

Covid-19 and Public Transportation

Public Transportation and People with Disabilities

Why are people with disabilities more likely to use public transportation than people without disabilities?

- Disabilities such as seizures or blindness may prevent a person from driving safely.
- People with learning disabilities who would otherwise become competent drivers may struggle to pass the written driver's exam.
- Driving may cause anxiety for people with psychiatric disabilities and those who have been in prior car accidents.
- People with disabilities are more likely to live in poverty, which means they're less likely to be able to afford a car, auto insurance, and vehicle maintenance costs.

Key Forms of Public Transit

Fixed-Route: Mass transit buses follow the same route every time.



Demand/Response: An individual schedules a ride, and the vehicle picks them up at their origin point and drops them off at their destination. (Rides are often shared with other passengers.)



Pre-Pandemic Transit Landscape: Branch County

- Fixed-route: Circle Route in Coldwater running Monday through Friday
- Demand/response: Countywide curb-to-curb system running 7 days a week, with service ending early Sunday afternoon

Branch Area Transit Authority Fares			
	Coldwater City Limits	Up to 5 Miles	Over 5 Miles
Regular	\$1.30	\$1.60	\$2.50
Student (12-18)	\$1.00	\$1.30	\$1.60
Seniors, Disabled, Children (3-11)	\$0.65	\$0.80	\$1.25



Pre-Pandemic Transit Landscape: Calhoun County

- Fixed-Route: Battle Creek Transit, 8 bus routes, with most running Monday through Saturday
 - \$1.25 general fare
 - \$0.60 reduced fare for seniors and people with disabilities
- Demand/response: Tele-Transit, limited service area (City of Battle Creek, City of Springfield, and limited portions of Bedford, Emmett, and Pennfield Townships)
 - \$7 general fare before 5 p.m.
 - \$5 general fare after 5 p.m.
 - \$2 reduced fare for seniors and people with disabilities



BATTLE CREEK
TRANSIT

Pre-Pandemic Transit Landscape: Kalamazoo County

- Fixed-route: 19 Metro bus routes in Central County Transportation Authority boundary, with most running 7 days a week
 - \$1.50 standard fare
 - \$0.75 reduced fare for seniors and people with disabilities



- Demand/response: Metro Connect service running countywide 7 days a week for rides scheduled up to 7 days in advance
 - \$12 standard fare
 - \$4 reduced fare for seniors and people with disabilities
 - \$3 ADA fare for qualified people with disabilities taking rides with origin and destination within 0.75 miles of a bus route
 - Subscription service available at \$6/ride
 - Rides to VA Hospital in Calhoun County and to transfer points in other surrounding counties

Pre-Pandemic Transit Landscape: St. Joseph County

- Demand/response: Countywide transportation 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday
 - \$8 standard fare
 - \$2 suggested donation for seniors
 - \$4 fare for people with disabilities
 - \$4 student fare (with school ID)
 - \$2 JARC employment transportation
 - \$2 to/from Glen Oaks Community College (with Glen Oaks student ID)
 - \$40 per hour contract ride (2 hour minimum)

Demand/response trips to Battle Creek VA Hospital on Wednesdays and transfers to Kalamazoo County

- Fixed-route: \$1 per destination, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday
 - Sturgis Circle Line
 - Sturgis Rev Line
 - Three Rivers Circle Line



Initial Covid-19 Impacts on Public Transportation

- Many riders with alternative transportation options chose not to use public transit to avoid the risk of Covid-19.
- Providers requested riders use transit for essential travel only.
- Temporary complete shut downs of fixed-route bus systems in Kalamazoo and Calhoun counties
 - Fixed-route riders diverted to demand/response systems during mass transit shut downs
- Acrylic barriers installed to separate drivers from riders before resuming fixed-route service in Calhoun and Kalamazoo counties
 - Required riders to board at the rear door, which meant drivers must radio dispatch to request a barrier-free bus for riders with disabilities who cannot board without a ramp
 - Fixed-route service was free because riders couldn't access the farebox, and demand/response service was free to be equitable to riders with disabilities.

More Covid-19 Impacts on Public Transportation

- Downtown Kalamazoo transportation center building closed to public
- Increased cleaning procedures
- Face masks required for riders and drivers
- Reduced rider capacity on vehicles
 - Some seats blocked off on fixed-route buses to force physical distance between riders
 - One rider at a time on some demand/response systems
- Reduction in service provided
 - Reduced hours of service on fixed-route
 - Fixed-route riders diverted to demand/response systems during hours fixed-route didn't run
 - SJCTA Rev Line shut down
- Public transit driver staffing shortages compounding the reduction in service
 - Drivers needing to quarantine after Covid-19 exposures
 - Lack of new applicants
 - Difficulty with driver retention
 - Some drivers retiring

New Developments

Calhoun County: New countywide demand/response system pilot program BCGo started in March 2021.

BCGo Fares	
Miles of Trip	Fare
< 6 miles	\$3.00
6 - 10 miles	\$5.00
11 - 15 miles	\$7.00
16 - 20 miles	\$10.00
> 20 miles	\$15.00
Additional Passenger(s)	\$3.00

Kalamazoo County:

- Western Michigan University ended their Bronco Transit campus bus system and contracted with Metro to provide 2 new fixed routes for students. The new campus-oriented bus routes are also available to the general public.
- Metro's travel training contract with Disability Network Southwest Michigan ended, and Metro hired their own travel trainer to teach people how to use public transportation in Kalamazoo County.

Ongoing Impact of Covid-19 on Public Transportation

- Face masks are still required.
- Fare collection resumed in Calhoun and Kalamazoo counties after acrylic barriers were removed from fixed-route buses in mid-2021.
- The driver shortage continues to limit the amount of service that can be provided.
 - No Sunday fixed-route service in Kalamazoo County
 - SJCTA Rev Line remains out of service.
- The newly passed federal Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act (IIJA) includes increased funding for public transportation.
- Additional grant funding to improve accessibility of train stations is available under the IIJA.

Resources

- Branch County: Branch Area Transit Authority: <https://www.branchareatransit.com>
- Calhoun County
 - Battle Creek Transit: <https://www.battlecreekmi.gov/750/Transit>
 - Reduced fare forms: <https://www.battlecreekmi.gov/481/Forms>
 - BCGo information: <https://www.battlecreekmi.gov/710/BCGo>
 - BCGo app: <https://www.bcgomi.com/>
- Kalamazoo County: Metro Transit: <https://www.kmetro.com>
 - Travel training services: <https://www.kmetro.com/riding/travel-training>
 - Token Transit (app-based fare payment option): <https://tokentransit.com>
 - Send Token Transit fares: <https://tokentransit.com/agency/kalamazoo/send>
- St. Joseph County: St. Joseph County Transit Authority: <https://sjcta.info>
 - Reduced fare form for riders with disabilities: <https://sjcta.info/disability-form/>
 - JARC (Job Access & Reverse Commute) employment transportation form for low-income riders: <https://sjcta.info/jarc-application/>

Questions? Comments?



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Michigan Rehabilitation Services
Branch & Calhoun counties: 269-968-3311
Kalamazoo & St. Joseph counties: 269-337-3700
<https://Michigan.gov/mrs>



Disability Network Southwest Michigan
269-345-1516
<https://dnswm.org>