



CAPITAL DISTRICT
**Regional
Planning
Commission**



THE NEW NORMAL: TRANSPORTATION IN THE CAPITAL REGION 2026



CAPITAL DISTRICT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

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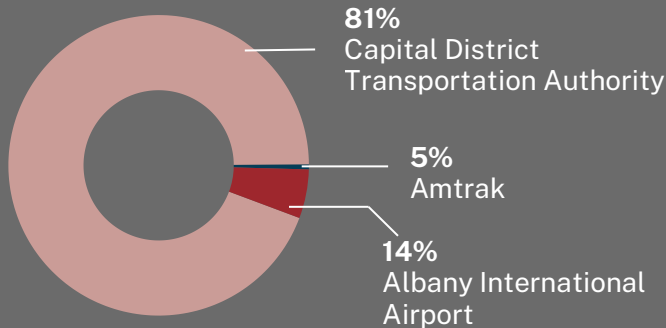
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Cover photo source: Capital Region Transportation Council

RIDERSHIP BY THE NUMBERS

in the Capital Region

2025 Ridership by Mode



19.5M
Total Trips Taken
in 2019

22.5M
Total Trips Taken
in 2025



Post Pandemic Recovery 2019 vs. 2025



+17%
CDTA Total Ridership



+12%
Capital District
Amtrak Ridership



+14%
Albany International
Airport Passengers Per
Flight



Recovery:

The return of ridership to pre-pandemic (2019) benchmarks, measured in the number of trips.

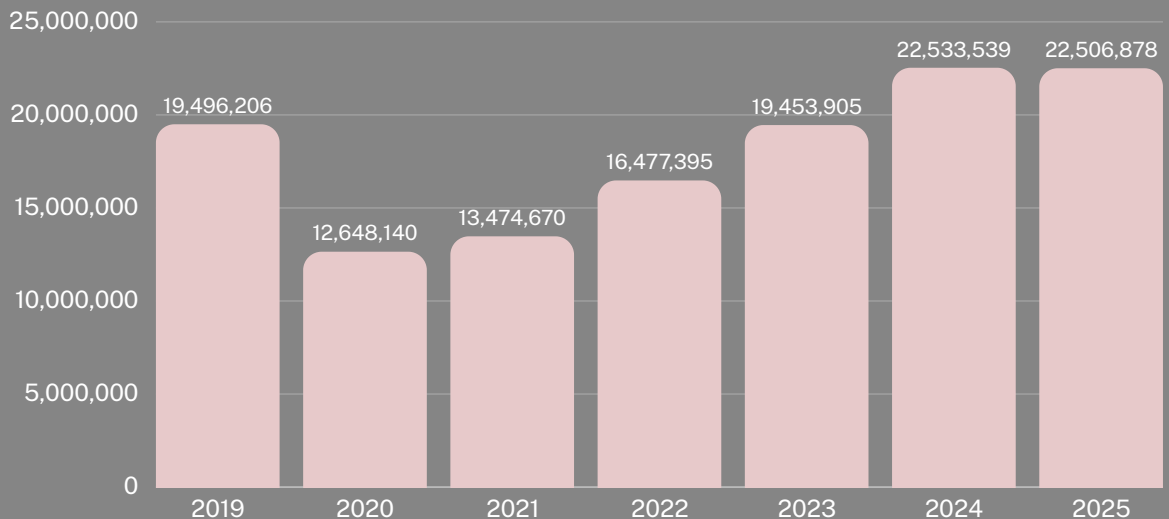


Trips:

The total number of unlinked passenger boardings, meaning each time a passenger boards a vehicle it is counted as one trip, regardless of transfers.

Total Number of Trips, 2019-2025

CDTA, Amtrak, and Albany International Airport



Source: National Transit Database

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Executive Summary

This report examines changes in transit ridership, service levels, and rider demographics across the Capital Region's transportation network, including Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA), Amtrak, and Albany International Airport, following the COVID-19 pandemic. Using data from the National Transit Database (NTD), CDTA, Albany County Airport Authority, U.S. Census, and Replica, the analysis assesses system performance and highlights trends across multiple modes of regional transit.

- The COVID-19 pandemic caused a sharp decline in CDTA ridership, with annual trips falling from 15.6 million in 2019 to 11.1 million in 2020 (-29%), driven by remote work, online learning, and public health concerns.
- In 2025, CDTA ridership was 17% higher than pre-pandemic levels (2019).
- CDTA ridership shifted following the pandemic, with growth among households earning \$0-\$15,000 and those earning above \$150,000, alongside declines in middle-income rider groups.
- While renters remain the primary share of CDTA riders, there has been an increase in ridership among households with access to at least one vehicle.
- Fare revenue declined sharply during the pandemic due to fare-free policies and reduced ridership, falling to \$6.7 million in 2021, and did not fully recover until 2024 (\$21.5 million); state and federal funding supplemented these losses to maintain operations.
- The CDTA's CDPHP Cycle bike-share program expanded significantly (340 to 600 bikes; 75 to 125 stations between 2019-2025), intended to support first- and last-mile transit connections, and reaching over 100,000 annual rides by 2025.
- Regional Amtrak ridership declined by 41% between 2019 and 2020 and reached its lowest point in 2021 (-52%), before rebounding to 8% above pre-pandemic levels by 2024. Regional ridership in 2025 was over 1 million passengers trips.
- Albany International Airport experienced a 66% drop in passenger traffic in 2020, but passenger load efficiency recovered by 2022 even as total flights and passenger volumes remained below pre-pandemic levels. Total enplanements at Albany International Airport surpassed 3 million in 2025, 5% higher than pre-pandemic levels (2019).

Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA)

Ridership

Public transportation systems experienced significant disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) bus network was no exception. In early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic led to a sharp decline in public transit usage nationwide. Changes in daily routines, including increased remote work and online learning, contributed to a substantial drop in demand for bus services. Health concerns related to virus transmission in shared, enclosed spaces further discouraged riders, while social distancing requirements forced many public transportation agencies to reduce vehicle capacity, often by as much as 75%.¹ Shifts in work patterns also contributed to lower transit demand: according to the 2019 5-Year ACS and 2024 5-Year ACS Estimates, the share of residents working from home in the Capital Region increased by approximately 10%, potentially reducing the number of regular commuters using CDTA services.² In addition, financial challenges, supply chain disruptions, and operator shortages placed further strain on public transportation systems at both the local and national levels.³



Source: Capital Region Transportation Council

Share of Workers Over the Age of 16 Working from Home

	2015-19 ACS 5-Year Estimate	2020-24 ACS 5-Year Estimate
Albany County	4%	15%
Rensselaer County	4%	14%
Saratoga County	6%	17%
Schenectady County	4%	14%
Capital Region	5%	15%

Source: U.S Census

¹ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S204604302100085X?via%3Dihub#f0010>

² 2015-2019 5-Year ACS and 2020-2024 5-Year ACS Estimates, Table B08301

³ <https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/2024-08/FTA-Report-0268-Effects-of-the-COVID-19-Pandemic-on-Transit-Ridership-and-Accessibility.pdf>

Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA)

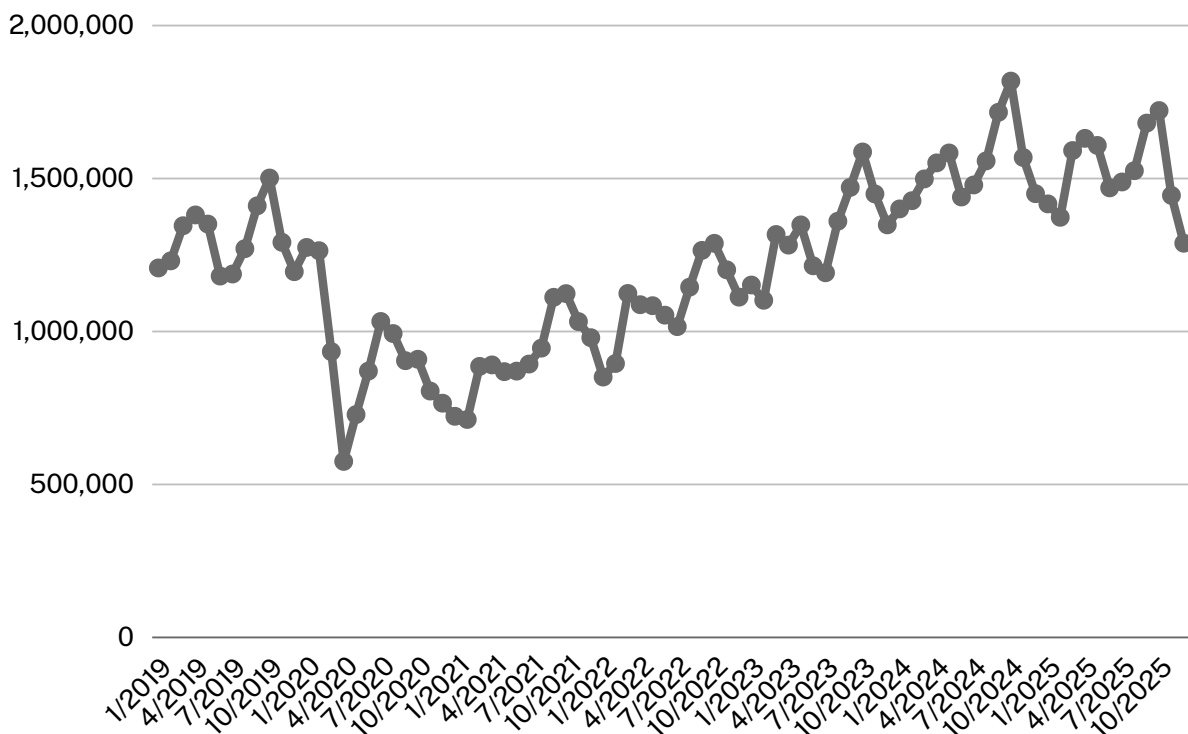
At the local level, CDTA implemented several operational adjustments in response to the pandemic. The agency temporarily suspended fare collection to limit contact between riders and operators, required passengers to board and disembark through rear doors to reduce driver exposure, and imposed capacity limitations to comply with social distancing guidelines. Additionally, the shift to remote learning significantly affected ridership, particularly among students participating in CDTA's Universal Access program through local colleges and universities.⁴



18,241,392

total trips on CDTA in 2025

Monthly Ridership, All Modes, 2019-2025



Source: National Transit Database

⁴ <https://www.timesunion.com/business/article/CDTA-ridership-rebounded-strongly-in-July-15520276.php>

Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA)

As a result, CDTA experienced a substantial decline in ridership during the peak of the pandemic. Annual ridership fell from 15,555,220 trips in 2019 to 11,058,241 trips in 2020, representing a reduction of approximately 29%. Recovery in the post-COVID period was slow; in 2021, annual ridership remained at similar levels to the previous year, with 11,037,981 riders. It was not until 2023 that ridership returned to pre-pandemic levels. In fact, ridership in both 2023 and 2024 surpassed 2019 levels, indicating a rebound in public transit usage within the CDTA service area. Compared to the national recovery rate of 77% between 2019 and 2023, the Capital Region performed remarkably well, with ridership about 2% above 2019 levels during the same period.⁵ Recovery has continued to strengthen, with 2025 ridership exceeding 2019 levels by 17%.

Several factors may explain why CDTA has outperformed national recovery rates. During the pandemic, the agency implemented a temporary zero-fare policy (see Financials section), helping maintain accessibility and support ridership. CDTA also entered the pandemic with a strong pre-existing network, including bus rapid transit (BRT) corridors, a polycentric hub system connecting major cities in the Capital Region, and expanded Universal Access partnerships with local colleges and universities. Additionally, the region's ridership base is heavily concentrated among essential workers and transit-dependent populations, making it more resilient to remote work trends. This composition likely contributed to a faster ridership recovery compared to regions more reliant on sectors with greater fluctuations in travel patterns, such as technology or professional services.

CDTA ridership can be broken out into three main modes of service:

1. Motor Bus
2. Commuter Bus
3. Demand Response

Recovery patterns vary significantly across these modes.

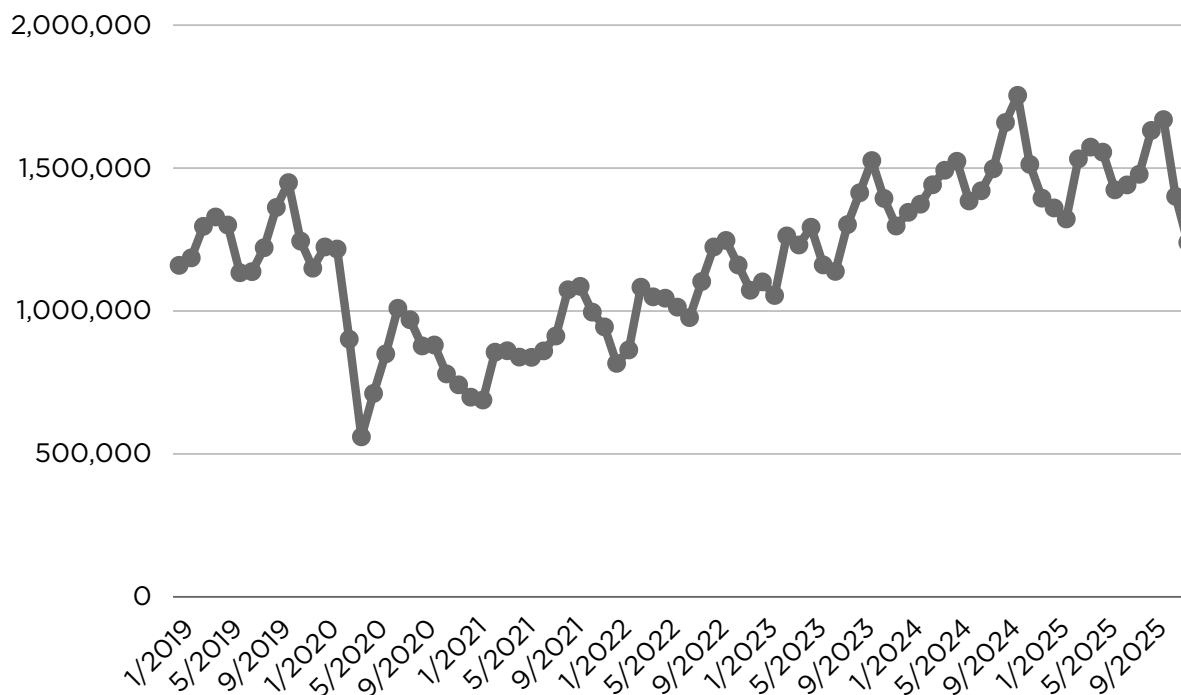


Source: Capital Region Transportation Council & CDTA

⁵ <https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/2024-08/FTA-Report-0268-Effects-of-the-COVID-19-Pandemic-on-Transit-Ridership-and-Accessibility.pdf>

Motor Bus

Monthly Ridership, Motor Bus, 2019-2025

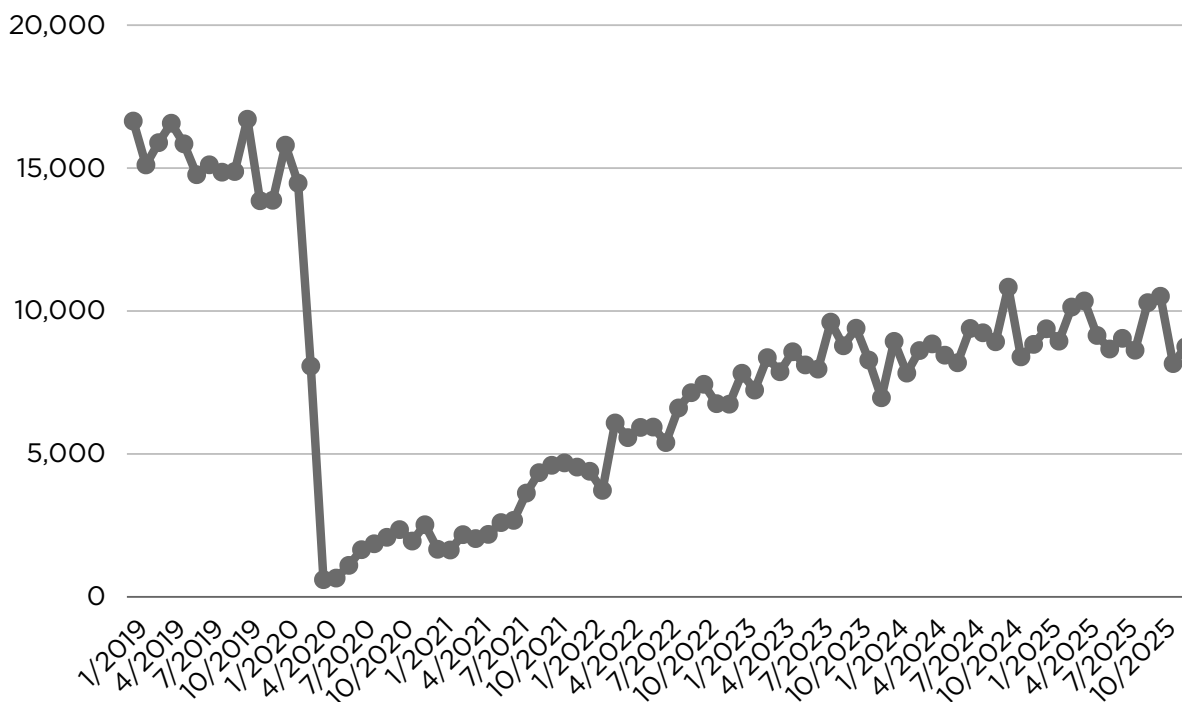


Source: National Transit Database

Motor buses generate the largest share of trips within the CDTA system, making them the most influential component of overall ridership. Because this mode accounts for the majority of total trips, changes in motor bus usage have the greatest impact on system-wide ridership trends. Motor bus routes include local, fixed-route, and bus rapid transit (BRT). In 2020, motor bus ridership declined sharply to 10,723,610 trips, representing a 28% decrease from 2019 levels. Since motor bus service accounts for the majority of total system ridership, this decline significantly contributed to the overall reduction in CDTA trips during the peak of the pandemic. Motor bus ridership rebounded steadily in the post-COVID period and, by 2023, had returned to about 1% above its 2019 level. This recovery indicates that the core service component of the CDTA network not only regained lost riders but slightly surpassed pre-pandemic demand and has continued to do so in recent years.

Commuter Bus

Monthly Ridership, Commuter Bus, 2019-2025



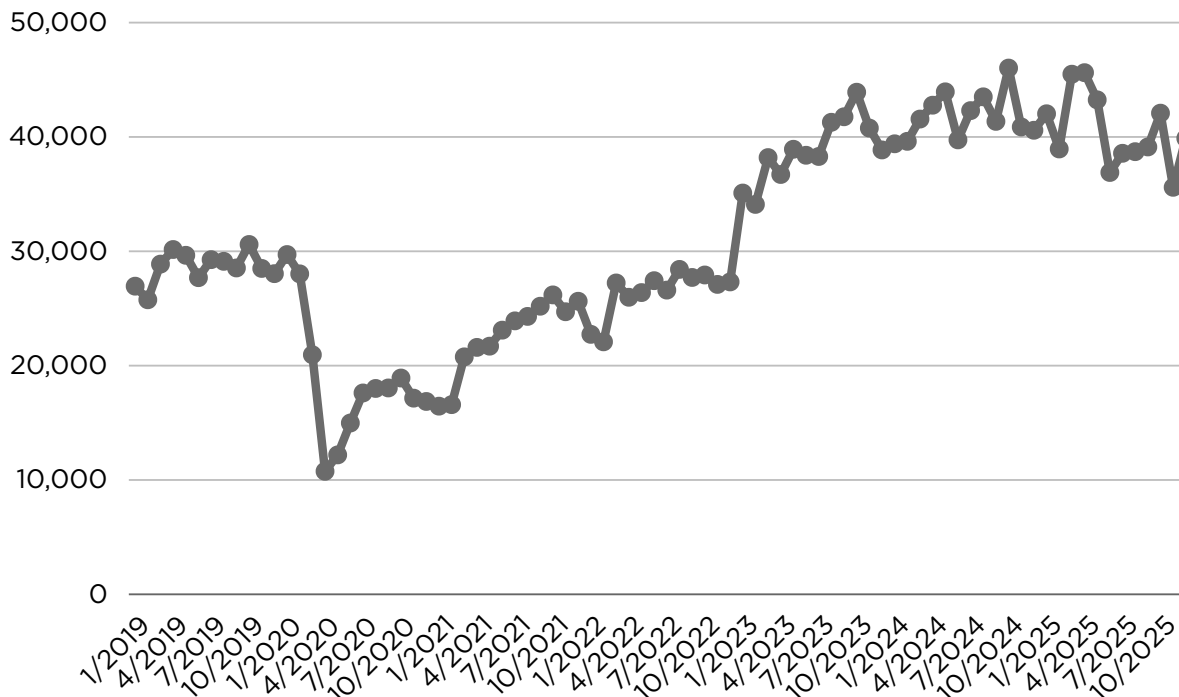
Source: National Transit Database

Commuter bus ridership is the only transit mode within CDTA that has not returned to pre-pandemic levels. Commuter bus routes are typically designed for longer journeys, like the CDTA Northway Xpress (NX), which connects Saratoga Springs to the City of Albany. Between 2019 and 2020, this mode experienced the steepest decline of any CDTA service type, with ridership falling by 71%. In 2023, when most other service categories had fully recovered, the commuter bus still only operated at 54% of its 2019 ridership. As of 2025, recovery remains incomplete, with ridership reaching just 61% of pre-pandemic levels. Even prior to the pandemic, commuter bus services experienced relatively low utilization, averaging approximately 13 passenger trips per hour.⁶ This suggests that the pandemic did not create a new weakness in this service category, but rather intensified existing structural challenges.

⁶ <https://www.cdfa.org/sites/default/files/CDTA%20Route%20Performance%20Report%20FY25.pdf>

Demand Response

Monthly Ridership, Demand Response, 2019-2025



Source: National Transit Database

Demand Response services provide pre-scheduled, shared-ride transportation, often used by seniors and individuals with disabilities who require ADA-accessible or curb-to-curb service (paratransit). Demand Response ridership declined by 43% between 2019 and 2020, with only 112,727 riders recorded in 2020. Despite the sharp initial decline, this mode recovered more quickly than any other CDTA service category, reaching approximately 18% above its 2019 ridership by 2022, one year earlier than the system-wide and other mode recovery. Demand Response continues to demonstrate strong utilization in recent years, with ridership exceeding 280,000 trips in both 2023 and 2024. In January of 2024, CDTA introduced Flex+ on-demand transit services, which allowed riders to pre-book services between the Joseph L. Bruno Rail Station and Downtown Albany. In the summer of 2024, this service expanded again, extending operating hours and adding an additional 19 stops for riders.⁷ This expansion is correlated to the increased ridership that is seen in 2024.

⁷ <https://www.masstransitmag.com/alt-mobility/shared-mobility/article/55093099/cdta-expands-flex-services-for-summer-months>

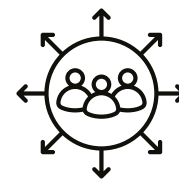
CDTA Ridership Demographics, Economics, and Tenure

Understanding who relies on CDTA transit is essential for evaluating both system performance and transportation equity. While ridership provides insight into overall demand for service, demographic and economic characteristics of riders helps identify the populations that rely on CDTA to move about the Capital Region.

Replica, a data and analytics platform, provides simulated mobility and demographic data that fill gaps left by federal and state datasets. These data are collected and modeled for a typical weekday (Thursday) and weekend day (Saturday) and are broken out by season (Fall and Spring). To examine changes associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, Fall 2019 and Fall 2024 are used for pre- and post-pandemic comparisons in the section below.

Economic Characteristics

In terms of employment status, the share of riders not participating in the labor force increased by 13.5% between Fall 2019 and Fall 2024. Individuals in this category are not currently employed and are not actively seeking work, and typically include students, retirees, individuals with disabilities, and stay-at-home parents.



+13.5%

Increase in riders not in the workforce

Another trend reflected in the data, consistent with broader Census-observed workforce changes, is the decline in riders working in-person. In Fall 2019, 88.1% of CDTA riders reported working in-person, compared to 62.7% in Fall 2024. This shift likely reflects the continued impact of remote and hybrid work arrangements, which have reduced traditional commute trips and contributed to a greater share of transit use for non-work travel purposes.



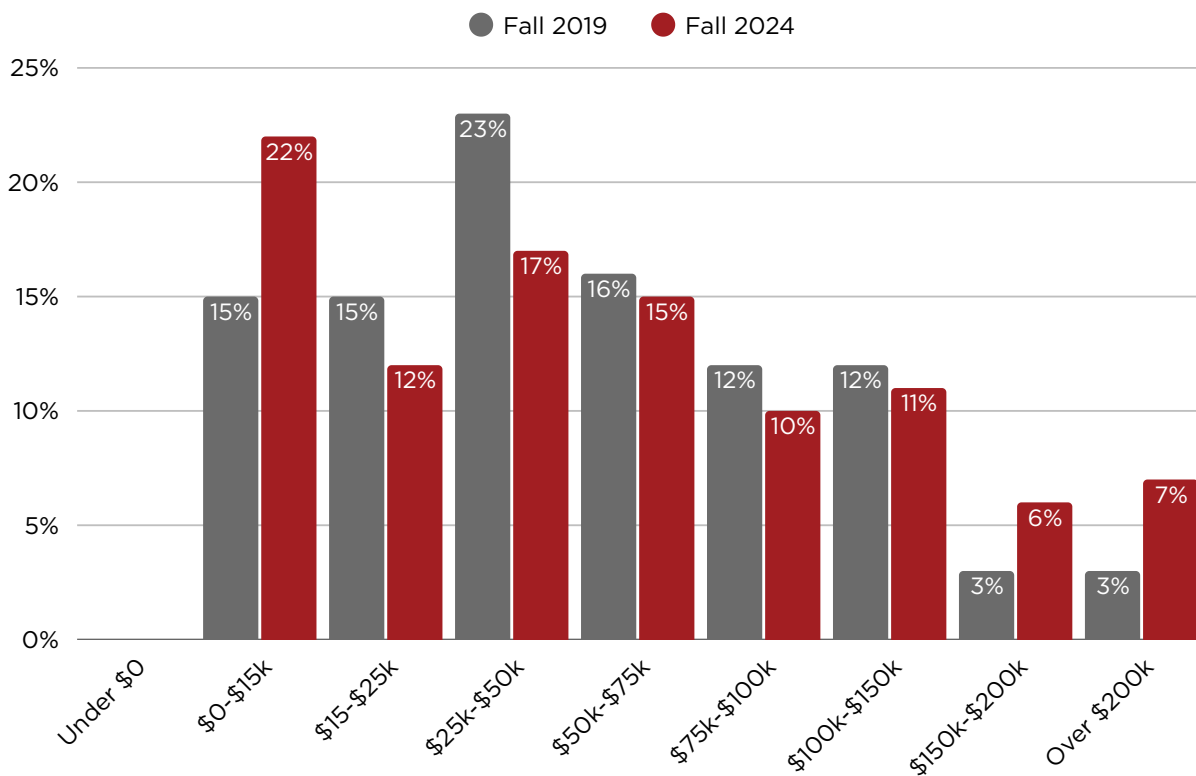
-25.4%

Decrease in riders working in-person

CDTA Ridership Demographics, Economics, and Tenure

Lower-income riders (households earning \$0-\$15,000 annually) increased from 15% to 22% of total ridership between fall 2019 and fall 2024, indicating a growing reliance on transit among the region's most economically vulnerable populations. Conversely, riders in the \$25,000-\$50,000 and \$50,000-\$75,000 brackets decreased from 23% to 17% and 16% to 15%. Moderate- and higher-income households (\$75,000 and above) also grew at the top end, with the \$150,000-\$200,000 and over \$200,000 categories increasing from 3% to 6% and 3% to 7%, suggesting that a portion of higher-income households have incorporated transit as an option post-pandemic. Overall, these trends indicate that CDTA ridership became more polarized after COVID-19, with increased representation among both lower-income households and higher-income households.

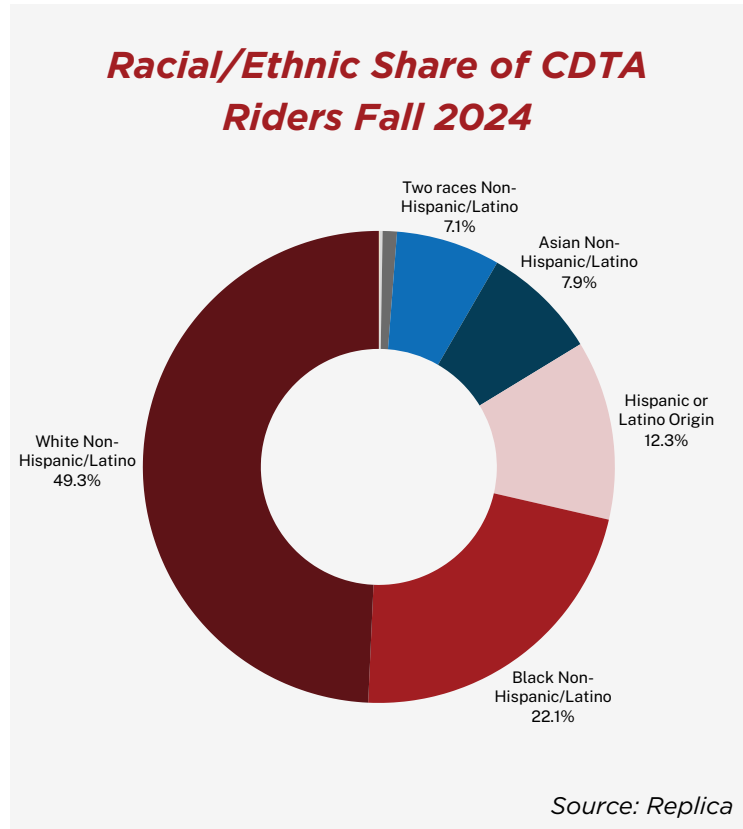
Household Income Distribution Among CDTA Riders



Source: Replica

Demographic and Housing Characteristics

The racial and ethnic composition of CDTA riders remained consistent between Fall 2019 and Fall 2024, with White Non-Hispanic/Latino individuals continuing to comprise the largest share, increasing slightly from 47.6% to 49.3%. Black Non-Hispanic/Latino riders remained the second-largest group, though their share declined from 27.3% to 22.1%. At the same time, there was growth in Hispanic, Asian, and other/multi racial groups, reflecting a modest diversification of the rider population beyond the two largest groups in the 2024 data.

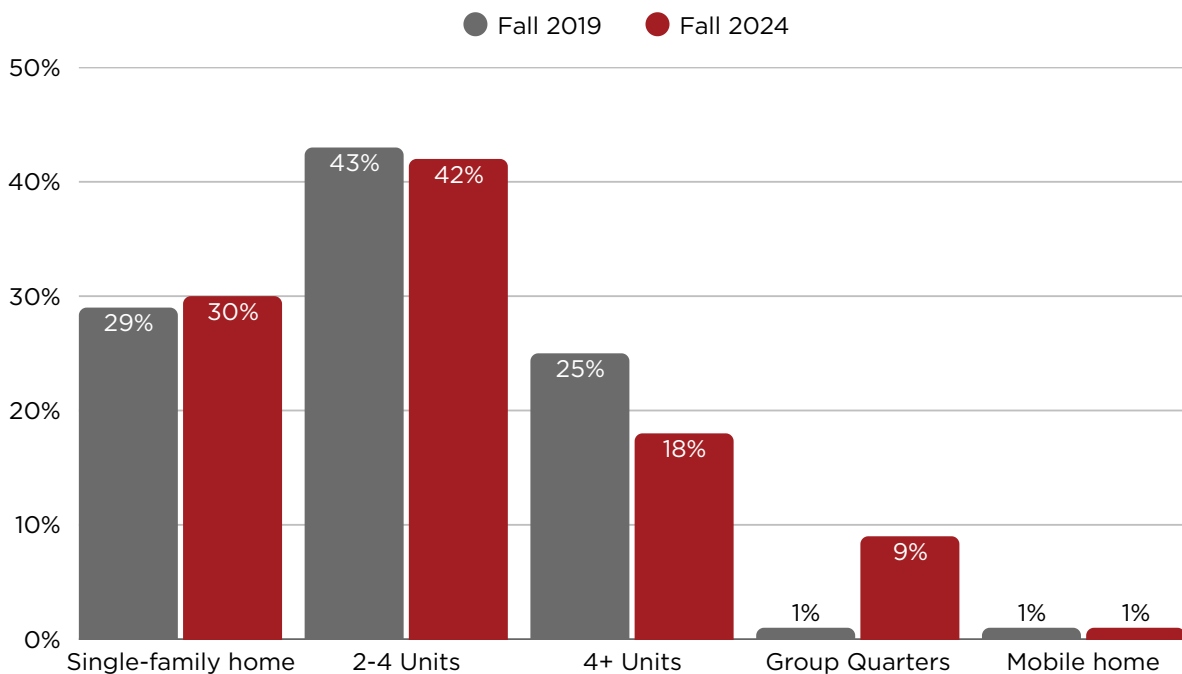


Across both periods, the largest share of riders was between the ages of 18 and 34, accounting for approximately 40% of total ridership. This may partially reflect CDTA's partnerships with local colleges and universities, as well as the concentration of individuals in this age group within prime working and educational years. Riders aged 50 to 64 represented the next largest cohort comprising of nearly 30% of all riders in fall 2024. Individuals within this age range are often approaching retirement, which may align with the observed increase in riders not participating in the labor force, particularly among retirees and those transitioning out of full-time employment.

CDTA Ridership Demographics, Economics, and Tenure

Housing characteristics further illustrate the populations most likely to rely on CDTA services. A majority of riders in both periods were renters, though the share declined from 67.4% in Fall 2019 to 59.4% in Fall 2024. While homeownership rates remained relatively stable, ridership increased among individuals living in group quarters. In Fall 2024, most riders resided in small multi-unit buildings (2-4 units), followed by single-family homes and then larger apartment complexes.

Ridership by Type of Housing



Source: Replica

CDTA Service Changes

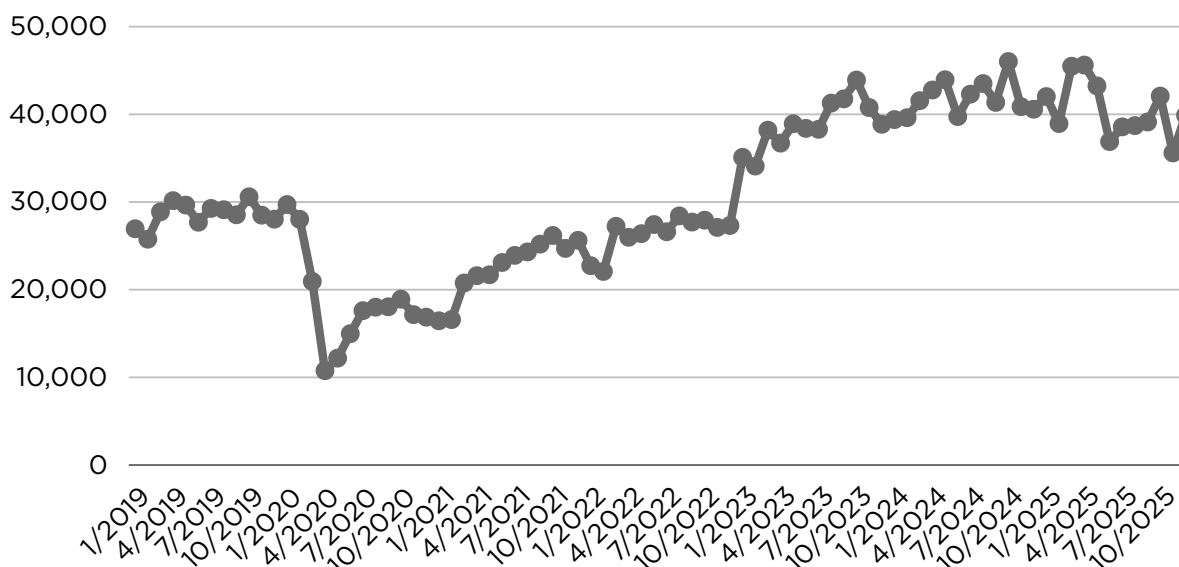
Vehicle Revenue Miles (VRM) represents the total number of miles traveled by transit vehicles while in revenue service, that is, when they are available to carry passengers. VRM is commonly used as a proxy for changes in service levels, since reductions or increases in these miles generally indicate service cuts or expansions. On a national level, among the 518 agencies reporting data to the National Transit Database, 97% reduced their service between 2019 and 2020.⁸ CDTA was among these agencies, experiencing an 11% reduction in total annual VRM between 2019 and 2020.

Motor Bus service experienced the least severe decrease between 2019 and 2020, a change that appears to fall within the normal range of year-over-year service adjustments and may not be directly related to the pandemic. Likely, this mode of transit had the smallest reduction because it serves as the backbone of the system, providing essential daily travel for riders, making significant service cuts less feasible.

In contrast, the largest cut to service was the Commuter Bus, which decreased service by 50%. This reduction likely reflects historically low utilization rates on these routes, combined with the widespread shift to remote or hybrid work during the pandemic, making it the most feasible service to scale back. Commuter Bus VRM continues to operate below 2019 levels.

Recovery of total VRM across all modes occurred in 2022, and service levels have remained above pre-pandemic levels since then.

Monthly Vehicle Revenue Miles (VRM), All Modes, 2019-2025



Source: National Transit Database

⁸ <https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/2024-08/FTA-Report-0268-Effects-of-the-COVID-19-Pandemic-on-Transit-Ridership-and-Accessibility.pdf>

CDTA Finances

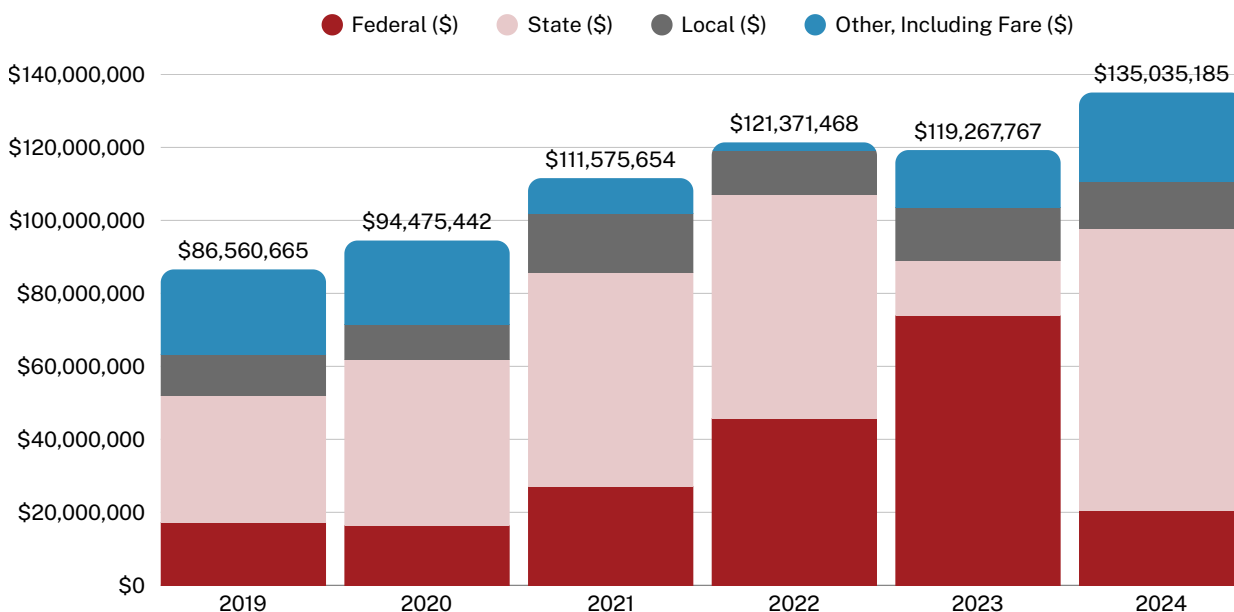
Ridership trends and demographic shifts drive the need for service adjustments but implementing and sustaining these services depend heavily on a combination of fare revenue and government funding. CDTA's fare revenue illustrates how the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted this balance. In 2019 and 2020, fare revenue was relatively stable at around \$20.8-\$20.9 million, but it dropped sharply in 2021 to just \$6.7 million, reflecting both a steep decline in ridership and a period during which fares were temporarily free (April 6th, 2020, through August 19th, 2020).

While ridership recovered to pre-pandemic levels by 2023, fare revenue did not fully rebound until 2024, reaching \$21.5 million. This lag indicates that rising ridership does not automatically translate to revenue, as fare policies and other factors can temporarily decouple the two. The pattern highlights that fare revenue alone is insufficient to sustain operations and underscores the essential role of state, federal, and local funding in maintaining transit service during periods of crisis and for general operating costs.

	Fares	Ridership
2019	\$20,882,332	15,555,220
2020	\$20,804,704	11,058,241
2021	\$6,745,411	11,037,981
2022	\$9,433,979	13,123,938
2023	\$12,294,779	15,824,491
2024	\$21,545,894	18,491,586

Source: National Transit Database

CDTA Funding Sources, 2019-2024



Source: National Transit Database

CDTA Finances

Between 2019 and 2024, CDTA relied on a mix of federal, state, local, and other directly generated funds, including fare revenue, to operate its transit services. Pre-pandemic in 2019, CDTA's operating budget totaled about \$86.6 million, with state funding (~\$35M) as the largest contributor, followed by fares and other directly generated revenue (~\$23M), federal funds (~\$17M), and local support (~\$11M). The COVID-19 pandemic caused a dramatic shift: fare revenue and other direct funds collapsed in 2021-2022, dropping to as little as \$2.3 million in 2022. Federal emergency relief through programs such as the 2020 Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act of 2021, and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Act of 2021 helped offset these losses. These were temporary programs but critical for transportation agencies to survive the pandemic. State and local contributions fluctuated in response, with the state covering a smaller share in 2023 before rising sharply to \$77.3 million in 2024 as federal relief receded. Local funding remained relatively stable throughout the period, while fares and other direct revenues rebounded by 2024. Overall, this highlights that CDTA cannot operate solely on fare revenue, relying on state support as the backbone of its operating budget, with federal funds serving primarily as temporary emergency relief and long-term capital support.

2024 CDTA Funding Sources



\$20.5M
Federal



\$77.3M
State



\$12.9M
Local



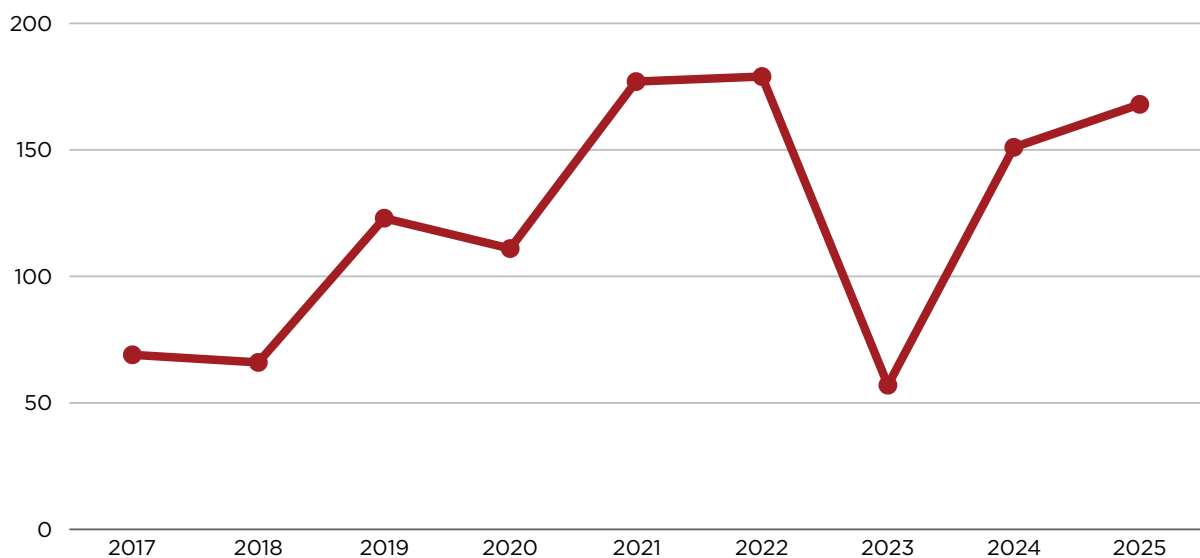
\$24.3M
Other
(Including Fare)

CDPHP Cycle

Ridership

In addition to traditional fixed-route services, the Capital Region has expanded access to micromobility options through CDTA's CDPHP Cycle bike-share program. Unlike scheduled bus service, CDPHP Cycle provides flexible, short-distance travel that can serve as a first- and last-mile connection within the broader transit network. First- and last-mile connections refer to the initial and final segments of a trip between a traveler's origin or destination, such as their home, workplace, or school, and a fixed-route transit stop. These short-distance gaps often present barriers to transit use when walking distances are too long or connecting service is limited. Bike-share systems such as CDPHP Cycle help bridge this gap by allowing riders to access transit stations more easily or complete trips that might otherwise require an automobile.

Number of CDPHP Rides per Bike



Source: CDTA

CDPHP Cycle

Like fixed-route transit services, CDPHP Cycle experienced a decline in ridership in 2020, reflecting travel restrictions and the temporary closure of workplaces, businesses, and recreational destinations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Research on U.S. bike-share systems during this period similarly found decreases in ridership alongside increases in average trip duration, potentially indicating a shift away from commute-oriented travel toward recreational use or trips associated with physical activity and mental well-being.⁹ Usage rebounded significantly in 2021 and 2022 as travel demand gradually returned. This growth coincided not only with broader recovery trends but also with system expansion: the number of available bikes increased from 340 in 2019 to 600 by 2025, while docking stations expanded from 75 to 125 over the same period. As a result, increases in ridership may reflect both changes in traveler preferences toward micromobility options in the Capital Region and improved system accessibility through additional infrastructure, including the introduction of electric bikes, which likely contributed to higher trip totals. Post-pandemic growth has remained strong, with total rides increasing to 100,633 by 2025, indicating sustained demand for flexible, short-distance mobility options within the regional transportation network.

	CDPHP Cycle Available Bikes	CDPHP Cycle Available Racks	CDPHP Cycle Rides	CDPHP Cycle Rides per Bike
2017	160	40	11,000	69
2018	340	70	22,597	66
2019	340	75	41,900	123
2020	340	85	37,784	111
2021	400	90	70,718	177
2022	450	100	80,377	179
2023	450	110	25,744	57
2024	550	120	82,898	151
2025	600	125	100,633	168

Source: CDTA

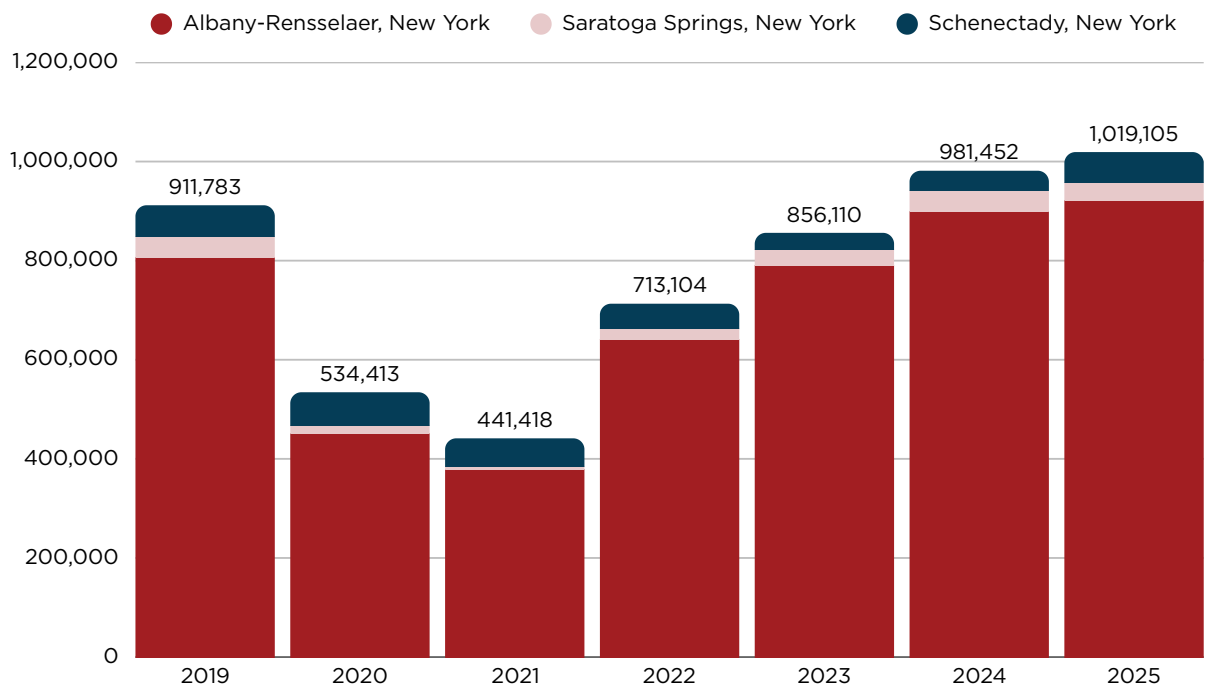
⁹ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9672988/>

Amtrak

Similar to other modes of transportation, intercity rail ridership in the Capital Region declined substantially during the pandemic. In 2020, total ridership across the three primary regional Amtrak stations, Albany-Rensselaer, Schenectady, and Saratoga Springs, fell from 911,783 passengers in 2019 to 534,413 passengers, a 41% decrease. Unlike other regional transportation modes, which experienced their sharpest decline between 2019 and 2020, Amtrak ridership reached its lowest point in 2021, with total trips dropping to 441,418, a 52% decrease from 2019. This delayed decrease likely reflects the prolonged reduction in business travel, continued remote work arrangements, and limited tourism activity that extended into 2021.

Ridership remained below pre-pandemic levels through 2023, reflecting a slower recovery compared to other transportation modes. However, a significant rebound occurred in 2024, with total trips reaching 981,452, approximately 8% above pre-pandemic levels, and continued into 2025, surpassing one million passengers (12% higher than 2019 levels). This growth has been driven primarily by weekend and leisure travel rather than weekday travel.¹⁰

Trips per Amtrak Station in the Capital Region, 2019-2025



Source: Amtrak

¹⁰ <https://nec-commission.com/document/nec-annual-report-fiscal-year-2024/>

Albany-Rensselaer Station, located in the City of Rensselaer, was the eighth busiest station in the national Amtrak system in 2025. It accounts for a substantial majority of regional rail activity, with 84-92% of Capital Region riders using this station annually, including throughout the pandemic. By 2024-2025, approximately nine out of every ten Amtrak passengers in the region boarded or alighted at Albany-Rensselaer, underscoring its role as a primary transportation hub in both the Capital Region.

	Albany-Rensselaer, New York Trips	Saratoga Springs, New York Trips	Schenectady, New York Trips	Trips
2019	806,960	41,611	63,212	911,783
2020	450,965	16,543	66,905	534,413
2021	379,209	4,753	57,456	441,418
2022	640,353	22,710	50,041	713,104
2023	790,517	31,368	34,225	856,110
2024	899,048	42,398	40,006	981,452
2025	920,779	36,146	62,180	1,019,105

Source: Amtrak

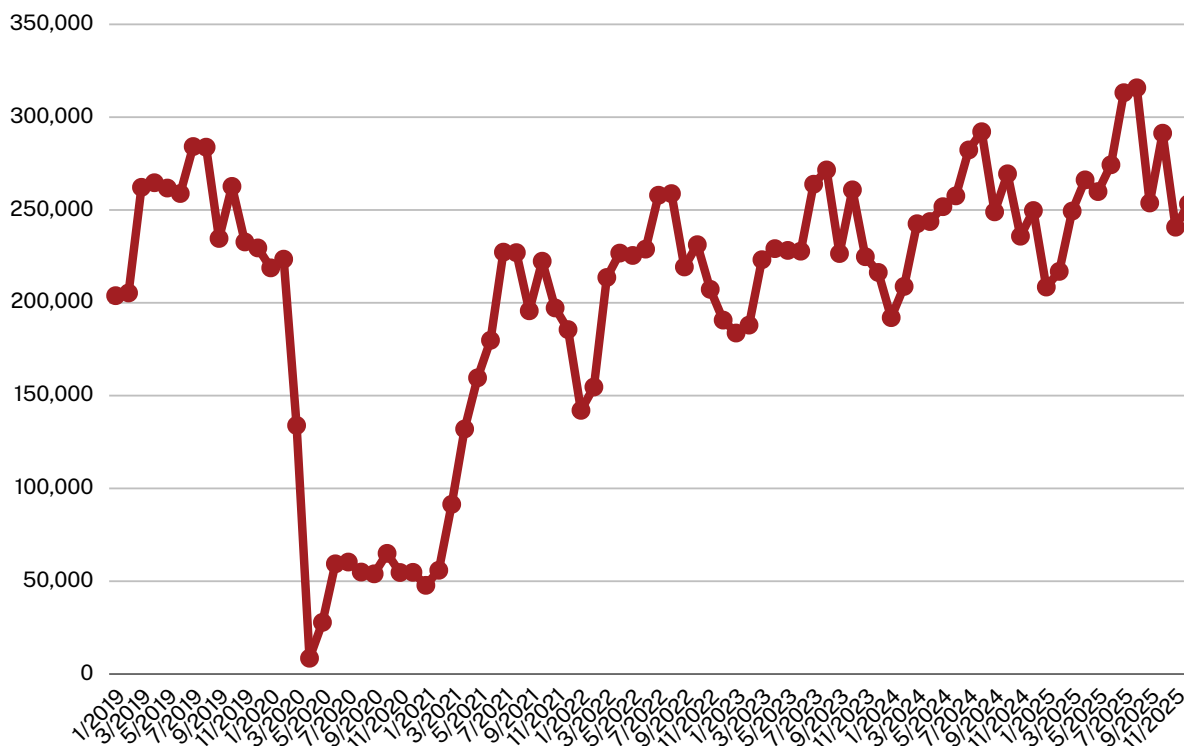
¹¹ <https://www.hsrail.org/blog/metro-north-to-offer-daily-departure-to-albany/>

Albany International Airport

The COVID-19 pandemic caused an unprecedented decline in passenger air travel, significantly impacting operations at Albany International Airport. In February 2020, the airport established a COVID-19 task force to implement health and safety protocols in response to the emerging public health crisis.¹² By 2021, additional mitigation measures were introduced, including mask requirements on flights, expanded allowances for carrying hand sanitizer, vaccination requirements for international travelers, and testing and quarantine periods for unvaccinated domestic travelers.¹³ In response to declining passenger demand and associated revenue losses, many airlines also shifted operations to increase air cargo services as a means of maintaining financial stability during the pandemic.¹⁴

Between 2019 and 2020, total passenger traffic decreased by 66% while the number of flights decreased by 44%. The lowest usage was during the height of the pandemic in April of 2020, with a total of just 8,510 passengers. Using both arrivals (enplanements) and departures (deplanements) captures the total movement of travelers through the airport, which provides a more complete picture of airport activity and recovery trends.

Total Passengers, by Month



Source: Albany County Airport Authority

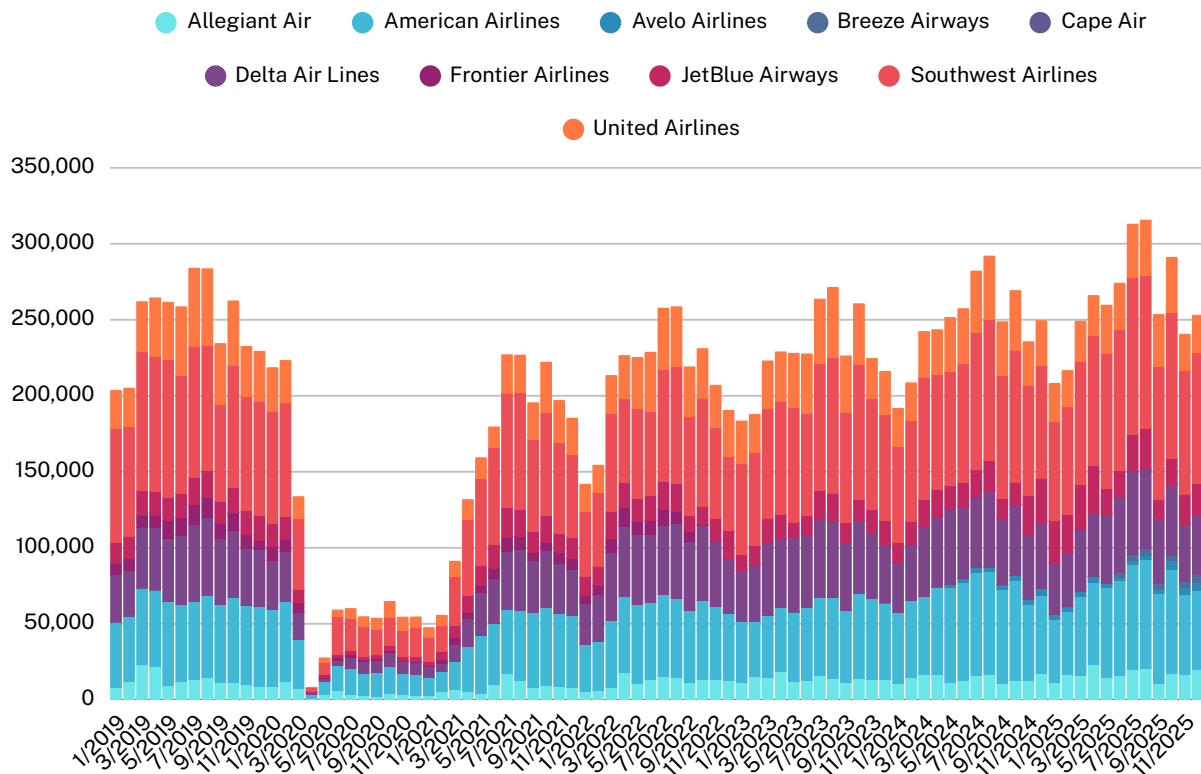
¹² <https://www.internationalairportreview.com/article/151013/air-travel-confidence-post-pandemic-albany-airport/>

¹³ <https://www.wamc.org/news/2021-11-10/albany-international-airport-resumes-pre-pandemic-service-warns-travellers-of-new-covid-guidelines>

¹⁴ <https://interactive.aviationtoday.com/avionicsmagazine/august-september-2020/the-first-100-days-how-airlines-responded-to-the-covid-19-crisis/>

Albany International Airport

Total Passengers, by Month and Carrier



Source: Albany County Airport Authority

In 2021, Albany International Airport rebounded from 2020, with departures increasing by approximately 20% and total passenger traffic rising by roughly 89%. The airport’s relatively high share of domestic travel contributed to this early recovery, as airports that rely more heavily on international service faced prolonged challenges due to border closures, travel restrictions, quarantine requirements, and sustained declines in demand for international flights.¹⁵ Despite this rebound, total raw passenger activity and the number of flights in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024 has remained below pre-pandemic levels, reflecting the ongoing effects of COVID-19 on air travel demand. It was not until 2025 that total passengers fully surpassed 2019 levels, exceeding 3 million passengers for the first time.

¹⁵ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8378661/>

Albany International Airport

However, because the number of flights directly influences the number of passengers that can be accommodated, normalizing passenger volumes by departures provides a more meaningful comparison of travel trends over time. While passenger volumes declined sharply in 2020, passengers per flight rebounded rapidly, reaching 95.7% of pre-pandemic levels by 2021 and exceeding 2019 levels by 2022. This indicates airlines recovered passenger load efficiency much faster than total flight operations recovered.

In 2025, passengers per flight remained elevated at 88 passengers per departure (14% higher than 2019), indicating continued strong load factors even as overall flight volumes gradually increased. The slight decrease in passengers per flight between 2024 and 2025 can likely be attributed to a significant increase in seat capacity. Total available seats grew by approximately 10.4% between 2024 and 2025, substantially higher than the roughly 4.5% increase experienced by airports of similar size nationwide. This expansion in available capacity likely contributed to the strong passenger totals observed in 2025 and may lead to more moderate growth in subsequent years as the market adjusts to the expanded seat supply.

	Departures Performed	Total Passenger Traffic
2015	38,489	2,548,646
2016	42,740	2,775,748
2017	42,674	2,781,069
2018	41,796	2,872,256
2019	38,674	2,987,303
2020	21,674	1,017,702
2021	26,040	1,924,553
2022	31,663	2,559,976
2023	31,912	2,747,560
2024	33,542	2,977,603
2025	35,730	3,145,748

Source: Albany County Airport Authority

	Passengers Per Flight	Passengers Per Flight Recovery
2019	77	
2020	47	0.61
2021	74	0.96
2022	81	1.05
2023	86	1.11
2024	89	1.15
2025	88	1.14

Source: Albany County Airport Authority

Conclusion

Overall, transportation systems in the Capital Region have demonstrated a strong recovery from pandemic-related disruptions, with all modes surpassing pre-pandemic ridership levels. However, recovery has been uneven across services and rider groups, reflecting lasting changes in work patterns, travel behavior, and transit reliance. These trends highlight the importance of continued service flexibility, multimodal connectivity, and sustained public funding to ensure the regional transportation network can effectively meet evolving mobility needs.

Capital District Regional Planning Commission

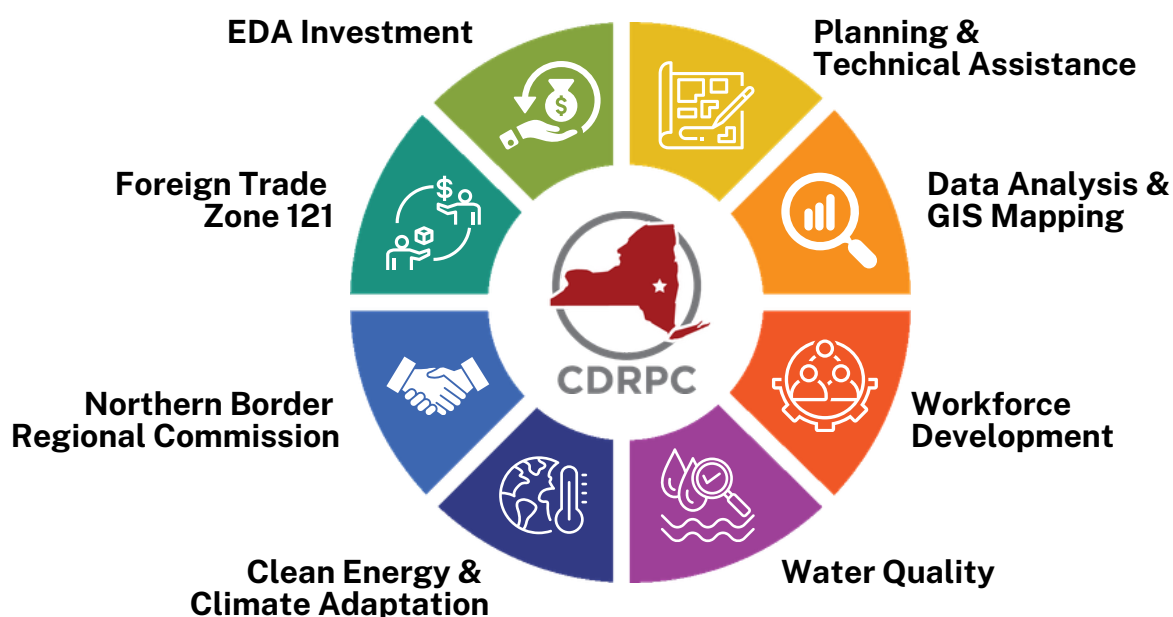
The Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC) is a regional planning and resource center serving the upstate New York counties of Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady. CDRPC objectively analyzes data, trends, opportunities, and challenges relevant to the Region’s economic development and planning communities.

CDRPC serves the best interests of both the public and private sectors by promoting intergovernmental cooperation; communicating, collaborating, and facilitating regional initiatives; and sharing information and fostering dialog on solutions to regional problems. Our organization provides added capacity to local municipalities through its regional coordination programs. By partnering with CDRPC, local municipalities can leverage the expertise of a full-time professional planning staff with significant network resources to provide added benefit to the work regularly performed in the Region.

Purpose

CDRPC was established in 1967 as a regional planning board by a cooperative agreement among the counties of Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady. Its original purpose was to perform and support comprehensive planning work, including surveys, planning services, technical services, and formulating plans and policies to promote sound and coordinated development of the entire Region.

CDRPC Programs





CAPITAL DISTRICT
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Planning
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