



A2YChamber
ANN ARBOR / YPSILANTI REGIONAL CHAMBER

West Huron Street, 3rd Floor | Ann Arbor, MI 48104
734) 665-4433 | fax (734) 665-4191 | A2YChamber.org

March 5, 2012

Mayor John Hieftje
Larcom City Hall, third floor
301 E. Huron St.
Ann Arbor, MI 48107

Dear Mayor Hieftje and City Council Members,

I write to you on behalf of the Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti (A2Y) Regional Chamber and its 1300 members to ask that you proceed with efforts to further the issue of transit expansion. Specifically, it is the hope of the Chamber that the "four party agreement" be approved so that the parties can move forward towards developing a more comprehensive county-wide transit program. We ask that you do this since the agreement provides us with a process to consider this option further, with the understanding that this is not a final decision and that ultimate approval of a countywide transit system will be subject to voter approval.

The A2Y Chamber is broadly supportive of increased mass transit not limited by arbitrary political borders. This has been our policy for many years. We believe that access to transit will help employees by providing access to jobs, as well as to employers by broadening their pool of employees. This will also help all citizens throughout the region to have better access to schools, health care, shopping and entertainment. While we have an excellent system in parts of our region, if we have a more regional-based transit system, we will enhance the quality of life and our economy for all. The agreement is a means for us to explore the best way to achieve this goal. It does not bind anyone on a final plan. That decision is wisely reserved for a later time and will ultimately rest with the voters.

We commend the City, AATA and all of the other civic leaders who have been leading this process to date. The master plan and now the recent set of recommendations of the Financial Task Force have provided us with a framework for exploring how we may enhance transit so that we become a more vibrant and competitive community. The four party agreements provide us with a means for taking the review to a new level without binding anyone as to any particular outcome. It also provides an important framework or ground rules for that process. This is a good and important step which provides those involved in planning on how some basic issues should be regarded.

Our County needs a transit system that is affordable, accessible and practical. Such a system may include fixed-route and other bus and van options, and in the longer term, rail and other modes of transit. Ultimately, this system should connect not just those within Washtenaw County, but it should also enable us to connect throughout the greater southeast Michigan region. The benefits to be derived from such a system are many, including environmental, economic and humanitarian. The process provided through four party agreements allows us to pursue this objective. Should it not be approved, then the process will flounder.

The agreement is not a commitment to a plan or a millage, and it does not set fares. It is merely a process to explore these and other issues further. We have nothing to lose or risk by taking this step, but we have much to lose if this step is not taken.

We therefore urge Council to approve the agreement and, as a Chamber, look forward to being actively involved in the planning towards fulfilling these objectives.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. If you have any further questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me at (734) 214-0101.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diane Keller". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Diane Keller, President & CEO
Ann Arbor / Ypsilanti Regional Chamber