TheRide 2045

Long-Range Plan

July 2022

PREPARED BY

TheRide 2045 was developed in close collaboration between Left Turn Right Turn and TheRide.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TheRide 2045 project team wishes to acknowledge and thank the many contributors to the development of this plan:

- TheRide's Board of Directors, for providing high-level direction and vision for the development of the plan;
- The Public Advisory Group, for their time and insight provided through the various workshops and reviews;
- TheRide's staff, for their dedication and passion in delivering services every day, and sharing that direct knowledge with us to inform the plan;
- The dozens of stakeholders we engaged with, for providing your perspective and knowledge to better the outputs; and
- The thousands of individuals from our communities that we heard from, for taking the time to share your aspirations, concerns, and ideas for how to make transit better.

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1 Introduction

TheRide 2045 is a Long-Range Plan that will transform transit in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area. The plan lays out a strategy for transit up to 2045 that will achieve the Board's stated vision:

A robust public transportation system that adapts to the area's evolving needs, environment, and quality of life.

Developing a long-range plan is a critical step toward transforming TheRide. It will allow the organization to plan further into the future and strive for substantial changes that would extend beyond the life of a typical 5-year plan. Simply put, many public transit projects (e.g., buying new buses and building new infrastructure) require significant investments and long timelines to complete. By planning with a longer-term horizon, TheRide can make sure short-term decisions align with a single shared long-term vision. The plan must be firm enough so TheRide can plan its budgets but be flexible enough to adapt to opportunities and challenges that arise.

Development of the plan began in the fall of 2019. Planning efforts were stalled due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and were resumed in 2021. Many community members and stakeholders were actively engaged throughout the process, with significant input and guidance provided by TheRide's Board of Directors and a Public Advisory Group that was created for this project.

The plan focuses on addressing **social equity** gaps by improving affordable and accessible transportation to jobs, education, services, and housing, **improving our environment** by giving travelers efficient transportation alternatives, and **supporting a strong economy** by better connecting businesses and people. The result will be a more competitive transit system that will **grow ridership**, resulting in a more sustainable and vibrant community.

CAPTURED IN THE LONG-RANGE PLAN

Geography

- The core scope of evaluation covers the three member municipalities of TheRide:
  - the City of Ann Arbor,
  - the City of Ypsilanti, and
  - Ypsilanti Township.
- There is limited treatment of adjacent municipalities, with a focus on where current residents are already using TheRide's service.

Long-term Investments

- Evolving the service network and introducing bus rapid transit, priority routes, and high-frequency routes across the service area.
- Other service features, including off-peak services, A-Ride, and on-demand services.
- Changes to facilities, fleet, and technologies, including construction of a new garage, transit hubs, a shift to a zero-emissions fleet, and improvements to technologies.
- Regional connections and collaborations.

BEING ADDRESSED OUTSIDE THE LONG-RANGE PLAN

Exploration of an Expanded Service Area and Member Representation within TheRide

- These will be explored in consultation with other jurisdictions and based on the vision defined through this plan.

Detailed Planning of Regional Connections

- For those falling under the jurisdiction of the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) of Southeast Michigan.

Detailed Route Design

- Specific alignments for each route and service – this would be undertaken through the short-term planning process based on the overarching concepts elaborated in this plan.

Organizational Structure and Design

1.1 CURRENT STATE

TheRide has high levels of customer satisfaction, ridership, and levels of service for a transit agency of its size. Over the 10 years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, service expanded significantly. Much of the growth was driven by an ambitious 5-Year Transit Improvement Plan in 2014 that received strong community support and allowed TheRide to provide service to more places, operate more hours, and at an increased frequency. As a result, when COVID-19 started TheRide covered a larger service area, longer service span, and more frequent services along key corridors with record ridership.

As service levels increased, ridership also grew, albeit at a slower pace. The declining productivity (a key measure of service efficiency) was expected and is in line with a declining national trend in ridership productivity. Although productivity declined, the successful implementation of the 2014 plan enabled TheRide to increase ridership at a time when ridership decreased nationally due to various factors such as declining gas prices and the emergence of Transportation Network Companies (e.g., Uber, Lyft).

As with transit across the country, TheRide was hard hit by COVID-19. Ridership was dramatically impacted, and a temporary service plan was put into place focusing on high use corridors and essential destinations. In August 2021, TheRide reintroduced pre-pandemic levels of service, including adjustments to all routes and services. Initial data suggests ridership is beginning to return.

In addition to a strong fixed-route bus service, TheRide provides a diverse array of services. Demand response services are undergoing a period of expansion and change in response to technological advances and changes in planning approaches. FlexRide has been used to replace low-demand fixed-routes resulting in improved service quality and cost efficiency. Steps are also being taken to improve the cost efficiency and service quality for A-Ride, GoldRide Demand Response, and FlexRide, which are less cost-efficient relative to the paratransit and on-demand service of peers. TheRide's fixed-route services by contrast are more cost-efficient relative to the fixed-route services of peer agencies.

Within the strong overall performance, various opportunities for improvement have been identified. These include high demand on certain corridors leading to overcrowding, low schedule reliability, some low productivity routes, and low levels of off-peak service. TheRide has been monitoring these issues and adjusting service to address them, and TheRide 2045 presents an opportunity to plan for adjustments to tackle them both in the near- and long-term.

2019 Ridership

The major source of ridership for TheRide is the University of Michigan Central Campus and downtown Ann Arbor. There is a large concentration of boardings at the Blake Transit Center (BTC) and Ypsilanti Transit Center (YTC). Transfers represent a significant portion of these, confirming the important role that these locations play within the current and future network.

Secondary demand nodes are located at the southern end of Eastern Michigan University, Nixon Rd. and Plymouth Rd., the University of Michigan North Campus, Briarwood Mall, the Meijer on Carpenter Rd., and Washtenaw Community College. The Washtenaw Ave. corridor Provides the highest and most continuous ridership in the area between two nodes: downtown Ann Arbor and downtown Ypsilanti. Other high ridership corridors lie between Plymouth/Nixon and Briarwood Mall, running north along State St. Both corridors also show high levels of ridership relative to service provided. The spatial distribution of 2019 ridership is shown in Figure 1.

Washtenaw County Equity and Opportunities Map

Examining the equity considerations of the current transit service, the greatest equity challenges are located in the southeast service area for TheRide. While most of this area has good levels of service, the connectivity of that service is limited. The area lacks fast and direct travel for longer trips that provide significant access to jobs, medical facilities, and other opportunities. This results in the correlation of low Opportunity Index scores (see Figure 2) and longer trip lengths.

The Opportunity Index created by the Washtenaw County government measures access to opportunities in five categories: health, job access, economic well-being, education and training, and community engagement and stability. Areas with very low access to opportunities are concentrated within the City of Ypsilanti, eastern parts of Ypsilanti Township, and southern parts of Superior Township. Improving direct and fast service to these areas would improve connectivity and access to opportunities for residents in these areas, which are considered in TheRide 2045.

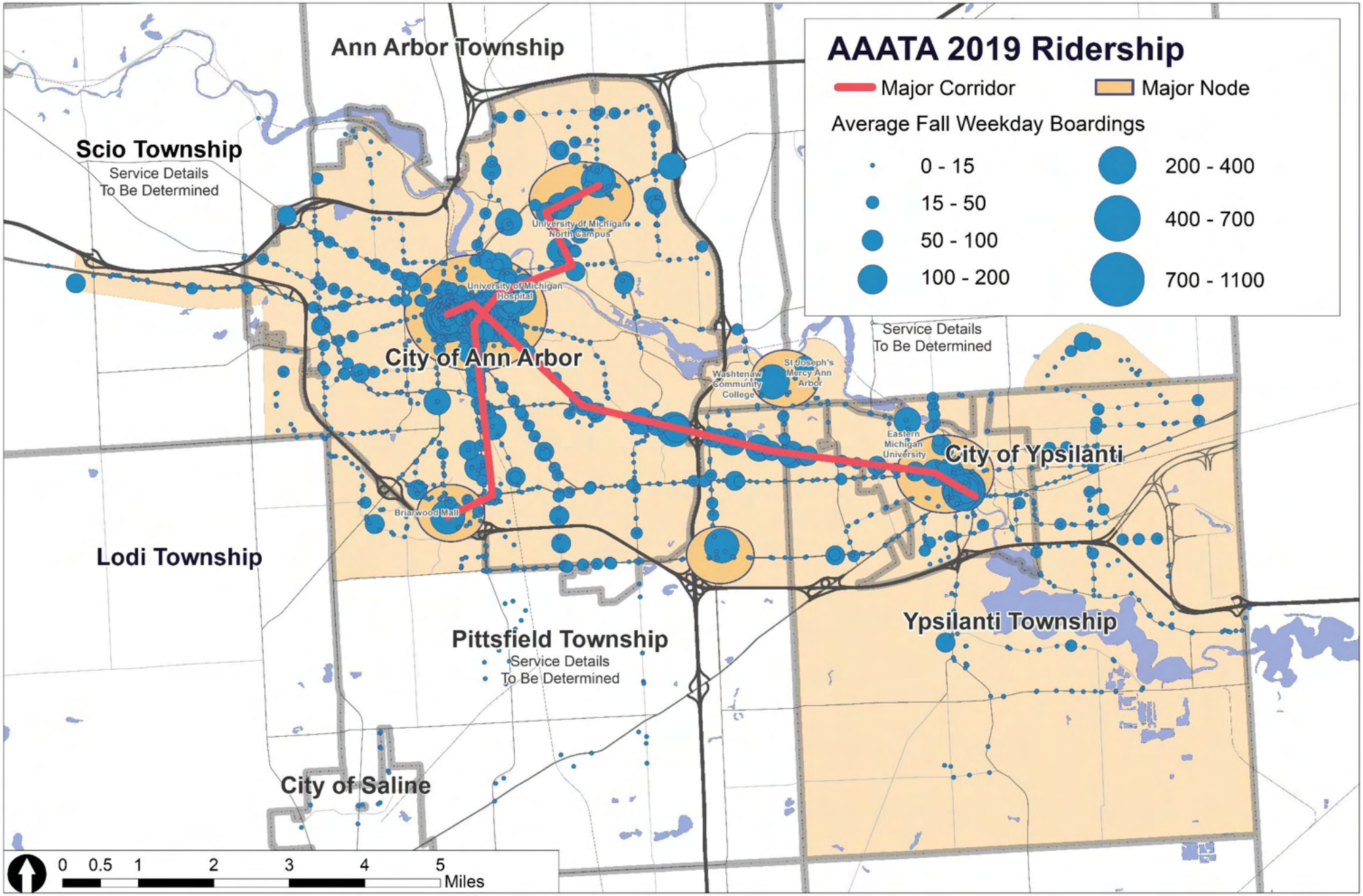


Figure 1 – TheRide 2019 Ridership – Source: TheRide

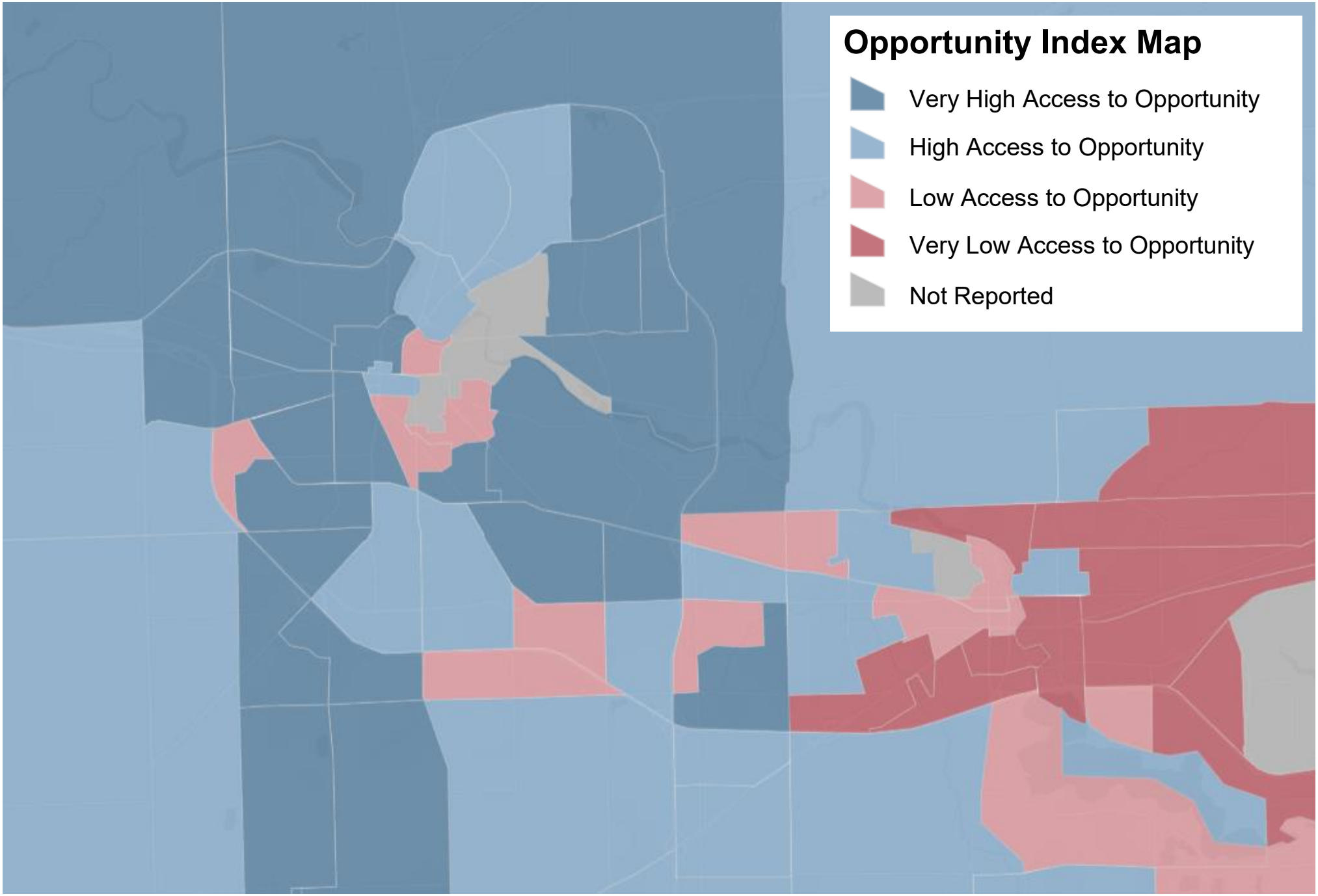


Figure 2 – Opportunity Index Map – Source: www.washtenaw.org/2480/Opportunity-Index

1.2 FUTURE CONTEXT

The Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area is a dynamic region with diverse municipalities. The years to 2045 will see moderate levels of change to the area, including population and employment growth in the area. While employment growth will be focused in the urban centers, population growth will be distributed through a combination of suburban sprawl as well as key urban destinations (including around University of Michigan and Eastern Michigan University campuses).

Municipalities in the region have all committed to supporting their communities to be more sustainable, resilient, and vibrant. In some cases, these commitments include transit-supportive plans that result in more livable communities – aspiring to improve densities, improve pedestrian access, and introduce parking constraints in certain areas. As a result, transit will continue to play a vital role in supporting the economic, environmental, and equity goals of the area.

To that end, transit must be designed within the future context and travel needs. Population growth and employment growth are the two most significant factors used to forecast future transit demand. Figure 3 shows population and employment projections by area municipality. Demographic variables such as age, income, employment type, etc. were also considered in developing transit demand forecasts, as were municipal plans related to transportation and urban development.

Major growth in transit demand (relative to pre-COVID-19 numbers) is projected to occur in:

- Downtown Ann Arbor,
- Along the Plymouth Rd. corridor, and
- At the University of Michigan North and Central campuses.

Good growth is also expected at the W. Stadium/Liberty/Jackson, Washtenaw/Huron Pkwy, Carpenter/Ellsworth nodes, and along State St. Elsewhere, strong transit demand growth is projected to occur around Eastern Michigan University and along the Washtenaw Corridor.

The following sections provide additional details regarding key factors that have been considered in forecasting transit demand, and how these factors change in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area up to 2045.

Population and Employment Growth

	Population Growth 2020-2045		Employment Growth 2020-2045	
	Percent Growth	**Absolute Growth**	**Percent Growth**	**Absolute Growth**
Ann Arbor City	8.7%	10,500	9.6%	12,750
Ann Arbor Township	12.7%	1,000	11.6%	1,250
Ypsilanti City	6.8%	1,500	9.8%	1,250
Ypsilanti Township	11.0%	6,000	10.0%	1,750
Pittsfield Township	32.6%	13,750	13.8%	3,750
Scio Township	33.3%	6,500	10.5%	1,500
Superior Township	42.1%	5,750	6.8%	750
Total	15.8%	45,000	10.1%	23,000

Figure 3 – Population and Employment Growth – Source: SEMCOG Regional Forecast

The rate of population growth is most significant in suburban township areas. However, strong growth based on absolute population is expected in urban areas. Specific areas of note include:

- Downtown Ann Arbor,
- Plymouth Rd.,
- Superior Township east of Leforge Rd. and south of Geddes Rd.,
- The area around Carpenter/Ellsworth Rds.,
- The area around W. Michigan Ave./ W. Textile Rd., and
- The area around Packard Rd./Eisenhower Pkwy.

Adjacent to Washtenaw County, significant growth is expected in western Canton Township. Moderate growth is also expected in southeastern Livingston County and southwestern Oakland County.

In comparison with population growth, employment growth is projected to have a far more urban focus. The University of Michigan campuses and downtown Ann Arbor will be the predominant drivers of employment growth. From a corridor perspective, projected employment growth aligns well with a linear route between Plymouth/US-23 and State St./I-94. Washtenaw Ave. east of US-23 is another area of notable projected employment growth. Maps of the spatial distribution of population and employment growth are shown in Figures 4 and 5 respectively.

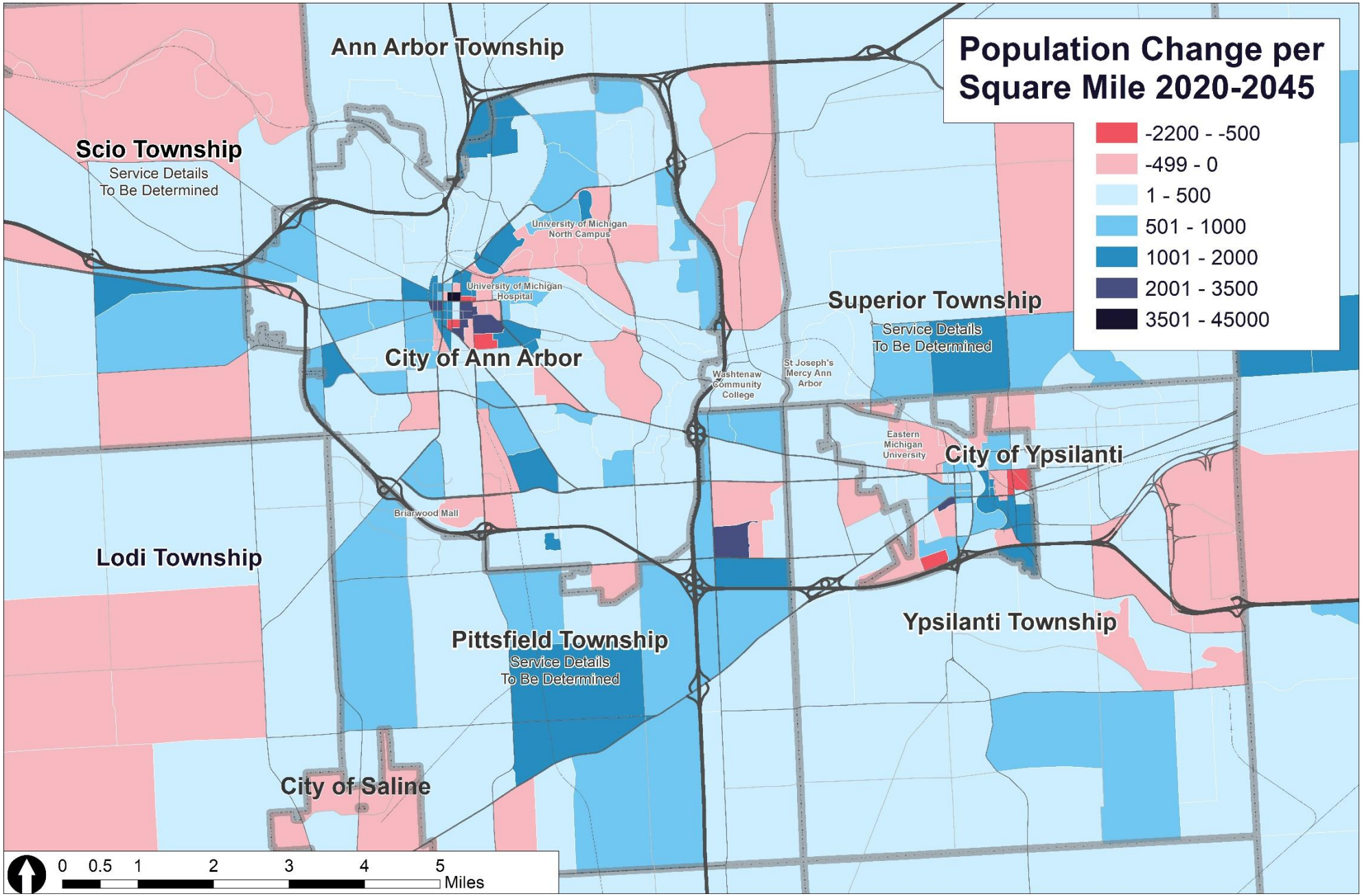


Figure 4 – Population Growth Map 2020-2045 – Source: SEMCOG Regional Forecast

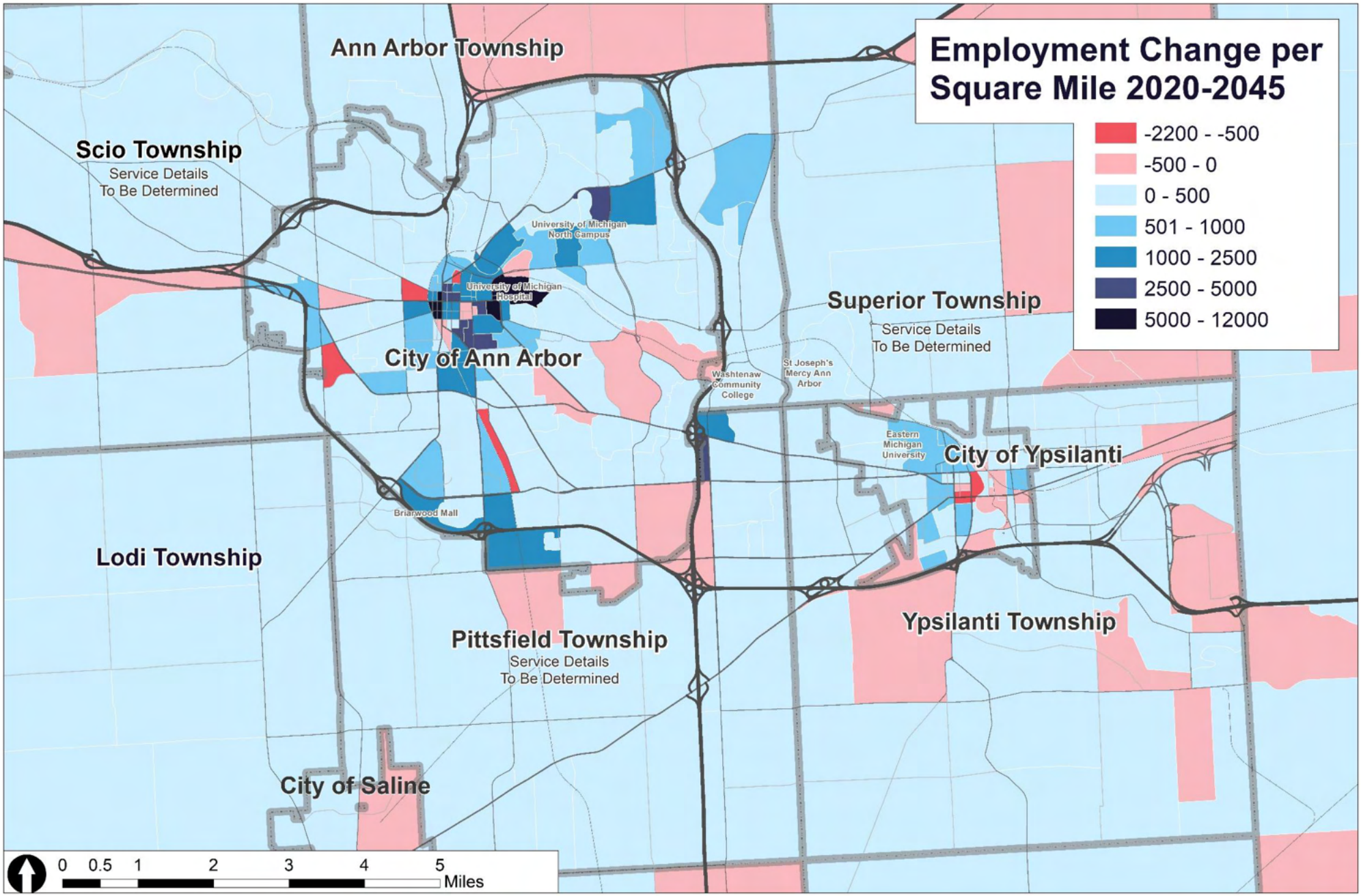


Figure 5 – Employment Growth Map 2020-2045 – Source: SEMCOG Regional Forecast

Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Area Travel Patterns 2045

Travel between the City of Ann Arbor and Pittsfield Township is forecasted to be the most significant inter-municipal flow in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Area, which aligns with significant population growth in both. As shown in Figure 6, travel in the area in general is focused on the City of Ann Arbor with large flows between the City of Ann Arbor and Scio and Ypsilanti Townships, and notable flows between the City of Ann Arbor and all area municipalities. In assessing forecasted travel flows within municipalities, travel between downtown and northeast Ann Arbor forms the dominant travel pattern. Other specific hubs with multi-directional travel flows include the University of Michigan North Campus, Nixon/Plymouth, Briarwood Mall, Eastern Michigan University, Washtenaw Ave. adjacent to US-23, and Carpenter/Ellsworth.

Regional Travel Patterns in 2045

Regional travel (highlighted in Figure 7) will continue to be a significant factor in the broader transportation context for the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area, with the following notable highlights:

- Travel between the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area and areas to the east (Canton Township, Dearborn, and Detroit) is anticipated to continue to be the main flow by a significant margin. Canton Township is the dominant origin-destination within this Wayne County travel flow.
- Travel between the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area, southeastern areas (Van Buren Township and Romulus Township), and southwestern areas (Saline and Lodi Township) are projected to be other notable regional flows.
- Northern travel flow is almost exclusively to the City of Ann Arbor and is projected to have strong proportional growth.
- Within the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area, the City of Ann Arbor is projected to be the dominant demand point for regional travel.
- There are also sizable travel flows between Wayne County and the City of Ypsilanti and Townships of Pittsfield and Ypsilanti.

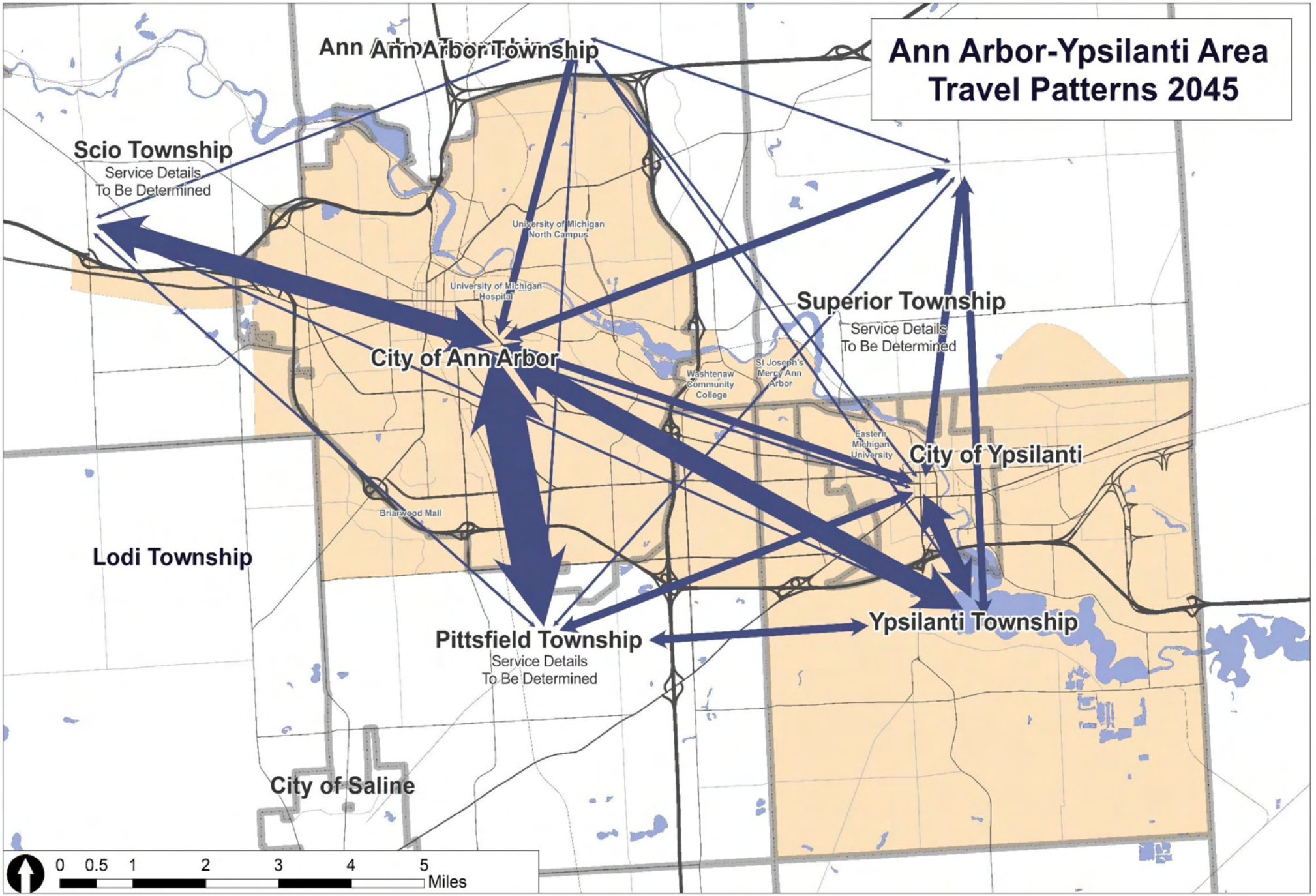


Figure 6 – Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Area Travel Patterns 2045. Line widths are proportional to the volume of projected average daily trips between the municipalities they connect. A large line, such as between the City of Ann Arbor and Pittsfield Township indicates many trips will occur. – Source: SEMCOG Travel Forecast

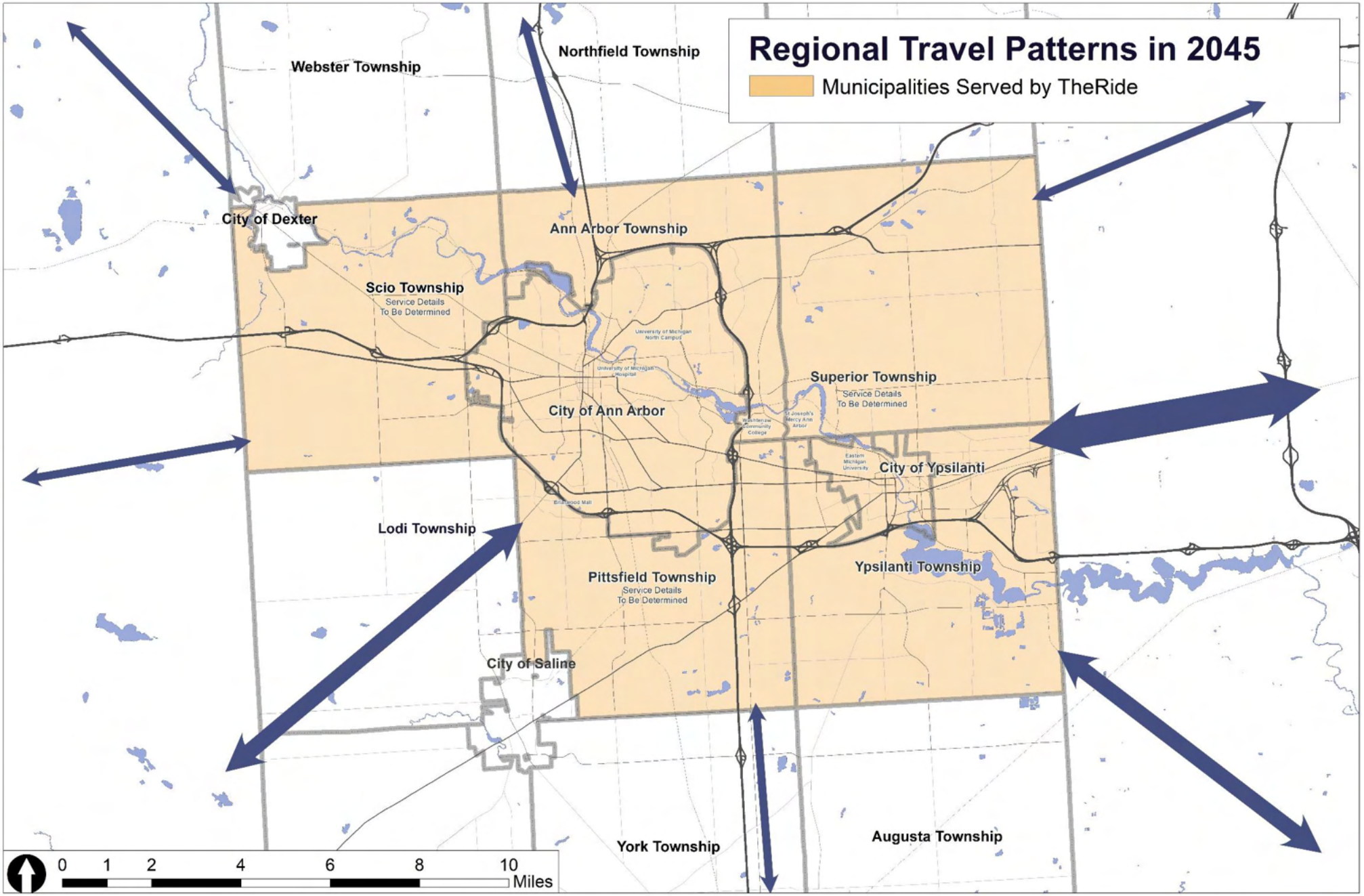


Figure 7 – Regional Travel Patterns 2045. Line widths are proportional to the volume of projected average daily trips between the municipalities within TheRide's service area and municipalities in the general direction of the line's outward path. For example, a large line, such as the one to the east or on the right side of the map, indicates many trips will occur between the municipalities served by TheRide and municipalities to the east that would include Canton Twp., Dearborn, and Detroit. – Source: SEMCOG Travel Forecast

Urban Structure and Transportation Context

Transit-supportive land use and built infrastructure conditions have a significant impact on future transit demand. Elements such as the availability of free parking, density, compactness, active transportation connectivity, the quality of active transportation environment, and roadway design and capacity have all been shown to significantly influence transit ridership and transit sustainability.

Planning in the City of Ann Arbor significantly emphasizes and prioritizes transit-supportive policies, development, and infrastructure as compared to other municipalities in the region. Future ridership demand in the city is projected to exceed what would be expected considering only demographic changes. Transit-supportive changes are expected to be particularly strong in the four new Zoning District for Transit Corridors:

- Plymouth/Nixon
- State/Eisenhower
- W. Stadium/Liberty/Jackson
- Washtenaw/Huron Pkwy

The Washtenaw Ave. corridor has strong transit-supportive plans across all municipalities. Conversely, new subdivision growth on the urban periphery will be considerably less transit-supportive than infill growth within existing urban areas.

COVID-19 Related Trends

The COVID-19 pandemic has added significant uncertainty to transit planning. It is expected that increased telecommuting rates, public health safety fears, an increase in private car purchases, and more dispersed housing purchases will have negative impacts on transit in the near term. However, economic strain, increasing inequality, and greater mode share of active forms of transportation will positively affect ridership. Taking all of this into account, it is likely that the former factors will prove more influential in the short-term.

Due to the pandemic, several other trip-taking patterns are expected to change. The number of longer commutes is anticipated to decrease per capita as more people work from home. Furthermore, the reduction of their longer commute trips could translate to more frequent, shorter trips. This is due to the additional time that has been gained from their previous commute that could be used for retail and leisure uses. As work/school commutes are generally concentrated in peak periods, it is expected that there will be less peaking of travel demand.

This short-term outlook is much closer to pre-pandemic conditions as compared to the pandemic conditions. This will be the case even more so when looking at ridership, travel patterns, and expectations in general up to 2045.

1.3 STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND CHALLENGES

The vision for society is changing, and TheRide has a role to play. Addressing changing societal trends in population, employment, and a greater emphasis on equity and environmental sustainability will require significant improvements and investments in transportation systems, infrastructure, and policy. TheRide 2045 provides a blueprint for these short- and long-term efforts. This includes capturing funding opportunities from the state and federal governments, and efficiently spending it on major infrastructure projects that are required to maintain existing service and to meet the changing needs of the community.

The COVID-19 pandemic has added to the those changing dynamics with shifts in ridership, travel patterns, and community expectations. Additionally, the challenges of operating within a diverse and multi-jurisdictional area add to the importance of establishing a clear vision for transit to unite behind and build toward. Success at TheRide requires many collaborators, including various municipalities, organizations, institutions, individuals, and TheRide itself to work together toward a common vision.

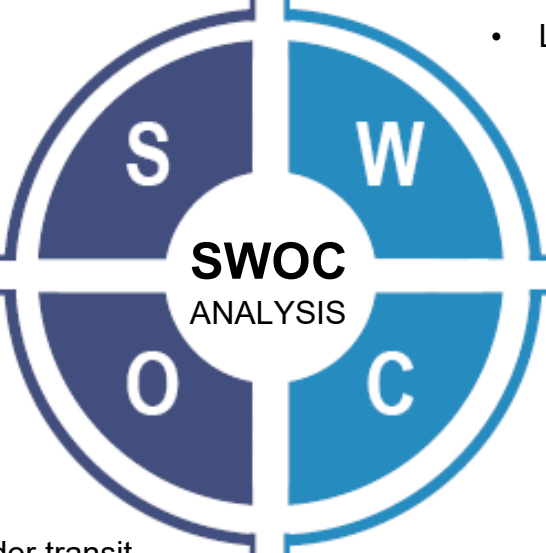
The following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges analysis shown in Figure 8, summarizes the key facets of the current state and future context of transit in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area that have helped to drive and shape TheRide 2045. Overall, TheRide is performing strongly, with promising opportunities to build on to 2045.

STRENGTHS

- Engaged board and staff
- Excellent range of services
- Strong level of service and ridership
- Strong credibility and support within the community
- Existing resources & assets in reasonable condition

WEAKNESSES

- Low productivity (trips per service hour) for paratransit and late-night demand response service
- Lack of integrated planning with University of Michigan's bus service
- Lack of facility capacity (terminals and garages)
- Existing structural budget deficits
- Low schedule reliability



OPPORTUNITIES

- Big university campuses are major destinations
- Supportive, engaged, and knowledgeable community
- Strong interest for higher-order transit, including bus rapid transit
- Potential to grow ridership on priority corridors and during off-peak periods
- Advocacy for the outside decisions that support TheRide's desired outcomes
- Transit-supportive development occurring in Ann Arbor and along key corridors
- Advancements in zero-emissions bus technology and related funding increases are anticipated

CHALLENGES

- Fragmented jurisdictions
- Accessibility of pedestrian connections to transit, bus stops and sidewalks
- Constrained funding and resources limit opportunities
- Uncertainty over regional transit future
- Substantial car-centric development that is not transit-supportive (low density, lower quality pedestrian environment, ample road, and free parking capacity)

Figure 8 – SWOC Analysis

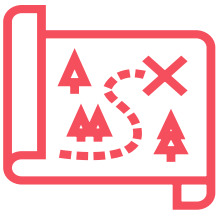
2 Process

TheRide 2045 was developed through a four-stage planning process that included rigorous public engagement and analysis.

The development of the plan occurred over four phases as outlined in Figure 9, below.

Phase 1: Guidance (Sep 2019- Mar 2020 & Feb-July, 2021)

Phase 2: Analysis (Mar-Aug, 2021)



Phase 3: Development (July 2021- Feb, 2022)

Phase 4: Finalization (Jan-Jun, 2022)

Figure 9 – Process Timeline

Phase 1: Guidance

The first phase was Guidance, during which we developed a framework for the reminder of the planning process, including the goals, principles, and methodology. Feedback from the public, TheRide's Board of Directors, and stakeholders were all considered. The Public Advisory Group (PAG) was also established: 12 individuals with different backgrounds that were consulted at regular points throughout the process to make sure that diverse perspectives were considered.

Phase 2: Analysis

The second phase was Analysis, where TheRide's current situation was evaluated to consider what is working well and what could be improved. The future context up to 2045 was considered next to ensure that transit was oriented to the expected changes in the community, including population, demographics, and employment. Existing plans from other municipalities and peer agencies were also considered, in addition to emerging technologies.

Phase 3: Development

In the third phase, Development, different elements and design options for the future plan were developed, before narrowing to four distinct scenarios based on different levels of funding.

Phase 4: Finalization

In the fourth phase, Finalization, this plan was developed based on the results of the previous phases and the feedback received from the public and key stakeholders. The plan is intended to be an achievable roadmap that lays out the steps to build a future transit system that achieves the goals developed in phase 1.

Significant public and stakeholder engagement was held throughout the planning process, including three formal rounds of engagement held in Phases 1, 3, and 4 respectively (summarized in greater detail in Section 2.2).

2.1 PLANNING METHODOLOGY

The development of the recommended solutions and initiatives for the TheRide 2045 is based on an assessment of the current state of the service and the future context within which service might operate against the Board's Ends (refer to Section 3.1). This included the identification of gaps and opportunities and a staged plan that continuously progresses toward the approved Ends.

The development of the plan relied on the construction and evaluation of plan options – amalgams of individual solutions and initiatives that together form a comprehensive plan that effectively advance the board's vision. These plan options vary according to the prioritization of specific gaps or opportunities, different funding scenarios, and themes related to the Board's Ends Policy such as access and equity, environmental sustainability, economic development, and transit mode share growth.

The following Figure 10 provides an overview of the planning methodology that was employed in developing the plan.

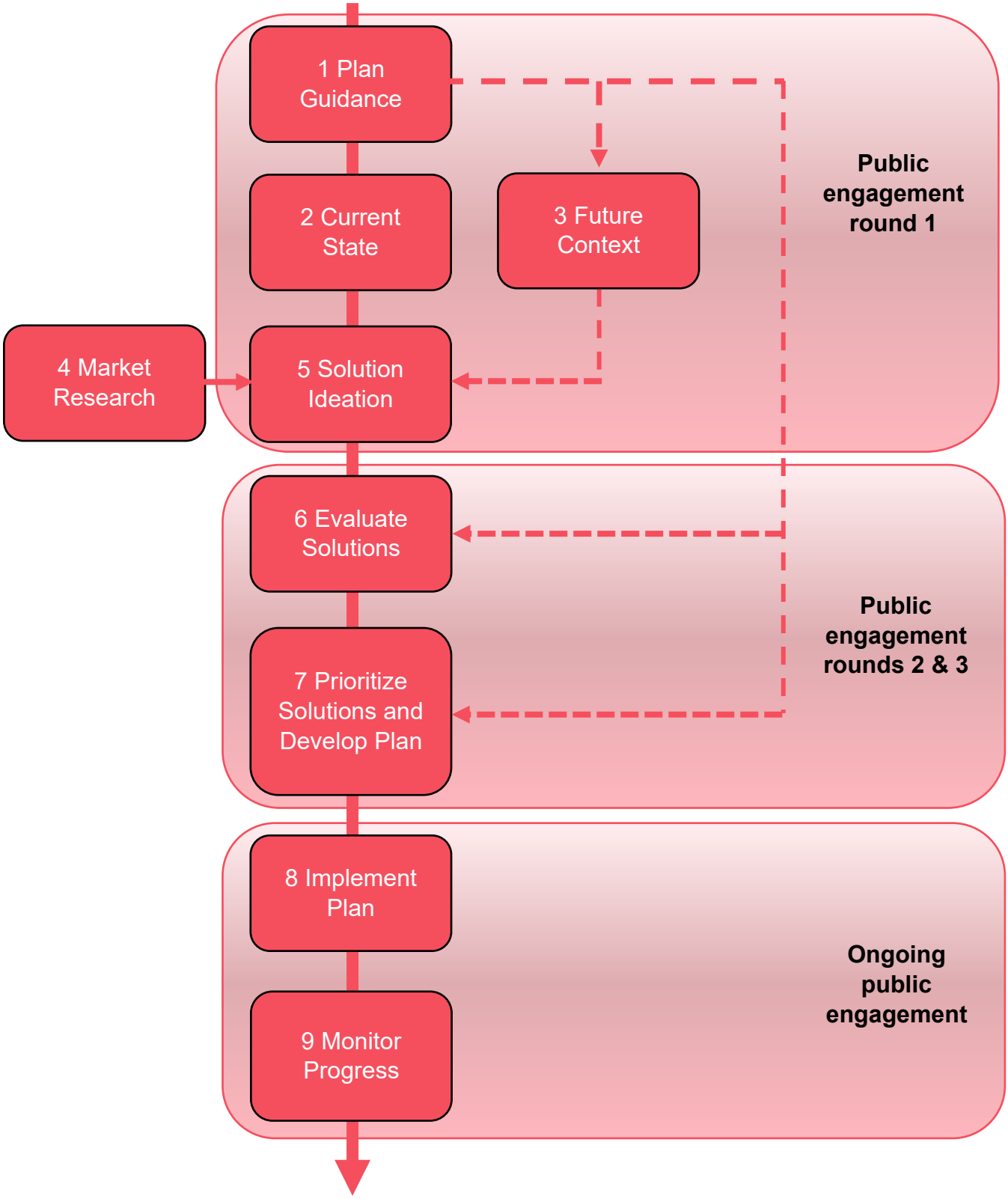


Figure 10 – Overview of Planning Methodology

Plan Guidance (1), summarized in Section 3, guided the entire project, informing areas of focus for research and analysis, and establishing how solutions are evaluated and prioritized.

The Current State and Future Context (2, 3), summarized in Sections 1.1 and 1.2, informed an understanding of TheRide's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges (SWOC) currently and in the future.

Potential solutions (5) were generated based on the SWOC analysis, market research (4), and the first round of public and stakeholder engagement.

Solutions evaluation (6) was informed by the Plan Guidance and additional public engagement. Another round of public engagement helped inform the final selection and prioritization (7) as did the continued use of the Plan Guidance. The above processes are summarized within this plan.

Following implementation of the plan (8), progress will be monitored and informed by ongoing public engagement.

Ridership and emission modelling was conducted to help establish a future context and to support the development and evaluation of solutions. Ridership projections consider both projected demographic changes (e.g., population and jobs) and the impacts of various service changes on ridership. The projected demographic changes are drawn from the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) regional forecast.[1] A sample of these outputs is found in Figures 4 and 5 in the future context section. The impacts of service changes on ridership are drawn from industry research.[2]

Greenhouse gas emissions modeling was developed based on the City of Ann Arbor's GHG inventory.[3] The modelling considers projected changes in zero-emissions vehicle usage, demographic changes, and changes to the proportional use of transit relative to private car travel.

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[1] https://semcog.org/regional-forecast
[2] Litman, Todd. "Transit price elasticities and cross-elasticities." *Victoria, Canada: Victoria Transport Policy Institute* (2019).
Dunkerley, Fay, et al. "Bus fare and journey time elasticities and diversion factors for all modes." *RAND Corporation* (2018).
Coogan, Matthew, et al. Understanding changes in demographics, preferences, and markets for public transportation. No. Project H-51. 2018.
[3] https://www.a2gov.org/departments/sustainability/Carbon-Neutrality/Pages/Greenhouse-Gas-Inventory.aspx

2.2 PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

TheRide 2045 included significant public and stakeholder engagement at three key points of the process. The first round of public and stakeholder engagement included collecting comments from conversations with stakeholders and the public. Key themes were identified, and each comment was tagged with the themes that applied. Based on this engagement some measures of success were then identified.

The second round of public and stakeholder engagement was open for comment from October 18 to November 24, 2021. During that time, the project team spoke to almost 700 people through direct in-person or on-line engagement, received 653 responses to an online survey, and had over 50 additional points of interaction (including emails, phone calls, and contacts through social media). In this round the team made special efforts to speak with elected officials from all three members of the Authority.

The third round of public and stakeholder engagement was open for comment from March 14 to April 22, 2022. During that time, the project team spoke to approximately 880 people through direct in-person engagement, involved 210 people in on-line public and stakeholder meetings, received 478 responses to an online survey, and had over 25 additional points of interaction (including emails, phone calls, and contacts through social media). In this round the team made special efforts to speak with non-transit users.

In total, over 4,475 points of community interaction were recorded through in-person and virtual engagement sessions, surveys, email, and phone. During this engagement, the community generally communicated a strong desire for transformational change. This included a vision of enhancing transit's role in overall mobility options for the community with a particular focus on improving transportation equity.

2.3 PUBLIC ADVISORY GROUP

A Public Advisory Group (PAG) was also formed that provided guidance throughout the process. The group was comprised of 12 individuals of diverse backgrounds who helped inform key decisions. The PAG was established to reflect the demographics of TheRide customers, accounting for diversity of race/ethnicity, age, income, place and type of residence, transit ridership, disability, and gender identity. At every stage of the project development, the group provided insight based on their own personal experiences. The first meeting of the group was used to gain feedback on the current strengths and challenges of the various services offered by TheRide, and the overall vision for Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti's future regarding transit. Through subsequent meetings, the PAG helped review solutions, plan scenarios, and draft recommendations. They also helped frame public engagement material and reflect on community feedback. Due to COVID-19, all meetings were held online.

3 Guiding Framework

The development of the plan was shaped by several guiding values.

Principally, the TheRide's Board of Directors sets the outcomes/goals that the organization should seek to achieve (i.e., Ends Policies). In addition, TheRide 2045 aimed for consistency with community and transportation plans in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area such as Ann Arbor's A2Zero and Comprehensive Transportation Plan, Ypsilanti's Master Plan, Climate Action Plan, and Non-Motorized Transportation Master Plan, Ypsilanti Township's Master Plan, Washtenaw County's ReImagine Washtenaw, Opportunity Index, and Housing Affordability and Economic Equity Analysis, WATS 2045 Long-Range Plan, and the RTA's Regional Transit Plan. Lastly, public and stakeholder engagement provided another layer of guidance, particularly related to the prioritization of various goals. Figure 11 sets out some key plan goals and corresponding sources of community values.

Community Values Drive Transit's Goals:

- Increase social equity, access to jobs, education, and housing
- Help the environment and reduce air pollution
- Support existing and new businesses

Figure 11 – Plan Goals and sources of Community Values

3.1 BOARD'S VISION AND GOALS

The Board of Directors defines the outcomes/goals that TheRide is supposed to be achieving in the future (i.e., Ends Policies). The "vision" for the plan is to achieve, or make headway on achieving, ***all*** of these outcomes, at least to some degree.

The Board establishes its Ends policies within its Vision for public transportation:

A robust public transportation system that

adapts to the area's evolving needs,

environment, and quality of life.

The Board of Director's Ends (outcomes/goals):

1. **AAATA exists so that an increasing proportion of residents, workers, and visitors in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Area utilize public transportation options that contribute to the Area's social, environmental, and economic vitality at a cost that demonstrates value and efficient stewardship of resources.**

1.1. Residents in the area have equitable access to public transportation services that enables full participation in society.

1.1.1. People with economic challenges have affordable public transportation options.

1.1.2. People with disabilities or mobility impairments, seniors, minors, and non-English speakers have equitable access to opportunities and destinations in the area.

1.2. Public transportation positively impacts our environment.

1.2.1. Public transportation options are increasingly chosen over use of a personal car.

1.2.2. Public transportation options minimize energy use and pollution, and conserve natural resources.

1.2.3. Public transportation options produce conditions favorable to more compact and walkable land development.

1.2.4. Relevant public policy is transit supportive.

1.3. Public transportation positively impacts the economic prosperity of the area.

1.3.1. Public transportation facilitates labor mobility.

1.3.2. Students can access education opportunities without need of a personal vehicle.

1.3.3. Visitors use public transportation in the area.

1.3.4. Public transportation connects the area to the Metro Detroit region.

1.4. Passengers are highly satisfied with public transportation services.

1.5. Residents of the area recognize the positive contributions of public transportation to the area's quality of life.

3.2 BOARD'S PLANNING FRAMEWORK

The Board of Directors has also created a planning and governance framework within its governance policies that primarily focus on funding and defining the planning process itself. The key policies are summarized below:

1. **Strategic Framework:** As a long-term planning exercise, the process and outcomes captured in this plan must show progress toward the Board's defined Ends. Part of that process includes defining multi-year plans that include the best available information on financial implications, and clear staging plans (captured in the Implementation Plan in Section 11) that will allow staff to recommend changes to the Board based on new information over time. This plan must be prudent and in line with common business practices and must also identify and evaluate risks for staff to manage.[4]

2. **Financial Planning and Stewardship:** In developing a long-term plan, it is always necessary to balance short-term financial constraints with longer-term aspirations. This means that the plan must be financially realistic, even if based on financial resources or funding sources not currently available. This long-term plan should not be constrained by the current financial environment but must be developed with clear assessment of financial requirements, potential funding sources and levels, and consideration of the risk to the plan and its alternatives if additional funding is not secured. Ultimately, the plan must demonstrate value and efficient stewardship of resources, and be based on realistic and transparent financial assumptions.[5]

3. **Public and Stakeholder Involvement:** Public and stakeholder engagement is a cornerstone of the Board's approach, and vital to the development of this long-term plan. The planning process must meaningfully engage riders, residents, stakeholders, partners, and staff. There should be good communication and transparency to the planning process and rely on and develop collaborative partnerships with community stakeholders.[6]

[4] Board's policy #2.4-2.4.8, 2.10.1.3, 2.0
[5] Board's policy #2.4, 2.4.3, 2.4.5, 2.4.8, 2.5
[6] Board's policy # 2.1.3, 2.1.4, 2.2.1, 2.9, 2.9.4, 2.9.5

3.3 OTHER INTERNAL GUIDING DOCUMENTS

In addition to complying with and supporting the Board's policy Ends, the plan also builds on previous and current planning studies addressing long-term planning for TheRide. Specifically:

- TheRide's Corporate Business Plan (FY 2022) set four medium-term priority areas for the organization:
    - Support community recovery (including restoring services and ensuring safe operations)
    - Planning for the future (including developing a long-range plan, advocacy strategy, and expanding terminals)
    - Servicing customers (including enhancing fare collection and fare structure and planning for the Bus Rapid Transit)
    - Modernizing TheRide (including implementing recommendations from a 2019 paratransit study and conducting a propulsion study)

3.4 EXTERNAL GUIDING DOCUMENTS

Various community policy documents helped to both guide the development of the Board's Ends as well as provide additional guidance for TheRide 2045. Influential policy documents include but are not limited to Ann Arbor's A2Zero and Comprehensive Transportation Plan, Ypsilanti's Master Plan, Climate Action Plan, and Non-Motorized Transportation Master Plan, Ypsilanti Township's Master Plan, Washtenaw County's ReImagine Washtenaw, Opportunity Index, and Housing Affordability and Economic Equity Analysis, WATS 2045 Long-Range Plan, and the RTA's Regional Transit Plan.

3.5 STAKEHOLDER CONSIDERATIONS

The following additional considerations reflect early-stage input from the public, stakeholders, and staff. These very much echoed themes and areas of importance highlighted by the Board's Ends.

- **Be an attractive transportation option:** The overarching priority for the Board, which was echoed unanimously by customers, stakeholders, and staff alike, is that public transportation be a viable and increasingly selected mode of travel for travelers. Thus, success of the plan will revolve around increasing modal share of TheRide services within the community, and specifically trips per capita. To get people out of cars and choosing public transit, the Plan must address customers' service design concerns:
    - More reliable off-peak service including extended service span
    - Enhanced quality of experience including customer amenities
    - Increased service frequency
    - Faster trips
    - More reliable service

- **Be a fully integrated public mobility provider:** Many stakeholders emphasized the importance of providing a variety of services to meet the diverse travel needs of the community. This desire was also expressed as growth toward becoming a mobility-as-a-service provider for a streamlined user experience and for better planning integration around diverse internal and external services.

- **Organizational sustainability:** TheRide's stakeholders felt that the organization needs to be financially sustainable over the long-term to ensure it can continually operate and support the community. This includes having the finances necessary to grow and develop.

- **Focus on integrating transit infrastructure to surrounding community development**: Stakeholders specifically voiced desires that fit within a general vision for influential community collaboration. There is a desire to improve external elements that have a significant bearing on transit success such as land use/transportation policy, improved access and maintenance of stops and supporting infrastructure, and better regional collaboration.

- **Enhance regional connections**: Customers and stakeholders specifically focused on the importance of establishing better regional connections.

- **Contribute to affordable and equitable communities**: The public and stakeholders expressed a desire to help improve affordability and equity through the provision of affordable and high-value transportation and by working to reduce inequities in transportation along income, racial, and ADA-related perspectives.

- **Efficient service provision**: Public feedback leans toward improved frequency over increased coverage of the service. With fixed resources, that means focusing on improving system efficiency. This focus on service efficiency also captures frequently cited visions for better matching of service to demand, such as on high demand corridors, efficient use of different service modes, and a network that meets the travel patterns of current and potential customers.

4 Overview of the Plan

The plan delivers significant community benefits through a series of improvements and expansions to transit services and infrastructure.

TheRide 2045 is the result of an 18-month-long process involving significant analysis and input from thousands of individuals and stakeholders. The plan will effectively advance the organization toward the goals and vision laid out by the Board and echoed by the community. Key benefits include:

- Growing ridership by providing an even more attractive and convenient transit service, designed to reduce travel times, make travel more direct, better match service to demand, and provide access throughout the week with longer hours of operation.

- Addressing socio-economic equity gaps by improving accessible and affordable transportation to work, education, medical, shopping, and social destinations for lower opportunity communities that rely on transit and through focusing enhancements on low opportunity areas.

- Improving environmental outcomes by attracting more people out of their cars and introducing low-emissions buses.

- Enhancing economic vitality by growing access to jobs and retail, incentivizing more walkable, vibrant, and healthy communities, and by reducing overall community costs for transportation.

- Advancing the goals of municipal policy documents such as Ann Arbor's A2Zero and Comprehensive Transportation Plan, Ypsilanti's Master Plan, Climate Action Plan, and Non-Motorized Transportation Master Plan, Ypsilanti Township's Master Plan, Washtenaw County's ReImagine Washtenaw, Opportunity Index, and Housing Affordability and Economic Equity Analysis, WATS 2045 Long-Range Plan, and the RTA's Regional Transit Plan.

The plan can deliver these benefits through a series of improvements and expansions to transit services and infrastructure. Figure 12 features some of the high-level outcomes of the plan. The key elements of TheRide 2045, highlighted in Section 4.1 and shown in Figure 13 are explored in greater detail in the subsequent sections of this report.

100%

Increase in the level of service experienced by the average rider

123%

Increase in the level of service experienced by those in low and very low Opportunity Index Areas[7]

39%

Faster travel time for the average trip taken by transit

97%

Of jobs will be near high-frequency transit[8]

7-11%

Reduction of transportation-related emissions

150-165%

Ridership growth expected

6.9 million

Car trips avoided

100%

Accessible services[9]

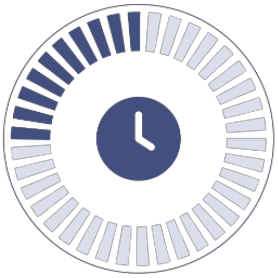
Figure 12 – Expected Outcomes

[7]Level of service measured as the average buses per hour passing through a 0.25 mile walk radius. Average rider reflects 2019 ridership data. Opportunity Index areas are defined by the Washtenaw Opportunity Index.

[8] High-frequency transit is defined as 15-minute or better service during peak times. Proximity is defined as within a 0.7-mile walk. All analysis is focused on the three member municipalities of TheRide (Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti and Ypsilanti Township).

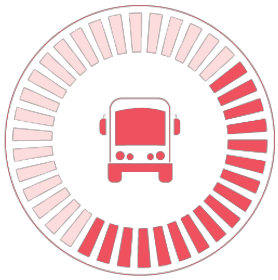
[9] Bus stop accessibility is subject to municipal sidewalks and permitting.

4.1 HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PLAN



Service Highlights

- 10 minute or better service with priority features on high-use corridors
- High-frequency network of numerous 15-minute or better services across the service area
- Better off-peak services, including a minimum of 30-minute frequency service throughout the service area, 7-days per week
- Later weekend and weeknight service hours
- Enhanced on-demand service including overnight with expanded coverage areas and shorter wait times



Transit Fleet and Infrastructure Highlights

- Two high-speed Bus Rapid Transit lines that will form the backbone of the network (Information on Bus Rapid Transit is provided in more detail on page 44)
- Four new transit hubs and improvements to TheRide's two transit centers to better connect services across our community
- A zero-emissions bus fleet

Partnerships, Collaborations, and Plans Highlights

- Partnerships and collaborations to enhance regional transit, first/last mile solutions, and general transit outcomes
- Infrastructure plans to enable service growth and enhance the customer experience
- Technology plans to enhance customer experience and operational efficiency
- An achievable financial plan that effectively harnesses important funding opportunities from state and federal governments while also highlighting how TheRide can work toward developing alternative funding sources.

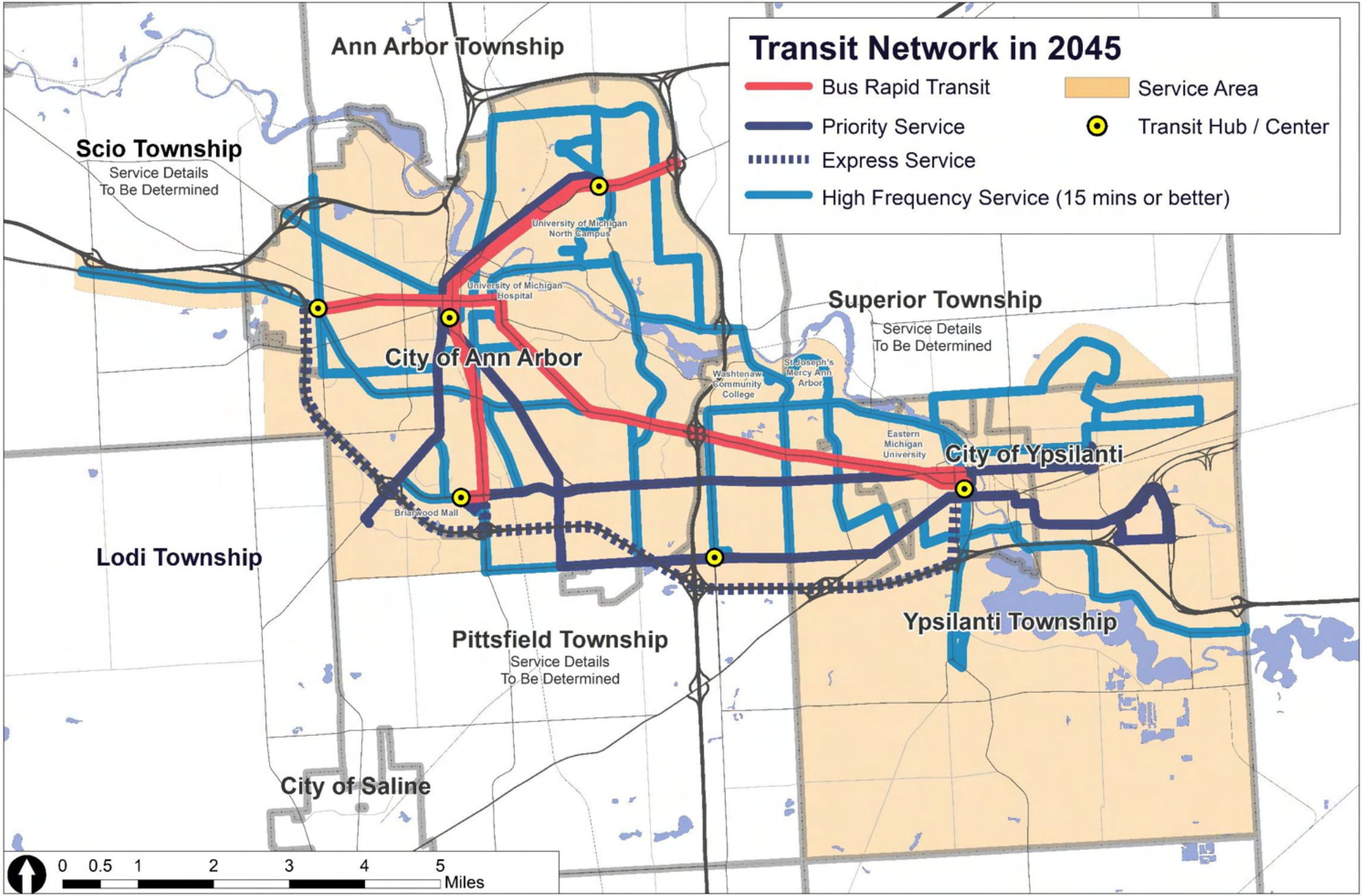


Figure 13 – Proposed Service Network

5 Service Network

The plan envisions TheRide's fixed-route service evolving from local routes in a hub-and-spoke configuration to a high-frequency grid-like network with more opportunities for quick transfers and direct trips.

The essential backbone of the new network are two Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) routes, providing fast and reliable north-south and east-west connections throughout the service area. The rest of the network is designed to allow riders to travel faster and maximize BRT's transportation benefits across the system.

TheRide 2045 proposes a 97% increase in vehicle service hours. The scale of this investment is essential to achieve the structural network changes that will result in greater efficiency and lead to a transformational improvement to the area's transportation system. The proposed network provides value and will lead to a more equitable community, a better economy, and a more sustainable environment.

5.1 SERVICE TYPES

The network reorganization is founded on new transit priority measures and the introduction of a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) spine (see Figure 15). This BRT spine provides fast and reliable north-south and east-west connections throughout the service area, forming the backbone of the system that is essential to the enhancements that are provided. The remainder of the network is designed to funnel into the BRT to maximize BRT benefits across the system. The service network includes a diversity of service types, highlighted by numerous high-frequency routes that broadly crisscross the service area. More diverse service types are introduced to better meet the needs of different types of customers, enhance efficiency, and to provide the highest quality and equitable transit service to the most people.

Specific and detailed routing has not yet been determined in this long-range plan and will be determined in short- and medium-term planning processes guided by service standards. For all local fixed-route service types (except base routes), future corridors have been proposed. To guide modelling of metrics, routes for all service types were developed.

Summary of Fixed-Route Service Types[10]

	Description	Frequency (Peak periods)	Stop spacing	Proportion of fixed route service hours
Bus Rapid Transit	Fast and the most frequent service. Significant transit priority measures, high-capacity buses and higher quality amenities.	5 minutes	0.5-1.0 miles	16%
Priority	Limited stop, very frequent service with some transit priority features. The routes serve the busiest corridors and are intended to move people quickly across the area.	10 minutes (combined)	0.5-1.0 miles	23%
Express	A point-to-point type service. Intended to effectively use high-speed roadways and move customers quickly over long distances.	15 minutes	3+ miles between stop clusters	2%
High Frequency	Routes with frequencies of 15-minutes or better during peak periods. Run along busier corridors and are broadly spread throughout service area.	15 minutes or better	Follows current stops spacing standards - 0.25 miles target	46%
Base Routes	Routes with frequencies of 20-30 minutes during peak periods. Serve lower-demand corridors and help to improve transit choice.	20-30 minutes	Follows current stops spacing standards - 0.25 miles target	13%

On-demand is another service type that has implications for the fixed-route network. On-demand will be provided in areas of low demand and to fill coverage gaps to improve access to transit.

[10] The above frequency and stop descriptions do not constitute standards but describe what is envisioned for the transit network in 2045.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

Bus Rapid Transit lines are frequent, comfortable, and fast services that will form the spine of the future network and reshape transit in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area. BRT can provide faster service through transit priority features, longer distances between stops, off-door fare boarding, and attractive and accessible stations (see Figure 14). Transit priority features are a variety of elements that help to improve transit operations relative to private automobile travel. They help to make a transportation system become more efficient and cost-effective. This is accomplished by providing optimal prioritization for a mode of transportation that can move more people with lower overall cost to the community. These features include:

Dedicated lanes: Transit-only lanes that could be separated by a barrier or demarcated as transit only lane often using paint. They allow transit vehicles to avoid competing with traffic which improves speed and allows buses to meet scheduled times more reliably.

Traffic signal priority: Traffic signal technology and the backend control system that senses transit vehicles at signalized intersections and tries to maximize green signals for them.

Queue jump lanes: Short dedicated transit lanes strategically located for transit vehicles to bypass traffic buildup. Often located at intersections.

Figure 14 –Example of a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Station - Ontario Growth Secretariat, Ministry of Municipal Affairs (2014)

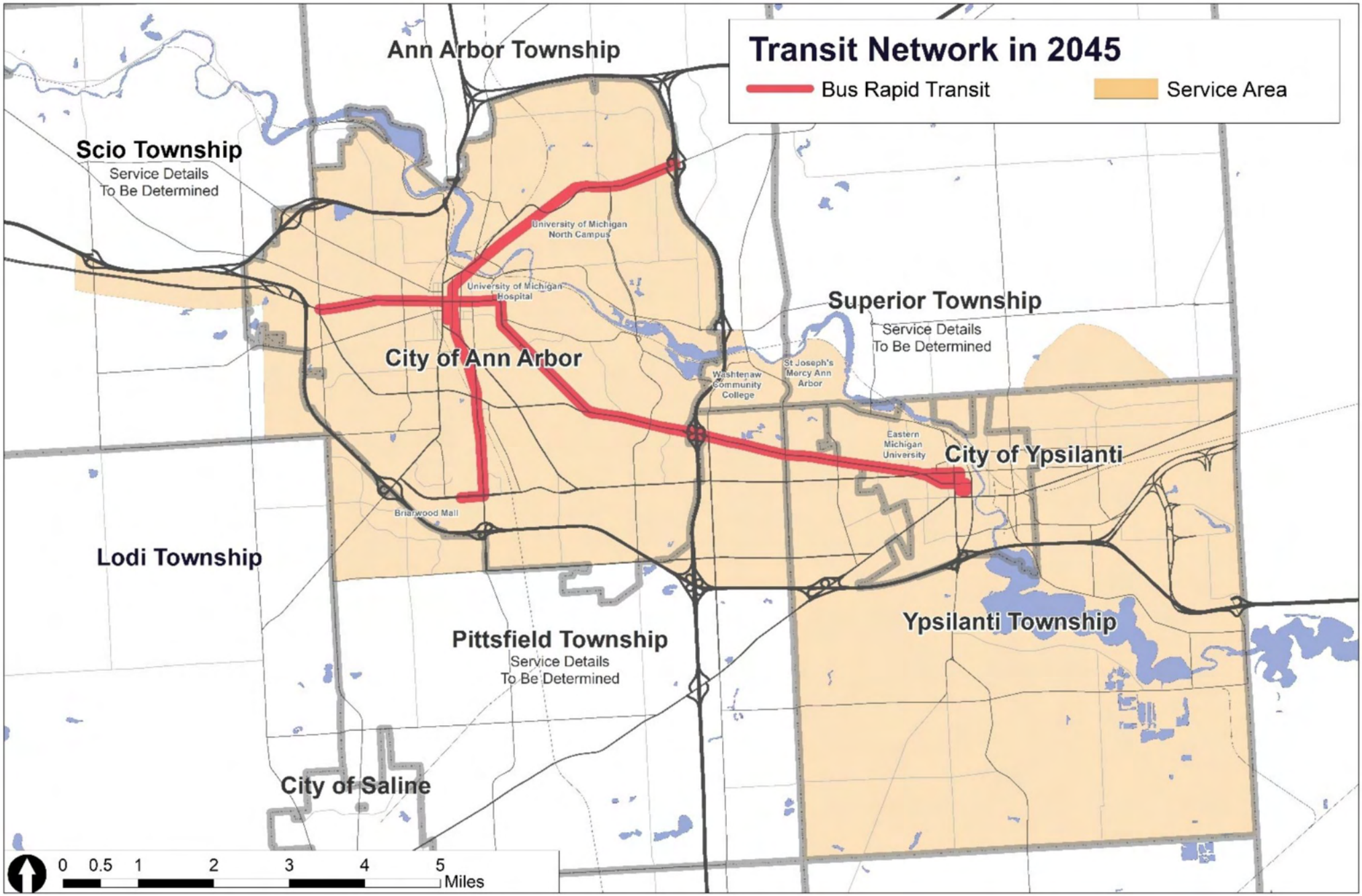


Figure 15 – BRT Network

The BRT in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area is envisioned to significantly use these measures with more than half of routing being provided by a dedicated transit lane. While the potential for dedicated lanes was considered when determining the approximate BRT routing alignment, the exact BRT alignment and usage of transit priority features will be determined in later studies. These studies will involve discussions with state and municipal officials to determine optimal right-of-way configurations along the BRT routes.

In addition to BRT corridors, transit priority features will be built strategically across the service area (see Figure 16). These features will be targeted at areas based on their potential to create customer travel time savings, enhance reliability, and be feasibly implemented. Areas that are likely to achieve these goals will have traffic congestion, be served by numerous or high-frequency routes, and have high through volumes of transit customers. Figure 16 shows TheRide's proposed areas for transit priority features. These areas will guide TheRide in discussions with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and local municipalities to determine final locations. Specific transit priority features will also be established in discussions with stakeholders.

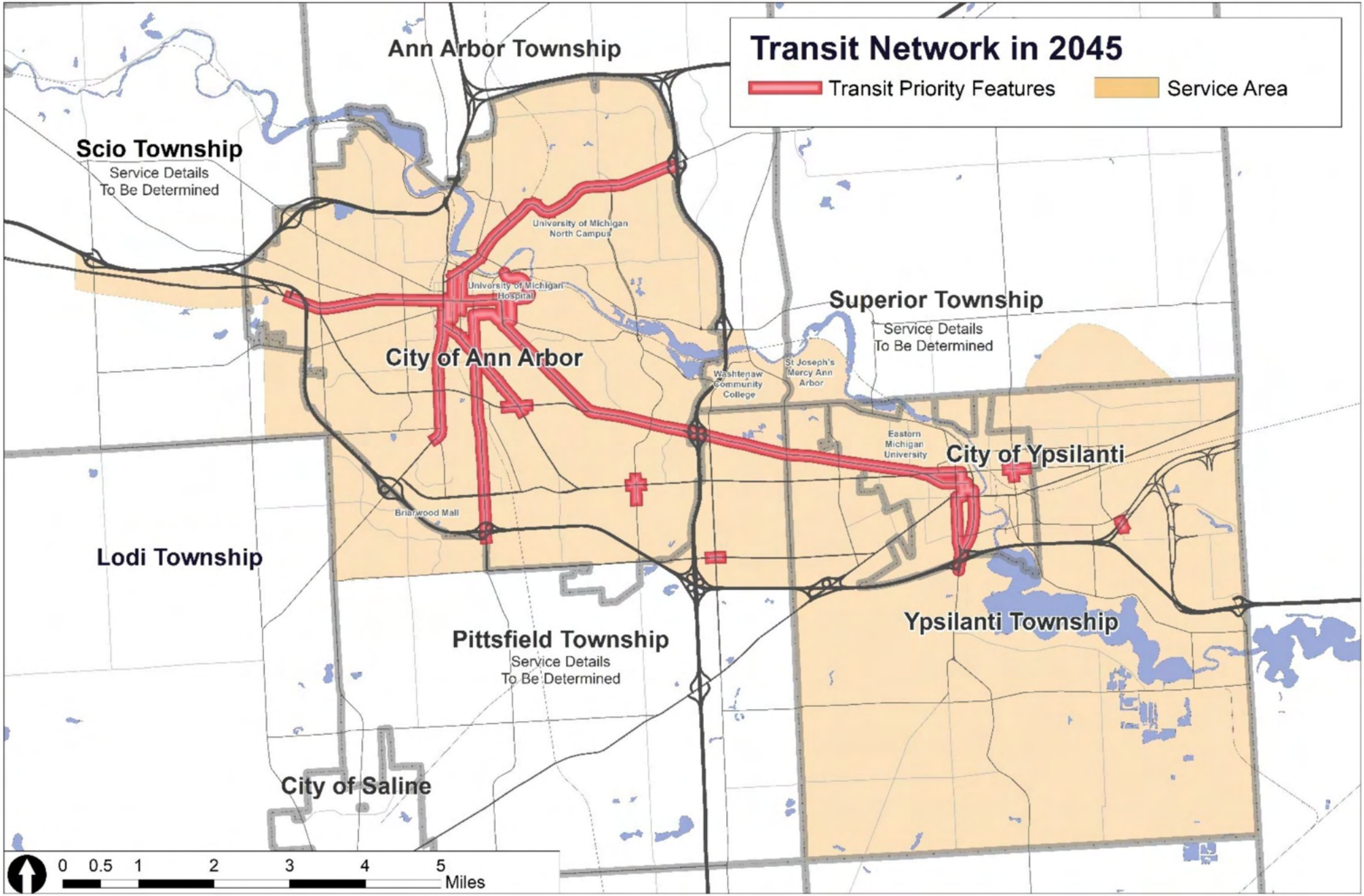


Figure 16 – Recommended Areas for Transit Priority Features

TheRide's BRT system will also include articulated buses that allow more people to be more comfortably funneled into the BRT spine. The proposed network is designed to funnel a greater proportion of riders into the BRT as compared to those corridors now. Due to the network focus on the BRT, the routes will also have a higher degree of amenities at stops and on buses. Stops could conceivably have real-time information, larger shelters with unique branding, wayfinding information, and ticketing machines, among other items.

Two BRT lines will span the service area. The Washtenaw BRT will run between downtown Ypsilanti and Maple/Jackson in Ann Arbor, roughly spanning the service area from east to west. The north-south BRT will run in Ann Arbor between Plymouth/US-23 and Eisenhower/State, spanning the service area from north to south.

The approximate proposed routing for the BRT is intended to provide a centralized, high-demand, and direct high-speed corridor. The centralized corridor relative to demand minimizes connecting route time into the BRT, increasing the proportion of a trip taken on the faster BRT service. Focusing the BRT on high demand areas helps to minimize transfers and maximize its time saving impact. Direct BRT routing helps to make the system as fast as possible for the greatest number of people.

The exact BRT alignment will be established in a subsequent study. A specific focus for future alignment analysis will be the area between downtown Ann Arbor and Nixon/Plymouth of the north-south BRT. It should be noted that the University of Michigan Hospital will likely be served by the north-south BRT, a Priority Route, or both.

Priority Routes

These routes, highlighted in Figure 17, provide some of the beneficial elements of a BRT and are a secondary level of enhanced service. The priority service is intended to provide higher frequency service to higher demand areas and facilitate faster trips for longer travel patterns not well covered by the BRT spine. The routes are somewhat enhanced by transit priority features such as transit signal priority and queue jump lanes. Stop spacing is similar to BRT, but the service would be provided alongside a high-frequency or base route on a corridor, creating both rapid and slower/high access options. Routes would be served by conventional 40-ft buses as their capacity is deemed sufficient considering frequency and projected demand.

Frequency on priority routes would range from 15 to 20 minutes during peak periods but reach 10 minutes for the combined corridor frequency when paired with a high-frequency or base route. This higher level of services matches the higher demand arterial corridors that priority routes are planned for.

Priority routes are also planned to facilitate faster long trips across the service area and fill projected higher demand long trip travel patterns that the BRT spine does not provide a convenient option for. To enable these fast and long trips, routes are long with limited deviations.

Three priority routes are planned:

End Point	End Point	Routing
Downtown Ann Arbor	West Willow	Packard, Ellsworth & Ecorse
Nixon/Plymouth	Ann Arbor-Saline/Oak Valley	Ann Arbor-Saline, Main & TBD[11]
Eisenhower/State	Cross/Harris	Eisenhower, Cross & Packard

[11] Priority alignment will be established during the detailed design process

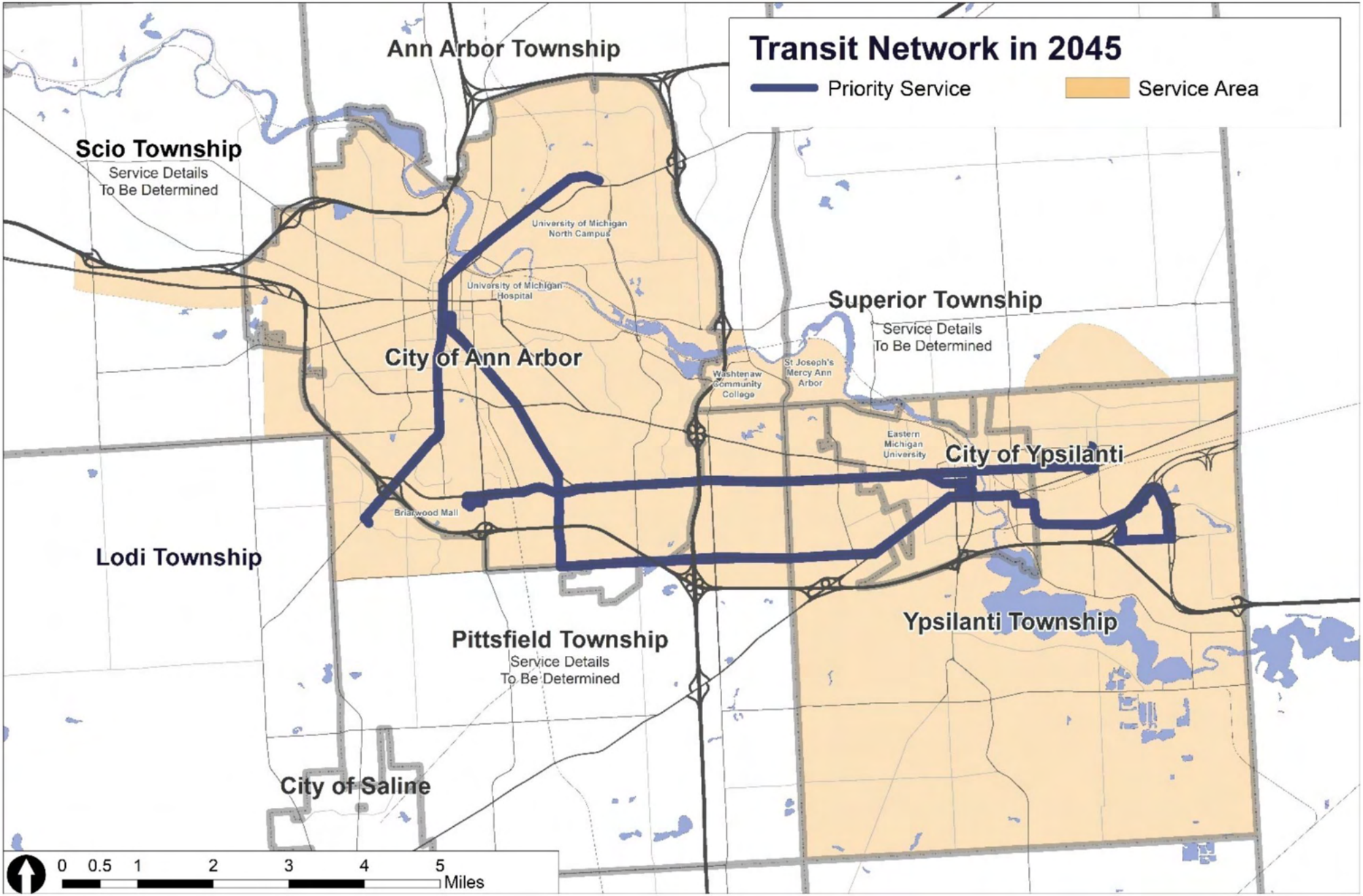


Figure 17 – Priority Route Network

Figure 18 Example of Transit Bus Using a Highway Shoulder Lane – Metrobus shoulder bypass in Arlington, VA" by SounderBruce is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

Express Routes

Express routes (shown in Figure 19) are a point-to-point type of service centered on Interstate 94 (I-94). The route is intended to effectively use this high-speed roadway to move customers quickly over long distances in the service area. It is the fastest proposed service with stops located in the City of Ypsilanti, and the Eisenhower/State and Jackson/Maple areas in Ann Arbor. These areas would be served by a stop or stops ranging from one to several. All three stop areas would connect into the BRT spine.

Using shoulder lanes on I-94 (as in Figure 18) would help improve the service's speed, efficiency, and reliability. Discussions should be held with the Michigan Department of Transportation to explore this opportunity.

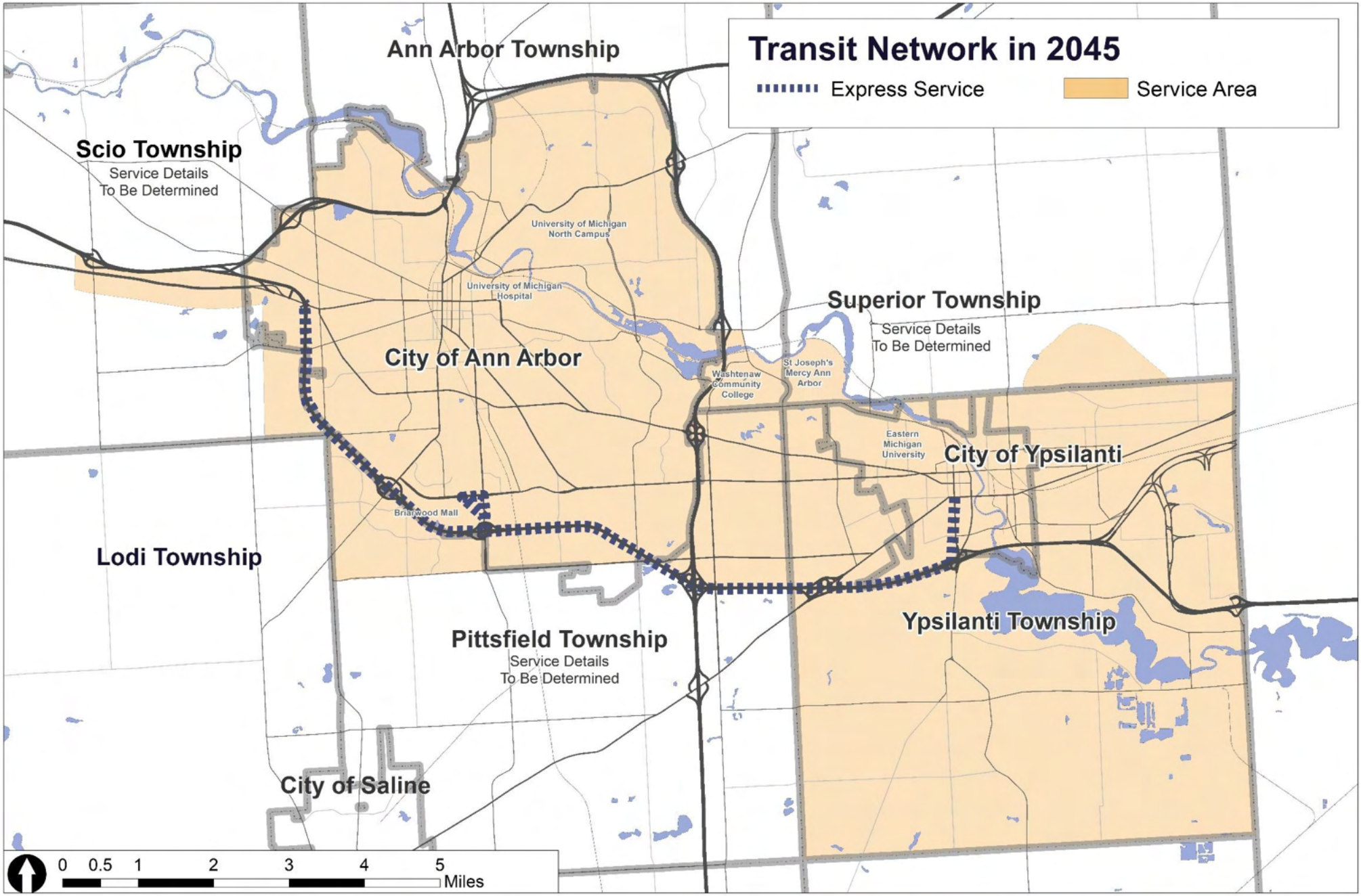


Figure 19 – Express Network

High-Frequency Routes

High-frequency routes (shown in Figure 20) cover most of the service area and are conventional routes operating at 15-minute or better frequencies during peak periods. They have stop spacing of approximately 0.25 miles. High-frequency routes are intended to cover moderate to higher demand areas.

Providing access to high-frequency service is an important step in making transit more convenient and growing ridership. Frequency of service was a commonly mentioned and prioritized area of improvement during public engagement. At a 15-minute frequency, people tend to start feeling as though they can take transit at any time and not rely on a schedule.

In addition to broad service coverage, high-frequency routes cross each other at short intervals. This allows convenient high-frequency trips to be taken in various directions from most locations in the service area. Having this broad grid network of high-frequency routes is essential to facilitating convenient transfers outside of the downtown cores. The ability to do so accomplishes the following:

- Improves travel between non-downtown locations,
- Provides more travel options in different directions,
- Uses less congested streets leading to faster travel speeds and greater efficiency,
- Allows routes to travel longer distances, creating more one-seat journeys, and
- Allows routes to cover the service area more efficiently.

Base Routes

Base routes are conventional routes with frequencies of 20-30 minutes in peak periods. These routes are intended to provide local service connections in areas of lower to moderate demand and to enhance transit options with new travel directions. The entire service area not within 0.25 miles of other fixed-route services, will have either base routes or on-demand coverage. The specific service will be determined in short-term planning processes.

Like the high-frequency routes, base routes are intended to cross other routes at even intervals and to feed into the BRT or into transit hubs.

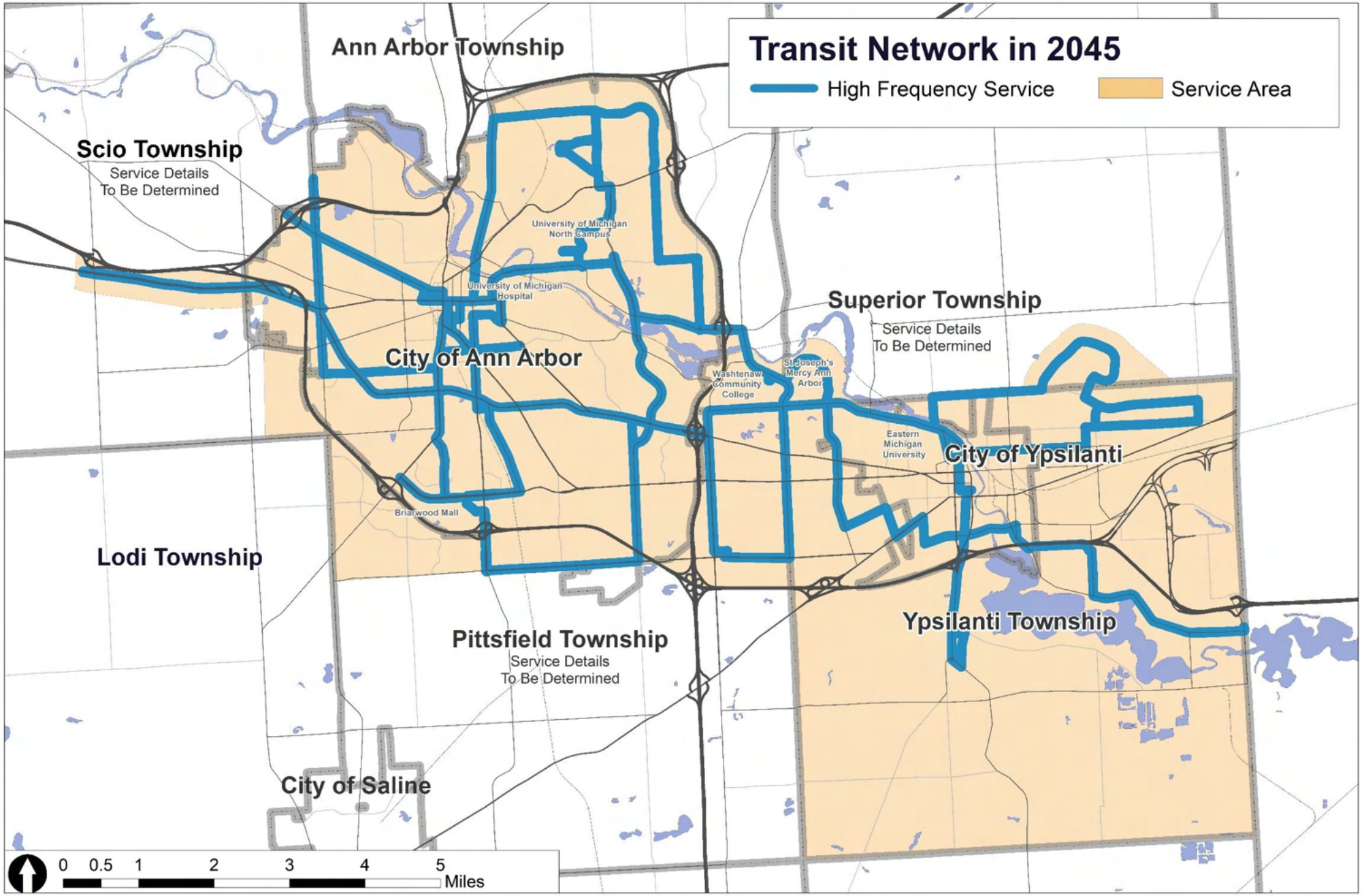


Figure 20 – Map of High Frequency Routes

5.2 TRANSIT HUBS

Four transit hubs will be developed outside of the downtown cores to facilitate better connectivity between peripheral areas.

- State & Eisenhower area
- Jackson & Maple area
- Carpenter & Ellsworth area
- Nixon & Plymouth area

These hubs will be composed of multiple stops serving multiple connecting routes. The hubs will make transfers easy and comfortable, provide a recovery location for vehicles and operators at the terminus of routes, and provide a higher level of amenities and excellent service in higher demand locations. Hub amenities could include real-time signage, heated waiting areas, ample seating and shelter, fare vending machines, restrooms, landscaping, wayfinding signage, and bicycle parking. The hubs are envisioned to be smaller and lower amenity versions of the transit centers at Blake and Ypsilanti.

The hubs are placed in strategic areas that currently have high demand, are projected to have significant growth in demand, and are located at logical connection points between numerous routes (see Figure 22). The service network is further designed to connect into these points with several frequent services. The proposed hubs are closely tied to the City of Ann Arbor's Transit Supported Development Districts.

Figure 21 – Example of a Transit Hub in Kelowna B.C.– Photo Credit: Via Architecture

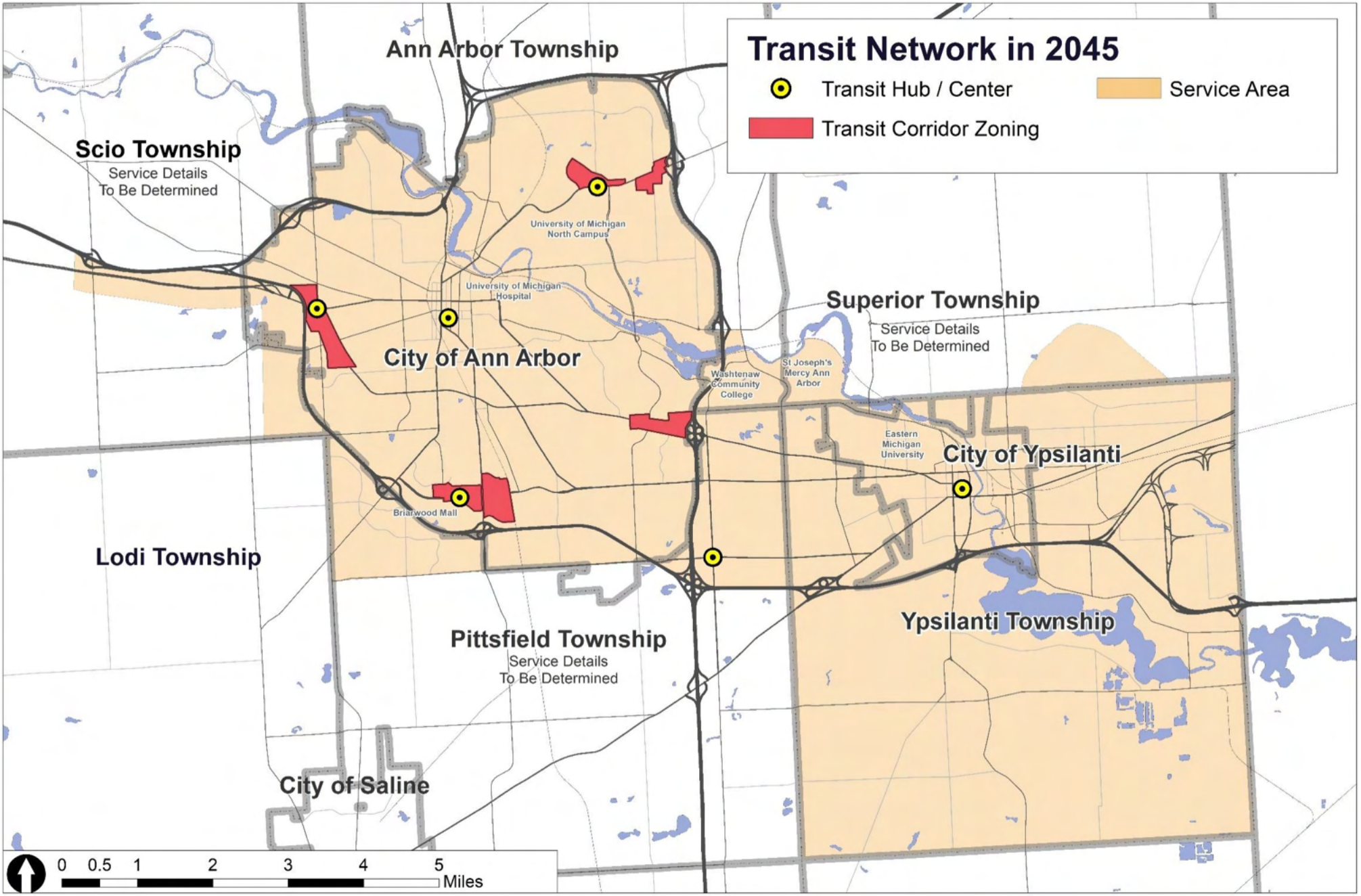


Figure 22 – Map of Transit Hubs and Their Relation to Transit Supported Development Districts

5.3 SERVICE BENEFITS AND OUTCOMES

The service network has been designed to meet several objectives that help further organizational goals. These include aiming to:

- Make the average trip taken by transit as fast as possible,
- Provide the average person with the most amount of service as possible,
- Provide more “one-seat” journeys,
- Make more direct routing,
- Focus service enhancements on low opportunity areas, and
- Provide broad access to high quality transit and better match service to demand.

These objectives help to improve the quality of transit service, grow ridership, provide more cost-efficient service, and achieve other goals of TheRide and the community. The projected beneficial outcomes of this network are shown in Figure 23.

More “One-seat” Journeys

The revised structure of the network will significantly benefit passengers by unlocking more “one-seat” journeys, direct trips where passengers don’t have to make any transfers and can sit in one seat on one bus. Direct one-seat journeys are increased by making routes longer, increasing travel options (directions from any given location, and by reorganizing the network for routes to better capture high projected travel patterns. Longer routes are enabled by increasing transfer connectivity out of downtown areas through a grid-like network of high frequency routes and the establishment of peripheral transit hubs. An indication of the increased multi-directional travel options and access to transit is the increase in stops, which goes from approximately 1,200 now to 1,350. This increase is even more substantial when you consider the introduction of numerous limited stop routes. Low opportunity areas will greatly benefit from the increase in “one-seat” journeys. For example, numerous low opportunity areas in the Ypsilanti area would have several direct routes between various areas in the City of Ann Arbor without requiring a transfer at the YTC.

100%

Increase in the level of service experienced by the average rider

123%

Increase in the level of service experienced by those in low and very low Opportunity Index Areas[12]

39%

Faster travel time for the average trip taken by transit

97%

Of jobs will be near high-frequency transit[13]

7-11%

Reduction of transportation-related emissions

150-165%

Ridership growth expected

6.9 million

Car trips avoided

100%

Accessible services[14]

Figure 23 – Expected Outcomes

[12]Level of service measured as the average buses per hour passing through a 0.25 mile walk radius. Average rider reflects 2019 ridership data. Opportunity Index areas are defined by the Washtenaw Opportunity Index.

[13] High-frequency transit is defined as 15-minute or better service during peak times. Proximity is defined as within a 0.7-mile walk. All analysis is focused on the three member municipalities of TheRide (Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti and Ypsilanti Township).

[14] Bus stop accessibility is subject to municipal sidewalks and permitting.

Below are some proposed new direct connections that align with major travel needs:

- Eastern Ypsilanti Township – Downtown and South Ann Arbor
- City of Ypsilanti and Eastern Ypsilanti and Superior Townships – Northeast Ann Arbor
- City of Ypsilanti – West Ann Arbor
- South, Southwest and West Ann Arbor – Northeast Ann Arbor
- State/Eisenhower – West Ann Arbor
- Northeast Ann Arbor – Carpenter/Ellsworth

Faster Trips

TheRide 2045's network will significantly reduce the travel times for the average trips taken by transit. The BRT, transit priority features, and a revised network structure that funnels trips into the BRT are principal reasons for this. Faster trips are also enabled by the introduction of limited stop services such as the Priority and Express services. Figure 24, on the following page, shows some travel time changes throughout the service area.

Routing has generally been designed to create the shortest possible trips for the most amount of people.

More Direct Routes with Fewer Deviations

More linear and direct routes make routes move faster and tend to reduce overall passenger travel times, even though some passengers might be forced into longer first/last mile connections. They also reduce the complexity of transit, making it easier to use. Routes have been streamlined in several ways including removing point-based deviations and reducing looping and branching. Route looping can be particularly frustrating to riders as you often can be travelling in the opposite direction that you wish to go. By 2045, TheRide also expects that land use and transportation development will be made in a more transit-supportive manner, reducing the need for problematic point-based deviations.

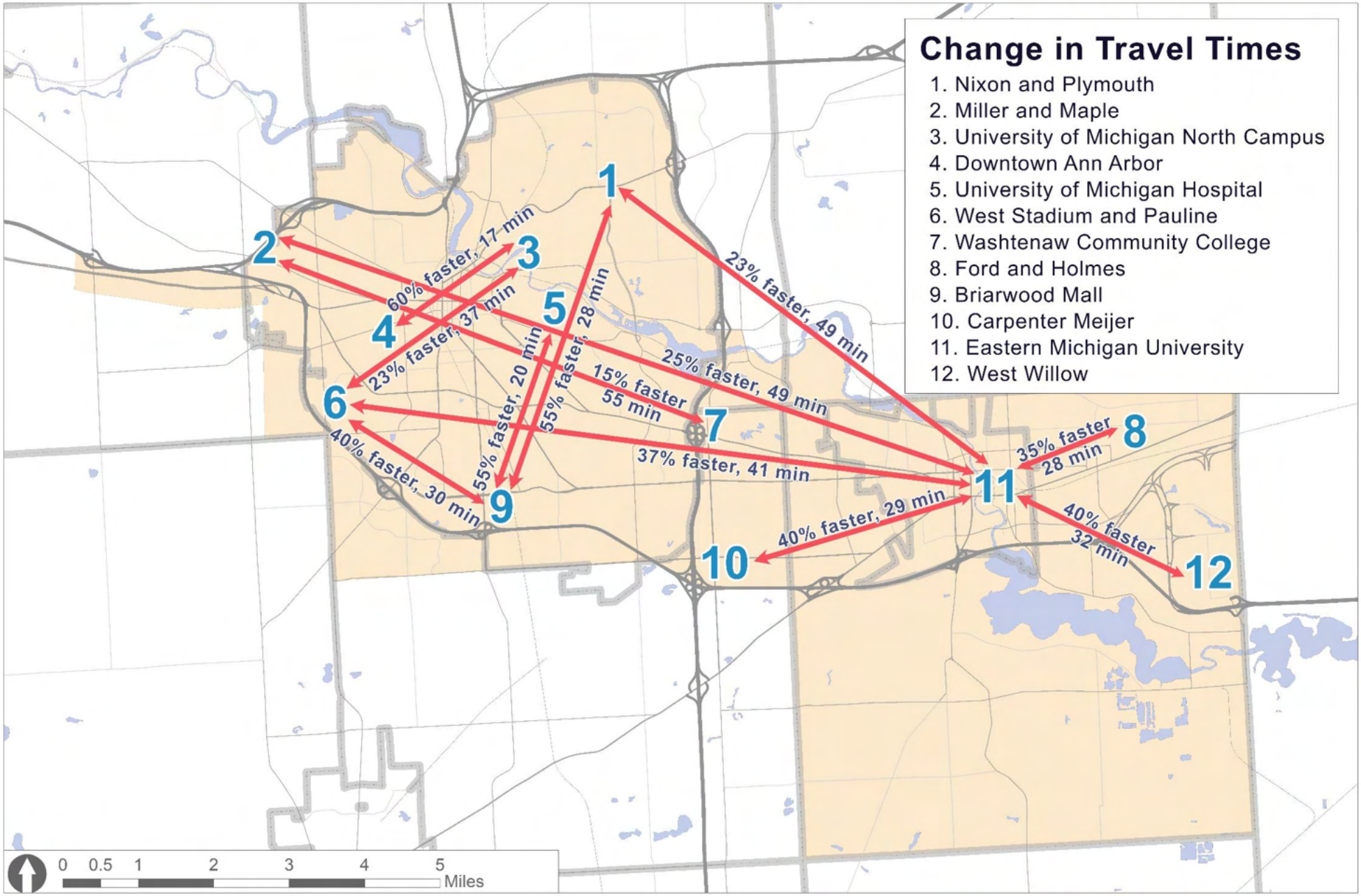


Figure 24 – Map of Travel Time Changes between Various Areas[15]

[15] Travel times were estimated using Remix which accounts for average walk times to/from origin/destination/transfer points, wait time, and in-bus time

Service Enhancement Focused on Low Opportunity Index Areas

While the network improves overall efficiency, reliability, accessibility, speed, and convenience, these improvements are even more focused on Low Opportunity Index areas, as defined by the Washtenaw County Opportunity Index. While there is 100% increase in the level of service experienced by the average rider, the average rider in Low and Very Low Opportunity Index areas experience an 123% increase. Areas such as the West Willow, MacArthur Blvd, Heritage Park, and Bryant areas of Ypsilanti would see the introduction of high-frequency routes and an expansion of routes serving their areas. The former two neighborhoods would have new direct connections to downtown Ann Arbor.

Broad Access to High Quality Transit

The extensive high-frequency network will bring nearly everyone in the member municipalities to within access to a high-frequency route and most to within access to two or more high frequency routes. The high-frequency network was purposely spread widely to increase access to high quality transit. 97% of jobs will be near high-frequency transit.[16]

Better Focus Service to Demand

The proposed network increases service in areas of high current and projected demand. High frequencies and numerous connecting routes are provided along the high-demand and high growth potential BRT corridors. 10-minute frequencies are available along busy Priority service corridors on Main, Plymouth, Packard, Eisenhower, Cross, and Ellsworth. Higher levels of service are provided for areas with large projected increases in population and employment such as Northeast Ann Arbor and the Carpenter/Ellsworth area. Matching service to demand helps makes transit service more cost-efficient, improves the overall quality of transit experienced by the average rider and is usually an effective means of growing transit ridership. Due to improved matching of service to demand, ridership per service hour is projected to increase from 21 in 2019 to 30 in 2045. Ridership is projected to grow by 150-165% and result in an increase in transit mode share from 5% in 2019 to 11% in 2045.[17]

[16] Proximity defined as within 0.7 miles of a 15-minute or better frequency route during peak periods
[17] 2019 mode share is drawn from the 2019 American Community Survey for the Ann Arbor Metro Area

6 Other Service Features

Beyond significant changes to the service network, TheRide 2045 includes substantial investment in other service features, including off-peak services, paratransit, and on-demand service delivery.

6.1 OFF-PEAK SERVICES

To support increased usefulness of off-peak services for all area residents, and to support peak ridership growth, **TheRide 2045 includes recommendations for more consistent spans of later services on weekdays and Saturdays, as well as later service on Sundays. Minimum service levels of 30 minutes *at all times* will also make the service more convenient and attractive.**

Off-peak schedules that include more frequent service and broader spans of service help people who rely on transit and increase the attractiveness of transit as a choice. Increased off-peak services meet a broader range of travel needs, enhancing the flexibility of transit with more travel options.

Off-peak service increases not only affect trips that occur within the off-peak hours but can also support ridership increases in peak periods. Potential passengers with one trip beginning or ending in peak periods are attracted to transit as the off-peak services grow. This off-peak expansion will be particularly important to match the shift toward a greater proportion of off-peak travel which was accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic and is expected to continue. Essential and lower wage workers, women, and seniors will greatly benefit from better off-peak service, as those groups rely more on service at time periods. Off-peak travel often encompasses medical appointments, retail/grocery trips, and shift work. Figure 25 shows the planned improvements to service span (the start and end of service on any given day) and minimum off-peak frequency for fixed-route services. On-demand services will be enhanced and expanded in areas and time periods not served by fixed-route to further bolster off-peak service. Currently, the majority of TheRide routes operate at infrequent services levels (60-minute intervals) during weekday evening hours, and almost all routes operate at similar levels on weekends.

	Service Span	Minimum Frequency
Weekday	6 AM-12 AM	30
Saturday	7 AM-12 AM	30
Sunday	8 AM-9 PM	30

Figure 25 – Off-peak Service Enhancements

6.2 PARATRANSIT SERVICE (A-RIDE)

Paratransit services continue to be a top priority for TheRide, designed to meet the needs of an aging community that will likely have more disabilities that make using fixed-route services challenging. Population projections indicate that continued growth in the senior population will continue through about 2030, then slow to about one percent annually. During this same period, however, the average age of a senior will continue to increase, with significant growth in the over-85 age cohort, who typically have lower travel rates but increased accessibility needs.

TheRide 2045 recommends the expansion of on-demand services (as described below) as well as continued focus on the accessibility of the fixed-route system to allow A-Ride to focus on the higher accessibility needs of eligible customers. Not only will this help ensure the availability of service, it will also increase the flexibility of travel for other passengers, with increased periods of service and potential for more spontaneous travel. The paratransit service area will continue to be provided in relation to the service area for non-ADA service. This will allow TheRide to control costs while focusing on the greater need.

Over the life of TheRide 2045 plan, there is the potential to merge key elements of the paratransit service and a broader range of on-demand services, particularly in the trip booking and service scheduling areas, with more integrated technology and customer service. The focus of the A-Ride paratransit service, however, will always be to prioritize the needs of people with disabilities that limit their choices of other services.

TheRide 2045 also recommends the implementation of expanding service monitoring and developing service standards to allow effective monitoring of service performance and needs as recommended by the 2018 Paratransit study.

The 2018 paratransit report (which examined potential ridership to 2030 and came to similar conclusions) developed recommendations to meet growth projections to ensure effective and efficient service for the community of people with disabilities. These were updated as part of TheRide 2045 plan, to recommend service increases in each stage of the plan. At the same time, as accessibility needs grow and A-Ride services increase to meet those needs, it will be critical to ensure that service remains available to those that need it most. This means expanding the Family of Services approach to provide a wide range of services to meet a variety of needs.

A Family of Services approach is one that tailors specific service delivery models and vehicles to specific user needs including integration of paratransit service and accessible fixed-route service for riders with accessibility needs. The result of a Family of Services approach could be that riders with disabilities who are comfortable and able to ride accessible fixed-route service may take trips that include multiple services e.g., they book an A-Ride trip to a transit hub and then transfer onto a fixed route for the remainder of their trip. The specific configuration of a Family of Services approach would recognize and accommodate for individual riders' needs.

Currently, services such as GoldRide, FlexRide, Late Night & Holiday service, and others provide a range of services to meet the needs of passengers with different functional needs and different travel patterns. An expansion of the Family of Services approach would involve expanding the service options available to those with accessible needs, developing a better understanding of those needs for each respective customer, and better integrating services.

Three focus areas for expanding service options are in making fixed-route transit more accessible, providing same day accessible on-demand service, and expanding the fleet mix to better meet individual needs. By better understanding accessibility needs, TheRide can work with riders to identify how a mix of paratransit, fixed-route, and other services can meet their specific mobility needs. Enhanced accessibility across all services and integration of those services along with needs identification can lead to a better overall experience for many riders, including a greater sense of independence and greater travel flexibility. Faster trips are also possible, particularly with the introduction of BRT and other high-speed services. This integrated service approach also has the potential to improve the efficiency of the paratransit services and lead to more accessible booking and enhanced service quality. As fixed-route services grow and expand the geographical coverage, A-Ride services will also be expanded to ensure coverage to new areas and the comparability of paratransit service.

6.3 ON-DEMAND SERVICE DELIVERY

Current on-demand services such as FlexRide or Late Night & Holiday service are designed to fill gaps in service areas and service span for those with travel patterns that cannot be cost-effectively met with fixed-route services. These services provide a basic level of service that often includes long wait times that can discourage their use and limit customers' mobility.

Expansion of these services should be done in a systematic and rational way, within an overall framework of consistent fare structures, clear service delivery guidelines and monitoring, and a focus on organizational goals. This means developing service standards and guidelines that address the overall role of on-demand services, including:

- Supporting A-Ride's ability to meet paratransit requirements,
- Introducing service in new areas ahead of planned fixed-route service,
- Fulfilling service requirements in low demand areas and time periods, and
- Providing a range of flexible services to meet a variety of passenger needs.

Recent developments in technology have allowed much more effective on-demand scheduling, while smartphone-based booking has increased the convenience and accessibility of these services. This means that the various services can be integrated into a single on-demand framework with flexible service in different periods and areas that meet unique needs but maintain a level of consistency that strengthens TheRide's overall offering.

TheRide 2045 recommends a tripling of on-demand service including an expansion to cover all of the member municipalities and to provide shorter wait times.

TheRide 2045 also recommends initiatives to support the expansion of on-demand services including:

- Updating service standards and guidelines to better guide on-demand service expansion recognizing technological developments, the increased attractiveness of these services in particular demographics, and the role of on-demand in supporting A-Ride;
- Conducting an on-demand service study to assess alternative service delivery models in various service areas, within the proposed service framework;
- Improving efficiency through enhanced technology and performance monitoring; and
- Exploring new markets including non-emergency medical transportation.

6.4 FARES

It is recommended that the conclusions of the comprehensive 2018 Fare Study and the 2021 Fare Model Refresh Report should continue to be evaluated for implementation. Key recommendations included:

- Establish a fare policy;
- Establish a process for fare changes;
- Implement fare capping;
- Expand third-party business pass program and develop pricing methodology; and
- Establish consistent discounts on services using current discount rates.

6.5 NEW MOBILITY

The definition of New Mobility widely varies. For the use of this report, the term is used to refer to emerging transit technologies that change the way we get around. These technologies include autonomous vehicles, bike/car/scooter share, mobility on demand, connected technologies, and service integration technology. TheRide is already harnessing on-demand technology and the utilization of these technologies will continue to be expanded as set out in section 6.3. Transit signal priority is a connected technology that section 5.1 highlights for implementation. Various service integration technologies are identified in section 7.3.

Many of the other listed technologies are exciting, but their application and priority to TheRide in their current iteration is uncertain. Iterations of some of these technologies and others will undoubtably change the future transit landscape. TheRide 2045 includes on-going investment in technology adoption and research of these emerging trends to meet the changing transportation landscape most effectively. New Mobility technologies will be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis to determine their potential influence on the transportation system and their feasible implementation.

7 Infrastructure

Infrastructure plays a critical role in supporting the expansion and improved efficiency of transit operations. Customer-facing infrastructure, such as transit centers and bus shelters similarly have huge impact on the customer experience and accessibility. This section takes a broad interpretation of infrastructure, including transit facilities, stops, terminals, fleet, technology, and some of the organizational changes required to support these plans, including an expanded workforce.

Figure 26 – Photo of the Blake Transit Center

7.1 FACILITIES

TheRide's numerous facilities serve a lot of different purposes. Some are strictly for transit operations, but most are for both transit operations and for riders. Therefore, an important aspect of facilities is that they need to be efficient for transit operations while also being customer-friendly and accessible for riders.

Transit Centers

Presently, all of TheRide's facilities are over-capacity and/or in need of significant upgrades. This includes the BTC and the YTC, which both need upgrades and expansions.

Upgrades to the BTC and YTC have been identified as high priority, near-term projects, with the YTC being the highest priority. While these projects are being developed in the near future, they should be designed with the long-range plan in mind. More specifically, considering a near doubling of service hours by 2045, the transit centers must be designed to efficiently accommodate the increased service.

Figure 27 – Example of a Transit Hub

Transit Hubs

Another key component of TheRide 2045 is the **construction of four new transit hubs** at:

- State & Eisenhower area
- Jackson & Maple area
- Carpenter & Ellsworth area
- Nixon & Plymouth area

The new transit hubs (see Figure 27 for an example) will be important transfer points for riders and will provide additional customer amenities. As TheRide facilities, they will be intentionally designed to enable efficient and safe transit operations as well. The locations of the new transit hubs are strategically selected where multiple routes meet and intersect. This will provide greater connectivity and will also be a more comfortable transfer and waiting location for passengers. Additionally, transit hubs will be designed to have good pedestrian access and have space allocated for active transportation modes and first and last mile solutions. This means that people will be able to ride their bike to a hub and park it there, or pick-up or drop-off an e-scooter in a designated space near the hub. In terms of the customer experience, the hub will provide comfortable waiting spaces that are sheltered from the elements as well as real-time information on screens, good wayfinding, vending machines, and access to technologies like Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs). Having staff on-hand to help riders could be another customer service aspect of these transit hubs.

Bus Stops

An ongoing challenge related to facilities is that some facilities are not owned by TheRide and, therefore, TheRide has limited control over them. The biggest problem is related to bus stops and the surrounding areas. Feedback from riders highlighted that some bus stops don't have a shelter, are sometimes not cleared in the winter, or are disconnected from the sidewalk network and are difficult to get to safely.

All these concerns have a huge impact on customer experience, customer safety, and system accessibility. While TheRide does not have direct control over these spaces, TheRide can engage with the municipalities and work together to make these stops more accessible and rider-friendly.

As part of this long-range plan, it is recommended that TheRide develop bus stop guidelines that bring together current informal policies and practices. These guidelines should outline the elements of adequate stops, such as sidewalk connectivity, lighting, clearing in winter, signage, shelters, and requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The public guidelines can be used in discussions with municipalities and to engage residents on this issue. Example guidelines are shown in Figure 28.

Figure 28 – Examples of Bus Stop Guidelines

New Garage

To support the increased service and alleviate the current over-capacity garage, a new bus garage will be required. Similar to the BTC and YTC which are presently in need of upgrades, the design of a new garage is a near-term project but should consider the implications of the increased service proposed within the long-range plan.

The current garage was already identified as operating over-capacity in an Operational Facilities Needs Study completed in 2017. Particular limitations the study highlighted were an at capacity vehicle maintenance area, insufficient parking for both the fleet and employees, insufficient work and conference space for administration and operators, and lack of maintenance equipment storage space. These challenges not only limit what TheRide can achieve presently, but also prohibits opportunities for growth and expansion that is included in this plan.

Therefore, a new garage is critical for enabling the recommendations of this plan, especially as it relates to service expansion. The new garage is anticipated to increase capacity for the fleet by 100 buses. It will also be critical in supporting the transition to zero-emissions vehicles with respect to different charging/refueling and maintenance requirements. The location of the new garage has not yet been decided but some options include an expansion of the current facility or the development of a satellite garage. There are potential benefits of both alternatives, such as efficiencies from having all resources under one roof or being able to cover a larger geographical area more efficiently.

Figure 29 – Wheelchair Accessibility is Critical for All the Fleet and Facilities

Designing for Customer Experience and Accessibility

With an anticipated ridership increase of 150-165%, it is critical that the customer experience is a central design feature for the transit center upgrades and the new transit hubs. Centering the customer experience includes enhancing accessibility at every level and establishing excellent wayfinding. Accessibility should be considered in the physical infrastructure design on-board vehicles and within transit centers, as well as in information systems, technology, and wayfinding. New riders and riders with disabilities in particular need clear and accessible ways to learn about the transit system, plan their trips, book, and pay for their trip, and then take their trip, which may also include transferring.

Another element of improving TheRide's accessibility is better integration of all services, including paratransit A-Ride, fixed-route, and other demand-responsive services (GoldRide, FlexRide, MyRide, etc.). Paratransit and fixed-route services in particular will be moving toward a Family of Services approach wherein riders with disabilities and mobility needs may be using a combination of accessible services to meet their travel needs. The new transit hubs and the BTC and YTC will play a critical role as transfer points to enable better integration of services. To accomplish this integration, riders need to feel comfortable and confident transferring between different services. The transfer points, wayfinding, and information systems should all be designed with that goal in mind.

In addition to enabling more efficient transit operations, transit facilities can also have important impacts on the community they're situated in. This is especially true when transit hubs are designed to incorporate mixed-use real estate, such as housing and commercial spaces. Developing new transit hubs or upgrading existing transit centers to include housing and commercial spaces can attract investment into the space and may also result in additional sources of revenue for TheRide.

Mixed-use development at terminals can change neighborhoods and can result in increased transit mode share by increasing both population density and the number of destinations at and near the terminal. People are more likely to take transit if it is convenient and in near proximity to their key destinations, including home, work, shopping, and other services. In this way, mixed-use real estate at terminals can better match demand to service and improve the first-last mile for people who live, work, and shop in the area. By contributing to a more vibrant community space and attracting retail and other destinations, this can greatly improve riders' waiting experience. A more livable, walkable, and transit-friendly neighborhood can also have significant environmental benefits, including avoided car trips and better air quality.

7.2 FLEET

TheRide's bus fleet is expected to grow by 57% over the course of this plan. This growth is driven by the expansion of services and especially the increase in rush-hour frequencies.

Garage Capacity: As the bus garage at 2700 South Industrial Highway is at capacity, additional garage space will be needed *before* the fleet can be expanded.

Fleet Diversification: TheRide, like many transit agencies, standardizes its bus fleet to a single type to achieve interoperability, economies of scale and efficiency. Today's use of 40-foot low floor urban transit buses is appropriate and will likely continue to be the main direction of the fleet going forward. Smaller "cutaways" (small truck chassis conversions with high-floors and wheelchair lift) for paratransit (A-Ride) service also seem appropriate going forward. However, there may be some opportunities to introduce other types of buses and vehicles to achieve efficiencies and service. In every case, care will need to be taken to ensure that new sizes of buses deliver real benefits without undue costs.

- **Articulated Buses:** If very frequent bus service is getting crowded with 40-foot buses, "artics" may be a cost-effective way to reduce crowding without having to hire more drivers. Double-length buses are often used in BRT applications due to faster boarding/alighting via a third door (i.e., dwell time). However, artics require expensive maintenance equipment and have higher capital and operating costs. Crowding and dwell time often determine whether artics are worth the expense. Presently, TheRide does not have garage space or maintenance equipment to introduce artics.

- **30-Foot Buses:** The smallest low-floor buses that are wheelchair accessible are 30 feet long. Such buses are often used in private shuttle applications. They are sometimes used to address public perceptions about low ridership and empty buses. There may be certain new routes or low-density areas where such buses may be cost effective. However, their costs for rush-hour service can increase quickly, and lower purchase prices are offset by shorter lifespans. The buses may not be as comfortable for passengers on poor roads. Assumptions about lower operating costs

are usually disappointed as the drivers are paid the same and fuel savings are often not as large as assumed.

- **Highway Coaches:** One-door coaches are well suited to longer distance routes with few stops, such as D2A2 and AirRide. Maintenance and driver-training needs are different from low-floor buses. While the current coaches on D2A2 and AirRide are not wheelchair accessible, coaches can be, and future coaches will be accessible.

- **Low-Floor Paratransit Buses:** Cutaways with low floors for the passenger compartment. Such vehicles are easier to use but may not be suitable for rural areas. They may also be more expensive.

- **Vans, Minivans, Sedans:** Smaller personal vehicles are well suited to applications like vanpool, carshare, and ride-hailing. However, the need for wheelchair accessible equipment limits the use of such vehicles.

Diversifying a fleet creates additional back-office costs for maintenance and driver training that can undermine on-street performance gains. Presently, TheRide contracts out certain services, such as A-Ride, FlexRide and D2A2, that require different types of buses. This may continue to be a cost-effective solution. Figure 31 shows the potential spectrum of vehicles that might be used graphically.

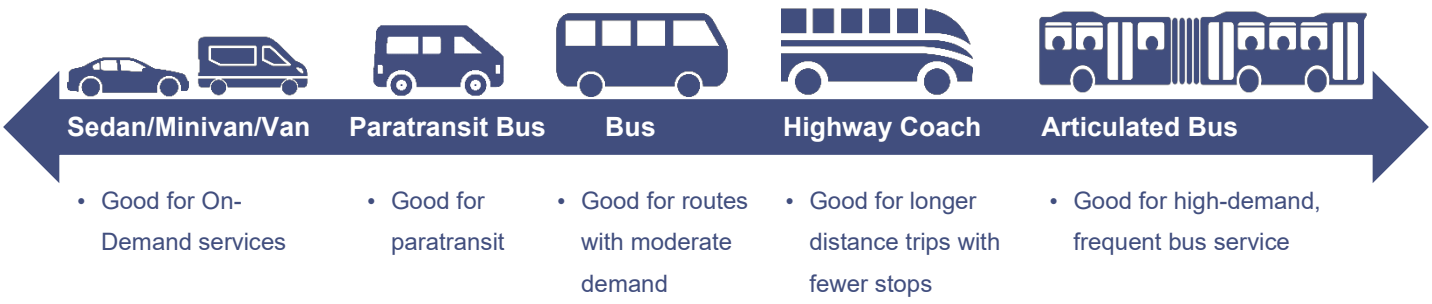


Figure 30 – The Spectrum of Potential Vehicles TheRide Might Use for Different Services

Figure 31 – A Zero-Emissions Bus Charging by Pantograph (photo by Steve Morgan)

Zero-Emissions Buses (ZEB): By 2038, 100%[18] of TheRide's vehicles are expected to be zero-emissions vehicles, likely Battery Electric Buses or Hydrogen Fuel Cell. Achieving this target will have significant environmental benefits, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving local air quality.

A concurrent study at TheRide is evaluating different propulsion alternatives to recommend a specific type of zero-emissions vehicle. Because buses have lifespans of 12-14 years or more, any new propulsions system purchased today will need to be able to meet the needs of services in the future, especially the daily mileage buses will need to achieve.

[18] Target is contingent on results from the propulsion study currently being conducted and on available funding

Figure 32 – An Interactive Trip Planner Kiosk (photo by Northwest)

7.3 TECHNOLOGY

Improvements and innovation in technology are changing what transit looks like today and creating new opportunities for what it might look like in the future. While some current trends are anticipated to continue throughout the lifetime of this plan, TheRide must also stay nimble and flexible to adjust to future technological improvements. Looking at a long-term horizon, it is difficult to predict the specific technologies that should be implemented. Therefore, dedicated funding has been allocated for three categories of technologies that will be important up to 2045:

- Operations and operational efficiency
- Customer experience
- First and last mile solutions and integrations

This plan recommends expanding investment in technology and leveraging the mass amounts of data to enhance performance monitoring. The anticipated technology, along with the transformational nature of this long-range plan overall, will require increased workforce capacity to successfully plan, integrate, and implement these projects. New technologies will only successfully realize benefits for riders and for TheRide if the right resources are allocated to their implementation.

Some areas that are anticipated to have a technological solution include:

- **Fare collection:** Riders have come to expect a modern and efficient fare collection system. This includes technological solutions like a smart card system and mobile ticketing. As TheRide looks to enable expansion of regional transit services and better integrate mobility services, fare payment integration will become increasingly important. This could include fare integration with the WAVE/People's Express or first and last mile solutions. Integration with the RTA will build off the 2019 regional fare integration study.

- **Trip planning:** Especially in the context of the long-range plan, which is introducing new services and changing other services, it is critical that all customers have access to modern trip planning tools. These tools should aim for seamless trip planning capabilities across services and other transportation modes. They must be intuitive for new riders as well as accessible for riders with disabilities. To enable adaptable in-journey planning, trip planning tools should include an app-based element.

- **First and last mile solutions:** Riders and potential riders whose home or destination is a little too far from transit are often unlikely to take transit. First and last mile solutions can encourage these riders and potential riders by making transit more accessible to them. While the specific solution may differ depending on the context of the neighborhood, potential solutions include technologies like e-scooters and trip booking integrations with Transportation Network Companies (TNCs).

- **Customer experience and accessibility:** Another trend in transit technology is technologies aimed at improving customer comfort, experience, and accessibility. Examples include public wi-fi, infotainment, charging ports at terminals and on buses, interactive wayfinding, and accessibility beacons for riders with disabilities.

7.4 WORKFORCE

To effectively achieve this plan, targeted enhancements to workforce capacity are needed. Most workforce enhancements are tied to service hour increases. This includes operators, dispatchers, supervisors, and mechanics. However, this plan recommends infrastructure enhancements, strategies, and actions that go beyond what is tied to current service hour levels. This will require additional capacity in all parts of the organization including Operations, Facility Services, Fleet Services, Community Relations, Human Resources, Finance and Procurement, Information Technology, Planning and Innovation, and Administration.

8 Regional Transit Network

Regional and inter-county transit is the responsibility of the Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan (RTA). However, in the development of this plan, TheRide often heard from residents and businesses about the need for regional and inter-county services. Based on those discussions, a cost-effective concept for regional transit emerged, and is included here for the consideration of the RTA.

The Ann Arbor area is a growing job center that attracts talent from across the region. It also has limited parking and congestion challenges. The Ypsilanti area also has needs for regional connections. Figure 33 displays regional transit elements recommended by TheRide 2045. The following list includes these elements, without any relative priority. TheRide will seek to implement these elements as funding and partnership opportunities are available.

The regional vision includes five elements:

1. **Provide a connection between the Ypsilanti area to Western Wayne County:** This connection was a commonly expressed desire during public engagement, particularly amongst current transit users in the Ypsilanti area. TheRide will work toward connecting the Ypsilanti area with both the SMART system and to Canton Township.

2. **Add an Ypsilanti connection to both the Airport and Detroit:** This service could either be designed to integrate with the current D2A2 and AirRide services or be provided as a separate service.

3. **Develop an Express/Park and Ride system:** An Express/Park and Ride network is sought to effectively capture regional commuters into and out of the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area and align with the City of Ann Arbor's Comprehensive Transportation Plan. Park and Ride lots would be developed at locations adjacent to regional travel corridors and with higher local demand. Express bus service would be provided between the lots and major trip generators within the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Area.

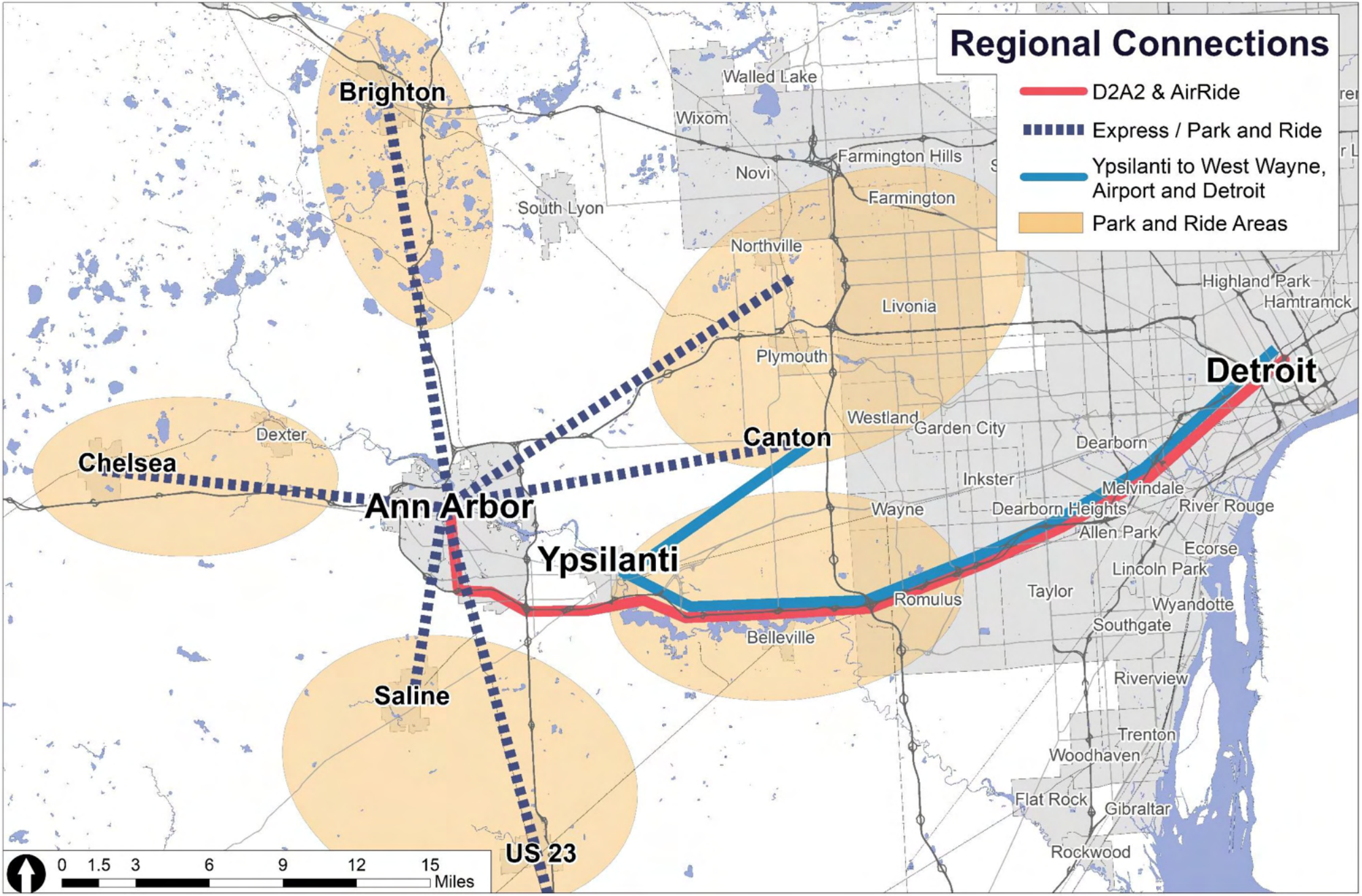


Figure 33 – TheRide Recommended Regional Connections in 2045

4. **Collaborate with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the RTA and other transit agencies in the state to allow bus operations on shoulder lanes and High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes:** Shoulder-lane operations on limited access highways would be an important element in enhancing the competitiveness of and the business case for a regional transit service. Transit use could be used in conjunction with a HOV lane. The I-94 corridor between State St. and Huron St. is a priority implementation area that would benefit the existing D2A2 and AirRide services and the proposed I-94 Express. Prior to launching any service, TheRide would need to work with MDOT to ensure safe operations.

5. **Engage with Non-AAATA Member Municipalities in Washtenaw County on the future of contracted services:** TheRide serves a broad service area, but only the City of Ann Arbor, the City of Ypsilanti, and Ypsilanti Township are current members of the AAATA. The other townships are serviced under purchase of service agreements. Full membership by municipalities enables TheRide to plan more effectively. To enable sustainable growth of TheRide's services, discussions should be conducted with interested non-AAATA member municipalities in Washtenaw County on the future of transit provision and contractual arrangements.

   TheRide will work with these municipalities to identify local needs and by doing technical analysis and public engagement to make recommendations based on local needs and the financial commitment desired.

   Several areas have been identified that would have good transit ridership potential and serve trips for people or jobs in the member municipalities. These include the Domino's Farms/East Medical Campus area, the West Ann Arbor Health Center area, northeast of the Carpenter/W Michigan area, and both north and east of the Harris and MacArthur area.

9 Transit-supportive Development and Policy

Most American cities, including the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area were designed for the automobile. Many of the direct and indirect policies used to support auto use are now noted for their impacts on the environment, social equity, and infrastructure costs.

While the car will remain the dominant mode of transportation for the foreseeable future, adjusting policies to create a more balanced approach will help encourage the demand for transit and other alternative modes, improve the quality of the transit experience, and more effectively achieve community goals. Many of these policies will shift the cost of owning and operating cars from society to individual car owners, which will be controversial. Key areas for future work include:

- **Intensification of Urban Development within the Existing Fixed-Route Service Area:** Enabling more dense, compact, mixed-use, in-fill development along high-frequency corridors (and not on the periphery of the urbanized area) focuses growth in areas of existing service and making transit more efficient. TheRide may wish to consider ceasing to expand its fixed-route service area and stop chasing suburban development.

- **Reduced Below Market Parking:** Traditional zoning often sets a minimum amount of parking for parcels, ensuring ample, free parking that shifts parking costs to real estate. Shifting to parking maximums, or eliminating parking requirements altogether, can make owning a car less attractive. Free or below market rate on-street parking or parking facilities also help to subsidize car use and decrease the demand for transit.

- **Road Widening:** New road construction or widening is often seen as facilitating greater auto traffic and suburban development. It is also very expensive, and Michigan's roads may already be beyond the state's ability to efficiently maintain. Limiting road expansion or implementing road diets will improve the pedestrian/cycling experience for accessing transit, making transit more competitive relative to cars.

- **Transit Priority:** Creating bus lanes and other features to make transit more attractive (relative to other modes) will help increase demand and make transit more efficient.

- **Tax Policy:** Shifting transportation taxation from the gas tax to a cost-per-mile tax (i.e., odometer tax) is increasingly seen as a future possibility due to the advent of electric cars.

- **Pedestrian Access:** Transit operates most effectively on long linear roadways. Ensuring that all land uses are within a reasonable walk to a transit appropriate corridor will improve the quality and efficiency of transit service. To limit point-based deviations of transit routes, development should ideally occur immediately adjacent to appropriate roadways for higher demand land uses or where high volumes of users with mobility related disabilities may locate. Transportation network design that makes pedestrian travel over short distances more direct compared to car travel can help to improve the attractiveness of transit.

- **Accessibility, Comfort, and Safety:** Car-centric development has often created a hostile environment for pedestrians, mobility device users, and cyclists accessing and waiting for transit. Roadways and other land uses can be designed to improve the accessibility, safety, and comfort of all those using transit. 100% accessibility off bus stops should be prioritized.

10 Advocacy and Partnerships

To successfully implement this long-range plan, TheRide will need support from many outside groups and individuals that provide or influence the funding, regulation, infrastructure, ridership demand, and public support for public transit.

TheRide will need to build robust relationships and communication channels to align priorities, build trust, and maximize the chances of success, as summarized in Figure 34. Key groups TheRide will need to collaborate with include:

- **Local**: Municipal governments, elected officials, advocates, businesses, non-profits, transit riders, and the general public are all potential assets as TheRide pursues its agenda. Building broad support at the local level will help ensure trust and support are available when TheRide makes proposals. It is notable that in a community with many advocacy groups, the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area does not host a transit activist/advocacy group. The local groups listed often share goals with TheRide, which enables collaboration on transit-supportive projects and provides an effective means of increasing organizational capacity.
    - **The University of Michigan:** As the self-governing dominant employer and driver of transportation and economic activity in TheRide's service area, relationships with the University of Michigan will always be important.
    - **Private Companies:** Increasingly, private, for-profit companies are becoming more involved in transportation decisions that affect their business, workers, or reputation. Toyota, for example, has been funding part of TheRide's FlexRide program.
- **Regional**: The Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS), SEMCOG, and the RTA are all part of the conduits delivering state and federal funding to TheRide and Washtenaw County and coordinating transit-supportive transportation investments in the county. They also have some potential to create new funding sources. Strong alignment with these groups will be important.
- **State**: Strong relationships with state official, MDOT staff, and the Michigan Public Transit Associations (MPTA) will be important. This will be important to protect existing state funding, encourage more funds, and assure transit-supportive regulation. Bus-on-shoulder operations (freeways), HOV lanes, and park and ride lots on state land near interchanges would be appropriate to consider advancing for MDOT's consideration.

Federal: TheRide will need to win several large competitive federal earmarks and/or grants for major capital projects (i.e., terminals, garage, BRT). In addition to well-developed, shovel-ready projects, and high-quality grant applications, TheRide will need to build strong relationships with elected officials and their staffs, and FTA staff.

The actions and decisions TheRide will need from these outside groups will fall into a few general categories:

- **Resources**: TheRide will require funding, political support, project collaboration, and other resources. Examples include: federal and state grants and funding, and local taxes. Crucially, TheRide may want to consider asking the state legislature to allow transit agencies access to more forms of taxation other than just the property tax. This could allow TheRide to shift the tax burden from residents to vehicle registrations, for example.

- **Regulations that Encourage Transit-supportive Development and Policy:** Transit demand and the quality of the passenger experience is directly or indirectly undermined by public policies that encourage car use.

    - **Transit-Supportive Land Development:** Examples of transit-supportive policies include encouraging higher-density, mixed-use, walkable urban development within TheRide's existing service area; encouraging lower parking requirements, sidewalk construction; and encouraging growth overall.

    - **Taxes:** State and federal tax policy also matters, such as replacing a diminishing gas tax with a tax on miles driven, for example.

    - **Institutional Policy Decisions:** The University of Michigan's internal policy decisions have a significant impact on local transportation and development decisions. To a lesser degree this also holds for other independent institutions and businesses. For example, encouraging business to provide transit passes as an employee benefit and means of offsetting parking costs.

- **Transit Supportive Infrastructure**: Some of the infrastructure that TheRide will rely on is controlled by others, and TheRide can work to influence decisions that support TheRide 2045. This includes selling land to TheRide, sidewalk construction, bus lane construction, first mile/last mile collaboration, and transit signal priority.

It is recommended that TheRide create a targeted legislative agenda including specific goals and target audiences and institutions, and to begin allocating time and resources toward advancing this agenda for outside policy changes.

Figure 34 – TheRide Advocacy and Partnership Goals

11 Implementation

The ambitious recommendations outlined in TheRide 2045 will be implemented gradually over the course of the plan timeline.

Numerous elements of the plan will require years of planning and construction, and some also depend on the implementation of other plan elements resulting in lengthy critical path timelines. The implementation plan has been developed in consideration of these dependencies as well as for factors such as funding availability time frames, ease of implementation, importance toward achieving organizational goals, implementation synergies, and financial and political feasibility.

The implementation plan is divided into four stages that roughly align with the continuation of 5-year millage periods. Stage 1 and 4 are six and seven years long respectively, due to the long-range plan timeline not perfectly aligning with the timeline of the 5-year millage periods. The following section details the implementation plan. Figure 35 provides an overview of the implementation stages while Figure 36 highlights major critical path elements of the plan.

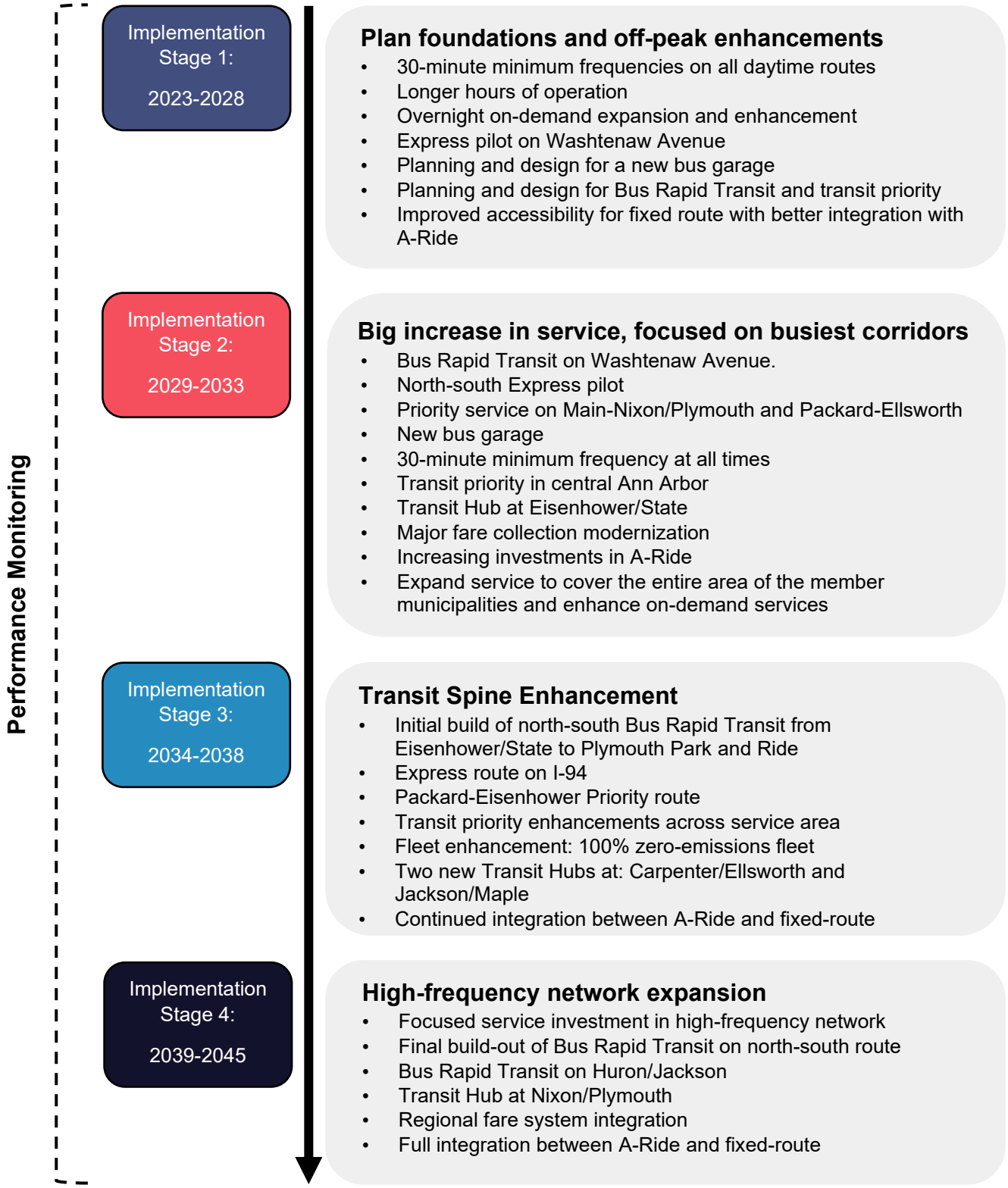


Figure 35 – Overview of Implementation Stages[19]

[19] A performance monitoring plan has been developed to track the effective implementation of the plan and to assess whether the implemented measures are driving the organization toward its goals as identified in the Guiding Framework.

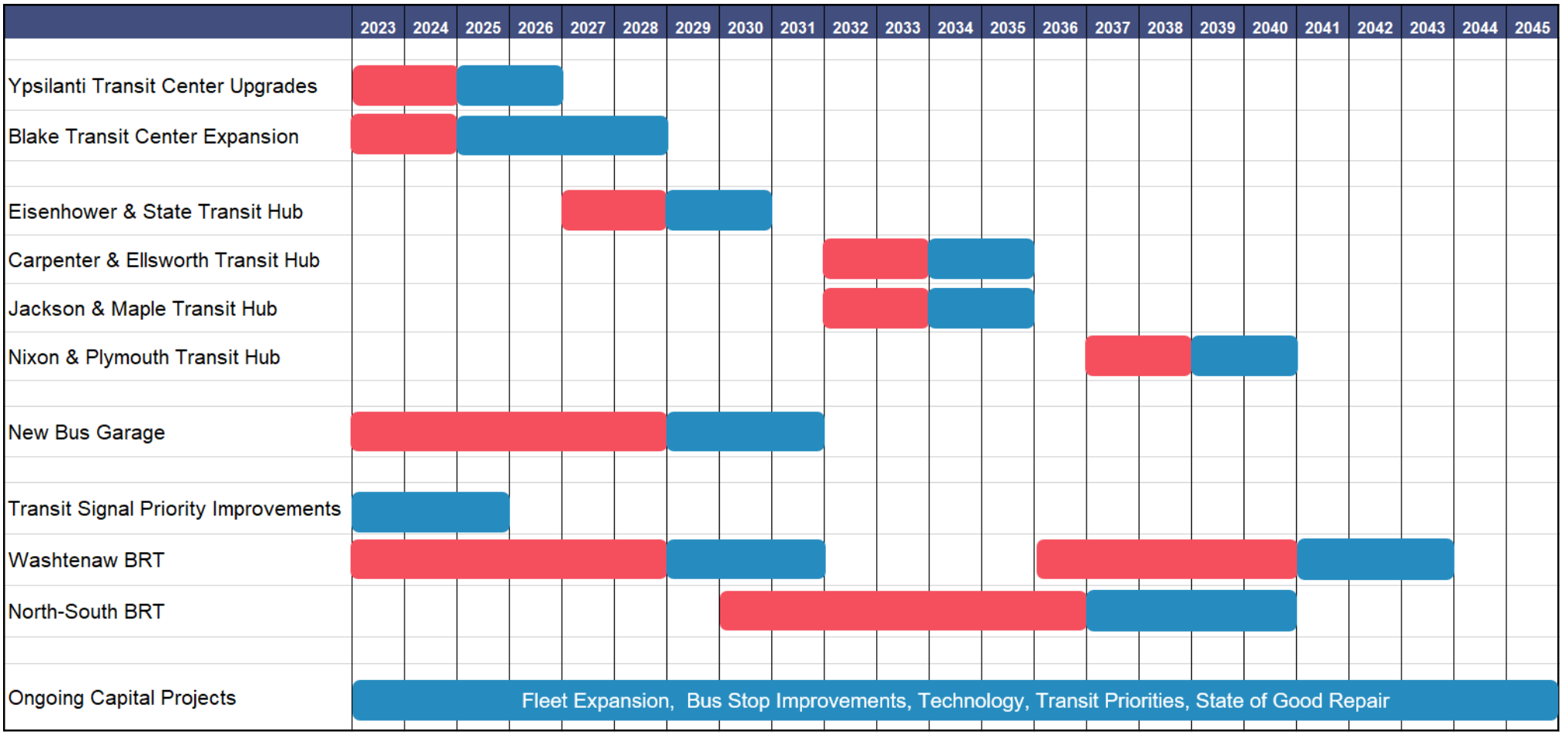


Figure 36 – Major Critical Path Elements of the Plan

11.1 2023-2028: PLAN FOUNDATIONS AND OFF-PEAK ENHANCEMENTS

Between the years 2023 to 2028, the focus will be to increase equity and grow ridership by laying the groundwork for future states along with investing in immediate service improvements that require less infrastructure. This includes extending hours of service, introducing a minimum 30-minute frequency on all routes during the daytime including weekends, and implementing a pilot express route on Washtenaw Ave. This express pilot service will provide enhanced service along the corridor to build ridership in preparation for the BRT in the following stage. TheRide will upgrade the YTC, expand the BTC, and start the design work for the new garage which will allow for growth of the bus fleet in later stages to support increased services. The BRT and transit priority planning studies, which will be conducted during this stage, are crucial to grant applications needed to support the funding of such construction. Figure 37 highlights Stage 1 implementation elements.

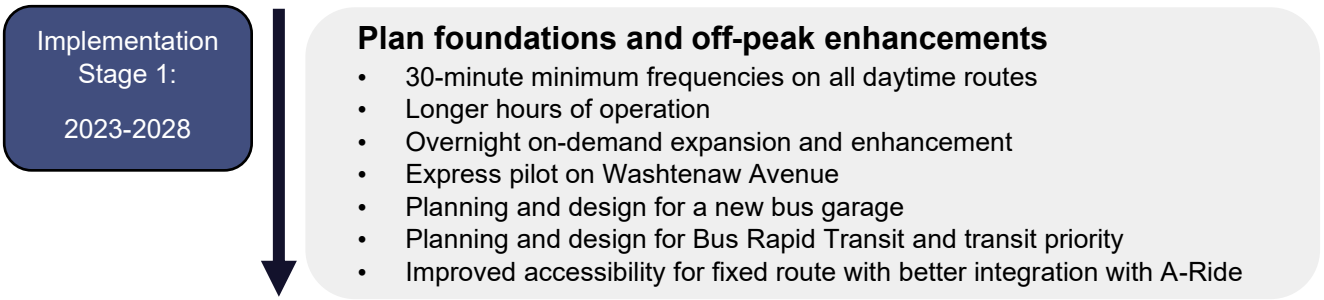


Figure 37 – Implementation Stage Elements – 2023-2028

Overall, this stage of the plan focuses on confirming alignment, looking at land requirements, community integration, and implementing quick wins. These quick wins include incremental infrastructure enhancements that will be done on the Washtenaw BRT corridor based on ease of implementation. This includes super stops, Transit signal priority, and potentially a pilot on dedicated bus lanes on small stretches of the network.

Other projects that will take place include enhancing the Family of Services approach for customers with accessibility issues. This will involve enhancing fixed-route accessibility including improvements at stops and through increased travel training. Work will be conducted to better integrate A-Ride with fixed-route service. Integration might also take place through the development of a single on-demand services app. A service review will be conducted for all on-demand services with an aim to match services most effectively with differing needs of customer areas. Figure 38 displays new network elements in Stage 1.

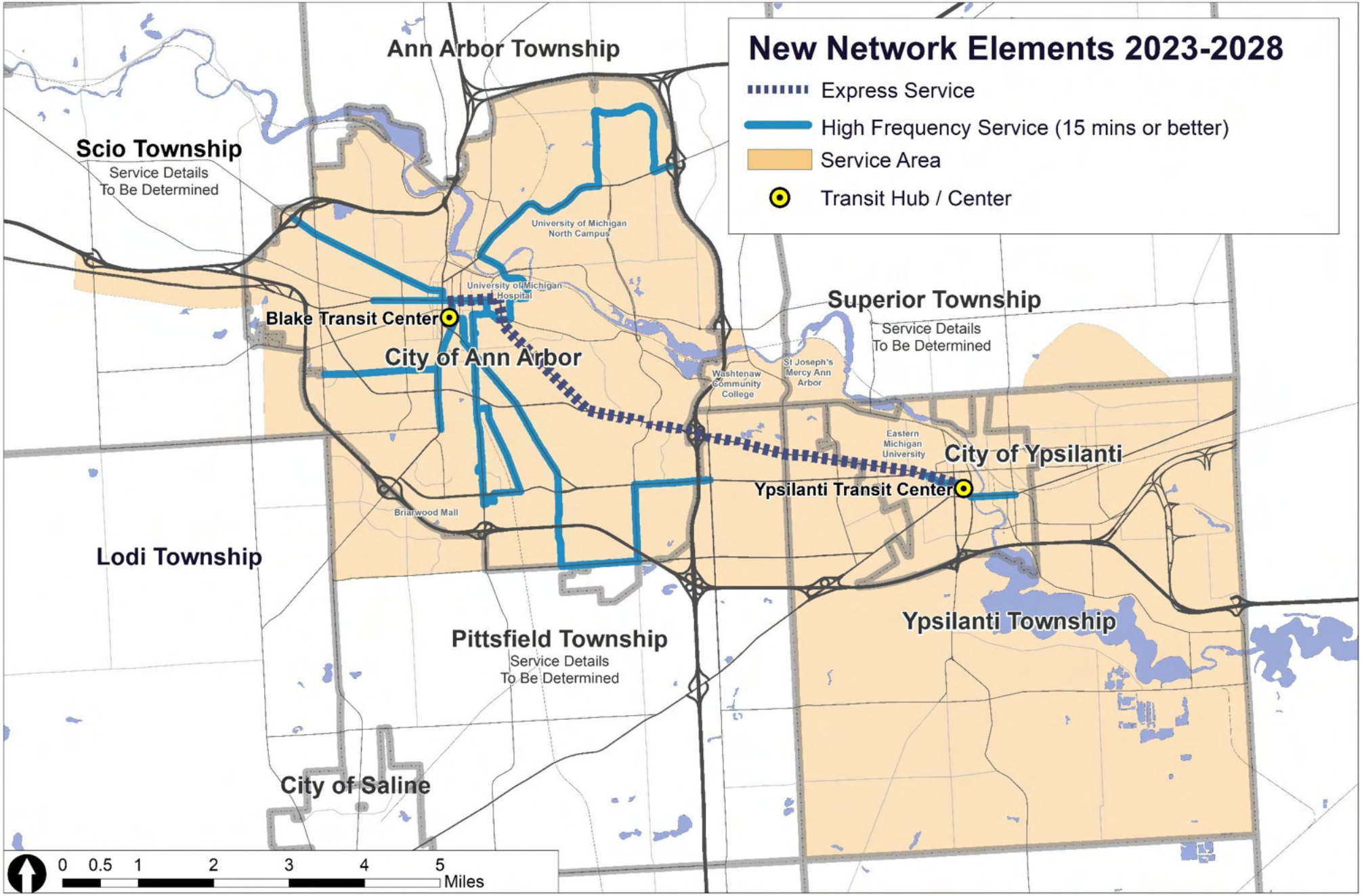


Figure 38 – New Network Elements – 2023-2028

11.2 2029- 2033: BIG INCREASE IN SERVICE, FOCUSED ON THE BUSIEST CORRIDORS

The second Stage of implementation from 2029 to 2033, will start significant enhancements to service and complete influential infrastructure that were enabled by the foundational development of Stage 1. The majority of the service enhancements will occur along the busiest corridors, better matching service to demand and efficiently growing ridership to best enable future enhancements. The express service launched between 2023-2028 on Washtenaw Avenue will be upgraded to a BRT service with better stops, queue jump lanes, and transit priority features along the route. Figure 39 highlights Stage 2 implementation elements.

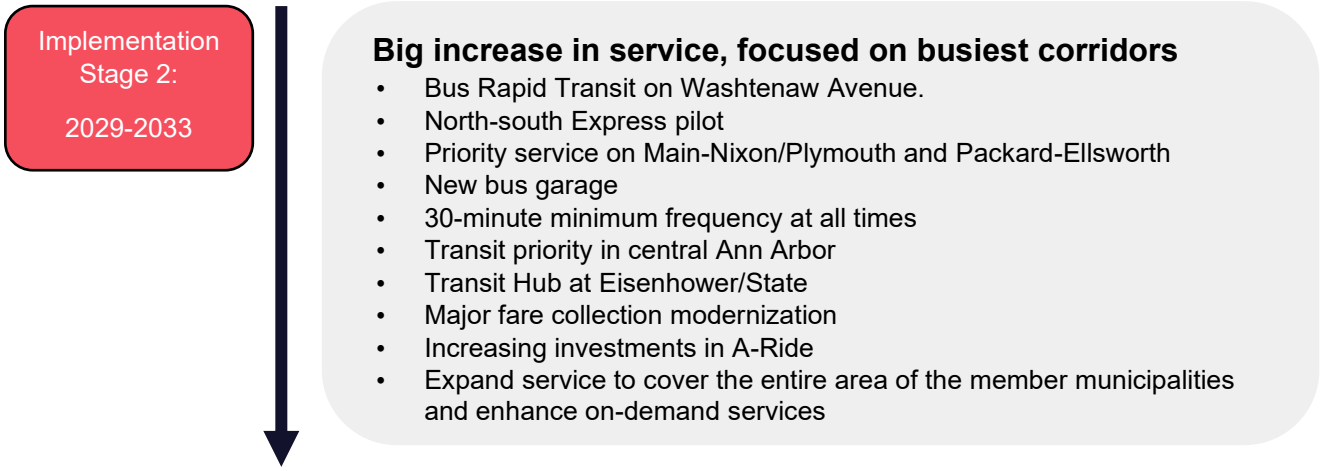


Figure 39 – Implementation Stage Elements – 2029-2033

BRT implementation is important at this stage to capture unique time sensitive funding opportunities from the federal government and to enable future network changes. The efficiencies BRT lines create ease subsequent enhancements. The Washtenaw BRT was identified as the priority corridor during public engagement and in modelling - providing widespread benefits. An express route on the north-south corridor from Eisenhower/State to the Plymouth Road Park and Ride lot will also be introduced with the intent to start building momentum for the north-south BRT. Additionally, priority services will be introduced on the Main/Plymouth, and Packard/Ellsworth corridors. At this stage, 30-minute minimum frequencies will be set for all times of day and 7 days per week. Investments in A-Ride will continue to improve service delivery for people with disabilities. Finally, this stage will include construction of the first new transit hub, modernization of the fare collection system, and expansion/improvements to FlexRide. Figure 40 displays new network elements in Stage 2.

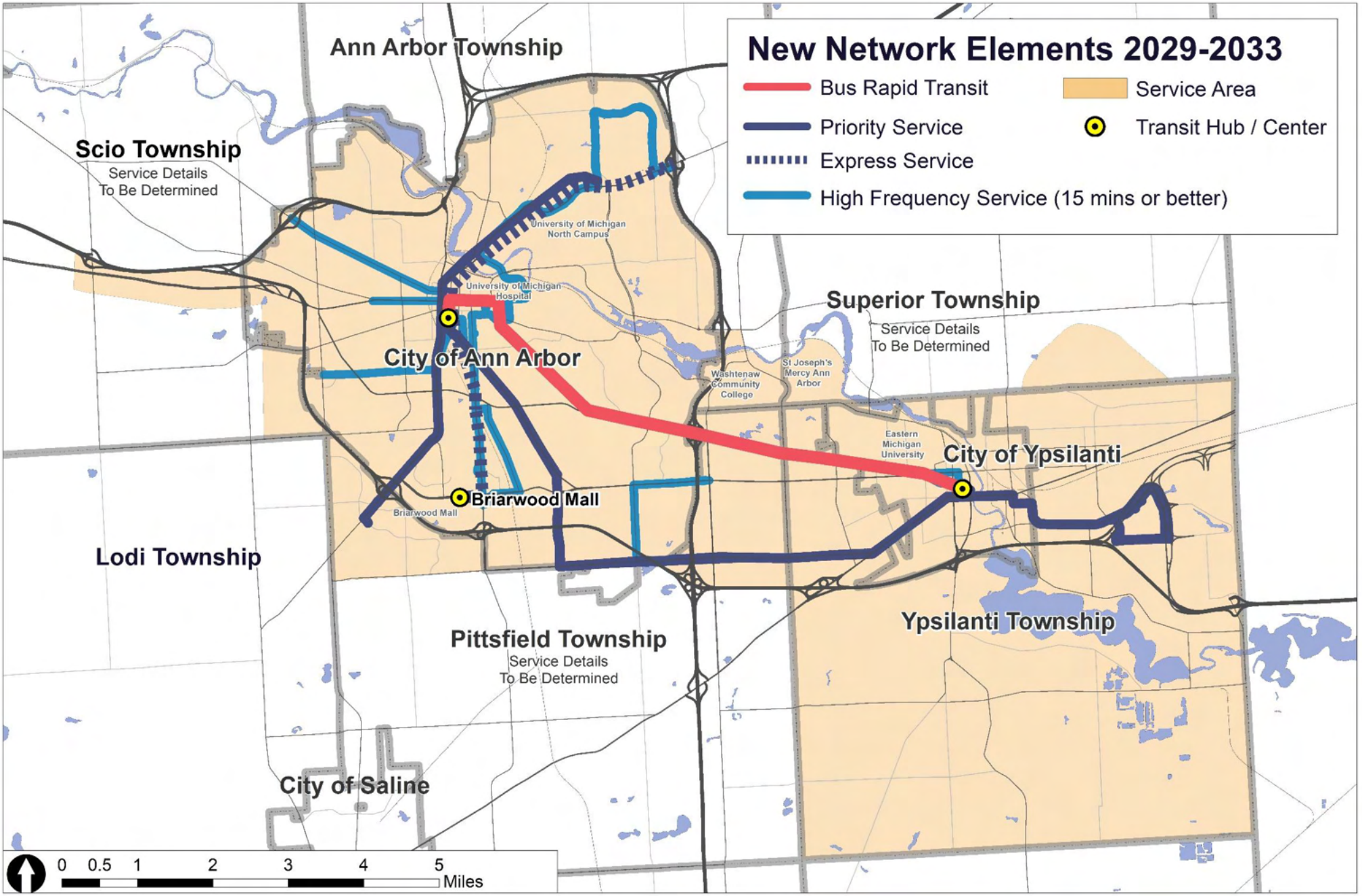


Figure 40 – New Network Elements – 2029-2033

11.3 2034-2038: TRANSIT SPINE ENHANCEMENTS

In the third stage of implementation, the backbone of the network will start to be realized. This will enable structural changes to the network's composition that will be fully completed in the final stage. Significant improvements to the attractiveness of transit relative to private car operation will become apparent across the service area. The transit spine and transit priority projects in this stage includes upgrading the north-south express route from Eisenhower/State to the Plymouth Park and Ride lot into a BRT service. The plan also includes the launch of a new express route on I-94 and a priority route on Packard-Eisenhower. These upgrades will be combined with transit priority enhancements across the service area. High-frequency routes will be added to help funnel people into these higher order services. Two new transit hubs are planned for Carpenter/Ellsworth and Jackson/Maple. The final elements for this stage include investments in integrating A-Ride with the fixed-route network, to provide seamless, accessible options for everyone, and a non-emergency medical transportation study. Figures 41 and 42 display implementation stage elements and network features of Stage 3 respectively.

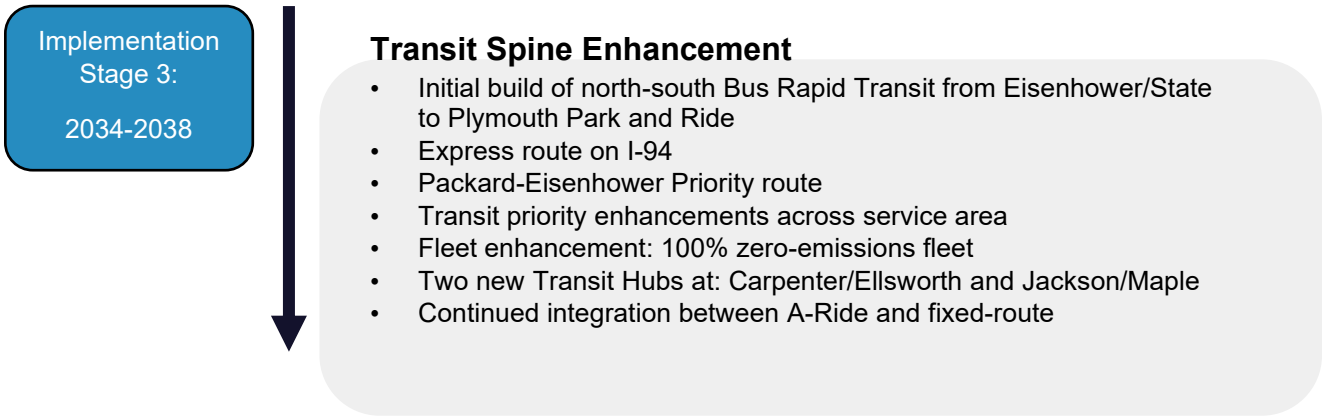


Figure 41 – Implementation Stage Elements – 2034-2038

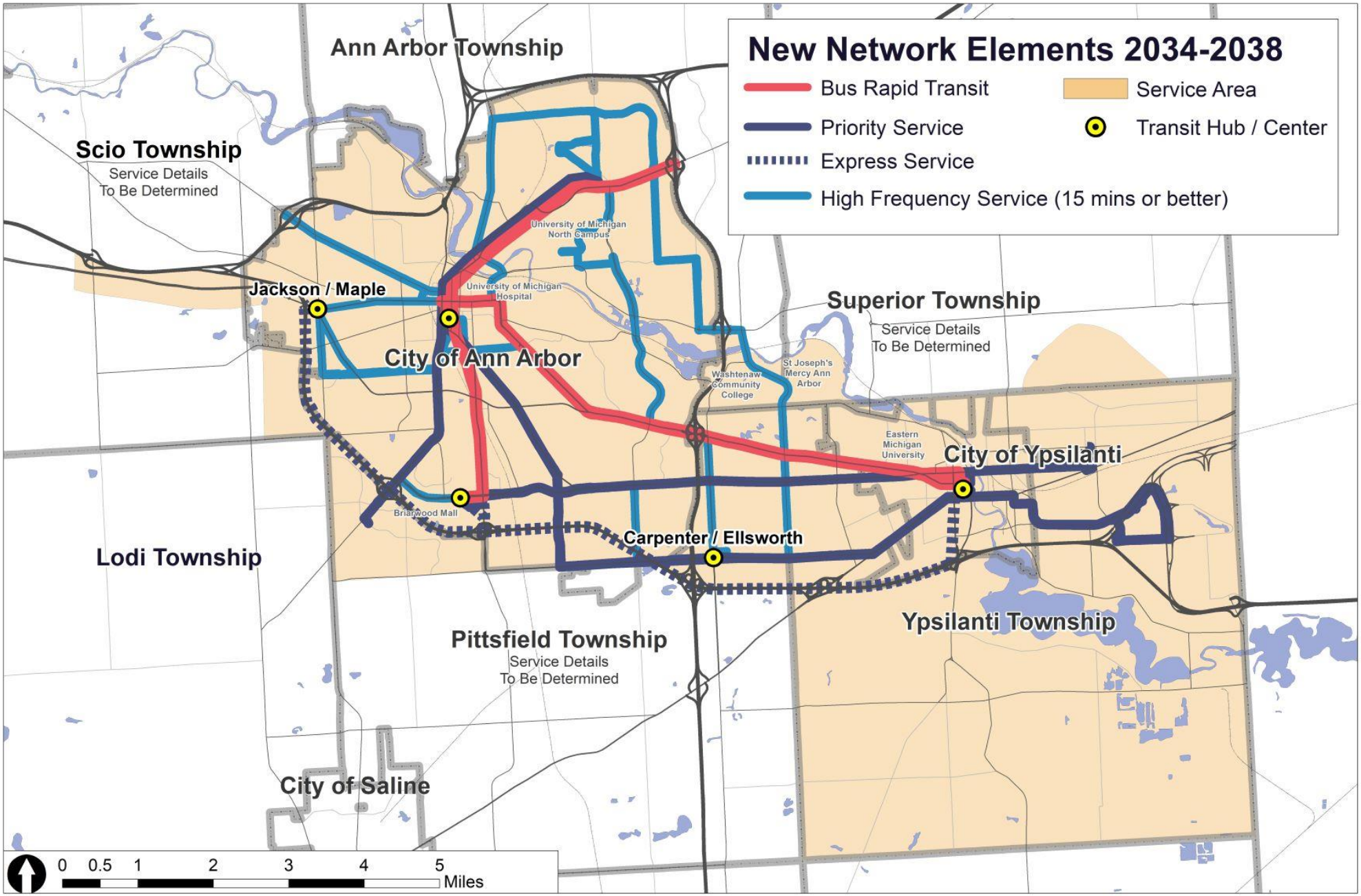


Figure 42 – New Network Elements – 2034-2038

11.4 2039-2045: HIGH-FREQUENCY NETWORK EXPANSION

Most of the high-frequency routes are introduced in the last stage of implementation bringing significant improvement in access to high quality transit. These changes will improve the interdependent effectiveness of the network and achieve the full benefits set out in the plan. The full BRT network will be completed. New transit hubs will be built at Nixon/Plymouth. Additionally, regional fare payment system integration is expected to be in place to facilitate cross-boundary travel. Figures 43 and 44 display implementation stage elements and network features of Stage 4 respectively.

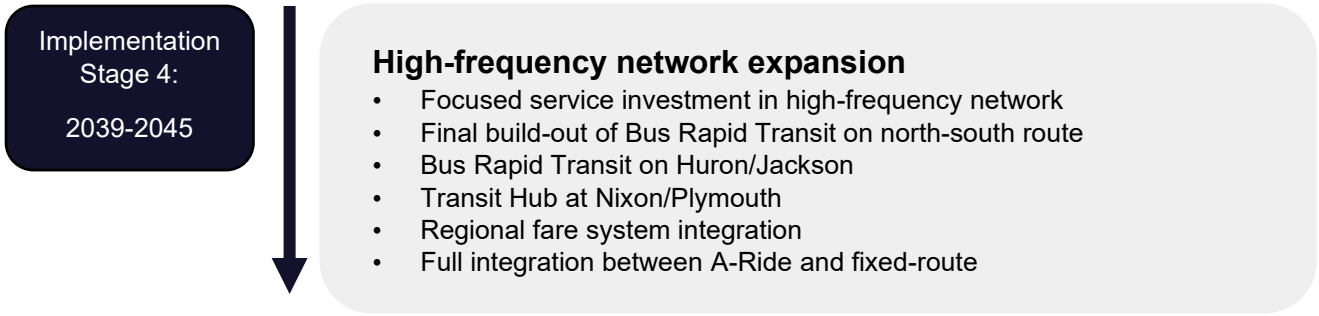


Figure 43 – Implementation Stage Elements – 2039-2045

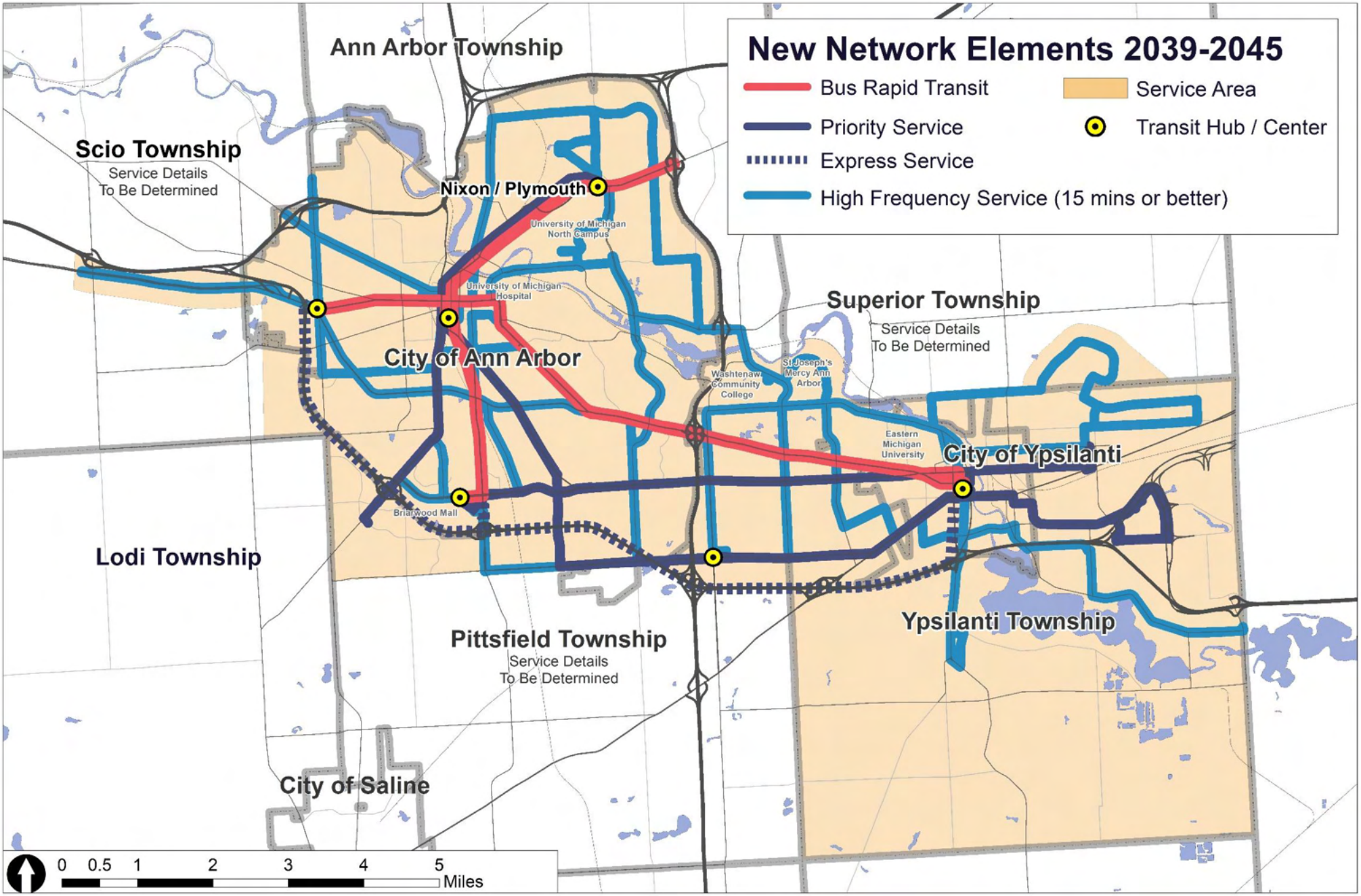


Figure 44 – New Network Elements – 2039-2045

11.5 BEYOND 2045

TheRide will continue to build and enhance the area's transit system beyond 2045. Numerous aspirational transit features were not included as part of this plan due to their lower likelihood of implementation over the lifespan of the plan and the importance of focusing attention to maximize efficacy.

For implementation beyond 2045, TheRide will keep monitoring for consideration several elements that are of interest to the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti community which have the potential to further improve the area's transit. These include elements like automated vehicles, which could prove particularly beneficial on BRT corridors. Rail corridors will continue to be potential long-term options. Municipalities in the past have built out BRT and developed significant ridership before transitioning the corridor to rail to match demand. Alternative funding sources, congestion pricing, and regional structure are three other potential transformational items that may support future growth beyond this plan scope.

11.6 ADAPTING THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Throughout the course of the plan timeline, there is risk that events outside TheRide's control will disrupt the proposed timeline. In general, millage votes and capital funding processes present uncertainty into the implementation plan. If millage votes do not pass or sufficient capital funding is not obtained, the implementation plan will have to be revised. Though the path toward the end vision will become more challenging, it should be maintained given the strong support by the broader community. In any event, the implementation plan should be adjusted by delaying service recommendations to a later stage, reprioritizing capital projects, or adjusting the overall timeline to achieve the end vision.

In the event that local funding is not sufficient to support the recommended service enhancements, some of the capital projects that represent more of the critical path elements toward the final plan might still be able to proceed. This is because these are less reliant on local funding. The garage and BRT studies should take priority for available funding as they are the projects on which future success is most contingent upon. While no new service investment would be available, some service adjustments should still be considered to accommodate changing travel patterns and align with the recommended network.

11.7 IMPLEMENTATION AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING

TheRide already has a formal process for monitoring its progress against the approved Ends Policy, including access equity, environmental impact, economic development, customer satisfaction, and public perception. A number of detailed measures contribute to this evaluation, explained in more detail in Section 3.

In addition to this existing monitoring and reporting framework, it will be important for TheRide to monitor the progress in achieving elements of TheRide 2045 plan. This process should be closely linked to the key considerations outlined in the plan guidance report, including:

- Being an attractive transportation option
- Being a fully integrated mobility provider
- Organizational stability
- Transit infrastructure integration
- Regional connections
- Contributing to affordable and equitable communities
- Efficient service provision

Each of these considerations was incorporated into the design of service and plan alternatives and their evaluation. As the agency proceeds with TheRide 2045 plan, it will be important to monitor both the implementation progress as well as to evaluate the performance of the various service recommendations against their planned performance.

Implementation Monitoring

TheRide 2045 includes recommendations for several service initiatives which will change or add to the existing service delivery. These include expanded span of service, increased frequency on existing and re-aligned routes, new route alignments, and service delivery plans.

Annually, TheRide should review the progress made in implementing specific elements of the plan to evaluate the status of progress and understand the reasons for and implications of significant deviations from the plan. This review process should inform not only mid-course adjustments as required but also contribute to the comprehensive review of the long-range plan every five years.

Performance Monitoring

The recommended elements of this plan are subject to a changing future context and the potential for a disconnect between the conceptual and their real-world application. Performance of new service initiatives should be monitored to ensure their cost-effectiveness and the ability to contribute to the broader service objectives within TheRide's Ends Policy. This includes ensuring that the current data collection and reporting procedures provide a consistent framework for evaluating the performance of TheRide 2045's service initiatives. To do so, current service standards are to be updated to include detailed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for different types of services. If elements of this plan are meeting these standards and/or are not contributing to TheRide's Ends Policy, a change of direction should be evaluated.

Frequent

Key operational data should be (and currently is) collected on a regular basis to ensure the effective operation of the service, including ridership counts and vehicle location data. The data can be used to evaluate the performance change of new service initiatives on existing routes resulting from route re-alignments, service increases, changes in span of service, and new services. New service standards will be developed to guide this evaluation including the development of standards around diverse services such as on-demand, BRT, and Priority routes. The data can also contribute to the longer-term performance measures. Regular data collection and reporting should include:

- Ridership (by route and period)
- Boardings per Revenue Vehicle Hour (by route and period)
- Vehicle location and on-time performance

These data are already collected as part of the regular operational procedures and used to monitor transit operations to ensure cost-effective operation and customer satisfaction.

Annual

Annual review and assessments of performance are important for keeping each of the stages of the long-range plan on track and informing five-year reviews of the plan. Annual service adjustments based on these assessments can ensure cost-effective operation, adherence to Ends Policy, and consistent progress in each stage of the plan. Deviations from planned progress for new service initiatives should be evaluated to assess root causes (operational, demographic, economic, etc.) and to adjust the plan within each stage. Changes to initiatives because of this process are brought forward to the five-year review process.

- Ridership per Capita
- Trip Duration (vs private automobile)
- Cost per ride

Periodic

Land use and demographic factors will change slowly over time once a service change is implemented. These measures should be monitored less frequently and provide input to reviews of the plan. Several of these factors were used to evaluate the selection of service options and should be monitored periodically to check performance and re-evaluate priorities. These include:

- Transit mode share
- Percent of residences and jobs within 0.25 miles of bus stop
- Percent of low income and minority racial groups within 0.7 miles of high-frequency transit (vs total population)
- Percent of residents and jobs within 0.7 miles of high-frequency transit
- Jobs accessible in 30-minute trip by an average household
- Households within a 30-minute trip to major destinations

For services in new areas, or in areas and time periods with new service delivery approach (such as on-demand), it will be important to provide sufficient time for the service to develop, attract ridership, and reach maturity. A minimum of one year, and in some cases two years should be allowed to establish the performance of new services. During this time performance targets should be adopted on a sliding scale leading toward the final targets (e.g., total ridership or boardings per hour). This will provide the agency with information to evaluate the service against reasonable expectations and provide an opportunity to adjust services to correct significant performance issues:

- First quarter: 25% of the minimum performance target
- Second quarter: 50% of the minimum performance target
- Third quarter: 75% of the minimum performance target

In each quarter of the remaining implementation period, services should reach at least 75 percent of the minimum target and be showing evidence of improvement. Without this performance, the service should be re-evaluated and adjusted to improve performance.

12 Financial Plan

Central to the success of TheRide 2045 is financial management. TheRide must pursue new funding opportunities, carefully maximize local, state and federal funds, and be careful not to overcommit or under-invest.

Having a long-term plan that helps sequence and contextualize individual decisions is crucial. Figure 45 outlines planned operating and capital costs at each implementation stage and categorizes expenses as either Operating or Capital costs. Operating costs are expenditures incurred daily, like employee wages, fuel, and bus maintenance. These costs are presently funded through local property taxes, state operating assistance, and passenger fares with support from federal operating assistance, contract service, and advertising revenue. Capital costs are durable assets such as vehicles, buildings, and infrastructure.

Figures are listed in (000,000s)	**2023-2028**	**2029-2033**	**2034-2038**	**2039-2045**
Annual Operating Cost	$63 M	$73 M	$82 M	$90 M
Increase in operating cost (from previous)	13%	16%	12%	10%
Capital Cost	$123 M	$233 M	$129 M	$174 M

Figure 45 – Operating and Capital Budget. Note all figures are in 2021 dollars

12.1 OPERATING BUDGET

The operating budget is divided into four-line items. All current operating costs are tied to service hours provided by either fixed-route or other services. This includes operator wages, vehicle and facility maintenance, fuel, and administration. These costs are assumed to rise in line with a rise in service hours for the respective service. Additional other operating expenses capture operating costs that are expected to increase beyond the rise in service hours. This includes costs associated with expanding facility and technology infrastructure, and additional staffing capacity required to implement elements of this plan more efficiently. Operating costs are shown in Figure 46.

Figures are listed in (000,000s)	2023-2028	2029-2033	2034-2038	2039-2045
Fixed-route service	$45 M	$52 M	$59 M	$66 M
Demand response service	$11 M	$12 M	$13 M	$13 M
Other services	$6 M	$6 M	$6 M	$6 M
Additional operating expenses	$1 M	$3 M	$4 M	$5 M

Figure 46 – Operating Budget. Note all figures are in 2021 dollars

Funding

Funding for operating costs is mostly sourced through local property taxes, state operating assistance, and passenger fares with support from federal operating assistance, contract service, and advertising revenue. In 2022, local property taxes are expected to make up 35% percent of total operating costs. Without expanded revenue streams, this is expected to increase to 45-55%. This is mostly due to federal funding being refocused toward capital projects of the plan. Due to projected increases to ridership and efficiency, fares are expected to cover a greater proportion of costs, rising from 9% currently, to 16% in 2045. Under this funding structure, the millage rate (local property tax rate) would rise by 1.7 for the first stage of implementation before seeing more gradual increases of between 0.3-0.5 for the final subsequent three stages. The 1.7 millage increase represents the current millage proposal that will be voted on in 2022.

The significant millage rate rise in the first phase is partially attributable to addressing a structural deficit and to account for rising inflation for costs that is significantly outpacing funding sources. Operating funding is captured in Figure 47.

Figures are listed in (000,000s)	2023-2028	2029-2033	2034-2038	2039-2045
Fares	$5 M	$8 M	$11 M	$13 M
State and Federal	$23 M	$26 M	$29 M	$31 M
Other revenue (Purchase of service agreements and advertising)	$2 M	$2 M	$2 M	$3 M
Local Property Tax	$33 M	$37 M	$40 M	$43 M

Figure 47 – Operating Funding. Note all figures are in 2021 dollars

While this plan makes contingencies for the continuation of this funding structure, it is recommended that other funding sources be pursued to reduce the proportion of funding derived from local property. Michigan only allows municipalities and transit agencies like TheRide to use property taxes for funding whereas other states allow a much broader array of taxing options. This over-reliance on property taxes may prove challenging over the course of this plan. It is recommended that TheRide consider advocating for the legal ability to shift to new taxing tools (Vehicle Miles Travelled tax, sales tax, etc.) even though this effort may take years. Section 12.3 provides additional information on potential alternative funding sources.

12.2 CAPITAL BUDGET

The total capital expenditures over the duration of this plan (2023 to 2045) are estimated at $658 million. These expenses include the following:

- Purchase of additional 40′ buses
- New articulated buses
- Cutaways and accessible vans
- Support vehicles
- Construction of a new garage
- Bus rapid transit (BRT) lines
- Transit priority measures
- Transit center, transit hub, and bus stop infrastructure
- New technologies for fare collection, customer experience, first and last mile solutions, and operations
- State of good repair including vehicle replacement, facility maintenance, and technology replacement

Figures 48 and 49 show capital costs by category.

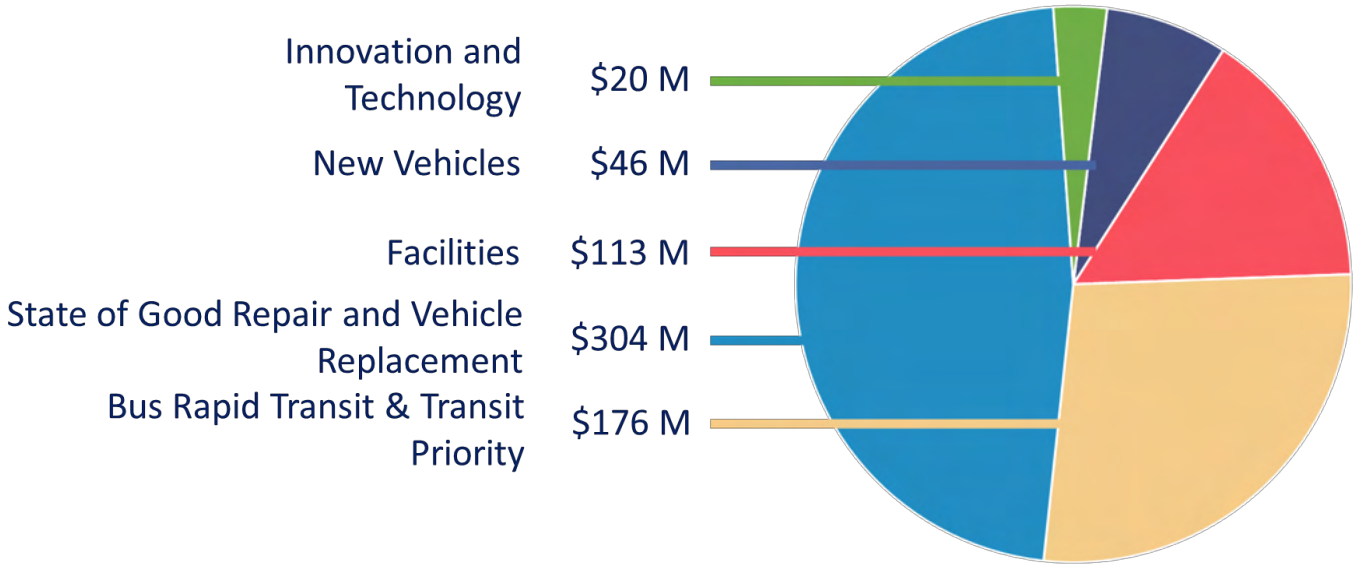


Figure 48 – Estimated Capital Costs by Category. Note all figures are in 2021 dollars

Figures are listed in (000,000s)	2023-2028	2029-2033	2034-2038	2039-2045	Total
New Vehicles	$0 M	$15 M	$15 M	$15 M	$46 M
Facilities	$35 M	$69 M	$6 M	$3 M	$113 M
Bus Rapid Transit and Transit Priority	$15 M	$80 M	$37 M	$44 M	$176 M
Innovation and Technology	$4 M	$6 M	$5 M	$6 M	$20 M
State of Good Repair and Vehicle Replacement	$69 M	$62 M	$67 M	$106 M	$304 M
Total	$123 M	$233 M	$129 M	$174 M	$658 M

Figure 49 – Estimated Cost for Each Category of Expenditure. Note all figures are in 2021 dollars

Revenue to pay for these capital costs will come from a variety of local, state, and federal sources. About $306.6 million, or 46 percent of the total program, will be available from formula funds and matching dollars. The remainder is expected to come from the federal Small Starts Program and state match, new grant programs under the Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, other grant opportunities, and the local capital reserve. About $36 million in local funds are required beginning in 2032 to meet a funding shortfall. Figures 50 and 51 show the anticipated funding by source and plan period.

The capital program has been designed to maximize the benefit of the once-in-a-generation investment from the Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). This Act significantly increases the funding to FTA to support the capital and planning needs of transit agencies across the country. IIJA increases formula funding by about 30 percent each year over the next five years, increases funding for competitive capital grant programs such as Small Starts, and introduces several new funding programs to improve equity and encourage the shift to lower emissions vehicles.

A significant portion of the capital expenditures will be spent locally on construction projects. Through programs such as the federal Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program and the Small Business Enterprise program it is expected that minority and disadvantaged businesses will benefit from the capital program. TheRide will ensure that minority and disadvantaged business are aware of opportunities to benefit from the significant capital construction programs anticipated during the planning horizon.

Figures are listed in (000,000s)	**2023-2028**	**2029-2033**	**2034-2038**	**2039-2045**	**Total**
Years in each period	6	5	5	7	
Stable Federal/State Funds	$91 M	$64 M	$64 M	$89 M	$308 M
Discretionary Grant Opportunities	$17 M	$131 M	$38 M	$45 M	$231 M
Local Capital Reserve	$10 M	$20 M	$0 M	$0 M	$30 M
Unidentified Sources	$5 M	$18 M	$27 M	$40 M	$89 M
Total	$123 M	$233 M	$129 M	$174 M	$658 M

Figure 50 – Total Capital Revenues by Sources and Plan Period. Note all figures are in 2021 dollars

Major Capital Programs

Vehicles

The first articulated buses will enter the fleet in 2029 to coincide with the Washtenaw BRT project opening. It is anticipated the fleet of articulated buses will grow to 35 vehicles by 2045. The fleet of 40′ buses will increase to 127 by 2045. It will also be necessary to purchase 209 40’ buses to replace those that have reached the end of their useful life from 2023 to 2045. Cutaway-style buses are used for A-Ride service. This fleet will grow to 55 buses in 2045.

Facilities

The capital budget includes funds to expand and improve the YTC and BTC, build new transit hubs, acquire a site to build a new maintenance and storage facility, and improve bus stops. Grant funding is available through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Bus Rapid Transit and Transit Priority

The plan calls for construction of two BRT lines and various transit priority measures. The first BRT line will be located on the Washtenaw Corridor. Development of this line will require coordination with MDOT as well as the cities, townships, and businesses along the proposed route. We anticipate that up to 80 percent of the funding for this project will come from the FTA Small Starts program.

Technologies

Capital investment in technologies will include for fare collection, customer experience, first and last mile solutions, and operational innovations. Grants may be available from the state or federal government, especially for systems that can be shown to improve equity.

State of Good Repair

A state of good repair program is included to ensure that facilities and vehicles remain in good condition. This includes purchasing replacements or rehabilitating existing vehicles and facilities. $54 million of the total $304 million state of good repair budget is dedicated to the replacement of new vehicles and maintenance of new facilities.

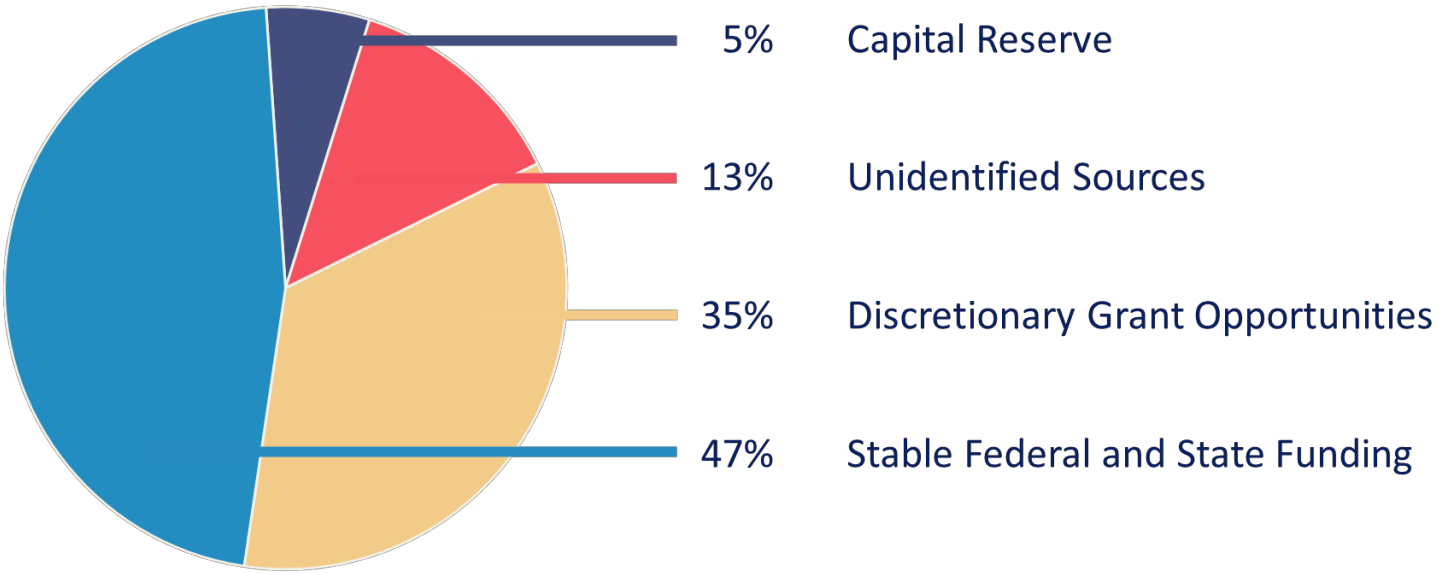


Figure 51 – Funding Sources. Note all figures are in 2021 dollars

Capital Program Funding Sources

The following table, Figure 52, highlights the capital funding sources that will be used to implement this plan.

Funding Source	Description
FTA 5307	The FTA 5307 award amounts are set in each transportation reauthorization bill, and the apportionment for areas of population of 200,000 or more is determined by a formula based on a combination of bus revenue vehicle miles, bus passenger miles, fixed guideway revenue vehicle miles, and fixed guideway route miles as well as population and population density.
FTA 5339	FTA 5339 is a formula grant designed to replace, rehabilitate, and purchase buses and related equipment and to construct bus-related facilities.
CMAQ	The CMAQ program funds transportation projects or programs that will contribute to the attainment or maintenance of the national ambient air quality standards. CMAQ works like a formula fund; grants are apportioned annually to each state according to the air quality in the state.
Earmarks	Earmarks are congressional provisions that direct funds to be spent on specific projects.
FTA Small Starts	The FTA Small Starts program is one of several competitive capital investment grant programs offered to transit agencies. The law requires Small Starts projects to complete project development before the grant award. Project development includes design and environmental clearances.
Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act FTA	The Infrastructure Law has increased formula funding and the funds available for capital investment grants. The Infrastructure Law creates increased support for bus facilities, stations and stops. It also provides planning activity support for low-density and low-income portions of cities and adjoining rural areas.
FTA 5337	The State of Good Repair program provides capital funds for the maintenance, replacement, and rehabilitation of bus systems to

	allow transit agencies to keep their systems in good repair. Funds can be used for buses, facilities, passenger stations and terminals, and security systems as well as to develop Transit Asset Management plans.
Other Grants (Federal and State)	Transit projects are eligible for the RAISE program, which is designed to support infrastructure investment. The RAISE program has been used to fund transit priority measures, including bus lanes. RAISE grants are for capital investments in surface transportation that will have a significant local or regional impact.

Figure 52 – Capital Program Funding Sources

12.3 ADDITIONAL FUNDING SOURCES

Additional funding sources are required to fill the remaining capital funding shortfall. Additional sources of funding will also be pursued to reduce the local property tax contribution for operating costs and to make funding more sustainable. Figure 53 lists potential recommended funding sources that TheRide could consider and/or advocate for to provide transit in the most cost-efficient way possible for the residents of the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area.

Funding Source	Description
Michigan State Infrastructure Bank	The Michigan State Infrastructure Bank loan program was created to provide loans to public agencies for transportation improvements. The program is designed to attract new public and private investment in transportation infrastructure in Michigan. A loan amount of up to $2 million will be considered.
Public Private Partnerships (P3)	P3s are an innovative method of financing the construction and operation of major public infrastructure. In Michigan, P3s are complex and take significant work to organize and implement.
Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan (RTA)	If the RTA is successful in the future with a transit millage or other form of taxation, it may produce enough revenue to support improvements in Washtenaw County.
Municipal Governments Grants	Municipal governments control most of the roadways that buses use and the sidewalks that passengers use to access transit. At various time local governments may provide grant opportunities to jointly enhance the infrastructure for the benefit of the community as well as passengers.
Business Improvement Associations	Local business improvement associations or similar organizations may be willing to contribute to improvements that benefit transit and their district.

Funding Source	Description
More Diverse Taxation	***Parking Tax and Fines*** A region-wide parking tax could generate significant revenue if it was levied on both paid and unpaid parking. A parking tax is related to transportation, and if it caused parking rates to increase, it could result in an increase in transit ridership. The State of Michigan does not have a legal basis for allowing special districts to tax parking, and a new legislation would be required.
	Sales Tax A sales tax is not directly relatable to transportation costs, and its cost of implementation would be minor because the state already has a mechanism in place for sales tax collection. Sales taxes are widely used to fund transit and nationwide fund about 38% of capital costs and 27% of operating expenses. The state law in Michigan currently does not permit special districts such the TheRide to enact sales taxes. To have a local sales tax within TheRide service area, the State of Michigan would need to pass enabling legislation.
	Payroll Tax Payroll Tax could provide a stable funding source because the tax is somewhat related to transportation demand, and workers would likely need transportation to their jobsite. The tax would need to apply to the entire service area and not just the downtown cores to avoid employment shifting. Michigan State law does not have a provision to implement a payroll tax; therefore, a change to state law would be required.
	Fuel Tax Fuel tax is controlled by the state and would require a new legislation to dedicate a portion to transit. The tax has the potential to encourage transit use because higher fuel costs could cause motorists to look for less cost alternatives.

Funding Source	Description
	VMT Tax VMT taxes could incentivize small vehicles or penalize higher polluting engines. A VMT tax would likely encourage transit use as well as raise money to fund transit. Strategically, a VMT tax would discourage sprawling. State legislation would be required.

Figure 53 – Potential Sources of Additional Funding

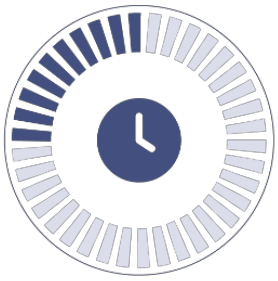
13 Conclusion

TheRide 2045 responds to the growing needs of our communities with a blueprint for preserving and expanding transit services and access to local and regional destinations.

TheRide 2045 is a Long-Range Plan that will transform transit in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area. Development of the plan began in the fall of 2019. Planning efforts were stalled due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and were resumed in early 2021. Many community members and stakeholders were actively engaged throughout the process, with significant input and guidance provided by TheRide's Board of Directors and a Public Advisory Group that was created for this project.

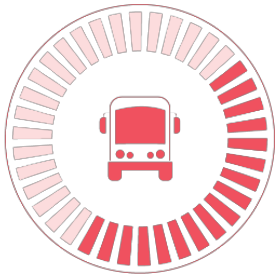
The plan calls for a vastly expanded suite of public transit services and infrastructure to be implemented up to 2045. This section highlights the key investments, outcomes, and benefits of TheRide 2045, with supporting details provided throughout this final report. By committing to this plan, the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area will see the build out of a transformed public transportation system that improves the lives of all residents in the community. Many of the ideas and investments called for in this plan extend beyond the typical 5-year horizon of most transit planning processes. As TheRide moves forward, it will use the long-term strategy laid out in this plan to guide the short-term planning efforts that drive transit.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PLAN



Service Highlights

- 10 minute or better service with priority features on high-use corridors
- High-frequency network of numerous 15-minute or better services across the service area
- Better off-peak services, including a minimum of 30-minute frequency service throughout the service area, 7-days per week
- Later weekend and weeknight service hours
- Enhanced on-demand service including overnight with expanded coverage areas and shorter wait times



Transit Fleet and Infrastructure Highlights

- Two high-speed Bus Rapid Transit lines that will form the backbone of the network (Information on Bus Rapid Transit is provided in more detail on page 44)
- Four new transit hubs and improvements to TheRide's two Transit Centers to better connect services across our community
- A zero-emissions bus fleet

Partnerships, Collaborations, and Plans Highlights

- Partnerships and collaborations to enhance regional transit, first/last mile solutions, and general transit outcomes
- Infrastructure plans to enable service growth and enhance the customer experience
- Technology plans to enhance customer experience and operational efficiency
- An achievable financial plan that effectively harnesses important funding opportunities from state and federal governments while also highlighting how TheRide can work toward developing alternative funding sources.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

100%

Increase in the level of service experienced by the average rider

123%

Increase in the level of service experienced by those in low and very low Opportunity Index Areas[20]

39%

Faster travel time for the average trip taken by transit

97%

Of jobs will be near high-frequency transit[21]

7-11%

Reduction of transportation-related emissions

150-165%

Ridership growth expected

6.9 million

Car trips avoided

100%

Accessible services[22]

Figure 54 – Expected Outcomes

[20]Level of service measured as the average buses per hour passing through a 0.25 mile walk radius. Average rider reflects 2019 ridership data. Opportunity Index areas are defined by the Washtenaw Opportunity Index.

[21] High-frequency transit is defined as 15-minute or better service during peak times. Proximity is defined as within a 0.7-mile walk. All analysis is focused on the three member municipalities of TheRide (Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti and Ypsilanti Township).

[22] Bus stop accessibility is subject to municipal sidewalks and permitting.

BENEFITS OF THE PLAN

TheRide 2045 will effectively advance the organization toward the goals and vision laid out by the Board of Directors and echoed by the broader community. It is a transformational plan that will make transit **faster** and **more attractive**, and fundamentally change how transit is provided in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area. Key benefits include:

- Growing ridership by providing an even more attractive and convenient transit service, designed to reduce travel times, make travel more direct, better match service to demand, and provide access throughout the week with longer hours of operation.
- Addressing socio-economic equity gaps by improving accessible and affordable transportation to work, education, medical, shopping, and social destinations for lower opportunity communities that rely on transit and through focusing enhancements on low opportunity areas.
- Improving environmental outcomes by attracting more people out of their cars and introducing low-emissions buses.
- Enhancing economic vitality by growing access to jobs and retail, incentivizing more walkable, vibrant, and healthy communities, and by reducing overall community costs for transportation.
- Advancing the goals of municipal policy documents.

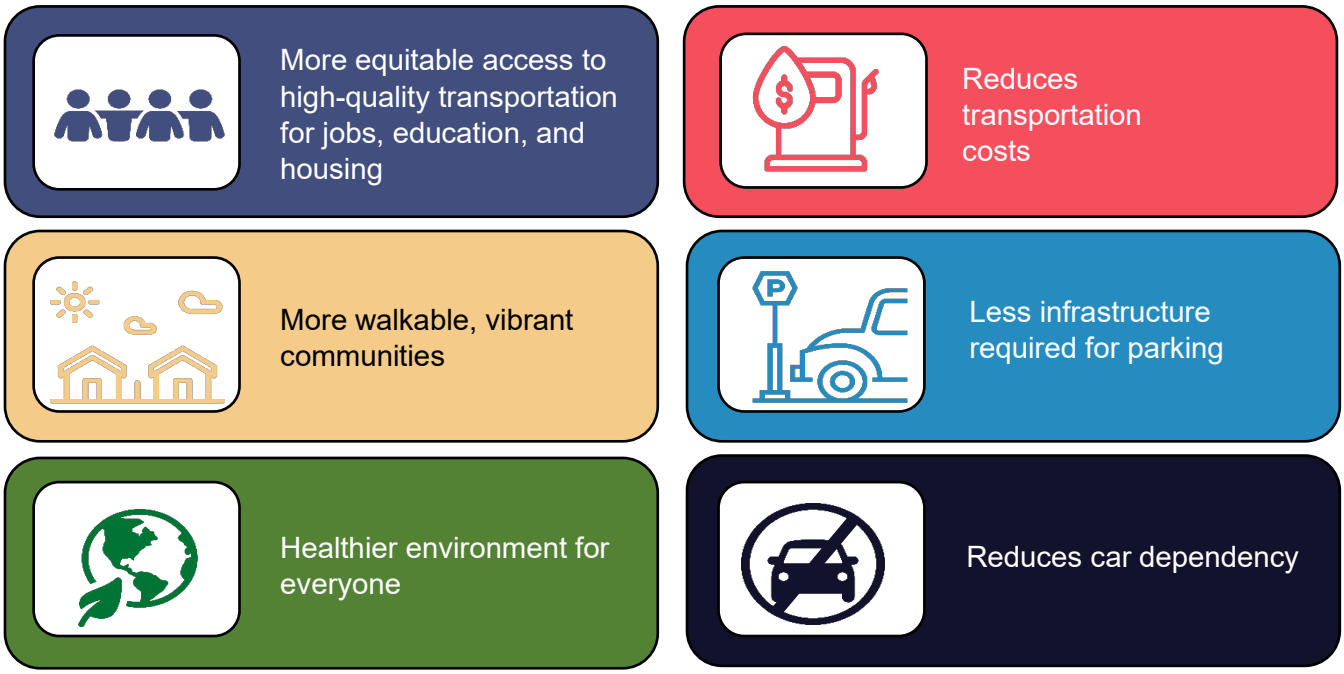


Figure 55 – Community Benefits

The plan can deliver these benefits through a series of improvements and expansions to transit services and infrastructure. Each community will benefit from the resulting structural change to travel.

Transit riders will experience service that is more frequent, comfortable, and reliable while also being provided with more travel options and shorter trips all day, every day. Seniors, people with disabilities, minorities, low-income groups, and anyone else with more limited access to private automobiles will have better access to jobs, education, social services, shopping, and housing. Transit enhancements for these groups will also mean a more attractive transit service for everyone that enhances access for all.

Coupled with new policies from outside partners, these enhancements will make transit even more attractive, increase ridership and access to destinations, and reduce private automobile dependency Fewer cars on the road improves the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Transit investments also reduce overall community costs for transportation – as it results in long-term reductions in municipal spending on roads and parking and individual spending on fuel and cars.

In closing, TheRide 2045 responds to the growing needs of our communities with a blueprint for preserving and expanding transit services and access to local and regional destinations. It is an ambitious vision that will require partnerships, additional investment, and leadership. Through this vision, TheRide can help lead our communities toward a future with greater social equity, environmental benefits, and access to jobs.

List of Appendices

1. Plan Guidance Report
2. Round 1 What we Heard Report
3. Round 2 What we Heard Report
4. Round 3 What we Heard Report

TheRide 2045

Plan Guidance Report

July 28, 2021

Left Turn Right Turn

ANN ARBOR AREA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

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1 – Introduction

This Plan Guidance Report presents the guiding framework for the development of TheRide 2045, a long-range plan for the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority (AAATA). The framework outlined here sets out how analysis throughout the project will be framed and how decisions will be made. The development of strategic options and the evaluation of those options will be based on the guidance of this framework.

This Plan Guidance Report is intended to be a living document throughout the project. As new understandings are developed, the guiding framework may be adjusted and refined.

2 – Strategic Framework

2.1 – Board's Vision and Goals

The Board of Directors defines the outcomes/goals that TheRide is supposed to be achieving in the future (i.e. Ends Policies). The "vision" for the plan is to achieve, or make headway on achieving, ***all*** of these outcomes, at least to some degree. To be clear, the Board has identified *what* TheRide will achieve, not *how* the goals should be achieved. It is the role of this planning process to make recommendations about the best way to achieve the Board's goals in consideration of the constraints and situational context TheRide must work within. A challenge for any planning process is to help balance a community's aspirations with what it can realistically accomplish.

The Board seeks public feedback on its outcomes/goals to ensure they accurately reflect the aspirations of the community, residents, and passengers. While public comments to-date tend to focus on attributes of future services and the priorities of various groups, any feedback that suggests a change and update to the Board's goals will be forwarded to the Board for its consideration.

The core geographical scope of evaluation for this plan covers the three member municipalities of TheRide: the City of Ann Arbor, the City of Ypsilanti, and the Township of Ypsilanti. Options will be evaluated based on their ability to achieve the vision and priorities defined in the guiding framework within the member municipalities. However, the scope of analysis will cover adjacent municipalities where the expansion or continuation of services might reasonably enable the following guidance to be better achieved in the member municipalities, or where current residents are already using TheRide's service. This might include the exploration of an expanded service area or member representation within TheRide. Regional connectivity to best accommodate broader travel patterns will also be explored.

The Board establishes its Ends policies within its Vision for public transportation:

> A robust public transportation system that adapts to the area's evolving needs, environment, and quality of life.

The Board of Director's Ends (outcomes/goals):

1. AAATA exists so that an increasing proportion of residents, workers, and visitors in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Area utilize public transportation options that contribute to the Area's social, environmental and economic vitality at a cost that demonstrates value and efficient stewardship of resources.

1.1. Residents in the area have equitable access to public transportation services that enables full participation in society.

1.1.1. People with economic challenges have affordable public transportation options.

1.1.2. People with disabilities or mobility impairments, seniors, minors, and non-English speakers have equitable access to opportunities and destinations in the area.

1.2. Public transportation positively impacts our environment.

1.2.1. Public transportation options are increasingly chosen over use of a personal car.

1.2.2. Public transportation options minimize energy use and pollution, and conserve natural resources.

1.2.3. Public transportation options produce conditions favorable to more compact and walkable land development.

1.2.4. Relevant public policy is transit supportive.

1.3. Public transportation positively impacts the economic prosperity of the area.

1.3.1. Public transportation facilitates labor mobility.

1.3.2. Students can access education opportunities without need of a personal vehicle.

1.3.3. Visitors use public transportation in the area.

1.3.4. Public transportation connects the area to the Metro Detroit region.

1.4. Passengers are highly satisfied with public transportation services.

1.5. Residents of the area recognize the positive contributions of public transportation to the area's quality of life.

2.2 - Board's Planning Framework

The Board of Directors has also created a planning and governance framework within its governance policies that primarily focus on funding and defining the planning process itself. The key policies are summarized below:

1. **Strategic Framework** As a long-term planning exercise, the process and outcomes of this study must show progress towards the Board's defined Ends. Part of that process includes defining multi-year plans that include the best available information on financial implications, and clear staging plans that will allow staff to recommend changes to the Board based on new information over time. This plan must be prudent and in line with common business practices and must also identify and evaluate risks for staff to manage. [1]

2. **Financial Planning and Stewardship:** In developing a long-term plan, it is always necessary to balance short-term financial constraints with longer-term aspirations. This means that the plan must be financially realistic, even if based on financial resources or funding sources not currently available. This long-term plan should not be constrained by the current financial environment but must be developed with clear assessment of financial requirements, potential funding sources and levels, and consideration of the risk to the plan and its alternatives if additional funding is not secured. Ultimately, the plan must demonstrate value and efficient stewardship of resources, and be based on realistic and transparent financial assumptions.[2]

3. **Public and Stakeholder Involvement:** Public and stakeholder engagement is a cornerstone of the Board's approach, and vital to the development of this long-term plan. The planning process must meaningfully engage riders, residents, stakeholders, partners, and staff. There should be good communication and transparency to the planning process and rely on and develop collaborative partnerships with community stakeholders.[3]

[1] Board's policy #2.4-2.4.8, 2.10.1.3, 2.0

2 Board's policy #2.4, 2.4.3, 2.4.5, 2.4.8, 2.5

3 Board's policy # 2.1.3, 2.1.4, 2.2.1, 2.9, 2.9.4, 2.9.5

2.3 - Other guiding documents

In addition to complying with and supporting the Board's policy Ends, the plan will also build on previous and current planning studies addressing long-term planning for TheRide. Specifically:

- TheRide's Corporate Business Plan set three medium-term priority areas for the organization:
  - Planning for the future (including developing a long-range plan, advocacy strategy and expanding terminals)
  - Servicing customers (including enhancing fare collection and fare structure and expanding real-time information)
  - Modernizing TheRide (including implementing recommendations from a 2019 paratransit study, reviewing sustainability of bike share, and conducting a propulsion study)

- The 2018 Paratransit Study provides three strategic takeaways for A-Ride and GoldRide:
  - Enhance efficiency
  - Tighten eligibility policies
  - Increase administrative support and focus on paratransit

- The 2018 Fare Study provided a fare structure review that assessed the current state and found it to be too complex but with strong third-party pass programs. Key recommendations include:
  - Establish indicator that initiates fare increase
  - Procure smart card + Mobile ticketing
  - Shift to offboard enforcement
  - Transition to a time-based fare
  - Eliminate or adjust various fare products

3 - Public and Stakeholder Input

The interests and aspirations of the general public and passengers are an important input into the planning process. **Public and stakeholder engagement** was initiated in 2019 and further public and stakeholder engagement has occurred in 2021. The What We Heard (Round 1) Report summarizes the feedback received and further details the engagement process. The timeline of engagement has spanned from prior to the Covid-19 pandemic to during it, resulting in changing priorities for respondents. The pandemic

will leave lingering effects on travel behavior and transit that must be considered in this plan. However, even in the near-term, the post-pandemic conditions will more closely resemble pre-pandemic conditions at TheRide as compared to pandemic conditions. In the 25-year horizon, this is even more so the case.

This Plan Guidance Report attempts to reconcile this reality by focusing predominately on pre-pandemic visions but also attempting to consider what new priorities will linger over the long-term.

Staff too, provide a great deal of knowledge, drawn from years of on-the-ground service and administration of the system. They are able to provide specific insight into challenges and opportunities to help TheRide develop over the next 25 years.

The key considerations reflected by the public, partners, and staff echoed the themes and areas of importance highlighted by the Board's Ends. These will be important to consider in developing the plan. The key considerations include:

- **Be an attractive transportation option**

  The overarching priority for the Board, which was echoed unanimously by customers, stakeholders, and staff alike, is that public transportation be a viable and increasingly selected mode of travel for travelers. Thus, success of the plan will revolve around increasing modal share of TheRide services within the community, and specifically trips per capita. To get people out of cars and choosing public transit, the Plan will have to address customers' service design concerns:

  - More reliable off-peak service including extended service span
  - Enhanced quality of experience including customer amenities
  - Increased service frequency
  - Faster trips
  - More reliable service

- **Be a fully integrated public mobility provider**

  Many stakeholders emphasized the importance of providing a variety of services to meet the diverse travel needs of the community. This desire was also expressed as growth towards becoming a mobility-as-a-service provider for a streamlined user experience and for better planning integration around diverse internal and external services.

- **Organizational sustainability**

  TheRide's stakeholders felt that the organization needed to be financially sustainable over the long-term to ensure it is able to continually operate and support the community. This includes having the finances necessary to grow and develop.

- **Focus on integrating transit infrastructure to surrounding community development**

  Stakeholders specifically voiced desires that fit within a general vision for influential community collaboration. There is a desire to improve external elements that have a significant bearing on transit success such as land use/transportation policy; improved access and maintenance of stops and supporting infrastructure, and better regional collaboration.

- **Enhance regional connections**

  Customers and stakeholders specifically focused on the importance of establishing better regional connections.

- **Contribute to affordable and equitable communities**

  The public and stakeholders expressed a desire to help improve affordability and equity through the provision of affordable and high-value transportation and by working to reduce inequities in transportation along income, racial and ADA-related perspectives.

- **Efficient service provision**

  Public feedback leans toward improved frequency over increased coverage of the service. With fixed resources, that means focusing on improving system efficiency. This focus on service efficiency also captures frequently cited visions for better matching of service to demand, such as on high demand corridors, efficient use of service different modes and a network that meets the travel patterns of current and potential customers.

4 – Planning Methodology

The development of the recommended solutions and initiatives for the TheRide's 25-Year Long-Range Plan will be based on an assessment of the current state of the service and the future context within which service might operate against the Board's Ends. This will include the identification of gaps and opportunities and a staged plan that continuously progresses towards the approved Ends.

The development of the plan will rely on the construction and evaluation of plan options – amalgams of individual solutions and initiatives that together form a comprehensive plan that effectively advance the board's vision. These plan options will vary according to the prioritization of specific gaps or opportunities or themes related to the Board's Ends Policy such as access and equity, environmental sustainability, economic development and transit mode share growth.

The following figure provides an overview of the planning methodology to be employed in developing the plan.

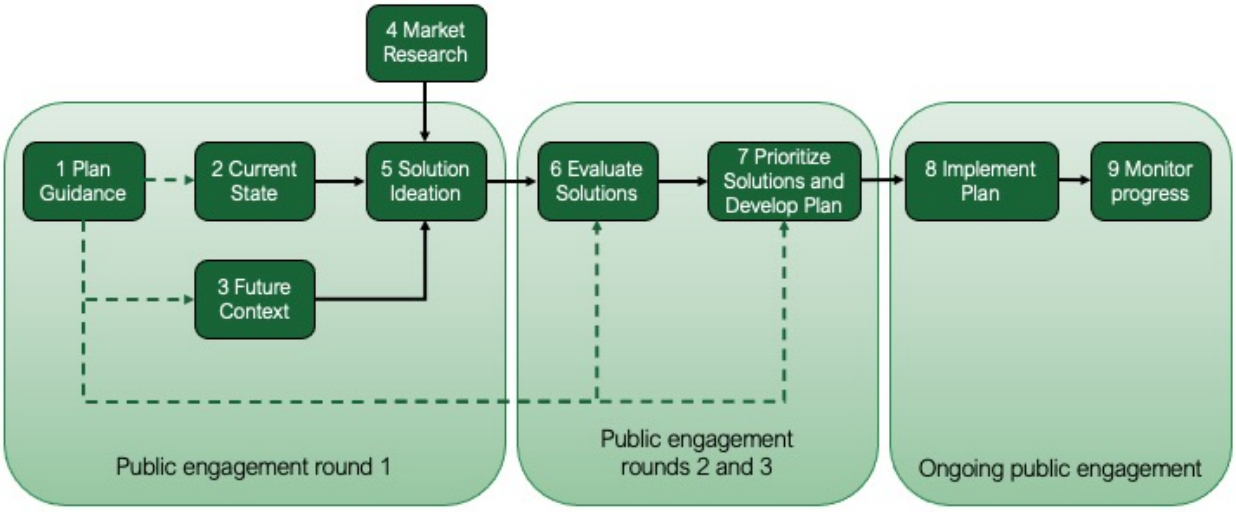

Figure 1 - Overview of Planning Methodology

The Plan Guidance (1) will be the guiding document for the entire project, informing areas of focus for research and analysis and establishing how solutions are evaluated and prioritized. The Current State and Future Context (2, 3) will result in a clear understanding of TheRide's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges (SWOC) currently and in the future. Potential solutions (5) will be generated based on the SWOC analysis, market research, and the first round of public and stakeholder engagement. Evaluation of the solutions (6) and then final selection and prioritization (7)

will be informed by the Plan Guidance and additional public engagement. Following implementation of the plan (8), progress will be monitored and informed by ongoing public engagement.

The following categories of solutions will be considered in Step 5 of this planning project:

Potential Solutions

- **Network elements**, including routes and services, higher-order transit connections, and other regional connections;
- **Fleet and facilities**, considering potential trends in fleet *electrification, autonomous vehicles* and needs for garage and customer facilities including transit terminals and stops.
- **Technology and fares**, including innovations in *fare payment technology*, *customer information*, and *microtransit*;
- **Service Design and Scheduling**, including all non-spatial features of fixed route service provision and scheduling practices
- **Delivery models,** including *family of services*, and *alternative delivery* and *contracting options*;
- **Governance**, including evolving *key partner relationships* and the overall structure of the organization;
- **External transit-supportive objectives**, including collaborative or advocacy strategies in concert with land use and transportation planning processes;

The solutions will be assessed in two stages. First, solutions will be evaluated individually and at a higher level to ascertain the value they bring to the organization.

Next, solutions will be combined to form more comprehensive plan options. Plan options will be clearly defined and characterized to facilitate public review and input – with consistent communication and transparency of evaluation. Each plan option will be comprehensively evaluated against the Board's Ends and will be presented to allow the public and stakeholders to assess the priorities of the progress towards the Board's Ends.

The framework outlined in TheRide's Corporate Business Plan will be employed at both stages as follows:

Evaluation Lens for Step 6	Individual Solutions	Plan Options
Organizational Alignment	• Does this idea help to advance the Board's desired outcomes? To what degree? • Does it mesh with what TheRide does, for whom and at what cost? • Is this focusing energy on future goals, or reactionary? • Does this idea provide an alternative to a different solution that is focused on a different End?	• Does the plan option effectively advance *all* of the Board's desired outcomes? What quantitative and/or qualitative key performance indicators demonstrate this? • Does it mesh with what TheRide does, for whom and at what cost? • Is the plan option moving TheRide forward strategically?
Roles	• Is the idea within TheRide's legal mandate, or is it the responsibility of another group? • Does TheRide have direct control, or can the organization only influence others? • Is this idea more appropriate for another organization? Is partnering a possibility?	• What elements of the plan option are reliant on the support of other organizations? • What level of external support and involvement is required to achieve success?
Risks	• What risks does the idea bring with it, now or in the future? Are those risks acceptable?	• What risks does the plan option carry that may impact achievement of the desired outcomes? • What risks does the plan option introduce to the organization, now or in the future?

Value and Affordability	• What are the funding requirements to implement and support this solution? • Is this a good use of limited funding or time (cost/benefit, ROI, etc.)? • What trade-offs are implicit or not immediately obvious?	• What are the funding requirements to implement and support this plan option? • Is this a good use of limited funding or time (cost/benefit, ROI, etc.)? • Does the plan option demonstrate value and efficient stewardship of resources? • Is the plan option based on realistic and transparent financial assumptions?
Capacity	• Does TheRide have the expertise to pursue this idea now or in the future?	• Does TheRide have the expertise to pursue this plan option now or in the future? • Does TheRide have the capacity of resources to pursue this plan option now or in the future?
Sequence and Readiness	• How ready is the solution to proceed? • Is there a risk of proceeding too soon? • What are the impacts of deferral? • Is this urgent to TheRide and its goals, or someone else?	• To be considered in the development of the implementation plan for the recommended option.
Public Commitment	• What commitments have been made regarding this this solution? Within what timeframe? • Are other external stakeholders involved in the execution of this solution and to what extent?	• Does the plan option deliver on commitments made? • What level of support will the plan option garner?

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TheRide 2045

What We Heard

Round 1 Engagement

July 2021

Left Turn Right Turn

ANN ARBOR AREA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

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We want to hear from you!

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Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority
c/o TheRide 2045
2700 S. Industrial Highway
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

THERIDE 2045 LONG-RANGE PLAN

TheRide 2045 Long-Range Plan is creating a comprehensive and long-term vision for public transit in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area. Work on TheRide 2045 began with initial public and stakeholder engagement in Fall of 2019. Due to the pandemic, further work on the plan was delayed. Now we are restarting our effort to develop a long-range plan. The project will span from Feb 2021 to Mar 2022 and is primarily planned to be completed over 4 phases:

Phase 1: Guidance (Feb-July, 2021)

Phase 2: Analysis (Mar-July, 2021)

Phase 3: Development (July 2021-Feb, 2022)

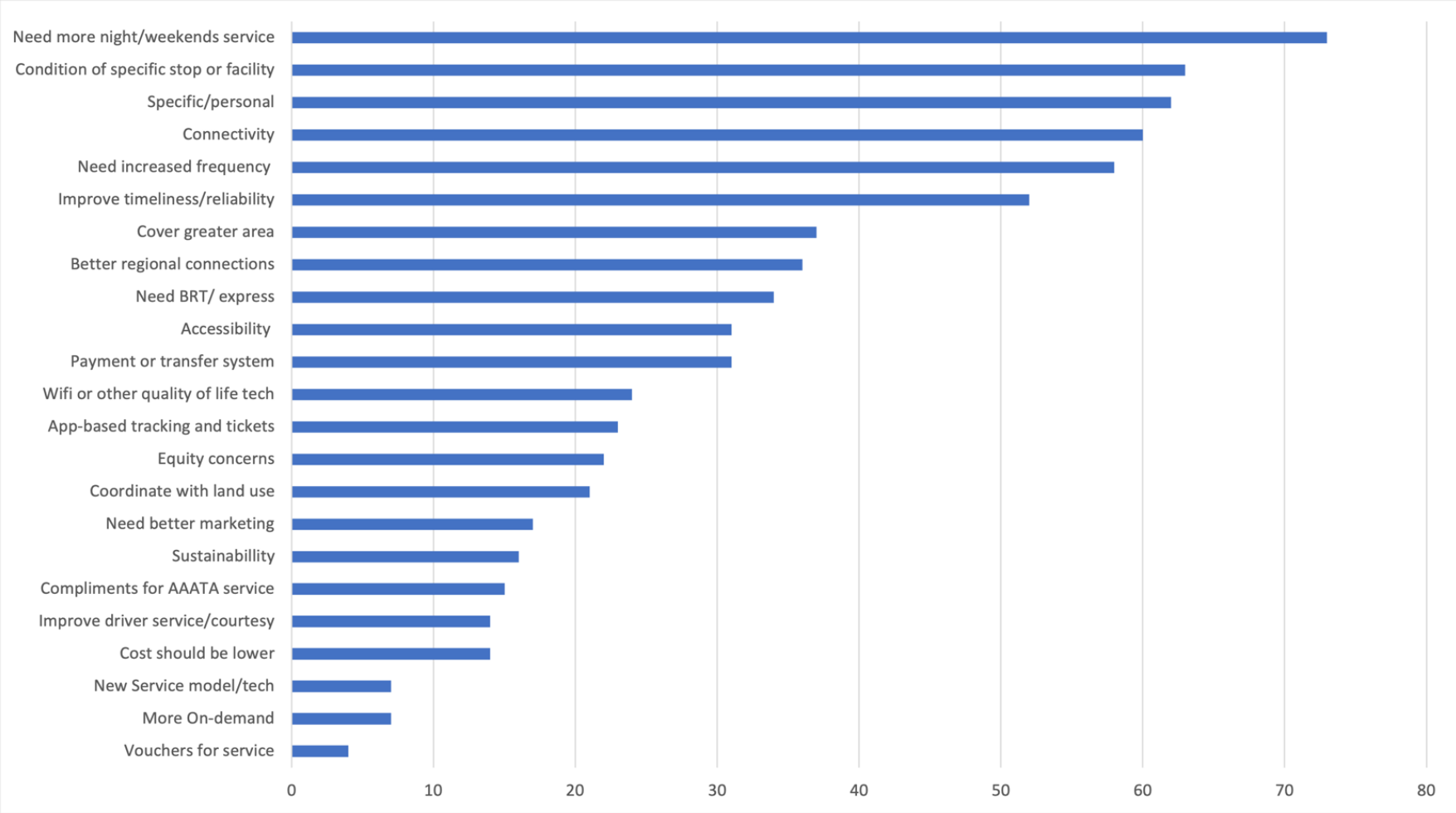
Phase 4: Finalization (Jan-Mar, 2022)

Public and stakeholder engagement plays a crucial role in guiding the content of the Long-Range Plan. Most of the public engagement will occur in the fall of 2021 and the earlier winter of 2022.

This report summarizes the key findings from the public and stakeholder engagement to date.

MOST COMMON COMMENTS

This is a summary of the most common comments received from all engagement activities to date. While every comment is unique, sorting them like this allows TheRide to see themes at a glance. See section 0 Discussion for more detail on each subject.



ENGAGEMENT TO DATE

Fall 2019 to Spring 2021

The first round of public and stakeholder engagement draws upon findings from previous public and stakeholder engagement activities held in 2019. Here, we set the stage for TheRide 2045 Long-Range Plan by focusing the engagement on a few key objectives:

1. Create the guiding framework and key measures of success that will guide the development of the Long-Range Plan.
2. Identify challenges and obstacles in using the service as reflected by riders.
3. Identify opportunities to improve customer experience and operational efficiencies.

The public and stakeholder engagement began in 2019 but was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Below is a summary of the key activities from the first round of public and stakeholder engagement process.

Engagement in 2019

This engagement process took pace in the fall of 2019 and included:

1. Public meetings
    - Ypsilanti Library
    - Ann Arbor Library
    - Spark East
    - Ypsilanti Public Hearing
    - Ann Arbor Public Hearing
2. Station Pop Ups
    - Blake Transit Centre
    - Ypsilanti Transit Centre
3. Comments through email and website
    - Over 200 comments received
    - 16 Stakeholder meetings

Engagement in 2021

1. TheRide website comment form (Apr 2021)

   The webpage for TheRide 2045 launched in April 2021, offering a section for visitors to leave general comments regarding the project and to sign up for email updates on its progress. Since its launch, the webpage has received approximately 60 comments from visitors, the findings from these comments are integrated into the themes in the What We Heard section below.

2. External stakeholders (April –June 2021)
   a. Stakeholder Webinar April 21, 2021: Project Introduction
      i. A stakeholder webinar was held in Apr 2021 to familiarize external stakeholders in the area with the project as well as to engage stakeholders in discussion to help develop the vision and guiding principles for the Long-Range Plan. The webinar revolved around discussion questions and gave participants the opportunity to comment on these questions using a virtual engagement tool called ConceptBoard.

   b. Stakeholder survey (Apr 2021)
      i. Prior to the stakeholder webinar, a survey with questions similar to those discussed in the webinar was circulated to the stakeholders with the intent of providing them the opportunity to reflect on these key themes prior to the webinar discussions. Some stakeholders submitted their response before the webinar, while others submitted afterwards.
         1. Please provide a brief description of your organization and the stakeholder group you represent.
         2. What services/features of TheRide best serve the group you represent?
         3. What are comments that you often hear and/or your perceptions about TheRide's service?
         4. What near-term changes would you like to see to improve service?
         5. Are there areas not currently being served by TheRide that you believe should be?
         6. What is your vision for public transportation in the Ann-Arbor-Ypsilanti Area and for TheRide over the next 25 years? (This can be a high-level vision or describe specific features)

7. What things do you think TheRide should be considering in developing a 25-year plan?
8. What does public transportation success in the Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti Area mean to you?
9. How would you describe your current relationship with TheRide?
10. Describe your ideal relationship with TheRide and how your current relationship can be enhanced?
11. Do you have expectations or desires for the next transit millage?

3. Public Advisory Group Meeting #1, June 9, 2021

The first meeting of the Public Advisory Group (PAG) took place on June 9th, 2021, via Zoom. This meeting included the 12 members selected as part of the PAG. The objective for this first round of engagement was to gain feedback on the current strengths and challenges of the various services offered by TheRide, and the overall vision for Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti's future regarding transit. The PAG will meet 5 more times over the course of the project on the following dates:

a. PAG Meeting #2 Solutions Workshop (July 2021)
b. PAG Meeting #3 Refine Solutions (August 2021)
c. PAG Meeting #4 Public Engagement (September 2021)
d. PAG Meeting #5 Revision of Feedback (December 2021)
e. PAG Meeting #6 Revision of Final Implementation Package (February 2022)

4. Elected Officials Webinars June 22 and 24, 2021:
    a. Webinars were held on June 22 and 24, 2021, with elected officials from the City of Ann Arbor, City of Ypsilanti and Ypsilanti Township. The webinars were designed to familiarize elected officials representing members of the Authority with the project, as well as to receive initial input to help develop the vision and guiding principles for the Long-Range Plan. The webinars included a series of 4 questions and gave participants the opportunity to comment on these questions using a virtual engagement tool called ConceptBoard. The questions asked were as follows:
        i. What is public transportation success in the Ann Arbor- Ypsilanti Area of the next 25 years?
        ii. What do you see as the current issues with public transportation in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area?
        iii. What are the future considerations that TheRide needs to account for in developing a 25-year plan?
        iv. What are the transit solutions that you believe should be pursued or evaluated over the next 25- years?

WHAT WE HEARD

Method

Representatives from TheRide collected the comments received from conversations with stakeholders and the public. We looked through every comment and pulled out the key themes. Then, each comment was tagged with the themes that applied. That means that we read all of the specific requests to see the trends out of the large number of comments at the same time.

Measures of Success

Based on our stakeholder engagement in particular, we have identified some measures of success. These are important later in the process so that we can look back to see whether the goals and objectives of the Long-Range Plan are being carried out effectively.

Key Themes

Our public and stakeholder engagement to date has revealed some key themes. By tracking and analyzing the hundreds of comments receive, we can see what people are talking about.

Discussion

Similar themes arose across many stakeholder and public events. This section characterizes the discussions on various topics.

- Need more night/weekends service
    - Many people commented on the need for extended hours on particular routes. While the routes and services differed, the request for extended hours is clear.
- Condition of specific stop or facility
    - These comments all addressed the cleanliness or state of repair of stops, or facilities.
- Improve timeliness/reliability
    - Any comment relating to on-time performance of our services were tagged in this category.
- Need increased frequency
    - There were many comments that indicated the need for more frequent service in certain areas.
- Need BRT/ express
    - BRT means 'Bus Rapid Transit', which is a service model where express buses are given dedicated lanes on major routes. These comments were different from the ones above that requested greater frequency or reliability in that they specifically called out the need for BRT or express buses.
- Cover greater area
    - Many people felt that TheRide should service either a wider area or have more routes within Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti.
- Better regional connections
    - These comments were different from the requests to cover a greater area because they mentioned the need to connect to other locations like the airport or downtown Detroit.
- Payment or transfer system
    - Some customers suggested new modernized fare payment and/or transfer systems.
- App-based tracking and tickets
    - Like reliability, some customers specifically mentioned the ability to use apps to track their buses in real time, or purchase tickets through an app.

- Connectivity
    - Many people felt that TheRide should be better integrated with other modes to create a seamless journey. Some examples of comments heard include: connecting with bikeshare, connecting with other services offered by TheRide, connecting with other transit agencies, or transfer between bus routes.
    - Better integration is needed with the University of Michigan.
- Compliments for AAATA service
    - These comments were all complimentary to our services and facilities. We appreciate our customers, and it is nice to know that TheRide is appreciated too.
- Specific/personal complaints
    - There was a wide variety of incidental service complaints or specific requests that did not fit into any other category. While these complaints are handled through TheRide's regular customer service, they still reveal opportunities for us to improve in the future.
- Improve driver service/courtesy
    - Some customers mentioned bad experiences with drivers on our service. While most drivers are great most of the time, we are all human. We hear your concerns and strive to improve.
- Need better marketing
    - Some comments related directly to TheRide's public image or promoting our services.
- Wifi and other quality of life technologies
    - There are many new amenities for a modern world that could be included into TheRide service over the next 25 years. The most frequent request is wifi.
- Cost should be lower
    - A few comments requested that the cost of service be reduced or wholly subsidized.
- Vouchers for service
    - Some customers felt that vouchers for taxis or other services could replace lack of service or service disruptions.
- Accessibility
    - Accessibility means universal access for all people, regardless of ability. Some customers and stakeholders have expressed the need for greater accessibility across our service.

- Equity
    - Some customers feel that transit needs to serve those who need it most. People who are heavily reliant on transit at the edges of the system have significantly less access to jobs. This disproportionately affects already disadvantaged communities.
- Land use
    - High housing costs in Ann Arbor pushes people to low-density, outlying areas that are difficult and expensive to service with transit. Planning for greater housing density along transit routes can ensure that people will live where they can be served by transit.
- Sustainability
    - Customers noted the importance of transit as a more sustainable mode of transportation than cars.
- More on-demand services
    - On-demand services means services like FlexRide, where customers use smartphone apps to summon rides within certain service areas.
- New Service Models and Technologies
    - There are many different ways to offer transit. Some customers have offered creative solutions to use new technologies or infrastructure upgrades to change the way TheRide functions.

USING YOUR FEEDBACK

Feedback that we heard on what transit success means for the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Area will help to shape the guiding framework for the plan. We also heard from TheRide board and staff, strategic plans, the area's municipalities, and the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG). This guiding framework will help shape our priorities when solutions are evaluated throughout the plan's creation.

We have also been using your feedback to inform the "Analysis" phase of TheRide2045 Long-Range Plan. We have been studying the current context by looking at the issues that you identified, like the low frequencies at night or on weekends, schedule reliability, stop conditions, and the travel challenges between Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor.

Your feedback is also guiding us to look at industry leading technology and transit trends, emerging types of transportation, and changing travel behavior and living preferences including remote working and a desire for more sustainable and vibrant spaces. We are considering demographic projections and ridership modeling along with local developments and community master plans.

The assessments of the current state and future context will help guide future projects and solutions development for TheRide 2045 Long-Range Plan. The feedback received to date provides suggestions for these solutions and the guiding framework to refine and prioritize the list. Once we have a list of possible solutions, grouped into themes and projects, we hope to hear from you again in the next round of engagement.

NEXT STEPS

This concludes our round 1 engagement. The next rounds will occur in the fall of 2021 and the earlier winter of 2022.

The Round 2 engagement will focus on refining and prioritizing the projects that we propose based on the information that we received from Round 1. The final round of engagement will focus on polishing the projects that were prioritized in Round 2.

Rounds 2 and 3 Engagement will include:

- Public Meetings
- Pop-ups at key station
- Webinar with stakeholders
- Stakeholder Working group meetings
- Online Surveys

Throughout the entire process, there are ongoing opportunities to engage and have your voice heard. **Check out our website at Theride.org for updates, to sign up for our newsletter or leave a comment at any time.**

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Title:	TheRide 2045 Round 1 Engagement - What We Heard
Version:	1
Author:	Left Turn Right Turn
Date:	July 22, 2021

What We Heard

Round 2 Engagement

December 2021

Left Turn Right Turn

ANN ARBOR AREA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

TheRide 2045 is a long-range plan for the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority. It will guide our decisions and investments over the next 25 years toward a vision that works for everyone. This report summarizes what we heard from our second round of public and stakeholder engagement in the fall of 2021. We spoke directly with almost 700 people through online meetings or in-person events and received over 400 responses to our survey. What we heard is summarized in the table below, organized by a few key themes.

Desire for transformational change

- The resounding message that we heard was a desire for a major enhancement to our transit system that will transform the way people move around our community.
- We heard that people wanted to be able to get around without a car.
- People wanted to improve social equity through transit service enhancement, providing access to jobs, school and housing for those who need it most.
- People value our environment and want to address our climate goals with a cleaner way to travel.
- There is an understanding that transformation will require significant investment, and people are generally willing to pay if the benefits are clear.

Desire for convenience, reliability and dependability

- People clearly wanted more high frequency routes across the service area.
- Customers want better off-peak service with more frequent buses for evenings, weekend.
- We heard a desire for fast, reliable Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and express service on major corridors.
- Customers want better connections between central locations across the service area.
- Beyond our service area, customers would like better connections to other destinations in the region.

Considerations when making transit better

- We need to collaborate with other organizations in the area, like municipal governments, the University of Michigan, and the Regional Transit Authority.
- Some people will be adversely affected by an increase to local millage, and so costs must be carefully weighed against the benefits they provide.
- Transit priority features, especially dedicated bus lanes, will require road space that is already in high demand.

Feedback by Member Municipality

- We heard in the City of Ann Arbor the need to focus on climate change and providing equitable service for those who need it most.
- In the City of Ypsilanti, we heard the need for equity in how we design and operate our services.
- In the Township of Ypsilanti, we heard the need to make sure our plan is affordable.

TheRide2045 Long-Range Plan

The Plan (phases, timeline)

TheRide 2045 Long-Range Plan is creating a comprehensive and long-term vision for public transit in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area. Work on TheRide 2045 began with initial public and stakeholder engagement in Fall of 2019. Due to the pandemic, the plan was delayed. We restarted in February of 2021 and are scheduled to finish in June of 2022. The project is taking place over four phases; we are currently in phase 3.

Phase 1: Guidance (Feb-July, 2021)

Phase 2: Analysis (Mar-Aug, 2021)

Phase 3: Development (July 2021-Feb, 2022)

Phase 4: Finalization (Jan-Jun, 2022)

Public and stakeholder engagement plays a crucial role in guiding the content of the Long-Range Plan. This report summarizes the key findings from the second round of public and stakeholder engagement, from October 18 to November 24, 2021. The next round of public engagement is scheduled to take place in the late winter of 2022.

Round 2 Engagement

The first round of public and stakeholder engagement took place in the spring of 2021, drawing upon findings from previous engagement activities held in 2019. The feedback from that first round of engagement helped us to establish the goals and values to guide our analysis. This led to the development of four scenarios based on levels of service enhancement, which we used to spark the conversations around the second round of engagement. See Appendix A: Scenarios Presented for more details.

The intention for this round of engagement was to:

1. The gauge the level of service enhancement the community would be willing to support over the next 25 years.
2. Identify the key areas to focus that service enhancement.

Public Advisory Group

Our Public Advisory Group (PAG), comprised of 12 individuals of diverse backgrounds, helps us ground our key decisions in the community. The PAG was established with a demographic split to reflect the customers of TheRide. They have helped us to frame our public engagement material and review the feedback.

Round 2 Engagement PAG Meeting Dates
Aug 11, 2021
Sept 22, 2021
Dec 1, 2021

PAG Meeting, December 1, 2021, with staff and some PAG members (some absent in photo).

Public and Stakeholder Meetings

The second round of public and stakeholder engagement was open for comment from October 18 to November 24, 2021. During that time, we received over 50 emails, phone calls and contacts through social media, and spoke to almost 700 people through direct in-person or online engagement and received 427 responses to our survey. For a more details on the specific events, please see Appendix B: Engagement Activities.

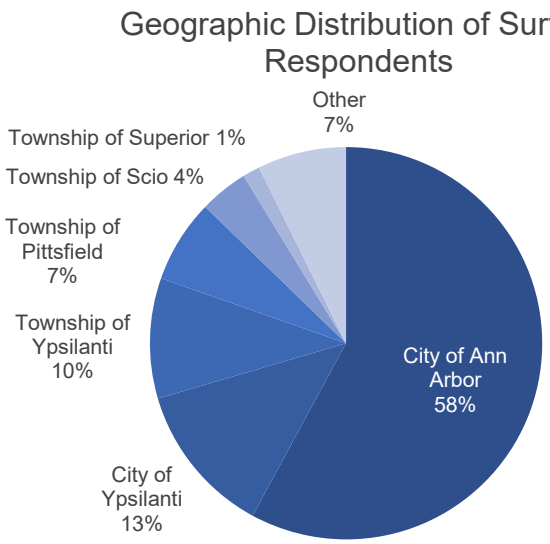
Oct 18 – Nov 24	People
Online Survey	427
Online Meetings • Public • Stakeholder • Staff	290+
In-Person Sessions	400+
Email, phone and social media contacts	50+

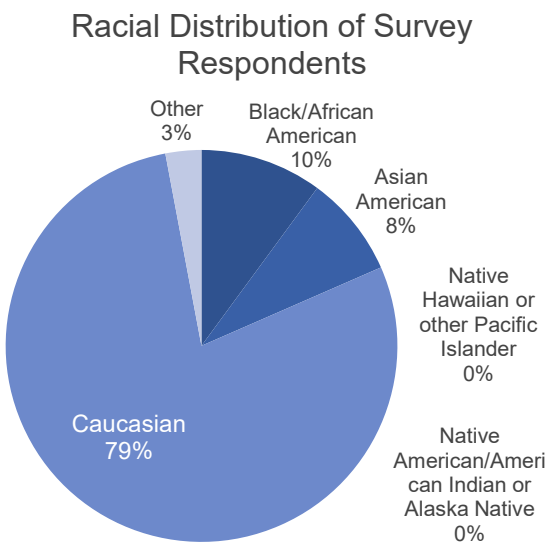
Ypsilanti Transit Center Public Engagement November 8, 2021

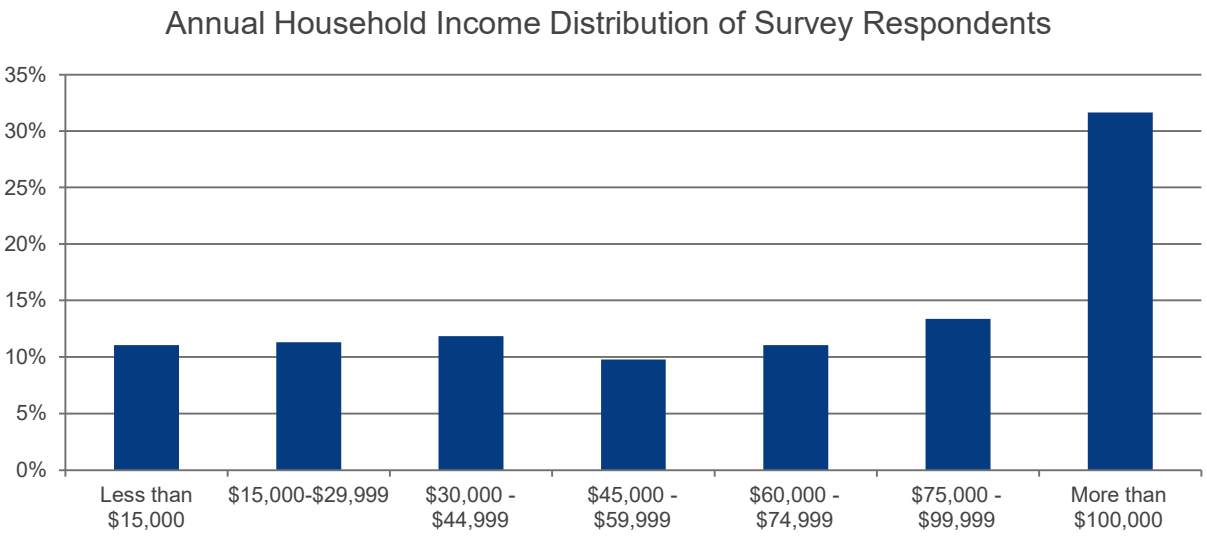
Who We Heard From

As part of the engagement, we ran a public survey to collect community feedback. We received 427 responses representing various viewpoints. However, as we integrate the feedback from this survey, we must keep in mind the voices that we heard and the voices that we did not. The respondents to the survey were mostly Caucasian with a higher household income. Not all of them are frequent transit users, but people likely do self-select to participate if they have some interest in transit.

Our in-person engagement feedback at the transit centers and particularly the Ypsilanti Transit Center (YTC), represented a higher proportion of African Americans and frequent transit riders. We included all feedback in the What We Heard section but we acknowledge that the results of the survey are not a full representation of the demographics in our service area.







What We Heard

The survey results echoed the what we heard through our on-line and in-person engagements. See Appendix C: for more details. This section represents all feedback received and is grouped into a few key themes.

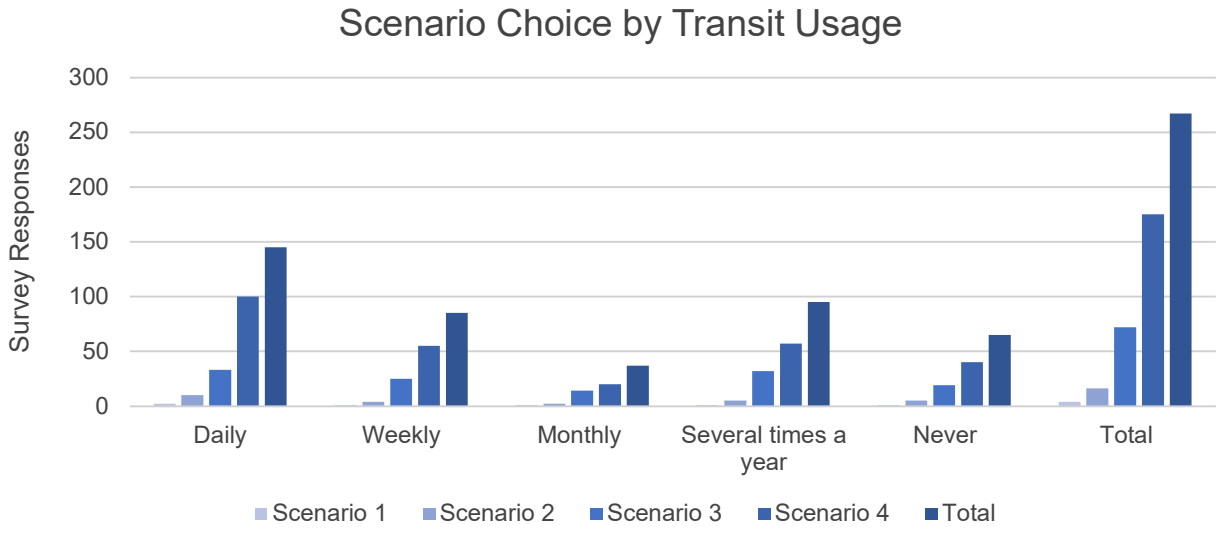
Transformational Change

The resounding message that we heard was a desire for a major enhancement to our transit system that will transform the way people move around our community. We heard that people wanted to be able to get around the area conveniently and quickly. Providing a better transit service for people who need it most improves the access to jobs, school, and housing. This was a very common reason why people felt we should transform our transit system. Another major reason was to reduce our carbon footprint; better transit leads to fewer car trips, which mean less emissions, which is good for our climate.

Most of the people that we spoke to understood that transformational change will have a cost associated with it, but they indicated a willingness to pay the increased millage when the benefits are clear. However, we also heard concerns, especially from Ypsilanti Township, about the effect higher tax rates will have on people, particularly those with lower incomes.

Scenario Choice

The feedback was structured around four scenarios, as described in Appendix A: Scenarios Presented. Many people were very excited about the idea of high-frequency network, transit priority features, and Bus Rapid Transit in Scenarios 3 and 4 as major selling features and saw coordination with municipal governments' land use planning as a key to the project success. Once successful, scenario 4 especially will mean the best results for our desired outcomes of improving equity, achieving our climate goals, and stimulating our local economy. The desire for transformational change was the same for frequent and infrequent transit users among survey respondents.



Survey respondents from the City of Ann Arbor, the City of Ypsilanti, the Township of Ypsilanti, the Township of Pittsfield, and the Township of Scio are supportive of scenario 4. Respondents from the Township of Superior are more supportive of Scenario 3.

Survey respondents who are African American, Asian American, retired, over the age of 65, or under the age of 19 were still generally in favor of Scenario 4 but with a less clear preference than other groups.

In total 64% of respondents preferred Scenario 4, 29% preferred Scenario 3, 6% preferred Scenario 3 and only 1% preferred Scenario 1. We must keep in mind that the people most interested in transit are the most likely to participate in this kind of engagement.

Convenience, Reliability and Dependability

The people we spoke with generally would like to see high frequency network across the entire service area for longer hours each day, and on weekends. They are interested in shorter, more reliable trips and not just to the downtown centers, but also connecting anywhere across the service area. They saw the importance of local partnerships, like the University of Michigan and municipalities both in the service area and in the broader region.

High Frequency Service

A major topic of interest is high frequency service, meaning routes with 15 minute or better service. Different demographics in the survey often had different priorities. However, when asked to choose their top three priorities, almost everyone across race, income level, work situation, age, transit usage, and municipality of residence included high-frequency network making it the most common choice by a wide margin.

We heard that people want faster service with less waiting time. Many people said that frequency is a key driver to making transit easier and more convenient to use. This is not only important for those travelling into the downtowns, but also to those travelling across town outside of the centers. See section Multi-Directional Connecti, below.

> *I went to Kerrytown by bus 65 at Noon today. The bus comes every 30 minutes, but 30 minutes felt too short for my errands plus getting to and from the bus… I ended up waiting 20 minutes at the bus stop. The errand ended up taking like 1 hr 20 mins when it could've taken less than an hour total, say if the busses came every 20 minutes. So this would incentivize me to take the bus more, if I knew I didn't have to rush for a bus in 30 mins at Noon or have to spend 1+ hours on my errands.*

Off-Peak Service

Many people talked about the need for more service on the evenings, and weekends. We heard a desire for 30-mintue service in off-peak times, expanding the hours of operation into the morning and evening. While some people did request more NightRide service, including better availability and expanding it to cover the entire daytime service area, it was overall less of a

priority to most people. We saw from the survey respondents that off-peak service was the second most common priority after high frequency service. Off-peak service was ranked very highly for people in most age brackets and work situations except for students and people under 19, who ranked it much lower. African Americans also rated it much lower than other races, favoring FlexRide instead.

We heard that someone planning a trip outside the peak times needs to plan a lot more to coordinate travel. This includes work and leisure. If someone's time obligation is within the regular service hours but it ends when there is infrequent or no service, they may not choose transit at all.

> *As someone who relied on AAATA for over a decade to get to and from my job as a food service worker, because of the winding routes and where I lived, it took over an hour to get downtown, and often on weekends I would be forced to use cabs instead of the bus because of the short hours… I know it's easy to focus resources toward the 9 to 5 crowd, but we must center those who rely on the bus exclusively for transport.*

Express and Bus Rapid Transit Service

The people we spoke to were generally interested in the idea of integrating faster routes with fewer stops that use transit priority features along major corridors. Many of the concerns that we heard about present service were related to long trip times and reliability, indicating a desire to resolve these issues. Many customers said that BRT services were needed on high demand corridors, especially between Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor along Washtenaw Avenue, with a focus on the downtown areas.

When respondents to the survey chose their top 3 priorities, Express and BRT services were very close in number, with a slight preference toward BRT. There may have been some confusion among respondents about the difference between these services, but even together they rank lower than the desire for high frequency service. Express and especially BRT services were less important to people with an annual household income between $30,000 and $60,000; all other income groups ranked them much higher. This may be due to where these people live in relation to the proposed routes.

A frequent concern was about a BRT competing for space on a busy roadway. To make a BRT project successful, we will need to align the interests of many different stakeholders. Even while acknowledging the benefit of a BRT, there was some pessimism about the feasibility.

> *Some of the attributes of BRT such as signal prioritization, queue jumping and limited stops could be implemented on any major transit route.*

Regional Connections

Many survey respondents cited that we need better regional connections, however it was not often the top priority. Infrequent transit users, and those from the Township of Ypsilanti ranked Regional Connections much higher than other groups. This is consistent with what we heard

from other conversations, where connections from Ypsilanti to Western Wayne County were raised as priorities. Stronger regional connections would improve access to jobs for people in a broader area, with an emphasis on local connections to SMART. We heard a need to access to other areas such as U of M medical facilities, Scio Township and Ann Arbor Township, Superior Township, and Dixboro.

There was some mixed discussion on the need for new or larger park and ride lots across the region with service to Ann Arbor or Ypsilanti. Some people felt that bringing people in from a broader catchment area will mean more fare revenue and ultimately better service. Others felt that a large expansion of park and rides would be a poor return on investment and may detract from ridership growth. Generally, park and ride expansion was not a high priority for survey respondents, particularly current riders.

Ann Arbor needs a connection to western Wayne County, not just downtown Detroit or the airport. Needs a connection to SMART in particular. The gap needs to be closed.

Multi-Directional Connectivity

We heard that when customers travel, it is not always to downtowns but across town outside of the centers. For these diverse trips, High Frequency Service on two routes that cross means less waiting and faster transfers.

It is easy to get in and out of downtown from all around A2. But it is really cumbersome to get to another part in town without having to go downtown. E.g., from my house, if I want to go 75 degrees to the left or right, it would be nice to get there straight instead of having to go downtown and transfer to a second bus to get me where I want. It takes way too much time for a short distance. We need transit for people outside of downtown who just want to go a couple miles radius in their own neighborhood without having to go downtown

Things to Consider while making Transit Better

The need for better collaboration came through as a theme in many of the conversations that we had about the future of transit in the area. Collaboration with the University of Michigan to coordinate planning and operations was consistently raised.

The municipal governments were mentioned as a key player, for both new projects and daily operations. The success of transit priority features, especially fully dedicated bus lanes depends on the municipal, County and State partners to support changing the streetscape. There was concern that such a big change would not be supported by the whole community or the local and State governments. Land use planning can also encourage denser development around transit nodes and major corridors.

The municipalities have a major role in ensuring good pedestrian connections to TheRide's services. If there are more buses and the same number of cars, it may become more dangerous for pedestrians or cyclists without safe street design. This includes the repair and snow clearing of the sidewalks and bus stops. Poorly cleared bus stops and sidewalks can render otherwise accessible transit service unusable for people with mobility issues.

Another concern was the burden of the increased millage on those who are least able to pay for it. It makes it more difficult that those are also the people who often need good transit service the most. To gauge this problem, we turn to the elected officials that we spoke to. There was a mix of skepticism and optimism about whether the service would improve in time to justify the tax increase for those affected most. Each politician had different concerns, but most were supportive of the more transformational changes proposed in scenarios 3 and 4 and the benefits that those changes will have on their constituents in the long-term.

> *I am loving the idea of one of the top budget plans. As a rider most of everything proposed will benefit me. I do have a concern though with a millage increase and property taxes go up, how will this impact rent prices and home prices and the cost of living in Washtenaw County. The cost of living is already way too extreme. I am a food service worker downtown and I believe I make a fair wage and I work for a small business who is just barely getting by.*

Engagement material used in November 2021 public events.

Using Your Feedback

Voices We Did Not Hear

While using the feedback we received, it is always important to keep in mind who it is coming from and recognize the gaps in our knowledge. As we take the next steps in presenting a single plan, we must use our professional judgement to interpret the data with this context in mind.

The respondents to the survey were mostly Caucasian with a higher household income. This is not reflective of the transit users in the area. As a result, we place more emphasis on in-person engagement feedback at the transit centers and particularly the Ypsilanti Transit Center, where we spoke with a higher proportion of African Americans. We also acknowledge the need to hear from non-transit riders, who were probably less interested in participating our public engagement are underrepresented in our feedback.

Creating a Plan That Works for Everyone

We heard through many conversations the need to serve those in our community who need it most. The importance of equity came through in many of our conversations and helps us to frame our approach, see section Next Steps for more details. We found that most of the priorities for low-income survey respondents lined up with the general trends. See Appendix C: Important Features.

We are able to review some of the survey responses in detail when we look at specific demographics and use our conversations to help put that feedback in context. For example, most demographic groups did not prioritize increasing FlexRide except for African and Asian Americans. This seems to run contrary to the most other feedback, where we heard that people would generally prefer a fixed route rather than on-demand service. These groups favored the idea of first and last mile solutions, and mobility as a service more than other groups. This may be due high housing prices in the centers forcing demographics that tend to have lower incomes to the outskirts where they are less served by transit.

The connection thread is probably a lack of access to transit. By providing easily accessible high frequency routes to the places identified in the Opportunity Index, we can hopefully address the reason for the responses from these groups in particular. The Opportunity Index is an important tool for identifying which communities have access to structural privilege and which do not. The index can guide future decisions about where to invest our collective resources and how to consider policy changes to advance equity.

We also heard that switching to zero-emission buses was very high priority among most survey respondents. While there is a parallel propulsion study being undertaken by TheRide, it helps to tell us that many people felt the need to have a positive impact on the environment.

Funding

Once we understand the appetite of the community to invest in transit, we can add the features that are most important to the community. Gauging that level of investment is therefore the key to our next step but we do not have enough information on the people who did not participate in our engagements. Since a significant portion of transit funding in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area comes from local millage, a successful transit plan must be accepted by the whole community, not just transit users.

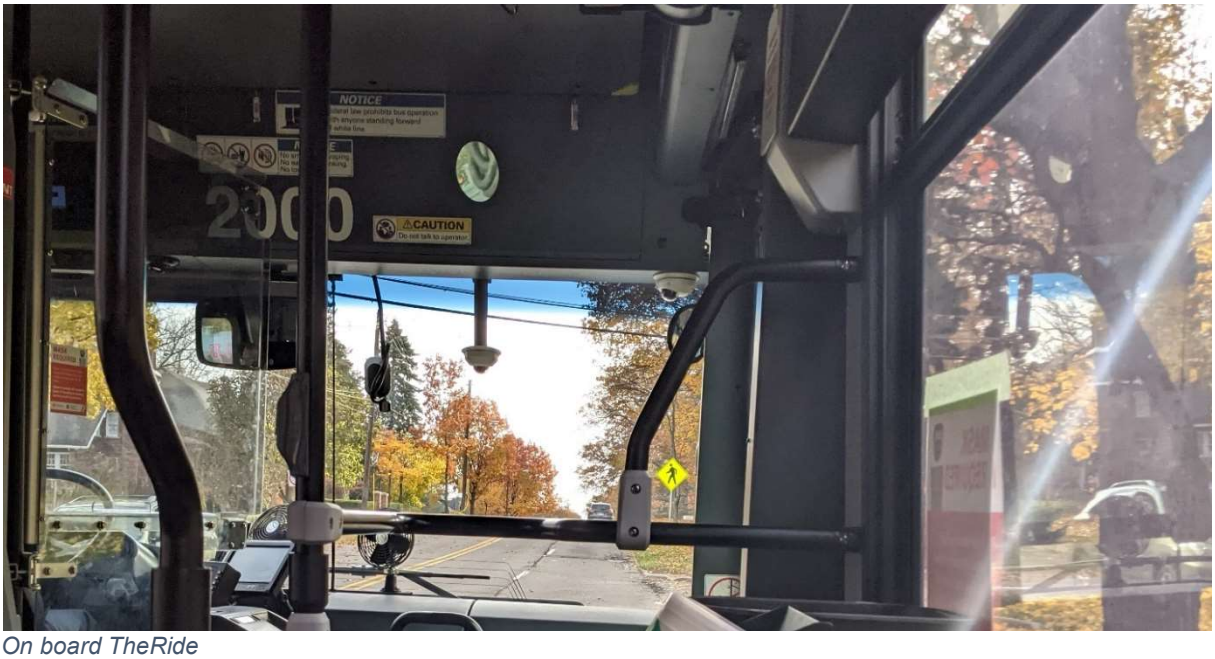
Understanding the level of investment that the entire community supports will determine the breadth of the plan that we put forward. Being most in touch with their own voters, we are using our conversations with elected officials to help us understand their perspective. While there was some concern over the impact of a tax increase, the feedback was largely supportive.

As we develop a single plan from here, we must work closely with the board of TheRide, who makes decisions on future tax rates, to make sure our plan is feasible.

Where Should We Start?

The scenarios as presented were examples of how features could be packaged. Based on this feedback, we will start with the most popular scenarios as a base and adjust from there. We will make those adjustments based on what we learned from the feedback.

Many people liked scenario 4 because it creates transformational change to the system that achieves our desired outcomes. Elements that were most important were high frequency network, off-peak service, faster and more direct connections to variety of locations, not just the downtowns. All of these services work together and cannot be achieved without a significant level of investment. This scenario has the greatest benefits to our goals of equity, the environment, and the economy, which resounded with the community.



On board TheRide

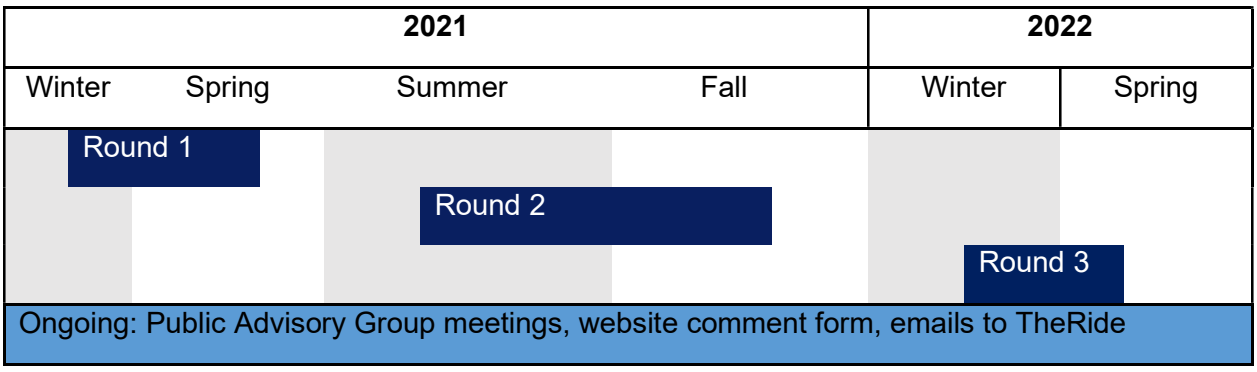
Next Steps

This concludes our second round of engagement. The next and final round is scheduled to occur in late winter of 2022. As we put the feedback we received into context, we will spend the next several weeks working on the implementation staging and financial plan for a single scenario. The final round of engagement will focus on tweaking this draft plan.

The next steps in the process will be:

Further Analysis	Further anaylsis on the concepts that people found most important, especially how the plan relates to equity and the environment.
Develop draft plan	Based on the analysis and the feedback, keeping in mind the voices we heard and the voices we did not.
Implementation and Financial Planning	Here we break draft plan down over time so we know how much to spend and when
Public Engagement Round 3	Final round of public engagement based on staged plan.
Final Plan	We will adjust the plan based on the final round of engagement. Once adopted, it will guide our decisions for the next 25 years.

Round 3 Engagement would include drop-ins and pop-ups at Stations, webinars with stakeholders, online public meetings, and an Online survey. **Check out our website at Theride.org for updates, to sign up for our newsletter or leave a comment at any time.**



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Title:	TheRide2045 Round 2 Engagement – What We Heard

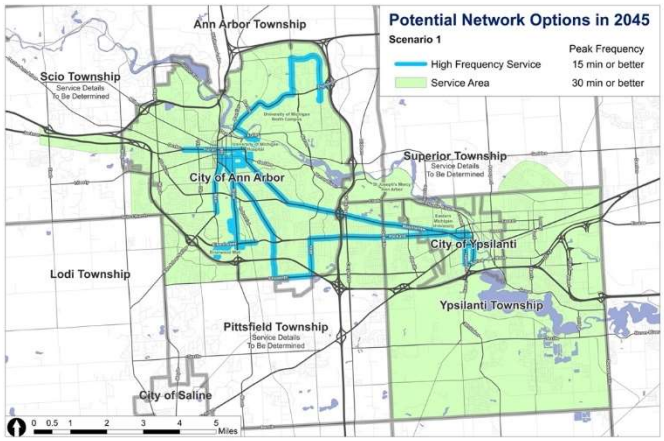
Appendix A: Scenarios Presented

Scenario 1 Baseline

Scenario 1 was presented as the baseline or status quo scenario with minimal to no investment and stagnant or declining ridership.

There is minimal to no increase in local millage, meaning there is minimal to no investment and stagnant or declining ridership. In scenario 1 there are minor adjustments over the next 25 years. In all scenarios upgrades to Blake Transit Center and Ypsilanti Transit Center are made.

In this scenario, 63% of the population and 82% of jobs are close to high frequency service (15 minutes or better).



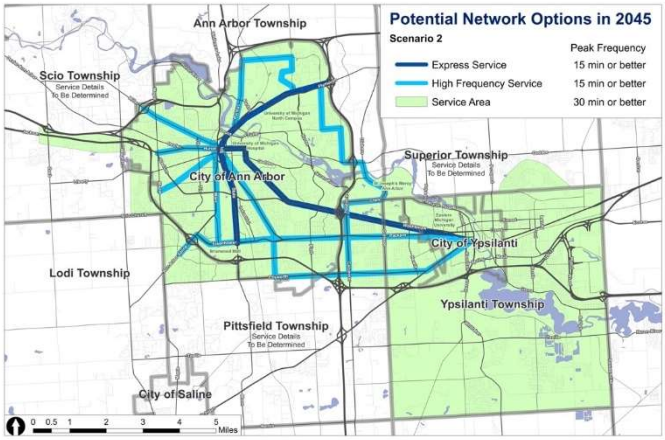
Scenario 2 Minor Enhancement

In scenario 2, there are minimal investments made resulting in limited ridership increase.

There is a small increase to local millage. Minor enhancements in scenario 2 include:

- New express services
- Concentration of service on major corridors
- Buses are on time more often
- More off-peak service including NightRide

In this scenario, 77% of the population and 93% of jobs are close to high-frequency service (15 minutes or better).

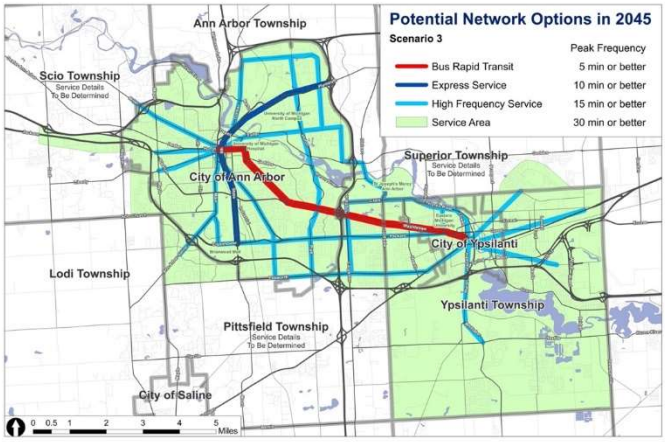


Scenario 3 Modest Enhancement

In scenario 3, there is a modest increase to local millage. Here, we present better service all around, with new types of transit such as:

- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
- High frequency service in more places
- Better transfers
- Buses are on-time, more often
- More off- peak service including NightRide

In this scenario, 86% of the population and 96% of jobs are close to high-frequency service (15 minutes or better).

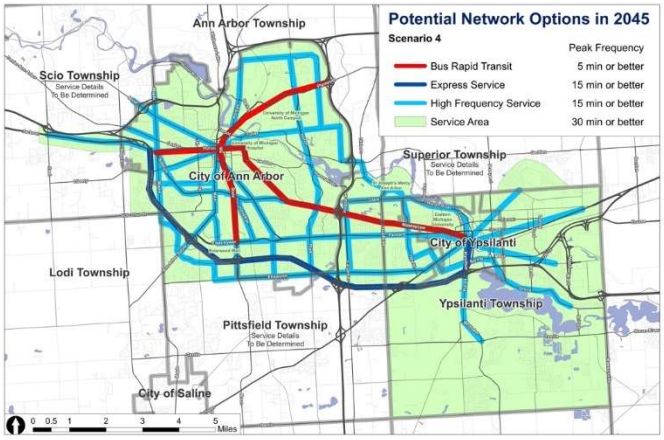


Scenario 4 Major Enhancement

In scenario 4, there is a large increase to local millage. With this investment, scenario 4 sees a transformational change of the entire transit system. Better services change how people get around the area:

- More Bus Rapid Transit
- Broad network of high frequency service
- Better transfers
- Buses are on time, more often
- Even more off-peak service including NightRide

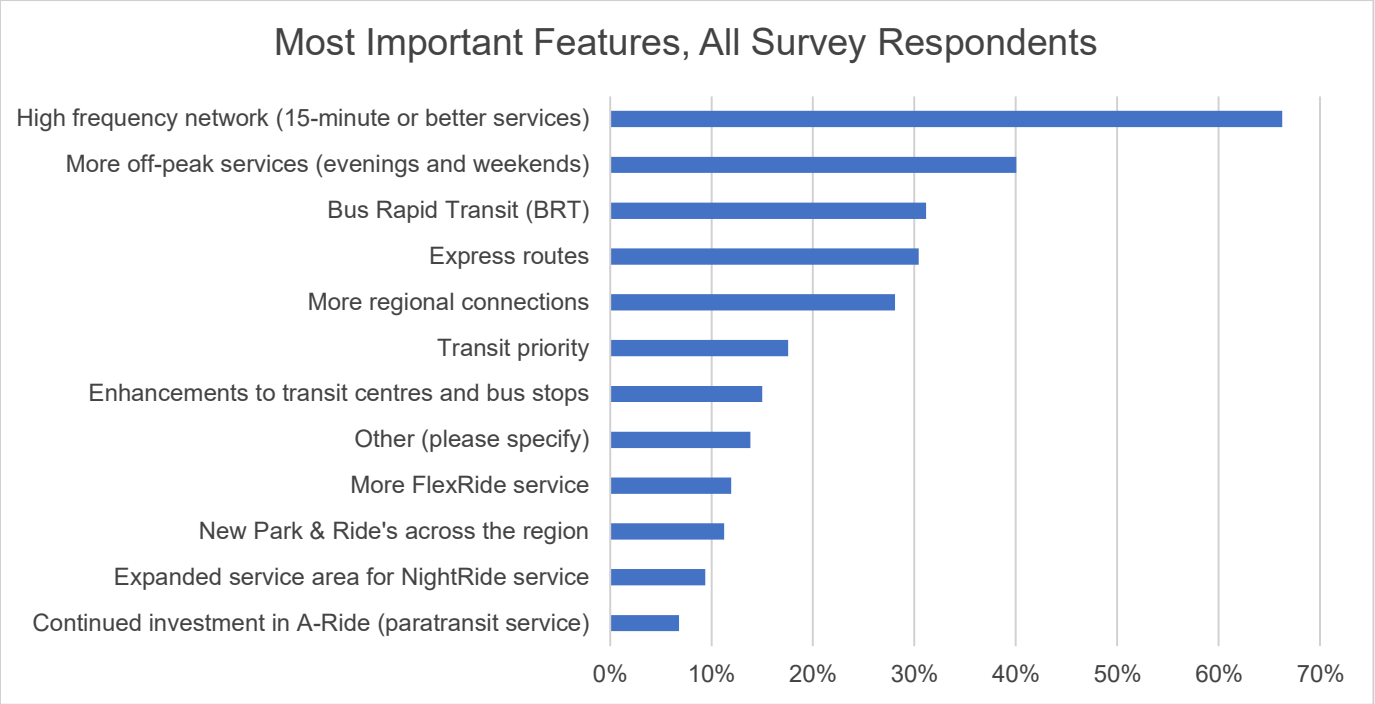
In scenario 4, 93% of the population and 99% of jobs are close to high-frequency service (15 minutes or better).

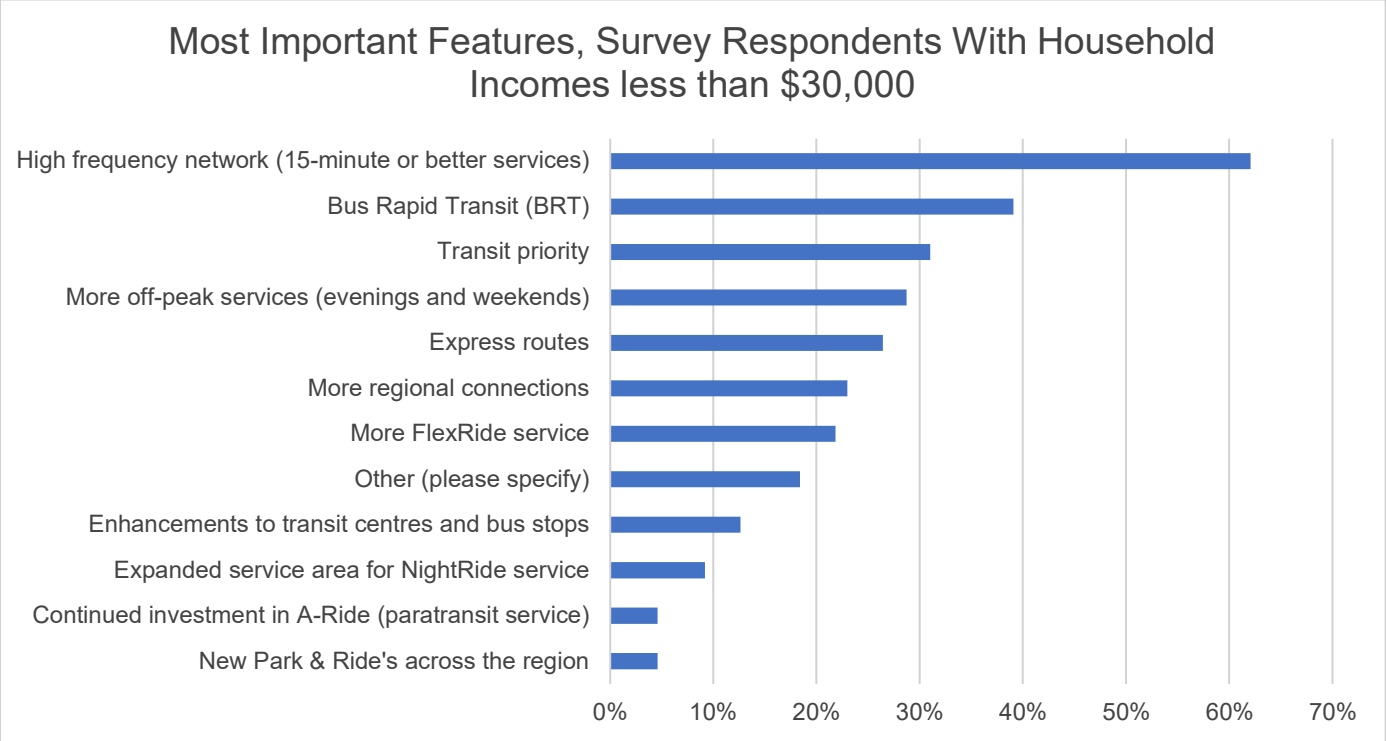


Appendix B: Engagement Activities

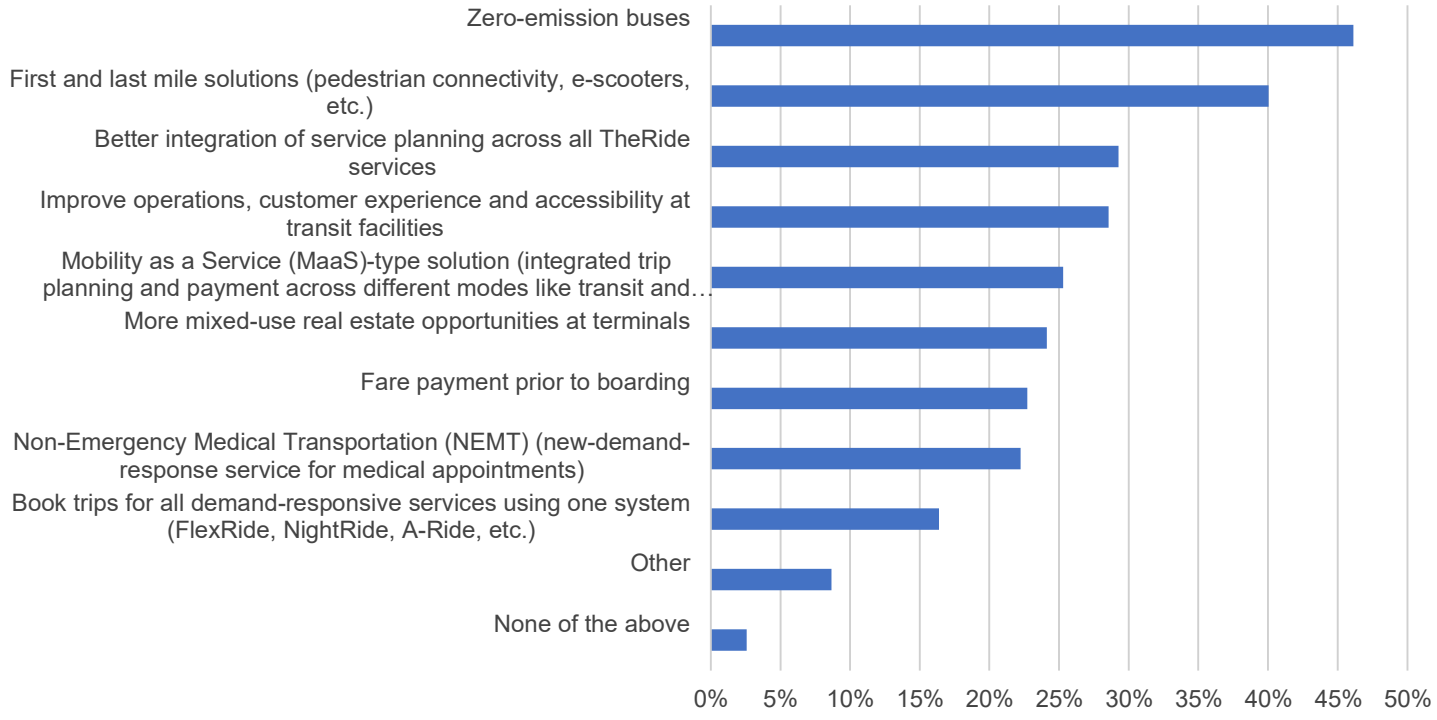
Stakeholder Group	Date
Board Meeting	6-Oct
Staff Town Hall 1	14-Oct
Staff Town Hall 2	14-Oct
Local Advisory Council	9-Nov
Stakeholder Webinar 1	20-Oct
Stakeholder Webinar 2	25-Oct
Ann Arbor Transportation Commission	20-Oct
Ann Arbor Transportation and Planning	19-Nov
A2ZERO Ambassadors Transportation Instructors Follow up	22-Oct
DDA Affordable Housing and Econ. Dev. Comm.	10-Nov
Ypsilanti City Council	19-Oct
YDDA Board	16-Dec
Ypsilanti Township Leadership Team	4-Nov
Ypsilanti Township Board	16-Nov
Scio Transportation Alternatives Planning Committee	10-Nov
Pittsfield Township Board	10-Nov
Washtenaw County Commission	20-Oct
WATS Policy Committee	17-Nov
WATS Technical Committee	3-Nov
RTA staff/consulting team	17-Nov
WCC Webinar	16-Nov
Online Public meeting #1	26-Oct
Online Public meeting #2	28-Oct
Online Public meeting #3	3-Nov
Online Public meeting #4	4-Nov
In-person Session: Ypsilanti Transit Center	8-Nov
In-person Session: Blake Transit Center	9-Nov
In-person Session: Ypsilanti District Library	10-Nov
In-person Session: Central Campus Transit Center	10-Nov
In-person Session: Eastern Michigan University	11-Nov
In-person Session: University of Michigan North Campus	12-Nov

Appendix C: Important Features

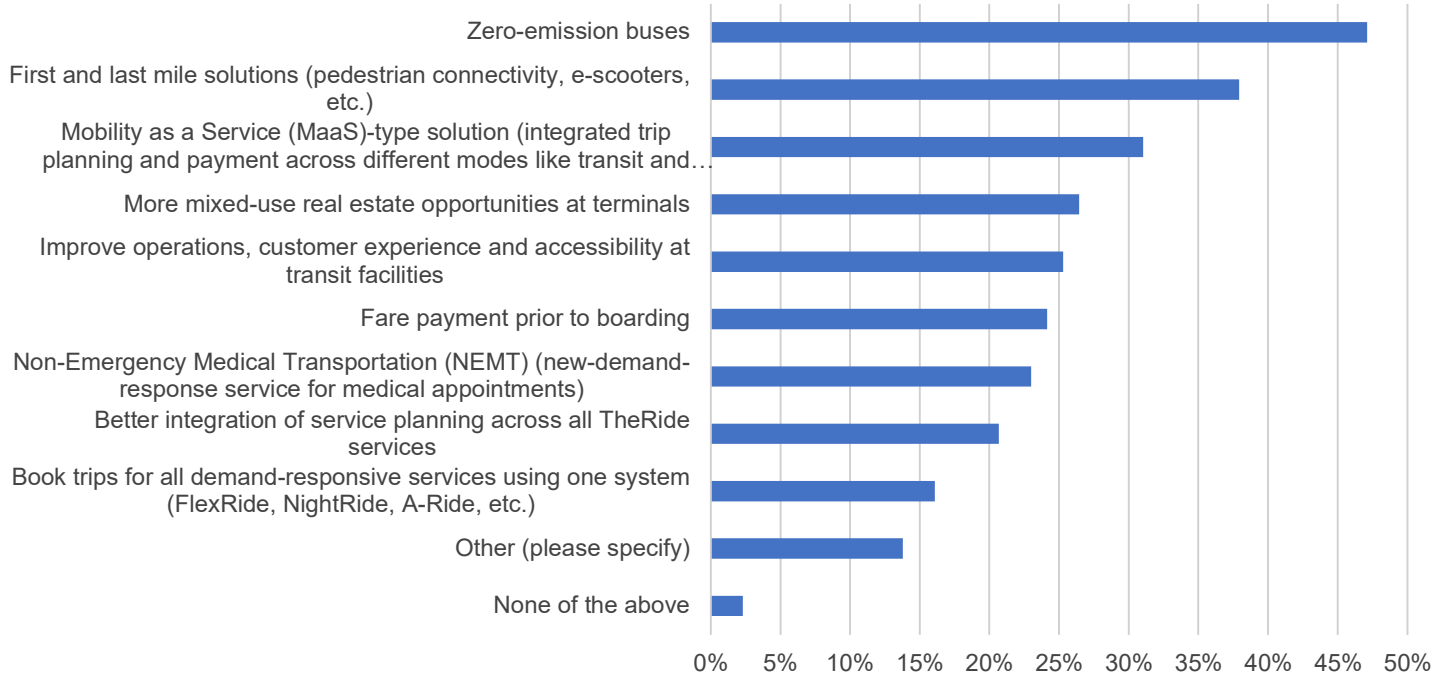




Other Ideas By Importance, All Survey Respondents



Other Ideas By Importance, Survey Respondents With Household Incomes less than $30,000



TheRide 2045

What We Heard

Round 3 Engagement

May 2022

Left Turn Right Turn

ANN ARBOR AREA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

TheRide 2045 is a long-range plan for the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority. It will guide our decisions and investments over the next 25 years toward a vision that works for everyone. This report summarizes what we heard from our third and final round of public and stakeholder engagement in the spring of 2022. We spoke directly about the Long-Range Plan with almost 1100 people through online meetings or in-person events and received 478 responses to our online survey. What we heard is summarized in the table below, organized by a few key themes.

Support

The people we spoke to were overwhelmingly supportive of the plan, many were willing to advocate for it. People understand that change takes time and money but appreciate the long-term vision.

Transit for Those Who Need It Most

Social Equity: we heard the strongest support for improving social equity and providing service to the people that need it most

Accessibility: means weaving accessibility into every aspect of our plan

More off-peak service: those who rely on transit need it at all times of day.

Efficiency, Reliability

Transit efficiency and faster travel times: means greater return on investments, faster travel, and better integration of services.

High-frequency routes: we heard a desire for a network of high-frequency routes across the service area, not just to downtown locations.

Sustainability: we heard people say we need a more sustainable transportation system.

Connections

Bus Stops and Transit Hubs: need to be accessible and connect to first/last mile solutions

Connections to other mobility services: inside our service area and beyond.

Collaboration with Municipalities and other partners: greater community benefits through an integrated planning approach

Cost

The cost of this plan: Most of the people that we spoke to understood that big change will have a cost associated with it. However, a minority of people that we spoke with did feel that the costs are too high and that alternative funding source should be explored

TheRide2045 Long-Range Plan

The Plan (phases, timeline)

TheRide 2045 Long-Range Plan is creating a comprehensive and long-term vision for public transit in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area. Work on TheRide 2045 began with initial public and stakeholder engagement in Fall of 2019. Due to the pandemic, the plan was delayed. We restarted in February of 2021 and are scheduled to finish in June of 2022. The project is taking place over four phases; we are currently in phase 4.

Phase 1: Guidance (Feb-July, 2021)

Phase 2: Analysis (Mar-Aug, 2021)

Phase 3: Development (July 2021-Feb, 2022)

Phase 4: Finalization (Jan-Jun, 2022)

Public and stakeholder engagement plays a crucial role in guiding the content of the Long-Range Plan. This report summarizes the key findings from the third and final round of public and stakeholder engagement, which took place from March 14 to April 22, 2022.

The comments and feedback provided in this report relate to the Long-Range Plan only.

Round 3 Engagement

The first round of public and stakeholder engagement took place in the spring of 2021, drawing upon findings from previous engagement activities held in 2019. The feedback from that first round of engagement helped us to establish the goals and values to guide our analysis. This led to the development of four scenarios based on levels of funding, which we used to spark the conversations around the second round of engagement.

Based on the responses in the second round of engagement, we developed a single draft plan. See Appendix A: Draft Plan Presented for more details. The intention for this round of engagement was to gauge the level of support for the draft plan in order to adjust our final Long-Range Plan. To do that, we spoke to TheRide Board and staff, external stakeholders, the public and our Public Advisory Group.

Public Advisory Group

Our Public Advisory Group (PAG), comprised of 12 individuals of diverse backgrounds, helps us ground our key decisions in the community. The PAG was established with a demographic split to reflect the customers of TheRide, including race/ethnicity, age, income, place and type of residence, transit ridership, disability, gender identity. At every stage of the project development, this group lent us their insight based on their own personal experiences. In the third round of public engagement, they gave comment on the material before it was presented to the public and debriefed on the preliminary findings afterward. Due to Covid-19, all meetings were held online.

PAG Meetings	
June 9, 2021	Introduction
July 7, 2021	Solutions workshop
Aug11, 2021	Refine solutions
Sept 22, 2021	Prep for public engagement Round 2
Dec 1, 2021	Review feedback Round 2
Feb 23, 2022	Prep for public engagement Round 3
April 27, 2022	Review feedback Round 3

Figure 1 PAG Meeting, December 1, 2021 with staff and some PAG members (some absent in photo)

Figure 2 PAG Meeting, April 26, 2022 with staff and some PAG members (some absent in photo)

Public and Stakeholder Meetings

The third round of public and stakeholder engagement was open for comment from March 14 to April 22, 2022. During that time, we received over 25 emails, phone calls and contacts through social media, and spoke to approximate 880 people through direct in-person engagement. We spoke to at least 210 people in our online public and stakeholder meetings and received 478 responses to our survey. We made special efforts to speak with non-transit users. For a more details on the specific events, please see Appendix B: Engagement Activities.

Figure 3 Washtenaw Community College March 22, 2022

Oct 14 - April 22	People
Online Survey	478
Online Meetings • Public • Stakeholder • Staff	210+
In-Person Engagements	880+
Email, phone and social media contacts	25+

Figure 4 Eastern Michigan University Student Center, March 21, 2022

Figure 5 Briarwood Mall, April 9, 2022

Who We Heard From

As part of the engagement, we ran a public survey to collect community feedback. We received 478 responses representing various viewpoints. However, as we integrate the feedback from this survey, we must keep in mind the voices that we heard and the voices that we did not. The respondents to the survey were mostly Caucasian with a higher household income. About half of our respondents were between 30 and 64. Not all of them are frequent transit users, but people likely do self-select to participate if they have some interest in transit.

Our in-person engagement feedback at the transit centers and particularly the Ypsilanti Transit Center (YTC), represented a higher proportion of African Americans and frequent transit riders.

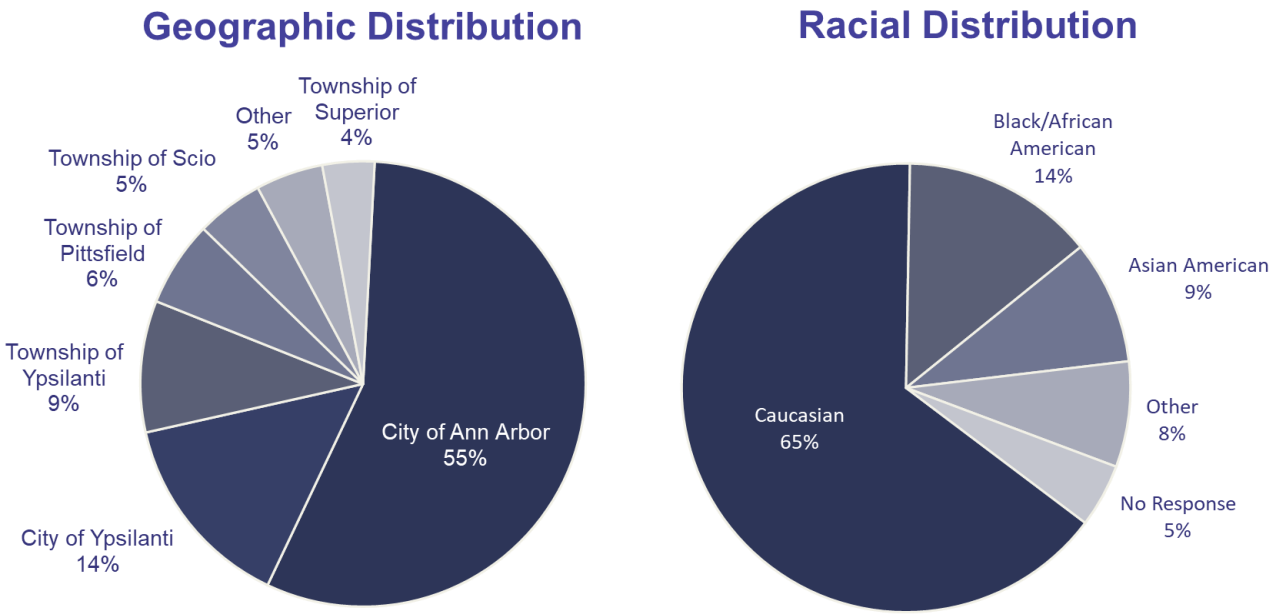


Figure 6 Geographic and racial distribution of survey respondents

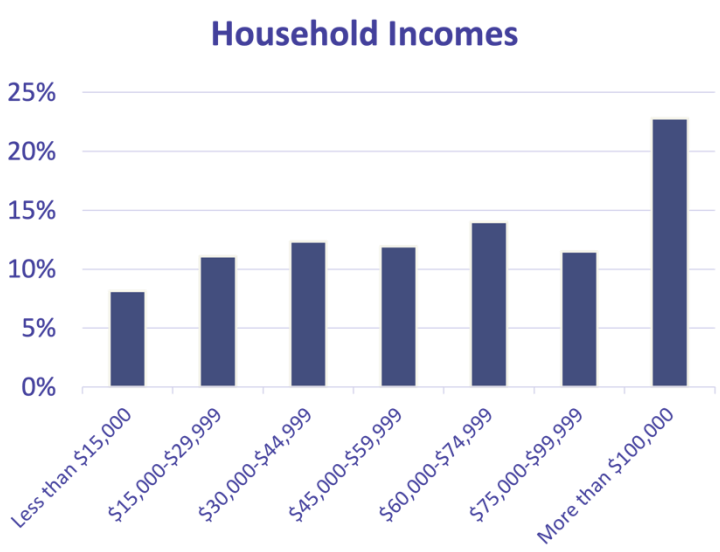


Figure 7 Survey Respondents by household income. Does not include 'no response'

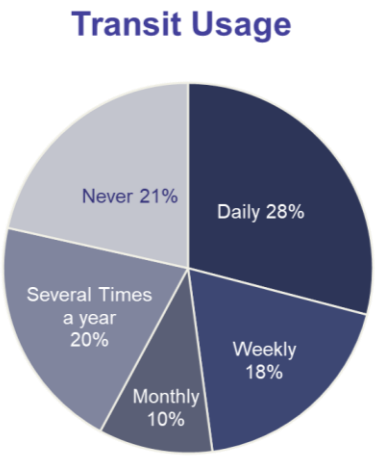


Figure 8 Survey Respondents by transit usage. Does not include 'no response'

Voices We Did Not Hear

While using the feedback we received, it is always important to keep in mind who it is coming from and recognize the gaps in our knowledge. As we take the next steps in presenting the final plan, we must use our professional judgement to interpret the data with this context in mind.

The respondents to the survey were somewhat skewed toward Caucasian with a higher household income. This is not reflective of the transit users in the area. As a result, we place more emphasis on in-person engagement feedback at the transit centers and particularly the Ypsilanti Transit Center, where we spoke with a higher proportion of African Americans. We also acknowledge the need to hear from non-transit riders, who were probably less interested in participating in our public engagement and may be underrepresented in our feedback. In our survey, non-transit users were the least supportive group of respondents. To engage more non-transit riders, we held in-person events at various public destinations such as the Briarwood Mall, Meijer store, and Ypsilanti District Library.

In our planning, we use the Washtenaw County Opportunity Index, which is an important tool for identifying which communities have access to structural privilege and which do not. The index can guide future decisions about where to invest our collective resources and how to consider policy changes to advance equity.

Our Public Advisory Group helped us to contextualize the feedback that we heard from the perspective of diverse communities.

Figure 9 Briarwood Mall, April 9, 2022

What We Heard

Representatives from TheRide collected the comments received from conversations with stakeholders and the public. We reviewed the survey and looked through every comment to pull out the key themes. We read all the specific requests to see the trends out of the large number of comments at the same time. See Appendix C: Important Features for more detail on the preferred features from the survey. This section explores the key themes that arose from our engagement and the actions that we will take when refining the final plan.

Support for the Plan

The meeting attendees and people that we spoke to in our in-person engagements were extremely supportive of the plan and our survey respondents were generally very supportive of the plan; 30% of survey respondents were strongly supportive and willing to advocate for the plan, another 35% were strongly supportive and 80% were at least generally supportive. Of the remaining respondents, 7% were neutral, 2% would be supportive with some small changes, and 11% would need major changes to the plan to be supportive.

The most supportive groups are those with household incomes less than $45,000 and daily transit users. The least supportive groups are those with household incomes from $60,000 - $90,000, and people who never use transit.

Overall, this is a very high level of support. This section will examine who and where the support is coming from, and what changes we should make to the final plan.

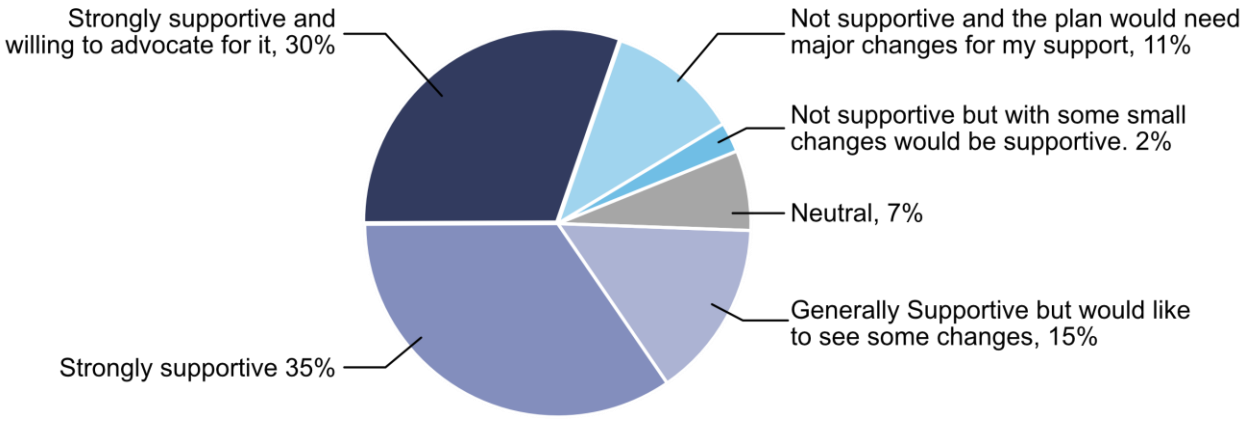


Figure 10 All Survey Respondents by Level of Support. Does not include 'no response'

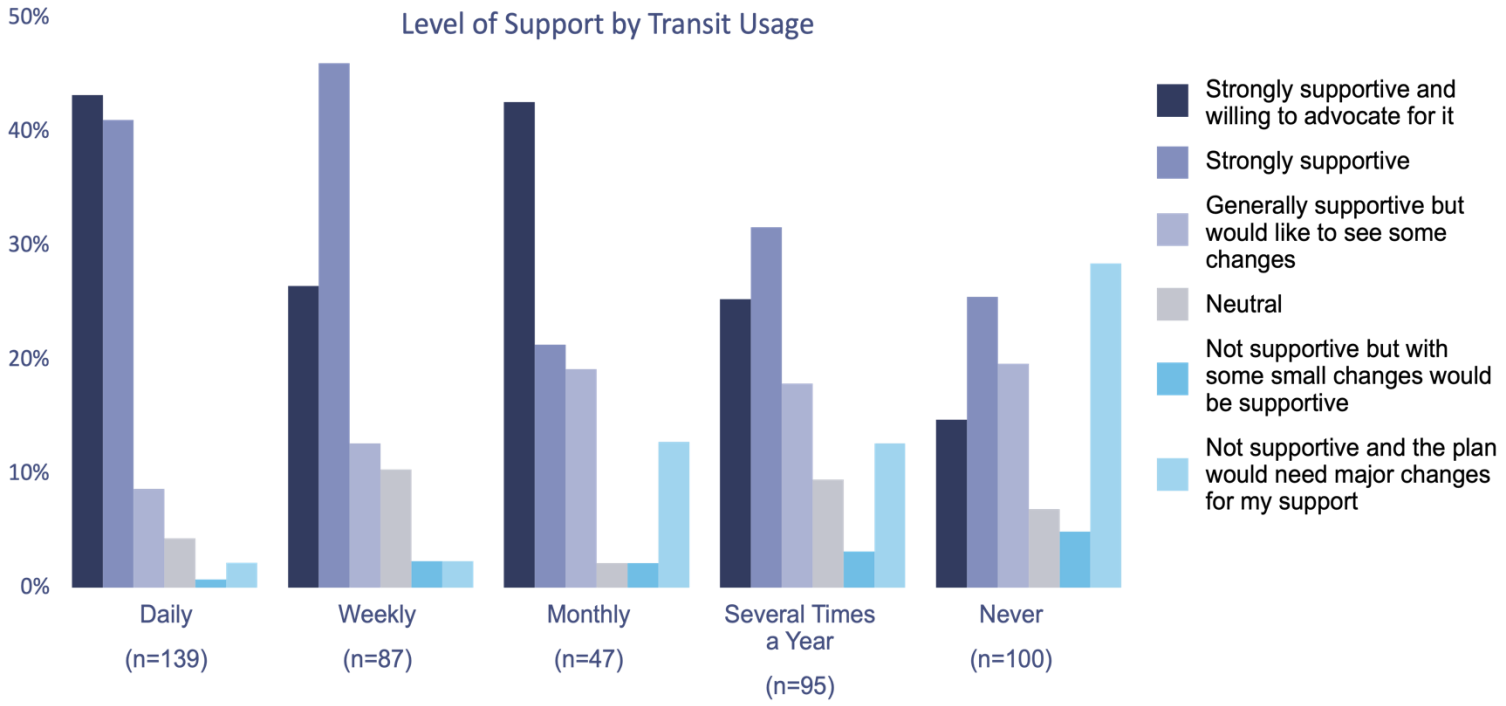


Figure 11 Survey Respondents Level of Support by Transit Usage. Does not include 'no response'

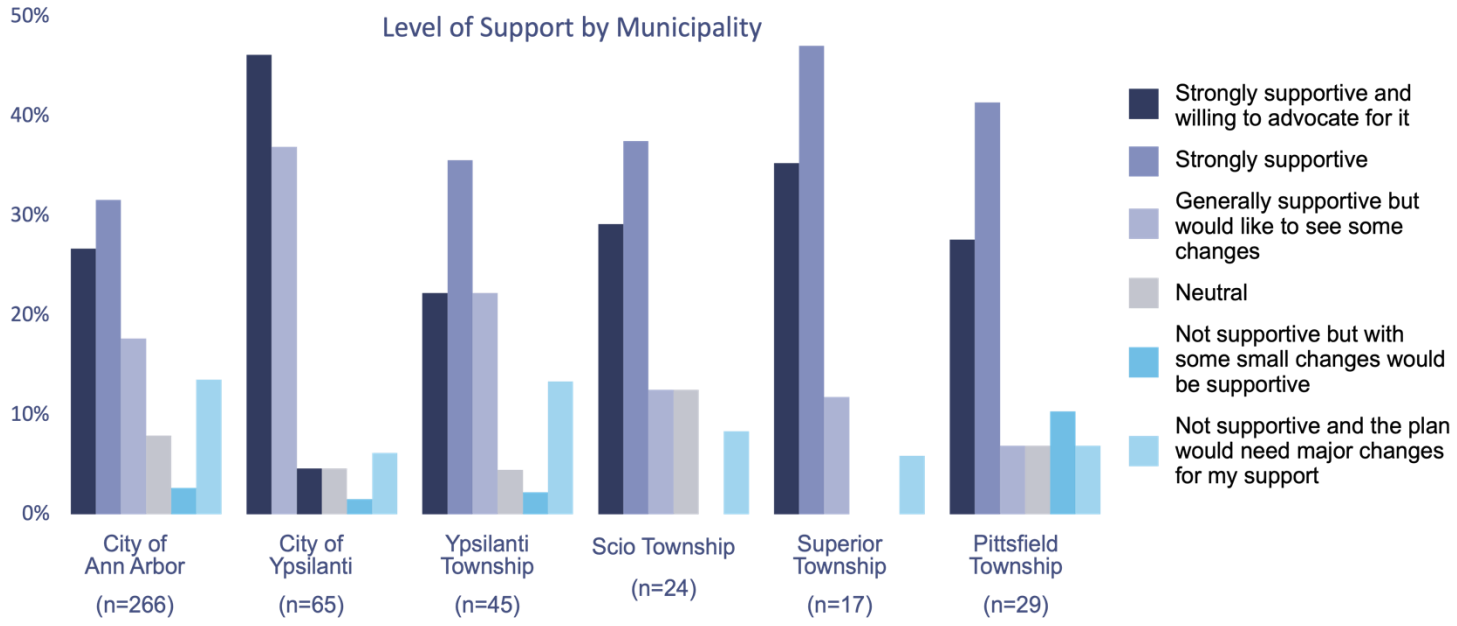


Figure 12 Survey Respondents Level of Support by Municipality. Does not include 'no response'

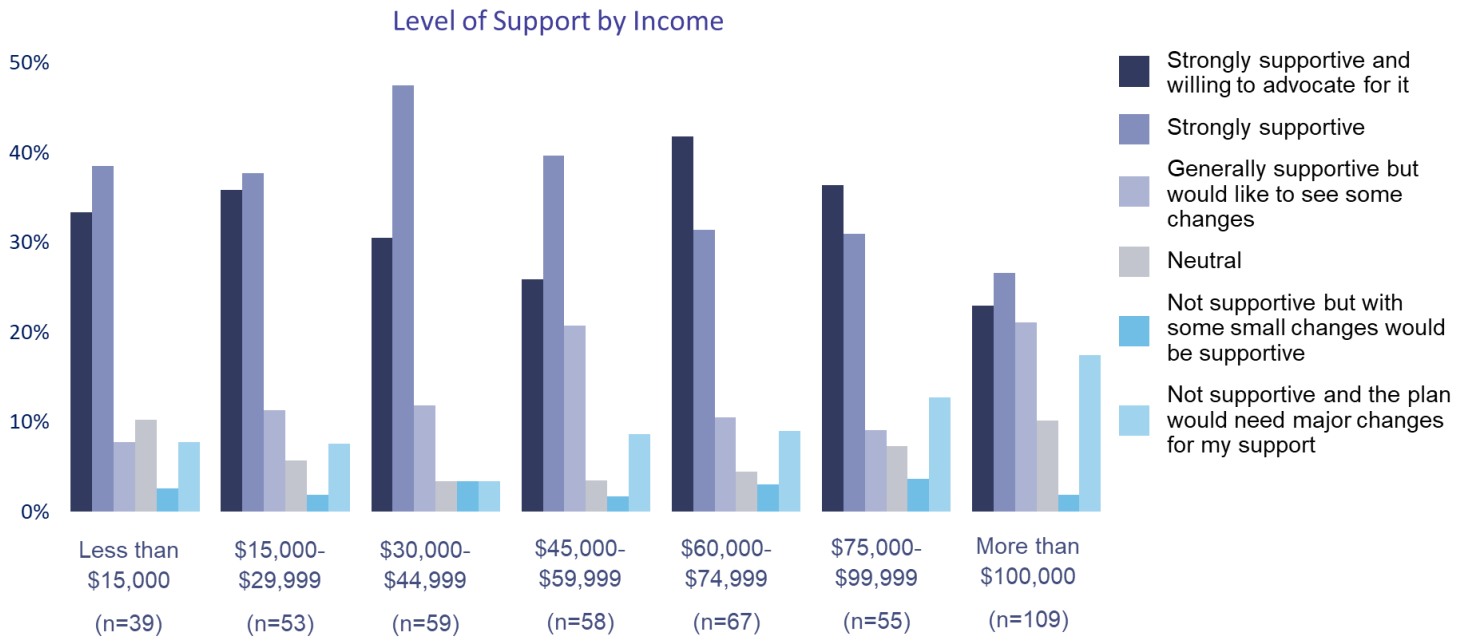


Figure 13 Survey Respondents Level of Support by Income. Does not include 'no response'

Transit for Those Who Need It Most

Equity

Transit needs to serve those who need it most. The greatest theme from all our engagement was support for our goal to improve social equity with this plan. Survey respondents who said they were the most supportive of the plan ranked social equity as the most important feature. This is consistent with what we heard from our in-person engagements.

To ensure that the plan works for everyone, we compared the responses from African American, Asian American, and lower income groups to the group as a whole. Both African American and Asian American survey respondents were even more supportive of the plan than the group as a whole. the preferred features for people with household incomes less than $30,000 were not significantly different than the group as a whole. See Appendix C: Important Features.

Plan Action: Equity is one of the cornerstones of this plan and we will continue to work toward providing high quality transit to those who need it most.

Accessibility

We heard that accessibility improvements are needed for existing bus stops, new vehicles, and new facilities. Any new fare payment or information system that we include must work for everyone, not just those who are tech-savvy.

While investments in accessibility enhancements was not ranked highly by most survey respondents, serving transit-dependent people with disabilities is a key aspect of this plan.

The term ‘disability’ over-simplifies the many different experiences, so accessibility must be included at every level of planning. Looking at specific accessibility-related comments helps us to prioritize. The insight feedback from our Public Advisory Group were especially helpful in this regard.

Plan Action: Ensure that universal accessibility is integrated at all levels of the plan as something for us to work towards.

More off-peak service

People who are completely reliant on transit need it at all times of day. Extension of service hours on evenings, weekends and overnight was a reoccurring theme. This was ranked as the most important feature by survey respondents that would like to see changes to the plan to be more supportive.

Plan Action: While some aspects of the plan need big infrastructure changes over time, adjusting service hours do not. Therefore, we can provide off-peak service sooner, in the first implementation stage from 2023-2028.

Efficiency, Reliability

Transit Efficiency and Faster Travel times

Nearly everyone agreed that improving transit and transportation efficiency is one of the most important aspects of this plan. That means greater return on investments, easier movement, less congestion, and better integration of every service we offer. Transit and transportation efficiency was the overall the most important feature ranked by survey respondents. While the entire plan aims to increase efficiency and overall travel times, certain features will work toward that goal.

Plan Action: Continue to prioritize features like Bus Rapid Transit on our busiest routes, on-demand services, and smaller vehicles in low-demand areas that will improve the overall efficiency of the system.

High-Frequency Routes

There were many comments supporting high-frequency transit routes in general and some comments requesting routes for specific areas. People were supportive of our planned network that will allow customers to transfer across the service area without going downtown. High-frequency service was the second most important feature ranked by survey respondents. This type of network also serves to improve overall transit efficiency.

Plan Action: The exact routing will be determined as they are implemented. At each stage the network design will focus on even coverage of the service area while ensuring service for the people and places that need it most.

Sustainability

The timeline that we proposed in the plan for ensuring that our entire fleet is carbon neutral by 2045 is not soon enough for some respondents. TheRide is currently doing a parallel Propulsion Study to determine the best technology to use in our bus fleets in the future.

Plan Action: based on this feedback, we are working to confirm if a 100% carbon neutral fleet can be achieved sooner. While this Long-Range plan agrees that it is important to move away from fossil fuels as soon as possible, the Propulsion Study will determine the exact timing and technology that we implement.

Connectivity

Bus Stops and Transit Hubs

Connecting to/from and using the bus stops and transit centers can be challenging. That means Connection for the first and last mile of a trip. We heard that the level of accessibility, the state of repair, and snow clearing of bus stops means that people cannot always use them. We heard a desire for better connection points, but some confusion around our proposed transit hubs.

Plan Action: Collaboration with Municipalities and Other Partners for transit centers, hubs and stops. Clarify and elaborate on transit hubs in the final plan. Gradually introduce improvements at transit hub locations rather than waiting for a single large project.

Connections to Other Mobility Services

We heard that connections from TheRide's service to other forms of transportation, considering a customer's entire journey. That means park-n-ride lots in the outskirts, connections to new and existing trail networks, bike or scooter share programs in central areas, and other transit agencies, such as WAVE, SMART, Amtrak or the University of Michigan.

Plan Action: The goal of the long-range plan is not to decide the specific routes but the network as a whole. That vision will guide the specifics we make at the time that we implement new routes. We will continue to work with the municipalities, peer agencies and community groups when planning those routes and build-in creative first and last mile solutions to transit hubs and centers.

Collaboration with Municipalities and Other Partners

The land use planning decisions we make now will affect how our community will grow and change over the next 25 years. We need to work with municipalities to ensure that our transit system grows and supports those changes and vice versa. That means coordinating transit planning with big picture decisions like zoning, and small picture decisions like roadway design, bike lanes and pedestrian infrastructure. This is especially relevant as we build out our transit priority features and Bus Rapid Transit system on busy streets with a lot of competition for space.

Plan Action: We will change our plan so we do not differentiate between BRT and BRT lite, blending dedicated lanes and transit priority features as needed on roads depending on future detailed studies. The key to success lies with collaboration with municipalities and other partners on land use planning and roadway redesign.

Cost

Most of the people that we spoke to understood that big change will have a cost associated with it. However, we also heard concerns, especially from Ypsilanti Township elected officials, about the effect higher tax rates on people, particularly those with lower incomes. Some people felt that those who need the service most may be most affected by the tax increase. With everything else happening in the world and our community, now is not the time to raise taxes.

Some people felt that they do not use transit enough to warrant the increased tax burden that will affect them. We also heard the taxes should go elsewhere, rather than increasing service. There was a variety of responses here, from providing free fares for everyone to increasing fares so only the current ridership bears the cost of improved service.

There were some questions about other funding sources for these improvements, like the federal or municipal governments. It is important to note that TheRide will leverage external funding as much as possible for this long-range plan. The current funding structure of TheRide depends in part on a Millage levy. About half of the total cost associated with the improvements in the draft plan will come from stable state and federal funding, and a third will come from other grants.

Plan Action: TheRide is conscious of the costs of this plan, and how it will affect people. We are also aware how improved service will benefit communities that need it most. The majority of people that we spoke to were supportive of the scale and cost of the investments. We will continue exploring other funding opportunities to manage the costs allocated to local residents. Some of these comments came from people living in the Township of Ypsilanti so in the final plan, we will review and adjust the timeline of some service improvements to ensure those who may be most affected by the taxes will benefit sooner.

Next Steps

Creating a Plan That Works for Everyone

In general, we heard an overwhelming support for the plan. People agreed with our focus on equity, and efficiency with a Bus Rapid Transit core surrounded by interconnected, high-frequency routes and on-demand services. The feedback we heard will affect the staging and adjust some of our priorities, but this draft plan that we put forward in this round of public engagement is a strong base.

We heard concerns about the cost of the plan and the burden of taxes, especially among the mid-range household incomes. One factor may be that high housing prices in the centers forcing lower income people to the outskirts where they are less served by transit. The farther away they are pushed, the more acutely they feel the lack of transportation options. While there are economic challenges today, connecting jobs, education and housing with high-quality transportation is exactly what will help the people who need it most. Investments in transit mean cost reductions not only in personal cost-of-living, but collective costs for the entire transportation system including roads and parking.

Transit in outlying areas becomes more expensive with fewer people and longer trips, while the challenge of central areas is having enough service to cover demand. There is no single solution, so TheRide will diversify its fleet, matching the type of service to where it's needed most. By seamlessly integrating these services with modern technology, we can broaden our customer base and create a transit system that works for everyone.

Finalization

This concludes our final round of engagement. As we put the feedback we received into context, we will spend the next several weeks refining the draft plan into a final recommended Long-Range Plan for the next 25 years. This means refining both the final plan for 2045 and the implementation staging. The next steps in the process will be:

Refine Draft Plan into Final Plan	Focus on aspects and features that were most important to the community and refine the implementation plan.
Final Reccommendations to the Board	As the governing body of TheRide, once the board adpots the plan, it will become TheRide's official Long-Range Plan.

Thank you to everyone who participated in our public engagement process. All of your feedback is being used to build a better future for our communities.

Check out our website at Theride.org for updates, to sign up for our newsletter or leave a comment at any time.

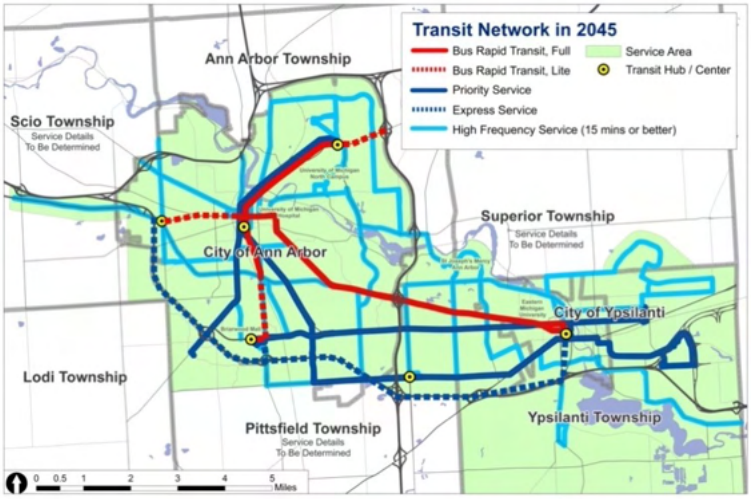
Document Control

Title:	TheRide2045 Round 2 Engagement – What We Heard

Appendix A: Draft Plan Presented

Draft Plan: TheRide 2045

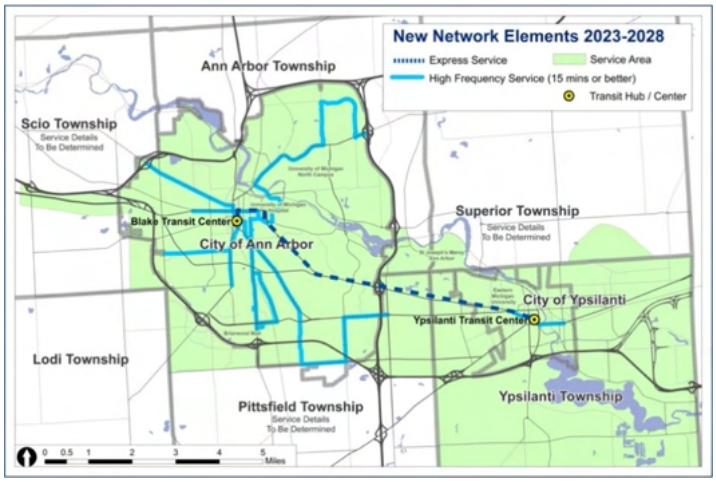
- Transformation of entire transit system
- Bus Rapid Transit forms the backbone
- Other main corridors are served by Express and Priority Service
- High-frequency routes across the service area
- New transit hubs at key locations:
  - Briarwood Mall
  - Jackson & Maple
  - Carpenter & Ellsworth
  - Nixon & Plymouth



Draft Plan: 2023-2028

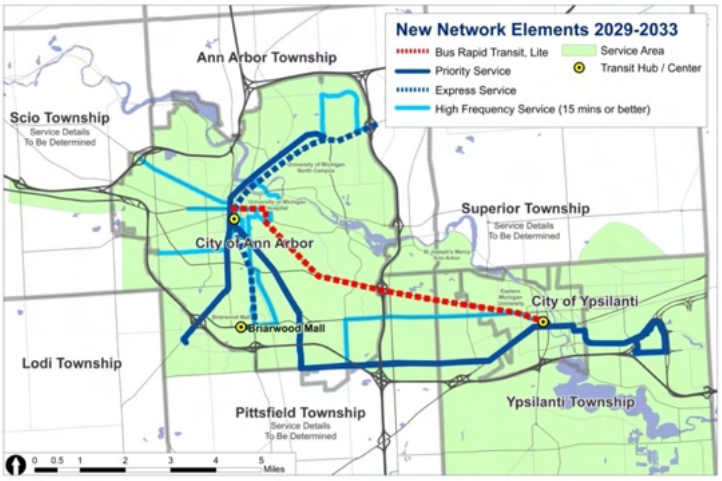
This phase of implementation lays out the groundwork for future stages while increasing Off-peak service. It includes:

- BTC and YTC upgrades
- Washtenaw express pilot
- Better off-peak service
  - 30-minute minimum frequencies during the daytime
  - Longer hours of operation
  - NightRide expansion and enhancement
- Improved accessibility for fixed route with better integration with A-Ride
- Planning and design for
  - New bus garage
  - BRT and transit priority



Draft Plan: 2029-2033

- Focus on increasing service on busiest corridors
  - Bus Rapid Transit Lite on Washtenaw Ave
  - North-South express pilot
  - Priority Service on Main-Plymouth and Packard – Ellsworth
- New bus garage
- 30-minute minimum frequency at all times
- Transit priority in central Ann Arbor
- Transit hub at Briarwood Mall
- Major fare collection modernization
- Increasing investments in A-Ride



Draft Plan: 2034-2038

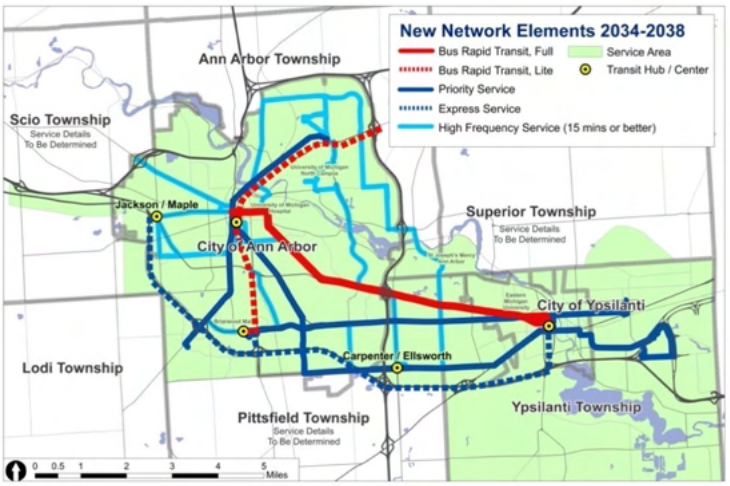
This portion of the plan includes large improvements to the backbone of the network including:

- Full Bus Rapid Transit on Washtenaw Ave
- N-S Bus Rapid Transit Lite from Briarwood Mall to Plymouth Park n Ride
- Express route on I-94
- Packard-Eisenhower priority route
- Transit priority enhancements across service area

Two new transit hubs at:

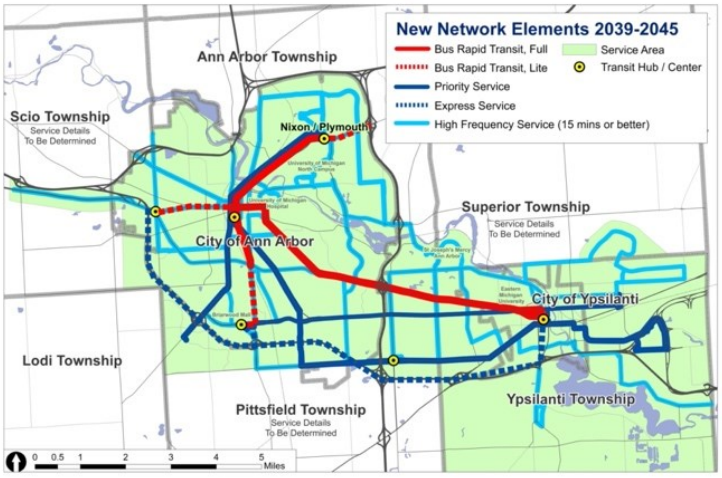
- Carpenter/Ellsworth
- Jackson/Maple

Expansion of high frequency network and FlexRide and continued integration between A-Ride and fixed route.



Draft Plan: 2039-2045

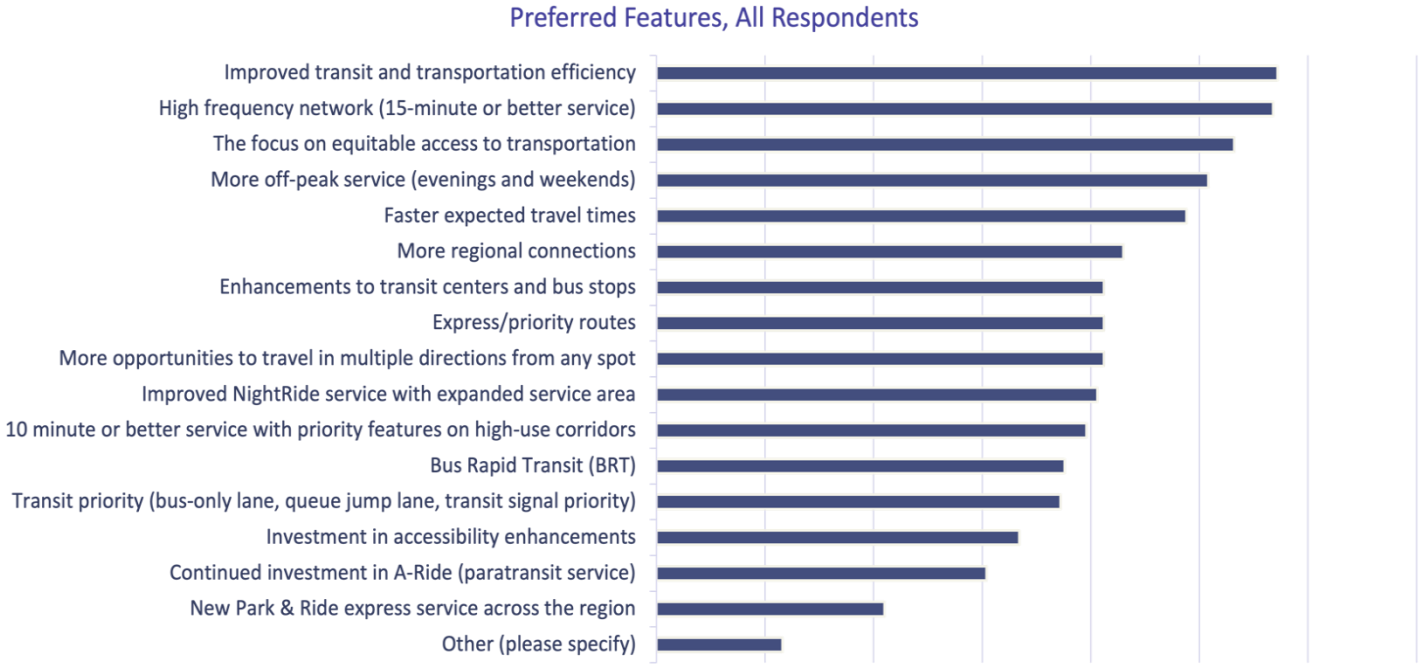
- Further improvements to the backbone of the network along with high-frequency routes across service area
  - Final buildout of BRT on N-S route
  - BRT Lite on Huron/Jackson
- Transit hub at Nixon/Plymouth
- Fleet enhancement: 100% zero-emissions fleet
- Regional fare system integration
- Full integration between A-Ride and fixed route



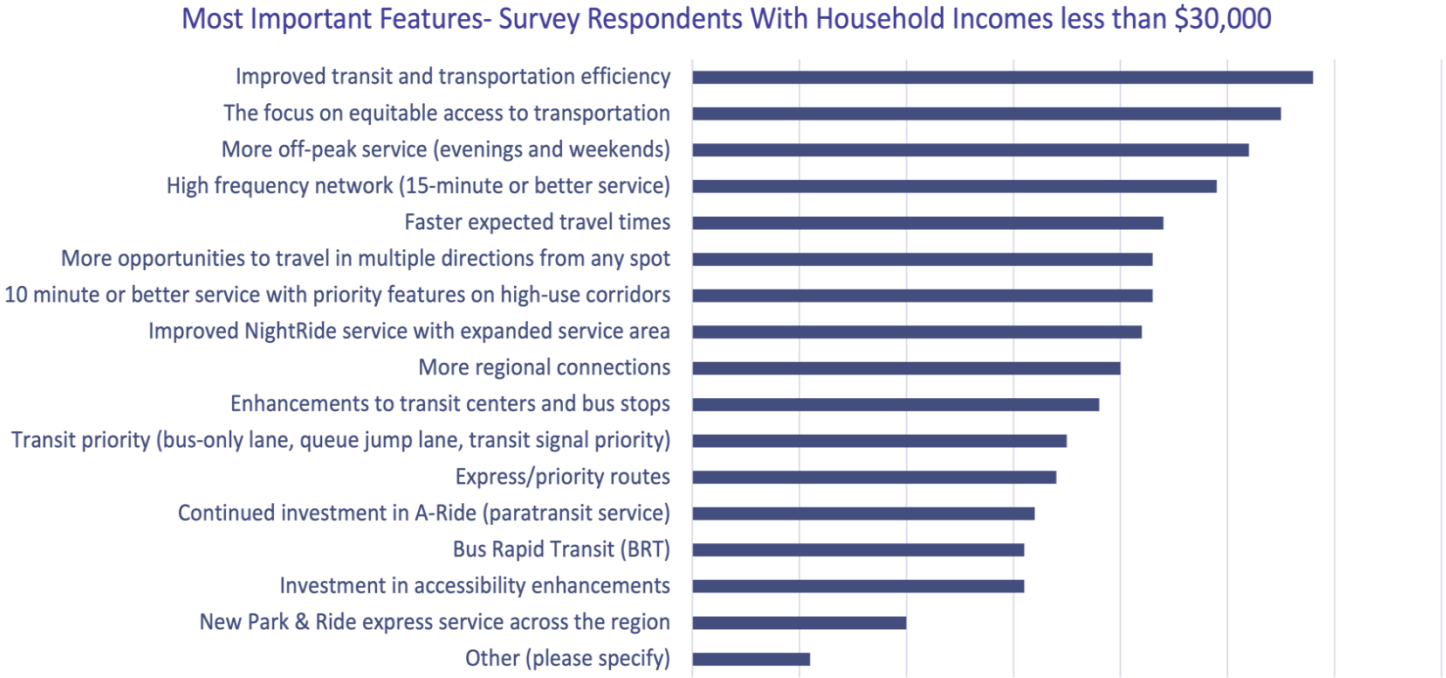
Appendix B: Engagement Activities

Stakeholder Group	Date
TheRide 2045 Public Advisory Group	23-Feb
TheRide 2045 Public Advisory Group	27-Apr
AAATA Board	17-Mar
AAATA Staff Town Hall 1	17-Mar
AAATA Staff Town Hall 2	18-Mar
Local Advisory Committee	12-Apr
AAATA Union	15-Apr
Ann Arbor Transportation Commission	16-Mar
Stakeholder Webinar 1	17-Mar
Stakeholder Webinar 2	22-Mar
Ypsilanti City Council	05-Apr
Ypsilanti Township Board	05-Apr
WATS Technical Committee	06-Apr
Washtenaw County Commission	06-Apr
Ann Arbor Transportation and Planning	07-Apr
Pittsfield Township Board	13-Apr
Scio Transportation Alternatives Planning Committee	13-Apr
YDDA Operations and Finance Committee	13-Apr
Superior Township Board	18-Apr
Online Public Meeting 1	29-Mar
Online Public Meeting 2	31-Mar
Online Public Meeting 3	06-Apr
Online Public Meeting 4	07-Apr
In person Session: Eastern Michigan University	21-Mar
In person Session: Washtenaw Community College	22-Mar
In person Session: Ypsilanti Transit Center	23-Mar
In person Session: Blake Transit Center	24-Mar
In person Session: University of Michigan - Central Campus	25-Mar
In-person Session: Ypsilanti District Library – Ypsilanti Township	05-Apr
In person Session: Meijer on Carpenter	08-Apr
In person Session: Briarwood Mall	09-Apr

Appendix C: Important Features



All Survey Respondents Preferred Features. Does not include 'no response'



Survey Respondents With Household Incomes less than $30,000 Preferred Features. Does not include 'no response'