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**Ann Arbor Transportation Authority**



**AATA Strategic Plan:**

# **Destination 2010**

**Adopted  
October 1999**



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Authority  
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December 1999



**To the Citizens of Ann Arbor,  
the Surrounding Townships, and Beyond**

**Dear Friends and Neighbors,**

**On behalf of the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority, we want to acknowledge and extend our appreciation to all the passengers, stakeholders, community leaders, and employees who gave their time and effort to help us develop “*Destination 2010*”. The strategic planning document you have before you represents the collaborative efforts of thousands of hours of research, planning, discussing, and organizing that took place over a 12 month period.**

***Destination 2010* is intended to provide a roadmap as AATA “drives the future” of public transportation in Ann Arbor, throughout the growing urbanized area, and into all areas of Washtenaw County and beyond. As the business, industrial, commercial and residential development of our area continues at a dizzying pace, viable transportation options will become increasingly important to support our dynamic region. AATA will continue to be the leader in facilitating mobility by providing options for safe, efficient, and reliable transportation to our community.**

**AATA welcomes you aboard. We hope this document will give you a better understanding of our plans for the future, and we appreciate any ideas or comments you may have. We’re glad to have you along on our exciting journey toward *Destination 2010* as we work to make AATA “The Ride of Choice”!**

Handwritten signature of James H. Saalberg.

Handwritten signature of Gregory E. Cook.

**James H. Saalberg, Chair  
Board of Directors of “The Ride”**

**Gregory E. Cook  
Executive Director of  
“The Ride”**

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# Executive Summary

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## INTRODUCTION

In response to the challenges anticipated over the next ten years, in 1998 the Board of Directors of the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority (AATA) resolved to develop a comprehensive strategic plan. Development of the plan, known as **Destination 2010**, was a collaborative effort involving the Board, AATA staff and employees, outside consultants, and external stakeholders.

Starting with the belief that a responsive public transit system is essential to the community's well-being, the strategic plan builds upon AATA's mission:

**“It is the Mission of the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority to facilitate mobility by providing options for safe, efficient, and reliable transportation.”**

This mission became the foundation for AATA's vision of its preferred future as “The Ride of Choice.”

AATA believes its actions are governed by the basic and unchanging values of safety, reliability, customer service and satisfaction, respect, inclusiveness, cooperation, responsibility, innovation, flexibility, and integrity. All strategic initiatives designed to move AATA toward **Destination 2010** must align with these values to ensure that AATA's basic tenets are respected.

As a starting point, those involved in the strategic planning process gathered information and input from a wide variety of sources. The data was filtered through the strategic issues model, which represents graphically how AATA responds to constraints and opportunities as they impact its core issues of *where* it will operate, *whom* it will serve, and *what* products or actions will best address the challenges of the next decade. The model also considers how the organization's core values affect these responses. In addition to its use in the strategic planning process, the model will be used as a tool to help AATA develop future strategic initiatives and work plans.

The data gathering portion of the strategic planning effort identified the following challenges AATA will face during the coming decade:

- # A larger transit-dependent population
- # Continued county-wide urbanization and population growth
- # Increased congestion of the county's transportation infrastructure
- # Ongoing technical advances that increase transit's productivity
- # Continued limited labor supplies
- # The need to improve internal culture

- # The necessity of attracting non transit-dependent riders to mitigate transportation congestion and broaden and strengthen community support

## **THE STRATEGIC PLAN: DESTINATION 2010**

Armed with a clear understanding of its mission, a better appreciation of its values, and an awareness of the challenges before it, AATA incorporated the needs and desires of its stakeholders into a strategic plan, **Destination 2010**. The plan is designed to be a flexible, living document that both guides AATA in the development of strategic initiatives and allows the organization to respond rapidly and appropriately to unexpected constraints or opportunities. The plan, which is organized similarly to the strategic issues model, addresses the core issues of where AATA will operate, who its customers will be, and what products or services it will offer:

### **Where:**

- # AATA will provide or facilitate transportation services throughout Washtenaw County and will maintain links to other transportation providers in Wayne, Oakland, Livingston, Jackson, and Monroe counties.
- # Fixed routes will form the backbone of the system within the urbanized area surrounding Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti.
- # Regularly scheduled routes will connect the urbanized area with the Detroit Metropolitan Airport while express routes will operate on or along north/south and east/west freeway corridors.
- # Demand response services will operate in low density urbanized areas still under development or in outlying small communities unable to support fixed routes.
- # Special event shuttles will operate between the urbanized area and venues throughout Southeast Michigan.
- # Finally, all of Southeast Michigan and Northwest Ohio will benefit from car and van pooling provided by AATA's RideShare activities.

### **Who:**

- # AATA will serve the widest customer base possible within its principal geographic service area (defined as Washtenaw County).
- # The bulk of its customers will continue to reside in the urbanized area that includes Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti.
- # The organization will, however, cater as much as possible to customers living outside the urbanized area who have transportation needs within the service area.
- # AATA will continue to serve large numbers of transit-dependent customers who have no access to other transportation.
- # Workers with fixed (i.e., non-variable) transportation needs will also be served.

- # Finally, in order to broaden its base of support, AATA will serve a growing number of non transit- dependent customers with fixed or repetitive transportation needs, as well as those with variable or changing transportation patterns.

**What:** There are a variety of actions AATA can take to meet the challenges of the next decade. These initiatives fall under three basic strategic themes:

**Theme 1: Improving AATA’s Services:**

- # AATA will improve and fully develop the services it operates within Washtenaw County.
- # Existing bus schedules will be adjusted or supplemented with additional services in order to reduce waiting time for customers.
- # Park-and-ride lots will be improved.
- # Physical amenities and facilities (shelters, transfer centers, etc.) will be upgraded.
- # Passenger convenience will be improved through such actions as increasing through-routing and implementing cash-less fare payment systems.
- # Customer service training will receive a new emphasis.
- # Technology will continue to be used as a tool to improve services to customers.
- # Public information systems and processes will be designed to make information more timely, accessible, and accurate.
- # Monitoring and reporting systems will be used to gauge the daily delivery of transportation services.

**Theme 2: Broadening AATA’s Services:**

- # AATA will expand its services outward as the urbanized area continues to grow.
- # Agreements will be negotiated with other transportation providers to develop an area-wide seamless system.
- # Park-and-ride lots will be expanded with renewed marketing efforts made to attract new passengers.
- # Specialized services (e.g., airport shuttles and late night entertainment shuttles) will be instituted.
  
- # Transportation services will be designed for commuting, entertainment, and recreational purposes to attract non transit-dependent customers.
- # Aggressive education and marketing programs will be used to broaden AATA’s customer base and build public support.

**Theme 3: Building the AATA Organization to Deliver its Services:**

- # AATA will assure that all its programs and policies reflect its core values and that employees and stakeholders are continually engaged in strategic thinking and planning.
- # Internal culture themes and benchmarks will be assessed regularly to ensure the organization achieves its ideals.

- # Employee training will continue to improve customer relations and address ongoing safety issues.
- # Technology will continue to be used as a tool to improve services to internal customers.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

AATA gratefully acknowledges the contributions of its Board members, management staff, employees and external stakeholders in the development of this strategic plan. The efforts of these individuals have helped ensure that AATA will be fully equipped to meet the challenges along the way to **Destination 2010**.

# Introduction and Background

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The Ann Arbor Transportation Authority (AATA) was authorized by an act of the Michigan State Legislature in 1968 to provide public transportation services within Washtenaw County. The City of Ann Arbor created AATA's Articles of Incorporation and authorized the system to provide public mass transportation services both within and beyond the corporate limits of the City of Ann Arbor.

AATA is governed by a seven-member Board of Directors whose members are appointed by the Mayor of Ann Arbor with approval from the City Council. This Board sets policies and hires an Executive Director who is charged with the overall management of the transportation system. Recognizing the advantages of having a formal framework to help ensure the quality of its policy decisions, in 1998 the Board authorized the Executive Director to undertake the development of a ten-year strategic plan.

AATA envisions that the strategic plan, known as **Destination 2010**, will serve a number of purposes. In addition to its use as a policy-making tool, the plan will help provide a clear vision for AATA's future development by clarifying the links between excellent customer service and the organization's overall success. The plan also will be used as a framework to ensure that daily decisions are consistent with AATA's mission and vision. Finally, management views the strategic planning process as a way to improve internal communication and address issues regarding internal culture.

An ad hoc committee of senior management and representatives from the Board selected a consultant to work with AATA in the strategic planning process. A core team of representatives from all levels of the organization was created to oversee the process and work began on the project in early 1999.

The strategic plan represents the collaborative efforts of AATA Board members, management, and employees working together and utilizing input from a wide representation of the local community, including AATA's passengers; local government officials; business and industry leaders; and representatives of educational institutions and social service agencies. The plan is intended to be a flexible framework around which will be built AATA's and the community's transportation future over the next decade. A mechanism will be developed to ensure ongoing review and updating as necessary to keep the plan a "living working document".



# Mission, Vision and Values

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It is the deep belief of the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority that convincing people to choose public transit is essential to the continued well-being of the community over the next ten years. Providing a transit system that adapts and fits to the changing needs of the area is critical to preserving the quality of life for everyone. AATA must meet the challenges of traffic congestion, pollution, energy conservation and social equity by providing and aggressively promoting the best possible transit services.

During the strategic planning process, these beliefs were formalized in statements of AATA's vision and values as complements to the previously-established mission statement.

## MISSION

**“It is the Mission of the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority to facilitate mobility by providing options for safe, efficient, and reliable transportation.”**

## VISION: “The Ride of Choice”

The Ann Arbor Transportation Authority is an organization providing, managing, and facilitating the greatest range of high-quality transportation options throughout Washtenaw County. It is an organization that respects and values its customers and its employees. AATA maintains its position as a recognized leader in the public transportation industry by being a flexible organization utilizing innovative technology and practices for the benefit of its customers. Members of AATA interact and work together and with external stakeholders in a spirit of cooperation and with the highest professional standards in order to make the organization “The Ride of Choice”.

## VALUES

AATA believes its actions must be built upon the following important and unchanging values:

**Safety:** Safety means security from hurt, injury or loss. AATA is pro-active in the promotion of vehicular, personal, and industrial safety for its customers, employees, and the general public. AATA provides thorough and ongoing safety-oriented training programs for all employees. In addition, equipment, policies, and actual practices are monitored and evaluated to ensure continued adherence to the guiding principle of “Safety First.”

**Reliability:** Reliability translates into consistent performance over time and is critical to those who depend upon AATA for transportation. Adherence to published schedules in association with operating conditions is a high priority, however, schedules are always secondary to safety.

Reliability is also an important factor in AATA's relationship with the community. AATA can always be relied upon to be a responsible and dependable asset to the community by being an ally to local organizations, foundations, government, and civic groups.

**Customer Service and Satisfaction:** Customer service means giving the highest level of respect and service possible to the community in order to achieve the highest level of customer satisfaction. AATA was created by the community's residents and believes it exists to benefit and serve that community. AATA meets or exceeds the expectations and entitlements of its stakeholders by enhancing the welfare of the community through high-quality transportation services.

The concept of customer service also applies internally to employees who depend upon their coworkers in order to fulfill their own job responsibilities. AATA is dedicated to supporting its internal customers and believes they are entitled to the same high levels of cooperation and respect as external customers.

**Respect:** Respect defines the relationship between individuals. AATA insists that attentiveness, consideration, and courtesy be observed at all times and by all parties--whether the occasion involves a fellow employee, a customer, or a member of the general public.

**Inclusiveness:** Inclusiveness stems from adherence to the value of "respect" and results in a non-discriminatory organization. AATA considers each employee to be important, and in so doing, the entire organization becomes greater than the sum of its parts. Inclusiveness means that all employees, regardless of personal characteristics, are afforded the same level of respect and are actively encouraged to participate to the fullest in all AATA activities.

AATA also provides the same high-quality transportation service to all customers without discrimination. To ensure inclusiveness, AATA actively solicits and considers input and participation from customers, employees, and the community.

**Cooperation:** Cooperation means working together for a common benefit. As an organization, AATA exhibits cooperation by creating an atmosphere of respect for both internal and external stakeholders. This "teamwork" concept translates into individuals working together to reach common goals, with every individual subordinating his or

her personal prominence to the efficiency and success of the whole group.

**Responsibility:** Responsibility means being accountable for one's actions or conduct. For AATA, this entails fulfilling all obligations in a legal, ethical and moral manner. Whether these obligations involve the environment, financial stewardship, community services, legal issues, customers, employees, or the general public, responsibility guides AATA's use of its assets and opportunities. Responsibility includes both stewardship of resources and adherence to the organization's core values.

**Innovation:** Innovation describes the introduction or use of new ideas, methods, or devices in order to do something in a new and better way, including the use of new technology and practices. AATA strives to be an industry leader in innovation and uses innovative technological solutions to transportation problems hand-in-hand with new methods and ideas.

Innovation is used to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of transportation services and to improve working conditions for employees. Behind this value is the belief that there is a better way of doing something just waiting to be discovered. A belief in the value of innovation includes the responsibility to share both successes and failures with other transportation providers so that all may benefit.

**Flexibility:** Flexibility is being willing and able to adapt to new, different, or changing conditions and is essential to take maximum advantage of innovations. AATA prides itself on being a flexible organization willing to capitalize on opportunities as they arise. Flexibility allows the organization to adapt to and better manage its constraints and incorporates the ability to make changes or adjustments in a relatively quick manner. Without the value of "cooperation", flexibility is difficult to achieve.

**Integrity:** Integrity incorporates recognizing the principles of right and wrong (ethics) and relating those principles to behavior (morals). AATA strives to maintain the highest level of character in its actions and does not tolerate lying, stealing, or deception in any form, for any purpose, or by any party. Included in integrity is a high regard for what are considered to be ethical professional standards within the transportation industry, government, and public service. AATA strives to demonstrate trustworthiness, credibility, frankness and sincerity to earn the trust of the community and its employees.

# The Strategic Planning Process

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The strategic plan was developed over a period of several months and involved a number of both internal and external stakeholders. Key to process was the use of the strategic issues model, which provided an overall contextual framework for the development of the plan.

## WORK PLAN

Initially, a **Selection Committee** comprised of Board members and senior staff chose a consultant to assist with the strategic planning project. Together, this committee and the consultants reached agreement on the scope of work, project goals, and an approach to working together.

Central to developing the strategic plan was a commitment to include and involve all parts of AATA's organization. To this end, a number of teams were created that included senior management, Board members, and union and non-union staff:

- # The **Core Team** was responsible for coordinating all elements of the process, guiding and reviewing the work done by all other teams, and generating the final plan.
- # The **Leadership Alignment Team** was created to initiate dialogue throughout the organization in order to build consensus toward working in the same general direction and toward the same general goals.
- # The **Research Team** was charged with assembling key data on demographic, development, and traffic trends, as well as information on the legal, political, and fiscal environment in which AATA operates.
- # The **Strategic Issues and Opportunities Team** was responsible for designing and coordinating the involvement of the workforce in order to integrate their thoughts and ideas into the strategic plan.
- # The primary mission of the **Communications Committee** was to disseminate information throughout AATA regarding the activities involved in each phase of the strategic planning process.
- # The **Internal Culture Team** focused on ensuring that overall organizational values were expressed both in how AATA defines and fulfills its mission and how it works internally as an organization.

The Core Team, the consultants, and the Leadership Alignment Team worked together to produce a detailed work plan, defined the team structure as described above, and identified the key research areas where important information was needed. More than 40 individuals were involved in the work of various teams.

The Research Team, the Core Team, and the AATA Board of Directors identified strategic issues and opportunities to be explored further by the Research Team. The Strategic Issues and Opportunities Team designed a series of work sessions to involve and educate all employees about the work plan and to involve them in the process of defining the challenges and opportunities facing the organization over the next ten years. These sessions, which came to be known as the “Mr. Potato Head” events, were facilitated by teams of staff and Board members. More than a dozen sessions were held with 98% of AATA staff participating in at least one.

The employee input gathered during the Mr. Potato Head events was used to generate ideas for future development and to formalize a set of organizational values. This process also resulted in the creation of the strategic issues model which summarizes graphically how AATA perceives its strategic environment. This model later became a way to better visualize the relationships among all issues which impact upon the organization.

A special team known as the **Stakeholder Council Design Team** was chartered by the Core Team for the purpose of identifying individuals representing groups outside the AATA organization who have a major interest in the future of public transit in the area. More than 60 such stakeholders were identified as representatives of passengers, local government and businesses, the public school systems and universities, and social service agencies. A series of four stakeholder sessions were held with a total of 45 stakeholders participating. The stakeholder sessions were facilitated by AATA staff and were designed to gather the views and preferences of these individuals. The various ideas presented by the stakeholders were carefully recorded so that they could be considered along with the ideas generated through internal research efforts.

Subsequently, the Core Team reviewed information gathered by the Research Team and the Internal Culture Team, as well as information gathered during numerous internal and external stakeholder sessions. This information was organized to reflect the interest and importance given it during stakeholder discussions.

A subgroup of the Core Team, using information gathered during all phases of research and the stakeholder sessions, then developed a draft strategic plan which included mission, vision, and value statements. This draft strategic plan was submitted to both the Board of Directors and internal stakeholders for final review to ensure it would be supported by the Board, staff, and employees.

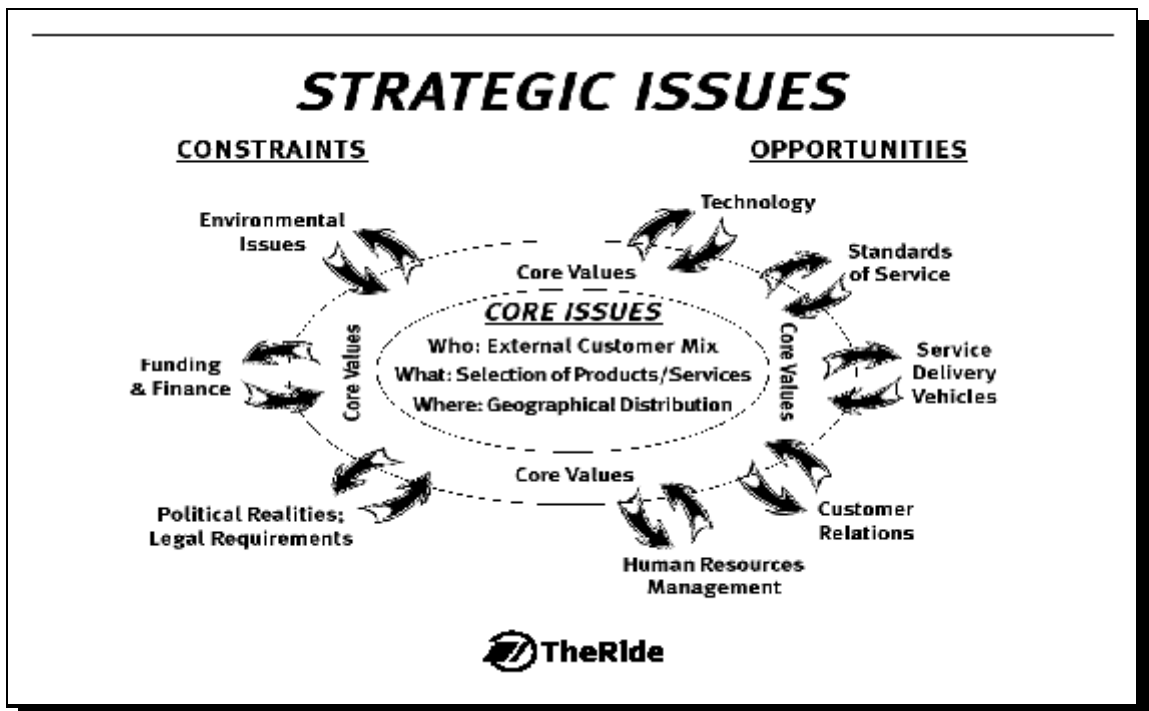
Following the review process, the Board of Directors approved the strategic plan. The completed plan was then disseminated throughout the community (including to the stakeholders).

As part of an ongoing process, the Board of Directors will work with AATA management staff to create annual goals and objectives for implementation of the strategic plan over time. Draft goals and objectives for the organization as a whole will be developed for review and approval by the Board as an initial step in the creation of the goals and objectives.

The strategic plan will be monitored at minimum on an annual basis and modified as appropriate to account for changing conditions and continuing stakeholder input. These changing conditions may have already been contemplated in the plan itself, or may materialize unexpectedly during the course of plan implementation.

## THE STRATEGIC ISSUES MODEL

Early in the process of identifying the strategic issues facing AATA, it became clear there were many different opportunities and constraints working independently and in concert to affect the organization. Recognizing the complexity involved in the relationships among these opportunities and constraints, the teams felt it necessary to develop an effective way to think and act upon them. The outcome of this effort was the development of the "Strategic Issues Model", which provided a contextual framework for the strategic planning process.



The purpose of the model is to illustrate how AATA's core values surround the discussion of its core issues, as expressed in terms of questions regarding "where", "who", and "what" must be considered. The variables surrounding and affecting the core issues are the opportunities and constraints. In using the model, AATA learned how to balance the various elements and understand the relationships among them.

All employees were trained to use the model, practiced using it, and eventually applied it during strategic planning sessions. As the organization gained experience with the model, it became clear that this framework should continue to be used during implementation of the strategic plan. The outcome of this systems approach to strategic thinking contributed to an increased awareness by the entire work force of what is possible when everyone works together.

# The Data

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A crucial element in developing AATA's strategic plan involved accumulating data upon which to base future assumptions. The body of knowledge generated became the foundation for the development of the plan, which is intended to direct AATA toward its preferred future, while at the same time allowing the organization the flexibility to take maximum advantage of changing conditions as they unfold and of various opportunities as they are revealed.

Since no one has perfect forward vision, it is important in any ongoing strategic planning process to institute a method by which changing conditions are regularly checked against the assumptions that were originally made about them. Using this "check-in" process as a base, new research can be done and data gathered that will enable AATA to fine-tune its strategic plan as it moves closer toward its preferred future.

All strategic plans must start from somewhere, and that "somewhere" for AATA encompasses the research and information gathered during the first six months of 1999. The following summaries include research done by various employee teams working under the direction of the Core Team. Additional data was generated from a series of surveys and feedback sessions held with employees and stakeholder groups. Together this body of information, as summarized below, provided the foundation on which AATA's strategic plan builds.

*The data gathered in this process was often exhaustive, and for the benefit of brevity and ease of handling has been summarized throughout this document. The complete scope of research material, surveys, and studies; lists of in-house and stakeholder participants; unabridged stakeholders' and employees' comments; editions of newsletters; progress notes; consultant recommendations and feedback; and other data generated or gathered during the strategic planning process is on file at AATA's headquarters and is available for review.*

## EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

Data regarding the environment external to AATA was generated from three general areas:

- # The Research Team gathered information describing trends within Washtenaw County that are expected to impact AATA and its mandate to provide transportation services to the area over the next ten years as well as data on the current status of various other issues expected to influence the organization over that time.
- # External stakeholders representing a variety of interests in the Ann Arbor area were asked to offer their ideas regarding the ten-year transportation needs of the community.
- # Customer service and satisfaction assessments were reviewed and assessed to gather data relevant to the development of the strategic plan.



## Demographic Findings

A number of sources of current demographic data and future projections were reviewed by the Research Team. The findings were organized around the core issues as identified in AATA's strategic issues model and are summarized as follows:

### Where: "Where will AATA need to provide its services?"

- # The U.S. Census Bureau defines "urbanized area" as any area consisting of a central place(s) and adjacent urban fringe that together have a minimum residential population of at least 50,000 people and generally an overall population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile of land area. The urbanized area including Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti is nearly fully developed in 1999, so growth potential there will be limited.
- # The Census Bureau defines "urban fringe" as being any closely settled territory adjacent to an urbanized area and which generally has an overall population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile of land area. Most of the growth in population and households in Washtenaw County is expected to occur in the townships on the urban fringe, particularly Ypsilanti, Pittsfield, and Scio Townships, as well as in and around the outlying cities/villages of Saline, Dexter, Chelsea, and Manchester.
- # Most of the projected population growth is expected to be in low-density subdivisions (less than four dwelling units per acre).
- # Despite this anticipated suburban growth, the existing urbanized area will still contain more than two-thirds of the population of the county in about 12% of the area.
- # Generally, the minimum population density necessary to support fixed route transit service is seven dwelling units per acre. Only the urbanized area is expected to have this level of population density.
- # The presence of The University of Michigan and a healthy downtown will result in a continued concentration of employment in downtown Ann Arbor. Employment is also expected to remain concentrated in areas such as Briarwood, St. Joseph Medical Center/Washtenaw Community College, and Eastern Michigan University.
- # Growth in employment concentration, like population growth, is expected on the fringe of the urbanized area including Jackson Road west from Ann Arbor, State Road south from Ann Arbor, and the Willow Run area east of Ypsilanti.

The following graphic, known as "The Bug", was used to illustrate the "where" issues described in the strategic issues model. The white portions of the graphic represent the City of Ann Arbor, while the black segment represents the remainder of the urbanized area outside the city. The shaded area represents the remainder of Washtenaw County outside both the City of Ann Arbor and the remainder of the urbanized area.

# Where?



## PRIMARY SERVICE CHALLENGE

1. Ann Arbor - Develop Ridership
2. Urbanized Areas Outside Ann Arbor - Develop Funding to Provide Expanded Service
3. Outcounty - Develop Service Plan for Large, Low-Density Area

## WASHTENAW COUNTY

- No current AATA service (except Chel-Dex and limited paratransit in some areas)
- Low population density (below threshold for conventional transit - less than 7 dwelling units/acre)
- No current local funding for transit
- No political structure in place for AATA to work with

### ANN ARBOR

- High existing service level
- Dedicated funding
- AATA Board determines level of service.

### DOWNTOWN/CAMPUS

- Paid parking
- High population density
- UM Campus & Businesses

### REMAINDER OF URBANIZED AREA

- Moderate to low level of current AATA service
- Population density high enough to support conventional transit
- Local funding through negotiated annual purchase to-service agreements with Ypsilanti & townships
- Elected officials determine level of service on ability/willingness to pay local share

## Who: “Who are expected to be AATA’s customers?”

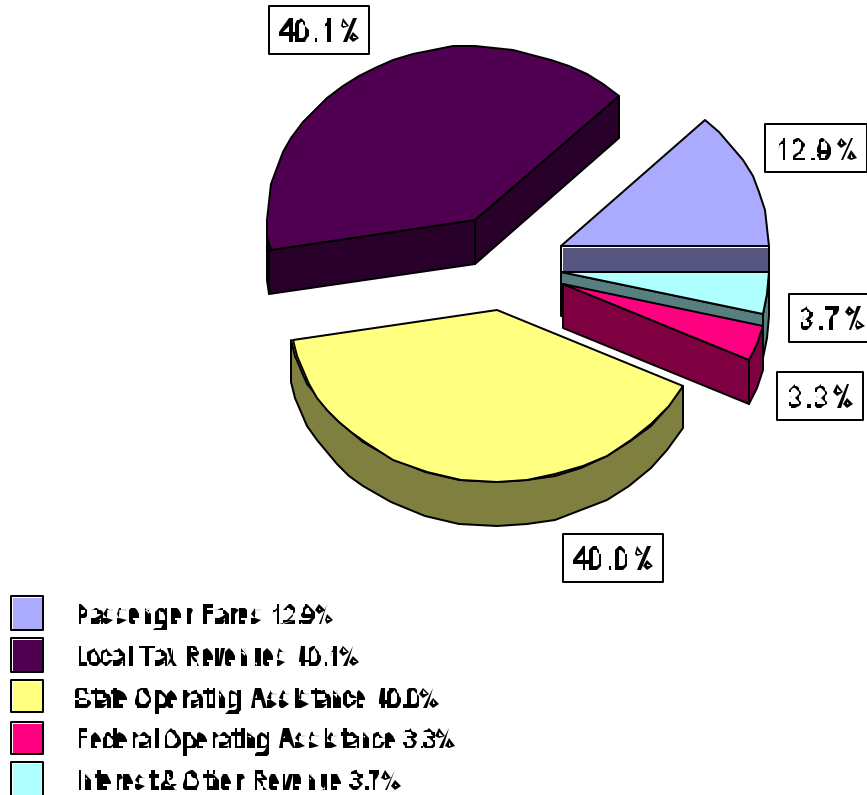
- # By 2010, the population of Washtenaw County is projected to increase by 8.6% from 313,071 to 340,000. This will primarily be the result of migration into the county.
- # The number of elderly persons (age 65+) is expected to increase by more than 25%, with the oldest age group (85+) expected to more than double by 2020. This is particularly important to AATA, since elderly persons have significantly different patterns of income, trip patterns, auto ownership, and disability than the general population.
- # The number of persons with disabilities of all ages (particularly those with severe disabilities) is expected to increase, but no estimates of the magnitude of increase were located.
- # The number of households is expected to increase at a faster rate than the population, as the number of persons per household decreases. This trend toward smaller households has resulted as families have fewer children and more people live alone.
- # Thirty-six percent of the population reports using AATA service at least once per year. Those who have an AATA route within three blocks of their home are more likely to have used AATA service. Seven percent of the population reports using service regularly (three or more times per week).

- # Regular users (those who use the service three or more times per week) make up more than 80% of AATA ridership and differ significantly from the general population in terms of age (median age = 30), income (median income < \$30,000 per year), auto availability (a third have no vehicle in their household), and employment (44% are employed full-time and 29% are full or part-time college students).
- # Infrequent riders (those who use the service less than three times per week) are *not* significantly different from the general population in terms of age, income, auto availability, and employment.
- # Twenty-five percent of AATA rides are made by people who had a vehicle available for the trip, but who chose to use the bus.

**What: “What demographic aspects affecting transportation need to be considered?”**

- # Traffic congestion is expected to increase. Vehicle miles traveled are projected to grow both due to increasing population, as well as increasing miles per person.
- # Some new road construction is expected, but much less than the growth in travel. Currently, most congested roadways are in the urbanized area. Most of the increase in roadway congestion is expected to be in the urban fringe.
- # Currently, a large number of people commute from outside Washtenaw County to work at jobs within the county. At the same time, Washtenaw County also has a large number of people who commute from within the county to work at jobs in other counties. Washtenaw County is relatively unusual in this respect. The number of people commuting both into and out of Washtenaw County is expected to continue to increase.
- # Job growth in Washtenaw County is expected to grow by nearly 50% over the next 25 years, faster than the rate of population growth. The growth in retail jobs is expected to be higher than the growth in other areas.
- # Neither The University of Michigan nor Eastern Michigan University expect a major increase in enrollment in the near future.
- # The number of school-age children is not expected to increase faster than the general population.

# FY 1999 REVENUES



**Funding**

## Facts

- # AATA is funded primarily by Ann Arbor property tax millage, state operating assistance, passenger fares, interest income, purchase of service agreements with other governments, and federal categorical grants. These sources are currently stable, but are subject to fluctuations due to circumstances outside AATA's control.
- # Ninety percent of operating revenues come from the millage, the state, and fares. Funds from the millage have been increasing about 4% per year.
- # State operating assistance is the least stable funding source, fluctuating between 31% and 50% of expenses. Changing funding formulas could have significant impacts.
- # Passenger revenues have been increasing at a rate slightly faster than ridership. A significant trend is the payment of fares by someone other than the rider (e.g., The University of Michigan, Eastern Michigan University, the Ann Arbor Public Schools, and employers).

- # Capital funding for buses, facilities, etc., is generally provided by federal grants (80%) and state sources (20%). AATA's allocation of federal capital dollars has been increasing. Since matching federal funds is a Michigan priority, state funding is considered secure. A few capital expenses do not qualify for federal or state funds and therefore require the use of local funds.

## Legal Environment

- # Since there is no county-wide planning authority in Michigan and no cross-township collaboration is required, townships have complete autonomy in planning.
- # Townships cannot charge developers for the off-site impacts of their developments (e.g., increased street usage). As a result, local growth remains difficult to control.
- # AATA's service area is defined as Washtenaw County. Inter-local agreements with other jurisdictions must be obtained to provide services outside Washtenaw County.
- # Existing legal obstacles are few and generally not difficult to resolve when changes to existing services or areas are desired.
- # AATA practices and services currently meet or exceed ADA requirements. The implications of ADA on new services must be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

*NOTE: Projections for the future are based on current trends and expert guesses about changes that are likely to occur. Even the best projections can be overwhelmed by unexpected events. The unabridged Research Team findings are available for review at AATA's headquarters.*

## Stakeholder Sessions

An important aspect of the strategic planning process was seeking out and listening to the needs of the community. Four external stakeholder sessions were designed to initiate dialogue on the ten-year transportation needs of the area. The meetings allowed AATA to suspend all assumptions and engage in critical thinking with members of the community.

The sessions were facilitated by AATA staff and involved more than 45 stakeholders who provided a wealth of feedback about what they wanted AATA to look like in 2010, including where AATA should operate and what kinds of services it should provide. The stakeholders presented ideas and concerns regarding 35 different issues which were then grouped into the following general themes:

- # Public transportation should be "seamless" to the user-- regardless of who provides that transportation. Therefore, AATA should work toward integrating all modes/providers of public transportation in the area so that customers can easily go from one to another.
- # AATA should expand both its services and its service area as the population, business, and

industrial development of Washtenaw County grows. In order to do this, AATA must seek and develop additional funding sources.

- # More frequent and convenient service to park-and-ride lots should be developed, with lot sites both within and outside the urbanized area in order to attract both local residents and commuters.
- # AATA should become a regional transit system with its base in Washtenaw County, but with express feeders reaching out into adjoining counties, particularly to Detroit Metropolitan Airport and the Detroit and suburban transit systems.
- # AATA should work to provide a link between employees and employers as labor shortages in Washtenaw County continue to attract workers from outside the area.
- # AATA must find a way to provide transportation services to the less densely populated suburban areas that will contain an ever-larger proportion of people (population growth appears to have stabilized within the densely populated cities).
- # AATA should utilize both marketing and education efforts to upgrade its public image as a safe, reliable, efficient, and sensible alternative to the private automobile. AATA should work diligently to educate area residents in order to raise its value within the community.
- # AATA should expand services of vital importance to senior citizens and people with disabilities, including the extension of discounted fares and expansion of direct trips throughout the entire AATA service area.
- # AATA should work with government leaders and decision makers throughout the community to make the infrastructure development of the Ann Arbor area more “transit friendly”.
- # AATA should remember that an excellent public transportation system is crucial to the continued economic health of Washtenaw County as a means of providing transportation for employees, students, the elderly, and visitors as well as offering an alternative to continued traffic congestion, parking problems, and pollution.
- # Public transportation is important in maintaining strong and vibrant downtowns in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, but AATA must remember that there are other destinations within its service area that attract large numbers of people. All passengers should be provided with adequate access to convenient transportation to destinations throughout AATA’s service area.
- # AATA should partner with social service agencies and other non-profit organizations, not only in the provision of transportation services, but in assisting these agencies in working with their funding sources.

The stakeholders expressed many times their pleasure at being included in AATA’s planning process. The stakeholders continuously voiced their strong support for AATA and stated that AATA is already doing a great job in providing public transportation services. The main concerns of these focus groups centered around AATA positioning itself to do an even better job in the coming decade and developing further strengths to take advantage of opportunities as they arise.

Information and feedback received during the stakeholders sessions was analyzed by teams working under the coordination of the Core Team. The information from the stakeholders added to the wealth

of information gathered from other sources. AATA promised to share the findings of the plan with the group.

*The complete notes from the Stakeholder Sessions from which this information was refined, along with a roster of the individuals involved, is available for review at AATA's offices.*

### **Customer Service and Satisfaction Assessments**

The Customer Service and Satisfaction Subcommittee of the Research Committee was charged with gathering and processing data regarding customer satisfaction with AATA's services and performance and with translating this information into a form that could be used by the Core Team in the strategic planning process. Data used in these assessments came from the following sources:

- # ***The 1998 AATA Household Survey*** conducted under the direction of Dr. Jonathan Levine and Hui-Chun Huang of the Urban and Regional Planning Program of The University of Michigan. This was an in-depth survey that showed a fairly high level of satisfaction with AATA's overall services and responsiveness to the community's needs.
- # ***The Annual On-Board Survey*** conducted in mid-1999 under AATA's direction. This survey showed a high and consistent level of customer (i.e., passenger) satisfaction with AATA's transportation services and indicated only minor year-to-year changes in satisfaction levels despite increased traffic congestion and widespread street construction activity.
- # ***The Critical Bus Operator Behaviors: An Analysis of Rider Perceptions, Final Report***, conducted by the Transportation Studies Center of Central Michigan University in 1994. Data from this assessment identified both positive and negative bus driver behaviors and ranked them according to passenger perceptions. The study found that bus operators generally had a solid understanding of their job as well as which driver behaviors passengers consider important. The study also indicated that passengers understood the complexity of a bus operator's job and most often felt that drivers were an asset to the AATA system. Riders were mainly concerned with other issues such as bus operation hours, schedule changes, routes, schedule times, etc.

*More detailed information on these studies is available for review at AATA's headquarters.*

## INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

Data regarding the internal environment includes an analysis of current AATA services, as well as an assessment of internal culture and summaries of employee comments.

### **The Present: a Snapshot of AATA on its 30<sup>th</sup> Birthday**

The research and data gathering phase included an assessment of AATA as it appears in 1999. The following represents how AATA currently addresses the core issues of “where”, “who”, and “what” as described in the strategic issues model:

#### **Where: “The Geographic Area Served by AATA”**

AATA provides services within the Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti urbanized areas and portions of Ypsilanti, Pittsfield and Superior Townships. It also operates an inter-urban express route between Ann Arbor, Chelsea, and Dexter. Fixed routes in Ann Arbor are located within 1/4 mile of 95% of all residences. Paratransit services are provided within 3/4 mile of all AATA fixed routes.

#### **Who: “Customers for Whom Services are Provided”**

- # Transit-dependent
- # Senior citizens
- # People with disabilities
- # Economically disadvantaged
- # Students: K - 12, as well as college and university students
- # Employees
- # Special event riders to art fairs, football games, commencements, shopping, etc.

#### **What: “Selection of Services Available to the Public”**

- # Regularly scheduled bus services on 25 fixed routes
- # Express routes and park-and-ride shuttles
- # Selection of fare options (passes, tokens, ½ fare tokens, discount cards, etc.)
- # A-Ride Services within 3/4 mile of all fixed routes for people with disabilities
- # AATA fixed route services within 1/4 mile of 95% of Ann Arbor residences
- # Senior Ride Program & Gold Card Program
- # Youth Ride Program
- # Telephone device for the deaf (TDD)
- # Web site for route, schedule, and general information
- # Handicap accessible vehicles and facilities
- # Accessible transit guide book and schedule booklet
- # Five park-and-ride lots



- # RideShare services to facilitate van and car pools
- # Holiday Ride and Night Ride (taxi services when fixed routes do not operate)
- # Art Fair, Football, Commencement, and other special event shuttles
- # AOS System - audio and visual automatic announcements of route time points

## Internal Culture Assessment

An internal culture assessment was performed by a cross-functional team of AATA employees. The assessment utilized a survey prepared and later interpreted by Dr. Dan Dennison of The University of Michigan. The assessment also utilized one-on-one interviews with approximately 20 percent of AATA's employees representing all jobs and seniority levels within the organization. The internal culture assessment gave employees the opportunity to discuss qualities they felt would result in an "ideal culture" at AATA. Those ideas included:

- # Everyone is accountable to deliver their best
- # Both individuals and the organization are achievement-oriented
- # Trust is felt because people follow through on commitments
- # Mutual respect and consideration is readily visible
- # Everyone feels respected and valued
- # Appreciation is shared and shown both in formal and informal ways
- # Doing a steady and responsible job is appreciated and recognized
- # Going above and beyond is encouraged and appreciated
- # Communication channels are strong
- # Information flows multi-directionally
- # People understand the big picture by knowing both organizational goals and their part in them
- # Goals and standards are established and regularly evaluated across functions
- # People take responsibility and ownership and are willing to make decisions
- # Pride dominates
- # All employees help each other to do their best in order to provide the best service to the community
- # Encouragement, appreciation, and incentives help people do their best
- # Everyone strives to be the best in everything they do
- # The highest standards of service, customer relations, tools and skills, and interpersonal relationships are maintained

*The complete text of the Internal Culture Assessment is available for review at AATA's headquarters.*

## Employee Core Value Comments

The Strategic Issues and Opportunities Team developed an interactive event in order to gather input from all employees. The purpose of this series of meetings, which became known as the “Mr. Potato Head” sessions, was to gather employees’ ideas regarding AATA’s core values and to begin to develop a picture of what the entire organization should look like in 2010.

Core values are considered extremely important when building a strategic plan. These values have a great impact on how the questions of “Where?”, “Who?”, and “What?” are answered. Core values help define AATA as a whole, as well as how it interacts with the community and treats individuals within the organization. Employees participating in Mr. Potato Head had many ideas on core values, which were then submitted to the Internal Culture Team for their use and input into the final strategic plan. The core value comments made by employees have been grouped into the categories listed below:

### **AATA Stresses Customer Service By:**

- # Being customer-oriented
- # Providing friendly service
- # Respecting customers
- # Treating customers equally
- # Providing good information to customers
- # Meeting the needs of passengers
- # Developing knowledgeable employees
- # Seeing to the customer’s comfort
- # Giving the customer the benefit of the doubt (empathy)
- # Making all employees ambassadors for the organization
- # Offering convenient and accessible services
- # Having enough buses
- # Recognizing and appreciating diversity
- # Dealing with customers in a consistent manner

### **AATA is a Professional Organization Because it:**

- # Maintains its integrity
- # Looks and acts professionally
- # Shows pride and commitment to the job
- # Works toward employee development
- # Develops employees who are knowledgeable about their work
- # Treats all employees in a consistent manner
- # Provides employees with ongoing learning
- # Makes access to everyone within the organization easy
- # Always strives to exceed expectations
- # Hires friendly employees

- # Strives to make AATA a fun place at which to work

**AATA Makes Safety its Number 1 Priority By:**

- # Always being safety conscious
- # Keeping security a very important issue
- # Ensuring working conditions reflect safe habits
- # Addressing customer and driver complaints regarding vehicles
- # Maintaining top notch maintenance practices

**AATA Shows Financial Stewardship to the Community By:**

- # Always carefully watching and using tax dollars
- # Taking fiduciary responsibilities very seriously
- # Always being “budget conscious”
- # Using community resources whenever possible
- # Believing that full buses help illustrate the organization’s efficiency to the community

**AATA Strives to Be Reliable By:**

- # Making on-time service one of its most important issues
- # Dependably being there for customers every day
- # Providing equal access to a ride for every customer
- # Providing frequent and direct service
- # Being flexible in order to meet customers’ needs
- # Constantly refining its service schedules
- # Working to provide a stable route structure
- # Always striving to improving its reliability

**AATA Uses Communications Effectively By:**

- # Making open communications a priority
- # Making information related to changes available throughout the organization
- # Providing department hosted tours to help others understand the organization
- # Making honesty and integrity paramount in all communications
- # Believing and practicing the concept that openness means there is nothing to hide
- # Using cross departmental communication to help solve problems

**AATA Practices Respect by:**

- # Always respecting the other person
- # Observing the golden rule in daily work life
- # Understanding that employee appreciation helps people do a better job
- # Insisting upon equal treatment for all

**AATA Uses Innovation and Creativity to Move Forward By:**

- # Striving to be an industry leader

- # Harnessing creativity at all levels of the organization
- # Using the leading edge of technology and equipment

#### **AATA Makes Itself Accessible to Everyone By:**

- # Striving toward efficiency in order to serve the maximum number of customers with its available resources
- # Maximizing physical accessibility of all its services and facilities
- # Designing efficient boarding and de-boarding areas to help speed services
- # Believing in the concept that seniors have earned the right to ride free
- # Making its services financially accessible to everyone

#### **AATA Strives for Teamwork By:**

- # Believing that teamwork and cooperation make things happen
- # Believing that everyone should work toward a collaborative culture
- # Believing the quality of service can be improved with teamwork and communication
- # Believing approachable managers are there to help employees do their jobs
- # Believing diversity results in a community that is greater than the sum of its parts

*Unabridged information on core value comments from employees is available at AATA's headquarters.*

### **Employees' View of AATA's Future**

During the Mr. Potato Head event, teams of AATA facilitators educated their fellow employees to help them better understand the strategic planning process. Through exercises that used the strategic issues model, employees learned to better understand the inter-relationships among the strategic issues. Employees were asked to provide their views of what AATA should look like ten years into the future. Their comments and suggestions have been summarized as follows:

#### **AATA Should Continue Doing the Many Things it Does Well:**

- # AATA provides reliable, safe, and dependable services to the community.
- # Vehicles are kept clean and in good appearance.
- # AATA maintains high standards in everything it does.
- # Drivers put their customers first and provide friendly and responsive service resulting in an excellent public image for the organization.
- # Drivers are provided with professional training and are held to professional standards.
- # Technology is used to improve the system's efficiency, to better serve customers, and to maintain all services at affordable levels.

**In Order to Meet the Challenges of 2010, AATA Should Start Doing Some Things Better:**

- # AATA should continuously analyze its fixed route system to ensure all route segments are properly timed and scheduled.

- # Additional express routes should be established along with more cross town or “through-routed” buses to increase the convenience and attractiveness of public transit.
- # Additional employees should be hired and trained and communication links throughout the organization should be strengthened.
- # Employee recognition programs would help maintain employee morale and translate into better customer service.
- # Customer relation and community education programs should be developed to sell public transit as a viable transportation option, as well as to better educate passengers so they can utilize public transit to its maximum advantage.
- # As Washtenaw County continues to urbanize, new funding arrangements must be explored so AATA can provide transportation services to a larger geographic area.
- # AATA must develop increased awareness of the political and legal realities affecting its growth.
  
- # As AATA’s services spread outward, new infrastructure development must be transit friendly so that public transit remains an attractive option for citizens.
- # The latest in technology must be pursued for vehicles, equipment, systems, and practices so AATA remains responsive to its constituents.
- # AATA must continue to adhere to the core values that have served it well over the past 30 years and that have acted as a constant “check-in” for its plans and actions.

*Detailed information on employees’ views can be reviewed at AATA’s offices.*

## **CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE**

Once the data gathering process was completed, the information obtained regarding both the external and internal environments was integrated with the knowledge and intuition of the Core Team and AATA senior staff. This process resulted in the discovery of numerous challenges, as outlined below, that will affect AATA’s future and therefore must be addressed in the strategic plan.

### **A Larger Transit-Dependent Population**

The changing demographics of Washtenaw County indicate substantial growth in the elderly population, along with a steady increase in the number of disabled persons, school-aged children, and those who are economically disadvantaged. These groups traditionally contain high percentages of transit-dependent individuals. Existing transit users, as well as potential riders, require higher and higher levels of customer service to retain their loyalty.

## **Continued County-wide Urbanization and Population Growth**

Industrial, commercial, and residential areas will continue to develop outside the traditional urbanized areas of Washtenaw County. Population will continue to grow rapidly, primarily due to migration from outside the county.

## **Increased Congestion of the County's Transportation Infrastructure**

The continued economic development of Washtenaw County, coupled with increased residential development and population growth, will result in ever-greater demands upon the county's transportation infrastructure. Existing streets and highways, particularly those primary roads connecting centers of activity, will become increasingly congested.

## **Ongoing Technical Advances that Increase Transit's Productivity**

Advancing technologies (some of which are just now emerging and being implemented by AATA) will make serving low density areas more efficient. Automatic vehicle location (AVL) systems, coupled with advanced software programs, have the potential to provide real-time scheduling and dispatching information for use in suburban settings. New vehicle technologies (such as lifts, power trains, video surveillance equipment, advanced communication systems, flexible routing software, and real-time systems monitoring) will enhance passenger safety and comfort while improving AATA's reliability and dependability.

## **Continued Limited Labor Supplies**

Increasing economic development within Washtenaw County (particularly a rapidly expanding service sector) will result in steadily increasing demands for labor. At the same time, the existing supply of labor will diminish as the aging "baby boom" generation enters retirement. These factors will combine to make it increasingly difficult for employers to secure enough employees and will force them to reach farther afield to satisfy their labor needs. AATA will become an increasingly important link in the future labor supply network.

## **The Need to Improve Internal Culture**

The quality of the AATA internal culture will become increasingly important in order to maintain a high level of employee satisfaction. Improved employee attitudes will translate into an improved level of customer service. In addition, the quality of the organization's internal culture will help retain existing employees as well as attract new employees in a constantly competitive labor market.

## **The Necessity of Attracting Non Transit-Dependent Riders**

To enhance the sustainability of the Ann Arbor area, public transportation will become increasingly important in mitigating traffic congestion, helping reduce the need for expanded and expensive parking facilities, and controlling the use of land resources for the transportation infrastructure. AATA can ease pressures exerted upon transportation and parking systems by attracting more non transit-dependent riders (those people with other means of transportation readily available to them). The non transit-dependent population does not currently represent a major segment of ridership; however, this group contributes heavily to the financial support of AATA and represents a potential source of even greater financial, political, and grass roots support in the future. As population, commerce, and industry grow, it will become increasingly important to expand the base of AATA's support throughout the entire county.



# The Strategic Plan: Destination 2010

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The strategic plan provides a vision of what AATA will look like in the year 2010 and beyond. Structured in the manner of the strategic issues model, the plan describes:

- # **Where:** The geographic location in which AATA services will be available to the general public.
- # **Who:** The various groups and types of individuals AATA intends to serve.
- # **What:** The initiatives AATA may pursue between now and 2010 in order to move the organization closer to its preferred future.

It is important to note that these initiatives or “Action Plans” are not considered to be all-inclusive of the many possibilities or opportunities that may occur. Instead, they are intended to be representative of actions AATA may consider for implementation. Each initiative must be carefully analyzed to estimate the cost, risk, and benefit of expending resources toward its accomplishment. Such an analysis may result in an initiative being moved forward or backward in time or placed on hold awaiting a more opportune time for introduction.

There will likely arise other initiatives or actions AATA may wish to consider that have not yet been contemplated. The strategic plan allows AATA the flexibility to take advantage of unexpected opportunities or to accelerate other possibilities as conditions warrant. These unexpected or accelerated opportunities will also be subjected to a cost, risk, and benefit analysis before implementation to ensure they provide the desired level of return on investment and coordinate with or supplement the overall goals of AATA.

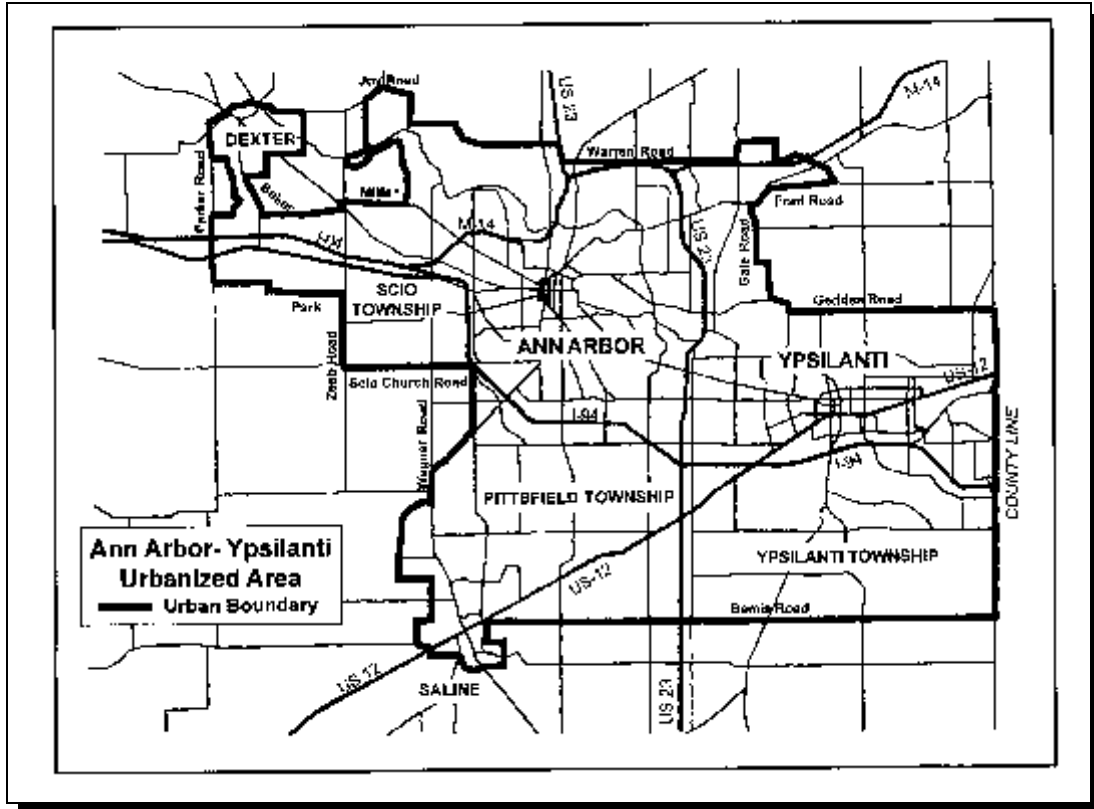
As part of the ongoing annual planning and goal setting process described previously, both old and newly-developed initiatives will be analyzed regarding their cost, risk, and benefit. This analysis will determine which actions should be taken during the following year in order to move AATA closer to **Destination 2010**.

## **WHERE: TYPES OF SERVICE DEFINE AREAS OF OPERATION**

As described in the data section of this document, the U.S. Census Bureau defines an “urbanized area” as any area consisting of a central place(s) and adjacent urban fringe that together have a minimum residential population of at least 50,000 people and generally an overall population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile of land area.

A “central place(s)” is the core incorporated or unincorporated place(s) of an urbanized area consisting of the most populous place(s) in the urbanized area. “Urban fringe” is the closely settled territory adjacent to the central place(s) of an urbanized area and generally has a population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile of land area.

The Ann Arbor - Ypsilanti Urbanized Area is shown on the map below. The area contains all of the Cities of Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and Saline; the Village of Dexter; and all or parts of the Townships of Ypsilanti, Superior, Pittsfield, Ann Arbor, Scio, Lodi, and a very small portion of Webster.



In 2010, AATA provides or facilitates transportation services throughout Washtenaw County and maintains links to other transportation providers in Wayne, Oakland, Livingston, Jackson, and Monroe counties. The type of service being provided defines the geographic area where that service exists. AATA operates or facilitates services in the following areas:

**Fixed Route Service Area:** The backbone of AATA’s service is its regularly scheduled fixed routes operating within a quarter of a mile of 95% of all residents living within the urbanized area. The fixed route system centers upon the downtown areas of Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti where the major transfer facilities are located.

**Airport Corridor:** Regularly scheduled fixed route service is provided along the I-94 corridor between the urbanized area and Detroit Metropolitan Airport. This service links the airport with Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan, Ypsilanti, Eastern Michigan University, Willow Run Airport,

Belleville, and Romulus.

**Express Route Corridors:** AATA operates fixed express routes along the north/south and east/west freeway corridors of I-94, US-23, and M-14. Express services operate between satellite park-and-ride commuter lots and the urbanized area. Several commuter lots serve as transfer centers between AATA's services and those of providers in adjoining urbanized counties. Commuter lots are located in:

- # Southern Livingston County including Brighton, Hamburg, Pinckney, and Howell
- # Eastern Jackson County including Grass Lake and Jackson
- # Southwestern Oakland County including South Lyon
- # Western Wayne County including Plymouth, Canton, and Belleville
- # Washtenaw County including Milan, Manchester, Chelsea, Salem, and Whitmore Lake

**Demand Response Service Areas:** In low density urban fringe areas still under development or in outlying small communities where ridership is not sufficient to support fixed routes, AATA either operates directly or coordinates the operation of demand response services that circulate freely in and around neighborhoods. These demand response vehicles interface with regularly scheduled mainline routes at pre-determined transfer areas. Over time, these less dense neighborhoods are then served by existing regularly scheduled mainlines or by new routes as ridership grows to justify higher levels of service. Most of these neighborhood circulators operate at the outer edges of the urbanized area; however, some also operate within smaller satellite communities such as Manchester, Chelsea, Whitmore Lake, and Milan.

**Special Event Transportation Areas:** AATA operates a system of special event shuttles within Southeast Michigan. These shuttles transport passengers from the urbanized area to entertainment and event venues located in Wayne and Oakland Counties. These areas include stadiums, casinos, theaters, concert halls, and convention centers in the downtown Detroit area as well as amphitheaters, stadiums, and coliseums in Oakland County. In addition, these shuttles operate in reverse to transport passengers from Wayne and Oakland Counties to special events taking place within the urbanized area such as athletic and cultural events at The University of Michigan or Eastern Michigan University and festivals such as the annual Ann Arbor Art Fair.

**RideShare Region:** Finally, AATA's RideShare program facilitates the formation of commuter car and van pools for individuals traveling within Washtenaw County as well as for those who must travel into the county from anywhere in Southeast Michigan/Northwest Ohio. AATA serves as a clearinghouse to expedite transportation for private individuals whose primary needs are for work or study-related transportation.

## WHO: AATA STRIVES TO BE INCLUSIVE

In 2010, AATA provides or facilitates transportation within a wide area and operates many different types of services to benefit the widest base of customers possible. The bulk of its customers are served within the urbanized area surrounding Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, since that is the area of greatest population concentration in Washtenaw County. Many additional customers travel to or from the urbanized area. Finally, customers whose transportation needs lie totally outside the urbanized area comprise a much smaller, but still important, segment of AATA's customer base. Customers include the following:

**Transit-Dependent:** AATA serves large numbers of transit-dependent customers such as the elderly who no longer drive; people with mobility disabilities; school, college and university students; passengers who have no access to other transportation; economically disadvantaged persons; and people who are not licensed to drive. Because many of the facilities, accommodations, agencies, and institutions designed for these individuals are located within the urbanized area, the bulk of these customers are served by AATA's fixed routes and paratransit services operating in and around Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti. Transit-dependent customers represent the largest group of AATA's riders.

**Employees:** Conveniently scheduled fixed routes (including expresses) serve as many working people as possible. The concentration of employees in the urbanized area (including downtown Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan, Eastern Michigan University, University Hospitals, and various industrial and research parks) makes it easier to attract employees with fixed transportation needs. These employees represent the second largest group of AATA's riders.

**Non Transit-Dependent with Fixed Needs:** AATA provides services to those who are described as "non transit-dependent". These people have access to other forms of transportation, but recognize the advantages of using public transit. These customers normally have specific fixed and/or repetitive transportation needs and include inbound commuters; reverse commuters; convention and special events visitors; passengers with specialized work or health related transportation needs; bicycle riders; environmentalists; socially conscious citizens; reformed auto users; employees of small to medium sized companies in industrial/research parks; late shift workers; and customers from low to moderate income households.

**Non Transit-Dependent with Variable or Changing Needs:** AATA provides services to customers who are traditionally non transit users but who wish to explore or utilize alternative transportation modes that offer lower costs, less stress, or which help relieve traffic congestion. These passengers generally have available to them a selection of transportation choices which may incorporate time, purpose, place, and vehicle. Trip purposes for these individuals include shopping; evening or weekend entertainment; special events; medical appointments; visiting friends; and similar trips that can be scheduled at the option of the individual.

## WHAT: ACTION PLANS TO MOVE AATA TOWARD DESTINATION 2010

On its way to **Destination 2010**, AATA intends to undertake a number of strategic initiatives designed to move the organization toward its preferred future. To better serve its customers, AATA initiates actions that improve and fully develop the services it operates within the urbanized area. Although Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti remain the system's hubs, AATA slowly spreads its services outward as the urbanized area develops. Actions are taken to deliver the highest quality of services possible and special efforts are made to attract non transit-dependent riders. In addition, AATA initiates actions designed to improve its internal organization. Examples of these initiatives are grouped into three basic "strategic themes" as described below.

### **Theme 1: Improving AATA's Services:**

- # Adjusting or supplementing existing bus schedules with additional service to reduce overall waiting time for customers, including between main line buses and park and ride shuttles.
- # Designing route systems to incorporate more effective "through-routing" to minimize the need for passenger transfers.
- # Auditing AATA's facilities (vehicles, shelters, transfer centers, park-and-ride lots, etc.) to determine improvements needed to provide pleasant, convenient, attractive, and secure surroundings.
- # Training all employees in order to ensure a consistently high level of friendly, safe, and courteous transportation services to all customers.
- # Developing convenient, accessible, accurate, and timely information for customers to help them better utilize AATA's services.
- # Establishing realistic and accurate reporting systems to better design and monitor the delivery of transportation services.
- # Implementing fare payment methods that are convenient and easily understood by passengers and easily administered by drivers.
- # Pricing fares to be competitive with, or more attractive than, other transportation modes.
- # Regularly soliciting customer feedback to quickly address any newly developing needs and to improve existing services.
- # Keeping abreast of the latest technological innovations and using newly developed equipment and procedures to better serve customers.
- # Regularly assessing operations, vehicles, and facilities to ensure the identification of customer and employee safety issues and adjusting policies and procedures to address safety deficiencies.

## **Theme 2: Broadening AATA's Services**

- # Increasing the size of AATA's service area as industrial, commercial, and residential areas continue to develop outward from the fringes of the urbanized area.
- # Establishing agreements with other transportation service providers to eliminate duplication of efforts and provide customers with seamless transportation services.
- # Instituting specialized services (such as airport shuttles and late evening entertainment shuttles) to attract and serve both transit-dependent and non transit-dependent customers.
- # Developing relationships with other organizations, including civic groups, educational institutions, and governments to provide seamless, integrated, and merged services for shared customers.
- # Utilizing technology in conjunction with improved communications to provide alternative public transit services for low density population areas.
- # Aggressively educating the public (including school children) and employees regarding the benefits of public transportation services provided by AATA.
- # Expanding and marketing a system of Park & Ride lots within the urbanized area to attract passengers commuting into the Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti area.
- # Designing transportation services for commuting, entertainment, and recreational purposes to attract traditionally non transit-dependent customers.

## **Theme 3: Building the AATA Organization to Deliver its Services**

- # Ensuring all programs and policies reflect the organization's core values and continue to engage employees and stakeholders in strategic thinking and planning.
- # Regularly assessing the status of various internal culture themes and benchmarks to implement corrective actions as needed before cultural concerns adversely affect the organization.
- # Regularly assessing priority internal culture efforts to help the organization achieve its ideal culture.
- # Continue using technology as a tool to improve services to internal customers.

## Next Steps

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Since the strategic plan is intended to be a flexible, living document, the strategic planning process is never really finished. At minimum, the plan will be reviewed annually and modified as appropriate to account for changing environmental conditions and continuing stakeholder input. These changing conditions may have already been factored into the development of the plan as it currently exists or may materialize unexpectedly as the plan is implemented.

The first step of the implementation process involves the creation of goals and objectives by the Board of Directors in conjunction with the AATA management staff. Initially, draft goals and objectives for the organization as a whole will be developed for review and approval by the Board. Once these goals and objectives are approved, the process will cascade throughout the entire organization, starting AATA on the road toward **Destination 2010**.

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# The Ride of Choice

*Additional copies of the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority "Destination 2010" Strategic Plan are available through:*

Ann Arbor Transportation Authority  
2700 S. Industrial Hwy.  
Ann Arbor, MI 48104  
734-973-6500

Ann Arbor District Library  
343 S. Fifth Ave.  
Ann Arbor, MI 48104  
734-327-4200

AATA Web Site  
[www.theride.org](http://www.theride.org)

Alternate formats  
available on request

