

THE VEHICLE

Washtenaw Area Transportation Study

October 2008

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Michigan Transportation Advisory Group presents Statewide Transit Vision to TF2

WATS Executive Director, Terri Blackmore, presented the Michigan Transportation Advisory Group (MTAG) *Statewide Transit Vision* to the Transportation Funding Task Force (TF2) in Lansing on September 8th. The TF2, mandated by Senate Bill No. 59, is charged with maximizing the state's return on transportation investments, and identifying alternative methods to current transportation funding sources.

The Statewide Transit Vision is a comprehensive document outlining an ideal Michigan transit system that would be available at a maximum level of funding. Focus areas of the vision include:

- Transit Promotes Economic Development
- Transit is Vital to Michigan Residents
- Transit has Been Underfunded for Decades
- Barriers to Implementing Statewide Transit Vision
- Transit System Needed to Serve all Michiganders
- Need for Comprehensive Transportation System
- Must Invest in Transportation System to Succeed in 21st Century
- Changes Must Begin Today

Projects specifically called for in the vision include: high speed trains to other Midwest cities, intercity passenger trains, regional commuter trains, light rail or bus-rapid-transit along major corridors in urban areas, expanded local bus service, expanded Para transit and lifeline service and transit supportive infrastructure such as sidewalks, park-and-ride lots and, and shelters.



WATS Travel Demand Model Complete!

The Washtenaw Area Transportation Study uses a travel demand forecast model to help evaluate potential changes in the transportation system as well as forecasted changes in population and employment. The model was recently updated using results from current travel surveys along with a scenario manager that allows staff to easily change the inputs to the model quickly. These changes will facilitate more timely model runs with expanded and enhanced results used to evaluate the transportation system.

The model is a tool used at several points during the long range transportation planning process. Currently WATS staff is running the model with socio-economic forecasts from the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments to estimate where congestion issues are likely to arise as well as when the congestion is likely to occur. This information is provided to the transportation agencies to help them develop projects and strategies to reduce congestion. The projects and strategies that the transportation agencies develop, such as adding new bus routes or road work, is then used as an input to the model so that WATS can evaluate the project's potential impact on the transportation system.

WATS 2035 Long Range Plan Blog is Live

This new method of long range plan development for the public involvement will allow for timely planning updates, and an open conversation about the future of transportation in the county. Comments will be summarized for inclusion in the Plan documentation.

Please visit WATS new 2035 LRP blog at <http://wats2035lrp.blogspot.com>



Transit Plan Provides County Wide Service Concept

In the fall of 2006, WATS initiated development of a County Wide Transit Plan that would provide the vision for long-term transit improvements throughout the County.

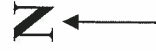
WATS completed a report on public transit in the Western portion of Washtenaw County in June 2006 that identified the need for a plan to continue the volunteer based transit service in the Manchester area. The Western-Washtenaw Value Express that operates service in the Chelsea and Dexter areas was identified as the likely candidate for providing the service; the lack of adequate and stable funding for the Manchester Service made it unlikely to occur in the near or distant future.

In addition to the completion of the report on the western Washtenaw transit service; WATS also completed a survey of nearly 1,000 middle and high school students on their transportation needs, modes and desires; and used an analysis completed by the Washtenaw County Community Collaborative that identified the impact that transportation costs for clients have on human services agencies budgets. These efforts supported WATS development of a Transit Plan for the county.

The planning process included the use of a steering committee, input from elected officials and public meetings to gauge support and collect input from the public. The process included the development of goals and objectives; identification of existing providers and their current services; the communities' needs and transit deficiencies; the elected officials' and public's willingness to financially support various modes of public transit and possible funding options for implementing the plan.

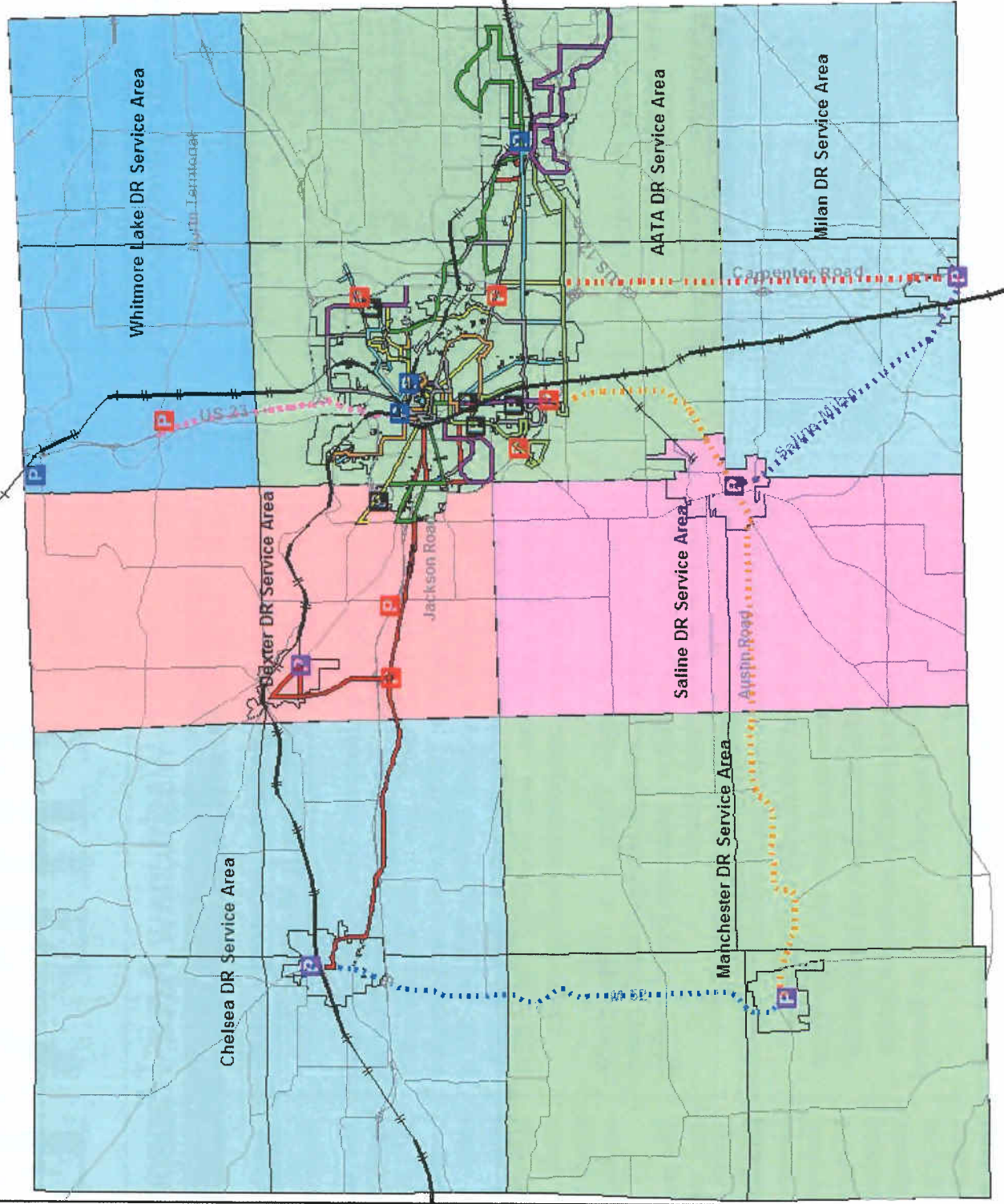
Using census data, employment data, destination data and current provider's service information, WATS identified needs and deficiencies for households, destinations, transit supportive infrastructure. Deficiencies included the following and can be found in detail in the final report available on the WATS website at www.miwats.org. Between 2000 and 2030, the number of households overall in the county with zero or one auto available is expected to increase by 16% while in the townships, the number of the same deficient households will increase by nearly 50%. Population over 65 is projected to increase by nearly 90% in the cities but the 65 and over population in the townships will increase by nearly 450% from 2000 to 2030. Most of the fixed route service provided

Transit Plan Recommendations For Washtenaw County



Key

- Existing Transit Service
- Community Connector
- Proposed Intercounty Rail Service
- Demand Response Service Areas
- Existing Park & Ride Lot
- Community Connector P&R lot
- Intercounty Rail P&R
- AATA Recommended P&R lot



Plan Recommendations

Transportation Improvements

- Increase frequency and expanded service hours for existing fixed route service
- Provide improved service between major human service providers
- Establish demand response/life line service centered on the cities and villages
- Establish community connector service linking service linking cities and villages to urbanized area
- Establish park and ride lots within each city/village to consolidate trips for community connector services
- Provide service linking adjacent counties with the urbanized area within Washtenaw County
- Provide service linking intermodal connections, particularly rail stations and Metro A airport

Administration, Planning and Funding

- Establish a mobility management function.
- Establish a county wide program to promote a full range of commuter choices.
- Create the organizational framework to implement Plan recommendations
- Establish dedicated funding to implement identified service improvements
- Increase capital and operating funding at the federal and State levels
- Encourage land use decisions that support existing and future transit service

outside the City of Ann Arbor does not have weekend service. There are no current public transit options for commuting between Washtenaw County and the adjacent counties. In 2000, nearly 75,000 employees commuted daily into the County while nearly 30,000 County residents commuted to employment outside the County.

With guidance from the Steering Committee, the Elected Officials and the public, staff developed recommendations and a map of proposed service for the county. The plan recommends seven different service improvements and six different supporting efforts. The plan recommendations are shown in the box above.

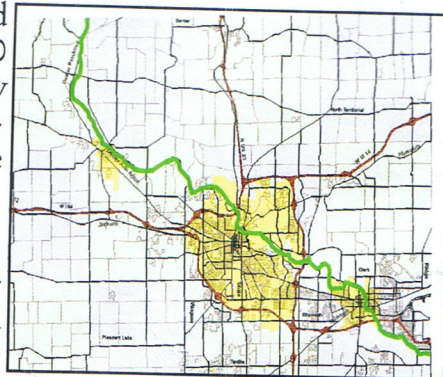
Efforts are underway to explore the implementation of the county wide service and a funding mechanism to ensure the continuation of important existing services such as the Manchester Senior Services, Western Washtenaw Area Value Express (WAVE), People's Express and AATA in addition to funding the proposed commuter train services.

Eastern Michigan University Dedicates New Section of County Border-to-Border Greenway



On Wednesday, August 27th, Eastern Michigan University and the Washtenaw County Parks Department officially reopened a critical connection on the Border 2 Border trail. The connection runs approximately .6 mile along an abandoned rail corridor from Cornell Street in Ypsilanti west to Hewitt, South of the Eastern Michigan University Athletic campus. The path was repaved and widened during July and August.

The project is an example of how quickly an improvement can move forward when groups collaborate. Eastern Michigan University split the \$125,000 price tag with the Washtenaw County Parks Department. The trail directly services Eastern Michigan University student faculty and staff and also connects the City of Ypsilanti and residents on the East side of the County to the existing portions of the Border 2 Border trail extending North and West.



Pictured above is John Donegon, EMU facilities vice president, who spoke about the speed at which the project progressed thanks to the leadership of EMU President Sue Martin and Robert Tetens, Director of the Washtenaw County Parks Department. President Martin and Mr. Tetens also spoke at the ribbon cutting. The map to the right depicts the trail's course once completed.

Deer Season is Here

Staying alert while driving will be especially important from October - December as it is high deer season. Drivers should be especially cautious late at night and early in the morning, and be sure to wear seatbelts.

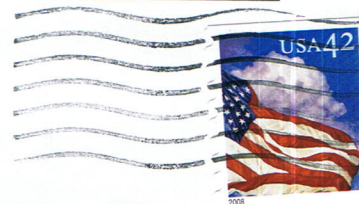
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