

Comments on Michael Ford's responses (12/21/2011) to the following question from City Council:

What are the benefits of the Countywide Transit for Ann Arbor? With the existing Ann Arbor property tax, Ann Arbor taxpayers will be paying a much larger share of the funds. How is this equitable?

First, it is important to understand that Ann Arbor currently enjoys a much higher level of service than outside Ann Arbor. For fixed route service, this includes comprehensive geographic coverage, as well as more frequent service, and a longer span of service. In addition, A-Ride and Good as Gold provide comprehensive door-to-door service for people with disabilities and seniors, while outside Ann Arbor, the level and availability of these specialized services is much lower. This service is what the existing millage funds (pay for) and the existing millage will continue to be needed to maintain this service.

This statement merely affirms that AATA will maintain existing in-city service, using Ann Arbor's existing millage. (Actually some of Ann Arbor's millage is now used for out-of-city service, such as the express to Canton.)

If additional funds are approved to implement the TMP, they will be used to fund additional service and service enhancements in Ann Arbor. Included in the first five years of the draft TMP for Ann Arbor City residents are:

- More frequent service on most routes including Plymouth, Packard, Miller, etc. (10-20 minute frequency) Note: Washtenaw Avenue service will be increasing to 5-10 minute headways during peak times in January 2012

This appears to be accurate. The TMP calls for an average \$3 million per year to be spent on "network enhancements".

- More direct routes enabling more Ann Arbor workers, high school students and residents to get to their destinations more quickly and efficiently

This is not indicated directly in the TMP. Could he be referring to the high-capacity routes?

- Bus priority measures that allow buses to move more rapidly through (or avoid) traffic including signal priority and queue-jump lanes at selected intersections, these investments will dramatically improve service and set the stage for higher-capacity transit options

Such measures will require substantial capital investment (extra lanes, new signals) – this is called Bus Rapid Transit and there is no mention of it in the TMP for the first 5 years. Possible exception: \$4 million in capital investment for the North-South Connector high-capacity route.

- Later service on weekdays, and Saturday and Sunday evening service for commuters, downtown workers, and students

This appears to be accurate. The TMP calls for an average \$3 million per year to be spent on “network enhancements”.

- Connecting service to Commuter Rail or Bus Rapid Transit when such service begins

The Bus Rapid Transit refers to the high-capacity routes (North-South connector and Washtenaw –Jackson connector) but these are not implemented in the first 5 years.

Commuter Rail is unlikely to be implemented in the first 5 years and the budget for the TMP does not call for it to be operating in the first 5 years.

- Bus stop improvements including improved amenities, bus stop accessibility, and more shelters and benches to make the transit experience more comfortable and accessible for all users

This appears to be accurate. The TMP calls for \$4.6 M over 5 years in bus stop enhancements and transit center upgrades. However, much of that work has been planned for AATA and is already underway (including the Blake Transit Center new construction).

- Real time information and enhanced methods to get information to customers

This is already underway. The AATA is currently reconfiguring their website with the aid of a consultant and real-time information is already increasingly available and reliable.

Finally, there will be substantial benefits for Ann Arbor residents from the creation of the county-wide service:

- Enables Ann Arbor residents to travel to more destinations outside Ann Arbor, such as Detroit Metro airport and nearby communities

With the exception of service to Ypsilanti, the TMP’s connections to other communities are almost entirely express services set up for commuter use (primarily directed at getting people in and out). These would not be convenient for casual travel from Ann Arbor to other communities.

- Creates options for more people to travel to Ann Arbor for work, school, and shopping using countywide funding from outside Ann Arbor, decreasing the need for parking investments and road improvements within the city
- Ability to connect most efficiently to the greater region
- Get commuters on the periphery out of their cars and onto a bus outside Ann Arbor with more park and ride lots

- Get regional commuters out of their cars with urban express services and vanpools

All four of these bullets are the same point: that bus commuting into Ann Arbor will relieve pressure on our roads and parking facilities. It is true that the TMP will enhance commuting into Ann Arbor; that is what it is primarily designed to do. However, it is not geared toward casual travel (i.e., shopping and entertainment). Also, whether this will result in actual dollar savings is questionable, since planning for these facilities is not integrated with the TMP.

The TMP sets the stage for local and regional transit investments, where Ann Arbor is the economic center of the county. The 196 board will continue to work with citizens in Ann Arbor and throughout Washtenaw County on refining a plan for the most appropriate services before initiating incorporation of a countywide authority.

This is stating hypothetical benefits for economic development, which are difficult to predict with certainty.

General note: “High-capacity transit” refers to the Connector Study (also called the North-South connector) and the Washtenaw-Jackson corridor connector. Both of these would use specialized transit technology like light rail, monorail, or Bus Rapid Transit. Both require extensive capital investment. The TMP calls for \$114 million capital investment over 30 years for the North-South and \$166 million for the Washtenaw-Jackson. Neither of these would be implemented in the first 5 years.