

TRANSIT AGENCY GUIDEBOOK

Created for MDOT to improve transportation reliability
for the residents of Michigan—through technology.



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16. Abstract

Michigan's public transit agencies face increasing challenges in adopting new technologies due to limited funding, staffing constraints, and varying technical capacity. The purpose of this project was to identify practical strategies to support the planning, marketing, and implementation of new transit technologies across Michigan.

The research methods included a statewide survey of Michigan's transit agencies, interactive workshops with the Michigan Public Transit Association and MDOT's Transit Technology Forum, and analyses of leading technology vendors and case studies. These methods informed both a comprehensive report and an accessible *Transit Technology Implementation Guidebook* designed for agency use.

The results show that successful technology adoption depends on both right-sized tools and strong human capacity. Agencies that invest in staff training, change management, and clear communication achieve higher adoption rates and sustained system performance.

The conclusions highlight that MDOT can best support statewide modernization through centralized training, shared communications resources, and peer learning networks.

Practical use of the results: The findings and Guidebook offer MDOT and local transit providers an actionable framework and ready-to-use tools for planning, funding, and implementing technology solutions that improve efficiency, service reliability, and the rider experience statewide.

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INTRODUCTION: THE FUTURE OF TRANSIT DEPENDS ON YOU

Public transit is on the move—literally and digitally. From real-time service alerts that keep riders informed to behind-the-scenes dispatch systems that ensure operations run smoothly, technology is transforming how transit agencies serve their communities. But while shiny new apps and digital tools often get the spotlight, the real magic lies in the details: budgeting smart, training staff, choosing the right vendors, and making sure new tech truly works for your agency—and your riders.

This is where the guidebook steps in. As a companion to the full report, *Marketing and Education Budget for Implementation of New Transit Technology: Project Report*, it serves as a practical, hands-on resource for public transit agencies. Developed in partnership with Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), CRAFT, Michael Baker International, and the University of Detroit Mercy, the guidebook translates research into action—offering tools, checklists, and step-by-step guidance to help agencies plan, fund, implement, and sustain new technology.

Drawing on the insights and experiences of transit agencies across Michigan, this guidebook is designed to meet you where you are—whether you’re beginning to explore digital tools for the first time or expanding an existing technology strategy.

Inside, you’ll find clear steps and plug-and-play tools designed to help you move from a lightbulb moment to a fully implemented solution. Use this guide to explore funding strategies, select tech solutions that fit your needs, build support inside and outside your agency, and lay the groundwork for long-term success.

GUIDEBOOK STRUCTURE

The guidebook is structured around the following five stages of technology implementation:

PHASE 1

Assess Your Agency Needs

Start with a solid foundation. This phase helps you understand your unique operational challenges and rider expectations, laying the groundwork for targeted, purposeful innovation.

PHASE 2

Plan, Fund, and Procure

Choose tech that fits. Learn how to align your goals with the right solutions, navigate procurement processes, and budget wisely for long-term impact.

PHASE 3

Employee and Staff Engagement, Awareness, Training, and Internal Communications

Behind every technological tool is a person. This section focuses on bringing your team along through training, communication, and knowledge sharing.

PHASE 4

External Technology Marketing and Training

Tech only works if people use it. Explore strategies to educate, engage, and inspire riders and stakeholders, ensuring they understand and support your investments.

PHASE 5

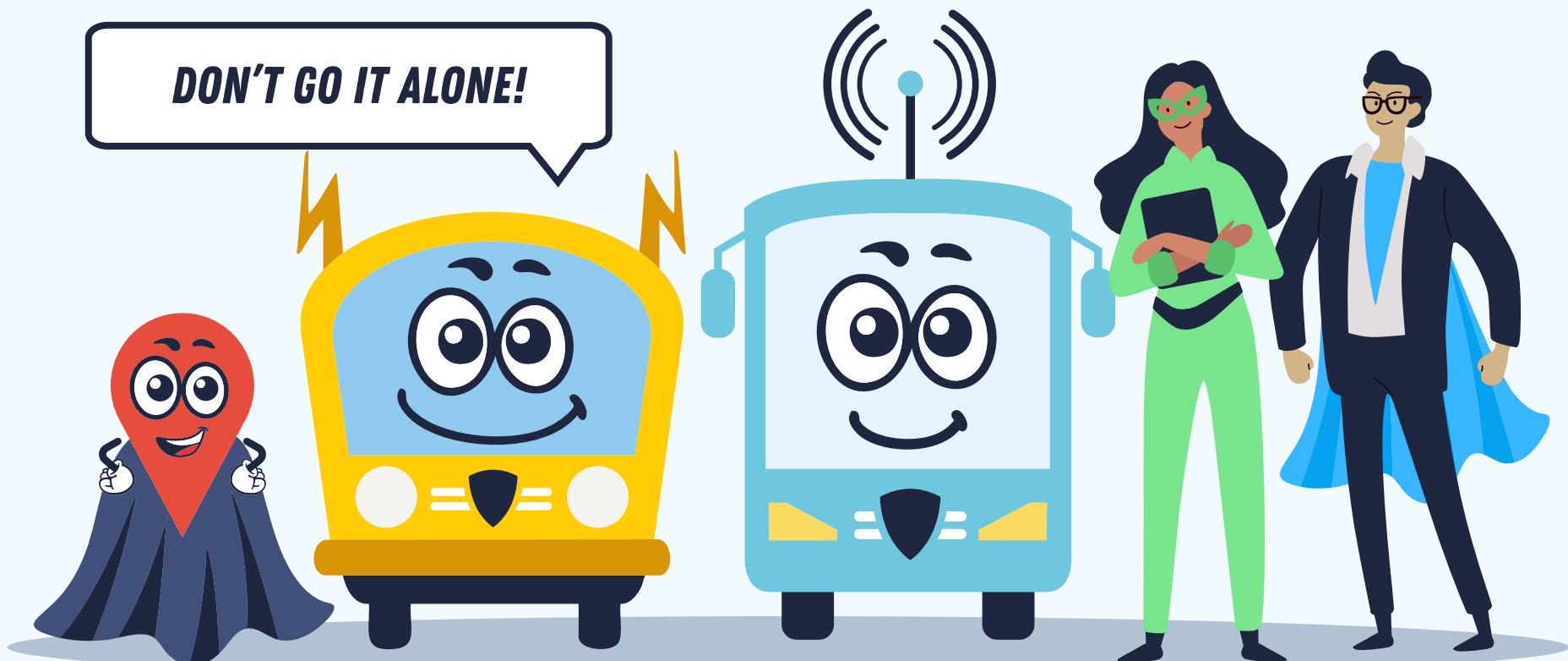
Manage, Maintain, and Evaluate Technology, Resources, and Funding

Implementation isn't the end of the road. Learn how to monitor progress, make adjustments, and keep your tech (and team) running strong over time.

MEET YOUR SUPERHERO GUIDES

Transit agencies are the real heroes in this story. Day in and day out, you keep communities moving, connect people to opportunities, and rise to new challenges with grit and creativity. This guidebook was created with that in mind, and you don't have to navigate it alone.

Throughout the pages of this guidebook, you'll be joined by a cast of transit-savvy superheroes, each representing key strengths agencies need to plan, implement, and sustain new technology. Think of them as trusted guides—not gimmicks—here to break down complex steps, highlight helpful tools, and remind you that you've got what it takes to lead your agency into the future.



“AGENT AXIS”

SUPERPOWER

Ability to zero in on what your agency really needs, cutting through the noise to uncover gaps, spot opportunities, and chart a course toward smarter, rider-focused solutions.

APPEARING IN PHASE 1

Assess Your Agency Needs



“BOLT THE BUS”

SUPERPOWER

Ability to plan, fund, and procure transit tech at lightning speed, connecting big ideas with the right resources to turn vision into reality without missing a stop.

APPEARING IN PHASE 2

Plan, Fund, and Procure



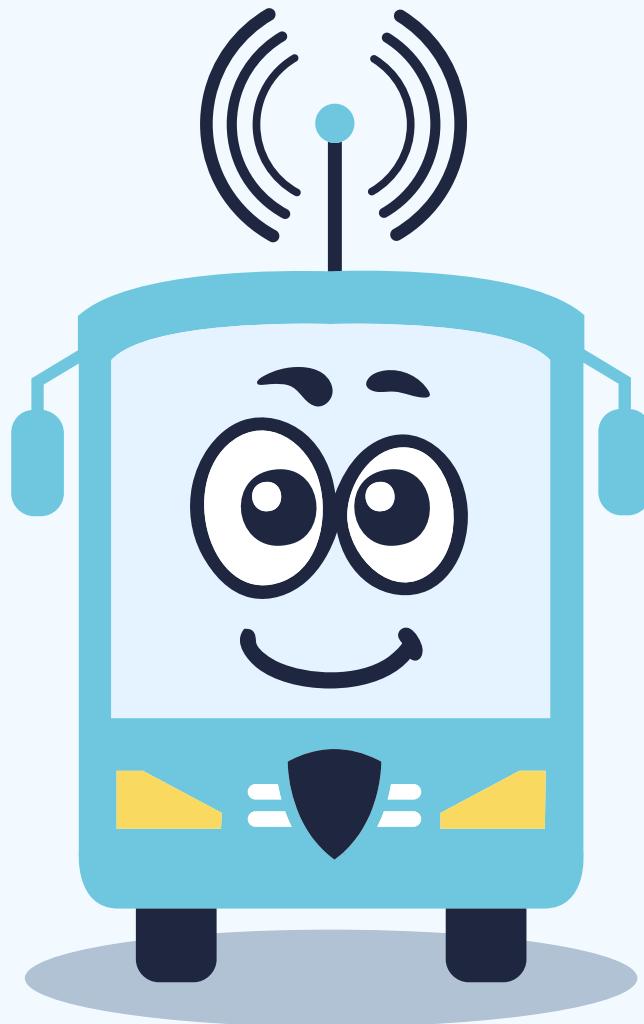
“COMMANDER CURBY”

SUPERPOWER

Ability to spark staff engagement and keep teams in the loop, boosting morale, building know-how, and turning everyday updates into mission-ready motivation.

APPEARING IN PHASE 3

**Employee and Staff Engagement,
Awareness, Training, and Internal
Communications**



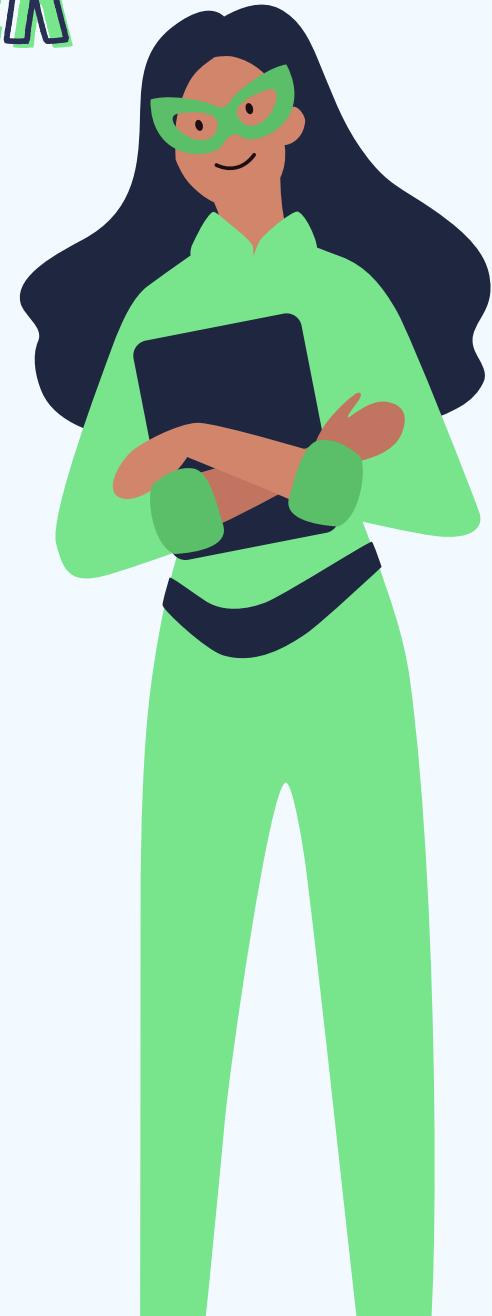
“MORGAN THE MESSENGER”

SUPERPOWER

Ability to turn complex transit tech into clear, compelling messages that connect with riders and inspire action, breaking down barriers, building trust, and making sure every feature finds its audience.

APPEARING IN PHASE 4

**External Technology Marketing
and Training**



“MIKE THE MECHANIC”

SUPERPOWER

Ability to keep transit tech, tools, and budgets in perfect sync—tuning up systems, fixing glitches fast, and powering smarter decisions with every turn of the wrench.

APPEARING IN PHASE 5

**Manage, Maintain, and Evaluate
Technology, Resources, and Funding**



“GRIDLOCK”

SUPERPOWER

Ability to jam progress at every turn, spreading confusion, stalling decisions, and overwhelming agencies with red tape, mixed messages, and outdated systems that keep transit stuck in the past.

MAKING TROUBLE IN ALL PHASES

Enter *Gridlock*—a not-so-friendly figure who pops up in each phase to represent common obstacles agencies may face: **limited budgets, staffing constraints, outdated processes, stakeholder resistance, and more.**

These challenges aren’t here to discourage you. They’re here to prepare you—with practical, field-tested strategies to help you overcome obstacles and keep moving forward.

**EVERY HERO’S JOURNEY
INCLUDES A FEW BUMPS
IN THE ROAD.**



PHASE 1

ASSESS YOUR AGENCY NEEDS

**BEFORE YOU DIVE
INTO THE LATEST
TECH, MAKE SURE YOU
ACTUALLY NEED IT.**



Get clear on your challenges, listen to what your riders want, and make sure any new tools fit with how you operate day to day. After all, smart moves are more important than shiny gadgets!

Investing in new technology isn't just about keeping up—it's about solving the right problems. Every transit system is different, and a one-size-fits-all solution rarely hits the mark.

Innovation works best when it's purposeful, aligned with how the agency operates and what riders need. By starting with this kind of clarity, agencies can make smarter decisions, build internal support, and set the stage for real, lasting impact.

This foundational step will help ensure that new tools and ideas actually move the needle.





YOUR MISSION

***ANY AGENCY, BIG OR SMALL, IS FIT FOR THIS MISSION.
GET READY TO SUIT UP–YOU'VE GOT WHAT IT TAKES
TO KICKSTART SMARTER INNOVATION!***

This process works best when the whole agency is in it together, collaborating across departments, listening to riders, and aligning around shared goals. When everyone's voice is part of the conversation, your tech decisions are smarter, stronger, and more likely to stick. The following steps offer a roadmap to help you get there.

1.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR RIDERS

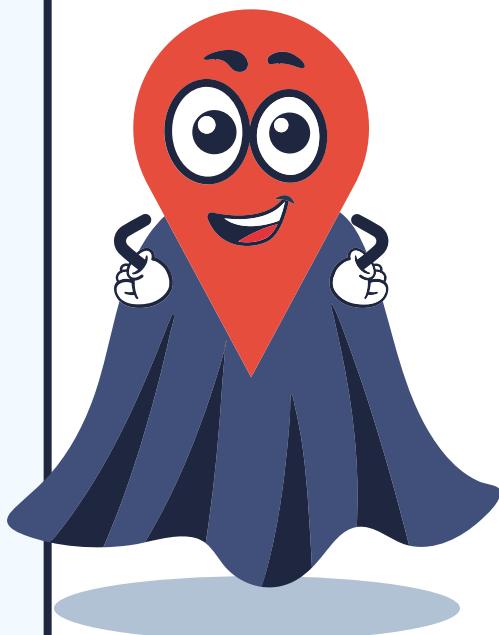
Knowing who your riders are today—and who they will be in the future—is essential. Rider personas can help agencies identify key needs and preferences. By comparing the existing technology inventory against these needs through a gap analysis or needs assessment, agencies can better align future investments with rider expectations and evolving mobility trends.



WHAT CAN RIDER PERSONAS DO FOR YOU?

Rider personas capture the unique needs, habits, and challenges of different groups—shaped by factors like age, travel patterns, and personal priorities. Most transit systems serve a wide range of riders, so it's common to have several personas that reflect your region's diversity.

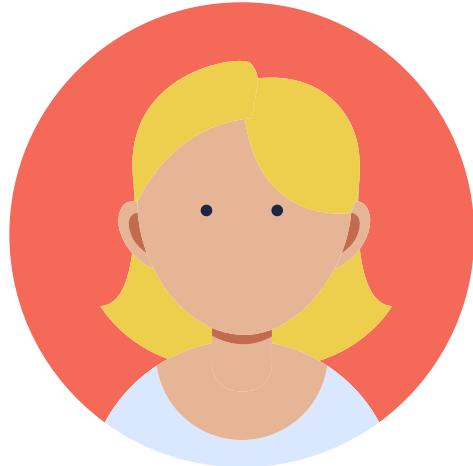
WHY DO THEY MATTER?



Because when you understand your riders, you can design services and choose technologies that truly work for them.

Whether it's mobile ticketing, real-time updates, or better accessibility, rider personas help you match the right tools to the right people. They're also useful for shaping marketing strategies that make sure riders know about and can take full advantage of what you offer. On the next pages are the rider personas we developed using surveys and internal research. Tailored to Michigan, these insights can help agencies across the state make informed decisions about transit technology.

PERSONA 1: THE SAVVY STUDENT



A technology-savvy student balancing a part-time job and evening college classes relies on public transit as their primary mode of transportation.

Without a driver's license, they depend on frequent and well-timed service to get to work and school on schedule. Challenges like missed connections and irregular schedules make real-time tracking, app-based ride requests, and reliable public transit essential for their success.

BACKGROUND

Suburban resident

No driver's license

Tech-savvy

Part-time college student

Works at the local Walmart

Travel Habits

- Going to/from work daily
- Evening college classes

Challenges

- Infrequent service
- Missed connections
- Irregular work hours

Definition of Success

- On-demand service
- Arrives/departs on schedule

Technology Considerations

- On-demand ride requests
- Realtime bus tracking
- Phone app payments

PERSONA 2: THE INDEPENDENT SENIOR



A retired resident in a rural area relies on public transit for essential trips, including medical appointments and errands.

Living on a fixed income and without access to fixed-route services, they require affordable, door-to-door public transit options that accommodate their mobility needs. With limited access to technology, they prefer printed schedules and phone-based reservation systems to navigate their public transit options independently and confidently.

BACKGROUND

Rural area resident

Fixed income

Does not own a smartphone

Retired

Travel Habits

- Weekly medical appointments

Challenges

- Needs mobility assistance
- No access to fixed-route services

Definition of Success

- Fare-free system
- Accessible vehicles that provide door-to-door service

Technology Considerations

- Prefers printed schedules and maps
- Calls to reserve rides

PERSONA 3: THE HYBRID COMMUTER



A professional with a hybrid work schedule chooses public transit over driving to avoid congestion and reduce commuting stress.

While they own a vehicle, they prefer using public transit for part of the week, making seamless connections and real-time service updates crucial for a smooth commute. Access to onboard Wi-Fi, flexible ticketing options, and multimodal connections enhances their ability to stay productive while traveling and ensures a reliable alternative to driving.

BACKGROUND

Lives in urban area outside city
Owns vehicle
Choice transit user due to
commuter traffic
Salaried job
Hybrid work schedule
Owns a smartphone

Travel Habits

- Uses transit for kids' school and work commute
- Goes to office only half of the week

Challenges

- Missed connections
- Multiple routes needed for one trip
- City route must align with connecting bus

Definition of Success

- Alerts on delays or cancellations
- Frequent buses and smooth connections

Technology Considerations

- All-in-one transit app
- Links to other transport modes
- Free onboard Wi-Fi for work

PERSONA 4: THE URBAN MULTITASKER



A busy city-based parent depends on public transit for daily errands, social outings, and transporting children. Without a personal vehicle, they navigate a mix of buses, micromobility options, and walking to get where they need to go.

Their biggest concerns include the reliability of public transit, accessibility for strollers and bikes, and clear communication of delays or cancellations. Features like onboard safety measures, multilingual signage, and well-maintained infrastructure make public transit more convenient and efficient for their family's needs.

BACKGROUND

Lives in the city

Does not own a vehicle

Stay-at-home mother

Hearing impaired

Travel Habits

- Uses public transit daily
- Transit for errands, social, and kids
- Enjoys using bicycles

Definition of Success

- Stops close to destinations
- Good bus stop/station setup
- Clean and safe transit
- Multiple communication methods

Challenges

- Stroller/bike storage on buses
- Delays or cancelled transit service

Technology Considerations

- Safe onboarding/offboarding apps
- Visual cues at stops and onboard
- Apps to support hearing impaired
- Easy micromobility (e.g., e-bikes)

PERSONA 5: THE DETERMINED TRAVELER



A senior, first-generation immigrant with LEP relies on public transit for errands, medical visits, and daily mobility.

Without a driver's license, they face challenges in understanding signage, online public transit information, and verbal announcements. Navigating the system is further complicated by mobility constraints. Their experience is improved through multilingual signage, clear visual cues at stops and stations, and public transit apps with built-in translation features, allowing them to travel with confidence and independence.

BACKGROUND

60 years old

Does not own a vehicle or have a driver's license

Speaks/understands very little English

First-generation immigrant

Uses a mobility device

Travel Habits

- Uses transit often for errands, outings, and kids
- Relies on paratransit for medical visits

Definition of Success

- Transit info in multiple languages
- Easy access to stops and vehicles
- Simple paratransit application process

Challenges

- Difficulty getting to stops and boarding
- Trouble with signs, content, and announcements

Technology Considerations

- Apps/drivers with text-to-speak tools
- Visual cues at stops and onboard

PERSONA 6: THE YOUNG NAVIGATOR



A young school-aged rider takes public transit to and from school, often traveling alone or with siblings.

With no school-provided transportation, they depend on buses to get to class on time and may need to travel later due to after-school activities. Delays, missed transfers, and safety concerns are significant challenges. Features like real-time tracking for students and parents, secure station amenities, and easy, cashless payment options help make their public transit experience safer and more accessible.

BACKGROUND

13 years old

Uses public transit to travel to elementary/secondary school

Often travels alone or with siblings

Travel Habits

- Uses public transit to travel to and from school
- Often travels later due to after-school activities

Challenges

- Delayed or cancelled buses and late arrivals
- Difficulty understanding transfers and new routes

Definition of Success

- Real-time tracking for both student rider and student's parents
- Ease of payment/adding funds

Technology Considerations

- Cashless, onboard payment
- Onboard Wi-Fi for devices without data/calling abilities
- Station amenities—security cameras, lighting, real-time information
- Online videos for users to understand how to ride the system

2.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR ORGANIZATION'S NEEDS

A. Defining Your Goals

One of the strongest arguments for investing in technology is that it can support agency growth. A clear problem statement should shape technology choices to better serve current and future riders. Agencies should:

- **Take inventory of existing technologies in use.**
- **Identify key challenges (e.g., outdated tools, declining ridership, organizational or operational inefficiencies).**
- **Ensure solutions align with the organization's mission and goals.**
- **Rank issues based on impact and risk.**
- **Use rider personas to set internal goals (efficiency, tracking, operations) and external goals (ridership, accessibility, communication).**



Laying the groundwork builds agency-wide support and ensures your tech investments actually make a difference. A well-planned, all-hands-on-deck approach boosts your chances of success—and delivers lasting wins for both staff *and* riders.

**IDENTIFY CHALLENGES
BEFORE YOU LEAP!**



B. Gathering Early Feedback

Successful technology adoption depends on strong collaboration across the agency and broader community. Involving key stakeholders—such as bus operators, riders, community leaders, and staff—through surveys and conversations helps surface overlooked challenges and opportunities. Agency personas are a great tool for guiding this process, helping organizations better understand their internal needs and challenges.

EVERY TRANSIT AGENCY IS DIFFERENT—SO THE SOLUTIONS SHOULD BE, TOO.

Agency personas help capture the unique mix of location, size, service type, and challenges that shape Michigan’s public transit systems. From rural dial-a-ride providers to large city networks, these profiles guide smarter, more tailored tech and policy decisions—so each agency gets what it actually needs, not a one-size-fits-all fix.



Rural (Demand-Response)

These agencies provide flexible, reservation-based rides for seniors, people with disabilities, and others in low-density areas—often without strong cell service or smartphone access.

Rural (Deviated Fixed-Route)

This hybrid model blends scheduled routes with limited on-demand flexibility, serving both regular commuters and riders with mobility needs.

Suburban

Covering large, mixed-density areas, suburban agencies offer commuter-friendly, fixed-route services that don’t require advance booking, balancing urban access with local travel.

Urban

Operating in dense population centers, these agencies use tech-forward, multimodal systems to serve a high volume of riders with efficient, connected service.

3.

EVALUATING TECHNOLOGY NEEDS

Before investing in new tools, agencies should take a step back to clearly define what problems they're solving and what success looks like. Agencies should focus on determining:

- **Whether a single technology or multiple solutions are required.**
- **If a hierarchy of technologies is necessary (e.g., Wi-Fi before a trip-planning app).**
- **Whether a solution can meet multiple objectives.**
- **If technology investments are flexible to ensure agency adaptability and resilience.**



A structured approach ensures investments address real challenges rather than adopting tech for its own sake. To support this, agencies should conduct a gap analysis or needs assessment comparing their current technology inventory against the actual needs and preferences of riders. This process helps identify where critical functionality is missing, which systems need upgrading, and where new tools can create the most impact.





NOT EVERY AGENCY IS EQUIPPED TO TAKE ON THE TECH FRONTIER.

**MANY AGENCIES—ESPECIALLY THOSE
IN RURAL AREAS OF MICHIGAN—LACK
A CLEAR TECHNOLOGY PLAN.**

Limited capacity makes progress even harder, with small teams often stretched thin. And when agencies do take the leap, they sometimes stumble into common pitfalls: misidentifying the core problem, underestimating costs or complexity, overestimating potential benefits, or struggling to integrate new systems with legacy infrastructure. Even the best technology can fail if it's too complex for staff or poorly communicated to riders.

But here's the twist: position technology as a solution to real challenges—like staffing shortages, operational gaps, or efficiency issues—the heroes' odds start improving. When tech supports the people on the ground, it stops being a hurdle and starts being a superpower.

TAKE ACTION!

Ready to power up your tech strategy? Before diving in, make sure you've got a clear mission. Knowing your agency's challenges and your riders' needs is the first step to making smart, lasting decisions.

1. Understanding Your Riders

Knowing your riders—now and in the future—is the foundation of smart tech planning. Rider personas and demographic data help shape investments that meet real-world needs.

- Gather current rider demographics and trip data—who are your riders and where do they go?
- Develop rider personas to reflect key user groups.
- Explore future trends in population, housing, employment, and mobility
- Identify barriers and opportunities through rider surveys or interviews.

**HERE'S A CHECKLIST
TO GET YOU STARTED!**



2. Understanding Your Organization's Needs

Defining Your Goals

A strong tech investment starts with a strong purpose. Let your biggest challenges and highest-impact goals guide your decisions—not the flashiest tools.

- Write a clear problem statement to guide your process.
- List internal and external challenges (e.g., outdated systems, declining ridership).
- Align proposed solutions with your agency's mission and long-term goals.
- Prioritize issues by risk and impact.
- Define measurable internal goals (e.g., efficiency, data tracking).
- Define measurable external goals (e.g., ridership, access, public satisfaction).
- Use tools from N-CATT or MDOT's HNTB studies to assess tech readiness.

Gathering Early Feedback

Get everyone on board from the start. Input from staff, riders, and community stakeholders helps surface hidden challenges and builds long-term buy-in.

- Talk to department reps across your agency.
- Engage bus operators, dispatchers, and maintenance staff.
- Connect with riders and community members.
- Use surveys, interviews, and focus groups to collect feedback.
- Develop internal organizational personas to understand departmental needs.

3. Evaluating Technology Needs

Not all solutions are created equal. Figure out what tools you need—and in what order—to build a smart, scalable tech strategy.

- Conduct a needs assessment to compare current technology capabilities with rider needs and identify gaps in service or functionality.
- Decide what level of technology or tools might be required.
- Identify dependencies (e.g., broadband before mobile apps).
- Evaluate flexibility to ensure adaptability over time.
- Confirm interoperability with existing systems and tools.

Resources

[MDOT: Statewide Technology Plan for Michigan Rural Public Transit Agencies](#)

[N-CATT: Technology Readiness Assessment](#)

[N-CATT: Launching a Customer-Facing App Worksheet](#)

[Example of a Tech Roadmap: Bay Area Transportation Authority Technology Roadmap](#)

[N-CATT: A Framework for Making Successful Technology Decisions](#)

[Spare: What is a Mobility Service Rider Persona and Why is it Important?](#)

PHASE 2

PLAN, FUND, AND PROCURE

**ALRIGHT, HERO!
PHASE 2 IS GO TIME!**



Phase 2 is where you turn strategy into action. With your needs and goals clearly stated, it's time to start identifying the right technology solutions. This means evaluating vendors, comparing features, and making sure each option aligns with your priorities—whether that's boosting efficiency, improving rider experience, or filling a critical operational gap.

But choosing the right tool is only part of the mission. You'll also need to consider costs, available resources, and internal capacity to implement and support the technology.

Securing buy-in from leadership and staff is key, as is ensuring your procurement process follows all relevant policies and regulations. A thoughtful, well-managed approach here sets the stage for long-term success.





YOUR MISSION

***TURNING STRATEGY INTO ACTION MEANS MAKING SMART,
INFORMED CHOICES AT EVERY STEP.***

The following steps offer a roadmap to help you choose solutions that meet your needs, align with your goals, and set you up for long-term impact.

1.

DETERMINE THE RIGHT TECHNOLOGY

Focus on solutions that directly address your agency's challenges. The best solution might not even include technology.

Technology is not one-size-fits all. Selecting a technology should be a collaborative and inclusive process, as its implementation will affect multiple facets of an agency's operations.



You can grow your understanding of the effective use of technology and data by:

- **Vetting vendors and exploring options that align with your goals.**
- **Considering scalability. Can you start small and expand?**
- **Evaluating integration. How will it work with existing systems?**
- **Using Requests for Information (RFIs) and tech demos to compare solutions and gather staff feedback.**
- **Piloting technology to help test feasibility before a full rollout.**



CHOOSING THE RIGHT VENDOR IS A MISSION IN ITSELF-AND IT STARTS WITH DOING YOUR HOMEWORK.

Attend industry events like Michigan Public Transit Association (MPTA) or national conferences, annual meetings, regional roadshows, and peer exchanges (virtual or in-person) to see tech in action and hear real stories from riders, drivers, and fellow agencies. These events provide the perfect settings for discovering solutions and building your vendor shortlist.

DON'T STOP AT ONE OR TWO OPTIONS.

Talk to many different providers, check in with peer agencies using the tech, and consider issuing an RFI or Request for Qualification (RFQ) to explore the market. Ask the tough questions: Can it integrate with your current systems? What kind of training and support do they offer? Are you locked into proprietary hardware? And how's the billing structured—monthly, annually, or one-and-done?

Bring staff into the demos, too. They'll help you spot red flags, ask smart questions, and build the buy-in you'll need to make adoption stick.



2. PLAN FOR RESOURCES

Technology adoption goes beyond the purchase—it requires infrastructure, training, and ongoing support.

- **Assess technical needs (hardware, cybersecurity, data integration).**
- **Identify the level of support that can be provided by the vendor.**
- **Plan for staff training. Who trains whom, and how?**
- **Consider long-term support throughout the tech's lifecycle. Will updates require additional resources?**
- **Ask yourself what needs to be done prior to procuring or implementing tech (e.g., cybersecurity and broadband needs).**

3. SECURE BUY-IN FROM DECISION MAKERS

For successful adoption, leadership must see the value.

- **Clearly define benefits. How does this technology solve key problems (identified during Phase 1)?**
- **Engage vendors in presentations to demonstrate impact.**
- **Align funding discussions with budget cycles to streamline approvals.**

4.

IDENTIFY FUNDING

Effective public transit relies on a diverse funding mix to ensure long-term stability. Understanding costs and funding options helps prevent budget surprises and supports smarter planning.

- **Assess initial (onboarding, equipment, hardware/software) vs. ongoing costs (subscriptions, updates, maintenance).**
- **Explore grants and joint procurement to maximize resources.**
- **Consider operational budgets for sustainable funding.**
- **Save on purchasing by taking advantage of state contracts, such as the state contract for revenue vehicles.**
- **Consider strategies that increase ridership or operational efficiency to build political support.**
- **Diversify funding streams (e.g., organizational partnerships, organizational paid fares, advertising, etc.) and establish a rainy-day fund to build resilience into your plan.**



HOW DO TRANSIT HEROES POWER UP?

In Michigan, transit agencies draw on a combination of federal, state, and local funding sources—including fare revenue, general funds, and property tax millages—to support their operations. To successfully implement and promote new technology programs, agencies must adopt funding strategies that go beyond infrastructure investment to include outreach and community engagement.

Federal Grant Funding

Federal grants support safety, accessibility, and innovation in public transit, with flexible funding for projects like station upgrades and new technology. These grants are available to agencies, tribal governments, and private partners.

Organization-Paid Fares and Bulk Programs

By partnering with employers, schools, and hospitals, transit agencies gain steady revenue while expanding access. These programs reduce congestion, lower emissions, and build long-term ridership habits.

Green Bonds and Climate Financing

Green Bonds offer low-interest capital for sustainable transit projects like EV fleets and energy-efficient upgrades. They attract eco-conscious investors and support climate goals while encouraging private investment.

Crowdfunding and Community Investment

These grassroots models engage residents and businesses in funding transit solutions. By promoting shared ownership, they support pilot programs, expand access, and align projects with community needs.

Public-Private Partnerships (P3s)

P3s bring private capital and expertise to transit projects, reducing risk, accelerating timelines, and introducing innovative solutions that improve efficiency and service.

Foundation Funding for Transit Technology

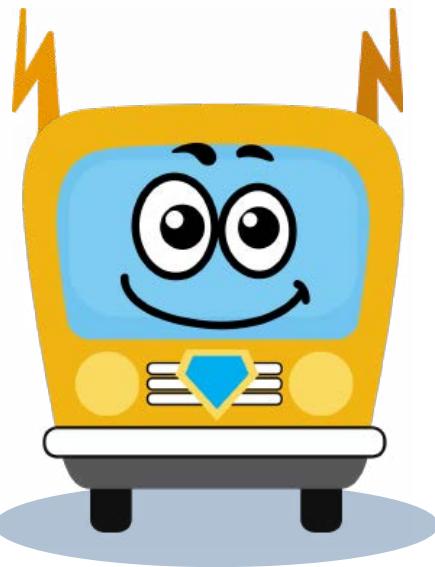
Foundations offer grants for projects that improve mobility, access, and infrastructure. Agencies should align proposals with foundation missions and follow specific application guidelines.

Other Creative Funding Opportunities

Agencies are using non-traditional methods—like advertising, shared assets, and local partnerships—to generate new revenue, boost visibility, and strengthen community support.

5.

NAVIGATE PROCUREMENT



TEAM UP, BUT STAY TRUE TO YOUR MISSION!

Joint procurement can stretch dollars and boost buying power, but it's not one-size-fits-all. While group buying offers leverage, it can also push smaller agencies to adopt technology that exceeds their needs.

Always make sure the solution fits your mission, not just the collective savings. For example, several Michigan agencies joined forces to procure Via's demand-response platform. It's a smart move—if the technology aligns with each agency's mission and capacity.

A structured procurement process ensures compliance and cost efficiency.

- **Use RFIs before issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP) to refine requirements.**
- **Review agency procurement policies to align with federal, state, and local guidelines.**
- **Consider joint purchasing with other agencies to reduce costs.**

Resources like N-CATT's Technology Procurement Playbook and National Rural Transit Assistance Program's (RTAP) ProcurementPRO tool can help agencies confidently navigate the process of procuring new transit technology.

PROCUREMENT PLAYBOOK

Create a checklist of key items to review before signing a vendor agreement. Think payment terms, reporting deliverables, training support, suggested key performance indicators (KPIs), and more. This ensures you cover all the essentials and set your team up for a smooth rollout.

Define your objectives first: Begin with a clear understanding of what the technology must achieve. Tie each procurement to specific operational or rider experience goals identified during internal assessments.

Involve key stakeholders early: Include operations staff, drivers, IT, procurement officers, and riders (if possible) in the evaluation process. Their input can ensure that solutions are both realistic and supported.

Build a simple needs matrix: List must-haves, nice-to-haves, and non-negotiables for each technology. This will help during vendor comparisons and prevent feature overload.

Understand total cost of ownership: Look beyond initial purchase price. Include training, maintenance, licensing, integration, and upgrade costs over the life of the product. Ensure that your project budget includes funding for important items outside of your contract with the technology vendor, such as marketing and additional training for agency staff and the public.

Draft a procurement timeline: Account for internal approvals, grant timelines, public notices (if applicable), and training rollout. A realistic schedule reduces delays and missed funding windows.

Develop or use a procurement template: If a centralized RFP/RFI template is available from MDOT or peer agencies, use it. Standardization saves time and ensures alignment with state procurement policy.

Verify vendor credentials and references: Ask for at least three transit-specific references. Call them. Pay close attention to after-sale service, product reliability, and user training quality.

Insist on a demonstration or pilot: Before committing, request a live demo tailored to your agency's environment—or consider piloting the product. Even simple sandbox tests can help validate usability.

Clarify support, service levels, and training: Include Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and staff training in contracts. Ensure that vendors offer tech support in formats that suit your agency's capabilities.

Plan for evaluation and scalability: Select technology that can scale with future needs. Build in KPIs from the start, and schedule reviews at regular intervals (three, six, and 12 months).

A large, dark gray, anthropomorphic road character with a wide, toothy grin, large white eyes, and a bow tie. It is positioned on the left side of the slide, with a winding road line extending from its head. The character is set against a white background with a decorative border of gray circles.

IT'S NOT EXACTLY SMOOTH SAILING OUT THERE.



Without a clear sense of what technologies are being used statewide, agencies can be left guessing—or reinventing the wheel.

Navigating procurement can feel like a maze, with many struggling through complex RFI and RFP processes. Funding hurdles only add to the challenge, making it tough to engage all stakeholders from the start. And sometimes, in the rush to innovate, agencies try to do too much at once.

The better move? Start small, scale smart, and build from a solid foundation.

TAKE ACTION!

With your goals set, it's time to choose the right tech to boost service, close gaps, and deliver results. But even the best tools need backup: budget, buy-in, and capacity.

READY TO MAKE YOUR MOVE?

**THIS CHECKLIST
HAS YOUR BACK!**

1. Determine the Right Technology

Not all tech is created equal. Choose solutions that solve your problems. Involve staff early and evaluate tools that fit your goals and operations.

- Vet multiple vendors to compare features and alignment with your goals.
- Assess scalability—can you start small and grow later?
- Evaluate integration with your existing systems and tools.
- Use RFIs and tech demos to gather staff input, considering potential challenges and opportunities of new technology.



2. Plan for Resources

Adopting new technology doesn't stop at purchase. It takes infrastructure, people, and ongoing support to succeed.

- Assess technical needs (equipment, hardware, cybersecurity, data systems).
- Clarify what the vendor provides in terms of support and training.
- Identify internal training needs—who trains whom and when?
- Craft a plan for future updates and maintenance costs throughout the entire lifecycle.
- Determine the level of marketing and public engagement that will be conducted; this will help to determine a marketing and communications budget surrounding the new technology.

3. Secure Buy-In from Decision Makers

Leadership support is key to turning plans into action. Show the value clearly and time your requests strategically.

- Define how the tech addresses specific Phase 1 challenges.
- Invite vendors to present demos and impact case studies.
- Align funding asks with budget cycles and agency priorities.

4. Identify Funding

Don't get caught off guard. Map out the full cost picture and explore multiple ways to fund your tech.

- Separate upfront costs (hardware, onboarding) from ongoing ones (subscriptions, support).
- Explore opportunities for grants, partnerships, or joint procurement.
- Check if the tech can be funded through operational budgets.
- Explore programs like MiDEAL to save through state contracts.

5. Navigate Procurement

A strong process helps you stay compliant and avoid surprises. Be clear, thorough, and strategic.

- Issue RFIs to gather information before writing an RFP.
- Review federal, state, and local procurement guidelines.
- Consider joint purchasing with peer agencies to cut costs.
- Turn to resources like N-CATT's Technology Procurement Playbook, RTAP's ProcurementPro, and the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) for practical guidance and best practices throughout the procurement process.

Resources

[Mobility Interoperability Principles: Interoperable Procurement](#)

[APTA: Technology Terms and Conditions](#)

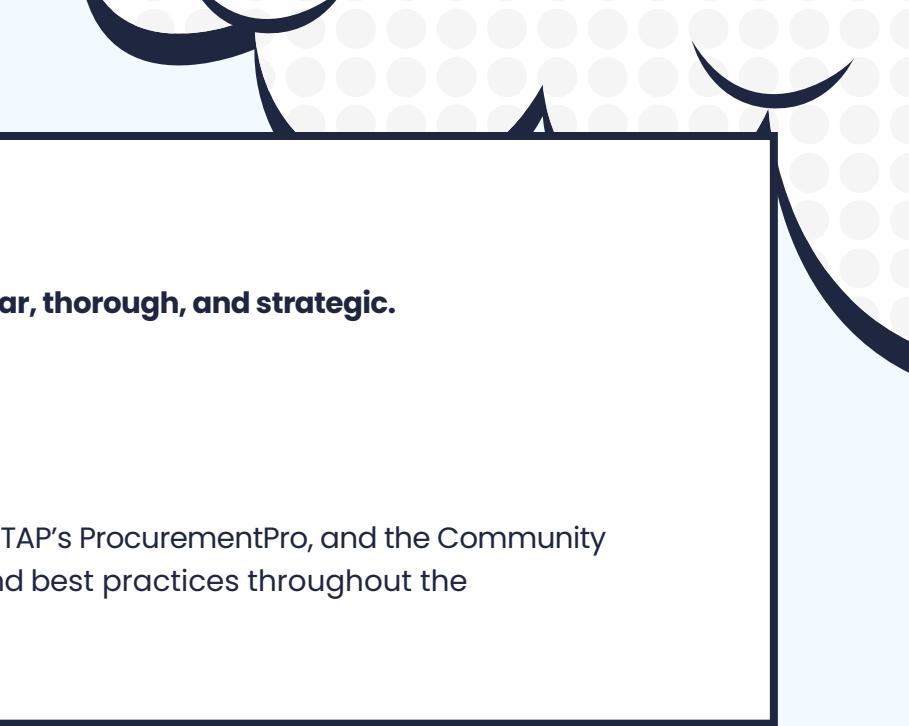
[National RTAP: Directory of Grant Writers](#)

[National RTAP: ProcurementPRO](#)

[National RTAP: Transit Manager's Toolkit – Procurement 101](#)

[N-CATT: RFIs as Tools in Transit Technology Procurements](#)

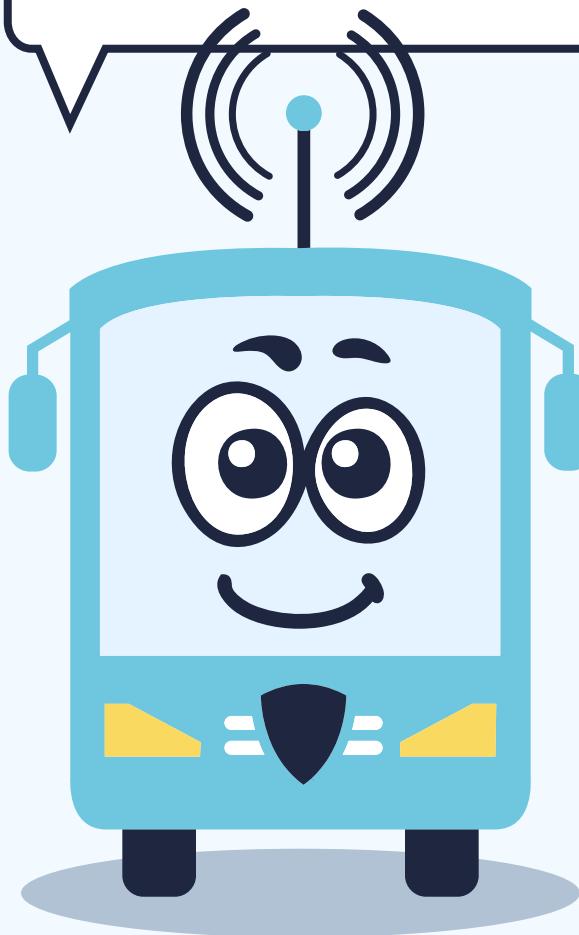
[N-CATT: Strategic Technology Technical Assistance Teams](#)



PHASE 3

EMPLOYEE AND STAFF ENGAGEMENT, AWARENESS, TRAINING, AND INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

**UPGRADING YOUR TECH POWERS
ISN'T JUST FLIPPING A SWITCH
- ESPECIALLY IN TRANSIT.**



Adopting new technology within any organization is no small feat—especially in the complex world of transportation. Public transit agencies must navigate a landscape shaped by regulatory frameworks, procurement rules, and legacy systems. In this environment, digital solutions must do more than perform well. They must integrate seamlessly with existing operations, earn the support of leadership and frontline staff, and deliver clear value to the public.

Phase 3 is where implementation begins in earnest. To succeed, agencies must go beyond the tech itself and invest in the structures that support long-term adoption: strong leadership alignment, intentional knowledge management practices, and comprehensive workforce training. These elements help ensure that new tools are not only installed but effectively used and continuously improved. With a clear plan, internal champions, and the right support systems, your agency can turn technological investments into transformative results.



POW!

YOUR MISSION

**PHASE 3 IS ALL ABOUT SETTING UP YOUR
AGENCY-AND YOUR TEAM-FOR LASTING SUCCESS.**

The following recommendations emphasize a strong change management strategy by tailoring training to different skill levels, incorporating peer mentorship and vendor-led sessions, and clearly communicating goals, timelines, and anticipated benefits.

1.

LEADERSHIP ALIGNMENT AND ACTION PLAN

A well-defined leadership framework helps guide change management by:

- Attendance – Identifying which leaders should engage in key meetings.
- Alignment – Ensuring leadership supports digital transformation goals.
- Advocacy – Establishing leaders' roles in driving and accelerating adoption.

2.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Encouraging mentorship, collaboration, and ownership fosters a strong knowledge-sharing culture.

Engaging employees early and identifying “superusers,” who act as technology champions, helps accelerate adoption. These champions—often seasoned employees transitioning from “doers” to mentors—play a critical role in training and peer support.



2.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Change takes strategy. A smart change management plan helps reduce disruptions, build trust with your team, and set your agency up for long-term success. Start by:

- Empowering early adopters: Identify and support “change champions” within the agency who can mentor peers, demonstrate the value of new tools, and normalize change.
- Incentivizing engagement: Recognize and reward employees who take initiative during technology rollouts through role advancements or certifications.
- Providing ongoing, role-based training: Move beyond one-time training and build continuous learning opportunities that support both implementation and career growth.
- Fostering a learning culture: Encourage innovation and cross-functional collaboration through peer learning, public recognition, and structured growth pathways.
- Aligning tools with job functions: Customize technology to match the specific needs of staff roles to increase usability and adoption.
- Coordinating multi-level change plans: Align leadership, staff, and partner agencies around shared goals with clearly defined communications, training, and feedback loops. By prioritizing intentional organizational development, Michigan transit agencies can ensure staff are not only equipped for change—but empowered to lead it.

3.

CONTINUOUS DOCUMENTATION AND SUPPORT

Knowledge Management should be integrated into every stage of digital implementation, ensuring that knowledge is captured, shared, and refined over time. This includes:

- Managing documentation and guiding training.
- Tracking best practices to inspire change.
- Providing regular updates to ensure evolving knowledge is recorded.

4.

TRAINING AND UPSKILLING THE WORKFORCE

A successful digital transition requires assessing workforce skillsets and tailoring training to meet diverse learning needs. Key training strategies include:

- Onboarding and customized training plans that include modules, group workshops, role-specific sessions, and refreshers—designed to evolve with each stage of implementation.
- Train-the-trainer programs that empower superusers to educate and support others.
- Technology-based training tools such as video libraries, virtual assistance, and real-time field resources to enhance learning and accessibility.

CHANGE IS WHEN YOUR ORGANIZATION IS MOST VULNERABLE...

**...AND WHEN RESISTANCE IS
MOST LIKELY TO TAKE ROOT.**



If your team is already stretched thin, clinging to paper-based systems, or unclear how new tech fits into their mission, hesitation can take hold and stall progress. Factor in high turnover and limited capacity, and disruption becomes even more powerful, threatening to derail progress altogether.

But this is also your chance to rise. With clear communication, strong leadership, and a culture that connects innovation to real benefits, you can rally your team, cut through the chaos, and turn this challenge into your next heroic win.

TIPS TO MAKE YOU THE HERO



Role alignment and communication

Many frontline and administrative staff may view public transit technology as outside their core responsibilities—particularly in roles that are already stretched thin. It's crucial to align new tools with existing duties and clearly demonstrate how they simplify daily tasks. Ongoing, targeted communication can help overcome resistance to change and skepticism by connecting innovation with real, tangible benefits—not as a top-down directive, but as a shared opportunity.

Workforce transitions and timing

High turnover and upcoming retirements across the sector add urgency and complexity to technology rollouts. Agencies should consider weighing the timing of adoption efforts carefully to avoid losing institutional knowledge during critical transitions. Structured knowledge management strategies, peer mentorship, and documented processes can help ensure continuity while creating opportunities to upskill the next generation of public transit professionals.

Organizational culture and employee well-being

In a post-pandemic workplace, work-life balance and well-being are front and center. Employees may be reluctant to take on new responsibilities without seeing a clear return on investment for their time and effort. Fostering a culture that supports innovation and personal sustainability is essential. This includes thoughtful change management, access to training, and visible leadership support for employee growth and adaptation.

Cost, bandwidth, and broader challenges

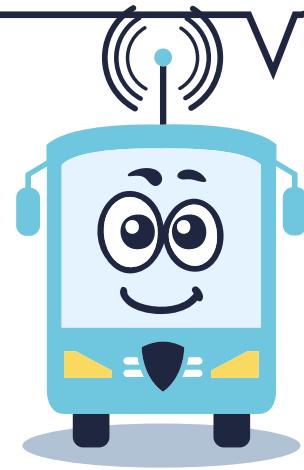
Technology is only one part of the equation. Agencies also face constraints around budget, staffing bandwidth, compliance requirements (such as passing drug tests), and broader operational challenges. As a result, any strategy for technology adoption should be realistic, responsive, and positioned within the larger context of what public transit agencies are truly up against.

TAKE ACTION!

READY TO LEAD THE CHARGE?

Your tech is chosen, but now the real mission begins. In transit, success isn't just about installing tools—it's about earning trust, fitting into complex systems, and delivering real value.

**USE THE CHECKLIST
TO POWER UP!**



1. Leadership Alignment and Action Plan

Strong leadership is your guiding force during change. Clear roles, consistent participation, and visible support are critical to driving momentum.

- Identify leadership participants for recurring key meetings.
- Define leadership roles as advocates and change champions.
- Assign responsibilities for decision-making, communication, and issue escalation.

2. Knowledge Management and Employee Engagement

Fostering a culture of collaboration and mentorship empowers your workforce. Engage team members early, identify champions, and encourage a sense of ownership at every level.

- Engage employees early in the planning and decision-making process.
- Identify and support superusers to serve as peer mentors and tech champions.
- Position experienced employees as mentors.

3. Continuous Documentation and Support

Knowledge must be captured and shared throughout the journey—not just at the finish line. Make best practices and lessons learned easily accessible to support ongoing learning and improvement.

- Integrate documentation into every phase of the implementation process.
- Develop training guides and support materials, such as documentation to formalize best practices.

4. Training and Upskilling the Workforce

A strong training program meets staff where they are. Use a mix of strategies to build confidence, competence, and readiness.

- Conduct skill assessments to identify training needs.
- Develop onboarding and role-specific training plans that adapt over time.
- Launch train-the-trainer programs using superusers as peer instructors.
- Use tech-enabled training (e.g., videos, virtual sessions, field-ready guides) for flexibility and reach.

Resources

[Indeed: How To Write an Action Plan \(With Template and Example\)](#)

[Change Adaptive: Change Management and Knowledge Sharing Best Practices](#)

[APTAU Learning: APTA Workforce Mini-Guides](#)

[National RTAP: Training](#)

[National RTAP: Sharing Training with Agencies Coordinating Transportation Best Practices](#)

[Transit Workforce Center: Train-the-Trainer](#)

PHASE 4

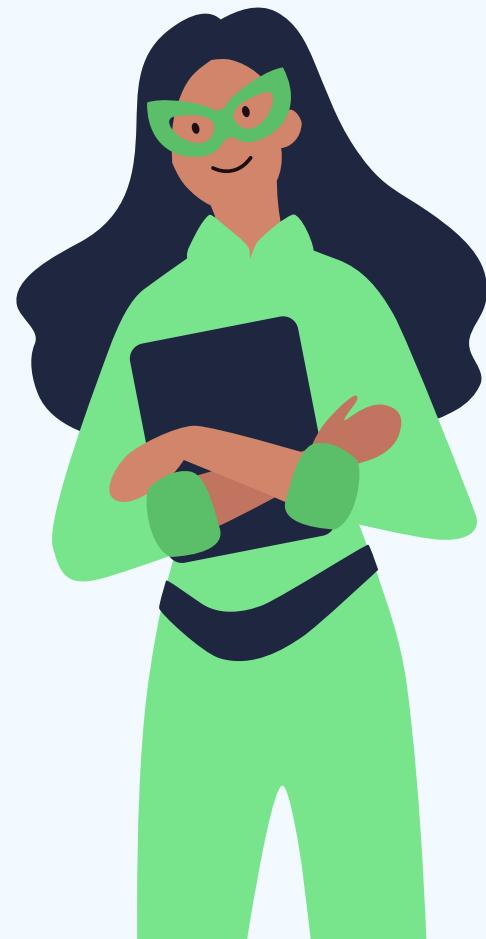
EXTERNAL TECHNOLOGY MARKETING AND TRAINING

Marketing isn't just about getting the word out. It's your agency's superpower for building trust, rallying support, and showing the real impact of public transit. For agencies that rely on millage renewals as a funding mechanism, strong public buy-in is essential to keeping services strong and future-ready. A bold marketing and engagement plan helps make your case, showing riders and community members how new technology investments make their everyday lives easier, safer, enjoyable, and more connected.

In smaller and rural communities, marketing must do more than inform—it needs to inspire action. You need to be a communication hero, forging real connections with the people you serve. This means meeting folks where they are—whether it's a printed flyer at the senior center or a short video on social media. Your mission: **stay flexible, think creatively, and keep your message aligned with your audience's needs.**

Phase 4 is your campaign strategy for connecting new tech with the people and community it's meant to serve. The following steps will help you scale outreach, inspire confidence, and deliver results.

YOU CAN'T SAVE THE DAY IF NO ONE KNOWS WHAT YOU'VE DONE!





POW! YOUR MISSION

MARKETING ISN'T A ONE-TIME EVENT. IT'S AN ONGOING PROCESS.

As a starting point in your journey, consider the National RTAP's advice: set aside about 2–8.5% of your operating budget for marketing. It's a small investment that packs a powerful punch.

Marketing and rider engagement should be ongoing strategies that help transit agencies build trust, drive adoption, and demonstrate impact. The following recommendations provide a roadmap for successful outreach at every stage of the journey, from crafting a tailored marketing plan to sustaining long-term public engagement.

1.

IDENTIFYING MARKETING STRATEGIES

**CRAFT YOUR MESSAGE AND
CHOOSE YOUR CHANNEL!**

**What do you want riders to really know
about your new tech?**

Whether it's real-time info, smoother ride requests, or better fare options, clear messaging is key. Now ask yourself: how will you get the word out and who can help you spread it?

Identifying the right marketing strategy depends on your goals, audience, and available resources. The following tactics—grouped from low- to high-effort—can help you choose approaches that match your agency's capacity while maximizing impact and engagement.



Low-Effort Tactics

- **On-the-ground engagement:** Transit staff ride the bus, assist passengers, and distribute QR codes to promote app downloads or tech usage.
- **Social media campaigns:** Focus on one or two high-value platforms like Facebook and Instagram to share updates, promote tools, and encourage rider-generated content.
- **Free marketing tools:** Use platforms like Canva, Linktree, and stock photo libraries to create polished materials without a design team.
- **Community partnerships:** Collaborate with local organizations (e.g., clinics, libraries, nonprofits) to help spread the word and share content.
- **Cross-posting support:** Encourage local partners and community groups to amplify messaging through their own channels.
- **Invite elected officials for a ride:** Give decision-makers at every level a firsthand look at service strengths and community impact.

Medium-Effort Tactics

- **Printed materials:** Distribute flyers and posters in key locations like grocery stores, laundromats, health centers, and senior centers.
- **QR code integration:** Add scannable codes to signage or materials to link riders directly to apps, support videos, or digital guides.
- **Rider testimonials:** Capture real stories from riders and share them through social media, posters, or newsletters to build trust and engagement.
- **Incentives:** Offer free or discounted rides for new users, loyalty programs, or promo codes tied to tech usage.
- **Targeted digital marketing:** Use geofencing, demographic targeting, and email campaigns (via Mailchimp or similar platforms) to reach specific rider groups.
- **Newsletters:** Send digital or printed updates through community partners (e.g., senior centers, food programs) or directly to households.



High-Effort Tactics

- **Bus wraps and station signage:** Promote trip apps or new tech through eye-catching visuals on buses and shelters.
- **Influencer or employee advocacy:** Partner with trusted community members or staff to act as ambassadors and amplify your message.
- **Community event sponsorships:** Build visibility by sponsoring or hosting events, pop-up booths, or interactive demos.
- **Hands-on travel training:** Offer in-person support to help riders adapt to new tools, especially in low-tech or rural communities.
- **Interagency collaboration:** Join forces with other agencies to share interns, toolkits, and marketing materials.
- **Ad revenue and sponsorships:** Sell space in newsletters or on digital signs, or partner with clinics, colleges, or employers to sponsor outreach—reinvest revenue into future campaigns.



NO MARKETING DEGREE? NO PROBLEM.

Whether you're juggling social media on the side or figuring out how AI fits into your outreach, these bite-sized guides from CRAFT are here to help. From easy-to-use tools and ethical tips to smart AI shortcuts and social media hacks, you'll find everything you need to market like a pro—no team required.

- **Marketing Without a Marketing Degree:** A practical guide to user-friendly tools that help non-marketers streamline branding, content creation, and outreach without needing formal training.
- **Marketing Made Smarter with AI:** An overview of how AI can simplify and enhance everyday marketing tasks, from content planning to audience engagement.
- **Ethics in AI for Marketing Is with You:** A thoughtful look at the ethical considerations of using AI in marketing, including transparency, bias, and accountability.
- **Social Media 101 Guide:** A step-by-step resource for small teams to plan, schedule, and manage social media with limited capacity and maximum impact.

2.

PLANNING AND BUDGETING FOR MARKETING

Don't forget to budget for marketing!

A good rule of thumb is to spend 2–8.5% of your total revenue on marketing, and put at least a quarter of that into technology marketing. So, if a rural transit agency brings in about \$2.67 million a year, that works out to roughly \$55,000 for marketing—and at least \$13,750 of that should go toward tech-focused outreach.

The table below outlines four investment tiers for marketing and outreach, highlighting the strategic focus and example activities possible at each funding level.

Investment Range	Strategic Focus	Sample Activities
\$1K–\$5K	Grassroots outreach & digital visibility	Single-platform digital campaign; flyers/posters; simple rider guide; volunteer-led info sessions; partner material distribution.
\$5K–\$20K	Enhanced outreach & multichannel activation	Multi-platform digital content; newsletters; community tech events; student/freelance support; signage with QR codes.
\$20K–\$50K	Integrated campaigns & branded experiences	Coordinated campaigns with videos; live activations; microsite; sponsored print materials; co-branded community outreach.
\$50K–\$100K	High-impact campaigns & systemwide visibility	Large-scale print/digital ads; countywide launches; major events; kiosks/signage; docu-style video series.

CRAFTING A MARKETING PLAN

Using the strategies you've identified, create a marketing plan that outlines the tools, effort, and costs for outreach, with messaging tailored to the audience—for example, seniors may prefer traditional methods, while younger riders may favor digital channels. The tiered approach below provides flexible, scalable ideas for outreach, rider engagement, and community activation based on your agency's size and budget.

Designed for rural and mid-sized communities, it demonstrates what's possible at different funding levels (excluding staff time, ads, or the technology itself) and encourages creative approaches like shared resources or sponsorships to maximize impact.

\$1,000 – \$5,000: Grassroots Outreach and Digital Visibility

- Launch focused, single-platform digital campaigns (e.g., Facebook), with minimal paid amplification.
- Develop and distribute printed flyers, posters, and basic visual signage across public facilities.
- Create campaign hashtags and encourage user-generated content through organic community involvement.
- Host community-facing information sessions (e.g., "Tech Help Day") with student volunteers or community partners.
- Produce a one-page printed or digital rider guide for app use or other technology onboarding.
- Collaborate with schools, religious/spiritual centers, senior centers, parks and recreation departments, and nonprofits to distribute campaign materials at no cost.

\$5,000 – \$20,000: Enhanced Outreach and Multichannel Activation

- Expand digital campaigns to additional platforms (e.g., Instagram), incorporating testimonials or animated explainers.
- Develop quarterly digital or print newsletters mailed to households or distributed in community hubs.
- Host outreach events, such as “Transit Tech Town Halls,” featuring demos and refreshments.
- Contract local high-school or university students, or freelance professionals with a limited hourly spend each month to assist with content creation or campaign support.
- Leverage design and scheduling tools that help streamline the creation process such as Canva Pro, Adobe Express, Buffer, or Mailchimp to streamline content development and publishing.
- Create signage for shelters or buses, QR codes linking to apps or feedback surveys, and printed instructional handouts.

\$20,000 – \$50,000: Integrated Community Campaigns and Branded Experiences

- Deploy coordinated multi-platform campaigns featuring branded videos, app walk-throughs, and earned media outreach.
- Host live activations, such as a “Tech on Wheels” campaign bus tour or booth sponsorships at fairs or job expos.
- Build a mobile-friendly landing page or microsite to support app onboarding and community education.
- Create custom print products (e.g., newsletters, brochures) with ad space for community business sponsorship.
- Design and distribute co-branded materials with healthcare providers, schools, or local merchants.
- Develop standardized, customizable templates for use by multiple agencies in a shared region.

\$50,000 – \$100,000: High-Impact Campaign Execution and Systemwide Visibility

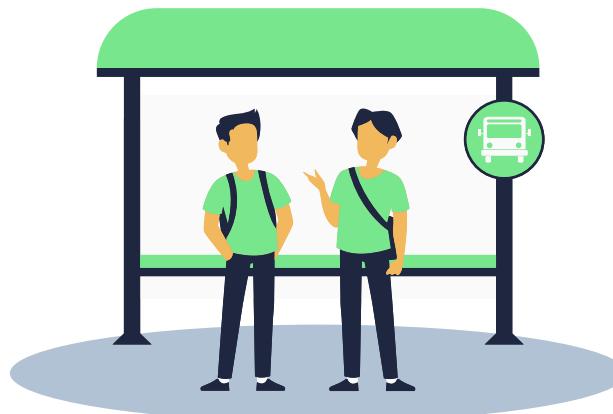
- Fund large-scale campaigns with print, digital, and in-person components, including TV/radio content, wrapped vehicles, and interactive displays.
- Execute countywide campaigns for technology launches, coordinated across agencies.
- Sponsor large-scale events such as a regional “Mobility Month,” incorporating gamification and rider incentives.
- Deploy touchscreen kiosks or real-time display signage in key ridership locations.
- Develop a series of docu-style videos or storytelling campaigns to promote the human impact of technology adoption.
- Contract part-time or freelance students or marketing professionals to manage production timelines and delivery milestones. This will significantly reduce cost since you are not hiring full-time resources, which may not be needed.

3.

EDUCATING RIDERS ON NEW TECHNOLOGY

Transit staff are the front line of rider experience—drivers, dispatchers, and other team members are often the first (and only) point of contact for questions about new technology.

Their face-to-face interactions build trust and offer real-time support, especially for riders who may be uncertain about change. That's why rider education works best when it's personal. Here are some outreach tactics to help staff connect and make tech adoption smoother for everyone.



Low Effort Tactics

- Field days: Staff ride routes to assist riders with new technology and answer questions in real time.
- Bus driver engagement: Train drivers to provide basic guidance and answer common rider questions.
- Customer support: Offer phone-based assistance for riders who need one-on-one help.
- Flyer distribution via community partners: Provide printed materials to libraries, clinics, and local businesses for display and handout.
- Engage community leaders: Share talking points with trusted local figures who can speak about the benefits of new tools.

Medium Effort Tactics

- Group sessions: Host small, informal trainings at senior centers, community hubs, or local churches.
- Pop-up training events: Set up booths at fairs, farmers markets, or food pantries with demos and printed materials.
- Co-branded outreach: Collaborate with libraries, clinics, or schools on posters, presentations, or info tables.
- Transit Tech Days: Organize community events with demonstrations, sign-up help, and interactive activities to build awareness and comfort.



High Effort Tactics

- Hands-on travel training: Provide personalized assistance for riders learning to use new technology, especially seniors or first-time users.
- Ongoing training: Offer refresher sessions beyond launch to reinforce adoption and support evolving tools.
- Group sessions: Host small, informal trainings at senior centers, community hubs, or local churches.
- Sponsor community events: Secure booths or sponsorships at large local gatherings to maintain visibility and trust.
- Train-the-trainer programs: Equip staff or volunteers to provide peer-led support and continue outreach beyond initial efforts.

4. SUSTAINING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

To maintain long-term adoption and satisfaction, agencies should establish clear feedback channels and stay actively engaged with their communities. Ongoing outreach and training reinforce positive perceptions of transit improvements, driving both ridership and public support. Always share your stories—whether it's helping unhoused riders, sending condolence cards, earning national recognition, or traveling to the state capital to advise elected officials.

PHASE 4 IS WHERE DISRUPTION THRIVES.

WHEN MARKETING MISSES THE MARK, RIDERS ARE LEFT CONFUSED, AND STAFF AREN'T FULLY EQUIPPED TO GUIDE THEM.



Misaligned outreach creates the perfect storm: new technology rolls out, but the people who rely on it don't understand how to use it, and the frontline heroes—dispatchers and operators—lack the tools to help. It's a moment tailor-made for chaos.

But with the right strategy—including clear public engagement, hands-on training, and internal staff communication—you can outsmart the confusion and take back control.



Marketing is your superpower, and Phase 4 is your campaign plan.

Whether you've got a lean toolkit or a full-on communications arsenal, your mission is clear: build trust, spark excitement, and connect new tools with the people who need them. Ready to suit up and get started? Use this checklist to guide your next move.

1. Identifying Marketing Strategies

Choose the right tactics based on your agency's capacity and goals.
The list below scales from quick wins to high-impact campaigns.

Low Effort

- Ride routes and distribute QR codes.
- Run social media campaigns (focus on one or two platforms).
- Use free design tools (Canva, Linktree, stock photos).
- Partner with local organizations (e.g., libraries, clinics).
- Encourage trusted partners to cross-post on social media.

Medium Effort

- Post flyers in high-traffic areas.
- Add QR codes to printed and posted materials.
- Share rider testimonials online or in print.
- Offer promo codes, loyalty programs, or free rides.
- Use email tools like Mailchimp for targeted outreach.
- Distribute newsletters through senior centers, meal programs, or other community hubs.

High Effort

- Create bus wraps or transit signage.
- Partner with influencers or staff ambassadors.
- Sponsor booths at community events.
- Host hands-on training at events or transit stations.
- Collaborate with other agencies to share toolkits or interns.
- Use sponsorships or ad space to generate marketing revenue.
- Introduce translation apps to reach non-English-speaking riders.

**RALLY YOUR COMMUNITY AND
SHOW THEM WHAT TRANSIT
TECH CAN REALLY DO!**



2. Developing a Marketing Plan

A strong plan lays the foundation for successful outreach. Tailor your messaging to your audience, budget realistically, and stay flexible as public needs evolve.

- Define key audiences and adjust messaging (e.g., seniors vs. tech-savvy riders).
- Allocate marketing resources—aim for ~1% of your operating budget (per National RTAP guidance).
- Outline tools, timelines, and responsibilities.
- Build flexibility into the plan to adapt to feedback and evolving community needs.

3. Educating Riders on New Technology

Face-to-face engagement builds trust—especially when introducing something new.

These tactics help you connect with riders at every comfort level.

Low Effort

- Host field days with staff riding and assisting.
- Train drivers to offer tech guidance.
- Provide a phone hotline for tech help.
- Share printed guides at clinics, stores, and libraries.
- Equip community leaders with talking points.

High Effort

- Provide one-on-one or small group travel training.
- Offer follow-up sessions after launch to reinforce use.
- Sponsor large community events to boost visibility.
- Launch train-the-trainer programs to extend reach.

Medium Effort

- Lead small group sessions at senior centers or places of worship.
- Host pop-ups at fairs or other community events.
- Co-brand flyers or presentations with local partners.
- Organize “Transit Tech Days” with games, demos, and support.

4. Sustaining Public Engagement

Outreach doesn't stop after launch. Keep the momentum going with feedback loops, regular updates, and ongoing training opportunities.

- Provide simple channels for rider feedback.
- Track rider sentiment and adjust messaging as needed.
- Offer refresher training as systems evolve.
- Maintain engagement through social media and newsletter updates
- Celebrate small wins—highlight milestones, testimonials, and rider success stories.

Resources

[National RTAP: Intro to Marketing Tools](#)

[National RTAP: Marketing Plan Workbook](#)

[N-CATT: Collecting & Analyzing Customer Feedback Data](#)

[CRAFT: Marketing Without a Marketing Degree](#)

[CRAFT: Marketing Made Smarter with AI](#)

[CRAFT: Ethics in AI for Marketing is With You](#)

[CRAFT: Social Media 101 Guide](#)

PHASE 5

MANAGE, MAINTAIN, AND EVALUATE TECHNOLOGY, RESOURCES, AND FUNDING

After you roll out that shiny new tech, don't just fly off into the sunset—set your review points!

Take a step back and ask: Is this working the way we hoped? What needs a tweak? Then keep the momentum going with annual evaluations to stay sharp, learn from experience, and gear up for your next big mission.

Technology adoption doesn't end at launch. Long-term success depends on how well systems, funding, and marketing are managed over time. In this final phase, agencies should establish regular review milestones followed by annual evaluations. These checkpoints offer critical opportunities to assess whether the technology is meeting its intended goals, identify areas for improvement, and gather feedback from both staff and riders.

Beyond the first year, annual evaluations help ensure the technology continues to deliver value as agency and community needs evolve. Agencies should use these reviews to refine strategies, adjust marketing and training efforts, and capture lessons that can guide future initiatives.

By building in a culture of continuous improvement, transit agencies can maintain momentum, adapt with confidence, and turn short-term wins into lasting impact.

**EVEN SUPERHEROES
NEED A CHECK-IN
NOW AND THEN**





POW! YOUR MISSION

TECHNOLOGY CHANGES ON A DIME. ONGOING EVALUATION IS YOUR SECRET WEAPON FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS.

Use real-time data, regular staff feedback, and proactive planning to keep your systems sharp, and stay ahead of the curve by tuning into webinars, roundtables, and vendor expos.

Don't let your tech get stale! Managing, maintaining, and evaluating your technology, resources, and funding requires real-time attention and strategic foresight. The following recommendations outline how to make evaluation a core habit, so your agency can make informed, proactive decisions that strengthen your transit system.

1.

ESTABLISH A REGULAR REVIEW SCHEDULE

Set structured evaluation checkpoints at three months, six months, and 12 months post-implementation, followed by annual check-ins. This cadence allows agencies to assess performance trends early and adjust before issues become entrenched. Regular evaluation also helps determine whether the technology continues to meet agency needs or if adjustments are required.

2.

DEFINE AND TRACK THE RIGHT KPIs

Different types of technology require different metrics, because success looks different for each tool. That's why agencies should establish a KPI framework before launch, with the flexibility to adjust based on real user behavior.

Examples include:

- **Dispatch software: response times, ride allocation efficiency**
- **Safety tech: incident rates, operator compliance**
- **Passenger tools: app usage, satisfaction scores, system feedback**

KPI tracking supports performance monitoring and influences decisions about scaling, replacement, or continued investment.

3.

DOCUMENT LESSONS LEARNED AND FEEDBACK

Encourage all teams, from dispatch to drivers, to participate in post-rollout reviews. Gather rider and staff feedback at multiple intervals using methods such as:

- Quarterly surveys
- In-app or on-site feedback buttons
- Focus groups with high-use populations (e.g., seniors, students)

Use these findings to inform user experience improvements, refine communications, and adjust training. Technology success is closely tied to the rider experience. What works or fails should guide future implementation.

4.

DESIGNATE A TECHNOLOGY LEAD

To keep projects on track and ensure accountability, agencies should designate a dedicated technology lead responsible for the following key functions:

- Monitoring vendor performance
- Coordinating updates
- Evaluating provider relationships
- Recommending whether to continue with the current vendor or explore alternatives

This role ensures accountability, especially in smaller agencies with lean teams, and supports consistent communication and decision-making.

5. CREATE A SYSTEM HEALTH CHECKLIST

Regular check-ins help prevent small issues from becoming major disruptions. A monthly “system health” checklist can ensure all components are functioning smoothly and staff remain confident using the technology, including:

- Software uptime and bug/performance reports
- Hardware functionality (e.g., tablets, dispatch units)
- Staff training needs or retraining opportunities
- Resolution logs for user-reported issues

This tool helps identify problems before they escalate and ensures continued operational readiness.

6. MAINTAIN A VENDOR RELATIONSHIP PLAN

Strong vendor relationships are key to long-term success. A structured plan with regular check-ins helps ensure accountability, surface issues early, and keep systems aligned with your agency’s evolving needs. Agencies should:

- Review performance benchmarks
- Track support response times and resolution quality
- Monitor contract deliverables and discuss upgrade pathways

Proactive relationship management supports strong service levels and gives agencies leverage for negotiation or change.

7.

PLAN FOR STAFF TURNOVER AND NEW USER ONBOARDING

Include technology onboarding in all new hire training and offer refresher sessions when systems change. Supplement with on-demand resources like training videos, FAQs, and user guides. This ensures knowledge continuity and maintains system usage quality despite staff transitions.

8.

MANAGE COSTS AND FUNDING

Sustainability depends on proactive planning. Agencies should integrate ongoing costs into long-term budgets and seek new funding sources (e.g., grants, public-private partnerships) to maintain or expand initiatives.

9.

ASSESS MARKETING AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

Even the best technology can fall flat without effective outreach. To ensure tools are reaching and resonating with riders, agencies should regularly assess marketing efforts and public awareness through the following strategies:

- Measuring adoption rates, app usage, and ridership changes
- Collecting rider feedback to uncover awareness gaps
- Re-engaging focus groups to refine outreach strategies
- Revisiting marketing and training efforts to improve adoption

10.

PLAN FOR NEXT STEPS

As systems mature and rider needs shift, agencies should take time to assess their path forward using the following considerations:

- Decide whether to scale existing tools or explore new solutions.
- Use a structured approach if expanding, restarting at Phase 1 for evaluation and planning if expanding into new tools or systems.
- Consider vendor pros and cons if expanding with the same provider.

EVEN THE STRONGEST TECH ROLLOUT CAN FALTER WITHOUT A PLAN TO EVOLVE.



**WITHOUT CLEAR KPIs, AGENCIES ARE
LEFT GUESSING WHETHER THEIR SYSTEMS
ARE TRULY DELIVERING RESULTS.**

As rider needs shift and agency priorities grow more complex, ongoing evaluation and feedback become essential—not optional. And with costs rising over time, future funding must be anticipated, not ignored. Without these safeguards, cracks begin to form, creating the perfect opening for disruption.

**The only way to stay ahead of the chaos?
Continuous improvement and smart,
forward-thinking strategy.**

**READY TO TAKE ACTION?
YOU'VE LAUNCHED THE TECH, NOW IT'S TIME
TO MAKE SURE IT LIVES UP TO ITS POTENTIAL.**



POW!

The final phase of your mission is all about long-term impact: tracking performance, listening to your team and riders, and staying ready to adapt.

Are your systems still hitting the mark?

It's time to suit up, check in, and keep your momentum strong. Use the following checklist to guide your ongoing success and stay one step ahead.

1. Establish a Regular Review Schedule

Ongoing evaluation helps catch issues early and ensure technology continues to meet your needs.

- Set formal review checkpoints at three months, six months, and 12 months post-implementation.
- Schedule annual evaluations after the first year.
- Set up check-ins to evaluate performance, adoption, and alignment with agency goals.

2. Define and Track the Right KPIs

Tailored metrics help you measure success and guide future investment.

- Create a KPI framework before launch, with room to adjust as needed.
- Monitor operational metrics (e.g., dispatch response times, uptime, incident rates).
- Track rider-facing metrics (e.g., app usage, satisfaction, feedback submissions).
- Use KPI data to inform decisions on scaling or changing providers.

3. Document Lessons Learned and Feedback

Collecting insights from riders and staff ensures better implementation next time.

- Conduct quarterly rider and staff surveys.
- Deploy and use in-app or on-site feedback tools.
- Host focus groups with key user groups (e.g., seniors, students).
- Apply findings to refine training, communication, and user experience.

4. Designate a Technology Lead

Accountability matters. Assign a point person to own the tech journey.

- Assign a lead to oversee vendor coordination and tech performance.
- Monitor updates, contracts, and support needs.
- Evaluate current provider fit and make recommendations for continued partnership or change.

5. Create a System Health Checklist

Routine “wellness checks” help prevent bigger issues.

- Review software performance and uptime monthly.
- Track user-reported issues and resolution timelines.
- Check equipment status (e.g., tablets, dispatch equipment).
- Identify staff/rider training or re-training needs.

6. Maintain a Vendor Relationship Plan

A strong vendor relationship supports better service and accountability.

- Schedule quarterly check-ins to review benchmarks and deliverables.
- Track support quality and responsiveness.
- Discuss upgrades, integration options, and any contract adjustments.

7. Plan for Staff Turnover and New User Onboarding

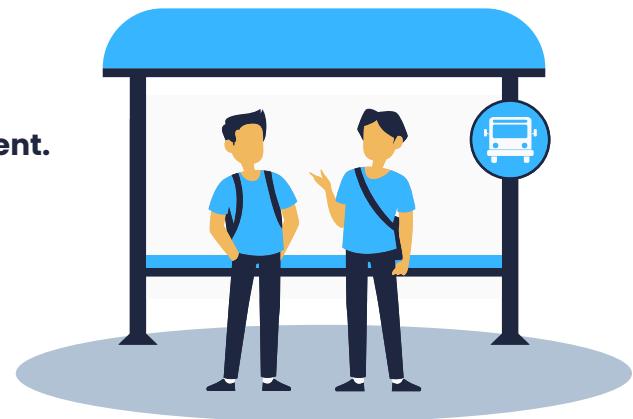
Keep knowledge from walking out the door—train early and often.

- Include tech onboarding in all new hire training.
- Provide refresher sessions when systems are updated.
- Offer on-demand support tools: videos, FAQs, and user guides.

8. Manage Costs and Funding

Stay financially sustainable with smart planning and resource alignment.

- Include ongoing technology costs in long-term budgets.
- Explore new funding sources (e.g., grants, partnerships) to maintain or expand tech.
- Plan for system upgrades or replacements in advance.



9. Assess Marketing and Public Awareness

Great tech delivers value only when people know it exists—and understand how to use it.

- Track adoption rates, app usage, and feature engagement.
- Gather rider feedback to assess communication effectiveness.
- Revisit focus groups to update outreach strategies and messaging.
- Adjust marketing and training plans to improve public buy-in.

10. Plan for Next Steps

Your tech journey doesn't end here—plan for what's next.

- Reassess current tech for scalability and future use.
- Revisit Phase 1 of this guidebook when expanding into new tools or systems.
- Evaluate current vendors and consider exploring alternatives if needs change.
- Stay current on industry trends through webinars, roundtables, and trade expos.

Resources

- [Transit Cooperative Research Program: TCRP Report 88: A Guidebook for Developing a Transit Performance-Measurement System](#)
- [N-CATT: Data Practices](#)
- [Outsource Accelerator: 10 Key Strategies for Successful Vendor Relationship Management](#)
- [Forbes: 17 Metrics for Evaluating the Success of Tech Projects and Initiatives](#)

CONCLUSION: YOUR MISSION BEGINS NOW!

If you've made it this far, you already know that implementing transit technology isn't a one-and-done task. It's a journey—one that unfolds over time, phase by phase, shaped by your agency's goals, community needs, and capacity to grow.

This guidebook is your starting point: a flexible framework designed to help you move forward with purpose, not a rigid checklist to follow. Think of it as providing freedom within the framework—a structure to keep you grounded, with the flexibility to adapt, experiment, and make it your own. Every agency is different, and success lies in tailoring the tools and strategies in this guide to fit your specific context.

As you dig into staff engagement, procurement, and marketing, remember: this work is iterative. It takes time, creativity, and room to experiment. You won't get everything perfect on the first try, and that's okay. Build gradually, and test, and refine. Make sure you give yourself and your team some grace. Learning is part of the process, and with the right mindset, you will reach your goals.

This guidebook is the beginning of a longer journey toward a more human-centered use of technology—one that strengthens operations, improves the rider experience, and ultimately supports more vibrant, connected communities. And while this guidebook is comprehensive, it's not the last word. As MDOT and its partners roll out future trainings, you'll gain access to even more resources focused on the "how"—from detailed implementation steps to peer learning and beyond.

You've got the tools. You've got the team. You've got the vision. Now it's time to take the next step.

BEHIND EVERY SUPERHERO IS A TEAM

The success of this project is the result of true collaboration. Academic researchers, industry experts, marketing professionals, and technology leaders came together, each offering their own expertise, perspectives, and insights to help MDOT and Michigan's transit agencies move forward with clarity and confidence. By blending research, real-world experience, and future-focused thinking, the project team created a practical, strategic roadmap for implementing transit technology across the state.

Throughout this guidebook, you've also met a team of superheroes—each representing the key roles and strengths needed to bring these ideas to life. Just like in the real world, no single player can do it alone. It takes planners, communicators, operators, finance leads, and community voices working in sync. Because at the end of the day, collaboration is the superpower.

Special thanks to Michigan transit agencies for helping bring these superheroes to life. You helped name the characters and shape the team, just as you're shaping the future of public transit.



