

MOBILITY ALL PLAN

Connecting Communities *Empowering Lives*

Mobility 4 All Plan

Coordinated Human Services Public Transportation Plan

Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan

September 2025



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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAATA	Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
API	Application Programming Interfaces
ATP	Access to Transit
CAC	Citizens Advisory Committee
CHSTP	Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan
CFP	Call for Projects
CIE	Community Information Exchange
CPP	Community Partnership Program
CTADA	Connecticut ADA Paratransit Resource Center
CTDOT	Connecticut Department of Transportation
CTF	Comprehensive Transportation Fund
DAX	Detroit Airport Express
DDOT	Detroit Department of Transportation
DPM	Detroit People Mover
FRTA	Freedom Road Transportation Authority
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
FY	Fiscal Year
M4A	Mobility 4 All
MCL	Michigan Compiled Laws
MDOT	Michigan Department of Transportation
MOD	Mobility-Oriented Development
MTA	Mass Transportation Authority
NEMT	Non-Emergency Medical Transportation
NOTA	North Oakland Transportation Authority
OPC	Older Persons Commission
PAC	Providers Advisory Committee
PEX	People's Express
PMP	Program Management Plan
RTA	Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan

RTMP	Regional Transit Master Plan
SEMCOG	Southeast Michigan Council of Governments
SMART	Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation
TOD	Transit Oriented Development
TWG	Technical Working Group
UZA	Urbanized Area
WAVE	Western-Washtenaw Area Value Express
WOTA	Western Oakland Transportation Authority

1 Executive Summary

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2 Introduction

The Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan (RTA) is updating its Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP), the Mobility 4 All (M4A) Plan. The RTA plans, funds, coordinates, and accelerates regional transit services, projects, and programs in Southeast Michigan, which comprises the entirety of Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw, and Wayne Counties, including the City of Detroit.

The last CHSTP, known as the [OnHand Plan](#), was completed in 2020. This M4A Plan updates and replaces the 2020 plan. Goals and recommendations from 2020 will be revisited, simplified, and coordinated with the investment priorities identified in the RTA's Regional Transit Master Plan (RTMP) and with the help of the Technical Working Group (see Appendix A for more details) formulated to support the development of the M4A Plan.

The plan focuses on how well existing public and human service transportation options match the needs of the region's residents, particularly the plan's target populations of older adults, people with disabilities, and individuals with limited incomes. The plan also considers improvements to coordination and collaboration across human service organizations and transportation providers. The M4A Plan is designed to meet the requirements of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) under 49 U.S.C. Section 5310, ensuring that the region has access to critical federal funds available under the [Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities Program](#). As stated in the circular, FTA C 9070.1H, federal law requires that projects selected for funding under the Section 5310 program be included in a locally developed CHSTP and that the plan be developed with participation by older adults, individuals with disabilities, representatives of public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human services providers and other members of the public. The final M4A Plan presented in this document provides a summary of the technical analyses completed, including examining existing conditions of the region, available funding mechanisms that support transportation services, and user travel patterns. Concurrent to the technical analyses, the study team conducted an extensive community engagement effort, reaching out to both current and potential riders to better understand the way people travel through the region and to identify any unmet needs.

Using these findings, a series of goals and recommendations was developed to guide improvements to the delivery of public and human service transportation services over the coming years. The proposed improvements help to address identified gaps in current services, achieve efficiencies in service delivery, and streamline mobility throughout the region. The recommendations prioritize transportation services and projects for funding and implementation under the Section 5310 program for the Detroit and Ann Arbor urbanized areas (UZAs), known regionally as the Mobility 4 All (M4A) Program. [Section 8 Goals and Recommendations](#) details the recommendations intended to move projects forward for funding over the next five years.

2.1 The Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan

The RTA has spearheaded regional transit planning efforts in the Detroit and Ann Arbor metropolitan area since the authority was created in 2012. The RTA's mission is to create new and better ways to move and connect people in Southeast Michigan, with a vision of a region where advances in transit create greater prosperity for all. To meet this vision, the RTA develops regional transit plans, coordinates a complex network of local service providers, accelerates pilot projects and programs, and distributes public transportation funds regionally.

As recommended by the 2020 OnHand Plan, the RTA has worked to regionalize the management and administration of the Section 5310 program funds annually apportioned to the Detroit and Ann Arbor UZAs. The RTA is the designated recipient of these funds, and is responsible for the biennial competitive selection process, planning for future transportation needs, and ensuring integration and coordination

among a diverse range of transportation modes and providers. Further, RTA is responsible for overseeing the implementation of projects developed and prioritized in the CHSTP.

2.2 The Role of the M4A Program

The M4A Program is a regional initiative that supports equitable transportation options for seniors, people with disabilities, and individuals with limited incomes. Funded by the FTA Section 5310 program, M4A aims to ensure that everyone, regardless of ability or income, has access to safe, reliable, and affordable transportation services to get where they need to go in the four-county region. Through the development of this plan, M4A helps the RTA better understand how well existing transportation services are meeting the needs of Southeast Michigan and providing innovative strategies to solve transportation issues so residents can get to work, medical appointments, and other daily activities.

Through the M4A Program, the RTA conducts a call for projects every two years, allowing local agencies, non-profits, and transportation providers the opportunity to apply for funding for projects that align with the program's goals and meet all program requirements. Funding is distributed through a competitive grant process. Projects funded through this process must be included in the region's CHSTP.

The M4A Plan is locally developed and guides funding decisions and project implementation under Section 5310 for the Detroit and Ann Arbor UZAs. The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) manages a statewide Section 5310 program for all areas with a population of less than 200,000. MDOT led the development of fourteen regional CHSTPs, including a plan for the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) published in December 2024. For rural areas in Southeast Michigan outside of the Detroit and Ann Arbor UZAs, funding decisions are guided by the plan developed for SEMCOG.

3 Existing Conditions

Analyzing the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the RTA Region is key to understanding transportation needs. The travel market analysis described in the following sections provides a profile of the region's demographics, with a particular focus on vulnerable populations. "Vulnerable population" refers to a group of individuals at a higher risk of experiencing disadvantage or difficulty in accessing resources, services, or opportunities. The M4A plan's target demographic consists of older adults, people with disabilities, and individuals with limited incomes, or vulnerable populations that have different transportation needs and encounter different transportation barriers. Examining population trends assists in identifying concentrations of these audiences and informs the overall goals and strategic recommendations included in the plan, helping to foster innovative transit solutions.

3.1 Travel Market Analysis

There are over 4.3 million people currently living in the RTA Region (Table 1). Over 90% of the region's population resides within Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb Counties. Wayne County has the highest population, comprising 41.4% of the RTA Region's total population. Population within Wayne County is concentrated in the cities of Detroit, Dearborn, Dearborn Heights, and Hamtramck. The City of Detroit makes up 14.8% of the RTA Region's total population. Oakland County's population is concentrated in the southeast corner of the county, with communities like Royal Oak, Ferndale, Hazel Park, Berkley, and Birmingham containing high population densities (Figure 1).

Washtenaw County, the most rural of the four counties, makes up 8.6% of the RTA Region's total population. The bulk of the county's residents live in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area, home to the University of Michigan, where an influx of over 50,000 students move to the area through the course of the school year.ⁱ

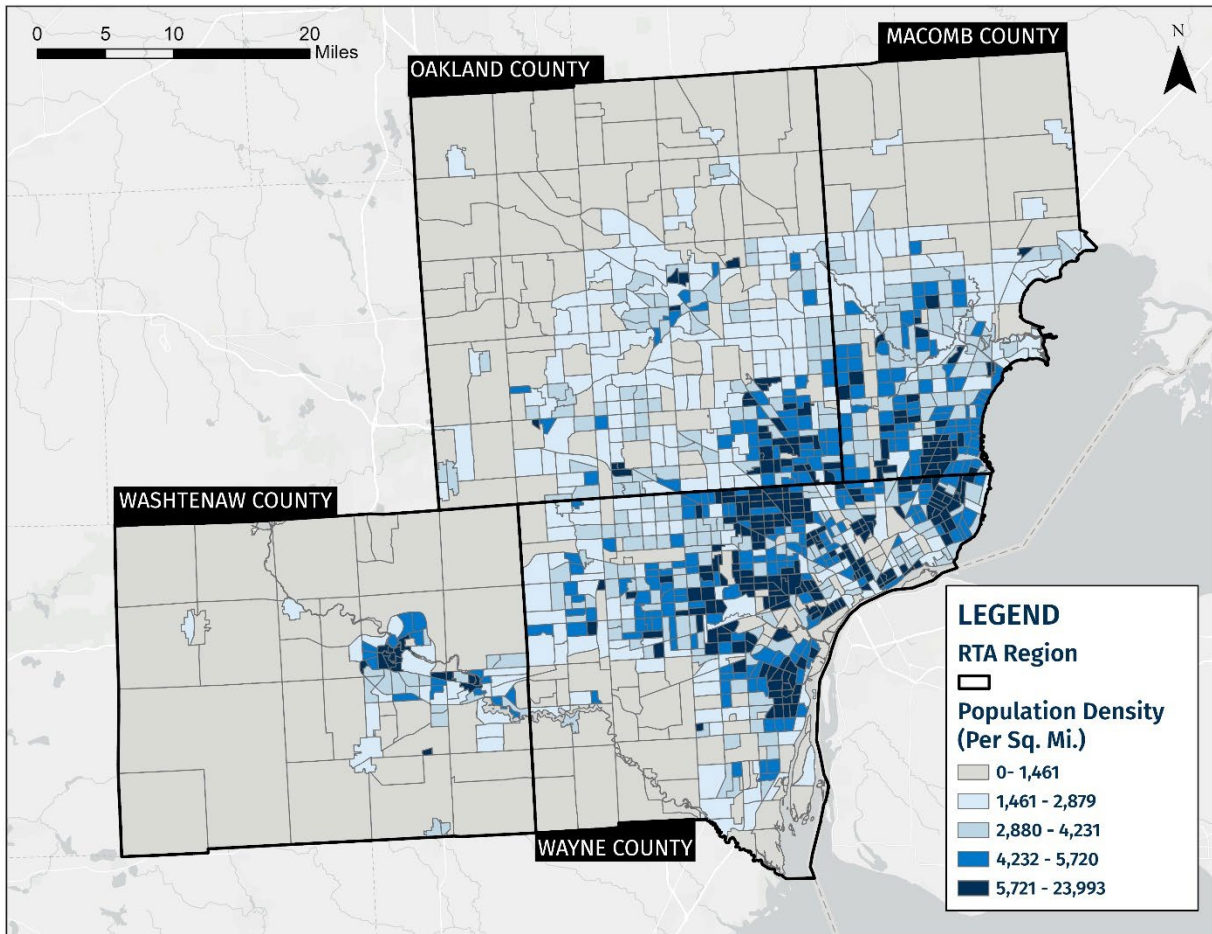


Figure 1. Population Density in the RTA Region

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates. Table B01001: Sex by Age.

The total population in the RTA Region is expected to grow by 6% by 2050, or by approximately 255,000 people for a total population of 4.5 million. Macomb County and Washtenaw County exhibit the greatest potential for growth, with projections expected to increase by 9% and 13% respectively. Wayne County, which includes the City of Detroit, is expected to remain fairly level in population (within 1%).

As exhibited by Table 1 and Table 2, the population in the RTA Region that is 65 years or older¹ is expected to grow at a much higher rate than the population as a whole. The entire four-county older adult population is projected to increase by 35% by 2050. Again, Macomb County and Washtenaw County are expected to see the most significant growth in this age category, increasing by 48% and 63% respectively, though both Oakland County and Wayne County will also see increases in the older adult population. The largest decreases in population are expected to be seen in the 5-17 and 18-24 age groups.

¹ Individual projections for the 60-to-65-year age group were not available from the SEMCOG Regional Forecast dataset.

General Population	Macomb	Oakland	Washtenaw	Wayne	Region Total
2020 Population	881,217	1,274,395	372,258	1,793,561	4,321,431
2050 Population	962,485	1,387,838	421,412	1,804,908	4,576,643
Percent Change	+9.2%	+8.9%	+13.2%	+0.6%	+5.9%

Table 1. Population Projections for the RTA Region (2020 to 2050)

Population 65+	Macomb	Oakland	Washtenaw	Wayne	Region Total
2020 Population	156,274	225,657	55,194	278,326	715,451
2050 Population	231,931	308,928	89,735	334,033	964,627
Percent Change	+48.4%	+36.9%	+62.6%	+20.0%	+34.8%

Table 2. 65+ Population Projections for the RTA Region (2020 to 2050)

Source: Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG). [2050 Regional Forecast](#).

3.1.1 Racial Composition

A diverse range of individuals call the RTA Region home (Figure 3). The region's population is predominantly white (62%). Individuals identifying as Black or African American (23%), Asian American (6%), or Hispanic or Latino (5%) make up much of the remaining population, followed by those who identify a combination of two or more races (4%) or as some other race alone (0.4%). Combined, the American Indian and Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander populations represent less than 1% of the region's population.

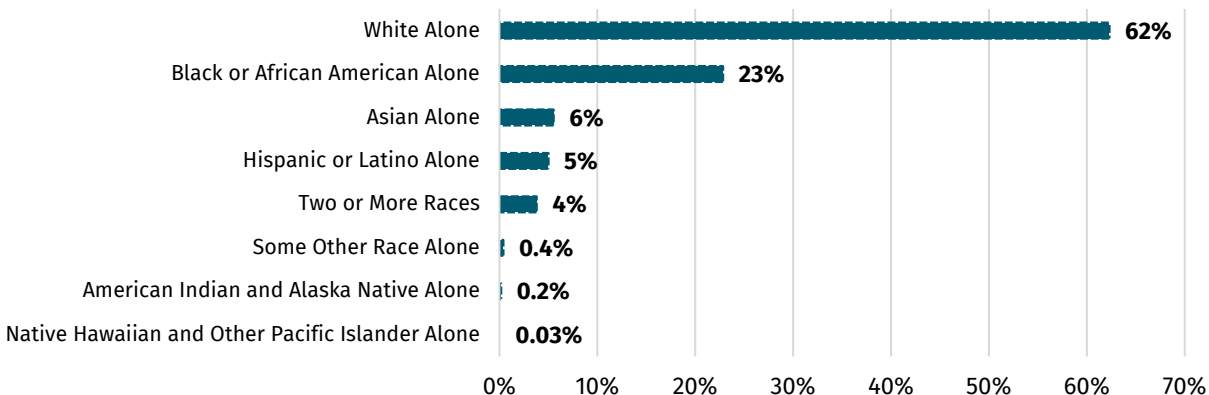


Figure 2. RTA Region Racial and Ethnic Composition

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates. Table DP05: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates.

3.1.2 M4A Target Populations

An index was created to identify areas with significant overlaps in M4A target populations.² The index considers the proportion of low-income households, people living with a disability, and older adult populations across the RTA Region, to assist in the identification of communities where the need for human service transportation is most likely to be concentrated. A higher score indicates a higher

² Vulnerable population refers to demographic groups at higher risk of experiencing socioeconomic, health, or mobility-related disadvantages. According to the FTA, these groups typically include low-income individuals, older adults, and persons with disabilities who require enhanced transportation options to access essential services.

concentration of M4A target populations. Figure 3 shows a dispersed distribution of vulnerable populations across the four-county region. High concentrations of vulnerable populations can be found in the denser urban regions of the RTA area, particularly in the cities of Detroit, Pontiac and Ypsilanti, but also in the Van Buren and Sumpter Townships of Wayne County. Additional concentrations can be found along the outskirts of Oakland, Macomb, and Washtenaw counties, such as Holly, the Richmond-Lenox area, and Saline.

Additional analysis on RTA regional demographics can be found in Appendix B.

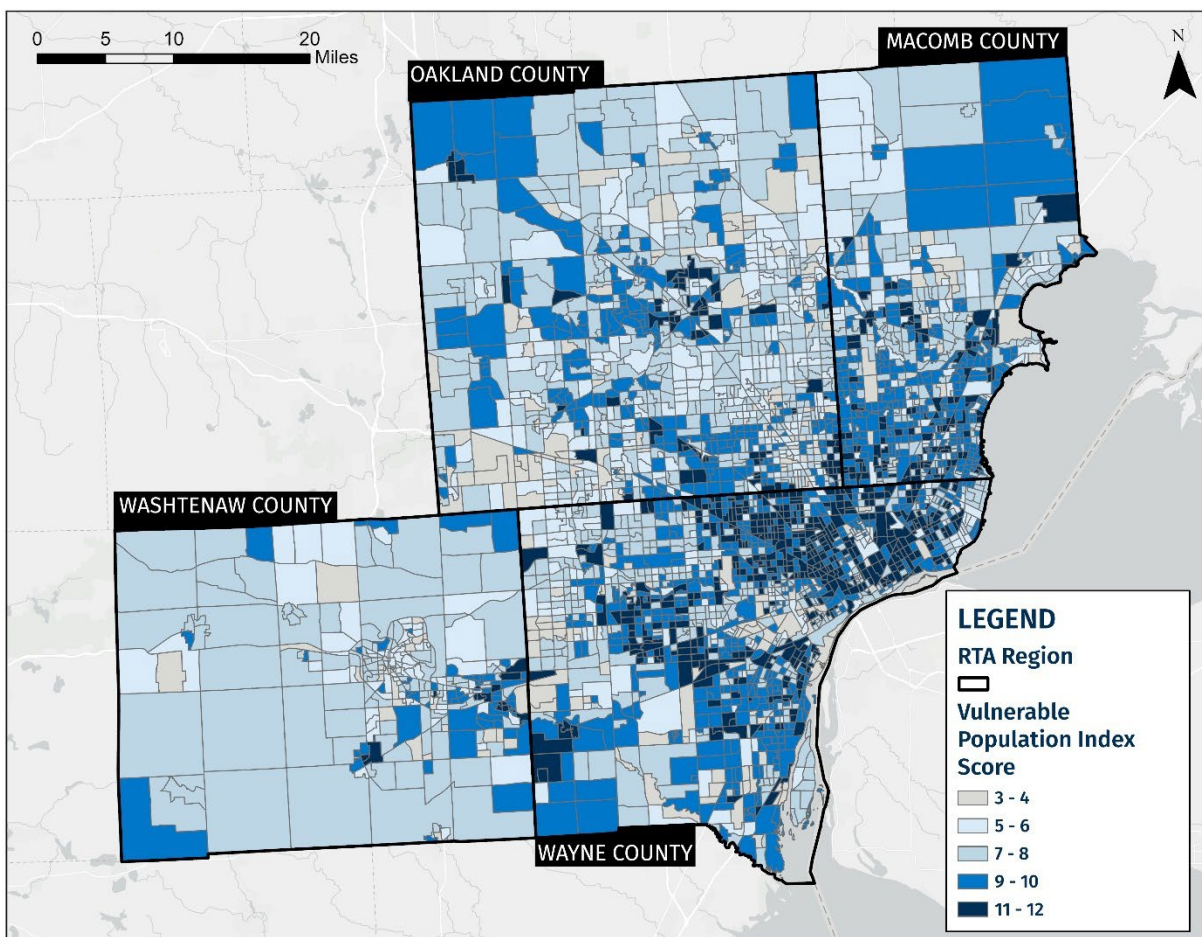


Figure 3. RTA Region Vulnerable Population Index

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates. Table B01001: Sex by Age; Table S1810: Disability Characteristics; Table C17002: Ratio of Income to Poverty Level in the Past 12 Months.

3.2 Transportation Service Provider Inventory

The RTA Region supports a large number of transportation providers, both in the public transportation and human services transportation spaces. To most accurately collect key information about the region's service providers, a survey was sent to over 90 of the region's providers to collect information on service type, rider eligibility, days and hours of operation, service area boundaries, and funding sources. Additional information collected included ridership and service use data, which consists of trip origin

and destination information, trip purpose, average monthly ridership, and rider policies/procedures (i.e., means of requesting or scheduling trips, fare structures, and advance reservation windows).

Southeast Michigan transit providers offer a variety of services and have different rider eligibility requirements. Services range from fixed-route that are open to the public and have set, publicized schedules, to door-to-door service where pre-scheduling is required, to transportation specifically for residential facilities and their residents. The descriptions below capture many service providers in the RTA Region, although it is not an exhaustive list.

3.2.1 Fixed Route and Complementary Paratransit

The RTA Region has several large transportation providers offering fixed-route services. As required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), each also offers complementary paratransit or coordinates with other providers to do so. Detailed descriptions of each provider can be found in Appendix B.

Figure 4 illustrates the providers operating complementary paratransit within three quarters of a mile of a fixed route across the RTA Region. The Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART) has the largest geographic reach, extending into the greater Metro Detroit area, while the Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT) primarily serves the City of Detroit. The Detroit People Mover (DPM) is an automated rail loop in Downtown Detroit and the QLINE is a streetcar system along Woodward Avenue. TheRide (operated by the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority [AAATA]), University of Michigan, and Western-Washtenaw Area Value Express (WAVE) are concentrated around Ann Arbor and the surrounding areas in Washtenaw County. The People's Express (PEX) University of Michigan Employee Commuter Route connects Park & Rides in Brighton and Whitmore Lake to the University of Michigan Medical Complex's Med Inn.

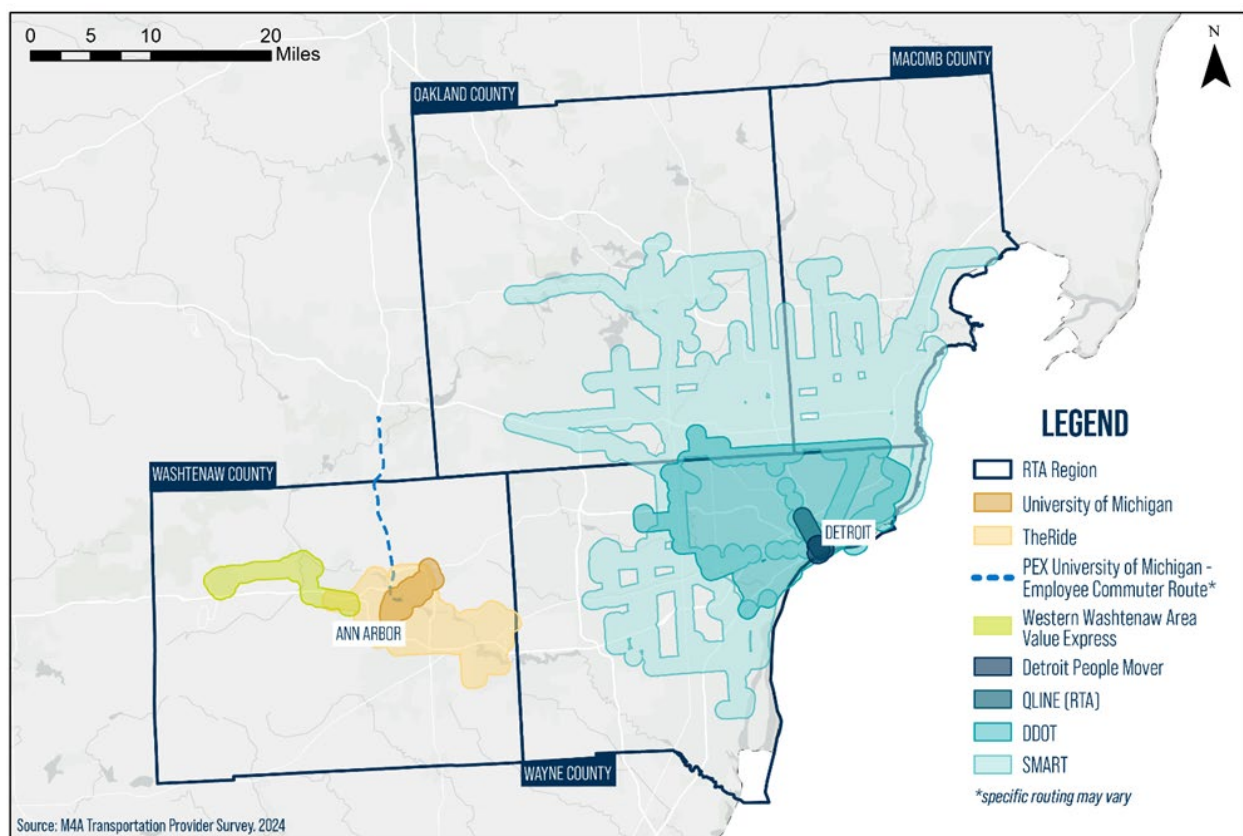


Figure 4. Fixed Route Provider Service Areas in the RTA Region

Two newer additions have been made to fixed-route services in the RTA Region: the Detroit Airport Express (DAX) and D2A2. More information on these services can be found in Appendix B.

3.2.2 Demand-Response Transportation Services

The RTA Region is served by a large number of demand-response transportation service providers. Unlike fixed-route services, which run on publicly available, set schedules, demand-response service schedules typically vary based on demand on a given day. Demand-response services typically have designated hours of operation, rides generally need to be scheduled in advance and may have eligibility requirements for riders.

These services include curb-to-curb and door-to-door rides through local community programs, public transportation providers, or non-profit organizations. Most programs give priority to medical, work, and essential trips. SMART and its partner organizations offer a wide range of demand-response services tailored to the needs of local communities across the SMART service area. Through the Community Partnership Program (CPP), SMART collaborates with 74 communities to provide customized transit options, including curb-to-curb and door-to-door services, primarily for seniors and individuals with disabilities. The Connector Service offers curb-to-curb rides within a 10-mile radius for those living beyond 1/3 mile from fixed routes, with exceptions for seniors and disabled riders. SMART Flex provides on-demand rides via a mobile app. TheRide complements the fixed-route service with FlexRide, an on-demand shuttle serving East and West zones, including late-night and holiday service. Seniors benefit from GoldRide, offering fare-free travel and demand-response options. TheRide also offers GroceryRide, which provides weekly trips from several senior housing communities in Ann Arbor to local grocery stores. WAVE's door-to-door service recently expanded to 18 towns in western Washtenaw County. The North Oakland Transportation Authority (NOTA) and the Older Persons Commission (OPC) Social & Activity Center offer door-to-door transit for eligible residents, prioritizing seniors, disabled individuals, and low-income riders. PEX serves rural areas in Oakland, Washtenaw, and Livingston Counties, including a commuter route for University of Michigan employees. The Western Oakland Transportation Authority (WOTA) provides accessible door-to-door service for residents aged 18 and up, with priority for seniors, disabled individuals, and veterans, and coordinates with other providers for extended travel needs.

Appendix B gives additional insight into these services and who is eligible for rides, as well as a summary of any additional providers that responded to the survey.

3.2.3 Other Service Providers

Human services transportation often travel farther than the typical fixed-route and demand-response transportation models. Catholic Charities offers wheelchair-accessible rides to its adult day care centers in St. Clair Shores and Auburn Hills. New Gateways and Freedom Work Opportunities provide transportation for program participants, including community outings. Residential facilities like Angel's Place, Jarc, and Family Living Center offer rides for residents to appointments and activities, often with no travel boundaries. Additionally, the Freedom Road Transportation Authority (FRTA) supports a volunteer driver reimbursement program, allowing eligible individuals to arrange their own rides and receive mileage compensation, offering flexibility for those with limited access to public transit. Additional information on human services transportation providers can be found in Appendix B.

3.2.4 Regional Mobility Management Services

Transportation service providers abound in Southeast Michigan. Variations between service eligibility, scheduling policies, geographical restrictions, fare policies, and more exist between these providers and sometimes between modes within a single provider. To help navigate these variations and the options, providers often hire a Mobility Manager, or someone who helps coordinate transportation options for eligible riders. In the RTA region, a regional resource exists in the form of the myride2 Transportation Concierge Service, a one-stop resource with a focus on helping seniors and adults with disabilities find

transportation options to travel across the full RTA region. Myride2 has a website (myride2.com) and call center that offers individually customized mobility management to help everyone get to where they need and want to go. Mobility managers help riders (or potential riders) coordinate the necessary services to travel from their origin to their destination, for the extent of their intended trip. Its services apply to anyone who requires transportation services, drives, or utilizes both modes to move around.ⁱⁱ

4 Funding Overview

Transportation providers rely on a diverse array of funding sources to sustain and expand operations, ensuring efficient and accessible transportation services are provided to the public. Primary funding sources typically include government appropriations from federal, state, and local budgets, which support capital projects, day-to-day operations, and ongoing maintenance activities. Funding is appropriated annually and is subject to many factors, such as economic conditions, policy priorities, and public input. Transportation providers also generate revenue through direct sources, including passenger fares, advertisement on vehicles, private donations, and partnerships with private entities. Additionally, dedicated taxes, such as property or fuel taxes, are commonly earmarked for transit funding. Balancing funding streams is essential to meet operational demands and address future transportation challenges and opportunities. Though there are a number of funding sources available, there is difficulty in administering these funds across the region.

This section outlines the funding sources utilized by transportation service providers in the RTA region, providing an overview of federal, state, local, and other funding sources, and compares per capita transit funding to RTA's peer regions.

4.1 Current Sources of Funding

In the RTA Region, federal subsidy is critical to supporting transportation services, with nearly 85% of Provider Survey respondents indicating they have received a federal grant, either directly or as a pass-through, to support the organization. State and local sources are also a key part of the funding picture, with 60% and 65% of respondents indicating they receive funding from these respective sources. The region's providers are resourceful, as many Provider Survey respondents indicated they charge a fee or fare for service. Numerous providers also indicated that their annual budgets are supported by private donations and/or fundraising, by grants from local foundations and/or non-profit organizations, and by corporate sponsorships and/or partnerships with private entities. Figure 5 depicts the types of funding received by RTA providers, per survey responses.

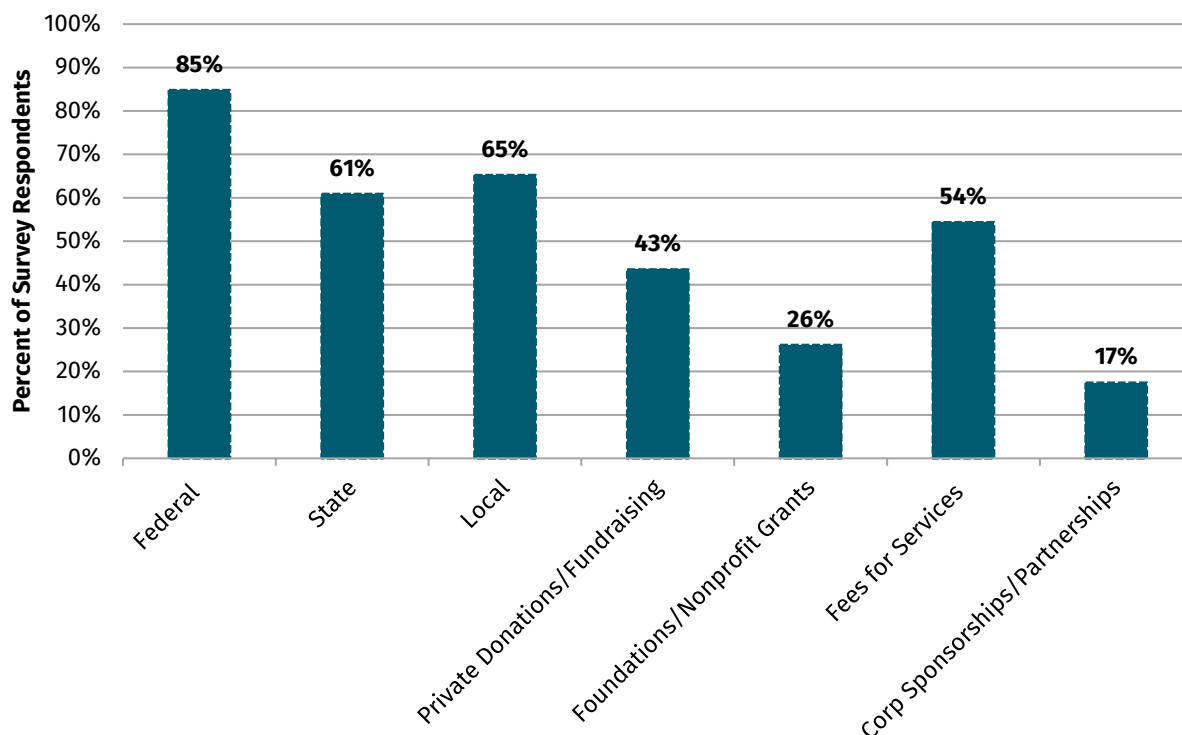


Figure 5. How RTA Region Transportation Providers Receive Funding

Source: M4A Transportation Provider Survey, 2024

The majority of transit funding in Southeast Michigan is designated through the RTA and expended by service providers to support operations, covering the costs required to run the day-to-day services and maintain the systems. Examples of these costs include salaries, wages, benefits, fuel, insurance, vehicle maintenance, and administrative costs. Operating costs are predominantly supported by directly generated revenue, such as passenger fare revenue, advertising revenue, or donations, followed by state and federal funding sources. While still important to the operation of a transportation service, capital spending in the RTA Region is significantly less than operating spending. Capital investments, such as the purchase of vehicles or necessary technologies are almost exclusively supported by federal and state grants.

Since 2019, the funding picture in the RTA Region has shifted. Federal funding has increased in the last four years, but state and local funding have decreased. This is largely due to the global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which began in early 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted public transit agencies, leading to a sharp decline in ridership while operational costs remained steady, or even increased. Many agencies opted to eliminate fares to support public health and safety in an attempt to reduce transmission of the virus by reducing contact between operators and riders, and as such, lost a critical source of revenue. Other revenues, such as those generated by advertising or parking, also suffered. Federal relief packages provided an influx of funding that helped agencies cover operational deficits, maintain payroll, enhance cleaning protocols, and implement safety measures for passengers and staff, while relieving pressure on state and local budgets. Figure 6 shows these changes in greater detail, noting the change in revenues and expenses from 2019 to 2023.

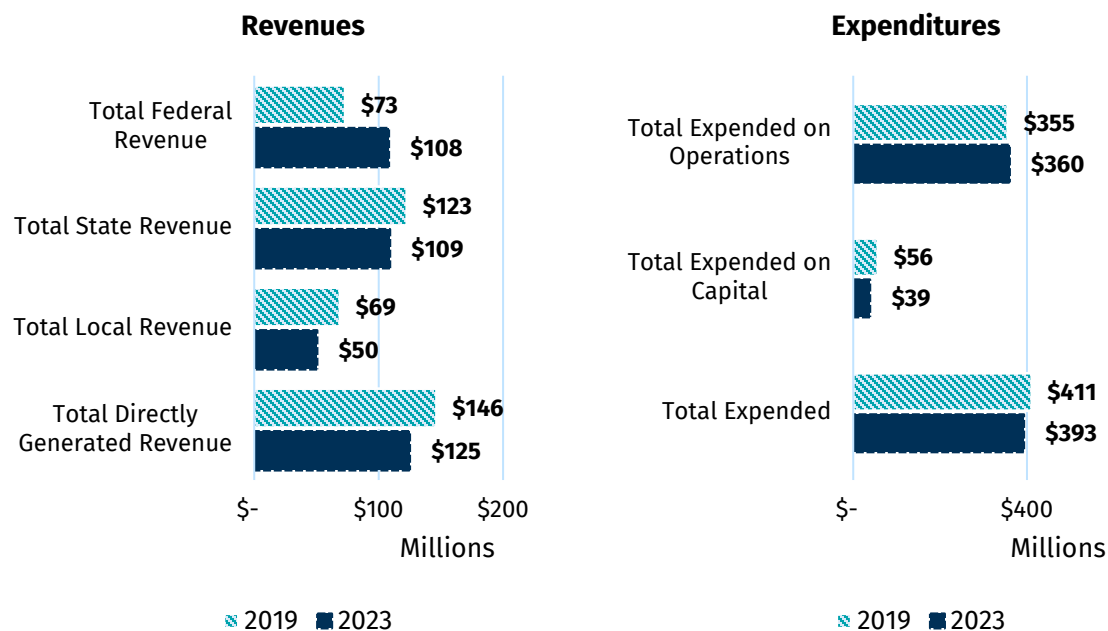


Figure 6. Changes in Revenue and Expenditures in the RTA Region (FY 2019 – FY 2023)

Source: National Transit Database, 2023

The next several sections will discuss the individual sources of funding, with additional detail found in Appendix C. As specified in the Michigan Compiled Laws (MCL) Act 387 of 2012, Section 124.548, the RTA is the designated recipient of both federal and state funding for the four counties of Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw, and Wayne, including the City of Detroit.ⁱⁱⁱ

4.2 Federal Funding

Based on available FTA award letters, in Fiscal Year (FY) 2024, the RTA Region received nearly \$83 million in federal formula funds to support public transportation.^{iv} Of these funds, \$71 million was allocated directly to transit agencies and \$42.4 million was distributed through MDOT to rural providers and to human services agencies. The largest federal transit funding source in the region is FTA Section 5307 funds, a formula grant program that funds urban transit agencies such as AAATA, DDOT, DPM, and SMART. Another large FTA program, Section 5339 Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities, funded the region's largest fixed-route bus providers at approximately \$5.5 million.

The State of Michigan administers FTA Section 5311 Formula Grants for Rural Areas, of which approximately \$1 million was distributed to the RTA Region to support rural service providers including PEX, NOTA, and WAVE. These formula grants are limited to rural areas with fewer than 50,000 residents, which in Southeast Michigan are located on the peripheries of the four counties and between the Detroit and the Ann Arbor urbanized areas.

FTA Section 5310 provides formula funding to states and designated recipients to enhance mobility options to meet the transportation needs of older adults and persons with a disability. The RTA is responsible for administering and managing the Section 5310 programs for both the Detroit and Ann Arbor UZAs, as outlined by its Program Management Plan (PMP). Funds are distributed via a single, regional competitive process, or call for projects (CFP). The awarded funds are then passed through to

the UZAs' direct recipients, AAATA, DDOT³, and SMART, which are then responsible for administering selected projects to subrecipients, which are primarily community-based service providers or non-profit organizations. The RTA's only previous subrecipient was AgeWays, the nonprofit that hosts and administers the myride2 regional mobility management program. Beginning in FY 2026, four additional mobility management subrecipients joined the oversight by the RTA to improve coordination with quarterly meetings anticipated to begin in November, 2025.

In FY 2023 and FY 2024 combined, the RTA Region was allocated approximately \$11.5 million in Section 5310 large urban funds.^v In the previous CFP, RTA received applications from around 70 agencies in the region and awarded 35 organizations, totaling \$12.2 million in requested federal funding. Of the awardees, 31 agencies were selected to receive funding to support vehicle replacements, continuing operations, and hardware and software upgrades. The State of Michigan administers Section 5310 funding that is apportioned to small urbanized areas between 50,000 to 199,999 population and to nonurbanized areas under 50,000 in population. Of the available \$6.5 million through MDOT for FY 2024, two providers in the RTA Region, PEX and WAVE, received \$222,108 and \$237,415 respectively.^{vi}

4.3 Michigan Department of Transportation Funding

MDOT provides statewide funding to transportation providers through the Comprehensive Transportation Fund (CTF), as outlined in MCL Act 51 of 1951.^{vii} State funding is subject to the annual appropriations process, which allocates funding to specific line items in the state budget.^{viii} Revenue for the CTF is generated through the state's gasoline and diesel fuel tax, vehicle registration fees, sales tax on automotive related items, and other miscellaneous revenue and interest.^{ix} In FY 2024, MDOT distributed over \$334 million in funding for public transit programs. Another \$330 million is available for FY 2025.

The major programs funded through the CTF include operating and capital funding for local transit operators, operating assistance for specialized services (i.e., the provision of transportation to older adults or persons with disabilities), and municipal credits to Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb counties. Other programs include funding for intercity passenger transportation, service initiatives (i.e., demonstration projects, research initiatives, or training), and vanpools (Table 2). Additional information on each of the statewide appropriations can be found in Appendix C.

³ DDOT currently does not have local subrecipients in the City of Detroit.

Program	Appropriation (in millions)	State Funding		Federal Pass Through Funding			Private Funding
		CTF	Local Funds	Section 5310	Section 5311	Other Federal	
Local Bus Operating	\$226.7	\$226.8	-	-	-	-	-
Nonurban Operating/ Capital	\$40.6	-	\$2.0	-	\$38.6	-	-
Intercity Passenger	\$9.6	\$2.5	\$0.2	-	\$6.2	-	\$0.8
Transit Capital	\$254.6	\$77.5	\$31.0	-	-	\$144.1	\$2.0
Specialized Services	\$30.5	\$13.0	\$4.2	\$13.4	-	-	-
Municipal Credits	\$2.0	\$2.0	-	-	-	-	-
Vanpool	\$0.4	\$0.4	-	-	-	-	-
Service Initiatives	\$20.8	\$7.3	\$2.0	-	-	\$9.5	\$2.0
American Rescue Plan (ARP) – One-time Local Bus Operating	\$20.0	-	-	-	-	\$20.0	-
TOTAL	\$605.4	\$329.5	\$39.3	\$13.4	\$44.8	\$173.6	\$4.8

Table 3. Michigan Statewide Appropriations to Transit (FY 2024) in Millions

Source: State of Michigan. 2024. Transportation Line Item and Boilerplate Summary – FY 2024-25.

https://www.house.mi.gov/hfa/PDF/LineItemSummaries/MDOT_lineFY25.pdf

4.4 Local Funding

Michigan law authorizes certain local entities to levy property taxes for the purpose of funding public transportation services.^x Municipalities or counties are eligible to use the proceeds collected from all taxable properties within their jurisdictions to contract with authorities authorized under the Public Transportation Authority Act.^{xi} The property taxes are levied as a millage, where a mill equals one dollar of tax on every \$1,000 of taxable value. In the RTA Region, there are several examples of regional or local millage rates utilized to support public transportation.

SMART's Community Partnership Program (CPP) has supported local transit initiatives since 1996 by leveraging federal funds to help municipalities develop services, primarily for older adults and individuals with disabilities, across Macomb, Oakland, and parts of Wayne County.^{xii} SMART service is also supported by recent millages passed in Macomb County, with a 0.95 mil rate over the next five years, and in Wayne County, with communities outside of Detroit approving a 0.994 mill levy. Oakland County's 10-year, 0.95 mill supports a community transit initiative that expands transit access across the county through the implementation of new services, expansion of existing services, and infrastructure improvements, with the proceeds going to existing transit services (i.e., SMART, NOTA, OPC, PEX, and WOTA). AAATA benefits from property tax revenues in Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and Ypsilanti Township, including a new 2.38 mill tax passed in 2022 to enhance TheRide and to increase equity within the service area by providing more access to jobs, education, shopping and healthcare. Additionally, other local jurisdictions like Livonia and Redford Township support community and senior transportation through their own transit-focused millages. Further descriptions of these funding sources is found in Appendix C.

4.5 Other Funds

Many transportation providers benefit from other sources of directly generated funds beyond the typical federal, state, and local appropriations, including the collection of passenger fares. Fare structures across the region vary by provider and include fixed fees, distance-based fares, and fare-free models. Most providers use a fixed fee structure, often with reduced rates for older adults and individuals with disabilities. Fare-free services are the next most common type and sometimes rely on donations or are free to specific resident groups. Distance-based fares are less common and typically involve per-mile charges or sliding scales depending on travel distance.

Other resources utilized include donations, grants from local foundations, and partnerships with local businesses or private companies. About 22% of surveyed providers reported receiving private donations, which, while not a major revenue source, help offset other funding needs. An example is the OPC Transportation program, which received nearly \$23,000 in donations in FY 2023. Additionally, 26% of providers receive foundation grants and 18% benefit from corporate partnerships, which may include advertising, event sponsorships, or program-specific support like “Adopt-a-Service” initiatives.

5 User Overview

This section focuses on travel patterns within the RTA region, as well as trip purpose, mode of travel, and the demographic profiles of public transit users. Details on the data and definitions utilized for these assessments are provided in the Appendix D.

5.1 Origin and Destination Trips by County

Within the RTA Region, most trips (an average of 85% on both weekdays and weekends) are local trips—those that begin and end within one county. The locational breakdown of these trips is described in Table 4. The remaining 15% of trips cross county boundaries, with trips between Wayne and Oakland representing the most common cross-county travel pair (6% of all trips), followed by Oakland-Macomb trips (4%) and Macomb-Wayne (3%).

Local Trip County	Percentage of Weekday Trips within RTA Region	Percentage of Weekend Trips within RTA Region
Wayne	35%	35%
Oakland	26%	26%
Macomb	16%	17%
Washtenaw	8%	8%

Table 4. Origin and Destination Trips by County

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekday and weekend datasets

5.2 Trip Purpose Across All Modes

For a transit service to provide the greatest service, it must first understand why trips are occurring. Trip purposes in the RTA Region vary depending on the individual user (such as older adults or people with limited incomes) and day type (weekdays versus weekends) (Figure 7 and Figure 8). Notably, older adults travel to restaurants on weekdays more than to work, while the opposite is true among individuals with limited income.

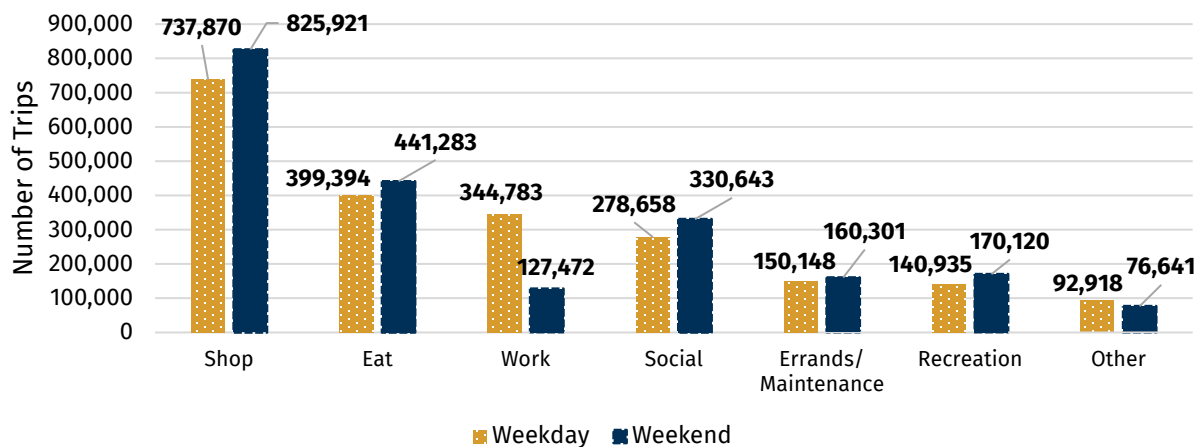


Figure 7. RTA Regional Travel Trip Purpose for Older Adults – Weekday vs Weekend

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekday and weekend dataset.

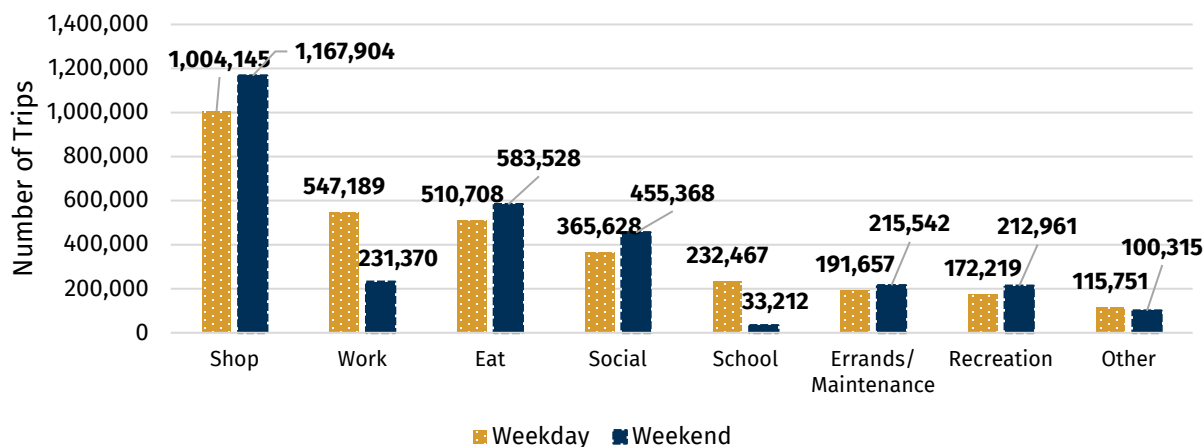


Figure 8. RTA Regional Travel Trip Purpose for Low Income Individuals – Weekday vs Weekend

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekday and weekend datasets.

5.3 Mode Share

Mode share provides additional context to help tailor transit services to the travel needs and patterns in the region. Personal vehicles are by far the most popular mode of travel among the general population, as well as specifically among older adults and low-income individuals (Figure 11 and Figure 12). Active transportation (trips made by people walking or biking, not including scooter trips) represents the second most common mode. Fixed-route public transit makes up a small portion of mode share for all population groups examined.

Users of public transportation are mainly utilizing **transit to go to work** (49% on weekdays and 46% on weekends). **Shopping** is the second most common trip purpose (19% on weekdays and 20% on weekends)

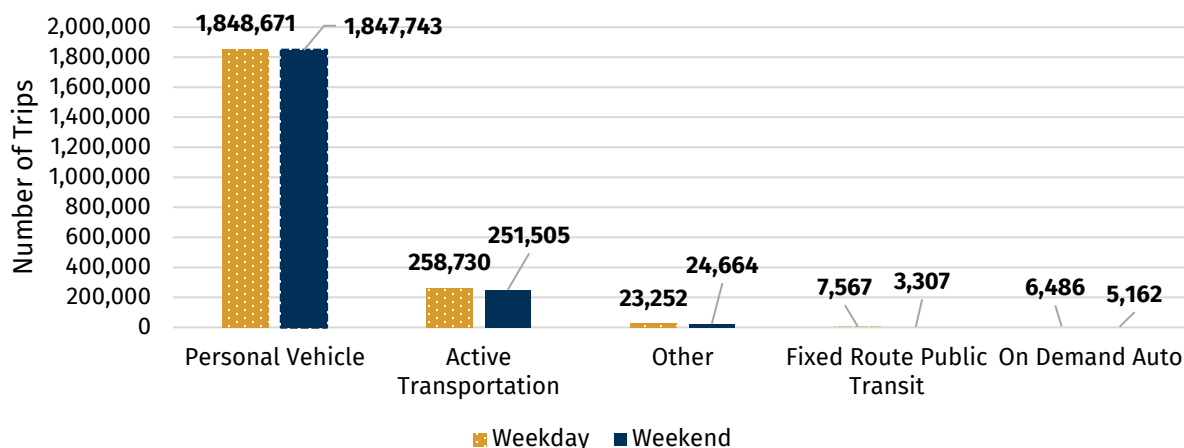


Figure 9. RTA Regional Travel Mode Split for Older Adults – Weekdays vs. Weekends

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekday and weekend datasets.

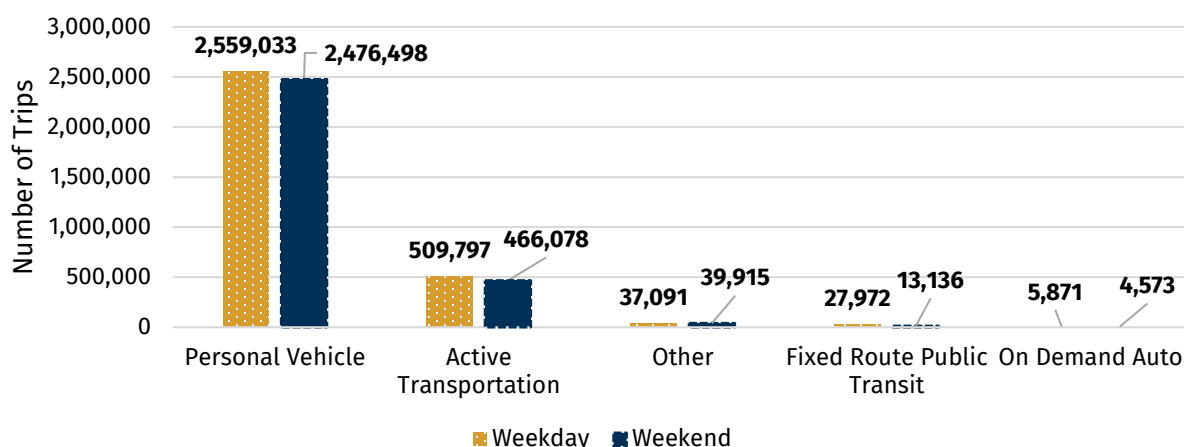


Figure 10. RTA Regional Travel Mode Split for Individuals with Limited Income – Weekdays vs. Weekends

Source: Replica Spring 2024 weekday and weekend datasets.

5.4 Public Transit User Profiles

The demographic profiles of public transit riders provide important context about the populations that tend to opt for public transit services to complete their trips. Profiles were assessed based on the M4A Rider Questionnaire, which collected rider information related to race, age, income, and disability or impairment status.

The ethnic composition of the RTA's public transit users is more varied than the region's general demographic makeup. Notably, the region's population is 62% white/Caucasian, while only 46% of public transit users are white/Caucasian (Figure 13). Individuals identifying as Black/African American make up 32% of RTA's public transit users, while only representing 23% of the general population. This trend applies to other racial minority groups within the RTA Region as well, in which such groups represent a larger share of public transit users compared to their representation within the overall population.

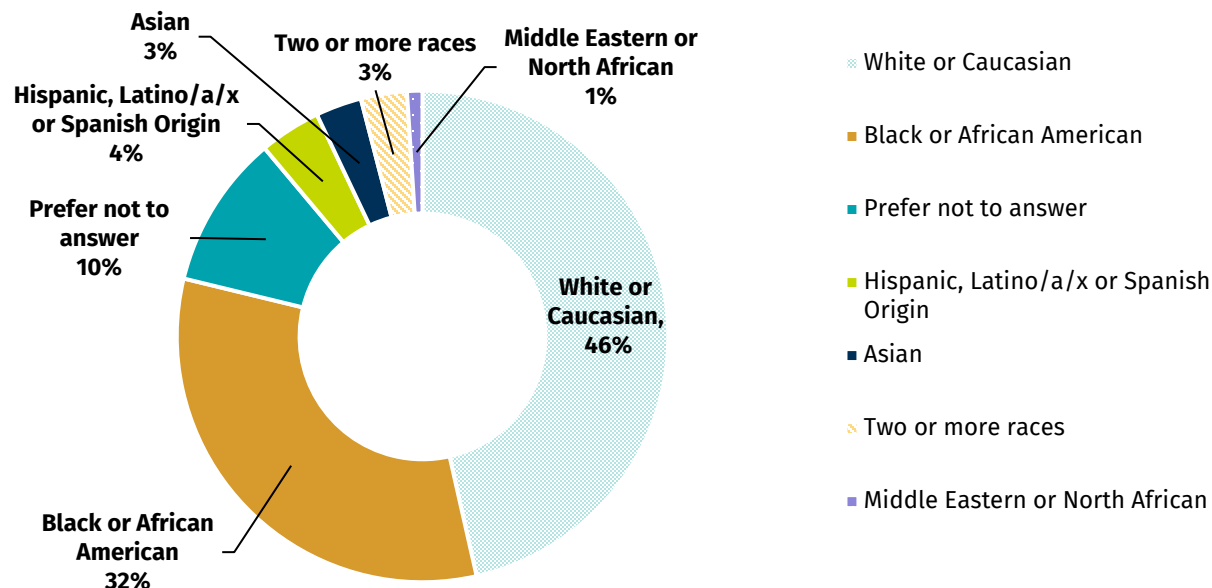


Figure 11. Percentage of Public Transit Users by Race

Source: M4A Rider Questionnaire. 2024.

A majority of public transit users have a household income of under \$60,000 per year, with 25% of users not providing an answer to the survey (Figure 14). This points to a higher likelihood that individuals and areas with limited incomes would utilize the RTA Region's public transportation services.

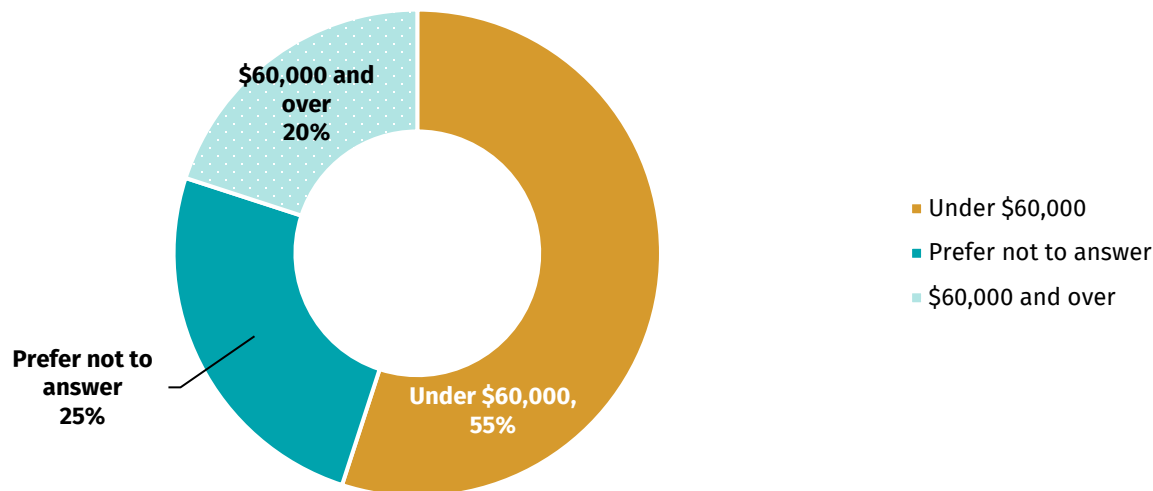


Figure 12. Percentage of Public Transit Users by Household Income

Source: M4A Rider Questionnaire. 2024.

Despite comprising a small portion of the general population, 50% of all public transit users identify as individuals with a disability or impairment, with an additional 4% of the user population not providing

an answer. This highlights how public transit services are highly utilized among individuals with a disability, significantly more so than among the rest of the population.

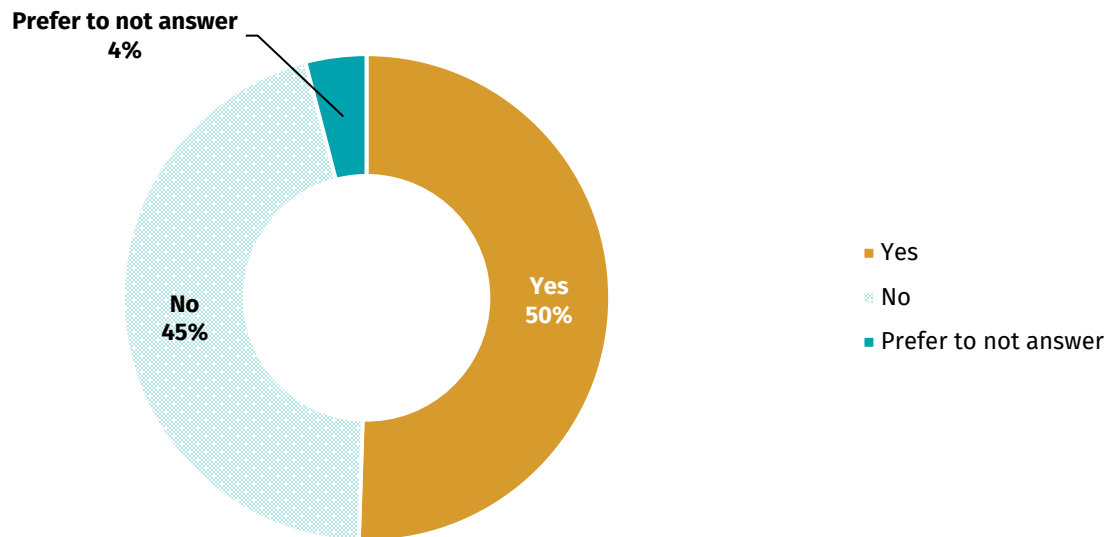


Figure 13. Public Transit User by Disability/Impairment Status

Source: M4A Rider Questionnaire. 2024.

6 Stakeholder Engagement

The FTA Section 5310 circular requires that a CHSTP be “developed and approved through a process that included participation by seniors, individuals with disabilities, representatives of public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human services providers and other members of the public.”^{xiii} To fulfill this requirement, the M4A Plan was backed by a comprehensive stakeholder engagement initiative, supported by the development of a Technical Working Group and inclusive of two rounds of community engagement.

6.1 Technical Working Group

The TWG was established as a key advisory body to support the development of the M4A Plan. Its primary role was to review the results of the technical analyses and to provide strategic guidance on effective community engagement measures. Composed of representatives from regional agencies, local governments, and other stakeholders, the TWG brought diverse perspectives and expertise to the planning process. The group met regularly throughout the development of the M4A Plan, actively participating in discussions on the region’s greatest transportation challenges and priorities. In addition to evaluating data and proposed strategies, TWG members also helped to identify existing engagement opportunities and recommended new opportunities to ensure broad and inclusive public transportation. Their input helped shape both the technical direction and the outreach framework of the M4A Plan, reinforcing its responsiveness to community needs. A summary of the TWG meetings can be found in Appendix A.

6.2 Community Engagement

The aim of the community engagement effort was to ensure that community stakeholders, primarily current users and potential users of the services in the RTA Region, could share their mobility-related experiences and help formulate solutions that address their needs. Two rounds of community engagement were conducted to support the development of the M4A Plan, the first in the fall of 2024 and the second in the spring and summer of 2025.

6.2.1 Round 1 Engagement

The first round of community engagement began in August 2024 and continued through November. The primary outreach tool was a community engagement questionnaire that asked both transit service users and non-users to describe their transportation and/or transit experiences and aspirations. This questionnaire sought to find out how well Southeast Michigan's transit system is serving residents, especially older adults, those with disabilities, and those older and disabled adults with low incomes, and to gauge whether the network's effectiveness varies for different groups.

The questionnaire was made available to the public on both the RTA's website, on the Mobility 4 All Plan page, and at thirteen different events that mainly targeted older and disabled residents of the RTA Region (Figure 14). Members of the public outreach team distributed paper copies of the questionnaire as well as postcards with a QR code that linked to the questionnaire at each of these events. Through the duration of the process, the team received 522 responses. Responses indicated that stakeholders want and need more transit flexibility and options, mirroring what was observed in the development of the 2020 OnHand Plan. With respect to flexibility, questionnaire respondents and those engaged in person at events wished for more service availability on weekends and evening hours. Many also said they were either unaware of what service options there were or how to access them. Stakeholders also desired access to more locations throughout the region and to have more and better regional connections, especially to various medical centers around the region. For more detailed information on the results of the survey, please see Appendix E.



Figure 14. Round 1 Community Engagement Labeling

6.2.2 Round 2 Engagement

The second round of community engagement was conducted from April through July of 2025. Using the results from the first round of community engagement, as well as findings from the technical analyses conducted in Appendices B through D, and from information gathered from the TWG, the study team identified five proposed transit improvement goals, each with four to six recommendations on how to improve transit services for those with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with limited incomes.

Stakeholders were asked to review each of these goals and rank the corresponding recommendations in order of importance to them via a short survey. Stakeholders were also asked to provide any additional feedback, questions and/or concerns they wished to share.



Figure 15. Round 2 Community Engagement Presentation on Findings and Draft Recommendations

The survey was made available to the public on the Mobility 4 All Plan page, during five public meetings hosted by the RTA, and at several other public events in the region (Figure 15). Of the five public meetings, four were held in-person at locations across the four-county region, while one

was held virtually to allow stakeholders the chance to participate if they were unable to attend an in-person session. Participants at each event were asked to rank the recommendations under each of the five goals listed in the survey according to what was important to them. Through this process, the study team was able to engage with 261 people across the RTA Region. The results of this prioritization effort are identified in Section 8, with additional details found in Appendix E.

7 Gap Analysis and Unmet Needs

7.1 Gap Analysis

A gap analysis is necessary to understand how, where, and to whom transit services are available, and where there is additional need. Three types of gap analysis were conducted: geographic, which examines service coverage in the RTA Region; temporal, which examines service availability; and use case, which examines service eligibility. All three analyses are vital to understanding where there is a gap in service and where the RTA region can improve services.

7.1.1 Geographic Gap Analysis

Geographic gap analyses refer to understanding where transit services are physically available to users and where they are not. By conducting this type of analysis, the RTA Region can better understand what areas are lacking services, as well as identify what areas have overlapping services. This analysis can be further refined by the type of provider (i.e., public non-profit versus private non-profit organizations), allowing RTA to understand who provides service to users and where said service is being provided, identifying possible service gaps for vulnerable populations.

Key findings from the geographic gap analysis include the following:

- All areas of the RTA Region are fully covered by some nominal type and level of public transportation service: three providers offer transportation services across all four RTA counties, and nine providers offer county-wide transportation services ranging in service area from one to three RTA counties.
- 33 demand response providers operate in service areas defined by municipality boundaries, roadway boundaries, or distance-based radial boundaries from a central location.
- There is significant geographic overlap in service provision, particularly in Oakland, Macomb, and Wayne Counties (up to seven overlapping local demand response providers). In Washtenaw County, there are a maximum of four non-countywide providers operating overlapping demand response service.
- The western and northwestern areas of Washtenaw County are the only areas in the RTA Region covered solely by local WAVE services.
- Providers that operate overlapping services often have different rider eligibility restrictions.

Figures 16 and 17 illustrate the gap analysis performed:

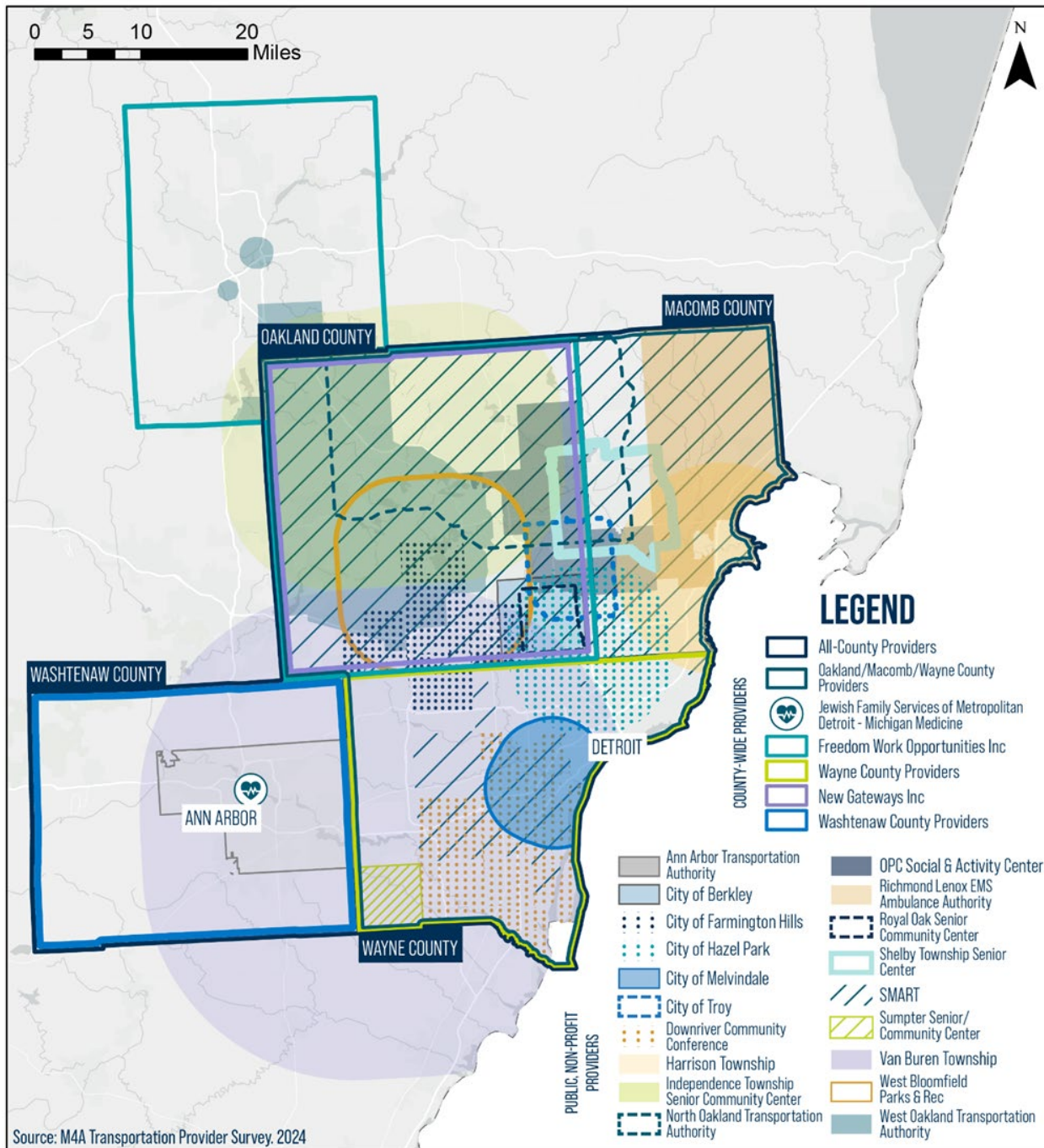


Figure 16. Geographic Gap Analysis: Public Non-Profit and County-Wide Provider Service Areas

Note: The All-County Providers group includes Freedom Road Transportation Authority, JARC, and Family Living Center Inc. The Oakland/Macomb/Wayne County Providers group includes Angels' Place, Detroit Area Agency on Aging, and Jewish Family Service of Metropolitan Detroit. The Wayne County Providers group includes Golden Services Non-Emergency Transportation and City of Romulus. The Washtenaw County Providers group includes Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County and WAVE.

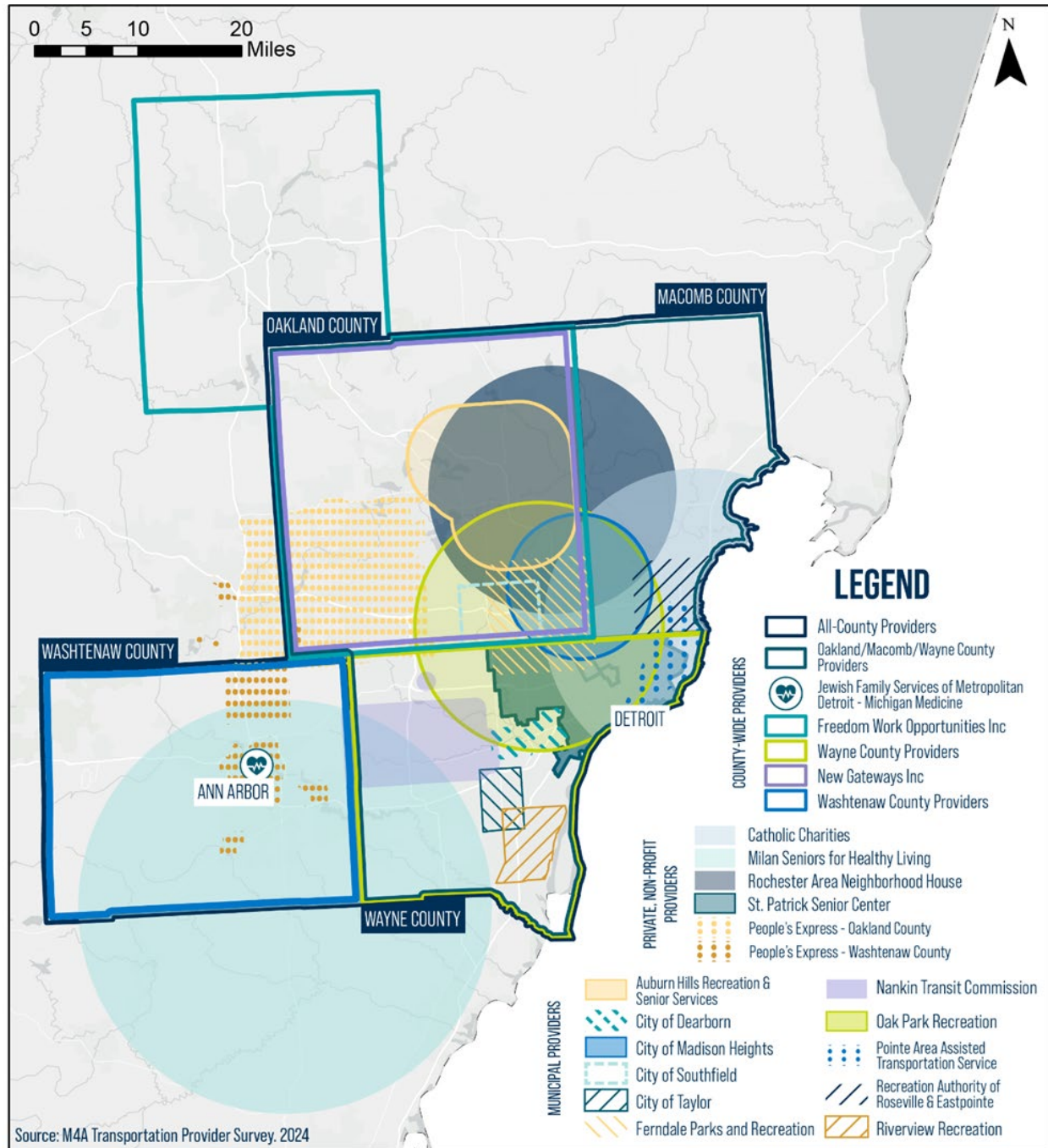


Figure 17. Geographic Gap Analysis: Private Non-Profit, Government Provider, and County-Wide Service Areas

Note: The All-County Providers group includes Freedom Road Transportation Authority, JARC, and Family Living Center Inc. The Oakland/Macomb/Wayne County Providers group includes Angels' Place, Detroit Area Agency on Aging, and Jewish Family Service of Metropolitan Detroit.

The Wayne County Providers group includes Golden Services Non-Emergency Transportation and City of Romulus.

The Washtenaw County Providers group includes Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County and WAVE.

7.1.2 Temporal Gap Analysis

Temporal gap analysis refers to understanding when transit services are available. By compiling the times and areas where services are available, RTA can readily recognize possible gaps in service depending on the time of day.

Table 5 and Figures 18 and 19 are a compilation of temporal data of providers within the region by operating times. Notably, the table showcases where service is limited to weekends, weekdays and Saturdays, and fewer than five weekdays. Doing so allows for the identification of potentially underserved areas by time, allowing for RTA to understand what areas are lacking service depending on the time of day.

Key findings from the temporal gap analysis include the following:

- Providers operating service only on weekdays and providers operating service on weekdays and weekends overlap in their service areas such that the entire RTA Region is covered by some level of transportation service seven days a week.
- The RTA Region has full transportation service coverage by providers operating standard hours of service (with hours starting between 6 A.M. and 9 A.M. and ending between 3 P.M. and 7 P.M.).
- Evening service (after 7 P.M.) is operated by providers covering most of the RTA Region apart from a section of Wayne County. Early morning service (before 6 A.M.) is operated by providers covering Oakland and Macomb Counties, as well as parts of Wayne and Washtenaw Counties.
- Providers that operate overlapping services often have different rider eligibility restrictions.

Weekday Operating Hours / Operating Days	Weekdays & Weekends	Weekdays & Saturdays Only	Weekdays Only	Fewer than 5 Weekdays
24 Hours	Angels' Place, DDOT, Family Living Center Inc, FRTA, JARC, TheRide demand response	N/A	N/A	N/A
4 A.M. 6 A.M. Start Time, 8 P.M. 1 A.M. End Time	SMART, University of Michigan, WAVE fixed route, PEX – Oakland County	N/A	PEX University of Michigan Employee Commuter Rout	N/A
6 A.M. 8 A.M. Start Time, 8 P.M. 12:30 A.M. End Time	DPM, NOTA, OPC Transportation, QLINE, TheRide, WOTA	N/A	WAVE demand response	N/A
6 A.M. 9 A.M. Start Time, 3 P.M. 7 P.M. End Time	Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan, City of Southfield, Nankin Transit Commission	Detroit Area Agency on Aging, Richmond Lenox EMS Ambulance Authority, St. Patrick Senior Center	City of Auburn Hills Recreation and Senior Services, City of Berkley, City of Dearborn, City of Farmington Hills, City of Oak Park Recreation, City of Romulus, City of Royal Oak Senior Community Center, City of Troy, Downriver Community Conference, Freedom Work Opportunities Inc, Golden Services NEMT, Harrison Township, Independence Township Senior Community Center, Jewish Family Services of Metropolitan Detroit, Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County, New Gateways Inc, PEX – Washtenaw County, Pointe Area Assisted Transportation Service, Recreation Authority of Roseville &	City of Hazel Park, Milan Seniors for Healthy Living, Rochester Area Neighborhood House

Weekday Operating Hours /Operating Days	Weekdays & Weekends	Weekdays & Saturdays Only	Weekdays Only	Fewer than 5 Weekdays
			Eastpointe, Shelby Township Senior Center, Sumpter Senior/Community Center, Van Buren Township, West Bloomfield Parks and Recreation	
End earlier than 3 P.M.	N/A	N/A	City of Madison Heights, Ferndale Parks and Recreation	City of Melvindale, City of Taylor, Riverview Recreation

Table 5. Temporal Gap Analysis

Source: M4A Transportation Provider Survey, 2024

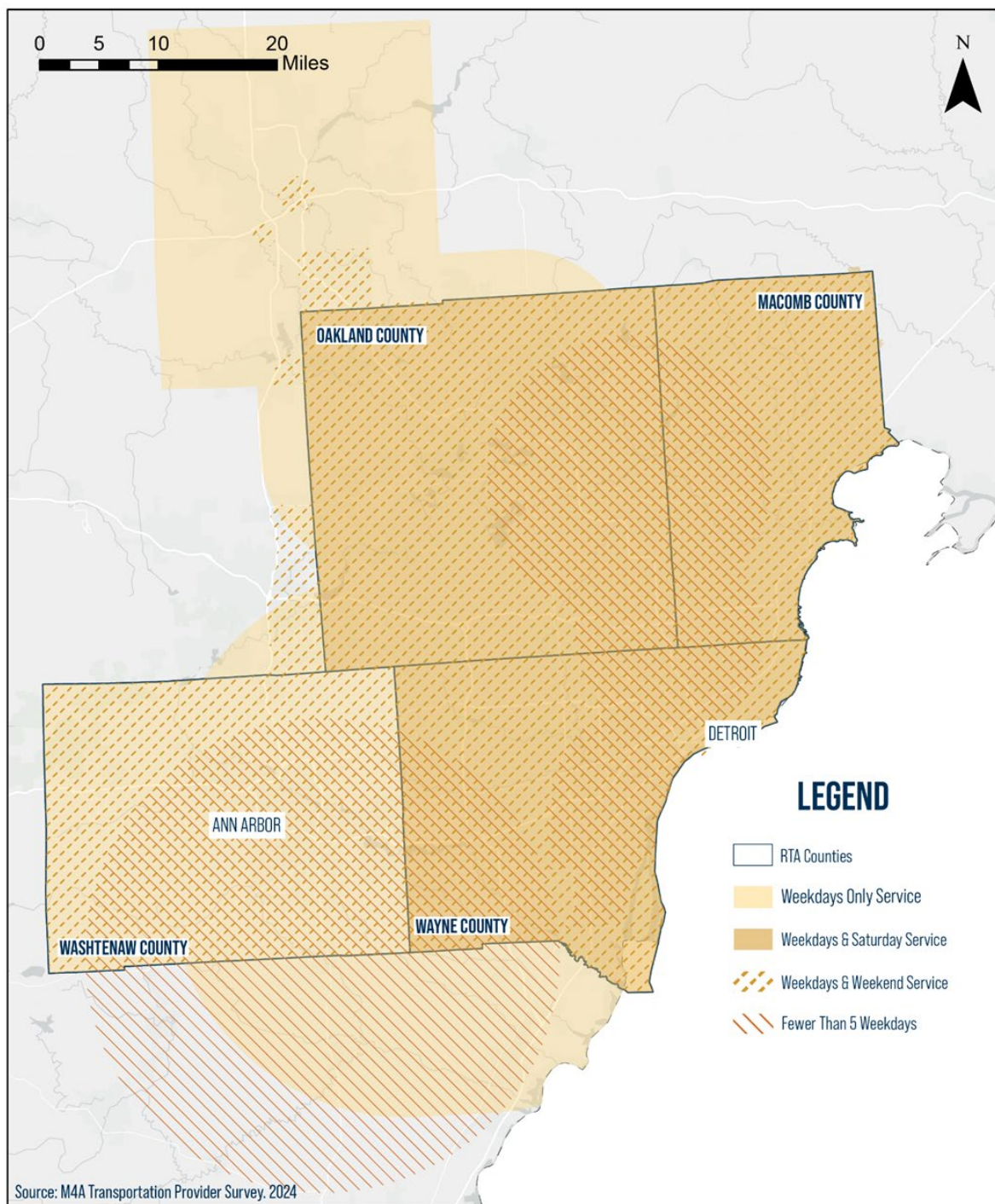


Figure 18. Temporal Gap Analysis: Provider Weekday vs. Weekend Service Operation

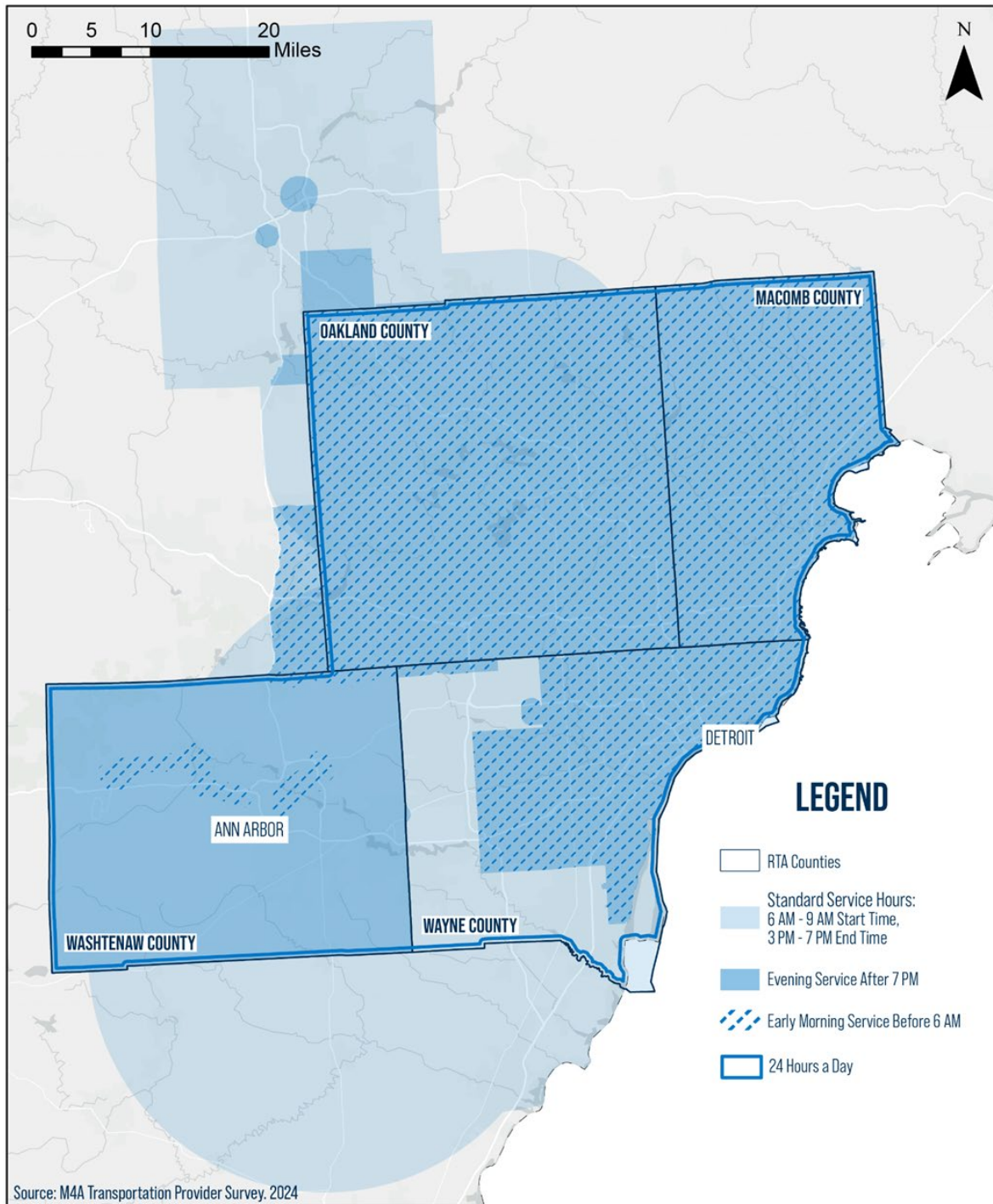


Figure 19. Temporal Gap Analysis: Provider Weekday Hours of Operation

7.1.3 Use Case Gap Analysis

A use case gap analysis refers to who can utilize which services and what providers are providing services to said users. This can help the RTA identify if there are significant gaps in the number of services provided to certain user groups and if more specialized services are needed.

Table 6 represents the user case gap analysis conducted within the RTA region. The users were categorized as: all users, older adults, people with disabilities, and people with limited incomes. Public non-profit, private non-profit, government, and fixed-route services are described, providing a snapshot into potential service gaps. Key findings from the use case gap analysis include the following:

- Providers serving all users, including older adults, people with disabilities, and people with limited incomes, collectively cover the entirety of the RTA Region.
- Only public non-profit and private non-profit providers operated dedicated service to people with limited incomes — no municipal government transportation providers.

User Group / Provider Type	Public Non Profit	Private Nonprofit	Government	Fixed Route
All Users	AAATA, City of Berkley, City of Royal Oak Senior Community Center, Harrison Township, Richmond Lenox EMS Ambulance Authority, SMART, NOTA, WOTA	WAVE demand response, Golden Services NEMT, People's Express – Oakland County, PEX – Washtenaw County	Ferndale Parks and Recreation, Riverview Recreation	TheRide, University of Michigan, DDOT, DPM, QLINE
Older Adults	TheRide demand response, Freedom Road Transportation Authority, Detroit Area Agency on Aging, City of Romulus, City of Farmington Hills, City of Melvindale, City of Troy, Downriver Community Conference, Independence Township Senior Community Center, OPC Transportation, Shelby Township Senior Center, Sumpter Senior/Community Center, Van Buren Township, West Bloomfield Parks and Recreation	Jewish Family Services of Metropolitan Detroit, Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County, Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan, Milan Seniors for Healthy Living, St. Patrick Senior Center	City of Auburn Hills Recreation and Senior Services, City of Dearborn, City of Madison Heights, City of Southfield, City of Taylor, Nankin Transit Commission, Pointe Area Assisted Transportation Service, Recreation Authority of Roseville & Eastpointe	N/A
People with Disabilities	Angels' Place, TheRide demand response, Freedom Road Transportation Authority, New Gateways Inc, JARC, Detroit Area Agency on Aging, City of Romulus, City of Farmington Hills, City of Hazel Park, City of Melvindale, City of Troy, Downriver Community Conference, Independence Township Senior Community Center, OPC Transportation, Shelby Township Senior Center, Sumpter Senior/Community Center, Van Buren Township, West Bloomfield Parks and Recreation	Freedom Work Opportunities Inc, Family Living Center Inc, Jewish Family Services of Metropolitan Detroit, Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County, Milan Seniors for Healthy Living, St. Patrick Senior Center	City of Auburn Hills Recreation and Senior Services, City of Dearborn, City of Madison Heights, City of Oak Park Recreation, City of Southfield, City of Taylor, Nankin Transit Commission, Pointe Area Assisted Transportation Service, Recreation Authority of Roseville & Eastpointe	N/A
People with Limited Incomes	Freedom Road Transportation Authority, Independence Township Senior Community Center, JARC	Jewish Family Services of Metropolitan Detroit, Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County, Rochester Area Neighborhood House	N/A	N/A

Table 6. User Case Gap Analysis

Source: M4A Transportation Provider Survey, 2024

7.2 Key Findings and Unmet Needs

Through the analysis of the present and existing conditions within the RTA Region, key observations have been made in the following areas: demographics, regional connectivity, service eligibility requirements,

complex funding mechanisms, and navigating transit options. These areas, while not inclusive of all the findings, represent the greatest needs of the region, and lay out the foundation for goals and recommendations for future service.

7.2.1 An Aging Population

Of the 4.3 million residents within the RTA Region, over 70% reside in Wayne and Oakland County. Population is particularly concentrated in the City of Detroit. Overall, the region's population is expected to grow by over 5% in the next 30 years. The portion of the population that is 65 years or older is expected to grow at a much higher rate than the population as a whole. The entire four-county older adult population is projected to increase by 34.8% by 2050. This growth makes it necessary to understand where this demographic resides, with analysis indicating most of the older adult population reside within Wayne and Oakland Counties. Concentrations of older adults are most often in suburban areas where access to transportation and healthcare may be limited. These suburban municipalities include Auburn Hills, Clinton, Novi, Macomb, Pittsfield, Rochester Hills, Scio, Southfield, Superior, and Westland. Pockets of older adults highlight the need for targeted transit solutions to ensure mobility and accessibility, as this population is more likely to also have a disability or be on a limited income.

7.2.2 Expanding Regional Connectivity

Within the RTA region, 85% of all trips begin and end within a single county. This mainly suggests two underlying motivations: land use patterns or access to transportation. On the one hand, the region may be highly self-reliant and contain all the necessary components for everyday life within itself, prompting residents to not need to travel across counties to fulfill their needs. On the other hand, there may be limited access to transportation, meaning that individuals are unable to take trips that go to another area without transferring.

Increasing the ability for users to travel across jurisdictional borders remains a priority for the RTA. There are noted gaps in service traveling across borders, such as crossing Eight Mile Road, which serves as Detroit's northern border with Oakland and Macomb Counties. These gaps need to be addressed to increase user ability to travel throughout the entire region, not just their surrounding areas. Coordination between providers to streamline cross-border trips and better connect service areas would be a productive next step in closing this gap in mobility, making it a foundational need for the area.

7.2.3 Service Eligibility Requirements

The Service Provider Inventory in Appendix B highlights the wide range of transportation providers in the RTA Region, each with different eligibility requirements that often depend on residence, age, disability status, or income level. These varying criteria, along with the need to register with individual agencies, complicate trip planning and can exclude certain users. Some smaller providers also require trips to be scheduled well in advance, especially for medical appointments. The RTA Region has made significant progress in working toward a more regionally connected transportation network. The next steps should focus on streamlining eligibility into one regional set of requirements and one regional registration process. By doing so, the RTA Region can accommodate growth while ensuring all present users can fulfill their needs easily, effectively, and reliably.

7.2.4 Navigating Transportation Options

There are numerous options for transportation services available for vulnerable populations, all of which have differing requirements, fare structures, and policies, creating confusion and challenges for those navigating the services. A streamlined system needs to be implemented to alleviate this, with the myride2 database serving as a basis for a system that simplifies trip-planning processes and ensures that transit service is increasingly accessible to vulnerable populations. However, while the myride2 database is an invaluable tool, it lacks some tools that allow users to navigate the system easily. To

remedy this, ongoing support for and promoting growth in awareness of the myride2 service is essential to maximizing the impact of regional transit coordination and accessibility.

Variations in fare policies, in particular, can pose a challenge to potential users. Generally, there are three different fare policies: fixed fee, distance-based fee, and fare free. Inconsistent policies on fares can disproportionately affect low-income and other vulnerable populations, increasing disparity among users. Integrating fare policies across transit agencies can improve the overall user experience in the region. Additionally, agencies can consider implementing new technologies, such as smart cards, rider accounts, or mobile apps, to streamline payments and interoperability between services and agencies. Addressing these complexities can allow the RTA Region to enhance user friendliness in their transit networks.

7.2.5 Variation in Funding Sources

There are four main sources of funding within the RTA Region: federal grants, state programs, local funds, and other directly generated sources (such as fares or donations). The overall balance of these sources varies by geography, provider type, or even operating type. Presently, federal funding is the most significant source of funding for all providers. Federal funding has increased, with the years between 2019 and 2023 seeing increases in funding from the recent COVID-19 relief measures implemented to stabilize operations while ridership was low. It is important, however, to recognize that relief funds were one-time appropriations and are not a sustainable source of funding. Strategic use of the influx of federal funding is necessary to accomplish goals such as building resilience, increasing capacity, and improving long-term financial health for transportation providers in the RTA Region.

Smaller providers, however, must depend upon multiple streams of revenue to maintain operations. This can make operations incredibly complicated, with significant administrative time needed to identify, apply, and maintain potential funding sources. In turn, smaller community providers and nonprofits with limited resources may struggle in the long-term to maintain services in the area without consistent revenue sources.

7.2.6 Maximizing State and Federal Funding

In the RTA Region, federal and state subsidy are key to the provision of both public and human service transportation, for both operating and capital expenditures. Through the passage of dedicated millages, providers have increased their ability to leverage state and federal funds through increased local funding. This increase in funding helps sustain everyday operations, while strengthening the regions' ability to acquire competitive grants. By increasing the synergy between local, state, and federal funding sources, the RTA region can advance crucial aspects of regional mobility and economic growth.

7.2.7 Funding Data Availability

Because of the large number of providers and the many different types of providers in the RTA Region, there is not a consistent and reliable source for funding data. In turn, funding data is difficult to compile and compare, limiting potential opportunities for the entire region. This is an opportunity for RTA, which can work with providers, to create a unified and streamlined database for funding to better monitor and leverage how funding is being utilized in the RTA region. Additionally, the database can be used to collect and analyze operations data, such as ridership, and information on capital assets, further assisting in identifying regional transit funding needs.

7.2.8 Variation in Trip Purpose

Trip purpose changes notably when considering the specific type of user. For individuals with limited incomes, shopping and getting to work are the most common purposes for utilizing transit. This suggests that trips may be driven by the need to purchase necessities, as well as reflecting the economic reality for many limited income groups, as lower paying jobs often do not have a remote option. Going out to

eat becomes the second highest purpose on weekends, hallmarking it as an important aspect of social interaction for all groups. Older adults mainly utilize transit systems for shopping and going out to eat, reflecting the need to maintain independence and continue daily life as one ages. There is also a significant spike in using transit for medical visits, with 7% of older adult users identifying medical visits as the main purpose of a trip, reflecting a higher need for medical care.

Interestingly, in contrast to Replica trip data, mobility managers of transit services (such as AgeWays) note that older adults and those with disabilities use transit predominantly for medical visits. This disparity may suggest that older adults and people with a disability who use transportation services in the region who need help understanding the services available rely on mobility management services to access the necessities, like medical trips. Once more comfortable, these users are more likely to branch out and use transit to make more recreational trips.

8 Goals and Recommendations

Through the course of this study, the M4A project team, with assistance from the TWG, identified regional goals to guide the improvement of the delivery of public and human service transportation in the RTA Region over the next five years (Figure 20). These goals reflect shared priorities among stakeholders and are grounded in the needs of older adults, individuals with disabilities, and individuals with a limited income. Within each goal, the team developed a series of recommendations to help guide decision-making, prioritize investments, and support the distribution of Section 5310 program funds in both the Detroit and Ann Arbor UZAs. These recommendations are intended to serve as a roadmap for enhancing coordination, expanding service coverage, improving accessibility, and ensuring long-term sustainability of public and human service transportation in the region.

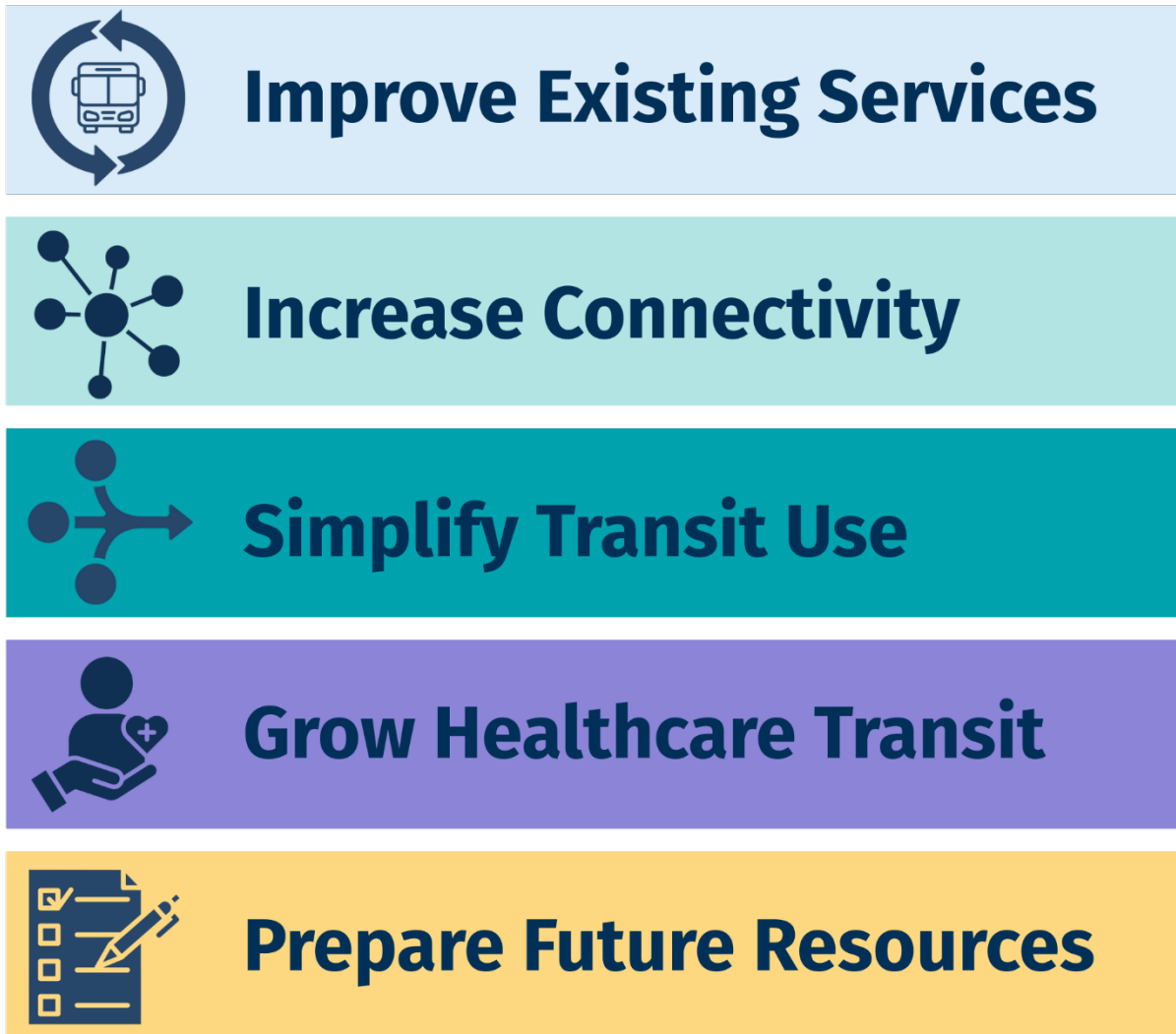


Figure 20. M4A Goals

8.1 Progress Since the 2020 OnHand Plan

The goals and recommendations of the M4A initiative are grounded in the framework established by the 2020 OnHand Plan. In coordination with TWG members, many of whom participated in the 2020 process, the goals were reviewed, refreshed, and simplified for the M4A Plan. A key component of this process involved revisiting each goal and recommendation to identify progress made to date, as well as relevancy to the current mobility landscape in Southeast Michigan. The 2020 OnHand Plan gathered its findings into five distinct goals, each accompanied by several specific recommendations. Some recommendations have been accomplished, many are in progress, and some are no longer applicable. 2020 goals, accompanying recommendations, and status can be found in Table 7.

Goal Number	Goal Name	Recommendation	Status
1	Increase Local and Regional Mobility	Maintain Existing Services	Nearing completion
1	Increase Local and Regional Mobility	Improved Cross Boarder Trips	Nearing completion
1	Increase Local and Regional Mobility	Volunteer Driver Program	In progress
1	Increase Local and Regional Mobility	Shared On-Call Service Delivery for Evenings and Weekends	In progress
1	Increase Local and Regional Mobility	Regional Fare Capping Program	In progress
1	Increase Local and Regional Mobility	Alternative ADA Paratransit Service Delivery Models	In progress
1	Increase Local and Regional Mobility	Flexible Voucher/Subsidy Program	Not started
1	Increase Local and Regional Mobility	Reverse Commute and Rideshare Programs	Not started
2	Improve Coordination Among Providers	Regional Coordinating Councils	Completed
2	Improve Coordination Among Providers	Service Standards for Community Transportation Providers	In progress
2	Improve Coordination Among Providers	Common ADA Paratransit Terms and Definitions	In progress
2	Improve Coordination Among Providers	Aligned ADA Policies and Practices	In progress
2	Improve Coordination Among Providers	Shared Regional Technology Investments	In progress
2	Improve Coordination Among Providers	Shared Scheduling and Traveler Information Technology	In progress
2	Improve Coordination Among Providers	Enhanced Coordination with Medical Facilities	In progress
2	Improve Coordination Among Providers	Vehicle Pooling Among Providers	In progress
3	Increase Awareness of Existing Services	Regional Branding and Marketing	In progress
3	Increase Awareness of Existing Services	Mobility Management and Travel Training Enhancements	In progress
3	Increase Awareness of Existing Services	School Based Travel Training Program Expansion	In progress
3	Increase Awareness of Existing Services	Demand Response Transportation Integration with Trip Planning Tools	In progress
3	Increase Awareness of Existing Services	MyRide2 Provider Call Center and Database Enhancements	Completed
4	Streamline Funding and Reporting	Performance Measurement System	Not started
4	Streamline Funding and Reporting	Regional Capital Plan	In progress
4	Streamline Funding and Reporting	Regional Fare Integration	In progress
4	Streamline Funding and Reporting	Packages of Funding for Community Transportation Services	In progress
5	Develop Partnerships for Supportive Physical Infrastructure	Home Ramp Subsidy Program	Not started
5	Develop Partnerships for Supportive Physical Infrastructure	Safe Routes for Seniors/Safe Routes for All	Not started
5	Develop Partnerships for Supportive Physical Infrastructure	Bus Stop and Station Accessibility	In progress
5	Develop Partnerships for Supportive Physical Infrastructure	Key Destination Mapping	Not started
5	Develop Partnerships for Supportive Physical Infrastructure	Mobility Hubs	In progress
5	Develop Partnerships for Supportive Physical Infrastructure	Eligibility Assessment and Travel Training Center	Not started

Table 7. 2020 OnHand Goals Current Status

Source: The RTA and the TWG, 2024-2025

The RTA region has made great progress in increasing mobility, enhancing partner coordination, spreading awareness of existing services, simplifying funding processes and reporting the 2020 OnHand

Plan. Several items within these categories have not progressed and may no longer be applicable to the region's mobility goals. Rather than creating subsidies or voucher programs for when or where service is not available, the region has focused on improving existing services. Similarly, other ways to increase connectivity have been prioritized over reverse commute rideshare programs. Still a high priority, but a complicated one, is the creation of a simple performance measurement system to document transportation provider performance and the performance of the network overall. Recognizing that there are more urgent priorities that are more immediately impactful to riders, activities related to this recommendation have not yet been started.

Tackling physical infrastructure to increase mobility for the M4A populations is still applicable but has taken a backseat to higher priorities with broader impact. Recommendations such as creating accessible routes to key destinations and taking on major outreach efforts to gather information about accessible routes to transit facilities have been limited by funding constraints. The step to create a home-ramp subsidy program has purposely been paused in order to allow for an educated approach. Acknowledging that other home ramp subsidy programs were already in the works, it was decided to postpone this approach and to utilize lessons learned from other local programs.

8.2 Relationship to Regional Priorities

RTA's ongoing work includes the annual update to the [Regional Transit Master Plan \(RTMP\)](#), a long-range planning document that summarizes trends, regional accomplishments, and regional opportunities for the growth and expansion of public transit in Southeast Michigan. The 2024 update of the RTMP includes a categorization of the region's top priorities into three focus areas: Move People, Strengthen Access, and Enhance Experience. Through the RTMP process, RTA has identified the following goals:

- Fund Transformative Mobility
- Improve Existing Services
- Expand Transit Coverage
- Innovate Resilient Projects
- Sustain Future Programs

These goals guided the development of the RTMP's regional transit priorities (Figure 21). Each priority supports aspects of RTA's goals and serves as a crucial step toward achieving them. While the M4A plan has a particular focus on assisting people with disabilities, older adults and those with limited incomes, it is important to consider the role of the RTMP as a guiding document to help the RTA advance regional transit planning to achieve a Southeast Michigan region where a robust transit network drives economic growth and opportunity for all. As such, each of the recommendations included in the M4A Plan are correlated with an RTMP Regional

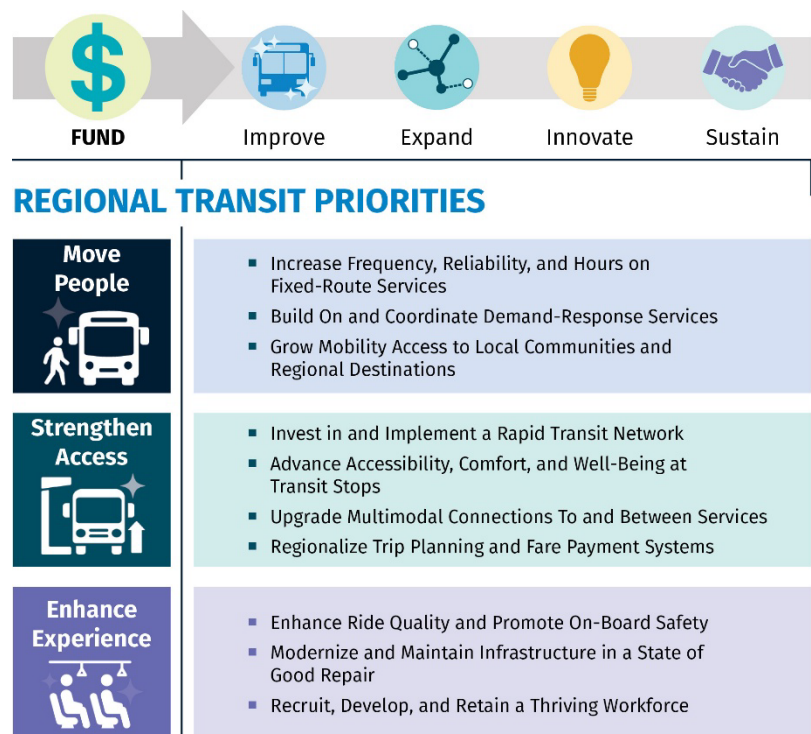


Figure 21. RTA's Goals as Identified in the 2024 RTMP

Source: 2024 RTMP

Transit Priority, further supporting the RTA's mission to maintain and increase funding for public transit in the region.

The RTMP also identifies three strategies for the RTA to achieve the Fund Transformative Mobility goal, which helps to guide the RTA and its partners in implementing actionable activities that can be carried out with no new funding (\$), with one-time funding (\$\$), and with a new, long-term regional funding source (\$\$\$). These same strategies have been applied to the M4A Plan so that the RTA and its regional partners can plan and work toward accomplishing the recommendations laid out for each M4A goal.

8.3 Prioritization of M4A Goals and Recommendations

A key objective of the M4A Plan is to develop regional strategies and prioritized actions for accessible human services public transportation. Working closely with the TWG, the M4A study team developed a draft list of consolidated and simplified goals and recommendations derived from several sources. Recommendations from the 2020 OnHand Plan that were still in progress or not yet started were reviewed for their relevance, then consolidated and simplified with additional recommendations identified by the 2024/2025 M4A planning process, including technical analyses and stakeholder feedback. This initial set of draft goals and recommendations were presented to the TWG prior to the second round of community engagement, to ensure alignment with stakeholder understanding and expectations and to gather feedback. The final draft goals and recommendations were then presented to the public, as described in Section 6.2.2. Participants were asked to rank the recommendations under each of the five goals listed in the survey according to what was important to them. For each goal, they were given four to six recommendations. The results of this prioritization activity are included in the recommendations below.

8.4 Improve Current Services

Improving the current services across the RTA region may have the most impact to M4A populations and yet remains a challenge to implement. Engagement efforts consistently revealed that stakeholders see a need to improve existing services, particularly in navigating transportation options, which was identified as a significant regional unmet need. This feedback highlights a strong desire for enhancements across the region.

Expanding service offerings will further enhance the reach and utility of the transit system, addressing diverse needs across the region. Efforts to make transit more accessible to both current and new users will play a key role in fostering greater adoption and satisfaction. Strengthening existing systems is considered the most effective way to improve the overall network, offering significant benefits, even though it requires considerable effort. Improving services may require deeper analysis of overlapping activities across providers, including areas such as service coverage, administration, or mobility management. Establishing a stronger network of transportation services on a sustainable foundation will facilitate subsequent innovative changes for the region.

8.4.1 Recommendations

Ways to achieve this goal are rooted in building and enhancing relationships amongst transportation providers to benefit the rider experience. Further collaboration and coordination within the RTA region can result in cost-saving initiatives, allowing for opportunities to expand service offerings and simplify riders' experiences using existing transportation services. One of the reasons this goal remains challenging to achieve is that all steps require additional funding, either one-time funding or sustained, long-term funding to maintain increased levels of service. Figure 22 displays the five recommendations identified for improving current services in the RTA region in the order they were prioritized through public and stakeholder engagement.

	Recommendation	RTMP Priority	Funding Strategy
	Add fixed-route and demand-response service offerings on evenings and weekends.		With Sustainable Funding (\$\$\$)
	Maintain and strengthen existing fixed-route and demand-response services, creating a reliable and efficient regional network		With Sustainable Funding (\$\$\$)
	Promote myride2 and transit providers' existing services in the region through an educational campaign, ambassador programs, and regularly scheduled travel training.		With Sustainable Funding (\$\$\$)
	Create unified branding for demand response services in the region to help increase visual presence and awareness, make transit more desirable and minimize confusion about services available.		With One-Time Funding (\$\$)
	Pilot tools that allow demand-response services to be incorporated into trip planners.		With One-Time Funding (\$\$)

Figure 22. Recommendations for Improving Current Services

Evening and Weekend Service

Travelers have diverse mobility needs, often requiring transportation options that are accessible during evenings, nights, and weekends to support their varied schedules. The M4A populations are no different. As previously discussed, there are gaps in times of day and days of the week when transportation services are offered. Engagement efforts heard calls for expanding service to run fixed routes after 10 P.M. and to offer demand response weekend coverage, specifically citing these as barriers to being able to use transportation services. Aligning with the RTMP priority to “increase frequency, reliability, and

hours on fixed route services,”⁴ offering transit services that meet travelers’ needs is a top priority for the region.

Enhance Current Services

The RTA region has numerous transportation providers, offering a multitude of services. Enhancing these services will strengthen the region. Amongst stakeholder and public engagement efforts, this sentiment was clear: there is a need for more buses, going to more places, more often. Starting with fixed-route services, running buses more frequently on expanded routes, and ensuring that the buses arrive as scheduled, will strengthen the fixed route network and enhance connectivity, providing reliable transportation options for all users.

However, the regional driver shortages are a significant barrier to offering more services and running new routes. There is an opportunity for collaboration amongst transportation providers to collaborate on training for new drivers. Rather than each provider managing training programs, the training process could be regionalized, and the cost of obtaining necessary license(s) could be subsidized. Cost is a major barrier to entering this profession. By sharing resources, more drivers could be recruited, trained, and available to offer more frequent and new services. Additionally, a region-wide driver training program would establish standardized training protocols, ensuring consistent and reliable service for all riders across the region's transportation network. This initiative aligns with the RTMP priority to recruit, develop, and retain a thriving workforce.

Ambassador Programs

Providing exceptional service is essential but ensuring that individuals understand how to effectively use it is also critical to the success of any transportation system. Myride2 is a resource for assistance navigating transportation options, but increasing awareness about its purpose and services requires additional support. Recruiting volunteers to serve as ambassadors for myride2, who can engage with schools and facilities supporting vulnerable populations, would open opportunities to facilitate travel training sessions. These sessions include in-person trainings where individuals physically ride the bus together and navigate the system. Many individuals benefit from being shown how to use the service alongside someone, as this hands-on approach significantly lowers the barrier to entry. For individuals with cognitive disabilities, including trainers who have cognitive impairments themselves, can significantly enhance program effectiveness, because peer instructors often relate more naturally to participants and convey information in ways that resonate better than traditional instruction models.

While myride2 is primarily for seniors, it is open to all riders. Strengthening its services to better support individuals with disabilities is an important focus for its continued development. There may be opportunities to integrate the Ageways and PEAC programs to enhance coordination of travel training efforts across the RTA region. Improved collaboration with disability networks and agencies, such as PEAC, could lead to the integration of PEAC’s initiatives into myride2, strengthening its reach and impact. Additionally, discussions with fixed route providers could explore the development of travel training resources, including videos or materials tailored for individuals with visual impairments, to further enhance accessibility.

Consistent Branding

The various demand-response service operators each maintain individual branding, which can lead to confusion around which services are available in the region and whether or not riders are eligible. Collaborating amongst providers to develop a unified and consistent brand across these services would foster trust and reduce confusion for riders. Additionally, it would emphasize the collaborative partnerships among providers. This approach is particularly important for individuals with cognitive

⁴ [RTA 2024 RTMP Executive Summary](#)

disabilities, as a single, identifiable system with cohesive branding, consistent colors and messaging makes services more desirable, recognizable, and easier to navigate, reducing potential confusion.

Demand Response Integration

Integrating demand-response services into trip planning tools is a crucial step toward enhancing accessibility and convenience for riders. A pilot tool, one that produces GTFS-Flex feeds and explores the Transactional Data Specification (TDS) to make demand-response services discoverable within planning tools would facilitate seamless planning and booking of multimodal trips. New pilot programs, such as the development of trip-planner hosted on the myride2 website would empower riders to independently plan their journeys across multiple services. This initiative aligns with the RTMP priority to regionalize trip planning, fostering a cohesive and integrated approach to transportation across the RTA region.

8.4.2 Leveraging Past Achievements

The RTA has launched several successful initiatives that are laying the foundation for the region to effectively implement these recommendations. In 2024, the RTA launched its new, simplified branding, to promote the RTA's services, what RTA does, and how it can help. The successful rebrand of the Area Agency on Aging 1-B, now known as AgeWays, brought about a simpler website that enhances public understanding of AgeWay's services, including myride2. Myride2 has also benefited from enhancements, such as increased brand awareness, further solidifying its role as a valuable resource for transportation assistance. Building on this positive momentum of brand awareness will establish a solid starting point for the success of the proposed new pilot initiatives.

Achievements in service offerings have also been made, such as SMART Flex, SMART's microtransit service, which runs seven days per week until 11 P.M. Though it is only available within the five microtransit zones, it is a strong example of an innovative strategy to expand service offerings on nights and weekends.

Through the Advancing Rural Mobility Program, MDOT recently piloted the Michigan Trip Planner, which provides transit information for fifteen rural transit providers in Michigan. The RTA and its regional partners could use this pilot as a local model for developing and integrating demand responsive services into a trip planning tool.

8.5 Increase Connectivity

Increasing the connectivity of the RTA Region's transportation services improves the navigability of the network and expands available transportation options, improving access and mobility for the region's most vulnerable populations. Enhanced regional connectivity is an unmet need and addressing it enables users to travel more easily across jurisdictional boundaries, be it municipalities, counties, or the region as a whole, without facing gaps in service or challenges in transferring between providers. Both technical analyses and engagement with stakeholders and the public identified Southeast Michigan's disjointed transit landscape, where "[m]any folks need to cross city or country lines in order to access necessary health and wellness services, but existing infrastructure doesn't always support this need." And while there are connected and coordinated services that exist, there is often a lack of understanding of what is available.

Enhancing connectivity also involves coordinated planning and investment in a diverse range of transportation solutions, such as microtransit services that offer flexible, on-demand services for first-mile and last-mile needs; transit-oriented development (TOD) that integrates housing, jobs, and transit access to create cohesive communities; and consistent bus stop guidelines that improve accessibility and enhance the rider experience across the region. It also requires strengthening multimodal connections for pedestrians and cyclists and implementing regional policies and programs that support service integration across agencies to simplify cross-border travel and improve mobility, especially for

paratransit riders. Together, these strategies create a more seamless and efficient regional transit network.

8.5.1 Recommendations

Steps to achieve this goal are fundamentally rooted in coordination among providers, municipalities, and stakeholders to enable seamless transfers, shared resources, and aligned policies and programs. Figure 23 displays the six recommendations identified for increasing connectivity in the RTA region.

	Recommendation	RTMP Priority	Funding Strategy
	Partner with municipalities to develop policies that support transit-oriented communities.		With One-Time Funding (\$\$)
	Align bus stop design guidelines and update service standards in partnership with road and transit agencies for improved accessibility, safety, and ADA compliance.		With One-Time Funding (\$\$)
	Expand accessible microtransit services to facilitate access to bus and rail stops.		With Sustainable Funding (\$\$\$)
	Partner with municipalities to improve pedestrian and cyclist access to transit stops through Complete Street policies, guidelines and projects.		With One-Time Funding (\$\$)
	Continue evaluation of the operational performance of existing microtransit services and implement a dashboard to educate the public on its effectiveness.		With No New Funding (\$)
	Build educational programs and develop policies that make it easier to travel across jurisdictional borders, especially for riders using ADA paratransit services.		With No New Funding (\$)

Figure 23. Recommendations for Increasing Connectivity

Transit-Oriented Communities

TOD and integrated land-use planning are key strategies in the RTMP for advancing mobility and livability in the RTA Region. These approaches also support the vulnerable populations identified by the

M4A Plan, allowing for aging in place by enabling older adults to travel without a car, fostering healthy, walkable neighborhoods for all users, and integrating essential services like healthcare, senior centers, and social services within transit-oriented communities. They also promote affordable housing options for individuals with limited incomes, reducing the need for long-distance travel.

Local master plans play a critical role in identifying and permitting TOD locations, ensuring alignment with regional goals for equitable and accessible development. Transportation and human service transportation providers can work closely with local municipalities to integrate mobility services into these plans, ensuring that TODs are not only well-connected by public transit but also accessible to populations with specialized mobility needs. This collaboration can include coordinated planning efforts, shared data on travel patterns and service gaps, and joint funding strategies (e.g., public-private partnerships) to support infrastructure improvements and service enhancements.

Bus Stop Design Guidelines

Supportive physical infrastructure was one of the five goals identified in the 2020 planning process and remains an integral part of ensuring a connected regional transportation network, particularly at bus stops. Comments from stakeholders emphasized the importance of basic maintenance and weather resilience of transit stops, which should be “... paved ... and accessible in winter (cleared of snow and ice)”.

To promote a more cohesive and inclusive regional transportation network, regional guidelines for bus stop design should be developed, emphasizing ADA accessibility through paved and accessible stops, while also encouraging municipalities and transit agencies to go beyond minimum compliance requirements. This includes incorporating features such as comfortable seating, shelters to protect from the elements, adequate lighting, and charging stations for mobility devices, such as e-bikes or electric scooters. Some bus stops and shelters are already equipped with these enhancements, but consistent implementation across the region is lacking. To improve upon this, interagency coordination, between transit providers, MDOT, SEMCOG, local road commissions, and municipal planning departments, is required. This ensures that infrastructure improvements, accessibility features, and service enhancements are planned and executed in a unified manner. This includes aligning timelines for roadway upgrades with transit stop improvements, coordinating on the placement of shelters and lighting, and integrating accessibility standards—such as curb ramps, tactile surfaces, and real-time information systems—across jurisdictions.

Accessible Microtransit Services

Microtransit, or a flexible, on-demand transportation service that provides shared riders within a defined service area, is a powerful tool to help fill in identified gaps in transportation networks, both from a geographic and temporal standpoint. Microtransit can be operated by public transit agencies, private companies, or through public-private partnerships, and prioritizes curb-to-curb or door-to-door services, meeting people where they are and providing additional flexible transportation options for those with mobility challenges. Several exemplary microtransit programs have been deployed in Southeast Michigan, such as the SMART Flex service and FlexRide.

In order to ensure the equitable implementation of microtransit in the RTA Region, it is critical to ensure that microtransit fleets are accessible, meaning they are equipped with ramps, securements, and offer space for mobility devices. Because microtransit is most typically offered through an app, it is also important to ensure that a call-in option is made available for users without smartphones or limited technological access and/or capabilities.

Pedestrian and Cyclist Access

Building a resilient and inclusive transportation system requires thoughtful consideration of pedestrians and cyclists. This means designing infrastructure that prioritizes safety, comfort, and accessibility for all

users, with audible pedestrian signals, curb ramps, and longer crossing times at intersections. It also involves integrating micromobility options at transit stops, such as bike and scooter parking, and equipping buses with bike racks to enhance first mile/last mile connectivity and support multimodal travel.

Much like the recommendations on TOD and bus stop accessibility, ensuring multimodal connectivity is based in collaboration with local municipalities. By aligning local planning efforts with regional goals, municipalities can implement complete streets designs that prioritize investments that enhance safety and comfort for all users, while creating a more resilient transportation network that can evolve with changing technologies. Community-led walk audits, involving both municipal and transportation representatives, can further inform planning by identifying barriers and opportunities from the perspective of those who use the system daily, helping shape a transportation network that is equitable, adaptable, and responsive to changing needs.

Performance Evaluation and Dashboards

While microtransit services have been piloted and implemented in Southeast Michigan, there is still a level of confusion among current and potential riders as to what microtransit is and how to use it. There is an opportunity for RTA and its regional partners to educate people on the benefits and successes of these programs, in part through an evaluation of the performance of these services. Public-facing dashboards displaying key metrics on the effectiveness of microtransit can go a long way in encouraging residents to use the service, while also educating local political leaders on the importance of providing this additional service, helping to secure additional funding.

Aligned Education Programs and Policies

Cross-agency coordination is essential to building a transportation system that supports the broader needs of the community. By aligning transportation planning with health, housing, and social services, agencies can create more efficient and equitable mobility options. This harmonization would be most effective through the alignment of policies and programs across jurisdictions to improve regional travel, particularly for older adults and individuals with disabilities. While many providers in the RTA Region offer mobility management services to help ease this burden, there is still a level of fragmentation, as certain parameters or eligibility criteria or a lack of coordination between services can limit an individual's ability to make trips efficiently. A more regional approach to mobility management can help to streamline service eligibility for users, reducing barriers and enabling more seamless regional travel. RTA is well positioned to support the region in developing these efforts, particularly through its work in managing the Section 5310 program, and can facilitate coordination between providers to foster a more unified approach to mobility. Coordination activities should focus on sharing best practices, identifying ways to align ADA policies, and exploring opportunities for collaboration and resource sharing. In turn, RTA can serve as an educator for the region, working to build awareness around mobility options, promote inclusive transportation planning, and support capacity-building among local partners.

8.5.2 Leveraging Past Achievements

RTA completed the Mobility-Oriented Development (MOD) study in 2020, which examined key regional corridors in Oakland, Wayne, and Washtenaw Counties to investigate opportunities for TOD and first-mile/last-mile connections. While the Action Plan developed as part of this study primarily focused on recommended actions for specific stations across the three counties, the plan also included corridor-level strategies that can improve mobility throughout the region. Several strategies touch on the recommendations identified in the M4A goal for increasing connectivity, providing a solid foundation for moving forward. These include a pedestrian-friendly design guide for stations to encourage walkable environments and the development of a regional system of mobility hubs. RTA is also in the process of creating the Access to Transit (ATP) program, which will allow RTA to partner with municipalities through

a regular call for projects process. The program will fund capital projects that improve accessibility at transit stops, such as shelters, boarding area improvements, and bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

In 2025, SMART released its Bus Stop Design Standards Manual, accompanied by a Quick Start Guide, intended for use by community leaders when planning streetscape improvements along SMART bus routes. The manual “... ensures [riders’] safety and full accommodation through universal, equitable design in line with the latest trends and best practices in the public transit industry.”^{xiv} The manual and guide have already received support from MDOT, SEMCOG, and municipal representatives in SMART’s service area. Using SMART’s efforts and experience as a baseline, the RTA and its regional partners could build from this manual, expanding to encompass the four-county region to support a regional bus stop design framework.

8.6 Simplify Transit Use

Simplifying transit use is critical to the promotion of public transit services as convenient, accessible, and valuable for all users, including the most vulnerable populations in the RTA Region. Navigating transportation options has been identified as a regional challenge due to the lack of unified policies, eligibility requirements, and fare structures between the numerous RTA transit agencies. Addressing this need would support the development of a streamlined and unified team of transit providers, enhancing user experience and offering simpler, more attractive, and more accessible services across the region. Integrated fare policies, potentially supplemented with the implementation of new technologies for increased fare acceptance across agencies, is one example of a strategy to better support and simplify cross-jurisdictional travel. Investing in comprehensive trip planning tools would further simplify transit use, as well as maximize users’ awareness of the transit options available to them. By pursuing such strategies, users would be faced with fewer barriers, allowing them to gain confidence in navigating transit services region-wide and encouraging increased and expanded ridership.

8.6.1 Recommendations

Achieving this goal requires coordinated efforts between providers to target standardized eligibility policies and application processes, streamlined regional dispatch, and unified regional fare collection. Figure 24 displays the four recommendations identified for simplifying transit use in the RTA region.

 Recommendation	RTMP Priority	Funding Strategy
Align eligibility requirements to ride with one regional application process, one portal and database, and more places to sign up.		With One-Time Funding (\$\$)
Add a regional demand response phone number and online booking/scheduling platform to streamline dispatch and to minimize confusion about what services are available and when.		With One-Time Funding (\$\$)
Implement a regional fare collection system across all modes of transportation, building on the Mobility Wallet pilot and investigating a regional fare capping program that allows riders to "pay as you go."		With One-Time Funding (\$\$)
Standardize ADA requirements, creating consistent policies and procedures for eligibility, appeals, no-shows, and late cancellations to simplify the rider experience and improve coordination.		With No New Funding (\$)

Figure 24. Recommendations for Simplifying Transit Use

Regional Eligibility System

Building an aligned regional eligibility system through a ‘one-stop’ platform establishes a more user-friendly, efficient, and convenient avenue for users to submit applications. The platform would support simplified transit use for the vulnerable populations that are required to demonstrate eligibility in order to utilize transit services, particularly by implementing a singular regional application process that would eliminate confusing and potentially contradictory policies and steps required across different providers. The platform would also support the RTA and transit providers in their ability to more accurately and efficiently track eligible users via a regional database. The ‘one-stop’ platform would also enable more seamless resource sharing across the region, as each provider and other organizations supporting vulnerable populations would refer customers to the same unified platform and application. An example of a successful regional system is the Connecticut ADA Paratransit Resource Center (CTADA) offered by the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT). The CTADA webpage hosts an online or downloadable paratransit application form that allows residents to determine their eligibility for statewide Connecticut complementary ADA Paratransit service.^{xv}

Streamlined Regional Dispatch Number & Online Platform

Regionalizing trip planning systems was identified as a regional transit priority in the RTMP, which specified the value of deploying a platform to support trip planning and scheduling for riders. This type of new rider-facing technology reduces the barriers that limit access to services and complicate system navigation. Indeed, findings from the M4A engagement effort confirmed that users experience frustration with navigating multiple agencies and booking systems. Offering a single centralized resource that provides riders with the ability to plan and schedule trips in a single call, or via a single online platform would enhance the user experience.

Unified Fare Collection System

Regionalizing fare payment systems was identified as a priority in the RTMP to simplify payment and transfers across providers, reduce barriers, and enable easier system navigation. An integrated transit payment system is being piloted in Southeast Michigan under the Mobility Wallet pilot program, which sets up a framework for the region to build upon moving forward. Solidifying regional multimodal fare payment and collection technology would ensure that users may ride with any partnered providers, including public transit and micromobility providers, without having to navigate multiple payment systems or fare structures. In addition, the exploration of regional fare capping options under the pilot program provides further opportunity for an improved rider experience, as financial barriers to frequent transit use are removed. The reduced barriers create opportunities for boosted ridership, enhanced user experience, and streamlined fare collection across the region.

Standardized ADA Requirements & Procedures

Transit riders in the RTA Region face challenges due to the inconsistencies in ADA requirements and procedures. Findings from the M4A engagement effort included rider frustrations regarding the fragmented disability services. With the standardization of the ADA eligibility and procedures regionwide, users would feel more comfortable and empowered to use the services, as the system would be streamlined and simpler to navigate. With the support of the RTA, significant coordination between providers would be necessary to minimize the discrepancies between provider-specific ADA requirements and procedures as much as possible. Targeted outreach would be critical to increase awareness of any future standardization updates, while simultaneously promoting transit services.

8.6.2 Leveraging Past Achievements

The RTA is set to launch a Mobility Wallet pilot program in 2025 to increase interoperability across transit providers and transportation modes in the RTA Region. The pilot offers an account-based mobility wallet, allowing users to purchase, store, and manage fare payments for multiple transit providers in a single mobile application. Riders benefit from the ease of a single integrated transit payment system, eliminated transfer fares, and the reduced need for multiple tickets or payment methods. Continuing to build on this pilot and to explore opportunities for eligibility-based fare capping will further reduce the financial and logistical barriers that inhibit ridership growth.

The implementation of the myride2 platform is another achievement that provides a valuable foundation for the effective implementation of these recommendations. Myride2 is both a web-based and call center-based mobility management service, allowing riders to plan and arrange trips to support regional mobility. Expanding on this platform would increase riders' access to trip planning and scheduling tools and allow for full regional participation of transit providers in the mobility management service.

8.7 Grow Healthcare Transit

Medical trips are critical and often the hardest to provide due to the long distances between where patients live and where their appointments are—distances that often span multiple transit providers'

service areas. In addition, patients have unique transportation needs, including companion riders, mobility device accommodations, door-through-door service, and one-seat rides instead of having the flexibility to transfer between services. As a result, fixed-route service is not a viable option for some healthcare trips. To fill this gap, many healthcare trips (called “Non-Emergency Medical Transportation”, or NEMT) are currently provided by private companies contracted through healthcare plans such as Medicaid with varying costs and reliability.

Growing healthcare transit would meet critical needs of regional residents and ensure reliable access to quality care, regardless of a person’s condition or financial resources. Transportation was described by stakeholders as an “invisible cost and sometimes highest cost in accessing medical services;” growing healthcare transit would reduce costs for both patients and healthcare providers by decreasing no-show appointments. This will be increasingly important as Southeast Michigan’s population continues to age with one in five people in the region reaching age 65 or older by 2028^{xvi}.

8.7.1 Recommendations

Steps to achieve this goal focus on coordination between healthcare and transportation providers as well as a new program that better facilitates and funds healthcare trips. Figure 25 displays the three recommendations identified for growing healthcare transit in the RTA Region in the order they were prioritized through public and stakeholder engagement.

	Recommendation	RTMP Priority	Funding Strategy
	Partner with medical facilities for consistent transportation, with a focus on regularly scheduled rides to recurring services such as dialysis and physical therapy.		With Sustainable Funding (\$\$\$)
	Initiate a Rides to Wellness program to fund additional access to medical, health, and wellness services.		With Sustainable Funding (\$\$\$)
	In collaboration with MDHHS, create a working group for community providers in the region to address medical transportation needs, barriers, and challenges.		With No New Funding (\$)

Figure 25. Recommendations for Growing Healthcare Transit

Partnerships with Medical Facilities

One way to build and strengthen partnerships between medical facilities and transit is to market transit services to major medical facilities throughout the RTA region, providing them with tailored information on the transit providers that serve their facility and how riders can access transit services. As medical facilities become more aware of the transit services available to their clients, they can act

as “trusted connectors” who refer their clients to use the transit system. This alleviates medical facilities from needing to create, operate, and fund their own transportation programs, as long as the transit system has sufficient capacity to meet clients’ transportation needs.

Once a medical facility is familiar with the available transit services, the RTA and other transit providers can partner with medical facilities to conduct hands-on travel training with clients to acquaint them with the transit system and how to use it.

Rides to Wellness

Building on partnerships with medical facilities, the RTA could initiate its own Rides to Wellness program to fill healthcare transit gaps in the current transit system and create a dedicated funding stream for medical, health, and wellness trips.

The RTA could glean lessons learned from the Mass Transportation Authority (MTA) Flint’s Rides to Wellness program, which “is a comprehensive non-emergency medical transportation program that provides mobility management, door-to-door service, and same day service to riders going to medical or other health and wellness-related appointments”^{xvii}. MTA partners with Genesee County Department of Veterans Services, Genesee Health Plan, and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) to provide the program. MTA also defines “wellness-related appointments” broadly to break down siloes between medical and other trip purposes and meet as many needs as possible.

Community Provider Working Group

MDHHS coordinates with community health providers throughout the RTA region and provides guidance for exchanging information with these providers, including the Community Information Exchange Micro-Toolkit^{xviii}. A Community Information Exchange (CIE) is already established in the RTA region and is discussed in more detail in Section 8.7.2. Topics for the working group to strategize may include gaps in the current healthcare transit system and how to fill them, healthcare transit funding, the potential for public transit providers to fill needs that are currently met through private NEMT providers, and aging in place or the development of housing near healthcare.

8.7.2 Leveraging Past Achievements

The RTA administers the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) program for the RTA region and has provided critical funding to nonprofit and public transit agencies that provide healthcare trips. Continuing to make this funding available will help to maintain baseline healthcare transit services.

United Way for Southeastern Michigan and Michigan 2-1-1 support Connect4Care: a CIE with Henry Ford Health (HFH), Gleaners Community Food Bank for Southeastern Michigan, and the Health Alliance Plan^{xix}. Through this CIE, HFH and Gleaners act as initial spokes, connecting through Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) – which allow different software programs to exchange information with each other – to bidirectionally process and serve patients with tax preparation, transportation, and childcare assistance. The RTA could work with transit providers throughout the region to get incorporated into Connect4Care and receive transportation referrals. The RTA could also partner with medical facilities to encourage them to join Connect4Care.

Furthermore, United Way for Southeastern Michigan and Foenix – Mobility Rising is anticipated to convene an ongoing quarterly Wayne County Transportation Leadership Circle: a working group with transit and social service agencies to support the development and execution of a Transportation Assistance Hub^{xx}. Oakland County hosts a similar monthly initiative for local public transportation providers. The Leadership Circle includes a broad host of community-based organizations that meet regularly to discuss transportation needs, barriers, challenges, and solutions—including healthcare transit. Instead of creating a new working group for healthcare transit, the RTA could participate in these Leadership Circles and encourage the region’s transit providers to participate as well.

8.8 Prepare Future Resources

A well connected and coordinated transit network is rooted in proactive planning, cross-sector collaboration, and a commitment to data-driven decision-making. As identified by the study team, funding data is inconsistent and hard to compare, and with the multitude of operators in the region, standardized data collection and performance measurement can provide the region with tools to better understand the efficiency and effectiveness of services. This presents an opportunity for the RTA to collaborate on a unified database that tracks funding, operations, and assets to better identify and address regional transit needs. By preparing future resources, through expanded technical assistance programs and improved data collection, the RTA and providers in the region can make more informed decisions on transportation investments.

8.8.1 Recommendations

Steps to achieve this goal focus on data collection and technical assistance, primarily spearheaded by the RTA. Figure 26 displays the five recommendations identified for preparing future resources in the RTA Region in the order they were prioritized through public and stakeholder engagement.

 Recommendation	RTMP Priority	Funding Strategy
Implement a technical assistance program to support community transit providers with planning activities, capital improvements, and grant applications that can increase capacity, collaboration, and connectivity.		With No New Funding (\$)
Document data collection processes for direct recipients and their subrecipients to better understand existing policies and processes in place.		With No New Funding (\$)
Generate a small set of performance measures to track the productivity and efficiency of both individual transportation providers and the network overall.		With No New Funding (\$)
Engage with local stakeholders to document current funding sources, uses, and cost efficiency across the region. Depending on findings, create a database to track funding across the wide array of providers.		With One-Time Funding (\$\$)
Develop a regional demand response task force to identify opportunities to improve rider experience and operational efficiency across the region, facilitate coordination of services and projects, and share lessons learned.		With No New Funding (\$)

Figure 26. Recommendations for Preparing Future Resources

Technical Assistance Program

Technical assistance is a core element of the Section 5310 program, centered in providing training, resources, and direct support to those interested in enhancing the mobility and transportation options for their communities. As the designated recipient of this funding for Southeast Michigan, the RTA can implement a targeted program that supports community transit providers with a host of activities, including direct assistance to smaller agencies to help build capacity, particularly when it comes to applying for Section 5310 funding. Other potential activities can include an RTA-hosted annual conference or series of workshops where agencies could learn about different funding opportunities, including those offered by local foundations or charity organizations, and share best practices in developing strong projects and applying for grants.

Data Collection Processes

With the implementation of a regional Section 5310 program by the RTA in 2022, there is a need to better understand the individual processes in which direct recipients of funding (i.e., AAATA and SMART) collect data from subrecipients. This can help the RTA in ensuring consistency, transparency, and alignment with regional goals, and to support the development of a standardized framework for monitoring program performance and outcomes across the RTA Region.

Performance Measurement

Performance measurement is important for optimizing resource allocation to meet regional goals. By tracking metrics like ridership, on-time performance, and coverage, the RTA can continually assess whether transit services are meeting community needs. It also ensures accountability, helping to educate stakeholders, funders, political leaders, and the public on how resources are being used and what outcomes are being achieved throughout the region. Robust data collection also supports grant proposals and helps justify continued or increased investment. Research into peer agencies can provide insights into best practices and key metrics. In developing a performance measurement program, with four to five standardized metrics that are easily trackable by agencies, regardless of size or technical capability, the RTA can better promote regional coordination and inform service adjustments, capital investments, and policy changes.

Funding Data

As the RTA works to understand regional data collection needs, particular emphasis should be applied to the collection and documentation of available funding sources and uses. The technical analysis of the region's funding picture revealed a lack of consistent and reliable sources for data on this subject. What data is available is difficult to compile and compare, limiting potential opportunities for the entire region. There is an opportunity for the RTA to work with providers, stakeholders, and local governmental agencies to document these sources, working to create a unified and streamlined database that assists in monitoring how funding is being utilized in the RTA region. Additionally, the database can be used to collect and analyze operations data, such as ridership, and information on capital assets, further assisting in identifying regional transit funding needs.

Regional Demand Response Task Force

As demonstrated by the series of recommendations presented by this plan, the RTA Region could benefit from the development of a regional demand-response task force that works to identify opportunities to improve the rider experience and operational efficiency, facilitate coordination of services and projects, and share lessons learned. The task force should consist of a mix of both riders and providers to provide a diversity of perspectives on current issues and solutions. The task force presents an opportunity to closely monitor and track progress that has been made toward each of the M4A goals and recommendations, acting as both a resource for helping the RTA and regional providers with any pain points encountered along the way, while also providing support and guidance on initiatives as they mature.

8.8.2 Leveraging Past Achievements

As outlined in the RTA's enabling legislation, the RTA Board established two key advisory bodies, known as the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) and the Providers Advisory Committee (PAC). These committees were created to ensure ongoing community and stakeholder engagement in regional transportation planning and are designed to meet regularly and make recommendations to the RTA on improvements to services in the region. The CAC brings together users of public transportation in the region, with at least 25% of the committee representing older adults or people with disabilities, while the PAC is composed of two members appointed by each public transportation provider in the region. These committees, particularly the PAC, serve as strong examples for a task force focused on demand response

services. Its structure facilitates collaboration among agencies, fosters data-driven decision-making, and ensures that operational realities are considered in service planning. A demand response task force modeled after the PAC could similarly bring together community providers, mobility managers, and other stakeholders to address challenges such as scheduling efficiency, service coverage, and rider eligibility.

9 Conclusion

The goals and recommendations outlined by the M4A plan help to address identified gaps in current services, achieve efficiencies in service delivery, and streamline mobility throughout the region. These recommendations are intended to provide better, more effective service to the RTA Region's most vulnerable populations, while also working to create a stronger transportation network for all users, regardless of their mobility needs.

At its core, the M4A Plan serves as a guiding document for identifying transportation solutions and strategies for people with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with limited incomes, while also prioritizing services and projects for funding under the regional Section 5310 program. The RTA conducts Section 5310 calls for projects every two years, with the next call anticipated for the 2027 and 2028 fiscal years. Potential applicants can use the recommendations in this plan to identify transportation services, mobility management services, and capital improvement projects for implementation.

Endnotes

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