



Business Plan and Budget FY2024-2028

September 2023



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MESSAGE FROM THE RTA BOARD

The RTA Board of Directors is navigating a new era of collaboration with regional leaders to solve our region's most pressing challenge: to build a more equitable, connected, reliable transit system. We are making progress. The Detroit to Ann Arbor express bus service continues to grow and has eclipsed 5,000 monthly riders. Soon, the RTA will launch a Detroit to Airport express bus service, which will conveniently and affordably link travelers between home or hotels and flights. We are also debuting a Universal Basic Mobility pilot project to advance an equitable approach to an integrated and modern fare system. Our ability to jump-start exciting projects and services is made possible through the RTA's leadership in concert with our transit providers and regional stakeholders.

The RTA Business Plan for fiscal years 2024-28 builds on the agency's momentum to fund, plan, coordinate, and accelerate regional transit over the next five years. The plan detail shows the RTA will meet our statutory responsibilities, provide technical assistance and leadership to win federal grants, and set Southeast Michigan on a path to sustainable transit funding. We're proud of our growing, talented team.

The RTA Board believes the people and communities of Southeast Michigan deserve a faster, more reliable, and more equitable transit system. We deserve a welcoming place where all people can enjoy access to opportunity, recreation, and community through connected transit. The RTA's business plan defines these goals and delineates a path forward.

The RTA Board of Directors continues advancing the strategies established in the Regional Transit Master Plan. The window is closing to spend down one-time American Rescue Plan funds and capitalize on funding opportunities wrapped up in the highly competitive Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. This pivotal moment fuels our sense of urgency and boldness.

We are optimistic that we can continue to reestablish the vital role of transit in our region. Transit technology is evolving rapidly. Local governments, cheered on by residents, are setting new standards for safe-street, climate-resilient, green infrastructure. Our buses are running more efficiently and traveling new routes, fueled by electricity, not gas. These new directions and expectations shift what is possible for our region's transit system.

Board of Directors

The RTA 10-member board is appointed for three-year terms by the county executives of Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb counties, the chair of the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners, the Mayor of Detroit, and the Governor of Michigan. The Governor's appointee serves as chair without a vote.

Governor Appointed

Dave Massaron

City of Detroit

Freman Hendrix

Macomb County

Jon Moore

Don Morandini

Oakland County

Jeannette Bradshaw

Helaine Zack

Washtenaw County

Ned Staebler

Alma Wheeler Smith

Wayne County

June Lee

Erica Robertson

Regional Collaborators

The RTA believes the people and communities of Southeast Michigan deserve a faster, more reliable, more equitable transit system. An accessible transit system is critical public infrastructure that is necessary to foster a livable, climate-resilient, and thriving region. A champion for everyone, the RTA envisions Southeast Michigan as a welcoming place where all people can enjoy access to opportunity, recreation, and community through connected transit.

Vision

RTA envisions a region with sufficient and stable funding to support improved public transit options that will advance equity by increasing accessibility; satisfy the integrated mobility needs of Southeast Michigan communities; and promote livable, healthy, and sustainable growth.

Mission

Our mission is to manage and secure transportation resources that significantly enhance mobility options, to improve quality of life for the residents and to increase economic viability for the region.

How We Were Formed

The Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan (RTA) was established by Public Act 387 of 2012. RTA is responsible for developing a regional master transit plan, coordinating regional transit projects and programs, and distributing federal and state transit formula funds in the four-county region, including Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw, and Wayne Counties. The county executives of Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb Counties, the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners chair, the Mayor of Detroit, and the Governor of Michigan appoint its 10-member board.

RTA works in partnership with public transit agencies to fulfill its role. Under state legislation, RTA is authorized to levy a regional property tax millage and a motor vehicle registration tax to secure local funding for improving transit services. Voters in Southeast Michigan must approve these taxes.

RTA's VALUE

Coordinating a complex network of local transit service providers, the RTA pools resources and generates ideas to solve decades-long public transit challenges in Southeast Michigan. The RTA tackles difficult shared problems, such as by investing in cross-county connections—including FAST, Downtown Detroit to Ann Arbor (D2A2), and the in-development airport express—and transit safety and accessibility, that riders have identified as deficiencies in the regional network. By plugging these gaps, the RTA advances transit as a more efficient, feasible, and inviting mode of transportation for all people in Southeast Michigan and paves the way for future developments.



Business Plan Purpose and Need

The RTA Business Plan articulates a fiscally sustainable work plan covering a five-year period. Updated annually, the plan details how the agency aligns strategic board investments that are based on clear, agency-specific business functions and guiding principles that communicate the RTA's vision, mission, and responsibilities.

The plan describes how the RTA will implement the RTMP over the short term and build towards long-term goals in concert with the region's transit providers. The Business Plan reiterates and expands on RTA's strategic direction, presents an actionable five-year work plan, and enumerates a financial plan to cover the cost of services. To deliver the work plan, the Business Plan presents an operational staffing plan to implement the RTA's programs and projects.

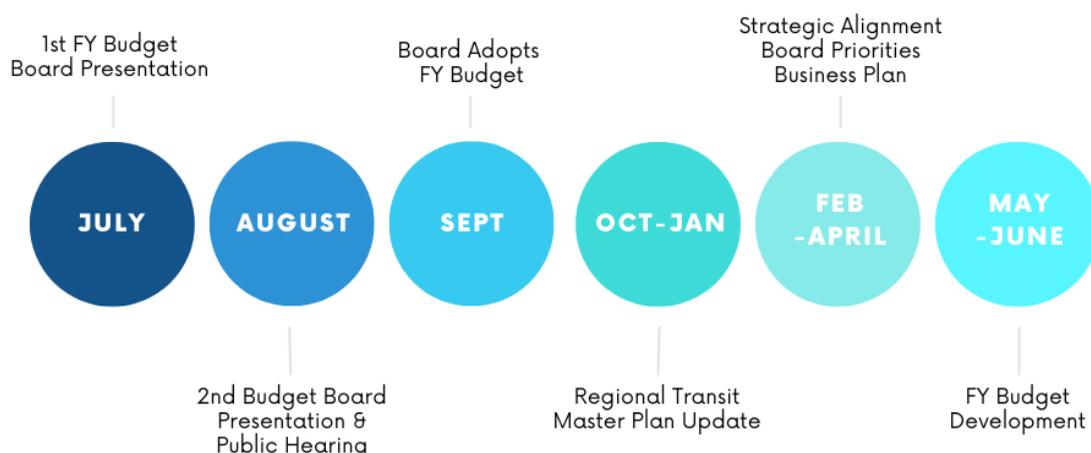
Ongoing & Emerging Needs

The Business Plan as a whole and the work plan specifically respond to ongoing and emerging needs to:

- Meet RTA’s statutory responsibilities.
- Solidify an effective, sustainable agency with a clear regional role.
- Grow internal staff to enhance RTA’s capacity to communicate, coordinate, fund, and accelerate regional transit.
- Implement regional priorities within existing funding programs and leverage new discretionary and formula funding sources.
- Accelerate new mobility concepts through strategic plans and pilot projects.
- Prepare the agency for successfully implementing a future ballot initiative at the board’s discretion.

Strategic Program Alignment & Annual Budget Cycle

The RTA’s fiscal year (FY) budget cycle helps to align the Board of Directors’ strategic priorities with the RTMP annual update process. The agency’s funded programming and targeted new initiatives is an ongoing year-long collaborative planning process that includes extensive engagement with transit providers and other stakeholders, a regional general opinion survey, and a comprehensive public engagement process.



A peer review of several regional transit authorities across the country and targeted interviews with stakeholders in Southeast Michigan informs the RTA’s Business Plan and current fiscal year work plan. The Business Plan uniquely responds to the pressing need to implement the most recent RTMP recommendations and position the region for federal funding with the recent two-year American Rescue Plan investment that expanded staff capacity to deliver on critical programming.

RTA STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The RTA Business Plan rests on the strategic direction that the RTA Board of Directors has set over the past 10 years. It is updated to meet the current and anticipated needs of the region.

Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles are the pillars on which RTA assesses all internal business decisions to advance the Vision. Each Guiding Principle is driven by prompts to judge whether a decision or initiative best meets the needs of the region and supports transit providers.

- Regional** Does the decision advance the Mission and Vision of the agency and the Goals of the RTMP? Is it within the Core Business Functions of the RTA?
- Coordinated** Does the decision advance the priorities of regional transit providers as defined in their planning documents? Does the decision build or deepen partnerships?
- Equitable** Does the decision advance equity by improving service for marginalized populations or for riders in regionally defined equity communities? Does the decision advance equity within the RTA as an organization?
- Innovative** Does the decision introduce or accelerate the implementation of a new or innovative concept, technology, or service type for the region that might benefit riders?

RTA STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Core Business Functions

RTA's Business Functions define the types of activities that position the agency to achieve its Vision and Mission and implement work plan initiatives, as informed by its statutory responsibilities and powers under PA 387 of 2012. In general, staffing and administrative decisions, initiatives, and projects and programs undertaken by the RTA fall under one or more of the four core Business Functions.

Fund

- Designated recipient for federal and state funds
- Empowered to review federal and state applications for alignment with regional goals
- Empowered to introduce a ballot initiative to generate regional funding for transit

Plan

- Required to produce a Regional Transit Master Plan (RTMP) and update it annually
- Empowered to advance transit projects on specific corridors
- Engaged in planning efforts to improve transit and equitable mobility (*e.g., OnHand Plan, Mobility on Demand study, Seamless Fare Integration studies, Workforce Mobility Equity study, corridor studies*)

Coordinate

- Convenes Provider's Advisory and Citizens Advisory Committees
- Empowered to issue Coordination Directives and withhold funding if regional goals are not followed
- Manages/funds integrated systems (*e.g., MyRide2*)

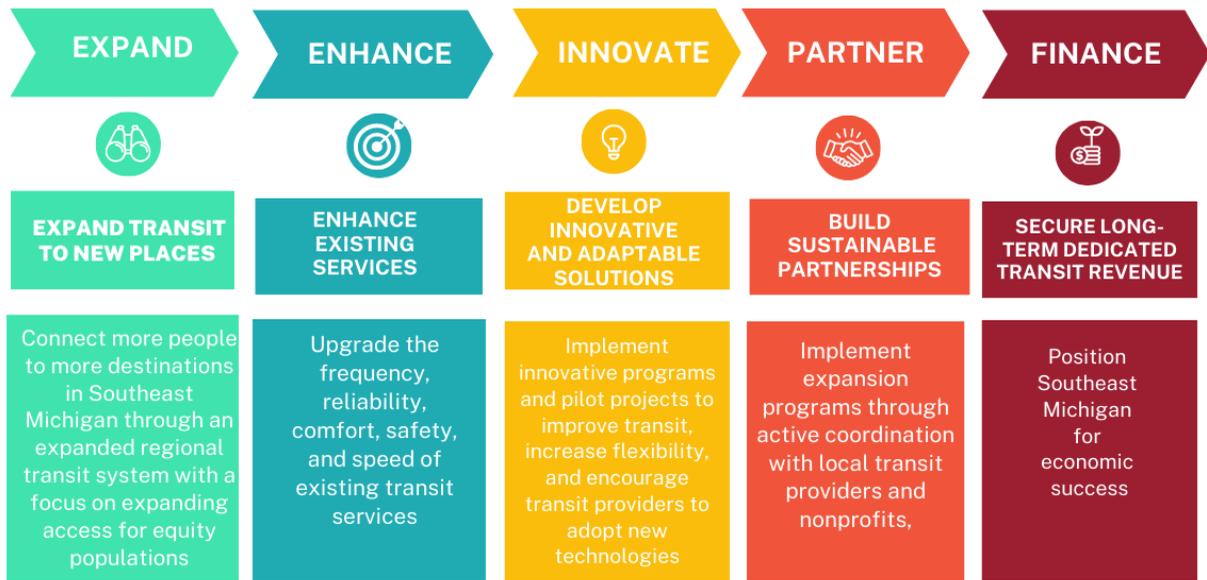
Accelerate

- Pilots new service types (*e.g., Reflex, D2A2, QuickConnect*)
- Seeks funding opportunities to expand and enhance transit
- Builds regional partnerships to strengthen the coalition for transformative, sustainable funding

Regional Transit Master Plan

The RTA Board adopted the most recent plan in February 2023. The upcoming Regional Transit Master Plan (RTMP) annual update will refine a strategic agenda driven by public input to guide future transit planning and projects in Southeast Michigan and build on recent achievements and innovations. The RTMP is an aspirational yet achievable vision for Southeast Michigan’s transit system and a first step toward improving transit equity and service.

The RTA Business Plan presents how the agency will manage financial and staff resources to advance all five of the RTMP goals:



To determine the FY 2023-2027 Work Plan, RTA leaned into the 21 strategies and 61 actions in the RTMP, advancing initiatives that can be advanced in the short- to mid-term, and prioritizing them based on applicability to RTA Guiding Principles. By focusing initiatives in this manner, RTA can make impactful, strategic investments that align with the RTMP goals. The next RTMP evaluation for FY 2024 will include a review and refresh of all the strategies and actions.

FIVE-YEAR WORK PLAN

Overview

Projected over a five-year horizon, the work plan enables the RTA to set achievable short-term actions with a view toward the implementation of more complex initiatives in subsequent years. Updated annually, the work plan aligns with updates to the RTMP, provider priorities, new opportunities, and emerging needs. The work plan covers operational necessities including staffing, board meetings, financial operations, policy and procedure development, effective communication, sustainable funding, and coordinated strategic regional projects.

Positioned for Federal Funding

The work plan strives to maintain current RTA activities and projects while building agency capacity to take on new efforts in line with the RTA's responsibilities and objectives. In particular, the work plan concentrates on implementing the RTMP in the short term and, with a broader view, strengthening the agency's ability to successfully run a future regional ballot initiative and secure new federal funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act, which contain many climate grant opportunities that cover climate-resilient infrastructure and greenhouse gas reduction projects.

Work Plan Inputs

To create the work plan, RTA considered the resources necessary to operate the agency, support its core Business Functions, and advance strategic initiatives that align with the RTMP goals and the regional Vision. RTA identified the strategic initiatives in the work plan by organizing existing projects and RTMP short- and mid-term actions into logical initiatives. RTA then weighed those initiatives balanced against its Guiding Principles to determine which to move into implementation.

Administrative Budget

Items within the Administrative Budget represent RTA core activities carried out by the RTA team. The operations budget funds most tasks required by state and federal law items.

Projects Budget

The Projects Budget represents funded priority initiatives (**Projects in Progress**) with contractors that execute with staff management oversight and unfunded exploratory or readying to launch endeavors (**Programs in Development**). Project Budget revenues tend to be covered by one-time funding sources like discretionary grant awards. Given the strategic role of RTA, several initiatives fall into both categories (referred to as "hybrid"). Hybrid initiatives require further development by staff before they can be launched in partnership with a contractor or provider. The work plan is presented in **Table 1 and 2**.

RTA WORK PLAN

Table 1: Projects in Progress

The RTA’s FY 2023-2024 transit project portfolio combines the agency’s technical assistance, planning, grant development, and implementation expertise to advance strategic and regionally critical transit programs.

	Budget Type	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Agency Operations	Administrative	Ongoing	Ongoing	TBD	TBD	TBD
Regional Transit Master Plan (RTMP)	Administrative	Annual Update	Annual Update	Annual Update	Annual Update	Annual Update
Expenditure Plan Framework*	Administrative	Expenditure Plan Framework	Expenditure Plan	Revisit Expenditure Framework	Expenditure Plan	Revisit Expenditure Framework
Advance CHSTP Program**	Administrative	CHSTP Update	5310 Call for Projects	CHSTP Update	5310 Call for Projects	CHSTP Update
CHSTP Pilot	Project	Planning Tech				
Regional Capital Investment Plan	Administrative	Review Strategic Process	Implement Strategic Process	Refresh Strategic Process	Refresh Strategic Process	Refresh Strategic Process
Regional Mobility Management	Project	MyRide2 Operations	MyRide2 Operations	MyRide2** Operations	MyRide2** Operations	MyRide2** Operations
D2A2 Service	Project	Funded Operations	Funded Operations	Partially Funded Operations	TBD	TBD
Regional Fare Modernization (Mobility Wallet)	Hybrid	Fare Technology Pilot	TBD Fare Technology Project	TBD Fare Technology Project	TBD Fare Technology Project	TBD Fare Technology Project
Downtown DET to Airport Express	Project	Implement Pilot	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Access to Transit Program	Project	Implement Pilot	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

RTA WORK PLAN

Table 2: Programs in Development

The RTA provides thought leadership and collaborates with partners to strategically explore and advance programs. The following initiatives remain in the exploration phase and are unfunded.

Initiative	Budget Type	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Regional Corridor Strategic Investment <i>(Including BRT)</i>	Hybrid	Strategy Development	TBD Major Corridor Project			
Technical Assistance Program	Hybrid	Strategy Development	TBD Technical Assistance	TBD Technical Assistance	TBD Technical Assistance	TBD Technical Assistance
Regional Tech Strategic Plan	Project	Regional Tech Strategic Plan	TBD Regional Tech Project			
Workforce Development Framework	Hybrid	Strategy Development	TBD Workforce Program	TBD Workforce Program	TBD Workforce Program	TBD Workforce Program
Zero-Emission Transition Plan***	Project	Strategy Development	TBD Service Pilot	TBD Service Pilot	TBD Service Pilot	TBD Service Pilot
Strategic Service Pilots	Hybrid	Strategy Development	TBD Service Pilot	TBD Service Pilot	TBD Service Pilot	TBD Service Pilot

Note: Cells in gray require additional funding.

**Anticipated funding for CHSTP Update and MyRide2 is in the planned Project Budget.*

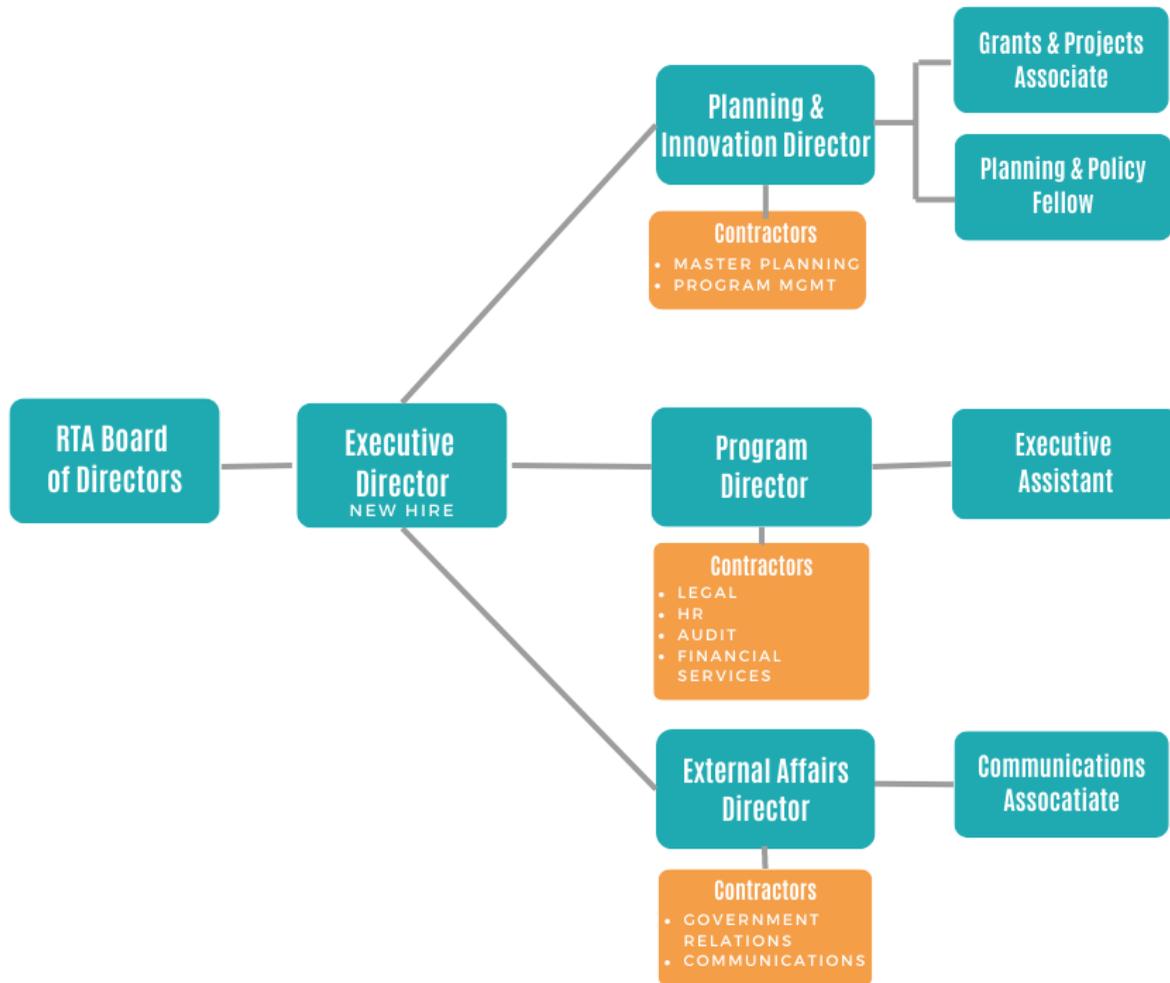
***The Expenditure Plan is the document that will create the basis of a potential ballot initiative. Funding for a formal ballot initiative will need to be provided through an outside funding source.*

****It is the RTA's current understanding that AAATA, DDOT, and SMART are advancing these plans on their own.*

RTA WORK PLAN

2023-2024 RTA Organizational Chart

The Board of Directors' FY 23-25 two-year ARP fund investment enabled the agency to expand the team from 4 to 8 employees.



The Executive Director position is currently vacant. The role is being fulfilled through a Program Management contract.

RTA BUDGET FORECASTS

FY 2024 Administrative Priorities

RTA staff categorized the following tasks as essential to the success of the work plan over the next five years. RTA will be especially focused on staffing, funding, and advancing core services in FY 2024.

Operations

- Hire a full-time Executive Director.
- Retain staff: Program Director, Planning & Innovation Director, External Affairs Director, Projects & Grants Associate, Communications Associate, and Planning & Policy Fellow.
- Invest in IT services that support a team of 8 employees.
- Retain ongoing core administrative contracts through procurement (financial services, legal, audit, government relations, media relations, and HR).

Planning & Innovation

- Complete annual RTMP and CHSTP updates.
- Embed equity into the RTA through a dedicated working group.
- Implement a Regional Capital Plan.
- Pursue discretionary funding to support and expand the RTA Work Plan.
- Develop and launch the region's first Access to Transit grant program with over \$2 million in funding available for upgrading bus stops and access to bus stops.
- Tap into \$25 million in ARP set-asides to advance RTA and providers' needs and priorities and sustain existing commitments (e.g., D2A2, MyRide2 programs).
- Identify additional funding sources for long-term operations and new projects, which could come from continued MDOT appropriations, and administrative fees on formula funding programs.
- Develop and sustain a technical assistance program to assist community transit providers in the region with planning, capital improvements, and grant applications.

External Affairs

- Expand and continue public engagement, stakeholder relationships, philanthropic support, and communications activities.
- Refresh RTA's brand and build ongoing marketing initiatives.

The proposed Administrative Budget for FY 2024–2028 is laid out in [Table 3](#).

RTA ADMINISTRATIVE BUDGET

Table 3: Operations FY 2024-2028

Administrative Budget	Budget	Projected			
Administrative Revenues	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026	FY2027	FY2028
American Rescue Plan Act (5307)	\$2,633,868	\$2,911,230	\$845,182		
MDOT Appropriation (FY2023)	\$133,602				
MDOT Appropriation (FY2024)	\$226,085				
5310 Administrative Funding	\$330,625	\$330,625	290,000	290,000	290,000
Total Revenue	\$3,324,180	\$3,241,855	\$1,135,182	\$290,000	\$290,000
Operating Expenses					
Personnel	\$1,503,443	\$1,548,547	\$1,595,003	\$1,642,853	\$1,692,139
Conferences/Travel/Training	\$45,530	\$48,000	\$49,405	\$48,500	\$49,355
Memberships and Subscriptions	\$11,257	\$11,257	\$11,257	\$11,257	\$11,257
Board & Public Mtg Management	\$16,600	\$16,600	\$16,600	\$16,600	\$16,600
Finance, Legal, Government Relations	\$285,775	\$294,244	\$302,967	\$311,952	\$321,206
Insurance	\$14,850	\$14,865	\$14,865	\$14,865	\$14,865
Rent and Utilities	\$22,800	\$77,800	\$77,800	\$77,800	\$77,800
Telephone and Internet	\$8,230	\$8,230	\$8,230	\$8,230	\$8,230
Computer Equipment and IT Support	\$35,655	\$30,655	\$30,655	\$30,655	\$30,655
Supplies	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500
Operating SubTotal	\$1,946,640	\$2,052,698	\$2,109,282	\$2,165,212	\$2,224,607
Planning Expenses					
Planning Services	\$381,450	\$397,852	\$414,960	\$432,803	\$451,414
Specialized Planning Services	\$515,000	\$515,645	\$516,318	\$517,019	\$517,751
CHSTP	\$150,000	\$0	\$162,900	\$0	\$176,909
Community Engagement	\$150,000	\$156,450	\$163,177	\$170,194	\$177,512
Planning SubTotal	\$1,196,450	\$1,069,947	\$1,257,355	\$1,120,017	\$1,323,587
External Affairs Expenses					
Branding	\$45,000	\$10,000	\$20,000	\$10,000	\$35,000
External Communications	\$84,000	\$86,520	\$89,116	\$91,789	\$94,543
Social Media Management	\$7,800	\$7,800	\$7,800	\$7,800	\$7,800
Website	\$30,240	\$1,240	\$1,240	\$1,240	\$30,240
Graphics/Photography	\$10,150	\$10,150	\$10,155	\$10,155	\$10,155
Promotional Items	\$3,900	\$3,500	\$3,900	\$3,500	\$3,900
External Affairs SubTotal	181,090	119,210	132,211	124,484	181,638
Total Expenses	\$3,324,180	\$3,241,855	\$3,498,848	\$3,409,713	\$3,729,832
Remaining	\$0	\$0	-\$2,363,666	-\$3,119,713	-\$3,439,832

RTA Project Priorities

Project Expenses

RTA has the following funded initiatives that it is anticipating completing or substantially advancing in FY 2024-2028, as shown in Table 4:

D2A2 Pilot (\$6,093,438) This budget line covers the advancement and implementation of the D2A2 Express Bus service. The annual cost is approximately \$2,200,000. RTA will need to consider options for continuing to fund this service once the pilot funding is exhausted in December 2024.

Regional Mobility Management (~\$400,000 annually) This budget line is intended to cover the continuation of the Regional Mobility Management Program through September 2023. This program currently provides funding for the regional MyRide2 One Click/One Call service provided by the Area Agency on Aging 1-B. RTA will need to continue to provide 5310 funding support to this project in future years.

Universal Basic Mobility (\$1,150,000) This budget line item is intended to fund a mobility wallet fare technology pilot focused on Detroit job seekers. RTA will need to consider options for continuing to fund this service once the pilot funding is exhausted in December 2024.

Access to Transit/Mobility Hub Projects (\$2,000,000) As a direct result of the Bus Stop Strategic Plan, the RTA would look for opportunities to invest in stop upgrades to provide a safer and more pleasant experience for transit riders.

Detroit to Airport Express (\$2,500,000) This budget line item is intended to cover an express bus pilot connecting downtown Detroit with the Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport. RTA will need to consider options for continuing to fund this service once the pilot funding is exhausted in December 2024.

Regional Transit Technology Strategic Plan (\$125,000) The purpose of this plan is to document all providers' current technology, the current marketplace of technology solutions, and how we can create long-term investments that support transit riders' needs.

RTA PROJECTS BUDGET

Table 4: Projects FY 2024-2028

Projects Budget			
	Total	Incurred-to-date	Balance
D2A2			
December 2025	\$8,202,699	\$3,265,550	\$4,937,149
Federal Grant MI-2021-036-01	\$4,311,592	\$2,096,847	\$2,214,745
State Grant 2017-0119/P7/R2	\$1,635,893	\$702,797	\$933,096
Fares	\$955,214	\$465,906	\$489,308
Federal Grant FY 2023 CMAQ*/**	\$1,300,000	\$0	\$1,300,000
Regional Mobility Management			
December 2025	\$3,100,300	\$963,454	\$2,136,846
Federal Grant MI-2017-031-02**	\$2,480,240	\$800,735	\$1,679,505
State Grant 2017-0119/P2/R4**	\$620,060	\$200,184	\$419,876
Universal Basic Mobility			
December 2024	\$1,150,000	\$0	\$1,150,000
State Grant 2022-0126/P3	\$1,150,000	\$0	\$1,150,000
Access to Transit Program			
December 2026	\$2,000,000	\$0	\$2,000,000
Federal FY 2024 CMAQ*/**	\$1,600,000	\$0	\$1,600,000
State Grant**	\$400,000	\$0	\$400,000
Detroit to Airport Express			
December 2024	\$2,500,000	\$0	\$2,500,000
Federal FY 2023 CRP**/**	\$2,000,000	\$0	\$2,000,000
State Grant**	\$500,000	\$0	\$500,000
Regional Tech Strategic Plan			
December 2024	\$125,000	\$0	\$125,000
State Grant 2017-0119/P10	\$125,000	\$0	\$125,000

**Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ)*

***Funding is secured.*

It will be amended into the grant at a future date.

**** Carbon Reduction Program*