

## **Transit Policy Recommendations for the 2019 Michigan Legislature**

**The Michigan Legislature plays a vital role in investing in and enabling transit improvements** both in southeast Michigan and all throughout the state. Here are a few important ways the 2019 Legislature should improve transit access and mobility.

### **1. Invest in Transit**

About a quarter of transit agencies' funding comes from the Michigan gas tax as distributed through Public Act 51 (1951). While only 10% of gas tax revenue can be used to fund transit and all other non-road purposes (the remainder is constitutionally-mandated for roads), it is rarely even that high. Legislators must ensure each year that funding is not syphoned away from transit and non-motorized.

Additionally, all of Michigan's transportation system is underfunded; legislators will need to act to increase overall transportation investment. Those limited transportation dollars must be carefully prioritized and used to invest in sustainable transit and repair our existing transportation system instead of wastefully widening highways.

### **2. Right-Size the RTA**

The Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan (RTA) was created by state law in 2012 to analyze, coordinate, and fund improved public transit throughout the region's four counties. While it has successfully identified gaps and barriers and developed a plan for regional transit improvement, the size and diversity of the four-county region has proven challenging, as rural areas perceive less value from transit. The legislature may need to amend the RTA statute to allow it to tax a smaller area than the full four-county region.

While valuable for minimizing opposition, it is essential that new boundary line be a clear boundary based on population density or the federal urbanized area or other similar definition. RTA needs to draw lines, but not circles: Regional transit cannot be effective and efficient if each and every town decides whether they want transit or not.

### **3. Invest in Rail Infrastructure**

Michigan has invested many millions of dollars in our highway system, but very little in rail service. We have an opportunity to connect our state together with attractive, sustainable, affordable train service, boosting tourism, supporting students, and encouraging more cross-state investment. Numerous studies have shown that rail service is achievable and attractive, but it needs up-front investment to succeed. Visionary Michigan leaders should invest in improving existing tracks to enable passenger rail service connecting Detroit with Ann Arbor, connecting Detroit with Grand Rapids and Holland, and connecting Ann Arbor with Traverse City.

### **4. Support Transit Providers:**

There are public transit providers in every county in Michigan providing essential services for our seniors, workers, and many others. Please take time to learn about your local transit service and their needs, and please utilize every opportunity to support those agencies and workers.

One important way to help local transit agencies is to provide them with additional means to fund transit service, beyond just property tax. Please explore and permit local communities to enact parking lot taxes, Uber/Lyft surcharges, or even a local sales tax (although the last will require a constitutional amendment).

### **5. New Mobility to Improve Access:**

Many new mobility technologies and services are coming online all the time, which offer great potential for expanding access and mobility. However, Michigan's leaders must ensure they are developed in ways that harm none and instead improve equity and provide greater access to opportunity for all Michiganders, not just a wealthy few. If they are using public right-of-ways and resources, they must provide clear benefits to the broader public.

One important way to do that is to amend the statute that created the Council on Future Mobility to expand its mandate and membership to address new mobility in transit, bicycles, and shared-use services, not solely autonomous vehicles.

*Transportation Riders United is a nonprofit organization dedicated since 1999 to revitalizing our cities, ensuring transportation equity, and improving quality of life throughout greater Detroit by improving and promoting public transportation.*

**Transportation Riders United, Inc.**

313-963-8872 PO Box 2668, Detroit, Michigan 48202

[www.DetroitTransit.org](http://www.DetroitTransit.org)