

Michigan Chronicle

Wayne County Transit Millage: Voter Education FAQ

1. What is the Wayne County Transit Millage?

A millage is the rate used to calculate property taxes each year. The Wayne County Transit Millage is a renewal for most communities in Wayne County, meaning no increase in the existing millage rate for those communities which includes and its passage will bring service to 17 additional communities. Communities that currently receive SMART service would not see an increase in their millage rate.

2. What are voters deciding on the Aug. 4 ballot?

On Aug. 4, 2026, Wayne County voters decide a countywide ballot question on dedicated funding for SMART, the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation.

3. What is SMART, and how is it different from DDOT?

SMART is the regional bus system that connects communities across Southeast Michigan. DDOT, the Detroit Department of Transportation, is the City of Detroit's own bus system. They are separate operations that serve different routes.

4. I live in Detroit and already pay for DDOT. Why is this on my ballot?

SMART and DDOT are separate systems. DDOT runs service within Detroit. SMART runs the regional network including Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb counties that connects Detroit to jobs, health care, school and services across Wayne County and beyond. Revenue collected in Detroit stays in Detroit. This question is about funding that regional connection.

5. What would the funding pay for?

It supports regional bus service: day-to-day operations such as vehicles, drivers, maintenance, and customer service, helping ensure trips to work, school, healthcare, and everyday destinations remain available. This includes local bus routes, SMART Flex on-demand service, paratransit for riders with disabilities, and coordination with transit providers across Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb counties.

6. What would it cost me?

About \$8 a month for a home with a market value near \$200,000, roughly \$98 a year.

7. How long would it last, and how much would it raise?

10 years, generating approximately \$50 million a year for Wayne County transit.

8. I do not ride the bus. Why does this matter to me?

A region is only as strong as its ability to move. Employers need workers who can reach the job. Hospitals, stores, schools and care providers need staff and customers who can get to them. Most people who do not ride still know someone who depends on transit, a parent, a coworker, a caregiver or a student. Reliable regional transit is infrastructure that supports the whole county's economy, not only the people on the bus.

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9. What does a countywide vote mean for my community? What happens if the funding is approved, and what happens if it is not?

Because of a recent state law, communities can no longer opt out, meaning all registered voters in Wayne County will have their voices heard on this countywide tax. For the Aug. 4 election the whole county votes as one block, and a simple countywide majority decides the result for everyone.

If it passes, applies across all 43 Wayne County communities for 10 years. For the 26 communities already in SMART, it is a renewal and the rate does not go up. For the 17 communities that had opted out, such as Plymouth, Livonia and Canton, it is new funding. I

If it does not pass, the same countywide rule works in reverse. Because one majority decides for the whole county, a single community cannot keep its own service if the countywide measure fails. SMART would lose the local Wayne County funding it runs on, and suburban routes, dial-a-ride, and specialized service for seniors and people with disabilities would end across the county.

In short, the county decides together. It either funds one continuous countywide transit system, or the regional suburban network loses its local funding.

10. Is this the same vote that Oakland and Macomb counties had?

Each county runs its own millage on its own legal timeline — Macomb is renewing a 2022 measure that's expiring, Oakland's 2022 measure still has years to run, and Wayne is holding its first-ever full-county vote this August after years of a fragmented opt-in/opt-out system.

11. When and how can I vote?

Absentee ballots are in voters' hands now, and Election Day is Aug. 4, 2026. For registration, absentee ballots, drop-box locations and polling places, contact your local clerk or visit the Wayne County Clerk Voter Education page at: <https://bit.ly/4ailfY0>

12. Where can I get official information about SMART and the millage?

bit.ly/SMARTMovesUs