



# Detroit Department of Transportation

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TO: Honorable City Planning Commission

FROM: Robert Cramer, Executive Director  
Detroit Department of Transportation

DATE: September 15, 2025

SUBJECT: Detroit Department of Transportation Service Enhancement Plan

This memorandum responds to the City Planning Commission's request for additional information on current and future plans to enhance service by the Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT), as part of the Commission's consideration of a zoning amendment designed to build more housing in the City and allow for greater density along key corridors.

DDOT's core priorities are:

- 1) Provide more frequent, reliable service
- 2) Operate all service as safely as possible
- 3) Provide a positive, enjoyable customer experience

DDOT is pursuing these core priorities in both the near-term and the long-term. In the near-term, DDOT has focused on providing more frequent and reliable service, with improved customer amenities, that returns its services to a pre-pandemic level. Over the long-term, DDOT is pursuing a vision for enhanced service along major corridors with passenger amenities that make riding the bus a convenient and enjoyable experience for all Detroiters.

Notably, the zoning updates being proposed to build more housing would support DDOT's long-term vision for improving transit in Detroit, as housing density and transit viability are complementary and mutually-reinforcing. Higher housing density is crucial for supporting a vibrant mix of neighborhood retail and services, as it ensures a sufficient customer base to sustain local businesses. This increased population concentration, in turn, increases the effectiveness and economic viability of frequent transit services. These improved transit options then make it easier for residents to access both local amenities and the broader city, reducing car dependency and traffic congestion. Ultimately, the synergy between dense housing, accessible retail, and robust transit creates more livable, walkable, and sustainable communities.

## **Frequent, Reliable, and Safe Service**

Over the last two years, DDOT has worked diligently to increase the frequency and reliability of its service, recovering from reductions to public transit during the pandemic and working to grow service beyond its pre-pandemic level. The department has made substantial progress, while recognizing that continued, long-term improvements will be necessary to build a public transit system that matches the aspirations of Detroiters and of DDOT as a department.

In terms of its work to recover pre-pandemic service levels, DDOT has increased peak service from 140 buses in 2023 to 200 today, an increase of over 40 percent. That growth has allowed DDOT to offer more frequent service across a wide range of its routes, including both its high-traffic, frequent routes and its lifeline routes. DDOT's greater service level has attracted more ridership: monthly ridership grew from 1.1 million in June 2024 to 1.3 million in June 2025.

Expanding service has required increasing the department's resources. With support from the Mayor, City Council, and Detroit residents, DDOT received a budget boost of \$20 million in FY26, the largest of any City department. The department has also invested deeply in human resources, hiring 150 more bus drivers and 40 mechanics since January 2024.

While these investments have resulted in major improvements to service, additional work continues to be necessary to reach our goals for service frequency and reliability. DDOT evaluates its service on a quarterly basis and is working to exceed pre-pandemic service levels by the end of this fiscal year. The department also closely monitors missed trips and on-time performance, refining how supervisors oversee service on the road to increase on-time trips.

DDOT has also taken steps to reform and improve its paratransit service, which offers door-to-door rides for passengers with disabilities. This year, DDOT launched same-day service, allowing riders to book same-day rides instead of requiring at least 24 hours' notice. The department has also changed its model for providing paratransit, bringing some services in-house, resulting in major improvements to service quality, with 98% of rides on time and significant increases in ridership.

DDOT has also worked to build a culture of safety across its fixed route and paratransit services. For example, DDOT conducts a weekly review and trend analysis of all accidents to identify training improvements and other opportunities to take preventative measures. The department also conducts random spot checks of safe operations and opened a safety tip line where customers can report incidents for further review. Finally, this year, City Council passed a passenger code of conduct for DDOT buses, providing clear expectations for conduct and specific responses to passengers who engage in unsafe or inappropriate behaviors on buses.

## **Customer Experience**

Attracting ridership to DDOT and increasing use of public transit requires offering a convenient and enjoyable experience for customers. DDOT has pursued this goal through a wide range of efforts, including:

- Opening the new \$31 million Jason Hargrove Transit Center to provide a state-of-the-art passenger terminal for customers near Eight Mile and Woodward
- Adding 60 new bus shelters this year, including solar lighting and USB ports for convenience, with another wave of 100 planned after that
- Adding 200 benches to bus stops this year and next, which will nearly double the number of bus stops with seating available
- Replacing DDOT's fareboxes to offer new, easier payment methods

## **Long-Term Planning**

As DDOT makes immediate improvements to its daily service, the department is also working toward a long-term vision for enhanced transit within the City and the region. Again, the zoning updates proposed to make it easier to build housing would support and reinforce DDOT's goals of improving transit in Detroit and making it a preferred option for Detroit residents.


First, DDOT is working to test, learn, and develop a model of bus rapid transit service tailored to Detroit's needs. Bus rapid transit refers to models that offer high-quality, high-frequency bus service using infrastructure and passenger amenity improvements to provide faster, more reliable, and more convenient service. To do so, DDOT has also launched service every ten minutes on two key corridors, E. Jefferson and Grand River, and is adding passenger amenities along E. Jefferson to identify which are most impactful for riders. These amenities include boarding islands to accelerate boarding, real-time "next bus" digital displays, and new bus shelters.

Allowing for increased density – both of housing and of amenities like retail – along key transit corridors would make it more viable to operate bus rapid transit by increasing the number of passengers within easy walking distance of transit. It would also increase the benefits of frequent transit service by increasing the number of destinations and passenger draws near the routes. As mentioned earlier, density and transit availability are complementary and mutually-reinforcing.

Building on the vision of frequent and attractive transit options, DDOT completed a years-long strategic planning and public engagement effort to develop a long-term plan for the system. The [final DDOT Reimagined strategic plan](#) includes [a vision for DDOT's network structure](#), transit route access for all Detroiters, connections with other mobility options, and key corridors in the City offering enhanced transit service and passenger amenities.

Importantly, both DDOT's near-term and long-term planning include close partnerships and co-planning with other transit agencies as well as other City departments. DDOT has a regular, open line of communication with partners at SMART, the People Mover, the QLINE, and MoGo to identify opportunities to align service, increase efficiency, or offer more transit options to Detroiters. DDOT also works side-by-side with City departments on joint projects; for example, DDOT and the Department of Public Works routinely partner on [safety improvements](#) along the transit network and at key transfer points.

Finally, DDOT's partnership with other City departments includes working with the Planning and Development Department (PDD) around mobility issues in the Plan Detroit process, combining each department's expertise, data, and strategic plans to develop a shared vision for bus service and land use planning that can mutually support each other.



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