



THE VEHICLE

Washtenaw Area Transportation Study

January 2010

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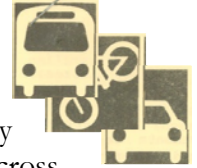
Good luck, Sarah!

Sarah Pressprich, a recent graduate from Cornell's Master in City and Regional Planning program, has just completed a two and a half month internship at WATS. While with WATS, she wrote the 2008 crash report and 2009 obligated project report; created materials for the 35th Anniversary celebration, reviewed plans, and recruited for the new Freight Technical Committee seat. She has proved to be an adept and versatile member of the WATS team.



We wish her luck on her future endeavors—she is looking for a full time planning job and would love to be able to stay in the area. If you need a great new planner, contact her at spressprich@gmail.com.

WATS Celebrates 35th Anniversary



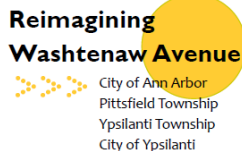
Washtenaw Area Transportation Study works with communities and agencies across Washtenaw County and the region to develop and implement forward thinking transportation planning.

2009 marked the 35th anniversary of WATS coordinated planning process and the occasion was celebrated at the December meeting of the WATS Policy Committee. Terri Blackmore, WATS executive director delivered a short presentation on the agency, which was followed by a luncheon. In attendance were past committee chairs, executive directors and others involved in the formation of WATS and the agency's history.

Pictures from the event are available on the WATS blog, miwats.blogspot.com. Please feel free to share any of your remembrances of the agency in the blog post.

Reimagining Washtenaw Avenue

This exciting new project from the Washtenaw County Office of Strategic Planning (project manager Anya Dale) explores opportunities to transform Washtenaw Avenue (M-17) between the Cities of Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor into an anchor with high quality transit that retains talent and attracts new development to the region.



The project benefits from the input of leaders in local government, business, public interest groups, community service associations and individual citizens. Data gathered confirms this corridor consistently has the highest AATA ridership for the past 30 years, has pockets of high residential density near transit stops, and has accessibility to major regional educational institutions and employers. At the same time, the corridor suffers from a sprawling auto-centric development pattern, higher than average building vacancy rates, over 100 acres of underutilized land and large gaps in the sidewalk system with failing or absent pedestrian connections. Washtenaw Avenue has the potential for infill and redevelopment to replace the segregated, auto-centric development patterns



With such a diverse and integral regional connection, the Reimagining Washtenaw Avenue project explores a comprehensive mix of improvements *continued on page 4*



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Improving Non-Motorized Networks: Pedestrian Crossing Islands and HAWK Signals

Walking is the most basic form of transportation—even if you use cars or buses to get around town, eventually you must get out and onto your feet. Kids get off the school bus, people walk into work or to the store, casual strollers take in the downtown, others simply enjoy walking for exercise or for fun. These pedestrians, more often than not, must cross streets. Cars and pedestrians don't mix well: those on foot are small, slow, and unprotected compared to motorized vehicles.

Long blocks, multiple lanes, and high vehicle speeds create a particularly challenging situation for pedestrians on arterial roads. A signalized intersection may be too far away, but crossing 4-lanes of cars moving at 40 miles an hour can be a difficult choice. Simply making a crosswalk increases pedestrian visibility, but also pedestrian confidence—unfortunately! The speed of traffic on arterial roads is often too high for a car to safely see a pedestrian and stop in time. To provide safer crossings in Washtenaw County, agencies have installed pedestrian refuge islands and are considering installing HAWK signals.

Pedestrian Refuge Islands

One solution, recently implemented in several places in Washtenaw County, is to create a raised pedestrian “island” or “refuge” in the center of a busy road. This island allows pedestrians to cross the first section of the road, pause safely, and then cross the second half of the road; dealing with only one direction of traffic at a time and effectively shortening the distance to cross the street.



Oak Valley Road, Pittsfield Township
(Google Street View)

The raised median, signs, and optional plantings signal to drivers to be cautious and to look out for pedestrians. The raised median also causes a perceived narrowing of the roadway, slowing traffic slightly. Pedestrian islands may be located at an intersection, but are especially effective when located mid-block, where signalized intersections are far from each other. The FHWA reports that this kind of facility has been demonstrated to decrease the percentage of pedestrian crashes and casualties by 57-82%, the highest impact on reducing crashes for non-signalized intersections.

HAWK Signals

Washtenaw County agencies are examining another pedestrian crossing innovation: the HAWK signal (High-intensity Activated crossWalk), a signal that stops traffic only when pedestrians are present. Many roads with high speeds, poor visibility, or limited traffic gaps are difficult for pedestrians to cross safely, but do not warrant a traditional stoplight.



HAWK Signal Configuration

Installing a HAWK signal allows traffic to flow uninterrupted until a pedestrian actuates the signal—the signal is normally off. When a pedestrian presses the crossing button, the signal blinks yellow to indicate caution, soon turning red to stop vehicles at the crossing. After a set interval, the red lights start to blink, indicating that vehicles should stop, but may proceed if the intersection is clear. Then, when the crossing interval is over, the signal turns off.

Sign up for Green Vehicle

Thanks to all who have selected the electronic version of *THE VEHICLE*! To change your subscription from the print to electronic version, email Nick Sapkiewicz at sapkiewicz@miwats.org with “Green Newsletter” in the subject line.



New WATS Technical Committee Representation

WATS' already diverse representation will be expanded at the Technical Subcommittee's next meeting in February 2010 when five new special interest seats are added to the committee including Senior Community, Disabled Community, Environment, Freight, and Non-motorized representative.

Applications for the new positions were vetted by WATS staff and approved for a one year term at the December Policy Committee meeting. New committee members include Senior Community - Wes Armbruster, Peoples Express, Disabled Community - Dave Reed, Select Ride, Environment - Tim Fischer, Michigan Environmental Council, Freight - Lance Hagler, Con-Way Freight, Non-motorized - Larry Deck, Washtenaw Biking and Walking Coalition.



Safety Concerns Prompt Bus Route Detour

Concern for passenger safety along Washtenaw Avenue has prompted the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority (AATA) to develop a long-term detour for its northbound Route 22. The Route 22 Pittsfield Boulevard bus stop will no longer be served.

The changes were made effective December 8 and should reduce the temptation for passengers to jaywalk across Washtenaw Avenue through traffic to transfer to other routes.

“For the past five months, Route 22 has been detoured off Washtenaw through Pittsfield Village to allow passengers to transfer to Routes 4 and 7 along Washtenaw,” Ford said.

“On December 8, under a new agreement with the Glencoe Crossing shopping center, the Route 22 North Connector buses will be detoured slightly east to loop through the shopping center. This will allow Route 22 passengers travelling toward downtown Ann Arbor using either Route 4 or Route 7 to transfer at the bus shelter there, without crossing Washtenaw. It will also permit Route 22 passengers travelling toward Ypsilanti to catch Route 4 or Route 7 buses at the stop just east of Carpenter on Washtenaw.”

Southbound Route 22 buses will remain on their current routing. AATA recommends that passengers transfer to Route 4 or Route 7 at Washtenaw Avenue and Huron Parkway or transfer to eastbound buses on the south side of Washtenaw east of Pittsfield Boulevard.

Although Route 22 will no longer serve the bus stop on Pittsfield Boulevard, it will continue to serve the bus stop located on the north side of Washtenaw in front of Belle Tire at the currently scheduled departure times. At the stop on the south side of Washtenaw in front of Mattress World and Frame Factory, Route 22 will be scheduled to depart at 10 and 40 minutes past the hour, but will not wait for transfers from other buses.

Ford said, “The safety of our passengers is the driving reason for this change. It will serve as an interim solution until we complete development and installation of a permanent bus transfer location on Washtenaw Avenue.”

Ann Arbor Transportation Authority Press Release

WATS Library Additions

- Saline Downtown Blueprint, Hyyette Palma - 2005
- US-23 Corridor Feasibility Study, MDOT - November 2009
- Fuller Road Station Concept Plan Report, JJR - October 2009
- Five-Year Transportation Program, MDOT - November 2009
- Complete Streets Technical Report, Genesee County Metropolitan Alliance - 2009



Asset Management

In 2002, the State of Michigan appointed the Asset Management Council to administer a data collection process requiring regional transportation agencies to conduct an annual surface rating program in partnership with MDOT, MPOs and the County Road Commission. The data gathered is uploaded to a statewide database and used to evaluate investment strategies maximizing the effectiveness of available resources.

WATS staff, along with representatives from the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Washtenaw County Road Commission (WCRC) completed the asset management data collection for 2009 in the beginning of September. Half of the paved federal aid eligible roads were rated, which totals about 919 miles of surface ratings.

Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating System (PASER) is used to assign a rating from "1" (failed road) to "10" (new road/complete reconstruction). The Washtenaw County information is combined with data from the entire state and a report is provided to the State Asset Management Council. The 2003-2009 data is available for each community at www.miwats.org. WATS provides Community ratings using descriptive categories from "Excellent" to "Failed." The Recommended Action graph shows the recommended action for the pavement based on the rating. The map on page 5 depicts the 2009 surface ratings. For more information visit www.michigan.gov/mdot

Reimagining Washtenaw Avenue (continued)

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that can be implemented to revitalize Washtenaw Avenue and spark redevelopment in the region.

Reimagining Washtenaw Avenue objectives pursue a vision of a redesigned corridor with improvements that could include: increased height and density, integrated transit access, non-motorized connections, infill redevelopment that builds on existing infrastructure, mixed use buildings and enhanced transit service. These tangible measures of successfully integrated transit oriented design (TOD) planning practices lay the foundation for a self-sustaining "talent center" benefiting the region economically and culturally.

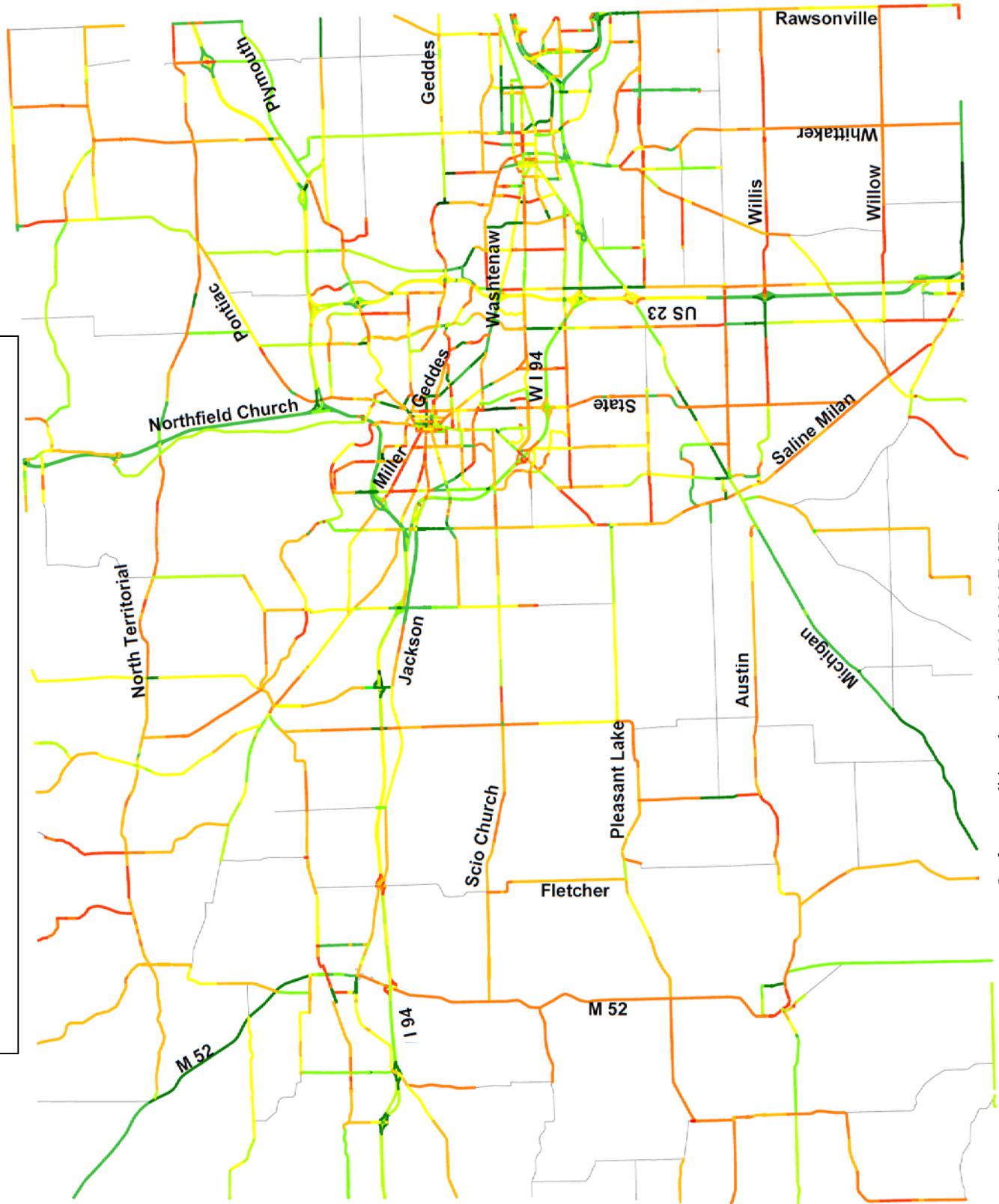
To achieve this vision communities are working together to promote an active downtown setting, encourage infill development and mixed use centers, and to plan and restructure the Washtenaw public street corridor to create a more intimate active downtown setting on the lands adjacent to and served by the Washtenaw Avenue corridor.

The Reimagining Washtenaw Avenue project assists local decision makers in implementing the changes that would achieve the vision of a reimagined Washtenaw Avenue. The final report includes an implementation matrix with specific recommended actions, as well as identified potential resources to guide change along Washtenaw Avenue. The improvements will help revitalize adjacent existing neighborhoods and grow new mixed use neighborhoods. The Reimagining Washtenaw Avenue report summarizes the existing conditions, vision and recommended action steps for use by the local communities along the corridor and local transportation agencies to implement the vision.

As the project continues to move forward, upcoming actions include: coordinating public investment to improve alternative transportation, enhancing the visual and experiential qualities of the corridor, developing a toolkit with incentives to encourage infill development and to work with existing and new partnerships to complete demonstration projects.

For more information on the Reimagining Washtenaw Avenue project please visit <http://annarborregionsuccess.org/action-teams/washtenaw-avenue-talent-center>

2009 Asset Management Surface Condition Ratings



Surface conditions based on 2008-2009 PASER ratings

Bus service changes approved by AATA Board

The Ann Arbor Transportation Authority (AATA) Board of Directors approved service changes to its Routes 2 and 2X bus service to alleviate overcrowding on Route 2 and providing service to the new Park & Ride Lot at the Plymouth Road-US 23 interchange.

The service changes take effect Sunday, January 24. All weekday trips will initiate and terminate at the new Plymouth Road Park & Ride Lot. Additional trips were added at peak times to help relieve overcrowding.

The approved service changes include new designations of Routes 2 and 2X as Routes 2A, 2B and 2C as follows:

Route 2A – Plymouth/Green North

All weekday trips will initiate and terminate at the new Plymouth Road Park & Ride Lot.

No change in service for the portion of the route between the Blake Transit Center and the Plymouth-Nixon intersection.

Between the Plymouth-Nixon intersection and the Plymouth Park & Ride lot, buses will serve Nixon and Green roads before going to the Park & Ride.

No change in service frequency or hours of service.

During evenings and weekends, buses will serve both the Green and Plymouth Road Park & Ride Lots.

Route 2B – Plymouth/Georgetown

All weekday trips initiate and terminate at the new Plymouth Road Park & Ride Lot.

No change in service for the portion of the route between the Blake Transit Center and the Plymouth-Nixon intersection.

Between the Plymouth-Nixon intersection and the Plymouth Road Park & Ride lot, buses will serve Plymouth Road after serving the Park & Ride.

No change in service frequency or hours of service.

During evenings and weekends buses will serve both the Green Road and Plymouth Road Park & Ride Lots.

The primary change from the original proposal involves the current Route 2X and the original proposal for a new Route 23. These will be combined into a single Route 2C.

Route 2C – Plymouth/Green South

For current Route 2X riders:

Route 2C will continue to provide service between Plymouth Mall and Kerrytown/downtown via the Broadway Bridge serving Central Campus.

Service will operate every 30 minutes during peak hours and every 60 minutes midday.

Route 2C will operate in both directions (to and from downtown).

One additional peak-hour trip will be added.

Service will be extended to the Green Road Park & Ride Lot.

Buses will serve every stop along the route except the stop at Traverwood/ Huron Parkway.

For current riders of Route 2 south of Plymouth Road (Green Road south to Glazier way, Glazier Way and Earhart Road):

Route 2C will continue to provide service to and from downtown using Washington Street, but will not directly serve the Blake Transit Center.

Service will operate every 30 minutes during peak hours and every 60 minutes midday.

Service will not directly serve the U-M Medical Center; transfers to the U-M Intercampus Route can be made at the Green Road Park & Ride Lot.

Route 2C will not operate on weekends. Instead, Saturday afternoon service will be provided all the way to Earhart Road on Route 22.

Routes 2A and 2B will provide service as far south as the Green Road Park & Ride Lot on evenings and weekends.

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South of Baxter Road, midday service frequency will be reduced from every 30 minutes to every 60 minutes.

Information on all AATA routes and schedules is available at www.TheRide.org or 734.996.0400.

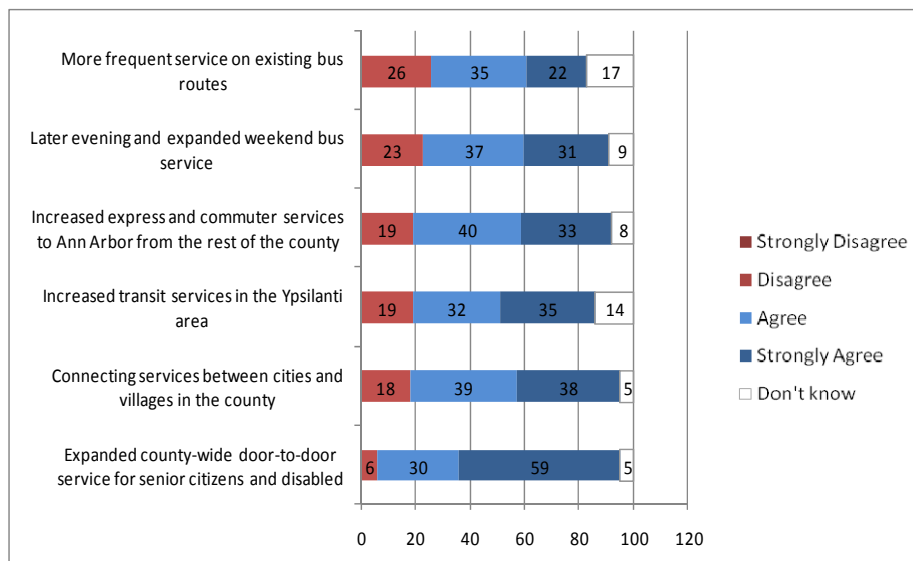
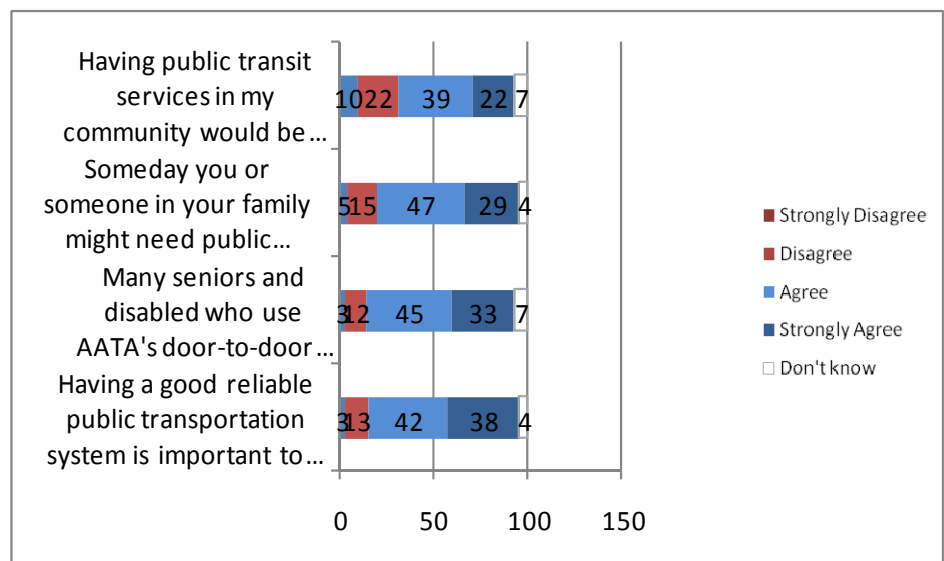
Ann Arbor Transportation Authority Press Release

AATA Transit Survey Results

AATA has recently issued preliminary data from the 2009 Washtenaw County Transit Public Opinion Survey. Researchers interviewed over 1,000 registered voters from throughout the county, including areas not yet covered by the AATA. Key findings include:

- The majority of voters think it is extremely important or very important to provide transit services in the county, 72% rated transit service as extremely (35%) or very (37%) important.
- AATA is viewed favorably in the county with a total of 65% of those surveyed having a very favorable opinion or somewhat favorable opinion.
- AATA’s “job rating” is also favorable, with 59% of respondents rating job performance as excellent or good
- Of all county voters, 40% say that they or another person in their household have used AATA in the past year.

Surveyors asked voters to agree/disagree with several statements supporting transit (right). While majority of voters agreed with all the statements, the most positive responses came from supporting senior or disabled citizens (78% agreement) and attracting jobs to the area (80% agreement).



Surveyors also asked voters which AATA services would be most important if a levy was passed (left). All services received over 57% support from county voters, though connecting cities and villages in the county (77%), expanding county-wide door-to-door service for senior or disabled citizens (77%), and increased transit in Ypsilanti (67%) were indicated as being the most important services to increase.

Pedestrian Crossing Safety Tips (Adapted from MI Secretary of State)

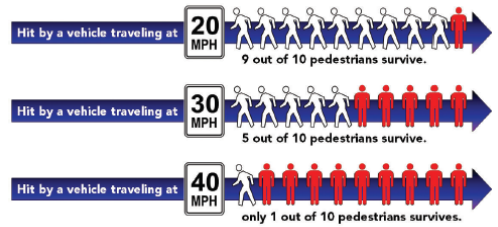
Pedestrians

- Try to cross the street at a designated crosswalk and always stop and look left, right, and left again before crossing
- Use and respect pedestrian signals when available
- If there's a parked car blocking your view of the street, look around the edge before crossing
- When there are no sidewalks, walk on the side of the road facing oncoming traffic
- Increase your visibility at night by carrying a flashlight and wearing reflective clothing



STOP NEIGHBORHOOD SPEEDING

A little extra speed makes a big impact.



Drivers

- Yield (or better yet, stop) for pedestrians, joggers, or bicyclists crossing the street
- When stopping at an intersection or crosswalk, halt your vehicle at the stop-bar before the crosswalk to give pedestrians and bicyclists their full space and ensure they have safe passage across the road
- When turning through an intersection, go slow and yield to pedestrians trying to cross in front of you
- Be alert for people crossing in the middle of a block

