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**AATA report: Ridership would increase by 3.6 million passenger trips annually within five years of new countywide transit system**  
*Washtenaw County residents would see more service, more routes, more choices*

**ANN ARBOR** – Ridership will increase by 50 percent – to an estimated 9.6 million passenger trips per year – on a new public transportation system for Washtenaw County residents and visitors if all the proposed services are implemented under a five-year plan released today by the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority (AATA).

The new transit plan would make a significant impact on the environmental quality, economic affordability and accessibility of all communities within Washtenaw County from 2013-2018, said Michael G. Ford, AATA’s chief executive officer.

“Our vision would allow anyone in Washtenaw County to travel throughout the county using public transportation,” Ford said.

“Our residents and our communities have to connect to prosper and thrive,” Ford added. “This plan will serve the transit needs of residents and businesses regardless of where they live in Washtenaw County, while also promoting regional economic development and a better quality of life.”

The plan proposes an array of improvements throughout Washtenaw County, including:

- A 56 percent increase in service hours in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti;

- More service for Chelsea, Dexter, Milan, Saline and other communities;
- More frequent service;
- More routes and fewer transfers;
- More affordable fare choices; and
- Extended weekend and late-night service.

The new AATA report, officially titled the “Five-Year Transit Program,” includes projected operating and capital expenses of the program that total nearly \$223 million over the five-year period. The five-year expenditures would be offset by an estimated \$184.2 million in revenue, resulting in a “gap” of \$38.8 million. The Five-Year Transit Program also shows the system currently provides 6 million rides annually, with projected growth of 3.6 million rides by 2018.

To finance these improvements, transit officials plan to seek a countywide levy of 0.584 mills – an amount that would cost about \$1 a week for most Washtenaw County taxpayers. The millage may go before voters as soon as May 2013.

Additional funding for countywide mass transit enjoys support from a clear majority of Washtenaw County residents. A March AATA survey, for example, shows 59% of likely voters in Washtenaw County support a new 1-mill property tax that would fund a new countywide public transit agency . The Five-Year Transit Program calls for a new millage that is almost half that amount, which should strengthen support for a 2013 millage request, Ford said.

The new report creates a short term plan for public transportation in Washtenaw County and creates the blueprint to begin implementing the 30-Year vision previously developed. The vision is a culmination of two years of work in obtaining input from citizens, officials and civic leaders representing local governments from throughout county.

“In order to ensure all communities that wish to participate in countywide transportation will have a voice in the decision-making process, we have established districts representing every local government unit in the county and each district selected a representative. These representatives have been meeting to discuss future plans and are now meeting with the AATA Board at every official meeting,” said AATA Board Chair Jesse Bernstein. “As we move forward with implementation, each community can decide to participate in the new transit organization and receive services paid for with local voter-approved funds or not.”

All Washtenaw County citizens are invited to learn about the Five-Year Transit Program at any one of eight public meetings scheduled in September:

<b>Area</b>	<b>Date &amp; Time</b>	<b>Meeting Location</b>
South Central	Tues., Sept. 11, 7-9 p.m.	Saline Senior Center
North Central	Wed., Sept. 12, 7-9 p.m.	Scio Township Hall
Southeast	Thurs., Sept. 13, 6:30-8:30 p.m.	Ypsilanti District Library
Ypsilanti	Mon., Sept. 17, 6:30-8:30 p.m.	Ypsilanti City Hall
Pittsfield	Tues., Sept. 18, 6:30-8:30 p.m.	Pittsfield Senior Center
Ann Arbor	Mon., Sept. 24, 6:30-8:30 p.m.	Ann Arbor Public Library
Northeast	Tues., Sept. 25, 5:30-7:30 p.m.	Superior Township Hall
West	Thurs., Sept. 27, 6:30-8:30 p.m.	Village of Manchester Hall

A copy of the Five-Year Transit Program and public meeting dates and times are available at [www.MovingYouForward.org](http://www.MovingYouForward.org).

*The Ann Arbor Transportation Authority (TheRide) was chartered in 1969 by the City of Ann Arbor, Michigan, as a not-for-profit unit of government. AATA operates the local public transit system for the greater Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area, enabling the area’s residents to reach their destinations at reasonable cost, and offers the region efficient, environmentally sound transportation alternatives. For more information, please visit [www.TheRide.org](http://www.TheRide.org).*

*TheRide’s Board of Directors has endorsed a 30-year Transit Master Plan for Washtenaw County. Updates on the progress of the plan are available at*

[www.MovingYouForward.org](http://www.MovingYouForward.org).

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