3. **Public Outreach Efforts**

Public outreach efforts for the study served three purposes:

- Gather public opinion about public transit generally and about specific services operating in the TMACOG area.
- Educate the public about innovations in public transit that have been implemented successfully in other cities, and the potential applicability of these services in the TMACOG area.
- Gather public reaction to the findings and recommendations of the study.

The study’s extensive public outreach efforts used a variety of means to ensure that every member of the community had an opportunity to express his or her opinions about public transportation services in the region. These approaches included:

- A telephone survey of 800 residents of the region
- Distribution of brochures and printed materials
- An informational survey, distributed on buses, at community events, and by public service and non-profit agencies throughout the region
- Two sets of traditional public meetings
- A series of outreach events at several public locations in the study area
- Focus groups, targeting groups likely to be under-represented in the other efforts
- Interviews with local stakeholders (business and community leaders)
- Media outreach and paid advertising, including publication of the informational survey in various newspapers
- Outreach via the Internet and receipt of comments by phone, fax, e-mail and in Spanish

The study pursued a “mosaic” approach, in which public input is gathered from a variety of sources and is placed together in its context to form the full picture of public opinion on the subject. Public outreach, in turn, is but one element in the larger study, which includes information from a variety of quantitative and qualitative information sources, used to form a full picture of public transit in the TMACOG region.

### 3.1 Telephone Survey

A telephone survey of 800 residents of the study area was conducted in May 2003. Odesky and Associates, a research firm with experience performing surveys in the northwestern Ohio/southeastern Michigan area, assisted in developing the survey instrument and conducted the survey under the auspices of the study. The survey gathered general public opinion regarding public transit operations in the TMACOG region, probed the public’s opinion about various potential deficiencies in the existing system, and tested the appeal of several possible new services that could be offered by public transit in the future. The telephone survey reached a theoretically random sample of households in the TMACOG region. Therefore, it provides the context for understanding the comments and responses that the study has received from other sources. The random survey is valuable because the other public input tended to over-represent the small percentage of the population in the region that today regularly uses transit.
The survey used a geographically stratified random sample of 800 households in the study area, using proven and scientifically valid telephone surveying techniques to overcome various types of potential bias in the sample or the survey. Thus, to the greatest degree practical, all residents of the TMACOG area had an equal chance to provide input to the study in this format. This technique ensured that the study would have a representation of the true range of opinion in the study area to compare against opinions collected by other public input and outreach efforts of the study. These other forms of input provide valuable insights into the opinions of the public, but often suffer from various forms of bias, principally in sample selection, that make the results scientifically invalid. Selection bias and other forms of survey bias, to the greatest extent possible, are absent in the telephone survey. As such, the telephone survey provides a quantitative, as well as qualitative, sample of public opinion in the region. Results of the telephone survey were used in the development of the estimate of unmet demand, the study’s quantitative estimate of unmet demand for transit in the region.

A more detailed description of the telephone survey results is included in Appendix E of this report.

i. Methodology

The survey called 800 residences in the study area, 100 in each of eight geographically defined regions within the study area. The ZIP code areas included in the eight regions are listed below in Table 3-1. At the 95% confidence level, the survey results have a margin of error of ±3.5% for the study area as a whole and ±9.8% for each of the eight sub-regions. Table 3-1 identifies the areas shown in the sub-regions.

ii. Results

Of those who responded to the survey, more than 90% had access to their own automobiles. This is consistent with recent census results, which also indicated high rates of auto ownership.
### Table 3-1
**Sub-Regions Surveyed**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region Number, County</th>
<th>Selected ZIP Codes</th>
<th>Name of Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Lucas (Toledo Core)</td>
<td>43602, 43624, 43620, 43610</td>
<td>Downtown Toledo, Old West End</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Lucas (Toledo Inner)</td>
<td>43604, 43608, 43605, 43609, 43607</td>
<td>Surrounding Downtown Toledo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Lucas (Toledo City)</td>
<td>43611, 43612, 43613, 43606, 43615, 43614, 43623</td>
<td>Ottawa Hills “Suburban” Toledo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Lucas (Toledo and Inner Suburban)</td>
<td>43460, 43537, 43560, 43617, 43551, 48182, 48144</td>
<td>Bedford Maumee Perrysburg Rossford Sylvania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood Monroe (MI)</td>
<td>43616, 43619, 43542, 43528, 43566, 43571</td>
<td>Harbor View Monclova Northwood Oregon Springfield Waterville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood Montreal (MI)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa Hancock</td>
<td>43402</td>
<td>Bowling Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Wood County</td>
<td>43403</td>
<td>Southern Wood County</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Auto Use

Autos were used for most trips, with transit accounting for a small percentage of trips. Table 3-2 shows the percentage of respondents who use various modes to travel to work or for other trip purposes. Only 0.5% of respondents said they regularly use transit for work trips, while nearly 3% of other types of trips were taken using transit.

Looking at the results by sub-region, only in the core areas of Toledo and in Bowling Green was the percentage driving to work below 90%. For travel from home to places other than work, the percentage driving was even higher, with the percentage lowest (90%) in the core area of Toledo. Among those identified as low income, the percentage driving for both work and other trips exceeded eighty percent.

Table 3-2: Means of Travel Used by Trip Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Home to Work</th>
<th>Home to Other</th>
<th>Start Away from Home*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drive</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>96.10%</td>
<td>96.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transit</td>
<td>0.50%</td>
<td>2.70%</td>
<td>1.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Means of Travel</td>
<td>4.50%</td>
<td>1.20%</td>
<td>1.30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Trips that begin somewhere other than home

Transit Familiarity and Use

More than 80% of respondents overall claimed to be familiar with public transportation in the area, with the percentages highest in the Toledo area and lowest among rural dwellers in southern Wood County. Lower income people and non-car owners were not significantly more likely to claim familiarity with the transit system.

Of the 81% who claimed familiarity with the region’s transit system, 16.4 percent said they had used public transportation in the past year. An additional 2.6% said that they had used transit within the past two years, and 30% said they had used transit in at least five years. Nearly 27% said they had never used transit. Nearly 70% of non-car owners and approximately 40% of low-income residents and more than 30% of residents of Toledo’s core areas said they had used transit in the past year. The majority of southern Wood County residents and residents of the most rural areas of Lucas County and the Monroe County townships said they had never used transit.

Only 0.5% of respondents said they use it daily to travel from home to work, and this rate rises to 8.3% of respondents who said they did not own cars, and 7.1% for residents of the core area of Toledo. Among those who had used transit in the past two years 3.3% said that they use it daily; about 21% use it weekly.

The reason most likely given (43.4%) for using transit was that the respondent had no car or used it when their car was in the shop. About 25% said they use it because it is convenient. Nearly 13% cited using the Mud Hens service.

Opinion About Transit

In terms of overall public opinion, a large number of respondents showed a lack of knowledge and indifference toward transit, with generally positive attitudes toward existing service and a low level of antipathy or negative stereotyping in evidence. As noted above, a high percentage of residents said they were aware of public transportation, and the majority said they think of TARTA or other bus services when they think of public transportation. Nearly one-third of
respondents had a positive image of transit, and only 5% said they saw it as having a negative image. Twenty-five percent said that public transit conjured up no image; nearly 40% said they had heard nothing positive about public transportation, and nearly 60% said they had heard nothing negative. The survey was conducted shortly after a news story broke involving some TARTA bus drivers who allegedly had criminal records, but less than 8 percent cited that news story as something negative heard about transit. Slightly more than 5% said that they had heard that transit had safety issues such as crime or rude kids riding the buses. When asked, most said they didn’t know whether transit had improved in the past year, but less than 3% said it had gotten worse.

Transit Needs

Nearly 96% of respondents agreed that public transportation must be provided for the disabled, elderly, non-drivers, and others who need it, as well as for the general population. Large majorities of respondents agreed to this proposition, regardless of whether they live in areas served by transit or not. Large majorities also agreed that the buses often only have a few people on them, and that transit systems need to find more ways to provide better service to residents. The majority agreed that there should be service to the airport and the train and Greyhound bus stations, and that not enough information is provided on the services that already exist. There was also support for more community-based Dial-A-Ride services.

Given a list of new transit services that they might consider using, about 33% said that they were very likely to use a new service to the airport, rail station or Greyhound (of those, only the airport is not currently served by transit). About 22% said they would use park-and-ride services to downtown Toledo, and 17% said they would use services “to communities not now served by bus service.” Point deviation services (something difficult to understand for those who haven’t used it) and park-and-ride services to the Arrowhead area received among the lowest levels of interest.

When given the opportunity to identify other issues related to transit, the largest number of responses were related to providing services to outlying areas. Perhaps not surprisingly, residents of outlying areas were most likely to say this. This response was highest (exceeding 60%) in Bowling Green and southern Wood County, and in the 30%-40% range for other suburban areas. Less than 20% of inner-Toledo residents identified this as a problem. Only a small percentage of respondents identified other problems, with the highest being improvements to advertising and public information.

3.2 Brochures and Printed Materials

The study produced a number of printed materials to provide the public with information on the purpose and goals of the study, to elicit public comment, and to disseminate preliminary results of the study to the public.

An initial handout (a flier backed with a copy of the informational survey) was provided in advance of and at the first round of public meetings in May and June 2003. This handout form provided information on the purpose of the study and contact information including mailing, e-mail and Web addresses and telephone numbers for both English and Spanish-speaking respondents, and the locations and dates of the first round of public meetings. A Spanish-language version of this flier was also prepared. A poster was prepared advertising the initial
round of public meetings. Copies of this flier were distributed to agencies represented on the study committees, at events attended by TMACOG’s Commuter Services division during spring 2003, and at the public meetings held in May and early June 2003.

A small single-fold brochure was produced to coincide with the summer events held July through September 2003. This brochure reported initial results of the public outreach and analysis conducted through June 2003, and provided information on the study purpose and contact information for those encountering the study for the first time. More than 1,000 copies were distributed at summer events and at events attended by TMACOG staff July through September 2003.

A third brochure, summarizing the preliminary findings of the study and soliciting further public comment, will be developed for the public meetings to be held towards the conclusion of the study.

3.3 Informational Survey

A one-page informational survey was distributed as part of the study. It ultimately had a number of purposes: to collect data from targeted populations, such as bus riders, clients of social service agencies, visitors to the project website, and attendees at public meetings; to disseminate information about the regional transit study; and to document the breadth of the public outreach effort that the study ultimately completed.

The survey was meant to be more informational than representative, and the study has consistently disclaimed statistical validity of the results. The sample is biased by the selection of populations that were provided with the opportunity to respond, and by self-selection bias within those populations. However, the results provide a large volume of anecdotal evidence of the opinions of various segments of the public in the TMACOG region. They also document the broad base of opinions that were represented in the study. The survey has provided a large cache of interesting insights, and will likely prove a treasure trove of data in future research on public transportation in the region.

The survey instrument is reproduced in Appendix D. Some slight variations occurred in the early versions of the survey instrument. The questions “do you consider public transportation to be a valuable or necessary community resource?” and “do you expect you or your family will have increased need for public transportation in the future?” were not included in some versions of the survey, and thus there are fewer responses to those questions. There was a Spanish language version of the survey distributed in the Spanish-speaking community and media outlets.

The survey sought to gather information about the interaction of the individual’s travel habits and their personal situation, such as their type of work, age, and disability status. For transit users, it attempted to identify potential inadequacies in the transit system in the region and the potential effects on travelers of those inadequacies. It also provided ample opportunities for respondents to write in their individual responses and comments, and many did with gusto. The survey also collected origin-destination data for work trips, the early responses of which were considered in the estimate of unmet demand documented in Chapter 6 of this report.
Distribution

More than 6,000 copies of the survey were printed. More than 2,000 were completed and returned. This high rate of return due in part to the large number completed on buses and at public events, where most were collected upon completion; and that copies distributed on buses and in the community were return-addressed and stamped. Distribution of surveys began in May and ran through August 2003. Surveys still were being received by TMACOG at the end of 2003.

Surveys were distributed and collected on buses and other transit services in the area. Members of the Study Committee and Executive Committee distributed them to clients and associates. Surveys also were distributed to social service agencies; were distributed and collected at public meetings, public events, and focus groups; were provided to stakeholders interviewed for the study, upon request; and were available on the project web site. The survey was published in paid advertisements in the Toledo Blade, the Toledo Journal and El Tiempo. Surveys also were distributed and collected by TMACOG staff at events sponsored or visited by the TMACOG staff throughout the area. On TARTA buses, the route number and block was marked on each survey collected on the bus. Surveys used color-coded paper and inks to allow for tracking of the origin of the survey (on-bus, at a public event, distributed by a social service agency, etc.).

Results

At the end of September 2003, approximately 1,930 surveys had been completed to a sufficient degree to allow some data analysis (a small number of surveys had been returned blank or contained no useful information). The response to each question or bank of questions on the survey is discussed individually below.

Do you consider public transportation to be a valuable or necessary community resource?

Nearly 97% of those who responded to the question (1,747) said yes. Only 57 responded negatively. This response shows wide recognition of the importance of public transit. Further, it indicates that there is little or no organized opposition to public transit in the region. This positive response indicates a future opportunity to build on the already generally positive image of transit in the region.

Figure 3-1
How often do you use public transportation?

Nearly half of the respondents to the survey said they never use transit, while nearly 30% said they use transit more than twice a week. Comparing this to the results of the telephone survey and the mode shares for transit demonstrates the unrepresentative nature of the survey—more than 80% of telephone survey respondents said they rarely, if ever, use public transit services. The over-sampling of the transit-using public is easily explained by the selection of audiences for the survey, but should be taken into account when considering the degree to which the results can be generalized to the public at large.

If you DO use public transportation, which services do you use?

This survey encouraged respondents to check all of the services that they use, rather than the one they use most. Of the 962 who responded to this question, nearly 800 said that they use TARTA fixed route service. A small number reported they use other TARTA services (TARPS, the Maumee and Perrysburg Call-a-Rides, the Mud Hens and Park-and-Ride services, Bedford Dial-a-Ride, BG Transit, UT and BGSU bus services). However, the responses for those services and for the non-TARTA services were all far below the response for TARTA bus service, in spite of the wide distribution of the surveys. It is possible that because TARTA bus was the first possible response to this question in the survey instrument, and because many are aware that TARTA operates some of the other services, it is possible that users of any of these services stopped once they had checked TARTA bus. Indeed, it is possible that users of the Bedford Call-a-Ride, the university services and so forth may believe that they are using TARTA, or do not know for sure that they are not. These distinctions may be obscure to members of the public, and TARTA is by far the region’s best-known and most advertised service, as shown by the results of the telephone survey.
If you NEVER use public transportation, why not?

Approximately 570 respondents provided reasons why they never use transit. Multiple answers were permitted, and many provided more than one response. Quite a few transit users answered this question, perhaps indicating why they do not use transit more often.

The largest group of responses to this question came in the “other” category, which allowed the respondent to write in a reason for not using transit. By far the most responses to the question were some form of “I own a car,” or have access to an automobile, apparently expressing an opinion that car ownership eliminates all need to use public transportation. Those aged 65 and over made up the largest number of respondents to the survey. Nonetheless, it is clear from the comments that for many citizens, using transit is an option for people too poor or too infirm to drive or for those who have exhausted other options, including finding a friend or relative to drive them or just staying home.

Where do you go when using public transportation?

This question, aimed at transit users, was not meant to receive one exclusive response, and many respondents checked multiple categories. “Work” and “shopping” essentially were tied as the top category, with trips related to medical services close behind. Education and visiting also received hundreds of responses. None of the responses was selected by a majority of transit users. This follows the results of the phone survey and other indications in the study that suggest that work trips are not a large majority of transit trips in the TMACOG area. Hundreds also checked the category “other,” and wrote in responses. Mud Hens games, the library, church, entertainment events, and the art museum lead the written-in “other” events.
Figure 3-4
If you NEVER use public transportation, why not?

- Doesn't match my schedule: 212
- Service is not reliable: 86
- Doesn't serve the places I need to go: 223
- Doesn't seem safe: 32
- Don't understand bus routes and schedules: 135
- Does not serve the area where I live: 192
- Afraid of or annoyed by other passengers: 55
- Other: 501

Figure 3-5 Where do you go when using public transportation?

- Work: 464
- School/College or Training: 253
- Doctor/Medical Treatment: 402
- Shopping: 451
- Visit: 300
- Friends: 285
- Other: 285
Do you ever need or want to go anywhere where public transit doesn’t go?

Of those who answered this question (about half of all respondents) more than 50% said that they could not go to all the places they needed or wanted to go using existing transit. Many of those who responded named places they would like to go. Oregon, and various places in Oregon (such as St. Charles Hospital and the Wal-Mart on Navarre Avenue) were the most popular unserved destinations. Locations in the Airport Highway corridor (Holland and Springfield Township, especially Spring Meadows Mall) and locations in Monroe County were among other popular, inaccessible locations.

Do you have use of a car?

Sixty percent said they have access to an automobile. This is far lower than the results of the telephone survey, which indicated that more than 90% of respondents had access to a vehicle, and also below census reports on car ownership rates in the region. This again illustrates that transit users made up a disproportionate percentage of the respondents to the informational survey.

Did you consider access to public transportation when choosing... (home, job, doctor, shopping location)?

One of the more surprising results of the informational survey is the large number of respondents who said that they chose their home, their job, their doctor and where they shop based, at least in part, on the availability of public transit. Nearly one-third of respondents overall, and a high proportion of those who use transit, said they chose their home based on availability of transit. More than one fourth of respondents chose their job, their doctor, and where they shop, based on transit availability. If these results can be assumed to represent the behavior of transit users in the region, the economic and demographic implications of transit availability are significant to development patterns in the region. There is evidence elsewhere in the study that the geographic and temporal availability of transit distorts the region’s job market, preventing potential workers, particularly lower-skilled, lower-income workers, from gaining access to jobs, and preventing employers from gaining access to such workers. The response to this question suggests that availability of transit service also affects markets for residences and services as well. However, more detailed study would be required to confirm this connection between transit service and residential location.
Do your work start and end times change depending on the day of the week or from week to week?

The market analysis prepared for the study (Chapter 4) shows that the various types of service-sector jobs are a large and growing element of the TMACOG region’s economy. Such jobs are more likely to have irregular work hours and shifts than are traditional manufacturing and governmental jobs. Further evidence of this pattern is found in the response to this question, asking whether the respondent works a steady work schedule. About two-thirds of the respondents to the survey responded to this question (many of the rest probably are retired or otherwise not in the workforce). About half indicated their work start or end times change. Such schedules suggest the need for longer hours of service and more frequent service for public transit to serve the varying work patterns of today’s—and tomorrow’s—workforce.

What time of day do you start work? What time of day do you finish?

About two-thirds of the respondents to the survey completed this question. Processing of the written-in responses will be completed when the receipt of surveys closes. However, the responses are sufficiently various to confirm the finding from the question above that start and end times for work hours are no longer uniform.

What type of work do you do?

More than 1,700 surveys, or more than 85% of those received, had this question answered. Processing of the written-in responses will be completed when the receipt of surveys closes. However, early indications are that retirees and office and clerical workers (especially government workers) made up the largest groups of respondents. High numbers were also found from manufacturing employment and non-employed persons, ranging from homemakers to those actively seeking work.

If you are a student, where do you go to school?

Students make up an important segment of the market for public transportation services, and are well represented in the sample of surveys received. The largest group of responses came from UT students, nearly 200 of whom completed the survey. Community college students also submitted more than 100 surveys. High school and junior high students, who are a large component of the transit market, are relatively under-represented in the survey.
**What is the ZIP code where you live? What is the ZIP code where you work?**

This question was placed mainly to derive origin-destination data for the estimate of unmet demand (see Chapter 6), but provided some useful information in its own right, particularly in confirming the broad coverage of the survey. About 90% of respondents answered the question regarding home ZIP code (however, not all the responses were usable, or provided in ZIP code form). About half of the respondents provided about their work location, and those responses were even more seldom provided in ZIP code form.

Based on analysis of the ZIP code data, the majority of surveys (more than 60%) were received from Toledo city residents. Residents of the cities of Oregon, Bowling Green, and both the City of Sylvania and Sylvania Township, were also well represented. Dozens of other localities were represented in the sample by one or more surveys.

**Do you have a disability that makes it difficult to get around?**

About 15% of respondents said they had a disability, which is approximately consistent with the percent of disabled in the population at large, and perhaps lower than would have been expected given the distribution of the surveys at social service agencies and on buses.

**Do you expect that you or your family will have increased need for public transportation in the future?**

About 40% of the respondents predicted more need for public transportation in the future. Given the large number of older people responding to the survey, this response perhaps indicates the fear that many older people have of losing their independence when they become too old to drive safely.

**How old are you?**

Perhaps given the distribution pattern of the surveys, it is not surprising that the largest groups of respondents were older people. The largest group, more than one-third of respondents, were persons 60 or over. Roughly equal numbers of persons 25 to 34 or 45 to 59 were the second largest groups. Those under 16 were under-represented in the survey given their numbers on board the buses for daily school trips.
Comments

A wide range of comments were received on the survey, ranging from praise and condemnation of the service to highly specific recommendations for route and schedule changes. The surveys will be fully processed when the survey is closed, and will be reproduced in the appendices.

3.4 Public Meetings

i. Round 1 Public Meetings, Spring 2003

The initial round of public meetings was conducted in May and early June 2003. The meetings were held at five locations throughout the region on four separate days.

- Perrysburg Township, May 20, 2003
- Oregon, May 21, 2003
- Bedford Township, May 22, 2003
- Downtown Toledo, June 4, 2003
- Springfield Township, June 4, 2003

The public meetings were structured as Stakeholder Charrettes (for invited major stakeholders and public officials) followed by meetings for the general public. Both types of meetings gave participants the opportunity to review the materials, hear a presentation, and provide their comments. Public times for the meetings were announced in paid newspaper advertisements, on posters and brochures, and with press releases to major and regional news outlets. The
press releases produced some news coverage for the initial public meetings, particularly in regional newspapers.

Turnout for most of the meetings was lighter than expected for both the stakeholder and public portions of the meetings. However, informed and spirited discussion was recorded at all the meetings. Comments recorded at the meetings are provided in Appendix B.

ii. Public Outreach Events, Summer 2003

The study conducted public outreach events at three locations in summer, 2003. Two Saturday mornings in July, TMACOG and study team staff were on hand to distribute materials, collect surveys and provide information at various locations in the study area. Displays were held at the Andersons stores in west Toledo and in Perrysburg Township on two Saturday mornings in July 2003. A display was in place, and staffed part-time, at the Lucas County Fair in Maumee in August 2003. The study collected hundreds of surveys and distributed project brochures at these events, collecting input from suburban and rural populations unlikely to be frequent users of the existing transit system.

iii. Round 2 Public Meetings, Spring 2004

A second round of formal public meetings was held in April 2004. The meetings were held at four locations over two days. Meetings were held on the following dates at the following locations:

- South Toledo, April 21, 2004
- Oregon, April 21, 2004
- Downtown Toledo, April 22, 2004

Public officials and members of the general public were invited to review displays and were provided with a presentation on the study findings and proposed recommendations before an open question and answer period. Turnout again was relatively light, though higher than in the initial round of meetings, particularly downtown and in Oregon. A number of useful comments which confirmed and clarified many of the study recommendations were received at the meetings. Comments recorded at the meetings are provided in Appendix B.

3.5 Focus Groups

The study conducted seven focus groups to provide input from targeted groups in the community. Focus groups are long-form interviews with groups of four to fifteen persons. In the focus group format, participants can read and handle materials about the subject, and can be asked follow-up questions and discuss issues amongst themselves, unlike one-on-one interviews.

Focus groups were held at sites convenient to the group being interviewed. The consultant team provided lunch or a snack and drinks. Interviews usually lasted one hour or more. Two or three consultants, sometimes supplemented by TMACOG staff, attended each focus group interview.

The focus groups were conducted with:
The Ability Center of Greater Toledo, in Sylvania, representing the disabled community
Senior Center, Inc., in the Old West End Toledo, representing the elderly
Instructors at Lott Industries, in west Toledo, representing those serving the developmentally disabled community.
A group of Monroe County officials and stakeholders representing the Michigan portion of the study area, at Ort Tool & Die, in Bedford Township, Michigan
Representatives of the Hispanic community, at Aurora Gonzalez Family Resource Center in south Toledo
South YMCA on Anthony Wayne Trail in south Toledo, representing non-transit users
Lucas Metropolitan Housing Authority (LMHA) in Central Toledo, representing public housing residents

Following is a summary of comments heard at these meetings. Full notes on the focus group meetings can be found in Appendix J.

The Ability Center of Greater Toledo

The disabled clients of the Ability Center had many complaints about the region’s transit system and specifically TARTA and TARPS operators, and compared the region’s services unfavorably to those in larger cities. They complained of rude behavior and other inconveniences such as broken lifts, missed trips, and long waits between buses. They noted that in many areas, sidewalks lack curb ramps and other improvements to make the buses accessible to those in wheelchairs or who use other mobility aids, and plowed snow is often a problem in winter. They suggested large print and easier-to-understand schedules, more cross-town routes to cut travel time between non-downtown locations, more information at bus stops and “talking stop” technology, and recommend reform and regulation of the taxi system.

Senior Center

The elderly clients of this local center were thankful for TARTA and TARPS as, without them, they would be housebound were they to lose their licenses (several did not drive). The seniors also complained of rude drivers, though not as vehemently as the disabled group did. Like the disabled, they also complained of malfunctions on the buses and broken lifts, and of the lack of and poor condition of sidewalks in many parts of the region. They suggested route extensions such as to St. Charles and Bay Park Hospitals in Oregon, and to Bowling Green. The participants also said that they would like more Sunday service.

Lott Industries (Lucas Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities Board)

This focus group included instructors and staff of the MRDD board, which helps mentally retarded and developmentally disabled persons in the county. The group had praise for TARTA, particularly TARTA drivers, and feel that TARTA does a good job with the tools they have with which to work. However, the group complained of long travel times (some clients must ride TARTA two hours each way to work, and said that this sometimes affected the job performance of these developmentally disabled workers). They also were concerned that destinations such as Oregon and Spring Meadows can’t be reached. The participants said that the refusal of some communities to accept TARTA amounts to “segregation” that should not be tolerated. The MRDD board considered moving its offices to Oregon but did not do so because it had no bus service. As a result of some of these problems, MRDD spends about $100,000 per year on taxis to transport clients. In fact, less than 20% of MRDD passengers use TARTA, while the majority are transported by the MRDD board’s fleet of 57 buses, fleet of vans, and taxi services. About 1,000 MRDD clients use the MRDD transportation system. They also admitted that many of
their clients who use TARPS today should be using TARTA and that this is in the process of being changed.

The participants cited a number of safety concerns with TARTA, including passengers riding at night, transferring in the downtown area, and riding buses at the same time as school students. They said that their clients effectively are precluded from working in evenings due to safety concerns. The MRDD instructors disliked the new TARPS reservation system, which they said is confusing and inconvenient, and seems to be more convenient for TARPS drivers than for clients. The focus group participants had a number of suggestions for improving transit service for the benefit of their clients. These include: satellite centers for TARPS users who need rides within a designated area; more special buses for student passengers (to eliminate students from regular bus trips) and greater coordination of the various bus systems in the region, including the MRDD system, to provide better service to disabled clients.

The participants had mostly negative comments regarding TARPS drivers, and gave very negative feedback to initiatives such as commuter rail and downtown trolley service. They said that these initiatives do nothing for their clients, and that providing more frequent service and routes to new areas should be the priority over rail services.

**Ort Tool and Die (Monroe County)**

This focus group included a number of Monroe County officials, including economic development and school officials. They pointed out that they have a property tax millage for transit now, used to fund the Bedford Dial-a-Ride service, which interfaces with TARTA. They said there are a number of passengers being served, including the elderly, young people, disabled, and non-drivers, but that residents would like earlier and later service, and earlier and later connections to TARTA. The service is running at peak capacity, and a second bus would generate more riders. If there were to be fixed route service, the group suggested north-south through the area, and possibly a park-and-ride lot for commuters to Toledo at Miracle Mile shopping center and connections to downtown. They said that there are some 200 Michigan Works welfare-to-work clients in the southern part of Monroe County. The biggest problem these clients face in finding jobs is transportation, and there are some vans, provided by SMART, that take them to job sites throughout the county. One participant suggested that service is needed from Bedford to Monroe. The group agreed that, to most people in the area, police and fire service is a higher priority than improved transit service.

**Hispanic/Latino Community**

The concerns of the Latino community as represented in the focus group cut across the concerns of the other groups ranging from non-users to the disabled. Several said they needed more information about the service and that the schedules and other materials were hard to read and use, and complained that there are no materials in Spanish. They suggested training in Spanish and hiring of a more diverse, Spanish-speaking staff for the transit agency. They complained about lack of night service and long travel times for cross town trips and described the effects of these kinds of delays on new workers, those studying for GED programs, and clients of social service agencies. They said that the times during which TARTA runs has some effect on scheduling and attendance at social service programs in the evening. Often, staff of social service agencies transport clients for evening and weekend programs. There was some discussion of tying the transit service in the south Toledo area into the community and developing a unique identity for the buses operating in that area. Toledo City Councilman Louis Escobar, one of the group participants, suggested that the service in Toledo compares
unfavorably to service in other cities and countries, and suggested the development of a “Jewels of Toledo” route to serve the Zoo, Botanical Gardens and Museum.

South YMCA (Non-Transit Users)

These self-professed non-users were not hostile to using public transportation but were generally unfamiliar with the service. Some had past experience riding the local bus service (TARTA) or using transit service in other areas, or have employees or clients of their programs who use it. They felt they didn’t have enough information about the service to use it comfortably. The participants recommended that TARTA overhaul its schedules and do more advertising and public awareness marketing. Those familiar with the existing service said buses come too infrequently and many of the employees and clients had long waits if they missed their bus. Some pointed out that the stop is too far from the YMCA building and service is too infrequent on the route serving Anthony Wayne Trail. Several participants suggested raising the fare to $1 to raise more funds, and suggested an alliance between TARTA and the Y to transport children for Y programs (the Y has a fleet of 30 vans used now to take children to Y programs). Other suggestions included improvements to the taxi system. Participants agreed that the taxis are dirty, expensive, and hard to find. They also recommended cleaning up the “scary” Greyhound station. The participants thought that the Mud Hens service is a good idea and liked the idea of streetcars in the downtown area, but questioned what people would do once they got downtown, since there is no shopping there anymore.

Lucas Metropolitan Housing Authority

The LMHA focus group was very large—more than 40 LMHA employees and public housing residents who were divided into two groups. The session was conducted at LMHA’s facilities on Nebraska Avenue in Toledo. Many were frequent transit users, and the opinions expressed were as varied as the groups were large. Transit users were generally pleased with the drivers, and said that the drivers usually were kind and helpful. Many comments were similar to those expressed in other forums, such as the need to get to St. Charles Hospital, Spring Meadows Shopping Center, and other employment and shopping locations not served by the transit system today. A job placement coordinator said clients are unable to get jobs at UPS, Honeybaked and Hickory Farms due to lack of service. One participant was happy to learn that a bus does serve the Arrowhead development. Many residents, especially the elderly, avoid the buses in the morning and after school because of the kids abusing the elderly residents. They also said young residents had destroyed the bus stop benches in the neighborhood. The participants recommended using smaller buses, a simpler bus schedule (running buses on the hour ad half hour), more frequent service, neighborhood Dial-A-Ride service, and training for LMHA staff to learn how to use the system, so they can pass on this knowledge to residents. Some complained of the fare, and they were very resistant to the idea of increasing taxes to pay for better service.

3.6 Stakeholder Interviews

In June through September 2003 the study team contacted and asked to interview more than 60 stakeholders—regional leaders in government, business, education and not-for-profit communities—whose organizations were not already represented on the project Executive or Study committees. The purpose of these interviews was to identify these leaders’ opinions and ideas about the future of public transportation in the TMACOG region. These meetings provided the perspective of governmental, business, and community leaders and allowed the study team to question and follow-up on comments made by the interviewees. Interviews were conducted in person or by telephone with the following business and community stakeholders in
the TMACOG region. The meetings were attended and conducted by consultant team staff, sometimes accompanied by TMACOG staff.

Fifteen community leaders were available for telephone or in-person interviews in that time period.

- Jim Carter, Wood County Commissioner
- Dr. David Nixon, Monroe County Community College
- Don Jakeway, Regional Growth Partnership
- Betty Goranson, The Andersons
- Wayman Usher and Brian Bilger, Lucas County Economic Development
- Becca Ferguson, Human Resources, Bowling Green State University (BGSU)
- Steve Nathanson, Mercy Health Partners
- Jodi Rosendale, Cooper Automotive
- Dan Hauenstein, Owens Community College
- Diana LaBiche, Toledo Urban League
- Phil Rudolph, Rudolph-Libbe, and Tom Blaha, Wood County Economic Development
- Mark V’Soske, Toledo Area Chamber of Commerce
- Colleen Sullivan, Hickory Farms
- Scott Schifferly, Wendy’s Restaurants
- Althea Williams, National Family Opinion (NFO)

TMACOG and the study team wish to thank these community leaders for generously taking the time to meet with the study team and provide us with their valuable opinions and information.

Generally, the results of the interviews with stakeholders can be summarized as follows:

- Economic development and government officials and the Chamber of Commerce think there would be a benefit to having a truly regional public transit system, more transit service to suburban employment areas, and perhaps connections to the Toledo Express and Detroit Metropolitan Airports, among other new or improved services. Some expressed the need for better marketing of transit services to make it seem more appealing to moderate and higher-income workers. However, the businesses they serve do not cite deficiencies in public transit as a problem for their businesses, and the officials do not see such deficiencies as being among the region’s economic development challenges.

- Employers of moderate or higher-income workers, including industrial and warehouse workers, see little need for improvements to public transit service. Some noted labor shortages during the late 1990s, but said that the demand for workers has decreased in recent years, and these employers have little trouble filling well-paying jobs.

- Employers of lower-paid, part-time and seasonal workers, particularly in places not now served by public transit, said that lack of public transit is often a major challenge in getting
and keeping workers. These employers expressed the desire for public transit service to their areas, but stop short of offering to help subsidize such service, expressing that providing transportation is a governmental function.

- Higher education officials would like local governments to take on more of the cost of public transportation, a cost that many of the higher education entities have taken upon themselves to provide transportation for their students. They would also like more transit service and better transit connections. The exception to this is Monroe County Community College, which sees little, if any, need for public transit service.

The comments of each interviewee are briefly summarized below. More complete documentation of each interview is provided in Appendix D.

**Jim Carter, Wood County Commissioner**

Mr. Carter sees no particular need for increased transit service in Wood County beyond the existing BG Transit (subsidized taxi) service in the City of Bowling Green. He notes a number of public agencies receive tax levy funding to provide services (including transportation) for the elderly and people with various disabilities. He believes these agencies should be held accountable to provide these services before additional services are developed. As a County Commissioner, he does not recall receiving any requests for public transit. Mr. Carter said he believes people should not expect the government to solve all their problems for them, and those who need transportation can often rely on friends, family, and charity organizations to provide for their needs, particularly in rural areas like much of Wood County.

**Dr. David Nixon, Monroe County Community College (MCCC)**

MCCC is a rapidly growing institution, and its Whitman Center campus, which is located in the TMACOG region and the regional study project study area, is the fastest growing element of it. MCCC and the Whitman Center particularly has some enrollment from Ohio, and MCCC also has an agreement with Owens Community College in Perrysburg Township that allows students at each institution to take classes at the other. These are indications that transit service to the Toledo area could be helpful to MCCC. Dr. Nixon also believes that transit service, both from Toledo and from Monroe, could be helpful in the College's outreach to lower-income students. He believes the community is growing and transit could be required to support more economic growth. He would be supportive of transit service to Whitman Center from the Toledo area and would consider allowing a park-and-ride facility to be developed on the Whitman Center site if the finances could be worked out. He said he thought expansion of transit could be helpful to him in expanding the College's student base.

**Don Jakeway, Toledo Regional Growth Partnership/Ohio Transportation Review Advisory Council (TRAC)**

Mr. Jakeway is both an economic development official with local and statewide experience and a member of the Ohio Department of Transportation's Transportation Review Advisory Council (TRAC), which advises the agency on transportation priority projects in the state. He said that service connecting the Toledo Express and Detroit Airports to downtown Toledo would be an economic benefit to the region. He also expressed interest in the plans for high-speed rail service in the region and connecting the airports, and in the downtown transit services being discussed as part of the Regional Core Circulator Study. He also suggested marketing needs to be increased to improve the image of public transit among moderate and higher income people in the region. Employers have not told him that public transportation is an issue in their businesses or in regional competitiveness. He believes transportation generally is a priority at
the state level, evidence of which includes the recent passage of the 2 cents per gallon increase in the gasoline tax. However, he said public transit would need to compete with other transportation projects for priority.

**Betty Goranson, The Andersons**

Mrs. Goranson said some Andersons sites have access to public transit service, others don’t. Some employees use transit to reach stores where there is service, but they have no particular problem finding workers for facilities that are not served by transit. She believes the Andersons has little trouble recruiting because the business is established and well known in the area, and because the pay is relatively high for the skill level involved, including for part-time and seasonal work. She said during the labor shortage of the late 1990s, they were in discussions with Hickory Farms to develop a cooperative transportation service to bring lower-income and disabled workers to their sites. They also worked with Goodwill Industries to identify candidates for jobs and hired more disabled workers. However, since 2000 the labor shortage has eased and these plans have been abandoned. Mrs. Goranson said most of their problems related to transportation are due to auto traffic around their facilities, particularly regarding traffic in the Arrowhead Park area and at the freeway and Turnpike interchanges in that area.

**Wayman Usher and Brian Bilger, Lucas County Economic Development**

Mr. Usher and Mr. Bilger said their priority for public transportation is for more and improved service to Arrowhead Park, service to Toledo Express Airport, and to growing retail and commercial areas in the Airport Highway area and elsewhere in the county. They pointed out that Arrowhead Park now houses more jobs than downtown Toledo, and yet has very little public transit service. They said lack of public transit service has hurt the area’s opportunities to attract manufacturing employment, and at least one potential investment in a manufacturing facility in a suburban area was lost because the area was not served by public transit. In spite of the lack of transit, they said the market for commercial and manufacturing development remains “greenfield” suburban sites, and businesses need to be educated about the amenities of locating in cities. They said ideally TARTA would serve the whole county, but finding an equitable funding mechanism will be difficult.

**Becca Ferguson, Human Resources, Bowling Green State University**

Mrs. Ferguson is an enthusiastic advocate for public transportation who believes a transit connection to Toledo would be a great advantage for BGSU. She said the lack of public transportation services between Bowling Green and Toledo is a bar to recruitment of workers and students for the university and makes it difficult for the university to meet its diversity goals in terms of both students and staff. They have also needed service for employees and students who can’t drive, some temporarily (because of license suspension). She said BGSU might consider developing a charter service, or flexing parking pass money to allow students to pay for public transit service. However, her preference would be for Wood County or other governmental entities to provide transit, as it is a governmental responsibility.

**Steve Nathanson, Mercy Health Partners**

Mr. Nathanson represents Mercy Health Partners, a health care organization that owns several medical facilities in Toledo, including St. Charles Hospital in Oregon. Mr. Nathanson is also a Toledo resident and community activist. He said unequivocally that St. Charles Hospital needs bus service, and the region needs bus service to St. Charles Hospital. Many East Toledo residents who live only a short distance from St. Charles Hospital travel across town to St. Vincent’s, just west of downtown Toledo, because St. Charles Hospital is not served by transit. He said service for patients (for both in-patient and out-patient services) and for visitors is just
as important as access for employees. He pointed out that other facilities in the Oregon-Northwood area, including Bay Park Hospital, Little Sisters nursing home, and some public housing facilities in Oregon would benefit from public transit service. He noted the commercial area on Navarre Avenue (SR 2) has become too big and too regionally important since the development of the Wal-Mart in that area for Oregon to remain outside the public transit service area.

Jodi Rosendale, Cooper Automotive, Bowling Green

Mrs. Rosendale is human resources manager for this major industrial employer, located in a suburban commercial area in Bowling Green. She said employees of the firm generally drive and recruitment has not been hurt by lack of regional public transit service. She said the only instances of employees being unable to drive themselves were when they were injured or had their licenses suspended, but this was very rare. She said the plant has few disabled workers. Accommodating disabled persons for the manufacturing jobs would be difficult as the work is physically demanding and—because employees are paid “piece work”—productions speeds must be very high. She said HR professionals in the Bowling Green area meet monthly for a “round table” discussion of issues facing them, and transportation issues occasionally come up. However, she said she didn’t recall any specific discussions related to public transportation.

Dan Hauenstein, Owens Community College

Mr. Hauenstein said the bus service for which Owens Community College contracts with TARTA helps them serve students and lessens the perceived distance between Toledo and the campus, located in Perrysburg Township. The charter service provides both the connection to Toledo and provides circulation service within the campus for students who park in remote areas or need rides between classes. This circulation service is supplemented by vans provided by the college. He says the charter service is used by both employees and students and has provided recruitment benefits to the college. He said the college has doubled the number of students it serves in ten years and projects continued rapid growth, and the need for more public transit is likely to increase in the future. He supports Wood County providing public transit from other areas of the county, noting that demand is likely to increase and lower income students would greatly benefit from such a service.

Diana LaBiche, Toledo Area Urban League

Ms. LaBiche, Director of the Youthbuild program, has worked with Job Placement candidates. Many of these clients are recently released from prison and often work irregular and late shifts. Some have lost job opportunities due to lack of transit. She said the area now un-served with the greatest need is Perrysburg Township—not Oregon. She said some clients use the Owens bus but there is need for more service to Owens and to other places in that area. She often provides bus tokens to people who need transportation, and believes there should be a voucher program for people who get new jobs so they can ride free until the first time they get paid. She opined that the community would support higher taxes for transit if they believed their needs would be met by expansions in service.

Maggie Thurber, Lucas County Commissioner

Mrs. Thurber was most concerned about the efficiency of public transportation, noting that it should be as self-sufficient and efficient as possible. She said many people believe there should be good quality transit, but it is questionable that they are willing to pay for it. She said the scheduled service is difficult for people’s busy schedules today, especially for moms. She said she supported the Mud Hens service so long as it continues to be used, and pointed out that the
service is used because people don't like to pay to park downtown. Constituents have not approached her to complain of the lack of transit service, but staff at Job & Family Services has reported that lack of transportation to the suburbs is a problem for many of their clients.

**Phil Rudolph, Rudolph-Libbe, and Tom Blaha, Wood County Economic Development**

Mr. Rudolph and Mr. Blaha are involved in the development of a major industrial park on SR 795 in Wood County. They believe that public transit service would be a benefit to that park to bring industrial workers from throughout the region. However, their transportation focus is on improvements to local roads surrounding the industrial park to provide better access to the park for autos and trucks.

**Mark V’Soske, Toledo Regional Chamber of Commerce**

Mr. V’Soske sees some value in the idea of having a countywide or region-wide transit service, but has not heard complaints about the quality or lack of transit in the region from local businesses. He noted that driving is the normal mode in this region and using transit can be difficult given our complicated lifestyles. He supports good connections to the airport, and says there will be demand for better service to Arrowhead, Route 20 in Perrysburg Township, Bedford-Temperance area, and Oregon. He supports the proposed streetcar service in downtown Toledo, saying it will add a "new dimension" to downtown. He says the extension of the bus loop one block south to Monroe will support the Warehouse District developments. He is skeptical, however, that a tax referendum for transit could be passed in the present down economy.

**Colleen Sullivan, Hickory Farms**

Hickory Farms has several locations in the Toledo area and, as a high proportion of their products are sold at Christmas, their work is highly seasonal. Between June and November, the distribution center runs three shifts of workers, and from October to December there are nearly 1,000 workers on staff throughout the region. During the first half of the year, employment is around 100. They use an employment agency, Job One, to provide workers during their busy season. Mrs. Sullivan said some people working the third shift have some problems with transportation, and in the past TARTA has put on an additional bus during Hickory Farms’ peak period to serve third shift workers. She said that, in the morning, the bus serving the distribution facility gets workers there either one hour early or 15 minutes late, and some workers who miss it arrive late. She said more service late and early, and more frequent service, would be helpful. She suggested that TARTA enter into discussions with Job One regarding providing the special bus service for the third shift. She said they have no trouble filling all the jobs, but do occasionally have workers blaming the bus for their late arrivals. There are many fewer cars in the lot than there are employees, so she suspects many use the bus.

**Scott Schifferly, Wendy’s Restaurants**

Mr. Schifferly, a representative of the largest Wendy’s franchisee in Northwest Ohio, said he has three locations not served, including one in the Spring Meadows Shopping Center area and one in Perrysburg Township at Buck Road near I-75. The bus service at his locations in Arrowhead and in Sylvania is also not very good. He has trouble attracting and maintaining staff at these locations due to lack of transportation, and says some employees walk long distances from the bus stop to the Spring Meadows and Arrowhead locations. He asked why the bus from Owens College couldn’t be extended to the Buck Road area, a fast growing area, and suggested Owens should help its students get to jobs located in this area. He says he has no trouble filling and maintaining staff positions at his locations where there is good bus service, such as the Monroe Street location. He is a Perrysburg resident and very supportive of the Dial-A-Ride
service, and believes this should be implemented in other areas. He noted that in these times of high unemployment it is important that the bus service get people to jobs.

**Althea Williams, National Family Opinion (NFO)**

According to Mrs. Williams, Director of Human Resources for this large, Toledo-based market research firm, NFO has difficulties in recruiting lower-paid workers for their operations as a result of the lack of public transportation in Northwood. Some employees, particularly those of temp agencies, have problems with reliability of transportation, while others lack their own vehicles. NFO supplements its staff at busy times with extra staff from temporary employment agencies. Late or no-show employees are a significant problem for them, and NFO sees the lack of public transportation as a significant problem for recruiting and for employees getting to work on time. They also have actively recruited disabled persons and have had difficulties with transportation for them. NFO has contacted local officials, with little success. They have considered sharing in the cost of the bus route that nearby Owens Community College has chartered but found it to be too expensive. They are considering developing their own service, but would prefer if the local government provided the service.

### 3.7 Media Outreach and Paid Advertising

During the week of May 12, 2003, advertisements for the initial round of public meetings were placed in the following regional newspapers:

- Bedford Now
- The Suburban Metro Press
- La Prensa
- Mirror Newspaper Group
- Messenger Journal Group
- Toledo Journal
- Herald Newspaper Group

A press release to major news organizations in the Toledo market was released in late April 2003 to coincide with the initial round of public meetings.

The informational survey was published in the following newspapers during the summer of 2003.

- Toledo Blade (June 13, 2003)
- Toledo Journal (July 15, 2003)
- El Tiempo (August 11, 2003)

An article about the study was provided to regional Chambers of Commerce for inclusion in their newsletters in August 2003.

Additional press releases were timed to coincide with the final round of public meetings held in April 2004.
3.8 Project Website

The regional transit study project website, accessed through the TMACOG website at www.tmacog.org/transitstudy, provided the public with project information and resources to contact and provide input to the study. The website included copies of informational brochures, dates and times of public meetings, and other information about the study. The website also provided the project message line and fax number and the study e-mail address. The website included an e-mail link that allowed visitors to instantly send an e-mail comment to the study team, and an interactive version of the informational survey. More than a dozen surveys were received in this manner.

3.9 Comments Received by E-Mail, Phone, Fax and Mail

Study brochures and the project website provided the public with various means to contact the study team to ask questions and comment on the study and public transit in the region. In addition to TMACOG’s postal address, a project e-mail address, transitstudy@tmacog.org, was created within TMACOG’s e-mail system to receive e-mails pertaining to the study. The e-mail address was also linked to the project website, to allow most computer users to create a pop-up e-mail message addressed to the study with a single click. Telephone numbers connecting to voice mail in the TMACOG telephone system, with messages inviting callers to provide their comments in both English (419-241-9155, Extension 250) and Spanish (Extension 260), were also provided. The number of TMACOG’s central fax machine (419-241-9116) was also provided to collect public input through that mode of communication.

3.10 Assessment of Public Outreach Efforts

The study’s efforts to reach out to the public, to allow the public to provide input and comment on the study, attempted to provide coverage to all geographic areas and population groups within the study area. Table 3-3 identifies some of the groups that the study attempted to reach and the efforts the study made to reach those groups.
Table 3-3: Public and Stakeholder Outreach Coverage Matrix

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