

Transit

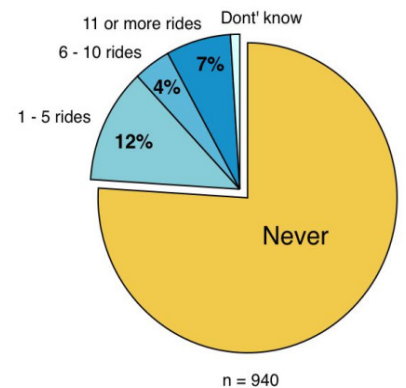
Public transit is a critical element of the transportation system. Transit is a vital tool to provide the public access to jobs, shopping, health care services, and recreational activities especially the elderly, youth, individuals with disabilities, and the economically disadvantaged. Millennials and Baby Boomers are also demanding fixed routes and shared rider services at increase rates, which creates additional stress on transit services. This is a critical time for transit services to respond to consumer demands.

As public transit evolves in Michigan, reliable funding resources become critical. The expense of maintaining a viable public transit system can only be maintained with commitments from Federal, State, and local jurisdictions.

Existing Studies

Jackson Area Transit Authority (JATA) Countywide Survey 2015

The JATA Countywide Survey was a project to gather customer and community market research to understand the priorities and needs of current JATA users over the next decade. In a two month period in early 2015, telephone interviews and online surveys were conducted with county residents. Through the survey, JATA determined that many county residents did not know much about the transit system and services they provide. Priorities that were determined from the study included expanding JATA's routes and schedules throughout the county, increasing the level of awareness of services, and improving information distribution or outreach to customers.



2015 Survey Question: In an average month, how often do you ride a JATA bus?

Connecting Jackson County Study 2017

The Connecting Jackson County Study identified the gaps and issues with the JATA transit service within the City of Jackson and across Jackson County. Completed in early 2018, this study was a deeper analysis of some of the findings from the 2015 JATA Countywide Survey. The study looked at fixed-route and reserve-a-ride services, operations and capital budgeting and funding, inter-city travel, and the confluence of the non-motorized transportation system. Conclusions of the study are listed later in this section.

City of Jackson Community Master Plan 2016

The City of Jackson Community Master Plan 2016 proposes a framework that is focused on the City's long-term stability and redevelopment based on an assessment of the community's existing conditions. cknowledging the role that transit plays in the

community. The plan specifically calls for the City to address the lack of municipal bus services across the southwest corner of the City.

Existing Transit Services

Intercity Bus Service

The Jackson County area is serviced by Greyhound Bus Lines which operates out of the Jackson Area Transportation Authority's downtown Transfer Center. JATA acts as the agent for Greyhound. There are seven weekly routes that pass through Jackson County primarily serving the I-94 corridor between Ann Arbor/Detroit and Chicago, and include connections to Albion, Battle Creek, Kalamazoo, and Benton Harbor. Northbound travel from Jackson includes a bus departure to East Lansing.

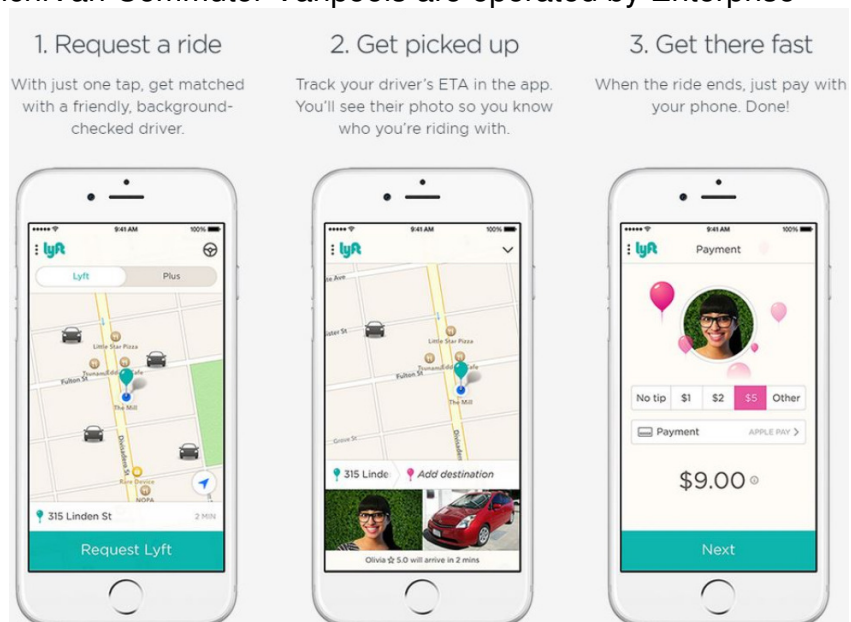


Greyhound route map

Rideshare Services

MDOT offers ridesharing and commuter vanpool programs throughout the state. As of 2017, there were no official ridesharing programs set up to accommodate the needs of within the Jackson MPO. The MichiVan Commuter Vanpools are operated by Enterprise and open to members of the public as well as help employers establish a program for employees.

Uber and Lyft started offering rideshare services within Jackson in 2017. Both are private companies that offer alternative curb to curb services for any consumer. The companies connect an employee-driver to a customer seeking an on-demand ride. This kind of service has been transformed by the use of smart phones.



Ridershare businesses and services displayed on a smartphone

Taxi Cabs and Limousine Services

Ten taxicab companies operate in the greater Jackson area. These services are licensed and must be registered with the City of Jackson in order to operate within the city limits. In addition to transit and taxicab services, there are several limousine services and car rental agencies in the Jackson area.

The Jackson Area Transportation Authority (JATA)

Public transportation services in Jackson have a long and varied history. Dating as far back as the 1890's, streetcar service was provided by the Jackson Street Railway Company. This service continued through 1936 when the first buses were purchased and began operating under the company name "Jackson City Lines." Since then, public transit services have been operated by both private and public entities. In 1986, the existing public transportation system was restructured under Michigan Public Act 196 and renamed the City of Jackson Transportation Authority (JTA). By becoming an authority, JTA was able to levy taxes to the residents within the City of Jackson to sustain both demand-response and fixed-route transit operations. Demand-responsive public transportation services are also provided on a limited basis to the remainder of Jackson County residents on a contractual basis. In 2011, the JTA changes its name to the Jackson Area Transportation Authority (JATA) to reflect the importance of providing more regional service.

JATA is governed by a nine-member Board of Directors consisting of four citizens representing the City of Jackson and representatives from the Jackson County Board of Commissioners, Blackman Township, Leoni Township, Summit Township, and two at-large members. The JATA Board meets monthly to oversee the public transportation system. In addition, the Local Transportation Advisory Council (LTAC) assists in the development of services, as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Plan and subsequent updates; the 10(e)18 Accessibility Plan and updates required under State law; as well as coordination and consolidation issues. The LTAC also reviews and provides recommendations on services provided to both senior citizens and

individuals with disabilities. The LTAC reviews all proposed service changes including route modifications and fare increases which affect services provided to seniors and/or the disabled.



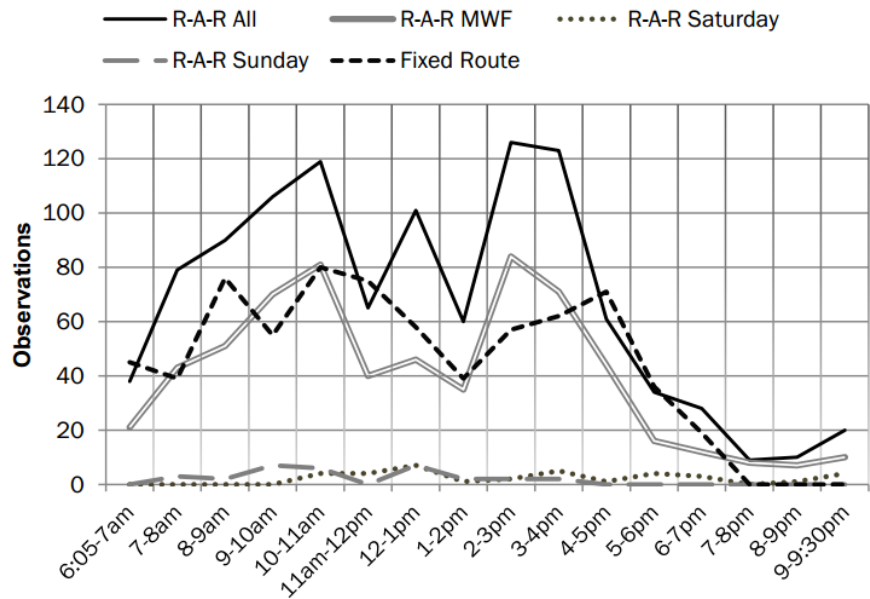
JATA Bus in downtown Jackson

Existing Levels

Service

JATA operates fixed route service on seven major routes Monday through Friday, from 6:15 AM to 6:15 PM. Saturday service runs from 10:15 AM to 6:15 PM. JATA operates two additional routes which have more defined purposes than the major routes and operate at much lower service levels based on demand. To maximize efficiency, the system is set up as a hub and spoke system. Buses meet for timed transfers at the system hub, located in Jackson’s downtown. All fixed route buses are handicapped accessible and have senior/disabled priority seating. Vehicles are equipped with bike racks to expand the service reach. Fixed route service is focused on the urban area in and around the City of Jackson.

JATA also operates demand-response, curb-to-curb services throughout the City and County. Weekday service operates from 6:15 AM to 10:15 PM; Saturday service operates from 10:00 AM to 10:00 PM; and Sunday service operates from 7:00 AM to 4:00 PM.



Existing Vehicle Fleet

The 2017 JATA fleet consists of 14 full-sized buses, ranging from 29 feet long to 40 feet long. Almost 80% of these will be eligible for replacement within the next 5 years based on their age. There are 19 medium and light duty vehicles currently in service which are used for demand response. Many of these are already eligible for replacement and a few others are pending disposal (expected Spring 2018). JATA also has 5 non-revenue vehicles used by staff in maintaining day-to-day operations. All vehicles are handicapped accessible with lifts or ramps and several have additional wheelchair stations that can accommodate up to six (6) wheelchair passengers,

**JATA Ridership – Number of Trips
1991 - 2017**

YEAR	FIXED ROUTE	DEMAND RESPONSE	SEMI-FIXED (contract)	HEAD START (contract)	TOTAL
1991-1992	685,272	49,721	59,287	0	794,280
1992-1993	760,093	53,229	59,458	0	872,780
1993-1994	761,155	63,398	56,049	0	880,602
1994-1995	708,577	68,124	41,294	0	817,995
1995-1996	665,312	66,796	35,835	0	767,943
1996-1997	626,665	66,336	37,128	0	730,129
1997-1998	618,988	73,121	36,051	0	728,160
1998-1999	597,980	80,499	38,499	0	716,978
1999-2000	593,459	96,978	37,967	0	728,404
2000-2001	585,446	119,895	18,030	87,847	811,218
2001-2002	512,621	115,378	1,605	84,948	714,552
2002-2003	516,741	107,790	0	67,584	692,115
2003-2004	495,064	98,625	0	52,418	646,107
2004-2005	513,116	95,533	0	46,189	654,838
2005-2006	559,412	89,637	0	26,292	675,341
2006-2007	480,475	74,551	0	0	555,026
2007-2008	504,390	57,105	0	0	561,495
2008-2009	505,934	52,422	0	0	558,356
2009-2010	557,561	46,444	0	0	604,005
2010-2011	582,512	44,997	0	0	627,509
2011-2012	545,384	41,829	0	0	587,213
2012-2013	530,363	42,092	0	0	572,455
2013-2014	548,102	40,476	0	0	588,578
2014-2015	549,311	39,230	0	0	588,541
2015-2016	510,768	32,232	0	0	543,000
2016-2017	486,262	34,316	0	0	520,578
TOTAL	15,000,963	1,750,754	421,203	365,278	17,538,198

Future Forecasts and Needs

JATA is expected to continue providing public transit service to the residents of Jackson County. This will include fixed route and ADA demand-response service to City of Jackson residents with additional demand-response service operating throughout the County. Transit operations are expected to continue with funding provided by passenger fares, federal and state grants, citywide millage, and service contracts.

The JATA capital program is based on fleet replacement schedules and programs. The only service expansion anticipated is for the purchase and operation of several over-the-road coaches for a possible commuter service between Jackson and Ann Arbor. However, the Connecting Jackson County study found that there is not a substantial interest in the service.

The replacement cycles represent the replacement policies, in terms of age and miles, as established by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for specific vehicle types. For the purpose of this Plan, JATA proposes to continue to operate their system at their current level of service. Although the focus of JATA will be to preserve and continue at the current level of service, this is not to imply that JATA will not be exploring service enhancement and delivery changes. However, similar to the road recommendations, only those projects which have an identified funding source are included in the list of projects.

The consultant team that completed the Connecting Jackson County Transit study determined the following list of gaps and opportunities to improve the JATA system and operations.

Service

- **Span of Service.** One of the main requests/complaints from the customer questionnaire that was completed during the study was that JATA fixed route services should be extended to later evening hours and on weekdays. There are some Reserve-A-Ride trips that originate in the fixed route service area beyond the fixed route service hours that also demonstrate this demand. Extending the service hours of existing routes or providing a limited service of supplemental evening routes should be considered.
- **Changeover of Routes.** The interlining of fixed routes (e.g. Route 1 turns into Route 2 etc.) may contribute to undercounting trips. Customers that do not get off the buses at the transfer station should be counted as transfer passengers. Once the Automatic Passenger Counter system is in place, it may provide a data set that could be used for cross referencing this data. Undercounting trips directly affects JATA's external subsidies.

Maintenance

- **Vehicles beyond useful life.** Many of the JATA Reserve-A-Ride vehicles are in service beyond their expected life span. The maintenance costs for these vehicles have shown a steady increase over the last few years. JATA requested

two new buses in 2017 by a TIP amendment. Some vehicles may show to be operating efficiently beyond a useful expectancy, while others may not. The expanded reserve-a-ride service area also adds additional stress due to the extra miles to the maintenance situation of these already aging vehicles.

Operational

- **Reserve-A-Ride Trip Scheduling.** A better tracking mechanism may be helpful for Reserve-A-Ride trips. The existing services seem to operate like a taxi service rather than a traditional paratransit system which would serve multiple customers simultaneously.
- **JATA's trip denial rate.** There are too many trips being provided that only carry one passenger at a time. This inefficiency lessens the ability for all trip needs to be met.
- **Timing of Route Transfers.** There are a few route crossings that could allow for transfers to occur outside of the Transfer Center, however the timing of these routes need adjustment to make these connections more useful.

Marketing / Branding

- **Awareness of services County wide.** There is reasonably high awareness for public transit services among the transportation disadvantaged population; however it is based largely on word of mouth and information from drivers. There is a desire for better sources of information, especially the case for the rural parts of Jackson County. The limited understanding of services might be cause for some with transit needs to be utilizing other avenues that might not be as cost efficient for their limited budgets.
- **The JATA Brand.** The agency, though now known as JATA, was once operating as JTA. Many signs and shelters still include the JTA logo and branding. This may become confusing to riders trying to differentiate the two. This may also turn away potential advertisers who wish to display their advertisements on JATA busses or benches. Additionally, the JATA drivers are very knowledgeable, and prove to be a huge resource to riders. Customers indicated that the drivers are what they like best about JATA service - more than double that of the next highest response for this question. The knowledge and friendliness of these drivers could be used in a marketing campaign to both attract and inform riders.

Coordination with other Agencies

- **Ridesharing and bicycling are just as important as public transit.** Carpools and vanpools have significantly more flexibility for certain types of trips than public transit. There would appear to be an opportunity to build on the already high level of ridesharing developing in Michigan and around the Country. Ridesharing services and matching could be useful in filling many of the mobility gaps. Additionally, the new bike share program could better supplement the

existing transit system to provide more mobility by expanding with new locations in areas served by JATA fixed route service. Coordination with the appropriate agencies could make this a reality.

- **Medical Programs and Social Service Agencies are providing services in rural communities.** There are currently a number of trips that are denied in the reserve-a-ride program due to lack of availability. Many of the JATA services to the rural parts of the County are used on medical trips that in many cases are needed 3 times a week which is all that JATA serves the area. Coordination with hospitals to better align the appointments for these patients and with other service providers to maximize the service levels could make trip denials
- **Additional Service Providers.** Services such as Michigan Flyer (AirRide) and Michivan (vRide) offer additional mobility options. The Michigan Flyer is currently investigating opportunities to add additional stop locations in Livingston County. If agencies in Jackson, including JATA, worked with them, Jackson might be able to show the need for service that once existed. This would include the City of Jackson, the Region 2 Planning Commission, Jackson County and others working together to achieve a common goal and need. Similarly the Michivan service could be a rideshare option for Jackson residents who need to travel to other counties for their daily job commute. This could benefit those without vehicles but could also prove to be more cost effective to existing drivers. This service is already active in Jackson County with 18 current vans that travel to and from Jackson to Lansing, Ann Arbor, Plymouth, and Novi at differing times and locations.

Funding

- **Service to Rural portions of Jackson County.** The Reserve-A-Ride system serves the entirety of Jackson County despite the fact that no outside agency in the County is contributing funds for this service. While JATA should be commended for continuing this service, it is financially not feasible to continue this for much longer without additional funding. JATA is obligated to serve areas within three quarters of a mile of its fixed route service area to stay in compliance with FTA requirements. However, if they allow residents in those areas to use their services to access destinations county-wide, then they are obligated to offer residents county-wide to request service as well. JATA should consider reviewing these practices and consider alternative service models that might be more feasible for the future of the agency. Alternative models might include seeking funding from townships, private partners, and restricting their services to the urbanized area amongst others.
- **Additional Funding Providers.** There are a number of areas in Jackson County that might benefit from fixed route transit access. For routes to exist to these areas however, funding partners need to be identified to make it feasible. Places like Jackson Northwest Public Schools already have an extensive advertisement

campaign to attract new students to their district which allows school of choice opportunities. Spring Arbor University may also benefit from providing a route for its students similar to Jackson College. A route in this direction might also benefit Jackson Lumen Christi High School. Reaching out to these institutions for partnering opportunities might allow the JATA fixed route system to expand, gain new riders, and provide more mobility to County residents.