

Bond Case Briefs

Municipal Finance Law Since 1971

With Ridership Still Down, Transit Agencies Rethink Priorities.

More frequent service in low-income neighborhoods, fewer buses to affluent areas, even fare-free transit, are all on the table as transit agencies try to figure out the future, according to a new report from the Urban Institute.

Transit systems across America are facing an existential moment. Ridership remains dramatically down from its 2019 levels and budgets are only kept afloat by federal subsidies that will not continue indefinitely.

But this moment of peril for public transportation is also an opportunity to break old routines.

“Transit agencies get stuck in their service patterns, without considering the fact that those service patterns may not be reflective of what people want,” says Yonah Freemark, senior research associate at the Urban Institute. “They have bus routes, in some cases, that they’ve had literally since they were running streetcars.”

Freemark and his co-authors — Jorge González-Hermoso and Jorge Morales-Burnett — wrote a [lengthy report](#) for the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) on how an array of transit agencies are planning for the post-pandemic future.

[governing.com](#)

December 3, 2021 • Jake Blumgart