

The Five-Year Program

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do we need improved transit in Washtenaw County?

The support for mass transit/countywide service is overwhelming – 70 percent of Washtenaw County residents believe it's important.

Significant gaps exist in the services being provided now. Some areas of Washtenaw County have no service whatsoever. We need to ensure our growing elderly population is able to remain independent. Additionally, rising gas prices continue to make commuting alone unaffordable. Good, affordable public transportation promotes a healthier quality of life, attracts businesses and jobs locally and helps spur economic development throughout our region.

Who benefits from improved transit?

You or someone you know depends on/benefits from public transportation. Our region needs better options for its residents and visitors to connect, prosper and thrive. The AATA Five-Year Transit Program provides options for people in all walks of life: from youth traveling to their first job; parents deciding whether to save for college or buy another car; workers reducing stress, saving time and money on their daily commute; and seniors and people with disabilities staying active in their downtown or traveling to the nearest medical center. Public transit services help reduce congestion on the roads commuters travel. Ignoring these critical needs merely increases our transportation and infrastructure challenges in the future.

How many people ride buses in Washtenaw County?

As reported June 4, 2012 by *USA Today*, the AATA saw a 9 percent increase in the first quarter of 2012 compared with last year – ranking No. 4 nationally for ridership gains. Today:

- 6 million+ trips are taken per year on TheRide
- 6 million+ annual trips are taken on U-M bus services
- 40,000+ annual trips are taken on WWAVE services
- 22,000+ annual trips are taken on People's Express services
- 4,000 annual trips are taken on Manchester Senior Services

We estimate that annual ridership will rise by 3.3 million more rider trips when all the 5-year service improvements are implemented.

What are the most immediate improvements I will see as part of the Five-Year Program?

The immediate improvements will enhance existing Ann Arbor- and Ypsilanti-area services and increase access to public transportation in underserved areas of Washtenaw County.

Throughout Washtenaw County, you will see:

- Increased door-to-door bus service for seniors and people with disabilities
- Several express routes reduce local congestion and help workers reach their jobs in urban areas
- New Park & Ride lots
- Local routes in Chelsea, Milan, Saline and Dexter

In the urban Ann Arbor area, residents can expect:

- Buses that come earlier and run later into the evening
- Increased service frequency on key corridors and many local routes
- More weekend routes and longer weekend hours

In the urban Ypsilanti area, residents can expect:

- Double the number of routes for quicker and more direct service
- Increased peak-hour buses coming every 30 minutes (down from one hour)
- Improved weekend service

What improvements are being proposed over the 5-Year time frame?

Overall in the urban area, there will be a 25% increase in service on weekdays and a 120-130 % service increase on weekends. Currently, many areas that are served get service that operates only for limited times. For example, most Dial-A-Ride is 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, while we propose to offer it from 6:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. and add Saturday hours from 8:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. If all proposed services in the Five-Year Service Program are implemented, an estimated 3.3 million additional rider trips per year will be taken on Washtenaw County's improved public transportation network.

Will any existing services decrease if a new countywide transit authority is created?

All existing public transportation services will be maintained. The Five-Year Service Program calls for improvements to existing services and implementation of new services, provided that new funding sources are secured.

How will we pay for the public transit improvements in the Five-Year Service Program?

A Financial Task Force of business experts and community leaders has created recommendations for how to fund the countywide transit improvements. Their report shows that a 0.5 to 1.0 mill property tax millage could raise the needed funds. If all services are implemented in the 5-Year Program, we estimate the owner of a \$200,000 home would pay about \$60 per year if the proposal were approved. The cost would be approximately \$1 per week for the average Washtenaw County homeowner.

Will bus fares increase?

A countywide fare and ticketing system needs to 1) introduce some new fares and ways of paying to be used on new services that don't exist today; 2) integrate the systems of each carrier in a way that makes it as easy as possible for riders to understand and be able to use multiple services as seamlessly as possible, and 3) achieve an optimal trade-off between ridership goals and revenue goals. The program cites the recommendations of our consultant and the Financial Task Force to increase fares in general. A modest fare increase is assumed for budgetary purposes. However, it will be up to a new transit authority board to decide on any fare increases.

Will the public have a say in all of this?

Yes. The public has been and will continue to be asked to provide input throughout every step of the process. Regular District Advisory Committee meetings have been held throughout the county in addition to community and public board meetings, outreach to community festivals, and online forums.

More importantly, the new authority can only improve and expand transit services if voters in the participating communities approve local funding.

