



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Connect Berrien to Host Public Input Opportunities to Improve Public Transit in Berrien County

Benton Harbor, MI, April 28, 2017 - The Connect Berrien project team is hosting open house meetings to discuss public transit in Berrien County. The meetings are part of a larger planning effort, known as Connect Berrien, to develop the Berrien County Transit Integration Plan.

Right now, there are four existing transit providers in Berrien County: Berrien Bus, Twin Cities Area Transit Authority (TCATA), Niles Dial-A-Ride Transportation (DART), and Buchanan Dial-A-Ride. According to Greg Strangeways, consultant with Nelson Nygaard "Berrien County is the only county of its size in the United States to have four transit systems. The ability of the public to utilize these systems to move between and among these providers is extremely difficult." Even with the four transit systems, a significant portion of the county has limited transit service, which restricts some resident's access to employment, shopping, healthcare and educational opportunities.

The Connect Berrien project is an effort to create a countywide service plan with a menu of transportation options that will be efficient and beneficial for residents and visitors alike. The study will evaluate routes, identify unmet transit needs, and propose service strategies to address such needs. The study will also recommend modifications to existing transit services to better serve current and potential new transit users.

As part of this study, several public meetings will be held throughout the County to gather input from interested participants. Everyone is encouraged to stop by the meeting nearest them to share their wish lists for public transit in Berrien County. Meetings will be held as follows:

Tuesday, May 9th	Wednesday, May 10th	Thursday, May 11th
3:00pm – 4:30pm and 5:00pm – 6:30pm	5:30pm – 7:00pm	5:30pm – 7:00pm
Niles Public Library	Southwest Michigan Planning Commission	New Buffalo Township Library
620 E. Main Street	376 W. Main Street	33 N. Thompson Street
Niles, MI 49120	Benton Harbor, MI 49022	New Buffalo, MI 49117

Following the first round of meetings, participant input will be combined with market analysis and evaluation of existing transit services in order to recommend alternatives to meet the transportation needs. Additional meetings to present findings will be held during the fall. This project is administered by the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission and is funded by a federal grant from the Federal Transit Administration with matching funds provided by the Lakeland Foundation, the Berrien County Manufacturers Association, and the County of Berrien.

Free Rides to Community Meetings

Call My Way There at the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission by **Friday May 5th** to schedule your FREE ride. 269-925-1137 x1519 (Mon-Friday 9:00am-5:00 pm)

Visit Connect Berrien website to learn more www.ConnectBerrien.org

HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC TRANSIT



The Connect Berrien Project Team is seeking your input on the future of public transit in Berrien County.

We will host three community meetings to:

- 1 Explain what public transit currently looks like in Berrien County
- 2 Learn more about your needs and concerns
- 3 Describe future opportunities to get involved in the countywide transit service planning process

LEARN MORE AND PROVIDE YOUR INPUT

Attend a Community Meeting!

Niles

Tuesday
**May
9**

(Two Options)

3pm - 4:30pm

5pm - 6:30pm

Niles Library

620 E. Main Street

Niles, MI 49120

Benton Harbor

Wednesday
**May
10**

5:30pm - 7pm

**Southwest Michigan
Planning Commission**

376 W. Main Street
Benton Harbor, MI 49022

New Buffalo

Thursday
**May
11**

5:30pm - 7pm

**New Buffalo
Twp. Library**

33 N. Thompson Street
New Buffalo, MI 49117

NEED A RIDE TO A COMMUNITY MEETING?

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Check out the Connect Berrien website to learn more!

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