

News Release
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Local Transit Systems Seeking Input to Improve Service in Northern Michigan

NORTHWEST LOWER, MI – Commuters and local businesses still have time to participate in a survey designed to improve transit service in Northwest Lower Michigan. Networks Northwest is working in cooperation with the Bay Area Transportation Authority (BATA) and Benzie Bus to conduct a transportation survey of people working primarily at large Traverse City west side businesses including Munson, the Grand Traverse Pavilions, and Meijer. In Benzie County, a survey is being conducted with Crystal Mountain employees to learn if Benzie Bus, Cadillac-Wexford Transit Authority (CWTA), and Manistee County Transportation may service those employees better.

“We have been given an opportunity to help people save money and time and this survey will help us make informed decisions to grow ridership,” said Kelly Dunham, BATA Executive Director.

The survey is being funded by a Rotary Charities grant. The results will guide the expansion of new routes and hours of operations. The survey is available online at, surveymonkey.com/r/L92XCT6. Anyone interested can also participate in the survey by contacting Tad Erickson at 231-929-5053 or taderickson@networksnorthwest.org. They can also contact their local transit service to discuss ways to commute and save money.

BATA, Benzie Bus, CWTA, and Manistee County Transportation announced in October that they had worked with the Michigan Department of Transportation to regionally receive \$443,000 in new funding to immediately improve commuter transportation options.

(MORE)

The Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) funding was awarded to the four counties to create better regional connectivity for people in Northwest Lower Michigan. BATA had received JARC funding in the past, but Benzie, CWTa, and Manistee were first time recipients. In total, almost half of the \$1.1 million new JARC funding for the state of Michigan was awarded to these four counties.

“We believe that helping people get to work is a primary responsibility for public transportation,” said Bill Kennis, Benzie Bus Director.

Nationally about 45% of a household income goes toward housing and transportation and locally it may be closer to 65% for some commuters. Networks Northwest recently published a commuter guide that establishes a case for employers to subsidize employee transit costs up to \$255/month with the help of tax credits. Employees can also use pre-tax earnings to help offset transportation costs such as purchasing bus tickets.

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NOTE to Media: Images are oftentimes available upon request by e-mailing Dan Boss at dan.boss@networksnorthwest.org and stating preferences for resolution (300 dpi?), file format (.tif? .jpg?) and file size (1MB or less?). Or, phone (231) 929-5047. Check our online Media Room at: networksnorthwest.org/media

Founded in 1974, Networks Northwest facilitates and manages various programs and services for the 10 county region. These programs include Northwest Michigan Works, Small Business Development Center, Procurement Technical Assistance Center, various business services, and many different regional planning initiatives in response to our communities' requests and needs. You will see the broad spectrum of workforce, business and community services Networks Northwest offers if you visit our web site, networksnorthwest.org

Networks Northwest's member counties are: Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, and Wexford.