

SMART Millage Campaign Overview



As you likely know, the SMART Millage passed! That victory was not random, but the results of hard work by many organizations, businesses, and individuals.

On behalf of Transportation Riders United Ballot Committee and the Keep SMART Rolling campaign team, this document explains many of the actions, often behind the scenes, that made that victory possible.

The SMART millage passed with nearly two-thirds support!

This victory is impressive in its own right, but especially because the 65.7% victory is fully 10% points above early polling predicted.

- Oakland (opt-in communities) passed it with 73.6% support
- Wayne (opt-in communities) passed it with 63.1% support
- Macomb County passed it with 59.6% support

This was doubly challenging because the 1.0 millage was both a renewal and increase in one vote - the first increase in 12 years.

This strong voter approval was possible not only because of the important service SMART provides, but also due to strong campaigning by a broad range of transit supporters who let voters know that the SMART millage was on the August ballot and reminded voters how essential SMART's service is for many throughout our community.



SMART Promoted Their Service and Need for the Millage

SMART is limited in their actions promoting a yes vote on the millage, since they cannot use tax dollars to ask for tax dollars. However SMART did promote the importance of their service with a marketing campaign featuring the message: "SMART: There's a lot riding on us." This included:

- Six 30-second videos played on network and cable TV, radio, and online
 - 2 by County Executives Brooks Patterson and Mark Hackel
 - 3 featuring SMART riders who are seniors or have disabilities
 - 1 featuring an employer
- Online digital in-banner video ads displayed 11.3 million times
- Distributed 11,000 postcards at 21 locally sponsored events
- 20 ads on the sides of buses

SMART staff also responded to requests by presenting to 600 people at public meetings at:

- Inkster and Garden City and Lathrup Village City Councils,
- The Conference of Western Wayne,
- The Downriver Community Conference,
- Chesterfield and Clinton Townships,
- RTA Board, and
- SEMCOG Executive Committee meetings.



To supplement SMART's effort and directly urge voters to vote yes on the millage, the Keep SMART Rolling team was created.

This informal group planned and ran a major grassroots campaign for passage of the SMART millage. Transportation Riders United created an official Ballot Committee under campaign finance law, raising and spending \$30,000 for the campaign in just 9 weeks. We greatly appreciate the generous support of the campaign contributors, including:

- William Beaumont Hospital
- St. John Providence Health System
- Butzel Long
- Vanderveer Garzia, P.C.
- Zausmer, Kaufman, August & Caldwell, PC
- Teamsters Local Union No. 247
- Michael J Whims Consultant, LLC
- Cornerstone Municipal Advisory Group
- Plante Moran
- Phoenix Environmental, INC.
- And many others!



The Strength of this Campaign was the Many Diverse Partners and Supporters.

Many organizations participated in promoting the SMART millage in a wide variety of ways. The supporting organizations included:

- Transportation Riders United
- MOSES, a coalition of faith-based congregations
- Sterling Heights Chamber of Commerce
- Sierra Club of Southeast Michigan
- Americans for Transit, a national transit advocacy group
- ARC Detroit, advocates for people with disabilities
- Amalgamated Transit Union, SMART drivers' union
- Area Agency on Aging 1B
- Ecology Center, environmental advocates
- Transportation for Michigan, a statewide coalition
- PEAC, which promotes mobility and independence for young people with disabilities
- North End Woodward Community Coalition, a local group of concerned citizens
- Jewish Family Services, which helps seniors in Oakland and Macomb Counties
- And others



Targeted Mailings Reminded Likely Voters About this Important Vote

TRU Ballot Committee produced and mailed 70,000 campaign postcards to targeted priority voters:

- 30,000 to absentee voter households in Macomb County timed to arrive with their ballot
- 20,000 to targeted absentee voter households around Oakland and Wayne County opt-in communities, also timed to arrive with their absentee ballots
- 20,000 to targeted likely voter households in Macomb County the final week before the election

Campaign Volunteers Shared Information One-on-One Throughout the Region

The campaign team talked with tens of thousands of voters and provided them with campaign literature highlighting the importance of the SMART millage. In total, 25,000 campaign flyers were distributed through these and other events.

- SMART bus stops and on SMART buses
- MOSES Youth Rally for Change
- Fireworks displays in Mt. Clemens, Birmingham, Hazel Park, and Hamtramck
- Clawson July 4th Parade
- Community meetings hosted by Senator Bert Johnson
- RiverDays, Trenton Fest, Sterling Fest, and other local festivals
- North Macomb, Westland, and 14th Congressional District Democratic Clubs

Online and Social Media Tools Reach Many Voters As Well

Many supportive organizations, including TRU, Sterling Heights Chamber, Ecology Center, Sierra Club, PEAC, and others used email to remind their members and supporters about the SMART millage and urge their support, reaching over 12,000 people.

The campaign created www.KeepSMARTrolling.org, which provided election information, maps of SMART communities, reasons to support the millage, frequently asked questions, and opportunities to get involved.

The Facebook.com/KeepSMARTrolling page also provided information to voters. In just six weeks, 677 liked the page, with 110,000 people were served activity from the page, including posts, ads, and mentions such as:

- “SMART Moves” music video created by Joel Batterman was seen over 3,300 times.
- An image of a voter sharing why SMART matters to him was seen 3,400 times,
- Let’s Keep SMART Buses Rolling ad was seen 47,400 times
- “Tomorrow is Election Day” post was seen 6,900 times
- Election Day picture of a happy mom, kid, and other bus riders was seen 16,900 times
- Additional posts shared SMART facts and creatively highlighted life without SMART

Additionally, our promoted Tweets reached 14,700 impressions and were retweeted hundreds of times.



Let's Keep SMART Buses Rolling!

Every day, SMART takes tens of thousands of our neighbors to jobs, schools, doctors, grocery stores and more.

- Fully 70% of SMART riders take it to work.
- SMART helps seniors and people with disabilities stay independent.
- SMART saves families money and supports our local economy.

Vote YES on Your County Public Transportation Millage August 5th

VOTE SMART AUG 5

Produced by Transportation Riders United, a nonprofit organization dedicated to improved transit, separate from SMART. Learn more and get involved at www.DetroitTransit.org/SMART or 313-963-8872.



LEARN MORE GET INVOLVED SUPPORTERS DONATE

Let's Keep SMART Buses Rolling!

YES! I'm voting SMART on August 5th:

Email Zip JOIN US

Why Vote Yes About the Prop What's at Risk

Learn more by contacting Transportation Riders United at www.DetroitTransit.org or 313-963-8872.

SMART Campaign Media Coverage

Both SMART bus staff and millage campaign staff and volunteers reached out to area press to highlight the importance of the SMART bus service and millage. While far from complete, here is some of the press coverage:

- Free Press Endorsement: Voting for SMART millage is the smart move
- Fox News: Let It Rip Weekend: SMART Bus Millage
- Channel 7 Spotlight on the News: SMART Millage
- Hometown Life: Voters should support SMART system: Public transportation important to region
- Observer & Eccentric: Vote yes on Wayne County Public Transportation (SMART) Millage
- Macomb Daily: SMART bus system will grind to halt without approval
- Free Press: Business leaders back SMART millage with future of bus system at stake
- Michigan Radio: Detroit regional bus system's future will be decided on August 5th ballot
- Channel 4 News: SMART bus riders hope metro Detroit residents vote 'yes'
- WDET: On the Ballot: SMART Asks Voters for a Millage Increase
- Additional op-eds and letters to the editor



Phone Calls Also Reminder Likely Supporters to Go Vote and Answer Questions

Telephone calls are another important way to reach a large number of voters in the final days of the campaign. Using proven techniques and new technology tools, we called nearly 50,000 targeted voters in the final week of the campaign.

- Had one-on-one phone conversations with 750 people, reminding them of the election, the importance of SMART bus service, and other voting information
- Hosted a **Telephone Town Hall** presentation and Q&A involving 4,000 Macomb County voters, with fully 900 still engaged after the full hour answering voter questions

While not always popular, phone calls are a proven tool to get people out to vote. Quite a few people thanked us for the reminder and promised to go vote.

Voter Outreach Continued Through Election Day

- 200 yard signs up last few days at 40 priority polling places and 30 busy intersections
- 20 volunteers handed out lit to voters at 12 targeted polling locations



Thanks to this work, our region voted overwhelmingly to keep SMART rolling. SMART bus service will continue for the next four years with new fuel-efficient buses.

While a campaign of this type requires a great deal of time, effort, and resources, this strong victory shows that **southeast Michigan voters are willing to invest in transit** when they understand the value it provides to our community.