

TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS FOR MASON COUNTY SENIORS

By Susan Evans, Mason County Senior Services

Transportation continues to be a challenge for older adults in Mason County according to results of the Mason County Senior Services Senior Needs Assessment. The survey also indicates that a majority (52%) of seniors are not familiar with all of the programs and services available, which includes transportation resources.

While Ludington Mass Transit Authority (LMTA) provides rides within Pere Marquette Charter Township, the city limits of Ludington and Scottville, and the business corridor between Ludington and Scottville, their Senior Rides Program goes even farther. This temporary program is funded by the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan (AAAWM) and provides rides from LMTA by donation to adults aged 60 and over throughout all areas of Mason County based on availability. These rides can be for the purpose of shopping, banking, social visits, senior center visits, etc. LMTA Executive Director Paul Keson says, “If you can be flexible on your day and time, we can accommodate your request for Senior Rides.” Call 231-845-6218 to schedule your ride.

Seniors may also be looking for rides to medical appointments. Some Medicare Advantage plans pay for non-emergency medical transportation. There are several other options in Mason County, mostly powered by volunteers, grants, and donations. Seniors eligible for Medicaid should contact their caseworker. Another option for non-emergency medical transportation within Mason County is LMTA’s Rides to Wellness Program which is funded through the Michigan Transportation Connection (MTC) and AAWM. Call 844-532-7433 for Rides to Wellness eligibility and scheduling. Some places of worship help make connections between

members of their congregation who need a ride and members who can help them. When seniors have no other options, the Scottville Area Senior Center (SASC) and Hands Extended Loving People (HELP) Ministry both provide rides to medical appointments including to appointments outside of Mason County, also based on availability (phone numbers below).

“[H]aving access to transportation services isn’t just about independence—it’s essential to maintaining your overall health and well-being.”

—National Council on Aging
6/17/24 article on transportation and better outcomes

According to the National Council on Aging, “...having access to transportation services isn’t just about independence—it’s essential to maintaining your overall health and well-being. Barriers to transportation mean missed medical appointments, which can lead to gaps in preventive medical care. Additionally, older adults who aren’t able to secure rides to social events can feel isolated from their communities, which puts them at risk for depression and cognitive decline.”

If you’re interested in becoming a volunteer driver to help seniors get to medical appointments, please contact the SASC at 231-757-4705 or HELP Ministry at 231-843-6811. If you’re interested in helping a friend, neighbor, or extended family member who might need help with transportation, offer a ride or offer to pick something up at the store for them. It could be a lifeline for an older adult.

If you have questions about resources for seniors, email Susan Evans at sevens@masoncountymi.gov. Seniors who need help finding programs and services can also contact AAWM at 888-456-5664 Monday–Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Another

helpful resource is the **Active for Life** publication for seniors which is available at senior centers, various locations throughout the community, and online at www.scottvilleareaseniorcenter.com.

