

MEMORANDUM



TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: VICTOR CARDENAS, CITY MANAGER
SUBJECT: AUGUST TRANSIT UPDATE
DATE: AUGUST 28, 2023

This correspondence aims to provide the latest update on the Administration's work as it pertains to rolling out transit through the County's millage. As a reminder, after the voters approved the County's transit millage last November, the County entered into contracts with four (4) providers: Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART), North Oakland Transportation Authority (NOTA), Western Oakland Transportation Authority (WOTA), and the Older Persons' Commission (OPC).

Upon entering into this new arrangement, the County learned that a fifth provider was already providing service: People's Express (PEX). PEX has been operating to the west of Novi in South Lyon, Milford, Milford Township, Wixom, and areas of Livingston County.

City staff has facilitated meetings with SMART, WOTA, and PEX; a summary of staff's meetings is listed below. The constant theme we've identified is the opportunity to expand Novi's senior transit and/or all members of the public by allowing a new provider with more capacity to take on that responsibility, albeit at a small cost to riders:

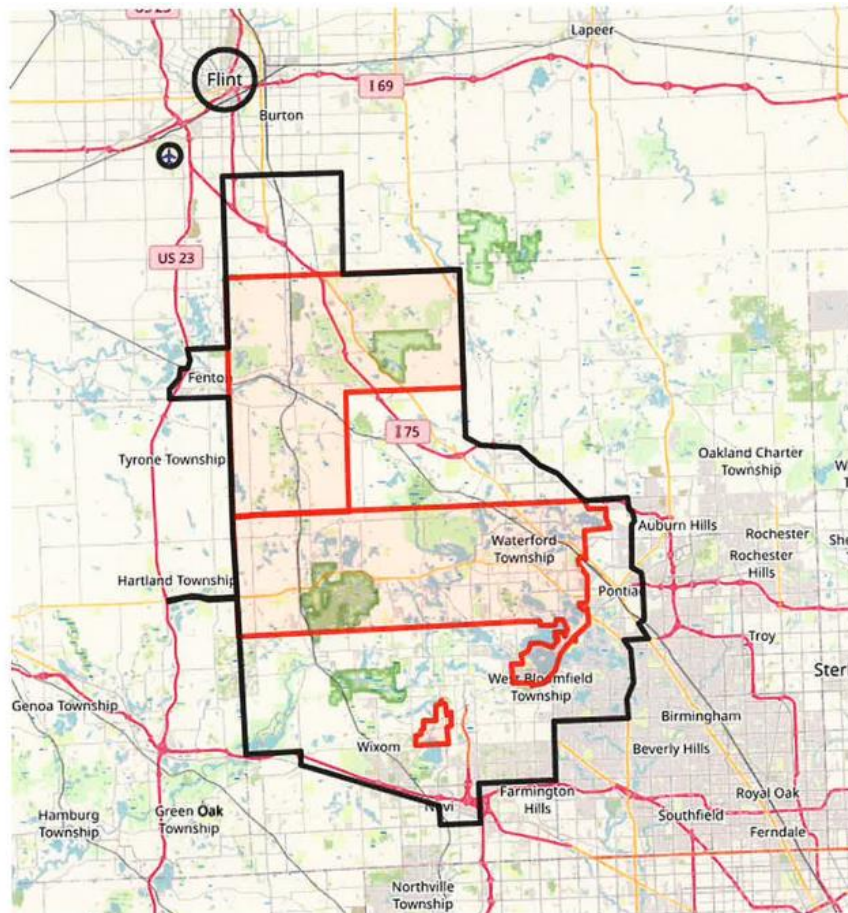
	Senior and ADA Transport	General Public	Service Days	Hours of Operation
Western Oakland Transportation Authority (WOTA),	Yes	No	M-Sat	6 a.m. - 9 p.m. Sat. 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
People's Express (PEX)	Yes	Yes	M - Sun	M - F 6 a.m. - 9 p.m. Sat. 6 a.m. - 5 p.m. Sun. 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
SMART	Yes	Yes	Yet to be determined	
City of Novi	Yes	No	M-Sat	8 a.m. - 7 p.m. Sat. 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART)

As previously shared, our meeting with SMART was pertaining to the fixed routes on Grand River and 12 Mile. **SMART promises those will be up and running on September 11, 2023.** Our next meeting will cover their proposal for on-demand transit offerings, commonly referred to as the Flex Connector.

Western Oakland Transportation Authority (WOTA)

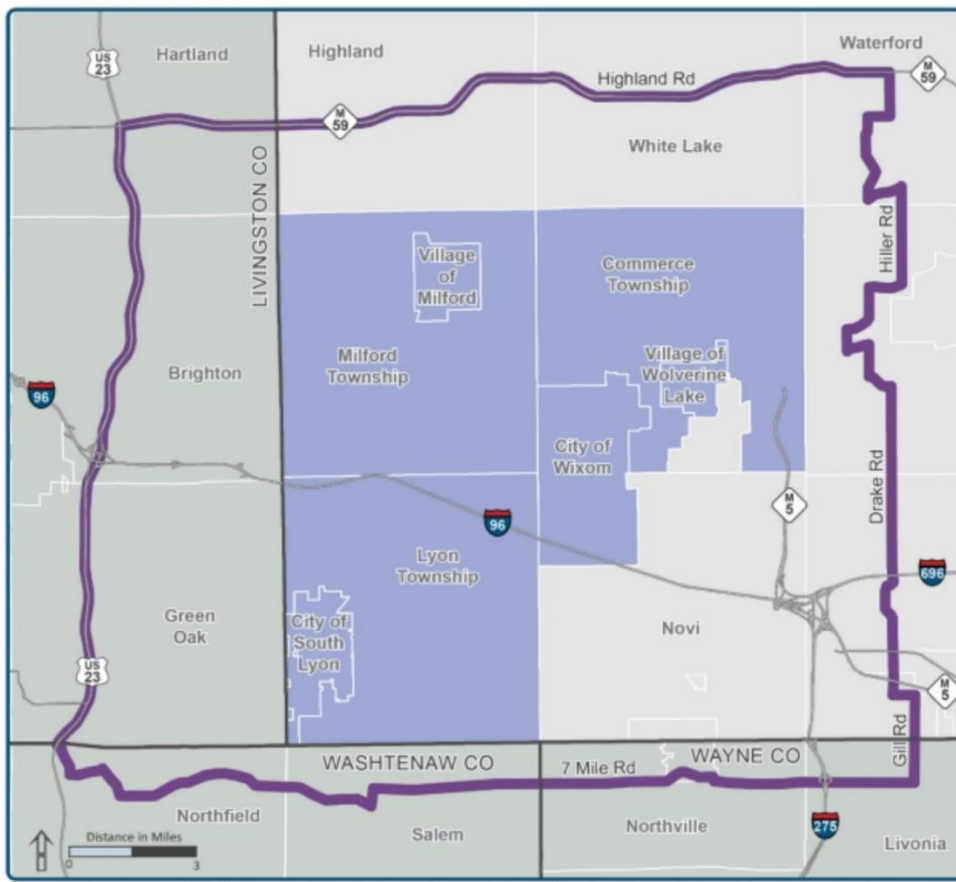
A meeting with the Western Oakland Transportation Authority (WOTA) was held on Wednesday, August 9, 2023 with Kimberly Viener, their Executive Director. WOTA serves seniors (55+), adults with disabilities (18+), veterans, and low-income individuals. WOTA is excited about expanding its service area depending on the needs of the residents of Novi. The anticipated start date (if chosen) would be Tuesday, January 2, 2024, with the hours of operation being Monday through Friday, 6 AM - 9 PM, and Saturday, 9 AM - 3 PM. WOTA wants to hire Novi's existing staff while bringing on additional WOTA drivers. Employment with WOTA includes a benefits package. WOTA would set up a dispatch center in the Novi area and purchase existing Novi vehicles. Residents must schedule two days in advance apart from medical or work-related transportation. Riders will pay a minimum of two dollars (\$2) per stop regardless of destination, and a twenty-dollar punch card will be available for purchase; the punch card includes ten rides with one freebie. The overall goal of the Western Oakland Transportation Authority is to give individuals who use their service a chance to live again.



People's Express (PEX)

Staff met with People's Express (PEX), Director Doug Anderson, on Friday, August 18. The organization currently travels through the City of Novi and has been doing so for the past twenty years. PEX does provide transportation into Novi for residents of Lyon, Milford, Milford Twp., and Wixom. PEX would expand services to Novi seniors, adults with disabilities, low-income individuals, and the general public. They currently operate in Milford Township, the Village of Milford, Commerce Township, the Village of Wolverine Lake, the City of Wixom, Lyon Township, the City of South Lyon, and routes into Ann Arbor and Detroit. PEX runs seven days a week and will only run on holidays for life-sustaining medical treatment. Eighty vehicles are in use, and fifteen are on order. A contract with PEX and neighboring communities will start on September 1, 2023.

Additionally, PEX would seek to hire existing Novi staff but will not move the dispatch location from Whitmore Lake. Adept IQ Scheduling will be used as one of their main operating systems to coordinate rides more effectively (same as SMART). The overall goal of People's Express is to provide safe and reliable public transportation to empower all individuals across Michigan to maintain their independence and enhance their quality of life.



Oakland County

A meeting with Eli Cooper, Manager of Transit, was held on Wednesday, August 23, 2023. He shared that Oakland County is pushing for consistency around the County as it relates to operating times, days, and fares. Numerous leaders from across the County came together and identified two dollars maximum for each ride for seniors and citizens with disabilities and four dollars for all other riders. The main point of the meeting was to identify the needs of Novi and what each transportation authority can provide that will support Novi residents long term.

Next Steps

At this point, there are still numerous questions that we will need answers to from the County before moving. As stated previously, staff will meet in the coming weeks with SMART regarding their offering(s) for on-demand services. After that meeting and further conversation with the County, staff will consolidate all the findings and provide a proposal for Council's consideration and recommendations for next steps. Staff will work closely with the City Attorney to provide a recommendation in the coming weeks.