



Advancing Rural Mobility: Michigan Public Transit Open Data Standards Program

MDOT Office of Passenger Transportation

PROJECT PARTNERS

Benzie Transportation Authority
Cadillac/Wexford Transit Authority
Charlevoix County Transit
Roscommon County Transportation

HNTB



wexpress
Cadillac/Wexford Transit Authority



PROJECT CHALLENGE

In rural communities, public transit provides a critical lifeline, but it can be a challenge to know what services are available. The Program seeks to provide access to static and real-time public transit info and improve planning/booking transit trips in rural areas. Public transit service data is currently distributed agency-by-agency, yet many agencies lack the expertise/staffing to establish/sustain data feeds. MDOT and rural transit agencies are partnering to deploy technology and bolster technical proficiency of staff, and ultimately generate publicly accessible GTFS data enabling integration with public/private trip-planning tools.

IMPACT

Stage 1 of the project will be in four Michigan counties: Benzie, Charlevoix, Roscommon, and Wexford. These counties contain 5 Census Tracts categorized as Areas of Persistent Poverty, 4 Opportunity Zones, 11 Census Tracts that have been identified as disadvantaged through the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool, and 4 federally recognized tribal lands. Access to mobility for these counties will be improved by enabling the traveling public to make more informed choices about reaching their destinations by provisioning both static and real-time info. Reliable information can build trust with riders, enhancing their confidence in the transit system.

CURRENT STATE OF THE ISSUE

In rural Michigan, 6% of households do not have access to a personal vehicle or have fewer cars than workers. A recent University of Michigan study found that over half of adults living below the poverty line also experience transportation insecurity and estimated that 13% of rural residents experience transportation insecurity.

POLICY QUESTIONS

1. What is the current state of transit data specifications for demand-response and flexible transit services, and how can agencies implement them and prepare for future changes? 2. What staff technical training should be implemented by rural transit agencies to establish and sustain GTFS data feeds? 3. What staffing and funding resources are necessary for rural transit agencies to establish and sustain GTFS data feeds?

STAGE 1 OUTCOMES

1. GTFS/GTFS-Flex data will be developed for the four partner rural transit agencies and services will be available in trip planning tools. 2. Partner transit agency staff will be educated on what GTFS and GTFS-Flex are and how to use and maintain data feeds. 3. The project team will document lessons learned from initial implementation and compile a report detailing its outcomes, which will serve as a roadmap for the Stage 2 statewide implementation, outlining necessary steps to integrate transit service information into the MDOT statewide MaaS platform.

STAGE 2 VISION

In Stage 2, MDOT would expand static and real-time transit information across all 60 of Michigan's rural transit agencies by producing the necessary data to integrate them with MDOT's MaaS Platform, which is currently being procured. This will enable people in rural areas across the state to discover transit services and plan trips in the MaaS platform.