

CIVIC FEDERATION REPORT



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ON THE RIGHT TRACK: ILLINOIS' NEW TRANSIT AGENCY AND PATH TO SUSTAINABILITY



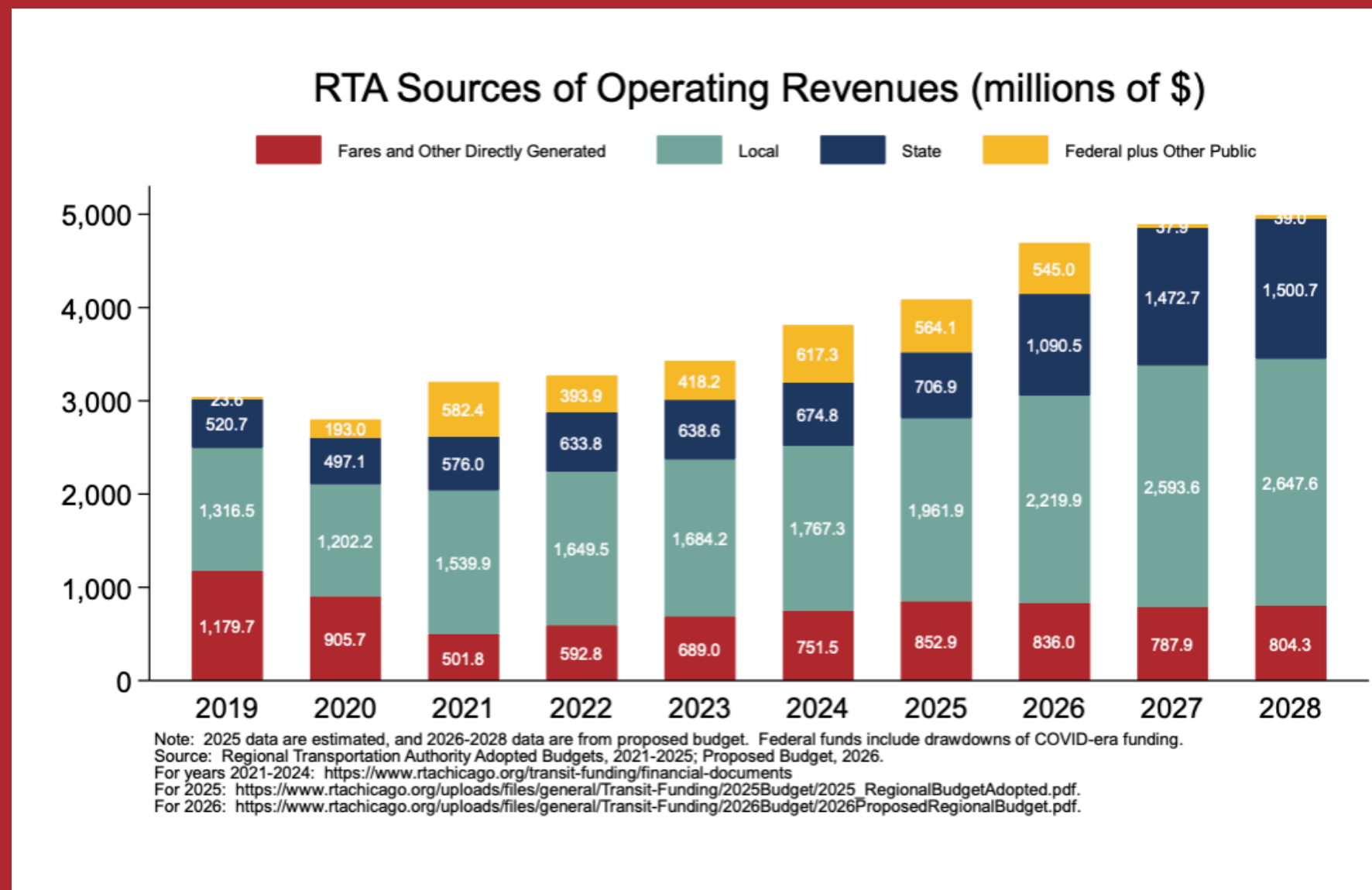


About the Report

On the Right Track provides an independent assessment of SB 2111, the legislation reshaping transit governance and funding in Illinois. The report examines:

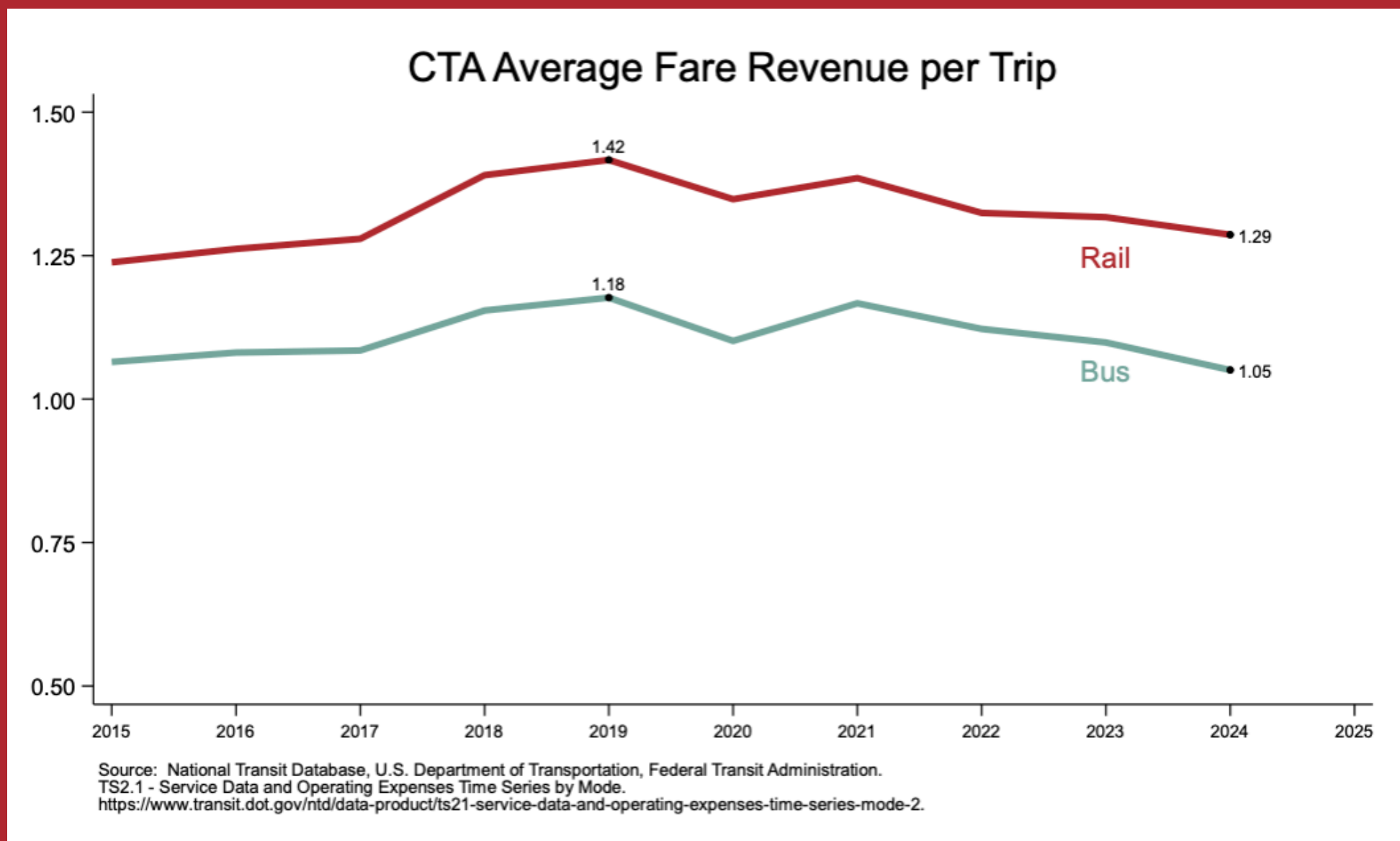
- How the bill averts the region's transit fiscal cliff and stabilizes near-term operations
- Creation of the **Northern Illinois Transit Authority (NITA)** to replace the RTA and strengthen oversight of CTA, Metra, and Pace
- New state funding sources directed to transit, including motor fuel sales tax revenues and Road Fund interest
- Permanently lower farebox recovery requirements that reflect post-pandemic ridership levels
- **Key implementation questions ahead, including improving service quality, safety, and regional coordination**





SB 2111 makes three key changes to increase public funding flowing to transit, which together provide enough additional funds to plug the operating budget deficit and to provide additional revenues to improve service throughout the northern Illinois region.





Average fare revenues per trip have fallen since 2019 about 10%, and base CTA fares have not changed since 2019.

In order for transit systems to maintain purchasing power amid inflation, they must raise fares with some regularity, despite concerns that fare hikes will decrease transit demand.





How Will Agencies Bring Riders Back?

Improving Service

Improving Safety and Security

Chicago-area transit ridership was already falling well before the pandemic, with only CTA rail providing more trips in 2019 than it did in 2007. And post-pandemic recovery remains weak.

Based on data through August, 2025 CTA bus ridership will be just shy of 80% of 2019 levels, with CTA heavy rail, Metra commuter rail, and Pace bus service each below 65%. Local bus ridership has recovered more fully than rail, reflecting the fact that “[l]ocal bus service tends to carry higher percentages of essential workers and transit-dependent riders than rail.” In fact, RTA recently found that 76% of its Pace bus riders do not own cars.





Making it Happen

SB 2111 has much going for it: **the fiscal cliff is avoided, and dramatic service cuts are now off the table.** Funding responsibility is now borne by many stakeholders, not just a few, which is appropriate given the shared benefits provided by a safe, efficient, and reliable transit system. Further, incentives to “think and act regionally” are much improved relative to the status quo.

Going forward, **implementation challenges and opportunities will require enormous energy and focus to address and exploit.** Just as multiple stakeholders worked for several years to get the legislation passed, multiple agencies, departments, and other stakeholder groups must now develop and execute the steps specified in the bill.



Want to learn more?



Read the full report at CivicFed.org

