



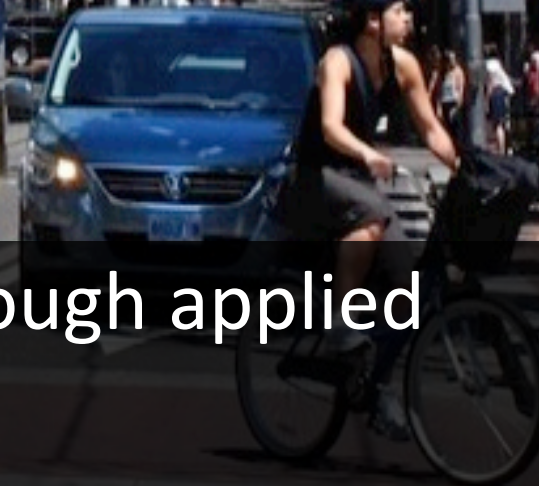
Public Transit in COVID recovery

ITS June 2021 Workshop

David Bragdon

Executive Director, TransitCenter

TransitCenter



A foundation improving public transit in the U.S. through applied research and advocacy. Visit transitcenter.org

Who's *not* On Board 2019



not

On



2019



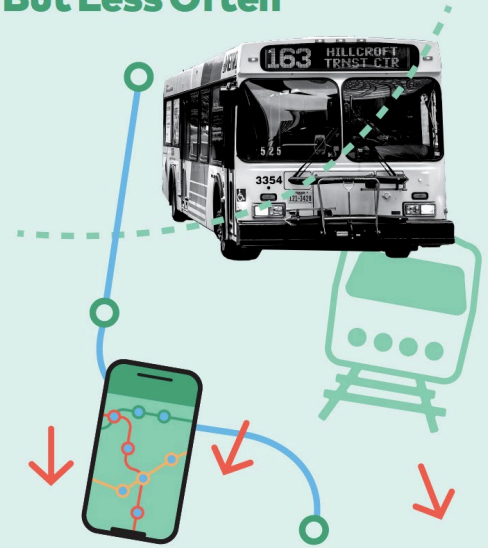
**How to Win Back
America's Transit Riders**

Winning and Keeping Riders



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Finding 1. Taking Transit, But Less Often



International evidence: transit not a superspreader



TRANSIT + COVID-19: a global perspective on operating safely with significant ridership

Major transit systems in cities that have **stopped the spread of COVID-19** are carrying **50-80% of typical ridership** as of summer 2020, with negligible viral transmission and **no clusters traced to trains or buses**. If passengers were observing 6-foot distancing standards, these systems would only be carrying 10-15% of typical ridership, at most.

At these volumes, the systems are **safely transporting people in standing-room-only vehicles**. Riders are neither packed in tightly together, nor observing spacing mandates like leaving half the seats unoccupied.

The fundamental protective measure is **universal mask-wearing**, not strict physical distancing. Ramped-up cleaning and disinfection are also widely deployed. Agencies should concentrate more frequent service where and when ridership is greatest to prevent crush loads, and convey information about crowding to riders via street-level displays, apps, and other communications. But in places that have successfully suppressed COVID-19, **6-foot distancing rules have not been necessary** to achieve safe operations for large transit systems.

Is the Subway Risky? It May Be Safer Than You Think

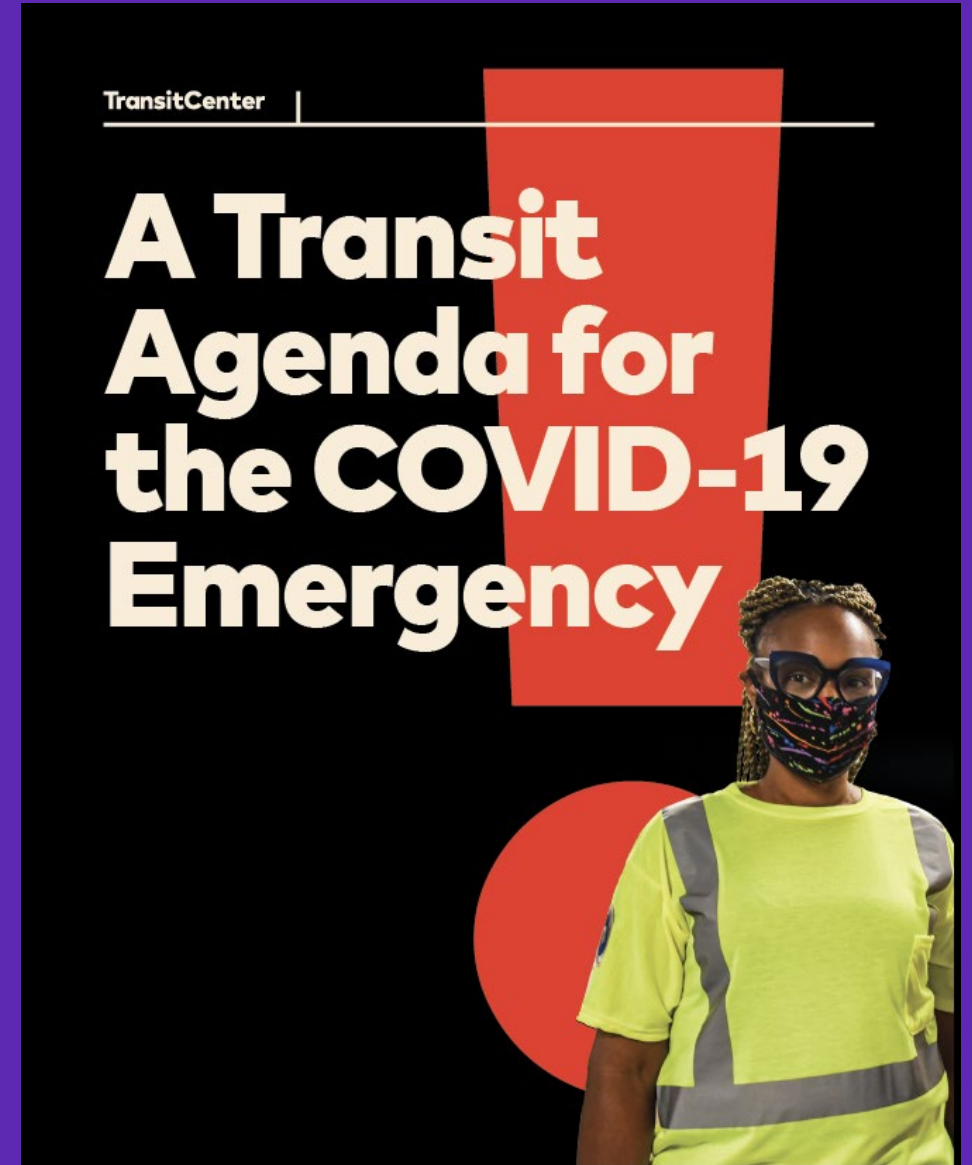
New studies in Europe and Asia suggest that riding public transportation is not a major source of transmission for the coronavirus.



Ridership on the subway is still just 20 percent of pre-pandemic levels. Many commuters remain fearful of being exposed to the coronavirus. Todd Heisler/The New

“Transit Agenda” based on rider survey, summer 2020:

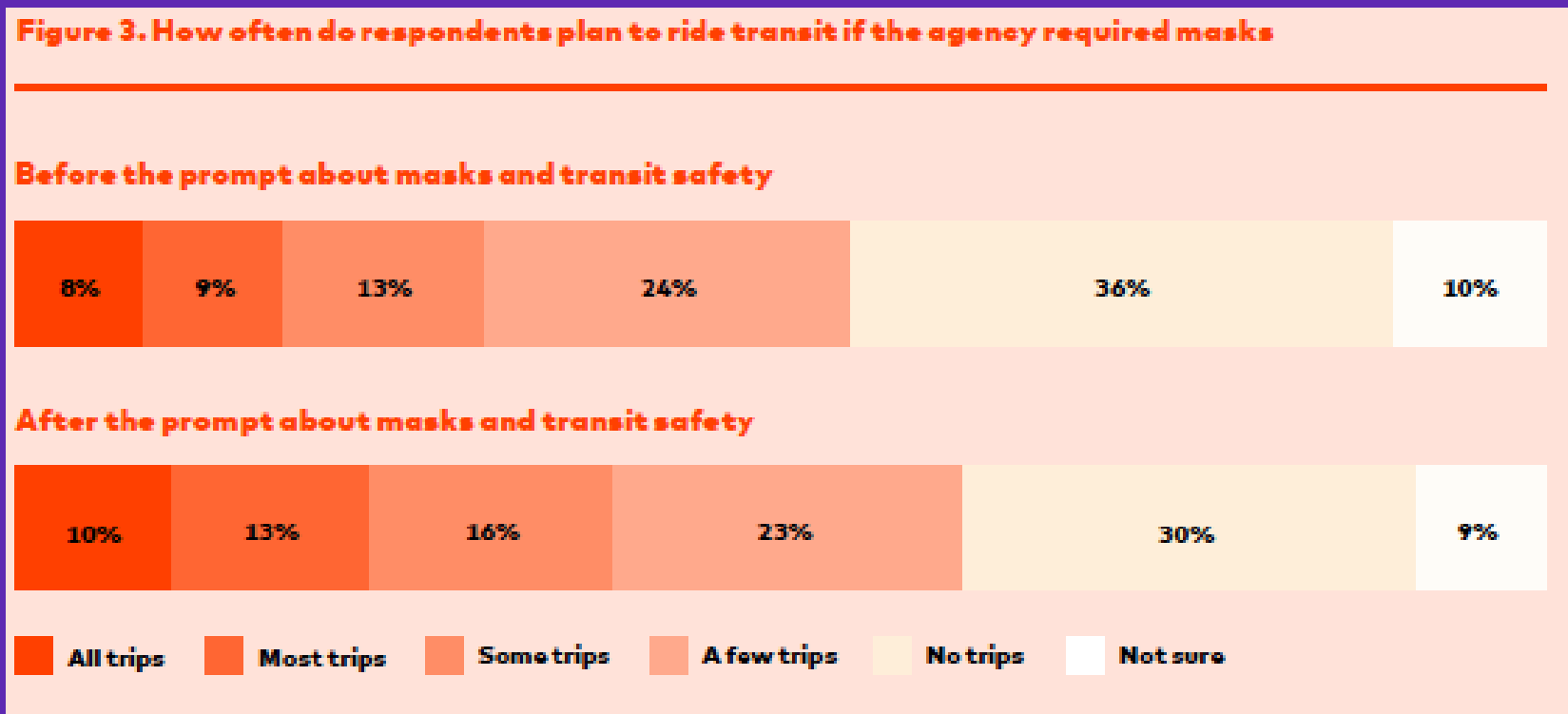
- Conducted by You Gov polling firm, commissioned by TransitCenter
- Sample of 2,198 transit riders
- Sampled the 7 largest ridership regions in the U.S.: New York City, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, Washington D.C.
- Four verbal focus groups for give-and-take narrative and commentary



Pre-vaccine, Masks Matter for Public Confidence – TransitCenter/YouGov National Poll, summer 2020

Respondents to the poll were asked how often they plan to ride transit after the worst of the outbreak. Then they were informed of research demonstrating the efficacy of masks, and asked how often they would ride if the agency required masks.

After hearing that message, 88% of respondents strongly or somewhat agree that transit agencies should require masks on board. Source: “A Transit Agenda for the COVID-19 Emergency” TransitCenter, October 2020





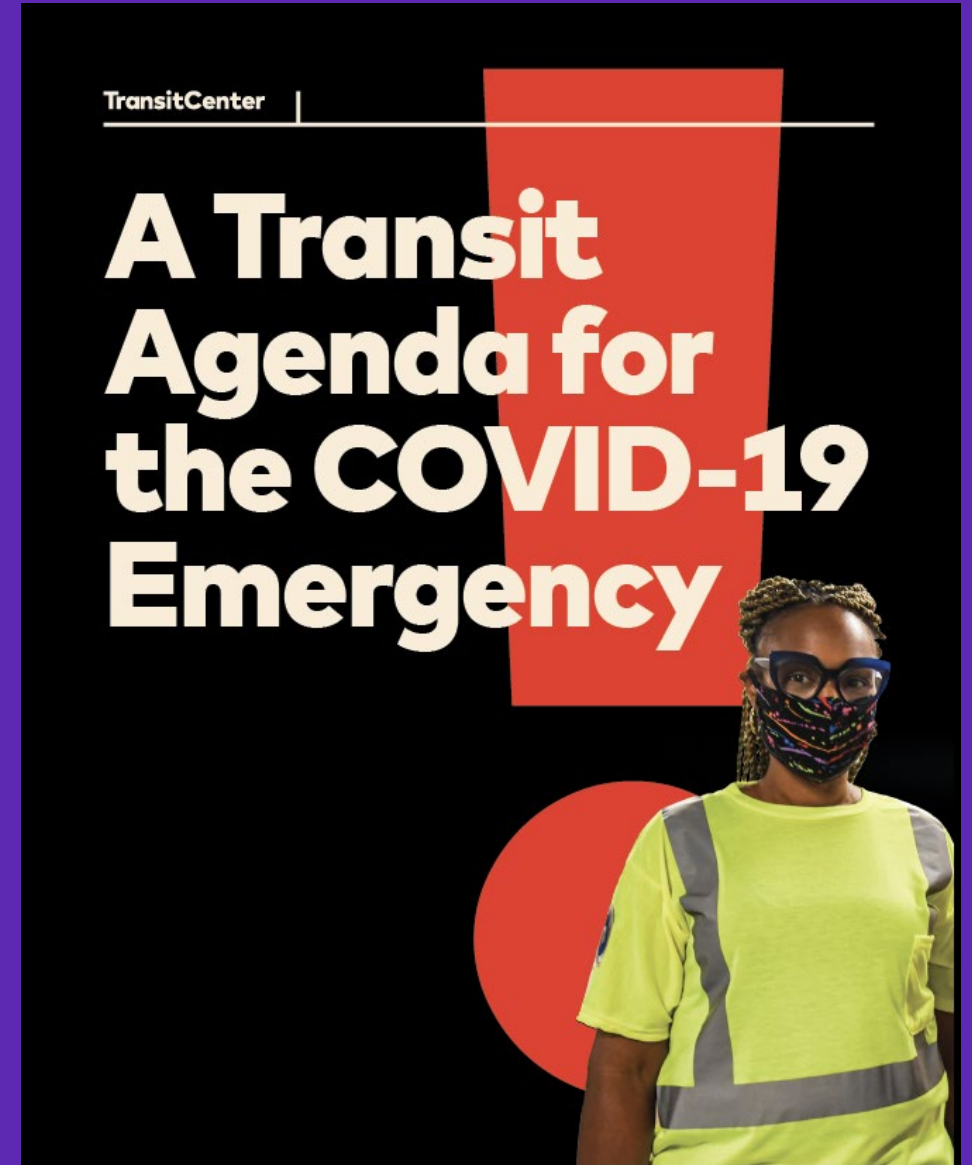
Focus groups revealed service quality matters to riders - especially reliability, frequency and hours of service

“The time schedules, lately buses are off more often. You don’t know when the bus is going to be there, and the communication isn’t there... If I miss this train, when is the next one?”

- “Chris”, Transit rider, Phoenix

How Agencies Should Respond:

- Reallocate service geographically to serve people and areas who use transit the most.
- Emphasize frequent service, 18 hours a day, on routes of highest demand.
- Protect workforce and riders with strong public health protocols, and communicate about it credibly.
- Dedicate street space to transit and other non-auto uses, to speed transit past expected increases in auto traffic.



Service reallocation to serve essential riders



April 10, 2020

How Transit Agencies Are Reallocating Service to Prioritize Public Health and Social Equity

Using data to respond to demand



Photo via Wickford
Local

OPERATIONS

July 29, 2020

**Transit Ridership Is Shifting
Constantly During the Pandemic.
Here's How the MBTA Keeps Up.**

American Rescue Act, signed by President Biden in February, and upcoming Reauthorization of Federal transportation programs, are a really big deal

- 1. Rare opportunity to break the auto-centric federal bias that has existed since 1956**
- 2. Transit operations, not only capital investment, is key**
- 3. Reducing GHG and improving equitable access should be measures of success**
- 4. Policy change is as important as overall spending**





David Bragdon, Executive Director, TransitCenter
dbragdon@transitcenter.org | [@transitcenter](https://twitter.com/transitcenter)