

Urban public transit, March 2021

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Ridership remains low

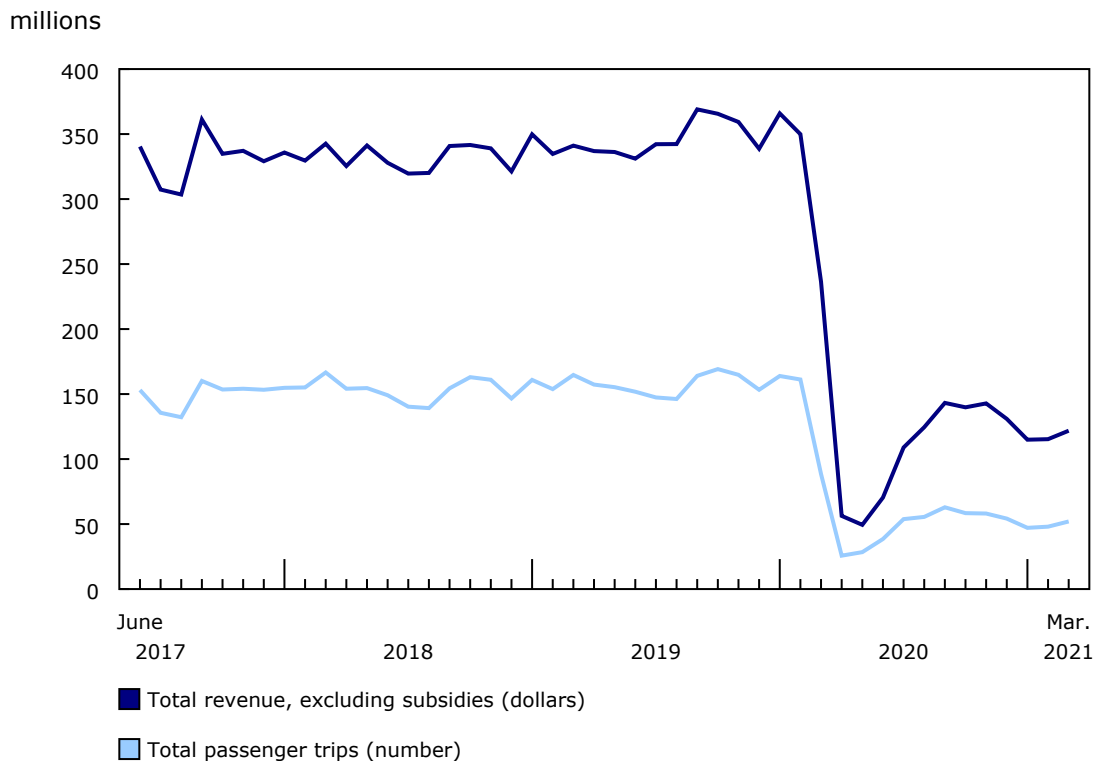
While public transit ridership edged up in March, it remained far below pre-pandemic levels.

Canada's urban transit networks carried 52.0 million riders in March, down 41.2% from the 88.5 million riders in March 2020, when ridership declined sharply mid-month because of lockdown restrictions. March was the 13th straight month of substantial year-year-over declines.

Although some passengers may have returned to public transit in March—as restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic were eased in many provinces—ridership numbers remained well below those of March 2020, with about 36.5 million fewer passengers. Looking further back, there were 112.7 million fewer riders in March compared with the same month in 2019.

On a monthly basis, public transit ridership increased by nearly 4.0 million riders in March—up 8.3% from February—slightly above the typical seasonal rise. This growth coincided with the lifting of stay-at-home orders in some Quebec and Ontario cities in March, and these two provinces accounted for about 60.0% of the increase.

Chart 1
Urban public transit operating revenue and passenger trips, monthly, 2017 to 2021



Source(s): Table 23-10-0251-01.

Dire financial situation

With ridership remaining well below pre-pandemic levels, the financial situation remains dire for transit agencies. Total operating revenues (excluding subsidies), at \$121.8 million in March, were down 48.5% (-\$114.6 million) from March 2020 levels, marking the 13th consecutive month of such declines.

Note to readers

Data for the most recent quarter are subject to revision. The data in this release are not seasonally adjusted.

This survey collects data on operating revenue (excluding subsidies) and the number of passenger trips from a panel of urban transit companies that represents at least 75% of revenues in each province and territory. Users should note that the panel is adjusted annually to maintain the 75% coverage and could differ slightly from what it was in the same month a year earlier.

Caution should be used when comparing values prior to January 2017 with more recent values, as the number of sampled companies changed significantly. Data prior to January 2017 can be found in table 23-10-0078-01.

The [Transportation Data and Information Hub](#), a web portal developed jointly by Statistics Canada and Transport Canada, provides Canadians with online access to comprehensive statistics and measures on the country's transportation sector.

Available tables: table [23-10-0251-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [2745](#).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).