



Legislation Text

File #: 12-1404, **Version:** 2

Resolution to Withdraw from the New Act 196 Public Transportation Authority, to Terminate the 4-Party Agreement between the City, AATA, Ypsilanti and Washtenaw County, and to Continue Discussion of Expanded Transit Among Urban Core Communities

The option of expanding transit service (bus, van, etc.) to an extended area of the County has been discussed by political leaders, business leaders, and community members for many years. In 2009 the Board of Directors of AATA embarked on an effort to engage many different voices in Washtenaw County to determine whether there was support for creating an expanded service area and plan within the county. This effort involved over 100 community (public) meetings, extensive surveys, and meetings with elected and appointed officials from every township and municipality.

Many residents of Washtenaw County supported the of increased mass transit options - options that would be available to all residents from four corners of the County - Augusta to Lyndon, Salem to Manchester townships and all points in between. But there were always questions - how much would this plan cost, who would pay for it, how would it be paid for and - most important in many minds - who would decide.

Those who supported the increased transit plan pointed to the benefits to Washtenaw County's (and Ann Arbor's) increasingly aged population. A good transit system could help people stay in their homes and still shop, get to the doctor, and get to entertainment. An improved transit system - one that ran more frequently for longer hours - would allow a variety of county residents the option (and not the necessity) of owning and maintaining a car. The number of jobs in Ann Arbor and the county would continue to increase, but the demands on the infrastructure would decrease (the city and the university, for instance, might be able to avoid building more parking structures).

Voices in opposition spoke to the plan's framework as developed and the anticipated allocation of resources as finally proposed. They objected to the financial burden the City's residents would bear without what they believed would be a significant improvement in services. They were concerned about governance - whether the voices of those from Ann Arbor would dominate the decision-making process, and the implications that balance might have on future services inside Ann Arbor and in the rest of the county.

While a funding mechanism for the extended transit plan remained undefined, questions about whether there would be regional support, only some local support or no support at all remained paramount.

After the Articles of Incorporation were filed with the State of Michigan, an opt-out window opened available by law to all communities in the County. While many municipalities in the county had previously voiced support for the of an extended transit system, almost all of those municipalities decided to opt out, in order to ensure the interests of their residents.

As a result, those municipalities still interested in a new transit system with enlarged boundaries that

would increase services to Ann Arbor and other Washtenaw County residents had to determine whether the transit plan, as proposed, remained viable.

The Ann Arbor City Council also faces this issue. While many on Council believe that an improved transit system would be a cultural and economic asset for the community, there is also a strong consensus that the transit plan, as currently proposed, is not meeting the needs of the greater population in the County. A more focused plan, with a clear financial path to success that provides services to Ann Arbor, Pittsfield, Ypsilanti and Ypsilanti townships, would be more viable.

There are no budget implications for this opt-out resolution. AATA currently receives funding from the City's public transportation millage, and that millage would continue.

Sponsors: Mayor Hieftje, Councilmembers Briere, Taylor, Higgins, Kunselman and Lumm

Whereas, AATA staff and the Board of Directors have conducted extensive preliminary meetings and discussions to determine whether there was support for an expanded transit system in Washtenaw County; and

Whereas, The Cities of Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, along with AATA and Washtenaw County, agreed to enter into a new Act 196-based transportation authority; and

Whereas; The funding mechanism and other details of the proposed transportation plan remained uncertain at the time the Articles of Incorporation were filed, with a variety of local and state initiatives possible; and

Whereas, While there is conceptual support from township and municipality leaders for an expanded transit system, many elected leaders concluded that the prudent act was to opt out of the New Public Transportation Authority; and

Whereas, The opportunity to improve transportation in the region continues to be of interest to the City Council, although the mechanism to achieve this goal is less clear; and

Whereas, The City will continue to receive public transportation services from AATA, and AATA remains the contracting agency for use of the 2.5 mills tax levy pursuant to and in accordance with the Agreement executed by and between the parties for such services entered into September 30, 1974;

Resolved, That AATA is encouraged to continue to discuss regional transportation options among Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, Ypsilanti Township, Ann Arbor Township, Pittsfield Township, and Scio Township, leading to a better understanding and process for improving local transit options; and

Resolved, That the City of Ann Arbor, by adoption of this resolution by City Council, hereby withdraws from the Washtenaw Ride effective immediately;

Resolved, That pursuant to and in accordance with Section 12(b) of the Public Transportation Agreement, the City of Ann Arbor, by adoption of this resolution by City Council, hereby exercises its right to immediately terminate the Public Transportation Agreement; and

Resolved, That the City Clerk is directed to provide notice of said withdrawal together with a certified copy of this resolution to Washtenaw County, as the sole member of the Washtenaw Ride, and the

Ann Arbor Transportation Authority and notice of the City's termination of the Public Transportation Agreement to each of the parties to the Agreement pursuant to Section 13(a) of the Agreement.

Sponsored by: Mayor Hieftje, Councilmembers Briere, Taylor, Higgins, Kunselman and Lumm