**

**MEDIA ADVISORY**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Thursday, August 23, 2018

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**Mayor Bliss joins community and transit leaders to celebrate kickoff
of new fare-free Route 19 service along Michigan Street corridor**

*Bistros, breweries, bars and businesses offering monthlong special deals and discounts just for saying ‘Route 19’ to highlight debut of hassle-free route that simplifies travel in downtown Grand Rapids*

**WHO:** Mayor **Rosalynn Bliss**

The Rapid CEO **Andrew Johnson**

 Mobile GR and Parking Services Director **Josh Naramore**

Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. President and CEO **Tim Kelly**

City Commissioners **Ruth Kelly** and **Joe Jones**

**WHAT: 15-minute press conference to announce the Monday, Aug. 27, launch of The Rapid’s new and improved fare-free Route 19 service.** The route serves riders from Plymouth Street along the Medical Mile on Michigan Street through a section of the near West Side along Bridge Street up to Stocking Avenue. The route includes stops near such anchor institutions as Spectrum Health, Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids Community College, Michigan State University’s College of Human Medicine, Meijer’s soon-to-open Bridge Street Market and more than 50 additional popular, high-traffic destinations along one of Grand Rapids’ busiest streets. Many of these businesses will offer special deals and discounts to patrons who simply mention the “Route 19 Discount” while at the establishment through Sept. 23.

The press conference will highlight how the introduction of free fares along the route – in combination with the City’s fare-free DASH service and City-sponsored fare-free portion of the Silver Line north of Wealthy Street – **will provide free travel throughout downtown Grand Rapids** without the hassle of parking. Another feature is the convenience of buses coming every 10 minutes on Michigan Street during peak afternoon and evening travel demand.

 The public transit service upgrades along Route 19 are part of a new three-year pilot program partnership with the City’s Mobile GR and Parking Services Department, Interurban Transit Partnership (The Rapid) and Spectrum Health that will dramatically increase bus service to help reduce traffic and ease parking congestion along the Michigan Street corridor.

**WHEN: 10:30-10:45 a.m.**

 **Monday, Aug. 27, 2018**

**WHERE:** Rosa Parks Circle

 35 Monroe Center St. NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503