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August 11, 2025

Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority  
415 North Fifth Avenue  
Ann Arbor, MI

To The Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority:

Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority (AAATA) is pleased to be a partner on the Fourth Avenue Street & Transit Improvements Project. AAATA has been working constructively with the Downtown Development Authority (DDA), the City of Ann Arbor, and the Ann Arbor Housing Commission (AAHC) since 2020 to balance various needs of all users along Fourth Avenue between William St and Liberty St. AAATA is excited about these proposed improvements, which will benefit transit riders, pedestrians, and the broader downtown community.

While the Blake Transit Center (BTC) continues to face operational challenges, particularly around bus operations and passenger waiting and transfers, we are encouraged by this opportunity to jointly address these issues through both the Fourth Avenue project and the AAHC's adjacent housing initiative at 350 Fifth Avenue. These efforts will provide improved waiting areas for transit riders, enhance pedestrian circulation, and make the area safer and more people friendly. The result will be more efficient and secure bus operations, increased transit use, and a more vibrant downtown.

The proposed design concept thoughtfully expands the transit loading zones along Fourth Avenue, effectively extending the BTC's functionality. It incorporates wider sidewalks, enhanced amenities, and dedicated space for transit riders and pedestrians, creating a safer and more welcoming environment for all.

As part of this collaboration, AAATA would like to ask the DDA's assistance in constructing the transit improvements – specifically for shelters/canopies, rider amenities, and dedicated bus loading areas. The current estimated cost for these elements exceeds \$2 million. The project team is actively engaged in a value engineering process to reduce this to approximately \$2 million. **We respectfully request the DDA to consider increasing the project budget by \$2 million to support these critical transit elements.**

**These transit improvements are closely aligned with DDA's mission to maintain a healthy downtown environment and support the area's long-term success.** As one of the top priority People-Friendly Streets, this project focuses on making Fourth Avenue safe and comfortable for people of all ages and abilities using all modes of transportation. By making transit more accessible and attractive, we can encourage more people including residents, workers, and visitors to choose transit over driving.

**Ongoing collaborations between the DDA and AAATA has yielded many successes.** From the GetDowntown program and the Downtown Circulation Study to the expansion of rider amenities, AAATA and DDA have consistently worked together to make downtown a more accessible and people-focused place. The Fourth Avenue project is yet another example of this strong and productive partnership.



**Timely implementation of the Fourth Avenue project is crucial, particularly as it is closely coordinated with the AAHAC's affordable housing development.** Any delays, especially those resulting from triggering additional federal review requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), could jeopardize both projects. If AAATA is required to cover the transit improvements using federal funds, the NEPA process could extend the project timeline by 6 to 12 months or more and introduce budget and scheduling uncertainties.

In summary, this project is a top priority for both organizations. It will enhance safety and accessibility and support the BTC expansion and the AAHC's affordable housing development, which will deliver long-term benefits for the downtown community. We respectfully request that the DDA increases the project budget to fund the transit improvements, enabling the project to proceed without delays or increased risks

We appreciate your partnership and look forward to continuing our collaboration through the planning and design process to support shared goals: reinforcing the DDA's People-Friendly Streets plan, expanding affordable housing, and strengthening public transit on Fourth Avenue and at the BTC.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Carpenter", written in a cursive style.

Matt Carpenter  
CEO