



Interurban Transit Partnership

Future Planning & Innovations Committee Members

Rick Baker

Andy Guy

Jack Hoffman (Chair)

Paul Troost

FUTURE PLANNING & INNOVATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, October 12, 2026 – 8:30 a.m.

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

AGENDA

	<u>PRESENTER</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
1. PUBLIC COMMENT		
2. MINUTES REVIEW – June 8, 2026	Jack Hoffman	Review
3. DISCUSSION		
a. Fall 2026 Service Overview	Nick Monoyios	Discussion
b. Winter 2027 Service Planning	Nick Monoyios	Discussion
c. Mobile GR Transit Access Overview	Max Gilles – Mobile GR	Discussion
d. Future Planning – Summer 2028+	Nick Monoyios	Discussion
e. Wealthy/US-131 Modernization Project	Deb Prato	Discussion
f. Title VI Plan Review	Tim Roseboom	Discussion
g. APTA Funding Campaign	Deb Prato	Discussion
h. APTA TRANSform Recap	Deb Prato	Discussion
i. MPact Recap	Josh Brink / JeffreyKing	Discussion

4. ADJOURNMENT

Next meeting: TBD, 2027

Future Planning & Innovations Committee Members*Rick Baker**Andy Guy**Jack Hoffman (Chair)**Paul Troost***FUTURE PLANNING & INNOVATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES****Monday, June 8, 2026 – 8:30 a.m.****Rapid Board Room (300 Ellsworth Avenue, SW)****ATTENDANCE:****Committee Members Present:**

Rick Baker, Andy Guy, Jack Hoffman

Committee Members Absent:

Paul Troost

Rapid Attendees:

Josh Brink, Kris Heald, Linda Medina, Nick Monoyios, Deb Prato, Andy Prokopy, Steve Schipper, Tim Roseboom, Kevin Wisselink

Public Attendees:

Dan Miller, Kate Miller

Mr. Hoffman called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

1. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Dan Miller, representing Together West Michigan (TWM), a non-Partisan faith-based, citizen-led organization focused on leadership development, shared the organization's efforts to make the Grand Rapids/Kent County area more affordable and livable. He highlighted priorities including childcare, housing, and transportation. Speaking as a member of TWM's transportation subcommittee, he said the organization is gathering ideas from community meetings while also offering recommendations. Suggestions included creating family transit passes to simplify fare payment for parents traveling with children, improving transit connections to downtown Grand Rapids, employment centers, and destinations such as Meijer, and adding under-seat storage or netting to better accommodate grocery bags. Mr. Miller also noted that TWM plans to meet with other local committees and engage elected officials to gather additional input and support.

Mr. Hoffman thanked Mr. Miller for his comments.

2. MINUTES REVIEW – February 9, 2026

Mr. Hoffman entertained a motion to approve the meeting minutes from February 9, 2026. No objections, minutes stand as submitted.

3. DISCUSSION**a. Website Update, Mr. Andy Prokopy**

Mr. Prokopy presented an overview of the agency's newly redesigned website. He explained that while minor updates had been made over the past 20 years, the site's overall design, layout, navigation, and content management system had become outdated and difficult to maintain. Following a competitive bidding process, the website redesign project was awarded to Boston Digital, which was later acquired by Mighty Union, the firm now completing the project.

The redesign focused on improving user navigation, accessibility, mobility responsiveness, real-time information, interactive tools, and overall branding. While the previous website scored well in accessibility and branding, it fell below current standards in navigation, mobile optimization, and real-time functionality.

Key improvements included a modernized design, enhanced accessibility features, better mobile performance, stronger visual branding, and preservation of the old website to meet Federal Transit Administration (FTA) historical record requirements.

Mr. Prokopy compared the old and new websites, noting that the new site had a soft launch two weeks ago. Although a few features are still being finalized, approximately 99% of the site is functioning as expected. EH described the new website as cleaner, easier to navigate, and more user-friendly, and encouraged committee members to explore the site and provide feedback.

In response to a question from Mr. Baker, Mr. Prokopy confirmed that registered users can reload their Wave Card online.

b. Planning Overview

- **Previous Planning Efforts**

Mr. Monoyios reviewed the agency's planning process, beginning with the 2018 Align Study. Originally intended to identify a third BRT corridor, the study found that no corridor justified additional BRT service. That finding helped shape subsequent planning efforts, including the COA (2021), Division United, the Zero-Emission Bus Plan, and the Climate Action Plan. Together, these initiatives informed the Transit Master Plan (TMP), completed in early 2025. Looking ahead, the agency will focus on short-term (0-5 years), mid-term (5-10 years), and long-term (10+ years) priorities, using fiscal sustainability as the foundation for determining future transit improvements.

- **Summer 2026 Service**

For Summer 2026 service, Mr. Monoyios presented a system map with all transit routes and a frequency table. A new weekend-only Route 100 was introduced, operating on Saturdays and Sundays, serving the eastern portion of Route 12 into Millennium Park.

- **Evaluating Data & Analyzing Trends**

The team continuously analyzes multiple data sources to improve transit planning, scheduling, and service delivery. They use Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) data to identify job location density and evaluate whether transit service adequately connects riders to employment centers. OptiBus scheduling software is used to create schedules, assign runs, and develop operator rosters.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) provide heat maps of ridership, showing where passengers travel and the volume of riders, while Replica uses anonymized cell phone data to analyze workforce density, population movement, and travel origins and destinations.

Technology enhancements continue through INIT, including Wave Card tap-and-transfer data that improves rider information, and Avail Technologies, which supports operations efficiency, customer-facing display, vehicle incident integration, National Transit Database (NTD) reporting, and more accurate Automatic Passenger Counter (APC) data.

Performance benchmarking shows that Grand Rapids Transit operates with one of the lowest operating costs among its peers while maintaining a lean organization and strategically allocating resources where they are needed most.

- Fall 2026 Service

Mr. Monoyios reviewed the three service periods; winter, spring, and fall, and emphasized that fall routes and schedules must be finalized by July 4. With the return of school service in the fall, adjustments may be needed due to changes affecting the new daycare, and layover times will be monitored accordingly. He also stressed a “back to the basics” approach, focusing on continuous improvement of internal processes across all departments.

Mr. Baker asked whether AI tools are being used to assist the team. Mr. Monoyios said the team has been experimenting with AI and regularly shares ideas with the finance team. They have tested AI by uploading spreadsheets with known answers and found that it produces the correct results only about half the time. Despite these limitations, AI has been useful for developing macros to analyze data and for researching practices at agencies across the country to gain insights and improve understanding.

Mr. Hoffman responded to Mr. Guy’s question about the organization’s strategic plan and whether its primary goal is simply to survive. He explained that he once saw Governor Whitmer’s road funding initiative as an opportunity for broader transportation funding reform, but while it benefited truckers and rural counties, it did little for cities and public transit. He emphasized that transportation funding remains highly uncertain and that current state funding falls short of meeting needs.

Mr. Hoffman noted that higher-density cities are more economically productive, environmentally sustainable, and better aligned with goals such as affordable housing. Given the uncertainty surrounding future transportation funding and fossil fuels, he believes the organization’s priority should be maintaining its strength and readiness so it can capitalize on future funding opportunities.

He pointed to data from Mr. John Helmholtz showing that The Rapid has a strong reputation in the community, with even non-riders recognizing it as a well-managed organization. He believes this positions the agency to make a strong case for additional local funding when the opportunity arises. In the near term, his focus is on maintaining a healthy organization and securing approval of a millage.

Addressing comments about expanding community engagement, Mr. Hoffman said the organization has already made significant efforts involving the community. While public input is important, he argued that transit professionals have a deeper understanding of what works because of their expertise and experience. He concluded by observing that many voters want high-quality public services but are reluctant to pay for them.

Mr. Guy said this is a dynamic time for the organization and emphasized the importance of maintaining a healthy, sustainable transit system. He explained that the board’s primary role is to provide long-term policy direction and strategic guidance, while staff are responsible for day-to-day operations. He noted that the Transit Master Plan (TMP) has not yet been adopted, meaning the board has not formally established long-term, community-informed guidance for the organization.

Mr. Guy also questioned the continued relevance of the Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA), noting that it was completed during the COVID-19 pandemic when travel patterns and ridership were significantly disrupted. He asked whether its findings and recommendations still reflect current conditions.

Finally, he expressed concern about the budget guidelines, particularly the goal of both increasing service frequency and expanding service hours. He noted that limited resources require tradeoffs, as improving frequency in one area can reduce service coverage elsewhere. He said he does not believe the board has provided sufficient high-level strategic direction to guide those decisions and would like clearer policy guidance to ensure operational choices support the organization’s long-term goals rather than focusing solely on the day-to-day management.

Mr. Hoffman believes that widespread reliance on motor vehicles has disrupted the natural environment. He sees a denser, greener future for West Michigan as both possible and necessary, driven in part by the rising cost of living in surrounding townships, which he believes will encourage changes in how communities develop.

Mr. Baker said the biggest challenge to increasing transit use is the area's automobile-centric culture, particularly in Michigan. He noted that public reaction to the new Amphitheatre showed many people were unwilling to walk even two blocks. While he supports maintaining a healthy, growth-oriented organization, he questioned whether the available data can be used not only to evaluate current service but also to predict how route changes such as those considered in the BRT study could increase ridership.

Mr. Monoyios said the main challenge is encouraging a cultural shift toward using different transportation modes, rather than expanding the route network. While additional routes could be added, the current hub-and-spoke system continues to meet travel demand, and any new routes would supplement not replace existing service.

Since the COA established its presence in 2021, the agency has monitored travel patterns closely. The data shows that travel destinations have remained relatively stable, with the biggest changes being increasing demand during evenings and weekends rather than shifts in where people are traveling. As a result, increasing service frequency and providing more travel opportunities is a higher priority than creating new routes.

Currently, the data does not reveal any significant gaps in service. Although there may be a few isolated trip generators, the existing hub-and-spoke network effectively serves most trips, with about 90% of travel fitting the current system's triangular travel pattern.

Mr. Baker asked to be reminded of the discussion from the COA process regarding the psychology of transfer and whether a hub-and-spoke model is the best approach. The group discussed whether riders may be reluctant to transfer, particularly when using routes such as the Silver Line as a primary corridor while other lines intersect with it. Mr. Monoyios noted that successful transfers depend on having sufficient service frequency to support them. He added that hub-and-spoke pulse systems work well for transit networks with varying service frequencies, such as 15-, 30-, and 60-minute intervals throughout the day.

Mr. Prato discussed the evolution of cross-town services and highlighted Route 33 as an example of growth-focused planning. The route began as a response to feedback from sixteen businesses in the Walker Industrial area during the Connect pilot. Employees, particularly hourly workers without smartphones, wanted reliable fixed-route option where they could wait at a bus stop and know when service would arrive. This led to the creation of Route 33.

Since its launch, Route 33 has continued to improve, including the addition of both clockwise and counterclockwise service. The Fruit Ridge Bridge project created another opportunity to adjust the route, allowing it to better serve the area by extending service beyond peak morning and evening periods to all day and evening operations. Continued growth in the employment center is making further adjustments as businesses report increasing employee numbers.

She noted that regulatory requirements can slow the pace of service changes, but The Rapid has consistently made improvements during each service planning period. The long-term plan includes three opportunities each year to evaluate and adjust routes, with dispatch also making operational refinements as needed.

She also emphasized the need to balance service investments across the five other cities, considering both revenue contributions and service hours. Contributions are currently aligned within approximately 3-4% between property tax revenue and service provided. While Grand Rapids receives the largest share of service due to its population and role as a transit hub with at least 14 routes converging there, the agency continues to evaluate equitable service distribution across all communities.

Ms. Prato emphasized the importance of revitalizing the Division United 2021 initiative and asked how to encourage developers to invest in making the BRT corridor more productive. Mr. Baker agreed, noting that this aligns with the city's housing plan, which focuses on developing housing along established corridors.

Mr. Guy added the issue has been discussed since the planning phase of the Silver Line and was part of the promises made during the 2004 millage campaign. He asked what actions are needed to make meaningful progress and expressed appreciation for the growth-focused comments. He also asked which of the presented plans should serve as the guiding policy framework for day-to-day decision-making.

Ms. Prato explained that the discussion centered on the guiding principles of the Transit Master Plan (TMP) and asked Mr. Monoyios to display the guiding principles document for the group. She noted that public feedback consistently calls for transit to serve more destinations with more frequent service. However, she emphasized that these expectations are constrained by financial sustainability, workforce limitations, and shortages in rolling stock and capital resources.

Mr. Monoyios noted that the community wants more. He emphasized the need to align land use and economic development with transit by encouraging growth where transit already exists on Division Avenue.

Mr. Baker noted he wishes we had levers to pull to come to the table with the developer and say here's what The Rapid can bring to the table to make this a feasible development for density. He is so passionate about us building along Division, and every one of those stops but it's not happening. Mr. Monoyios added that discussions through Division United showed developers, bankers, and neighborhood groups support incremental infill development, but financial challenges and perceived risk prevent many projects from being viable.

Mr. Baker asked Mr. Monoyios to go back to the chart that shows ridership compared to our other peers. He asked what happened to the approximately 12 million riders lost since 2013, noting that despite community growth and job creation, ridership has not recovered. He recalled that ridership increased when gas prices approached \$4.00 per gallon and asked whether higher gas prices, potentially reaching \$5.00, were driving ridership up again. Mr. Monoyios responded that they have not seen that effect yet, explaining that changing travel patterns and fewer people coming downtown continue to impact ridership.

Mr. Hoffman thanked both Mr. Guy and Mr. Baker for their comments.

c. Learning Opportunities, Mr. Nick Monoyios

Mr. Monoyios presented a slide with upcoming Learnings or APTA Conferences with details.

Board Member Seminar in Detroit, MI July 17-20

APTA Tech and Sustainability Operations Planning, St. Louis, MO August 9-12

Transit Ballot Initiatives, Nashville, TN December 14-16

Annual Expo Chicago, IL October 4-7

Mpact Toronto, Ontario September 14-17

4. ADJOURNMENT

This meeting was adjourned at 9:05 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for October 12, 2026

Respectfully submitted,



Kris Heald, Board Secretary