

# Myths and Facts: Public Transit Agreement

**MYTH:** The proposed transportation agreement would require that Ann Arbor turn over the tax millage that supports our buses to a new Transit Authority.

**FACT: Ann Arbor's millage CANNOT be used to subsidize out-county services.** The Public Transportation Agreement protects Ann Arbor from losing any existing service if a new transit agency is created

**MYTH:** The proposal could have a detrimental effect on the bus service in Ann Arbor.

**FACT: The Public Transportation Agreement GUARANTEES that Ann Arbor will maintain its current level of service.**

**MYTH:** Ann Arbor will not be able to unilaterally withdraw from the Public Transportation Agreement.

**FACT: Ann Arbor is NOT obligated to join or participate in the transit authority.** The Public Transportation Agreement merely provides a transparent framework for discussions to continue and sets clear goals that must be met before a new transit authority can be created. Nothing else.

**MYTH:** Ann Arbor residents are essentially giving up control of its taxes to fund a county wide transit system.

**FACT: If a new transit authority were to be created, Ann Arbor would be the DOMINANT entity.** Ann Arbor would have five more board members than the next largest district and six more board members than all other districts.

**MYTH:** The taxes of Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti will be used to fund bus service to an area 25 times their size.

**FACT: The Transit Master Plan includes substantial SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS in both Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti. Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti's current funding will protect and maintain its current service.** Any additional funding approved would be used to build on existing service, help to bring more workers into Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti's job centers, and create a more efficient transit system for Washtenaw County

**MYTH:** The first 5-year phase of a regional transportation plan will cost half a billion dollars.

**FACT: This figure is being confused with what's been reported as an *estimated* cost for the entire 30-year Transit Master Plan.** The countywide [Financial Task Force](#) is exploring service funding options, and has not yet identified any specific costs associated with a 5-year plan.

## **Additional Resources**

See <http://www.movingyouforward.org/news-resources/Public-Hearing> for more information

### **Background:**

In order to create a transit system that works for all Washtenaw County residents, there needs to be a **framework** for communities to work together. This framework is detailed in the 4-Party Public Transit Agreement that Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, Washtenaw County and The Ann Arbor Transportation Authority (TheRide) are being asked to sign. The agreement ensures the process of moving toward countywide transit:

- Is clear and **transparent**
- Is **fair** to citizens
- Uses public resources in an **efficient** way
- Maintains **local control**, but allows municipalities to **work together**

TheRide started the process of moving toward countywide transit in 2011 by working with local jurisdictions from Washtenaw County to create an unincorporated countywide transit (u196) Board. Communities in 7 transit districts helped select new transit representatives to serve on this board through cooperative (Act 7) agreements.

Now that a an unincorporated board is established, AATA is working with the County and cities of Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti in the month of January to finalize details of the 4-Party Public Transit Agreement and Articles of Incorporation. These cities are involved because they both contribute a property millage to the authority that will be needed to maintain their services. This agreement lays out a process and the conditions that need to be met to transition from city-authority to a countywide-authority.

The proposed steps are as follows:

- **u196 Board** will complete & publish a 5-Year Transit Improvement Program in 2012
- Then, **u196 Board** will request **County Clerk** to file Articles of Incorporation (an administrative role)
- **County Clerk** will file Articles of Incorporation, creating a new 196 authority:
  - New Authority with boundaries of Washtenaw County, with **no operations or funding** until funding request is approved by voters
  - Incorporated 196 Board, selected by districts, would govern the new authority and be subject to State and Federal transit statutes
  - Municipalities and county would **not** take on liabilities, not provide Full Faith and Credit, nor make request for funding.
  - **Any municipality may opt out.** Certified letters are required by law to be sent to every municipality. *Opt-Out communities would not be taxed or receive transit service.*
- **Then, if and when “countywide” funding is established**

- **Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti** would transfer their millages to new Authority to maintain their current service

This arrangement allows for the 196 Board to make a funding request to voters once per calendar year through the end of 2014. If there is no countywide funding established by that time, this agreement will expire and TheRide would continue to operate its existing services.