

Introduction to MPTA
February 2009

What is MPTA?

The Michigan Public Transit Association is a dynamic, proactive, organization that advocates on behalf of the state's public transportation providers, industry suppliers, and riders. MPTA offers training and educational resources for its members to better advance the availability, quality, and effectiveness of public transportation for Michigan residents and visitors. MPTA is a resource for legislators, MDOT, transit operators, the media, and advocates interested in public transportation's demonstrated impact as an essential part of Michigan's infrastructure.

Who is MPTA?

We are the state's oldest and largest public transportation association, representing over 50 urban systems, rural dial-a-rides and specialized service providers throughout the state. Our membership also includes approximately 50 state and international companies that provide goods and services to the public transportation industry.

What benefits does public transportation bring to the state?

Driving Our Economy

- Public transportation in Michigan is a \$560 million industry that directly employs more than 5,800 people. Public transportation is available in every county in Michigan.
- Michigan's investment in public transportation brings back approximately \$3.5 billion in economic benefit to the state. Different studies peg the return on investment at anywhere from \$3 to \$9--but all agree that you get back more than you put in.
- 77% of New Economy companies rate public transportation as "very important" when deciding where to locate.
- Public transportation saved nearly 6 million hours of congestion time in 2005 in the Detroit and Grand Rapids areas alone.
- A recent national survey shows that households that are likely to use public transportation daily save over \$8,400 each year compared to a household with no access to transportation.
- High-speed fixed guideway systems, like those under development in Grand Rapids and Southeastern Michigan, are magnets for development and urban revitalization.
- Dollars spent on public transportation in Michigan are put back into our communities. Companies such as Cummins Bridgeway and American Seating in Grand Rapids, Detroit Diesel, Midwest Bus Corporation in Owosso, EMP in Escanaba and others businesses located throughout Michigan are supported by public transportation. Employees of public transportation and vendors in turn use their wages to purchase goods and services, extending public transportation's economic reach.
- Public transportation takes people to jobs, stores, medical and entertainment venues--all of which puts more money into Michigan's economy.

Moving our People

- In the last six years alone, public transportation use has risen 22% -- faster than vehicle miles traveled on our roadways and airline passenger miles logged over the same period.
- High gas prices made many Michigan citizens take a second look at public transportation. First attracted by the savings, many systems report that riders have stayed on even though prices have fallen in recent months.

- The Michigan senior population is expected to increase 44% from 2000 to 2020. Public transportation is an essential part of the services our aging population needs. Viable, accessible public transportation allows seniors to better maintain their independence, their physical and mental well being, and even their residences, by giving them the mobility options they need.
- Public transit systems are often included among “first responders” in times of emergency. Recent examples include nursing home and apartment fire evacuations in Flint, Owosso, Kalamazoo and the Upper Peninsula, evacuation of injured and stranded motorists along I-96 when a multiple car pileup in fog shut down the highway, and moving stranded air travelers to lodging when 9-11 grounded national flights at K.I. Sawyer airport outside of Marquette.

Protecting Our Environment

- A bus is twice as efficient as an automobile for every passenger mile traveled. Those who ride public transportation reduce their carbon footprint by eliminating travel that would have otherwise occurred in a private vehicle.
- If Americans used public transportation for just 10% of their trips, the United States would reduce its dependence on foreign oil imports by 40%.
- Riding public transportation far exceeds the benefits of other energy-saving household activities, such as using energy-efficient light bulbs, adjusting thermostats, or using energy-efficient appliances.
- Public transportation contributes to Michigan’s green technology industry and jobs growth. The Mass Transit Authority in Flint is currently partnering with Michigan State University, Kettering University’s Center for Fuel Cell Systems and Powertrain Integration, and spin-off companies like Global Energy Innovations, to research hydrogen fuel cells and other future public transportation energy sources.

What are the challenges?

Developing a stable, sustainable funding source that allows for inflationary cost increases and system growth based on community needs. Bus operating expenses are funded primarily through local dollars from fares, millages, contracts for service, and other sources. However, state funds are an important part of the equation. Transit usage is growing across the state. Paradoxically, the more that Michigan residents choose transit, the fewer dollars are captured from gas taxes, meaning less money is available to support these systems. As demand grows and services are put in place to meet those needs, we must have a mechanism in place that aligns funding levels more closely with mode choice.

Funding for the implementation of high-speed, high-capacity services that doesn’t negatively impact existing services. Projects are currently underway in Southeastern Michigan and the Grand Rapids area and may be pursued by other regions in the future. We must support communities that choose these progressive transportation systems that are proven to attract new riders, promote economic development, create jobs, and reduce traffic congestion. But this cannot occur at the expense of the smaller, more traditional bus systems upon which many Michigan residents depend.

Promoting a safe and secure environment for bus operators and passengers. Bills have been introduced in previous legislative sessions that would increase penalties for assaults and other criminal activities aboard transit vehicles. Because on-board assaults threaten not only those on the vehicle, but also lives and property in the vicinity of the bus, MPTA will continue to advocate for these changes to the criminal code.