



2023

# ANNUAL REPORT

Creating a Seamless  
Transportation Network  
for Oakland County



 **OAKLAND**  
COUNTY MICHIGAN  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
DAVID COULTER  
OAKLAND COUNTY EXECUTIVE

# 2023 Oakland Transit Annual Report

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# Introduction

## A Message from Executive Dave Coulter

Oakland County's first annual transit report is a testament to our commitment to establish a reliable, affordable and accessible public transportation system that responds to the diverse needs of our county's residents.

This report wouldn't have been possible without the support of the voters of Oakland County who recognized the need for a robust and seamless transportation network across the county that connects residents, communities, businesses and organizations.

On the heels of the transit millage approval, Oakland County quickly laid the groundwork for a transformational transit system, establishing a Transit Division within the Economic Development department, led by transportation professional Eli Cooper and two planners.

The Executive Office and Board of Commissioners also negotiated contracts with our five current transit providers—Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART), People's Express (PEX), North Oakland Transportation Authority (NOTA), Western Oakland Transportation Authority (WOTA), and OPC Transportation (OPC).

These agreements signify our commitment to not only sustain but enhance and expand county-wide transportation services. By fostering collaboration with these providers, we intend to create a comprehensive and inclusive transit network that addresses the evolving needs of our growing population.

With sincere appreciation,



**DAVE COULTER**  
Oakland County Executive



# Key Achievements

## & Milestones of the Past Year

### OAKLAND COUNTY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION MILLAGE IS APPROVED BY VOTERS

On November 8, 2022, the residents of Oakland County showcases their commitment to enhancing their community by approving the Oakland County Public Transportation millage. This momentous decision not only reflects a shared vision for a more accessible and efficient public transit system, but also serves as a testament to the collective spirit of progress within Oakland County.

The approved 10-year, .95 millage is a crucial financial commitment that will play a pivotal role in transforming and sustaining public transit services throughout Oakland County. The millage effectively ends the “swiss cheese” approach to transit and allows for the development of a countywide transit network.

This financial backing empowers the community to make significant strides in maintaining and expanding public transit services. The 10-year duration ensures a sustained and consistent investment over a substantial period, allowing for long-term planning and development initiatives. Such foresight is instrumental in fostering a reliable and robust public transportation network that responds to the evolving needs of the residents.

### MULTI-YEAR AGREEMENTS ARE FORGED WITH FOUR TRANSIT PROVIDERS

Collaborative efforts facilitated by County staff result in approved contracts between the Board of Commissioners with four public transportation providers — Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART), North Oakland Transportation Authority (NOTA), Western Oakland Transportation Authority (WOTA), and the Older Persons’ Commission (OPC) — as a result of the countywide transportation millage made possible by voters. These contracts focus on continuing, enhancing, and expanding county-wide transportation services to better serve the diverse needs of the community.

Under the agreements, NOTA, WOTA, and OPC commit to increasing their hours of operation, adding more destinations, and standardizing fares at \$2 per ride in their service areas. SMART commits to implementing the first route expansions in decades, announcing planning in support of service expansions in Auburn Hills, Bloomfield Hills, Farmington Hills, Keego Harbor, Novi, Orchard Lake, Pontiac, Rochester, Rochester Hills, Sylvan Lake, Troy, Waterford, West Bloomfield, White Lake, and Wixom.

### LOCAL TRANSPORTATION REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM IS ESTABLISHED FOR 2023

Oakland County’s Board of Commissioners also creates a Local Transportation Reimbursement Program to support communities who are not yet served by the four public transportation providers and who have an existing contract or have already budgeted for public transportation services between January 1 and December 31 of 2023.

### ESTABLISHMENT OF OAKLAND COUNTY TRANSIT DIVISION

Oakland County Executive Dave Coulter creates a dedicated Transit Division within the Economic Development Department, demonstrating a commitment to integrated and efficient transit management. The Transit Division works to guide the overall transit program and collaborate with transit operators in building a linked transit network that offers frequent, convenient and reliable public transportation options for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities. In addition, staff coordinate with local communities to identify transportation barriers, make recommendations to the County Board of Commissioners for millage fund appropriations, develop transit-based programs to improve community infrastructure, participate in regional transit discussions, and offer technical support and convenings.

The division is staffed with an experienced transit manager in **Eli Cooper**, a forward-thinking transportation leader guiding Oakland County through the progressive steps required to ensure widespread public transportation access across all four corners of the county. Cooper joins Oakland County with 35 years of experience in transportation oversight and planning, having recently served as the transportation program manager in Ann Arbor for 17 years.

He is joined by two transit planners, **Sarah Lagpacan** and **Dominic Pavone**, who bring expertise and enthusiasm to the improvement of Oakland County’s transit infrastructure. Lagpacan, a former Transportation Planner with AECOM, helped transit agencies and municipalities across the country plan and implement multimodal projects including Bus Rapid Transit, bus route network redesigns, and complete streets. Pavone, a former Transportation Planner at Bay County who oversaw the Bay City Metropolitan Planning Organization, brings data analysis, GIS, and short- and long-range planning expertise to the Oakland County Transit Division.

Together, they’re working to create a comprehensive, countywide public transportation system by expanding and diversifying service as well as eliminating the boundaries between communities and providers.



Eli Cooper



Sarah Lagpacan



Dominic Pavone



**OAKLAND COUNTY TRANSIT AD HOC COMMITTEE CREATED**

The Oakland County Board of Commissioners creates the Oakland County Transit Ad Hoc Committee to support countywide transit expansion, develop county public transportation policy, and provide oversight of all transit millage monies and contracts. The committee makes recommendations to the Board’s Economic Development & Infrastructure Standing Committee for full Board consideration. The committee meetings are posted on the Board’s website and the public is invited to attend.

Members of the 2023-24 Oakland County Transit Ad Hoc Committee include commissioners:

- Brendan Johnson, Chair
- David T. Woodward, Vice Chair
- Marcia Gershenson
- Michael J. Gingell
- Ajay Raman
- Philip J. Weipert

**OPC EXPANDS**

The Older Persons’ Commission (OPC) expands hours of service and adds 19 medical facilities in Troy, Auburn Hills, and Sterling Heights to its service area.

**WOTA EXPANDS SERVICE AREA**

The Western Oakland Transportation Authority (WOTA) adds Orchard Lake, Keego Harbor, Sylvan Lake, and Lake Angelus to its service area, bringing transit services to this area for the first time following the passage of the Oakland County Public Transportation Millage.

**AN ADDITIONAL TRANSIT PROVIDER JOINS OAKLAND TRANSIT**

The Oakland County Board of Commissioners unanimously approves a new contract to expand public transportation service in the southwest area of the county with People’s Express (PEX). The expanded service area, which would launch in September 2023, improves public transportation services in South Lyon, Wixom, Milford Township, Commerce Township, Lyon Township, the Village of Milford and the Village of Wolverine Lake.

The new driving boundaries connect more communities and allow for increased cross-community transportation. The agreement with Oakland County expands hours of operation and increases PEX’s fleet.

**WOTA EXPANDS SERVICE AREA AGAIN**

WOTA adds the Village of Holly, Holly Township, Groveland Township and Rose Township further expanding its service area.

**SMART EXPANDS SERVICE**

On September 11 of 2023, SMART announces extended bus routes and 68 new bus stops in Novi, Wixom, and Bloomfield Hills. This marked the first time in 28 years that Novi and Bloomfield Hills have transit services and the first-ever fixed route in Wixom. The extensions include:

- Route 305 Grand River & 740 Twelve Mile – extending existing routes from Farmington Hills through Novi to Wixom
- Route 805 Farmington-Novi Park & Ride – extending an existing express route from Farmington Hills to Novi
- Routes 450 Woodward & 462 FAST Woodward – adding a new stop at Woodward Avenue and Long Lake Road on existing routes that previously only passed through Bloomfield Hills

Additionally, all fixed route expansion routes provide Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit service to residents with disabilities who live within three-quarters of a mile from fixed route service.

**NOTA EXPANDS SERVICE AREA**

NOTA adds Independence Township, City of the Village of Clarkston, Springfield Township, Brandon Township and the Village of Ortonville to its service area.

**CONTINUED EXPANSIONS BUILT INTO 2024 AGREEMENTS WITH TRANSIT PROVIDERS**

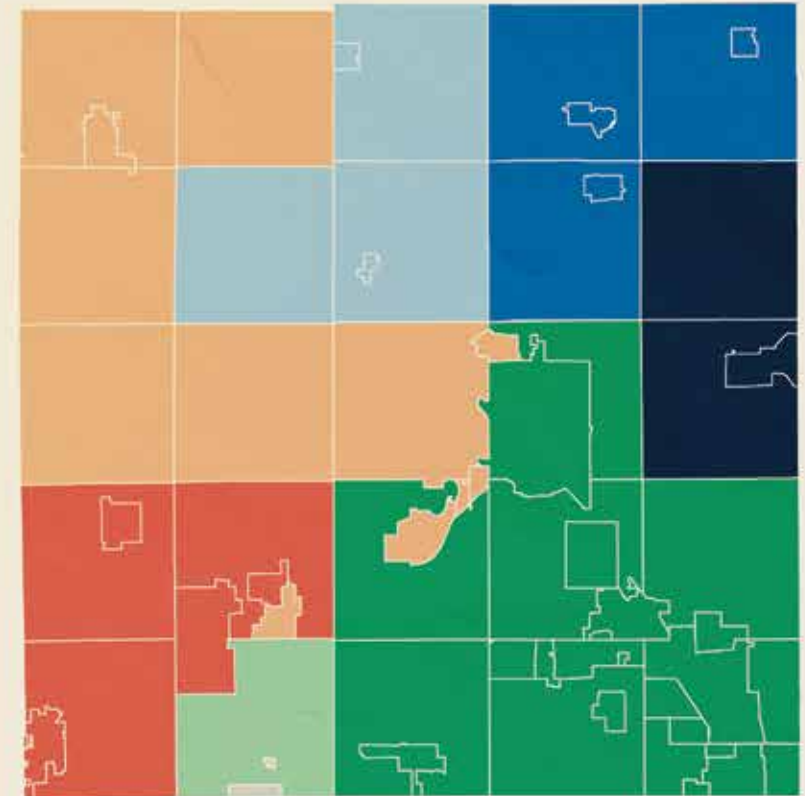
Collaborative efforts between the Oakland County Transit Division and the Board of Commissioners result in amended contracts with NOTA, WOTA, OPC, and PEX to roll out weekend service hours and general public service if not already in place and with SMART to continue implementing service expansions in Auburn Hills, Farmington Hills, Keego Harbor, Orchard Lake, Pontiac, Rochester, Rochester Hills, Sylvan Lake, Troy, Waterford, West Bloomfield, and White Lake.

# Transit Provider Profiles

Within Oakland County, there are two primary types of transit providers. The first is the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART) and the second is the Community Transit providers including North Oakland Transportation Authority (NOTA), Rochester Hills-Oakland-Rochester Older Persons' Commission (OPC), People's Express (PEX) as well as some local transportation programs.



**Oakland County Transit Providers**  
*(as of December 2023)*



Orange	WOTA	Light Blue	NOTA + Local Programs
Blue	NOTA	Dark Blue	OPC
Red	PEX	Green	SMART
Light Green	SMART + Local Program		



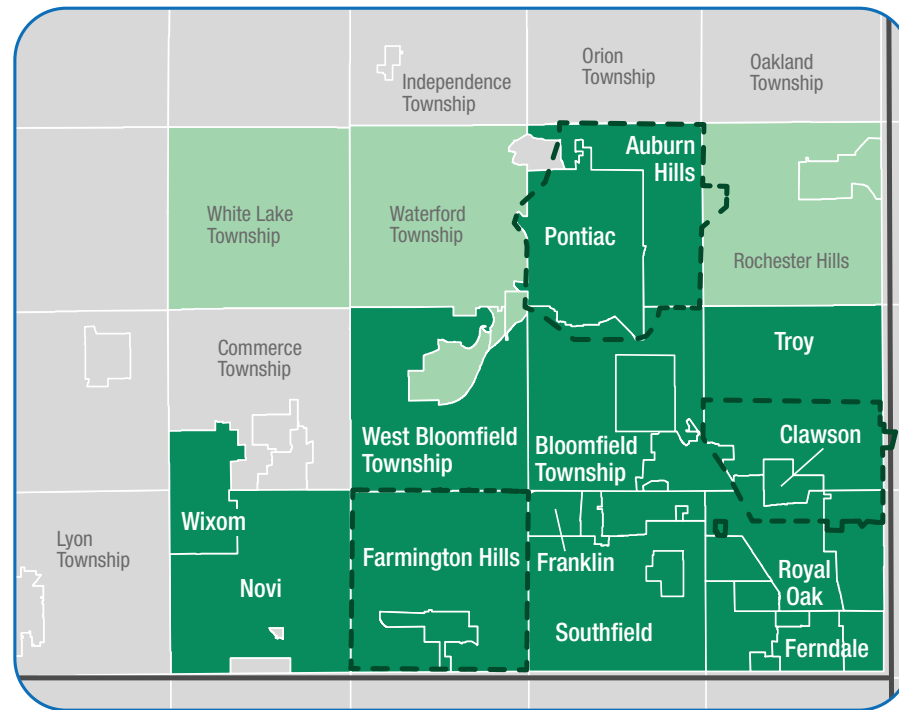
### About

Established in 1967, SMART is a regional public transportation authority delivering fixed route, demand response, and Flex (microtransit) service in the three-county Detroit metropolitan region, including the urban portions of southeastern Oakland County.

### 2023 Millage-Supported Accomplishments

- 2 new bus stops at Woodward Ave & Long Lake Rd in Bloomfield Hills
- Route extensions to Novi and Wixom with 66 new bus stops
- Hired 96 fixed route drivers and 66 demand response drivers
- Began implementing an upgraded dispatch software system that the other transit providers and local transportation programs throughout the region will also be able to use

### Service Area



- **Fixed Route Service Area**  
These communities are served by SMART's fixed route service
- ▤ **SMART Flex Zone**  
On demand driving zone
- **Planned 2024 Fixed Route Service Area Expansions**  
Fixed route extensions or new fixed routes are planned for implementation in these communities in 2024

### Transportation Modes

SMART offers a variety of transportation modes to meet the diverse needs of its ridership, including:



#### FIXED ROUTE

Big buses that run on specific routes and stop at specific locations marked as bus stops.

**4,616,188** rides in 2023 (Oakland, Macomb, and Wayne County total)

**8%** more rides than 2022



#### DEMAND RESPONSE

Curb-to-curb small bus/van transportation that riders schedule days in advance. People with disabilities who need additional assistance can receive door-to-door service.

**84,123** rides in Oakland County 2023

**3%** more rides than 2022



#### FLEX (MICROTRANSIT)

Designated point-to-point, wheelchair-accessible minivan transportation that riders can request on-demand within specific zones. People with disabilities who need additional assistance can receive door-to-door service.

**241,176** rides in Oakland County in 2023

**43%** more rides than 2022



“Expanding the route system and connecting our Farmington Hills campus to the western parts of Oakland County is an absolute game changer for our students, because one of the greatest hurdles for them to get to school is transportation.”

—PETER M. PROVENZANO JR.  
*Oakland Community College Chancellor*

“(With the Route 740 expansion), I don’t have to get off at the State Fairgrounds. I can just take (the bus) from the east side.”

—DEANTE BROCKMAN  
*SMART rider*



RideNOTA.org >

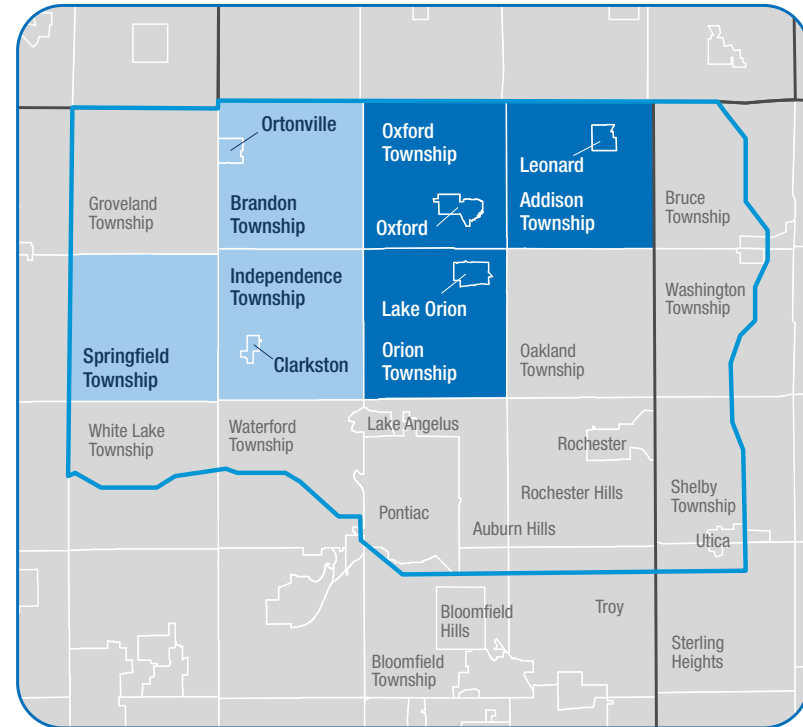


The North Oakland Transportation Authority (NOTA) has been providing transportation services since 2001 to qualifying residents of Addison Twp, Oxford Twp, Orion Twp, Lake Orion, Leonard, and Oxford Village. Eligible riders include seniors over 60, people with disabilities, and low-income residents along with a companion rider. NOTA accommodates trips to work, medical appointments, shopping, and community events within the driving boundary. In addition, NOTA operates a trolley with limited service between Downtown Oxford and Downtown Lake Orion.

### 2023 Millage-Supported Accomplishments

- Increased service capacity with 10 new vehicles, including a snowplow to keep service running in the winter months
- More than doubled staff with 37 new employees
- Expanded parking lot and added a fuel center to improve operations
- Doubled service area to include 5 new communities
- Expanded driving boundaries
- Expanded hours of service
- Delivered 91 Thanksgiving meals to NOTA riders

### Service Area



- Participating Community**  
Residents living in these communities may utilize NOTA
- Affiliate Community**  
Residents living in these communities may utilize NOTA or municipality services
- Driving Boundary**  
NOTA provides services to destinations within the boundary

### Transportation Modes



#### DEMAND RESPONSE

Door-to-door small bus/van transportation that riders schedule days in advance. People with disabilities who need additional assistance can receive door-to-door service.

**49,314** rides in 2023

**21%** more rides than 2022



#### TROLLEY

A charming and convenient mode of transportation weaving through the heart of downtown Lake Orion and Oxford

**5,348** trolley rides in 2023

**9%** more trolley rides than 2022



“ In 2010 I experienced a sudden vision loss which left me legally blind... In 2012 (I moved) to the Lake Orion/Oxford area so that I would qualify (for NOTA's) transportation services. (They have) afforded me opportunities that changed my life for the better. Initially I rode NOTA a few days a week while completing my BSW at Oakland University. Upon graduation, I found employment in Auburn Hills and...ride as a passenger 4-5 days per week... If it were not for NOTA I would not be able to maintain employment and I am so thankful for their invaluable services!”

—JULIE EVANS, NOTA rider

“ I'm 79 years old... I haven't owned a vehicle for nearly ten years... NOTA has provided trips to doctor appointments, grocery stores, and even personal outings. NOTA is not only a reliable service, but also the employees (are remarkably) caring... Because of (them) I don't feel isolated... The newly expanded routes and hours have been achieved with amazing speed... (They) are working in an even greater capacity to serve where there has long been a need! What an achievement!”

—LORRAINE MCWETHY, NOTA rider

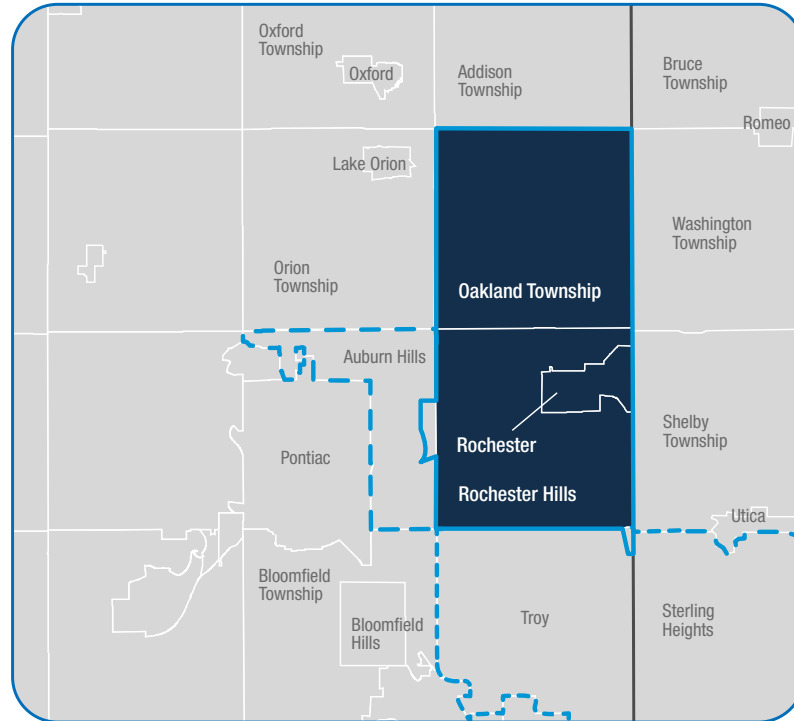


OPC Transportation has been providing transportation services for over 40 years to qualifying residents of Rochester Hills, Oakland Township and Rochester. Eligible riders include seniors 55 and older and adults with disabilities under 55 along with a companion rider. OPC accommodates trips anywhere in the three communities for medical and personal appointments, work, school, shopping and other pursuits.

### 2023 Millage-Supported Accomplishments

- Increased service capacity with 4 new and more fuel-efficient wheelchair-equipped vans, a new Director of Transportation, 8 new drivers and a new dispatcher
- Expanded medical facility destinations in Auburn Hills, Troy, and Sterling Heights
- Expanded hours of service
- Provided wheelchair securement training and national certification for all drivers and dispatchers
- Provided additional transportation throughout the day for disabled young adults to participate in Dutton Farms field trip programming
- Provided shuttle rides for 5,350 members of the general public to get to and from 6 different community events
- Identified a site for an expanded transportation facility

### Service Area




- Participating Community**  
Residents living in these communities may utilize OPC services
- Driving Boundary**  
OPC provides services to destinations within the boundary
- Additional Destinations**  
OPC also provides services to select medical facilities in these communities





### Transportation Mode

#### DEMAND RESPONSE

Door-to-door small bus/van transportation that riders schedule days in advance. People with disabilities who need additional assistance can receive door-to-door service.

 **43,335**  
rides in 2023

 **30%**  
of rides are wheelchair users

 **50%**  
more rides than 2022



“After the loss of my vision, I’m still able to get where I need to go with the OPC transportation program. The service allows me to remain independent and enjoy my retirement.”

—SALLY, OPC RIDER

“OPC has been a huge help and partner to Dutton Farm. Every Tuesday and Thursday they have helped Dutton Farm provide community transportation for our adults with disabilities. These trips include volunteering at the Rochester library, Innovation Hills Park, Avon Bowling lanes and Rochester Area Recreation. Thanks to OPC we are able to transport our students out to the community to do the things they love to do and volunteer in our community.”

—HARRISON KAKKURI  
Dutton Farm



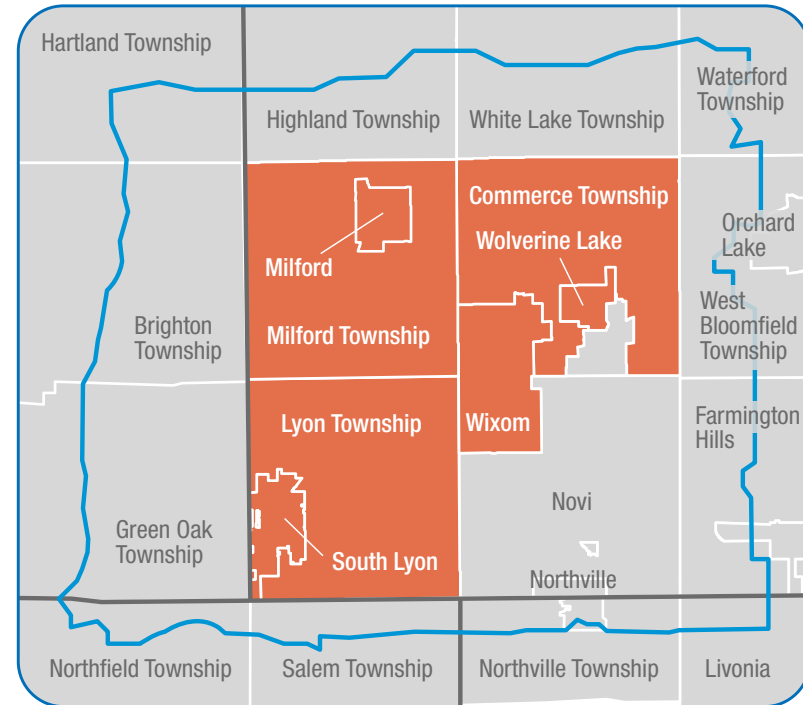


People's Express (PEX) has been providing transportation services in Oakland County for over 20 years and, before the Oakland County transit millage, contracted with individual municipalities to provide limited and short distance transportation to Milford, Milford Township, South Lyon, Lyon Township, Commerce Township, Wolverine Lake, and Wixom. Starting September 2023, any resident of these communities is eligible for rides throughout an expanded service area and to expanded destinations, with priority given to seniors, people with disabilities, low-income individuals, and veterans.

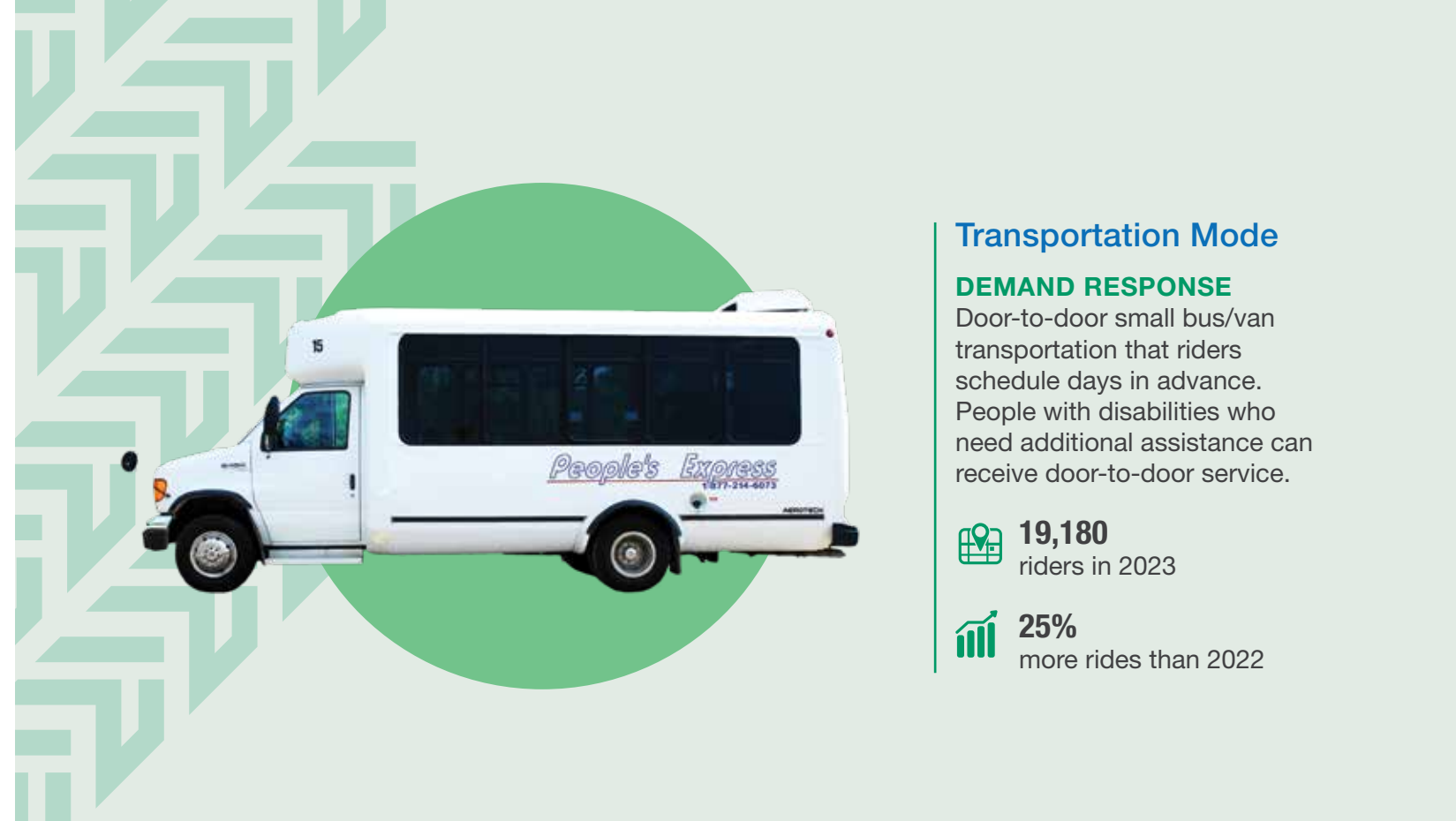
**2023 Millage-Supported Accomplishments**

- Increased service capacity with 9 new vehicles and 20 new staff
- Removed limitations on trips between communities
- Expanded driving boundary
- Expanded hours of service

**Service Area**



- **Participating Community**  
Residents living in these communities may utilize PEX services
- **Driving Boundary**  
PEX provides services to destinations within the boundary



**Transportation Mode**

**DEMAND RESPONSE**

Door-to-door small bus/van transportation that riders schedule days in advance. People with disabilities who need additional assistance can receive door-to-door service.

 **19,180** riders in 2023

 **25%** more rides than 2022



“ Thought I’d pass along this snap of Jared Denton’s first day taking PEX from our home in Milford to the Living and Learning Enrichment Center in Northville. This is so exciting for us – thank you all!”

– **MINDY DENTON,**  
*Mother of PEX Rider*

“ She can count on us to get her to her appointments and places to go shopping. She is able to go to stores that were out of our boundaries previously. She can go to the dollar store or Walmart. She has told her friends who don’t have cars about us and how wonderful we are and how much we help her and are reliable... She tells as many people as she can about our services and how wonderful we are and how we make sure she is taken care of. She said her friends tell her all the time how wonderful we are and thanking her for telling them about us.”

– *Dispatcher Recap of Conversation with Marlene Traud, PEX rider*



RideWOTA.org >

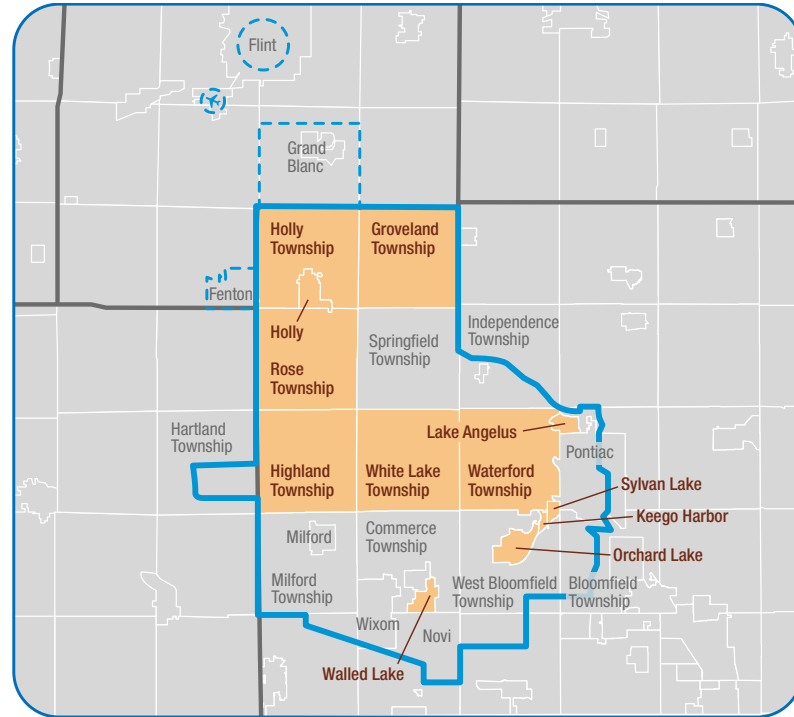


The Western Oakland Transportation Authority (WOTA) has been providing transportation services since 2020 to qualifying residents of Highland, Walled Lake, Waterford, and White Lake. Eligible riders include seniors 55 and older, adults with disabilities, low-income families, and veterans along with companion riders. WOTA accommodates trips to work, medical appointments, shopping, banking, civic events, entertainment venues, and social activities within the driving boundary.

### 2023 Millage-Supported Accomplishments

- Increased service capacity with 17 new vehicles and 30 new staff, including an in-house maintenance manager to keep vehicles in good working condition with less downtime
- More-than-doubled service area to include 8 new communities, 4 of which never had transit before the millage
- Expanded hours of service
- Improved on-time performance
- Provided shuttle rides for at least 3 different community events

### Service Area



- Participating Community**  
Residents living in these communities may utilize WOTA
- Driving Boundary**  
WOTA provides services to destinations within the boundary
- Additional Destinations**  
Residents of the Village of Holly, Groveland Twp, Holly Twp and Rose Twp may also travel to these additional destinations as needed



### Transportation Mode

#### DEMAND RESPONSE

Door-to-door small bus/van transportation that riders schedule days in advance. People with disabilities who need additional assistance can receive door-to-door service.

**49,825**  
rides in 2023

**55%**  
more rides than 2022



“ You are bringing hope and life to many of us who were desperate and about to give up on life. Our isolation, powerlessness, and segregation from the rest of the world had become overwhelming for some of us. Several months ago, there was a 22 day wait for us to get transportation to a grocery store...There are several of us who are overwhelmed about the miracle of WOTA service to Holly. It just does not seem real! It is hard to believe we can independently go shopping, to the doctor, swimming, to parks, to the library, to a movie, out to eat...I rarely cry, but this miracle brings tears to my eyes. I have rarely used the word miracle, but WOTA is our miracle. Thank you!”

— **THERESA RODGERSON**  
*Holly Resident*

“ By providing longer hours for riders using WOTA for employment and medical, we are paving the way for fully expanding the program. As WOTA builds the program, we are excited to see millage dollars at work in our communities.”

— **RICK HAMILL**  
*WOTA Board Chairman and Highland Township Supervisor*

# Local Transportation Programs



The Oakland County Interim Local Transportation Reimbursement Program supported local individual programs for many communities in the northwest and southwest. Throughout the course of 2023, this funding allowed them to continue to offer demand response service for their residents. Transit Division staff worked with communities in the southwest to consolidate individual contracts and expand services with People's Express. Communities in the northwest part of the county joined the WOTA service area. Staff continue to work with the remaining communities to identify needs and, if possible, transition to receiving services from the appropriate transit providers.

Before the millage, SMART's Community Partnership Program supported local communities within the SMART service area to deliver community-based door-to-door transportation services relying on opt-in tax revenue. With the adoption of the countywide millage, these important locally provided services are now funded through the County millage and are still administered by SMART.



“ Our experience with WOTA has been very positive. Our residents seem to appreciate the extended hours. The ridership has continually increased. Because of the extended hours and the expanded service area, more residents are able to utilize the service. ”

— **DEBORAH BIGGER**  
*Village of Holly Clerk/Treasurer*

“ Recently we had a [resident] who needed two procedures for her vision...Between the initial doctor visit for a checkup, subsequent surgical consultations, the separate procedures, follow ups for each procedure and other trips necessary due to slight complications, this resulted in the need for 11 separate visits. Each visit would have been over \$100 per round trip to transport a wheelchair via private transportation service. Having the SMART buses available in West Bloomfield Township saved her and her family literally hundreds in transportation costs between November 2023 and February 2024. ”

— **BEN BUR**  
*West Bloomfield Township Parks & Recreation Driver*

# Funding

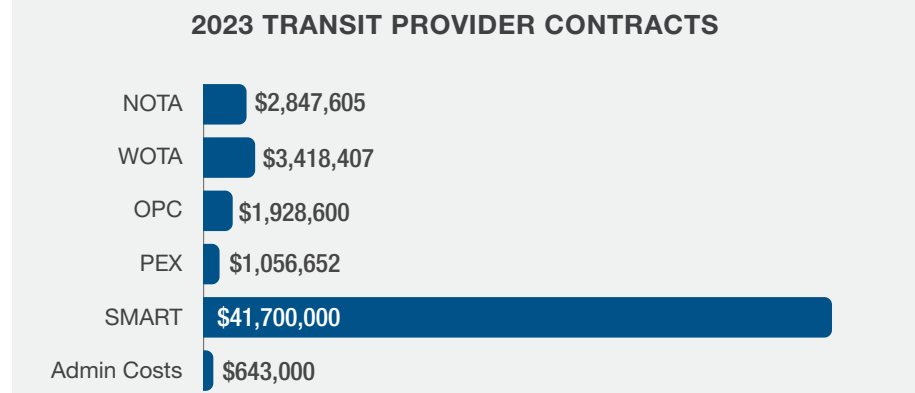
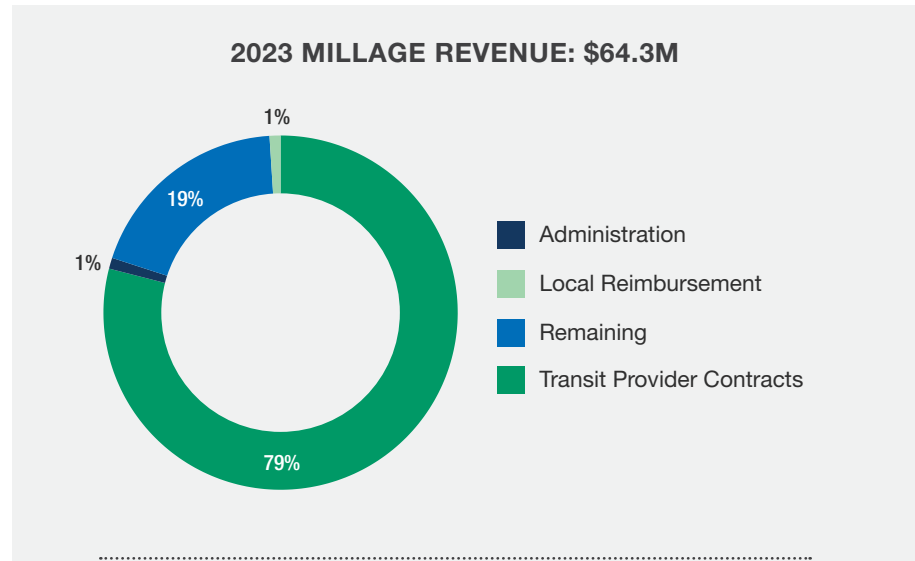
## 2023

Funding collected through the Oakland County Public Transportation Millage in 2023 amounted to \$64.3 million, with about \$51.0 million spent on transit provider contracts. This allocation of funds reflected Oakland County's commitment to enhancing and expanding transportation services for the benefit of all residents.

### TRANSIT PROVIDER CONTRACTS: \$50,951,000 (79%)

The largest share of the 2023 millage revenue funded the County's five contracted transit providers: SMART, NOTA, OPC, PEX, and WOTA. These contracts ensured the continued delivery of reliable and comprehensive county-wide transportation services while underpinning service expansions in Q3 and Q4 of 2023. Transit provider expenditures included:

- Staff (e.g., salaries, benefits, training and drug/alcohol testing)
- Facility Expenses (e.g., building rent, utilities and office supplies)
- New Vehicles
- Vehicle Fuel & Maintenance
- Insurance
- Technology (e.g., phones, tablets and dispatch software)
- Other Expenses (e.g., advertising/marketing and audit/legal services)



### ADMINISTRATION: \$643,000 (1%)

A crucial aspect of maintaining an effective transit system is the proper administration of operations. To facilitate this, a portion of the millage funding was allocated for administrative purposes. This included staff salaries, office infrastructure, and other necessary resources to manage the day-to-day operations of the Transit Division within the Economic Development Department.

### LOCAL REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM: \$851,000 (1%)

Oakland County appropriated \$851,000 to reimburse communities that had a current contract or had already budgeted for public transportation services that would have otherwise been covered by millage funding. The program, which concluded in 2023, was called the Local Transit Reimbursement and allowed communities to submit semi-annual reimbursement requests with performance reports detailing ridership, services provided, and expenditures.

### REMAINING FUNDS: \$11,854,000 (18%)

The remaining 2023 millage revenue was deposited into a fund reserve consistent with County fiscal policy and is available only for transit as a resource base for continued service improvements and expansions, such as Bus Rapid Transit project development, and transit access/safety improvements in future years. This flexibility ensures that the transit system can adapt to evolving needs and challenges.

## 2024

The anticipated millage revenue will increase to \$69.4 million in 2024. This enables continued support of the five transit providers and further planned expansions, including the introduction of weekend service and general public service where it is not yet provided. The millage revenue will also support transit access and safety improvement projects throughout the County, including sidewalk and crossing infrastructure that makes it easier and safer to get to bus stops and transit pickup/drop-off locations.

Due to the service expansions and improved coordination enabled by the County millage, the contracted transit providers are beginning to leverage more funding from other sources, including the State's Local Bus Operating fund. Utilizing millage revenue to bring more resources into Oakland County is a key goal moving forward. In fact, our FY23 Operating results indicate that regional transit services (including services provided by SMART outside of Oakland County) saw a remarkable return of \$1.25 for each dollar spent. This figure encompasses all sources of revenue, including State, Federal, Fares, and various other sources. Additionally, our capital awards for the year further underscore the success of our efforts in maximizing funding opportunities.



# Community Engagement & Partnerships

## MONTHLY TRANSIT PROVIDER MEETINGS

In 2023, Oakland County prioritized collaboration through monthly transit provider meetings. These gatherings provided a platform for networking, idea sharing, and mutual feedback among providers. The aim was to foster a sense of community, encouraging the exchange of valuable information that contributed to the overall improvement of transportation services throughout the county.

## SMARTER MOBILITY PROGRAM

SMART kicked off its consultant-led planning process to gather community input and plan the future of the fixed route and Flex systems. More information and engagement opportunities can be found at [smarter-mobility.org](http://smarter-mobility.org)

## WOODWARD CORRIDOR PLANNING

The significance of the Woodward corridor to Oakland County cannot be overstated. Collaborating with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the county engaged in a planning contract for a long-term corridor plan. This collaboration is aimed at developing a sustainable transportation strategy for the future. Additionally, staff worked closely with state, regional, and local officials to compile a grant application to the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) in support of a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project along the Woodward corridor and other regional transit enhancements along Gratiot, Michigan, and Washtenaw Avenues. The outcome of the application is expected in early 2024, marking a pivotal moment for the county's transportation infrastructure.

## SMART "DRIVE A BUS WITH US" CAREER FAIR

In June 2023, SMART held a career fair for interested job seekers to get hands-on experience operating a SMART bus and other high-tech SMART vehicles on the M1 Concourse track in Pontiac. 35 new drivers were hired as a result of the event, a great win for SMART as it works to address the driver shortage that it, along with most other transit agencies across the county, currently face.

## COMMUNITY TRANSIT PLANNING

Looking ahead to 2025 and beyond, Oakland County is proactively planning for the future by conducting a consultant-led Community Transit Plan. This strategic initiative will build on the SMARTer Mobility Program to guide the entire county in developing a robust and responsive transit system that meets the evolving needs of residents and businesses beyond the fixed route and Flex systems.



SMART "Drive a Bus with Us" Career Fair



Countywide Transit Forum

## VETERANS TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

In a commendable collaborative effort, Oakland County Veterans Services, the Oakland County Transit Division, and the transit providers are joining forces to explore expanding the current veterans' transportation program beyond its current services which are limited to the Veterans Administration offices and healthcare centers. Garnering inspiration from a knowledge exchange with the Flint MTA Vets to Wellness program, the goal is to develop a program that transports veterans for all trip purposes throughout the county. This partnership underscores the county's commitment to addressing the unique transportation needs of its veteran population which totals more than 50,766 individuals based on 2022 data.

## COUNTYWIDE TRANSIT FORUM

An instrumental initiative in fostering collaboration was the Countywide Transit Forum. This event brought together staff and elected officials from the County's cities, villages, and townships to learn about the transit program and share their insights. The forum served as an open space for dialogue, and the valuable feedback received will be used to shape future transit plans. Plans for follow-up sessions in 2024 are underway to delve into specific subjects raised during the initial forum.

## PARTNERSHIPS TO ADDRESS GAPS

WOTA, PEX, and SMART have teamed up to address transportation barriers for patients at DMC Huron Valley Hospital. In addition, WOTA and SMART are working with Huron Valley Schools and Waterford local school districts to assist with transportation for the adult transition and special needs student programs that they offer, creating opportunities for independence outside the school environment and assisting with transportation for work.

# Conclusion



WOTA Leadership

2023 has been a transformative year for Oakland County's transit system. Through collaboration, outreach, and strategic partnerships, the county is laying the foundation for a reliable, affordable, and accessible public transportation network that caters to the diverse needs of its residents. The initiatives outlined in this report mark significant steps toward building a more connected and sustainable future for Oakland County.



NOTA Dispatch Team



Hilarie Chambers Presents at Countywide Transit Forum



## A Message from David T. Woodward *Chairman, Oakland County Board of Commissioners*

Oakland Transit is freedom for people to get to the places they need and want to go. Whether you use it or not, better transit is good for all of us. Thousands of workers, patients, students and seniors depend on public transportation options to get to their destinations. Many riders are people we count on a daily basis, others use it to be part of our community and not be trapped in their homes.

The first-year review of our countywide public transit strategy is nothing short of amazing. Service expanded, new routes began, and more hours of service were established to get more people to more places. This report proves that when you improve transit service, more people use it.

I want to give a special shout out to the Oakland Transit team and all our public transportation providers that accepted the challenge and pushed the limits on what is possible. When we work together to create better rider experiences, grow capacity to serve more people, and collaborate to have better transit options in Oakland County, we all benefit.

*...and this is just the beginning!*



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[OakGov.com/OaklandTransit](http://OakGov.com/OaklandTransit)



 *All ways,*  
**MOVING FORWARD**