



Growing Ridership

Futureproof Your Network with
Resilient Ridership and Revenues

KEOLIS

Solutions: Now and for the Future

Rethinking how transit systems are managed is about futureproofing, simplifying, and building a modern, frictionless transit system in the U.S. Furthermore, it addresses consumer demands, champions innovation, and leans in on marketing to ensure stakeholders are reached, informed, engaged, and called to act.

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Inside

In this paper, we will spotlight learnings from Keolis networks around the globe and showcase how revenue and ridership can be increased and sustained. We will also show how working with an international provider like Keolis can offer opportunities to establish new standards in next-generation public transit.

Contact Keolis North America at Media@KeolisNA.com

References

<https://ggwash.org/view/76230/accessible-transit-signage-can-work-for-everyone-heres-a-few-ways-how>

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INTRODUCTION

Habits form, change, and shift throughout our lives, often without much notice. Whether it's seismic cultural shifts during a pandemic or a new generation entering the workforce, an individual purchasing a new home or a student reading an article about the impact of wildfires on their community, we are constantly making choices that direct and fuel our lives.

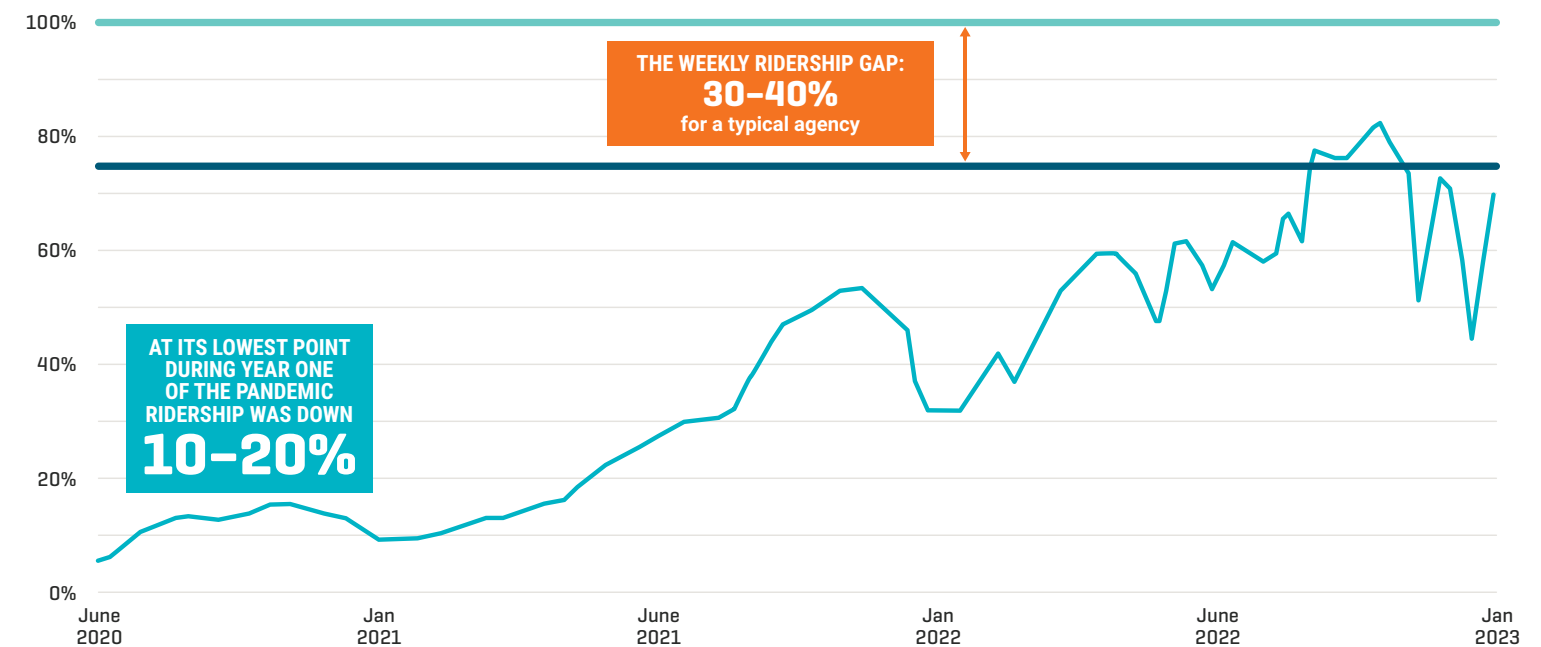
Product marketers have known and focused millions of dollars on research, shopper data and consumers' habits for decades.

The science behind shopper marketing supports the idea that when consumers are adding to their families, moving to a new city or receiving a health diagnosis, they are most likely to be susceptible to the value of a new product or service.

Few industries have had to pivot and adapt more in the last few years than the public transportation industry. While train and bus ridership numbers are down and civic leaders debate road usage charges (RUC) to adapt

to increasing demand for electric vehicles (EV), the U.S. federal government has set ambitious goals to improve the nation's infrastructure not seen in nearly a century. Lockdowns exposed a larger population and industries to the benefits of digital networking solutions, virtually redefining the term *commuter* overnight.

Ridership Recovery Snapshot of a Typical Transit Network



GROW RIDERSHIP AND REVENUES

The most evident issue facing public transit agencies (PTA) is depleted revenues as ridership continues to lag. Attracting new riders is no small task and many agencies may be faced with the option of cutting service to balance budgets. This can create a **death spiral** for transit—a self-fulfilling prophecy that only further chills ridership for years. In addition, as the impacts of climate change continue to devastate regions

around the world, it's essential that we reduce our dependence on cars and trucks and expand the menu of mobility options available to a wider section of the population.

As the public transportation industry contemplates and rises to meet today's—and tomorrow's—challenges, there are opportunities to regain and grow revenue and ridership. Underscoring that, despite the impulse reactions to cut back on service or raise fares, existing

and prospective riders still need to rediscover **what transportation can offer** and how **easy it can be to use**.



Along with responding to issues and regaining ridership and revenue, the sudden shift in consumer habits and needs has presented a wealth of learnings and opportunities.

Learnings from Keolis networks around the globe showcasing how revenue and ridership can be increased and sustained →



Invest in and launch:
End-to-end digital tools that make transit frictionless



Enhance marketing strategies to:
Mine operations for insights into current and future riders



Adapt and appeal to consumer mindset and schedules by:
Futureproofing networks and building a resilient ridership base



Inspire action by publicizing commitments to:
Modernize transportation, cut carbon emissions, and alleviate congestion on roadways

Keolis Way

Keolis Way is a global program to: **STRENGTHEN OUR COMMON APPROACH AND OUR WORKPLACE CULTURE.**

It provides a framework for business planning and continuous improvement to the benefiting of our key stakeholders: our people, our passengers, the planet and our partners. Keolis Way sets out our common objectives regardless of the country, size, or transport mode.

The ultimate goal of Keolis Way is to extend our leadership in operating and delivering safe, smart and sustainable mobility solutions that are accessible to everyone.



MAKE TRANSPORTATION FRICTIONLESS



The U.S. must seize the rare chance to give public transportation the makeover that riders have long demanded and that which there is a latent demand for by potential passengers.

David Scorey
Keolis North America

After the Great Recession, austerity measures meant two out of three large public transit agencies had to cut service and more than half were forced to raise fares. The massive cuts drove consumers away, hobbling transit agencies for years while the impact on traffic and the environment in each region worsened.

THAT SAID, IN 2015, ONE CITY SAW AN OPPORTUNITY.

Houston invested in a bus network redesign that prioritized uncomplicated, localized and frequent rides. The practical changes helped the city become one of the few to report increased bus ridership. Just like highway expansions can induce more car ridership and more traffic, frequent, efficient and easy-to-understand transit systems can attract riders.



Frictionless means end-to-end trip planning, inclusive of reliability and affordability, complimented by technology and ease of use.

As a society, we have increasingly come to rely on and even expect digital tools to simplify our lives. In fact, in 2018, the U.S. Department of Education published findings that showed



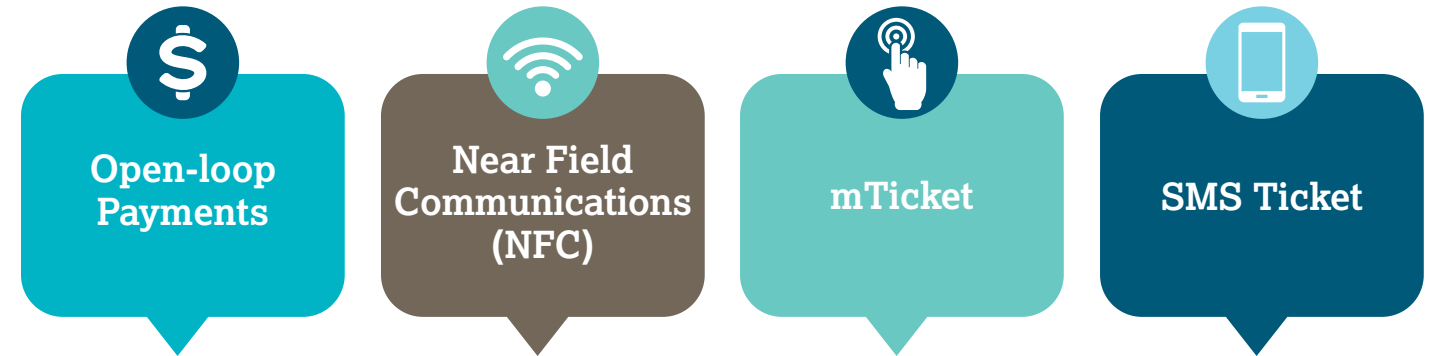
84%
of U.S. adults were digitally literate

Subsequently, in 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic necessitated lockdowns and introduced most of the population to some aspect of working, learning and socializing online. So, it is reasonable to assume that most riders are comfortable with technology today.

The remaining **16 percent** can be reached through enhanced and improved real-time signage including but not limited to:

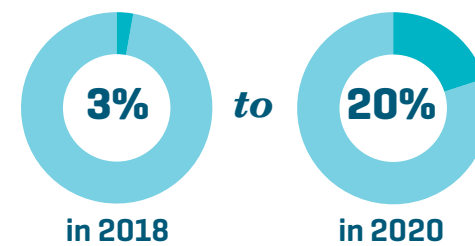
- text and lighting for the visually impaired
- braille or audio recordings
- animations

What Types of Solutions Are Offered to Customers?



In a 2023 internal audit, Keolis measured a significant spike in the adoption of mobile payment offerings in Dijon, France, both during the immediate aftermath of compulsory lockdowns and continuing through today. In addition, offering fixed pricing and packages appealed to riders to recommit to public transit.

Across France, adoption of digital ticketing like tap-and-go mobile payments and mTickets, has **more than tripled from**



Amenities are important for attracting new transit riders. Many future passengers may not identify as commuters. Today's riders are running errands, going to school, journeying to urban centers or out to rural destinations like breweries and parks. Launching end-to-end trip planning and streamlining communications in Boston attracted relapsed and new riders. And, once aboard, a comfortable passenger experience, friendly staff and sensible fare structures will keep them coming back.

Finally, ensuring fares stay competitive with driving is critical. Raising fares hurts already marginalized communities further while incentivizing continued car use by motorists. Fare policies should incentivize these communities and be simple enough for leisure riders to understand.

Flexible and accessible fare products, family discounts, business partnerships and rewards programs are good for passengers and communities. PTAs need to remain innovative in this space and employ every tool at their disposal to attract old and new riders as the country continues this collective journey.

FUTUREPROOF: ANALYZE, ANTICIPATE AND ADAPT

Traditional barriers to using public transit include perceptions of unreliable service, unattainable fares, and lack of safety. Now, with the broad adoption of telecommuting for work and services like healthcare, reversing the downward trend in ridership and revenue requires investment in the future at a time when revenues are low.

Like in the Great Recession, the same austere approach has been revived in response to this trend. Echoing the return on investment that Houston experienced in 2015, Keolis conducted a deep dive review into more than 100 initiatives from around the globe and found that cutting service or raising fares can have a minimal impact on the bottom line while impact to overall public perception and ridership can be damaging.

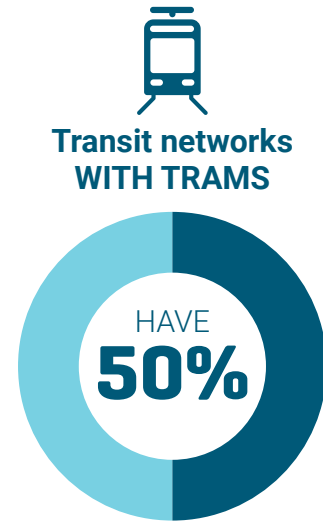
In addition to preserving service, riders may no longer identify as commuters. In fact, in multiple markets, weekend bus service experienced a faster comeback than traditional 9-to-5 itineraries. A transportation agency in Greensboro, NC increased their weekend service during the months following the pandemic and saw a significant uptick in ridership. With findings from Keolis research, GTA invested in the network and raised weekend service levels to match weekdays.

**Between 2021-2022
RIDERSHIP INCREASED BY
26 PERCENT**

In addition to shifting schedules, new generations entering the market have preferences based on their own collective experience in the world.

In the French city of Pau, Keolis operates a hydrogen-powered BRT network.

Most of this network operates on a dedicated route and the design of the bus features a rounded front and wheel coverings. This design makes the bus look more like a tram, an important feature for attracting ridership. Research has found prospective riders have an affinity for tram (aka streetcar or trolley) design.



MORE RIDERSHIP than those with just buses

Reframing the experience from the consumer's perspective can be a bridge to network and ridership growth.

Overall perception of public transit will shift when you pair strategic initiatives with the amenities that all consumers have come to expect such as:

- WIFI
- outlets
- mobile applications
- real-time communication

THE AIM **Attract and nurture a resilient ridership base that continues to grow and support an upward trend for revenue.**

THE RESULT **Strategic investments today hold potential to futureproof the organization.**



CHAMPIONING NEXT-GEN TRANSIT

Few in the last decade could have predicted and comprehended the seismic shift that the world has experienced in the last three years. Worldwide, impending changes to society brought on by advancement and adoption of technology, the impact of climate change and debates over immigration continue to push towards a new normal.

Despite the overnight drop in ridership due to lockdowns, leaders in the transportation industry persevered. While public transportation remained a lifeline for the frontline workers, who saved lives and kept society functioning, it was leaders who faced the near daily onslaught of challenge and adversity with an unwavering commitment to see the opportunities and pivot rapidly.

Pandemic learnings aside, ridership on America's buses and subways had been steadily declining in the years prior. This was due to the

infrastructure's state-of-good repair backlogs and network designs that made using public transit in the U.S. feel secondary compared to other developed countries. Now, thanks to federal stimulus dollars and funding from a landmark infrastructure bill, the U.S. has an opportunity to reimagine and futureproof its transit systems.

By distilling this proactive spirit and championing ambitious goals, PTAs can be a major voice in this movement through its initiatives, partnerships and external marketing. They can utilize this voice to motivate stakeholders, from riders and community leaders to civil engineering experts and politicians, through targeted marketing and no-regret early action.

THESE OPTIONS INCLUDE:



Launching partnerships with area businesses to promote transit use



Partnering with regional transit agencies, management associations and other private operators on first/last mile solutions



Introducing rewards programs with area businesses connected to transit use

Working with a global provider like Keolis offers the opportunity to learn from other cities and, not only borrow but establish a new standard for the next generation of public transit.

CONCLUSION

In addition to the key areas outlined here, Keolis can help its partners develop their own strategies to grow ridership and revenue. Contact Keolis North America at Media@KeolisNA.com for a checklist outlining **25 options** to consider and to discuss specific needs and solutions.



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