



For Immediate Release

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## **Bedford Health Van Program Dedicates Five New SMART Vans**

**September 16, 2020 (Temperance, MI)** - SMART and Representatives of the Health Van Program are introducing five new seven-passenger vans to their fleet. There will be no official ribbon cutting to maintain social distancing and to ensure safety protocols held by the Health Van program are met. The new buses are replacement vehicles to the fleet which provides transportation for seniors and people with disabilities to medical appointments and treatments, allowing them the access they need for healthcare and continued quality of life and freedom of independence.

SMART is the regional transit provider in Southeast Michigan helping people connect to the work, school, medical facilities and entertainment destinations. Along with providing public transit in the region, SMART is the fiduciary agent for the State of Michigan in administering the Specialized Service programs. As such, SMART is instrumental in preparing and processing the necessary contracts and ensuring compliance for all participants for the state. Funding for the new vans and transportation program is provided by the state Specialized Services program and federal capital dollars.

“The Bedford Health Van program has been a critical part of the community for many years, providing needed transportation to many area residents.” Said Robert Cramer, SMART Deputy General Manager, “SMART is very excited to deliver these new vehicles, which will help continue this important work for years to come.”

These new 20 foot buses have seating for seven passengers, and are all equipped with wheelchair lifts making the entire fleet accessible to every rider. The Bedford Health Van fleet provides non-emergency ride that enables Monroe County residents to get to important medical appointments and treatments throughout Southern Michigan and Northwest Ohio. These rides are essential to seniors in the community for medical needs, as well as the ability to stay independent by providing rides to church, funerals, family reunions, and other recreational trips. The Bedford Health Van has been operating for 31 years, and has served nearly 5,000 passengers last year alone.

Bedford Health Van Director, Carrie Pitzen, states, “Our program prides itself on our professional and caring staff. It begins with a phone call, but it’s truly our drivers respect for all that need our services that show the true depth of what we offer. Many of our clients have been part of our family for over 20 years.”

The Bedford Health Van has been diligent in combating the spread of Coronavirus through its service by conducting regular cleanings and sanitizing between passenger rides. Scheduling has also been altered to only allow for only one client at a time to adhere to social distancing policies and all State guidelines.

As the designated recipient of State and Federal transit funds, SMART is responsible for administering transit programs that support all transit programs in Monroe County. The Bedford Health Van program has been involved in Specialized Services Program since its inception in 1987. The specialized services program provides funding to support public transportation services for senior citizens and people with disabilities.

As part of this program local communities have access to SMART's maintenance facilities and staff expertise for the repair and maintenance of the SMART vehicles. This service is a great cost savings for municipalities.

*Serving since 1967, SMART is southeast Michigan's only regional public transportation provider, offering convenient, reliable and safe transportation for Macomb, Oakland and Wayne Counties. SMART offers a family of transit services, including fixed route and small bus services as well as support for local transportation programs to connect people to employment and educational institutions, medical appointments and shopping centers. Through SMART's small bus programs, over one million rides are provided to seniors and people with disabilities annually. SMART is supported by federal and state funding, local contributions through a transit property tax millage from opt-in communities and bus fares. For routes and fare information, visit [www.smartbus.org](http://www.smartbus.org) or call Customer Service at 866-962-5515.*

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