MDOT receives $600,000 grant for innovative projects to reduce COVID-19 spread on public transit buses

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Fast facts:
- MDOT will receive $600,000 in grants to be distributed to six public transit agencies to demonstrate innovations to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- Projects involve automated wheelchair securement systems and a contactless fare system.

February 4, 2021 -- As part of the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Public Transportation COVID-19 Research Demonstration Grant Program, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) will receive $600,000 to be distributed to five public transit agencies in rural and urban areas for innovative projects. The program supports strategies to develop, deploy, and demonstrate innovative solutions that improve the operational efficiency of transit agencies and enhance the mobility of transit users affected by the COVID-19 public health emergency.

"Public transit remains a vital service for many citizens getting to work, school, shopping, or doctor's appointments," said Jean Ruestman, MDOT Office of Passenger Transportation administrator. "We continue to work with our partner transit agencies to look for grants for innovative solutions to protect passengers and transit workers from the virus."

Blue Water Area Transportation Commission in St. Clair County, Saginaw Transit Authority Regional Services (STARS), Jackson Area Transportation Authority, Marquette County Transit Authority, and Western-Washtenaw Area Value Express (WAVE) will receive funding to install automated wheelchair securement systems in their buses. Developed by Q'Straint, this system will allow passengers to self-secure their wheelchairs safely and will help eliminate close contact with the bus driver.

Charlevoix County Public Transportation will receive funding to integrate a new mobility on-demand/contactless fare payment system with the agency's dispatch and scheduling system. In partnership with Routematch by Uber, the contactless fare payment system eliminates cash transactions, which reduces virus transmission and promotes safety and confidence in using public transit.

Announced on Jan. 19, the FTA awarded about $15.8 million for 37 projects in 35 states. Specific focus areas were vehicle, facility, equipment, and infrastructure cleaning and disinfection; exposure mitigation measures; innovative mobility such as contactless payments; and measures that strengthen public confidence in transit service.

Information around this outbreak is changing rapidly. The latest information is available at Michigan.gov/Coronavirus and CDC.gov/Coronavirus. To learn more about the COVID-19 vaccine, visit Michigan.gov/COVIDVaccine.

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