

Frequently Asked Questions about Transit in the Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments (TMACOG) Region

Public transportation is a complicated industry that is political, expensive, and necessary. It is political because there are geographic areas in our region that do not need or want certain types of transit. It is expensive because moving people around is costly. Public transit is necessary because it provides personal mobility, reduces air pollution and road congestion, and can foster economic development through high capacity transit investments. This summary seeks to answer several of the most commonly asked questions about public transportation in the TMACOG region which encompasses Lucas and Wood counties in Ohio and southern Monroe County in Michigan.

1. What is public transportation?

Public transportation in our area consists of a variety of services including: buses, subsidized taxis, van pool services, and paratransit services for senior citizens and people with disabilities. Public transit in other areas also includes: trolleys, light rail, commuter trains, streetcars, bus rapid transit, cable cars, ferries and water taxis, and monorails and tramways.

2. Who rides transit?

There are generally two types of transit riders: transit-dependent riders and choice riders. Choice riders own or could easily own their own vehicle. Transit-dependent riders do not have reliable access to a vehicle and have limited access to other means of transportation. Some examples of choice riders include commuters and people going to a sporting event using a shuttle service. Some examples of transit-dependent populations include minors under the age of 16, seniors who no longer drive, individuals with a disability that impacts their ability to drive, and individuals who cannot afford a vehicle. However, these groups are neither mutually exclusive nor all-inclusive.

3. What public transit is available in the TMACOG region?

| Mode | Service Name |
|---|---|
| Service Provider: Toledo Area Regional Transit Authority (TARTA) | |
| Fixed-Route Bus | TARTA |
| Demand Response* | Call-a-Ride: Maumee, Ottawa Hills , Sylvania, Sylvania Township, Waterville, and Rossford |
| Fixed-Route Bus only for sporting events | Muddy Shuttle and Walleye Shuttle |
| Paratransit/Demand Response* | TARPS (Toledo Area Paratransit Service) |
| Service Provider: City of Perrysburg | |
| Demand Response* | Perrysburg Transit |
| Service Provider: Lake Erie Transit | |
| Demand Response* | Bedford Dial-a-Ride |
| Service Provider: City of Bowling Green | |
| Demand Response* | B.G. Transit |

*"Demand response" is any non-fixed route system of transporting individuals that requires advanced scheduling by the customer.



4. What is “Human Services Transportation?”

"Human Services" refers to a diverse network of public agencies and private non-profits that provide medical services, educational services, workforce development, and many other social services. These human services agencies sometimes provide transportation to their clients. To help pay for transportation costs, some agencies seek federal funding. A locally developed, coordinated human services transportation plan is required for agencies seeking to receive one type funding (federal “Section 5310” which provides funds to improve transportation for elderly and disabled citizens). The plan must undergo a development and approval process that includes seniors and people with disabilities, includes transportation providers and is coordinated to the maximum extent possible with other federal and state departments and agencies.

5. How are transit systems funded?

Transit systems are funded through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and through state and local governments. The federal government can usually fund capital projects from 50-80 percent but a local funding match is required. Local funds may come from a sales, income or property tax. In addition, most transit services charge a fare known as farebox recovery which helps pay for a small portion of the cost to provide transit services. The majority of large transit systems in Ohio have around a 20 percent farebox recovery ratio.

6. Why is transit subsidized?

Transit is expensive to operate, maintain, and expand. Like highway and aviation transportation, the majority of public transportation does not completely pay for itself and needs to be subsidized to maintain systems throughout the country. Communities may opt to support public transit to provide transportation to people who are unable to use an automobile, to reduce congestion and automobile emissions and to provide economic growth which occurs with capital infrastructure investment. Aside from administrative costs, there are generally two types of costs associated with running transit service: capital costs and operating costs. Capital costs include infrastructure such as bus stops and buses as well as park-and-ride lots. Operating costs include items such as vehicle maintenance and fuel costs and usually include the labor costs associated with driving the vehicle. For instance, the operating cost for a five-mile-long bus route that runs from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. every 30 minutes, 365 days a year, is about \$382,000 in the Toledo region. Federal funds can be used for capital costs but are available for operating costs only under certain circumstances, such as in an urbanized area that has a population over 50,000 but fewer than 200,000, or for a transit agency that operates fewer than 100 buses.

7. How is public transit subsidized through federal funding programs?

Federal public transit funds are managed by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) through specific sections of the federal transportation bill “Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century” (MAP-21). The following is a listing of the recipients in our region and their source of federal formula funds.



| Funding Programs | Recipients | | | | |
|--|--------------|-------|--------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| | To the State | TARTA | B.G. Transit | Bedford Dial-a-Ride | Various non-profit agencies |
| 5307 (greater than 50,000 but less than 200,000 population) Urbanized Area Formula Program | | | | X** | |
| 5307 (greater than 200,000 population) Urbanized Area Formula Program | | X | | | |
| 5339 – Bus and Bus Facilities | | X | | | |
| 5310 – Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities | X* | | | | X* |
| 5311 – Formula Grants for Rural Areas (less than 50,000 population) | X* | | X | | |

*State receives 5310 and 5311 then passes through the funds. **SMART (Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation) in the Detroit area passes through these funds to Lake Erie Transit.

8. How are revenues raised to support the local share of transit costs in major urban areas in Ohio?

Listed below are the local funding sources for large transit authorities in Ohio that have more than 2 million boardings per year. TARTA is the only large transit authority in Ohio whose major source of local funding is property taxes.

| Geographic Area | Agency | Local tax mechanism |
|-----------------|--|---|
| Akron | Metro Regional Transit Authority | .5 of 1% local sales tax |
| Cincinnati | Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority | Funded by a .3% earnings tax collected by the City of Cincinnati, which is paid by everyone who works or lives in the city. |
| Canton | Stark Area Regional Transit Authority | .25 of 1% sales tax |
| Cleveland | Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority | 1% local sales tax |
| Columbus | Central Ohio Transit Authority | Funded through a 0.5% local sales tax, of which 0.25% is temporary |
| Dayton | Greater Dayton Regional Transit Authority | .5% local sales tax |
| Toledo | Toledo Area Regional Transit Authority | 2.5 mil property tax |

9. What is the regional transit authority in the TMACOG region?

The Toledo Area Regional Transit Authority (TARTA) is the regional transit authority in Northwest Ohio.

10. Why is transit not everywhere?

Barriers to more wide-spread transit include the lack of knowledge of federal and state laws, regulation and legal restrictions on the use of federal funds, inadequate state funding and the lack of technical expertise to expand public transportation. In addition, not every jurisdiction has transit because some areas don't have sufficient general funds to support public transit or don't want to create a new tax to specifically fund transit.



11. If a community desires to be served by TARTA, what steps are necessary to join?

The enabling legislation on how to join TARTA comes from the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) 306.32 and ORC 306.321. Currently, counties, municipal corporations, or townships can join TARTA by the adoption of a resolution by their legislative bodies. TARTA must then be notified. The existing members of TARTA must unanimously approve the resolution. The government agency seeking to become a part of TARTA must agree to tax their constituents with a property tax. Under ORC 306.32 the resolution to join the transit agency does not have to be put to the voters. Another alternative is written under ORC 306.321 which states the resolution has to be submitted to the voters of the territory to be added to TARTA.

12. What steps would be necessary to provide more regional public transit in the TMACOG region?

A regional tax base, such as a county-wide sales tax is one strategy that could be implemented to provide more regional public transit. To accomplish this, a county government must be a part of TARTA and that county would initiate a switch, changing the local funding mechanism to a county-wide sales tax. (An interested county would have to join TARTA by passing a resolution to join and to switch the local funding mechanism from property tax to a county-wide sales tax). All current members of TARTA would have to also pass a resolution that allows the county to join TARTA as well as a resolution that switches the funding mechanism to a regional sales tax.

13. Why is it beneficial to switch the funding mechanism from a property tax to a regional sales tax?

One benefit to switching the main local funding mechanism to sales tax is because the revenue responds quicker to inflation. In addition, the revenue from the current property tax has been capped, limiting ability to meet growing transportation needs. Another benefit is that the service area could be expanded to include more jurisdictions. In addition visitors to the Toledo area would also contribute to the sales tax revenue.

14. Why haven't steps been taken to switch the local funding mechanism to a county-wide sales tax?

In 2010, steps were initiated to switch the local funding mechanism to a county-wide sales tax. Lucas County succeeded in passing a resolution to join TARTA and to switch the local funding mechanism. However, not all members of TARTA were able to agree that switching the funding mechanism from property tax to sales tax would be beneficial to their residents. However it may be possible in the future to revisit this issue.

15. What are some current developments with transit service in our community?

TARTA is preserving current transit service levels given ongoing constraints in funding. Ridership has increased on both TARTA's fixed-route and paratransit services. Transit ridership has also increased in Ohio and nationwide. In addition, the effort continues to improve efficiencies in providing mobility for the elderly and persons with disabilities. In support of improving mobility for seniors and the disabled, Wood County has just approved an update to the locally coordinated Public and Human Service Transportation Plan and the Toledo urban area is working on implementing their coordinated plan.