

About This Document

Transit design guidelines and service standards explain how transit service is planned and managed. They set clear rules for things like routes, schedules, stops, and connections so service is consistent, fair, and easy to use. These guidelines help make sure the transit system meets community needs, uses resources wisely, and provides reliable service for everyone. The purpose of this document is to guide future decisions so that transit service is clear, connected, and responsive to the people it serves.

These are derived from the Board of Directors' strategic goals (Ends Policies) that establish a need to balance attracting riders with providing basic coverage throughout the areas we serve. The vision of the Ann Arbor Area Transit Agency (AAATA), known as TheRide, is to provide a robust fixed-route public transportation system that adapts to the area's evolving needs, environment, and quality of life. TheRide exists so that an increasing proportion of residents, workers and visitors in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Area utilize public transportation options that contribute to the Area's social, environmental and economic vitality at a cost that demonstrates value and efficient stewardship of resources.

TheRide Design Guidelines and Service Standards provide a framework for how the agency designs and monitors transit service, as well as the process for making changes. There is a preference for attracting riders and the standards and guidelines reflect this preference. The document is divided into four main sections.



The Service Design Principles

highlights the key principles and best practices for building a logical, coordinated, and rider-friendly transit network.



The Service Standards

defines the minimum requirements TheRide uses to measure how well transit service is performing and to determine when adjustments are needed. These standards are measurable rules that set baseline expectations for how transit should operate. They serve as firm benchmarks to promote fairness, consistency, and accountability, while still allowing flexibility to adapt to changing demand.



The Service Guidelines

describes the different types of fixed-route transit service and outlines key principles for how they should be designed. These guidelines are recommended practices that help shape decisions while allowing flexibility. They provide direction and reflect best practices but can be adapted to fit local needs and unique circumstances.



The Service Changes & Evaluation

describes the steps and timeline for making changes to service, especially when the service does not meet the standards.

This document covers the fixed-route services operated directly by TheRide. It does not cover demand-response services (e.g. ARide, NightRide, FlexRide) or third-party services like D2A2 or Michigan Flyer.

How to Use & Update This Document

Service standards are developed by each transit agency in the United States to guide the design, implementation and evaluation of their services. TheRide staff conducts a review of the Service Standards & Guidelines every three (3) years. The document is required by FTA Circular 4702.1B to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, which requires all transit agencies to develop service standards and guidelines. With each update, the Service Standards & Guidelines are revised to reflect the latest industry and agency best practices, recent service findings and experiences, feedback from the community, and changes to service types and availability of resources.

In preparation for this update, TheRide reviewed guidelines from other transit agencies to develop an understanding of peer best practices, and completed internal and external engagement to determine what has worked well and what could be improved upon from previous guidelines.

