

# Performance Measures Topic Summary – Transit



Fixed Route Ridership



Percent of County Population within Walking Distance of Fixed Route Service



Percent of County Population Covered by Demand Response Service



Transit Modeshare



Fixed Route System Efficiency



10% of WATS Federal Funding to Transit

## Effective Transit Matters for Everyone

### *Transit as Driving Alternative*

Each year, more than 6.8 million trips are made using fixed route transit in Washtenaw County. For many riders, using transit is their preferred choice. Leaving the car at home can be an affordable and low hassle alternative, especially when visiting campus or downtown.

### *Transit as Mobility Service*

For others, transit might be their only option to access jobs, health care, or daily errands. Health conditions might limit their ability to drive, yet not prevent them from working. For the thousands of Washtenaw residents this applies to, transit is a necessity.

### *Transit as a Congestion Response*

Downtown Ann Arbor, Washtenaw Avenue, and areas around the University of Michigan are already congested. Due to numerous negative consequences and limited space, widening roadways is both unrealistic and undesirable in these areas. In addition, any new parking space in high land value areas has the opportunity cost of new development and uncaptured tax base. Under these constraints, increasing modeshare of alternative transportation is the most effective policy to both increase the number of

**21,800**  
daily car trips to  
accommodate  
Washtenaw County  
transit users

people who access Washtenaw County's most congested areas, while improving or at least maintaining the existing level of congestion.

### *Transit for GHG Reduction*

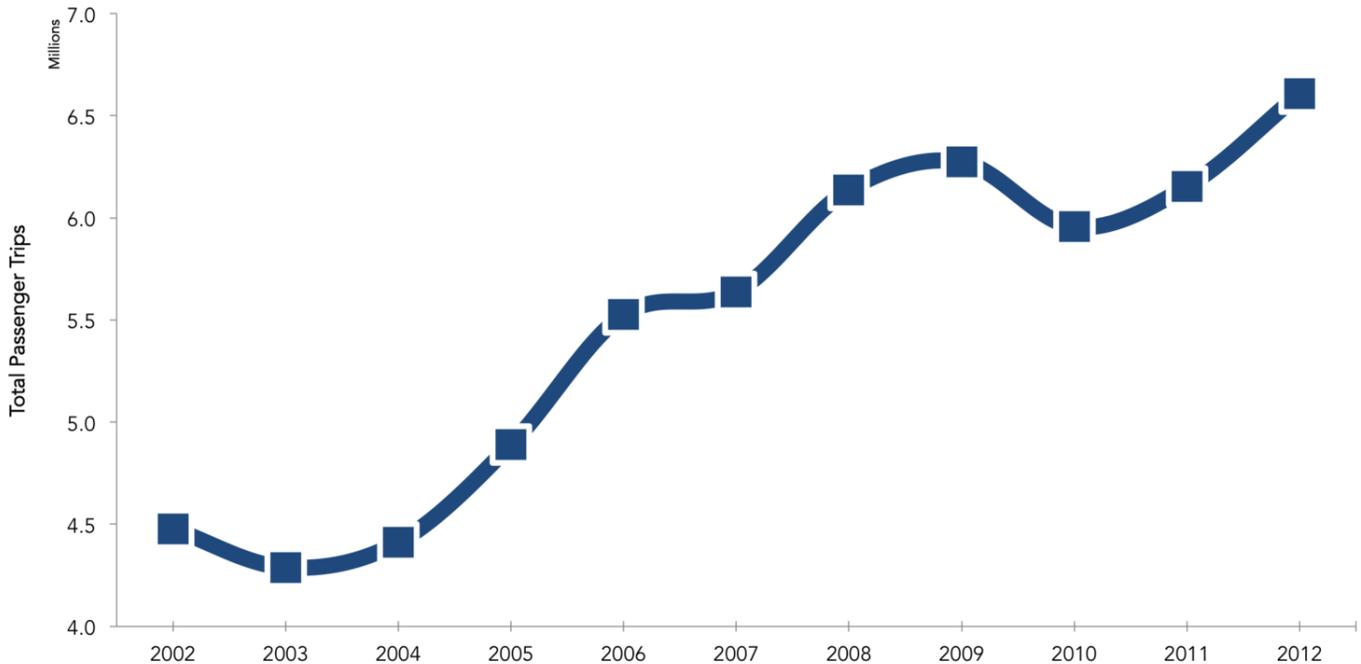
Transportation accounts for 29% of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States. By moving more people with fewer vehicles, public transportation can reduce emissions. On average, bus transit systems produce 33% less greenhouse emissions per passenger mile compared to the average single occupancy vehicle (FTA). Also, transit can facilitate compact development, which conserves land and decreases the distances people need to travel to reach destinations.

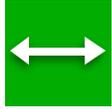
## Measuring System Performance



### Fixed Route Ridership

Since 2002, Washtenaw County's transit ridership has grown **40%**, outpacing the national 12% growth rate. These gains continued despite fare increases in 2009 and 2010.





## Fixed Route System Efficiency

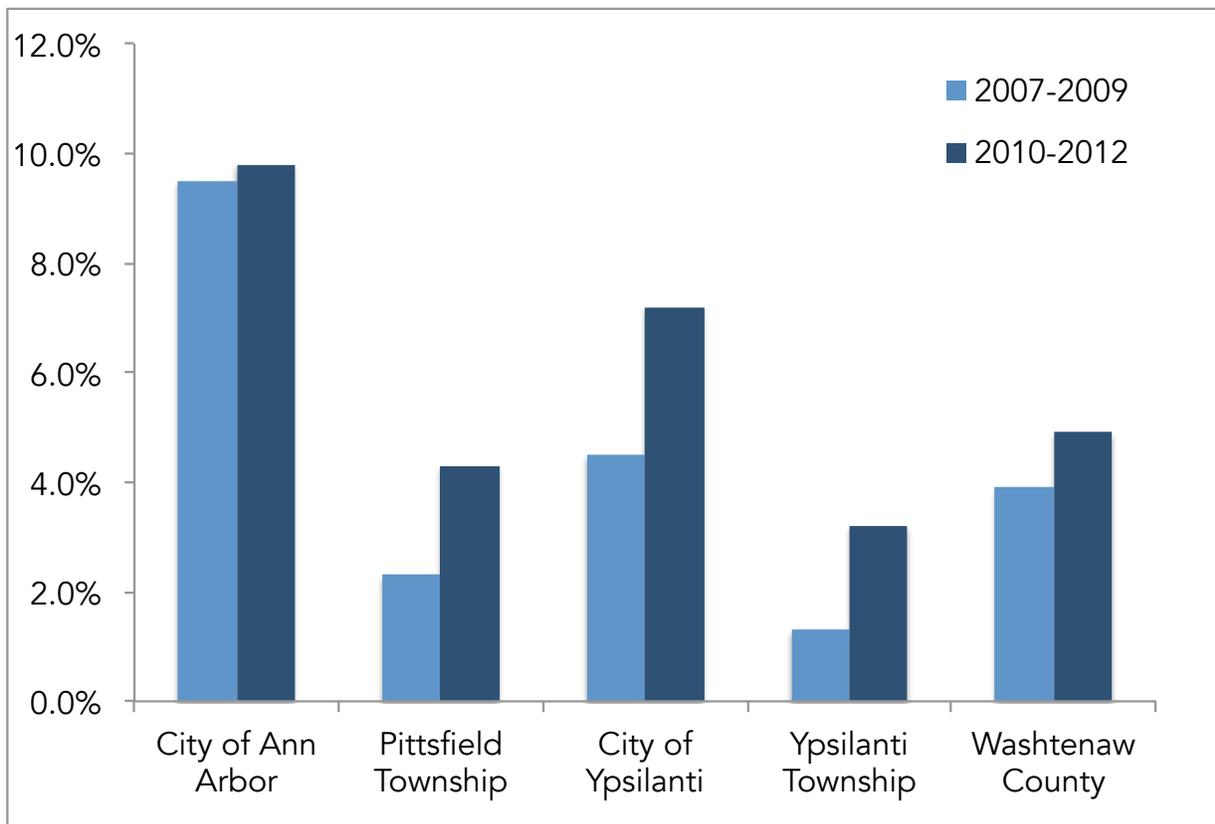
TheRide's operating expenses are very competitive with comparable transit providers around the nation. There are multiple possible measures of service efficiency, however expenses make the most sense when compared to the number of trips provided, rather than by vehicle or vehicle revenue hour. TheRides operating expense per passenger trip in 2012 was \$3.52, according to TheRide, this is 17% better than peer providers.

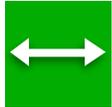
$$\frac{\$}{\text{person}} = \$3.52$$



## Transit Modeshare

Washtenaw County's transit modeshare is growing. From 2009-2012, Washtenaw County's transit modeshare was 4.9%. Nationally, 5.0% of commuters use transit, however this includes cities with much larger populations, intense congestion, where demand for transit is much greater. Statewide, the average is 1.3%.

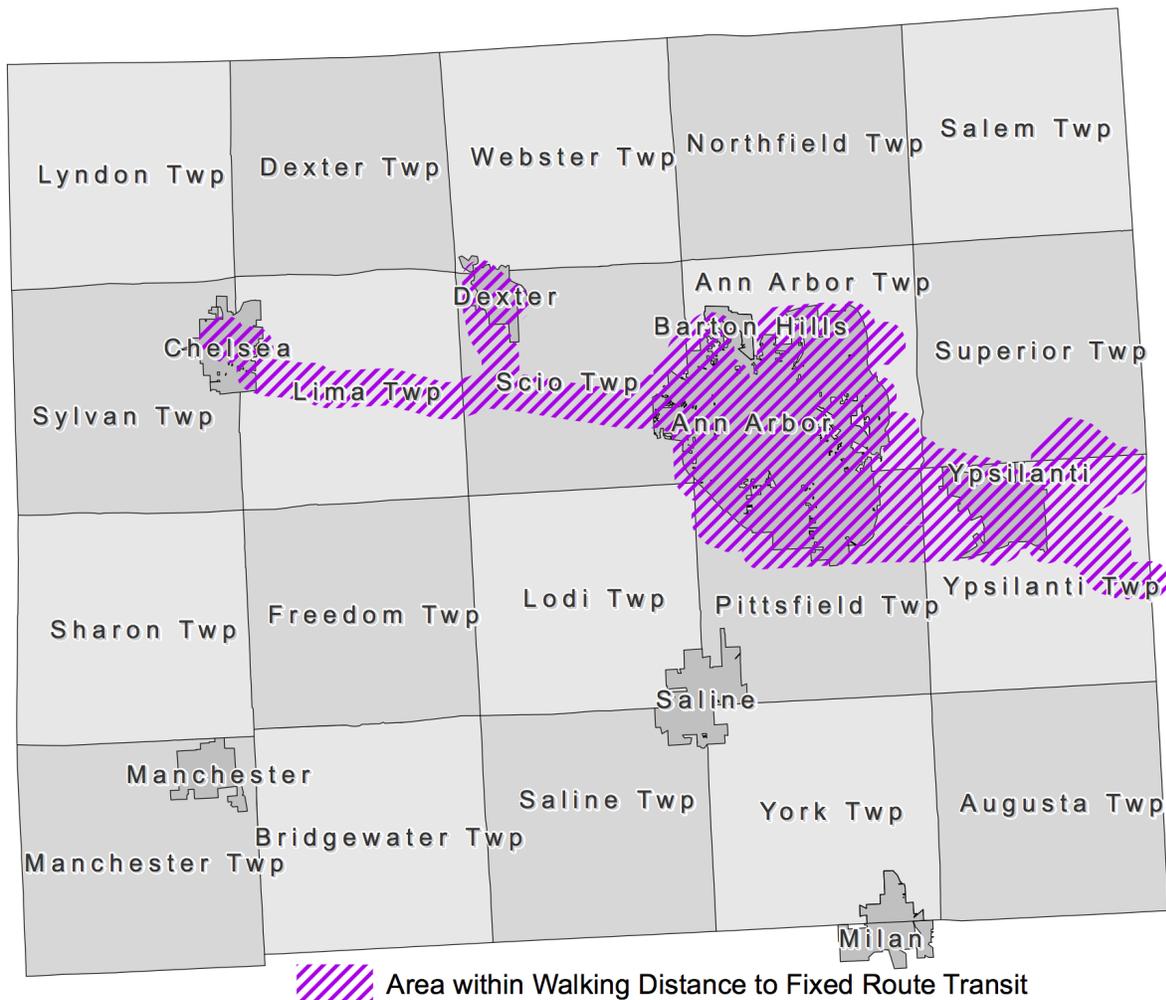




## Percent of County Population within walking distance of fixed route service

Approximately 59% of Washtenaw County's residents live within walking distance of transit. Walking distance is defined as one half mile from a transit route, rather than a transit stop. The map below shows areas within walking distance throughout the county.

59%



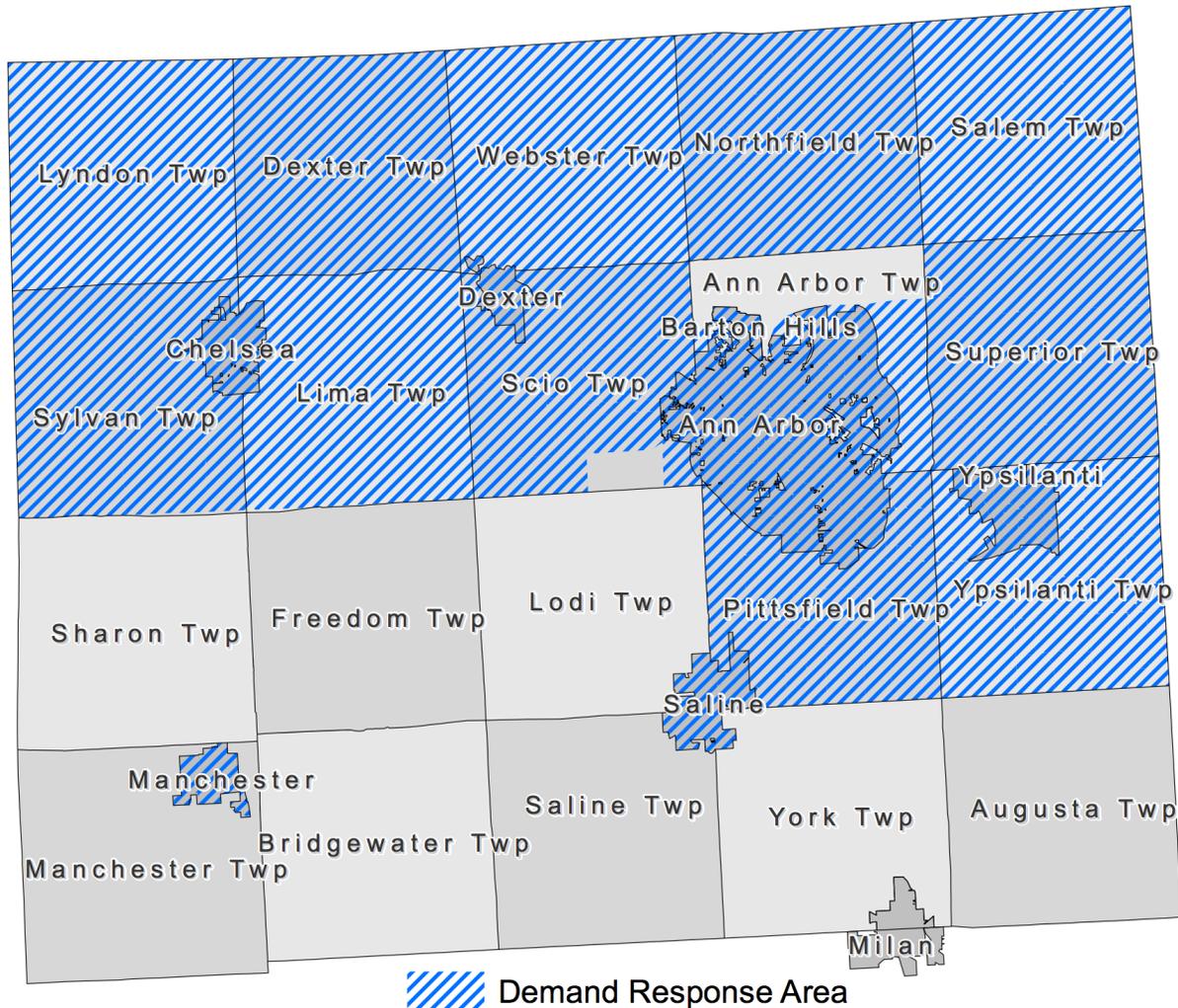


## Percent of County Population covered by Demand Response Service

Door-to-door service provides transit service for those unable to board to walk to a bus stop. Also known as Demand Response, this service is important for allowing seniors, individuals with physical or cognitive disabilities to live independently and reach important destinations. Approximately 89% of Washtenaw County's citizens have access to door-to-door transit service. Major providers include Western Washtenaw Value Express (WAVE), Manchester Senior Services, Peoples Express, and TheRide. The maps below shows locations covered by paratransit.

89%

### Washtenaw County Demand Response Coverage





## Invest 10% of Federal Funds in Transit

WATS’ Policy Committee set a target to invest 10% of federal funds in transit. This target includes all WATS funds obligated to transit providers for vehicles, stops, and 50% of any non-motorized improvements leading up to transit stops. With three full years of investment data as of 2013, WATS can accurately track its investment. The table below highlights the those three years.

|              | Transit Investment | Total Federal Investment | Percent Transit |
|--------------|--------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| 2011         | \$520,082          | \$5,141,972              | 10.1%           |
| 2012         | \$358,617          | \$5,180,924              | 6.9%            |
| 2013         | \$401,450          | \$7,621,263              | 5.3%            |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>\$1,280,149</b> | <b>\$17,944,159</b>      | <b>7.1%</b>     |

While WATS did not meet its 10% target, current tracking methods do not include road surface investments on roads with transit service. This should be considered as WATS continues to improve its tracking methods and performance measures.

## Strategies for Improving County Transit

Washtenaw County’s communities are leaders in providing efficient and well used transit service for small to mid sized urban areas. Fixed route ridership is growing, on-demand service is widespread, and the community demonstrated its interest in improving transit services in TheRide’s recent millage campaign.

However, American transit ridership has room to grow. Current trends, while promising, may not fully address environmental goals of slowing Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) growth or greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, affordable on demand service remains out of reach for much of the county.

In 2007, WATS published its Transit Plan for Washtenaw County. This plan was followed by TheRide’s Transit Master Plan for Washtenaw County, which created a comprehensive vision for the county’s transit system. In the countywide plan, TheRide identified 10 strategies for improving services and growing ridership around the county. WATS has adapted that list below. Many of these strategies have already or are currently being implemented by communities and service providers.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Essential Services</b>                 | Essential services include door-to-door and flex-ride style service. These allow those with disabilities or households outside of the fixed route service area to access their destinations directly or at least access the transit network.  |
| <b>Countywide Connections</b>             | Building on the existing fixed-route and interurban services in the County, countywide connections can link all of Washtenaw’s cities and villages and support local transit trips in the larger communities  |
| <b>Urban Bus Network Improvements</b>     | Frequency improvements, expanded service hours, and bus signal priority improve travel times and reliability, and make transit an attractive alternative to single occupancy vehicles   |
| <b>High Capacity Transit</b>              | High capacity transit, such as light rail and bus rapid transit, can promote investment, attract choice riders, focus land use development, promote economic development, support Transit Oriented Development (TOD), and increase property values.   |
| <b>Regional Connections</b>               | Regional connections, such as airport service, commuter rail, and car/van-pooling, help stimulate economic growth locally and across the region by connecting communities with regional destinations  |
| <b>Local Connections</b>                  | Improving waiting areas and creating attractive, safe and convenient access points to the transit network can help change public perceptions about transit and improve passengers’ experiences. Transit centers can shape land use development by creating focus points for Transit Oriented Development. |
| <b>Integrating Transit into Community</b> | Walking and biking access to transit are essential parts of the transit system, as most transit trips begin as walking or biking trips. Transit stops should be well connected to non-motorized infrastructure.   |
| <b>Integrated Ticketing</b>               | Integrated Ticketing is a form of ticketing that can be accepted across different services, irrespective of who operates them and simplifies passenger experience.  |
| <b>Integrated Information</b>             | Integrated travel planning, travel training, and information services are important for a user first system that minimizes the knowledge based barriers to accessing transit.   |
| <b>Vehicle Enhancements</b>               | Introducing attractive, comfortable, safe, accessible, efficient and environmentally friendly vehicles with modern conveniences like WiFi can draw choice riders, youth, people with disabilities and seniors.  |

# WATS' Role

WATS, as a source of transportation funds, primarily impacts one aspect of transit planning—funding. While WATS is responsible for shaping the long term vision for transportation countywide, in essence, the goal of that vision is identifying and planning for the projects in need of federal funding. Moving forward, WATS should focus on two areas within funding policy:

- Tracking funding targets
- Prioritizing projects for funding

## Tracking Funding Targets

In late 2009, the WATS Policy Committee approved federal funding policies originally recommended as part of the Non-Motorized Plan and approved a process to prioritize and track the federal funding expenditures of non-motorized and transit investments.

The policy created total funding targets of 10% each to Transit and Non-motorized improvements. With three years of data available, WATS can accurately track this goal, and only dedicated 7.1% to transit improvements between 2011 and 2013.

Current tracking methods only account for funding spent directly on transit projects. While fixed route service presence is an item on WATS' federal funding application, the tracking scheme does not account for improvements to roads with transit service. Additionally, the targets do not provide flexibility for rural funding, where the targets may not be feasible.

WATS and its committees should discuss appropriate responses to missing the 10% target. Possible responses could include reevaluating the targets and tracking schemes or working with agencies to identify additional projects.

## Prioritizing Projects for Funding

In its Long Range Plans, WATS identified six broad agency goals that address both local needs and federal planning guidance

- Security and Safety
- Accessibility and Mobility
- Invest Strategically
- Protect the Environment
- Engage the Public
- Link Transportation and Land Use

In the 2040 Long Range Plan, WATS identified needs to improve how progress on these goals was measured. This document is part of that effort.

As WATS considers funding projects throughout the region, it should use the goals laid out in the Long Range Plan to guide decisions. Fleshing out the relationship between funding decisions and the goals is the most direct means for WATS to accomplish those goals. For example, as a transportation planning agency, WATS has a limited ability to impact land use policy throughout the county apart from best practice recommendations. However, numerous locally initiated projects, many with enhanced transit as a centerpiece to the vision, are already

addressing this balance and identifying projects that advance Linking Transportation and Land Use.

Moving forward, the WATS and its committees should:

- Evaluate the Transit Funding Tracking Scheme, specifically addressing rural transit funding targets, and how road surface improvements on fixed route lines factor in target accounting
- Evaluate WATS Federal Funding Application, with particular focus on WATS' Long Range Plan Goals