

## Average number of transit rides each year per Oregonian

### Our strategy

ODOT Public Transportation Division (PTD) partners with local transit providers to offer safe and cost-effective public transportation. This system supports the state's economy and quality of life across diverse geographies and people. Public transportation is also vital to provide access to essential services, and transportation for those who cannot or choose not to drive, and to reduce congestion and greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, demand for public transportation in Oregon is expected to grow in response to changing demographics.

In 2018, the Oregon Transportation Commission adopted the *Oregon Public*

*Transportation Plan* (OPTP) that outlines policies to support increased ridership, improved transit outreach, comprehensive planning for transit, and better transit facilities. Public transportation is an integral component of Oregon's multimodal transportation system that helps Oregon's diverse communities work by getting people where they want to go.

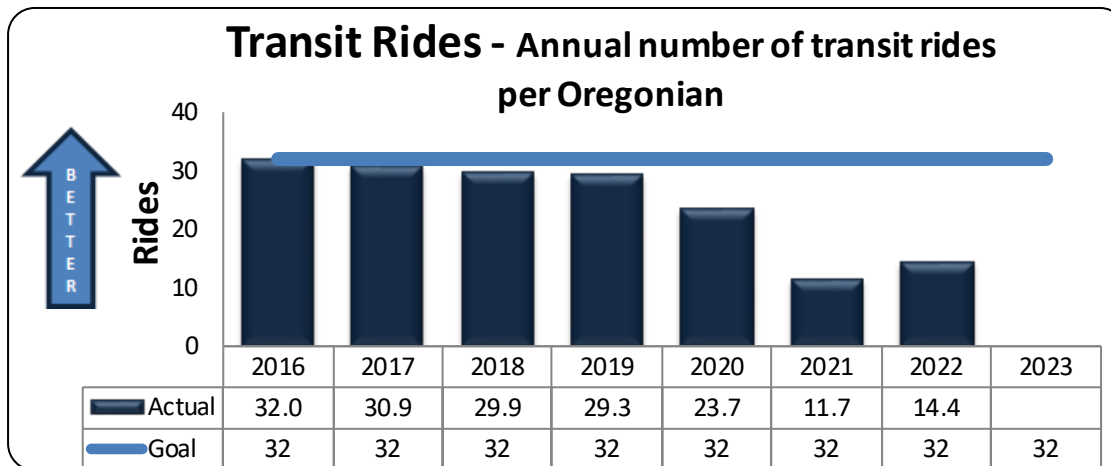
The Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) was included as part of the [HB 2017 Keep Oregon Moving](#) to provide additional, stable funding to local transit providers.

In addition, one goal of ODOT's [Strategic Action Plan](#), adopted by the Oregon

Transportation Commission (Dec 2020), is to improve access to transit, walking, and biking. Success will be measured by the increase in the percentage of agency funding dedicated to projects and programs that improve equitable access to these modes. Strong partnerships with local transit providers to enhance investments in public transportation are key to this outcome.

### About the target

The target was set in 2018, based on 2011-2016 ridership, with an expectation that it be evaluated after three to five years. Transit ridership per capita began declining several years before the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.



## Fact

Increased federal funding during the pandemic did allow transit providers to make efforts to maintain service availability and to use vehicle fleets to support meal delivery, senior transportation, and vaccination transportation.

# Transit rides, cont.

## How we are doing

While outperforming the national average on rides per capita, Oregon has seen a substantial decline in public transit use because of COVID-19.

Complete 2023 data is not yet available, but ridership was at its lowest in the spring and summer of 2021 and started rebounding during 2022.

Increasing ridership is an ODOT priority, but it may take several years before it returns to pre-COVID levels. PTD will continue to analyze the impacts of the pandemic and timing for recovery and determine if the target remains reasonable.



## Factors affecting results and what needs to be done

ODOT Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) funds were just starting to help improve ridership when services had to be reduced because of COVID-19 safeguards. Oregon transit agencies took necessary precautions to ensure the safety of riders and drivers for the past three years. They are also dealing

with the effects of inflation, supply chain disruptions that delay procurement processes for new buses, and staffing shortages.

Local transit providers determine their local needs and priorities, and although this includes increasing ridership, they also need STIF funds to add or replace buses, extend routes, increase service frequency, procure technology, add passenger shelters, or improve service planning. As ridership increases, the need for transportation alternatives will outpace available service in less than a decade.

Ridership is affected by internal factors – ones that transit agencies can control – such as service quantity and quality, fares, and reliability.

Ridership is also affected by external factors – those that transit agencies cannot control – such as demographics, population growth, car ownership, fuel prices, teleworking, and perceptions of personal safety on transit. For example, Oregon’s population over 65 years of age has grown over 40 percent in the past decade, and the substantial number of people teleworking during COVID have been slow to return to the office.

Because congestion and climate concerns are increasing, the importance of alternatives to single occupancy vehicles and strategic investments in priority multimodal

corridors should contribute to the State’s goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and congestion management.

TriMet, Cherriots (Salem Area Mass Transit), and Lane Transit District currently provide approximately 90 percent of all transit trips in Oregon. Although all Oregon public transit providers are investing to increase ridership, the largest agencies will provide the largest gains for this measure.

## About the data

Smaller and rural providers report ridership to the PTD Oregon Public Transit Information System (OPTIS) database on a quarterly basis. Larger, urban providers report ridership annually to the National Transit Database (NTD); this information is typically released one full year after transit agencies provide their data. Population data used to calculate the measure uses the July 2022 certified population estimates from the Population Research Center of Portland State University.

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## Data sources

Oregon Public Transit Information System;  
National Transit Database; Portland State University, Population Research Center