



How Michigan Leaders Need to Transform Transportation in 2023-24

When Michiganders can depend on convenient, high-quality public transit, we save money, minimize the climate crisis, connect workers with jobs, and **make Michigan a more affordable, attractive place to live**, work, learn, and invest. Michigan leaders must take bold action to provide the world class transit we need.

Below is a list of policy and budget recommendations from TRU and fellow community partners. **The highlighted recommendations are ripe for action in the Michigan legislature in 2023.**

INVEST IN GREAT TRANSIT

As President Biden has often said, “Don’t tell me what you value. Show me your budget and I’ll tell you what you value.” Michigan’s transportation budget and policies must prioritize affordable access for all, health & safety, equity & justice, sustainability, and accountability & responsibility.

Michigan’s budgets have neglected public transit, rail, and active transportation for decades, leaving Michiganders out in the cold. New budget priorities must make bold investments in transportation choices.

- 1) **Restore state investment in Local Bus Operating** back to its initial 50% by boosting LBO funding to \$300 million a year. This will enable transit agencies throughout the state to overcome the driver shortage and provide the consistent, reliable transit Michiganders need.
- 2) **Consistently invest in rail and rapid transit.** Using not only one-time funds, but every year, fund the development of rapid transit throughout Michigan’s cities. Fund the full MDOT rail plan including boosting existing Amtrak service and developing coast-to-coast and north-south rail service.
- 3) **Flex federal funds** towards transit, rail, and active transportation amenities to balance Michigan’s transportation network. With the significant recent increases in federal funding, Michigan needs to utilize the substantial flexibility offered by federal law to prioritize healthier travel options.

MODERNIZE MDOT PRIORITIES

The Michigan Department of Transportation still acts too much like its predecessor, the Michigan Department of Highways. A modern Department of Transportation does much more than fill potholes and build roundabouts; it should advance the state’s goals by providing a more affordable, equitable, climate-friendly transportation system that works for all Michiganders.

- 4) **Evaluate and prioritize MDOT projects based on transparent, quantifiable metrics** that match the state’s and agencies stated values. Consider not just traffic flow but also climate impact, pedestrian safety, accessibility, and other essential metrics when deciding where to invest the state’s transportation funding. Then report back on impacts of project investments after they’re completed.

- 5) **Proactively implement the MI Healthy Climate Plan** commitments including to “increase access to clean transportation - including public transit - by 15% a year.” MDOT needs a proactive plan, quantifiable metrics, and experienced staff dedicated to achieving this goal throughout the state.
- 6) **Stop widening roadways.** Michigan’s population hasn’t increased in forty years; it’s time to stop widening roadways, even for so-called “flex lanes.” We can’t afford it and it only enables greater sprawl and urban disinvestment.
- 7) **Give Michiganders walking, biking, and using wheelchairs and transit truly equal priority** as drivers on all full-access roadways. Appoint MDOT and Transportation Commission leaders with substantial multimodal experience. Enhance and expand implementation of Complete Streets. Regulate roads to prioritize pedestrian and bicyclist safety, not the convenience of car passengers. Give electric bicycles the same incentives as electric cars.

SUPPORT CITIES AND METRO REGIONS

Many Michigan cities and metro regions want to invest in high quality transit and active transportation but are held back by state laws. In addition to boosting state investments in transit, Michigan lawmakers need to change state laws to enable local communities to make the investments that are right for them.

- 8) **Amend RTA to allow more flexibility.** The Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan was created by state law and needs state law changes to allow fewer than four counties to invest together and to allow counties that provide countywide transit to include urbanized areas in new RTA funding measures.
- 9) **Provide more local funding options.** Initially, that should include parking fees, toll revenues, income taxes, hotel and liquor taxes, and other mechanisms. Ultimately Michigan leaders need to amend the state constitution to allow local sales taxes and end the 10% transit funding limit.
- 10) **Support cities’ multimodal goals along state routes.** MDOT is in charge of many of the most major roadways in our cities, including Woodward, Michigan Ave, and Washtenaw. Yet too often MDOT is a barrier to those communities achieving local goals of walkability, rapid transit, and safe streets. That’s got to change. That can start by MDOT maintaining bike lanes on all state trunk lines instead of forcing that cost onto locals.

These investments and policy changes can put Michigan on track to provide all Michiganders the affordable, accessible transportation choices we all deserve, while making Michigan a more attractive, sustainable state ready to compete for residents and businesses in the 21st century.

Transportation Riders United

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

www.DetroitTransit.org