

# Benzie Transportation Authority

Presentation of Findings  
August 19, 2025



# **Benzie Bus Service Extension Plan FY2026**

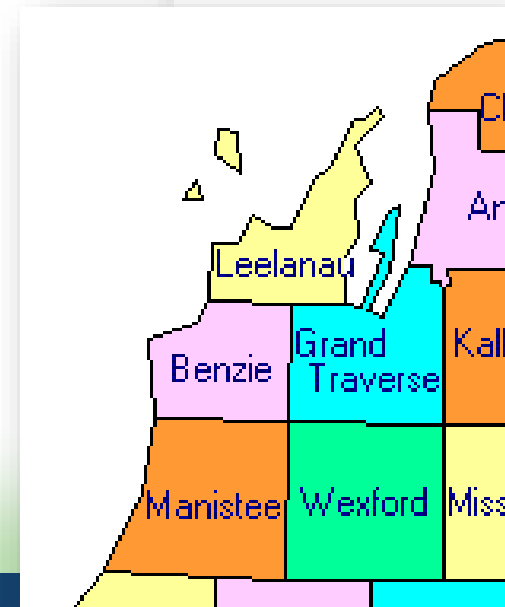
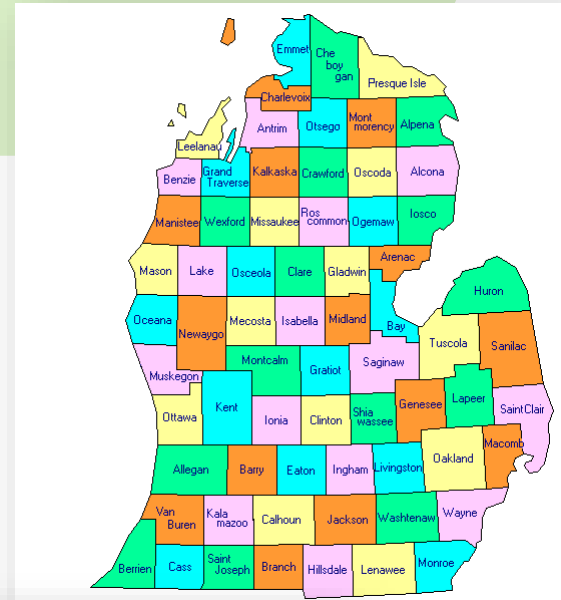
## **Enhancing Health Rides for a Healthier, More Connected Benzie County**

Presented by Rob Scott, Mobility Manager  
Benzie Transportation Authority (Benzie Bus)  
August 19, 2025

# Project Overview and Location

## Expansion of Access in Benzie County, NW Michigan, and statewide

- **Goal:** Expand Health Rides to improve non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) and community access.
- **Timeline:** FY2026 enhancements (Oct 2025–Jan 2026) and Rides to Wellness (R2W) transition by FY2027.
- **Location:** Benzie County, MI, with regional service to Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Manistee, and Wexford counties.



# Listening to Our Community

- Engaged 450+ residents via:
  - Surveys
  - focus groups
  - community meetings.
- Formed a 10-member advisory committee with diverse representation (healthcare, seniors, disabilities).



# Community Engagement Efforts



**Outreach methods:** Sponsored and organic social media/digital media placement, direct mail, feedback sessions at community events, in-person and virtual meetings

**Participation:** 60% older adults, 25% people with disabilities, 15% caregivers/providers.





# Key Findings and Needs

## Understanding Community Needs

- **Gaps in service:** 3-day Health Rides schedule leads to 20–25% trip denials, causing missed appointments.
- **Accessibility:** Rural geography and lack of Sunday & evening service limit access to work, worship, and care.



- **Health Equity:** Older adults and people with disabilities face barriers to preventive care.



# Proposed Solutions and Timeline

## Q1 FY2026 (Oct 2025)

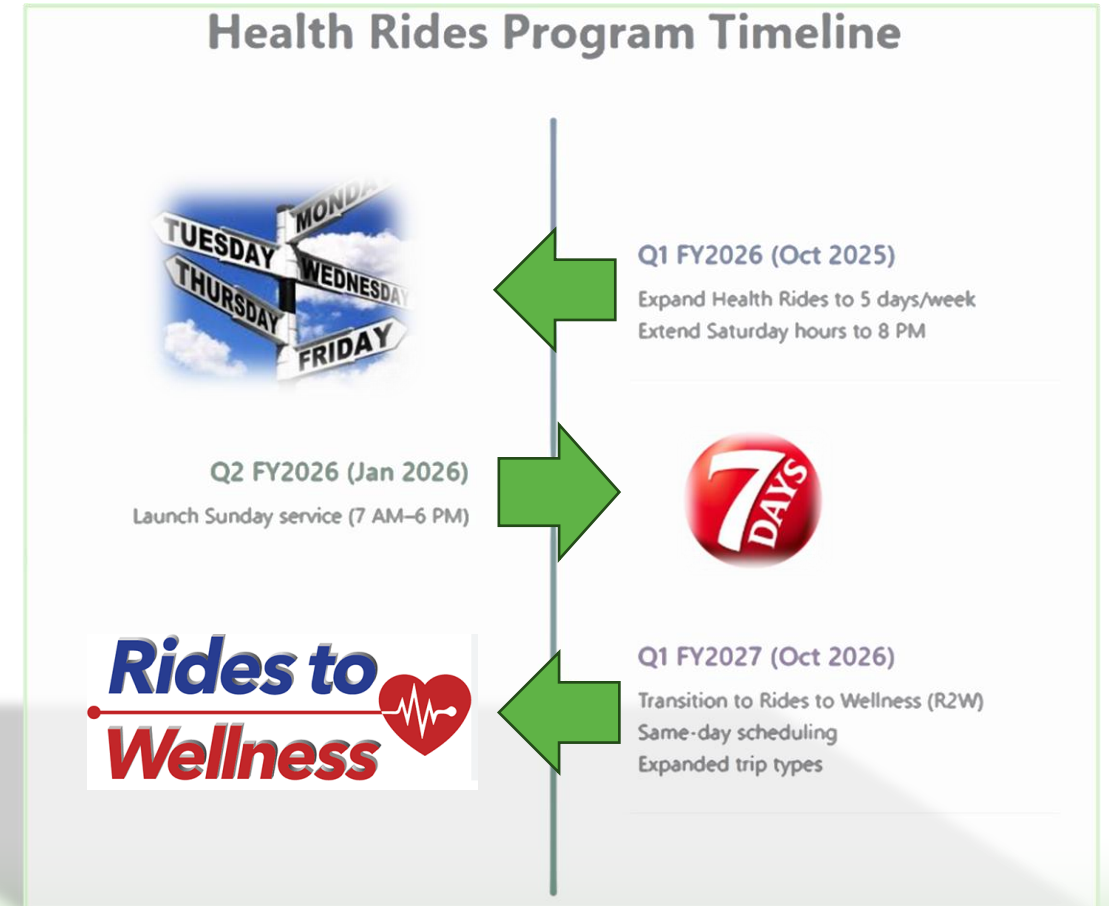
- Expand Health Rides to 5 days/week
- Extend Saturday hours to 8 PM

## Q2 FY2026 (Jan 2026)

- Launch Sunday service (7 AM–6 PM)

## Q1 FY2027 (Oct 2026)

- Transition to Rides to Wellness (R2W)
- Introduce same-day scheduling
- Expand trip types



# Implementation & Performance Metrics

## Making It Happen

- Staffing: Add 1 FTE driver (Q1), 2 FTE drivers (Q2), 0.5 FTE dispatcher (FY2027)
- Fleet: Purchase 3 AWD minivans/SUVs and 1 wheelchair-accessible van (\$205,000).
- Funding: 2024 millage, FTA 5310 grants (New Freedom)
- Metrics: Reduce trip denials to <10%; track ridership via Ecolane platform





# Lessons Learned & Recommendations

## Sharing Our Success

- Lesson: Awareness builds trust and engagement, improved outcomes.
- Lesson: Partnerships with healthcare providers enhance engagement, coordination and funding.
- Recommendation: Engage stakeholders early; use mixed outreach (digital, print, in-person).
- Recommendation: Leverage FTA resources for rural transportation planning and funding.





## Contact Information

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