

# Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority



Annual Report  
2020

## Message from the Director

As the Executive Director of the Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority (TCATA), it is my pleasure to present this 2020 Annual Report to the Benton Harbor City Commission, the TCATA Board of Trustees, and to anyone interested in the operations of our agency, the designated recipient of public transportation funding for the Benton Harbor-Saint Joseph-Fairplain MI Urbanized Area.

The year began well, as we put in place two long planned initiatives. It involved replacing pencil and paper based dispatching with a computer tablet based system that made dispatching easier and record keeping more accurate. We also launched the Yellow Route that provides regularly scheduled service connecting people in Harbor Towers, Benton Manor, KPEP, Blossom Acres, Buss Housing and the Boys and Girls Club to Intercare where people can connect to the Blue Route out to Fairplain Mall Area.

And then in the middle of March, COVID-19 hit and we were put in the position of discouraging all but essential trips. Ridership by April had dropped by more than half. Door to door, demand response style trips declined more than those on our fixed routes, whose riders tend to be essential workers going back and forth to their jobs. Due to safety concerns, enhanced cleaning of the buses was instituted, protective barriers were put in place in the buses, and personal protective equipment was provided to all drivers and employees. Due to additional federal funding provided by the CARES Act, we were able to withstand the loss of revenue from the farebox and to help pay for unexpected costs associated with dealing with the pandemic.

Despite the many challenges and hardships that TCATA and all public transit agencies have had to deal with this past year, we continue to face the future with an eye toward recovery and improvement. We will be replacing our facility security cameras and phone system. We will be looking to upgrade our dispatch software capabilities. Over the course of the year, all our employees will participate in a twenty hour long Transit Operator Development Course.

This past year has proved once again how important the people of TCATA are to the functioning of our agency. In the face of disease, fear, and uncertainty, we have persevered and continued to provide our essential service. For that I am extremely grateful and appreciative. I would also like to note with thanks and respect the many years of service to our Board of Trustees by the former members Anthony Andrews, Juanita Henry, and Emma Kinnard.

In closing, I would like to dedicate this annual report to the memory of Jalita Joseph, a long time TCATA employee who passed away this past April. Her warm smile and friendly demeanor were appreciated by all and will be sadly missed.

*Paul Gillespie*  
Executive Director



### 2020 Board of Trustees:

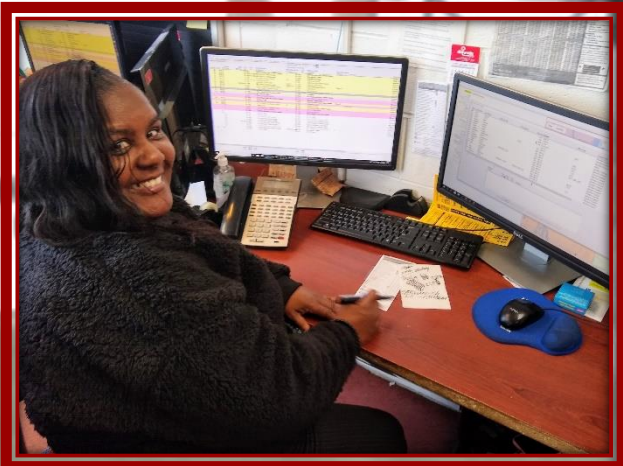
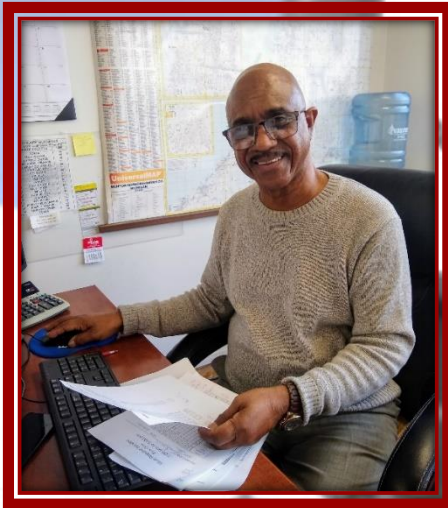
Anthony Andrews, *Chairperson*  
Emma Kinard, *Secretary*

James Childs, *Trustee*  
Juanita Henry, *Trustee*  
Lisa Varrie, *Trustee*

# Making a Difference Together

During the Covid-19 pandemic, TCATA continued to provide trips for life sustaining purposes including trips to the grocery store, medical visits and employment.

According to the Department of Homeland Security, “essential workers are those who conduct a range of operations and services that are typically essential to continue critical infrastructure operations.” Public transit workers are among those considered to be in essential industries, and so, since March 24<sup>th</sup> when the Governor issued her first stay at home order, TCATA drivers, dispatches, and managers have been on the job in person providing the transportation services that many Twin Cities Area residents have continued to depend on.



*“The biggest challenge working through the pandemic is being on top of things to ensure that everyone is safe.”*

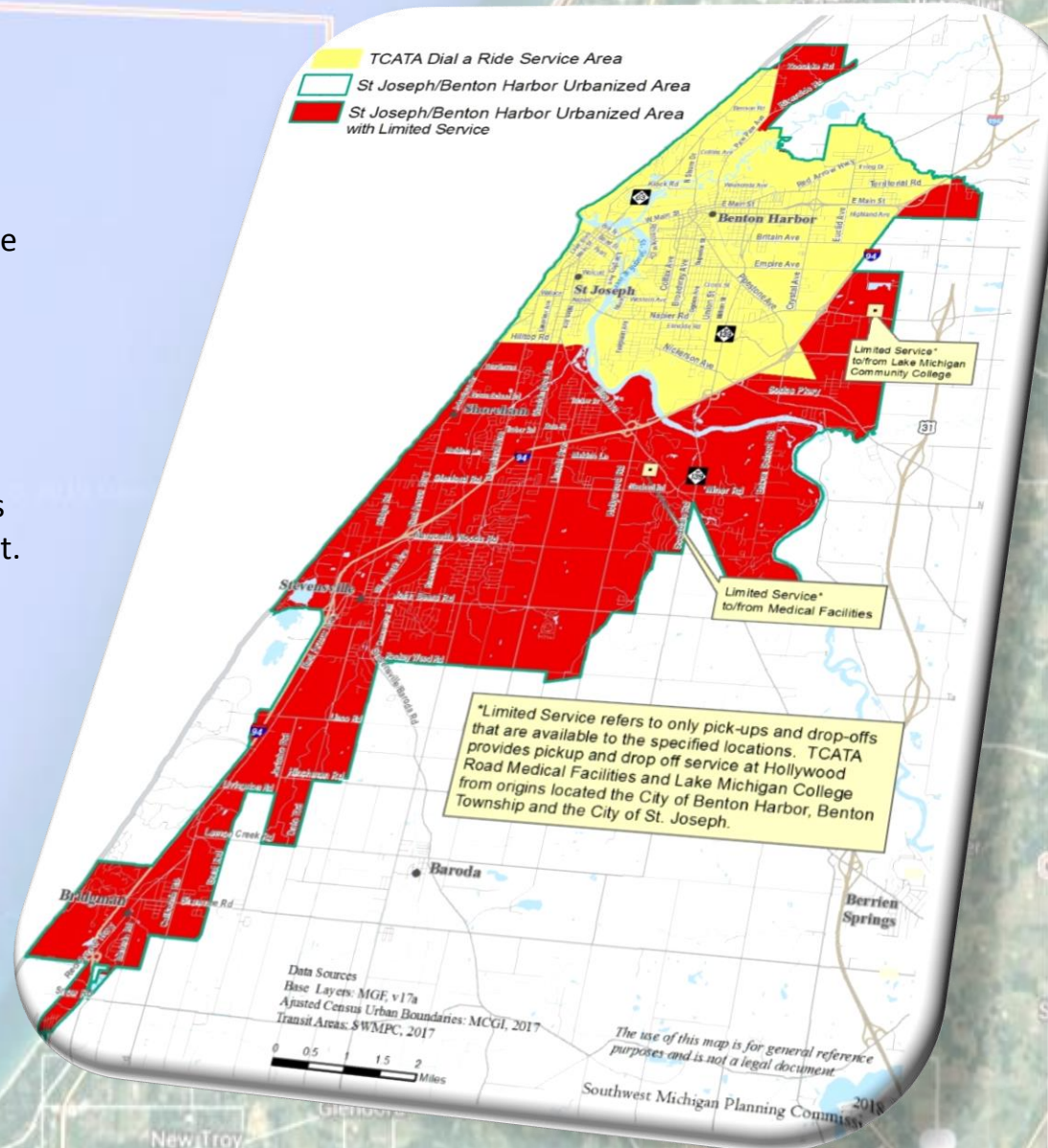


## Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority Service Area

Today, TCATA offers demand response and fixed route service to approximately 33,000 residents within a fourteen square mile service area, about fifty three percent of the Benton Harbor-St. Joseph-Fair Plain Urbanized Area.

The remaining forty seven percent of the Benton Harbor-St. Joseph-Fair Plain Urbanized Area receives limited service from TCATA in portions of Royalton, St. Joseph Charter Township and Lincoln Township. This service includes:

- Drop-off and pick up service to medical facilities along Hollywood Road
- Fixed route service to employment destinations along Red Arrow Highway.
- Drop-off and pick up service at Lake Michigan College and Berrien County Health Department.



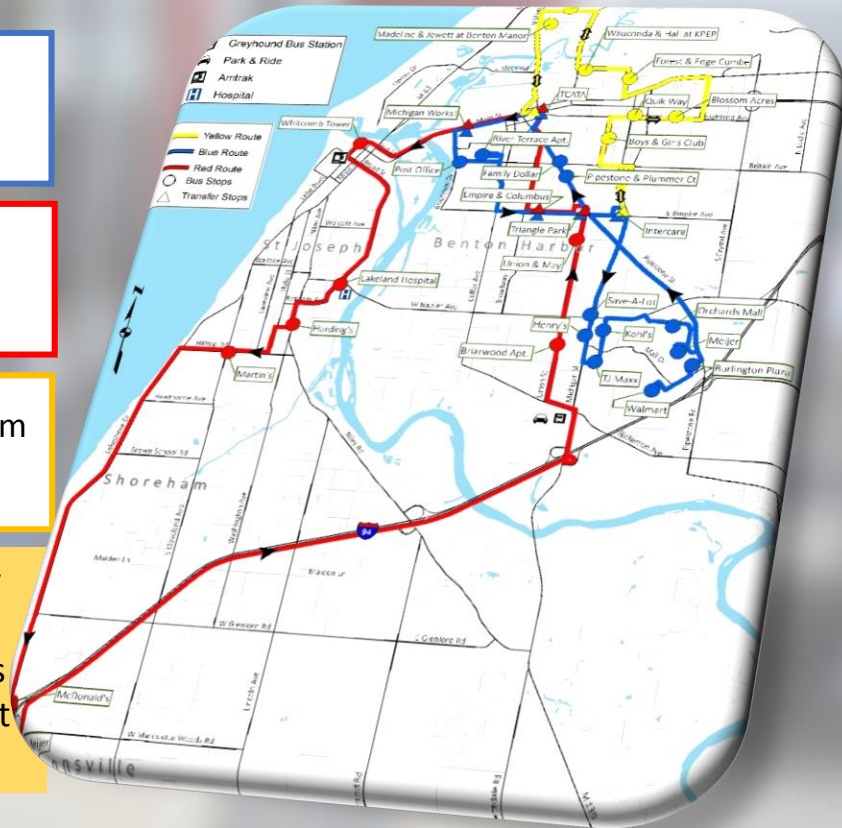
# TCATA Fixed Route Service

**Blue Route** The route operates Monday through Friday from 6:00 am – 10:00 pm and on Saturday from 8:00 am – 10:00 pm.

**Red Route** The route operates Monday through Friday from 6:00 am – 10:00 pm and on Saturday from 8:00 am – 10:00 pm.

**Yellow Route\*** The route operates Monday through Friday from 7:00 am – 5:00 pm

In 2020 TCATA launched the Yellow Route that provides regularly scheduled service connecting people in Harbor Towers, Benton Manor, KPEP, Blossom Acres, Buss Housing and the Boys and Girls Club to Intercare where people can connect to the Blue Route out to Fairplain Mall Area.

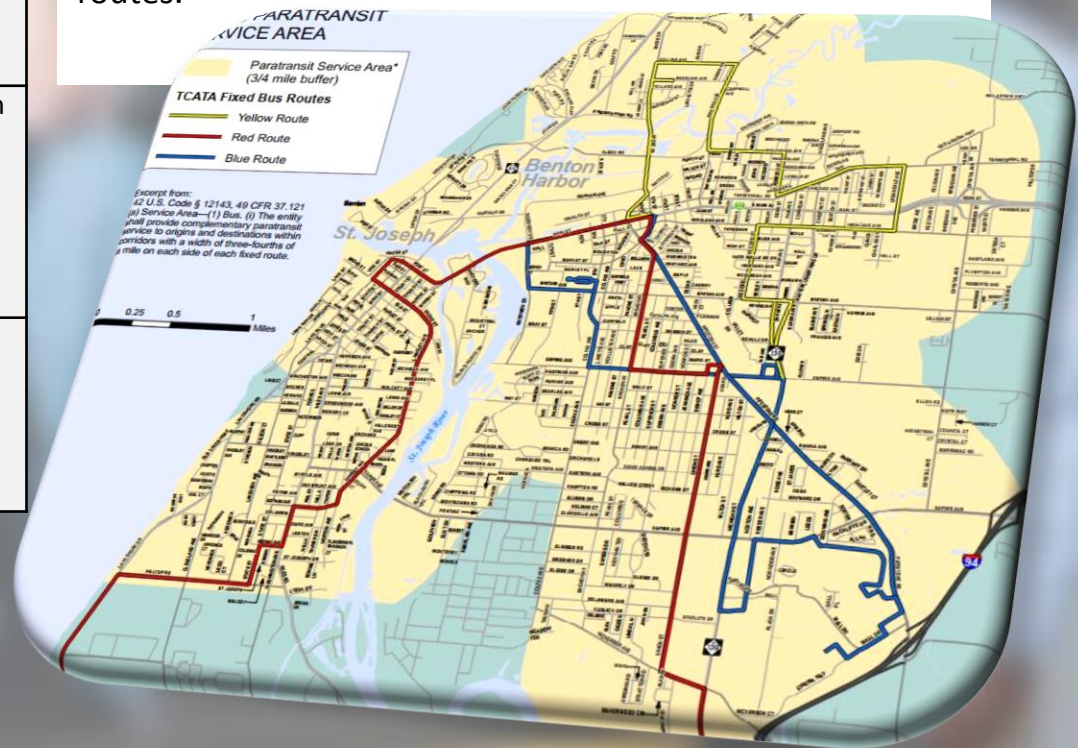


\* Route launched 1/15/2020

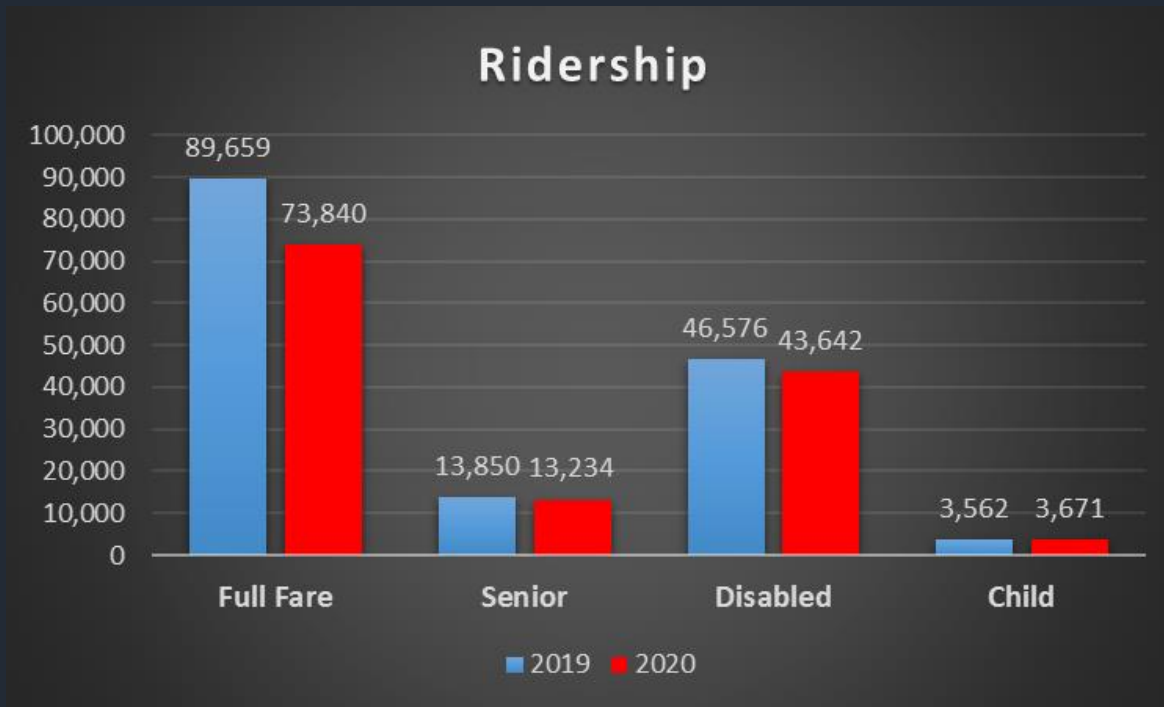
# TCATA Access – Paratransit Service

This paratransit service is required by the Americans with Disabilities Act and is provided to customers whose disability or health condition prevents them from using TCATA fixed route service for some or all of their travel. Only persons who are certified by TCATA are eligible to ride TCATA Access Paratransit. Trips are provided at the same times and within the same geographic areas as fixed routes.

Service Area	Days	Hours of Service
<b>BLUE ROUTE:</b> Origins and destinations must be within ¼ mile of Blue Route.	Mon. – Fri.  Saturday	6: 00 am -10:00 pm  8: 00 am -10:00 pm
<b>RED ROUTE:</b> Origins and destinations must be within 3 /4 mile of Red Route and within TCATA service area.	Mon. – Fri.  Saturday	6: 00 am -10:00 pm  8:00 am -10:00 pm
<b>YELLOW ROUTE:</b> Origins and destinations must be within ¼ mile of Yellow Route.	Mon. – Fri.	7: 00 am -5:00 pm



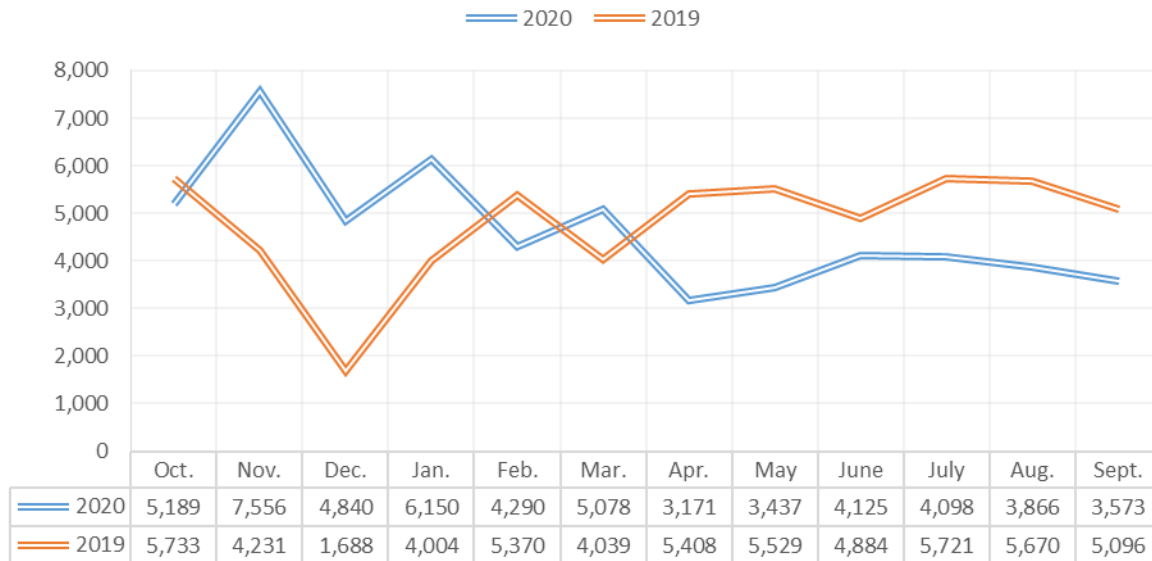
# TCATA Passengers



Source: TCATA 2019 & 2020 Demand Response Service Operations Report

# How Many People Used TCATA Fixed Route Service?

FIXED ROUTE RIDERSHIP 2019 & 2020



## COVID 19 Impacts

Fixed route service saw a small reduction of 3.5 % in 2020 compared to Demand Response Service which experienced a 12.5 % reduction in ridership.



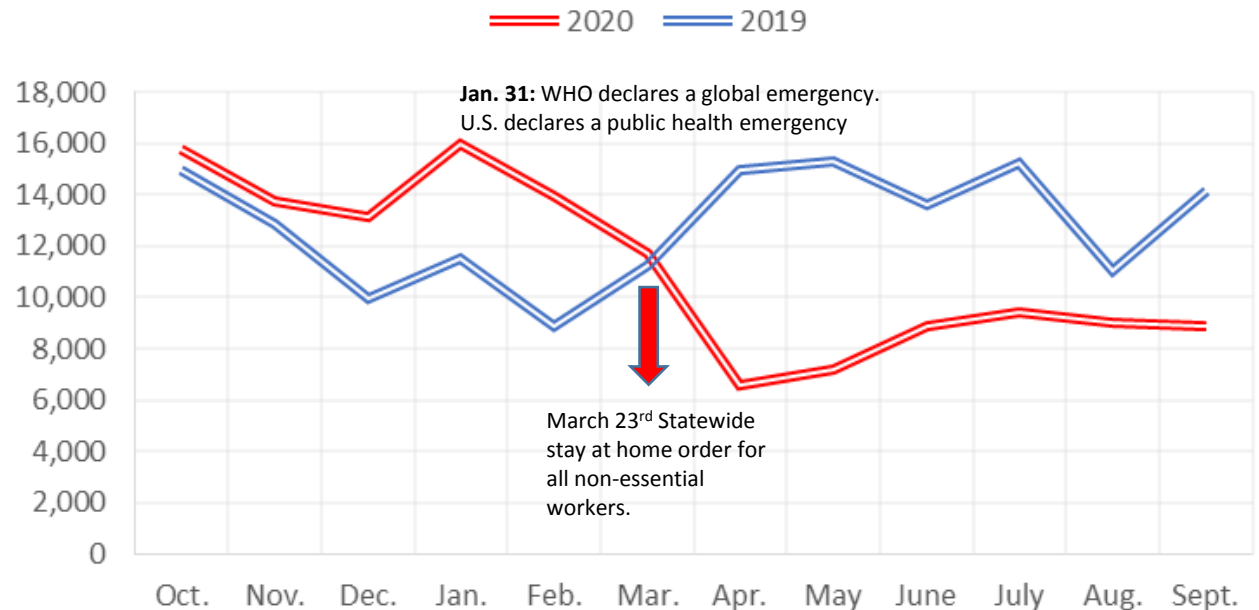
# COVID 19 Impact on Ridership

In fiscal 2020 transit ridership was trending favorably October through January. Then came the crippling effects of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in March, all but shutting down many of the communities in Berrien County.

Since COVID-19 restrictions began in March ridership in each of the months following through May saw a considerable drop in ridership.

Overall demand response ridership decreased by 12.5 percent from fiscal 2019.

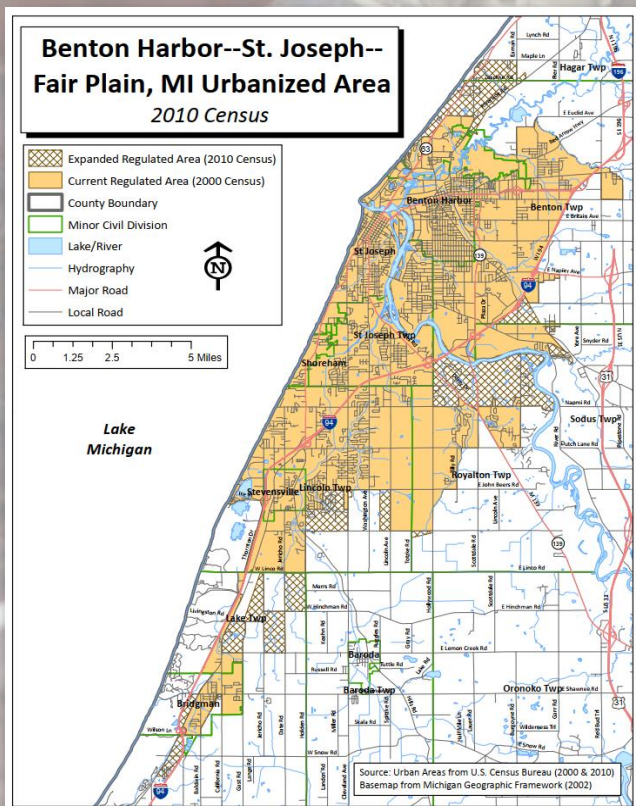
## DEMAND RESPONSE RIDERSHIP



Source: TCATA 2019 & 2020 Ridership Report

# Public Transit Funding Basics

Public transit in Michigan is funded through a combination of federal, state and local funding sources.



## FEDERAL FUNDING:

- TCATA is the designated recipient of FTA 5307 Urban formula funding for the Benton Harbor-St. Joseph-Fair Plain Urbanized Area. (Funding is formulated based on population, density and low income population.)

## STATE FUNDING:

- The state of Michigan reimburses TCATA for approximately 38% of eligible operating expenses.
- The state of Michigan provides a 20 % match for capital purchases

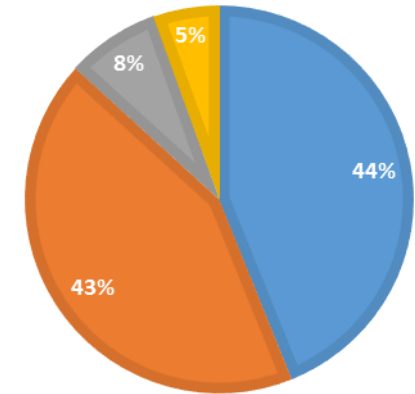
## LOCAL FUNDING:

- City of Benton Harbor Millage levies 1.25 mills on all real and tangible personal property in the City of Benton Harbor for the exclusive purpose of financing the contractual obligation created by the contract between the City of Benton Harbor and the Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority for a period of 20 years beginning in 2008.
- Passenger Fares cover approximately 8% of the total cost to provide the ride.

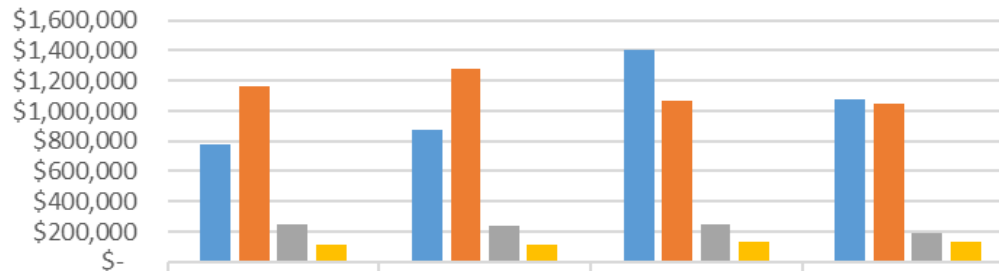
# Revenue Sources

## 2020 REVENUE SOURCES

■ Federal ■ State ■ Fares ■ BH Millage



## Revenue by Type



	2017	2018	2019	2020
■ Federal	\$777,380	\$870,456	\$1,406,469	\$1,076,508
■ State	\$1,158,832	\$1,282,628	\$1,066,783	\$1,051,637
■ Fares	\$250,121	\$242,955	\$247,163	\$190,924
■ BH Millage	\$109,129	\$109,785	\$130,874	\$132,952

■ Federal ■ State ■ Fares ■ BH Millage

Due to additional federal funding provided by the CARES Act, TCATA was able to withstand the loss of revenue from the farebox and to help pay for unexpected costs associated with dealing with the pandemic

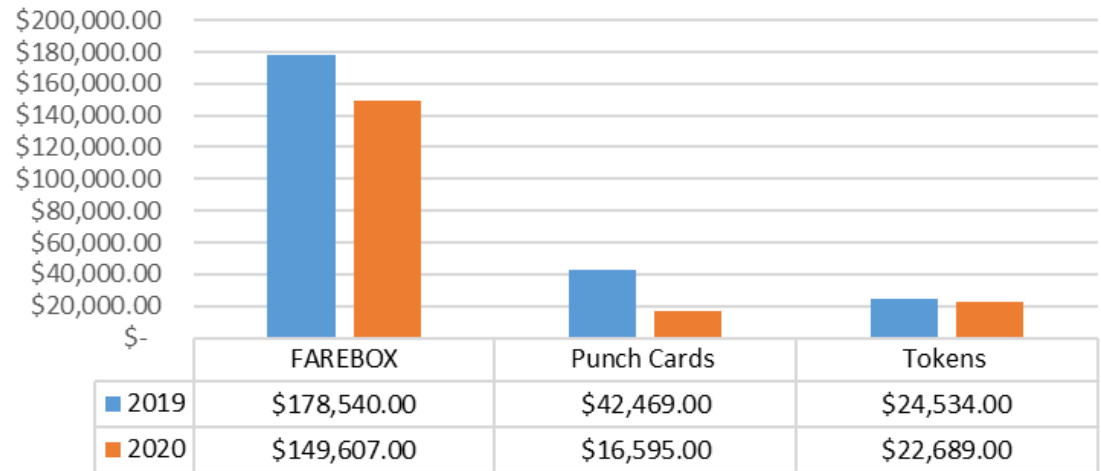
Source: TCATA 2015-2019 Profit and Loss Reports

# Passenger Revenue

A variety of passenger fares are collected, they include Farebox, Prepaid Punch Cards and Tokens.

Due to reduced ridership because of Covid 19, passenger fares were down by over 20 % compared to 2019.

Passenger Revenue by Type



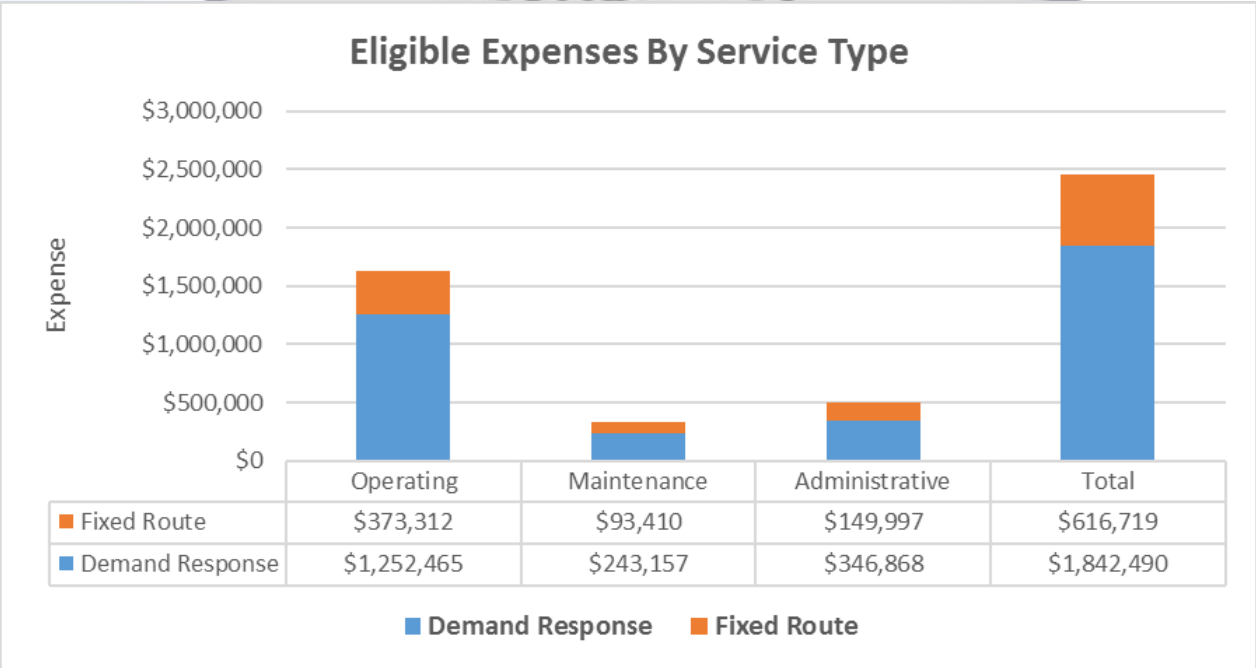
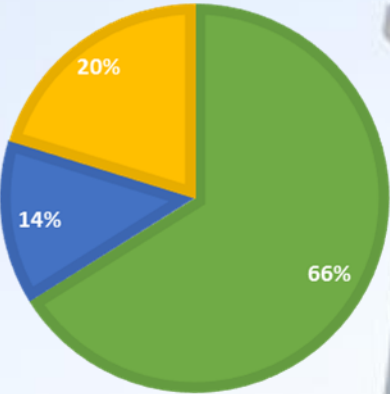
■ 2019 ■ 2020

# Expenses - 2020



## 2020 ELIGIBLE EXPENCES

■ Operating ■ Maintenance ■ Administrative



Source: TCATA 2020 Revenue & Expense Schedule



### MAINTENANCE

Purchased wrecker to allow transport of larger busses.

#### **Funding**

Federal: \$ 141,292

State: \$ 35,323

## 2020 Capital Purchases



### ADMINISTRATIVE CARS

Replaced two 2010 sedans with two hybrid vehicles.

#### **Funding**

Federal: \$29,190

State: \$ 7,297



### MAINTENANCE

Power washer and steamer was purchased to clean busses.

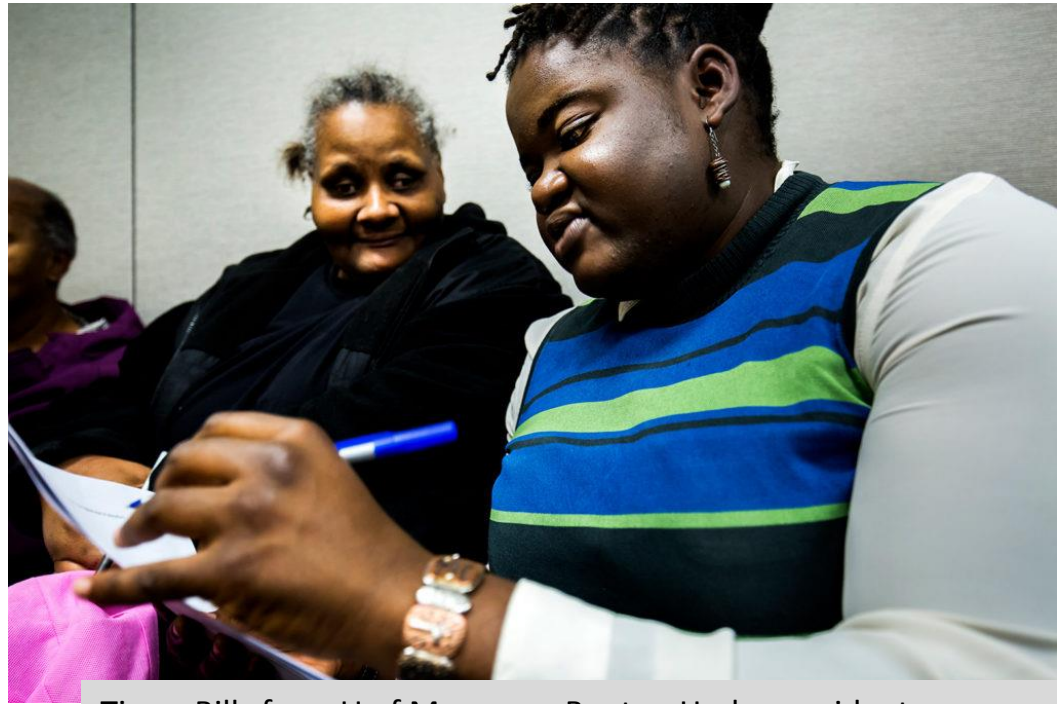
#### **Funding**

Federal: \$ 7220

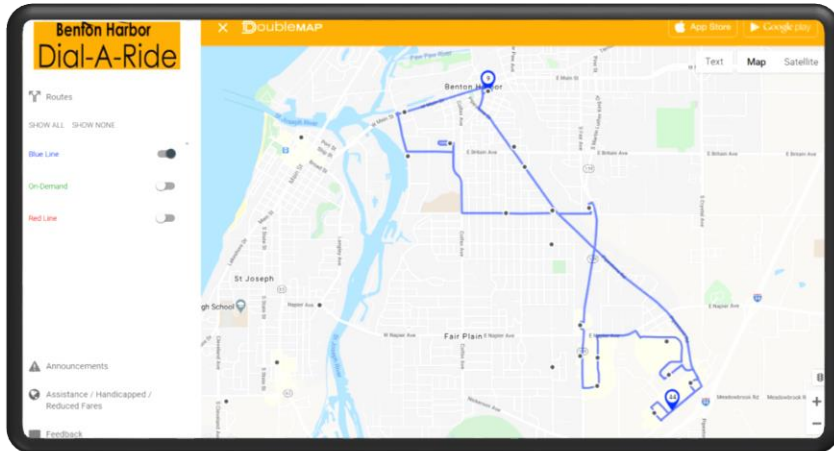
State: \$

# Working Toward Innovative Transportation Solutions

We will continue working with a team of researchers from the University of Michigan on a National Science Foundation funded study entitled *“Data Informed Scenario Planning for Mobility Decision Making in Resource Constrained Communities.”* This study seeks to find out where technology intersects with reality in order to understand our community and improve service.



Tierra Bills from U of M surveys Benton Harbor residents on their travel needs.



TCATA's Double Map App provides real-time arrival information to TCATA customers for the fixed route bus service.

[Go to Benton Harbor Live Bus Tracker](#)

# Key Issues & Uncertainties Today and in the Future

## REVENUE & COST MANAGEMENT

Sustaining a level of service while adapting to the uncertainties in future funding from state and federal funding sources because of loss of tax revenue due to Covid-19.

Managing fluctuations in taxable values and fares that facilitates a sustainable source of match needed for federal funds.

Examining appropriate funding options needed to meet the transportation needs of the urbanized area.

Monitoring significant decline of fare revenue due to decrease of ridership during and after pandemic.

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & HEALTH

Obtaining the skill sets needed to handle advancements in technologies associated with the operation and maintenance of transit vehicles.

Recruitment and retention of drivers with CDL.

Regulatory mandates such as physical examinations and drug tests that determine who is employable in safety-sensitive positions.





# TCATA By The Numbers—2020

TCATA service area population: **33,000**

Annual Riders: **189,760**



Dial a Ride Passengers: **134,387**

Fixed Route Passengers: **55,373**



Expense Per Passenger Trip: **\$12.95**

Expense Per Mile: **\$ 6.38**

Annual Fare Received, 8% of Operating Expense: **\$188,891**

Annual Millage Received, 5% of Operating Expense: **\$132,952**



TCATA Current Employees: **44**

# A LOOK BACK THROUGH THE YEARS...



## 1974

The Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority (TCATA) is incorporated on July 1st to provide public transportation services under the Michigan Mass Transportation System Authorities Act 55 of 1963. It is formed as a cooperative venture by Benton Harbor, Saint Joseph, Benton Township, Saint Joseph Township, and Lincoln Township. It operates both demand response "Dial-A-Ride" service as well as two fixed routes. Fare is 50 cents, 25 cents for seniors and people with disabilities, and free for children under twelve. Service begins on September 31st. Wilbert Brown is the first Director.

## 1975

During its second year of operation, a local financial contribution is required to fund the system. As a result, Lincoln Township trustees, citing cost, decide to withdraw from the Authority. Other jurisdictions vote to remain in the system and provide financial support. In its first year of operation, TCATA carries 140,000 passengers. Its budget is \$194,000, of which \$150,000 is supplied by federal and state funds, and \$44,000 is generated in fares. A local resident, Joseph Mammina, owner of Twin City Motor Transit Inc., files a \$200,000 lawsuit against TCATA and participating jurisdictions, claiming TCATA illegally competes with his business and seeks a permanent injunction against its operation.

## 1976

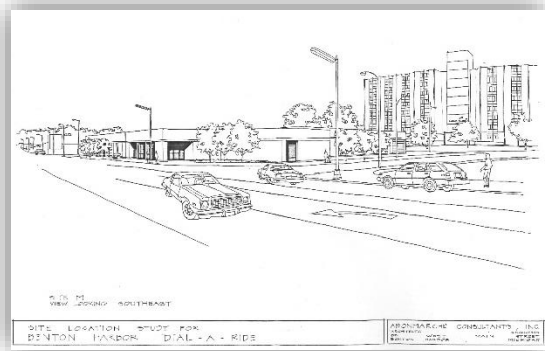
Voters in Saint Joseph Township, by a 3-1 margin, reject a millage proposal to support TCATA, despite nearly 10,000 rides being given in the Township in the previous year. They withdraw on July 1st.

## 1977

The Saint Joseph City Commission votes to drop out of the Authority, leaving only Benton Harbor and Benton Township as members. TCATA raises regular fares to 75 cents, senior fares to 35 cents, and child fares to 50 cents.

## 1979

Benton Township supervisors vote to drop out of the Authority, citing financial hardship. This leaves the City of Benton Harbor as the only one of the original five jurisdictions to remain in the Authority. Benton Harbor supports TCATA through an annual contribution from the city budget.



**1982**

TCATA celebrates the milestone of having served one million customers (passengers) since its founding in 1974.

**1984**

The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission contracts with Abonmarche Consultants for a site location study for a bus storage and maintenance facility .

**1985**

TCATA announces plans to build new facility at 275 East Wall Street on the site of the former Milner Hotel. It has been located at 271 Market Street since its inception and has grown too big for that facility.

**1987**

After losing an initial vote in June, in August Benton Harbor voters approve a 1.25 mill property tax levy to provide ongoing financial support to the Authority. The levy is good for twenty years. Marketing Study is completed with recommendations for methods to increase ridership.

**1988**

TCATA breaks ground on a new administration and maintenance facility at 275 East Wall Street in downtown Benton Harbor.

**1989**

In September, TCATA opens its new facility. The \$1.5 million dollar building was paid for with 80% federal and 20% state funding. Service is extended to Saturdays as well as Monday-Friday.

**1990**

TCATA begins offering a fixed route service from downtown to the Mall Area along Pipestone.

**1991**

TCATA employees vote to join AFSCME union

**1993** TCATA Board requests financial contributions from Benton Township or service could be curtailed. Township refuses to provide funding. Service continues.



## 2001

TCATA Board votes to name facility after 27 year Director Wilbert Brown

**2003** TCATA extends service to medical facilities located in Saint Joseph and Royalton Townships on Niles Avenue and Hollywood Road. Lakeland provides seed funding to TCATA for service to new facility. (Three year program - \$100,000, \$50,000, and \$25,000 in 2005)

## 2006

TCATA is awarded \$619,000 in countywide competitive CMAQ federal and state funding for three new buses and a new fixed route for a two year period.

## 2007

After 32 years as Executive Director, Wilbert Brown retires and is replaced as Director by Bill Purvis, the longtime assistant director. Benton Harbor voters extend for twenty years the 1.25 mill tax to support TCATA. TCATA serves its 5 millionth passenger, Frances White of Benton Township, who is awarded a lifetime pass.

## 2009

The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) authored grant on behalf of TCATA for Red Route and additional hours for Blue Route. This grant required no local match and has funded the routes for the past 11 years. Funding totals approximately \$3.8 million dollars. (\$350,000 annually) SWMPC, TCATA plan and market routes. Products included design, production and installation of signs. (Partnered with City of St. Joseph for production and installation of signs at no cost to TCATA)

## 2010

SWMPC authored grant on behalf of TCATA for Mobility Manager Program. This grant required no local match and has been funded for the past 10 years. Funding total: (\$75,000 annually) TCATA receives \$730,000 in America Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding to purchase 8 busses, two staff cars, bike racks, bus shelters and shop equipment.

## 2012

MyWayThere.org website is launched – TCATA has online information for the first time.

## 2017

Executive Director Bill Purvis retires and is replaced by Alex Little.

## 2019

Paul Gillespie is hired to replace Alex Little

## 2020

Yellow Route begins serving housing in the City of Benton Harbor, Benton Township, Intercare and Boys and Girls Club.



# QUESTIONS

For additional information regarding the material presented in this report contact:

**Paul Gillespie, Director**

Phone: 269-927-2268

Email: [pgillespie@tcatabus.org](mailto:pgillespie@tcatabus.org)

**We encourage you to attend TCATA monthly board meetings.**

4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month

Meeting information can be found here:

<https://www.mywaythere.org/tcatameetings.asp>