

News Release

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Self-driving shuttles provide new transportation option in Grand Rapids

ST. PAUL, Minn. – Multiple, self-driving vehicles using state-of-the-art technology are winding their way down Grand Rapids roads, providing a new option for transportation to area residents, according to the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

The demonstration project is one of three in the state, led by MnDOT’s Connected and Automated Vehicles office, and is named goMARTI. Riders can access a free, on-demand shuttle by downloading an app and scheduling a ride, or by calling 211. Although the vehicles are considered self-driving, there will always be an operator on board who will verify the safe operation of the vehicle and aid passengers as needed.

“MnDOT continues its commitment to collaborate with local communities and valued partners to find innovative ways to provide safe, accessible transportation options for all Minnesotans,” said Commissioner Nancy Daubenberger from MnDOT. “The goMARTI demonstration project will provide great insight on how the technology stands up in rural Minnesota winter conditions.”

This pilot project marks several firsts for the automated vehicle industry. This represents the first commercial launch of May Mobility’s Toyota Sienna Autono-MaaS (S-AM). It also prioritizes accessibility and equity as the first rural AV route and with the inclusion of three first-ever ADA-compliant S-AM vehicles to better serve the Grand Rapids community. Residents can book rides through an app developed by Via, a transit technology provider.

During the 16-month project, MnDOT and its partners hope to:

- Advance and inform the operation of automated vehicle technology in rural, winter conditions
- Engage and educate the local community by providing real-world automated vehicle experiences
- Provide safe, accessible mobility for residents, especially those with transportation challenges
- Understand what economic development this innovative pilot brings while attracting future talent and technology to the Iron Range

Project partners also include the City of Grand Rapids, Department of Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation, Itasca County, The PLUM Catalyst, University of Minnesota, Arrowhead Regional Development Commission and Mobility Mania. Each shares a goal of increasing safe, accessible transportation options for residents.

To learn more about how to schedule a ride, hours of operation, and other project information: goMARTI.com

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