

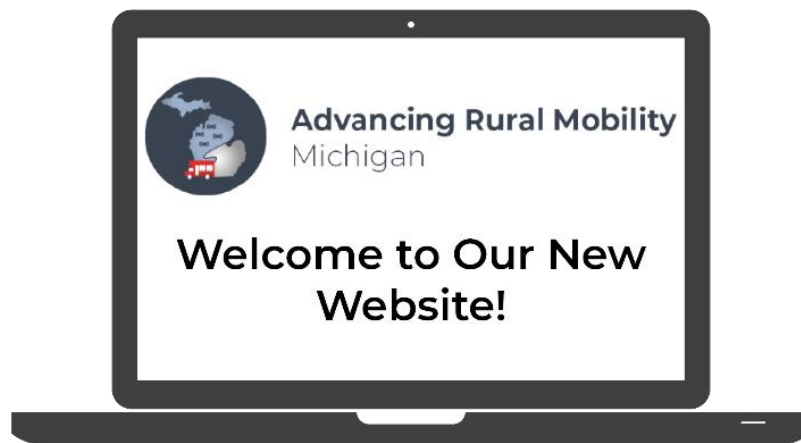
**Subject:** Advancing Rural Mobility Program: New website launched!

### **Program Overview**

Public transit provides a critical lifeline in rural communities, but knowing what services are available 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.

### **Introducing Our New Website!**

The Advancing Rural Mobility Program has [launched a new website!](#) Check out the website for updates on phase one of the pilot program, including agency partner highlights, community benefits, and program technology findings.



### **Partner Spotlight: The Benzie Transportation Authority**

[The Benzie Transportation Authority](#), known as Benzie Bus, fosters independence and prosperity by providing a secure and convenient public transportation network in Benzie County, Michigan. Benzie Bus offers airport service, regional transportation options, non-emergency medical transportation, health rides, and package delivery. The agency also provides the Traverse City Express (TCX), a convenient route between the Benzie County Area and Traverse City.

Benzie Bus provides on-demand response transit services throughout Benzie County, with the added flexibility for riders to travel up to seven miles south into Manistee County, provided the journey commences or concludes within Benzie County. Additionally, Benzie Bus offers an airport shuttle service on a demand-response basis. Services are available Monday through Friday from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m. and on Saturdays from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.



### **Upcoming Technology Events/Tech Talks**

**April 25, 2024, 1-2 p.m.** – Artificial Intelligence (AI) is at the forefront of revolutionizing the transportation industry from bus operations to data analytics. This session will provide insights from groundbreaking research, making AI less intimidating and more approachable for transit professionals and policymakers. The presenter, Renee Autumn Ray, recently published *Understanding AI and Transportation* with the Eno Center and is the Senior Director of Strategic Growth at Hayden AI.

**May 22, 2024, 11 a.m.-noon** – When your agency is implementing new technology, it's important to ensure that it's usable by all stakeholders. Kellie Blackwell, who is on the staff of the Michigan Disability Rights Coalition and is a member of the Capital Area Transportation Authority's local advisory council, will offer suggestions to help you engage the right people and processes to ensure a successful tech implementation.

If you are not already receiving Tech Talk invitations and would like to, email Janet Geissler, MDOT mobility innovations specialist, at [GeisslerJ1@michigan.gov](mailto:GeisslerJ1@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](mailto:VandevenderS@michigan.gov) with any questions or comments.