



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **LETS Launches New Healthcare Transportation Service with Support from Ascension Providence Hospital, Michigan Medicine and Saint Joseph Mercy Health System**

HOWELL, Michigan. - (September 6, 2019) Livingston County is taking a major step towards improving health equity for residents through a collaborative partnership to increase access to needed resources and healthcare services. The Livingston Essential Transportation Service (LETS) is launching a new healthcare focused transportation service in fall 2019 thanks to a 3-year, \$318,000 funding commitment from Ascension Providence Hospital, Michigan Medicine and Saint Joseph Mercy Health System. This is an excellent opportunity for Livingston County residents to have greater access and mobility in their lives. Adequate, reliable and affordable transportation means better access to services and is a vital part of the foundation for a healthy community.

The Livingston County Health Department's 2015-2020 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) identified healthcare integration and transportation as high-priority issues for improving the health and well-being of Livingston County residents. The CHIP process established a Healthcare Integration workgroup that includes representatives from the three major health systems, LETS, and the Health Department. This group works to develop options to improve access to healthcare services, by focusing on the "bigger picture"- the social determinants of health, which are the conditions that effect how people live, work and play. The healthcare systems funding the new service agree that transportation remains one of the biggest barriers that residents face when trying to access medical care and other resources that improve the quality of life. This collaboration between healthcare providers ensures that residents can get to medical

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appointments, and allows for greater capacity within LETS to expand ride service for other basic needs, like employment and access to healthy food.

The proposed door-to-door transportation service will specifically focus on transportation to and from medical appointments, pharmacy visits, on-demand emergency department discharges, and other activities that fulfill the mission of improving health and wellness. Adding two new wheelchair-accessible, full-size vans and two full-time drivers to their fleet allows LETS to maintain regular services to the community. The new vans will be designed to feature the logos of LETS and the three health systems to make them easily identifiable to the public.

The service is eligible for federal and state transportation grants that will be matched by annual contributions from Ascension Providence Hospital in the amount of \$33,000; Michigan Medicine in the amount of \$33,000; and St. Joe's in the amount of \$40,000. The total healthcare contribution of \$106,000 per year is expected to leverage an annual minimum of \$130,000 in operating grant revenue for a total estimated service budget of \$236,000. Capital costs for the two vans will be funded entirely by state and federal grants in the amount of \$150,000.

A resolution to accept funding for the transportation service will be presented to the Livingston County Board of Commissioners on Monday, September 9<sup>th</sup>, by LETS director Greg Kellogg. If approved by the Board of Commissioners, the service is expected to begin in October 2019.

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