

Ann Arbor Area Transit Frequently Asked Questions

OCTOBER 2013

Q: Are Ann Arbor area residents willing to pay more taxes for transit improvements?

A: Yes. Three out of four Ann Arbor area residents surveyed in 2009 (70%) and 2011 (74%) indicated that they support paying additional taxes for more public transportation options. ⁱ

Q: Is it true that some communities do not pay for the transportation service they get?

A: No. AAATA/TheRide does not have the means to provide transportation services to communities who cannot pay for them. If a stop-gap measure is needed to continue service until another funding source is identified, the authority and that community works in a public forum until another funding source is identified. This is done on a case-by-case basis.

Q: Does the AAATA/TheRide use bus operating funds to pay for commuter rail service planning?

A: No. AAATA/TheRide budget and financial documents are made public and show that bus operating funds are not used for commuter rail service planning. ⁱⁱ

Q: Do voters think favorably of AAATA/TheRide?

A: Yes. AAATA/TheRide's favorability rating has remained steady at 90%. This has held true during the most recent community surveys administered in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti. ⁱⁱⁱ

Q: Doesn't Ann Arbor has bigger issues to solve than traffic congestion?

A: No. Like roads, police, fire and sewer service, public transportation is an essential community service. It supports the economic vitality and quality of life in the Ann Arbor area by providing access to jobs, connections to lifeline destinations for seniors and individuals with disabilities, and access to educational opportunities for everyone. ^{iv} AAATA/TheRide averages 130,000 trips per week, helping to reduce traffic congestion and improve the environment.

Q: Does AAATA/TheRide do anything to control costs?

A: Yes. AAATA/TheRide has a long history of strong financial stewardship, and has been working hard to keep costs down while still being responsive to the growing transportation needs of residents within our community. One example of an implemented cost-saving measure is the use of hybrid buses, which has saved taxpayers over \$1 million in fuel costs. ^v

Q: Who will benefit from AAATA/TheRide's expansion of services?

A: Everyone. Transportation is an essential community service and a non-partisan issue that is important and beneficial for all residents, whether one rides the bus or not. Quality of life for seniors and people with disabilities is greatly improved by the ability to access medical care, grocery stores and participate in social events through affordable public transportation. A robust transportation system attracts and retains businesses and workers, provides young families with a safe and thriving environment to raise children, reduces environmental pollutants and provides access to educational opportunities for all residents. ^{vi} Between 2010 and 2013, Ann Arbor and Pittsfield Township led growth in Washtenaw County, with population growth of about 3,220 in

Ann Arbor and 1,405 in Pittsfield. Washtenaw County also added more than 11,000 jobs in the same period.^{vii}

Q: How do AAATA/TheRide's operating costs compare with peer transit agencies?

A: Favorably. AAATA/TheRide's costs are in line with the overall level of service it provides and with industry standards. AAATA/TheRide's cost per passenger is 16.8% lower than the median of its top 20 nationally ranked peer agencies. TheRide also carries 49.6% more passengers per service hour than the median of the same peer group.^{viii}

Q: Why did AAATA/TheRide waste a lot of money trying to create a countywide transportation authority?

A: The money was not wasted. AAATA/TheRide spent less than one percent of its total annual budget for countywide transportation planning purposes. Expenses for transportation planning, public outreach and research are necessary to operate a successful and cost-efficient transit system.^{ix} The planning completed during the countywide process is and will continue to be used to inform all future transportation improvements.

Q: When Ypsilanti Township joins AAATA/TheRide, will they still have to pay for their service?

A: Yes. When Ypsilanti Township becomes a member of the AAATA/TheRide, they will be required to continue to pay their purchase of service agreement for the services provided in their community until citizens approve an Authority-wide funding request. Citizen approval of an authority-wide funding request would generate enough money from Ypsilanti Township to cover the costs associated with both their current services and proposed service improvements.^x

Q: Are there Urban Core Improvements that will benefit Ann Arbor residents?

A: Yes. There are many transportation improvements that will benefit Ann Arbor residents. The Urban Core service improvements won't benefit one community more than the other—all communities will benefit together. Service improvements for Ann Arbor include:

- Later Dial-a-Ride service during the week for seniors and people with disabilities, more weekend service and more destinations covered
- Fixed-route service will improve with more direct routes
- Later evening service on fixed-route buses
- More weekend service and access to more destinations throughout the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area.^{xi}

Detailed routes and schedules for the service improvements will be available for review at the October/November public meetings.

ⁱ TheRide Community Surveys 2009 and 2011

ⁱⁱ TheRide Audit and Budget Documents

ⁱⁱⁱ TheRide Community Surveys 2009 and 2011

^{iv} A New Direction, Our changing relationship with driving and the implications for America's future

^v Urban Core Transit Themes, March 2013

^{vi} The New Real Estate Mantra-Locations Near Public Transportation, National Association of Realtors

^{vii} Study: Ann Arbor and Pittsfield Township Drive Steady Washtenaw County Population Growth, MLive.com, September 24, 2013.

^{viii} Florida Transit Information System

^{ix} AATA Budgets 2009-2012

^x Urban Core Materials April 25, 2013

^{xi} Urban Core Materials 3/28/13