

The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole
Transportation Services
April 13, 2023

Report of the Commissioner of Public Works

York Region Transit 2022 System Performance

1. Recommendation

Council receive this report for information.

2. Summary

This report provides Council with an overview of York Region Transit (YRT) 2022 system performance and includes an update on ridership, revenue, service reliability and accomplishments.

Key Points:

- YRT continued to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic with revenue ridership increasing to 15.5M in 2022 compared to 9.4M in 2021 but below 22.3M achieved in 2019, prior to the pandemic
- YRT maintained a high level of reliability in 2022 throughout changing travel patterns and increasing travel demand
- Key initiatives were delivered, including 118 service improvements, adding two new electric buses, opening of Cornell Bus Terminal and Major Mackenzie West Terminal, and completing several asset management-related programs for fleet and facilities
- Fare and service integration continued to be a priority through collaboration with the Ministry of Transportation, Metrolinx and other Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) transit agencies
- York Region received approval through the Zero Emission Transit Fund, including a grant of \$76M and a low-interest loan of up to \$137M, to support the purchase of approximately 180 electric buses and associated infrastructure through March 31, 2026, accelerating transit fleet electrification goals by about 10 years

3. Background

York Region Transit delivers a variety of services to meet the unique needs of communities across the Region

York Region provides a blend of equitable, economical and innovative transit services to meet the varying needs of all nine local municipalities within its large geographical service area.

A variety of YRT services are provided:

- Viva bus rapid transit
- Base routes – Operate on major arterial corridors
- Local routes – Operate in neighbourhoods
- High school specials – Provide direct service to high schools
- Express routes – Provide limited-stop, direct service to key destinations
- GO shuttles – Provide direct service to GO train stations
- Seasonal services – Operate to key destinations such as recreational facilities, shopping malls, and amusement parks
- Mobility On-Request (Conventional) – Fully accessible, on-demand transit service designed to provide immediate local travel within a defined geographical area where demand for transit service is low
- Mobility On-Request (Paratransit) – Door-to-door, shared-ride, accessible public transit service for people with disabilities

4. Analysis

Transit revenue ridership continued to increase in 2022 reaching 15.5M compared to 9.4M in 2021

Revenue ridership is the number of fare-paying customers on the system. YRT and other transit agencies across the country experienced revenue ridership growth throughout 2022, with more riders returning to use public transit. In Q4 2022, revenue ridership was 81% of Q4 2019, with transit riders returning most notably on weekends and on Viva and base routes. These routes provide connections to the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) subway, industrial areas, and key destinations along major travel corridors. Weekday ridership is down with fewer commuter travellers, likely due to continuation of hybrid work practices. Ridership associated with GO train connections, office employment and post-secondary travel may take some time to return to pre-pandemic levels.

A comparison of monthly system-wide revenue ridership for 2019 through 2022 is shown in Appendix A.

Service adjustments were made as travel patterns changed and ridership increased

While a total of 19 routes remained suspended in 2022 due to low ridership, alternative transit options were offered, including Mobility On-Request. In 2023, staff will continue assessing suspended services for reinstatement, considering overall demand. Ridership is expected to continue increasing and projected to return to pre-pandemic levels by 2026.

The 2021-2025 YRT Business Plan and annual Transit Initiatives continued to guide service expansion supporting ridership recovery. Applicable service increases on major corridors were implemented, such as those identified as part of the Frequent Transit Network, Express Bus Network and Viva system in York Region, and adding connections for travellers to all transit, including GO trains, TTC subway lines and the Viva network.

In 2022, ridership increased on Conventional and specialized Mobility On-Request services

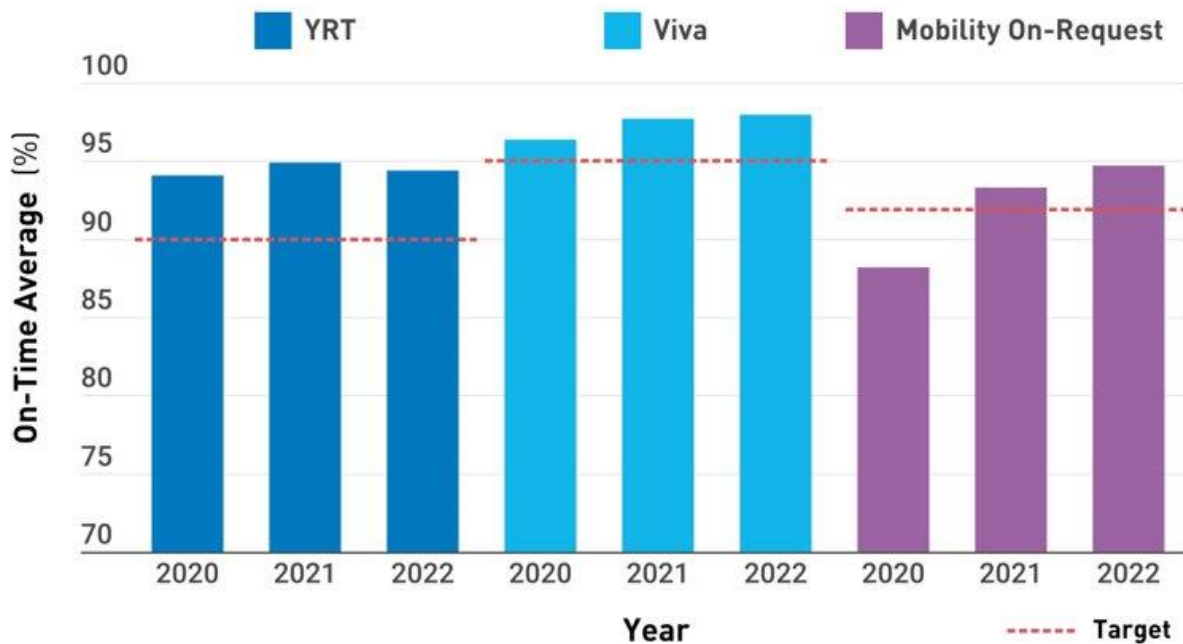
Mobility On-Request is a cost-effective and flexible service delivery model designed to provide service to travellers in low-demand areas and connect these areas with higher-order transit services. Conventional Mobility On-Request ridership increased by 47% to 75,812 and specialized Mobility On-Request ridership increased by 64% to 226,914. Two new Conventional Mobility On-Request services were implemented in 2022 while three others were expanded. A comparison of Mobility On-Request conventional service for 2019 through 2022 is shown in Appendix B.

Mobility On-Request conventional service has continued to operate in place of 15 local conventional bus routes based on demand during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure transit options remain available for travellers. In 2023, two services in the City of Vaughan will be converted back to a conventional fixed route due to growing ridership.

York Region Transit surpassed on-time performance targets in 2022

On-time performance is a measure of the quality of service operated by YRT. Operating schedules are compared to real-time operating data and adjusted six times per year. Service is monitored in real-time through the Centralized Control Centre. This allows for immediate service adjustments to address delays and reduce traveller wait times. In 2022, staff continued to adjust schedules in response to changing travel patterns and increasing travel demand. On-time performance reached 94% for conventional service, 98% for Viva and 95% for Mobility On-Request, exceeding targets, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1
On-Time Performance 2020-2022



Key initiatives were delivered in 2022 with a focus on traveller experience and the environment

In 2022, programs continued to be delivered advancing branch, departmental and corporate goals and strategies, including:

- Awarded transit operations and maintenance contract for the newly integrated South-East Transit Division
- Ongoing construction for the expansion of the Region’s LEED silver certified operations, maintenance and storage facility located at 55 Orlando Avenue, scheduled to be completed in 2023
- Piloting passenger information screens using solar-powered technology
- Added two new electric buses into service in support of the Transit Bus Fleet Electrification Plan that will see all YRT buses converted to zero-emission technology by 2047
- Opened Cornell Bus Terminal in the City of Markham and Major Mackenzie West Terminal in the City of Vaughan
- Continuing work to advance the Yonge North Subway Extension into York Region and associated transit-oriented communities
- Piloted Mobility On-Request service to Maple and Rutherford GO Stations using a self-service application in partnership with City of Vaughan and Metrolinx

- Ride-to-GO program was improved to allow free travel on YRT to/from GO Transit
- Implemented 118 services changes to improve service reliability and promote ridership recovery
- Refurbished 48 buses through asset management programs
- Provided oversight in the manufacturing process and commissioned 85 replacement buses by early 2023
- Replaced 63 concrete bus stop pads, installed 21 new pads, upgraded 11 bus shelters, and installed 22 new shelters throughout the Region
- Administered PRESTO cards to approximately 510 Transit Assistance Program participants, 740 Transit Discount Program participants and distributed 2,160 PRESTO cards to Ukrainian Transit Program participants
- Converted Mobility On-Request 65+ service into a permanent program
- Provided Travel Training to 224 travellers
- Completed the 5-year fare policy and 10-year fare collection outlook review in partnership with TTC
- Updated yrt.ca to offer improved navigation, readability and content structure

York Region Transit will continue working with the Province and other transit agencies to improve service integration and fare payment options

On March 1, 2022, the Ontario government announced it was implementing Phase 1 initiatives to make transit more affordable including GO Transit fare changes that harmonized fares with GTHA transit agencies and provided a full subsidy to local transit agencies in the 905-area code. In [April 2022](#), Council was provided with a memorandum on this milestone.

In August 2022, the Ministry of Transportation developed a Draft Initial Business Case (IBC) detailing varied fare structures and their benefits and trade-offs. Analysis, review and feedback on the draft IBC by GTHA transit agencies including YRT is ongoing.

Staff are evaluating opportunities to improve cross-boundary travel, including open-door service south of Steeles Avenue, which would allow YRT to pick up and drop off customers within the City of Toronto.

In 2022, staff continued working with PRESTO to prepare for the launch of contactless payment across the GTHA. On January 23, 2023, PRESTO contactless payment was launched on YRT in partnership with PRESTO and other local transit agencies, enabling customers to pay transit fares with a credit card or mobile wallet. Payment with debit card is expected to launch later this year.

5. Financial

Transit agencies continued to receive senior government funding to deliver safe and reliable transit throughout 2022

Ontario transit agencies continued to receive funding through the joint federal-provincial Safe Restart Agreement to address financial impacts resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. In December 2022, the Ontario government announced \$505M of new federal-provincial funding to help transit agencies address costs related to the COVID-19 pandemic between February 1, 2022, and December 31, 2022. In February 2023, the Region received confirmation of an additional \$8.7M related to 2022 COVID-19 impacts on transit services.

In February 2022, the provincial government committed \$80M in supplementary funding to stabilize 2022-23 Gas Tax Program allocation as transit systems began to recover. York Region was allocated \$17.2M.

Transit fare revenue increased to \$53M in 2022

In 2022, fare revenue totalled \$53M compared to \$33M in 2021 but remained below 2019 revenue levels totalling \$74M. This revenue loss was partially mitigated by \$17M in savings from reduced service levels. In 2022, revenue/cost ratio recovered to 29%, up from 21% in 2021, primarily due to ridership growth. Key factors impacting revenue/cost ratio recovery in 2022 included service resumption costs, higher inflation and fuel prices, fare freezes in 2020, 2021 and 2022, and additional fleet and facility maintenance costs as required by public health measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Staff continue to review fares, fare structure and funding opportunities to optimize delivery of the right mix of sustainable transit services.

York Region was approved for a \$76M federal grant and \$137M loan through the Zero Emission Transit Fund, accelerating transit fleet electrification goals

In [December 2020](#), Council approved the Transit Bus Fleet Electrification Plan. On August 10, 2021, the federal government launched the \$2.75B Zero Emission Transit Fund to help communities invest in zero-emission public transit and school transportation options, including zero-emission buses and infrastructure. York Region submitted a Stage 2 application in July 2022. At the end of 2022, the Region received approval through the Zero Emission Transit Fund, including a grant of \$76M and a low-interest loan up to \$137M, to support the purchase of approximately 180 electric buses and associated infrastructure through March 31, 2026, accelerating transit fleet electrification goals by about 10 years.

6. Local Impact

Well-planned transit services help shape and connect communities. The Region's continuing investment in public transit provides travellers with a safe, effective and reliable transportation choice.

In 2022, a total of 118 service adjustments were implemented to expand services, improve service reliability, and provide safe and convenient connections at two new terminals. Service changes were communicated to travellers through collaboration among key stakeholders.

YRT staff met with stakeholders and staff from all nine local municipalities to discuss proposed 2023 service changes and upcoming projects. Public engagement occurred virtually and on-bus. YRT staff received over 600 comments and completed surveys on the planned service changes.

7. Conclusion

In 2022, YRT delivered key initiatives including the addition of two new electric buses, the opening of Cornell Bus Terminal and Major Mackenzie West Terminal, and completion of several asset management-related programs. YRT maintained a high level of service reliability through changing travel patterns and increasing travel demand.

In 2022, transit revenue ridership continued to increase, totalling 70% of 2019 ridership, and is expected to recover to pre-pandemic levels in 2026.

YRT will continue working with GTHA transit agencies and the federal and provincial governments to provide safe and reliable transit service and advance fare and service integration opportunities.

For more information on this report, please contact Kyle Catney, Director, Operations, York Region Transit at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 75637. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.

Recommended by:



Erin Mahoney, M. Eng.
Commissioner of Public Works

Approved for Submission:

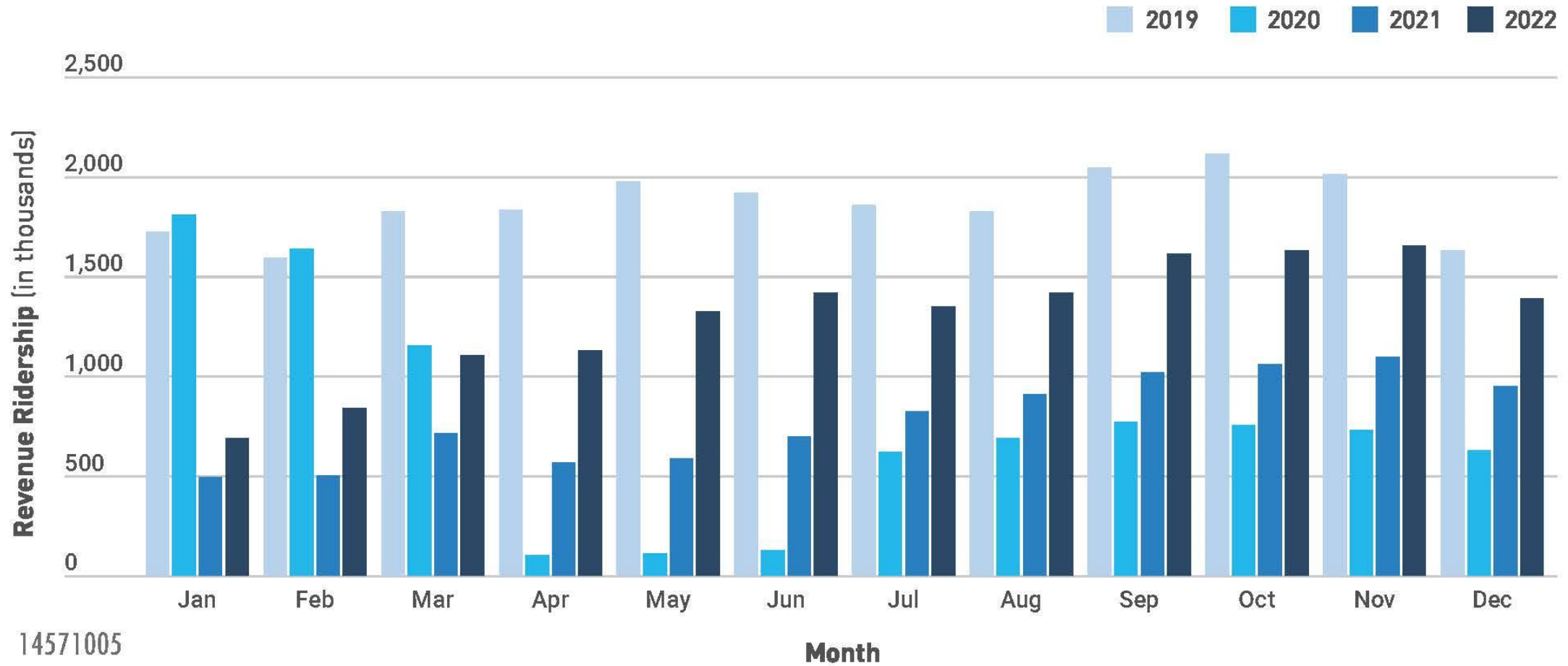


Bruce Macgregor
Chief Administrative Officer

March 24, 2023
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Appendix A – YRT 2022 System Performance Ridership Comparison
Appendix B – YRT 2022 System Performance Ridership Mobility on Request Conventional

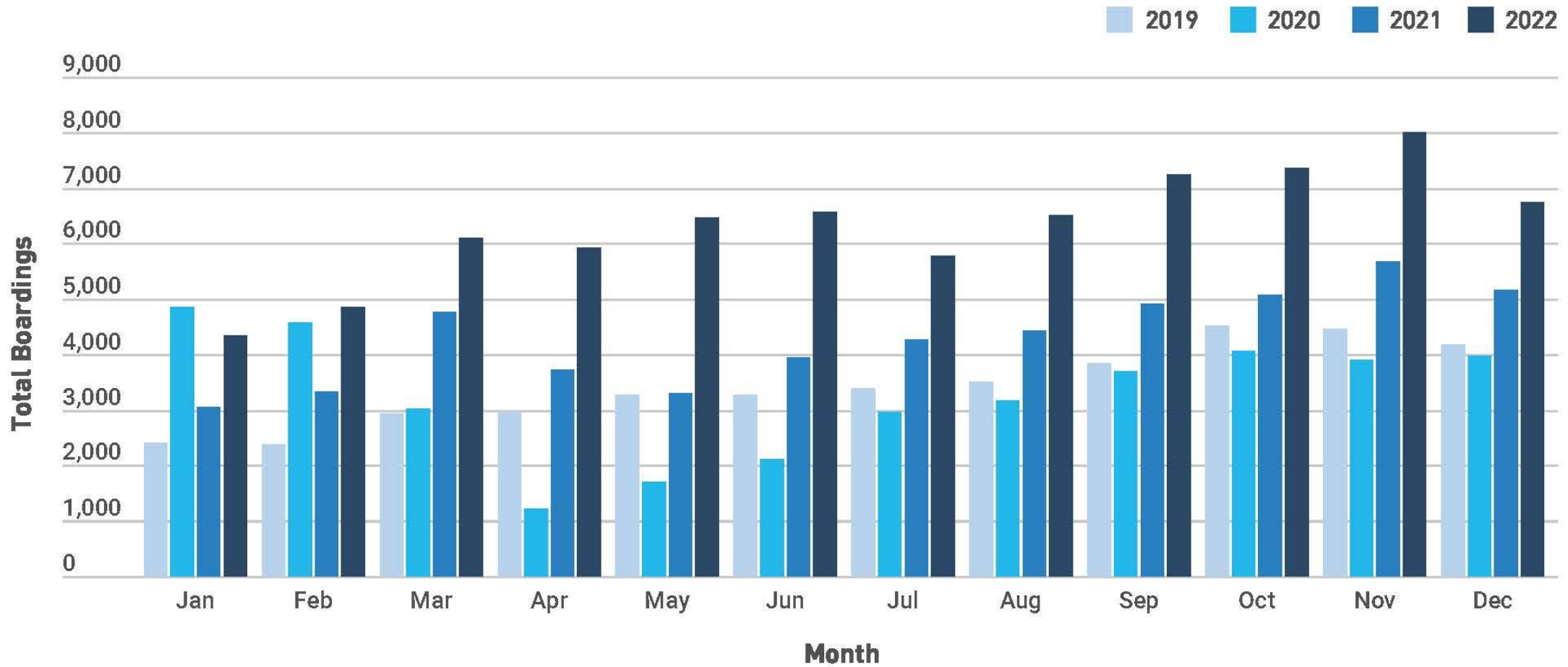
York Region Transit 2022 System Performance Report YRT System Ridership Comparison (2019 to 2022)



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Notes: Revenue ridership decrease from April - June 2020 caused by rear door boarding initiative; Ridership includes MOR Paratransit and Conventional services.

**York Region Transit 2022 System Performance Report
 Mobility On-Request Conventional Ridership Comparison (2019 to 2022)**



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