

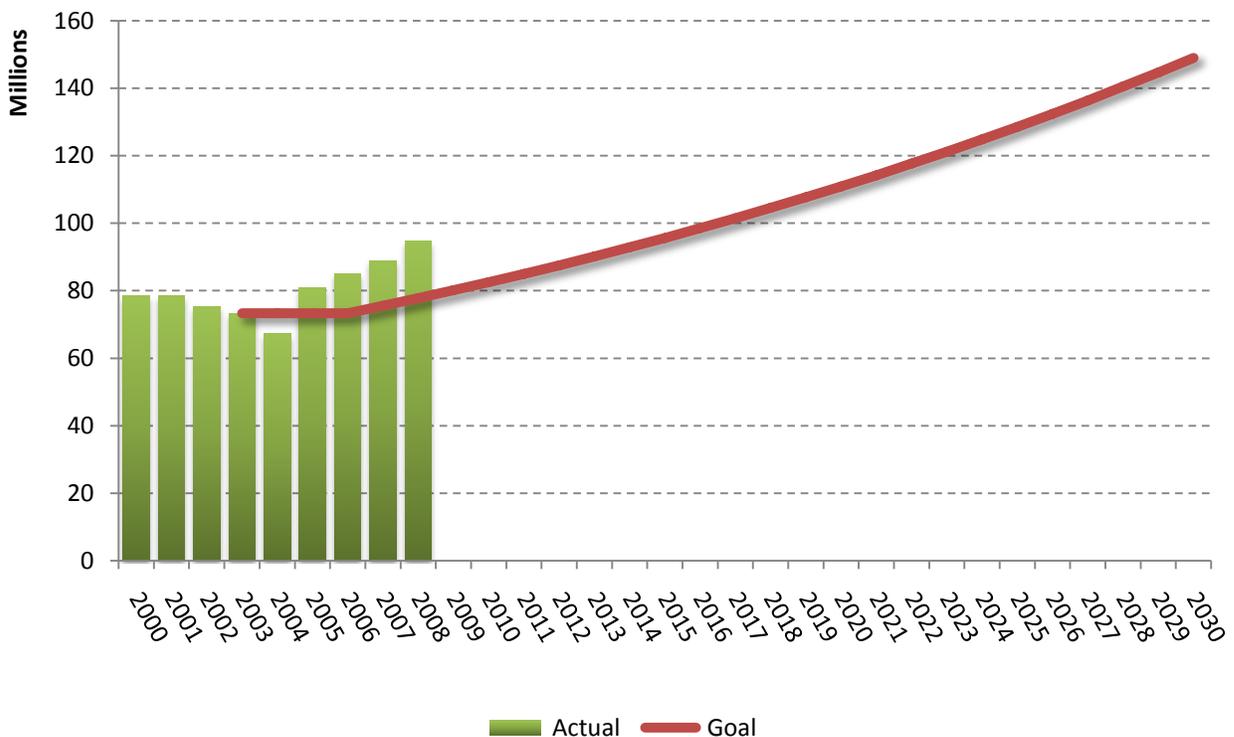
## Chapter 10. Progress Toward Doubling Ridership

The Metropolitan Council’s 2030 *Transportation Policy Plan*, adopted in 2009, reaffirmed the goal of increasing regional ridership by 50% by 2020 and doubling regional ridership by 2030. The goal uses a baseline ridership number from 2003. It assumes no growth for the first four years (through 2006) and 3% annual growth after that. This chapter looks at the progress toward meeting this goal.

Ridership trends have seen a dramatic turnaround since early in the decade. Regional ridership declined steadily from 2001 to 2003, a 7.1% decrease in total. A 44-day transit driver strike in 2004 significantly impacted ridership, as Metro Transit buses did not operate over that period. In 2005, ridership increased significantly. That trend continued through 2008 and regional ridership has seen 29% growth since 2003.

By 2008, this put ridership about 17 million rides ahead of the goal established in 2004. The region was 22% ahead of the goal in 2008 and ridership numbers were above the trend line figure for 2014.

**Annual Ridership Actual vs. Goal**

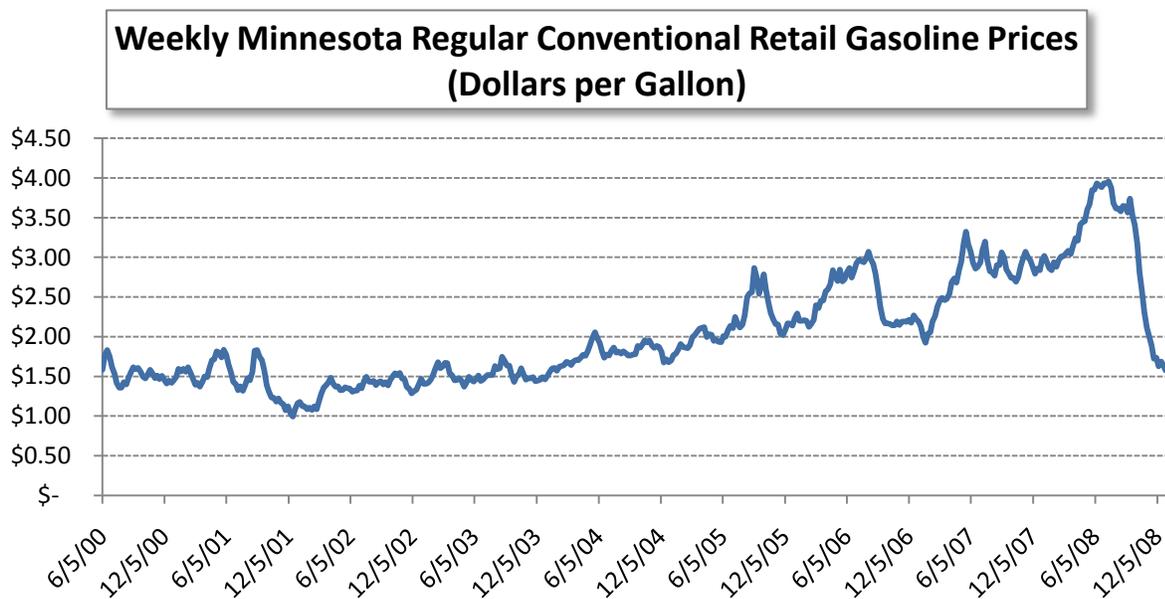


- Actual ridership includes University of Minnesota and Hiawatha light rail services beginning in 2004.
- 2004 ridership affected by 44-day transit driver strike.

Several factors have contributed to the recent ridership increases:

- Economic recovery has occurred after significant downturns following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Downtown Minneapolis employment increased 5.3% from 2003 to 2006. Overall employment in the region has grown approximately 3% in that same period.<sup>1</sup>
- The region has added new public transit services since 2003, including the University of Minnesota service and Hiawatha light-rail service. The Suburban Transit Providers have opened several large park-and-ride facilities in recent years.
- The cost of gas has increased dramatically since 2003. At the end of 2003, gas was approximately \$1.50/gallon in the Twin Cities. By August 2006, gas was approaching \$4.00/gallon, a 167% increase in less than 3 years. The cost of gas historically has not had a dramatic effect on transit ridership, but such a drastic increase undoubtedly has contributed to higher ridership.

Future ridership growth will depend on funding levels, the economy, employment levels, development patterns, service improvements, and highway congestion levels.



United States Energy Information Administration, 2010

<sup>1</sup> Minnesota DEED, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)