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## How Technology Transforms Mobility in Michigan--and Beyond

Small, hungry, and agile Michigan-based companies use technology to improve their businesses and shape the future of mobility.

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Michigan, the state that has long been a leader in American manufacturing and automotive technology, is home to a new age of innovation. Here, artificial intelligence and machine learning are making the mobility industry smarter, safer, and more powerful. Predictive analytics is improving satellite communication and transforming space travel, and Michigan-based small and midsize businesses (SMBs) are leading the charge.

### Paving the way for smarter, safer roads

One Michigan-based business is working to make roads everywhere safer. P3Mobility, an Ann Arbor-based software and consulting company, aims to reduce traffic fatalities through the deployment of vehicle-to-everything (V2X) infrastructure. V2X is the communication between a vehicle and any entity that may affect or be affected by the vehicle, including other cars, infrastructure, pedestrians, and cyclists. With cost acting as one of the greatest barriers to V2X adoption, P3Mobility is introducing commercial models into the V2X ecosystem, such as enabling consumers to pay for “smart road services.” “We are completely committed to the safety benefits of this technology,” explains Erin Milligan, founder and CEO, P3Mobility.

P3Mobility’s success has been fueled, in part, by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) and the company’s access to the state’s network of original equipment manufacturers (OEMs). Michigan is home to 26 OEMs, including Ford Motor Company, General Motors, Stellantis, and 98 of the top 100 automotive suppliers, making it “a magnet for startups,” notes Charlie Tyson, technology activation director, Michigan Office of Future Mobility and Electrification. An environment with such a robust automotive-sector economy creates a perfect climate for mobility newcomers and innovators to thrive.

As Michigan attracts and grows more innovative SMBs, developing the right talent is increasingly important. The state already has the highest concentration of engineers in the nation and 17 nationally ranked universities and colleges with engineering programs. To meet increased demand and new skills, the state recently announced a \$5 million grant to proactively prepare mobility talent. The grant supports Michigan workers while they secure in-demand technology skills and funds corporate initiatives designed to close industry skills gaps.

“There’s no question that Michigan is completely committed to leading the country in investment and efforts in mobility,” Milligan notes, citing several state and federal projects that have benefited her business. For example, P3Mobility demonstrated its technology on the streets of Ann Arbor, in partnership with the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute, through a grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation. The groundbreaking project created an implementation guide so others can understand how to finance, build, and operate connected vehicle infrastructure. “[Projects like this] could only happen in Michigan because the right partners, talent, and initiative are located here,” she explains.

### Connecting humans through space

A small business’s ingenuity and agility can provide a massive competitive advantage. ATLAS Space Operations is taking on global incumbents from its headquarters in Traverse City with its Freedom Software Platform. The cloud-based, global ground management system simplifies satellite communications and gives satellite operators secure space access. “What started as a five-person company less than a decade ago now builds software used by commercial and military clients,” says McKenzie Weeks, marketing manager at ATLAS.

ATLAS relocated to Michigan from California in 2017 as part of an initiative Boomerang Catapult, a Traverse City-based investment group, created to bring more high-tech jobs to Northern Michigan. Norman Lee, vice president, marketing and communications at ATLAS, notes that 20Fathoms, the tech startup incubator ATLAS joined, helped shape the company’s strategy. Incubators and technology accelerators across the state help “emerging entrepreneurs take ideas from napkin to market,” Tyson says.

Being selected to join Michigan’s Small Business Development Center’s annual showcase in Washington, D.C., where Lee and co-founders got to network with Washington influencers, further increased ATLAS’s visibility. ATLAS recently won a government contract with the U.S. Space Force to use machine learning and predictive data analytics to deliver enhanced satellite data insights that anticipate and address satellite communication issues before they occur. Ongoing support and funding from the MEDC have helped ATLAS compete in the international marketplace, as well.

Whether on the ground or up in space, Michigan-based companies are responsible for game-changing innovation. “We’re makers here in Michigan. There’s a culture of ‘You Can,’” Tyson notes. “That’s one thing emerging companies and innovators across the globe realize when they come here.”

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