



Detroit Transit Policy Platform





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Detroit Disability Power's mission is to leverage and build the organizing and political power of the disability community to ensure the full inclusion of people with disabilities in Metro Detroit.



Transportation Riders United (TRU) works for more and better public transit in the Detroit region through education, engagement and advocacy.



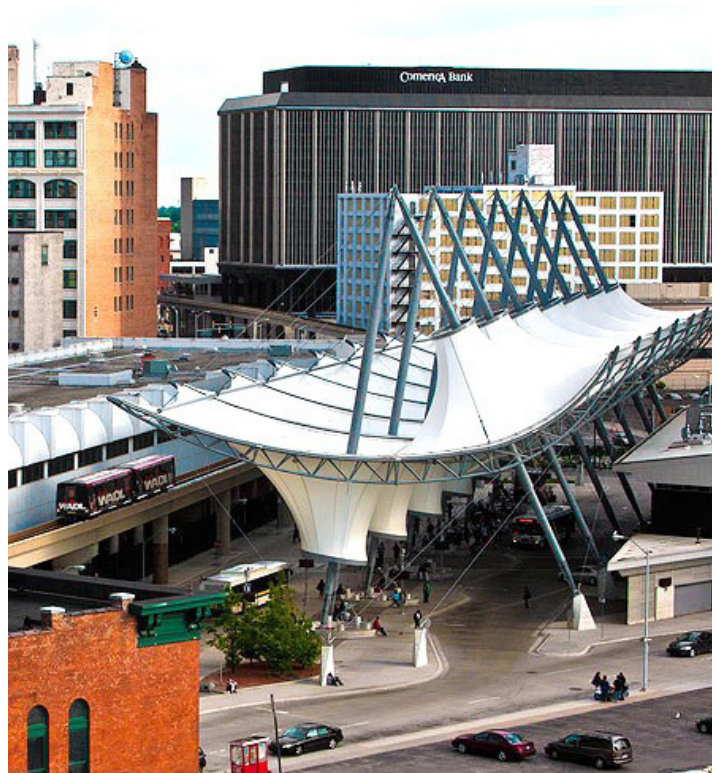
MOSES (Metropolitan Organizing Strategy Enabling Strength) is a community organizing nonprofit serving residents of Detroit and its surrounding metropolitan region.



Detroit Transit Solutions

Transportation policy is complex and many issues are interconnected. Here are nine important ways Detroit leaders can improve transit for the City.

1. Double DDOT
2. Support riders with disabilities
3. Provide competitive, family-supportive wages
4. Support transit funding on the Wayne County ballot
5. Build regional and state support for transit investment
6. Improve bus shelters and accessibility
7. Ensure safe streets for all
8. Advance transit-supportive land-use
9. Ensure consistent, effective DDOT leadership





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The Need

There is a critical need for better transit service in Detroit. Roughly one-third of Detroit households lack access to a car; thousands more suffer financial strain from high insurance, loan, and repair costs, worsened by historic and system inequities.

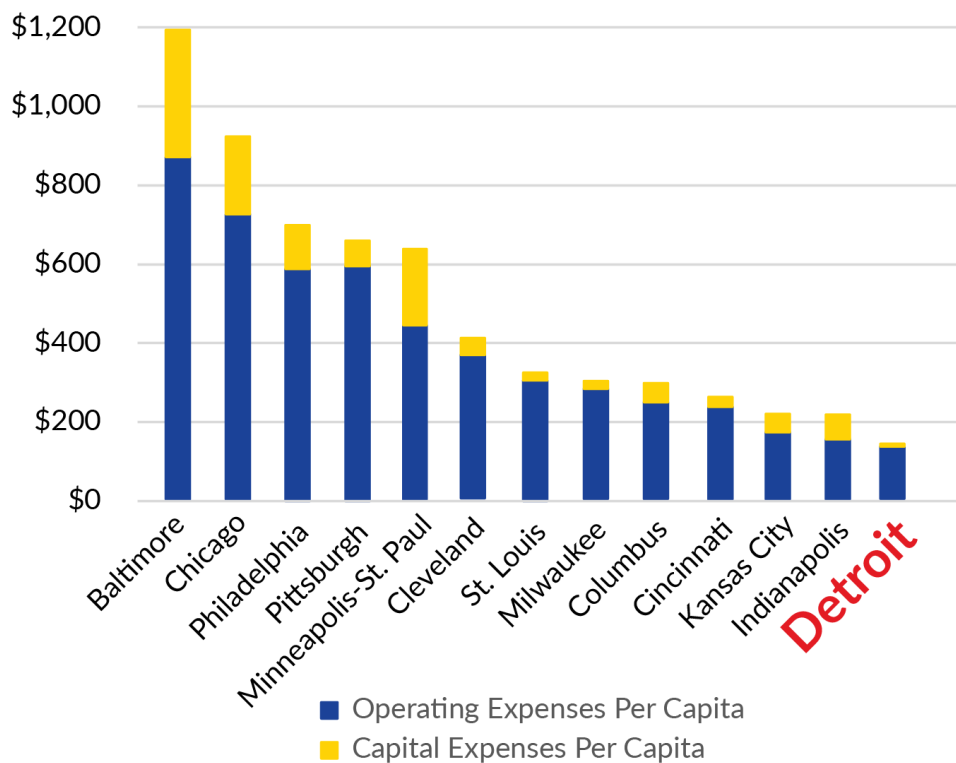
The Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT) provides a critical service, carrying tens of thousands of people every day to jobs, schools, doctors, stores, and other daily needs. Many Detroiters also use SMART transit services to reach jobs and other opportunities in the suburbs.

Yet bus riders too often have to suffer long waits, inconsistent quality, numerous transfers, and

insufficient service on evenings and weekends. This is in large part because the Detroit region invests less money per capita in transit than any major U.S. metro region and in part because of the region's historic failure to collaboratively prioritize quality transit.

The next Detroit Mayor and City Council must make improving DDOT and regional transit service a top priority. They must double DDOT bus service, help to lead efforts for better regional transit; and work to ensure Detroit's streets are safe for everyone, including pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders.

Annual Transit Investment by Metropolitan Area, per Person



Source: National Transit Database, 2023

1. Double DDOT

The DDOT Reimagined plan, released in 2024 after data-driven analysis and extensive public input, outlines a plan to roughly double DDOT bus service. It would improve the frequency on the busiest corridors to run every 10 minutes or less and ensure no route runs less than every 30 minutes. The next administration should support this plan and commit to its full implementation by 2030.

Fully implementing the DDOT Reimagined plan will require increasing transit funding to roughly double what the City has been investing in recent years. In addition to increasing General Fund contributions to DDOT, this will likely require additional funding sources. Detroit leaders need to develop new revenue streams that don't harm lower-income residents, which could entail an entertainment tax, parking surcharges, a regional transit millage, or other options.



2. Support Riders with Disabilities

While good transit benefits all Detroiters, it is essential for the one in six Detroiters living with a disability. DDOT has made meaningful progress improving its paratransit service and must continue to ensure riders with disabilities receive the safe, timely, respectful transportation they need. **Fully implementing DDOT's commitment to provide same-day reservations for paratransit riders must be a priority of the next administration.**

Detroit must also make sure riders with disabilities on fixed route buses are ensured timely space on those buses, or otherwise be promptly provided other transportation. DDOT should also **regularly provide employees with sensitivity training** to effectively serve riders with a wide range of visible and non-visible disabilities.





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3. Provide Competitive, Family-Supportive Wages

Currently, pay for DDOT drivers starts at \$19/hour, whereas pay for SMART drivers starts at \$27/hour. Low pay contributes to a high rate of turnover among DDOT drivers, mechanics, and other vital staff, which increases crashes, increases training costs, and negatively affects transit service to the community.

Detroit leaders should **ensure DDOT employees receive regionally-competitive, family-supporting wages** that are at least at parity with SMART. This will enable the City to recruit and retain excellent drivers and to improve service quality for bus riders.



“Currently, pay for DDOT drivers starts at \$19/hour, whereas pay for SMART drivers starts at \$27/hour.”

4. Support Transit Funding on the Wayne County Ballot

Thanks to an act passed by the Legislature last year, the next Wayne County transit property tax millage will be levied on a countywide basis for the first time, including in Detroit, Livonia, Canton, and more. Detroit leaders should strongly support passage of this countywide ballot measure as a way to improve regional transit and to ensure Detroiters can access the full range of job, school, and medical opportunities. While this millage will not in any way replace the City's need to invest in DDOT, the **next administration should work with Wayne County leaders to ensure funds raised in Detroit be used to substantially improve transit service for Detroiters.**

“Detroit leaders should strongly support passage of the Wayne county transit property tax millage to improve regional transit.”



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5. Build Regional and State Support for Transit¹ Investment

Detroit cannot fund all of its transportation needs on its own, especially the development of the high quality rapid transit we need along the region's busiest roadways and connecting between cities. We need new revenue measures to fully fund transit development in the City and to improve the regional connections. While Detroit cannot achieve that on its own, **Detroit leaders can and must lead and lobby aggressively for increased transit investments at the regional and state levels.**



“Detroit leaders can and must lead on increased transit investments at the regional and state levels.”

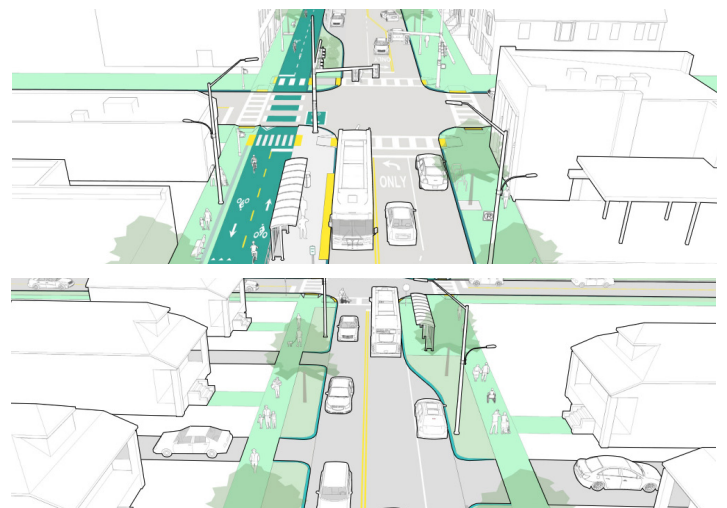
6. Improve Bus Shelters and Accessibility

Nearly every bus ride starts with a walk to and wait at a bus stop. Yet many sidewalks are broken or lack curb cuts, many bus stops lack paved landing pads for wheelchairs, and too few stops have basic comforts of seating and shelters. Detroit leaders must work to improve bus stop access, seating, and shelters, including:

1. Make 100% of Detroit's sidewalks accessible;
2. Ensure all bus stops have paved landing pads;
3. Ensure ADA-mandated curb cuts and safe, well-marked crosswalks;
4. Add more shelters where possible and seating where shelters may not be feasible;
5. Separate street parking from bus stop areas.

7. Ensure Safe Streets for All

Detroit's transportation infrastructure has historically prioritized speed over safety, contributing to a high rate of traffic violence: the second-highest per capita among major U.S. cities. On average, **over 100 people are killed annually in traffic crashes in the city**, and our streets are especially dangerous for bicyclists and pedestrians. Although improvements have been made in recent years, and the City's 2022 Streets for People plan set out a vision for improving transportation safety, much more remains to be done. **The City must accelerate the build-out of safe pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure**, such as road diets, mid-block crossings and protected bike lanes.



*We have great safe streets plans. Now we need to build them.
Image credits: 2022 Streets for People plan*



8. Advance Transit-Supportive Land Use

Transit is most effective and mobility is most affordable in higher density communities with a mix of homes, shops, schools, and other businesses all close by each other. So Detroit planning should prioritize higher-density, mixed-use, mixed-income development along major transit routes. Additionally, large surface parking lots and other inefficient land-uses make the City less attractive, especially for people walking or biking.

Detroit should eliminate minimum parking requirements (except for accessible parking spaces) for new or re-development to prevent excessive parking. Detroit should also adjust taxing and fee structures to decrease costs for high-density development and increase costs for low-efficiency land-uses. Parking taxes or surcharges should be used to enable greater transit improvements.



*An example of transit friendly land use
Image credits: Strongtowns*

“**Detroit should eliminate parking minimums and incentivize high-density development.**”

9. Ensure consistent, effective DDOT leadership.

There has been significant turnover in DDOT leadership, with a total of 5 different directors over the past decade. High turnover and inconsistent leadership can create problems for transit agencies. **The next mayor should take steps to ensure consistent, effective leadership** and provide the department with the support it needs, particularly in regard to its interactions with other City departments, such as the Office of Contracting and Procurement and Department of Human Resources.

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