

For release Tuesday, November 26  
Re event Wednesday, December 4

## **Thanks and Hopes of Public Transit This Holiday**

### **Public Transit Riders, Providers, Workers, Allies Jointly Urge Legislature Restore Transit Funding Before Year's End**

Thankful for the public transit services that connect tens of thousands of Michiganders to jobs, schools, doctors, and loved ones, a set of transit groups and allies are urging Legislators to restore public transit funding before the end of the year.

Michigan's 77 public transit agencies provided over 46 million rides last year to people who physically, financially, or legally can't drive across all of Michigan's 83 counties.

*"Driving shouldn't determine destiny, even here in the Motor City,"* said Megan Owens, Executive Director of Transportation Riders United (TRU). *"As we give thanks for the opportunities and independence Michigan's public transit provides, we implore our legislators to invest in the transit so many of us depend on."*

Public transit is a public service that depends on public investment, just like public parks, public schools, and public roads. Yet after a one-time bump in the 2023-24 state budget, state reimbursement levels dropped to their lowest level ever in the current year.

*"The current funding crisis has destabilized transit agencies and threatens essential rides,"* said John Dulmes, Executive Director of the Michigan Public Transit Association.

Despite deep dedication and hard work, many of the 77 public transit agencies all across Michigan are struggling to provide the rides Michigan's seniors, students, people with disabilities, workers and others need. As the weather gets colder, transit agencies strive to provide more reliable, frequent, and convenient mobility options, yet funding shortfalls and rising costs risk fewer rides available less frequently.

*"The current funding situation is unsustainable and is reaching a dire point for transit services,"* said Ken Jimkoski, President of the Michigan Association for Transportation Systems (MASSTrans).

Public transit riders, workers, providers, and allies will come together Wednesday December 4 to urge Michigan legislators to support public transit during their lame duck legislative session, especially to invest at least \$15 million for Local Bus Operating in a year-end spending bill, to restore funding to last year's level.

*“We also call on legislators to ensure that any transportation funding proposals include support for the thousands of men and women that operate our transit systems across the state,”* said Earl Cox, President of the Amalgamated Transit Union Michigan Legislative Conference.

To ensure Michiganders can access affordable mobility options, the legislature must address transit in their lame duck priorities.

- To ensure transit doesn't go backwards, the legislature must allocate \$15-39 million in the supplemental / book-closing spending bill expected in December. \$15 million would bring state operating support up to the \$261 million invested last year, while \$39 million would hold transit harmless given increased operating costs.
- The legislature must pass the SOAR-reform package that would balance Michigan's long-term economic development spending with \$200 million a year for public transit and \$100 million for housing, making Michigan a more attractive and affordable place to live, work, and invest.
  - *“The ‘Make it in Michigan’ proposal would be a historic investment that would provide people with the accessible, reliable public transit they want,”* said Ross Gavin, Director of Urban Land Use, Infrastructure, and Transportation at the Michigan Environmental Council.
- Legislative efforts to address Michigan's transportation funding shortfalls must include public transit and the full transportation system, in addition to roads and bridges. All new transportation funds must follow the longstanding formula that invests 10% of transportation funds in public transit, including buses, trains, senior shuttles, and ferries.
- Legislators should also pass pending legislation that would eliminate local opt-outs in Wayne County, enabling the entire county to vote together and invest together in transit service throughout the county.

The supporting coalition includes:

- **[Transportation Riders United \(TRU\)](#)**, a Detroit-based community group of bus riders and allies who educate, advocate, and mobilize for more and better public transportation and other affordable mobility options
  - Megan Owens, Executive Director, 248-259-2439, [Megan@DetroitTransit.org](mailto:Megan@DetroitTransit.org)
  - Joel Batterman, Campaigns Manager, 734-904-5548, [Joel@DetroitTransit.org](mailto:Joel@DetroitTransit.org)
- **[Michigan Public Transit Association \(MPTA\)](#)**
  - John Dulmes, Executive Director, 517-930-0008, [John@MPTAonline.org](mailto:John@MPTAonline.org)
- **[Michigan Environmental Council](#)**
  - Ross Gavin, Director of Urban Land Use, Infrastructure, and Transportation, 269-832-7257, [ross@environmentalcouncil.org](mailto:ross@environmentalcouncil.org)
- **[Michigan Association of Transportation Systems \(MASSTrans\)](#)**
  - Ken Jimkoski, President
- **[Amalgamated Transit Union \(ATU\)](#)**
  - Todd Tennis