

**Warren C. Evans**  
Wayne County Executive

May 9, 2018

Members of the Tax Policy Committee  
Michigan House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairperson and Members of the House Tax Policy Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to express Wayne County's concerns regarding House Bill 5870, which would allow municipalities to opt-out of the Regional Transit Authority (RTA). As you may be aware, I and other regional leaders worked collaboratively for over a year to develop a new regional transit plan – Connect Southeast Michigan – which is now under consideration by the RTA.

While I am not naïve about the regional politics at play with transit currently, it remains my hope that we can come to agreement on the type of transit system we so desperately need. However, I can say unequivocally that this bill moves us further away from our goal. While voters rejected the RTA millage in 2016, the 2012 legislation establishing the RTA served as a tremendous victory after decades of work toward transit. To change that legislation now is shortsighted and ignores the global economic trends that indicate regional transit is a necessity, not a luxury.

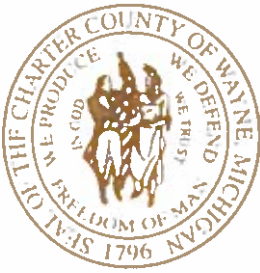
The RTA is not the only regional taxing authority we have in Southeast Michigan without opt-outs. Other examples include the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Detroit Zoo, the Cobo Authority, and the Great Lakes Water Authority. These regional efforts work because the entire region participates. We also need to pay for things that society relies on such as education, senior services and infrastructure. Transit is no different. House Bill 5870 sets a dangerous precedent in allowing a community that does not like a result to choose to opt-out at the detriment of the entire region based on the political winds of the moment.

Opt-outs undermine the very purpose of regional transit. A system that allows opt-outs cannot be regional by definition and therefore cannot deliver the full benefits of regional transit. How can a regional transit system be effective if you are unable to stop in cities or visit businesses and employment centers along the routes? To build ridership, people need routes that fully access jobs, entertainment, cultural amenities, and necessities to maintain or achieve a high quality of life.

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One of the reasons the RTA statute was written without opt-outs is that opt-outs have negatively impacted the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART). While I am proud of the great work SMART does with the resources they have, there is only so much they can do with a service area designed like a slice of Swiss cheese. Many riders have long, difficult journeys due to lengthy wait times, transfers, or lack of accessible routes. If you live in Hamtramck and have a job in an opt-out community like Novi, you likely have to walk or pay an Uber to get to work once you hit the Novi border. Those are barriers many cannot overcome.

Under the current RTA law, voters choose whether or not to support regional transit. Under this bill, a community's governing body could choose to withdraw from the RTA without taking into account the will of the people. Let's not take away the option of voters to decide if they approve a regional transit plan.

While I may not have liked the outcome of the millage in 2016, the RTA statute worked as it was designed. Its rejection served as the ultimate opt-out. It also forced us to go back to the drawing board to create a much better plan that delivers better service and more value throughout the region, which the voters should be allowed to vote on. If they vote it down, they vote it down.

Finally, it is no secret that our region has a long history of building walls, leading to less collaboration and more division. Our region's history with transit is complicated and divisive, and we are at a critical juncture. In order for our region to continue to grow and prosper, we need to knock down these walls not construct new ones. House Bill 5870 threatens to push us back years, if not decades, in terms of regional transit. I believe we have the right plan via Connect Southeast Michigan under consideration now, I ask that you let that process run its course. My team and I are happy to work with anyone on developing a regional transit plan, but it has to be *regional*, not a patchwork service area that by a flawed design cannot meet the transit needs of our collective community.

Sincerely,

Warren C. Evans  
County Executive

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# Metro Detroit CEOs: Transit plan can't wait

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(Photo: Kathleen Galligan, Detroit Free Press)

Over the last decade, our region has made incredible progress. We have strengthened and diversified our economy, and we have experienced investment in our region at a pace that has caused the nation to sit up and take notice. This, in turn, has improved employment and increased the vibrancy of our communities. And the flow of young people out of our region has reversed in recent years — they are returning home to their roots in large numbers.

And yet there is an important piece missing in our region's success story: we lack a workable regional transit system. Of the 25 largest metropolitan areas in our nation, the Detroit region ranks 24th in per capita transit spending, 24th in the percentage of our citizens using public transportation to get to work, and dead last in the number of public transit trips the average citizen takes. This state of affairs is badly complicating daily life for so

many of our citizens; it also is badly out of step with the exciting recovery underway in our region.

The poor quality of our public transit is not lost on potential investors in our region. When Amazon passed on naming Detroit as a finalist for its second headquarters site, the lack of a workable regional transit system was one of a few key factors cited. How important a factor it was can be debated; what cannot be debated is that Amazon didn't like what it saw.

Recently, at the Detroit Regional Chamber's annual "State of the State" event, Governor Snyder added his voice to those urging our region to move to improve its public transportation. And he offered the region's leaders some sound advice: "At this point, don't aim for perfect. Find what you can agree upon and get going!"

This is not a new challenge in our region — it is decades old. But the governor is right — it is past time to get going.

As leaders of corporations and foundations in Southeast Michigan, we are proud of the long list of things moving in the right direction in our region. Public transit is not on that list, and that needs to change soon.

<b>Gerry Anderson</b> , DTE Energy	<b>Mary Barra</b> , General Motors
<b>Matt Cullen</b> , Quicken Loans/Rock Ventures	<b>David Dauch</b> , American Axle
<b>Dave Egner</b> , Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation	<b>Nate Forbes</b> , The Forbes Company
<b>John Fox</b> , Beaumont Health	<b>Dan Gilbert</b> , Quicken Loans/Rock Ventures
<b>Jim Hackett</b> , Ford Motor Company	<b>Joe Hinrichs</b> , Ford Motor Company
<b>Christopher Ilitch</b> , Ilitch Holdings	<b>Wright Lassiter</b> , Henry Ford Health System
<b>Dan Loepp</b> , Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan	<b>Richard Manoogian</b> , Masco
<b>Chip McClure</b> , Michigan Capital Partners	<b>Jim Nicholson</b> , PVS Chemicals
<b>Cindy Pasky</b> , Strategic Staffing Solutions	<b>Roger Penske</b> , Penske Corporation
<b>Rip Rapson</b> , Kresge Foundation	<b>Mark Reuss</b> , General Motors
<b>Ray Scott</b> , Lear	<b>Robert Taubman</b> , The Taubman Company
<b>Tony Tedeschi</b> , Detroit Medical Center	

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# Hospital chiefs: Lack of transit in metro Detroit is a public health issue

John Fox, Jene Meyer, Dr. Anthony J. Tedeschi and Wright L. Lassiter III Published 10:52 a.m. ET May 2, 2018

*The authors are the chiefs of Beaumont Health, Ascension Michigan, Detroit Medical Center and Henry Ford Health System.*



(Photo: Regina H. Boone, Detroit Free Press)

Strong public transit is fundamental to building and maintaining healthy communities in Southeast Michigan. Connecting our communities and removing the barriers that keep patients from accessing regular health care is critical to our region's future. The evidence is clear. Lack of access to a working regional transit system can have life and death consequences for residents of our community. It is a public health issue and an issue that we have the ability to solve.

Affordable and accessible transit boosts public health by making communities more walkable, providing greater ability to access health services and quality food. The region's lack of transit increases the number of missed appointments, causing delays in care that often result in emergency room visits that put patients at unnecessary risk. In addition, transit barriers inhibit patients from filling prescriptions, which can result in missed work days, increased healthcare costs and damage long-term health in our region.

**Metro Detroit CEOs: [Transit plan can't wait](https://www.freep.com/story/opinion/2018/04/15/ceos-transit-letter/510402002/)** (<https://www.freep.com/story/opinion/2018/04/15/ceos-transit-letter/510402002/>)

**More: [RTA seeking public comment on transit plan](https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2018/04/27/michigan-regional-transit-rt/557206002/)** (<https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2018/04/27/michigan-regional-transit-rt/557206002/>)

**More: [Regional transit is flash point as Big 4 leaders meet](https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2018/04/20/mike-duggan-warren-evans-l-brooks-patterson-mark-hackel-regional-transit/536774002/)** (<https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2018/04/20/mike-duggan-warren-evans-l-brooks-patterson-mark-hackel-regional-transit/536774002/>)

The elderly, children and the transit-dependent suffer most from our lack of transit. Yet, all of our communities would become healthier with a connected, thriving regional transit system.

The healthcare industry employs more than 320,000 people in southeast Michigan, according to the [2018 Michigan Health & Hospital Association \(MHA\) Economic Impact Report](https://www.mha.org/Newsroom/Publications/Economic-Impact) (<https://www.mha.org/Newsroom/Publications/Economic-Impact>). We are job providers with a workforce that requires a viable transportation system to get to and from their jobs. We are community partners that believe in the future of our region, and that transit is an essential element of helping metro Detroit compete on a national and global scale. But most importantly, we are care providers whose patients suffer because our region has yet to come together in support of a regional transit system. We are committed to changing that in 2018. The health outcomes within our reach make it clear that we cannot afford a further delay.

We urge our regional leadership to come together in support of a regional transit plan in 2018.

*This guest column is signed by:*

- John Fox, President and CEO of Beaumont Health
- Jean Meyer, Chief Operating Officer, Ascension Michigan
- Dr. Anthony J. Tedeschi, CEO of Detroit Medical Center
- Wright L. Lassiter III, President and CEO of Henry Ford Health System

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