

**March 31, 2008**

## **Local organization chosen to receive one of 8 senior transportation demonstration grants**

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission is one of eight community organizations selected in a competitive, nationwide application process to receive grants from the National Center on Senior Transportation, Washington, D.C. The grants are for demonstration projects that will work creatively to meet the transportation needs of older adults living in the community.

SWMPC's proposal was called "Regional Coordination of Senior and Rural/Small Urban Transit Services in Southwest Michigan Using Regional Web-based Technology, Surveying Needs and Piloting Programs to Improve Older Adult Mobility " For the past three years, SWMPC has been convening public transit and human service providers to improve mobility through increased coordination with the use of shared technology (web-based client management, routing and scheduling software). The overall project goal is to provide safer, more reliable, more convenient, more flexible and affordable transportation to older adults in southwest Michigan (Berrien, Branch, Cass, Van Buren and St. Joseph Counties) in an environment of decreasing funding and increasing demand. The grant money will specifically be used to purchase and implement a regionalized, web-based program in rural/small urban transit agencies in SW Michigan allowing for efficiencies and improvement and/or expansion of services

Along with SWMPC, grant partners include Van Buren Public Transit, Berrien Bus, Cass County Transportation Authority, Twin Cities Transportation Authority (Benton Harbor area), St. Joseph County Transportation Authority, Branch Area Transportation Authority, St. Joseph County Commission on Aging, South Haven Area Senior Services, Branch County Commission on Aging and Area Agency on Aging Regions II & IV. However, the grant proposal was submitted with over 35 letters of support representing over 60 state, regional, local governmental agencies, non-profit and faith based organizations and the private sector.

According to the NCST, more than 300 public, private and faith-based aging/human services and transportation organizations from 46 states plus the District of Columbia applied.

"Based upon the recommendations of our reviewers, we believe the group of eight projects that have been selected for funding will lead the way in addressing the transportation needs of older adults through the use of highly creative approaches," said **Virginia Dize**, NCST's assistant director.

"These projects offer tremendous opportunities for learning and innovation that will further transportation services for older adults," added **Mary Leary**, senior director for transportation initiatives at Easter Seals.

Established in 2006, the National Center on Senior Transportation is co-administered by Easter Seals and the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration and the U.S. Administration on Aging. The Center's mission is to provide technical assistance and training and support innovations that enhance transportation for older adults at the community level.

For additional information, contact:  
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