

Advance Regional Transit

2022 Regional Master Transit Plan Update

February 2023



**REGIONAL
TRANSIT AUTHORITY**
OF SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN

rtamichigan.org

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**REGIONAL
TRANSIT AUTHORITY**
OF SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN

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The RTA was created by Public Act No. 387 of 2012. Its 10-member board is appointed for three year terms by the county executives of Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb counties, the chair of the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners, the Mayor of Detroit, and the Governor of Michigan. The Governor's appointee serves as chair and without a vote.

This update fulfills the requirement outlined in the Regional Transit Authority Act, Public Act 387 of 2012, which established RTA.

Cover photo credits: DDOT photo taken by Trevor Logan Jr. SMART and TheRide photos provided by the respective agencies.

INTRODUCTION

In December 2021, the Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan (RTA) adopted its Regional Master Transit Plan (RMTP), [Advance 2021](#). The RMTP sets a strategic agenda to guide regional transit improvements that support RTA's vision:

A region with sufficient and stable funding to support improved public transit options that will advance equity by increasing accessibility; satisfy the integrated mobility needs of Southeast Michigan communities; and promote livable, healthy, and sustainable growth.

Advance 2021 identified five goals to achieve this vision (see Figure 1). Toward these goals, RTA works in partnership with the region's public transit agencies: Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority (AAATA, also known as TheRide), Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT), Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART), the Detroit Transportation Corporation (the operator of the Detroit People Mover (DPM), M-1 RAIL (operating as QLINE), and over 80 community-sponsored transit providers.

Advance Regional Transit documents progress made to implement the RMTP in 2022, transit industry trends, and recent community outreach efforts. These inform updates to the RMTP strategies and actions that ensure RTA is adapting to changing regional transit needs. Updated strategies and actions are outlined in the [Plan Updates](#) section.

Figure 1: RTA's Goals

RTA's Goals

EXPAND

Expand Transit to New Places

ENHANCE

Enhance Existing Services

INNOVATE

Develop Innovative and Adaptable Solutions

PARTNER

Build Sustainable Partnerships

FINANCE

Secure Long-Term Dedicated Transit Revenue

TRANSIT INDUSTRY TRENDS

The annual plan update process provides an opportunity to reflect on local and national trends that are impacting the transit industry, and to determine whether or not RTA's vision, goals, and strategies account for them. Some of the major trends to consider are Covid-19, the national transit workforce crisis, record levels of federal funding, the increasing popularity of bus rapid transit service (BRT), and perceptions of safety and security.

Covid-19 & Ridership

Transit ridership has been rebounding in 2022, with national ridership reaching over 70% of pre-Covid-19 ridership. National trends show that demand-response transportation, an essential service that many seniors and people with disabilities rely on to maintain their independence, has seen the greatest recovery at 74% of prepandemic ridership.¹

Commuter trips have declined since the pandemic; however, people are traveling more throughout the day.² Since Covid-19, people are also making more short trips.³ Frequent, all-day transit services and local microtransit services can help people make these trips in Southeast Michigan.

The National Transit Workforce Crisis

One of the greatest challenges facing the transit industry nationally is maintaining a sufficient workforce to sustain and expand service. According to a survey conducted by the American Public Transit Association (APTA) in February 2022, 92% of public transit agencies are struggling to hire new employees, and 66% are having difficulty retaining employees. Bus operators and bus maintenance staff were ranked as the two most difficult positions to fill.⁴ An aging and retirement-ready workforce is another common issue facing transit agencies.⁵ Labor shortages have impacted transit service, with 71% of agencies having either cut service or postponed deploying service increases.⁶

To meet this challenge, Southeast Michigan's transit agencies have ramped up hiring and retention efforts with additional recruitment staff, advertising campaigns, and bonuses for good attendance.

Increased Federal Funding

In November 2021, Congress passed the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) providing a historic level of investment in public transit infrastructure. BIL will bring over \$443 million dollars to Southeast Michigan over five years, a 36% increase over previous funding levels.⁷

Additional funding will be available through discretionary grant programs, and Southeast Michigan needs to be ready to submit grant applications in order to bring funding to the region. In 2022, RTA helped MDOT win a \$25 million grant for transit, connected and autonomous vehicle (CAV),

Figure 2: Though it has not reached prepandemic rates, ridership is rebounding. Image Credit: QLINE



and complete streets improvements on Michigan Avenue, and helped SMART win \$180,000 to improve access to transit in Pontiac. DDOT brought \$6.9 million in FTA funding for electric buses, and TheRide was appropriated \$7 million in federal funding for a new Ypsilanti Transit Center. RTA demonstrated that it can help its partners develop and coordinate winning grant applications that can improve transit in Southeast Michigan (see MDOT Grant Support).

Bus Rapid Transit

BRT is a bus-based service that mimics features of rail (e.g., farther apart stops, stations with platforms, and priority lanes) to improve speed and reliability. BRT is often developed in partnership with local governments to encourage transit-oriented development (TOD), create more walkable communities and affordable housing, and drive economic development. Station areas provide opportunities for mobility hubs with access to multiple modes of transportation.

BRT has demonstrated that it can increase ridership and decrease travel times. Additionally, BRT routes have recovered from low pandemic ridership levels faster than other modes.⁸

BRT has gained popularity as a strategy for improving transit service in regions across the US. There are currently over 80 BRT routes operating in 30 metropolitan regions in the US.⁹ An additional 38 BRT projects in 19 states are currently seeking funding through FTA's Capital Investment Grants (CIG) Program, which provides capital funding for BRT and fixed-guideway projects.¹⁰ BRT may be an effective strategy to increase transit ridership in Southeast Michigan, and RTA and MDOT can help transit agencies leverage CIG program funding.

Safety & Security

Increasing crime rates have received a lot of media attention in the last year, but despite common perceptions, national and local crime rates on transit are relatively low.¹¹ Though uncommon, incidents do happen. In 2021, there were 15 reported security events on public transit in Southeast Michigan. Regionally, people took 14.1 million transit trips in 2021, making the crime rate one in every 936,896 rides.¹²

Ensuring riders are safe and also feel safe is critical to ensuring people have access to mobility. Southeast Michigan's transit agencies do a great job keeping staff and riders safe. RTA can promote the efforts agencies take to keep riders and staff safe to help increase awareness of safety measures, and prioritize improvements that make transit stops safer, such as better lighting, shelters, and cameras.

Figure 3: The conceptual design of the Detroit Mobility and Innovation Corridor. Image Credit: MDOT



RTA | MDOT Grant Support

In August 2022, USDOT awarded \$25 million in Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant funding to MDOT's Detroit Mobility and Innovation Corridor on Michigan Avenue in Detroit's Downtown and Corktown neighborhoods. The road reconstruction will include the installation of new dedicated transit and CAV lanes, and pedestrian, cyclist, and transit amenities, improving access to transit. RTA partnered with MDOT to complete the Benefit-Cost Analysis required for the application. RAISE is one of the grant programs that received additional funding through BIL.

RECENT PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

In 2022, RTA made communication and engagement with regional stakeholders and communities a central activity. RTA is growing its team to conduct outreach through newsletters, social media, and direct community and stakeholder engagement. RTA's monthly newsletter launched in January 2022 and reaches over 3,000 people, providing information and news on transit in Southeast Michigan. RTA increased its social media presence and launched the "Ask RTA" and "Did You Know?" campaigns, which provide information on transit services and are a way to directly engage with the public. RTA is active on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and is growing its presence on LinkedIn and TikTok to reach a wider audience and different demographics.

In 2022, RTA participated in a number of community engagement and education events, including meetings with regional chambers of commerce. RTA was a project partner in the University of Detroit Mercy's Community Development Program. Students completed a transit and mobility innovation capstone project in the City of Detroit, and RTA helped them with program planning and community engagement in multiple neighborhoods.

Oakland County conducted outreach to educate voters on [Oakland Transit](#), the County's 10-year 0.95 mill measure that will support county-wide transit services. This millage was approved by voters in November 2022 and will support expanding transit service coverage to the entire county along with service enhancements.

As part of the annual update process, RTA considered key findings from recent public outreach efforts to understand whether regional transit priorities have changed since RTA conducted engagement in 2021. In 2022, DDOT and TheRide conducted extensive in-person, online, and survey-based public engagement as part of their planning processes for [TheRide 2045](#) and [DDOT Reimagined](#). These engagement efforts provide an opportunity to incorporate public feedback into this annual plan update.

TheRide and DDOT both heard comments that reinforced the desire for more frequent and reliable service, and for more service during evenings and weekends. They also heard a desire for more regional services and more crosstown services. Bus stop improvements, including shelters and benches, were also a common theme.

TheRide heard a strong desire for transformational change and for a focus on transportation equity, both of which it addresses in its plan and will be supported by increased transit millages in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area.

DDOT survey respondents ranked safety improvements as their second priority after higher service frequencies. To address this priority, RTA has incorporated safety and security into actions focused on transit stops, which can be found in the [Plan Updates](#) section of this document.

Figure 4: RTA staff promotes transit at a Wayne State Warrior Wednesday event in September.



2022 ACCOMPLISHMENTS & THE YEARS AHEAD

In the past year, RTA and the region's transit agencies have made progress on the goals, strategies, and actions outlined in *Advance 2021*. Planned activities in 2023 will also help improve transit service in Southeast Michigan and bring the region closer to RTA's vision. This section highlights accomplishments from 2022 and planned activities for 2023 that align with in *Advance 2021*. To fully achieve RTA's visions, the region will need to identify dedicated regional transit funding.

RTA hired three staff members in 2022 to help the organization implement these goals in collaboration with regional partners.

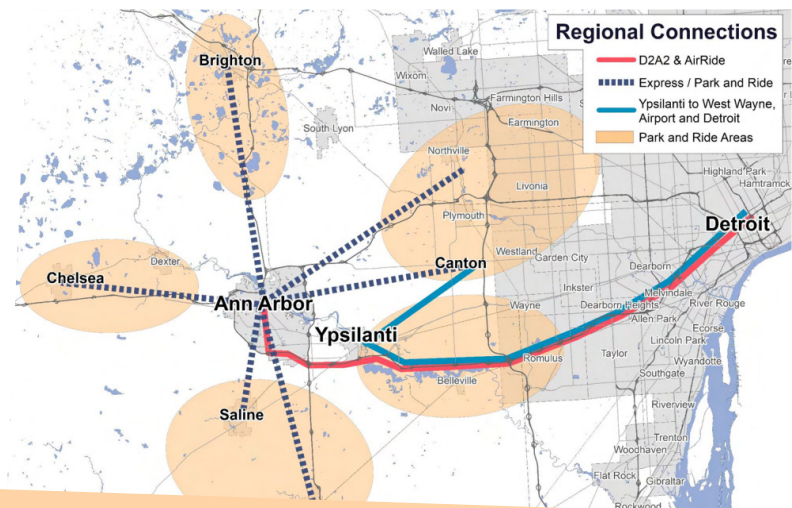
Expand Transit to New Places

RTA and TheRide's ongoing D2A2 pilot provides service between Downtown Detroit and Downtown Ann Arbor and has seen steady ridership increases throughout the year. In October, D2A2 provided 5,000 rides. This pilot is funded through 2024, and additional funding will need to be identified to continue service.

SMART Flex service was expanded to Farmington and Farmington Hills, and the new Metropark Express service takes riders to and from the Lake St. Clair Metropark.

This year, RTA was awarded \$2 million through SEMCOG's Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) to

Figure 5: Proposed service network developed through *TheRide 2045* long-range planning process. Image excerpt from *TheRide 2045*.



DDOT & TheRide | Agency Strategic Planning

In July 2022, TheRide completed *TheRide 2045*, a long-range plan demonstrating the agency's vision and strategy for improving public transit in the greater Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area. The plan emphasizes addressing equity gaps in access to employment, education, and essential services, and aligns with many of RTA's goals and strategies. *TheRide 2045* identified funding needed to implement the plan, which resulted in voter approval of a millage in August.

This year, DDOT kicked off its network redesign planning process, *DDOT Reimagined*. Through public engagement and analysis of existing routes, ridership, and travel patterns, DDOT will develop strategies for service improvements. The planning process also considers the regional transit goals outlined in the RMTP. DDOT expects to complete and begin implementing the plan in 2023.

Alongside SMART's 2020 [SMART Path Comprehensive Operations Analysis Plan](#), the region's three primary bus agencies have all engaged in planning processes to expand and enhance services.

fund another pilot, an express service between Detroit and the Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport.

Expanding services to areas that currently lack transit options will require additional sources of revenue. This year, additional funding to expand services has been secured through voter approved millages for TheRide in Washtenaw County and for SMART, North Oakland Transportation Authority (NOTA), Western Oakland Transportation Authority (WOTA), and Rochester Older Persons' Commission (OPC) in Oakland County (see [page 10](#)).

In 2022, TheRide completed their long-range plan, *TheRide 2045*, and DDOT began a planning process for its network redesign, *DDOT Reimagined*, which will be completed in 2023. These plans lay the foundation for improving fixed-route, demand-response, and microtransit services, as well as for enhancing existing services. TheRide's new millage takes effect in 2024 and will support the implementation of the strategies laid out in their plan.

RTA's [Detroit Workforce Mobility Equity Analysis: Gap Analysis Report](#) identifies mobility gaps to minimal-preparedness jobs for job-seeking Detroiters. This report, completed in 2022, is a first step toward providing more equity-focused recommendations for expanding and enhancing service.

Enhance Existing Services

Through the new consolidated regional FTA Section 5310 funding Call for Projects, RTA allocated over \$4.0 million in 2022 to 30 community transit providers. This funding supports locally identified projects and services. This program also funds [MyRide2](#), a mobility management service that helps people find and coordinate rides. MyRide2 received over 6,000 calls this year from people seeking help with scheduling transit trips in the region.

In 2022, RTA provided Richmond-Lenox EMS with over \$280,000 for service operations, in addition to over \$395,000 toward mobility management and vehicle replacements. In September, they began offering same-day demand-

Figure 6: QLINE's tactical transit lane pilot on Woodward Avenue.



QLINE | Transit Signal Prioritization & Dedicated Lanes

QLINE has implemented projects on Woodward Avenue to help prioritize transit operations along the corridor. In summer 2022, QLINE launched Transit Signal Prioritization (TSP) at 26 intersections along Woodward Avenue. TSP is currently only being used by QLINE, though DDOT and SMART can take advantage of it by purchasing and installing equipment on their buses. Preliminary results show that TSP has reduced travel times by 10% and cut average dwell times at red lights by 50%.

After implementing the region's first dedicated transit lane in 2021, QLINE has been piloting a tactical transit-only lane during special events on the northbound side of Woodward Avenue between Adams Street and the I-75 Service Drive. DDOT and SMART also use this lane. QLINE is seeking funding for a permanent installation of the lane, and exploring additional areas where dedicated-transit lanes can help improve the efficiency and reliability of public transit along the corridor.

response service. Trips can be scheduled 30 minutes in advance, giving riders more freedom and flexibility to travel when they want or need to.

The region has progressed on transit corridor projects, implementing transit signal prioritization (TSP), piloting transit lanes and new services, winning funding for transit lanes and bus stop improvements, new transit-supportive zoning tools, in-process corridor studies.

QLINE deployed TSP at 26 intersections along Woodward Avenue, increasing efficiency. QLINE is also exploring strategies to expand dedicated transit lanes along the corridor, including a pilot during events.

TheRide was awarded \$2.1 million through SEMCOG's CRP to create a limited-stop bus route on Washtenaw Avenue, enhancing service and decreasing travel times on the corridor. This route might set a foundation for a future BRT service.

Corridor improvements are coming to Michigan Avenue, where MDOT's RAISE grant, which RTA provided technical support on, will support the implementation of dedicated transit and CAV lanes along with BRT station-style bus stops. These will improve the efficiency of service and create infrastructure for potential BRT services.

This year the City of Ann Arbor created its first Transit Corridor District (TC1), which enables transit-oriented development

Figure 7: One of North Oakland Transportation Authority's (NOTA) new vehicles purchased with Section 5310 funding allocated by RTA. Image Credit: SMART.



RTA | Section 5310 Funding for Community Transit Providers

After completing the first regional Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP), [OnHand: Expanding Transportation Access Across Southeast Michigan](#), RTA streamlined the region's allocation process for FTA Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities funding. The new process, implemented in 2021, is a consolidated regional call for projects that provides funding for community developed priorities. The call for projects included funding from fiscal years 2021 and 2022, and one-time federal stimulus funding from Covid-19 relief programs.

Through this process, RTA received requests for over \$13.6 million from 49 of the region's transit providers. With less than \$8.9 million in available funding, RTA was not able to fulfill all of these providers' needs, but was able to fund 67 projects at 46 entities across two years. Additional dedicated regional transit funding would help these entities expand and enhance community services.

With 2022 funding, RTA supported 40 projects at 31 organizations, totaling \$4.1 million, 99% of which went to community transit providers that offer critical health and wellness transportation across the region and MyRide2. Funded projects included:

- ▶ The replacement of 48 vehicles
- ▶ Operating and maintenance support
- ▶ Mobility management
- ▶ A pilot Mobility as a Service (MaaS) application
- ▶ A new service connecting Ypsilanti and Westland

RTA will release another call for projects for future funding in early 2023.

around major transit corridors.¹³ The new zoning designation allows for higher densities and mixed uses, and creates parking requirement maximums.¹⁴ Ann Arbor is exploring additional areas to implement TC1 zoning, and is coordinating with TheRide. Similar concepts are outlined in ZoneDetroit's [Zoning Analytic](#) report, which recommends establishing parking maximums and allowing less parking in areas with transit access. Reducing parking requirements can help lower development costs, making affordable housing more feasible.

MDOT is conducting planning and environmental linkages (PEL) studies on Washtenaw Avenue between US-23 and Downtown Ypsilanti, and on Gratiot Avenue in the City of Detroit. These corridor studies can be used in part to pursue grant funding for a planned BRT service. RTA completed its *Regional Transit Corridor Strategy* as well as the *Gratiot Avenue Transit Capital Funding Blueprint* to increase awareness of these federal funding opportunities, and to foster partnerships with road agencies as they conduct the PEL studies.

Additionally, DDOT, SMART, and TheRide's planning documents align with RTA's goals for enhancing transit service, including developing a high frequency network, increasing service spans for fixed-route and paratransit services, and advancing capital corridor projects. TheRide and Oakland County's new millages will generate revenue to implement these improvements.

Develop Innovative & Adaptable Solutions

DDOT and SMART deployed the region's first battery electric buses in 2022, and DDOT received \$6.9 million from FTA for four additional electric buses. SMART is also increasing its electric bus fleet with three additional buses and chargers funded by a \$3.2 million award through SEMCOG's CRP. NOTA, WOTA, and OPC were also awarded CRP funding to each purchase two electric vehicles and chargers for non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) services in Oakland County.

Agencies are also preparing for future transitions to zero-emissions vehicles (ZEV). This year, DDOT completed a zero emissions fleet transition plan, a requirement for certain competitive grants. TheRide completed its [Alternative Propulsion Bus Study](#) to help the agency determine which type of ZEV

Figure 8: One of SMART's new battery electric buses, which were put into service in September and October of 2022.

Image Credit: SMART



DDOT & SMART | Battery Electric Buses

In 2020, FTA awarded \$2.6 million to DDOT and SMART to pilot electric buses and charging infrastructure. In May 2022, DDOT deployed four electric buses purchased through this grant, and SMART introduced its four electric buses into service in September and October. These electric buses will help reduce emissions and improve air quality, while helping the agencies to better understand how this technology works and how to prepare for additional low- and no-emission vehicles.

FTA awarded DDOT an additional \$6.9 million in August 2022 to buy four more battery electric buses and charging equipment, a first step toward implementing the agency's zero emissions fleet transition plan.

will work best for their service and operations, and develop strategies for deploying ZEVs in coordination with required infrastructure upgrades. SMART has undertaken a facility study that considers how to best integrate ZEV infrastructure into their facilities. Notably, QLINE and DPM are fully electric.

RTA's on-demand booking app pilot, MI Ride Paratransit, ended in 2022. MI Ride tested app-based ride booking with a group of DDOT and SMART paratransit riders in order to learn about what challenges and opportunities exist for permanent app deployment. Users reported high levels of satisfaction with the app and a reduction in the time it took them to book trips. Lessons learned will be used to address implementation challenges and seek opportunities for a full-scale deployment in the future.

Build Sustainable Partnerships

RTA was awarded \$1.6 million through SEMCOG's Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program to launch the Access to Transit grant program, which will provide funding to transit agencies to invest in bus stop improvements and multimodal mobility hubs. This program will be used to pilot improvements, create design standards, and foster partnerships and coordination between transit, road agencies, other mobility service providers. RTA plans to develop this into an annual program to help transit agencies fund and coordinate transit stop improvements across the region.

Through its Areas of Persistent Poverty (AAP) Program, FTA awarded SMART \$180,000 for the design and engineering of a mobility hub that will improve pedestrian and cyclist access to transit in downtown Pontiac. RTA partnered with SMART on this grant and co-authored the application.

The City of Detroit opened the first segment of the Joe Louis Greenway, a one-mile stretch between Joy Road and Warren Avenue, on October 31, 2022. The greenway will help improve pedestrian and cyclist access to transit stops. During the [planning process](#), DDOT and the City of Detroit General Services Department coordinated on the design and potential locations of future bus stops and bus stop enhancements.

Figure 9: A concept for a mobility hub from DDOT's 2019 *Transit Capital Upgrades Preview*. Image Credit: DDOT



RTA | Access to Transit Improvements

RTA was awarded \$1.6 million to improve access to transit through SEMCOG's Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program. With this funding, RTA will pilot the Access to Transit grant program, which will provide funding to transit agencies to make transit stops more comfortable and accessible. Projects can include ADA improvements, benches, bus shelters, and lighting, and can be used to develop mobility hubs, which foster connections between multiple transit routes or mobility modes. The region's transit agencies have developed strategies and concepts for mobility hubs in previously completed planning documents, including RTA's [Mobility Oriented Development \(MOD\) Study](#), [TheRide 2045](#), and DDOT's [Transit Capital Upgrades Preview](#) from 2019. RTA will release a call for projects in 2023 to allocate funding to transit agencies and other mobility providers.

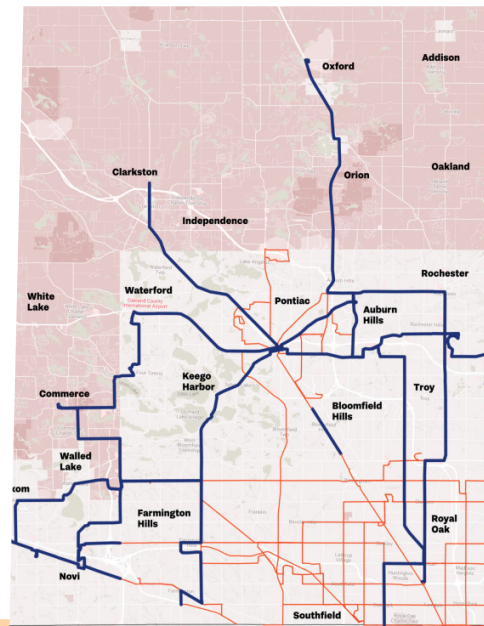
Secure Long-term Dedicated Transit Revenue

RTA provided technical support to MDOT and SMART to develop successful discretionary grant applications, including co-authoring SMART's AAP Program grant application for funding to design a mobility hub in downtown Pontiac. RTA will continue to provide technical and grant writing support to regional partners to win federal grant funding for Southeast Michigan.

In 2022, Southeast Michigan passed two ballot initiatives that will increase funding for public transit: a millage increase for the TheRide in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area, and a county-wide public transit millage in Oakland County. Voters also approved millage renewals in Macomb and Wayne Counties that will maintain existing SMART services.

These ballot initiatives and discretionary grant applications are critical to improving transit in Southeast Michigan, but regional funding sources need to be identified to achieve the vision laid out in the RMTP. After adopting the RMTP, RTA developed a business plan to guide the implementation of RMTP activities over the next five years. In 2022, RTA hired three new staff members to build RTA's capacity to implement the business plan and deliver longer-term goals. In 2023 and 2024, RTA intends to develop an expenditure plan outlining a future revenue strategy to fund regional transit improvements and provide more funding to Southeast Michigan's transit agencies.

Figure 10: An example of what potential new routes supported by Oakland County's Public Transportation Millage might look like. Existing routes are shown in orange and new ones in blue. Image Credit: Oakland County



SMART & TheRide | Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Area & Oakland County Millages

Transit millages passed in Macomb and Wayne Counties to maintain existing SMART service, and millages passed in Oakland County and the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area to increase local investments in public transit.

In August 2022, voters in Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and Ypsilanti Township approved a millage increase that will fund improvements to transit service that aim to increase equity and provide more access to jobs, education, and essential services. The five-year 2.38 mill property tax will go into effect in 2024, and will support the implementation of *TheRide 2045*, the agency's long-range plan, which supports many of RTA's goals and strategies. This millage will support investments toward longer hours of services, more frequent weekend routes, a new express route, expanded overnight service, and major capital projects.

In November, residents voted to maintain SMART service in Macomb, Oakland, and Wayne Counties. In Oakland County, a county-wide millage passed, eliminating opt-out communities and ensuring transit services are provided in all areas of the county. In addition to maintaining SMART service, the millage will generate revenue to support increased frequencies on existing routes, expanded routes to new places, additional demand-response service, and microtransit service. Funding will also support service improvements for NOTA, WOTA, and OPC. Additionally, the Oakland County millage covers a 10-year period, so it will not need to be renewed every four years as it was previously.

PLAN UPDATES

Through the annual update process, including reviewing industry trends, recent public outreach, and recent accomplishments, and engagement with transit agencies, RTA identified updates to strategies and actions to better align with current conditions. An overview of these updates is outlined in this section and revisions are documented in the [Strategies & Actions Progress Matrix](#). The matrix also identifies progress made on actions in 2022, as well as activities planned to be carried out over the next few years.

Paratransit Booking & Payment App

RTA's MI Ride paratransit booking app pilot ended this year, and actions related to this project were updated. App users were highly satisfied with the experience. RTA will work with transit agencies to find new technologies and funding opportunities that can support a future regional paratransit booking platform.

ZEVs & Infrastructure

Transit agencies have developed their own zero-emissions fleet transition plans or are completing other assessments that will inform forthcoming transition plans. RTA will consider these plans as it develops a regional capital planning strategy. RTA is open to potential partnerships with transit agencies to explore opportunities for regional zero-emissions charging and refueling infrastructure.

Bus Stop Improvements

Bus stop improvements were a common theme in public engagement. Strategies and actions in the RMTP were focused on providing bus shelters, but not other transit stop amenities. RTA broadened these actions to include additional amenities and wayfinding at transit stops to improve access to transit and foster connections between modes and services.

Safety & Security

Public transit is one of the safest ways to travel, but feeling unsafe is a barrier to transit. RTA will partner with transit and road agencies to make safety and security improvements to bus stops, such as adding lighting. RMTP actions related to transit stop enhancements have been updated to include security improvements. RTA will also work with transit agencies and other stakeholders to identify funding opportunities for on-board security improvements.

Promoting Transit & Increasing Ridership

By building local and regional partnerships, RTA will take a more active role in promoting the benefits of public transit and will seek to increase transit ridership and reduce the number of single-occupant vehicle trips.

UPDATED STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

Goal: Expand Transit to New Places

Strategy 1: Expand fixed-route services to regional destinations

- ▶ Partner with transit providers to develop criteria for route extensions and new routes that include access to jobs and services, and equity outcomes.
 - ▶ In progress. Transit agencies developed and are developing frequent route networks as part of their planning processes.
- ▶ Develop a prioritized list of route extensions and new routes, and an inventory of the resources needed to implement them, including operations funding, vehicles, staff, and passenger amenities.
 - ▶ In progress. In 2022, TheRide completed *TheRide 2045*, which includes prioritized service improvements. DDOT will complete its network redesign in 2023.
- ▶ Pilot route extensions to key areas.
 - ▶ In progress. RTA is currently piloting D2A2 service. In 2024, RTA will pilot a new airport express service and TheRide will pilot express service on Washtenaw Avenue.
- ▶ As funding becomes available, support the implementation of new and extended routes.
 - ▶ Planned for 2023 and 2024. Oakland County is developing strategies to implement new and enhanced service and improve service with additional millage funding. TheRide's millage increase goes into effect in 2024.

Strategy 2: Ensure all areas of the region have public transit service

- ▶ Seek funding to implement services for people with disabilities, seniors, and people with low incomes in areas of Washtenaw and Oakland Counties that lack service.
 - ▶ In progress. In 2022 voters approved millages that will expand transit service to all of Oakland County and improve service in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area.
- ▶ As funding becomes available, programs should be expanded to include the general public.
 - ▶ Planned for 2023 and 2024. Oakland County is developing strategies to implement new and enhanced service and improve service with additional millage funding. TheRide's millage increase goes into effect in 2024.

Strategy 3: Expand microtransit services to additional areas

- ▶ Add and extend microtransit zones to new places.
 - ▶ In progress. In 2022, SMART expanded SMART Flex to Farmington and Farmington Hills and provides Metropark Express to and from the Lake St. Clair Metropark.

Goal: Enhance Existing Services

Strategy 4. Implement a Frequent Transit Network

- ▶ Partner with transit agencies to develop criteria for frequent routes that consider existing ridership, and access to jobs and services, particularly for equity populations.
 - ▶ In progress. Transit agencies developed and are developing frequent route networks as part of their planning processes.
- ▶ Develop a prioritized network of high-frequency routes.
 - ▶ In progress. Completed and in progress agency plans include high frequency networks.
- ▶ Apply for funding to pilot frequency improvements on prioritized routes.
 - ▶ Ongoing activity. TheRide and Oakland County millages will support higher frequencies.

- ▶ As funding becomes available, implement the high-frequency route network.
- ▶ Work with the region's bus operators to increase frequencies on bus routes across the region.

Strategy 5: Increase fixed-route services during off-peak hours

- ▶ Complete a study focused on nighttime and weekend travel patterns and shift times.
- ▶ Increase nighttime and weekend service.
 - ▶ In progress. TheRide and Oakland County millages will support enhanced services.

Strategy 6: Increase on-demand service hours to include evenings, late nights, and weekends

- ▶ Develop pilot programs in areas where there is high demand for access to essential services, and high proportions of equity populations.
- ▶ Support increased service hours on on-demand services.

Strategy 7: Invest in transit corridor projects

- ▶ Review and update existing Locally Preferred Alternatives (LPA) to reflect current conditions.
 - ▶ In progress. RTA assessed LPAs in the *Regional Transit Corridor Strategy*.
- ▶ Prioritize corridors for capital projects, and advance them through FTA's environmental review process and Capital Investment Grants (CIG) Program to apply for funding.
 - ▶ Planned activity for 2023 and 2024.
- ▶ Partner with local governments to develop transit supportive land use and affordable housing policies.
 - ▶ In progress. TheRide worked with the City of Ann Arbor to create TC1 zoning districts.
- ▶ Pilot smaller-scale transit priority improvements.
 - ▶ In progress. Activities completed in 2022 include QLINE deploying TSP and pilot transit lanes.
- ▶ Implement corridor capital projects.
 - ▶ In progress. MDOT is developing plans to implement Detroit Mobility and Innovation Corridor on Michigan Avenue.
- ▶ Identify additional potential rapid transit corridors and create a regional corridor development plan.

Strategy 8: Create universal service standards for ADA paratransit services and community transit providers

- ▶ Work with community transit providers to create a universal set of rider eligibility criteria.
- ▶ Develop plans and raise funding to increase service hours and eligibility, or address specific needs.
- ▶ Support the implementation of consistent hours of operation and eligibility requirements.

Strategy 9: Streamline business processes to enable seamless travel across jurisdictional boundaries

- ▶ Create a working group to develop programs and policies for seamless cross-jurisdictional travel.

Strategy 10: Expand community transit provider services

- ▶ Create an advisory committee for community transit providers.
- ▶ Implement a technical assistance program to support community transit providers with planning activities, capital improvements, and grant applications that can increase capacity.
- ▶ Support the purchase of vehicles, equipment and facilities, and hiring additional staff.
 - ▶ Ongoing activity. RTA provided Section 5310 funding to community transit providers in 2022, and will hold another Section 5310 call for projects in 2023.

Strategy 11: Promote and expand carpools, vanpools, and park-and-rides

- ▶ Promote carpools, vanpools, and park-and-rides.
- ▶ Develop a regional park-and-ride strategy.
- ▶ Work with transit agencies to develop additional park-and-ride lots, and services to them.

Goal: Develop Innovative and Adaptable Solutions

Strategy 12: Implement a state-of-the-art seamless regional fare system

- ▶ Work with DDOT and SMART to expand Dart, and design and implement a state-of-the-art fare system.
- ▶ Partner with TheRide, QLINE, and DPM to ensure they are prepared to join the fare system.
- ▶ Expand the fare system to paratransit and community transit services.

Strategy 13: Implement a regional trip planning and mobility management platform

- ▶ Implement a MaaS platform that promotes seamless travel throughout the region.
- ▶ Coordinate with MDOT's Office of Passenger Transportation to consider a statewide MaaS platform.
 - ▶ In progress. RTA is on the MaaS project steering committee.

Strategy 14: Implement a regional paratransit and on-demand booking and payment app

- ▶ Investigate how to integrate or consolidate provider trip scheduling technologies across the region.
- ▶ UPDATED: Seek opportunities to fund and develop a regional demand-response booking and fare payment platform.
- ▶ As funding becomes available, seek opportunities to offer scheduling same-day service.

Strategy 15: Develop and implement a zero-emissions fleet transition plan

- ▶ UPDATED: Providers develop their own fleet-specific zero-emissions fleet transition plans.
 - ▶ In progress. DDOT completed its plan, and other agencies plan to in 2023 and 2024.
- ▶ Develop and submit competitive grant applications to purchase zero-emissions buses and infrastructure.
 - ▶ Ongoing activity. DDOT and SMART were both awarded funding in 2022.
- ▶ NEW: Explore opportunities for shared zero-emissions vehicle infrastructure.

Goal: Build Sustainable Partnerships

Strategy 16: Develop and implement a regional capital plan

- ▶ Develop a regional capital plan.
 - ▶ RTA plans to develop a capital planning process in 2023.

Strategy 17: Create a task force to investigate and develop solutions for workforce training and retention challenges

- ▶ Partner with transit agencies to create a regional task force to investigate the region's workforce challenges and develop strategies, programs, and partnerships to address them.
- ▶ Expand transit workforce training programs to additional institutions and workforce development agencies in the region and incorporate trainings on new technologies, like electric vehicles.

UPDATED: Strategy 18: Improve transit stops across the region

- ▶ UPDATED: Partner with transit agencies to develop a prioritized list of bus stops where shelters and mobility hubs should be installed.
- ▶ UPDATED: Seek discretionary funding to purchase and install bus shelters, stop amenities, mobility hubs, wayfinding, and security improvements, and provide technical assistance to complete the necessary reviews and permitting processes.
 - ▶ Ongoing activity. Funding was secured in 2022.

- ▶ UPDATED: Partner with cities and road agencies to streamline permitting processes and requirements for installing bus shelters and other transit stop amenities.
- ▶ UPDATED: Work with transit agencies to develop regional design standards for bus shelters and transit stops that prioritize comfort and security and foster connections and multimodal trips.
- ▶ UPDATED: Purchase, install, and maintain new bus shelters and other transit stop amenities, or provide funding to transit agencies for that purpose.
 - ▶ Planned for 2023 and 2024 with secured funding.

Strategy 19: Partner with municipalities and road agencies to make pedestrian and bikeway improvements

- ▶ Partner with transit agencies and municipalities to prioritize pedestrian and bikeway improvements at stops that are the least accessible, and work with road agencies to implement improvements.
- ▶ UPDATED: Partner with transit agencies, SEMCOG, MDOT, and county and local road agencies to develop regional standards for sidewalks, crosswalks, wayfinding, and bicycle infrastructure near transit stops.
- ▶ Seek funding to implement access to transit improvements in line with standards laid out in RTA's MOD Study.
 - ▶ Ongoing activity. Funding was secured in 2022.

Strategy 20: Support the implementation of first and last mile options

- ▶ Advocate for microtransit and micromobility to be equitably deployed across the region.
- ▶ Partner with microtransit and micromobility providers to integrate services with a regional fare system.
- ▶ Support the purchase of equipment and infrastructure, such as microtransit vehicles, bikes, and docking stations, and provide funding to operate and maintain services.

NEW: Strategy 21: Build partnerships to promote public transit and increase ridership.

- ▶ NEW: Partner with local and regional entities to promote the benefits of public transit to Southeast Michigan and to reduce congestion in downtown areas.
 - ▶ Planned for 2023.
- ▶ NEW: Partner with transit agencies and other entities to promote transit safety and security, and identify funding opportunities for safety and security projects.
 - ▶ Planned for 2023.

Goal: Secure Long-term Dedicated Transit Revenue

Strategy 22: Increase per capita transit spending to be on par with peer regions

- ▶ Adopt *Advance 2021*.
 - ▶ Completed.
- ▶ Develop a plan for a future funding initiative.
 - ▶ Planned discussions for 2023 and 2024.

Strategy 23: Support provider funding initiatives and grant applications

- ▶ Continue to support the region's transit providers in their funding initiatives and competitive grant applications.
 - ▶ Ongoing activity. In 2022, RTA supported transit agency and county millages and discretionary grant applications. In 2023, RTA will work in partnership with transit agencies to explore sustainable funding opportunities for pilot programs, including D2A2.
- ▶ Provide technical assistance to large and small transit providers for pursuing, coordinating, and managing grant applications, and ensure that they align with the regional strategic goals.
 - ▶ Ongoing activity. RTA helped secure over \$25 million in discretionary grants in 2022.

NEXT STEPS

RTA will continue to work with regional transit providers and other partners to advance the goals and strategies laid out in this RMTP Annual Update. This document, in conjunction with RTA's *Business Plan and Budget FY2023-2027* will guide RTA activities over the next five years.

At the end of 2023, RTA will complete another annual update to evaluate progress on the RMTP and to determine if additional changes need to be considered. In 2024, RTA plans to conduct public engagement to complete a full update to the RMTP to ensure it is aligned with the regional vision for public transit.

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