

Transit White Paper

Transit is an integral part of Michigan's transportation system. It helps remove barriers to economic activity by connecting workers, consumers, and businesses to key activities and markets supporting Michigan's economic vitality. It also provides a means of transportation to persons who may otherwise not be able to get to needed medical appointments, shopping, work, school, or recreational activities. Transit plays a role in making Michigan a great place to live well and age well.

The *2005-2030 MI Transportation Plan (MITP)* included a [Transit Technical Report](#). The information in the report presented a summary of key policy, planning, and operational data and issues relevant to understanding the current status, potential issues, and future directions for transit in Michigan. It also contained information about transit assets, services, and programs in Michigan.

In 2012, a new [Transit White Paper](#) was drafted that discussed some of the significant changes to transit in Michigan since the 2006 report was compiled. This 2016 white paper provides changes and improvements to the transit industry since 2012.

Existing State of Public Transit in Michigan

Transit in Michigan continues to provide a range of services. There are 79 public transit agencies serving Michigan residents, including 20 urban transit organizations and 38 specialized transportation providers. All 83 counties continue to have some form of public transportation, although service is still limited in some counties. A list of all public transit providers can be found at the Michigan Department of Transportation's (MDOT) [Public Transit Providers website](#).

Map 1 shows where local public transportation bus services are currently available in Michigan.

System Changes Since 2012

Some of the significant changes since 2012 to the transit system in Michigan are:

Regional Transportation Authority of Southeast Michigan (RTA):

The RTA was established for southeast Michigan, via Public Act 387 of 2012. The RTA is comprised of Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, and Washtenaw counties. It is governed by a 10-member board with two representatives from each of the participating counties, one representative from the city of Detroit, and one non-voting member, appointed by the governor, who acts as chairperson. The RTA is charged with coordinating public transit services in the four counties. This includes developing a single master transit plan and coordinating the operating and capital plans of all transportation agencies and authorities in the southeast Michigan region.

In 2016, the RTA will complete their regional transit plan and begin implementing some elements, including regional funding initiatives and selecting service options for major corridors based on alternative analysis recommendations. The alternatives analysis for Woodward Avenue has led to the selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA), Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), along the 27-mile corridor that will operate within the existing right of way, servicing 26 stations primarily on Woodward Avenue through 11 communities in Wayne and Oakland counties. Environmental work is proceeding. Alternatives analyses for the Michigan Avenue and Gratiot Avenue corridors began in 2015. The two studies will evaluate alternatives for reliable, higher-quality transit between Detroit and Mt. Clemens, including the portion of Gratiot Avenue from downtown to M-59 and between Detroit and Ann Arbor, including the Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County (Metro) Airport. Actual service implementation will be dependent on the RTA's ability to secure federal, state and local funding.

The Rapid – Laker Line BRT:

The Laker Line will connect Grand Valley State University's (GVSU) Allendale campus to their downtown campus and the medical mile. It is currently in the environmental assessment phase and service is planned to begin in late 2017 or early 2018, if approved for funding this year by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The Laker Line will replace Routes 50 and 51 and will connect to the Silver Line so that it is a true BRT network. The estimated construction cost is \$64 million and the annual estimated operating expenses are \$3.8 million, which represents an increase of only 3.1 percent from the current Route 50 and Route 51 regular bus service. In a partnership with GVSU, some of the operating expenses will be shared between the university and The Rapid. In addition to the standard shared-use lanes, raised platforms, signal priority, and pre-boarding fare collection, the Laker Line will have lane priority in specific "bus only" areas of the GVSU campus to reduce congestion and increase timeliness of the route.

Detroit – [M-1 Rail \(QLine\)](#):

A nonprofit managed public/private partnership streetcar project. This rail system will connect destinations along the Woodward Avenue corridor beginning north of Grand Boulevard and ending just north of Jefferson Avenue in downtown Detroit. Construction, railcar manufacturing, and testing are under way as the project advances toward the April 2017 revenue service date.

Next steps include complete construction, vehicle and route testing, and completing operational and readiness reviews.

Capital Area Transportation Authority BRT:

In 2011, the Capital Area Transportation Authority (CATA) completed an alternatives analysis for the Michigan Avenue/Grand River Avenue corridor in Lansing, East Lansing, Lansing Township, and Meridian Township, which led to BRT being selected as the LPA. In 2013, the FTA approved CATA to move into the project development phase. An environmental assessment was completed by CATA in 2015 and submitted to FTA for review. FTA approved CATA to begin design work that will allow CATA to refine project construction costs. A final construction timeline has not been set.

Ann Arbor – The Connector:

An alternative analysis is under way to examine various options to improve and enhance public transit from northeast of Ann Arbor to south of Ann Arbor, connecting the campuses of the University of Michigan (UM), downtown Ann Arbor, the medical center, the train station, and commercial areas. The next steps include selection of an LPA, conducting and considering public input to make any revisions, and reporting a final recommendation to the sponsoring agencies, which include the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority (AAATA), UM, the Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority, and the City of Ann Arbor.

Flint’s Mass Transportation Authority (MTA) Corridor Study:

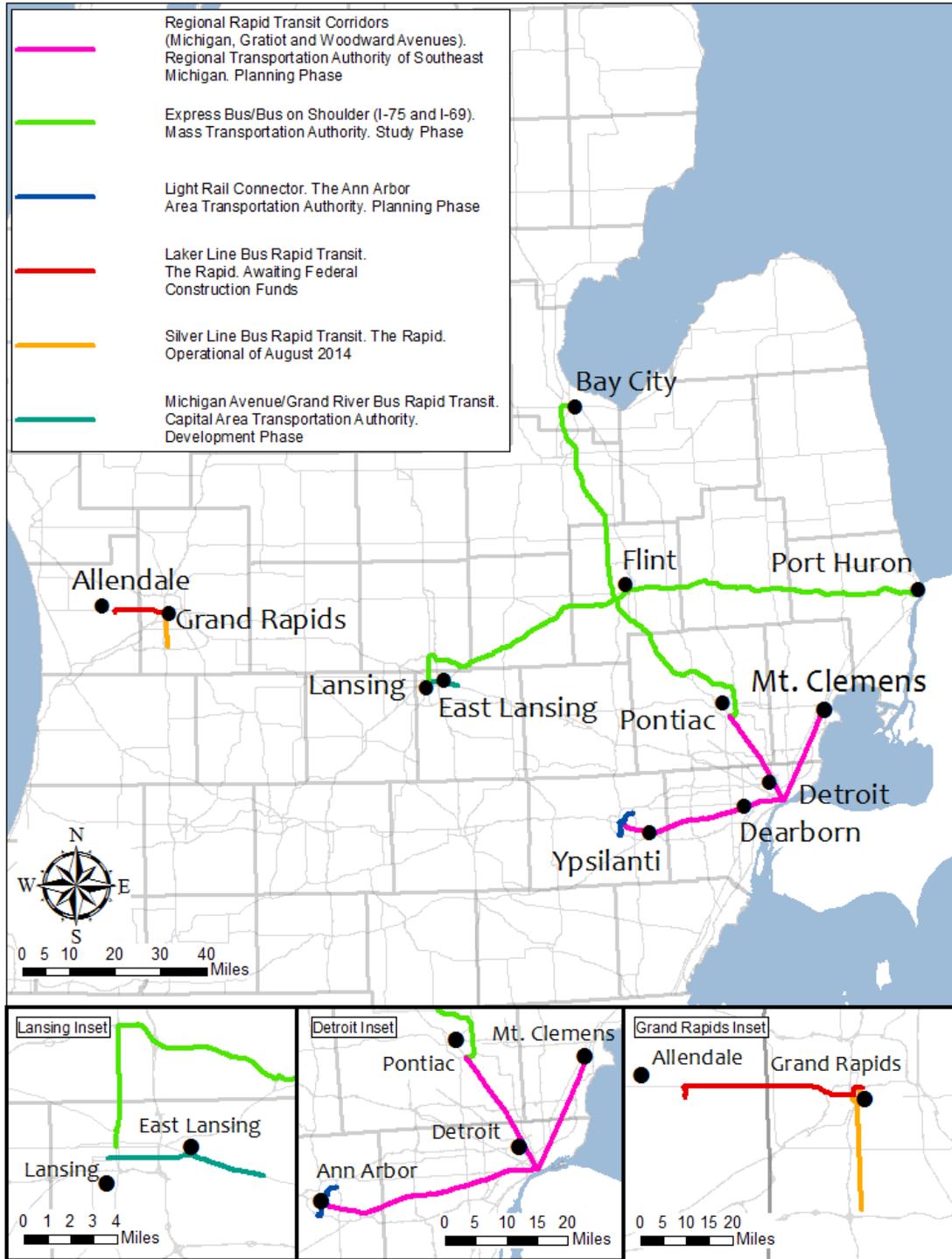
The MTA has commissioned a study of the I-75 corridor between Bay City and Detroit, which will include the I-69 corridor from Port Huron to Lansing, to determine the needs and how best to address those needs today and in the future. It is obvious that there is an increasing need to move workers and/or others, potentially even for non-emergency medical transportation, such as transportation to dialysis, throughout these corridors. The MTA is strongly looking at a potential “Bus on the Shoulder” program that could operate along the shoulder of I-75 and I-69 and include a major hub at or near these connecting freeways.

The Rapid – Silver Line BRT:

The Rapid, in Grand Rapids, opened their Silver Line BRT in August 2014. The construction costs were approximately \$40 million, including \$32 million in federal funding and \$8 million in state funding. The 9.6-mile line connects the center city and the medical mile with the southern suburbs of Wyoming and Kentwood. Buses arrive every 10 minutes during peak travel times and every 20 to 30 minutes during off-peak travel times. The ridership, as of October 2015, has averaged 3,500 to 4,000 riders per day. Technological advances include Wi-Fi broadcasting, automated fare vending machines, emergency phones and 24/7 camera surveillance at stops/stations, level boarding, and bike parking at stations.

A map of the above mentioned corridors under development can be found on the next page.

Map 2: Rapid Transit Corridors in Operation or Under Development



Flint Alternative Fuel:

Transit agencies throughout the state are increasing the number of alternative fuel vehicles. An excellent example of this is the Flint MTA, which is working toward converting its entire fleet to use alternative fuels, such as hydrogen, compressed natural gas, diesel electric, diesel hybrids, and propane fueled vehicles. The MTA has also built fueling stations throughout their region to fuel the buses. The alternative fuels are located at the Grand Blanc Alternative Fueling Facility. At this location, they have four stations: two propane, one hydrogen, and one compressed natural gas. They also have propane fuel available at Mt. Morris, Flushing, Swartz Creek, and Fenton. The fueling stations are also being used by the Genesee Intermediate School District to fuel some of their propane-powered buses. Long-range plans include opening the alternative fueling facility to the public, as well as other agencies operating fleets using alternative fueled vehicles.

Ann Arbor Bike Share Program:

Bicycling can often supplement local transit services and may be used by some riders to start and/or complete a bus trip, in what is often referred to as “the first or last mile.” The Clean Energy Coalition started a new bike share program, ArborBike, in September 2014 in partnership with the City of Ann Arbor, UM, and AAATA. As of June 2015, there were 13 stations around downtown Ann Arbor and UM campuses, with 125 bikes in circulation. The capital cost of the project was \$750,000, including \$600,000 in federal funding and \$150,000 in local support. As a bike-share program, ArborBike is intended for local trips and checkout time is capped to maintain enough bikes in circulation for all users. More than 12,000 trips were generated in 2015.

Michigan Transit Connection:

The Michigan Transit Connection (MTC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, non-emergency medical transportation brokerage. MTC’s proposed brokerage services will use existing, publicly funded infrastructure such as the Michigan Association of United Ways 2-1-1 Call Centers, public transit mobility managers, and Area Agencies on Aging Call Centers to serve as mobility management call centers. MTC also plans to use the extensive transit system that is already operating in communities throughout Michigan. MTC is working to develop contractual agreements with private health systems, HMOs, hospitals, community mental health agencies, and local Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) offices to provide non-emergency medical transportation services. As noted under the “National Transit Policy Issues/Initiatives” section found later in this paper, increasing the ability of transit to provide access to health care is an important issue throughout the country and the MTC hopes to be part of the solution.

Marine Passenger:

Two new marine passenger providers, the City of Mackinaw Island and Charlevoix County Transportation Authority (Ironton Ferry), began receiving state operating assistance, taking the total of Comprehensive Transportation Funds (CTF)-supported passenger ferry systems to four. The City of Mackinaw Island provides service after the tourist season from Nov. 1 through April 20 each year until ice forms. The Ironton Ferry operates during the late spring, summer, and early fall months across the south arm of Lake Charlevoix. It is generally open from

mid-April through mid-November. These two new CTF recipients join two existing longtime recipients of Local Bus Operating (LBO) assistance: the Beaver Island Transportation Authority in Charlevoix County, which provides ferry service between Charlevoix and Beaver Island, and the Eastern Upper Peninsula Transportation Authority, which provides bus transit in Chippewa and Luce counties and ferry service to Neebish, Sugar and Drummond islands. Public Act 51, which governs the distribution of state transportation funding, requires MDOT to cover 50 percent of the operating expenses of eligible transit agencies or authorities that provide rural ferry boat services.

Local Mobility Management:

Mobility management is a customer-driven, market-based approach to transportation services. It focuses on individual travel needs rather than large-scale transit operations. It offers a full range of travel alternatives to the single-occupant automobile, providing a single point of customer access to multiple travel modes. The primary purpose of local mobility managers is to help people locate and use available services to complete a trip. However, they also work to facilitate coordination of services and track unmet needs. Over the past several years, more than ten Michigan transit agencies have added mobility management capacity using FTA funds and state match. There are many agencies that currently have a mobility manager on staff. The Area Agency on Aging-1B also provides a one-call, one-click mobility management service that helps seniors and adults with disabilities living in Oakland and Macomb counties find transportation options.

Urban and Rural Ridership:

Public transit ridership decreased by about 7.8 percent from Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 to FY 2014, while hours of service increased by about 10.2 percent. It is notable that Michigan transit agencies were able to achieve a net increase in hours of service during a period when state operating assistance per year has stayed the same. However, without any additional revenue funding, ridership may continue to drop because service will be reduced as costs increase and state funding remains consistent. Current information about local transit ridership and passengers can be found on [MDOT's online scorecard](#).

Vanpooling:

Vanpooling continues to increase each year in both the number of vans and riders. At the end of 2014, there were 450 vans and more than 2,900 riders. Since 2014, MDOT has partnered with DHHS on a demonstration project providing vanpools to DHHS clients.

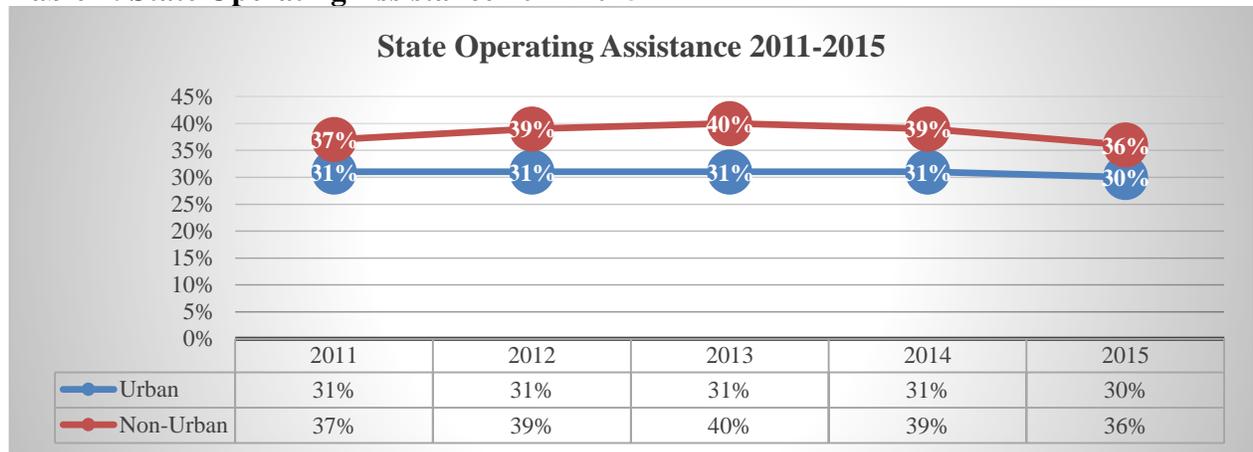
Current Funding Sources, Levels and Influences

Public transit in Michigan is a compilation of local, public, and nonprofit service providers. Agencies may be a department of a city or county, private nonprofit organization, or an authority that has its own board and local taxing authority. Funding is a mix of federal and state assistance, local millage or general funds, contracts, farebox, and other sources of revenues, such as the sale of maintenance or advertising.

State Comprehensive Transportation Funds

The largest state program supported with revenues from the CTF remains the LBO program that provides state assistance in the form of reimbursement, as a percentage of eligible operating expenses. From FY 2006 to FY 2014, the annual appropriation for the LBO program remained static at \$166.6 million per fiscal year with a slight increase to \$167.4 million beginning in FY 2015. During this time, the state’s share of operating expenses has declined (Table 1). The decline is largely a function of total expenses increasing each year while the LBO appropriation has remained relatively static.

Table 1: State Operating Assistance 2011-2015



Source: Public Transportation Management System

In Gov. Rick Snyder’s FY 2017 Executive Budget, released in February 2016, the governor proposed a \$12.6 million increase in the CTF appropriated for the LBO program in FY 2017, taking advantage of the transportation revenue package signed into law by the governor in November 2015. If this increase is adopted in the final budget passed by the Legislature and signed into law by the governor, and if the increase is sustained each year thereafter, it should boost and help slow the decline in the state’s share of operating expenses. However, if transit services expand in southeast Michigan at the levels laid out in the RTA’s Regional Plan, funding to other areas in the state will decline.

MDOT has continued to use the CTF to match federal capital grants as required under Act 51. Act 51 requires the CTF to provide at least two-thirds of the non-federal match to transit capital grants awarded to MDOT and/or local transit agencies. MDOT has a long history of providing the full match, which for most federal grants is 20 percent of the total project cost. The 2006 Transit Technical Report and the 2012 Transit White Paper noted that annual CTF revenues have not been sufficient to sustain MDOT’s goal of providing the full 20 percent match. To maintain the 20 percent match commitment and allow agencies to capture all federal funds, MDOT used federal toll revenue credits for a portion of the matching funds from FY 2005 through FY 2010

(with small amounts used in 2011 and 2012). Bond refinancing and general fund appropriations have also been used to supplement annual CTF revenues in recent years. The governor's FY 2017 Executive Budget proposes a nearly \$20 million increase in the CTF appropriated for transit capital match in FY 2017. If this increase is adopted in the final budget, and if the increase is sustained each year thereafter, it will allow the CTF to provide all the match needed to leverage the federal formula funds that will come to Michigan over the life of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, the new five-year federal authorization bill. The proposed funding level will also allow MDOT and Michigan transit agencies to compete for discretionary and competitive funds. As noted earlier in this paper, CATA, The Rapid and the RTA hope to receive significant federal awards for BRT projects in several corridors. If all three metropolitan areas are successful in accessing federal funds, the proposed increase in the CTF appropriated for match will be insufficient.

Federal Transit Funding

The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (P.L. 112-141) (MAP-21), was signed into law by President Obama on July 6, 2012. Continued in MAP-21, mobility management is a capital expense, which is funded with a federal share of 80 percent.

MAP-21 authorized funding and programs for FY 2013 and FY 2014, and was extended on a short-term basis several times. Beginning with FY 2016, there is a new five-year authorization bill, the FAST Act that, to a large degree, maintains the programs and approaches laid out in MAP-21.

MAP-21 was transformational in many important areas. The federal highway and transit programs are transitioning to become performance-oriented. The legislation placed new emphasis on studying, planning for, and facilitating the movement of freight, and it streamlined the federal highway program by greatly reducing the number of individual programs. Some of the changes brought about by MAP-21 have come to fruition, while others are still in the process of being implemented through regulations and other program guidance. The FAST Act continues all the transit formula programs as outlined in MAP-21, with increases that are roughly inflationary. New program requirements included in MAP-21 pertaining to transit asset management and transit safety planning and related performance measures remain in place. The FAST Act includes a new competitive program that allows grants to be made to states and transit agencies for bus and bus facility capital projects.

Under MAP-21, many transit programs were maintained, some were eliminated, and some new programs and requirements were added. These changes continue under the FAST Act. Some of the changes are discussed below.

- The **Formula Grants for Rural Areas** (Section 5311) program remains in place and MDOT has continued to use the majority of its annual allocation under this program to provide operating assistance for rural transit agencies. Although this helps offset operating costs, it limits the amount of federal funds available for capital investment. As a

result, there has been an increase in the number of rural transit vehicles in service that have exceeded their useful life, resulting in higher maintenance costs and reduced service reliability. A continued focus on use of these federal funds for operating expenses, combined with the anticipated formula funding levels under the FAST Act, may lead to further declines in the condition of the rural transit fleet. However, as described below, the FAST Act adds a competitive set-aside under the Section 5339 program for bus and bus facility capital projects, which may help with the state's bus replacement needs.

- The **Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC)** program, which provides funding to address the unique transportation challenge faced by welfare recipients and low-income persons seeking to get and keep jobs, was eliminated as a stand-alone program. However, JARC activities remain eligible under the Urbanized Area Formula Grants Section 5307 and Section 5311. There was an increase in funding for the Section 5307 and Section 5311 programs to accommodate JARC activities. MDOT has continued using CTF to match federal funds used for JARC activities at a rate of 50 percent federal and 50 percent state match.
- The **New Freedom (NF)** program was also eliminated as a stand-alone program and the activities became eligible under the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) program. There was an increase in funding to the Section 5310 program to accommodate these activities. These funds are used to provide additional tools to overcome existing barriers facing Americans with disabilities seeking integration into the work force and full participation in society. With this funding, several rural and small urban transit agencies continue to fund mobility management programs and expanded services. As discussed in the National Transit Agenda section of this paper, growing local and state mobility management programs will continue to be a need within Michigan. MDOT also has used Section 5310 funds for NF capital projects in rural and small urban areas, such as new or improved bus shelters constructed using Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) specifications. The overall allocation method for Section 5310 funds also changed under MAP-21. Under the past authorizations, all Section 5310 funds were allocated to the state for statewide distribution. Now, a large portion of the funds are allocated directly to the large urban transit agencies and states receive smaller allocations for use within both small urbanized areas and rural areas.
- A new **Ferry Boat Formula (FBP)** program was introduced under the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Under MAP-21, FBP funds were distributed to eligible entities based on the number of passengers carried (20 percent), vehicles carried (45 percent), and total route miles (35 percent). Under the FAST Act, FBP funds are distributed based on number of passengers carried (35 percent), vehicles carried (35 percent), and total route miles (30 percent). There are seven eligible ferry services in Michigan and annual allocations range between \$3,500 and \$636,000. The formula program replaced a prior FHWA discretionary program. This competitive program helped ferry boat systems replace/add ferries, a multi-million dollar expense that may emerge only every 10 years or more. The former FHWA discretionary program had been used to fund new ferry boats for both the Beaver Island Transportation Authority and the Eastern Upper Peninsula Transportation Authority. In the absence of a discretionary program that can be accessed

for rural ferry boats, the condition of Michigan’s public ferry boat infrastructure may decline¹.

- There was a significant change to funding for the **Bus and Bus Facilities** program under MAP-21 and additional significant changes under the FAST Act. Under the two authorizations prior to MAP-21, the Bus and Bus Facilities program was a discretionary program, first through congressional earmarks and then through a national competitive grant-making process, with projects selected by the FTA. It was replaced under MAP-21 with two formula programs, Bus and Bus Facilities (Section 5339) and the State of Good Repair (Section 5337). Section 5337 provides funding to urbanized areas with fixed guideway transportation facilities. In Michigan, the only agency eligible to receive these funds is the Detroit People Mover. Section 5339 provides formula allocations to large urban transit agencies and to the state for both small urbanized and rural agencies. Because of the success Michigan had in obtaining discretionary funds under previous authorizations, Michigan saw quite a decrease in funding when the discretionary component of the Bus and Bus Facilities program was discontinued in MAP-21. The FAST Act re-establishes a competitive program under Section 5339 that allows the Secretary of Transportation to make grants to states and transit agencies for bus and bus facility capital projects, including replacing, rehabilitating, purchasing, or leasing buses or related equipment; and bus-related facilities. The program is authorized at \$268 million (nationwide) starting in FY 2016 and grows to \$344 million in FY 2020. This program may help with the state’s bus replacement needs.
- Remaining in place under MAP-21 and the FAST Act is the **Fixed Guideway Capital Investment Grants Program**, also referred to as New Starts (Section 5309). New and expanded rail, bus rapid transit, and ferry systems may receive funding under this program. This program is being used by The Rapid for the Silver Line and will likely be sought by The Rapid, CATA, and the RTA for proposed BRT projects.
- Additional changes and impacts of MAP-21 (which were all maintained by the FAST Act) are discussed in this paper under the section titled, “National Transit Policy Issues/Initiatives.”

¹ MAP-21 added an FTA-managed competitive grant program for passenger ferries, but it only funds public ferry systems in urbanized areas; Michigan’s ferry boat agencies are not eligible.

Federal Apportionments

In FY 2015, Michigan was apportioned the following federal funding in each identified program:

General Operation and Infrastructure

<i>Section Number Program Name</i>	<i>Total Amount</i>
Section 5307 Urbanized Area Formula Grant Program	\$85.4 million
Section 5337 State of Good Repair	\$1.1 million
Section 5339 Bus and Bus Related Facilities	\$10.5 million
Section 5311 Formula Grant Program for Rural Areas	\$20.6 million
Section 5311(b) (3) Rural Transportation Assistance Program	\$0.3 million

Transportation Services for Targeted Populations

Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities	\$8.7 million
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Planning

Section 5303 Metropolitan Planning	\$3.0 million
Section 5304 Statewide Planning and Research Program	\$0.6 million

Total \$130.2 million

Source: Aug. 27, 2015 Federal Register

State Policy Issues/Initiatives

Balancing Operating and Capital Investments

In the *2006 Transit Technical Report*, two CTF policy issues were noted:

- The decline of state assistance under the LBO program.
- The inability for CTF revenues to keep up with the match obligation for federal capital funds awarded to Michigan transit agencies.

As mentioned previously, reimbursement percentages under the CTF LBO program have been declining and MDOT's ability to continue to provide the full 20 percent match remains a concern. The impact of the state transportation revenue package passed in 2015 on both the LBO and capital match programs, as well as all other CTF programs, has yet to be determined. While the new revenues will help sustain existing transit services and infrastructure, balancing the ever-increasing needs for operating assistance with the need to keep the infrastructure in a state of good repair will continue to be a challenge. A particular challenge will be the role of state funding in support of transit services throughout the state, including in rural areas and community-based services that are focused on senior citizens and persons with disabilities in contrast to urban expansion. As noted earlier, urban expansion, such as BRT in the Grand Rapids, Lansing and Detroit metro areas, is being actively studied, planned or implemented.

Performance Measurement

MDOT continues to use the Public Transportation Management System (PTMS) to collect transit agency data on revenues, expenses, ridership and other agency related information. The system is also used for vehicle, equipment and facility inventories. PTMS data is used to calculate cost-effectiveness indicators for each transit agency, such as cost per mile. These performance indicators are published annually on MDOT's website.

Transit ridership and condition of the rural fleet are performance measures found on MDOT's online scorecard and the governor's Infrastructure Dashboard. The dashboard can be used to track transit ridership trends in Michigan compared to national trends.

In addition, MDOT is working with the transit industry to collect data in support of a more detailed list of measures on the condition of the transit system in Michigan. The intent of these additional measures is not to compare agencies within peer groups, but rather to determine the "state of the industry" in adopting selected best practices, such as asset management and performance measurement. The results are combined and reported at a statewide level and used by MDOT to target technical assistance efforts. See [Measuring and Reporting Michigan's Transit System Condition 2015](#) for the 2015 final report. The 2016 final report should be out in August 2016.

In 2008, MDOT developed a tool to measure the economic and social benefits of transit investment as part of its performance measurement efforts for transit. The scalable tool can be used by all systems, from rural to large urban systems, to determine the benefit of transit operating investments in their local service area. It can also be used to calculate a statewide economic benefit as a result of the total federal, state, and local funds invested in transit operations. The MDOT model differs from other transit benefits models or methodologies in that most others are focused on the economic benefits of large capital investments and/or specific transit projects. The model has become outdated, and the MDOT Office of Passenger Transportation is in the process of conducting a trip purpose survey statewide, which will be used to update the model with more current information.

In 2015, MDOT sponsored an "Attitudes and Perceptions" survey to explore public opinion regarding MDOT and the transportation system in Michigan. This was the sixth survey in a series since 2006. The survey is also used as part of the public participation process for the State Long-Range Plan. Seasoned experts in surveying interviewed a random sample of 1,400 adult Michigan residents by phone. Included in the interview was a list of 13 MDOT activities for which respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction on a scale of 1-5 (5 being "most satisfied" to 2 being "very dissatisfied" and 1 being "unsure"). In evaluating the results, the 13 activities were grouped by highest, middle, and lowest satisfaction ratings. Among the five activities that ranked in the middle of the respondents' satisfaction were "Making sure sufficient public transportation services for local trips, such as public bus or Dial-A-Ride services are available," and "Making sure sufficient public transportation services are available for the elderly and persons with disabilities." In addition, those surveyed were asked if they had used local transit in

the past year. Twenty-six percent said yes (up from 21 percent in 2011) and those specific individuals were asked to rate their satisfaction using the same 1-5 scale. The overall rating was 3.64 (up from 3.56 in 2014), which puts the quality of the local public transportation services that respondents had directly experienced among the top five activities with the highest satisfaction ratings. These results suggest the public is moderately satisfied with the level of local transit and for those who have used the service, they are satisfied with its quality.

Other Statewide Transit Issues

In addition to balancing investments and performance management, MDOT is working with the industry on the following statewide transit issues:

- With continued state, federal and local revenue constraints, MDOT has been increasing its focus on cost-effective transit operations. MDOT also continues to encourage agencies to look at how they might consolidate functions with other transit agencies, including creating regional transit authorities and with local governments and other agencies.
- Access to transit by specific populations, such as veterans and seniors, is increasing in focus. MDOT is working with the Michigan Association of United Ways (MAUW) to improve the transportation functionality of its 2-1-1 system. Michigan 2-1-1 is a free, confidential service that connects individuals with local community-based organizations across the state offering services in the areas of housing, health care, education, food assistance, transportation, and more. On behalf of MAUW, MDOT received a grant from FTA under its Veteran's Transportation Community Living Initiative (VTCLI) program to improve the transportation information available to veterans and others in the 2-1-1 database and to evolve its eight regional call centers into a statewide system.
- MDOT is working with the state's regional planning agencies to identify, prioritize, and address gaps in regional transit mobility, in particular for seniors. In June 2014, Gov. Snyder released a special message to the Legislature on the topic of aging, titled "Making Michigan a Great Place to Live Well and Age Well." In that message, the governor asked MDOT to partner with our metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and regional planning agencies (RPAs) to work on the issue of regional transit mobility with a specific focus on senior citizens. Identifying gaps in regional transit mobility is in process and future steps will include prioritizing needs at the regional and state levels and identifying specific actions that can be taken to close gaps in regional transit mobility. Regional transit mobility is being defined as "the ability to use local transit services to make a trip that involves moving from one county to the neighboring county and/or from one transit system to the neighboring system."

National Transit Policy Issues/Initiatives

For transit, MAP-21 set a national agenda focused on three main areas: safety, asset management and performance management. All three continue to be focus areas under the FAST Act.

Safety

In what the FTA calls a “historic move,” MAP-21 granted the agency with significant new authority to strengthen the safety of public transportation throughout the United States. The FTA must develop safety performance criteria for all modes of public transportation (rail, bus, etc.). Both MAP-21 and the FAST Act require all recipients of FTA funding to develop agency safety plans that include performance targets, strategies, and staff training. The FTA has been issuing rulemakings for all the new safety requirements. It will be several years before the impacts of these new requirements on Michigan’s transit providers, and benefits to the transit system, are realized.

Asset Management

Both MAP-21 and the FAST Act require the FTA to define the term “state of good repair” and create objective standards for measuring the condition of capital assets, including equipment, rolling stock, infrastructure, and facilities. Based on that definition, the FTA must then develop performance measures under which all FTA grantees will be required to set targets. All FTA grantees and their sub-recipients are required to develop transit asset management plans. These plans must include, at a minimum, capital asset inventories, condition assessments, and investment prioritization. Each designated recipient of FTA formula funding will be required to report on the condition of its system, any change in condition since the last report, targets set under the above performance measures, and progress toward meeting those targets. These measures and targets must be incorporated into metropolitan and statewide transportation plans and transportation improvement programs. Like the transit safety provisions of MAP-21, FTA is developing the rules that will guide implementation of these new requirements and the impacts on Michigan’s transit system will be realized in the coming years.

Performance Management

Both the safety and asset management provisions of MAP-21 and the FAST Act require transit providers to develop safety and asset management plans and set performance targets for safety and state of good repair. These targets will be reflected in performance-based planning documents prepared by MPOs.

In addition to the direction set forth in MAP-21 and the FAST Act, an additional national agenda item is the connection between transit and health care. According to FTA, about 3.6 million Americans miss or delay medical appointments every year because they lack a ride to the doctor. FTA has defined its “Rides to Wellness” program to make sure people can get a ride to the health care they need. The initiative’s goals are to increase access to care, improve health outcomes, and reduce health care costs.

Increasing access to health care will continue to put pressure on transit providers in Michigan and across the nation. This pressure is well-articulated by the Flint area MTA, which states the following in its 2016-2020 Five-Year Plan: “The need for medical transportation is growing as people live longer, but with emerging medical issues.” A good example is the increased demand for dialysis treatment. The number of dialysis facilities serving Genesee County has expanded

from five to 16 units in the past five years. Transportation for non-emergency medical purposes is provided by an array of public, private, nonprofit, and individual carriers. For the MTA, medical trips comprise approximately 5 percent of fixed route trips and 17 percent of para-transit trips.”

To increase access to health care, the FTA has acknowledged the importance of one-call/one-click centers that are being built and enhanced across the country under the FTA-led VTCLI. As mentioned earlier, this includes Michigan’s 2-1-1 system that is being improved with a VTCLI grant. The 2-1-1 program is an essential tool in mobility management. It compliments and supports local mobility managers housed in transit, regional planning and social service agencies in locations throughout Michigan.

Conclusion: Public Transit Remains an Important Mobility Option

Public transit continues to be an important mobility option in Michigan. It helps remove barriers to economic activity by connecting workers, consumers and businesses to key activities and markets supporting Michigan’s economic vitality. It also provides a means of transportation to persons who may otherwise not be able to get to needed medical appointments, shopping, work, school or recreational activities.

Transit services in Michigan remain relatively stable. All 83 counties continue to have some form of public transportation, although service is still limited in some counties. Since 2005, local transit ridership has increased 3.8 percent, while service hours increased 6.0 percent and miles 5.6 percent. The 2015 “Attitudes and Perceptions” survey suggest that the public is moderately satisfied with the level of local transit services available to them and, for those who have used the service, they are satisfied with its quality.

In the same way that technology is providing drivers with more real-time information about road and traffic conditions, technology is helping non-drivers access a variety of public and private transportation services. Using state and federal funds, MDOT is assisting the MAUW improve the transportation information available to veterans and others in MAUW’s 2-1-1 database and to evolve its eight regional call centers into a statewide system.

Technology is also a critical component of providing more modern urban transit services. The application of intelligent transportation systems (ITS) is a significant aspect of the growing use of BRT in Michigan’s urban areas. MDOT has supported the implementation of BRT in Michigan by providing the match to federal funds, as well as state operating assistance for The Rapid’s Silver Line in Grand Rapids, the state’s first BRT line. MDOT has also provided funds for BRT planning and development projects being led by CATA, the AAATA, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, the Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan and an additional BRT line (the Laker Line) being planned by The Rapid.

Transit agencies are evolving from service providers to mobility managers by using 2-1-1 and other information sources to help people locate and use all available services to complete a trip. Mobility managers can be particularly helpful in planning and implementing cross-county trips that require transfers between neighboring transit systems, when passenger assistance is needed,



or when close coordination is needed between transportation providers with medical service providers. Meeting the needs for longer-distance transit trips - such as those needed by Michigan's aging and Medicaid-dependent populations to regional medical centers - will likely be an increasing challenge.