

## **Benzie Bus Announces Millage Vote to Secure Future of Public Transit**

**Benzie County, MI** – The Benzie Transportation Authority (also known as Benzie Bus) has scheduled a millage proposal for a public vote on August 6th, aiming to safeguard and advance public transit for the rapidly growing needs of Benzie County's residents. In the face of declining state funding and a pressing demand for expanded services, the Benzie Bus appeals to the community's sense of unity and foresight to approve an essential millage increase.

If approved by voters, the millage proposal would levy annually a new additional millage not to exceed 1 mill, replacing the current levy of 0.47 mills. This modest yet critical hike will allow Benzie Bus to continue servicing the county's increasing ridership, which soared to over 100,000 in 2023. This surge, despite the previous year's pandemic challenges, underscores the community's reliance on Benzie Bus for its unmatched affordability and accessibility.

"The reliability and affordability of Benzie Bus are irreplaceable assets for our residents," states John Morse, Chair of the Benzie Bus Board of Directors "Our aging population, many of whom have given up driving, depend on us for their everyday needs. The proposed millage is a vital step to ensure we can continue to serve them without compromise."

A critical analysis of Benzie Bus's service and expansion plans reveals an urgent need for additional funding to match the growing demand, especially as senior citizen numbers are expected to rise significantly. According to Benzie Senior Resources, the senior demographic in Benzie County is experiencing rapid growth, further necessitating reliable transportation services.

The revenue from the new additional millage, estimated to be around \$1,707,000 in its first year, will be instrumental in maintaining the current level of operations and exploring future service enhancements. It's not merely a budget adjustment; it's an investment in the quality of life and autonomy for all community members, particularly the elderly and disabled.

Reflecting on the community's feedback, Sophia Hogarth, Mobility Coordinator at Benzie Bus remarks, "We've received an outpouring of gratitude for the services we provide. The stories we hear every day from our riders inspire us to keep pushing forward. This millage is not just about keeping buses on the road; it's about keeping our community connected and thriving."

In the lead-up to the vote, Benzie Bus is committed to transparent communication and education regarding the millage proposal's impact. Detailed informational resources will be made available to ensure voters are fully informed.

Residents are encouraged to access comprehensive details on the millage proposal, including its community benefits, financial implications, and FAQs, at [www.benziebus.com/millage](http://www.benziebus.com/millage). Benzie County can continue to foster independence, connectivity, and resilience among its residents.

### **About Benzie Bus:**

With a dedication to community service and a commitment to operational excellence, Benzie Bus has stood as a beacon of public transportation in Benzie County for 17 years. From offering a crucial transportation alternative to providing a social connection for those isolated by lack of mobility, Benzie Bus remains steadfast in its mission to offer a transit service that is inclusive, dependable, and attuned to the needs of every Benzie County resident.

**On August 6th, a vote will determine the future of connectivity, accessibility, and mobility in Benzie County**