



Regional Transit Authority  
Of Southeast Michigan

**DRAFT**

# 2024 Regional Transit Master Plan Update

December 2024



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Regional Transit Authority  
Of Southeast Michigan

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The Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan (RTA) believes the people and communities of Southeast Michigan deserve a more equitable, reliable, and effective public transit system. An accessible transit system is critical public infrastructure that is necessary to foster a livable, climate-resilient, and thriving region. A champion for everyone, RTA envisions Southeast Michigan as a welcoming place where all people can enjoy access to opportunity, recreation, and community through connected transit.

RTA develops regional transit plans, coordinates a complex network of local service providers, accelerates pilot projects and programs, and distributes public transportation funds regionally.

RTA has a 10-member Board of Directors appointed by the Governor of Michigan, the Mayor of Detroit, the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners Chair, and Executives of Macomb, Oakland, and Wayne Counties. Serving a unique role in the region, RTA pools resources and generates ideas to solve decades-long public transit challenges in Southeast Michigan and tackles difficult shared problems that riders have identified as deficiencies in the regional network.

By plugging these gaps, RTA advances transit as a more inviting mode of transportation for all people in the region and paves the way for future shared mobility developments.

This document fulfills the requirements to annually update the regional transit plan as outlined in the Regional Transit Authority Act, Public Act 387 of 2012.

The preparation of this document was financed in part through: cooperation with the Department of Transportation; the Federal Transit Administration; and the participation of the Michigan State Transportation Commission.

INTRODUCTION

**Introduction**

**1.0**

# INTRODUCTION

The Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan (RTA) has spearheaded and led regional transit planning efforts in the Detroit and Ann Arbor metropolitan area since the authority was created in 2012. Part of RTA's ongoing planning work includes annual updates to the Regional Transit Master Plan (RTMP), a long-range planning document that summarizes transit trends, regional accomplishments, and regional opportunities for the growth and expansion of public transit in Southeast Michigan. The RTMP outlines RTA's top ten regional transit priorities that serve as a path forward for RTA and regional partners to advance and improve upon various aspects of public transit in Metro Detroit. These priorities have been informed by public engagement conducted by RTA as part of prior and ongoing planning studies, and they are also closely coordinated with the region's transit providers.

A robust regional transit system is critical for growing both the region and the state's population and economy. The plans, programs, and projects that are led and coordinated by RTA – including the RTMP – define a path forward for critical public transit infrastructure and service enhancements. This, in turn, prepares the region for future rapid transit - and other major capital and operational transit projects – which will result in enhanced regional access and connections between cities and communities in Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw, and Wayne counties.



Figure 1. RTA's role in Southeast Michigan's regional transit system.



### Fund Transformative Mobility

Position Southeast Michigan for economic success by increasing funding and aligning regional policy advocacy.



#### Improve Existing Services

Upgrade the frequency, reliability, comfort, safety, and speed of existing transit services, including fixed-route and demand-response services.



#### Expand Transit Coverage

Connect more people to more destinations in Southeast Michigan through an expanded regional transit system with a focus on expanding access for equity populations.



#### Innovate Resilient Projects

Implement expansion programs through active coordination and partnership with local transit providers and nonprofits.



#### Sustain Future Programs

Implement innovative programs and pilot projects to improve transit, increase flexibility, and encourage transit providers to adopt new technologies.

Figure 2. RTA's Goals.

## RTA's Role

RTA plans, funds, coordinates, and accelerates regional transit services, projects, and programs in Southeast Michigan, which comprises all of Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw, and Wayne Counties, including the City of Detroit (see Figure 1). Within these roles, RTA is responsible for leading regional transit planning, developing and implementing new services, allocating federal and state funding to transit service operators, and securing new regional funding sources for public transit.

Since it was established in 2012, RTA has led the development of several plans, studies, and discretionary grant applications, supported regional coordination initiatives, and developed and launched pilot services and technologies. Some of the projects RTA has led include the reflex service pilot, which was the precursor of FAST, the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation's (SMART) limited-stop bus service, the Michigan Ride Paratransit app, Detroit to Ann Arbor Express Bus Service (D2A2), the ongoing mobility wallet pilot project, development of a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Program, and Detroit to Airport Express (DAX) service, which will begin in spring 2024.

RTA is responsible for annually allocating transit funding provided by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to Southeast Michigan's transit agencies and community transportation services. In 2024 RTA allocated over \$95 million from these sources to support transit service in the region.

Subject to voter approval, RTA has the authority to levy a property tax and a motor vehicle registration fee to fund investments in transit service and infrastructure. Though RTA does not currently raise revenue through either of these mechanisms, additional funding is key to improving transit in Southeast Michigan.

# The RTMP

RTA’s vision is 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. The Regional Transit Master Plan (RTMP) guides RTA and its partners - including transit agencies, community transit providers, nonprofit organizations, and government entities - toward achieving this vision.

RTA revises the RTMP annually to provide status updates on recent regional transit accomplishments, to identify any trends in the national transit industry, and to summarize recent public feedback received on the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for public transit in the region. The previous 2023 RTMP update developed a consolidated list of the top ten regional transit priorities for RTA to focus its efforts on, which were condensed from the original list of 23 strategies that were included in the 2022 RTMP.

In addition to providing updates on recent transit accomplishments, this update to the RTMP includes a categorization of the top ten priorities into three priority focus areas: Move People, Strengthen Access, and Enhance Experience. This update also revises some of the previously identified Implementation Activities, while also adding additional supporting activities that outline a clear path for each identified Implementation Activity.

The RTMP is a strategic document, and it is not tied to a budget. A critical next step in advancing regional transit is to identify sustainable regional funding sources and develop an expenditure plan that identifies specific projects to be funded over a long-term period.



Figure 3. Snapshots from the 2023 RTMP document.

## Public Engagement

From August to November of 2024, RTA set up booths at 12 events across the four counties and spoke with residents, riders, and transit providers. Staff efforts focused on gathering feedback about the RTA's new program Mobility 4 All (M4A), a regional initiative to improve transit solutions in Southeast Michigan, with a particular focus on assisting people with disabilities, older adults, and those with limited incomes. Although this engagement was centered around M4A, much of the input that was gathered is applicable to the RTMP and RTA's long-term vision for transit in Southeast Michigan.

RTA engaged with the public at popular community events and through an online survey. Surveys were shared at public events, distributed to transit providers, and made available on RTA's website. Over 500 people participated in the survey, providing input that will help shape the region's Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP) also known as M4A.

RTA also coordinated with local transit agencies to ensure that the RTMP is aligned with their goals and initiatives, and with what they have heard from the public in recent engagement around their plans and projects.

### Examples of Public Engagement:

- Participation in community events throughout the region
- Online survey
- RTA website feedback
- Coordination meetings with transit providers and their engagement efforts



Figure 4. Photos from RTA led community and stakeholder engagement efforts.  
Image Credit: RTA.

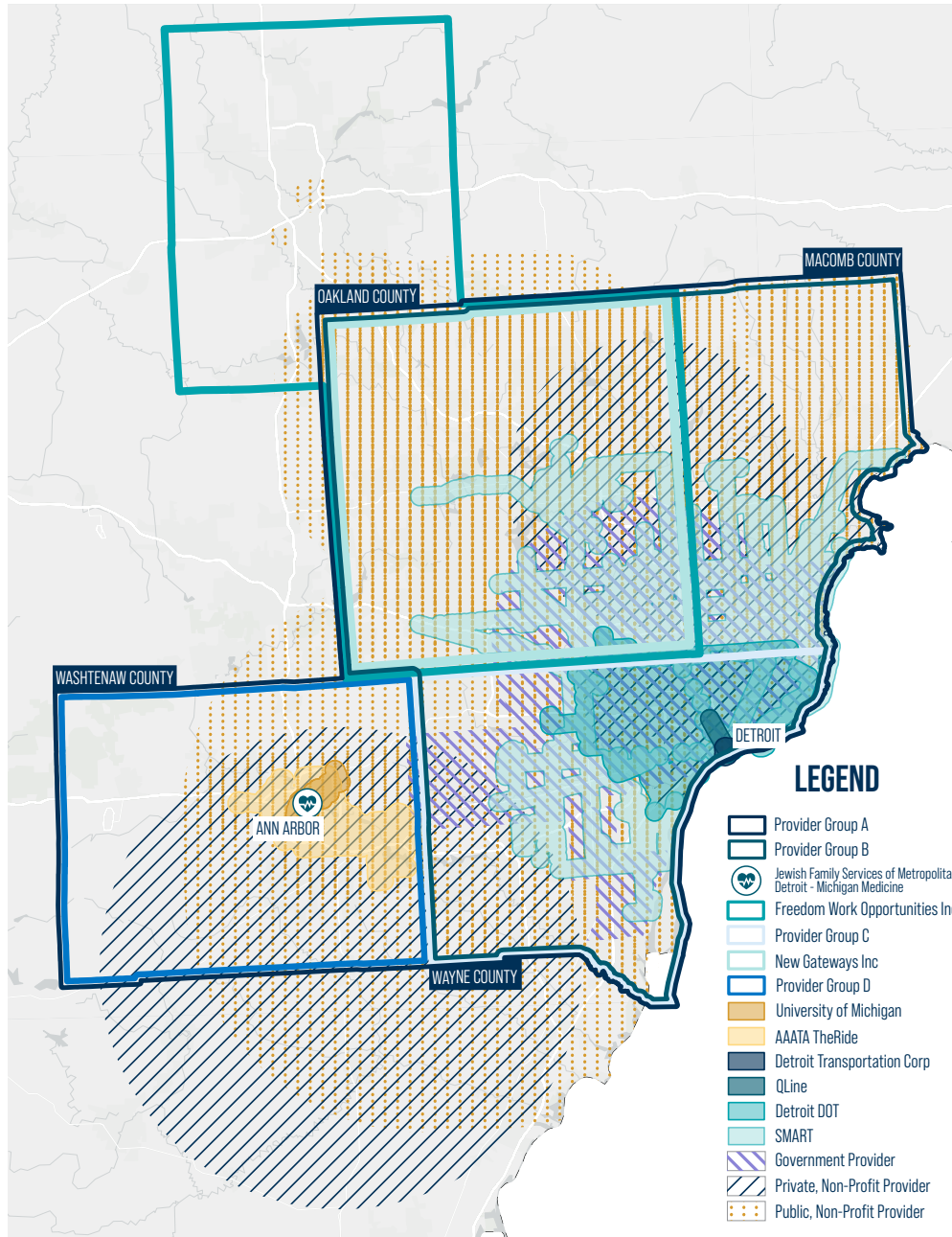
# SOUTHEAST TRANSIT NETWORK

**Southeast Michigan's  
Transit Network**

**2.0**



# SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN'S TRANSIT NETWORK



Southeast Michigan has a large, yet somewhat fragmented, public transit network that covers the majority of the region.

**While transit service is available in most communities within the region, there are some gaps where transit service is not available or where access to services is restricted to certain populations, such as seniors or people with disabilities.**

Available services range from fixed-route bus and rail, demand-response service (origin to destination services such as paratransit, dial-a-ride, on-demand, and microtransit), micromobility, and carpool and vanpool services. These are offered through public transit agencies, community-sponsored transportation services, institutional- and employer-sponsored transportation, for-profit companies, and other providers. Some of these options are available to the general public, and others are geared toward specific populations, such as people aged 65 and over, people with disabilities, students, or veterans. A map of public transit service areas is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Southeast Michigan's Public Transit Network. Image Source: RTA.  
Note: Genesee Co is not within the RTA.

## Public Transit Agencies

RTA is the umbrella organization that connects the five public transit agencies that operate fixed-route bus or rail service in the region: the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority (AAATA, also known as TheRide), Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT), Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART), Detroit Transportation Corporation (DTC, operating as the Detroit People Mover [DPM]), and the QLINE. The QLINE is now operated by RTA following acquisition of the service by RTA from M-1 RAIL in 2024. Over 80 community-sponsored transit providers also serve the region, in addition to a number of organizations and companies that provide transportation and mobility services.

DDOT, SMART, and TheRide also operate Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit services for people with disabilities who are unable to ride bus or rail services. These are pre-scheduled trips that take a rider directly from their origin to their destination. SMART and TheRide offer additional demand-response and other services with broader eligibilities. With \$2 million in funding from RTA, DDOT will provide same-day paratransit service that goes beyond federal requirements beginning in January 2025, improving access to transit (see Figure 6 for a brief description of services and follow the links to agency websites for more information). D2A2, the Detroit to Ann Arbor Express Bus Service, is operated by RTA and was started in partnership with TheRide. DPM and QLINE are both rail services operated within the City of Detroit.

Providers from other regions also offer connections to and from Southeast Michigan, including Amtrak, Flint's Mass Transit Authority (MTA), Port Huron's Blue Water Area Transit, Livingston County's Livingston Essential Transportation Service (LETS), Transit Windsor, and various coach bus services.



DDOT provides fixed-route bus service and ADA paratransit service throughout Detroit and in portions of neighboring communities, including Dearborn, Hamtramck, Highland Park, Livonia, and Southfield.



SMART provides fixed-route, ADA paratransit, demand-response, and microtransit services in all of Macomb County and portions of Oakland and Wayne Counties.



TheRide provides fixed-route, airport, ADA paratransit, demand-response, and microtransit services in the Greater Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area. In partnership with RTA, TheRide offers D2A2 service.



The Detroit People Mover is a fully automated rail system that runs on an elevated single-track loop around Downtown Detroit.



QLINE is a 3.3-mile streetcar operated by RTA that provides service between 12 station intersections along Woodward Avenue in Downtown Detroit, Midtown, and New Center.



Oakland Transit coordinates services amongst different transit providers in Oakland County, including SMART, OPC, NOTA, WOTA, and PEX.

Figure 6. Southeast Michigan fixed-route transit agencies

## Mobility Navigation

Mobility management services assist people with finding information on transportation options, helping with planning and scheduling trips, and offering travel trainings to help them learn to use services confidently. AgeWays, formally known as the Area Agency on Aging-1B (AAA1-B), is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting seniors and caregivers in Southeast Michigan. It offers a variety of services, including in-home care, Meals on Wheels, community dining programs, and caregiving resources. One of its key programs is MyRide2, a mobility management service funded through the RTA that assists seniors and adults with disabilities in Oakland, Macomb, Washtenaw, and Wayne counties. MyRide2, in partnership with RTA, helps users find and arrange transportation options, including wheelchair-accessible and door-to-door services, and provides travel training to promote independent use of public transportation. United Way for Southeastern Michigan's 2-1-1 helpline, and the AARP Ride@50+ Washtenaw County are examples of additional mobility management services for navigating transit options in Southeast Michigan.



Figure 7. MoGo Riders on the greenway. Image Credit: MoGo.

## Micromobility

Micromobility services, such as bikeshare and scootershare, are options for shorter trips and traveling to or from bus stops and train stations. MoGo is the Detroit area's nonprofit bikeshare system, and currently has 83 stations in Detroit and southern Oakland County. In 2024, people took nearly 100,000 rides on MoGo. There are also private companies – including Lime, Spin, and Boaz - operating e-scooters in Detroit and e-scooters and e-bikes in Ann Arbor.

## Community-Sponsored Transportation Services

In addition to the fixed-route agencies, there are over 80 community-sponsored transit providers serving areas across Southeast Michigan. Community-sponsored transportation systems generally focus on providing local trips to seniors and people with disabilities, though some also provide rides for people with low incomes, and others are open to everyone. RTA awards annual funding from FTA's Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities grant program to support these community-sponsored transportation services. In 2024, RTA awarded over \$13.2million to 30 service providers between FY2023 and FY2025 with a potential call for projects in 2025 for FY2025 and FY2026.

Community-sponsored transportation service providers range from independent systems, like, North Oakland Transportation Authority (NOTA), Peoples' Express (PEX), the Rochester Older Persons' Commission (OPC), Western Oakland Transportation Authority (WOTA), and Western-Washtenaw Area Value Express (WAVE), to services funded through SMART's Community Partnership Program (CPP). CPP allows communities that opt into SMART's local funding to develop and deliver targeted local services. There are currently 76 communities participating in SMART's CPP, including Nankin Transit, Pointe Area Assisted Transportation (PAATS), Richmond-Lenox Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Senior Transportation with Advanced Reservations (STAR), and many others.

## Institutional and Employer Transportation

Some institutions and employers offer transit services to their students, staff, and visitors. The largest of these systems is the University of Michigan's bus service, which operates 13 bus routes and provided 5.3 million trips in 2023.<sup>1</sup>

## Nonprofit Agencies

Several nonprofit organizations in the region provide a range of transportation to specific populations, or for specific types of trips. RTA provides funding to nonprofit agencies through its FTA Section 5310 Program. In 2024, RTA provided Section 5310 funding to Freedom Road Transportation Authority, Oakland Community Health Network, and PEAC, among others.

## Carpool and Vanpool

MDOT and TheRide sponsor MichiVan and VanRide, respectively, which are commuter vanpool services. The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments' (SEMCOG) Southeast Michigan Commuter Connect is a website where people can plan trips and match with carpools and vanpools.



Figure 8. Older Persons' Commission (OPC) is one of SE Michigan's community-sponsored transportation services. Image Credit: OPC



Figure 9. University of Michigan is one of the region's institutional transit providers. Image Credit: University of Michigan.

# NATIONAL TRENDS

**National and Regional  
Trends in Transit**

**3.0**

# NATIONAL AND REGIONAL TRENDS IN TRANSIT

In 2024, transit agencies are continuing to navigate a “new normal” shaped by changing ridership patterns since the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>2</sup> As ridership continues to rebound, transit agencies are implementing innovations to enhance mobility while addressing new operational challenges. The transit industry is reconsidering how to best serve riders and communities given new travel patterns, identifying solutions and strategies to overcome labor shortages, and working to address current and future funding deficits.

Successful approaches to meet these challenges include embracing new technologies, focusing on travel needs beyond the nine-to-five commute, and investing in bus rapid transit (BRT) and transit-oriented development (TOD). Through the annual RTMP update, RTA considers how these industry trends, as well as recent regional progress and accomplishments, impact Southeast Michigan’s future priorities and allocation of resources.

## The Post-Pandemic Transit Landscape

Both nationally and locally, transit ridership has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels, though it is gradually recovering. COVID-19 had a huge impact on transit service with ridership declining as travel patterns changed and many office workers shifted to hybrid or full-time remote work. As of September 2024, national transit ridership was at 79 percent of pre-pandemic levels.<sup>3</sup> Beginning in 2022, Southeast Michigan transit ridership has been trending upward from pandemic lows in 2021, when annual ridership in the region declined to 14.1 million trips. In 2023, people rode transit over 22.8 million times, 54 percent of pre-pandemic ridership (see Figure 10).<sup>4</sup>

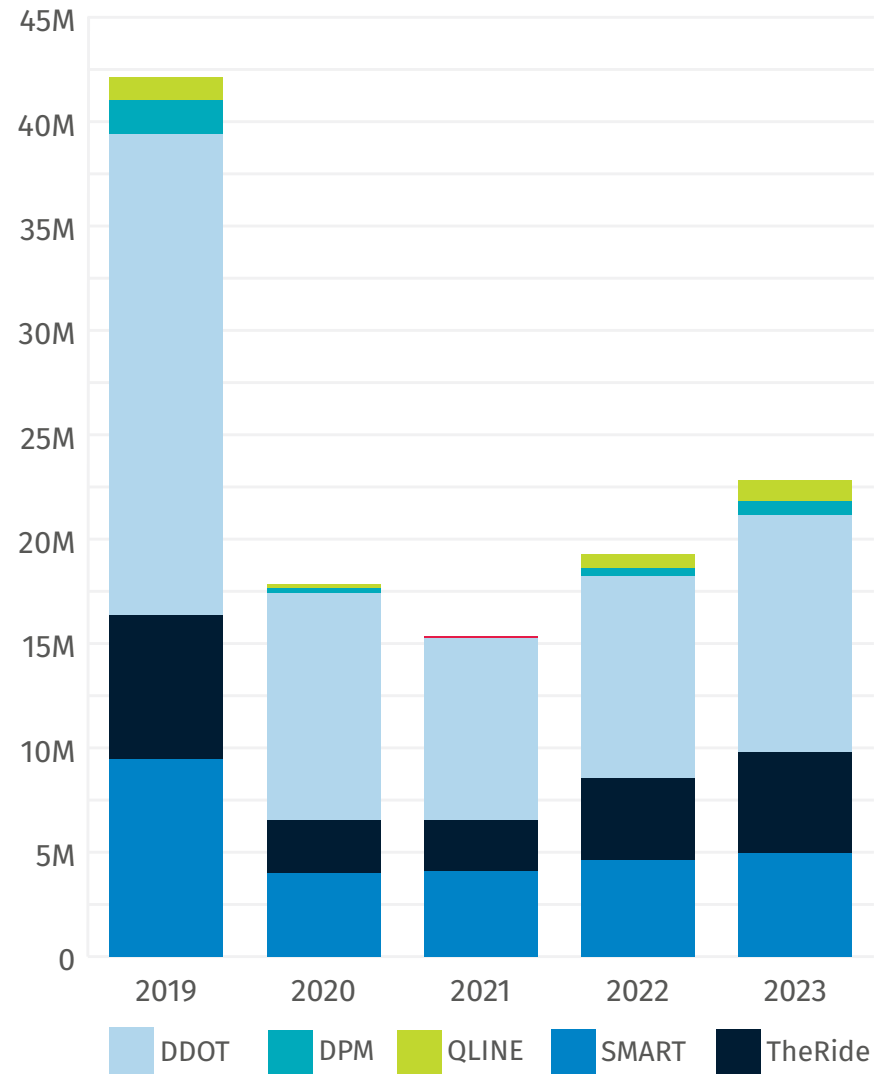


Figure 10. In 2019, people took over 42 million trips on public transit in Southeast Michigan. Ridership declined as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and changing worksite policies, but has been rising in the last two years. Source: National Transit Database.

Even with full 2024 calendar year ridership data not yet available, regional transit ridership appears to be on track to surpass last year’s ridership total, further continuing the upward trend in public transit use. As of October 14, 2024, the Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT) reported 10,363,600 trips for the 2024 calendar year to-date, which surpasses the 2023 ridership posted for the same timeframe last year – from January 1 to October 14, 2023 - when ridership was at 8,849,894 trips.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, the Detroit People Mover has seen a spike in ridership in 2024, aided by the implementation of zero-fare service. DPM recorded a ridership of 655,283 in 2023. In comparison, by September 2024 ridership had already reached 977,330 - even with three months remaining in the year – marking an annual increase of 49 percent.<sup>6</sup> This is, again, demonstrating a continued increase in the use of transit in the region.

**Improving service reliability, accessibility, and on-time performance can help continue this upward trend in ridership; however, this is complicated by the continued national transit workforce shortage and the uncertainty of future funding levels for transit providers. Investments in bus lanes, signal priority, and high-frequency services can also help boost reliability.**

Further complicating matters, remote work policies in some employment sectors became more commonplace during the pandemic, resulting in lower transit ridership during peak weekday periods. This trend has persisted, although it has been a shift with many employers requesting or mandating



Figure 11. The Detroit People Mover has seen increased ridership in 2024, partly due to the implementation of zero-fare service. Image Credit: WSP.

workers to return to the office at least a few days per week and enforcing in-person work policies.<sup>7</sup> In September 2024, a Census Household Pulse Survey designed to study the ongoing issues impacting household’s post-pandemic found that 25 percent of Michigan households had someone working from home at least once a week, compared to more than 36 percent in August 2021. In Downtown Detroit in 2023, 45 percent of daily workers had returned to the office compared to 14 percent in April 2020.<sup>8</sup>

The pandemic also brought focus to essential workers who are not able to work from home, and the role they play in keeping Southeast Michigan’s economy going. Many of these workers do not have nine-to-five work schedules and do not work downtown. Though public transit is an essential service for many essential workers, it has not always prioritized their travel patterns.



Figure 12. Transit agencies in Southeast Michigan are hard at work to hire and train new employees. Bus operators go through a robust training and licensing course, and are celebrated at graduation. Image Credit: City of Detroit



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Figure 13. Southeast Michigan transit providers continue to promote hiring programs as a way to ease the staffing shortages that began during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Additionally, most trips are not work-related and since the pandemic, trips have been more spread out throughout the day rather than during peak commuting hours.<sup>9</sup> According to the Federal Highway Administration’s (FHWA) 2022 National Household Travel Survey, 21.9 percent of total trips and 34.5 percent of transit trips were to or from work or work-related.<sup>10</sup> According to SEMCOG’s 2019 On-Board Transit Survey data, 53.2 percent of transit trips in the RTA region were work-related.<sup>11</sup>

The higher proportion of work-related transit trips in Southeast Michigan may indicate that there is a greater need for transit services to better accommodate non-commute trips. One way to achieve this might be to increase service throughout the day, in the evenings, and on weekends. Expanded microtransit services, like SMART Flex and FlexRide, can also be implemented to provide local access to key destinations in areas that are more challenging to serve with traditional fixed-route bus service, or microtransit can serve as first- and last-mile connections for residents to transfer to higher frequency regional bus and rail services. The expansion of these more flexible transit services – coupled with service improvements to traditional bus and rail services – can be a tool to improve access to new employment opportunities, healthcare, fresh food, and social services.

The long-term impacts of the pandemic on cities, work policies, and travel patterns are being increasingly understood, however, there are still significant headwinds and challenges for the transit industry to navigate. In Southeast Michigan, transit agencies and the RTA are continuing to work together to monitor trends, listen to riders, and implement new and expanded services that address transportation inequities and meet current and future needs.



## Overcoming Workforce Challenges

Transit agencies in Southeast Michigan and across the country are facing hiring and retention challenges, further intensified by the pandemic. Labor shortages have made it harder to operate the current level of scheduled service, let alone to implement planned service improvements. Challenges in workforce retention include a labor field with increasing competition and rising wages for vehicle operators and mechanics, an aging transit workforce, changing technical skill sets that are required due to the shift to electric or alternative vehicle propulsion systems, and lengthy processes for job applications, training, and licensing.<sup>12</sup>

In 2023, 43 percent of transit and intercity bus drivers were over the age of 55, compared with 23 percent in all industries.<sup>13</sup> As many transit workers get closer to retirement age and retention of staffing continues to be a challenge, transit agencies will need to continue to bolster their recruitment efforts to attract new employees to continue operating services. Nationally, the number of jobs available for transit and intercity bus drivers is expected to increase by 21 percent by 2030, which is a higher rate of job growth than most other occupations.<sup>14</sup>

Agencies across the US are implementing strategies to boost recruitment and retention, including rolling hiring processes, increased collaboration between human resources and operations departments, more staff focused on recruitment, implementing hiring incentives, improved marketing campaigns, simplified descriptions of jobs and benefits packages, launching or expanding career pathways programs, and standing up programs to help workers manage stress and burnout.<sup>15</sup> In 2024, as a way to improve retention and be more competitive within the transportation sector, DDOT driver wages increased by \$3 per hour, with the wage now at \$19.15 per hour.<sup>16</sup>

Spending and Ridership in the Top 25 UZAs, 2023

Urbanized Area	Population	Per Capita Operations Expenditures	Per Capita Ridership
New York--Jersey City--Newark, NY--NJ	19.4M	\$917	164
Los Angeles--Long Beach--Anaheim, CA	12.2M	\$287	31
Chicago, IL--IN	8.7M	\$356	38
Miami--Fort Lauderdale, FL	6.1M	\$189	19
Houston, TX	5.9M	\$138	12
Dallas--Fort Worth--Arlington, TX	5.7M	\$143	10
Philadelphia, PA--NJ--DE--MD	5.7M	\$319	40
Washington--Arlington, DC--VA--MD	5.2M	\$652	53
Atlanta, GA	5.1M	\$134	13
Boston, MA--NH	4.4M	\$457	55
<b>Southeast Michigan</b>	<b>4.1M</b>	<b>\$75</b>	<b>7</b>
Phoenix--Mesa--Scottsdale, AZ	4M	\$110	9
Seattle--Tacoma, WA	3.5M	\$550	42
San Francisco--Oakland, CA	3.5M	\$736	66
San Diego, CA	3.1M	\$161	25
Minneapolis--St. Paul, MN	2.9M	\$219	18
Tampa--St. Petersburg, FL	2.8M	\$80	8
Denver--Aurora, CO	2.7M	\$265	22
Riverside--San Bernardino, CA	2.3M	\$85	4
Baltimore, MD	2.2M	\$367	26
Las Vegas--Henderson--Paradise, NV	2.2M	\$123	23
St. Louis, MO--IL	2.2M	\$145	10
Portland, OR--WA	2.1M	\$356	31
San Antonio, TX	2M	\$132	14
Sacramento, CA	1.9M	\$133	8

Figure 14. Of the 25 most-populous urbanized areas (UZAs) in the US, Southeast Michigan spends the lowest per capita on transit operations and has the second lowest per capita ridership. Source: National Transit Database.

Transit agencies have the opportunity to foster long-term career opportunities for staff, including advancement from drivers and mechanics to management roles, and through communications of these opportunities as well as incentives. Career fairs and increased marketing of open positions can help agencies reach job seekers, such as SMART’s Drive a Bus with Us career fair in June of 2023, where potential candidates were able to test drive buses and paratransit vehicles.<sup>17</sup>

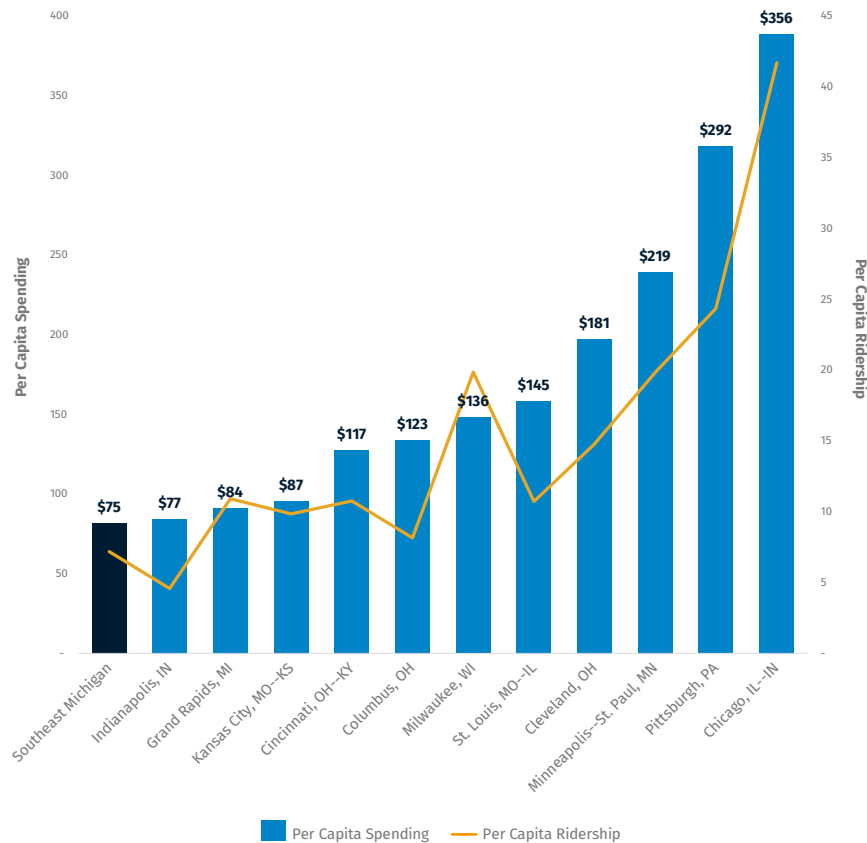


Figure 15. Southeast Michigan trails its peer regions in per capita transit spending and per capita transit ridership.

## Funding Public Transit Operations

Transit agencies, cities, and advocates around the country are considering alternative revenue sources to maintain, improve, and expand public transit service, and to help them catch up on the backlog of projects that have been underfunded for decades. Investing in public transit supports the regional economy; in Southeast Michigan, every dollar invested in transit generates two dollars in economic returns.<sup>18</sup> Increasing funding is critical to improving service, which will lead to increasing ridership: when transit works for people, they take it.

Compared to peer regions, Southeast Michigan has an opportunity to enhance its investment in public transit, which can lead to expanded services and increased ridership. With its two urbanized areas - Detroit and Ann Arbor - increasing the region’s per capita spending on public transportation could significantly benefit residents by providing more efficient and accessible transit options.

Southeast Michigan is the eleventh most-populous region in the US; in fact, if you consider the population of the City of Detroit alone, it would still rank twelfth. However, of the 25 largest UZAs shown in Figure 14, Southeast Michigan spends by far the lowest per capita on public transit (\$75 per person), closely followed by Tampa-St. Petersburg, Florida (at \$80 per person). It is not a coincidence that Southeast Michigan also provides the second lowest number of vehicle revenue miles (a common metric used to measure how much transit service is provided) per capita and has the second lowest transit ridership per capita. In terms of total ridership, Southeast Michigan also trails behind the majority of its peers as the second lowest.

On average, the top 25 largest UZAs spend \$285 per capita on transit operations. Removing transit-intensive cities such as New York, Chicago, Washington DC, Boston, Seattle, San Francisco, and

Baltimore, average per capita spending is \$172, more than double Southeast Michigan’s.

Southeast Michigan also spends the least compared to its Midwestern peers and has the lowest per capita spending and second lowest ridership (see Figure 15). Southeast Michigan also has the second-lowest per capita vehicle revenue miles. Additionally, Cincinnati is the only other Midwestern peer area that lacks regional rail or bus rapid transit (BRT), although Cincinnati Metro passed a transit referendum in 2020 and is currently planning and designing the first two of the city’s four planned BRT corridors. Indianapolis passed a local referendum in 2016 and the city’s transit agency – IndyGo – recently opened the second of three planned BRT lines. Columbus has a “BRT-lite” line – CMAX – with the planned implementation of full-fledged BRT projects after the region’s LinkUS transportation funding referendum was approved by voters in November 2024. With these peer cities moving forward with BRT and other transit investments, Southeast Michigan will fall further behind without a meaningful infusion of investment in capital projects and operational funding.

As for available funding sources, FTA provides discretionary grants for capital projects but does not typically provide additional operating funding beyond what is allocated proportionally (based on urbanized area population) through FTA’s formula funding programs. Any additional operating funds required beyond that level is a local responsibility.



Figure 16. Central Ohio Transit Authority’s LinkUs transit campaign was passed by Columbus, Ohio voters in November 2024 and will fund new BRT corridors throughout central Ohio. Image Credit: COTA.



Figure 17. Cincinnati Metro is currently designing two BRT corridors for future construction through a transit referendum that passed in Hamilton County, Ohio in 2020. Image Credit: Cincinnati Metro.

In Southeast Michigan, local funding sources vary by agency and are typically provided through property taxes and municipal general funds. MDOT’s Local Bus Operating (LBO) Assistance Program supports a portion of an agency’s expenditures. LBO can legally provide up to 50 percent of an urban agency’s operating expenses, but given funding levels, is typically closer to 30 percent.

Across the US, transit agencies use an array of revenue sources, but sales taxes are the most common source of local funding.<sup>19</sup> In Michigan, local option sales taxes are not currently allowed by the state constitution and the state sales tax is capped at six percent.

In 2022, the greater Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area and Oakland County approved millages that will increase capital and operating funding for transit.

**A variety of federal, state, local sources and the new transit millages in Oakland County and Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti are a positive step towards transit funding. However, additional long-term and sustainable funding will be required to complete transformational transit projects in the region.**

## Low- and No-Emission Vehicles

Transit agencies are exploring or adopting alternative fuel technologies, such as electric batteries, hydrogen fuel cells, compressed natural gas, and propane. Transitioning these technologies requires updating infrastructures and reallocating resources to effectively integrate lower-emission vehicles. Replacing aging vehicles with low-emission alternatives can improve riders’ quality of life by reducing single-occupancy vehicle use and enhancing access to public transit.

This transition offers significant environmental benefits that improve public health. For instance, lower-emission vehicles often operate more quietly, reducing noise pollution and the risk of hearing damage. Electric buses, in particular, produce zero harmful tailpipe emissions, improving air quality and rider experience.<sup>20</sup>

This shift requires investments in new technologies and equipment for charging and storing vehicles, training operations, and maintenance staff on new propulsion systems. Additional considerations could include the management of the energy grid, battery endurance, and navigating the ever-changing market of manufacturers providing options for low- and no-emissions transit vehicles. This transition opens opportunities for workforce development and economic growth. Workers maintaining older transit systems today can be trained as the next generation of skilled low- and no-emission transit workforce, driving sustainability and innovation in new systems.<sup>21</sup>

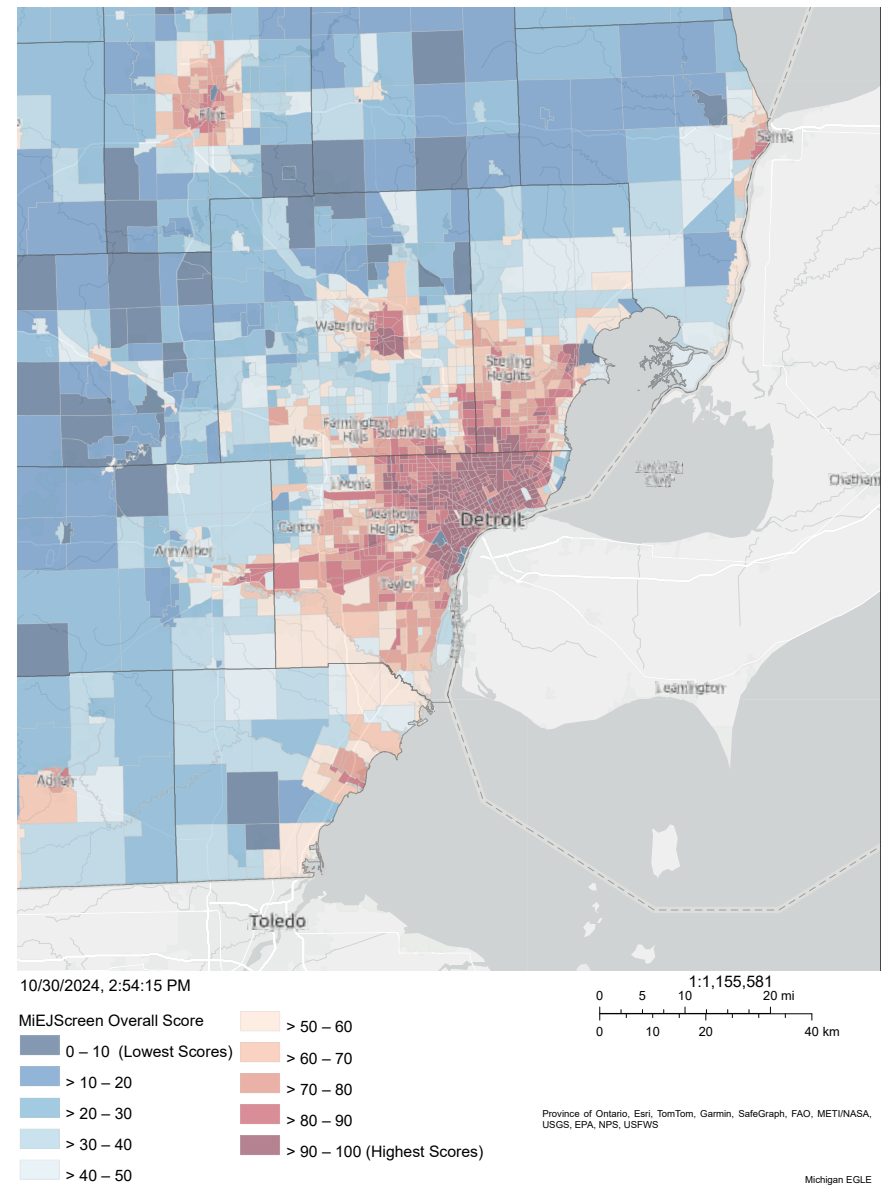


Figure 18. The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy MI EJ screening tool measures environmental risks in communities. High scores, which are seen in large parts of Southeast Michigan, indicate that areas experience higher pollution and risk. Transit infrastructure can help address environmental inequities. Image Credit: EGLE’s MI EJ Screening Tool.

## Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)

Several studies and research, both national and specific to Michigan, have noted that the “next generation” is interested in using transit and new mobility for travel with less need for an automobile. For example, the Growing Michigan Together Council Report states that “amenity- and opportunity-rich places are more likely to attract talent”.<sup>22</sup> For Michigan to achieve this, we must have well-connected public transit systems to help attract employers and employees.

Places ranked as most attractive to young people have well-established transit systems often with rail, streetcars, and rapid transit, along with excellent bus systems. Those transit systems have a pattern of land uses that support transit. Newer developments within those systems often have been designed assuming transit will provide an opportunity for travel, with less reliance on an automobile.

Transit or Mobility Oriented Development (TOD/ MOD) is a land-use pattern with dense, compact, mixed-use, and walkable developments. These developments can support transit that reduces parking needs and allows people to travel without having to rely on a car. In 2020, the RTA completed the Mobility-Oriented Development (MOD) Study for Woodward Avenue and key locations from Detroit to Ann Arbor. The MOD Study described how TOD concepts can be combined with mobility and provided a future benchmark for TOD in the RTA region.

Key elements for TOD/MOD along a corridor include:

### Mixed Land Uses

Allowing a mixture of land uses, which may include residential, office, and commercial within the same building or a mixture of uses in an area. This promotes more transit demand compared to a development like an office building where there may just be a peak need during the morning and evening of certain weekdays.

### Compact Dense Development

Corridors with a high level of transit can support more development, especially around a Bus Rapid Transit stop or around Mobility Hubs. The height of the development needs to be consistent with the context of the area. It might mean 2-4 story development along some corridors where it may just be single-story buildings currently. In other cases, it would be mid- or high-rise buildings. Examples are shown in the RTA’s Mobility Oriented Development Study for different contexts and how the height and density can gradually be reduced to be compatible with the adjacent neighborhoods.

### Reduced parking

A mixture of land uses in one location allows certain trips to be made by walking or biking instead of by car. If longer distance trips are made using transit instead of a vehicle, that also reduces the auto trips. Combined, this may reduce the overall number of parking spaces needed.

### Local land use plans and zoning

Development along the corridors is managed by the various communities that have zoning authority – cities, villages, and townships. Those local master land use plans could identify locations for TOD-type development. Zoning standards could allow or even require TOD in terms of permitted uses, height, setbacks, parking, and other standards. For large lot developments, communities could require liner buildings for some buildings to be closer to the street to better connect with transit. Communities could prevent deep setbacks and prohibit certain auto-related uses like gas stations at key locations along major transit routes.

TOD can also help the region, municipalities, and agencies to meet goals such as attainable or affordable housing, sustainability, healthy climate, and other targets. Some municipalities require those types of elements to be included for a project to receive public investments during the approval process. Others require incentive elements as part of a Planned Unit Development (PUD) or discretionary zoning approval. Many municipalities have a Downtown Development Authority, Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA), or other organizations that can use Tax Increment Financing to help fund improvements in the public right-of-way to help support private sector projects with TOD elements.<sup>23</sup> Other transit agencies have supported TOD development through joint developments where a transit agency and developer have a “Public-Private Partnership” to make a project financially viable and meet the communities or agency goals.<sup>24</sup>



Figure 19. IndyGo's Red Line is an example of a recently completed BRT project in a Midwest peer city. Image Credit: IndyGo



Figure 20. The Rapid's Silver Line in Grand Rapids, Michigan is a BRT corridor that was completed in 2014. Image Credit: Mass Transit Magazine

## Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

TOD is often associated with rail lines, however, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) offers many of those benefits with the advantages of a lower cost, being easier to implement, and less disruption along an already developed corridor, like the BRT candidates in Metro Detroit and Ann Arbor. BRT is a bus-based service that mimics many of the features of rail. Stops are farther apart than typical bus stops, there are stations with level-boarding platforms, and it may have features to help reduce congestion delays, such as transit signal priority and dedicated lanes. Initially, there was some resistance to BRT from the development community, thinking that the routes were not permanent. However, experience from the many new BRT projects can be used to demonstrate that BRT provides similar TOD opportunities as light rail or streetcar.

RTA has been accelerating BRT projects, with an initial focus including Gratiot, Michigan, Washtenaw, and Woodward Avenues. Previous work along priority corridors like Woodward for example includes the SEMCOG Rapid Transit Study, RTA's MOD study in 2020, recent redesigns in the City of Ferndale, and the new MDOT Corridor Plan that has re-engaged all of the communities and agencies along Woodward.

## Mobile Applications (Apps) for Riders

The rise of smartphone apps has continued to change the way people travel and has raised expectations for how passengers should be able to pay for transportation services. This is no different in the public transit sector. Transit riders increasingly expect to have real-time arrival information and fare payment options available on devices that can help quickly and easily identify options for travel and pay for trips.

Some transit agencies are developing their own trip-planning apps, while others are making transit schedule data publicly accessible so that technology companies can integrate transit information into their platforms. In some cases, transit agencies are pursuing both options. The prevalence of trip planning and payment apps can give riders the choice to use the tool that works best for them; however, an environment with too many options - especially when they are not fully integrated to support transfers between services or modes - can be confusing for riders and can limit functionality. This is where a Mobility as a Service (MaaS) system can help bridge the gap by promoting easier and simpler access to transit and micromobility in Southeast Michigan.

A critical step in the integration of trip-planning apps is promotion of accessibility and standardization in the underlying data feeds that drive them. To provide the best experience for riders, transit agencies need to have high-quality, standardized, up-to-date, and readily available transit operations data that can be accessed in real time via technology integrations. The California Integrated Travel Project (Cal-ITP) is an initiative led by State of California public agencies that aims to streamline fare collection and the provision of real-time information for transit riders. The goals of Cal-ITP are to invite travelers toward more efficient and sustainable modes of travel; to reduce operating costs for transit agencies, to simplify every traveler's life, and to create a seamless, user-friendly system that makes paying for a transit ride simple and easy. National best practices of under-development and operational MaaS initiatives, such as Cal-ITP, can serve as models for RTA to push for and facilitate technology improvements that benefit all transportation system users and transit providers.

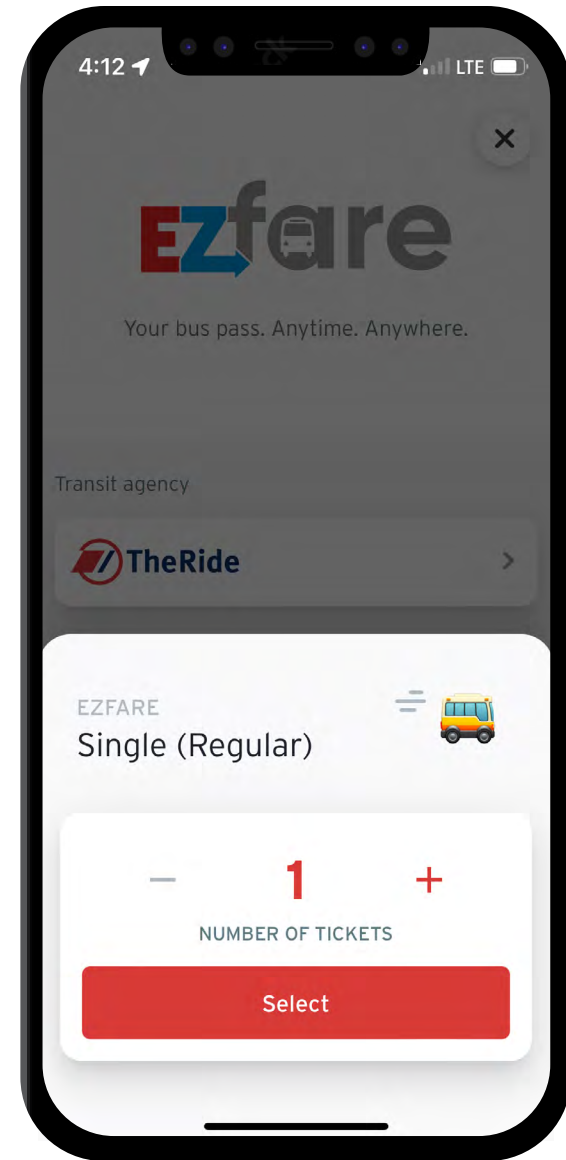


Figure 21. The EZfare app is an example of a transit fare payment mobile app used by some local transit providers in Southeast Michigan. Image Credit: EZfare App.



## Barriers to Transit Accessibility



Figure 22. Accessibility of transit remains a critical need across the United States, including in Southeast Michigan. Image Credit: SMART.

agencies now have capital programs specifically dedicated to bus stop and bus route capital upgrades, including improvements to bus stop boarding areas, sidewalks, curb ramps, shelters, benches, lighting, and other passenger amenities. The planning, design, and/or construction of these improvements are often funded through federal grant programs, such as FTA's Bus and Bus Facilities program, FTA's Areas of Persistent Poverty program, or USDOT's (United States Department of Transportation) Safe Streets and Roads for All program; however, many programs are also being funded using a portion of funds raised through a local or regional transit referendum. Examples include Cincinnati Metro's Transit Infrastructure Fund, Sound Transit's System Access Fund, and Central Ohio Transit Authority's (COTA) LinkUs program. While each of these programs are unique, they are similar in that they fund improvements to transportation and transit infrastructure, including bus stops, sidewalks, protected bike lanes, shared use paths, crosswalks, and/or road resurfacing. The goals of these programs include partnering with local communities to upgrade infrastructure as a way to improve mobility and improving safety and connectivity for active transportation users to access jobs and services in their communities and region.

The integration of micromobility services with transit service is also a trend among transit agencies nationally. Many agencies either partner with micromobility providers or – in some cases – directly operate micromobility services as a part of the agency's services. Partnerships can include agreements to co-locate micromobility vehicles – typically scooters or bicycles – on or near agency transit hubs or even providing access to use or pay for micromobility services through existing transit passes or fare cards. Many micromobility services also offer discounted rates or memberships to low-income residents through programs designed to remove barriers to transportation and improve equity in transportation. Strategic placement of micromobility vehicles and hubs can be critical in closing first- and last-mile gaps in the transit network, particularly when coupled with infrastructure investments to improve safety for active transportation users.

Transit agencies across the country have a renewed focus on increasing the accessibility of transit. This includes both improving the experience of using transit through capital infrastructure upgrades at bus stops and also integrating micromobility services as a way to further increase opportunities to use transit to connect to jobs, services, and goods.

While the regulations for the accessibility of transit stops and stations were passed as part of the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) in 1990, much of the transit infrastructure being used today predates the passage of the ADA. The result of this – both across the country and also in Southeast Michigan – is that there are bus stops and stations that are not universally accessible to people of all abilities.

Transit agencies across the country are working to address these accessibility issues, either at individual bus stops or along full transit corridors. Many

# RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

**Recent Regional Transit  
Accomplishments**

**4.0**

# RECENT REGIONAL TRANSIT ACCOMPLISHMENTS


In the past year, RTA and its partners have achieved a number of accomplishments, including transfer of the QLINE to RTA, developing new and expanded services, undertaking planning initiatives, and proceeding and completing capital projects that will improve transit and help advance RTA’s vision and goals. This section highlights some of the major achievements.

## QLINE Ownership Transfer

In September 2024, the QLINE transitioned ownership from M-1 Rail to the RTA following board approval. The transition of the QLINE to public ownership was always considered as the long-term plan for the system. With the transition to RTA ownership, the QLINE can now access critical public funding resources. This includes eligibility for MDOT (Michigan Department of Transportation) capital match funding, federal funding programs, and the state Comprehensive Transportation Fund. This change positions the QLINE for long-term success by ensuring sustainable investments that will enhance and expand the system for years to come.

The integration of the QLINE into the RTA organization aligns with RTA’s mission to expand public transit options, foster equity, and better address the mobility needs of Southeast Michigan’s communities. As of Fall 2024, ridership has grown to 3,185 average daily riders, up by 24 percent compared to 2023.<sup>25</sup> The demand has steadily risen as more residents and visitors discover its benefits. The ownership of the QLINE embodies the RTA’s vision of fostering livable, healthy, and sustainable growth throughout the region.

### DAILY AVERAGE RIDERSHIP

100 Trips = 

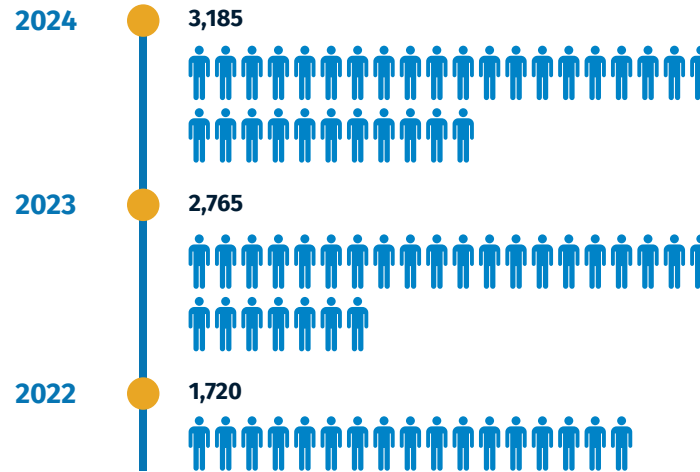


Figure 23. QLine Average Daily Ridership in the last three years.



Figure 24. Ownership of the QLINE transitioned to RTA in September 2024, with RTA now managing daily operations and capital maintenance of the streetcar line. Image Credit: WSP.



Figure 25. Additional service was added to D2A2 in 2023, along with a Frequent Rider Passbook option. Image Credit: WSP.

## New, Improved, and Expanded Services

The recent success of new transit services and pilot transit services provides an example of how expanded transit services can positively impact residents and communities across Southeast Michigan. Updates on new and expanded services include D2A2 (Detroit to Ann Arbor), Detroit Airport Express, Oakland County transit expansions, Washtenaw Avenue Express, and fare free pilot programs for QLINE and DPM in Downtown Detroit.

### Additional Trips on D2A2

In response to demand for later service, the RTA and TheRide added D2A2 trips at midnight and a mid-evening trip on weekends in the summer of 2023. A Frequent Rider Passbook is now available, which includes 50 one-way rides for \$100, which is a 60 percent savings. D2A2 ridership continued to grow in 2023 and further grew in 2024. Ridership between the months of January – September in 2024 was 50% greater than the same months in 2023. In total, there have been more than 66,000 riders in 2024 (Jan-Sept).

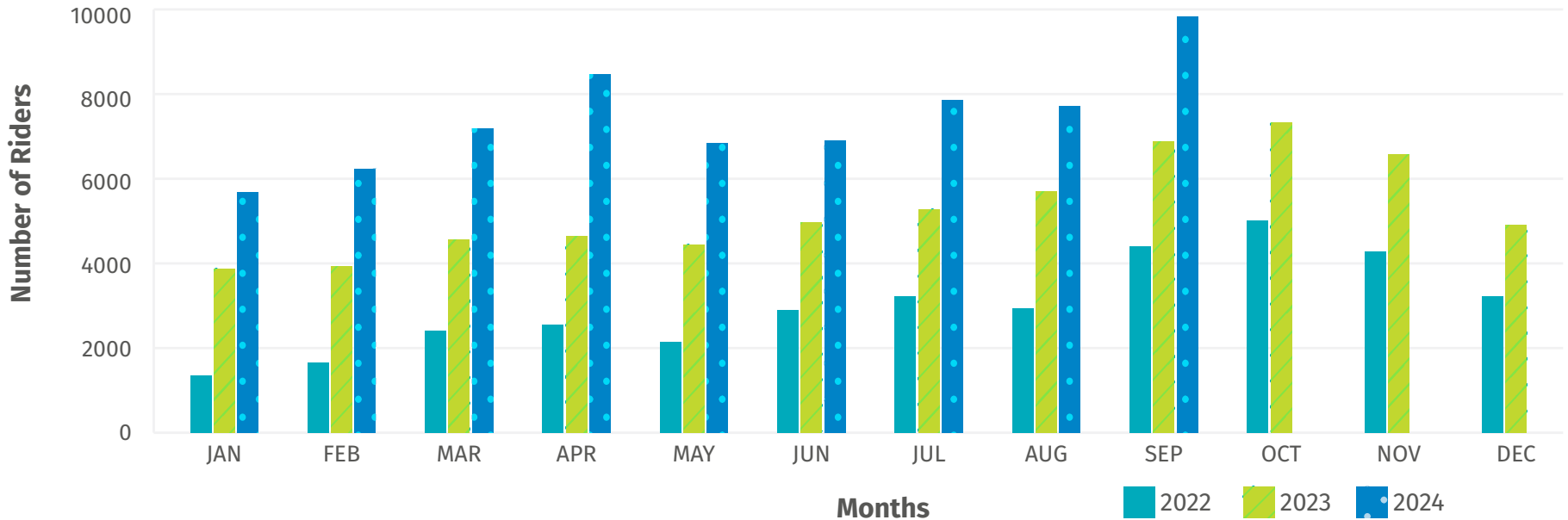


Figure 26. D2A2 ridership continues to climb annually, with additional growth throughout 2024.



Figure 27. DAX is a new service that launched in March 2024 to provide connections between Downtown Detroit and the Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport (DTW). Image Credits: WSP.

**Detroit to Airport Xpress (DAX) Pilot**  
 Building on the success of the D2A2 pilot, RTA has launched DAX, a pilot bus service between Downtown Detroit and the Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport (DTW) in March 2024. DAX is supported by a \$2.5 million Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) grant through SEMCOG from USDOT and MDOT. Just between March through September 2024, DAX had over 36,000 riders.

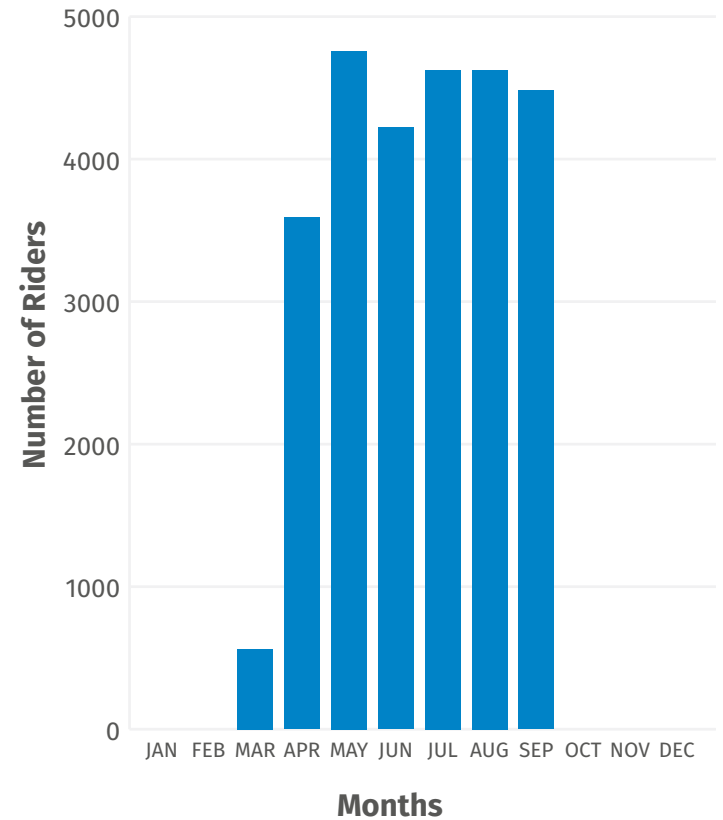


Figure 28. DAX monthly ridership for its inaugural year of service, as of September 2024.

## Oakland County Service Expansions

In November 2022, Oakland County voters approved the Oakland County Public Transportation millage: a 10-year, 0.95 millage dedicated to maintaining and expanding public transit services throughout Oakland County.<sup>26</sup>

As a result of this millage, transportation services in Oakland County have expanded. In September 2023, SMART extended service on five existing routes to provide access to new areas. Routes 450-Woodward Local and 462-FAST Woodward now serve stops in Bloomfield Hills. Routes 305-Grand River and 740-Twelve Mile were extended to serve Novi and Wixom, and Route 805.

Grand River Park and Ride was extended to serve Novi and additional stops in Farmington Hills. SMART also added two brand new bus routes in 2024. Route 492-Rochester was added in April 2024 and connects the Jason Hargrove Transit Center in Detroit to Oakland University via Rochester Hills and Rochester, two communities that did not previously have SMART service. Route 759-Highland Road was added in June 2024 and connects White Lake Township, which did not previously have SMART service, to Oakland University via Waterford Township and Pontiac.

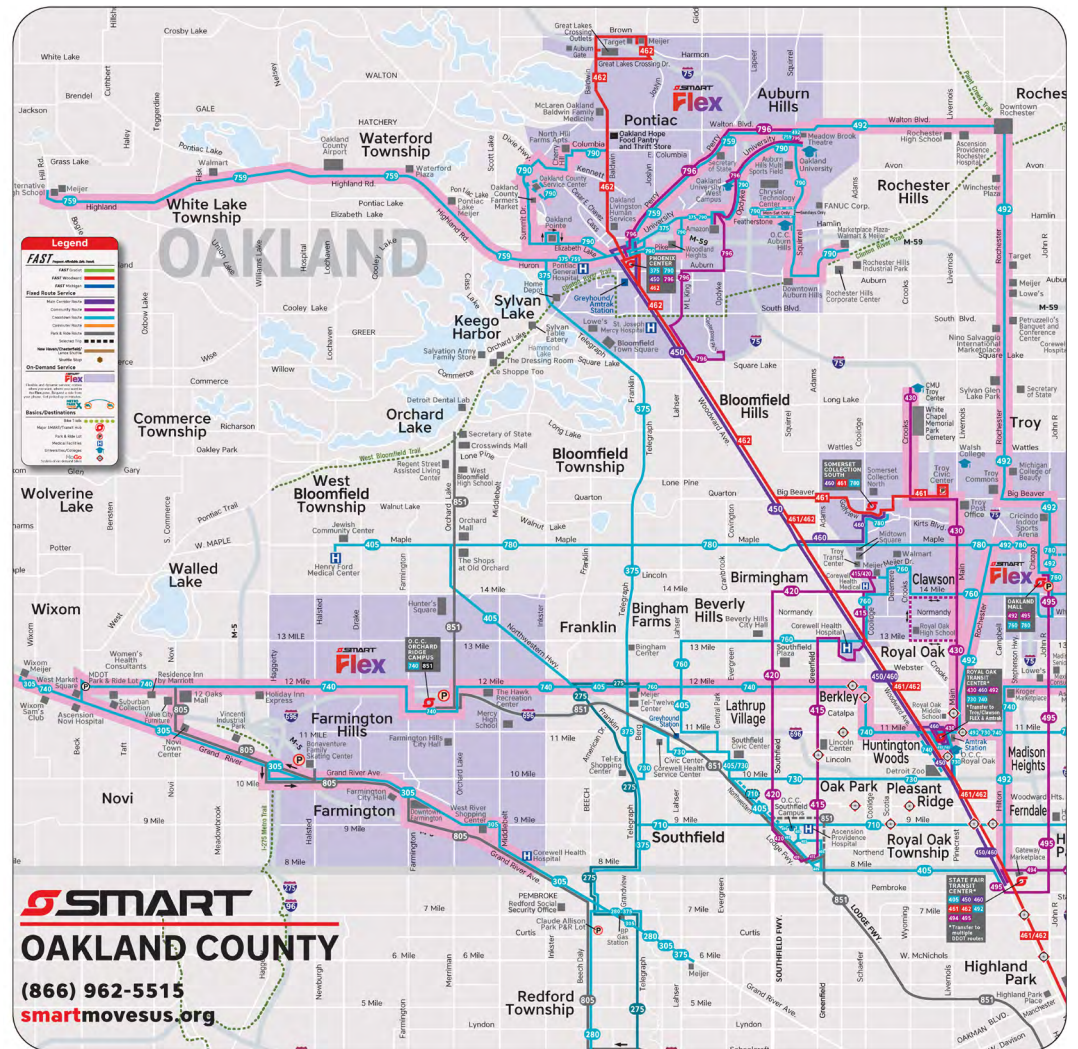
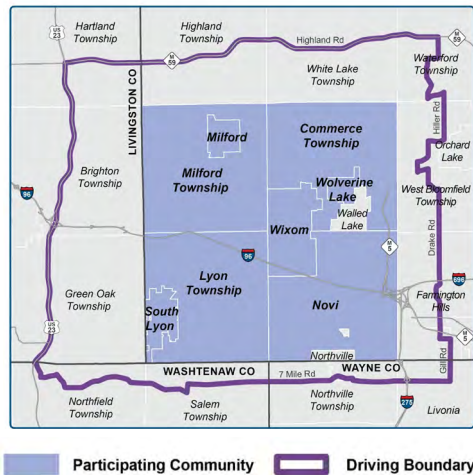
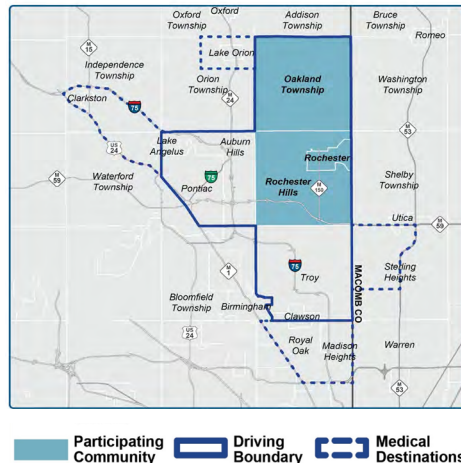
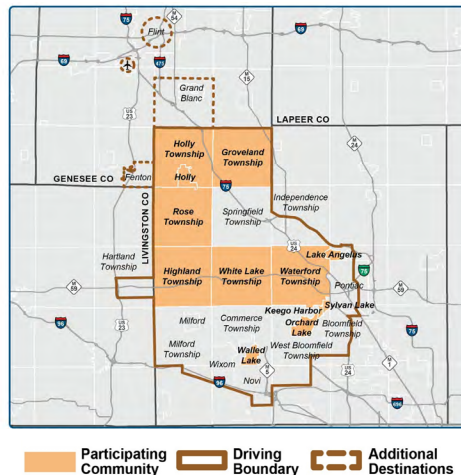


Figure 29. A map of expanded and added SMART transit routes, highlighted in pink. Image Credit: SMART



*People's Express*



The Oakland County Public Transportation millage has also funded improvements to demand response transit providers in the parts of Oakland County not served directly by SMART: North Oakland Transportation Authority (NOTA) and Older Persons' Commission (OPC) Social & Activity Center in northeastern Oakland County, People's Express (PEX) in southwestern Oakland County, and Western Oakland Transportation Authority (WOTA) in northwestern Oakland County.

All four transit providers expanded their service areas and hours of service, implemented uniform fares, and expanded rider eligibility beyond only seniors and people with disabilities. NOTA expanded service to cover Brandon, Independence, and Springfield Townships and the Village of Clarkston. WOTA expanded service to cover Groveland, Holly, and Rose Townships, the Village of Holly, Keego Harbor, Lake Angelus, Orchard Lake, and Sylvan Lake. PEX expanded its service to cover Novi and provide trips between communities where it previously only provided in-community travel. As a result, ridership across all four transit providers increased 133 percent between January 2023 and June 2024.

Figure 30. [clockwise from upper left] 2025 Service Area Maps for North Oakland Transportation Authority (NOTA), OPC Social & Activity Center, People's Express (PEX), and Western Oakland Transportation Authority (WOTA). Image Credit: HNTB/Oakland Co

Oakland County is currently working on a Community Transit Plan to guide strategies and investments that will build upon the SMARTer Mobility Program to help further improve public transit in the County. This plan will be crafted based on a thorough assessment of existing and forecasted transit needs, best practices, and comprehensive engagement with the public and stakeholders. The plan is anticipated to be completed in 2025. Based on data analysis that has been completed, there are several major generators that are located outside of the current SMART service area that could be considered for fixed route bus service including:

- The Dixie Highway corridor between Clarkston and Pontiac
- The Pontiac Trail corridor between Wixom and Walled Lake
- Rochester Hills between Auburn Hills and Rochester, including along Auburn Road

Other areas could be considered for increased demand response bus service, such as deviated fixed routes or dedicating more vehicles to a particular area, including:

- The Villages of Holly, Oxford, and Lake Orion
- Orion Township, particularly the Great Lakes Crossing area
- Milford and downtown Milford
- Wixom and Novi, including hospital, medical, shopping, and senior housing complexes
- Clarkston downtown and medical centers
- Some trips outside of Oakland County to Livingston County (served by LETS) and from Holly to Fenton and the Grand Blanc/Flint area (served by MTA)

The Community Transit Plan is expected to provide recommendations regarding appropriate service models for the different parts of Oakland County and the funding, human resources, technology, and capital resources needed to implement those service models and coordinate services across the various transit providers.



Figure 31. NOTA (above) and OPC (below) both expanded services after the passage of additional transit funding in Oakland County. Image Credits: NOTA and OPC.





Figure 32. TheRide launched the Washtenaw Express in May 2024 after receiving funding for the service from a grant through SEMCOG. Image Credit: TheRide.



Figure 33. Zero fare services helped both the QLINE and People Mover see continued increases in ridership, with each service providing approximately 70,000 rides over the three-day NFL Draft in Detroit in May 2024. Image Credit: QLine

## Washtenaw Avenue Express Service

TheRide received \$2.1 million through SEMCOG’s CRP grant award to operate an express bus service on Washtenaw Avenue, which launched in May 2024. The limited-stop service operates on weekdays as an additional option to provide a connection with improved travel times between Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti. The total ridership from May to September 2024 was approximately 34,000 trips. The service was recommended in TheRide’s long-range plan, TheRide2045, and could set a foundation for a future BRT service along the Washtenaw corridor.

## QLINE & People Mover Zero-Fare Services

Zero-fare services are increasingly being considered across the US as a way to remove barriers to accessing transit and increasing mobility equity. QLINE has been operating fare-free since Fall 2021 when it reopened after COVID-19 shutdowns. Ridership has been steadily increasing and reflects the diverse population of the region. In 2024, DPM piloted zero-fare service, with sponsorship support. As free services, QLINE and DPM have helped to increase access not only for residents and employees but also for visitors during major events, such as the National Football League (NFL) Draft that took place in Downtown Detroit in April 2024. The QLINE and DPM each provided approximately 70,000 rides during the three-day NFL Draft event in 2024.

## Micromobility / MoGo System

In 2024, people took almost 100,000 rides on MoGo. At the end of 2022, MoGo, in partnership with the City of Detroit was awarded \$676,672 through SEMCOG's CRP grant for another MoGo expansion. This expansion will be implemented in 2025 and will add up to 20 new station locations in Detroit, seven of which will include charging capabilities for electric assist bicycles (e-bikes). Up to 60 e-bikes will be added through the expansion project, bringing the future total active fleet to around 600 bikes (including auxiliary bikes and e-bikes).

As a result of the Connect/D study, MoGo is also exploring relocating some stations to better serve as a first- and last-mile option for bus riders. The study also led MoGo to accept cash payments at DivDat Kiosks, which are available at 59 locations in metropolitan Detroit. MoGo is also working toward improved bicycle unlocking processes via QR codes, which is expected to be deployed in Summer 2025.

There are also private companies operating e-scooters in Detroit and e-scooters and e-bikes in Ann Arbor.

## Expansion of Low- and No-Emissions Transit Vehicles

Regional efforts are underway to deploy low- and no-emission vehicles to work towards the State of Michigan's and SEMCOG's Healthy Climate Plan goals, which include increasing access to clean transportation options by 15 percent annually as well as reaching net zero emissions by 2050. In January 2024, DDOT published the final draft plan of its DDOT Reimagined plan, aimed at modernizing the city's fleet program. This plan includes the introduction of four new zero-emission electric buses in 2024. At the time of its release, DDOT's fleet consisted entirely of diesel buses. Since then, with the support of FTA funding, the city has deployed the four electric buses into service. In July 2024, DDOT received notice of an additional \$35.8 million in FTA low- and no- emission funding to upgrade alternative fueling infrastructure and vehicles. This funding will be used to purchase 25 new buses in 2025, including four hydrogen fuel cell buses and 21 hybrid electric buses.

In October 2023, TheRide proposed piloting a four-to-five-year project involving two hydrogen fuel cell buses, one outdoor fueling station, and workforce training. This project includes 12 months of operation across all seasons. The pilot will be funded as part of a \$25 million FTA Low/No Emission Grant Program award announced in July 2024. In addition to the hydrogen fueling station and two hydrogen buses, part of this funding will also be used to purchase over one dozen diesel electric hybrid buses.

Currently, both the QLINE and DPM operate entirely on electric.



Figure 34. MoGo Users on Belle Isle. Image Credit: MoGo.

## Mobile Technologies and Fare Payment System Integration

### Regional Mobile Applications

In Southeast Michigan, transit riders and micromobility users can access several apps to look up trip information, including DDOT's Bus Tracker app, Transit App, Google Maps, Moovit, and others. Additionally, DDOT, SMART, TheRide, and MoGo offer app-based fare payment options. However, one of the current challenges with mobile transit fare payment in Southeast Michigan is the differing payment systems used by regional transit and mobility providers: TheRide uses EZfare, DDOT uses Token Transit, and MoGo uses Transit App. This lack of consistency between transit provider fare payment systems can be an additional barrier for transit users. To address this issue, the RTA, in partnership with DDOT, SMART, QLINE, DPM, MoGo, United Way for Southeastern Michigan, Detroit at Work, and the Downtown Detroit Partnership, will pilot a mobility wallet. This system will enable users to pay for public transportation trips through a single shared system, simplifying the payment process to provide better service to transit riders.

**MDOT is currently leading the process of envisioning and creating a statewide MaaS system. RTA is on the steering committee to help guide the project and could serve as a lead partner in advancing a regional pilot as early as 2025.**

MaaS is a concept that consolidates trip planning, real-time information, payment, and booking into one platform, typically integrating multiple transportation options into one holistic system.



Figure 35. Future mobile fare payment system integration continues to be a priority for RTA and local transit providers, which will be aided by RTA's ongoing Mobility Wallet pilot program. Image Credit: WSP.

## Mobility Wallet Pilot

In partnership with DDOT, SMART, QLINE, DPM, MoGo, United Way for Southeastern Michigan, Detroit at Work, and the Downtown Detroit Partnership, RTA will be piloting a mobility wallet that can help connect job seekers with employment opportunities. The technology will allow users to pay for public transportation trips through a single shared system. Through this technology pilot, RTA seeks to gain a better understanding of the potential for a mobility wallet to make it easier for riders to pay for transit and other mobility services.

The mobility wallet will offer access to multiple transportation options and will explore future opportunities for fare-capping across multiple providers and subsidy programs. The implementation of this program will have a great impact on the community, including improved transportation accessibility, enhancing the commuter experience, supporting the economic growth of the region, ensuring that reliable transportation is inclusive of all community members, reducing transportation costs, and improving the quality of life for residents. MDOT and the Office of Future Mobility and Electrification (OFME) provided \$1 million to support the pilot through the Mobility Wallet Challenge. A contractor has been selected to lead the Mobility Wallet pilot and work on the program will continue in 2025, with a planned launch of the pilot in January 2025.

## Planning Initiatives

### Transit Agency Planning Initiatives

DDOT, SMART, and TheRide all have ongoing or recently completed service planning initiatives. In 2022, TheRide adopted TheRide2045, a long-range plan that provides a vision for the transit system and steps toward implementing it. Supported by a millage increase that passed in 2022, TheRide is focused on implementing the first phase of the plan, which proceeds through 2028. This phase includes increasing frequencies on all routes, increasing service hours, improving nighttime on-demand service, piloting a limited-stop service on Washtenaw Avenue, a new bus garage, transit center improvements, transit signal priority or BRT on major corridors, and improving accessibility.

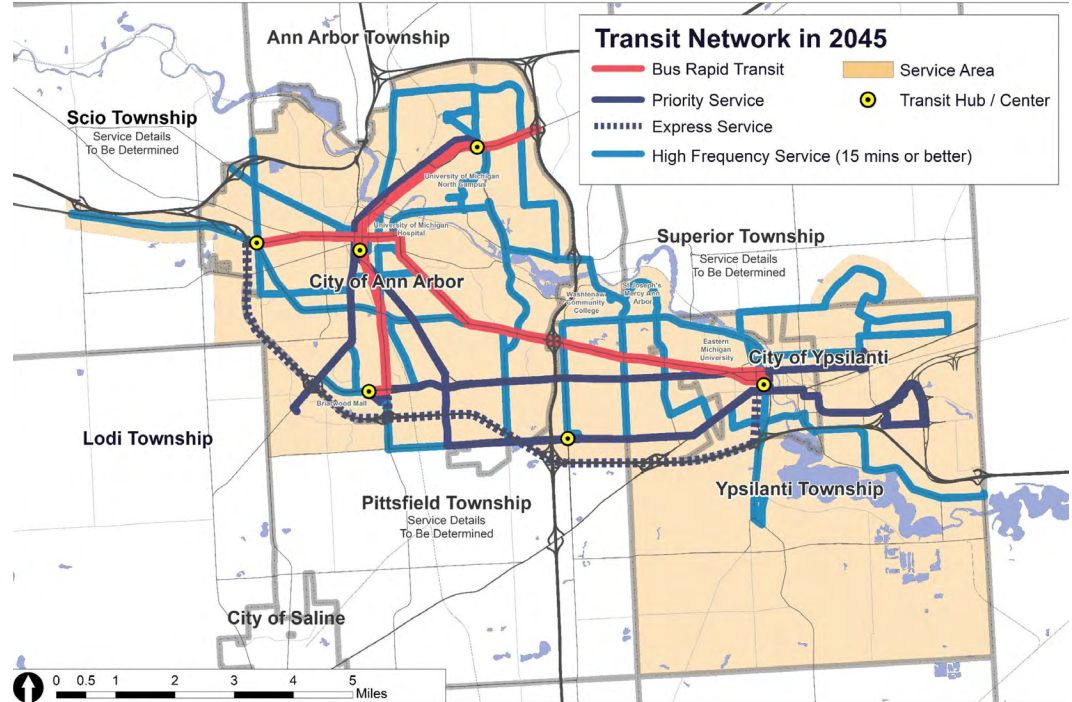


Figure 36. TheRide 2045 Network Map. Image Credit: TheRide

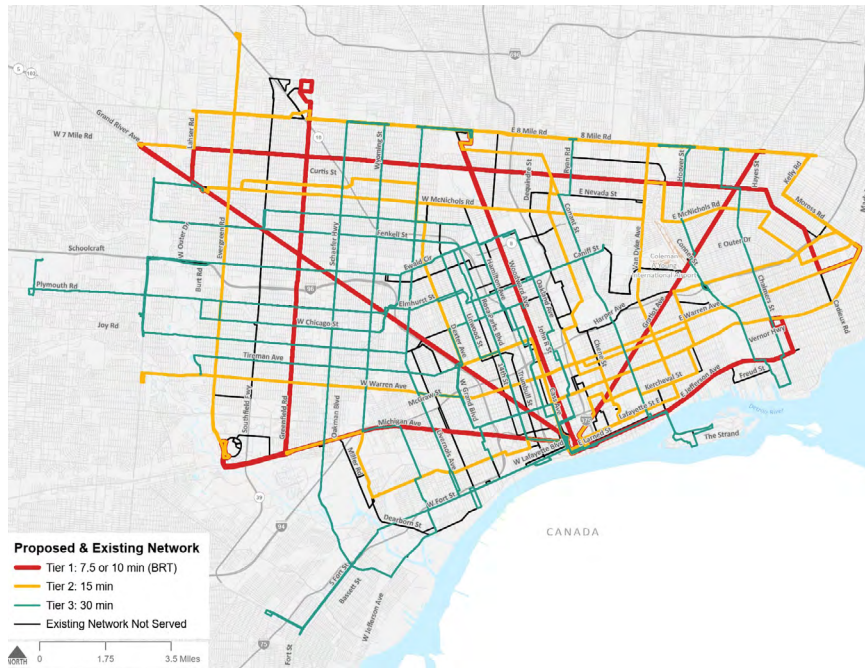


Figure 37. DDOT Reimagined Network Map

**DDOT Reimagined** is DDOT’s final draft plan for redesigning its bus network and identifying frequency, routing, capital, and operating improvements to better connect Detroiters to opportunities, pending City Council approval. The final draft plan was released in January 2024 and simplifies the alignments of neighborhood connector routes while also consolidating several pairs of routes in single routes which minimizes duplicative coverage. The Plan proposes a network of Enhanced Corridor, or Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lite routes with enhanced frequencies and other routes also improving their frequencies. The Plan also includes recommendations for improvements to operating procedures and technology, along with capital investments across the system.

SMART’s **SMARTer Mobility Program** is an effort to evaluate existing services in order to expand and integrate services, possibly create a user-friendly mobile app, and make SMART Flex a permanent service. SMART has collected feedback and is currently analyzing data from the public and stakeholders to create a preferred SMARTer bus network that is anticipated to be released in early 2025.

**DPM** will be kicking off two planning studies in 2025. This includes a post-pandemic planning study which will look at how the use of the system has changed compared to pre-pandemic ridership patterns. The second study is a more comprehensive system plan and downtown mobility study, which will study opportunities to expand the DPM system as well as review overall mobility options in downtown Detroit and how to better integrate DPM stations with the downtown multi-modal network.



Figure 38. SMARTer Mobility Program Existing Conditions Report Cover. Image Credit: SMART



## Corridor Studies

As noted, there have been various studies for all or some of the segments along many of the region's major corridors. Some of those studies were led by the RTA, others were orchestrated by SEMCOG, the Woodward Avenue Action Association, or others. While MDOT was often involved, they did not lead those studies up to and including locally preferred alternatives (LPA), prior to planning and environmental linkages (PEL) studies. As the "owner" of the roads, MDOT has recently prepared or begun more detailed comprehensive studies of sections on several of these corridors. These new plans describe options that consider the needs of motorists and trucks but focus on improving use and safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users. All of these new plans describe how transit reliability and infrastructure can be improved (transit signal priority, exclusive transit lanes, queue jumps, pedestrian crossings along the roadways, etc.).

### Michigan Ave. in Detroit

There was an overall Detroit to Ann Arbor rapid transit analysis led by the RTA in 2016. The RTA then prepared a MOD study in 2020 that focused on how TOD could be used to support transit along this corridor. A PEL study for Michigan Ave, from Campus Martius through Corktown to I-96, was completed in 2020 and has now moved into the design process.

### Washtenaw Ave – Ann Arbor to Ypsilanti

Washtenaw County led an involved ReImagine Corridor Plan for this key transit route. Implementation has been ongoing including new zoning standards, advancement of bus "super stops" and non-motorized improvements. A new PEL study was being finished at the end of 2024 for Washtenaw (M-17) along with a redesign of the Washtenaw interchange over U.S. 23 in Ann Arbor. RTA and staff from TheRide have been heavily involved in that process.

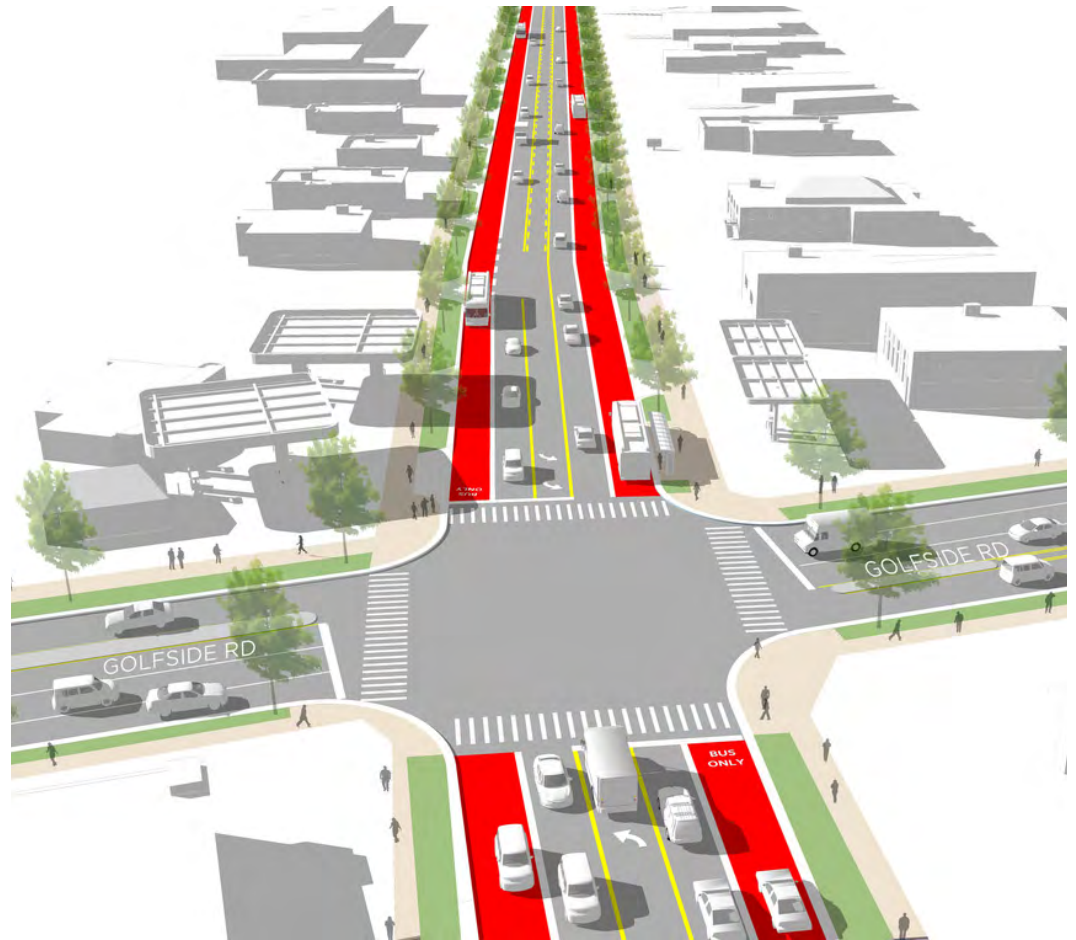


Figure 39. Washtenaw Ave PEL Acceptable Alternative. Photo Credit: MDOT

## Gratiot Ave

The RTA led a rapid transit study from Downtown Detroit to M-59 in Macomb County in 2016. This study outlined how BRT could be accommodated with some preliminary cross-sections, concepts for BRT stations, and TOD development. As a follow-up, MDOT prepared a PEL study for Gratiot Ave (M-3) in Detroit being finished at the end of 2024. That project includes preferred cross-sections that include exclusive transit lanes.

## Woodward Ave

There have been several past studies of Woodward by different agencies. SEMCOG led a study of this corridor with a focus on transit improvements, concluding that Bus Rapid Transit would be the best option. The RTA crafted an MOD study for Woodward in 2020. That study explained and illustrated how land use and mobility changes could improve the use of transit and other community goals along this corridor. MDOT has begun a new comprehensive study of Woodward Avenue from downtown Detroit to just outside the downtown Pontiac loop. RTA staff have been involved in this new process, highlighting the benefits of transit.

## Intercity Passenger Rail Services

Several intercity passenger rail projects are underway to enhance connections to Southeast Michigan. These projects aim to improve rail service to cities like Chicago and Grand Rapids, which already have existing passenger rail connections to the region, while also exploring additional connections to Toronto, Toledo, Holland, and Traverse City.

In December 2023, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) announced that four intercity passenger rail corridors in Michigan will receive grant funding to develop service plans through the Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) Program. These include the Wolverine Corridor, which operates between Chicago and Pontiac through Detroit, the Pere Marquette Corridor between Chicago and Grand Rapids, the Blue Water Corridor between Chicago and Port Huron, and the Cleveland-Toledo-Detroit Corridor, which is a potential new service that could include a stop at DTW.



Figure 40. Gratiot Avenue locally preferred alternative from the Gratiot Avenue PEL study.

Two additional potential passenger rail services are in the planning stages to connect the region with other destinations in Michigan and existing interstate routes. The “Coast-to-Coast” corridor would link Detroit to communities along Lake Michigan, ending in Holland and connecting with Amtrak’s Pere Marquette service in Grand Rapids. Efforts are also underway to study a north-south passenger rail service that would connect Southeast Michigan to Traverse City and Petoskey, potentially running along a segment of Amtrak’s Wolverine service, which runs between Chicago and Detroit/Pontiac.



Figure 41. An aerial rendering of DDOT’s under construction Coolidge Terminal project.

## Major Capital Projects

### DDOT’s Coolidge Terminal and Jason Hargrove Transit Center

DDOT recently undertook two large capital projects: the Coolidge Terminal Replacement Project and the Jason Hargrove Transit Center. The new Coolidge Terminal replaces a facility that was damaged and decommissioned after a fire in 2011. Construction began in November 2023 and is anticipated to be completed in December 2025. The facility will have the capacity to maintain and operate 144 buses and have the potential to be expanded in the future. Three new buildings are being constructed as part of this terminal complex, including bus storage and coach services; fleet maintenance with parts storeroom; and operations and administration. The new facility also replaces DDOT’s Gilbert Terminal and will become the new west-side base of operations for drivers and mechanics.

Construction on the Jason Hargrove Transit Center began in May 2023. The new transit center, which is located in the former Michigan State Fairgrounds at Eight Mile Road and Woodward Avenue, opened in May 2024. The Jason Hargrove Transit Center is named after a DDOT bus driver who died from COVID-19 in 2020. Jason Hargrove – a husband and a father of six children – was an advocate for driver safety and the transit center is a testament to his legacy. The Jason Hargrove Transit Center is part of a \$31 million redevelopment of a former Dairy Cattle Barn on the fairgrounds property. The center serves DDOT, SMART, rideshare customers, and MOGO users and is the nexus for five key bus routes: 4-Woodward, 12-Conant, 17-Eight Mile, 30-Livernois, and 54-Wyoming. The transit center includes modern amenities, restaurant and retail options, a ticket office, and restrooms. A dedicated lounge provides transit operators with space to rest between shifts.





Figure 42. TheRide's Ypsilanti Transit Center Rendering

### TheRide's Ypsilanti Transit Center Expansion

TheRide is planning an expansion to the Ypsilanti Transit Center to update the facility and accommodate planned service increases. The project aims to build a new, larger, and more modern transit center in downtown Ypsilanti. This project is supported by a \$7 million appropriation from the federal government as well as \$1 million in local funding. The updated transit center will increase the capacity for additional buses, passengers, and other transportation modes and will include more comfortable waiting areas, improved wayfinding and operations, customer service representatives, and improved passenger amenities.

A locally preferred site selection analysis was completed after extensive engagement with staff, stakeholders, and the public. Environmental review began in January 2024 and schematic design began in September 2024, with the goal of completing both environmental review and schematic design in Spring 2025. Design development and final design will continue from there, leading to construction beginning in 2026 with opening of the expanded transit center in 2027.

### TheRide's Blake Transit Center Expansion

TheRide will expand the Blake Transit Center (BTC) platform south of the current location. The expansion will add a small amount of additional capacity for buses and allow for at least one bus bay to accommodate a 60-foot articulated bus. The improvement will consolidate bus service closer to the transit center and minimize the number of buses that have to use 4th Avenue for boarding and alighting, where they service bus stops currently. The expansion location is currently a city parking lot owned by the Ann Arbor Housing Development Corporation (AAHDC), the nonprofit arm of the Ann Arbor Housing Commission (AAHC). The remainder of the site not used by BTC will be transformed into affordable multi-family housing units. Construction for this project is anticipated to be completed in 2027 or 2028. Additionally, the Downtown Development Authority is working on streetscape improvements along 4th Avenue where BTC is located with improved pedestrian facilities and a more people-friendly design.



Figure 43. TheRide's Blake Transit Center

## People's Express Maintenance Facility

MDOT was awarded \$10.5 million through FTA's 2023 Bus and Bus Facilities Program to build a new maintenance and operations facility for People's Express near Ann Arbor.

## Detroit Mobility and Innovation Corridor

Construction of the Detroit Mobility and Innovation Corridor in Detroit's Downtown and Corktown neighborhoods is expected to begin in 2025 and be completed in fall 2026. When completed, this project will add BRT-style bus stops, better cyclist and pedestrian access to bus stops, and dedicated transit and connected and autonomous vehicle (CAV) lanes to Michigan Avenue. Benefits of the project include improved transit travel time reliability and convenience, improved walkability and safer pedestrian crossings, bicycle facilities for all ages/abilities, and reduced vehicle speeds. This MDOT project was awarded \$25 million by USDOT in 2022 and the total estimated cost for the project is \$70 million RTA supported the project by developing the benefit-cost analysis required for the application.



Figure 44. The preliminary design of the Detroit Mobility and Innovation Corridor, which was awarded \$25 million by USDOT in 2022. Image Credit: City of Detroit

## Detroit People Mover 2024 Track Improvement Project

The Detroit People Mover 2024 Track Improvement Project replaced 7,000 feet of rail, 20 percent of the total system, as part of a \$5 million maintenance initiative funded through federal and state grants.<sup>27</sup> This upgrade includes the replacement of nine curve areas for the first time and the third rail replacement in the People Mover's 37-year history. These improvements extend the life of the system's infrastructure by an additional 15 to 30 years. Additional maintenance and upgrades include station, platform, and track work across other areas of the system.

The Detroit Transportation Corporation (DTC) Board in 2024 approved \$38.5 million in funding, which will cover five years with a \$6.5 million annual operating subsidy and \$6 million for the acquisition of sixteen railcars, along with a surplus of spare parts and automatic train control equipment, from the Toronto Transit Commission.<sup>28</sup> Twelve of the railcars underwent essential cosmetic overhauls, system conversions, and HVAC retesting to ensure full compatibility with DPM operations. The remaining four cars will be placed in long-term storage for future rehabilitation.

DTC also completed a large-scale closed-circuit television (CCTV) upgrade, increasing the number of security cameras at all 13 stations, along the guideway, and at the maintenance control facility. This brings the total number of security cameras up to 220 cameras systemwide. Additionally, all stations and trains are equipped with emergency phones, and all elevators and stairwells now feature voice monitoring systems.

# REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

**Regional Opportunities**

**5.0**

# REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

As early chapters demonstrate, there has been significant progress towards improving transit in Southeast Michigan through capital projects, programs, service expansions, and planning studies in recent years. These successes can also lead to new and additional opportunities which can be pursued by RTA and local transit providers as a way to further improve, expand, innovate, and sustain transit across the region. This chapter identifies some of these potential opportunities, which then feed into the ten priorities of the RTMP in the next chapter.



*Figure 45. Expanded fixed route service, including bus and rail service, continues to be a future priority for RTA and Southeast Michigan transit providers. Image Credit: TheRide.*

## Improve and Expand Transit and Mobility Services

RTA's regional vision includes new and expanded transit services across the region's communities, including further integration of micromobility services. The continued growth of pilot services and the expansion of transit services through recently passed transit referendums in Oakland and Washtenaw counties have shown that new services and expanded services can be successful, provided that funding is identified to launch and sustain these services. This presents additional opportunities for fixed route improvements, new regional express services, and expanded micromobility services.

### Expanded Fixed-Route Services

As we move past the pandemic, transit ridership has continued to rebound. However, both nationally and regionally, travel patterns and travel behavior have shifted. These shifts provide an opportunity to consider adapting existing transit services to meet both current and future needs.

New, sustainable transit funding in Oakland and Washtenaw counties has allowed for bus routes and express services to be added or expanded, as detailed in the previous chapter. Recently completed transit plans - such as the DDOT Reimagined plan, the SMARTer Mobility Plan, and TheRide 2045 plan - provide a framework for more efficient as well as expanded bus services.<sup>29</sup> The Detroit Transportation Corporation, which operates the People Mover, is currently studying a possible expansion of the system to serve more downtown destinations. Using these plans, RTA and transit providers can work together to identify funding for piloting the expansion of fixed route frequencies or service spans, or even the addition of new fixed-route services. By monitoring the successes of any current and future pilot services, these services could then be expanded upon once a more sustainable and long-term regional funding source is available. However, without additional funding in the short-term or long-term, opportunities to expand transit services will be limited to more incremental approaches.

## Regional Express Services

Regional express pilot projects like D2A2 and DAX have allowed RTA to test new services and technologies, with data-driven refinements to the services further improving their success. RTA now needs long-term funding to sustain these services. Additional one-time funding can also provide an opportunity to replicate these successes with new regional express pilot services.

RTA has identified multiple suburban communities that would be feasible candidates for an express bus service connection to downtown Detroit. Communities could include Pontiac, Sterling Heights, Mount Clemens, Novi, and Plymouth. Express transit service will allow an affordable and comparable alternative to driving by private automobile to the region's Central Business District for work or leisure. Improved transit service would encourage a mode shift towards transit that has the opportunity to reduce road congestion, reduce carbon emissions, and increase access for disadvantaged populations across the region. RTA applied for Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) grant funding from SEMCOG for fiscal years 2027-2029. If awarded, RTA will work with a private operator to launch a pilot express bus service from downtown Detroit to Pontiac, called D2P, in 2028 and downtown to Mount Clemens, called D2M, in 2029. SEMCOG will announce awarded projects in late-January 2025.

## Micromobility Services

Micromobility providers - such as MoGo bikeshare - serve as important regional mobility partners in improving connections to and from transit services via active transportation modes. Future expansion of micromobility can help to fill-in gaps in the transit network and provide greater emission-free mobility options.

MoGo's upcoming expansion will improve their service by replacing aging bikes within their fleet with electric assist bikes, a change that will benefit riders by providing a more comfortable experience and extending the reach of locations that can be accessed by bike. There is opportunity to further expand and integrate micromobility services into the regional transit network, including through the implementation of mobility hubs at key regional transit nodes and destinations.



*Figure 46. DAX is an example of a regional express service pilot that can continue to be improved upon and serve as a template for other similar express services in the future. Image Credit: WSP.*



*Figure 47. Micromobility service, like MoGo, continue to be popular and future expansion creates more opportunities to integrate these services with transit services. Image Credit: MoGo*

## Innovate and Modernize Infrastructure & Technologies

The need to modernize transit infrastructure and technology is a key issue facing transit operators, both nationally and regionally. RTA has several programs underway to prioritize infrastructure and technology improvements. These programs will work towards improved safety and accessibility of transit, the integration of new mobile technologies for trip planning and fare payment, and the modernization of transit facilities, equipment, and vehicles.

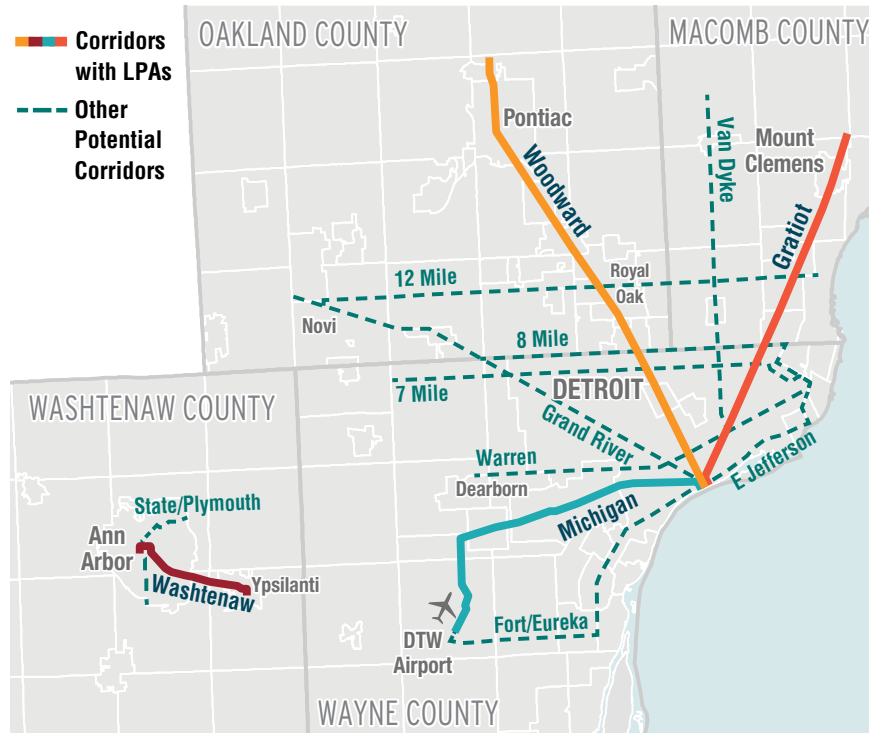


Figure 48. RTA and local transit providers remain committed to plans to improve rapid transit corridors across Southeast Michigan.

## Rapid Transit Corridors Framework

Rapid transit remains a priority for the region, however, decisions need to be made to prioritize corridors and identify funding to advance preliminary engineering and environmental review. As a first step towards this, RTA will be beginning a Corridors Framework project in 2025. This project will lay out a vision for the region’s rapid transit network and will articulate potential roadway infrastructure, technology, safety, and accessibility improvements along priority regional transit routes. Leveraging previous studies that RTA and partners have already conducted, the Framework will streamline previous planning studies into a regional network-view of priority transit corridors for the region. A goal of the Corridors Framework project is to help communities and leaders understand the planning work that has already occurred to develop enhanced transit service along key regional corridors including Gratiot, Michigan, Washtenaw, and Woodward Avenues. Various funding and implementation scenarios will be included in the Framework to help cities, towns, transit operators and other regional partners advance transformative transit corridor improvement projects.

Investing in transformative transit corridor improvement projects brings an opportunity to intentionally integrate land use decisions in development plans. As transit and other transportation infrastructure investments can bring increased interest in real estate development, communities can adopt new development standards that will encourage human-scaled, safe and walkable environments to emerge along high-capacity transit corridors.

**With this focus on TOD, communities can reinvigorate neighborhoods and improve quality of life and affordability by increasing the supply of housing and jobs that are located near safe, reliable, frequent transit service.**

RTA is taking on TOD planning projects in 2025 that will equip local jurisdictions with policy and construction tools that can be implemented to address outdated, automobile-oriented land use policy and construction tools that will further support redevelopment with a focus on improved access for pedestrians and is designed in a way that encourages the use of transit. Continuing to advance transit-oriented development will be key to providing a built environment that is supportive of transit use along these corridors.

### Access to Transit

Improved accessibility to transit services is a key short-term and long-term regional goal. RTA is actively working on the creation of an Access to Transit Program (ATP). ATP will provide a framework for RTA to partner with local municipalities and townships to improve the accessibility of transit services through a regular call for projects process. Potential capital projects that could be funded through ATP include bus stop shelters, bus stop boarding areas, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, and other similar improvements to expand first and last mile connections to transit.

The Access to Transit planning work underway includes interviews with peer agencies that have similar project programs and public engagement to understand local community needs and desires around transit access. The ATP planning process is expected to be completed in 2025.



Figure 49. The Reimagine Washtenaw Plan included recommendations for bus stop accessibility improvements. Image Credit: Reimagine Washtenaw Plan.



Figure 50. Local transit agencies, including TheRide, continue to improve bus stops to increase accessibility and add new amenities to enhance the rider experience. Image Credit: Reimagine Washtenaw Plan.

## Strategic Technology Plan / Trip Planning / Fare Payment Systems

New trip planning and fare payment technologies can help people more easily navigate the transit system and remove barriers to using transit. Continued partnership and collaboration between local transit providers and mobility partners is needed to advance these complex technology systems. Despite broad regional transit coverage within the metro area, unique transit fare payment systems serve as an additional barrier for riders to use multiple transit services and transfer between these services. Additionally, key transit corridors are under various municipal and state route jurisdictions with an incompatible mix of traffic signal technologies and transit vehicle communications. RTA has targeted advancing regional planning for the integration and expansion of key transit technologies for 2025 to improve transit operations, streamline the user experience for regional transit trips, and upgrade traffic equipment.

## Low- and No-Emissions Vehicles

Low- and no-emission vehicle propulsion technologies are key to improving the rider experience, enhancing public health, and fostering regional sustainability. Even with DDOT and TheRide both recently receiving critical discretionary grant funding for low- and no-emission buses, much more will be required to support SEMCOG's Southeast Michigan Healthy Climate Plan.

In response, the RTA is positioning itself to transition into the role of regional facilitator for zero-emission transitions by supporting the development of a regional zero-emission fleet and facilities plan. Additionally, the RTA will collect feedback and reports from each provider to inform larger regional changes.

DDOT and SMART will continue developing agency-wide zero-emission bus fleet and facility plans, collaborating with regional stakeholders and aligning with community providers where applicable. To ensure effective investment, research will focus on which propulsion technologies perform best in the region's four-season climate.<sup>30</sup>

Other regional providers will continue to set clear strategies for growth and improvement, focusing on the development of infrastructure and facility plans that can support the transition. These strategies reinforce how future fleets can be sustainable and capable of meeting the regional transportation needs.



Figure 51. Reducing emissions remains a regional priority, with both DDOT and SMART receiving federal funding in 2024 to expand their fleets with low- and no-emissions vehicles. Image Credit: DDOT.



## Facility Projects and State of Good Repair

New and improved transit centers and maintenance and operations facilities provide opportunities to expand services and to create safer, healthier, and more comfortable environments for passengers and transit staff. Regional coordination on funding these critical facility projects will support a thriving workforce and better customer experience.

**The Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT) is looking to invest in transformative projects that upgrade transit centers to attract new riders and support workforce development through improved connectivity, modernized facilities, and enhanced transit experiences.**

DDOT is hoping to redesign three major transit hubs next to serve as vibrant community spaces and critical connection points.

1. Mack Avenue and Moross Road Transit Center: Located near St. John's Hospital in Cornerstone Village, this hub will serve as a connecting point for Detroit's eastern neighborhoods.
2. Grand River Avenue at Old Redford Meijer: Positioned to act as the northwestern transit center, enhancing mobility options in this area.
3. Fairlane Town Center in Dearborn: Designed as the western transit hub for DDOT, improving accessibility to surrounding neighborhoods.

These facilities are being updated to serve dual functions as transit connection hubs and as community spaces. DDOT and the City of Detroit will collaborate with municipalities and/or private property owners to develop the new transit centers and ensure the long-term presence of DDOT and SMART services at these prospective transit hubs.

Additionally, The Blake Transit Center (BTC), operated by TheRide, is intended to undergo expansion and redesign by FY2028. The project aligns with plans to nearly double service hours by 2045. TheRide is also exploring a new bus garage, a satellite facility to house and maintain an expanded fleet, with an operational goal by FY2031. Both projects are aimed to support zero-emission initiatives.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, SMART conducted a Mobility Survey to identify gaps in service and opportunities to better connect residents to job hubs. The resulting plan, set for release in 2025, will help align transit improvements with workforce development priorities.<sup>32</sup>



*Figure 52. Facility projects, including the Blake Transit Center expansion, continue to be both a priority and an ongoing opportunity to help improve the transit experience for the region's transit riders. Image Credit: WSP.*

## Grow and Sustain Partnerships and Coordination

As a regional authority, the success of RTA's programs, policies, and projects is heavily dependent on regular coordination and cooperation with the regional partners and stakeholders. There are many shared issues and challenges facing local transit providers - such as workforce recruitment and retention - which provides opportunity for shared learning and shared resources to address these challenges. Additionally, RTA must closely coordinate with non-transit partners - including MDOT and municipal and township transportation departments - who have jurisdiction over the roadways where transit services operate. Further strengthened partnerships and on-going coordination can create new opportunities for regional transit improvements.



*Figure 53. Workforce retention and hiring remains a priority and there are continued opportunities for collaboration between transit providers to help ease ongoing transit staff shortages. Image Credit: TheRide.*

### Workforce Retention and Recruitment

Workforce recruitment and retention of transit employees remains an issue, both nationally and locally. Continued collaboration is needed among the various transit providers to recruit and retain employees by working with organizations to market the benefits of transit jobs and provide the necessary training for employees to be successful in their role. By working collaboratively, transit agencies could benefit from collective lessons learned, identify new ways to amplify hiring communications for all transit providers, and streamline and simplify the hiring process.

### Interagency Coordination and Collaboration

Since MDOT and local road agencies have jurisdiction over the design and operations of the road network that transit operates on, continued coordination and ongoing collaboration with these agencies will be key to advancing RTA's key regional transit capital projects, such as rapid transit, bus stop enhancements, mobility hubs, bus on shoulder, high-occupancy vehicle and dedicated transit lanes.

With increased collaboration and coordination between transit providers and road agencies, new opportunities can be identified to integrate transit improvements into ongoing and planned capital projects along key transit corridors. Additionally, early involvement of road agencies in transit corridor planning processes can also help to ensure alignment and minimize unexpected surprises as future corridor projects advance through planning, design, and construction. Recent corridor and PEL studies are positive examples of how interagency coordination can positively impact future transit projects.

## Advancing Short-term and Long-term Funding

To achieve its vision for transit in Southeast Michigan, RTA must pursue new projects and programs through both short-term and long-term funding opportunities. However, the process to implement major transit improvements using a long-term, sustainable regional funding source is complex and often involves factors that are outside of RTA’s direct control.

While working towards a long-term regional funding source, RTA also continues to pursue short-term (or one-time) funding opportunities to advance key transit priorities. Through this focus on short-term projects, planning studies, and pilot programs, RTA is able to showcase new services to riders, regional stakeholders, and elected officials. Successfully building and transitioning these short-term projects into sustainable services helps to make a case to the public and regional stakeholders for additional long-term funding to further advance transit in Southeast Michigan.

### Short-term funding opportunities

Federal discretionary grants are a critical piece of the overall strategy to advance RTA’s goals for improved regional transit. Recently RTA was awarded a U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Thriving Communities technical assistance and capacity-building grant. Additional grant funding will be needed to advance efforts to pilot new services, plan for service expansions, and build out the infrastructure that will support more rapid and reliable transit. RTA has submitted applications to major state and national grant programs in Federal Fiscal Year 2025 including the Michigan Infrastructure Office (MIO) technical assistance for RAISE and the Reconnecting Communities Pilot, with both applications seeking significant investment in transit infrastructure that would help establish dedicated lanes on key transit corridors, upgrade transit stops, address pedestrian safety and ADA accessibility, and improve transit operations with signal priority.

## RECONNECTING COMMUNITIES PILOT PROGRAM

## UNIFICATION OF NEIGHBORHOOD INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSIT FOR EQUITY (UNITE)

### Woodward Corridor

SEPTEMBER 30, 2024

LED BY:



CO-APPLICANT:

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

&

SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Figure 54. RTA continues to pursue local, state, and federal funding opportunities for planning and capital projects, including recent applications to the federal Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods grant program. Image Credit: RTA.

In addition to major USDOT grant programs described above, RTA is also seeking grant funding within the region. The USDOT's Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program and US Environmental Protection Agency's Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) both offer formula funding to metro areas with the goal of reducing emissions. Applications are reviewed by a local evaluation team and scored on their impact in reducing emissions. RTA's submitted projects in FY 2025 include Access to Transit for improved pedestrian and ADA infrastructure and additional non-stop express bus route pilots as well as extensions of the MoGo bikeshare program and new micro transit flex zones for hospital workers.

Seeking discretionary grants will continue to be a critical strategy for advancing RTA's goals in the coming years.

**RTA will continue to prioritize transit access and reliability improvements, but as the funding landscape changes with a new administration in 2025 and a surface transportation bill reauthorization in 2026, federal policy priorities could shift, making transit projects' competition tougher.**

RTA will monitor for policy changes and will work with elected officials to keep transit investments at the forefront.

## Long-term Funding Opportunities

In recent years, there have been new transit funds targeted to specific areas. Residents in Oakland County passed a transit milage in November 2022 that allowed the county to form a new county-wide transit department and expand transit services. And new funding in Washtenaw County has provided an opportunity for TheRide to improve and expand services within the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti service area. The passage of transit referendums in these communities can serve as an example for the types of improvements that could be implemented in other Southeast Michigan counties, including Macomb County as well as Wayne County, for example if House Bill 6088 is passed to remove opt-out for communities, should they pursue a similar boost in transit funding.<sup>33</sup>

Additionally, planning work and studies – such as recent corridor studies and RTA's upcoming Corridor Framework project - can be used as a tool to educate and inform Southeast Michigan residents and stakeholders about the benefits of investing in transit infrastructure and services. These types of plans and communication tools can help to advance the discussion around a long-term regional transit funding source.

# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

**Public Engagement**

**6.0**

# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

In 2024, RTA engagement efforts focused on hearing from residents and transit riders about the RTA's new initiative Mobility 4 All (M4A), also known as the region's Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP). The purpose of M4A is to find transit solutions for people in Oakland, Macomb, Wayne, and Washtenaw counties with a particular focus on assisting those with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with limited incomes. RTA engaged with the public at popular community events and through an online survey. Surveys were distributed at public events, shared with transit providers, and made available on RTA's website. Public feedback will help shape the development of RTA's priorities.

## Community Events and Rider Outreach

The aim of M4A community engagement is to ensure that these stakeholders have opportunities to share their mobility-related experiences and to help formulate solutions that address their needs. In total, there will be two rounds of community engagement to support the development of the 2024 CHSTP. Round 1 engagement began in August 2024 and was completed in late-November 2024. The primary outreach tool for Round 1 engagement was a community questionnaire that asked both transit service users and non-users to describe their transportation/transit experiences and aspirations.



### Detroit

- September 13 – Strides for Seniors
- September 20 – Strides for Seniors
- September 27 – Strides for Seniors
- November 6 – Community Resource Fair



### Macomb

- September 19 – Senior Fun Fest
- October 27 – Mount Clemens Farmer's Market



### Oakland County

- September 27 – Strides for Seniors
- October 1 – Total Wellness Fair
- October 5 – Family Caregiver Connections: Learn, Lunch, Link
- November 12 – Golden Opportunity Club Meeting



### Washtenaw County

- October 5 – Senior Living Week Expo
- October 22 – Transition Services Workshops



### Wayne County

- September 13 – Strides for Seniors
- September 20 – Strides for Seniors
- September 27 – Strides for Seniors
- October 24 – Downriver Transition Council Disability Expo

Figure 55. Public Engagement events in 2024.



*Figure 56. RTA continues to hold public engagement events throughout the region to get public and stakeholder input on future transit needs and plans.  
Image Credit: M4A.*

Round 2 engagement is expected to begin in early spring 2025, once a draft of the CHSTP is available. At that time the RTA will call upon stakeholders – including seniors, people with disabilities, people with limited income, and human service organizations – and the broader community for public input to review and comment on the document before it is finalized later that year.

The primary outreach tool for Round 1 engagement is a community questionnaire that asks both transit service users and non-users to describe their transportation/transit experiences and aspirations.

### Online Survey

The goal of the RTA's Mobility 4 All rider questionnaire was to find out how well the Southeast Michigan transit system is serving residents - especially older adults and those with disabilities, with a particular focus on older and disabled adults with lower incomes - and to gauge whether the network's effectiveness varies for different groups.

In September 2024, the Mobility 4 All questionnaire went live on the RTA website. The survey was shared on the RTA's social media, was shared with transit providers to distribute through their channels to customers and was distributed via RTA's newsletter. Paper surveys and M4A postcards with a QR code to direct people to the surveys were distributed at 13 different events. These events primarily targeted older and disabled residents. Through the 60-day duration when the questionnaire was live, the team received 522 responses.

See Appendix . for details on specific locations and events where the public was engaged for this effort.

## Engagement Key Findings

The data collected to date indicates that stakeholders want and need more transit flexibility and options. This mirrors what RTA learned from public engagement efforts in 2020, the last time the CHSTP – previously branded as OnHand - was updated. Concerning flexibility, questionnaire respondents and those who were engaged in person at events desire more service availability on weekends and evening hours. Stakeholders also desire access to more locations and to have more - and better - regional connections. The only major difference between current and 2020 findings was an increase in technology. A more thorough evaluation of lessons learned will emerge as RTA continues to parse the engagement data, as well as other relevant data assembled by the project team.

Through events serving area seniors and the disabled in Detroit, Downriver, Macomb County, and elsewhere, residents were also willing to share their transit woes. Especially among seniors - including those who still can drive themselves - there is a recognition that a time may come in their future when public transit options will become more crucial to their well-being and for their ability to have access to services and important destinations. Many said they were either unaware of what service options were available or how to access those services. At many events we attended, representatives from MyRide2 were also present, allowing many attendees the opportunity to connect with their services. Among those who currently use the transit services, there is still concern about their inability to make cross-country or regional connections to key destinations and services, especially for visits to key medical centers across the region.

The preliminary findings of the questionnaire are summarized on the next page.

### RTA Michigan: Public Engagement and Questionnaire

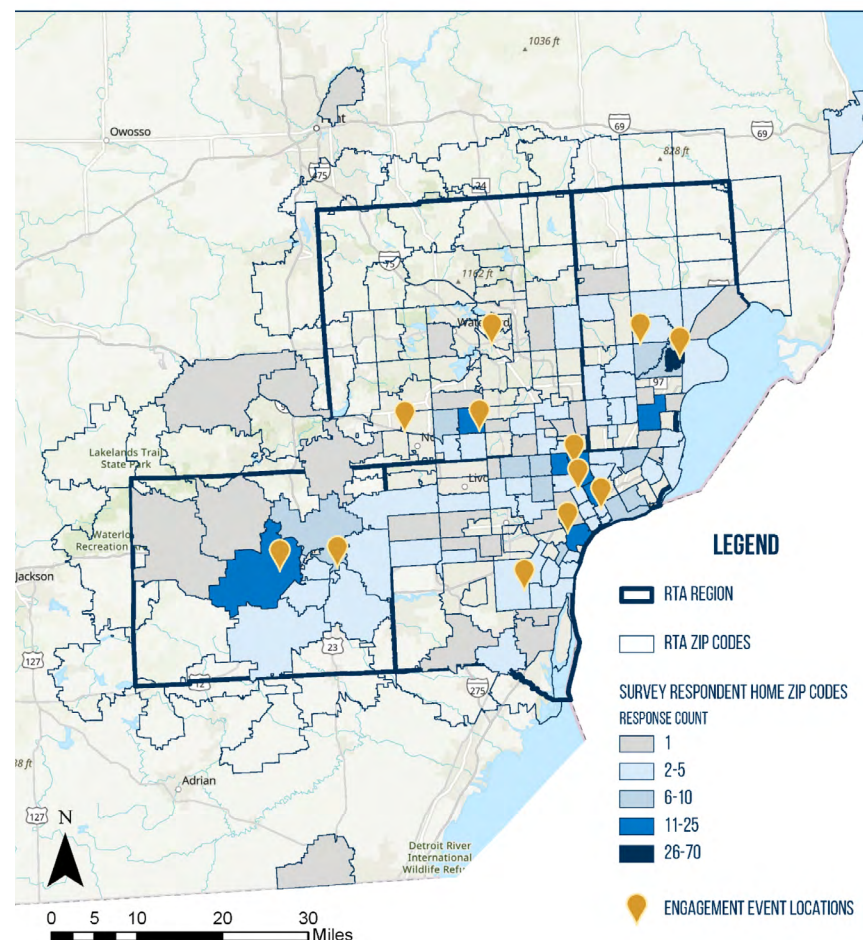


Figure 57. RTA Michigan: Public Engagement and Questionnaire Map.  
Image Credit: Mobility 4 All.





### How respondents travel in southeast Michigan

The survey reveals a growing demand for a variety of transportation options that support independence and sustainability. While 60.6% of residents still drive themselves, more people are exploring alternatives that can connect them to their communities in meaningful ways. Public transit services—like TheRide, SMART, DDOT, the Detroit People Mover, and QLINE—are used by 30.3% of respondents. Meanwhile, nearly a third (29.6%) of respondents are choosing to walk, bike, or use personal mobility devices, reflecting a growing commitment to active, eco-friendly travel. Others rely on private services like Uber, Lyft, or specialized services such as the SMART Connector and ADA paratransit, while some turn to family and friends for essential rides.



### Which destinations cause the most difficulty

Of the 459 respondents who shared their experiences, a significant portion highlighted that certain key destinations remain hard to reach. For nearly a third (29.8%), medical appointments pose the greatest travel challenge, followed closely by shopping or running personal errands (25.9%). Visiting family and friends (22.2%) and getting to physical therapy or exercise classes (18.3%) is also a challenge for many. These responses underscore a need for transit options that are convenient, reliable, and accessible for all. Encouragingly, 44.4% of respondents reported no travel difficulties—likely because they benefit from the independence that access to a personal automobile affords. Increased transit options can also offer a similar sense of freedom to more people.



### What makes traveling difficult

Among the 428 people who shared their challenges, the barriers are clear and present opportunities for change. For 35%, the cost of transit is a major obstacle. Another 28.7% expressed frustration with simply understanding what services are available. Evenings and weekends are underserved, with 25.5% unable to find rides during these times, and 23.4% finding scheduling trips in advance a difficult but necessary burden. With some struggling to navigate where to wait, how to transfer, and when their ride will arrive, it's clear that more accessible, efficient transit solutions could make a transformative difference.

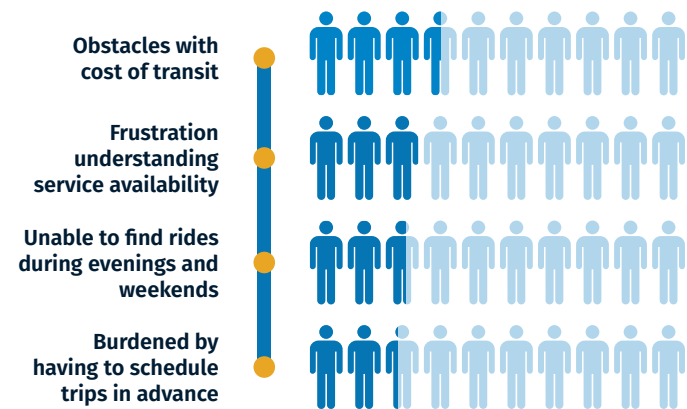


Figure 58. Representation of travel difficulties expressed by survey participants.



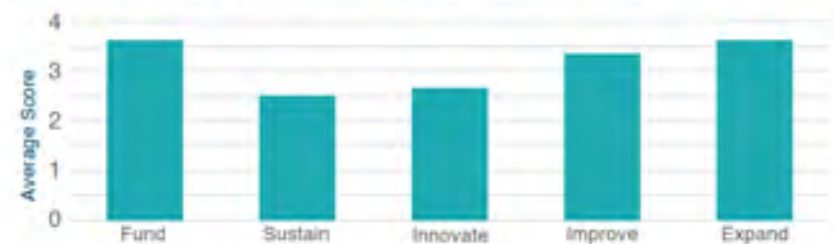
### Technology use

71.5% of respondents shared they use a computer or mobile device to make purchases or access services, a sharp increase from the 2020 OnHand survey.

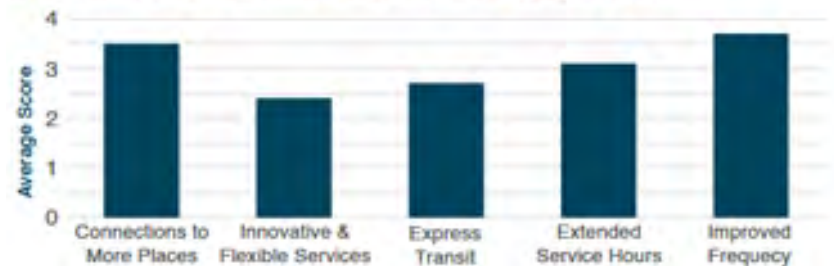
See appendix . for the survey questions.

KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

Average Respondent Priority Goals, Ranked 1 (Low) to 5 (High)



Average Respondent Service Priorities, Ranked 1 (Low) to 5 (High)



Average Respondent Priorities for Improving Access, Ranked 1 (Low) to 5 (High)



Figure 59. Key survey findings from the Mobility 4 All public outreach.

Survey Respondent Comments

The survey responses received included the following comments:

- “ I represent a group home, and many clients have issues with transportation.”
- “ ADA connector has been late or never arrived. I have been left at dialysis due to no bus arriving and trips being canceled.”
- “ I drive myself but would love to take the fixed route bus if there was better frequency and more routes.”
- “ We need seamless transit throughout SE Michigan. One card, one payment. Much greater connectivity and attractive transit centers, preferably multimodal!”
- “ I am the only driver for my 19-year-old son, mom, and aunt. I take them to all their appointments. I do not know how to get transportation for them.”
- “ I am on SSI and I walk with a cane. I need reliable transportation, especially for morning appointments. I cannot afford to use Uber or a cab.”

## Transit Agency Feedback

RTA engaged with the region's public transit agencies and MoGo to ensure the RTMP is aligned with their goals and initiatives. Public awareness of services was a key theme among all agencies, indicating the importance of marketing services and educational outreach. Providers indicated that securing long-term funding was a top priority for the region and that the stability provided by long-term funding would help them achieve RTA's goals. Additionally, providers expressed a desire to continue strengthening partnerships, whether it be with local municipalities or other mobility services, to enhance their existing services and the connections between them. DDOT and SMART hope to see a focus on continued workforce development strategies through a regional effort.



Figure 60. TheRide 2045 conducting outreach at local mall. Image Credit: TheRide

## Agency Conducted Public Engagement

DDOT, SEMCOG, and TheRide each conducted public engagement in 2023, and RTA reviewed key findings to understand what partner agencies are hearing. SMART is in the process of gathering public feedback and is committed to sharing responses with RTA for future consideration. Common themes included:

- A strong desire for BRT and light rail transit (LRT) along major corridors.
- Increasing the frequency and reliability of existing routes.
- Providing more amenities and information at bus stops.
- Operating more frequent and affordable services to the airport.
- More service on weekends and at night.
- Adding integrated first- and last-mile services.
- Improving accessibility to public transit.
- Addressing safety and cleanliness concerns on vehicles and at stops.

## If you are reading this, it's not too late!

If you have not yet engaged with RTA or have additional thoughts to share on regional transit, it is not too late to make your voice heard. RTA continually welcomes the public to reach out through email, social media, or participation in RTA's public meetings. Contact information can be found on the last page of this document and on RTA's website.

# REGIONAL PRIORITIES

## Regional Transit Priorities

**7.0**

# REGIONAL TRANSIT PRIORITIES

## Funding Regional Priorities

Central to delivering RTA’s mission and achieving its vision and goals is maintaining and increasing funding for public transit in Southeast Michigan. Fund Transformative Mobility is an overarching goal that will allow RTA and its partners to invest in the 10 regional transit priorities discussed in this chapter. RTA works to increase transit funding through grant opportunities and by building regional partnerships.

In Southeast Michigan, public transit is currently funded through multiple federal, state, and local sources. The federal government provides formula funding on an annual basis to the region that can be used to support capital projects. There are also annual opportunities to apply for discretionary grants for specific projects. MDOT provides the match funding required to use federal grants and also provides a portion of agencies’ operating funds through the Local Bus Operating (LBO) Assistance Program. This program can legally provide up to 50 percent of an urban agency’s operating expenses, but given funding levels, is typically closer to 30 percent. The state also provides \$5 million annually for QLINE’s operations through the Convention Center Development Fund, which is funded through taxes on liquor and hotel accommodations. Local funding is provided through property taxes and municipal general funds.

RTA has three strategies toward its goal to Fund Transformative Mobility in Southeast Michigan that are organized around current funding, one-time funding, and new long-term funding (see Figure 61). Actions that RTA and regional partners can complete are grouped by these funding categories to highlight what can be accomplished with different levels of funding. RTA annually develops a legislative agenda that seeks to ensure funding levels are at a minimum maintained while addressing the need for one-time and long-term funding.



**Fund Transformative Mobility**  
Position Southeast Michigan for economic success by increasing funding and aligning regional policy advocacy.




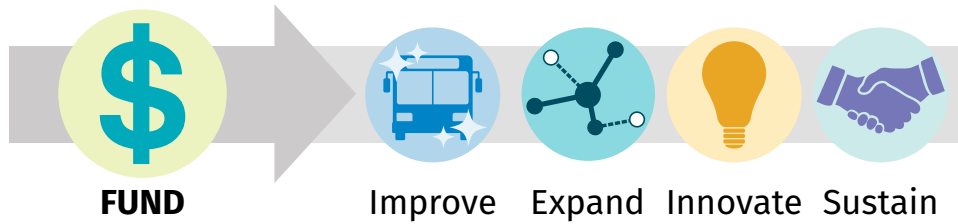
Funding Categories	Strategies	Opportunities
 No New Funding	Execute a multi-year budget and business plan to align with advocacy for advancing regional policies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilize existing federal, state, and local funding sources.</li> </ul>
 One-Time Funding	Collaborate on regional grant applications and support provider funding initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal, state, and SEMCO discretionary grant programs.</li> <li>Federal earmarks.</li> <li>Nonprofit partnerships.</li> <li>Corporate sponsorships.</li> <li>Public-private partnerships.</li> </ul>
 Sustainable Funding	Elevate per capita transit spending for greater services in Southeast Michigan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property tax millage.</li> <li>Vehicle registration tax.</li> <li>Additional opportunities to be determined, such as increasing Local Bus Operating Program Assistance and advancing RTA’s legislative agenda with state support.</li> </ul>

Figure 61. Funding Categories for Transformative Mobility



## REGIONAL TRANSIT PRIORITIES

<p><b>Move People</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase Frequency, Reliability, and Hours on Fixed-Route Services</li> <li>▪ Build On and Coordinate Demand-Response Services</li> <li>▪ Grow Mobility Access to Local Communities and Regional Destinations</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strengthen Access</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Invest in and Implement a Rapid Transit Network</li> <li>▪ Advance Accessibility, Comfort, and Well-Being at Transit Stops</li> <li>▪ Upgrade Multimodal Connections To and Between Services</li> <li>▪ Regionalize Trip Planning and Fare Payment Systems</li> </ul>
<p><b>Enhance Experience</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Enhance Ride Quality and Promote On-Board Safety</li> <li>▪ Modernize and Maintain Infrastructure in a State of Good Repair</li> <li>▪ Recruit, Develop, and Retain a Thriving Workforce</li> </ul>

Figure 62. Regional Transit Priorities

## Regional Transit Priorities

In the previous RTMP update, RTA reviewed the strategies and actions in previous versions and consolidated them into 10 regional transit priorities for investment based on public input, transit industry trends, recent accomplishments, and ongoing projects in Southeast Michigan. RTA’s goals guided the development of these regional transit priorities. Each priority supports aspects of RTA’s overarching regional goals and serves as a crucial step toward achieving them.

This update of the RTMP includes a categorization of those top ten priorities into three focus areas: Move People, Strengthen Access, and Enhance Experience. Additionally, this update revises some of the previously identified Implementation Activities, while also adding additional supporting actions that outline a clear path for each identified Activity. RTA’s goals are to fund transformative mobility, improve existing services, expand transit coverage, innovate resilient projects, and sustain future programs (see Figure 60). These goals guided the development of the regional transit priorities. Each priority supports aspects of RTA’s goals and serves as a crucial step toward achieving them.

RTA sets out to lead, guide, and support the accomplishment of these 10 regional priorities through activities that plan, fund, coordinate, and accelerate them in the region. Figure 61 outlines RTA’s regional transit priorities, and this chapter provides more information on each priority, including actions RTA and its partners can carry out with no new funding, with one-time funding, and with a new, long-term regional funding source.

# MOVE PEOPLE

## Increase Frequency, Reliability, and Hours on Fixed-Route Services

Develop a core network of transit routes with frequencies of at least every 15 to 30 minutes for 18 hours every day of the week and increase the number of 24-hour bus and rail routes. Implement improvements that increase reliability and on-time performance, such as dedicated lanes, traffic queue jumps, streamlined boarding, and transit signal priority (TSP).

### Why it Matters

Frequent service that is available throughout the day provides reliable transit for those who work a nine-to-five schedule and those who do not. Since 46.8 percent of transit trips in Southeast Michigan are not work-related, providing all-day access to groceries, health services, education, and other places is critical to ensuring riders can rely on transit to get to all of their destinations. High-frequency all-day services enable people to ride with confidence that they will arrive on time and always make the last bus back home. Improving frequency and reliability has been shown to increase transit ridership.<sup>34</sup>

### Public Feedback

Improved frequency and hours of service are consistently among the highest priorities in engagement RTA has conducted. In the 2023 survey, respondents ranked increasing frequency as their top priority.



Figure 63. The dedicated transit lane on Woodward Avenue allows QLINE, DDOT, and SMART to avoid congestion near Little Caesar's Arena. Image Credit: M-1 RAIL

## Recent Progress and Accomplishments

- DDOT, SMART, and TheRide have all identified service improvements to routes through planning studies: DDOT Reimagined, SMARTer Mobility Program, TheRide 2045.
- In 2021, QLINE deployed the region's first dedicated transit lane on a 0.3-mile segment of its route and TSP at 26 intersections along Woodward Avenue.
- DDOT increased frequency on Route 9 (Jefferson) to every 10 minutes on weekdays and every 15 minutes on weekends in January 2024.
- TheRide implemented the Washtenaw Express bus service in May 2024.
- SMART added new routes: Route 492 (Rochester Road) and Route 759 (Highland Road) to its fixed route network in April 2024.
- SMART extended Route 790 to serve new areas in Auburn Hills and Rochester Hills in June 2024.
- The QLINE and Detroit People Mover have seen high growth in ridership in 2024, demonstrating desire for fast and frequent transit. Most other transit agencies in the region have also seen increased ridership from pandemic lows in recent years.

## Implementation Activities With No New Funding

- Review bottlenecks on key transit corridors that are impacting speed and reliability of fixed-route services.
- Implement targeted pilot projects that increase reliability of service on bus and rail corridors in congested areas (e.g., temporary dedicated lanes, non-stop express routes).

## With One-Time Funding

- Pilot frequency and service hours improvements on priority routes identified in agency plans.
- Improve speed and reliability of key transit corridors through targeted capital projects in congested areas.

## With Sustainable Funding

- Improve frequency and service hours on priority bus and rail corridors to make transit more a more attractive and convenient transportation option.



### Supported Goals

Increasing frequency, reliability, and service hours are the cornerstones of improving existing services for current riders and attracting future riders. Partnership with transit agencies will be critical to piloting and implementing service improvements.



# MOVE PEOPLE

## Build On and Coordinate Demand-Response Services

Improve mobility for people who rely on demand-response transit services by offering same-day services, increasing hours of operation, expanding eligibility to more people, and streamlining transfers between services.

### Why it Matters

Fixed-route bus and rail services are not efficient in all parts of the region, particularly in lower-density suburban communities and rural areas. There are over 80 government and nonprofit agencies providing demand-response transit service in Southeast Michigan, each with its own hours and days of operation, service areas, eligibility criteria, trip scheduling processes, and costs. This can make it challenging for people to understand what options are available and how to use them. In some areas, there may not be services available if a rider does not fit the eligibility criteria.

Additionally, Michigan's population is aging, with 2.7 million seniors projected to live in the state by 2030.<sup>35</sup> Many demand-response services in the region provide rides to this growing population and will need to expand capacity to meet demand.

### Public Feedback

At RTA engagement events, some attendees indicated they were unaware of existing services in their area, and if they were eligible. Booking trips that cross service areas have been identified as a common pain point for both riders and agency staff.



Figure 64. People's Express provides transit service in Oakland and Washtenaw Counties. Image Credit: People's Express

## Recent Progress and Accomplishments

- With new funding, NOTA, OPC, and WOTA have standardized their fares. NOTA, People's Express (PEX), and WOTA increased their service areas, and NOTA increased its hours of operation.
- In 2025, DDOT will offer same-day paratransit rides with funding provided by RTA.
- In 2024, RTA began an update to the regional Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP), rebranded as Mobility4All.
- In 2024, RTA applied for SEMCOG Carbon Reduction Program grant funding to pilot paratransit service near regional suburban hospitals with less public transit service options.
- The region anticipates an increase in paratransit demand as the population ages and has already seen ridership growth in 2024.
- NOTA piloted new service to Independence Township, Village of Clarkston, and Springfield township in March 2024. Service was permanently implemented in September 2024.
- PEX expanded its service to cover Novi and provide trips between communities where it previously only provided in-community travel.
- WOTA expanded service to cover Groveland, Holly, and Rose Townships, the Village of Holly, Keego Harbor, Lake Angelus, Orchard Lake, and Sylvan Lake.
- Ridership across all four Oakland County demand-response transit providers increased 133 percent between January 2023 and June 2024.



### Supported Goals

This priority focuses on expanding and improving demand-response services across the region, requiring strong partnerships between providers to coordinate and promote services, and implementing technologies that make it easier to book and operate services.

## Implementation Activities With No New Funding

- Promote existing services in the region through an educational campaign.
- Create a paratransit and demand response task force to identify opportunities to improve rider experience and operational efficiency across the region.
- Update the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP), branded as the Mobility 4 All Plan.

## With One-Time Funding

- Implement and execute a Rides to Wellness program to fund additional access to medical, health, and wellness services.

## With Sustainable Funding

- Implement demand-response operational changes and rider experience improvements.
- Sustain a Rides to Wellness program.

# MOVE PEOPLE

## Grow Mobility Access to Local Communities & Regional Destinations

Ensure transit service that is tailored to local needs is available in every community in Southeast Michigan. This can include demand-response and microtransit services in lower-density areas, new or extended fixed-route services in higher-density areas, and express services that serve major regional destinations and provide access to other regions.

### Why it Matters

Public transit is an essential service for those who depend on it, including the 12.5 percent of households in the region that are transit-dependent.<sup>36</sup> Nationally, people can save over \$13,000 a year by riding transit instead of owning a car, a huge sum for many of the region's residents that can be invested back into local communities.<sup>37</sup>

With new millage funding in Oakland County, network gaps have been filled in many areas that previously lacked transit service. However, some communities in Washtenaw County and western Wayne County lack transit service and connections to major destinations. As an example, according to an analysis using Remix, a seven-mile-long route extension in Livonia would connect people to over 16,000 additional jobs, as well as a hospital, college, and nursing home.

### Public Feedback

On average, respondents to the survey said expanding service to new areas was their highest priority. People are especially interested in new airport services and increasing the Michigan Flyer service hours. Some respondents also desire connections to Livingston County, outside of the RTA region.



Figure 65. Riders waiting for D2A2 service. Image Credit: WSP

## Recent Progress and Accomplishments

- RTA's Detroit to Airport Xpress (DAX) was launched in March 2024. From launch date to September 2024, DAX has provided over 36,000 rides.
- New funding in Oakland County has allowed SMART, NOTA, People's Express, and WOTA to expand their services to more areas.
- The D2A2 pilot added additional trips at midnight and a mid-evening trip on weekends in the summer of 2023.
- D2A2 ridership continued to grow in 2023 and 2024, with year-to-date 2024 ridership up 50 percent compared to 2023 ridership.
- RTA is pursuing funding for a pilot program to create two new non-stop bus service routes from Pontiac and Mount Clemens to downtown Detroit.
- In December 2023, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) announced that four intercity passenger rail corridors will receive grant funding to develop service plans through the Corridor ID Program. These include the Wolverine Corridor, the Pere Marquette Corridor, the Blue Water Corridor, and the Cleveland-Toledo-Detroit Corridor.

## Implementation Activities With No New Funding

- Evaluate the operational effectiveness of existing regional express transit routes.
- Partner with intercity bus and rail service providers to foster connections to other regions.

## With One-Time Funding

- Pilot additional regional express routes and airport express services, including airport connections to Macomb and Oakland counties.
- Evaluate the operational effectiveness of existing microtransit services and identify best practices for integration with bus and rail services.

## With Sustainable Funding

- Sustain D2A2 and DAX as permanent services.
- Expand regional express services in communities across the region, in particular in areas of Washtenaw and Wayne counties that are not currently served.
- Expand microtransit services to facilitate access to transit stops.



### Supported Goals

Regional partnerships and innovative service pilots will be required to expand services to parts of the region that lack transit service, or that warrant higher levels of service.

# STRENGTHEN ACCESS

## Invest In and Implement a Rapid Transit Network

Plan, design, fund, and operationalize rapid transit services along regionally significant corridors that support TOD, and work with local communities to develop MOD plans that encourage equitable economic growth.

### Why it Matters

Rapid transit networks, such as subways, light rail, and BRT, improve access to jobs, essential services, and other opportunities. BRT routes provide communities with the benefits of rail, such as frequency and speed, while costing less to implement and offering greater flexibility for adjustment to travel and development patterns. BRT provides frequent, all-day bus service, using dedicated lanes, stations with level boarding platforms, prepaid fares, and real-time arrival information, all of which make the rider experience more comfortable and convenient. Increasing the speed of travel is critical for people who are transit-dependent. In Metropolitan Detroit, 2.3 million jobs are accessible in a one-hour car trip, compared to 64,000 in a one-hour transit ride. This represents a huge barrier to opportunity for people who do not have access to a car.

TOD provides opportunities for economic development, market-rate and affordable housing, and placemaking. Capital investments in transit are proven to catalyze business growth and housing development near transit stops. Together these strategies encourage lively, walkable neighborhoods with thriving businesses, further improving mobility options for all.

### Public Feedback

Rapid regional transit has been a consistent priority during public outreach that RTA has conducted since its inception. Recent engagement conducted by RTA and other regional entities has reinforced that a rapid transit network is still a strong priority for people in our region.



Figure 66. The IndyGo Red Line, a 13 mile BRT system in Indianapolis, Indiana. Image Credit: IndyGo

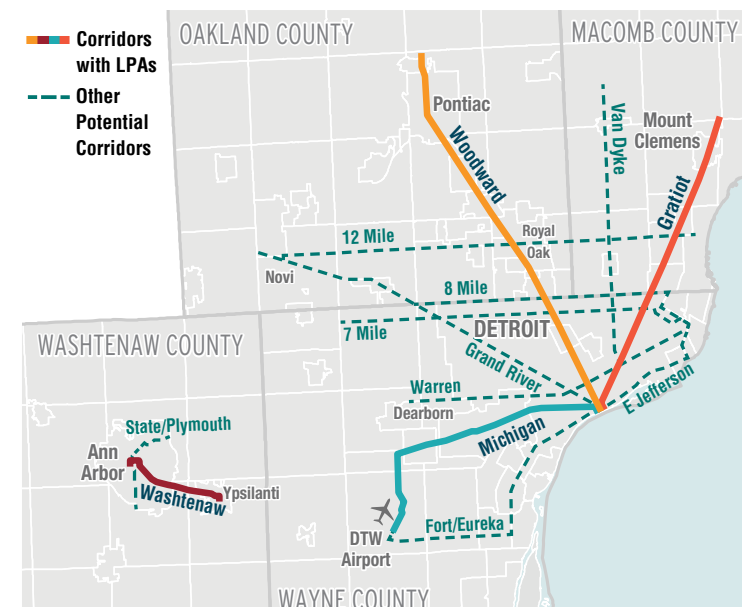


Figure 67. Potential Rapid Transit Corridors

## Recent Progress and Accomplishments

- There are planned and ongoing studies on Gratiot, Washtenaw, and Woodward Avenues that will identify preferred transit projects.
- RTA adopted BRT locally preferred alternatives (LPAs) on Gratiot, Michigan, Washtenaw, and Woodward Avenues.
- Dedicated transit and connected and autonomous vehicle lanes will be installed on Michigan Avenue.
- SMART's FAST service (which was based on RTA's reflex pilot) and TheRide's planned Washtenaw Avenue Express lay the foundation for future BRT services.
- DDOT increased frequency on East Jefferson Avenue to every 10 minutes in January 2024 and plans to install BRT-style amenities on the corridor.
- RTA has conducted a preliminary analysis of major corridors for FTA CIG program funding.
- In 2023, RTA submitted a \$138 million RCN grant application to potentially fund rapid transit corridor project development on Woodward Avenue and to construct improvements to other corridors.
- Construction of the Detroit Mobility and Innovation Corridor in Detroit's Downtown and Corktown neighborhoods is expected to be completed in 2026 and include dedicated bus and connected autonomous vehicle (CAV) lanes.



### Supported Goals

Rapid transit and TOD will expand access to opportunity and can improve existing transit services while leveraging partnerships between transit agencies, mobility service providers, multiple levels of government, and developers.

## Implementation Activities With No New Funding

- Prioritize regional corridors for capital investment and develop a funding strategy for capital improvements and operations.

## With One-Time Funding

- Conduct or update corridor studies to determine which rapid transit modes best support local and regional needs.
- Partner with municipalities to develop policies that support transit-oriented communities.
- Begin the project development process required to apply for funding for rapid transit corridor projects.

## With Sustainable Funding

- Fund and build a network of regional rapid transit corridors.

# STRENGTHEN ACCESS

## Advance Accessibility, Comfort, and Well-being at Transit Stops

Ensure transit stops meet ADA standards and have amenities and security features to help all riders feel healthy and comfortable waiting for their vehicle. This can include improving sidewalks and curb ramps and providing seating, shelters, lighting, real-time signage, and greenscaping.

### Why it Matters

Transit stop amenities help riders feel safer, healthier, and comfortable and shield them from inclement weather. Research has shown that people waiting at bus stops with shelters perceive their wait times to be shorter than at bus stops without them.<sup>38</sup> Another recent study found that improved stops had increased use compared to unimproved stops, increasing ridership on those routes.<sup>39</sup> Making sidewalk networks more accessible can also shift ridership from paratransit to fixed-route service by removing barriers to access.<sup>40</sup>

TOD provides opportunities for economic development, market-rate and affordable housing, and placemaking. Capital investments in transit are proven to catalyze business growth and housing development near transit stops. Together these strategies encourage lively, walkable neighborhoods with thriving businesses, further improving mobility options for all.



Figure 68. Shelters, lighting, seating, bike racks, and greenscaping are important components of transit stops that promote well-being. Image Credit: Reimagine Washtenaw

## Recent Progress and Accomplishments

- RTA is actively working on an Access to Transit plan to inform the creation of an Access to Transit program that will provide funding for transit infrastructure through a future call for projects program.
- SMART is ensuring ADA-compliant bus stops are installed prior to launching new and extended bus routes, and began a bus stop condition assessment in 2024.
- DPM plans to update all stations with new security technology and informational kiosks in 2024.
- TheRide is moving forward with planning and design for improvements to the Blake Transit Center and Ypsilanti Transit Center.
- DDOT's Jason Hargrove Transit Center opened in May 2024 at the Michigan State Fairgrounds.
- The RTA continues to fund the Access to Transit Program (ATP) to update pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure and amenities at transit stops in the region.



### Supported Goals

Safer, healthier, and more comfortable stops will improve riders' experiences with existing services and will increase accessibility for people who use mobility devices or strollers. Partnerships with municipalities and MDOT will be required to upgrade transit stops and ensure ADA compliance.

## Implementation Activities With No New Funding

- Conduct a regional bus stop and rail station inventory to assess current conditions and ADA accessibility and to prioritize improvements.
- Work with local and state road agencies to streamline permitting processes for transit access improvements.
- Coordinate with local and state road agencies to integrate bus stop improvements into corridor capital improvement projects.

## With One-Time Funding

- Define and implement an Access to Transit program to fund transit stop priority projects.
- Create bus stop design guidelines and update service standards in partnership with road and transit agencies for improved accessibility and safety.
- Using regional design standards, upgrade stops across Southeast Michigan.

## With Sustainable Funding

- Using regional design standards, the upgrade stops across Southeast Michigan.



# STRENGTHEN ACCESS

## Upgrade Multimodal Connections To and Between Services

Increase access to and from public transit by improving pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure at and near transit stops, promoting complete street designs, enhancing park-and-ride services, and increasing the availability of microtransit and micromobility options.

### Why it Matters

Trips using multiple modes, services, or routes can extend the mobility range of riders and increase the number of destinations they can reach. In 2019, 44 percent of riders in Southeast Michigan made one or more transfers during their transit trips, while others connected to bikeshare, demand-response services, and other first- and last-mile solutions.<sup>41</sup> Multimodal trips can be made easier by locating major transit services near one another and forming essential partnerships between providers. Mobility hubs provide an opportunity to co-locate services such as transit stops, micromobility, secure bike parking, microtransit drop-off zones, and park-and-rides.

### Public Feedback

Over half of Connect/D survey respondents reported riding a bicycle and a bus on the same trip. Additionally, many DDOT survey respondents indicated a desire for route connection and timing improvements.



Figure 69. SMART Flex service operates in multiple zones and can be used to travel to and from bus stops. Image Credit: City of Dearborn.



Figure 70. Micromobility services, such as MoGo bikeshare, can improve first- and last-mile connections to transit. Image Credit: MoGo.

## Recent Progress and Accomplishments

- MoGo is planning an expansion in 2025 that will add 20 new bikeshare stations that facilitate transit access in Detroit.
- In 2023, the City of Detroit was awarded \$24.8 million through the Safe Streets for All Program to improve safety and bus stop accessibility at 56 high-crash intersections to support safer transfers.
- TheRide is planning improvements to the Blake and Ypsilanti Transit Centers, and DDOT has completed improvements to the Jason Hargrove Transit Center at the Michigan State Fairgrounds.
- MoGo is pursuing CMAQ funding that would allow for its entire fleet to be transitioned to electric-assist bicycles.

## Implementation Activities

### With No New Funding

- Partner with local municipalities to improve pedestrian and bicycle access to transit stops through complete street policies, guidelines and projects.
- Partner with MDOT and major property owners to improve bus access to park-and-ride lots.

### With One-Time Funding

- Prioritize locations for new mobility hubs at regionally significant transit stops and transfer points.

### With Sustainable Funding

- Build mobility hubs at regionally significant transit stops and transfer points.



### Supported Goals

Upgrading first- and last-mile solutions will improve access to the existing transit system and will leverage innovative modes like microtransit and micromobility. It will require forming partnerships between agencies, mobility service providers, and government entities that own roadways.

# STRENGTHEN ACCESS

## Regional Trip Planning and Fare Payment Services

Implement a regional multimodal fare collection system that simplifies payment and transfers between services and modes, and streamlines fare policies across providers, creating a seamless navigation experience. Deploy a trip planning platform that helps riders plan and schedule trips, and that is integrated with the regional fare system.

### Why it Matters

Navigating the transit and mobility network can be challenging, especially without a centralized source of information on all services available in Southeast Michigan, or one easy way to pay for them. Cities across the United States are working to integrate transportation options into a unified app or fare card. Streamlined, regional fare payments and trip planning tools can help riders easily plan and pay for trips, providing greater freedom of movement.

### Public Feedback

Recent engagement with transit riders revealed that fare systems in the region need improved connection, both between agencies and modes to ensure riders are getting the best fares.



Figure 71. Tapping fare cards, credit cards, and mobile wallets has become a faster and easier way to pay fares.  
Image Credit: TheRapid.

## Recent Progress and Accomplishments

- RTA is currently developing a mobility wallet pilot to test the feasibility of a solution and determine what would be needed for a broader implementation. Launch of the pilot is planned in 2025.
- myride2 offers web-based information and call centers to help people identify and use available mobility services in the region.
- QLINE provides zero-fare service, and DPM piloted zero-fare service in 2024, removing a barrier to service and making it easier to connect to other modes.
- RTA's MI Ride Paratransit App Pilot resulted in lessons learned for a future solution.
- DDOT, SMART, and TheRide offer app-based payment options.
- MDOT is currently leading the process of envisioning and creating a statewide Mobility as a Service (MaaS) system.
- MoGo now accepts cash payments at DivDat Kiosks, which are available at 59 docking stations in metropolitan Detroit.

## Implementation Activities With No New Funding

- Continue to develop and implement the Mobility Wallet pilot project.
- Continue to collaborate with MDOT on their statewide MaaS system.
- Determine the preferred parameters for an account-based regional fare system.

## With One-Time Funding

- Deploy an account-based regional fare system that can be integrated with existing trip planning tools.
- Develop regional technology standards to ensure interoperability between technology systems.
- Support full regional participation in a publicly available GTFS data repository.

## With Sustainable Funding

- Develop a regional MaaS platform and build integrations to support additional tools for customers.



### Supported Goals

Innovative payment and trip planning technologies will improve current services by removing barriers to accessing them. This priority requires utilizing new payment technologies and building partnerships between transit agencies and other mobility providers.

# ENHANCE EXPERIENCE

## Enhance Ride Quality and Promote On-Board Safety

Enhance the rider experience by addressing real and perceived safety and cleanliness concerns through marketing campaigns, staff training, upgraded onboard technologies, and a transit ambassadors program that is focused on customer service, community outreach, rider support, and a sense of security.

### Why it Matters

Flying is the safest way to travel, but that does not stop people from clinging to the armrest during takeoff.<sup>42</sup> Commonly held perceptions of safety and cleanliness concerns on public transit cause some people to avoid it if they can. Though data indicate that public transit is safer than driving, perceptions of a lack of safety are a barrier to transit use.<sup>43</sup> Addressing actual and perceived safety and cleanliness concerns will improve the rider experience and help increase ridership. Increasing safety at transit stops is addressed in a separate priority (see page 38).

### Public Feedback

Survey respondents expressed that safety was a high priority among initiatives that would remove barriers to using transit. In DDOT's 2023 Title VI Non-Rider Survey Report, 75 percent of respondents cited safety concerns on the bus as a reason why they do not ride transit. The second highest reason was cleanliness, which 44 percent of respondents labeled as a barrier to ridership. Though public transit is safe to ride and vehicles and stations are cleaned regularly, public and media perceptions need to be addressed to make the transit system more attractive.



Figure 72. Transit Ambassador programs, such as LA Metro's program, can help provider increased customer service, community outreach, rider support, and an enhanced sense of security. Image Credit: TriMet

## Recent Progress and Accomplishments

- The Transit Police regularly monitor DDOT, DPM, and QLINE services and buses and the QLINE have on-board cameras.
- DPM is updating the security equipment at all stations including cameras and public address (PA) systems.
- TheRide posts security guards at transit centers to promote pedestrian and passenger security.
- In early 2024, the Detroit People Mover upgraded security cameras and public address system equipment at all stations.



### Supported Goals

Public opinions of safety and cleanliness discourage some people from using public transit. Partnerships between RTA, transit providers, Transit Police, and social service agencies and organizations will help RTA improve the rider experience and improve the perception of transit.

## Implementation Activities

### With No New Funding

- Develop a public information campaign that promotes the safety and cleanliness of public transit.

### With One-Time Funding

- Develop de-escalation and rider support training programs for transit operators.
- Facilitate and oversee upgrades to on-board safety and security equipment.
- Facilitate and oversee improvements to off-board safety and security for transit riders.

### With Sustainable Funding

- Facilitate the creation (or expansion) of transit ambassador programs that provides riders with information, responds to cleanliness incidents, gathers feedback, addresses safety concerns, and assists riders in need of additional support services.
- Review security staffing needs for the QLINE and other services that operate fare free or using off-board fare payment systems.

# ENHANCE EXPERIENCE

## Recruit, Develop, and Retain a Thriving Workforce

Engage, support, and sustain a diverse and talented workforce to continue reliable operations of current service and the ability to expand services in the future. Ensuring competitive compensation and benefits packages, providing training on new technologies and career advancement, and updating recruitment practices will attract new employees while helping current employees grow and thrive.

### Why it Matters

Transit agencies across the nation have struggled to hire and retain the employees needed to operate and maintain transit systems. Without a stable workforce, agencies cannot implement new services, increase frequencies of existing routes, or even maintain current levels of service. According to a survey conducted by the American Public Transit Association (APTA) in February 2022, 92 percent of public transit agencies are struggling to hire new employees, and 66 percent are having difficulty retaining them. Bus operators and bus maintenance staff were ranked as the two most difficult positions to fill. Labor shortages have impacted transit service, with 71 percent of agencies having either cut service or postponed deploying service increases.

### Public Feedback

Some survey respondents felt that staffing shortfalls need to be addressed to deliver current services before expansions can be successfully implemented.



Figure 73. TheRide Operator. Image Credit: TheRide

## Recent Progress and Accomplishments

- DDOT and SMART are offering bonuses and incentives to attract new bus operators and to encourage high attendance.
- SMART has hosted hiring events such as the Drive a Bus with Us career fair, where potential candidates could try driving fixed-route and paratransit vehicles.



### Supported Goals

Investing in the transit workforce is critical to expanding and enhancing services. RTA and transit agencies need to partner with schools and workforce training centers to develop innovative solutions to this challenge.

## Implementation Activities

### With No New Funding

- Identify recruitment and retention challenges and develop recommendations with transit providers to collaboratively address the issue.
- Elevate marketing and run joint recruitment campaigns on the benefits of working in public transit.

### With One-Time Funding

- Partner with agencies to formalize training and coaching programs that promote career pathways and help employees advance in their jobs.

### With Sustainable Funding

- Build joint training centers for new and seasoned transit employees.
- Update pay and benefits packages to be competitive with other transportation industries.



# ENHANCE EXPERIENCE

## Modernize and Maintain Infrastructure in a State of Good Repair

Maintain transit infrastructure, including buses and trains, passenger and maintenance facilities, and service vehicles, in a state of good repair to ensure continuous and safe operations. When replacing infrastructure, integrate innovative technologies and best practices that improve operational efficacy and environmental impacts.

### Why it Matters

Maintaining existing assets is critical to continuing to operate transit services and the foundation for service expansions. Preventive maintenance routines can ensure agencies can provide quality service for years to come. As agencies seek to replace infrastructure, they need to be forward-thinking and incorporate best practices and new technologies. For example, agencies can replace vehicles with low- and no-emission vehicles over time, allowing them to incorporate charging and refueling infrastructure into facilities and to train staff to use and maintain new technology.

### Public Feedback

Public feedback tends to focus more on improvements to the system, rather than ensuring that current service can be sustained. Maintaining a state of good repair is critical to accomplishing both. Some respondents to the 2023 survey felt that funding should support service enhancements before adopting new technologies such as low- and no-emission vehicles.



Figure 74. 2024 Low-No Grant Award. Image Credit: AAATA

## Recent Progress and Accomplishments

- DDOT is constructing the new Coolidge Terminal and Maintenance Facility, with an expected opening date of December 2025.
- To increase capacity and accommodate low- and no-emission vehicles, TheRide plans to construct a new garage and renovate the Ypsilanti Transit Center.
- DPM has acquired 16 replacement rail cars from the Toronto Transit Commission for use on the People Mover. Twelve of the rail cars have rehabilitated and prepared for operations while the remaining four rail cars are being stored for future rehabilitation.
- In 2023, RTA distributed \$3 million in Section 5310 funding for agencies to replace and purchase new vehicles.
- MDOT was awarded \$10.5 million through FTA's 2023 Bus and Bus Facilities Program to build a new maintenance and operations facility for People's Express near Ann Arbor.
- The DPM 2024 Track Improvement Project replaced 7,000 feet of rail, 20 percent of the total system, as part of a \$5 million maintenance initiative.
- Planning and design work has progressed for the expansion of two transit center for TheRide, including the Ypsilanti Transit Center and the Blake Transit Center.



### Supported Goals

Maintaining transit assets will allow service providers to operate and improve core services. Innovative technologies and collaborative approaches will be considered as assets are rehabilitated or replaced.

## Implementation Activities

### With No New Funding

- Develop a long-term, needs-based capital plan for the region, inclusive of all transit operators (bus, rail, paratransit, and demand response).
- Facilitate and support ongoing, strategic coordination with regional partners for federal funding through discretionary grant programs.

### With One-Time Funding

- Facilitate the replacement of transit vehicles with low-emission or no-emission vehicles, including any facility upgrades or equipment required for operations and maintenance.

### With Sustainable Funding

- Continuously maintain and modernize transit facilities and equipment as a way to address project backlogs and incorporate new technologies.

# THE PATH FORWARD

**The Path Forward**

**8.0**

# THE PATH FORWARD

Together, RTA and its partners can carry out several of the implementation activities outlined in this plan to improve, expand, innovate, and sustain transit services in Southeast Michigan. However, RTA needs a stable regional funding source to invest in the projects, services, and programs that will transform mobility and support a vibrant region.

## Next Steps

With or without a stable regional funding source, RTA will continue to work with transit agencies and other partners to plan, fund, coordinate, and accelerate transit improvements. RTA develops a business plan on an annual basis to align its budget and staffing to carry out priority projects. The RTMP is used in the development of the business plan and helps to identify resources to apply to specific projects and programs. While RTA continues its work with stakeholders and regional partners on a plan and path forward for a long-term funding source, the RTA's business plan will also focus on projects that require minimal funding, as well as grant applications that will provide one-time funding for specific projects or programs. For example, the ongoing pilot programs for the mobility wallet, D2A2, and DAX are funded through grants that allow RTA to test new services while also seeking permanent funding solutions to sustain the services. The RTMP will continue to be updated annually to document changes to regional priorities based on annual progress, as well as through input from transit riders, local and regional partners, and the general public.



Figure 75. (top to bottom) DAX, MoGo, QLine and Ypsilanti Bus Center.

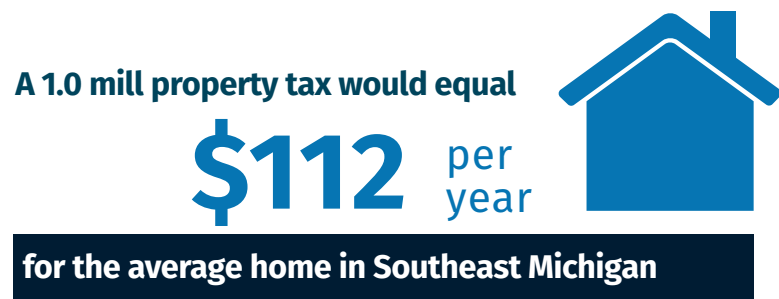


Figure 76. Subject to voter approval, RTA is authorized to collect a property tax and a vehicle registration fee.

## The Path to Regional Transit Funding

Public transit is a critical component of the nation's public infrastructure. Cities and regions across the US are investing in transit service and transit infrastructure as a way to support economic growth. Funding sources for transit vary from region to region, but common sources include sales, property, income, payroll, and fuel taxes, vehicle registration fees, and tolls, among other sources. In Southeast Michigan, RTA is authorized to collect a property tax millage and a vehicle registration tax within its service area, subject to voter approval. Based on recent estimates, in 2023, a one-mill property tax could have generated approximately \$160 million, and a \$1.20 vehicle registration fee could have generated \$114 million. Though it would require changes to the state constitution, and potentially to RTA's enabling legislation, as a comparison, a quarter-cent local sales tax is estimated to have generated approximately \$213 million in 2023.

## Expenditure Plan and Ballot Process

If and when a decision is made to pursue a ballot initiative, the RTA would develop an expenditure plan that includes a multi-year program of projects that can be carried out with the projected revenues of the proposed ballot initiative. This process involves considering different project scenarios (for example, which routes to increase frequency on or where to construct rapid transit corridors). RTA will engage with the public to determine which scenario to adopt within the expenditure plan. The expenditure plan will also identify metrics to measure successes, which can also be used to identify future improvements.

Following the creation of an expenditure plan, RTA can then ask voters to consider approval of a property tax and/or a vehicle registration tax to fund and carry out the plan through a ballot measure. In order to get on the ballot, the measure would first need approval by seven of the nine voting RTA board members, including at least one from each county and the City of Detroit. A ballot initiative is also required to occur during a regular general election.

## Stay Engaged!

RTA cannot achieve its vision alone. The priorities outlined in this plan will require engagement, coordination, support, leadership, and action from RTA's regional partners, including transit agencies and providers, municipalities, counties, the state, businesses, nonprofits, elected officials, community leaders, advocates, and riders. You can support RTA and its vision by signing up for newsletters, following RTA on social media, attending public meetings, and - most importantly - taking public transit and talking to your friends, families, and colleagues about how important transit is to you and to the region.

**Get on board with transit and RTA feedback opportunities! It is never too late to ride and provide input.**

Reach out to RTA, whether by email, social media, or in-person to let us know how public transit can better service your needs. RTA's Board of Directors meets on the third Thursday of every month, the Providers Advisory Committee (PAC) meets quarterly, and the CAC meets bimonthly. Meeting calendars are available on RTA's website. You can also apply to join RTA's CAC.

Through 2025, RTA will be updating the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP) to M4A. The current plan, OnHand: Expanding Transportation Access Across Southeast Michigan, was completed in 2020. Stay engaged with RTA for updates on the plan and to find out about related opportunities to provide input.



Figure 77. Stay involved with RTA through RTA's website, social media, and public meetings.  
Image Credit: TheRide.



Figure 78. RTA's Community Advisory Council (CAC) meets every two months to advise on transit services and programs, advocate for transit funding, and assist RTA with engaging the public.

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