



# Transit Assistance Program

Andrea Kiepe, TAP Coordinator

# Low wage workers

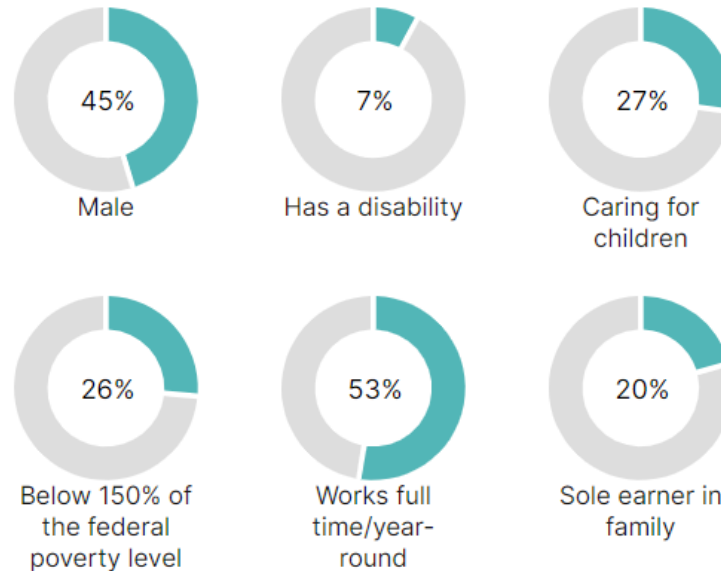
The US has 30 million prime-age, low-wage workers

In total, low-wage workers make up more than a quarter of the total labor force.

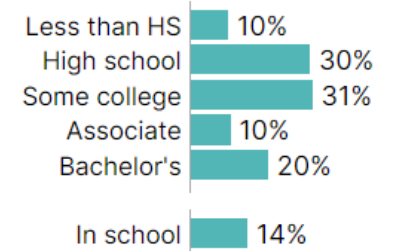
Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI | Ages 18-64 | All low-wage workers

548,500 low-wage workers • 35% of all workers • Median hourly wage: \$11.26

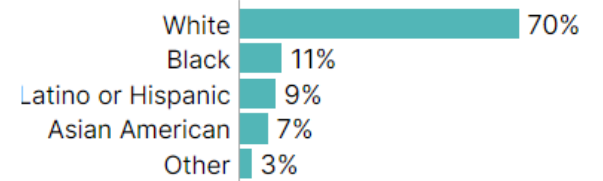
## Key characteristics



## Educational attainment



## Race/ethnicity



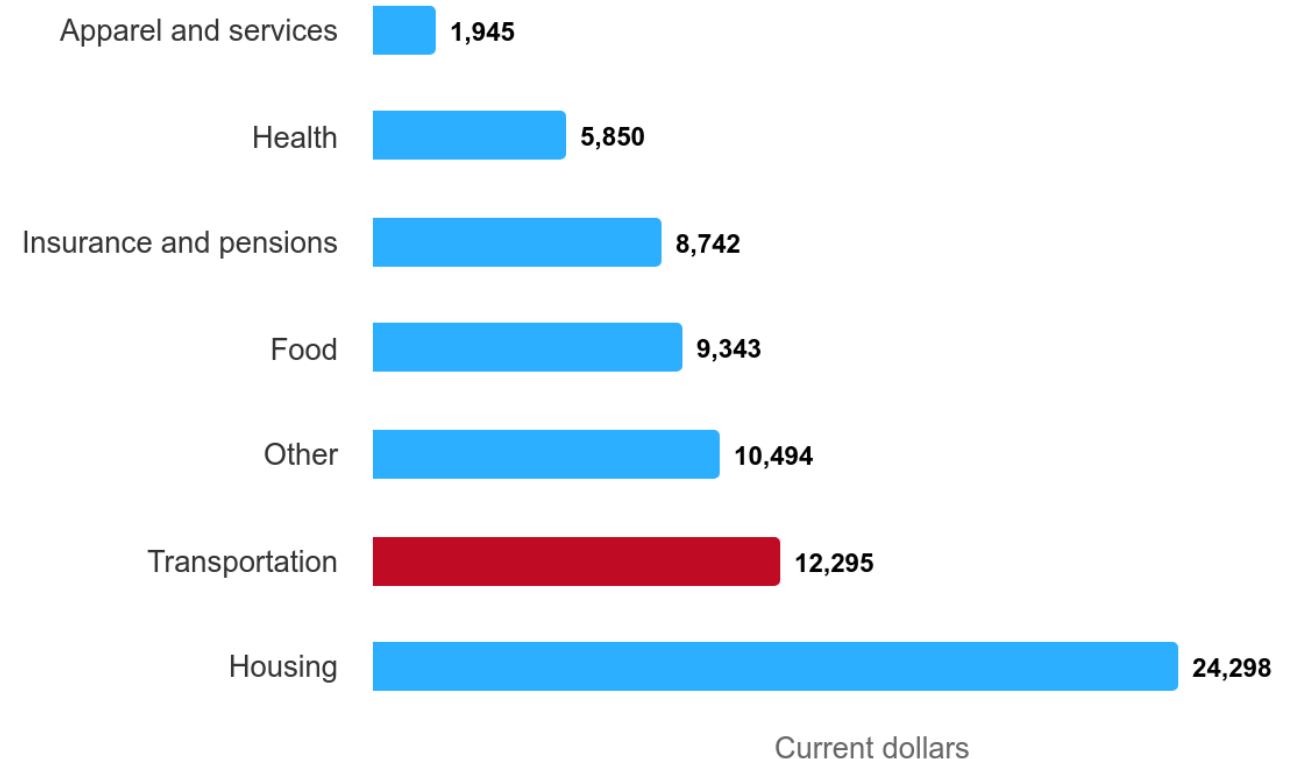
Source: 2023 Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) of the Current Population Survey.

# Making transportation more affordable

Transportation is the second largest household expenditure category after housing.

Households in the lowest income quintile spent the least on transportation **but faced a larger transportation cost burden**, spending 30% of their after-tax income on transportation.

Average Household Expenditures, 2022



Source: Bureau of Transportation Statistics, 2022  
<https://data.bts.gov/>

# ★ Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers: Used Cars and Trucks in U.S. City Average (CUSR0000SETA02)

Observations:

Dec 2024: **184.034**

Updated: Jan 15, 2025 7:40 AM CST

Next Release Date: Feb 12, 2025

Units:

Index 1982-1984=100,

Seasonally Adjusted

Frequency:

Monthly

1Y

5Y

10Y

Max

Edit Graph

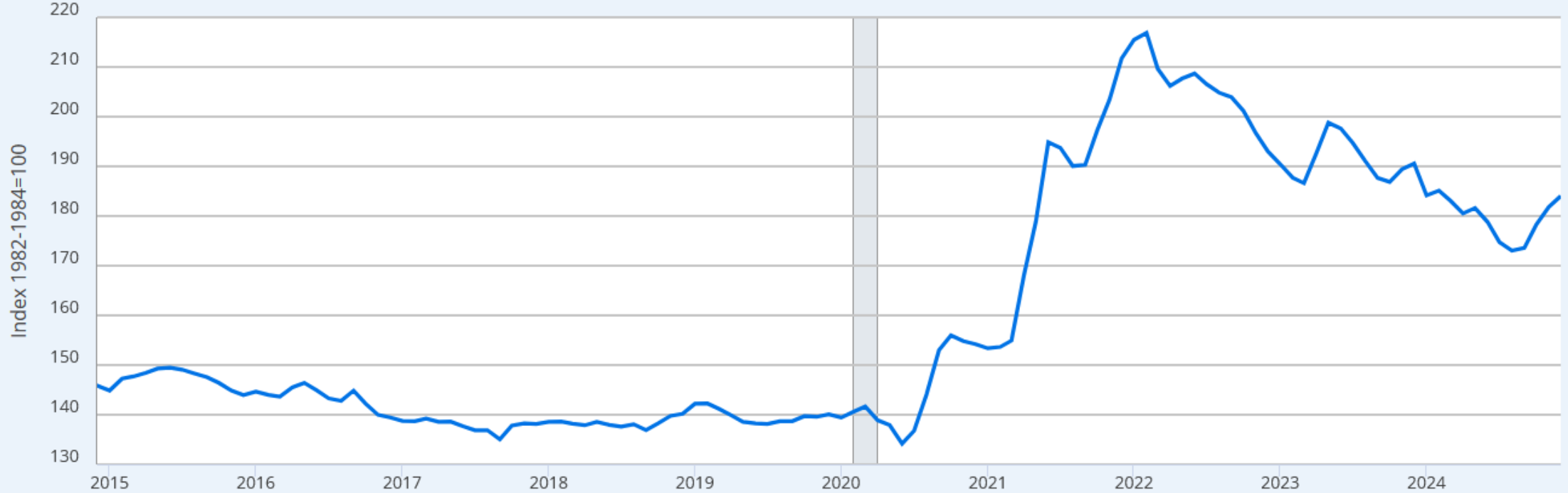
2014-12-01

to

2024-12-01

Download

**FRED** — Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers: Used Cars and Trucks in U.S. City Average



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics via FRED®



# Better transit access: measurable social benefits



## Study: Transit pass program brings academic, social and economic benefits to MPS students

By Tim Harlow | MARCH 15, 2016 – 7:33AM

The Minneapolis School District's decision to have high school students use public transportation to get to class instead of riding yellow school buses is paying off with **better attendance and better grades** according to a new study by University of Minnesota researchers.

The study funded by Metro Transit found that 81 percent of pass users rated their experience as satisfied or very satisfied and 80 percent of parents gave the program the same marks.

**Students eligible for free or reduced lunch or were black, foreign-born or from single-parent homes reaped the biggest benefits and rode most, according to the study co-authored by research fellow Kirti Das.**

"Transit enables students to access additional educational opportunities and participate in additional activities," Fan said.

To that end, it also helps students' social well being, a benefit Fan did not expect find.

"Not having a pass would be social exclusion," she said, noting that students can use their passes to get to jobs or go to movies with friends. "Not having transportation hinders the ability to socialize, and that is a very important human development activity."

*Assessing the Impacts of Student Transportation on Public Transit; Fan, Yingling; Das, Kirti (Center for Transportation Studies, University of Minnesota, 2015)*

# History

- Founded by Mary Capistrant in 2017 after a year of pilot projects
- TAP Coordinator hired 2018
- Added Unemployment and Refugees to eligibility in 2020
- Automated online TAP application 2021
- Massive marketing revamp and campaign in 2023
- Partners have almost tripled since inception
- Hit one million rides in 2024



TAP founder Mary Capistrant

# What is TAP?

- Reduced fare pass — \$1 ride on a Go-To Card
- Lasts for one year, then can be renewed
- Applicants need to have both an identity document and proof of income — usually from a social benefits program like WIC, EBT or Medical Assistance



*TAP Ambassador shift in Minneapolis*



# 50% of Area Median Income in 2024

\$43,500 for one person

\$49,700 for a family of two

\$55,900 for a family of three

\$62,100 for a family of four

\$67,100 for a family of five

\$72,050 for a family of six



# Getting a TAP Go-To Card

- Enroll online in minutes
- Apply a Transit Service Center
- Via one of our 150+ community partner organizations
- Attend an open enrollment event or community gathering like Open Streets

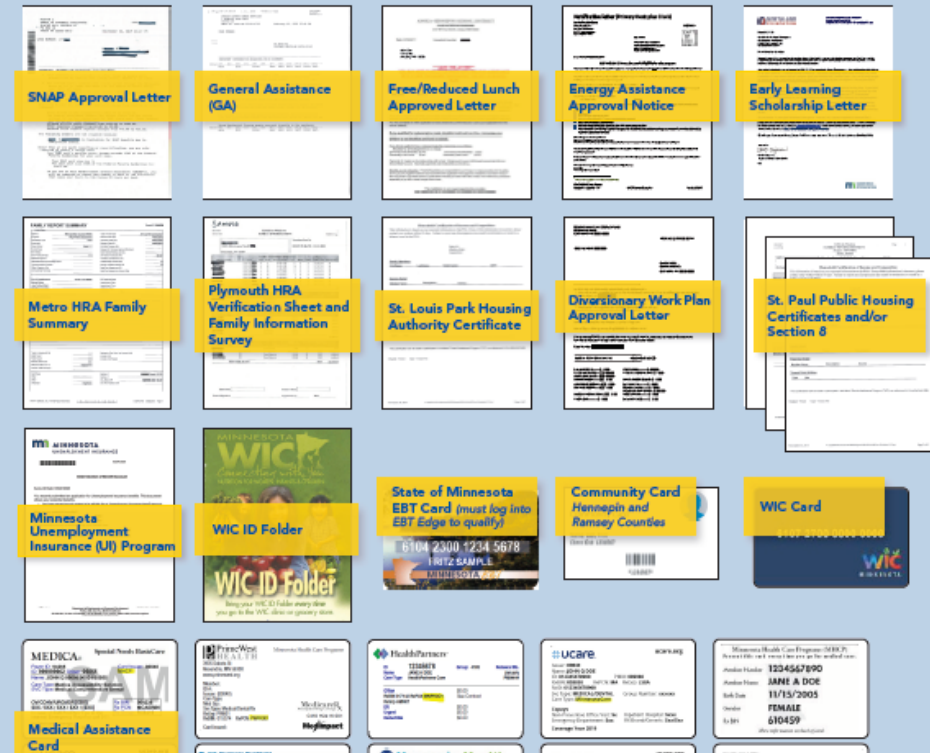
## Transit Assistance Program (TAP) Accepted Documents

Effective: August 2020

To be eligible you must have a **Photo ID** or a utility bill with your name and address



Plus one of these cards or documents:



# Who are our TAP partners?

- Food shelves
- Clinics and hospitals
- Tribal governments
- Homeless shelters
- Schools and Adult Education programs
- Housing agencies and organizations
- Local government
- Immigrant and refugee organizations
- Women's shelters
- Corrections agencies
- Employment agencies



*ICA Food Shelf, Bloomington*

# Examples of TAP partners

A Mother's Love Initiative

Afghan Cultural Society

Amherst H. Wilder Foundation

Bethlehem Lutheran Church

City of Brooklyn Park

Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio (CLUES)

East Side Neighborhood Services

Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota

Indigenous Peoples Task Force

Karen Organization of Minnesota

Little Earth Residents Association

Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota

Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe

Minneapolis American Indian Center

Minnesota Alliance With Youth

Minnesota Council of Churches

Mount Olive Lutheran Church

Neighborhood Health Source

Pillsbury House and Theatre

Red Lake Nation

Resource West

RISE INC (TAP)

Saint Paul Public Housing

Salvation Army

St. Louis Park Emergency Program (STEP)

Ujamaa Place

US Federal Probation and Pretrial Services

Vail Place

Vietnamese Social Services of Minnesota (VSS)

Voice in The Wilderness Organization

Volunteers Enlisted to Assist People (VEAP)

Women's Advocates in St. Paul

YMCA Youth and Family Services



*A Mother's Love, Minneapolis*

# Making it easier to qualify: City of Minneapolis

Now people can easily use a tax return or paystub to qualify for TAP directly – even without social benefits.

Minneapolis Service Center  
Public Service Building  
505 Fourth Ave S, Skyway level

One block from **Government Center Station**



## Recent developments: challenges

- Removal of rush hour means TAP isn't needed for seniors and youth
- Social benefits expansions from pandemic expired and now many do not qualify, despite inflation chipping away at household budgets
- Changes at federal level make it less likely immigrants will seek benefits like TAP
- Other pass programs are serving the TAP user base — schools, Access Pass, etc.



*Community Action of Ramsey County*

# Limiting factors

- Proving identity and income
- Knowing about TAP
- Ease of application and use
- Participation of non-profit partners



# Primary barrier to growth – proving eligibility



Many lower income people do not have access to the social programs we depend on to certify riders.

Social stigma or other concerns can keep people who are eligible from applying.





# Recent developments: **positive**

- TAP ridership up 13% in 2024
- TRIP agents have embraced TAP, hugely supportive
- TAP Ambassadors have full calendar of tabling and events
- Great collaboration with OECC and Outreach
- Ongoing discussions with major partners like Minnesota DHS
- Technology improvements have significant potential – fare capping, easier eligibility, increased term to two years



*LEAP School, Saint Paul*

# Options for increasing accessibility

Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
Implement two-year term	New fare system is implemented, switch to account based	Fare capping
Fare simplification: rush hour	Pilot self certification for income	Self certification for income
Direct income verification at stores and online	Integration with DHS	Explore options for TAP \$5 promotional allowance with legislature

# How can you help?

- Keep spreading the word to customers and co-workers
- Suggest potential new community organizations to become partners
- Sign up for TAP Ambassador shifts
- Share your ideas for improving or expanding TAP



*Partner organization STEP - St. Louis Park  
Emergency Program*

**Thank You!**

**Andrea Kiepe**

*[andrea.kiepe@metrotransit.org](mailto:andrea.kiepe@metrotransit.org)*

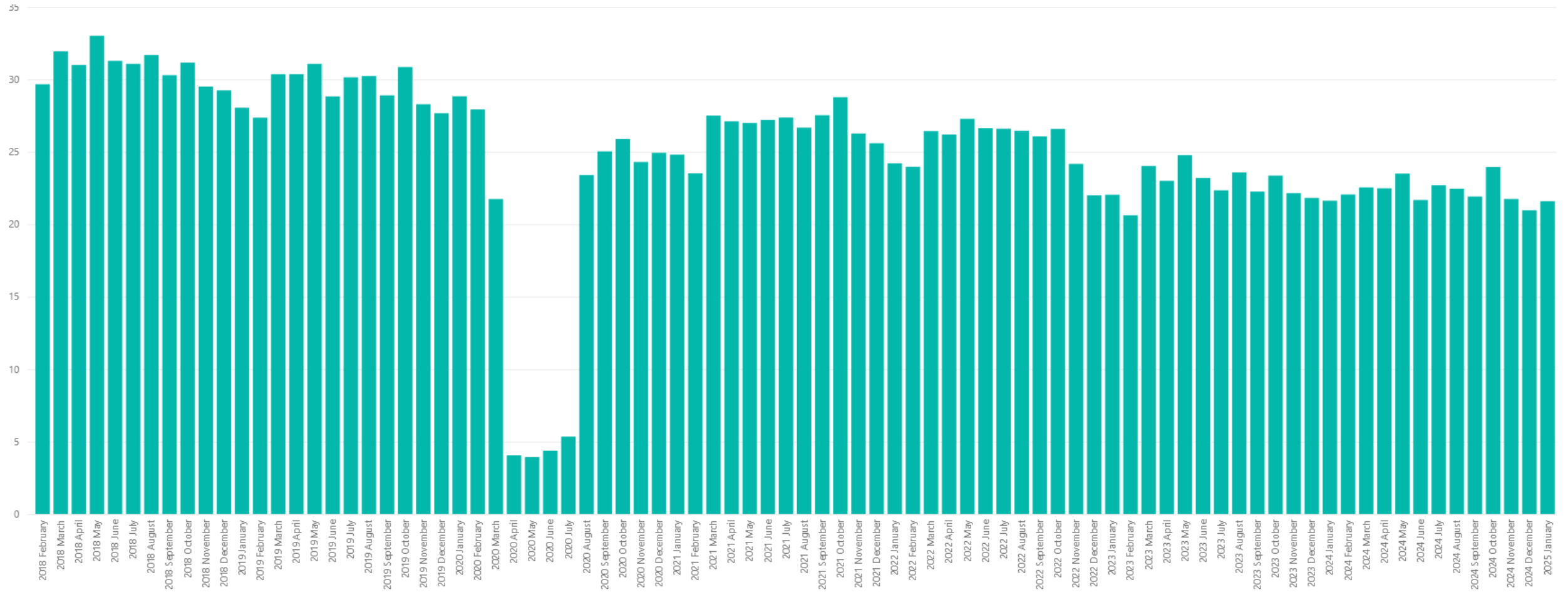
612-349-7747

## UniqueCards

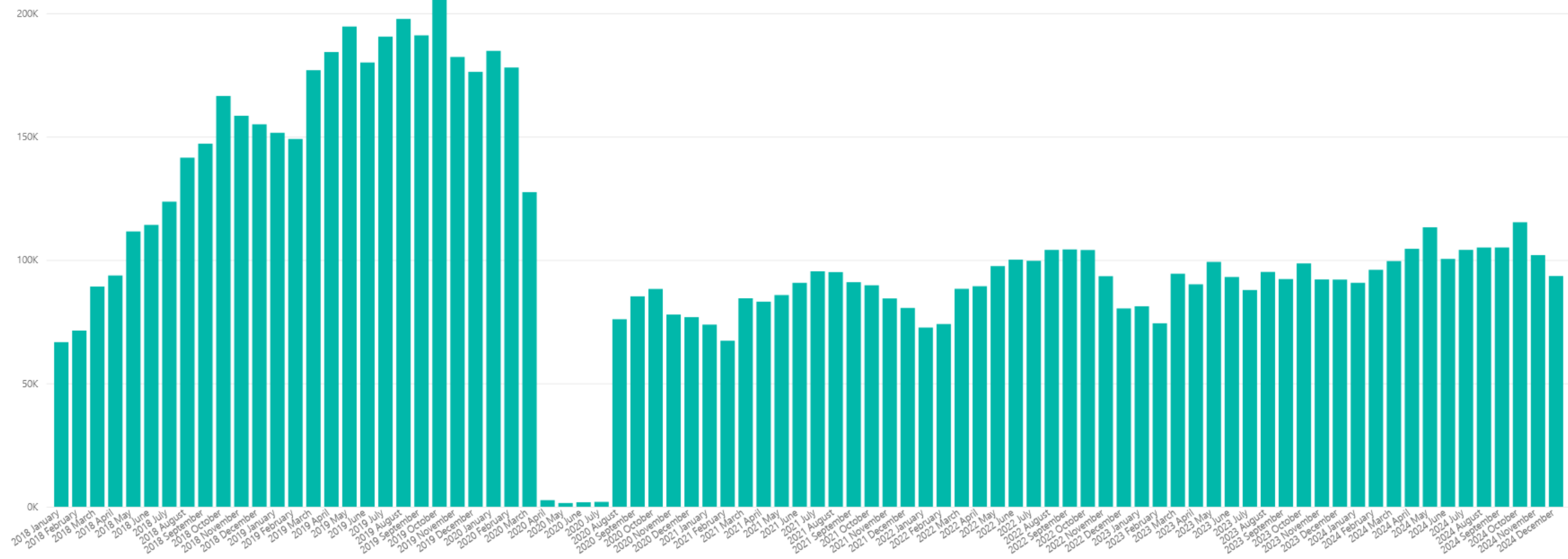
BY YEAR, MONTH



**Monthly Unique Riders**



# Monthly Average Ridership



# Monthly Total Ridership