

WASHTENAW COUNTY SURVEY, 2011

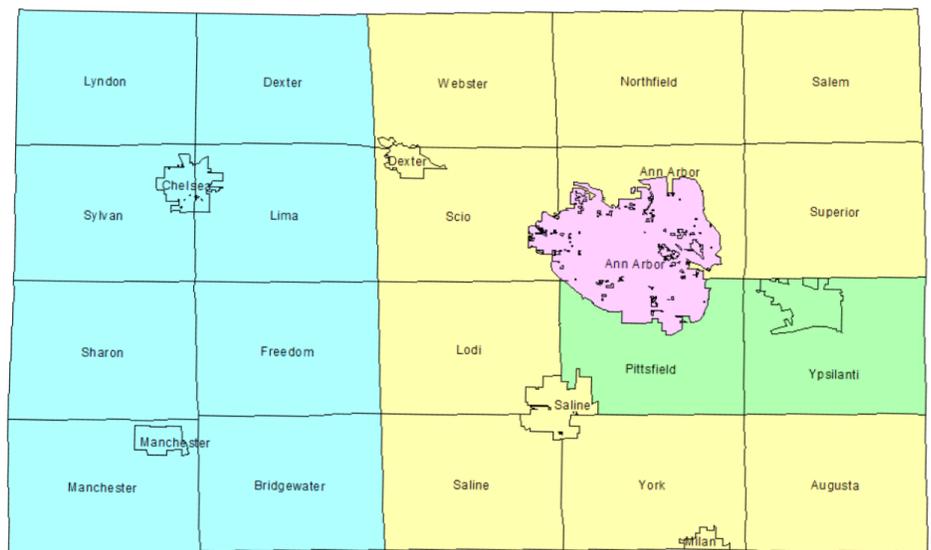
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CJI Research Corporation, assisted by Triad Research Group, interviewed a random sample of 1,356 Washtenaw County registered voters between October 5 and December 10, 2011. Interviews were conducted by telephone when a telephone number could be matched to the voter's name and address. For others (those using cell phones only or with unpublished numbers) mailings were used to collect responses by means of an online version of the survey, or by toll-free call to an interviewer. This survey repeated and expanded upon, a similar survey conducted in 2009.

There were five objectives for the 2011 survey:

- Examining attitudes and behaviors in the background of a proposed transit expansion, including voters' opinions of quality of life in Washtenaw County, awareness and household use of public transit service, and the perceived importance of providing and expanding transit service in the county.
- Measuring support for a possible one mil property tax increase to fund services that are described in the Transit Master Plan (TMP). That plan was developed through a combination of public participation and formal transportation planning. While public participation is extremely important and useful in developing a plan, as a practical matter only a limited number of citizens tend to participate in such opportunities for input. A scientifically constructed survey tests the concepts in a broader setting providing an opportunity for the voice of a wider public to be heard.
- Understanding reasons for supporting or opposing the transit expansion and associated millage increase.
- Examining patterns of change that may have occurred since the previous survey in 2009.
- In addition, in 2011, the robust, address-based sampling methods, although time-consuming, were used to guarantee that the survey would serve as a benchmark against which future results could be measured with confidence.

For purposes of sampling and analysis, Washtenaw County was divided into four regions as shown in the varied colors on the map. This assured adequate representation of all parts of the county. A minimum of 321 interviews were completed in each of the four regions.



SUMMARY OF RESULTS

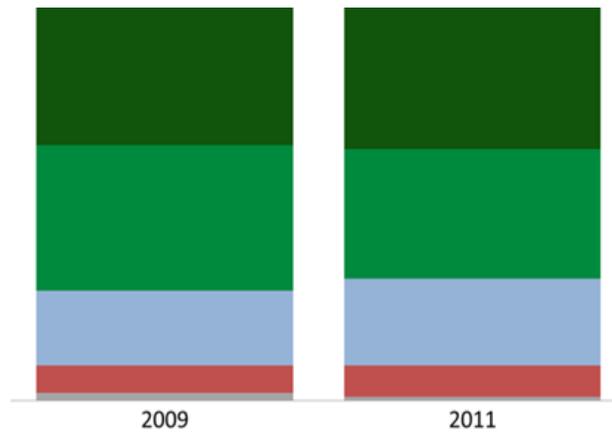
QUALITY OF LIFE IN WASHTENAW COUNTY

Satisfaction with the quality of life in a community impacts people's opinions of public agencies. Almost all respondents (95%) are either very satisfied (61%) or somewhat satisfied (34%) with Washtenaw County as a place to live. These results are identical to those of the 2009 survey.

The public is divided on whether Washtenaw County is a better or worse place to live today than it was five years ago. Twenty-two percent (22%) say that Washtenaw County is a **better** place to live today than it was five years ago while

another fourth (29%) say it is a **worse** place to live today. A plurality of 40% voluntarily say that the county today is about the same as a place to live as it was five years ago. The remaining 9% are not sure. These results are similar to those of 2009, although slightly less optimistic. In 2009 24% said things were better and 25% said worse than they were in 2004. In 2011, 22% said things were better and 29% said things were worse than 2006. Nonetheless, the consensus is that the quality of life is very satisfactory.

Importance of providing public transit



Q11. How important do you think it is to provide public transit services in Washtenaw County?

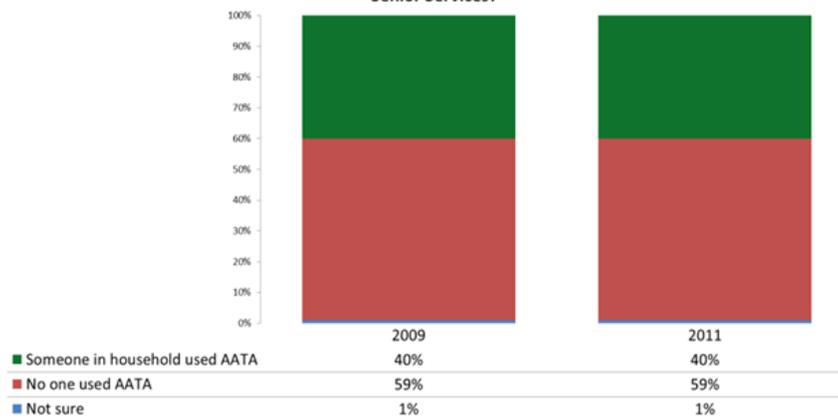
■ Extremely important	35%	36%
■ Very important	37%	33%
■ Somewhat important	19%	22%
■ Not very important	7%	8%
■ Not sure	2%	1%

How important is it to provide public transit ?

As in 2009, in 2011, more than two thirds of respondents (69%) think it is extremely important or very important to provide transit services in Washtenaw County. Very few, only 8%, believe it is not very important to do so.

Using public transit

Q12. In the past year, have you or anyone in your household ridden any public transit in Washtenaw County, including AATA, The Ride, People Express, the Wave, or Manchester Senior Services?



How widely is public transit used?

A high proportion of Washtenaw households (40%) have used public transportation in the past year. In many other communities the total percent of the population having used public transit in the past year is in the range of 25% to 30%.

Rating AATA

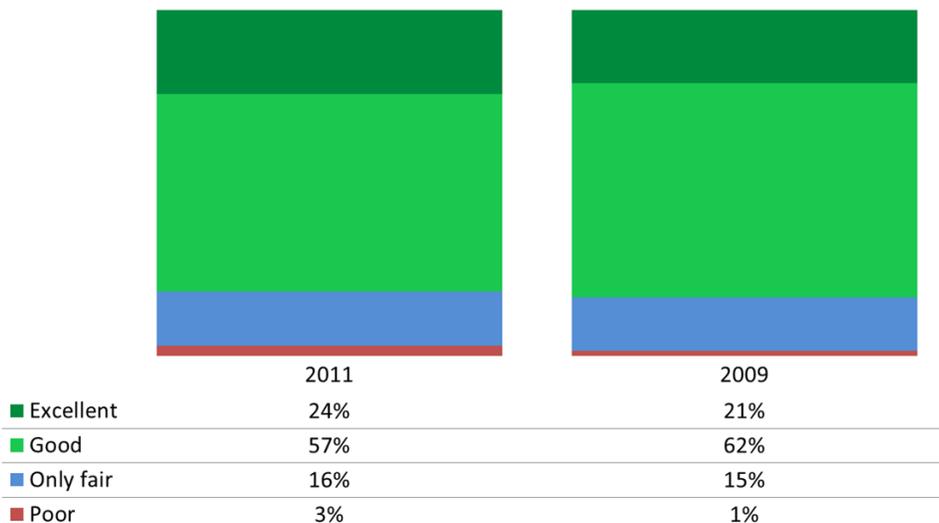
How well does the public believe AATA does as a provider of transit service?

The public’s rating of AATA’s performance as a transit provider continues to be very positive. Of those who expressed an opinion, 81% rated AATA as excellent or good.

Change since 2009 has been minimal with some statistically unimportant shifting from the category of “good”

to the categories of “Excellent,” (+3%) and “Not sure” (+2%).

Q10 How would you rate the job AATA currently does of providing public transit services? (Percentages include only those able to rate service)

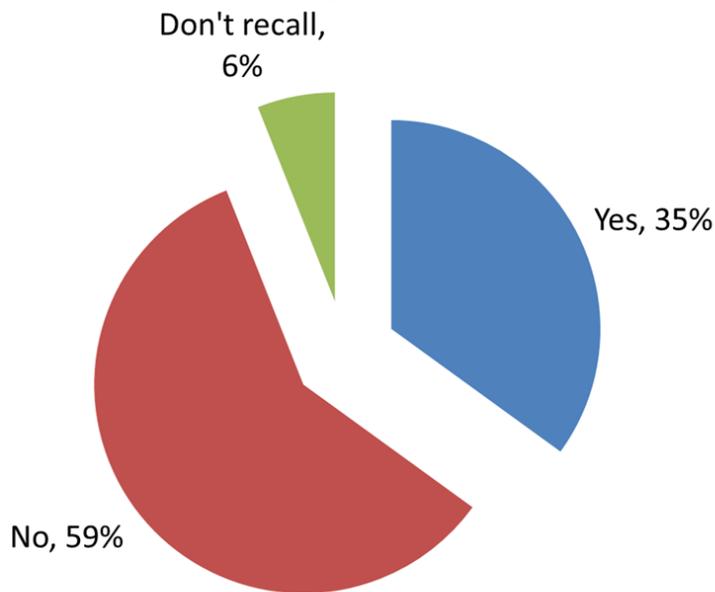


Awareness of a new county-wide transit agency

Are people aware of the development of a new county-wide transit agency?

More than one-third of the public (35%) have heard about a new public transit agency that will have county-wide responsibility. Most who have heard of it have some very general idea of what this agency would be undertaking.

5. Have you heard anything in the past year about a new county-wide public transit agency in Washtenaw County?

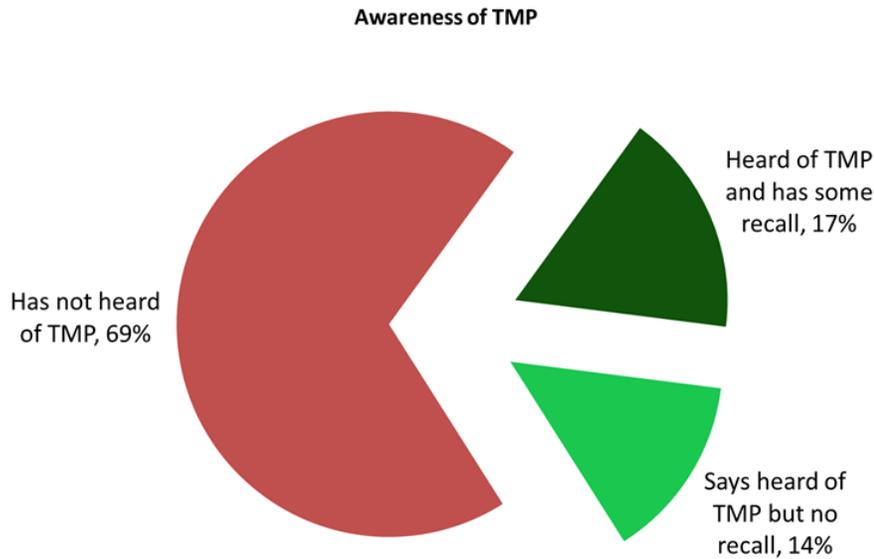


Awareness of the Transit Master Plan

The development of the *Transit Master Plan* (TMP) for Washtenaw County involved not only professional planners, but also input from thousands of citizens. When the public was asked in the survey if they had heard of the TMP, a total of 31% said they had. This included 14% who said they had heard of it, but knew nothing

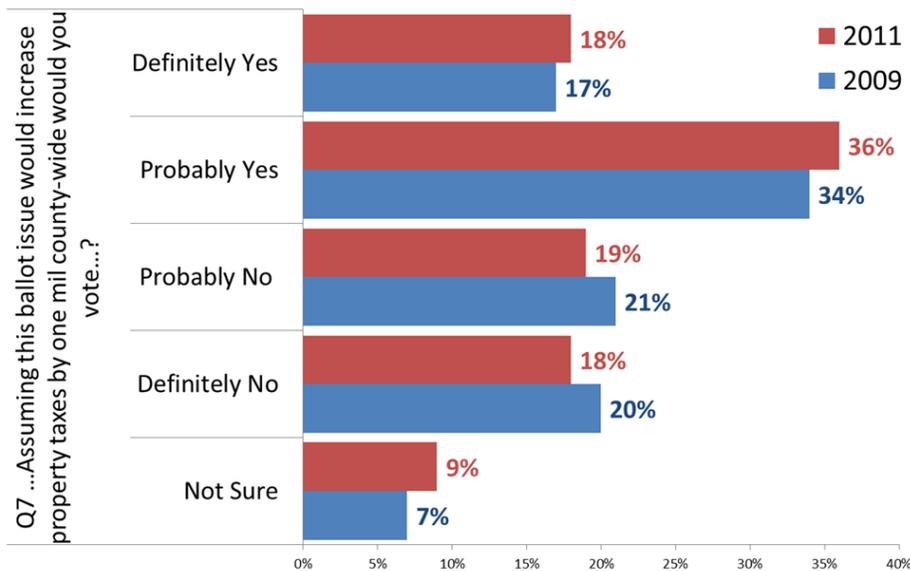
about its substance, and 17% who recalled something specific about the plan.

These levels of awareness for something as detailed and technical as a master plan for thirty year development of transit are quite high in our experience.



Attitudes toward a one mil increase to expand transit service

To realize the various elements of the TMP would require public funding. In both 2009 and 2011, respondents were asked a question about a millage issue. This was more a measurement of attitudes than a vote question because the “vote” was on a continuum as shown in the chart, and was not a simple vote “For” or “Against.” In 2011, those voting “definitely yes” or “definitely no,” were equal in number (18%). But those who answered “Probably yes” greatly outnumbered those who answered

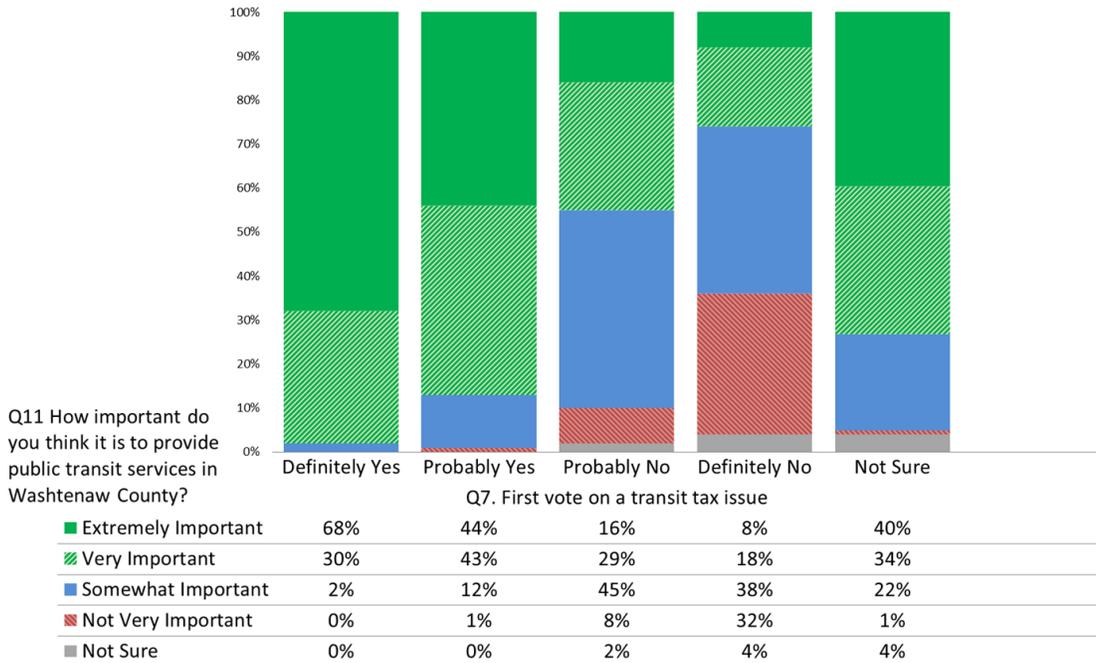


“Probably no.” This suggests that while the public leans toward approval of a millage issue to expand transit service, approximately one-third are positive, but are also reserving judgment to some extent.

However, the bottom line is that when asked if they would support a one mil increase to fund county wide expansion of public transit, majorities in both 2009 (51%) and 2011 (54%) answered positively.

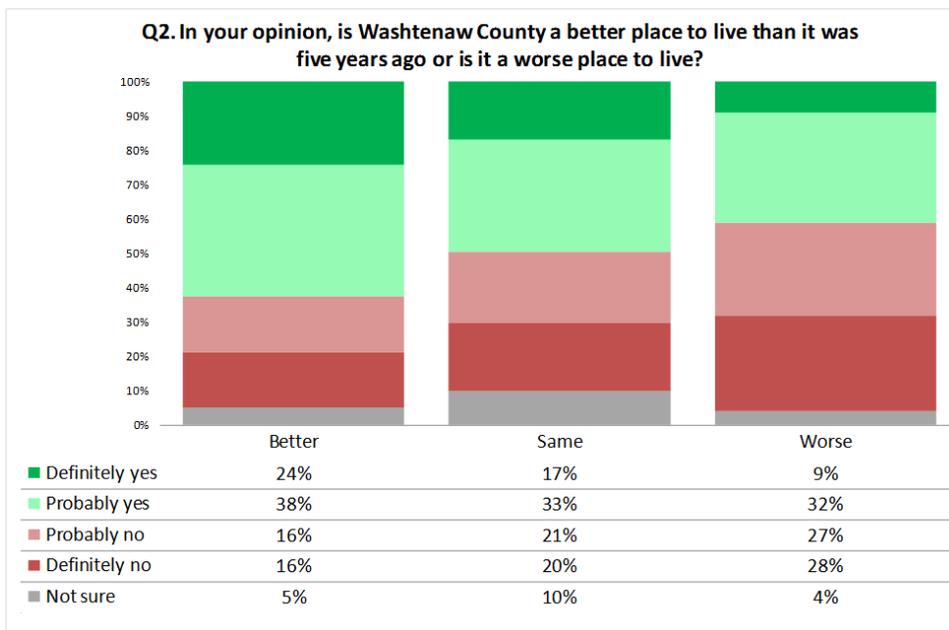
The importance of providing public transit

The degree of willingness to provide increased millage to fund transit expansion is, as one would expect, closely related to the strength of the belief that it is important to provide public transit service in the county. Of those who said they would definitely vote yes on a millage issue, 68% said it is extremely important to provide transit service and none (0%) said it was not very important. On the other hand, of those definitely opposed, 32% said it is not very important. Of the respondents who said they would probably support such a millage, a total of 87% said it was either extremely important or very important to provide transit service. This suggests that while they feel less intensely about this issue than those who definitely support it, most do tend to believe in the importance of providing transit service.



Optimism and support for transit development

It is not only attitudes toward transit service *per se* that influence the level of support people feel for a transit expansion ballot issue. Optimism about the direction of the community also plays a part. The chart below shows the relationship between the optimistic sense that things locally are moving in the right direction, and the degree



of support people feel for a transit development millage issue. Those who feel that Washtenaw County is a better place to live than it was five years ago are much more likely (total of 62%) to definitely or probably support the transit issue than those who feel things are worse (total of 41% support the issue).

Reasons to oppose a transit millage issue

Respondents were asked to respond on a continuum from strong agreement to strong disagreement to a series of statements that were negative toward a transit millage increase. Agreement would undermine issue support .

Affordability. The statement with the strongest and most equally divided response was that while the respondent would like to expand public transit he or she “...can’t afford to pay any more taxes.” The public is almost evenly divided on this matter, with a total of 49% disagreeing with this statement and 47% agreeing.

Economy. The latter response has to be seen in the light of response to the second item in the chart—attitudes toward the economy. While a majority of 55% disagreed, a total of 43% agreed that “The economy is too uncertain...” for them to support a transit millage increase. Thus, the willingness of the public to fund the types of transit service improvements described in the TMP at a level of one mil is somewhat circumscribed by concerns about both taxes and the state of the economy.

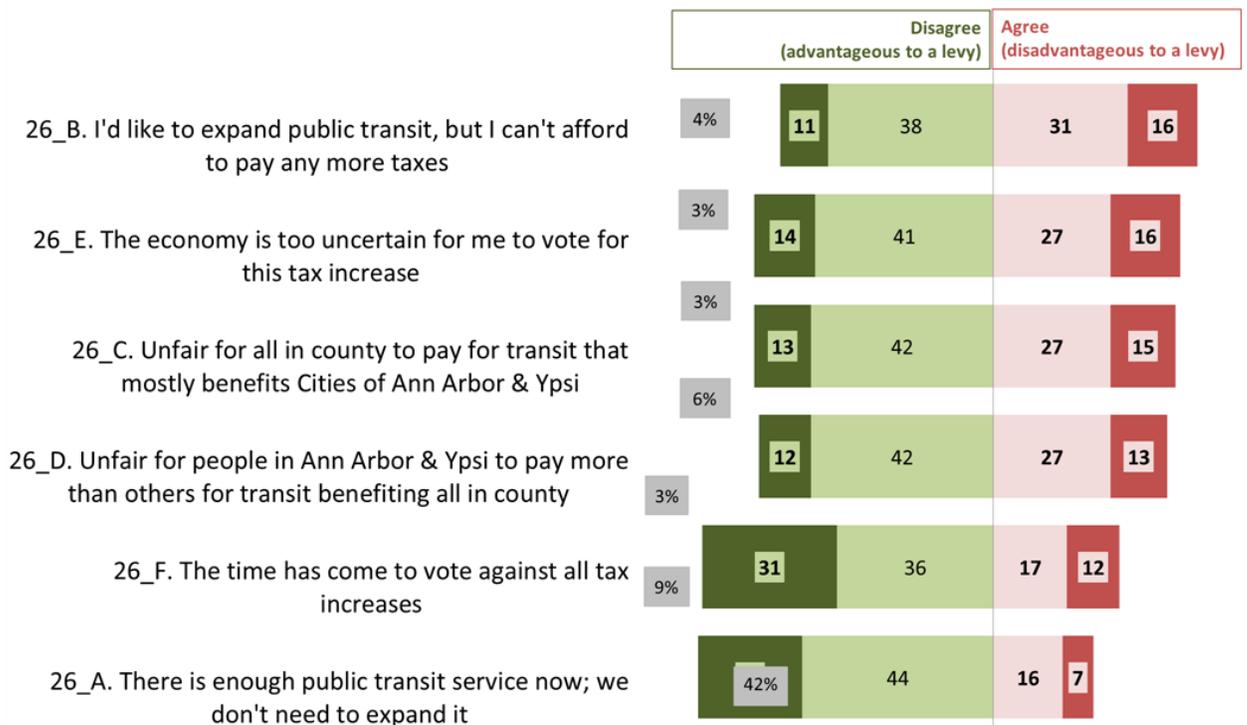
Taxes. On the other hand, by a ratio of more than 2:1 (67% to 29%), respondents *reject* the statement that “The time has come to vote against all tax increases.” And, by a 3:1 ratio (68% to 23%) respondents reject the statement that “There is enough public transit service now; we don’t need to expand it.” Thus, in spite of tax and economic concerns, the public is not rejecting all millage increases , and is indicating an interest in expansion of transit service.

Fairness. If a flat one mill increase were approved, the millage rate would differ among Washtenaw County communities. While Ann Arbor property owners now pay two mills and Ypsilanti one mil, owners elsewhere in the county pay no transit millage. Thus a flat one mil increase would result in county-wide service, but would retain differing millage rates. This evokes concern about fairness. Majorities reject both the statement that it is “...unfair for everyone in the county to pay for transit that mostly benefits Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti,” and (conversely) that it is “...unfair for people in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti to pay more than others for transit benefiting the whole county.” The statements are rejected by 55% and 54%, respectively., but 42% and 40% (respectively) agree with them,. an indication that the rate-fairness issue is of concern to a significant minority..

Agreement / disagreement with statements that would undermine a vote for a transit millage if voters agreed

(Total "don't know" shown at ends of bars. Undecided voters omitted in bar percentages)

■ Don't know ■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree



Statements that tend to support a transit millage issue were also examined.

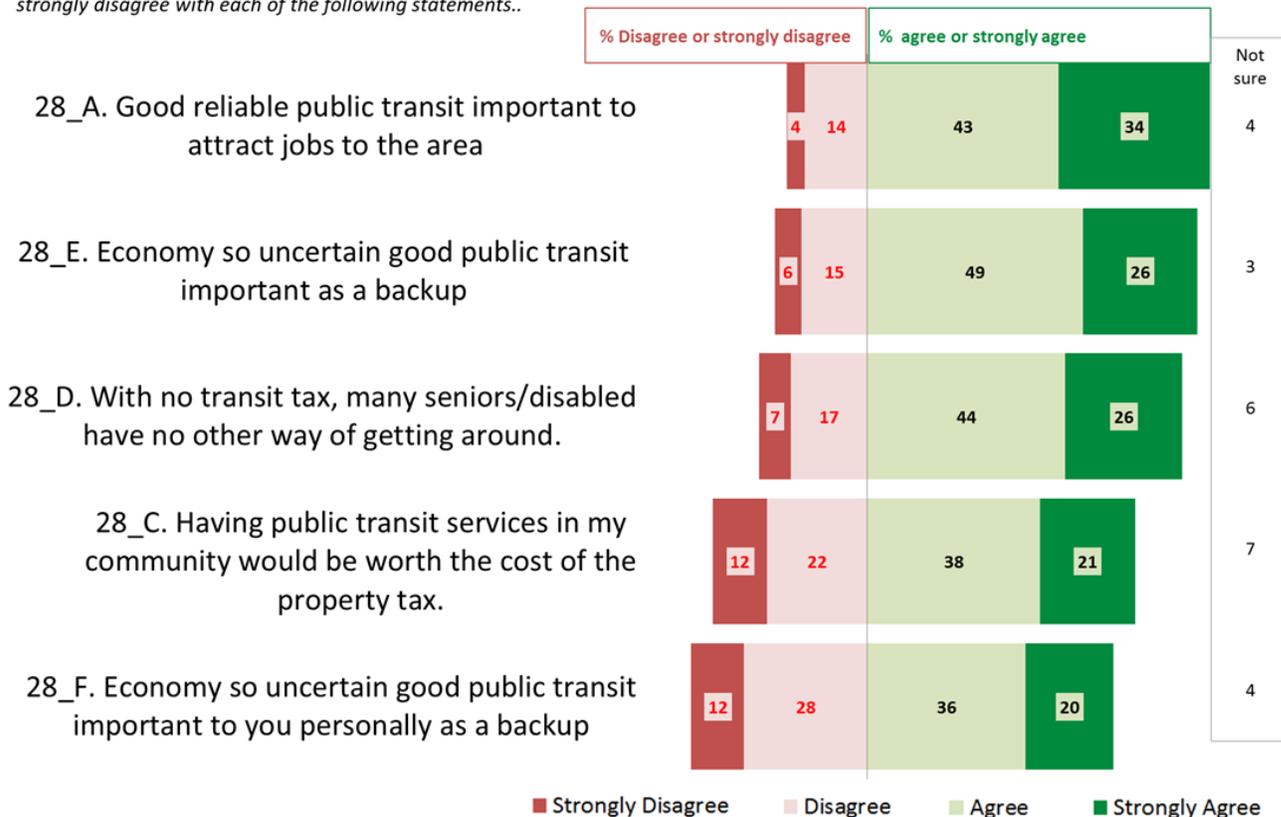
Public transit is important to jobs and the economy. Overwhelmingly, respondents agreed that good, reliable public transportation is important to jobs and the economy (77% agree; 18% disagree). This is a very important consideration, especially given concerns about the state of the economy. It also is reflected in the inclusion of an emphasis on commuting services in the TMP.

Economic uncertainty makes a transit backup necessary for the community. By a ratio of 75% agreeing to 21% disagreeing, respondents agreed that economic uncertainty made it important to have the backup of a good public transportation system. Also, it is clear that although economic uncertainty is seen by many as a good reason to support public transit for the community as a whole, fewer people (56%) perceive themselves personally as needing such a backup.

Seniors and those with disabilities need transit. By a similarly large ratio (60% agree; 23% disagree), respondents agreed that many seniors and persons with disabilities would have no way to get around in the absence of a tax supported transit service. This is a very important aspect of public opinion on transit expansion.

Public transit is worth the cost. A majority of 59% agree that having public transit in their communities would “...be worth the cost of the property tax.” However, one-third of respondents (34%) disagree, an indication that cost-consciousness is a substantial part of the reason for opposition to this issue.

Q28 Now please tell me if you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements..



What transit improvements does the public perceive as important?

The Transit Master Plan calls for a number of changes and additions to current service. Respondents were asked how important they perceived each of them to be.

Service for seniors and persons with disabilities is very important. Of the additional services that could be provided if the transit expansion millage passes, only one was seen as very important to provide by a majority of voters: 56% said it is very important to provide expanded countywide door-to-door service for senior citizens and persons with disabilities. Another 30% said this is somewhat important to provide.

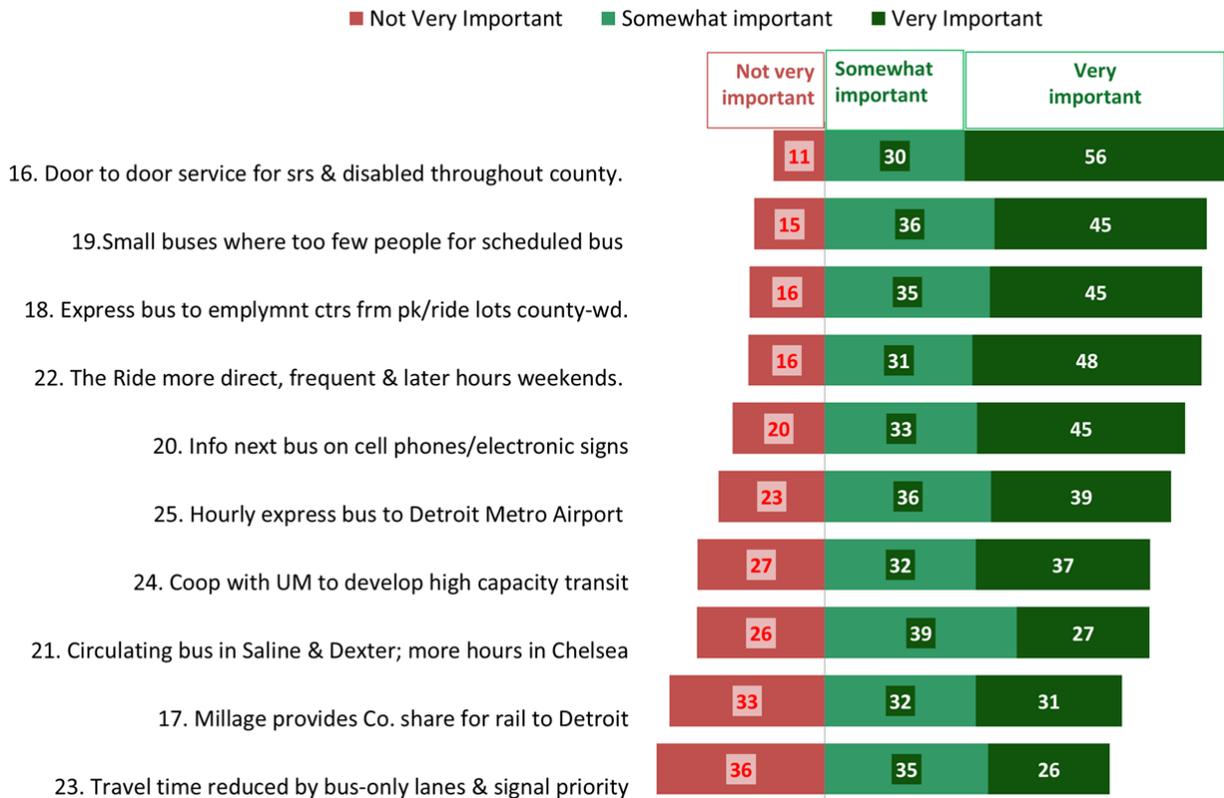
Other additional services are also important to the public. Between 45% and 48% rated four other service improvements as "very important." Each of these proposed service expansions attracts a much higher percentage saying the service is very important than the percentage saying it is not very important.

- The four services are:
 - ⇒ *Small buses in presently unserved areas* to provide transportation to major destinations and to access scheduled service (45% very, 36% somewhat, and 15% not very important).
 - ⇒ *Express bus service to major employment centers* (45% very, 35% somewhat, and 16% not very, important).
 - ⇒ *The Ride's service made more direct and expanded on weekends* (48% very, 31% somewhat, and 16% not very, important).
 - ⇒ *Information on when the next bus is coming* provided on cell phones and electronic signs (45% very, 33% somewhat, and 20% not very, important).
- Two other items attract less support than those above, but still garner significantly more responses that the service is very important than responses saying that it is not very important. They are:
 - ⇒ *Hourly express bus to Detroit Metro Airport* (39% very, 36% somewhat, and 23% not very, important).
 - ⇒ *Plans with U of M to develop high capacity transit* (38% very, 32% somewhat, and 26% not very, important)

Local service in Saline and Dexter and extension of hours in Chelsea are very localized and on a county-wide basis would be unlikely to be widely considered as important. Yet even there, a total of 66% said it was very or somewhat important. The improvement that is perhaps the most technical, and probably least desirable to those who drive is last on the list — travel time reduction through the use of bus only lanes and signal priority for buses (26% very, 35, somewhat, and 36% not very, important).

Importance of services AATA could provide if a millage passes

(Total "don't know" and "somewhat important" shown at ends of bars)



There is a strong belief that public transit is an important service. An unusually large proportion of households include someone who has used AATA or other local transit services in the past year. AATA's performance as a transit provider is highly rated.

The public mood is positive. Quality of life in Washtenaw County continues to be seen very favorably by most people. Although the public is somewhat divided on whether the county is a better place to live now than it was five years ago, most perceive things as the same or better than five years previously.

More than one-third of the public have heard about a new county-wide transit agency. A reasonably large number of people have heard of the Transit Master Plan and can describe it in at least a basic manner.

Asked if they would support a one mil increase in property tax to support the expansion of transit county-wide, a total of 54% indicate they would, although many of them indicate only that they would probably support it. That the issue currently enjoys majority support does not mean that it would pass easily because while most see the need for additional transit service some voters, especially those who said they would *probably* support the issue have concerns about the affordability of additional millage.

A majority of the public say that all of the ten transit improvements in the Transit Master Plan they were asked about are either very or somewhat important to implement. The strongest majority is for door to door service county-wide for seniors and people with disabilities, but there is also strong support for other service that would reach out into areas not now served. These include, for example, small buses in service in areas too sparsely populated for regular fixed route service, express buses to employment centers from park and ride lots, and additional service on weekends on existing AATA routes.