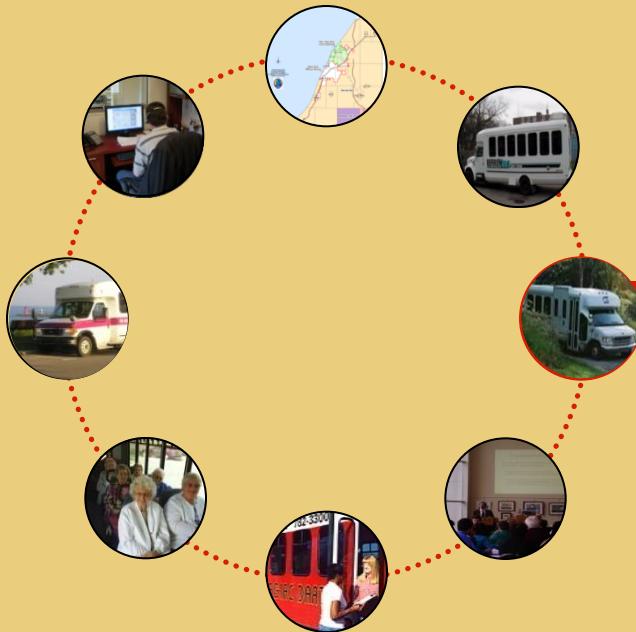


# ***BERRIEN COUNTY TRANSIT CONSOLIDATION FEASIBILITY STUDY***

**September 30, 2013**

**Update for NATS and  
TwinCATS**



# Background



## Study Purpose:

- ❖ Streamline transit service, simplifying and improving access to transit use for riders;
- ❖ Achieve service efficiencies and economies;
- ❖ Provide a central focus on transit for Berrien County; and
- ❖ Create a robust transit system to meet the growing and changing needs of the residents of Berrien County.

# Completed Work



- ❖ *Technical Memorandum #1: Evaluation of Current Operations*
- ❖ *Technical Memorandum #2: Evaluation of Proposed Options*
- ❖ *Technical Memorandum #3: Preliminary Financing Plan for a Countywide Transit System*
- ❖ *Technical Memorandum #4: Considerations for Establishment of a Berrien County Transit Authority (BCTA)*

# Current Realities



- ❖ Four transit systems:
  - ❖ Fragmented system that is difficult for customers to understand or navigate
  - ❖ Customers are required to pay separate fares for trips between different areas of the County
- ❖ Duplicative administrative and operations functions
- ❖ General lack of connectivity between systems

# Some Consolidation Challenges



- ❖ Different organizational structures and oversight boards
- ❖ Numerous funding sources, including three separate millages
- ❖ Two systems operated directly, two contracted out to a private provider
- ❖ Separate planning processes
- ❖ Varying wage scales and different benefit packages

# Some Consolidation Opportunities



- ❖ Financial – Reduce duplication in management, dispatching, maintenance, and facilities
- ❖ Planning – Improve connectivity and develop services and schedules through a countywide approach
- ❖ Operational – Streamline fare structures, coordinate marketing, eliminate duplicative services, improve productivity and lower costs

# Current Status



- ❖ After review of possible options, project advisors recommended that preferred structure initially would be a new transit authority for non-urbanized areas of County currently served by Berrien Bus
- ❖ The Berrien County Transit Authority (BCTA) would serve as a foundation for further consideration of consolidation opportunities

# Proposed BCTA Vision



- ❖ Provide public transportation that supports individual independence
- ❖ Provide public transportation that supports economic development
- ❖ Provide public transportation that offers local businesses additional solutions for retaining employees
- ❖ Improve coordination of transportation services in the County and an improved regional network
- ❖ Serve as the foundation for a possible unified countywide public transit system



# BCTA: Major Considerations



- ❖ Process for Organization
- ❖ Governance
- ❖ Operations/Staffing
- ❖ Services/Planning
- ❖ Funding

# Process for Organization



- ❖ Organized under State of Michigan Public Transportation Act
- ❖ Would be an independent governmental unit
- ❖ Would have the ability to levy a millage

# Governance: Board of Directors



- ❖ Roles and Responsibilities:
  - ❖ Develop goals and objectives and ensure they are met
  - ❖ Develop mission and vision statements and establish Governing Principles
  - ❖ Provide fiduciary oversight
  - ❖ Set service policies and standards
  - ❖ Hire the transit director and oversee their performance
  - ❖ Serve as the liaison between the Board and elected officials

# Board of Directors Composition



- ❖ Should provide appropriate representation from the community and all regions of the County
- ❖ Challenge in Berrien County is how to ensure representation in an area with numerous cities, villages, townships, and unincorporated areas
- ❖ Accomplished through use of Board of County Commissioners or appointees with appropriate term limits and rotation of Board members?

# Board of Directors Composition



- ❖ Typically only voting members would consist of representatives from jurisdictions or organizations that contribute funding
- ❖ Representatives from other organizations could serve as ex officio member
- ❖ Nominating process would need to be established
- ❖ Possible subcommittees:
  - ❖ Governance
  - ❖ Planning and Development
  - ❖ Performance Monitoring/External Relations

# Operations/Staffing Considerations



- ❖ Public transportation authority act states that services may be:
  - ❖ Operated directly
  - ❖ Contracted out
  - ❖ Overseen by a management firm
- ❖ No matter the operating agreement, BCTA would require an administrative staff:
  - ❖ Serve as liaison to Board
  - ❖ Oversee operations
  - ❖ Manage any contracts

# Services/Planning



- ❖ BCTA would provide foundation to:
  - ❖ Assess current shuttle services designed primarily to serve human service agency contracts, and identify opportunities to provide more general public services
  - ❖ Plan and implement new services if a millage is proposed and approved
  - ❖ Evaluate opportunities to provide improved service in underserved areas and new service in unserved areas of County
  - ❖ Lead and facilitate additional coordination with the other three transit systems in the County

# Funding



- ❖ BCTA would serve as recipient for current sources -- these sources would remain the primary funding streams when the authority is initially created
- ❖ BCTA could pursue millage in area served by authority or an agreement with other transit systems on a countywide one
- ❖ BCTA could revisit agreement with TCATA regarding Section 5307 Program funds
- ❖ BCTA could apply for funds through the FTA Section 5310 Program and MDOT's Specialized Services Program



# Future Opportunities



- ❖ Same Michigan Act that allows for creation of BCTA includes provision for allowing new membership after formation
- ❖ Political subdivisions or portions of a city, village, or townships may become a member upon:
  - ❖ Resolution adopted by majority vote of the legislative body requesting membership
  - ❖ Resolution adopted by a 2/3 vote of members of the Board of the authority approving an amendment to the Articles of Incorporation

# Possible Initial Steps



- ❖ City of Buchanan and Berrien Bus already have established agreements, so natural first step after BCTA is in place:
  - ❖ Buchanan City Commission (that serves as Board for Buchanan Dial-a-Ride) votes to join BCTA
  - ❖ BCTA Board votes to add Buchanan to authority
  - ❖ City of Buchanan joins BCTA; through agreement funds from current millage become part of revenues for BCTA

# Looking Further Ahead



- ❖ TCATA and Niles DART could work with their local communities and a decision is made to join the BCTA
- ❖ BCTA Board votes to add as new members
- ❖ New members join BCTA; through agreement funds from current millages become part of revenues for BCTA
- ❖ BCTA begins process for one countywide millage
- ❖ Services planned and operated as one.

# Countywide Millage/Service Planning Possibilities



- ❖ Primary Activity Centers: St. Joseph/Benton Harbor Area, Niles
  - ❖ Additional fixed routes to connect people who reside within these areas to connect people living in rural communities to the activity centers
- ❖ Secondary Activity Centers: Watervliet, Coloma Area, Berrien Springs
  - ❖ Dial a Ride service or flex routes to move people who reside within the secondary activity centers to destinations in secondary activity center
- ❖ Remaining Rural Area Communities
  - ❖ 24 Hour reservation demand response or scheduled shuttles from these communities to Primary or Secondary Activity Centers

# Contact Information



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