

Transportation Options Easy to Find, Thanks to New Websites, Guide

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Getting to the grocery store or doctor's office may seem like an easy task. Without transportation of your own, it can be very difficult, especially for older adults and people living with disabilities. There are options available, but many don't know where to find them or what the requirements are to access the needed transportation services. The West Michigan Transit Coalition launched a new web-based tool and one-page Quick Reference Guide to make it easier for everyone to find transportation providers.



The website was developed in collaboration with the Ottawa County Transit Coalition and the Kent County Essential Needs Task Force Transportation Subcommittee. Three addresses can be used to reach the same website:

- Kent County residents: www.kentRIDE.org
- Allegan and Ottawa County residents: www.lakeshoreRIDELink.org
- Muskegon County residents: www.muskegonRIDE.org

"This is a great tool for all of West Michigan," said John Mitchell of the 2-1-1 helpline in Kent County. "Whether it's a student or a family in need of social services, all the information they need is right at your fingertips and it is searchable by county, eligibility categories, hours of service and cost."

The information on the Kent County portion of the website builds on a decade's worth of collaboration. "It was great that individuals from Lakeshore RideLink asked us to be a part of their effort to put a regional directory on-line as we readied to prepare a third edition of our directory," said Joan Konyndyk of Hope Network Transportation. "The cost savings associated with not printing a 40-page directory will only be outweighed by the aggravation avoided by having easily updated information on-line, 24/7."

The Quick Reference Guides are available, free of charge, at several agencies throughout the four counties, including the Kent County Health Department at (616) 632-7290, Disability Advocates of Kent County at (616) 949-1100, Hope Network at (616) 243-0876 and through the Heart of West Michigan United Way's 2-1-1 Program.

The West Michigan Transit Coalition includes the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan, Disability Advocates of Kent County, Disability Network/Lakeshore, Harbor Transit, Heart of West Michigan United Way, Hope Network, Kent County Essential Needs Task Force Transportation Subcommittee, Kent County Health Department, Love INC, Macatawa Area Express, North Ottawa Council on Aging, Pioneer Resources and The Rapid.

The collaborative effort's mission statement is to:

Increase vital access to transportation resources through education, advocacy and collaboration of resources to ensure the quality of life for the members of our community.