



Performance Report

April 30, 2024

Transit Performance Review

**Area Transportation Authority of
North Central Pennsylvania
(ATA)**

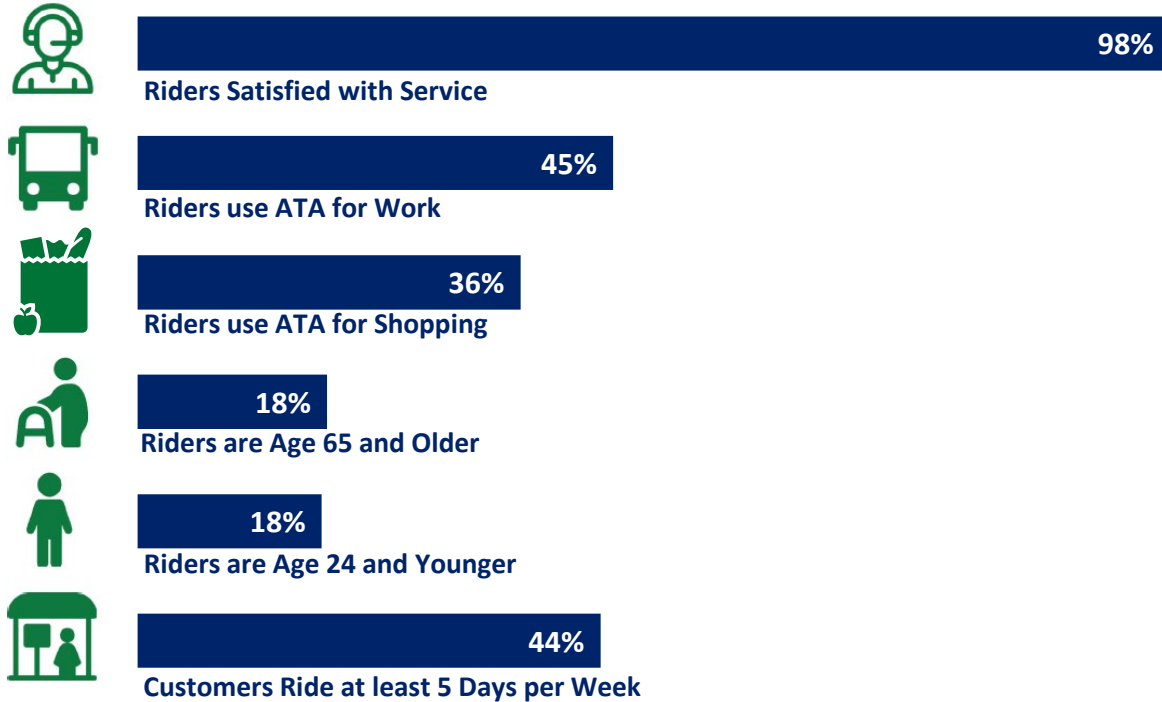


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AREA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY OF NORTH CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA (ATA) PERFORMANCE REVIEW EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



FIXED-ROUTE RIDER PROFILE

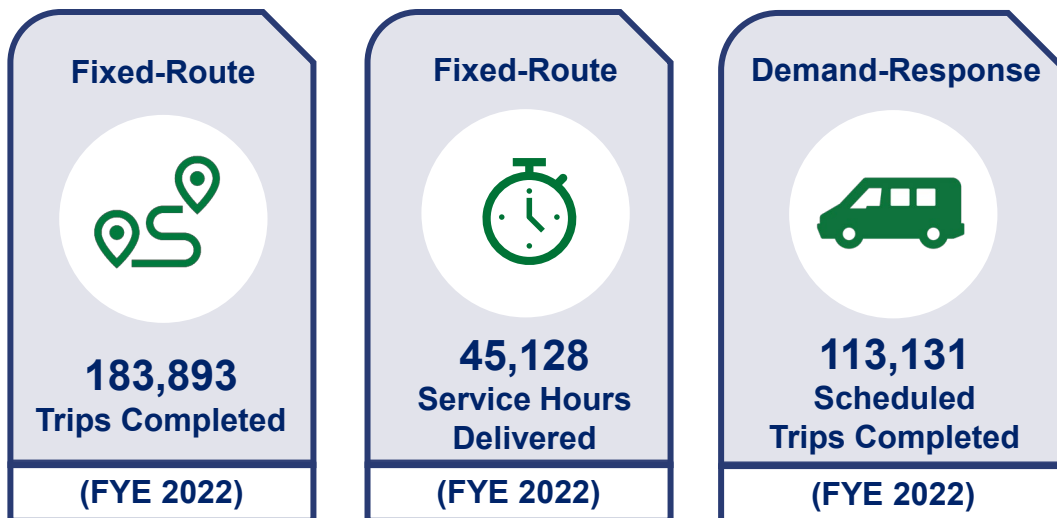


Source: 2022 ATA Customer Satisfaction Survey

COMMUNITY IMPACTS

SOCIAL

Mobility Benefits



Fixed-Route On-Time Performance Goal (FYE 2022)

Fixed-Route **90%**

Source: FYE 2022 dotGrants and Agency Reporting

COMMUNITY IMPACTS

ECONOMIC



\$4.0M

**Spent Doing Business
With Pennsylvania Vendors (FYE 2022)**







\$2.0m

Total Driver Wages Paid (FYE 2022)

Sources: FYE 2022 dotGrants and Agency Reporting

ACT 44 PERFORMANCE METRICS

	TARGET (2022)	ACTUAL (2022)	FUTURE (2028)
 INCREASE Passengers / RVH	6.08	4.07	4.77
 CONTAIN Operating Cost / RVH	\$81.49	\$103.53	\$127.88
 INCREASE Operating Revenue / RVH	\$9.39	\$12.29	\$14.27
 CONTAIN Operating Cost / Passenger	\$13.41	\$25.41	\$26.85

BEST PRACTICES

- Expanded public engagement to include individual surveys targeting ATA’s markets, including non-riders.
- Markets ATA services to seniors and the ADA community at exposition events
- Incorporated an accountability framework within the maintenance plan.
- Fostering interagency collaboration with human service agency representatives at its quarterly Regional Rural Transportation Advisory Committee (RRTAC) meetings.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Develop an implementable strategy to reclaim lost market share in medical trips.
- Conduct a market assessment of the available rental space on the second floor of the Punxsutawney bus terminal.
- Consider the long-term impacts of potential utility increases of the new DuBois facility when developing a sustainable operating budget.

ATA PERFORMANCE REVIEW EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Other Fixed-Route Performance Statistics	FYE 2019	FYE 2022
Operating Revenue / Operating Cost	13.2%	11.9%
Operating Cost / Total Vehicle-Hours	\$73.47	\$97.52
Operating Cost / Total Vehicle-Miles	\$5.03	\$7.21
Total Passengers / Total Vehicle-Hours	5.34	3.84
Operating Cost / RVM	\$5.31	\$7.32
RVM / Total Vehicle-Miles	94.7%	96.5%
RVH / Total Vehicle-Hours	98.8%	94.2%
Operating Subsidy / Passenger Trip	\$11.95	\$22.40
Farebox Recovery	11.9%	10.7%

Note: Does not include ADA Paratransit Operating Statistics

Fixed-Route Annual Operating Statistics	FYE 2019	FYE 2022
Vehicles in Maximum Service (VOMS)	25	28
Operating Cost	\$3,657,065	\$4,672,815
Operating Revenues	\$484,109	\$554,815
Operating Subsidies	\$3,172,956	\$4,120,027
Total (Actual) Vehicle-Miles	727,325	647,822
Revenue Vehicle-Miles (RVM)	688,556	638,100
Total Vehicle-Hours	49,778	47,912
Revenue Vehicle-Hours (RVH)	49,192	45,128
Total Passenger Trips	265,628	183,893
Senior Passenger Trips	45,226	38,224

Note: Does not include ADA Paratransit Operating Statistics



ATA Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) Fixed-Route Bus and Demand-Response Van at the Punxsutawney Bus Terminal

FLEET SNAPSHOT



104

**Total
Vehicles**

**Estimated Annual
Miles per Vehicle**



3 Large Heavy-Duty Buses 14,600



37 Small Heavy-Duty Buses 14,000

29 Light-Duty Buses 9,800



35 Vans 9,900

Source: 2023 Capital Planning Tool and FYE 2022 dotGrants Reporting

HIGH-LEVEL FINANCIAL INDICATORS

FYE 2019

92.7%

FYE 2022

109.2%



**Total Reserves /
Total Operating Expenses**

FYE 2019

\$1.64

FYE 2022

\$2.71



**Effective Fare (Total Fare
Revenue / Passenger Boardings)**

Source: dotGrants Reporting

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Preface

Pennsylvania law requires transit agency performance reviews and five-year performance targets to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service

COVID-19 disproportionately impacted transit-dependent populations

Transit agencies have navigated new requirements, higher costs, and shifting travel demand

A “new normal” for transit systems seems to be emerging, but uncertainty and volatility remain

PennDOT will reevaluate performance targets when the long-term impacts of the pandemic are known

Act 44 of 2007 and Act 89 of 2013 increased funding for public transportation in Pennsylvania. The laws also required transit agencies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery through increased ridership, revenue, and cost containment. PennDOT evaluates every fixed-route transit agency in the Commonwealth through a performance review at least once every five years to determine how well the agency satisfies these requirements. Act 44 also requires PennDOT to develop five-year performance targets for each agency as part of the performance review process.

Beginning in February 2020, COVID-19 caused significant social and economic disruptions as workplaces closed and people limited travel and gatherings to reduce the spread of the disease. The adverse impacts throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania were profound. The health and unemployment effects of COVID-19 disproportionately impacted senior, disabled, and low-income populations. These individuals also rely heavily on public transportation to meet their essential travel needs.

The impacts of COVID-19 on the public transportation industry were also severe. Ridership decreased by more than 90 percent at some agencies during April 2020. Revenues dropped as agencies opted to waive fares to limit bus driver interactions and possible disease transmission from the handling of tickets and currency. Agencies increased the frequency and extent of bus cleaning, which increased operating costs. Some agencies furloughed drivers as they reduced service in response to plummeting passenger demand.

By late Summer 2020, transit agencies had begun to stabilize from the initial impacts of COVID-19, only to have statewide infection rates soar in the fall and winter. As COVID-19 lingered and mutated for more than three years, its impact on travel patterns became less severe, but its influence never fully subsided. As of early 2023, post-pandemic travel patterns have begun to emerge and stabilize, but the long-term effects of the pandemic on transit remain unknown.

Many of the ridership, revenue, and operating cost trends used to develop this transit performance review report, including five-year performance targets, rely on information that predates the pandemic. PennDOT will continue to monitor the impacts of COVID-19 and reassess the transit agency's five-year performance targets when the long-term effects of the pandemic are known. If the performance targets are revised, they will be published as an addendum to this report.

Introduction

Purpose

Act 44 requires local transportation organizations that receive state operating assistance to participate in periodic reviews to assess agency performance. PennDOT established a framework for conducting performance reviews with local transportation organizations to:

- Assess efficiency and effectiveness of service, financial stability, and general management/business practices;
- Agree to five-year targets for Act 44-mandated performance criteria;
- Assist agencies in developing an action plan which addresses opportunities for improvement and ways to achieve performance targets;
- Provide technical assistance to implement the plan at the request of the transportation organization; and
- Reassess each organization on a five-year cycle.

The reassessment at the end of each five-year cycle is to evaluate:

- Whether the organization met the agreed-upon performance targets; and
- The sufficiency and effectiveness of actions taken by the organization to improve performance and management practices to meet performance targets.

This report presents the Area Transportation Authority of North Central Pennsylvania (ATA) review, conducted on August 9, 2023.

Performance Review Process Steps

The performance review process is a collaborative effort between the transit agency and PennDOT.

As shown in **Exhibit 1**, the performance review process assesses ATA's unique challenges and changes since the previous performance review, the accuracy and reliability of reported data, implemented practices, additional opportunities for improvement, and realistic targets to attain before the next review.

Exhibit 1. Performance Review Process Steps

Key to Responsibilities: **PennDOT** **PennDOT + Transit Agency** **Transit Agency**

1.	Notify agency of performance review schedule and request supporting documents.
2.	Review available data and request additional information.
3.	Agree upon a set of peer agencies for comparison.
4.	Review the most recent customer satisfaction survey.
5.	Assess Act 44 variables, including current performance, targets from the previous review, and Action Plan implementation.
6.	Conduct Act 44 performance criteria analysis.
7.	Interview agency management, staff, and governing body.
8.	Perform supplementary data collection and reconciliation.
9.	Evaluate performance, financial management, and operations.
10.	Report results and determine agency compliance with performance requirements.
11.	Develop the performance report.
12.	Develop, implement, and monitor a five-year Action Plan.
13.	Provide technical assistance, if required, to help meet five-year performance targets.

Agency Overview

The Area Transportation Authority of North Central Pennsylvania (ATA) is a seven-county rural transportation authority that provides fixed-route bus service, paratransit service¹, and vanpool service. (**Exhibit 2**). ATA was officially incorporated in 1976 as the first regional, rural public transportation authority in the United States. The Authority is governed by an eleven-member Board of Directors. The members are appointed by the County Commissioners of the original six incorporating counties², and the number of appointees for each county is based on population. ATA has regional transit service in Cameron, Clearfield, Elk, Jefferson, McKean, and Potter. Transit service in Clarion County consists of a Pennsylvania Western University Clarion Campus Loop and a Clarion Area Transit Mall Loop (**Exhibit 3**).

ATA offers 22 fixed routes that generally circulate within one community or provide inter-community mobility. The fixed-route system allows flag stops, and fares are based on a zonal system. Currently, ATA operates eight deviated fixed routes. Deviated fixed routes deviate up to a quarter mile from the regularly scheduled route. Riders must call ahead of time to request a deviation.

Exhibit 2. ATA Fixed-Route buses at the Punxsutawney Transit Center



ATA has two distinct brands of paratransit service, Call-A-Bus (CAB) and Countywide Service (CWS). CWS provides shared-ride bus service to the entire county, while CAB shared-ride service is restricted to smaller service areas. The limited-service area for CAB rides allows for lower fares. Both brands require ride reservations at least one day prior to the trip. ATA offers qualifying medical trips through Pennsylvania's Department of Human Services (DHS) under the Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP) program.³ These medical trips alongside other qualifying demand-response paratransit programs are provided through CAB and

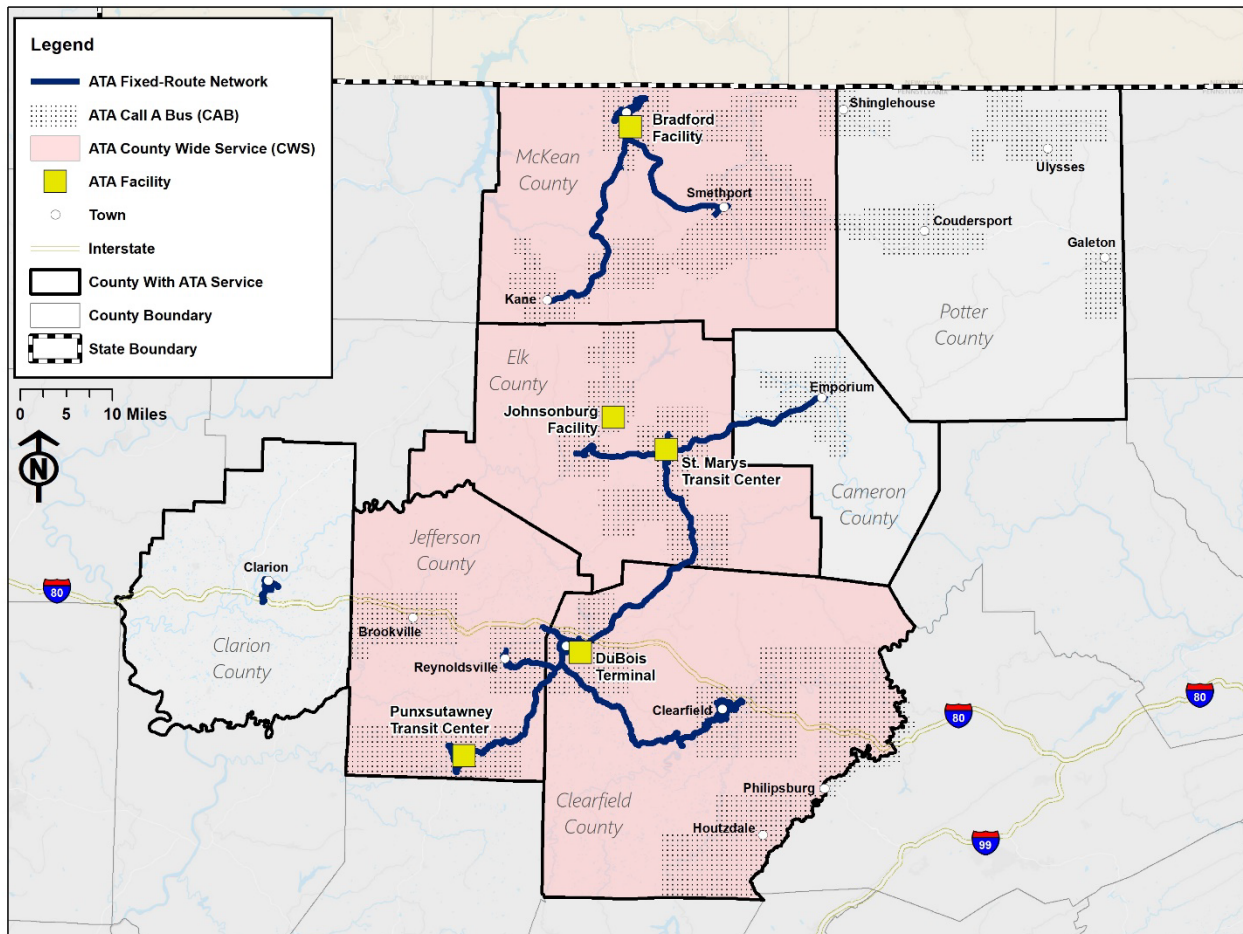
¹ ATA has two distinct brands of paratransit service, Call-A-Bus (CAB) and Countywide Service (CWS).

² Cameron County, Clearfield County, Elk County, Jefferson County, McKean County, and Potter County.

³ MATP is available in Cameron, Elk, and McKean counties.

Countywide service, and reported as Department Approved Service (DAS)⁴ in dotGrants. ATA also sponsors vanpool formation through the Vanpool Advantage Network. Groups of seven to twelve people can form their own vanpool groups, with ATA providing support.

Exhibit 3. ATA System Map



In Fiscal Year 2022 (FYE), ATA had 28 fixed-route vehicles operating in maximum service and provided 183,893 total fixed-route passenger trips. In FYE 2022, ATA operated 36 vehicles in maximum service for its demand response paratransit service and delivered a total of 113,131 demand response passenger trips. ATA's vanpool program operated with three vans in maximum service and provided 814 total passenger trips in FYE 2022.

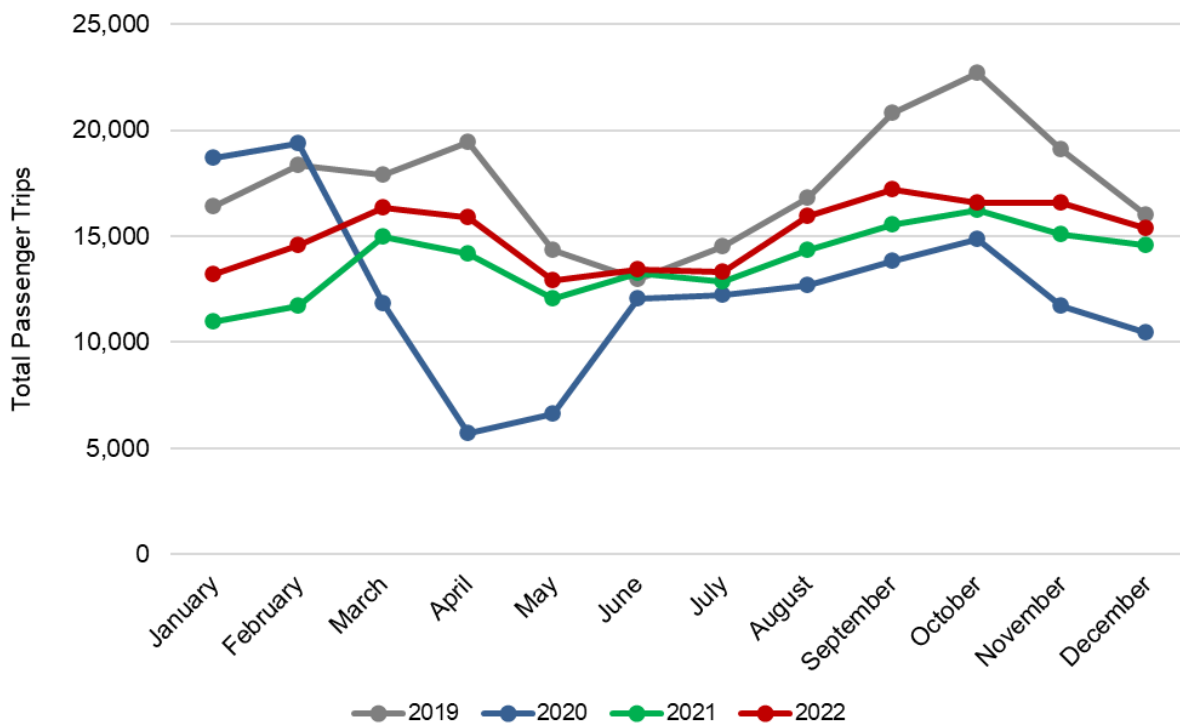
ATA also provides transportation for some MATP trips outside of its published shared-ride operating hours and service areas. DHS sponsors these MATP trips. Because these trips are not available to the public, PennDOT requires these agencies to report these trips, costs, and

⁴ Department-approved service for the purposes of reporting demand-response transportation services under various reimbursable shared-ride programs (e.g., Lottery, Area Agency on Aging (AAA), Persons with Disabilities (PWD), etc.).

revenues as non-public transportation. ATA provided 14,170 non-public transportation trips in FYE 2022.

Like most transit systems nationally and across Pennsylvania, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted ATA's ridership beginning in March 2020. Monthly fixed-route ridership began to stabilize at the end of 2021 but remained below pre-pandemic levels in 2022 ([Exhibit 4](#)).

Exhibit 4. Monthly Fixed-Route Ridership, 2019 – 2022



Community Impacts

Public transportation is a vital service to the community. It provides mobility options and increases access to jobs, medical facilities, food stores, schools, and other economic destinations.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the critical nature of public transportation to individuals and their communities. Essential workers and those most reliant on public transportation services continued to ride throughout the pandemic while many former commuters and individuals in professional service jobs continued remote work and did not use the service as frequently as pre-pandemic.

One of the most significant impacts the COVID-19 pandemic had on ATA was closure of senior centers and other activity-driving senior destinations and in-person classes for Clarion University. With pandemic restrictions lifted by 2022, fixed-route ridership rebounded to 69 percent of pre-pandemic levels and demand-response services are at 71 percent. However, ATA highlighted challenges in matching the changing needs of its manufacturing-based workforce trips, citing shorter shifts and more shift blocks outside of traditional peak periods.

Customer Satisfaction Survey

Between 2022 and 2023, ATA surveyed fixed-route (404 responses), shared-ride (375 responses) customers, and non-riders (284 responses). Survey efforts were part of outreach efforts for ATA's Transit Development Plan (TDP). Nearly all (98 percent) fixed-route customers were satisfied with fixed-route bus service, with almost two-thirds (64 percent) very satisfied. On-time performance ranked high, with 92 percent satisfied. ATA scored high with frequency of weekday service at 89 percent satisfaction; however, only 63 percent were satisfied with the current reduced weekend service schedule that was implemented following the COVID-19 pandemic. Fixed-route survey respondents indicated that 45 percent of their trips were for work, 36 percent for shopping, with the remaining 19 percent split between higher education, medical appointments, and social/recreational uses. Respondents indicated that 83 percent will continue to ride ATA and 82 percent would recommend ATA to others. ATA deployed a survey in each of its service area counties. Clearfield County had the highest response rate at 45 percent of the survey followed by McKean County (34 percent), Clarion County (13 percent), and Jefferson County (four percent).

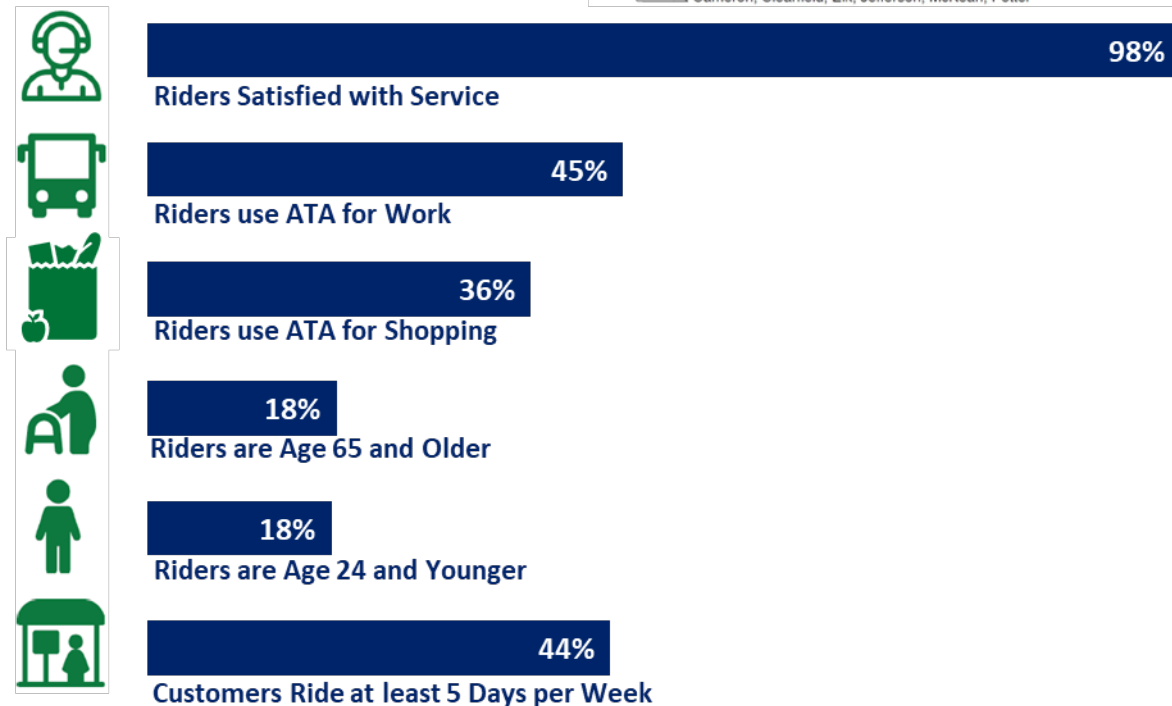
The shared-ride survey respondents indicated that 92 percent believe their fare was adequate, and that 58 percent could afford to pay an additional \$0.25 while 25 percent could pay \$0.50 more. Medical trips were the greatest demand for shared-ride service with 28 percent of booked travel, followed by shopping (22 percent), social/recreational (20 percent), school K-12 (20 percent), and work (ten percent). Most respondents (82 percent) stated they would definitely continue to ride ATA, while 16 percent responded they would likely continue riding ATA.

The non-rider survey revealed that despite most respondents (79 percent) indicating they never have ridden public transportation, a quarter of respondents (25 percent) had a very favorable impression of ATA, and 32 percent had a somewhat favorable impression. The highest reason for not choosing ATA was a preference to drive oneself (70 percent), followed by no service availability in their area (22 percent), low frequency (20 percent), unsure how to use ATA (15 percent), and bus stops were too far (15 percent). Nearly half of the respondents (40 percent) indicated that social media was the best way to inform the public about ATA services.

ATA Fixed-Route Rider Profile

The fixed-route customer satisfaction survey provides insight into rider characteristics and customer preferences, contributing to a high-level fixed-route rider profile. (**Exhibit 5**). Respondents from the fixed-route survey indicated that 44 percent of respondents frequently use ATA rides at least five days per week, and 56 percent use the service because they do not have alternate transportation. Those 24 years old or younger comprise 18% of total respondent ridership, and those aged 65 and older comprise 18 percent. Many of ATA's customers have continued to ride since the COVID-19 pandemic, with 58% of respondents riding ATA throughout the last three years. Fixed-route bus is an essential service for many riders who rely on ATA for their daily transportation needs for work, shopping, and medical appointments.

Exhibit 5. Fixed-Route Rider Profile



Source: 2023 ATA Fixed-Route Customer Satisfaction Survey

Economic and Social Impacts

ATA benefits the local economy and the communities it serves through the expenditure of public funds and fare revenue, supporting jobs in transit operations, and by purchasing services and goods ([Exhibit 6](#)).

In FYE 2022, ATA's procurement of goods and services infused \$4.0 million into the Pennsylvania economy. ATA invested \$3.9 million in total wages: \$1.9 million for operators, \$586,743 for other operations staff, \$605,516 for maintenance personnel, and \$846,957 for

general administration staff. ATA employs 86 drivers, approximately 81 percent of its pre-pandemic driver pool of 100 to 105.

ATA provided 183,893 fixed-route bus trips and 113,131 paratransit trips in FYE 2022.

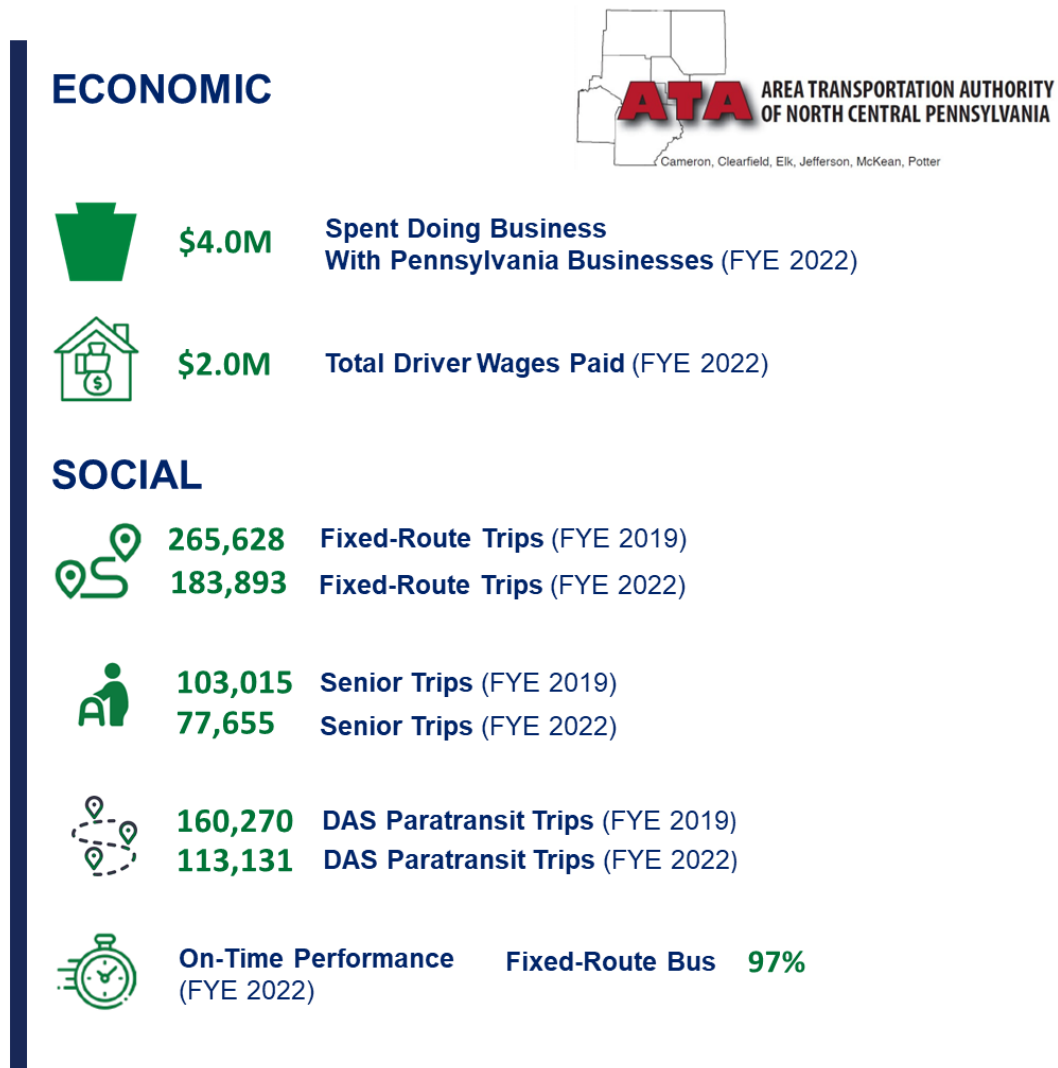
Total post-pandemic ridership on fixed-route service is approximately 69% percent of pre-COVID levels. ATA provided 183,893 total passenger trips in FYE 2022 compared to 265,628 total trips in FYE 2019. Senior ridership increased after pandemic lows and currently stands at 75 percent of pre-

Coronavirus levels. ATA provided 77,655 senior fixed route trips in FYE 2022, compared to 103,015 in FYE 2019.

On July 1, 2021, ATA implemented Fixed-Route Intelligent Transportation Systems (FRITS) to enable the Authority to have real-time bus tracking and monitor on-time performance. ATA has a fixed-route goal of 90 percent on-time performance. In FYE 2023, on-time performance was 54 percent across all routes. ATA management discussed how the Authority was addressing issues in time point placement and identified a need for additional driver training to ensure accuracy and quality of its data reported in the FRITS system.

In FYE 2022, ATA provided 113,131 total paratransit trips between CAB and CWS and reclaimed 71 percent of its 2019 pre-pandemic ridership (160,270 trips). Under the shared-ride program, ATA carried 39,431 senior Lottery-funded trips, 51,890 MATP trips, and 21,810 PwD trips. ATA's vanpool program had 814 trips in FYE 2022.

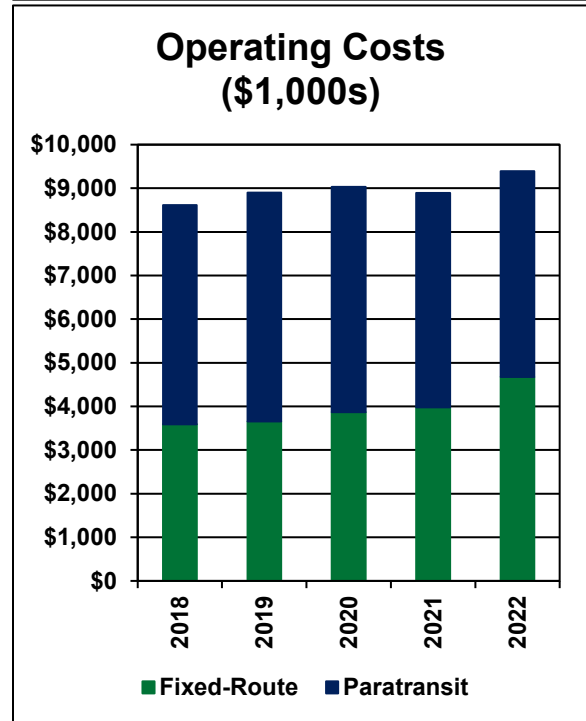
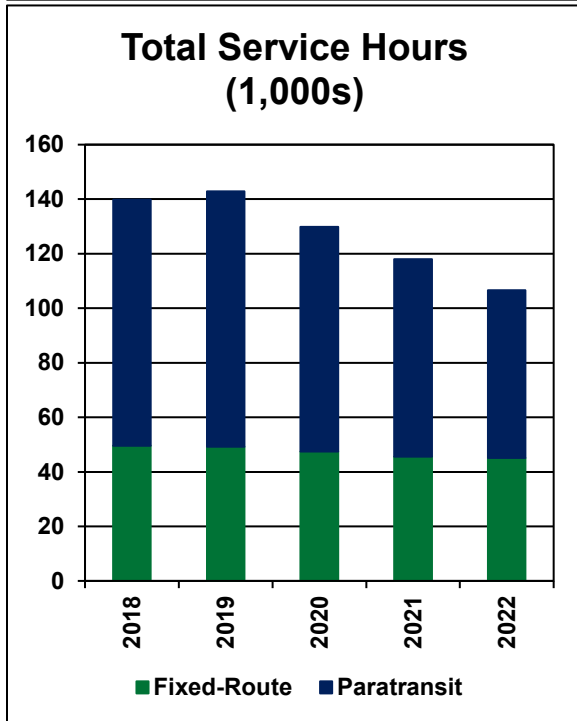
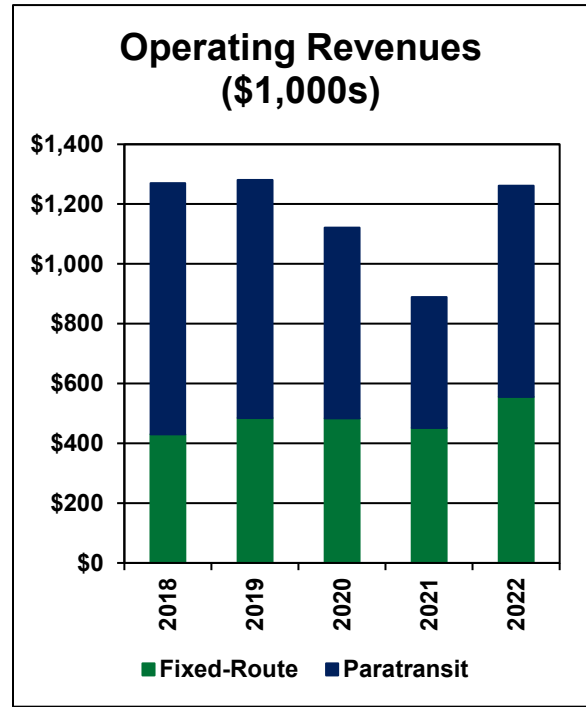
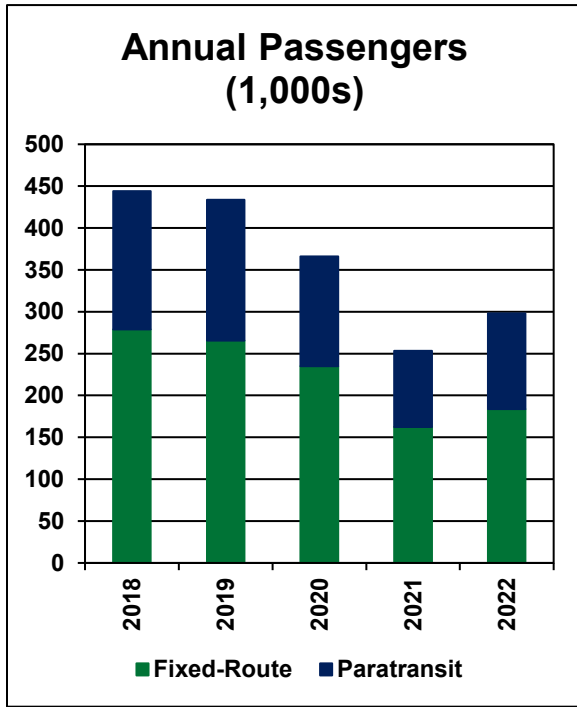
Exhibit 6. Economic and Social Measures



Source: FYE 2022 dotGrants and agency reporting values.

Agency Trends

Annual Operating Statistics



Note: **Appendix A: Data Reconciliation** on page 24 provides reconciled values between dotGrants and the National Transit Database (NTD).

Financial Health

Transit agencies in good financial health typically have diverse revenue streams, build sufficient operating reserves, and prioritize long-term financial sustainability. ATA operated with a balanced budget during FYE 2022. Total transportation services cost approximately \$10.5 million to operate. ATA earned approximately \$2.5 million in revenues and required roughly \$8.1 million in subsidies to offset operating deficits (**Exhibit 7**).

Exhibit 7. FYE 2022 Operating Budget Summary

FYE 2022	Fixed-Route	DAS	Vanpool	Non-Public	Total
Total Operating Expenses	\$4,672,325	\$4,713,659	\$7,512	\$1,235,221	\$10,628,717
Total Revenue	\$554,815	\$703,649	\$3,190	\$1,234,319	\$2,495,973
Total Federal Subsidies	\$2,300,000	\$2,295,678	\$4,322	N/A	\$4,600,000
Total State Subsidies	\$1,616,721	\$1,547,369	\$0	N/A	\$3,164,090
Total Local Subsidies	\$203,306	\$166,963	\$0	N/A	\$370,269

High-Level Financial Indicators

As shown in **Exhibit 8**, ATA had carryover subsidies (cash reserves) equal to 90.3 percent of its total annual operating costs at the end of the Fiscal Year 2022. These cash reserves are attributable to an influx of federal COVID relief funds for operating expenses, which enabled the authority to build its state operating reserves from \$2.5 million in FYE 2019 to \$7.4 million as of FYE 2022.

ATA has one operating line of credit of \$390,000 line available for short-term use to maintain sufficient cash flow. As of FYE 2022, there was no open balance on the line of credit and there were negligible amounts in accounts payable and accounts receivable over 90 days.

Passenger fares recovered 9.9 percent of fixed-route operating expenses.

Before the pandemic, ATA had a farebox recovery ratio of 11.9 percent. In FYE 2022, farebox recovery decreased to 10.7 percent. The last fixed route fare increase was in 2008 in the amount of \$.25, from \$1.00 to \$1.25.

ATA's fixed-route operating subsidy per passenger trip was \$16.52 in FYE 2021. The operating subsidy per urban passenger trip nearly

doubled from \$9.66 in FYE 2019, the last fiscal year before the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on ridership, revenues, and operating costs. The increase in federal subsidies offset enabled ATA to cover inflationary increases and build a large reserve.

Exhibit 8. High-Level Financial Indicators

Indicator	Value		Assessment Criteria / Rationale	Source
	FYE 2019	FYE 2022		
Total Reserves / Annual Operating Cost	38.0%	90.3%	A combined target of 25%+ provides liquidity to cover unexpected cost increases or service changes without incurring interest fees from loans.	FYE 2019 Audit FYE 2022 Audit
Credit Available / Annual Payroll	0.0%		Only necessary if combined carryover subsidies are less than 25% of annual operating costs. This ensures that the agency maintains sufficient cash flow and liquidity to pay all current bills.	FYE 2022 Audit and PennDOT dotGrants
Accounts Payable (AP) 90+ days	0.0%		Target should be 0% over 90 days. Larger values indicate cash flow concerns.	November 2022 agency reported value
Accounts Receivable (AR) 90+ days	0.0%		Target should be 0% over 90 days. Larger values can cause cash flow problems.	November 2022 agency reported value
Debt / Annual Operating Cost	0.0%		Target should be 0%. Low debt amounts reduce interest expense.	FYE 2022 Audit
Farebox Recovery	FYE 2019	FYE 2022	Typically, the target should be 12%-15% or higher. The drop in ridership associated with the COVID-19 pandemic significantly reduced farebox recovery.	FYE 2019 Audit, FYE 2022 Audit, and PennDOT dotGrants
	11.9%	10.7%		
Effective Average Fare	\$1.64	\$2.71	Total fare revenue / total passengers. Effective fare calculates the actual value of fares per passenger trip and is an indicator of when fares might need adjustment to offset increases in operating costs.	FYE 2019 Audit, FYE 2022 Audit, and PennDOT dotGrants
Operating Subsidy per Passenger Trip	\$11.95	\$22.39	Indicates the subsidy requirement to offset operating losses per passenger trip.	FYE 2019 Audit, FYE 2022 Audit, and PennDOT dotGrants

Safety

Industry practices dictate a holistic approach to safety that includes the principles of Safety Management Systems (SMS). At this time, ATA is not required to develop a Federal Transportation Administration (FTA)-compliant Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP).

ATA established a Risk Management Committee to coordinate operations, maintenance, human resources, and other department leaders to implement the Authority's Risk Management

Program. Aspects include identifying potential risks, response protocol, and safety and risk management training.

ATA is an active member of the State Association for Transportation Insurance (SAFTI), a statewide transit industry insurance pool that provides workers compensation and protection. ATA participates in SAFTI online training programs like defeating distracted driving, accidents & emergencies, fatigue awareness, and disability awareness, and conducts in-classroom training for drivers.

Capital Asset Management

PennDOT verifies asset conditions by reviewing Capital Planning Tool (CPT) records and interviewing transit agency management, operations, and maintenance staff. Transit Asset Management (TAM) is a systematic process that allows agencies to track assets, forecast asset conditions, and plan for asset maintenance or replacement. This Federal Transit Administration (FTA)-required process accounts for the entire life cycle of a capital asset (e.g., facilities, equipment, rolling stock, and infrastructure) used for public transportation, from procurement through operations and maintenance to disposal. A critical element of the TAM process is the inventorying and assessment of asset conditions.

Detailed inventories of the fleet and other capital assets indicate when assets should be scheduled for replacement. This process is key for efficient coordination with local funding contributors. PennDOT recognizes a revenue vehicle asset as eligible for replacement when it reaches its useful life in years and miles. The estimated service life (ESL) for a vehicle depends on its size, fuel type, and seating capacity:

- Large, heavy-duty bus ESL is 500,000 miles and 12 years;
- Small, heavy-duty bus ESL is 350,000 miles and 10 years;
- Medium-duty bus ESL is 350,000 miles and 10 years;
- Light-duty bus ESL is 150,000 miles and five years; and
- Van ESL is 100,000 miles and four years.

As of January 2024, ATA had a fleet of 104 total vehicles in service. The fleet consists of large and small heavy-duty buses, light-duty buses, and vans. As shown in (**Exhibit 9**):

- Large, heavy-duty buses accrued an average of 14,600 annual miles;
- Small, heavy-duty buses accrued an average of 14,000 annual miles;
- Light-duty buses accrued an average of 9,800 annual miles; and,
- Vans accrued an average of 9,900 annual miles.

Exhibit 9. January 2024 Fleet Utilization Snapshot

Vehicle Type	Fleet	Average Age	ESL Requirements		Annual Miles	
			Years	Miles	2024 Estimate	ESL
Large, Heavy-Duty Bus	3	15	12	500,000	14,600	42,000
Small, Heavy-Duty Bus	37	15	10	350,000	14,000	35,000
Light-Duty Bus	29	7	5	150,000	9,800	30,000
Van	35	6	4	100,000	9,900	25,000

Source: PennDOT Capital Planning Tool (CPT)

Based on current odometer readings and estimated yearly mileage, ATA's fleet utilization requires that vehicles remain in service longer than the estimated service life in years.

In June 2020, PennDOT conducted a useful life bus optimization study to identify options that would assist ATA in better aligning the age and mileage of its vehicles while continuing to meet passenger demand and provide adequate spare coverage. At the time, ATA's spare ratio coverage was 36 percent, which is higher than FTA's standard of 20 percent.

The useful life bus optimization study recognized that for ATA, there are additional factors that impact the availability of an ideal vehicle type and vehicle placement strategy—procurement, breakdown response coverage, passenger comfort and deadhead:

1. There are limited vehicle choices available under the current COSTARS purchasing program. As a result, ATA continued to buy large buses, despite low max hourly passenger boardings on many regular service routes.
2. ATA received an FTA Buy-America waiver in the mid-2000s that permitted ATA to purchase Sprinter vans for fixed-route and demand-response service. As of 2024, ATA retired these vehicles.
3. The Authority developed a network of 23 storage locations to ensure a 30-minute response time for road calls and to control for deadhead across its rural service area of 5,091 square miles.

ATA's practices contribute to its 36 percent spare vehicle ratio, with a 92 percent spare coverage for fixed-route service and only 11 percent coverage for demand-response services. The optimization study assessed vehicle storage capacity, fleet utilization, and passenger demand to identify options for ATA to optimize its fleet to meet useful life:

1. ATA could maintain existing fixed-route VOMS with 13 fewer buses. Optimization would reduce the bus fleet from 42 vehicles to 29 total vehicles, consisting of 17 buses available for service and 12 buses available as spare vehicles.
2. Transitioning from buses to BOCs would help maximize existing utilization by lowering the useful life benchmark from 500,000 miles/14 years to 150,000 miles/10 years. ATA would use three more BOCs to meet existing fixed-route VOMS.
3. Optimization would reduce the total number of spares by eight vehicles, thus reducing the fleet spare ratio from 36 percent to 26 percent for 68 total VOMS.
4. Optimization would reduce the number of spare buses kept at JM Leasing and the Fullington Autobus Company (FABCO) garage by one bus each.
5. Establishing a light maintenance facility with vehicle storage in Emporium or Cloudersport would improve road-call response time to remote parts of Cameron and Potter counties.

Act 44 Performance Review Findings

Prior Performance Reviews

On prior performance reviews, ATA set goals to increase fixed-route ridership and revenues and contain growth in operating costs. Specifically, ATA accomplished the following as part of prior action plans:

- Updated the marketing plan to include targeted goals and activities tied to ATA operations divisions and services.
- Inventoried fixed routes with an updated analysis of their operating environments, ridership levels, stop locations and times, demographic changes, riders' preferences, and shifts in commercial and industrial sites.
- Executed a four-year lease agreement for a tenant in the St. Mary's facility and leased out available space at the Punxsutawney facility.
- Implemented Ecolane and MyAvail Fixed-Route Intelligent Transportation System (FRITS) and developed a reporting by vehicle type to meet ATA's farebox reconciliation needs.
- Developed a targeted recruitment strategy to fill key management positions.
- Increased security by installing onboard vehicle cameras on fixed-route and demand-response fleets.
- Implemented a new asset tracking system as part of its maintenance software that provides an internal framework for asset replacement schedules.

Current Performance Assessment and Findings

The current performance assessment reviews the agency's progress in achieving its five-year performance goals and identifies additional steps to improve performance. The 2019 performance report established performance targets for the fiscal year ending on June 30, 2022, based on the following annual goals (**Exhibit 10**).

- Increase passengers per revenue vehicle-hour by 2.0 percent per year;
- Increase operating revenue per revenue vehicle-hour 2.0 percent per year;
- Contain growth in operating costs per revenue vehicle-hour to 3.0 percent per year; and
- Contain growth in operating cost per passenger to 1.0 percent per year.

Exhibit 10. FYE 2022 Performance Assessment

Act 44 Performance Metrics	Annual Performance Goals	Performance Assessment	
		FYE 2022 Targets	FYE 2022 Actual
Passengers / RVH	2.00%	6.08	4.07
Operating Revenue / RVH	2.00%	\$9.39	\$12.29
Operating Cost / RVH	3.00%	\$81.49	\$103.53
Operating Cost / Passenger	1.00%	\$13.41	\$25.41

In addition to completing the 2018 Action Plan, steps ATA took to improve agency performance included:

- Implemented the Authority's first Transit Development Plan (TDP) to help reimagine services after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Conducted several surveys for rider preferences, customer satisfaction, and non-riders as part of the TDP process to gauge overall public opinion and perception of ATA services.
- Started construction of a major capital facility project for the ATA Dubois Southern Division to improve maintenance capacity and provide indoor vehicle storage.
- Initiated additional capital facility projects for a passenger transfer center in Bradford and light facilities for vehicle storage in Emporium and Coudersport to improve road call response time in Cameron and Potter counties.

The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting changes in travel behavior adversely impacted ATA's ability to achieve its 2021 performance targets. Ridership and revenue decreased significantly from March 2020 through 2021, while costs increased due to COVID mitigation measures (e.g., additional cleaning of vehicles, facilities, equipment, etc.). ATA successfully met its five-year performance target for operating revenue per revenue vehicle-hour.

Future Performance Goals

Background

Act 44 requires that PennDOT and transit agencies establish five-year performance targets for each of the four Act 44 metrics for fixed-route service:

- Passengers per Revenue Vehicle-Hour
- Operating Cost per Revenue Vehicle-Hour
- Operating Revenue per Revenue Vehicle-Hour
- Operating Cost per Passenger

Setting performance targets for these metrics and regularly reevaluating performance is intended to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery. To keep pace with increases in operating costs, Act 89 requires agencies to maintain a policy for adjusting fares for inflation. ATA measures the price of its base fare against the federal inflation rate since it last raised its base fare to determine if an increase is warranted. ATA last increased its base fixed-route fare in 2008 from \$1.00 to \$1.25. ATA's fare policy also considers additional factors like the economic conditions of its service area and the overall impact on ridership. ATA is considering a potential \$0.25 fare increase as ridership begins to stabilize following the COVID-19 pandemic and the Authority evaluates which TDP recommendations to implement.

ATA Goals for FYE 2028

PennDOT based ATA's future-year performance targets on the most recent audited financial year (FYE 2023). Over the next five years, ATA must work to achieve the targets shown in **Exhibit 11** to ensure continued eligibility for full Section 1513 funding.

Exhibit 11. FYE 2028 Performance Goals

Performance Criteria	FYE 2023 Observed	FYE 2028 Goal	Target Annual Increase
Passengers / RVH	4.32	4.77	2.00%
Operating Revenue / RVH	\$12.31	\$14.27	3.00%
Operating Cost / RVH	\$110.31	\$127.88	3.00%
Operating Cost / Passenger	\$25.55	\$26.85	1.00%

PennDOT will continue to monitor the impacts of COVID-19 and reassess the transit agency's five-year performance targets when the long-term effects of the pandemic become known. If the performance targets are revised, they will be published as a supplement to this report.

Functional Review

Identifying Opportunities for Improvement and Best Practices

Functional reviews catalog best practices to share with other transit agencies and identify opportunities for improvement that should be addressed in the Action Plan. The performance review process includes assessing agency operations, management, and governance. PennDOT analyzes agency policies, programs, practices, and peer statistical comparisons to identify areas for review. The document review and peer comparison inform the performance discussion with agency leadership and staff. The outcome of the functional review is a collection of best practices potentially applicable to other Pennsylvania transit agencies and a list of opportunities for retaining and promoting ridership, ensuring long-term financial sustainability, and other opportunities for improvement.

A recommended Action Plan template is found in **Appendix B: Action Plan Template** on page 26 and the determinations and findings of the Act 44 peer review are found in **Appendix C: Act 44 Peer Comparison Analysis** on page 28.

Retain and Promote Ridership

Service must be responsive to community needs to achieve optimum service levels. Before the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on ridership, transit systems nationwide faced lower ridership as gas prices fell and ridesharing companies competed with fixed-route systems. The rise in work-from-home practices, which increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic, adversely impacted commuter and discretionary travel demand. As transit agencies work to restore ridership to pre-pandemic levels, actions that focus on raising the awareness of service, enhancing the customer experience, and improving service efficiency help retain and attract ridership.

Best Practices

1. **Expanded public engagement to include individual surveys targeting ATA's markets, including non-riders.** ATA launched this multi-survey effort as part of public outreach for the Authority's first Transit Development Plan (TDP).
2. **Markets ATA services to seniors and the ADA community at exposition events.** ATA has successfully used these events to directly interact with potential customers and sign-up attendees for applicable rider programs.

Opportunities for Improvement

1. **Provide refresher training for FRITS systems to drivers.** ATA's initial on-time performance reports showed varying results with some routes reporting over 60 percent of trips early and others reporting over 20 percent trips late. Management indicated that the varying results could be addressed with increased training for operators.

2. **Incorporate systemwide route performance as part of monthly Board updates.** ATA recently implemented FRITS and developed a customized report to integrate data from FRITS and Ecolane to monitor systemwide performance. By tracking system-level information, ATA can monitor its post-pandemic recovery as the Authority begins to implement route changes recommended by its TDP.
3. **Develop an implementable strategy to reclaim lost market share in medical trips.** ATA's service area is experiencing a regionalization of medical facilities to centrally located hospitals, with some services reallocating to New York State on the northern tier and to DuBois in the southern tier. This regionalization has significantly reduced demand for many of the smaller medical trips ATA provides. In 2021, a same-day, on-demand medical trip pilot service was launched within ATA's service area through a partnership with one of the hospitals and the regional planning organization. ATA should develop an implementable ridership growth strategy for medical trips that:
 - Leverages its expertise as a longstanding rural transportation provider;
 - Solidifies strategic relationships with key community partners like hospitals, human services agencies, and regional planning organizations; and,
 - Identifies the appropriate service delivery model to sustainably compete for medical trips amid hospital regionalization efforts.

Ensure Long-Term Financial Sustainability

Sound financial management is critical to ensuring the viability of transit services. Agencies often undertake multiple major expenditures on limited budgets. This includes funding major capital facility projects, fleet replacement, and funding recurring costs, including operations and maintenance, annual fringe benefits, fuel, utilities, and cleaning. Steps to ensure long-term financial sustainability include improving farebox recovery, diversifying revenue streams, right-sizing service to resources, and implementing cost-control measures.

Best Practices

1. **Incorporated an accountability framework within the maintenance plan.** The plan sets goals leading to the long-term sustainability of assets for the maintenance department and lists the objectives that must be completed to achieve these goals.

Opportunities for Improvement

1. **Conduct a market assessment of the available rental space on the second floor of the Punxsutawney bus terminal.** Currently, the bottom half of the facility is leased. However, the unfinished second floor remains vacant. ATA could consider building the cost to finish the space's interior into the lease price and pursue lease tenants. By incorporating the build-out cost into the lease agreement, prospective tenants would have the flexibility to customize the space more readily and ATA would save on potentially costly accommodations.
2. **Consider the long-term impacts of potential utility increases of the new DuBois facility when developing a sustainable operating budget.** The new capital facility will be the main maintenance and indoor storage location for the ATA Southern Division. Since the building will have significantly larger square footage compared to the previous

building and include new features like indoor storage and more administrative space, ATA should anticipate an increase in baseline utility costs.

3. **Ensure changes in service levels are integrated sustainably into future operating budgets.** ATA completed its first TDP following the COVID-19 pandemic, which suspended 20 of the Authority's fixed routes. Demand-response services have rebounded faster than fixed-route and deviated fixed-route services. ATA should consider the impact of implementing fixed-route new services and increased service levels recommended by the TDP on the Authority's long-term financial outlook to ensure sustainable cost containment.
4. **Continue evaluating opportunities to optimize the fleet to meet estimated service life replacement in years and miles.** ATA began new capital facility projects after its useful life bus optimization study was conducted in 2020. At the time of the study, ATA maintained several spare vehicles at varying locations across its five-county service area. Improved indoor storage at DuBois and new storage facilities in Coudersport and Emporium present an opportunity to reduce spares in remote and unsecured locations. Reducing the overall number of spares would increase the utilization of the existing fleet.

Identify Other Opportunities to Improve Performance

There are additional opportunities to enhance agency performance. Actions that prioritize Board education, strategic planning, workforce management, and partner agency collaboration improve overall agency functions. Actions that target organizational improvement promote efficient and transparent administration. Advocacy with stakeholders and funding partners on behalf of the agency builds stronger community ties. Goal-oriented actions help inform Management and the Board's decision-making process to inform investment decisions when pursuing significant capital investments and new information technologies.

Best Practices

1. **Fostering interagency collaboration with human service agency representatives at its quarterly Regional Rural Transportation Advisory Committee (RRTAC) meetings.** This Committee includes ATA management, human services group officials, and other transportation providers. ATA is able to market new services and teach agency representatives how to sign up for services, who then disperse this information to their clients.

Opportunities for Improvement

1. **Determine whether there are opportunities to improve the user interface on the ATA website** to ensure that the average user can easily navigate and find the information needed on ATA's various services.
2. **Develop workforce development strategies to attract quality candidates and retain ATA staff in operations and administration positions.** Given ATA's rural location, it would benefit the Authority to incorporate workforce development as part of its employee recruitment and retention efforts to ensure ATA maintains sufficient staffing levels. Especially if there is competition with the private sector for many of the skill-based

professional services like management, finance, IT, and technical positions in operations and maintenance.

Appendix A: Data Reconciliation

The performance review process reconciles NTD data to audited, agency-reported dotGrants legacy budgets to ensure the data presented in this report are consistent and accurate. Certified audits, financial statements, and other agency-generated reports are examined to identify discrepancies in financial and operating statistics. Any discrepancies discovered are verified and appropriately reconciled with agency management before determining Act 44 performance metrics and establishing new performance goals.

Ridership	FYE 2017	FYE 2018	FYE 2019	FYE 2020	FYE 2021
NTD	238,430	278,857	265,628	234,986	162,253
dotGrants	238,430	278,857	265,628	234,986	162,253
Variance	0	0	0	0	0
Percent Difference	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Adjusted Value	238,430	278,857	265,628	234,986	162,253
Operating Costs	FYE 2017	FYE 2018	FYE 2019	FYE 2020	FYE 2021
NTD	\$2,926,458	\$3,592,961	\$3,657,065	\$3,869,859	\$3,981,208
dotGrants	\$2,948,795	\$3,592,961	\$3,657,065	\$3,869,859	\$3,981,208
Variance	22,337	0	0	0	0
Percent Difference	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Adjusted Value	\$2,948,795	\$3,592,961	\$3,657,065	\$3,869,859	\$3,981,208
Operating Revenue	FYE 2017	FYE 2018	FYE 2019	FYE 2020	FYE 2021
NTD	\$405,406	\$430,292	\$484,109	\$483,157	\$451,762
dotGrants	\$397,734	\$430,292	\$484,109	\$483,157	\$451,762
Variance	(7,672)	0	0	0	0
Percent Difference	-2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Adjusted Value	\$397,734	\$430,292	\$484,109	\$483,157	\$451,762
Revenue Vehicle-Hours	FYE 2017	FYE 2018	FYE 2019	FYE 2020	FYE 2021
NTD	39,154	49,627	49,192	47,424	45,616
dotGrants	39,154	49,627	49,192	47,424	45,616
Variance	0	0	0	0	0
Percent Difference	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Adjusted Value	39,154	49,627	49,192	47,424	45,616

The following Act 44 performance metrics were calculated for ATA.

Act 44 Adjusted Metrics	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Pass/RVH	6.09	5.62	5.40	4.96	3.56
Op Rev/RVH	\$10.16	\$ 8.67	\$9.84	\$10.19	\$9.90
Op Cost/RVH	\$75.31	\$72.40	\$74.34	\$81.60	\$87.28
Op Cost/Pass	\$12.37	\$12.88	\$13.77	\$16.47	\$24.54

Appendix B: Action Plan Template

Part 1 – Actions to Retain and Promote Ridership

Recommendations from Narrative Starting on page 20.	ATA Action	Estimated Initiation Date	Estimated Completion Date
1. Provide refresher training for FRITS systems to drivers.			
2. Incorporate systemwide route performance as part of monthly Board updates.			
3. Develop an implementable strategy to reclaim lost market share in medical trips.			

Part 2 – Actions to Ensure Long-Term Financial Sustainability

Recommendations from Narrative Starting on page 21.	ATA Action	Estimated Initiation Date	Estimated Completion Date
1. Conduct a market assessment of the available rental space on the second floor of the Punxsutawney bus terminal.			
2. Consider the long-term impacts of potential utility increases of the new DuBois facility when developing a sustainable operating budget.			

Recommendations from Narrative Starting on page 21.	ATA Action	Estimated Initiation Date	Estimated Completion Date
3. Ensure changes in service levels are integrated sustainably into future operating budgets.			
4. Continue evaluating opportunities to optimize the fleet to meet estimated service life replacement in years and miles.			

Part 3 – Other Opportunities for Improvement

Recommendations from Narrative starting on page 22.	ATA Action	Estimated Initiation Date	Estimated Completion Date
1. Determine whether there are opportunities to improve the user interface on the ATA website.			
2. Develop workforce development strategies to attract quality candidates and retain ATA staff in operations and administration positions.			

Appendix C: Act 44 Peer Comparison Analysis

Peer agencies were identified through a collaborative process between PennDOT and ATA management using criteria defined in Act 44 and NTD data from the most recently available year, FYE 2021. The systems identified for peer comparisons are:

1. Endless Mountains Transportation Authority, Athens, PA
2. Crawford Area Transportation Authority, Meadville, PA
3. Berkeley Charleston Dorchester RTMA, Moncks Corner, SC
4. Montachusett Regional Transit Authority, Fitchburg, MA
5. Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority, Florence, SC
6. Ulster County, Kingston, NY
7. St Lawrence County, Canton NY

Passengers per Revenue Vehicle-Hour: Motor Bus (MB)

System	FYE 2021 Single Year		Five-Year Change Since FYE 2016		
	Value	Rank of 8	2016 Value	Annual Rate	Rank of 8
Endless Mountains Transportation Authority	2.28	6	6.45	-18.77%	6
Crawford Area Transportation Authority	6.82	1	14.46	-13.95%	5
Berkeley Charleston Dorchester RTMA	1.31	8	3.92	-19.66%	8
Montachusett Regional Transit Authority	5.34	2	15.53	-19.21%	7
Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority	5.10	3	7.26	-6.82%	2
Ulster County	4.24	4	7.02	-9.58%	3
St Lawrence County	1.59	7	1.80	-2.45%	1
Area Transportation Authority of North Central PA	3.56	5	6.41	-11.12%	4
<i>Average</i>	3.78		7.86	-12.70%	
<i>Standard Deviation</i>	1.96		4.78	6.34%	
<i>Average – 1 Standard Deviation</i>	1.82		3.08	-19.03%	
<i>Average + 1 Standard Deviation</i>	5.74		12.63	-6.36%	
Act 44 Compliance Determination	In Compliance		In Compliance		
Compared to the Peer Group Average	Weaker		Stronger		

Operating Revenue per Vehicle-Hour: MB

System	FYE 2021 Single Year		Five-Year Change Since FYE 2016		
	Value	Rank of 8	2016 Value	Annual Rate	Rank of 8
Endless Mountains Transportation Authority	\$5.25	6	\$6.86	-5.20%	4
Crawford Area Transportation Authority	\$19.77	2	\$10.03	14.53%	2
Berkeley Charleston Dorchester RTMA	\$2.08	8	\$7.33	-22.27%	8
Montachusett Regional Transit Authority	\$22.10	1	\$33.76	-8.13%	5
Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority	\$5.95	5	\$11.97	-13.06%	6
Ulster County	\$2.80	7	\$8.09	-19.12%	7
St Lawrence County	\$8.61	4	\$3.21	21.82%	1
Area Transportation Authority of North Central PA	\$9.90	3	\$10.85	-1.81%	3
<i>Average</i>	\$9.56		\$11.51	-4.16%	
<i>Standard Deviation</i>	\$7.52		\$9.39	15.48%	
<i>Average – 1 Standard Deviation</i>	\$2.04		\$2.12	-19.64%	
<i>Average + 1 Standard Deviation</i>	\$17.08		\$20.91	11.32%	
Act 44 Compliance Determination	In Compliance		In Compliance		
Compared to the Peer Group Average	Stronger		Stronger		

Operating Cost per Revenue Vehicle-Hour: MB

System	FYE 2021 Single Year		Five-Year Change Since FYE 2016		
	Value	Rank of 8	2016 Value	Annual Rate	Rank of 8
Endless Mountains Transportation Authority	\$70.93	3	\$67.96	0.86%	1
Crawford Area Transportation Authority	\$91.55	5	\$72.01	4.92%	3
Berkeley Charleston Dorchester RTMA	\$69.76	2	\$46.69	8.36%	7
Montachusett Regional Transit Authority	\$140.81	8	\$121.04	3.07%	2
Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority	\$92.78	6	\$65.64	7.16%	5
Ulster County	\$97.72	7	\$72.17	6.25%	4
St Lawrence County	\$60.68	1	\$22.86	21.56%	8
Area Transportation Authority of North Central PA	\$87.28	4	\$60.72	7.53%	6
<i>Average</i>	\$88.94		\$66.14	7.46%	
<i>Standard Deviation</i>	\$24.73		\$27.69	6.22%	
<i>Average – 1 Standard Deviation</i>	\$64.20		\$38.44	1.25%	
<i>Average + 1 Standard Deviation</i>	\$113.67		\$93.83	13.68%	
Act 44 Compliance Determination	In Compliance		In Compliance		
Compared to the Peer Group Average	Stronger		Weaker		

Operating Cost per Passenger: MB

System	FYE 2021 Single Year		Five-Year Change Since FYE 2016		
	Value	Rank of 8	2016 Value	Annual Rate	Rank of 8
Endless Mountains Transportation Authority	\$31.10	6	\$10.53	24.17%	5
Crawford Area Transportation Authority	\$13.42	1	\$4.98	21.93%	4
Berkeley Charleston Dorchester RTMA	\$53.13	8	\$11.90	34.87%	8
Montachusett Regional Transit Authority	\$26.35	5	\$7.80	27.58%	7
Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority	\$18.20	2	\$9.05	15.01%	1
Ulster County	\$23.04	3	\$10.29	17.50%	2
St Lawrence County	\$38.07	7	\$12.67	24.62%	6
Area Transportation Authority of North Central PA	\$24.54	4	\$9.47	20.98%	3
<i>Average</i>	\$28.48		\$9.59	23.33%	
<i>Standard Deviation</i>	\$12.47		\$2.42	6.15%	
<i>Average – 1 Standard Deviation</i>	\$16.01		\$7.17	17.19%	
<i>Average + 1 Standard Deviation</i>	\$40.95		\$12.00	29.48%	
Act 44 Compliance Determination	In Compliance		In Compliance		
Compared to the Peer Group Average	Stronger		Stronger		

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