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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

The RTA Regional Ridership Report began in 2013 as a five-year retrospective on RTA system ridership since the 2008 recession. It is now issued annually. Between 2008 and 2012, system ridership increased 1.9%, despite system-wide ridership losses in 2009 and 2010. The region’s ridership loss and subsequent recovery was consistent with the economic trends of the period. As the economy improved and jobs returned to the region, so did riders; peaking at 666.1 million unlinked passenger trips in 2012. Since then, the RTA system has seen ridership decline again as the Service Boards adjusted fares and service levels and contended with other factors such as extreme winter weather, record low gas prices, and the emerging popularity of car and bike sharing services.

The RTA system recorded its third consecutive year of ridership decline in 2015\(^1\) with total system ridership decreasing 0.3% to 634.9 million annual unlinked passenger trips. This decline in annual ridership was driven by ridership losses on Metra rail, CTA bus, and Pace bus. The rate of overall decline was less than the 2.3% decline experienced in 2014.

- CTA ridership of 516.0 million annual unlinked passenger trips in 2015 was 0.3% greater than prior year as ridership growth of 1.6% on CTA rail offset the 0.7% decline on CTA bus.
- Metra ridership declined 2.1% in 2015 to 81.6 million annual unlinked passenger trips.
- Pace Suburban Service recorded ridership losses in 2015, declining 4.9% to 33.1 million annual unlinked passenger trips. This was the second consecutive year of negative ridership results for Pace.
- Pace ADA Paratransit recorded 2.7% ridership growth in 2015 with annual ridership increasing to 4.2 million unlinked passenger trips.

\(^1\) Final, audited ridership figures for CTA, Metra, and Pace become available in April, four months after the close of the year. This explains the lag time between the year ending and when this report is published.
CTA and Pace ADA recorded favorable ridership results for the year while Metra and Pace Suburban bus both lost ridership in 2015. Metra ridership fell by 2.1% after two years of positive growth. Pace recorded ridership losses on eight of its nine Pace-owned fixed-route bus divisions in 2015. Ridership also declined on Pace private contract service. This was the second consecutive year of significant ridership losses for Pace. Pace’s peer agencies in Detroit, Orange County, and Nassau County, New York noted similar rates of ridership loss.

CTA recorded 0.7% ridership losses on its buses in 2015, but continued to see strong growth in rail ridership. Growth of 1.6% on CTA rail offset the losses on bus and resulted in a net growth of 0.3% for the CTA system. The share of CTA rail riders continues to increase as bus ridership declines. Rail ridership now accounts for 47% of CTA system ridership, up from 38% in 2008. Like Pace, CTA is not alone in seeing its bus ridership drop. For purposes of comparison, peer agencies MTA/NYCT and LA Metro recorded larger percentage losses in bus ridership than CTA in 2015, at 2.5% and 5.1% respectively. Pace ADA Paratransit recorded favorable ridership growth in 2015, increasing 2.7% over prior year. While growth on Pace ADA Paratransit service remains positive, it has slowed in recent years and has not achieved 5% growth year over year since 2013.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RTA System Ridership (millions)</th>
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<tr>
<td>------</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Metra</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pace</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pace ADA Paratransit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RTA System</strong></td>
</tr>
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‘Passenger miles traveled’ is a performance statistic which measures the total number of miles traveled by customers. It is tied to ridership but does not always track proportionately with ridership change because of varying trip lengths. In 2015, system passenger miles declined at a greater rate than ridership, falling 0.9% to 4.1 billion miles traveled while ridership declined by just 0.3%. This decline in passenger miles traveled was fueled by declining ridership on Metra and Pace Suburban Service. Metra and Pace customers often travel very long distances on the system; fewer long distance riders, particularly on Metra, resulted in a greater net percent loss in passenger miles traveled than ridership in 2015. For Pace, the reverse was true as ridership declined at a greater rate than passenger miles. CTA and Pace ADA Paratransit both saw their passenger miles increase, consistent with positive ridership growth during the year.

Between 2011 and 2015, total passenger miles traveled on the system increased 0.4% while ridership declined 2.6%. CTA, Metra, and Pace recorded ridership losses during this five year period; however, Metra was the only agency to record a corresponding dip in passenger miles traveled. CTA and Pace, in contrast, recorded an increase in passenger miles despite overall ridership decline. Both agencies have streamlined service in recent years, adding express service and combining routes to reduce transfer points on the system and improve the customer’s experience. While combining routes can increase passenger miles by allowing passengers to travel farther distances in a single trip, it can also negatively impact ridership results due to how individual trips are recorded. Before the route consolidations, if a rider took two buses to get to a destination, it was counted as two unlinked trips. When these two bus routes were consolidated, the same rider only had to take one bus trip which is equal to one unlinked trip. Accordingly, a rider may be traveling more miles on the system but being counted for fewer trips. When reading this report it is important to consider that ridership is just one way to measure the health of the RTA system and there are many other performance categories by which the RTA tracks the impact and effectiveness of public transit in the region. For more information on other RTA performance measures visit www.rtachicago.org.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CTA</td>
<td>2,122</td>
<td>2,266</td>
<td>2,170</td>
<td>2,131</td>
<td>2,147</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metra</td>
<td>1,645</td>
<td>1,682</td>
<td>1,666</td>
<td>1,668</td>
<td>1,622</td>
<td>-2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pace</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>-3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pace ADA Paratransit</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td>4,042</td>
<td>4,236</td>
<td>4,128</td>
<td>4,094</td>
<td>4,059</td>
<td>-0.9%</td>
</tr>
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Factors Affecting Travel Patterns

There were multiple factors affecting ridership in 2015, resulting in negative growth on the system. Low gas prices in 2015 had a significant, negative effect on ridership. Prices averaged $2.67 a gallon for the year, $1.00 less than the average in 2014, and bottomed out at $2.20 a gallon in December. National trends indicate transit ridership dips when gas prices decrease. This is true for the RTA system as well.

In addition to low gas prices, ridership across the system has been impacted by better technology, better travel information, and more transit options. CTA and Metra use Twitter and RSS feeds to communicate to their riders. With the Ventra mobile app, riders can manage their ticket fares and plan their trips in one spot. With bus and train tracker information on smart phones, on bus shelters, and in rail stations, riders can quickly evaluate whether to take a bus, a train, a taxi or car service, or even bike or walk depending on the time of day and when the next bus or train is expected to arrive. A steady increase in the average passenger trip length for CTA bus over the last five years indicates that riders are taking fewer, but longer bus trips. For shorter trips, riders may be looking to alternative transit options such as Uber, Lyft, or Divvy, Chicagoland’s popular bike share program. Some of the Divvy bike stations with the highest ridership are those adjacent to CTA and Metra rail stations. This suggests many commuters are using Divvy bikes to complete transit connections and “last mile” type trips. Indeed, the Canal & Adams Streets Divvy station and Clinton & Washington Streets station, serving Chicago’s Union Station and Ogilvie Transportation Center, respectively, were among the top 10 Divvy bike rental locations in 2015.2

A 10.8% average fare increase implemented by Metra in February 2015 and the elimination of $0.25 transfers on cash fares by Pace in mid-20143 have also led to loses in ridership, particularly discretionary ridership. Discretionary riders are riders who use transit for optional or non-essential, non-work, or non-school trips. This market segment is the most elastic to fare price. Discretionary riders are more likely to change behavior based on fare changes. Pace estimates cash-paying customers make up 20% of its ridership base. Eliminating $0.25 transfers on cash fares was effectively a large fare increase for these customers. Discretionary Pace riders who did not wish to change to the Ventra card system may have decided to stop riding Pace or to ride more infrequently.

Pace ridership was also impacted by bus route restructuring in 2015. Pace has consolidated bus routes in recent years to increase efficiency and improve the customer experience. Consolidating routes has had the positive effect of reducing the number of transfer points on their system but the negative effect, from a reporting perspective, of reducing ridership as two trips became one for some Pace riders. Pace

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2 https://www.divyybikes.com/data
3 This move aligned Pace’s fare policy with CTA, which had previously eliminated transfers on cash fares.
restructured routes in its Fox Valley and West divisions in 2015 and combined routes in DuPage County. Pace’s performance trends over the last five years illustrate the impact of the route consolidations. Since 2011, Pace’s ridership has decreased 1.7% but passenger miles have increased by 2.1%. This means riders are taking fewer but longer trips. It also means that route restructuring that impacts ridership reporting may be inflating actual ridership losses. Long term, providing a better customer experience will result in more riders choosing transit.

Market Analysis

As stated in the previous section, fewer discretionary riders rode on the RTA system in 2015. These optional or occasional riders were the most sensitive to factors like low gas prices and changes in fare policies. This trend is evidenced by larger ridership losses during weekend and off-peak service for all three Service Boards. CTA rail recorded 0.7% ridership loss on Saturdays—a stark contrast to the 2.2% growth recorded on weekday service. CTA bus and Pace Suburban Service both experienced their largest ridership declines on Saturday and Sunday/Holiday service. In fact, Saturday ridership for Pace bus declined nearly 10% from 2014. CTA bus ridership on Saturdays declined 1.6%. Metra ridership also declined on off-peak and weekend/holidays in 2015, resulting in a 2.1% loss in total ridership for the year despite growth on peak weekday service.

CTA

CTA bus ridership weakened for the third consecutive year in 2015 while rail ridership increased enough to offset this decline, an indication that riders are indeed shifting to rail. Bus ridership losses in 2015 were not as widespread as in 2014; seven of CTA’s 14 bus route groupings recorded positive ridership growth unlike in 2014 when each group lost ridership. Route groups which grew ridership in 2015 included: South Side Downtown, South Side East-West, Far South Side, North-South Crosstowns, Midway (MDW) Feeder, Evanston, and Special.

The South Side East-West and Far South Side routes both increased their ridership in 2015. Bus routes in these groups serve as feeder routes to the CTA Red Line and carry some of the largest ridership loads on the system. Ridership on the Red Line and its feeder bus routes declined sharply in 2013 when CTA closed the southern branch (Dan Ryan) of the Red Line to rebuild 10.2 miles of track. Red Line ridership rebounded in 2014, but ridership on South Side East-West and Far South Side bus routes declined again.
and remained below 2013 levels in 2015. Red Line South ridership is increasing at a greater rate than ridership on feeder routes, so some riders may be walking, using Divvy or Uber, or another form of transit to get to Red Line stations. Overall, South Side bus and rail ridership is a strong area of growth for the CTA. South Side Downtown bus routes and Midway Airport feeder bus routes also increased in ridership. In contrast, ridership on South Side Lake Shore Drive (LSD) express bus routes declined in 2015. These losses might be attributable to growing Red Line ridership.

The Evanston bus route group recorded ridership growth of nearly 4% in 2015. Routes in this group provided alternate service to CTA Yellow Line riders while the rail line was closed for repair for nearly half the year. This explains some of the growth in 2015. However, other routes in the group with service to Old Orchard Mall in Skokie, Illinois also recorded ridership growth.

The CTA’s Special route group also saw ridership improvements in 2015. The largest increases occurred on University of Chicago-subsidized service, as well as express routes to the Museum of Science and Industry, Soldier Field, and the United Center.

Downtown, North Side Downtown, and North West Feeder bus route groups recorded significant ridership losses in 2015 concurrent to ridership growth on the Red, Purple, and Blue rail lines. In these areas train service runs parallel or overlaps with bus service. These bus route groups may also be losing riders to Divvy and Uber.

Bus routes in the Downtown route group which provide express service from Chicago’s Union Station and Ogilvie Transportation Center also lost ridership for the second consecutive year. Divvy and Uber may play a role in the ridership decline; Union Station and Ogilvie are both major origin and destination hubs for Divvy riders. The same is possible for the North West Feeder route group, which recorded ridership losses of 3.5% in 2015. This group is comprised of smaller bus routes which feed into the CTA Blue Line and Metra trains on the Union Pacific and Milwaukee Districts. Lower Metra ridership on these lines may have also impacted ridership on these bus routes.

CTA continues to listen to riders demand for quicker, more efficient service. In mid-2015, CTA, in partnership with the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), began construction on the “Loop Link” project which brings dedicated bus and bike lanes to Chicago’s central shopping and business district. CTA has reintroduced express bus service to Ashland and Western Avenues, which are high ridership routes along major traffic thoroughfares. CTA has also made significant, targeted investments to its rail infrastructure in the last four years resulting in momentous rail ridership growth. These investments include rebuilding the Red Line South in 2013 and launching Your New Blue and Red/Purple Modernization projects that replace track and signal structure and upgrade stations to be more modern and ADA accessible.
The CTA’s Brown and Yellow Lines were the only train lines which lost ridership in 2015 and both of the losses can be both attributed to construction. The Yellow Line was out of service from May into October due to an accidental embankment collapse from a construction project by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District. The Brown Line had weekend service disruptions for much of the year as the CTA worked to remove slow zones on the line. Ridership on the Blue Line increased 4.0% and the Orange, Red, Green, and Pink lines also recorded growth at or above 2.0%.

**Metra**

After two years of ridership growth, Metra recorded ridership losses on each of its 11 rail lines in 2015. The long period of low gas prices was enough to make some riders leave the system or choose to ride more infrequently. Ten-ride ticket sales also impacted ridership. As part of its fare changes in February 2015, Metra reinstated the discount on ten-ride tickets to 10 rides for the price of nine. As a result, ten-ride tickets sales increased in 2015 while monthly pass sales decreased. This impacted ridership because Metra has an open-boarding system and derives ridership results from ticket sales.

Metra’s largest ridership base is in the northern and western suburbs. The BNSF line, which serves DuPage and Kane counties, and the Union Pacific Northwest line (UP-NW), which serves northwest Cook and McHenry counties, continue to carry the most riders. The North Central Service (NCS) line, with service to northern Lake County, and Metra Electric District (MED) line, with service to southern Cook and Will counties, recorded the largest ridership losses in 2015. This was also the fifth consecutive year of declining ridership on the MED; the line has lost 10% of its ridership base since 2011 and over 20% since 2007. Despite this, the MED remains the fourth-largest Metra line in terms of ridership. The Heritage Corridor is a lower service and lower ridership line. It serves Cook and Will counties and carried 724,000 riders in 2015.

Some Metra lines have grown ridership since 2011 despite fare increases and ridership losses across the board in 2015. The NCS recorded the greatest growth during this period. Ridership on the UP-NW, UP-W, Milwaukee District North (MD-N), and SouthWest Service (SWS) lines also increased. DuPage, Will, and Cook counties increased their labor force during this time which is likely supporting the growth on the HC, UP-W, and SWS lines. The labor force in Lake County, serviced by the NCS and MD-N, has declined slightly since 2011 along with the labor force in McHenry County, served by the UP-NW. Both lines grew in riders despite a shrinking labor force. The BNSF, Union Pacific North (UP-N), Milwaukee District West (MD-W), Rock Island, and MED lines, which serve the western, southwestern, and south suburbs, have lost ridership 2012. The BNSF, MD-W, and UP-W all travel through western Cook and DuPage counties; however, only the UP-W has grown in ridership since 2011.
The cost of operating the Metra system increases every year, especially as the infrastructure gets older and requires more maintenance. Metra instituted fare changes in 2012, 2013, and 2015 to keep up with growing expenses after not doing so in the years after the recession. In raising fares, Metra also asked its riders to help support a modernization plan to replace rail cars and implement Positive Train Control (PTC). Financing for capital improvement projects is crucial given the uncertainty of state and federal funding. Large fare increases in 2012 and 2015 had an unfavorable impact on ridership in the short term given the historically low gas prices. However, moving forward with a plan for smaller, regular fare increases enables Metra to make long-term investments in rider safety and comfort that will improve the commuter experience and attract more riders to the system.

Pace Suburban Service

Pace recorded losses on eight of its nine Pace-owned fixed-route divisions in 2015. Ridership also declined on Pace private contract service. Ridership losses were widespread across the region—the result of low gas prices and the elimination of cash transfers that took place in 2014. Pace ridership was also impacted by ridership trends at the other Service Boards, as many Pace routes provide feeder service to CTA and Metra train stations.

Pace’s largest year over year losses were recorded on the Fox Valley Division which serves the suburbs of Aurora and Naperville in Kane County. Ridership on Fox Valley routes lost a combined 17.9% of riders in 2015, driven by large losses on bus routes feeding into Metra’s BNSF line. BNSF ridership fell 1.5% in 2015. The #524 West Aurora was the only BNSF feeder route to record ridership gains in 2015. This bus route also provides service to Hollywood Casino in downtown Aurora.

Pace’s River, North, North Shore, and South Divisions recorded 5% or greater losses in 2015. Ridership on bus routes in the River Division declined by a total of 9.1% during the year. The largest losses occurred on downtown Elgin routes that feed the Milwaukee District West (MD-W) line which also lost ridership in 2015. The #550 Elgin Transportation Center–Crystal Lake bus route that services the Milwaukee District West (MD-W) Big Timber station was the only River Division route to increase ridership during the year. The North and North Shore Divisions operate in Lake County and northern Cook County, respectively. North Division ridership declined 6.7% in 2015, led by large declines on downtown Waukegan routes. Within the North Division, shuttle bus service from the Metra Milwaukee District North (MD-N) and Union Pacific North (UP-N) stations to Capital One and CDW companies, recorded notably strong ridership growth. The #573 Green Bay Road also saw strong ridership growth.
In the North Shore Division, ridership fell 7.0% from 2014. Large losses were recorded on Pace routes feeding into the CTA’s Yellow Line. The Yellow Line was closed for half of 2015, driving down both CTA and Pace ridership. North Shore shuttle bus services to and from Metra Milwaukee District North (MD-N) stations also performed poorly in 2015, consistent with ridership losses on Metra’s MD-N in 2015. The South Division, which operates in southern Cook and DuPage counties, also saw its ridership decline. Ridership losses were greatest on routes that feed into Metra Electric District (MED) stations, which have steadily lost ridership over the last five years.

Pace’s Heritage Corridor was the only division to record favorable ridership growth in 2015. The Heritage Corridor is Pace’s smallest division behind Fox Valley. Its ridership increased 0.6% in 2015 to 1.2 million passenger trips. This growth was driven by increases on I-55 Bus-On-Shoulder routes which originate at Pace Park-n-Ride facilities and travel express along I-55 to downtown Chicago. The #855 Plainfield-- East Loop Express was the only express bus-on-shoulder service in this division which lost riders in 2015. Local service routes originating in Joliet and Plainfield also saw ridership declines. The Heritage Corridor has also been an area of strong ridership growth for Metra in recent years.

Overall, express service performed well for Pace, confirming that riders respond positively to quick, efficient service. Pace South Division routes that feed into CTA’s 95th Street Terminal were an area of positive growth as were express routes in the Southwest Division which connect the Southwest Suburbs to the CTA’s Blue Line and to Pace’s Northwest Transportation Center in the City of Schaumburg. Pace continues to invest in express and Bus-on-Shoulder service as demand for these routes increases. The Agency has plans to implement a network of 24 Arterial Rapid Transit (ART) routes called Pulse service. The first Pulse route will open in 2017 and run along Milwaukee Avenue between Golf Mill Shopping Center in Niles, Illinois and the Jefferson Park Transit Center in Chicago.

**Pace ADA Paratransit**

ADA Paratransit ridership grew by 2.7% in 2015. Chicago ADA Paratransit trips made up the bulk of the service; but, suburban ridership is growing at a higher rate than city ridership. Historically, growth in ADA Paratransit trips has been around 5% year over year; however, growth has slowed in the past two years. This slowing of ridership growth is most visible for Chicago ADA Paratransit trips. In 2015, Chicago service increased just 1.9% while Suburban ADA Paratransit trips increased nearly 6%. Included in total ADA Paratransit ridership numbers are the trips Pace provides to and from RTA ADA Paratransit Eligibility Certification sites. Pace recorded fewer trips of this nature in 2015, another indication that growth may be slowing somewhat.
THE REGION IN 2015

Unemployment

The regional unemployment rate improved for the first three quarters of 2015, falling to 5.6% in September. Unemployment grew in the fourth quarter of the year, increasing to 5.8% in December; still, this marked an improvement of 0.5 percentage points year-over-year.

The underemployment rate, a measure of the workers who are over-qualified or part-time despite seeking full-time, high-skill employment, decreased by 1.8 percentage points year-over-year to 10.9% at the end of 2015. This figure remains high when compared to the pre-2008 level of about 9.0%, but has improved significantly from the high of 18.0% recorded in 2010.
Employment

In December 2015 there were 3.6 million jobs in the region, 26,200 or 0.8% more than in December 2014. The 12-month moving average of regional jobs shows steady improvement and is now 6.0% greater than 2011 levels.

Labor Force

There were 3.8 million individuals in the region’s labor force in 2015, a decrease of 0.1% from prior year. This loss was driven by a 0.3% decline in workers in Cook County in 2015. Cook County, which includes the City of Chicago, is the main driver of the region’s economy, making up 61.4% of the labor force.

The collar counties of DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will account for the other 38.5%. Will, Lake, and Kane counties all recorded labor force growth in 2015 while DuPage and McHenry’s labor force remained flat to prior year.
Sales Tax Collections

Over 40% of total RTA system revenue for operations comes from sales tax collected in the six-county region. RTA sales tax consists of 1.25% on retail sales in Cook County and 0.5% on retail sales in the collar counties.

Total sales tax collections for the RTA region equaled $1.17 billion in 2015, 4.0% greater than the 2014 result of $1.12 billion. Sales tax collections in Suburban Cook County generated the most revenue in 2015, accounting for $541 million. The City of Chicago generated $363 million in sales tax revenue in 2015 and the collar counties made up the remaining $265 million.

Fuel Prices

Fuel prices began falling in late 2014 and remained low throughout 2015. The average annual cost for a gallon of gas in the region in 2015 was $2.67, nearly $1.00 less than in 2014. When fuel prices are low, the cost of operating a car decreases, making driving more attractive and less of a cost burden to commuters. The lower cost of fuel may have contributed to some of the ridership losses recorded in 2015.
Temperature

Temperatures in the region trended above average for most of the year and were significantly warmer than 2014, particularly in the fourth quarter. The first quarter was 6.1 degrees warmer on average than the first quarter of 2014, but 1.2 degrees colder than the historical average. Temperatures tracked a few degrees warmer than average and prior year in the second and third quarters and finished the year more than 8.0 degrees warmer than average and prior year.
CTA Bus

In 2015 there were 130 CTA bus routes in operation. These routes were assigned to 14 route groups signifying the territories in which they operate. The map below illustrates ridership levels by route group. Higher columns indicate greater ridership. The lines on the map represent CTA bus routes. Darker shading denotes greater population density.
CTA buses service 1,307 route miles. Cross-town North-South and East-West routes cover the most territory within CTA’s service area and carry the largest share of CTA bus riders.

CTA bus ridership totaled 274.3 million passenger trips in 2015, down 0.7% from prior year. CTA bus ridership was impacted in 2015 by low gas prices and the popularity of alternative transportation options such as Uber, Lyft, and Divvy bike share. CTA bus ridership has also declined in light of customers’ growing preference for rail service. Rail ridership now accounts for 47% of CTA system ridership, up from 38% in 2008. This trend towards rail is also occurring at CTA’s peer agencies and is not unique to CTA.

The North-South Crosstowns bus route group recorded the highest ridership in 2015, tallying 69.3 million unlinked trips; but routes in the North Side East-West route group carry more riders per mile despite having lower total ridership. West Side East-West, North Side Downtown, South Side East-West, and South Side Downtown bus route groups also carry more riders per mile than the North-South Crosstowns routes, which cover more than 250 route miles in the CTA service area. The Special and Midway (MDW) Feeder route groups tallied fewer than 2.0 million unlinked passenger trips in 2015. Special routes carry the fewest riders per mile.

In 2015, seven of the 14 bus route groups saw positive ridership gains. This is a marked improvement over 2014, when every route group recorded ridership losses. The Special and Evanston route groups experienced the greatest ridership growth, with ridership on routes in these two groups increasing by 3.8% and 3.7%, respectively. Bus ridership also increased on the South Side of the CTA’s service area, with Far South Side, South Side East-West, South Side Downtown, and North-South Crosstowns route groups performing...
positively in 2015. In contrast, Downtown, Northside Downtown, and Northwest Feeder bus route groups experienced the greatest ridership losses, declining by 7.0%, 4.8% and 3.5%, respectively.

**Top Five**

Bus routes experiencing the greatest ridership growth percentage in 2015 included the #30 South Chicago, #96 Lunt, #165 West 65th, #39 Pershing and the #111A Pullman Shuttle. The #30 South Chicago and #111A Pullman Shuttle are both in the Far South Side route group, which recorded total ridership gains of 0.9% in 2015. The #39 Pershing is a route in the South Side East-West route group. The route experienced growth of 13.4% in 2015. Ridership on route #39 increased due to the CTA adding weekend service on the route as part of a 180-day experiment. While ridership increased, CTA determined that this growth was not enough to constitute extending Sunday service permanently. The #165 West 65th bus route recorded 10.4% growth, contributing to the growth recorded by the Midway (MDW) Feeder route group. Ridership growth on route #96 Lunt equaled 9.9% year-over-year, however the North Side East-West route group still recorded a slight ridership decline of 0.1% as larger routes in the group like the #73 Armitage, #74 Fullerton, #78 Montrose, #80 Irving Park, and #81 Lawrence lost ridership in 2015.
Bus routes experiencing the greatest ridership losses in 2015 included the #132 Goose Island Express, #85A North Central, #56 Milwaukee, #124 Navy Pier, and the #18 16th/18th. The #124 and #56 were highly impacted by Loop Link construction in 2015. The #132 Goose Island Express experienced the largest decline in 2015, as ridership was impacted by service reroutes. The #85A North Central, #56 Milwaukee, #124 Navy Pier, and #18 16th/18th are classified in the Northwest Feeder, North South Downtown, Downtown, and West Side East-West, respectively; all of their route groups experienced ridership declines in 2015.

**Weekday vs. Weekend Service**

CTA bus ridership declined on weekday, Saturday, and Sunday/Holiday service in 2015. Saturday service saw the greatest decline in riders, falling 1.6% to 28.2 million unlinked passenger trips. Weekday service, which accounts for the majority of bus trips, was just slightly unfavorable to prior year, declining by 0.1% to 221.1 million unlinked passenger trips. Saturday ridership also declined on CTA rail.

The #9 Ashland bus in the North-South Crosstowns route group recorded the greatest weekday and Saturday ridership with 7 million annual unlinked passenger trips recorded on weekdays and 1 million trips recorded on Saturday during the year. The #79 79th Street bus in the South Side East-West route group tallied the second highest ridership for weekday and Saturday service with 6.8 million total annual trips during the week and 1 million on Saturdays. For Sunday/Holiday service the #79 79th Street bus eclipsed the #9 Ashland by 35,000 trips, reaching 857,000 passenger trips during the year. In addition, the #66 Chicago (West-Side East-West ), #49 Western (North-South Crosstowns), and #77 Belmont (North Side East-West) each tallied more than 5 million passenger trips during weekday service. These routes also tallied larger weekend ridership along with the #151 Sheridan and #22 Clark buses, both routes that originate on the North Side of the city and end in Downtown Chicago.
The #30 South Chicago, #39 Pershing, #111A Pullman Shuttle, and #172 University of Chicago/Kenwood bus routes, serving the South Side of Chicago, recorded the greatest weekday and weekend ridership gains despite overall ridership losses on the CTA bus system. Additionally, bus route #59 59th/61st, a smaller route in the South Side East-West group traveling from the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago to Midway Airport, recorded a decline in Saturday ridership while Sunday/Holiday ridership nearly doubled year over year. The #22 Clark, #36 Broadway, #63 63rd, #66 Chicago, #146 Inner Drive/Michigan Express and #151 Sheridan are large bus routes, each providing more than 1 million annual trips on weekends alone, that recorded significant weekday and weekend ridership losses in 2015.
CTA Rail

The CTA rail system consists of eight transit routes or lines, plus Loop service, which operate at 145 stations in the City of Chicago and surrounding suburbs. The map below illustrates ridership levels by rail line. Taller lines indicate greater ridership. Darker shading denotes greater population density.
CTA rail recorded 241.7 million unlinked passenger station entries in 2015, an increase of 1.6% over 2014. Of these 241.7 million station entries, 198 million can be attributed to specific rail lines. The other 44 million trips are classified as rail-to-rail transfers on shared platforms. Red Line ridership made up 39.8% of riders, tallying 78.8 million station entries. The Blue Line accounted for 23.6% of total rail ridership, with 46.8 million station entries. Loop Service and the other rail lines accounted for the remaining 36.6% of ridership in 2015.

The CTA Blue Line experienced the greatest ridership growth in 2015, increasing by 4.0%. Blue Line ridership growth was driven by increases in station entries on the O’Hare and Dearborn Subway branches of the rail line. The O’Hare branch has grown by nearly 6 million entries or 27% over the last 5 years; a trend that is likely to carry forward as it is estimated that the construction of over 1,000 new residential units are currently underway within walking distance of its stations. Ridership on the Blue Line Forest Park branch was flat to prior year. The Pink Line also saw substantial ridership gains, growing by 3.5%. Pink Line growth was driven by increases in station entries at the 18th street, Polk, Damen, Western, California, Kedzie, Cicero, and 54th/Cermak stations.
The Yellow and Brown Lines were the only lines to lose ridership in 2015. The Yellow Line saw its ridership decline by 52% when service was suspended for five and half months after an embankment adjacent to the tracks collapsed from external construction work. Service remained suspended while the embankment was rebuilt. CTA provided riders with alternative bus service during the line closure. Ridership on the Brown Line fell by 2.9% in 2015, driven by fewer entries at the Sedgwick, Armitage, Chicago/Franklin, Kedzie, and Diversey stations. Ridership on the Brown Line fell by 2.9% in 2015, driven by intermittent weekend service disruptions and reroutes as CTA worked to remove slow zones on the line.

Top Five

The Randolph/Wabash and Adams/Wabash stations in the Loop experienced the greatest station entry growth in 2015, with ridership increasing by over 30% at both stations. The nearby Madison/Wabash station was closed for construction for most of 2015, resulting in riders using the Randolph and Adams stations as alternatives and driving up ridership at these stations.

Ultimately, one new station, scheduled to open in 2016, will be constructed at Washington and Wabash, replacing both the Randolph and Madison stations. The O'Hare Airport station on the Blue Line grew by over half a million entries (15.3%) in 2015, driven by increased air travel at the airport. The California/Milwaukee and Damen/Milwaukee stations also increased by 22.5% and 20.3% as riders returned to these stations following construction-related declines in 2014. These California and Damen stations were closed for rehab for part of 2014 which helps to explain the large ridership gains. In addition, the Morgan-Lake Green Line station (opened in 2012), California-Cermak station on the Pink Line, and Harrison Red Line and Linden Purple Line stations experienced significant ridership gains in 2015.
The largest ridership losses for CTA rail were driven by closures. The Madison/Wabash station in the Loop was closed starting in March 2015 for construction, resulting in a more than 80% decline in station entries. The Madison/Wabash station was closed permanently in March 2015 as construction began on the new Washington/Wabash station, expected to open in 2017. The Madison/Wabash station lost 80% of its entries in 2015 but these entries were picked up at nearby stations. With the Yellow Line closed from May to November of the year, entries at the Dempster and Oakton stations were also down considerably year over year.

Station entries at the Western/Milwaukee station on the Blue Line fell as riders returned to nearby California and Damen stations following construction-related service disruptions in 2014. The 63rd Street station on the Dan Ryan Branch and the 63rd Street stations on the Green Line’s Halsted and Ashland branches saw declines in ridership due to CDOT bridge construction at 63rd and the Dan Ryan Expressway and a resulting reroute of CTA’s #63rd Street bus. Beyond the “Top 5,” ridership also declined by nearly 8% at the Halsted/63rd street and Ashland/63rd Street stations on the Green Line. The Pulaski-Lake station on the Green Line and Sedgwick and Armitage stations on the Brown Line were also among the stations to lose the most ridership in 2015.
Weekday vs. Weekend Service

Weekday ridership on CTA rail, which accounts for the majority of rail trips, grew by 2.2% in 2015 to more than 160 million station entries. Sunday/Holiday ridership also increased, growing 0.7% to more than 17 million entries. In contrast, Saturday ridership declined in 2015, falling 1.5% to 20 million entries. CTA bus also saw a decline in Saturday ridership. The Lake/State station in the Red Line's State Street Subway recorded the greatest ridership for weekday, Saturday, and Sunday/Holiday in 2015 with greater than 5.6 million total annual station entries recorded on weekdays, 750,000 annual station entries on Saturday, and 615,000 entries on Sunday/Holiday.

The Clark/Lake station in the Loop, with 5.2 million station entries, Chicago/State on the Red Line, 4.0 million entries, and the Fullerton and Belmont Red Line stations, with more than 3.2 million station entries each, recorded the next highest number of station entries for weekday service on the CTA rail system in 2015. The Chicago/State - Red and Belmont - Red were also in the “Top 5” for station entries on weekends and holidays. The Grand/State - Red, Roosevelt - Red, and O’Hare Airport - Blue stations were also among the “Top 5” for station entries on the weekends and holidays. The Central-Evanston, South Boulevard, Halsted/63rd Street - Green, King Drive - Green, Kostner - Pink, and Oakton-Skokie station on the Yellow Line recorded the fewest number of station entries for both weekday and weekend/holiday service, with fewer than 220,000 total annual station entries on weekdays and less than 25,000 annual station entries on Saturday or Sunday/Holiday.

The Adams/Wabash and Randolph/Wabash Loop stations recorded the large weekday and weekend ridership gains due to the closure of the nearby Madison/Wabash station for most of the year. The California/Milwaukee Blue Line station recorded significant ridership gains on weekday service and saw the greatest ridership gains of all CTA rail stations for weekend service. The Western Blue Line station, the next station after California in the direction of O’Hare Airport, recorded losses in 2015 which were
significantly higher on weekend service than during the week. Weekend track work at the Damen and California/Milwaukee stations in 2014 resulted in many riders boarding at the Western station instead; inflating ridership figures at Western in 2014. With the work complete in 2015, station entries returned to more normal levels at Western and at California. The Chicago/Franklin, Armitage, and Sedgwick stations on the Brown Line each recorded over 30% fewer station entries on weekends in 2015 compared to weekday service which was down by less than 5.0%. Weekend track work closed some Brown Line stations intermittently in 2015 which explains why ridership was down on weekends.
METRA RIDERSHIP RESULTS

The Metra commuter rail system is comprised of 11 rail lines which operate in the six-county RTA region. Metra recorded 81.6 million annual unlinked passenger trips in 2015, 2.1% less than prior year. Metra anticipated some ridership loss in 2015 due to low gas prices and, to a lesser degree, a fare increase. The map below illustrates ridership levels by Metra rail line. Taller lines indicate greater ridership. Darker shading denotes greater population density.
The BNSF Railway (BNSF) is Metra’s highest ridership line, recording 16.4 million unlinked passenger trips in 2015. It provides daily service to Kane County, with stops in Chicago, western Cook and DuPage counties. The Union Pacific Northwest, Union Pacific North, and Metra Electric District lines are the next highest ridership lines, totaling 11.3 million, 9.2 million, and 9.1 million passenger trips in 2015, respectively. The Union Pacific Northwest and North lines provide service to northern Cook, McHenry County, and Lake County. The Metra Electric District services the Southside of Chicago, South Suburban Cook, and Will County. The North Central Service (NCS) and Heritage Corridor (HC) are Metra’s lowest ridership lines and have the lowest frequency of service, recording 1.8 million and 724,000 unlinked passenger trips in 2015. The NCS line services northern Cook and Lake County while the Heritage Corridor (HC) travels through Cook and Will Counties, terminating in Joliet, Illinois.

The BNSF line has the highest ridership of all Metra rail lines, but it does not have the highest rider density. Notably, it is the Heritage Corridor (HC), Metra’s smallest line, and the Metra Electric District (MED), which lost a sizable number of riders in the last five years, which log the highest number of passenger miles per vehicle mile.
Ridership declined on every train line in 2015, with the greatest ridership losses recorded on the North Central Service (NCS), and the Metra Electric District (MED). This was the fifth consecutive year of ridership loss on the Metra Electric District, with the line losing nearly 10% of its ridership base since 2011. The NCS recorded the greatest growth in 2014, growing by 7.9%. Despite the losses in 2015, ridership of 1.8 million remains greater than 2013 ridership results. Since 2007, ridership on the line has increased by nearly 400,000 passenger trips.

Weekday vs. Weekend Service

Weekday ridership during peak travel periods, which accounts for 71% of Metra trips, increased in 2015 despite the overall ridership decline on the system. Ridership losses on Saturdays and Sundays as well as during weekday off-peak service hours drove the 2.1% ridership decline on the system. Ridership losses during off-peak and weekend hours suggest that discretionary (i.e., optional or occasional) riders were more sensitive to lower gas prices, and to a lesser degree, the fare increase than daily commuters.
Pace Suburban Service

Pace Suburban Service recorded 33.1 million annual unlinked passenger trips in 2015, a decrease of 4.9% from prior year. This was the second consecutive year of ridership loss for Suburban Service. As with CTA and Metra, Pace ridership in 2015 was negatively impacted by low gas prices. The map below illustrates ridership levels for each of the nine divisions. Higher columns indicate greater ridership. The lines on the map represent Pace bus routes. Darker shading denotes greater population density.
Pace Suburban Service is comprised of fixed-route, Dial-a-Ride, and vanpool service. Pace’s fixed-route service operates 209 routes in more than 202 communities in the six-county RTA region. There are nine Pace-owned fixed-route service divisions.

**Fixed-Route Service**

**Pace-owned Service**

Pace-owned fixed-route service recorded 28.1 million annual unlinked passenger trips in 2015. The West Division, operating in western Cook County and DuPage County, recorded the highest ridership of all Pace-owned fixed-route service divisions, providing 6.9 million rides. The South Division, serving Cook and DuPage counties and the Northwest Division, which serves Des Plaines and the northwestern suburbs of Cook County, were the next highest ridership routes, recording 6.0 million and 5.0 million rides, respectively. The Fox Valley and Heritage Divisions served the fewest riders in 2015, recording 617,000 trips.
and 1.2 million trips, respectively. The Fox Valley division serves the Aurora and Naperville areas in Kane County and the Heritage Division serves south suburban Will County.

Eight of Pace’s nine fixed-route divisions lost ridership in 2015. Pace’s Heritage Division was the only division to grow ridership in 2015, increasing by 0.6% compared to 2014. In contrast, the Fox Valley Division experienced the greatest ridership losses, decreasing by 17.9%. These losses came after the route saw its ridership decline by 9.0% in 2014. The River Division is another route network that saw its ridership drop significantly in 2015, decreasing by 9.1%.

**Top Five and Weekday vs. Weekend Service**

Weekday service on Pace bus, which accounts for 87% of fixed-route trips, saw ridership decline 5.5% in 2015. Ridership also declined on Saturday and Sunday/Holiday service. Saturdays saw the largest ridership decline, with passenger trips on fixed-route buses falling 9.9% compared to 2014. This large decrease in ridership on Pace’s Saturday service coincided with declines of a lesser magnitude on the CTA. Over 40% of Pace riders transfer from Pace buses to the CTA, therefore Pace’s ridership is very closely linked to CTA’s ridership trends.

Pace’s top performing routes in 2015 were well distributed around the region. The #352 Halsted (South Division) and #381 95th St. (Southwest Division) which both feed into the CTA 95th Street Terminal, and the #290 Touhy Ave. (Northwest Division), #270 Milwaukee Ave. (Northwest Division), and #307 Harlem Ave. (West Division) bus routes recorded the greatest weekday ridership for Pace fixed-route service during the year. These routes were also high performers for Saturday and Sunday/Holiday service, along with the #349 South Western (South Division) and #250 Dempster St. (Northwest Division) bus routes.
Contracted Service

Pace provides municipal contracted service subsidized by the City of Highland Park and the Village of Niles. Contracted service to the Village of Downers Grove was suspended in 2014. Pace also contracts directly with three private transit providers for fixed-route service in 28 different communities, which is mainly funded by the Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) program.

Total ridership for Pace’s contracted service totaled 2.6 million in 2015, a decline of 7.8%. This comes after ridership on contracted service grew by 14.2% in 2014. The elimination of the Downers Grove service played a role in the ridership decline; however, this service supported the fewest riders. The Village of Highland Park service, which recorded 375,000 trips in 2015, saw its ridership fall 12.8% during the year. The Village of Niles service also declined, falling 3.9% to 276,000 trips. Ridership on Private Contract Services grew 2.2% to 1.3 million but was not enough to offset the ridership losses on municipal service.
Vanpool, Dial-a-Ride, Taxi Access Program

In addition to Fixed-route and Contracted Service, Pace operates Vanpool, Dial-a-Ride, and Taxi Access programs. Dial-a-Ride is a door-to-door service that is contracted by a municipality and operated by Pace. Vanpool is a Pace-sponsored car sharing program in which 5-13 people share a Pace van to travel to and from work. Each rider pays a monthly fare based on distance and number of participants. Taxi Access is a reduced rate taxi program for RTA-certified ADA Paratransit customers that operates within the City of Chicago.

Dial-a-Ride recorded 4.9% ridership loss in 2015, with ridership declining to 940,000 unlinked passenger trips. This nearly 5% decline is on top of the 15% loss in riders that was recorded in 2014 after Pace reduced some of its Dial-a-Ride programs. Vanpool also recorded ridership losses in 2015, falling 4.5% to 2.1 million unlinked passenger trips. Vanpool ridership is particularly sensitive to low gas prices. When the cost of gas is lower, the demand for cost-saving car-pooling transportation options also declines. Ridership on Taxi Access increased in 2015, after two years of falling ridership, increasing 3.4% to 32,000 unlinked passenger trips.

ADA Paratransit Service

Ridership on ADA Paratransit service increased 2.7% in 2015 to 4.2 million unlinked passenger trips. Ridership growth was driven by increases on both City of Chicago and Suburban ADA Paratransit service. Chicago service represents 76.6% of ADA Paratransit trips, with 3.2 million trips recorded in 2015. Suburban service accounts for just 22.4% of total ADA Paratransit service, but recorded higher ridership growth than the City of Chicago in 2015.
FARE HISTORY

The chart on the following page illustrates all fare increases and adjustments at CTA, Metra, Pace Suburban Service, and Pace ADA Paratransit from 2000 to 2015. Metra was the only agency to increase fares in 2015. CTA, Metra, and Pace launched the mobile Ventra application in November 2015, providing riders with a universal fare instrument to access CTA, Metra, and Pace. With the app, riders can manage their Ventra accounts, add transit value to their Ventra Card, and buy and use Metra mobile tickets.

- Over the fifteen-year period, CTA had four fare increases; in 2004, 2006, 2009, and 2013. In 2013, CTA increased the price of its 1-day, 3-day, 7-day, and 30-day passes and added a $2.75 surcharge for rides originating at O’Hare Airport. Single ride reduced fare for seniors and disabled persons (not in the Benefit Access Program) increased to $1.00 for bus and $1.10 for rail, bringing the federally-mandated reduced fare program back to a half fare. The fare for high school students was reduced from $0.85 to $0.75. In addition, CTA introduced a new $3.00 single-ride Ventra ticket which includes two transfers.

- Metra implemented fare increases in 2002, 2006, 2008, 2012, and 2015. In addition to these fare increases, Metra made a fare adjustment in 2010 which raised the price of one-way fares and weekend pass tickets and increased the on-board purchasing penalty to $3.00. Metra also instituted a fare policy change in 2013, eliminating the discount on the 10-ride ticket. This policy change was reversed in 2015 and the discount was restored.

- Pace Suburban Service increased fares in 2000, 2001, and 2009. The fare increase in 2009 raised the full-price fare to $1.75 with a $0.25 transfer. The cost of vanpool service also increased at this time. In 2014, Pace eliminated the $0.25 transfer for cash fares in an effort to get more riders to move to using Ventra.

Fares for Pace ADA Paratransit increased in 2009 to $3.00 for both Chicago and Suburban ADA Paratransit service.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>1/1/02</td>
<td>5% increase on all fares; on-board purchase penalty now $2.00.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>4/10/01</td>
<td>Fare increased to match CTA ($1.50 = $0.30 transfer).</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1/1/04</td>
<td>Fare increased from $1.50 to $1.75; cost of transfer reduced to $0.25. Reduced fare increased to $2.50 with Transit Card. CTA began promoting Chicago Card with embedded chip.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>1/1/06</td>
<td>Cash fare increased to $2.00. No change for Transit Card/Chicago Card users.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2/1/08</td>
<td>10% increase on all fares ($10 million revenue per year allocated to Capital Projects).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1/1/09</td>
<td>Bus fare increased to $2.00. Rail fare increased to $2.25. Cash fare increased to $2.25. 7-day pass increased to $23.00. 30-day pass increased to $86.00. U-pass fares increased 15%. 1/1/09</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2/1/10</td>
<td>One-Way fares increased 6%. Weekend ticket prices increased from $5.00 to $7.00. Onboard purchase penalty now $3.00. Quarter-rounding of fares introduced.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>2/1/12</td>
<td>25% increase in average fare (15.7% One-Way, 30% Ten-Ride, 29.4% monthly). One-Way tickets valid for 14 days; not eligible for refund. Monthly tickets valid only for the month issued and refund subject to $5.00 handling fee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1/14/13</td>
<td>Single-ride rail fare from OHare Airport increased to $5.00. 1-day pass increased to $10.00. 3-day pass increased to $20.00. 7-day pass increased to $28.00. 30-day pass increased to $100.00. CTA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>2/1/13</td>
<td>“10 rides for the price of 9” discount on 10-ride ticket discontinued.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>7/1/2014</td>
<td>$0.25 transfer eliminated on cash fares. $0.25 transfer only eligible w/ Ventra card.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>2/1/15</td>
<td>10.8% increase in average fare. 10.8% increase in Full-fare Monthly. Reduced-fare One-Way tickets increased 11.1% to 22.3%, depending on the zone. Reduced-fare 10-ride tickets increased 3-10%. Reduced-fare Monthly increased 11.1% to 22.2%, depending on the zone. “10 rides for the price of 9” discount on 10-ride ticket reinstated. Grace period on monthly tickets restored; now valid on the first business day of the following month until noon. One-Way tickets are good for 90 days, instead of 14. Onboard purchase penalty increased to $5 from $3. Price of a weekend pass increased to $8 from $7.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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