

Advancing Rural Mobility Program: Exploring GTFS Experiences

Program Overview

Public transit provides a critical lifeline in rural communities, but knowing the available services can be challenging. [The Advancing Rural Mobility Program](#) seeks to improve transit trip planning in rural areas and provide passengers with access to static and real-time transit information. MDOT's Office of Passenger Transportation (OPT) is partnering with four rural transit agencies-Benzie Transportation Authority (also known as Benzie Bus), Cadillac/Wexford Transit Authority (also known as WexExpress), Charlevoix County Transit, and Roscommon County Transportation Authority.

Partner Agency Spotlight: Cadillac/Wexford Transit Authority

Cadillac Wexford Transit Authority, known as [WexExpress](#), offers door-to-door public transit across Wexford County, which spans over 575 square miles. WexExpress offers several services, including demand response, flex routes to neighboring counties, non-emergency medical transportation, and contract services for community mental health.

Additionally, WexExpress manages the New Freedom Volunteer Driver Program. This initiative enables riders to travel beyond the typical routes in Wexford County to various parts of Michigan, assisting residents in reaching appointments or treatments elsewhere in the state. Since the program started in 2018, it has experienced significant growth, expanding from 63 to 500 rides per month, supported by a team of volunteers. The service is funded through a Federal New Freedom grant and partnering with agencies such as the Area Agency on Aging, Wexford County Commission on Aging, Wexford County Veteran Services, DHHS, and several others. The grant pays for half of the mileage reimbursement for drivers, and the partnering agency pays the other half.

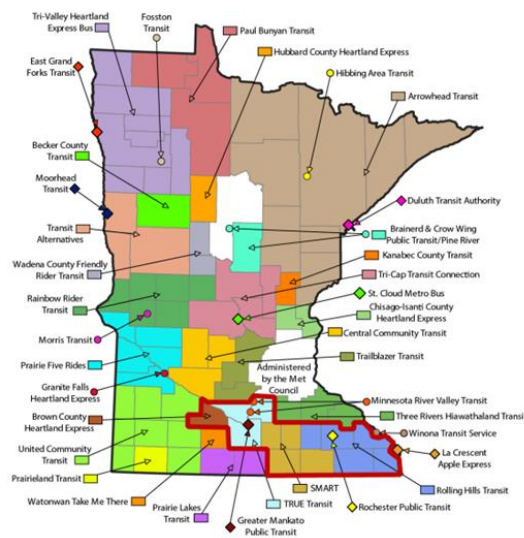


MnDOT Southern Minnesota Maas Platform

Transit agencies worldwide are creating Mobility as a Service (MaaS) apps, integrating various modes of transportation using modern data standards like **GTFS**, **GTFS-Flex**, **TDS**, and **GOFS**. This offers users a seamless trip-planning experience.

[The Minnesota Department of Transportation \(MnDOT\)](#) initiated a Mobility as a Service (MaaS) pilot project in 2020, collaborating with seven transit systems in southwestern Minnesota. MnDOT defines MaaS as technology that provides visibility and access to all public transit and participating shared mobility options such as: TNCs, taxis, bike shares, scooter shares, car shares, and van pools in a defined region. This project aimed to create and implement an integrated platform for trip planning, real-time updates, fare payment, booking, and ticketing.

MDOT's Statewide MaaS initiative in Michigan similarly aims to streamline travel by enabling easy access to all public transit and shared mobility services. The ARMP project lays the groundwork for this by creating standardized data specifications for demand-response transportation, initially focusing on four rural agencies. MDOT expects lessons from this pilot to guide statewide **GTFS** and **GTFS-Flex** implementation, forming the basis for a comprehensive MaaS system. This involves advocating for **GTFS-Flex** adoption in urban areas to integrate demand-response services into trip-planning tools.



Upcoming Technology Events/Tech Talks

May 22, 2024, 11 a.m.-noon - When your agency is implementing new technology, it's important to make sure it's usable by all stakeholders, to provide access as well as to ensure successful adoption. Kellie Blackwell will speak about her personal experience as someone with a disability that uses transit services. Kellie is also an active member of the Capital Area Transportation Authority's local advisory council and will share ideas around how to engage LAC members for a more meaningful experience that promotes access for all.

June 17, 2024, 1-2 p.m. - As more people turn to online resources for information, it's essential that transit agencies' websites contain useful, easy-to-find information. Jillian Otten, team lead for public engagement and communications for HNTB, and Cara Marcus and Erik Dickey of National RTAP will explain the benefits of a strong website, as well as provide valuable information and tools to identify the important content that should be on your site.

If you are not already receiving Tech Talk invitations and would like to, email Janet Geissler, MDOT mobility innovations specialist, at GeisslerJl@michigan.gov to get added to the notification list. Meeting links are typically sent about two weeks before each event.

Stay Connected

Please get in touch with MDOT Project Manager Sherry Vandevender at VandevenderS@michigan.gov with any questions or comments.