



MICHIGAN CHAPTER

May 20, 2013

House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
Anderson House Office Building
Lansing, MI 48933

Re: HB 4637 – Undermining the Regional Transit Authority

Dear Committee members:

The Sierra Club Michigan Chapter encourages you to vote NO on House Bill 4637, which would allow the governing board of a county or municipality to opt its community out of the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) by a vote. Sierra Club supports a viable Regional Transit Authority in Southeast Michigan for many reasons, including the potential for reduced mobile automobile emissions. Mobile emissions, which are very high in Detroit and Wayne County along major roads and freeways, contribute to harmful health problems such as increased asthma attacks and other respiratory illnesses. This bill would undermine the integrity of the currently configured RTA and get in the way of mitigating these emission-related problems.

In order for an RTA to provide a high level of efficient service, it must have the ability to serve communities within the region based on demand and not a checker board of opt-in and opt-out communities. If the SMART service area is any indication, this bill would lead to a checker board of public transit (all of Macomb County participates in SMART, 27 communities in Wayne County participate and 17 do not, and 36 communities have opted-out in Oakland County and 23 have opted-in). This patch work leads to inefficient routes which burdens passengers and hinders ridership. It drives up service costs as buses travel longer distances, and continues to get in the way of having effective and efficient mass transit.

For these reasons, we urge a NO vote on HB 4637. Votes taken on this bill will be included in the Sierra Club Michigan Chapter's Legislative Scorecard.

Sincerely,

Mike Berkowitz
Legislative & Political Director
Sierra Club Michigan Chapter