



To: Board of Directors  
From: Michael Ford, Chief Executive Officer  
Date: July 18, 2013  
Re: Regional Transit Authority Master Agreement and Coordination "Top Five"

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### **Status of the Master Agreement**

The Regional Transit Authority (RTA) transit Providers Advisory Committee (PAC) has started meeting. A Draft Master Agreement, based largely on our draft Memorandum of Understanding language, is being developed to give more definition of the relationship between the transit providers and the RTA, particularly regarding the timing and logistics of plans, the assurance of local and federal funds being allocated and distributed to AATA, and how state local bus operating (LBO) funds will be distributed. Staff has provided input through draft language that had been developed with local/board member/legal input and through meetings with the RTA.

AATA is in a limited position as the legislation provides the RTA with broad powers. The RTA is not required to develop a Master Agreement, but sees great benefit in ensuring that transit providers are able to function well while creating an environment of cooperation. Our comments have been well received and incorporated (e.g. outline of agreement, protections on local funding, method of distribution of state funding, inclusion of discretionary funding, maintenance of local policies and procedures, etc.). Staff is satisfied with most of the terms as outlined as they accurately reflect legislation and create an environment in which AATA can continue to operate with local processes, funding, and policies intact.

The one item that has garnered further discussion is the RTA's use of LBO for operating funds in addition to the state grants. All providers recommended that the RTA board look for other funding options. The RTA board directed their staff to look for alternative funding. The RTA staff has returned with a reduced RTA operating budget, reduced use of the region's LBO from 2% to no more than 1%, and the elimination of the RTA's use of the LBO after voter-approved funding is established, but have said that other operating funding is not available. AATA staff are encouraged that the RTA's use of the LBO has been reduced and made temporary. RTA board members have stated that the use of LBO should be a worst case option, requested further Master Agreement language not to use LBO until state grants and other sources are exhausted, and are actively looking into public and private sources. However, new sources of funds may not be available before the RTA approves the Master Agreement. For FY2014, the

RTA is budgeting the use of 0.77% of the region's LBO which would cost AATA approximately \$68,923.

The RTA board has not yet approved this Master Agreement, but is expected to pass it within the month as it is needed as a prerequisite to secure planning grants and establishing funding to hire a CEO. While the RTA is not required to gain AATA's approval on the Master Agreement, the RTA board desires AATA's input.

**Coordination Top Five: What does AATA want the RTA to work on?**

Attached is a draft document for your input listing coordination items as will be discussed by the PAC.

The PAC members have been requested to bring their organization's "top five" coordination opportunities that they would like the RTA to work on. Our internal discussions yielded three top priority items.

From previous discussions, it is clear that individuals from SMART would like to coordinate fares and develop cross-regional service standards. While these may not be AATA's highest priorities, if regional standards are created, it will be important for AATA to have been a voice in the design process. PAC discussion regarding these items will be exploratory and start out informally. So, the list is an important starting place, but would not be set in stone.

We are asking for your input on coordination items that the AATA Board would like added, subtracted or modified before bringing the list to the PAC.

# Potential AATA/RTA Coordination Opportunities

## Service coordination interests: AATA in Context

AATA has strong interest in connecting more people to the transit system and the continuous improvement of its network within its existing service area, in Washtenaw County, as well as improving connections to the Detroit Metro area and to other areas in its commute-shed such as Livingston County. The RTA has the potential to plan and actualize many of these cross-regional goals. Though, from a service perspective AATA's regional interests can be generally prioritized as follows:

1. **Improved and expanded transit options within Washtenaw County**, particularly in the "Urban Core" of Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti
2. **Cross-regional interconnectivity:** Transit and paratransit connections between Ann Arbor/Washtenaw County from Detroit Metro Area, particularly from western Wayne, into Ann Arbor area. The current challenge is that "you can't get there from here."
3. Transit options from **Livingston County** into Ann Arbor area.

## AATA's Cross-Regional Top "Five"

Outside the Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti Urban Core, AATA's priorities for cross-regional connections to Detroit Metro include the following. More details for these and several other potential coordination opportunities can be found below.

1. ExpressRide between Canton and Ann Arbor (within 1 year)
2. Other cross-regional connectivity to Western Wayne and Detroit
  - a. Connections to SMART
  - b. Ann Arbor to Detroit Rail
  - c. AirRide
  - d. Paratransit
  - e. Fare media
3. Funding/Development for transit technology improvements (e.g. Transit Signal Priority)

## Current status of regional services:

AATA has worked hard to offer a couple cross-regional services and are seeing successes. Though, two important challenges have emerged:

- Use of local tax funds for service for commuters outside Washtenaw County has raised significant local criticism. The AATA board has adopted not using local funds for outside commuter services as a policy.
- Most of the Western Wayne communities opt out of SMART—there are not many transit services to connect to.
- The two regional services AATA offers are:
  - AATA partners with MichiganFlyer to offer **AirRide** service from Ann Arbor to DTW airport. Of the 12 round trips, 8 originate in Lansing and 4 originate in Ann Arbor. Michigan Flyer has just been awarded a TCSP grant which could expand service provision from Lansing.

- AATA currently operates **ExpressRide** service to/from Canton and Ann Arbor with 2 round trips per day. Local sentiment and board resolution have determined that the local cost of service of ~\$15,000 must be supported through fares, 3<sup>rd</sup> parties, or host community contributions. Canton recently declined to contribute monetarily, but agreed to some in kind contributions. UM and AADDA assist with fares for UM employees and downtown employees, respectively. Local funding will need to be addressed again next year.

#### Plans/Research and Development:

AATA is preparing for its future, locally and regionally. In particular, the AATA long range Transit Master Plan calls for increased fixed route, demand response, high capacity transit options, and park and ride lots within Washtenaw County, as well as Rail connections and ExpressRide services to/from neighboring counties. Currently these projects are in various stages of research and development:

- **“Urban Core”** improvements and expansion of fixed route, demand response, and potential ExpressRoutes in Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti and nearby townships. Ypsilanti City is currently in the process of joining AATA, our name will change from AATA to the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority (A3TA). AATA and local officials in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti are in talks about the timing and level of a potential transit millage in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti for improved services. AATA and local officials from nearby townships are in talks about improving and expanding services through a variety of funding mechanisms. For communities outside this core, AATA will work with interested partners who are able to provide new and sustained funding.
- **Rail.** Ann Arbor’s vision for regional high capacity transit has been rail on existing rail corridors.
  - The Mayor of Ann Arbor has promoted rail projects throughout his tenure, particularly for a new station near the UM Hospital
  - MDOT is rehabilitating a number of rail cars
  - Staff lead WALLY R&D project, a proposed rail connection between Ann Arbor and Howell in Livingston County on existing tracks. Demo car was recently displayed at the Ann Arbor Mayor’s Green Fair. Staff will complete a station design project in mid-2014. There are some challenges with ownership of section of rail in north Ann Arbor.
  - Staff participate in SEMCOG’s discussions of Ann Arbor to Detroit (East/West) Rail
- Exploration of **Transit Signal Priority** measures with City of Ann Arbor and Washtenaw County.
- Incremental development of **BRT elements** on Washtenaw Avenue, the main corridor connecting Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti
- **Connector Study** with City of Ann Arbor, AADDA, and UM, a proposed high capacity transit option connecting northeast Ann Arbor, UM’s campuses, and south Ann Arbor. An Alternatives Analysis will be completed in spring of 2014 and the partners are actively discussing next steps.

## Other coordination interests

Outside of the Transit Master Plan and “fixed” route services, AATA has discussed the following as areas of potential coordination:

### Master Plan and Calendar

AATA would like to develop the timeline and process for updating the regional and local plans and to get an understanding of what the plans will contain.

### Dashboard

While AATA has not had a strong interest in regional standards, AATA has long-established service standards and will be updating them shortly.

### **Connected Paratransit**

In addition to connected fixed route transit services, there is strong interest in ensuring paratransit customers can travel throughout the region, perhaps even developing or adopting a new model for service.

### **ADA Compliance**

AATA staff would be interested in coordination of ADA adherence, training, policy & guidelines, eligibility, and accessibility & accommodations.

### **Joint Purchasing**

AATA will be doing a bus purchase on its own this year for buses to be delivered in 2015. Many purchases are extremely time intensive. As a relatively small provider, AATA is sometimes unable to attract major industry bidders (e.g. fareboxes) because it's relatively small size.

### **Support Services with regional service provision (Fare media, maps, website, etc)**

If regional service is created, AATA staff believe that tools that support service are essential. AATA is interested in being at the table in the development and design, however, before they are truly useful to AATA riders, there must be regional service!

#### **Fare Media**

AATA uses a GFI Farebox and uses "swipe" cards, but are interested in implementing Proximity "Smart" Cards. There are several other fare and fare media considerations that staff plan to examine over the next year.

#### **Regional Brand/Website**

It would be beneficial for the RTA website have links to each service, maps, etc.

#### **Regional Map**

A regional map would be challenging to display at a useful scale if it includes Washtenaw County. However, it would be very beneficial to show points of connection between the systems and ensure that Service Information is available. Electronic services, like Google Transit, are a great start.