

# BENZIE BUS

2024 Millage Request



# What is on the ballot?

## WHAT?

Millage proposal requesting support for an "additional new" millage not to exceed 1.0 mills

The new millage will **replace** the current millage when it expires Dec 2025

By the time the millage goes into effect (January 2026) the mill rate will have "rolled back" to approx .9766 mills

Actual Benzie Bus rider who resides at a local assisted living facility and rides Benzie Bus, allowing freedom for both her and her adult children, who would be "chauffeurs" otherwise



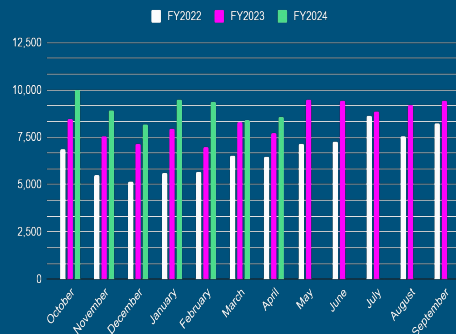
## Why are we asking for an *increase*?

Operating and capital costs have increased **38%** since 2019

Rider demand grew 22% in 2022 and **another 16%** in 2023 requiring more routes to keep up

October - April 2024 ridership is 14% higher than October - April 2023, putting Benzie Bus in position for another record-breaking year

Passenger Trips



### Line items with the most significant increases:

- Labor and Benefits - We have increased wages but remain relatively low compared to other transit agencies
  - \$17/hour - no transit experience and no CDL
  - \$17.75/hour - some experience and a chauffeur's license
  - \$18.45/hour - driving experience and a CDL holder
- Parts and service for vehicles - Our fleet is aging, requiring more expensive repairs, and our miles have increased as ridership has grown.
- Fuel and Propane

We expect vehicle maintenance costs to remain high through 2025 as continued supply chain issues mean delays in the delivery of new vehicles.

This year, we expect to dip into our reserve funds to cover approximately \$100k of our operating expenses.

## Who are our passengers?



Over half of our passengers are Seniors and passengers with disabilities. The 60+ group is the fastest growing segment of our counties population, so the increase in demand in services is no surprise.

70% of **all trips** are for **essential** services: medical appointments, access to food, social services, education, and employment

25% of trips are students going to school and enjoying after school activities

2,500 Benzie residents use Benzie Bus (13.5% of our population) and we average around 533 trips per day

## How will the revenue from the millage be used?

Initially, the millage revenue will allow us to *maintain our current level of service* and add additional routes during our current service hours in order to keep up with demand

### GOAL: Add service to meet the current needs of our passengers

Weekday Service Expansion Phase 1 (2 routes, 9 hrs/day, 5 days/week)

Driver Hours: 4,590

Dispatch hours: No additional hours required

Other Costs: 2 Expansion Buses

Health Rides Service Expansion Phase 1 (1 routes, 12 hrs/day, 2 additional days/week)

Driver Hours: 1,248

Dispatch hours: No additional hours required

Other Costs: 1 Expansion Van

Saturday Service Expansion Phase 1 (1 route, 9 hrs/rte)

Driver Hours: 468

Dispatch hours: No additional hours required

Other Costs: None

In the first year we'll expand our regular service to keep up with current demand.

There is a need for additional service during the week - ridership increased 20% last year. So far this year it's up another 14%. Adding two routes during the week will allow us to serve more passengers.

We have our Health Rides service, which is our non-emergency medical transportation service specifically for out-of-county medical rides. It currently operates just 3 days per week. We launched Health Rides in 2022 and it grew 25% in just the first year and is up 10% this year. We know there is a need to expand this service to 5 days per week.

Ridership demand on Saturdays has also increased by 30%

## How will the revenue from the millage be used?

Phase 2, we will expand our non-emergency medical transportation service and add Sunday service

### **GOAL: Expand medical transportation services and add Sunday requested Sunday service**

Health Rides Service Expansion Phase 2 (2 additional routes, 12 hrs/day, 5 days/week)

Driver Hours: 6,120

Dispatch hours: No additional hours required

Other Costs: 3 Expansion Vans

Sunday Service Expansion (4 routes, 9 hrs/day)

Driver Hours: 1,872

Dispatch Hours: 624

Other Costs: None

Phase 2 we'll focus on the 2nd expansion of our Health Rides program. Our mobility coordinator just attended a VA Transportation Symposium in Saginaw, where leaders from the VA and rural transit agencies in our region came together to discuss the transportation issues being faced by our Veterans. We look forward to continuing our work with them, and eventually being able to provide transportation to the Saginaw VA Hospital

A long-time requested service has been service on Sundays to help our Seniors get to church.

# How will the revenue from the millage be used?

## Phase 3: Respond to passengers' requests for expanded evening service

**GOAL: Expand service hours to 10PM to meet the needs of more hourly workers, particularly in manufacturing, hospitality, and healthcare**

### Weekday Service Expansion Phase 2

Extend evening hours to 10PM (2.5 hours per route, 3 routes/day)

Driver Hours: 1,913

Dispatch hours: 637

Other Costs: None

Expand hours to 10PM Saturdays (5.5 hrs per route, 3 routes)

Driver Hours: 858

Dispatch hours: 260

Other Costs: None

Phase 3, we'll focus on responding to our passengers' needs for requested evening service by extending our hours until 10PM first during the week, and then if that is successful on Saturdays as well.

## What if the millage request fails?



Should the millage request fail, operating hours will be reduced and services cut. The Board would then regroup and go out for a new millage request in 2025

Actual Harbor Lights employees who use Benzie Bus every day to get to and from work

If the millage request fails, we'll be required to cut services and reduce operating hours.



## Connecting *people* to *community*

Actual Benzie Bus rider, age 100 years 8 mos, who lives at home and takes Benzie Bus to appointments and social activities



We understand that the August ballot is fully loaded, and that the NMC mill request has lots of residents concerned about the potential tax burden of all of these requests. We believe every item on the August ballot is essential, and like every other organization listed, the decision to request more from our community was extremely difficult. We believe it is absolutely necessary for the overall well being of our community for this request to pass.

Should our request pass, we will continue to

- be fiscally responsible and
- provide service that is essential for our seniors, our working families, and our local businesses

We would appreciate your support and the support of your constituents.

Questions?

[jessica@benziebus.com](mailto:jessica@benziebus.com)

