


METRO

2025
SPECIAL REPORT



METRO'S JOURNEY:

HOW FIVE YEARS EXPANDED PUBLIC TRANSIT FOR METRO'S SERVICE AREA

In 2019, the community voted to approve a new millage which expires at the end of 2025. Metro has spent the last five years adapting public transit with additional services for our community and more technology to improve communication and customer experience.

Metro Link was launched in April 2024. Developed based on comprehensive ridership studies and extensive public input, this on-demand, app-based mobility solution addressed a persistent challenge for traditional public transportation: flexibility. At \$1.50 per ride (the same as the Metro bus fare), Metro Link extended the reach of the Metro service area, allowing riders to book trips that arrive within minutes.

Operating in distinct zones, Metro Link riders can either be transported to destinations located within their area or be linked to the nearest Metro bus stop to continue their travel plans. Currently, Metro Link is providing up to 7,000 rides to a growing rider base each month.

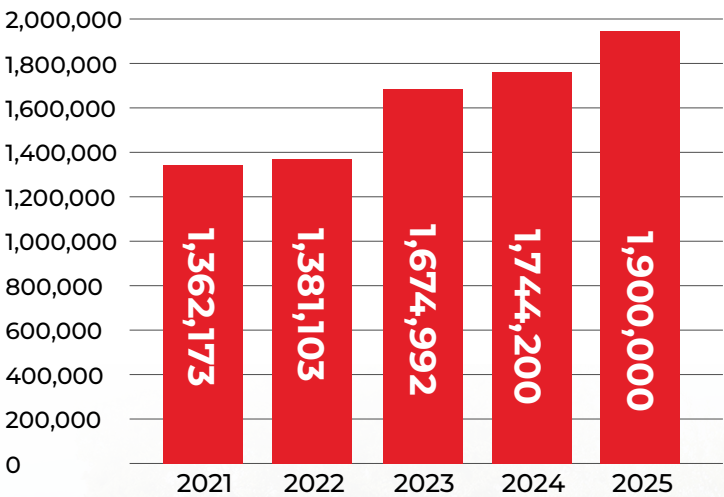
Communications enhancements started in 2023 as Metro strengthened its connection with the community through targeted use of online platforms and a new website. Riders now receive more robust and detailed social media updates via Facebook and X (formerly Twitter), with a Metro Instagram account debuting before the end of 2025. In addition, riders can subscribe to monthly emails that keep them informed about service changes, improvements, and transit news, and can scan available QR codes to share their own Metro experiences.

Metro continued improving technology for riders, including helpful apps like MyStop Mobile for route information and Token Transit for touchless fare

payment. Token Transit users can use this app to ride multiple Metro services, including Metro Link.

Metro has grown through these innovations in the last five years, with more people having greater access to the resources in our area. Today, Metro delivers even more value as a transit system — it's a mobility solution network that connects our riders to their community in modern ways.

Number of Rides on the Fixed Route System



The Metro bus is on track to reach 1.9 million rides in 2025



WHAT VALUE DOES METRO BRING TO THE COMMUNITY?

“

Being able to serve people from all walks of life.

Metro can take you to the grocery store, to the doctor's appointment, or to work. A lot of people use our services for educational purposes through partnerships with KVCC and Western. They're allowed to get discounted or unlimited bus services through those programs.”



Keshia Woodson-Sow
Metro Director of Operations

“

Almost everybody that works here lives here.

There's very few people that live outside of this community, so we have people that that live here, that work here, that go to school here, go to church here, go to grocery stores, volunteer here. And so it's really a big family.”



Earl Cox
Metro Coach Driver

“

It's ... an economic engine. It allows people to go out and spend and make money. It also gives them the sense of independence to be able to not have to rely on just family and friends to get them around.”



Paul Ecklund
ADA Specialist and Systems Advocate with
Disability Network Southwest Michigan

“

Oh, I love my passengers ... I'm on campus and I love them. They are so awesome ... They talk about a lot of different things. You know, you have to remember they're away from their parents. Nobody that they can turn to. And thank God, they trust us enough to turn to us.”



Renee Whitfield
Metro Coach Driver

WHY THE METRO MILLAGE MATTERS:

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE, AFFORDABLE TRANSIT SYSTEM FOR ALL



Investing in a strong transit system helps grow strong communities. If you have ridden any of Metro's fixed routes, Metro Connect, the Metro Share programs, or the newest addition, Metro Link on-demand service, then you have benefited from the Metro millage. But even if you don't use the services, Metro

benefits you by providing the hardworking people in our community with ways to get to work, school, stores and more. Tens of thousands of people are on the move with Metro.

You may be asking yourself, "What is the millage?" The millage is a tax rate applied to real estate for the benefit of our community.

The Metro millage supports many mobility solutions, which collectively provide 1.75 million rides annually across 21 bus routes, seven days a week. This demonstrates the system's essential role in keeping our citizens moving safely and efficiently.

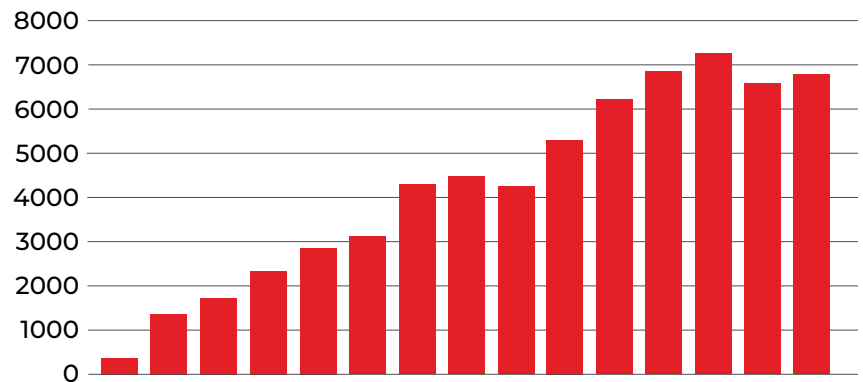
From an environmental perspective, public transportation significantly reduces carbon emissions by decreasing individual vehicle dependency. Metro's services offer residents sustainable alternatives for daily commuting, shopping, accessing essential services, contributing to cleaner air and reducing traffic congestion throughout the county.

The millage ensures transportation remains economical for all residents. Local millage funds comprise approximately 36% of Metro's \$25.6 million budget, leveraging additional state and federal

grants to help maintain affordable fares. This funding structure allows Metro to serve a diverse community of riders, including students, seniors, individuals with disabilities, veterans accessing VA services in Battle Creek and anyone seeking cost-effective transportation alternatives.

Economic research shows investment in public transportation yields a strong return, with every dollar generating \$5 in economic benefit. A robust transit system also increases property values by an average of 24%. For homeowners, the millage represents a cost of just \$110 annually on a \$200,000 property.

Metro Link Ridership Since the April 2024 Launch



From April 2024 to June 2025

By supporting Metro's renewal on Nov. 4, 2025, voters can ensure continued access to safe, sustainable and affordable transportation while strengthening Kalamazoo County's economic vitality and environmental future.



If you'd like to receive updates and information from Metro, join our mailing list.

RACHEL DEVRIES' METRO STORY

Eight years ago, Rachel DeVries had just graduated from high school and was contemplating her future. As a non-driver, her mobility was limited, making it difficult to get from home to a job, pursue educational opportunities or socialize in the community without relying on friends or family.

Rachel is vivacious and outgoing; sitting at home all day was not satisfying. She became involved with Disability Network to build skills and a community for herself. That community came with resources, one of which was travel training on Metro. From there, she began working with Director of Operations Keshia Woodson-Sow, who was working at the Metro customer service desk at the time. Metro staff were able to help Rachel develop solutions to help Rachel learn and safely ride the bus. That opened doors she needed.

She began riding the 11 – Stadium route, bonding with the driver because they shared the same last name. Through this initial relationship, she was able to discover new independence and autonomy.

"It was phenomenal!" she says, recounting how her relationship with another veteran Metro driver, Crystal, "blossomed" over time. Initially, Rachel said she was standoffish with Crystal and butted heads on a few occasions. However, Crystal was professional, patient and eventually, the driver and rider built a rapport. Rachel insists

that their interactions made her more confident about riding different routes and pushing herself to do more with the bus system.

"We all have personalities on the bus," Rachel said, "I love that!"

Ultimately, Rachel's story is one of relationships. While she values being able to get to work, shopping and appointments, she truly values the way her ability to independently travel and access her community has allowed her to build relationships with others. Rachel and her boyfriend met on the bus and ride together almost every day.

"I have people here that matter," she said, "I am so thankful for those relationships."



CHOICE RIDERS

Public transportation is critical to those who can't or don't drive, and those who need to save money. That's well-known. Less obvious are the benefits to those who want to save money, find it more convenient or want to help the environment.

"When public transportation works, studies show it results in more equitable access to employment, businesses can thrive, and more families have the income they need to enjoy a higher quality of life," said Clarence Lloyd, vice president and director of Southwest Michigan First's Chamber of Commerce.

According to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), for every dollar invested in public transportation, approximately \$4 in economic returns are generated. And for every \$1 billion in investments in the sector, 50,000 jobs are created and supported.

Studies show public transportation eases traffic congestion, connects people with jobs and opportunities and saves on commuting costs.

It also reduces air pollution. Buses emit 20% less carbon monoxide, 10% as many hydrocarbons and 75% as many nitrogen oxides per passenger mile as an automobile with a single occupant. The association states that public transportation

in the United States is responsible for saving 4.2 billion gallons of gasoline each year.

The benefits are clear, a little investment means major gains to people, communities, and the planet.

20%
LESS
CARBON



**Read more about
how Metro keeps
the community
connected.**

CHOOSING THE BUS:

RACHEL BAIR'S COMMUTE FOR HEALTH, PLANET AND PRODUCTIVITY

Rachel Bair owns a car and doesn't need to ride the bus.

Like some of her friends, she chooses to ride the bus.

As part of a healthy lifestyle, Bair also walks and rides her bike to and from work. And, of course, if the weather turns bad, she can put her bike on the front of a bus.

"I feel productive on the bus," says Bair. "I can check email or write a work plan."

Bair and her husband have lived in places – Ann Arbor and Chicago – where it made sense to own one car. "It made sense when we moved here to use public transportation, as we learned to do in those cities," she said.

"Walking, riding a bicycle and using transportation just became part of our lifestyle. It's good for our health, economic and part of our commitment to the environment and society."

Director of Sustainable Food Systems at Kalamazoo Valley Community College, Bair

works on all three KVCC campuses – Anna Whitten Campus downtown, the Healthy Living Campus and the Texas Township campus. She lives on Kalamazoo's West Side.

"I'm not sure people realize how reliable Metro is," says Bair. "The app shows me where the bus is and when it's going to be at my stop. When I need to, I can transfer at the Transportation Center."

Food is Rachel Bair's thing. "It's our most intimate connection to the environment." She said she likes to make choices – like walking, bicycling and riding the bus – that "protect us, our neighbors, and our planet." Several of her friends feel the same way.

Although the bus provides warmth and comfort on a cold winter day, Bair says the weather year-round is a lot better than what people give it credit for. "Just build weather into your lifestyle."





FROM EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

Metro is committed to providing innovative public transportation for all residents. Our flagship service, the Metro Bus, is joined by Metro Connect, Metro Link and Metro Share to build a modernized, flexible system which increases community access. Our mobility solutions add value to the lives of residents and overall health of Kalamazoo County:

- **Enhanced Economic Opportunity**

Reliable, affordable transit enables access to jobs, education, and healthcare, empowering individuals to participate in the economy and improve their livelihoods.



- **Social Value**

Public transportation breaks down social barriers by connecting people from different neighborhoods and backgrounds. This fosters a sense of community and reduces social isolation, particularly for those without access to private vehicles.

- **Environmental Sustainability**

Reduced reliance on private cars through robust public transit decreases traffic congestion, air pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to a healthier and more sustainable environment.

- **Improved Public Health**

Increased access to healthcare and recreational facilities through convenient public transportation promotes better physical and mental health.

- **Enhanced Quality of Life**

All of the above factors contribute to more people having more access to their community and greater opportunities for success.

Metro's affordable and flexible mobility solutions are not merely about moving people; they are part of building a strong, prosperous, and sustainable community where everyone has the opportunity to contribute and thrive.



**WATCH THE 2025
SPECIAL REPORT
VIDEOS.**



Metro serves a really important role in the region. Transportation, I think, is the backbone of our community from an economic development standpoint. From an access standpoint, we have people that don't have the ability to drive, don't have vehicles ... That's really why I got involved, ... because it's a key part of the growth of the Kalamazoo region."



Curtis Aardema

Chair of the Central County Transportation Authority (CCTA)
and the Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority (KCTA)