



Michigan Transit Strategic Plan

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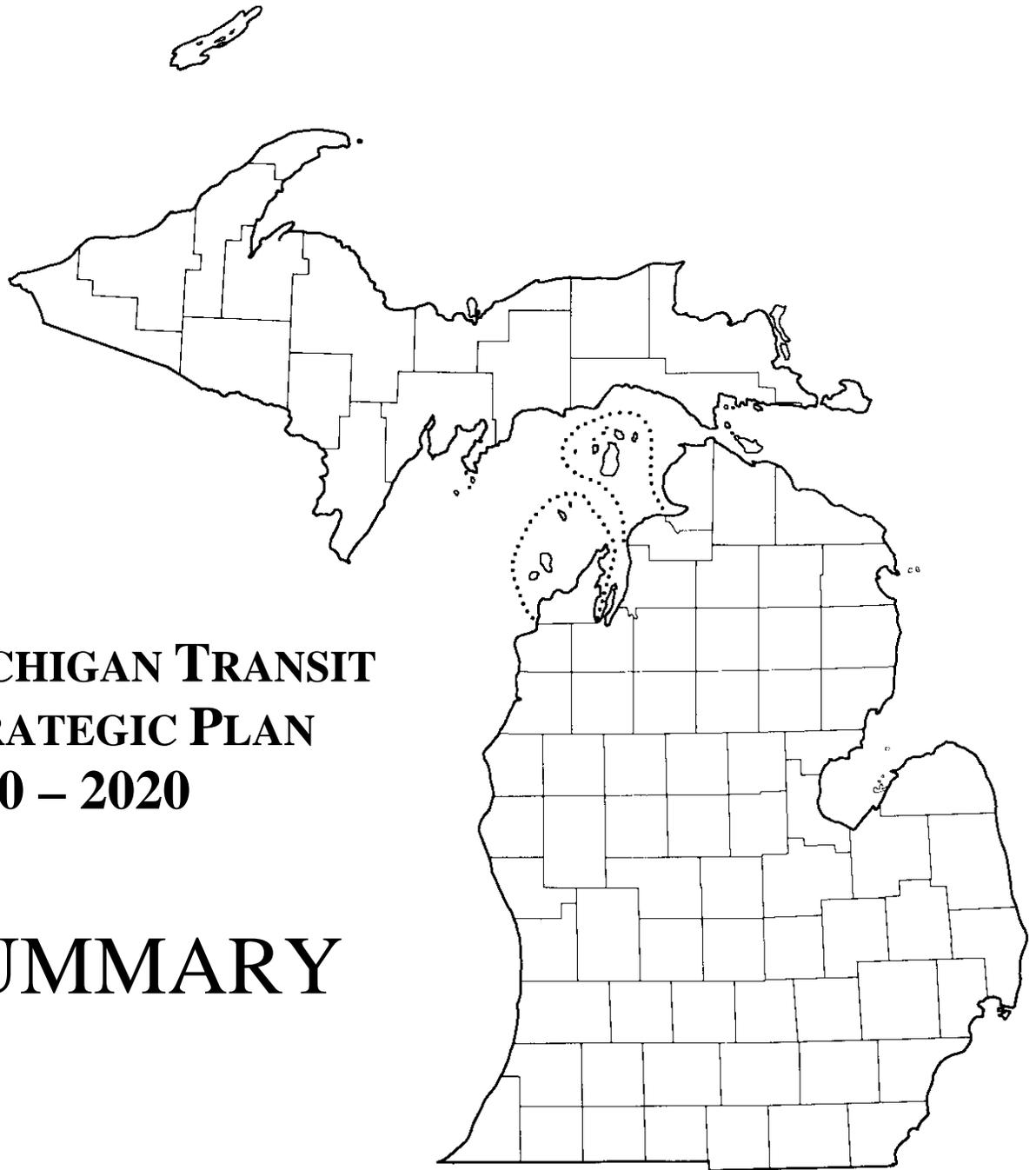
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2000-2020

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**MICHIGAN TRANSIT
STRATEGIC PLAN
2000 – 2020**

SUMMARY

Michigan Department of Transportation

Foreword Strategic planning is a difficult undertaking. It requires agreeing on a common mission and defining achievable goals. As part of the process, you have to be willing to identify strengths and weaknesses and evaluate areas that need to be changed and processes that can be streamlined.

One important aspect of the strategic planning process is recognizing that transit is part of a larger transportation system. Success in implementing the initiatives included in this plan will be based on the transit community's ability to recognize how transit fits into the overall scheme of integrating mobility choices into an overall transportation system.

This document is the culmination of input from the transit industry and its stakeholders. It is intended to guide Michigan transit over the next 20 years. The direction that is taken will determine where valuable resources will be expended and how technology will be used to improve services.

The Passenger Transportation Division is committed to meeting the goals and actively participating in carrying out the initiatives included in the strategic plan. Our collective efforts will prove vital in meeting the mobility needs of Michigan citizens. They will also serve to keep Michigan on the national forefront in the provision of transit services.

It is a great time to be involved in public transportation. The future and how we address its challenges is in our hands. Our collective efforts will strengthen public transit. Through this partnership, we can meet the challenge that lies ahead to meet our customers ever changing mobility needs.

Kip Grimes, Administrator
Passenger Transportation Division
Michigan Department of Transportation

**Michigan
Public Transit
Mission**

To improve the quality of life of Michigan residents by providing safe, efficient, responsive, and reliable public transit that integrates into an overall transportation system.

**Transit
Strategic Plan
Vision**

The Michigan Transit Strategic Plan for 2000-2020 strives for public transit to provide services that meet the mobility needs of all Michigan citizens.

Goal

The goals of the plan are to:

*Increase Cooperation within the Transit Community
Remove Barriers to Transit Use
Provide Efficient and Effective Transit Services
Ensure Adequate Funding*

INTRODUCTION

The Michigan Transit Strategic Plan was developed for the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), Bureau of Urban and Public Transportation (UPTRAN), by the University of Michigan in conjunction with Passenger Transportation Division (PTD) staff. Many individuals and groups contributed to its development. The Strategic Plan Oversight Team, which included the Strategic Planning Advisory Council, and others interested in Michigan transit, provided input and oversight in development of the plan.

The strategic plan will guide transit in Michigan to achieve its mission. Initiatives included in the plan complement MDOT's overall planning effort that is detailed in the State Long Range Plan (SLRP). Implementation of the plan will strengthen the transit industries' ability to advance public transit in Michigan.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The transit strategic planning process was conducted from the Spring of 1999 to the Spring of 2001. The process resulted in the development of implementable initiatives that had support among those who provided input and the transit community as a whole. The process entailed:

1. Visioning and priority setting with the Strategic Plan Oversight Team;
2. Conducting research on transit "best practices" across the country;
3. Holding 11 focus groups with transit agencies, elected officials, and stakeholders in various areas across the state;
4. Developing a comprehensive survey based on focus group findings and input from the Strategic Plan Oversight Team, PTD staff, and others;
5. Conducting a survey among transit agencies, specialized services providers, advisory team members, the Strategic Plan Oversight Team, stakeholders, and PTD staff;
6. Updating the situation audit;
7. Selecting initiatives to be included in the strategic plan;
8. Presenting preliminary initiatives at the 2000 PTD Annual Meeting to transit managers and other interested agencies and individuals during two break-out sessions; and
9. Presenting the initiatives to UPTRAN management.

PRIMARY GOALS

The Michigan Transit Strategic Plan is based on four primary goals:

1. *Increase Cooperation within the Transit Community:* Transit in Michigan is provided by individual public, private, and non-profit organizations. Respective agencies provide service at state regional, municipal, and local levels. The Michigan transit community believes that enhanced cooperation between the multiple providers and development of public/private partnerships could improve service and intermodal and regional connections, resulting in enhanced public support.
2. *Remove Barriers to Transit Use:* Transit passengers oftentimes face barriers to their mobility when they use transit between cities and regions; when they link transit with other modes; and when they are unaware of the full range of transportation options. Michigan transit seeks to remove these barriers through regional and intermodal mobility, internal and external communications, and coordination of transit resources.
3. *Provide Efficient and Effective Transit Service:* Michigan transit seeks to improve utilization of existing resources and incorporate new technology to provide efficient and effective transit services. Developing performance measures to evaluate the outcome of implementing the initiatives included in the Michigan Transit Strategic Plan will be included as part of the process.
4. *Ensure Adequate Funding:* Providing transit for the citizens of Michigan requires a predictable and sufficient funding base to meet increasing service needs. Multiple strategies are required, including securement of locally generated funds, coordination of transportation funds from multiple sources, participating in competitive grant application processes, and obtaining continued federal and state support.

ORGANIZATION OF PLAN

The Michigan Transit Strategic Plan is divided into four sections. Section One, *Initiatives*, presents the initiatives selected for implementation. Preceding each initiative is background information on the problem that the initiative addresses. The information provided reflects input received throughout the situation audit and input gathering process. Section Two, *Situation Audit*, provides a quantitative overview of transit trends in the state of Michigan, together with demographic forces that are likely to affect transit operations during the period of this plan. Section Three, *Focus Group Report*, provides documentation of the 11 focus groups that were conducted as part of this process. Section Four, *Michigan Transit Priorities Survey Report*, details the survey results.

**ENVIRON-
MENTAL
JUSTICE**

A 1994 Presidential Executive Order (EO 12898) directed every federal agency to make environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing the effects of all programs, policies, and activities on “minority populations and low-income populations.” MDOT receives federal funds and, therefore, complies with this EO by identifying, addressing, and documenting environmental justice issues and concerns during the development of proposed transportation programs, policies, and projects.

Environmental justice principles were included in the development of the transit strategic plan. Continual efforts will be made to identify potentially affected minority or low-income groups or individuals and to actively involve them in the decision-making process. As action steps are developed to implement the initiatives, these principals will be addressed.

INITIATIVES

Nine initiatives were selected for the 2000-2020 Michigan Transit Strategic Plan. These initiatives were grouped into five major categories: legislative; regional and intermodal; internal and external communication; transit efficiency and effectiveness; and land use coordination. These initiatives complement the SLRP, which includes the following goals: transportation services coordination; land use coordination; provide basic mobility; preserve systems appropriately; promote intermodalism; protect the environment and aesthetics; strengthening the state’s economy; and promote safety. Completion of these initiatives will help achieve the four goals outlined in this plan.

A summary of the Transit Strategic Plan initiatives is as follows:

LEGISLATIVE

Coordination of Funds at the State Level

Background:

There are funds for transportation throughout the state budget (e.g., for social services programs and employment). However, synergy between state departments on priorities would help to remove barriers to effective utilization of transportation funds at the local level. In some cases, public and nonprofit agencies may provide transportation services in an uncoordinated and duplicative fashion; in others, agencies expect services from public transit providers without engaging them in their planning process. It appears that coordination of transportation resources at the state level requires legislative action to foster effective coordination at the local level.

Initiative:

Build on efforts to coordinate transportation funds at the state level. In addition, Michigan transit will foster support for such coordination within the transit community and among other interests at the local level.

Budget Operating Assistance over a Multi-year Period

Background:

Year-to-year uncertainty in state funding for local transit was identified as an obstacle to planning local transit service.

Initiative:

Transit in Michigan will seek to establish year-to-year predictability in state transit funding. Four options that will be analyzed to accomplish this initiative are:

- 2) Adoption of a more predictable formula so annual funding is tied more closely to the economy;*
- 2) Dissemination of Comprehensive Transportation Funds (CTF) budget forecasts by the Michigan Department of Management and Budget so transit agencies can better estimate funding levels;*
- 3) Multi-year authorization bills that will provide funding targets for several years; and*
- 4) Two-year legislative budgeting cycle, which would provide funding stability for two years rather than one.*

Funding Alternatives

Background:

The burden of funding transit is increasingly borne by local and state governments. Additional funding options would help local areas make up for the decline in other sources of funding for public transportation. In 1997, 45 of 72 public transit agencies were locally supported by property tax millage. The remaining 27 agencies are supported by local general funds.

Initiative:

Provide information and support to transit agencies regarding available options for expansion of local funding. One alternative is reorganization under an authorizing act that offers greater options regarding generation of local revenue. When opportunities arise, Michigan transit will seek additional ways to levy taxes. It will also work cooperatively with transit from other states to revise policies for the equitable distribution of federal transit funds.

**REGIONAL
AND
INTERMODAL**

Regional Coordination of Transit Provision

Background:

Cooperation of existing local public, private, or non-profit transit organizations as a way to provide a base level of transit service where it is currently lacking and bridge jurisdictional boundaries to provide regional transit mobility.

Initiative:

Establish a statewide task force to determine how to coordinate service on a regional basis and establish how financial incentives will be initiated. The task force is responsible for:

- 1) Developing a process for organizing regional public transportation, including the delineation of local boundaries and service areas for regional cooperation;*
- 2) Defining appropriate roles for public transit agencies, non-profit organizations, and private for profit providers, including intercity bus carriers, in assuring regional mobility;*
- 3) Establishing a mechanism for funding regional transportation that does not favor any particular entity;*
- 4) Seeking sustained financial incentives for regional cooperative initiatives;*
- 5) Involving representatives of stakeholder groups in order to increase their commitment to the regional planning process;*
- 6) Developing intermodal initiatives to facilitate connection between intercity and local public transit; and*
- 7) Providing information from its effort to promote the provision of regional public transportation.*

Base Level of Service

Background:

Input from focus groups, surveys, and the Strategic Plan Oversight Team highlighted difficulties with the provision of regionally organized transit in Michigan. While there appear to be political and fiscal barriers to effective regional public transportation, there are no apparent legislative barriers.

**INTERNAL
AND
EXTERNAL
COMMUNICATION**

Initiative:

Define a base level of transit service and forge collaboration between existing public, private, and non-profit providers to ensure that the established base level of service is provided.

Coordinated Information Sources

Background:

Efforts to improve and coordinate service are of little use if potential passengers are unable to learn how to use and connect the different services available to reach their destination. Making comprehensive information on transit services available will help to provide seamless transportation.

Initiative:

Providing a “clearinghouse” information resource on transit services will improve communication within the transit community and promote transit ridership. Efforts to make full use of information technologies, including the Internet and intelligent transportation systems, will be made.

Communication within the Transit Community

Background:

Creating a culture of open communication and mutual trust needs to be generated within the transit community. This will lead to development of a unified voice for transit advocacy within the state of Michigan.

Initiative:

Develop forums, led by professional facilitators, to improve communication and foster cooperation within the transit community, leading to a unified voice for transit advocacy. Mutual reliance and interest are also expected to generate joint endeavors between various elements of the transit community in the state.

**TRANSIT
EFFICIENCY
AND
EFFECTIVENESS**

Transit Efficiency and Effectiveness

Background:

Measuring and increasing transit efficiency and effectiveness needs to be addressed. Incorporating efficiency and effectiveness measures in incentive-based programs would be one way to encourage transit agencies to increase performance. Other initiatives, notably those addressed in the Transit Strategic Plan, would help transit agencies better utilize existing resources and thereby increase efficiency and effectiveness.

Initiative:

Develop common indicators of transit efficiency and effectiveness that can be used by transit providers, funding agencies, and other entities to measure performance. These indicators will help transit agencies evaluate their performance based on their past practice, as well as with “peer” transit agencies. Incorporating appropriate measures into incentive-based programs to reward improvement in efficiency and effectiveness will be considered.

**LAND USE
COORDINATION**

Transit and Land Use Coordination

Background:

Some developments make it difficult for transit operators to design effective service leaving potential passengers with little choice but to use an automobile for access to goods and services. Other developments are designed in a way that transit can serve easily, providing effective transportation for a variety of populations and destinations. Considering transit accessibility when making land use decisions can improve the transportation alternatives available to people and increase transit ridership.

Initiative:

Develop educational materials that describe how to integrate transit into land use decisions. Initiate cooperative creation of model zoning and local ordinances to facilitate transit oriented development and land use. Promote inclusion of transit agencies in land use planning from development of master plans to site plan review. Request Regional Planning Agencies to develop a regional transit plan.

SITUATION AUDIT The situation audit provides a comprehensive status of transit operations in Michigan. Trends in population, travel, utilization of transit service, funding levels, revenue sources, and transit service performance were evaluated.

The situation audit showed dramatic changes in transit operation and service over the past decades. The suburbanization and aging of the population, greater household ownership of automobiles, and increasing highway travel led to challenges for transit operations to meet customer needs. With the commitment of federal, state, and local governments, transit has reversed the downward trend in total statewide ridership, but at a high cost per passenger and increased operating cost.

It is expected that these trends will continue in the future. However, technological advancements are expected to improve advertising, scheduling, and routing of transit services. These influences will help achieve better communication between transit providers and users, improving overall transit service.

FOCUS GROUPS Eleven focus group sessions were held with various transit agencies, advisory team members, elected officials, and stakeholders across the state. In total, there were 70 participants. The sessions explored key transit-related issues and challenges and identified the top priorities to be included in the strategic plan.

Focus group participants identified public transit best practices, key transit issues, and challenges and constraints. They also provided input on the role of MDOT, transit needs and priorities, and ways to plan for partnership. The top initiatives and priorities to be implemented focused on improving transit capabilities, service, access, and image. These issues were included in the survey.

SURVEY Five hundred and three surveys were distributed to transit agencies, specialized services providers, stakeholders, advisory team members, the Strategic Plan Oversight Team, and PTD staff between February and April 2000. Two hundred eighty valid responses were received for an overall response rate of 56 percent. Transit agency responses are as follows: 100 percent from large urban, 80 percent from medium/small urban, and 66 percent from non-urban agencies.

Topics included on the survey were: legislative/funding initiatives; communications; regional and intermodal coordination; marketing; public-private cooperation; new services program overview; program oversight conducted by MDOT/UPTRAN/PTD; PTD staff services; and the strategic plan mission/vision.

Overall there was agreement between the groups surveyed on transit priorities. Legislative and funding initiatives, as well as improved communications emerged as high priorities. Results from the survey were presented to the Oversight Team for prioritization and were incorporated into the plan.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The intent of the strategic planning process was to provide representatives from the transit industry, its stakeholders, and MDOT with an opportunity to work together to plan for the future of public transit in Michigan. With input from these interested parties, action plans will be developed to implement the initiatives described in this plan.

PTD will monitor and update the plan and will also provide a link between the transit strategic planning effort and implementation of the SLRP. The duties and responsibilities of PTD staff include:

- Serve as a facilitator among MDOT, transit providers, and stakeholders to implement the plan.
- Incorporate continual feedback from local transit agencies and other interested parties into the transit strategic planning process.
- Oversee the conduct of the situation audit for further evaluation of transit issues and needs.
- Review the goals and initiatives to ensure that strategies being incorporated into action plans are in alignment.
- Continue to communicate with transit agencies, stakeholders, and other interested parties activities that are being accomplished in response to the strategic planning effort. Information will be made available through various means such as the PTD Web site, the TransActions newsletter, advisory teams, and published reports.

CONCLUSION

Public transit will continue to play a vital role in meeting the mobility challenges of Michigan citizens. The strategic planning effort will help move transit forward to achieve its mission. Initiatives included in the strategic plan will complement MDOT's overall planning effort detailed in the SLRP. Everyone within the public transit industry is invited to join in this effort by providing input and expertise as the initiatives are implemented to meet the goals of this plan. Transit in Michigan can meet the challenges included in this plan.

PARTICIPATION IN THE STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT

SPRING 1999 - SPRING 2001

The following list of individuals were instrumental in the development of this plan through the focus groups, surveys, or oversight team:

Local transit agencies - Metro, urban, rural
Specialized Services Providers

Michigan Department of Transportation
Bureau of Urban & Public Transportation,
Bureau of Transportation Planning

Intercity Bus Carriers
MPO/Regional Planning Offices
State Agencies
Elected Officials

Members of the Strategic Plan Oversight **Team** included:

Debbie Alexander, Capital Area Trans Authority
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Claryce Gibbons-Allen, Detroit Dept of Trans
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Ted Bidigare, Muskegon Area Transit System
Greg Cook, Ann Arbor Transportation Authority
Joseph DeKoning, Bay Area Transportation Auth
Robert Foy, Flint Mass Transportation Authority
Sally Graham, Pointe Area Assisted Transportation
Roger Haynes, Greyhound Lines, Inc.
Robert Jordan, Greyhound Lines, Inc.
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April Lee, SEMCOG Transportation Programs
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