



Interurban Transit Partnership

Planning & Technology Committee Members

Mayor Rosalynn Bliss

Jack Hoffman

Andy Guy

Terry Schweitzer (Chair)

Paul Troost

Citizen Members:

Ryan Anderson

Dave Bulkowski

PLANNING & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, May 13, 2024 – 8:30 a.m.

Rapid Central Station Conference Room (250 Cesar Chavez Avenue, SW)

AGENDA

	<u>PRESENTER</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
1. PUBLIC COMMENT		
2. MINUTES REVIEW – March 11, 2024	Terry Schweitzer	Review
3. DISCUSSION		
a. TMP Recommendation Concepts & Strategies	Nick Monoyios	
b. Suburban Micromobility Discussion	Terry Schweitzer	
c. Transportation Funding Reform Update	Jack Hoffman	
4. ADJOURNMENT		

Next meeting: July 15, 2024



Future Planning & Technology Committee Members

Mayor Rosalynn Bliss

Jack Hoffman
Citizen Members:

Andy Guy
Ryan Anderson

Terry Schweitzer (Chair)
Dave Bulkowski

Paul Troost

PLANNING & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Monday, March 11, 2024 – 8:30 a.m.

Rapid Central Station Conference Room (250 Cesar E Chavez Avenue, SW)

ATTENDANCE:

Committee Members Present:

Terry Schweitzer, Paul Troost, Jack Hoffman, Dave Bulkowski, Andy Guy, Mayor Bliss

Committee Members Absent:

Ryan Anderson

Staff Attendees:

Steve Clapp, Kris Heald, Deron Kippen, Steve Luther, Linda Medina, Nick Monoyios, James Nguyen, Deb Prato, Jason Prescott, Andy Prokopy, Steve Schipper, Mike Wieringa, Kevin Wisselink

Other Attendees:

Clover Brown, Jeffrey King

Mr. Schweitzer called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

1. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments

2. MINUTES – January 8, 2024

Chair Schweitzer asked for any changes or corrections to January 8, 2024, meeting minutes. None were suggested. The meeting minutes from January 8, 2024, were approved and submitted as written.

3. DISCUSSION

a. TMP Update – Mr. Monoyios

Mr. Monoyios gave a high-level update on the Transit Master Plan (TMP), and he referenced the slide deck included in the meeting packet. The focus will be on the needs and opportunities in the coming months.

TMP Status Update:

Future Options and Scenarios in progress.

Inter-county corridor analysis.

Evaluating the staff allocation

Joint Development. More to come.

Funding & Financials analysis

Mr. Monoyios noted we had a good discussion with West Michigan Express Task Force in Hudsonville on February 12th. There was good discussion around feasibility, we reviewed the implementation plan, and the station locations. We are putting together letters of recommendations, and we will be meeting with the cities to finalize the specifics of the station platform locations.

Mr. Monoyios addressed a question Mr. Troost asked at the last meeting regarding the omission of Grandville on the West Michigan Express. This item was brought up at the taskforce and Mr. Ken Crombeen is aware of the concern. It was a question of how many people would be traveling west from Grandville. There were models showing people traveling both east and west. The preliminary model showed omitting Grandville, and then phasing it in later. More discussion will come.

Mr. Monoyios noted the fifth Steering Committee meeting took place on February 12th. All the technical findings were presented, and the team focused on an exercise; 'Yes, and'.... discussion. The group was asked to write down a value statement they have for transit, and then the statement was passed to the person on their left.

Mr. Monoyios asked the committee to add their yes, and... statements:

Mr. Bulkowski said, yes, and... transit is intuitive. Connectivity is just there.

Mr. Hoffman said his yes, and... is the goal is connecting between people, business, and fun, and not between vehicles. The 'and' is the transportation system has gotten sidetracked into moving vehicles instead of goods and people.

Mr. Troost said his yes, and....is the convenience of transit.

Mr. Schweitzer added his yes, and... is being able to show how the new attractions (amphitheater and stadium) and existing attractions more opportunity to connect.

Mayor Bliss's comment was about the connection with economic development.

Mr. Guy's comment to yes, and... is the return on investment to the business small and large and the neighborhoods.

Mr. Monoyios noted a Public Engagement Event coming up in April 2024.

b. 131 – PEL Study Update – Mr. Monoyios

Mr. Monoyios noted the two implications related to The Rapid of this study is the Wealthy Street interchange design. There is a majority of support to put Wealthy Street at grade level. There is even more favor in closing the MLK interchange.

Mr. Hoffman asked if we are on board for The Rapid operation in terms of moving trucks in and out.

Ms. Prato added this will tie up our movement a bit, and she is concerned about The Rapids footprint with Wealthy Street being in the middle of it.

Mr. Guy asked if the Department of Transportation has a timeline. Mr. Monoyios said it depends on the funding.

c. TDM Update – Mr. Monoyios

Mr. Monoyios noted we are starting a working group with the GVMC.

- Knowledge library with park and ride lot, map transit user guide for all audiences
- Staffing and commuters' outreach and regional campaigns
- Building on the West Michigan Ride Share program.
- Identifying new park and ride lots for carpooling and transit.
- Equity passes and a mobility wallet.

Mr. Bulkowski said the metro council approved the contract for citywide mobility in Kent County.

d. Amphitheatre and Soccer Stadium Update – Mr. Monoyios

Mr. Monoyios noted The Rapid is having conversations with Progressive A&E and Mobil GR on the Amphitheatre and the Soccer stadium development and how we can integrate the design of a stop station that will interface with and access these new locations.

Ms. Prato added for the bus/bus facilities grant, we plan on asking for an extension of our BRT service. Additional articulated buses, and a mobile ticketing option integrated with the venue. The hope is transit users will have a preferred entrance and easy access.

e. Feonix – Mobility Rising Update – Mr. Kevin Wisselink

Mr. Wisselink reported The Rapid is working with Feonix this is a nonprofit agency that coordinates transportation opportunities and services throughout the country. Feonix was awarded a grant from MDOT. This grant will expand veteran transportation options. This is a partnership The Rapid will support.

f. On-Demand Study Update – Mr. Steve Schipper for Mr. Jason Prescott

Mr. Schipper reported on the Rapid Connect service on behalf of Mr. Prescott. The service at Walker and Kentwood has been active for two (2) years. The Rapid has engaged with a company to take a deep dive and look at the service. Last Wednesday we received the future and existing conditions report, and the next steps will be them coming to town to ride the routes and deep dive exactly where we have been, and where we go from here. We will be looking for recommendations for both Connect and PASS services.

Mr. Schweitzer asked if it would focus more on the riders, or the employers.

Mr. Schipper replied that it would be more comprehensive. How do we make connections with 2nd and 3rd shifts?

g. Optibus Update – Mr. James Nguyen

Mr. Nguyen reported on the Optibus Software. Optibus is a planning, scheduling, rostering, operations, and time and attendance software. This will replace The Rapids current software TMS. Over the last few months, Planning, Operations and Finance teams have been migrating data into the new software. The Operations team is currently training on the new platform. We hope to be testing the new platform in a few weeks and GO Live by August 2024.

h. APTA Marketing/Communications Conference Recap – Ms. Cassi Cooper

Ms. Cooper reported on her recent business travel to APTA. She was able to make great connections with others in transit and with Mesmerize. The general theme for the event was building a robust customer experience. She found in many ways The Rapid is a front-runner in the industry.

i. IT Strategic Plan Update

Mr. Prokopy stated that Ms. Prato met with the President of GRCC in the fall to find an all-access pass solution for their students. We took the information and brought it to the fare payment provider, INIT to find out about integration costs. We have received a quote from our e-Fare provider and GRCC is reviewing it now.

Mr. Schweitzer asked if GRCC initiated the conversation on this. Mr. Prokopy confirmed yes.

Mr. Troost asked what the price tag was. Mr. Prokopy said the integration cost is \$175,000 plus 10,000/year in annual maintenance.

j. Update on VMT Fee Policy Proposal - Mr. Jack Hoffman

Mr. Hoffman gave a short policy proposal to the Attorney General for MDOT. Mr. Hoffman asked for her feedback. He also attended Phil Skaggs fundraiser. He gave Mr. Hoffman some pointers for testifying before the transportation commission.

4. ADJOURNMENT

This meeting was adjourned at 9:47 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 13, 2024

Respectfully submitted,



Kris Heald, Board Secretary



3a



THRIVING

Planning and Technology Committee Meeting

May 13, 2024

A framework for the future of connectivity.

Agenda

Project Status Updates

— Spring Engagement

TMP Recommendation Concepts & Strategies

Next Steps

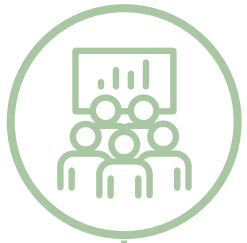


Project Status

IN PROGRESS

COMPLETE

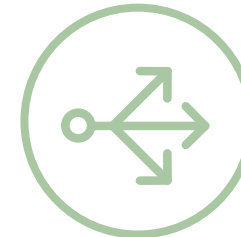
IN PROGRESS



Public Involvement
Building partnerships (throughout the process, public workshops targeted for Fall 2023 and Spring 2024)



Market Analysis
Transit demand, travel patterns, mobility need



Future Options and Scenarios Analysis
Who and where to serve? How?



Existing and Future Conditions Analysis
Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats



Peer Review
Best practices from similar and aspirational mobility providers

COMPLETE

COMPLETE

Project Status

COMPLETE



West Michigan Express Planning

Reassess feasibility, develop implementation plan

IN PROGRESS



Planning Guidelines, Policies and Performance Measures

How to measure and ensure success?

IN PROGRESS



Administrative and Operational Staffing Evaluation

How to staff?



Corridor Analysis

Connections to places outside current service area



Fleet, Facilities and IT Strategy

How to support?

COMPLETE

IN PROGRESS

Project Status

IN PROGRESS

ON DECK



Joint Development Opportunities

How to shape what happens next to transit?



Phased Implementation Strategy



Final Transit Master Plan

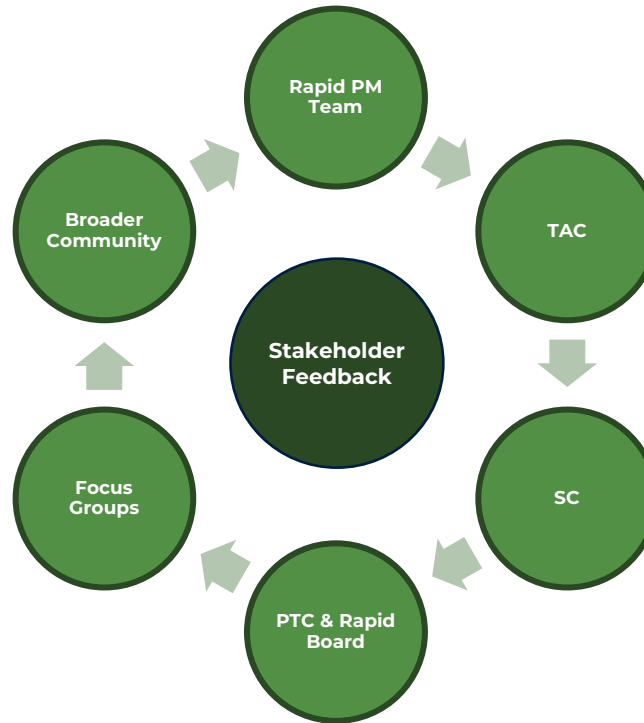
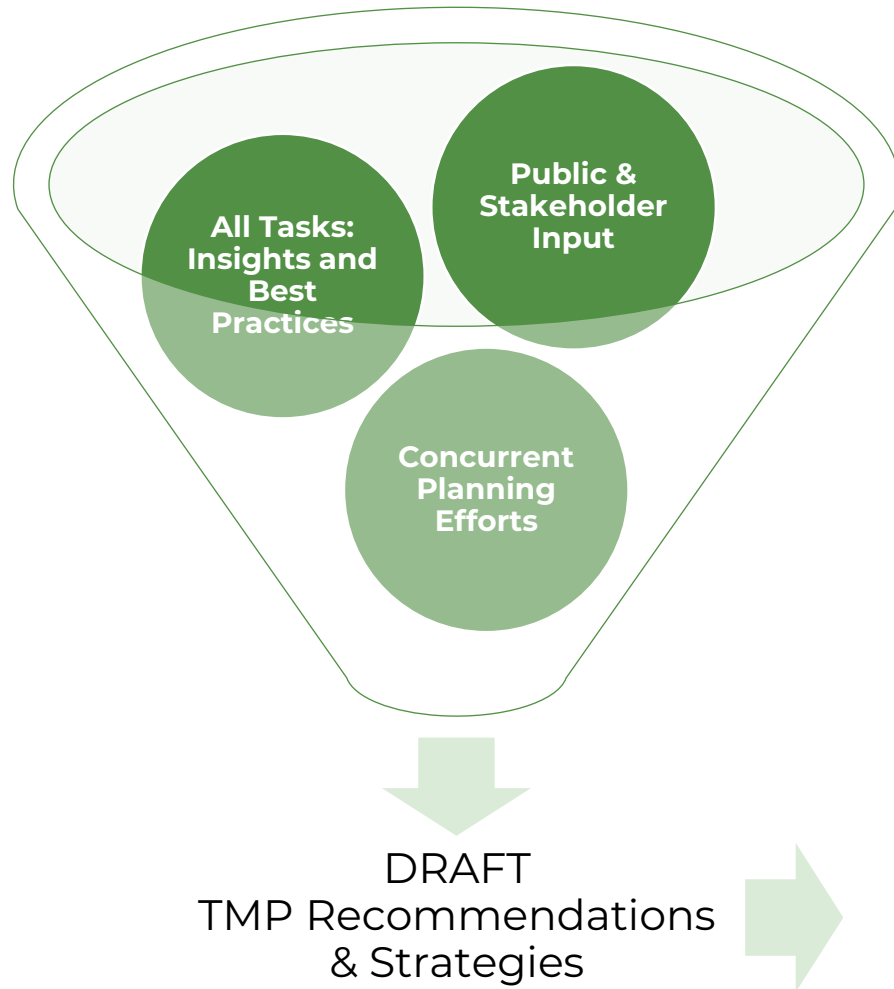


Financial and Funding Analysis

How to fund?

IN PROGRESS

Recommendations and Strategies: Development Process



Refine TMP Recommendations & Strategies

Final TMP Recommendations & Strategies

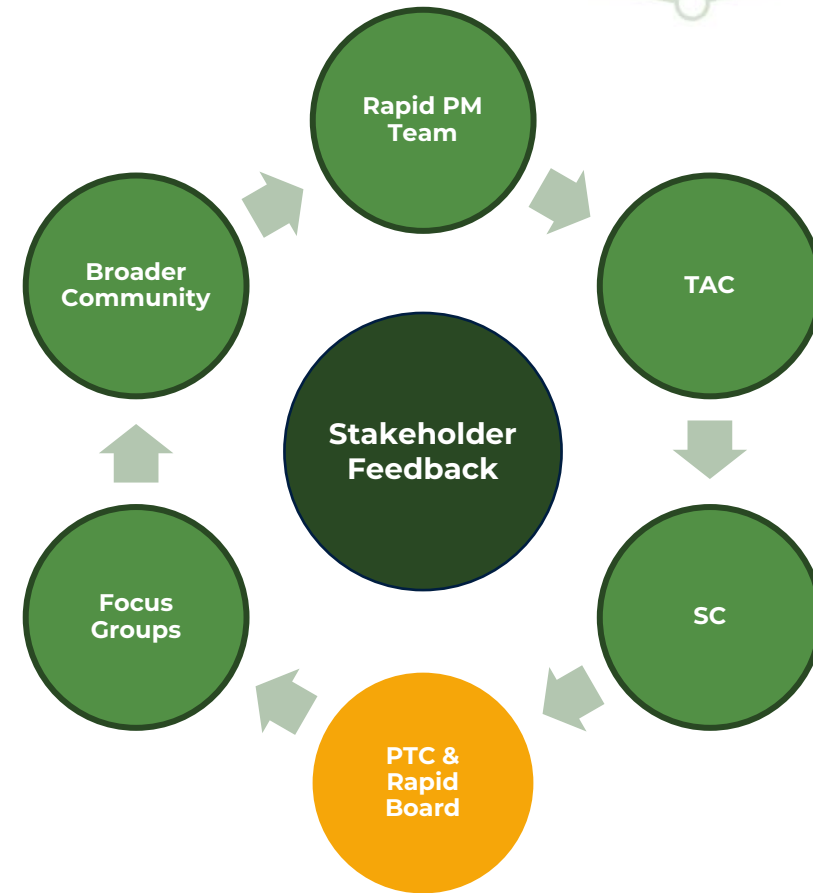
Next Steps

Finalize Recommendations

- Committee feedback
- Public feedback

Develop “TMP Roadmap to Implementation”

- Prioritized strategies
- Funding tools
- Implementation strategies





Spring Public Engagement






Spring Engagement Objectives

1. Share findings
 - Technical tasks and analyses
 - Fall 2023 public and stakeholder engagement
2. Capture initial feedback on TMP recommendation concepts

Spring Public Engagement Schedule

May 2024

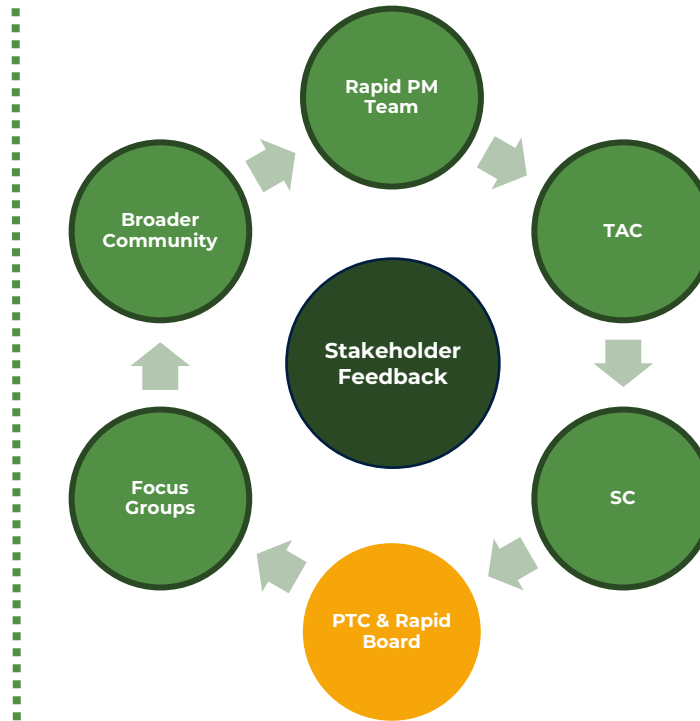
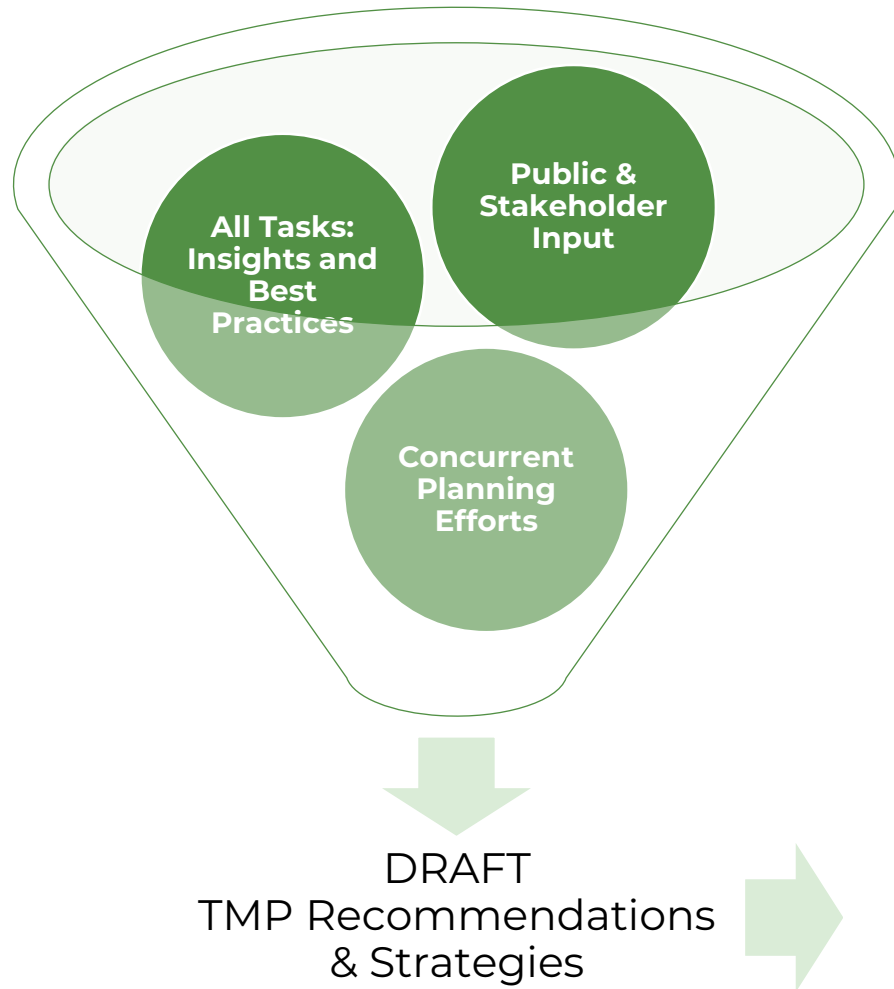
April					May				June	
1	8	15	22	29	6	13	20	27	3	10
										

-  **Public Engagement**
-  **Press Release**
-  **Public Meeting** – week of May 20
-  **Focus Groups** – week of May 20
-  **Engagement with 150+ Regional Stakeholders Groups** – week of May 20



Recommendation Concepts & Strategies

Recommendations and Strategies: Development Process

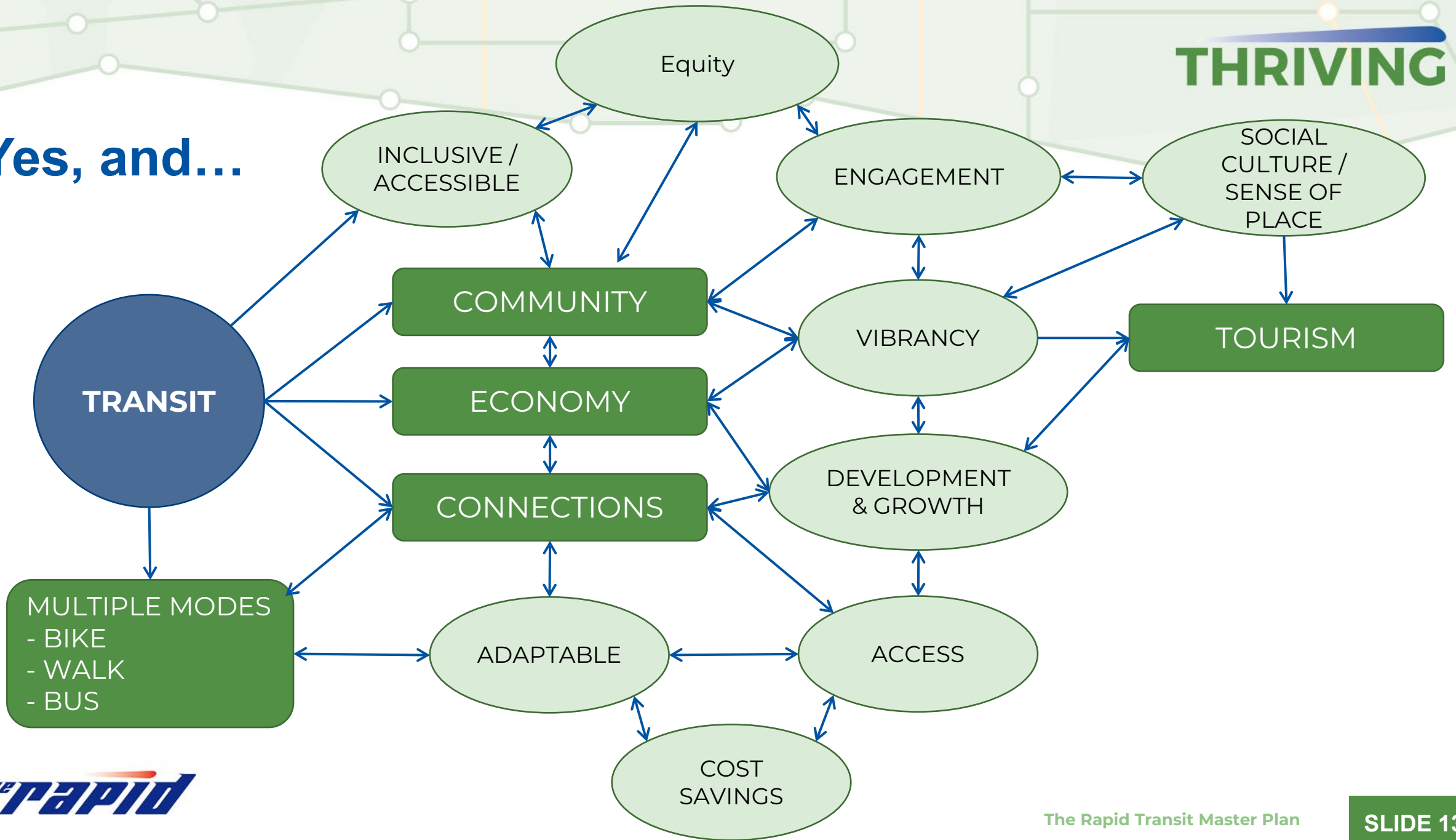


Refine TMP Recommendations & Strategies

Final TMP Recommendations & Strategies

Yes, and...

THRIVING



Roadmap to Implementation

Each Recommendation Concepts & Strategy will be Evaluated by

→ Funding Scenarios

- A. Existing funding / cost-neutral
- B. Strategically prepare for and pursue discretionary funding opportunities
- C. Pursue long-term sustainable funding sources for operations

→ Staffing Scenarios

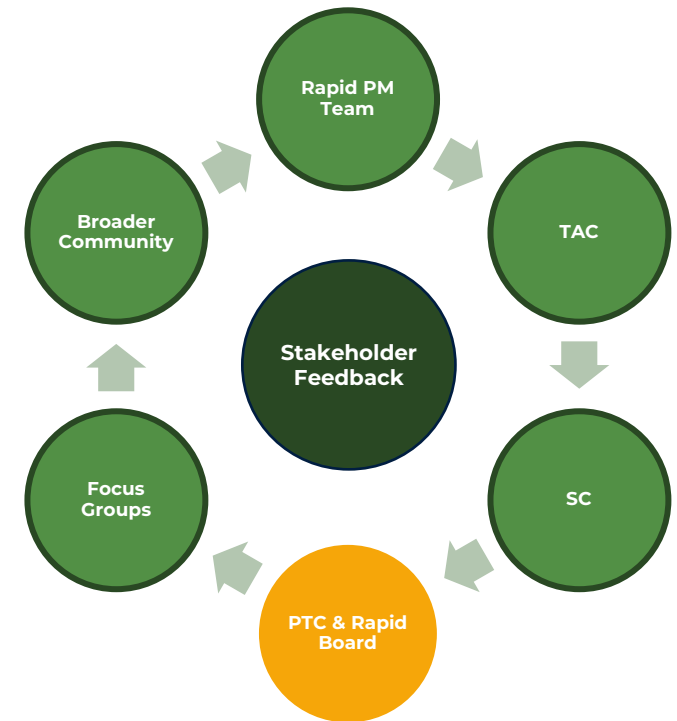
→ Estimated Cost

→ Implementation Timeline

- Near-term (less than five years)
- Mid-term (five to ten years)
- Long-term (over ten years)
- Ongoing






→ Implementation Partners

→ Guiding Principles



Guiding Principles

At The Rapid, we are the transportation provider of choice and convenience because...

-  **COMMUNITY | We reflect you and your needs.**
-  **GROWTH | We plan for action.**
-  **CONVENIENCE | We serve for user experience.**
-  **INTERNAL WORKFORCE | We value employee personal growth.**
(Engaged and prepared to meet our future challenges)
-  **ADAPTABILITY | We're future-flexible.**

DRAFT Recommendation Concepts



Community Awareness and Education



Existing Service Improvements



Future Service Expansion



Transit-Supportive Spaces



Innovation & Technology



Regional Partnerships



Sustainable Funding



Internal Workforce Development

DRAFT Recommendation Concepts



Community Awareness and Education



Existing Service Improvements



Future Service Expansion



Transit-Supportive Spaces



Innovation & Technology



Regional Partnerships

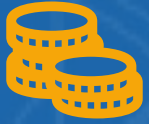


Sustainable Funding



Internal Workforce Development

Funding Tools / Scenarios



Existing funding / cost-neutral

Local property tax/transit millage (1.47)

Fares*

Sale of transportation services*

Advertising*



Discretionary / one-time funding

Federal grants

State assistance

**Aside from the property tax/millage, directly generated and local sources are generally lower value, more reliant on ridership trends, and have less room for year-over-year growth compared to the millage.*

Funding Tools



Long-term sustainable funding

Local property tax/transit millage (>1.47)

Sales tax

Excise tax (Gas tax, TNC tax, motor vehicle sales tax, etc.)

Fees and fines (e.g., parking fees, vehicle registration fees, etc.)

Joint development revenue (cash, long-term lease agreements, etc.)

Value capture (TRZ, TIFs, PIDs, etc.)

Park and Ride fees

Existing Service Improvements

Enhance rider experience by improving existing service, operations, and rider amenities.

Focus Groups identified numerous benefits to improving existing services, such as attracting talented workforces, and attracting new riders through improved service frequency, reliability, service hours, and other amenities to enhance the rider experience.

Market Analysis and Existing and Future Conditions Analysis identified several opportunities for service improvements, such as travel time, service frequency, service connectivity, and facility amenities.

“We need to enhance the current system before connecting to other communities – the first priority is the current service area enhancements” –
Online comments

Peer Analysis: Peers recommend implementing micromobility along existing or planned transit lines to foster first- and last- mile solutions

65-71% of survey respondents identified service frequency, service hours, and transit travel time as most important to improve the current system.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- ✓ COMMUNITY
- ✓ GROWTH
- ✓ CONVENIENCE
- ✓ INTERNAL WORKFORCE
- ✓ ADAPTABILITY

Existing Service Improvements

** Required for long-term implementation*

Underway

Cost

Develop and implement a guaranteed ride home program (West Michigan Rideshare).



Study and examine options to improve existing microtransit service efficiency, community awareness, and integration with fixed-route services.



Improve existing paratransit efficiency, community awareness, and integration with other specialized transportation services.



Existing Funding



Discretionary Funding



Sustainable Funding

Existing Service Improvements

** Required for long-term implementation*

Near Term

Cost

Continue to invest in existing productive routes such as LL, SL, 1, 2, 4, 9, 11 and 28, by increasing service efficiency, frequency, and OTP.



Explore route network design that incorporates additional mobility hubs/transfer centers.



Perform a study to evaluate existing fare structure and opportunities for regional fare coordination.



Evaluate and expand standards for in-vehicle amenities, such as on-board wi-fi.



Evaluate and improve customer facing technology as per with ITP Strategic Technology Plan.



Develop bus stop design and maintenance standards.



Existing Funding



Discretionary Funding



Sustainable Funding

Existing Service Improvements

** Required for long-term implementation*

Mid Term

Extend service hours for later weekday service and include weekends.



Assess opportunities for high-capacity services (BRT, LRT) along high performing corridors.



Long Term

Study feasibility of a high-frequency core (crosstown) network along key corridors, connecting major activity and mobility hubs., especially as ridership and demand grows.

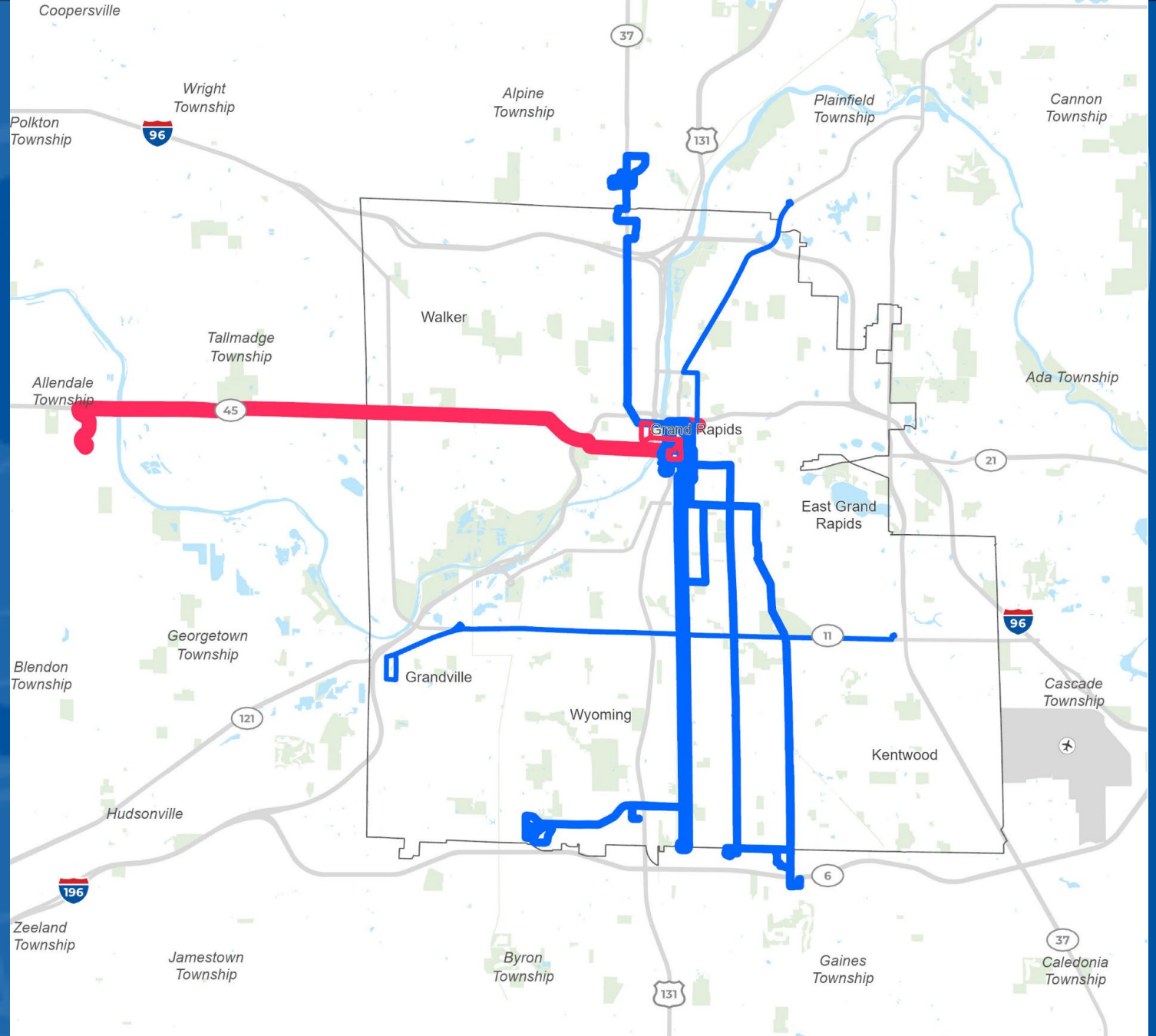


Study feasibility for Light-Rail Transit (LRT) services or Commuter-Rail Transit (CRT) services along existing high-capacity bus corridors, especially as ridership and demand grows.



Existing Service Improvements Near Term

Continue to invest in existing productive routes such as LL, SL, 1, 2, 4, 9, 11, and 28, by increasing service efficiency, frequency, and OTP.



Future Service Expansion

Increase connectivity within and outside of the ITP Service Area

60% of survey respondents identified connections to other transit systems beyond The Rapid as a top priority of the TMP (Ranked 2nd highest priority overall)

Steering Committee identified new regional and local connections during early TMP goal discussions

60% of survey respondents said they would like to see expanded routes in the future of transit for the region.

"It would be great to see expanded service and multiple transit options." – **Online survey**

Market Analysis and Intercounty Corridor Analysis identified several areas for potential service expansion and regional connectivity.

73% of survey respondents identified expanded service areas as the most important improvement to the current transit system.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- ✓ COMMUNITY
- ✓ GROWTH
- ✓ CONVENIENCE
- ✓ INTERNAL WORKFORCE
- ✓ ADAPTABILITY

Future Service Expansion

** Required for long-term implementation*

Near Term

Cost

Develop service agreement standards to provide service area extensions or other context-relevant services to non-ITP member jurisdictions.



Also develop standards to market contracted services as last mile solutions to private sector employers and institutions.

Implement West Michigan Express pilot express bus service along Chicago Dr corridor.



Study feasibility of intercounty service concepts:

- Alpine Ave: Extension of route 9 and/or new Alpine Rapid Connect Zone
- Walker Ave: New bus service and/or realignment of the Walker Rapid Connect Zone
- Plainfield Ave: Extension of route 11 and/or new Plainfield Rapid Connect Zone
- Barry St/54th Ave: New bus service between Grandville and the Airport
- US-131: Express or limited bus service between Wayland and Grand Rapids with park and rides in Wayland, Moline, Cutlerville, and Kentwood



Any concepts outside the ITP member communities will require additional funding.



Existing Funding



Discretionary Funding



Sustainable Funding

Future Service Expansion Near Term Concepts

Within ITP Member Communities

Walker Ave: New bus service and/or realignment of the Walker Rapid Connect Zone

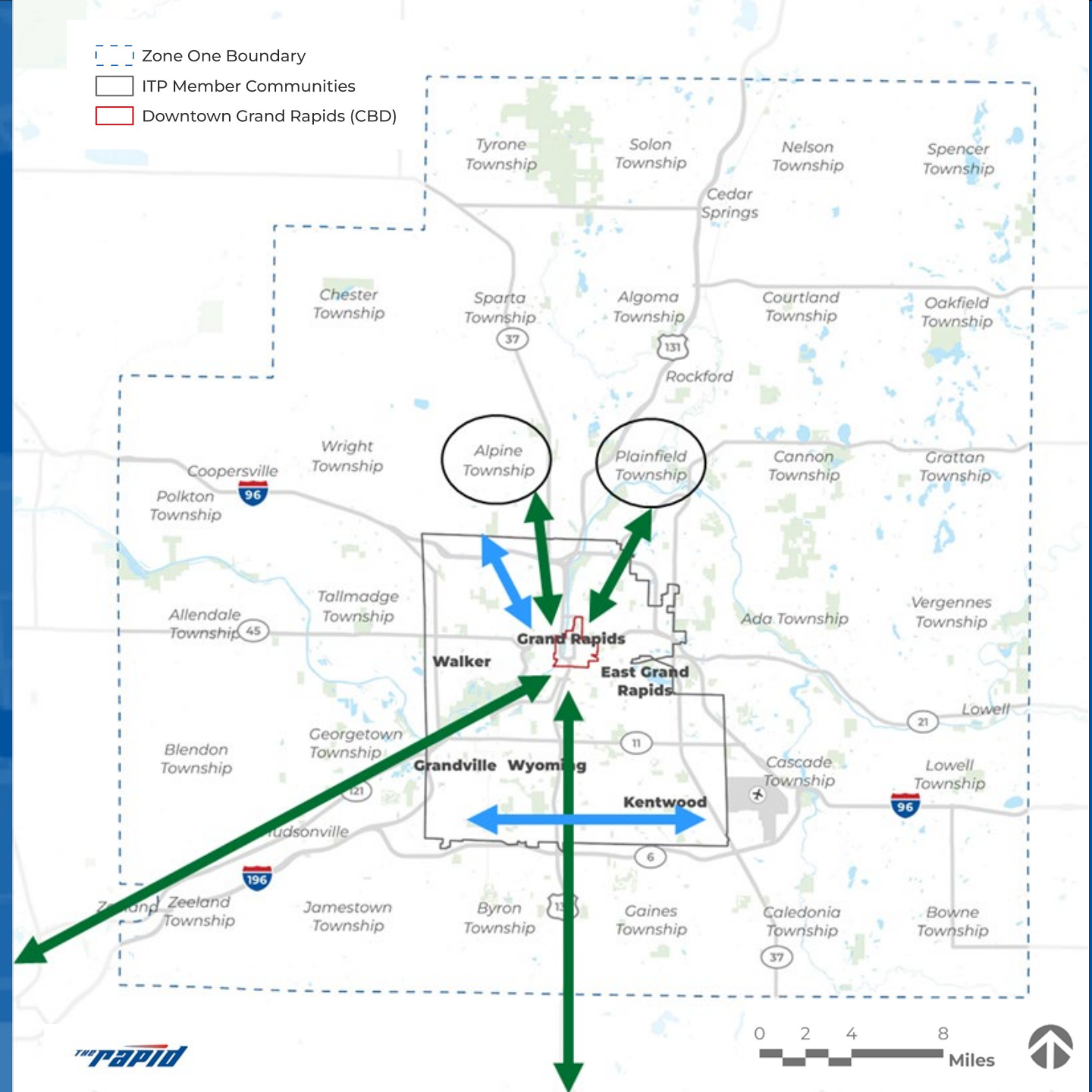
Barry St/54th Ave: New bus service between Grandville and the Airport

Outside ITP Member Communities

US-131: Express or limited bus service between Wayland and Grand Rapids with park and rides in Wayland, Moline, Cutlerville, and Kentwood

Plainfield Ave: Extension of route 11 and/or new Plainfield Rapid Connect Zone

Alpine Ave: Extension of route 9 and/or new Alpine Rapid Connect Zone



Future Service Expansion

** Required for long-term implementation*

Mid Term

Cost

Explore expansion of the transit service area by adding municipalities/townships to the ITP service area, such as Alpine, Plainfield, and Allendale Charter Townships.



Study feasibility of intercounty service concepts:

- Lake Michigan Dr: Laker Line extension or Allendale Charter Township Rapid Connect Zone.
- Zone Two: Limited or express bus along US-31 or developing context-sensitive services in areas of localized connectivity



Long Term

Study feasibility of intercounty service concepts as areas experience growth:

- 84th St
- Beltline Ave/Broadmoor Ave



Existing Funding

Discretionary Funding

Sustainable Funding

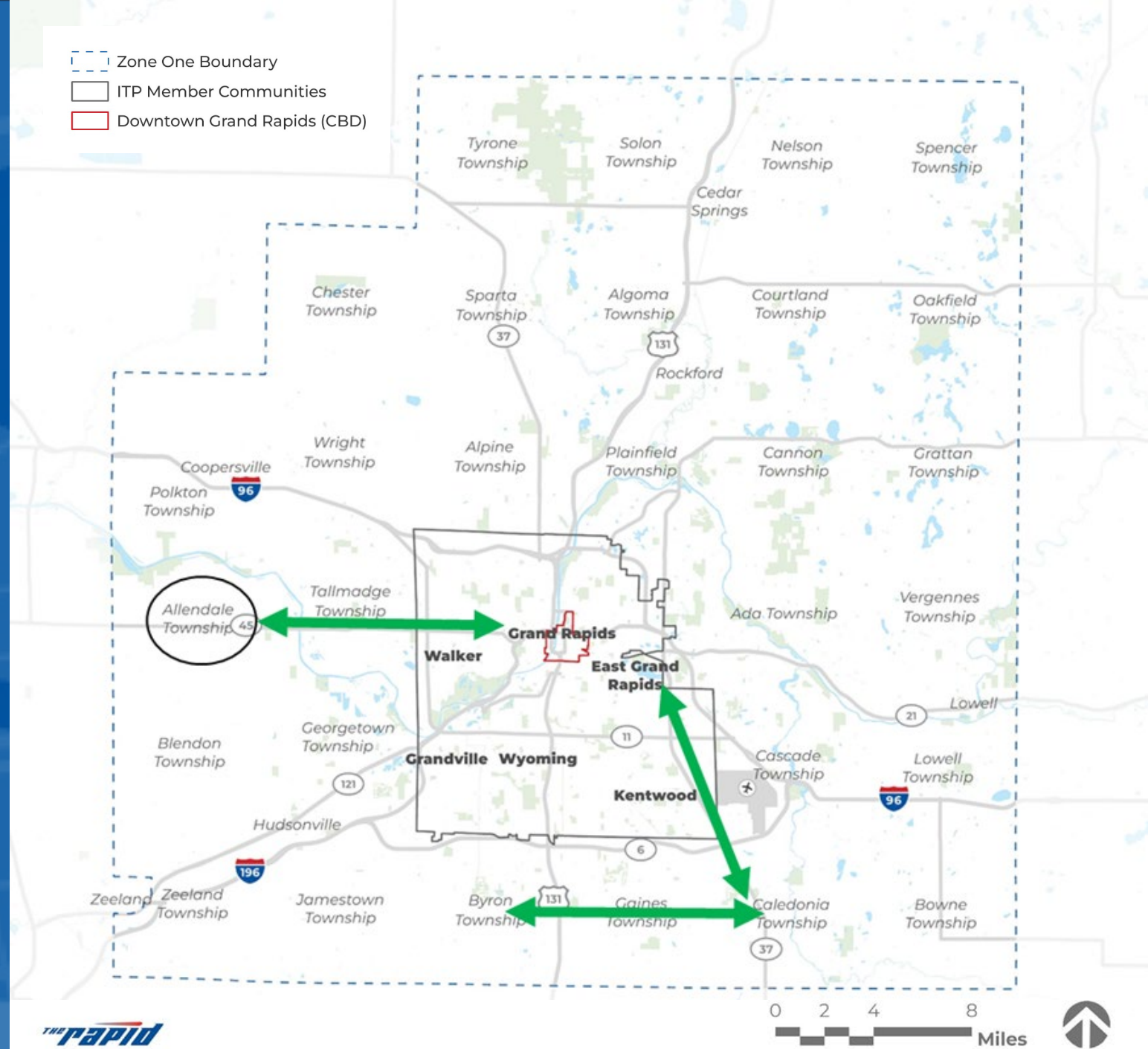
Future Service Expansion Mid & Long Term Concepts

Lake Michigan Dr: Laker Line Extension and/or Allendale Charter Township Rapid Connect Zone.

Zone Two: Limited or express bus along US-31 or developing context-sensitive services in areas of localized connectivity

Others, as areas experience growth:

- 84th St
- Beltline Ave/Broadmoor Ave



Transit-Oriented Development

Explore tools to foster transit-supportive places using plans, policies, and public investments.

50-63% of survey respondents consider the following to be the most important improvement to the transit system:

- More dense, walkable development near transit (63.3%)
- Better walking/biking access to transit (60/9%)
- More affordable housing options near transit

Peers suggest working with member cities to preemptively rezone for TOD and engage communities on TOD needs in tandem with transit investments.

53% of survey respondents identified access to affordable housing as a priority for the TMP.

Open house attendees identified additional pedestrian and bike infrastructure should be added near bus stop locations.

Placemaking and economic development are values transit brings to a community.
- **Steering Committee**

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- ✓ COMMUNITY
- ✓ GROWTH
- ✓ CONVENIENCE
- ✓ INTERNAL WORKFORCE
- ✓ ADAPTABILITY

Transit-Oriented Development

** Required for long-term implementation*

Near Term

Cost

Develop transit-supportive streetscape and roadway design guidelines



Develop mobility hub standards and policies



Develop TOD and Development Design Guidelines



Plan and study to leverage redevelopment potential of Rapid-owned assets and sites, such as the Rapid Central Station



Mid Term

Plan and study to leverage redevelopment potential of Rapid-owned assets and sites, such as the Rapid Operations Center or 60th and Division Station, as the surrounding markets strengthen.



Establish a team of staff dedicated to advancing TOD strategies.



 Existing Funding

 Discretionary Funding

 Sustainable Funding

Innovation and Technology

Pursue innovative technologies to streamline Rapid operations, improve rider convenience, and align mobility services.

Focus group attendees identified opportunities to improve rider experience through Mobility as a Service (MaaS), ridesharing route-matching, and other customer-facing technologies, including dynamic passenger information and wayfinding systems

Advisory technical committees identified several partnership opportunities between transit agencies and other public organizations to advance mobility goals.

Market Analysis and Existing and Future Conditions Analysis identified a few innovative technologies to help improve service efficiency as well as rider experience.

Online comments identified technology and transit infrastructure opportunities, such as transit signal priority and sophisticated digital fare platforms

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- ✓ COMMUNITY
- ✓ GROWTH
- ✓ CONVENIENCE
- ✓ INTERNAL WORKFORCE
- ✓ ADAPTABILITY

Innovation and Technology

** Required for long-term implementation*

Near Term

Cost

Coordinate with regional stakeholders to consolidate wayfinding and fare payment apps into a mobility wallet and/or MaaS, such as the Mobile GR Mobility Wallet.



Explore real-time information displays and other dynamic wayfinding and passenger information technologies for stops and stations.



Explore microtransit and paratransit operations software and technology to improve coordination and efficiencies between the two services.



Update ZEB (EV/Hydrogen) Transition Plan to incorporate new options and technology improvements



Mid Term

Continue to assess MaaS technology to improve regional mobility coordination opportunities



Long Term

Assess the feasibility of autonomous vehicles as technology improves.



Reassess the feasibility of ZEB (EV/Hydrogen) as technology improves.



Existing Funding



Discretionary Funding



Sustainable Funding

Regional Partnerships

Strengthen regional partnerships to align mobility planning efforts and implement TMP recommendations.

Peer agencies emphasize the benefits of working with jurisdictions and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) for transit-supportive policies, developing corridor-based zoning for transit-supportive uses, establishing contacts with collaborating agencies, and aligning leadership and organizational goals.

Peer agencies recommended working with state and local leaders to raise awareness of procedural and financial barriers to transit goals and to advocate for change.

Advisory stakeholder committees identified several partnership opportunities between transit agencies and other public organizations to advance mobility goals

Peer agencies describe the need for intentional alignment between jurisdictions, communicating shared goals and planning objectives.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- ✓ COMMUNITY
- ✓ GROWTH
- ✓ CONVENIENCE
- ✓ INTERNAL WORKFORCE
- ✓ ADAPTABILITY

Regional Partnerships

** Required for long-term implementation*

Near Term

Cost

Transit-Oriented Development: Partner with local stakeholders to study mobility and land use needs and opportunities within key redevelopment areas, especially in context of Rapid TOD/Joint Development strategies and ITP Member Communities' Master Plans.



Service Expansion: Partner with local communities to develop service agreement standards to provide service area extensions or other context-relevant services to non-ITP member jurisdictions.



Regional Coordination: Support the GVMC through their TDM working groups and partner with jurisdictions to implement TDM strategies and align regional mobility services.



Mobility Hubs: Partner with local governments to study and develop mobility hubs.



Discretionary Funding: Partner with GVMC and member jurisdictions to pursue discretionary funding to support regional transit and mobility initiatives.



Regional Growth: Coordinate with regional economic development corporations to align mobility solutions and regional growth needs, especially when developing standards to market contracted services as last mile solutions to private sector employers and institutions.



 Existing Funding

 Discretionary Funding

 Sustainable Funding



Mentimeter Activity:

Which recommendation areas are most exciting to you?

Join at menti.com | Use code
92 57 33 5





THRIVING

Thank You!

A framework for the future of connectivity.

From: Jack L. Hoffman

To: Rapid Planning Committee

Date: 4/29/24

Subject: Update on transportation funding reform

Table of Contents.

Update.....1

Attachment, comments before state transportation commission, 4/18/24

Update

On April 18 appeared before the State Transportation Commission in Lansing. Attached are my comments. I criticized the governor’s transportation policy of avoiding any funding disputes during the remainder of her term by bond financing secured by future gas and registration taxes. I encouraged the commission to establish its independent transportation policy based on its constitutional duties and powers.

I have communicated with the house and senate transportation committees and the house appropriations subcommittee for transportation, requesting an opportunity to appear and give testimony. The ask is that the legislators use their prerogative as state officers to ask attorney general Nessel her opinion on the question, in the event the legislature fails to appropriate sufficient tax revenues to maintain the state’s transportation system, do Proposal M and Act 484 of 1978 vest the transportation commission with authority to establish and implement a policy of charging commercial operators a regulatory fee for the privilege of using the system for the operation of their vehicles.

I have opened a discussion with MDOT’s director, director of government affairs. commission adviser, director of communications, and assistant attorney general for transportation on whether the organization chart on the department’s website should be revised to reflect the commission’s constitutional duties and powers to establish and implement an independent department transportation policy.

Here’s a revealing anecdote. At the April 18 commission meeting the auditor general for transportation gave a short presentation. He said to the effect in view of all the hubbub being raised about the commission’s constitutional authority to establish transportation policy he’d been asked to review the commission’s existing policies. This was his preliminary report. The commission web site listed about 150 different “policy” documents dealing with specific issues. He was recommending that the commission immediately find that two-thirds of these were either obsolete or previously repealed and should be removed from the website forthwith. His department would make a more careful review of the remaining 50 or so to determine how many, if any, were still current. Without further ado the commission removed two thirds of the policy documents on the department website. This is good news in the sense of clearing away the dead wood. Along that line commission chair Hayes announced at the beginning of the meeting that all commissioners were present and that after the meeting was concluded they would spend the rest of the day in a policy planning retreat. My impression was this was the first such retreat in living memory.

Anecdote two. Off the record I was told, Jack, you have to understand the position in which you are putting the director and commissioners. You are probably right on the law, but you have to realize no one has treated appointment as director or commissioner as anything but a political appointment for as long as anyone can remember. The commissioners and director were appointed with that mindset. With a different mindset, others might have been appointed. I thanked my interlocutor for the observations. I in turn observed, to the effect, well, we have to start somewhere.

I spoke with Representative Hood a couple of times about the infrastructure bill she is introducing which will impose a services tax to fund both water and transportation infrastructure with certain exemptions comparable to the exemption of food from the state sales tax. I believe the bill so far contains thirteen exempt categories of services.. I told her I would not oppose such a bill but that I would continue to work on funding the transportation system through regulatory fees. I gave her my reasons. I doubted the political feasibility. Furthermore, I thought regulatory fees based on costs associated with the use provided a better funding model. But, I said, our proposals did not compete, since in my scenario the commission would exercise its power to establish a regulatory fee policy applicable to commercial vehicles only in the event the legislature failed to appropriate sufficient tax revenues. If the Hood bill becomes law, problem solved.

On April 9 I talked with Carol Glanville about the transit caucus. I will prepare a paper for the caucus on the benefits of transportation funding reform for transit, comprehensive transportation, and the transportation system in general. On April 15 at the Wooden fundraiser I met Senator Peters' regional director Peter Dickow. I told him my issue was transportation funding reform. He replied, I know, and asked if there was anything the Senator could do to further the effort. I told him that on my issue the FHWA had already been very helpful with its guidance and so on so I had nothing to ask at present but would keep his question in mind. He said, do so.

On May 2 I will be meeting in Lansing the Representative Pat Outman of the 81st district based on Montcalm county who is minority vice-chair of the house transportation commission.

MDOT	Public Comment	Identifier	date
			4/18/24
Subject: Financing the transportation system with bonds versus regulatory fees			
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Public Comment

My name is Jack Hoffman. I reside in Grand Rapids, Michigan. My purpose today is to discuss debt versus regulatory fee financing of state transportation programs and facilities.

In 2019 proceeds of state fuel and registration taxes were 2.8 billion. The state trunkline fund received one billion of that. 900 million went to pay current maintenance and preservation expenses of state highways and 100 million to bond service, almost all to principle.

In 2020 Governor Whitmer declared it to be her policy to fund maintenance and preservation of the state’s transportation system by borrowing against future fuel and registration tax revenues. This commission adopted the governor’s policy. Laura Mester, MDOT Chief Administrative Officer, warned at the time. "This will not fix all of our roads and bridges. We still need a long-term solution,"

In her 2024 state of the state speech the governor reiterated a transportation policy based on the politics of avoiding any hard decisions on transportation funding during the remainder of her term by borrowing from the future and leaving the increased problems to successor administrations, commissions, and citizens. Under the governor’s policy in 2024 fuel and registration tax proceeds will be about the same as in 2019, 2.8 billion. Distributions to the stf fund will increase to 1.4 billion. Of this 1 billion will go to current highway expenses, about the same as in 2019, and 400 million to debt service, most of it interest.

There is an alternative.

In 1978 by Proposal M and Act 484 the people and legislature of Michigan amended the state constitution and the state highway commission act to replace the prior politically partisan, elected state highway commissioner with an independent non-partisan state transportation commission vested with authority to establish a policy and promulgate a rule, that, in the event the legislature fails to appropriate sufficient tax revenue to maintain and preserve the state's transportation system, commercial operators shall be charged a regulatory fee for the privilege of operating commercial vehicles on the system. If there is any question on this, the commissioners should use their prerogative as state officers to request a legal opinion from Attorney General Nessel.

At some future time, our grandchildren might ask us, grandmother, grandfather, what did you do during the great transportation funding crisis of the 2020s? None of us will want to have to answer, well, we were afraid to offend anybody so we opted to borrow against future revenues and leave an even worse problem to future generations.

There is no political solution That is why the voters created this independent commission and vested it with the power to establish and implement an independent transportation policy.

Appendix 13, tax revenues, state trunkline fund, debt and debt service						
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
fuel and registration tax revenue	2.8 billion	2.7 billion	2.8 billion	2.8 billion	2.9 billion	2.8 billion
stf bond debt outstanding at end of fiscal year	500 million	1.2 billion	1.8 billion	1.7 billion	2.8 billion	3.5 billion
distribution to stf fund for maintenance and preservation	900 million	1 billion	1 billion	1 billion	900 million	1 billion
distribution to stf for stf debt service for next fiscal year	100 million	100 million	200 million	200 million	300 million	400 million
total distribution to state trunkline fund	1 billion	1.1 billion	1.2 billion	1.2 billion	1.2 billion	1.4 billion
stf fund as % of tax revenue	36%	41%	43%	43%	41%	50%
stf debt as % of annual tax revenue	18%	44%	64%	61%	97%	125%