Interurban Transit Partnership

Present Performance & Service Committee Members

Charis Austin (Chair) *Tracie Coffman* *Renee Hill* *Mayor David LaGrand* *Tim Mroz*
Clarkston Morgan *David Moore*

PRESENT PERFORMANCE & SERVICE COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

Tuesday, September 15, 2026 – 4:00 p.m.

Rapid Central Station Conference Room | 250 Cesar E Chavez, SW

AGENDA

	PRESENTER	ACTION
1. PUBLIC COMMENT		
2. MINUTES REVIEW – March 17, 2026, May 19, 2026 (no quorum)	Charis Austin	Approval
3. INFORMATION		
A. Ridership and Metrics		
1) Paratransit – August 2026 Report not available	N/A	
2) Fixed Route Ridership – August 2026	Tim Roseboom	Information
3) On-Time Performance – August 2026	Josh Brink	Information
B. Millage		
1) Peer Agency Millage Efforts	Nick Monoyios	Information
2) History of ITP Millages		
3) Funding Mechanics		
4) Education vs. Advocacy		
5) Board Roles		
6) Roadmap to the Election		
7) Q/A		
C. Rapid Realities Recap	Nick Monoyios	Information
4. ADJOURNMENT		

Upcoming Procurements:

Legal Services
Bus Cleaning, Servicing, Washing, and Related Support Services
Bus Shelter – Stations Cleaning Services

Next meeting: November 10, 2026

Present Performance & Service Committee Members

Charis Austin (Chair)
Tracie Coffman *Renee Hill* *Mayor David LaGrand* *Tim Mroz*
Clarkston Morgan *David Moore*

PRESENT PERFORMANCE AND SERVICE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 17, 2026 – 4:00 p.m.

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

ATTENDANCE:

Committee Members Present:
Charis Austin, Clarkston Morgan, David Moore, Tim Mroz

Committee Members Absent:
Tracie Coffman, Renee Hill, Mayor LaGrand

Rapid Attendees:
Joshua Brink, Steve Clapp, Kris Heald, Linda Medina, Nick Monoyios, Deb Prato, Jason Prescott, Andy Prokopy, Tim Roseboom, Steve Schipper, Lindsay Thomasini

Public Attendees:

Ms. Austin called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m.

1. PUBLIC COMMENT

No Public Comment

2. MINUTES – January 13, 2026

Ms. Austin asked if there were any corrections or changes to the meeting minutes from January 13, 2026. There was none.

Mr. Mroz motioned to approve, and Mr. Moore supported it. The motion passed unanimously.

3. INFORMATION

A. Ridership and Metrics

1) Paratransit, February 2026 – Mr. Jason Prescott

Mr. Prescott highlighted a few points from the February report that was in the meeting packet.

Ridership Trends & Insights:

- Year over year increase: Approximately 8%, mainly in non-disabled senior and ADA funding sources.
- Seasonal Patterns: Higher ridership in winter, due to winter-only eligibility and door-to-door service.
- Day-specific trends: Notable increase on Sundays in February, possibly linked to religious activities or shopping, contrasting with the usual Saturday ridership in fall.
- Ridership monitoring: Ongoing analysis of weekend vs. weekday trends.

Dispatch and Driver Operations:

- Ownership Change: The Rapid assumed dispatch oversight on October 1, 2025.
- Idle time reduction: Clear minutes (driver idle time) decreased by about 20% since November, improving operational efficiency.
- Driver Scheduling: Adjustments to routes and shifts, including overlaps, to better manage breaks and route ownership.
- Driver Staffing: Currently, approximately 23 full-time drivers; two recent hiring events added six drivers in training, with two more job fairs planned.

Mr. Morgan inquired about the hiring process. Mr. Prescott noted that timing is about 2-3 weeks for new drivers, who do not need CDLs but must complete ADA, maintenance, and wheelchair handling training.

Mr. Moore inquired whether special events or Sunday sports may influence ridership patterns.

Mr. Prescott noted adverse weather leads to canceled appointments, reducing ridership during these periods. Driver call-offs are another factor.

Mr. Morgan inquired about PASS Ridership. Mr. Prescott noted Passenger Adaptive Suburban Services (PASS) is a supplemental service for first mile/last mile. The Rapid runs the program, and it is integrated with ADA services. Our Go!Bus and Paratransit fleet will go out and pick up a client 1/3 of a mile or more from a bus stop, pick them up at home and bring them to a fixed route bus stop. He noted the additional cost of PASS is minimal and aligns with millage promises to enhance accessibility for residents distant from fixed-route stops.

Ms. Prato added more commentary on clear minutes and why it is important.
She noted we averaged 8500 clear minutes just idling per day at $75/revenue hour, which totals $10,625 a day, we were paying to sit idle. This underscores the importance of optimizing operations to reduce unnecessary downtime and maximize productive wheel turns, boosting revenue and operation.

2) Fixed Route Ridership, February 2026 – Mr. Tim Roseboom

Mr. Roseboom reported that in February 2026, ridership totaled just under 594,000 trips. He emphasized that this figure represents significant growth, with a 6% increase in contract ridership and a 9% increase in fixed route ridership compared to previous periods. These increases are consistent across various time frames, including weekday, evening, and weekend (Saturday and Sunday) services.
Despite these positive trends, the year-to-date ridership still lags slightly behind the previous year, with a 1.2% decrease, totaling just under 2.8M rides for the year so far.

3) On-Time Performance, January/February 2026 – Mr. Joshua Brink

Mr. Brink reported on January and February 2026 On-Time Performance. On-Time Performance (OTP) for January 2026 was 80%, with a goal of 90%. The OTP trend correlates with weather conditions and detours, notably on the Laker Line and Michigan Street detour. System-wide performance was below target across all routes.

On-Time Performance for February 2026 was 88.53% An improvement from January, nearly reaching the goal. Slight decline compared to February 2025 by 2%. No major detours occurred; congestion was the primary factor affecting performance.

Mr. Moore inquired about rider feedback regarding delays. Mr. Brink noted feedback was received, but specific metrics were not available at the time.

Mr. Monoyios explained that a delay of up to 5 minutes is still considered “on time,” as it allows riders to make connections. In some cases, this may be more convenient.
Ms. Prato confirmed that customer feedback is actively received.

Mr. Mroz asked about informing customers of route closures. Mr. Prokopy clarified that delay data is based on schedule adherence, however, the data does not explicitly indicate when a bus is not coming, as omitted data reflect delays.

B. Operational Financial/Impacts

1) Summer Service, Event Service – Mr. Nick Monoyios

Mr. Monoyios reported on the Summer Service Schedule and Planning.

Service Periods:

- Winter: January – April
- Spring/Summer: May – August
- Fall: September – December

Mr. Monoyios noted the planning team holds regular sessions with bus operators to gather input and data-driven improvements.

Service Reductions in Summer:

- No GRPS, Secondary, GRCC Shuttle, Bulldog line to Ferris, GVSU, or off-campus shuttles.
- Laker Line reduced to 15-minute intervals from 10-minute intervals.

Detour and Construction Coordination:

- Collaborations with Metro Council & MDOT to manage detours.
- Schedule adjustments are made based on construction impacts.

Extended Evening Service:

- Last weekday pulse currently is at 10:20 p.m.
- Added pulses at 10:50 p.m. and 11:20 p.m. to accommodate event nights (e.g., Amphitheatre events) ending at 11:00 p.m.

Route and Service Changes:

- Route 10 (Special Olympics). Service ends at 68th Street in May due to contract expiration; significant impact on paratransit riders. Communication plans are underway for affected clients.

Route 1000:

- Resumes this summer, running weekends, along Route 12 to Millennium Park.

DASH Change:

- Minor routing tweak for better service on Wealthy, improving on-time performance and customer satisfaction.

Event and Rostering:
Event Planning:
Ms. Austin asked if we are having later service on event night, to which Mr. Monoyios confirmed yes.
Ms. Prato added that all events will be rostered with new software, enabling operators to know their

extra hours on event days. She also noted it is confirmed where the Van Andel, Amphitheatre, and DeVos events coincide, which will require flexible planning.

Operator Welfare:
Mr. Mroz inquired if bio breaks are factored into schedules to which Mr. Monoyios confirmed yes. He also noted that construction near Route 13's terminus previously provided bathroom access, now it is addressed with planning and the transportation department.

Mr. Mroz inquired whether The Rapid is monitoring private venues like GLC Live due to their proximity to Van Andel, which could impact an additional 800 – 900 people. Mr. Monoyios confirmed that the team is actively monitoring all city activity, noting a growing influence in the entertainment sector.
Ms. Prato mentioned that the City of Grand Rapids has discussed some private venues and will follow up with more details.

Mr. Moore asked about the new summer hours and how they are communicated. Mr. Monoyios stated the hours were approved today and will be communicated both internally and externally. Ms. Prato added that the methods include a press release, Facebook updates, Campaign Monitor emails to registered Wave Card users, posting on the website, and posters at the Information Center at Rapid Central Station.

Ms. Austin requested this information be shared at the CAC Advisory meeting as well.

C. Employees

1) Operator Recruitment and Retention – Ms. Lindsay Thomasini & Mr. Steve Schipper

Ms. Thomasini reviewed trends in operator recruitment and retention, focusing on data from 2024 onward, tracking started in 2024 due to system changes.

She discussed hiring patterns, retention rates, and strategies to improve recruitment and retention.

2024 Highlights:
Hired 80 new bus operators. As of March 11, 2026, retention is at 31%. Terminations at 34%, Resignations at 22% and Job abandonment at 12%.
The average employment duration for resignations was 216 days.
Class sizes varied. July 2024 had up to 20 trainees. January 2024 had 12 trainees, and March 2024 only had 1 trainee.

Winter 2024 had no uncovered work; summer and fall saw increased open rosters due to higher service demand.

Mr. Morgan inquired about seasonal fluctuations. Ms. Prato mentioned summer has fewer rosters due to lower service during university vacations. Fall sees increased activity with up to 43 open rosters due to supplemental routes, high school services, and campus shuttles.
Ms. Prato added that terminations stem from attendance violations, or policy violations, with some linked to drug and alcohol tests or DOT violations.

Ms. Thomasini noted some of the resignation codes include healthy/family reasons, dissatisfaction, licensing issues, or career advancement.

2025 Highlights:
39 new bus operators hired: retention rate of 67%. Class sizes ranged from 3-8 new hires per session. Termination reasons included attendance violations, drug/alcohol violations, accidents, licensing issues, and dissatisfaction. Data shows resignations after an average of 84 days.

2026 Outlook:

Average of 201 operators so far. 27 conditional offers sent; 10 hired. Some offers were withdrawn due to licensing or other issues; 17 offers ended before employment started, mainly du to DOT certification problems.

Strategies and Tactics:
The Rapid has partnered with West Michigan Works for focus groups to understand perceptions and barriers.

Key Findings:
The role is viewed as meaningful and respected. Concerns around safety and schedules, and an emphasis on benefits like paid CDL training, health benefits, union stability, overtime, and career growth.
Ms. Thomasini noted the development of a 'day in the life' video to attract candidates, and updated advertising to highlight these key points and broaden market research.

Mr. Mroz inquired what the starting salary is, to which Ms. Thomasini confirmed $25.41/hr. He followed up with a second question does the union help with the candidates who walk away. Ms. Prato noted The Rapid is a second-chance employer, willing to work with applicants disclosing past issues.

Mr. Morgan inquired about the average age of applicants. Ms. Prato noted the average age has shifted from mid-40s to mid-30s.

Mr. Moore asked about ongoing drug testing. Mr. Schipper confirmed ongoing test includes random drug tests and reasonable suspicion assessments, covering over 80% of the workforce annually.

D. Fleet and Facilities

1) Maintenance Break Room Refresh – Mr. Steve Schipper

Mr. Schipper presented slides showing the renovation of the breakroom.

2) Early Childhood Center Update – Ms. Deb Prato

Ms. Prato provided a brief update on the Early Childhood Center at Rapid Central Station. The national team is currently visiting for a tour. The ribbon-cutting ceremony is scheduled for June 8, with Governor Gretchen Whitmer and US Representative Congresswoman Hillary Scholten expected to attend.

She also mentioned that Transit Worker Appreciation Day is on March 18, inviting board members to join if their schedules permit. The celebration will feature two food trucks, Two Bones BBQ and Ollie's Donuts, and will include an awards ceremony at noon to recognize the Administrative Employee of the Year, Technician of the Year, and Bus Operator of the Year.

4. ADJOURNMENT

This meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.
The next meeting is scheduled for May 19, 2026

Respectfully submitted,

Kris Heald, Board Secretary

Present Performance & Service Committee Members

Charis Austin (Chair)
Tracie Coffman *Renee Hill* *Mayor David LaGrand* *David Moore*
Clarkston Morgan *Tim Mroz*

PRESENT PERFORMANCE AND SERVICE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, May 19, 2026 – 4:00 p.m.

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

ATTENDANCE:

Committee Members Present:
Charis Austin, Clarkson Morgan, David Moore,

Committee Members Absent:
Tracie Coffman, Renee Hill, Mayor LaGrand, Tim Mroz

Rapid Attendees:
Steve Clapp, Kris Heald, Jeffrey King, Deron Kippen, Linda Medina, Nick Monoyios, James Nguyen, Deb Prato, Jason Prescott, Andy Prokopy, Tim Roseboom, Steve Schipper, Lindsay Thomasini, Mike Wieringa, Kevin Wisselink

Public Attendees:

Ms. Austin called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m.

1. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment

2. MINUTES – March 17, 2026

A quorum was not present, so the meeting minutes could not be approved. Approval of March 17, 2026, minutes will be deferred to the July 21, 2026, meeting.

3. INFORMATION

A. Ridership and Metrics

1. Paratransit, April 2026 – Mr. Jason Prescott

Mr. Prescott noted that recent efforts have focused on improving productivity by maximizing driver utilization and vehicle occupancy. In April 2026, paratransit service achieved 1.99 riders per hour,

nearly meeting the established goal of 2.0 riders per hour, with continued efforts aimed at exceeding that benchmark.
As productivity has improved, attention is now shifting to factors affecting On-Time Performance (OTP). Current OTP stands at 80%, significantly below the agency goal of 95%. Contributing issues include drivers arriving late for shifts, delays leaving the yard, and non-work-related stops during service hours, such as visits to gas stations or fast-food restaurants. To address these concerns staff are working with Transdev to strengthen collective bargaining agreement (CBA) language, increase accountability, improve morale, and establish higher performance standards.
Transdev is currently operating without a General Manager and is actively recruiting for the position after a recent candidate declined the role. Driver recruitment remains a priority, with the contractor approximately 20 full-time drivers short of its target workforce of 110 drivers. Through twice-monthly job fairs, Transdev hired 11 new drivers in April.
Ridership remains about 30% below pre-pandemic levels; however, ADA applications continue to increase steadily, indicating expected future ridership growth despite current figures not yet reflecting that trend.

Mr. Moore asked what CBA means. Mr. Prescott explained that CBA stands for Collective Bargaining Agreement, which is the contract between the drivers and their union. He stated that the agreement establishes expectations for service and allows drivers to be held to a higher standard, with both parties working to reach terms that support high-quality service and performance.

Mr. Moore asked whether this issue has had any impact on ridership. Mr. Prescott said he does not believe it has reduced ridership percentages, but he noted that some negative behaviors have been allowed to continue. He expressed concern that if passengers do not reach their destination at the start of a negotiation period, they may delay their trip to a later time. Efforts are being made to prevent that from happening.

Mr. Moore noted that ridership is continuing to increase. What were the numbers like last year. Mr. Prescott explained that total ridership, which includes Ride Link and Network 180 services, is 6.5% higher than it was at the same time last year. ADA ridership has also increased, but at a slower rate of approximately 3% to 3.5% year over year. While ridership growth is positive across services, overall, ADA ridership has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Mr. Morgan stated that there is now evidence of unsatisfactory work being performed and asked whether the community has been surveyed to gather feedback that could help demonstrate concerns and provide a better understanding of the contract and ongoing negotiations.
Mr. Prescott responded that questions regarding surveys would be best addressed by Mr. King, while questions about collective bargaining agreement (CBA) language should be directed to Mr. Schipper. He added that many paratransit labor negations occur directly between the contractor and the drivers' union. However, customer surveys conducted by the agency indicate that riders would like more reliable, timely service and shorter trips.

Mr. Schipper noted that some concerns have developed over time and that the departure of the previous GM is not necessarily viewed negatively, as the organization's culture did not fully align with the desired standards of professionalism and accountability for passengers. He expressed optimism about working with a new GM and hopes to have input in the hiring process. He also noted that Transdev negotiates directly with the union, so while ideas and feedback can be shared, they do not always influence the outcome.

Ms. Prato stated that after bringing the operation in-house, the team assumed responsibility for dispatch and maintenance. While vehicle operations have lacked consistent leadership, efforts are underway to strengthen management and move the operation forward.

2. Fixed Route Ridership, April 2026 – Mr. Tim Roseboom

Mr. Roseboom reported that combined Fixed Route and Contract Services carried more than 601,000 passengers in April 2026. Contract Services continued to outpace Fixed Route growth, driven largely by GVSU and GRCC having more days in session, as students ride using their school IDs under existing agreements.

Overall ridership has recovered to approximately 62% of pre-pandemic levels, while year-to-date ridership remained essentially flat with a 0.4% increase compared to FY25.

Board members discussed how ridership should be evaluated. Ms. Prato questioned the continued relevance of comparing current ridership to 2019 levels, while Mr. Morgan supported retaining the comparison as a recovery benchmark and recommended reporting it annually. Mr. Moore emphasized the need to establish clear ridership goals and identify strategies to increase ridership.

3. On-Time Performance, April 2026 – Mr. Tim Roseboom for Mr. Josh Brink

Mr. Roseboom reported that April's On-Time Performance (OTP) finished slightly above 88%, below the 90% goal. While performance improved compared to April of the previous year, it declined from March. He noted that seasonal road construction and detours are beginning to affect service, with major detours identified in the report and expected to continue through the summer and into early fall.

Mr. Roseboom reviewed how OTP is measured, explaining that arrivals 0-5 minutes early are considered early, and approximately 10% of trips were late.

Mr. Morgan asked why Routes 73 and 76 showed the highest percentage of early arrivals. Mr. Roseboom explained the OTP is measured at designated timepoints along each route. For the Grand Rapids Public School trippers (Routes 71-76), which operate only one trip with two timepoints.

Mr. Morgan questioned whether these school trippers should be measured differently to avoid skewing the overall data. Ms. Prato noted Routes 1-44 represent the core fixed-route system, while the remaining routes are specialized trips. She agreed it would be worthwhile evaluating the impact of the trippers on the overall OTP data but stated that the report did not reveal any significant concerns. She also emphasized that running early is undesirable and noted that the system instructs operators to stop and wait if they are ahead of schedule.

B. Operational

1) Overview – FTA Triennial Review Process, Mr. Kevin Wisselink

Ms. Prato introduced the discussion by explaining that the Present Performance & Service Committee focuses on organizational operations, accountability, and transparency. With an upcoming millage, she emphasized that demonstrating strong oversight and responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars is essential. One key measure of that accountability is the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Triennial Review.

Mr. Wisselink explained that because The Rapid receives significant federal capital funding, the FTA conducts a comprehensive review every three years to ensure compliance with federal regulations and proper use of grant funds. Independent contractors oversee the review on behalf of the FTA.

The review process began with a detailed Recipient Information Request (RIR), requiring completion of a 93-page questionnaire along with 217 supporting documents. The agency is evaluated in 17 compliance areas, including legal compliance, financial management, grant administration, project management, transit asset management, fleet maintenance, procurement, Title VI, ADA compliance, GO!Bus operations, school bus and charter service regulation, drug-free workplace requirements, drug and alcohol testing, Section 5307 grant administration, and the Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP).

Mr. Wisselink highlighted Financial Management as one of the most significant review areas. The FTA requires extensive documentation, including three years of audits, financial policies, funding sources, staff responsibilities, grant records, five-year financial plans, and capital and operating budgets. He noted that the review involves staff across the leadership team, with Ms. Liz Shelling coordinating the overall effort.

The Review Process includes:

- Submission of required documentation through the RIR.
- Preliminary review by the FTA and contracted reviewer.
- An on-site visit scheduled for the week of August 10, 2026, during which additional procurement and maintenance records will be examined.
- A draft findings report, allowing the agency two weeks to provide clarification or address any issues.
- A final report issued approximately 45 business days after the site visit, followed by corrective actions if necessary.

Mr. Wisselink reported that The Rapid received only two findings during its previous Triennial Review, relating to drug-free workplace advertising requirements and vehicle disposal procedures during the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal for every review is zero findings.

He also noted that two compliance areas-Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)-will not be formally reviewed this cycle because federal requirements are currently being revised, although the agency must still comply with those programs.

Danielle Holmes of Holmes CPA has been assigned as the lead reviewer. The agency expects to receive additional document requests in late July before the August site visit.

Mr. Morgan asked how compliance is scored. Mr. Wisselink explained that performance is measured by the number of findings, with zero findings representing full compliance.
Mr. Morgan also asked about consequences for unresolved findings. Mr. Wisselink stated that unresolved issues can escalate and may ultimately result in withholding of federal funding.

Mr. Moore asked about procurement compliance. Mr. Wisselink explained that federal procurement requires several mandatory steps including cost estimates, competitive bidding, evaluation criteria, and proper advertising—failure to complete required documentation can result in a finding.
Mr. Moore also asked whether the discussion surrounding the Red Project related to the Triennial Review.

Ms. Prato clarified that it does not directly relate to the review but instead concerns The Rapid's advertising policy. She explained that the agency's viewpoint-neutral advertising policy prohibits advertisements promoting federally illegal drugs. While naloxone is a life-saving overdose reversal medication, permitting such advertising could require revisions to the policy. She noted that discussions with the Red Project were unsuccessful because the organization was unwilling to modify its proposed messaging, while The Rapid must also uphold its federally required drug-free workplace policies.

C. Employees

1) Bus Operator Hiring Update, Mr. Steve Schipper

Mr. Schipper reported that bus operator hiring has improved significantly, with staffing nearing full capacity. The maintenance team is currently overstaffed by one mechanic, and a recently graduated intern is expected to be hired. Due to reduced summer service while schools are out and employee vacations, there are currently only four open operator schedules, with approximately 30 expected to be posted int eh fall and winter.
The Rapid has three employees currently in training, along with a second training class of seven additional candidates at various stages of the hiring process.

Mr. Moore asked whether staffing shortages have contributed to lower ridership. Mr. Schipper did not believe there is a direct correlation, noting that many applicants are motivated by The Rapid's mission.

Ms. Prato added that an extra board of operators helps cover vacations and medical leave, and volunteers are used through a revolving work list. She also noted that service cuts have been minimal over the last quarter, though managing unlimited work hours remains an ongoing concern.

2) Training – Summer Bus Operator Refresher, Mr. Steve Schipper

Mr. Schipper noted we are meeting with every bus operator to refresh skills in a relaxed, supportive environment. The summer refresher includes collaboration with Pine Rest staff to strengthen customer service and people skills, while planning and maintenance teams are also included to reinforce operational best practices.

D. Fleet and Facilities

1) Fleet Maintenance Scorecard, Mr. Steve Clapp

Mr. Clapp explained that the maintenance team reviews a weekly scorecard to track key performance indicators (KPIs), including road calls, which occur when a bus experiences a mechanical failure while in service. Using daily dispatch reports, the team identifies the most common causes of road calls and works with supervisors to ensure accurate diagnoses, high-quality repairs, and long-term solutions that help prevent recurring issues.

As an example, Mr. Clapp described an issue with 2021 Gillig buses experiencing check engine warnings. After nearly two years of investigation, the team determined the root cause was a faulty water pump valve. The problem was isolated to the 2021 model year, allowing the maintenance team to implement targeted repairs and reduce future occurrences.

4. ADJOURNMENT

This meeting was adjourned at 5:02 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for July 21, 2026

Respectfully submitted,

Kris Heald, Board Secretary

Date: September 15, 2026

To: ITP Board of Directors

From: Tim Roseboom – Senior Planner

Subject: FIXED ROUTE RIDERSHIP AND PRODUCTIVITY REPORT – AUGUST 2026

OVERVIEW: In August 2026, there was an 11.6% decrease in total monthly route ridership as compared to August 2025. Regular fixed route services increased 3.9%, but contract services decreased 52.4%. DASH Work was eliminated and the DASH Circulators were combined to one consolidated clockwise route on May 4. Also, GVSU was in session the last full week of August 2025 but did not start until August 31 in 2026.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Monthly Ridership

	August 2026	August 2025[1]	% Change
Regular Fixed Route Service *(Routes 1–44)*	356,772	343,477	3.9%
Contracted Service *(GVSU, DASH, GRCC, and Ferris)*	62,294	130,841	-52.4%
Total Monthly Fixed Route Ridership	**419,066**	**474,318**	**-11.6%**

Daily Average Ridership

	August 2026	August 2025[1]	% Change
Weekday Total	16,634	19,150	-13.1%
Weekday Evening	2,825	3,053	-7.5%
Saturday	8,982	9,403	-4.5%
Sunday	4,969	5,032	-1.2%

Productivity Summary

	August 2026	August 2025[1]	% Change
Average passengers per hour per route	13.5	13.4	0.5%
Average passengers per mile per route	0.99	0.96	3.3%
Average farebox recovery percent per route	9.1%	10.9%	-16.7%

Fiscal Year Ridership

	FY 2026	FY 2025[1]	% Change
Regular Fixed Route Service *(Routes 1–44)*	3,615,476	3,543,994	2.0%
Contracted Service *(GVSU, DASH, GRCC, and Ferris)*	1,599,293	1,645,853	-2.8%
Total Fixed Route Ridership YTD	**5,214,769**	**5,189,847**	**0.5%**

[1] Prior-year monthly ridership figures shown in this report may differ from those published in last year's Committee/Board report for the same month due to delayed farebox data retrieval.

COMPARISON OF AUGUST 2026 TO AUGUST 2019

Monthly Ridership

	August 2026	August 2019	% Change
Regular Fixed Route Service *(Routes 1–44)*	356,772	608,801	-41.4%
Contracted Service *(GVSU, DASH, GRCC, and Ferris)*	62,294	165,264	-62.3%
Total Monthly Fixed Route Ridership	**419,066**	**774,065**	**-45.9%**

Daily Average Ridership

	August 2026	August 2019	% Change
Weekday Total	16,634	30,866	-46.1%
Weekday Evening	2,825	4,939	-42.8%
Saturday	8,982	13,740	-34.6%
Sunday	4,969	6,577	-24.4%

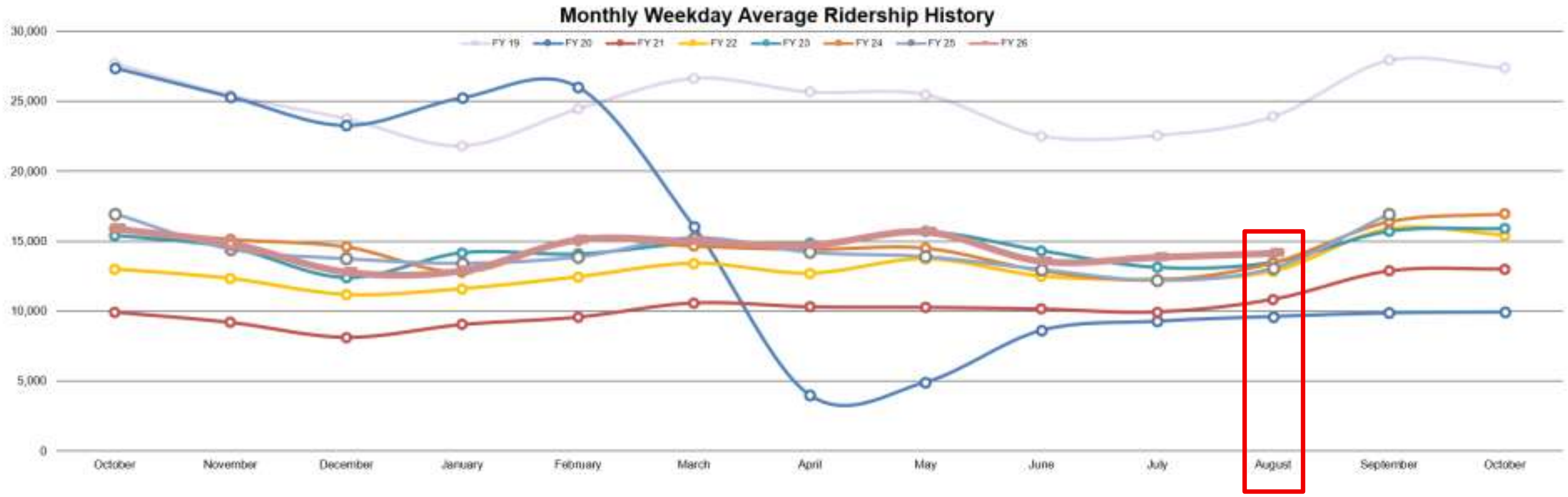
Productivity Summary

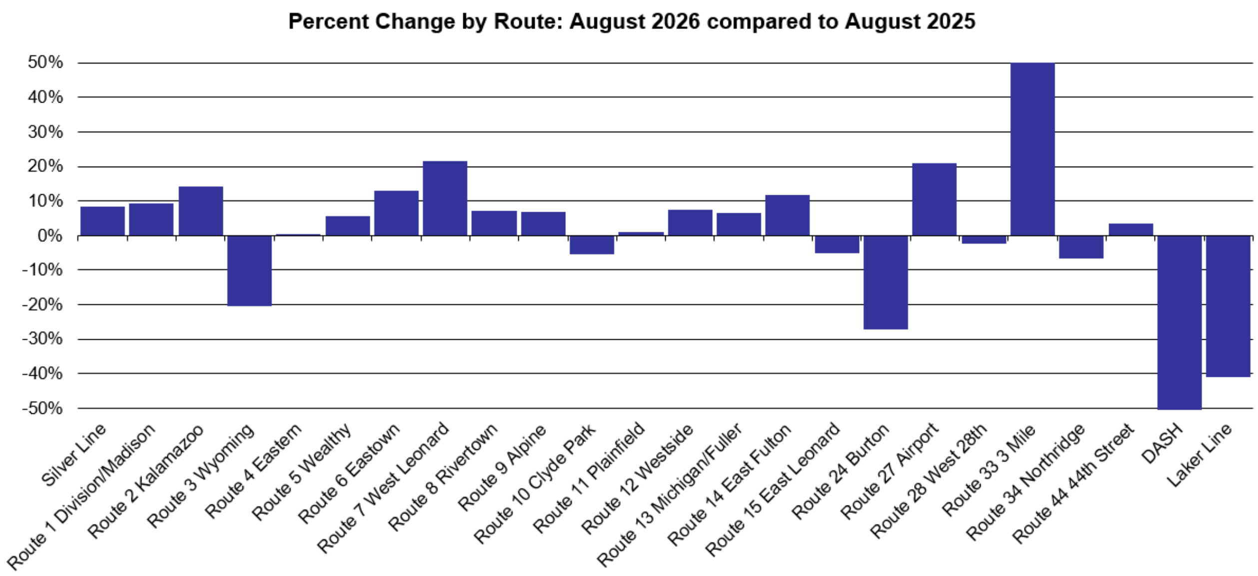
	August 2026	August 2019	% Change
Average passengers per hour per route	13.5	19.4	-30.6%
Average passengers per mile per route	0.99	1.54	-35.5%
Average farebox recovery percent per route	9.1%	26.2%	-65.3%

Fiscal Year Ridership

	FY 2026	FY 2019	% Change
Regular Fixed Route Service *(Routes 1–44)*	3,615,476	6,664,781	-45.8%
Contracted Service *(GVSU, DASH, GRCC, and Ferris)*	1,599,293	2,470,618	-35.3%
Total Fixed Route Ridership YTD	**5,214,769**	**9,135,399**	**-42.9%**

	Monthly Farebox Recovery	Weekday Farebox Recovery	Saturday Farebox Recovery	Sunday Farebox Recovery
Silver Line	9.93%	9.48%	13.69%	9.80%
Route 1 Division/Madison	9.53%	9.78%	9.59%	7.33%
Route 2 Kalamazoo	9.67%	9.47%	12.56%	8.59%
Route 3 Wyoming/Rivertown	7.46%	7.81%	7.80%	5.25%
Route 4 Eastern	9.86%	9.79%	10.84%	9.02%
Route 5 Wealthy	9.16%	9.08%	9.80%	n/a
Route 6 Eastown	8.15%	7.88%	7.78%	11.58%
Route 7 West Leonard	7.79%	7.61%	8.57%	8.88%
Route 8 Prairie/Rivertown	9.12%	9.64%	8.48%	6.42%
Route 9 Alpine	12.77%	12.07%	16.14%	16.13%
Route 10 Clyde Park	9.76%	9.69%	11.06%	8.11%
Route 11 Plainfield	8.39%	8.07%	9.88%	10.46%
Route 12 Westside	7.78%	8.16%	8.23%	0.00%
Route 13 Michigan/Fuller	7.57%	7.55%	7.69%	n/a
Route 14 East Fulton	8.89%	9.50%	6.22%	n/a
Route 15 East Leonard	10.93%	11.07%	9.39%	11.93%
Route 24 Burton	5.23%	5.33%	4.65%	n/a
Route 27 Airport Industrial	8.90%	8.90%	n/a	n/a
Route 28 West 28th	9.61%	9.56%	10.08%	9.35%
Route 33 Walker Industrial	3.57%	3.57%	n/a	n/a
Route 34 Northridge	2.00%	2.00%	n/a	n/a
Route 44 44th Street	9.20%	9.13%	10.82%	7.88%
Route 0 Express	0.05%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Route 1000 Millenium Park	2.15%	n/a	1.63%	2.71%
Route 71 Central 4A	10.22%	10.22%	n/a	n/a
Route 72 Central 10A	16.33%	16.33%	n/a	n/a
Route 73 Union 3A	47.29%	47.29%	n/a	n/a
Route 74 Union 7A	41.10%	41.10%	n/a	n/a
Route 75 Union 10B	25.78%	25.78%	n/a	n/a
Route 76 Union 12A	49.26%	49.26%	n/a	n/a


Monthly Weekday Average Ridership History
FY 19
FY 20
FY 21
FY 22
FY 23
FY 24
FY 25
FY 26
30,000
25,000
20,000
15,000
10,000
5,000
0
October
November
December
January
February
March
April
May
June
July
August
September
October


Percent Change by Route: August 2026 compared to August 2025
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
-10%
-20%
-30%
-40%
-50%
Silver Line
Route 1 Division/Madison
Route 2 Kalamazoo
Route 3 Wyoming
Route 4 Eastern
Route 5 Wealthy
Route 6 Eastown
Route 7 West Leonard
Route 8 Rivertown
Route 9 Alpine
Route 10 Clyde Park
Route 11 Plainfield
Route 12 Westside
Route 13 Michigan/Fuller
Route 14 East Fulton
Route 15 East Leonard
Route 24 Burton
Route 27 Airport
Route 28 West 28th
Route 33 3 Mile
Route 34 Northridge
Route 44 44th Street
DASH
Laker Line

Interurban Transit Partnership **3A3**

Date: September 15, 2026

To: ITP Board

From: Josh Brink - Planner

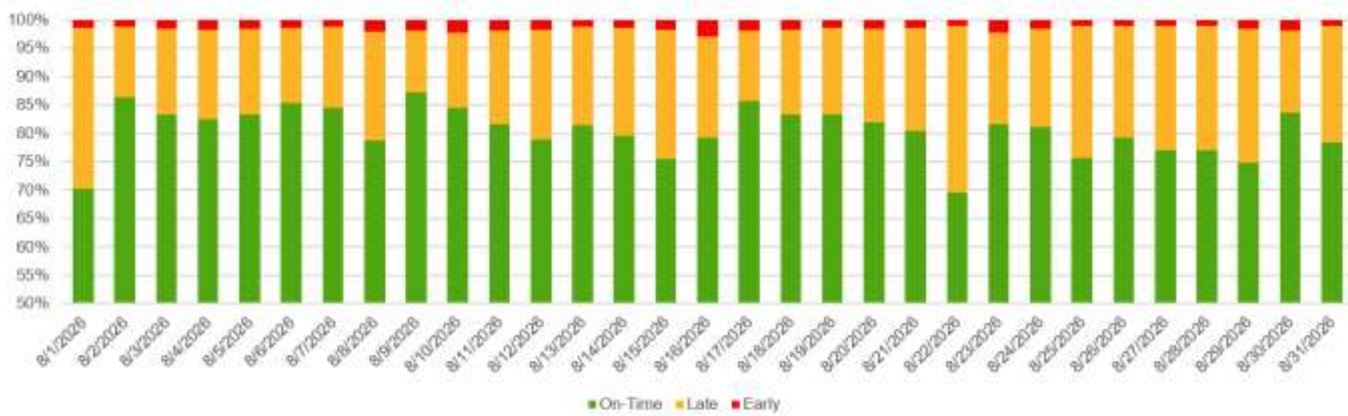
Subject: FIXED ROUTE ON-TIME PERFORMANCE REPORT – August 2026

SYSTEMWIDE ANALYSIS

The Rapid considers a route to be "on time" if it is anywhere from 0 to 5 minutes late. A bus that arrives before the scheduled time or 5 minutes after the scheduled time is considered not "on time."

The figure below demonstrates systemwide daily on-time performance (OTP) for August 2026.

Systemwide Daily On-Time Analysis
August 1st through August 31st



The table below summarizes systemwide on-time performance for the month and compares to the same month in the previous year, and the previous month in 2026.

In August 2026, 80.58% of the service was on time, with incidents of lateness occurring 17.90% and incidents of earliness at 1.52%. This month had a -1.73% decrease in OTP from August 2025 and a decrease of -5.26% from July 2026. August 2026 continued to have lower OTP than our goal of 90% because of some disruptive detours on Routes 4, 7, 24, 33, and 34. We expect to see this trend continue into September as these detours are set to continue. Many of our downtown routes were also affected by amphitheater events which had their highest frequency in the month of August.

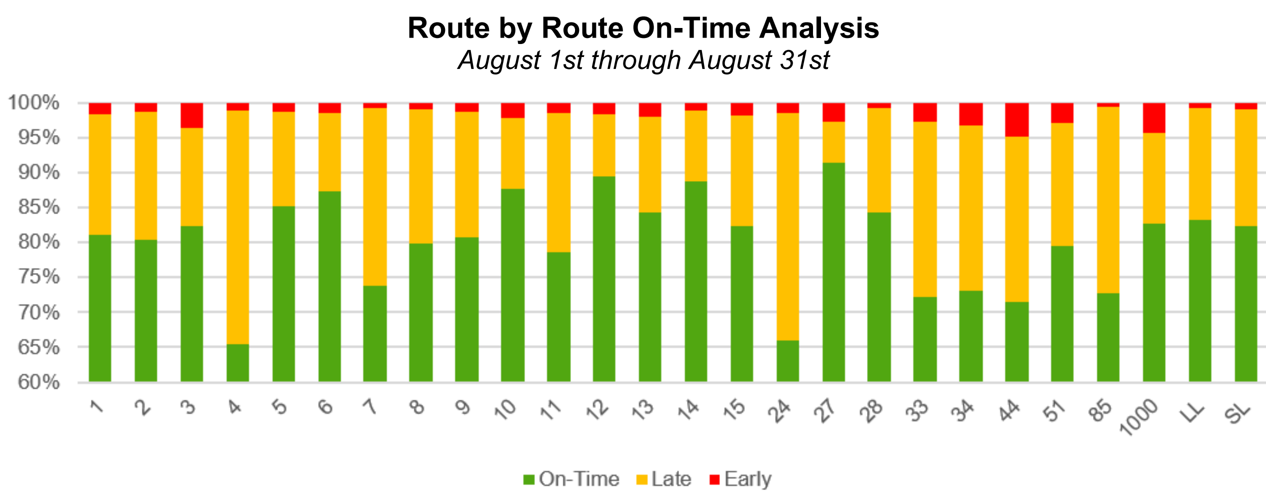
Year	Aug On-Time	Jul On-Time	Δ
2026	80.58%	85.85%	-5.26%
2025	82.31%		
Δ	-1.73%		

ROUTE BY ROUTE ANALYSIS

Aside from minor short-term occurrences, the detours that most impacted on-time performance were:

- Burton Closures (Routes 3, 4 and 24)
- US-131 Freeway Lighting Project (Routes 7, 33, and 34)
- Breton Rd Closure (Route 44)
- Prairie Closure (Route 8)
- Fulton Closure (Laker Line)
- Alpine Closure (Route 9)

OTP by route is illustrated in the graph below:



SYSTEMWIDE BUS ROUTES

Route 1 - Division/Madison	Route 9 - Alpine	Route 27 - Airport Industrial	Route 60 - GRCC Shuttle
Route 2 - Kalamazoo	Route 10 - Clyde Park	Route 28 - 28th Street	Route 85 - GVSU Apartment Connector
Route 3 - Wyoming/Rivertown	Route 11 - Plainfield	Route 33 - 3 Mile	Route 100 - FSU Express
Route 4 - Eastern	Route 12 - Westside	Route 34 - Northridge	Route 1000 - Millennium Park
Route 5 - Wealthy	Route 13 - Michigan/Fuller	Route 37 - GVSU North Campus	LL - Laker Line
Route 6 - Eastown	Route 14 - East Fulton	Route 44 - 44th Street	SL - Silver Line
Route 7 - West Leonard	Route 15 - East Leonard	Route 48 - GVSU South Campus	
Route 8 - Prairie/Rivertown	Route 24 - Burton	Route 51 – DASH	

The Rapid ITP

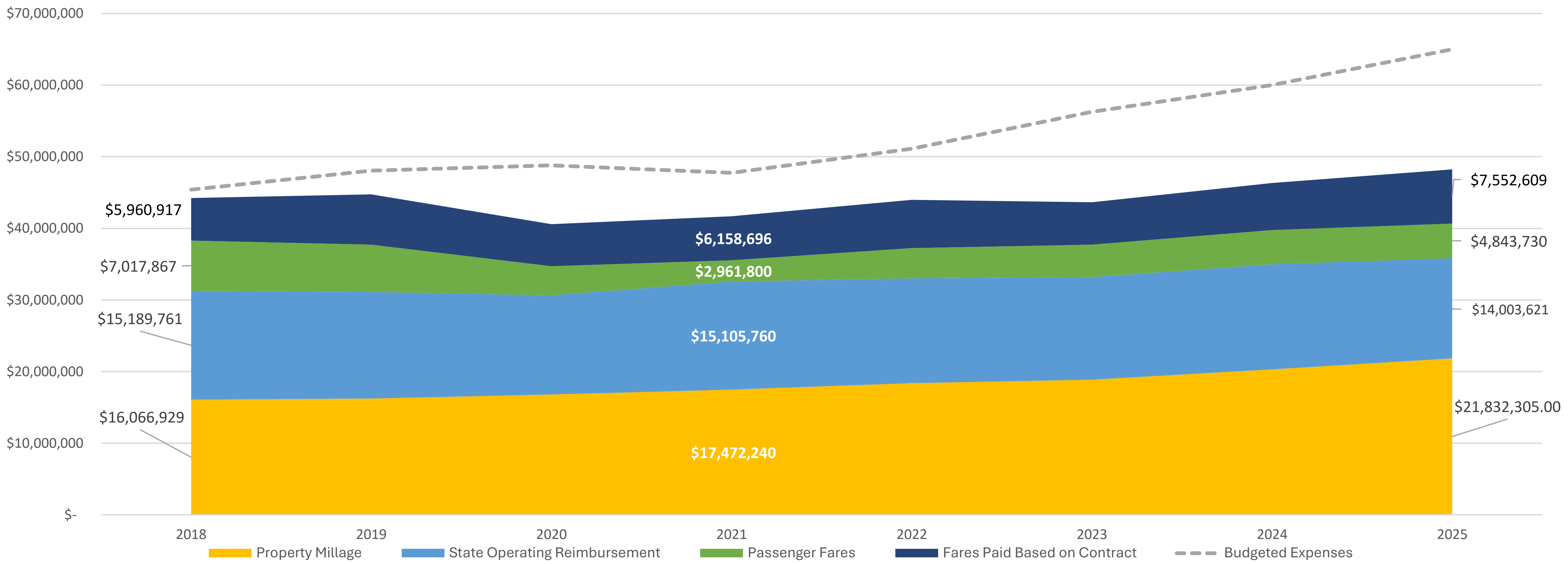
2026 ITP Board Retreat

February 25, 2026

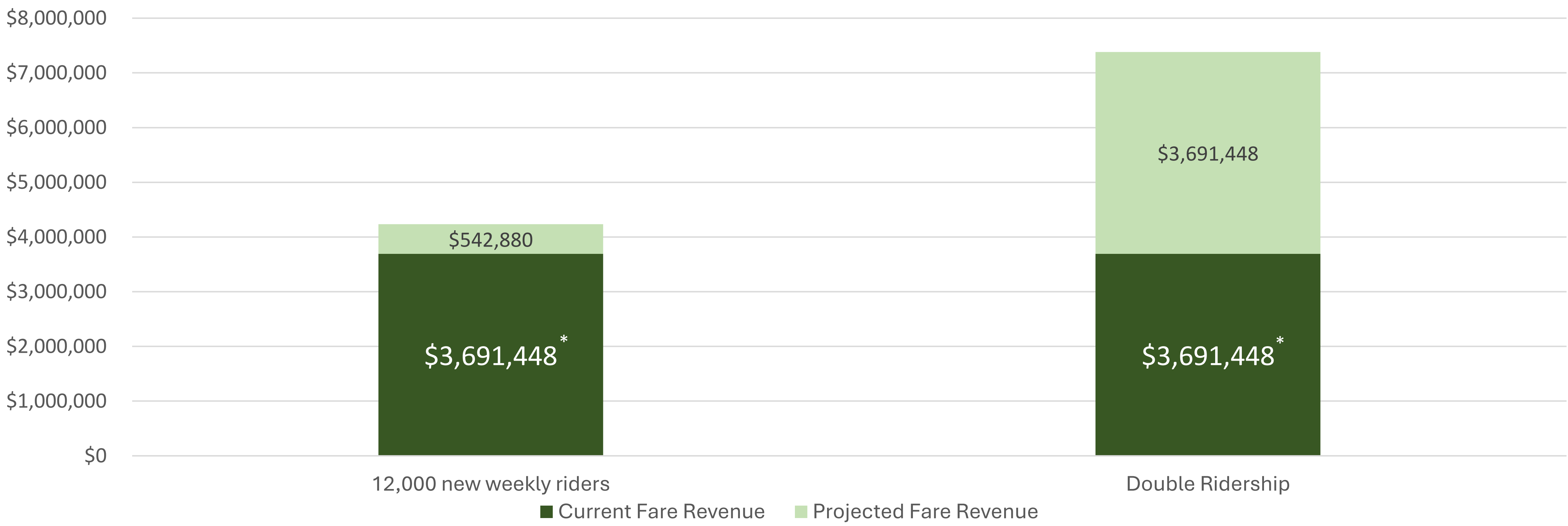
Reality 1: Projected Gap

Adopted FY26 5-Year Projections					
	FY 25/26	FY 26/27	FY 27/28	FY 28/29	FY 29/30
	APPROVED	PROJECTED	PROJECTED	PROJECTED	PROJECTED
Total Revenue	$51,969,055	$55,019,420	$57,915,080	$60,905,199	$64,054,849
Total Expenses	$64,999,808	$68,688,687	$72,676,357	$76,674,250	$80,915,260
Gap between Revenue and Expenses	**$13,030,753**	**$13,669,267**	**$14,761,277**	**$15,769,051**	**$16,860,411**
Reserves	**$8,030,753**	**$8,669,267**	**$9,761,276**	**$10,769,051**	**$11,860,411**
Capitalized Operating Expenses	**$5,000,000**	**$5,000,000**	**$5,000,000**	**$5,000,000**	**$5,000,000**

Reality 2: State Operating is Stagnant



Reality 3: Farebox Revenue Alone Won't Close The Gap



*calculated based on FY25 linehaul noncontract ridership

Reality 4: Falling Behind

Sources: MPTA Local Millage Toolkit, National Transit Database, Kent County Mobility Study

Transit System	Voter-Approved Millage Rate	Millage Duration	Last Approval
City of Ann Arbor, City of Ypsilanti, Ypsilanti Township (The Ride)	2.38	5 Years	August 2022
City of Ypsilanti (The Ride)	.89	Permanent	N/A
City of Ann Arbor (The Ride)	1.93	Permanent	N/A
Scio Township (The Ride, contracted services)	.36	10 Years	August 2024
The Ride Total	**5.56**		
Capital Area Transportation Authority (CATA)	0.60	6 Years	November 2020
Capital Area Transportation Authority (CATA)	3.07	5 Years	November 2024
CATA Total	**3.67**		
Flint Mass Transportation Authority (MTA)	0.60	5 Years	May 2021
Flint Mass Transportation Authority (MTA)	1.23	5 Years	August 2024
MTA Total	**1.83**		
Interurban Transit Partnership (The Rapid)	1.47	12 Years	November 2017
The Rapid Total	**1.47**		
Kalamazoo Metro (Central County Transportation Authority)	1.10	5 Years	November 2025
CCTA Total	**1.10**		

Reality 5: 2 Mills

FY 28/29 Funding			
Millage Rate	Headlee Rate*	Estimated Funding After Capture**	Additional Funding
1.47	1.38	$23,898,609.61	
1.60	1.59	$28,559,803.01	$4,661,193.41
1.70	1.69	$30,344,790.94	$6,446,181.33
1.80	1.79	$32,129,777.88	$8,231,168.27
1.90	1.89	$34,039,426.00	$10,140,816.39
2.00	1.98	$35,699,753.80	$11,801,144.19

*REDUCED MILLAGE BY AN AVERAGE .77% FOR HEADLEE

**BASED ON 2025 LEVY PROPERTY VALUES WITH AN ESTIMATED 4% INCREASE YOY

Reality 6: Operating Budget Projections

Operating Budget Projections FY 25/26 – FY 29/30					
	FY 25/26	FY 26/27	FY 27/28	FY 28/29	FY 29/30
	APPROVED	PROJECTED	PROJECTED	PROJECTED	PROJECTED
Total Revenue	$51,969,055	$56,793,527	$59,648,145	$62,604,103	$65,707,392
Total Expenses	$64,999,808	$68,217,809	$71,651,440	$75,117,859	$78,760,384
Gap between Revenue and Expenses	**$13,030,753**	**$11,424,282**	**$12,003,295**	**$12,513,756**	**$13,052,992**
Reserves	**$8,030,753**	**$6,424,282**	**$7,003,295**	**$712,612**	**$779,802**
Additional funding from 2 millage		$0	$0	$11,801,144*	$12,273,190
Capitalized Operating Expenses	**$5,000,000**	**$5,000,000**	**$5,000,000**	$0	$0

*New ballot language would require superseding the current millage approval through August 2029

Community Value Survey Trends

The Rapid ITP 2026 Board Retreat
February 25, 2026

Purpose and Intent of Exercise

- 2025 marked the first year of our three-year Community Value Survey effort, during which we collected and aggregated data by partner city, providing us with more detailed insights for each city. The 858-resident sample has a precision of +/- 3.4% at the 95% confidence level.

- Our goal for the following exercise will be to build upon this foundation and expand additional research themes (not the exact questions) to be used in our transit ballot initiative research. Once completed, the transit ballot initiative polling research results will then help inform and assist in developing multiple messaging strategies tailored to our communities.

Value Provided by The Rapid Services

Value Provided by The Rapid Services. Respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how valuable The Rapid was regarding 16 items, with 1 meaning "Not at all Valuable" and 5 meaning "Extremely Valuable." The **five items** that received a rating of 85% or higher ("Extremely Valuable" and "Somewhat Valuable" answers) are listed below.

- "Providing mobility to low-income families and individuals" **(92%)**
- "Overall value to the community" **(91%)**
- "Providing transportation options to people with special mobility needs" **(90%)**
- "Providing affordable transportation options" **(86%)**
- "Providing access to medical facilities/healthcare" **(85%)**

Community Perception

Net Promoter Score. Net Promoter Score is calculated by subtracting the percentage of Detractors from the percentage of Promoters. Scores can range from -100 to 100.

- Grand Rapids/East Grand Rapids is -17
- Grandville -39
- Kentwood -30
- Walker 7
- Wyoming -29

Brand Perception. Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with the statement "I have a positive perception of The Rapid brand." Below is their agreement broken down by area ("Strongly Agree" and "Agree").

- Grand Rapids/East Grand Rapids – 70%
- Grandville – 70%
- Kentwood – 57%
- Walker – 82%
- Wyoming – 66%

Funding and Value

Public/Government Funding. Respondents were asked to indicate how much they think the current level of public/government funding for public transportation should change over the next five years. Listed below are the results by area (responses of "Somewhat Greater" or "Much Greater").

- Grand Rapids/East Grand Rapids—80%
- Grandville—67%
- Kentwood—80%
- Walker—74%
- Wyoming—71%

Taxpayer Value. Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with the statement, "The Rapid provides taxpayer value." Below is their agreement broken down by area ("Strongly Agree" and "Agree").

- Grand Rapids/East Grand Rapids—65%
- Grandville—52%
- Kentwood—55%
- Walker—69%
- Wyoming—64%

Next Steps

- Input for polling research

Public Opinion · Public Policy · Organizations · Campaigns

1987 – Founded in San Diego
1988 – Phone centers established in Riverside, CA and San Diego
1990 – Phone centers established in Reno, NV and San Diego
1992 – Predictive dialing installed to double interviewing capacity; CERC calls San Diego Mayor’s race
1993 – "The Edge" newsletter launches
1998 – Qualitative focus groups introduced
2000 – CERC calls San Diego Mayor’s race
2003 – KPBS/Competitive Edge Research Poll and annual Super Bowl poll launched
2004 – CERC calls San Diego Mayor’s race (x2)
2005 – CERC calls San Diego Mayor’s race (x2)
2006 – SDIPR/CERC Opinion Barometer launched; Ballot measures paper presented at AAPOR Conference
2008 – CERC calls San Diego Mayor’s race; Convenes post-election summit @ USD
2009 – Interviewer effects paper presented at AAPOR Conference
2010 – Web-based interviewing and custom panels introduced
2012 – Dial-testing introduced; CERC calls San Diego Mayor’s race (x2)
2013 – CERC calls San Diego Mayor’s race; Business Forecast survey launched
2014 – CERC calls San Diego Mayor’s race
2016 – CERC calls San Diego Mayor’s race
2017 – Phone center established in El Paso, TX
2018 – CERC calls CA Governor’s race (x2)
2019 – Ballot measure wording paper presented at AAPOR Conference
2020 – Incumbent viability paper accepted for presentation at AAPOR Conference
2022 – San Diego County Issues Barometer launched
2024 – CERC calls Presidential and Senate races in CA
2026 – Mixed-mode vs text-only paper presented at AAPOR Conference

John Nienstedt, MA Political Science: **President**
Member, American Association for Public Opinion Research, Insights Association
SBA Entrepreneurial Success Award (2000)
Pollster of the Year (x8)

Rachel Lawler, MA Political Science: **Research Analyst**
Member, American Association for Public Opinion Research
Ronald Zavala: **Director of Operations**
James Iwu: **Research Assistant**

Ride The Rapid –
Greater Grand Rapids Area Millage Measure Poll

May 27, 2026

n=607 active voters

Summary

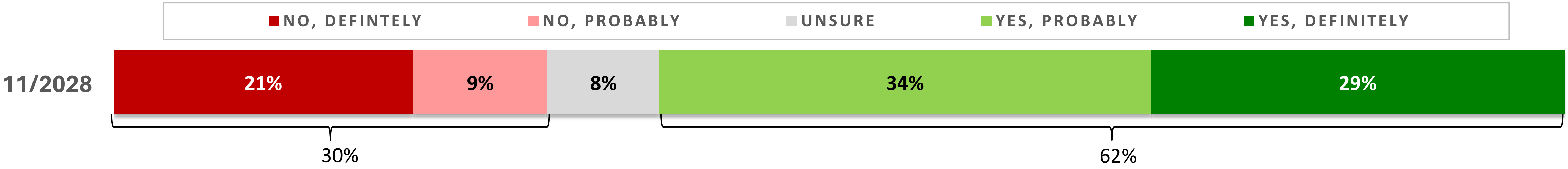
Research Objectives:	1) Gauge voter support for a property millage increase to fund public transit
	2) Understand vote dynamics
	3) Test supporter and opponent messaging
	4) Anticipate an outcome given a campaign
	5) Determine which election would produce the strongest support
Sample Size:	n=607
Margin of Sampling Error:	± 4.0%
Confidence Level:	95%
Sample Methodology:	Simple random sampling from listed sample
Jurisdiction:	Cities of East Grand Rapids, Grand Rapids, Grandville, Kentwood, Walker, and Wyoming
Eligibility:	Active voters
Effective Turnout Models:	60% (November 2028) and 35% (November 2026)
Interview Methods:	Telephone (landlines and cellphones), email push-to-web, text push-to-web
Field Dates:	May 4-8, 2026
Field Facility:	Competitive Edge Research, El Paso TX
Project Director:	John Nienstedt, Sr.
Research Analyst:	Rachel Lawler
Research Assistant:	James Iwu

Initial Ballot Test

Voters Back this Measure by a Wide Margin

- 62% support the measure and 30% are voting "no"
- A November 2026 measure is equally doable
- Great, though support is somewhat soft
  - Half the vote is "probable" or uncertain
- There is substantial "play" in the electorate.

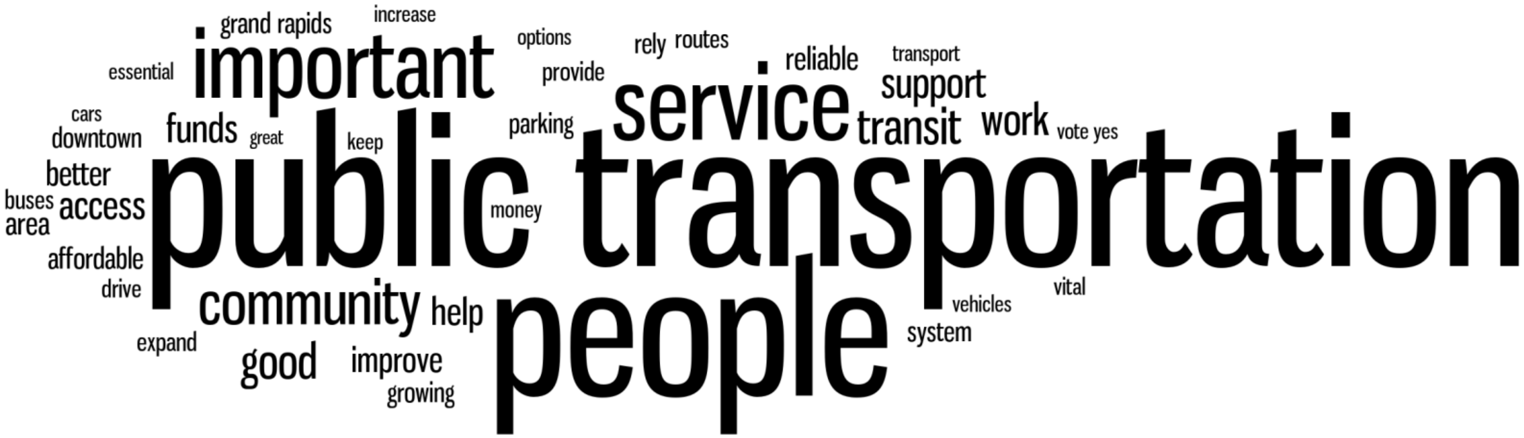
"May the Interurban Transit Partnership (The Rapid) levy a tax of [1.88] mills ($1.88 per $1,000 in taxable value) for a period of twelve (12) years, 2029 through 2040, inclusive, on all taxable property within The Rapid's district (consisting of the cities of East Grand Rapids, Grandville, Grand Rapids, Kentwood, Walker and Wyoming) to provide funds for public transportation purposes within such district? This millage would consist of the renewal of that portion of a 1.47 mills authorization previously approved by the electors in 2017 and expiring in 2029 that has been reduced by operation of the Headlee amendment, which was [1.38] mills in [2026], and new additional millage of 0.500 mill. The Rapid estimates that this millage would raise $32,511,168 when first levied in 2029. If the election were held today, would you vote "yes" to approve the measure or "no" to reject it?"

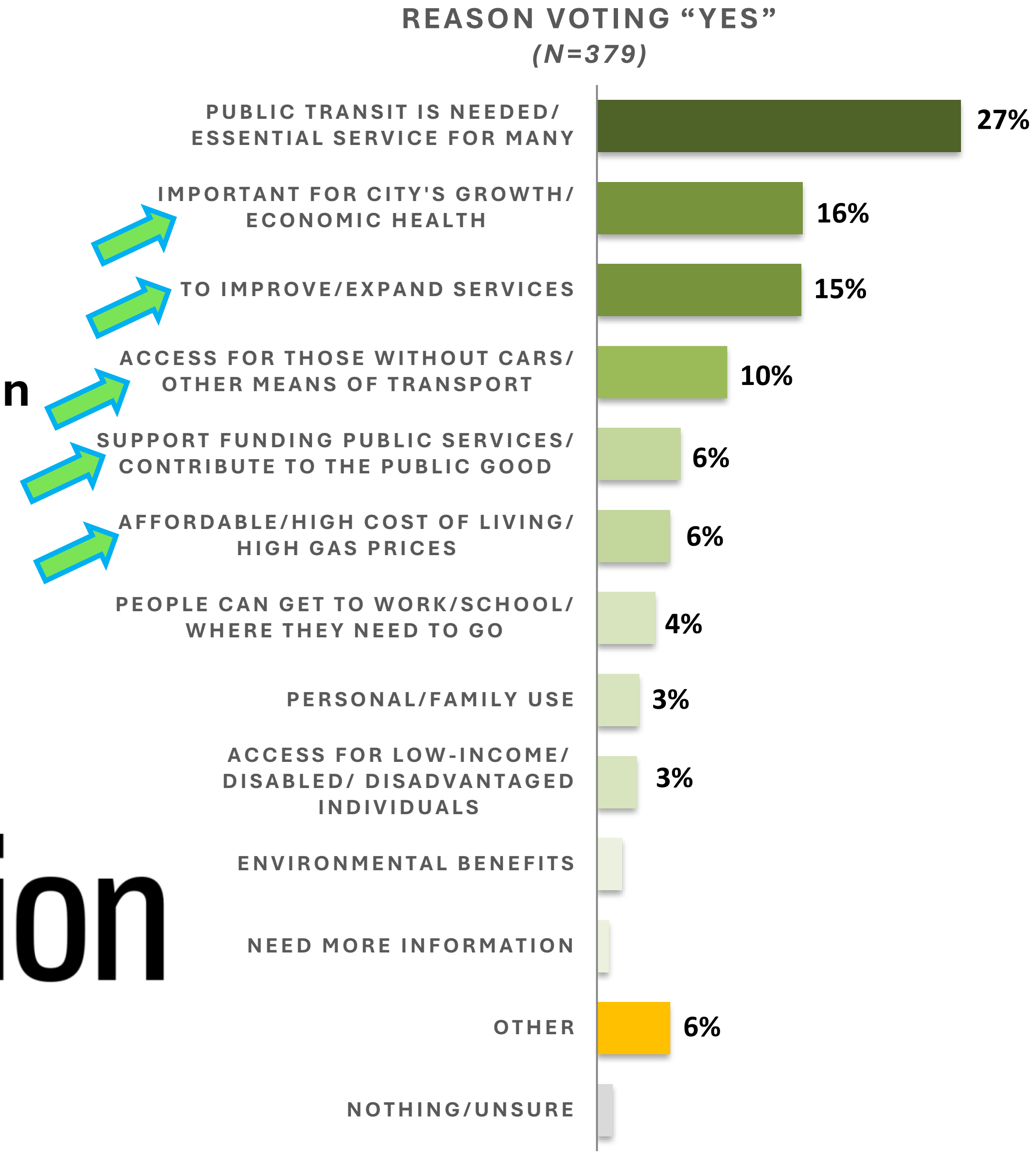


Why?

Public Transit is Essential Tops the List

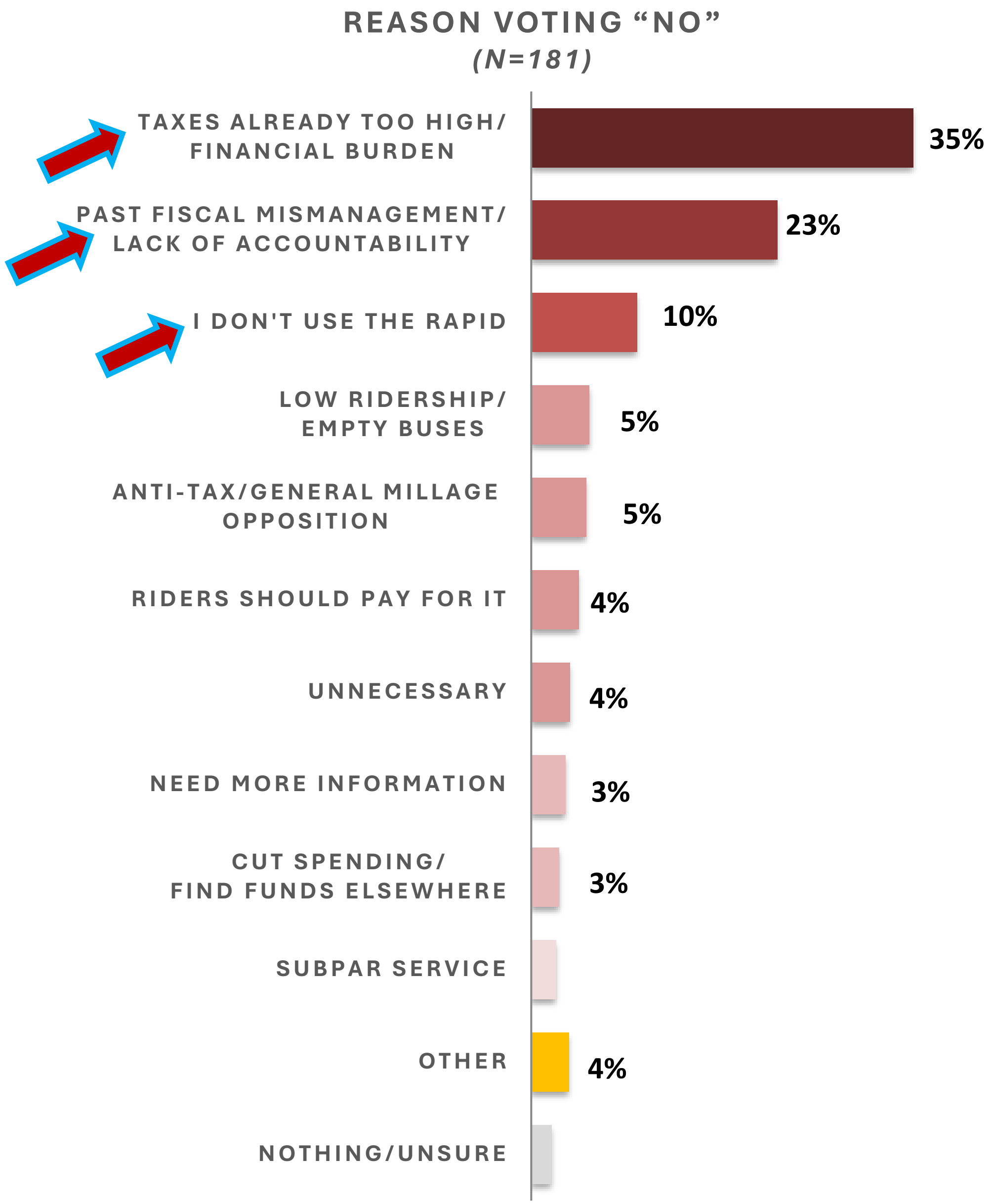
- 27% of supporters say that's why they're voting "yes"
  - Their mantra: *"Everyone needs transportation"*
  - Even many non-users empathize with transit riders
- 16% cite transit's **growth and economic benefits**
  - Popular answer among newer registrants
- Young supporters often prioritize **improvement/expansion**
- 10% want transit **for those without other options**
- 6% generally want **public services funded**
  - Often low-income supporters
- Another 6% highlight **affordability.**

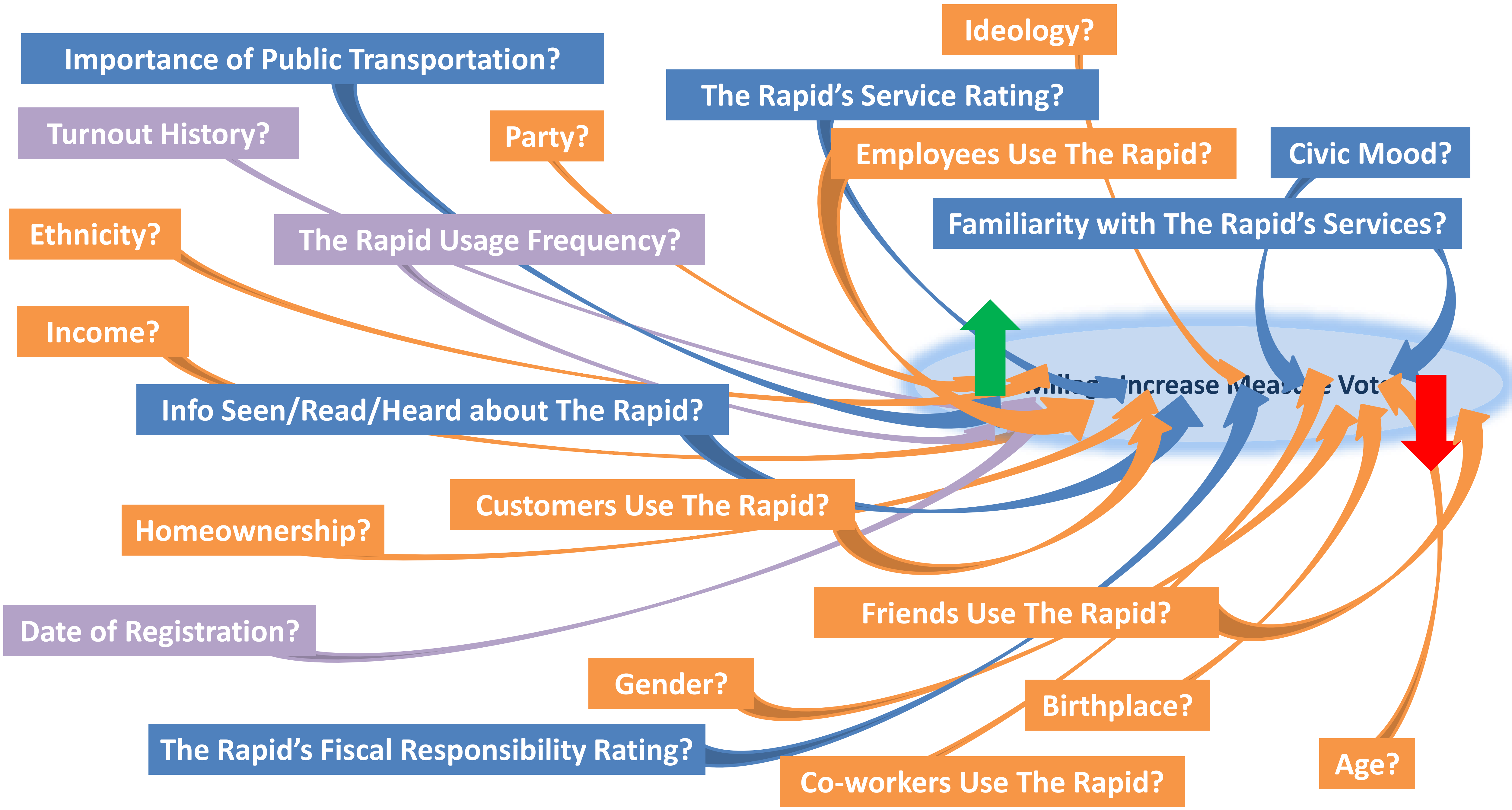




2 Reasons for Most "No" Votes

- **Taxes are already too high/financial burden** tops the list
  - *"I'm sick of taxes on top of taxes on top of taxes; just to pay my property tax I have to pay a 1% administrative fee; I have to pay a tax just to pay my property tax?"*
  - Popular among opponents who are very reliable voters
- 23% are upset about perceived **past fiscal mismanagement**
  - Some opponents paint the millage with a broad brush
- 10% **don't use The Rapid**
  - *"I don't want to pay for something I don't use"*
- Remaining responses are disparate and minor.

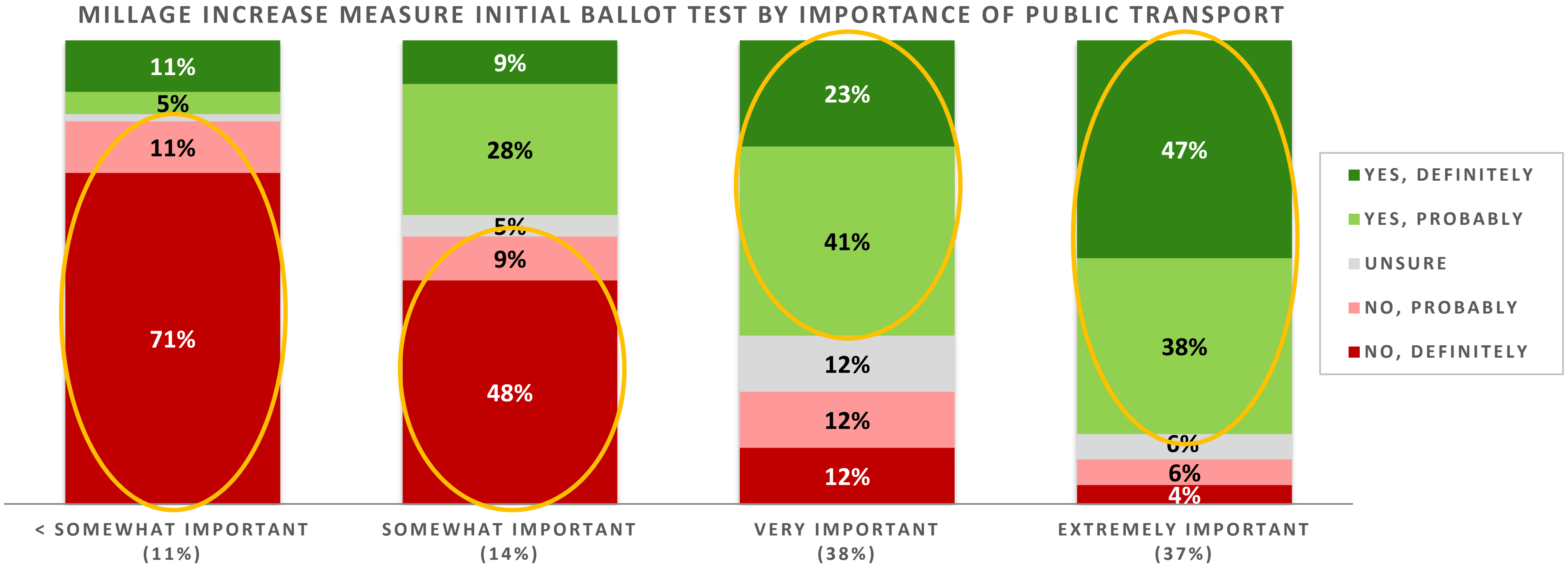




Importance of Public Transportation?
Ideology?
The Rapid's Service Rating?
Turnout History?
Party?
Employees Use The Rapid?
Civic Mood?
Ethnicity?
The Rapid Usage Frequency?
Familiarity with The Rapid's Services?
Income?
Increase
Info Seen/Read/Heard about The Rapid?
Customers Use The Rapid?
Homeownership?
Friends Use The Rapid?
Date of Registration?
Gender?
Birthplace?
The Rapid's Fiscal Responsibility Rating?
Age?
Co-workers Use The Rapid?

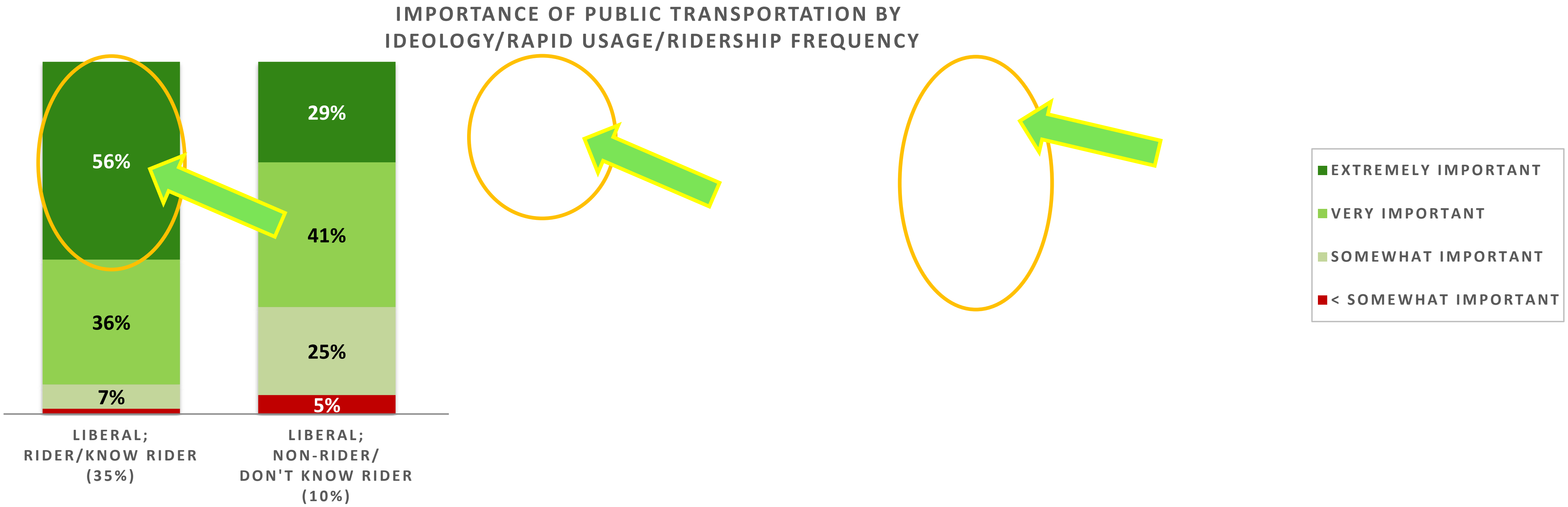
1) A Bedrock Belief in Public Transportation Girds Support

- Voters who think transit is *extremely* important overwhelmingly support the measure
- Even those who say it's *very* important are broadly supportive
  - But note how soft that support is
- Support drops dramatically among those who deem public transit less than very important
  - However, they're only ¼ of the electorate
- The importance attached to public transport probably won't deteriorate over time
  - Supporters are on solid footing.



Liberals Love Public Transportation, but Ridership is Key

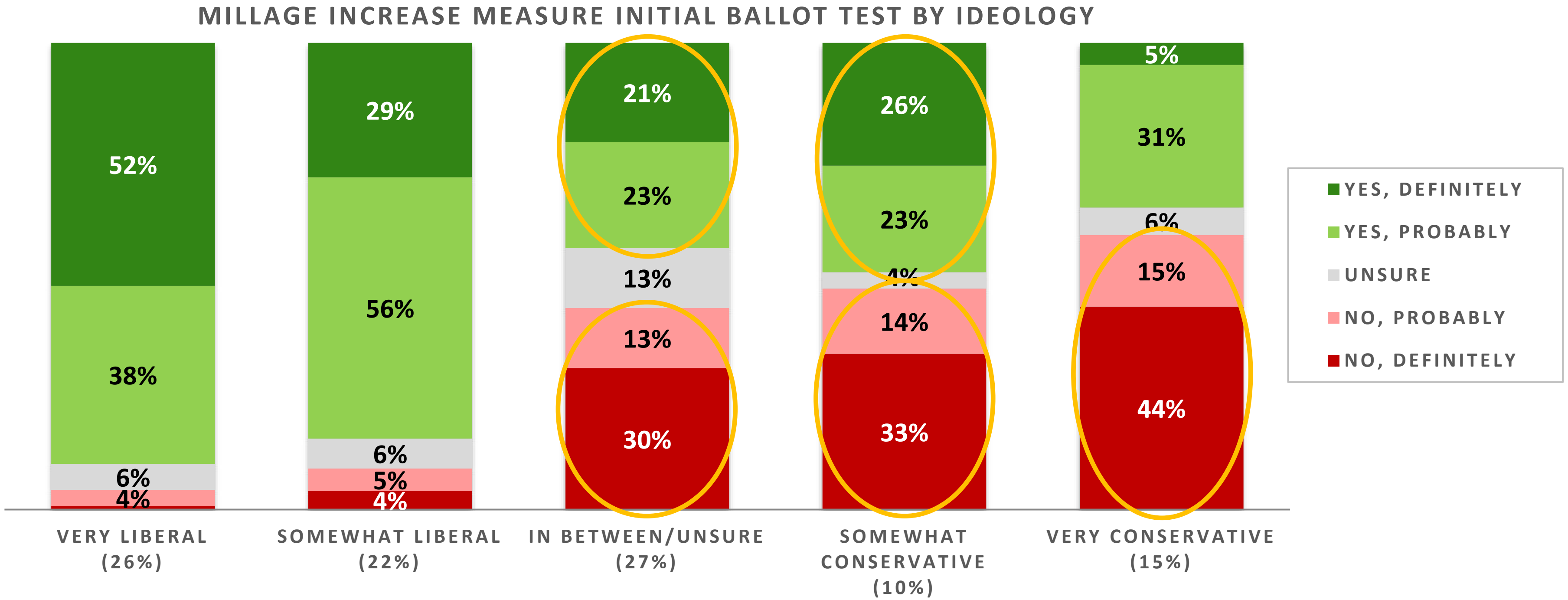
- Most liberals *who ride The Rapid* or *know a rider* think public transit is extremely important
- Liberals who don't ride and don't know one are not completely convinced
- Center-right voters show a similar pattern
- Far-right voters generally don't prioritize it *unless* they have ever personally used it



- Getting very conservative folks – or anyone -- on the bus can turn them in to public transit fans.

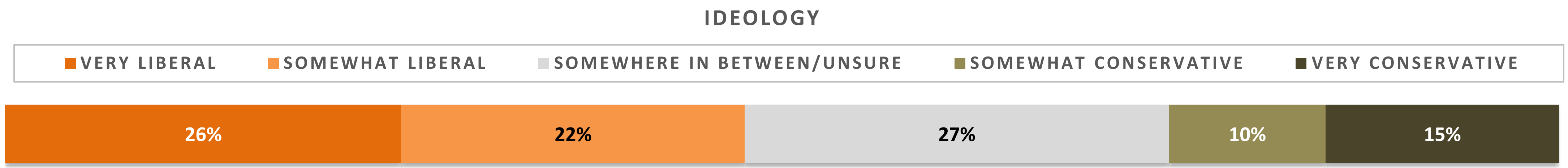
2) With a Far-left Base, Moderates Are Key

- The far-right typically lines up against the measure
- Moderate conservatives split almost evenly
  - Same with middle-of-the road voters
    - Demographically, the battle for votes will happen here
- Proponents can generally count on liberals to vote "yes"



- Appealing to conservatives isn't mandatory, but convincing those in the mushy middle is.

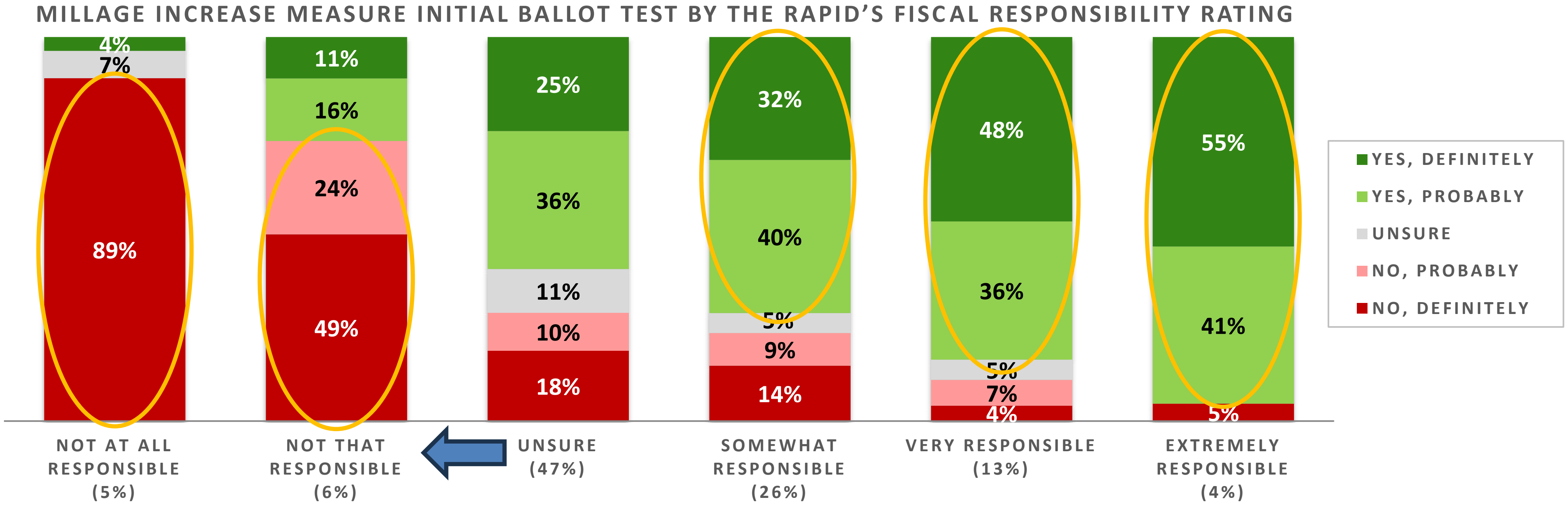
Liberals Outnumber Conservatives Nearly 2:1



- Liberal voters are disproportionately:
  - Women
  - < 55
  - Transplants from outside Michigan
  - Earn $100k+
  - Democrats
- Conservative voters are disproportionately:
  - Men
  - Seniors
  - MI natives
  - Earn < $50k, and 22% are low-income homeowners
  - Republicans
- Middle-of-the-road voters more often have incomes < $50k.

3) *Fiscal Responsibility is a Must*

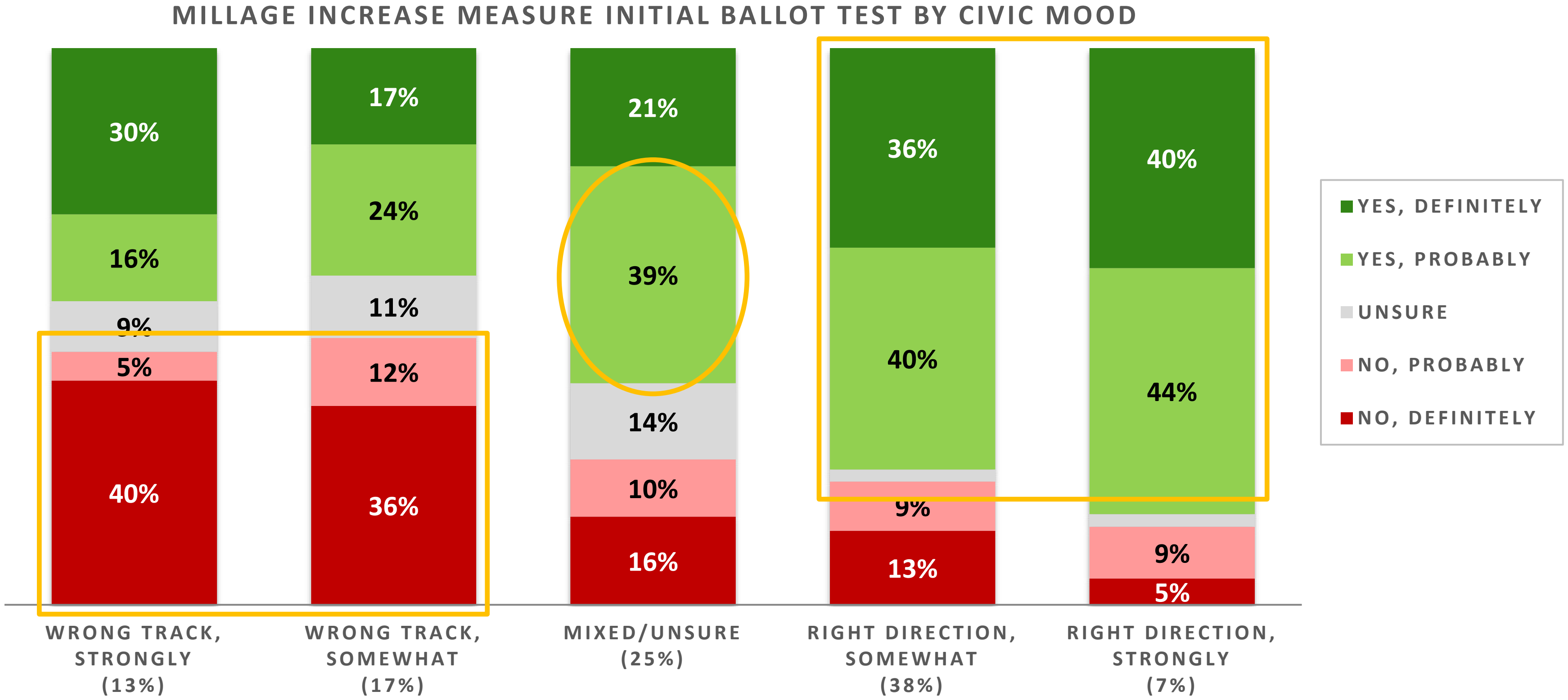
- Perceived fiscal responsibility is associated with more votes for the measure
- Even The Rapid being tagged as *somewhat* responsible isn't automatically bad
- On the other hand, very few "yes" votes can be had if The Rapid is seen as fiscally *irresponsible*
  - Fortunately, only 1-in-9 voters currently feel that way
- Risk comes into play if "unsure" voters start doubting The Rapid's stewardship of public funds
  - That huge chunk is susceptible to changing their minds



- Maintaining a good, or at least not bad, reputation for fiscal responsibility is important.

4) Avoid a Downturn

- Optimistic voters tend to support civic initiatives; this is no different
- Support is soft among voters with mixed/unsure opinions
- Dissatisfied voters are against the measure more strongly than not
  - They're currently in the minority

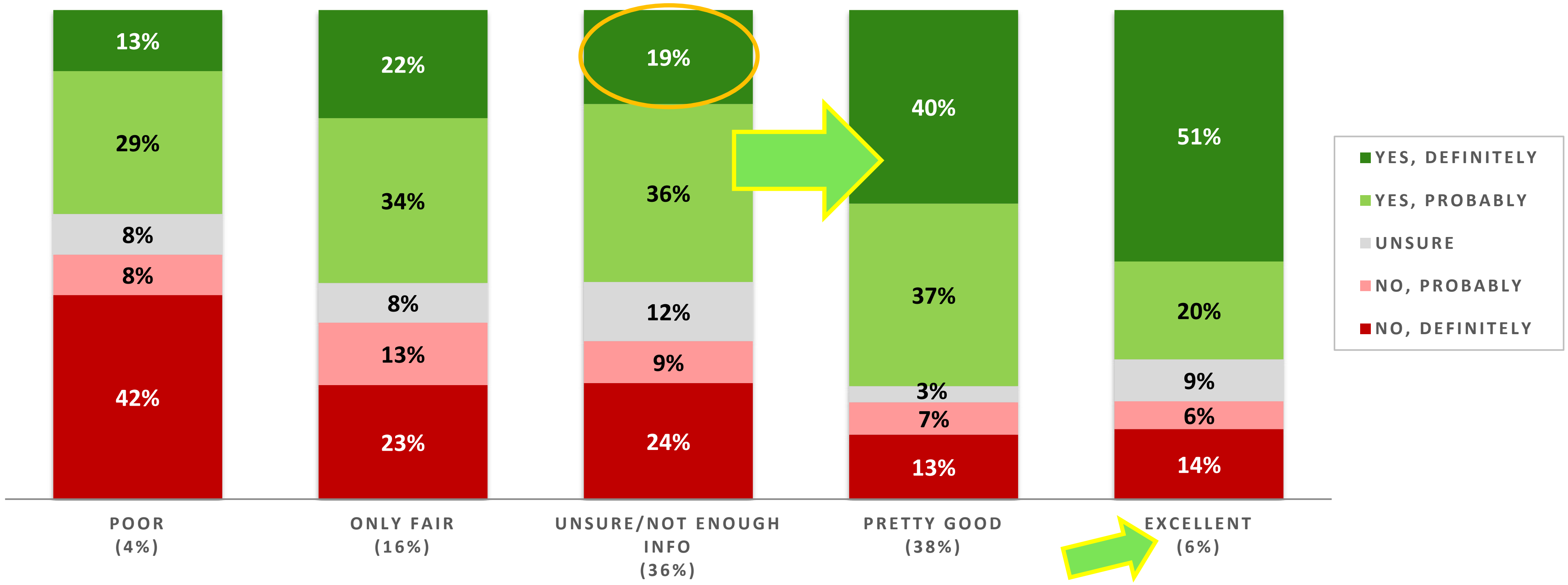


- What will the civic mood be like when voters are casting ballots?

5) Good Service Generates Support

- Voters rating The Rapid's service as *excellent* overwhelmingly support the measure
  - But they're only a small part of the anticipated electorate
- Those who rate the service as *pretty good* are less-intensely supportive
- The measure becomes wobbly for voters with no opinion
  - They largely favor the measure but their support needs solidification.

MILLAGE INCREASE MEASURE INITIAL BALLOT TEST BY THE RAPID TRANSPORTATION SERVICE RATING



6) Low-Income Homeowners Feel Pinched

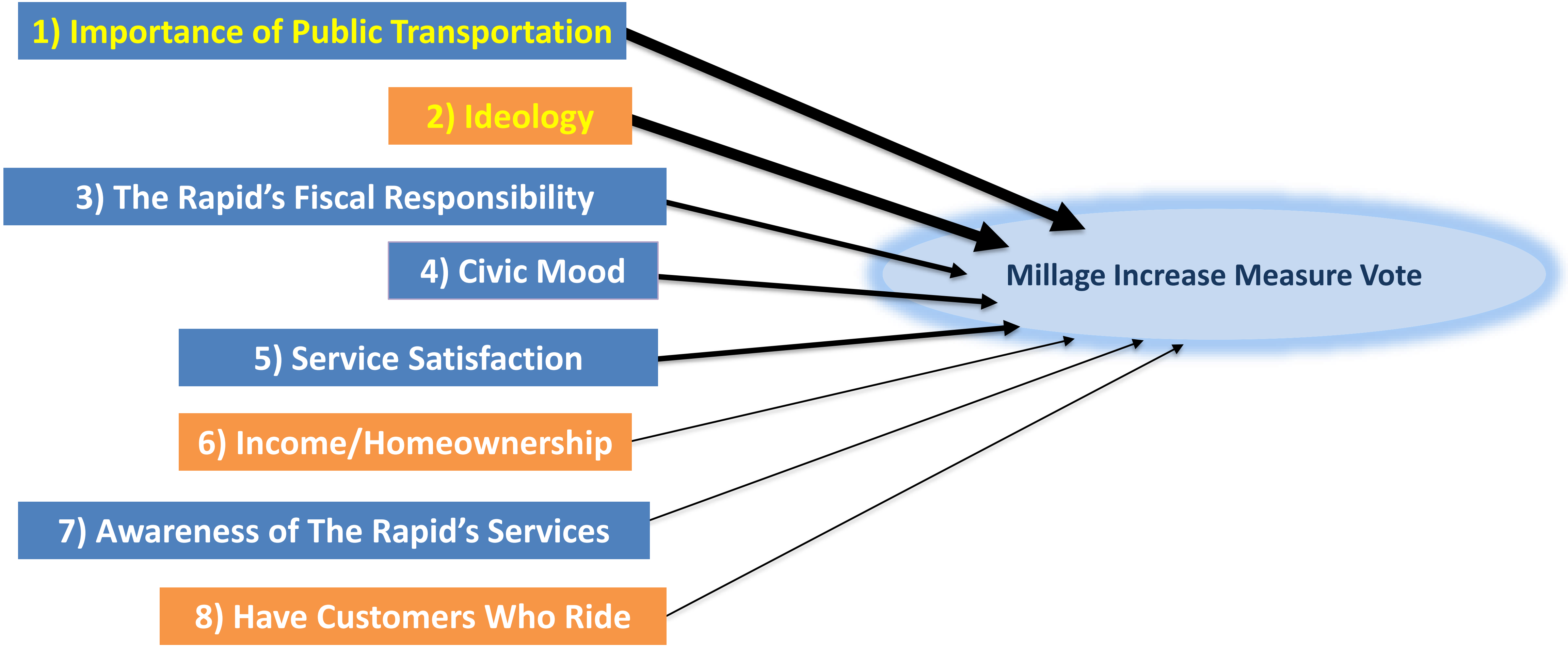
- Homeowners making < $50k are nervous about the additional tax burden
  - But they won't be a difference-maker if all other factors hold steady
- Higher-earning homeowners and renters don't face similar pressures from the millage increase

7) To Know The Rapid is to Support the Millage

- The relatively tiny segment that's never heard of The Rapid is mostly voting "no"
  - It won't be a difference-maker if all other factors remain constant
- Widespread awareness with The Rapid benefits the measure

8) The Rapid's Economic Benefit isn't Lost on Business Owners

- The 13% who cater to customers vote 73% "yes," with 42% *definite*
  - They could be early pro-millage vanguards
- Voters serving Rapid-riding customers are 3x more likely to be women < 55 than men < 55.


1) Importance of Public Transportation
2) Ideology
3) The Rapid's Fiscal Responsibility
4) Civic Mood
5) Service Satisfaction
6) Income/Homeownership
7) Awareness of The Rapid's Services
8) Have Customers Who Ride
Millage Increase Measure Vote

Moving Forward

Messages

The MPower™ Metric

- CERC measures the persuasive power of messages using proprietary statistical techniques
- Computed among persuadable voters
- MPower is the metric:
  - Range is from -200 to +200
  - Superstar messages generate scores of 130+
  - Useful messages range from 70 to 129
  - Ineffective messages come in < 70
  - Messages that backfire score negatively.

4 of 12 Messages are Dynamite

- CERC has never seen such powerful messaging for one ballot measure!
- That it **keeps bus rides low and affordable for low-income residents** tops the list
  - Leading with either version of this message would be very appropriate

Premium Supporter Messages	MPower™
We need to keep bus rides affordable. With more than 4-in-10 riders having incomes below $20,000, this measure will enable The Rapid to keep bus rides affordable for low-income residents <u>in your community.</u> *(n=140)*	**188**
We need to keep bus rides affordable. With more than 4-in-10 riders having incomes below $20,000, this measure will enable The Rapid to keep bus rides affordable for low-income residents in <u>(the respondents' specific community).</u> *(n=146)*	**168**

- The **economic help for the community**, **access to regular off-hours transportation**, and **strong fiscal guardrails** are fantastic second-tier messages.

2nd Tier Blockbuster Messages	MPower™
Buses must run when riders need them most. Many entry-level service, healthcare, and retail jobs are concentrated on evenings and weekends. This measure ensures access to regular off-hours transportation so people can get to work when jobs are available and so businesses relying on them won't suffer.	133
Good public transportation allows everyone in our community freedom and opportunity. This measure enables all residents to do what is important to them, and help working families and our community succeed economically.	133
There are strong guardrails to ensure the funds are well-managed. The Rapid is overseen by board members from each of the six partner cities. A Community Advisory Committee guides The Rapid on programs for services to seniors and persons with disabilities.	131

3 Useful Opposition Arguments

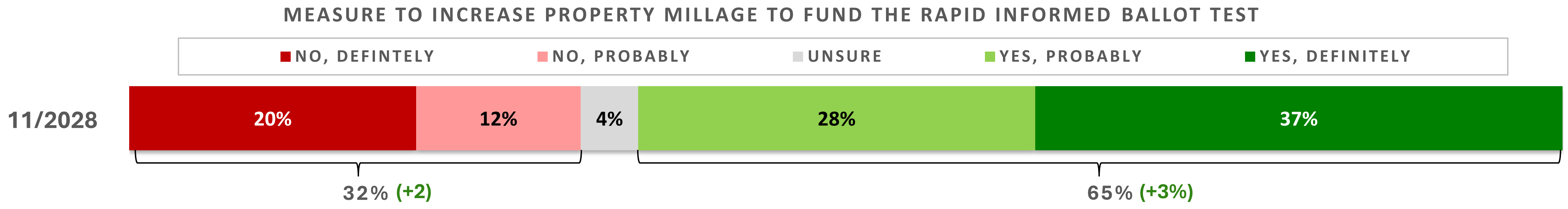
- None come close to the persuasiveness achieved by proponents'
- That **homeowners are already paying too many taxes** is their strongest weapon
- A **struggling economy and stagnant wages** is a close second
- **Multiple tax proposals on the ballot** is only somewhat effective
- The **empty busses** argument gets close, but won't be damaging
- Remaining arguments are duds.

Opponent Messages	MPower™
Enough is enough. Homeowners can only be asked to support so many taxes, no matter how worthy the purpose, and people in our area are paying too many taxes already. By voting "no," our taxes will go down.	92
Michigan's economy is still struggling and wages are stagnant, which means it is still a bad time to pay higher taxes. We shouldn't increase our tax burden now.	89
Voters will be asked to support other important tax proposals, including taxes for schools, police, fire, roads and others. There are better things to spend our money on, and those taxes should be a higher priority than a tax increase for public transportation.	83
This millage increase isn't needed. The bus service is adequate for the population, and, in fact, the buses are not used all that much right now, with many running mostly empty.	67
This millage increase amounts to throwing good money after bad. The bus system is unreliable, offers limited service hours and coverage, and the service is inconsistent. We should not reward the bureaucrats who run The Rapid with more of our money.	18
Riders -- not homeowners -- should be the ones paying for bus service. If the users of the system aren't supporting it enough to keep it going, it's not fair to burden people who don't ride the buses with a higher tax.	14

Informed Ballot Test

Opinions Shifted Positively

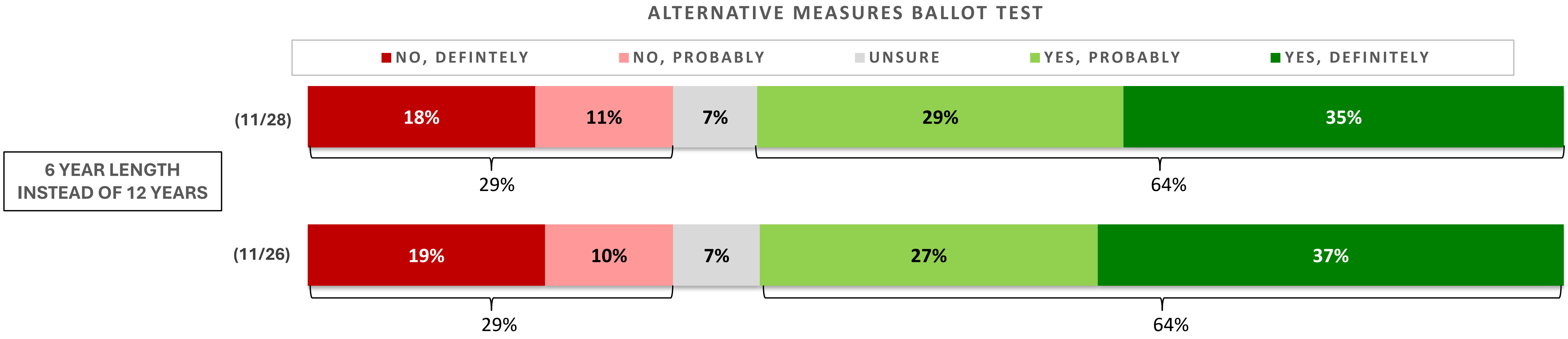
- The messaging mix did not expand supporters’ overall vote share, but it:
  - Helped solidify a substantial portion of “yes” votes
    - +8% *definite* “yes” in both ‘28 and ‘26
  - Prevented opponents from gaining significant ground.



Alternative Measures

No Difference Between the 3 Versions we Tested

- After the messaging, voters supportive of the 12-year increase also like the alternatives in either year.



Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Largely due to strong general support for public transportation, the millage increase is in good shape
   - ✓ The Rapid should pick the option it likes best
2. The campaign would largely be a matter of locking down support
3. Job #1 is to demonstrate the extreme importance of public transportation
   - ✓ Voters need to get on the bus!
4. Proponents must appeal to those in the middle of the ideological spectrum
   - ✓ Centrist, nonpartisan, and non-political endorsers will be best
5. Maintaining a good -- or at least not bad -- reputation for fiscal responsibility will be important
   - ✓ Avoid scandal at all cost and tell good financial stories
   - ✓ Target the 13% who are 42- to 48-years-old with fiscal prudence messaging
6. You can't control the civic mood, but be prepared for a harder fight if there's a recession
7. Many voters don't know how good The Rapid's service is, putting those voters at risk
   - ✓ Consider a fare-free day to entice bus riding, create awareness, and boost service ratings
   - ✓ You don't have to do this in Kentwood
8. Low-income homeowners present a challenge that doesn't necessarily need to be addressed
   - ✓ It's middle-income non-Democrats who should initially be prime targets
9. Business owners with customers could be easily recruited as messengers
10. Stick to the winning messages and don't get sidetracked
11. Make some effort to combat the three potent opposition messages.

Thank You!

Public Opinion · Public Policy · Organizations · Campaigns

1987 – Founded in San Diego
1988 – Phone centers established in Riverside, CA and San Diego
1990 – Phone centers established in Reno, NV and San Diego
1992 – Predictive dialing installed to double interviewing capacity; CERC calls San Diego Mayor's race
1993 – "The Edge" newsletter launches
1998 – Qualitative focus groups introduced
2000 – CERC calls San Diego Mayor's race
2003 – KPBS/Competitive Edge Research Poll and annual Super Bowl poll launched
2004 – CERC calls San Diego Mayor's race (x2)
2005 – CERC calls San Diego Mayor's race (x2)
2006 – SDIPR/CERC Opinion Barometer launched; Ballot measures paper presented at AAPOR Conference
2008 – CERC calls San Diego Mayor's race; Convenes post-election summit @ USD
2009 – Interviewer effects paper presented at AAPOR Conference
2010 – Web-based interviewing and custom panels introduced
2012 – Dial-testing introduced; CERC calls San Diego Mayor's race (x2)
2013 – CERC calls San Diego Mayor's race; Business Forecast survey launched
2014 – CERC calls San Diego Mayor's race
2016 – CERC calls San Diego Mayor's race
2017 – Phone center established in El Paso, TX
2018 – CERC calls CA Governor's race (x2)
2019 – Ballot measure wording paper presented at AAPOR Conference
2020 – Incumbent viability paper accepted for presentation at AAPOR Conference
2022 – San Diego County Issues Barometer launched
2024 – CERC calls Presidential and Senate races in CA
2026 – Mixed-mode vs text-only paper presented at AAPOR Conference

John Nienstedt, MA Political Science: **President**
Member, American Association for Public Opinion Research, Insights Association
SBA Entrepreneurial Success Award (2000)
Pollster of the Year (x8)

Rachel Lawler, MA Political Science: **Research Analyst**
Member, American Association for Public Opinion Research
Ronald Zavala: **Director of Operations**
James Iwu: **Research Assistant**