

## **UPDATES**

### **1) The Twin Cities Area Transit Authority (TCATA) New Board Members**

- TCATA Fixed Route Education Video
- Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom Funding

### **2) Consolidation of Buchanan Dial A Ride**

### **3) Completion of the Niles Transportation Development Study**

### **4) Mywaythere.org-Testing (Launching March, 2012)**

### **5) Reduced Fare Card Program-Progress Report**

### **6) Consolidation Feasibility Study**

### **7) Pokagon Band Tribal Study**

### **8) Berrien County Coordinated Transportation Coalition**

### **9) Berrien County Coordinated Transportation Plan Update**

- Mark your calendars for April 10, 2012 for the next coalition meeting. (see details below)

### **10) Public Participation Plan Update**

For Twin Cities Area Transportation Study (TwinCats) and Niles Area Transportation Study (NATs)

## 1) New Board Members for Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority (TCATA)

On Wednesday, February 15, Benton Harbor's Emergency Financial Manager Joe Harris announced changes to several boards including the Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority (TCATA) also known as Dial-A-Ride. Harris appointed new board members and reappointed two current board members. **Click here to see the [official document](#).**

### **New Board Members:**

Joanne Johnson-Disability Network Systems Advocate  
Richard Martin-Area Agency on Aging Chief Information Officer  
Joe Harris-Emergency Financial Manager/City Manager

### **Current Board Members:**

Ralph Pringle  
Herbert Singleton

### **Next Board Meeting:**

**March 21, 2012 at noon**

**Location: 275 E. Wall St. Benton Harbor**

**Note:** *Board meetings are held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of every month at noon.*

- **Fixed Route Educational Video:**

The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) and the Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority (TCATA) partnered to create a video that was released in October 2011. Since the release, we have received numerous positive comments from people who have seen it on cable television, YouTube and in various transportation training sessions. Big thanks to Juanita Henry (previous TCATA Board member) who helped get the video broadcast on Comcast's channel. Click the link below to view the video and tell us what you think!

<http://youtu.be/AiMzIqWqMKQ>

- **Job Access Reverse Commute and New Freedom Transportation Funding**

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) and the Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority (TCATA) are partnering for the third year to submit an application for the Federal Transit Administration grants New Freedom (5317) which funds the Mobility Manager position and a number of mobility management projects as well as Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC)(5316) which funds the continuation of the Red Route and the Blue Route's extended hours. The application will be submitted March 1, 2012. In the past this funding has brought an additional \$580,000 to fund these services.

## **2) Consolidation of Buchanan Dial-A-Ride**

The City of Buchanan has already moved in the direction of consolidation in an attempt to decrease the overall operational costs of their three bus dial-a-ride system. Effective January 1, 2012 the City contracted with Berrien County to operate their bus system. The County in turn subcontracted with their third party operator, Transportation Management, Inc. (TMI), to operate and maintain the Buchanan buses. TMI has operated the Buchanan system since its inception. If you have any questions about the arrangement between the County, City of Buchanan and TMI contact Dennis Schuh, Berrien County Transportation Coordinator 269-983-7111 ext. 8262 or [dschuh@berriencounty.org](mailto:dschuh@berriencounty.org).

## **3) Niles Transportation Development Plan (TDP)**

On February 6, 2012 the steering committee for the Niles Dial- A- Ride Transportation (DART) Development Plan and Laura Brown of RLS, discussed the draft implementation plan which consist of short and long-range goals that will be implemented over a span of 5 years. The alternatives presented in the plan should significantly increase efficiencies in Niles DART services.

## **Some Of the Highlights Were:**

### **1) Increase Efficiencies in Operations**

- **Niles DART will transition from immediate request (for dial-a-ride services) to a 24hour advance request system**
  - Niles Dial A Ride is currently in the process of implementing a dispatching software program-allowing trips to be scheduled in advance

- Expand hours of operation for demand response services
  - Niles Dial A Ride would like to provide two more hours of service
- Make changes to the Flex Route 2
  - Eliminating unused stops to accommodate more flexing

## 2) Find Funding to pay for Outreach and the Expansion of Services

- Niles DART will consider several funding sources that could help with expenses
  - Funding Sources included 5317 New Freedom
  - 5316 Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC)
  - 5307-Urbanized Area Formula Funding (FTA)
  - CMAQ- *Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Funding Sources*
  - Employers/Chamber of Commerce
  - SMEGA-Southwest Michigan Economic Growth Alliance
    - ❖ Community Block Grant Funding (could potentially be used for public transportation).

## 3) The need to implement consistent policies for drivers, maintenance workers, and riders

- Niles DART plans to construct a handbook and training for drivers about internal policies and safety requirements
- Niles DART plans to implement a more stringent process for documenting maintenance on buses
- Strengthen current operational policies to create consistent and dependable services for riders
  - In order to change policies, public input is required- Niles will conduct input meetings in the near future

**Next Steps:** The steering committee will continue to help Niles DART Staff facilitate service changes as needed. If you have any questions, comments or concerns please contact:

### **Kelly Getman-Dissette**

Transportation Coordinator

Email: [KGetman-Dissette@nilesmi.org](mailto:KGetman-Dissette@nilesmi.org)

Phone: 269.684.5150

**Or**

## **Evan Smith**

Operations Manager

Email: [esmith@nilesmi.org](mailto:esmith@nilesmi.org)

Phone: 269.684.5150

### **4) Mywaythere.org (Launching in March)**

Mywaythere.org is a tool that helps people overcome transportation barriers and get to the places they need to go by considering different ways to get around Southwest Michigan. The **mywaythere.org** website will serve as an information hub that will provide you easy access to a wealth of resources, ways to get involved, transit videos, and help you stay up-to-date on what's going on with transit in Southwest Michigan! Currently the site is being tested for accessibility and user friendliness with different human service providers and users. We are hoping to have the site ready for use by the beginning of March. **Click [HERE](#) to test the Find A Ride tool.** Insert where you are and where you want to go, answer 6 questions, then you will be provided with a listing of the perfect transportation matches to meet your traveling needs.

If you would like more information or a demonstration of how to use the site, please contact Mobility Consultant & Community Liaison Christina P. at 269-925-1137 ext. 19 or email: [pippenc@swmpc.org](mailto:pippenc@swmpc.org)

### **5) Regional Reduced Fare Card Program-Progress Report**

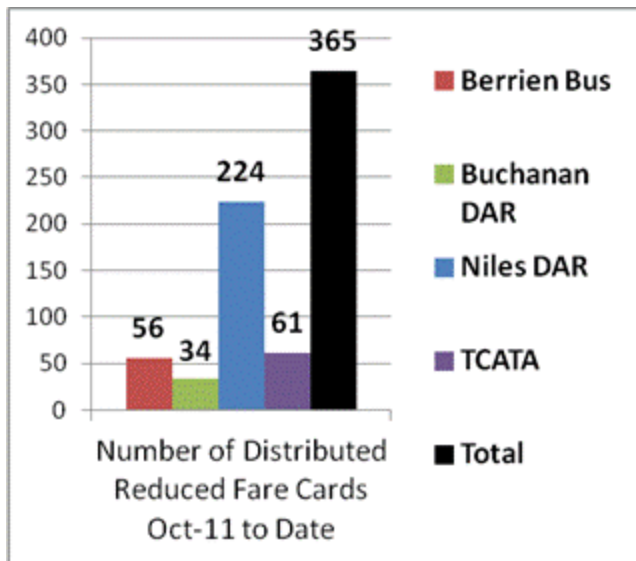
The regional reduced fare card program allows seniors 60 years and older and those with disabilities to ride any public transportation system for *half-off* what the regular fares are. The seven transit providers in Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties worked together to produce **one** card that will easily identify those that are eligible for half fares. The Reduced Fare identification cards can be used on any of the systems in this region (and outside the region at the discretion of the transit agency). Applications can be picked up at your nearest transit provider or click [HERE](#) to print a copy of the application and mail to your nearest transit provider. See details about the [application process](#), or contact your nearest transit provider. The address and phone numbers of participating transit agencies can be found in the table below.

<b>TRANSIT AGENCIES</b>	<b>ADDRESS</b>	<b>PHONE</b>
<b>Berrien Bus</b>	<b>4676 E Shawnee Rd, Berrien Springs, MI 49103</b>	<b>269-471-1100</b>
<b>Buchanan Bus</b>	<b>4676 E Shawnee Rd, Berrien Springs, MI 49103</b>	<b>269-697-0600</b>
<b>Cass County Public Transit</b>	<b>400 E State Street Cassopolis, MI 49031</b>	<b>269-445-2455</b>
<b>Dowagiac Dial- A- Ride</b>	<b>200 Depot Dr, Dowagiac, MI 49047</b>	<b>269-782-3300</b>
<b>Niles Dial-A-Ride</b>	<b>623 N. Second Street, Niles, MI 49120</b>	<b>269-684-5150</b>
<b>Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority</b>	<b>275 E. Wall Street, Benton Harbor MI 49022</b>	<b>269-927-2268</b>
<b>Van Buren Public Transit</b>	<b>610 David Walton Dr, Bangor, MI 49013</b>	<b>269-427-7921</b>

### **Reduced Fare Card Progress Report:**

The chart below (Total Distributed Reduced Fare Cards October 2011-Present) presents the number of applicants from each transit provider that has received a Reduced Fare Card.

#### **Total Distributed Reduced Fare Cards (October 2011-Present)**



**Note: Production of reduced fare cards and postage is funded with 5317 Mobility Management funds.**

If you would like to arrange a training for a group of employees to learn about the application process and requirements, please contact Mobility Consultant & Community Liaison Christina Phippen at 269-925-1137 ext. 19 or email: [pippenc@swmpc.org](mailto:pippenc@swmpc.org)

## 6) Consolidation Feasibility Study

On Wednesday, October 26, 2012 Dan Dalton from the KFH Group presented information and facilitated a discussion with transit agencies and stakeholders to ensure that the interpretation of the data and their observations were correct. Since then, Dan Dalton and Bennett Powell from the KFH Group have been analyzing data and information collected during their meetings with key personnel from transit agencies and other stakeholders. All of this information has been compiled into the first technical memorandum which should be available in the upcoming weeks. We will send you a link to the study's webpage when the Tech memo is ready for viewing and comments. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the Consolidation Feasibility Study, please contact Senior Planner Kim Gallagher at the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission at 269-925-1137 ext 18 or email [Kgallagher@swmpc.org](mailto:Kgallagher@swmpc.org).

## **7) Pokagon Band Tribal Transit Study**

The need for the Pokagon Tribal Transit Study which covers a 10 County service area (4 counties in Michigan and 6 in Indiana) arose out of the Pokagon Band's Long Range Transportation Development Plan. The study will produce a set of recommendations for future tribal transit service. Several transportation options will be investigated such as:

- Entering into a direct service cooperative agreement with an existing public transit service provider
- Investing in new tribe-specific transit service; or
- Continuing with the current level of service provided by existing transit providers.

On Monday, February 13, 2012, the steering committee met and discussed the results of the Pokagon Study's survey as well as provided some recommendations that can be put in place now to assist with the collection of valuable information to be used in determining the best long-term transit options. The Steering Committee is made up of stakeholders from several key Pokagon Band departments such as Pokagon Department of Health, Social Services Department, Education, and the Housing Department.

In moving forward, the next meeting will serve to discuss results discovered from the aggregation of additional data and resources collected. If you would like more details about the survey results or have any questions about the Pokagon Band Tribal Transit Study, please contact Senior Planner Kim Gallagher at the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission at 269-925-1137 ext 18 or email [Kgallagher@swmpc.org](mailto:Kgallagher@swmpc.org).

**Next Tribal Transit Steering Committee Meeting:  
April 2012 (Date and time: TBD)**

## **8) Berrien County Coordinated Transportation Coordinated Coalition (BCCTC)**

The Berrien County Coordinated Transportation Coalition (BCCTC) is a group that consists of representatives of the four transit agencies in Berrien County, representatives of human service agencies, and other stakeholders. Since the Kickoff of the Consolidation Feasibility Study in June 2011, those who wanted to stay involved opted to receive updates and /or participate at scheduled upcoming meetings for the BCCTC as well. Thanks for your support! While there hasn't been any full committee meetings scheduled, the subcommittee of the BCCTC has met in-person and via email on projects such as the Reduced Fare Card Program, The Twin Cities Area Transit Authority's (TCATA) future Complementary ADA Paratransit Services, and the mywaythere website.

## **9) Berrien County Coordination Plan Update**



Every year the Berrien County Coordinated Transportation Plan should be updated. Updating the plan helps us determine our progress, re-evaluate any unmet needs, and help us develop plans in moving forward. I will be sending an updated copy of the Coordinated Plan in an email in the upcoming week so that you can review it and prepare to bring your valuable input to the next meeting!

**Please Mark Your Calendars!**

**Next BCCTC Meeting:**

**April 10, 2012 at 9am**

Location: Michigan Works!

**Note:** *Agenda and more information will be sent at a later date*

If you have any questions about the Berrien County Coordinated Transportation Coalition please contact Mobility Consultant & Community Liaison Christina P. at 269-925-1137 ext. 19 or email: [pippenc@swmpc.org](mailto:pippenc@swmpc.org)

## **10) Public Transportation Plan Update**

**For the Twin Cities Area Transportation Study (TwinCats) & Niles Area Transit Study (NATS)**

As the designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO), the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) is seeking your input with updating the Public Participation Plan (PPP) for the Twin Cities Area Transportation Study (TwinCATS) and the Niles-Buchanan-Cass Area Transportation Study (NATS). The purpose of the PPP is to set comprehensive standards on the best way to communicate with citizens about transportation issues and planning processes. With the implementation of the plan, the results should yield an increase in the number of citizens involved in the transportation process whether citizens participates at meetings, via email, surveys, etc. Click the link below to view a draft of the Transportation Public Participation Plan.

[http://www.swmpc.org/downloads/draft\\_plan\\_january\\_10\\_2012.pdf](http://www.swmpc.org/downloads/draft_plan_january_10_2012.pdf)

If you would like to send your input about the draft Public Participation Plan please contact:

**Suzann Flowers**

Associate Planner

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

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Phone: 269-925-1137 x 17

**Or**

**Trevor Thomas**

Associate Planner

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

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Phone: 269-925-1137 x24

**As always, feel free to contact me with any questions, comments, or concerns. I love hearing from you!**

**-Christina**

Christina J. Phippen

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*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has. ~Margaret Mead*