

# COVID-19 Series

Keeping Connections. Sharing Perspectives. Moving Forward Together.

## Restoring Service and Confidence Post-COVID-19

How transit agencies can prepare for recovery



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In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many transit systems are carrying 90 percent or fewer riders on drastically scaled back networks. Large portions of fleets are parked, and some services are shut down completely. As the U.S. begins to flatten the curve, public leaders are thinking about what mass transit's full return to service may be, including what ridership and passenger experience requirements may look like in the future, both short- and long-term. **How can our industry prepare to help restore both service and passenger confidence post-COVID-19?** For transit systems, there are several key considerations when thinking about ramping service back up to meet a highly concerned, and perhaps skeptical, ridership.

### Service Plans

Transit agencies will need to understand their customers' concerns, design an appropriate level of service, and be prepared to answer questions about new plans. Opportunities to adjust service, providing more or fewer routes, as needed, should be examined. **Key questions to consider include:**

- » Who is riding the scaled-back service now and why?
- » How is the local community planning to reopen and what level of service will be appropriate?
- » How will reduced revenue impact service restoration?
- » Were any innovative service delivery methods introduced during the crisis that are appropriate to continue?

## Equipment

Transit agencies should determine, in advance, how much and how long any necessary equipment inspections and maintenance will take to accommodate new service plans. **Key questions to consider include:**

- » Will the entire fleet be needed for post-COVID-19 service?
- » Has a majority of the fleet been parked during the pandemic or has it been rotated?
- » What inspections will be needed before equipment can be safely returned to service?
- » What level of daily fleet cleaning will be required?
- » How will fleet availability be impacted by new cleaning requirements?

## Employees

A debt of gratitude is owed to all transit staff that remained on the frontlines during the pandemic! These essential employees are keeping other essential personnel mobile during this event. However, agencies should be prepared for staff attrition as a result of the pandemic. Training programs will need to be fully staffed to meet the needs of both returning employees and new recruits. **Key questions to consider include:**

- » What staffing level will be needed to support the ramp up and return to service?
- » Have staff been idle during the pandemic?
- » Will retraining or requalification be required?
- » What level of cleaning is required of all employee quarters prior to reopening and after service restoration?

## Infrastructure

A thorough inspection and cleaning program will need to be identified and implemented prior to ramping back up service. **Key questions to consider include:**

- » Were any stations, guideways, or facilities closed during the crisis?
- » Will any inspections or cleaning be required prior to reopening?
- » What will be required for cleaning of these critical pieces of infrastructure going forward?

## Customers

Customers will need to be welcomed back to the network and encouraged to ride the systems again. Special programs or events (to the extent allowed) should be considered to help regain customer confidence.

**Key questions include:**

- » How will riders be notified that the system is back online?
- » How will system safety be conveyed to the public?
- » Will incentives be offered to entice riders back or gain new riders?
- » How will riders that continued to use transit during the pandemic be recognized?

## How VHB Can Help

There are many tools to help transit agencies prepare now for a return to ridership. **Online survey tools** can be used to better understand customers' concerns and needs, including which systems to return to service and how quickly. **Service plans** can be updated and refined based on continued ridership during the pandemic.

**Training programs and inspection protocols** can be refreshed to reflect the new realities. VHB is here to help you navigate potential options, answer questions, scenario plan, and perform evaluations to restore your vital services. Contact [Darrell Smith](#) or [David Wilcock](#) today to start planning for tomorrow.