



Interurban Transit Partnership

Board Members

Mayor Gary Carey, Chair			Mayor Katie Favale, Vice-Chair	
Charis Austin	Rick Baker	Tracie Coffman	Steven Gilbert	Andy Guy
Renee Hill	Jack Hoffman	Mayor David LaGrand	Mayor Steve Maas	David Moore
	Clarkston Morgan	Tim Mroz	Paul Troost	

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING AGENDA

Wednesday, October 28, 2026 – 4:00 p.m.

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

AGENDA

	<u>PRESENTER</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
1. PUBLIC COMMENT		
2. MINUTES REVIEW – September 23, 2026	Mayor Carey	Approval
3. CEO'S REPORT	Deb Prato	Information
4. ACTION ITEMS		
a. FY 2027 MDOT Grant Application	Kevin Wisselink	Approval
5. PERFORMANCE REPORTS		
a. Paratransit Route Ridership	Deb Prato	Information
b. Fixed Route Ridership	Tim Roseboom	Information
1. September 2026		
c. Finance	Linda Medina	Information
1. Operating Statement – August 2026		
2. Professional Development and Travel Report		
a. August 2026		
3. Grant Statement		
6. CHAIR'S REPORT	Mayor Carey	Information
7. COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES not approved by committee		
a. Future Planning & Innovation Committee, October 12, 2026	Jack Hoffman	Information
8. ADJOURNMENT		



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BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, September 23, 2026 – 4:00 p.m.

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

ATTENDANCE:

Board Members Present:

Charis Austin, Rick Baker, Mayor Carey, Tracie Coffman, Andy Guy, Renee Hill, Jack Hoffman, Mayor LaGrand, Mayor Maas, David Moore, Clarkston Morgan, Tim Mroz, Paul Troost

Board Members Absent:

Mayor Favale, Steven Gilbert

Rapid Attendees:

Josh Brink, Steve Clapp, Kris Heald, Jeffrey King, Deron Kippen, Linda Medina, Nick Monoyios, Deb Prato, Andy Prokopy, Tim Roseboom, Lindsay Thomasini, Mike Wieringa, Kevin Wisselink

Public Attendees:

Devin Norris, Kyle Pray (SeyferthPR), Lydia Shingle (Disability Advocates), Chris Swank (GVSU), Janelle Vandergrift (ENTF), James White

Chairman Mayor Carey called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m.

1. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Devin Norris; a rider of The Rapid for more than 45 years, addressed the Board regarding a comprehensive proposal for restructuring and improving the transit system.

Mr. Norris explained that he has developed a complete route overhaul designed to create stronger cross-grid connectivity between multiple routes, improve travel-time efficiency, increase ridership, and restore several historical routes.

One of the historical routes he referenced is the 1968 configuration of Route 2, which was known as the Martin Luther King Park route. Mr. Norris noted that he had prepared a detailed route description, although he did not review the entire document during his comment.

Mr. Norris highlighted a new proposal replacing Routes 33 and 34 with a new route called North Crossroads. He described North Crossroads as a cross-town circulator operating in both clockwise and counterclockwise directions. The proposed route would expand service corridors across the community, running from Fruit Ridge through North Ridge, Hendershot, and Four Mile, and continuing across to the East Beltline.

Mr. Norris indicated his alignment would provide additional coverage in areas of Plainfield and along Knapp Street, ultimately reaching the Knapp's Corner Meijer as an end-of-line point before continuing back around the circulator. He believes this expanded connectivity would increase ridership. He noted that Routes 33 and 34 primarily serve the industrial sector on the northwest side and suggested that the proposed configuration could build upon that existing service.

Mr. Norris also discussed a new proposed Route 35 and encouraged the Board and Planning Department to review the additional route concepts he has submitted through The Rapid's website. He also proposed restoring Route 6 to what Mr. Norris described as its historical alignment. He referenced Route 16 and the former trolley streetcar system, noting that Cherry Street was historically served by this route.

Mr. Norris explained that one of the ongoing issues with the current Routes 4 and 6 dates back to the 2004 restructuring that moved service to Central Station. He stated that Route 4 currently travels along Cherry Street only as far as Eastern Avenue, while Route 6 uses Lake Drive. He explained, Route 4 traveled along Lake Drive, turned onto Cherry Street, and then continued onto Eastern Avenue. Route 6 historically provided service farther across Lake Drive toward Gaslight Village and Lakeside Drive.

Mr. Norris said that the current route configurations create a lack of connectivity between the two routes and in his opinion have been a problem for decades. He suggested that restoring elements of historical alignments could improve connectivity and travel efficiency.

Finally, Mr. Norris proposed recommissioning Route 17 as a Leonard Crosstown route. Under his plan, the existing East and West Leonard routes would be eliminated and replaced with service provided through different configurations of existing routes, while a new Leonard Crosstown alignment would provide direct cross-town service.

He proposed connecting this concept with the restoration of Route 12 as Fulton Crosstown indicating under this arrangement, riders traveling from Standale could use Route 12 to travel inbound toward the downtown network, providing a dependable downtown connection.

Mr. Norris stated that establishing a Leonard Crosstown route could address several existing connectivity and travel-time issues. He noted that riders traveling between areas such as Alpine and Fuller would be able to make that trip without having to travel to Rapid Central Station to transfer to Route 15 and then travel back in the opposite direction.

Mr. Norris concluded by thanking the Board for considering his proposals and encouraging the Board and Planning Department to review the route concepts he has submitted.

2. MINUTES REVIEW – August 26, 2026

Chairman Mayor Carey entertained a motion to approve the meeting minutes from August 26, 2026. Mayor Maas motioned to approve, and Mr. Mroz supported it. The motion passed unanimously.

3. CEO'S REPORT

Ms. Prato noted that given the lengthy agenda she would keep her comments brief. She provided an overview of the action items.

As requested at the August Board meeting a polling analysis for a ballot initiative in 2027 was completed and included in the meeting packet.

Mr. John Helmholtz was present to provide a presentation regarding the recommended millage strategy related to the millage rate, ballot date, and millage duration action items. These items include the, which Mr. Guy requested as additional discussion on the topics which were related to his motion at the August meeting to table the Truscott Rossman and SeyferthPR contract actions items. Drawing the board's attention to the bus cleaning contract award, she noted DetailXPerts, cost proposal is much higher than the other proposer. Staff did not consider the bid to be responsible and, after discussion the matter with the bidder, learned that the bid had been submitted in error.

The Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan will also be discussed. Mr. Roseboom will present an update on his work related to the plan.

Ms. Prato also noted that the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) Plan and master agreement would be presented.

Ms. Prato stated that she would like to reserve time for what she anticipated would be lengthy discussions and numerous questions as the Board proceeded through the remainder of the agenda. She added that she was happy to address any questions at that time.

Mayor LaGrand asked about the polling results, particularly the reasons respondents identified for supporting public transportation, referencing page 7 of the report.

Mayor LaGrand questioned whether respondents had been presented with a predetermined list of reasons for supporting public transportation. He noted that polling questions can sometimes provide

respondents with several reasons identified by the pollster and then ask them to select among those options.

He said he raised the issue because he believes affordable housing and public transportation are closely connected. In his view, transportation can significantly affect housing affordability because individuals who can use public transportation to commute may have more of their income available for housing. Mayor LaGrand observed that housing was not included among the reasons identified in the polling results. He suggested that the absence of housing from the results should not necessarily preclude the organization from discussing the connection between housing affordability and public transportation in future communications. He said that public transportation could be discussed as a component of a broader housing affordability strategy and suggested that this connection may be worth introducing into the community conversation.

Ms. Prato responded that she did not have the exact polling questions available at that time but could obtain them and confirm whether housing was included or otherwise correlated with respondents' views regarding public transportation. She indicated that housing was likely not correlated with public transportation in the polling conducted at that particular stage.

Mr. Hoffman thanked Mayor LaGrand for his comments. He said that, if the question or framing suggested by Mayor LaGrand had been included in the polling, his expectation would be that it could have made the polling results even more favorable toward public transportation. He noted that the existing results were already somewhat favorable.

Mr. Hoffman further stated that, in campaigns, he frequently emphasizes that the way an issue is presented during a campaign can influence how the public perceives it after the election. He said the same principle applies to a millage campaign and that the messaging used during the campaign could affect how the community understands the value of public transportation over the long term.

He noted that public transportation has traditionally been presented primarily as a means of helping people get to work. While he acknowledged that this is a valid benefit, he suggested that connecting public transportation with housing affordability could provide an additional way of explaining its broader value.

Mr. Hoffman said that framing public transportation as a resource that can help people manage housing costs could resonate with members of the community. He also noted that public transportation can benefit the broader community and suggested that the campaign provides an opportunity not only to communicate about the millage itself but also to shape the community's understanding of public transportation for years to come. He concluded that, given the favorable polling results, there may be an opportunity to consider not only how the millage should be structured but also how the community should think about the value and role of public transportation over the coming decades.

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4. POLLING ANALYSIS 2027, Ms. Deb Prato

Ms. Prato noted that, at the previous meeting, Mr. Guy had raised a question about whether the polling had been analyzed specifically for a 2027 election. She asked Competitive Edge to review its analytics and rerun the data with 2027 as the election year. She stated that Competitive Edge's narrative was included in the meeting packet and that its conclusion was straightforward: the year of election – 2026, 2027, or 2028 – did not appear to materially affect the level of support. Ms. Prato added that if the Board needed additional information or a deeper analysis, she would invite Competitive Edge to return and discuss the findings.

Mr. Guy expressed his appreciation to staff and the consultants for providing the additional information. He explained that he had raised the question because the 2027 analysis was not included in the previous presentation or reflected in the minutes. He was pleased that Competitive Edge had rerun the numbers and provided additional context regarding what a 2027 election could mean. He also appreciated SeyferthPR's review and assessment.

Mr. Guy asked whether there were potential cost-sharing considerations associated with a 2027 versus a 2028 election, including the impact of holding an election during a cycle without other local initiatives on the ballot. He asked whether the organization had a clear understanding of how those costs might differ. Ms. Prato explained that three of the six cities would have other local ballot activity in 2027. SeyferthPR was working to estimate election-related costs, including election services, preparation and printing, and

mailing absentee ballots. She noted that, based on the information available, those costs would likely be less than the cost of competing for media attention during the 2028 election cycle. She added that Mr. Helmholdt would address the issue in greater detail during his presentation.

Mr. Guy said it would be helpful for the Board to understand the magnitude of those costs, particularly because some of the larger communities would not have other local initiatives on the 2027 ballot. He also noted Competitive Edge's recommendation to conduct another survey closer to the filing decision. He asked when that survey would ideally occur and what the typical filing deadline would be.

Ms. Prato stated that the filing deadline is generally in early August of the election year. She noted that there is still time to conduct additional polling and gather more information before a filing decision is required.

Mr. Guy added that the additional time could also be used to gather more information and further refine the proposition.

Mr. Guy said this timing could affect the Board's consideration of Item 6a on the agenda. He questioned whether a decision on that item was necessary at the current meeting if there was sufficient time to further organize and prepare for a filing that would meet the appropriate election deadline.

Ms. Prato agreed. She explained that Item 6a had been placed on the agenda because, at the previous meeting, the Board could not fully address Item 6b without first having additional information about the timing and level of interest. She noted that the millage election year would be important in determining when the organization should begin its marketing and public education efforts.

Ms. Prato explained that the outreach campaign would help refine the organization's messaging. Competitive Edge's polling identified messages that resonated with supporters and messages that resonated with opponents, and respondents were presented with both supporting and opposing messages in a randomized rotation to determine whether those messages changed voter sentiment. She stated that additional education and outreach would help the organization better understand what she described as the "mushy middle" of the electorate and would allow the organization to sharpen its messaging. The organization understands that the six-city community values mobility for everyone and that GO!Bus is an important component of public transportation. She also noted that seniors have particular perspectives on transit that may not be shared uniformly across all six cities, and that each city has its own priorities. Those considerations, she said, would become clearer through continued outreach and education.

Mr. Guy stated we have time to get organized around that, particularly given the filing deadline. He stated Competitive Edge had a recommendation for another survey closer to the filing decision and asked whether there was a general sense of how far in advance that survey should occur. For example; one month or three months before the filing decision.

Ms. Prato responded that the timing would be determined as the organization learned more through its outreach efforts.

She explained that the timing would depend in part on which messages resonate, which do not, which constituencies and cities respond to particular messages, and where additional communication may be necessary. She noted that not every aspect of the strategy needs to be finalized immediately. Ms. Prato also expressed some concern about discussing detailed campaign strategy in an open public meeting, noting that opponents would then have access to that information. She emphasized, however, that the organization would remain transparent throughout the process about what it was learning. She indicated that SeyferthPR would continue to assist with that effort.

Mr. Guy again thanked staff for bringing forward the additional information, stating that it was helpful for the Board's consideration.

Ms. Prato noted that staff are thinking about these issues continuously and acknowledged that Board members do not have the same opportunity or responsibility to focus on them every day. She said that staff wanted to make sure any information gaps were addressed and that the Board had the information necessary to make informed decisions and support the agency.

Mr. Hoffman stated that he had discussed the issue with Mr. Guy, Ms. Prato, Mr. King, and Mr. Monoyios. He said that, from his perspective, the timing of the millage depends on the overall strategy. He referenced Mr. King's comments that the basic proposal would not be to expand services, but rather to position the organization for a secure financial future based on its strong reputation and performance. He noted that the polling was positive regarding that message and the proposed increase.

Mr. Hoffman said he did not believe there was sufficient time to develop a new service proposal before 2027, noting that the Silver Line had been discussed and developed over several years. Therefore, if the organization proceeds in 2027, he believed that approach would be consistent with Mr. King's memorandum, and he was comfortable with it.

Mr. Hoffman said that the tactical question of election timing also raised a broader strategic issue. He understood Mr. Guy's concern that a 10-year millage based solely on maintaining current services could create a level of comfort that might limit the organization's ability to adapt. Conversely, a shorter millage or broader aspirations could provide a different level of flexibility and accountability.

He recalled that, when the Silver Line millage was proposed, the campaign was described as a "Rapid Revolution" and envisioned significant changes to the system. Since then, there have been successes, challenges, and changes in the transportation environment.

Mr. Hoffman said he was comfortable maintaining the organization's current course while allowing external conditions to develop. He identified several factors that could affect transportation policy and demand, including gas prices, Grand Rapids' continued growth and housing development, and changes in state transportation funding. He noted uncertainty surrounding state transportation budgets and the potential implication for local transportation needs.

Mr. Hoffman said he did not yet see a clear path forward on those broader issues. For that reason, he was comfortable maintaining the organization's current approach and relying on its reputation and service quality as the basis for the proposal. He also noted that maintaining financial flexibility could allow the organization to respond to opportunities that may arise in the future. He stated that he was comfortable with the plan presented by staff.

Ms. Coffman asked whether the decision regarding the amount of the millage and the timing of the millage needed to be made together. She noted that Mr. Guy's comments regarding the filing deadline suggested there was still time for further consideration. She asked whether the Board could decide on the election date separately from decisions regarding the millage rate, length, and other aspects of the proposal.

Ms. Coffman noted that the current proposal presents those decisions together but questioned whether they necessarily needed to be treated as one decision or whether the Board could address them separately.

Ms. Prato stated should the organization defer until 2028; she would not approach the decision with the assumption that a ballot proposal would fail. However, she emphasized that delaying the initiative by one year could increase the organization's exposure to risk because an unsuccessful ballot initiative would leave less time remaining under the current millage authorization and would limit the agency's available options. While she expressed confidence in the organization's likelihood of success, she acknowledged that the vote margin could be narrow, given the close outcomes of prior millage elections.

She also observed that transit has become a more prominent topic of public discussion. In her five years with The Rapid, she said, there has been more public conversation about transit than at any point previously, and she viewed that increased attention as a positive development.

Ms. Prato explained that the reason she placed Item 6a on the agenda was because she was asked to. At the previous meeting, board member Guy requested the action item related to the proposed contracts with Truscott Rossman and Seyferth PR related to public engagement and education be tabled because we had not yet determined the election date, proposition duration, and millage rate. These two action items were meant to satisfy that request related to approval of the public education and engagement contracts.

Mayor LaGrand stated that he did not want to preempt Mr. Helmholtz's presentation but emphasized the importance of being careful, from the outset, about how the organization frames the proposal. He said he would resist describing the proposal solely as one of "service continuity," because the bus system is continually evolving and improving.

Mayor LaGrand noted that there are opportunities to improve fare collection, increase efficiency, adjust routes, and optimize operations. He emphasized that the organization should not reduce the conversation about its services to simply which routes operate and how frequently buses run. He explained that, while the number of hours buses are on the street and service frequency are important measures, the organization is already operating near its maximum capacity in those areas. That does not mean, however, that there are no opportunities for improvement. He cited the COA as an example of how the organization had adjusted and optimized services and noted that staff are continually working to improve processes and create efficiencies so that more revenue can be directed toward service.

5. MILLAGE STRATEGY – PRESENTATION, Mr. John Helmholdt

Mr. Helmholdt began by noting that, in a previous role, he had the privilege of working on ten different transit millage campaigns across the state, including The Rapid's second and third millages. He emphasized his longstanding passion for the services provided by public transportation. He offered a strong commendation to the Board and the leadership of The Rapid for positioning the organization well for a potential millage increase.

POLLING RESULTS

Before getting into the recommendation, Mr. Helmholdt highlighted the strength of the polling data. The initial ballot test showed support above the 60% threshold, with 62% of respondents supporting the millage. Following an informed ballot test, in which respondents heard both supporting and opposing arguments, support increased to 65%.

The polling also showed that 75% of respondents consider public transportation an essential public service. This result was bipartisan and geographically balanced across all six cities served by The Rapid. Overall, the polling validates the work being done by The Rapid and demonstrates strong public recognition of the essential role public transportation plays in the community.

The polling indicates that the millage could potentially be successful in several election cycles. However, after considering several factors, the recommendation is to pursue the millage in November 2027.

WHY NOVEMBER 2027?

Less competition for voter attention.

One of the primary advantages of November 2027 is the relatively limited competition for voter attention. Three of the six cities served by The Rapid are expected to have municipal elections on the November 2027 ballot. Those elections should generate additional voter interest and turnout, while avoiding the significantly greater volume of activity associated with a presidential election year such as 2028.

In a presidential election year, voters are exposed to substantially more campaign messaging and ballot activity, making it more difficult for a local millage proposal to distinguish itself.

LOWER ELECTION COSTS

Another significant consideration is cost.

The expansion of absentee voting has contributed to increased turnout, particularly in August election. Higher turnout also increased the cost of reaching likely voters, including postage, printing, and other campaign-related expenses.

The estimated costs vary considerably by election cycle:

- August 2027: Approximately 15% -25% voter turnout, with an estimated campaign cost of roughly \$250,000 - \$300,000
- November 2027: Approximately 35% or greater turnout, with estimated costs in the range of \$300,000 - \$400,000
- November 2028: Potentially 65% or greater turnout, with campaign costs potentially exceeding \$1M.

For these reasons, November 2027 presents an opportunity to conduct the campaign at a significantly lower cost than a presidential election year.

ELECTORATE CONSIDERATIONS

The characteristics of the electorate are another important factor.

An off-year election generally produces an electorate that is older and more highly engaged. These voters are more likely to research ballot proposals, review campaign materials, and ask questions before making a decision.

The polling suggests that support remains relatively strong across age groups, with support averaging close to 60% even among the various age segments tested.

The primary challenge is that lower overall turnout means the campaign will need to do more to motivate supporters to participate. It will not be sufficient to rely solely on broad awareness or simple campaign slogans. The campaign will need to provide clear information and meaningful education about the value and need for public transportation.

November 2027 provides an advantage because municipal elections in three of the six cities should create an additional reason for voters to participate. Even if some of those races are uncontested, their presence on the ballot should contribute to turnout.

TIMING CONSIDERATIONS

The timing options present both advantages and disadvantages.

AUGUST 2027

Advantages:

- Fewer competing ballot proposals.
- A more engaged and educated electorate.
- Historically older voters are more likely to participate in off-year elections.
- Lower overall campaign costs.

Challenges:

- Lower voter turnout.
- Less overall voter participation.
- Greater need for voter education.
- More effort required to motivate supportive voters to participate.

NOVEMBER 2027

November 2027 offers many of the same advantages as August while providing several additional benefits.

The municipal elections in three of the six cities should produce somewhat higher turnout and give voters another reason to participate. This also provides a longer runway for an educational campaign and allows The Rapid to build awareness and engagement leading into the election.

Holding the millage vote in November also places it within the traditional general election environment, which can provide an additional level of familiarity and legitimacy for voters.

ELECTORAL CONSIDERATIONS

Currently, East Grand Rapids, Grandville, and Kentwood are expected to have municipal races on the November 2027 ballot, including several open or contested seats.

An important financial consideration is that The Rapid would not bear the full cost of elections already scheduled in those three communities.

There will still be costs associated with having the millage question placed on the ballot, including costs incurred by Kent County for ballot preparation and printing, as well as costs incurred by the individual municipalities.

Final cost estimates are still being developed and will be provided once they are available.

Because three of the six communities already have elections scheduled, November 2027 provides an opportunity to share some of the underlying election costs while benefiting from the additional voter turnout those elections generate.

ADDITIONAL POLLING

Mr. Helmholtz recommended conducting another round of polling in approximately the spring leading up to the campaign.

The purpose would be to determine:

- Whether the public education campaign has changed voter attitudes.
- Which messages are resonating most strongly.

- Whether additional information is needed to address voter concerns.
- How support varies among different demographic groups.

Affordability was identified as one of the top issues in the current polling and in many other polls being conducted. Housing was not specifically tested in this survey, but related issues such as affordability could be explored in greater depth in the next round of polling.

LENGTH OF THE MILLAGE

Mr. Helmholdt also discussed the question of how long the millage should remain in effect. The recommendation is for a minimum of 10 years.

SHORTER MILLAGE TERMS

A shorter term provides more frequent opportunities for voters to review and reconsider the funding.

Potential Advantages include:

- More frequent voter oversight.
- Greater flexibility to adjust funding levels.
- Potentially greater acceptability to some voters.

However, shorter terms also create challenges:

- More frequent renewal campaigns.
- Additional election cost.
- Additional costs associated with voter education.
- The need to raise funds for repeated campaigns.
- Greater uncertainty regarding long-term funding.
- Potential limitations on long-term investments.

Historical polling and election experience have not shown that the length of the millage term is necessarily a determining factor in whether voters support or oppose a proposal.

LONGER MILLAGE TERMS

A longer term provides greater predictability, stability, and continuity of funding.

It also allows The Rapid to:

- Better to align funding with long-term transit asset life cycles.
- Reduce the frequency and expense of renewal campaigns.
- Improve long-term financial planning.
- Support larger capital investments.
- Provide greater funding stability.

A longer term does require voters and taxpayers to commit for a greater period and provides fewer opportunities for reassessment. However, historical polling and election experience have not demonstrated that these concerns significantly affect voter support.

For these reasons, the recommendation is to pursue a 10-year millage.

MILLAGE STRUCTURE

Another consideration is the structure of the ballot proposal.

If The Rapid seeks to restore, renew, and increase the millage through a single ballot question, the increase cannot exceed 0.5 mills over the current rate.

If the desired increase exceeds 0.5 mills, two separate ballot questions would be required.

This structural consideration should be incorporated into the development of the final millage proposal.

COST SHARING

The three cities with regularly scheduled elections in November 2027 will not require The Rapid to bear the full cost of conducting those elections.

The remaining three cities will have additional election-related costs.

Final estimates are still being developed, but the total additional election expense is expected to be in the range of several hundred thousand dollars.

Even with those costs, however, November 2027 is expected to provide substantial savings compared with conducting the campaign during the November 2028 presidential election.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the polling, voter demographics, expected turnout, election competition, campaign costs, and the existing municipal election schedule, the recommendation is to pursue a 10-year millage in November 2027.

The strategy would be supported by a sustained voter education effort, followed by additional polling in the spring to measure changes in public opinion and identify the messages most likely to resonate with voters.

The goal is to enter the November 2027 election with strong public awareness, a clear understanding of the value of public transportation, and a well-developed campaign strategy.

Ms. Coffman asked about the pros and cons of using a single question versus two questions if the proposal were to exceed 0.5 mills. Mr. Helmholdt explained that when voters are presented with more than one option, they have the ability to vote yes on one and no on the other. Historically, ballot measures have been structured so that voters may support a renewal but choose not to support an increase. He noted that using two ballot measures also requires additional communication to explain to voters why there are two questions. The preference is to have one question because it is simple, clear, clean, and concise. If the proposal can be accomplished with a single question, it generally has a better chance of receiving voter support.

Mr. Hoffman said he understands that a 0.5-mill increase would generate approximately \$5 million to \$6 million. He asked whether the organization would also receive state matching funds when those funds are spent.

Ms. Prato explained that eligible operating expenses qualify for state operating reimbursement, referred to as state operating assistance. However, the organization must incur the eligible expenses before the state reimburses those costs.

Mr. Hoffman said the reimbursement typically runs from approximately 20% to 25%.

Ms. Prato clarified that the reimbursement rate has been 29% for the past two years and is expected to be 28% this year.

Mr. Hoffman said that, therefore, the 28% reimbursement would be added to the revenue budget.

Ms. Prato explained that the revenue budget consists of locally generated revenue, farebox revenue, millage revenue, and state operating assistance.

Mr. Guy responded to Ms. Coffman's question and noted that there are different ways to approach the two questions. He said he was thinking about their friends in Ottawa County and asked: If the goal is to move toward a November 2027 election, with a filing deadline in late summer 2027, would that mean setting the deadline around August 2027?

Mr. Helmholdt confirmed that August 2027 would be the anticipated timeframe.

Mr. Guy said that, at a high level, they are beginning to see a calendar take shape in which a public relations, outreach, and community relations program is underway. Additional polling would be conducted in the spring, followed by a firm deadline toward the end of the summer to finalize the proposition and ensure the effort is positioned for success in November.

Mr. Helmholdt said one argument he would make is that earlier is better. Moving forward sooner would provide more time to execute education efforts and build awareness. For that reason, he said he would prefer not to wait until August and believes the sooner the process begins, the better.

Mr. Guy said this also relates to Item 6B, noting that allowing the community relations effort to run for a period of time could be beneficial in helping to strengthen and refine the proposition before it is finalized.

Mr. Helmholdt noted that they met with Truscott Rossman the previous evening and discussed the challenge of presenting the organization as one authority and one entity while also recognizing that it serves six individual cities. The goal is to develop an approach that feels localized at the six-city level while remaining under the umbrella of one comprehensive education initiative.

He said they are confident in their ability to effectively communicate and align the messaging across the communities. He also pointed to the positive media coverage surrounding the Roselynn Bliss dedication and said they would like to build on that momentum by coordinating earned media, paid media, and social media efforts.

The overarching goal is to align these various communication and outreach efforts in a way that ultimately informs voters about the opportunity to vote in support of public transportation.

Ms. Coffman noted that, during the previous performance committee meeting, a recommended timeline was presented for the marketing campaign leading up to the proposed November 2027 timeline. She asked for clarification because she did not see the timeline included in the packet and wanted to be reminded when marketing was recommended to begin.

Ms. Prato explained that marketing had originally been recommended to begin in September, but the timeline has since been pushed to October. She noted that the recommendation was for marketing to conclude and transition to the voting phase in May, although May is not necessarily a firm deadline.

Mr. Monoyios added that the advocacy component had previously been discussed as beginning in March and continuing through the end of February, with some advocacy efforts beginning immediately.

Ms. Prato further explained that part of Mr. Helmholdt's role will involve stakeholder engagement, including identifying and developing advocacy groups. She noted that, because the sector does not necessarily have an established advocacy base, the work will include determining how to build and strengthen that network.

Mr. Mroz asked whether he could speak to his comment and noted that six years is not what you are recommending; rather, the recommendation is ten years. He asked why something in between might not be considered and whether ten years is simply a convenient round number.

Mr. Helmholdt explained that, historically, campaigns in the 10- to 20-year range have been consistently successful. He said a ten-year period provides enough time to fully implement a plan and continue executing the strategic plan, while still having the option to return later to request a restoration or a different increase if needed. He acknowledged that there is not a great deal of science behind the ten-year recommendation, other than the fact that it provides more time than five years and that similar campaigns have been successful.

Mr. Hoffman said you were just discussing this with Mr. Guy, and that Item 6A is requesting a decision today on the millage ballot date. There was some discussion that, as Mr. Guy pointed out, the decision does not necessarily have to be made today because there is still some time available. But what I'm hearing from you and from Truscott Rossman is that you really prefer to make a decision now rather than let it drag out. Is that basically correct? You said the earlier, the better, right?

Mr. Helmholdt believes there is a real sense of excitement and an opportunity to build on the momentum coming out of the early childhood center announcement and some of the other recent developments. Transit is becoming more relevant and exciting again. There was a period, particularly before COVID, when the environment was a little different, but we're starting to come back from that, and I think you're going to see that momentum continue.

By beginning your educational efforts sooner, you can positively impact ridership as well. The question is: How do we continue to build awareness and excitement around transit while also increasing ridership? How do we get more employers engaged and make them part of the effort?

That grassroots engagement at the ground level in each of the six cities isn't just going to help educate residents about why this vote is so important. It can also help strengthen your overall ridership and, ultimately, your bottom line.

Mr. Morgan asked, given the unknown factors surrounding what 2027 may look like, what the latest possible decision point would be to determine whether moving forward with the millage is a "go" or "stop" based on global or national circumstances that could hinder the community's willingness to support the millage. He asked whether there is a point at which the Board should consider the effort a stopgap.

Mr. Helmholdt said the organization is currently in the midst of a historic election and is seeing developments that have not occurred in previous elections. He noted that, in the primary alone, approximately 1.5 million Democrats turned out compared with approximately 900,000 Republicans, representing an unprecedented gap between the two parties in a primary election. He explained that the polling team has been conducting this work for approximately 30 years and is learning more about how the electorate is changing, particularly regarding absentee voting. Historically, absentee voters tended to cast their ballots within 40 to 72 hours, allowing campaigns to predict voting behavior with a high degree of confidence. That pattern has changed, with voters now sometimes holding their ballots for as long as three weeks. As a result, campaigns must determine how to strategically allocate their budgets to communicate with and engage those voters between the time they receive their ballots and when they ultimately cast them.

Despite these changes, Mr. Helmholdt said he remains confident that a decision could be made now to move forward with a November 2027 millage. He said adjustments could be made to the campaign budget and voter targeting as more information becomes available. The campaign will have a clearer understanding of who is likely to vote and whether turnout is significantly higher than historical levels or generally consistent with past elections. He noted that turnout will likely be somewhat higher and that additional costs will also result from the requirement to mail ballots rather than simply mail applications.

Mr. Helmholdt said the team's current level of confidence in pursuing a November 2027 election is strong. He identified two additional decision points that could provide more information. The first would be to wait until after the November 3 election, when the team would have significantly more information about statewide results as well as results in each of the six cities. That information could then be analyzed in greater detail. The second option would be to conduct another poll after additional community education has taken place.

Mr. Helmholdt reiterated that, based on the team's experience with transit and millage campaigns in various communities, he is confident the organization could execute a successful campaign in November 2027. He also expressed confidence in working collaboratively with Truscott Rossman to develop and implement the campaign. However, he acknowledged that waiting until after the November 3 election or until another poll has been conducted would provide additional information to inform the decision.

Mr. Morgan followed up regarding the U.S. Postal Service and the timing of absentee ballots. He noted that, with the change in how ballots are treated for purposes of being counted, the relevant timing is now tied to when the ballot is postmarked or sent rather than simply when it is turned in. He asked whether recent elections have shown any change in voter behavior, particularly whether voters who previously held onto their ballots are now returning them more quickly to ensure they are counted.

Mr. Helmholdt said that voter behavior is changing. He noted that voters now have the ability to vote in person during the week leading up to Election Day, and participation during that period, which had previously been in the single digits, is beginning to increase. He expects those numbers to continue rising as some voters remain uncomfortable with absentee ballots. He said concerns and messaging surrounding absentee voting have caused some voters to return their ballots earlier or choose in-person voting instead.

However, Mr. Helmholdt said the team is not seeing massive shifts in Election Day voting. In fact, Election Day voting has decreased substantially as voters have become more comfortable with absentee voting, which has become increasingly easy and accessible.

Ms. Prato added that one of the reasons the Truscott Rossman and SeyferthPR discussion was previously tabled was because the timing of the engagement depends on whether the organization

ultimately pursues the millage in 2027. If the organization decides not to pursue the millage until 2028, beginning that work too early could result in a much longer period of public relations, marketing, and community education.

Ms. Prato explained that this is why the ballot date and duration-rate discussions were structured around first determining the election year. Before moving from Item 6B forward, the group needs to establish Item 6A—at minimum, determining which year the millage would be pursued.

Mr. Guy asked whether the body could informally agree that 2027 is an attractive option without that agreement interfering with efforts to ramp up positive community education about the organization and the value it provides to the community. He noted that the board could move forward with an informal understanding around a potential 2027 effort without formally committing to an initiative. In the meantime, the organization could increase its community education efforts and gather additional information and intelligence to support a 2027 effort, without formally committing to placing an initiative on the ballot.

Mr. Helmholdt said he believes those community education efforts should be ongoing regardless of the timing. He noted that having certainty about when the organization intends to move forward would help establish a long runway for communicating information to the community. He reiterated that staff are prepared to move forward whenever the board is ready.

Mayor LaGrand said another way to view the issue is that the board could logically change its mind. He believes there is a significant advantage to the board taking direct action, providing a clear direction for staff, and moving forward with a plan. If the board later determines that moving forward was a mistake, it could live with the consequences of pulling the plug; however, doing so would not involve entering into a binding contract. Rather, the board would be engaging services in pursuit of an objective. He emphasized that the initiative would not be on the ballot until the board takes that step. In his view, there are significant advantages to the board providing staff with a clear direction and moving forward with a defined plan.

Mr. Mroz said that we discussed about six years and 10 years, and you said you've always been a fan of Evergreen. Mass transit is not going away; it has been around since the '40s, '50s, and '60s. Have we looked at just going with 1.88 mills and being done with it? And what does the polling show?

Mr. Helmholdt said that option was not tested in the polling. He said he was somewhat more skeptical of it because Evergreen is pretty unique, and he rarely sees that approach deployed. The City of Grand Rapids is also fairly unique, given its long history of successfully passing millage increases. Because of that, he said, it would be worth testing the 1.88-mill option in polling to see how it performs in the six-city context.

Mr. Helmholdt said that 10 years is an option they know voters have supported in the past through various ballot measures, which makes it a somewhat safer choice. However, he said that could also be tested in polling. Ultimately, he said he believes the safest approach is a 10-year millage because it provides voter accountability and gives the organization an opportunity to return to voters and continue making the case for the importance of transit. He noted that the cost of doing business is unlikely to decrease over time.

Mr. Helmholdt concluded that, unless additional polling is conducted, he would recommend selecting a specific term—such as 10 years—and sticking with it.

Ms. Prato noted that Mr. Hoffman asked at the last board meeting whether we thought 12 years was too long, and I said, yes, I do, given the rapid increase in operating expenses. Those kinds of increases aren't simply keeping pace with the growth in our other revenue sources.

That said, this is in the context of having been flat at 1.47 for 17 years, and we have now been rolled back to 1.38 under Headlee. So, while property taxes continue to grow—and certainly that number grows along with property values, we've been at the same rate for 17 years. This baby was born and is now graduating from high school, and we're still operating at the same rate. That's a long time to make a budget work.

Ms. Coffman asked a follow-up question regarding Mayor LaGrand's comment about being able to change our minds. She said that is where she has been leaning. Even if the group were to say today that it is targeting November 2027, there would still be an opportunity to change course before filing. If something catastrophic were to happen in the economy, polling was to suddenly decline because of something negative happening locally, or circumstances otherwise changed significantly, there would still be an opportunity to reconsider.

She asked Mr. Helmholdt whether he saw any downside to moving forward with November 2027 as a target while continuing to conduct polling, provide education, and gather data. She noted that the education campaign would be very different from the campaign that would occur once the proposal is formally turned over to voters.

Her understanding is that, at this stage, the effort would focus on educating the public about bus ridership, the role of public transit, and what transit means to the community. That feels beneficial regardless of whether the group ultimately moves forward with a ballot proposal. Once the proposal is formally placed before voters, the campaign would shift to advocating for a specific vote and specific funding measures, which would be much more difficult to change or reverse.

Ms. Coffman asked whether she was missing any potential negatives to saying, hypothetically, "Let's aim for November 2027," while continuing the polling, education, and data-gathering efforts, knowing that there would still be an opportunity to change course before filing. Her view was that there is little downside to beginning the educational effort now because it does not commit the group to ultimately putting the proposal on the ballot.

Mr. Helmholdt explained that the educational effort is not solely about voter education. It is also about making a positive case for why public transit plays an essential role in the community, how it is accessible and available to everyone, and how the community can make transit "cool" again. That includes talking about ridership, strategies for increasing ridership, and ways to get more employers engaged.

He noted that a metropolitan area of this size—and larger—typically has a very diverse transit-riding population, including young professionals, college students, senior citizens, and people from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds. Senior citizens, for example, may rely on public transit to access essential health care and other services.

Mr. Helmholdt added that the education effort can also simply explain what the ballot proposal would mean. Materials could explain, "If you vote yes, this is what it means," as well as "If this does not pass, this is what it means." All educational materials would be developed with legal counsel to ensure full compliance with applicable laws.

He explained that an informational campaign can technically continue all the way through Election Day. The legal distinction is that the educational effort cannot advocate for a particular outcome. It cannot say "vote yes" or "support" the proposal, and there are specific prohibited terms that cannot be used. However, the campaign can provide factual information, such as how to obtain an absentee ballot, how to vote, where to vote, and what the proposed funding would be used for.

The advocacy or "yes" campaign would be completely separate from the educational effort, maintaining a clear legal distinction between the two. That campaign could begin at any time, but most of its significant activity would likely occur in the weeks leading to the election and the mailing of the first absentee ballots.

Mr. Helmholdt said that if the target is November 2027, the sooner the "yes" campaign can begin organizing and building momentum, the better. However, the most significant campaign activity would likely take place around August and September 2027.

Mr. Guy thanked Mr. Helmholdt for his comments and, during Item 6b, noted that he believes the organization needs to rethink its approach to public education and outreach. Rather than ending the education campaign in the spring and handing it off to an as-yet-unidentified group or champion, he emphasized the importance of maintaining an ongoing education program. He said that community education should extend beyond the millage campaign and become a continuous part of the organization's overall communications efforts.

Mr. Helmholdt said that, as a transit advocate, he also recognizes the importance of looking beyond the six cities currently served. He noted that the County has completed its mobility study and that the Metro Council is also examining transportation issues. He said the Authority should strive to be the envy of other transit agencies across the state and country by demonstrating strong management, cost-effectiveness, and efficiency. He added that the millage and the potential community support behind it could help establish a foundation that extends well beyond the next Election Day. In his view, demonstrating strong community support could improve ridership, strengthen overall perceptions of public transportation, and position the Authority to consider ways to increase accessibility and affordability beyond the six cities.

6. ACTION ITEMS

a. Millage Rate, Ballot Date & Duration, Ms. Deb Prato

Ms. Prato expressed some concern because last month, she brought forward the marketing and education initiatives before the dates had been determined. At that time, she was asked to clarify that those dates were important in determining whether we should move forward with the marketing and education efforts. She noted that she can withdraw the item if necessary. She feels that Mr. Helmholdt is in the same camp. It would be helpful to have some information direction that our goal is 2027, with the understanding that, barring something catastrophic nationally or geopolitically, 2027 would be the year we are working toward and preparing for. That has been the agreement we had; first in February 2025 and again in February 2026; that we would look toward 2027, with 2028 as the backstop. Given the changes in voter enrollment, if there were a significant increase in voters in 2028 and that became our backstop year, that would also be positive news for us. Our millage ends in 2029, so that timeline remains important.

Would you like to provide informal direction to me and the team that 2027 is the goal and that we should continue moving forward on that basis?

The plan has always been to continue checking in at each board meeting and reporting on what is working, what is not working, what we are learning, what we are not learning, how we think we can learn more, and who we need to connect with.

As part of his regular contract, Mr. Helmholdt has also conducted stakeholder engagements with board members. Each of you should have had an individual interview with him to discuss your thoughts on this. Those conversations are independent of my perspective because not everyone thinks about the same issues at the same time during a one-hour board meeting. That is the value of having those individual conversations.

So, I am open to whatever direction you would like me to take—what you would like me to present, what you would like me to do, what you would like me not to do, or whether you would like me to withdraw the item.

Mayor LaGrand made a motion that we begin planning for and move toward placing a millage proposal on the November 2027 ballot, based on a 10-year duration. He also proposed that we continue discussing the millage rate and revisit that issue at the earliest opportunity. He believes this is an appropriate first step and would like the Board to move forward with it now.

Mayor Maas supported the motion.

Chairman Mayor Carey noted, I have a motion from Mayor LaGrand, support from Mayor Maas. Is there any other discussion from the board?

Mr. Baker asked for clarification, stating that he was unsure whether the vote on Item 6a was to approve placing the matter on the November 2027 ballot or simply to establish November 2027 as a target date, with the matter to return to the council for a formal vote at a later time.

Mayor LaGrand said he was comfortable committing to the November 2027 ballot, noting that the council could change its decision later if circumstances warranted.

Ms. Coffman clarified that Mayor LaGrand's proposal differed somewhat from the language in the packet. While Item 6a references November, it also specifies a 12-year term and a mill rate. She explained that Mayor LaGrand's motion would therefore amend Item 6a as currently written and asked that the distinction be noted.

Chairman Mayor Carey asked Mayor LaGrand to restate his motion for clarity.

Mayor LaGrand stated that the motion was to approve proceeding with placing the matter on the November 2027 ballot and to do so for a 10-year millage.

Ms. Prato notes for clarity, the board item states that the Board is being asked to approve staff's recommendations, and that SeyferthPR are currently retained as political strategic advisors through November 2027, for a duration of at least ten years.

Are we capping the term at ten years, or are we intending to proceed with "at least ten years"?

Mayor LaGrand is proposing a ten-year term.

Chairman Mayor Carey confirmed the motion from Mayor LaGrand and supported by Mayor Maas and asked for any other discussion.

Mr. Baker noted that he would be abstaining from the vote. Ms. Coffman also noted that she was legally required to abstain from voting. Chairman Mayor Carey acknowledged that Members Coffman and Baker would be abstaining for the reasons stated.

Chairman Mayor Carey stated that there was a motion from Mayor LaGrand, supported by Mayor Maas, with two abstentions. He asked if there was any further discussion.

Mr. Guy requested clarification regarding the matter being voted on. Chairman Mayor Carey clarified that the vote was on the 2027 term and a 10-year term. Chairman Mayor Carey confirmed that this was the motion currently on the floor.

Mr. Guy said that the language does not include specific details regarding the mill rate or other related matters, which would be determined as the matter is brought forward.

Chairman Mayor Carey said that, at a minimum, the board should move forward with the action item. As he understands it, the proposal is for a 10-year period, and a date has been established. He noted that circumstances could change in the future, at which point the board would have the authority to make a different determination if necessary.

Ms. Prato clarified that, regarding the Board action item, she had included Action Item No. 2 to approve the maximum amount allowable for a single ballot item, as it had been recommended that this be addressed before proceeding with the discussion on marketing and education. She asked whether that portion was being withdrawn.

Mayor LaGrand stated that this was not part of the motion he made. He noted that someone else could make a motion regarding that item, but his motion was to take two of the three items and put them up for a vote so the Board could move forward.

Chairman Mayor Carey confirmed that there was a motion and support to establish a November 2027 target date for a 10-year term, made by Mayor LaGrand and supported by Mayor Maas, with two abstentions. He asked whether there was any further discussion on that specific item.

Chairman Mayor Carey called for a vote, asking all those in favor to say “aye.” The majority responded affirmatively. He then asked for those opposed. Chairman Mayor Carey stated that the motion carried.

Ms. Prato asked whether, when we conduct additional polling, we will have the mill rate question finalized. The question tested in our initial polling was 1.88, which at the time represented the full 0.5 for a single ballot. We have discussed conducting a second round of polling after completing the education process. Will we be in a position to determine the mill rate by that point so that the secondary polling is based on a more accurate figure? She noted that Mr. Helmholdt recommended conducting the second round of polling in January or February.

Mayor LaGrand said yes, he hopes the board can address the question of the millage rate at its next meeting. He would like to see the issue addressed quickly, but he also wants to allow time for clarification because he has heard differing opinions about the appropriate millage level. He believes that conversation is still worth having. However, in the interest of time, he wanted to provide staff with enough direction to begin moving forward.

Mr. Morgan asked for clarification, noting that Ms. Prato had referenced Action Item 6A, Action 2. He asked whether the item was being tabled so the board could have further discussion at its next meeting and whether the item had not yet been voted on.

Ms. Prato clarified that the millage rate would be addressed later as part of Action 2.

Mr. Guy encouraged the board to bring the millage discussion forward along with some of the scenarios and planning work that staff has already developed. He noted that the board has not yet had an opportunity to fully review or discuss those scenarios. While there have been several general conversations around the table about a maximum millage rate and what that could mean for the budget, there have also been suggestions about different approaches, including whether GO!Bus should be part of the proposition.

Mr. Guy said the board has discussed various ideas about what the overall strategy could look like, but it has not yet received a comprehensive analysis, nor has a committee recommending the proposition to the board to have an opportunity to fully review and deliberate on that analysis. He said it would be useful for the board to work through those scenarios to ensure it is maximizing the opportunity presented by the proposition being considered for the committee or the community.

He also noted that the board is likely to learn more in the coming months through the election process, additional information about the financial implications of 2027, further polling, and continued community engagement. That information, he said, will ultimately help inform where the board should land on the millage rate and the broader proposition.

Mr. Guy said that, as a board member, he would like to see that information so the board can be confident it is putting forward a fully developed proposition with strong community support. He encouraged the board to consider how it can move from its current position toward that point over the next several months, noting that there is sufficient time to do so.

b. Contracts w/Truscott Rossman & SeyferthPR, Mr. Jeffrey King

Mr. King is requesting Board approval to enter into contracts with both Truscott Rossman and SeyferthPR for Public Engagement and Education Services for a period of nine months, from September 2026 through May 2027.

Ms. Coffman asked whether the proposed contracts covered only consulting fees and, if so, where funding for media buys and other marketing expenses identified in the firms' proposals would come from.

Mr. King explained that those expenses would be funded through the election services budget approved by the Board as part of the most recent fiscal budget. The expenses were not specifically

identified in the contracts because the scope and cost of those efforts would not be known until the campaign strategy was developed and specific media needs were determined.

Ms. Coffman clarified that the proposed contracts therefore covered only consulting fees, which Mr. King confirmed.

Mr. Hoffman noted that he had raised questions at the previous meeting regarding the use of two consultants and how their work would be coordinated with staff. He said he had since met with Mr. King, Mr. Monoyios, and Ms. Prato, and his concerns had been addressed. He also noted that, as Mr. Helmholtz indicated, the proposed structure appeared to be workable.

Mr. Hoffman further discussed the budget with Mr. King and understood that the contracts would provide for more hours than originally contemplated in the firm's proposals, which accounted for the combined contract amounts being somewhat higher than the initial proposals. He noted that, given the approximately \$32 million proposal and the fact that such an effort occurs only once every 10 years, the investment represented a reasonable expenditure in that context. Mr. Hoffman stated that he intended to vote in favor of the contracts.

Mr. Guy echoed Mr. Hoffman's comments and noted that he had also raised questions at the previous meeting. He said he had been encouraging more robust community education and outreach efforts for some time and that such efforts were consistent with recommendations in the Transit Master Plan.

Mr. Guy expressed support for the refined scope of work and encouraged staff to consider how the communication and education efforts could continue beyond the May 2027 contract period. He noted that ongoing public education and organizational awareness should be considered as a long-term asset rather than limited to a single campaign. He added that sustained communication efforts could complement the work necessary to successfully advance a future millage proposal.

Ms. Coffman added that the issue had also been discussed at the previous week's Present Performance and Service Committee meeting, including how the initiative could evolve into a year-round marketing and communications campaign.

Ms. Prato said that, anticipating the question, she and Mr. Wisselink had discussed whether the proposed work could transition into the organization's regular marketing and communications efforts if the millage proposal did not move forward. She explained that the current procurement was specifically scoped around transit millage education and outreach. She said she would prefer to utilize an outside firm rather than build those capabilities internally, noting that the technology, photography, and other resources required to support this type of work are already available through firms that use them daily.

Ms. Prato noted, however, that a separate procurement process would be required if the scope were expanded to include general communications and marketing services.

Ms. Hill asked about the proposed media buys of \$900,000 for Truscott Rossman and \$874,000 for SeyferthPR and asked where those funds would come from.

Mr. King explained that the amounts represented proposed media buys included in each firm's response to the RFP. The firms had been asked to develop comprehensive proposals identifying what they believed would be an appropriate level of investment for a millage campaign. He explained that the proposed media expenditures could include television, social media, radio, and print advertising, depending on the campaign strategy, target audience, geographic area, and voter demographics.

Chairman Mayor Carey entertained a motion to approve the contracts with both Truscott Rossman and SeyferthPR. Mr. Mroz motioned to approve, and Ms. Austin supported it. The motion passed unanimously.

c. Contract with DetailXPerts for Bus Cleaning and Fueling Services, Mr. Steve Clapp

Mr. Clapp is requesting Board approval to enter into a two-year contract, with three one-year renewal options, with DetailXPerts for bus cleaning and fueling services.

Mr. Moore asked whether the price differential between the two companies would affect the overall budget and whether selecting the higher proposal could offset, hinder, or disrupt other planned projects, noting that the Board had hoped to achieve some cost savings.

Mr. Clapp explained that DetailXPerts' proposal was approximately 4% higher than the current cost of the services. He stated that staff considered the proposal to be fair and reasonable. He also noted that Progressive Building Services' proposal was significantly lower than expected, and the company acknowledged during the interview process that its pricing was too low.

Ms. Prato provided additional context, explaining that the contract covers the Authority's day-to-day bus fueling and cleaning operations. She noted that the Authority also has an in-house team, established two budget cycles ago, that performs deep cleaning of the buses.

Chairman Mayor Carey entertained a motion to approve the two-year contract, with three one-year renewal options, with DetailXPerts for bus cleaning and fueling services. Mayor LaGrand motioned to approve, and Ms. Coffman supported it. The motion passed unanimously.

d. Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan 2026 Update, Mr. Tim Roseboom

Mr. Roseboom is requesting the Board's approval and adoption of the Kent County Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan.

Chairman Mayor Carey entertained a motion to approve and adopt the Kent County Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan. Mr. Guy motioned to approve, and Mr. Mroz supported it. The motion passed unanimously.

e. MDOT Master Agreement, Mr. Kevin Wisselink

Mr. Wisselink is requesting Board approval for the CEO to execute the Master Agreement with the Michigan Department of Transportation.

Chairman Mayor Carey entertained a motion to approve the CEO to execute the Master Agreement with the Michigan Department of Transportation. Mayor Mass motioned to approve, and Mr. Guy supported it. The motion passed unanimously.

7. PERFORMANCE REPORTS

a. Paratransit Route Ridership – Report not available

b. Fixed Route Ridership, Mr. Tim Roseboom

No questions

c. Financial Reports, Ms. Linda Medina

Mr. Guy inquired about the administrative line item and related expenses, noting that expenditure is trending approximately 20% below the budgeted amount for this time of year. He asked what staffing capacity was currently lacking, and which positions the organization had anticipated having in place to support the workload. Ms. Medina clarified whether he was referring specifically to wages.

Mr. Guy explained that he was referring to expenses, including wages and administrative costs. He reiterated that expenses are approximately 20% below the projected budget and asked which positions remain unfilled that were expected to be supporting the organization's work.

Ms. Medina identified the following vacant positions:

- Communications position
- Assistant Controller
- Training Manager
- Paratransit Director
- Assistant Paratransit Director
- Transportation Director

8. CHAIR'S REPORT

Chairman Mayor Carey yielded the floor

9. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Present Performance & Service Committee

Ms. Austin noted that the meeting focused on reviewing millage information and included a very productive discussion.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:40 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for October 28, 2026

Respectfully submitted,



Kris Heald, Board Secretary



DATE: October 15, 2026

TO: The Rapid Board of Directors

FROM: Kevin Wisselink, Director- Procurement and Capital Planning

SUBJECT: FY 2027 MDOT GRANT APPLICATION

ACTION REQUESTED

Staff are requesting The Rapid Board approve the FY 2027 Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) grant application and authorize the CEO or her designee to execute a grant contract on behalf of The Rapid.

BACKGROUND

Each year, MDOT requires that transit agencies file a grant application for capital, operating and planning assistance for the upcoming fiscal year. The MDOT application is the first grant application in the annual cycle. This draft application is for MDOT use in estimating funding for state budgeting purposes. A final application with project descriptions will be brought to the Board in late early 2027 when applying for the federal grant application. A version of this was brought to the Board in early 2026, but the application needs to be resubmitted to MDOT to include the specific amount of local funds being used (\$44,040,429). This had never been required before this time and was just recently brought to The Rapid's attention by MDOT, resulting in this board item.

OPERATING ASSISTANCE

The Rapid is requesting \$30,623,953 in State operating assistance based on projected eligible expenses of \$61,247,905. Requested operating assistance is based on 50% of eligible operating expenses, the maximum amount eligible under Act 51, however, actual state match is anticipated to be around 28.0948% or \$17,207,476 Actual expenditures for FY 2027 will be determined through service and budget decisions made by the Board prior to October 1, 2026

CAPITAL ASSISTANCE – FTA Section 5307

Total capital assistance of \$16,299,000 with a state capital share of \$3,259,800 is requested based on a 20 percent match of the \$13,039,200 estimated federal apportionment of Section 5307 funds. The 20 percent match applies to all capital projects unless otherwise specified. All individual projects and splits are between Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and MDOT as listed in Attachment A. The Board can review and modify all capital and operating programs again in late fall when the federal grant application is filed. There is no local share required for the capital portion of this application.

PLANNING ASSISTANCE – FTA Section 5307

Total planning assistance of \$75,000 with a state share of \$15,000 is requested based on a 20 percent match of the \$60,000 federal planning funds listed in Attachment A. This amount is an estimate; specific planning activities and a final budget will be developed and brought to the Board as a part of the annual Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) prepared in the spring of 2026, at which the application amounts can be amended.

CONGESTION MITIGATION, AIR QUALITY (CMAQ) PROGRAM

CMAQ funds are used to assist with operating and capital costs associated with programs that reduce carbon monoxide, nitrates, and particulate emissions in the region. The Rapid is requesting a total of \$991,680 with a federal share of \$823,344 and a state share of \$168,336 for the following projects: \$300,000 for Replacement 40' Buses, \$491,680 for Replacement 35' Dash Buses, \$50,000 for Clean Air Action days and \$150,000 (100% federal funding) for the Rideshare program. This amount is an estimate; specific CMAQ activities can be amended with a final budget when a call for projects is requested from the MPO in the spring of 2026.

CAPITAL ASSISTANCE – FTA Section 5339

Section 5339 is formula funds and may be used for bus and bus facility projects. A total request of \$1,320,610 with an 80% federal share of \$1,056,488 and a 20% state share of \$264,122.

CAPITAL ASSISTANCE – FTA Section 5337

Section 5337 is formula funds and may be used to provide capital assistance for maintenance, replacement, and rehabilitation projects of existing high-intensity fixed guideway and high-intensity motorbus systems to maintain a state of good repair. A total request of \$1,976,500 with an 80% federal share of \$1,581,200 and a 20% state share of \$395,300.

Attachment A
The Rapid
FY 2027 Capital Plan

Project Name	Total Federal	Federal Source	State Match	Funding Source	Total Cost
Section 5307					
ADA Vehicle Equipment	22,400	5307	5,600	CTF	28,000
Bus Tire Lease	236,000	5307	59,000	CTF	295,000
Computer Hardware	280,000	5307	70,000	CTF	350,000
Computer Software	336,000	5307	84,000	CTF	420,000
Facility Equipment	40,000	5307	10,000	CTF	50,000
ITS	320,000	5307	80,000	CTF	400,000
Office Furniture	80,000	5307	20,000	CTF	100,000
Preventative Maintenance	4,000,000	5307	1,000,000	CTF	5,000,000
Rehab Admin/Maintenance Facility	120,000	5307	30,000	CTF	150,000
Replacement 40' Buses	7,360,000	5307	1,840,000	CTF	9,200,000
Shelters/Stop Improvements	160,000	5307	40,000	CTF	200,000
Shop Equipment	20,800	5307	5,200	CTF	26,000
Surveillance/Security Equipment	64,000	5307	16,000	CTF	80,000
Total Capital	\$13,039,200		\$3,259,800		\$16,299,000
Planning Funds	60,000	5307	15,000	CTF	75,000
Total (5307)	\$13,099,200		\$3,274,800		\$16,374,000
CMAQ					
Replacement 40' Buses	240,000	CMAQ	60,000	CTF	300,000
Replacement 35' Dash Bus	393,344	CMAQ	98,336	CTF	491,680
Rideshare	150,000	CMAQ	0		150,000
Clean Air Action Days	40,000	CMAQ	10,000	CTF	50,000
Total (CMAQ)	\$823,344		\$168,336		\$991,680
Section 5339 Bus/Bus Facility					
Replacement 40' Buses	1,056,488	5339	264,122	CTF	1,320,610
Total (5339)	\$1,056,488		\$264,122		\$1,320,610
Section 5337 State of Good Repair					
Replacement 40' Buses	1,581,200	5337	395,300	CTF	1,976,500
Total (5337)	\$1,581,200		\$395,300		\$1,976,500

INTERURBAN TRANSIT PARTNERSHIP BOARD

RESOLUTION NO. 102826

Fiscal Year 2027

RESOLUTION OF INTENT

THE APPROVED RESOLUTION OF INTENT TO APPLY FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2027 UNDER ACT NO. 51 OF THE PUBLIC ACTS OF 1951, AS AMENDED.

WHEREAS, pursuant to Act No. 51 of the Public Act of 1951, as amended (Act 51), it is necessary for the Interurban Transit Partnership Board, established under Act 196, to provide a local transportation program for the state fiscal year 2027, therefore, apply for state financial assistance under provisions of Act 51; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary for the Interurban Transit Partnership Board to name an official for all public transportation matters, who is authorized to provide such information, as deemed necessary by the Commission of department for its administration of Act 51; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary to certify that no changes in eligibility documentation have occurred during the past state fiscal year; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary for the Interurban Transit Partnership Board to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act in the provision of all its service; and

WHEREAS, the performance indicators have been reviewed and approved by the governing body.

WHEREAS, the Interurban Transit Partnership Board will review and approve a balanced budget for fiscal year 2027; and

WHEREAS, the Interurban Transit Partnership Board has reviewed and approved the proposed estimated budget and funding sources for Section 5307 of \$13,099,200 in federal funds, matched with estimated state funds. Estimated Section 5339 budget of \$1,056,488 in federal funds are matched with \$264,122 estimated in state funds. Estimated Section 5337 budget of \$1,581,200 in federal funds are matched with \$395,300 in estimated state funds. Estimated CMAQ budget of \$823,344 in federal funds are matched with \$168,336 in estimated state funds.

WHEREAS, the Interurban Transit Partnership Board has reviewed and approved the proposed balanced estimated budget and funding sources of estimated state funds \$17,207,476, estimated local funds of \$44,040,429, with total estimated eligible expenses of \$61,247,905.

HEREBY, appoints the CEO or her designee, as the Transportation Coordinator for all public transportation matters and is authorized to provide such information as deemed necessary by the commission or department for its administration of Act 51 for 2027; and

BE IT RESOLVED, that the CEO or her designee are hereby authorized to execute agreements, contract extensions and to initiate any Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), or Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) amendments with the Michigan Department of Transportation on behalf of the Interurban Transit Partnership Board for capital, operating, planning, and marketing funds.

CERTIFICATE

The undersigned, duly qualified, and acting Secretary of the Interurban Transit Partnership Board certifies that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted at a legally convened meeting of the Interurban Transit Partnership Board.

Kris Heald, Board Secretary

Date

Paratransit Operating Statistics
September 2026

September	Trips Scheduled	Completed Trips	Noshow Trips	On-Time	Late	% Late	% on time
Tuesday, September 1, 2026	747	737	10	665	82	11%	89%
Wednesday, September 2, 2026	788	779	9	617	171	22%	78%
Thursday, September 3, 2026	712	698	14	605	107	15%	85%
Friday, September 4, 2026	624	615	9	495	129	21%	79%
Saturday, September 5, 2026	243	238	5	236	7	3%	97%
Sunday, September 6, 2026	326	319	7	280	46	14%	86%
LABOR DAY HOLIDAY							
Tuesday, September 8, 2026	601	590	11	550	51	9%	92%
Wednesday, September 9, 2026	758	747	11	415	343	46%	55%
Thursday, September 10, 2026	731	719	12	516	215	30%	71%
Friday, September 11, 2026	722	709	13	605	117	17%	84%
Saturday, September 12, 2026	246	242	4	228	18	7%	93%
Sunday, September 13, 2026	294	291	3	272	22	8%	93%
Monday, September 14, 2026	713	697	16	539	174	25%	76%
Tuesday, September 15, 2026	719	710	9	550	169	24%	77%
Wednesday, September 16, 2026	835	818	17	613	222	27%	73%
Thursday, September 17, 2026	701	681	20	568	133	20%	81%
Friday, September 18, 2026	712	698	14	616	96	14%	87%
Saturday, September 19, 2026	256	251	5	233	23	9%	91%
Sunday, September 20, 2026	270	265	5	230	40	15%	85%
Monday, September 21, 2026	691	682	9	596	95	14%	86%
Tuesday, September 22, 2026	771	762	9	663	108	14%	86%
Wednesday, September 23, 2026	760	744	16	597	163	22%	79%
Thursday, September 24, 2026	686	680	6	581	105	15%	85%
Friday, September 25, 2026	700	692	8	496	204	29%	71%
Saturday, September 26, 2026	223	216	7	212	11	5%	95%
Sunday, September 27, 2026	251	246	5	221	30	12%	88%
Monday, September 28, 2026	717	711	6	622	95	13%	87%
Tuesday, September 29, 2026	688	677	11	570	118	17%	83%
Wednesday, September 30, 2026	787	773	14	635	152	20%	81%
Summary:	17272	16987	285	14026	3246	19%	81%



Date: October 28, 2026
To: ITP Board of Directors
From: Tim Roseboom – Senior Planner
Subject: FIXED ROUTE RIDERSHIP AND PRODUCTIVITY REPORT – SEPTEMBER 2026

OVERVIEW: In September 2026, there was a 3.4% decrease in total monthly route ridership as compared to September 2025. Regular fixed route services increased 4.0%, but contract services decreased 14.4%. GVSU service operated at a full schedule, and GRPS operated one less day than a full schedule in September. FY26 finished with just above 6.2 million passengers, a 1.4% decrease from FY25, largely due to the DASH reduction that was implemented May 4.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Monthly Ridership

	September 2026	September 2025¹	% Change
Regular Fixed Route Service (<i>Routes 1–44</i>)	410,760	394,970	4.0%
Contracted Service (<i>GVSU, DASH, GRCC, and Ferris</i>)	227,513	265,918	-14.4%
Total Monthly Fixed Route Ridership	638,273	660,888	-3.4%

Daily Average Ridership

	September 2026	September 2025¹	% Change
Weekday Total	27,271	28,143	-3.1%
Weekday Evening	4,342	4,205	3.3%
Saturday	10,733	10,600	1.3%
Sunday	5,664	6,873	-17.6%

Productivity Summary

	September 2026	September 2025¹	% Change
Average passengers per hour per route	15.7	15.6	0.7%
Average passengers per mile per route	1.13	1.12	1.1%
Average farebox recovery percent per route	10.6%	11.1%	-4.2%

Fiscal Year Ridership

	FY 2026	FY 2025¹	% Change
Regular Fixed Route Service (<i>Routes 1–44</i>)	4,369,353	4,282,441	2.0%
Contracted Service (<i>GVSU, DASH, GRCC, and Ferris</i>)	1,869,768	2,042,613	-8.5%
Total Fixed Route Ridership YTD	6,239,121	6,325,054	-1.4%

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 SEPTEMBER 2026 TO SEPTEMBER 2019

Monthly Ridership

	September 2026	September 2019	% Change
Regular Fixed Route Service (<i>Routes 1–44</i>)	410,760	636,788	-35.5%
Contracted Service (<i>GVSU, DASH, GRCC, and Ferris</i>)	227,513	374,697	-39.3%
Total Monthly Fixed Route Ridership	638,273	1,011,485	-36.9%

Daily Average Ridership

	September 2026	September 2019	% Change
Weekday Total	27,271	45,523	-40.1%
Weekday Evening	4,342	6,337	-31.5%
Saturday	10,733	16,956	-36.7%
Sunday	5,664	6,639	-14.7%

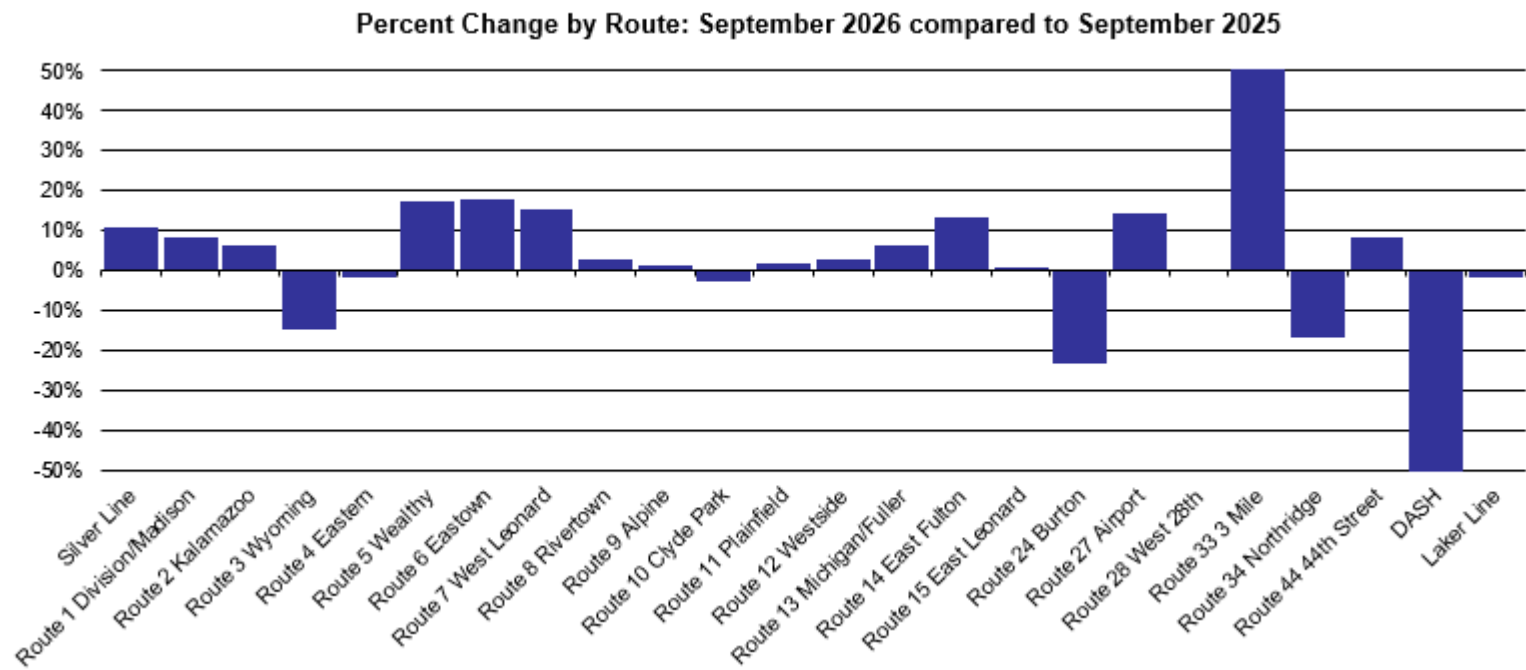
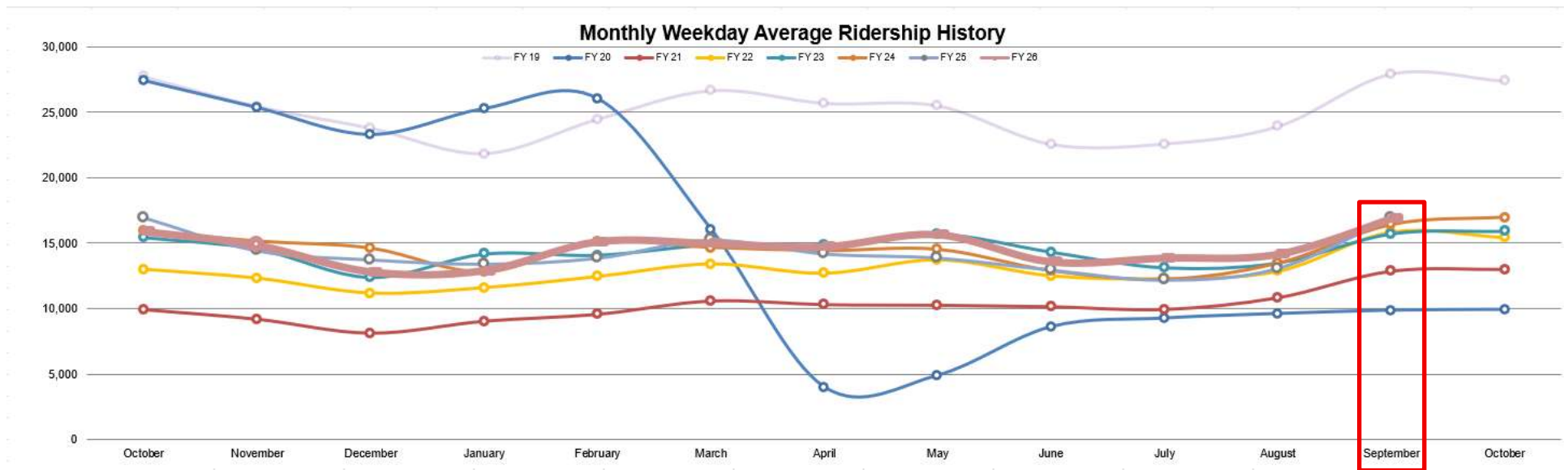
Productivity Summary

	September 2026	September 2019	% Change
Average passengers per hour per route	15.7	20.4	-22.9%
Average passengers per mile per route	1.13	1.61	-29.8%
Average farebox recovery percent per route	10.6%	27.0%	-60.6%

Fiscal Year Ridership

	FY 2026	FY 2019	% Change
Regular Fixed Route Service (<i>Routes 1–44</i>)	4,369,353	7,301,569	-40.2%
Contracted Service (<i>GVSU, DASH, GRCC, and Ferris</i>)	1,869,768	2,845,315	-34.3%
Total Fixed Route Ridership YTD	6,239,121	10,146,884	-38.5%

	Monthly Farebox Recovery	Weekday Farebox Recovery	Saturday Farebox Recovery	Sunday Farebox Recovery
Silver Line	12.24%	12.08%	13.98%	12.10%
Route 1 Division/Madison	11.24%	11.55%	9.77%	9.15%
Route 2 Kalamazoo	11.27%	11.42%	11.43%	9.21%
Route 3 Wyoming/Rivertown	10.34%	10.89%	8.69%	7.70%
Route 4 Eastern	12.26%	12.38%	11.05%	12.29%
Route 5 Wealthy	10.71%	10.91%	8.66%	n/a
Route 6 Eastown	9.97%	9.87%	8.92%	13.35%
Route 7 West Leonard	8.61%	8.63%	7.84%	9.28%
Route 8 Prairie/Rivertown	9.24%	9.63%	7.57%	7.64%
Route 9 Alpine	13.55%	13.11%	15.51%	18.41%
Route 10 Clyde Park	10.59%	10.50%	10.43%	12.71%
Route 11 Plainfield	10.71%	10.68%	10.20%	12.70%
Route 12 Westside	10.08%	10.20%	11.16%	5.57%
Route 13 Michigan/Fuller	10.75%	10.98%	8.70%	n/a
Route 14 East Fulton	11.97%	12.77%	7.28%	n/a
Route 15 East Leonard	14.30%	14.88%	9.76%	14.26%
Route 24 Burton	6.29%	6.38%	5.59%	n/a
Route 27 Airport Industrial	10.02%	10.02%	n/a	n/a
Route 28 West 28th	10.81%	10.73%	10.94%	11.84%
Route 33 Walker Industrial	3.78%	3.78%	n/a	n/a
Route 34 Northridge	2.58%	2.58%	n/a	n/a
Route 44 44th Street	10.39%	10.42%	10.71%	9.51%
Route 0 Express	0.20%	0.05%	0.00%	0.01%
Route 1000 Millenium Park	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Route 71 Central 4A	13.87%	13.87%	n/a	n/a
Route 72 Central 10A	20.72%	20.72%	n/a	n/a
Route 73 Union 3A	47.15%	47.15%	n/a	n/a
Route 74 Union 7A	49.76%	49.76%	n/a	n/a
Route 75 Union 10B	36.72%	36.72%	n/a	n/a
Route 76 Union 12A	37.48%	37.48%	n/a	n/a





Interurban Transit Partnership

Date: October 28, 2026
To: ITP Board of Directors
From: Linda Medina, Director of Finance
Subject: August 2026 Financial Statements

Attached are the August 31, 2026, financial statements for both General Operations and Grants for your review along with the Professional Development and Travel Activity Report for August.

FY 25/26 YTD Operating Statement Analysis

Total revenues and expenses are trending favorably through August 2026. Revenues are .6% over budget while expenses are 13% under budget before capitalizing operating expenses. Overall trends remain consistent with no significant changes.

As we continue working through the fiscal year-end close process, the Finance Department is heavily focused on completing the numerous accruals, account reconciliations, adjusting entries, grant reconciliations, and other year-end procedures necessary to ensure the accuracy of the FY 2025/2026 financial statements. This is a detailed and time-intensive process that will continue over the next several weeks as we finalize financial activity, review supporting documentation, and prepare for the annual audit.

While final results are still being evaluated, preliminary indicators suggest the organization remains on stable financial footing. Importantly, the ability to meet operational and financial obligations without relying on reserve funds reflects prudent fiscal management and strengthens the organization's long-term financial position.

Please feel free to reach out to me directly at (616) 774-1149 or lmolina@ridetherapid.org with any additional questions regarding the attached financial reports.

The Rapid
General Operating Statement
Year to Date as of August 31, 2026

	YTD as of August 31, 2026		Variance		Last Year FY 24/25	% Variance to FY 24/25	Current Year FY 25/26
	Budget	Actual	\$	%	YTD Actual	YTD Actual	Annual Budget
Revenues and Operating Assistance							
Passenger Fares	\$ 4,305,885	\$ 4,341,797	\$ 35,912	0.8%	\$ 4,394,890	-1%	\$ 4,813,645
Sale of Transportation Services							
CMH Contribution	423,487	368,147	(55,340)	-13.1%	346,278	6%	461,985
Dash Contract	2,292,937	2,112,780	(180,157)	-7.9%	2,391,559	-12%	2,501,834
Grand Valley State University	3,955,954	3,254,837	(701,117)	-17.7%	3,437,064	-5%	4,583,236
Van Pool Transportation	-	-	-	0.0%	-		-
Township Services	187,853	176,648	(11,205)	-6.0%	205,401	-14%	185,918
Other	321,421	301,856	(19,565)	-6.1%	324,376	-7%	360,063
Subtotal Sale of Transportation Services	7,181,652	6,214,268	(967,384)	-13.5%	6,704,679	-7%	8,093,036
State Operating	14,143,871	13,590,530	(553,341)	-3.9%	12,894,420	5%	15,339,950
Property Taxes	20,307,226	21,146,800	839,574	4.1%	19,793,228	7%	22,061,749
Advertising & Miscellaneous	1,976,973	2,888,071	911,098	46.1%	2,680,695	8%	1,660,675
Subtotal Revenues and Operating Assistance	47,915,607	48,181,466	265,859	0.6%	46,467,912	4%	51,969,055
Grant Operating Revenue	-	-	-	0.0%	-		-
Unrestricted Net Reserves	-	-	-	0.0%	-		8,030,753
Total Revenues and Operating Assistance	<u>\$ 47,915,607</u>	<u>\$ 48,181,466</u>	<u>\$ 265,859</u>	<u>0.6%</u>	<u>\$ 46,467,912</u>	<u>4%</u>	<u>\$ 59,999,808</u>
Expenses							
Salaries and Wages							
Administrative	\$ 7,490,554	\$ 5,971,747	\$ (1,518,807)	-20.3%	\$ 5,688,756	5%	\$ 8,113,721
Operators	15,573,192	13,548,845	(2,024,347)	-13.0%	13,017,740	4%	16,870,956
Maintenance	3,580,935	3,120,132	(460,803)	-12.9%	2,523,419	24%	3,879,337
Subtotal Salaries and Wages	26,644,681	22,640,724	(4,003,957)	-15.0%	21,229,915	7%	28,864,014
Benefits	9,502,496	7,663,244	(1,839,252)	-19.4%	7,480,246	2%	10,431,981
Contractual Services	4,439,546	3,896,593	(542,953)	-12.2%	3,018,476	29%	5,538,372
Materials and Supplies				0.0%			-
Fuel and Lubricants	1,781,068	1,656,859	(124,209)	-7.0%	1,725,527	-4%	2,273,730
Other	2,196,232	2,254,030	57,798	2.6%	1,762,245	28%	2,672,063
Subtotal Materials and Supplies	3,977,300	3,910,890	(66,411)	-1.7%	3,487,772	12%	4,945,793
Utilities, Insurance, and Miscellaneous	4,495,668	3,946,468	(549,199)	-12.2%	4,300,636	-8%	5,967,010
Purchased Transportation	8,251,661	7,782,743	(468,918)	-5.7%	7,986,577	-3%	9,252,638
Expenses Before Capitalized Operating	57,311,352	49,840,662	(7,470,690)	-13.0%	47,503,621	5%	64,999,808
Capitalized Operating Expenses	(2,873,315)	(2,751,385)	121,931	-4.2%	(2,354,517)	17%	(5,000,000)
Total Operating Expenses	<u>\$ 54,438,037</u>	<u>\$ 47,089,278</u>	<u>\$ (7,348,759)</u>	<u>-13.5%</u>	<u>\$ 45,149,105</u>	<u>4%</u>	<u>\$ 59,999,808</u>
Net Surplus/(Deficit) before Net Reserves		\$ 1,092,188			\$ 1,318,808		
Net Surplus/(Deficit) after Net Reserves							

**Interurban Transit Partnership
Grant Revenues & Expenditures
Month Ended 08/31/26**

GL0376

Page 1

	Adopted Budget	Amended Budget	Month To Date	Year To Date	Balance	Percent Target 92%
<u>Grant Revenue</u>						
1. Federal Grant Assistance	19,310,779	24,013,096	740,463	19,093,606	4,919,490	80%
2. State Grant Assistance	4,827,695	6,003,274	185,116	4,773,402	1,229,872	80%
3. Transfer In - Operating Budget	0	0	0	0	0	100%
4. Use of Restricted Net Assets	0	0	0	0	0	100%
5. Other Local	0	0	0	0	0	100%
6. Total Grant Revenue	24,138,474	30,016,370	925,579	23,867,008	6,149,362	80%
<u>Labor</u>						
7. Administrative Salaries	40,000	38,900	1,129	14,523	24,377	37%
8. Driver Wages	0	0	0	0	0	100%
9. Temporary Wages	0	0	0	0	0	100%
10. Fringe Benefit Distribution	20,000	20,000	406	4,684	15,316	23%
11. Total Labor	60,000	58,900	1,535	19,207	39,693	33%
<u>Material & Supplies</u>						
12. Tires & Tubes	900,000	900,000	5,440	263,926	636,074	29%
13. Office Supplies	1,000	1,000	0	0	1,000	0%
14. Printing	1,000	4,100	0	0	4,100	0%
15. Total Material & Supplies	902,000	905,100	5,440	263,926	641,174	29%
<u>Purchased Transportation</u>						
16. Purchased Transportation	1,200,000	1,100,000	0	26,602	1,073,398	2%
17. Specialized Services	795,474	795,474	198,868	596,604	198,870	75%
18. Total Purchased Transportation	1,995,474	1,895,474	198,868	623,206	1,272,268	33%
<u>Other Expenses</u>						
19. Dues & Subscriptions	30,000	30,000	0	22,596	7,404	75%
20. Professional Development	30,000	28,000	755	1,866	26,134	7%
21. Miscellaneous	0	0	0	0	0	100%
22. Total Other Expenses	60,000	58,000	755	24,462	33,538	42%
<u>Leases</u>						
23. Office Lease	0	0	0	0	0	100%
24. Transit Center Lease	0	0	0	0	0	100%
25. Storage Space Lease	0	0	0	0	0	100%
26. Total Leases	0	0	0	0	0	100%
<u>Capital</u>						
27. Rolling Stock	10,463,411	14,063,417	0	13,219,476	843,941	94%
28. Facilities	1,208,000	4,339,000	56,193	4,231,533	107,467	98%
29. Equipment	938,843	938,843	0	133,378	805,465	14%
30. Other	4,053,116	3,300,006	284,166	2,539,642	760,364	77%
31. Total Capital	16,663,370	22,641,266	340,359	20,124,029	2,517,237	89%
32. Planning Services	457,630	457,630	484	60,794	396,836	13%
33. Capitalized Operating	4,000,000	4,000,000	378,138	2,751,384	1,248,616	69%
34. Total Expenditures	24,138,474	30,016,370	925,579	23,867,008	6,149,362	80%

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & TRAVEL REPORT
 ALL EMPLOYEES
 AUGUST 2026

AMOUNT	PURPOSE	EMPLOYEE (s)	LOCATION
280.00	MPTA Annual Meeting	S. Schipper	Crystal Mountain, MI
319.84	APTA Transform Expo	M. Wieringa	Chicago, IL
483.81	GSX Security Conference	M. Wieringa	Atlanta, GA
755.00	Mpact Transit	J. King	Toronto, Ontario
1,838.65			

*This total does not include incidental travel and meeting expenses such as mileage, parking, lunch meetings, etc.

Future Planning & Innovations Committee Members*Rick Baker**Andy Guy**Jack Hoffman (Chair)**Paul Troost***FUTURE PLANNING & INNOVATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**
Not approved by the Committee**Monday October 12, 2026 – 8:30 a.m.****Rapid Central Station Conference Room (250 Cesar E Chavez Avenue, SW)****ATTENDANCE:**Committee Members Present:

Andy Guy, Jack Hoffman

Committee Members Absent:

Rick Baker, Paul Troost

Rapid Attendees:

Josh Brink, Kris Heald, Jeffrey King, Deron Kippen, Nick Monoyios, Deb Prato, Andy Prokopy, Tim Roseboom, Steve Schipper, Mike Wieringa, Kevin Wisselink

Public Attendees:

Clover Brown (GVMC), Max Gilles (Mobile GR), Devin Norris

Mr. Hoffman called the meeting to order at 8:36 a.m.

1. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Devin Norris – A Better Transit System for Grand Rapids

For more than 30 years, one of the biggest problems with public transit in Grand Rapids has been that too many trips force riders to travel through downtown, whether downtown is their destination or not.

Routes 6 and 4, for example, reflect a network that has remained largely unchanged for 22 years. Current ridership numbers measure the system as it exists today, not the underlying demand for a better-connected transit network.

Every fare increases risks driving ridership down without addressing the fundamental problems. Raising fares does not fix an inefficient system. It makes public transportation less affordable without making it work better.

Proposal: Rebuild the Network Around Riders

Mr. Norris' plan is to redesign the system into a 25-route network consisting of 15 downtown routes and 10 cross-town and connector routes. The goal is to build the transit network from the platform up, based on the needs of riders, rather than designing it from the administrative office down.

Every route would connect major residential corridors directly to employment centers, including industrial facilities, distribution centers, retail destinations, medical facilities, professional offices, and government centers.

The objective is simple: replace forced downtown transfers with direct, one-seat rides wherever possible.

Riders should also have the freedom to spend their evenings downtown by choice, with a free-transfer connector available to help them get home. Transit should provide flexibility and convenience, not force people to take unnecessary trips downtown.

Making Better Use of Existing Resources

The cost of implementing this plan is one of its strongest advantages.

Based on his analysis, the redesigned network could operate using The Rapid's existing fleet of approximately 150 service buses, without requiring the purchase of additional buses to launch the full 25-route system. His plan estimates that approximately 35 to 40 buses could remain available as spares, creating opportunities for future frequency improvements.

The proposal is designed to make better use of existing resources, improve connections, and increase the value riders receive from every dollar spent on public transportation.

As part of this redesign, he proposes reducing the fare from the current \$1.75 per ride to \$1.50, with a longer-term goal of reducing it to \$1 per ride.

This is a plan to help The Rapid strengthen its service, improve affordability, and operate more efficiently over the long term.

Implementation Timeline

His proposed timeline is to begin implementation by November 2026, with a launch targeted for January or February 2027.

This would give riders an opportunity to experience a more functional transit network and see meaningful improvements before the November 2027 millage vote.

The principle is straightforward: deliver improvements first, demonstrate results, and then ask voters to support the system's future.

By showing residents what a better-connected network can accomplish, The Rapid can build greater public confidence in the value of its services and the investments needed to sustain them.

Mr. Norris has offered to Work with The Rapid

He noted that he is willing to work directly with the planning department to help implement this proposal. I understand the interlining structure I have designed, how the routes connect, and how the downtown lineups can be organized to improve efficiency and service.

He noted that he had already sent Mr. Monoyios his final thesis and complete proposal for consideration.

There are multiple areas of the existing system that need to be addressed. His goal has been to identify those weaknesses, understand how they affect riders, and develop a practical alternative that makes better use of the resources already available.

He did not simply identify what was broken. He developed a plan to rebuild it better.

2. MINUTES - June 8, 2026

As a quorum was not present, approval of June 8, 2026, meeting minutes will be deferred to the next Future Planning and Innovations Committee meeting, to be scheduled in 2027.

3. DISCUSSION

Mr. Hoffman noted he'd like to proceed with the discussion items on the agenda. He views these items as addressing our current, short-term planning needs. Mr. Guy, however, has been advocating for what he believes you described as a more strategic perspective, and he would like to explore that further.

Perhaps we can work through the agenda items first and then return to the broader strategic discussion. Mr. Hoffman is interested in hearing Mr. Guy's thoughts on how our short-term planning fits within the overall strategic vision, as he'd like to better understand his perspective.

a. Fall 2026 Service Overview, Mr. Nick Monoyios

Mr. Monoyios began his comments by outlining the agenda items, noting that Items 3A through 3F would be covered in a single presentation that addresses each topic in sequence. Mr. Max Gilles from Mobile GR would then present the Mobile GR Transit Access Overview under Item 3C. Items 3G and 3H would be presented verbally, followed by a brief recap from Mr. King, Mr. Brink, and Mr. Monoyios, who would share a few slides summarizing their key takeaways from the Impact conference in Toronto.

The presentation began with an overview of the current transit service implemented at the end of August, which would remain in effect through January 10. The discussion would then cover proposed service for the upcoming winter, key planning considerations, and potential summer 2027 service and beyond.

As part of the annual fall service adjustments, school-related services resumed, including increased frequency on the Laker Line, the return of off-campus shuttles, GRPS secondary peak trippers, GRCC service, the DeVos Campus shuttle, and the Bulldog Line. These services gradually increase transit availability to accommodate school schedules, with service levels reaching their peak again in the spring.

Several route adjustments were also highlighted. Route 1000, a seasonal summer route, was discontinued for the season, and its resources were reallocated to provide Sunday service on Route 12. Additional Saturday frequency was also added to Route 12 to improve service intervals.

On Route 15, a minor evening and Sunday adjustment eliminated the deviation through the KCTC facility, as there is limited activity at the location during those times. Instead, buses remain on Knapp Avenue and Leffingwell Avenue. This adjustment reduces travel time and supports improved reliability and customer service. Because Route 15 is interlined with Route 7, operates on a relatively tight schedule, and serves more wheelchair users than any other route, these time savings are particularly beneficial.

Mr. Monoyios then introduced Route 0, explaining its purpose and how it operates. Previously, certain trips at the beginning and end of the service day operated as deadhead trips, meaning buses traveled without passengers between the garage and the end of the route. Early-morning buses sometimes traveled directly to their starting points without operating along the regular route, while buses completing their final trips would travel directly back to the garage rather than continue into Central Station. These deadhead movements saved approximately \$200,000 to \$300,000 annually, as there was insufficient demand to justify operating them as regular revenue service.

However, customers began asking why they could not board these buses while they were already traveling to or from locations along the route. For example, employees starting early shifts wanted to use buses traveling from the garage to destinations such as Knapp's Corner Meijer. Similarly, passengers leaving Celebration Cinema wanted to board buses returning to the garage and travel downtown.

In response, the transit agency introduced Route 0 to make these trips available to passengers. Deadhead trips, including early-morning departures, trips during evening service reductions from 30 minutes to 60-minute frequencies, and the final trips of the day, are now designated as Route 0. Rather than operating with doors closed and lights off, these buses operate with their lights on, accept

fares, and provide express service between the garage and the end of the route. In the reverse direction, buses travel from the end of the line toward downtown.

This approach effectively extends the service span by approximately one hour at both the beginning and end of the service day, improving access and the overall customer experience. Ridership on Route 0 has been increasing since its introduction.

Mr. Monoyios also noted an additional financial benefit: the agency is converting existing deadhead miles into revenue miles without adding service miles. Because these buses were already traveling along these routes, making the trips available to passengers allows the agency to collect fares and report additional revenue miles toward its Federal Transit Administration Section 5307 formula funding.

He concluded by acknowledging that Route 0 represents a nontraditional approach to transit service delivery but emphasized its potential effectiveness. The agency will continue monitoring ridership, gathering customer feedback, and evaluating what is working well and what may need adjustment to support ongoing service improvements. He then invited questions from the group.

Mr. Hoffman stated that maintaining existing service does not mean simply allowing operations to continue without intervention. Rather, it requires active, proactive, and reactive efforts to ensure service remains effective.

Mr. Monoyios emphasized that the organization is continually looking for opportunities to refine and improve service, noting that this commitment to continuous improvement is part of its overall approach.

Mr. Guy asked whether this presented an opportunity that could be tracked and evaluated.

Mr. Monoyios also asked whether ridership trends were being monitored for consistency, noting that some trips appeared to have recurring ridership, particularly when passengers rely on specific trips to meet their work-related needs.

Mr. Roseboom confirmed that ridership was being observed. He explained that the service primarily operates during very early morning hours, around 5:00 to 5:45 a.m. or earlier, and late at night, around 10:30 to 11:00 p.m. or later. Despite these off-peak operating hours, the service is generating ridership, estimated at several dozen to approximately 100 trips per week. He emphasized that there is a clear demand for the service, which was one of the anticipated outcomes when it was introduced. However, given the early morning and late-night schedules, significant ridership volumes were not expected.

Mr. Monoyios noted that, now that the Early Childhood Center has opened and enrollment continues to grow, the team is monitoring enrollment levels and exploring opportunities to encourage transit use among families. While Ms. Prato may have more detailed enrollment information, the goal is to stay informed about enrollment trends and identify ways to optimize transit access through transportation demand management (TDM) strategies. This includes reviewing enrollment rosters and conducting outreach as needed to improve the transit experience for families traveling to and from the center.

b. Winter 2027 Service Planning, Mr. Nick Monoyios

Mr. Monoyios reviewed the general timeline for preparing winter service changes, a process that occurs three times annually. Schedules will be finalized by November 13. In the interim, the team is evaluating on-time performance, monitoring overall system health, identifying potential service adjustments, and completing run-cutting and roster development. The union will review the proposed changes, followed by operator selections toward the end of the calendar year. The revised service is scheduled to begin January 11. It was confirmed that January 11 aligns with payday and the start of the Grand Valley semester. Service performance will continue to be monitored through mid-March, when the evaluation process will begin again for the spring and summer service changes.

Mr. Monoyios also discussed the ongoing evaluation of transit service adjustments implemented for amphitheater event days. Supplemental schedules extended service on weekdays and weekends beyond 11:00 p.m. on event dates. The team is tracking ridership by route and hour to assess the impact of the extended service and distinguish amphitheater-related ridership from regular corridor activity, including passengers traveling to and from work. This analysis will help determine whether maintaining the extended service into the next calendar year is justified given the associated costs. Additional information will be available once the evaluation is complete.

Finally, Mr. Monoyios provided an update on transit access improvements near Amway Stadium. In coordination with Progressive and the City, a 9-by-36-foot space has been allocated at the southeast corner of the stadium along Mount Vernon Avenue for the installation of a transit shelter. The team is working with Mobile GR to review event traffic management plans and assess potential route adjustments to improve transit access to the downtown area. Options include Route 7, which currently operates along Mount Vernon Avenue, as well as Route 9, the DASH, and the Laker Line along Fulton Street. The team is evaluating these services collectively to identify opportunities to improve connectivity and accommodate event-related travel demand. Further updates on the proposed approach are anticipated early next year.

Ms. Prato asked Mr. Monoyios to provide an overview of the Replica data collected for the amphitheater, including the key findings, followed by Mr. Brink's analysis of the ticket sales data.

Mr. Monoyios explained that the city is working with Replica, a company that uses cell phone location data to analyze movement patterns. Replica has provided an initial report that is still being refined, with a final draft yet to be reviewed.

The report includes information on visitor origins, congestion on city streets, and travel patterns at different times of day. The city plans to share relevant findings with Mobile GR. The report also contains a wide range of additional metrics, including scatter plots, graphs, maps, and charts, which staff are continuing to review.

Mr. Monoyios noted that Mr. Roseboom and Mr. Brink are working directly with Replica to refine the data inputs and improve the accuracy of the results. Once finalized, the analysis will provide valuable insights to help the city evaluate the amphitheater's impact on traffic and visitor movement and identify potential improvements for next year.

Ms. Prato noted that MDOT is considering a two-year planning study for Wealthy Street, which is particularly significant given that Wealthy Street is the most heavily used exit.

Mr. Monoyios asked whether this referred to the exit most frequently used by transit riders and individuals traveling without automobiles, or whether it referred to overall vehicular traffic.

He noted that, as they would discuss later, it is important to consider how all these initiatives intersect and how the amphitheater may affect the Wealthy Street to US-131 modernization project. A downtown circulation study is also scheduled to begin, alongside DGRI's core priorities. With so many projects underway, participation in these efforts can help ensure effective coordination and integration.

These projects have broader implications for downtown mobility, particularly as other transformational developments, such as the soccer stadium, move forward. Maintaining flexibility and adapting to the impacts of these evolving initiatives will remain a guiding principle.

The second item Ms. Prato asked Mr. Monoyios to address was ticket sales by ZIP code for the amphitheater. Mr. Brink summarized the findings, noting that approximately 43% of ticket sales came from locations within the United States but outside Michigan. Approximately 19% of ticket sales

originated within the transit service area, while 36% came from locations within Michigan but outside the service area.

These findings indicate that slightly more than half of ticket sales originated within Michigan, but only about 20% came from within the transit service area. This geographic distribution may help explain some of the travel patterns observed on amphitheater event nights.

Mr. Monoyios presented a heat map and noted that Mr. Brink had prepared a one-page overview, which he summarized verbally. The map showed ticket sales recorded in the system across the continental United States, particularly in Michigan and Chicago. Mr. Brink added that, although the route lines were difficult to see due to their small size, the map highlighted the areas with the highest concentration of activity. He also noted that ticket sales were widely distributed across the United States, which was somewhat surprising.

Mr. Hoffman inquired whether approximately 50% of ticket sales at the amphitheater were attributed to purchasers from outside the state.

Mr. Brink confirmed that approximately 43% of ticket sales were associated with out-of-state purchasers. He clarified that the data provided was general in nature and did not indicate whether tickets may have been purchased in bulk by companies or other entities using out-of-state ZIP codes.

Mr. Monoyios added that the data reflected the location of ticket purchases rather than necessarily indicating where ticket holders traveled from to attend the event. He noted that the heat map showed concentrations of ticket purchases in areas such as Los Angeles and New York City, but those purchases did not necessarily mean that individuals traveled directly from those cities to attend the show. He explained that the purchases could have been made through ticket brokers, ticketing agencies, or other third-party vendors. He concluded that while the data provided a useful starting point, they did not tell the complete story.

c. Mobile GR Transit Access Overview, Mr. Max Gilles -Mobile GR

Max Gilles introduced himself as the Strategic Initiatives Manager for the Mobile GR department at the City of Grand Rapids. He leads a team focused on policy development, strategic planning, community engagement, and project management.

They recently conducted an exciting community engagement exercise, and Ms. Prato invited him to share some of the findings with you today.

Background and Purpose

For the past several years, Mobile GR has budgeted approximately \$2 million to \$3 million annually to support transit in our community. Historically, much of that investment has gone toward the DASH shuttle service.

We wanted to reconnect with the community and take a closer look at whether that remained the right priority for those funds, or whether there were other ways the city could better support transit access for residents.

Our goal was to facilitate meaningful, in-depth conversations with community members and better understand their priorities. Rather than simply distributing a questionnaire, we wanted to create a focus group-style experience that would allow people to discuss their needs, share their perspectives, and help us identify the most important areas for investment.

We brought in approximately eight to ten trained community engagement professionals from various city departments to support each session. This allowed us to have more personal, detailed conversations with participants and gather a deeper understanding of their experiences.

Community Engagement Sessions

We held one engagement session in each of the city's three wards.

Ward 1: 34 attendees

Ward 2: 13 attendees

Ward 3: 16 attendees

The Ward 1 session was held at the downtown public library, which provided a relatively central and accessible location for participants.

During each session, we presented several potential investment options and invited community members to discuss their priorities. Staff members, including myself, rotated throughout the room to facilitate conversations and hear directly from participants about how the city—and Mobile GR specifically—could better support our transit system.

Mr. Gilles emphasized that they were very transparent with participants about where they are in this process. This was an early and preliminary exercise, and they were asking the community to help them think through potential directions, not to vote on a final decision.

Each option would require additional work, whether that involved coordinating with external partners like The Rapid, assessing costs, or securing budget approval through the City Commission. We wanted participants to understand those limitations while still giving them a meaningful opportunity to shape our priorities.

The Six Investment Options

We asked participants to consider six potential approaches to transit investment.

The first three options focused on affordability:

Reducing or eliminating fares for students and qualifying residents participating in economic assistance programs.

Reducing or covering the cost of GO!Bus trips.

Partnering with employers, schools, housing advocates, and other community organizations to distribute free or discounted transit passes.

The fourth option focused on service frequency: Increasing evening and weekend service on select routes. Given our available budget, we were clear that this would need to be targeted rather than applied across the entire network.

The fifth option focused on route geography: Supporting pilot routes that could improve crosstown connectivity and complement The Rapid's existing network.

The sixth option was to maintain our current approach: Continuing to prioritize the DASH downtown shuttle as the primary focus of the city's transit investment.

Again, these were preliminary options intended to help us understand which elements of transit service mattered most to residents and how we might prioritize limited funding.

What We Heard: Community Priorities

We organized the results by looking at the options that received the highest first-, second-, and third-place rankings.

The leading option was increasing evening and weekend service, which received:

25 first-place votes

12 second-place votes

8 third-place votes

That gave it a total of 45 top three rankings.

The second-highest priority was supporting crosstown routes, followed by maintaining the DASH shuttle.

Those results were interesting, but the rankings alone don't tell the whole story. When we reviewed our discussion notes and other participant feedback, we saw considerable support for finding a balance between improving service across the city and maintaining the benefits people currently receive from DASH.

One of his biggest takeaways was that he had expected affordability to emerge as one of the strongest concerns. However, none of the three fare-related options made the top three.

That doesn't mean affordability isn't important. Rather, it showed us that participants were also placing significant value on where and when transit service is available.

Key Themes from the Conversations

Beyond the rankings, we identified several recurring themes in our discussions.

First, frequency matters. Participants emphasized the importance of having transit service that runs often enough to be practical and dependable. This emerged as a major priority when people discussed where the city could make the greatest difference through its funding.

Second, evening and weekend access is important. This was consistent with strong support for increasing service during those periods. Participants highlighted the need for transit options that better accommodate people's schedules beyond traditional weekday hours.

Third, there is strong support for DASH. People clearly value the downtown shuttle and the role it plays for those who live, work, and visit downtown. However, much of the feedback focused on restoring DASH's previous service area.

We explained that the changes to DASH were not the result of a reduction in the city's funding commitment. Instead, increasing operating costs meant that maintaining or expanding the previous service area would require additional resources that we do not currently have available.

Finally, we heard that many of the things people value about DASH could potentially be preserved while distributing some of our investment more broadly across the city's transit network.

That last point is especially important. It suggests that we may not have to choose between maintaining a valuable downtown service and investing in transit improvements that benefit other parts of Grand Rapids.

Next Steps

Based on these findings, we're moving forward with three main areas of exploration.

First, our transportation planners are identifying potential routes where Mobile GR funding could help increase evening and weekend service along The Rapid's existing network.

Second, we're looking at potential crosstown routes that could be tested through pilot programs to improve connectivity for residents traveling between different parts of the city.

Third, we're exploring how we can preserve the elements of DASH that community members value while balancing that investment with opportunities to improve service elsewhere.

We'll be bringing these concepts to The Rapid to discuss feasibility and develop preliminary cost estimates. That work will help us understand which options are practical, what they would cost, and whether we could combine multiple improvements within our available budget.

From there, our goal is to bring a set of options to Mobile GR leadership and the City Commission for consideration.

We're still early in the process, and there is a great deal of work ahead. We need to understand the costs, determine what can realistically be accomplished, and identify the right combination of investments.

But we're excited to have a clearer sense of where the community would like us to focus.

Closing Thoughts

What excites me most about this work is the opportunity to think differently about how we support transit across Grand Rapids.

For many years, DASH has had a strong, positive impact on people who live, work, and visit downtown. That's something we recognize and want to preserve.

At the same time, I've worked in community engagement for the City of Grand Rapids for nearly ten years. During that time, I've often heard residents in other parts of the city ask, "Where is our DASH trial? We'd like to see investment in our community, too."

Those conversations have stayed with me. They reflect a broader question about how we can ensure that our transit investments serve residents throughout the city.

The Rapid's network serves Grand Rapids as well as neighboring communities. By working together, we have an opportunity to explore how city funding could support improvements that benefit a wider range of Grand Rapids residents, not just those traveling within the downtown area.

This engagement process was an important first step toward identifying those needs and determining how we can respond to them.

He noted he is grateful to everyone who participated and shared their perspectives. We're still in the early stages, and we know there is more engagement and planning. But we've gained valuable insight into what residents want from their transit system and where they believe the city can make a meaningful difference.

Mr. Hoffman thanked Mr. Gilles for his presentation and asked whether the underlying concept of the financing was that parking is now part of the broader mobility mission.

Mr. Gilles explained that Mobile GR has two primary funds: the traffic and safety fund, which was unrelated to the discussion, and the parking fund, which receives revenue from parking fees. As with other enterprise funds, parking revenues must be used for purposes that benefit the system generating the revenue. He explained that Mobile GR's position is that investments in transit support the City of Grand Rapids' parking network by connecting parking facilities to additional destinations and increasing the value and usefulness of the parking system. He noted that all city parking lots and facilities are connected to transit, making connectivity investments essential. Accordingly, the proposed investments would be funded through the parking fund because they support the overall parking system.

Mr. Hoffman agreed with the rationale but asked about the financial performance of parking operations, specifically whether revenues were sufficient to cover expenses or whether the system was losing money.

Mr. Gilles explained that, over the past decade, operating costs have increased faster than revenues. Although the parking system was not yet operating at a deficit, it was moving closer to a point where revenues would no longer fully cover operating costs. Based on the public budget proposals

presented the previous year, approximately 91% of operating costs were covered by revenues, including the investments under discussion.

He noted that increased activity associated with the amphitheater and other venues generated additional visitors but also required more staffing and maintenance. In particular, maintenance costs for elevators had nearly doubled over the previous four to five years. Mr. Gilles added that significant increases in operating expenses, such as those associated with DASH service, could make it difficult to maintain existing service levels. In such cases, Mobile GR must consider alternative uses of funds that offer a better return on investment.

Mr. Hoffman asked whether the city was constructing additional parking facilities.

Mr. Gilles responded that, to his knowledge, the city was not building any new parking facilities. The costs discussed were associated with maintaining existing operations and infrastructure.

Mr. Hoffman observed that the parking structures were aging and likely required increased maintenance.

Mr. Gilles agreed and noted that, even during periods of peak demand, parking capacity remained sufficient. He explained that when major venues and entertainment destinations—including the amphitheater, the arena, DeVos Place, Twenty Monroe, Intersection, and Pyramid Scheme—held sold-out events, there were approximately two occasions when all events occurred simultaneously. Even under those circumstances, only three of the City's nine parking ramps were filled.

He added that average parking occupancy throughout the summer had not exceeded 64% at any point, including around the Fourth of July. Based on these utilization levels, Mr. Gilles concluded that the City had sufficient parking capacity and that constructing additional parking facilities was unnecessary.

Mr. Guy commented that he appreciates the transition, noting that you have built the mobile GR department and began thinking about transportation in a more integrated way. He also expressed appreciation for the community engagement sessions, specifically mentioning the conversation at the Center for Community Transformation and commending the approach taken.

He then asked for clarification regarding the proposal to increase service frequency on select routes, specifically whether community feedback identified particular routes or priority areas.

Mr. Gilles explained that during anecdotal conversations, when individuals selected increased frequency as a priority, staff asked which routes they would like to see improved. Many responses reflected personal needs, with residents naturally identifying routes along the roads they use most frequently. However, staff also took a broader approach.

Transportation planners have been evaluating which routes would have the greatest overall impact for Grand Rapidsians. This week, they plan to share that data with The Rapid to help inform the prioritization process.

Mr. Gilles emphasized that, given budget constraints, the goal would likely be to increase frequency on approximately three or four select routes rather than expand service across a large number of routes. He noted that community members were enthusiastic about the possibility of improving frequency on three or four routes that would serve the city's core geographic areas.

Mr. Guy: You mentioned building on what DASH does well. Could you elaborate on what people perceive DASH as doing well?

Mr. Gilles: This is one of the things I appreciate most about DASH. I'm a huge fan of the service, and it has been a significant part of my role in the City for a long time. However, one of the challenges is

that DASH tries to accomplish everything. It serves residents early in the morning, commuters throughout the day, and eventgoers in the evening. While that broad level of service is valuable, it also amplifies the impact of cost increases because of the scope and intensity of the service being provided.

As part of this process, we conducted a pilot survey focused on the route being piloted. We've been talking with community members to better understand the core elements of the service they need most. The survey effort is just wrapping up, so we're still analyzing the data, and I don't want to get too far ahead of the findings.

However, the initial feedback suggests that people primarily use DASH at specific times to commute to and from work in the downtown core. Others rely on it for particular destinations and activities in the evenings after work.

This points to the need for a more nuanced approach to service planning. We should look more closely at timing, geographic coverage, and frequency rather than providing the same frequency across the same broad service area throughout an extended period. That approach presents some challenges in coordinating with The Rapid, so we'll need to explore what options are feasible.

Ultimately, we want to recognize that DASH is an important community service while identifying which aspects are most valuable to residents and focusing our resources on those needs. That's what the early data appears to indicate, although we need to complete the analysis before drawing firm conclusions.

Mr. Guy: I appreciate your answer. For those of us who have been part of these discussions for years, the question of what DASH is and whom it serves has been around for nearly 20 years.

As we've discussed the recent efforts to revamp the service, one question that continues to come to mind is why people need DASH when The Rapid already provides service within the areas covered by some of the previous DASH routes. What needs are those Rapid routes not meeting? Alternatively, what could The Rapid do differently in those areas to better address residents' transportation needs?

Perhaps the solution is as straightforward as improving communication and public education about stop locations, service frequency, and available routes. As someone who frequently walks around the district and lives just outside downtown, I see a considerable amount of transit service in the area that could potentially meet some of the needs people associate with DASH.

Mr. Gilles: That's one reason focus group discussions are so valuable. We spoke with several people who were frustrated by the reduction in DASH's geographic coverage under the pilot route. After hearing their concerns, we pointed out that The Rapid already operates routes in their area and asked what changes might make those services more appealing. Would free fares or increased frequency make a difference?

Many people initially said they didn't want to use The Rapid. When we explored the reasons, we found that cost was not necessarily the primary concern. Most people said they didn't mind paying a fare. Some suggested that frequency might be a factor, but the common response was that they simply wanted DASH back.

This is an instructive example of something I've encountered in focus groups on other topics, including parking: resistance to change and preconceived perceptions about existing services can strongly influence people's preferences.

These conversations help us understand the underlying issues before pursuing solutions. Without that understanding, we risk trying to address individual concerns in ways that may not be feasible or appropriate.

What we've found so far is that some of the requests for DASH involve service characteristics that we will not be able to replicate. In some cases, the expectation is essentially for DASH to compete directly with The Rapid. We've been clear with community members that this is not our objective. Creating a service that offers something better than The Rapid across the same areas is neither strategically desirable nor, in my view, an appropriate use of public funds.

That's why these conversations are so important. While some community members strongly prefer the return of the previous DASH service, we need to be clear about what the city is trying to accomplish. Our goal is to identify options that improve, complement, and support existing transit services rather than duplicate or compete with them.

d. Future Planning – Summer 2028+, Mr. Nick Monoyios

Mr. Monoyios noted that the survey results continue to validate the findings discussed by Mr. Gilles. Although its sample size is considerably smaller, The Rapid's 1,100-plus surveys have consistently shown the same results. Improving service frequency was identified as the top priority, followed by improvements to evening and weekend service.

He then discussed the summer service period, which will run from May through the end of August 2027. He emphasized the importance of remaining flexible and responsive as planning continues, noting that the outcomes cannot yet be determined. By participating in related initiatives and coordinating their integration, The Rapid can build greater confidence in developing service plans that best meet the needs of the community.

Regarding the proposed cross-town and neighborhood connector options, Mr. Monoyios explained that staff have begun analyzing ridership data and transfer patterns to identify how customers travel between routes. These analyses will help establish a clearer picture of travel patterns and determine where demand for connections is greatest. While crosstown service is a priority, its effectiveness depends on sufficient service frequency. Several factors must therefore be considered when identifying the most effective crosstown and neighborhood connections.

He highlighted several ongoing planning initiatives that will inform this work, including the City of Grand Rapids' Mobile GR mobility blueprint, Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.'s updated downtown master plan, and the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council's downtown circulation study. These efforts will help assess local and regional transportation needs, including access to and from downtown, and will inform decisions about crosstown and neighborhood connections.

He also noted that the transportation demand study is underway, including its communications component, along with the zoning ordinance update. Mr. Monoyios emphasized that land use is one of the most effective tools for improving transit and that zoning decisions will play an important role in supporting future service improvements.

e. Wealthy/US-131 Modernization Project, Ms. Deb Prato

Finally, he provided an update on the Wealthy Street and US-131 modernization project, noting that a kickoff meeting had taken place the previous week. Building on the earlier Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study for the US-131 corridor, the project will examine potential improvements to the area extending south from the S-curve.

Mr. Monoyios explained that one key consideration is whether Wealthy Street should remain at grade or be reconstructed as an overpass. The project will also evaluate widening US-131, which could have significant implications for The Rapid's Century Avenue facility, the Amtrak lot, and other nearby real estate interests.

The project is currently reviewing existing conditions and establishing its purpose and need. Alternatives are expected to be evaluated in early 2027, with a preferred alternative anticipated by

summer 2027. Environmental review is expected to begin after the preferred alternative is selected and continue into the latter half of 2028, followed by further work to determine funding and next steps.

Mr. Monoyios emphasized the importance of maintaining flexibility and participating in these initiatives to ensure The Rapid's interests are considered throughout the planning process. He also noted that the millage campaign and associated communications strategy were scheduled to launch that week. Coordinating these efforts will be essential to ensuring that the various initiatives advance in a cohesive and strategic manner.

He invited questions before turning the meeting over to Tim for a brief update on the status of Title VI, which would be presented at an upcoming board meeting.

Mr. Guy asked whether The Rapid had established a preferred alternative for the Wealthy Street project.

Mr. Monoyios responded that it was too early to identify a preferred alternative. Given the significant potential real estate implications for The Rapid, he recommended continuing to participate in the process while remaining pragmatic and objective in evaluating the benefits and trade-offs of each option.

Ms. Prato added that the project could also provide substantial benefits by improving access to and from the area.

Mr. Monoyios stated that the kickoff for this initiative took place just last week and provided a high-level overview of the current status.

Mr. Hoffman asked whether there was an upcoming meeting regarding the Grand Rapids Zoning Ordinance project.

Mr. Monoyios explained that it had been some time since the last meeting and that approximately another year remained in the process. He offered to follow up on the project's status but noted that there were no substantive updates to share at this time. He added that the City's master planning process had reinforced the importance of recognizing transit as a more effective and valuable tool moving forward. Although the specific language and implementation details had yet to be determined, he believed the overall direction aligned with the interests of the transit community.

Ms. Prato added that, regarding road widening, she would prefer an approach similar to Ann Arbor's in 2024, when the city pushed back on road-widening plans to advocate for greater investment in transit rather than widening US-131.

Mr. Guy explained that this was partly why he had asked about the agency's position. He encouraged the agency to develop a preferred alternative that reflected its interests in real estate holdings and transit operations. Drawing on past experiences with MDOT in Grand Rapids, he emphasized the importance of establishing and advocating for a clear position. Otherwise, agencies and organizations risk having decisions made for them rather than helping shape the outcome. He encouraged the agency to clarify its preferred direction regarding service, real estate, and its broader interests.

f. Title VI Plan Review, Mr. Tim Roseboom

Mr. Roseboom gave a quick verbal update for Title VI Plan Review.

Title VI derives from the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and is intended to ensure nondiscrimination in service delivery. It covers several areas, including facility siting, transit service delivery (such as route locations and frequency), and the availability of translation services for individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP). It also addresses fares.

As noted on the slide, this plan is presented to the Board every three years. The current plan expires in January 2027, so we are working backward from that deadline to ensure it is brought before the Board in January. The Board must certify that the plan is valid before it is submitted to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for review.

Our goal is to bring the plan to the Board in January. Following Board approval, the CEO will sign the plan and all accompanying attachments and certifications before the package is submitted to the FTA. The FTA's review typically takes approximately one month.

Mr. Hoffman noted that no major changes have been made in the past three years, so he does not anticipate significant differences.

Mr. Roseboom agreed, adding that Route 34 was introduced during this period and therefore requires a Title VI review. He also noted that the fare-capping initiative followed Title VI procedures, including a disparate impact and disparate burden analysis.

Regarding major facilities projects, Mr. Roseboom identified Century as the only project potentially involving new construction, as the other projects fell within the previous Title VI review period.

Additionally, the Planning Department received two Title VI complaints and is responsible for investigating them. Each complaint must be documented, along with the department's response and any actions taken.

g. APTA Funding Campaign, Ms. Deb Prato

Ms. Prato provided a brief update on federal transit funding, noting that the continuing resolution would result in an approximately 20% reduction in transit appropriations and an estimated 81% reduction in passenger rail funding. She emphasized that these are federal funding considerations. The continuing resolution is set to expire on December 11, 2026, following the midterm elections, and the ultimate impact remains uncertain.

In response to Mr. Hoffman's question regarding the general reduction in federal funding, Ms. Prato confirmed an estimated 20% reduction, or approximately \$4.2 billion. When asked whether this reduction would be reflected in the capital fund, Ms. Prato explained that the impact could affect either capital or discretionary funding. She noted that the funding category under discussion was Section 5307 and that the situation remains a "wait and see" matter.

h. APTA TRANSform Recap, Ms. Deb Prato

Ms. Prato then provided an update on the APTA Transform conference. This year's event included an exposition featuring transit buses, rail vehicles, new equipment, and intelligent transportation information systems. Mr. Clapp, Mr. Wisselink, Mr. Schipper, Mr. Roseboom, Mr. Lockwood, Mr. Kludy, and Mr. Wieringa attended, demonstrating the breadth of technologies and innovations represented on the exhibit floor.

She noted that many conference presentations tend to revisit previously covered topics. However, APTA will host another transit ballot initiative conference in December in Nashville, which may be worth attending. The conference is expected to examine a reworked campaign following an initial unsuccessful effort. The campaign branded "Choose How You Move," took a broader approach by incorporating sidewalks, complete streets, lighting, safety, and transit into a single millage initiative rather than focusing exclusively on transit. Ms. Prato emphasized that there are valuable lessons to learn from this approach.

i. MPact Recap, Mr. Josh Brink and Mr. Jeffrey King

Mr. Brink shared highlights from the MPact conference, formerly known as Rail~Volution, which he and Mr. King attended in Toronto in September 2026. The conference provided an opportunity to

explore innovative approaches to transit-oriented development, urban planning, and public transportation strategies from across North America.

Mr. Brink began by highlighting Toronto's development patterns and the relationship between transit infrastructure and neighborhood density. Comparing images of Toronto's skyline from 2000 and 2014, he demonstrated how transit lines have helped shape the city's growth. Toronto provided a compelling example of how transit investment can support increased housing development and help address housing shortages.

A major highlight of the conference was its emphasis on tours, using the city itself as a classroom. Participants observed successful examples of urban development that integrated streetcars, bicycles, pedestrians, and automobiles through complete streets. They also examined less successful, car-oriented development patterns from the 1960s and 1970s. Although Toronto operates on a much larger scale than Grand Rapids, Mr. Brink noted that its neighborhood-level development offers valuable lessons for the community.

One particularly compelling example featured higher-density housing integrated into an established neighborhood. Developed in collaboration with the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), the project was located near a subway line and demonstrated how density can complement existing neighborhood character while supporting transit use. Mr. Brink emphasized that this type of development does not have to detract from a neighborhood's identity and can instead contribute to its vibrancy.

Mr. Brink also discussed several educational sessions he attended. One focused on the fiscal challenges facing transit agencies across North America, including the potential for funding reductions to create a downward spiral in service and ridership. The session explored strategies agencies are using to address fiscal challenges and maintain sustainable transit operations. He highlighted regional transit restructuring in the Chicago area as an example of efforts to address these challenges through organizational changes and coordination among transit providers.

Another session focused on wayfinding and the importance of creating a seamless passenger experience throughout an entire trip, from the starting point to the final destination. Mr. Brink noted how TTC incorporates its longstanding branding and historical identity into the transportation experience, demonstrating how established traditions can strengthen a transit system's identity and improve customer experience.

A final development example featured the redevelopment of a strip mall along Toronto's Line 6 light rail corridor. The project included high-density development and a community center integrated into the site, creating a more vibrant, walkable environment. Mr. Brink noted that a similar approach could be envisioned along commercial corridors in the Grand Rapids area, such as 28th Street, where transit infrastructure could help support more connected and attractive community spaces.

Mr. Brink concluded by thanking the administration and the Board for supporting the opportunity to attend the conference. He emphasized the value of learning from successful and unsuccessful examples across North America and bringing those insights back to Grand Rapids to inform future transit planning, development, and policy decisions. He then invited Mr. Jeffrey King to share his additional takeaways from the conference.

Mr. King noted as Mr. Brink mentioned, there's a lot of excitement around attending this particular conference. This was my third time attending, and it really is the largest gathering of transit, housing, and urban planning professionals—people who are passionate about these topics and spend five straight days sharing ideas and learning from one another.

There are always great learning opportunities, particularly around transit-oriented development (TOD) and how a healthy built environment supports and strengthens transit. This year, I also had a great opportunity to connect with transit agencies from across the country that have either recently

completed successful transit ballot initiatives or are preparing for upcoming efforts. There were some valuable lessons learned and insights shared through those conversations as well.

4. ADJOURNMENT

This meeting was adjourned at 9:45 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for to be determined 2027.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Kris Heald", is positioned above a horizontal line.

Kris Heald, Board Secretary