

A blue bus with "EUPTA" written on its side is parked on a snowy street. The bus is a modern, low-floor model with its front door open. The background shows a residential area with a house and trees under a clear sky. The sun is visible in the upper left, creating a lens flare effect.

Eastern UP Transit Integration & Efficiency Study (EUPTIES)

Public Meeting 2

February 25, 2026

OHM Advisors

Agenda



Study Progress/Recap



Existing Conditions



Community Engagement



Proposed Transit Strategies



Next Steps



Study Progress & Recap





The **purpose and main goal of this Study** is to explore the feasibility of **coordinating and consolidating transit services** to ensure that the Eastern UP enjoys a sustainable and robust transit system that is around for future generations.



Study Progress & Recap

- Kicked-off study
- Visited with providers and rode the transit systems
- Interviewed neighboring providers
- Completed existing conditions memo
- Completed best practices analysis
- Interviewed legislative stakeholders
- Held rider listening sessions



Study Progress & Recap (continued...)

- Held three Transportation Steering Committee (TSC) meetings
- Conducted online public survey and analyzed results
- Held public open house at LSSU Cisler Center on Thursday, July 31, 2025
- Developed “Focus Area” Strategies



Current Phase of Work

Phase	2024	2025	2026
1: Study Kick Off	●		
2: Evaluation of Current Operations		● ● ●	
3: Evaluation of Proposed Options			● ●
4: Final EUPTIES Development			● ●

- TSC Meetings
- Public Outreach
- Combined TSC & Public Meeting

We are here!



Existing Conditions



AGENCY SNAPSHOT



Bay Mills Indian Community

2,500 Riders in 2024



TRANSIT SERVICES

- Fixed Route 3x/Day
- Dial-A-Ride in the Bay Mills area in between scheduled routes



HOURS OF OPERATION

6:30 AM - 4:55 PM Monday - Friday



RIDER ELIGIBILITY

Everyone can ride!



FLEET

1 Full Sized Bus

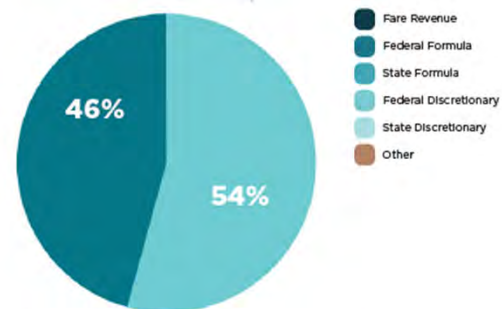


1 Transit Van



1 Minivan/SUV

FINANCIAL REVIEW



STAFF

7 Total Staff



Administrative Staff



Full-Time Driver



Part-Time Driver



On-Call Drivers

GOVERNANCE



5 Member Governing Board



AGENCY SNAPSHOT



Chippewa Luce Mackinac Community Action Agency (CLMCAA)

17,000 Riders in 2024



TRANSIT SERVICES

- Fixed Route 7x/Day
- Dial-A-Ride
- Rides to Wellness



HOURS OF OPERATION

Fixed Route 8 AM - 4 PM
DAR 6:30 AM - 6 PM
Monday - Friday



RIDER ELIGIBILITY

Everyone can ride!



FLEET

6 Cutaway Bus

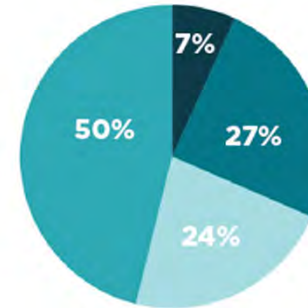


2 Transit Van



1 Minivan/SUV

FINANCIAL REVIEW



STAFF

12 Total Staff



Administrative Staff



Full-Time Dispatcher



Full-Time Mechanic



Full-Time Drivers



Part-Time Driver



On-Call Driver



AGENCY SNAPSHOT



Eastern Upper Peninsula Transportation Agency (EUPTA)

28,000 Riders in 2024



TRANSIT SERVICES

- Fixed Route 11x/Day Monday - Friday, 6x/Day Saturday - Sunday
- Dial-A-Ride
- Rides to Wellness



HOURS OF OPERATION

Fixed Route 5 AM - 11:30 PM
 DAR 8 AM - 4 PM Monday - Friday,
 9 AM - 4 PM Saturday



RIDER ELIGIBILITY

Everyone can ride!



FLEET

5 Cutaway Bus

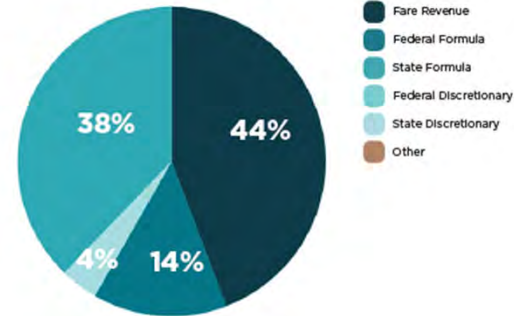


3 Transit Van



7 Minivan/SUV

FINANCIAL REVIEW



STAFF

27 Total Staff

Administrative Staff

Full-Time Bus Supervisor

Full-Time Mechanics

Part-Time Driver

GOVERNANCE

8 Member Governing Board



AGENCY SNAPSHOT



Lake Superior State University (LSSU)

~1,000 Riders in 2024



TRANSIT SERVICES

- Fixed Route (Seamore Shuttle)



HOURS OF OPERATION

Sunday 12 – 3 PM
Monday, Wednesday 9 AM – 12 PM, 6:30 – 9 PM
Tuesday, Thursday 8:30 – 11:30 AM, 6:30 – 9 PM
Friday 8:30 – 11:30 AM, 1 – 5 PM



RIDER ELIGIBILITY

LSSU Students and Faculty



FLEET

1 Transit Van



GOVERNANCE

8 Member Governing Board



AGENCY SNAPSHOT



Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians

2,500 Riders in 2024



TRANSIT SERVICES

- Kewadin Casino Shuttle



HOURS OF OPERATION

8 AM - 12 AM Sunday - Thursday
8 AM - 2 AM Friday - Saturday



RIDER ELIGIBILITY

Casino patrons and employees

FLEET



1 Transit Van

5 Pending Vehicles

FINANCIAL REVIEW

\$19,781,404 FY22 RAISE Grant

\$440,000 FY24 FTA Regional
Tribal Transit Program

STAFF

12 Pending Staff



Administrative Staff



Mobility Coordinator (pending)



Elder Drivers
(1 pending)



Rides to Wellness
Drivers (pending)

GOVERNANCE



12 Member Governing Board

1 Chairperson



Key Takeaways

Service and Ridership

RIDERSHIP TRENDS

EUPTA maintains relatively stable ridership, while CLMCAA and Bay Mills have seen declines. Mackinac County Transit shows modest growth, and LSSU's ridership is limited but consistent.

SERVICE EFFICIENCY

EUPTA's cost per passenger and per mile has increased, indicating reduced operational efficiency. CLMCAA's cost metrics have remained more stable, though ridership has declined.

DECLINING JARC SERVICES

Despite consistent funding, both CLMCAA and EUPTA report declining ridership for Job Access Reverse Commute programs.

DATA GAPS

Limited or estimated data from Bay Mills, LSSU, and the Sault Tribe make comprehensive comparisons challenging.

EMERGING TRANSIT SERVICES FROM TRIBAL ORGANIZATIONS

The Sault Tribe is actively developing a regional transit system, supported by recent federal grants and planning efforts, signaling future growth in service availability.



Key Takeaways

Financial Analysis

EMERGING REVENUE MODELS

Transit Agencies in the Eastern Upper Peninsula are increasingly relying on non-emergency medical transportation programs like Rides to Wellness to supplement traditional funding sources. These services not only meet critical mobility needs but also offer a more stable and growing revenue stream compared to farebox income.

ESCALATING COSTS

Despite efforts to maintain service levels, operating expenses across agencies are rising faster than revenues. Inflation, expanded service delivery, and personnel costs are contributing to this trend, raising concerns about long-term financial sustainability.

DECLINING FEDERAL AND STATE SUPPORT

Federal and state formula funding has declined or remained flat for several agencies, increasing reliance on discretionary grants and local sources. This shift places additional pressure on agencies to secure competitive funding and manage tighter budgets.



Key Takeaways

Physical Assets

CAPITAL PLANNING ACROSS AGENCIES

Only EUPTA has a formal Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) in place. Other agencies, including Bay Mills, CLMCAA, LSSU, and the Sault Tribe, either lack a CIP or are in early stages of planning, which may limit their ability to secure long-term capital funding and coordinate future investments.

OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES

Several agencies operate with minimal fleet sizes and lack dedicated vehicle storage or maintenance facilities. Bay Mills and LSSU, for example, do not have garages or formal plans for facility upgrades, while CLMCAA is undergoing a feasibility study to assess its existing site.

TECHNOLOGY AND FARE INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

Fare collection and communication systems range from basic to advanced, with most agencies relying on traditional tools. There is limited adoption of modern technologies like app-based fare systems or GPS-enabled dispatch, which could improve service coordination and rider experience.



Key Takeaways

Staff Analysis

DRIVER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION ARE MAJOR CHALLENGES

Agencies face persistent difficulties hiring and retaining drivers, especially for part-time roles that lack benefits. These staffing gaps are compounded by an aging workforce and frequent medical-related absences, leading to service disruptions.

LIMITED COORDINATION ACROSS AGENCIES

There is no formal collaboration between agencies for key operational roles such as dispatchers, mechanics, and on-call drivers. This lack of coordination reduces flexibility and limits opportunities to share resources or respond to staffing shortages regionally.

SCHEDULING AND COVERAGE CONSTRAINTS PERSIST

Inconsistent driver availability and scheduling challenges hinder efforts to expand service hours. Rural fringe communities are particularly underserved, especially for demand-response and non-emergency medical transportation services.

STAFFING RELIANCE ON DISCRETIONARY GRANTS IS UNSUSTAINABLE

Several agencies depend heavily on competitive grant funding to support staffing and operations. This reliance introduces financial uncertainty and limits long-term planning capacity.



Key Takeaways

Governance

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES VARY

Agencies operate under different governance models, ranging from tribal councils to university administration and nonprofit boards, making regional coordination complex and requiring tailored approaches to collaboration.

LIMITED REGIONAL OVERSIGHT OR INTEGRATION

There is no centralized body overseeing transit across the Eastern Upper Peninsula, which limits opportunities for shared decision-making, joint planning, and resource pooling.

STRATEGIC PLANNING CAPACITY IS UNEVEN

While some agencies have long-term planning frameworks, others lack formal governance mechanisms to support strategic transit development, hindering efforts to align services with regional mobility goals.



Community Engagement Results



How did we engage?



UPPER PENINSULA
TRANSIT AGENCY VISIT
& RIDE-ALONG
January 8 - 10, 2025



STAKEHOLDER
INTERVIEWS
RIDER LISTENING
SESSIONS



ONLINE SURVEY
July 15 - August 15, 2025
56 Responses



PUBLIC MEETING #1
July 31, 2025
6 - 8 PM



TRANSPORTATION
STEERING COMMITTEE
(TSC)
3 Meetings



Slide 20

- AJ1** Add UP trip to this graphic
Adrianna Jordan, 2026-02-16T16:39:40.349
- AJ1 0** Also add 3 TSC meetings so far?
Adrianna Jordan, 2026-02-16T16:44:17.704

Public Meeting #1: Recap

- **When:** July 31, 2025
- **Where:** Crow's Nest, Walker Cisler Student & Conference Center at Lake Superior State University
- **How:** Open House with stations
- **Stations:** Project overview boards, transit familiarity and map plot activity, transit user experience activity, transit budget game, exit survey



Public Meeting #1: Results

\$100 Transit Challenge

Better connections to other transit services	\$100
Expanded hours	\$60
Improved bus stops	\$40
Lower fares/more fare options	\$30
More frequent service	\$15
Easier technology	\$10
More accessible vehicles and stops	\$10

Board Comments

- “Social media – direct connection to one agency website”.
- “Consolidation of fares, online payment option, taking various forms of payment”.
- “Luce County has more seasonal employment (resorts) that could be better served by transit”

Map Comments

- “Desire a connection from Kincheloe to St. Ignace for employment”.
- “Secure connection to Mt. Pleasant Soaring Eagle Casino. Not sure how to get there from Indian Trails bus stop”.
- “Secure connection to Chippewa Airport, at night. Hours are usually 8 AM- 4 PM”.
- “Michigan Correctional Facility in Newberry is an employment center for SSM.”
- “Splash pad at Sherman Park in SSM”.





Online Public Survey Results



Who did we engage? Survey summary

83%

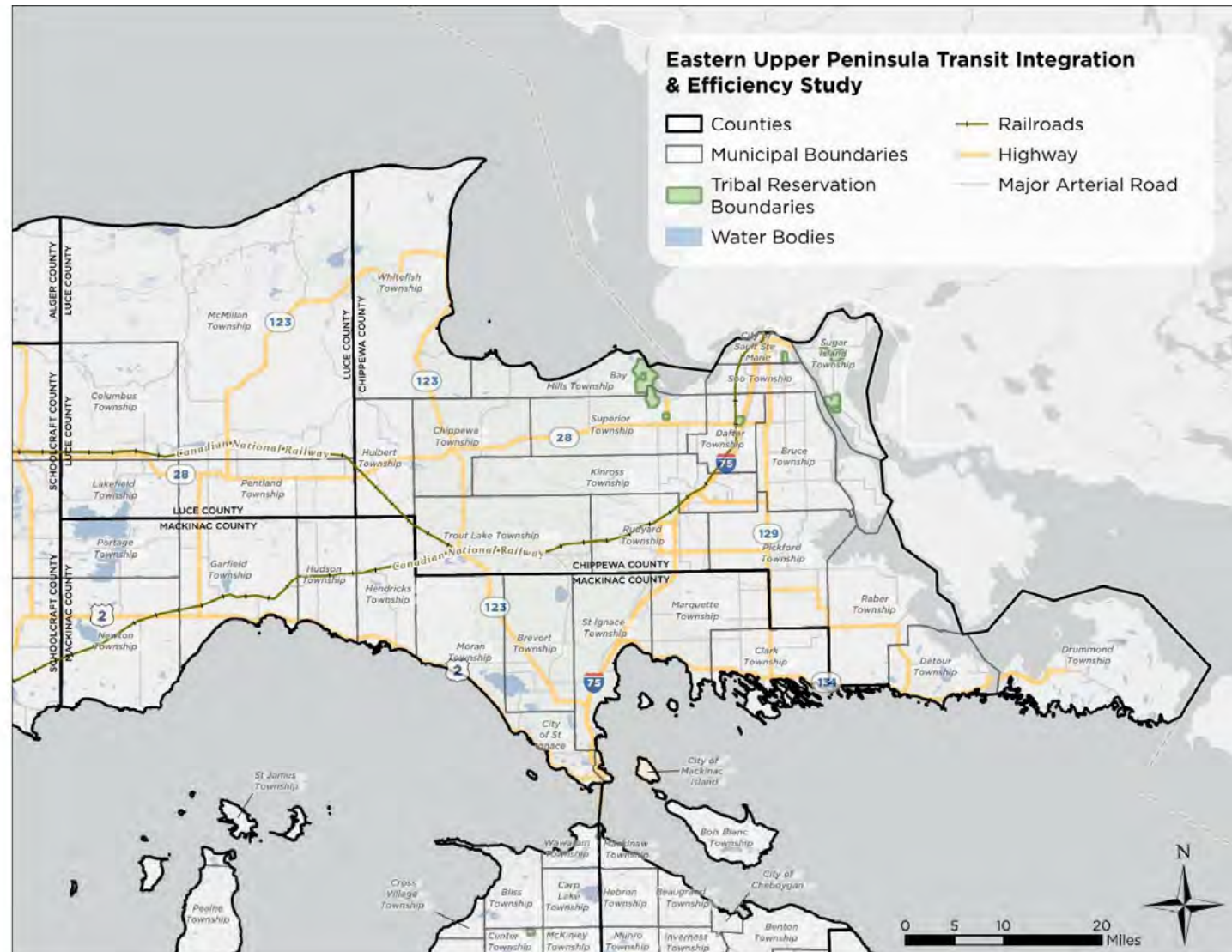
live in
**Chippewa
County**

4%

live in **Luce
County**

8%

live in
**Mackinac
County**



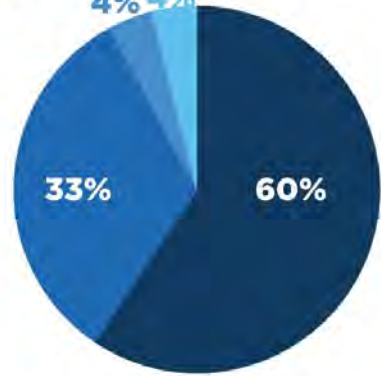
Who did we engage?

- 30% Use **Transit**
- 14% Do **Not** Have a **Valid Driver's License**
- 9% Do **Not** Have **Access to a Vehicle**
- 36% Have an **Income Lower than \$75,000***

** approximately the median household income for Chippewa, Luce, and Mackinac County*

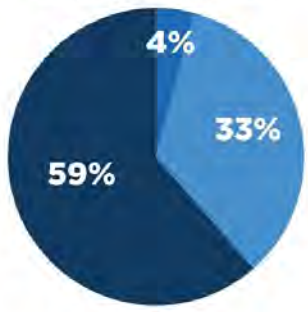
Female Male Other Prefer Not to Answer

GENDER



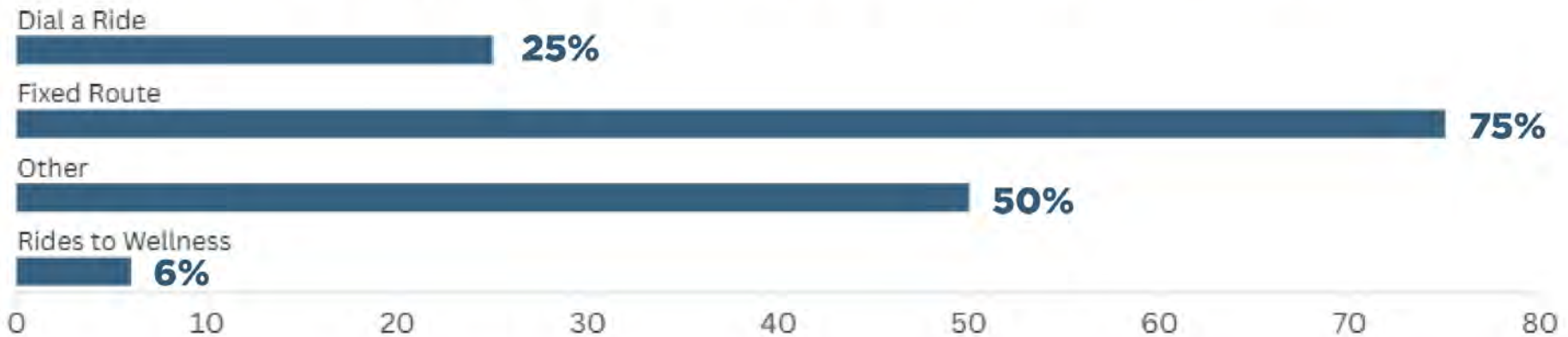
Full Time Employed College/University Student Employed Part Time

EMPLOYMENT



Current travel mode

WHICH TRANSIT PROVIDER(S) DO YOU USE? SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.



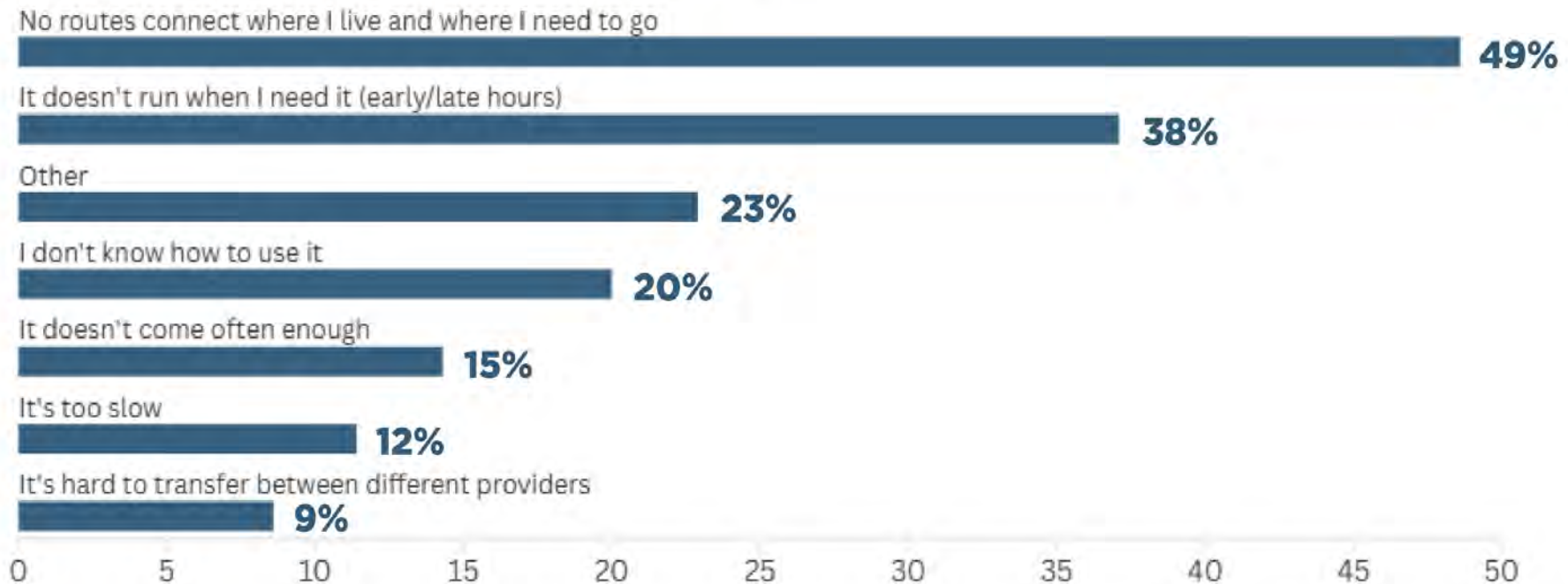
Other Responses:

- Neebish Island Ferry



Transit access

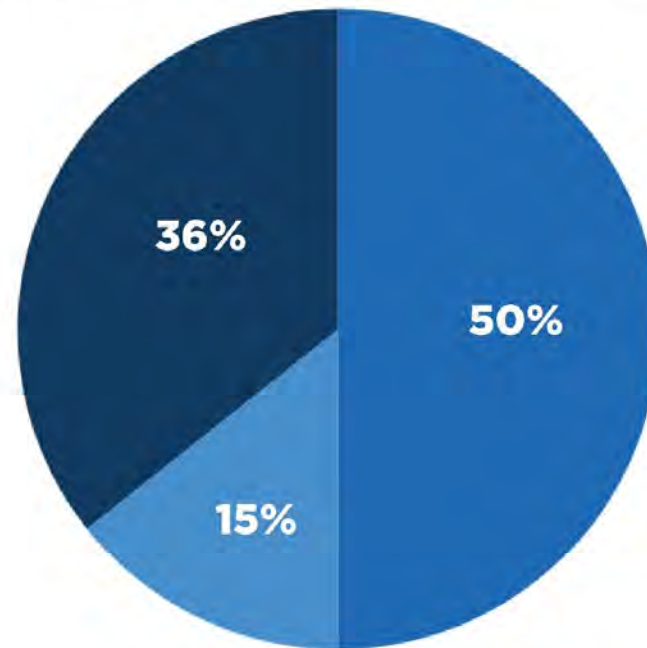
IF YOU DON'T TAKE TRANSIT, WHY NOT?



Transit cost

WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO PAY MORE FOR FASTER OR MORE FREQUENT TRANSIT SERVICES?

■ Yes ■ Maybe - Depends on the Cost ■ No



Transit priorities

WHAT ARE YOUR TOP PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IN CHIPPEWA, LUCE, AND MACKINAC COUNTIES?

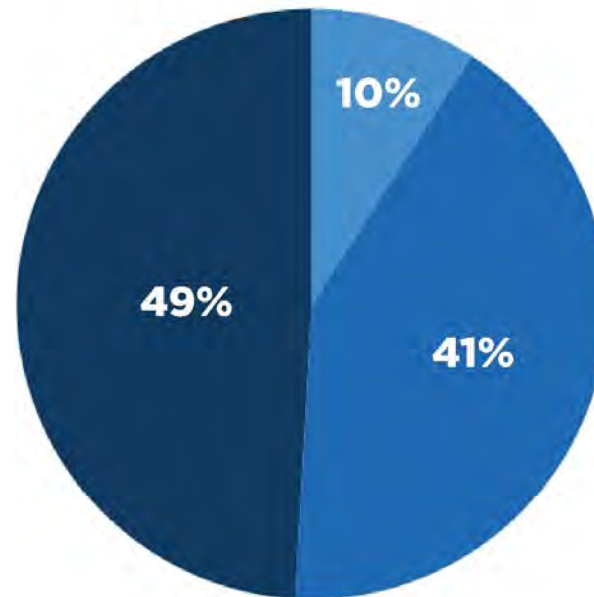
- 1 More Weekend Service**
- 2 Earlier/Later Hours**
- 3 Easier Access to the Transit Network**
- 4 Better Bus Stops** (*Shelters, Benches, Heating, Lighting*)
- 5 Ability to Go Places** *Outside of Chippewa, Luce, and Mackinac Counties*
- 6 Faster Services**
- 7 More Affordable Fares**
- 8 More Ways to Pay Fares**
- 9 Easier Transfers** *to Other Transit Services*
- 10 Cleaner and More Comfortable Vehicles**



Transit coordination

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO YOU THAT PUBLIC TRANSIT IS COORDINATED ACROSS CHIPPEWA, LUCE, AND MACKINAC COUNTIES, WITH ONE FARE SYSTEM, ONE TECHNOLOGY PLATFORM, AND ONE CUSTOMER SERVICE NUMBER?

- Very Important
- Somewhat Important
- Not Important



Interviews with Locally Elected/ Appointed Officials



Interviews with Locally Elected/Appointed Officials



4 interviews between
June – August

Kelly Church, Chippewa County Administrator
Justin Knepper, Chippewa County Commissioner
Allison Watkins, Village of Newberry Administrator
Scott Marshall, St. Ignace City Manager



Purpose: Determine transportation priorities and strengthen public engagement strategies



Locally Elected/Appointed Officials' Interviews

Transportation Priorities

- Interest in transit to **Detroit sporting events**.
- Increase **non-emergency medical transport** coverage area.
- Improve transit options for **unhoused K-12 students**.
- Develop **multi-agency mobility hub** and more **bus shelters**.
- **Indian Trails** buses lack community visibility due to odd arrival/departure hours – raises safety concerns too.
- Excitement around **Amtrak** – even if not practical.
- **Develop bus stops** at SSM industrial park, My Michigan Medical Center, and Soo locks/ACE.
- Expand **bus service hours**.
- Expand service between **SSM, Newberry, Marquette, Escanaba**.



Locally Elected/Appointed Officials' Interviews

Public Engagement Strategies

- **Online transit “hub”** with the most up-to-date system information.
- **Changing people’s behavior** is the biggest challenge – people love their cars, despite high insurance costs, and **change perception** that transit is only for low-income population.
- Coordinated, **improved branding and marketing**.
- Better **transit maps**.



Transit Focus Area Strategies



Transit Strategies

Overall Goals

- **Rider Experience:** Deliver more seamless transit service in Chippewa, Luce, and Mackinac counties, making public transit a competitive and preferred choice for travel.
- **Operational Efficiency:** Make it more efficient and effective for agencies to deliver quality service.
- **Financial Sustainability:** Provide cost savings for the agencies through reduced administrative duplication and maximized resource utilization.

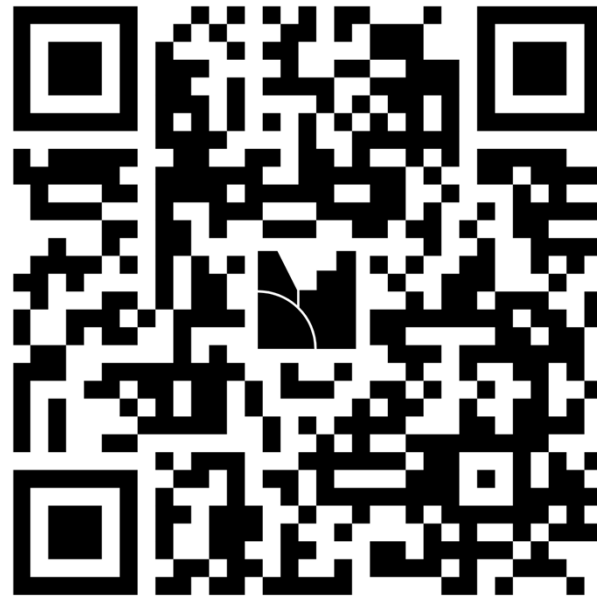


**How to
participate:**

Live Interactive Mentimeter Poll:

menti.com

Enter code: 3921 0190



RANK THE FOLLOWING STRATEGIES TO MEET THE SERVICE GOAL OF "IMPROVING OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY":

Implement modern scheduling and routing software

Establish a shared regional scheduling and dispatch office

Establish dedicated transfer points between adjacent fixed/deviated fixed route service

Transition to smaller vans to reduce the need for drivers with CDLs

Establish a regional mobility manager

RANK THE FOLLOWING STRATEGIES TO MEET THE SERVICE GOAL OF "ESTABLISHING A MORE RIDER FRIENDLY TRANSIT SYSTEM":

Establish microtransit zones in Sault Ste. Marie and St. Ignace

Implement a regional trip planning mobile app and/or website with vehicle tracking

Coordinate existing transit services to align with Sault Tribe service expansions

Explore the feasibility of a rural vanpool system shared between all the agencies

Increase the frequency of service between Sault Ste. Marie and Kincheloe

RANK THE FOLLOWING STRATEGIES TO MEET THE SERVICE GOAL OF "GROWING RIDERSHIP FOR MORE STABLE FUNDING":

Establish agency service contracts to establish facility-specific dedicated service

Collaborate with employers on specialized job shuttles to get staff to work reliably

RANK THE FOLLOWING STRATEGIES TO MEET THE SERVICE GOAL OF "FORMALIZING REGIONAL CONNECTIONS":

Explore a Sault Ste. Marie to St. Ignace transit connection, potentially via Kincheloe

Provide and advertise on-demand transit service to island ferries

Transit or taxi support for Indian Trails connections

Share Newberry and Curtis services with Mackinac County Transit

A large orange shape on the left side of the slide, consisting of a vertical rectangle on the left and a quarter-circle on the right.

How you can help:

What other factors do you want our project team to consider when we elevate strategies for coordination and consolidation in the following areas?

- Transit services
- Finances
- Physical Assets
- Staffing
- Governance



Discussion

- What regional transit concerns do you have in the focus areas?
- What regional transit improvements would you most like to see implemented in your community in the focus areas?



Next Steps



Next Steps

- Refine draft **coordination and consolidation strategies** – Now through April 2026
- **TSC Meeting #4** – March 2026
- Prepare **Draft Feasibility Study** – March through May 2026
- **TSC Meeting #5** – June 2026
- **Community Engagement Round #3** – August 2026
- Prepare **Final Feasibility Study** – June through August 2026

TSC Meeting #4: Understanding & Testing Transit Service Coordination & Integration Strategies

- March 2026
- Review results of second round of public engagement
- Gauge interest in draft coordination and consolidation strategies
- Identify “fatal flaws” in presented strategies



Thank You

Questions?

