

Testimony for the Senate Transportation Committee on SB909, 911, 912 & 967 - March 13, 2012

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, the National Motorists Association wishes to support the goals for the set of bills today to establish and fund a Southeast Michigan Regional Transit Authority. But citizens need clear guarantees the results do not harm existing private and commercial road users.

There is no doubt that southeast Michigan needs improved, high-speed bus service. And, there is no doubt that bus rapid transit is far preferable to rail transit, due to its enormous relative cost-effectiveness and future route flexibility.

However, bus rapid transit must be designed to not worsen travel for the great majority of users who use these corridors in automobiles and commercial vehicles. If not properly done, such systems could drastically reduce the utility of our main roads for automobile and truck travel by reducing capacity, by making turns inconvenient or circuitous, and by adversely disrupting the signal progression.

The goal should be to speed up ALL traffic, including express and local buses. Then we won't reduce existing capacity in order to guarantee preferentially better service for new bus rapid transit systems, at the unacceptable expense of increasing travel times and congestion for existing road users.

Among other things, any dedicated lanes for bus rapid transit must be new capacity, not a reduction in the current number of lanes for existing automobile and truck travel. That would be a disaster for current users who have paid for the roads already, most of whom do not live and/or work in areas where they could take advantage of any new bus rapid transit systems.

A registration surtax on top of real property taxes for transit will be a hard sell to voters, but not impossible, provided that automobile and truck owners are guaranteed that they will not be paying higher fees for less-adequate road service. If we want voters to support improved transit, the transit plan must not leave private and commercial motorists with worse road conditions than we have now.

The National Motorists Association supports the goals of these bills, but believes serious amendments are needed to guarantee that the existing usability of the roads for automobiles and trucks is not harmed.

Respectfully submitted,



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