



# The Ride 2045

## Long-Range Plan Executive Summary

July 2022





TheRide 2045 is a Long-Range Plan for transit in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area. The plan lays out a shared vision and strategy for transit up to 2045.

It focuses on addressing **social equity** gaps by improving affordable and accessible transportation to jobs, education, services, and housing, **improving our environment** by giving travelers efficient transportation alternatives, and **supporting a strong economy** by better connecting businesses and people. The result will be a more competitive transit system that will **grow ridership**, resulting in a more sustainable and vibrant community.



## Expected Outcomes



Figure 1 – Expected Outcomes

<sup>1</sup>Level of service measured as the average buses per hour passing through a 0.25 mile walk radius. Average rider reflects 2019 ridership data. Opportunity Index areas are defined by the Washtenaw Opportunity Index.

<sup>2</sup> High-frequency transit is defined as 15-minute or better service during peak times. Proximity is defined as within a 0.7-mile walk. All analysis is focused on the three member municipalities of TheRide (Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and Ypsilanti Township).

<sup>3</sup> Bus stop accessibility is subject to municipal sidewalks and permitting.

## Benefits of the Plan

TheRide 2045 will effectively advance the organization toward the goals and vision laid out by the Board of Directors and echoed by the broader community. It is a transformational plan that will make transit **faster** and **more attractive**, and fundamentally change how transit is provided in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area. Key benefits include:

- Growing ridership by providing an even more attractive and convenient transit service, designed to reduce travel times, make travel more direct, better match service to demand, and provide access throughout the week with longer hours of operation.
- Addressing socio-economic equity gaps by improving accessible and affordable transportation to work, education, medical, shopping, and social destinations for lower opportunity communities that rely on transit and through focusing enhancements on low opportunity areas.
- Improving environmental outcomes by attracting more people out of their cars and introducing low-emissions buses.
- Enhancing economic vitality by growing access to jobs and retail, incentivizing more walkable, vibrant, and healthy communities, and by reducing overall community costs for transportation.
- Advancing the goals of municipal policy documents (refer to Guiding Framework, p10).



Figure 2 – Community Benefits of TheRide 2045

The plan can deliver these benefits through a series of enhancements and expansions to transit services and infrastructure. Each community will benefit from the resulting structural change to travel.

Transit riders will experience service that is more frequent, comfortable, and reliable while also being provided with more travel options and shorter trips all day, every day. Seniors, people with disabilities, minorities, low-income groups, and anyone else with more limited access to private automobiles will have better access to jobs, education, social services, shopping, and housing. Transit enhancements for these groups will also mean a more attractive transit service for everyone that enhances access for all.

Coupled with new policies from outside partners, these enhancements will make transit even more attractive, increase ridership and access to destinations, and reduce private automobile dependency. Fewer cars on the road improves the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Transit investments also reduce overall community costs for transportation – as it results in long-term reductions in municipal spending on roads and parking and individual spending on fuel and cars.



## Current State and Future Context

The vision for society is changing, and TheRide has a role to play. Addressing changing societal trends in population, employment, and a greater emphasis on equity and environmental sustainability will require significant improvements and investments in transportation systems, infrastructure, and policy. TheRide 2045 provides a blueprint for these short- and long-term efforts. This includes capturing funding opportunities from the state and federal governments, and efficiently spending it on major infrastructure projects that are required to maintain existing service and to meet the changing needs of the community.

The COVID-19 pandemic has added to the those changing dynamics with shifts in ridership, travel patterns, and community expectations. Additionally, the challenges of operating within a diverse and multi-jurisdictional area add to the importance of establishing a clear vision for transit to unite behind and build toward. Success at TheRide requires many collaborators, including various municipalities, organizations, institutions, individuals, and TheRide itself to work together toward a common vision.

The following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges analysis summarizes the key facets of the current state and future context of transit in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area that have helped to drive and shape TheRide 2045. Overall, TheRide is performing strongly, with promising opportunities to build on to 2045.

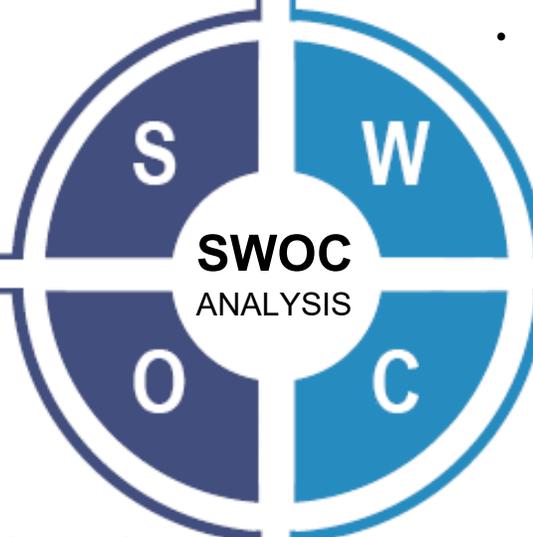


## STRENGTHS

- Engaged board and staff
- Excellent range of services
- Strong level of service and ridership
- Strong credibility and support within the community
- Existing resources & assets in reasonable condition

## WEAKNESSES

- Low productivity (trips per service hour) for paratransit and late-night demand response service
- Lack of integrated planning with University of Michigan's bus service
- Lack of facility capacity (terminals and garages)
- Existing structural budget deficits
  - Low schedule reliability



- Big university campuses are major destinations
- Supportive, engaged, and knowledgeable community
- Strong interest for higher-order transit, including bus rapid transit
- Potential to grow ridership on priority corridors and during off-peak periods
- Advocacy for the outside decisions that support TheRide's desired outcomes
- Transit-supportive development occurring in Ann Arbor and along key corridors
- Advancements in zero-emissions bus technology and related funding increases are anticipated

- Fragmented jurisdictions
- Accessibility of pedestrian connections to transit, bus stops and sidewalks

- Constrained funding and resources limit opportunities
- Uncertainty over regional transit future
- Substantial car-centric development that is not transit-supportive (low density, lower quality pedestrian environment, ample road, and free parking capacity)

## OPPORTUNITIES

## CHALLENGES

Figure 3 – SWOC Analysis



## Process

TheRide 2045 included rigorous public engagement and analysis. The development of the plan occurred over four phases as outlined below.

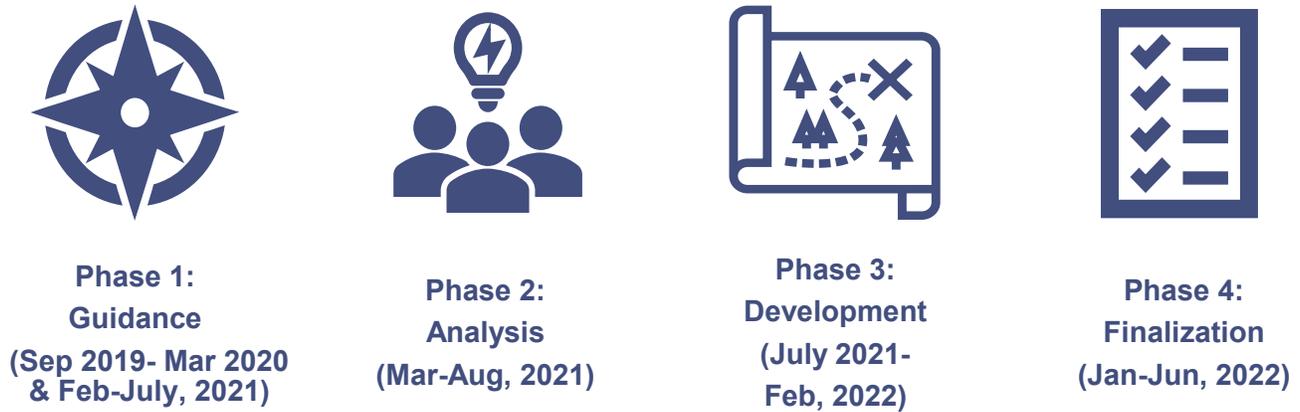


Figure 4 – Process Timeline

### **Phase 1: Guidance**

The first phase was Guidance, where we developed a framework including the goals, principles, and methodology to guide the remainder of the planning process. Feedback from the public, TheRide’s Board of Directors, and stakeholders were all considered. The Public Advisory Group (PAG) was also established: 12 individuals with different backgrounds that were consulted at regular points throughout the process to make sure that diverse perspectives were considered.

### **Phase 2: Analysis**

The second phase was Analysis, where TheRide’s current situation was evaluated to consider what is working well and what could be improved. The future context up to 2045 was considered next to ensure that transit was oriented to the expected changes in the community, including population, demographics, and employment. Existing plans from other municipalities and peer agencies were also considered, in addition to emerging technologies.

### ***Phase 3: Development***

In the third phase, different elements and design options for the future plan were developed, before narrowing to four distinct scenarios based on different levels of funding.

### ***Phase 4: Finalization***

In the fourth phase, Finalization, this plan was developed based on the results of the previous phases and the feedback received from the public and key stakeholders. The plan is intended to be an achievable roadmap that lays out the steps to build a future transit system that achieves the goals developed in Phase 1.

Significant public and stakeholder engagement was held throughout the planning process. Separate rounds of engagement were held in Phases 1, 3, and 4 respectively. The PAG met seven times and provided guidance throughout the process. In total, over 4,475 points of interaction were recorded through in-person and virtual engagement sessions, surveys, email, and phone.

During this engagement, the community generally communicated a strong desire for transformational change. This included a vision of enhancing transit's role in overall mobility options for the community with a particular focus on improving transportation equity.



## Guiding Framework

The development of the plan was shaped by several guiding values. Principally, TheRide’s Board of Directors sets the outcomes/goals that the organization should seek to achieve (i.e., Ends Policies). In addition, TheRide 2045 aimed for consistency with community and transportation plans in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area such as Ann Arbor’s A2Zero and Comprehensive Transportation Plan, Ypsilanti’s Master Plan, Climate Action Plan, and Non-Motorized Transportation Master Plan, Ypsilanti Township’s Master Plan, Washtenaw County’s ReImagine Washtenaw, Opportunity Index, and Housing Affordability and Economic Equity Analysis, Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS)’s 2045 Long-Range Plan, and Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan (RTA)’s Regional Transit Plan. Lastly, public and stakeholder engagement provided another layer of guidance, particularly related to the prioritization of various goals. Figure 5 sets out some key plan goals and corresponding sources of community values.

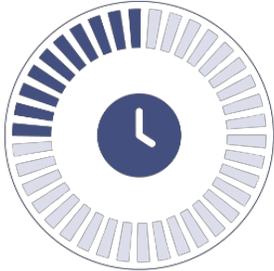
### Community Values Drive Transit’s Goals:

-  Increase social equity, access to jobs, education, and housing
-  Help the environment and reduce air pollution
-  Support existing and new businesses



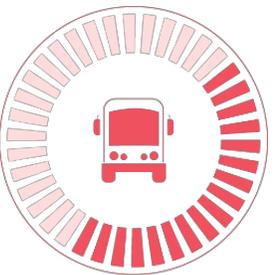
Figure 5 – Plan Goals and Sources of Community Values

# Plan Highlights



## Service Highlights

- 10 minute or better service with priority features on high-use corridors
- High-frequency network of numerous 15-minute or better services across the service area
- Better off-peak services, including a minimum of 30-minute frequency service throughout the service area, 7-days per week
- Later weekend and weeknight service hours
- Enhanced on-demand service including overnight with expanded coverage areas and shorter wait times



## Transit Fleet and Infrastructure Highlights

- Two high-speed Bus Rapid Transit lines that will form the backbone of the network
- Four new transit hubs and improvements to TheRide's two transit centers to better connect services across our community
- A zero-emissions bus fleet



## Partnerships, Collaborations, and Plans Highlights

- Partnerships and collaborations to enhance regional transit, first/last mile solutions, and general transit outcomes
- Infrastructure and technology plans to enable service growth, enhance customer experience, and operational efficiency
- An achievable financial plan that effectively harnesses important funding opportunities from state and federal governments while also highlighting how TheRide can work toward developing alternative funding sources

## Service Network

Figure 6 shows major components of the planned network in 2045. Additional local service routes with greater than 15-minute frequencies are proposed and are too numerous to be depicted on this map.

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### *Public engagement feedback*

*“It is critical to have buses that operate more often, and with more routes. As a parent of small children, it is nearly impossible for me to wait with them for such delayed wait times. It is also not feasible for me to use the bus to do everyday errands. If the goal is to decrease auto use, public transportation must increase drastically!”*

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The plan envisions TheRide’s fixed-route service evolving from local routes in a hub-and-spoke configuration to a high-frequency grid-like network with more opportunities for quick transfers and direct trips. The essential backbone of the new network are two Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) routes, providing fast and reliable north-south and east-west connections throughout the service area. The rest of the network is designed to allow riders to travel faster and maximize BRT’s transportation benefits across the system.

Figure 7, describes and compares the various new enhanced services that will be provided.



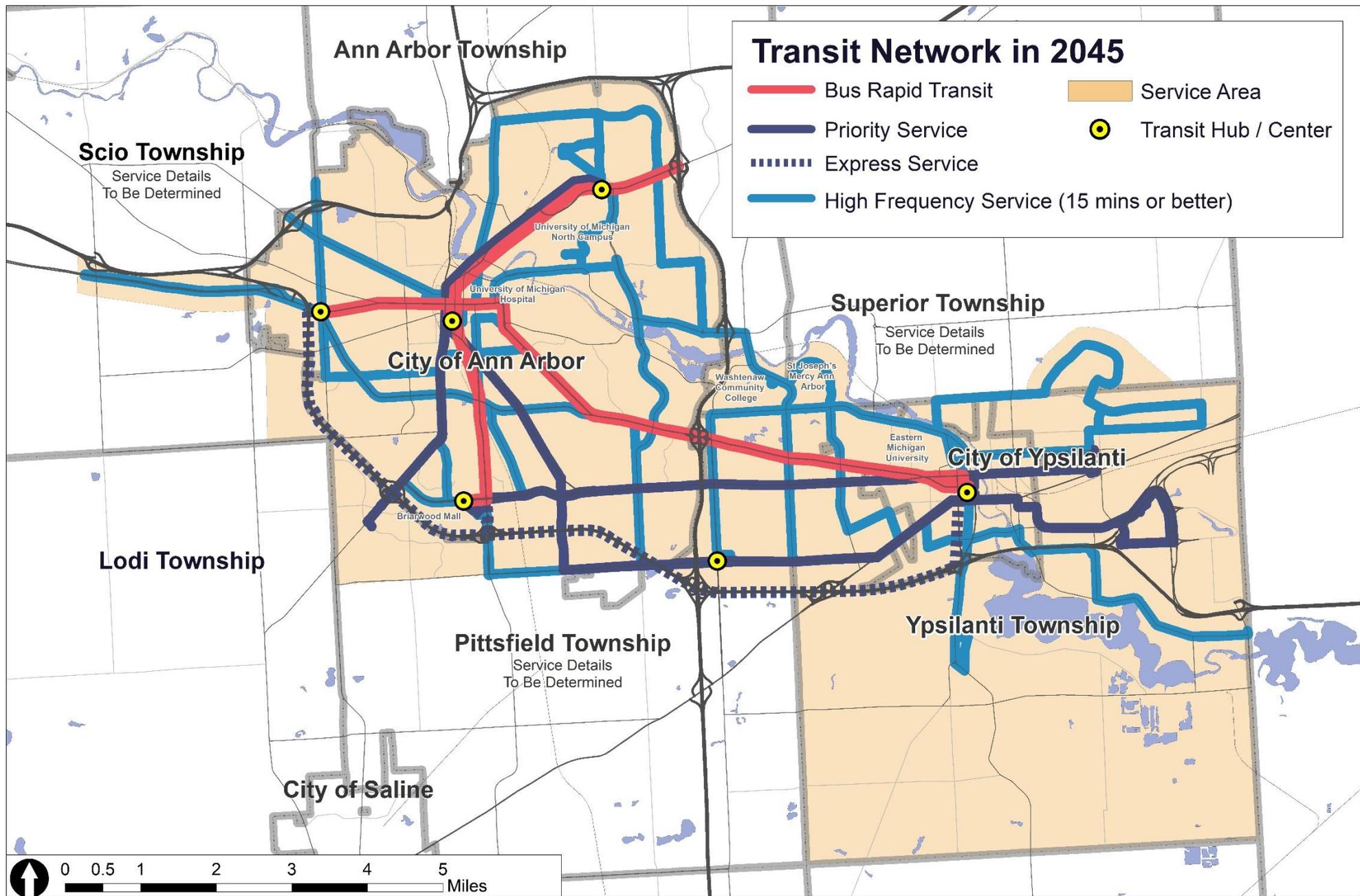
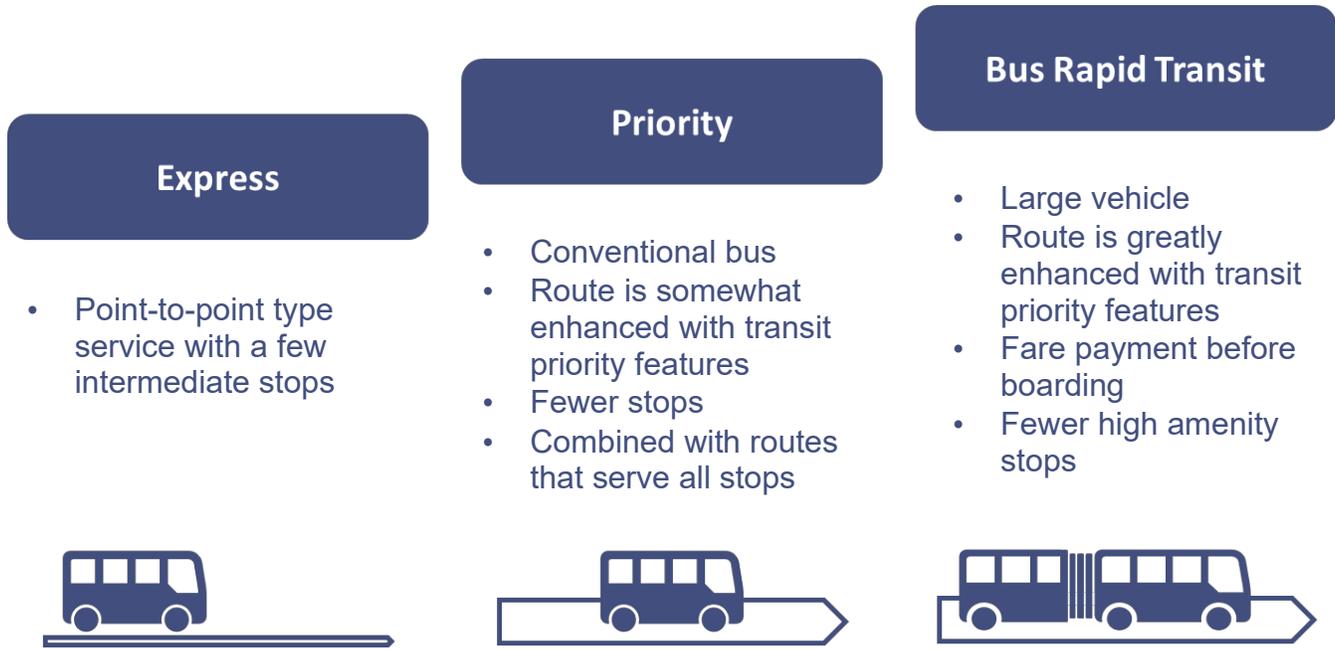


Figure 6 – Proposed Service Network in 2045





**Transit priority features** include dedicated lanes so transit does not compete with traffic, traffic signal priority and queue jump lanes. Transit priority features make service faster and more efficient and reliable.

Figure 7 – New Enhanced Services



Figure 8 –Example of a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) station - Ontario Growth Secretariat, Ministry of Municipal Affairs (2014)

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*Public engagement feedback*

*“It is easy to get in and out of downtown from all around (Ann Arbor). But it is really cumbersome to get to another part in town without having to go downtown. We need transit for people outside of downtown who just want to go a couple miles radius in their own neighborhood without having to go downtown.”*

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## **More “One-seat” Journeys**

The revised structure of the network will significantly benefit passengers by unlocking more “one-seat” journeys; direct trips where passengers don’t have to make any transfers and can sit in one seat on one bus. This is accomplished by having longer routes and more routes travelling in various directions. Some of the proposed new direct connections that align with major travel needs are:

- Eastern Ypsilanti Township – Downtown and South Ann Arbor
- City of Ypsilanti and Eastern Ypsilanti and Superior Townships – Northeast Ann Arbor
- City of Ypsilanti – West Ann Arbor
- South, Southwest and West Ann Arbor – Northeast Ann Arbor
- State/Eisenhower – West Ann Arbor
- Northeast Ann Arbor – Carpenter/Ellsworth

## **Faster trips**

TheRide 2045’s network will significantly reduce the travel times for the average trips taken by transit. The BRT, transit priority features, and a revised network structure that funnels trips into the BRT are principal reasons for this. Faster trips are also enabled by the introduction of limited stop services such as the Priority and Express services. Figure 9, on the following page, shows some travel time changes throughout the service area.

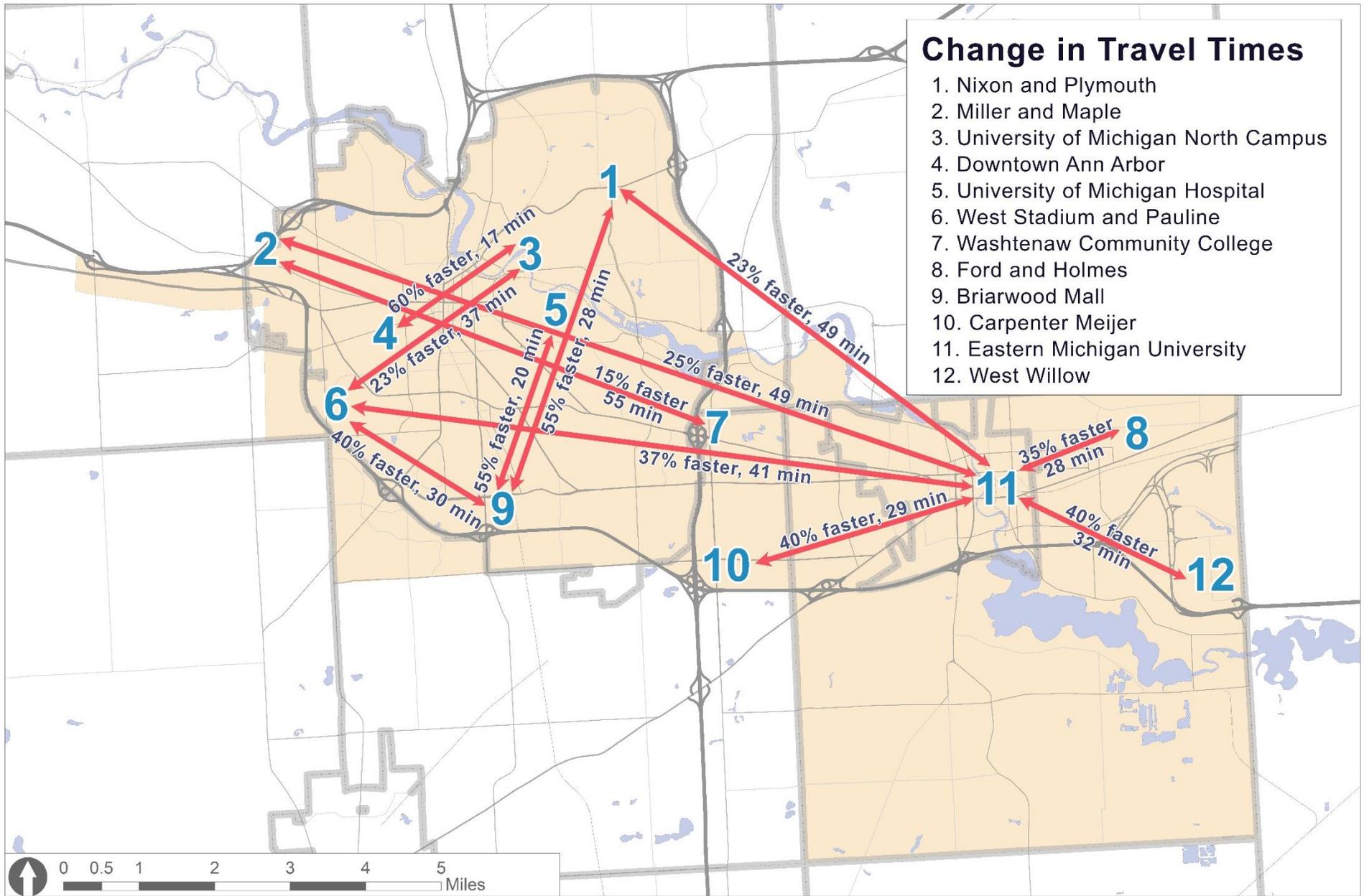


Figure 9 – Map of Travel Time Changes between Various Areas<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Travel times were estimated using Remix which accounts for average walk times to/from origin/destination/transfer points, wait time, and in-bus time

## Other Service Features

Beyond significant changes to the service network, TheRide 2045 includes substantial investment in other service features, including off-peak services, paratransit, and on-demand service delivery.

TheRide 2045 include recommendations for better off-peak service which helps people who rely on transit most. This includes essential and lower wage workers, women, students, and seniors. Figure 10 shows planned improvements to service span and minimum off-peak frequency of fixed-route services.

	Service Span	Minimum Frequency
Weekday	6 AM-12 AM	30
Saturday	7 AM-12 AM	30
Sunday	8 AM-9 PM	30

Figure 10 – Off-peak Service Enhancements

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### *Public engagement feedback*

*“As someone who relied on AAATA for over a decade to get to and from my job as a food service worker, because of the winding routes and where I lived, it took over an hour to get downtown, and often on weekends I would be forced to use cabs instead of the bus because of the short hours... I know it's easy to focus resources toward the 9 to 5 crowd, but we must center those who rely on the bus exclusively for transport.”*

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TheRide will continue to implement improvements to A-Ride recommended in the recent Paratransit Study. This includes a greater focus on service integration across all services, including A-Ride and improved accessibility measures on all services. A-Ride capacity will continue to grow to meet demographic and trip needs and will mirror the fixed-route service area.

Additionally, TheRide 2045 recommends a tripling of on-demand service including an expansion to cover all of the member municipalities and to provide shorter wait times.



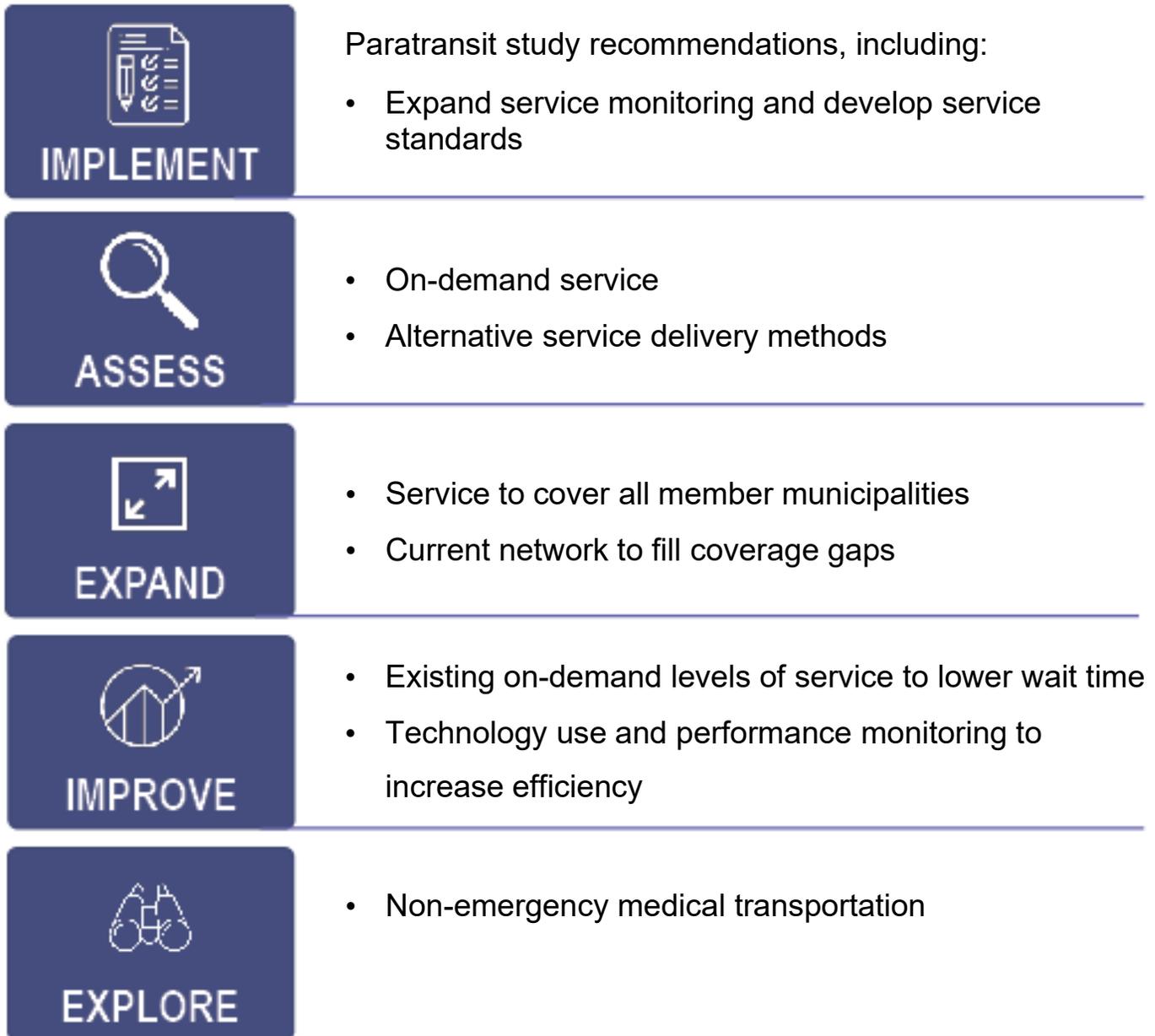


Figure 11 – Actions and Strategies for Non-fixed-route Service Offerings

## Infrastructure

Infrastructure plays a critical role in supporting the expansion and improved efficiency of transit operations. Customer-facing infrastructure, such as transit centers and bus shelters similarly have huge impact on the customer experience and accessibility. The plan considers a broad interpretation of infrastructure, including transit facilities, stops, terminals, fleet, technology, and some of the organizational changes required to support these plans, including an expanded workforce.

### Facilities

Facility highlights of the plan are shown below in Figure 12.

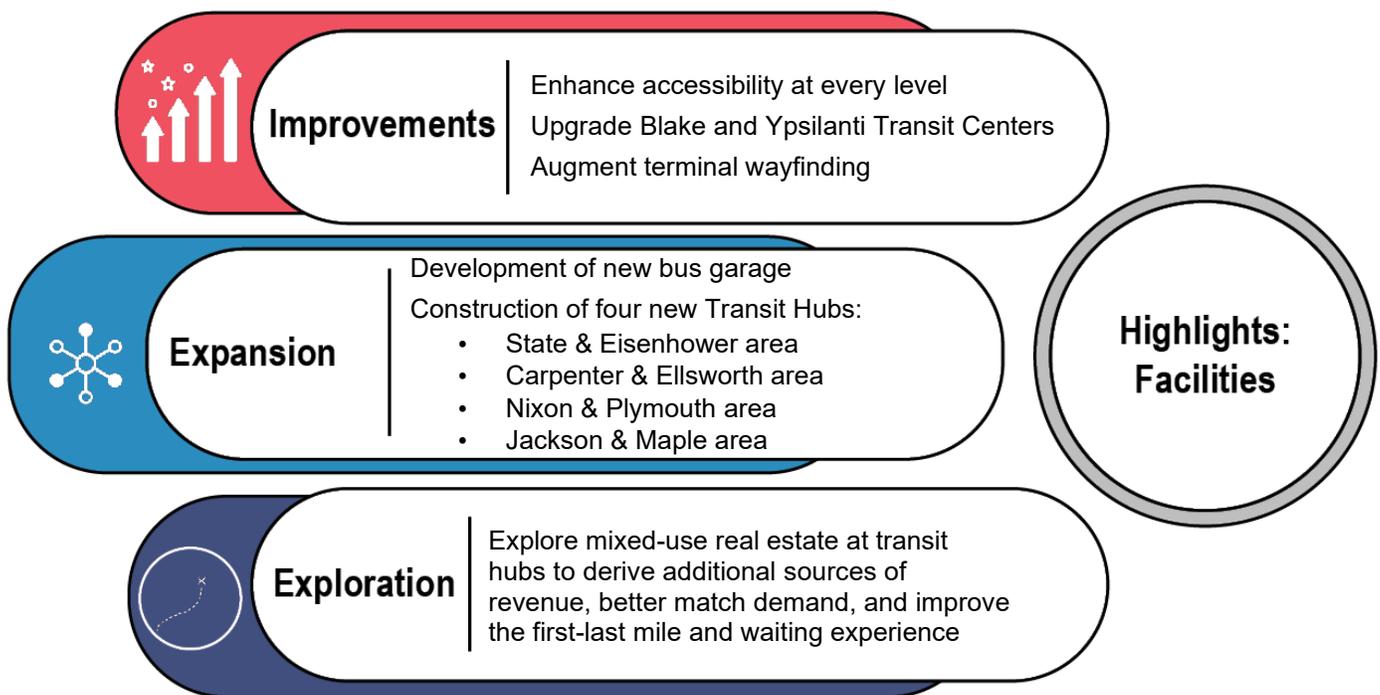


Figure 12 – Facility Highlights

## Fleet, Technology, and Workforce

Fleet, technology, and workforce highlights of the plan are shown below in Figure 13.

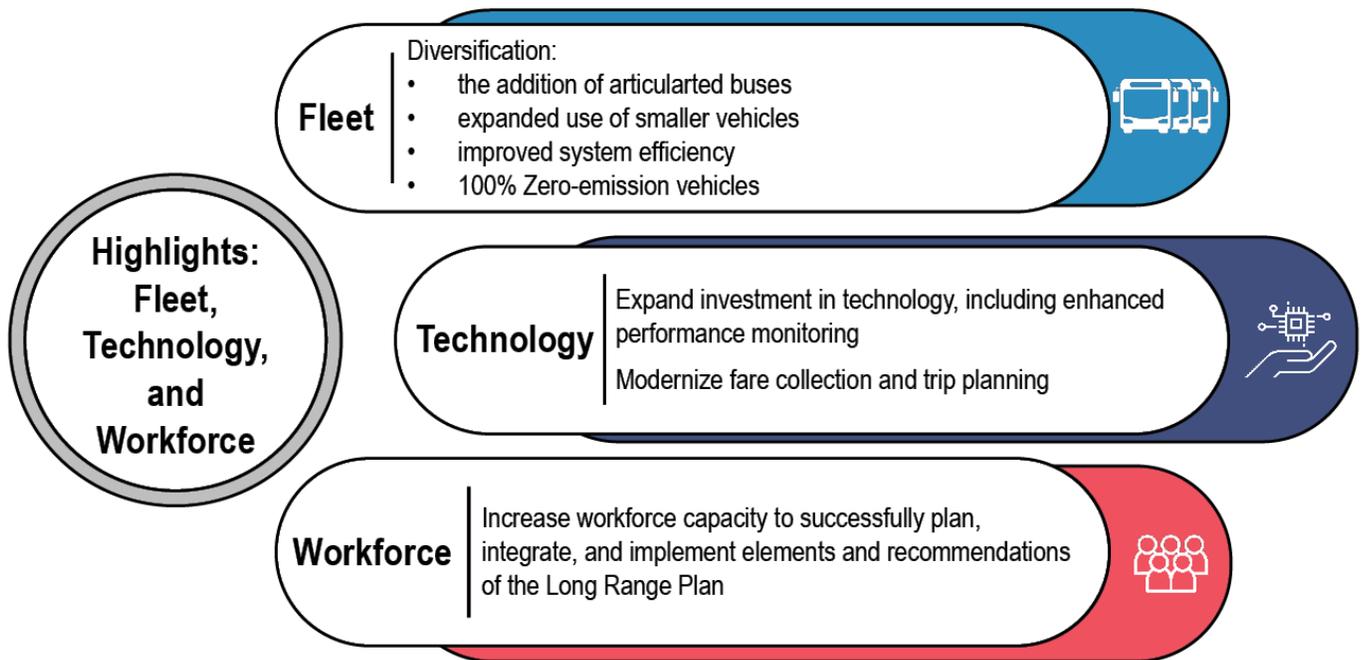


Figure 13 – Fleet, Technology, and Workforce Highlights

## Regional Transit Network

The Ann Arbor area is a growing job center that attracts talent from across the region. It also has limited parking and congestion challenges. Successful long-distance express bus service such as AirRide and D2A2 can be expanded, including for the Ypsilanti area. TheRide can work with the Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan (RTA) to consider regional and inter-county services such as those shown in Figure 14.

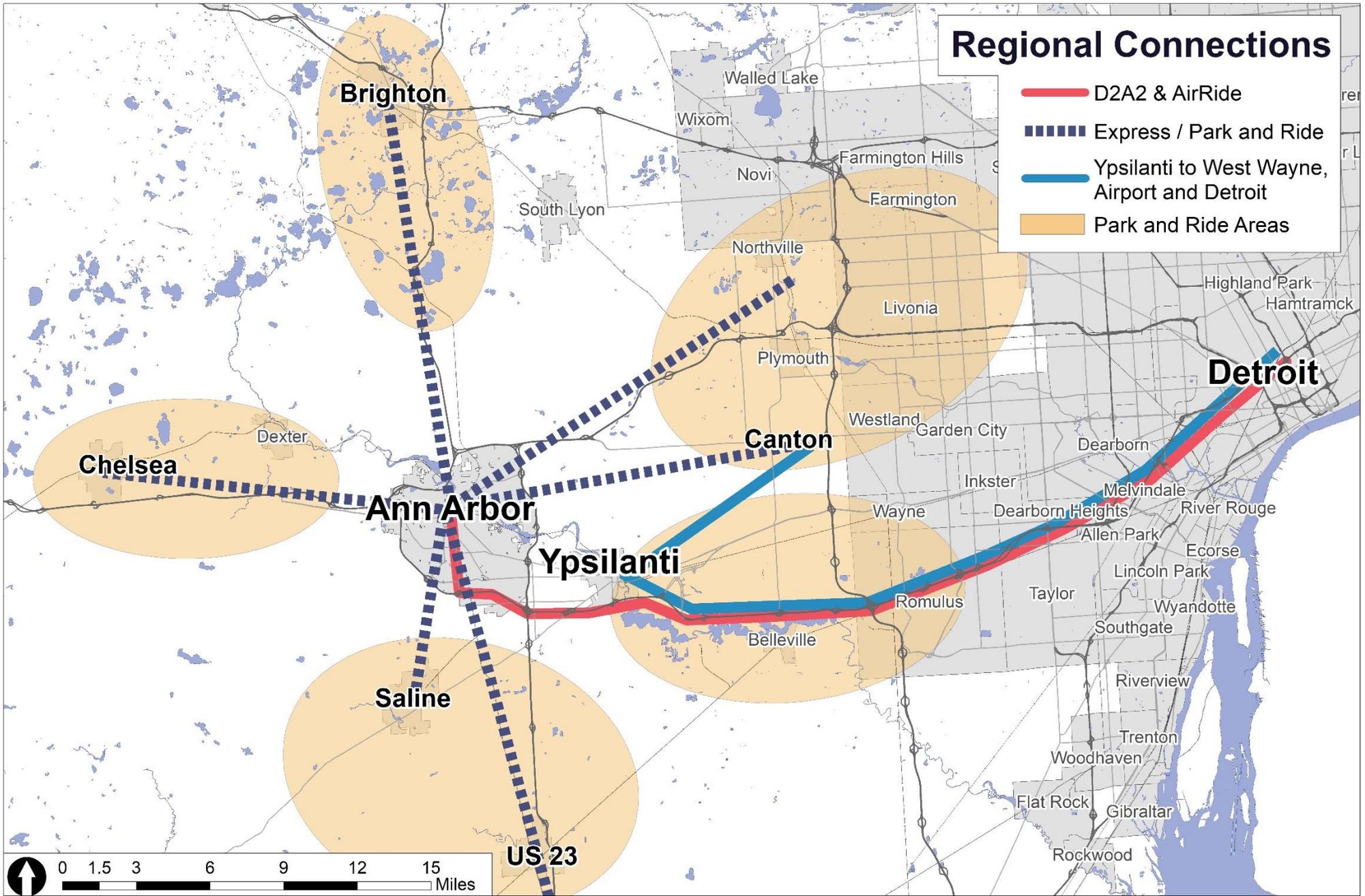


Figure 14 – TheRide Recommended Regional Connections in 2045



## Transit-Supportive Development and Policy

Many policies are in place in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area that prioritize the usage of private cars over other transportation modes. This is detrimental to many community goals including social equity, environmental sustainability, and efficient infrastructure spending. A more balanced development and policy approach will help to improve the transit experience and transit demand. This plan prioritizes seven areas for future work:

- **Intensification of urban development within the existing fixed-route service area:** Focusing growth in areas of existing service makes transit more efficient.
- **Reduced below-market parking:** Shifting to parking maximums, or eliminating parking requirements altogether, can make owning a car less attractive and encourage more transit use.
- **Road widening:** Limiting road expansion or implementing road diets will improve the pedestrian/cycling experience for accessing transit, making transit more competitive relative to cars.
- **Transit priority:** Bus lanes and other features help make transit more attractive.
- **Tax policy:** Tax policy can be an effective means of ensuring that spending on transportation appropriately matches its value to society, including more sustainable funding for transit.
- **Pedestrian access:** Pedestrian networks can be designed so that people can better access efficient transit corridors and to improve the attractiveness of transit.
- **Accessibility, comfort, and safety:** Roadways and other land uses can be designed to improve the experience in accessing and waiting for transit.

## Advocacy and Partnerships

Advancing the goals of TheRide 2045 while building more equitable and sustainable communities will require TheRide to build new and stronger partnerships with outside decision makers at the local, state, regional, and federal levels.

The demand and ease of using transit is heavily influenced by municipal land use and transportation planning decisions such as overall density, urban form, walkability, and parking policy. Regional transit development is addressed by the RTA. The State of Michigan and Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) control many roads, as well as funding,



regulatory, and key policy decisions like high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes and road pricing. The federal government can provide much of the capital funding needed to implement this future vision. Clearly many of the factors influencing the success of this plan are outside the direct control of TheRide. This plan recommends expanded partnerships and more robust advocacy with external stakeholders as follows:

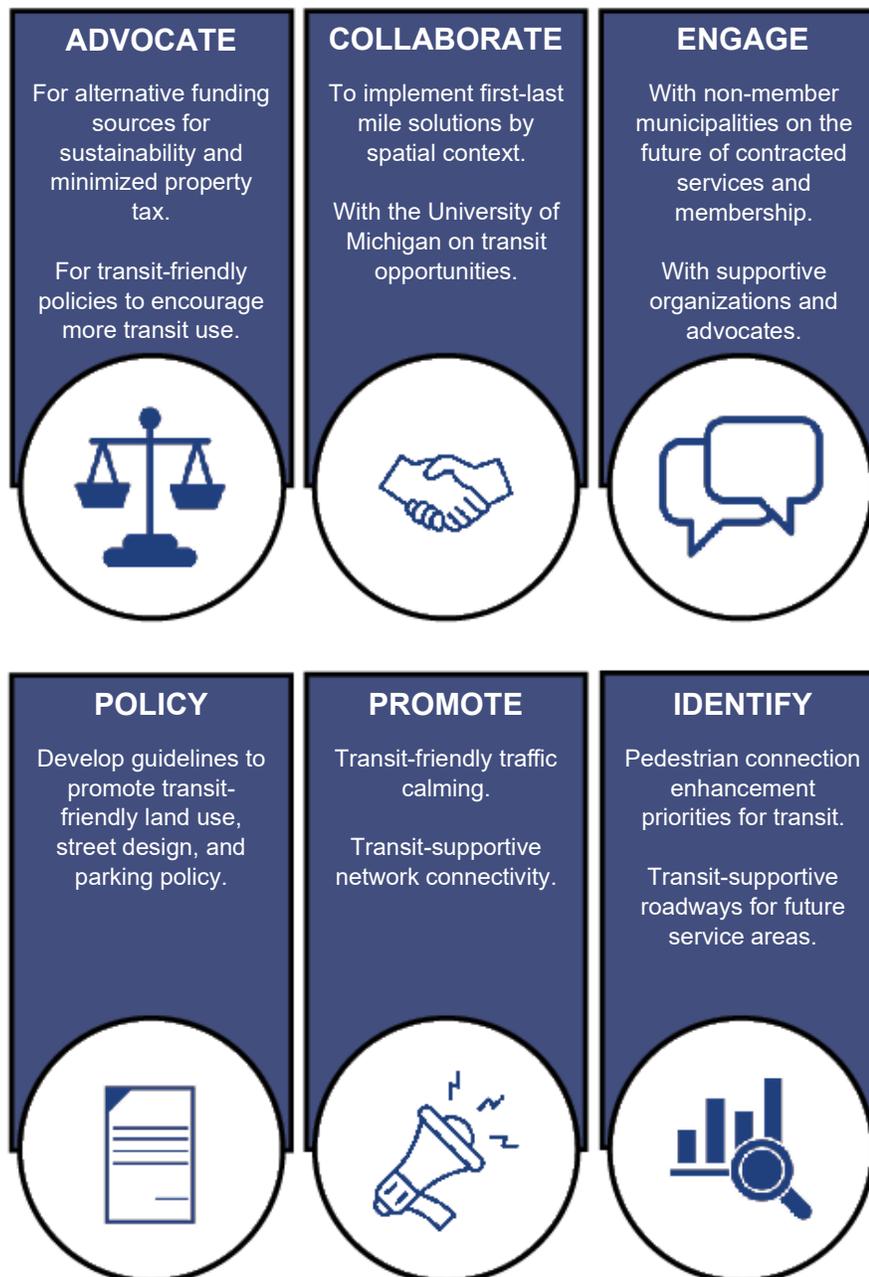


Figure 15 – TheRide Advocacy and Partnership Goals

## Implementation

The ambitious recommendations outlined in TheRide 2045 will be implemented gradually over the course of the plan timeline. The implementation plan is divided into four stages that roughly align with the continuation of 5-year millage periods.

The first stage between the years 2023 to 2028, sets the plan foundations with planning and design for major infrastructure projects that are critical path elements to developing the final vision. Quick wins will be completed, including implementing equity-enhancing and popular off-peak improvements. In the second stage from 2029 to 2033, a new garage and Bus Rapid Transit on Washtenaw will be constructed enabling a big increase in service, focused on the busiest corridors. In the third phase of implementation, the network spine will start to be realized due to the initial build of the north-south Bus Rapid Transit, the Priority Routes and transit priority features. Developing the network spine will enable the network to be reconfigured and significant investment in high-frequency routes in the final stage, from 2039 to 2045.



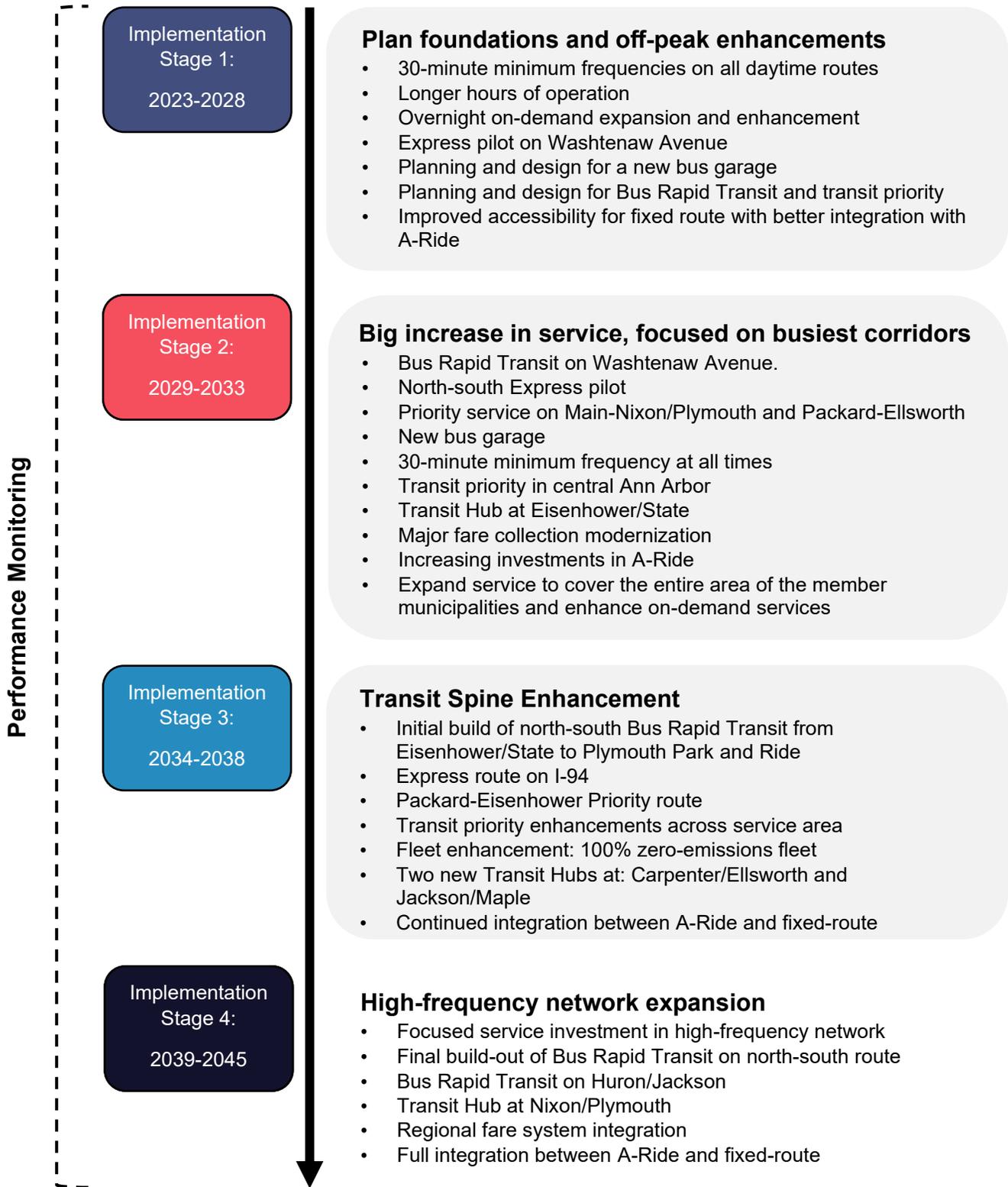


Figure 16 – Overview of Implementation Stages<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> A performance monitoring plan has been developed to track the effective implementation of the plan and to assess whether the implemented measures are driving the organization toward its goals as identified in the Guiding Framework.



## Financial Plan

Central to the success of TheRide 2045 is financial management. TheRide must pursue new funding opportunities, carefully maximize local, state, and federal funds, and be careful not to overcommit or under-invest. Having a long-range plan that helps sequence and contextualize individual decisions is crucial. Figure 17 outlines planned costs at each implementation stage and categorizes expenses as either Operating or Capital costs.

Operating costs are expenditures incurred daily, like employee wages, fuel, and bus maintenance. These costs are presently funded through local property taxes, state operating assistance, and passenger fares with support from federal operating assistance, contract service, and advertising revenue. While this plan makes contingencies for the continuation of this funding structure, other funding sources are recommended to be pursued to reduce the proportion of funding derived from local property taxes.

	2023-2028	2029-2033	2034-2038	2039-2045
<b>Annual Operating Cost</b>	\$63 M	\$73 M	\$82 M	\$90 M
<b>Increase in operating cost (from previous)</b>	13%	16%	12%	10%
<b>Capital Cost</b>	\$123 M	\$233 M	\$129 M	\$174 M

Figure 17 – Operating and Capital Budget. Note all figures are in 2021 dollars.

Capital costs are for durable assets such as vehicles, buildings, and infrastructure. Figure 18 highlights the various types of capital investment. The largest investment is maintaining existing infrastructure, with \$304 million dedicated to state of good repair and vehicle replacement to 2045. Expansion of BRT and transit priority measures is the second largest investment at \$176 million, and new facilities (i.e., terminals, garages, etc.) will require \$113 million.

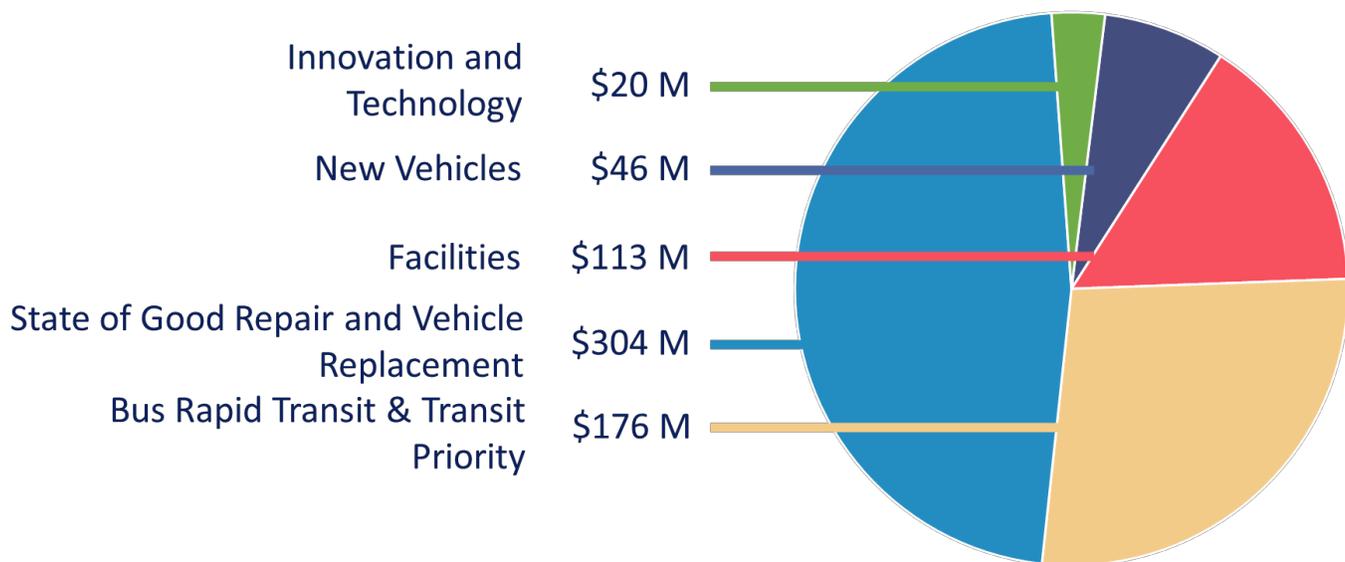


Figure 18 – Estimated Capital Costs by Category. Note all figures are in 2021 dollars.

Capital funding comes from various sources. Figure 19 shows the proportional breakdown of capital funding sources. With the current federal administration’s increased investment in transit, TheRide has an important opportunity to request federal capital grant funding to support much of the plan’s capital needs.

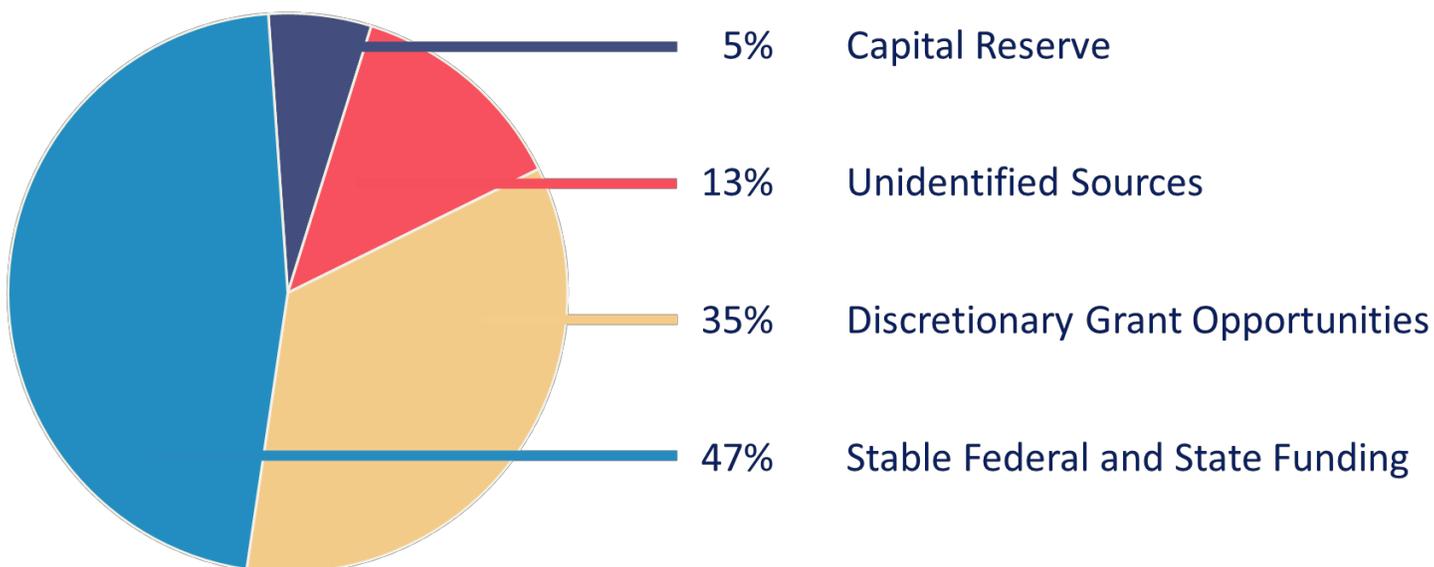


Figure 19 – Capital Funding Sources. Note all figures are in 2021 dollars.

The biggest funding sources come from stable federal and state *formula* funding. Discretionary grant opportunities from federal and state partners are the other big source of funding. These come from competitive grant processes that have a high likelihood of success and are generally tied to specific projects such as bus rapid transit or new facilities. Funding timelines and proportional funding sources have been planned to optimize grant application success with project impact and cost efficiency.

Smaller funding amounts come from a capital reserve that is being funded through local millage revenues. The remaining amount of 13% will be funded through currently unidentified sources. Potential sources of funding include, other grant opportunities, revenue from partnerships, and various taxation opportunities. The plan outlines alternative funding sources to pursue to fill this unidentified funding and to help reduce reliance on local property taxes and provide more sustainable sources of funding. Overall, this financial plan is achievable but also flexible should any surprises arise along the journey.

In closing, TheRide 2045 responds to the growing needs of our communities with a blueprint for preserving and expanding transit services and access to local and regional destinations. It is an ambitious vision that will require partnerships, additional investment, and leadership. Through this vision, TheRide can help lead our communities toward a future with greater social equity, environmental benefits, and access to jobs.



