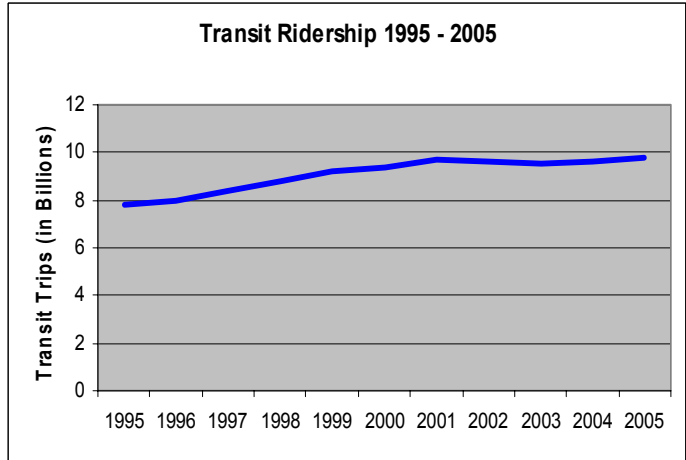




Transit ridership has grown markedly over the past decade. Since 1995, transit use has increased by 25.1 percent. Over the same period, transit use increased at a faster rate than auto use. More than 9.7 billion trips were taken on public transportation in the U.S. last year. Since the nadir of transit use in the 1970s, ridership has steadily rebounded growing by nearly 40 percent. Long-term trends suggest that transit ridership will continue to rise in coming years. Key trends supporting increased transit use include, changing demographic and consumer preferences; higher fuel prices; higher density and ‘urbanization’ of suburban communities; and policies and land use more supportive of integrating travel modes.



Myth: Transit ridership may be up, but it pales in comparison to growing auto use.

Fact: Over the past ten years, growth in transit use has outpaced auto growth, 25.1% to 22.5%. Transit outpaced growth in auto use in seven of the last ten years. Last year, auto growth was essentially flat (0.1%) while transit use continued to expand. In 2004, growth in transit ridership was double that of highway use. A variety of factors, including the high costs of fuel and road expansion in urban areas, suggest that auto use in the U.S. is unlikely to see marked growth.

Myth: New transit projects don't meet projections.

Fact: A review of recent rail projects reveals that most far surpassed initial ridership projections. For example:

Dallas – DART ridership was 10% higher than original expectations. The system has been so successful that a new federal grant was just awarded for further expansion.

Denver – Following initial construction, ridership was nearly 70 percent above projections. Strong ridership and consumer demand led to voters approving a sales tax in 2004 to further expand the system.

Salt Lake City – Utah Transit Authority's reported that average daily ridership on TRAX is 55,700; this is more than double what was projected by 2020.

Minneapolis – Ridership in 2005 was about 40,000 rides per month ahead of forecasts made before the new line opened.

Myth: Ridership increases are due to construction of new light rail lines, and light rail use comes at the expense of bus ridership.

Fact: Research has shown that cities investing in rail transit usually see growth in all transit modes. For example over the last ten years in Portland, bus ridership has steadily grown even as rail use increased. Nationally, although light rail posted the largest increase in use in recent years, bus ridership has grown more than 18% over the last decade. Growth has been consistent across transit modes. Last year saw growth in light rail (6%), commuter rail (2.8%), subways (2.3%), paratransit (2.5%) and buses (.4%). Some bus systems grew dramatically, including Minneapolis (14.5%); Dallas (7.5%); suburban Chicago (7.4%); and San Antonio (5.8%).

Myth: Gas prices don't increase transit use, and any slight gain from fuel costs quickly disappear when prices stabilize.

Fact: With high gas prices in the third quarter of 2005, national transit ridership grew by 3.3 % from the same period in 2004. At the same time that transit ridership was increasing during the 2005 third quarter, Americans parked their cars and vehicle miles of travel (VMT) decreased by 0.2%, according to federal statistics. Many transit systems have since historic spikes in use associated directly with rising gas prices, including triple-digit percentage increases in some areas. Several media stories have documented changing consumer behavior and rising demand associated with fuel prices.

This trend continued in November 2005, despite a drop in gas prices that month. A recent survey of agencies has found increases from high prices beginning in 2005 have largely been sustained.