

TRANSIT

Topline Asks

1. Will you support connecting Oakland County to multiple modes of transportation with a de-emphasis on personal automobiles in favor of buses, bicycles, walking, and other modes of climate-efficient transportation?
2. Would you support the creation of a mobility initiative that helps cities plan together across Oakland County, housed under a new sustainability office which can help direct grants and expertise to communities for planning and development of clean transit?
3. Should Oakland County put a moratorium on widening roads until a local funding plan for their long-term maintenance is in place? Would you support Oakland County pushing the Michigan Department of Transportation to create high-occupancy vehicle lanes on I-75 and other major highways to discourage wasteful single-occupancy vehicle travel?

Climate change cannot be solved without addressing transportation. At the heart of the matter is a singular question: how do we move people through our county without damaging the planet and polluting communities? Since 2017, transportation is now the largest emitter of carbon pollution, surpassing electricity. “An increase in travel was the reason transportation eclipsed electricity to be the largest source of CO2 emissions. The total number of miles driven by passenger cars and trucks increased 46% from 1990 to 2017.” [1]

In Southeast Michigan, limited transit options force people to use expensive, polluting cars, even though better technologies and solutions exist. Right now, we invest just a third of what other comparable metro regions invest in their public transportation system. [2]

Economic Development

- According to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), for every one dollar spent on public transportation, an average of four dollars in economic returns is created. [3]
- APTA research has shown that investment in public transportation infrastructure creates jobs in communities of all sizes throughout the country, including in small and rural areas where bus and rail manufacturers are located. [4]
- Cities experience high financial returns from the grouping of talent together in denser areas facilitated with transit, also known as ‘agglomeration.’ This creates more economic development and boosts a region’s competitiveness. In a University of California at Berkeley study, scholars find a “hidden economic value of anywhere from \$1.5 million to \$1.8 billion a year.” Zoning and transportation policies coupled together can unlock millions of dollars of economic productivity in Oakland County. [5]

TRANSIT

Economic Development *continued*

- Cities experience a phenomenon of high financial returns from grouping talent together in denser areas facilitated with transit, also known as ‘agglomeration.’ This creates more economic development and boosts a region’s competitiveness. In a University of California at Berkeley study, scholars find a “hidden economic value of anywhere from \$1.5 million to \$1.8 billion a year.” Zoning and transportation policies coupled together can unlock millions of dollars of economic productivity in Oakland County. [5]
- According to the International Association of Public Transport, “capital investment in public transport sparks a chain reaction in economic activity up to three or four times the initial investment, enabling and promoting urban densification and greater urban productivity. Investments such as these can also provide up to twice as many local jobs compared to investment in other areas, such as roads, due to their complexity and thus the variety of competencies required.” [6]
- We need a regional approach across our five different systems to achieve the vision we need for the future. “In order to effectively provide regional transportation services, we need **regional governance and funding**. Regional governance encompasses [collaboration among transit providers and local governments](#), but also a [regional focus](#) on policies critical to the success of transit, such as [land use and planning](#) and economic development.” [7]

COVID-19 Transit Impacts

- While SMART’s immediate budget is not at risk, as gas tax revenues plummet (and if property taxes decline), future years’ budgets could be at risk.
- SMART is at 20% ridership during the pandemic but, those rides are a critical service that should be protected, particularly because it impacts the most vulnerable people.
- As the community starts to recover, transit will provide vital savings for families struggling financially.
- Our health is tied to how we use land and cities. Our health is tied to our planet’s health. If we want to begin to avoid things like the pandemic happening, if we want to look toward a future that is cleaner, one that is better for all of us, we are going to have to reduce our dependence on individual cars. Transit is not just an essential service, it’s part of our community’s health plan. This is an opportunity to change the way we talk about our work and how others view transit.

TRANSIT

Regional Comparison

- For a public transit system to be effective, it needs sufficient dedicated funding for long-term operations. **Nearly every major metropolitan area has a dedicated regional transit tax** that supports its construction and ongoing operation of buses, trains, senior shuttles, rapid transit, streetcars, and more. Other than SMART’s modest millage, our region lacks such a funding source. [8]
- **The Detroit region spends less on transit than 38 other regions**, including Milwaukee, Columbus, St. Louis, Las Vegas, and Kansas City. [9]
- The Regional Transit Authority analyzed the gaps and limits of southeast Michigan’s transit and developed a plan to provide much more of the transit our region needs. The Regional Transit Master Plan was approved in 2016 by the RTA Board, with support from all four counties and the City of Detroit. [10]
- The average household in the US spends almost 20% of its total income on transportation expenses. For low-income households, this average burden can be as high as 30%, according to a survey conducted by the Center of Neighborhood Technology (CNT) of 28 metropolitan areas across the country. [11]

Reference Links

1. <https://usafacts.org/articles/transportation-now-largest-source-greenhouse-gas-emissions/#:~:text=Transportation%20is%20now%20the%20largest%20source%20of%20greenhouse%20gas%20emissions,electricity%20generation%20continued%20to%20decline.>
2. <https://www.detroittransit.org/>
3. https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/2018_Investment_Brochure.pdf
4. <https://www.apta.com/research-technical-resources/research-reports/public-transit-knowledge/>
5. <https://www.citylab.com/life/2013/08/public-transit-worth-way-more-city-you-think/6532/>
6. <https://www UITP.org/vision-mission>
7. <https://crcmich.org/regional-transportation-in-southeast-michigan-will-the-third-time-be-the-charm>
8. <https://www.detroittransit.org/support-regional-transit-investment/>
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. <https://www.aceee.org/blog/2016/07/america-s-transportation-energy>