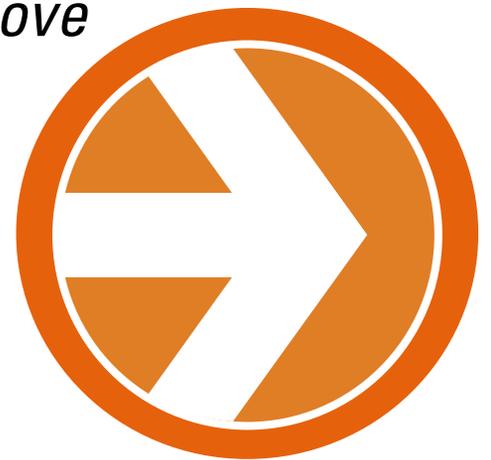




# Getting There **TOGETHER**

*Citizens' Agenda to Move  
Transit Forward in the  
Grand Valley Region*





# Looking for

# MODERN TRANSIT

*Citizens, leaders campaign for a crucial key to Grand Valley's new economy*

**T**he people of the Grand Valley are going back to the future. Life science, information technology, and other innovative, high-tech industries represent 21<sup>st</sup>-century economic opportunity just as manufacturing promised good-paying jobs 100 years ago. Reminiscent of visionary founders like Louis Campau, entrepreneurs are investing billions of dollars to build vibrant neighborhoods and business districts with modern offices, eateries, and living space. And just like in the 1920s, there is now serious talk of putting streetcars in service to move people around the growing region more efficiently and effectively.

Expanding public transit now is a top priority for students, seniors and, yes, the workers wearing suits. As the convenience of automobile ownership diminishes and costs escalate, walking, biking, and other alternatives to the car have become increasingly popular across the metropolitan area. For example, annual ridership on The Rapid, the urban transit service, jumped 13.8 percent in 2005—to a record 6.4 million rides. And twice in the past five years citizens voted for tax hikes to enhance their local bus service. Now civic leaders are formulating plans to roll streetcars back out. Some even envision building a light rail system similar to those operating in Chicago, Salt Lake City, and Denver.

“The facts are clear,” said Peter Varga, executive director of The Rapid. “Public transportation in the greater Grand Rapids area works.”

Indeed, a comprehensive transportation system that provides practical choices beyond the automobile and promotes independence, health, and prosperity for all citizens in the metropolitan area is now a real possibility. But some significant obstacles must be overcome. Most notably, the region's growth and investment strategy essentially ignores the growing value of, and demand for, modern public transit.

On October 3, 2005, more than 220 of the metropolitan area's business leaders, neighborhood activists, public officials,

environmentalists, planners, bus riders, and others gathered at St. James Church in downtown Grand Rapids for the region's first Citizens' Transit Summit. They convened to develop a strategic set of priorities that steadily reduces the area's growing dependence on the automobile and greatly expands the transportation alternatives that are so clearly lacking.

This report, *Getting There Together*, summarizes those priorities. It is a clear, reasoned approach to reforming public spending priorities, trading poorly planned land use patterns for thoughtful development that supports transit, and providing a broader range of transportation options—well maintained roads, safe sidewalks and bike routes, and world-class public transit—throughout the Grand Valley metropolitan area.

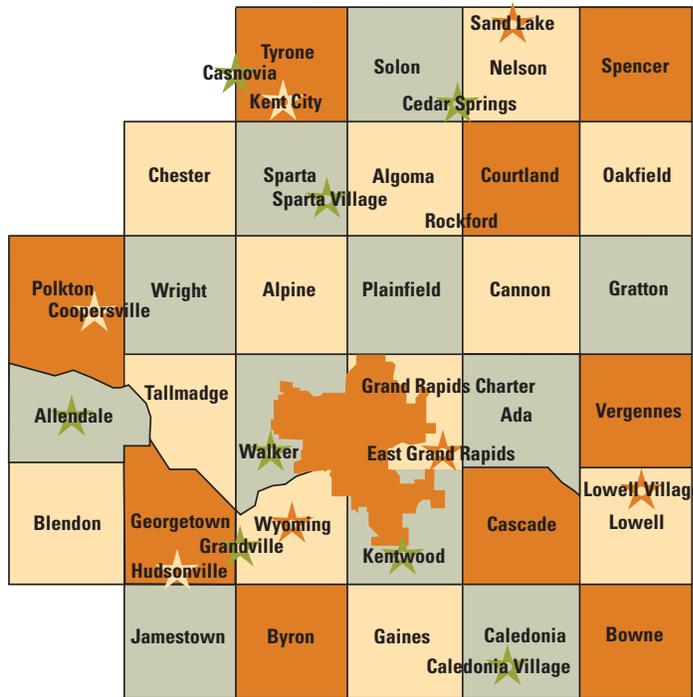
## **The Verdict Is In**

A substantial body of research demonstrates how important good public transportation is in the new century. As “old economy” manufacturing jobs continue to fall to “new economy” knowledge jobs, a recent survey by Jones Lang LaSalle, a worldwide real estate and financial management firm, finds that 77 percent of “new economy companies” rate access to mass public transit as an extremely important factor in deciding where to locate.

Michigan, however, largely refuses to take public transportation planning and investment seriously. For example, the Michigan Department of Transportation during the next couple decades intends to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in our region's infrastructure. But the agency's plans are narrowly focused on widening existing roads and building new highways, while basically ignoring public transit and other alternatives.

That is one of many reasons why a growing number of citizens, business leaders, and civic officials fear that metropolitan Grand Rapids is headed for traffic gridlock, just like Detroit, Los Angeles, and other major urban centers that fail

# METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AREA



Map: MLU/lane Kowieski. Reference: Grand Valley Metro Council and RECIS.

to provide real transportation choices beyond the auto. One 1996 study conducted by Grand Rapids transit experts predicted a 1,000 percent increase in traffic congestion by 2015—unless our car-dominated growth patterns begin to change quickly.

“I never got caught in a traffic jam on I-96 15 years ago,” said Grand Rapids Congressman Vern Ehlers. “Today, you drive in every morning and it’s jammed up. Project 15 years in the future. With the increase in traffic, what do you think is going to happen? We’ll need light rail in 15 years. Public transit is very important for our future. We have to start thinking long term. We have to plan ahead.”

## A Winning Strategy

Our region once had a thriving public transit system that carried people to work and recreation. It was dismantled—and the streetcars were actually burned—to make way for the latest transportation innovation: the automobile. Today, growing traffic congestion on area roadways slows the movement of people and goods, erodes air quality, and reduces the

quality of the lives of all motorists forced to endure it. The rising cost of driving hurts families and businesses. And the lack of a quality regional transit system immobilizes many of our neighbors, particularly youngsters, senior citizens, workers, and people with disabilities.

It also disrupts our ability to lure talented workers, attract modern companies, and compete successfully in the global economy. St. Louis, Seattle, Dallas, and our other competitors already have begun building safe, highly convenient, and affordable public transit. Clearly, the Grand Valley metropolitan area must join the movement for truly modern mobility and significantly expand our region’s transportation choices.

*Getting There Together* is a strategy that has wide support across our communities and can help to build a more effective and balanced transportation system. It is a practical agenda to alleviate clogged roadways, conserve natural resources, and promote public health and fairness. What’s more, this strategy will help to rebuild central cities, produce jobs, and fuel future opportunities for citizens across the entire metro area.

## The Goal of PUBLIC TRANSIT

The Citizens’ Agenda for Transit calls for bold and visionary leadership to make fundamental changes in the way Michigan and the Grand Valley region plan and pay for transportation projects. The agenda reflects that of the Alliance for a New Transportation Charter ([www.antc.net](http://www.antc.net)), a national advocacy group, and is based on the widely held belief that a more balanced transportation strategy—well maintained roads, first-class public transit, and safe routes for bicyclists and pedestrians—ultimately:

### 1 SUSTAINS ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

- Reduces cost for taxpayers and employers
- Ensures reliable distribution of goods and services
- Attracts businesses and workers
- Focuses growth to build community and reduces costs

### 2 PROMOTES SOCIAL EQUITY AND LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

- Guarantees access for everyone
- Reduces the cost of living
- Strengthens community and livability

### 3 ENHANCES PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY, AND SECURITY

- Increases safety for pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, and others
- Increases healthy air quality
- Increases physical activity

### 4 IMPROVES ENERGY USE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

- Preserves open space and farmland
- Secures healthy water resources
- Promotes energy conservation



# There's No Reason TO WAIT

*Better service today will speed the arrival of tomorrow's truly rapid transit*

**T**en years ago you couldn't catch a bus in Grand Rapids after dark—or anytime Sunday, for that matter. Today, though, many bus routes operate as late as midnight; there's even some limited weekend service around the metropolitan area. A bus system that once was hard to use now enables many people to work, play, and worship seven days a week.

That decade-long journey toward better public transit service has exposed one unassailable, extremely important fact: The more convenient, far-reaching, safe, and affordable the metro area's bus system becomes, the more people from all walks of life use it.

Kevin Wisselink, a longtime transit activist who now works for The Rapid, has the numbers to prove it.

"We're seeing dramatic growth in ridership," Mr. Wisselink said recently. "In 1995, we were doing about 3.3 million rides [a year]. Fast forward to 2005, we're doing about 6.4 million rides. That's basically a doubling in ten years. Not too many systems around the country can claim that kind of improvement. But significant gaps in the service still remain."

On Sundays, for example, service is restricted to a small number of routes, and those run just every 45 minutes. Also, riders in The Rapids' service area find it difficult to travel to northern Kent County, into Ottawa County, and beyond. And the frequency of buses remains well short of what commuters find in world-class cities like Chicago.

"We've got a long ways to go," Mr. Wisselink said.

## Step by Step

That's why Transit Summit participants focused on an extensive list of service enhancements that the Grand Valley metro area needs. They discussed additional cross-town bus routes, expanding and improving service in rural communities, and extending commuter rail lines from the central city to Holland, Muskegon, and Lansing. They talked about placing rapid buses, streetcars, and even light-rail trains onto dedicated routes throughout the urban area.

Such major public works projects are part of the natural evolution of any successful public transit system. Cities as different and as great as Chicago, San Francisco, Dallas, and St. Louis have done—or are doing—the same thing. The projects require careful planning and thoughtful investment, processes that leaders in the Grand Valley metro area have already begun to think about and, in some cases, initiate.

But there is no reason why the region should delay other, less dramatic improvements while leaders figure out



*As The Rapid increases its service ridership is rising steadily.*

exactly how to make more far-reaching, longer-term investments. Local officials and area residents can work together to steadily increase and improve local transit service by embracing five key priorities.

## Provide Complete Metro Mobility

Metropolitan transit service has expanded considerably in the past decade. For example, new routes serving 44<sup>th</sup> Street, 28<sup>th</sup> Street, and the Allendale campus of Grand



Valley State University are highly successful—so much so, in fact, that further expansions of those routes are on the way.

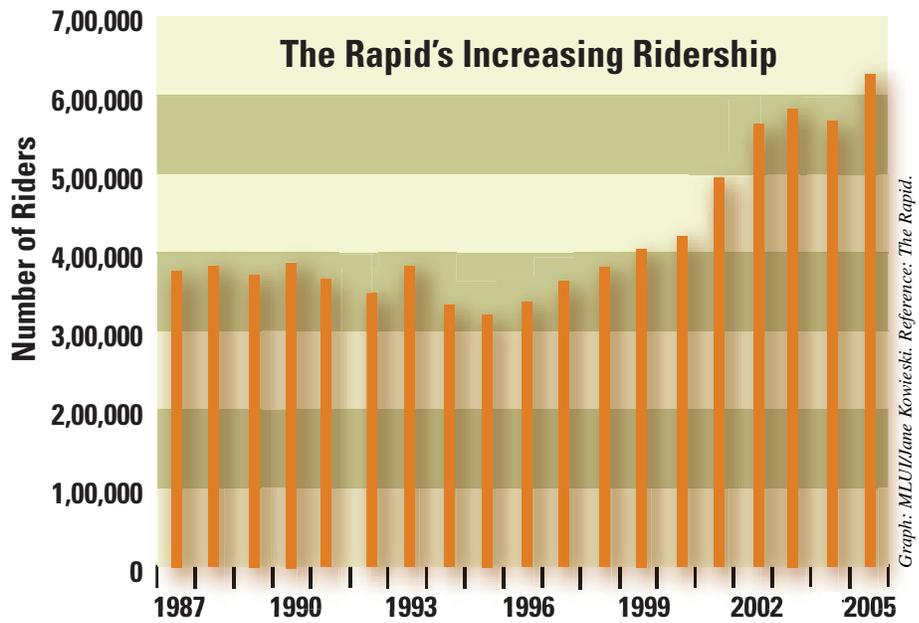
Yet several of the region’s newest cultural assets, including Frederick Meijer Gardens, Millennium Park, the West Michigan Whitecaps Stadium, and countless local businesses and homes remain drastically underserved by transit. The fact is that demand is growing for additional routes and longer hours of service across the region—from Cedar Springs to Sparta and from Jenison to Lowell. A system providing convenient, affordable, and safe transportation throughout the entire metropolitan area—connecting all merchants, neighborhoods, and institutions—is not only wanted by many residents, it is essential to economic, environmental, and social well-being.

**Get Coordinated**

**PRIORITY 2** The Rapid is not the only transit provider in the metro area. The Red Cross, Hope Network, Senior Neighbors, and several other civic groups offer transportation to citizens who require service beyond what The Rapid system can provide.

But these various special transportation providers are completely uncoordinated—with each other and with The Rapid. This often frustrates and even hassles customers. For example, riders often must place one phone call to one provider for round trip travel to the doctor, and a separate phone call to another provider for a trip to the grocery store. This happens even though different transportation providers sometimes have vehicles going to the same place at the same time.

We can do better. Enhancing coordination between these important organizations and developing a single gateway for citizens using any part of the transit system lead to more efficient service, greater fiscal responsibility, and improved regional mobility.



*Spurred by downtown redevelopment and voter-funded service increases, The Rapid doubled its ridership in just ten years. The system raised fares in 2004.*

Graph: MLU/Jane Kowieski. Reference: The Rapid.

**Work the Weekends Harder**

**PRIORITY 3** The need to move quickly and conveniently around the region for work, entertainment, shopping, family gatherings, and other activities doesn’t stop when the weekend starts. In some ways, the pace of life actually picks up. A dependable transit system must adjust to such changes.

Due to budget constraints, however, The Rapid must sharply cut its regular service on Saturdays and Sundays and operates just half of its regular weekday routes. Increasing the number of routes and hours of service builds more confidence in transit, as well as more ridership. That strengthens the entire public transportation system.

**Establish a Regional Authority**

**PRIORITY 4** Regional transportation authorities can promote cooperation among local governments because they are able to coordinate services for people, places, and commerce far more effectively and efficiently than individual agencies can when working alone. Moreover, regional

transportation authorities are essential to maximizing federal funding of transportation systems.

The Rapid already provides this service for Grand Rapids, Kentwood, Wyoming, East Grand Rapids, Grandville, and Walker. But the service must be extended throughout the broader Grand Valley metropolitan area. World-class transit in the Grand Valley region requires a single agency charged with transportation planning, investment, service management and coordination, and public information.

**Bike, Blade, and Walk the Talk**

**PRIORITY 5** To achieve the best transportation system possible, the Grand Valley region must develop and integrate all sorts of ways to move around the metro area. Ridership is strong on the 28<sup>th</sup> Street bus route, for example, but 28<sup>th</sup> Street lacks sidewalks. Civic leaders must promote walking and bicycling much more aggressively than they have in the past because these are highly effective methods of decreasing dependency on the automobile and making it much easier for transit riders to use the regional system.



*Pedestrian-friendly urban redevelopment spurs both the regional economy and public transit use.*



# Hey, We Need **A PLAN!**

*New approaches to zoning, development, and road design will get transit rolling*

**C**itizens who live and work in the Grand Valley metro area clearly want more transportation choices that save time, money, and stress. The solution is to build energetic urban centers where walking, biking, or taking the bus is at least as convenient as driving. But regional growth remains largely organized around just one form of transportation: the automobile. That has a profound affect on an array of core community values, including air quality, energy consumption, housing availability, job opportunity, and family time and budgets.

“The most powerful lever to change a region is the transportation system,” said Robert Grow, a visionary leader who helped Salt Lake City residents begin building modern transit. Mr. Grow delivered the keynote address at the Citizens’ Transit Summit, where he added: “If you want to look at the way regions develop, you’ll come to understand that the transportation system generally defines the land uses that go around it, the way a region will grow over the next 25 to 50 years, and, ultimately, the way people live.”

Michigan is an excellent example. The combination of the state’s highway subsidies and poor support of public transit promotes runaway sprawl, frustrating traffic jams, and rising public and private costs. Such a roads-dominated transportation policy also wastes, rather than saves, tax dollars because it erodes communities, degrades the environment, and stalls the economy by disconnecting job seekers, particularly those with disabilities or without personal transportation, from potential employers.

### **The State’s Problem Is Our Problem**

Michigan’s roads-only approach directly threatens the standard of living in the Grand Valley region. Ironically, that is particularly true for those who depend on cars. Over the coming decades, if nothing changes, drivers will see their quality of life decline as they sit in their cars, stuck in traffic wasting their precious personal time, warned a 1998 report by the Grand Valley Metro Council.

That is one reason why the City of Grand Rapids Planning Commission recently adopted a master plan that

promotes more compact, transit-oriented development in neighborhoods and business districts. But developers continue to struggle with public policies that make it harder, not easier, to design and construct projects that stimulate transit and pedestrian activity.

Worse, there's a lack of coordination between the state's growth strategy and what our region is striving for. An example of this is the state's latest outward-bound investment in our area, which will drain existing commercial and residential centers: the new South Beltline highway. That brand-new concrete has begun to pull development away from our central cities and negatively affect businesses located on 28<sup>th</sup> Street. Such shortsighted planning and investment interfere with what many of the region's citizens and leaders are trying to accomplish.

The Grand Valley metro area needs a new development approach that better coordinates transportation and land use planning. Our communities must offer alternatives to driving such as walking, bicycling, and riding buses and trains by designing more compact neighborhoods that weave together homes, shops, workplaces, and recreation facilities and offer multiple means of reaching them that are friendly to people of all ages, incomes, and physical abilities. Here are five ways to get started:

### Link Transportation and Land Use

**PRIORITY 1** Careful land use planning is essential for making public transportation work. That is because mixed-use, compact, walkable development makes transit more efficient and effective. Yet land use planning and spending at the local, regional, state, and federal level remain largely disconnected from transportation planning and investment decisions. Low-density land uses that segregate schools, neighborhoods, and businesses into isolated sections of the community are now the rule in our region.

Until civic leaders better coordinate land use and transportation decisions, it will be difficult to develop a truly comprehensive, fast, attractive regional transportation system.

### Act Like Neighbors

**PRIORITY 2** Dozens of individual local governments are responsible for transportation and land use planning and investment in the Grand Valley metro area. But little formal public process exists to foster collaborative planning, cooperation on appropriate development, and responsible use of capital.

Cities, townships, villages, and counties must work together more closely. The region's economy, ecology, and culture depend on it. Preserving local autonomy is important but, ironically, government leaders can best defend the character of their communities by embracing regional planning, coordinating decision-making across political boundaries, and planning together for a modern, multi-modal transportation system. Any other approach facilitates more sprawl and erases the things that make each community unique.

### Design Superior Streets

**PRIORITY 3** Roadways throughout the region generally are designed for a single purpose: speeding the passage of cars and trucks.

Too often officials choose new or wider streets and highways at the expense of public transit and other alternatives that respect community character. But many transportation planners now realize that traffic expands to fill available road space and that fewer transportation alternatives lead to more traffic congestion.

The backbones of balanced transportation systems are road corridors that enable people, goods, and services to travel safely and efficiently in a variety of ways, including by car, truck, bike, bus or train, and foot. Local officials must embrace innova-

tive street designs that incorporate all of these alternatives from the very beginning of the planning process. Projects must also meet or exceed Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. That will ensure roads become thriving transportation corridors that meet everybody's needs.

### Construct Transit-Friendly Buildings

**PRIORITY 4** Many communities across the region are now interested in the walkable development patterns that make public transit more efficient and easier to use. But they must first replace current, outdated planning and zoning policies with new guidelines that at least allow, if not favor, building mixed-use, compact projects organized around existing or proposed transit lines. The guidelines should place parking behind buildings, locate front entrances next to bus or rail stops, and reduce building setbacks. Such guidelines encourage walking, biking, bussing, and other alternatives to the automobile by making non-drivers feel welcome, safe, and comfortable as they move around the community.

### Target Jobs along Transit Routes

**PRIORITY 5** As communities rework their master plans and zoning ordinances, they can significantly strengthen public transit and the local economy by targeting future economic development along existing or proposed transit routes. Too often, developers build major job centers, such as office parks, outside current transit service areas or well away from existing routes. The buildings tend to sprawl across their sites and often lack sidewalks, which makes providing transit service more difficult and expensive. Coordinating new job centers with transit routes strengthens transit service and makes the economy more efficient as more people discover easier ways to get to work.



# Five Steps to **FAIR FUNDING**

*How to bulk up Michigan's starving public transit*

**D**espite the growing public demand for more transportation choices, raising the dollars to fund mass transit systems remains a significant challenge. The Grand Valley metropolitan area should embrace two broad strategies to secure crucial funding. First, civic leaders must ensure that money intended for transit projects is actually spent on transit projects. Second, citizens and public officials must boldly advance innovative ways to finance expanded transit investments, including new tax proposals.

Residents across the metro area strongly support greater public transit investment. In April 2000, for instance, 65 percent of voters in the six-city urban area serviced by The Rapid said “yes” to a tax increase to enhance transit service. Then, in November 2003, 66 percent of voters approved an additional tax hike for transit; support for the transit millage grew in suburban areas.

Meanwhile, federal financial support for capital projects is also rising.

But state funding is essential to capturing those crucial federal funds, and that is where the big problem is. Lansing continues to reduce state investments in transit, even as ridership and expenses climb—not just in our region, but across Michigan. So state funding remains well below Michigan’s constitutional limit for transit. Worse, our elected state officials have for several years now diverted dollars earmarked for transit to other priorities, even as tax revenues increase. This hurts The Rapid’s ability to buy and run buses, upgrade technology, and maintain basic things like

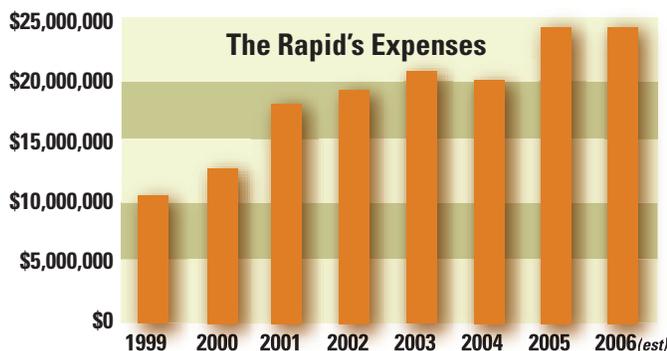
bus shelters. It also could forfeit significant federal money.

“In Congress, we’ve increased funding for transit, particularly for the Grand Rapids area,” said Congressman Vern Ehlers of Grand Rapids. “It is a great disappointment that the state has not come up with the matching funds that are necessary. That to me is not very bright, simply because for every dollar the state puts up they are going to get four dollars back from the federal government. That is a pretty good deal.”

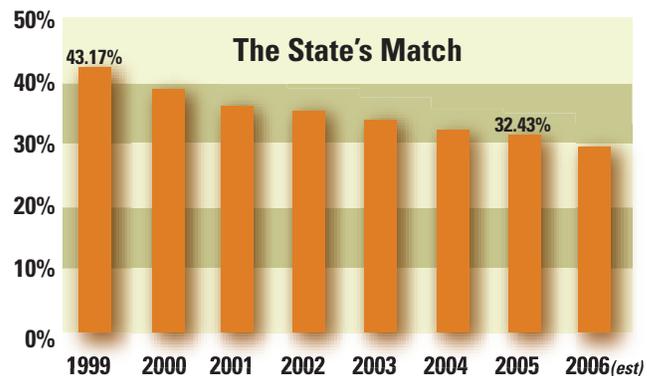
And that is just the beginning of what Michigan could gain for its transit investment. A 1999 study by the Massachusetts consulting firm Cambridge Systematics Inc. estimated that every \$10 million investment in public transit generates 300 jobs and a \$30 million boost in local sales, because new and improved bus or rail corridors attract significant private investment capital.

But, despite the tremendous financial leverage that increased spending on transit provides, Michigan’s economic development strategy remains in the clutches of road and highway spending. “According to the state Constitution, 90 percent of the Michigan Transportation Fund is supposed to be spent on roads,” said Jennifer Kalczuk, spokeswoman for The Rapid. “That is not a balanced funding strategy if the goal is to promote a comprehensive transportation system that provides a range of mobility choices beyond the car.”

Such a narrow strategy is increasingly out of touch with the needs and goals of cities like Grand Rapids, Kentwood, Wyoming, and other communities in the metro area. Here are five ways to reverse the trend and ramp up transit investment:



*Soaring ridership, combined with rising fuel, personnel, and equipment costs push The Rapid's expenses sharply upward...*



*...while support from the State of Michigan continues to fall, squeezing the system.*

Graphs: MLU/Jane Kowieski. Reference: The Rapid.

## Get Michigan's Fair Share

PRIORITY  
1

Michigan's lackluster commitment to public transit risks sacrificing \$100 million a year in federal funds earmarked to maintain and grow public transit. It costs the Grand Valley metro area dearly for two reasons. First, service providers must cover Lansing's cuts by shifting scarce dollars away from bus and technology upgrades, service enhancements, and other line items that improve the system.

Second, for every dollar Michigan does not spend on local transit, it loses four additional federal dollars that could be used to maintain and improve those services. Leaving these critical federal dollars on the table, especially in such uncertain financial times, is bad business and irresponsible governance. Securing those funds must be a top priority for state legislators and the governor.

## Stop Stealing from Transit Fund

PRIORITY  
2

Another reason why Michigan fails to leverage its fair share of federal transit funding is that state lawmakers now habitually spend money originally collected for transit on other priorities. Since fiscal year 2000-2001, lawmakers have taken more than \$65 million from the Comprehensive Transportation Fund to cover general fund deficits. The largest allocation of CTF revenues traditionally provides operating assistance to local transit agencies. Transfers from the fund must cease, and all transit dollars must be spent on transit.

## Fully Fund Transit

PRIORITY  
3

The Michigan Constitution allows using "up to 10 percent" of gas and diesel tax revenues to replenish the Comprehensive Transportation Fund. The state, however, fails to contribute the full 10 percent. In fact, when then-Governor John Engler raised the state gas tax in 1997, the



*Grand Valley residents want a more successful transit system. But state planning and investment is weighted heavily towards roadbuilding projects such as the South Beltline.*

most recent hike, the full four-cent increase went to maintaining, expanding, and building roads; none went to the CTF. State leaders must support the transportation fund at the state's constitutional maximum. That will elevate and stabilize currently unpredictable transit funding, leverage more federal dollars, and maintain and expand local transit services.

## Boost Local Investment

PRIORITY  
4

The people of the Grand Valley region are clearly willing to pay for carefully thought-out transit improvements. In 2000, the six cities that comprise The Rapid's service area—Grand Rapids, East Grand Rapids, Kentwood, Wyoming, Walker, and Grandville—passed a 0.75 mill levy for transit. In 2003, voters renewed that millage and raised it to 0.95 mills. After both millage elections, The Rapid invested the new money to expand service and provide more rides. Both times, the system saw significant ridership increases.

So, in addition to securing additional state and federal support, local leaders must consider further increasing the local millage to support more service enhancements. Regional leaders must also think beyond the current six-city service area and consider a regional taxation strategy—particular-

ly in Kent County and eastern Ottawa County—to expand and pay for expanding service throughout the greater metropolitan area.

## Think Outside the Box

PRIORITY  
5

Political leaders must also think creatively about new funding streams that go well beyond the old ones, which are most often property tax millages. Summit participants identified two reasonable and promising ideas that merit immediate action.

First, more of the taxes collected on auto-lease agreements must go to transit. Currently, a percentage of the tax generated from auto sales goes directly to the CTF to support transit programs. But similar revenues generated from leasing agreements, an increasingly popular arrangement, go to the general fund, not transportation. State leaders should close this anti-transit loophole by transferring the special, statewide tax on auto-leasing agreements to the CTF.

Second, increase the state gas and/or diesel tax to generate new funding. The Legislature could boost annual transportation funding—*across the board*—by \$50 million for every cent it raises the diesel tax. That would mean an additional \$5 million increase in transit-related funding.



# Getting There TOGETHER

**C**itizens from every walk of life want a more balanced, cost effective, and environmentally friendly transportation system serving the Grand Valley metropolitan region. But hoping that uncongested streets, wider bike routes, safer sidewalks, and modern transit will simply appear is not enough. Citizens must get involved, work together, and push their local and state officials and elected leaders to change longstanding policies that favor cars to the near-exclusion of other ways of getting around.

The metropolitan area has a rich planning history and a wealth of transit-related expertise. Some examples:

- The Citizens League of Grand Rapids called for innovative public funding strategies to support public transit and recommended including bike paths and sidewalks in road construction projects in their April 1990 *Down the Road* report.
- The Grand Valley Metro Council, the regional planning organization, said compact, mixed-use development was essential to stimulate public transit in their 1998 *Long Range Public Transportation Plan*.
- The West Michigan Environmental Action Council proposed several light-rail options for the metropolitan area in 2000.
- The City of Grand Rapids Master Plan, adopted in 2002, calls for transit-oriented development throughout the city.
- Kent County's Emergency Needs Task Force Transportation Subcommittee has recommended coordinating and streamlining existing transit services since 2003.
- The Creating Communities for a Lifetime initiative called for expanding transportation options for senior citizens in 2005.

These and other important efforts point the way toward developing a world-class transportation system serving the Grand Valley region. But so far, little has happened.

To change that, citizens should concentrate their efforts on three key areas.

First, we must make sure public transit administrators continue to advance new proposals to expand and enhance

service in the metropolitan area. Second, we must make sure local officials encourage—and invest public dollars in—development that enables transit to flourish. Third, we must make sure state and regional leaders transform our narrowly focused and outdated state transportation funding strategy into one that provides citizens with more transportation choices. This includes ensuring that money intended for transit goes to transit, as well as finding new money to support expanded service.

This Citizens' Agenda builds on many years of far-reaching work, sets forth a unified vision for transit, and prioritizes key action steps to achieve it. The overarching goal is to focus on, and engage you and your neighbors in, convincing our leaders to act *now*. You can help advance the recommendations of *Getting There Together* by contacting one of the following six participating civic groups:

Concerned Citizens for Improved Transit  
Phone: 616-949-1100 ext. 255  
Web: [www.disabilityadvocates.us/CCIT%20meetings.htm](http://www.disabilityadvocates.us/CCIT%20meetings.htm)

Faith In Motion  
Phone: 616-774-9037  
Web: [www.graceoffice.org/fim](http://www.graceoffice.org/fim)

Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce  
Phone: 616-771-0359  
Web: [www.grandrapids.org/advocacy/transportation-forum.htm](http://www.grandrapids.org/advocacy/transportation-forum.htm)

Kent County Emergency Needs Task Force Transportation Subcommittee  
Phone: 616-949-1100 ext. 228  
Web: [www.accesskent.com/entf](http://www.accesskent.com/entf)

Michigan Land Use Institute  
Phone: 616-308-6250  
Web: [www.mlui.org](http://www.mlui.org)

United Growth for Kent County  
Phone: 616-336-3265  
Web: [www.msue.msu.edu/unitedgrowth](http://www.msue.msu.edu/unitedgrowth)



Like smooth roads and convenient transit, sidewalks and bike paths are the essential building blocks of a successful transportation system.

# JANUARY 2006

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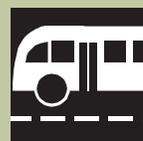
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Getting There Together reports the result of a unique collaboration among citizens groups, businesses, foundations, advocacy organizations, social service agencies, healthcare providers, educational institutions, faith-based and environmental organizations, civic leaders, and private citizens—all of whom are working to increase prosperity, protect the environment, and strengthen our community with world-class transit.

Supporters of the Citizens' Transit Summit, held October 3, 2005 in Grand Rapids, include:

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*Jennifer Kalczuk and Kevin Wisselink, from The  
Rapid, served as technical advisors.*

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