MDOT
Michigan Department of Transportation

Michigan Transit
Strategic Plan

**MDOT is improving Michigan's total transportation
system by efficiently delivering transportation products, services, and information.**

2000-2020

MICHIGAN TRANSIT STRATEGIC PLAN
2000 – 2020

May 2001

Michigan Department of Transportation
Bureau of Urban and Public Transportation
Passenger Transportation Division
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INTRODUCTION

This Michigan Transit Strategic Plan is the product of input of many individuals and groups with interest and concerns about public transportation in the state. From the spring of 1999 to the spring of 2001, the Michigan transit strategic planning process sought systematically to gather information from these individuals in order to develop targeted initiatives that would advance transit in the state. The process entailed:

1. Visioning and priority setting with the Strategic Plan Oversight Team, which include the Strategic Planning Advisory Council;

2. Conducting research on transit "best practices" across the country;

3. Holding 11 focus groups in various areas across the state with a total of 70 participants comprised of stakeholders, transit agencies, and elected officials;

4. Developing a comprehensive survey on the basis of focus group findings and input from the Strategic Plan Oversight Team, Passenger Transportation Division (PTD) staff, and others;

5. Conducting a survey among the Strategic Plan Oversight Team, transit agencies, specialized services providers, advisory team members, stakeholders, and PTD staff. Five hundred and three surveys were distributed, of which 56 percent were returned and incorporated into this study. The response rate for transit agencies was 100 percent large urban, 80 percent medium/small urban, and 66 percent nonurban.

6. Updating the situation audit;

7. Selecting initiatives to be included in the Strategic Plan;

8. Presenting preliminary initiatives during two breakout sessions held at the PTD Annual Meeting. Approximately 50 people provided input on the initiatives; and

9. Presenting the initiatives to the Bureau of Urban and Public Transportation (UPTRAN) management.

The aspiration of the plan is for focused, implementable initiatives that have broad support among the many parties who had input into this process. In this fashion, it is not a comprehensive plan incorporating all aspects of transit in Michigan or even all activities of PTD. Similarly, it is not a "wish list" on which all parties are likely to find all their desired improvements, investments, and initiatives. The hope of the many participants in this process is, instead, that this plan can serve as a guide for transit in Michigan to achieve its mission:

To improve the quality of life of Michigan residents by providing safe, efficient, responsive, and reliable public transit that integrates into an overall transportation system.

This plan is divided into four sections. The first presents the initiatives selected as highest priority for implementation during the period of this plan. Preceding each initiative is a brief paper that presents background information of the problem that the initiative addresses. Following the "initiatives" section is the situation audit that provides a quantitative overview of trends in transit in the state of Michigan, together with larger demographic forces that are likely to affect transit during the period of this plan. Next, a detailed write-up of the 11 focus groups that were conducted as a part of this process is presented. Finally, a report is presented of the survey of transit agencies, specialized services providers, advisory team members, stakeholders and PTD staff.

The Michigan Transit Strategic Plan is based on four primary goals:

1. *Increase Cooperation within the Transit Community*: Transit in Michigan is provided by individual public, private, and non-profit organizations. Respective agencies provide service at state regional, municipal, and local levels. The Michigan transit community believes that enhanced cooperation between the multiple providers and development of public/private partnerships could improve service and intermodal and regional connections, resulting in enhanced public support.

2. *Remove Barriers to Transit Use*: Transit passengers oftentimes face barriers to their mobility when they use transit between cities and regions; when they link transit with other modes; and when they are unaware of the full range of transportation options. Michigan transit seeks to remove these barriers through regional and intermodal mobility, internal and external communications, and coordination of transit resources.

3. *Provide Efficient and Effective Transit Service*: Michigan transit seeks to improve utilization of existing resources and incorporate new technology to provide efficient and effective transit services. Developing performance measures to evaluate the outcome of implementing the initiatives included in the Michigan Transit Strategic Plan will be included as part of the process.

4. *Ensure Adequate Funding*: Providing transit for the citizens of Michigan requires a predictable and sufficient funding base to meet increasing service needs. Multiple strategies are required, including securement of locally generated funds, coordination of transportation funds from multiple sources, participating in competitive grant application processes, and obtaining continued federal and state support.

Initiatives

Nine initiatives were selected for the 2000-2020 Michigan Transit Strategic Plan. These initiatives were grouped into five major categories: legislative; regional and intermodal; internal and external communication; transit efficiency and effectiveness; and land use coordination. These initiatives emerged from the strategic planning process and complement MDOT's overall planning effort that is detailed in the State Long Range Plan (SLRP). The initiatives were adopted by the Strategic Planning Oversight Team as detailed in the final section of this plan.

Table 1. The goal of transportation services coordination is primarily furthered through initiatives to coordinate transportation funds at the state level, to ensure regional and intermodal mobility, and to enhance communication and information provision in the transit community. Transit has significant potential contributions to statewide land use goals through enhanced linkages between transit and land use development and policies. The goal of providing basic mobility is one of the primary tasks of transit in Michigan. Therefore, every initiative of this plan is designed to contribute to that goal. Preservation of systems is ensured through the development of a reliable resource base for transit operations and maintenance. Promotion of intermodalism is primarily served by initiatives to remove barriers to regional and intermodal mobility. Environmental protection is furthered when improved regional mobility offers attractive alternatives to drive-alone travel. The goal of strengthening the economy is furthered by initiatives that increase transit's effectiveness and ensure the employment accessibility of transit users through regional and intermodal initiatives. Finally, the goal to promote safety will be addressed through the regional and transit efficiency and effectiveness initiatives.

Environmental Justice

A 1994 Presidential Executive Order (EO 12898) directed every federal agency to make environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing the effects of all programs, policies, and activities on "minority populations and low-income populations." The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) receives federal funds and, therefore, complies with this EO by identifying, addressing, and documenting environmental justice issues and concerns during the development of proposed transportation programs, policies, and projects.

Environmental justice principles were included in the development of the strategic plan. Continual efforts will be made to identify potentially affected minority or low-income groups or individuals and to actively involve these groups in the decision making process. As action steps are developed to implement the initiatives included in this strategic plan, these principals will be addressed.

Table 1: Correspondence of Michigan Transit Strategic Plan Initiatives with State Long Range Plan Goals

Michigan Transit Strategic Plan Initiative:	State Long Range Plan Goal							
	Transportation Services Coordination	Land Use Coordination	Provide Basic Mobility	Preserve Systems Appropriately	Promote Intermodalism	Protect the Environment and Aesthetics	Strengthen the State's Economy	Promote Safety
Legislative Initiatives:								
Coordination of Funds at State Level	**		*		*		*	
Budget Operating Assistance over a Multiyear Period			**	*				
Funding Options			**	*				
Regional and Intermodal Initiatives:								
Regional Transportation	**		**		**	*	**	**
Regional Coordination of Transit Provision	**		**		**			
Internal and External Communication Initiatives:								
Coordinated Information Sources	**		*		**			
Communication within the Transit Community	**		*					
Transit Efficiency and Effectiveness Initiative:								
Transit Efficiency and Effectiveness	**		**		*		*	**
Land Use Coordination Initiative:								
Transit and Land Use Coordination		**				*		

Key: * Highly Supportive   ** Primary Linkage

Section One

<u>INITIATIVES</u>

I. LEGISLATIVE

A. Coordination of Funds at the State Level

Background:

There are funds for transportation throughout the state budget (e.g., for social services and employment programs). However, synergy between state departments on priorities would help to remove barriers to effectively utilize transportation funds at the local level. In some cases, public and nonprofit agencies may provide transportation services in an uncoordinated and duplicative fashion; in others, agencies expect services from public transit providers without engaging them in their planning processes. It appears that coordination of transportation resources at the state level requires legislative action to foster effective coordination at the local level.

Legislative action could proactively encourage such cooperation. The legislature or an executive order could:

- Create a coordinating office or local/regional offices to track the different sources of available funding and facilitate coordination among agencies;

- Provide financial assistance/incentives to local coordination efforts and participating transit agencies;

- Mandate coordination of transportation funds at the state level between MDOT and other state agencies; and/or

- Mandate coordination of transportation funding to diverse agencies upon coordination with transit providers.

One program along the lines of the second bullet above is the Specialized Services Operating Assistance Program. Act 51 of 1951, as amended, provides for "not less than $2,000,000" to be distributed annually from the Comprehensive Transportation Fund (CTF) to provide transportation service for seniors and people with disability. In FY 2001, the specialized services appropriation was $3,600,000. Transit providers and human services organizations interested in coordinating their service must jointly propose and be approved to do so in order to access this funding. An example of an outcome of this program is found with the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART), which facilitated formation of several geographically based Specialized Service Coordinating Committees throughout its territory in suburban Detroit. Through an initial effort to develop ridership guidelines and hold regular meetings (including an annual meeting that draws all of the committees together), a cooperative atmosphere has prospered. SMART feels that the committees have allowed participating agencies to coordinate funds and meet the needs of senior and disabled passengers more effectively.

A great deal of coordination must occur before transit and specialized service agencies submit an application for operating assistance. As with the initiative to Facilitate Cooperation

for Regional Transit Mobility, described later, financial incentives to begin this coordination would help offset the costs of the process and increase the sense that coordination of funds is a state priority.

An example of coordination at the state level is the Welfare Reform effort. Although not mandated as suggested in the third bullet above, MDOT in conjunction with the Family Independence Agency (FIA) and the Michigan Department of Career Development (MDCD) have jointly funded projects geared toward expanding service hours and area. As part of the process, local partners are required to address unmet needs. This effort has facilitated welfare recipients getting transportation to work.

Whether it is done through the legislature, the Governor, or otherwise, providing a state mandate for coordination would likely be necessary for additional coordination to occur at the local level. It appears that there is significant potential for benefits from such coordination based on transportation spending in various agencies: $6 million in the Department of Community Health (DCH), $0.6 million in the FIA, $6 million in the MDCD, $0.8 million in the Office of Services to the Aging, $154 million in the Department of Education (Special Education only) and $240 million in the MDOT budgets. (Act 51 Transit Committee Minutes of August 17, 1999)

Other states are encouraging transportation coordination in a variety of ways. Brief descriptions of efforts in selected states follow. In addition, the Bay Area Transportation Authority in Michigan has created a structure for coordinating transportation, which is also described.

Ohio has a state level directive on coordination and a supportive infrastructure but coordination is not mandated. The Ohio Statewide Transportation Coordination Task Force distributes publications, handbooks, and a technical guide to help local entities go through the coordination process. In addition, it provides operating assistance to successful applicants. In Ohio, the impetus for coordination was primarily a need to serve the mobility requirements of rural populations. (http://www.dot.state.oh.us/ptrans/Coordination%20Links/state_coord.htm)

Florida's Transportation Disadvantaged Program was created by statute in 1979 with a mandate to coordinate transportation, providing cost-effective, non-duplicative transportation to people with disabilities, the elderly, low-income individuals and children-at-risk. The Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, an independent agency located within the State Department of Transportation, and the Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund, which provides dedicated funding to address transportation needs statewide, were both started ten years later. Florida's 67 counties are represented by 51 Community Transportation Coordinators statewide, each with an advisory local Coordinating Board. All social service agencies (public and nonprofit) that receive state transportation funding must be part of a coordinated approach toward transportation service delivery, which is overseen by a Community Transportation Coordinator. In addition, an ombudsman helpline is in place for transportation disadvantaged 'customers' to receive information or provide comment. (http://www.dot.state.fl.us/ctd/)

Iowa has had a legislative mandate to coordinate publicly funded passenger services since 1976 with a focus on local agency coordination. The legislature also created a state level Transportation Coordination Council, which involves the Iowa Department of Transportation, the Department of Human Services, and the Department of Education. However, this council lacks legislative or executive directive and has not met in the last four years. Economic sanctions might be applied if, for example, an agency does not coordinate its services. Although the state has had 16 regional rural transit systems covering all counties of the state since the late 1970s, there are still concerns about regional boundaries being barriers to mobility. (Act 51 Transit Committee Minutes, October 5, 1999)

Maryland has an Executive Order that established a state coordinating committee for human service transportation. Funding goes directly from the Mass Transit Administration (MTA) to the local transit agencies. MTA hopes to have all transportation funding flow through the regions to the transit operators to promote the coordination of transportation regardless of funding source or client. However, the structure to carry this out had not yet been determined as of October 1999. (Act 51 Transit Committee Minutes, October 5, 1999)

In Michigan, the Bay Area Transportation Authority (BATA) operates a demand/response service throughout Leelanau and Grand Traverse Counties. Trips are coordinated by the Office of Transportation Services (OTS), which was created in partnership with other human service providers such as the FIA, DCH, and MDCD. Project Zero funds support the participation of the social service agencies.

Thus a number of coordination models for transportation resources between transit and human service providers exist. In many cases, these rely on state level legislation. It appears that legislative reform in this area in Michigan would be an impetus to enhanced coordination. As a number of models of coordination exist from which to choose, determining the most appropriate models for the Michigan context would be a critical first step towards legislative reform.

Initiative:

Build on efforts to coordinate transportation funds at the state level. In addition, Michigan transit will foster support for such coordination within the transit community and among other interests at the local level.

B.   Budget Operating Assistance over a Multi-year Period

<u>Background:</u>

Year-to-year uncertainties in state funding for local transit were identified as an obstacle to planning transit service. Following are four potential approaches to addressing this issue.

First, transportation authorities are eligible for bus operating assistance grants of up to 50 percent of eligible operating budgets in areas of over 100,000 population, and up to 60 percent in areas of under 100,000 population. However, UPTRAN is not able to meet these targets submitted annually for bus operating assistance. Because funding levels are derived from an annual dollar amount appropriation rather than from an appropriation that is itself based on formula, local bus operating assistance is difficult to predict from year to year. If funding levels were based on formula, with adjustments in legislative appropriations being limited to every three or four years, annual funding levels would be tied to variation in the economy more than any other factor and would be much more predictable.

A second alternative pertains to dissemination of budget forecasts. Under the current system, the state Department of Management and Budget (DMB) estimates the future stream of revenue that individual agencies will receive for transportation purposes based on economic factors. The funding available for operating assistance can be derived from this forecast using the formula in Act 51. As an industry, transit agencies attempt to replicate the revenue estimate process and predict future operating assistance levels. If DMB were to share its revenue estimates with the transit agencies, they would be able to estimate funding levels more accurately.

A third way to address the problem of operating assistance budgeted for one year at a time is for the state legislature to enact multi-year authorization bills, similar to the federal TEA-21 Transportation Authorization Act. While not guaranteeing annual appropriation levels, an authorization bill would provide targets that would serve as funding estimates for the transportation agencies. This approach contradicts the first somewhat. While the first calls for reliance on formula based funding, with only periodic legislative intervention, this approach calls for legislative determination of funding targets. The first approach would appear to provide the greatest certainty with regard to funding, while the second (forecast based) and third (legislative target-based) appear to be fallback positions should the first approach prove infeasible.

A final approach is the revision of state legislative budgeting procedures to a two-year budgeting cycle. This would offer reasonable stability of expectations throughout a number of departments, and as such, could enjoy broad-based support.

<u>Initiative:</u>

Transit in Michigan will seek to establish year-to-year predictability in state transit funding. Four options that will be analyzed to accomplish this initiative are:

1) **Adoption of a more predictable formula so annual funding is tied more closely to the economy;**

2) **Dissemination of Comprehensive Transportation Funds (CTF) budget forecasts by the Michigan Department of Management and Budget so transit agencies can better estimate funding levels;**

3) **Multi-year authorization bills that will provide funding targets for several years; and**

4) **Two-year legislative budgeting cycle, which would provide funding stability for two years rather than one.**

C.   Funding Alternatives

Background:

The burden of funding transit is increasingly borne by local and state governments. Additional funding options would help local areas make up for the decline in other sources of funding for public transportation. In 1997, 45 of 72 public transit agencies were locally supported by property tax millage. The remaining 27 agencies are supported by local general funds.

The Michigan State Constitution prohibits cities, villages, townships, and counties from levying a sales tax (Opinion of the Attorney General, June 18, 1970, No. 4694). However, the state constitution does permit cities, villages, and charter counties to levy other taxes for public purposes, subject to limitations in law (Michigan Constitution Article VII, Sections 2 and 21). Townships and counties that are not chartered may levy other taxes if they are given the power to do so by the legislature.

For example, cities (but not villages) are permitted to enact an income tax under the City Income Tax Act (Public Act 284 of 1964). Voters must approve a city income tax being imposed for the first time after January 1, 1995. Disposition of funds is to the general fund of the city. Twenty-two cities have such taxes, none of which were enacted after 1994.

Specifically related to the provision of public transportation, the Public Transportation Authority Act (PA 196 of 1986) allows a transportation authority organized under this act to fund public transportation services using one or more of the following:

- Farebox revenue
- State, federal, and local grants and contributions
- Ad valorem taxes
- Special assessments or charges
- Income tax
- Bond and notes
- Contracts or leases
- Property tax millage not to exceed five mills

Public transit systems organized under Act 196 as of December 2000 were:

Altran Transit Authority (Alger County)
Bay Area Transportation Authority
(Grand Traverse & Leelanau Counties)
Bay Metro Transportation Authority
Branch Area Transit Authority
Caro Transit Authority (Tuscola County)
Cass County Transportation Authority
Crawford County Transportation
Authority

Delta Area Transit Authority
Gogebic County Public Transit
Ionia Transit Authority
Jackson Transportation Authority
Kalkaska Public Transit Authority
Greater Lapeer Transportation Authority
Saginaw Transit Authority Regional Services
Saugatuck Interurban Transit Authority
(Allegan County)

None of the above authorities currently use a local income tax for funding. A property millage appears to be the most common source of local support for transit organized under Act 196.

Four transportation authority managers were interviewed on the issue of use of the income tax; two of them were not aware that an income tax was an option under the Act. All four agreed that it probably would not be a good option, particularly in light of the significant support for their millage. They believed that the public would only support a millage or an income tax, but not both. They also felt that voters were familiar and comfortable with a millage, making it a more popular choice. If funding were to become so tight that they were forced to pursue new local funding sources, there are other options that they would pursue before an income tax, including increased public-private partnerships, tax exempt status, and non-transportation based services such as leasing their facilities.

In addition to PA 196 of 1986, other Michigan laws governing or related to public transportation agencies permit a variety of funding options, as follows (Act 51 Transit Committee Report, Appendix C):

PA 94 of 1933, Revenue Bond Act – Permits bonds to be issued and taxes to be levied without limitation to the extent necessary for the payment of bonds.

Public transit systems organized under Act 94 as of December 2000 were:

Antrim County Transportation	Manistee County Transportation
Barry County Transit	Mecosta County Area Transit
Berrien County Public Transportation	Muskegon Area Transit System
Charlevoix County Public Transportation	Ogemaw County Public Transit
Clare County Transit	Ontonagon County Public Transit
Gladwin City/County Transit	Osceola County Area Transit
Huron County Transit	Otsego County Bus System
Iosco County Transit	Roscommon Mini Bus System
Kalamazoo County	Sanilac County Transportation
Livingston Essential Transportation Services	Schoolcraft County Public Transportation
Lenawee County Transportation	Van Buren Public Transit Agency

PA 359 of 1947, The Charter Township Act - Charter townships may incorporate with certain powers and functions, which may include the provision of public transportation.

Yates Township Transportation System (Lake County)

PA 55 of 1963, as amended, Mass Transportation Authorities Act – An Act 55 transportation authority may levy a property tax of not more than five mills in the political subdivisions that comprise the authority, subject to the approval of a majority of registered voters residing in the service area.

Public transit systems organized under Act 55 as of December 2000 were:

Ann Arbor Transportation Authority (Washtenaw County)
Benton Harbor/Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority (Berrien County)
Flint Mass Transportation Authority (Genesee County)
Capital Area Transportation Authority (Ingham County)
Ludington Mass Transportation Authority (Mason County)

PA 279 of 1965, Home Rule City Act – Under its charter, a municipality may make provisions for governmental departments considered necessary for the welfare of the local community, including public transportation facilities both within and ten miles outside its limits.

Public transit systems organized under Act 279 as of December 2000 were (MDOT 2000):

Adrian Dial-A-Ride (Lenawee County)
Alma Dial-A-Ride (Gratiot County)
City of Alpena Dial-A-Ride
Battle Creek Transit (Calhoun County)
Belding Dial-A-Ride (Ionia County)
Big Rapids Dial-A-Ride (Mecosta County)
Buchanan Dial-A-Ride (Berrien County)
Detroit Department of Transportation (Wayne County)
Dowagiac Dial-A-Ride (Cass County)
Harbor Transit (Grand Haven, Ottawa County)
Greenville Transit (Montcalm County)

Hillsdale Dial-A-Ride
Holland Dial-A-Ride (Ottawa County)
Houghton Motor Transit Line
Ionia Dial-A-Ride
Kalamazoo Metro Transit System
City of Marshall Dial-A-Ride (Calhoun County)
City of Midland Dial-A-Ride
City of Milan Public Transportation (Washtenaw County)
Niles Dial-A-Ride (Berrien County)
City of Sault Ste. Marie (Chippewa County)

PA 7 of 1967, Urban Cooperation Act – Transportation authorities organized under Act 7 do not have the power to tax. The authority is funded when member governmental units place a millage vote on the ballot individually.

Public transit systems organized under Act 7 as of December 2000 were:

Cadillac/Wexford Transit Authority
Eaton County Transportation Authority
Eastern Upper Peninsula Transportation Authority (Chippewa & Luce Counties)
Interurban Transit Partnership (formerly Grand Rapids Area Transit Authority, Kent County)
Isabella County Transportation Commission
Marquette County Transit Authority
Blue Water Transportation Commission (St. Clair County)
Shiawassee Area Transportation Authority

PA 204 of 1967, Metropolitan Transportation Authorities Act – A transportation authority organized under this act may not levy taxes.

The public transit system organized under Act 204 as of December 2000 was:

Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART) (Wayne, Macomb, Monroe, and Oakland Counties)

<u>PA 292 of 1989, Metropolitan Councils Act</u> – A council of two or more local governmental units in a metropolitan area formed under this Act for the purpose of providing public transportation may place a millage of not more than one-half mill on the ballot.

There were no public transit systems organized under Act 292 as of December 2000.

It appears that a sales tax is the only funding option unavailable to all local governmental units that wish to expand local funding of public transportation. An amendment to the state constitution would be required to change this prohibition. In addition, cities are presumably the only government subdivision permitted to levy an income tax under the City Income Tax Act (Public Act 284 of 1964); villages are prohibited. A legislative amendment would be required to expand this option to other types of local government. Legislative action would also be required to grant specific taxing powers to townships and counties that are not chartered.

The question of whether a portion of the State Wagering Tax could be used to support transit also arose through the strategic planning process. Other states with legalized gaming, such as New Jersey, often allocate a portion of the state revenue to transit. Michigan state law permits a city in which a casino is located (currently Detroit only) to allocate its portion of gaming revenue (the City Wagering Tax) to civic purposes including programs intended to improve the quality of life in the city and road improvements. All revenue from the State Wagering Tax is deposited in the School Aid Fund. It would be necessary to amend the Michigan Gaming Control & Revenue Act, as amended (Public Act 69 of 1997) for a portion of the state revenue to be allocated to transit.

Beyond the state level, current federal policies lead to higher subsidies flowing to states relying heavily on rail transit. As a state that relies on buses for its transit provision, Michigan receives less than its "fair share" in the disbursement of federal transit investments. Yet federal formulas that effectively encourage the development of rail hamper the ability of states to deploy the most efficient transit technologies for their specific areas. A mode-neutral distribution of federal funds would enable Michigan to deploy enhanced transit in cost-effective bus modes.

<u>Initiative:</u>

Provide information and support to transit agencies regarding available options for expansion of local funding. One alternative is reorganization under an authorizing act that offers greater options regarding generation of local revenue. When opportunities arise, Michigan transit will seek additional ways to levy taxes. It will also work cooperatively with transit from other states to revise policies for the equitable distribution of federal transit funds.

II.   REGIONAL AND INTERMODAL

A.   Regional Coordination of Transit Provision

<u>Background</u>:

The strategic planning process identified the cooperation of existing local, public, private, or non-profit transit organizations as a way to provide a base level of transit services where it is currently lacking and to bridge jurisdictional boundaries to provide regional transit mobility.

Most of the direct action for cooperation would come from local operators and intercity bus carriers themselves. However, there are also several potential state roles. Where possible, the state can provide financial incentives to encourage and facilitate cooperation. In cases where this is infeasible, the state can take a leadership role in convening collaborative discussions, in developing information (e.g., traveler surveys), and in seeking potential connections (e.g., identification of points of linkage between systems).

1)   Provide Financial Incentives

In order to develop regional initiatives, state-provided financial incentives are necessary to induce local transit providers to cooperate to 'fill in the gaps' and create a regional system.

The state currently provides financial support for transportation agencies that are trying to cooperate to provide multi-county public transportation. Since 1997, PTD has provided an application for capital and operating assistance for regional service. Since the beginning of the program, $7 million has been distributed through the regional program. Funding may include startup expenses, capital equipment and facility modification, marketing, and operating assistance.

A great deal of coordination must occur among participating transit providers before an application can be submitted representing regional transportation interests. Although the state finances coordination studies, if it were to fund incentives to begin this coordination, costs of the process would be offset, increasing the sense that regional public transportation is a state priority. Financial incentives might include seed money to finance a cooperative process with required demonstration of results, reimbursement of expenses incurred through the process of developing a regional cooperation plan, an annual bonus for regions that have adopted and are implementing a regional coordination plan, or penalties for non-cooperation. The last two options would provide the kind of ongoing incentive that could encourage providers to begin talking.

An annual bonus for ongoing regional cooperation could yield positive results, as it:

1) Would provide a way for local transit providers to 'earn' ongoing additional funding that could potentially be used for the regional coordination effort or for purposes other than meeting the mandate to coordinate regional transportation; and

2) Would be a bonus for action rather than punishment for inaction (as a penalty for non-cooperation would be).

Financial support for the process itself and increased levels of funding for the existing funding categories of the Regional Transportation Program would also encourage and enable more regions to pursue provision of regionally-based public transportation.

2) Bring Transportation Providers to the Table

If local transit providers are to cooperate to provide regional service, they need to discuss their common needs, relative strengths, and negotiate an agreement under which they will cooperate. A collaborative decision-making process with positive financial incentives would bring stakeholders together with the promise of letting them play a role in shaping the strategy to achieve regionally-based transit.

Getting the critical parties to the table to have these discussions would require someone to initiate the meetings. The parties contemplating participation will only do so if they feel it will be worth their time and effort. Incentives for participation, such as financial incentives that will help offset the costs of participation, and reasonable assurances that all the stakeholders necessary to a successful outcome will be participating, will help initiate a positive process. Ideally, the process would be consensus-based, free of bias in favor of any participant(s), and facilitated by an impartial third party. Collaborative decision-making processes increase the likelihood that the parties involved will be committed to successful implementation of the result because they were involved in its creation.

3) Organization of Regional Transportation

Input from focus groups, surveys, and the Oversight Team highlighted difficulties with the provision of regionally organized transit in Michigan. While there appear to be political and fiscal barriers to effective regional public transportation, there are no apparent legislative barriers.

There are several ways in which a transportation authority can be organized (Act 51 Transit Committee Report, Appendix C).

- Several Acts permit direct organization of a transportation authority across two or more political jurisdictions:

    PA 204 of 1967, Metropolitan Transportation Authorities Act – One or more contiguous metropolitan counties can participate in a regional transportation authority in order to provide public transportation.

    PA 55 of 1963, as amended, Mass Transportation Authorities Act - Provides that the legislative body of any city with a population of 300,000 or less may incorporate a public authority for the purpose of providing a mass transportation system.

    PA 196 of 1986, Public Transportation Authority Act – A county, city, village, township, or two or more such public entities can organize to provide public transportation services under

a separate board.   The authority can help fund these public transportation services using a variety of mechanisms, including ad valorem, income, and property taxes.

- Other Acts allow municipalities to take action for the good of the community, including providing public transportation:

  PA 312 of 1929, The Metropolitan District Act – Any two or more cities, villages, or townships may incorporate as a metropolitan district and provide public transportation services.

  PA 94 of 1933, Revenue Bond Act – Public corporations may make public improvements, including transportation systems.

  PA 359 of 1947, The Charter Township Act - Charter townships may incorporate with certain powers and functions, which may include the provision of public transportation.

  PA 279 of 1965, Home Rule City Act – Under its charter, a municipality may establish governmental departments considered necessary for the welfare of the local community, including public transportation facilities both within and ten miles outside its limits.

- Municipalities can cooperate in providing public transportation through:

  PA 35 of 1951, Intergovernmental Contracts Between Municipal Corporations – Any local governmental entity with the power to enter into contracts may enter into an inter-governmental contract with one or more other municipal corporation(s) to provide (or receive) any lawful municipal service, such as transportation services.

  PA 7 of 1967, Urban Cooperation Act – Two or more public agencies may form an authority and jointly exercise power through an interlocal agreement, subject to the approval of the Governor.

  PA 8 of 1967, Intergovernmental Transfers of Functions and Responsibilities – Two or more political subdivisions may enter into a contract with each other providing for the transfer of functions or responsibilities to one another, subject to the consent of each political subdivision involved.

  PA 292 of 1989, Metropolitan Council Act – Two or more local governmental units in a metropolitan area may form a council, which may place a millage on the ballot.

    Given multiple existing approaches enabling the provision of regional transportation, efforts to enable and encourage regionalism need to focus on the existing political and fiscal barriers rather than enabling legislation.

Establish a statewide task force to determine how to coordinate service on a regional basis and establish how financial incentives will be initiated. The task force is responsible for:

1) **Developing a process for organizing regional public transportation, including the delineation of local boundaries and service areas for regional cooperation;**

2) **Defining appropriate roles for public transit agencies, non-profit organizations, and private for profit providers, including intercity bus carriers, in assuring regional mobility;**

3) **Establishing a mechanism for funding regional transportation that does not favor any particular entity;**

4) **Seeking sustained financial incentives for regional cooperative initiatives;**

5) **Involving representatives of stakeholder groups in order to increase their commitment to the regional planning process;**

6) **Developing intermodal initiatives to facilitate connection between intercity and local public transit; and**

7) **Providing information from its effort to promote the provision of regional public transportation.**

B. Base Level of Service

Background:

While there is public transportation of some form in every county in Michigan, the service provided varies dramatically. Some counties receive a base level of service countywide, while others have transit agencies that serve a specific, limited population and/or geographic area. An initiative that emerged was to provide a base level of public transit in every county.

A strategy to achieve this initiative would have two components:

1) Define the 'base level' of service that is desired; and

2) Work to achieve implementation of service to this level in each county.

Providing this new service in any given location would require that one of three things happen:

1) An existing transit provider expands service into previously unserved areas;

2) A new public transportation provider begins to operate service in previously unserved areas; or

3) Existing transit providers cooperate to offer service in the 'gaps' between their service areas that were previously unserved.

The third of these new service options is likely to be the most efficient way to provide a base level of service throughout a county as it would divide the responsibility for that service among several providers. In addition, development of regional public transportation would likely offer transit access in the portions of counties that are not currently served.

Ideally, defining the base level of service to be provided in each Michigan county also would be a collaborative decision-making process. This process would be approached on a statewide basis, involving representatives from all stakeholder groups. As noted above, participants in consensus-based decision making processes generally are more committed to implementing their decision if they have participated in its development.

<u>Initiative:</u>

Define a base level of transit service and forge collaboration between existing public, private, and non-profit providers to ensure that the established base level of service is provided.

III.   INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

A.   Coordinated Information Sources

Background:

Coordinating information sources was almost uniformly regarded as a critical but daunting task that often does not seem like a top priority for scarce funding. However, it became clear that efforts to improve and coordinate service were of little use if potential passengers were unable to learn how to use and connect the different services available to reach their destination. Making comprehensive information on transit services available will help to provide seamless transportation.

A previous state effort to provide information coordination was difficult to keep up to date, did not receive much use, and was discontinued. However, it was in operation before widespread use of the Internet and was based on customers dialing a 1-800 number for information. The interactive nature, relative ease of use, and increasing prevalence of Internet access makes it an excellent tool for responding to passenger requests for a customized route, map, and schedule. Although the Internet would be the more effective tool for conveying such information, telephone-based information also should be provided.

It is unclear whether this type of information coordination is more appropriate on a regional scale or statewide. Initially, it may seem preferable to provide information on a statewide basis. However, there are resource constraints to accomplishing the data collection and maintenance necessary to make this an effective system. For example, a telephone-based pilot program underway in southwest Michigan includes nine counties and continues to expand, but is limited by the funding available to support maintenance of the data. Therefore, it may be more manageable to fund and accomplish up-to-date information coordination on a regional level. It should be possible to integrate these systems to provide information at the state level at a later time. Thus the effective provision of transit information is intimately related to other efforts at enhancing regional cooperation among agencies.

In order to create and maintain an effective coordinated information system, providers need to agree to pursue the project, and funding must be allocated to the effort beyond the period of database creation. This poses a challenge for transportation agencies that understand the importance of providing coordinated information to their customers but for whom there are many other priorities. It may be possible to overcome this with a statewide initiative to begin information coordination at the regional level, using a common system to facilitate future integration, that includes financial incentives or funding earmarked for database and interface creation and maintenance.

Initiative:

Providing a "clearinghouse" information resource on transit services will improve communication within the transit community and promote transit ridership. Efforts to

make full use of information technologies, including the Internet and intelligent transportation systems, will be made.

B.   Communications within the Transit Community

Background:

Finally, two clear priorities that emerged from the strategic planning process were the improvement of communications within the transit community and the development of a more unified voice for transit advocacy within the state of Michigan. These priorities are closely related, as the dominant feeling was that poor communications have led to disjointed action.

Efforts to improve communications include the Passenger Transportation Management System (PTMS), the PTD Trans Actions newsletter, and the PTD Web site. All public transit agencies and many specialized services providers use PTMS. This electronic system provides information regarding transit agency operations to those assessing it. The Trans Actions newsletter and the PTD Web site are used to keep those interested in Michigan transit informed of various initiatives and activities. While these are ways to make information available, they do not generate dialogue. Therefore, creating a culture of open communication and mutual trust needs to be generated within the transit community. This will lead to development of a unified voice for transit advocacy within the state of Michigan.

Initiative:

Develop forums, led by professional facilitators, to improve communication and foster cooperation within the transit community, leading to a unified voice for transit advocacy. Mutual reliance and interest are also expected to generate joint endeavors between various elements of the transit community in the state.

IV.   TRANSIT EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

A.   Transit Efficiency and Effectiveness

Background:

Through the strategic planning process and development of the preceding initiatives, it became clear that measuring and increasing transit efficiency and effectiveness are important and need to be addressed. Incorporating efficiency and effectiveness measures in incentive-based programs would be one way to encourage transit agencies to increase performance. Other initiatives, notably those addressed previously in this document, would help transit agencies better utilize existing resources and thereby increase efficiency and effectiveness.

Performance Measures

Figure 1: Framework for Transit Performance Concepts
Source: Fielding (1987)

The fundamental relationship between transit inputs and outputs and consumption that define both efficiency and effectiveness are diagrammed in Figure 1, from Fielding (1987). The relationships defined here as cost efficiency and service effectiveness are the efficiency and effectiveness measures of interest to Michigan transit.

SERVICE INPUTS
Labor, Capital, Fuel

COST EFFICIENCY

COST EFFECTIVENESS

SERVICE OUTPUTS
Vehicle hours,
Vehicle miles,
Capacity miles

SERVICE EFFECTIVENESS

SERVICE CONSUMPTION
Passengers,
Passenger miles,
Operating revenue

Cost efficiency can be thought of as a relationship between service production and service inputs. Fielding explains that the indicator "describes how well factors such as labor, equipment, facilities, and fuel are used to produce outputs as represented by vehicle hours or miles of service." (p. 60) It can be calculated as a relationship between data on inputs such as labor, capital, and fuel and data on service outputs such as vehicle hours and vehicle miles.

Service effectiveness refers to the relationship between service outputs and service consumption. Indicators of effectiveness measure "the consumption of transit output as well as the impact of transit on societal goals, such as reducing traffic congestion." (p. 60) The relationship between service consumption (passengers, passenger miles, operating revenue) and service output yield this measure. Thus a service may have a high cost efficiency if it is able to mount high levels of transit provision, but a low service effectiveness if the service efficiently provided is only lightly used.

Fielding also defines cost effectiveness measures, explaining that "overall indicators integrate efficiency and effectiveness measures, as when costs of service inputs are related to consumption. Cost per passenger and the ratio of revenue to the cost of producing service are overall measures." (p. 60) Such measures are obtained by taking service-input data per service consumption data and are useful for administrative or public relations, but are not adequate for developing improvement strategies.

Measures of efficiency and effectiveness are important, not one to the exclusion of the other, and can be combined in overall indicators (Fielding 1987). However, an overall measure, which indicates cost effectiveness, does not itself provide for assessment or targeted improvement of its components, efficiency and effectiveness. Effective planning and evaluation requires breaking up the overall cost effectiveness measures into their cost efficiency and service effectiveness components in order to develop fine-grained indicators of areas that may be targeted for improvements.

Using Performance Measures with Incentive-based Programs

Incorporating efficiency and effectiveness measures in the criteria for incentive-based programs is one approach to encourage transit agencies to improve performance. An increased allocation of money or other resources would be the reward for meeting an established target, such as exceeding a performance threshold or improving performance by a predetermined margin. A program to distribute resources specifically set aside to reward performance would be one way to accomplish this. Care must be taken; however, to ensure that such programs do not provide incentives to adjust service or data collection to increase apparent efficiency or effectiveness only.

The funding formula used to allocate annual state funding to transit agencies is one such incentive-based program in which performance-based criteria might be included. There has been a significant amount of debate over the pros and cons of doing so. Subsidies to transit have been criticized for encouraging declines in productivity and discouraging innovation. Proponents of performance-based criteria in the funding formula suggest that these approaches are ways to distribute subsidies to overcome these potential negative effects. They cite studies that correlate increases in subsidies with reductions in performance and productivity (Karlaftis and Sinha 1997). They suggest use of a performance-based allocation of transit subsidy to "reward those systems that raise productivity, attract new passengers, and enhance operating efficiency" (Karlaftis and Sinha 1997). A study performed by researchers at Purdue University in 1997 sought to test this assertion by analyzing the effect of performance-based measures that have been included in Indiana's transit subsidy allocation formula since 1986 on transit system self-reliance, efficiency, and effectiveness. They determined that a "positive change has been realized in transit system effectiveness and self-reliance, while no perceptible change was observed in transit system efficiency" (Karlaftis and Sinha 1997).

At the same time, there is reason for caution in devising funding formulas that increase reliance on efficiency as a basis for distribution. The first problem is in the definition of efficiency itself. For example, consider two systems, one tends to serve short trips and the other

tends to serve long trips. The former may exhibit low costs per trip but high costs per passenger mile, while the latter may show the reverse. Depending on one's perspective, either the passenger trip or the passenger mile could be viewed as the end product of the system; hence there may be no objective way to ascertain which of the two systems is operating more efficiently. Relatedly, the expense structure of large urban, small urban, and non-urban systems is considerably different, with significantly more subsidy per trip going to the smaller systems. This will necessitate the creation of different distribution principles between the systems, but that would represent a deviation from the simple efficiency logic of formula-based distribution.

Moreover, some formulas can provide transit agencies with incentive to alter service in order to increase their apparent productivity, without improvements in actual efficiency or effectiveness. For example, trips that are "through-routed" (i.e., vehicles changing between routes seamlessly to reduce transferring) may be broken into segments in order to create another boarding, and hence another "trip." This problem stems from the fact that transit statistics tend to rely heavily on data on unlinked trips, or boardings, rather than on linked trips. The latter track people's movements from origin to destination, but are much more difficult to observe and to collect reliable data on. Similar alterations in service patterns can be developed to increase vehicle miles, passenger miles, or virtually any desired outcome to increase apparent productivity.

Furthermore, transit operators can readily enhance the efficiency or effectiveness statistics of their operations by eliminating less productive service, such as that operating on late nights or weekends. Under a regime of efficiency-based formulas, a cash-strapped operator might be tempted to do just that, as it quickly provides a double benefit: not only is the subsidy to the low productivity operation eliminated, but the action is rewarded through budgeting based on efficiency-based formulas. Yet, it is unclear from the statewide perspective whether such late night or weekend service should have been eliminated; these are decisions that most would argue are best left to the local level. So, in a paradoxical way, efficiency-based budgeting may have unintentionally preempted local decision making.

The current cost-based formula under which public transit agencies receive state funds based on the cost they incur may be seen in part as a program to match locally generated revenues with state subsidy. Systems that are successful in generating revenues through farebox collection, local taxation and other local sources are rewarded through state subsidy. Consequently, agencies that serve local needs - and are thus able to raise local revenue - are rewarded under cost recovery systems.

Despite this potentially desirable characteristic of cost-based formulas, they may leave behind those poorer communities that are unable to generate significant revenues locally because of a small tax base per capita. Perhaps even more serious than the potential inefficiencies of such formulas is their potential inequity. One approach to resolving this is incorporating transit needs as an element of policies for the allocation of state transit resources; for example rates of carlessness within a transit operator's jurisdiction may be incorporated into distribution formulas. Improving Performance by Making More of Existing Resources

The initiatives described in the first three parts of this section, with the possible exception of the Funding Options initiative, have a common theme: to enable better transit service using resources that are currently available. Increasing cooperation, coordination, and communication among transit providers, as well as greater confidence in future funding levels, would allow transit agencies to streamline operations and provide more extensive and a better quality of service with existing resources. These initiatives all reflect the desire of participants in the strategic planning process to improve the level of efficiency and effectiveness of transit, and convey participants' ideas of how Michigan can begin achieving performance improvement.

Initiative:

Develop common indicators of transit efficiency and effectiveness that can be used by transit providers, funding agencies, and other entities to measure performance. These indicators will help transit agencies evaluate their performance based on their past practice, as well as with "peer" transit agencies. Incorporate appropriate measures into incentive-based programs to reward improvement in efficiency and effectiveness.

References:
Fielding, Gordon J. (1987) Managing Public Transit Strategically. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Karlaftis, Matthew G. and Kumares C. Sinha.   (1997) "Performance-Based Transit Operating Subsidy Allocation: A Before and After Study." Journal of Public Transportation 1(2)1-23.

V.   LAND USE COORDINATION

A.   Transit and Land Use Coordination

Background:

One of the major goals of the SLRP is to "Coordinate local land use planning, transportation planning and development to maximize the use of existing infrastructure, increase the effectiveness of investment, and retain or enhance the vitality of the local community." Transit can contribute to accomplishment of this goal. Some types of developments, neighborhoods, and cities are arranged such that transit operators find it difficult to design effective service, leaving people little choice but to use an automobile for access to goods and services. Other developments or areas are designed in a way that transit can serve easily, providing effective transportation for a variety of populations and destinations.

Considering transit accessibility when making land use decisions can improve the transportation alternatives available to people and increase transit ridership. This can be done at all geographic scales, from the individual development to the region; thus Michigan transit may be able to approach this goal incrementally. Coordination at broader geographic scales entails more challenges than smaller-scale coordination; thus this geographic range offers the opportunity to find levels of transit-land use coordination appropriate to a given physical and political environment.

At the level of the individual site, small modifications can frequently render plans more amenable to access by transit. For example, placement of buildings close to existing bus stops can alleviate the need for transit passengers to traverse large parking lots competing with vehicular traffic to reach their bus. Careful design at the site plan stage can ensure this and provide a place for passengers to feel safe and comfortable while waiting for transit. Alternatively, provisions can sometimes be made for bus access and egress to the site itself.

At the level of the neighborhood, transit-oriented developments (TODs) are co-located with a permanent transit stop and a variety of medium-to-high density land uses, including office, retail, and residential, to generate and attract sufficient numbers of potential transit passengers. The more clusters of development in a community, the more the effect will be to increase public transit use as increasing numbers of people find that both their home and employment are convenient to transit. The municipal general planning process is an opportunity to coordinate land use and transit at the level of an individual community, since it can identify appropriate locations for redevelopment, infill, or new development in a transit-friendly fashion. In many areas of high employment, the market is eager to develop at higher than usual densities, thus welcoming the adoption of zoning policies that would allow these clusters.

While the state has delegated most authority over land use decisions to individual cities, villages, and townships, it remains in a position to provide information on the relationship between land use and transit use, and the benefits to be achieved through their coordination. It can also facilitate coordination among the diverse populations and transit providers that would benefit from greater transit accessibility. Citizens and transit operators throughout the state can

be important partners in land use planning decisions, from identifying ways transit can be accommodated in individual site plans to representing transit in the master planning process.

Some of the ways this coordination might be accomplished are included in the initiatives on Coordination of Funds at the State Level and Regional Coordination of Transit Provision. In addition, some states, including Oregon, New Jersey, and Maryland, have laws and/or programs to facilitate TOD or higher density neighborhoods clustered around high quality transit and built for pedestrians. Oregon has a state law that provides for incentives and guidelines for TODs. TODs are also encouraged through the state's Transportation and Growth Management Program. New Jersey provides for TODs in specially planned areas, such as environmentally sensitive areas. Maryland's Transit Station Smart Growth Program provides funding to "spur the development of land around transit stations." The state also has a TOD Task Force, created by the governor through executive order. The Task Force is charged with assessing the benefits of TODs, and recommending ways to maximize those benefits and implement TODs in the short- and long-term.

Initiative:

Develop educational materials that describe how to integrate transit into land use decisions. Initiate cooperative creation of model zoning and local development ordinances to facilitate transit-oriented development and land uses. Promote inclusion of transit agencies in land use planning from development of master plans to site plan review. Request Regional Planning Agencies to develop a regional transit plan.

VI.   IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The intent of the strategic planning process was to provide representatives from the transit industry, its stakeholders, and MDOT with an opportunity to work together to plan for the future of public transit in Michigan. With input from these interested parties, action plans will be developed to implement the initiatives described in this plan.

PTD will monitor and update the plan and will also provide a link between the transit strategic planning effort and implementation of the SLRP. The duties and responsibilities of PTD staff include:

- Serve as a facilitator among MDOT, transit providers, and stakeholders to implement the plan.

- Incorporate continual feedback from local transit agencies and other interested parties into the transit strategic planning process.

- Oversee the conduct of the situation audit for further evaluation of transit issues and needs.

- Review the goals and initiatives to ensure that strategies being incorporated into action plans are in alignment.

- Continue to communicate with transit agencies, stakeholders, and other interested parties activities that are being accomplished in response to the strategic planning effort. Information will be made available through various means such as the PTD Web site, the TransActions newsletter, advisory teams, and published reports.

Public transit will continue to play a vital role in meeting the mobility challenges of Michigan citizens. The strategic planning effort will help move transit forward to achieve its mission. Initiatives included in the strategic plan will complement MDOT's overall planning effort detailed in the SLRP. Everyone within the public transit industry is invited to join in this effort by providing input and expertise as the initiatives are implemented to meet the goals of this plan. Transit in Michigan can meet the challenges included in this plan.

Section Two

<u>SITUATION AUDIT</u>

I. INTRODUCTION

The objective of the situation audit component of the strategic plan is to provide a comprehensive picture of the status of transit in Michigan, including the general environment of transit operation and the characteristics of transit services statewide. Specific attention is given to social demographic trends such as statewide population changes, vehicle ownership and travel patterns. Since transit agencies within the State operate under vastly different conditions (large urban, medium/small urban, and non-urban) comparisons are conducted in order to reflect the environment within which a given system operates. Objective data included in this report are from two major sources: Michigan Public Transportation Management System (PTMS) database, and other data publicly available on the worldwide web. All information is presented visually with maps and charts wherever possible.

II. POPULATION DENSITY AND CHANGE

The State of Michigan has experienced significant population growth during the 20th century. Total population increased from 5.3 million in 1940 to 9.8 million in 1998. However, there are significant differences in terms of spatial distribution of populations across the state. The most densely populated places in Michigan are Wayne, Macomb, Oakland, and Genesee counties - all are located in southeast Michigan - with more than 800 residents per square mile. All counties in Upper Michigan have less than 50 residents per square mile except in Schoolcraft County (Figure 2). Differences in population density are perhaps the prime determinant of transit outcomes as long distance pickups are necessary in less populated areas.

Population density change was negative in 15 Michigan counties (including Wayne County) between 1970 and 1998. Macomb, Oakland, Livingston, Ottawa, and Kent counties experienced the most significant population density increases (Figure 3). This reflects a continuation of suburbanization trends of the past half century.

According to projections, most counties in Upper Michigan will continue the trend of population decline in the coming decades. At the same time, counties like Oakland, Livingston, Kent and Ottawa will experience population density increases as they did in the past three decades (Figure 4). Ann Arbor and the Grand Rapids – Holland metropolitan areas are forecast to have the highest rate of population increase from 1990 to 2020 in Michigan. The third most rapid increase is forecast for the non-metropolitan areas across the state. Flint, Saginaw-Bay-Midland, and Detroit areas are slated for negative or very little population change in the coming decades (Figure 5).

Population growth in suburban areas and declining population in remote rural areas will lead to a different transit market, especially as the population ages. This is reflected in the initiatives to coordinate funds at the state level and to coordinate regional transit provision.

III. TRANSIT DEPENDENT POPULATIONS TRENDS

The transit dependent populations include the elderly (65+), poor, and persons with a mobility or self-care limitation. The spatial distribution of these people varies across Michigan

when presented as the percentage of population or as absolute numbers. That is, upper and north Michigan have a higher percentage of transit dependent population compared with total local population, while southeastern Michigan has a much higher amount of transit dependent population.

A.   Elderly Population (2020 forecast)

In general, counties in the Upper Peninsula and northern Michigan have a higher percent of elderly population than southern counties (Figure 6). The elderly population (age 65 or higher) in Michigan is forecast to increase from 1.1 million, or 12 percent of the total population in 1990, to 1.7 million, or 17 percent of the total population in 2020. This means that almost one-fifth of the Michigan population will be over 65 by that time (Figure 7). By 2020, most of the elderly population will be living in southern Michigan counties, while counties in northern and upper Michigan will have a higher percentage of elderly people (Figures 8 and 9).

B.   Persons with a Mobility or Self-Care Limitation (1990 and 2020)

Based on 1990 census data, there were about 485,000 people with a mobility or self-care limitation in Michigan. The majority of these people lived in urban areas, particularly in the southeastern Michigan area (about one-third living in Wayne County, see Figure 10). Compared with the total population, however, counties in upper and northern Michigan had a higher percentage of disabled people (Figure 11).

Because of the connection between disability and age, growth in the population of individuals with mobility or self-care limitations can be forecasted on the basis of the aging population. Seven percent of the population aged 16 and over has at least some limitations in mobility or self-care, according the Census definition (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Summary Tape File 3A, Table P69). In Michigan, this includes five percent of the population aged 16-64, 14 percent of the population 65-74, and 31 percent of the population aged 75 and over (http://www.mdch.state.mi.us/mass/DAIM/Figures/daimf16.html). Based on these rates of disability by age, the disabled population in Michigan is expected to grow by 14.8 percent between 2000 and 2020, as compared with only 6.4 percent growth in the population as a whole. The spatial distribution of the disabled people will not change significantly from 1990 to 2020 (Figures 12 and 13).

C.   People in Poverty (2020 estimates)

The number of people of all ages in poverty in Michigan increased slightly from 10 to 12 percent between 1980 and 1997. Among all 84 counties, 41 counties experienced a decline or no change in terms of poverty level. The remaining 43 counties had an increase in poverty level (ranging from one to four percentage points each). Since poverty is in large measure a function of the business cycle and hence difficult to predict 20 years from now, we used the average poverty levels of 1980, 1990, 1993, 1995, and 1997 as a rough estimate for 2020. Based on this average, counties in central and upper Michigan demonstrate a higher percent of poverty population than the rest of the regions in the state (Figures 14 and 15).

D.   Convergence of Elderly, Disabled, and Poverty Population (2020)

Because of overlap among the three groups of transit dependent population (e.g. someone is old, poor and mobility limitation), it is inappropriate to add up the absolute numbers of these people to represent the total transit dependent population in each county. Instead, we break the counties into three groups (low, medium and high) in terms of the proportion of elderly, poor, and disabled, and then examine the convergence of these three different maps on one single map to represent the level of transit dependent population for each county. For example, Wayne County has a high level of poverty population, low level of elderly people, and low level of disabled persons. The overall ranking in terms of all transit dependent population for Wayne County is therefore low.

Again, almost all counties in northern and upper Michigan have high or medium percentage of transit dependent population (Figure 16). In terms of sheer numbers of the elderly, disabled and poor population, most of the top third counties are located in south and central Michigan (Figure 17).

IV.   INCOME, CAR OWNERSHIP, AND TRAVEL TRENDS

Apart from population demographics, transit demand is influenced by the incidence of poor and carless households.

The disparity in household income is obvious between southern and northern Michigan. Most counties in southern Michigan have an average household income more than $30,000 (Figure 18), and the percent of people of all ages in poverty is lower in the southern part of the state, with the exception of Wayne County (Figure 19).

To get a more accurate picture of transit dependent population/household, it is useful to introduce other measurements including household automobile ownership and motorization rates. Households lacking an automobile are primarily found in urban and rural areas (Figure 20); these areas also demonstrate relatively low vehicle ownership rates (Figure 21). These two phenomena are not identical however; some urban areas have average car ownership rates but a high proportion of households without a car. This can occur, for example, when a central city with high rates of carlessness is in the same county as a suburb with high levels of car ownership per capita.

From 1960 to 1990 there was significant growth in vehicles per household, particularly a steady increase in two- and three- or more vehicle households (Figure 22). Yet there remains a persistent base of 10 percent of households without automobiles in Michigan. It is reasonable to assume that this rate of carlessness will continue into the future, as it stabilized around 1980. This suggests a continuing need for transportation options not based exclusively in single-occupancy automobile use.

The most striking change in the data is a more than 500 percent increase in roadway travel miles, a 350 percent increase in passenger vehicles, and a 220 percent increase in travel

miles per capita since 1940. They are increasing at a far greater rate than the state population during the same period (Figure 23).

V.   UTILIZATION OF TRANSIT SERVICES

Transit utilization can be seen in part as a product of the broader trends referred above. Total ridership for the local bus and specialized services programs is starting to rise after reaching a low in 1996 (Figure 24). More than 90 percent of the 80 million passengers who used transit systems each year are served by systems operating in 15 urban areas. But despite the slight ridership growth, Michigan has a higher proportion of drive alone travel and somewhat lower transit usage than the United States as a whole, and even higher in comparison to other states in the upper Midwest (Figure 25).

In general, lower income and lower car ownership tend to increase demand for transit service. But in non-urban areas, the generally low level of service – a product of low densities and high travel distances - leads to lighter usage than in metropolitan areas (Figures 26, 27, and 28).

Transit in Michigan is especially crucial to seniors and persons with disabilities. These two types of passengers represented 11 percent of total ridership, with significant differences between system types. Medium/Small transit systems have a higher percent of elderly passengers than urban and non-urban systems, while non-urban areas have the highest percent of passengers with disabilities (more than 50 percent in many cases). It's important that serving seniors and persons with disabilities become a top priority in most non-urban areas (Figures 29, 30, 31, and 32). The initiatives to coordinate funds at the state level and to achieve regional transportation are closely related to this.

VI.   TRANSIT FUNDING LEVELS

Public transportation is funded at the state level by the Comprehensive Transportation Fund (CTF). The contribution of federal aid is small compared to this fund and is generated by a portion of the federal fuel tax.

State Revenue for public transportation goes to the CTF and is derived from 7.9 percent of the Michigan Transportation Fund and about seven percent of the state sales tax received on auto-related products. The Michigan Transportation Fund receives most of its revenue from the state fuel tax and vehicle registration fees.

The overall non-local funding level for public transit in Michigan has increased from 150 million to 220 million over the past ten years, with the majority of this funding coming from the state, ranging from 86 to 99 percent of the total funds (Figure 33).

With regard to different transit categories, large urban areas have a higher revenue per capita from all sources than medium/small and non-urban systems (Figure 34). Not surprisingly, both federal and state funding tend to concentrate on urban areas in Michigan (Figures 35 and 36). But compared with other major metropolitan areas nationwide, Detroit ranked 20th in terms

of local transit operating funding per capita (Figure 37). Relatedly, Michigan receives lower than average transit funding for its urbanized areas from the federal government (Figure 38). It may be that the exclusive reliance on buses in Michigan tends to lower this figure when compared to other states such as California, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, and Pennsylvania that have invested in more expensive rail systems.

VII. REVENUE SOURCES FOR TRANSIT

Based on PTMS data, the operation of Michigan transit agencies is becoming more reliant on state and local funding sources. Federal funding for transit in each transit category shrank dramatically from 1995 to 1998. The decrease is more significant in large and medium/small urban areas than non-urban areas. The proportion of farebox income in total operating revenue is also decreasing (Figure 39, 40, 41 and 42). The initiative to expand funding options reflects the increasing dependence on non-federal sources.

VIII. TRANSIT SERVICE LEVELS

Michigan provides some level of public transportation services in all 83 counties, including urban service, specialized services, and small community service. Among all counties, 48 have countywide services (Figure 43). The level of transit services on a per capita basis is similar between different transit systems in Michigan (Figure 44). Compared with other states, however, Michigan has only an average level of transit service in rural areas – with 59 percent of its population served by transit, far behind California and New Jersey (Figure 45). The regional transportation initiatives are related to this distribution of transit provision.

At the state level, about half of all transit vehicles are less than 5 years old (Figure 50).

IX. TRANSIT SERVICE PERFORMANCE

An evaluation of public transit services entails assessment of efficiency and effectiveness, as well as the equity dimension. Efficiency is the relationship between inputs and service level outputs. Effectiveness, on the other hand, refers to the use of outputs to achieve objectives, such as ridership generation. Based on available PTMS data, the following three aspects of service performance were evaluated. These performance indicators are also used in the initiative to increase transit efficiency and effectiveness.

Cost Efficiency

Two indicators are used to evaluate the overall and labor cost efficiency of Michigan's transit service. First, vehicle hours per $1,000 operating cost indicate that non-urban transit systems have more efficient services than urban systems, although the differences are decreasing during 1995 –1998 (Figure 51). Second, the differences of vehicle hours per employee between transit categories are not significant at all (Figure 52).

Service Effectiveness

 Two indicators are used to gauge the service effectiveness of transit service: passenger trips per vehicle hour and passenger trips per vehicle mile. The differences between transit categories in these two dimensions are large, particularly between urban and non-urban systems. Large urban transit agencies deliver considerably more passengers per vehicle hour and vehicle mile than other systems (Figures 53 and 54). This is a function of the different territory each has to serve and the distance transit vehicles must traverse between pickups.

Cost Effectiveness

 Cost effectiveness measures gauge the cost of output defined in terms of passengers and trips, rather than service per se. Two important trends emerged when we examine the cost effectiveness of transit service in Michigan from 1995 to 1998: the increasing cost per passenger and the decreasing ratio of passenger fare revenue to operating expenses. Operating subsidy per passenger is about twice as high in non-urban areas than in urban areas (Figures 55, 56, 57, and 58). In terms of employee numbers required for one million passenger trips, large urban systems are much more cost efficient than medium/small and non-urban systems (Figure 59).
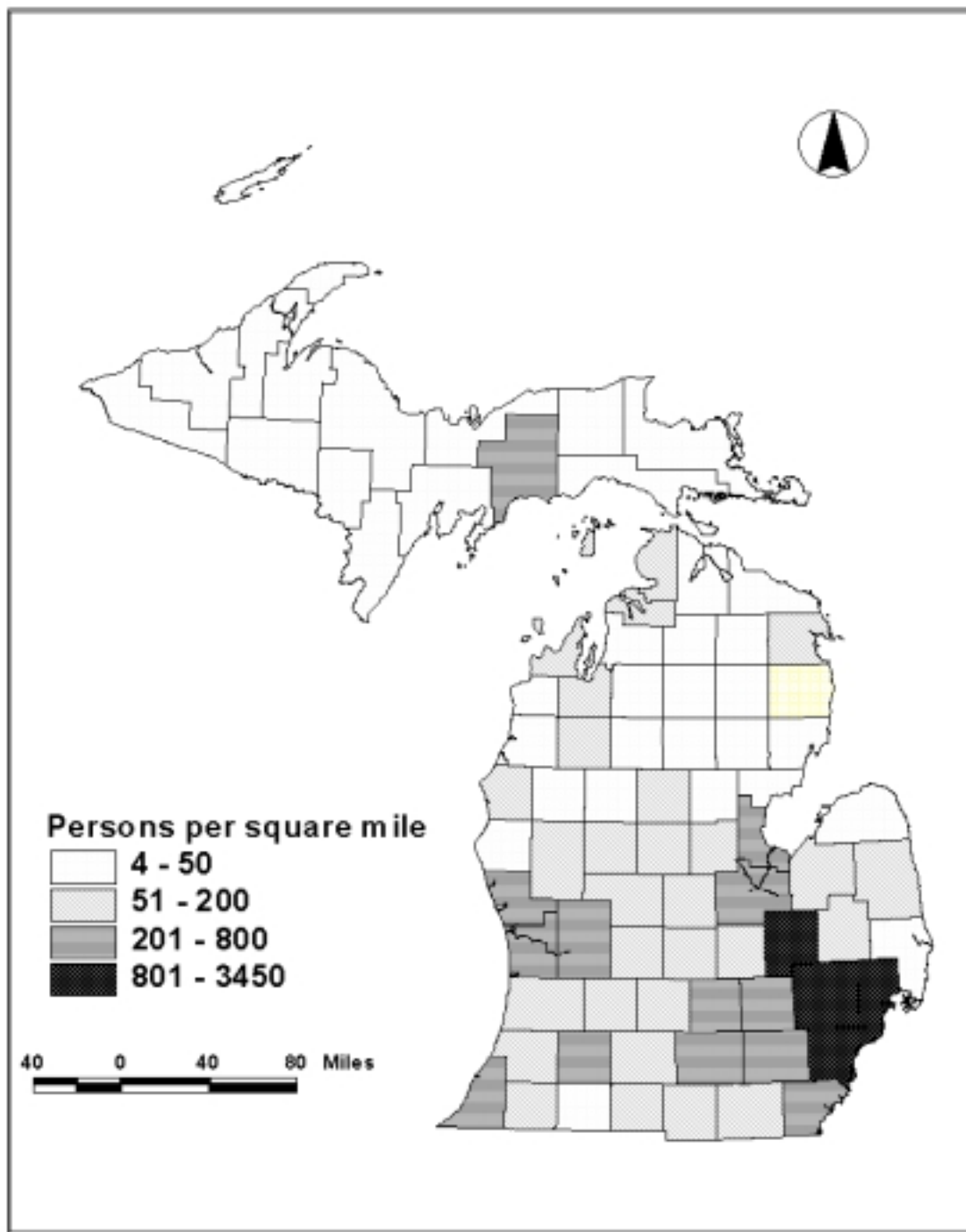
Figure 2. Population Density by County in Michigan, 1998
Source: Michigan Information Center, http://www.state.mi.us/dmb/mic/
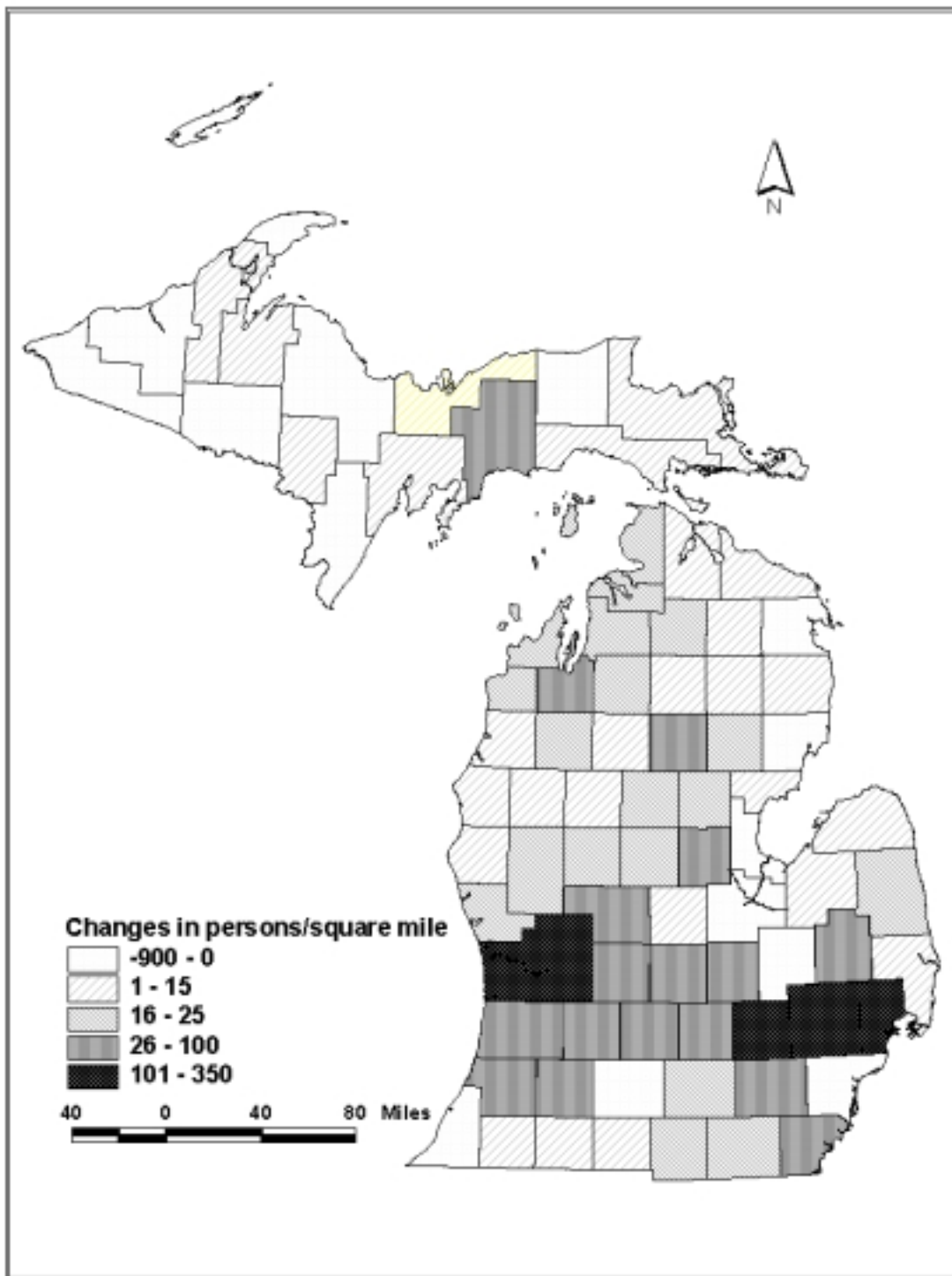
Figure 3. Changes in Population Density by County in Michigan, 1970 – 1998
Source: Michigan Information Center, http://www.state.mi.us/dmb/mic/
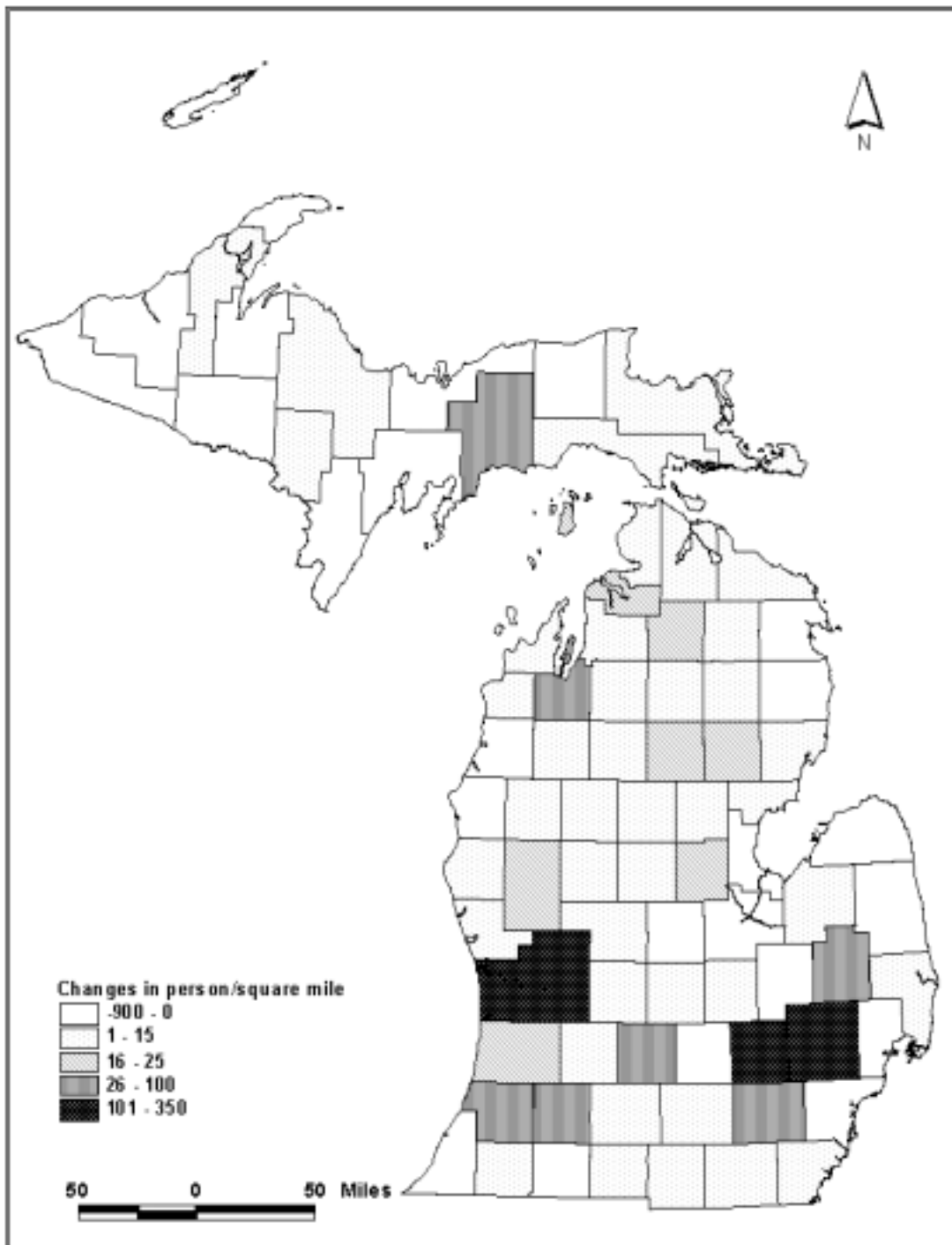
Figure 4. Changes in Population Density by County in Michigan, 1998 – 2020 (projections)
Source: Michigan Information Center, http://www.state.mi.us/dmb/mic/
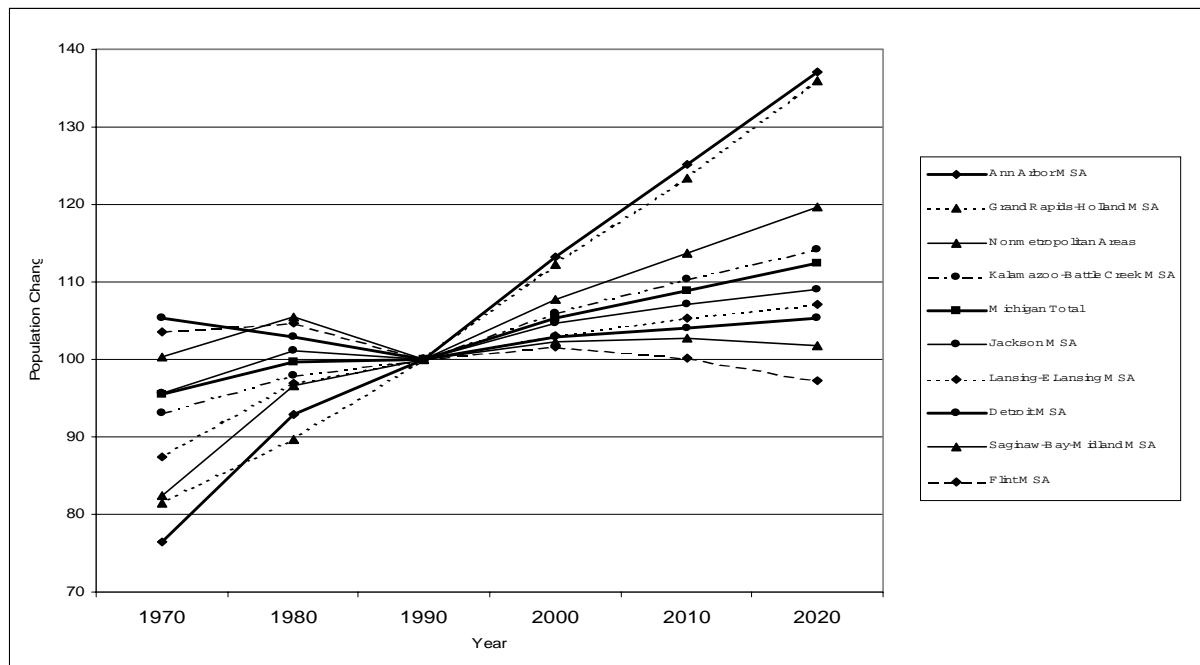
Figure 5. Rate of Population Changes by Region in Michigan (1990 =100. Year 2000, 2010, and 2020 are forecasts)

Source: Michigan Information Center, http://www.state.mi.us/dmb/mic/
Michigan Aging Services System, http://www.mdch.state.mi.us/mass/masshome.html
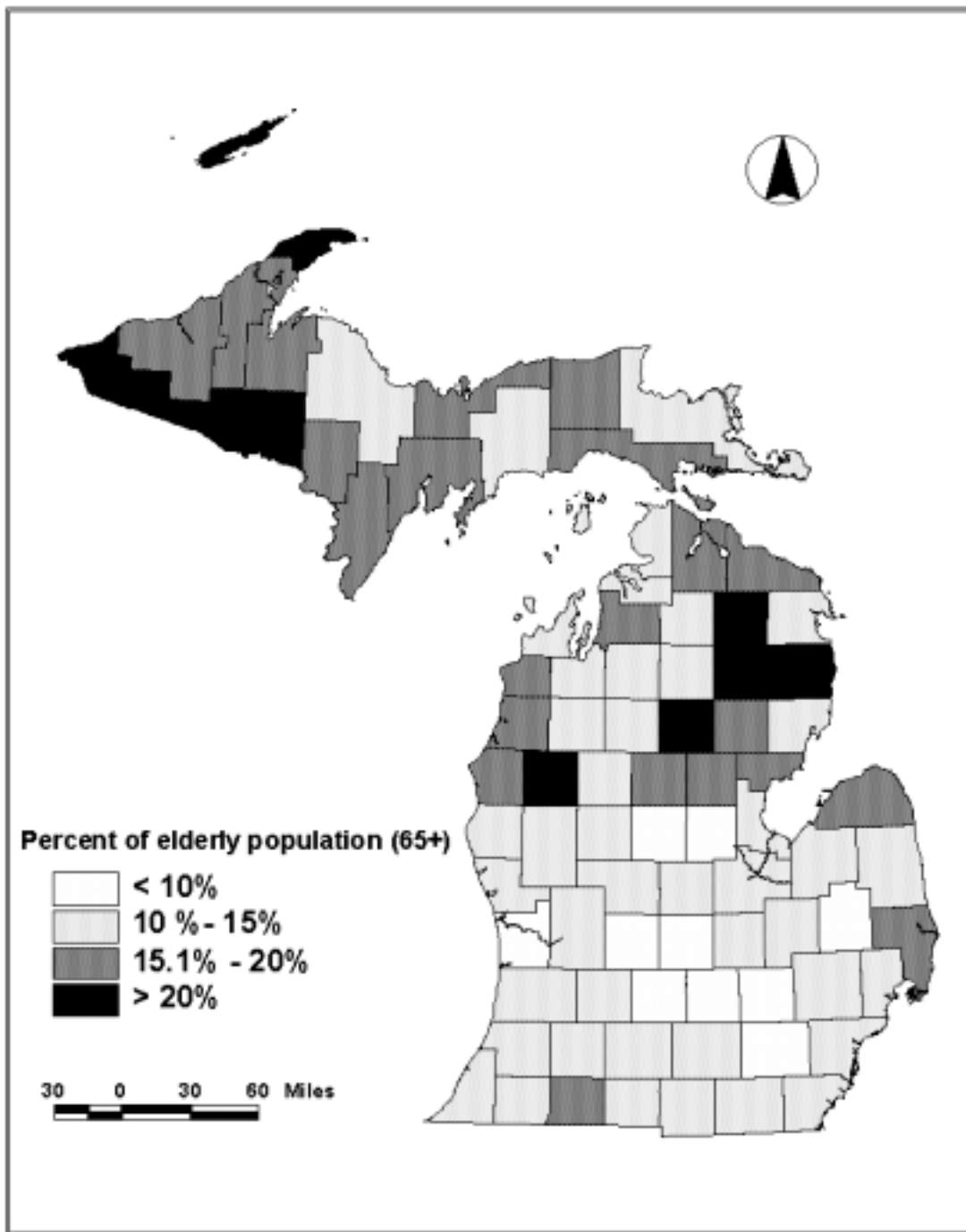
Figure 6. Percent of Elderly Population (65+) by County in Michigan, 1990
Source: Michigan Information Center, http://www.state.mi.us/dmb/mic/
Michigan Aging Services System, http://www.mich.state.mi.us/mass/masshome.html
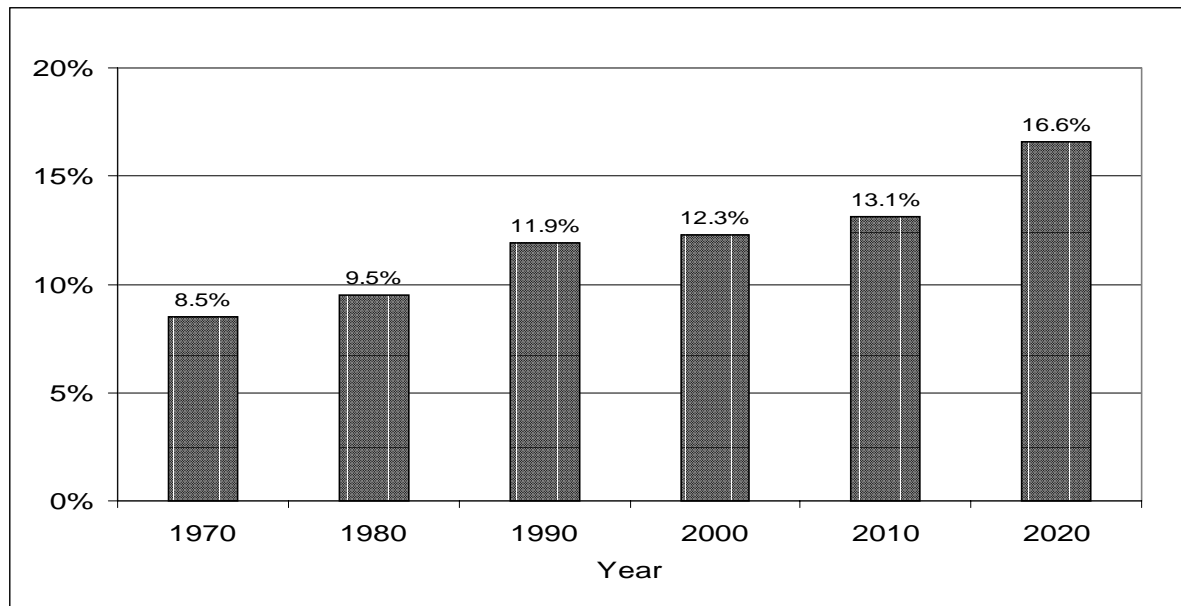
Figure 7. Percent of Elderly Population in Michigan (2000, 2010, and 2020 are forecasts)
Source: Michigan Aging Services System, http://www.mdch.state.mi.us/mass/msshome.html
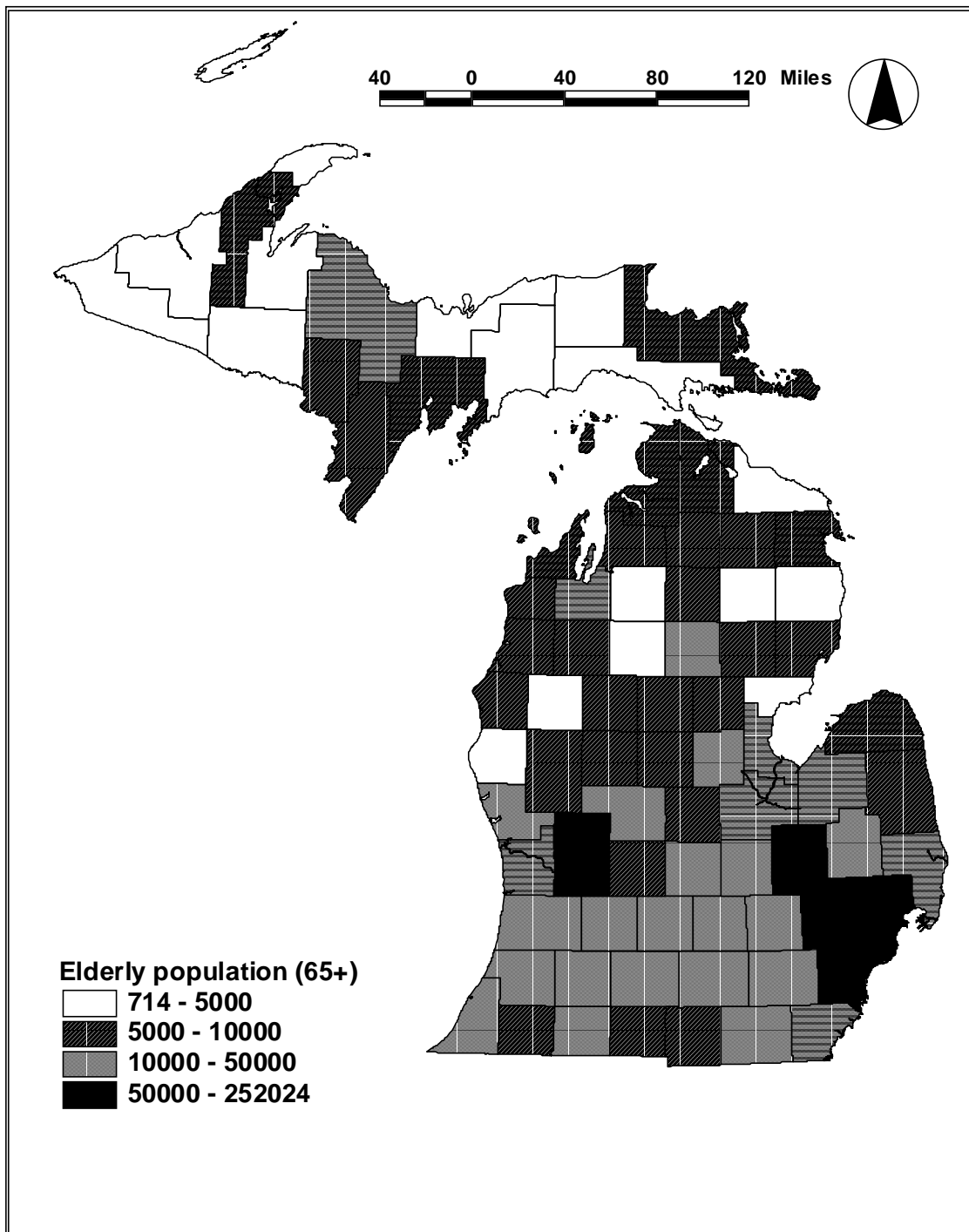
Figure 8. Elderly population by county in Michigan (2020 forecast)
Source: Michigan Information Center
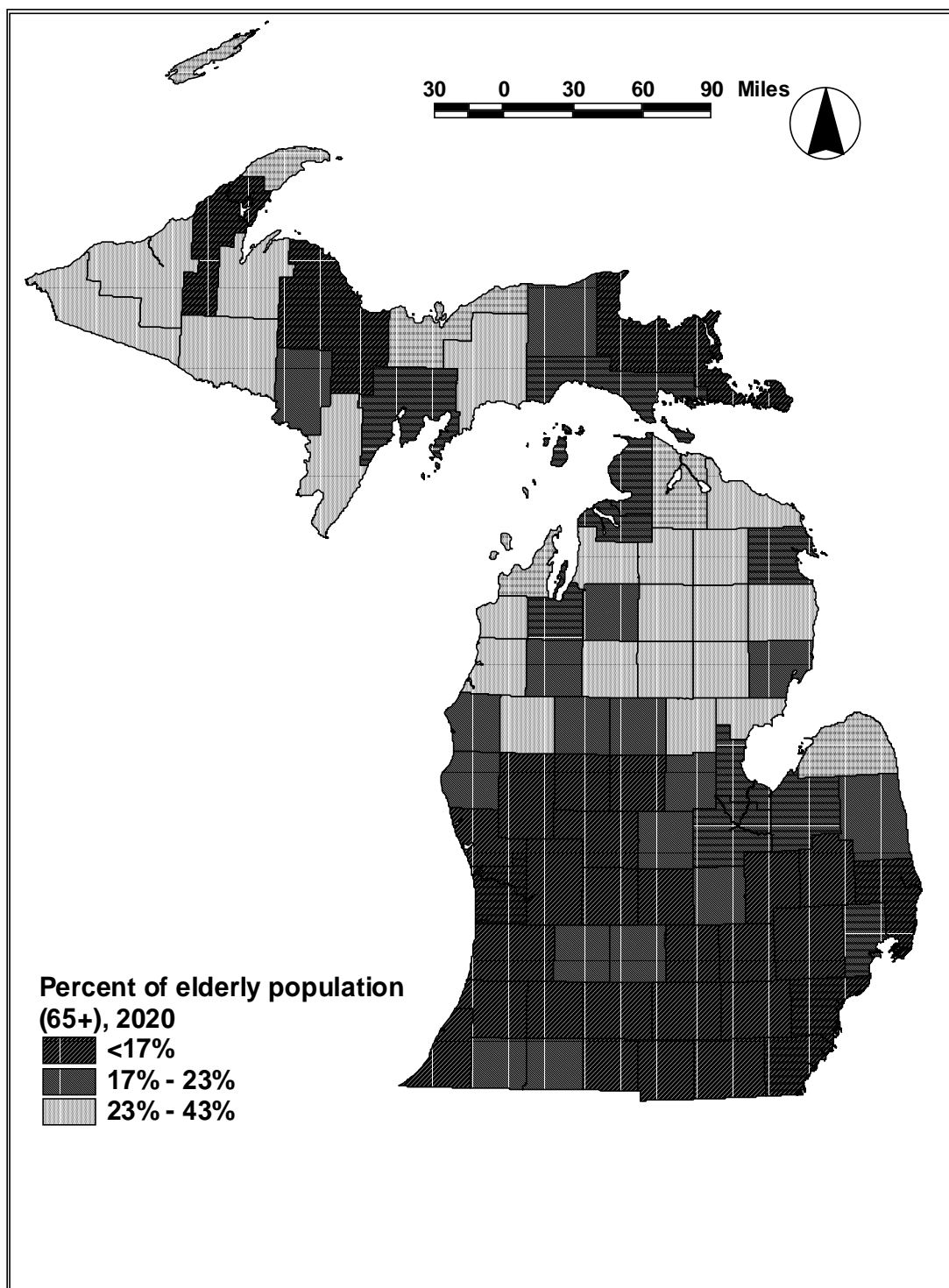
Figure 9. Percent of elderly population by county in Michigan (2020 forecast)
Source: Michigan Information Center
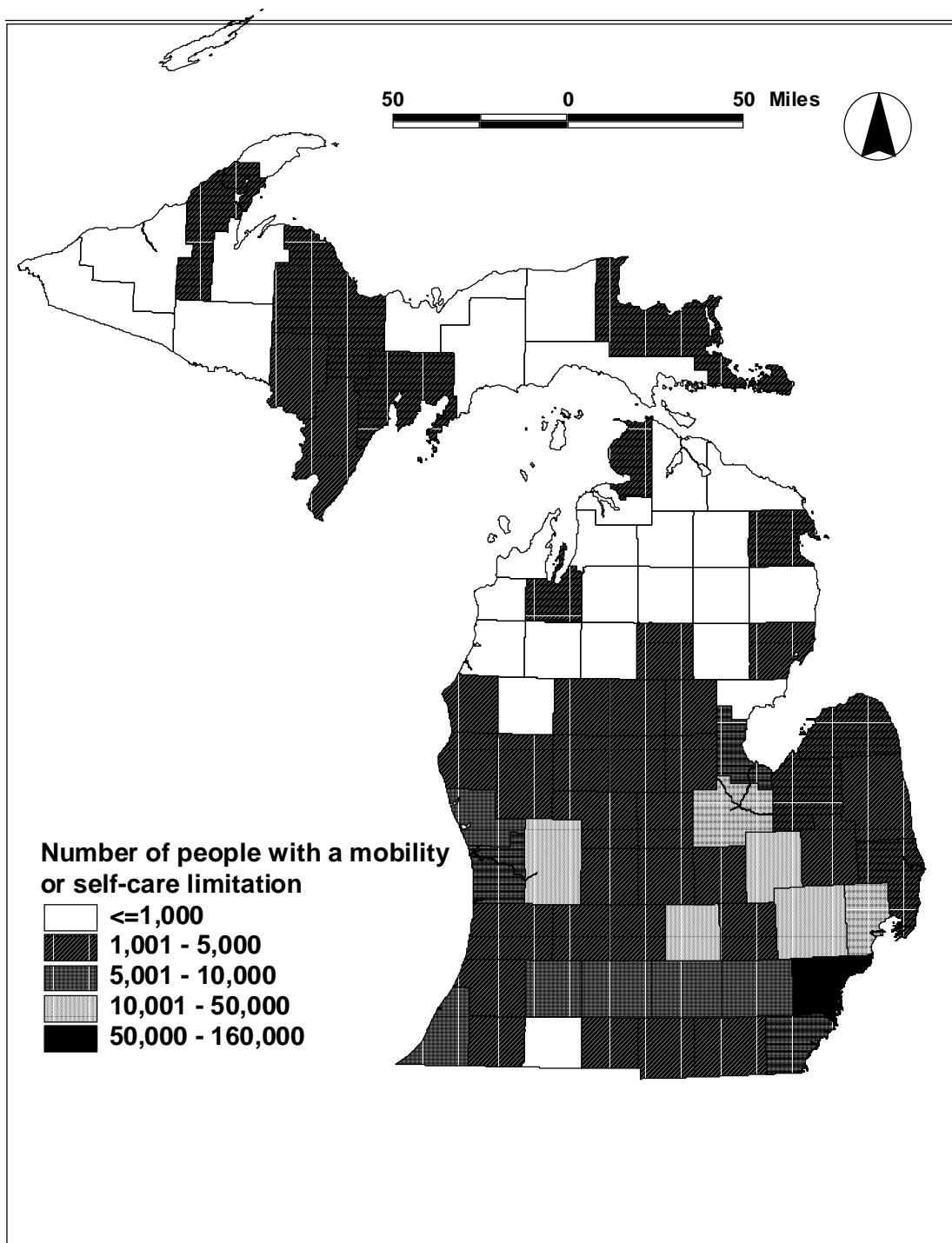
Figure 10. Persons with a mobility or self-care limitation by county in Michigan 1990
Data source: 1990 census data

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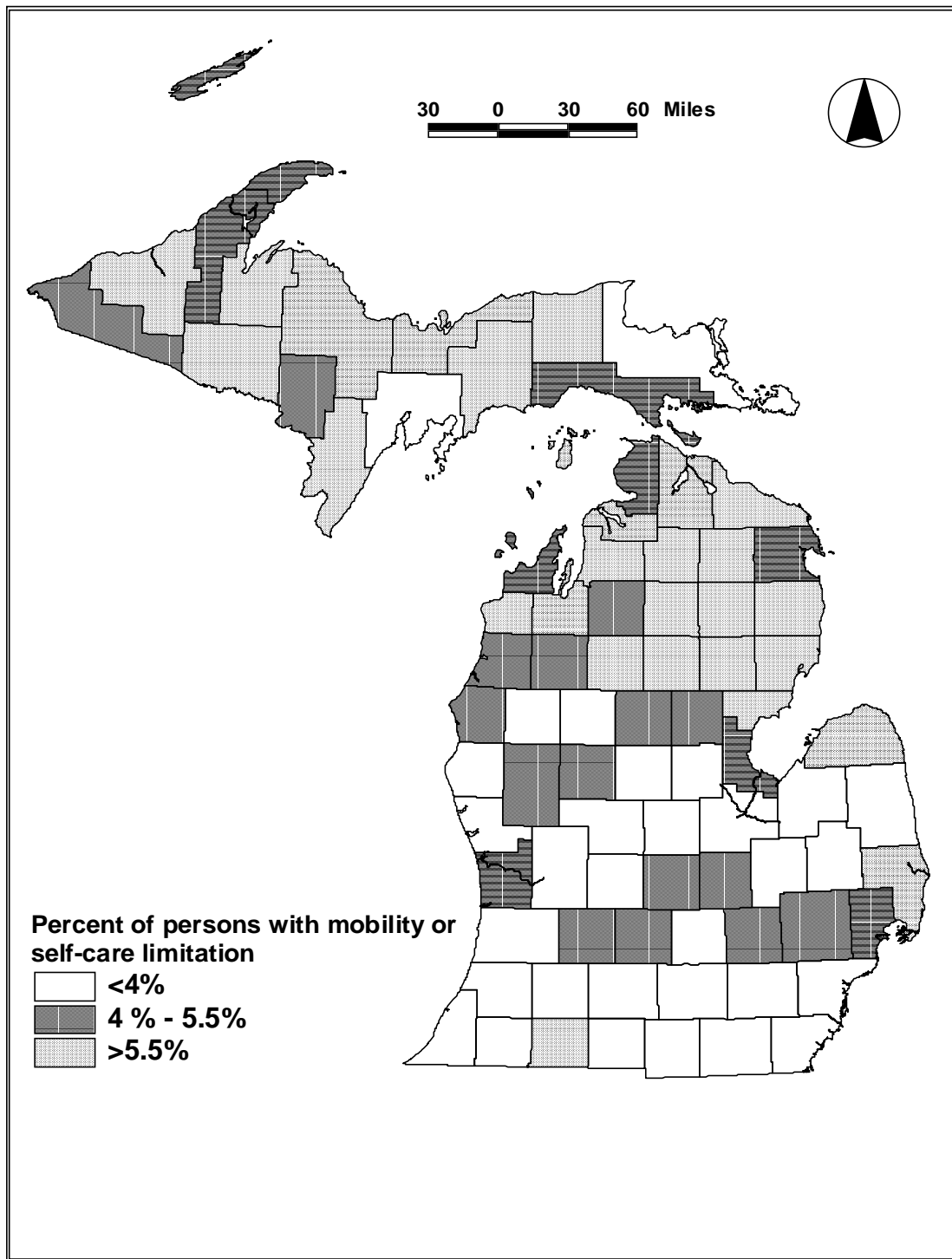
Figure 11. Percent of persons with a mobility or self-care limitation by county in Michigan
Data source: 1990 census data
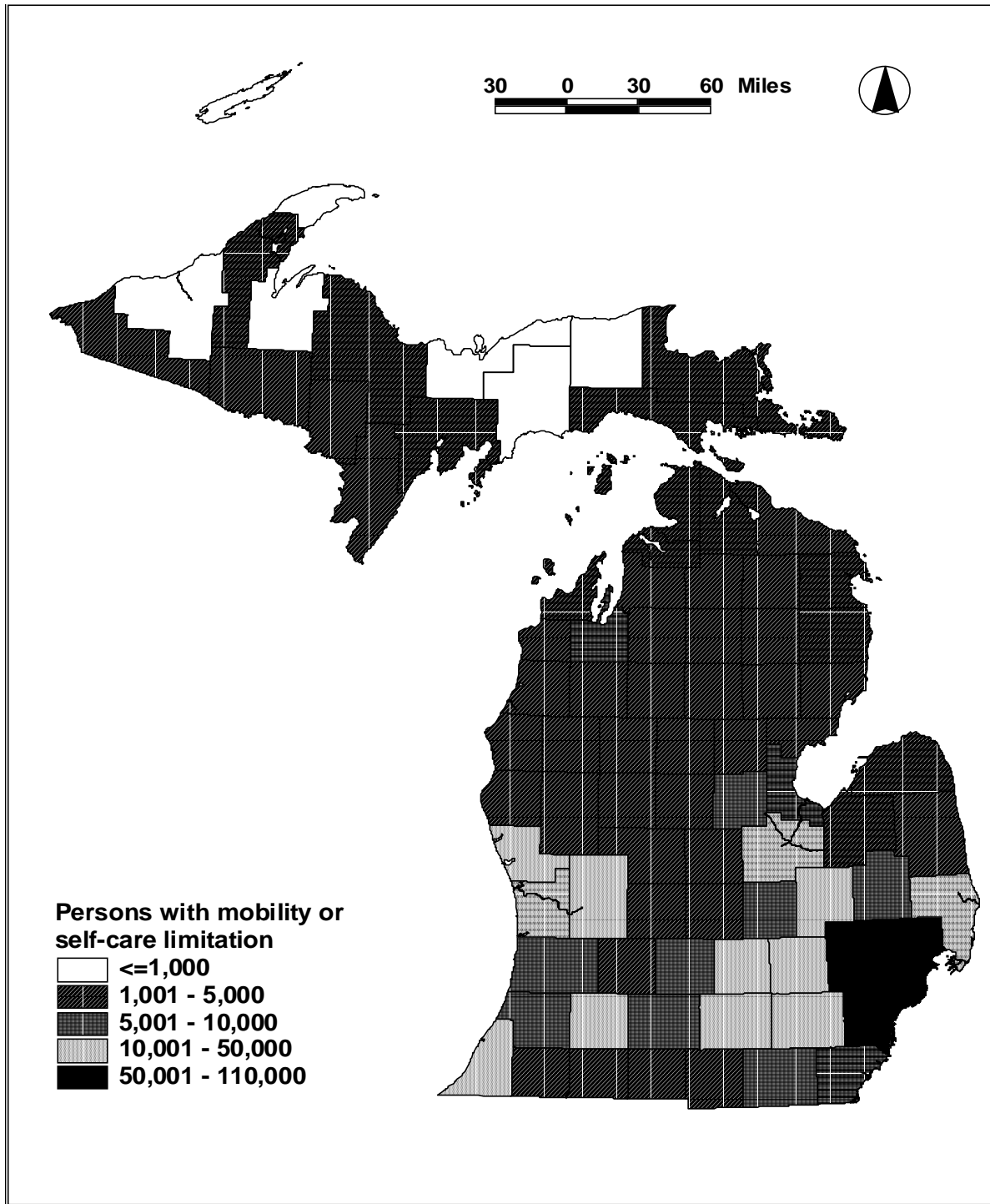
Figure 12. Persons with a mobility or self-care limitation by county in Michigan (2020 forecast)
Sources: converted from population forecast by age group, Michigan Information Center, 2000

30   0   30   60 Miles

**Percent of persons with a mobility
or self-care limitation, 2020**
- **<6%**
- **6% - 8%**
- **8% - 11%**
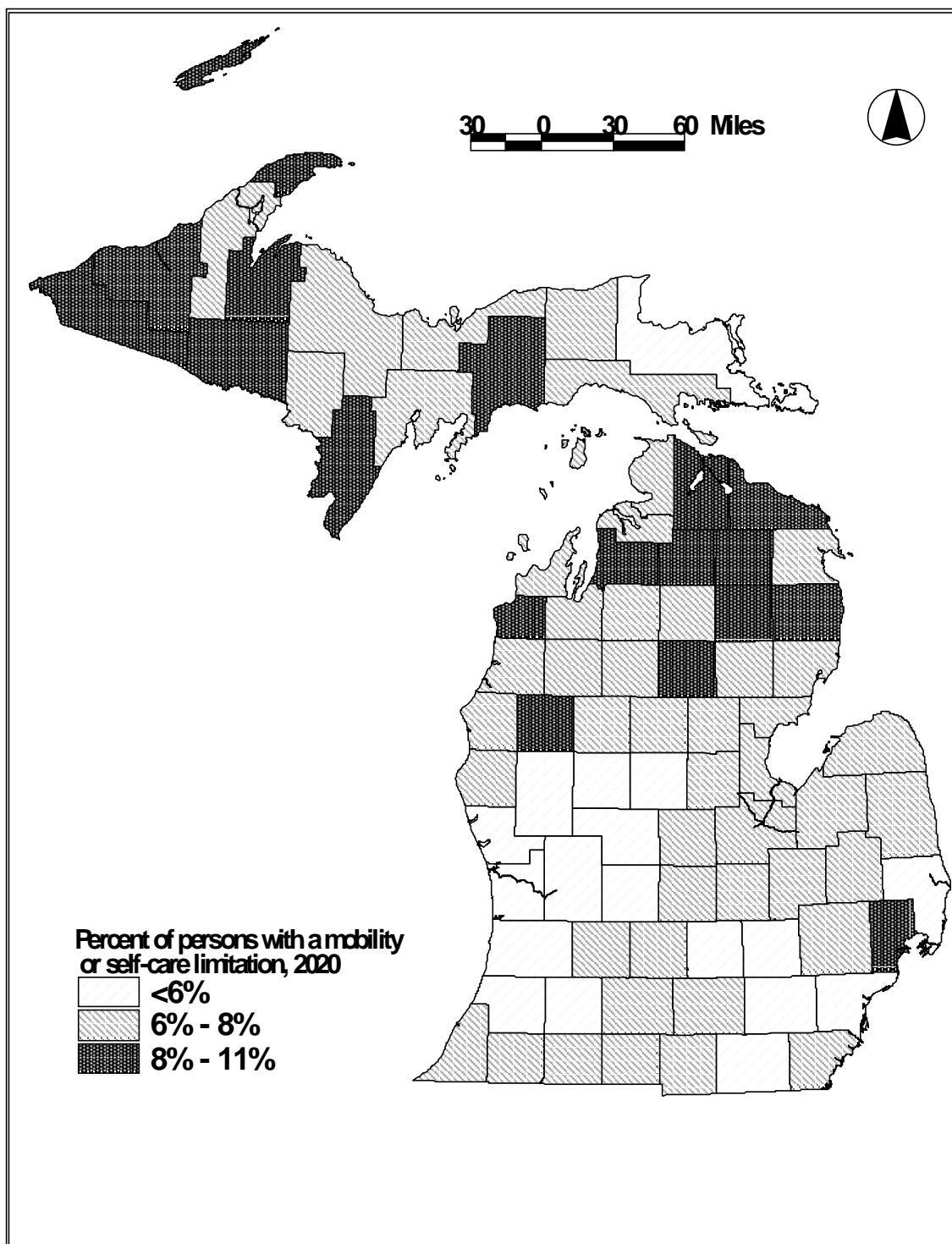
Figure 13. Percent of Persons with a mobility or self-care limitation by county in Michigan (2020 forecast)

Sources: converted from population forecast by age group, Michigan Information Center, 2000
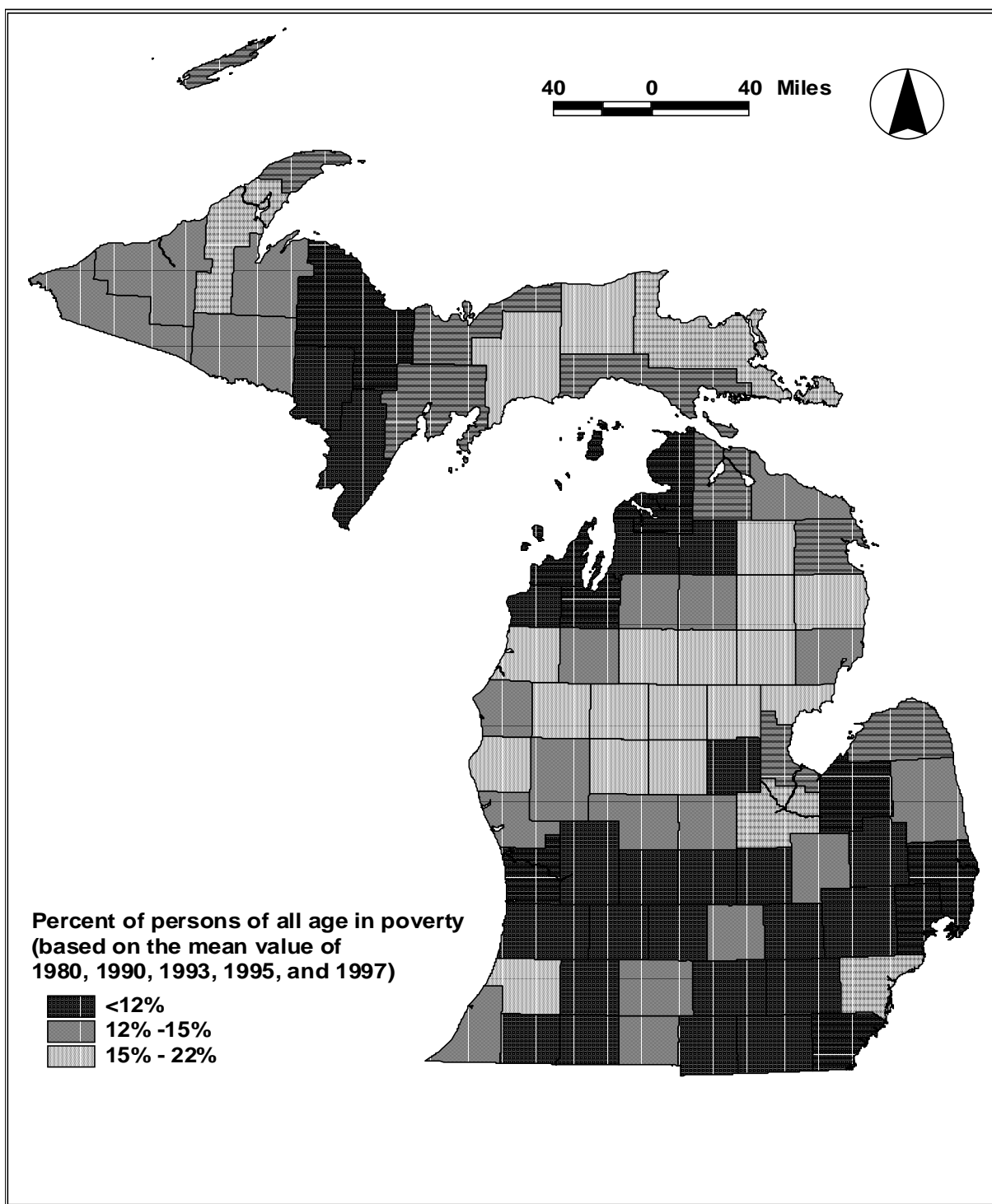
Figure 14. Persons of all ages in poverty by county in Michigan
Source: Michigan Information Center, http://www.state.mi.us/dmb/mic/

The map legend reads:

Percent of persons of all age in poverty
(based on the mean value of
1980, 1990, 1993, 1995, and 1997)

- <12%
- 12% -15%
- 15% - 22%
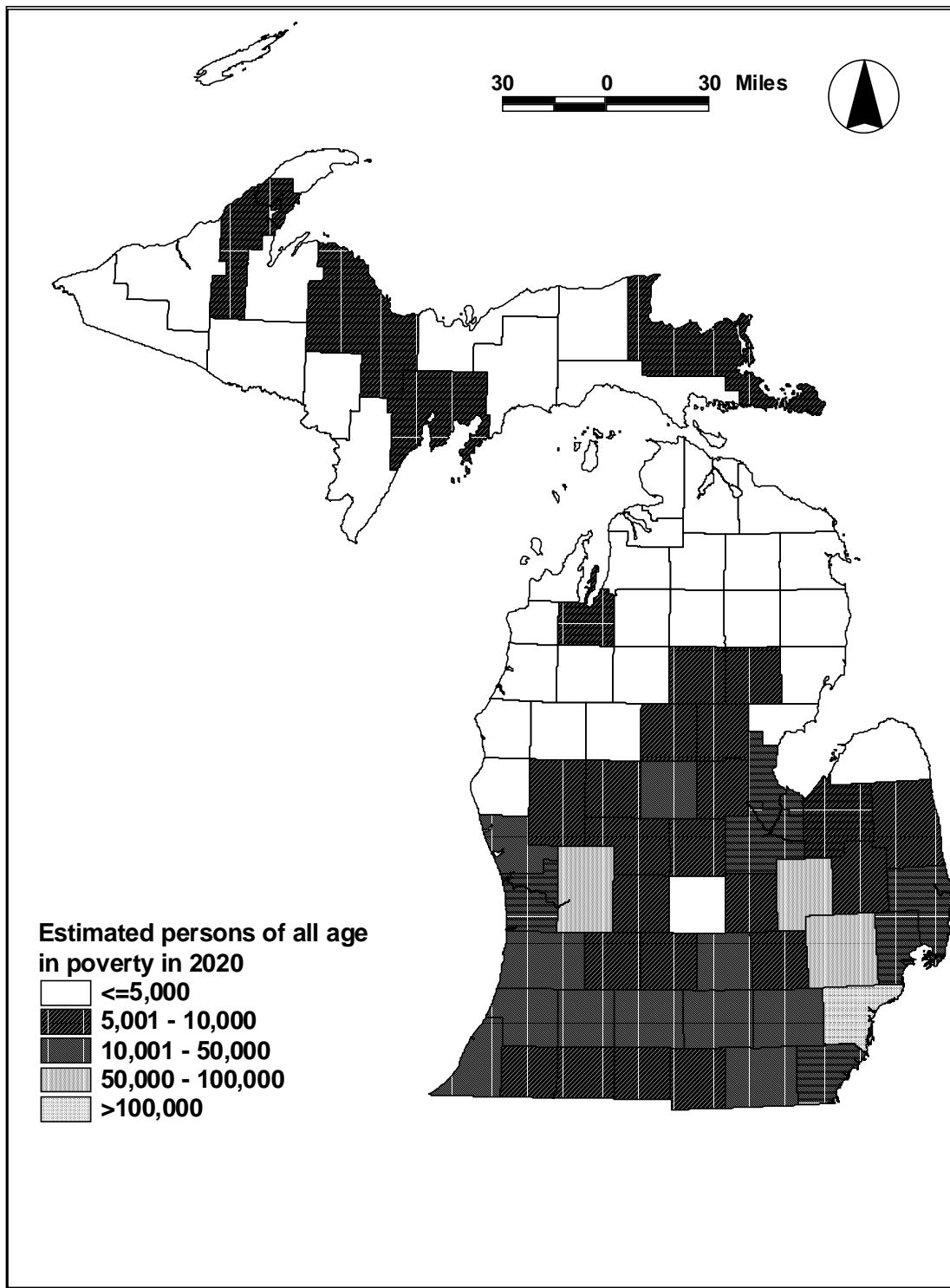
Figure 15. Estimated persons of all ages in poverty in Michigan in 2020
Note: Calculations are based on the average poverty level in 1980, 1990, 1993, 1995, and 1997, then multiply with the 2020
forecast population.

Figure 16. Proportion of transit dependent population by county in Michigan (2020 estimates)
Note: Calculations are based on the percentage of elderly population (65+), persons of all age in poverty, and persons with a mobility or self-care limitation in each county.
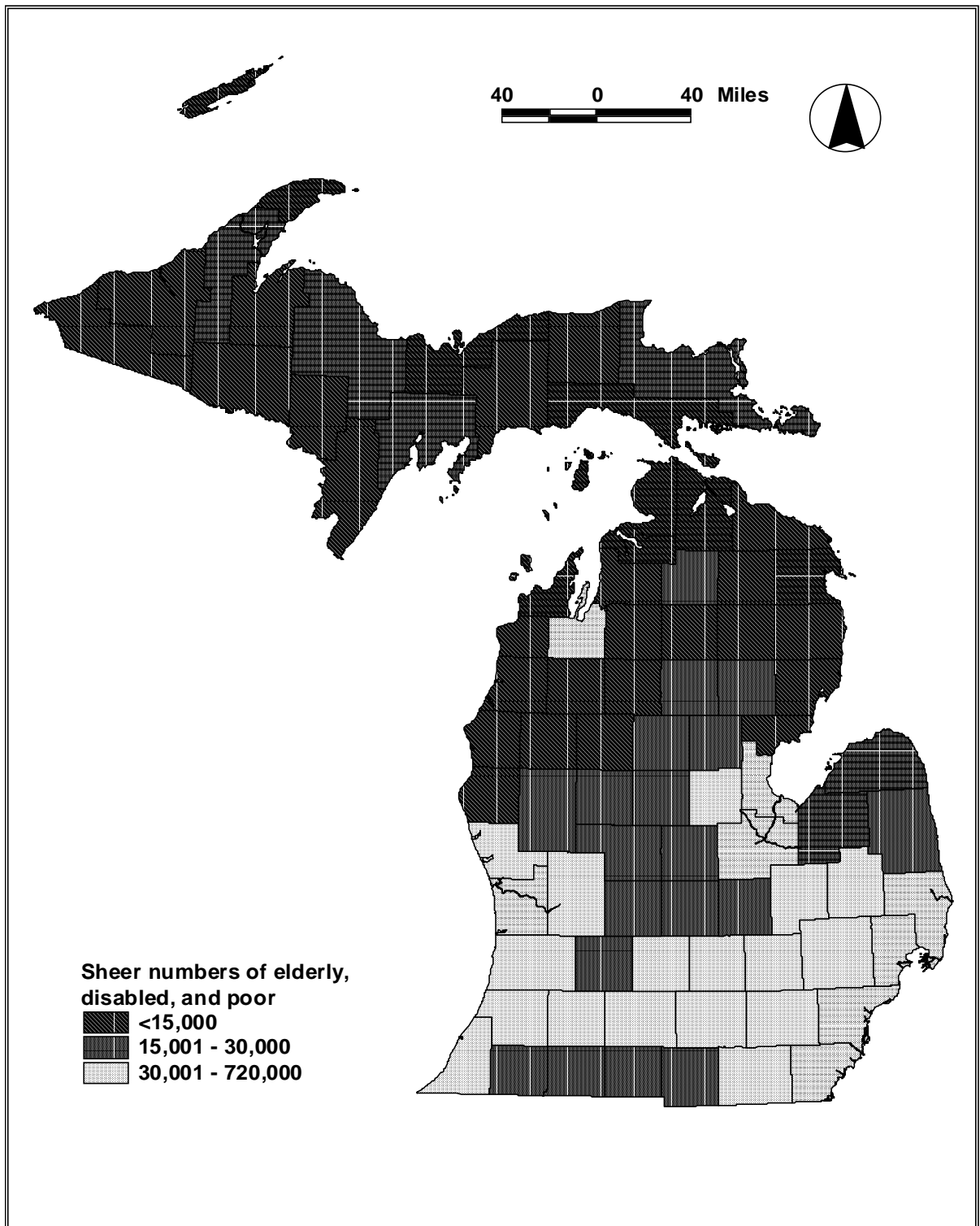
Figure 17. Sheer Numbers of elderly, disabled, and poor proportion by county in Michigan (2020 estimates)

Note: calculations are based on the percentage of elderly population (65+), persons of all age in poverty, and persons with a mobility or self-care limitation in each county.
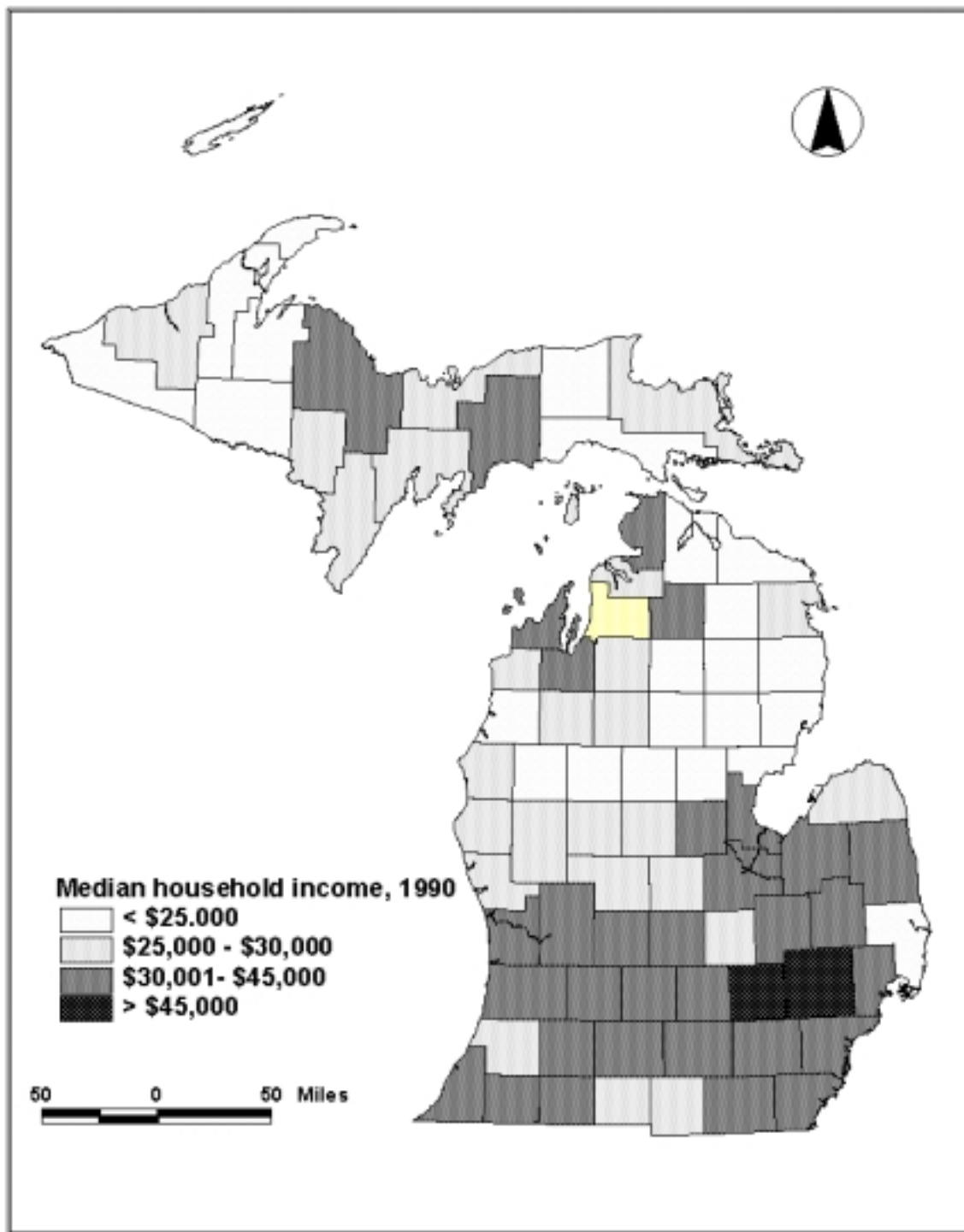
Figure 18. Median Household Income by County in Michigan, 1990

Source: Michigan Information Center, http://www.state.mi.us/dmb/mic/
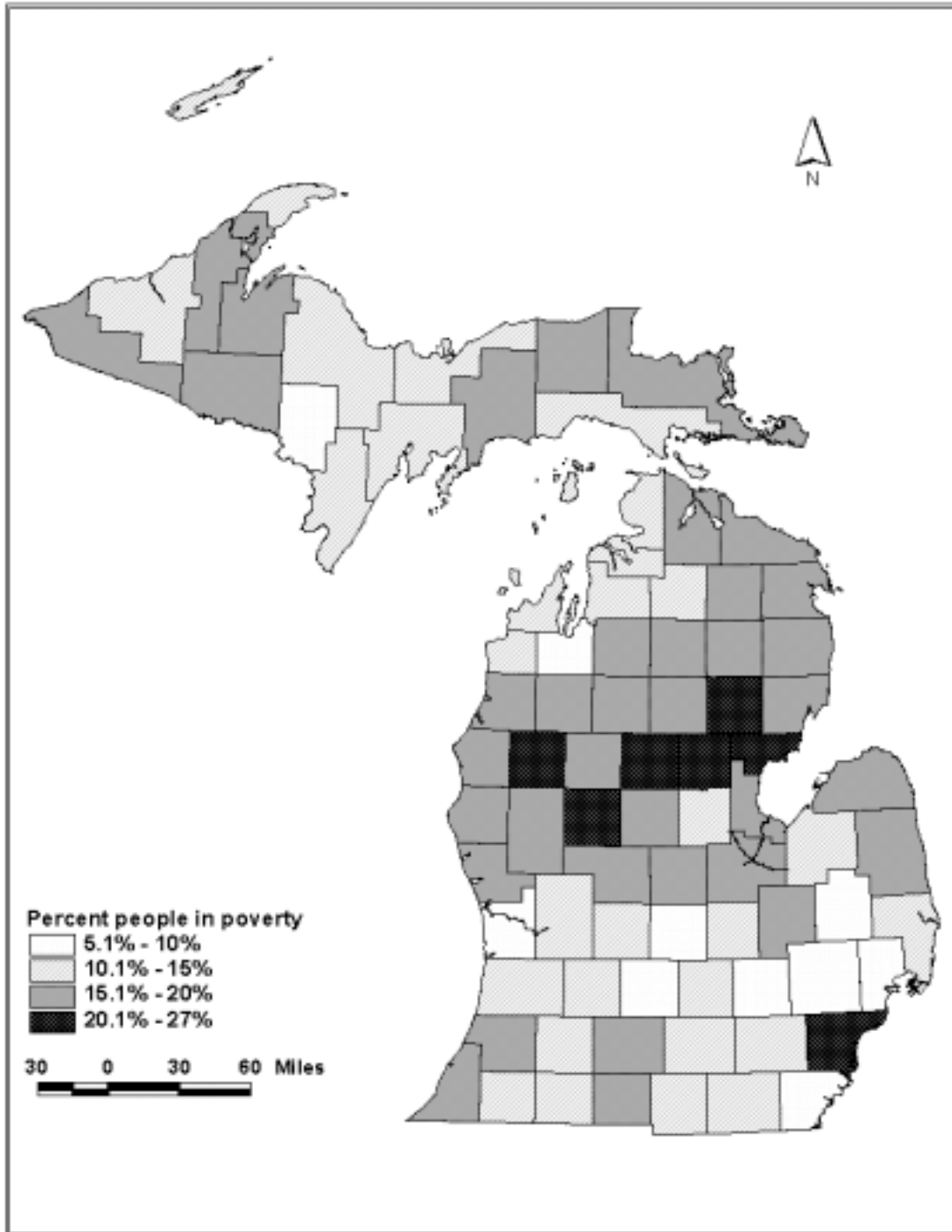
Figure 19. Estimated Percent of All Ages in Poverty by County, Michigan 1993
Data source: Michigan Information Center, http://www.state.mi.us/dmb/mic/
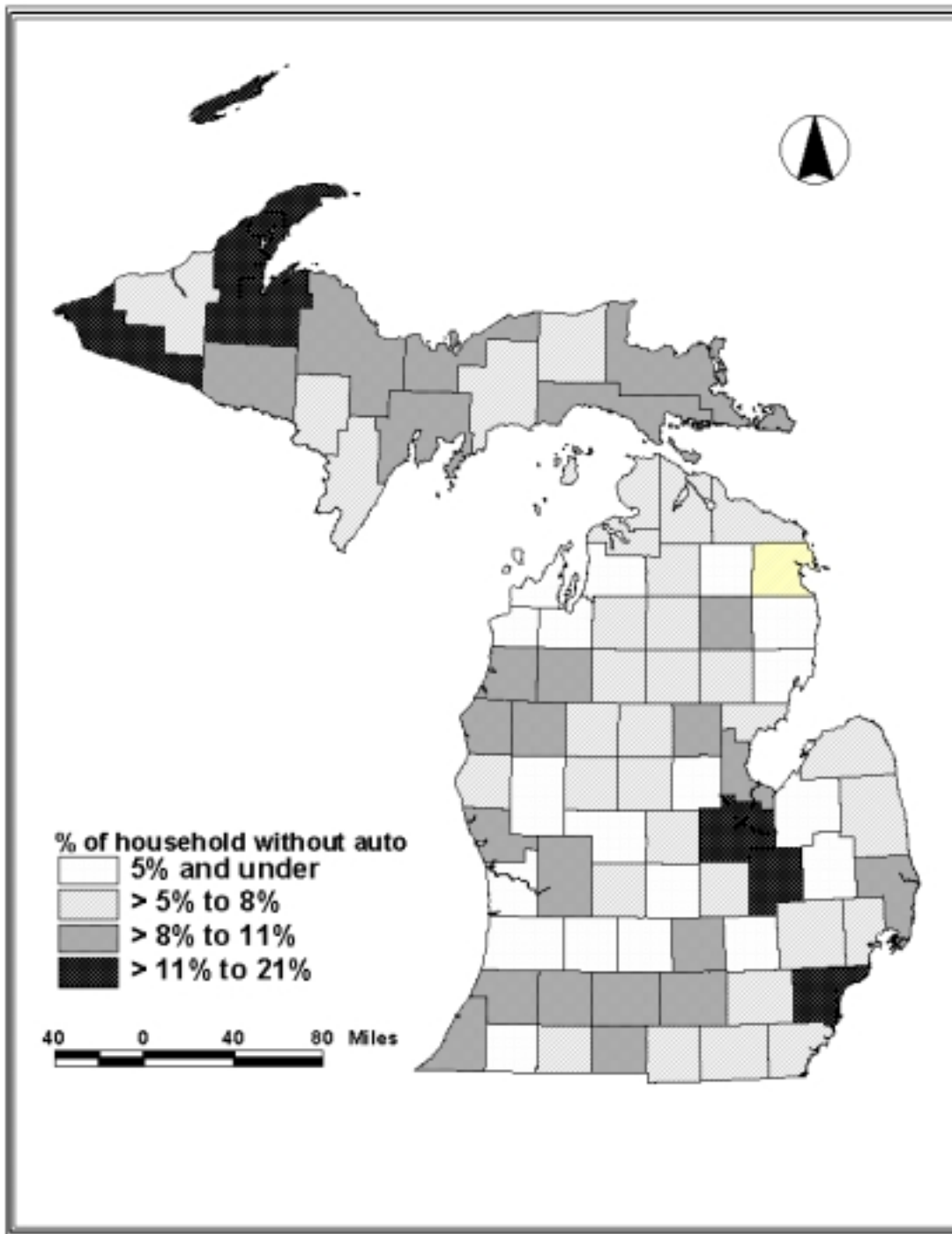
Figure 20. Percent of Households without Automobiles in Michigan, 1990
Source: Michigan Information Center, http://www.state.mi.us/dmb/mic/
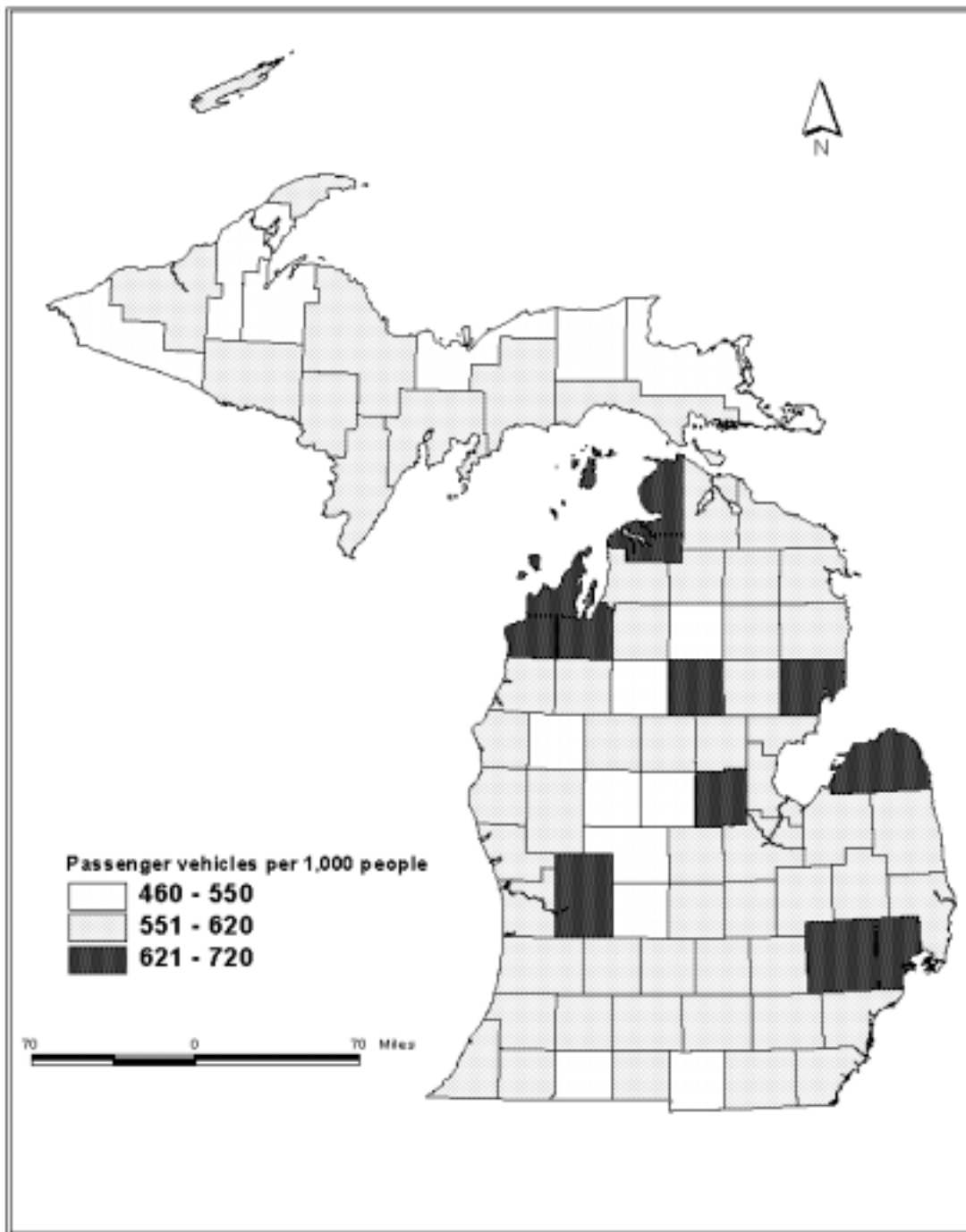
Figure 21. Passenger Vehicle Numbers per 1,000 Residents in Michigan, 1998
Source: Michigan Information Center (population) and Secretary of State (vehicle numbers)
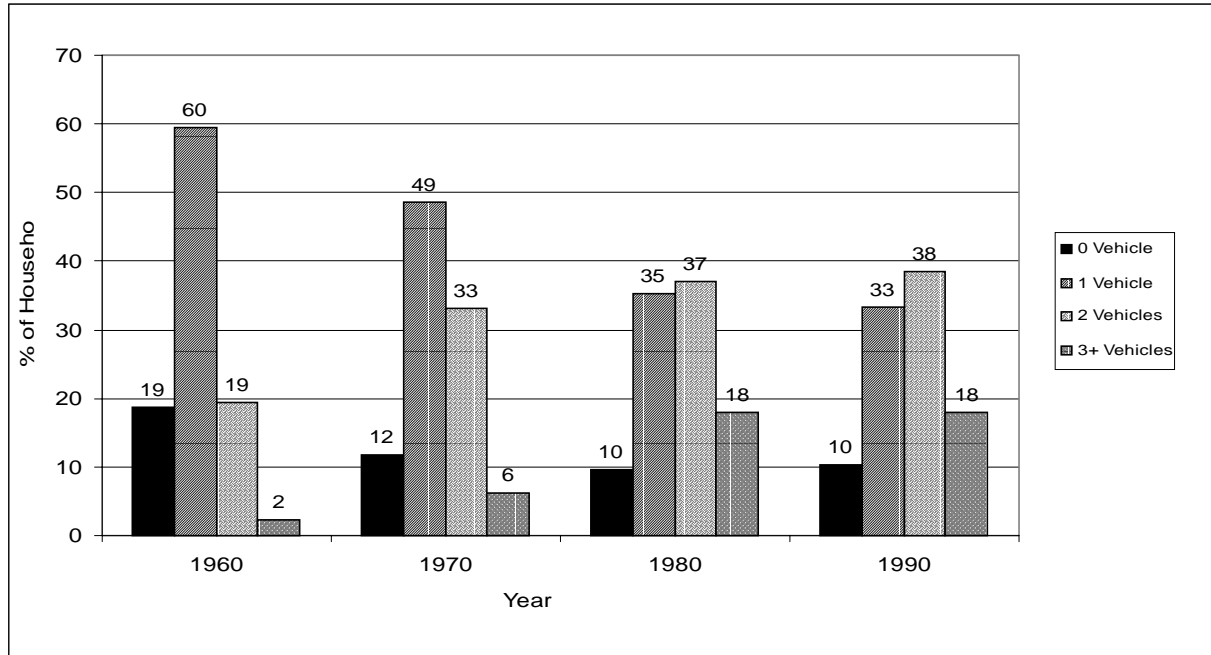
Figure 22. Household Vehicle Ownership in Michigan
Source: 1960,1970,1980, and 1990 US Census Data
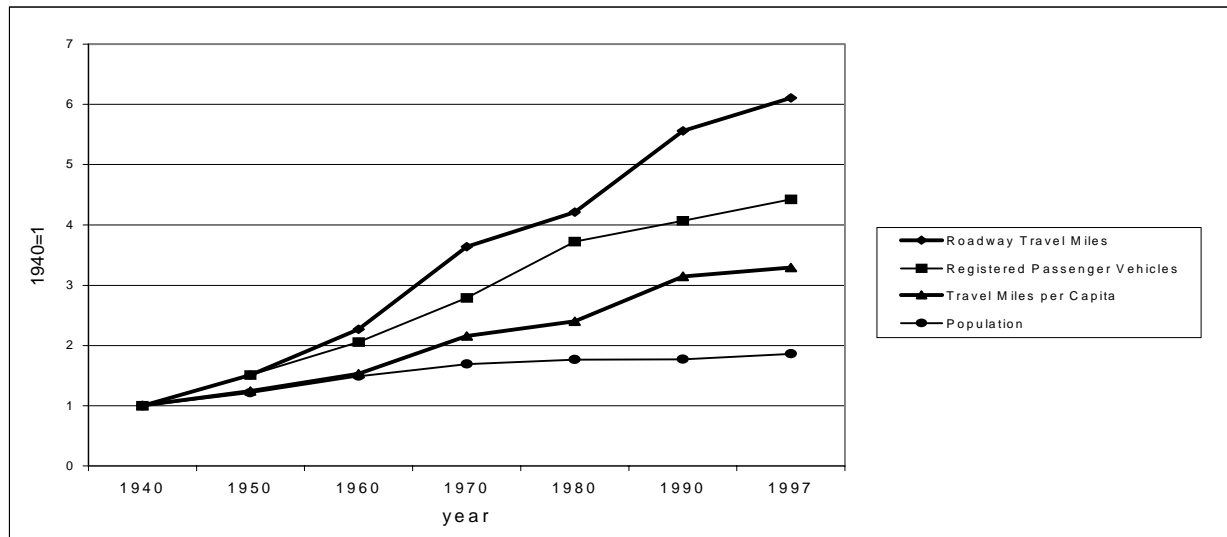
Figure 23. Rates of Growth in Population, Registered Passenger Vehicles, and Travel Volumes in Michigan
Source: MDOT Facts and Figures, 1998. http://www.mdot.state.mi.us/planning/facts.htm
Vehicle Registration Statistics, Michigan Department of State, http://www.sos.state.mi.us/vehiclereg/lp_hist.html
Demographic Census Data, Michigan Information Center, http://www.state.mi.us/dmb/mic/
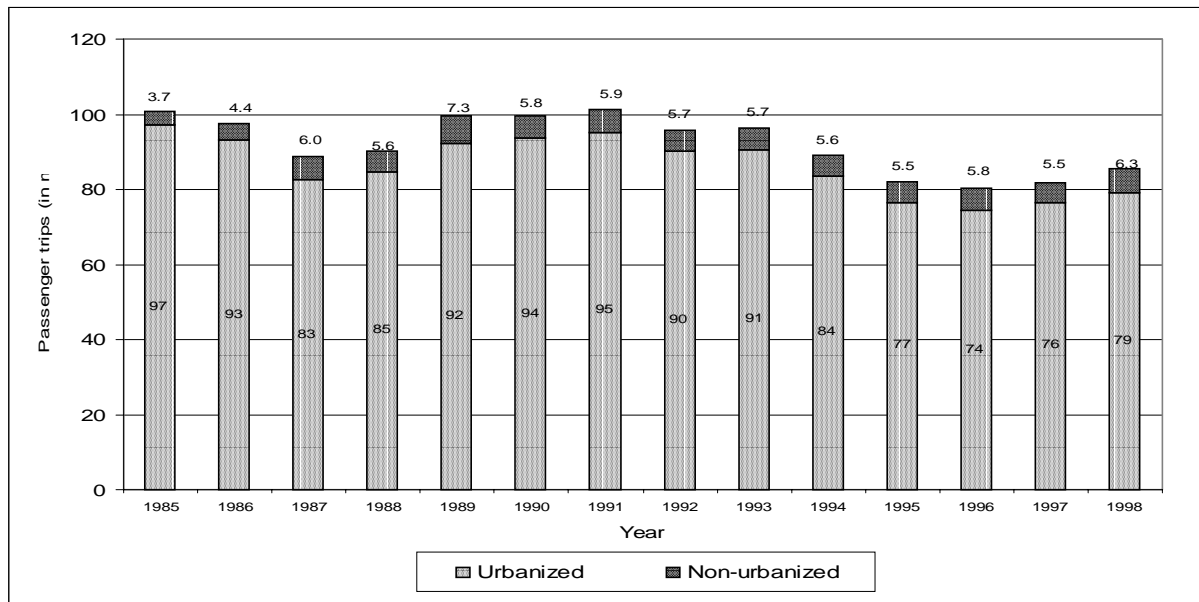
Figure 24. Public Transit Ridership in Michigan (1985 - 1998)

Source: MDOT, Bureau of Transportation Planning
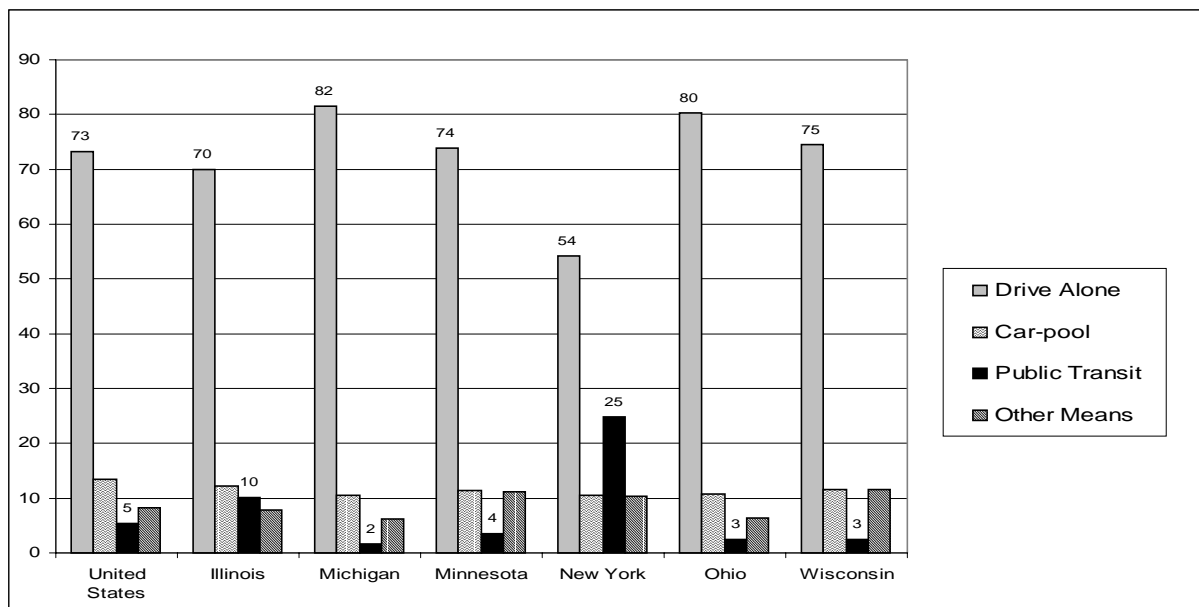
Figure 25. Percent of Transportation Means to Work

Source: 1990 Census, http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/journey/usmode90.txt
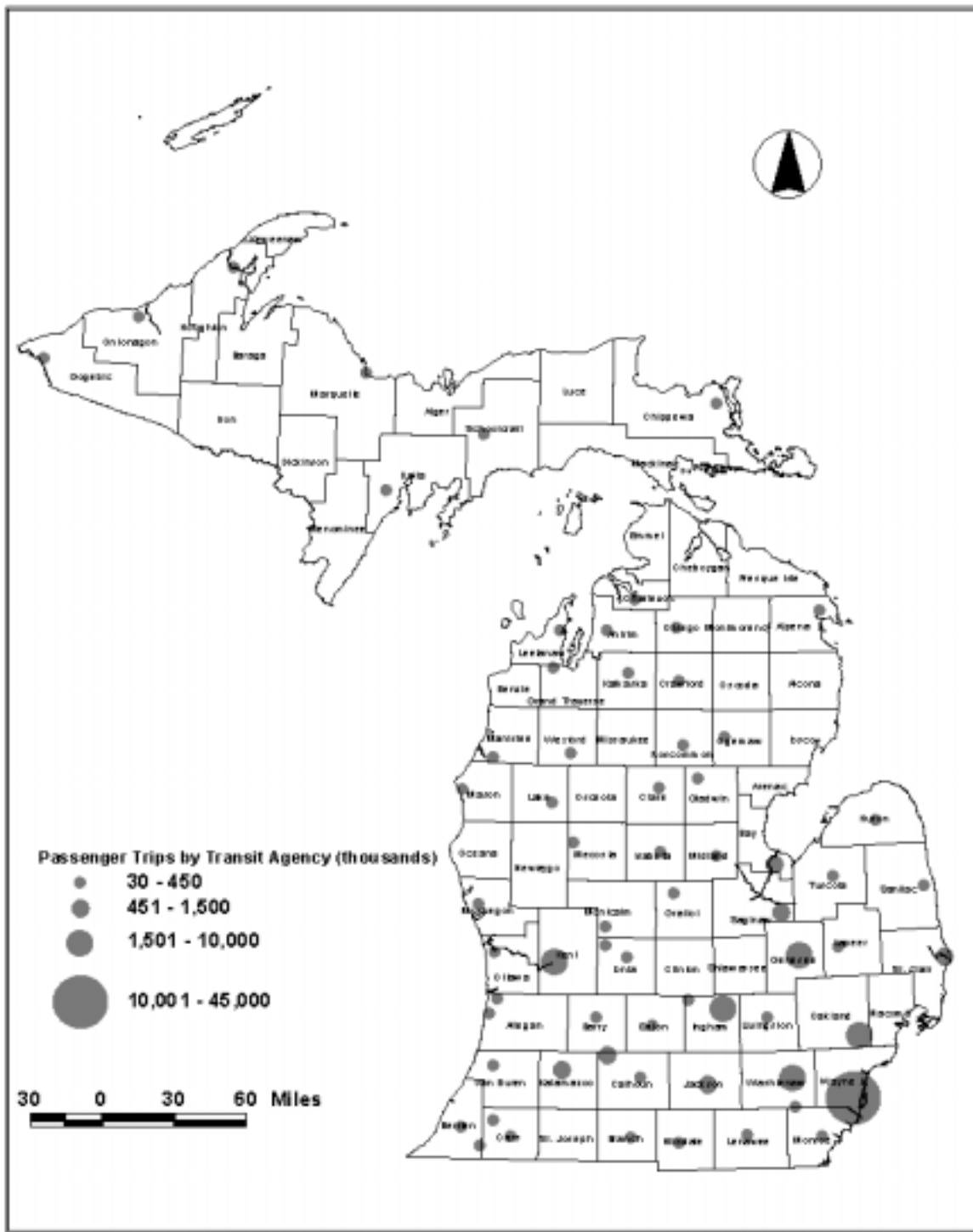
Figure 26. Distribution of Passenger Trips by Transit Agency in Michigan, 1998
Source: PTMS database, MDOT, 1998

Figure 27. Transit Passenger Trips Per Capita in Michigan
Source: PTMS database, MDOT, 1998
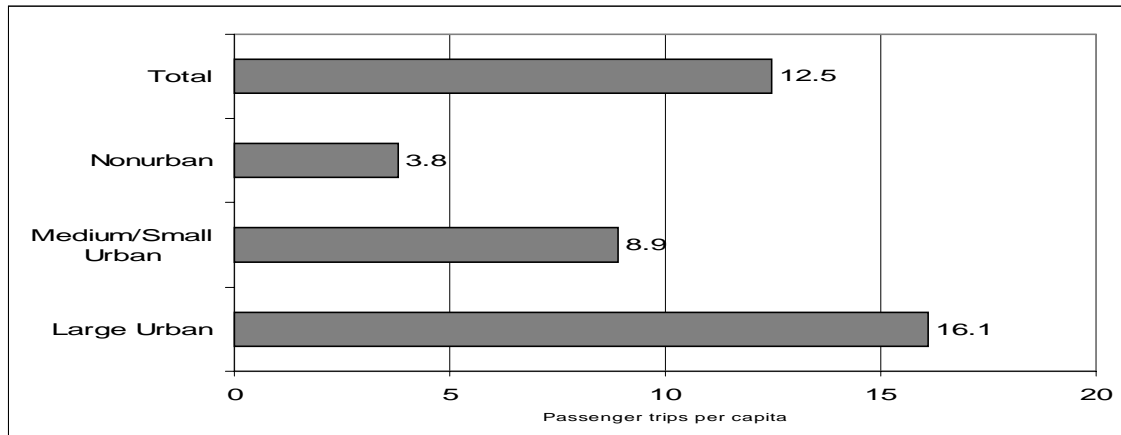
Figure 28. Passenger Trips Per Capita in Michigan, 1998
Source: PTMS database, MDOT
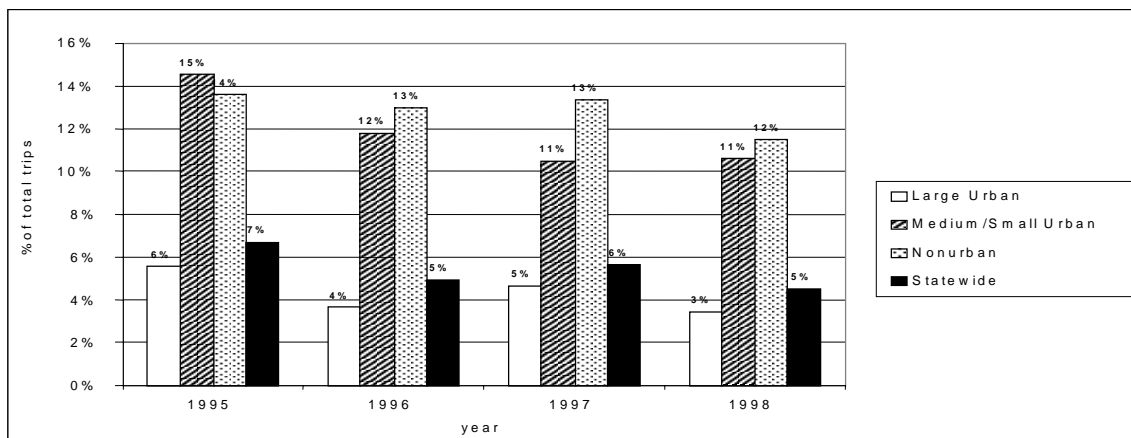
Figure 29. Percentage of Elderly Transit Passengers (65+)
Source: PTMS database, MDOT, 1995 – 1998
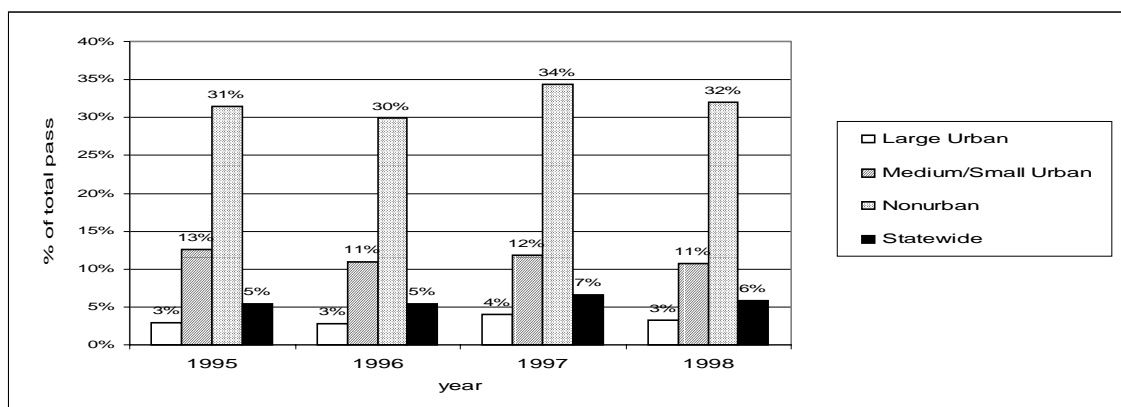
Figure 30. Percentage of Transit Passengers with Disability
Source: PTMS database, MDOT, 1995 – 1998
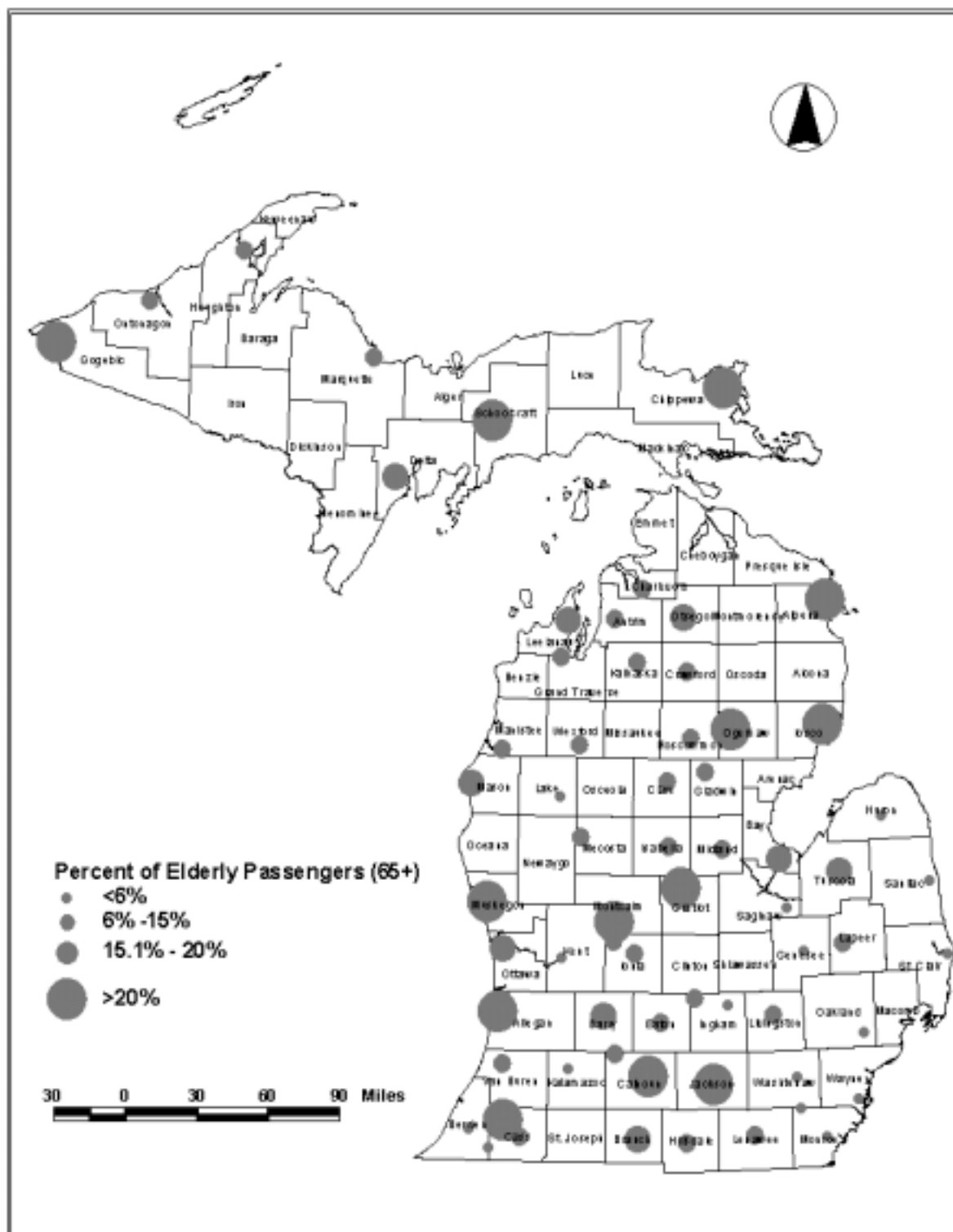
Figure 31. Percent of Elderly Passengers by Transit Agency
Source: PTMS database, MDOT, 1998

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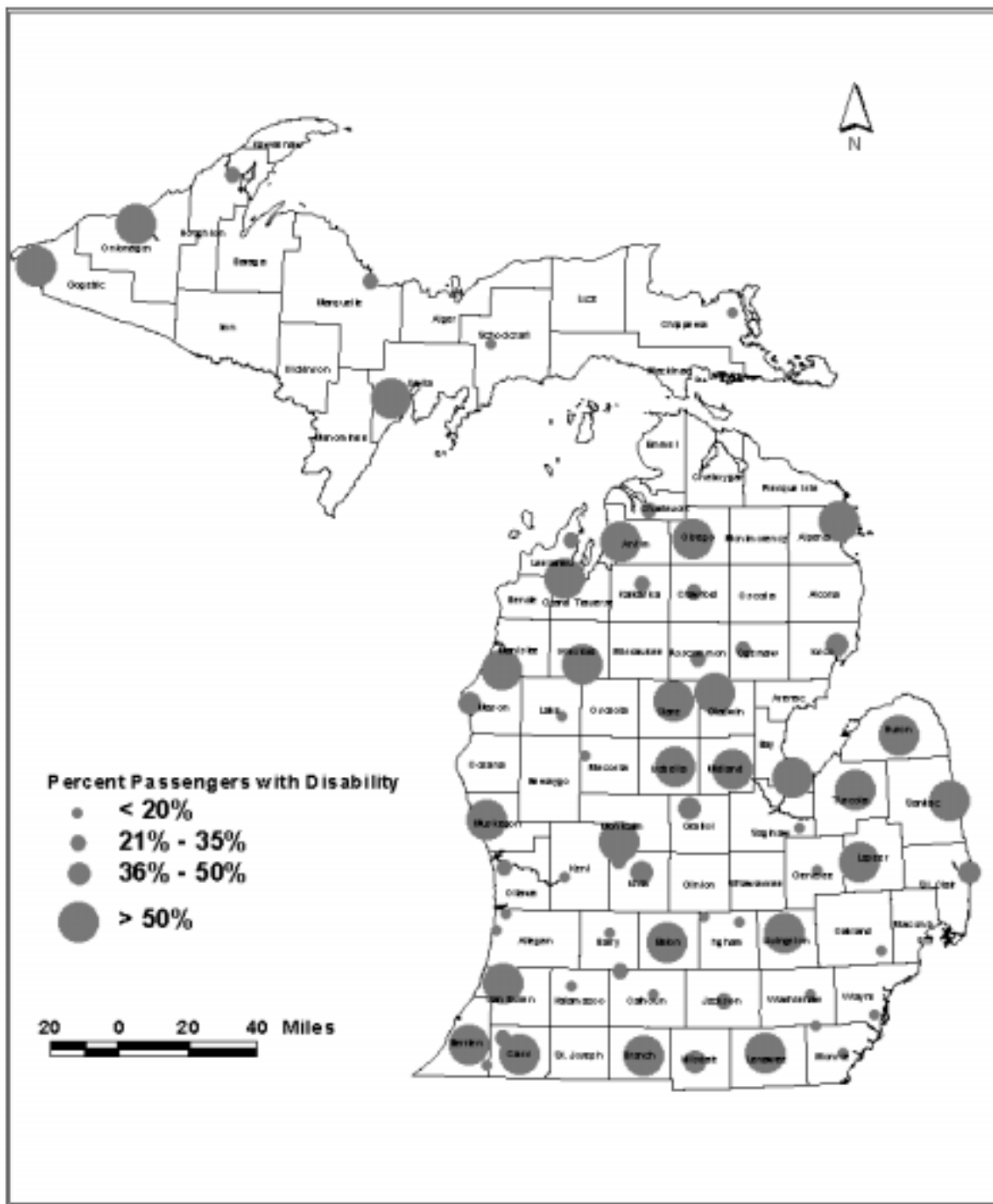
Figure 32. Percent of Passengers with Disability by Transit Agency, 1998
Source: PTMS database, MDOT, 1998
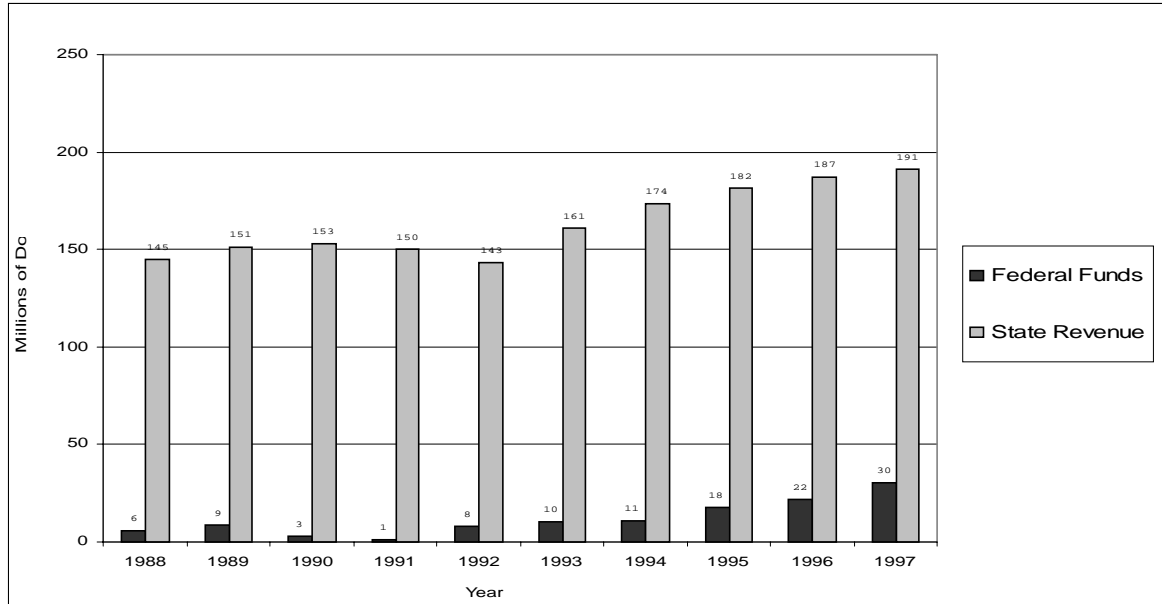
Figure 33. Federal and State Funds for Public Transportation in Michigan
Source: MDOT Comprehensive Financial Report, Bureau of Finance, 1997
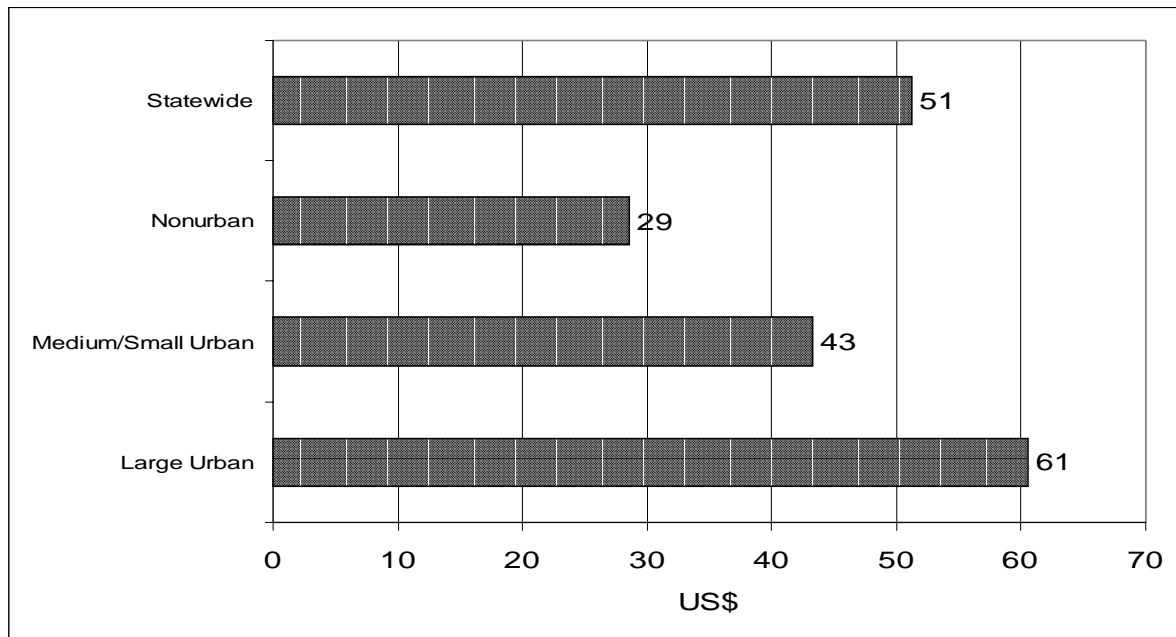
Figure 34. Total Revenue per Capita by Transit Category, 1998
Source: PTMS database, MDOT
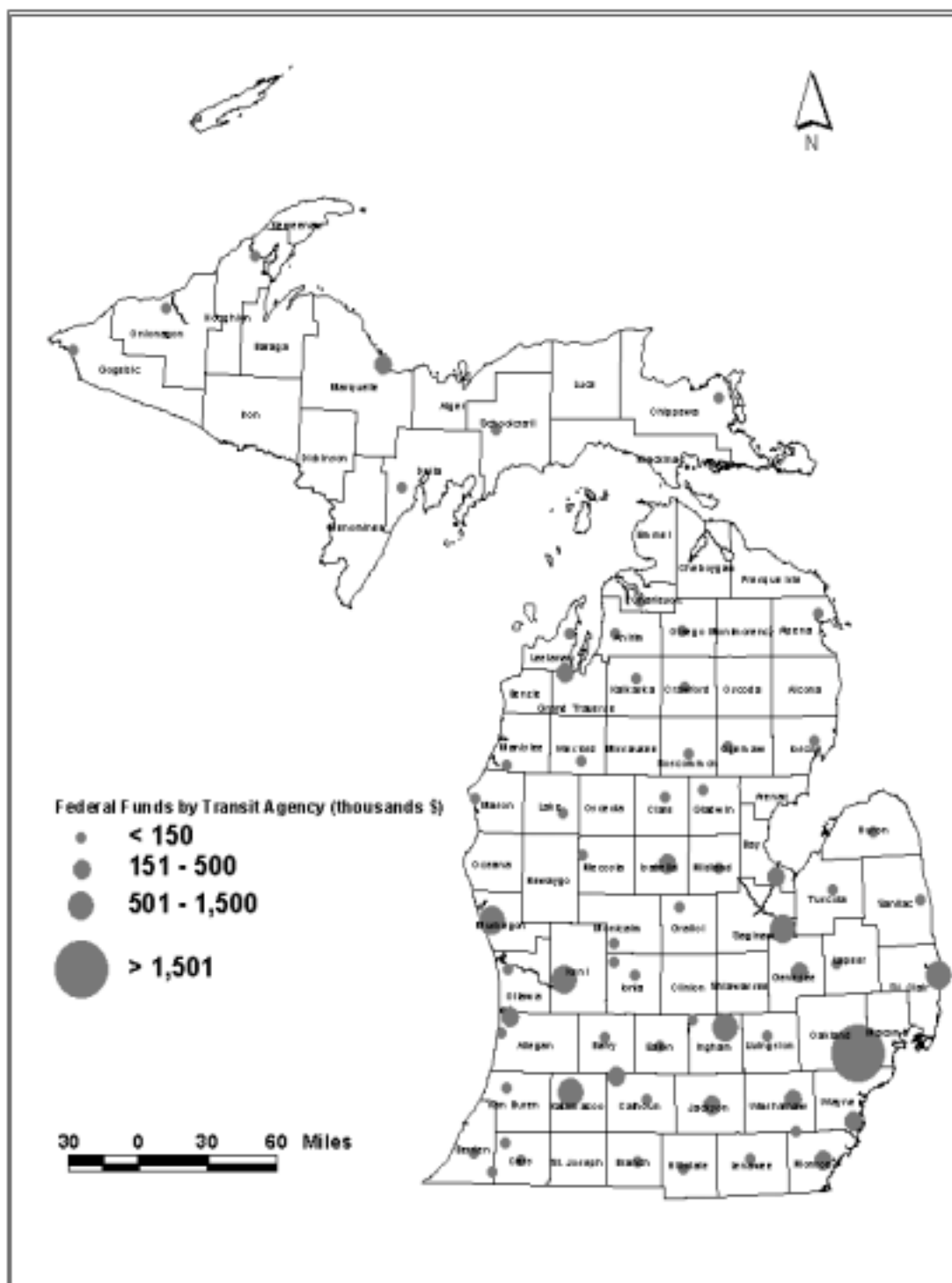
Figure 35. Federal Operating Funding for Transit in Michigan, 1998
Source: PTMS database, MDOT
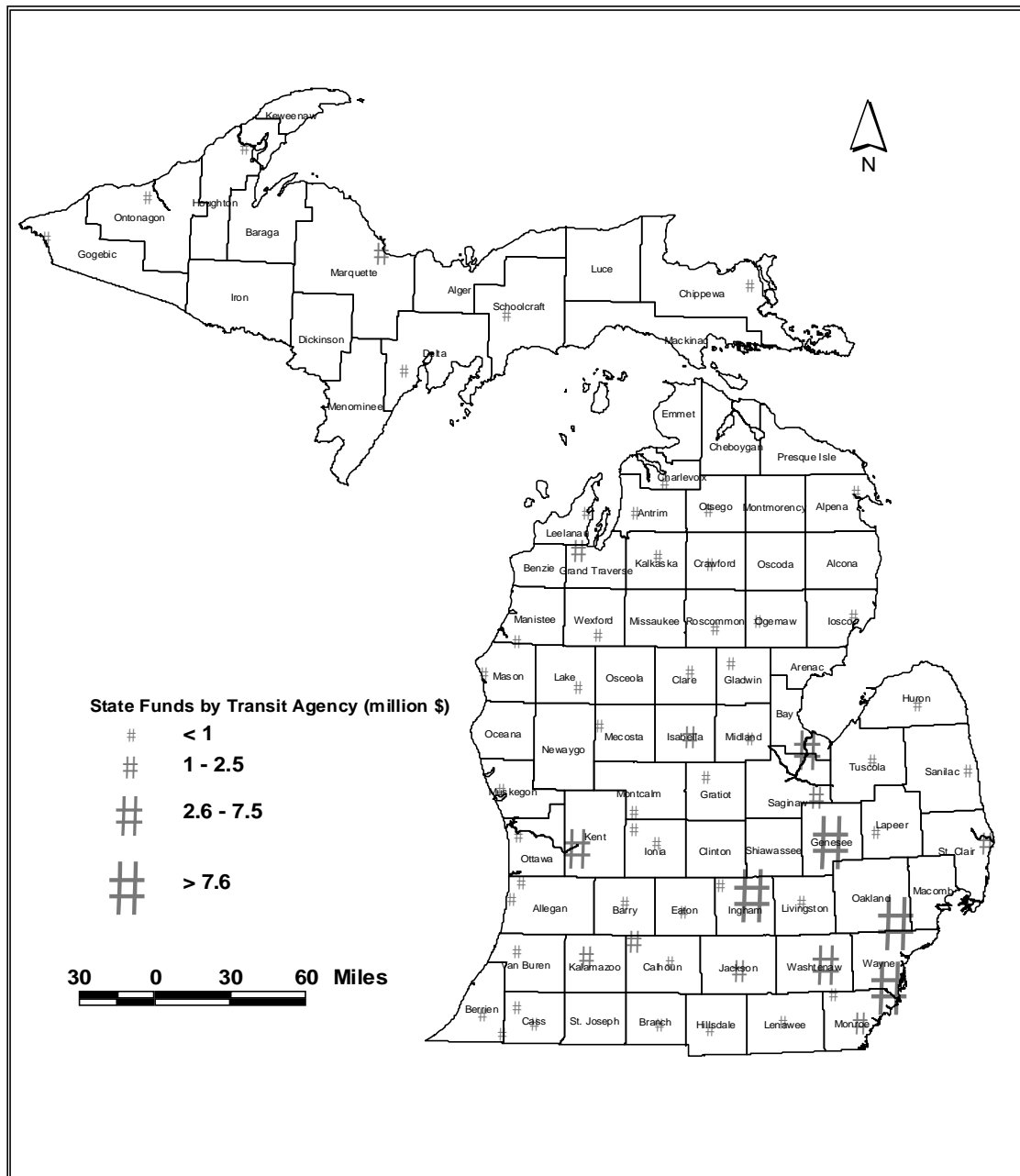
Figure 36. State Operating Funding for Transit in Michigan, 1998
Source: PTMS database, MDOT, 1998
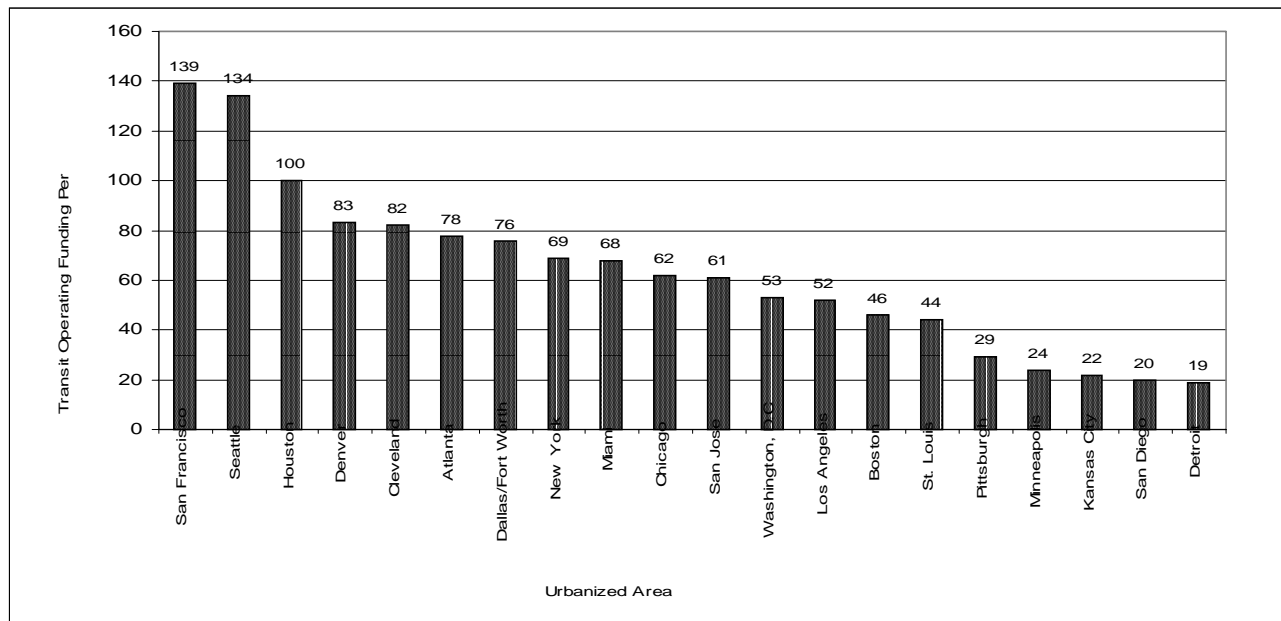
Figure 37. Transit Operating Funding - Urbanized Area Local Funding Per Capita, 1997
Source: National Transit Database, FTA
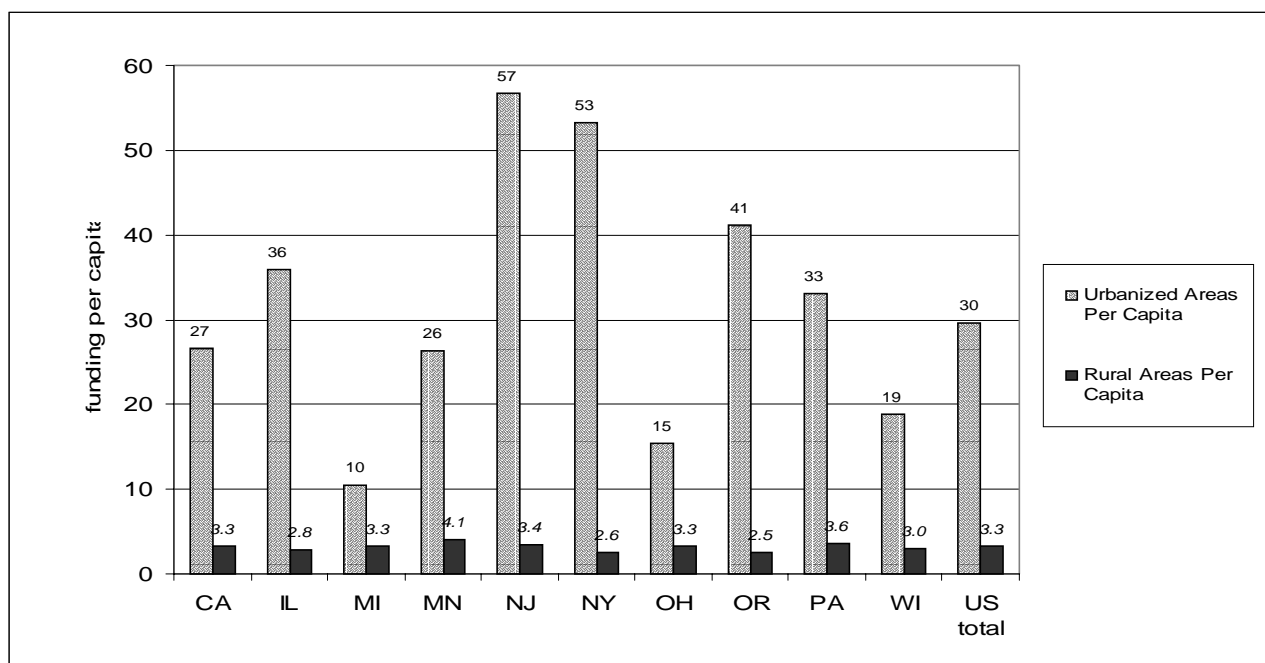
Figure 38. Public Transit Funding by State (federal capital & operating dollars only), 1998
Source: Federal Register, November 6, 1998
CTAA, http://www.ctaa.org/fednews/tables
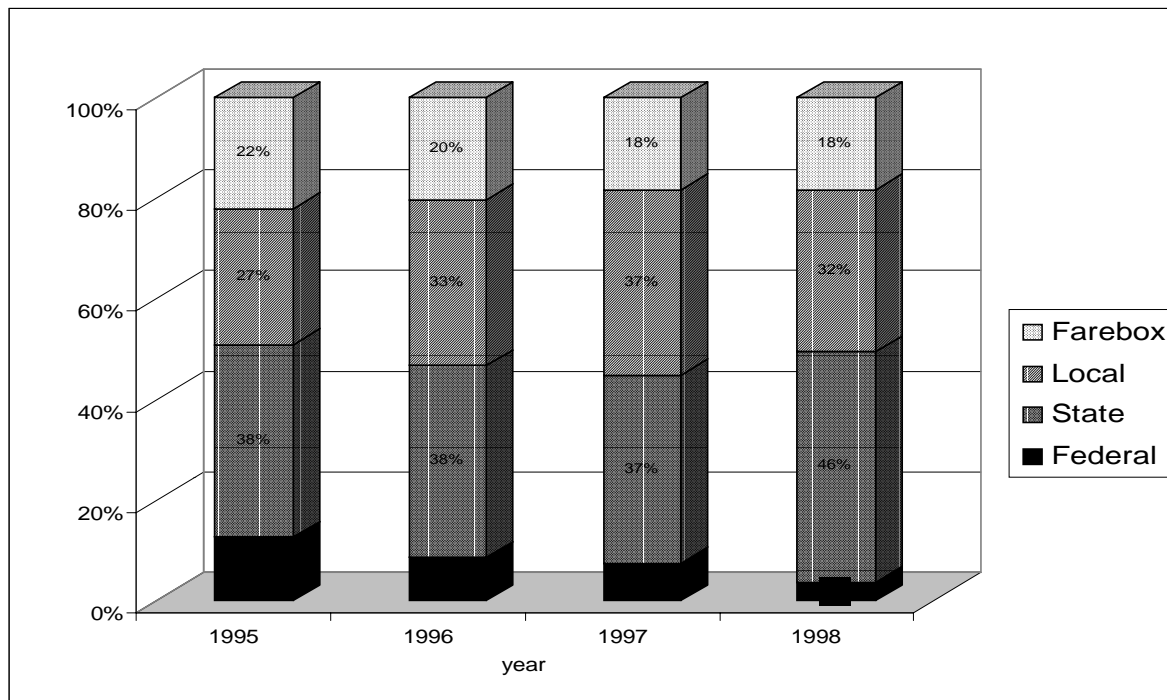
Figure 39. Sources of Total Revenue for Transit Agencies Statewide
Source: PTMS database, MDOT, 1995 - 1998
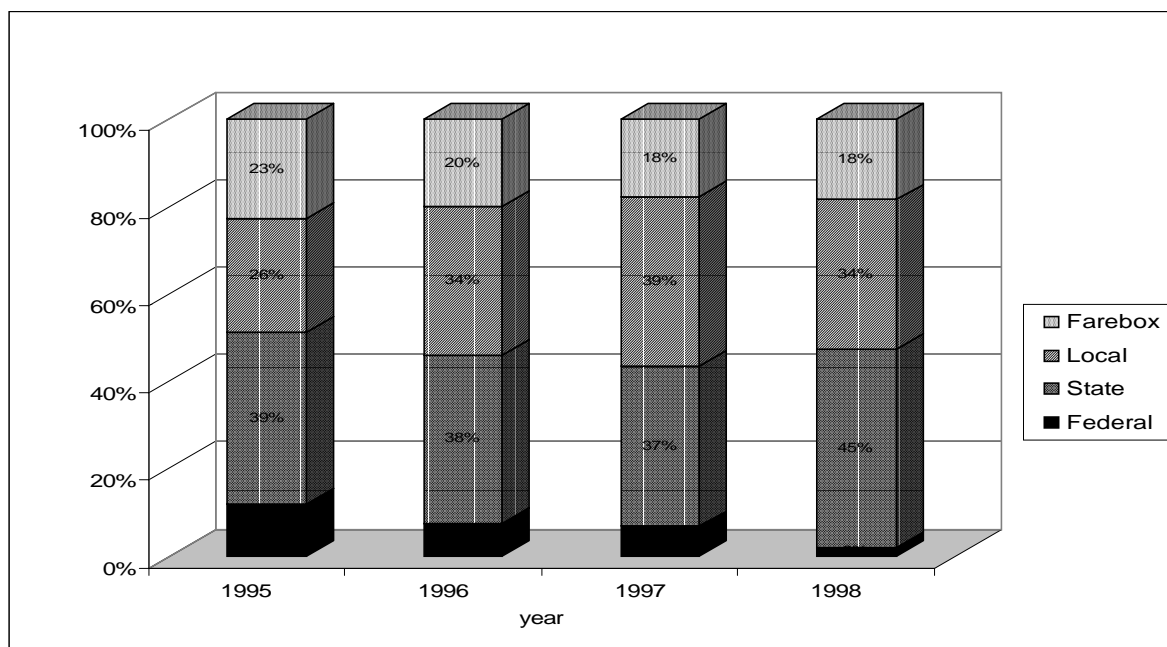
Figure 40. Sources of Total Revenue for Large Urban Transit Agencies
Source: PTMS database, MDOT, 1995 – 1998
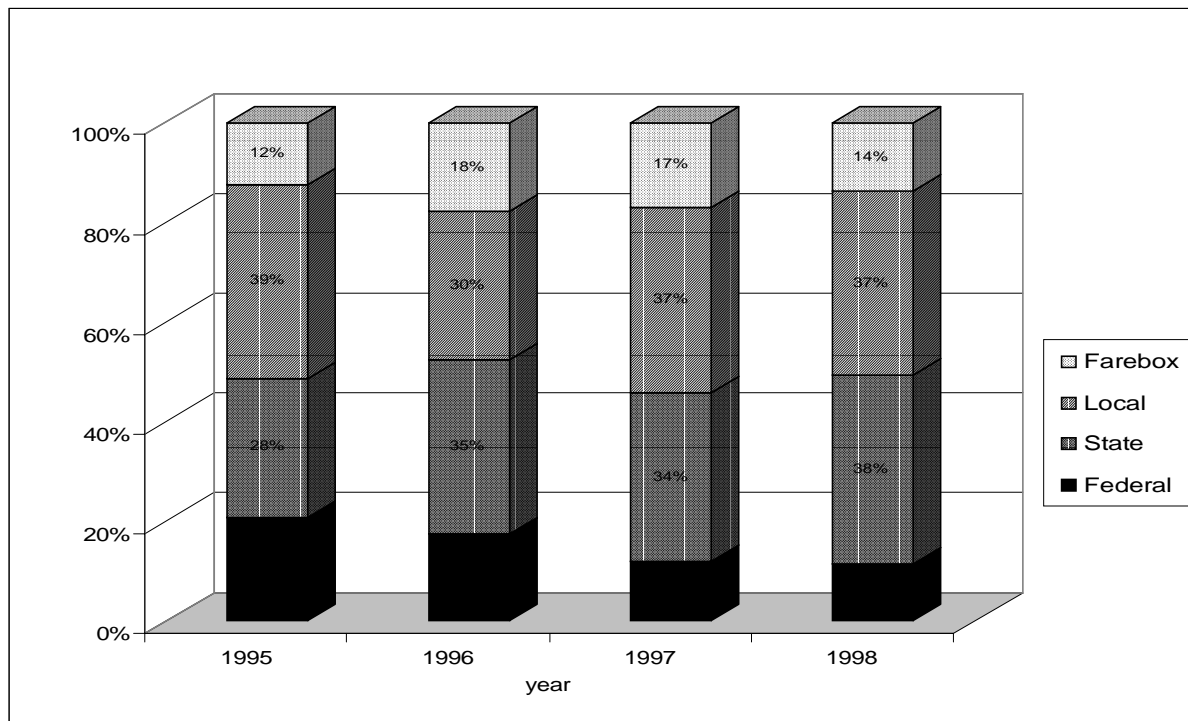
Figure 41. Sources of Total Revenue for Medium/Small Urban Transit Agencies
Source: PTMS database, MDOT, 1995 - 1998
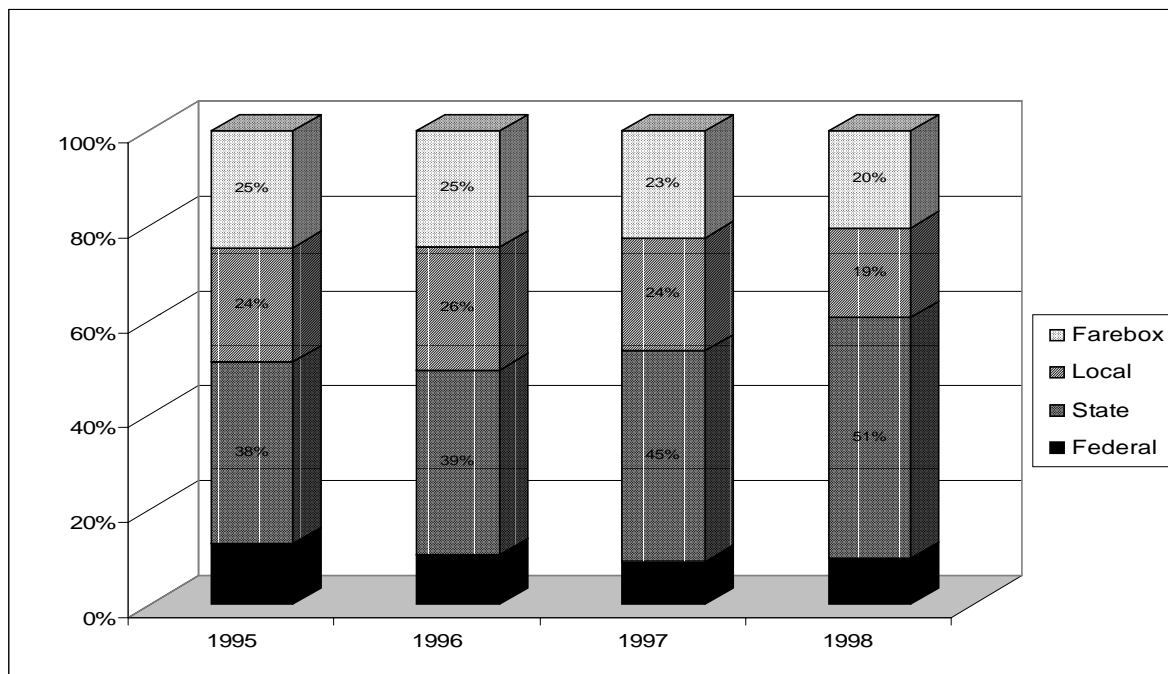
Figure 42. Sources of Total Revenue for Non-Urban Transit Agencies
Source: PTMS database, MDOT, 1995 – 1998
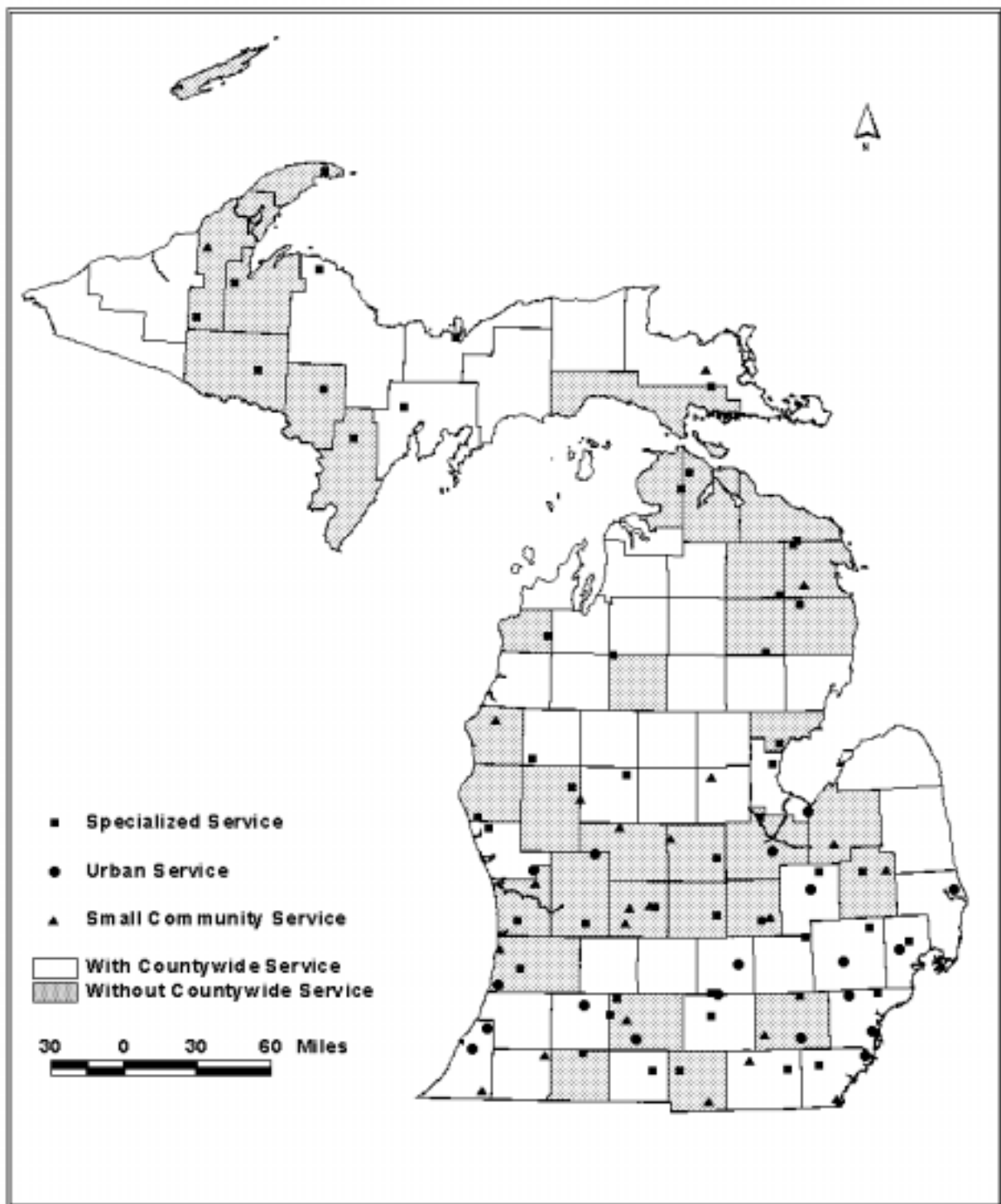
Figure 43. Distribution of Transit Services in Michigan
Source: MDOT, 1998
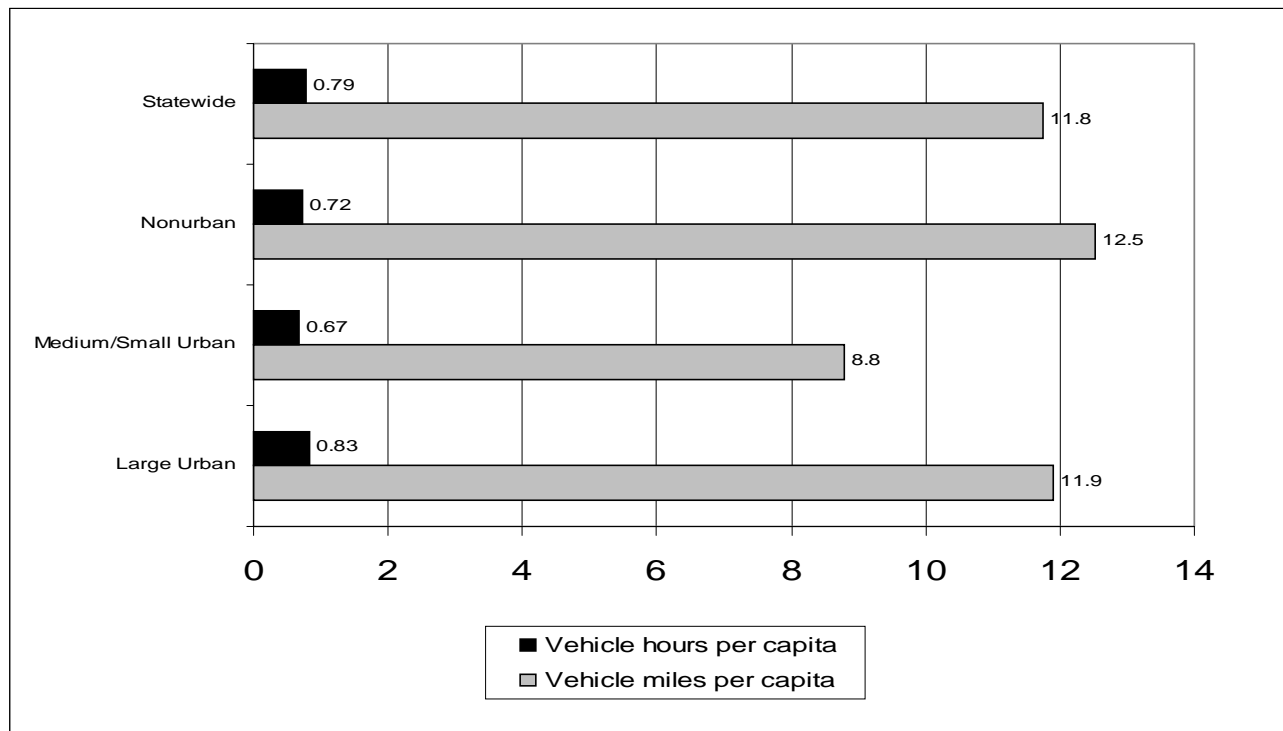
Figure 44. Vehicle Hours and Vehicle Miles per Capita, 1998
Source: PTMS database, MDOT
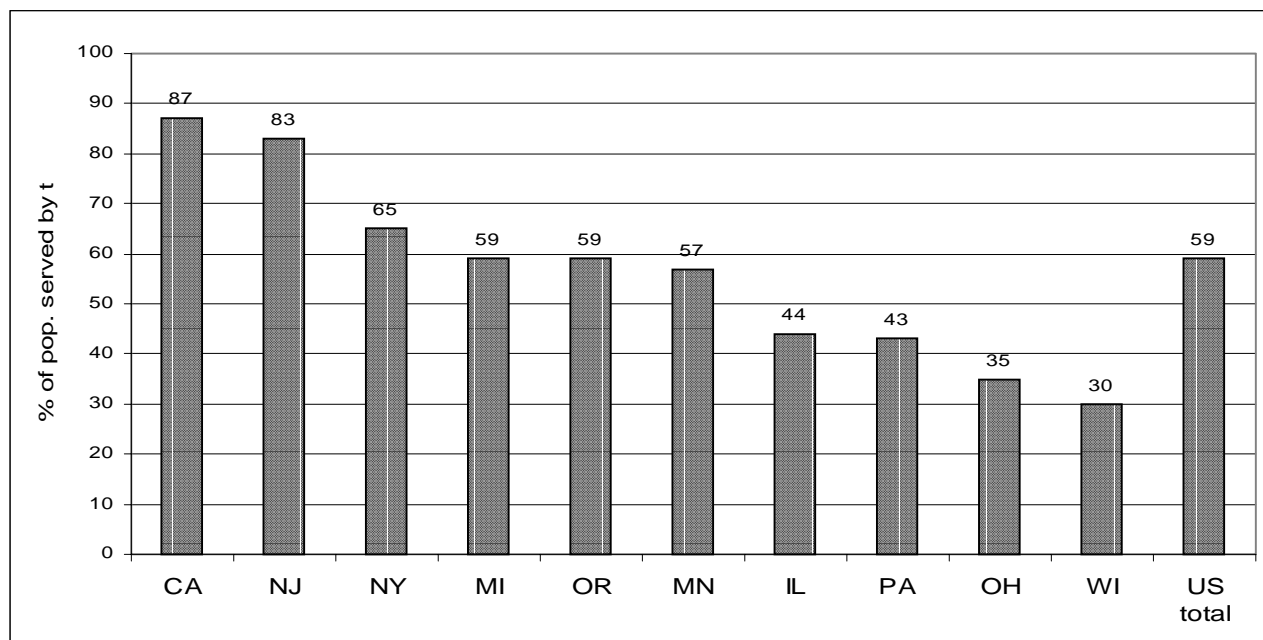
Figure 45. Percent of Rural Population Served by Public Transit, 1998
Source: Community Transportation Association of America, CTAA, http://www.ctaa.org/
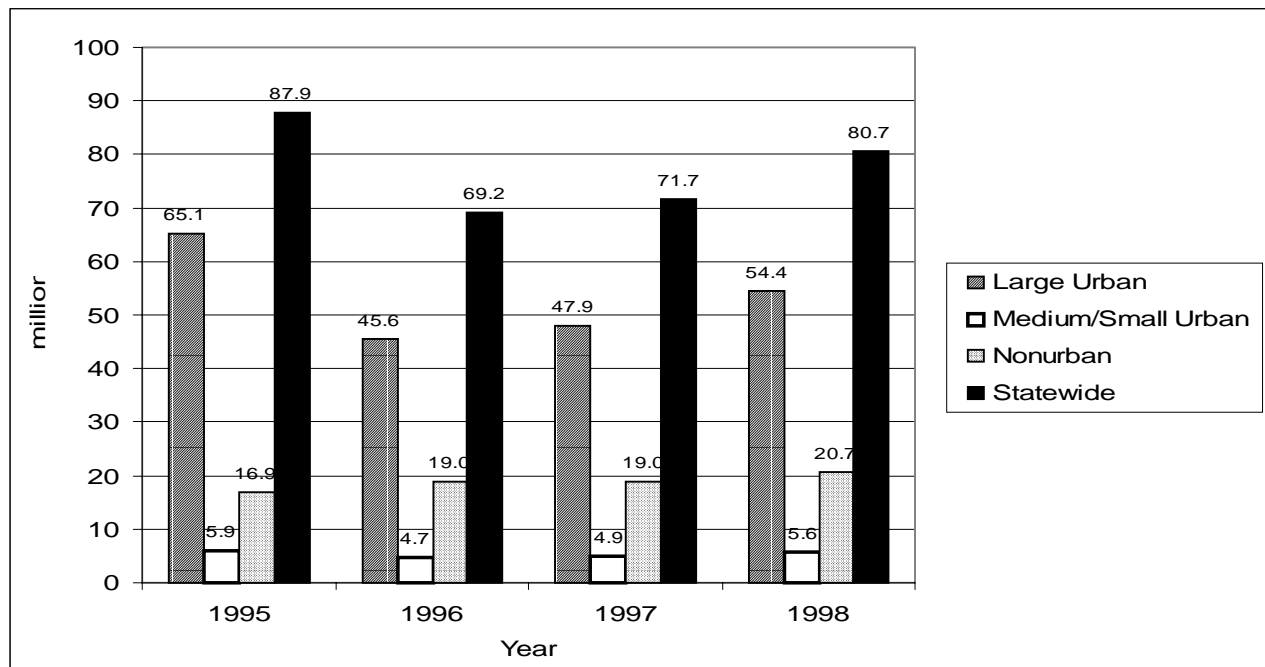
Figure 46. Vehicle Miles by Transit Category
Source: PTMS database, MDOT, 1995 - 1998
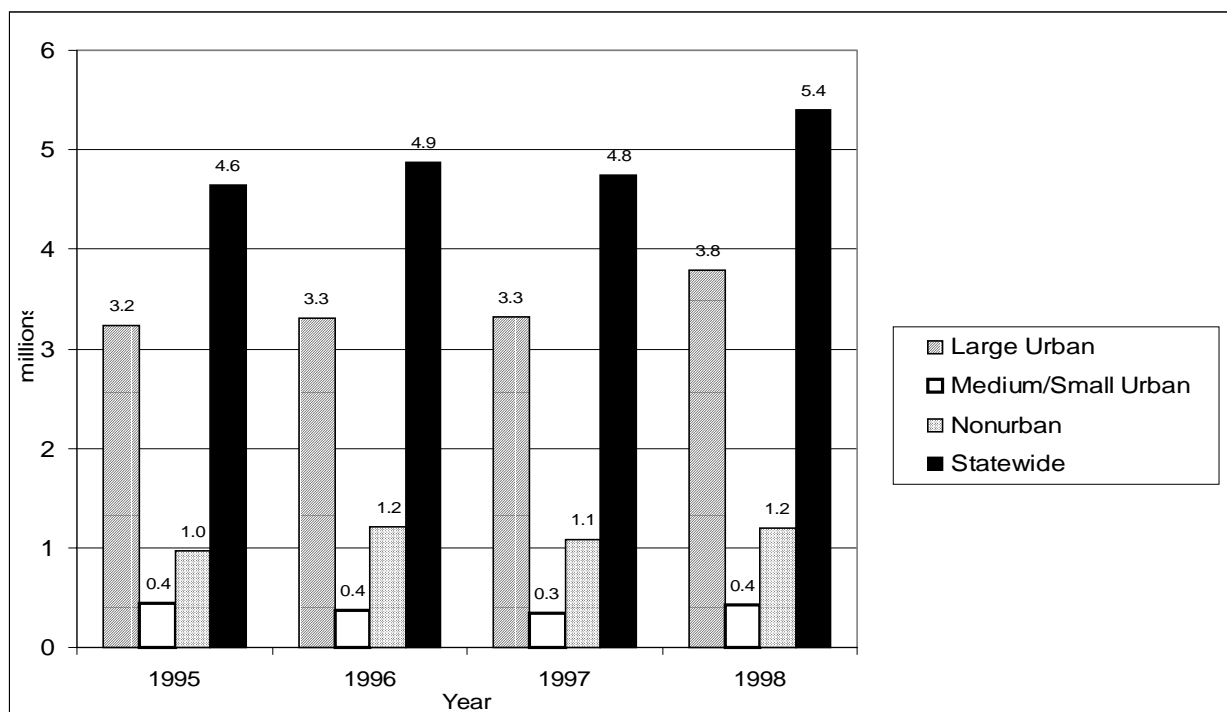
Figure 47. Vehicle Hours by Transit Category
Source: PTMS database, MDOT, 1995 – 1998
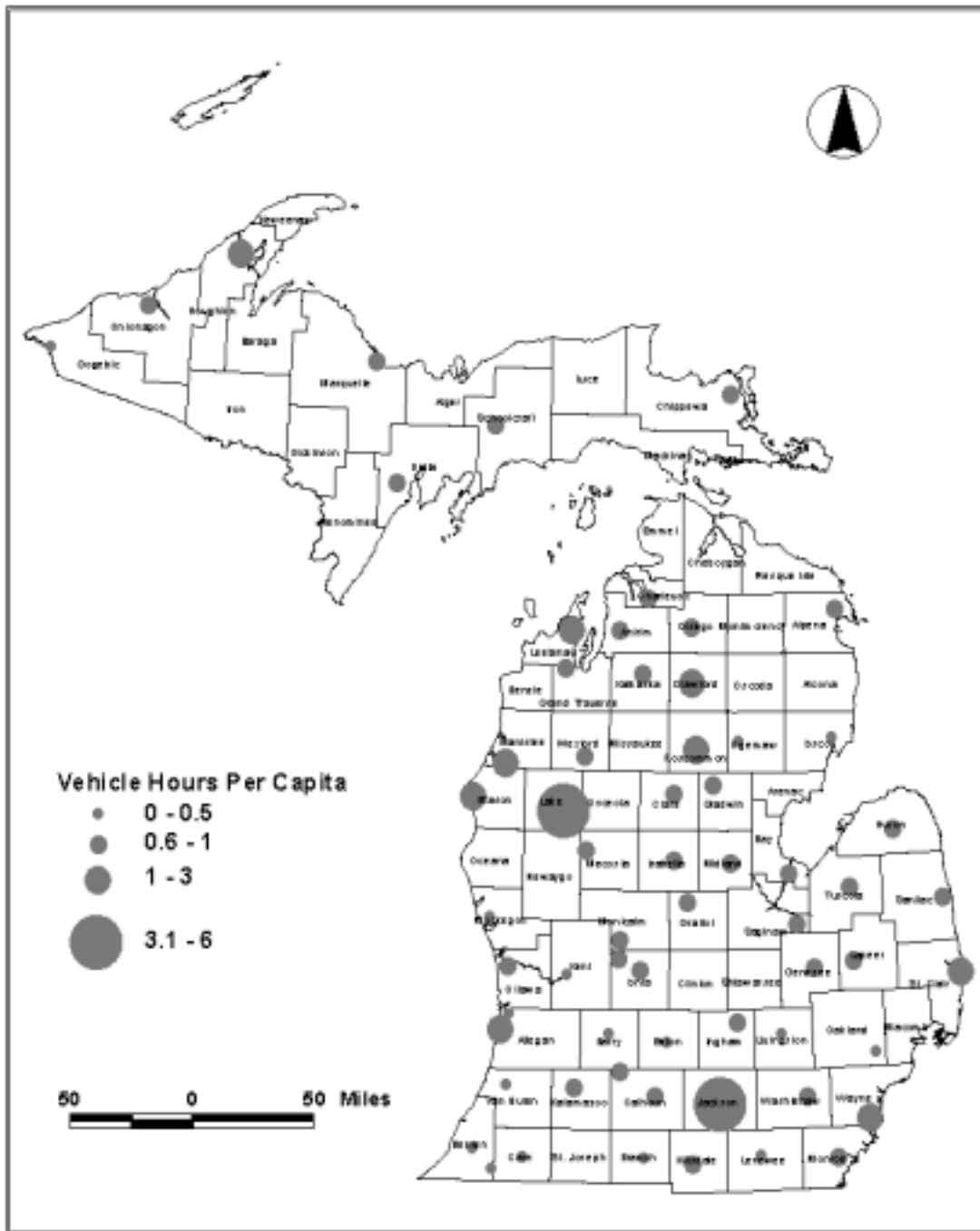
Figure 48. Vehicle Hours per Capita by Transit Agency, 1998
Source: PTMS database, MDOT, 1998
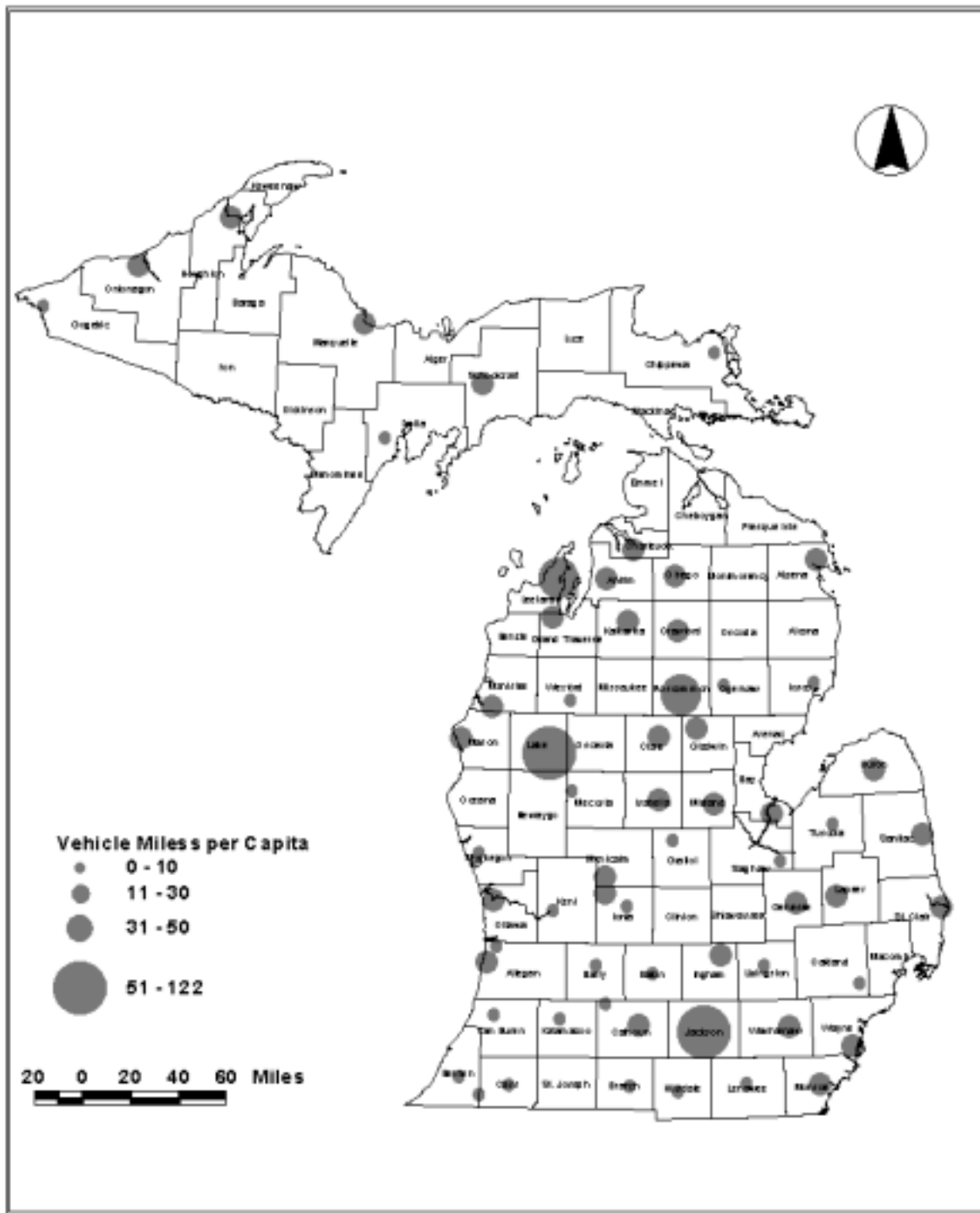
Figure 49. Vehicle Miles Per Capita by Transit Agency, 1998
Source: PTMS database, MDOT, 1998
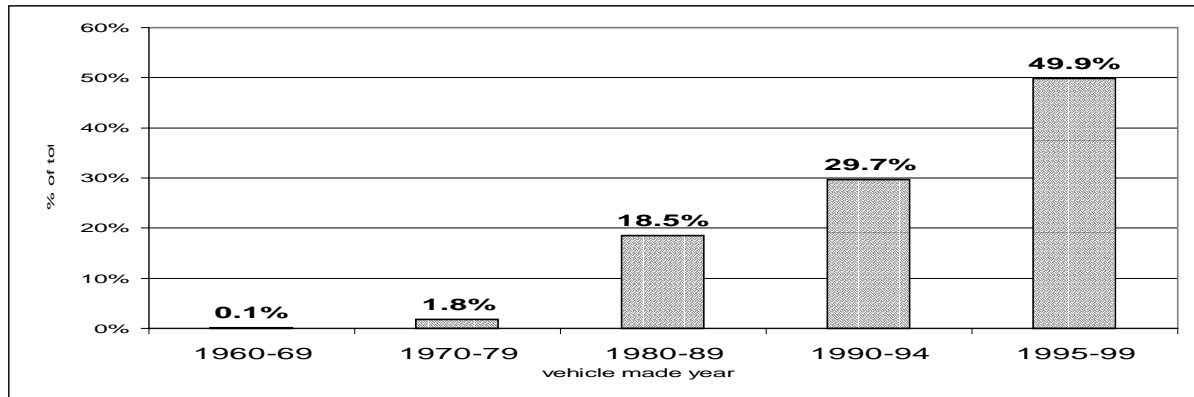
Figure 50. Age Distribution of Public Transit Vehicles Across Michigan
Source: PTMS database, 1999
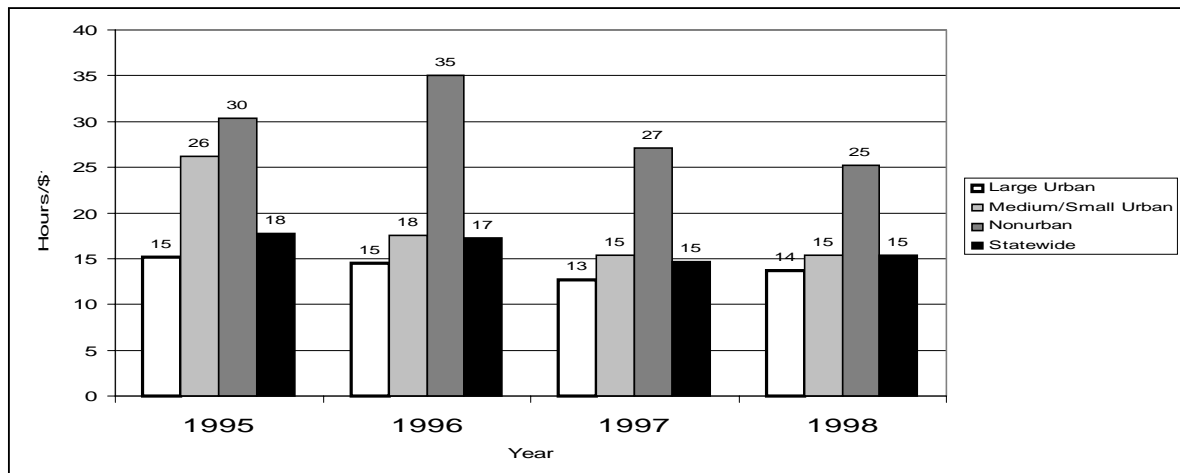
Figure 51. Vehicles Hours Per $1,000 Operating Expenses by Transit Category, 1998
Source: PTMS Database (Please note that these data are subject to significant uncertainty)
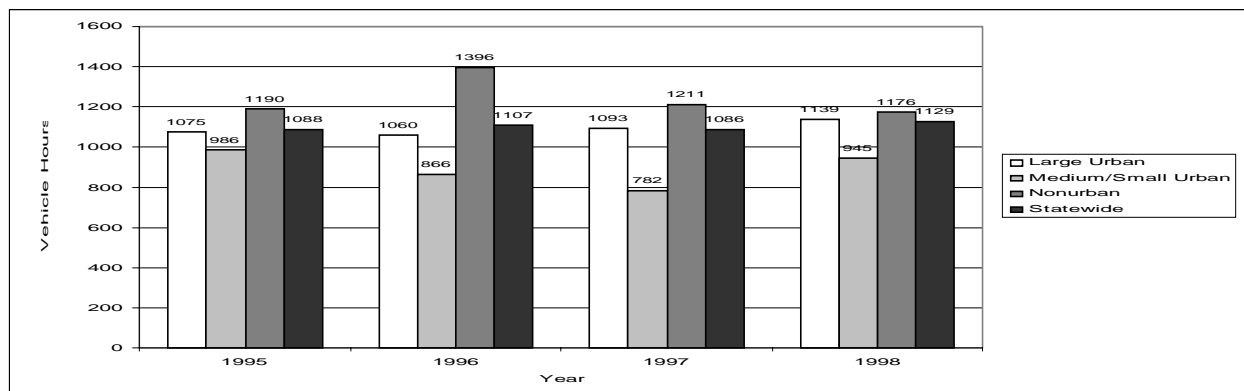
Figure 52. Vehicle Hours Per Employee by Transit Category, 1998
Source: PTMS Database (Please note that these data are subject to significant uncertainty)
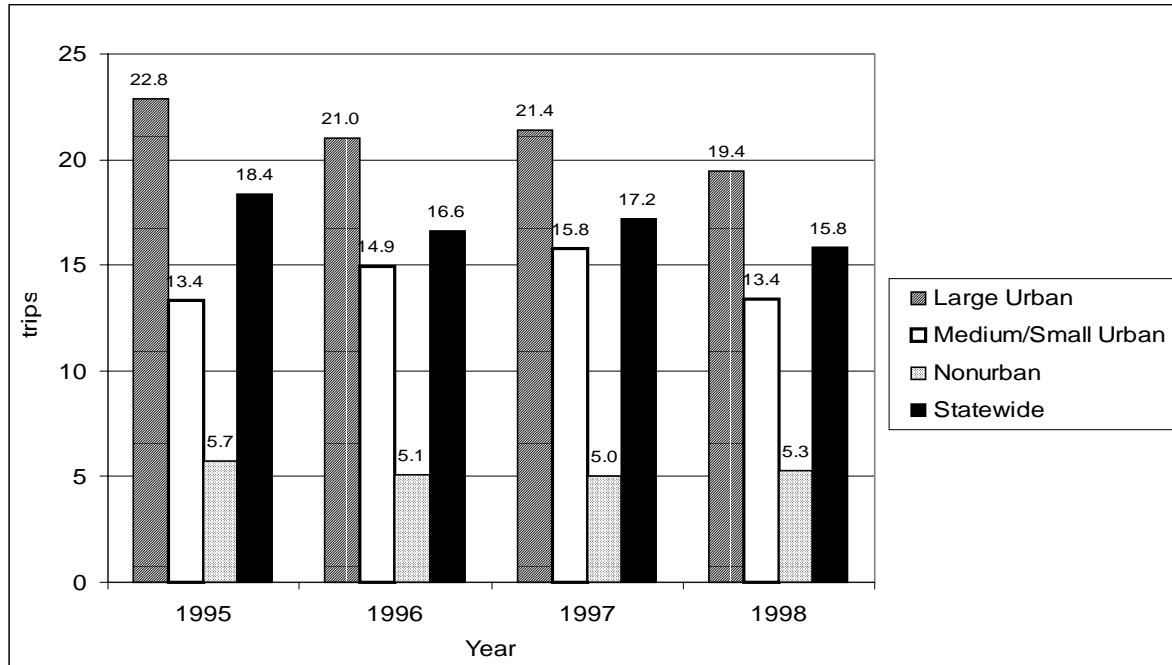
Figure 53. Passenger Trips per Vehicle Hour by Transit Category
Source: PTMS database, MDOT, 1995 - 1998
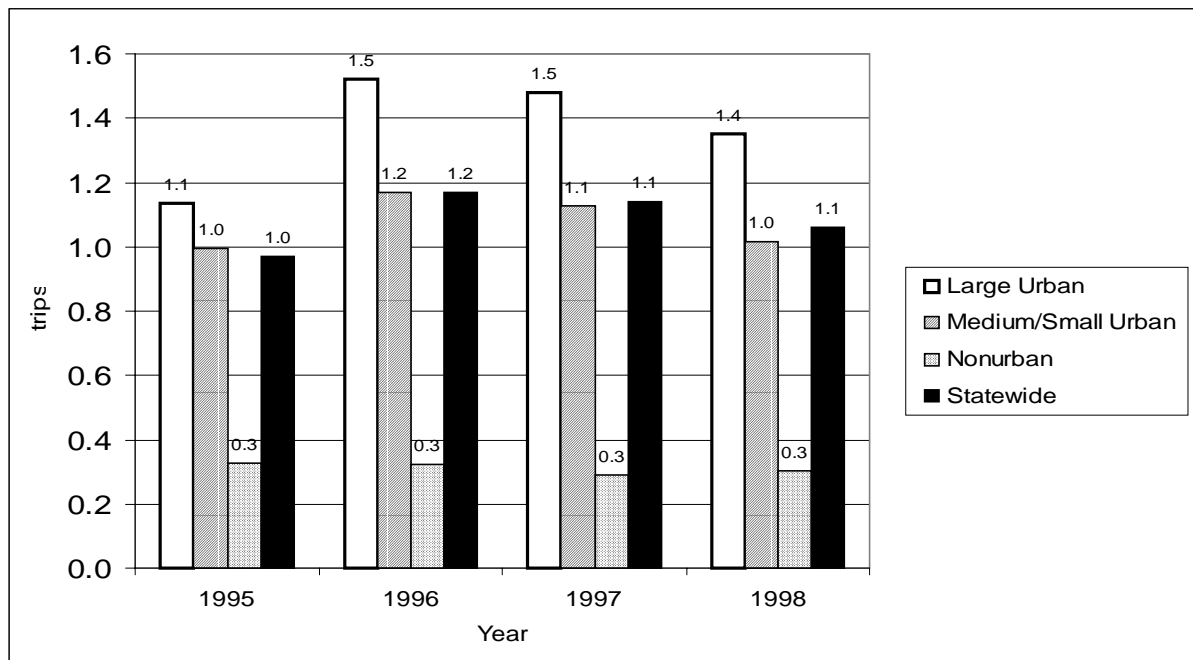
Figure 54. Passenger Trips per Vehicle Mile by Transit Category
Source: PTMS database, MDOT, 1995 – 1998
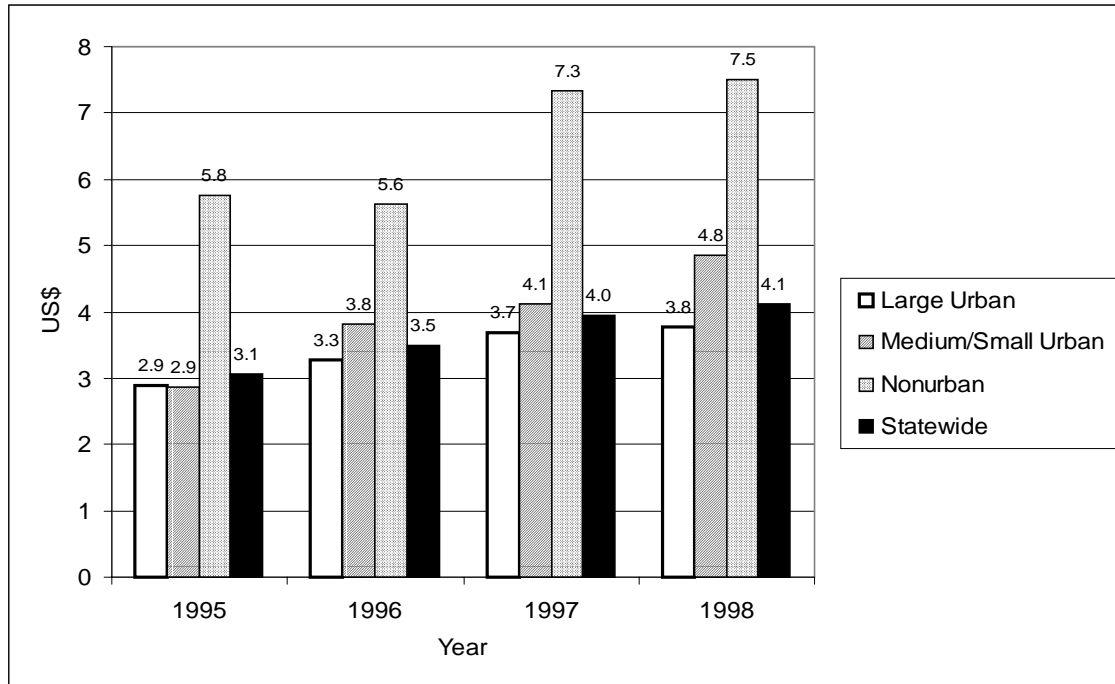
Figure 55. Total Revenue per Passenger Trip by Transit Category
Source: PTMS database, MDOT, 1995 - 1998
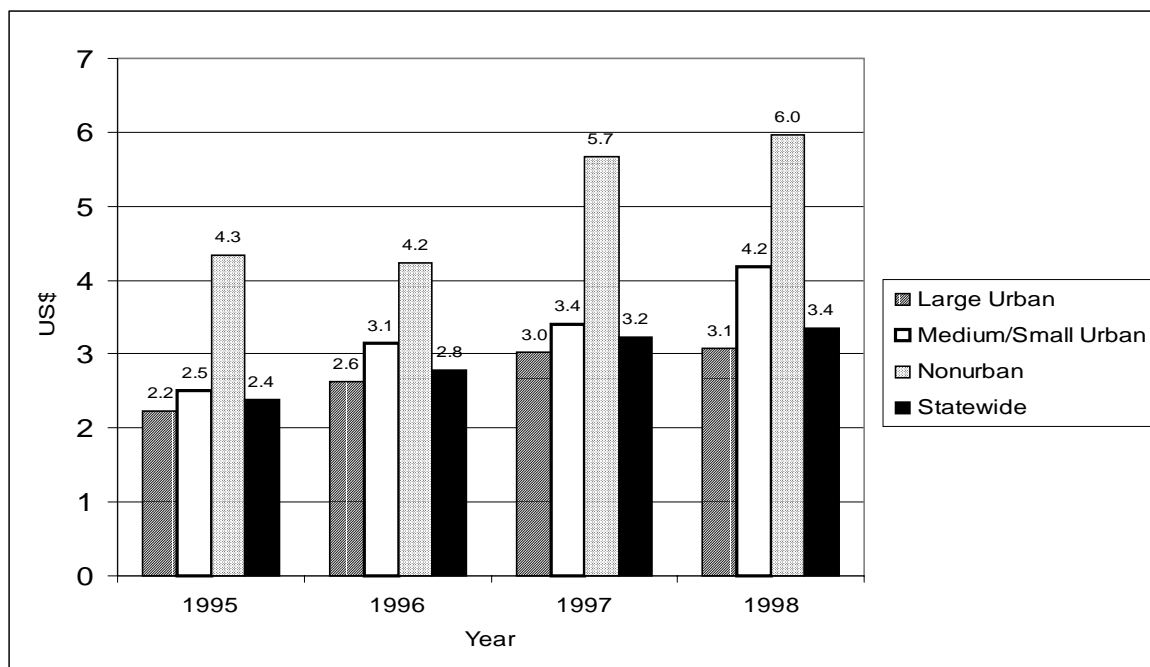
Figure 56. Operating Subsidy per Passenger Trip (subsidy = total revenue - farebox income)
Source: PTMS database, MDOT, 1995 - 1998
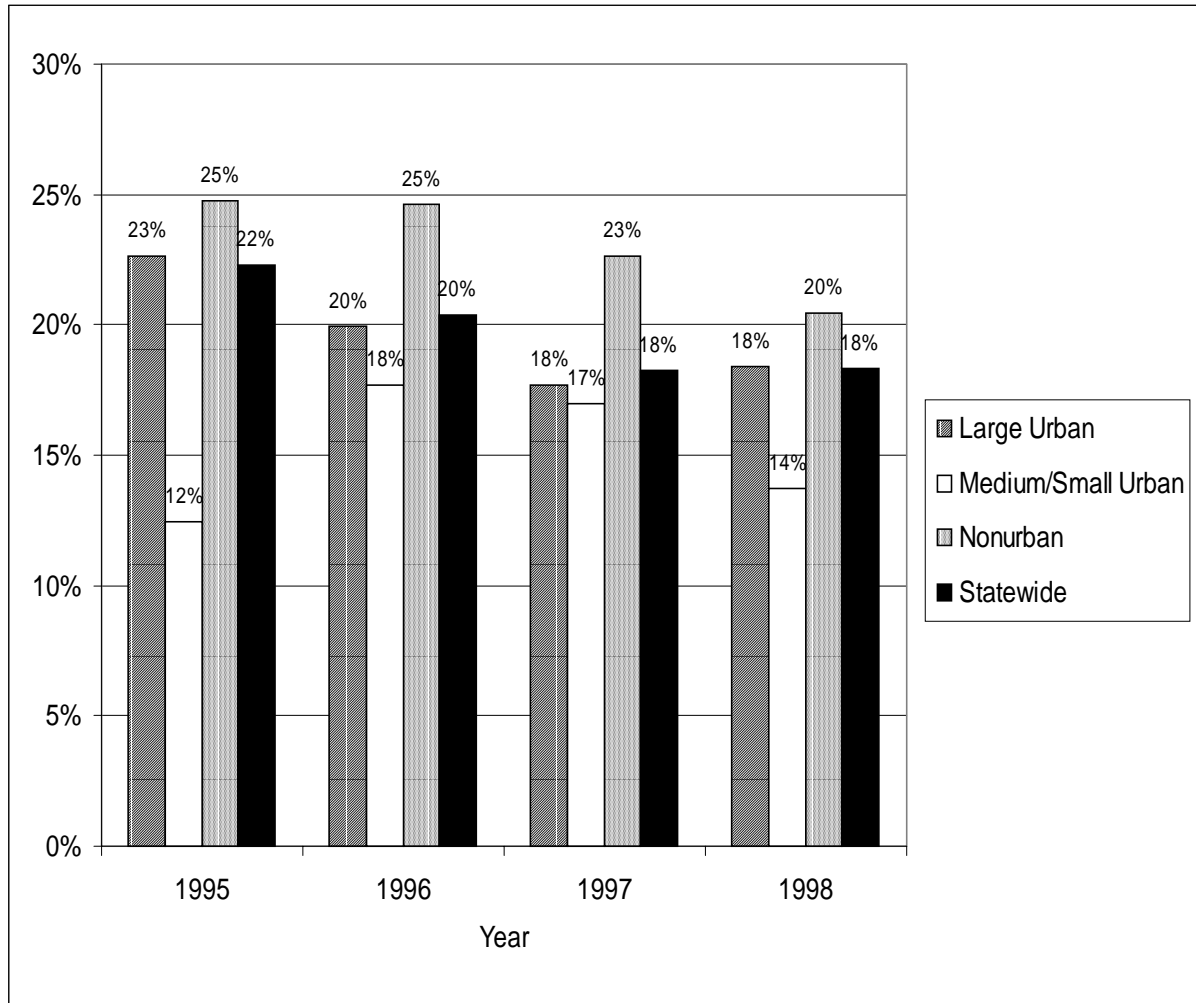
Figure 57. Ratio of Passenger Fare Revenue to Operating Expense
Source: PTMS database, MDOT, 1998
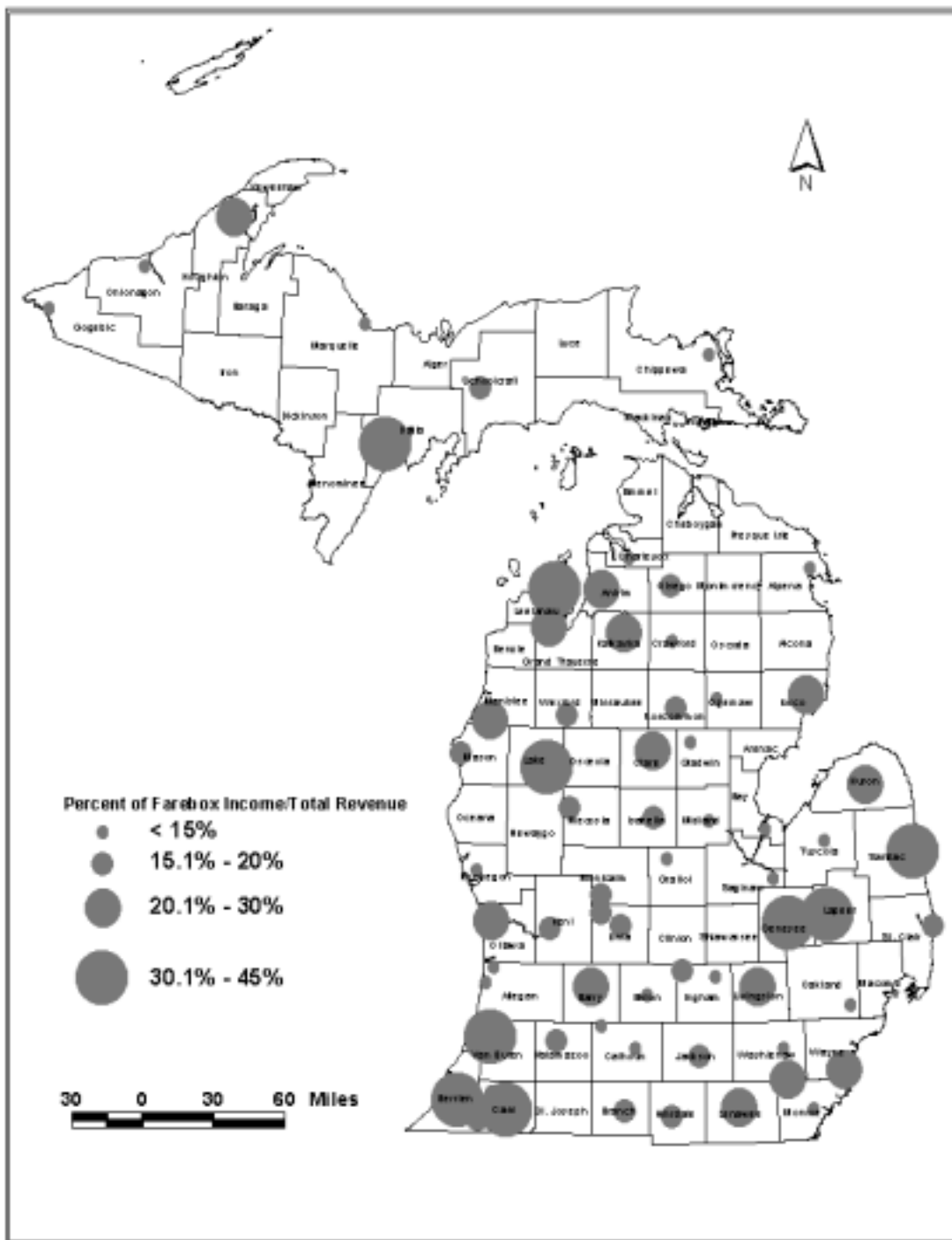
Figure 58. Percent of Farebox Income in Total Revenue by Transit Agency, 1998
Source: PTMS database, MDOT, 1998

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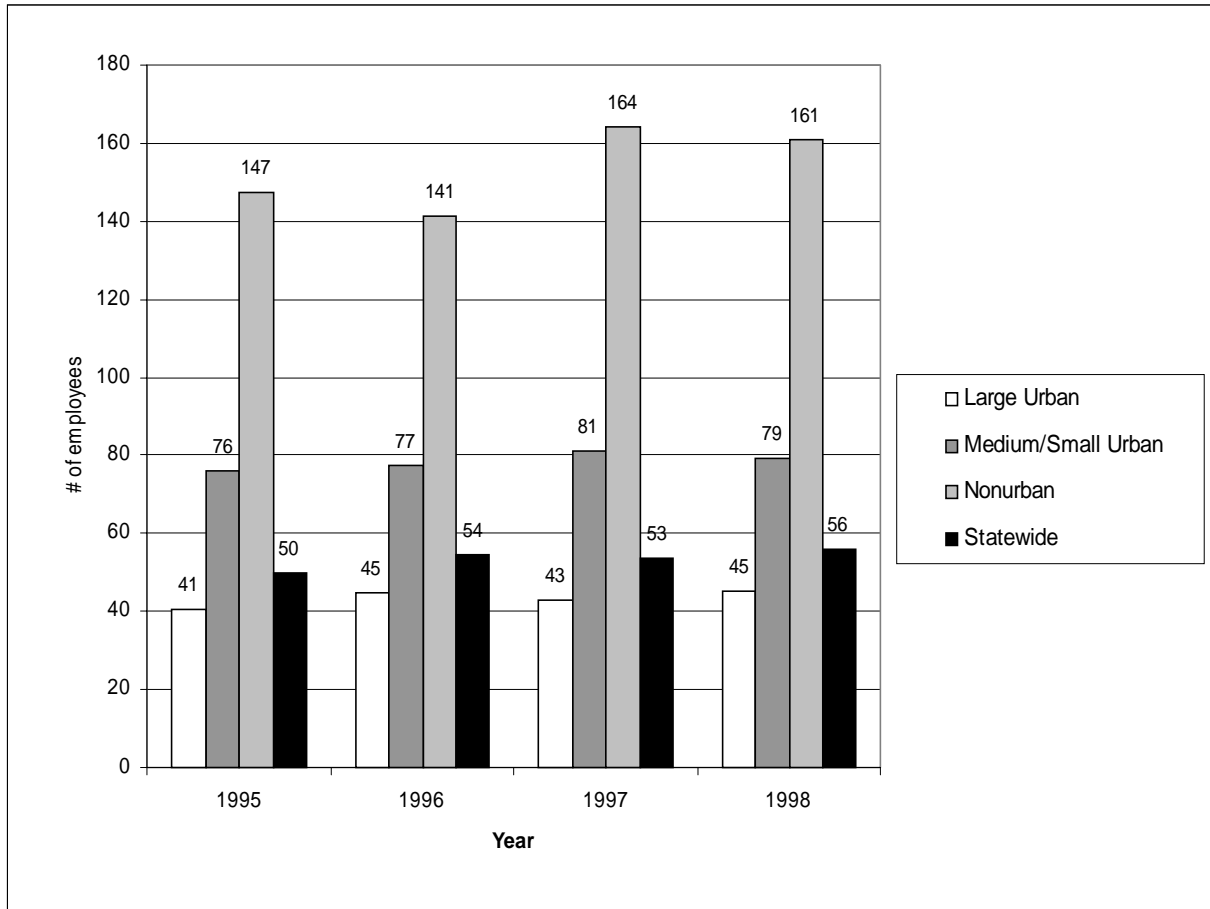
Figure 59. Employee Numbers per One Million Passenger Trips
Source: PTMS database, MDOT, 1995 - 1998

Section Three

FOCUS GROUP REPORT

I.   OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the qualitative portion of the study were to:

(1)   Identify *best practices* in public transit -- states, regions, and/or municipalities that operate superior transit systems -- based on what the stakeholders have heard or experienced *first-hand*.

(2)   Identify the key transit-related issues, challenges and constraints being faced in Michigan.

(3)   Identify the initiatives and priorities for Michigan that need to be implemented to improve transit over the next 5-20 years.

(4)   Gauge reactions to the concept of *Planning for Partnership*; learn what stakeholders think of the idea and who they believe should be partners.

II.   RESEARCH DESIGN

A total of 11 focus group sessions were held with various public transit stakeholders throughout Michigan. The sessions were 90 minutes in length and were conducted during normal business hours over a two-week period: July 12 - July 29, 1999. There were 70 total participants. The following lists the composition of the 11 groups:

- Four groups with transit agency officials/representatives: Two held in Detroit; one in Grand Rapids, and one in northern Michigan.

    Note: Since it was a challenge to find a location in northern Michigan that would be convenient for the targeted participants to attend, the group discussion was held via telephone conferencing.

- Two groups with MPO/Local Government stakeholders: Detroit, Grand Rapids.

- Two groups with employers and vendors [industry/technical]: Detroit.

- One group of elected officials: Lansing.

- One group of state/other government bureaucrats: Lansing.

- One group of local advisory committee members/social service representatives: Lansing.

Appendix A contains a copy of the discussion guide which was structured to meet the core objectives of the study. The *major* emphasis in all of the sessions was to explore the key

transit-related issues and challenges they are faced with today -- and -- identify what they believe should be treated as top priorities in the new strategic plan.

III.   KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This section of the report emphasizes the common trends and key findings for the 11 groups. We typically also report significant differences between the various types of focus group participants. However, in this study we found few differences in the responses given by the different groups of transit stakeholders.

That is, overall, there were many similarities in the comments and suggestions offered by each group -- across different regions, types and level of involvement in transit.

Examples of verbatim comments are sometimes provided in the body of this report to highlight, support, or clarify certain findings. However, this report is not intended to be a complete transcript of all participants' responses. Comments by different individuals are generally provided separately. In some cases, similar comments by different individuals are grouped together. A series of periods (...) indicates a continuation by the same individual. A slash (/) denotes the beginning of a comment by a different individual.

For more details or additional verbatim comments from individuals within a group, refer to the audiotapes that were provided to the University of Michigan research team.

For clarity, the key findings and conclusions from the 11 focus groups are segmented by the major topics covered in this study:

- A.   Public Transit Best Practices
- B.   Key Transit Issues, Challenges and Constraints
- C.   The Best Role for MDOT/UPTRAN
- D.   Top Transit Needs and Priorities
- E.   Planning for Partnership Concept

A.   Public Transit Best Practices

A number of *public transit best practices* were identified by the focus group participants. Based on what they have read, heard, or experienced *first-hand*, the locations they believe have superior public transit systems and processes are...

> ...   Major metropolitan areas in the U.S. -- Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Washington D.C., Houston, Portland [Maine and Oregon], San Francisco, Seattle.

> ...   States: Illinois, Connecticut, New York, Ohio, Virginia, Wisconsin

> ...   Other countries -- Brazil, Germany

> ...   Cities internationally -- London, Paris, Stockholm, Toronto.

Based on participants' comments about what makes these *best practices* systems stand out as superior, four common characteristics were identified. These systems are superior because they are: (1) Intermodal/interconnected; (2) accessible; (3) convenient and user friendly; and, (4) the various constituent groups involved in the systems work in collaboration and provide strong leadership.

1) <u>**Intermodal / Interconnected**</u>: Superior transit systems offer multiple modes of transportation, e.g. bus, heavy rail, light rail, and/or trolley, integrated into networks with convenient service connections between modes.

- *Boston has a good subway system, train and rails...the Metro extends out to various regions.*

- *D.C. has a bus service express with minimal stops...you can get downtown reliably, and they have rail. / D.C.'s system must have a lot of networks because the linkages are there, and it's a very clean system...you can be dropped off and picked up by a connection at the same point. / D.C. has the Metro and a bus system that are dependable and reliable.*

- *Atlanta has a good balance of light rail and buses dedicated to HOV lanes...well-rounded and well-balanced...covers a couple of counties where there's urban sprawl ...they make good use of the technology...they have the ability to track buses...Atlanta is considered intermodal.*

- *Toronto has a metro system...buses, trolley, subway, and train-rail...the network feeds it...rail goes in a couple of directions ...Toronto has transportation connections. / In Toronto, you can hook up with a train, trolley and a bus...they'll take you where you want to go.*

- *London [England] has buses, trains, subways, and everything is connected...it's a full comprehensive system...people use public transportation because everything is connected, and there's no shame to use it.*

- *Europe and the Eastern bloc - you can get anywhere without a car and any mode of transportation...Europe is a great example of public transportation...bus, rail, etc.*

2) <u>**Accessible**</u>: This *best-practice* characteristic refers to several issues:

a) Adequate access to public transit throughout a region, including urban, suburban, and rural areas;

- *In New York, Chicago, Atlanta, and San Francisco, you can get into the suburbs and smaller communities easily.*

- *New York opened up transportation in areas where there was none.*

- *Boston...the metro extends out to various regions.*

b)   Accessibility/usability of modes of transportation by special populations such as the disabled;

-   *Amtrak uses portable lifts at some of the manned stations, and the conductor can take the portable lift out and fix it.*

-   *I'm impressed with Brazil because they have lift equipment maintenance on their line-haul buses...when not working, the bus is taken out of service. / In Brazil, lifts have been placed at bus stops...they can repair them without pulling the bus out, and the lifts are sheltered...ingenious.*

c)   Scheduling that provides adequate frequency, and extended hours of operation (24 hours) to accommodate peak as well as off-peak travel.

-   *In Chicago, San Francisco and Atlanta...there's good transportation around the clock.*

-   *Portland...light rail runs every few minutes.*

3)   **Convenient / User-friendly**: Providing information through various methods to help riders understand and use the system. Superior systems provide information that is easy to access, easy to understand, complete, and up-to-date. Examples include printed schedules, routes, color-coded maps, telephone assistance with routing, etc. Also includes convenient methods of payment such as "cashless" fee card systems.

-   *In Toronto, D.C., and Chicago, it's obvious how to use public transit because their systems are very friendly and there are maps. / You can find your way around Toronto because maps are available and easily accessible.*

-   *Boston has color-coded subway and bus maps for different routes...good maps that you can pick up and posted maps with directions. / Paris has color-coded maps.*

-   *D.C. has a cashless system...a credit card type swipe card that's scanned as you enter and exit...you can stick it back in and it will give you the balance left on the card...it's user friendly...the card is dispensed from vending machines...you can buy any denomination, daily, monthly, weekly with no expiration date.*

-   *Germany has time schedule information right at the bus stop.*

-   *In Europe, they design the trip for you. . . routing and connectivity.*

-   *Portland has demand response routes . . .you call for a ride, and they help you locate the route*

4)   **Collaboration, Coordination and Leadership**: Transit providers, organizations and vendors working closely together for the same goal. All of the *best practice* examples that came to mind were cities and states in the U.S.:

*   *In the northeast, state and transit associations are so tight...they work in sync... there's no animosity...we generate a lot of animosity between our transit agencies.*

*   *State departments in Connecticut, Illinois, Ohio, and Oregon seem to generate interest in public transportation...there's a commitment to capitalizing the systems...the associations that represent transit are closer than the ones here in Michigan... cooperation is better, and there's one voice at the legislature*

*   *When you look nationally in major metro areas, there's no single merged system... Chicago has eight, and they're all coordinated and funded.*

*   *Illinois is a best practice state...it has an 800 lb. gorilla...CTA and Metro, but there's a strong cooperative relationship between them.*

B.   Key Transit Issues, Challenges and Constraints

When asked about areas in Michigan that *stand out as superior* in some way, there was a general consensus across groups that public transit systems in Michigan lag far behind the *best practice* examples described earlier**.** The factors that contribute to Michigan's status are discussed in more detail in the section on barriers to effective transit.

Despite the prevalence of negative opinions about Michigan transit systems, there were some exceptions mentioned across groups. These reflect pockets of areas or specific types of services that serve as a model. Participants highlighted the fact that the following best practice examples only refer to certain areas. Some areas have no coverage with respect to the transit programs listed below.

Michigan was described as a leader in providing transportation for the disabled and the elderly.

Michigan was also seen as a leader in providing **transportation for rural areas**. Most states do not have this.

Additionally, **a number of specific programs were mentioned which reflect collaboration between transit agencies, local governments, and private organizations**. Examples include:

*   A joint venture between the Grand Rapids Transit Authority and the public schools to provide high schools transportation on regular, line-haul routes;

*   DDOT's partnership with *Easy Ride* and *Welfare to Work* includes 30-40 participating representatives, agencies, and riders who meet regularly. They've been successful in capturing federal dollars. Easy Ride spearheads this initiative;

*   An experimental program by Troy Chamber of Commerce to pick up/drop off riders at SMART stops;

*   A SMART initiative to do routing and connectivity with Job Express;

- An Ann Arbor program which provides free bus passes to divert auto users to public transit for their work commutes;

- A Grand Rapids surface transportation center developed three years ago which consists of an off-street center with bays. It serves 18 routes. Buses arrive within five minutes of each other and transfers are convenient;

- Genesee County passed a county-wide millage - `Your Ride' van service to cover six areas; and

- A Lake County, Michigan program in which volunteer drivers use their vehicles. There are no jurisdictional barriers or equipment purchase barriers for transit agencies there.

As noted earlier, the majority of participants feel that Michigan **does not** currently have what they'd consider to be *superior* transit systems -- statewide, regionally, or locally. Most of the time in the focus groups was devoted to understanding the issues, challenges and constraints that act as barriers to effective public transit in this state.

Seven (7) transit-related issues, challenges and constraints were identified as the most important factors impacting public transit in Michigan today:

1) Inadequate funding

2) Lack of effective leadership, commitment or advocacy

3) Lack of collaboration and cooperation

4) Inability to meet the diversity of rider needs

5) Urban sprawl

6) Negative image of public transportation and a lack of awareness of services

7) Automobile culture -- a general preference for driving personal vehicles.

We noticed **the same issues surfaced in all 11 groups at some point during the sessions,** which suggests they have had similar experiences, regardless of their transit scope or level of involvement. Although they may have talked about an issue from their particular perspective, the content of their comments and the resulting implications were the same.

Participants' comments suggest **many of these issues are interrelated with multiple reciprocal** *cause and effect relationships.*

Although they were not asked to *prioritize* each issue as to its importance, prevalence or impact, three of these issues were clearly viewed as the most important. **Their comments suggest the number one challenge is insufficient funding followed by lack of effective transit leadership/advocacy, and a general lack of commitment from MDOT/UPTRAN to make transit a top priority**. As noted above, the issues were perceived as being closely interrelated. Many participants believe funding problems are a direct result of the latter two issues - poor leadership/advocacy and lack of commitment to transit at the state level.

1)   **<u>Inadequate Funding</u>**: Although participants were not asked to *prioritize* each issue as to its importance or impact, it was patently clear that they believe **the most significant challenge is inadequate funding.** This issue, which became the basis for several initiatives, surfaced in all 11 groups as a major constraint. Based on their comments we were able to identify several sub-categories under the more general heading of "funding":

      a)   **Limited funding support/insufficient funds**; Most of the comments regarding funding centered around inadequate *capital* allocations and operating budgets that fall short of what is needed to meet transit needs.

               Many of the groups talked about not having the funds for equipment or to implement new technologies. The primary result of this is an inability to effectively schedule and route their equipment to meet the needs of their public. Expanding funding options became the focus of an initiative in Section One.

-   *Michigan struggles for funding operations.*

-   *Transit has to battle the state for money -- we're getting less money in percentage terms.*

-   *We've run lean for so long that there's not enough staff or funding to do what we'd like to do or what other states are doing.*

-   *The state needs to put more money into transportation.*

-   *All public transportation is minimally funded in the state.*

-   *The state is reducing the amount of money for SMART and DDOT, but we need to run more buses.*

-   *The state contribution to our operating budget was 43 percent of what we needed.*

-   *There's not enough money for operating expenses and costs are starting to skyrocket.*

-   *We only get enough to survive, not to expand our operations.*

-   *UPTRAN underestimates our operating needs -- something has changed in the past few years -- the focus is on where can we cut transit funding. / UPTRAN asks what our needs are but projects everything down really low -- the number one priority should be business operating funds.*

-   *Capital is not given freely from the federal government.*

      b)   **Unstable/unreliable funding:** Another issue that contributes to the perception that transit is inadequately funded in Michigan has to do with the stability of amounts allocated for transit. It is difficult to maintain a consistent level of funding due to varying allocations from one funding period to the next. Consequently, stakeholders' ability to effectively manage mid-range and long-range planning is hampered. An even more serious problem occurs when an agency learns in the middle of the budget year that the current budget under which

they are working is not going to be funded for the full amount. The initiative to budget operating assistance over a multi-year period discusses strategies to address the instability of transit funding.

- *Operating funds are a problem everywhere, but more so in Michigan ... once we get it, it's a struggle to keep it going.*

- *We're limited by funding and this is forcing transit agencies in a region to cooperate more ... local agreements to go across boundary limits ... we need to cooperate, but we also need more resources ... better and more reliable funding.*

- *Funding doesn't coincide with what was planned ... there needs to be more efficiency and better planning ... I need the state and federal to say, do planning for the next 3-5 years and this is what we'll fund... funding is unstable.*

- *There's a lack of stable funding ... it varies from year to year ... we get pretty good support, but it fluctuates significantly ... it's difficult to do budgets and planning ... if we had strong local funding, it may not be that difficult.*

- *The number one issue is unpredictability of funding ... it's hard to do long-range planning five years out when we're battling day-to-day financial issues ... also, this may be discouraging people from being involved ... there's a lot of gritting of the teeth and sitting on hands because things move so slowly.*

- *We're constrained by the 10 percent from gas and weight taxes ... we aren't going to see a huge increase in the amount of funding we need.*

- *We have to take loans for cash flow for the 11 months it takes to fund us.*

- *Capital and operating budgets are a real problem/constraint ... capital is distributed in a different fashion ... it's so undependable ... they do all your planning for you, and you have no choice.*

c) **Inappropriate structure and use of funding formula:** Many of the comments suggest the funding formula is an issue. The formula distribution is not clearly understood, and there's a perception that it's not fair to all communities and is not adhered to on a consistent basis. Including performance-based measures in a funding formula is discussed as part of the initiative on Transit Efficiency and Effectiveness.

- *At the state level, there's no commitment to adhere to the formula.*

- *The state needs a very objective point-based evaluation system that's uniformly used by everyone.*

- *There's a different formula based on community or city -- larger vs. smaller urban areas have different formulas.*

d) **Poor coordination of transit funds**: Another funding issue which surfaced repeatedly was the perception that transit funds are allocated in a fragmented manner, without the guidance of an integrated plan and systematic coordination to ensure that resources are put where they are needed most. An initiative to coordinate funds at the state level is included in the first section of this report.

- *A common theme is all areas have needs, but the money gets spent in the wrong direction ... nobody coordinates funding needs.*

- *We need to be part of the discussion about resources, support needed, and the services out there ... there's no effort to coordinate transportation dollars.*

- *There are different pots of money appropriated to different departments, but no one is responsible for coordinating it.*

- *There's a lack of funding coordination and accountability.*

- *Money is distributed and spent without regard to a plan... need local interests to be organized ...we don't know our jurisdiction or where our authority lies... it's not uniform from one area or MPO to the next.*

e) **Allocation of transit funds to other agencies/programs:** Related to the issue of poor coordination of funding allocations is the perception that funds are allocated to the wrong agencies or programs.

- *Money is put in the hands of the coordinating body, not ours ... we're the ones providing transportation to meet the needs, yet they control the funds to operate their own programs whatever way they see fit.*

- *Welfare to Work and FIA have pockets of money ... funds would be going to transit if they were not going to these programs ... they tell the agencies to use money creatively to get these people to work, and many have contracted to private bus, van and coach services ... but, transit agencies want to know why UPTRAN let this happen.*

- *MDOT is subdividing all the different needs ... FIA, career development, etc. ... a lot of the areas are already being worked on, so it's hard to do strategic planning ... the dollars are peeled off and going to other entities like Work First programs.*

- *They're giving some transit funds to administration ... Secretary of State, Attorney General's office.*

- *Transportation dollars have to go to the providers, not the program ... there's not a transportation element that gets money allocated.*

2) **Lack of Commitment, Leadership and Advocacy for Transit:** This second key barrier to effective transit in Michigan surfaced in all 11 groups throughout the sessions. It is the subject of the initiative on Communications within the Transit Community. Importantly, it is perceived as a root cause of the problems with funding discussed above.

a)	**Transit not a priority:** There was pervasive belief among stakeholders that public transit is not treated as a priority at the highest levels in the state, e.g. by legislators, the Governor, other elected officials, and appointed officials.

-	*Some legislators see public transit as an after-thought -- don't want to spend money on transportation.*

-	*Transportation is not a priority to those who don't use it.*

-	*In other markets, public transit is for everybody -- it's more elaborate and thorough elsewhere, but legislation was done to support it and get it going.*

b)	**Poor leadership/advocacy:** Many transit stakeholders believe MDOT and UPTRAN are not providing the level of leadership and advocacy on their behalf to address citizens' transit needs. They also made it clear that they *want and need* some visible evidence of leadership. Many stakeholders feel they're on their own battling for funds and services.

-	*Leadership in the industry in this state is a problem... there's a need for leadership from the state ... why is MDOT letting SMART and DDOT do what they want?*

-	*We need a champion at the top who has good connections to somebody with a vision and dedication to transit.*

-	*MDOT is part of the problem ... they don't provide advocacy for transit ... MDOT could be stronger.*

-	*There's a reluctance to stick their neck out on new transit technology.*

-	*There's a need to push using the funding that's available to be more efficient, but if the state wants us to be more efficient, they'll need to become efficient themselves ... take the lead.*

-	*The state ought to reorganize and get rid of the dead weight ... UPTRAN has 90-100 positions ... they can get rid of half of them and run much more efficiently.*

c)	**Overemphasis placed on highway/road projects:** There was a general consensus that the lack of commitment to and advocacy for mass transit in Michigan is due in large part to a preference for supporting highway/road projects. The level of attention given to highways and roads was held up as an example of priority status, funding support, effective leadership, and advocacy.

-	*Michigan does not advocate ... they're not pro-mass transit ... they seem to be pro roads.*

-	*MDOT is highly highway ... transit gets the short end of the stick.*

-	*The transit vote is scrutinized to the extreme, but the road vote floats through very easily ... the gas tax increase went to roads, not transit.*

- *Transit is in competition with highways because the majority of people have cars... UPTRAN is in lock-step with MDOT ... they emphasize highways over public transportation.*

- *Transit is not a priority ... the emphasis is on highways ... we have no advocates... all transit flows for re-allocation are driven by road and highway interests... highways should be the state's lowest priority.*

3) **Poor Collaboration and Cooperation Among Transit Stakeholders:** These issues surfaced in all 11 groups at some point during the discussion. Although some examples of good cooperative relationships were cited, most **participants believe there's insufficient collaboration and cooperation going on at the local, regional and state level.** Several initiatives in the first section of this report discuss strategies to increase cooperation and coordination.

According to participants, the need for better collaboration among stakeholders is particularly important to:

- Support economic development efforts in urban, suburban, and rural areas;

- Deal with the negative consequences of urban sprawl, e.g. traffic congestion, longer commutes, and air pollution;

- Link workers to areas where jobs are available, and help support work programs such as welfare-to-work.

Most stakeholders believe there's a need for **more effective coordination** by a *central* entity -- and -- for **greater cooperation** among transit providers and key stakeholders. Looking at the findings across all 11 groups, it appears that **transit in Michigan is a somewhat *fragmented* system that lacks the level of cohesiveness, collaboration and cooperation to make it a superior system statewide.**

Some transit authorities in specific regions have taken the initiative to partner or collaborate with employers, and with programs like FIA and Work First. Several constructive examples of collaboration in Genessee County were mentioned:

- *We have more cooperative relationships in Genesee County ... all the entities work well together ... Flint and others at this table ... some are formalized and structured, some aren't.*

- *Genesee County has employers [Star Theater in Great Lakes Crossing] on its advisory board ... many employers provide direct subsidy to us ... we also have auto manufacturer support from Waterford and Pontiac ... they provide direct financial support... funding is clearly possible by collaborating with FIA to get money ... some of the funds are distributed based on needs ... we're sharing with other areas even though the source of funding is directed at Genesee County... I'm seeing a great effort to get people back to work, but transportation is a great barrier ... I've heard about local or regional efforts like Flint, but there's no state effort."*

- *Genesee County has an advisory council relationship among area transportation people, private companies, county transit, local transit ... we meet monthly to talk about needs coming through from other sources (regional advisory council, workforce development) ... it's a formalized planning function with regional input, information sharing and planning done at monthly meetings ... employers are responsive to our needs, usually the next day.*

There were also comments in more than one group about **General Motors and CompuWare** working with private providers to address their needs.

- *GM is teaming up with somebody to create their own transportation system that will better fulfill their needs. / GM and CompuWare are conversing about putting their own transportation together ... I'm glad they're doing it. / CompuWare and GM are working with separate companies to create transportation for their employees because they don't perceive SMART and DDOT as capable of meeting their needs.*

In many groups - particularly those in southeast Michigan -- the SMART-DDOT relationship was held up as an example of the need for better coordination and cooperation.

- *We need to do better with the resources we've got ... we need better route coordination between DDOT and SMART ... they're two broken down systems ... they're getting good service, but they need improving in a number of areas.*

- *There's so much in-fighting between DDOT and SMART ... SMART is trying to accommodate the workers from Detroit to the suburbs, but there are turf battles ... DDOT is very jealous of SMART operating in the city because they have dual roles ... this can be resolved by better coordination of services.*

- *There's a lack of cooperation between Detroit and surrounding areas ... we need one bus system, but we now have two ... we have different politics here, very strong county politics (Wayne, Oakland, Macomb).*

While the DDOT/SMART relationship was offered as a negative example of collaboration, **SEMCOG was held up as a positive example of cooperation and collaboration:**

- *SEMCOG is exemplary in coordinating, planning and working with others.*

- *All the regions need to work together but don't ... not one MPO ever complained about SEMCOG ... they're exemplary in coordinating, planning and working with others.*

- *There are a couple of levels of coordination ... we need to get all the pots of money under one roof and targeted ... SEMCOG's trying to coordinate funds, but there are local political impediments.*

4) <u>**Inability to Meet the Diversity of Needs:**</u> Another important challenge for public transit in Michigan has to do with the increasing diversity of transit customers. This issue

was raised in all 11 transit stakeholder groups. **There was a general consensus that transit systems currently are not flexible enough and do not have the capacity to meet the diverse needs of the elderly, disabled, physically ill, low income, and workers.**

a)   **Employee/Employer Needs**: Each group talked about the challenges they face in accommodating the needs of employees and employers. The key constraints here are:

- Transit schedules that do not accommodate employees' work schedules. Particularly important is the lack of 24-hour scheduling to accommodate shifts/work schedules that deviate from traditional work hours;

- Unreliable service and long wait times;

- Lack of adequate routing and connections to link workers to areas were jobs are available. The failure to provide service from urban cores to suburban areas where more economic growth is happening is an example;

- Lack of intermodalism and seamless transportation; and

- Failure to provide enough creative or alternative transit services that link into and support mass transit modes. Examples include demand-response services, curb-to-curb, and door-to-door service.

Initiatives in Section One of this report that relate to these constraints include coordination of funds at the state level, regional transportation, regional coordination of transit provision, and coordinated information sources.

Some comments on this issue were:

- *Employers are willing to pay to get workers to the site, but we still cannot provide 24-hour service. / We have some 24-hour lines in Michigan, but only a few...it's difficult to get to the suburbs, and that has an impact on employment. / The real issue in Traverse City is not having public transportation 24 hours, seven days a week... if someone works in the evenings, they can't get transportation, and demand-response can't support them.*
- *Schedule reliability is a major issue...long wait times...I see people waiting and there's no bus in sight. / The bus schedule doesn't meet the needs of the residents...they have to wait a long time.*

- *There's a lot of growth in Detroit right now, and people are ready to work, but there's no transportation for them.*

- *My brother lives in Shelby Township and works in Warren ... it takes four hours with connections and schedules.*

- *Charlevoix, Elgin and Delta Counties have a program to transport people to work any time of the day...they call ahead of time and arrange transportation, but it's inconvenient because they have to wait 45 minutes to an hour after they get off work.*

- *Transit has played an important part in Welfare to Work issues ... the FIA people need specialized assistance like door-to-door transportation ... it's a challenge.*

- *The existing routes don't take them where they want to go ... we need a grid system for bus transfers to be much more efficient.*

- *Public transportation didn't meet our needs [FIA], so we went off on our own and developed things to be more effective for our clients, but we need to do a better job of educating people about our needs which go beyond senior citizens.*

b) **Disabled and elderly needs**: Transit providers are also challenged by the disabled population who are often transit dependent. In addition, the growth in the older population - many of whom are also transit dependent - is increasing the demand from elder-friendly transit services. The initiative to coordinate funds at the state level discusses strategies to address this need. The key issues involving the elderly/disabled riders are:

- Equipment that does not accommodate the special needs of the disabled and elderly. Many accessibility features benefit both groups.
- Failure to provide access to transit information by making accommodations for the sight and hearing impaired.
- Failure to provide creative alternative transit services that support mass transit modes. Examples include demand-response services, curb-to-curb, and door-to-door service.

Some comments on the growing demand for disabled/elder-friendly transit were:

- *There's an increasing demand for transportation of seniors and the disabled ... 25 years ago, we were a leader in the state.*

- *For a long-time, seniors dominated, now ADA is pushing funding support to the disabled... we might want to try to expand the door-to-door, curb-to-curb, but we can't implement best practices...we're constrained by insufficient funds.*

- *The issues transcend transit...people with disabilities live outside the MPO...the growing population of elderly people will create a bigger problem...the issue of mobility is everybody's issue.*

- *The fastest growing age group in southeastern Michigan is the elderly...we'll become transit-oriented and need different kinds of transportation.*

- *We have segments within the aging population who can used fixed route buses, those who can still drive, but also older ones where curb-to-curb works.*

- *In Kalkaska, we do a lot of handicap, elderly and lower income transporting.*

- *A lot of times, the needs of the elderly are different from the disabled ... the level of personal assistance needed ... curb-to-curb vs. door-to-door ... most of our systems are curb-to-curb because of the graying of America.*

- *Transporting the children of the disabled is a major issue ... I can get around, but my kids can't.*

- *A 24-hour advanced notice is required for handicapped people to get transportation ... it's absolutely primitive the way it's run.*

- *Adaptive equipment for the handicapped is an issue...How often do you encounter route information brochures in braille? They're not available in braille ... they were on tape, but the tapes were not updated. / There needs to be signage and directions inside the buses for the hearing impaired.*

- *The demands for special services to meet the needs of the disabled are growing geometrically ... their needs are finally being recognized ... we have a responsibility to provide services for them, but it's difficult to do in Grand Rapids because the request for para-transit service is so great ... monies to transport people and fixed route services are not always sufficient, and a regular line-haul bus doesn't meet their needs.*

- *A variety of services are needed more and more ... it starts with a recognition that the population is aging and disabled ... the demand-response service is increasing dramatically.*

- *A big issue is that people with disabilities are not viewed as a viable customer segment for transportation, housing, technology ... people assume the demand is not there.*

5) **Urban Sprawl:** Urban sprawl, which occurs as low-density development spreads out from the core of a city over increasingly larger geographical areas, is another significant barrier to effective transit in Michigan. **Every transit stakeholder group we talked to raised this issue as a major challenge.** It is reflected in the initiatives to coordinate funds at the state level, organize and coordinate provision of regional transportation, and coordinate transit and land use.

Urban sprawl creates a greater need for effective mass transit in order to deal with problems associated with sprawl, such as traffic congestion, long commutes, and negative environmental impacts. As one participant put it, *"Urban sprawl is creating the opportunity for better, more effective public transportation."* **However in their current state, Michigan transit systems do not have the resources to effectively service sprawling, low-density development.**

- *As the population shifts away from the city, you don't have density, but you have ridership that needs that service. / Our region is becoming larger because people's travel*

patterns are changing ... they need more access ... we're trying to expand geographically, but we're being spread out and getting thinner. / We're trying to service a large geographic area and trying to get people out of cars. / We don't have the high density population that other states have. / We need to stop urban sprawl...we need high density populated areas. / People are moving out of the cities to areas that are less densely populated and not on either a regularly scheduled line or connector. / In Elgin County, the lower income people live outside the transit area because they can't afford to live in the city.

Many of the comments regarding sprawl focused on business and economic development issues, and related concerns about transporting employees to and from work. The success of initiatives like Welfare to Work and FIA depend largely on the availability of transportation to get employees to areas where jobs are available. One of the results of urban sprawl is that most of the growth in new jobs occurs in outlying areas. People who needs those jobs are often located in the older, urban areas. Additionally, the lack of transportation between outlying communities limits the ability of people to travel from one suburban community to another for jobs, or for other reasons.

The major implications of urban sprawl, according to the majority of participants, is that it highlights the need for:

a)   **Inter-modal, inter-connected transit systems:**

-       *We need a centralized, multi-modal system that's linked and coordinated. / The southeast has a poor transportation system. You can't go out 30 miles because there's no rapid transit, no inter-urban, and no rail. These are blocked by the Big Three. / There's no bus service linkage...transportation out and into places you want to go. / We need alternatives to line-haul buses. / Mass transit doesn't serve business needs. There are no densities to support light rail, but if you wait for densities to occur in sprawling metro areas, you'll have to wait a long time.*

b)   **Urban sprawl also highlights the need for seamless, regional transportation that transcends the boundaries of local communities.**

-       *Counties have limitations and boundaries that a transit provider can't cross -- the rider has to get on another system -- this happens in every community./ Some organizations don't work real well with their neighbors. We have a lot of splintered groups who serve a bus here and there. There's no interlocal agreement between them. / There's no coordination going on now. We need to give input on how to use the money. /A strong commitment to transit needs isn't there to have coordinated services. There needs to be a strong financial commitment and more resources...MDOT assumes it's a God-send. / Collaboration is needed...there's no commitment to work regionally...it's not been there. / The communities want to remain separate -- some areas are struggling not to have public transportation, and I'm not sure why./ You have to maintain control of the sprawl -- if you start throwing out regional transit, sprawl will get worse.*

6)   **Negative Image of Public Transit and Lack of Awareness of Public Transit Services:**
There was a strong belief across all of the stakeholder groups in this study that **public transportation in Michigan has a negative stigma** - unlike other major cities or states.

Reportedly, Michiganders view public transportation as being for the disadvantaged --
people who cannot afford a vehicle -- poor people, the elderly, and the handicapped.

- *The image is public transportation is for people who can't afford a car./ The attitudes are a social thing. They're seen as elderly, handicapped, retarded and old people's buses...nobody else wants to ride them. / The prevailing attitude is the need for public transportation is a need by a very small minority of people - that's not accurate though...there's a need among young people, seniors, and medical. / How many years has this area [southeast Michigan] snubbed its nose at public transportation? None of us would, but the perspective is it's for the disabled and people who can't afford cars. / There's a negative stigma...the perception is transit is for poor people, a lifeline for the elderly, people going for health care. / Some people are embarrassed to ride our buses. In some rural areas, the bus is associated with mental health clients...about 40 percent are handicapped. We do 50-100 wheelchair transports a day. / There's an image and status issue with public transportation...we need to uplift it and make it a cool thing to do...young people see it as not cool.*

Two sub-elements of this problem were identified from participants' responses:

a) **First, there is a definite need to educate people about public transportation services.** People don't know what is offered. They don't know how to use public transportation, or how/where to get the information about it. This problem appears as part of the Coordinated Information Sources initiative.

- *I'm bothered by the fact that people do not know how to use transit.*

- *Very little is known publicly...we don't do a good job of publicizing what's out there and how to ride a bus.*

- *Every region has different numbers for help...it would be better if these were routed through a central organization...there are glimmers of hope working with different groups like SMART and DDOT...they have computerized dispatching for smaller community-based transit providers.*

- *Chicago has five plus public transportation systems...that's not the issue...the challenge is to make them work together. SMART basically operates along Woodward, and DDOT is local, but riders may not understand the difference.*

- *If public transportation is available, I'd love to use it...what is available is not marketed enough...people don't know what, where, when, or who to talk to.*

- *We need to let the public know what's available...they'll assume what they need is not available.*

- *People don't use the bus because they don't know the connections or the connections they need aren't there.*

- *People feel less secure or safe at different times riding a bus...some have cameras and direct communication to the bus company and the police. If people know there's monitoring for hold-ups and break downs, they would feel more secure.*

- *You have to teach people how to use public transportation...retirees and people living in rural areas...other states are facing the same issue about rural.*

- *The biggest obstacles are the decision makers...people who have never used it and don't understand it.*

b) **Second, there is a lack of interest in using public transportation, and people perceive that there are few incentives or benefits for doing so.** It is likely that transit's image would be improved through the initiatives to improve coordination of funds, regional service, and information sources, as well as the initiative to unify the voice of Michigan transit.

- *There's a chicken and egg problem -- we lack adequate resources for high level service so we can't interest people in transit, which would help turn it around.*

- *Some employers in Lansing are giving transit passes now as benefits for employees, but the irony is there aren't many takers. It goes back to the perceived value of public transportation and the stigma of it.*

- *Public transportation needs to be more of an integral role in the Holland community -- people rarely think of it. We can't identify the benefits to a local community of local transportation in dollars and cents. We need to educate people on why public transportation is a good investment for the community.*

- *There are no incentives for employees to use it if the company pays for parking.*

- *The factors that play a role in generating the need are parking availability, cost, and traffic congestion.*

- *We need to limit parking and raise the rates -- there are no incentives to ride the bus, like no parking spots or fees for parking.*

7) **Automobile Culture - A General Preference for Driving Personal Vehicles**: There was a reference to this in nearly every group. The preference for personal transportation over public transportation was often cited as an explanation or potential justification for some of the service utilization problems that exist. Given the poor perceptions of public transportation, combined with accessibility and routing issues, **there continues to be a general preference for relying on personal transportation.** Transit would become more competitive with the personal vehicle through the initiatives to improve service and the Transit and Land Use Coordination initiative.

- *People do not want to give up their vehicles./ Most people in southeastern Michigan have grown up with the independence of a vehicle. They prefer to have their own transportation./ People will not give up the convenience of their vehicles -- they want flexibility.*

- *Michigan has a long history of being the automobile capitol of the world -- the entire focus has been on cars and highways. Public transportation that's non-automotive based is lacking.*

- *We have the most expensive system in the world...the freeway. Our mass transit puts each individual in their car and moves them along.*

- *We're an auto town...mass transit has to come about -- HOV lanes, dedicated lanes. We can't build any more lanes. We need to consider commuter rail, light rail or some other form of mass transit.*

- *We're such a car-oriented society -- I challenge all MDOT staff to live with the frustration we live with every day regarding transportation.*

Three factors which contribute to the automobile culture in Michigan were identified:

a) Michigan has always been the automobile capitol of the world, and people identify with this;

b) There's an over-reliance on the Big Three auto companies who encourage people to buy vehicles; and

c) There has historically been a general emphasis at the state level on roads and highways, rather than public transportation.

Lastly, there were several related comments about a general lack of awareness of the benefits of public transportation as an alternative to driving. Publicizing the disincentives to driving may lead more people to choose public transportation.

- *The biggest hurdle we face is trying to attract people with cars to use other transportation systems...they cannot be convinced because there's an independence factor and an awareness problem of what's available./ here's an opportunity for public transit, but there needs to be awareness of the services and benefits...parking rates and traffic/road congestion. / Parking rates are making people more receptive to public transportation. / Road congestion is helping to build the numbers of people who use public transportation./ With CompuWare, GM and the casinos, people are seeing more congestion.*

C.   The Best Role for MDOT / UPTRAN

Prior to having the groups identify what transit stakeholders see as the top priorities going forward, **each group was asked to identify the best role for MDOT/UPTRAN**. Note that there was some disagreement within and across groups regarding these roles. However, a close examination and analyses of their responses did reveal a set of **five over-lapping, core roles for MDOT/UPTRAN:**

1) <u>**Create the Vision and Provide Leadership and Advocacy:**</u> MDOT/UPTRAN should take a strong, visible role as the leader on transit issues in this state. This includes creating and communicating a vision and strategic plan for superior transit systems throughout the state, and providing strong advocacy to acquire transit resources - at the

state and federal levels. This role is not just <u>advisory</u> - it includes undertaking active and proactive efforts to spearhead initiatives and resolve transit problems. This is tied to the initiative intended to improve the unified voice for transit through communication within the transit community.

- *MDOT needs to re-focus and put transit in a higher light than it is now.*

- *The state has to take the lead and set the tone.*

- *MDOT has to have a leading, active, operative role within the state... MDOT should be the leader to coordinate the partners and their efforts ... the state needs to balance the major opposition like the Big Three...*

- *The role should be to spearhead, solicit, and act.*

- *MDOT is our state leader ... they should be the coordinator, but there needs to be a line of control to the agencies ... local authorities can stop things from happening ... there needs to be authority at the state level to override local decisions.*

- *Provide advice to the Governor and agency heads about transit*

- *The role should be to implement change ... they need to be a real advocate.*

- *Be a real advocate for transit ... we need to feel UPTRAN is on our side when we're up for budget review.*

- *Work with the federal government and get as much money for our state as possible.*

- *MDOT needs to take a stronger stance on state funding initiatives -- lobby with the legislature to provide tax incentives.*

- *MDOT should have the last say because they can control incentives -- they can lobby the legislature for tax breaks, but they can't actually give tax breaks.*

- *MDOT needs to have stronger initiatives on transit issues -- they need to take this plan [strategic plan] and implement it... MDOT needs to be very proactive.*

2) **Foster Economic Development:** Economic development and public transit are reciprocally related. Transit systems can foster or hinder economic development. Conversely, economic development can increase the demand for more effective transit systems. As the leader on transit issues in the state, MDOT/UPTRAN should implement transit initiatives that will foster economic development, and solicit input on and support for transit issues from businesses, government agencies, and other non-profit agencies who can benefit from improved transit systems.

- *MDOT can do something about companies moving around ... GM is taking all the economic development funds from one area to another ... there's no gain for the state or the community.*

- *MDOT needs to get all types of businesses involved to foster the initiative for a strong, dependable transit system... the entire focus should be economic development.*

3) **Coordinate Transit Funds:**   As noted earlier, there was some disagreement regarding MDOT/UPTRAN's role. This was particularly true for this role. Most thought there should be more coordination of funds by MDOT/UPTRAN, including some degree of authority and control over how transit funds are used. For example, several thought MDOT/UPTRAN should implement a system of financial rewards/penalties based on transit agencies' performance. However, there was concern about loss of local control and input on transit decisions, and skepticism about the ability of MDOT/UPTRAN to be effective in the role of coordinating funds. One of the initiatives in Section One specifically addresses the Coordination of Funds at the State Level.

- *Ideally, UPTRAN is positioned correctly to coordinate funds ... some states have transit agencies do it, but the problem here is discrimination.*

- *MDOT should have all the money coming through them, but include us* [transit agencies] *in the decisions because we're dealing with the demands of different groups.*

- *Control and approval of annual budgets.*

- *Coordinate dollars and different things like public health, FIA, Work First, and the elderly.*

- *The state should coordinate and market programs and funding.*

- *Obtain local input from the regional planning groups or councils [SEMCOG] ... they've been the local units that have acted as a conduit for funding.*

- *MDOT/UPTRAN could be a planning entity to represent the larger interests of the state ... the money will still have to go through them, but local control over transit is important.*

- *I could see MDOT as a facilitator, but not necessarily the coordinator.*

- *The coordinator should be somebody independent of MDOT ... someone who has the power to penalize and change the plan when necessary.*

4) **Facilitate Collaboration:**   In this role MDOT/UPTRAN should facilitate cooperation and collaboration among transit agencies, and between those agencies and other transit constituents and stakeholders. Three initiatives include this kind of cooperation: coordination of funds at the state level, regional coordination of transit provision, and coordinated information sources.

- *MDOT should be the statewide facilitator of interlocal agreements ... if two counties are having problems with their agreement, MDOT should step in and help them out.*

- *Help people see the benefits of collaborating.*

- *Facilitate and listen to open up needs and get people to express them.*

- *Make sure public transit and highway development are working together in planning ... if the state always builds an extra lane, it will not encourage public transportation.*

- *Get control with FIA and Michigan Works at the state level and do some policies to enhance us at the local level ... it would be nice to have one program through MDOT.*

- *Help coordinate programs that impact transit (Work First, Project Zero).*

- *Ensure various state agencies are cooperating so we will not run into obstacles and can work hand-in-hand with them.*

- *Coordinate schedules for continuity ... when there are calls for routing, MDOT should make recommendations, disseminate information and resolve the transit problems.*

- *Create a clearinghouse number to tell people how to get where they want to go.*

5) **Serve as a Central Resource for Technical Research and Assistance:**
MDOT/UPTRAN should serve as a centralized source of technical information on transit needs, trends, projections and innovations; undertake ongoing research to really understand the needs of different communities; provide technical assistance with operational issues; and conduct technical analyses of transit problems and solutions.

- *Identify more flexible ways to get at issues faster.*

- *Do projections ... sometimes you have to look at the problem as specific to the community ... match the transit needs of the community.*

- *Identify what the needs are and the growing areas that will need attention.*

- *Look at where the needs are and plan transit around those ... look at the elderly/aging population and where their needs are ... we need to provide alternatives to people.*

- *Look at all road projects for transit issues and impact.*

- *Figure out ways to make grant subsidies and invoicing processes simpler/more timely.*

D. **Top Transit Needs and Priorities**

Toward the end of each focus group session, participants were asked to identify the top initiatives and priorities that need to be implemented to improve transit over the next 20 years. The priorities they listed were consistent with the major issues and constraints they identified earlier in the session. Basically, their suggestions focused on improving transit capabilities, services, access, and its overall image within Michigan. These led to an identification of <u>five</u> major priorities with specific initiatives for each one.

Note that many of the solutions that surfaced during this portion of the focus group discussion were not specifically action-oriented. The groups seemed to have some

difficulty coming up with specific tactics *"off the top of their heads"*. Rather, many of their suggestions were much broader -- more like goals, objectives or targets to achieve.

1) **<u>Improve Funding Strategies and Allocations</u>**: This was typically the first solution offered in each group. Funding was the focus of the initiatives to coordinate funds at the state level, budget operating assistance over a multiyear period, and expand funding options. The following lists the specific funding-related actions suggested by the groups, along with examples of their verbatim comments.

   a) **Increase funding levels**:

   - *Increase funding across the board. / Make public transit a top priority by increasing funding levels. / Increase funding for operations. / Put more money in the pot for transportation. / Provide federal and state funding support...if transit is a priority, look to the federal government for operating funds.*

   b) **Re-visit the formula to enhance the stability of funds**:

   - *Provide stable, dedicated funding to meet the growing needs for transportation... state, federal, and local funding. / Change the formula. / Allow us to provide 3-5 year plans with stable funding, and marshall the resources to help us do our jobs. / More stable funding. / Provide more adequate and stable operating funds..*

   c) **Plan for the allocation of transit funds to meet existing, as well as future needs**:

   - *Provide resources that go beyond just transportation operations to planning.*

   - *Look at policies because these go hand-in-hand with funding issues.*

   - *Funding truly needs to be worked on and planned.*

   - *Recognize public transit as economic development...the federal government has moved the transit issue out to economic development.*

   - *Procurement procedures for vendors need to be re-vamped...the low bid process is an oxymoron...it needs to change to achieve quality and value.*

   - *Make sure a maintenance plan is put into practice.*

   d) **Implement a financial reward system to encourage effective use of transit funds**:

   - *Incorporate a basic system of rewards [operating money] for regions that do what they should do. / Help fund systems that are reaching out and providing a great service. / Reward good behavior, and penalize bad behavior through funding. / Reward those who accommodate transit needs. / Use a carrot and stick approach [rewards and punishment]. / There's nothing in place for violations ... you have to have penalties to make people stay on course ... the penalty could be taking their funding away for awhile*

until they come up to the standards in the plan. / Encourage strategic planning at the local/regional level...give rewards and maybe even penalties./ MDOT needs to be an expert and heavy-handed... provide incentives and rewards for consolidation of services.

2) **Make Transit a Priority: Create a vision of it; communicate that vision to others; and provide the resources to support the vision.** This priority is reflected in the initiative to improve communication within the transit community.

- *The Governor needs to say transit is important to Michigan. / Make transit a priority ... identify what transit is and should be. / Make quality transportation a priority in all towns, for all people.*

- *Create a vision of what it's going to look like and set strategic directives, work toward those, and modify them along the way.*

- *Create an ideal of where transit will be in 20 years, such as 24-hour service, light rail, connectivity between the SMSAs, and incremental steps to get there.*

- *We don't have a statewide vision now...all of the entities have different visions and missions ... they clearly don't have the same vision or mission now...all of them need to be part of this process ...they're not all on the same page.*

- *Create a common vision among MDOT, the transit agencies, and the legislators with all of them pursuing what's best for public transit (we need to be servicing customers to the best of our abilities).*

- *The vision has to address congestion, demographics, economic growth and development, and urban sprawl.*

- *Policy makers and legislators need to sit around the table and develop a plan for transit at the state level.*

- *View transportation as a lot more holistic...approach it to include buses, vans, taxis, car ownership and driver programs.*

- *Identify the mission for public transportation...know what your goal is and have funding levels to support that...get your funding in order to match your goals and mission.*

3) **Provide Transit Leadership and Support:** MDOT leadership could play a role in any of the initiatives identified in Section One.

a) **Become more proactive in leading transit issues and advocating for capital funding and support:**

- *There needs to be someone to champion the cause.*

- *Create a consistent message and policies at all levels -- demonstrate proactive leadership.*

- *The role of UPTRAN as the leader in public transit is growing in importance and significance...bring transit to the table, rather than as an after-thought.*

- *Leadership has to come from the regions and corporate...there's a strong regional push to do transit plans for the entire region.*

- *Transit needs to be more proactive than reactive...have to be involved in the up-front part of it.*

- *We need broad support from the entire electorate.*

- *Advocate for funds to support transit, capital improvement, needs that aren't being met. / Advocacy...bring about new ideas and ways to move Detroit into the 21st century. / Advocacy rather than oversight...take more of an advocate role to assist people...look at how to organize the department to serve an advocacy role.*

b)   Facilitate coordination, cooperation and consolidation:

- *There needs to be better coordination between transit agencies, federal, state and local agencies like Work First and FIA initiatives.*

- *UPTRAN should begin being a real partner with us with real cooperation and coordination...a real, working partner.*

- *Look at ways of bringing all the entities together to address mobility issues, the needs of the disabled, and urban sprawl.*

- *Solicit involvement and support for transit among employers. One idea is to come up with five demonstration pilot projects ... offer tax incentives to businesses ... e.g., SMART going to employers like K-Mart and asking them to give money to support transit.*

- *Coordinate and develop a consensus among transit agencies and users as to their needs.*

- *Start talking and collaborating at the local level to get funds ... some places are working better than others, but they're all beginning to talk.*

- *Create an attitude of cooperation to provide services among transit providers.*

- *Create a transit authority for each district with coordination between them.*

- *Figure out how to break down barriers and coordinate with MDOT. / Create a closer cooperative effort with MDOT ... there's a lack of trust between transit agencies, UPTRAN and MDOT. / Create a partnership between MDOT, UPTRAN and the transit agencies ... we both can't go to the legislature and say different things.*

4)   <u>Enhance Transit Capabilities and Transportation Services:</u> This priority appears throughout Section One, but is particularly evident in the initiatives to coordinate funds at the state level, organize and coordinate regional transportation, and coordinate information.

a)   **Identify transit stakeholder needs and implement tactics to fill the gaps:**

- *Identify transit needs...who the people are, what their needs are, and where they need to go.*

- *There are a whole lot of programs - Work First, FIA that have transportation needs...we react to those.*

- *UPTRAN Human Services did an inventory 10 years ago and looked at what the agencies were doing and how much money was involved...it was an inter-agency effort.*

- *Identify the individual needs of the stakeholders and respond directly to those.*

- *Include local governments in planning and decisions...they know exactly what's needed and should not be ignored.*

- *Look hard at population shifts that will happen in the next 10 years.*

- *Identify transit districts or developmental areas planned for the next 10-15-20 years.*

- *Look at what the ridership would be for specific connections [e.g. Holland to Muskegon].*

b)   **Conduct an inventory of transportation resources and coordinate them:**

- *Take a look at what transportation resources are provided in the state now...do an inventory...a lot of state agencies and non-profits provide transportation, then coordinate them.*

- *Coordinate various modes of transportation based on needs...coordinate what we do know about...we know enough to get started.*

c)   **Identify *best practices* within the State and implement them in other areas:**

- *Develop a special services plan like the one in Clinton County.*

- *Look at programs that are working well like CATA and use them as models to implement throughout the state for more uniformity.*

- *Look at Midland County - they received an award recently...look at what they've done in their rural areas...para-transit and line-haul.*

- *Get best practices from within the state and widely publicize the processes and successes...go public so legislators and transit operators in other regions know what's going on.*

d)   **Provide funding for new equipment and the maintenance of existing equipment:**

- *Become more innovative ...buy and maintain equipment to keep the vehicles clean and running. / Buy more vehicles...increase the size and mix of buses to address the needs in*

our area [Grand Rapids]...we have to be able to match the vehicle to the individual's needs. /

- *We need resources to maintain the vehicles, e.g. local air conditioning service [UP]...we have to drive 60 miles for warranty service.*

- *Allow vendors to give a presentation to rid misconceptions about the features of specific technology...for example G.P.S. [global positioning satellite]...the higher you go in an organization, the less they know.*

e) **Provide funding for the expansion of routes and schedules to more effectively meet the variety of customer needs:**

- *Transporting people to work is increasing the load...the need has gone from a 12-hour schedule to 24 hours. / Don't terminate services on the weekends.*

- *Improve route pick-up times to become more dependable and predictable.*

- *Develop standard wait times./Add more fixed routes and schedules to reduce the amount of wait time.*

- *Increase the schedule for Woodward and other routes on major lines.*

- *Create better routes...a centralized route, then those that bridge out.*

- *Reduce the work load, problems and issues by hiring drivers, buses and vans...be more solutions-oriented.*

- *Move public transit away from where it is now to mainstream populations where most of the riders can be, but they will not want to ride on a system they can't rely on.*

f) **Create a seamless, intermodal, interconnected transportation system:**

- *Create wrap-around services...all transportation modes...for seniors, children, welfare, coordinate routes and funding.*

- *Do real-time scheduling with continuity...not bound by city to city restrictions...one vehicle that takes you straight from one location to the next.*

- *Get people to and from work and anywhere they want to go*

- *Make better use of regular buses with feeders.*

- *Build a good solid bus system that meets suburb to suburb needs.*

- *Look at the possibility of high-speed rail that connects Lansing to southeast Michigan [the only train we have now is ancient...we'd be real smart to build a new generation of high speed rail].*

- *Create a pretty seamless system. / Get the riders to the points they need...from A to B to C.*

- *Figure out a new concept for transit that reacts to the economic realities of where people live, work and need to go...this means going beyond hubs to a grid that recognizes population and traffic areas to accommodate the needs.*

- *Make a core or base level transportation available in all communities - not necessarily the same type of transportation.*

5) <u>**Enhance the Overall Image of Public Transportation in Michigan:**</u> The initiatives to improve coordination of funds, regional service, and information sources, as well as the initiative to unify the voice of Michigan transit, would all be likely to provide the public with a better image of public transportation in the state.

    a)   **Promote awareness of public transportation services and benefits**:

- *Educate people...they don't know what SMART offers because they're not marketing their services./ Educate the general public about public transportation. / SMART and DDOT need to advertise more...people aren't informed enough...advertise more about the numbers to call, routing, the 800 numbers. / Educate people about how to use transit.*

- *Look at transit opportunities for the entire state, not just regionally -- transit can add real value to tourism.*

- *Educate the public, decision makers and spec writers for vendor contracts.*

- *Make it more appealing to ride public transportation. / Find ways to make public transportation more attractive for a wider base of people.*

- *Ask people why they aren't riding the bus.*

- *Transportation vouchers would be ideal.*

    b)   **Design and implement a strategy to change the image of public transit:**

- *Change the image of public transportation / Launch a campaign that helps people understand the state cannot grow without a seamless transportation plan. / Market and change the mind set of residents in Michigan that transit can be safe, convenient, and accomplish more than just a bus ride./Market it as not a welfare issue. / Educate the public on the advantages of public transportation like the cost savings and it's better for the environment./ Advertise and promote public transportation. Do it through job training programs and literature./ Create a system that has no stigma, where people aren't afraid to use and they feel there are enough running that they can go where they need to go./ Bring about an image that transit has a proactive role with input into the planning process. We've been the tail of the dog or only a safety net. We need to change the image and role of public transit.*

Finally, there were some questions about how the results from this study will be used, and whether their input and suggestions will be implemented. A number of participants across groups were skeptical about anything being done, and some were openly opposed to the idea of *another* strategic plan. There were several references to a similar previous study for a strategic plan that was reportedly done five years ago. **They don't believe anything was done with the results because they haven't seen any major changes implemented to address the issues they identified in the earlier study.**

- *I'm turned off by the whole concept of a strategic plan and the planning for partnership concept...I'm ready for some action.*

- *I don't like the idea of putting another study together and a report that just sits. I'm getting turned off by the planning language...strategic plan for the year 2020 and planning for partnership.*

- *MDOT does these strategic plan studies every 20 years.*

- *This is UPTRAN's strategic plan, not ours. We went through a series of strategic planning sessions five years ago. I'm not so sure the plan is being totally used...it turned into a document.*

- *The issues today are the same issues we had five years ago, and they're still important today...I'm leery of a new strategic plan...are you sure the solutions haven't changed from five years ago?*

There were several separate suggestions to share the results from this study, as well as the final version of the strategic plan the U of M Research Team develops.

- *I hope this is not the only opportunity to give input into this 5-20 year plan. I would love to be informed...in the loop. / It would help if MDOT shares the strategic plan with the public...get input and feedback from the constituents and residents. / You should communicate the outcomes of the study and the strategic plan.*

E.   Planning for Partnership Concept

The last topic covered in the focus groups was *Planning for Partnership*: *Transit agencies, MDOT, transit operators, local authorities, etc. partnering for a strengthened voice.* The objective was to gauge their reactions to the idea, and obtain a list of whom they think should be considered a partner.

Most of the stakeholders in this study reacted favorably to the concept because it's set up to address some of the core transit issues they raised: Transit leadership, funding advocacy, collaboration, cooperation, and the development of strategies and tactics to more effectively address public transit needs. Partnerships are explicitly or implicitly part of several of the initiatives in Section One, particularly those that incorporate coordination of funds and of transportation within a region.

- *The partnership should lobby for funding, resources and capital.*

- *This is what public transit agencies are...what the regional councils were set up to do 30 years ago.*

- *The purpose should be coordination in serving different populations or consolidation of services.*

- *The partners need to be the decision makers. They need to agree on what transit should look like. They can impact public policy...stop and think, and seriously debate issues.*

- *They'd be more successful as a group if they came to the table to discuss the issues of land use, congestion, etc.*

- *The biggest issues are capital funding and employee resources.*

- *It needs to be regional.*

- *The initiatives have to come from the partners. You need to bring them together and identify the needs of each one.*

- *There are a lot of politics that will come into play.*

- *You will have to market and package it so it's non-threatening, a win-win situation that covers the benefits for individuals and businesses...what it would mean to them, how they can gain from it, and the image it projects.*

- *It's achievable to expect a win-win from this, but it will be difficult. The partners will have to acknowledge each other's interests and try not to cut each other's interests.*

- *Get buy-in from the partners by creating it as a we-thing...all of us...<u>our</u> problem.*

- *There may be different players in each community. Start with a base and add others depending on the community.*

- ***The major corporations in Michigan should be partners in the planning process. They have the necessary <u>political</u> <u>clout</u>.***

There were a few outspoken skeptics here and there -- stakeholders who did not immediately see the value of a formal, structured partnership.

- *It's another buzzword.*

- *It will be a challenge to get the partners to agree on a vision, mission and goals.*

- *A partnership is not the direction I think they should go in. I don't think a plan from MDOT to the Big Three telling them what to do will happen.*

- *MDOT needs an independent overseer that's apolitical...an advisory panel.*

-   This is now a big basis -- it gets away from rural issues -- local and rural need to work together to build a partnership.

In addition to the tentative list of partners shared with them, their suggestions were to consider the following:

1)   **MPOs**: The Metropolitan Planning Organizations were generally viewed as being successful and as having valuable experience in planning and overseeing transportation issues. They add a strategic advantage because they can bring in different transit initiatives and they represent all local communities in their areas. Additionally, the MPO's were described as being effective, they share information, and they get things done.

2)   **Employers:** There was a consensus that involvement by employers is necessary for the success of the partnership. The stakeholders explained that employers have vested interests in employee transportation issues, and they are willing to get involved. They feel the partnership should include high-level business representatives (e.g. CEOs) from the Big Three and other large corporations.

3)   **Chambers of Commerce:** Local chambers represent employers and they understand employers' needs. They can help represent the interests of small and medium-sized employers.

4)   **Customers**: The stakeholders felt that there must also be meaningful, significant involvement by citizens to ensure that their needs are understood, and that they buy-in to the concept.

5)   **Community / Human Services Organizations:** Several types of organizations were recommended, including schools at all levels, the medical institutions, and religious organizations. Also, other organizations for whom transportation is an important issue should be involved, such as the Work First Program and the Center for Independent Living.

6)   **Other State Departments**: Transportation is highly related to the goals and services provided by some other departments, such as Social Services, Public Health, Community Health, and Travel and Tourism. And, of course, projects administered by Roads have a major impact on transit issues.

Section Four

MICHIGAN TRANSIT PRIORITIES SURVEY REPORT

I. INTRODUCTION

As part of the statewide process to develop a strategic plan for transit in the state of Michigan for 2000-2020, a survey of transit agencies, specialized service providers, stakeholders, advisory team members, and MDOT staff was conducted between February and April 2000.

These respondent groups are defined in the following manner:

Transit Agency: Public organizations providing transportation services to the general public

Special Services: Public or nonprofit organizations providing transportation services to specialized groups (e.g., elderly or people with disabilities)

Stakeholders: People from a range of backgrounds, including public and private transportation, social services, education, religious, municipal and business with interest in public transportation

Advisory Team: Members of Strategic Plan Advisory Teams

MDOT Staff: Selected employees of the Department of Transportation Passenger Transportation Division and Bureau of Transportation Planning

Priority issues included in the survey emerged from eleven focus groups conducted around the state during the summer of 1999. The survey questionnaire also reflected the input from MDOT/UPTRAN/PTD staff, and the Strategic Plan Oversight Team which includes the Strategic Plan Advisory Council. This report presents findings from the survey, particularly respondents' attitudes toward the initiatives and priorities for public transit in Michigan over the period in question.

II. METHODOLOGY

The mail out survey used three different versions of the questionnaire with five different target populations. Transit agencies and specialized service providers received the same 16 page-long survey questionnaire (long form), the advisory teams and MDOT staff groups received a 14 page-long survey (medium form), and the stakeholders received a 12 page-long version (short form). All questions in the medium and short form appeared in the long form, which had 11 different sections of questions, including marketing, communications, legislative/funding initiatives, regional and intermodal cooperation, new services, public/private cooperation, service development and new technology, training, program overview, PTD staff services, and mission/vision. The questionnaires had both closed-ended and open-ended questions; the long form is included in Appendix B.

The questionnaires were first sent out to all respondents at the beginning of February 2000. A follow-up questionnaire was sent out to the non-respondents three weeks later. Finally a reminder post card was mailed to the non-respondents two weeks after that.

Two hundred eighty valid responses were received for an overall response rate of 56 percent. The response rate ranged from a low of 32 percent for Advisory Team members to a

high of 100 percent for Large Urban Transit Agencies, as in Table 2. A list of transit agencies that responded is also included in the Appendix.

Table 2. Strategic Plan Survey Response Rate

	Transit Agencies							
	Lg	**M/S**	**Non**	**SS**	**SH**	**AT**	**MS**	**Total**
Surveys sent out	6	10	55	133	118	126	55	503
Received	6	8	36	78	66	40	46	280
Not received	0	2	19	55	52	86	9	223
Response rate	100%	80%	66%	59%	56%	32%	84%	56%

Lg: Large Urban, **M/S**: Mid/Small Urban, **Non**: Nonurban, **SS**: Specialized Svc., **SH**: Stakeholders, **AT**: Advisory Team, **MS**: MDOT Staff

The data files of all closed-ended questions were created using the RAOSOFT Survey Program. Answers to the open-ended questions were post coded into several broader categories and are reported here.

III.   SURVEY RESULTS

As described above, the survey studied five separate populations, and this report details results from each of the populations separately, rather than combining the five groups together. Surveyed transit agencies were further divided for reporting purposes into the following three substantive groups:

Large urban: DDOT, SMART, AATA, CATA, Flint MTA, and GRATA

Medium/Small urban: Battle Creek, Bay County, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Muskegon, Port Huron, Saginaw, Holland (no response), Niles and TCATA (Benton Harbor—no response)

Nonurban: Those not listed above.

Survey responses are summarized in the following discussion. A full set of responses to all closed-ended and open-ended questions is included in Appendix C.

A.   Legislative/Funding Initiatives

In general, the focus groups and survey respondents considered legislative and funding initiatives the top priority for public transit. The survey instrument asked recipients to rate the importance of several legislative and funding initiatives that may be pursued in Michigan over the next five years. The initiatives included in the survey were developed through the focus group process.

A recurring theme arising during the focus groups was year-to-year predictability of transit funding. Operators indicated that uncertainties regarding state funding precluded rational planning, instead forcing them into ad-hoc spending cycles. Even without funding increases, which all agreed were sorely needed, it was felt that reasonable assurance of funding that would

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be available over a three year cycle would be a key element of effective transit planning at the local level.

A second direction pertained to coordination of transit funding. Funds for transportation services are found in a number of social and employment service agencies throughout state and local government. These agencies generally do not view transportation provision as their core mission, but provide various forms of paratransit services as ancillary to their operations. These services are not frequently coordinated with transit and other transportation agencies, and too rarely is the transit provider given the opportunity to provide the services. Focus group participants suggested that mandated coordination of transportation funds at the state level was the necessary element to ensure the kinds of efficiency-generating cooperation that was sought at the local level.

A third legislative initiative pertained to local revenue generation. With the decline in federal operating assistance, local transit is increasingly called upon to rely on locally generated sources for operating funds. These can include property taxes, farebox revenues, advertising, or contracted services, but state law bars local transit agencies from seeking other sources of support, notably sales tax. As local agencies are to bear the burden of raising operating funds, many focus group participants felt that they should be permitted to seek whatever sources of funds were appropriate to their area, subject to approval of local voters or decision making bodies.

Finally, in a number of other states, transit is organized on a regional basis, with the transit provider being an independent unit of government that spans jurisdictional boundaries. Michigan lacks enabling legislation for such agencies, and as a result, transit organizations are subsets of municipal or county government. This limits the potential for transit provision of regional mobility, and as a consequence a number of focus group participants felt that working toward such enabling legislation should be a high priority for transit in Michigan.

Importance of Potential Legislative/Funding Initiatives

Table 3 shows that more individuals in all but one of the survey respondent groups chose "Enabling legislation that would budget operating assistance over a three-year period" as the single most important legislative/funding initiative over the other options. The most selected option of those in the Specialized Service respondent group was "Enabling legislation to expand the range of potential local funding sources." Survey responses echoed the input from the focus groups and led to development of three initiatives in Section One: coordination of funds at the state level, budget operating assistance over a multiyear period, and funding options.

Table 3. Importance rating of potential legislative/funding initiatives

Initiative		Transit Agencies						
		Lg	**M/S**	**Non**	**SS**	**SH**	**AT**	**MS**
Enabling legislation to budget operating assistance over a three-year period	"Important", "V. imp."	100%	63%	81%	68%	71%	67%	55%
	Single most important	**33%**	**50%**	**42%**	22%	**28%**	**28%**	13%
Legislation requiring coordination of transportation funds of multiple departments at the state level	"Important", "V. imp."	83%	88%	72%	58%	70%	72%	75%
	Single most important	0%	13%	14%	6%	11%	15%	32%
Enabling legislation to expand the range of potential local funding sources	"Important", "V. imp."	83%	75%	69%	86%	88%	80%	70%
	Single most important	17%	25%	6%	**28%**	21%	13%	11%
Enabling legislation for regional transit providers	"Important", "V. imp."	33%	0%	42%	74%	76%	67%	64%
	Single most important	0%	0%	8%	21%	15%	23%	23%
Legislation requiring coordination of transportation funds of multiple state departments at the local level	"Important", "V. imp."	50%	75%	67%	67%	71%	56%	58%
	Single most important	0%	13%	8%	9%	14%	3%	4%
Other (detail in Appendix)	Single most important	33%	0%	11%	1%	6%	13%	0%
None	Single most important	0%	0%	3%	1%	3%	0%	2%

Lg: Large Urban, **M/S**: Mid/Small Urban, **Non**: Nonurban, **SS**: Specialized Svc., **SH**: Stakeholders, **AT**: Advisory Team, **MS**: MDOT Staff

B.   Communications

Survey respondents reinforced the input provided in the focus groups, and the Section One initiative to improve Communication within the Transit Community resulted.

1)   Unified voice for transit advocacy in Michigan

In all of the focus groups, the lack of a unified voice advocating for transit emerged as another key barrier to effective transit in Michigan. Focus group participants attributed the problems experienced with funding described above largely due to this lack of unified commitment to and advocacy for transit, and felt that MDOT/UPTRAN should be providing a greater level of leadership and advocacy on their behalf.

a)   Assessment of Current Situation

Survey recipients were asked to specify their agreement or disagreement with the following bulleted statements by checking the appropriate box: strongly agree, agree, medium, disagree, or strongly disagree. For each statement, the percentage of individuals in each respondent group who indicated "strongly agree" or "agree" is reported.

- "Transit has a unified voice for advocacy in Michigan."

- "It is important that transit have a unified voice for advocacy in Michigan."

There is a striking contrast between the portion of respondents who think that transit has a unified voice and the percentage who believe that it is important for transit to have a unified voice for advocacy.

There is a unified voice for advocacy		A unified voice for advocacy is important	
Transit Agencies		Transit Agencies	
Large Urban:	33%	Large Urban:	100%
Mid/Small Urban:	38%	Mid/Small Urban:	63%
Nonurban:	17%	Nonurban:	86%
Specialized Service:	15%	Specialized Service:	80%
Stakeholders:	6%	Stakeholders:	76%
Advisory Team:	13%	Advisory Team:	85%

b)   Suggested Actions

Individuals who indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed with the preceding statement were asked to "describe actions that should be taken to develop a unified voice in the transit industry in Michigan." Comments were coded into nine categories, with frequencies listed in Table 4. Sample responses follow. From the thrust of the comments, it appears that coordination between UPTRAN, the Michigan Public Transit Association (MPTA) and MASSTRANS is seen as essential, together with enhanced communications between all parties and greater leadership on the part of the state.

Table 4. Responses to the question, "If you indicated 'agree' or 'strongly agree,' describe actions that should be taken to develop a unified voice in the transit industry in Michigan."

Suggested Action	Transit Agencies			SS	SH	AT	MS	Total
	Lg	M/S	Non					
Coordination between MDOT, MPTA, MASSTRAN, & transit agencies	2	1	12	3	6	4	13	41
Improved communications	0	0	5	8	9	5	1	28
Leading role of the State, MDOT/UPTRAN	1	2	9	0	1	4	3	20
Identify shared goals/develop a common vision	2	0	1	2	2	1	2	10
Market public transit	1	1	0	0	5	0	2	9
Organizational changes	0	0	0	2	0	1	2	5
More funding & equal funding opportunities	1	0	0	0	1	3	0	5
It's difficult to form a unified voice	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	3
Other (detail in Appendix)	1	0	1	14	13	5	9	43
Totals	8	4	28	29	37	25	33	164

Lg: Large Urban, **M/S**: Mid/Small Urban, **Non**: Nonurban, **SS**: Specialized Svc., **SH**: Stakeholders, **AT**: Advisory Team, **MS**: MDOT Staff

The categories of responses in the table above were the product of grouping and classifying the written comments. In order to give a flavor of the nature of the comments, sample responses follow. As with the verbatim comments in the Focus Group Report (Section Three), the following are not intended to provide a complete transcript of all participants' responses.

- Coordination Between MDOT, MPTA, MASSTRAN, and Transit Agencies

- *Agree on each other's roles.*

- *[Transit systems, transit orgs., and MDOT] roles should be more clearly defined, be made less political, and they should work together 'better'.*

- *Advisory members could meet from every area around the state.*

- *Coordination/leadership among consumer groups would strengthen unity. Cooperation and receptivity is needed, from transit providers, project managers, and MDOT.*

- *MDOT needs to keep realizing that each area of the state has different needs, and maybe all areas can work together for the common goal: public transit.*

- *A more coordinated approach to delivering transportation to all customers (public transit, school bus, FIA, etc.).*

- *We should have one entity that represents all TAs in Michigan – and that entity should have and get cooperation with MDOT.*

- *Quit fighting over money.*

- *Regional planning and focus groups that have better insight to the regional needs rather than locals who are more intent on their own system operations.*

- *Get away from big systems vs. little systems.*

- *Encourage systems that neighbor each other to coordinate services/connect routes.*

- *Work between providers, customers, interest groups, and private industry on transfer priorities issues and potential solutions. This work needs to be conducted at the state and local levels. There needs to be agreement on the common needs and partnerships. Incentives to encourage this collaboration would facilitate the process.*

- <u>Improved Communications</u>

- *Creation or expansion of providers and transit users in local advocacy groups that meet regularly.*

- *Try using honesty in communications, even when the message is unpopular.*

- *Establish a network between statewide agencies to address issues.*

- *It would be nice to meet with other managers with similar transit agencies, size, population, etc.*

- *Monthly meetings with members of each division along with providers.*

- *Consensus building throughout the state on key transit issues, so that there is a majority on one accord.*

- *Regular input from consumer advisory groups is needed for both fixed route and specialized services.*

- *Broader communication in a quarterly forum.*

- *More communication/interaction between MDOT and transit planning agencies. Very limited at present.*

- <u>Leading Role of the State, MDOT/UPTRAN</u>

- *A method for distributing funds that is fair and equitable. An UPTRAN that has a pro-transit management.*

- *A top level advocacy team for rurals would help MDOT's credibility.*

- *State officials/representatives should make sure that the laws and processes are being adhered to by local road commissions, transit, MDOT, UPTRAN, etc.*

- *The state has to stop pitting transit agencies against each other.*

- *There needs to be more effort for unity at the top levels of UPTRAN. Actions need to match words.*

- *UPTRAN needs strong leadership which acts as advocates for transit. Too often the department acts as a politically driven rather than issue driven organization.*

- *MDOT must recognize transit as an essential component of transportation.*

- *Since UPTRAN currently has no staff experienced in public transit, they need to shape policy around input from transit leaders in the state. This could be done at two input gathering sessions annually.*

- *MDOT management needs to communicate goals more effectively.*

- *MDOT should only recognize one organization as a united voice.*

- *MDOT needs to oversee local transit agencies and have authority to insist on coverage.*

- Identifying Shared Goals/ Develop a Common Vision

- *Identify shared goals between agencies, and between agencies and the state.*

- *The transportation of people is our mission. Whether we are a fixed route system or a dial-a-ride system should not matter as to the matter of advocacy. The value of public transportation to the people who use it and the impact on the economy is what should be stressed.*

- *Continuing opportunities for informational sessions for the purpose of agreeing on terminology and definitions, review of current situation, developing joint goals, developing doable action plan, and reconvene to review progress and make adjustments.*

- *Long range goals for transit, intercity bus, rail and regional with a common, singular purpose – increase ridership and improve connections among modes – carriers.*

- *A unified voice for advocacy does not mean that there can't be a variety of transit programs throughout the state. It means there should be a statewide plan that incorporates the needs of the different constituencies. One way to accomplish this is to get a coalition of the stakeholders to develop a plan.*

- Marketing of Public Transit

- *Display successful efforts to accomplish these goals.*

- *Use marketing that shows positive reasons for using public transit in Michigan.*

- *Encouraging employees to take advantage of the commuter tax credit program.*

- *Major PR campaign with participation at all levels.*

- *More/better marketing of inter-links.*

- Organizational Changes

- *Attend and testify at Transportation Committee hearings to ensure committee 'hears' from both rural and urban agencies and communities – not just professional transportation 'experts'.*

- *Coordinate in-person advocacy meetings with state legislators.*

- *Merger between DDOT & SMART.*

- *Combine 2 transit associations into one.*

- More Funding and Equal Funding Opportunities

- *Committees should be formal and encouraged to pursue changes, obtain and distribute funds to enhance transit.*

- *More dollars.*

- *One agency like MPTA planning with UPTRAN funding and spending for budget and operating assistance and capital before it comes. After the fact, it becomes adversarial.*

- *Equal weight should be given to the various advocacy groups (organizations) within the state. Outreach to the less visible/verbal groups in Michigan.*

- **It's Difficult To Form A Unified Voice**

- *Agree on few points (full funding, greater unity) and not squabble over matters between agencies.*

- *Don't know that a unified voice can be developed in transit industry due to regional, political, and even geographical conditions/differences.*

- **Other**

- *Bring 'for profit' providers, not just transportation authorities into the transit promotional system.*

- *Utilizing joint efforts with the DD Council, state ARC, with association for persons in supported environments.*

- *A data gathering process (centralized) should be established.*

- *A fan out system should be established to get crucial information to legislators at a time when it is needed.*

- *An advisory group (small) or one person should coordinate efforts to eliminate duplications.*

- *Transit agencies and providers must recognize and support transit friendly land use.*

- *Also show free perks for consistently using it … how user friendly it is & how cost effective it is.*

- *Bring together all the interests for a week long retreat, hire a facilitator, and make them reach a consensus!*

- *The industry itself should recognize the need and fund that unified voice. If they need help finding it, they should request that help.*

- *This should include the road building interests as well.*

- *Transit agencies should recognize the efforts that are made by MDOT staff on their behalf. They don't seem to accept that there are qualified individuals that try to be responsive to their needs in a fair way.*

- *I would agree strongly if the voice were positive. Currently it appears the message coming from the state level is negative.*

- *Include users and user groups.*

- *Sell convenience. … links to strong central cities and revitalization.*

- *We need to be working closely together to push an agenda of urban redevelopment and prevention of sprawl.*

- *We should be promoting the positive steps local transit are taking to improve services even as we are working behind the scenes to make improvements.*

2)   Communication between MDOT/UPTRAN/PTD and respondent's organization

a)   Assessment of Current Situation

Responses to the questions pertaining to transit advocacy indicated the central importance of enhanced communications between UPTRAN and other parties, notably transit agencies. Survey recipients were asked to specify their agreement or disagreement with the following bulleted statements by checking the appropriate box: strongly agree, agree, medium, disagree, or strongly disagree. For each statement, the percentage of individuals in each respondent group who indicated "strongly agree" or "agree" is reported.

- "There is a lot of communication between MDOT/UPTRAN/PTD and our organization."

- "It is important that there be a lot of communication between MDOT/UPTRAN/PTD and our organization."

Again, responses revealed a striking difference between the expressed need for communication and the perception of existing communication for each of the respondent groups.

There is a lot of communication		It is important that there be a lot of communication	
Transit Agencies		Transit Agencies	
Large Urban:	17%	Large Urban:	50%
Mid/Small Urban:	50%	Mid/Small Urban:	50%
Nonurban:	39%	Nonurban:	86%
Specialized Service:	28%	Specialized Service:	74%
Stakeholders:	23%	Stakeholders:	68%
Advisory Team:	15%	**ADVISORY TEAM:**	**80%**

b)   Suggested Direction for Improvements

Survey respondents indicated to which means of communication between MDOT/UPTRAN/PTD and transit providers that improvement efforts should be most directed: in person: project managers, advisory team, printed materials, web, e-mail, or other. Participants were invited to select more than one choice.

Communications via project managers, printed materials, and advisory teams were consistently the top three priorities for improvement. Specialized Service providers and Stakeholders selected "Printed materials" more often than the other options, while transit agencies tended to advocate improvements in project manager communications. Table 5 provides the expressed preferences of each respondent group.

Table 5. Responses to the question, "To which means of communications between MDOT/UPTRAN/PTD and transit providers should improvement efforts be most directed?"

	Transit Agencies						
Means of Communication	*Lg*	*M/S*	*Non*	*SS*	*SH*	*AT*	*MS*
In person: project managers	*25%*	*33%*	*27%*	*29%*	*22%*	*24%*	*36%*
Printed materials	*25%*	*17%*	*20%*	*31%*	*27%*	*19%*	*8%*
Advisory team	*0%*	*8%*	*15%*	*14%*	*15%*	*25%*	*13%*
Web	*17%*	*8%*	*7%*	*7%*	*16%*	*10%*	*15%*
E-mail	*17%*	*17%*	*19%*	*13%*	*17%*	*16%*	*23%*
Other (detail in Appendix)	*17%*	*17%*	*12%*	*6%*	*3%*	*6%*	*5%*

Lg: Large Urban, **M/S**: Mid/Small Urban, **Non**: Nonurban, **SS**: Specialized Svc., **SH**: Stakeholders, **AT**: Advisory Team, **MS**: MDOT Staff

c)   Preferred Forms of Communication

Survey recipients were also asked whether there are other forms of communication that are preferable in dealing with MDOT/UPTRAN/PTD. In response, respondents provided a range of answers that were post-coded into seven categories, listed in Table 6. Sample responses follow.

Table 6. Responses to the question, "Are there other forms of communication you prefer in dealing with MDOT/UPTRAN/PTD? If yes, please list."

	Transit Agencies							
Form of Communication	**Lg**	**M/S**	**Non**	**SS**	**SH**	**AT**	**MS**	**Total**
Phone/fax	0	0	1	3	4	0	1	9
Newsletter/web materials	1	0	1	1	2	1	0	6
Deputy director/project manager	0	0	2	1	0	0	2	5
Meetings/face-to-face	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	4
Reverse communications	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	3
All	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Other (detail in Appendix)	0	0	2	1	3	4	5	15
Totals	1	1	8	6	11	7	9	43

Lg: Large Urban, **M/S**: Mid/Small Urban, **Non**: Nonurban, **SS**: Specialized Svc., **SH**: Stakeholders, **AT**: Advisory Team, **MS**: MDOT Staff

Sample responses:

- Phone/Fax

- *Phone, …fax.*

- *Central person to call if trying to located someone who isn't answering their line.*

- *Phone 'trip' line would be great.*

- *Fax on important issues of each organization.*

- **Newsletter/Web Materials**
  - *E-mail, … web, … newsletter.*
  - *I like receiving press releases by e-mail. Previously much of this information had to be obtained by reading the newspaper or hearing it on the radio.*

- **Deputy Director/Project Manager**
  - *Deputy director – timely funding decisions.*
  - *Project managers.*
  - *Have administrators make informal visits to transit agency.*
  - *Communication with upper management.*
  - *Both the Division Administrator and the Deputy Director should get out of their offices and meet one on one with transit operators to communicate with them.*

- **Meetings/Face-to-Face**
  - *Face to face.*
  - *Annual, … on line conferences.*
  - *Regional quarterly meetings to discuss program success, failure, or needs modifications.*

- **Reverse Communications**
  - *Don't call us, we'll call you.*
  - *The communication process is a one way program. Until that changes to an interactive process, this is a meaningless questions.*
  - *UPTRAN representation at local task force meeting.*

- **All**
  - *Actually, utilizing multiple strategies would be best.*

- **Other**
  - *They need to tell us the same thing twice.*
  - *Communication through the prime time news media, churches, or flyers.*
  - *Consumer advisory groups, and consumer satisfaction surveys.*
  - *People only have so much time in a day to read/digest printed materials, web, email.*
  - *Regional TAs and MDOT.*
  - *The more the TAs and MDOT staff 'mingle' the better.*
  - *I believe some more intense consultative process outside the public view is needed if at all possible, to repair relations. No process that does not include the governor's office is likely to work.*

- **Newsletter/Web Materials**

  - *E-mail, … web, … newsletter.*

  - *I like receiving press releases by e-mail. Previously much of this information had to be obtained by reading the newspaper or hearing it on the radio.*

- **Deputy Director/Project Manager**

  - *Deputy director – timely funding decisions.*

  - *Project managers.*

  - *Have administrators make informal visits to transit agency.*

  - *Communication with upper management.*

  - *Both the Division Administrator and the Deputy Director should get out of their offices and meet one on one with transit operators to communicate with them.*

- **Meetings/Face-to-Face**

  - *Face to face.*

  - *Annual, … on line conferences.*

  - *Regional quarterly meetings to discuss program success, failure, or needs modifications.*

- **Reverse Communications**

  - *Don't call us, we'll call you.*

  - *The communication process is a one way program. Until that changes to an interactive process, this is a meaningless questions.*

  - *UPTRAN representation at local task force meeting.*

- **All**

  - *Actually, utilizing multiple strategies would be best.*

- **Other**

  - *They need to tell us the same thing twice.*

  - *Communication through the prime time news media, churches, or flyers.*

  - *Consumer advisory groups, and consumer satisfaction surveys.*

  - *People only have so much time in a day to read/digest printed materials, web, email.*

  - *Regional TAs and MDOT.*

  - *The more the TAs and MDOT staff 'mingle' the better.*

  - *I believe some more intense consultative process outside the public view is needed if at all possible, to repair relations. No process that does not include the governor's office is likely to work.*

3) Communication Using the MDOT/UPTRAN/PTD Web sites

a) Access to Web sites

The majority of individuals responding to the survey in each respondent group can access the MDOT/UPTRAN/PTD Web sites. The majority of respondents also have accessed the MDOT/UPTRAN/PTD Web site, although fewer have done so than have the ability to do so (Table 7).

Table 7. Use of MDOT/UPTRAN/PTD Web site (percent agreeing)

	Transit Agencies					
Statement	Lg	M/S	Non	SS	SH	AT
My organization has the ability to access the MDOT/UPTRAN/PTD Web site	100%	100%	94%	67%	77%	87%
My organization has accessed the MDOT/UPTRAN/PTD Web site	100%	88%	72%	22%	32%	64%
The Web sites give us access to information that we need	17%	0%	39%	21%	17%	28%

Lg: Large Urban, **M/S**: Mid/Small Urban, **Non**: Non-urban, **SS**: Specialized Svc., **SH**: Stakeholders, **AT**: Advisory Team, **MS**: MDOT Staff

b) Needs Met by Web site

Survey recipients were asked to specify their agreement or disagreement with the following bulleted statement by checking the appropriate box: strongly agree, agree, medium, disagree, or strongly disagree. For each statement, the percentage of individuals in each respondent group who indicated "strongly agree" or "agree" is reported in Table 6. It appears that the MDOT/UPTRAN/PTD Web sites serve the needs of some respondent groups better than others, but that for the most part a minority of Web site users encountered the information that they need on the Web site.

c) Suggested Additions to Web site

Anticipating that Web site users would be seeking additional information, the survey included space for respondents to suggest information that should be added to the MDOT/UPTRAN/PTD Web site. Post-analysis placed the responses into nine categories, listed in Table 8 with the number of responses each represents. Sample responses follow.

Table 8. Responses to the question "What information, if any, should be added to the MDOT/UPTRAN/PTD Web site?"

Information	Transit Agencies			SS	SH	AT	MS	Total
	Lg	M/S	Non					
Updated information on decision-making status	1	0	5	1	2	1	1	11
Make it easier to use & serve the needs of the service providers & the public	0	0	1	0	7	0	3	11
Information regarding funding	0	1	0	1	0	2	4	8
Information on transit services' intermodal connectivity	0	0	1	1	2	1	2	7
Application forms & guidelines	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	4
Information on vehicle services	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	4
Bulletin board & chat rooms	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3
Unknown	0	0	2	2	4	0	0	8
Other (detail in Appendix)	2	0	2	0	1	4	5	14
Totals	3	1	12	5	16	12	21	70

Lg: Large Urban, **M/S**: Mid/Small Urban, **Non**: Non-urban, **SS**: Specialized Svc., **SH**: Stakeholders, **AT**: Advisory Team, **MS**: MDOT Staff

Sample responses:

- Updated Information On Decision-Making Status

    - *Up-to-date information on … capital program, … grants, … decision-making, … changes of statute or policy, … procurements.*

    - *The Web site must be responsive to informational needs and concerns as they become relevant.*

- Make It Easier to Use and Serve the Needs of the Service Providers and the Public

    - *How to access.*

    - *Make it easier to navigate to local/regional transit providers.*

    - *Direct link to PTMS.*

    - *Amtrak info.*

    - *Some links to transit policy advocates.*

    - *The Web site serves the needs of MDOT rather than the service providers or the public.*

    - *More photographs of what public transit is all about. Maybe feature a different system each month.*

- Information Regarding Funding

    - *Funding information.*

    - *Appropriation budget.*

    - *Capital approved.*

- *Capital unfunded.*

- Information on Transit Services' Intermodal Connectivity

- *Valid system statistics.*

- *Information on local transportation services.*

- *Intermodal connectivity and contacts.*

- *Intercity-rail-regional route map for Michigan.*

- Application Forms and Guidelines

- *More forms that can be filled out and e-mailed.*

- Information on Vehicle Services

- *Web sites that address problems relating to warranty on vehicles, ADA problems, service problems, parts locating.*

- *Available vehicles in good condition for sale to another transit and other equipment available for emergency and down time because of equipment failure.*

- *What types of uses of buses are permitted under 'inter-local' agreements specifically.*

- Bulletin Board and Chat Rooms

- *Bulletin boards/chat rooms for discussion.*

- *Press releases.*

- *Transit agencies able to put significant events directly on the PTD Web site.*

- Unknown

- *Can't think of any.*

- *Not having visited, I can not make a value decision.*

- Other

- *All we need from MDOT are the funds to operate our systems.*

- *More information of what is in store for agencies in the future.*

- *Personal contacts, in my opinion, are more effective.*

- *Some data can't be accessed unless you have a special 'plug-in'. I don't like it.*

- *Info on transit friendly land use planning.*

- *A specific definition of what constitutes 'public transit.'*

- *Appropriate use of buses by grantees.*

- *Written letters sent to TAS in the last year.*

4)   Benefits of and Communications with Advisory Team

   a)   Representation on Advisory Team

   A survey question asking whether the survey recipient's organization has representation on an UPTRAN/PTD Advisory Team revealed that 15% of organizations overall have representation. Representation of organizations within each respondent group varies considerably.

   <u>Yes, my organization has representation on an UPTRAN/PTD Advisory Team</u>.

   Transit Agencies
   Large Urban: 50%
   Mid/Small Urban: 0%
   Nonurban: 36%
   Specialized Service: 21%
   Stakeholders: 17%

   b)   Benefits of Membership on Advisory Team

   If a survey respondent's organization does have representation on an UPTRAN/PTD Advisory Team, they were asked to describe the benefit of membership. Table 9 summarizes the responses to this question, which were post-coded into five categories. Sample responses follow.

Table 9. Responses to the question, "If yes, please describe the benefit – if any – of this membership to your organization."

	Transit Agencies				
Benefit	**Lg**	**Non**	**SS**	**SH**	**Total**
Information sharing	1	2	3	4	10
It's good to participate in the process	0	3	1	2	6
Networking	0	2	2	1	5
No benefits	0	2	0	0	2
Other (detail in Appendix)	0	2	3	3	8
Totals	1	11	9	10	31

Lg: Large Urban, **Non**: Nonurban, **SS**: Specialized Svc., **SH**: Stakeholders

Sample responses:

- <u>Information Sharing</u>
- *To be better informed on transportation issues statewide and share info from an urban perspective on transportation needs of special populations.*
- *Knowledge of strengths and weaknesses of area transportation systems.*
- *Helps keep us updated to MDOT activities [as related to] our concerns.*
- *Information on changes regarding upcoming construction financial help.*
- *(Helps us monitor) service to specialized population.*

- It's Good to Participate in the Process

- *Ability to discuss in-the-field hands-on issues. Round table discussions.*

- *Provides input from transit agencies.*

- *Voice in distribution of money and policy.*

- *Problem solving efforts, programs, etc. of MDOT and other team members and vice versa.*

- *Voice in operations.*

- Networking

- *Establishing relationships, teamwork, and offering advisory input.*

- *Provides personal contact with MDOT staff.*

- *Networking with others.*

- *Good way to communicate with others.*

- No Benefits

- *No benefits.*

- *We dropped out of this as our managers felt their time was wasted.*

- Other

- *Beneficial, but we still have a lot of barriers to overcome.*

- *Not sure how to answer since so unfamiliar with the group.*

c)   Awareness of Advisory Team Recommendations

Individuals who responded that their organization does not have representation on an UPTRAN/PTD Advisory Team were asked if they were aware of recommendations made through the Advisory Team meeting/information process. An overall majority of respondents replied that they were aware of such recommendations.

Yes, I am aware of recommendations made through the UPTRAN/PTD Advisory Team meeting/information process.

Transit Agencies
    Large Urban: 17%
    Mid/Small Urban: 25%
    Nonurban: 17%
Specialized Service: 17%
Stakeholders: 12%

C.   Regional and Intermodal Coordination

Where transit is organized locally, ensuring metropolitan and interurban mobility frequently requires coordination among separate transit agencies. Participants in each of the eleven focus groups believed that there generally is insufficient collaboration and cooperation at the local, regional, and state levels and that this fragmentation is a barrier, particularly to effective economic development, urban sprawl management, and programs linking workers to where jobs are located. One potential role for MDOT is to bring the relevant parties together to coordinate interjurisdictional service. Other potential roles include:

- Providing financial incentives for such coordination;

- Organizing competitive bidding procedures that enable private providers to compete with public transit operators where appropriate;

- Focusing on a limited set of demonstration projects for metropolitan and interurban mobility to highlight the potential of cooperation in achieving these goals; and

- Publicizing information on 'best practices' from Michigan and elsewhere in the area of interjurisdictional cooperation for metropolitan and interurban mobility.

1)   Usefulness of Potential Regional and Intermodal Mobility Initiatives

As shown in Table 10, respondents in each of the groups except the Large Urban Transit Agencies opted for MDOT involvement in bringing relevant parties to the table to achieve cooperative arrangements, or providing financial incentives to encourage such arrangements. The two initiatives selected most often by these groups are reflected in the initiative to coordinate regional provision of transit, while the second regional and intermodal initiative examined the perceived legislative barriers to regional transportation. Members of the Mid/Small Urban Transit Agencies group selected "Disseminate 'best practice' ideas for regional & intermodal transit mobility" as often as they recommended bringing providers to the table. Interestingly among the Large Urban Transit Agency respondents, the most important single priority was processes to bid regional and intermodal services among public and private providers.

Table 10. Usefulness rating of potential regional and intermodal mobility initiatives

Initiative		Transit Agencies						
		Lg	**M/S**	**Non**	**SS**	**SH**	**AT**	**MS**
Bring various transportation providers to the table to arrange for regional & intermodal service	"Useful", "V. useful"	50%	38%	70%	81%	86%	80%	83%
	Single most useful	0%	**25%**	17%	**35%**	**44%**	28%	**45%**
Provide financial incentives for cooperation between agencies	"Useful", "V. useful"	50%	38%	67%	71%	74%	69%	64%
	Single most useful	17%	13%	**39%**	27%	24%	**36%**	26%
Competitively bid regional & intermodal services among public and private providers	"Useful", "V. useful"	50%	0%	22%	37%	50%	33%	49%
	Single most useful	**33%**	0%	3%	4%	11%	8%	13%
Sponsor demonstration projects for regional & intermodal mobility	"Useful", "V. useful"	33%	25%	42%	60%	65%	67%	53%
	Single most useful	0%	13%	6%	9%	8%	5%	6%
Disseminate "best practice" ideas for regional & intermodal transit mobility	"Useful", "V. useful"	67%	38%	42%	59%	65%	82%	62%
	Single most useful	17%	**25%**	6%	4%	6%	8%	2%
Other (detail in Appendix)	Single most useful	0%	13%	8%	1%	3%	8%	0%
None	Single most useful	17%	0%	17%	0%	0%	5%	0%

Lg: Large Urban, **M/S**: Mid/Small Urban, **Non**: Nonurban, **SS**: Specialized Svc., **SH**: Stakeholders, **AT**: Advisory Team, **MS**: MDOT Staff

2) Expansion of Public Transit Services to Meet Needs Traditionally Met by Private Transit Providers

The survey included a question asking recipients whether the public transit provider should be responsible for more transit services in their area. The examples of school transportation and transportation that is currently provided by social service agencies or medical organizations were included. In addition to indicating their preferences, respondents explained their answer. Explanations were post-coded into seven categories, as listed in Table 11. Sample responses follow.

Table 11. Explanations of responses to the question, "Should the public transit provider be responsible for more transit services in your area?"

Explanation	Transit Agencies			SS	SH	AT	MS	Total
	Lg	**M/S**	**Non**					
More efficient if cooperated	0	0	8	4	5	6	5	28
In the best interest of the taxpayers & customers	0	1	5	6	4	3	3	22
More funds/specific equipment are needed	0	2	7	3	4	2	2	20
Transit agencies are experts on transportation	1	0	1	2	2	2	4	12
Not responsible for more services	1	1	1	3	5	0	1	12
It's a local/market issue	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	4
Other (detail in Appendix)	0	0	3	16	8	5	2	34
Totals	3	4	26	35	28	18	18	132

Lg: Large Urban, **M/S**: Mid/Small Urban, **Non**: Nonurban, **SS**: Specialized Svc., **SH**: Stakeholders, **AT**: Advisory Team, **MS**: MDOT Staff

Sample responses:

- <u>More Efficient if Cooperated</u>

- *Coordination with school transportation should become a priority.*

- *Each county should have one agency to oversee all transportation services.*

- *To reduce cost and duplication, it would be more efficient to have most transportation services delivered by one entity.*

- *A totally coordinated system would be more efficient, less costly, and more flexible.*

- *Public transit should take the lead in coordinating service at the local level to ensure less duplication and better efficiency.*

- <u>In the Best Interest of the Taxpayers and Customers</u>

- *Having a single control point for all public funded transportation is in the best interest of the taxpayer and the customer.*

- *Would save a lot of tax dollars.*

- *Should provide service that would save tax dollars and best utilize equipment and personnel.*

- <u>More Funds/Specific Equipment are Needed</u>

- *Need more buses to provide more services!*

- *Only if local funding issues can be resolved. Transit cannot afford to subsidize school service. Federal rules prohibit public transit systems from providing 'exclusive' school bus service.*

- *Yes – provider should work to provide service that is needed in their community, but at the same time expanding service requires expanding revenue.*

- <u>Transit Agencies are Experts on Transportation</u>

- *Public transit providers should oversee all transportation.*

- *Transit providers are trained to transport people in an effective and safe manner and bring experiences and resources to the table that could benefit and stretch the dollars of other organizations.*

- *Transit provider should be given an opportunity to at least coordinate transportation among various publicly funded or publicly licensed operations serving our area.*

- <u>Not Responsible for More Services</u>

- *They should not be 'responsible' for it, but should have the opportunity to work cooperatively through a contract to provide some of these services.*

- *Specific types of transportation needs should be delivered by the organizations that require them.*

- *We can barely handle what we have.*

- *Unrealistic.*

- It's a Local/Market Issue

- *Should be a local decision.*

- *The local provider tends to understand local needs of their clients.*

- *Let the market make the decision.*

- Other

- *Provide service except for school transportation.*

- *Extended hours and routes.*

- *More crossing county lines.*

- *I believe we can fill a need in this area. However, it must be paid for by those receiving services.*

- *Non-profits should not be in the transportation business – have few resources, maintenance is difficult – detracts from main mission of service.*

- *Only if they can provide better lower cost services.*

D.   Marketing

Focus group participants noted a negative image of public transit and a lack of awareness of public transit services in Michigan. They saw a need to educate the public about the availability and benefits of public transportation services.

1)   Usefulness of Potential Marketing Initiatives

The survey asked respondents to indicate how useful each of several marketing initiatives would be and to indicate which of those initiatives would be the most useful. Table 12 shows that more individuals in five of the seven respondent groups selected "Provide centralized, coordinated information sources for transit passengers" than the other initiatives. Respondents in the Mid/Small Urban and Nonurban Transit Agency groups followed a different pattern in selecting "Provide a consistent image of transit throughout the State." The initiatives to Coordinate Information Sources and improve Communication within the Transit Community, reflect this interest in improving Michigan transit's image. All three Transit Agency groups indicated "other" initiatives more frequently.

Table 12. Usefulness rating of potential marketing initiatives

		Transit Agencies						
Initiative		**Lg**	**M/S**	**Non**	**SS**	**SH**	**AT**	**MS**
Provide centralized, coordinated information sources for transit passengers	"Useful", "V. useful"	88%	13%	53%	77%	85%	77%	74%
	Single most useful	**33%**	0%	8%	**37%**	**41%**	**36%**	**28%**
Provide a consistent image of transit throughout the State	"Useful", "V. useful"	67%	38%	83%	65%	59%	72%	74%
	Single most useful	0%	**38%**	**42%**	18%	17%	23%	26%
Publicize intermodal connections between transit agencies & other modes of transportation	"Useful", "V. useful"	67%	50%	64%	72%	86%	77%	74%
	Single most useful	0%	13%	8%	14%	17%	18%	21%
Publicize transit to the business community statewide	"Useful", "V. useful"	83%	75%	67%	72%	73%	69%	70%
	Single most useful	17%	0%	17%	9%	15%	5%	9%
Utilize standard set of marketing materials for transit agencies	"Useful", "V. useful"	17%	25%	42%	59%	52%	38%	49%
	Single most useful	0%	13%	3%	6%	5%	5%	9%
Other (detail in Appendix)	Single most useful	50%	25%	11%	1%	2%	5%	2%
None	Single most useful	0%	13%	3%	3%	0%	3%	0%

Lg: Large Urban, **M/S**: Mid/Small Urban, **Non**: Nonurban, **SS**: Specialized Svc., **SH**: Stakeholders, **AT**: Advisory Team, **MS**: MDOT Staff

2)   Local or Standardized, Statewide Marketing Materials

Survey recipients were asked regarding their priorities for standardized, statewide marketing materials versus locally produced. Agreement varied across the respondent groups, as demonstrated below.

I agree that it is more important to have local, rather than standardized, statewide marketing materials.

Transit Agencies
    Large Urban: 67%
    Mid/Small Urban: 88%
    Nonurban: 72%
Specialized Service: 73%
Stakeholders: 68%
Advisory Team: 82%

3)   Explanation of Agreement or Disagreement

Table 13. Sample responses follow.

Table 13. Explanations for agreement or disagreement with local over statewide marketing

Explanation	Transit Agencies							
	Lg	M/S	Non	SS	SH	AT	MS	Total
Individual community has its own needs	3	2	9	24	19	9	19	85
Each transit agency is different in nature (e.g., size & service)	1	3	12	5	8	10	3	42
Both are useful & important	1	0	4	3	4	4	3	19
It's easier & more beneficial to conduct local marketing	0	1	2	7	5	2	0	17
Standardized marketing helps publicize public transit statewide, cut costs, improve transit image, etc.	0	0	1	3	4	2	5	15
It depends on the situation	0	0	0	0	3	3	3	9
Other (detail in Appendix)	0	0	2	4	7	2	1	16
Totals	5	6	30	46	50	32	34	203

Lg: Large Urban, **M/S**: Mid/Small Urban, **Non**: Nonurban, **SS**: Specialized Svc., **SH**: Stakeholders, **AT**: Advisory Team, **MS**: MDOT Staff

Sample responses:

- Individual Community Has Its Own Needs

- *Each area has different needs – when marketing materials are tailor-made for that area, people can identify and accept them more.*

- *The state is too diverse geographically to benefit from a standardized, statewide marketing program – urban, rural, suburban, etc.*

- *Sometimes a local program better explains a certain activity.*

- *Accurate, timely information focused on strengths of local system.*

- *In our county, which is essentially rural, marketing needs to have a local 'flavor' to avoid client cynicism.*

- *Most folks using public transit are going to local vs. state destinations.*

- *Standardizing materials would not provide the information needed, i.e. bus schedule, ticket cards, millage info brochures, interim bus signs, bus signs at local businesses.*

- *Local marketing materials can be directed to consumers most likely to use those services (cost efficient).*

- Each Transit Agency is Different in Nature (e.g., Size and Service)

- *Marketing on the local level is more effective because each systems is so different in nature.*

- *Not all systems desire to provide comprehensive transit service or 'true' public service.*

- *System diversity makes statewide material of little value. Sources of material like transit clip art and sample ads are helpful and they can be customized for local use, with local information that is system specific.*

- *A dial-a-ride system is not the same as a fixed route, and Detroit is much different than the U.P.*

- *Each system is unique especially re: types of passengers and reasons for riding/utilizing public transit.*

- *Each transit agency is unique in operation, administration, and travel patterns of its passengers.*

- *Local marketing sells the real picture not a universal watered down concept.*

- Both are Useful and Important

- *Need some of both.*

- *Would be helpful if there were two types of standardized, one for urban and one for rural.*

- *It should be standard in design with local information.*

- *There should be a certain basic set of materials, but they should allow for customization when necessary.*

- *Needs to be both kinds & both a statewide appeal to business and local appeal to local transit dependent.*

- *The local agency would better know its advertising market, however having basic marketing material to use would be beneficial.*

- It's Easier and More Beneficial to Conduct Local Marketing

- *Much easier for rural systems to market themselves because their service is dial-a-ride, and size of county requires an educational process locally.*

- *Statewide marketing materials are likely to be set aside, and their effort wasted, if they are not 'exactly' what the community would do themselves.*

- *Consumers would understand the local marketing materials better, because they would be more detailed in their area.*

- *Specific information for local systems is most useful to the majority of passengers.*

- *People make decisions about use based on their local need, not a general impression.*

- *Statewide information is too generalized and will not accurately reflect the situation in large metro area.*

- **Standardized Marketing Helps Publicize Public Transit Statewide, Cut Costs, Improve Transit Image, etc.**

- *Consistency in approach, connected, centralized systems allow a "one call" connection between local and statewide resources.*

- *Statewide marketing may get the message across that public transit is there to serve all, not just the people who have no other option.*

- *Consumers should be able to go city to city, county to county with one set of instructions. Local marketing to meet intercommunity needs will always be necessary. But to meet the public's future transportation needs, it will need to be as easy to get across state as it is to get across town.*

- *Since most of our population work outside of our locale, it is most important to have regional marketing materials.*

- *Standardized marketing cuts costs and allows for statewide evaluation of marketing.*

- *I think a statewide campaign would help improve transit image and awareness of transit and give transit a broader overall appeal – local campaigns could then focus on the specifics of their system without the added burden of educating about the basics regarding transit.*

- **It Depends on the Situation**

- *This assumes transit systems throughout the state operate in a manner that would lend itself to standardized marketing materials. It also depends on what 'standardized marketing materials' are.*

- *Too simplistic. Depends on specific materials.*

- **Other**

- *Citizens want to know what they pay taxes for.*

- *Small transit agencies will not be able to do a high quality marketing campaign.*

- *Until there is effective collaborative regional transportation in SE Michigan, we have no option but to 'market' locally.*

- *Many of the small bus systems throughout the state lack the marketing personnel or expertise to produce and execute effective and productive marketing initiatives.*

- *Consistent 'regional'/market area materials.*

- *People within Michigan need to be easily able to locate marketing materials.*

- *Some standard statewide material ensures the basics are covered.*

- *State funds & technical assistance that could assist local transit develop effective marketing would be helpful.*

E. Public-Private Cooperation

Public-private cooperative ventures can help stretch public transit funds, and meet the needs of a greater population or the needs of a specific population better. The idea was well received by the focus groups and survey recipients.

1) Importance of Cooperative Ventures

Survey recipients were asked how important public-private cooperative ventures are for their organization in each of three areas and which of the three is the most important initiative in public-private cooperation. "Private sector political support for transit" was the most popular choice of respondents in the Transit Agency and Stakeholder groups, while more individuals in the Specialized Services group selected "Contracted services with private or nonprofit transportation providers" than the other options. Notably, Large Urban and Mid/Small Urban Transit Agencies provided a significant portion of "Other" responses. Table 14 summarizes the responses received.

Table 14. Importance rating of potential public-private cooperative ventures

Initiative		Transit Agencies				
		Lg	M/S	Non	SS	SH
Private sector political support for transit	"Important", "V. imp."	100%	63%	58%	60%	70%
	Single most important	**33%**	**50%**	**39%**	23%	**52%**
Contracted services with private or nonprofit transportation providers	"Important", "V. imp."	83%	50%	36%	56%	61%
	Single most important	0%	0%	25%	**31%**	23%
Private sector funding of transit services	"Important", "V. imp."	67%	13%	42%	53%	52%
	Single most important	0%	13%	14%	18%	9%
Other (detail in Appendix)	Single most important	50%	25%	0%	0%	9%
None	Single most important	0%	0%	3%	3%	6%

Lg: Large Urban, **M/S**: Mid/Small Urban, **Non**: Nonurban, **SS**: Specialized Svc., **SH**: Stakeholders

For each of the three initiative areas, the survey also asked respondents to describe any such arrangements that they had in place or were working to develop. Responses are tabulated in the following three tables.

a) Private Sector Political Support for Transit

Table 15. Arrangements for private sector political support for transit

Arrangement	Transit Agencies			SS	SH	Total
	Lg	M/S	Non			
Advocate the benefits of transit to the business communities & their employees	2	0	2	1	2	7
Support for local millage	0	0	0	2	2	4
Other (detail in Appendix)	0	0	3	3	6	12
Totals	2	0	5	6	10	23

Lg: Large Urban, **M/S**: Mid/Small Urban, **Non**: Nonurban, **SS**: Specialized Svc., **SH**: Stakeholders

Sample Responses Describing Arrangements Made or Planned:

- <u>Advocate the Benefits of Transit to the Business Communities and Their Employees</u>

- *Any employer we work with, we ask to support us in larger initiatives for grants and funding.*

- *We have developed Business Advisory Committees to provide the private sector 'voice' for our services.*

- *Media, statistical studies, local brainstorming and businesses such as getting their workers to work programs – incentives to companies who support transit-tax breaks.*

- <u>Support for Local Millage</u>

- *Local millage, county millage.*

- *Idea – if workers ride more support for millage.*

- <u>Other</u>

- *We are the only game in town – no private sector exists, including taxis, buses, etc.*

- *County supports but rarely mandates any cooperation.*

- *Stakeholder participation in our strategic planning process.*

- *There are a number of business reps. on our local transit board. A number of business groups and businesses have funded and/or endorsed an upcoming transit campaign.*

- *We work with various business, civic, and local religious organizations.*

b) **Contracted Services with Private or Nonprofit Transportation Providers**

Table 16. Arrangements for contracted services with private or nonprofit transportation providers

	Transit Agencies					
Arrangement	**Lg**	**M/S**	**Non**	**SS**	**SH**	**Total**
Specialized services (elderly, disabled, mental health, etc.)	0	1	3	3	0	7
Bus/taxi, or park & ride	0	0	1	0	3	4
Paratransit services	1	0	0	0	2	3
Welfare to work	0	0	0	0	2	2
Contracted services with Greyhound agency	0	0	2	0	0	2
Other (detail in Appendix)	0	0	4	9	10	23
Totals	1	1	10	12	17	41

Lg: Large Urban, **M/S**: Mid/Small Urban, **Non**: Nonurban, **SS**: Specialized Svc., **SH**: Stakeholders

Sample Responses Describing Arrangements Made or Planned:

- <u>Specialized Services</u>

- *Specialized services non-profit agency.*

- *We subcontract demand response service for elderly and disabled residents in the evenings and on weekends through the local taxi company. Provides 7days/week, 24 hours/day service.*

- *We are currently working in partnership with SMART to provide transportation for seniors, disabled, welfare recipients, and low income individuals.*

- <u>Bus/Taxi, or Park and Ride</u>

- *Bus/taxi.*

- *Park and ride cooperative facilities with U of M.*

- *We contract with private & non profit van services and taxi service to supplement mass transit.*

- <u>Paratransit Services</u>

- *Our local transit provider contracts its paratransit and express bus service with private companies.*

- *Paratransit contracts with taxi companies.*

- <u>Welfare to Work</u>

- *Services to MDCD clients and to career centers through work first and welfare to work.*

- *Welfare to work pilots.*

- <u>Contracted Services with Greyhound Agency</u>

- *Greyhound agency.*

- *Greyhound – we are a commission agency.*

- <u>Other</u>

- *Private sector funding purchased services – contracts.*

- *We are a non profit provider.*

- *We are working on a cooperative venture with Ridesource, a one call office in Washtenaw County for rides anywhere in the county.*

- *We work jointly with other surrounding communities.*

- *Peak hour routes, equip./vehicle rental.*

- *Through Project Zero, our local sites have worked with faith-based and nonprofit groups to provide transportation for FIA customers and sponsor car donation programs.*

c) Private Sector Funding for Transit

Table 17. Arrangements for private sector funding for transit

Arrangement	Transit Agencies					
	Lg	M/S	Non	SS	SH	Total
Business communities	1	0	0	1	7	9
Schools/universities	2	0	0	0	0	2
Other (detail in Appendix)	1	0	1	3	3	8
Totals	4	0	1	4	10	19

Lg: Large Urban, **M/S**: Mid/Small Urban, **Non**: Nonurban, **SS**: Specialized Svc., **SH**: Stakeholders

Sample responses describing arrangements made or planned:

- Business Communities

  - *While very difficult to obtain private sector funding for transit, just as it is for highways, we do have contracts for service with a private shopping mall.*

  - *Contractual agreement with Jackson Rd. business association to pay local share of route through Scio Township.*

  - *Employer contributions through the Commuter Choice Initiative.*

  - *Local employers funding van pools or other forms of transportation for 2nd & 3rd shifts – when public transportation is usually not available.*

- Schools/Universities

  - *Capstone – student housing.*

  - *MSU.*

- Other

  - *State and city employee shuttle service.*

  - *Small grant from United Way to help offset transportation costs for monthly activities.*

  - *Working on support of city to help with costs for new vehicle as 60% of our riders reside in city limits.*

  - *Chambers of commerce.*

2) Further Public/Private Cooperation: Form and MDOT/UPTRAN/PTD Role

The survey asked whether there should be more public/private cooperation for transit. If the recipient believed that there should be, they were asked to explain what form that involvement should take and any potential role for MDOT/UPTRAN/PTD in fostering that cooperation. Responses were post-coded into seven categories as summarized in Table 18. Sample responses follow.

Table 18. Explanations of form and role for MDOT/UPTRAN/PTD in further public/private cooperation

Form/Role	Transit Agencies			SS	SH	Total
	Lg	M/S	Non			
MDOT's leading role in bringing stakeholders together, marketing, conducting research, etc.	2	1	2	5	3	13
Cooperation between public & private transit providers	1	1	1	5	4	12
Political support from local/business communities	0	0	0	3	8	11
Financial support/fund bidding	2	2	0	3	3	10
Advocacy for mass transit	1	0	0	1	1	4
MDOT does not have a positive role	1	0	0	0	1	2
Other (detail in Appendix)	0	1	2	3	2	8
Totals	7	5	5	20	22	60

Lg: Large Urban, **M/S**: Mid/Small Urban, **Non**: Nonurban, **SS**: Specialized Svc., **SH**: Stakeholders

Sample responses:

- <u>MDOT's Leading Role in Bringing Stakeholders Together, Marketing, Conducting Research, etc.</u>

- *MDOT could research other states for this concept and host a workshop (informative) to spark some interest among providers.*

- *MDOT – provide outline of progress.*

- *One-on-one contact with employees regarding public transportation options. UPTRAN could change the struggling 'rideshare' program into a transit marketing program.*

- *Leadership roles in bringing profit and non-profit together.*

- *Marketing the plans, and funding the plans, also provide meetings and meeting places where all three sit down.*

- *Serve as a liaison and a 'cheerleader' for this to happen.*

- *In areas that aren't currently being served by public transit.*

- <u>Cooperation between Public and Private Transit Providers</u>

- *Come together to determine services/needs.*

- *UPTRAN could set up statewide public/private standards and possibly policies.*

- *Expand statewide coalition efforts with private sector to show legislators the positive impact transit has in the state.*

- *Bringing parties to the table.*

- *Integrated services between providers.*

- *Link with non-profits.*

- **Political Support from Local/Business Communities**
  - *Local representation from each community.*
  - *Many businesses that require workers - should help in the formation of these relationships.*
  - *Political support from businesses that receive customers because transportation is provided.*
  - *PR role undertaken to facilitate communities view of public transit.*
  - *Private sector representative on transit committees - private input in terms of transit needs - private dollars to fund initiatives.*
  - *Local employer support is needed to win additional funding & turn around community decisions to opt out of the public transit system.*

- **Financial Support/Fund Bidding**
  - *Bid funding.*
  - *MDOT can take a lead by providing the funding incentives (seed money) to attract private involvement and funding for services.*
  - *Involvement and monetary support.*
  - *Provide funding for local seniors agency and/or Center for Independent Living (CIL) to host a monthly collaboration of public/private transit providers who would eventually bid for systematic services within the local community or the county or region.*
  - *Incentives for employees in public & private sector to use transit.*
  - *Offer matching monies for local transit when private cooperation is realized.*

- **Advocacy for Mass Transit**
  - *Medical institutions have great clout and could be used to advocate for mass transit and public/private networks.*
  - *Transit support in lieu of parking; facilitate the process for lower parking requirements and higher transit use & service.*

- **MDOT Does Not have a Positive Role**
  - *MDOT would not have a large role in this issue.*
  - *At present the state's role appears to be counter productive.*

- **Other**
  - *Need to develop small vehicle services in rural areas.*
  - *Not sure what the private transits could provide without the goal to make a profit.*
  - *We are willing to cooperate, but no other non-profit providers exist.*

- *Needs to be an effort to increase evening and weekend transit.*

- *The private sector needs to be made aware of the impact that public transportation has on the workforce and the 'bottom line'.*

- *Model agreements.*

- *Private incentives for cooperation community needs assessment of service gaps & how best to meet needs. Should be at both state & local level with state modeling behavior.*

F.   New Services

The survey included a series of questions about the importance of developing different transit services. Recipients were asked to give their opinion of each and to indicate which one they think is the single most important initiative in new forms of transit services. Table 19 summarizes the responses.

1)   Importance of Potential New Forms of Transit Services

Individuals in four of the seven respondent groups selected "Implementing service in counties that do not currently have general public transportation" over the other options. The other three groups, Large and Mid/Small Urban Transit Agencies and MDOT Staff, chose "Improving intermodal access/connectivity" in preference to that choice. These two initiatives were the top two selected by all the groups, by a significant margin. These selections are reflected in the Regional and Intermodal Initiatives.

Table 19. Importance rating of potential new forms of transit services

		Transit Agencies						
Initiative		Lg	M/S	Non	SS	SH	AT	MS
Implementing service in counties that do not currently have general public transportation	"Important", "V. imp."	50%	25%	61%	77%	71%	69%	68%
	Single most important	0%	13%	**47%**	**47%**	**42%**	**36%**	28%
Improving intermodal access/connectivity	"Important", "V. imp."	67%	50%	42%	53%	67%	62%	83%
	Single most important	**33%**	**25%**	28%	17%	35%	23%	**34%**
Developing high occupancy vehicle lanes in major metropolitan areas	"Important", "V. imp."	83%	38%	33%	32%	46%	39%	43%
	Single most important	17%	13%	6%	3%	6%	5%	13%
Improving frequency of passenger rail service	"Important", "V. imp."	50%	13%	14%	37%	59%	46%	45%
	Single most important	0%	0%	0%	6%	5%	10%	6%
Improving speed of passenger rail service	"Important", "V. imp."	33%	13%	14%	30%	35%	31%	30%
	Single most important	0%	13%	0%	3%	5%	5%	6%
Other (detail in Appendix)	Single most important	33%	25%	0%	1%	3%	8%	4%
None	Single most important	17%	13%	6%	3%	0%	3%	2%

Lg: Large Urban, **M/S**: Mid/Small Urban, **Non**: Nonurban, **SS**: Specialized Svc., **SH**: Stakeholders, **AT**: Advisory Team, **MS**: MDOT Staff

2)   Improving Intermodal Access/Connectivity

Survey respondents who indicated that "Improving intermodal access/connectivity" was "important" or "very important" were asked to specify the intermodal linkages deserving the most effort at improvement. Seven categories emerged in the responses, which are summarized in Table 20. Sample responses follow.

Table 20. Intermodal linkages deserving the most effort at improvement

Linkage	Transit Agencies							
	Lg	M/S	Non	SS	SH	AT	MS	Total
Bus & rail	0	0	2	1	8	3	8	22
Link all modes of transportation	0	0	4	0	2	5	5	16
Bus & bus	0	0	0	1	6	2	5	14
Provide transit service in all counties	0	0	2	2	0	4	0	8
Improve rail services (e.g., speed & frequency)	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	5
HOV lanes	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	3
Bus/rail & air	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Other (detail in Appendix)	0	1	0	4	7	3	5	20
Totals	1	1	10	10	25	18	24	89

Lg: Large Urban, **M/S**: Mid/Small Urban, **Non**: Nonurban, **SS**: Specialized Svc., **SH**: Stakeholders, **AT**: Advisory Team, **MS**: MDOT Staff

Sample responses:

- <u>Bus and Rail</u>

- *Bus and rail.*

- *Intercity rail – bus.*

- *Coordinate schedules between rail & local bus.*

- *Intercity bus and rail with local public transit services often co-location works best.*

- *Local bus, intercity bus, intercity rail.*

- <u>Link All Modes of Transportation</u>

- *Coordinate service to provide intermodal access.*

- *Those intermodal linkages in high use areas, i.e., urban metro regions, to relieve congestion and growing or expanding communities.*

- *Air to rail component in metropolitan areas, regional component in all modes for connectivity from area to area.*

- *Any type of linkage which allow the passenger to connect between regional, cities, counties, etc.*

- *Bus, train, airport, private vehicle, foot.*

- *Government linkages between regional services (phone, rail, bus) and local transit providers.*

- <u>Bus and Bus</u>

- *Van/bus.*

- *Intercity bus/local bus.*

- **Provide Transit Service in All Counties**
- *We need to provide service to all areas in Michigan.*
- *County to county.*
- *Linking northern counties together.*
- *State-wide, cross country.*

- **Improve Rail Services**
- *Rail service frequency and intercity connectivity.*
- *Rail service.*

- **HOV Lanes**
- *High occupancy vehicle lanes would reduce traffic congestion and encourage car pools.*
- *Vehicle lanes for vehicles having 4 or more people in them.*

- **Bus/Rail and Air**
- *Air and bus.*

- **Other**
- *Information and choosing to say 'yes' and make it work.*
- *City and urban.*
- *Southeastern Michigan connections from Ann Arbor to Detroit.*
- *Bike to transit.*
- *Shelters in areas of cooperating services.*
- *Work to transit.*
- *Local linkages from smaller transit organizations.*

G. Program Overview

1) Quality of MDOT/UPTRAN/PTD Process and Program Oversight

In order to assess the process and program oversight conducted by MDOT/UPTRAN/PTD, identified as problematic by some in the focus groups, survey recipients were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with a series of six statements. They were then asked to specify which of those deserves the most effort at improvement. Responses are summarized in Table 21.

There was a considerable amount of variation in responses to the question of what oversight area was the most deserving of improvement efforts. Overall, the formula payment, contract and local purchase process emerged as top candidates for improvement.

Table 21. Assessment of processes or programs administered by MDOT/UPTRAN/PTD

		Transit Agencies					
Process/Program Oversight		**Lg**	**M/S**	**Non**	**SS**	**AT**	**MS**
The formula payment process	Percent viewing process as efficient (agree or strongly agree)	50%	63%	56%	21%	15%	40%
	Single most deserving of improvement	**17%**	0%	6%	**10%**	**26%**	11%
The contract process	Percent viewing process as efficient	0%	25%	28%	32%	18%	19%
	Single most deserving of improvement	**17%**	13%	**31%**	8%	3%	**19%**
The annual application process	Percent viewing process as efficient	33%	50%	33%	40%	28%	45%
	Single most deserving of improvement	**17%**	13%	11%	8%	15%	9%
PTMS: Ease of Use	Percent viewing PTMS as easy to use	17%	38%	36%	14%	26%	21%
	Single most deserving of improvement	0%	7%	3%	4%	2%	9%
The extended purchase process	Percent viewing process as efficient	33%	13%	31%	12%	26%	34%
	Single most deserving of improvement	0%	0%	11%	4%	0%	6%
PTMS: Usefulness of data	Percent viewing PTMS as useful	50%	13%	39%	13%	28%	53%
	Single most deserving of improvement	0%	6%	3%	4%	3%	10%
The local purchase process	Percent viewing process as efficient	50%	63%	22%	14%	26%	26%
	Single most deserving of improvement	**17%**	**25%**	3%	3%	0%	6%
Other (detail in Appendix)	Single most deserving of improvement	0%	13%	8%	3%	0%	2%
None	Single most deserving of improvement	0%	13%	8%	9%	0%	2%

Lg: Large Urban, **M/S**: Mid/Small Urban, **Non**: Nonurban, **SS**: Specialized Svc., **SH**: Stakeholders, **AT**: Advisory Team, **MS**: MDOT Staff

2) Effectiveness of Purchase Programs

The survey also asked that recipients suggest what MDOT/UPTRAN/PTD could do to make the extended and/or local purchase programs more effective. Responses were post-coded into eight categories and are summarized in Table 22. Sample responses follow.

Table 22. Actions that could improve effectiveness of extended/local purchase programs

Actions	Transit Agencies						
	Lg	M/S	Non	SS	AT	MS	Total
Extended purchase: more flexibility, more efficient	2	1	8	4	0	0	15
More training/technical assistance	0	0	1	0	0	10	11
Local purchase: reduce amount of paperwork	0	2	6	2	0	0	10
Speed up the process	0	0	4	1	1	3	9
Make the system simpler	0	0	2	0	1	3	6
None	1	0	2	1	1	1	6
Both	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Other (detail in Appendix)	0	1	1	1	2	1	6
Totals	3	4	25	10	5	18	65

Lg: Large Urban, **M/S**: Mid/Small Urban, **Non**: Nonurban, **SS**: Specialized Svc., **AT**: Advisory Team, **MS**: MDOT Staff

Sample responses:

- Extended Purchase: More Flexibility, More Efficient

- *Extended: establish more options on available vehicles. Particularly alternative fuel options.*

- *Extended: more flexibility.*

- *Extended: need contracts available sooner and open for a longer period of time.*

- *Extended: greater interest. We go through SMART to receive the funding and purchase of vans that we use for our local community. A grant is filled out each year hoping our needs will be recognized.*

- More Training/Technical Assistance

- *More training.*

- *Continue to administer PTD technical assistance.*

- *More assistance in explaining the process and state/federal requirements. Easier third party and add on process.*

- *Provide assistance on specification and assistance in development.*

- *Training on inspection process.*

- Local Purchase: Reduce Amount of Paperwork

- *Local: get funding contracts out sooner. We are still waiting for contracts for FY 1999 funding.*

- *Local: less complicated contract requirement.*

- *Local: reduce 'on-site' inspection requirements.*

- *Local: reduce amount of paperwork.*

- *Local: small systems need help with this. MDOT could hire larger systems with lots of experience to provide these services to small systems.*

- *Local: speed up documentation process to make the process attractive. As it is now, people are discouraged and many times will not use the method – is this the intent?*

- *Local: allow agencies to expand current buses.*

- *Local: increase the amount available to local communities.*

- <u>Speed Up the Process</u>

- *Not so much paperwork.*

- *Small non-profits can't use it. HELLO!! Too much paperwork!*

- *Contracts either need to be available sooner, or open for a greater period of time.*

- *Get info to TAs in a more timely and complete manner.*

- *Reduce paper requirements.*

- <u>Make the System Simpler</u>

- *Do not make them provide up front monies. In a non-urban county operation it is an accounting nightmare.*

- *We don't need this department. All federal and state funds should come direct to transit property.*

- *Allowing transits to more easily group purchases making more buying power.*

- *Make it available to all agencies needing to purchase vehicles.*

- <u>None</u>

- *Local: have not used.*

- *None useful to our org. I believe they are good for small operators.*

- *Not sure.*

- <u>Both</u>

- *Both: have seminars to go over printed materials.*

- *Both: provide more money.*

- <u>Other</u>

- *Explain both better.*

- *More suppliers participating and more items available for purchase.*

- *Provide assurance (in writing) that program meets all FTA requirements.*

H. PTD Staff Services

1) Rating of Current PTD Staff Services

The quality of several PTD staff services was the subject of a series of questions on the survey. Recipients were asked to specify whether they thought each of five services was "very helpful," "helpful," "medium," "not helpful," or "not helpful at all." Table 23 shows the portion of respondents in each group who indicated "very helpful" or "helpful" for each service.

Respondents uniformly indicated the greatest level of satisfaction with the "overall assistance from PTD project managers." A sharp contrast exists between the opinion of MDOT staff and that of the other groups in each case, with the possible exception of "Technical assistance from PTD training providers." This contrast is most pronounced in the assessment of "PTD overall oversight/monitoring," which fewer than 50% of respondents in two groups found to be helpful.

Table 23. Percentage of respondents who find PTD staff services "very helpful" or "helpful"

Service	Transit Agencies					
	Lg	**M/S**	**Non**	**SS**	**AT**	**MS**
Overall assistance from PTD project managers	17%	**75%**	**78%**	**36%**	**41%**	**62%**
PTD overall assistance	17%	38%	64%	33%	38%	**62%**
Technical assistance from PTD vehicle service coordinators	**33%**	13%	64%	24%	28%	60%
Technical assistance from PTD training providers	17%	13%	64%	26%	21%	47%
PTD overall oversight/monitoring	0%	13%	42%	27%	26%	55%

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2) Addition or Elimination of PTD Services

The PTD Staff Services section of the survey also asked whether there are any services that are provided by PTD that could be eliminated, and are there any services that could be added. Suggested eliminations were in seven areas, while suggested additions fell into five. As is evident from a sampling of the responses, opinion regarding desirable PTD services is not uniform.

a) Sample of Suggested Service Eliminations

- Technical Services/Training
- *Train the trainer programs.*
- *All technical services.*

- Vehicle Services
- *Question value of the vehicle spec. program – seems to be based on MDOT staff desires rather than needs of system.*

- *Vehicle services coordinator's role is minimal – could incorporate necessary responsibilities into project manager responsibilities.*

- Oversight/Monitoring Team

- *Oversight/monitoring: we have local boards!*

- Advisory Team

- *Advisory teams could be eliminated.*

- Project Managers

- *PTD project managers!*

- Don't Know

- *Have not used these services.*

- Other

- *Intercity subsidies.*

- *Less day to day involvement, more general legislative involvement.*

- *Concentrate funding/policy on redevelopment of urban areas – not building so many new roads through rural areas with the pretext that it will assist with traffic flow and decrease congestion.*

- *Need description with possible venders making proposals instead of specifications being put together for bus with everything running costs up.*

b) Sample of suggested service additions:

- Training/Technical Assistance

- *Communication/dispatch support.*

- *More emphasis in training areas.*

- *Just technical assistance.*

- *Coordinating training resources for all of the various programs.*

- *Regulation of TAs vehicles for safety reasons.*

- New Policy/Legislative Initiative/Visions

- *Provide incentives for communities to collaborate and combine their municipal credits for the benefit of all.*

- *Specialized demonstration programs.*

- *Legislative updates/assistance.*

- *Intermodal oversight & coordination.*
- *New policies, legislation to assist with intermodal transportation – developing regional systems.*
- *Vision.*

- Get More Involved With Local Process
- *Monitoring local meetings between townships, county road commissions, and transit agencies.*
- *District representation.*

- Improve and expand transit services
- *Expand service areas.*
- *Need improvement to meet the increased demand.*
- *Increase public transportation on weekends and evenings.*
- *The ability to take buses to a broader geographical area under the Specialized Transportation Grant.*

- Other
- *Contract process should be streamlined however possible.*
- *More public info when needed.*
- *Option for specialized transportation for volunteer drivers throughout the state.*
- *Increase staff for better service.*
- *My supervision does not believe in unit/team meetings. We are not able to discuss problems, solutions, etc. as a group. Workers in the unit hold unofficial meetings to discuss issues when the supervision is gone.*
- *Could be disbanded without great adverse impact.*

I. Mission/Vision

1) Prioritizing Strategic Directions

In order to indicate preferences for broad policy direction for transit in Michigan, survey recipients were asked to prioritize a list of eight suggested priorities for strategic directions for transit in Michigan over the next five years. Table 24 summarizes the prioritization provided by individuals in each of the respondent groups. These categories are echoed throughout this report.

Overall, there is considerable agreement between the groups surveyed on transit priorities. All groups ranked legislative and funding initiatives first priority. Communications emerged as a very high priority area as well, with all groups ranking it second or third priority.

Table 24. Ranking of suggested priorities for strategic directions

	Transit Agencies							
Suggested Priority	**Lg**	**M/S**	**Non**	**SS**	**SH**	**AT**	**MS**	**Total**
Legislative/funding initiatives	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**
Communication	3	3	**2**	**2**	3	**2**	3	**2**
Regional & intermodal coordination	4	6	6	3	**2**	4	**2**	3
Marketing	7	5	5	6	3	5	5	4
Public-private cooperation	8	8	7	4	5	8	4	5
New services	5	7	8	4	6	3	8	5
Service development & new technologies	**2**	4	4	8	7	5	5	7
Training	6	**2**	3	7	8	7	7	8

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2) Serve Transit Dependent or General Population?

In order to further refine the mission or vision for transit in Michigan, the survey asked recipients to select from five options to indicate their opinion of whether transit in Michigan should concentrate on meeting the transportation needs of the transit dependent population or should seek to attract the general population. The percentage of respondents in each of the groups to select each option is shown in Table 25.

Table 25. Response to question of whether transit in Michigan should serve the transit dependent or the general population

Response	Transit Agencies			SS	SH	AT	MS
	Lg	M/S	Non				
Transit in Michigan should concentrate on serving the needs of the transit-dependent population	0%	13%	0%	10%	8%	0%	9%
Transit in Michigan should concentrate on both groups, with an emphasis on the transit-dependent population	17%	13%	**53%**	**46%**	**42%**	**44%**	**38%**
Transit in Michigan should concentrate on both groups equally	**50%**	**50%**	39%	24%	26%	26%	26%
Transit in Michigan should concentrate on both groups, but with an emphasis on the general population	17%	13%	3%	6%	14%	15%	11%
Transit in Michigan should concentrate on attracting the general population	17%	13%	6%	0%	6%	8%	9%

Lg: Large Urban, **M/S**: Mid/Small Urban, **Non**: Nonurban, **SS**: Specialized Svc., **SH**: Stakeholders, **AT**: Advisory Team, **MS**: MDOT Staff

J.   Oversight Team Priority Sets

The organization with authority over the strategic planning process of which this survey is a part is the Strategic Planning Oversight Team. In order to inform the team of the priorities of the various interested parties, a preliminary version of these survey results was presented to team members in a workshop held on April 25, 2000. A voting process among team member was undertaken in order to seek to reach agreement on priorities for transit initiatives as part of this strategic planning process. The workshop focused on selected initiatives reflecting five different aspects: marketing, legislative/funding, regional and intermodal coordination, new services, and public-private cooperation. The oversight team members were asked to identify the three most useful initiatives in each of the five different fields, and three priorities for public transit in Michigan. The results are compiled in Table 26.

The direction of the Oversight Team, in conjunction with the survey results and input of the focus groups, will be used as the basis for the development of initiatives within the Michigan Transit Strategic Plan.

Table 26. Oversight Team Priority Sets

	First priority	**Second priority**	**Third priority**
Priorities for public transit	Legislative/Funding Initiatives	Regional and Intermodal Coordination	Communication
Most important legislative initiatives to pursue	Legislation to expand local funding sources	Legislation for regional transportation providers	Budget operating assistance over three years
Most useful regional & intermodal mobility initiatives	Providing financial incentives	Bringing transportation providers to the table	Sponsoring demonstration projects
Most useful marketing initiatives	Coordinated information sources	Consistent image of transit	Publicizing intermodal connections
Most important initiatives in new forms of transit service	Service in counties with no transit	Improving intermodal access/connectivity	Improving frequency of passenger rail service
Most important initiative in public-private cooperation	Contracted services	Private sector political support	Private sector funding