

Thanks to those of you who had the opportunity to attend the Berrien County Coordinated Transportation Coalition (BCCTC) Meeting on Tuesday, April 10th. At the meeting, we discussed many important issues that people residing in Berrien County are currently facing. Below you will find a brief overview of what we found when comparing the status of Berrien County at the beginning of our coordination efforts (based on 2000 census data) to the current status of Berrien County (based on 2010 census data). *Stats based on 2006-2010 ACS data.

In Berrien County...

- 1) The Median Family Income has dropped-** What would you do with nearly a 4,000 pay cut?
 - a. 46,548 in 2000
 - b. 42,626 in 2010
- 2) Unemployment has increased.**
 - a. 4% in 2000
 - b. 12% in 2010
- 3) Population has decreased.**
 - a. From 2000-2010-5,640 left Berrien County
- 4) *Persons below the poverty level have increased.**
 - a. 5,000 more people are below the poverty level in 2010.
 - b. Persons below poverty level from 2006-2010 is higher in Berrien County (17%) than the State of MI (15%) and US (14%)
 - c. Children in poverty increased from 15% in 2000 to 23% in 2010.
- 5) The population of those 65 years and older has increased.**
 - a. Berrien (16%)
 - b. Michigan (13%)
 - c. US (13%)

Our discussion focused mostly on the needs of seniors, those with disabilities, and those in poverty. Below, you will find a graph depicting the number of people from each population residing in each of the public transit systems' service area. Although many other transportation services are available for each of these populations, such as Senior Center transportation, there are many services that are not accessible or sustainable options for those that have disabilities or low-incomes.

For example:

- **The Disabled American Veteran (DAV) shuttle bus is not equipped with a lift** and does not allow passengers to carry on oxygen tanks-essentially excluding those with physical disabilities.
- **Transportation to the shuttle bus stops is not available at the times when needed.** Public transit schedules are not coordinated with the DAV shuttle bus service.
- **Many of the Senior Center vans are not equipped with lifts.** Seniors using wheelchairs must find other means to gain access to medical and other life sustaining services which can be expensive or not available in the area where he/she resides.
- **Taxi services are not accessible.** Many times human service agencies subsidize and rely on taxi services to help get people to work. However, once the taxi service can no longer be subsidized, it is not a sustainable or viable option for those with low incomes.
- **Many Veterans have issues gaining access to the Veterans Clinic within and outside of Berrien County** (Battle Creek's Veteran Hospital). Public transit service area boundaries as well as their reluctance to cross county lines (due to insurance limitations), makes traveling to the tri-county (Berrien, Cass, Van Buren) VA clinic in Benton Harbor extremely difficult or nearly impossible.. Unfortunately, many Veterans without access to vehicles often times go without medical treatment if they are not living in close proximity to Dial A Ride or fixed route service.

For example:

- A Veteran traveling from Berrien Springs need to get to the VA Clinic in Benton Harbor by 9:00am. First, he must call 24 hrs in advance to reserve a ride on the Berrien Bus system. Once an appointment is secured and Berrien Bus arrives in Benton Harbor, the Veteran must transfer to the Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority (because now Berrien Bus is in TCATA's territory). Then the Veteran will be dropped off near the VA clinic and must walk the rest of the way. For those who are not ambulatory or have

cognitive disabilities, upon arrival in Benton Harbor, he/she must call TCATA for a pickup which may take 45 minutes to 1.5 hours. TCATA only offers same-day services and peak times vary.

- Due to the difference in service structures and the lack of coordination (between the transit systems and medical providers), the Veteran cannot be guaranteed that he will make it to his appointment on-time. This experience alone may be enough to deter the Veteran from seeking preventative healthcare services.

Keep in mind that the Veteran in this scenario is coming from Berrien Springs- imagine trying to secure transportation from Cass County, or Van Buren County!

Moving Forward with Coordination:

Many of these issues can be addressed by increasing coordination between transportation providers, Senior Centers, human service agencies, Veterans dispatch staff, and medical staff coordinators.

In the coming weeks, we will start planning special workshops to begin brainstorming and developing strategies on ways we can increase our coordination efforts to address many of these transportation needs in the region. You may help us start this process by filling out the stakeholders' [questionnaire](#)!

Person Centered Focused Outreach:

Mywaythere is one of the many projects we are using to increase the awareness about the many resources available in our region. We are asking that if you haven't already, please check out Mywaythere.org and give us feedback. If you would like for Mobility Manager, Christina Phippen to present you or your staff with a demo of how the website works and all the resources that are available, please email her with a date and time you would like the demo. Also, you may send in a request for outreach materials such as mywaythere brochures and postcards. Be sure to request how many you need and whether or not you would like any special adjustments made to the materials for the people that you serve.

Coordination Plan Update-Please Submit Your Input:

We know that as the need increases in our region, coordination will become more vital than ever before!

If you could not attend the meeting, please fill out the questionnaire attached to give us your input on strategies you believe can be utilized to increase our coordination efforts. **Please let us know on your [questionnaire form](#) if you would like to participate in a focus group/workshop to address the following most critical needs.**

- 1) Improving Veterans transportation to medical appointments in and out of the county.
- 2) Learning about the challenges people with disabilities face when accessing different types of transportation and the best practices for addressing those challenges.
- 3) Working with the Berrien County Senior Centers to develop strategies to improve seniors' access to life sustaining and life enhancing services in Berrien County and the region.

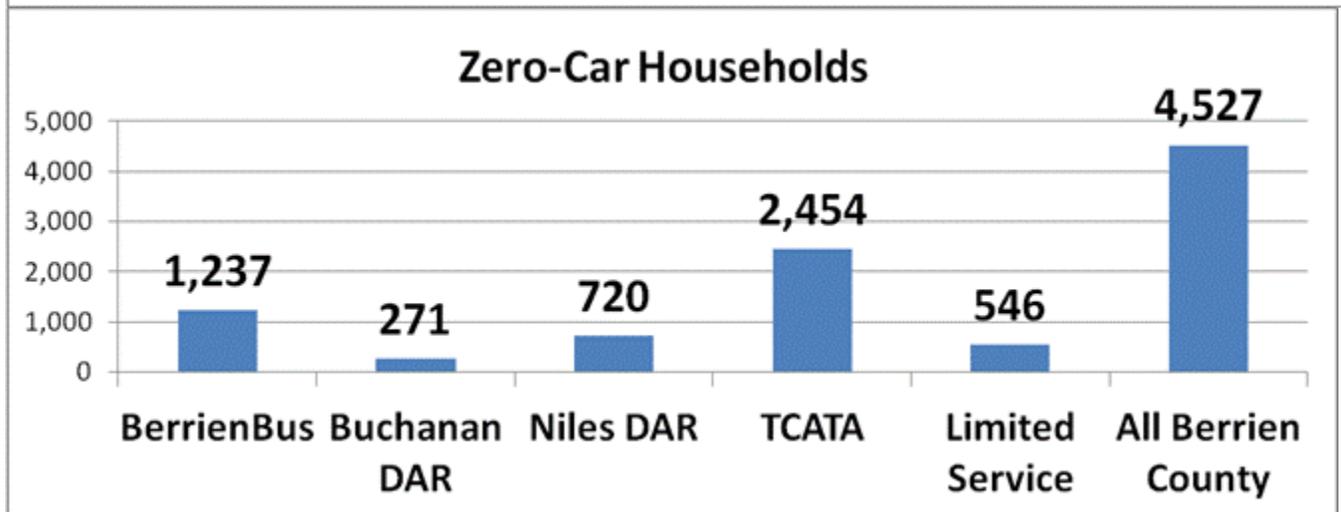
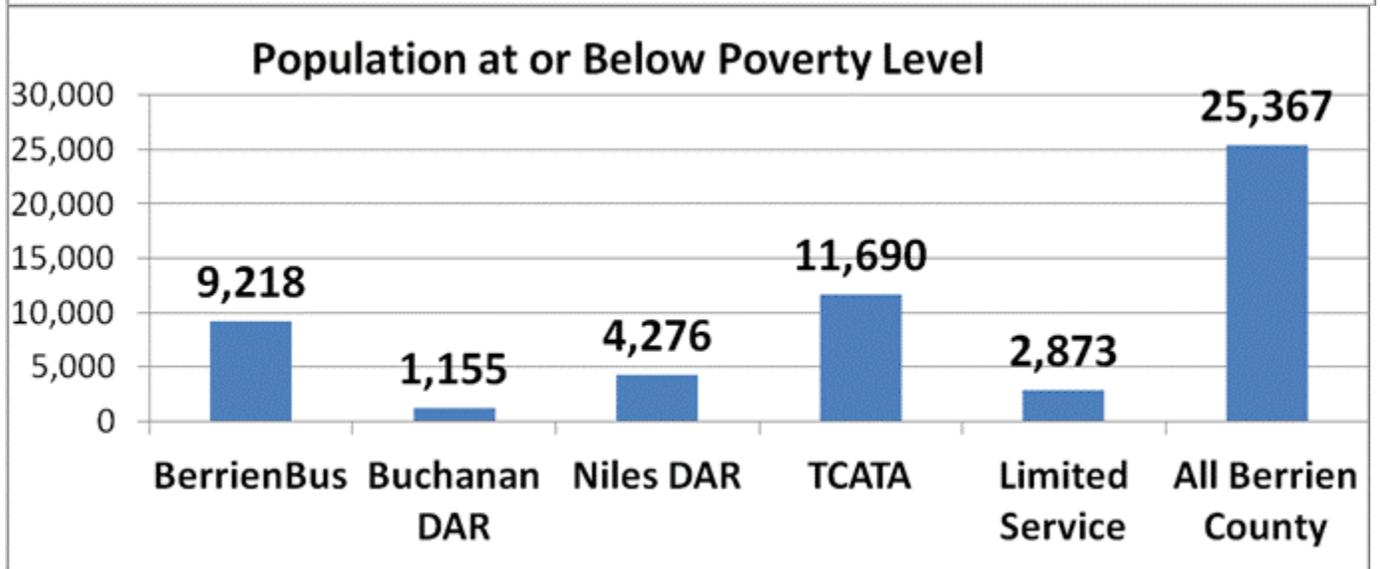
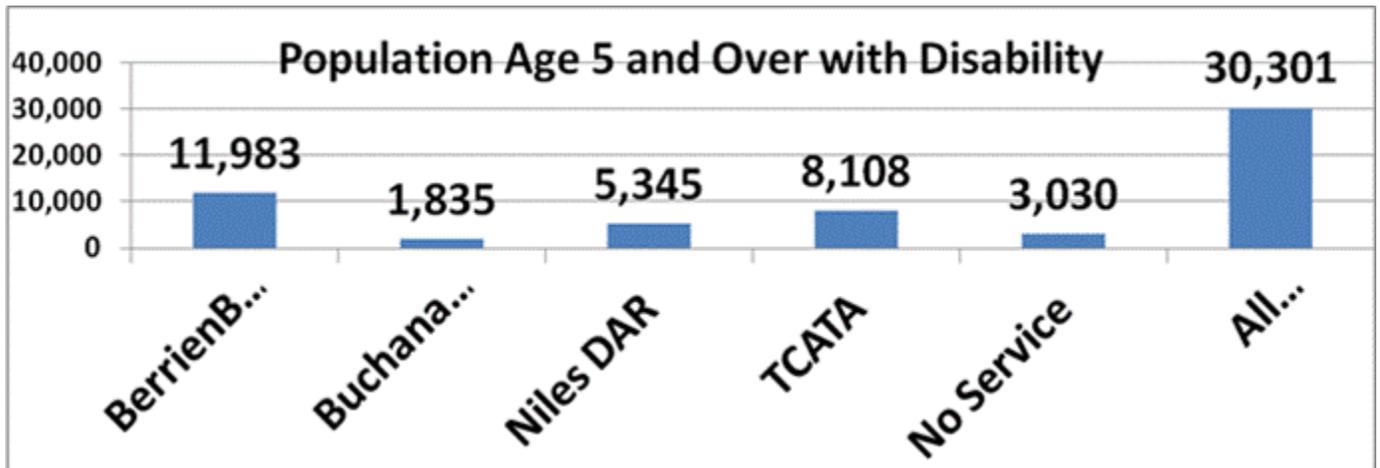
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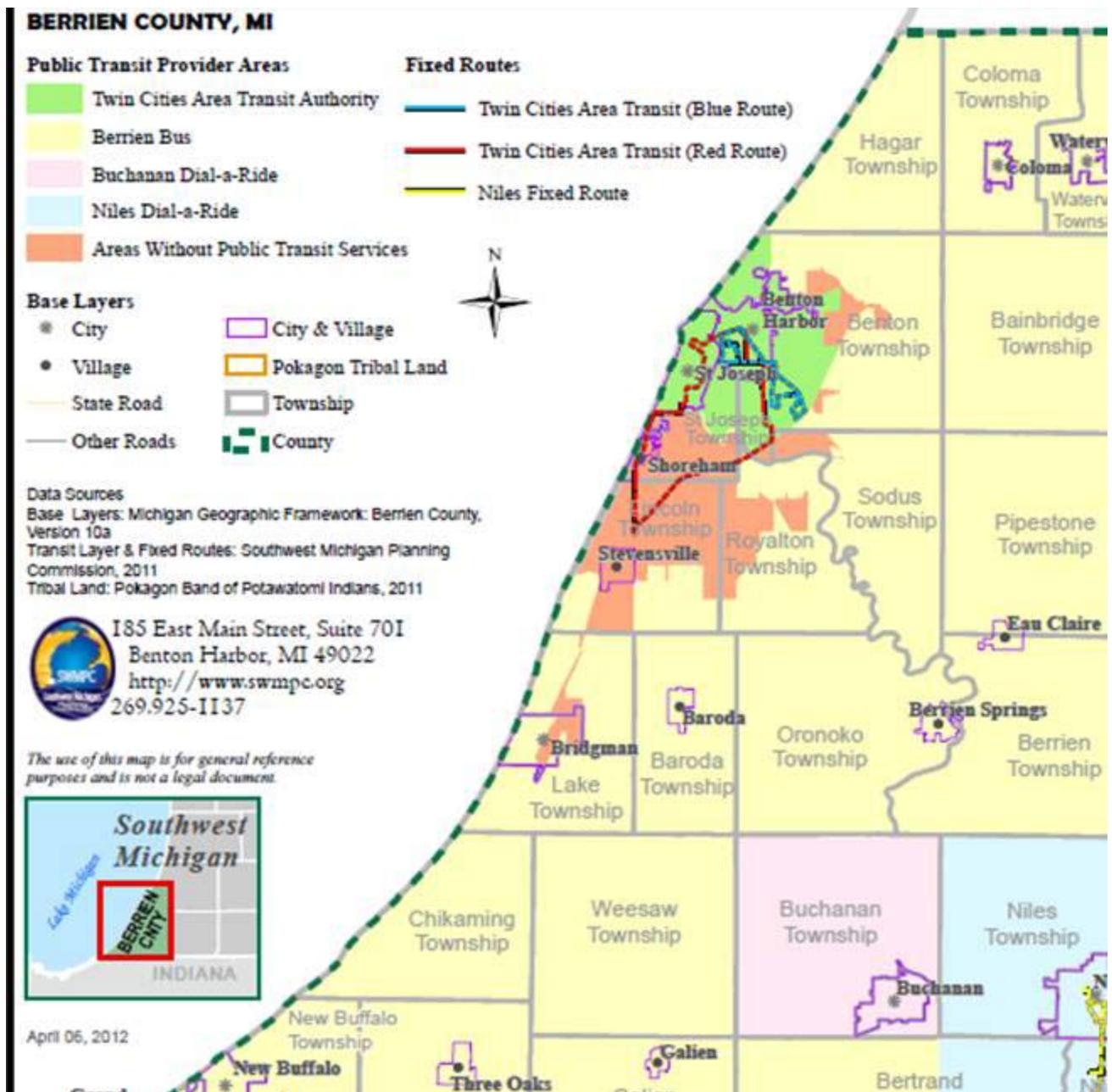
The input you provide on the questionnaire will be used to update the Coordination Plan. The information will also be used to help us better plan future coordination meetings. Thanks in advance for your participation in our on-going coordination efforts!

Transportation Updates

- 1) Berrien RICC Hosts Al Pscholka Next Monday, April 23rd at Michigan Works from 2pm to 3pm. (see the attached flyer or [calendar](#) for more details)
- 2) Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority (TCATA) Board Meeting will take place on April 25th located at the City Hall Commissioners Chamber (see [calendar](#) for more details)

Below you will find a few statistics on the number of seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income populations residing in each Public Transit providers' service areas. *Limited to no Service Area shown in the charts refers to the pink area shown on the map below.





Don't forget to complete the [questionnaire](#) (contact info form) if you have not done so already. As always, please contact me if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you!

Or copy the following address into your browser:

http://www.mywaythere.org/downloads/contactinfoforms_410a.pdf

-Christina

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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