

September 22nd, 2016

The Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti Regional Chamber's Statement of Support for the November 8th 2016 Ballot Proposal from the Southeast Michigan Regional Transit Authority

The Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti Regional Chamber supports the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) of Southeast Michigan's November 8, 2016 ballot proposal before voters in Southeast Michigan's four counties (Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw and Wayne). The 20 year, 1.2 mills, Regional Master Transit Plan will connect Southeast Michigan's four counties with reliable regional public transit. The A2Y Chamber supports the RTA proposal because it will address several problems and lead to a number of benefits.

There is great, and unmet, need for a regional transit system. Our region has four separate local transit agencies which do not adequately connect and coordinate, leaving 92% of our residents unable to access a job by transit within an hour. This is easy to see in the traffic entering and leaving Ann Arbor on a daily basis. Our current systems also inadequately provide for the needs of our seniors and those in need of specialized para-transit. The RTA will coordinate and contract with existing local agencies to ensure the entire network works as one system. Passage of the ballot proposal will not only raise funds for RTA operations, it will allow the RTA to leverage its relationships with existing local agencies to obtain up to \$1B in new funding from state and federal sources. The RTA will pass along those funds to local agencies through contracts to provide much of the services in the plan, including local services. The RTA offers small communities the potential of obtaining needed specialized services they cannot currently afford.

The RTA will help us better compete with other metro areas. On a per capita basis, Southeast Michigan spends less than half of what most comparable metro areas do on regional transit, and less than a quarter of what the Chicago area spends. In the competition for jobs and people, we need to level this playing field and offer viable comprehensive regional transit. This will be especially important for our high tech sector and for millennials as whole, who are less interested than previous generations in driving as a means of transportation. Failure to do so will bring negative economic outcomes.

Once implemented, the RTA plan will connect two million existing jobs and lead to the creation of over 67,000 new jobs. In Washtenaw County progress will come quickly, with more service along the Washtenaw Ave. corridor in 2017 and bus rapid transit within five years. Washtenaw County will also see greater rail connectivity within our borders and to Detroit Metropolitan Airport. In addition to these services, we will see great potential for increased funding for AAATA to provide new local services.

The RTA proposal is a unique opportunity. After two generations of effort, and 26 attempts, Southeast Michigan finally has the opportunity to put in place a reliable regional transit system that will provide for our transit needs. This opportunity is unique for its bipartisan support, the wide array of business, labor, transit and community groups supporting it, and the viable structure it seeks to put in place to provide needed services to our region. The RTA plan is also equitable because it ensures that at least 85% of funding raised within a county will be spent within that county, and all four counties have equal representation on the RTA board.

Washtenaw County and our region will benefit greatly from the RTA proposal, as it will help Washtenaw County address our increasing economic inequities and inequalities by improving access to jobs and services for our residents. For all of these important reasons, the A2Y Chamber fully supports the RTA proposal and encourages our members to do the same on Tuesday, November 8th, 2016.