MTA Q&A

Q: What is this dataset about?
A: It contains daily ridership and traffic data for various NYC transit services — subways, buses, LIRR, Metro-North, Access-A-Ride, Bridges & Tunnels, and Staten Island Railway — starting from March 2020.

Q: What trends did you notice in subway ridership
A: There was a significant drop in March 2020 when the pandemic hit. Subway ridership dropped to less than 10% of pre-pandemic levels and then gradually increased. It still hasn't fully returned to 100% consistently.

Q: Which transit mode recovered the fastest?
A: Bridges and tunnels (vehicular traffic) showed the fastest recovery, often reaching or exceeding 100% of pre-pandemic levels before other modes.

Q: How was subway ridership affected by the pandemic?
A: Before the pandemic, subway ridership averaged over 5 million per day. During the peak of the pandemic, it dropped by over 90%, reaching as low as 10% of normal levels. Post-pandemic, it gradually recovered, reaching around 70–80% of pre-pandemic levels on most days.

Q: Did bus ridership recover faster than subways?
A: Yes, bus ridership stayed higher during the pandemic, averaging around 50–60% of normal in early months and recovering to 80–90% more consistently. This suggests that buses were more essential for certain communities or areas during the lockdowns.

Q: How was LIRR impacted compared to other modes?
A: LIRR saw a major drop, similar to subways, with usage falling to around 5–10% in March 2020. It has recovered more slowly and still lags behind other modes in terms of return to full usage.

Q: What about Metro-North ridership?
A: Metro-North experienced a steep decline during the pandemic, and like the LIRR, it recovered at a slower pace. This is likely because many of its users are suburban commuters who shifted to remote work.

Q: How did Access-A-Ride perform?
A: Interestingly, Access-A-Ride ridership did not drop as drastically. It hovered around 80–110% of pre-pandemic levels, showing that this service remained essential, especially for individuals with disabilities.

Q: Did car traffic bounce back quickly?
A: Yes. Traffic through bridges and tunnels dropped slightly early in the pandemic but returned to — and often exceeded — pre-pandemic levels faster than any other mode.

Q: What trends did you notice with the Staten Island Railway?
A: This mode had the lowest ridership overall, both before and after the pandemic, and it followed similar trends as subways but on a much smaller scale.

Q: Which mode had the highest ridership before the pandemic?
A: Subways were the most used, with daily ridership over 5 million.

Q: Which had the lowest ridership before the pandemic?
A: Staten Island Railway had the lowest usage, often under 20,000 daily riders.

Q: And during the pandemic?
A: Buses had the highest relative usage during the pandemic, maintaining 50–60% ridership. Subways dropped to the lowest among the main modes, percentage-wise.

Q: After the pandemic?
A: Bridges and tunnels (car traffic) were the first to reach or surpass 100% of pre-pandemic levels. Buses and subways continued to recover but haven't fully returned.

Q: Is there a noticeable difference between weekdays and weekends?
A: Yes. Weekday ridership is consistently higher across all transit types. Weekends show lower overall traffic and usage, particularly for commuter-focused services like LIRR and Metro-North.

Q: When did ridership start to recover after the initial pandemic drop?
A: Ridership began to recover gradually in mid to late 2020, with noticeable increases in 2021 as restrictions eased and vaccines became available. However, full recovery has been slow and inconsistent.

Q: Were there any sudden drops or spikes later in the dataset?
A: Yes. Drops occurred around holidays (like Christmas and Thanksgiving), major snowstorms, or COVID-19 variant waves. Spikes sometimes happened on major reopening dates or during summer months.
