



# NextGen Ridership Update

**Operations, Safety, and  
Customer Experience Committee  
November 16, 2023**



**Metro**<sup>®</sup>

# NextGen Bus Plan Ridership Update

This report provides an assessment of Metro bus system ridership. Ridership is analyzed by:

- Day type (Weekday, Saturday, Sunday)
- Service area
- Equity Focus Communities (EFCs)/non-EFCs
- Time period
- Line/line group, and

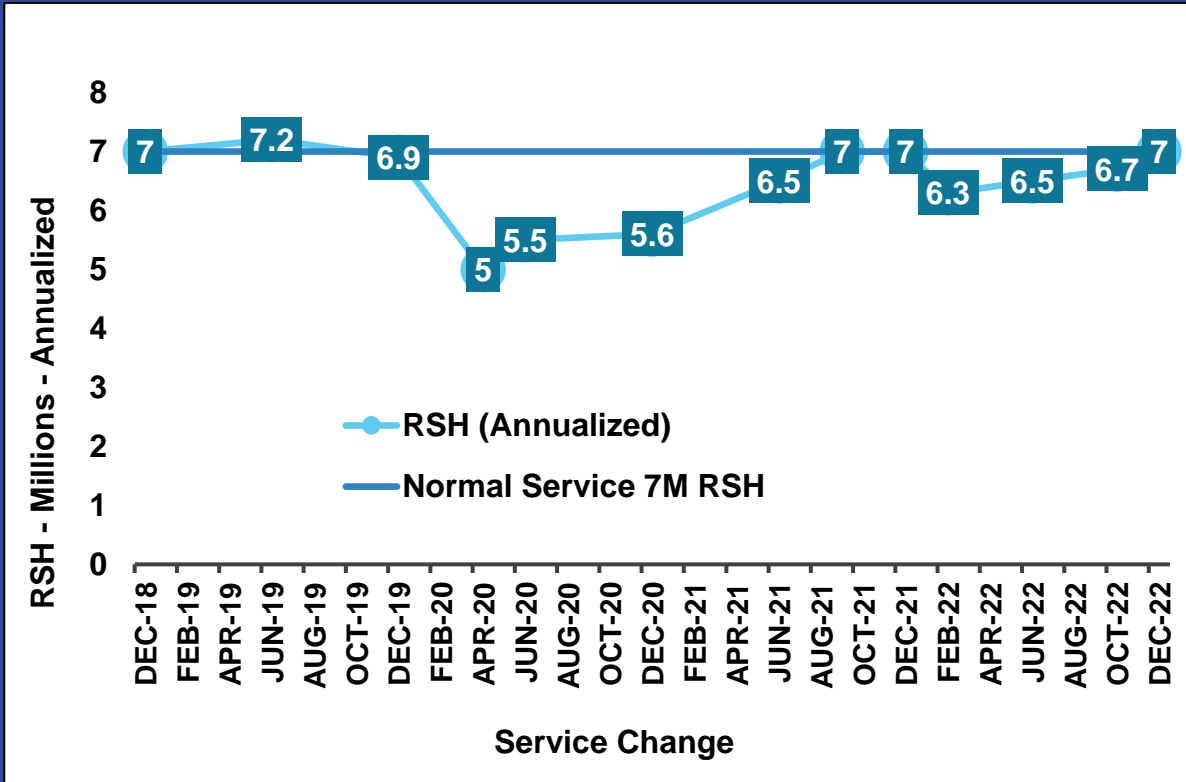
The national operator shortage required Metro to reduce service by 10% in February 2022 to stabilize service reliability. Full restoration of service was completed in phases by December 2022. Metro now has full bus operator staffing as of August 2023.

The report compares the ridership from 2019 (pre-pandemic) through September 2023 when service was both fully restored and fully staffed. Another update will be provided in early 2024 on bus ridership through second half of 2023.

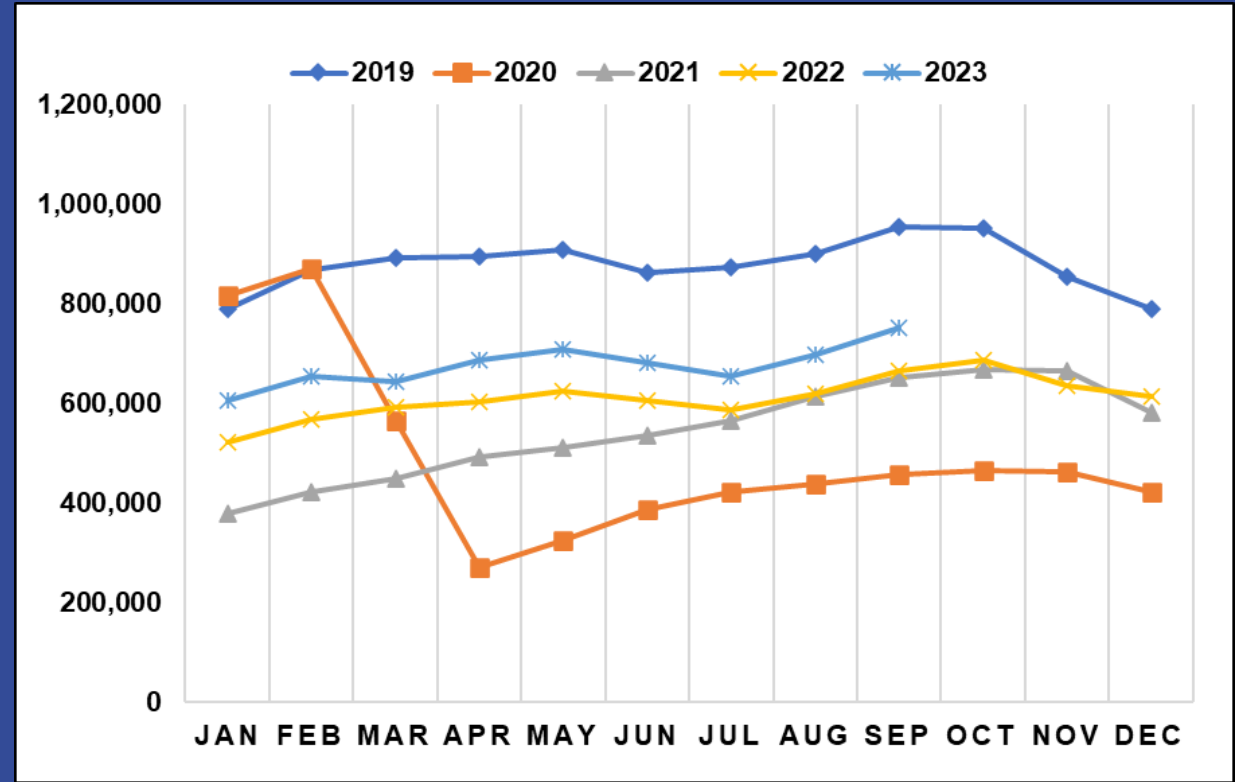


# Service Levels and Weekday Ridership

Metro Bus Service Annual Revenue Service Hour Levels 2019 – 2022



Average Weekday Ridership 2019 – 2023

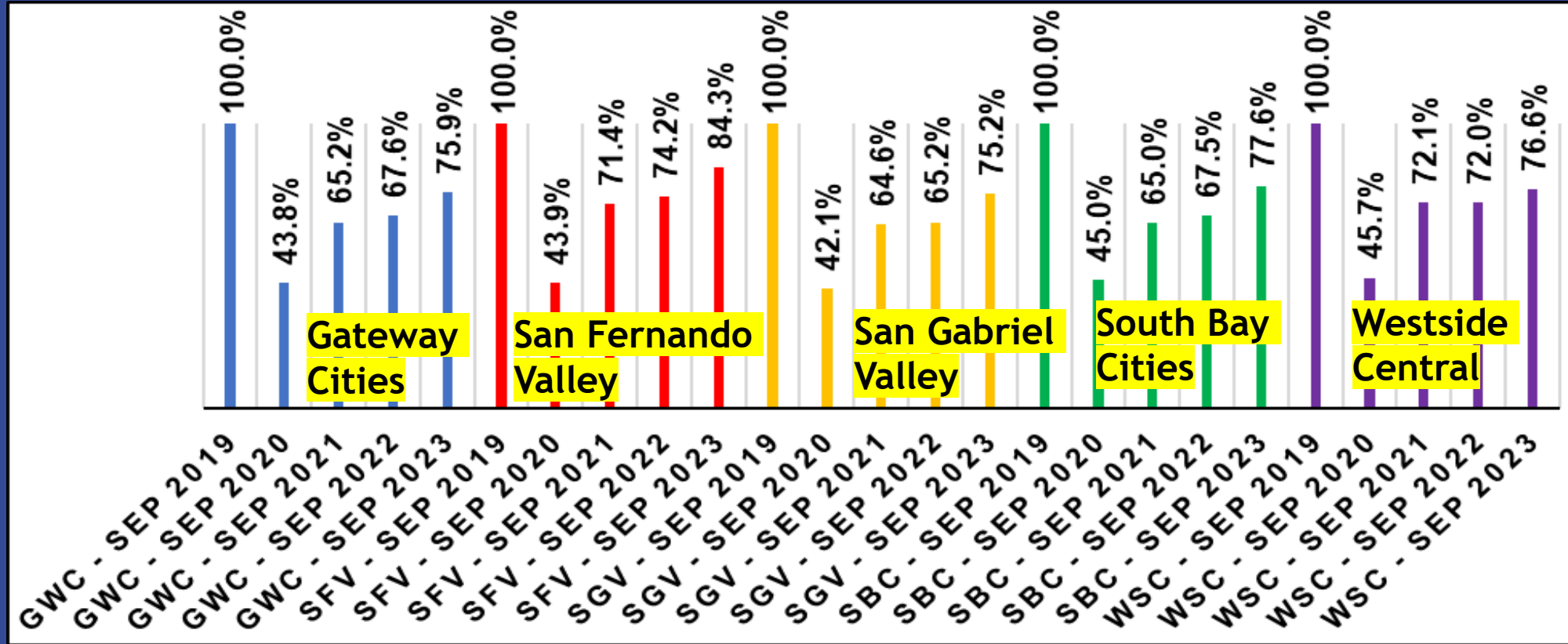


After the pandemic low point in 2020, weekday ridership recovered strongly in 2021 into 2022, together with service restoration, NextGen Bus Plan, LIFE and GoPass implementations. Growth was slower in the second half of 2022 but grew strongly in 2023 after full service was restored.



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# Average Weekday Ridership Recovery by Service Area September 2019 – September 2023



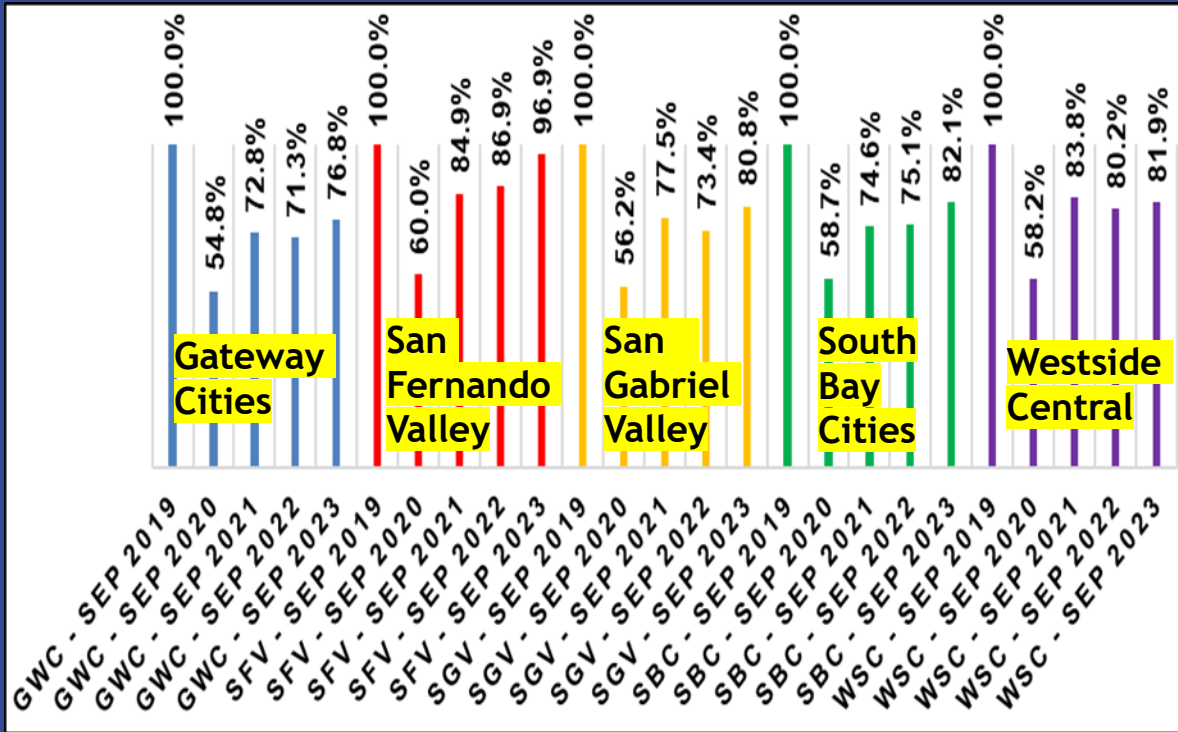
Weekday bus ridership has grown year over year in each of Metro's regions, with a notably strong recovery in the San Fernando Valley, and big growth in all areas between September 2022 and 2023 when NextGen service was fully implemented, and service was most reliable. Similar patterns of growth regionally were also seen on weekends, again led by the San Fernando Valley.



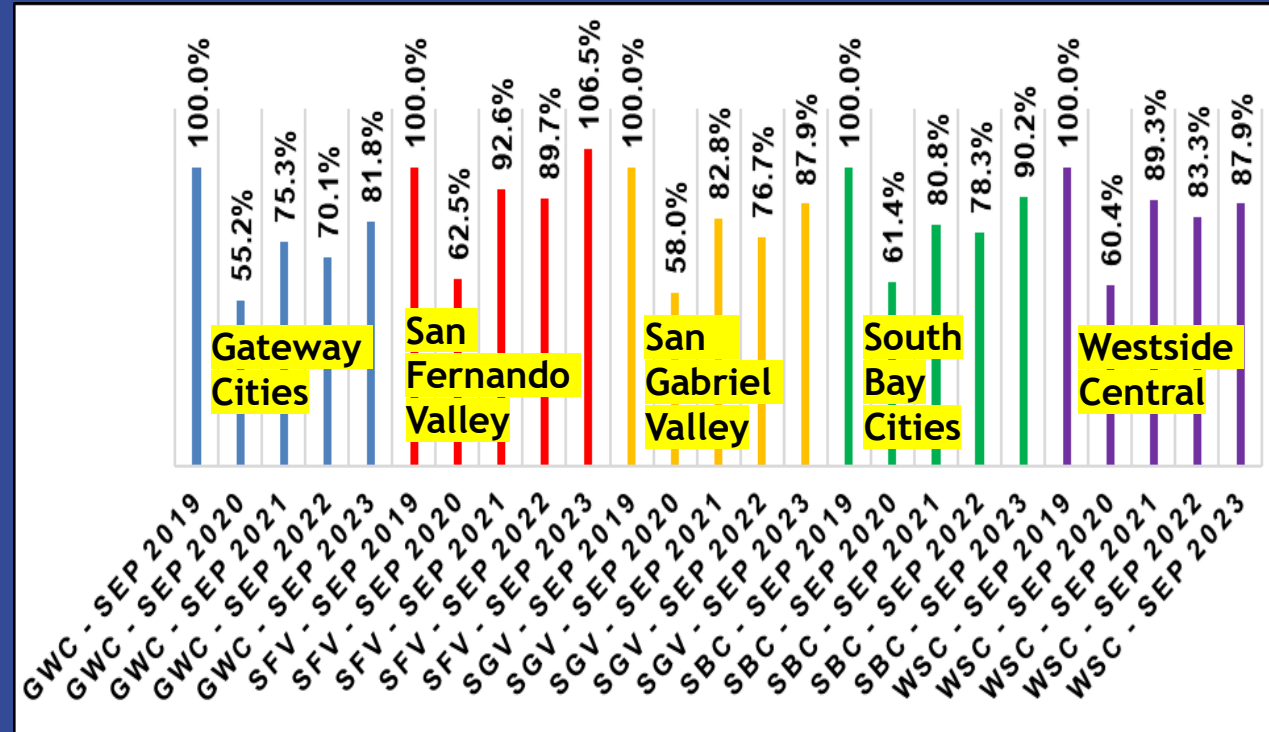
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# Saturday Sunday Ridership Recovery by Service Area

## Average Saturday Bus Ridership 2019–2023

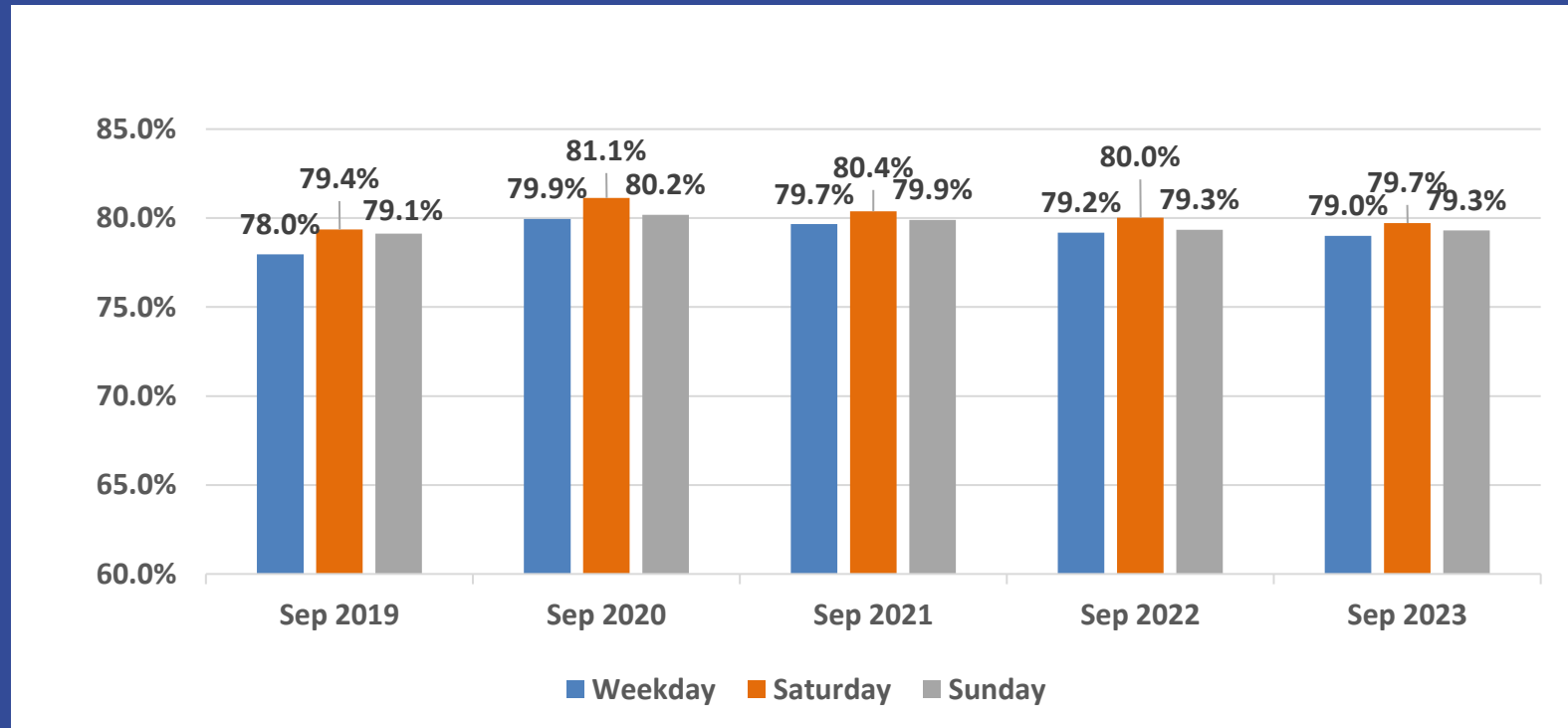


## Average Sunday Bus Ridership 2019-2023



After the pandemic low point in 2020, ridership recovered strongly in 2021 into 2022 with service recovery, NextGen Bus Plan, and LIFE and GoPass programs. By the second half of 2022, weekend bus ridership growth had slowed, but grew more strongly in 2023. Sunday ridership is closest to achieving pre-pandemic levels.

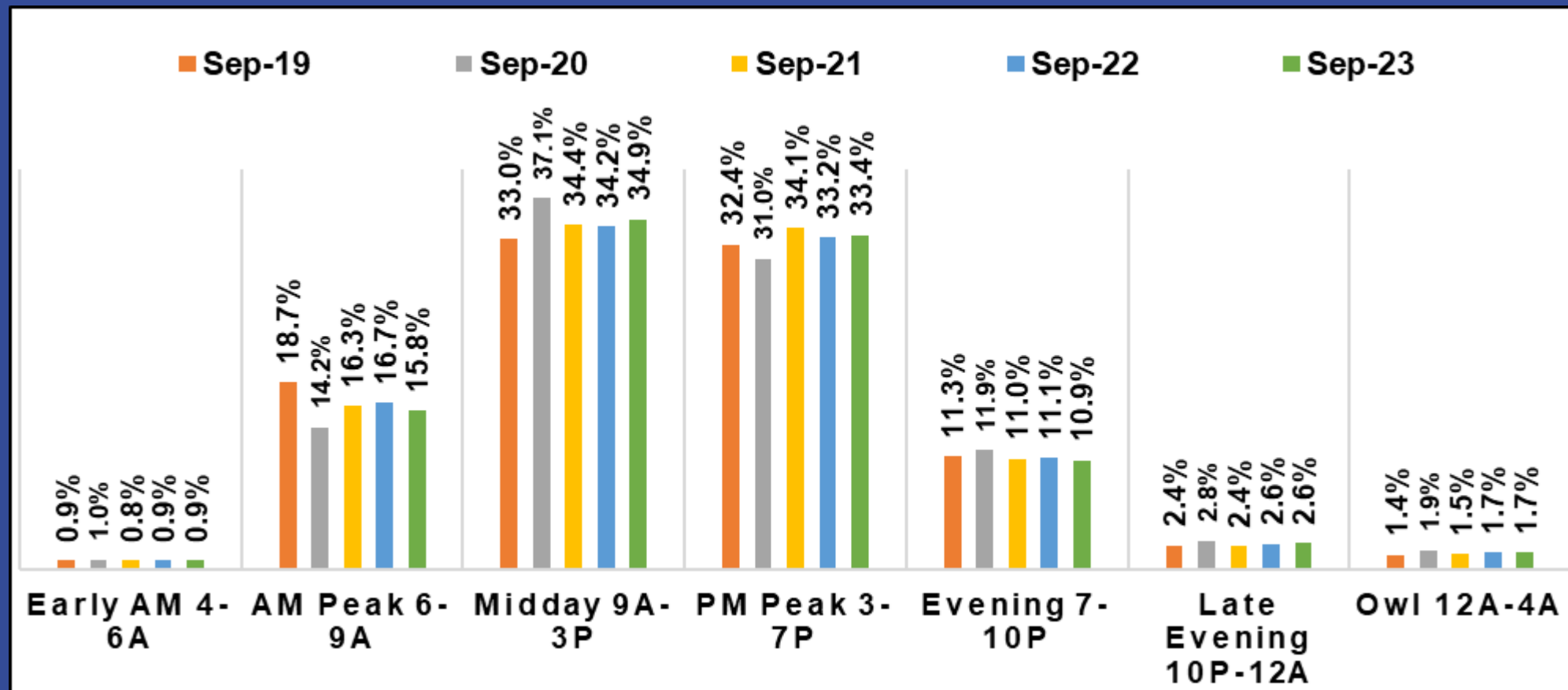
# Ridership Percentage in Equity Focus Communities September 2019 – September 2023



Equity-Focus Community share of bus ridership (boardings) grew most in 2020 when people travelled for essential jobs and services. The EFC share remains above pre-pandemic levels suggesting the NextGen Bus Plan has been beneficial to these communities.



# Weekday Ridership by Time Period – 2019 to 2023



Midday share of ridership grew during the pandemic and has remained higher than pre-pandemic, likely in response to NextGen Bus Plan’s increased off-peak service frequencies. AM peak remains subdued compared to pre-pandemic. People have changed their transit usage due to telecommuting and more off-peak travel to service jobs. In contrast, PM Peak slightly increased.



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# Average Weekday Line/Group Ridership Recovery

Average % Ridership Recovery Sept 2023 versus Sept 2019	Number of Weekday Lines/ Line Groups	Number of Saturday Lines/ Line Groups	Number of Sunday Lines/ Line Groups
> = 140.0%	0	0	1
130.0 – 139.9%	0	2	1
120.0 – 129.9%	0	3	5
110.0 – 119.9%	1	1	6
100.0 – 109.9%	5	8	11
90.0 – 99.9%	20	13	21
80.0 – 89.9%	15	25	13
70.0 – 79.9%	18	15	13
60.0 – 69.9%	13	3	3
50.0 – 59.9%	7	4	0
40.0 – 49.0%	1	0	0
30.0 – 39.9%	2	1	1
Total Lines/Line Groups	82	75	75

- In September 2023, ridership recovered to above pre-pandemic levels on 6 weekday, 14 Saturday, and 24 Sunday lines.
- Weekday system overall had 78.6% ridership recovery:
  - Above average recovery was most common for the NextGen higher frequency with Tier 1 & 2 lines:
    - 31 out of 49 Tier 1 & 2 lines/line groups with 15 minute or better frequency
    - 13 out of 33 Tier 3 & 4 lines/line groups with 20-60 minute frequency
- Saturday/Sunday system overall ridership recovery 86.0%/92.4%, with above average recovery also common for the higher frequency NextGen Tier 1 & 2 lines/line groups :
  - Saturday: Tiers 1 & 2: 26 out of 49 lines/line groups; Tiers 3 & 4: 11 out of 26 lines/line groups
  - Sunday: Tiers 1 & 2: 26 out of 49 lines/line groups; Tiers 3 & 4: 13 of 26 lines/line groups
- The NextGen lines with improved frequencies appear to be most supportive of ridership recovery.





# Conclusions

During the pandemic with Stay-at-Home orders, ridership declined sharply and trips were shorter-distance because people were not commuting as much and traveling closer to home. Non-peak ridership was more resilient as those trips were largely composed of essential workers and/or essential trips.

As ridership has recovered, off-peak and EFC shares of ridership have remained larger than pre-pandemic, and the average trip length has remained shorter. These outcomes are consistent with the intent of the NextGen Bus Plan to grow ridership in off-peak and shorter-distance travel markets.

As at September 2023, weekday ridership is around 76%, Saturday 86%, and Sunday ridership is 92% of pre-COVID ridership. Year over year ridership growth returned in the first half of 2023 after full service was restored, following slower growth in the second half of 2022 when service levels were reduced and the numbers of cancellations were high.

Metro is now fully staffed with bus operators, allowing for more reliable service. 2023 has presented an opportunity for the full benefits of improved frequency and accessibility under the NextGen Bus Plan to be enjoyed by riders.

Ridership recovery has been strongest where service frequencies and accessibility have been improved. These benefits of NextGen should be promoted together with continued promotion of programs such as fare capping, LIFE, and GoPass to accelerate ridership recovery and achieve the growth intended from NextGen.



**Questions?  
Thank You**