

# Zero Fares Pilot Program Evaluation Report



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**Executive Summary**

Under the direction of O-22-47, ABQ RIDE amassed a Technical Team to review the Zero Fares Pilot Program and provide an analysis and recommendation to City Council on the future fare structure for fixed routes. This advisory team was comprised of community representatives from organizations including Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless and the Transit Advisory Board. The team also included City of Albuquerque staff from the Office of Equity and Inclusion, City Council Services, and ABQ RIDE.

Each week, members of the Technical Team met to discuss several topics as set forth in Section 7 of O-22-47. Those topics included: the overall cost of the program, the revenue lost as a result of the program, ridership numbers and the effectiveness of ABQ RIDE services for its riders, security, cleanliness of the overall system, and finally the Technical Team’s recommendation to maintain or eliminate a permanent Zero Fare structure for ABQ RIDE.

The parameters (equity, safety, logistical and operational feasibility) ensured that the Technical Team remained focused during each meeting. Transit agencies from across the country and around the world were referenced to draw examples. During each topic-based weekly discussion, subject matter experts were invited to participate and provide their expertise to the Technical Team. The following is a list of weekly subjects, and the subject matter expert(s) that were present. Details from these meetings are contained within each section of this report.

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>In Attendance</b>
<b>Meeting 1</b> March 29	Overview of O-22-47 & mission of Technical Team	Technical Team
<b>Meeting 2</b> April 5	Operational Expenses & Revenue Loss	Technical Team ABQ RIDE Finance
<b>Meeting 3</b> April 12	Ridership Demographics & Boarding Data	Technical Team ABQ RIDE Principal Planner
<b>Meeting 4</b> April 19	Security/Cleanliness	Technical Team Metro Security APD, ACS, AFR Associate Director for Facility Maintenance
<b>Meeting 5</b> May 3	Recommendation	Technical Team
<b>Meeting 6</b> May 10	Security Cont’d	Technical Team

After much discussion and analysis of all aspects of the zero fares concept by meeting participants, the final recommendation from the Technical Team is to implement a permanent Zero Fare structure for ABQ RIDE. Zero Fares provides opportunities for transit dependent riders and eliminates unnecessary barriers for anyone utilizing the transportation services that are provided

by the City. The absence of fares eliminates fare disputes, speeds up boarding times, and eradicates the need for heavy and expensive fare boxes on buses. Additionally, under a Zero Fares structure, non-profit organizations are able to focus the funds that were previously used to purchase passes on other community needs.

### **Introduction**

For calendar year 2022, ABQ RIDE has undergone a significant pivot in the way it provides essential transportation services to residents and visitors of the City of Albuquerque. In September 2021, City Councilors passed legislation O-21-67, amending the Transit System Ordinance to provide for a Zero Fares Pilot Program for all City of Albuquerque transportation services. With an initial allocation of \$3 million and an additional \$1.5 million to extend the program to 18 months, ABQ RIDE provided all regular fixed routes, Albuquerque Rapid Transit (ART), and Sun Van paratransit services free of charge – Zero Fares. In March 2023, City Council voted and passed O-23-71, making ART and Sun Van permanently free.

As one of the largest cities in the United States to implement such a program, there were few examples from other regions on the impact of free bus fares on both the community and transit agency. Kansas City, Missouri (KCATA) implemented a similar program which was evaluated to understand the changes that might occur, as well as the varying types of data sets that needed to be collected to accurately analyze the impact of zero fares on the department and the community. Since its implementation in January 2022, ABQ RIDE has collected data on ridership, safety and security, Sun Van metrics, customer service call volume, and operational costs. It is important to note that not all of these metrics were collected in the summer prior to the establishment of Zero Fares.

It should also be noted that many agencies around the country are implementing or discussing moving toward Zero Fares programs. Most recently Washington DC (WMATA) has been in a heated debate on zero bus fares which has been put on hold to focus on their “Better Bus” network plan and impending FY 25 fiscal cliff, though they continue to pilot three bus lines as free fares. SunTran in Tucson, AZ, which is of comparable size to ABQ Ride, has also been zero fare since the pandemic and will remain as such through at least December 2023.

The information and analysis provided in this report is intended to demonstrate the impact of the Zero Fares Pilot Program to ABQ RIDE and the community it serves to aid in the determination of the fare structure moving forward. The overall goal for the department in any circumstance is to provide transportation to the Albuquerque community in a safe, accessible, sustainable, and equitable manner.

### **Operational Expenses and Revenue Loss**

Meeting 2: April 5, 2023

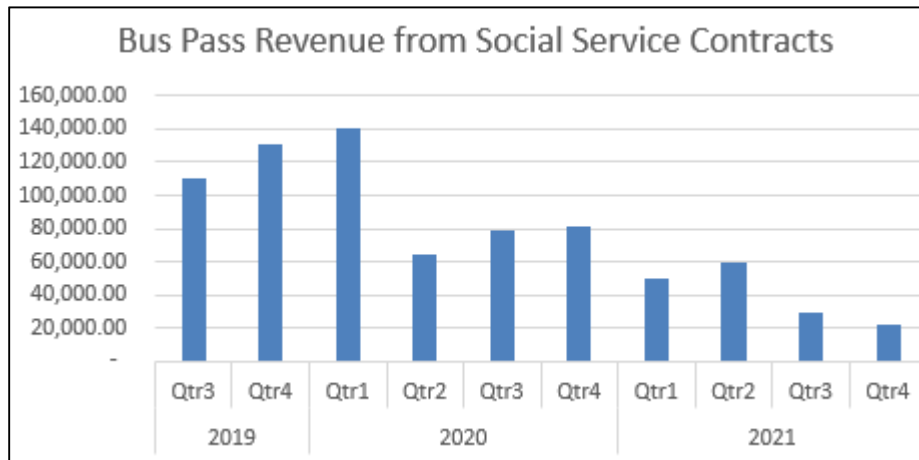
The Technical Team was joined by ABQ RIDE’s Finance team to discuss the effects of the Zero Fares Pilot Program on the department’s operational costs. The effects of the Zero Fares Pilot Program on nonprofit organizations was also discussed.

In 2014, ridership on ABQ RIDE peaked at 13 million riders, resulting in approximately \$4.2 million in fare revenue. By fiscal year 2019, ridership had dropped to 9 million with fare revenue at \$3.3 million.

Fiscal Year	Passenger Fares	Ridership	Revenue per Rider
2014	\$ 4,196,000	13,009,000	\$ 0.32
2015	\$ 3,905,000	12,360,000	\$ 0.32
2016	\$ 3,876,000	11,414,000	\$ 0.34
2017	\$ 3,428,000	10,251,000	\$ 0.33
2018	\$ 3,446,000	9,659,000	\$ 0.36
2019	\$ 3,288,000	9,160,000	\$ 0.36
2020	\$ 2,747,000	7,670,000	\$ 0.36
2021 *	\$ 1,523,000	3,977,000	\$ 0.38
2022 *	\$ 796,000	2,423,000 ^	\$ 0.33
<b>Average Revenue per Rider</b>			<b>\$ 0.34</b>

\* As of March 2021, fares free for students/seniors  
 ^ Ridership shown thru Dec 2021; Zero Fares began Jan 2022

Between 2019 and 2021, social service agencies that purchased passes to distribute to low-income households spent a total of \$768,000 on passes. After a peak in the first quarter of 2020, COVID-19 began to impact ridership, causing a decrease in revenue from these agencies.



As a non-profit distributor of ABQ RIDE bus passes prior to the Zero Fares Pilot Program, Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless provided their expenses associated with the purchase and distribution of bus passes from 2019. Bus pass purchases were just 31% of the total cost for this social service provider to distribute the passes.

Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless, Inc			
Analysis of Expenses Associated with 2019 Bus Pass Distribution Costs			
Line Item Expense	FTE	Amount	Explanation of Expense
Client Advocate	0.2		Daily from 6:30am-8am
Client Advocate	0.2		Daily from 6:30am-8am
Engagement Specialist	0.5		Daily line engagement from 6:30am & throughout the day
HRO Coordinator	0.2		Oversight of Bus Pass Program
<b>Total Salary, Taxes, Fringe Benefits</b>		<b>51,591</b>	
Bus Passes		47,256	Purchased from CoA
Security		22,366	Security costs 5 days a week from 6am-8am - from 8-5 not included
<b>Total Direct Expenses</b>		<b>121,213</b>	
Federally Negotiated Indirect Rate	25.50%	30,909	Administrative support to process & pick up as well as monitor and report
<b>Total Cost to Administer Bus Passes</b>		<b>152,122</b>	

Operating expenses for ABQ RIDE related to collecting fares include:

- Counting and preparing daily deposits from fare collection
- Selling/providing bus passes to grocery stores and community-based organizations for redistribution
- Customer service employees assisting patrons and answering questions about fares
- Fare box repairs
- Armored car services

The total annual operating expenses to collect fares is about \$655,000 annually.

<b>Operating Expenses - Fare Collection</b>	
<b>Full-time Employees</b>	
Accounts Receivable (2 FTE)	\$ 140,000
Vault Pullers (3 FTE)	174,000
Customer Service (2 FTE)	114,000
<i>Subtotal</i>	<u>\$ 428,000</u>
<b>Collection Expenses</b>	
Vault Supplies	2,500
Farebox Repairs	27,500
Bus Passes	50,000
Armored Car Services	108,600
Software Maintenance	38,600
<i>Subtotal</i>	<u>227,200</u>
<b>Total Annual Operating Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 655,200</b>

In addition to annual operating expenses, ABQ RIDE also accrues monthly costs associated with vandalism to buses while they are on the road. That data is demonstrated in the Safety & Security section, beginning on page 16. These costs are determined by ABQ Ride mechanics who develop work orders based on the damage to each individual vehicle. Depending on the severity of the damage, a bus may be unusable for any given period of time until it has been repaired and cleared for use once again. The cost of vandalism on rolling stock has increased 130% over 2021; the number of work events has risen 82% over the same timeframe. The price for glass and motor vehicle parts has also increased over this time factoring into a part of the increase in cost associated with vandalism. However, much of this vandalism occurs outside of the vehicle from a location that does not require a fare to be purchased. Some of these instances are due to a passenger being asked to remove themselves from the vehicle.

2021 Vandalism	Cost	# Work Orders
January	\$10,907.64	9
February	\$764.44	3
March	\$39,662.93	14
April	\$27,263.14	12
May	\$15,157.36	6
June	\$3,652.88	9
July	\$19,758.94	15
August	\$29,960.54	19
September	\$15,638.12	17
October	\$33,463.16	14
November	\$40,000.22	17
December	\$19,121.30	11
<b>2021 Totals</b>	<b>\$255,350.67</b>	<b>146</b>

2022 Vandalism	Cost	# Work Orders
January	\$35,152.36	16
February	\$44,477.25	24
March	\$27,762.59	16
April	\$65,830.20	32
May	\$74,755.39	23
June	\$32,183.49	16
July	\$64,756.01	29
August	\$78,217.76	38
September	\$44,714.17	23
October	\$45,021.36	20
November	\$27,177.91	8
December	\$47,945.77	20
<b>2022 Totals</b>	<b>\$587,994.26</b>	<b>265</b>

When City Council passed O-23-71, making ART and Sun Van permanently free, ART ridership was estimated to be approximately 2,000,000 while the total ridership for all ABQ RIDE fixed routes were estimated to be 6,500,000. Therefore, about 30% of total ridership is attributable to ART. Paratransit revenue, which is included in passenger fare revenue represents about \$415,000 per year equating to 13% of total revenue in Fiscal Year 2019.

Looking forward to Fiscal Year 2024, ridership is estimated to be 7,500,000. Using the average revenue per rider previously calculated while considering permanent zero fares for ART, net revenue (A) would be \$1,785,000 from fares.

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Estimated Ridership</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>Avg Rev Per Rider</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Revenue</b>
2024	7,500,000	X	\$ 0.34	=	\$ 2,550,000
<u>Adjustments for Services now permanently zero fare</u>					
Paratransit Revenue about 13% in 2019 of total Revenue					\$ (332,000)
ART Ridership/Revenue about 30% of Total					\$ (765,000)
Net Revenue - A					\$ 1,785,000
Less: Operating Expenses related to Fare Collection					\$ (655,000)
Net Revenue - B					\$ 1,130,000
Less: Social Service Contract related Revenue - about 15% of revenue					\$ (383,000)
Net Revenue - C					\$ 747,000

This could then be reduced by the operating expenses related to Fare Collection for a Net Revenue (B) of \$1,130,000.

One possible solution is to distribute free bus passes to social service contractors, thus allowing them to reduce their expenses and further meet the needs of the individuals they are serving. If this was done, the Net Revenue (C) to the City from fares would be \$747,000.

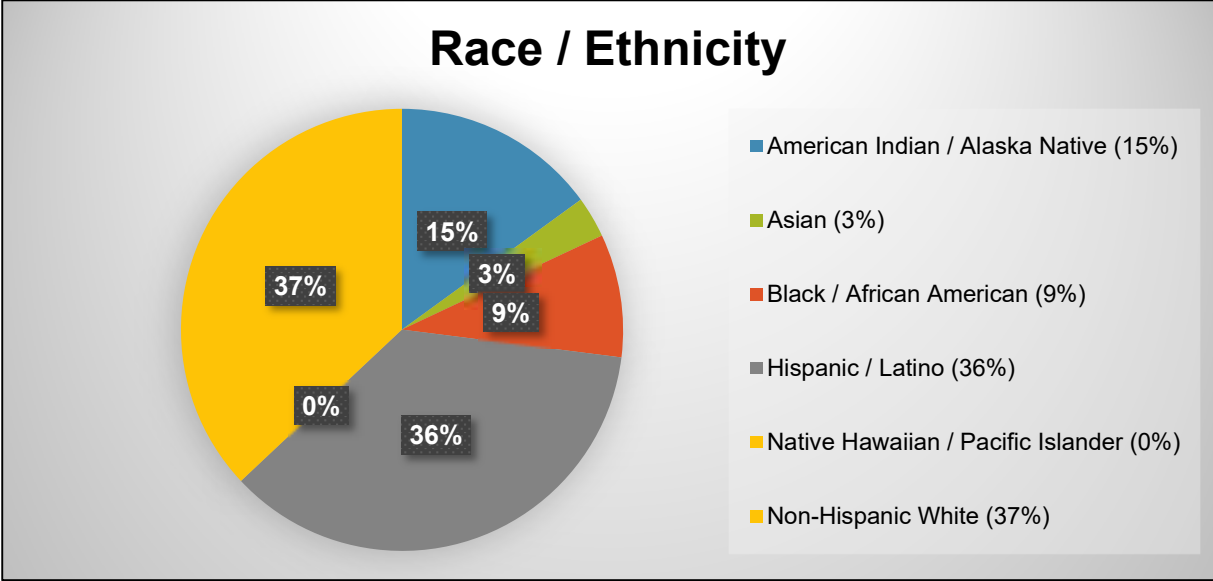
### **Ridership Demographics & Boarding Data**

Meeting 3: April 12, 2023

The Technical Team discussed ridership data and demographics including household income, vehicle availability, destination, access, and trip destinations from ABQ RIDE's 2023 Title VI survey. During these discussions, the group recognized the importance of the quality of service being provided rather than focusing only on the total number of boarding's that occurred during 2022.

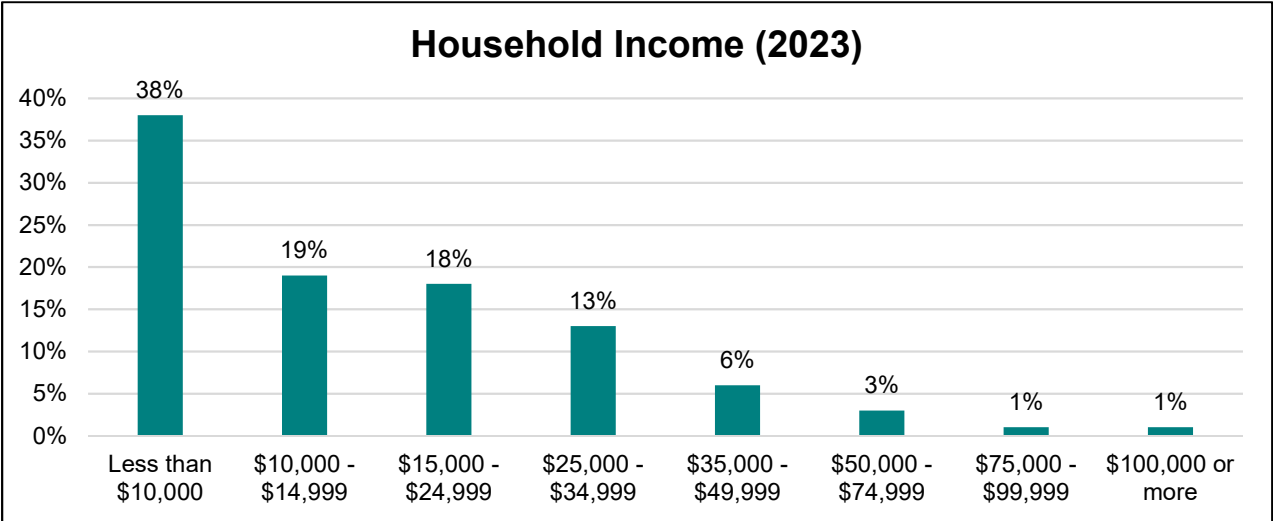
#### **Demographics and Travel Patterns**

ABQ RIDE conducted an on-board survey of its riders in January and February 2022. Surveys were offered by interviewers in English and Spanish, with the option of phone surveys offered to riders whose first language is not English. Over 1,400 surveys were collected. The major results of the surveys for relevant characteristics are presented below, and they are based on the weekday weighted and expanded percentage, as reported in the 2022 Albuquerque Transit (ABQ RIDE) On-Board Survey Report, July 7, 2022.

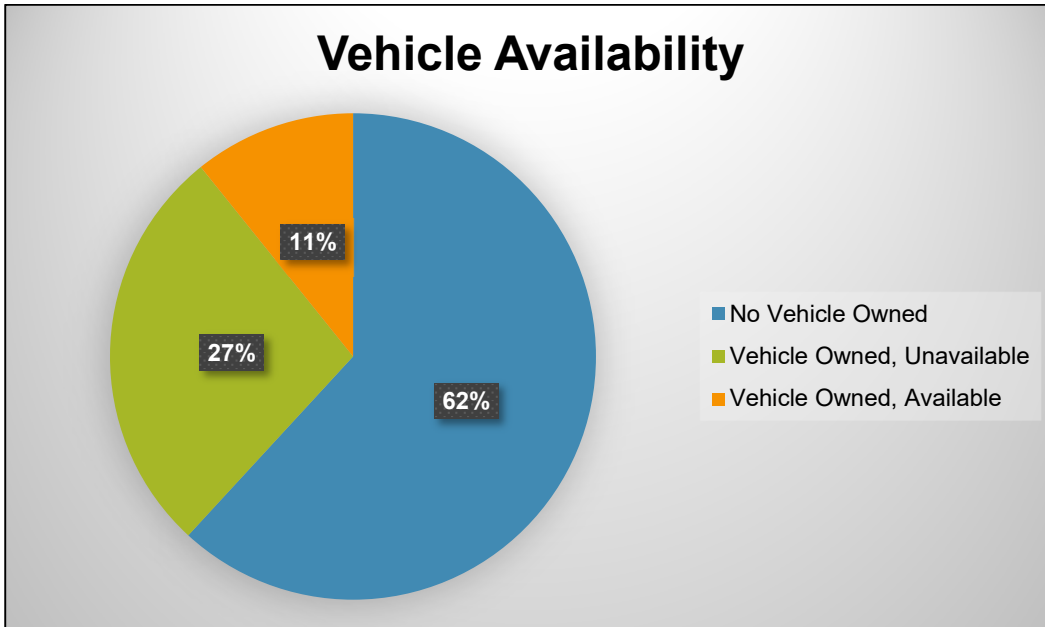


As indicated above, the largest group of riders identified themselves as white/non- Hispanic, with an approximately equal percentage of Hispanic riders. Minorities represent the same share of ABQ RIDE users as in the overall population in the service area (63%). Approximately 5% of riders speak English less than “very well.” One-quarter (25%) of ABQ RIDE’s riders speak another language at home, and of these riders, about 20% report that they speak English less than “very well.” Of those that speak other languages at home, 76% of these riders speak Spanish. Navajo is the second most common language spoken at home at 11%.

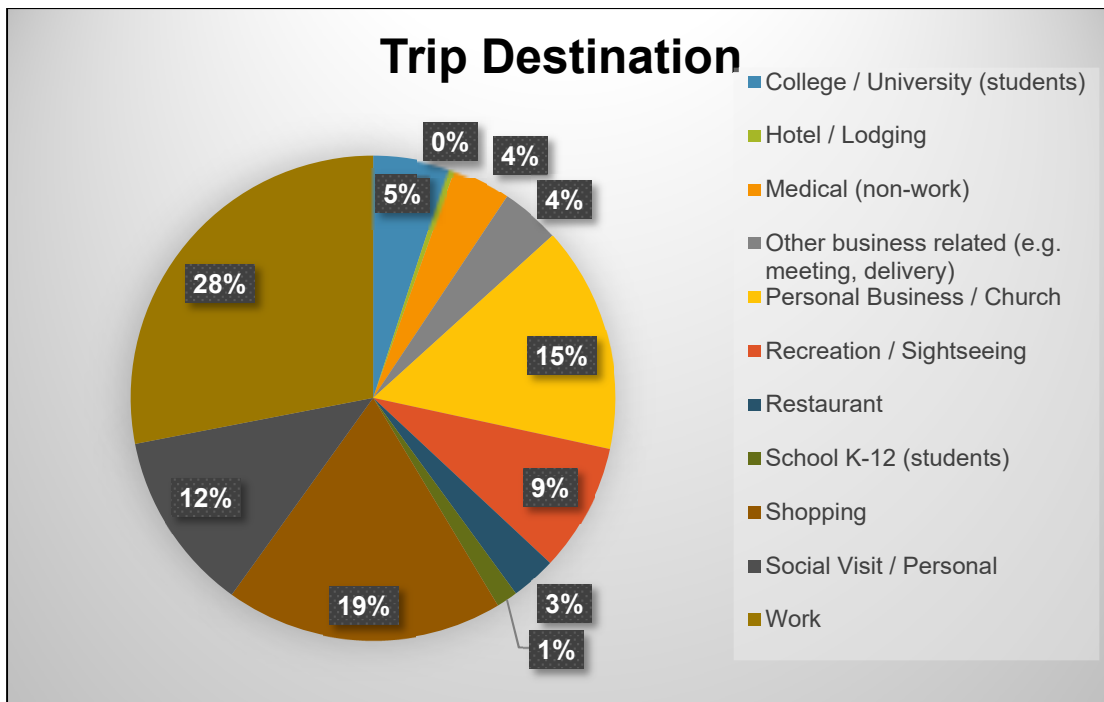
Household income for riders is relatively low, with a majority (88%) reporting an annual household income less than \$35,000. One-half (50%) of riders were employed (full or part-time); 22% reported being unemployed and not seeking work, and 16% are unemployed but are seeking work. One-tenth (10%) of riders were retired. Students represent 14% of all riders. Survey data for household annual income is shown in the following graph.



More than half of riders (63%) come from households without a car. Of those with one or more household vehicle, only 20% have access to a vehicle for the trip they made on transit.

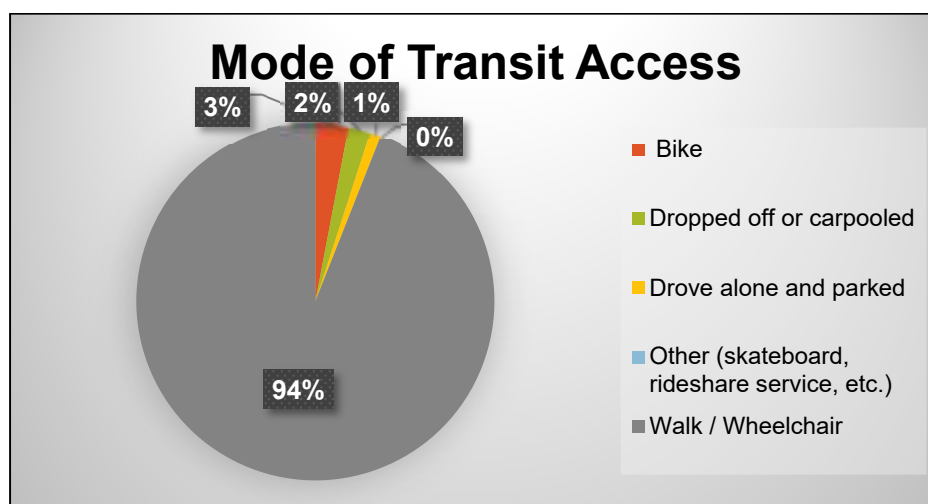


Excluding trips to home and non-specific “other” destinations, work trips represent about 28% of riders’ trip purposes, followed by personal business and church (19%), shopping trips (19%), social visits/personal (12%), and recreation/sightseeing (9%).



Below is a breakdown of destination types by demographic category.

Destination Type by Demo. Category	Minority	Non-Minority	Low-Income	Not Low-Income
Work	29%	26%	25%	42%
Personal Business / Church	19%	20%	21%	12%
Shopping	14%	27%	20%	15%
Social Visit / Personal	12%	12%	13%	4%
Recreation / Sightseeing	10%	6%	9%	8%
College / University (students)	6%	4%	4%	9%
Medical (non-work)	4%	3%	4%	3%
Restaurant	3%	2%	3%	5%
School K-12 (students)	2%	1%	1%	1%
Hotel / Lodging	1%	0%	1%	0%



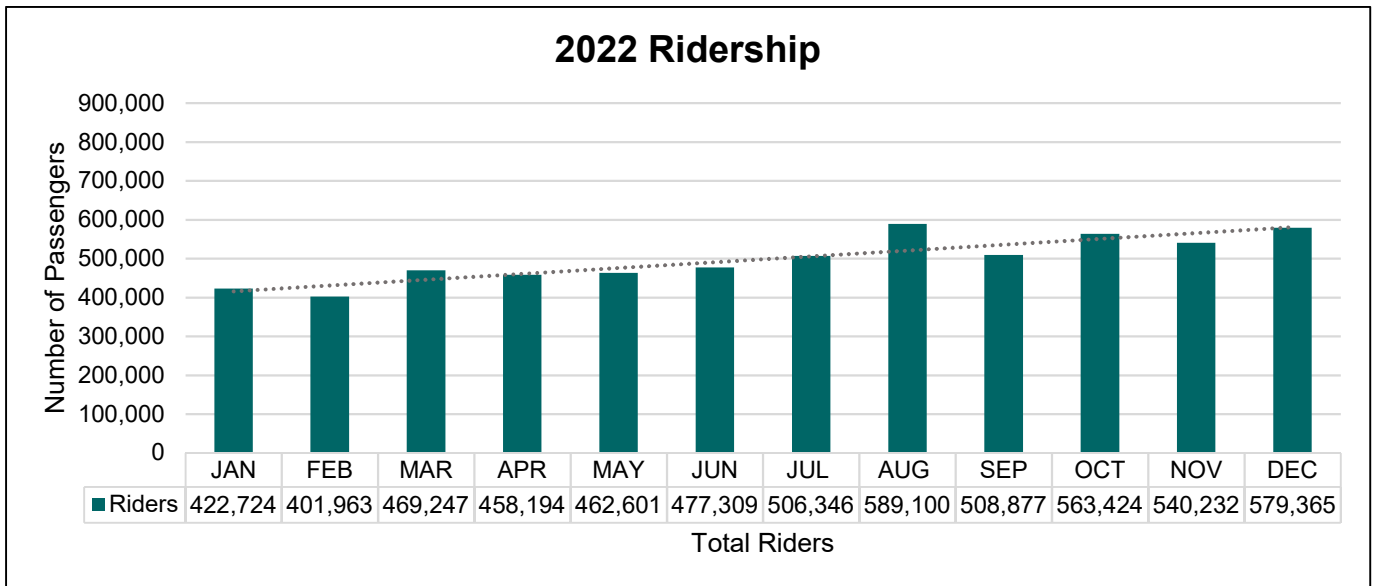
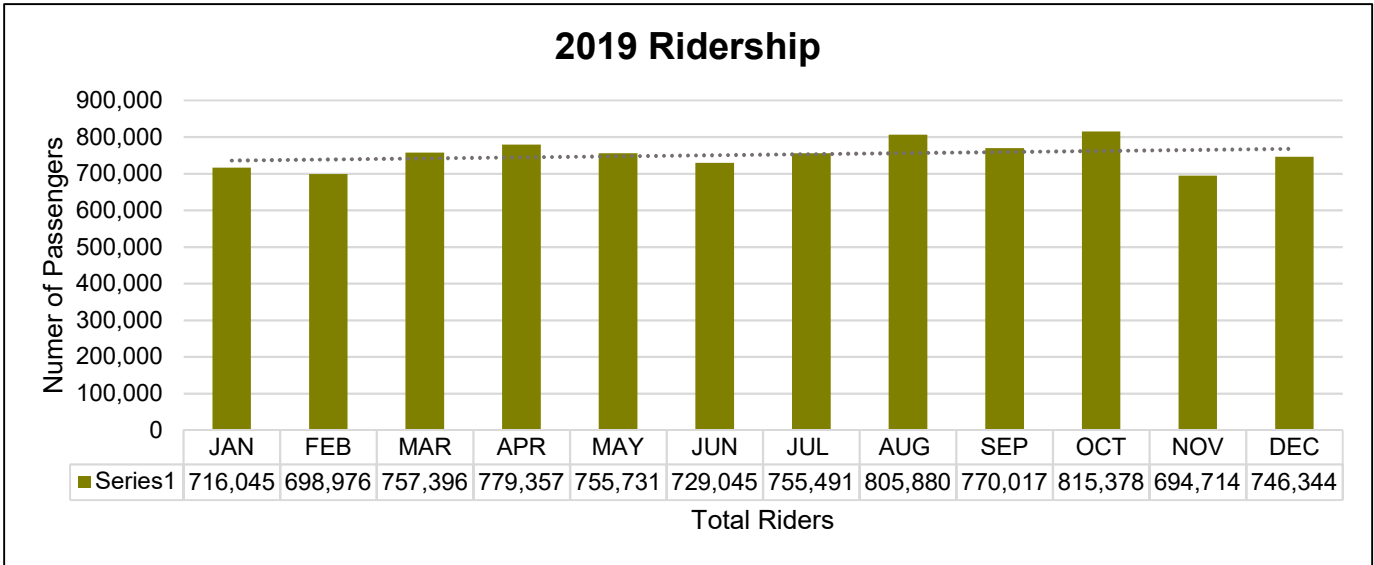
About 22% of ABQ RIDE passengers transfer to complete their trips.

### Ridership

Prior to the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, ABQ RIDE recorded over 9,000,000 passenger boarding's in fiscal year 2019. In March 2020, Transportation services across the globe plummeted and ABQ RIDE saw its lowest ridership with roughly 3,900,000 passenger boarding's.

Designed to increase ridership by removing barriers for the public and creating a more accessible system, the Zero Fares Pilot Program was implemented in response to Covid-19. Throughout 2022, ridership steadily increased. Identifying the cause of ridership increases came down to three factors: the return to a new normal after the pandemic, inflation, and record high gas prices.

Prior to the implementation of Zero Fares, a majority of ridership data was collected via fare boxes, excluding ART buses that utilize automatic passenger counters. During the pilot, however, drivers (Motorcoach Operators) were responsible for collecting ridership data manually. Despite this data collection method, 2022 ridership has continued to increase, as shown in the chart below though it has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels. 2023 ridership continues to increase as well.



## **Cleanliness**

Meeting 4: April 19, 2023

The Technical Team discussed the importance of cleanliness among the transit system as a strategy to increase safety and help promote a positive experience for both riders and drivers.

In addition to Bus Stop Maintenance and Vehicle Servicer staff, ABQ RIDE has implemented the following to address cleanliness:

- Contracted detailers to detail buses nightly at the Ken Sanchez Transit Facility
- Began on-route cleaning program at Central & Unser Transit Center on June 1, 2023
- Bus wash repaired, early Spring 2023, re-build design underway
- ART station refresh to include new decals, restriping, and painting
- Repainting standard fixed route shelters throughout City
- Increased Adopt-a-Stop community awareness
- Expanded Adopt-a-Stop program to businesses and organizations
- Two community bus stop clean-up volunteer opportunities
- Lighting improvements at transit centers
- Providing odor neutralizing spray to drivers



## **Safety & Security**

Meeting 4: April 19, 2023

Meeting 6: May 10, 2023

The Technical Team discussed safety, security data, and cleanliness efforts by the department as a result of the Zero Fares Pilot Program. During these discussions, public safety partners including APD, AFR, ACS, Metro Security and ABQ RIDE Associate Director over Facility Maintenance were invited to participate. The group acknowledged the importance of a cleaner and safer transit system for the community during these conversations. Recognizing the importance of public safety on ABQ RIDE, security and cleanliness were the topic of several meetings. Currently safety and security data is tracked by ABQ Ride accident, injury and incident reporting (AI&I), Metro security calls, and through APD calls. There is some overlap in reporting in which an incident may be called into all three departments. It is important to note that data prior to the Zero Fares

Pilot program is limited as collection began only 3 months before its implementation. During this meeting, all three tracking mechanisms were discussed.

#### ABQ RIDE Security Accident, Incident & Injury Categories (AI&I)

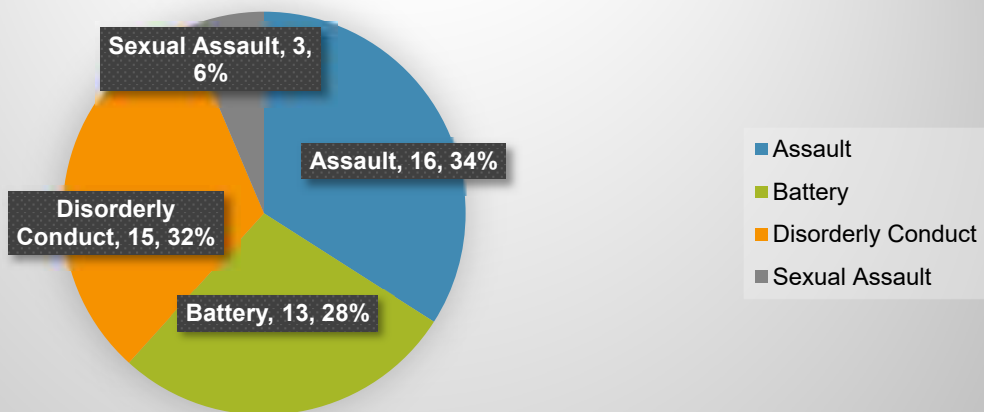
As part of our discussion, ABQ RIDE's category system was evaluated for use in accident, injury and incident reporting. The following is the tier system in which emergencies are divided, with Level 1 being the most severe.

During a Critical or Major Incident/Accident, two operations supervisors will manage the scene. Dispatch will assign the lead, preferably the supervisor that is closest to the scene. The lead will be in charge of the scene and completing all corresponding documentation. They will identify themselves as the lead to Field Responders (AFR, APD, BCSO, EMS, ACS). Additionally, the role of a lead is to assess the scene, check for injuries, render aid, gauge vehicle damage, communicate with dispatch, collect evidence for their investigation, and determine if a post-accident drug and alcohol test is required. When the scene is clear, they will send a follow-up to dispatch and manager via phone and email that may include incident/accident report.



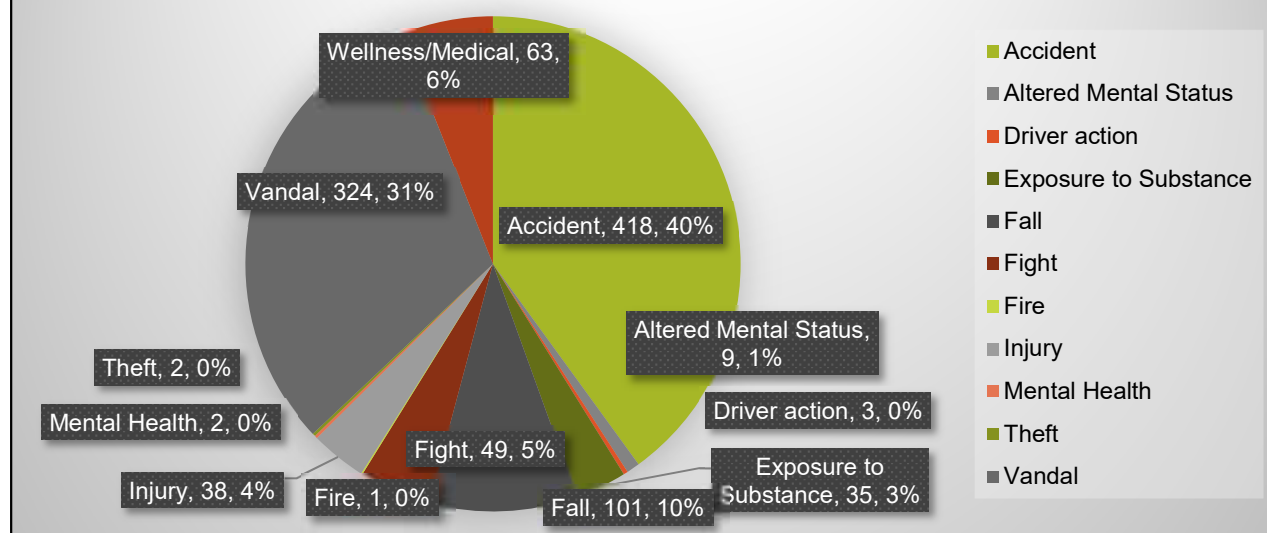
**Category 1** – Critical Incidents/Accidents: Human fatality and/or critical injuries, multiple individuals sustain critical injuries that require immediate medical treatment and are transported by (ambulance/vehicle) from the scene, disabling damage that require vehicle and/or vehicles to be towed away from the scene. For reporting purposes, category 1 incidents are assault, battery, disorderly conduct and sexual assault. In this category, dispatch will deploy two (2) operations supervisors (1 lead and 1 back-up or support).

## Category 1 Incidents (Jan 22 - Dec 22)

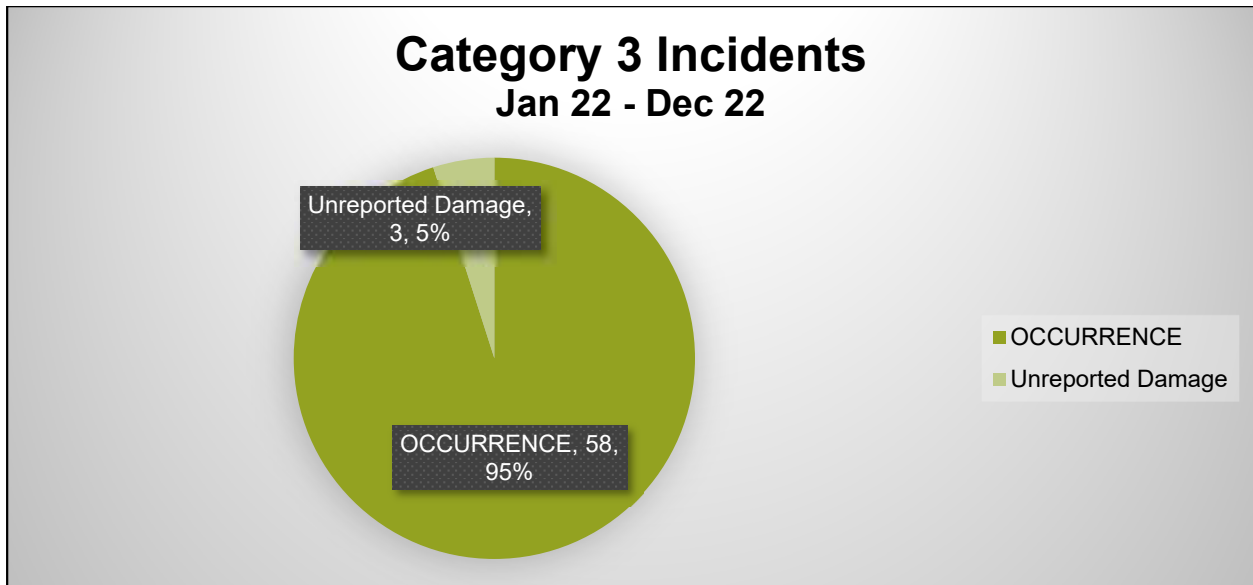


**Category 2 – Major Incidents/Accidents:** Non-life-threatening injuries to driver/passenger, physical altercations, any incident involving a weapon, passenger fall/medical emergency that require immediate medical treatment and are transported by (ambulance/vehicle) from the scene, multiple individuals sustain non-life-threatening injuries that require immediate medical treatment and are transported by (ambulance/vehicle) from the scene, vehicle contact with a pedestrian or bicyclist. For reporting purposes, category 2 incidents are altered mental status, driver action, exposure to substance, fall, fight, fire, injury, mental health, theft, vandalism and wellness/medical. In this category, dispatch will deploy two (2) operations supervisors, however, if the situation can be controlled without assistance the lead supervisor is acceptable.

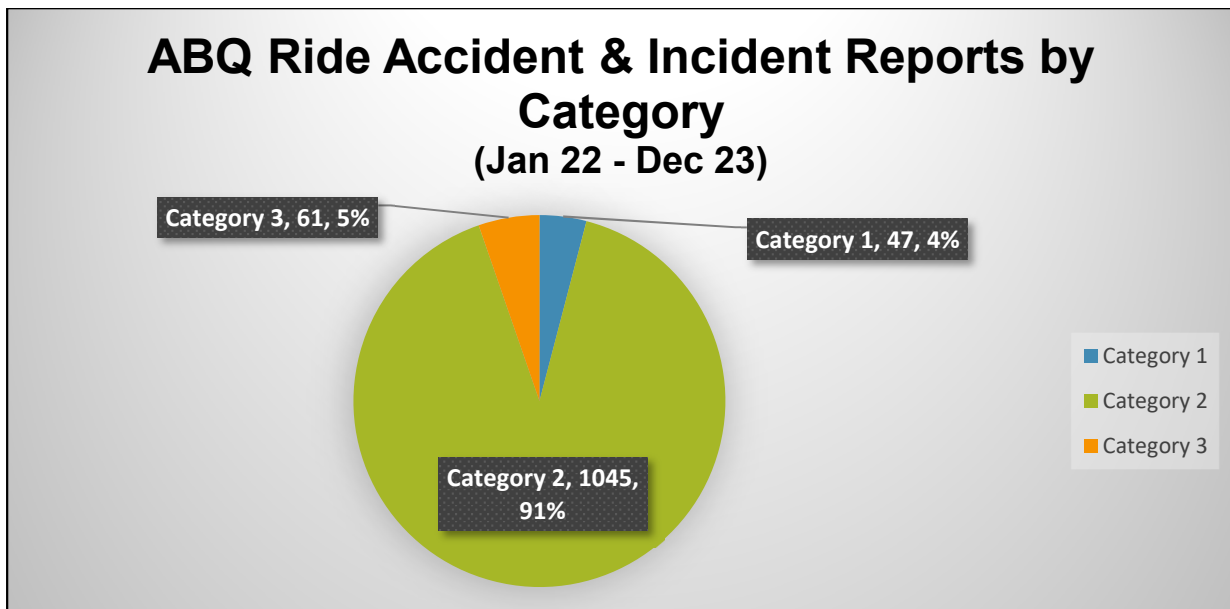
## Category 2 Incidents (Jan 22 - Dec 22)



**Category 3 – Minor Incidents/Accidents:** passenger drunkenness, vandalism, and disorderly conduct; non-collision, or collision with no visible damage where there are no significant injuries and the situation is unlikely to escalate into a major incident. For reporting purposes, category 3 are occurrences and unreported damage. In this category, dispatch will deploy one (1) operations supervisor who will handle the incident/accident with security or law enforcement, and there is no need to deploy the "back-up or support" supervisor.



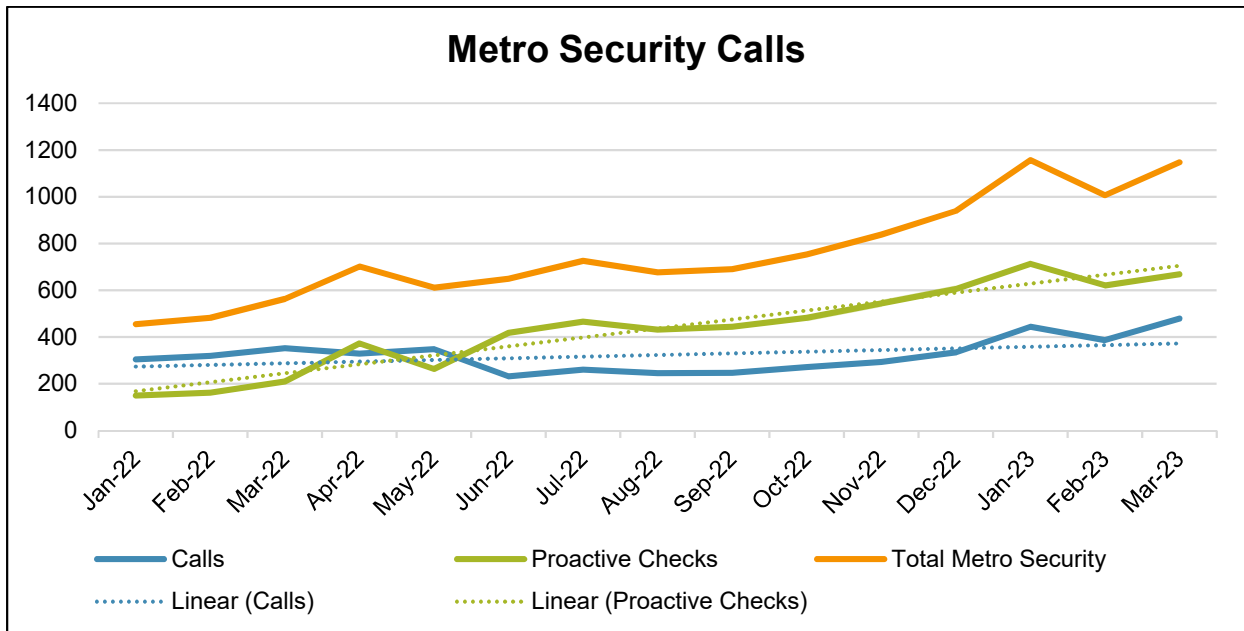
A majority of the accident and incidents that ABQ Ride responds to are labeled as Category 2 with only 5% of incidents (47 incidents) being the most serious category 1. Accidents, vandalism and falls make a majority of the reports made.



### Metro Security Transit Related Calls

Along with ridership increases, ABQ RIDE also experienced a rise in security incidents occurring on buses, at bus stops, and at transit centers. Based on the data from metro security, this trend is in correlation to the increase in ridership. Improvements on security incident reporting and tracking were implemented to strengthen data over the course of the pilot program. Additionally, a greater emphasis was placed on performing proactive security checks, helping to mitigate incidents before they happen.

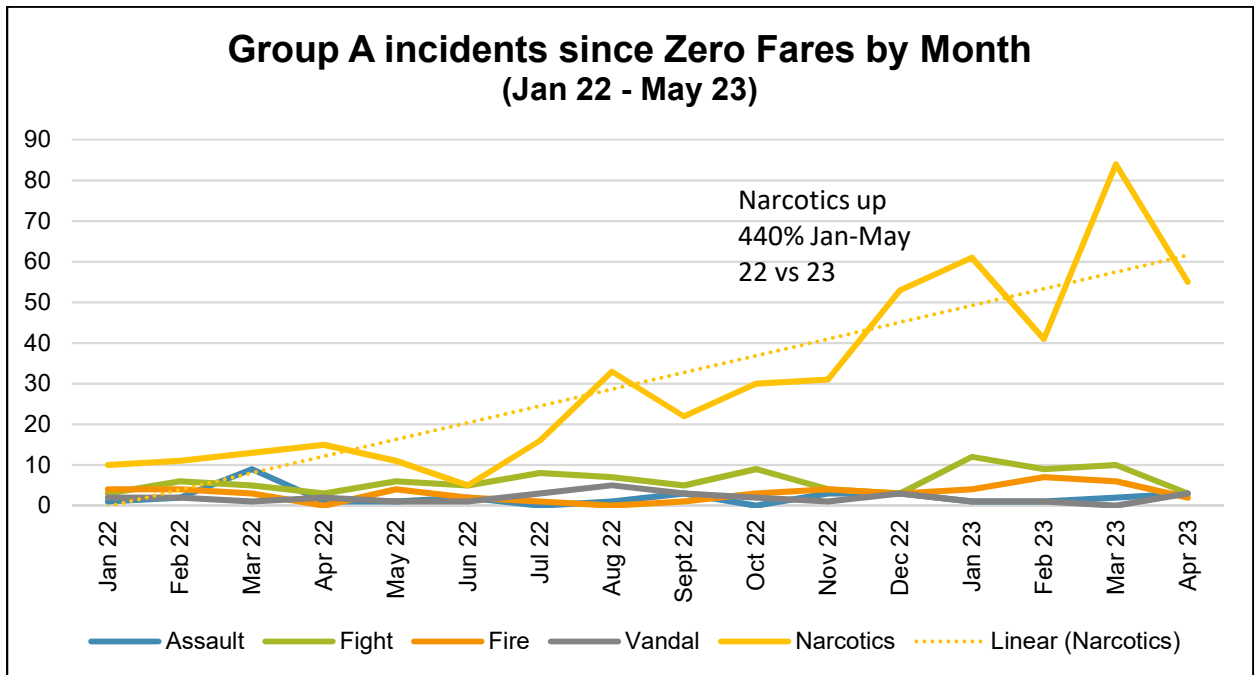
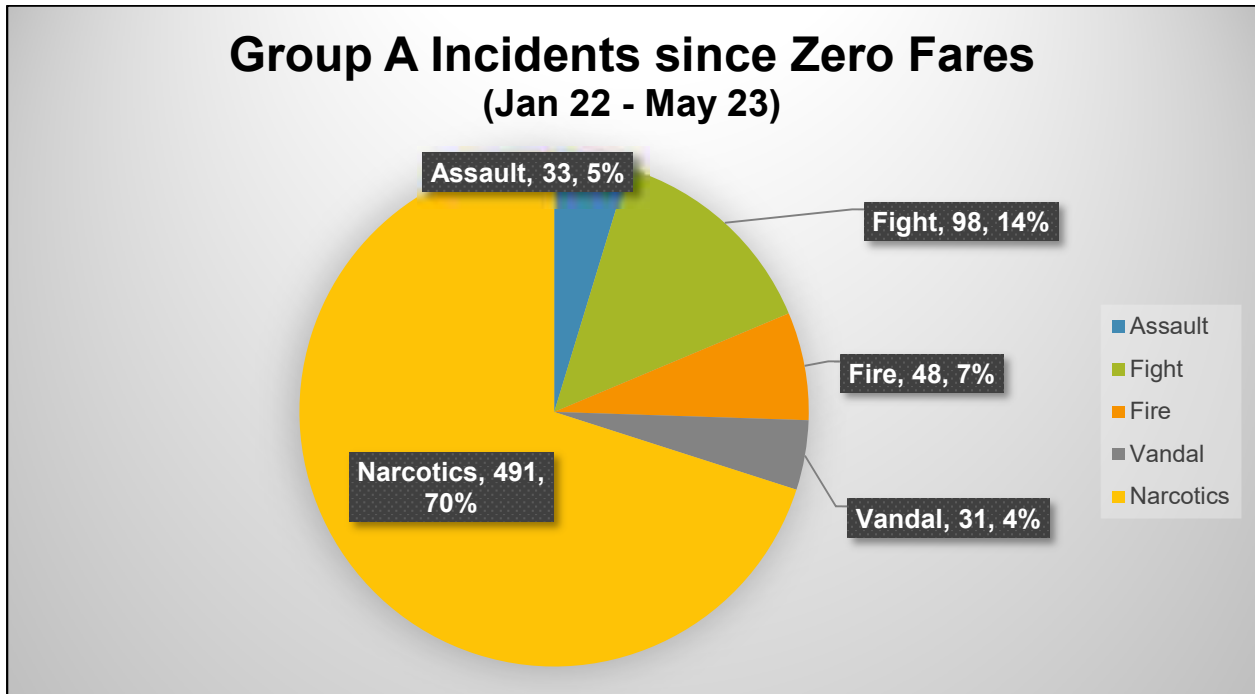
Data reveals when more people utilize a service, the likelihood of incidents occurring will naturally increase. This concept has been proven and is shown in data throughout the duration of the pilot program. On average, only 0.6% of incidents occur per every 1000 riders during 2022.



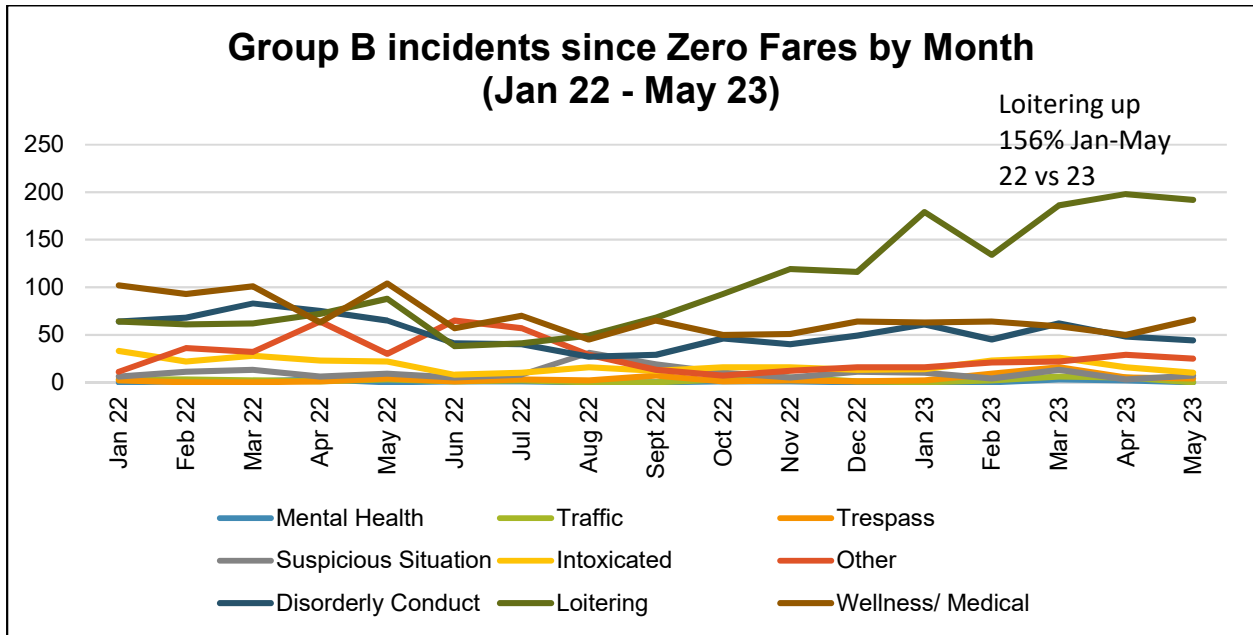
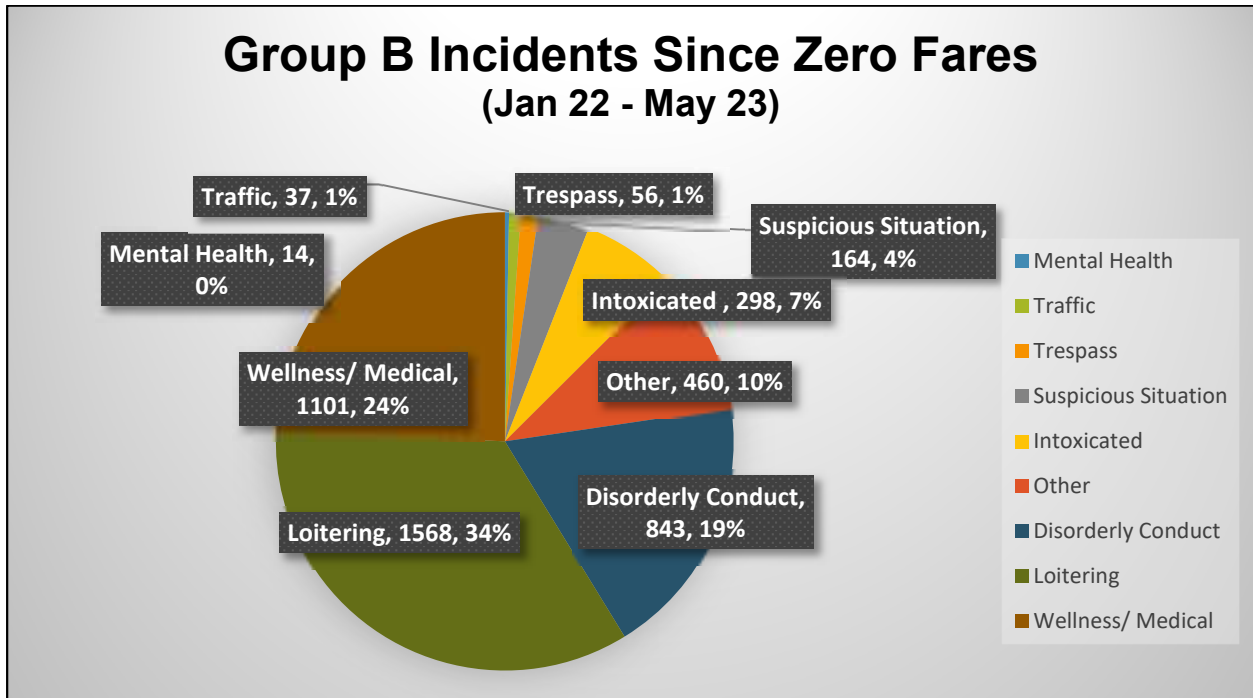
The types of incidents being responded to and the percentage of those which are considered to be proactive is a critical point to highlight when analyzing overall safety within the ABQ RIDE system. While calls for certain individual categories including the use of narcotics and loitering have drastically increased, many other categories have decreased or remained stagnant over the past 12 months, keeping the total number of reactive calls stable and fairly consistent. Data collected by the City’s Metro Security Division suggests a steady increase in security checks which include officers conducting proactive/routine checks of Transit facilities (bus stops, transit centers) to ensure these areas remain safe. Many of the items logged in this category result in no further action necessary but are still important to include in overall security data.

Many transit agencies across the country use the National Incident-Based Reporting System category definitions to assess their security incidents. The security call data from Metro was taken and categorized into Group A and Group B incidents or offenses to better understand the severity of these events that are occurring on the ABQ Ride network.

Of the categories that are reported, Group A offenses include assault, narcotics, fights, fires and vandalism. The charts below depict that the largest issue on the ABQ Ride network is narcotics (70%) which has continued to increase since June of 2022 at an elevated rate. All other categories appear to remain relatively flat.

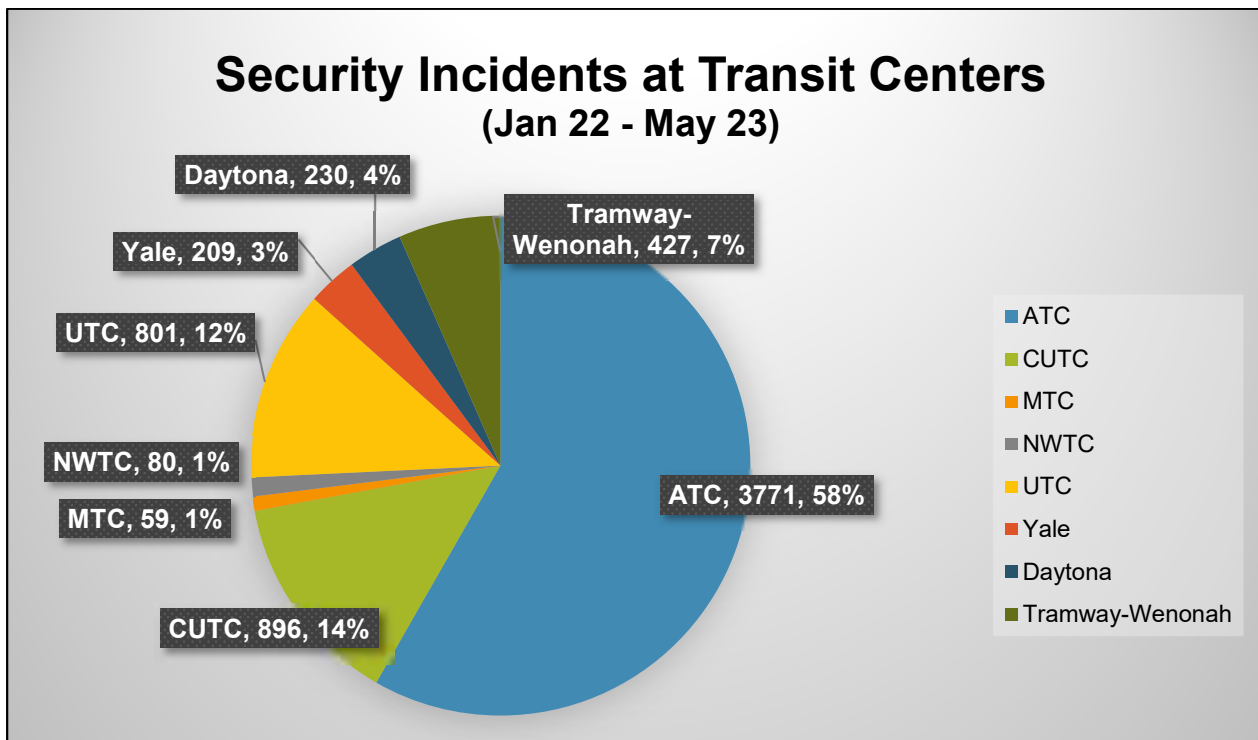


Group B incidents are lower level security incidents. There are three categories that encompass 77% of these calls received – Loitering (34%), Wellness/Medical (24%) and Disorderly Conduct (19%). Loitering has been on the rise since August 22 with all other categories remaining relatively flat.



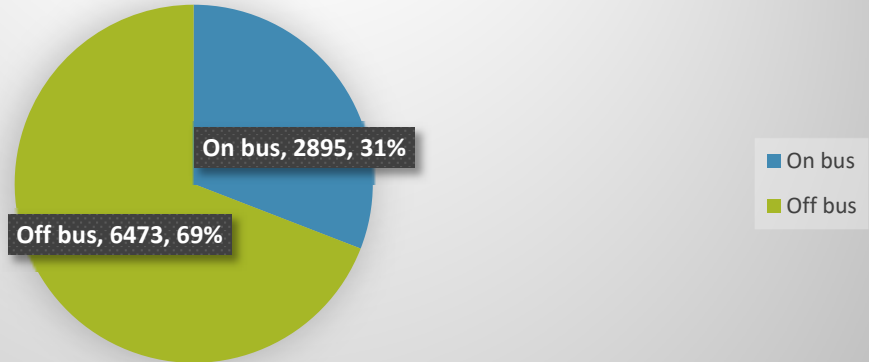
Group A incidents, which are the most serious, entail 7% of security calls at ABQ RIDE with Group B equating to 41% and the remaining 52% security checks. The data displays that the most prevalent issues on the network are loitering, wellness/medical, disorderly conduct and narcotics.

When broken down by location, data shows that a majority of incidents occurring along bus routes are concentrated among the three Central Ave. routes, which constitute an average of 48% of overall ridership. An average of 84% of security incidents on buses have occurred on Central Ave. alone. Among transit centers, data collected over the twelve-month zero fare period has shown an increase in call volume to the Central & Unser, Uptown, and Alvarado Transportation Centers with an overwhelming majority occurring at the ATC. It should be noted that the ATC has a 24/7 security presence. When looking at overall security data for the entire ABQ RIDE system, 70% of reported incidents have occurred on Central bus routes or at the Alvarado Transportation Center, both of which experience high usage and foot traffic.



Of the incidents occurring on the ABQ Ride network, 69% are occurring off the bus at transit facilities and bus stops or platforms. These are areas in which a person would not be required to pay a fare.

## Incidents Occurring On Bus vs Off Bus since Zero Fares (Jan 22 - May 23)



### APD Transit Related Calls

APD provided transit related calls for service at bus stops by type and location for the 2022 calendar year. While this data is important to consider, it is important to note that the incidents are charted if they have occurred within 50ft. of a bus stop. Therefore, some calls may not have involved ABQ RIDE at all. Other call types such as traffic stops and accidents do not have impact on security numbers.

REPORT CREATED BY DATA DRIVEN POLICING UNIT ON 1/13/2023

### TRANSIT STOPS CALLS FOR SERVICE BY TYPE\*

SORTED BY TOTAL 2022 CALLS

Call Type <sup>1</sup>	Proactive Call <sup>2</sup>	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Avg. Calls per Quarter	2022 Total
1 20-F-watch	Yes	203	169	109	164	159	655
2 54 Traffic Stop	Yes	159	183	144	101	137	627
3 335 Onsite Suspicion	Yes	106	147	82	111	112	446
4 31 Suspicious Person/Vehicle		82	117	130	91	102	401
5 35 Disturbance		86	138	104	77	97	382
6 31-1 0911 hang up		35	78	42	8	41	163
7 44 Traffic Accident - No Injuries		26	85	49	47	68	252
8 27-4 Aggravated Assault/Verbal		28	85	43	34	35	141
9 25 Contact	Yes	49	32	26	31	32	129
10 60 Field Briefing	Yes	30	36	24	21	28	110
11 52 Alarm		27	28	22	17	27	106
12 64 Crime Scene Investigation	Yes	21	22	28	21	23	93
13 39-50 Shop/Find/Shop Spotter		14	20	28	24	24	94
14 28 Manned person	Yes	28	8	27	28	15	80
15 27-6 Theft/Breach		15	17	33	33	15	98
16 30-10 Welfare check	Yes	12	20	14	6	13	52
17 32 Fight in Progress		8	24	11	15	12	48
18 15 Family dispute		8	17	12	9	11	42
19 38 Welfare		5	13	33	8	10	39
20 43-1 Suicide		9	23	7	6	9	35

\* Totals include calls that may have not occurred specifically at a transit stop but within 50 ft of the stop location. All call types are included here for transparency to show the breakdown in activity at and adjacent to transit stops (within 50 foot buffer). <sup>1</sup> Includes officer-initiated activity.

The data provided in the transit stops calls for service by location is similar to the patterns as portrayed in the metro security data. The ATC and uptown are at the top of the call list along with Central/Wyoming and Central/San Mateo as well as other locations with 45% of the locations below noting Central in the address.

REPORT CREATED BY DATA DRIVEN POLICING UNIT ON 1/23/2023

### TRANSIT STOPS CALLS FOR SERVICE BY LOCATION

SORTED BY TOTAL 2022 CALLS

	Stop ID*	Address	Routes*	2022 Total Calls	Q4 Calls	Avg. Calls per Quarter
1	4611	Central / Wyoming	177, 88	397	79	99
2	4438	1 <sup>st</sup> / Central(ATC)	407, 66, Others	325	85	81
3	3258	Uptown Transit Center	8, 6, 766, 12, 34	191	87	48
4	7618	Montano Transit Center	157, Red Runner	168	28	42
5	4487	Central / San Mateo	66, 777, 776	162	38	41
6	7184	Tramway / Wendorff	777	116	30	29
7	2008	Busara / Juan Tabo	1, 2	104	29	26
8	6896	Montgomery / Pennsylvania	5	100	25	25
9	4711	Copper / 8 <sup>th</sup> Street	66	96	20	24
10	4496	Central / Florida	66	94	28	24
11	7276	Central / 65 <sup>th</sup> Street	66	84	8	21
12	1489	Golf Course / Homestead Dr <sup>th</sup>	92, 157	81	3	20
13	2058	Juan Tabo / Menaul	1, 8	71	23	18
14	4443	Central / Broadway	66	67	18	17
15	1148	Alameda / Coors	96	62	20	16
16	2773	Louisiana / Domingo	157	55	5	14
17	3247	Wyoming / Chico	31	50	11	13
18	5650	Central / Bryn Mawr	66, 766, 777	46	14	12
19	5776	8 <sup>th</sup> Street / McKnight (Coronado Park)	10	43	5	11
20	4648	Central / Monroe	66	29	8	10

\* Approximate stop ID and routes. Some locations included combined stops if stop locations are close by (within 50 foot buffer).  
 † May be an outlier location due to data issue.





### APD Retail Crime Operation, May 2023

In spring of 2023, the Albuquerque Police Department conducted an organized retail crime operation that resulted in the arrests of 31 individuals and nearly \$7,000 of stolen merchandise. This growing issue across the metro has contributed to the illegal drug trade, making it a priority for the department to pursue retail crime offenders and the mode of transportation used to commit these crimes. Of the 31 individuals arrested, 10 utilized the City bus while the other 70% walked or used personal vehicles. Through these efforts, APD has partnered with Albuquerque Retail Assets Protection Association and the Attorney General's Office to continue to tackle the issue from all sides. ABQ Ride has also continued to work with APD on this issue.

### Additional Safety Measures

ABQ Ride is continuously working to provide for the safety of patrons and staff. The Albuquerque Police Department has identified that crime rings are becoming more sophisticated and organized in the methods they employ including; at times using transit as a conduit to and from crime scenes. To continue providing for the safety of ABQ Ride patrons and staff and to assist APD and its law enforcement partners the Transit Department has implemented several measures during the Zero Fares Pilot program that help to address system-wide security issues. Those measures are as follows:

- Weekly Security meeting with ABQ RIDE, Metro Security, Albuquerque Police Department, Albuquerque Community Safety, Office of Equity and Inclusion, and the Bernalillo County Sheriff's Department.
- Began a proactive approach to public engagement.
- Installed visual safety messages on each bus.
- Implemented an audio message reminding passengers of "Rules to Ride".
- Addressed lighting at several facilities and shelters.
- Granted full access to the Real Time Crime Center and Narcotics Unit for more than 2,600 cameras on buses and facilities.
- Reactivated "Emergency Buttons" at each ART station.
- Removed shelters that were attracting unlawful behavior with the collaboration of APD
- Currently researching an "App" that will allow passengers to report an incident in real time to Security in a safe manner.
- City Council update to 7-2-2-1, making it illegal to loiter at bus stops, bus shelters, ART platforms, and Transit facilities.
- Department actively monitoring ART platforms and dispatch broadcasting into these platforms when APD/metro dispatched
- Bus drivers reporting trash or inappropriate activity at stops

### Other Transit Agencies

When approaching the subject of “Transit Security”, the Office of Equity and Inclusion provided several reports and articles for the Technical Team’s review. Much of the information provided highlighted security issues on multiple public transportation systems from around the globe. While cities like Los Angeles and other European communities may have differences in population and demographics, these examples are meant to demonstrate the similarities in security incidents that occur among public transportation systems; some of these systems require a fare. To conclude, these studies indicate that security issues remain a factor regardless of whether a fare structure is in place or not.

### Reports of Violent Crime, Drug Use Rock LA Metro System

LA Metro requires a \$1.75 fare for all one-way trips with options for daily, weekly, and monthly passes. Even with the cost of fares, the transit agency that serves one of the nation’s largest metropolitan areas saw a 25% increase in violent crime during 2022 and a large spike in drug-related deaths, many of which were related to Fentanyl on their transit network.

### Sun Tran; Tucson, Arizona

Like Albuquerque, the Tucson, Arizona transportation system, Sun Tran, initiated free fares around the time that COVID-19 was making its way across the country. Sun Tran made the decision to keep the free fare structure in place until December 2023. During discussions, the topic of safety in the system was brought up, however, a security analysis determined that safety issues began to rise prior to the pandemic even with fares in place. This finding suggests that the free fare structure was not a contributing factor to the increase in security incidents on public transportation vehicles or at bus stops. Furthermore, Vice Mayor Lane Santa Cruz concluded safety measures should be addressed through public policy and not associated with the accessibility of public transportation.

### Denmark

Other examples include communities in European countries like Denmark which have also experienced similar concerns when it comes to safety among public transportation systems. The Danish Railways Association conducted a questionnaire survey in January 2023 to collect data on the extent of verbal and physical assaults the frontline staff has witnessed.



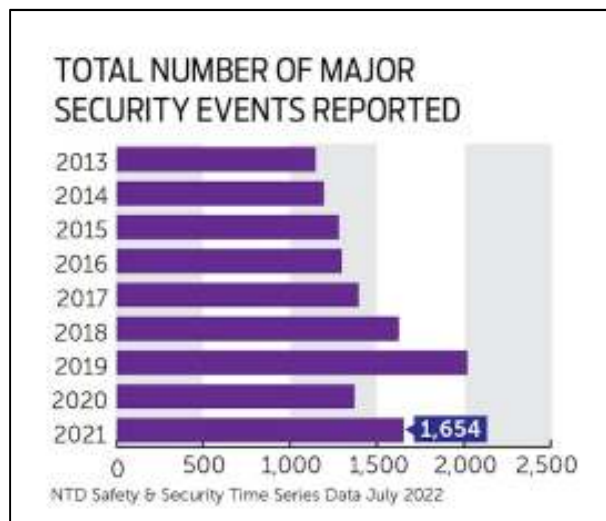
The survey results:

- 17.4% have been **physically** assaulted one or more times within the past 3 months. Most physical assaults occur in connection with ticketing (57.5%), but almost every fifth physical assault is unprovoked (18.8%)
- 77.1% of had been subjected to one or more **verbal** assaults within the three months. Most verbal assaults occur in connection with ticketing (61.1%), but every fourth verbal assault is unprovoked (25.4%)
- 57.4% experience that, "The tone has become rougher after the Corona epidemic"

Source: <https://www.djf.dk/voldsomt-omfang-af-vold-mod-frontmedarbejdere-i-toget/>

### Mass Transit Magazine

According to a November 2022 study conducted by Mass Transit Magazine, ([2022 Transit Safety & Security Report | Mass Transit \(masstransitmag.com\)](https://www.masstransitmag.com)) public transportation as an industry has been experiencing an increase in safety incidents since at least 2013. This concept is illustrated in the Federal Transit Administration’s National Transit Database (NTD) Safety & Security Time Series Data chart below.



In conclusion, this increase in security and safety incidents on all public transportation precedes the Covid-19 pandemic and occurs within systems that still collect fares indicating that Albuquerque’s Zero Fares Pilot Program is not the sole cause of the increase in incidents. However, it is the opinion of the team that safety and security must remain at the top of the department’s priorities. Whether zero fares remain or a fare is again implemented, ABQ Ride will continue to face safety and security issues and will be implementing changes to continue to improve security on the network.

### Fare Evasion

Collecting fares increases interactions between drivers and passengers often leading to disputes which can easily escalate to assaults and/or batteries on ABQ RIDE drivers. A recently published article by transitcenter.org titled [“Safety for All”](#) reveals that the standard practice of collecting fares often leads to violent interactions between drivers and passengers. Many cities across the country are struggling with a substantial loss in fares due to fare evasion. One of many examples is MTA which estimates “about 700,000 bus riders do not pay the fare on an average weekday. Skipping the fare on the buses is as easy as stepping aboard without paying or dropping less than the full cost of a ride in the farebox” ([MTA Looks Beyond Enforcement After \\$690 Million in Fare Evasion](#)). Reinstating a fare or implementing a pass program will require a level of verification and enforcement.

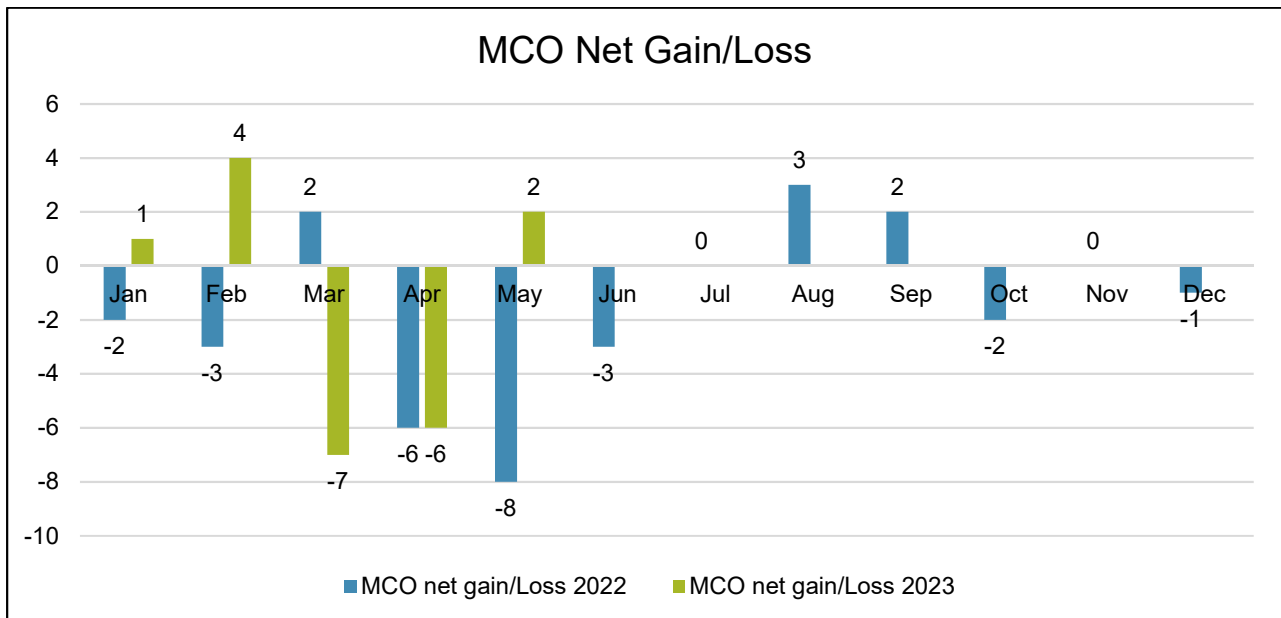
## Additional Information to Consider

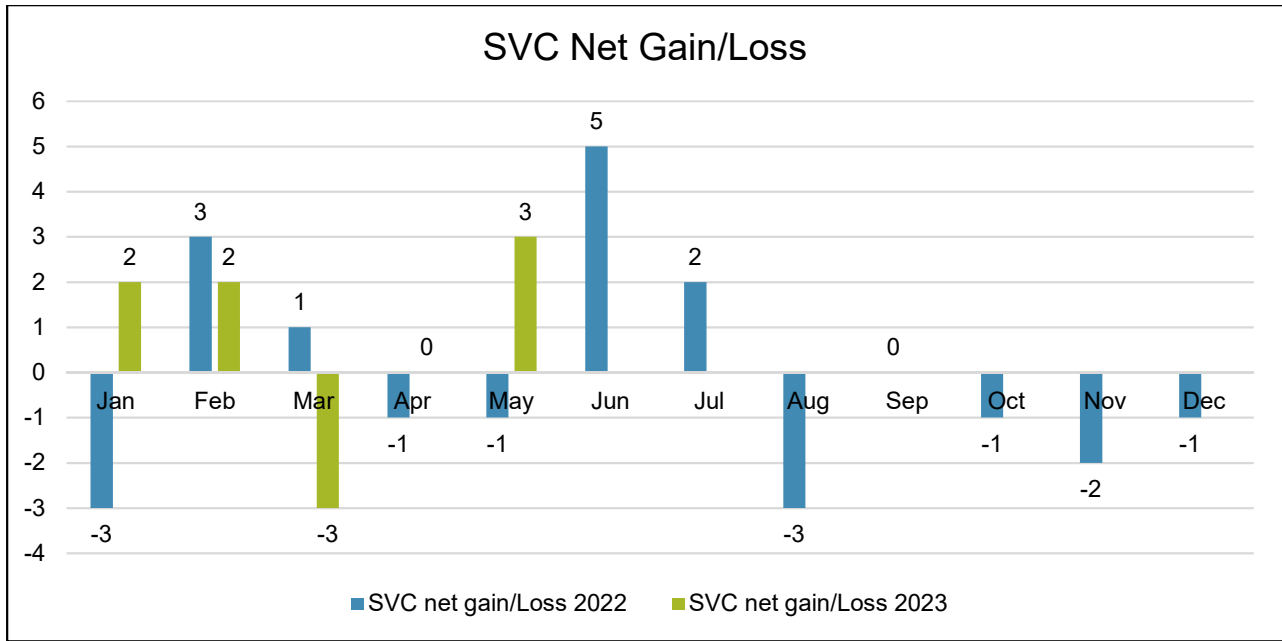
### Driver Hiring and Retention

During the course of the Zero Fares Pilot Program, vacancy rates have continued to climb. The concern has been voiced that this may be attributable to perceived security and safety concerns the drivers are being faced with along their routes. This insinuates that Zero Fares may be impacting drivers in a negative manner. Ultimately, transit agencies across the country are facing severe workforce shortages. In March 2023, APTA released [“Transit Workforce Shortage, Synthesis Report”](#), providing causes of the shortage including an aging workforce leading to high retirement numbers, intense competition for workers, and concerns about work schedules and compensation. This was based on surveys received from over 1,300 current and former transit workers across the country.

Though not the leading factors, the report determined that health and safety are also issues that drivers face across the country. The report states, “Agencies and workers alike reported an increase in negative interactions between operators and customers since COVID 19 pandemic began, including customer drug and alcohol use, assault and harassment of operators on vehicles and at transit facilities and customers in crisis.” In conclusion, these issues are not specific to Albuquerque nor is Zero Fares the main factor. In further support of this conclusion, the department is facing even worse shortages within vehicle maintenance for positions that very rarely interact with the public.

The charts below reflect the hiring and retention numbers since Zero Fares. In line with agencies across the country, the department is also experiencing retention issues within the first few years of employment. In fact, the report determined that “16% of transit workers leave during training and onboarding and 20% more during the probationary period.”





Vehicle Maintenance Vacancies as of June 9, 2023				
Position	Vacancies	Filled	Total	Vacancy Rate
Mechanic III (B32)	9	20	29	31%
Mechanic II (B31)	4	0	4	100%
Vehicle Servicer (B19)	14	7	21	67%
Total	27	27	54	50%

ABQ RIDE is working to address these issues through the newly added training division, separate from operations. In this new division, our team is working with new hires to ensure they have the proper support while they progress through probation and into the new role. Internally, the team has discovered that many drivers face situations in their personal lives that can make their work schedules difficult to manage. Several drivers who are hired struggle to find adequate transportation, housing, childcare, etc. Further, we are working to minimize the required hours per week to allow a smooth transition into these positions. The department is also developing a mentoring program for new drivers. In addition, ABQ RIDE is continuing to make changes to policies to protect drivers and remove them from the enforcement process. Drivers should inform, not enforce. A new passenger removal process has been implemented as well as more regular de-escalation training for drivers.

### Driver Feedback

At the start of the Zero Fares Pilot Program, ABQ RIDE conducted a short survey to gather input from drivers about their views. Drivers were asked about their feelings toward the Zero Fares Pilot Program at the start of 2022 and again in January 2023. The initial feedback was largely negative which is in contrast to the feedback received earlier this year which is more balanced. The following are statements from two different drivers expressing their revised views of the program.

*“I’ve been driving for transit, almost 6 years now. Driven just about every route. I want to implore you to do what you can to keep the free fare program going. To eliminate it would affect the most vulnerable in our beautiful city. To end it would put the bus drivers in harm’s way as they are the ones on the front lines, dealing with the frustrated folks that will take out their frustration on the drivers and buses. Possibly on other passengers. I completely support and encourage the continued free fare program.”*

*“I have been with transit ART for 6 years. I believe the fares should stay free.”*

*“I like it but it has caused more problems than benefits.”*



Pros & Cons of Fare Structures

<b>Fare</b>	<b>Zero Fare</b>
<p>Pro:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revenue for dept.</li> <li>• Greater control for passengers</li> <li>• Increase of direct marketing strategies</li> </ul>	<p>Pro:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No fare disputes</li> <li>• Everyone rides for free</li> <li>• No fare collection expenses</li> <li>• Faster boarding times</li> <li>• Increased speed and reliability</li> <li>• Eliminates need for fare box maintenance</li> <li>• Reduces traffic congestion</li> <li>• Redirects economic growth towards local economy</li> <li>• Greater focus on security staffing</li> </ul>
<p>Con:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates fare disputes</li> <li>• Must pay or have pass to ride</li> <li>• Incur fare collection expenses</li> <li>• Added burden to non-profits</li> <li>• Increased dwell time when boarding</li> <li>• Fare box maintenance</li> <li>• Creates traffic congestion</li> </ul>	<p>Con:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of revenue for dept.</li> <li>• Increased perception of security incidents</li> <li>• Need to be subsidized</li> <li>• Need to employ full time staff members to manage fare system</li> </ul>

## **Recommendation**

Meeting 5: May 3, 2023

The Technical Team recommends that the fare structure for ABQ RIDE should permanently remain Zero Fares without the use of a pass across the entire system. This recommendation is a direct result of a deep dive into security and ridership data, the impact on equity and accessibility to the community, and the overall financial impact on ABQ RIDE.

Additionally, with the recent passage of O-23-71, creating a permanent Zero Fare fee structure on the ART Line and Sun Van, it was determined that asking passengers to pay on portions of the ABQ RIDE system and not on other portions would not only create confusion for passengers but would also create the opportunity for fare disputes between passengers and ABQ RIDE drivers.

Based on the Technical Team's meeting on the implementation of a pass system, it has been determined that this requirement would not achieve the outcome of increased accountability, thereby creating a safer transit system. However, the team determined that a greater emphasis on security measures must remain a top priority for ABQ RIDE. Focusing money and resources toward building a stronger security system would be more effective than investing resources into an inefficient pass system. For a detailed look at how a pass system would work under a Zero Fare structure, refer to the Zero Fare Pass-Identification Program Report.

In order to keep transportation services Zero Fares moving forward, additional funding to supplement lost revenue and coordination with City of Albuquerque Departments will be required to ensure our service is accessible and safe for our community. To achieve this, ABQ RIDE must direct our limited resources to the areas that are the most needed by the community and make safety and security a greater priority.

## **Conclusion**

ABQ RIDE acknowledges that safety and security incidents remain an issue system wide. The department remains steadfast in addressing these issues. Providing equitable access to a safe and reliable service will ensure that ABQ RIDE maintains its mission of being the first choice in transportation services in the Albuquerque Metro area. During calendar year 2022, passengers and community advocates have expressed their examples of barriers that zero fares has removed for minority and marginalized populations when it comes to the basic right of transportation. Ridership is steadily increasing while security incidents within the system have risen only in relation to an increase of passengers.

### **Quotes from anonymous riders:**

*"I'm not currently working so it is a huge help. The service has also been fast and the no cost helps me get to the laundry mat, grocery store, clinic, and gives me the ability to still live my life despite my current unemployment situation."*

*“There are four people in my household and only one of us works. We live in an apartment and can’t afford a car, but we also can barely afford bus transportation. The free bus transportation has given us more money to pay bills like electricity and food. Plus my daughter and I have a lot of medical conditions so that means frequent visits to the doctor or urgent care. Visits we were having to cancel before because we couldn’t afford to pay for the bus.”*

*“We don’t ride the bus but I am so happy for everyone who does. They don’t have to miss a bus anymore because they don’t have the fare.”*

Recently, ABQ RIDE has created a security tactical plan in partnership with APD, Albuquerque Community Safety (ACS), Metro Security, and AFR documenting response to incidents. The creation of a long-range security plan is currently underway and will be shared with City Council when completed. This long-range plan will create a refined process for our criminal trespass, passenger removal, and many of the department’s outdated processes.

In addition to cooperation from APD, ACS, AFR, and Metro Security to increase safety, ABQ RIDE has been working to improve the overall rider experience through the ABQ RIDE Forward Network Study, which began in spring of 2022. This project is an initiative aimed at reviewing the performance of the existing bus network with the goal to update the City’s plans for future transit improvements based on the resources available and the community’s transportation needs.

The department remains grateful for the opportunity to conduct the Zero Fare Pilot Program during calendar year 2022. This program has created opportunities for City departments and the community to work together to come up with creative new ways to address safety, security, and cleanliness, helping to create a more equitable and diverse transportation system for the residents of Albuquerque.

Moving forward, a permanent zero fares program is appropriate to maintain equitable access to transportation while jointly increasing safety and accountability within the network. By removing barriers to public transportation, residents and visitors of Albuquerque can experience an accessible, equitable, sustainable, and safe ride to their many destinations. Further, zero fares will allow the department to focus its efforts on safety and security instead of splitting the City’s time, money, and resources to also maintain a pass system. By keeping a pass free, zero fare structure, the focus can be placed on utilizing technology to promote a safer transit system for the future.