



# Partners for Transit

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## Rural Transit Providers Help Residents Age In Place

Rural transportation providers help fill the basic need that more and more residents are facing. Many of the patrons of rural transportation use the service everyday day, while others rely on it at least several times a month. The investment rural transportation providers make in Washtenaw County contributes not only to residents ability to remain in their homes, but to the economy in the areas they serve as well.



For years, residents of rural Washtenaw County have had help meeting their transportation needs from Peoples Express of Whitmore Lake, The WAVE of Chelsea and Manchester Senior Services. These services keep residents connected to critical needs such as, work, medical appointments and grocery visits, thus providing the ability to maintain a high quality of life and age in place. Passengers are not limited to any particular segment of the population. They range from students to elderly individuals, and even individuals who could drive, but choose to use public transportation services instead.

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The Partners for Transit mission is to improve the local economy by advancing transit options and improving the quality of life for Washtenaw County residents. The group is comprised of community leaders, local professionals, and motivated residents. To join in the partners movement, visit [partnersfortransit.org](http://partnersfortransit.org) and select volunteer.

**Urban - Transit Rider Profile**

Transit Rider: Sherry Miller

Employer:

Rides: Park and Ride, go!pass!

"I believe that utilizing the AATA transit system is a great way to save a ridiculous amount of money than it would cost me to park my car in a structure to work downtown. Also, I find that riding the bus in to the station from the Park & Ride in the morning is relaxing and non-stressful. I'd recommend it to anybody. I love my go!pass!

I ride the bus frequently with many business people, even some attorneys that I know. It's a great alternative transportation option."

## Rural Transit Providers: Part of a Countywide Transit Solution

An expanded transit presence in rural areas and more connections between downtown and out-county locations provides a connectivity solution that has many benefits. Economic benefits include increased access to retail locations, and a stabilizing effect on property values as individuals are better equipped to remain in their homes and age in place. Additionally a greater number of individuals able to use public transportation throughout Washtenaw County results in a more efficient system, with a greater return on investment, through maximized transit ridership.

**“I don’t have a car, relatives live a distance away. I depend on People’s Express for getting me to my medical appointments and groceries. I would like to use it on Saturdays.”**

**TINA HOWELL  
PEOPLES EXPRESS  
RIDER,  
WHITMORE LAKE, MI**

People’s Express provides service in northeast Washtenaw County, including the US-23 corridor from I-96 to Hospitals (U of M and St. Joseph Mercy), Colleges, Businesses and transfers to a number of stops on AATA bus routes. Services also include flex routes, a hybrid of fixed-route and on-demand bus service.

The WAVE offers several transportation programs including door-to-door bus service for Chelsea area residents, door-to-door bus service for Dexter School District residents, an interurban express route called the Community Connector which links

Chelsea with Dexter and Ann Arbor, the LifeLine Community Van program which provides rides to western Washtenaw County residents to locations anywhere within the County and group trip bus service for MDOT approved groups.

With all the benefits provided to Washtenaw County’s residents and local economy by rural public transportation, services like the WAVE and People’s Express do not have a fixed source of funding on which they can rely. Rather, the funding they do receive is largely from grants along with a mostly volunteer driver pool.

Though grants supply a very useful source of funding, there are limitations on the type of service each grant can fund and agencies must reapply for grants annually. For example, grants that rural services regularly receive can only be used to fund service for seniors and individuals with disabilities, job access for low income individuals, and for the creation of new types of service (not expanding service).

With a reliable source of transit funding for equitable service across the County, services such as Peoples Express, WAVE, Manchester Senior Services and TheRide (Ann Arbor Transportation Authority) could be expanded and made available throughout the county. Such an expansion would need to be a collaborative effort between local communities and the existing providers to develop and enhance community designed, community based systems to fill in mobility gaps. Additionally a stable funding source would allow for long range planning to provide service which currently cannot be done with the variability of year-to-year funding.



**“My mother is a resident at Chelsea Retirement Community. I use the WAVE bus to transport her to medical appointments. Without the service I would find it difficult to get my mother to the doctor. The handicap equipment is helpful.”**

**TERELL BIRD  
WAVE BUS PATRON  
BELLEVILLE, MI**

## Public Transportation...

*Ridership has increased 30% since 1995, with more than 10 billion trips taken annually.*

*Provides an affordable alternative to driving. Households that use public transportation save an average of \$6,251 per year.*

*Saves the U.S. the equivalent of 4.2 billion gallons of gasoline annually - more than 11 million gallons of gasoline per day.*

*Is estimated to reduce CO2 emissions by 37 million metric tons annually.*

*Saves fuel, reduces an individual's carbon footprint, and reduces congestion.*

*Provides an immediate option individuals can take to reduce their energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.*

*Reduces CO2 emissions by 20lbs per day - more than 4,800lbs per year for each commuter that switches from a private vehicle to transit.*

*Is a national priority that should be specifically targeted by climate change and energy legislation.*

*Source: American Public Transportation Association*

## Transit Allows Healthy Living Choices

The transportation choices we make on a daily basis have a direct influence on physical activity levels, mental health, and social networks while the large transportation policy decisions we make as a community impact individuals' abilities to adopt healthy behaviors.

Transportation goals across Washtenaw County attempt to provide options for healthy behaviors such as incorporating walking and biking into travel choices by encouraging the development and connectivity of bike lanes, sidewalks, trails and shared use paths. Quality transit and a robust system of non-motorized amenities work in tandem to give individuals healthy travel choices that enrich the built environment in our communities and improve social capital and health.



The benefits of public transit also include being able to get to healthy dietary choices. This is particularly true of some of Washtenaw County's most vulnerable residents. Food Assistance Program eligible residents and funds received have been on the rise for several years now. Accessibility of local food assistance programs helps insure that people with few choices are able to obtain fresh, nutritious foods.

Equitable transit choices indeed allow individuals to prioritize healthy lifestyles and impart the benefits to future generations, including a stronger economy, cleaner environment, and a better quality of life, resulting in of a vibrant, sustainable community for all.

## Rural - Transit Rider Profile

Transit Rider: Bonita Champine

Community: Manchester

Rides: Manchester Senior Services

### What would happen if service stopped and you could no longer use the bus?

“I would miss the camaraderie we all experience with fellow seniors. We are mostly widows. Others are very important! My physical ability to get around is deteriorating and I can picture being completely dependent.”

### For what types of trips do you use public transit?

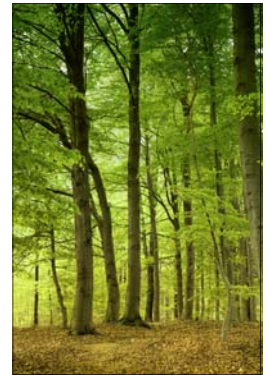
Senior meals twice weekly, doctor appointments, shopping and entertainment events.

### What about the current transit/bus system works for you?

Pam! She listens to what we want and genuinely cares about all of us. She gets it done... all while being fun.

### In general, why is bus service important to you?

For now the ability to socialize with friends, and later to do for me what I can't do for myself.



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