Current Detroit Transit

Phase Three of a Study by the University of Detroit Mercy’s Transit Research Team

July 2013

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Drawing on Cover

The drawing on the cover is part of the graphic summary of the Metro Detroit Regional Transit Workshop held at the University of Detroit Mercy on May 17 – 18, 2013. It was created by graphic facilitator, Brandy Agerbeck of loosetooth.com. The full graphic summarizes the presentations and discussion of the workshop. To view the full graphic or any of the presentation videos from the workshop go to http://udmercy.edu/transit-workshop/
BACKGROUND ON DETROIT REGIONAL TRANSIT STUDY

In late June 2012 the University of Detroit Mercy (UDM) launched a project to study the factors that enable and inhibit the development and operation of effective regional transportation systems in Southeast Michigan (Detroit metro area). This project was supported through grants from the US and Michigan Departments of Transportation and through matching support from the University of Detroit Mercy. The study team includes six UDM faculty members and seven students from three UDM schools/colleges, the School of Architecture, the College of Engineering and Science, and the School of Law.

This comprehensive study is comprised of five interwoven threads that will, over sixteen months, be examined and presented in five phases:

Phase 1: Other Cities: experiences in other cities and related lessons regarding the development and operation of effective regional transit systems

Phase 2: Detroit History: past successes and failures of metropolitan Detroit related to regional transit

Phase 3: Detroit’s Current State and Opportunities Regarding Transit

Phase 4: Comparisons of Detroit to Best and Worst Case Urban Models

Phase 5: Analysis and Recommendations for Detroit Regional Transit

PHASE THREE REPORT: CURRENT DETROIT TRANSIT

This document reports the findings from Phase Three focusing on the period from 2006/7 to 2013. These years are directly relevant to Detroit’s current options and decisions, and warrant in depth analysis. A number of key developments, such as the beginnings of regional transit planning and governance, M-1 Rail and Ann Arbor Commuter Rail occurred at the start of this “current” period. From the Phase Three effort, individuals or subgroups of the team have examined each of six areas, and have written a separate chapter for this report on each area as it relates to the development and operation of effective regional transit systems. (see Table of Contents on next page)

The team will conclude this study with its final report on its Phase 4 and 5 efforts later in 2013.
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CHAPTER 1

LEADERSHIP AND POLITICS OF TRANSIT IN CURRENT DETROIT (2007 - 2013)

Leo E. Hanifin and Scott Douglas

July 2013
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- Richard Murphy, Board Member – Regional Transit Authority
- Carmine Palombo, Director Transportation, SEMCOG
- Bill Shea, Reporter – Crain’s Business
- John Swatosh, Chief Operation Officer – SMART
- Jim Townsend, State of Michigan Representative 26th district
- Ernie Zachary, Detroit Developer
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For this report, “Current Detroit” is considered to be the period between 2007 and June of 2013. During this period, there have been three synergistic developments that have resulted in greater progress towards effective regional transit in Metro Detroit than has occurred in preceding 60 years. These developments are

- a Regional Transit Authority (RTA) and a regional transit plan
- the M-1 Rail Streetcar System
- the Ann Arbor – Detroit Commuter Rail Service

These three occurred through the sustained efforts and political wisdom of many leaders from government, transit providers, business, foundations, community organizations and academia. The progress was not without setbacks, including cutbacks and lack of coordination of local bus services in much of Southeastern Michigan. None-the-less, these leaders, each in their own way, remained steadfast in their mission to improve and expand regional transit in our region, and to derive the impact of making Metro Detroit a more vibrant, economically strong, livable and sustainable community.

While this progress in new organization and systems has been welcome, during this period the existing bus systems have continued to decline, resulting in loss of service and ridership. The two primary transit providers, DDOT and SMART, have suffered major reductions in funding.

This report starts with an introductory section that provides a transition from the team’s earlier report on Detroit Transit History (University of Detroit Transit Research Team 2013) that ended in 2006 to the current period. It then provides the timelines for key actions, efforts and accomplishments for the three developments and the decline in bus service, followed by discussion of the RTA and M-1 Rail. The section on leadership provides a list of key leaders from various stakeholder dimensions of SE Michigan and their roles in advancing regional transit and key transit initiatives. Finally, the report discusses key issues related to leadership and politics going forward from today.
INTRODUCTION

The recently published study of the history of transit politics and leadership in Detroit covered the period up to 2007 (Hanifin 2013). That report concluded that there were four key elements of politics and leadership that have been missing in Detroit’s transit history, but must be present to move forward with effective regional transportation:

1. Effective leadership that understands transit and builds wide support. This needs to include many leaders from different segments of the community, working together across geographic, political, economic and racial differences.

2. Education of the public that leads to understanding of the benefits of regional transit to all citizens, and then to public opinion and political pressure to move forward.

3. Building of a wide and deep coalition of support.

4. Director(s) of transit systems that provide the efficient, affordable, reliable service that diminishes or eliminates the public’s disillusionment and distrust of transit authorities.

Factors 1, 3 and 4 will be discussed in this report on Current Detroit Transit. The area of public education and public opinion will be addressed in Chapter 6, authored by Dr. Claudia Bernasconi. For this study, “current Detroit” is defined as the period from 2007 to May 31, 2013.

During this period there have been many encouraging developments for Detroit regional transit that give hope to the region’s prospects for developing effective regional transit:

The traditional racial and economic divides are slowly becoming blurred. For example, middle class blacks have moved into the inner ring of suburbs in Oakland and Macomb Counties and Western Wayne County.

The level of investment in the core of Detroit has risen significantly, leading to considerable gentrification and movement of young professionals into the city.

The overt racism that typified the region in past decades is, to a much greater degree, no longer legally, politically or socially acceptable.

The auto industry has rebounded, creating jobs in the suburbs, many of which can be filled by workers from the city.

Considerable local match has been raised by private investors and foundations creating the potential for higher levels of federal funding.
Many other regions, some with similar political, racial and economic barriers, have developed effective regional transit that clearly demonstrates the impact of such systems on the economic vitality, livability and environment of their regions. These have been studied by leaders from transit, business, government and academia, providing valuable understanding of how those other regions overcame those barriers . . . lessons that can guide the efforts of our region. In phase 1 of this project, the research team studied four other “peer regions” and documented its findings in their report, “Transit Lessons for Detroit from Four Peer Regions: Atlanta, Cleveland, Denver and St. Louis” (UDM Transit Research Team 2013)

In Metro Detroit, a spirit of regionalism has begun to emerge as reflected in regional support for the Detroit Zoo, the Detroit Institute of the Arts (DIA) and Cobo Hall. Of course, the most relevant shift toward regionalism is the passage of legislation and creation of a Regional Transit Authority for SE Michigan.

A light rail/streetcar system on Woodward evolved from a concept to a vision, a plan and an active, funded project that will be constructed and operating in the near future.
KEY TRANSIT DEVELOPMENTS – 2007 – 2013

During the last six years since 2007 there have been two transformative developments in transit in Southeastern Michigan. The first is the emergence of effective regional collaboration, initially in the form of regional planning and then in the form of regional governance through the creation of a Regional Transit Authority (RTA). The second is the planning, design, funding and construction of a light rail/streetcar system on Woodward Avenue, known today as “M-1 Rail.” These two developments occurred simultaneously over that full six years. While they were, to a large degree, independent initiatives, at times they influenced and impacted one another. Both have taken sustained efforts by many key leaders to overcome many political, legal and financial barriers. And both have now reached the point that their creation is certain and their impact on the future of transit in Southeastern Michigan will be profound and positive.

In addition to these two seminal initiatives, a third project, the Ann Arbor – Detroit Commuter Rail Project, has been under development during the same period. While it is not progressed as far as the first two, it has made considerable progress toward implementation and is synergistic with the regional plan and M-1 Rail.

The following timelines provide the key events and developments of each of these three developments. To amplify the critical nature of leadership and politics in these developments, the authors have taken the liberty of inserting vignettes or quotes intended to enrich the readers appreciation and understanding of such political or leadership issues. To separate these from the strictly factual elements of this timeline, these are highlighted in grey.

A. REGIONAL PLANNING AND REGIONAL AUTHORITY

June 2007 – RTCC reactivated: Regional Transit Coordinating Committee was authorized in 1967, but was inactive during the period that SEMTA and DARTA existed. In June 2007, after the ruling of the Michigan Supreme Court ended DARTA, the members of the (chief executives of Macomb, Oakland and Wayne Counties and the Mayor of Detroit) and “approved resolutions to assume certain duties and functions from the DARTA organization which had been created under the inter-local agreement. The RTCC also authorized the appointment of a General Secretary and Chief Executive Officer. . . The RTCC subsequently approved a contract with former State Senator John Hertel as RTCC General Secretary and CEO. “(Hamilton 2012)

2008 – RTCC Creates Regional Transit Plan: The RTCC published its Comprehensive Regional Transit Service Plan, identifying corridors for arterial bus rapid transit, light rail
and commuter service. This plan failed to identify governance or funding solutions. (Regional Transit Coordinating Council 2008)

2009 – RTA Legislation introduced and fails to reach the House floor: In December 2009 three state representatives introduced bill that would create a regional transit authority: Bert Johnson (HB573), John Swiltalkski (HB5732) and (Marie Donigan (HB5733). The House Intergovernmental and Regional Affairs committee (Chaird by Donigan) voted the bills out on May 18, 2009; the bills were never taken up on the House Floor. The City of Detroit, represented by Norm White who was the CEO of DDOT at the time, testified against the bills in committee on more than one occasion and in workgroups, as did Gerry Poisson, Chief Deputy County Executive of Oakland County.


July 2011 – Governor Appoints Special Advisor on Transit: “Snyder earlier this year appointed Dennis Schornack, a former senior policy adviser to Gov. John Engler, to be his special adviser on regional transit.” (Shea, Feds push for regional transit authority to run light rail 2011)
2011 - Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) concept introduced in “Rolling Rapid Transit”

Figure 1 Proposed Regional BRT Routes

(Anderson 2011)

January 26, 2012: A four bill package (SB 909, SB 911, SB 912, and SB 967) to create a Regional Transit Authority is introduced in the Michigan Senate sponsored by Senators Tom Casperson, Bret Johnson, and Virgil Smith.

September 11, 2012: The lack of support for the RTA legislation by the City of Detroit leads to open criticism by SMART General Manager John Hertel. This was reported in an article in Crain’s Detroit Business that stated “The man who spearheaded creation of the Woodward project and a proposed regional transit system, John Hertel, now runs the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation bus system. ‘There can be no major progress on anything without a regional transit authority,’ he said, adding that Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano, Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson and Macomb County Executive Mark Hackel, Snyder and lawmakers are prepared to support an RTA.’ Hertel blames the city on the lack of action. “There’s been one thing missing: Activity on the part of the Bing administration to get this done.” (Shea, Feds push for regional transit authority to run light rail 2011)
**November, 2012:** The Michigan Senate passed bills to create a regional transit authority (RTA) for southeast Michigan.

The RTA bills were passed on a party line Republican vote on the House and Senate Floor even though there were no Republican sponsors and no Republicans (except for Wayne Schmidt) votes in Committee.

**December 19, 2012:** Governor Snyder signs the bills that establish the RTA. The central bill, Senate Bill No. 909 becomes Act No. 387 of Public Acts of 2012. Key elements of the four related acts are as follows:

The RTA covers four counties: Wayne, Macomb, Oakland and Washtenaw; bill allows other counties to petition their way into the authority in the future if desired

Sets aside $250,000 from the Transportation Fund to support the authority as it begins its duties (Senate Bill 909) (However, that is the only funding set aside at this time.)

Referendum is required to provide a funding mechanism that needs to pass on a regional basis

One mechanism suggested is a vehicle registration fee. That fee is limited to $1.20 on every 1,000 dollars (Senate Bill 909). This would add an estimated 25 dollars per vehicle to the registration fee and raise approximately 75 million dollars a year, assuming we have the same number of vehicles once regional transit is developed.

The other mechanism suggested is a special property tax assessment

(Note: There was no suggestion of a local sales tax as such taxation is prohibited in the Michigan Constitution.)

Anti-rail: RTA cannot acquire, build or operate any rail systems without unanimous approval by the RTA board

Ten RTA board members: Governor’s appointee as non-voting chair, one from Detroit (appointed by Mayor) and two from each county (appointed by the county executives). Also, one of the two Wayne County’s members must be from Detroit.

Advisory Committees: the legislation requires two advisory groups:

- A public transportation provider advisory council that consists of 2 members appointed by each public transportation provider in the public transit region.
- A citizens’ advisory committee that consists of public transit region residents.

Prohibits the authority from assuming liability for, or paying any legacy costs of, an existing public transit authority or agency without voter approval (Senate Bill 909)
The RTA has authority to issue “coordination directives” regarding public transit systems, and withhold federal funds to agencies that do not comply.

The RTA will accept the transit plans developed by RTCC and AATA as the initial plan for regional transit development, and will update the regional transit plan annually. The RTCC plan proposes the development of a 110 mile bus rapid transit (BRT) system.

The RTA becomes the designated recipient of State and Federal funds once it enters into a “Memorandum of Understanding” with the Transit agencies that will receive the Federal funds.

This authority is exempt from taxation and zoning laws and has the authority to enter into agreements with local road agencies (Senate Bill 909).

**Early 2013:** RTA board was appointed and 1st RTA board meeting was held on April 10, 2013

(Note: See section II below, “DOT/FTA Involvement in Detroit’s Regional Transit Initiatives,” for more information on the efforts and actions that led to the passage of the RTA legislation.)

### B. WOODWARD TRANSIT INITIATIVE (NOW M1 RAIL)

**February 2007:** John Hertel, CEO of the Regional Transit Coordinating Committee, and his RTCC Deputy Director, John Swatosh, developed the concept for a privately funded modern streetcar service to initially run on Woodward from Jefferson Avenue to Grand Boulevard, a distance of 3.4 miles, and would eventually run north to 13 mile road in Oakland County. This concept was to be a catalyst for the development of a greater regional system. (Swatosh, The Genesis of M-1 Rail 2013)

**2007: DTOGS initiated by DDOT:** URS contracted to support the Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT) in the design and completion of the Detroit Transit Options Growth Study (DTOGS). DTOGS included preliminary design/development of options, public input and selection of a locally preferred option.

**March 1, 2007** - Hertel meets with the Michigan Ohio University Transportation Center (MIOH UTC) director, Leo Hanifin, to define a project to create the preliminary plan for that system (later labeled the Woodward Transit Catalyst System). Hertel believes that creating an effective mass transit up Woodward would build public appreciation and support for modern transit leading to a demand for expansion regionally. Hertel wants to see something move forward within 18 months. The study would examine a 3.4 mile route from New Center (where the Amtrak station is) to the Detroit River, and would
create a preliminary plan including concept images, and estimates of the cost of surface rail be per mile (from engineering to completion) and the cost to operate at different times per day.

July 10, 2007 – Hertel secures support from the Kresge and Hudson Webber Foundation, Roger Penske and Dan Gilbert for the study and preliminary plan for streetcar system in Woodward by UDM-Deloitte team.

July 30, 2007 – Engagement letter submitted by the University of Detroit Mercy – Deloitte team for study/preliminary plan and operational estimates in eight to ten weeks for $225,000. The plan included system specifications, tentative station locations, vehicle description, operating plan, cost estimate and revenue estimates and governance structures during construction and operation. The final deliverables included station renderings, an animation of the system in operation and a case statement for the system which described the benefits of light rail/streetcar systems in other cities that could be expected in Detroit and SE Michigan. The project proposal was approved.

MDOT Support: Throughout the development of the preliminary plan, advice is provided on an ongoing basis by MDOT director Kirk Steudle and MDOT leader of train transportation, Tim Hoefner.

Summer and Fall 2007: Hertel met with key business and community leaders over a period of 5 months to “pitch” the project and to generate interest and support in the downtown Modern Streetcar concept. He hosted several meetings with business, community and government leaders, nurturing the project as a catalyst to regional development of modern multi-modal transit. In doing so, Mr. Hertel formed the coalition of initial sponsors, including Roger Penske, Dan Gilbert, Chris Ilitch, Peter Karmanos, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Wayne State University, Henry Ford Hospital and others. (Swatosh, The Genesis of M-1 Rail 2013)

Oct. 24, 2007 Preliminary plan presented to the business coalition and government leaders by Dr. Leo Hanifin and leaders from Deloitte. The presentation was entitled, “The Woodward Transit Catalyst Project: The Catalyst for Effective Rapid Transit and Development in the Detroit Region.”
The title of the plan is “Woodward Transit Catalyst Plan”; the term catalyst indicates the anticipated impact of this system in providing awareness of modern transit systems . . . if people of a region experience effective modern transit they will want more. This strategy was echoed later by the head of the FTA, Peter Rogoff, when he said “We’re making good progress. This, like others across the country, will have stutter steps and naysayers along the way. After the first segment is built, even some of the naysayers want to know when the next one is coming to their community,” (Shea 2011)

November 21, 2007 – The Regional Area Initial Link (TRAIL) is incorporated.

March 10, 2008 - Investigative visit to Minneapolis and Portland: At the initiative of Roger Penske, a trip was organized to learn directly about the processes, strategies and steps taken by two other cities in creating light rail systems. The visiting team included Penske, Tom Dekar (Deloitte), Kirk Steudle (MDOT), Tim Hoeffner (MDOT), John Swatosh (RTCC), Laura Trudeau (Kresge), Leo Hanifin (UDM), Scott Anderson (UDM) and Matt Cullen (GM). The team was able to ride several transit systems, meet with transit and community leaders, and visit maintenance facilities in both Minneapolis and Portland.
Early 2008: The Regional Area Initial Link (TRAIL) and TRAIL board formed. The first meeting 3-25-08 was opened with the following quote, "Do not go where the path may lead . . . go instead where there is no path and leave a trail" from Emerson. TRAIL begins actions toward building the Woodward Transit Catalyst System, including hiring project manager, consultant, engineering firm for preliminary design. Fund raising continues.

March 14, 2008: Detroit Free Press editorial: Image of competition and lack of cooperation between DTOGS and TRAIL emerges. “Private investors are also looking at building light rail along Woodward, on 3.4 miles from Hart Plaza to Grand Boulevard. It's important that those investors and city officials start talking as soon as possible, maybe through John Hertel, the new CEO of the Regional Transit Coordinating Council. Given the obstacles, the Woodward project stands the best chance of succeeding if the two proposals cooperate, instead of compete.” “In any case, for light rail on Woodward to succeed, the entire region must get behind the plan. Metro Detroit can't afford to let more infighting destroy another opportunity to start building a woefully needed regional mass transit system.”

April 2008 - Rick Gustafson from Portland retained by TRAIL Board of Directors as consultant to system planning.

April 21, 2008 - The Alternatives Analysis study known as the Detroit Transit Options for Growth Study (DTOGS) project concludes a light rail line along eight miles on Woodward Avenue from Downtown to the Michigan State Fairgrounds near Eight Mile Road is the best alternative to build the starter line for a regional rapid transit system in the Detroit area. This is announced at a DTOGS press conf. at Next Energy (Norm White, Carolyn and Kwame Kilpatrick). The related press release indicates “Construction on Woodward Avenue could begin as soon as 2011 and is dependent on unified local support, Federal approvals and securing matching funds. Construction is expected to take 24 to 30 months.”

2008: Norm White, head of DTOGS project appointed to TRAIL Board of Directors to bring City directly into the privately funded TRAIL project

June 4, 2008 TRAIL Board meeting: The following discussion from the board minutes reflect the close collaboration of the diverse stakeholders from business, government, academia and foundations engaged in this initiative:

- John Hertel described meetings with the governor’s office and house leadership regarding the development of TRAIL and relevant legislation that he had authored.
• Kirk Steudle and Tim Hoeffner reviewed possible alignment and commit MDOT support for preliminary subsurface examinations and surveying the area for the light rail system.

• Leo Hanifin would be responsible for preparing a time line for the steps of the project.

• The need for a communication plan was discussed. Roger Penske requested that Laura Trudeau prepare a communication plan outlining the steps for releasing a public announcement about TRAIL.

• Trudeau indicated that on June 12th the Kresge Foundation would meet to approve an immediate $500,000 advance to TRAIL.

2008 – TRAIL-related bills passed (House Bills 6542-6547) These bills accomplished the following changes:

• Authorized a non-profit to operate a street railway
• Requires an operating subsidy in annual state budget
• Permits MDOT expenditures to support M-1 RAIL

January 2009: M-1 Rail is incorporated replacing TRAIL

2009 – Matt Cullen elected President and CEO of M1 Rail

April 2009: DDOT, citing DTOGS, selects Woodward Avenue as the Locally Preferred Option for the first light rail line in Detroit. (URS 2009)

Summer 2009: “Basis of Design” documents submitted by TRAIL. Design is 15% complete.

Late 2009 – Dec. 2011 - Attempt to unite DTOGs and M1 into one project under coordination of MDOT

Dec. 11, 2009 Broad Collaboration on Woodward Light Rail: A memo to M-1 board from Matt Cullen, President and CEO of M-1 Rail, reflects the efforts of key governmental leaders at all levels to collaborate on moving Woodward Light Rail forward. In that memo he stated, “Legislation that paves the way for use of the $125 million M-1 RAIL investment as a local match for federal funding for Woodward Light Rail was passed yesterday by the U.S. House of Representatives and is en route to the U.S. Senate with approval expected yet this year. We appreciate the tremendous collaborative efforts of U.S. Senator Carl Levin, Congresswoman Carolyn Cheeks-Kilpatrick, Governor Granholm’s team and the City of Detroit in achieving this milestone.
It is also a pleasure to share the enclosed M-1 RAIL endorsement letters to Rip Rapson from Mayor Dave Bing and Norm White on behalf of the City of Detroit, and Kirk Steudle on behalf of MDOT. These letters are robust in their support and key to fulfilling commitments needed by The Kresge Foundation in order to release their next $7.5 million grant payment later this month.” (Cullen 2009)

“Through the efforts of Kirk Steudle, the FTA has begun reaching out to the three Woodward Light Rail partners—MDOT, DDOT and M-1 RAIL—via the office of FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff. This has led to collaboration among the three local agencies to function as a single entity. We are making good progress toward a fiduciary protocol for a joint working team led by MDOT. This team will develop our internal project MOU.

This is especially important given the anticipated visit to Detroit in January of U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood and our plan to provide him with a personal briefing on our project at that time.” (Cullen 2009)

2010 DTOGS development: DDOT starts federal environmental impact process for funding and construction of the “Woodward Light Rail” project from the Detroit River to Eight Mile Road.

February 2010 – Tiger 1 grant of $25 million awarded to M-1 Rail

June 2010 - M-1 RAIL becomes Phase 1 of the 9 mile City Project (Detroit Transportation Opportunities for Growth Study)

2011 - M-1 RAIL becomes investor in City of Detroit Woodward Light Rail Plan

June 29, 2011 The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and City of Detroit cosigned a final environmental impact statement (FEIS) for Detroit’s Woodward Light Rail Project.

August 2011 – Record of Decision received on Woodward Avenue Light Rail Environmental Impact Statement: This cleared the way for Tiger Grant originally awarded to M-1 Rail to be “repurposed” by US DOT to provide this grant and the support from MDOT to the combined M-1 DTOGS project under the control of the City of Detroit.

Sept. 11, 2011 - FTA head Peter Rogoff publically expresses preference to have Woodward Light Rail run by an RTA, but says that this will not be a requirement for DOT funding. At that time the Woodward project was a “$528 million project, a nine-mile route from downtown to the city limit at Eight Mile Road that would require $318 million of that cost to come from the FTA. (Shea 2011)

Late 2011 - City of Detroit fails to provide funding of their share of joint project

December 2011 - Joint USDOT, State of Michigan, and City of Detroit cancelation
of Woodward Light Rail and announcement of intention to utilize Bus Rapid Transit

The media declaration of failure of Woodward Rail project. Governor Snyder, Mayor Bing and the US DOT are willing to scrap the entire Woodward Light Rail Project in favor of providing BRT service on Woodward (as part of the regional BRT system). However, the leaders of M-1 Rail refused to accept the failure of the City led project as a failure of the M-1 part of the project.

**January 2012 – FTA agrees to allow M-1 RAIL to perform validation of project plan** and gives them 90 days to submit answers to their concerns.

**April 20, 2012 – M-1 Rail submits a 171 page “M-1 Rail Streetcar Project Business Plan” (Developed to support the 90-day project validation effort) to FTA. The funding sources were described as follows, “This consists of over $84 million in committed private and philanthropic contributions which, together with $16 million in New Markets Tax Credits funding and a $25 million federal TIGER grant, meet our goal.” (M-1 Rail 2012)

**April 2012 – M-1 Rail Business Plan Accepted by FTA** A key element of this decision was the language that Senator Carl Levin Senator Levin had inserted into the appropriations bill allowing for M-1’s investment to count as local match to connected projects. (Sec. 168) Determining the local share of costs of the Woodward Corridor for the rating process for New Starts projects, requires that the Secretary of Transportation consider any portion of the corridor advanced entirely with non-federal funds.

**September 2012 – An independent utility investigation was completed. This was done to identify the location of utilities and utility conflicts along the corridor, which significantly assisted in advancing the design process and schedule.**

**2012 - 2013 – SEMCOG commissions Parsons Brinkerhoff to study the alternative modes of transit along Woodward Ave. (supported by $2M from FTA). Meetings are held to secure public input.**

**January 18, 2013: DOT Secretary Ray LaHood** announces support for the M-1 projects and again “repurposes” the Tiger grant back to the M-1 project.

**Apr. 22, 2013** “The Federal Transit Administration has given the M-1 Rail streetcar project its required environmental clearance to build the $137 million, 3.3-mile loop on Detroit’s Woodward Avenue, the project’s organizers said today.” Operation is projected to start in late 2015. (Shea, M-1 Rail line gets $25 million from U.S. to get it done 2013)

**May 3, 2013: M-1 Rail Board Approves a resolution to “Proceed with the M-1 Rail Streetcar Project, within an anticipated construction commencement date in the summer of this year and an anticipated construction completion date in 2015.”**
C. ANN ARBOR – DETROIT COMMUTER RAIL

For over seven years, the transportation leadership of SEMCOG has been working with MDOT, Amtrak, Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and the service communities to introduce commuter rail service between Ann Arbor and Detroit. The concept was presented in public meetings in September 2005. The SEMCOG website has 34 updates posted on its project webpage. (SEMCOG 2013).

In one of the earliest updates in March 2007, Carmine Palombo, SEMCOG’s Director of Transportation, was optimistic regarding the project’s progress, stating “We are working to establish this service as soon as is possible. At this time, I do not have an estimate of when service could begin. We will have a much better estimate once AMTRAK has completed its discussions with the freight railroads.” (Palombo 2007)

However, a variety of barriers have led to delays. These delays in implementing this system can be attributed to such things as “the lack of an owner, the lack of dedicated funding, the requirements of Amtrak and previous to them, the Norfolk Southern, and the time it takes to do projects of this magnitude.” (Palombo, Personal Discussion of Ann Arbor Commuter Rail 2013)

An Alternatives Analysis/Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the project was completed by SEMCOG in July 2007. One likely alternative that was explored is depicted below.

Figure 3 One-Alternative Route for Ann-Arbor Commuter Rail

(SEMCOG 2007)
While the service was not yet implemented, a number of important steps have been accomplished to move closer to its launch:

- **The Great Lakes Central (GLC) Railroad has completed the refurbishment of all nine passenger cars needed for the proposed Ann Arbor-Detroit commuter rail service. These refurbished commuter rail cars passed safety tests with flying colors.**

- **Grand Rapids, Michigan-based American Seating has completed production of seats for all nine cars. The seats have all been delivered and are installed in the completed cars.**

- **Agreements with the host railroads have either been executed or are in final negotiations. Construction of the West Detroit Connection Track is expected to begin in early 2013.**

- **FTA has determined that an (Expedited) Environmental Assessment (EA) will be required to clear the project for construction. This is very good news as the more rigorous analysis required under a full Environmental Impact Statement could have caused significant delay. FTA has indicated that this will be an expedited EA, with priority for their staff.**

- **Capacity analysis is underway and is being headed by MDOT. (SEMCOG 2013)**

- **MDOT received $187.5 million for high speed rail from Dearborn to Chicago. Parts of these funds were employed to acquire and stabilize Norfolk Southern track. Both the acquisition and improvements of this rail will be critical to the introduction and operational control of commuter rail on the Ann Arbor to Detroit alignment. (There still remain challenges regarding the efficient mixing of freight and passenger traffic in this corridor.) (Kuehne October 26, 2011)**

According to the latest project update report, “The project team is working on providing service to special events along the Ann Arbor-Detroit Corridor beginning in 2013.” (SEMCOG 2013)

**D. DETERIORATION OF LOCAL BUS SERVICES**

For many years prior to the period covered by this report, the primary local bus service providers, Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT) and Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART), have been criticized for their lack of coopera-
tion and coordination of their services. In addition, SMART operations have been hampered by the “opt out” of key communities in the region, leaving gaps in their service map and reducing funding.

During the current period from 2007 to now, the severe economic downturn has led to dramatic reductions tax revenues provided to SMART. Since DDOT is a department of the City of Detroit, Detroit’s overall fiscal losses have further constrained operating support to DDOT.

The net impact of these developments has been a deterioration of the bus services in and around Detroit, including the elimination of routes and the reduction of the numbers of bus runs on the remaining routes. (Klinefelter 2012)

In addition to the reduction in bus routes and bus runs, there is a need for better and safer shelters for riders, but funds are not available for this. This frustration was reflected by SMART COO John Swatosh when he discussed transfer points in the system stating, “There needs for something better than just your average shelter in a lot of different locations. It needs to be multimodal or multipurpose, where you can have better lighting. Any place where there’s more people and there’s more lighting, there’s less danger. We don’t have the budget to put up those kinds of facilities. Lighting and security isn’t part of our plan (because there’s no money for it). It needs to be part of a regional commitment to providing safe and secure and comfortable places for riders to wait for the vehicles, and you know most (other regions) have shelters that are more welcoming and safer than what we can provide. It’s not that SMART doesn’t want to. They just don’t have the money to do it.” (Swatosh 2013)

While the cutbacks have reduced overall bus service in the region, the level of coordination is higher now than it has been in the past. According to Christine McFadden, “I think that what we’re doing currently is the best coordination we’ve ever had with DDOT where we’re coordinating transfers at the city limits. Although it’s not ideal for everyone, it’s the best coordination we’ve had as far as not duplicating service and that sort of thing.” (McFadden 2013) While this degree of coordination has occurred, McFadden is frustrated that DDOT does not collaborate up front on scheduling. Rather, they provide route changes and cuts when they are made public, leaving SMART to react with their changes. (McFadden 2013)

Until recently the division of capital funds in Metro Detroit was determined by a longstanding formula whereby 65 percent of all the federal and state funding that came to the region for transit went to Detroit (DDOT) and 35 percent went to the outlying areas (SMART). This ratio went into effect in 1989 in Public Act 204. As a result, DDOT has been able to replace a much higher fraction of their bus fleet more frequently than SMART. This has created a disparity in the age of the two bus fleets. According to one
SMART leader, “our entire fleet needs to be replaced, and the system in the city (DDOT) has no buses that are eligible for replacement.” (Swatosh 2013)

The possible factors that might be used to determine the allocation of federal and state funds do not provide a clear picture. The current data indicates that while DDOT carries over three times as many passengers, the revenue miles for the two systems are about equal and SMART serves a total population that is five times that of DDOT.

### Table 1 2011 Ridership Information for DDOT and SMART

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DDOT</th>
<th>SMART</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unlinked passenger trips</td>
<td>35,907,731</td>
<td>11,405,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue Miles</td>
<td>15,824,884</td>
<td>14,534,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>713,777</td>
<td>3,734,090</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The FTA recently required the region to re-analyzed the split of federal funds for capital projects. This resulted in a SEMCOG decision to implement the following split:

SMART: 51.5%

DDOT: 48.5%

People Mover: 1%

This will lead to a shift of approximately $7 million from DDOT to SMART in the fiscal year starting July 1, 2013. (Helms, Detroit loses $7 million for buses to suburbs despite city’s pleas 2013) This shift has led to considerable outcry from Detroit officials and DDOT.

**Figure 4. DDOT and SMART Funding Trends**

Note: National Transit Database changes in funding since 2006 in Dollars
Bus riders around the region have made their displeasure clear with protests against any cut in bus service. (Huffington Post 2012) (Transportation Riders United 2009). The need for more and better transit was also made obvious by the emergence of two new transit services in 2012. AirRide, provided by the Ann Arbor Transit Authority, launched bus service between the Detroit Metropolitan Airport and Ann Arbor on April 2, 2012. (Stanton 2012) In 2012, The Detroit Bus Company also started providing public event shuttles, tours and day trips. (Chiaramonte 2013) In 2013 it received a grant to shuttle school children to after school and summer programs. (Haimerl 2013)

Clearly, as the RTA moves forward it will need to balance their attention to creating regional rapid transit with the establishment of better local bus service for current and new riders. This is both a political issue and an issue of equity for those who are transit dependent.
I. OVERVIEW OF M-1 RAIL

A. SUMMARY OF M-1 RAIL PLAN

**M-1 Mission:** The mission of M-1 RAIL is “to create a catalyst for investment, economic development and urban renewal that positively impacts the entire region through the construction of a streetcar circulator system running along and connecting all points of Woodward Avenue from the Riverfront to the New Center area.” (M-1 Rail April 20, 2012) In recent documents, M-1 has projected the catalytic impact that M-1 will have on investment in the corridor, stating, “It is expected that the Woodward Avenue Streetcar will bring approximately $500 million to $1 billion worth of economic development along the corridor.” (M-1 Rail 2013)

**“M-1 Vision:** The M-1 RAIL Project is envisioned to be one element of a future modern, world-class regional transit system where all forms of transportation, including rail, bus, vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian, are considered and utilized to build a vibrant, walkable region that includes a thriving Downtown Detroit. This city center is envisioned by supporters of M-1 RAIL to become a foundation for growth and prosperity throughout the surrounding neighborhoods adjacent to the Central Business District, Midtown and New Center.” (M-1 Rail April 20, 2012)

The alignment of the M-1 Rail System is 3.4 miles as street cars from Larned Street downtown to just north of W. Grand Blvd (M-1 Rail April 20, 2012). The schematic below indicates cross streets that are near the eleven stops in the initial construction plan. These stops will serve a variety of major institutions (cultural, health, entertainment, educational, business, . . . ), including New Center/ Henry Ford Hospital, Amtrak Station, Tech Town, College for Creative Studies, Wayne State University, Detroit Medical Center, Midtown/Cultural Center, Detroit Institute of Arts, Performance venues/Professional Sports stadiums, Campus Martius Park, Downtown, and the Riverfront.
Figure 6. Proposed M-1 Rail route
Figure 7. Typical Side-Running M-1 RAIL Cross-Section between Stations

(M-1 Rail April 20, 2012)

Figure 8. Typical Side-Running M-1 RAIL Cross-Section at Stations

(M-1 Rail April 20, 2012)
Table 2. One-Way Running Time Estimates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AM Peak</th>
<th>Mid-Day</th>
<th>PM Peak</th>
<th>Off-Peak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Running Time (Minutes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northbound</td>
<td>15:52</td>
<td>15:37</td>
<td>16:29</td>
<td>15:22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southbound</td>
<td>15:44</td>
<td>15:29</td>
<td>16:37</td>
<td>15:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Speed (mph)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northbound</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southbound</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on 2030 traffic forecasts, no traffic signal priority.

(M-1 Rail April 20, 2012)

B. INNOVATIVE NATURE OF THE M-1 INITIATIVE

By many accounts, M-1 Rail is an unprecedented in its innovation, and in its commitment of funds and effort by Detroit’s private sector.

The import and innovation of this private initiative was express by Leo Hanifin (a co-author of this report) when he spoke at the TRAIL Board Meeting in 2008, stating “I believe that today, all of we are today the most important group in our City and region . . . not just because we are creating an effective transit system that will serve our the people of SE MI and be an important catalyst to returning Detroit to greatness. But because we are demonstrating unique and innovative cooperation and commitment from state and regional governments, from top business leaders, from community organizations and foundations and from a university, all acting not in their separate interests, but for the greater good of our region and its people. And also because we are being very innovative in creating this transit system: innovative in the engineering and architecture to make it effective, efficient and still very affordable, and innovative in its financing, organization and governance. We in this room have demonstrated not only that innovation, but also the energy and perseverance, the commitment and cooperation to make this system a reality . . . and I look forward to the day, not that far off, that we all take a ride on the Woodward Transit together.” (Hanifin 2008)

This degree of innovation, commitment and perseverance was again recognized nearly five years later when Secretary LaHood’s came to Detroit to announce $25M in funding for M1 (and over $6 million in funding for the RTA start-up), “The amount of community backing for the transit project was unprecedented for big cities, but he had withheld federal funding until metro Detroit’s political leadership and the state Legislature approved a regional transportation authority to coordinate bus service in a region known for dysfunctional mass transit.” (M-1 Rail line gets $25 million from U.S. to get it done 2013)

The innovation of M-1 was especially evident in the private leadership and funding from private sources and tax credits. As of the submission of the M-1 Rail Business Plan to DOT in April 2012 it had already secured the following sponsors:
Table 3 - Committed Foundations, Donors, and Sponsors for M-1 Rail

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kresge Foundation</td>
<td>$35,100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detroit Development Authority (DDA)</td>
<td>$9,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compuware</td>
<td>$3,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detroit Medical Center</td>
<td>$3,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Ford Health System</td>
<td>$3,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilitch Holdings</td>
<td>$3,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quicken Loans</td>
<td>$3,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penske Corporation</td>
<td>$3,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayne State University</td>
<td>$3,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevrolet</td>
<td>$3,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford Foundation</td>
<td>$3,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kellogg Foundation</td>
<td>$3,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Cross Blue Shield</td>
<td>$3,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayne County</td>
<td>$3,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hudson Webber Foundation</td>
<td>$1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kresge Additional Backstop Grant</td>
<td>$3,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$84,000,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(M-1 Rail April 20, 2012)

In addition, the business plan refers to $19 million more that had been promised from private investors and up to $40 million that would be available through New Market Tax Credits. (M-1 Rail April 20, 2012)

Five months later, Penske and Cullen, representing the M-1 Rail Board, stated to FTA, “By September, M-1 RAIL’s work with both private enterprises and public agencies has secured a total of $115.5 million for the project. All of these revenues were secured absent a clear Federal commitment to the project.” This document also included funding commitments from new sponsors (Chrysler, Ford Motor Company Fund and Bank of America) and described the plan for M-1 to fund operation of the streetcar line for its first ten years. (Penske and Cullen 2012)

In the April 20, 2013 M-1 Business Plan submitted to FTA, Roger Penske and Matt Cullen commit “The M-1 RAIL Project represents an unprecedented commitment by the private and philanthropic sector to fund most of the cost to build – and then to operate for up to 10 years – a vital public infrastructure project for the benefit of the citizens of Detroit and the State of Michigan.”
II. DOT/FTA INVOLVEMENT IN DETROIT’S REGIONAL TRANSIT INTIATIVES

Throughout the period from 2007 to the present the US DOT and FTA provided encouragement and assistance to those in the Detroit region who were engaged in planning of transit systems and organizations. That assistance was the result of the efforts of Detroit officials, including Mayor Dave Bing, and the views of federal officials that there was a great need for more and better transit in Detroit. According to FTA administrator Peter Rogoff, “They rank about ninth in the nation as far as the size of the metropolitan area and 107th in the volume of transit that they provide.” (Snyder 2011)

In 2011, “Detroit (was) one of five cities selected to be part of the Obama administration’s new Strong Cities, Strong Communities program, which aims to help build the capacity of local governments to “develop and execute their economic vision and strategies. Detroit and Fresno are the only two receiving special attention from the FTA, according to Rogoff, with Detroit getting extra-special attention. The FTA had more people on the ground than usual in Detroit, helping guide city officials through the environmental impact review process in addition to the all-star panel.” (Snyder 2011) In August 2011, the FTA brought top leaders from several transit agencies across the country, including Salt Lake City, Denver, Portland, Atlanta and Dallas, to Detroit to share their methods and strategies of successful development of transit systems.

The FTA also assigned an advisor to Detroit, Sean Libberton, Director, FTA Office of Capital Projects, for more than a year, to provide ongoing advice and assistance to government and transit providers.

One of the pivotal elements of the FTA advice and influence in Detroit was their insistence that a regional transit authority (RTA) be created in Detroit. In September of 2011, this position was presented in the form of a recommendation that light rail should be run by an RTA. At that time FTA Administrator, Peter Rogoff stated "Many people have viewed an RTA as the ideal operator for the system," FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff said, adding that it isn't in Detroit Department of Transportation's best interest to have the "added burden" of operating a rail line.” (Shea 2011) However, Rogoff stopped short of making the RTA a condition for federal funding of the Woodward Light Rail Project. According to the Crain’s report, “The head of the Federal Transit Administration wants Detroit's Woodward Avenue light rail project to be operated by a regional transit authority -- a governance system that's proved elusive here -- but he won't say the lack of an RTA will jeopardize the proposed line.” (Shea 2011)

The FTA also assisted in developing a broader understanding and appreciation of the value of bus rapid transit (BRT) systems, such as those proposed in the RTCC Regional
Transit Plan of 2008. On February 24, 2012, FTA, joined Governor Snyder’s office and R-PATH to host a bus rapid transit (BRT) workshop at the Detroit Zoo. The National Bus Rapid Transit Institute organized the workshop that included presentations from leaders from FTA, and BRT systems in Los Angeles, Cleveland and Las Vegas to inform the Detroit community of BRT. 140 regional leaders attended. (R-PATH 2012)

On April 20, 2013 M-1 Rail submitted a 1200 page plan to the FTA seeking approval of the project and reallocation of the $25 million Tiger Grant to by DOT. In the cover letter to Sec. LaHood from Cullen and Penske stated “While we believe the M-1 RAIL Project will spur the continued transformation of the Woodward Corridor, and out from there the resurgence of a stronger Detroit, the benefits are even broader. The M-1 RAIL Project will create positive momentum for transit across Southeast Michigan as we work to meet our transit needs on a regional scale, and it will provide a tremendous financial head start for the proposed regional Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project through federal legislation enabling the private investment in the M-1 RAIL Project to count as local matching funds.”

On June 4, 2012 Secretary of Transportation, Ray LaHood, visited Detroit to meet with Mayor Bing, Governor Snyder and Matt Cullen, CEO of M-1 Rail and indicated that DOT was not yet ready to approve and support the M-1 Rail project and gave M-1 an additional 60 days to answer additional concerns and questions. (Shea, Crain’s Detroit Business 2012) LaHood’s concerns related primarily to who would operate the streetcar system and what funds would support that operation. In effect, the concerns expressed made the DOT approval and support dependent upon the creation of a regional transit authority (RTA) in Metro Detroit.

In fact, Sec. LaHood was also involved in the pursuit of support for the RTA bills. “LaHood met with Bolger and House Majority Floor Leader Jim Stamas, R-Midland, for an hour at his Washington office Sept. 14 in an effort to win approval for the stalled plan. He also met last month with Gov. Rick Snyder and (Randy) Richardville. Winning approval for the regional authority may also clear the way for $25 million for the M-1 Woodward Avenue street car plan, LaHood said.” (Shepardson 2012)

These developments further energized the political forces of Governor Snyder and the M-1 advocates to secure the votes in the Michigan legislature to pass the RTA legislation. In September the CEO’s of eight major corporations and universities cosigned a letter to the state Legislature’s top two Republican leaders urging the passage of the RTA bills. Transportation Advocacy groups such as Transportation Riders Unites and Trans4M were also very active in pursuing legislative support.

The RTA passage finally occurred on the last day of the 2012 legislative session, and
the RTA bills were signed into law by Governor Snyder on December 19, 2012.

On January 19, LaHood returned to Detroit to announce the granting of $25 million to M-1 rail and $6.5 million to the RTA. (Shea, M-1 Rail line gets $25 million from U.S. to get it done 2013)
III. DETROIT’S LEADERS OF TRANSIT DURING THE CURRENT PERIOD

As was the case with all of the periods and regions studied, it took the wisdom and effort of many important leaders to create the progress that has occurred in transit since 2007. This section summarized the key contributions of some of those leaders.

It is important to note that these leaders come from many segments of the Detroit community including government, transit providers, business, foundations, community groups and academia. Also, there are many other leaders not described here who had significant impacts, both positive and negative, on the advancement of transit in the Metro Detroit region. These are offered as examples and, as such, this is not an exhaustive list.

A. TRANSIT LEADERS FROM GOVERNMENT

1. **Rick Snyder**: Governor Rick Snyder took an active role in advancing and supporting regional transit development in Southeastern Michigan, in contrast to most previous governors. He used his political influence on a number of Republican state legislators to secure the votes needed to pass the RTA bills in December of 2012.

2. **Dennis Schornack**: Mr. Schornack was appointed as Governor Snyder’s senior strategy adviser on mass transit in July 2011. From that time forward he met with a great many individuals and organizations to understand their views and needs regarding transportation and to advocate for a regional transit authority. That advocacy included presentations at transit workshops (such as the BRT Workshop at the Detroit Zoo on February 24, 2012), meetings of transit advocacy groups (such as TRU) and city and county executives and commissioners.

3. **John Hertel**: As CEO of the Regional Transit Coordinating Council (RTCC) Hertel developed a regional transit service plan that was approved by the “Big Four” (the executives of Wayne, Oakland and Macomb Counties and the Mayor of Detroit). He also led in the conception of the Woodward streetcar system, developed extensive support from business and foundation leaders, and led in the formation of The Regional Area Initial Link (TRAIL) Board (predecessor to M1 Rail). On March 25, 2010 he was named the General Manager of SMART.

4. **Jim Townsend**: State Representative who co-sponsored the bills that created the Regional Transit Authority in December 2012. He also collab-
orated efforts to develop and educate a network of stakeholders, including the Detroit Regional Transit Workshop in May 2013.

5. **Marie Donigan**: As a State Representative, Donigan co-sponsored a failed attempt to create the RTA. After she left the legislature due to term limits, she worked with other community leaders to advocate for effective transit in the region and was the driving force behind the May 2013 Detroit Regional Transit Workshop at UDM.

6. **Carmine Palombo**: As the Director of Transportation at the Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), Palombo worked with MDOT to develop the plans and funding for the Ann Arbor - Detroit Commuter Rail System. During the initial stage of RTA operations, he was assigned as staff to the RTA.

**B. BUSINESS AND FOUNDATION LEADERS**

According the long-time Detroit News transit reporter, Matt Helms, “The ones who seem best, so far, at really generating support (for transit) are the big-name business leaders. We’ve had political leaders for years who tried to float plans, or get support for plans forward, for various forms of transit, and it doesn’t go much farther than the planning stages. This time around, when you get names like Karmanos, Gilbert, Penske, and Ilitch, it appeared to galvanize the political community.” (Helms 2013)

1. **Roger Penske**: Penske was the unflagging and constant driving force in the planning, funding and building of M1 Rail streetcar system on Woodward Avenue. He orchestrated many alliances and, when the creation of the RTA was established as a condition of federal support by the FTA, he and others from the M-1 Rail Board advocated for the passage of the RTA legislation by the Michigan Legislature.

2. **Dan Gilbert**: Dan Gilbert, Chairman and Founder of Rock Financial and Quicken Loans, was one of the key leaders in the M-1 Rail development from its inception in 2007. While his roles with M-1 were not as public as Roger Penske’s, his roles as an investor in downtown Detroit and his decisions to move key business downtown provide great stimulus to both the transit oriented development and transit ridership.

3. **Matt Cullen**: Early in the M-1 Rail developments, Cullen represented General Motors interests in transit service for their headquarters in downtown Detroit. Later, in 2009, he was named CEO of M-1 Rail and led in discussions and negotiations between M1 and FTA, City of Detroit and
state legislators. He also led in the securing funding from a variety of sources including tax incentive grants, station branding contributions and foundation grants.

4. **Laura Trudeau**: Laura Trudeau is senior program director for the Community Development and Detroit program. She has been a strong advocate of transit and an active contributor to the development of the M1 Rail system.

5. **Tom Dekar**: As Vice Chairman of Deloitte LLP, Tom Dekar played several key roles in the development of M-1 Rail. He arranged the participation of Deloitte’s transit team from Toronto in the development of the preliminary plan created with faculty from the University of Detroit Mercy in 2007. He then joined the TRIAL and M-1 Boards until the spring of 2013, serving as an officer of the board for much of that time. He was influential in M-1’s financial planning, especially the development and execution of the New Market Tax Credit concept to provide $16 million funding to M-1.

C. **TRANSIT SYSTEM LEADERS**

1. **John Swatosh**: Swatosh was “second in command” with John Hertel at both the RTCC and SMART (Chief Operating Officer). He was a co-author of the 2008 Regional Transit Plan (RTCC 2008) and contributed to the BRT Plan developed by Scott Anderson (Anderson 2011). The latter plan became the initial plan for the Regional Transit Authority launched in 2013.

2. **Norm White**: White was the leader of the DTOGs project that led to DDOT’s Woodward Light Rail plan (from Jefferson Avenue to Eight Mile Road). White was ineffective in the efforts to combine this with the M1 Rail project and failed to secure financial support for the project from the city, leading to the demise of all but the initial M1 project (3.4 miles from Jefferson to Grand Blvd.)

3. **Ron Freeland**: Through a contract with Parsons-Brinkerhoff, Freeland was CEO of the Detroit Department of Transportation since February 2012, a period of great economic stress in Detroit. Having previously directed four transportation agencies, he was able to quickly recognize critical structural and cultural weakness of DDOT and worked to correct them.

4. **Paul Childs**: As Chief Operating Officer for M1 Rail, Childs had full responsibility for the design and construction of this rail system, as well as the purchase of vehicles and plans for operation.
5. **Tim Roseboom**: As the manager of **DDOT**'s strategic planning division, Roseboom was DTOGS Project Manager, providing leadership and oversight to URS as it completed the DTOGs study for DDOT that resulted in the plan for the Woodward Light Rail System.

**D. COMMUNITY AND ACADEMIC LEADERS**

1. **Megan Owens**: As Executive Director for Transportation Riders United (TRU), Megan has worked vigorously for improved transit, focusing on the needs of riders. She mobilized many stakeholder groups to support the creation of a Regional Transit Authority and was a partner in the Detroit Regional Transit Workshop and major initiatives to study and influence public opinion regarding transit.

TRU was launched in the spring of 1999 and incorporated in 2011 as a (c)(3) non-profit charitable organization. TRU’s purpose is to:

- Improve understanding of and perception towards transit;
- Engage and involve the public in important transportation decisions;
- Watchdog transportation processes and provide transit expertise to decision-makers; and
- Be the public’s voice to ensure transportation investments support the public’s interest in accessibility, affordability, accountability and sustainability. (TRU 2013)

2. **Scott Anderson**: Anderson, a longtime advocate of transit, was a member of the team from UDM team that created the preliminary plan for the Woodward streetcar system in 2007. In 2011 he developed a preliminary plan for bus rapid transit corridors for SE Michigan (Anderson 2011) that presents BRT as a way to implement the rapid transit elements of the regional transit plan adopted by RTCC on December 8, 2008. (RTCC 2008)

3. **UDM Transit Researchers**: Since 2007 over 40 faculty members and student at the University of Detroit have contributed to the understanding and advancement of transit system in Southeastern Michigan. They were supported in their projects by the US DOT, MDOT, the Kresge Foundation, APTA and others. This team of researchers have completed or are currently engaged in ten such projects during this period:
Table 4. Recent Transit Research Projects and Leaders at the University of Detroit Mercy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Principal Investigator</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Woodward Transit Catalyst Project (Preliminary design of the M1 Rail System)</td>
<td>Leo Hanifin</td>
<td>Completed in 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transit Oriented Development at Selected LRT Stations in the Detroit Metropolitan Area (with)</td>
<td>Dr. Khasnabis – Wayne State U. and Dr. Utpal Dutta, UDM</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transit Oriented Development at Selected LRT Stations in the Detroit Metropolitan Area (Incorporating Environmental Sustainability)</td>
<td>Dr. Khasnabis – Wayne State U. and Dr. Utpal Dutta, UDM</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeling Metropolitan Detroit Transit</td>
<td>Dr. Khasnabis – Wayne State U. and Dr. Utpal Dutta, UDM</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A study of the factors that enable and inhibit the development and operation of effective regional transportation systems in Southeast Michigan</td>
<td>Leo Hanifin with Lloyd Sample, Claudia Bernasconi, Utpal Dutta, Alan Hoback and Scott Andeson</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A study of public opinion regarding transit and a public education program</td>
<td>Claudia Bernasconi with Leo Hanifin, Kathy Zhong, Linda Slowik and Megan Owens (TRU)</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Metro Detroit Transit Workshop</td>
<td>Leo Hanifin with Megan Owens and Marie Donigan</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRANSIT Smart Moves (middle school summer camp)</td>
<td>Pamela Todd</td>
<td>Year one completed in 2012; year two in progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transit as a critical element for community development: a graduate course for transportation and community development professionals</td>
<td>Leo Hanifin</td>
<td>In Progress; 1st course offering in 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Benefits of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in Southeast Michigan</td>
<td>Utpal Dutta</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: These researchers also play important roles in the community participating in transit advocacy, sitting on transit boards (M-1) and conveying their research findings at transit meetings, workshops, courses and conferences.

It is important to note that the leaders from various stakeholder communities mentioned in this section are just a fraction of the individuals who contributed to the advancement of effective regional transit in Metro Detroit. They are offered to provide examples, and to inform and motivate others from many segments of the community.
IV. LEADERSHIP AND POLITICS GOING FORWARD

A. THE CURRENT STATE OF PUBLIC OPINION/POLITICS

There is considerable optimism regarding the future of transit in the Metro Detroit region, based substantially on the developments discussed in this report and a growing sense of regionalism across Southeastern Michigan. This regionalism is reflected in the creation of the RTA, and the willingness of legislators and voters across the region take action to support other regional assets, including the Detroit Zoo, the Detroit Institute of Arts and COBO Hall. At the same time, there significant negative elements of public and political opinion that, left unaddressed, may foster opposition to increased transit funding, construction and operation. These elements include skepticism, dissatisfaction with current service, lack of trust of government and transit agencies, safety and security concerns, racial Issues, and funding sources/mechanisms. The following sections provide some perspectives of individuals regarding each of these aspects.

Skepticism

Matt Helms of the Detroit Free Press has covered transit for over fifteen years. In his view, “. . . metro Detroit, in general, has a deep skepticism of transit, because we’ve seen plans come and go for so many years, and metro Detroit is one of the top cities in the country for personal automobile usage. We have one of the highest rates of single-person-per-vehicle commuting to work, and it just seems like that was an intractable part of living here. So there’s this inherent skepticism when you live here that that can be changed, and we’ve seen that play out politically numerous times.” (Helms 2013)

Dissatisfaction with Current Service

In a 2012 article the poor bus service in Detroit was characterized as follows, “Waits have been getting longer for many of the roughly 107,000 to 117,000 daily passengers who depend on Detroit’s bus fleet. The city has lost about half of its bus service since 2005, according to Transportation Riders United, a rider advocacy group.” (Huffington Post 2012) In addition to concerns about DDOT service, the marginal coordination of DDOT and SMART operations, and lack of integrated fare and information systems frustrate regional riders.
Lack of trust of government and transit agencies

Across the nation, there is a declining level of public trust in government. In 2002, 60% of Americans felt that they could trust our government to do the right thing always or most of the time; by 2012 that number had eroded to 19%. (Gallup 2012) Such distrust can reduce the public’s willingness to support transit initiatives. The lack of public trust regarding Detroit transit was worsened in 2012 when DDOT cut services at the same time they provided large bonuses to the companies that were contracted to manage DDOT, Parsons-Brinckerhoff and Envisurage. Henry Gaffney, head of the Detroit bus drivers’ union expressed his frustration, "Besides making me feel like I may be in the wrong business, that deal wasn’t designed with people, poor people in mind." (Huffington Post 2012)

Safety concerns

Safety and security is a concern in every large city today. Many transit agencies in other regions employ their own security staff or transit police. However, neither DDOT nor SMART has the funds to do so. Both rely on local police to increase security.

According to the DDOT website, DDOT works with the Wayne County Sheriff’s Department to keep bus routes and stops safe for riders. Since May 2007, Sheriff Deputies have conducted an average of 1,400 "coach boardings" per month and maintain high visibility on buses 24 hours per day, seven days per week. However, after a driver was assaulted in November 2011, the head of the DDOT drivers union, Henry Gaffney, said the Wayne County Sheriff’s Office used to provide officers to ride on the buses before budget cuts. (Tammy Stables Battaglia 2011)

Racial Matters

While our region and nation have made great strides in the elimination of racial prejudice and bigotry, racial issues remain as an underlying concern that impacts transit routes and funding. When discussing the location of bus stops with local businesses, Christine McFadden, SMART Manager Fixed Routes, indicated that she sometimes she receives responses with racial undertones. “We get accused of bringing people from the city, those people, doing drugs in our bathrooms and that sort of thing, and people blame these problems on transit instead of what the problem actually is.” (McFadden 2013)
Funding Sources/Mechanisms

Currently the mechanism of local support for transit used by SMART and indirectly by DDOT is property taxes. However property tax levels do not correlate well to the ability to support and the need for transit. The owners of high value properties pay more, but generally have less interest and use of transit. The owners of low value properties pay less, but have higher transit needs and use. Also, when property taxes support transit instead of sales tax, visitors to the region such as conference attendees, business travelers and college students are not paying their full share of the cost of the transit that they use. In many other states, local sales taxes are a common method of supporting transit.

This situation is frustrating to transit providers. James Fetzer, Deputy General Manager of Operations at SMART feels, “You can’t build much of a system and we have a very, very low millage rate, but the state (constitution) will not allow us to go after a sales tax, which is really a big hindrance in Michigan for building a good transit system, I think. You know a one-cent sales tax generates a huge amount of revenue, and it also allows people to come to visit to pay for the transit.” (Fetzer 2013)

John Swatosh, COO at SMART is pessimistic about the chances of changing that, stating, “. . . there’s absolutely no desire, willingness on behalf of politicians to amend the constitution to allow for a regional sales tax. It’s not going to get any traction. (We) tried to get that as part of the recommendations in 2008 for their funding of the Regional Authority and there was absolutely no desire or interest to go through a constitutional amendment.” (Swatosh, COO - SMART 2013)

Given these issues and concerns it is critical that the leaders and stakeholders who wish to advance transit in Southeast Michigan develop a strong case for transit that addresses them and also clearly articulates the many values that effective transit will provide to our region.

B. THE CASE FOR TRANSIT

While there is little overt or organized opposition to transit in Detroit, any system that will require support from taxpayers can expect to have opposition from some residents, and even from others who travel the country opposing all transit and taxation. (Lind 2009). Some in the Detroit region who are not transit riders feel that we don’t need more or better transit systems. This perspective was ob-
served by Matt Helms, a long time transit reporter for the Detroit Free Press, when he stated, “. I think the biggest peril to (transit projects) has always been just kind of that metro Detroit skepticism itself. It’s the idea that, well, we’ve gotten along without trains for 50 years; why do we need to bring them back, kind of thing, and it will never work here, because we’re the Motor City.” (Helms 2013)

If transit is to be planned, funded, built and operated, the people of the region will have to support a case for better transit. The case that has proven to be effective in other regions, such as St. Louis and Denver, has provided a myriad of “values” that are provided to everyone in the region, including many important organizations, not just the value to current riders. As the St. Louis campaign of 2010 state “Transit . . . some of us use it, all of us need it.” (Schrout 2013) The needs of non-riders range from individuals who need the healthcare workers who use transit to come to care for them or their children who go travel to college on transit every day, to organizations like the businesses who need to get workers and customers to them, to the region that needs to retain young talent and needs to stimulate the economy and to create more livable sustainable communities. The following sections begin to explain some of the values and elements of the political case that will have to be made for transit investment in Metro Detroit.

The following is an outline of the elements that should be included in the case for more and better transit in the Metro Detroit region.

a. Vitality of the region
   i. Economic development
   ii. Retaining the technical talent and the creative class
   iii. Riders of choice
b. Congestion and cost of road construction and repair
c. Transit dependent riders
d. Transit as an essential element of infrastructure (like roads, the uses don’t pay the entire cost of transit)
e. Getting riders to work and workers to employers, including reverse commute and inter-suburban commute
f. Quality of Life issues
   i. Environment
   ii. Livability of community
   iii. Walkability of community

For more depth of discussion of the case for transit readers are encouraged to visit the website for the recent Metro Detroit Transit Workshop at www.udmercy.edu/mdtw. This workshop brought together transit leaders and advocates from across the nation to present how they were able to plan and fund transit systems in their regions.


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CHAPTER 2

LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE IN CURRENT DETROIT (2007 - 2013)

Lloyd Semple

July 2013
TRANSIT GOVERNANCE IN SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN – A BRIEF RECENT HISTORY AND CURRENT SNAPSHOT

The purpose of this paper is to provide some historical perspective, as well as a current picture, of governance issues relating to public transportation systems in Southeast Michigan. The following analysis will focus primarily on the current state of governance in the area, with a retrospective analysis where appropriate. There are two major developments within the past several months that make the analysis of governance as of June 2013 most important.

In December 2012, the Ninety-sixth Legislature of the State of Michigan adopted Act #387, Public Acts of 2012 which, after 23 failed attempts, created a Regional Transit Authority for Southeastern Michigan (the “RTA”). The power of the Authority over transit is derived from the statutory authorization to coordinate and control (a) funding for operation and capital of the public transit providers in the region, (b) routes, fares, stops, etc. in the region and (c) the development and implementation of a single transit plan for the region. The region covers Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Washtenaw and the City of Detroit, although adjacent counties may petition to join. A withdrawal option for the designated Counties and the City is not included in the legislation.

Almost all of the essential elements of governance for the RTA are specifically set forth in the statute.

1. THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

The statute provides for a Board of Directors consisting of ten members, nine of whom are voting members appointed in the manner and with the qualifications as provided in Section 5 of the Act. One person is the Governor’s representative appointed by the Governor who serves as the Chairperson without vote. Two individuals are appointed by each of the four County Executives in the region and one is appointed by the Mayor of the City of Detroit. There is also a provision for an appointment of representatives from any adjacent county that successfully petitions to become part of the public transit region and the authority.
The legislation contains limitations on the eligibility for service on the Board. A Board Member shall neither be an employee of the county or city appointing the Board Member, nor an employee of a public transportation provider operating in the region. The Board Member shall not be currently serving as an elected officer of the State or a political subdivision of the State. And, there are two affirmative requirements, (a) the Board Member must be a resident of and a registered elector in the county or city from which he or she is appointed and (b) a Board Member shall have substantial business, financial or professional experience relevant to the operation of a corporation or public transportation system. This later requirement is a unique provision discussed later in this paper.

Board Members are to serve without compensation but may receive reimbursement for customary expenses. The statute specifically spells out the fiduciary duties of the Board Members, who must carry out their responsibilities in a non-partisan manner in good faith, and in the best interest of the state, with the degree of diligence, care and skill that an ordinary prudent person would exercise under similar circumstances in a like position. The legislation also states customary restraints on actions that could be considered conflicts of interests or inappropriate receipt of gifts (or other influence) from outside parties.

In appointing the initial members of the RTA Board, the county executives have made decisions which follow the guidelines of the enabling statute. The Governor appointed Paul Hillegonds, a business person who was a long-term member of the Michigan House of Representatives. He has had significant experience with Board responsibility at several of Michigan’s most influential and important NGO’s.

Washtenaw County appointed Richard Murphy, who has a background in transportation planning, housing and neighborhood revitalization. He is the Program Director at the Michigan Suburbs Alliance and serves on the management team of the state-wide Transportation for Michigan Advocacy Program. Also from Washtenaw County is Liz Gerber, a Professor of Public Policy at the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, where she focuses her research on regionalism and governmental cooperation, transportation policy and other land use and economic development issues.
Oakland County appointed Stephen Potter, an experienced trial attorney with extensive exposure in transportation safety, municipal law and highway liability. He has represented the Road Commission for Oakland County. Oakland County also appointed Matthew M. Wirgau, who is President and Managing Member of Middle Market Investment Banking Firm. He has considerable experience in public transit, as he served from 1990 to 2008 on the Board of Directors of SMART where he was Chair of the Board of Directors from 1994 to 2008. In addition, he was Deputy Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration and a Special Assistant to the Secretary of Transportation from 1983 to 1989.

Macomb County appointed Julie Gatti, a practicing attorney in Mt. Clemens, Michigan and current President of the Macomb County Bar Association. Macomb County also appointed Roy C. Rose, a civil engineer who has been involved in large projects involving infrastructure systems, site development and other civil projects. He has served as Vice Chairman for the Business for Better Transportation, President of Leadership Macomb and numerous other public institutions.

The City of Detroit exercised its appointment right by nominating Mary Lisa Franklin, who is the President of Warriors on Wheels of Metropolitan Detroit, an organization devoted to advocacy and education for people with disabilities and seniors. She is a handicapped transit advocate who was employed for ten years with the Wayne County Government in the Department of Management and Budget. While on its face she does not appear have substantial business, financial or professional experience relevant to the operation of a corporation or public transportation system, she does bring perspective and voice for disabled persons, who comprise a large percentage of the riders in the City of Detroit transit system.

The enabling legislation contains several other basic and customary elements of governance including requirements (a) to conduct meetings in public in compliance with the Open Meetings Act and to give notice and adopt by-laws consistent with the Act, and (b) adopt a schedule of regular meetings to be held at least once each quarter. The majority of the voting members of the Board will constitute a quorum. Actions of the Board shall be by simple majority vote of all voting members of the Board (not just those constituting a quorum at the meeting) except as follows: (a) a supermajority of 7/9’s of the voting members, including one affirmative vote from at least one member of each participating county and the
sole representative from the City of Detroit is necessary to place on the ballot and determine the rate of any millage or motor vehicle fee. The legislation also requires that the Board shall provide in its by-laws, and has so provided, that unanimous vote of all voting members be required to “acquire, construct, operate or maintain any form of rail passenger service within the public transit region” or “acquire a public transportation provider.” Interestingly, the legislation in effect specifically provides that any accrued liabilities funded or unfunded (i.e. legacy costs) cannot be acquired unless approved unanimously.

The RTA is off to a good start. It held an orientation workshop on March 28, 2013 and held its first official meeting on April 10, 2013. As is customary, it elected officers (a Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer) and established an Executive and Policy Committee, a Finance and Budget Committee and a Planning and Service Coordination Committee. A second meeting was held on May 15, 2013 following a second unofficial orientation workshop on April 24, 2013. At the May meeting, action items were a receipt of reports from standing committees, final approval of by-laws and approval of a website policy to comply with the Open Meetings Act. In addition, expense reimbursement policies were approved as was the Memorandum of Understanding with the law firm of Miller Canfield to act as legal counsel. In addition, the Board received reports from the Budget and Finance Committee and the Planning and Service Coordination Committee. Finally, the process for considering and making appointments to the Citizens Advisory Committee (as required by the Act and Federal Law) were approved, and it was determined that the Citizens Advisory Committee shall be comprised of a minimum of ten persons and a maximum of thirty.

In summary, the Regional Transit Authority is open for business. Its governance requirements and parameters are as outlined in the enabling legislation and the by-laws adopted at the RTA’s second meeting. An appropriate representative group from the four counties and the City of Detroit is in place and functioning. If the body can function constructively, with a regional perspective rather than individual parochial outlook in the decision making process, the RTA’s creation will finally accomplish coordinated regional transit in the Southeast Michigan area.
M-1 RAIL

M-1 Rail was initially incorporated as a Michigan non-profit corporation in November 2007 for the purpose of planning, designing, constructing, equipping, furnishing, operating for itself or by contract for a public transportation facility, as broadly defined, under the name “The Regional Area Initial Link.” In January 2009 the Articles of Incorporation were amended to narrow the purposes of the corporation to the operation of a street railway system principally in the City of Detroit and to change the name of the corporation to M-1 Rail. The corporation has been granted status by the Internal Revenue Service as a qualified organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. It is in the process of designing, constructing and, in the future, operating a circular streetcar that will initially run 3.3 miles along Woodward Avenue from Congress to Grand Boulevard Streets. The initial funding has been generated by commitments from foundations, corporations and the Detroit Development Authority, combined with federal discretionary grants and federal tax credits. Construction is estimated to be completed by fall 2015.

Governance of M-1 Rail has taken the form of a typical Michigan non-profit directorship corporation, organized on a directorship non-stock basis. In a directorship non-profit corporation, the directors act as the members of the corporation with the power to elect the membership of its own Board, thus, the board is “self-perpetuating”. Its Board of Directors, in addition to the primary promoters of the project, Roger S. Penske and Dan Gilbert, include distinguished community leaders, corporate executives with significant investment in the City of Detroit, a representative from a large Foundation and another from a major Detroit-based University. Since the formation of the Regional Transit Authority, which was a condition to receipt of significant funding for the M-1 Rail project, RTA Board has become active. The Board has authorized the formation of an executive committee pursuant to the recently restated by-laws and the Board has been expanded from eleven up to nineteen persons. In addition, officers of the corporation, in typical form, have been elected to the offices of Chair, Vice Chair, President, Secretary and Treasurer. The schedule of board meetings calls for meetings quarterly, with executive committee meetings between board meetings. An organization structure has been adopted with a Chief Operating Officer, a Chief Administrative Officer and a Chief Financial Officer.

The close but somewhat complicated relationship of M-1 Rail with Regional
Transit Authority is still being sorted out. There are indications that the related but separated 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, possibly to be known as M-2-Rail, will need to be formed as well as transactional documents must be entered into relating to MDOT.

**DDOT**

The Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT) is a department of the City of Detroit existing under Section 7-1101 of Chapter 11 of the 1987 Home Rule Charter and provides a commission of seven members appointed by the Mayor, but the commission has only advisory authority. It falls within the jurisdiction of the RTA. A mandatory advisory board has existed over the years but appears to have had little or no influence on the operations of the system. Indeed, while the Advisory Board (designated an Advisory Commission) held regular monthly meetings for some period of time, it currently does not appear to be functioning and is waiting mayoral appointments. In September 2012, the Mayor’s office submitted a request for applications for the Advisory Commission but appointments to date have not been made.

The sole authority to supervise, manage and control DDOT rests with an administrative head (the Director) appointed by the Mayor. There is no Board of Directors. The organization chart of the Department is below.
SMART

The Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART) exists pursuant to Public Act 148 of 1988 and includes in its service area all of Macomb County, significant parts of Oakland and Wayne Counties and the Central Business District/Midtown in the City of Detroit.

The 1988 Act mandated a Board of Directors consisting of the Chief Executive Officer from the counties of Oakland, Macomb and Wayne (or their designated alternates) and an additional appointed member from each of those counties. A seventh representative on the Board of Directors is chosen on a rotating basis from the counties of Livingston, Monroe, St. Clair and Washtenaw. Currently the board consists entirely of elected officials or government employees or retired government employees. The enabling statute authorizes the Board to adopt By-
laws and Rules of Procedures which it has done. The statute also sets forth specific obligations of the Board including the requirement for an “annual audit”, the preparation of budgets and appropriations and the preparation and filing of financial plan if the Authority operates in a deficit condition. The Board has the specific statutory authority to employ a General Manager whose duties and obligations are set forth in the statute. The Authority specifically does not have the power to levy taxes.

SMART has adopted by-laws and rules and procedures. Regular meetings, at least quarterly, are to be held and a specific order of business is prescribed in the by-laws. Other than customary notice and “housekeeping” matters, the prescribed agenda requires a Chairperson’s report, a General Manager’s report and a financial report. For a quorum (four members), at least one member from each of Macomb, Oakland and Wayne counties must be present. The affirmative vote of at least one member of the Board from Macomb, Oakland and Wayne counties is required for adoption of any resolution. Board members receive no compensation other than reimbursement for expenses incurred in the discharge of their duties.

The duties of the Chairman of the Board and Vice-Chairman of the Board are specifically set forth in the by-laws as are the duties of the General Manager. In addition to an Audit Committee with specific and broad duties, the By-laws provide that special committees can be established from time to time as necessary with duties prescribed by the Board. The By-laws provide for customary indemnification of Board members and officers consistent with the General Corporation Statutes of the State of Michigan.

**DTC**

The Detroit Transportation Corporation was formed to own and operate the Detroit People Mover. The People Mover was initially conceived in the late 1970’s and was to be part of the SEMTA Regional Transit plan. The project was transferred to the Detroit Transportation Corporation in 1985. The fully automated system was opened July 31, 1987.

The sole purpose of the Detroit Transportation Corporation is to own and operate the Detroit People Mover. Its six person Board of Directors consists of one ap-
pointee from the Office of the Mayor of the City of Detroit, the Detroit Department of Transportation Director, the Director of Finance from the City of Detroit, the Director of Planning and Development of the City of Detroit, the City Council President and a representative of SMART. The Detroit Transportation Corporation was created by the City of Detroit pursuant to State law as a component unit of the City for the purpose of acquiring, completing and operating the People Mover. The DTC is governed by the Board, all of whom are appointed by the Mayor of Detroit, in the categories set forth above. While the Board meets quarterly, the dates of its meetings are seldom posted publicly nor are agendas and minutes shared publicly. According to a former Board member, the Board carries out normal Board functions such as receipt and approval financial information, approval of contracts and capital budgets, review and consider legal matters and fare and rate decisions. Essentially, the Detroit Transportation Corporation functions as a department of the City of Detroit.

THE ANN ARBOR TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

The Ann Arbor Transportation Authority was originally chartered by the City of Ann Arbor in 1968 under Act 55 of the Public Acts of 1963, but in 2012 started a process to reconstitute itself pursuant to Section 3 of Act 196 of 1986. Governance will essentially be the same under either controlling law.

The Board of Directors of the AATA consists of seven members appointed by the Mayor of Ann Arbor. Regular monthly meetings of the Board are held and agendas and minutes are regularly published on the Authorities website. The Authority is known as “the Ride”, and it conducts its business pursuant to the Michigan Open Meetings Act. The AATA does not publish information about the individual members of the Board. An organizational chart is attached.
The AATA has created a Local Advisory Council to provide input, review and comment. A vehicle accessibility plan is required by the Michigan Department of Transportation and to generate recommendations to the Board of the AATA regarding any senior adult and persons with disabilities related issues of a significant nature. Its authority is expressly derived from the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 which requires transportation systems to have an advisory committee representing persons with disabilities.

The LAC meets on a regular basis, and at the present time is scheduled to meet 11 times a year. It reports regularly to the Board of AATA.
CHAPTER 3

FINANCE IN CURRENT DETROIT (2007 - 2013)

Scott Anderson

July 2013
I. INTRODUCTION

Transit Funding in southeast Michigan – a snapshot

APPROACH AND BACKGROUND

For this report, “Current Detroit” is considered to be the period between 2007 and June of 2013. During this period, there have been three synergistic developments that have resulted in greater progress towards effective regional transit in Metro Detroit than has occurred in over 60 years. These developments are

1. a Regional Transit Authority (RTA) and a regional transit plan
2. the M-1 Rail Streetcar System
3. the Ann Arbor – Detroit Commuter Rail Service

The purpose of this paper is to give a very short-term historical and current view of the financial situation surrounding the public transportation systems in southeast Michigan. Although the focus is on current funding, the look slightly backward (and forward) is necessary because significant changes have recently occurred, and the near-term financial situation may look significantly different than the current situation, itself wildly different from the situation of just a few years ago.

Two major developments, one intentional and one not, have caused this dichotomy. The intentional development was the enactment by the State of Michigan of a passage of bills creating a Regional Transit Authority (RTA) for the metropolitan region in 2012. The RTA has just recently, at the time of this writing (April 2013) begun to organize and hold its initial meetings; it has yet to hire a staff, and the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) and the State are providing assistance until the RTA is firmly established and has its own office space, staff and so on. The FTA has provided $6 million in startup funding for the RTA.

The unintentional development was the massive economic downturn of 2008-2011, which by several measures hit the Detroit area harder than many other regions, and which shone a glaring light on the risk of tying so much public transportation funding to a single economic measurement, property values, as has been the case in the region.

We will look at the way the region’s four public transportation systems are funded. Each of the four - the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority (AATA), the Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT), the Detroit Transportation Corporation (DTC), operator of the downtown People Mover) and the Suburban Mobili-
ty Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART) – has its own organizational structure and its own funding formula. Structure is not the focus of this report, but it is worthwhile to mention a single difference. While AATA, DTC and SMART are legal entities, corporations of one kind or another, DDOT is not; it is simply an operating department of the City of Detroit.

In terms of taxonomy we will discuss the various funding sources by type, and how each of the four operators employs each type of source, now and in the recent past. We will also discuss, briefly, options which are available under the new RTA laws that would not have been possible up to now, and we will compare one of the important sources – farebox recapture – with that of selected other regions.

II. RELIANCE ON PROPERTY TAXES

Each of the four operators relies heavily on property taxes for a major source of funds, though in the case of DTC it is indirect. This is not an intentional result of a careful consideration of possible sources, but a result of a constitutional constraint. Michigan does not allow for local-option sales taxes, which are used to fund public transportation in many communities, including most of the peer communities studied in earlier reports. The use of property-tax revenue is rather a default, the only reasonable way to raise funds locally unless new revenue sources, authorized by the RTA law but requiring a public vote, are approved.

This led to the unfortunate situation in 2008-11, which persists to this day although it appears to have stopped getting worse, wherein as jobs were lost in great quantities, fueling an increased demand for municipal services (transit just being one of many), the job losses and other factors caused a precipitous decline in property values. For instance, the Oakland County Department of Management and Budget each year prepares a report giving the property value of all properties in the County. Looking just at residential property, the total property value of all residential properties in the County fell from $55,590,000,000 in 2007 to $35,550,000,000 in 2011, a decrease of 36% in just four years. (Oakland County 2007 & 2011) As this was replicated throughout the region, and SMART gets roughly a third of its operating revenue through local real estate taxes, it led to a decrease of available funds of about $14 million to SMART in that period.

Also unique to SMART is that in two of the three counties in which it operates, individual communities can decide not to participate in SMART, in which case they neither receive SMART’s services nor collect and pass on the property
tax. Only in Macomb County is the tax collected county wide; in Wayne and Oakland Counties several communities do not collect the tax and do not receive service. In 2006, the City Council in Livonia, a very large suburb a short distance west of Detroit in Wayne County, voted to no longer participate in the SMART system, which necessitated major route changes and left an odd-looking and large hole in the bus service (in addition to removing a significant revenue stream from SMART). The fact that no community in extreme western Wayne County participates has made it impossible to provide reasonable service between Detroit and Ann Arbor; contrast that with Macomb County, where the all-in tax made it possible in 2008 for SMART and the Port Huron local bus system to provide service between that community and metro Detroit.
Figure 3.1 Opt-in and opt-out areas: SMART
The RTA package of bills calls for a transit future in which individual communities within counties will not have the right to withdraw piecemeal; each county will participate as a county.

SMART, at least, has a dedicated tax devoted to it in Macomb County and in the participating communities in Wayne and Oakland Counties, as has AATA. DDOT’s role as a City department means that as revenues in Detroit fall, it invariably suffers funding cuts along with other City departments. There is no dedicated source of funds for DDOT, collected for the purpose and which can only be used for transportation; DDOT is at the mercy of City budget processes every year. As Detroit’s population has fallen and its ability to raise funds has diminished, its bus service has been cut severely. Detroit, with about 40% of the population it had at its peak in the 1950s, operates less than 2% of the transit trips it operated then.

The DTC has recently been receiving about 22% of its approximately $20 million budget from the City of Detroit. In 2011 the City announced it was cutting that subsidy and it appeared that the system would have to reduce service significantly, but the cutbacks were avoided. This, too, is a side effect of the reliance on decreasing property values in the City and region as a whole.

Overall, taking 2009 as a recent and typical year, DDOT receives 42% of its total revenue from the City and thus indirectly from property taxes; DTC was 22%, SMART 34% and AATA 39%.

III. OPERATING REVENUE: THE FAREBOX

Historically, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, private firms operated transit systems on a for-profit basis, but by the 1920s the ability to make a profit had fallen by the wayside and now every public transit system is subsidized to some extent. However, systems do collect fares and the revenue from farebox collections is an important source of funds. All the southeast Michigan systems, though, lag behind most of the rest of the nation’s large urban areas in this respect.

AATA receives 21% of its revenue from farebox collections (including prepaid fares such as passes); for DDOT and SMART it is 14%; for DTC 5.5%. This compares unfavorably with other systems, and can reduce competitiveness for
federally sponsored projects. Other similar cities range from Denver’s 19% to Atlanta’s 32%.

Without studying other systems’ financial results in detail it is difficult to come up with a precise and quantified set of reasons why the numbers for the metro Detroit systems are lower than those for other cities, but one reasonable supposition is that the multi-modal nature of other regions allows them to take advantages of efficiencies that a region which provides almost entirely local-stop fixed-route bus service cannot. Regions with light rail, subways, bus rapid transit and the like can promote the efficient means of travel used by motorists. A typical motorist drives a short distance on local roads to get to an arterial road or highway, travels that faster and more efficient route as far as possible, then turns back onto side streets if necessary to reach a final destination.

This mode of travel is duplicated by travelers in regions with high capacity transit modes. A person will walk, bicycle, taxi or bus to a rapid transit station, ride that to near a final destination, then repeat a slower mode for the “last mile”. The rapid transit route – no matter what the mode – transports passengers more efficiently for the simple reason that it is busier. A full bus or train costs only very slightly more to operate than a bus which is only one quarter full, but receives four times as much fare.

Also, because local bus service in a busy urban area is inherently slow, it is difficult to attract “choice riders”, those who have access to a private vehicle but choose to use transit. In Boston, over 30% of the public uses transit regularly; in Minneapolis it is 16%, in Cleveland, 10%. In metro Detroit, with an urban-core population (2010) of 3.7 million, DDOT and SMART serve approximately 153,000 users per day, only 4% of the population. Ann Arbor’s ridership is higher but hard to measure in a way that would give a meaningful comparison, because Ann Arbor’s college student population is so high relative to its permanent population and college students use transit at a much higher level than the general population in all but a few cities.

**IV. FUNDING FOR TRANSIT IN DETROIT VS. OTHER MAJOR AMERICAN CITIES**

As the chart below illustrates, Detroit’s per-capita funding of public transportation is the lowest in the country, just 37.5% of the national big-city average. Though commentators have often blamed the region’s minimal transit on other things (poor management, lack of population density, and so on), it is a simple and unarguable fact that we cannot expect excellent transit when we are paying
just over a third what a typical big city pays on a per-capita basis.

Figure 3.2 Transit Expenditure per Capita, top 20 U.S. regions (by regional population) (Owens)

**Detroit region spends $75 per capita on transit, less than every other major metro area.**

**National average (of similar and smaller regions) - over $200**

Most major cities have a dedicated sales tax to build and operate transit

Federal Funding for Capital Projects and the “65-35” Issue

The region receives money each year from a Federal fund that pays for transit capital projects. For decades the money has been apportioned in a fixed ratio, 65% to DDOT and 35% to SMART. In April 2013, in response to a directive from the FTA, SEMCOG, who is managing the disbursement in the short term until the new RTA is in a position to do so, has changed the formula and will now disburse 51.5% to SMART and 48.5% to DDOT. Reports have said this will cost DDOT about $7 million (over what they would have received if the allocation had remained as it had been). (Helms)

This issue illustrates the continued parochialism about transit in the region and it will be an interesting conundrum for the nascent RTA. The City government of Detroit considered a lawsuit to try to get the change reversed. The City’s recently installed emergency manager, Kevin Orr, who would likely have to approve expenses for such a lawsuit, has indicated he did not think it a worthwhile act, preferring to concentrate on available grants rather than lost causes. SMART’s Chairman, Paul Tait, said the move was reasonable because SMART
has more immediate needs for capital projects. (Cwiek) (All sides agree, as it is undeniable, that SMART has older buses.)

SEMCOG has said the funding shift was necessary as the FTA had promised to withhold funding unless a new formula was devised. Opponents of the change point out that DDOT has many more riders on a daily basis than SMART (109,000 vs. 44,000). The author scoured article after article and did not find anyone, in government, advocacy or media, asking what would be best for the region’s transit customers. The aggressive divisiveness, almost a reflex, found in the many articles and blog posts about this issue, illustrate how difficult it will be for the RTA to reach agreements on important issues surrounding regional transit.
V. STATE FUNDING FOR TRANSIT

The fifty states vary widely in how much support they provide for transit, ranging from states such as Delaware that fund 100% of transit’s required subsidy to states such as Mississippi that provide no state-level transit funding at all.

In Michigan “transit is supported through the Comprehensive Transportation Fund (CTF), a part of the Michigan Transportation Fund (MTF). The CTF is statutorily allowed up to 10% of specific taxes, including gas tax revenues, collected for the MTF. Funding provided to the CTF is often between 6-8% with revenues often transferred to support the general fund. The funding from the CTF is allocated for capital match for federal funds and for operating revenues for transit services.” This leads to the unfortunate situation that if any transit provider in the state increases services and ridership, it gets more funding out of a fixed pie. “This means that as one agency improves service and the number of rides provided, it receives more operating match, but because the total is unchanged, other service providers receive less funding without a reduction in the service presently provided.” (WATS)

The State’s 2012-13 appropriation through the CTF for local bus operations is $166.6 million. The Fund also provides funds for other related purpose, such as the Detroit/Wayne County Port Authority and subsidies for intercity bus and rail service. An urban transit agency (defined by the state as one serving a region of population 100,000 or more) may receive up to 50% of its operating funds, and a rural agency may receive up to 60%. The amount provided is not, and has not been for many years, sufficient to meet either of these ceilings; in fact the anticipated funding for urban agencies is that they will receive 32.4% of operating funds and rural agencies will receive 38.9%. (These numbers maintain the proportion of 50% to 60% in the law.)

DDOT, however, benefits from an exception written into the law in 1997. That law provided that Detroit would continue to receive, at minimum, the amount provided to it in 1997, which was $48.4 million. That provision has never before come into effect; Detroit’s distribution under the percentage formula has always exceeded the 1997 actual-dollar amount. However, a reduction in the DDOT budget has led to the situation that in 2012-13, under the percentage rule, DDOT would only be eligible for $40.1 million.

The extra $8.3 million, of course, results in a reduction of money to all the State’s other transit providers. To ameliorate this, the Governor has proposed a supplemental appropriation of $5.4 million to the CTF to partly replenish the fund-
ing available to the other agencies. The precise formula for distributing the extra $5.4 million has not been finalized at the time this is being written. [Cite Hamilton]

VI. FUNDING FLOW-THROUGH: CURRENT (PRE-RTA) AND NEW (RTA ERA)

The State of Michigan’s series of bills, passed into law in 2012, which created the RTA, do not create a funding mechanism for the RTA; rather, they enable the RTA, with the support of voters, to create a funding mechanism. However, the existence of the RTA will change how money flows from its sources to the transit providers in the region. The following charts explain the way the flow-through will change under the new RTA.

Figure 3.3 Federal and State Funding Flow-Through: pre-RTA vs. RTA era
Figure 3.4 Local Funding Flow-Through: pre-RTA vs. RTA era (under certain assumptions)

(Chart slightly modified from source; see text for discussion)

VII. LOCAL FUNDING AND THE REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY

The Transit Riders United presentation from which the author obtained the above chart was modified slightly for inclusion here, in this way. The original said on the left side “Local Funds – No Changes” and in the lower-right square said “SMART millage in opt-in areas”. That is one possibility but there are others. The RTA act allows the RTA to create a locally-originated funding source for the “rolling rapid transit” (RRT) it calls for, which is a particular flavor of what is more commonly known as Bus Rapid Transit. However, nothing in the legislation restricts the RTA to funding only that operation. In fact, it is possible for the RTA to create a funding source sufficient to provide both RRT and some portion – any or
all – of the local bus service in the region. It is also possible, as discussed be-
low, for the RTA to operate any or all of the local bus service. If the RTA were 
able to raise sufficient funds to provide the level of local service in some or all of 
the area served by SMART, then it would no longer be necessary for SMART to 
leverage a millage; and in that case there would be no opt-out areas since the funding 
mechanism for the RTA will be in effect uniformly throughout the RTA’s four-
county service area.

As the charts show, FTA capital and operating funds will now flow through 
the RTA for all the region’s transit providers, including whoever operates the RRT 
system (which could be the RTA itself, or one of the existing transit operators, or 
another provider such as a contracted third-party entity, a not uncommon setup). 
However, under the provisions of the RTA act, state operating funds will not be 
provided to fund operations of RRT at all; they will continue to flow, although 
through the RTA, to the existing transit providers. This was necessary to secure 
the support of, among others, outstate legislators (the author knows this from 
personal discussions with some of these legislators) who were worried about the 
state funds – which were not increased as part of the RTA act – being divided 
into yet more slices.

The chart shows both a new regional and a new county-wide source of 
funds for the RTA. In fact either or both of these might happen. If a vehicle reg-
istration fee to fund transit in the RTA four-county region is approved region wide 
by voters, then that money, by the provisions of the RTA act, would flow through 
the RTA to support BRT operations, and possibly (as discussed earlier) to the 
local transit providers to partly or fully fund their operations.

The most common form of transit subsidy in big city regions throughout 
the United States is a purpose-dedicated sales tax. It is useful to consider 
whether this would be the best medium to long term mechanism for funding 
transit in metro Detroit, as it has the greatest and broadest history of success. 
However, since it would require amending the Michigan constitution, a vehicle 
registration fee such as that proposed in the acts which enabled the RTA is likely 
to prove a sensible short to medium term solution.

If, on the other hand, any county chooses to collect a vehicle registration 
fee, it might choose to do so to fund a mixture of transportation projects including 
projects which would be managed by county road agencies and transit projects 
and operations. The transit projects and operations could be local in nature, 
such as improving the local fixed-route bus service, in which case the funds 
would flow through the County treasurer to the local transit agency, or they could
be regional in nature, in which case the funds would flow through the County treasurer to the RTA, finally to whoever operates the RRT service, or the funds could be split and partly used for each purpose.

The RTA's initial charge does not call for it to spend operating funds at all. First, it can't yet spend operating funds on BRT since the service does not yet exist, and can't until a funding mechanism for operations is approved and funding for the capital project is obtained. Second, the initial task assigned to the RTA by the recently-enacted laws is to evaluate, and if necessary update, the existing regional transit plans, of which there are two.

The Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS), published in 2007, is a master transit plan for that County. It calls for improvements such as bus service to areas not then served and regional commuter rail service on existing freight tracks. The Comprehensive Regional Transit Service Plan which covers the other three counties, and which was approved by the Mayor of Detroit, the County Executives of Oakland and Wayne Counties, and the Chair of the Macomb County Board of Commissioners (this is before the recent change to Macomb County's type of government) in 2008, called for extensive improvements on many corridors, including BRT on several corridors and light rail on one or more corridors. As both plans were adopted before the creation of the RTA legislation, neither could have possibly anticipated its coming, but the focus of both plans on improved services will inform the RTA as to what is possible and when – both studies anticipated phased improvements – and how much funding will be required, both capital and operating.

VIII. EXPENSES – DDOT AND SMART

DDOT's annual budget in one recent report was $166 million and SMART's was $118 million. A comparison of relative expenses by like categories is not possible because Detroit breaks down its budget much differently than SMART. However, just to give the flavor of what the costs are in transit provision, a chart is provided based on DDOT and SMART annual budget numbers, to show how the expenses are broken down at a large-category level. In the case of SMART, very detailed numbers are provided, so in order for the chart to be reasonable the author combined categories (and gives the precise details of the combination below the chart).
DDOT and SMART serve many of the same routes on portions of the same streets, and have maintenance facilities serving buses in the same overall region. As the combination of DDOT’s and SMART’s bus fleet is fewer in number than the number of vehicles operated just by DDOT’s predecessor department DSR in the 1950s and 1960s, it is clear that the six maintenance facilities operated by the two current agencies could be reduced somewhat. Further, each of DDOT and SMART pays separately for administration, fare collection, customer service, line supervision and the like.

The RTA acts require a supermajority for the RTA to acquire any current operating agency. (In the case of DDOT, it is in fact impossible, since DDOT is not in any way a legally separable organization but is simply a department of the City.) However, nothing in the RTA legislation requires a supermajority for the RTA to acquire assets or to operate transportation services. There is no logical reason for the development of SMART and DDOT as separate agencies; the background for this (which is very well known and does not to be laid out in detail here) is political and jurisdictional.

As the RTA will need public support for funding, in the form of a referendum, one step that could establish the RTA as a model for efficiency would be to acquire the assets of the two agencies operating concurrently in the tri-county area, create an operating subagency to manage the procurement of operations, and then contract to a provider (an existing provider or an outside organization) to design a regional local bus network based on the existing conditions of the present time – job centers, transit dependent populations, universities, hospitals, smart-growth development and so on – rather than to continue to tweak the systems of today which were for the most part designed in the immediate post World War II era and have been but little changed, except for cuts in the cities and modest cross-suburban expansion in the suburbs, up to today.

Washtenaw County is not included in this portion of the analysis because it is, from a transit standpoint, much different than DDOT, SMART and the tri-county portion of the region. Funding is much higher in the area served by AATA than in the tri-county area, and there is no overlap of routes; the only point commonly served is a single stop at Detroit Wayne County Metropolitan Airport.
IX CONCLUSION

The reliance on property tax to fund transit, the historic underpinning of transit funding throughout southeast Michigan, has shown its unsustainability in light especially of the recent economic downturn, which produced a combination of greater need for transit and less funding.

The vehicle registration fee envisioned by the RTA enabling act will provide a reasonable short to medium-term source of funding for transit in the region, but the most commonly successful mechanism, a local dedicated-purpose sales tax, should be seriously explored as a medium to long-term source.

Detroit’s per capita spending is the lowest among major urban areas in the U.S.; the RTA funding would improve this and will also make it possible for the region to more successfully compete for Federal funding of projects. Rapid Transit will increase overall system efficiency and will likely improve farebox recapture ratios.

The current organization for provision of bus service in the tri-county part of the region has no logical basis and is inefficient; the RTA should move toward a single-provider solution for Wayne, Oakland and Macomb Counties (including the City of Detroit). This will enable substantial savings as duplication of routes, administration, maintenance facilities and customer service and communication functions can be eliminated.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Scott Anderson has taught mathematics and computer science for many years at the University of Detroit Mercy. He has a master’s degree in Computer Science from the University and a bachelor’s degree in Computer Science from the State University of New York (Albany). Scott was a member of the team that developed the initial concept of the “Woodward Transit Catalyst Project”, now M-1 Rail, and assisted with the visioning of bus rapid transit in metro Detroit that formed part of the basis for the 2012 RTA legislation. His interest in logistics generally, and transit in particular, goes back many years, and he is co-author of the paper Walking and Transit with Dr. Hoback. He consulted to private industry for many years, specializing in freight logistics systems. He especially likes SEMCOG because they make nice maps for him, and every time he has occasion to visit, they give him coffee.
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CHAPTER 4
TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT IN CURRENT DETROIT (2007 - 2013)

Utpal Dutta

July 2013
INTRODUCTION

The term transit-oriented development (TOD) is being used increasingly in the transit literature, particularly in studies related to planning and design of urban rail transit. TOD relates to the integration of diverse but desirable land uses with transit, both temporally and spatially. They are designed to increase transit ridership and to promote desirable land uses surrounding the station areas. A desirable feature of TOD is pedestrian orientation, as demonstrated in a number of recent studies. A TOD complex is typically centered on a transit station with gradually decreasing density contour lines, characterized by high density development in the center with “progressively lower density development spreading outward from the center.” A formal definition available in literature is as follows [www.wilkipedia.org,]:

A transit-oriented-development (TOD) is a mixed use residential and commercial area designed to maximize access to public transport and often incorporates features to encourage transit ridership...TOD’s generally are located within a radius of one quarter to one-half mile from a transit stop, as this is considered appropriate for pedestrians.

Although the above definition of TOD does not mention any specific transit mode, current development patterns in North America suggest that urban rail transit, particularly light-rail transit (LRT) is most conducive to TOD. The principles of TOD include

• A mix of uses
• Walkable
• Compact Development
• Near Transit Stop

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TOD AND TRANSIT

Over the last decade, there has been an increased interest in North American cities (i.e., the United States and Canada) in constructing LRT systems in metropolitan areas with the intent of improving mobility. Other factors that have driven this trend include, but are not limited to, the following:

• Reduced negative environmental impact compared to standard buses (powered by fossil fuels).
• Ability to carry larger passenger volumes efficiently
• Better service reliability than standard buses
• Reduced dependence on foreign-sourced fossil fuels (i.e., crude oil)
• Ability to generate significant economic development
• Less capital-intensive than rapid-rail transit (RRT) systems
• Better societal image than standard buses

A preliminary search indicated that there are [www.ggw.org]:
• 27 cities in North America that have LRT systems in operation
• 13 cities under extension or under construction for LRT
• Another 40 cities where LRT systems have been approved or proposed (including the Detroit metropolitan area)
• At least 20 of the 27 cities that have constructed LRT have implemented some type of TOD program surrounding transit station locations

The current literature indicates that many of the TOD programs are on their way to achieving their desired goals of generating higher passenger ridership than (standard) buses, creating significant economic development, and reducing travel congestion. One recent study found that a major economic advantage of TOD is a significant reduction in transportation costs for households located in or around TOD areas [CTOD 2007]. The study shows that households with sufficient access to transit stations (i.e., considered to be within a five-minute walk of the transit station), spend about nine percent of their household income on transportation, while the corresponding figures of the average household and households in the suburbs in the United States are 19 percent and 25 percent, respectively. The recent increases in crude oil prices are likely to cause this gap to increase even further.

Another study observed that TOD-type housing options in four metropolitan areas produced significantly less traffic than what is generated by a comparable conventional development [Arrington & Cervero 2008]. At the national level, these savings are likely to result in less dependence on foreign oil. Lastly, recent experience with transit in different cities show that for every dollar of investment in transit, there is an additional five to six dollars worth of economic development generated by TOD programs [Hurst 2008].

Thus, the major benefits of TOD can be summarized as follows:

• Reduced traffic congestion, traffic hazards, and environmental pollution.
• Increased transit ridership resulting from denser development near the station areas.
• Potential for significant economic development in proximity to TOD.
• Reduced household spending on transportation, with a focus on lower-income households.
• Reduced dependence on non-renewable energy.
• Promoting walkable communities and desirable land uses.
• Potential to reduce urban sprawl.
• Vibrant station centers, conducive to pedestrian travel.

The rendering in Figure 1 depicts an ideal configuration for a TOD, a mixed-use redevelopment proposed in the city of Beaverton, OR (a suburb of Portland) [Maurer 2008]. In the foreground, passenger boarding platforms and shelters for an LRT system can be observed, while in the background a number of high-density buildings (presumably mixed-use, where both retail and residential land uses are represented) have been sited within a pedestrian plaza. The TOD site has been complemented by street lighting, landscaping, and wide walking paths, all at pedestrian scale.

**Figure 4.1 Ideal TOD Site Configuration**

(Source: The Urban Renaissance Group and Group Mackenzie)

In the planning literature, there is no universally-accepted premise about what a TOD should accomplish. However, upon review of TOD experience of other cities, it was noted that [CTOD 2011]:

81
• Neighborhoods near transit are more racially and socio-economically diverse than other neighborhoods.

• The growth of households within transit zone will be significant in next twenty years.

• For every 100 ft decrease in distance between a home and the TOD, the average sale price of the home increased by $10,500.

• After implementation of TOD, the transit mode share of work trips increase from 31 to 46 percent, while non-work trip increase from 20 to 31 percent.

Compared to other types of developments Environmental and community related benefits as noted include:

• Preserves Land
• Reduce Air pollution
• Improve Air Quality
• Community Related Benefits
• Improve quality of life for everyone
• Less driving time could allow more time with family and friends
• Improved accessibility
• Better for health
• Encourage walking and biking
• Safer for Pedestrian
• Slower auto traffic
• Less auto accidents
• More “eyes on the street”

TRAVEL IMPACTS

People living in communities with high quality and well integrated transit (Transit Oriented Communities or TOC) own fewer vehicles, drive half as many as yearly miles, walk and bike four times more and use transit more than ten times then residents of more automobile dependent communities. Figure 4.2, displays this pattern in Portland, Oregon based on land use type.
Figure 4.2 Mode Split pattern of Transit Oriented Community in Portland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Use Type</th>
<th>Auto Ownership Per Household</th>
<th>Daily VMT Per Capita</th>
<th>Mode Split</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good transit/Mixed use</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>9.80</td>
<td>58.1%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good transit only</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>13.28</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remainder of region</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>21.79</td>
<td>87.3%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Oregon [Litman 2010]

TOD FAVORABLE POLICIES

According to the Center for Transit-Oriented Development (CTOD), the following policies support economic development along a new transit corridor as shown in Table 2 [CTOD, 2008]:

TABLE 4.1 Example of Economic Revitalization Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local hire requirement</td>
<td>Makes transit construction beneficial for those who live along the corridor (Pride, ownership)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax break and other incentives</td>
<td>Encourage businesses to move to near transit line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of Business Improvement District (BiD) or Tax increment financing district (TIFD)</td>
<td>Assist to fund streetscape and other improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Parking</td>
<td>Preserve access to local business before, during and after construction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FACTORS RELATED TO TOD

A number of factors are considered while examining the TOD potentials of any site. They include but are not limited to existing land use, demographic, employment distribution, zoning, walk score and density within a half a mile radius of a station. Walk score and density factors are not very familiar attributes of any station surrounding in comparison to demographic, land use and others. Thus they are introduced here for the sake of clarity.

WALK SCORE

In order to quantify the walkability of a candidate site for TOD, Walk Score (a tool developed with the intent of scoring geographic locations on their pedestrian-friendly at-
tributes) is utilized in some cities. The algorithm used by its developers ranks addresses on an additive scale ranging from 0 to 100 (representing descriptions of "Car-Dependent" to "Walker's Paradise", respectively; (Table 3) [Walkscore 2010]. Using this approach, points are awarded to the address in question according to the number of destinations in its proximity, and their relative distance to them as well. Points of pedestrian attraction beyond one mile from the entity in question are not counted in the “Walk Score”.

### TABLE 4.2 Walk Score Thresholds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WALK SCORE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90 - 100</td>
<td>&quot;Walker's Paradise&quot; Daily errands do not require a car.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 - 89</td>
<td>&quot;Very Walkable&quot; Most errands can be accomplished on foot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 - 69</td>
<td>&quot;Somewhat Walkable&quot; Some amenities within walking distance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 49</td>
<td>&quot;Car-Dependent&quot; A few amenities within walking distance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 - 24</td>
<td>&quot;Car-Dependent&quot; Almost all errands require a car.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Walk Score, “How it Works”)

### DENSITY

TOD related development should be relatively dense and compact within the “Core area” (i.e., within half a mile radius). Density can be measured in following ways:

Floor Area Ratio (FAR): is the ratio of the total built space on a site to its land area and is frequently used to measure density. For example, a site with land area of 100,000 square feet has 300,000 square feet of building on it, it’s FAR is 30.

Dwelling Units per Acre (DUPA): For residential development, TOD professionals use DUPA as a measure of density. For example, a single family home on a quarter acre lot would generate a DUPA of 4. However, an apartment complex in an urban setting can easily represent a DUPA of 75 or more.

According to MARTA TOD guidelines, the most recognizable measure of density and scale is height. Height and density do not reflect same way all the time, a taller building with more open space at the ground level and shorter building with less open space could have the same FAR. Accepted Density guidelines are presented in Table 4.
The process of identifying TOD packages at any selected site would require detailed analyses of the existing conditions (e.g., population, land ownership) and the possible barriers that may inhibit TOD implementation (e.g., zoning definitions and classifications).

- **Development Inventory**

In order to develop a TOD package at any site, it is first necessary to assess the type of existing development within some pre-defined influence boundary. For TOD projects, that pre-defined boundary should be established as no greater than a mile walking distance (to capture the upper boundary of comfortable walking distance for transit riders and TOD inhabitants), and the types of development that may be of interest include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Residential (e.g., for-sale, rental, senior, low-income)
- Retail/Service/Commercial (e.g., eateries, apparel, drugstore)
- Public/Civic/Institutional (e.g., parks, pedestrian plazas/common areas, schools, churches, hospitals)

This data will enable developers to determine what type of new businesses to include among the existing development to allow for growth and expansion.
• **Population Characteristics**

Along with noting the existing developments in a TOD area, the characteristics of the surrounding area’s population must be analyzed when considering development/redevelopment. Developments that cater to the needs of this population, while attracting new population would be considered highly desirable. For example, if part of the population in a TOD area consists of people of a certain demographic (elderly, low-income, etc.), one may consider including businesses that not only accommodate their interests, but also those that are likely to attract new people.

• **Land Ownership**

Available land may have to be transferred from an existing owner to a developer in order for development to occur. Rather than owning several parcels of land scattered throughout an area, a developer may wish to assemble parcels of land in close proximity into larger blocks to facilitate desirable development patterns.

• **Zoning**

Zoning is a primary determinant of the types of land uses permissible under the current law, and may be a major issue when dealing with any type of development/redevelopment project. With the TOD goal in mind, zoning definitions/classifications may have to be adjusted to allow for a specific type of building/project. The feasibility of such zoning changes under the current city ordinances must be carefully assessed.

• **Funding**

A key factor to the successful implementation of any TOD program is the availability of funding. Funding can come in various forms, such as: grants, special tax provisions, incentives, private donations, etc.. Amidst all the planning barriers, funding may be the last hurdle to be cleared before project groundbreaking takes place.
BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION

Although there are many factors in each of the TOD sites that are believed to ease the implementation process (e.g., high transit ridership, existing vibrant community, proximity to frequently-traveled travel corridors), there may also be underlying factors that could inhibit TOD implementation as well. Examples of those factors include:

1. Assembly of disaggregate and scattered land parcels (properties may be difficult to purchase or obtain)

2. Costs of infrastructure improvements (e.g., sidewalk/curb construction, storm water drainage, pedestrian and vehicular traffic signals, street lighting).

3. Vehicular and pedestrian traffic issues (e.g., capacity, safety, operations).

4. Financing challenges (e.g., sources of funding, tax revenue)

5. Lack of coordination between TOD stakeholders (e.g., public versus private organizations; local/state/Federal governments, private property owners).

6. Market conditions (lack of demand for new developments)

With regard to real estate, the acquisition of land for development projects may be delayed, and in some cases blocked altogether, by landowners who are unwilling to negotiate. On the other end of the spectrum, the topic of eminent domain often invokes considerable opposition from the public. For instance, the Pole Town industrial development located in the city of Detroit displaced a community of more than 4,000 residents for the construction of a new General Motors plant in the 1970’s. A small group of those displaced challenged the city of Detroit and General Motors, and would eventually take their argument to the Michigan Supreme court, only to be defeated in a 1981 ruling: Poletown Neighborhood
Council v. City of Detroit. The power of eminent domain has been a sensitive and controversial topic, and has been challenged in many cities in the U.S. [Nolan, 2000].

The use of eminent domain for the sake of economic development remains blocked by the state of Michigan constitution, as the result of the 2004 Michigan Supreme Court ruling in the case of County of Wayne v. Edward Hathcock. In that case, the court justices expressed that the state law allowing eminent domain for public use was interpreted, at the time, to favor those leading the movement for the Poletown development. The law generally allows land to be taken if it is to be used for purposes benefiting the public [Michigan Supreme court, 2004].

Although the ruling was considered a victory for those supporting the rights of private property owners, it simultaneously became a barrier to the planning and implementation of development projects, particularly, TOD projects that often require significant amounts of (often disaggregate) land parcels.

Another potential mechanism is use of tax abatement, zoning modification, etc. through the concept of consent judgment. This can be applied in a legal sense, and an example of use is the land designation for the Troy-Birmingham Multi-modal Transit Center. In this case, Grand Sakwa (the land owner) agreed to give a piece of land to the cities of Troy and Birmingham, with a major stipulation; they had to start development on the site within a specified time frame or else the land would revert back to Grand Sakwa ownership. The cities of Troy and Birmingham were able to secure sufficient funding to allow for development on the land within the specified time frame, thus fulfilling the agreement set forth by Grand Sakwa.

MECHANISMS DEPLOYED TO IMPLEMENT TOD

- General Mechanisms

The implementation of any new programs (e.g., TOD, joint development, etc.) is often hindered by different barriers. In order to overcome these barriers, it may be necessary to deploy a different set of mechanism or techniques. The mechanisms described below may be executed by TOD stakeholders, a broad range of
groups and organizations that may include, but are not limited to: local governments (e.g., planners, city council, public works), Federal/state/regional governments (e.g., FHWA, HUD, MDOT, SEMCOG), private developers, transit providers/agencies, and financial institutions. The deployment of these mechanisms requires significant intergovernmental cooperation at different levels. Mechanisms have been classified into three categories:

1. **Planning**: relates to strategies that may be used to change zoning definitions or master plans for communities to facilitate the implementation of TOD programs. Examples include creating overlay zoning districts, benefit assessment districts, empowerment zones, and re-zoning properties.

2. **Institutional**: relates to strategies involving a planned arrangement for the coordination of efforts and/or resources exerted between different TOD stakeholders. Examples of this mechanism include the creation of project-specific planning commissions (i.e., TOD), joint-development programs, municipal powers, development rights, and court rulings.

3. **Economic**: relates to strategies that may be used by TOD stakeholders to overcome economic barriers through a commitment of public monetary resources. Examples include property leasing, PPP, TIF, land banking, alternative sources of funding, land acquisition, and grants (local, state, or Federal).

There have been numerous examples, in the Detroit metropolitan area, where such mechanisms have been utilized for the execution of development projects. Mechanisms that may be used for the implementation of TOD projects in the state of Michigan, the SEMCOG region, or counties and local governments are listed in Table 5 [USDOT 2010].
### TABLE 4.3 Mechanisms: General

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JURISDICTION</th>
<th>AGENCY</th>
<th>PROGRAM</th>
<th>APPLICATIONS</th>
<th>FINANCING (TYPE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>FHWA / FTA</td>
<td>Metropolitan &amp; Statewide Planning Formula Grant</td>
<td>Regional planning, decision-making</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>FHWA / FTA</td>
<td>Transportation Planning Capacity Building Program</td>
<td>Land use and scenario planning, TOD, non-motorized transportation, safety</td>
<td>Grants (Formula)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>FTA</td>
<td>Urbanized Areas Formula Grant Program (Transit agencies in urbanized areas population of 200,000+)</td>
<td>Planning, engineering design, and evaluation of transit projects; 1%+ of funds used for historic preservation, landscaping, public art, pedestrian access, disabilities access</td>
<td>Grants (Formula)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Federal</td>
<td>Bus &amp; Bus Facilities Discretionary Grant Program (Transit agencies in urbanized areas population of 200,000+)</td>
<td>New and replacement buses, equipment, facilities, intermodal transit centers</td>
<td>Grants (Competitive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>FHWA</td>
<td>Transportation Enhancement (TE) Program</td>
<td>Expand transportation mode choices, safety programs, historic preservation, environmental mitigation, scenic beautification</td>
<td>Grants (Formula)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>FHWA</td>
<td>Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Program</td>
<td>Reduce pollution, transportation system efficiency, non-motorized transportation facilities, travel demand management</td>
<td>General fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>EPA</td>
<td>Smart Growth Implementation Assistance (SGIA) Program</td>
<td>Technical assistance for resolving transportation and parking issues, affordable housing, storm water management, infill and redevelopment.</td>
<td>Competitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>EDA</td>
<td>Economic Development Program</td>
<td>Aid in financing economic development.</td>
<td>Grants, loans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>EDA</td>
<td>Economic Development Planning</td>
<td>Provides assistance to public agencies for economic development planning</td>
<td>Grants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 4.3 Mechanisms: General (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JURISDICTION</th>
<th>AGENCY</th>
<th>PROGRAM</th>
<th>APPLICATIONS</th>
<th>FINANCING (TYPE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>MEDC</td>
<td>Economic Development Corporations (PA 338 of 1974)</td>
<td>Plan/acquire/prepare sites, loan guarantees, equip facilities for private enterprise</td>
<td>Grants, bonds, operation revenues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>DDA</td>
<td>Downtown Development Authorities (PA 197 of 1975)</td>
<td>Devise and maintain plans, acquire/hold/develop property, enter PPP, operation of projects</td>
<td>Grants, bonds, operation revenues, TIF, tax proceeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>MTA</td>
<td>Metropolitan Transit Authority (PA 204 of 1967)</td>
<td>Plan/acquire/operate transit and related facilities, utilize eminent domain for land needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The state of Michigan, the SEMCOG region, and the city governments represented by any site along the transit corridor are eligible for varying degrees of development incentives. For instance, although the city of Detroit has experienced a decrease in population over the past three decades, the city government and the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation (DEGC) have established well-defined mechanisms to promote developments expected to improve the quality of life for the remaining population. Programs intended to attract nationally-recognized casual dining restaurants and grocery stores are likely to be of particular interest in this context. Such programs are examples of local support for new development.

On the other side of the scale, the current federal administration has expressed a strong desire to incorporate smart growth, sustainability, and livability into new developments in the nation's communities. Federal monies are largely available through a competitive process, rewarding the most suitable projects with grants. The marriage of local incentives, on the lower scale, Federal incentives, on the upper scale, and state and regional programs, in between, may be highly attractive to stakeholders wishing to pursue development projects.

The city of Detroit utilizes a number of organizations and authorities, in planning for development limits intended to improve economic growth and quality of life for its citizens. The DEGC is a private, non-profit organization that provides the city a number of services, with the intent of creating new investments and employment: project management, financial assistance, planning, and development assistance. The 35 members of the DEGC collectively serve as the authority governing other organizations, all of which are intended to boost economic activity within the city of Detroit.

The affiliated organizations have been listed below [DEGC 2010]:

- **Downtown Development Authority (DDA):** The DDA was created in 1976 with the intent on promoting economic growth, focused in the downtown district of the city of Detroit. This area contains approximately two square-miles of land area, and is bounded by: John C. Lodge Freeway (M-10) to the west, Fisher Freeway (I-75) to the north, Chrysler Freeway (I-375) to the east, and the Detroit River to the south.
- **Detroit Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (DBRA):** Provides incentives for the city of Detroit to pursue redevelopment and revitalization efforts in areas in need (e.g., environmentally contaminated, blighted, abandoned, under-utilized). The authority is governed by a nine-member board of directors.

- **Economic Development Corporation (EDC):** A component unit of both the city of Detroit and the DEGC. Some of the long-term activities involving the EDC include making loans payable to the city of Detroit utilizing U.S. Housing and Urban Development grants (HUD), and designating land parcels for tax benefits and incentives.

- **Neighborhood Development Corporation (NDC):** Established as a subsidiary corporation by the EDC, housing and neighborhood programs within qualified blighted or redevelopment areas can be implemented by the NDC. The NDC can implement a program to acquire property, construct improvements, and rehabilitate or construct houses for immediate sale as long as it is in accordance to a City Council approved project plan.

- **Local Development Finance Authority (LDFA):** A component unit of both the city of Detroit and the DEGC, the LDFA was created in October 1988. The objectives of the authority are as follows: collection of taxes from within tax increment districts to pay debt service used to complete development projects, establishing additional tax increment districts within the city limits (e.g., East Riverfront Conservancy, Jefferson Ave. Chrysler Corporation assembly plant).

- **Tax Incentive Finance Authority (TIFA):** This branch was established in 1982 under PA 450 of 1980. Funding for TIFA comes from tax increments captured as a result of new growth. Spending of funds must be in accordance with a City Council approved plan.

The city of Detroit has the benefit of a well-defined hierarchy of planning organizations and departments. Throughout the city, there are a number of completed
developments that exhibit the full potential of public-private partnerships. For instance, Joe Louis Arena (home to the Detroit Red Wings of the National Hockey League (NHL)) and Cobo Hall were constructed through the use of well-executed PPP’s.

**MECHANISMS FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION SPECIFIC TO THE CITY OF DETROIT**

There are various mechanisms available to stakeholders pursuing development within the Detroit city limits. As mentioned earlier, there are a number of organizations that operate within the city who are empowered to execute these mechanisms in cooperation with the city.

Institutional mechanisms, such as joint development (JD), have been used for the planning and construction of Cobo Hall, a 700,000 square feet convention center, located in Detroit’s CBD. The structure is most notable as the historical home of the North American International Auto Show, held every January. Cobo Hall was opened to the public in 1960, and was constructed in the airspace directly above a portion of the John C. Lodge Freeway (M-10). This project and others that have been supported by the city of Detroit (expansion of Cobo Hall exhibition spaces) suggest that there are no legal objections to development in the airspace over, or below, public facilities. If this assumption holds true, spaces above or below public facilities may be utilized for more productive uses: commercial, residential, institutional, etc [Khasbanis 1980]. In recent years, other noteworthy joint development projects include Detroit Zoo, Detroit Institute of Art etc.

Mechanisms involving local, state, and Federal organizations and agencies that may be used for the implementation of TOD projects in the city Detroit have been listed in Table 6 [DEGC 2010].
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JURISDICTION</th>
<th>AGENCY</th>
<th>PROGRAM</th>
<th>APPLICATIONS</th>
<th>FINANCING (TYPE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federal</td>
<td>FHWA</td>
<td>Pedestrian &amp; Bicycle Safety Program</td>
<td>Research, developing guidelines, tools, safety countermeasures, identifying 'hot' spots</td>
<td>General fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sustainable Communities</td>
<td>Regional planning, land use planning, affordable housing, multi-family housing, linking land uses, zoning reform, energy-efficient housing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HUD</td>
<td>HOPE VI</td>
<td>Elimination/reclamation of distressed public housing, demolition, rehab, new construction, supportive services for the relocated, green building</td>
<td>Grants (Competitive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Public Housing Program</td>
<td>Operating expenses, repairs, incorporating environmental sustainability, energy &amp; water conservation</td>
<td>Grants (Formula)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Housing Choice and Project-Based Vouchers</td>
<td>Provide funding to local public housing agencies for rental subsidies. Allow tenants to relocate closer to work, family, or places of worship</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)</td>
<td>May be used for low-to-moderate income persons, prevention of slums/blighted area, meets community development needs having urgency.</td>
<td>Grants (Formula)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Supportive Housing for the Elderly (Section 202) &amp; Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities (Section 811)</td>
<td>Support operating and maintenance costs so that rent prices remain affordable for those with very low incomes</td>
<td>Grants (Competitive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JURISDICTION</td>
<td>AGENCY</td>
<td>PROGRAM</td>
<td>APPLICATIONS</td>
<td>FINANCING (TYPE)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>DDA</td>
<td>Housing/Office/Retail Development</td>
<td>Assistance for the construction, redevelopment, or improvement of real property.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>DDA</td>
<td>Small Business Loan Transactions</td>
<td>Assistance for building owners, tenants, and business owners, with the intent to halt decay of property values and create new employment.</td>
<td>Loans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Business Development Loan Fund</td>
<td>Foster investment in national or regional recognized chain retail/restaurant ventures.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>Real Property Gap Fund</td>
<td>Encourage investment in the rehabilitation of real property by Detroit residents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>DEGC</td>
<td>Neighborhood Enterprise Zones (NEZ)</td>
<td>Provides tax incentives for housing developments and improvements.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>DEGC</td>
<td>Commercial Rehabilitation Act</td>
<td>Encourage the rehabilitation of commercial properties no less than 15 years old by abating taxes on new investments. Particular effort exerted in seeking grocery or produce markets.</td>
<td>Tax relief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(PA 210 of 2005)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>Personal Property Tax Abatement</td>
<td>Encourage development of the following projects: mining, manufacturing, R&amp;D, wholesale trade, office operations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Obsolete Property Rehabilitation</td>
<td>Encourages rehabilitation and reconstruction in districts that may contain properties that are blighted or functionally obsolete.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>Renaissance Zone: Woodward Ave.</td>
<td>Approximately 2 acres of land is eligible for a number of tax incentives: business, income, state education, personal property, real property, utility use.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TRANSIT IN METROPOLITAN DETROIT, MICHIGAN

The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) is the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) designated for the southeast Michigan region encompassing seven counties: St. Clair, Macomb, Wayne, Oakland, Livingston, Washtenaw, and Monroe (Figure 2) [SEMCOG 2012]. The current population of the southeast Michigan area of more than four million, places it among the top five regions in the country. Long-term predictions conducted in the early 2000s indicate significant growth in population, households, and employment during the upcoming two decades.

Approximately 192,000 households in the SEMCOG region have been identified as households without access to a private automobile. Despite this figure, the modal split for transit in the region is very low: only 2.5 percent of people commuting to their place of employment do so using public transit (mostly captive riders). In contrast, 94 percent of commuters travel to work by car, van, or light truck. Thus, the Detroit metropolitan area cannot be designated as a transit-oriented community.

Regions with similar population bases in North America (e.g., Washington, D.C., San Francisco, CA; Boston, MA; and Toronto, Canada) have successfully creat-
ed and maintained a transit base by attracting choice riders, thereby significantly reducing congestion levels, environmental pollution, and dependence on fossil fuels. The common ingredient among these cities is some type of rail-based travel mode, either LRT or RRT. Choice riders are those commuters who choose to travel by way of public transit, despite the fact that they own at least one private automobile. Very little emphasis, if any, has been placed by policy makers in this region to attract these riders (until now, by creating Regional Transit Authority). This is evident from the fact that, while the region ranks fifth in population in the country, it ranks 23rd both in the number of miles and hours of transit services provided [RTD 2012]. Furthermore, the region ranks 21st in the amount of local dollars spent on transit. However, this trend will most likely change due to the creation of RTA.

**HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

As stated in the SEMCOG report, many regions in the United States spend more than three times as much, per capita, for transit services than in the Detroit metropolitan area (Detroit: $59.00, Cleveland: $124.00, San Francisco: $255.00) [Khasnabis 2010, SEMCOG 2001]. Other factors that have limited the availability of transit activities in the region (until recent legislative action) include: the lack of consensus about the structure, governance and funding of a regional transit system, and lack of support among the public at large for a viable transit base.
This phenomenon is exemplified by a number of missed opportunities experienced in obtaining transit resources. For instance, the bulk of a $600 million commitment made by the Federal government in 1974 was “lost” because of a general lack of consensus on the programming and planning aspects for a transit system. Similarly, the first regional transit agency in the Detroit metropolitan area, Southeast Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA), was created in the early 1970’s without a dedicated local transit support base (unlike other metropolitan regions in the country), thereby limiting the region’s ability to compete for federal grants. Lastly, no transit allocations were made out of increased gasoline tax revenues in the state, resulting from 1997 legislation, despite the fact that up to ten percent of these funds could have been dedicated for transit.

Transit services are currently provided by three major agencies in the Detroit metropolitan area:

- Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT): service within the city limits of Detroit, Hamtramck, and Highland Park.
- Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART): service for the Detroit metropolitan area, with limited service within the Detroit city limits (including the cities Hamtramck and Highland Park).
- Detroit Transportation Corporation (DTC): Service for the people mover system.
DDOT and SMART provide bus route service for over 100,000 transit miles per operating day, generating a daily ridership of over 170,000. A number of other transit services are available in the SEMCOG area for their respective local communities:

- Ann Arbor Transportation Authority (AATA): service for the city of Ann Arbor
- Blue Water Area Transportation Commission (BWATC): service for the city of Port Huron
- Lake Erie Transit (LET): service for the city of Monroe and Monroe County

VARIOUS CHARACTERISTICS OF DETROIT AND COMPARABLE CITIES

Information related population, median income, mean travel time, land area of various cities including Detroit are presented in Table 7. Based on the 2010 census population density of Detroit is close to Cleveland, Pittsburg and St. Louis and lot higher than Atlanta, Denver and Charlotte. Thus, designating Detroit as a city of vacant land is just a myth and there is no truth on such designation. Population density along planned transit corridors are presented in Figure 6.

Existence of TOD in Detroit

There are a number of TOD imprints in Detroit, especially along the Woodward Avenue. Some of the existing TODs are presented in Figures 7 and 8 [www.Woodwardavenue.org 2013]. Woodward Avenue Action Association (WA3) is a very active TOD advocacy group within the State of Michigan [www.Woodwardavenue.org 2013]. The objective of economic and community based organization is to shape the future of the 27 mile along Woodward Avenue
from downtown Detroit to Pontiac by promoting TOD. The Master plan of all the cities along Woodward corridor staring from Ferndale to Birmingham has TOD elements. A list of WA3 partners are included in Figure 4.8.

Figure 4.7 Potential Transit Corridors and Population Density (Census 2000)
WA3 developed a number of tools for communities along the Woodward Avenue to facilitate their TOD activities. Steps to be taken in order to implement TOD are presented in Figure 8 [www.Woodwardavenue.org 2013]. They also design renderings of different sections of Woodward Avenue before and after the implementation of TOD. Two such efforts are presented in Figure 9 and 10 [LSL Planning 2012]. It is to be noted that Michigan will have more growth of older population in the future (Figure 11), thus plans should be undertaken to create a livable community for them. TOD can play a significant role in this context.
What is mixed-use development?

A building or district which hosts multiple integrated land uses, such as residential, office and retail

Campus Martius Park Area
Downtown Detroit, MI
Mixed Use Development creates Vibrant “24 Hour” Places - where people can Live, Work, Shop, and Play

Royal Oak

Royal Oak is one of the hottest spot for professionals in metro Detroit to live, work, shop, and play!
Figure 4.11 Steps to Implement TOD along the Woodward Corridors

For Cities Along Woodward Avenue:
Steps to implement for T.O.D type of Development.

- Transit Oriented Development
  - Step 1: Review Master Plans
  - Step 2: Amend Zoning Codes
  - Step 3: Adopt Form Based Codes
    - Allow Mixed Use Developments
    - Step 4: Planned Unit Development
      - Integrate with Transportation System
  - Step 5: Transportation System

Result: A Transit Oriented Type of Development
Figure 4.12 Woodward Avenue at 12 mile without TOD

What could be....

Current view north of Woodward and 12 Mile
Michigan’s Golden Spike, is another TOD initiative focused on southeast Michigan’s key transportation corridors [Golden Spike undated]. It is a collaborative effort among the Michigan Suburbs Alliance, Michigan Environmental Council and Tourism and Economic Development Council. Golden Spike is funded by a grant from the People and Land program of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Golden Spike has published a document “Using transit-Oriented Development to Create Economic Vibrancy in Neighborhoods: A guide for Elected and Appointed Officials in Michigan” to assist communities in implementing TOD. Recently, the Michigan Land Bank [www.Michigan.gov/landbank] has been very active in developing public private partnership. It is to be noted that the mission of the Michigan Land Bank is to “promote economic growth in this state through the acquisition, assembly and disposal of public property, including tax reverted property, in a coordinated manner to foster the development of that property, and to promote and support land bank operations at the county and local levels.” The Michigan Land Bank signed an agreement with the Magic Plus LLC to develop the former state fairground. As a part of their development plan, a transit station is included.
The City of Dearborn has developed a comprehensive TOD around their planned Intermodal transit station. A pictorial sketch is presented in Figure 13.

Figure 4.14 Trends of Young and Senior Citizens Population along

From 2000-2030:
Trend of Young and Senior Citizens population in cities along Woodward

- Decrease in age group of 18-34 by 4,454 people
- Increase in age group of 65+ by 7,232 people
Figure 4.15 Preliminary TOD plan around Dearborn Intermodal Transit Center

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The mission of the RTA should be provide mobility of all people by means of sustainable world class transportation system (Cleveland Health line) keeping long range investment in mind.

- The RTA and all transit providers in Southeast Michigan should believe in “the person standing at the corner in the cold waiting for the ride is the most important person in the world and they only exist for that person” and act accordingly above and beyond their self-interest.

- Aggressive efforts should be taken to develop Public Private Partnership (P3) funding while implementing TOD/and walk-able streets (Complete streets)

- With the assistance of the Urban Land Institute, the RTA should
work closely with the Michigan Land Bank (www.Michigan.gov/landbank). It is to be noted that the mission of the Michigan Land Bank is to “promote economic growth in this state through the acquisition, assembly and disposal of public property, including tax reverted property, in a coordinated manner to foster the development of that property, and to promote and support land bank operations at the county and local levels”. In this context Denver RTD’s approach should be followed.

- Similar to St. Louis Metro and MARTA information on demographics, employment, land use, walk Scores, etc. within a half mile to one mile radius should be readily available to encourage potential TOD developers. Examples of walk score maps, zoning maps and land use maps are included in appendix. GIS based layer maps should be available for each station highlighting various attributes (UDM can assist in this effort)

- As TOD is moving towards generating a Transit Oriented Community (TOC), a variety of “Livable Community” grants are available from HUD and the USDOT to support community development. The RTA should pursue these funding sources. It is to be noted that St. Louis and MARTA were very effective in getting livable community funding.

- Master Plans of all cities along the Woodward corridor from Ferndale to Birmingham contain TOD elements, even without a fully operational RTA. The RTA should work with cities along the main transit corridors to develop consistent corridor-wide zoning. RTA could suggest best practices for TOD favor zoning (or even a master plan).

- RTA should recognize places of historical significance and use historical credits to aid development in partnership with developers

- The RTA should work closely with existing agencies, such as the Woodward Avenue Action Association (WA3) and Golden Spike to promote TOD concepts along the Woodward corridor and other transit corridors.

- Board members of the RTA should familiarize themselves with the TOD initiative tools developed by the WA3, Golden Spike and other similar agencies.

- At least one transit station within each city along the transit corridor.
should be designated as that city’s information center, resulting in that station being maintained by that particular city. (the RTA needs to provide some design standards to assure maintenance of the transit system’s visual and quality image)

- Applicability of the Smart Street concept should be considered while building transit routes (a number of examples are included in the appendix)

- Mexican Town, Masonic Temple, New Center, Pontiac, Shelby Township, and Roseville station sites (end points of different transit routes) should be considered as prime candidates for BRT related TOD

- At this point, M1-rail is an autonomous organization. In order to encourage transit related development from a funding and zoning standpoint, M1-rail and RTA should convey a unified transit voice, even though they are not the part of the same operating entity (For example, same stations, Integrated trip planning, Unified ticketing)

- The Michigan Land Bank signed an agreement with the Magic Plus LLC to develop the former state fairground. As a part of their development plan, a transit station is included. The RTA should work closely with mega developers (namely Magi Plus), so that fairground as well as other future developments (such as, planned Masonic Temple surrounding development) will include transit friendliness as one of their attributes.

- The City of Dearborn has developed a preliminary TOD plan of their intermodal transit center. The RTA should examine that plan.
APPENDIX

Exhibit 1. Detroit Walk-Score Map

Examples of Information around any Stop:

Stop Name: Woodward & 7 Mile

1. Existing Amenities within a 1 mile radius

- **Fitness** – Joc’s Gym, No Limits Training for Life
- **Medical** – Francis Animal Hospital and Grooming, Motown Pharmacy, Franklin Medical Pharmacy
- **Restaurants/Coffee Shops** – Subway, McDonald’s, Sillas Restaurant, Ancient Pyramid Bakery, Golden Gate Café, Royal Kabob, Tigris Restaurant, Bahi Restaurant, Stonehouse, Motown Fish & Seafood, Fish Fry Taronda, Dennis Julian’s Coney Island, Bread Basket, La Dolche Vita, San Diego Coffee Shop
- **Groceries** – John R Food Market, Caesar Food Center, Mid Fair Party Store
- **Child Care/Schools** – Greenfield Union Elementary School, Emmanuel Head Start Program,
- **Parks** – Palmer Park, Coventry Park, Michigan State Fairgrounds, Hunt Playground
- **Bookstore** – Holli-Joi’s Bookstore

**Woodward & 7 Mile**

19059 Woodward Ave., Detroit, MI

Walkscore: 55 / 100

Exhibit 2. Surrounding Bus Stops  [www.maps.google.com](http://www.maps.google.com)
Exhibit 3. 1 mile radius around the location www.freemaptools.com

Exhibit 4. Walkscore amenities, the house icon depicts the location www.walkscore.com

2. Possible Additional Amenities to raise walkscore and increase pedestrian friendliness

With a walkscore of 55, this location scored as “Somewhat Walkable”. Not much can really be done to significantly increase the score due to lack of available land.
Exhibit 5. Detroit Downtown Parking Diagram: Abundance of surface parking Lot (Not good for TOD)

Exhibit 7. Streetprint: Thermoplastic patterned crosswalk in asphalt [Tetra tech, 2007]
POTTSTOWN, PA

- **Before**
  - Two lanes of traffic
  - No bike lanes
  - Parallel parking

- **After**
  - One lane of traffic
  - Bike Lanes
  - More parking
  - Center Lane

Exhibit: 8 Attributes that encourage TOD
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CHAPTER 5

EQUITY AND ACCESS IN CURRENT DETROIT
(2007 - 2013)

Alan Hoback

July 2013
I. SOCIAL EQUITY / ACCESS IN CURRENT DETROIT

POLITICAL CULTURE AND SOCIAL CULTURE IMPACTS ON SOCIAL EQUITY AND ACCESS IN TRANSIT

Inequity is caused by poor or unaffordable housing, employment & income, educational attainment, social exclusion, and environmental blight. (Gleeson and Randolph 2002) However, each of these causes is under the control of political and social culture. Rather blaming unaffordable housing as a cause of inequity, it is more effective to deal with the root cause which is cultural systems.

In southeast Michigan, there has long been no consensus to support social reform that supports equity. (Batterman 2010) Transit is both a measure of cultural mindset, and a partial remedy to social inequity. The question is whether this is still a hurdle that prevents the improvement of transit.

Local newspapers used to be a gauge of how deeply residents throughout the area felt about social equity, as applied to transit and other things such as low income housing. Newspapers were an indicator of the level of those feelings. (Batterman 2010) No evidence was found that the local newspapers currently supported feelings that transit was a means for “blacks to steal white jobs” as they had in the past.

However, reader comments on newspaper websites have become part of the voice of the newspaper. The Media chapter in this report talks more about how blogs shape opinions and editorial content in newspapers. Reader comments are much more common than in the past when mailed in editorials needed to be written. Since reader comments are often more of a fringe voice that is strongly against social equity than the editorial opinion, but through being displayed on the newspapers’ web pages, the comments have an impact on the effective message of newspapers. Although society has moved to be more tolerant of social equity, it has also developed a culture to allow diverse voices that are less tolerant.

Political culture has also changed in similar ways. Looking at specific community leaders in Southeast Michigan, such as county executives and mayors, they seem to have become more willing to work together than their counterparts thirty years ago.

Political culture in southeast Michigan in the past has been to avoid significant coordination between cities, and promote practices that lead to sprawl. D’Anieri maintains that there was coordination in the past, but that it was mandated by the State and favored the suburbs. (D’Anieri 2007) Those practices promoted
sprawl. Since those practices led to inequitable development, it takes a change in practices to make development equitable.

There are benefits to working together. (Todd Litman 2012) The culture of working together has some recent success. The Michigan Suburbs Alliance is one of the newest efforts. It is coordinating policy that promotes reinvestment in cities rather than continuous sprawl.

II. ACCESS IN CURRENT DETROIT

As mentioned in previous chapters, access provided through transit and other modes is a key social equity issue since it provides access to jobs and other services.

Access is primarily transit because of the wide geographic distribution of jobs and services. However, other modes are important for reaching locally available jobs and services. Other modes are necessary are the first link in a transit trip.

Walking, and biking are more common alternative modes of transportation. The minimum that needs to be provided for alternative modes is a safe path such as a sidewalk. (Litman 2011) However, there are other things that improve these modes such as walk score, transit oriented development or dense development, and a pleasant atmosphere.

Southeast Michigan is like many other metro areas. The City of Detroit generally has good sidewalks, but few pedestrian oriented areas. In suburbs, there are often places without sidewalks. Also, considering that the suburbs are very low density, there is a low ability to reach goods and services through that mode. (Pucher and Renne 2003)

No evidences was found of moving away from auto-oriented street designs rather than using “Various smart growth land use reforms include reduced and more flexible parking requirements, support for more compact and mixed land use, public investment practices that favor infill over sprawled development, more accessible and walkable roadway design, location-based utility pricing and tax rates, and encouragement for urban infill development. (Litman, Smart Growth Reforms: Changing Planning, Regulatory and Fiscal Practices to Support More Efficient Land Use 2012)

ACCESS VIA TRANSIT

Access is about whether a person can reach their destination. Without knowing the destination, we can assume that they want to reach as many job opportunities and services as possible.
Access is less about time than in mobility studies where driving time is the primary concern. In access studies, the total number of opportunities available in a reasonable time is the concern.

The Brookings Institution has calculated access to jobs for large US cities. (Tomer 2012) The Brookings Institution results will be discussed, but assumptions about their methodology will be challenged, and a new procedure will be used to find access in Detroit, and later for comparable regions.

**Jobs**
Both studies use jobs as a measure of access. Reaching employment is the primary transportation activity for a majority of transit users, and job data is readily available from the Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics survey. (US Census Bureau n.d.)

Other services are important too, but generally services are distributed in similar patterns with other jobs. Restaurants are an example of a good or service that is distributed somewhat evenly throughout urbanized areas.

Access to emergency rooms could be important to study. Hospitals are less distributed evenly, and may be clustered in commercial areas, so studying them could give very different results. However, ambulances are often used as the transportation mode to ERs, so the role of transit is diminished in that situation.

The number of jobs that are reachable by a person driving versus a person riding transit will be compared. It would be equitable or equal if they reached the same number of jobs. Complete access to all jobs may not be practically obtainable. Therefore, comparisons to the best regions show the goal.

Jobs is an important issue to study related to access. It has been shown that workers with cars work more hours. (Tomer, Transit Access and Zero-Vehicle Households 2011) It is assumed from this that the car provides the opportunity to work more hours since better opportunities can be reached in a reasonable time.

Brookings finds that 22% of all jobs in the region can be reached in 90 minutes via transit for the average Detroit metro region resident. This is much lower than the national average of 30%. Brookings prefers to express this in terms that an employer would be interested in. They state that the average job can be reached by only 20% of potential employees. Denver is an example of a higher ranked city in Brooking’s analysis. It says that 47.6% of residents can reach a typical job. Planning authorities in Denver don’t consider their transit system complete; therefore the obtainable rate will be significantly higher than 47.6%.
Some methods focus on access to low wage jobs via transit. This is among the statistics that Brookings creates. The assumption is that the transit-captive are lower income and won’t need access to higher wage jobs. However, some disabled people are transit captive, but that doesn’t necessarily limit their career potential. Access to jobs among the disabled is a social equity issue, therefore this report won’t focus on low wage jobs only. Brookings found no significant difference between access to service jobs and manufacturing jobs. However, high skill jobs tended to be clustered in areas such as downtowns that have higher transit access than low skilled jobs.

**Time and Distance**
Access methodologies use limit on the time it takes to reach a job, good or service. Walking distance is also important because long distances limit who is willing to walk.

Time equates to a distance, based on travel modes. The Brookings Institution study uses 90 minutes one-way as the practical limit for daily travel to work. That would be equal to three hours of commuting time per day. This is about twice the mean of 47 minutes of how long people actually travel to work. (US Census Bureau 2011)

The average commuting time in the US is 27 minutes each way, or 54 minutes per day. (USDOT Bureau of Transportation Statistics 2010) The limit that the Brookings Institution placed on transit is about three times the average.

This brings up an equity issue. If people drove three hours a day, many of them could go between one metropolitan statistical area to the next. Commuting between MSAs doesn’t seem realistic for most commuters. Even to spend two hours a day commuting is very unlikely among drivers, but not unheard of. It would require a person to be very desperate, or have unusual conditions such as constantly changing work location. It is not equitable to assume that a transit commuter would do things that most of them don’t do, and drivers don’t either. Three hours a day of commuting would require extensive sacrifices in quality of life. An implication from a reference mentioned above is that people with cars might be working more because it is possible to do so with greater access to job opportunities. (Tomer, Transit Access and Zero-Vehicle Households 2011)

Although economic models show that people of different employment types and income levels value their time differently, it is not equitable to assume that all jobs are available to someone as long as they can reach them in three hours per day. A limit of one hour each way, or two hours per day will be used in this study. It represents a more realistic limit.
Walking Distance
The Brookings methodology was to assume that a job was accessible to transit if it was within 0.75 miles from the bus stop. It is unknown if they considered true walking distance (Hoback, Anderson and Dutta 2008) or straight-line distance. It is also unclear from the methodology whether the walking time was considered.

Most community planning initiatives and bus system design limit walking to 0.25 miles. This is shown to be the case for the Detroit bus system (DDOT) during the peak of their service availability in the 1990s. See in the figure below that 90% of the residents of Detroit are within 0.25 miles of a bus stop.

III. QUARTER MILE COVERAGE OF BUS STOPS

There are several reasons to consider 0.25 miles as a practical limit to walking. First, there are cultural factors that limit walking in modern society. (Hoback, Anderson and Dutta, Health Effects of Walking to Transit 2012) Secondly, as people age or reach the threshold of disability, their walking ability is often limited. Third, in northern cities like Detroit, the winter weather can get down to -10F. This would cause frostbite in 30 minutes if there was a 10 mph wind. Frostnip could happen within 10 minutes. Walking then standing and waiting for a bus is uncomfortable for much of the time whether or not a person would suffer physical harm from the weather. Fourth, many cities including Detroit are not walker friendly beyond having mostly well connected routes of sidewalks. Fifth, practically, most people are not willing to walk more than 0.25 miles. See the graph that shows a large share of people who walked to work did so for less than
IV. WALKING COMMUTE TIME IN DETROIT

Methodology
Rather than do a network analysis for all residents, a Monte Carlo simulation was used. This requires selection of a number of random trials. This is continued until additional trials produce no change in the results. Therefore, the results have converged to an answer. Previous work with walking to transit in Detroit has shown that as little as six trials can reach the answer with no significant error. With only four trials, the answer can be reached within 10% error. (Hoback, Anderson and Dutta, True Walking Distance to Transit 2008) This work began with twelve starting points in southeastern Michigan, therefore it should give a reliable representation of travel times.

First, six high population areas within each Detroit, and the suburbs were identified. These were plotted in Google Earth. Then from an eye altitude of roughly 50 miles, placemarks representing residential starting points were placed. The high altitude meant that the placemarks were random within the identified population area. See the figure below.
1. **High population areas in Metro Detroit**

Next, driving time polygons were made in turn for each starting point. In the figure, the red outline is the approximate distance that a person could drive to within an hour. The white outline is City of Detroit shown for reference. The envelope of driving distances was found with Google Earth’s Get Directions tool. The goal was to identify the travel distance to within one minute. (1.7% geographic error) In actuality, there may be rural areas away from freeways that have errors up to 4 minutes. (6.7%) However, the geographic error is not the same as the error in the number of jobs that can be reached. The driving polygons normally truncate in rural areas that have a much lower job density than city. Therefore, an insignificant number of additional jobs are impacted if the boundary is inaccurate.
2. Driving Envelope from northwest Detroit

Then a different process was used for find transit travel distance envelopes. Google Earth’s Get Directions tool was considered for this, but the assumptions did not seem to fit Detroit’s actual state of transit service. Until those assumptions could be resolved, a different method was used.

To do the transit envelopes by hand, several assumptions had to be made. Many of these assumptions were discussed with Megan Owens of Transit Riders United. (Owens 2012) The assumptions are:

- Maximum of 0.25 miles walking to bus stop. If the distance was more than that, then the person could only go to employment locations within a quarter mile. This was taken as the true walking distance, not straight line. The walking pace was assumed to be a brisk 3 mph. Observation shows that many people going to stops walk quickly there. If people walk slower, then it would reduce the number of jobs that they can reach within one hour.

- Average planned wait time of 2 min. based on country wide statistics.

- Average late bus wait time of 4 min. based on actual service reliability. (There is a big variation in this number from day to day.)
• Average wait time at transfers of 6 min. (This also has a big variation.)
• Maximum of 0.25 miles walking to destination.

The creation of the polygon for the travel envelope was created graphically. For example, a graphical shape was positioned along the route that marked off a 0.25 mile buffer that people could walk. This overestimates their ability to walk since it represents a straight line distance. However, many jobs such as restaurants, retail and etc. are located on main roads, so this assumption is not significant. The graphical shape was the length that a bus could travel at 10 mph for one hour. (10 miles) It was shortened whenever walking or transfer time meant that less than 60 minutes of travel time remained for use on the route. Connections were handled by using additional graphical shapes at junctures. Their length was equivalent to the time remaining. The last step was to digitize a polygon in Google Earth that represented the total envelope that a person could reach in one hour. Whenever the bus reached a jurisdictional border, the necessity of a transfer between systems was considered. See a sample below in the figure. The red outline represents the envelope of travel. In the figure, the west side was limited by time remaining and limited transfer options.

3. **Envelope for one hour on a bus from northwest Detroit**

Then the polygon envelopes for travel were exported to ArcMap GIS. The poly-
gons were used to select all jobs that fell within them. The jobs were geographi-
cally placed by Census blocks. If a block center was within the envelope, then
its jobs were counted. The same process was used for all of the randomly cho-
sen points in the metro region.

Results
For comparison, see both the transit and driving outlines overlaid in the figure.
Geographically, there is a great difference. See the table for Detroit values.
Some starting points are truncated from the table to fit the page size. The results
are tabulated by county in the MSA.

4. Overlay of driving and transit envelopes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>NW Detroit</th>
<th>East Detroit</th>
<th>North Detroit</th>
<th>West Detroit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>256,713</td>
<td>262,157</td>
<td>260,293</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
V. SOCIAL EQUITY AND ACCESS CONCLUSIONS

There are several patterns. Bus riders originating in Detroit can reach between 3 to 9 percent of the jobs that someone driving a car can reach in one hour. The average is 6%. This is much lower than the 22% that Brookings found for the metro Detroit region.

The scenario is much worse for suburban residents that are transit captive. They can only reach 0 to 9% of jobs that a driver can reach. The average is 2%. Many of the starting points in the suburbs were outside of a 0.25 mile maximum walking distance to a bus stop, so they could only reach jobs that they could walk to in that distance. For example, The West-Wayne point was not within reach of any jobs on foot. For the Southwest-Downriver point, a hypothetical person could walk to three jobs. This demonstrates that being transit captive is a much more severe problem for someone in the suburbs. Although in Michigan, jobs are more plentiful in the suburbs, there may be no way to get to them if the resident doesn’t live near a bus stop. It is likely that someone who is transit captive would intentionally reside near bus stops or places of employment.

Another conclusion is that the region has approximately 1.7 million jobs. The
majority of the drivers can reach nearly all of the jobs within one hour. An exception is that people in Ann Arbor have a hard time reaching jobs on the East side within an hour.

The Brookings method found significantly higher access to jobs (22%) than this study did (4%). The great difference in results shows the need for further comparison of the methods.

If equality was not the goal, it could be determined whether people had access to a set number of jobs, such as 100,000. By that criteria, some places in the City of Detroit have good enough access, and for only one of the suburban trial points. It is not recommended by the researchers to consider transit in metro Detroit to be good enough, even in those few areas with relatively higher job access.

Either way, transit captive people have very limited choices in where they can work in the Detroit MSA. It is certainly not equal opportunity for people with cars and those without, or who have disabilities. It is unlikely that improvements in transit will be able to make opportunities completely equal, but significant effort should be taken to make it more equitable.
CHAPTER 6
MEDIA AND PUBLIC OPINION IN CURRENT DETROIT (2007 - 2013)

CLAUDIA BERNASCONI, MARIAROSARIA DI PALO AND
KRYSSIA BUSSIERE
JULY 2013
INTRODUCTION

The role of media and public opinion efforts in Detroit (2007-2013)

APPROACH AND METHODS

This section of the report analyzes current media initiatives and public opinion efforts in regard to public transit for the Detroit region. Research has been conducted in order to identify key transit events, key media initiatives and public involvement efforts in relationship to transit issues and events over the last 7 years (2007-2013).

News coverage on regional transit issues from three of the major regional news publications (Detroit Free Press, Detroit News, and Crain's) has been monitored, as well as the level and type of engagement of transit agencies, with particular attention to their involvement in social media.

A total of 150 print articles from 2007 to May 2013 have been consulted. Articles have been retrieved online through the LexisNexis database by using the key words “regional transit”. Articles consulted have been categorized based on a positive, negative or neutral attitude toward transit. These attitudes may have resonated with the public's perception of key transit events. Additionally, the articles were studied to better understand possible interrelations between news coverage and outcomes of efforts to establish regional transit. The underlined assumption in the study was that the particular perspective covered or emphasized in articles could shape or influence the public debate and public opinion regionally. Appendix A includes summaries of articles consulted.

Data about local transit agencies/providers (SMART, DDOT, and DPM), and key advocacy groups was retrieved through online search of agency web sites, review of documents including annual reports, press releases or newsletters, surveys and other material available on public transit initiatives, plans and community involvement, as well as interviews to key personnel from the main transit organizations and groups, and to the key local reporters covering transit in the region.

Additional information was also retrieved by attending the Metro Detroit Transit Workshop at University of Detroit Mercy, Detroit in May 2013. The total number of web sites consulted is 43.

A total of 23 online articles from 2007 to 2013 have been consulted. Articles have been retrieved online from three of the major newspapers (MLive, MetroTimes, and Huffington Post) by using the key words “public involvement”, “public hearings”, and “campaigns”. The Appendix B provides summaries of all articles consulted.
sulted. Articles have been categorized as positive, negative or neutral towards the local transit agencies and advocacy groups.

NEWS COVERAGE ON REGIONAL TRANSIT EFFORTS AND EVENTS IN THE DETROIT REGION – 2007/2013

In the effort to reconstruct the debate around transit issues as it was visible by the general public (that relied on print media as primary source of information), the following section of the report solely relies on what was reported by print media between 2007-2013. The assumption here, which was also confirmed by the local reports interviewed by our team, is that print media still has nowadays the capability to shape the general discourse on local events, and influences in a ripple-like manner the radio and television communication outlets (Shea 2013) (Helms 2013). Therefore we can assume that print media is generally the first in “spreading the voice” about a topic, and that the perspective promoted by print media becomes a framework for further communications about the same issues.

Table 01 displays the total number of articles found in the LexisNexis database using the keyword: “Regional Transit”. Table 02 displays the total number of local news coverage reviewed, with article categorization in relation to positive, negative or neutral attitude to key transit initiatives. Table 3 includes a list of key transit events in the region from the year 2007 to 2013.

<table>
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<tr>
<td>JAN-MAY 2013</td>
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Table 01. Number of Articles on “Regional Transit” (keyword)
### Table 02. Orientation of Articles towards Transit Initiatives

<table>
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<th>News Source</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Events</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

**Key Events**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>M1-Rail is formed for the purpose of developing a regional rapid transit system starting with the development of a modern street car service on Woodward Ave.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>DDOT in its DTOGS project identifies Woodward as the location for the Light-Rail project.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>In December, the RTTC board approved a try-county multimodal Comprehensive Regional Transit Service Plan prepared by Detroit Regional Mass Transit. The RTTC defined the next steps for the establishment of</td>
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</table>
a Regional Transit Authority and a regional transit funding plan.

SMART purchased two hybrid electric articulated buses that help accommodate riders along high demand routes while helping the environment. During this year the legislature failed to approve the development of a RTA.

2009

2010

Detroit’s population drops to 713,777.

The M1-Rail and DTOGS projects appear to merge into the Woodward Light Rail project. Despite initial agreement on development and funding, disagreements exist concerning alignment of the light-rail route.

2011

The City of Detroit cuts DDOT bus operating subsidy and approves a bond issue to help fund Woodward Light Rail required match. SMART unveiled three hybrid electric buses painted in local university colors.

Governor Snyder proposed legislation that would form a RTA and provide funding

SMART cuts service by 22% due to lower property values.

2012

Oakland County overwhelmingly passed the SMART millage with a 79% approval. November: The Michigan Senate passed bills to create a RTA for southeast Michigan.

2013

Ray LaHood, of the Federal Transit Association, announced $25 million in federal funds for the private proposal for the development of light-rail along Woodward.

Ten members from Wayne, Macomb, Oakland and Washtenaw counties are appointed to the RTA board.

Table 03. Key Transit Events in the Detroit Region – 2007/2013
In 2007, the city and private supporters began to develop a plan for light rail service on Woodward Ave. The plan, called M1-Rail, was intended to connect “suburban and urban town centers with light rail and other forms of transit” (Gallagher 2007). The first step was a vote on the preliminary vision document concerning implementing rapid transit on Woodward. The plan’s success would depend on whether or not the service was reliable enough to increase demand for mass transit. This would include small improvements to service and perhaps some consolidation of services between DDOT and SMART. In response to this interest in urban development through the development of transit, John Hertel, CEO of the Regional Transit Coordinating Council (RTCC) began to speak with regional leaders and groups to gather support before a plan was finalized to be presented to the Legislature. His efforts included “meeting with groups to determine the best plan for mass transit and how it will be paid for... to channel that enthusiasm into a consensus” (Time to cooperate on Regional Transit; emerging plan is region's last, best chance 2007). The plan would base everything on “ridership and costs – in other words, no service unless justified by use” (Four area leaders need to give transit plan a push 2007).

The initiative was generally highly regarded amongst newspaper articles from each local news source. A *Detroit Free Press* article highlights opinions from citizens: Detroit resident, Claudreen Jackson, says: “I love Hertel's strategy of building support first. I hope he gets enough to cause people to take action”. Monique Young (Detroit) and Sherri Muzher (Mason) both note the divide between the city of Detroit and its suburbs, but suggest that the development of transit is in the region’s best interest. Francis Schorr (Detroit), however, believes that development is coming at the wrong time: “Given the scarcity of public dollars and the area’s declining population, now seems like a terrible time to build mass transit – unless the return on investment can be assured” but concedes that “mass transit would help unite the region” (Free Press Talk-Bank Board; build it and they will ride 2007).

In March, DDOT hosted four open houses to gather public opinion on where it would be worthwhile to implement a new plan. Key corridors under consideration included 8 Mile, Grand River, Gratiot, Woodward and Michigan (Gorchow 2007). The department also “completed [a] study... [which] follows guidelines set by the Federal Transportation Administration’s ‘New Starts' program”. The study was intended to serve as a base for securing federal funds (Benedetti 2007).
Simultaneously, a group called One D, “representing thousands of large and small businesses, service organizations, civic and cultural institutions and progressive community leaders” advocated for development on five major fronts: economic prosperity, educational preparedness, quality of life, race relations and regional transit. The group’s efforts “work around the political establishment but speak to it with one voice on behalf of the public” (Free Press Editorial: Piece together cooperation; One D plan for region needs to show value of teamwork 2007). The initiative aims to unite the region, which has often been divided by “city and suburb, black and white, Republican and Democrat, have and have-not...along county lines, city and township borders and between the Detroit region and the rest of Michigan” (Dzwonkowski 2007). One D agreed to implement the use of report cards to monitor performance in the five major sectors for focused improvement that were previously mentioned, including regional transit (Josar 2007). The move was meant to measure the quality of regional services and create accountability, however, John Marshall, retired president of the Kresge Foundation (Troy), worried that those measures would force systems to divert funds to programs and neglect “mundane but important efforts like strategic planning and staff training” (Gallagher, Service agencies must make grade; report cards will measure results, may affect funding 2007).

One D aimed to have “support for regional transit and the supporting legislation in all communities to establish a regional transportation authority in December 2008” (Josar 2007). The group was mentioned in multiple articles by each of the three news outlets that have been studied. According to a survey that EPIC/MRA conducted for Crain’s Detroit Business and Honigman Miller Schquartz and Cohn L.L.P., however, 73% of Southeast Michigan business executives have not heard of One D. Once the initiative was explained, however, 60% thought it would be effective (Harrison 2007)

2008: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SUPPORT

The Detroit Transit Options for Growth Study (DTOGS), which in 2008 was synonymous to the city’s plan for transit (All above-board on light-rail plans!; Private developers must make full details of plan public to keep larger system on track 2008), recommended Woodward for the development of transit. The Woodward corridor received a considerable amount of interest and became the focus of enthusiasm from the community as it was associated with “low building costs with high potential ridership” (Region needs to move together on new plan for light rail 2008). Articles in 2008 stressed the need for regional cooperation in order for a regional transportation development plan to be successful (Gerritt, Region needs a first-step success on transit 2008). Private developers began to show interest
in a similar, though shorter in length, development of regional transit along Woodward. Their support would mean less of a wait or dependence on federal funds (All above-board on light-rail plans!; Private developers must make full details of plan public to keep larger system on track. 2008), however, Bill Shea, for *Crain’s Detroit Business*, reported that there was some concern over the introduction of a private plan alongside the DTOGS project that had been commissioned by the Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT). Megan Owens, of Transit Riders United (TRU), warned of the private proposal overshadowing the city’s proposal for the development of regional transportation: “we hope this is done in conjunction with other plans... Detroit has been working hard on DTOG” (Shea, Light-rail for Woodward?; Private funding for 3.4 mile loop. 2008).

With the increase in support from the private sector, articles began to talk about funding. Several indicated that regional support was high in 2008, though concrete cost estimates and funding had yet to be determined. Mike Wilkinson, from the *Detroit News*, reported that “Federal funds are expected to cover more than half of the plan’s cost” (Wilkinson 2008). The proposal was framed as a “first step” in the process of developing regional transit (Wilkinson 2008).

**2009: THE CREATION OF A REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY REINTRODUCED**

In 2009, it is clear that regional support for the development of transit is overwhelming. Says Hertel: “When you have money being donated, when you have legislators passing laws, when you have the Big Four agreeing over and over again – that’s very different from the way it used to be” (Gallagher, Dream of regional rail-transit system is nearing reality; $44 million for line pledged; leaders back plan 2009). The Big Four included officials from Detroit, Wayne, Oakland and Macomb County. The *Detroit Free Press* reported in June that the addition of newcomers (Detroit Mayor Dave Bing and Macomb County Commission Chairman Paul Gieleghem) and skepticism from Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson did not signal support from the Big Four for the creation of a regional transit authority (Region can’t afford to stay stuck in neutral on transit 2009).

It is stressed in multiple articles that the creation of a regional transit authority is necessary for securing federal funds. Without a regional transit authority, the region would fail to obtain 5307 grants as funding from the FTA. Nearly $120 million in private support is intended to be used to secure a match from the federal funds. In 2009, this private plan, called the M1-Rail project, was expected to provide the first stretch of rapid transit along Woodward, to be continued by the region as demand allowed (Keep transit plans on track 2009). An article from the
Detroit News cautions supporters of the plan, citing the Brookings Institute's report, Job Sprawl Stalls: The Great Recession and Metropolitan Employment Location, on the risks of investing in a new system over improving existing transit systems: “job sprawl... means that workers in Metro Detroit do not commute in and out of the central city, as they do in most big cities, but instead travel suburb to suburb” (Take the bus. 2009) rendering a fixed light rail system unsuitable for current demand.

The discourse on establishing a regional transit authority also produced disagreements among leaders. Detroit Interim Mayor Ken Cockrell Jr. pushed for a merge of DDOT and SMART but did not discuss the idea with John Hertel, who in 2009 was head of the RTCC (Regional Transportation Coordinating Council), which coordinated the distribution of federal funds to the city and suburban systems (Shea, Surprise, doubt meet mayor's call for transit merger 2009).

News reports seem to indicate that there was still regional agreement in improving regional transit but a new disagreement with the plan emerged, as well as a disagreement on the creation of a regional transit authority. Articles speak positively of transit but warn of new hurdles that the plan might face.

2010: FUNDING HURDLES

In May 2010, John Hertel left his position as CEO of the RTCC as funds had run out for him and his staff. Hertel then became the general manager of SMART (Shea, Is this it for post of transit czar?; Big 4 aren't moving to fill Hertel's position. 2010), though the move did not prevent him from continuing to “advocate for the $10 billion, 25-year build-as-needed plan for improved and expanded bus service, light rail and commuter trains” (Shea, Hertel expects to champion transit 2010). Bill Shea, of Crain's Detroit Business, also reported the unease that surrounded Hertel's move from the RTCC when officials did not quickly replace the position; however, Hertel was unsure of whether or not the position needed to be filled after his leave: “We got the two jobs done I was specifically hired to do: To create the plan and get the plan approved, and to create the legislation and get it introduced” (Shea, Is this it for post of transit czar?; Big 4 aren't moving to fill Hertel's position. 2010). SEMCOG believed that the position was key in the proposal for the development of regional transit because a “Hertel figure is needed to advocate for public transit in general, not just on behalf of individual agencies” (Shea, Is this it for post of transit czar?; Big 4 aren't moving to fill Hertel's position. 2010). As Detroit and Oakland began to express concerns over what is included in the bills, Shea suggested that if the bills were to face opposition, “it
[would be] unclear who would pick up the RTA torch again” (Shea, Is this it for post of transit czar?; Big 4 aren't moving to fill Hertel's position. 2010). An opinion piece within the same issue of *Crain's Detroit Business* references Shea's article and reduces the loss of momentum to politics: “How can we expect any business investor to take this region seriously? Once again, political interests are put ahead of public interest in the quest for improved transit for Southeast Michigan” (Opinion 2010).

Overall, articles reference the theme of funding; in January 2010, President Obama was “expected to sign a $1.1 trillion bill [to send] $197 million to Michigan to upgrade regional transit options. The legislation also enables Detroit to clear a key funding hurdle for the Woodward Avenue light rail project” (Fleming 2010). A regional transit authority would “have the authority to tax – but only after a vote of the people” (Take next transit step: A regional authority 2010). As of 2010, it is unclear from where sufficient funding will be drawn, though an article from the *Detroit Free Press* suggested it would likely require a tax (Take next transit step: A regional authority 2010).

Increases in property millage to fund transit have historically been successful with southeast Michigan suburban communities. In July 2010, political support for this method was high – as reported in the *Detroit Free Press*, Oakland, Wayne and Macomb county executives “gathered at 8 Mile and Dequindre, where the three counties meet, to urge the public to approve a 0.59-mill property tax renewal Aug. 3 for SMART, the regional bus system” (Turn SMART support into transit progress 2010). The author remarked that “it's not often that Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson, Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano and Macomb County Commission Chairman Paul Gieleghem get together to support a tax – but it happened last week” (Turn SMART support into transit progress 2010).

Another article from the *Detroit Free Press* stated that a tax was necessary to fund possible projects because after the creation of a regional transit authority, there would be a need for “a local financial mechanism to operate the system – most likely some kind of regional sales tax” (Big Plans for the future Detroit; Detroit schools 2010). By August 2010, private and public investment had brought in nearly $125 million for the development of M1 Rail. In addition, a “federal economic recovery grant contributed $25 million” (Transit politics 2010). Again, most local news sources spoke positively of transit but stressed the need for concrete funding strategies.

In August, author Marie Donigan of the *Detroit Free Press* expressed her disappointment in an announcement which named “Woodward Rail and its connection
to Amtrak at New Center as a regional transit system” (Donigan 2010, 22). Donigan was concerned that previous plans for expansion of the route and the creation of a regional transit authority were not mentioned, though they were when the comprehensive plan was introduced in 2008. Says Donigan: “Both are good projects but they are not the solution to Metro Detroit’s transit problems... [with] the recent announcement that Detroit would go it alone, it seems the comprehensive plan became yesterday’s news” (Donigan 2010). Donigan objects to newer versions of the plan being described as regional without addressing the initial objectives for achieving regional transportation.

2011: REGIONAL DISAGREEMENT

In an article for the Detroit Free Press, December 2011, Detroit Mayor Dave Bing and U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood announced their support for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) because of a lower initial cost, little heavy construction needed, and the potential for ridership (Bing, 2011). Just before the announcement, Bing said that “a light-rail system 3.8 miles up Woodward doesn’t speak to regional transportation, not when 60 percent of the employed of the city work outside the city”, though supporters of the M1-Rail plan did not want to abandon the project, with many interested in continuing to push for its creation (Lynch 2011). Governor Snyder suggested the creation of a regional transit authority to establish routes for BRT (Shepardson 2011).

The Detroit News also mentioned some negative views of transit from those who depend on DDOT or SMART services. In his October article previous to this announcement, Jeff Gerritt included a quote from a Detroit resident: “Regina Gilbert, 55, one of the dozens of riders who called me following my column on Sunday on Detroit bus riders’ frustration and anger. ‘It would be a slap in the face for Detroit to build a new, clean, efficient rail system for people to get from the suburbs to Detroit when people who live in this city can’t get to where they need to go in a timely matter’” (Gerritt, Region must act now in bus crisis 2011).

Matt Helms and Christina Hall spoke of regional disagreements preventing further federal funding: “U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood has delivered $25 million for light rail on Woodward and more than $350 million for high-speed rail from Detroit to Chicago. It’s possible hundreds of millions more could be had from the federal government – if southeast Michigan can learn to get along.” (Hall 2011) This was likely a response to disagreements between SMART and DDOT over a possible merge of services. Previously, SMART had been unwilling to merge services but in 2001, the city of Detroit was hesitant to cooperate unless they saw concrete funding from the suburban bus service (Hall 2011). The issue of funds was significant in discussions of the development of transit in southeast
Michigan; there was a concern over the potential for a proposed system to draw funds from the city bus system. But there was also cause for concern over merging the city and suburban bus systems; in a *Crain's Detroit Business* article, Megan Owens of TRU pointed to DDOT’s “pension obligations and complex labor rules and hiring practices” - all which would be accumulated in the case of a merger (Shea, Regional transit bills linked to creation of a third bus system 2011).

The region was still in talks of creating a regional transit authority. In October 2011, the *Detroit News* reported that Governor Snyder was not going to attempt to merge DDOT and SMART so that a new regional transit authority could be free of legacy costs and “contentious union relationships” (Unify Metro Detroit transit 2011). In 2011, Snyder pushed for an eventually unified system but the *Detroit News* author was skeptical of the region’s ability to “run three separate bus systems, plus a separate authority to run the Woodward Avenue light rail line if and when it's built, and still achieve anything close to efficiency with its transportation dollars” (Unify Metro Detroit transit 2011).

At the end of 2011, *Crain's Detroit Business* reported that talks of BRT had been in the works since early 2011 but the announcement seemed to be abrupt. The author pointed to miscommunication between private backers and the city of Detroit: “I don't think the city fully understood the depth and commitment of the private investors to the work, and I don't think the private investors understood the nuance the city was trying to develop around the relationship with the federal government” (Kaffer 2011).

**2012: THE BILL FOR CREATION OF A REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY**

A bill calling for the creation of a regional transit authority was introduced in 2012. The bill was regarded by most authors from each newspaper to be necessary in securing federal funds for the recently approved transit plan. There were fears, however, that the bill may face opposition from labor boards over disagreements with labor and pension protection, though the Detroit Free Press reported that there has not be any indication of this as of February in 2012 (Forward on transit with authority 2012).

Reporters from the three local newspapers remained optimistic about progress with the plan for the development of regional transit with a noticeably greater amount of articles that leaned positively toward transit. One article from the *Detroit Free Press* stressed the need for the regional transit bill to be passed in the
Senate, again citing the risk of losing $120 million in federal investment to match private investment. According to this article, the need for successful regional transit is great: “with up to 90% of low-income individuals lacking reliable transportation, a new regional transit system will give them the means to find and keep a job or access needed skills training. For many of our neighbors, access to mass transit is a pathway out of poverty and into the middle class – and that's good for all of us” (Peters, Baruah and Michalakis 2012).

Though, another article in May 2012 by Nolan Finley of the Detroit News deems the plan “lousy” (Finley 2012). Says Finley: “I simply don't believe that layering a third bus system onto a region that already has two broken ones – DDOT and SMART – is the way to solve our transit needs. And if Washtenaw County comes in as Gov. Rick Snyder envisions, and the Woodward Avenue M-1 rail line gets built, Metro Detroit would have five autonomous transportation authorities... the obvious answer is to dissolve the existing systems and create one coordinated transit authority to serve the entire region” (Finley 2012). Finley loosely mentioned Washtenaw County’s hesitance to remain in the proposed transit authority. In November, the county's Board of Commissioners “passed a resolution opposing inclusion in the regional transit authority (Livengood 2012). Livengood, of the Detroit News, also suggested that the bill would need outside support in order for it to be passed because of disagreement among local politicians. In December, the bill narrowly passed 57-50 in the House (Gray and Helms 2012), facing much opposition from Democrats who withheld votes on major issues or bills in protest of right-to-work legislation (Gautz 2012). The move was reminiscent of former Governor Bill Engler’s veto of the DARTA bill - another push for the creation of a regional transit authority - over lack of support the building of for charter schools in Detroit. Before the bill's passing, an opinion piece in Crain's Detroit Business criticized the Democrats for their move: “it is incredible that lawmakers who purport to be supportive of adding jobs continue to disregard the pleas of job creators who say reliable transit is critical to their workforces” (Opinion 2012).

JAN 2013 – MAY 2013: THE REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY

In 2013, the news outlets were buzzing with announcements of recent appointments to the newly established regional transit authority. Kathleen Gray, of the Detroit Free Press, spoke of Paul Hillegonds' appointment as chairman and of the process for appointment: “The leaders of Wayne, Oakland, Macomb and Washtenaw counties each get two appointments to the authority. Detroit Mayor Dave Bing gets one, and Snyder gets to appoint the chairman” (Gray, Veteran lawmaker Hillegonds is named chairman 2013). This addressed concerns of
whether or not the entire region would be involved in the process. Gray also noted that the authority would need approval from each county before a millage request could be put to a vote. (Gray, Veteran lawmaker Hillegonds is named chairman 2013).

At the beginning of the year, Ray LaHood, of the Federal Transportation Administration, announced that $25 million in federal funds would be delivered to the private proposal for the development of light-rail on Woodward. First, Detroit leaders had to “agree to set up a regional transit authority that would usher in new cooperation and reform public transportation in southeast Michigan.” (Helms 2013). Efforts to make the proposal's funding strategies more concrete were rewarded by the issuing of these funds. Mary Kramer, of Crain's Detroit Business, referred to the new RTA legislation as the key to establishing “transit as a way to connect neighborhoods, get people to jobs more quickly and attract investment” (Kramer 2013), something she said Cleveland has succeeded in with their own form of bus rapid transit.

LaHood remarked on the level of support from the region's private sector: “no community has ever raised $100 million for a project like this. That is unprecedented... when you think it was done in Detroit, one of the hardest hit, if not the hardest hit economy in the country, it's extraordinary.” (Shepardson, LaHood: M1 light rail on track 2013). This support was evident at a young adult churchgoers march in February. The Detroit Free Press reported that participants were fed up with the current system's unreliability. After the march, the group of young adults met with the Metro Coalition of Congregations to discuss improvements to regional transit, among other issues (Anderson 2013). Later in April, the Detroit News quoted the president of a group that advocates for the disabled. Lisa Franklin, president of Warrior on Wheels, seemed pleased with the region's progress and said that after establishing what is needed for the region, the next step would be looking at “how much it's going to cost to fund [transit development] and figure out where we're going to get the money from” (Fleming, Regional transit mission embarks 2013).

An article in February by Detroit Free Press writer Stephen Henderson suggested that Detroit residents could still use some convincing; regarding federal funds granted to M-1 Rail and funding cuts for DDOT, Henderson said that it “may not be an intentional diversion, but you sure could not blame skeptical Detroiter for believing it might be. At minimum, the practical effect grossly reinforces the notion that leadership in the city, state and even Washington is more concerned with downtown and midtown (with higher concentrations of wealth and ethnic diversity) than with the city's mostly poor, nearly all-black neighborhoods” (Henderson-
son 2013). This warning was in reference to SEMCOG’s suggestion of splitting federal funding in favor of the suburbs in establishing new funding formulas for the Federal Transportation Administration. Henderson argued that this would confirm “Detroiter’s worst fears... [and would make it] tougher down the road to gain their buy-in” (Henderson 2013).

An article from January 2013 reported that “the leaders of Wayne, Oakland, Macomb and Washtenaw counties each get two appointments to the authority” (Gray, Veteran lawmaker Hillegonds is named chairman 2013). In May, however, a state representative who voted against the creation of a regional transit authority, Kurt Heise, suggested “giving local communities the right to withdraw or opt into the transit authority” (Helms, 2013). The Detroit Free Press also reported that the regional transit authority did not include the opt-out provision to, in (executive director of TRU) Megan Owens’ opinion “prevent weaknesses that hurt SMART’s ability to provide service”.

MEDIA INITIATIVES AND KEY PUBLIC OPINION AND INVOLVEMENT EFFORTS (2007-2013)

The following section of the report includes an overview on local transit providers and advocacy groups active in the promotion of transit in the region. Research was conducted on the agency/provider’s approach to communicating and engaging with the public and on the level and type of engagement and coordination of local active groups. Interviews to key local transit personnel and advocacy leaders provided additional information on efforts and issues of communication and involvement with the public.

Summarizing, the following data was considered relevant to the study of media and public opinion/involvement efforts in Detroit Region:

- Current available online transit agency communication tools (agency/association websites, call lines, blogs, e-newsletters, alerts/events news),
- Number of online press releases and other information available online on the agency/association efforts,
- Overall coverage by local media coverage on the agency/group,
- Social media level of engagement (number of followers/subscribers), and
- Key media initiatives of the transit agency and advocacy groups (such as major campaigns or outreach efforts) in the last seven years (2007-2013).
TRANSIT AGENCIES:

SMART and DDOT, the two transit agencies serving Detroit and its region, operate separately though several attempts have been made toward the establishment of regional coordination. The approach to communication with the public and involvement of the public will be discussed separately for each transit provider and group.

SMART

The Suburban Mobility for Regional Transportation, SMART, operates since 1989. The agency serves the public with 11 million rides annually, providing “access to more than 59,000 businesses and 850,000 jobs” (Suburban Mobility for Regional Transportation 2013).

Public Involvement and Educational Efforts:

In the last seven years SMART has engaged with the public through a variety of tools (e.g. public meetings, public outreach activities, online tools, on-board information boards), and has conducted several surveys to understand ridership satisfaction and their interests and needs in regard to the transit service. Outreach activities typically intensified closer to the four-year based millage vote.

Overall the public’s support for additional funding to the agency in the millage vote has been steadily increasing, with the most recent 2011 vote registering 78% of voter support (Suburban Mobility for Regional Transportation 2008). This suggests that the agency, together with local advocacy groups, has been successful in increasing the awareness about transit of at least a slice of population in Southeast Michigan, though it must be noted that the millage vote only applies to the opt-in communities, and therefore does not reflect the totality of the region. As suggested by Joel Batterman, Transportation Programs Coordinator at Michigan Suburbs Alliance, public opinion might not have been the key factor in getting the majority of votes in the millage case (Batterman 2013).

SMART follows the Public Participation plan by SEMCOG, Southeast Michigan’s MPO, though a new plan by SMART is being development as a consequence of the new Title VI regulations. Participation to transit fairs and the organization of public hearings and meetings provide SMART with feedback from the public that can help the agency improve service. During the time frame in question (2007-2013) public hearings have been publicized through print media, online media and on-board information. Key hearings have been held in 2009 and 2011 when
fares increased and services were cut (SMART 2013). A toll free number and the website provide the public with the opportunity to give feedback to the agency on a regular basis.

Structurally SMART’s communication efforts are concentrated at the local community level. As reported by Beth Gibbons, SMART’s marketing budget does not allow for mass marketing (such as radio and TV), which is also less appropriate to the “patchwork nature of the SMART service area”; therefore “targeting communities with access to SMART service is a more effective and efficient use of taxpayer dollars” (SMART 2013). Efforts are also conducted through word of mouth and “relationship building through SMART’s County Ombudsmen working in the field helping organizations and municipalities with their transit programs” (SMART 2013). As noted by Megan Owens, Director of the Transportation Riders United advocacy group, General Manager John C. Hertel has been very productive about public outreach and public support and his work has been instrumental in providing community transit and increasing mobility of the elderly and disabled across neighborhoods (Owens 2013).

Among the strategies used by the SMART to reach out to the public are the following: participation in community events and sponsorships directed to local communities, students, seniors and people with disabilities; collaboration with about 117 organizations, including MOSES, and Transportation Choices, a consortium of alternative transit providers (SMART 2013); collaboration with the Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce to reach out to the Hispanic community as a business partner; and collaboration with the organizations Starfish and LIFT to support women employment (Gibbons 2013).

In order to increase access to public transit and to improve efficiency SMART developed a Community Partnership Program (CPP) in which the agency and the community collaborate to improve quality of services and to fulfill the need of the community. “Local community representatives and SMART planners identify the community’s specific transit needs and design a plan tailored to each community” (SMART 2013). Some of the successful traits of this program are: the strengthen community ties with SMART, through locally recruited drivers, and the ability of communities to “fund the CPP program using their SMART Community Credit allocation” (SMART 2013). The flexibility of the program ensures a good fit within each community.

In June 2008, the agency administered on-board passenger surveys (1871 respondents) to get information on riders’ demographics, behavior and perceptions, and the level of satisfaction with SMART services. Data was compared to findings from the 1998 survey. Results show that the age of the majority of people
using public transit ranged from 25 and 54 years old, educational level of riders rose since 1998 as well as the number of students using public transportation; finally a considerable number of riders were employers individuals (67.0%), relatively low income people with no car availability. Findings from the 2008 survey included high ratings of satisfaction for “personal safety” (80.5% of respondents), “SMART service overall” (79.5%), and “making transfer” (78%) (SMART, On-Board Passenger Survey 2008).

In 2009, through telephone interviews, the agency also gathered data among 1256 “non-riders” residents of Oakland, Macomb and Wayne counties with the scope to address issues and understand barriers that limited the increase in ridership. Results indicated that generally the non-riders have a neutral or positive perception of SMART and consider the agency an important part of the southeast Michigan’s transportation network (95%) in particular to the benefits of people who do not own a personal vehicle (SMART, 2009 Non-rider Research 2010).

In 2011, a study was conducted on fixed routes and selected small bus services to gather data on bus stops, trips, routes and on time performances in order to analyze the current services and to use the information for future planning projects (Consulting 2011). The surveys were administered on the buses involved about 90% of SMART trips (Gibbons 2013).

*Media Strategies:*

SMART launched its new website in 2011 that can be found at: [http://www.smartbus.org/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.smartbus.org/Pages/default.aspx). The home page shows the most visited pages, such as the SMART Trip Planner and the Service Bulletins as well as news, events and service changes. “My SMART Program” constitutes an important connection for riders to receive pertinent information on route, weather, special events, service changes, etc., and counts about 9000 people who are part of the membership (Gibbons 2013); “Live Bus Alert” service, provides real time information on bus arrival, and Calendar of Events inform the public about meetings, Public Hearings and community events (Suburban Mobility for Regional Transportation 2013).

Marketing materials, such as maps, individual schedules, brochures and flyers, are available for the riders at the SMART transit centers and many other public facilities such as libraries and colleges. In 2010-2012, marketing programs have been used to educate the public about SMART services. The agency holds an annual month-long event called Commuter Challenge (CC) (SMART 2013) that awards riders that rode a bus more often, conserving miles and lowering gas emissions. In 2013 the agency will also be promoting a business-to-business chal-
lence working with various larger businesses to increase involvement from the business community and increase awareness about the program (Gibbons 2013).

The agency’s website includes a section dedicated to Public Notice on SMART facts and a News Releases section that covers a period of time from 2007 to 2012, with information on major changes to service and upcoming events (SMART 2012). As seen in figure 1, from 2007 to 2010 an average of only two news releases per year have been published, while a peak verifies in 2011 with a total of thirteen news releases. A total of eight news releases published in 2008 shows again a decreasing trend in news coverage (data retrieved on January 17, 2013).

VI. News Releases published on SMART website (2007-2012)

What emerged from our study and was confirmed in our interview with SMART personnel on February 19th, 2013 (SMART 2013) is that the online presence or digital image of the agency does not give a complete and accurate idea of the variability of engagement and information strategies conducted by the agency. Additionally, only two Annual Reports, from 2008 and 2009, are available online. Though regular SMART e-newsletters target to different user groups, including riders, employees, and CPP’s, those unfamiliar with the system do not have a good opportunity to better understand SMART’s level of engagement in the community. It can be inferred that reporters and other interested parties do not have sufficient tools to easily acquire and disperse data about outreach and educational efforts by the agency. The lack of visibility of efforts can also damage the image of agency in the eyes of the general public in Southeast Michigan, which includes a large number of non-users.

Social Media constitutes a useful way to connect to the agency with comments and suggestions. SMART utilizes Facebook, with its 3,637 subscribers since July 2, 2012, (Facebook 2013) and Banner advertising is used by the agency to edu-
cate the public and to introduce ride services. The agency is also working on an application for smart phones with texting capability and map tracking (Gibbons 2013). Another Social Media utilized by SMART agency is YouTube with 5 subscribers since March 3, 2010 and 4 videos, but a total of 10,311 video views (YouTube 2013) (data retrieved on January 17, 2013). SMART personnel reports using positive and negative comments from the public as input to resolve issues emerged from the online dialogue (Gibbons 2013).

Local media coverage:

According to Beth Gibbons, Manager of Marketing and Communication at SMART, the agency maintains a good relationship with most of the key local reporters covering transit issues in the region, such as Tom Greenwood (The Detroit News) and Matt Helms (Detroit Free Press). Though she admits SMART does not always get positive publicity from media, the agency strives to collaborate with local city newspapers to promote services for the communities (Gibbons 2013).

In the perspective of SMART personnel, print media more often captures negative events (such as cuts, or other problematic issues) than positive initiatives such as outreach work or new improvements. Several newspaper articles retrieved during our study, from the Detroit Free Press and The Detroit News, are positive or at least neutral towards the agency. As an example, one Detroit Free Press article from 2010, hints to the positive role of SMART in the region, as it can increase regional support for transit improvement at large: “Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson, Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano and Macomb County Commission Chairman Paul Gieleghem gathered at 8 Mile and Dequindre, where the three counties meet, to urge the public to approve a 0.59-mill property tax renewal Aug. 3 for SMART, the regional bus system (Turn SMART support into transit progress 2010).

Other articles report on riders’ “frustration and anger” for some of the decisions made by the agency, such as the article published on Detroit Free Press in October 2011 after the announcement of a 22% of cuts in suburban services: “Many Detroiter already feel like Regina Gilbert, 55, one of the dozens of riders who called me following my column Sunday on Detroit bus riders’ frustration and anger” (Gerritt 2011).

The news of service’s cuts is also reported in another article from The Detroit News on October 2011, which announces that the public will be invited to three hearings to give feedback on proposed changes. As Gibbons said, SMART was waiting for public input before agreeing of any changes on routes and trips
(Feighan 2011). “More than 110 people packed the first of three public hearings on proposed route cuts at SMART. They warned that the cuts would hurt the region’s most vulnerable residents” (Helms, SMART bus cuts hearing packed 2011).

Not many articles in online newspapers, such as Metro Times and Huffington Post, cover SMART and its public involvement in the recent years, though a few articles have been found at MLive website. Those articles seem overall neutral towards the agency’s public opinion and involvement efforts. Articles report on public hearings held in 2009 when fare increased to prevent cuts to services. A millage proposal for 23 communities was authorized, but people living outside those communities served by the SMART system opposed to the proposal (Foley, SMART bus riders will see fare increases starting today 2009). In October 2011 the agency planned to hold public hearings before the service’s cuts that would happen in December. Media captured the momentum to relate SMART’s hearings to larger pressing dilemmas about the regional scale of transit: “Free Press columnist Jeff Gerritt says the pending cuts should serve as a call to action prompting local leaders to finally get serious about forming a regional transportation authority” (Oosting, Metro Detroit public transportation takes a hit as SMART plans major service reductions, layoffs 2011).

**DDOT**

The Detroit Department of Transportation, DDOT, is currently the largest transit agency in the State of Michigan and provides public transit since the 1920s.

*Public Involvement and Educational Efforts:*

Our interview with DDOT personnel on May 2013 suggested that the agency is involved in a few outreach efforts. DDOT personnel emphasized that despite of the lack of any marketing budget the agency believes it is essential to communicate with the public, and to interact one on one with riders and non-riders, in particular in contexts different from hearings, which by nature instead focus on urgent and unsolved problematic issues, and most often determine confrontational communication. Rovella Philips, Manager II, and SuVon Treece, Marketing Manager, from the customer Relations and Communication Division, indicated that the following outreach programs are considered key in the agency’s public opinion strategy: participation to transportation fairs and health fairs, interactions with churches, and school programs, and displays at various events not necessarily related to transit (Philips 2013).
Basic communication tools employed by DDOT include: open meetings, web and E-blast based rider alerts, a call line, email-based press releases, and surveys. Monthly meetings are held every Thursday of the month to better understand the public’s concerns. Attendance at these meetings is extremely variable depending on the urgency of the current issues (Philips 2013). When possible the agency strives to take in consideration the feedback from the public in regard to scheduling and routes (Detroit Department of Transportation 2013).

Rider alerts are online and on-board, but can also be found in libraries, schools, and other facilities that also provide the public with the DDOT schedule. Different languages are addressed by the 9331300 call line. News releases are not available online, but are sent to an email list.

In addition, the agency employs other tools to monitor ridership and rider satisfaction and increase efficiency of the transit service. “Bus checkers” ride on buses for a month and look at real numbers of riders using the bus, and monthly surveys to DDOT customers are also administered. Every month an average of 550/600 forms are completed by riders. These are brief ten question surveys, which cover general perception/satisfaction issues. For example typical question include: Would you recommend DDOT to a friend? Was the bus clean? Have you called customer service in the last 3 months? Where your concerns addressed? (Philips 2013)

In the past DDOT could dispose of bigger marketing funds, and this allowed for radio and TV marketing, and other key marketing strategies also in connection to sports events in Detroit (Philips, 2013). The agency has now very limited funds for marketing and focuses on outreach, funded through grants, participating to a number of local outreach/educational events. The Commuter Challenge and Back to School campaign, which is a non-transit related event, are other ways the agency engages with the public. Another campaign the agency is currently working on is the “Square One” image building campaign, used to educate the agency’s employers in order to help change the image of DDOT (Philips 2013). This initiative includes targeted slide presentation at bus garages for DDOT drivers and staff to educate employees about DDOT’s work and vision at a broader scale, and complements other commitment boosting initiatives, such as driver and employee of the month. The assumption behind this “internal public opinion campaign” is that perceptions will spill out to the general public from within the agency.

Media Strategies:

DDOT website is available through Michigan Department of Transportation or the
city of Detroit’s official website at the following address: [http://www.detroitmi.gov/Departments/DetroitDepartmentofTransportation/tabid/80/default.aspx](http://www.detroitmi.gov/Departments/DetroitDepartmentofTransportation/tabid/80/default.aspx). No Press Releases or annual reports are available online page. As DDOT is a city department, information about DDOT's revenues and expenses is available on the City's web site as part of the City's overall budget. Information on public transportation services and events can be found under the general city of Detroit’s official website and accessed by the home page or can be received via email. DDOT has a mailing list, the “DDOT E-Blast Mailing List” and provides the public with an online for feedback to the agency (DDOT E-Blast Mailing List 2013). The agency offers a “TextMyBus” service that alerts of where your bus is. The website provides notification about public hearings (Detroit Department of Transportation 2013).

The only social media the agency utilizes is Twitter with only 143 followers starting from March 2, 2012, which is the date of its subscription to the website (Twitter 2013) (data retrieved on January 18, 2013).

**Relationship with media:**

There are two notable aspects in regard to the agency’s relationship with local print media: the “municipal structure” of interfacing with media; and the historical cautious approach to communicating with the media. Decision-making in a municipal transit agency must go through numerous interconnected departments, and this is also true for the Customer Relations and Communication Division. Requests need to be approved by different levels including the Mayor’s office and approvals circulate back before any action can be taken in regard to a media issue, a request for information or for an interview.

According to Rovella Philips, there is a disconnect between perceptions of riders, which DDOT can monitor through surveys and meetings, and the stereotyped image of the agency in the eyes of region. Furthermore, media coverage places no relevance on the “regional character” of riders and fails to defeat typical suburban/urban stereotypes applied to public transit and ridership in the region. Though DDOT is a municipal service serving the city of Detroit, riders commute and transfer to SMART. “Riders are already regional” says Rovella Phillips.

Print media have not always been portraying a positive image of transit and DDOT, also because articles tend to react to pressing and controversial issues, rather than reporting on improvements and changes. For example the increase in ridership of 300,000 rides from February 2013 to March 2013 (from 2.2 million rides to 2.5 million rides) does not make the headline, as well as the high peak in ridership of October 2013 (3.1 million rides), though on the contrary media
seemed quite receptive about other topics; for example cuts and rerouting in 2012 inspired several news articles. Due to the lack of funds for marketing, news and information on improvements or positive changes in the service are solely posted on the website (Philips 2013).

Historically, DDOT’s unwritten policy about communicating with media has been very conservative, with little openness to media “Years back everyone was instructed to stay away from media” (Philips 2013), though in recent times the city “has opened up more to the media” (Philips 2013), and the Mayor has intensified press conferences. The change in communication approach to media is significant, though the image of the agency is slow to change and the collaboration with media can be further improved (Philips 2013).

Newspapers, such as Detroit News, Detroit Free Press and Crain’s Detroit Business, have been neutral, and sometimes positive towards DDOT initiatives. In 2007, an article on Detroit News informed that the agency was holding four open houses to gather input from the public in order to design the best plan for transit in Detroit (Henion 2007). Another article from 2007 reported that DDOT was completing a study that allowed the public to participate in the planning process for five possible corridors for rapid transit in Detroit (Benedetti 2007). In 2011, DDOT and SMART adopted “a method for providing audio descriptions of bus routes, which helps visually impaired people use public transit” (The rest of the 50 Companies to Watch 2011). During time of deep cuts, the agency was also holding public hearings to try to stabilize the system and gather proposals from the riders (Helms, DDOT’s new CEO aims to stabilize service for city Detroit Free Press 2012). (See Appendix A for more details)

Other articles have voiced a more critical view on the agency’s public efforts. As an example, an article in the Detroit News of May 10, 2012 reported complaints against DDOT in regard to violation of federal regulations for public input: “Detroit Department of Transportation officials ... appeared before the council Wednesday. General Manager Ronald Freeland said service is improving, despite recent route cutbacks… Earlier, The North End Woodward Community Coalition said it filed a civil rights complaint and called for a restoration of bus cuts that were implemented earlier this year. The group, in a statement, says it filed the Title VI civil rights complaint based on DDOT's violation of federal regulations for public input” (Nichols 2012). (See Appendix A for more details)

Online newspapers, such as Metro Times, MLive and Huffington Post, reported on several outreach efforts conducted by DDOT between 2009 and 2012, prevalently with a neutral attitude towards the agency changes in services, organization of public hearings and service cuts. Of the three online magazines, Huffing-
tonpost appeared to be more critical towards the agency, as seen in the articles included in Appendix B. As an example an article on the February 27, 2012 Huffington Post issue reported that: “DDOT's on-time performance is 65 percent, compared to the industry standard of 85 percent. Buses miss service on 33 percent of their stops every day…” (Sands, DDOT Service Cuts, Department Changes Addressed At City Council Meeting 2012); and another article included the following criticism: “Poor bus service is putting Detroit's financial recovery at risk, according to a report issued Tuesday by transportation advocacy group Transit Riders United. The group gave the Detroit Department of Transportation a D- grade for timeliness in its second "report card" and claimed Mayor Dave Bing's administration has failed to keep promises to improve bus service…” (Sands, Detroit Bus Report Card From Transportation Riders United: DDOT Service Remains Unacceptable 2012).

Overall online magazines provide the public with very detailed information on the public hearings held by the agency and also spurred people to intervene and participate: “We can do things to help Bing, who is facing re-election, change his mind. Start with calling his office at 313-224-3400. Also, try to get to one of the public hearings being held at four locations around town next week. You can find details about when and where they are at TRU's website at detroittransit.org or call DDOT at 313-933-1300. This is a bus we all need to jump on” (Guyette, Bing's wrong bus stop 2009).

DDOT seems to be currently more engaged in internal restructuring and internal opinion efforts and is not focusing on reshaping its public image yet. Rebranding efforts (coupled with other strategic management improvements), and increased online and social media engagement would greatly enhance the way the agency communicates to the public.

**DTC**

The Detroit Transportation Corporation’s agency, DTC, was established in 1983 to complete and operate the Detroit People Mover, DPM, an elevated and automated light rail system that serves downtown business district since 1987. Though this system is confined to the downtown area of Detroit it has potential as an additional connector of a larger regional intermodal system. Therefore brief research was also conducted on this transit provider.

**Public Involvement and Educational Efforts:**

The main communication/educational/marketing tool historically and also current-
ly employed by DTC is a showcase of art called “Art in the station” in all its thirteen stations to improve the appearance of the system and attract the attention of the public. This program won several awards for outstanding public art and reveals the agency effort to attract more riders and generate interest in the community.

**Media Strategies:**

Information about the agency can be found visiting the MDOT website (MDOT 2013), the City of Detroit official website (City of Detroit 2013), and the Detroit People Mover website (Detroit People Mover 2013). The DPM website is well geared toward the surrounding community with information ranging from a schedule of upcoming downtown events to public hearing notices. The website has an informative and very visual interactive station guide, but Press Release and Annual Reports are not available online. A survey named “Your Opinion of Our Service Matters!” (The Detroit People Mover 2013) can be filled out (but it is currently not available - January 22, 2013), as well as a complaint form for discrimination acts (The Detroit People Mover 2013).

DPM engages social media tools such as Facebook with 843 since July 29, 2009 (Facebook 2013) and Twitter with 293 followers since April 9, 2009 (Twitter 2013) (data retrieved on January 22, 2013).

**ADVOCACY GROUPS AND OTHER TRANSIT ENTITIES**

There are numerous advocacy groups active in the Detroit region directly or indirectly focusing transit. Among the most important groups in terms of public involvement are the following: Transportation Riders United (TRU), Metropolitan Organizing Strategy Enabling Strength (MOSES), Trans4m Coalition (TRANS4M), Michigan Suburbs Alliance, and Downtown Detroit Partnership. Advocacy groups especially support people with disabilities and low-income residents. The hope of these organizations is that the existing Detroit’s transit agencies will be more involved in public participation and community engagement in the future (Helms 2013).

**TRU**

Transportation Riders United, TRU, is a transit advocate organization working to improve public transit in Detroit and to involve people in transportation decisions since 1999 (Transportation Riders United 2013).
Public Involvement and Educational Efforts:

TRU is constantly involved in advocacy and education with the scope to improve the understanding of transit issues and the awareness of benefits of public transit, to engage the public in important decisions, and to ensure public's interest to support and improve services. The agency grades DDOT’s services twice a year and produces reports with updates to inform the public about current states of transit. This group tackles day-to-day issues as well as critical moments in transit decision-making from the perspective of the battleground. For example in 2011, TRU “helped mobilize several hundred people to SMART’s public hearings who spoke out against the cuts” (TRU 2011).

The organization engaged in a variety of strategies to engage the public. In 2012 it has been involved in the creation of a series of videos of real-life stories of Detroit bus riders called “Faces of Transit” to affectively give voice to issues caused by the condition of Detroit metro transit in these recent years (Faces of Transit: DDOT Riders Impacted by Poor Service 2012). TRU also routinely organizes tables and festivals, is involved in presentations of projects and transit issues to different groups (e.g. Peace and Justice committee, universities, etc.), and reaches out transit agencies and decision makers through its Email newsletter (Owens 2013).

According to TRU Strategic Plan 2012-2015, key efforts of the organization include: connecting technical and political audience to the general public by presenting technical and legal information in a simple language; issuing campaigns and public hearings; collaborating with organizations and groups that support public transit initiatives. In recent years (2007-2013) TRU has also ensured public participation in planning for Woodward Light Rail project and collaborated in shaping the vision for the Comprehensive Regional Transit Service Plan approved by RTTC in 2008 (Transportation Riders United 2012-2015).

Media Strategies:

TRU’s goal is to use media, political pressure and grassroots organizations to claim transit system improvement, expand the communication network, and enable activism (Transportation Riders United 2012-2015, 11).

Currently, TRU provides the public with a website at http://www.detroittransit.org/, which includes a Transit News section starting in July 2006 which is a press review including articles from the major Detroit’s newspapers and magazines online such as Detroit Free Press, The Detroit News, Crain’s Detroit Business, MLive, Huffington Post, annarbor.com, and others (Transit News 2012). Figure 2 portrays the number of articles reported per year. Upcoming events and meet-
ings appear on the home page, a variety of articles are posted in blogs (Archived Blog 2013) and an e-newsletter, the Detroit Transit Update E-Newsletter, every week or two, sends out updates of the top transit events, facts, opportunities, and news (Detroit Transit Update E-Newsletter Archives 2011).

VII. Transit News from the main newspapers and online magazines published on TRU website

TRU did not utilize social media until 2013. In summer 2012 the agency planned to hire an internet expert in order to improve the website and social media to better educate people on public transit and to better connect the public to transit decisions and improvements (Transportation Riders United Summer 2012). Since March 2013, TRU joined Facebook (Facebook 2013); currently the website counts 926 subscribers (data retrieved on May 23, 2013). Thanks to the support from various organizations, TRU’s “email newsletter list and Facebook page have grown to nearly 4,000 people getting updated weekly” (TRU 2012).

Relationship with media:

According to Bill Shea, reporter of Crain’s Detroit Business newspaper, TRU is considered to be one of the most established and strong organizations in the region, with a consistent record of public input seeking and outreach organizing in the last seven years. In particular, the Executive Director Megan Owens is considered to be very knowledgeable in terms of grassroots organizing, committed to her job, able to establish relationships, and capable of making information available at the neighborhood level or the “man-on-the-street level” (Shea 2013).

Matt Helms, reporter at Detroit Free Press newspaper, also referenced TRU as a strong organization working at different scales in order to give visibility to big transit projects as well as to everyday troubles that riders may face, and considers it one of the most active advocacy group in developing public and politic sup-
Several articles in print media give room to TRU's initiatives. For example in 2007 an article in the Detroit Free Press informed about a meeting sponsored by TRU “held to discuss the best corridor for implementing rapid-transit lines” (Bello 2007).

Newspapers online (Metro Times and Huffington Post) are usually neutral or positive towards TRU advocacy group. Megan Owens and other TRU members, are depicted in articles as very active and involved in the major discussions on transit decisions in relation to fights against transit cuts and for the improvement of the quality of public transportation (Sands, Transportation Riders United Protest DDOT Bus Cuts During Valentine's Day Visit To City Hall 2012) (Svoboda, Might Rail? Hopes are high for the Woodward Corridor - But obstacles remain 2011). TRU is also listed as one of the non-profit organizations and coalitions of Detroit that focus on environmental justice-related work: “Advocating for better public transit and increased access to the existing systems, TRU also seeks more mass transit options for the region. Mass transit improves urban neighborhoods, ensures transportation equity and improves quality of life, TRU believes." (Svoboda, Going Local 2011).

**MOSES**

The Metropolitan Organizing Strategy Enabling Strength, MOSES, is a non-profit organization since 1997 and group of congregations of faith to advocate for social justice. The organization acts on numerous issues that have an impact on the communities including the lack of adequate public transportation. The goal of the agency is to build relationship between people. Though this process might start with a group that gravitates around similar values and priorities, the engagement process ultimately targets a subsequent step in the relationship-building strategy, which involves people or groups that might not necessarily share the same opinions but that increase their knowledge on the transit issue and their commitment level through dialogue.

MOSES connects to congregational institutions, unions, and educational institutions and becomes a support incubator for individual-initiated project. A key component of MOSES’ work is training, as groups and communities are spurred to speak for themselves rather than using MOSES as their spokesperson.

*Public Involvement and Educational Efforts:*
MOSES employs a variety of communication strategies that impact public opinion. An interview with key personnel from the agency, including Ponsella Hardaway and Valerie Przywara, provided an overview of current engagement strategies with riders or the general public, including public meetings/forums between community and key leaders; one on one conversations open to the public; Training sessions/leadership assembly monthly; task force meetings; presentations/road shows at churches leading up to a public meetings (MOSES 2013). Information on recent outreach efforts is available at the MOSES website (http://www.mosesmi.org), and includes the following: Public hearings (2010) for the choice of a preferred alternative for the environmental impact statement; the informative program on mass transit (October 24, 2009) in which 60 people attended; public meetings of as many as 5,000 people (on different issues); work towards the formation of the regional transit authority, DARTA; and a campaign to improve accessibility of public busses (Metropolitan Organizing Strategy Enabling Strength 2013).

Most recently MOSES has actively worked towards the RTA legislation approval. After months of meetings with State Senator John Pappageorge, a new strategy by MOSES, including the dialogue with group of veterans, allowed for increased visibility of perceptions and priorities by the same constituency of the Senator. His new endorsement of the bill became an important signal for many others. Similarly MOSES was able to establish a good communication with Dennis Schornack, Senior Adviser for Strategy, Governor of Michigan at State of Michigan, who made important announcements at a meeting, organized MOSES in October 2012. The engagement with regional leaders contributed to the visibility of MOSES work and the values it stands for, as well as to the organization’s respectability and importance in the region.

In October 17, 2012, MOSES, together with a group of allies, met Dennis Muchmore (Chief of Staff for Governor Rick Snyder), Bill Rustem (Director of Strategy) and Dennis Schornack (Senior Policy Advisor to the Governor on Transportation) to discuss about different topics concerning with social justice and the formation of a Regional Transit Authority. The discussion was considered successful from part of the leaders participating to the meeting and another one was scheduled for the following month (Moses Action Update: Governor Snyder’s Chief of Staff Dennis Muchmore 2012). Moses also attended, together with TRU and Michigan Suburbs Alliance, the meeting held on Oct. 23, 2012 “presented by the Harriet Tubman Center for Organization and the Metro Coalition of Congregations”, where members explained the various problems that affect all of southeast Michigan, including the lack of public transit and the importance of the establishment of a Regional Transit Authority (Bianchi 2012).
In recent years MOSES also engaged in small actions regarding transit such as the following: provided benches at the bus stops or terminals, pushed for DDOT service improvement (2008-2009), pushed organizations to campaigns, and catch actions to create support. Before 2007, the agency had a key role in engaging in individual meetings with people from the administration or legislators against the formation of a public transit authority. These groups were the most diverse group people of faith, age, race, and political affiliation (MOSES 2013).

In summer 2010 MOSES was instrumental in mobilizing the public for the millage vote through on-the-road activism (on the busses, at the bus stops), and participation to town hall meetings, public meetings and forums. In that occasion MOSES' action was showcased by media and therefore increased visibility of the issue. Similarly MOSES engaged in “catchy actions” to capture the media and the public's attention. For instance in occasion of SMART cut of services to downtown, MOSES organized the “red cross” campaign, with printed red crosses on SMART busses to attract attention to the issue. In other instances, MOSES organized small demonstrations (in Lansing and Washington D.C.) to showcase action in regard to specific transit issues.

MOSES works with cities and suburbs. The organization engages with local issues within the city of Detroit (communicating with DDOT and SMART), but has also the capability to speak to the larger regional context (as an example MOSES conducted an effort to increase the visibility of pro-transit people living in Livonia, through an collective letter to the Livonia observer by twenty congregations in Livonia). Differently from highly marginalized groups, which we could refer to as “extreme activist”, MOSES can reach to diverse social and geographical targets.

MOSES collaborated with several organizations and advocacy groups such as Trans4m, Suburban Alliance, TRU, and Sierra Club. Its role has also been to remind the policy works groups of the importance of grass root engagement and education of the people and the leaders to help establish “self-advocacy” versus advocacy, education and intentional conversation versus a closed doors approach to decision making (MOSES 2013), in other words transparency, accountability and participation versus marginalization and polarization of opinions regarding transit.

**Media Strategies:**

Methods used to reach out the public include online newsletters and articles. MOSES has its own website at [http://www.mosesmi.org](http://www.mosesmi.org), which currently displays a press review section called the “N the news” with articles from different online newspapers on various social justice topics, including transportation. The web
site also includes press releases with two articles; Newsletter Archives with 4 articles; Action Alert Archives with 4 news releases. (Metropolitan Organizing Strategy Enabling Strengh 2013).

The agency engages in social media, and has a Facebook page, though not open but only visible to followers (Facebook 2013). MOSES joined Twitter in October 1, 2011, with 160 followers (Twitter 2011), and has a dedicated YouTube page since 2010, with 11 Videos and 721 video views (YouTube 2010) (data retrieved on February 27, 2013).

The agency uses drama and stories to grasp the ways in which transit impacts people life (MOSES 2013). The use of films and videos is important to MOSES’ messaging and awareness raising efforts. This multimedia approach to communication reflects’ the organization’s conviction that messaging and media strategies must differ group by group. Multiple messaging and multiple media tools are essential for real engagement with a diverse region. As states by Valerie Przywara, developing “a new narrative about us as a region and the city and the region” (MOSES 2013) is essential to effectively reach out to the people for the future RTA vote.

Relationship with media:

MOSES maintains a good relationship with print media, and interacts with various reporters, including Matt Helms, from the Detroit Free Press, as well as radio show hosts, and filmmakers for the making of film documentaries on community engagement (MOSES 2013).

Online newspaper coverage (e.g.MLive and MetroTimes) confirms MOSES’ level of engagement, together with other local advocacy groups and non-profit organizations, such as Transportation Riders United, Michigan Suburbs Alliance, and Sierra Club, and participation to public pro-transit events. Its commitment to better transit has been captured and made more visible by media. For example a 2012 Metro Times article reports: “MOSES is involved in the issue of transportation because its member congregations have said loud and clear that it's an issue that has a huge impact on the people they serve” (Guyette, On the bus 2012).

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

There are several other advocacy groups and coalitions that have been working to revitalize the Southeast Michigan and its public transit system between 2007 and 2013. These comprehend:
• Transportation for Michigan or Trans4M, which includes “nonprofits, businesses, policy makers, environmental groups, planners, academic institutions and others” (Transportation for Michigan 2013);

• Michigan Suburbs Alliance, a nonprofit organizations founded in 2002 that collaborates with cities and partners to organize initiatives on different issues to “serve and advocate” for Detroit (Michigan Suburbs Alliance 2013); and

• Downtown Detroit Partnership (DDP), which “is a private/public partnership of corporate and civic leaders that supports, advocates and develops programs and initiatives designed to create a clean, safe, beautiful, inviting, vibrant and economically viable Downtown Detroit community” (Downtown Detroit Partnership 2013).

Public Involvement and Educational Efforts:

Since 2009, Trans4m engaged Michigan residents in conversations and organized events and forum meetings in order to improve and promote public transit (Transportation for Michigan 2013). The group organized 17 community forums in 2012 (Wassus 2012) and hosted “a video contest for Michigan residents from December 10, 2012 to February 24, 2013” (Transportation for Michigan 2013).

Michigan Suburbs Alliance organizes events and Annual Meetings; in 2009, the organizations launched a program called the Millennial Mayors Congress (MMC) in order to engage young people in planning on regional issues (Thompson 2013). The MMC administered a survey to more than 550 residents of Macomb, Oakland, Wayne and Washtenaw counties between 18 and 35 years old. The results showed that transit was the main concern among the people interviewed and 76 percent of Millennials in the tri-county area expressed dissatisfaction with public transportation services (Michigan Suburbs Alliance n.d.).

The Downtown Detroit Partnership supports plans for a light rail system on Woodward Avenue and conducts community engagement efforts and educational efforts in relation to Transit Oriented Development. DDP partnered with the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation (DEGC) and Midtown Detroit, Inc. and established a comprehensive Planning Group. “DDP has committed significant resources along with its Downtown stakeholders to conduct interviews and workshops to provide optimal participation in authorship of the vision, principles, and action plans that will foster Downtown investment, job development, and transit ridership” (Downtown Detroit Partnership 2012).
Media Strategies:

All of the organizations mentioned above have their own Websites, including: Transit News (the articles are usually not only on transit issues), Press releases, Blogs, Newsletter, and Publications. Downtown Detroit Partnership also has an Announcement page, Quarterly Stakeholder Updates, and Events and annual meetings.

The organizations engage in social media. All of them have a Facebook page. Trans4m joined the website on February 21, 2013 and counts 414 subscribers (Facebook 2013); Michigan Suburbs Alliance joined Facebook on January 2, 2013 and counts 426 subscribers (Facebook 2013); finally Downtown Detroit Partnership joined the social media on February 28, 2013 and has 7849 subscribers (Facebook 2013). Trans4m also has a Twitter page with 403 followers joined on August 5, 2011 (Twitter 2013) (data retrieved on March 13, 2013).

CURRENT PUBLIC OPINION PARTICIPATION EFFORTS IN THE DETROIT REGION

Currently (i.e. May 2013), several undergoing initiatives and studies are being conducted in the region in order to improve the transit system and to involve the public in planning decisions.

The Woodward Avenue Rapid Transit Alternatives Analysis (AA), which started in July 2012 and will end in December 2013, is sponsored by SEMCOG and conducted in collaboration with Woodward Avenue Action Association (WA3). The study area is a 27-mile corridor along Woodward Avenue and includes 11 municipalities, from downtown Detroit to Pontiac. SEMCOG and Woodward Avenue Rapid Transit AA Steering Committee are holding “an extensive public outreach campaign designed to educate and enlist the involvement of area residents, businesses, and institutions in the process” (Woodward Avenue Rapid Transit 2013). Residents from the involved municipalities can participate in the process of evaluating alternatives for public transit along the corridor attending five workshops that are being held in different locations from Downtown Detroit to Pontiac. It is possible to find more information about this initiative and ways to be involved in the Woodward Avenue Rapid Transit study by visiting their website, http://www.woodwardanalysis.com, for updates and articles and by joining the emailing list to receive information and newsletters (SEMCOG 2013).

Transportation Riders United (TRU) is collaborating with a team of researchers at University of Detroit Mercy to provide the public with a survey that investigates people’s opinions and priorities and willingness to pay towards the improvement
of the transit system. The survey connects to the Regional Transit Plan that will be developed by the RTA: the goal of the public opinion survey is to reach out to people from the four-county region between April and September 2013 and to get the necessary input from the public to effectively reflect people needs in the new plan. TRU will also conduct an outreach campaign in the summer of 2013. Outreach strategies include the engagement of public in festivals and community meetings in order to inform, gather feedback, to encourage people to take action, and to grow new supporters of public transit (TRU 2013).

The Detroit Works Project led by Tony Griffin, Director of Technical Planning Team Urban Planning and Design for the American City, recently published its strategic plan for Detroit called “Detroit Future City”, which involved the public with its 30,000 conversations. The so-called “strategic framework” describes how the city could look like in the next 10 or 30 years. It includes transit options and recommendations in order to provide the city with more job opportunities, especially for people that do not own a car. According to the plan, the transit service would help the city to improve its economy and help in increasing investment and development as well as land value (Woods 2013). During the over one-year study for Detroit Works, a team of architects from the Detroit Collaborative Design Center at University of Detroit Mercy, led by Dan Pitera, conducted an extensive outreach program engaging over 163,000 times Detroit residents for input on the plan.

In May 2013 TRU, University of Detroit Mercy, and Marie Donigan, previously Chair Representative of the house standing committee on Transportation in Michigan State Senate/House of Representatives, organized the Metro Detroit Transit Workshop (MDTW), in collaboration with TRU and University of Detroit Mercy, with the scope of bringing together professionals and activists from different American cities to learn about processes that lead to the creation of an effective transit system. The goal of the workshop was “to educate, energize and empower a broad coalition of people to help planners build the system we need and will pay for” (University of Detroit Mercy 2013). Several engagement and messaging strategies emerged from the workshop and will be discussed in the Comparisons and Recommendations Report.

INTERVIEWS: THE PERSPECTIVE OF MEDIA

As part of our study, interviews to key local transit reporters were conducted. This allowed us to consider the view of media on transit and the level of understanding, perspective, and insight media personnel bring to the table of regional
public opinion and involvement efforts.

Both Matt Helms (Detroit Free Press) and Bill Shea (Crain's Detroit Business) argued during our interviews (respectively, January 23, 2013 and February 11, 2013) that Media is a key player in the regional discourse, and that reporters have a great responsibility in portraying you the public important themes/topics, and in shaping public opinion. Journalists interview those that are willing to talk and those that make themselves more visible “media is driven by the info derived from the private groups” (Shea 2013). Bill Shea argued that journalists need to be skeptic about sources, and are usually able to understand who is a trustworthy source of information and who is not.

From the interviews with Matt Helms and Bill Shea (respectively, January 23, 2013 and February 11, 2013), it became evident that there is a sophisticated and elusive web of news dispersion on which reporters rely. Matt Helms stated that much of his research also focuses on reading blogs and Facebook/social media entries, in which the public disperses links to more in depth articles or provides information that might not have been available otherwise. Though both reporters agree that much of the social media/blog conversation is polarized and exaggerated social media influence what print will be writing and covering.

Press review conducted on transit related articles on three major newspapers (Crain’s, DFP, DN) for years between 1994 and 2013 suggest that political issues are central is transit issues and that this centrality is well captured in the print media. Transit articles written between 2007 and 2013 display an increased coverage of political issues connected to transit. Furthermore, both Rhonda Anderson (Sierra Club) and Joel Batterman (Michigan Suburb Alliance) mentioned, during our interviews, the disconnect between experts and the people/public and the lack of awareness and understanding of the political mechanism behind transit issues and transit planning. The real accountability structure is invisible to the public in its complexity as well as the interrelations between decisions by different political subject in the various regional geographic areas (or counties). External decision, i.e. decisions taken in other municipalities or counties or by other groups, influence internal decisions and outcomes and complicate the traceability of accountability levels, and impact internal priorities and plans. The public fails to understand this complexity. The public also fails to understand/know about the political levels and steps necessary to make a vote possible.

Press review (2007-2013) allowed us to detect the overall negative image of transit providers that print media portrays in current times. Little emphasis is placed on outreach or public involvement efforts. The focus was mostly on the failures or pressing issued faced by transit agencies/providers or their user
groups, and on dilemmas of future scenarios. At the same time, press review indicated that “transit development” or “transit” at large was portrayed as an important and necessary element for the region, revealing a disconnect between the positive image of “abstract concept of transit” and the negative image of concrete local transit entities/systems. Interestingly a pilot public opinion survey conducted by the University of Detroit Mercy in 2013 (307 responses) revealed a similar disconnect. While the majority of people did not think transit was important for them or their families, the majority of the people agreed that transit development is important for the region.

In an interview with Bill Shea the lack of coordination between advocacy groups was brought up, together with the general low visibility of such groups and their leaders (with exception of TRU). In an interview with Joel Batterman (3-22-13) a different picture emerged. MEC, Trans4M, and Michigan Suburban Alliance seem well connected and interacted with other citizens groups (Moses, Sierra Club, TRU, Metro Coalition Congregations, and Trans4M) during their most recent campaign. The issue seems more related to the visibility of these groups and the visibility of their actual coordination than to the actual level of coordination, which instead seems very appropriate.

One pressing issue in terms of public opinion on transit deals with the capability of the new transit plans, in the way they are crafted but also in the way they are portrayed to the public, to speak to diverse stakeholder groups. Several pressing regional issues interfere with how the plan will be received by different groups across divides, such as the divide between Detroit and its inner suburban ring and the wider region, or the political divide, or the social/racial divide. Joel Batterman questioned the ability of current presentations of the plan to attract diverse stakeholders (as such presentation was shaped to ensure republican support).

Overall, several articles reviewed portray a divisive regional condition. An article from the Detroit Free Press by Mare Donigan in August 2010 (Donigan, 2010) pointed out the potentially negative consequence of the development in the region of two competing transit projects (the M1/light rail project and the regional authority and plan), that are distinct from a geographical, scale and social levels. The divide between the reality of the struggling DDOT system, with continuous cuts and their effect on the Detroit public, and the new launched regional plan and the funding involved, is portrayed by Gerrit (2010). Jeff Gerritt included a quote in his October article titled Region must act now in bus crisis from a Detroit resident, who reported dissatisfaction among riders that would prefer to see improvements of local public transit in the City rather than a new efficient system to
connect the suburbs with downtown (Gerrit, 2011).

The public opinion can be influenced by news coverage and might be as split as the conditions portrayed in the articles. Along the same line, Joel Batterman (3-22-13) emphasized the issue of taking for granted Detroit’s support in a future vote, and the dangers of disregarding the potential imbalance between new plans and failing old system. A strong and unified public opinion will be critical for this region as it will face a future vote on a transit plan. As Batterman highlighted, the 2014 vote would be the first of its kind in this region, as it would not be conducted county by county but as a one-region vote.

CONCLUSIONS

In depth press review was conducted for the years 2007- May 2013 for three major newspapers (Crain’s, Detroit Free Press, and Detroit News); online documentation (press releases, newsletters, annual report, general web site info, social media) on local transit providers/agencies and local transit advocacy was studied in regard to public opinion efforts and public involvement/outreach. Two local transit reporters and four coordinators/directors of local advocacy groups have been interviewed in regard to current media issues and engagement efforts.

From the study of efforts by transit providers the following themes emerged:

- The variability of outreach efforts conducted by the transit providers (in particular in the case of SMART);
- The general low level of visibility of the outreach efforts;
- The inadequate use of online and social media tools;
- The availability of great amount of data from surveys to capture satisfaction levels and specific needs of the ridership; and
- The in-ward focused quality of communications (e.g. through e-newsletters emailed to riders lists and not available online), which reduces the capability of the system to speak to larger populations/interests groups.

Overall local advocacy groups seem strong, complementary to each other in their target groups and specific focus, and well inclined to collaboration. Their efforts have been limited due to resources and capability of each organization but seem to have been well organized and effective. Press review indicated a low level visibility of collaboration efforts among advocacy groups.

Several overarching themes emerged from the interviews with local reporters and
advocacy groups. Summarizing the themes include:

- The importance of media in shaping the discourse about regional transit;
- The interrelatedness of print media and social media/blogs;
- The politicization of the discourse about transit in the media;
- The disconnect between experts and the public;
- The positive image of transit as an abstract element, and the negative image of local transit in the media;
- The importance of visible and cohesive advocacy groups; and
- The importance of flexibility in messaging and involvement strategies.

Implications and recommendations emerging from the study of these themes will be discussed in more detail in the Comparisons and Recommendations report.

APPENDIX A: DETROIT NEWS ARTICLES

The following Appendix provides an overview of all articles consulted, including a brief schematic summary of content and the overall orientation of articles (negative or positive towards transit. Articles have been retrieved from the LexisNexis database using the keyword REGIONAL TRANSIT at:

http://www.lexisnexis.com/lawschool/research/

I. 2007: Introduction of M1-Rail and effort to gather support

A group of private business people and the Kresge Foundation form the M1-Rail to develop a modern street car service on Woodward Ave. Between Jefferson and Grand Boulevard as the first phase of a Regional Transit System.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

“Connecting suburban and urban town centers with light rail and other forms of transit, the hottest topic in urban redevelopment today, will be the focus of next week’s 21st annual UM/ULI Real Estate Forum... the forum this year will focus on
a proposed transit link connecting Troy and Birmingham in Oakland County and similar connections around the country.”

“Residential, retail and office development that springs up around rail hubs and stations has become crucial to urban revitalization... 'It's very real and in fact it's becoming one of the most dominant forms of development in the country,' he said. 'If Detroit does not offer walkable urban development, a lot of people who want it are going someplace else.'”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

John Hertel, CEO of Detroit Regional Mass Transit “charged with coordinating efforts to develop a regional transportation plan for southeast Michigan.”

“Vision ideas emphasize light rail construction and sophisticated coordination of buses to ease transit snarls. There's even mention of bullet trains over longer distances.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

“Macomb County Board of Commissioners Chairman William Crouchman has been named head of the Regional Transit Coordinating Council, a group studying the feasibility of mass transit from metro Detroit to, possibly, Ann Arbor.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

Opinion of potential revitalization of mass transit in Detroit:
The city needs a reliable and available system for those who depend on public transportation (Candace Roulo, 31, Macomb Twp)

“This is not about the suburbs bailing out Detroit. It is about bringing this area into the 21st Century. Without reliable, safe rapid transit, those new high-priced casino hotel rooms will go unoccupied. We will continue to lose conventions.” (Monique Young, 41, Detroit)

“Convenience and comfort” of mass transit (Peter Stoyanoff, 65, Lexington)

“From a taxpayer's standpoint, mass transit is favorable to funding highways and roads; from a human standpoint, there's a legitimate "us vs. them" mentality between the suburbs and Detroit. Short of a sports game, when do suburbanites visit Detroit? The answer is usually "never," but Detroit's resurrection is in Michigan's interests. The necessary healing might begin with a transit system.” (Sherri Muzher, 37, Mason)

“Rapid transit, when implemented properly, helps move the economy – not just the people” (Jenifer Daniels, 28, Oak Park)

“I love Hertel's strategy of building support first. I hope he gets enough to cause people to take action.” (Claudreen Jackson, 66, Detroit)

“Given the scarcity of public dollars and the area's declining population, now seems like a terrible time to build mass transit - unless the return on investment can be assured. That said, though, mass transit would help unite the region.” (Francis Schorr, 40, Detroit).


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

Plan in the works to create a “rapid transit line running along Woodward, from Jefferson to New Center by 2010... extending to 8 Mile by 2015, and similar lines appearing along Michigan Avenue, M-59 and Telegraph Road by 2020”.

New CEO of RTCC (Regional Transit Coordinating Council), John Hertel is meeting with groups to determine the best plan for mass transit and how it will be paid for before he moves forward with concrete plans.

“Hertel has found overwhelming support for improving mass transit. His job... will
be to channel that enthusiasm into a consensus.”

The first step is a vote on the preliminary “vision” document concerning implementing rapid transit on Woodward. Whatever plan is chosen, its success will depend on whether or not the service is reliable enough to increase demand for mass transit. This will include small improvements to service and some consolidation of services between DDOT and SMART.


KEYWORDS: TRANSIT, RAIL

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:

Following a number of failed plans for mass transit in Detroit and surrounding regions, transportation officials want the public’s opinion on where it will be worthwhile to implement a new plan. Key corridors under consideration include 8 Mile, Grand River and Gratiot, Woodward and Michigan.

After determining the best way to move forward, officials hope to secure at least half of the required funds from the federal government.


KEYWORD: REGIONAL TRANSIT

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

“That particular perception assumes regionalism means taking from the suburbs and giving to the city. But there’s another one that says regionalism means the city surrendering some of its control to the suburbs. Both are deeply rooted in thinking that anything regional must have winners and losers, that the whole of southeast Michigan cannot be more important than any of its parts.”

In order for One D, “representing thousands of large and small businesses, service organizations, civic and cultural institutions and progressive community leaders”, to successfully initiate change in the region, they must “work around the
political establishment but also speak to it with one voice on behalf of the public.”

Key to creating regional cooperation for raising funds is establishing regional co-
operation with the overall goal and focus of a project.

One D's goals include establishing regional transit, but also reach for economic
prosperity, educational preparedness, quality of life and race relations.

Ron Dzwonkowski. One D or bust; strategy must bring meaning to regional co-

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:

One D: Transforming Regional Detroit

Although One D advocates are confident that significant cooperation has been
made between communities, the author insists that divides that have derailed
plans in the past, such as disagreements between “city and suburb, black and
white, Republican and Democrat, have and have-not, plus along county lines,

The main goal of One D is to unite all parts of the region, especially in creating a

“One D deliberately kept government agencies out of its structure because it in-
tends to be a one-voice advocate for public policies that are consistent with eco-

Mackinac conference can make a difference if leaders stick to goals. Detroit Free

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:

The Detroit Regional Chamber is holding its annual policy conference on Macki-

nac Island to discuss One D’s main goals: “economic prosperity, educational

preparation, regional transit, race relations, regional cooperation and quality of

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Advocates for One D hope for participants to leave the conference with a clear idea of how to move forward in one of these aspects.

United Way has been conducting about 1000 email surveys on these issues:
80% unhappy with public transportation
60% unhappy with how suburban growth and development have been managed


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:
A meeting will be held to discuss the best corridor for implementing rapid-transit lines.
The event is sponsored by Transportation Riders United, a “nonprofit advocacy group for public transit riders”.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:
Detroit’s leaders are creating scorecards to measure the quality of regional services such as mass transit.
The action will ideally kick-start change and inspire improvement where services are poor, but will also likely influence funding decisions. They key is creating accountability where there hasn’t been before.

For regional transit, ridership levels will be considered.

John Marshall, regional retired president of the Kresge Foundation (Troy), worries that these measures will force systems to divert funds to programs and neglect “mundane but important efforts like strategic planning and staff training.”

OBSERVATIONS:
John Hertel, newly appointed CEO of the Regional Transit Coordinating Council,
held meetings to determine the best possible way to move forward before a concrete plan was set in place. His technique was to recruit support and determine areas where proposals will likely face opposition by speaking with community organizations across the region. Simultaneously, an initiative titled “One D: Transforming Regional Detroit” worked to inform regional leaders on their role in various sectors selected for focused improvement including educational preparedness, economic prosperity, quality of life, social equity, regional transit. Today, the goal of One D is to determine the best course of action with use of the most accurate information. In January of 2007, One D developed scorecards for each of the previously mentioned sectors in order to create more accountability within groups and systems. Overall, the efforts in 2007 seem to have much support from the region, with many deeming these actions Detroit’s final and best chance to turn things around, however, some still fear that divides existing between major groups and communities will once again thwart plans for improvement. Overcoming these divides will make a difference in whether or not a plan is successful.


KEYWORD: RAIL

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:
Woodward the favored route after open houses was held to determine where best to install a light rail system to connect to Ann Arbor.

Estimated $350 million cost (if successful, the city will receive half of these funds from the federal government but will have to supply the other half).

With 80,000 downtown workers, the demand definitely exists.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:
Four open houses will be held to determine the best plan for public transit in Detroit. Officials are looking for public input.

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:

Four Five corridors, Woodward, Michigan, Gratiot, Grand River and Eight Mile have been identified by the city of Detroit. One of these will be selected to connect Detroit to a proposed commuter rail line to Ann Arbor. After this is selected, the city will select a system to use. They are looking for public input.

“The process is part of a $3 million, federally funded study that aims to convince Bush administration officials to pony up potentially tens of millions of dollars for a transit system.”

To avoid failure, the team must be diligent and persistent.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:

The reality of Detroit: “People love their cars.”

The state House will now have a subcommittee devoted to public transit.

Author fears expense of developing new rail lines (not the case if using existing rail lines on Woodward) in a city connected by freeways.

While the Detroit People Mover has failed and its ridership is depleting, bus ridership for SMART and DDOT has actually increased by 13% and 5% respectively from 2005 to 2006.

The cost for DDOT’s system is 30% above the national average but this does not translate into 30% better service because of difficult labor regulations.

“What this region needs is a unified bus system that serves the needs of all of citizens rather than the fragmented service it has today.”

David Josar. One D lays out goals to improve region; group hopes to build transit
system by 2015, wants all kids to be literate.. Detroit News. Page 1B, June 1, 2007.

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

One D has set a list of goals that include having a “true regional transit system... in place by 2015.” One D is made up of six Metro Detroit civic organizations.

“By December 2008, have support for regional transit and the supporting legislation in all communities to establish a regional transportation authority.”

The group has agreed to implement the use of report cards to monitor the quality of service in five major sectors: economic prosperity, educational preparation, quality of life, race relations and regional transit.

It is important to move forward and not be hindered by disagreements that slowed progress in the past.

Racial diversity, low cost of living and excellent healthcare are all assets to the city and can help draw in young people.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:

“online poll conducted [on behalf of One D] by Issue Media Group and United Way for Southeastern Michigan shows four out of five respondents want a better rapid transit system.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:

On One D's efforts to establish a brand for the Detroit region: “Regional cooperation is a key element in this effort, as it is in so many others, and I am encouraged by the work of all of these organizations to help change Detroit’s image. We
must remember, however, that successful branding takes time. We must be pa-
tient and stick with our strategy, and there is not a moment to lose.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

Unlike previous attempts to improve education, regional transit and race rela-
tions, One D “provides the missing link of unity, and it gives it a much better shot
at success”. This in contrast with disagreements between organizations that had
previously halted efforts.

Completely organized by business and civic groups, the effort will eventually
need to involve politicians. This is where things may lose momentum.

David Josar. One D: Public input key to success; group of six Metro organiza-

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

One D promises annual report cards to increase accountability and monitor pro-
gress.

Key to success in the region will be making cooperation present in every aspect
of improvement.

The areas (economic prosperity, educational preparedness, quality of life, race
relations and regional transit) were selected after individual groups polled 10,000
area residents.

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

In order to overcome past obstacles to regional growth, systems will need to be held accountable in order to make measurable progress.

Harmony between civic groups is the first step in establishing regional cooperation. One D hopes to attract young people and tourists with a new brand for the region.

OBSERVATIONS:

The City of Detroit is conducting a study to determine the best route for possibly installing a light rail system to connect neighborhoods and downtown to Ann Arbor. They have held open houses to collect public input on the issue. There were only 4 articles from the Detroit News that covered the plan for installing light rail on Woodward. Many cities have either installed or studied the use of light rail and Detroit has the demand needed for such a system. The concern is with determining whether a city that relies so heavily on the automobile can support a light rail mass transit system.

One D, a collaboration between leaders of major civic groups in the region, aims to tackle five main sectors: economic prosperity, educational preparedness, quality of life, race relations and regional transit. Key to the effort’s success will be maintaining unity between groups and monitoring local services to manage accountability.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:

“Edsel Ford announced a 'Champions Council' to help foster and evaluate progress on the goals of One D, the collaboration of six regional civic organizations formed last year to work for regional revitalization. Ford, One D’s watchdog and champion, urged business and civic leaders to get involved by promoting Detroit’s positive points.”

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

“High hopes surround a plan for a $3 million transit center in Troy that is expected to spur walkable development and connect the sprawling suburb to Detroit and other communities. Regional planners say the center, near the edge of Birmingham, could act like a regional transit point as the area’s struggling transportation system develops around it.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:

The possibility of a transit center along the border of Troy and Birmingham will be discussed at the annual UM/ULI Real Estate Forum in Troy.

“The center would link to current bus and rail lines and could accommodate light or commuter rail.”

The author proposes that it is necessary to include passengers from the Detroit Metropolitan Airport in order to achieve regional transit.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

With support, it may be possible to establish a light rail or bus rapid transit system along Woodward.

“‘Now DDOT and SMART is used primarily by seniors, people with disabilities and a low-income group,’ she said. ‘We’d like people with other options to choose it. And with more happening downtown, those people can use it.’”
“DDOT has a recently completed study that is meant to serve as the basis for federal funding requests. The study follows guidelines set by the Federal Transit Administration 'New Starts' program. The public had an opportunity in March to share its opinion on five corridors under consideration for rapid transit. Woodward was voted No. 1.”

“To be a world-class city, we have to have a regional transit system [and get] all the players together, from TRU to SEMCOG to... John Hertel.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE
SUMMARY:
According to a survey (EPIC/MRA) conducted for Crain's Detroit Business and Honigman Miller Schwartz and Cohn L.L.P., 73% of Southeast Michigan business executives have not heard of One D but once the initiative was explained to those surveyed, 60% thought the initiative would be effective.

Bill Shea, Smith, J. Make regionalism 'a way of life'; Session becomes rallying cry for One D collaborative effort.

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE
SUMMARY:
“Edsel Ford asked for audience members to make regionalism a way of life” at the Mackinac Policy Conference.

“One D, a group of six regional civic groups that are working together on five priorities for the region... economic prosperity, educational preparedness, regional transit, race relations and quality of life, with regional collaboration as an umbrella over all.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE
SUMMARY:
“Washington-based Amtrak and the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments are negotiating to run trains daily between Ann Arbor and Detroit as part of a trial that could last up to three years and be modeled after a similar program in Los Angeles, said Sue Stetler, communications director for SEMCOG.”

“The Amtrak people have been so enthusiastic and supportive,” Stetler said. “They could offer no examples where a demonstration project like this has not been successful.”

“The Amtrak/SEMCOG plans aren’t the only ones in the works to make mass transit happen here”:

DDOT has “hired New York City-based URS corp to design a rapid transit system in Detroit, Dearborn, Highland Park and Hamtramck.”

DCDC at the UDM SOA “is working with TRU to put together a three-year plan for mass transit in the region.

“The Detroit Regional Chamber plans to support legislation that would lead to the creation of a regional transit authority”.

II. 2008: Public and private support


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

The Regional Transit Coordinating Council (CEO John Hertel) will be holding four open houses for public input before the regional transportation plan is finalized. Public input is also needed for how residents would like to pay for the system.

“Hertel and his deputy, John Swatosh, have been developing the plan for more than a year. Extending to 2035, it calls for commuter rail service from Detroit to Ann Arbor; light rail along Woodward, first from Jefferson to the New Center and then to 11 Mile; and rapid transit bus service along Gratiot, from Woodward to M-59. To build ridership, a more basic form of rapid transit bus service, called arterial rapid transit, would start along eight corridors, including Michigan Avenue, Grand River, Fort, Telegraph and Van Dyke.”

John Wisely. Plan for a regional mass transit system is on the horizon. Detroit
ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:

Hertel says the key to approval of the plan is in gaining support from “state representatives, state senators and other officials that must pay the cost”.

“Hertel, who is the head of the Regional Transit Coordinating Council, said communities that have invested in mass transit have seen $8 of private investment for each dollar of mass transit investment.”

An endorsement video “and Hertel's presentation drew enthusiastic applause from the group of local government leaders, including mayors and supervisors.”

Under the current system, funds for new transit developments would take from existing funding for transit, which could anger communities if they were to lose existing transit systems. “Hertel said the system would need new money rather than simply reshuffling existing transit money to fund it.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:

Author criticizes Regional Transit Coordinating Council's plan for new transit developments.

“A comprehensive regional transit system for southeast Michigan may be decades away, but one of the best ways to get there is to start using and improving what's already up and running.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

On the regional transit plan being developed by the RTCC: “In establishing a true regional transit network, it calls for everything from better bus stops to more frequent service. It bases every step on ridership and costs - in other words, no ser-
vice unless justified by use.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE
SUMMARY:

“Detroit’s Department of Transportation is moving forward with a plan to jump-start rapid transit in southeast Michigan by building eight miles of light rail from downtown to the Michigan State Fairgrounds. The Detroit Transit Options for Growth Study - DTOGS - has just recommended the Woodward stretch because of community support and relatively low building costs, as well as high potential for ridership - 11,000 riders a day - and transit oriented economic development. The line, including 13 to 15 stations, would cost an estimated $371 million to build. New-start money from the Federal Transit Administration could cover 50% to 60% of construction costs. The rest would have to come from state, local and even private sources.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE
SUMMARY:

Regional cooperation key to regional transportation success
Determining where funds are an issue that must also be determined through regional cooperation.
“A successful rail line on Woodward would rev people up and jump-start a new regional system.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL
SUMMARY:
“Private developers who want to build a light-rail line on Woodward in Detroit might hold the key to this region’s first real step toward a mass transit system. To make the most of this opportunity, however, investors must come forward – now”

This private system wouldn’t depend on federal funding and so would not be delayed. The route, however, is shorter than the route on Woodward that the city has proposed.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

“Hertel said local leaders this time have had a near uniform voice, recognizing the need for regional transit in the largest American metropolitan area without it.”

The plan will “phase in future infrastructure around ridership demand.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

Proposal for adding a train line which would incorporate a route from Dearborn to the Detroit Metropolitan Airport is in the works.

“The project is one of several in planning stages, including a light-rail line along Woodward in Detroit and a commuter line from Livingston County to Ann Arbor. [Carmine] Palombo, director of transportation for the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments] said he was optimistic the Ann Arbor-Detroit line will get off the ground, as it already has some political support, though cost estimates and funding proposals have yet to be decided.”
Letter 1:

“I agree that "Region’s transit plan is off to a good start" (Sept. 28). The infrastructure for a light rail system, already in place, is called the Detroit People Mover. A light rail system was to run out of the People Mover to the northern, northeastern, northwestern and the east and west suburbs, respectively, and a rail to eventually run south to Monroe County. This plan is a great step in the right direction to make the Metro Detroit possibly a world-class region.” - Thomas A. Wilson Jr., Detroit.

Letter 2:

“How many years has the public been exposed to regional transit talk? What officials fail to tell us is only one region’s transit system pays its own way. Unless there is greater population density, there is no way to get the needed riders to use the system in Metro Detroit. Another factor that comes into play is that the region no longer has shops that let a lot of workers out at the same time - who would use such a system. And then there is the matter of security for the riders.”

- Frank Mannino, Warren

Goal for One D: “By December, have support for regional transit and the supporting legislation in all communities to establish a regional transportation authority.”

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

Regarding progress on One D's initiatives, Edsel Ford will “say that the region is still failing on race relations and educational preparedness, but making some progress on economic prosperity, quality of life and regional transit.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:

“Detroit has developed an exciting plan for mass transit along Woodward Avenue. Unfortunately, the proposed rail line doesn’t go far enough. It stops at Eight Mile Road, the city limits, the end of Detroit's jurisdiction. To be effective, a mass transit plan must include all of Metro Detroit. Detroit's solo effort, however, is understandable. City officials are rightfully fed up with the false starts at building regional mass transit. But frustration doesn’t negate the need for a broad regional service.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

“'First step' toward the return of light rail in Metro Detroit... Federal funds are expected to cover more than half of the project's cost.”

“Chris Frey, 31, lives near Wayne State and works downtown for an accounting firm. He buys a monthly bus pass and takes it to work, as well as out to Royal Oak. Frey believes a light rail system will make those rides easier and more efficient, with fewer delays caused by weather and traffic.”
ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:

“A possible bus or streetcar route between the redevelopment at the former Kmart Corp. Headquarters and a Troy regional transit center near the edge of Birmingham is being discussed by Troy officials.”

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:

Robert Thibodeau, Detroit:

The plan for regional mass transit must be a regional effort.

It must incorporate ground transit options for the Detroit Metropolitan Airport.

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:

“Details are beginning to emerge about a privately funded plan to build a $103 million light-rail commuter loop along 3.4 miles of Woodward Avenue in Detroit from Hart Plaza to Grand Boulevard. Detroit Regional Mass Transit... is serving as the clearinghouse.”

“Private contributions and foundation grants would fund the system's construction, but no financial deals are believed to be imminent.”

“Megan Owens [of Transportation Riders United] voiced concern about a private plan competing with public efforts already under way, specifically the 'Detroit Transit Options for Growth' study. That study, commissioned by the Detroit Department of Transportation, examines transit needs in the city and offers recommendations for mass-transit options and routes. The study, known as DTOG, is the required first step to secure federal money. 'We hope this is done in conjunction with other plans,' Owens said. 'Detroit has been working hard on DTOG.'”
ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

“Private-sector money behind a $103 million light-rail transit loop on Detroit’s Woodward Avenue could mean decades trimmed from the project's planning and could reinvigorate other transportation projects already in the works, mass transit insiders say.”

“Such an effort also is likely to accelerate efforts to establish a regional rail system. Plans call for the Woodward loop to tie into the Detroit-to-Ann Arbor transit line proposed by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments regional planning group.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:

“Only Detroit would shoot itself in the foot by somehow managing to have two competing plans. As Bill Shea reports on Page 3, the city of Detroit's Department of Transportation has taken one approach: light rail down the middle of Woodward Avenue. That plan is intended to preserve street parking, but experts say street-center access is preferable for high-speed commuter service. Forcing passengers to cross several lanes of traffic on foot to reach the light rail stops creates safety issues, too, critics say. A private-sector initiative, meanwhile, first reported by Crain's last spring, wants curbside service to help stimulate business activity along the demonstration route on Woodward.”

III. 2009: The creation of a regional transit authority reintroduced


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE
SUMMARY:

"After decades of missed chances, southeast Michigan appears closer than ever to getting what other major cities already enjoy - a true regional transportation system. The first link in that potential system got a major boost last week when the Kresge Foundation and Detroit's Downtown Development Authority pledged a combined $44 million to the proposed M1-RAIL light-rail line on Woodward in Detroit."

Megan Owens, Transportation Riders United: “What gives me the most optimism is that we've gotten to the point where just about everyone in the region agrees we need quality regional transit”.

“When you have money being donated, when you have legislators passing laws, when you have the Big Four agreeing over and over again - that’s very different from the way it used to be” Hertel said.

“Two key steps remain: The region must create a transit authority to build and operate the system. To that end, Hertel hopes to present a proposed format for a transit authority board to regional leaders by June.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

The city must create a regional transit authority or “metro Detroit will be in no position to take advantage of hundreds of millions of dollars in federal aid needed for new transit projects, including the publicly funded portion of a planned light-rail system on Woodward in Detroit.”

“Part of the problem is that two of the Big Four -- Detroit Mayor Dave Bing and Macomb County Commission Chairman Paul Gieleghem -- are newcomers. Bing took office in May and Gieleghem in January, and neither has spent much of his career thinking about regional transit. Nor is a transit authority a high priority for Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson, who is skeptical of any efforts involving rail or new taxes.”

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

“Seven years ago, in an act of petty political petulance, outgoing Gov. John Enler vetoed Detroit Area Regional Transportation Authority (DARTA) legislation that he had vowed to support. Despite that setback and many others, the region approved a regional transportation plan a year ago and is now on the verge of taking the next step by establishing an authority to oversee the plan's execution.”

“Long-awaited bills establishing a Regional Transit Authority for southeast Michigan were introduced in the House on Thursday. State representatives should approve the bills this month and send them to the Senate for action early next year. The bills lay the groundwork for building a transportation system in Detroit and Wayne, Oakland and Macomb Counties that will benefit the entire region. Further delays will put southeast Michigan at a disadvantage to compete for federal transit funds in the next six-year transportation bill, shoving metro Detroit further behind urban areas like Denver and even Grand Rapids, where elected officials have already demonstrated their ability to collaborate on regional transportation plans.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

“Local, on-the-ground efforts to improve mass transit in southeast Michigan should not stall while legislators consider a sorely needed plan to create a Regional Transit Authority.”

“Private investors will build the first leg of the Woodward line from Hart Plaza to the New Center -- the so-called M1-RAIL project. The City of Detroit seeks to use the $120 million in private money invested to leverage federal match funding to complete the rest of the line to 8 Mile. Detroit plans to secure more than half of the $400 million needed to complete the project from federal new-starts grants, and secure urban transit money, called 5307 grants, from the Federal Transit Administration.”

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

“History was made on Dec. 8 at the offices of the Miller-Canfield law firm in downtown Detroit, when the so-called Big Four - Detroit Mayor Ken Cockrel, Jr., Wayne and Oakland County executives Robert Ficano and L. Brooks Patterson, along with William Crouchman, chairman of the Macomb County Commission - voted unanimously in favor of Hertel's 25-year master plan for mass transit in Metro Detroit.”

This is key to drawing young professionals to the region.

John Hertel must also submit a proposal for the creation of a regional transit authority.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

“The Senate passed legislation Sunday that will send nearly $197 million to Michigan to upgrade airports and regional transit options, buy energy-efficient buses, beautify streets, expand bike paths and bolster police programs in Detroit to reduce shootings and carjackings.”

“$1.3 million for construction of a Troy-Birmingham Multi-modal Transit Center, which would be a hub for regional public transportation, combining Amtrak rail, SMART bus services and taxi connections. 'A new regional transit center will spur business growth, create jobs and allow residents and visitors to travel more easily in and out of Oakland County,' said Rep. Gary Peters, D-Bloomfield Township, who pushed for the funds.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

“Mayoral candidate Warren Evans said during a debate Tuesday that residents are tired of selling off city assets to balance its book, striking at an opponent’s
idea to merge the bus system with a regional transit authority. 'The reality is Detroiters are terribly upset about losing their assets over the last several years,' he said of opponent Duane Montgomery's bus merger idea. 'It's been cumulative and the assets are dwindling. With good management, (D-DOT) can operate more efficiently."


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE
SUMMARY:

“The new station, called the Troy Intermodal Transit Facility, is envisioned as a hub in a larger regional transit system planned for Metro Detroit, including a commuter rail line from Ann Arbor to Detroit and a proposed light rail line along Woodward Avenue in Detroit to the suburbs of Oakland County.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE
SUMMARY:

“Light rail on Woodward Avenue is closer to a reality than it’s ever been. But as Metro Detroit gets set to embark on a 25-year transit plan, the region should focus first on building a bus system that gets people to the places they need to go.”

“The institute calls that "job sprawl." What it really means is that workers in Metro Detroit do not commute in and out of the central city, as they do in most big cities, but instead travel suburb to suburb. A fixed rail line would have a hard time serving those commuters because its focus is to bring people in and out of downtown. After securing $70 million in private funding, along with a promise for operating funds from the state Legislature, the stage is set to break ground on a 3.4-mile light rail system between Hart Plaza and the New Center area. Supporters hope that the short line will create an appetite for additional light rail lines. More likely, the line will be underused, unless work patterns change dramatically.”

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

“After months of delays, the elected executives of Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties and Detroit Mayor Dave Bing could meet in October to sign off on the wording of legislation that would establish a regional mass transit authority.”

The authority is necessary in order to receive federal funds for regional transit initiatives. Ideally, Hertel says, this authority will not include opt-out options.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

Detroit Mayor Dave Bing is threatening to cut bus service to lower the city's deficit.

“But there’s a solution to Detroit’s problem with its Department of Transportation bus system, if the city would only take advantage of it: a regional transit authority. Buses and light rail would be operated by the authority, not the city, just as Cobo Center is now operating. Such an authority would execute a regional transit plan already approved by the 'Big 4' elected leaders for Macomb, Oakland and Wayne counties and the city of Detroit. But just like Cobo, a regional authority requires state legislation.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

Detroit Mayor Ken Cockrel Jr. calls for a merge of the city and suburban transit systems.

“'It was not discussed with me ahead of time,' said John Hertel, CEO of the Regional Transportation Coordinating Council, the legal entity that acts as the pass-through agency for state and federal funding for both bus systems.”

Disagreements over a merger may get in the way of the recently approved bus
and rail plan.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

“A June 30 deadline for a vote on the next step for a regional mass transit plan may pass because Detroit hasn’t appointed anyone to negotiate for the city with the project's organizers” in wake of Former Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick's resignation.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

The creation of a regional transit authority is necessary in order to gain access to federal funds.

Marie Donigan, D-Royal Oak is pushing for the passing of two bills to establish a regional transit authority and improve “current law aimed at improving defined corridors to also include transit incentives.”

III. 2010: Funding hurdles


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:

The creation of a regional transit authority is necessary for the region's development and for securing federal funds.

The bills face opposition from Detroit and Oakland: “Oakland County reportedly objects to labor protections that were inserted into the bills. If so, union reps should work with Oakland County on compromise language. Both sides have a
lot to gain. A regional transit authority will secure federal transportation dollars that create thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in economic development."

“The bills call for a five-member board, with one member each appointed by Wayne, Oakland and Macomb Counties and the City of Detroit, and one by the governor. The new authority would operate in a truly regional way -- by majority instead of unanimous vote -- and not allow one county or city to veto progress. Everyone should work to retain that measure; if necessary, however, leaders could craft a compromise requiring a supermajority -- four of five members -- for certain actions.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:

“The announcement touted Woodward Rail and its connection to Amtrak at New Center as a regional transit system. Both are good projects but they are not the solution to Metro Detroit's transit problems.”

The announced plan omits the creation of a Regional Transit Authority and plans for expanding the system after Woodward.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

Without a Regional Transit Authority, the region cannot obtain the funds it needs to operate a new transit plan.

It is unclear where other funds will be drawn. It would likely require a regional sales tax.

“The authority would hire a CEO to construct and operate a regional transit system. It would also have the authority to tax -- but only after a vote of the people.”

**ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE**

**SUMMARY:**

Letter: G. Patrick Thompson, Roseville

Renewal of SMART millage may signal support for the creation of a regional transit authority.


**ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE**

**SUMMARY:**

“Action can't wait until next year, when the plan for a metro Detroit transit authority would face an even more uncertain future under a new governor and Legislature. Delaying a regional authority also would jeopardize millions of dollars of federal transportation aid -- and the jobs and economic development that come with it.”


**ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE**

**SUMMARY:**

“It's not often that Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson, Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano and Macomb County Commission Chairman Paul Gieleghem get together to support a tax -- but it happened last week. The three leaders gathered at 8 Mile and Dequindre, where the three counties meet, to urge the public to approve a 0.59-mill property tax renewal Aug. 3 for SMART, the regional bus system. The tax costs the owner of a home worth $200,000 about $59 a year.”

Still no consensus on a plan for the creation of a regional transit authority.

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:

“To be effective, the transit authority bills need to retain several key provisions, including a new proposal requiring the governing board to bring a transit funding plan to the Legislature within six months of their appointments, and the initial plan, recommended by Hertel, to require a majority vote only of the board. Finally, the bills should allow the city and suburban bus systems to operate under the current funding system for two years or so to give the authority time to get up and running and create a new way to pay for regional transit.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

Plan for transit off track due to:

$40 million needed for track and signal improvements

No long term funding

Requires a state gas tax or a regional sales tax to provide funds

Regional transit authority needed


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

“Regional transit system, rapid lines:

The plan: Light rail on Woodward, from Jefferson to 13 Mile. Private interests are already lined up for a total of $120 million to build the first leg -- 3.4 miles from Jefferson to the New Center. Express buses on Gratiot, Michigan and to the airport. Commuter rail from Ann Arbor to Detroit, possibly from Detroit to Pontiac
and even Port Huron and Mt. Clemens. Better basic bus service, with extended routes and increased frequency.

What has to happen: The Legislature must approve a regional transit authority as the governing agency for SMART, DDOT and any rapid-line operations. Washington won't help unless the region speaks with one voice on its transit needs. An RTA then will have to win a local financial mechanism to operate the system -- most likely some kind of regional sales tax that would also require an amendment to the state Constitution.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:

Political leaders, once again, cannot agree on how a regional transit authority should operate. This is preventing federal funds from reaching the Detroit region.

The author states that SMART has run efficiently but is underfunded. Approval of a property millage will help keep SMART afloat. It seems that there is support among the communities in question (who have approved property millage to provide funds for transportation since 1995).

Though, “due to plummeting property values, SMART will probably have to cut some service, even if all three counties approve the millage renewal, said new general manager John Hertel.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:

“It seems, and has always seemed, that Detroit desires regional cooperation only when it benefits Detroit disproportionately. Otherwise, they prefer to go it alone. It seems disingenuous for Detroit to totally dismiss the suburbs until they have reached rock bottom and then cry for help.”
ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:

There seems to be regional support for the newly proposed transit plan, “but for the plan to succeed it is necessary for Metro Detroit to establish a transportation body with actual power to make decisions.”

“The total project - from downtown to Eight Mile - is anticipated to cost between $450 million and $500 million. Private and public investment raised by M-1 Rail has brought in $125 million and a federal economic recovery grant contributed $25 million.”

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:

A developer “filed a motion in Oakland Circuit Court last month accusing the city of not securing all proper funds for the $7 million project, which includes construction of a building, a pedestrian tunnel and two platforms on a 3-acre parcel behind Midtown Square shopping plaza near Maple and Coolidge.”

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

“Construction will begin this spring on an $8 million regional transit center in Troy and Birmingham after state transportation officials secured federal money for the project, part of a larger high-speed rail initiative in Metro Detroit.”

“President Barack Obama announced Thursday that Michigan will receive $40 million for high-speed rail from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act that Congress enacted last year. Michigan will invest a portion of that money to build the transit center, MDOT official Ron DeCook said.”

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

“The president is expected to sign a $1.1 trillion bill that sends $197 million to Michigan to upgrade regional transit options. The legislation also enables Detroit to clear a key funding hurdle for the Woodward Avenue light rail project.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:

John Hertel has left his position as CEO of the Regional Transportation Coordinating Council and will become the general manager of SMART (Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation).

It seems as if his position will not be replaced after funds for Hertel and his staff ran out.

Hertel was hired by the Big 4 in 2006 to create a regional transit system and to orchestrate the enabling legislation for a governing authority that could survive the political and legal pitfalls that have consumed numerous previous attempts.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

“The high-profile light rail project on Detroit's Woodward Avenue gets the headlines, but a $927 million system of three dedicated bus corridors dubbed the "golden triangle" is the true core of the region's proposed mass transit plan.”

“the 'golden triangle' - a 67.3-mile set of three linked corridors made up of Woodward and Gratiot avenues and M-59. The triangle would be served by
streetcar-like articulated buses (called rolling rapid transit or bus rapid transit) that have their own dedicated lanes, traffic signal priority and stations so that they operate almost like a light rail system."

“‘It’s in a sense rail on wheels, using the existing routes,’ Gieleghem said. ‘We’re convinced, in Macomb County, this is all the benefits of a rail system at a third of the cost.’”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:

“A three-bill package under review by the House Intergovernmental and Regional Affairs Committee would create a new Southeast Michigan regional transit authority that could apply for and manage federal transit dollars.”

Detroit is not in agreement because although the city agrees that a regional transit system is needed, “these bills fall short of that goal” (Detroit’s CFO Norm White). A spokesman for the city said that legislation does not maintain funding in favor of DDOT over the suburban system.

“Yet a regional authority could relieve much of Detroit’s financial burdens if suburban SMART buses took over mainline thoroughfare service, allowing Detroit to improve its feeder-line service.”

“A regional transit authority is long overdue. Let’s get this done.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

Former CEO of RTCC, John Hertel, appointed general manager of SMART

“In that role, Hertel expects to continue to advocate for the $10 billion, 25-year build-as-needed plan for improved and expanded bus service, light rail and commuter trains over 406 miles in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties”

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:

“How can we expect any business investor to take this region seriously? Once again, political interests are put ahead of public interest in the quest for improved transit for Southeast Michigan.”

“Changes in pending legislation for a regional transit authority have also made it unacceptable to Oakland County. So the bill is stuck in the state House, with only Macomb and Wayne counties in favor of it.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:

Frustration that the plan for light-rail on Woodward Avenue ends at the city limits. Detroit CFO Norm White: “It’s got to start somewhere.” But some argue that this goes against establishing a regional transit system.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:

“This Detroit-goes-it-alone strategy - and the city’s refusal to support regional transit legislation - are measures of just how difficult it is for Detroit and its neighbors to act like a region.”

“Stopping at Eight Mile guarantees that Detroit calls the shots on the core rail system - awarding contracts, making design decisions, even choosing whether the line runs at the curb or in the middle of the avenue.”

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:

“Third, current transit projects - including the proposed light-rail line on Woodward Avenue - must go beyond the city limits of Eight Mile Road. We must demonstrate a regional project - like a golden triangle - to voters if they are asked to approve taxes to pay for transit.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:

Dick Blouse's goals when he came to Detroit as President of the Detroit Regional Chamber: “Get the Detroit Regional Chamber out of the red. Bolster relationships with local businesses while projecting a global identity. Forge regional ties in conflicted metro Detroit.”

Establishing regional transit a priority for Blouse.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

“one example of how the website is working to build a voice around particular issues that One D is tracking is by posting thoughts and insights from civic leaders on how a regional transit system intersects with or supports their organizations' missions.”
IV. 2011: Regional disagreement


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

Detroit's plan for the Woodward Light Rail Project is raising suburban support of regional transit initiatives.

There is still a push for the creation of a regional transit authority in order to secure funds.

“Detroit cannot afford to take more money from its bus system, which has already reduced service by at least one-third over the last five years. Nor would the FTA, which is paying for more than half of the rail project's construction costs, permit the city to do so.”

“But that argument puts the cart before the horse. A regional authority is needed first to not only develop a regional funding plan but also to attract federal transit dollars to the Detroit area. The regional authority would operate light rail, as well as the city and suburban bus systems, with new efficiencies.”

Suburban support includes Macomb, Oakland (though less so) and “leaders in six southern cities... studying how to extend the Woodward rail line north of Detroit into Ferndale, Royal Oak and Birmingham.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood and Mayor Dave Bing announce their support for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) for three reasons:

Lower initial cost

less heavy construction needed

BRT can serve twice as many riders as light rail.

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:

“That goal has eluded southeast Michigan for decades, however, with increasingly dire implications: The Detroit Department of Transportation is in crisis mode, slashing routes and ending 24-hour service on June 27 as the system bleeds $54 million a year from the city’s budget. The Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART) has avoided service cuts, but a $7-million hit to its 2011-12 budget foreshadows more trouble.”

“U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood has delivered $25 million for light rail on Woodward and more than $350 million for high-speed rail from Detroit to Chicago. It’s possible hundreds of millions more could be had from the federal government -- if southeast Michigan can learn to get along.”

Previously, SMART had been unwilling to merge services but now it is the city of Detroit that will not cooperate unless they see concrete funding.

“ultimately, voters likely would be asked to support a regional tax to pay for the system.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:

Interview with Federal Transit Administrator Peter Rogoff after a transit workshop at Wayne State University.

There is concern over the Woodward Light Rail Project potentially drawing funds from the city bus system.

“We thought the discussion about a regional transit solution and regional transit financing would come later. We’re realizing that the conversation appropriately needs to start happening now -- not just to maximize the success of the Woodward project but also to get at those other related issues as well.”

Although there is discussion of expanding the light rail project into the suburbs, Rogoff believes that that kind of expansion should happen in the future so that
planners are reasonable about what is affordable.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:

“SMART General Manager John Hertel will today announce cuts in service of 22%, effective Dec. 12. That's almost one-fourth of an already anemic network of routes and stops in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties -- a service area further weakened because 50 communities opt out entirely.”

“It will announce service changes in November, after public hearings in all three counties.”

“Over the last five years, DDOT has cut a third of its service -- and probably more -- as the city whittled DDOT's budget from $80 million to $53 million a year. But the suburban bus cuts are SMART's first ever -- and unavoidable, [John] Hertel said.”

“Many Detroiters already feel like Regina Gilbert, 55, one of the dozens of riders who called me following my column Sunday on Detroit bus riders' frustration and anger. 'It would be a slap in the face for Detroit to build a new, clean, efficient rail system for people to get from the suburbs to Detroit when people who live in this city can't get to where they need to go in a timely matter,' she told me Tuesday.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

“After working for months toward the $500 million M-1 Rail plan, leaders settled on a 34-station, four-line regional rapid bus system that would connect downtown Detroit with Macomb and Oakland counties and Detroit Metro Airport.”

“Detroit didn't have the required funding to make a Metro area light-rail system work - either in matching funds or long-term operations.”

Supports of M-1 do not want to abandon the project and so are still pushing to make it a reality.
Mayor Bing: “A light-rail system 3.8 miles up Woodward doesn't speak to regional transportation, not when 60 percent of the employed of the city work outside the city”

“The Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments, a regular player in transportation projects throughout the region, was not a part of discussions on the Woodward corridor.” in reference to the meeting between Ray LaHood and Mayor Bing.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:

The state will analyze Detroit's finances and Governor Rick Snyder has suggested the creation of a Regional Transit Authority to establish routes for BRT.

“Last month, a one-day strike stranded thousands of bus riders after about 100 drivers protested safety conditions after an incident with a passenger. Also in November, Transportation Riders United gave Detroit's Department of Transportation an 'F' grade, saying the system routinely strands thousands of people and has ‘utterly failed.’”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:

“The Obama administration and the city of Detroit are expected to announce as early as today they will scrap a plan for light rail along Woodward in favor of a rapid-transit bus system, three officials briefed on the plan said late Tuesday.”

“LaHood told The Detroit News on Tuesday the Obama administration is willing to commit "millions of dollars" to help fund a regional transportation authority in southeast Michigan if leaders finalize a plan”

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

Despite several attempts and general regional support, a regional transit authority has not be created. This is preventing federal transit funds from reaching the Detroit region as it is working to coordinate a plan for regional transit.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:

Governor Snyder's plan would create a new Regional Transit Authority for south-eastern Michigan that he says will be responsible for placing high-speed buses on four main routes, and eventually coordinate all bus service in the region.”

He is proposing an authority which is “free of legacy costs and the contentious union relationships that are currently keeping many SMART and D-DOT buses off the roads” and which will be made up of leaders from each county and the city of Detroit.

The author argues that although merging the two existing systems will be complicated and would likely require additional funds to overcome legacy costs, it is necessary to do before adding another layer of transit with the plan for bus rapid transit.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:

“The project first ran into problems when it became intertwined with the city of Detroit's plans to extend transit to Eight Mile Road, said people both involved in the project and observing it.”
"News stories last week presented the shift from light rail to rapid-transit buses as a sudden development, an abrupt course change. But the sequence of events that led to last week's announcements actually started early this year."

'I think, in retrospect, we weren't dealing with full and open information on both sides of the question,' Rapson said. 'I don't think the city fully understood the depth and commitment of the private investors to the work, and I don't think the private investors understood the nuance the city was trying to develop around the relationship with the federal government. The thing we clearly have to put back together is a much more engaged, open conversation among the parties."


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL
SUMMARY:

"Snyder press secretary Sara Wurfel said a separate system that doesn't have massive pension obligations (like those of DDOT) is the best way to get transit done."

Megan Owens, TRU: "No one is going to be willing to merge with DDOT and all its pension obligations and complex labor rules and hiring practices," she said. "I don't see that there's any way a true merger can occur."


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE
SUMMARY:

"The head of the Federal Transit Administration wants Detroit's Woodward Avenue light rail project to be operated by a regional transit authority - a governance system that's proved elusive here - but he won't say the lack of an RTA will jeopardize the proposed line."

Rogoff, FTA: "It's always a good business practice when establishing a new transit system that the agency that's going to operate it is involved early in the process,"

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

“A new economic development study of Woodward Avenue north of Eight Mile Road through Birmingham represents an early step in potentially extending Detroit’s planned light-rail line into the suburbs.” though there is not currently a plan in place.

'Until now, there hasn't been consensus among these communities on what they envision for transit and how (transit-oriented development) factors into that,' Carmona said.'Cities plan in isolation. Now they're looking at their shared borders and how that impacts the whole on Woodward in Oakland County.' Also on the task force are representatives from the SMART bus system, Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, Michigan Suburbs Alliance, Detroit Zoo and Beaumont Hospital.”

V. 2012: The bill for creation of a regional transit authority


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:

State Senate passed a bill to create a regional transit authority November 26, 2012.

"state Rep. Paul Opsommer, R-Dewitt, chairman of the House transportation committee… acknowledged that public transportation in metro Detroit needs fixing, but he hasn't given the bill his unconditional support. He said he's concerned about a provision that would allow the authority to pre-empt local zoning ordinances, and he's unsure whether there will be support from suburban and Detroit legislators."

On riders: "I never heard anybody riding the buses talk about politics," [Sen. Tom] Casperson said. "They were sincerely asking for help."

Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners only want in on the regional transit
authority if it "protected federal funding for the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority, maintained that bus system's independence and gave Washtenaw County the ability to decide on its own when to opt into the Regional Transit Authority."

Gov. Rick Snyder and Detroit Mayor Dave Bing are in favor of the plan. John Hertel, general manager of SMART, stresses that it is crucial for the bill to pass immediately so that the region can start to receive funding.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:

"But politics -- and, specifically, the politics of race and poverty -- threaten to once again throw the plan into limbo."

The authority may face complaints from labor boards in the future, but the author argues that there has not be any indication that labor and pension protections will be at risk under the new authority.

"the proposed RTA would generally act by simple majority vote, with a supermajority needed to put a funding plan on the ballot and a unanimous vote required to take over a public transit agency."


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:

Author: Snyder must gather support from fellow Republicans for the passing of a bill to create a regional transit authority for the future of the region and the legacy he leaves behind.

"Some legislators will never support a regional transit authority for southeast Michigan. They will oppose, reflexively, any effort to advance the interests of Detroit or public transit. A few equally obstructionist Detroit lawmakers will likely oppose the authority on grounds that any cooperative effort poses a threat to Detroit's sovereignty."

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

The region risks losing $120 million in federal investments (to match those of private investors) if the bill for the creation of a regional transit authority does not pass in the state Senate.

"Finally, with up to 90% of low-income individuals lacking reliable transportation, a new regional transit system will give them the means to find and keep a job or access needed skills training. For many of our neighbors, access to mass transit is a pathway out of poverty and into the middle class -- and that’s good for all of us."


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

"The state House approved the bill by the slimmest of legislative margins, 57-50. Bills need 56 votes to pass. It now heads to Gov. Rick Snyder for his signature."

"Megan Owens, executive director of Transportation Riders United, a Detroit-based advocacy group, said Thursday that she was pleased with the passage of one of the bills, but also concerned that if the other bill -- the one dealing with funding mechanisms -- wasn't approved in the lame-duck session, supporters would have to restart the process next year because a regional transit authority can't go forward without dedicated money."

Some riders remain sceptical that this plan will succeed, given the history of failed attempts to restore the region’s transit.

There is still talk of plans to build a privately funded downsized version of the M-1 rail on Woodward.

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood supports the plan for a streetcar line on Woodward Avenue but would like to see the creation of a regional transit authority and a more comprehensive plan of how federal funding would be put to use for the project.

Private investors must show more clearly where they will draw funds to support the project's first ten years before it will be managed fully by the regional transit authority.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

The region waits for the House to pass a bill to create a regional transit authority.

"Ari Adler, spokesman for Speaker of the House Jase Bolger, R-Marshall, said the regional transit authority is certainly on the agenda, but not necessarily near the top. If we don't get it done in the next few weeks, we can revisit it next year," Adler said. That lack of urgency makes Hertel nervous."

The bill may face opposition surrounding the issue of right to work "which would ban mandatory union membership or dues-paying for employees covered by collective bargaining agreements."


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

Unions and many Democrats oppose right-to-work and this may lead to little support for a regional transit authority in the House.

If leaders cannot come into an agreement soon, the region risks losing federal
funding for transit.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

"The RTA would have the power to coordinate routes and scheduling and the ability to withhold federal funding to agencies that don't cooperate."

"it will be a challenge to sway the region's voters to agree to pay for it -- likely through higher vehicle registration fees of $40-$60 per year."

Projects an RTA can help accomplish and coordinate; A new regional transit authority would coordinate all transit service in southeast Michigan, including these transit initiatives and agencies. Detroit Free Press. Sec. Opinion, page A22. February 26, 2012.

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

Transit initiatives and agencies to possibly be coordinated by an RTA:

proposed rapid transit network

light rail service on Woodward Ave. (privately funded M-1 Rail after Woodward Light Rail Project was dropped in December 2011)

Train service from Ann Arbor to Detroit

Added rail service on Woodward

Basic bus service in metro Detroit


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

"The M-1 advocates have sought $25 million in federal grants for the $137 million
project. M-1 said it has raised more than $84 million, including a $3 million pledge from Wayne County in 2012 and $9 million from the Detroit Development Authority paid over 10 years."

Yet to be completed is the creation of a regional transit authority. This will need to be passed by the state legislature in the next month.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

$25 million in federal funds was to go toward the plan for light rail on Woodward Ave. but has since been reallocated to a proposed bus rapid transit system.

M-1 seeking $25 million in federal funding

Ray LaHood wants backers of the plan to prove that they can get past new hurdles (which now include "possible cost overruns and construction challenges for the route").


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

"U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood has said the state needs to create a Metro Detroit regional transit authority to qualify for $50 million in federal aid - $25 million for the authority and $25 million for the M-1 Woodward Avenue street car project."

"One point of contention is the governance of the authority. Under Townsend's bill, the board would consist of two appointees of the governor; two members each from Macomb, Oakland and Wayne counties, with at least one of Wayne County's appointees coming from Detroit; and one appointee of the mayor of Detroit."

"State Rep. Doug Geiss, D-Taylor, said suburban Wayne County should have two sole votes and proposed giving one of Washtenaw County's votes to Detroit to equalize city-suburban representation."

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

"Snyder… signed bills to create a regional transit authority for Wayne, Oakland, Macomb and Washtenaw counties."

"The regional transit legislation, which has been sought for four decades, would empower the authority to bypass zoning laws for construction of public transportation facilities and create dedicated lanes for rapid-transit buses along Metro Detroit's busiest corridors."

"U.S Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood has said creation of a regional transit authority to manage DDOT and SMART bus routes was crucial to the release of $25 million in federal funding for a $137 million Woodward Avenue streetcar project."


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

"Trans4M's priorities include establishing a regional transit authority to link DDOT and SMART systems and a "complete streets" policy that incorporates the needs of bicyclists, motorists, transit riders and pedestrians."


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

"I simply don't believe that layering a third bus system onto a region that already has two broken ones - DDOT and SMART - is the way to solve our transit needs. And if Washtenaw County comes in as Gov. Rick Snyder envisions, and the Woodward Avenue M-1 rail line gets built, Metro Detroit would have five autono-
mous transportation authorities."

"The obvious answer is to dissolve the existing systems and create one coordinated transit authority to serve the entire region"

Legacy debt is stopping from completely consolidating both existing systems: "Between them, DDOT and SMART have nearly $1 billion in bond, pension and retiree health care obligations. A united authority would have to absorb that debt, which would be a huge anchor on a start-up."


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

"Some of Detroit's best known business executives have teamed up to invest $120 million of their own money into this project. President Barack Obama and U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood are committed to Detroit, southeast Michigan and this project. Gov. Rick Snyder has consistently supported these efforts and stands ready to sign this legislation into law. The Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce and labor unions agree, too: Build the RTA!"

"This is our opportunity to advance as a city, region and state. To let old divisions and stale partisanship halt this progress would be a grave mistake."

"I urge the Republican leaders in the Michigan Senate and House to act on this legislation as soon as we reconvene this month" (Johnson is a Democrat).


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

"The Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners recently passed a resolution opposing inclusion in the transit authority, creating further divisions among southeast Michigan lawmakers. The Snyder administration is trying to figure out whether Washtenaw County wants to remain in the bill, Casperson said."

"To get the bills to Snyder before year end, Casperson said the House is going to need strong support from outstate legislators to counter divisions among law-
makers in Metro Detroit. State Sen. Coleman Young II, D-Detroit, joined Senate Republicans in opposition to the package of bills. Young said he opposes giving the transit authority eminent domain to seize land or homes for construction of bus stops or other transportation facilities."


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

"Two related bills stalled Thursday after strife over right-to-work legislation froze bipartisan cooperation. Senate Bill 909, which sets up the transit authority that will develop high-speed bus lines on key main roads in the Metro area, narrowly passed 57-50 in the 110-member House."

"Passage of the bill establishing the authority 'lays the groundwork for a more reliable, convenient and affordable system of public transportation options in our state's most populated region,' said Chris Kolb, president of the Michigan Environmental Council."


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

"Last month, the proposed light rail project along Woodward Avenue was scrapped in favor of a series of high-speed buses, drawing a chorus of criticism from regional transit advocates."

Private investors still have a chance to prove to the federal government that light rail is viable. The plan has not been dropped entirely but will likely need to be reworked or scaled down.

"LaHood, in explaining the switch [from light rail to bus rapid transit] to the Michigan congressional delegation, last month said Detroit didn't have the required funding to make a Metro area light-rail system work - either in matching funds or long-term operations."

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

Money will not come solely from Detroit to fund the regional transit system (recently switched from light rail on Woodward Ave. to bus rapid transit because of the failure to prove come up with a legitimate plan to obtain enough funding). Rather, it will come from a regional transit authority and federal funding.

Next month there will be a bill introduced for the creation of a regional transit authority.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

"Key members of the administration, including the governor, consider the M1 project to be a distraction that could jeopardize a plan for a system of high-speed buses in metro Detroit, something proposed by Snyder in December, the sources said."

"Snyder's staff has worked with lawmakers to craft bills, introduced two weeks ago, that would set up a regional authority for the bus system. The worry is that M1's system could siphon operating funds from the buses - or prove to be an obstacle to getting the votes to pass the legislation."

"Cullen represents M1 Rail's leadership and financial backers: Penske Corp. founder Roger Penske, who is chairman of the project; Peter Karmanos Jr., founder of Detroit-based Compuware Corp.; the Ilitch family, owners of the Detroit Tigers, Red Wings and Little Caesar Enterprises Inc.; and Quicken Loans Inc./Rock Financial founder Dan Gilbert, the project's co-chairman. The four have committed $3 million each for the display advertising rights to a station along the route. Henry Ford Hospital and Wayne State University also have committed $3 million each for a station. The Troy-based Kresge Foundation has pledged $35 million, part of which has been spent. Gilbert, whose business empire is headquartered in downtown Detroit and who has bought nine buildings there, is said to be the chief advocate for M1 Rail."
"The FTA [Federal Transit Authority] had awarded a $25 million stimulus grant to the city's rail project, but in December, U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray La-Hood reallocated that money to the regional bus plan. He has subsequently said M1 could apply for another $25 million grant in the newest round of federal transit stimulus funding - a process that doesn't guarantee funding and involves a lengthy approval process."

Megan Owens of Transportation Riders United said that there is a need for both plan in the city.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE
SUMMARY:
"Organizers of the $137 million streetcar plan for Detroit's Woodward Avenue are assembling a list of private-sector companies to operate the system on a concession basis. Part of the U.S. Department of Transportation's requirement for up to $25 million in capital funding is that it wants a list of potential operators for the system. The line will not be operated by M1 Rail, the private-sector organizer and financier of the streetcar project, or by any government agency such as the Detroit or Michigan departments of transportation or by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments regional planning agency, said Matt Cullen, M1's CEO."


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL
SUMMARY:
"Some serious strings are attached to any federal funding for the M1 streetcar project on Woodward Avenue. The project must secure a long-term funding strategy. Plus...it needs to hire a private operator. Most important, it needs an operating authority - a framework for governance and funding."

"How often do private funders initiate, promote and fund a project to the tune of $100 million? If M1 fails, how many more times do we think major business leaders will step out front in a manner similar to the backers of M1?"
ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

"It is incredible that lawmakers who purport to be supportive of adding jobs continue to disregard the pleas of job creators who say reliable transit is critical to their workforces."

"If the legislation is enacted, not only will it allow a transit authority to proceed, it will ensure that the region qualifies for additional federal funding, including funds to help launch light rail on Woodward Avenue. This is a no-brainer. Republican leadership needs to embrace this cause."

A regional transit authority has been created but still needs a signature from Gov. Rick Snyder.

"Given that only 11 of 46 Southeast Michigan representatives voted "yes" in total, the region has outstate legislators to thank for the result."

"Passed was a bill that would fund the RTA by enabling the authority to levy a fee as part of vehicle registration, but only if voters in the four counties approve it. The wording allows the RTA to charge up to $1.20 for each $1,000, or fraction of $1,000, of a vehicle's list price used in calculating the regular registration fee. It would be charged only to registrations within the RTA's district."

"Acquiring another transit agency also would require a public vote. Also under the bills, as written, no full or supermajority is needed to create a rapid-transit bus system."
ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:

"Democrats decided they would vote against or abstain from voting on all legislation they felt was also being rushed through the process, even if it was a bill or an issue they generally supported. This was their protest against the right-to-work legislation, since they did not have the votes to stop that."

"But, especially during this incredibly busy lame-duck session, there have been issues of importance to Southeast Michigan for which Democratic support was needed, including regional transit"

"On regional transit, it took three times before Republicans were able to muster the votes on their own. Previous attempts to pass it saw the majority floor leader clear the board and try again later."

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

"The 90-day deadline for a private investor consortium to assemble a plan to finance, build and operate a streetcar-style rail line on Woodward Avenue in downtown Detroit is largely informal, the group's leader said. Instead, M1 Rail's organizers will themselves decide whether to pursue their $125 million project or scrap it, said the effort's CEO, Matt Cullen. There is no official yes-no judgment by local, state or federal officials. 'I don't view it as we're trying to convince anybody,' Cullen said."

The city is no longer concerned with M1 and is pursuing the creation of a regional transit authority for a bus rapid transit system to secure federal funding.

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

Benefits of M1:

"Would link a number of Detroit's assets"

Economic development

Would compliment the bus rapid transit system proposed

"Private sector dollars can be counted by federal authorities as a local match for that larger transit system when it comes to making federal grants"

Unique situation for private investors to raise $100 million for a "major public infrastructure project"

VI. Jan 2013 – May 2013: The Regional Transit Authority


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

"Shanelle Jackson, a Detroit Democrat... was one of two Democratic House members who voted yes when legislation to create a regional transit authority for southeast Michigan squeaked through the Legislature on Dec. 6. That's the day Snyder outraged Democrats by announcing his support for fast-track passage of right-to-work legislation."

Jackson: ""It was the right thing to do," she said. "I had never seen so much opportunity come through for the city of Detroit."

"Jackson will be responsible for outreach to get the transit authority for southeast Michigan up and running. "She's got a passion for RTA, and she's got lots of background doing outreach," said [Jeff] Cranson[, spokesman for MDOT], adding he is not aware of any discussions between the administration and Jackson about her vote on Dec. 6."

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

TRU plans “to hold a rally at 1:30 p.m. that day in at the Rosa Parks Transit Center in Detroit. They will then begin marching at 2 p.m. along Michigan Avenue with banners and balloons. The transit authority was created by the state Legislature in the fall to oversee development of bus and rail transit in Wayne, Oakland, Macomb and Washtenaw counties.”

“According to a TRU news release, the group’s members plan to sit in on the Regional Transit Authority’s initial board meeting at the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments’ offices at 1001 Woodward, where the public can comment on how mass transit needs should be filled.”

Five additional public meetings are to be held April 17-30 in Berkley, Bloomfield Hills, Detroit and Ferndale to let people say where they’d like passenger stops located for a proposed rapid-transit bus system on Woodward, according to the Michigan Department of Transportation.

For more on those meetings, go to www.detroittransit.org.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

$25 million in federal funds will be delivered to the private proposal for the development of light-rail on Woodward. Ray LaHood will award the funds to the M-1 project.

First, Detroit leaders had to “agree to set up a regional transit authority that would usher in new cooperation and reform public transportation in southeast Michigan”. 

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ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

“Paul Hillegonds, a veteran lawmaker and businessman, will lead the regional transit authority that was created by the Legislature last year to try to improve public transportation in southeast Michigan, Gov. Rick Snyder announced during his State of the State address Wednesday.”

“The authority is designed to help better coordinate public transit and will have representatives from several counties in metro Detroit. The leaders of Wayne, Oakland, Macomb and Washtenaw counties each get two appointments to the authority. Detroit Mayor Dave Bing gets one, and Snyder gets to appoint the chairman.”

“Hillegonds said he was called about the transit authority position a few weeks ago. "I was surprised. ... I'm very excited about the opportunity," he said. "Great regions have coordinated public transit agencies.""

“It would coordinate the city and suburban bus service provided by the Detroit Department of Transportation and the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transit (SMART). It also would spearhead the creation of a light-rail line and bus rapid transit system. The authority would have the ability to seek millages to run public transportation, but each county would have to approve any request before it went on the ballot.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

“Why can't we have something like that?’ she said. "What is stopping us from getting this moving forward?” The 25-year-old from Hazel Park took part in a march Sunday in Ferndale with a few dozen young adults and teenagers who share concerns about local mass transit. Some of the marchers, who held signs and chanted as they walked near St. James Catholic Church, said they find the current system unreliable, with buses sometimes never arriving.”

“"I'd like to see more buses running and make sure they're on time," said Rasul
Zakie, 15, of Detroit.”

Inside the church, the marchers joined several hundred people with the Metro Coalition of Congregations -- an interfaith organization representing Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties -- who discussed how to improve regional mass transit, reduce gun violence and increase health care access.

Shauna Rushing (event organizer)


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:

“Apparently, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments didn't get the memo. Friday, that body (charged with managing federal transit funds while the RTA pulls itself together) is poised to dramatically alter the funding split between SMART, the suburban bus line, and the Detroit Department of Transportation, the city bus system.

The change could cripple DDOT, which is already limping, and leave thousands more city riders stuck without reliable transportation.

Right now, DDOT gets 65% of the federal money sent to southeast Michigan, which actually makes sense, because it is the largest transit agency in the state, with about 106,000 daily riders, according to the American Public Transit Association.

SMART has only about 35,000 riders; it gets 35% of the federal money.

SEMCOG says that needs to change, ostensibly because the Federal Transportation Administration has asked locals to come up with new funding formulas. SEMCOG's answer? To base the split on population, rather than ridership. DDOT would get 48% of the money; SMART would get 51%.

DDOT would lose $7 million in capital funding, enough to take dozens of buses off the road.”

“There's also a horrible set of political optics involved here. Mayor Dave Bing supported RTA against the wishes of a lot of Detroiters, who feared loss of hyper-local control (DDOT) would mean worse service for them. If the first decision made after RTA's passage confirms Detroiters' worst fears, it will be tougher down the road to gain their buy-in. A double-cross doesn't play well in city poli-
tics.”

On federal funds for M-1 Rail and the funding cuts to DDOT: “That may not be an intentional diversion, but you sure could not blame skeptical Detroiters for believing it might be. At minimum, the practical effect grossly reinforces the notion that leadership in the city, state and even Washington is more concerned with downtown and midtown (with their higher concentrations of wealth and ethnic diversity) than with the city's mostly poor, nearly all-black neighborhoods.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:

“State Rep. Kurt Heise, R-Plymouth Township, one of the lawmakers who voted against the RTA, said Thursday that he wants to give local communities the right to withdraw or opt into the transit authority as communities now do with the suburban SMART bus system. All of Macomb County participates in SMART, but 53 communities in Wayne and Oakland Counties opt out and don't pay the property tax millage for suburban buses, leaving scatter-shot bus service and reduced funding for SMART's operations.”

“Megan Owens, executive director of Transportation Riders United, said the RTA was created without the opt-out provision to prevent weaknesses that hurt SMART's ability to provide service.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:


“There's no question unified transit would be a vast improvement over the impractical, dueling bus systems that currently "serve" the region, with Detroit Department of Transportation buses in the city, SMART buses in the suburbs, and poor coordination between the two.”

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:

"What I have seen happen in Detroit is a transformation," U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood told a gathering of top civic and political leaders Friday at Wayne State University, which is on the $140-million M-1 Rail streetcar line's planned 3-mile route from downtown to New Center. "This is a day of celebration for this city."


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:

"But Ari Adler, spokesman for House Speaker Jase Bolger, R-Marshall, said Detroiters shouldn't hold their breath waiting for financial assistance from the state. 'If anyone is waiting for a cash bailout from Lansing, it's not going to happen," Adler said. "We've done a lot of things to help Detroit, like the lighting authority and the regional transit authority, but at this point, there's really nothing else for us to do.'"


KEYWORDS: REGIONAL TRANSIT

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

"U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood is expected to visit Detroit on Jan. 18 to announce around $25 million in federal funding will be made available for Detroit's light-rail streetcar project - a move that could help boost development in Midtown."

"Winning final approval in Michigan for the regional transit authority helped clear
the way for the federal funding - about $25 million - for the M-1 Woodward Avenue light-rail streetcar plan.”

"""RTA and M-1 overall would say that moving forward on robust public transportation solves a decades-long problem for the area and residents, and will be an economic engine for growing the local and regional economy," Sara Wurfel said. "M-1 would be a key complement to the RTA now under way after historic passage late this past year.""" - Sara Wurfel, spokeswoman for Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

"After three decades in the making, the Michigan Regional Transit Authority will officially meet for the first time today with the mission to improve transportation and find ways to pay for it."

“The RTA can raise money through special assessment districts or increasing vehicle registration fees - both of which voters would need to approve. The Legislature appropriated $250,000 for start-up costs.”

“Lisa Franklin, president of the Warriors on Wheels group that advocates for the disabled and Bing's representative on the authority, said the first year is going to be about figuring out the RTA's structure.

"I would like to sit down and look at what we want, how we want to connect the dots, what we want as far as rail," she said. "Once we do that, we need to figure out how much it's going to cost to fund it and figure out where we're going to get the money from.""


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY:

"""That's a huge milestone for the people of the Detroit region," LaHood said. "... In a tough economy, people need to have a lot of different forms of transporta-
tion. This means the Detroit region will be like the rest of America - have a regional transportation program."

"LaHood said M-1 advocates have raised $100 million from private sector sources."

"No community has ever raised $100 million for a project like this. That is unprecedented," he said. "When you think it was done in Detroit, one of the hardest hit, if not the hardest hit economy in the country, it's extraordinary."


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:
Metro Coalition of Congregations: "They came from different churches, many miles apart, but the 300 worshippers who gathered Sunday in Ferndale all had the same focus."

"Also on the group's agenda: lobby the newly formed Regional Transit Authority, which will oversee the bus rapid transit system and other bus service, to include a youth and clergy representative on a citizens advisory committee. Dozens marched near the Ferndale church before the meeting to draw attention to the need for mass transit."


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:
"Republicans argue suburbanites and outstate residents would rally to Snyder's financially responsible leadership. They note the GOP-led Legislature has helped Detroit by creating regional transit..." on Snyder's appointing an emergency financial manager.

ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:

New law takes effect: PA 388-390: Creates a Southeast Michigan Regional Transit Authority to coordinate and oversee public transportation in four counties, including a new Detroit light rail line. It can set up routes, terminals and stations and can levy a special assessment with approval of voters in the region.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:

“- The Metro Detroit Transit Workshop, an event for potential stakeholders in a regional transit system, is set for May 17-18 at the University of Detroit Mercy. https://community.udmercy.edu/transit”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

“Carmona, 43, has been executive director of the Woodward Avenue Action Association, a nonprofit aimed at bolstering economic development along historic Woodward Avenue, for the past 15 years.

Her tenure included the successful efforts to have Woodward designated a National Scenic Byway and an All-American Road.

She will join M1 on April 22 and will be responsible for "donor relations, investor relations and overall communications and community strategies," the organization said.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:

“The 10-member Michigan Regional Transit Authority Governing Board has
started developing a master plan for public transportation in Detroit and Wayne, Oakland, Macomb and Washtenaw counties, The Associated Press reported.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:

“Steven Potter, president and partner of Auburn-Hills law firm Potter, DeAgostino, O'Dea & Patterson, and Matthew Wirgau, former board member for the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation, were named to the Regional Transit Authority Governing Board.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY:

“Gov. Rick Snyder named former House Speaker Paul Hillegonds, senior vice president of corporate affairs at DTE Energy Co., as chairman of the Regional Transit Authority.


ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

On BRT in Cleveland: “But unlike Detroit - at least so far - Cleveland has invested in transit as a way to connect neighborhoods, get people to jobs more quickly and attract investment.

The new RTA legislation approved in December for Southeast Michigan is a big step toward those same goals.”
ORIENTATION TOWARDS TRANSIT: POSITIVE

SUMMARY:

“And he was relentlessly busy in the waning days of 2012, as Snyder was presented with nearly 300 bills during the lame-duck session that lawmakers approved and hoped he would sign. Chief among them were right-to-work legislation, Personal Property Tax reform, a new emergency manager law, a regional transit authority...”
Appendix B

The following Appendix provides an overview of all articles consulted online from the following newspapers: Metro Times, MLive and Huffington Post. Various keywords have been utilized for the search and are specified by article, along with the brief schematic summary of content and the indication of the overall orientation of articles (negative or positive towards the agency).


KEY WORD: DDOT public hearings

ORIENTATION TOWARDS THE AGENCY: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY

“The Detroit Department of Transportation is looking to modify several changes in bus service and is looking for public feedback before moving forward. The cuts come just weeks after a new, $22.5 million transit center opened in July, DDOT issued a statement detailing the cuts to local media outlets, but later redacted it…”

A series of public hearings have been scheduled in August 2009.

“DDOT is also encouraging public feedback by mail or e-mail… You can e-mail your responses to ddotcomments@detroitmi.gov or send snail mail to Detroit Department of Transportation, Attention: Service Planning Division, 1301 E. Warren, Detroit MI 48207”.


KEY WORD: public hearings

ORIENTATION TOWARDS THE AGENCY: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY

“We read with interest last week's news that Detroit Mayor Dave Bing is considering the elimination of city bus service on Sundays and Saturday nights as one way to help reduce a deficit estimated to be about $350 million…"
The good news is that this is still just a (horribly misguided) proposal and not a done deal. We can do things to help Bing, who is facing re-election, change his mind. Start with calling his office at 313-224-3400. Also, try to get to one of the public hearings being held at four locations around town next week. You can find details about when and where they are at TRU’s website at detroittransit.org or call DDOT at 313-933-1300.

This is a bus we all need to jump on.”


KEY WORD: DDOT public hearings

ORIENTATION TOWARDS THE AGENCY: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY

“The city on Wednesday announced that two public hearings would take place Feb. 24 on the proposed changes, which include ending bus service between 1 a.m. and 4 a.m. The city says some other bus routes could be eliminated.”


KEY WORD: DDOT public hearings

ORIENTATION TOWARDS THE AGENCY: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY

“The Detroit Department of Transportation will hold four public hearings on planned cuts to city bus service on Friday February 24… "The road could be bumpy as we implement some of these changes, but we're committed to making it happen," said Chief Financial Officer Chris Brown in a written statement. “We're doing this to improve our efficiency and keep fare rates the same.”
SUMMARY

DDOT's on-time performance is 65 percent, compared to the industry standard of 85 percent. Buses miss service on 33 percent of their stops every day... Councilman James Tate asked whether the mayor's administration would take disciplinary action for DDOT's poor performance... The administration had originally considered outsourcing DDOT's management permanently, according to Brown, but instead chose a temporary contract to observe and investigate the full extent of the department's problems... Brown also offered a justification for the bus service cuts, saying the department examined route usage and decided to cut the least-used routes and times, which included 1 a.m. to 4 a.m. service... Freeland said he intends to improve remaining bus service and timeliness and focus on more efficient bus maintenance. The department will begin implementing service evaluations in three weeks.

Freeland also expressed interest in switching over to a cashless fare system that would rely completely on swipe cards, but he said such a decision would require public input... "We need you to be involved," Freeland replied, "to give us some time and to hold our feet to the fire."

SUMMARY

"Poor bus service is putting Detroit's financial recovery at risk, according to a report issued Tuesday by transportation advocacy group Transit Riders United. The group gave the Detroit Department of Transportation a D- grade for timeliness in its second "report card" and claimed Mayor Dave Bing's administration"
has failed to keep promises to improve bus service... TRU Executive Director Megan Owens also criticized DDOT's pull out rate, a measure of functional buses running routes each day...


ORIENTATION TOWARDS THE AGENCY: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY

“The Detroit Department of Transportation is rolling out its new "415" plan Monday, promising bus service every 15 minutes on the city's four busiest routes.

...Wait times may decrease on the "415" routes, but riders are seeing less service on the city's other bus lines. In February, DDOT announced a series of major cuts that reduced weekday and weekend coverage on most routes and eliminated overnight bus service entirely.”


KEY WORD: public involvement and DDOT

ORIENTATION TOWARDS THE AGENCY: NEGATIVE

SUMMARY

“...I wish conversations about public transit involved the public. Great transit won't happen because a cadre of powerful people say so. While high-profile support is essential, making transit work is ultimately an act of the people. Commuters. Taxpayers. Hoi polloi who couldn't hope to access smoke-filled rooms where high-stakes conversations about transit are currently taking place. The first question is obvious: what do commuters want from a transit system? The next questions are just as important: what will it take for us to tax ourselves to fund transit? Better yet, what will it take for us to actually use the system? To the extent that we're even asking these questions, we're answering them with guesses and assumptions, blithely optimistic that private decisions (and private dollars) will build and sustain a public asset. As proven in so many others city, it doesn't work that
way. It's time to take transit issues out of their silos and into the real world.”


ORIENTATION TOWARDS THE AGENCY: NEGATIVE
SUMMARY

“...Waits have been getting longer for many of the roughly 107,000 to 117,000 daily passengers who depend on Detroit’s bus fleet. The city has lost about half of its bus service since 2005, according to Transportation Riders United, a rider advocacy group. Under the Detroit Department of Transportation’s new "415" plan, the city has increased service along its four busiest routes, with buses now running every 15 minutes, but the new schedule necessitated tradeoffs elsewhere. In March, the department, whose management had recently been privatized by the city, shortened hours on more than 30 routes and discontinued all service between 1 a.m. and 4 a.m.

...The problems are especially acute for the poor and disabled, and for workers who clock out late at night, when transportation options are already limited.

"Route rationalizations occur when DDOT adjusts routes to meet the demands of the public, assessed with ridership data, and to meet the confines of DDOT's budget," Ron Freeland, the agency’s chief executive, said in a statement to The Huffington Post. "Many of these services changes and modifications have been implemented since March."


KEY WORD: public campaign and DDOT

ORIENTATION TOWARDS THE AGENCY: NEUTRAL
SUMMARY

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“Bill Nojay lives in upstate New York, where he's a conservative radio talk show host five days a week and is campaigning for a seat in the state assembly.

And for the last seven months, he's been running the Detroit Department of Transportation as its chief operating officer.

That is until Tuesday, when The Detroit News called Mayor Dave Bing's office to ask about Nojay's side jobs. Two hours after the inquiry, Bing's staff issued a statement saying Nojay was no longer working for the department.”


KEY WORD: DDOT public hearings

ORIENTATION TOWARDS THE AGENCY: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY

“Detroit's Department of Transportation implemented extensive cuts to bus service last month, and further cuts are on the way. DDOT will hold public hearings Thursday to announce new service changes... Occupy Detroit's Stephen Boyle, who organizes with the Transit working group and uses DDOT as his primary form of transportation, explained why the group was tying a memorial for Dr. King to an event about public transit. "Public transportation is a human right," he said. "Martin Luther King ... fought for rights for all people." Boyle said Occupy Detroit wants to see the restoration of DDOT's overnight service. "They've sacrificed people's jobs and health in the process [of making cuts]," he said.”


KEY WORD: DDOT public hearings

ORIENTATION TOWARDS THE AGENCY: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY

“In order to comply with laws governing service changes, DDOT will hold four
public hearings on Friday, Feb. 24 at the Northwest Activities Center at 18100 Meyers Road and Wayne County Community College at 5901 Conner St. Each location will hold two sessions, one at 11 a.m. and another at 6 p.m.

The hearings replace DDOT's regularly scheduled monthly public meeting, originally set for Feb. 16. A complete list of service changes and route alternatives will be available starting Feb. 17 at DDOT's main office, Detroit Public Library branches and Community Access Centers. They will also be online at the DDOT website, and comments can be sent to ddotcomments@detroitmi.gov.”


KEY WORD: SMART public hearings
ORIENTATION TOWARDS THE AGENCY: NEUTRAL
SUMMARY

“In public hearings held prior to today's changes, SMART officials said fare increases were necessary to prevent cuts to services... In more SMART dealings, The Oakland Press reports that Oakland County Commissioners have authorized a millage renewal proposal for 23 communities that are serviced by SMART. The board, however, struck down a proposed countywide transportation tax that would have expanded service and closed some route gaps. Commissioners representing communities that are not served by SMART spoke out against the proposal.”


KEY WORD: SMART public hearings
ORIENTATION TOWARDS THE AGENCY: NEUTRAL
SUMMARY

“New York activists Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer last month won a temporary injunction against the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation, which initially denied their application for bus ads that seemed to characterized Islam as a violent religion and encouraged Muslims to leave the faith…” SMART service helps people in their daily lives by getting them to work, school and medical appointments," General Manager John Hertel said in a statement on the appeal Monday. "We don't think people who ride SMART and go about their daily life should be confronted with any political advertising at any time. Our primary purpose is to provide bus service, commercial advertising is incidental to that."


KEY WORD: SMART public hearings

ORIENTATION TOWARDS THE AGENCY: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY

“Proposed service cuts include the elimination of select weekday, Saturday and Sunday routes, along with the termination of several routes at the Detroit city limits. SMART plans to hold three public hearings in November before reducing service in December. With property taxes and government funding unlikely to rebound any time soon, Free Press columnist Jeff Gerritt says the pending cuts should serve as a call to action prompting local leaders to finally get serious about forming a regional transportation authority.”


KEY WORD: TRU public hearings

ORIENTATION TOWARDS THE AGENCY: NEUTRAL
SUMMARY

This article faces the problem of cost and time needed for the construction of the Woodward Light Rail project from Jefferson Avenue to 8 Mile Road “…TRU, along with the Michigan Environmental Council and Transportation for America, are in the midst of hosting a series of community forums where people can learn more about the project and ask questions that Owens and others answer when they can. They're focusing on the first phase: the Jefferson to New Center segment, as the configuration of the southern terminus isn't finalized — and it hasn't been decided if the track will run at curbside or in the middle of the street. Meanwhile, part of the New Starts application process, which city officials hope will eventually fund the second phase, is the recently completed preliminary environmental impact statement that was formally presented Feb. 12, at two hearings attended by about 400 people at Detroit Public Library.

Attendees viewed poster-sized renderings of proposed routes — including where track would run in the street (curbside or in the middle) and the configuration of the tracks downtown, which has not been finalized. Federal and city officials also presented the results of the preliminary environmental impact study released earlier this year. The study, required by the federal New Starts process, found no major negative environmental impacts from the project. Public comments were limited to three minutes. "A response to all verbal and written comments received by the March 14 deadline will be published in the final environmental impact statement scheduled for completion in early May 2011," says Tricia Harr, a planner with the Federal Transit Authority, a division of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Owens calls the process "an accelerated timeline" and says it's evidence the federal government is interested in the Detroit project. "But there does need to be a financial plan," she says. "The first phase is pretty solid in terms of both the construction and operational funds. Extending it, there will need to be new revenue somewhere, and it's a little unclear right now where that will be from."


KEY WORD: TRU campaign

ORIENTATION TOWARDS THE AGENCY: POSITIVE
SUMMARY

This article lists a series of non-profit organizations and coalitions that “are doing environmental justice-related work in Detroit and southeast Michigan. This non-profit focuses on environmental literacy and helping people understand how to adopt sustainable lifestyles… Advocating for better public transit and increased access to the existing systems, TRU also seeks more mass transit options for the region. Mass transit improves urban neighborhoods, ensures transportation equity and improves quality of life, TRU believes.”


KEY WORD: TRU public hearings

ORIENTATION TOWARDS THE AGENCY: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY

“Members of the advocacy group Transportation Riders United (TRU) rallied in front of Detroit City Hall Tuesday to deliver a Valentine's Day message about the need for improved bus service. The group was responding to rumors that DDOT's recently contracted private-sector management firm plans to cut employees and overnight bus service… Megan Owens, TRU's executive director, said members showed up to hold Mayor Dave Bing to a promise made three months earlier to improve bus service in Detroit. Owens added that TRU had hoped to hand the mayor a valentine with a message about bus service, but were turned away at the door to his offices. "Not only are they not improving service and planning more cuts," she said, "they're cutting bus riders literally and figuratively."

Other TRU members spoke before City Council Tuesday to share their concerns about the quality of bus service in Detroit. At the meeting, Mayor Bing's spokeswoman Denise Gardener said rumors about the city scrapping weekend bus service entirely were untrue. She said there would be "reductions, but no eliminations." TRU members also raised questions about Parsons Brinckerhoff, which was contracted in January to run DDOT but has since subcontracted to another firm, Envisurage… After delivering TRU's valentine to Bing, Owens headed to Lansing to participate in the first hearing on a potential Regional Transit Authority, a system proposed by Gov. Rick Snyder that would coordinate mass transit in Metro Detroit. She said TRU also planned to present a valentine to
state Treasurer Andy Dillon, who is overseeing Detroit's Emergency Manager Review Board. If the board decides to recommend an emergency manager for Detroit, that manager would ultimately be responsible for running DDOT. "We want to make sure no matter who is in charge of buses that they know we want better service," Owens said.


KEY WORD: Metropolitan Organizing Strategy Enabling Strength

ORIENTATION TOWARDS THE AGENCY: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY

"Public transportation advocates are turning up the heat on lobbying efforts after the state Senate approved a bundle of legislation that would create Southeast Michigan's first Regional Transit Authority (RTA) in history... Megan Owens, Executive Director of Transportation Riders United traveled to Lansing on Wednesday to lobby on behalf of the legislation with a coalition of about 40 people that included members of the Michigan Suburbs Alliance, the Sierra Club and the faith-based social justice advocacy group MOSES (Metropolitan Organizing Strategy Enabling Strength).

The group launched their efforts on the capitol steps that morning with a press conference that included a sing-a-long of a newly-unearthed Motown gem "There Ain't No Mountain High Enough To Keep Us From An RTA." Afterwards, they lobbied the offices of all 110 state house reps and sat in on a hearing of State House Transportation Committee that included testimony on the RTA bills. They hope to see action on the package before the legislature's current lame duck session comes to an end."


KEY WORD: Metropolitan Organizing Strategy Enabling Strength

ORIENTATION TOWARDS THE AGENCY: NEUTRAL
SUMMARY

“Push for a regional transit authority gains traction locally… Joining Didorosi on the bus ride last week were older activists like Reese, a suburban businessman, a representative of the nonprofit Michigan Suburbs Alliance, and a few twentysomething organizers from the faith-based group MOSES (an acronym for Metropolitan Organizing Strategy Enabling Strength). MOSES is involved in the issue of transportation because its member congregations have said loud and clear that it's an issue that has a huge impact on the people they serve.

Also on the bus was Megan Owens, executive director of the nonprofit advocacy group Transportation Riders United. Like the others aboard, she's hopeful the RTA legislation will make it past the obstructionists controlling the Legislature and land on Snyder's desk. Getting it there, though, is going to take pressure, both from the top down and the bottom up. Business leaders, politicians and grassroots activists need to exert all the influence they can to help the GOP leadership in the House and Senate see the light.”


KEY WORD: Michigan Suburbs Alliance public hearings

ORIENTATION TOWARDS THE AGENCY: NEUTRAL

SUMMARY

“…Last week, Bicycle Advocacy Day in Lansing brought Michigan's three statewide cycling advocacy groups to the Capitol to lobby for bike-friendly legislation for the first time. About 80 people from the League of Michigan Bicyclists, the Michigan Mountain Biking Association and the Michigan Trails and Greenways Association rode the several miles from Michigan State University's campus to the Capitol… Ferndale has a citizens' group drafting a possible ordinance for the City Council to adopt, says Melanie Piana, associate director of the Michigan Suburbs Alliance, who spoke at a hearing in favor of the legislation.”
...Tom Barwin, then city manager for the city of Ferndale, looked forward to that promise being fulfilled. But he never saw it. Now manager for the village of Oak Park on the outskirts of Chicago, Barwin was a driving force behind formation of a coalition of older suburbs surrounding Detroit in 2002. "When I was in Ferndale, we did what I thought was the closest thing to a miracle Detroit could ever hope for by forming the Michigan Suburbs Alliance," says Barwin. The nonprofit organization brought together older, inner-ring suburbs beginning to experience some of the same problems Detroit had been dealing with for decades. With issues such as smart growth and regional mass transit atop its agenda, and almost a million people in the cities represented, the group offered the prospect of being a powerful ally for Detroit..."


"The Downtown Detroit Partnership will tell some 900 civic and business leaders on Wednesday what its vision for what downtown Detroit will look like in 2016. The DDP will also give attendees a look at its new brand at its annual meeting, taking place at the Detroit Marriott at the Renaissance Center in the Renaissance Ballroom from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m."
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