



Regional
Transportation
Authority

Peer Regional Review

Report Year 2020

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Executive Summary

The regional peer report card was developed to provide context to the performance of the Chicago region's transit service by relating it to comparable peer regions from across the country. To accomplish this goal, the Regional Peer Review incorporates data reported to the National Transit Database (NTD) by all transit agencies that receive federal funding. This report includes NTD data for report year 2020, the most currently available, which was published in November 2021.

Peer regions were selected based on population, so that the top ten US metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) are represented: Atlanta, Boston, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC, with the Chicago metropolitan area being the third-largest. For each of the top ten regions, the main transit operators were determined to best represent each region's public transportation service.

COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic on March 11, 2020. In the following days, each of the peer regions included in this report implemented a variety of stay-at-home orders and sweeping mandates that restricted business operations and functions to essential activities. Public transportation ridership took an immediate plunge and stayed historically low in the ensuing months as work and social trips continued to be curtailed; additionally, social unrest activities throughout the summer of 2020 negatively impacted service provision and demand. The pandemic's impact on public transportation ridership remains significant; at the time of this report (early 2022) systemwide ridership has improved to roughly half of pre-pandemic levels.

Agencies dealt with the COVID-19 in a variety of ways which directly affected their operations and ability to accurately report performance. Reducing or eliminating service hours, eliminating fares, implementing rear boarding, and instituting capacity restrictions were a few strategies to deal with the pandemic and attempt to maintain service for those who relied on it while protecting riders and operators. In addition to service changes, agencies increased sanitization procedures, which significantly increased operating cost and put additional strain on already-reduced work forces. Capital work was also constrained, as worker shortages and supply chain issues limited the ability to work on projects, although some agencies attempted to boost their capital project progress while ridership remained low.

The impacts of the pandemic on public transit provision and usage have been significant and will likely continue to impact most performance results for years to come.

This report is based on published data from the National Transit Database (NTD) to ensure as much comparability between agencies in definition and collection of data elements as possible. Data submission by transit agencies is a requirement of receiving federal funding and thus

follows guidelines and procedures established by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Although this report reflects the 2020 report year for each agency, the time period that constitutes the 2020 report year varies by agency. Chicago and New York transit agencies use the calendar year as their NTD report year, while other regions use their state fiscal year as their NTD report year. Accordingly, the other regions' 2020 report year reflects performance for either July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020 or October 1, 2019 – September 30, 2020, and as such does not reflect as much of the downward trend related to the COVID pandemic as is reflected in the Chicago and New York performance data. Thus, peer comparisons for measures that reflect service, operating cost, and fare revenue are not reasonable; **results are stated herein to maintain continuity of the performance reporting effort and to provide general information regarding each agency's operations.**

Peer Selection

The peer group selected for use in the Regional Peer Review consists of the top ten metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) as defined by the US Bureau of the Census: Chicago, Atlanta, Boston, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC. Population and land area data correlate to each MSA region. For consistency with the six-county RTA area, the main transit properties serving each MSA were included in this report.

PEER AGENCIES INCLUDED WITHIN METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREAS

Geographic Region	Transit Agencies Included
Chicago	Chicago Transit Authority, Metra, Pace
Atlanta	Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, CobbLinc
Boston	Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
Dallas/Fort Worth	Dallas Area Rapid Transit, Fort Worth Transportation Authority
Houston	Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County
Los Angeles	Access Services, Foothill Transit, Long Beach Transit, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Los Angeles Department of Transportation, Montebello Bus Lines, Omnitrans, Orange County Transportation Authority, Riverside Transit Agency, Santa Monica Big Blue Bus, Southern California Regional Rail Authority
Miami	Broward County Transit, Miami-Dade Transit, PalmTran, South Florida Regional Transportation Authority
New York	All Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) operating agencies (Long Island Rail Road, Metro-North Commuter Railroad, MTA Bus, New York City Transit, Staten Island Railway), Nassau Inter-County Express, New York City Department of Transportation, Port Authority Trans-Hudson, Suffolk County Transportation Division, Westchester County Bee-Line System
Philadelphia	Port Authority Transit Corporation, Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority
Washington, DC	City of Alexandria DASH, Ride-On Montgomery County Transit, Virginia Railway Express, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Notes/Methodology

1. To address differences resulting from the use of varying report year time periods, this report omits agency performance rankings and instead illustrates percentage changes from the last report year, and the actual results for the current report year. Additionally, results for the Chicago and New York regions are shown physically separated from the other regions' results to reflect their different reporting time frame.
2. The fare recovery ratio used in this report follows the NTD definition, which is the proportion of operating costs that are covered by fare revenues paid by passengers. The NTD recovery ratio differs from the RTA recovery ratio, which takes into account certain adjustments as enumerated in the RTA Act such as the exclusion of various costs, the treatment of depreciation, and the inclusion of in-kind services.
3. The use of the metropolitan statistical area (MSA) was selected as the standard representation for each urban area and has been incorporated into this report for both population and square mileage data. *Source: Cumulative Estimates of Resident Population Change and Rankings: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2020. U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, accessed December 14, 2021.*
4. New Jersey Transit, which serves both the New York and Philadelphia regions, has been excluded from this and prior year reports because there is no way to disaggregate the data between the two urban areas. As a result, there is some under-representation of transit service for these urban areas. Similarly, the Maryland Transit Administration, which primarily serves the Baltimore region and also serves the DC area, has not been included in this or prior reports as its operating data cannot be divided among the DC and Baltimore metropolitan statistical areas. As a result, Washington, DC metropolitan area transit service is slightly understated.
5. In the instances where a reporting agency did not provide a revenue vehicle's useful life benchmark, the default Federal Transit Administration (FTA) benchmark specific to each revenue vehicle type was used for peer agency calculations.

Peer Characteristics

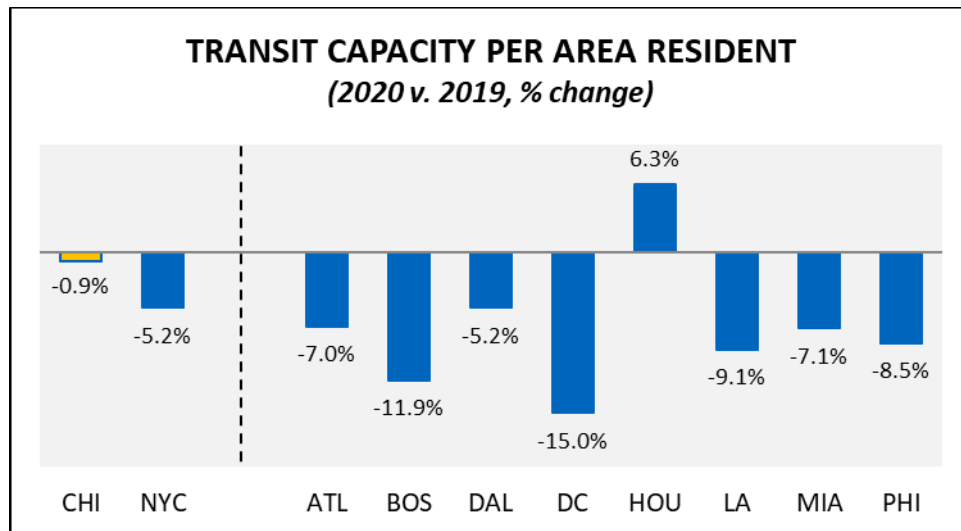
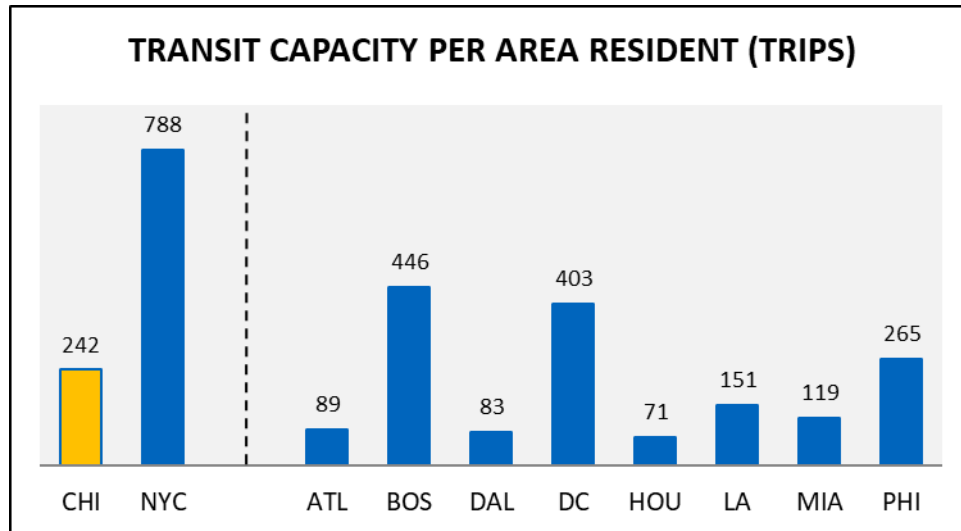
2020	CHICAGO	ATLANTA	BOSTON	DALLAS	HOUSTON	LOS ANGELES	MIAMI	NEW YORK	PHILADELPHIA	WASHINGTON, DC
Population Ranking	3	9	10	4	5	2	7	1	8	6
Population (thousands)	9,407	6,088	4,878	7,694	7,154	13,110	6,173	19,124	6,108	6,325
Square Miles	7,197	8,339	3,487	8,928	8,827	4,848	4,602	6,687	5,077	5,598
Population Density	1,307	730	1,399	862	810	2,704	1,341	2,860	1,203	1,130
Vehicle Revenue Miles (millions)	199	59	84	58	64	248	90	624	87	145
Passenger Trips (millions)	231	93	277	55	65	425	88	1,769	246	296
Passenger Miles (millions)	1,259	544	1,274	344	388	2,400	552	8,222	1,127	1,457
Operating Cost (millions)	\$2,545	\$517	\$1,557	\$659	\$588	\$3,084	\$910	\$12,663	\$1,357	\$2,261
Fare Revenue (millions)	\$360	\$102	\$545	\$51	\$37	\$374	\$78	\$2,751	\$363	\$544
Capital Funds Expended (millions)	\$900	\$277	\$984	\$278	\$145	\$2,464	\$333	\$5,437	\$533	\$775
Average Trip Length (miles)	5.5	5.9	4.6	6.3	6.0	5.7	6.3	4.6	4.6	4.9
Average Vehicle Passenger Capacity	62.4	53.8	118.5	69.0	47.1	45.0	51.7	112.3	85.7	86.6

Results

Service Coverage

Transit Capacity per Area Resident

The amount of available service, as measured by average vehicle capacity and vehicle revenue miles, per person in the region.



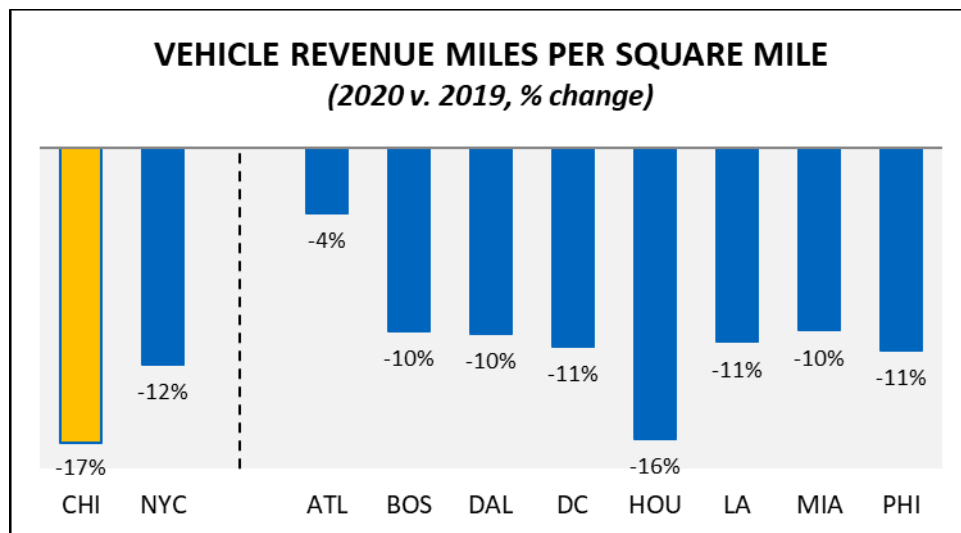
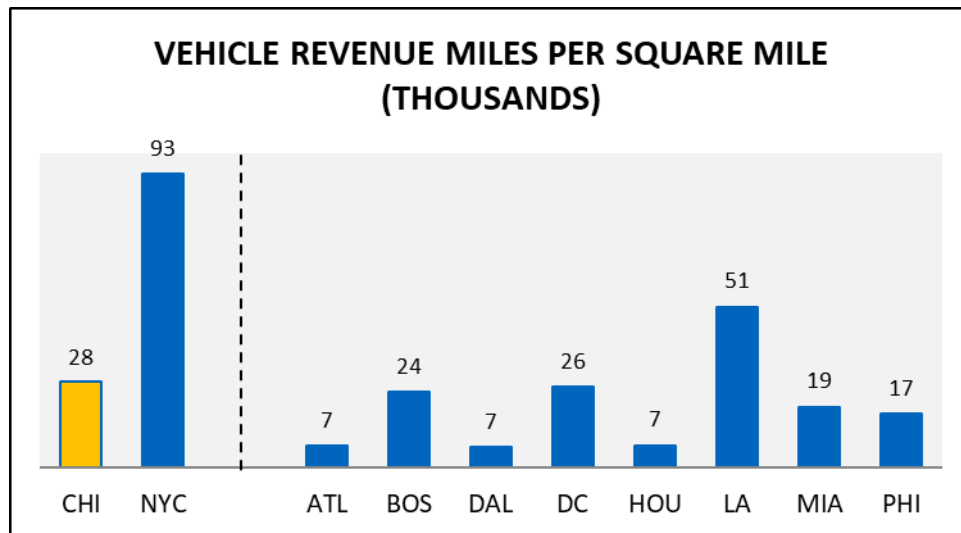
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Results

Service Coverage

Vehicle Revenue Miles per Square Mile

The total number of miles traveled annually by transit operators in a region per square mile of the metropolitan statistical area (MSA).



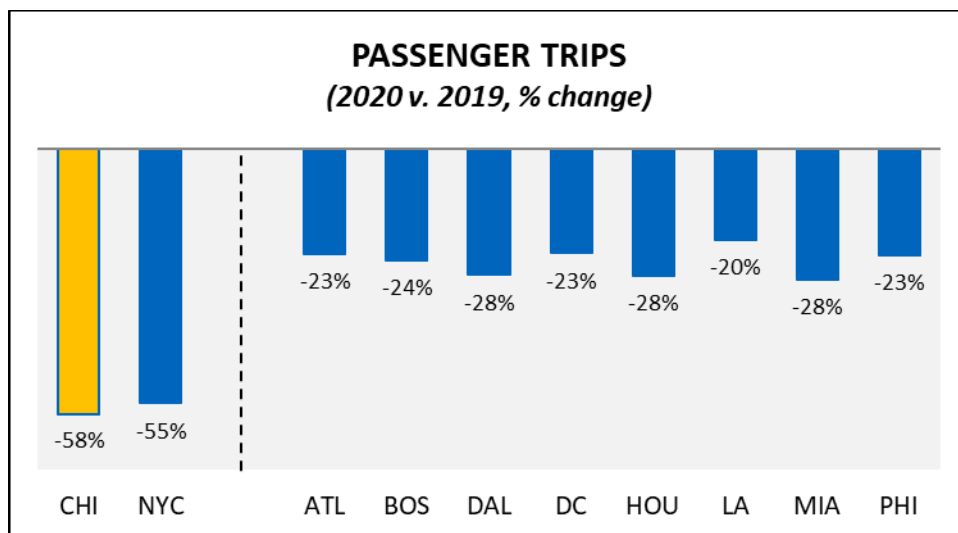
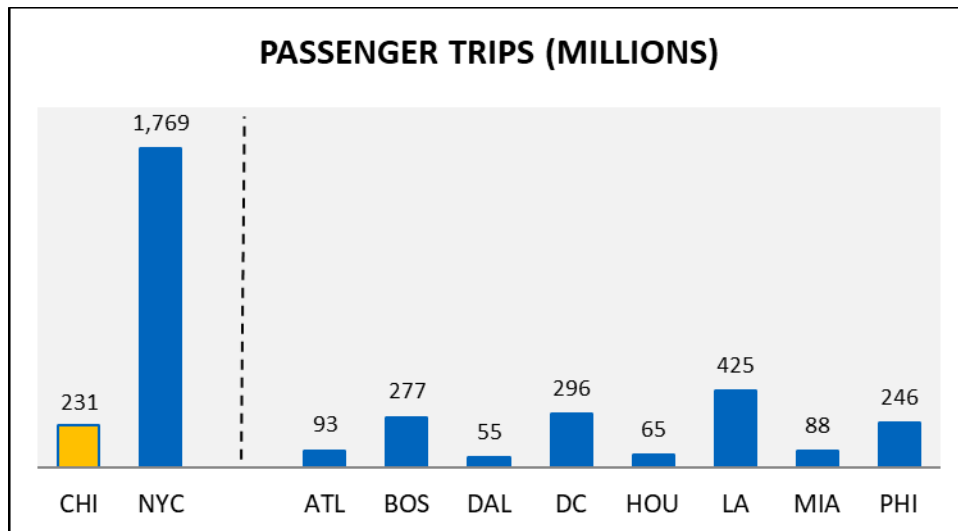
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Results

Service Coverage

Passenger Trips

Also known as ridership, refers to the number of trips taken on public transportation. A trip is counted each time a public transit bus or train is used. Each transfer between vehicles from the beginning to the end of an individual journey is counted as a separate “unlinked” trip.



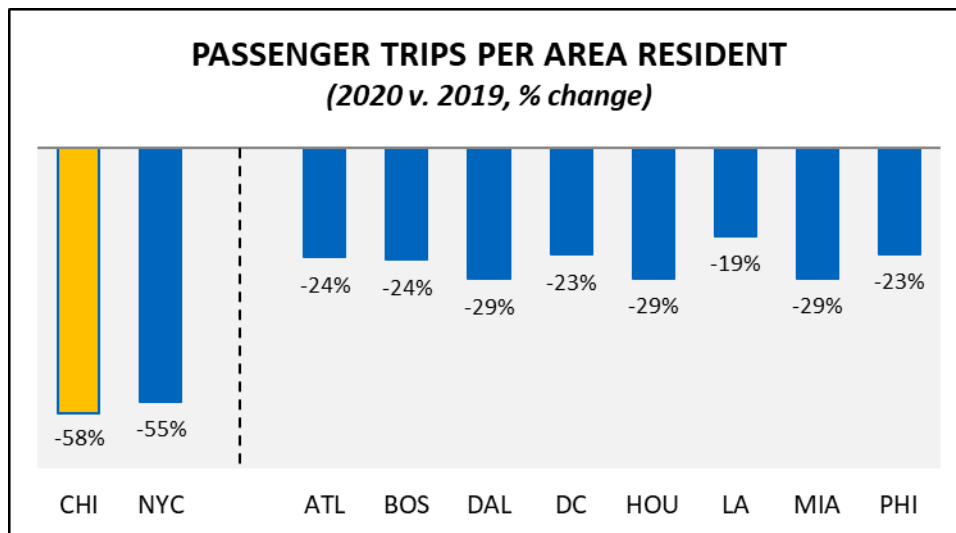
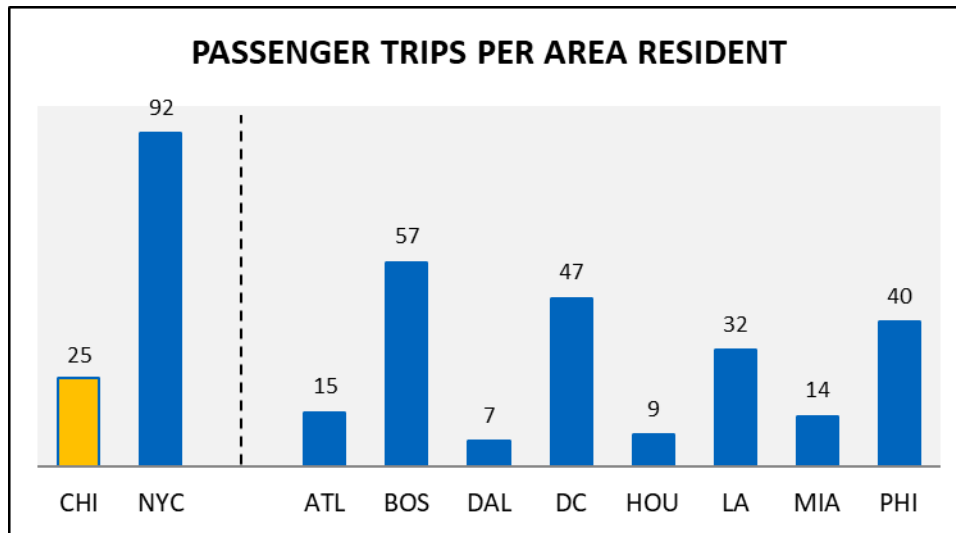
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Results

Service Coverage

Passenger Trips per Area Resident

The average number of rides taken per resident annually.



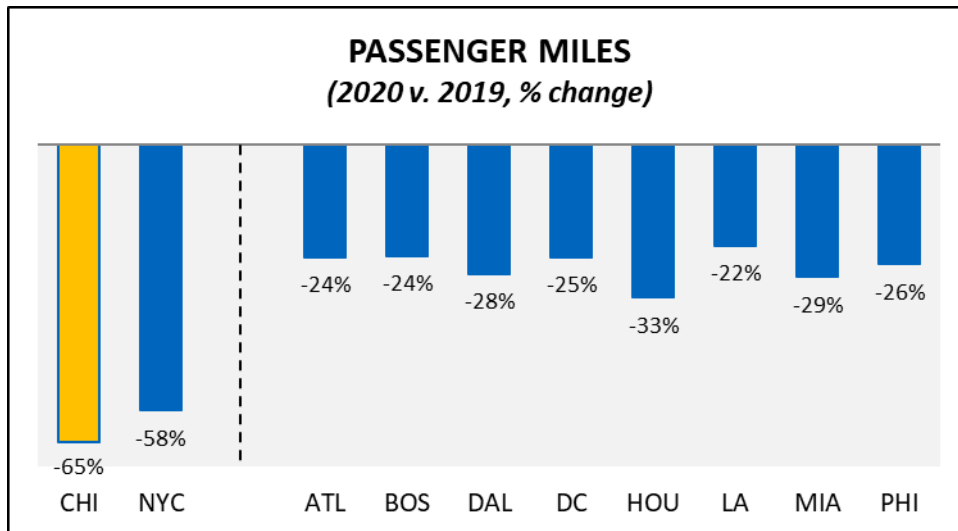
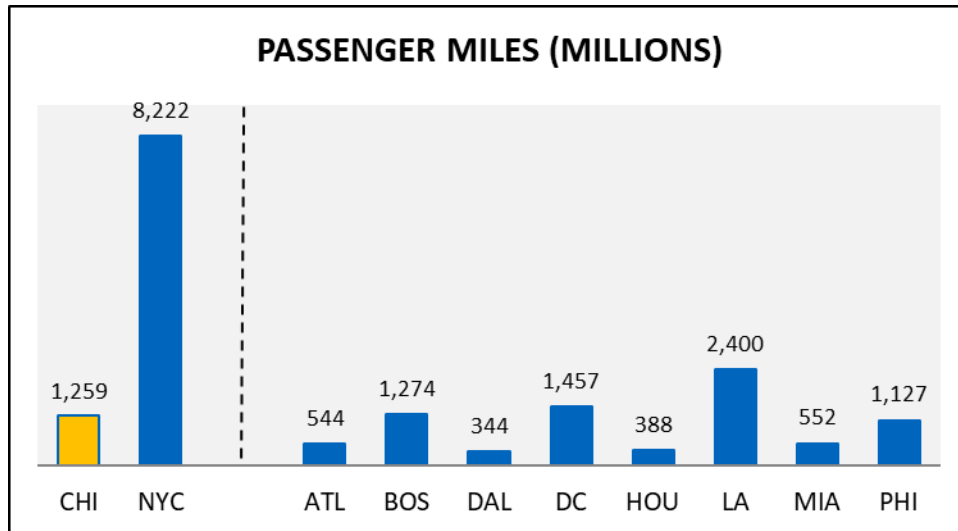
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Results

Service Coverage

Passenger Miles

The cumulative sum of the distance ridden by passengers.



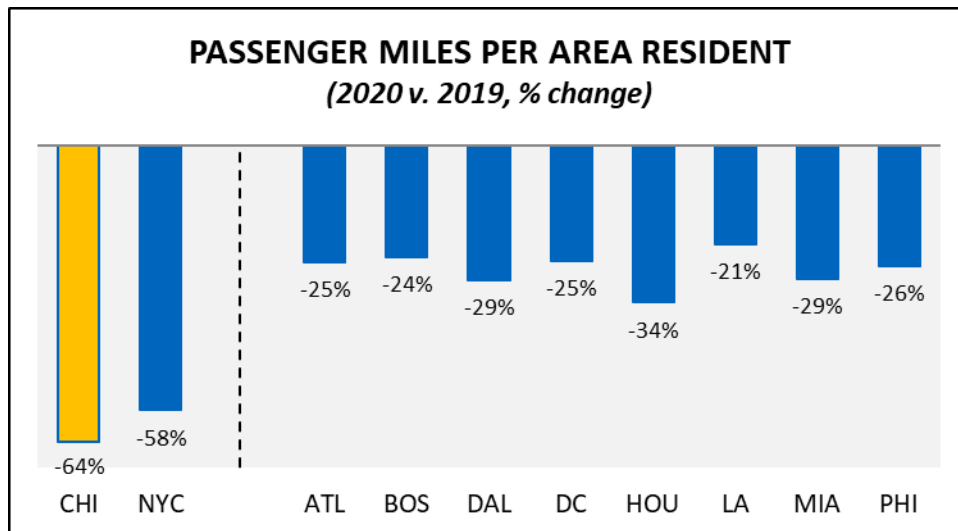
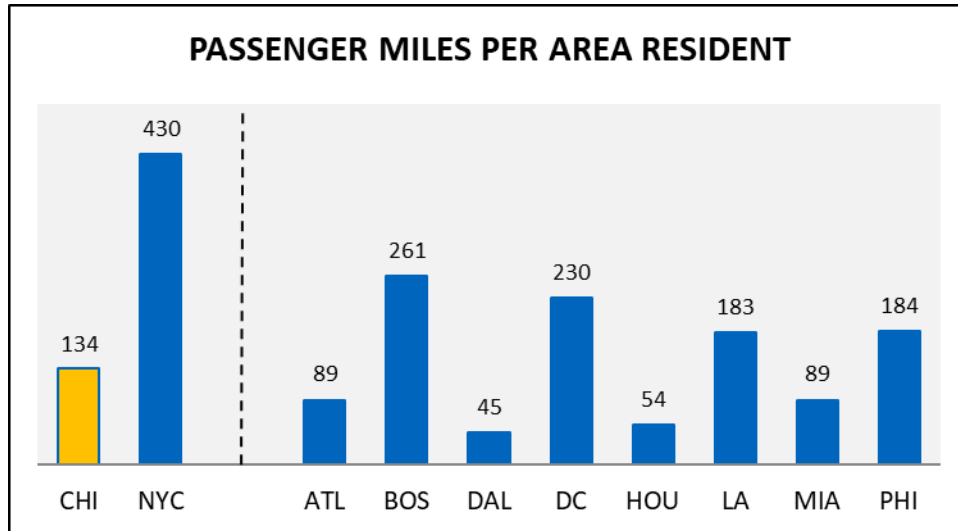
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Results

Service Coverage

Passenger Miles Traveled per Area Resident

The average number of passenger miles traveled per resident annually.



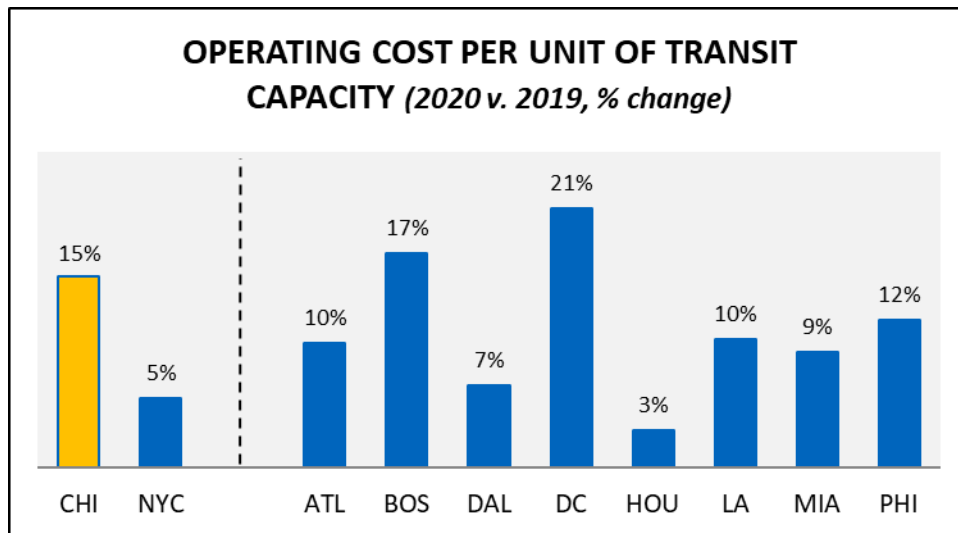
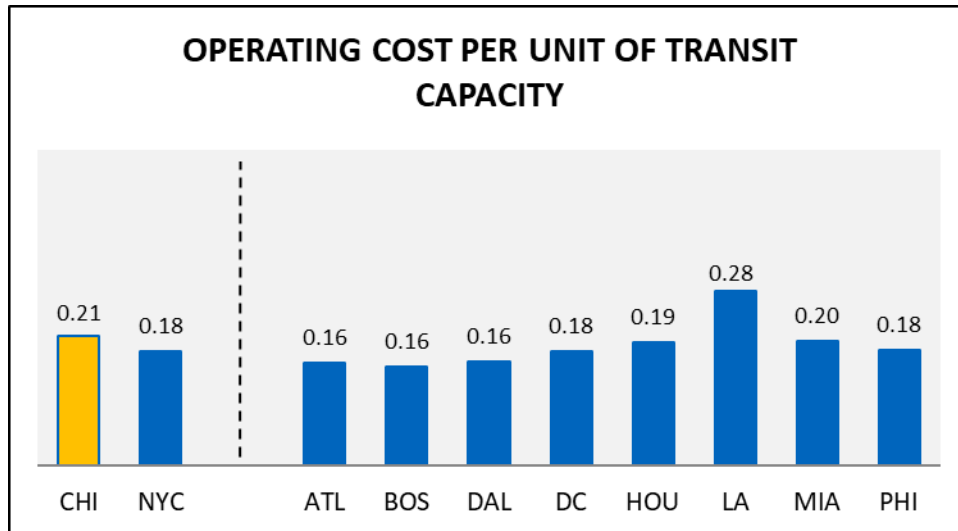
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Results

Service Efficiency & Effectiveness

Operating Cost per Unit of Transit Capacity

The average cost of providing a passenger seat (or space) for each mile of an individual trip, whether or not it is taken.



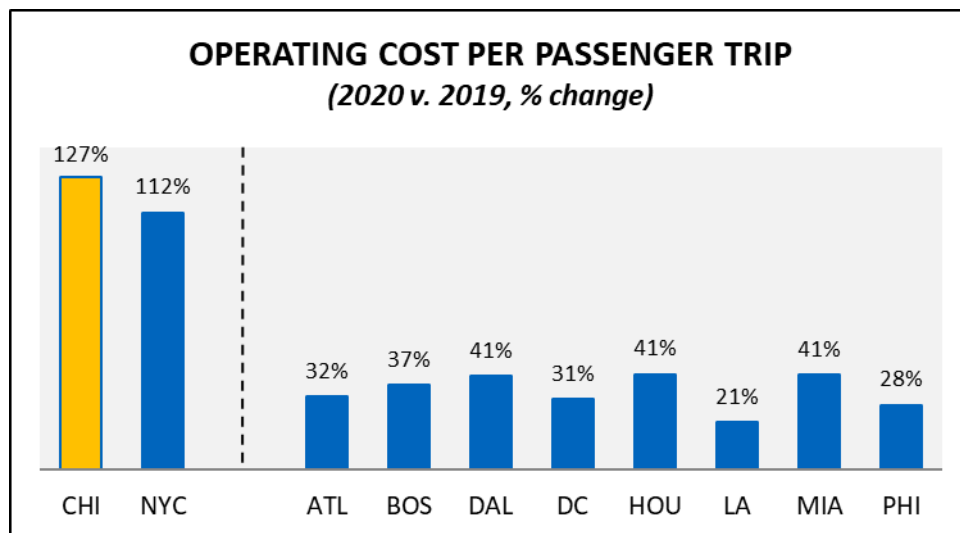
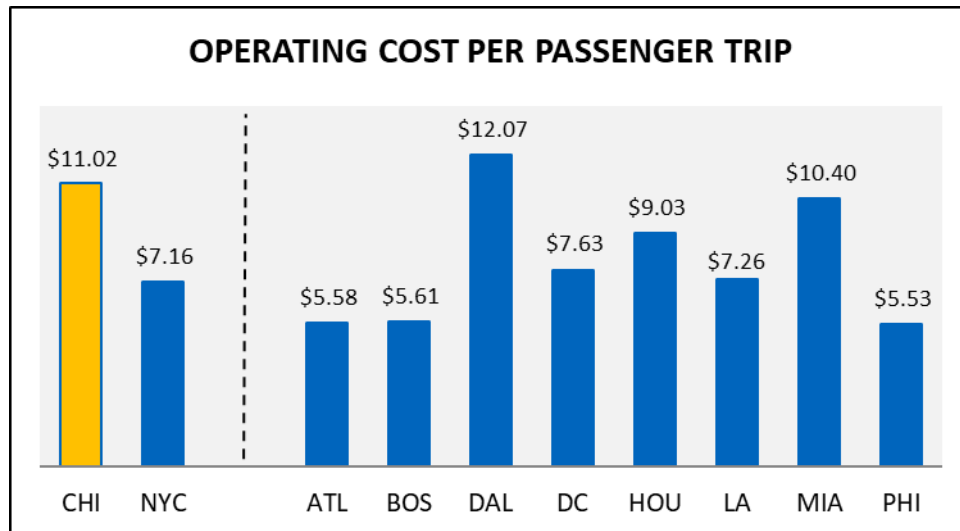
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Results

Service Efficiency and Effectiveness

Operating Cost per Passenger Trip

The total operating cost divided by the total number of unlinked passenger trips taken on public transit vehicles.



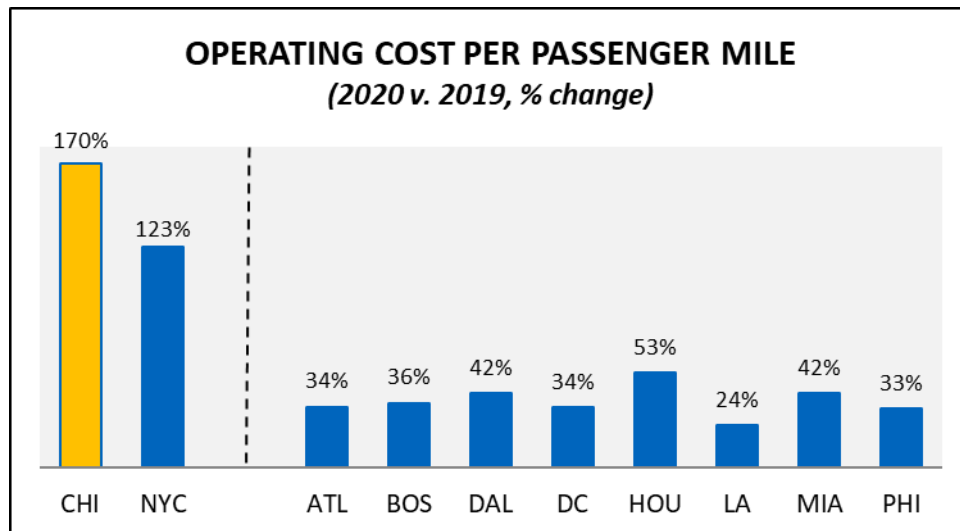
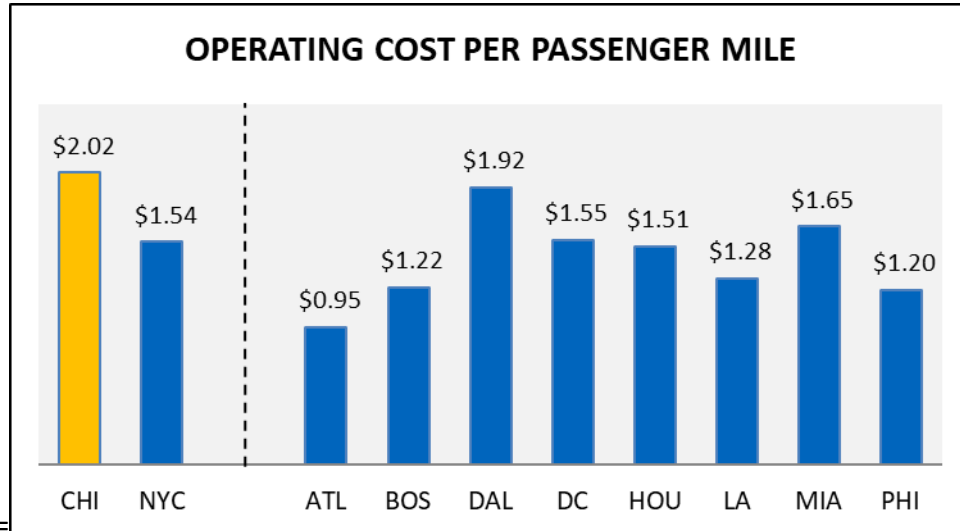
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Results

Service Efficiency and Effectiveness

Operating Cost per Passenger Mile

The total operating cost divided by the total number of miles traveled by passengers.



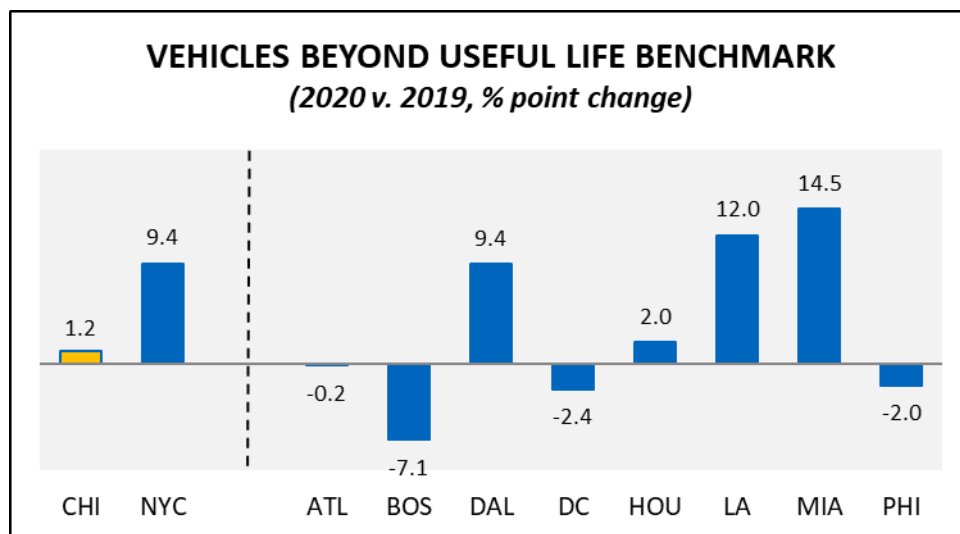
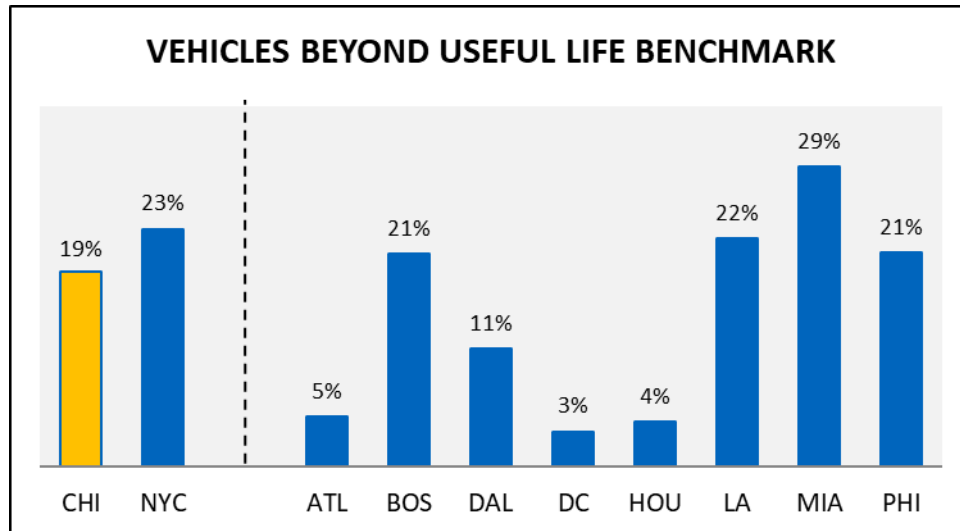
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Results

Service Maintenance & Capital Investment

Percent of Vehicles Beyond Useful Life Benchmark

The percentage of a revenue vehicle fleet in service beyond the expected lifecycle of a capital asset. Expected lifecycles take into account a particular transit agency's operating environment, and also reflect vehicle rehabilitations and overhauls.



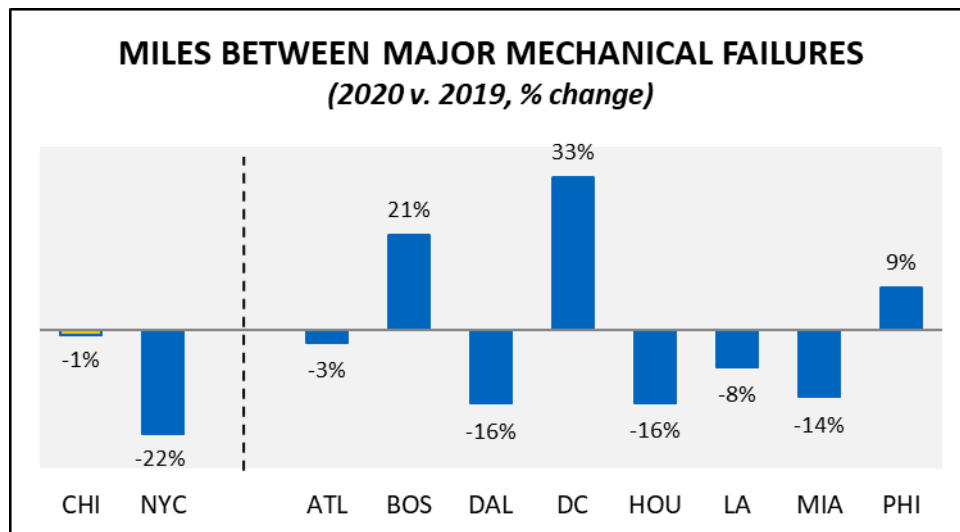
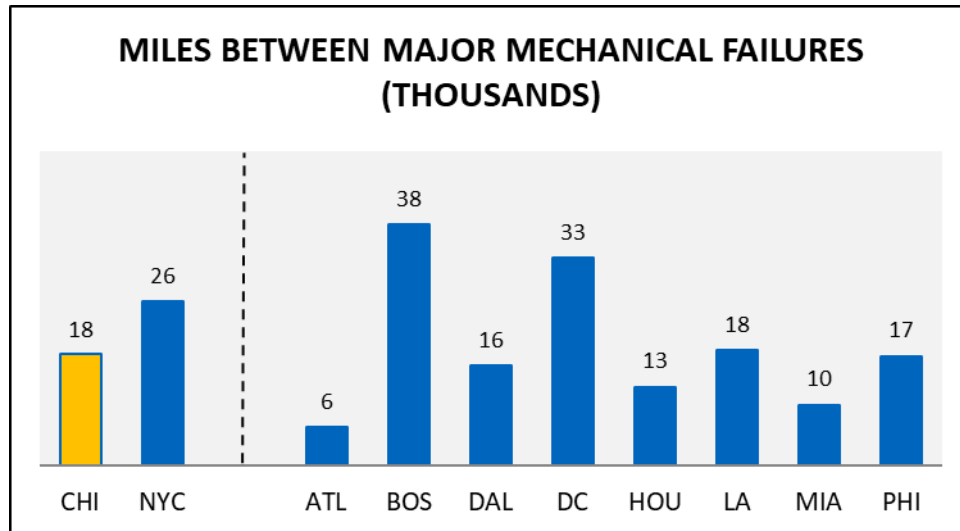
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Results

Service Maintenance & Capital Investment

Miles Between Major Mechanical Failures

The average number of miles that vehicles travel while in revenue service between failures of some mechanical element or a safety concern that prevents a vehicle from completing a scheduled trip or from starting the next scheduled trip.



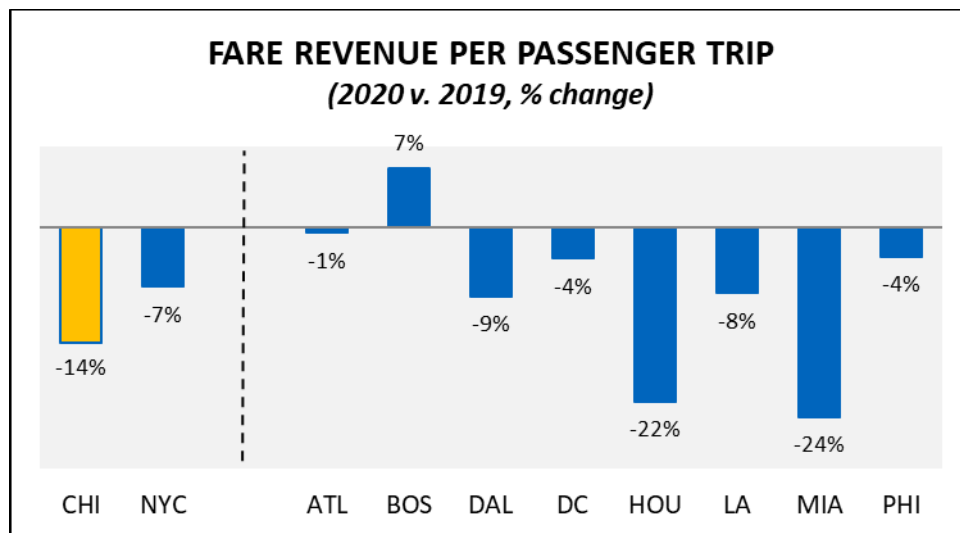
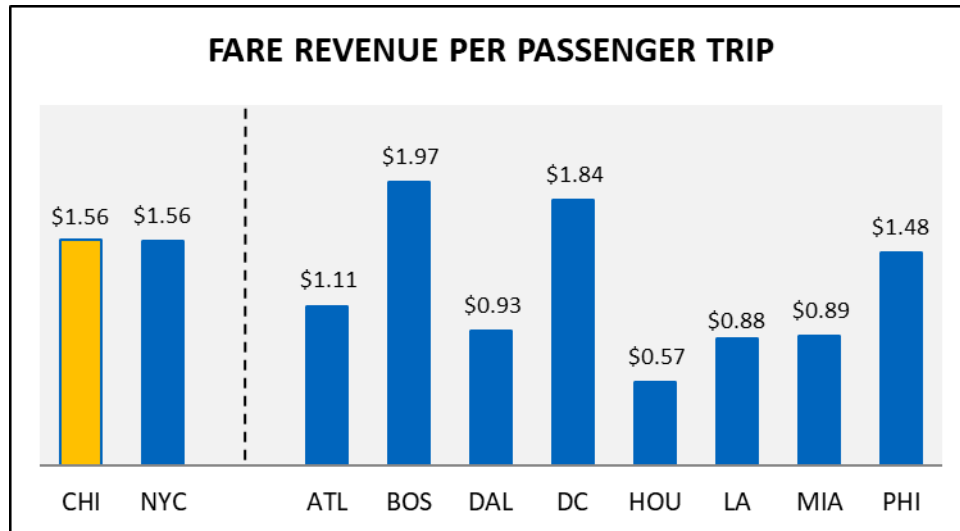
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Results

Service Level Solvency

Fare Revenue per Passenger Trip

The average fare paid by customers per trip.



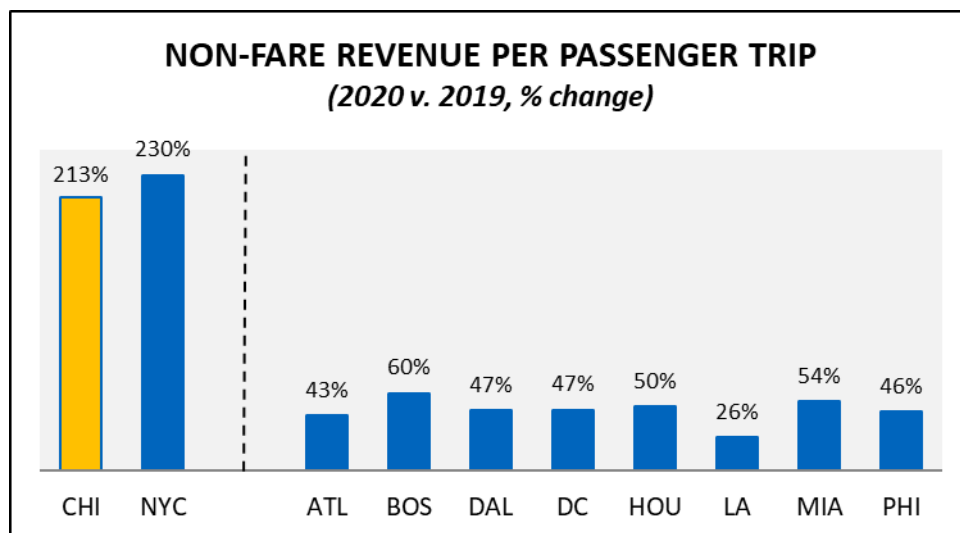
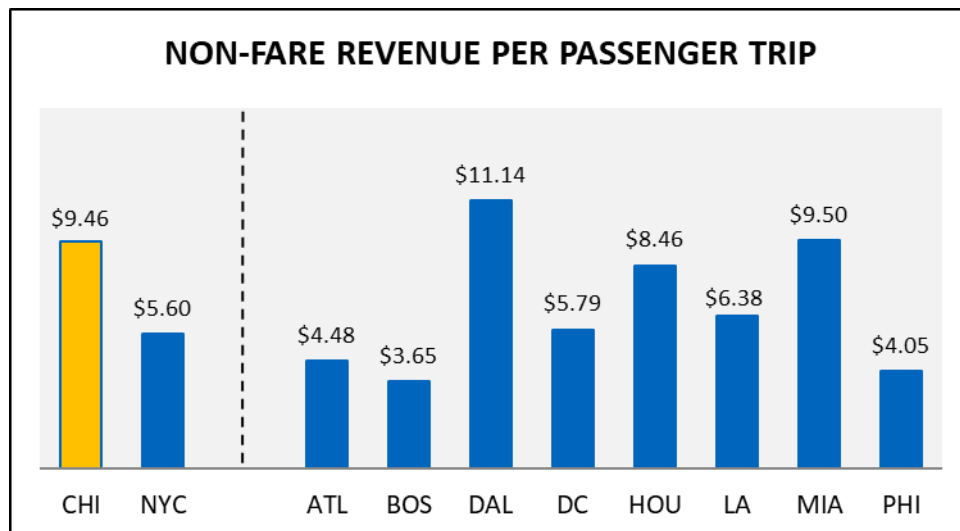
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Results

Service Level Solvency

Fare Revenue Shortfall per Passenger Trip

The average cost of each trip that is not covered by the fare paid by customers. The balance of operating costs is covered by other directly-generated revenue (advertising, concessions, etc.) and public funding (local, state, and federal).



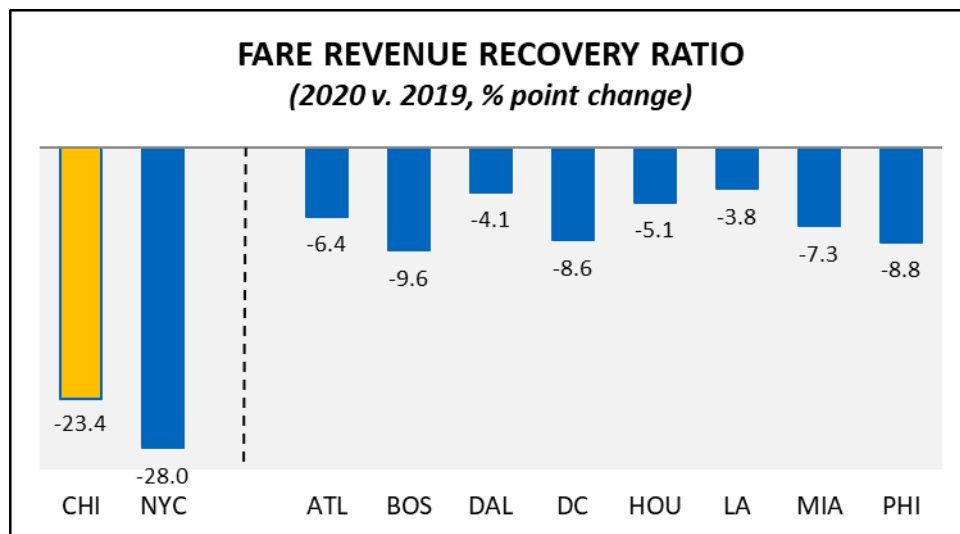
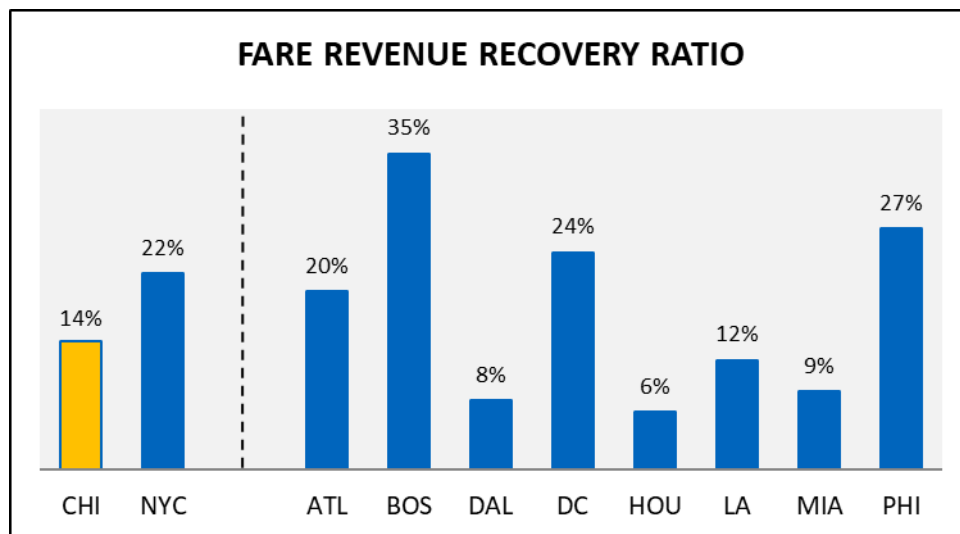
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Results

Service Level Solvency

Fare Revenue Recovery Ratio

As defined by the NTD, the proportion of operating costs that are covered by fare revenues paid by passengers; this differs from the RTA recovery ratio, which takes into account other system-generated revenue and certain adjustments as enumerated in the RTA Act.



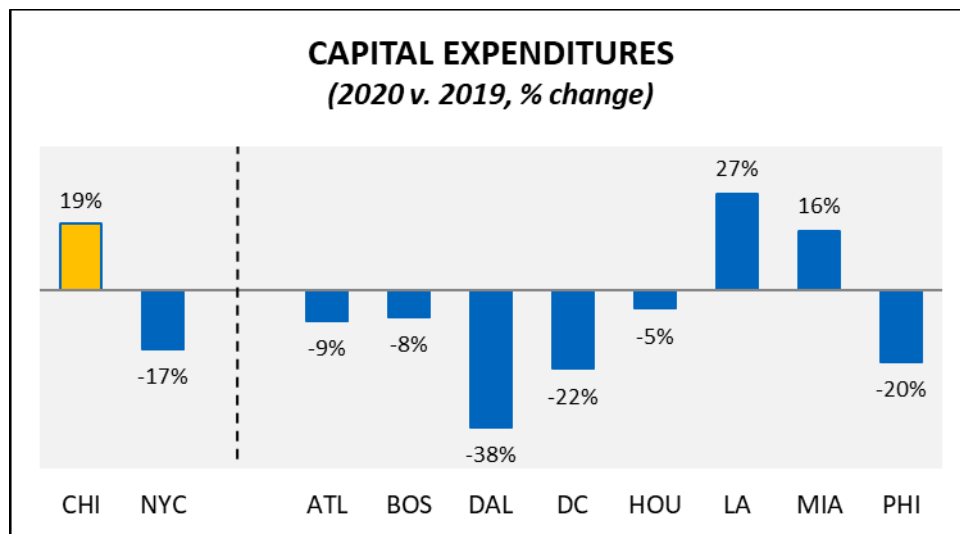
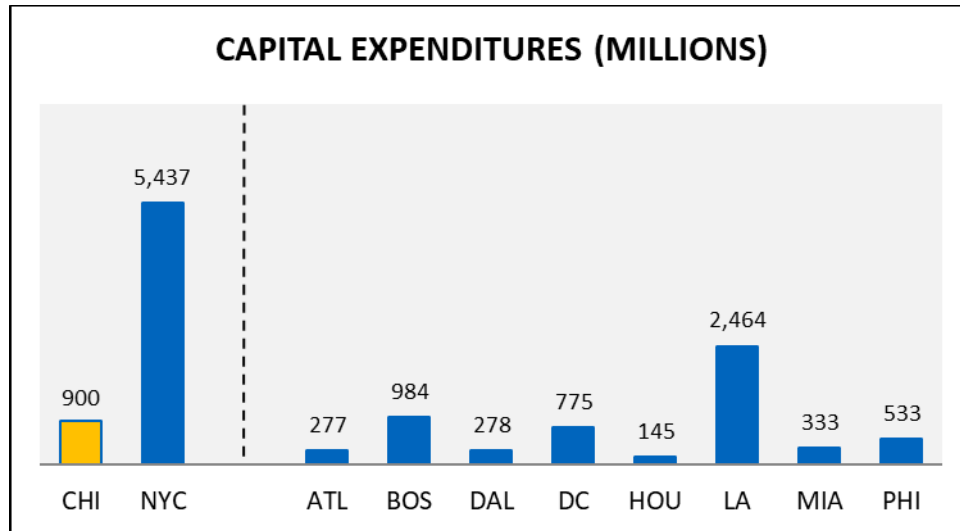
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Results

Service Level Solvency

Capital Expenditures

Funds expended to finance the maintenance, enhancement, and expansion of the transit system’s infrastructure. Capital funds expended in one year may include funding from prior years due to the longer-term nature of capital project implementation.



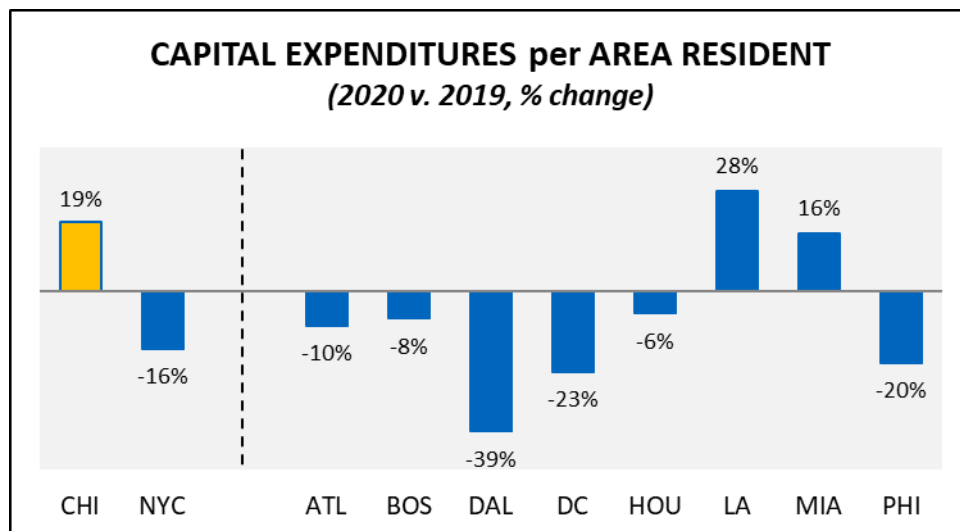
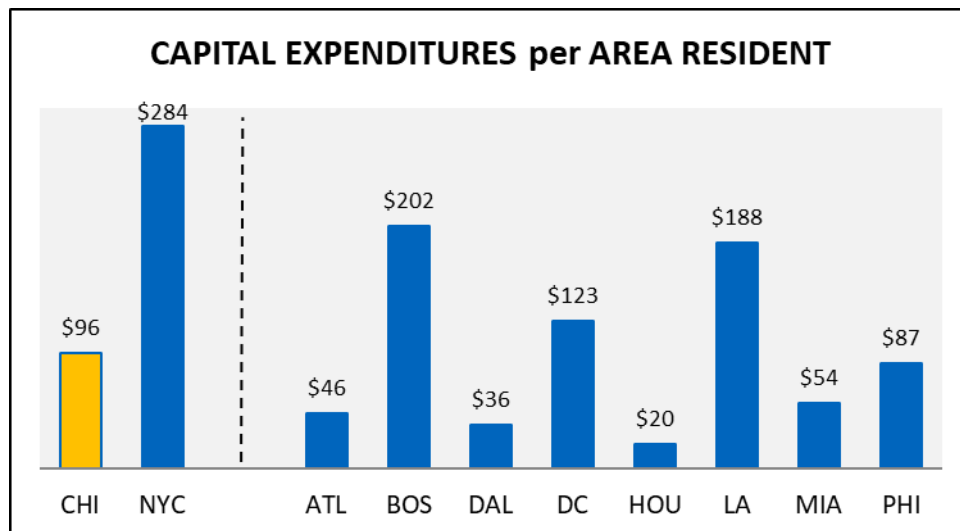
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Results

Service Level Solvency

Capital Expenditures per Area Resident

The total amount of capital expenditures per resident of the metropolitan statistical area (MSA).



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