

# A vehicle for change.

Developing a five year plan and  
creating techniques to market  
countywide rural transportation

March 2012

A Transportation Research Project of Disability Network/Lakeshore



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# Executive Summary

In October of 2008, Disability Network/Lakeshore of Holland, MI was awarded a Service Development and New Technologies (SDNT) grant from the Michigan Department of Transportation for a study entitled, “Techniques to Market Countywide Rural Transportation.” This community change study seeks to increase awareness of and support for Allegan County Transportation (ACT).

ACT, the public transit system for Allegan County, MI, receives numerous calls from residents and organizations who are not eligible for services and do not understand the services provided by ACT. Also, ACT is consistently looking for ways to improve and increase ridership in the existing service area. These issues raise the underlying questions: What services do Allegan County residents need and support? How much factual information do residents have about public transit? What are the best ways to educate residents about ACT and the need for improved transit services?

Disability Network/Lakeshore partnered with Daniel Bergan, PhD, and Genevieve Risner, PhD from Michigan State University to conduct this six-phase study in Allegan County, MI.

Additionally, a workgroup of 15 community partners representing social service organizations, schools, governmental entities, private transit providers, and residents formed to develop and implement a five-year community supported strategic plan for ACT with the goal to effectively and efficiently meet the transit needs of Allegan County residents.

The workgroup found several significant findings.

## Stakeholders:

- + 35% noted they use volunteers to help meet unmet transit needs
- + Work and medical appointments were the number one traveled destinations
- + 52% stated the inability to get people the services they need is how transit needs affected their organization or business
- + 84% said they either strongly or somewhat strongly supported increased transit services
- + 92% cited the need for regional transportation in the next three years as very or somewhat important

## Current and Prospective ACT Riders:

- + 65% of respondents indicated the need for increased regional transportation in West Michigan over the next three years
- + 25% of respondents stated a lack of transportation prevented them from looking for, getting, or keeping a job
- + 36% of respondents stated a lack in transportation services prevented them from attending medical appointments in that last year
- + 81% of residents indicated the transportation services offered by ACT are very or somewhat important to the community

### Taxpayers:

- + 78% indicated they were either very or somewhat likely to support a transit millage in Allegan County
- + 90% stated transit services offered by ACT are very or somewhat important to the community
- + 60% said they strongly or somewhat strongly support the ACT Five Year Plan

A complete analysis on each phase of this study is available on Disability Network/Lakeshore's website ([www.dnlakeshore.org](http://www.dnlakeshore.org)). Each phase contains in-depth data analysis including survey tools and raw survey data.

# Laying the Foundation

## Create a workgroup

Following the best practices of Disability Network/Lakeshore's 2008 Service, Development, and New Technologies Grant study, a workgroup was created to facilitate the study. One person alone cannot affect systems change, but rather a group of individuals coming together actively can make change. This project was named as the "Allegan Transportation Workgroup." The term "workgroup" instills the idea that everyone works as a team and participates in the development, implementation, and success of the project.

The workgroup oversees the project and takes action research to accomplish the work. They determine how they will accomplish the goal or solve the problems, and divide the bulk of the work among themselves when action must be taken - functioning as a working group.

One member of the workgroup acts as facilitator. The facilitator's role is to keep the group organized and on track, and moderate discussion. By asking questions, the facilitator constantly encourages the workgroup to develop processes and solve problems that help the group reach its end goal(s).

There is not a specific number as to how many individuals should be part of the workgroup. For this particular project, twelve members were recruited. It is important to have a large enough representation to accomplish goals, yet also remain cognizant that too many members prevent consensus building.

In addition, special attention must be given to stakeholder skills and characteristics including: knowledge about the topic, connections and respect within the community, and ethnicity. A diverse group will yield better results.

Since all communities are different, you will have to choose who to include in your workgroup. Below is a list of the stakeholders represented in this community study project:

- + Disability Organization
- + Public School Systems
- + Municipalities (elected officials)
- + Faith Based Organizations
- + Interested Citizens
- + Transportation Providers
- + Metropolitan Planning Organization
- + Businesses

Some other organizations to consider include courts, hospitals, rehabilitation centers, homeless shelters, governmental agencies, tourism organizations, environmental groups, chamber of commerce groups, transit riders and regional transit boards.

In addition, you want workgroup members with specific characteristics. Here are a few qualities and skills to look for as you identify people for your workgroup membership:

- + Extensive positive relationships with other community members
- + Knowledge about transportation issues
- + Connection with current/potential riders
- + Previous research experience and knowledge
- + Excellent communication skills
- + Marketing skills
- + Ability to think big picture and identify outreach opportunities
- + Ability to work well independently and as part of a team
- + Creative
- + Willingness to commit time to the effort
- + Excellent follow-through

After you develop a wish list of workgroup members, begin to contact people and schedule a meeting with each person. Plan to meet with people for at least 30 minutes at a location of their choice. You will need to bring the following with you: a volunteer description and agreement (Appendix A, and a draft process outline and timeline (Appendix B).

When you meet with people, explain the project and give each person an opportunity to share his/her thoughts and ideas. After you discuss the potential members' suggestions for the project, if you think the person meets the qualifications and characteristics of a great workgroup member, share the volunteer description with him or her. Since you only want to involve people who are willing to commit time to the project and are capable of doing the work, you must be clear with people about what you are asking them to do, how much time it will take, and what skills and abilities they need to be successful.

After discussing the commitment involved, if the person is willing to participate in the project, ask them to fill out a volunteer commitment form. The volunteer commitment contains a series of questions. Answers to this list of questions will help you understand the group dynamics before the workgroup meets. Understanding your group members' perceived strengths and weaknesses will help you feel more confident in asking people to take responsibility for specific tasks without asking them to do activities that might make them uncomfortable. Knowing what each member hopes to gain from the project will help you to ensure their experience is positive and meets their expectations – so they might be willing to work on another project with you in the future.

Make sure all your workgroup members complete and sign the volunteer commitment form. Then, make a copy for their records and keep the original for yourself. Hopefully, you won't need to pull this form out later in the project. However, should you have a group member who consistently does not follow through; you can always use the signed form as a tool for accountability, serving as a reminder of their commitment to the workgroup.

Once you have met with all of your prospective workgroup members and have secured signed volunteer forms, choose a date, time and location for your first meeting. Call or email workgroup members well in advance (at least four weeks) to ensure they set aside time for the first meeting. About one week prior, send out a brief reminder to the team members, along with a draft agenda.

After meeting with each potential workgroup member, send a handwritten thank you note for the person's time and interest in your project.

### Meeting with Stakeholders

Municipal staff and elected officials are important parties to involve in project planning and discussion. The best case scenario is to involve them up front to solicit their feedback, ideas, and recommendations. Plus, it's a great opportunity to invite them to participate on the workgroup and be part of the process.

Before sharing your project with elected officials, start the dialogue with municipal staff – either the city manager or the township supervisor. If there's a transit authority in your area speak with the director of the transit agency. Share the draft plan and ask for their feedback and ideas. Some good questions to ask at these meetings include:

- + What do you think of the draft plan and process? How would the information gathered through this project be helpful to you?
- + What groups in your area do you think should be involved in this project?
- + I would like to allow you and your board/council the opportunity to review the survey instruments and allow for modifications/additions before they are distributed to the public. Would you and your board/council be interested and willing to provide feedback and input as we move through the process?
- + What's the best way to keep you posted on this project? What's the best way to keep your board/council up to date on this project?
- + Would you or a board/council member be interested in being part of the workgroup to oversee the process?

We found the best process to keep board and council members up to date is to send out monthly memos via email; a length of one page is usually sufficient. Keeping these stakeholders involved in the process as much as possible creates more dialogue about your project and, in the end, results in better data that meets the needs of a broader audience.

After meeting with municipal staff, send each person a handwritten thank you note for his/her time and assistance.

### Reevaluate your plan

Review all the information you have collected to this point from potential workgroup members and municipal stakeholders. The key to a successful project is that you have a process that values input from the people with whom you have spoken. Therefore, analyze people's input and modify the process accordingly.

## Get organized

Before the workgroup is convened, there is much work to be accomplished. First, the facilitator must prepare for the workgroup's first meeting. The facilitator should select a date, time, and location for the first meeting and communicate this to all members.

Now, in anticipation of keeping the workgroup organized, the facilitator should put together a toolkit for each member. The toolkit should be an one-inch binder with a cover that specifies the name and goal of the project and lists the name of the member to whom that binder belongs. It should contain the following items:

- + Table of contents
- + Project description (Appendix B)
- + Project timeline (Appendix B)
- + Meeting agendas
- + Meeting minutes
- + Map of study area
- + Contact information for all workgroup members
- + Copy of only that member's volunteer agreement
- + Any other relevant reference information
- + Tabs separating each section

Once the binder is completed, the facilitator should prepare an agenda. Make copies of the agenda for all workgroup members, and three hole punch them so members can easily transfer meeting materials to their binders after the meeting.

Finally, pick up some snacks for the workgroup members to enjoy at the first meeting.

For future meetings, agendas, minutes and supporting materials should all be three hole punched so workgroup members can immediately save these documents in their binders. Also, continuing to offer snacks is always a great way to demonstrate appreciation and hospitality.

# PHASE 1:

## Getting Directions

This phase one of the study in which the ACT Workgroup researched community stakeholders in Allegan County to further understand their perspectives on unmet transit needs in their communities. The workgroup used two research methods in order to complete an analysis on stakeholders, including an online stakeholder survey and six focus groups.

### Online Stakeholder Survey

In order to begin understanding the unmet transit needs in Allegan County, an online survey, created by Disability Network/Lakeshore and Daniel Bergan, PhD, of Michigan State University, was developed and distributed to community members as identified by the ACT Workgroup. The online stakeholder survey determined unmet transportation needs and opportunities in the Allegan community from the perspective of the local stakeholder.

The survey began in November 2008 and continued through January 2009. The community members were selected as those who work with people having unmet transportation needs including, but not limited to, non-profit agencies, employers, faith-based organizations, and units of government.

Completed surveys were compiled through Survey Monkey and downloaded for a complete analysis. Complete data analysis concerning Phase 1 can be found in the Phase 1 Report published in 2009. A copy of the survey is provided in Appendix C.

### Results

Completed by 143 respondents, community members represented included: church or faith-based organizations (32), organizations serving people with disabilities and/or low incomes (26), unit of governments (16), employers (10), educators (10), senior or health care organizations (9), realty / housing providers (4), transportation providers (3), chambers of commerce (3), and tourism/recreation groups (2).

Of the community members who completed the survey, they indicated representing the following populations: clients/consumers (51.8%), individuals with low income (39.7%), individuals with physical disabilities (36.2%), seniors (31.2%), individuals with developmental disabilities (31.2%), members / parishioners (24.1%), employees (20.6%), individuals with severe mental illness (20.6%), taxpayers (19.9%), and students (17.0%).

When asked how they currently meet people's transit needs, stakeholders stated: Volunteers (34.8%), Allegan County Transportation (27.0%), Saugatuck / Douglas Interurban Transit (12.8%), Macatawa Area Express (9.2%), Love In the Name of Christ (2.8%), In-house transit system (7.1%), Taxis (2.8%), and Voucher Program (2.1%).

Just over one-third (36.2%) do not provide or pay for transportation. One-fifth of respondents (22.7%) provide transportation through other venues.

When asked if their organization would be willing to implement programs in order to offer transportation to the people they serve or their employees, one-third (33.6%) of the respondents stated “Yes”, while 15.7% stated “No”.

Stakeholders were asked, “In the past 30 days, how many requests for rides did your organization receive?” Responses included: 1-19 (43.3%), 20-49 (6.0%), 50-79 (3.0%), 80 – 99 (1.5%), and 100 or more (11.9%).

They were also asked, “In past 30 days, how many rides did your organization provide?” Stakeholder responses included: 1-49 (30.4%), 50-149 (7.2%), 150-249 (2.9%), 250 – 349 (1.4%), and 350 or more (8.7%).

When asked if unmet transit needs affected their organization/business, 80% of stakeholders indicated they had been affected in some way by unmet transportation needs, while only 20% stated they had not been affected. Over half (54.2%) indicated an inability to get people services they need, followed by a decreased participation in programs (44.4%), lost revenue (22.5%), decreased productivity (17.6%), decreased pool of potential volunteers (12.7%), decreased pool of potential employees (11.3%), inability to employ people (9.2%), and loss of current employees (4.9%).

When asked where people needed to go but could not reach due to a lack of transportation, work was the destination with the most responses, followed by medical appointments. Other destinations with a number of responses included grocery or retail stores and social service organizations.

Nearly half of respondents (41.5%) noticed seasonal trends when transit needs are greatest. Approximately three-fourths (71.7%) of those respondents indicated that winter is when transit needs are greatest, followed by summer (31.7%).

When stakeholders were asked about their level of support for increasing transportation in Allegan County, most stated they strongly (56.3%) or somewhat support (27.3%) increased transportation services. No (0.0%) respondents stated they somewhat or strongly opposed increased transportation services.

When asked to rank factors according to which would have the greatest impact on improving unmet transportation needs, respondents stated the greatest impact would be through: 1) expanding the geographic area covered, 2) improving services in existing areas, and 3) increasing hours of services.

In the next three years, stakeholders believe the need for a regional transportation system will be very important (56.4%) or somewhat important (35.7%). A small number of stakeholders (1.4%) indicated regional transportation will not be important in the next three years.

Finally, when asked which surrounding county/ies would respondents like to see Allegan connect with in the next three years, stakeholders selected Ottawa County (82.0%), Kalamazoo County (60.2%), Kent County (46.9%), and Van Buren County (36.7%).

Results of the stakeholder online survey provided important insight into the current state of public transportation provided in Allegan County. In addition, these results communicate the perceptions of what people in the county face in terms of unmet transportation needs, how unmet transit needs affect organizations and businesses, and how future transit services could be improved to serve a greater population. After summarizing the online stakeholder survey results, the Allegan County Transportation Workgroup found it essential to elicit a more in-depth discussion of these issues through a series of six focus groups throughout Allegan County.

### Stakeholder Focus Groups

In January 2009, the ACT Workgroup conducted a series of six focus groups with over 45 community members representing organizations and businesses throughout Allegan County, using trained volunteer facilitators from the Transportation Workgroup. The purpose of the focus groups was to gather feedback on the online stakeholder survey results, discuss community perceptions of needs in specific areas of the county, and identify people with unmet transit needs.

In order to illicit responses that were specific to the needs of certain geographies within the County, the focus groups were held in five separate regions throughout the County including Southwest Allegan, Northwest Allegan, Southeast Allegan, Northeast Allegan, and the City of Allegan.

Participants in the focus groups included non-profits, employers, government agencies, faith-based organizations, medical institutions, transit providers, senior care organizations, tourism groups, educational organizations, financial institutions, and an elected official. Each focus group lasted between 60-80 minutes, and consisted of six open-ended questions. All focus groups sessions were tape-recorded for accuracy, however, after a full analysis was completed, the tapings were destroyed for confidentially purposes.

After securing transcripts and detailed notes from all six focus groups, Mr. Steve Faber from the Delta Strategy analyzed and compiled an initial draft summary. Then, Mr. Faber facilitated a work session of the focus group facilitators to further summarize themes, dissimilarities, consistencies and recommendations that surfaced from the geographical groups.

### Results

The results of the survey were consistent with what each focus group identified as needs. Several members commented that it verified what they see as the needs in the area. Some commented that the survey results clearly showed how Allegan County transportation needs are unique in the each region due to being a large rural county and also very reliant on volunteers and churches to meet the current transit needs. Obviously, this volunteer system has certain limitations for meeting the variety of needs in Allegan County. Some of these limitations include a coordinated

communication system, insurance costs and liability for vehicles, seasonal reliability and other variables associated with volunteer resources.

Groups were asked to identify other population groups that they believe to have transit needs. Most groups cited that seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income individuals have the most need for an accessible and affordable transit system. Ex-offenders and people being released from jail were also listed as a population needing transportation services. Single- or no-car working families also experience challenges getting from home to work. Generally, people that live in the more rural areas of the county have fewer options for transit. Individual's experiencing an ongoing medical issue tend to also be more dependent on transit. There are also unique needs for families with young children, school of choice students, and alternative education students. There was some recognition that the general population has an unmet transit need, but may not know it. In order for that to happen, people will need to see transit as less of a social service and more as a reliable and quality service that they want to use.

Groups were asked to identify any impact that transit has on their organizations or businesses. Those groups offering a service to more vulnerable populations are affected by people not being able to make it to their location to receive quality services. Those groups helping with employment issues know that clients depending on ACT or volunteers for transportation are going to experience a barrier for gaining employment or staying employed. Those agencies offering medical services see that transportation can be a life and death issue if people are unable to keep appointments or get medical attention. People become isolated without transit options; this makes everyone's jobs more difficult. Additionally, there are costs associated with offering transportation services, and picking up or dropping off people in more remote areas of the county costs more money and takes more volunteer time. Senior services are very affected by transit services.

Groups were asked to describe their support for increased transit services. There was support for increased transit services. There was encouragement to look at other counties with a similar urban/rural or demographic make-up to Allegan County to see what options exist. There needs to be communication with legislators and increased awareness for citizens as to the options for increasing transit. People had a difficult time describing a preferred system of transit and specifically what it should look like for the county.

## Conclusions

The results of the stakeholder analysis provide valuable insight as the Allegan County Transportation Workgroup moves forward in developing a five-year community supported strategic plan for Allegan County Transportation. Overall, the perceptions of stakeholders in Allegan County agree that there is a large unmet transit need, especially when needing to travel to work, medical appointments, and shopping / grocery.

In not only understanding how unmet transit needs affect the stakeholders' service population, it was also important to understand how transit needs affect their organization or business. Stakeholders cited a decrease in participation in the

programs offered and an inability to get people the services they need as being the top two ways their organization or business is affected. Furthermore, stakeholders noted that a loss in revenue was seen as a result of unmet transit needs. Volunteers were ranked number one in how organizations or businesses try to meet the transit needs of their service population. Finally, when reviewing transit needs in terms of seasonality, stakeholders stated that transit needs were the greatest in the winter months. However, both Northwest and Southwest Allegan stakeholders mentioned that summer months were a time of great transit needs because of the boost in tourism in the Lakeshore area.

Many stakeholders agree there are several improvements that could be made to ACT in order to serve more residents. Most cited expanding geographical area covered and improving the existing services within the county. In addition to meeting the transit needs of residents within Allegan County, stakeholders noted that implementing regional transportation services is very or somewhat important, especially in connecting with Ottawa County.

Lastly, as the Allegan County Transportation Workgroup moves forward in increasing awareness of and support for ACT, stakeholders stated that they would strongly or somewhat support increased transportation services in Allegan County. In terms of marketing ACT services to the broader Allegan community, stakeholders stated that more detailed service materials were needed in order to inform residents of the services they currently, or will, provide.

Overall, the information the ACT Workgroup received through Phase 1 of this study provided a solid foundation in moving into phase two: understanding individual unmet transit needs through individual residential research methods.

# PHASE 2:

## Filling Up the Tank

### Current Rider Survey

In February 2009, Disability Network/Lakeshore, Bergan Consulting, Creative Inquiry, LLC and the ACT Workgroup created and developed this survey in order to understand the transportation needs of the current riders of ACT.

The survey was distributed by mail to a diverse population of current riders as recorded in ACT's database. The mailer included the current rider survey, a pre-addressed stamped envelope and an opportunity for respondents to participate in a drawing for 1 of 5 \$25 American Express gift cards. The survey was mailed in early February and collected in March 2009. A copy of the survey is provided in Appendix E.

Completed surveys (246) were compiled through Survey Monkey and downloaded for a complete analysis. A complete analysis of the current rider survey is available in the Phase 2 & 3 Report published in 2009.

### Results

Over one-third of respondents stated that ACT was their primary mode of transportation. Another one-third of respondents stated friends, family and neighbors were their primary mode of transportation. When respondents were asked, "When not using their primary mode of transportation, what was their second mode of transportation," most respondents stated family, friends and neighbors or ACT.

Almost half of respondents stated medical trips as their traveling destination but were unable to get there because of a lack in transportation. Second was destinations related to shopping and groceries. About one-fifth of respondents stated work/employment and visiting family, friends and neighbors as a needed travel destination. Traveling to court/jail and school were among the lowest two destinations with a lack of transportation.

A large percentage of respondents stated that a lack of transportation had not prevented them for looking for, getting, or keeping a job. Over 50 respondents stated that they had been prevented from looking for, getting, or keeping a job because of a lack in transportation. Ten percent of respondents were unsure if a lack in transportation had affected their job opportunities.

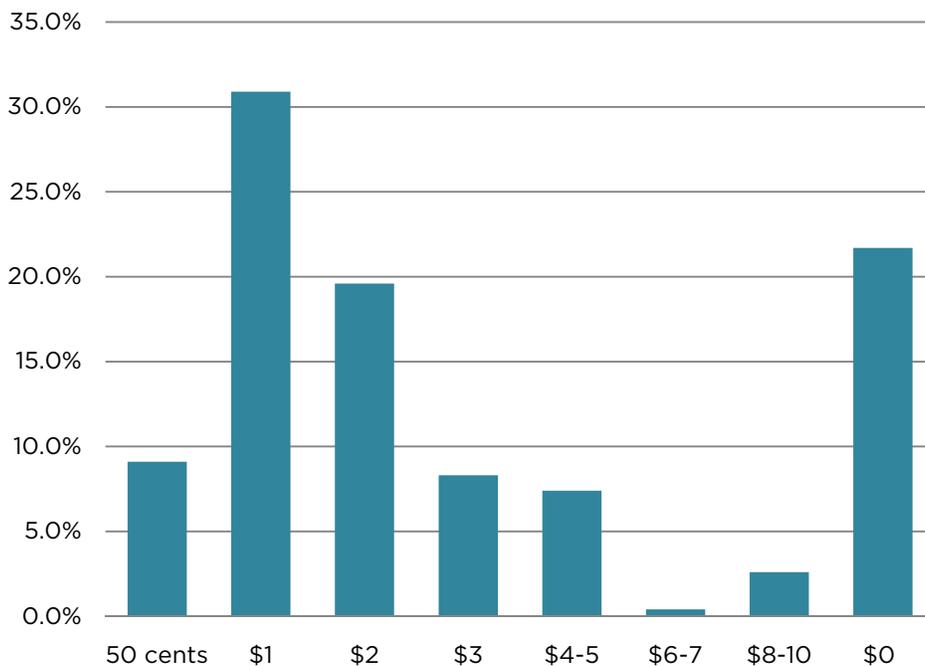
Roughly half of respondents stated the need to travel to another county/counties in West Michigan. The other half of respondents stated they did not need to travel outside of the County. Only 2.5% were unsure whether they needed to travel outside of the county.

With half of respondents stating a need to travel outside of the County, it is useful to know which county/ties respondents wanted transportation to. Respondents were able to choose from the four surrounding counties including Kalamazoo, Kent, Ottawa and Van Buren. Kalamazoo, Kent and Ottawa counties had over forty percent of respondents stating they needed to travel to that county. Van Buren received the lowest percentage of need.

Sixty-five percent of respondents stated they see the need for regional transportation in West Michigan increasing within the next three years. Nineteen percent of respondents stated they did not see the need for regional transportation increasing and 16.0% were unsure whether they would see an increase for regional transportation. The correlation between the current need to travel outside of Allegan County and the need for regional transportation increasing over the next 3 years demonstrates that Allegan continues to grow outside of a central location as many needs are located outside of Allegan County.

Over one-third of respondents stated that an affordable cost for one, one-way ride would be equal to \$1. Second, respondents stated that they had no money to pay for transportation. Roughly one-fifth of respondents stated that \$2 would be considered affordable. Only a few respondents saw \$3 or above as affordable cost for one, one-way ride. Thus, most respondents are only willing to pay between \$1 and \$2 for transportation, or nothing at all.

**Figure 1. Percentage of respondents by affordable cost for one, one-way ride**



Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with ACT services in order to gain a better understanding of how ACT services are perceived in the community. Over half of respondents stated they were completely satisfied or satisfied with ACT services.

Respondents were asked to rank the top three (3) solutions that would best meet their transportation needs. Public transportation that goes to the places I need to go and runs on the days and times I need was seen as the greatest solution to meeting transit needs in Allegan County. Second, was gas money. The third top solution to meeting transit needs was money for bus passes, taxi rides, etc.

### Prospective Rider Survey

In March 2009, Disability Network/Lakeshore, Bergan Consulting, Creative Inquiry, LLC and the ACT Workgroup created and developed this survey in order to understand the transportation needs of the prospective riders of ACT.

The survey was distributed to agencies, businesses, and organizations throughout Allegan County who may have had clients, members, employees who would potential use ACT's services. Distribution of the survey began in March and ran through May 2009, with all responses being collected by the end of May. A copy of the survey is provided in Appendix F.

Completed surveys (493) were compiled through Survey Monkey and downloaded for a complete analysis. A complete analysis of the prospective rider survey can be found in the Phase 2 & 3 report published in 2009.

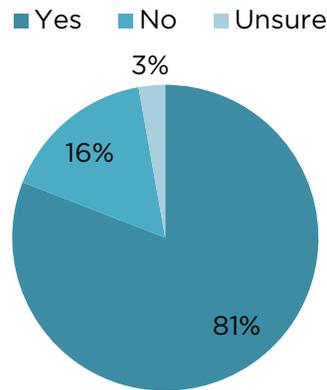
### Results

Almost three-fourths of respondents stated the personal automobile as their primary mode of transportation. Thirteen percent of respondents stated friends, family and neighbors were their primary mode of transportation. ACT ranked fairly low as a primary mode of transportation by prospective riders.

When respondents were asked, "When not using their primary mode of transportation, what was their second mode of transportation," most respondents stated family, friends and neighbors. Second was their personal automobile.

Over three-fourths of prospective transit riders had heard of ACT, while only 16.3% stated they had not.

**Figure 2. Percent of respondents who have heard of ACT**



Prospective riders indicated they did not currently use ACT services because of inconvenient hours (11.1%), inconvenient routes (10.0%), and it does not provide service in my area (8.6%). However, many (66.5%, 294 respondents) prospective riders indicated there was no need to utilize ACT service at this time.

A large percentage (79.5%, 380 respondents) of respondents stated that a lack of transportation had not prevented them for looking for, getting, or keeping a job. Roughly 80 respondents (17.4%) stated that they had been prevented from looking for, getting, or keeping a job because of a lack in transportation. Lastly, 3.1% (15 respondents) of respondents were unsure if a lack in transportation had affected their job opportunities.

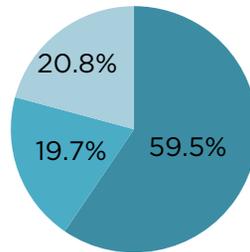
Roughly three-fourths (71.6%, 338 respondents) of prospective riders stated that seasonal weather does not affect their transportation needs. While a quarter (24.4%, 115 respondents) stated that the weather did affect their transportation needs. Four percent were “unsure”.

Over half (56.6%, 261 respondents) of respondents stated the need to travel to another county/counties in West Michigan. The other half (40.8%, 188 respondents) of respondents stated that they did not need to travel outside of the county. Only 2.6% (12 respondents) were unsure whether they needed to travel outside of the county.

Sixty percent (272 respondents) of respondents stated they see the need for regional transportation in West Michigan increasing within the next three years. Nineteen percent (90 respondents) of respondents stated they did not see the need for regional transportation increasing and 20.8% (95 respondents) were unsure whether they would see an increase for regional transportation. The correlation between the current need to travel outside of Allegan County and the need for regional transportation increasing over the next 3 years demonstrates that Allegan continues to grow outside of a central location as many needs are located outside of Allegan County.

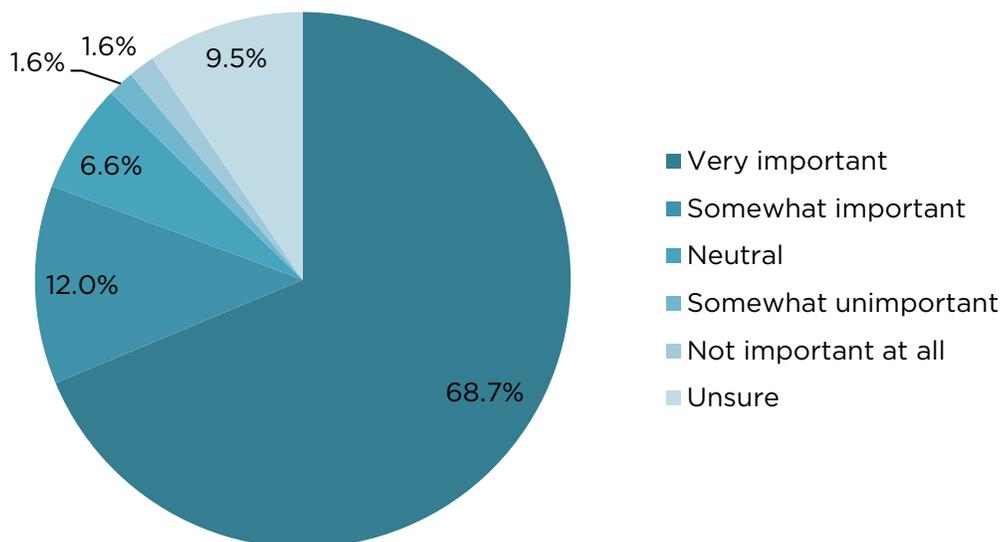
**Figure 3. Percent of respondents who see the need for regional transportation in West Michigan increasing within the next three (3) years**

■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure



Respondents were asked how important ACT’s services are to the Allegan County. Over half (68.7%, 303 respondents) of respondents stated that ACT’s services are very important to Allegan County. Twelve percent (53 respondents) stated that their services were somewhat important. The remaining respondents were either neutral (6.6%, 29 respondents), somewhat unimportant (1.6%, 7 respondents), not important at all (1.6%, 7 respondents) or unsure (9.5%, 42 respondents).

**Figure 4. Percent of respondents by importance of ACT services to the community**



In order to find out which method of communication is most preferred by current riders, respondents were asked to select the best option for the way in which ACT could educate the community on the public transit options available. Overwhelming,

respondents choose mailings (54.5%, 120 respondents). The second type of communication preferred was the newspaper (20.9%, 46 respondents), followed by flyers (18.6%, 41 respondents), a phone call (15.0%, 33 respondents), the radio (7.3%, 16 respondents), email (5.9%, 13 respondents), a website (4.5%, 10 respondents), billboards (4.5%, 10 respondents), and a church bulletin (3.2%, 7 respondents).

### **One-on-One Interviews**

The ACT Workgroup conducted fifteen, 30 minute interviews during February and March 2009. The one-on-one interviews consisted of individuals with unmet transportation needs who have used Allegan County Transportation in the past as a transit provider. The purpose of the interviews was to determine the extent of people's transit needs and possible solutions for meeting those needs.

After the workgroup members completed the interviews, the responses were analyzed and collectively compiled for results. Individualized open-ended responses for each interviewee can be found in the Phase 2 and 3 Report.

# PHASE 3:

## Starting the Engine

### Development of Five-Year Plan

After completing Phase 1 and 2, the Workgroup detailed critical issues facing ACT, developed strategies to study these issues, created goals and recommendations to improve each area of concern, and provided a rationale for these recommendations. A copy of the ACT Five Year Strategic Plan can be found in Appendix G. The Workgroup relied on six primary studies to base its recommendations:

1. Survey and focus groups with Allegan County stakeholders, including but not limited to businesses, elected officials, nonprofit and governmental organizations, service clubs, faith based organizations, and schools, about transportation needs in Allegan County (ACT Stakeholder Survey 2008).
2. Analysis of current ACT operations, outlining the current services provided by ACT, as well as areas and suggestions for improvement (2009).
3. Survey of current ACT passengers to examine their transportation needs and usage of ACT (Current Rider Survey 2009).
4. Study of prospective ACT passengers to examine their transportation needs and reasons for not using ACT (Prospective Rider Survey 2009).
5. Input sessions to generate feedback from community members and stakeholders regarding the improvements and changes to ACT detailed in the five-year plan (2009).
6. Survey of Allegan County residents to identify their support for Allegan County Transportation and the changes recommended in the five-year plan (Allegan Taxpayer Survey 2009).
7. Use GIS data software to plot 2000-2008 US Census data including senior populations, people with disabilities, income levels, housing units and vehicles per household.

The recommendations of the Workgroup included:

- + Provide a Reserve-A-Ride transportation system to the general public in Allegan County.
- + Implement community service areas that allocate transportation service to each of the five regions in Allegan County.
- + Connect ACT with public transportation systems in the surrounding counties of Kalamazoo, Ottawa, Kent, and Van Buren.
- + Maintain the current fare structure of \$2 per trip for general public transportation and \$1 per trip for seniors, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) passengers, and children.
- + Provide transportation services Monday through Friday from 5:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., with limited employment related service from 9 p.m. to 11 p.m.

- + Provide Saturday and Sunday service on a limited basis up to 115 hours per weekend.
- + Maintain a user-friendly ACT website with current information on service, fares, updates, and contact information.
- + Create an ACT annual report with year-end updates, successes and trends to share with riders and stakeholders.
- + Work with the local press outlets to secure earned media on ACT updates and trends.
- + Maintain ongoing dialogue with ACT customer and stakeholders to gather feedback on whether the system meets their needs and research requests for service enhancements as appropriate.
- + Seek funding to support implementation of the improvements outlined in the plan.

Five transportation options were designed to beginning meeting the recommendations listed:

1. Option A: Maintain Current ACT System.
2. Option B: Dedicate transportation to connect Allegan City with Wayland/Hopkins and the Interurban in Saugatuck/Douglas, and provide transportation to Casco Township.
3. Option C: Dedicate an additional 56,617 rides for public transportation service by creating a county-wide zone transit system in Allegan County.
4. Option D: Dedicate an additional 88,614 rides for public transportation service by creating a county-wide zone transit system in Allegan County.
5. Option E: Dedicate an additional 130,123 rides for public transportation service by creating a county-wide zone transit system in Allegan County. Provide limited demand response service in high density areas.

### Community Input Sessions

From September to November 2009, the Allegan County Transportation Workgroup community input sessions throughout Allegan County to test support for the five proposed transportation options.

Over 10 organizations sponsored the community input sessions throughout Allegan County. The general public was invited to attend all of the above sessions. The sessions were promoted with flyers and with press releases in both the Holland Sentinel and Allegan County News.

A PowerPoint presentation was design to showcase the results of Phase 1 and Phase 2, as well as the educate attendees on the proposed transportation options for the five-year strategic plan.

### Results

Ten community input sessions were held with over 85 attendees. Overwhelming, the community supported proposed Option E, followed by Option D, and then Option C. There was little support for Option A or B. Full responses by community members can be found in the Phase 2 & 3 report published in 2009.

Options E, D, and C converted the current ACT service area into a community zoned system in which ACT became a true county-wide system by having the potential to serve all residents within Allegan County. This was very appealing to community members. Individuals also supported increasing service hours from 5:00pm to 9:00pm to provide for more employment related trips.

Individuals felt the fare structure at its current rates were suitable and ACT should continue to provide services at those rates. Individuals also discussed their potential support for a county-wide transportation millage.

Overall, attendees are very supportive of the proposed transportation options and were excited about the changes potentially coming to the county.

# PHASE 4:

## Picking up the Passengers

### Community Survey

In December 2009, 600 phone surveys (copy of survey found in Appendix H) were conducted with residents in Allegan County to determine awareness of and feelings toward Allegan County Transportation, support for the Five-Year Transportation Plan, and effective messages that could be used to promote public transit in Allegan County. Respondents resided throughout Allegan County; each unit of government was represented in the study. Respondents were selected through random-digit dialing, which accounts for the differential sample sizes.

Most respondents were females (66%) with an annual household income between \$25,000 and \$50,000 (27%). Most respondents were over the age of 50; 36% were 50 to 65 years old and 35% were over 65. A majority of respondents (77%) neither knew someone with nor had unmet transportation needs themselves in the past year. However, 55% of respondents correctly identified ACT as the public transportation provider in Allegan County.

The majority of respondents (57%) did not know how to rate the current service provided by Allegan County Transportation. It was also the case that many respondents (49%) did not know how to rate the job Allegan County Transportation does in meeting the transportation needs of the community with the resources available. Likely, this is due to the fact that many respondents did not have unmet transportation needs, and did not have personal experience with the service. However, among those who provided a response about ACT service, 21% rated current services as good or very good, and 29% rated the service as good or very good when considering the resources available. Overwhelmingly, 90% of respondents believe transit services offered by ACT are very or somewhat important to the community.

Respondents were most likely to agree with considerations that focused on transportation helping people with disabilities and the unemployed, and being a good way to deal with rising gas prices. Also, people were most supportive of the Five-Year Plan when they knew people would be transported to dialysis, although all three Five-Year Plan elements received support.

Overall, the findings suggest respondents are supportive of public transportation and are willing to provide financial support through a millage for increased public transportation services in Allegan County. Over two-thirds (78%) of respondents indicated they were either very or somewhat likely to support a transportation millage in Allegan County. While the greatest support was for a millage of \$9 per year, millages of \$18 and \$24 per year also received much support, especially when the millage amount was framed in terms of a good of equivalent value and not broken down to a weekly amount. Additional support was demonstrated by the 59%

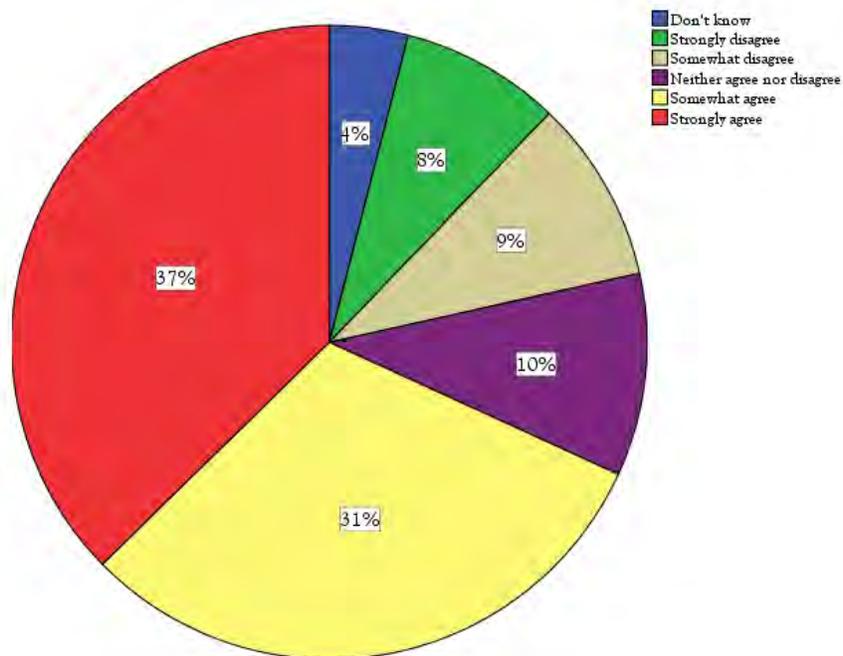
of respondents (354 people) who added their names to a list of public transportation supporters in Allegan County to be shared with local elected officials.

Messages that focused on positive public transportation experiences and transit opportunities elicited more support for expanding transit than negatively framed messages that focused on solving transit problems. Also, respondents were significantly more supportive of the Five-Year Plan when they knew it was developed by community leaders compared to citizens just like them.

### Results

Respondents were randomly assigned to a positive priming message, a negative priming message or no priming message about transportation in Allegan County. After the message was read the respondent was asked: "Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement: I am supportive of expanding public transportation in Allegan County."

Figure 5. Support for expanding public transportation



Respondents rated the current services of Allegan County Transportation as very good (5%), good (16%), fair (10%), poor (6%), and very poor (6%). A large majority of respondents (57%) did not know or refused to answer this question.

Excluding those respondents who did not provide an answer provides a better picture of the service ratings for ACT. Among those respondents who answered this question, the current services of Allegan County Transportation were rated as very good (12%), good (36%), fair (24%), poor (13%), and very poor (15%). Of those who

could rate ACT's service, 48% provided ratings of good or very good, 24% indicated average service, and 28% indicated poor or very poor service.

Respondents rated the job Allegan County Transportation does in meeting the transportation needs of the community with the resources available as very good (6%), good (23%), fair (12%), poor (5%), and very poor (5%). A large number of respondents (49%) did not know or refused to answer this question.

Half of respondents (50%) said the transportation services offered by Allegan County Transportation are very important to the community, 40% said they were somewhat important to the community, and 5% said they were not important to the community. There were 5% of respondents who were either undecided or refused to answer the question.

Eight considerations were provided to respondents. These statements focused on social justice, economic development, transportation service and environmental considerations. The statements were randomized for each respondent to prevent order effects.

Respondents were more likely to agree with considerations about public transportation that focused on social justice benefits or affordability. The statements that most respondents agreed with were that it helps people with disabilities get to their jobs, it increases the ability to get employment and training opportunities for the unemployed and underemployed, and it provides an affordable solution to rising gas prices.

For question ten, each respondent was asked each of the following, do you think you would be more likely to less likely to support Allegan County Transportation (ACT) if:

- + transportation service hours were dedicated evenly throughout Allegan County
- + seniors could get to meal sites in many locations
- + people could get to Freisnuf Medical Center, the only dialysis clinic in Allegan County

All three of the Five-Year Plan considerations generated increased likelihood of support. The consideration with the most support was getting people to the dialysis clinic (92%), followed by helping seniors travel to meal sites (88%), and dedicating service hours equally throughout the county (70%). Focusing on specific populations and needs seems to generate the most support, especially when the travel need is related to preserving the health and well being of community members.

**Table 1. Five-Year Plan considerations by likelihood of support**

Five-Year Plan Considerations	Likelihood of Support		
	More likely	Less likely	Don't know
transportation service hours were dedicated evenly throughout Allegan County	70% (418)	15% (90)	15% (92)
seniors could get to meal sites in many locations	88% (527)	7% (41)	5% (32)
people could get to Freisnuf Medical Center, the only dialysis clinic in Allegan County	92% (552)	4% (24)	4% (24)

N = 600

Each respondent was asked, did you know that if Allegan County Transportation (ACT) does not have local funding, the following will happen:

- + Many seniors and persons with disabilities will be unable to get around
- + ACT will not be able to meet the transportation needs of many Allegan County residents
- + ACT will lose the opportunity to bring in state and federal dollars into Allegan County

Most respondents were not aware that any of these things could occur if ACT does not have local funding. The greatest percent of respondents were most unaware of ACT losing the opportunity to bring in state or federal funding into the county (69%). A majority of respondents did not know that ACT would not be able to meet the needs of many Allegan County residents (58%), and many seniors and persons with disabilities would be unable to get around (56%). Thus, these would be important considerations to highlight in a marketing campaign.

**Table 2. Five-Year Plan considerations by knowledge**

Five-Year Plan Considerations	Knowledge		
	Yes	No	Refused
Many seniors and persons with disabilities will be unable to get around	43% (260)	56% (335)	1% (5)
ACT will not be able to meet the transportation needs of many Allegan County residents	41% (245)	58% (345)	2% (10)
ACT will lose the opportunity to bring in state and federal dollars into Allegan County	29% (175)	69% (411)	2% (14)

N = 600

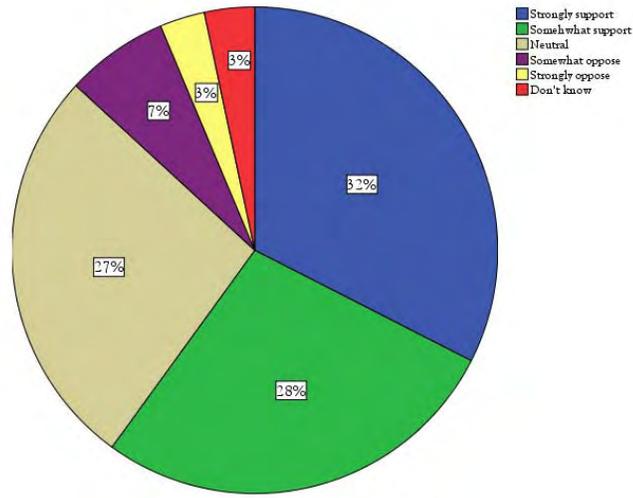
Respondents were asked, using a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being strongly oppose and 5 being strongly support, please tell me what number best indicates your attitude toward the Allegan County Transportation Five-Year Plan.

Before this question was asked, respondents were read the following statement: Allegan County Transportation has developed a five-year plan to improve transportation services for residents of Allegan County. It calls for dedicating service hours throughout Allegan County, providing rides to the senior meal site, and offering rides to the only dialysis clinic in the County.

Then, respondents were randomly assigned to one of five message frames: people like you participated in developing the plan, community leaders participated in developing the plan, 1,000 people like you participated in developing the plan, 200 community leaders participated in developing the plan, or no message. After the message was read the respondent was asked: "Using a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being strongly oppose and 5 being strongly support, please tell me what number best indicates your attitude toward the Allegan County Transportation Five-Year Plan."

Regardless of the message condition, a majority of respondents (60%) of respondents either strongly or somewhat supported the five-year plan. Over one quarter of respondents (27%) were neutral, and 10% did not support the plan. Only 3% of respondents did not know. Figure 2 displays these findings.

Figure 6. Support for the ACT Five-Year Plan



Messages that stated community leaders participated in the development of the plan resulted in the greatest support for the five-year plan. The no message condition resulted in the next greatest support for the five-year plan, followed by the people like you message condition.

These findings suggest that five-year plan marketing should focus on community leader involvement in plan development. Also, specific numbers of community leader participants should not be used as this added feature significantly decreased support for the plan. However, the no message condition was as effective, statistically, as the community leader message. Thus, when developing a marketing plan, one might consider not adding any details about how the plan was developed and focus on the components of the plan itself.

Respondents were asked, using a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree, please tell me how much you agree with the following statements:

- + I don't think public officials in Allegan County care much about what people like me think
- + In general, people like me have an influence in local politics in Allegan County
- + Generally speaking, the opinions of people like me are important to Allegan County public officials

This question was used to create a scale to measure whether different messages altered perceptions of process efficacy, one's ability to influence policy. The scale's reliability was assessed. One item was removed from the scale as it proved to be a poor indicator. This item was "I don't think public officials in Allegan County care much about what people like me think." This item was measured on its own as a separate indicator and recoded. The other two items were averaged and had a

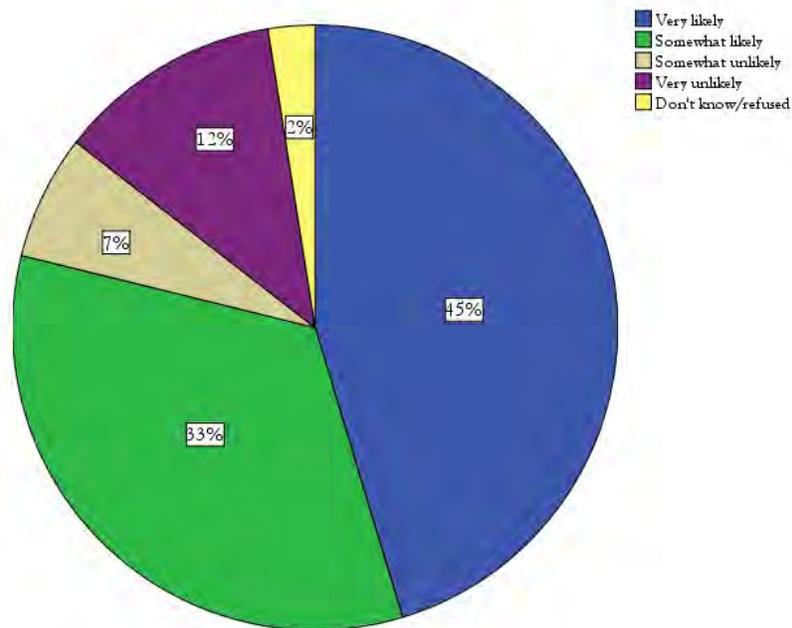
reliability coefficient of .70. Higher mean scores on items indicate more agreement with the statement.

Results indicate that there was not a significant difference in process efficacy or in feelings that Allegan County officials care what people “like me” think among different message conditions. All conditions indicate that respondents have an average sense of process efficacy and an average sense that officials care what they think; no messages significantly increased these outcomes.

The 600 respondents surveyed were randomly assigned to one of 12 message frames about the potential cost of a public transportation millage, and then they were asked about their support.

Overall, respondents were supportive of a millage for public transportation. Forty-five percent of respondents were very likely to support a transportation millage, 33.5% were somewhat likely to support a millage, 7% were somewhat unlikely, and 12% were very unlikely. Only 2.5% of respondents were unsure or did not provide an answer. These findings are detailed in Figure 3.

**Figure 7. Likelihood of support for a transportation millage**



Messages linked to a specific millage amount were pooled together. For example, support for millage amounts framed as \$9 per year, one piece of bubble gum per week, and four 2-liters of pop per year were averaged together. This process was repeated for the other two millage amounts. Then, these averages were analyzed to determine whether certain millage amounts were statistically different from the others.

Analyses of potential millage costs demonstrated that a millage of \$9 per year received the highest support, followed by a millage of \$18 per year and a millage of \$24 per year. Comparison of these mean scores demonstrated a statistically significant difference between \$9 per year and both \$18 and \$24 per year. Also, there was a statistically significant difference between \$18 and \$24 per year. This means that support is higher for a \$9 per year millage compared to an \$18 or \$24 per year millage. Support is higher for an \$18 per year millage compared to one that is \$24 per year.

However, these results do not mean that respondents did not support a potential millage costing \$24 per year. The lowest support for a millage of \$24 per year occurred when the millage was framed as 46 cents per week. When this same cost was framed as four dinners at a fast food restaurant like McDonalds per year, support increased by a marginally significant amount. This message, equating to a total cost of \$24 per year, was not significantly different from any of the \$18 millage messages. Thus, depending on the message chosen to promote a millage, a \$24 per year millage may receive as much support as an \$18 per year millage.

It is also important to note that the messages framed as weekly amounts generated less support in each respective amount category. It is possible that due to innumeracy, people are either unable to accurately translate the weekly cost into a total amount in their heads or feel like a weekly frame could be an attempt at deception. In either case, the results of this study caution against promoting a potential millage in weekly amounts, and finds that framing a millage in terms of an item/s per year appears to be a more effective strategy for gaining support.

# CONCLUSION

## Driving Forward Together

The framework presented in this final report provides a foundation for any organization or transit agency to replicate an unmet needs study, including increasing awareness of and support for a rural transportation system. In addition, this study developed a community supported five-year strategic plan for ACTas to effectively and efficiently begin meeting the transit needs of residents in Allegan County - which can be replicated to other rural transit agencies.

Additionally, a framework for educational transportation materials for a rural transportation agency has been designed based on messaging that creates the highest support for public transportation. Using this messaging research will give organizations and transit agencies the opportunity to best communicate to different populations using the messaging that best ensure public support.

As the results will demonstrate, the findings indicate that transportation affects a whole community, not just individuals who need rides. Bringing people together to research and solve community issues can be an effective way to create change. The art of making this process successful is in maintaining harmony and balance between (1) giving people the tools, structure, and support they need to move forward, and (2) giving people authority and power to study and shape their future. When that balance is attained, essential community services such as transportation can be designed to meet community needs, elicit taxpayer and community support, and stimulate creativity and enthusiasm from providers - transforming ideas into reality.

# APPENDIX

# APPENDIX A: Volunteer Description and Agreement

## TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH TEAM MEMBER DESCRIPTION + AGREEMENT

### Description

Position: Transportation Research Team Member

Timeframe: September 2008 - December 2011

Time Commitment: approx. 5 hours per month  
(includes: 1 monthly meeting at 2 hours, plus 3 hours of research or marketing work)

### Goals:

- ★ increase awareness of and support for Allegan County Transportation.
- ★ develop a community supported five-year strategic plan for Allegan County Transportation

### Activities and Responsibilities:

- ★ Work with the Transportation Research Team to develop and implement research processes, survey tools, and interview questions and analyze results
- ★ Develop and test messages about the impact lack of transportation has on people and their networks; analyze results
- ★ Create communication strategies and tools to communicate transportation needs and issues to various stakeholders
- ★ Design, secure and participate in earned media activities and presentations to groups as appropriate

### Required Skills and Abilities:

- ★ Excellent follow-through
- ★ Ability to think big picture and “outside-the-box”
- ★ Excellent communication skills, including superior listening skills
- ★ Established or ability to establish positive relationships with community members, organizations, and groups
- ★ Willingness to work as part of a team
- ★ Commitment to excellence

### Agreement

I have read and understand the activities and responsibilities of action team members. I am willing to commit at least 5 hours per month from September 2008 until December 2011 of my time, energy, and creativity to making this project a success.

---

Signature

Date

**Please attach your business card or contact information to the completed form.**

**Completed volunteer agreements are due before August 29, 2008 to:**

*Disability Network/Lakeshore, 426 Century Lane, MI 49426*

Please note: Our first group meeting will be held on **DATE at TIME, LOCATION**

In an effort to ensure that your participation in this project is a mutually positive and beneficial experience, please take a few minutes to answer the following questions:

What skills and abilities do you possess that you feel are most helpful to groups in which you participate? In other words, what are your strengths when it comes to working within a group? What do you enjoy doing?

What activities or tasks, if any, do you dislike or feel uncomfortable doing?

How do you hope participation in this project will be beneficial to you?

What else would you like to share about yourself or your expectations for this project?

What is the month and day of your birthday? \_\_\_\_\_  
Month Day

*[Contact Information of Project Coordinator]*

**THANK YOU!**

# APPENDIX B: Project Outline

**TITLE:** A Vehicle for Change: Developing a five year plan and creating techniques to market countywide rural transportation

**GRANT:** A Service Development and New Technology (SDNT) Grant from Michigan Department of Transportation

**STUDY AREA:** Allegan County, MI

**TIMEFRAME:** September 2008 – December 2011

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND GOALS:** This community change study seeks to increase awareness of and support for Allegan County Transportation. In addition, this study will develop a community supported five-year strategic plan for Allegan County Transportation as to effectively and efficiently begin meeting the transit needs of residents in Allegan County. This study is being conducted in Allegan County, Michigan.

## **Phase 1: Stakeholder Analysis (September 2008 – January 2009)**

1. Conduct online surveys with community stakeholder organizations, businesses, and elected bodies to determine unmet transportation needs and opportunities in the Allegan community from the perspective of the local stakeholder.
2. Hold focus groups with local stakeholders to gather feedback on online surveys, discuss their perceptions of needs in their areas, and identify people with unmet transit needs for one-on-one interviews.

## **Phase 2: Unmet Transportation Need Analysis (February 2009 – April 2009)**

1. An on board passenger survey will be conducted to determine rider demographics, travel patterns, unmet needs, and satisfaction with current transit service with current Allegan County Transportation and Saugatuck/Douglas Interurban Transit Authority riders.
2. A prospective rider survey will be conducted with potential riders through one-to-one intercept surveys to determine their reasons for not using the services, changes to the service that would increase their likelihood of using public transit, and their perceptions and awareness of Allegan County Transportation services.
3. Key informant interviews will be held with stakeholders and people with transportation needs through one-on-one conversations to better understand the quantitative data previously collected, acquire quotes and stories, and build relationships with key informants.

## **Phase 3: Community Perspectives (May 2009 – October 2009)**

1. Data gathered will be used to develop a draft five-year strategic plan for Allegan County Transportation to effectively and efficiently begin meeting the transit needs of residents in Allegan County.
2. Several community input sessions will be held throughout Allegan County to gather stakeholder feedback and input on the draft five-year strategic plan. Locations and times for input sessions will be thoughtfully considered to ensure maximum participation of multiple and diverse community residents and stakeholders. Staff and elected officials from Allegan County townships and cities will be invited to attend. One input session will be held with Allegan County Commissioners.

3. Considering all feedback given during the community input sessions, the five-year strategic plan will be modified to create a community supported plan.

**Phase 4: Taxpayer Analysis (November 2009 – December 2009)**

A telephone survey will be administered to registered voters in Allegan County to determine their awareness and perceptions of Allegan County Transportation services. In addition, services and potential millage rates will be tested for support.

**Post-Project (January 2010– December 2011)**

The results of all the feedback and data collected will be used to modify the community supported five-year strategic plan. The five-year strategic plan will be presented to the Allegan County Board of Commissioners for approval. After approval of the final plan, ACT will conduct an educational marketing process to educate residents and citizens on ACT services in a rural county.

## APPENDIX B: Project Timeline

	Activity	Month	Goals
<b>2008</b>			
Pre-Project			
	Recruit action team + solicit feedback on process	June - August	12-15 members secured
Phase 1: A Stakeholder Analysis			
	Online survey	October - December	143 surveys completed
	Focus groups	November - January	6 focus groups held
	Create Phase 1 Final Report	January	1 report completed
<b>2009</b>			
Phase 2: An Individual Analysis			
	One-to-one interviews of people with transit needs	February / March	14 interviews completed
	Current rider survey	February - April	241 surveys completed
	Prospective rider survey	February - April	463 surveys completed
	Create Phase 2 Final Report	October	1 report completed
Phase 3: A Community Analysis			
	Develop draft strategic plan	May - July	1 draft plan created
	Hold community input sessions	September / October	9 sessions held
Phase 4: A Taxpayer Analysis			
	Modify ACT Plan	October	
	Taxpayer survey	November	600 surveys
	Create Phase 3 + 4 Final Report	January	1 report completed
<b>2010</b>			
Phase 5: Post Research			
	Present Plan to commissioners for feedback	January	
	Modify and finalize plan	December - March	1 plan modified and finalized
	Seek commissioner approval	April	1-2 commissioner meetings
Phase 6: Educational DVD			
	DVD Design, Concept, Shooting and finalization	May - July	1 educational DVD
<b>2011</b>			
Phase 7: Marketing Plan			
	Develop and distribute marketing materials	August 2010 - May 2011	TBD

# APPENDIX C: Online Stakeholder Survey

1.

Welcome to the Allegan Stakeholder Survey!

As you know, a research project is underway in Allegan County to identify unmet transportation needs and develop a five year strategic plan for Allegan County Transportation. As a stakeholder, you intimately know of local transportation needs, and your input will be invaluable throughout this project.

The information you provide in this survey will be compiled and analyzed by Dr. Daniel Bergan of Michigan State University. The results of this study will also assist the Allegan County United Way in their community assessment project. Finally, your results will be used by Allegan County Transportation to develop a strategic plan for improvements to the public transit system. Therefore, your responses will be used to evaluate and understand local countywide transportation issues so solutions can be sought.

2.

The following survey contains 20 questions about transportation needs. It should take about 10 minutes to complete. Participation is completely voluntary. All individual responses will be kept anonymous.

3.

\* 1. In order to ensure only one response is given per organization, please fill out the information below. Neither the name of the respondent nor the organization will be attached to any specific responses you give in the survey.

Name of organization	<input type="text"/>
Address of organization	<input type="text"/>
Name of respondent	<input type="text"/>
Work phone	<input type="text"/>
Email	<input type="text"/>

## 2. Please indicate what type your organization is:

- Chamber of Commerce
- Church or faith based
- Court of rehabilitation related
- Education
- Employer
- Environmental
- Organization serving people with disabilities or low incomes
- Realty/Housing
- Senior or health care
- Tourism or recreation related
- Transportation Provider
- Unit of Government

Other (please specify)

## 3. My organization is completing this survey to represent the transit needs of \_\_\_\_\_ . (Please select all that apply.)

- Students
- Employees
- Clients/Consumers
- Members/Parishioners
- Taxpayers
- Seniors
- Individuals with low incomes
- Individuals with severe mental illness
- Individuals with developmental disabilities
- Individuals with physical disabilities
- Other (please specify)

4. What municipalities in Allegan County does your organization serve?  
(Please select all that apply.)

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Allegan City       | <input type="checkbox"/> Holland City      | <input type="checkbox"/> Plainwell City      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Allegan Township   | <input type="checkbox"/> Hopkins Township  | <input type="checkbox"/> Salem Township      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Casco Township     | <input type="checkbox"/> Laketown Township | <input type="checkbox"/> Saugatuck Township  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cheshire Township  | <input type="checkbox"/> Lee Township      | <input type="checkbox"/> Saugatuck City      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clyde Township     | <input type="checkbox"/> Leighton Township | <input type="checkbox"/> Trowbridge Township |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dorr Township      | <input type="checkbox"/> Manlios Township  | <input type="checkbox"/> Valley Township     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Douglas City       | <input type="checkbox"/> Martin City       | <input type="checkbox"/> Watson Township     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fennville City     | <input type="checkbox"/> Martin Township   | <input type="checkbox"/> Wayland Township    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fillmore Township  | <input type="checkbox"/> Monterey Township | <input type="checkbox"/> Wayland City        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ganges Township    | <input type="checkbox"/> Otsego City       | <input type="checkbox"/> All                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gun Plain Township | <input type="checkbox"/> Otsego Township   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heath Township     | <input type="checkbox"/> Overisel Township |  |

Other (please specify)

5. Currently, in what ways, if any, is your organization helping meet the transportation needs of the people it serves?(Please select all that apply.)

- Volunteers
- Taxis
- Voucher Program
- Macatawa Area Express (MAX)
- Allegan County Transportation (ACT)
- Saugatuck/Douglas Interurban Transit
- In-house transit system
- Love in the Name of Christ (Love INC.)
- We do not provide or pay for any type of transportation.
- Other (please specify)

6. Would your organization be willing to implement programs in order to offer transportation to the population you serve or your employees?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

7. In the last 30 days, how many request for rides did your organization receive?

1 - 19

20 - 49

50 - 79

80 - 99

100 or more

Did not receive any requests

8. In the last 30 days, how many rides did your organization provide? (Excluding rides provided by public transportation.)

1 - 49

50 - 149

150 - 249

250 - 349

350 or more

Did not provide any rides

9. How do unmet transportation needs affect your organization?  
(Please select all that apply.)

Lost revenue

Loss of current employees

Decreased pool of potential employees

Decreased pool of potential volunteers

Decreased productivity

Decreased participation in programs

Inability to employ people

Inability to get people services they need

Does not affect the organization

Other (please specify)

10. Based on your experience, please rank the top three destinations that people who live in Allegan County have the greatest difficulty reaching.

	Work	School	Grocery or Retail Store	Medical	Social Service Organization	Church or Worship	Court	Social or Recreational	Other
1 = greatest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2 = second greatest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3 = third greatest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Does your organization notice any seasonal trends when transit needs are greatest?

Yes  No  Don't know

12. If you answered "Yes" to question 11, in what season do people you work with have the greatest unmet transportation needs? (Please select all that apply.)

Spring  Summer  Fall  Winter

13. Please rank the following factors according to which ones you believe would have the greatest impact in improving the current transit system.

1 = greatest impact

	1	2	3
Improving services in existing areas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consolidating services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expanding geographic area covered	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increasing hours of service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increasing days of service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lowering cost of service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improving customer service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increasing accessibility of vehicles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adding amenities (benches, shelters, etc...)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Don't know	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

14. How strongly would your organization support increasing public transportation in Allegan County?

Strongly support  
 Somewhat support  
 Neutral  
 Somewhat oppose  
 Strongly oppose

15. A regional transportation system is a transit network that connects surrounding counties. In the next three (3) years, do you believe the need for regional transit will be:

Very important

Somewhat important

Not at all important

Don't know

16. If you answered "very important" or "somewhat important" to question 15, which surrounding county/ies would you like to see Allegan County connect with in the next three years? (Please select all that apply.)

Kalamazoo County (Kalamazoo)

Van Buren County (South Haven)

Kent County (Grand Rapids)

Ottawa County (Holland)

Other (please specify)

5.

Please help us with the most important part of this study - putting a face with the transportation needs in Allegan County. Do you have an employee who needs transportation? Do you work with a senior who needs a ride to the doctor? Does a member of your church need rides on Sundays? These real life stories are essential to create transportation solutions. Please share any anonymous stories you have about a person who needs a ride(question 17) OR provide contact information for that individual (question 18).

17.

18. If you know of someone who has a transportation story, please list their information below.

Name:

City/Town:

ZIP:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

19. We plan to host a stakeholder focus group to acquire more detail about transportation issues and opportunities in Allegan County in the near future. Because we value your thoughts, we would like to include you in this conversation. Would you be interested in being part of a transportation focus group in the near future?

Yes

No

20. Would you like to receive a report of the findings from this survey?

Yes

No

7.

Thank you for your valuable input! We are incredibly grateful for your time and participation.

Please visit the transportation page at [www.dnlakeshore.org](http://www.dnlakeshore.org) to learn more about this transit project.

# APPENDIX D: Focus Group Letter

Dear Mimi,

Thank you for agreeing to take part in a **Transportation Stakeholder Focus Group** to discuss the community's transit needs and share the perspective of **Allegan County United Way**. Your input will be invaluable in helping us better understand unmet transportation needs in Allegan County. Included below is a reminder of the date, time, and location of the focus group you will be part of:

Date: Tuesday, January 13

Time: 11:00am to 12:15pm

Location: Allegan County DHS – Zimmerman Training Room  
(3255 122<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Allegan, MI 49010)

Holding this focus group is the next step in a lengthy process to understanding the barriers and opportunities surrounding unmet transit needs in Allegan County, as well as, producing a five-year strategic plan for Allegan County Transportation. In addition to holding stakeholder focus groups, our work will involve several steps over the next year including: interviewing people with unmet transportation needs, surveying current and prospective transit riders, surveying taxpayers, and surveying elected officials.

If you have not already completed the **Transportation Stakeholder Survey**, please visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/AlleganTransitSurvey> and take time to answer all the questions *before* you attend the focus group. The survey should take about 15 minutes to complete. We sincerely hope you will answer each question as accurately and completely as possible. Our study is only as good as the data we receive from you and other participants.

If you have any questions about the focus group process, the survey, or the transportation study, please do not hesitate to contact Kathryn Gillen at 616.396.5326 or [kathryn@dnlakeshore.org](mailto:kathryn@dnlakeshore.org).

Your participation is critical to understanding people's unmet transit needs. Thank you very much for your time and help!

With sincere appreciation,

Kathryn Gillen  
Public Policy Specialist  
Disability Network/Lakeshore

# APPENDIX E: Current Rider Survey

## 1. Allegan County Transportation Current Rider Survey

### 1. In what township or city in Allegan County do you live? (Select one)

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> City of Allegan    | <input type="radio"/> Heath Township    | <input type="radio"/> Otsego Township     |
| <input type="radio"/> Allegan Township   | <input type="radio"/> City of Holland   | <input type="radio"/> Overisel Township   |
| <input type="radio"/> Casco Township     | <input type="radio"/> City of Hopkins   | <input type="radio"/> City of Plainwell   |
| <input type="radio"/> Cheshire Township  | <input type="radio"/> Hopkins Township  | <input type="radio"/> Salem Township      |
| <input type="radio"/> Clyde Township     | <input type="radio"/> Laketown Township | <input type="radio"/> City of Saugatuck   |
| <input type="radio"/> Dorr Township      | <input type="radio"/> Lee Township      | <input type="radio"/> Saugatuck Township  |
| <input type="radio"/> City of Douglas    | <input type="radio"/> Leighton Township | <input type="radio"/> Trowbridge Township |
| <input type="radio"/> City of Fennville  | <input type="radio"/> Manlius Township  | <input type="radio"/> Valley Township     |
| <input type="radio"/> Fillmore Township  | <input type="radio"/> City of Martin    | <input type="radio"/> Watson Township     |
| <input type="radio"/> Ganges Township    | <input type="radio"/> Martin Township   | <input type="radio"/> City of Wayland     |
| <input type="radio"/> City of Glenn      | <input type="radio"/> Monterey Township | <input type="radio"/> Wayland Township    |
| <input type="radio"/> Gun Plain Township | <input type="radio"/> City of Otsego    |   |

Other (please specify)

### 2. What is your primary mode of transportation? (Select one)

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Personal automobile                    | <input type="radio"/> Love in the Name of Christ   | <input type="radio"/> Bicycle            |
| <input type="radio"/> Carpool                                | <input type="radio"/> Friends / Family / Neighbors | <input type="radio"/> Taxi / Cab Service |
| <input type="radio"/> Allegan County Transportation (ACT)    | <input type="radio"/> Local Church                 | <input type="radio"/> Walking            |
| <input type="radio"/> Saugatuck / Douglas Interurban Transit | <input type="radio"/> School Bus                   |  |
| <input type="radio"/> Pioneer Resources                      | <input type="radio"/> Evergreen Commons            |  |

Other (please specify)

### 3. When not using your primary mode of transportation, what other mode do you use most often? (Select one)

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Personal automobile                    | <input type="radio"/> Love in the Name of Christ   | <input type="radio"/> Bicycle            |
| <input type="radio"/> Carpool                                | <input type="radio"/> Friends / Family / Neighbors | <input type="radio"/> Taxi / Cab Service |
| <input type="radio"/> Allegan County Transportation (ACT)    | <input type="radio"/> Local Church                 | <input type="radio"/> Walking            |
| <input type="radio"/> Saugatuck / Douglas Interurban Transit | <input type="radio"/> School Bus                   |  |
| <input type="radio"/> Pioneer Resources                      | <input type="radio"/> Evergreen Commons            |  |

Other (please specify)

4. Do you own a personal automobile?

Yes

No

5. If you answered "Yes" to question 4, what is the total number of working automobiles in your household? (Select one)

0

1

2

3

4

5 or more

6. When was the last time you used Allegan County Transportation (ACT)? (Select one)

Today

Within the past month

Within the past week

Within the past six months

Within the past two weeks

Over six months ago (skip question 7, move to question 8)

7. How often have you used ACT to take you to and from the following destination in the past six (6) months?

	Daily	3 or 4 times a week	1 or 2 times a week	3 or 4 times a month	1 or 2 times a month	Never
Work	<input type="radio"/>					
School	<input type="radio"/>					
Shopping	<input type="radio"/>					
Medical Appointments	<input type="radio"/>					
Social Service Agencies	<input type="radio"/>					
Church	<input type="radio"/>					
Visiting Friends / Family Members	<input type="radio"/>					
Social Activities (such as movies, out to eat, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>					

8. In the past year, what destinations did you need to travel to but a lack of transportation prevented you from getting there? (Select all that apply)

Work / Employment

Visit Friend / Family

Social Services Agency

Church

Court / Jail

Shopping / Grocery

School

Medical Appointment

None

Other (please specify)

9. In the past year, has a lack of transportation prevented you from looking for, getting, or keeping a job?

Yes

No

Unsure

10. In the past year, did you have a need to travel to another county/ties in West Michigan?

Yes

No

Unsure

11. If you answered "Yes" to question 10, please indicate to which counties you needed transportation. (Select all that apply)

- Kalamazoo
  Kent (Grand Rapids)
  Ottawa (Holland)
  Van Buren (South Haven)

Other (please specify)

12. Do you see a need for regional transportation in West Michigan increasing within the next three (3) years? (By regional transportation, we mean transportation to other counties.)

- Yes
  No
  Unsure

13. What would be an affordable cost for one, one-way ride to where you need to travel? (Select one)

- 50 cents
  \$3
  \$8-10  
 \$1
  \$4-5
  \$0, I do not have any money to pay for transportation.  
 \$2
  \$6-7

14. When thinking about your typical weekly schedule, what days and times do you need transportation?

	6 am - 10 am	10 am - 2 pm	2 pm - 6 pm	6 pm - 10 pm	10 pm - 2 am	2 am - 6 am
Monday	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Tuesday	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Wednesday	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Thursday	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Friday	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Saturday	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Sunday	<input type="checkbox"/>					

15. Do you need personal assistance when you travel?

- Yes
  No

16. Do you need an accessible vehicle when you travel?

- Yes
  No

17. If the following public transit services were available, which would you rather use: (Select one)

- Fixed Routes (These are specific routes with buses traveling from bus stop to bus stop at regularly scheduled times.)  
 Demand Response (This is a door-to-door service that requires a reservation made 24 hours in advance.)  
 Unsure

18. How far would you be willing to walk to a bus stop to ride Allegan County Transportation (ACT)? (Select one)

- Less than 1/4 mile     
  3/4 mile     
  Will not ride  
 1/4 mile     
  One mile     
  Unsure  
 1/2 mile     
  Over one mile

19. If a new Allegan County Transportation (ACT) route opened within a half mile (approximately 4 city blocks) from your home and your destination, how likely would you, or any member of your family, be to ride ACT to and/or from:

	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not likely at all	Does not apply
Work / Employment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shopping / Grocery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Medical Appointment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social Service Agency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Church	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friends / Family Members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>			

20. Please rate ACT on the following:

	Superior	Above average	Average	Below average	Inferior	Unsure
Quality of customer service	<input type="radio"/>					
Marketing of ACT	<input type="radio"/>					
Friendliness of bus drivers	<input type="radio"/>					
Friendliness of management	<input type="radio"/>					
Friendliness of phone operators	<input type="radio"/>					
Timeliness	<input type="radio"/>					
Comfort of vehicles	<input type="radio"/>					
Reliability	<input type="radio"/>					
Cost	<input type="radio"/>					
Accessibility for people with disabilities	<input type="radio"/>					
Helpfulness of bus drivers	<input type="radio"/>					
Helpfulness of management	<input type="radio"/>					
Helpfulness of phone operators	<input type="radio"/>					
Efficiency	<input type="radio"/>					
Meeting your transit needs	<input type="radio"/>					
Safety	<input type="radio"/>					

21. Overall, how satisfied would you say you are with ACT's services?

- Completely satisfied     
  Satisfied     
  Neutral     
  Unsatisfied     
  Completely unsatisfied

22. What is the best way to educate you on the public transit services that are available in Allegan County? (Select one)

- Newspaper
- Radio
- Fliers
- Billboards
- Mailings
- Phone call
- Church bulletin
- Email
- Website

Other (please specify)

23. Please rank the top three (3) solutions that would best meet your transportation needs.

	Greatest	Second greatest	Third greatest
Getting my vehicle fixed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gas money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personal assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My driver's license reinstated	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Car insurance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Money for bus passes, taxi rides, etc...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public transportation that goes to the places I need to go and runs on the days and the times I need to travel.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Accessible features for my vehicle	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

24. Please select three (3) values from the following list that you think public transit promotes AND are most important to you.

- Independence
- Community
- Opportunity
- Happiness
- Individualism
- Freedom
- Safety
- Success
- Connection
- Equality
- Optimism
- Efficiency

Other (please specify)

Just a few final questions about you.

25. Are you currently employed?

- Yes
- No

26. Not including yourself, how many adults live in your home who also need transportation?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more

27. Not including yourself, how many children live in your home who also need transportation?

- 0       1       2       3       4       5 or more

28. Do you own or rent your home?

- Yes       No

29. What is your gender?

- Male       Female

30. What is your age?

- Under 18     18-29     30-39     40-49     50-59     60-69     70-79     80 and over

31. Which of the following best describes your ethnicity?

- African American / Black       Hispanic / Latin American       American Indian / Alaska Native  
 Caucasian / White       Asian / Pacific Islander       Unsure

Other (please specify)

32. Which of the following best describes your total family household income?

- Under \$10,000       \$30,001 - \$40,000       \$60,001 - \$70,000  
 \$10,001 - \$20,000       \$40,001 - \$50,000       Over \$70,000  
 \$20,001 - \$30,000       \$50,001 - \$60,000       Unsure

Thank you for your participation in our survey. The results of this survey will become available in May. All past and future reports and updates associated with this study are or will be published at [www.dnlakeshore.org](http://www.dnlakeshore.org).

# APPENDIX F: Prospective Rider Survey

## 1. Allegan County Transportation Prospective Rider Survey

A research study is currently underway in Allegan County to identify unmet transit needs and develop a five-year strategic plan for Allegan County Transportation (ACT). As a resident of Allegan County and a potential rider of ACT, your input will be invaluable as we move forward in this study.

The information you provide in this survey will be compiled and analyzed by Dr. Daniel Bergan of Michigan State University and Disability Network / Lakeshore. The results of this study will also assist the Allegan County United Way in their community assessment project. Finally, your results will be used by Allegan County Transportation to develop a five-year strategic plan for improvements to the public transit system. Therefore, your responses will be used to evaluate and understand local countywide transportation issues so solutions can be sought.

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and all responses will be held in strict confidence.

By completing this survey in its entirety you will be entered into a drawing to WIN 1 of 5 \$25 VISA gift cards! Your contact information will be requested at the end of this survey for the drawing, however, it will NOT be associated with your responses!

To view earlier reports on this study and the final report of this phase to be posted in May, please see [www.dnlakeshore.org](http://www.dnlakeshore.org).

### 1. In what township or city in Allegan County do you live? (Select one)

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> City of Allegan    | <input type="radio"/> Heath Township    | <input type="radio"/> Otsego Township     |
| <input type="radio"/> Allegan Township   | <input type="radio"/> City of Holland   | <input type="radio"/> Overisel Township   |
| <input type="radio"/> Casco Township     | <input type="radio"/> City of Hopkins   | <input type="radio"/> City of Plainwell   |
| <input type="radio"/> Cheshire Township  | <input type="radio"/> Hopkins Township  | <input type="radio"/> Salem Township      |
| <input type="radio"/> Clyde Township     | <input type="radio"/> Laketown Township | <input type="radio"/> City of Saugatuck   |
| <input type="radio"/> Dorr Township      | <input type="radio"/> Lee Township      | <input type="radio"/> Saugatuck Township  |
| <input type="radio"/> City of Douglas    | <input type="radio"/> Leighton Township | <input type="radio"/> Trowbridge Township |
| <input type="radio"/> City of Fennville  | <input type="radio"/> Manlius Township  | <input type="radio"/> Valley Township     |
| <input type="radio"/> Fillmore Township  | <input type="radio"/> City of Martin    | <input type="radio"/> Watson Township     |
| <input type="radio"/> Ganges Township    | <input type="radio"/> Martin Township   | <input type="radio"/> City of Wayland     |
| <input type="radio"/> City of Glenn      | <input type="radio"/> Monterey Township | <input type="radio"/> Wayland Township    |
| <input type="radio"/> Gun Plain Township | <input type="radio"/> City of Otsego    |   |

Other (please specify)

2. What is your primary mode of transportation? (Select one)

- Personal automobile
- Love in the Name of Christ
- Bicycle
- Carpool
- Friends / Family / Neighbors
- Taxi / Cab Service
- Allegan County Transportation (ACT)
- Local Church
- Walking
- Saugatuck / Douglas Interurban Transit
- School Bus
- Evergreen Commons
- Pioneer Resources

Other (please specify)

3. When not using your primary mode of transportation, what other mode do you use most often? (Select one)

- Personal automobile
- Love in the Name of Christ
- Bicycle
- Carpool
- Friends / Family / Neighbors
- Taxi / Cab Service
- Allegan County Transportation (ACT)
- Local Church
- Walking
- Saugatuck / Douglas Interurban Transit
- School Bus
- Evergreen Commons
- Pioneer Resources

Other (please specify)

4. Do you own a personal automobile?

- Yes
- No

5. If you answered "Yes" to question 4, what is the total number of working automobiles in your household? (Select one)

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more

6. Have you ever heard of Allegan County Transportation (ACT)?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

7. Why don't you currently use Allegan County Transportation (ACT) for transportation? (Select all that apply)

- No need
- Too expensive
- Unsafe
- Uncomfortable
- Inconvenient hours
- Inconvenient routes
- Unreliable
- Unfriendly bus drivers
- Takes too long
- Bus is not accessible for people with disabilities
- Bus cannot carry bikes
- Bus stop too far away
- Does not provide service in my area
- Bus stop is inaccessible (i.e. no sidewalk, difficult to navigate)
- Never heard of ACT
- Heard negative comments about ACT
- Unsure

Other (please specify)

8. If your car broke down and you needed another form of transportation immediately, what is the likelihood you would use Allegan County Transportation to take you to: (Please indicate your choice for each row)

	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not likely at all	Does not apply
Work / Employment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Church	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visit Friend / Family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Court / Jail	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Medical Appointment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Services Agency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shopping / Grocery	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social activities (such as movies, out to eat, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If other please specify:

9. In the past year, what destinations did you need to travel to but a lack of transportation prevented you from getting there? (Select all that apply)

- Work / Employment
- Church
- School
- Visit Friend / Family
- Court / Jail
- Medical Appointment
- Social Services Agency
- Shopping / Grocery
- None

Other (please specify)

10. In the past year, has a lack of transportation prevented you from looking for, getting, or keeping a job?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

11. Does seasonal weather affect your need for transportation services?

Yes

No

Unsure

12. If you answered "Yes" to question 11, please indicate in which season you have the greatest unmet transportation need.

Spring

Summer

Fall

Winter

13. In the past year, did you have a need to travel to another county/ties in West Michigan?

Yes

No

Unsure

14. If you answered "Yes" to question 13, please indicate to which counties you needed transportation. (Select all that apply)

Kalamazoo

Kent (Grand Rapids)

Ottawa (Holland)

Van Buren (South Haven)

Other (please specify)

15. Do you see a need for regional transportation in West Michigan increasing within the next three (3) years? (By regional transportation we mean transportation to other counties.)

Yes

No

Unsure

16. What would be an affordable cost for one, one-way ride to where you need to travel? (Select one)

50 cents

\$3

\$8-10

\$1

\$4-5

\$0, I do not have any money to pay for transportation.

\$2

\$6-7

17. When thinking about your typical weekly schedule, what days and times do you need transportation?

	6am - 10am	10am - 2pm	2pm - 6pm	6pm - 10pm	10pm - 2am	2am - 6am
Monday	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Tuesday	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Wednesday	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Thursday	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Friday	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Saturday	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Sunday	<input type="checkbox"/>					

18. Do you need personal assistance when you travel?

Yes

No

19. Do you need an accessible vehicle when you travel?

Yes

No

20. If the following public transit services were available, which would you rather use: (Select one)

Fixed Routes (These are specific routes with buses traveling from bus stop to bus stop at regularly scheduled times.)

Demand Response (This is a door-to-door service that requires a reservation made 24 hours in advance.)

Unsure

21. How far would you be willing to walk to a bus stop to ride Allegan County Transportation (ACT)? (Select one)

Less than 1/4 mile

3/4 mile

Will not ride

1/4 mile

One mile

Unsure

1/2 mile

Over one mile

22. If a new Allegan County Transportation (ACT) route opened within half mile (approximately 4 city blocks) from your home and your destination, how likely would you, or any member of your family, be to ride ACT to and/or from:

	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not likely at all	Does not apply
Work / Employment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shopping / Grocery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Medical Appointment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social Service Agency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Church	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friends / Family Members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social Activities (such as movies, out to eat, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)				
<input style="width: 300px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>				

23. Please rate your perception of ACT on the following:

	Superior	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Inferior	Unsure
Quality of customer service	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Marketing of ACT	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Friendliness	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Timeliness	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Comfort of vehicles	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Reliability	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Cost	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Accessibility for people with disabilities	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Helpfulness	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Efficiency	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Meeting community transit needs	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Safety	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn

24. Overall, how important would you say ACT's services are to the Allegan County community?

- Very important
- Neutral
- Not important at all
- Somewhat important
- Somewhat unimportant
- Unsure

25. What is the best way to educate you on the public transit services that are available in Allegan County? (Select one)

- Newspaper
- Billboards
- Church bulletin
- Radio
- Mailings
- Email
- Fliers
- Phone call
- Website

Other (please specify)

26. Please rank the top three (3) solutions that would best meet your transportation needs.

	Greatest	Second greatest	Third greatest
Getting my vehicle fixed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gas money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personal assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My driver's license reinstated	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Car insurance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Money for bus passes, taxi rides, etc...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public transportation that goes to the places I need to go and runs on the days and that the times I need to travel.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Accessible features for my vehicle	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

27. Please select three (3) values from the following list that you think public transit promotes AND most important to you.

- Independence
- Individualism
- Connection
- Community
- Freedom
- Equality
- Opportunity
- Safety
- Optimism
- Happiness
- Success
- Efficiency

Other (please specify)

Just a few final questions about you.

28. Are you currently employed?

- Yes  No

29. Not including yourself, how many adults live in your home who also need transportation?

- 0  1  2  3  4  5 or more

30. Not including yourself, how many children live in your home who also need transportation?

- 0  1  2  3  4  5 or more

31. Do you own or rent your home?

- Yes  No

32. What is your gender?

- Male  Female

### 33. What is your age?

- Under 18    18-29    30-39    40-49    50-59    60-69    70-79    80 and over

### 34. Which of the following best describes your ethnicity?

- African American / Black    Hispanic / Latin American    American Indian / Alaska Native  
 Caucasian / White    Asian / Pacific Islander    Unsure

Other (please specify)

### 35. Which of the following best describes your total family household income?

- Under \$10,000    \$30,001 - \$40,000    \$60,001 - \$70,000  
 \$10,001 - \$20,000    \$40,001 - \$50,000    Over \$70,001  
 \$20,001 - \$30,000    \$50,001 - \$60,000    Unsure

36. Please share your contact information to be entered in a drawing for 1 of 5 \$25 VISA gift cards. You must complete the survey in its entirety to be eligible for the drawing. Your contact information will NOT be connected to any information you provide in the survey.

Name:

Address:

City/Town:

ZIP/Postal Code:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

Thank you for your participation in our survey. The results of this survey will become available in May. All past and future reports and updates associated with this study are or will be published at [www.dnlakeshore.org](http://www.dnlakeshore.org).

# Allegan County Transportation Five-Year Strategic Plan

Prepared by:  
*The Allegan County Transit Workgroup*

In partnership with:  
*Disability Network/Lakeshore*

February 2011



*Funding for this study was provided by the Michigan Department of Transportation through a Services, Development and New Technologies (SDNT) Grant.*

*Project No: 104248, Agreement No: 2008-0427*



February 3, 2011

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the Alleghan County Transportation Workgroup, it is my pleasure to introduce the five-year strategic plan for Alleghan County Transportation, which is contained in the following document.

This strategic plan is the culmination of over two years of collaborative work by staff, volunteers, and interested citizens. During our work, we conducted surveys, one-to-one interviews, and community input sessions, held several meetings, and performed extensive research, data collection, and analysis. Our Workgroup, charged by the Alleghan County Transportation Department to create a five-year plan, has devoted an enormous amount of time and energy into this process. Our discussions have always centered on one central goal: how to best improve general public transportation services for the residents of Alleghan County.

As a result, we have decided to pursue the following improvements to Alleghan County Transportation over the next five years: offer general public transportation in Alleghan County through a Reserve-A-Ride, five community service area system Monday through Friday from 5:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., with limited employment related service from 9 p.m. to 11 p.m. Additionally, limited Saturday and Sunday service will be offered up to 115 hours per weekend. ACT will maintain the current fare structure of \$2 per trip for adults and \$1 per trip for seniors, people with disabilities and children; as well as, engage in ongoing communication with stakeholders. ACT will seek local funding to implement these recommendations.

We remain committed to a mission of enhancing and promoting economic development and serving the transportation needs of Alleghan County residents by providing safe, reliable, barrier free travel.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Dan Wedge'.

Dan Wedge  
*Director, Alleghan County Transportation*

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## I. Executive Summary

The Allegan County Transportation Workgroup (Workgroup) is composed of local directors, employees, elected officials and residents serving or living throughout the Allegan County region. In September 2008, the Workgroup began discussing short-range improvements to Allegan County Transportation (ACT) and developing strategic research processes to solicit input from local organizations, businesses, elected officials and residents. The Workgroup's mission was to develop a five-year strategic plan for ACT to meet the growing transportation needs of the general public living in Allegan County.

Consultants hired to assist with the elements of the planning, research and marketing process included:

- Daniel Bergan, Ph.D., *Michigan State University, Bergan Consulting LLC, Principal*
- Lisa Dingman, *Square One Design, Graphic Designer*
- Brian Kelly, *Brian Kelly Photography, Videographer*
- Genevieve Risner, *Creative Inquiry LLC, Principal*

The Workgroup detailed critical issues facing ACT, developed strategies to study these issues, created goals and recommendations to improve each area of concern, and provided a rationale for these recommendations. The Workgroup relied on six primary studies to base its recommendations:

1. Survey and focus groups with Allegan County stakeholders, including but not limited to businesses, elected officials, nonprofit and governmental organizations, service clubs, faith based organizations, and schools, about transportation needs in Allegan County (ACT Stakeholder Survey 2008).
2. Analysis of current ACT operations, outlining the current services provided by ACT, as well as areas and suggestions for improvement (2009).
3. Survey of current ACT passengers to examine their transportation needs and usage of ACT (Current Rider Survey 2009).
4. Study of prospective ACT passengers to examine their transportation needs and reasons for not using ACT (Prospective Rider Survey 2009).
5. Input sessions to generate feedback from community members and stakeholders regarding the improvements and changes to ACT detailed in the five-year plan (2009).
6. Survey of Allegan County residents to identify their support for Allegan County Transportation and the changes recommended in the five-year plan (Allegan Taxpayer Survey 2009).
7. Use GIS data software to plot 2000-2008 census data including senior populations, people with disabilities, income levels, housing units and vehicles per household (Appendix D).

*\*These studies are available to the public upon request or by visiting the ACT website.*

The culmination of these studies and analysis of the findings resulted in the development of a five-year strategic plan for Allegan County transportation detailed in the following pages. The recommendations of the Workgroup include:

- Provide a Reserve-A-Ride transportation system to the general public in Allegan County.
- Implement community service areas that allocate transportation service to each of the five regions in Allegan County.
- Connect ACT with public transportation systems in the surrounding counties of Kalamazoo, Ottawa, Kent, and Van Buren.
- Maintain the current fare structure of \$2 per trip for general public transportation and \$1 per trip for seniors, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) passengers, and children.
- Provide transportation services Monday through Friday from 5:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., with limited employment related service from 9 p.m. to 11 p.m.
- Provide Saturday and Sunday service on a limited basis up to 115 hours per weekend.
- Maintain a user-friendly ACT website with current information on service, fares, updates, and contact information.
- Create an ACT annual report with year-end updates, successes and trends to share with riders and stakeholders.
- Work with the local press outlets to secure earned media on ACT updates and trends.
- Maintain ongoing dialogue with ACT customer and stakeholders to gather feedback on whether the system meets their needs and research requests for service enhancements as appropriate.
- Seek funding to support implementation of the improvements outlined in the plan.

## II. Mission Statements

### The Allegan County Board of Commissioners

#### Mission Statement

The Allegan County Board of Commissioners shall plan, develop and evaluate the necessary policies and resources to ensure our County continues to progress and prosper.

#### Vision Statement

The Allegan County Board of Commissioners is committed to providing our citizens superior and innovative services, being judicious and efficient in the expenditure of resources and promoting a safe, clean and healthy environment in which to live, work, and play.

#### Value Statement

The principles of Honest, Integrity, Commitment and Respect will serve as the foundation for all of our words, deeds and actions in providing services to the citizens of Allegan County.

### Allegan County Transportation

#### Mission Statement

Allegan County Transportation's mission is to enhance and promote economic development and serve the transportation needs of Allegan County residents by providing safe, reliable, barrier-free travel.

### III. Organizational History and Profile

In July 2000, ACT began providing transportation to residents in key areas throughout Allegan County. Since then, ACT has provided a reservation service for the last ten years, expanding its geographic coverage according to the availability of funding and the growing demand for service. Throughout this time, ACT services have been supported financially through state and federal programs such as Project Zero, Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC), and Specialized Services as well as funding from contracts with local organizations, Allegan County, and passenger fares.

Allegan County Transportation is a department of Allegan County and is governed by the Board of County Commissioners. The County owns all of the transportation buses, facilities, and equipment and is responsible for overseeing the Transportation Director. ACT contracts with Transportation Management, Inc. to conduct the daily transit operations. The contractual arrangement between ACT and Transportation Management, Inc. has existed since ACT's inception.

The current ACT service area encompasses the City of Allegan with transportation service following the M-40 corridor to Holland, the M-89 corridor to Otsego and Plainwell, and the M-89 route to the City of Fennville and Pullman. Additionally, ACT serves the US 131 highway cities of Shelbyville, Martin, Dorr and Wayland. The service area includes a one-mile radius around the road corridors listed. ACT does not provide a fixed route service.

Additionally, there are two public transit providers that provide transportation service to a limited amount of residents within Allegan County. The Interurban Transit Authority (ITA) has served over 1.2 million riders in the City of Saugatuck, Saugatuck Township and Douglas Township residents since 1980. In 2010, ITA provided 58,187 passenger trips, 6% increase from 2009 (54,789). However, many of these passengers would like to connect with ACT in order to travel outside of the ITA service area. The ITA is funded by both federal and state funds, as well as through a local millage.

Secondly, beginning in 2000, the Macatawa Area Express Transit Authority (MAX) has been serving the greater Holland and Zeeland area with a fixed route and demand-response system and provided over 339,422 passengers trips in 2010. Currently, ACT connects to the MAX through a transfer point located at the Family Fare on 40th Street in Holland. Similar to ITA, MAX receives funding from both the state and federal levels, as well funding through a local millage. In the future, ACT would like to work collaboratively with these two transit providers in order to better serve the residents of Allegan County.

Currently, ACT provides reservation service to specific populations as dictated by state and federal funding programs and the local organizations that contract with ACT for

service. This means that passengers must call 24 hours in advance during office hours to pre-schedule a ride and must be eligible for service.

In 2009, ACT provided 47,123 passenger trips (one trip equals one, one-way ride), a 20 percent increase in ridership from 2007 (39,420 passenger trips). ACT has provided over 290,000 passenger trips, traveled over 3.6 million miles, and spent just over 151,000 hours on Allegan roads since its inception in July 2000.

Passenger trips are categorized into three types of trips: Specialized Services, Job Access Reverse Commute or Regular Service. The majority of passenger trips, 35,817 (76%), were provided through regular service funding. Regular service funding primarily provides transportation to the customers, clients and consumers of organizations that contract with ACT for service. These organizations include, but are not limited to Department of Human Services, Allegan County Community Mental Health, Michigan Works!, and Allegan Area Educational Service Agency. Specialized Services, a state funded program, accounted for 7,823 trips (17%) and provides medical, shopping or recreational trips for seniors and persons with disabilities. The remaining 3,483 trips (7%) were provided through the Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) program, a state and federal funded program that provides trips for employment related services.

ACT service is currently available Monday through Friday from 5:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. No weekend service is available at this time. All reservations must be made 24 hours in advance; however, limited demand-response (same-day) service is available for emergency related trips as vehicles are available.

For one, one-way trip through the reservation service, fares are \$2.00 for the general public or \$1.00 for seniors, persons with disabilities, and children ages 5 through 11. Children under 5 years of age with an adult ride for free. For Specialized Service trips, the passenger fare amount is the remaining balance of total hours (\$45.00/hour) subtracted by the state grant funding (\$1.20/mile traveled). There is a \$5 minimum passenger fare for this service.

ACT uses a 28-vehicle fleet, including vans and buses, to accommodate their riders. Of these vehicles, 20 vehicles are wheelchair accessible.

ACT's 2009 budget totaled just over \$1.1 million. The budget includes salary and wages for one full time Transportation Director and one part time Administrative Assistant, both employees of the County. ACT's contract with Transportation Management, Inc. includes the employment of 27 people: one operations manager, one transportation coordinator, one mechanic, three operators/administrative support, and 21 drivers (Appendix B).

Federal grants contribute 16% per year (\$218,754) and State grants contribute 40% per year (\$538,385). Contracts with organizations/agencies throughout the County contribute 31% per year (\$417,110). Passenger fares contribute 10% per year (\$138,229). Additionally, ACT receives 3% per year (\$40,500) from the County and less than 1% (\$2,226) from non-operating revenues.

In 2008, ACT began construction of a new transit facility located at 750 Airway Drive, Allegan, MI. This facility houses all ACT operations in one location, which increased efficiency of operations and the management of the transit system. Construction was completed in June 2010.

Today, ACT continues to receive numerous calls from residents and organizations throughout Allegan County that are not eligible for service under one of the funding sources and do not understand the services provided by ACT. Most of these individuals reside in the service area, but because nearly all of ACT's local funding comes from contracts with local organizations general public riders are not able to access ACT services because of a lack in local funding. Thus, ACT's obligation is to meet the service needs of local organizations per contractual agreements, and general public transportation is provided when a general public trip need matches a contractual trip being provided.

ACT is consistently looking for ways to improve and increase ridership. ACT partnered with community organizations and residents to conduct a series of studies and develop a five-year strategic plan with recommended service improvements in order to enhance service delivery and meet the growing demand for ridership. The results of these studies are outlined in the following document.

## IV. Critical Issues and Core Strategies

**The current ACT structure does not adequately address the travel needs of the Allegan County general public.**

The demand for ACT service exceeds the supply of available transportation. Since the ACT system is designed to meet the travel needs of the clients, customers, and consumers of local organizations that contract with ACT for service, not the general public, some residents of Allegan County have been unable to receive transportation service. Strategies selected to assess the travel needs for general public transportation include:

- Develop map plotting current ACT rider origins and destinations
- Compare the map to the current ACT deviated fixed route system
- Complete a current rider survey of ACT passengers to determine current riders travel needs
- Conduct one-on-one interviews with current ACT riders to determine the extent of current riders travel needs
- Conduct a transportation needs assessment survey of the general public, including prospective riders, to determine the travel needs of the Allegan County community
- Conduct focus groups with Allegan County stakeholders (including businesses, schools, churches, and organizations) to determine the transportation needs of the Allegan County community
- Conduct an assessment of services provided by transportation providers of similar sizes to compare to current ACT services
- Develop map plotting denied passenger trips
- Compare the map to the current ACT system
- Determine existing gaps in services
- Improve the ACT structure to address these service gaps and meet the needs of the Allegan County community

**Public transportation fare structures must be affordable for those who need it most and competitive with fares of other transit providers of similar sizes.**

Since ACT's inception fares have not been reevaluated. Thus, the Workgroup felt it was time to assess whether the fares were still appropriate to meet passenger needs, yet competitive with other transit providers. Strategies selected to assess fares include:

- Investigate fares collected by other transportation providers
- Conduct a transportation needs assessment of the general public, including prospective riders, to determine the fees members of the Allegan County community are willing to pay to ride ACT

- Conduct a transportation needs assessment of current riders to determine the fees they are willing to pay to ride ACT
- Compare the results of these studies to the current fares collected by ACT
- Develop a recommendation of a fare structure for ACT

**Allegan County continues to grow and develop outside of a centrally located region.**

Allegan County includes 34 municipalities and has large numbers of residents living outside of the central City of Allegan, approximately 137 persons per square mile with a land area of 827 square miles. Thus, the Workgroup examined whether the current transportation structure was the most appropriate match for the Allegan County community over the next five years. Strategies selected to address the current geographic coverage area of ACT include:

- Develop maps developed by the geographic information system (GIS) using 2000 census data to plot the population of seniors age 55 and older, population of seniors age 65 and older, population of people with a disability, occupied housing units with no or one vehicle, occupied housing units with no vehicle, occupied housing units with one vehicle, household income between \$10,000 and \$25,000, household income below \$10,000, and population under poverty level
- Compare these maps to the current ACT system
- Hold focus groups with stakeholders (including businesses, schools, churches, and organizations) to determine the regional transportation needs of residents of Allegan County
- Conduct a transportation needs assessment of the general public, including prospective riders, to determine the need for regional transportation
- Conduct a transportation needs assessment of current riders to determine needs to travel to the need for regional transportation
- Conduct an analysis of similarly sized rural transportation systems
- Improve the existing ACT transportation system to address regional transportation needs

**Dependence on Federal and State grants, municipal funding from Allegan County, and revenue from local community organizations is inadequate to meet the transportation needs of Allegan County residents.**

Currently, Allegan County Transportation is funded, primarily, by local organizations and agencies through contractual service agreements, which serves as a local match to bring in federal and state grant funding. This revenue is dedicated to providing limited and specific transportation trips to clients, consumers and customers. A limited amount of funding is available to provide rides to the general Allegan County public, but is not currently sufficient to meet prospective riders travel needs. Strategies selected to assess the funding structure of ACT include:

- Conduct an analysis of ACT revenues and expenditures
- Review the Allegan County Area Wide Coordinated Public Transit Human Service Plan
- Conduct an analysis of similarly sized rural transportation systems
- Determine the best funding structure to provide general public transportation service

**The current ACT system is not equipped to advance economic development or environmental conservation opportunities in Allegan County.**

Tourism opportunities in Allegan County necessitate the creation of a visitor-friendly transportation system. Also, current environmental trends provide an opportunity to create an environmentally friendly transit system that automobile owners might use. Strategies selected to address the potential transportation benefits of ACT for the general public include:

- Conduct a survey with stakeholders (including businesses, schools, churches, and organizations) in Allegan County to determine how unmet transportation needs effects their organization.
- Conduct a transportation needs assessment of the general public, including prospective riders, to determine how transportation effects their employment
- Conduct a transportation needs assessment of current riders to determine how transportation effects their employment
- Explore ways ACT transportation system could address the economic development needs of Allegan County

**Allegan County residents do not understand ACT’s geographic coverage, scope of services, and funding structure and do not know how to access transportation service.**

The Workgroup needed to address the best way to alleviate passenger confusion about ACT services. Strategies selected to explore education and marketing needs include:

- Conduct a focus group with stakeholders (including businesses, schools, churches, and organizations) in Allegan County to determine how to market ACT services
- Conduct a transportation needs assessment of the general public, including prospective riders, to determine the best way to educate residents about ACT services
- Conduct a transportation needs assessment of current riders to determine the best way to educate residents about ACT services
- Review the Allegan County Area Wide Coordinated Public Transit Human Service Plan

- Develop an education and marketing plan to educate Allegan County residents about ACT services

**Service alterations must be tweaked as implementation occurs to ensure maximum effectiveness and efficiency.**

The Workgroup recognized the need to allow some room for flexibility once implementation of a modified transportation service was implemented. Thus, upon implementation, the committee identified the need for ACT to evaluate opportunities for adjustments that would meet resident's travel needs in the most efficient way.

## V. Goals, Recommendations, and Rationales

### A. Service Type

**Critical Issues:**

The current ACT structure does not adequately address the travel needs of the Allegan County general public.

Allegan County has several residents who need ongoing medical related transportation, especially to and from dialysis treatment.

Allegan County has over 11,400 residents with disabilities, particularly individuals served by Community Mental Health, who could be more independent with access to public transportation.

**Goal:**

Create a transportation structure that addresses the transportation needs of prospective general public transportation riders in Allegan County.

**Recommendation:**

Provide Reserve-A-Ride transportation system to the general public in Allegan County.

**Rationale:**

Overall, each year ACT’s ridership continues to grow, indicating an increasing demand for transportation service. Following is a chart detailing ACT ridership trends from calendar years 2001 through 2010.

**Table 1. Ridership Levels by Service Year for Allegan County Transportation**

Year	Number of Service Hours	Number of Ridership (Trips)	Number of Miles Driven	Percent Change in Ridership
2001	7,779	13,998	199,849	
2002	12,205	20,012	319,654	+ 42.9%
2003	11,917	25,208	299,777	+ 25.9%
2004	13,199	28,330	327,583	+12.4%
2005	15,353	36,673	350,573	+29.4%
2006*	15,046	35,926	371,686	-2.0%
2007	18,440	39,420	469,650	+10.0%
2008	27,666	44,989	616,495	+14.0%
2009	29,807	47,123	685,462	+4.7%
2010**	28,389	42,914	669,502	-8.9%

\*Note: Fewer trips were provided, but covered more mileage - also the first year without Project Zero funding.

\*\* Note: Michigan Works! decreased from 5days a week to 1 day a week service.

In addition, ACT has had to turn away hundreds of people requesting transportation over the years because the demand for rides exceeds the availability of transportation. Table 2 shows that from Jan. 2010 thru Dec. 2010, ACT was unable to service over 575 individuals, roughly 1.5 persons per day. A quarter of those trips were medically related followed by work related trips. Each month, more residents are turned away from ACT's services because of a lack in funding to provide more transit.

**Table 2. Number of Riders Unable to Receive Service**

Year	Medial Trips	Work Trips	School Trips	Shopping Trips	Other Trips
# of riders unable to be served	157	80	35	13	292

The Workgroup collected data on similarly sized transportation systems in Michigan to determine how they currently provide county-wide transportation service to their general public riders. While some transportation providers offer a reservation service, others also divide the county into zones, or community service areas, to allocate rides throughout the service area. Below is a chart detailing the total ridership from 2008 thru 2010 and type of service offered by transportation providers of similar sizes.

**Table 3. Transportation Provider by Ridership and Service Type**

Transportation Provider	Total Ridership (2010)	Total Ridership (2009)	Total Ridership (2008)	Service Type
<b>Van Buren County</b>	78,500	65,050	60,806	Reservation Service for entire county, Dial A Ride for South Haven and Paw Paw areas, South Haven Metro Loop (fixed)contracts
<b>Kalamazoo Metro Transit</b>	394,318 (2,305,969)*	730,917 (2,534,742)*	560,773	Demand Response for entire county (Care-A-Van), Demand Response (para-transit) one mile off fixed routes (Metro Bus), Regular Fixed routes (Metro Transit)
<b>Benzie County</b>	69,964	67,434	68,385	Reservation Service with Express Route in high-density areas
<b>Barry County</b>	75,120	74,030	82,936	Door-to-door service countywide and demand-response "quickie bus" service in Hastings and Middleville
<b>St. Joseph County</b>	77,258	70,151	70,170	Reservation service & contracts
<b>Allegan County</b>	42,914	47,123	44,989	Reservation service & contracts

\*Additional ridership from Kalamazoo Metro Transit City service.

The Workgroup conducted two studies to gauge the type of public transportation service current and prospective riders would like to use. People were asked, “If the following public transit services were available, which would you rather use?” Then, people were given the option between Fixed Routes (These are specific routes with buses traveling from bus stop to bus stop at regularly scheduled times) or Demand Response (This is a door-to-door service that requires a reservation made 24 hours in advance.) If people didn’t know what type of service they’d prefer, their answer was recorded as unsure. Of the 237 current riders who answered this question, 49% would prefer to use a demand response-type system, 19% would like to use fixed routes, and 33% were unsure. Of the 427 prospective riders who answered this question, 43% would prefer to use a demand response-type system, 22% would like to use fixed routes, and 35% were unsure. Thus, likely ACT riders would prefer to use a Reserve-A-Ride service where they request a ride 24 hours in advance, and then a bus would provide them with door-to-door service.

The Workgroup also asked current and prospective riders about the types of destinations they needed to reach. People were asked, “In the past year, what destinations did you need to travel to but a lack of transportation prevented you from getting there?” Of the 201 current riders who answered this question, 45% indicated they did not have access to a medical appointment, 30% could not get to the grocery store, 23% could not visit friends or family, and 20% could not get to work. Of the 467 prospective riders who responded to this question, 65% indicated they were not prevented from accessing any destinations; however, 21% (103 people) said they could not reach a medical appointment, 16% (76 people) could not get to a grocery store, and 13% (69 people) were unable to get to work. Thus, current riders – to a large extent – and prospective riders – to a lesser extent – are having primary difficulty reaching medical appointments, followed by accessing grocery stores, visiting friends and family, and getting to work.

These findings were also supported by focus groups conducted with organizations, agencies, churches, schools, and other groups throughout the Allegan County community. Specifically, major issues include getting people to the only dialysis center in Allegan County, supporting the independence of individuals served by Community Mental Health, connecting seniors with the meal sites in Hopkins, and providing reliable transportation for employment opportunities for MI Works clients.

Allegan County has several residents who need ongoing medical related transportation, especially to and from dialysis treatment. Allegan County Transportation receives several requests for rides from Allegan County residents who need tri-weekly kidney dialysis treatment. There is only one kidney dialysis treatment center in Allegan County, Fresenius Medical Care, located in the City of Allegan. Fresenius serves over 40 individuals weekly for a total of 120 visits per week. The facility estimates that 60% of their customer base is transported by friends and family, while ACT provides only 11% of the transportation trips. Many of Fresenius’s customers would prefer to use ACT services, but there is no funding to provide this type of transportation. Additionally, there is not any affordable transportation for Allegan County residents to reach Fresenius, and accessing dialysis care can mean the difference between life and death for patients. Thus,

the Workgroup identified a need to link Allegan County residents with Fresenius Medical Care.

Allegan County Transportation continues to provide transportation services to seniors throughout the county. Just over one-fifth, or 21% (27,871) of Allegan County residents are age 55 or older. Many of these seniors rely on ACT to transport them to and from their medical appointments and recreational activities. Without ACT, many seniors become isolated from their surroundings and unable to participate in many of the county's senior activities.

Allegan County has over 11,400 residents with disabilities, particularly individuals served by Community Mental Health, who could be more independent with access to public transportation. Over the last two years, ACT provided an average of 7,400 rides to consumers of Allegan County Community Mental Health on a contractual basis for employment and social service related trips. However, several of these riders also need transportation to get groceries, pick up prescriptions, attend social events, and live independently in the Allegan County community.

Focus groups also indicated that a majority of their clients, customers, and consumers are unable to reach grocery stores to shop or pick up prescriptions, engage in social activities in the community like visit friends and family, go out to eat, watch a movie at the theater, or arrange ongoing transportation to places of employment. In particular, seniors are having a difficult time getting to and from meal sites located in Hopkins Township. Working parents have a need to take their children to and from daycare so that they may work. Over the last three years, ACT averaged 6,300 rides per year in order to service the growing demands of MI Work clients.

Also, several people located near South Haven need transportation to reach grocery, medical and employment destinations. Thus, the Workgroup identified a need to link Allegan County residents with grocery, social, daycare, and employment opportunities, especially in areas near South Haven, Wayland and Hopkins.

In its inception, ACT was designed to meet the contractual needs of countywide service organizations through contracts and grants; ACT was not designed to meet the general public's transportation needs. Therefore, it is not surprising that many of the unmet transportation needs mentioned by ACT riders, the general public, and community groups and organizations focus on medical, shopping, social, and employment related trips that are not covered under ACT's current contracts. For many residents, ACT's current level of service is not adequate to meet their transportation needs. As a result, the Workgroup believes the Allegan County community needs public transportation focused on addressing the medical, employment, shopping and social needs of the general public through a Reserve-A-Ride transportation system.

**B. Service Area**

**Critical Issues:**

Allegan County continues to grow and develop outside of a centrally located region.

The current ACT structure does not adequately address the travel needs of the general public residing in Allegan County.

The current ACT system is not equipped to advance economic development or environmental conservation opportunities in Allegan County.

**Goal:**

Offer public transportation services to Allegan County residents.

**Recommendation:**

Implement a five (5) region community service area transportation structure that allocates transportation service to each of the five regions in Allegan County (Appendix C).

Connect ACT with public transportation systems in the surrounding counties of Kalamazoo, Ottawa, Kent, and Van Buren.

**Rationale:**

Allegan County includes 34 units of government composed of 24 townships and 10 cities generating a total 2009 population of approximately 113,449. Much of Allegan can be classified as rural, with the highest densities of housing, businesses and service organizations located within select areas that are located at the outer edges of the county, with Allegan City being an exception (4,805 residents) - located closer to the center. The areas with relatively large populations include Dorr Twp. (7,852 residents), Gunplain Twp. (6,475 residents), and Laketown Twp. (5,948 residents). Remaining units of government have lower density populations and more dispersed housing. This geographic layout of the County results in higher density areas with businesses, social service organizations and medical facilities surrounded by pockets of low density rural areas.

In addition, Allegan County is surrounded by four other Counties (Ottawa, Kent, Kalamazoo, and Van Buren) where other medical, employment, and retail outlets are located. Because ACT receives requests for service to these Counties, the Workgroup felt it was critical to ask current and prospective riders about their need to travel to these areas. Therefore, the Workgroup asked current and prospective riders, “In the past year, did you have a need to travel to another county/ties in West Michigan?” Of the 241 current riders who answered this question, 50% said yes, 48% said no, and 3% were unsure. Of the 461 prospective riders who answered this question, 57% said yes, 41% said no, and 3% were unsure. People were also asked to which counties they need transportation. *People could select more than one county, so percentages exceed 100 percent.* Current riders needed to travel to Ottawa (61%), Kalamazoo (59%), Kent (48%), and Van Buren (35%) Counties. Prospective riders needed to travel to Kalamazoo (47%), Ottawa (46%), Kent (42%), and Van Buren (22%) Counties. Thus, most people had a

need in the last year to travel to another county and, primarily, needed to get to Ottawa, Kent, and Kalamazoo Counties.

ACT further investigated current ridership trends. First, ACT staff, with the help of Allegan County’s Geographic Information System’s (GIS) Department, gathered data on current rider’s trip origins and destinations, and plotted these locations on maps. Second, Allegan County’s GIS Department developed maps plotting: the population of seniors age 55 and older, population of seniors age 65 and older, population of people with a disability, occupied housing units with no or one vehicle, occupied housing units with no vehicle, occupied housing units with one vehicle, household income between \$10,000 and \$25,000, household income below \$10,000, and population under poverty level. Third, all of these maps were compared to the ACT’s current service area to determine current and projected gaps in transportation service. The results from this analysis indicated that there were primary destinations with a need for general public transportation, but underserved by ACT. These locations include: Casco Township, Wayland Township, Hopkins Township, and Townships located between the Interurban Transit System service area (Saugatuck Township) and the City of Allegan including Valley Township and Clyde Township.

The Workgroup conducted an analysis of the service areas covered by other transit systems of similar sizes. Results revealed that ACT was the only transportation provider that does not serve the entire county in which it is located. Following is a chart detailing the service area covered by similarly sized transit systems.

**Table 4. Transportation Provider by Service Area Covered**

Transportation Provider	Service Area
<b>Van Buren County</b>	Entire County split by zones
<b>Kalamazoo Metro Transit</b>	Entire County
<b>Benzie County</b>	Entire County
<b>Barry County</b>	Entire County
<b>St. Joseph County</b>	Entire County
<b>Allegan County Transportation</b>	Limited portions of the County

Understanding that ACT’s service area is very limited, the Workgroup conducted a survey of current and prospective riders and stakeholder organizations to determine the economic impact lack of transportation had on them. Current and prospective riders were asked, “In the last year has a lack of transportation prevented you from looking for, getting or keeping a job?” Of the 240 current riders who answered this question 25% (59

people) said yes. Of the 478 prospective riders who answered this question, 17% (83 people) said yes. Thus, out of 518 people, 142 have been unable to look for, get or keep a job due to lack of transportation.

Stakeholder organizations also participated in an online survey and indicated that lack of public transportation was affecting their organization. Stakeholders were asked, “How do unmet transportation needs affect your organization?” The majority of respondents indicated that they are unable to get people the services they need (52%, 77 stakeholders), have decreased participation in the programs (44%, 63 stakeholders) and lost revenue (23%, 32 stakeholders). Thus, local Allegan County organizations indicated negative economic and other effects due to lack of transportation for their consumers, clients and customers.

As an added benefit, the Workgroup recognized the potential for public transportation to create and enhance economic development. Although many Allegan County residents own a personal vehicle, public transportation offers the potential to encourage people to conserve environmental resources and can be an added community benefit for tourists who visit the area. Prospective ACT riders were asked, “If your car broke down and you needed another form of transportation immediately, what is the likelihood you would use Allegan County Transportation to take you to...” a variety of destinations. Although most people who participated in the survey do not currently use ACT and have a vehicle, 52% said they would be very or somewhat likely to take ACT to a medical appointment and 37% would be likely to take ACT to work should they need a ride. Thus, if public transportation were to be available to the general Allegan County public, it would not only serve individuals who need transportation on a daily basis to access critical destinations, but it would also provide general residents the opportunity to access transportation when they need it.

**C. Fare Structure**

**Critical Issue:**

Public transportation fare structures must be affordable for those who need it most and competitive with fares of other transit providers of similar sizes.

**Goal:**

Create an ACT fare structure that encourages ridership and is affordable for passengers.

**Recommendation:**

Maintain the current fare structure of \$2 per trip for general public transportation and \$1 per trip for seniors, ADA passengers, and children.

**Rationale:**

Three studies were conducted regarding fares. The Workgroup conducted the first study, comparing ACT’s current fares with those of other transportation providers. The following table summarizes these results and illustrates that ACT’s current fare structure is consistent with other transportation systems.

**Table 5. General Public Fares by Transit Providers of Similar Size**

<b>Transportation Provider</b>	<b>Reserve-A-Ride Adult</b>	<b>Reserve-A-Ride Seniors/ ADA Passenger/Children</b>	<b>Fixed Route Adult</b>	<b>Fixed Route Seniors/ ADA Passenger/Children</b>
<b>Van Buren County</b>	\$4.00 - \$6.00	\$2.00 - \$3.00	\$1.00	\$0.50
<b>Kalamazoo Metro Transit</b>	\$10.00 - \$12.00	\$3.00 - \$10.00	\$1.50	\$0.75
<b>Benzie County Transportation</b>	\$3.00	\$1.50	N/A	N/A
<b>Barry County Transportation</b>	\$2.00 in town \$3.00 if 5+ miles out of town	\$1.00 in town \$1.50 if 5+ miles out of town	N/A	N/A
<b>St. Joseph County Transportation</b>	\$8.00	\$4.00	N/A	N/A
<b>Allegan County Transportation</b>	\$2.00	\$1.00	N/A	N/A

The second study asked current ACT users about fares. The survey asked: “What would be an affordable cost for one, one-way ride to where you need to travel?” Out of the 230 current riders who answered this question, 31% reported that \$1 was affordable, 20% reported \$2, 9% reported \$0.50, 8% said \$3, and 22% indicated that no amount would be affordable as they do not have any money to pay for transportation. Thus, most current

riders (60%) indicated \$2 or less would be an affordable cost for one, one-way ride on ACT.

The third study asked prospective ACT users about fares and found very similar results. The survey asked: “What would be an affordable cost for one, one-way ride to where you need to travel?” Out of the 430 prospective riders who answered this question, 37% reported that \$1 was affordable, 20% reported \$2, 13% reported \$0.50, 11% said \$3, and 11% indicated that no amount would be affordable as they do not have any money to pay for transportation. Thus, most prospective passengers (64%) indicated \$2 or less would be an affordable cost for one, one-way ride on ACT.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that transportation providers charge no more than half the fare value of the adult public transportation fare. Thus, the Committee felt that maintaining \$2 adult fares and \$1 fares for seniors, children, and people with disabilities would be affordable for most people, consistent with fares sought by other transit providers, and meet the requirements established under the ADA.

**D. Service Hours and Days**

**Critical Issue:**

The current ACT structure does not adequately address the travel needs of the Allegan County general public.

**Goal:**

Provide transportation on the days and times when ACT riders need to travel.

**Recommendation:**

Offer public transportation Monday through Friday from 5:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. with limited employment transportation from 9:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. Additionally, provide limited Saturday and Sunday up to 115 hours per weekend.

**Rationale:**

The Workgroup collected data on similarly sized transportation systems in Michigan to determine when they provide countywide transportation service to their general public riders. Most transportation providers begin service at either 5:30 a.m. or 6:00 a.m. and end sometime between 5:30 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. About half of the providers studied offer service Monday through Friday only while half also provided limited Saturday service. No transportation systems offered Sunday service. Following is a chart detailing the days and times service is provided by other transportation systems.

**Table 6. Transportation Providers by Time and Days of Operation**

	Time of Operation	Days of Operation
<b>Van Buren County</b>	6:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.	Monday - Friday
<b>Kalamazoo Metro Transit</b>	6:00 a.m. - 10:15 p.m.	Monday - Saturday
<b>Benzie County</b>	6:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m. M-F, 7:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. Sat	Monday - Saturday
<b>Barry County</b>	5:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.	Monday - Friday
<b>St. Joseph County</b>	6:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. M-F, 6:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Sat	Monday - Saturday
<b>Allegan County Transportation</b>	5:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.	Monday - Friday

The Workgroup conducted two surveys to ask current and prospective riders about their transportation needs. People were asked, “When thinking about your typical weekly schedule, what days and times do you need transportation?” Of the 194 current riders who answered this question, most need transportation between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Monday through Friday, on Saturday from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., and on Sunday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Close to half of current riders need transportation Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. as well as on Saturday between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Of the 300 prospective riders who answered this question, most need transportation between 6 a.m. and 10 a.m. Monday through Friday, on Saturday from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., and on Sunday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Over half of prospective riders also need transportation Monday through Friday from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. as well as on Saturday between 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. The charts provided below details people’s responses. Thus, a transportation schedule that provided service Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. would meet most current and prospective riders transportation needs.

**Table 7. Current Riders by Days and Times Transportation is Needed**

	6 a.m. – 10 a.m.	10 a.m. – 2 p.m.	2 p.m. – 6 p.m.	6 p.m. – 10 p.m.	10 p.m. – 2 a.m.	2 a.m. – 6 a.m.	Response Count
Monday	48.5% (66)	<b>52.2% (71)</b>	50.0% (68)	16.9% (23)	7.4% (10)	6.6% (9)	136
Tuesday	46.9% (67)	<b>51.0% (73)</b>	48.3% (69)	13.3% (19)	6.3% (9)	5.6% (8)	143
Wednesday	47.9% (67)	<b>51.4% (72)</b>	49.3% (69)	16.4% (23)	6.4% (9)	6.4% (9)	140
Thursday	47.3% (62)	<b>50.4% (66)</b>	49.6% (65)	15.3% (20)	6.9% (9)	6.1% (8)	131
Friday	46.6% (62)	<b>51.9% (69)</b>	49.6% (66)	18.0% (24)	8.3% (11)	6.8% (9)	133
Saturday	37.5% (24)	50.0% (32)	<b>56.3% (36)</b>	29.7% (19)	14.1% (9)	9.4% (6)	64
Sunday	43.1% (25)	<b>55.2% (32)</b>	43.1% (25)	22.4% (13)	8.6% (5)	5.2% (3)	58

Table 8. Prospective Riders by Days and Times Transportation is Needed

	6 a.m. – 10 a.m.	10 a.m. – 2 p.m.	2 p.m. – 6 p.m.	6 p.m. – 10 p.m.	10 p.m. – 2 a.m.	2 a.m. – 6 a.m.	Response Count
Monday	<b>63.5%</b> <b>(155)</b>	47.1% (115)	52.5% (128)	22.5% (55)	5.7% (14)	3.7% (9)	244
Tuesday	<b>62.9%</b> <b>(151)</b>	40.8% (98)	57.9% (139)	22.9% (55)	5.0% (12)	2.9% (7)	240
Wednesday	<b>61.4%</b> <b>(156)</b>	44.9% (114)	55.9% (142)	22.8% (58)	5.5% (14)	2.8% (7)	254
Thursday	<b>62.3%</b> <b>(149)</b>	43.1% (103)	56.9% (136)	23.0% (55)	5.4% (13)	2.9% (7)	239
Friday	<b>63.0%</b> <b>(153)</b>	45.7% (111)	53.5% (130)	21.4% (52)	5.8% (14)	3.3% (8)	243
Saturday	45.4% (74)	<b>57.7%</b> <b>(94)</b>	57.1% (93)	32.5% (53)	8.6% (14)	4.3% (7)	163
Sunday	46.0% (74)	<b>60.9%</b> <b>(98)</b>	45.3% (73)	27.3% (44)	6.2% (10)	3.1% (5)	161

## E. Public Communication

### Critical Issues:

Allegan County residents do not understand ACT's geographic coverage, scope of services, and funding structure and do not know how to access transportation service.

Service alterations must be tweaked as implementation occurs to ensure maximum effectiveness and efficiency.

### Goal:

ACT must work well for those who need it most.

### Recommendation:

Maintain a user-friendly Allegan County Transportation website with current information on service, fares, updates, and contact information.

Create an Allegan County Transportation annual report with year-end updates, successes and trends to share with riders and stakeholders via mail.

Work with the local press outlets to secure earned media on ACT updates and trends.

Maintain ongoing dialogue with ACT customer and stakeholders to gather feedback on whether the system meets their needs and research requests for service enhancements as appropriate.

### Rationale:

Each year, ACT hosts a feedback and planning session with community organizations, riders, elected officials, and interested citizens as part of the development of a coordinated human services plan. A primary issue identified at the 2008 planning meeting was the lack of awareness and accurate knowledge the Allegan County community has about ACT services. Thus, at the meeting, people placed the need to focus on marketing and education as a top priority for ACT in 2008 and coming years.

Following this planning process, The Workgroup conducted two studies (Reference: Current Rider Survey and Prospective Rider Survey), to determine the best way to educate current and prospective riders about ACT's services. Current and prospective ACT riders were asked, "What is the best way to educate you on the public transit services that are available in Allegan County?" The majority of respondents (55% of current riders and 45% of prospective riders) indicated that a mailing would be the best way to educate them about public transit services. The second best marketing strategy would be to educate people through the newspaper (21% of current riders and 43% of prospective riders). Thus, Allegan County Transportation should create an annual report that is distributed to current riders and other interested stakeholders/residents that includes yearly updates on ridership trends, revenues and expenses, successes, and other trends to educate the community about ACT services. In addition, ACT should continue

to work with the local newspapers to secure earned media on successes, trends, and updates concerning the transit system.

Finally, although the web was not a popularly selected marketing option selected by current and prospective riders (5% of current riders and 9% of prospective riders chose this option), the web remains an efficient and economic way to update and maintain current service information and make this information available to the Allegan County public. Thus, ACT should maintain a user-friendly website that provides current information on service, fares, updates, and contact information.

Additionally, after initial implementation of service changes occur, most likely, minor adjustments will be required. A critical component of the success of ACT alterations is follow up with riders and stakeholders. During this dialogue, stakeholders will be asked to evaluate ACT service changes and whether the new system is meeting their needs. As community input is gathered, additional thoughts about ways to continue to improve the system may arise. Thus, as appropriate, ACT staff should research the feasibility of additional changes and improvements to meet community needs.

## F. Funding

### **Critical Issues:**

Dependence on Federal and State grants, municipal funding from Allegan County, and revenue from local community organizations is inadequate to meet the transportation needs of Allegan County residents.

### **Goal:**

Determine the best way to fund general public Allegan County Transportation services.

### **Recommendation:**

Seek local funding to support implementation of the improvements outlined in the plan.

### **Rationale:**

Allegan County Transportation conducted an analysis of funding sources among other similarly sized transportation providers in Michigan. A table detailing these funding sources is provided below. Results reveal that ACT is unique in that it receives a competitive amount of state and federal revenue; however, it is unable to provide a competitive number of trips due to limited local funding. While other transportation providers receive similar amounts of local funding, the source of this funding tends to come from millages. Nearly all ACT's local funding comes from contracts with local organizations. The ramification of this type of local funding is that stipulations are put on trip types that ACT can provide; and while ACT has similar costs comparable to other transit providers, they are restricted to the amount of general public riders they can serve. ACT's obligation is to meet the service needs of local organizations per contractual agreements, and general public transportation is only provided when a general public trip need matches a contractual trip being provided. A frequent lack of overlap between these needs causes ACT to have lower ridership numbers than other transit systems and makes it very difficult to provide "public" transportation to residents of Allegan County whose ride is not covered under a contractual agreement or specific grant source.

In order for ACT to provide general public transportation in Allegan County, the Workgroup has identified a need for additional local funding that is not tied to contractual agreements with local organizations or grant sources. With fewer restrictions on the people ACT can serve and the trip types ACT can provide, the transit system would have resources to offer rides to the general Allegan County public. Thus, the Workgroup recommends that local funding be sought to implement the transportation improvements outlined in this five-year plan, particularly for transit service to the general public residing in Allegan County.

Table 9. Transportation Providers by Expenses and Revenues

	Service Area Population (2009)	Total Ridership	Total Expenses	Total Revenues <i>Federal</i>	Total Revenues <i>State</i>	Total Revenues <i>Local</i>	Total Revenues <i>Farebox</i>	Type of Structure
<b>Van Buren County</b>	76,263	65,050	\$1,153,937	\$184,630	\$426,774	\$682,017	\$303,220	Transportation Agency, public, not for profit
<b>Kalamazoo Metro Transit</b> <i>(nonurban district)</i>	n/a	730,917	\$1,883,923	\$300,479	\$696,753	\$1,000,721	\$452,949	Transportation Authority as appointed by the County Commissioners
<b>Benzie County</b>	31,996	67,434	\$1,602,824	\$256,816	\$592,791	\$521,507	\$133,509	Transportation Authority – independent of county
<b>Barry County</b>	56,755	74,030	\$801,276	\$59,936	\$296,345	\$541,069	\$186,082	Department of County
<b>St. Joseph County</b>	62,964	70,151	\$1,182,061	\$173,967	\$437,175	\$616,624	\$260,868	Transportation Authority under County
<b>Allegan County</b>	112,975	47,123	\$1,101,211	\$176,882	\$407,274	\$27,108	\$543,124	Department of County

## VI. Proposed Service Options

### Option A: Maintain Current ACT System

Currently, ACT receives funding from the Federal and State governments, county-wide organizational contract agreements, Allegan County and passenger fares. The grants provided by the government include funding two unique programs: Specialized Services and Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC).

ACT currently operates as a reservation service in which requests must be made 24 hours in advance from time of requested pick-up. All general public transportation trips are scheduled on a first come, first serve basis after all contractual agreements have been scheduled.

ACT has a limited service area that follows the M-40 corridor from the City of Allegan to Holland, the M-89 corridor thru the City of Fennville and Pullman, the southeast M-89 corridor to Otsego and Plainwell, and the US 131 highway including the cities of Shelbyville, Martin, Dorr and Wayland. Based on the geographic areas served, ACT created a deviated route with a one mile radius. This is not a fixed route system, but rather a way for ACT to provide more trips in an efficient and timely manner. Service hours are from 5:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday thru Friday, with minimal trips provided after hours for contract agreements.

Fares are set at \$2.00 for one, one-way ride, and \$1.00 for persons with disabilities, seniors and children between 5 and 11 years on the deviated route. Children under 5 ride for free. Trips designated under Specialized Services are calculated as the remaining balance of total hours (\$45.00/hour) subtracted by grant funding (\$1.20/mile traveled). There is a \$5 minimum charge for this service.

### Option B: Dedicate transportation to connect Allegan City with Wayland/Hopkins and the Interurban in Saugatuck/Douglas, and provide transportation to Casco Township

Service Options B builds on the current reservation service system in which riders request service at least 24 hours in advance. This option services 56,757 rides per year (1,113 rides per week) to fund additional service areas in the county to serve more residents. All general public transportation trips are scheduled on a first come, first serve basis after all contractual agreements have been scheduled.

Expanding service areas include a connecting deviated route to the Interurban Transit Authority in Saugatuck/Douglas, a deviated route to the South Haven area, and a third deviated route to Wayland, going thru the Hopkins area. These deviated routes would only operate on certain days as determined by ACT and ridership demands. All fares, service hours and days remain the same.

If this option were chosen Specialized Services, a state funded program, would be eliminated. The current ACT funding structure would not be able to fund the additional hours needed to implement this option, thus a local millage would be required. ACT would receive a state match on the local millage dollars received and therefore, replace the funds previously provided by Specialized Services. All other funding would remain the same, including organizational contract agreements.

This option would also include the promotion of punch cards and operate as a Reserve-a-Ride system.

**Option C: Dedicate 113,235 rides for public transportation service by creating a county-wide zone transit system in Allegan County**

Service Option C expands ACT to provide a county-wide transit system in which the county is divided into 5 community service areas. Thus, the current route system would be discontinued allowing the entire county to be serviced, instead of just the current service area routes traveled. A total of 113,235 riders per year (2,220 rides per week) is included in this option. Each zone would be designated a certain amount of hours from the total amount of hours funded, as determined by ACT and ridership demands. These hours would then be divided among trip type including employment, medical, shopping, etc. The designation of hours ensures that each zone is fairly serviced.

This option would also extend service hours from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Monday thru Saturday.

In addition to the system requiring 24 hours notice for scheduling, the service days and fares remain the same as the current system. All general public transportation trips are scheduled on a first come, first serve basis after all contractual agreements have been scheduled. This option would also eliminate Specialized Services, as a local millage is required. All other funding would remain the same, including organizational contract agreements.

This option would also include the promotion of punch cards and operate as a Reserve a Ride system.

**Option D: Dedicate 177,228 rides for public transportation service by creating a county-wide zone transit system in Allegan County**

Service Option D mirrors all of the components of Service Option C; however the total number of rides increases to 177,228 per year (3,475 rides per week). This increase will allow for transportation service to extend to 11:00 p.m. All other components of this option remain the same as Service Option C.

**Option E: Dedicate 260,247 rides for public transportation service by creating a county-wide zone transit system in Allegan County**

Service Option E mirrors all of the components of Service Option D, however the total number of rides increases to 260,247 per year (5,103 rides per week). Additionally, this option will allow for limited demand-response system in high dense areas such as, City of Allegan, City of Otsego, City of Plainwell, and City of Wayland. Thus, ACT will not only provide a Reserve-A-Ride system, but also a demand response system. All other components of this option remain the same as Service Option D.

***Additional Service Option*****Option F: Expansion of Route Radius**

This additional service would only apply to Service Options A and B in which the one mile service radius to all routes would be extended to a two mile radius. For Option A an additional 25 hours would be required, and for Option B an additional 55 hours would be required. This service would assist providing a larger geographic coverage of the ACT service area.

*\* Options are based on 5 days a week, 51 weeks a year (5 holidays per year)*

## VII. Projected Costs of Proposed Service Options

Table 10. Projected Costs of Proposed Service Options

	Option B	Option C	Hybrid Option (C/D)	Option D	Option E
Additional Hours (Year)	27,030	47,736	54,621	64,770	86,496
Additional Rides (Year)	56,757	113,235	149,403	177,228	260,247
Additional Rides (Week)	1,113	2,220	2,930	3,475	5,103
<b>EXPENSES</b>					
Cost per hour	\$43.95	\$37.35	\$37.00	\$36.70	\$35.73
Operational Cost (Year)	\$1,187,968.50	\$1,728,939.60	\$2,020,977.00	\$2,377,059.00	\$3,090,502.08
<b>REVENUES</b>					
State & Federal Funds	\$428,029.50	\$643,030.60	\$729,080.00	\$857,180.00	\$1,114,660.08
Local Funds	\$759,939.00	\$1,139,909.00	\$1,291,897.00	\$1,519,879.00	\$1,975,842.00
Estimated Annual Tax per Household	\$10.00	\$15.00	\$17.00	\$20.00	\$26.00
Millage Rate	0.181	0.272	0.308	0.362	0.471

## VIII. Final Recommendation

The Workgroup desires to develop Allegan County Transportation into a county-wide transit system that effectively and efficiently meets the ridership demands of the general public. Additionally, the Workgroup encourages reliable and affordable transportation for passengers ensuring a comfortable and friendly ride.

Based on three years of research and dialogue, the Workgroup recommends a hybrid of options C and D. This option would include the characteristics outlined in Option D, but would scale back the number of hours served to 54,621 and additional rides per year to 149,403. Additionally, Option C only expands service hours to 9:30 p.m., whereas, Option D expands hours until 11:00 p.m. It is important to find a balance between number of hours served and hours of operation. This hybrid option does include the revenues from a 0.308 millage. It is important to note that based on economic variables, including a change in property values, the amount of the millage rate may increase or decrease accordingly. This balanced hybrid option will effectively and efficiently meet the current and future (within the five year projection) needs for Allegan residents.

Option D provides optimal transportation service throughout the County, as well as limited weekend services. Option C does not meet the transit demands of the community as identified in terms of yearly hours served; while Option E provides an unlimited, demand-response system that would be underutilized with ACT's current ridership levels.

Due to the fiscal constraints of the Allegan County General Fund and the decrease in state and federal transportation funding, the Workgroup recommends that Allegan County Transportation seek a local transit millage. This funding would allow general public riders to utilize the county-wide ACT system.

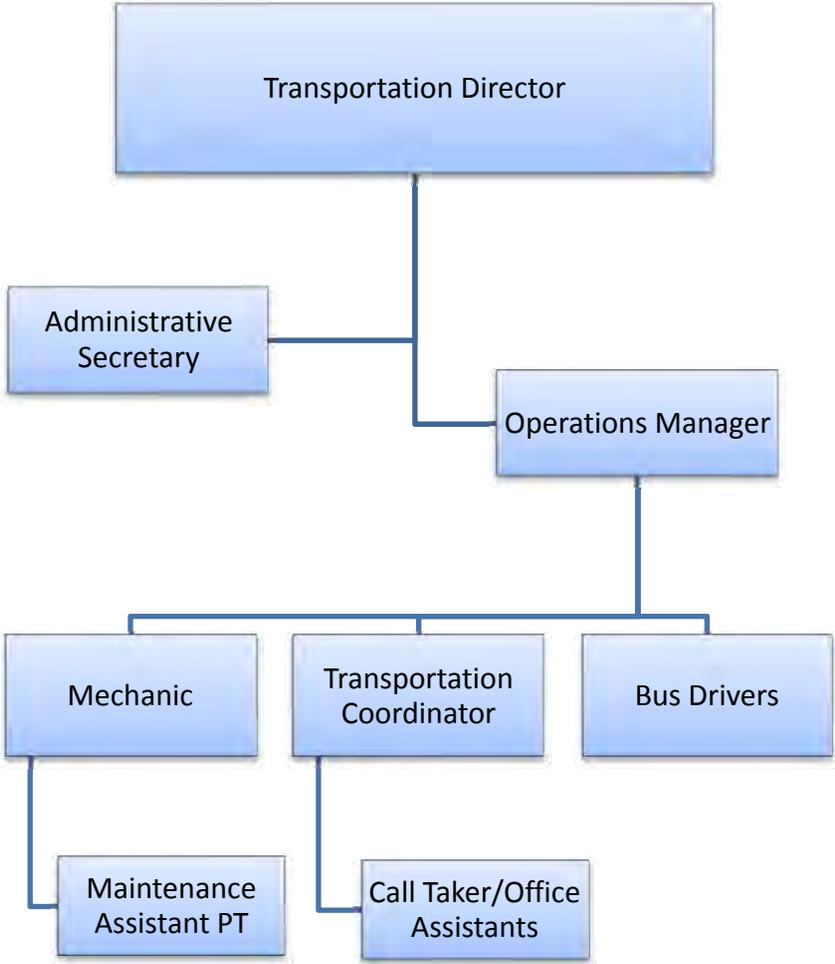
The Workgroup further recommends the re-evaluation of the ACT system after the completion and full implementation of the five-year strategic plan.

## APPENDIX A:

### Allegan Transit Workgroup Members

- Doug Bazuin  
*Herman Miller*
- Chad Broersma  
*Operations Manager, Allegan County Transportation*
- Beth Durkee  
*Allegan County Community Mental Health*
- Kathryn Gray  
*Public Policy Specialist, Disability Network/Lakeshore*
- Cherie Giller  
*Director, Interurban Transit Authority*
- Susie Hernandez  
*WIC Specialist, Pullman Health Clinic*
- Dean Kapenga  
*County Commissioner, Allegan County*
- Shannon McVoy  
*Michigan Commission for the Blind*
- Trinidad “Trino” Perez  
*Board Member, Commission on Aging*
- Bob Poetsch  
*Board Member, Interurban Transit Authority*
- Lisa Sheaffer  
*Treasurer, City of Fennville*
- George Smeenge  
*Resident, Laketown Township*
- Fritz Spreitzer  
*County Commissioner, Allegan County*
- Ashley Thomson  
*Administrative Secretary, Allegan County Transportation*
- Sherry Torres  
*Director, Allegan County Senior Services*
- Dan Wedge  
*Director, Allegan County Transportation*

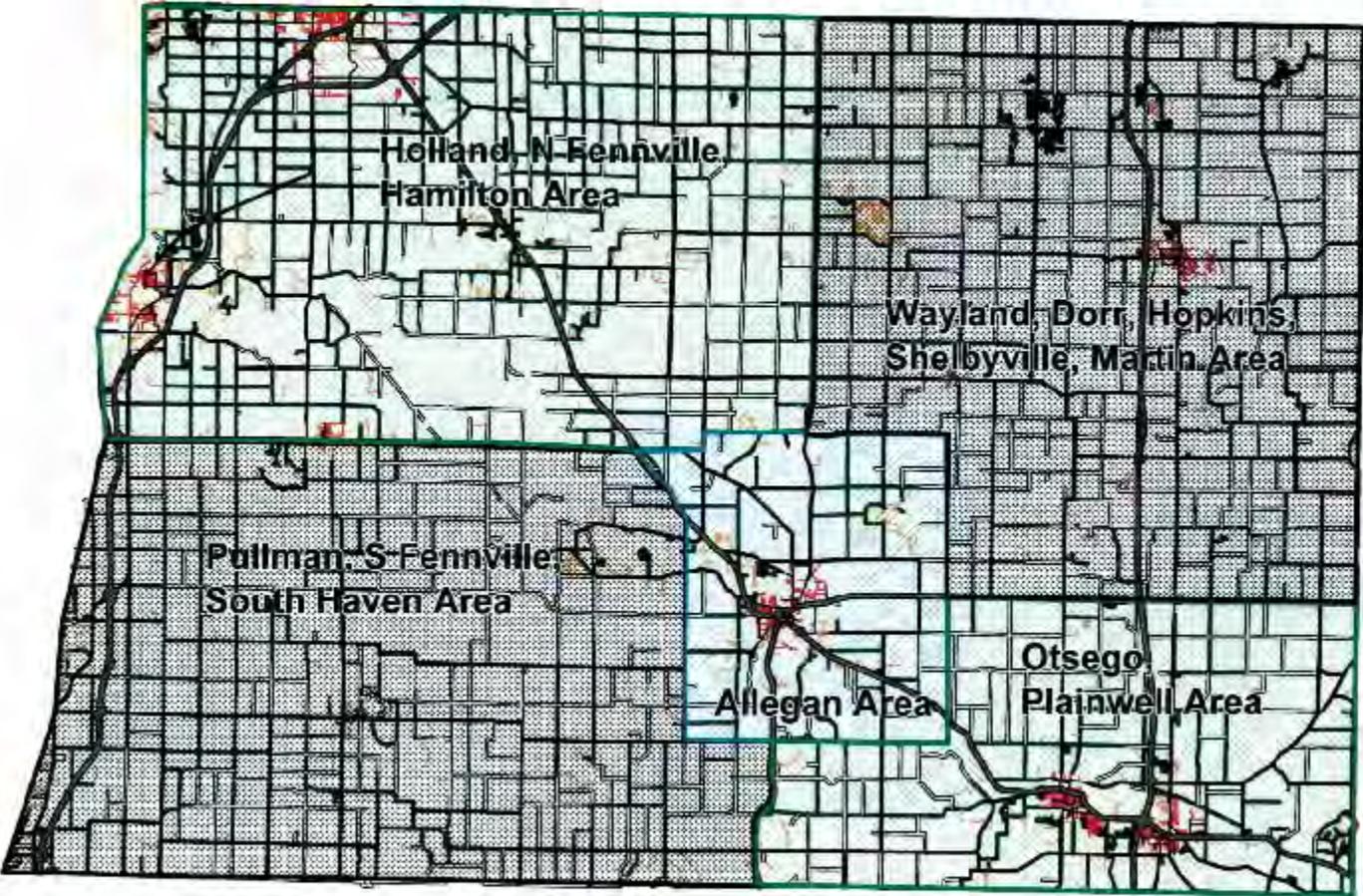
**APPENDIX B:**  
ACT Staff Organizational Chart



**APPENDIX C:**

Map of ACT Community Service Areas

**Alleghan County Community Service Areas**

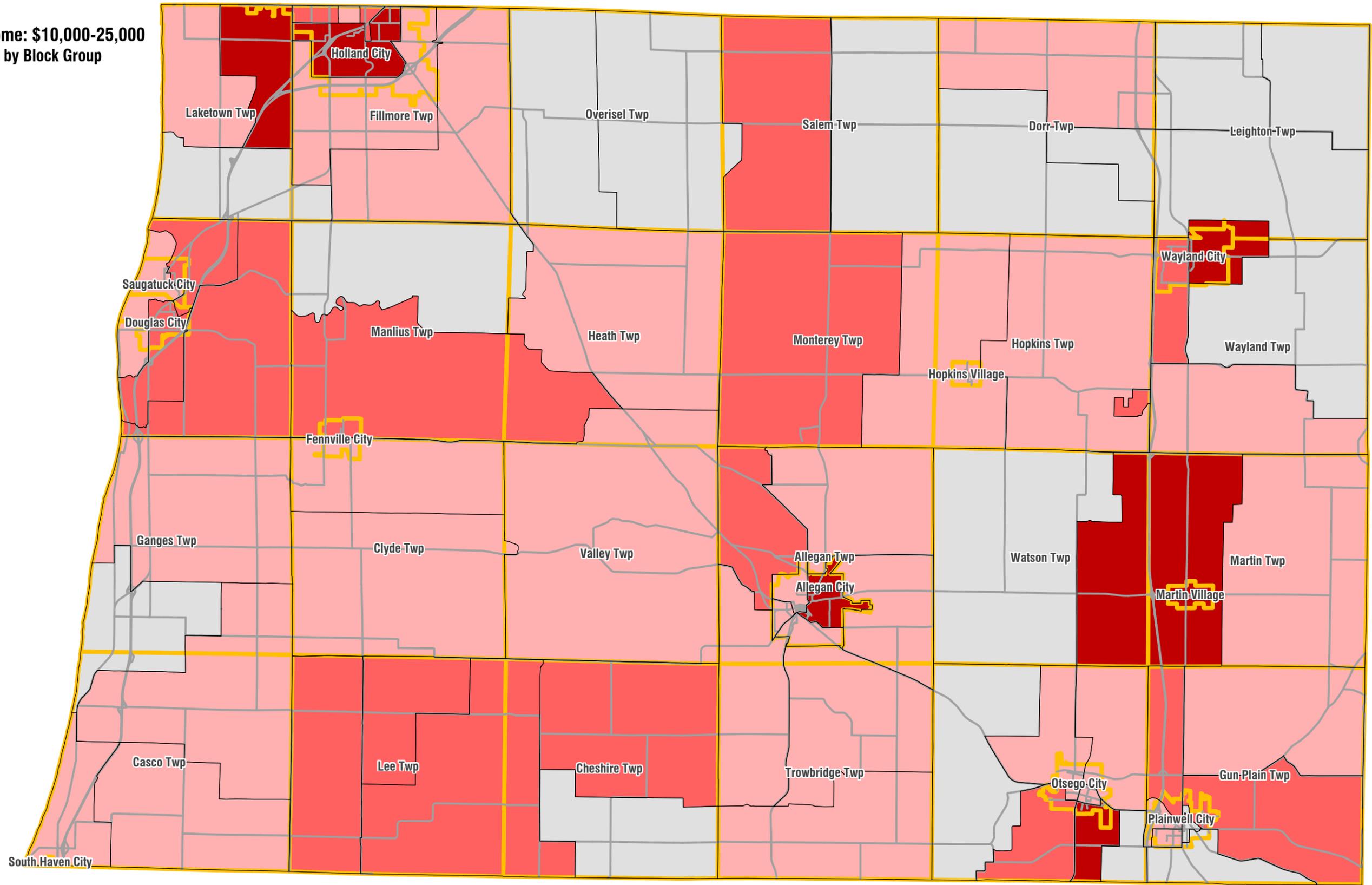


# **APPENDIX D:**

## Maps of GIS Census Data

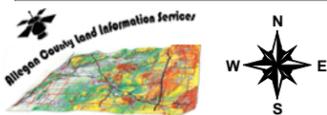
**1999 Household Income: \$10,000-25,000  
Number of Households by Block Group**

- 150 to 200 (6)
- 100 to 150 (17)
- 50 to 100 (33)
- 0 to 50 (18)



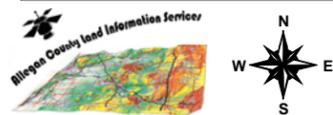
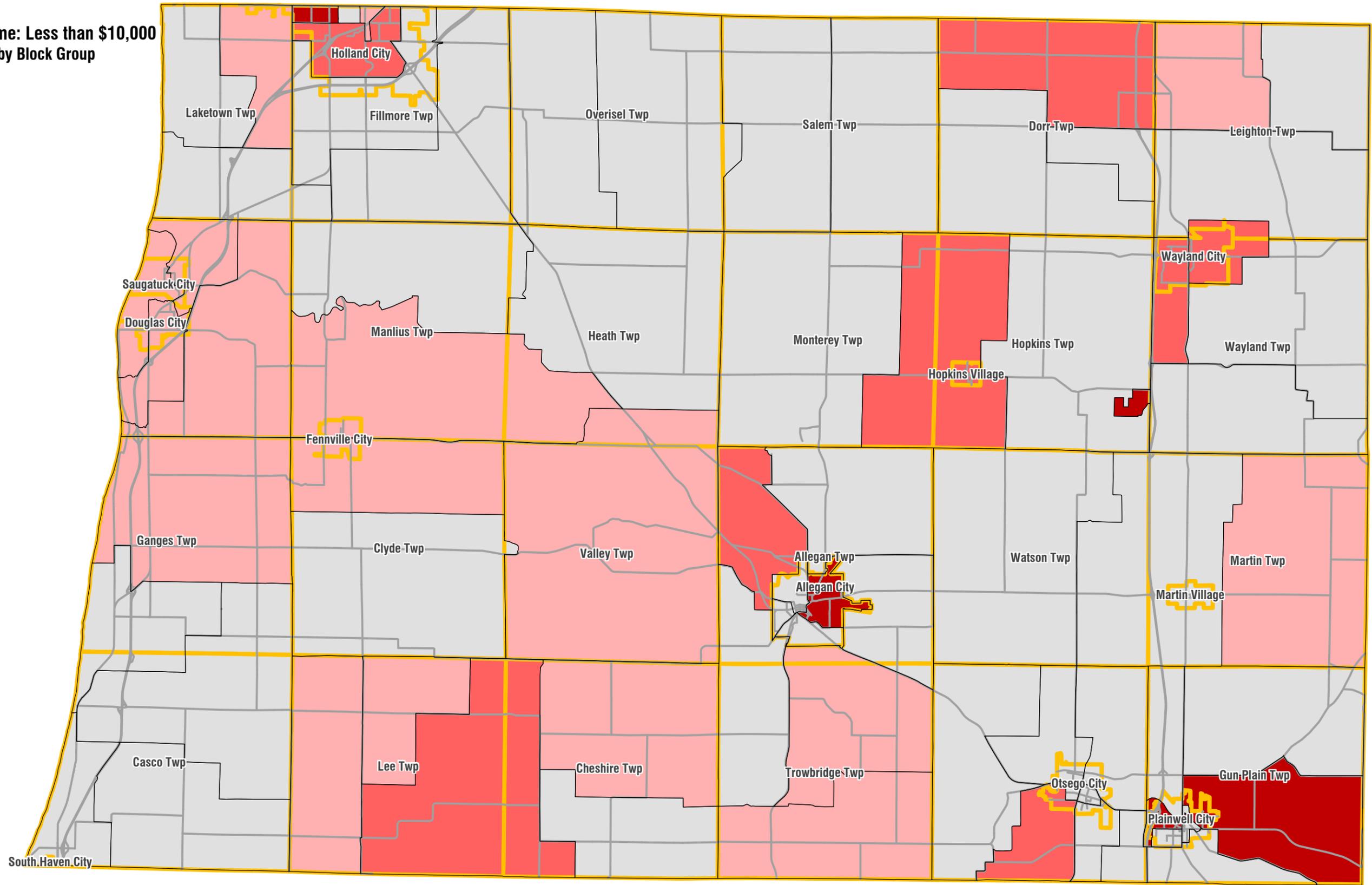
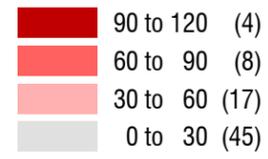
**1999 Household Income, \$10,000-\$24,999  
Allegan County, Michigan**

Allegan County Land Information Services assumes no liability for the conclusions drawn from the use of this data.



Map Scale: 1 : 175000  
Map Printed: 5/22/2009

**1999 Household Income: Less than \$10,000  
Number of Households by Block Group**

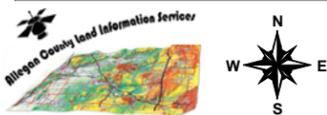
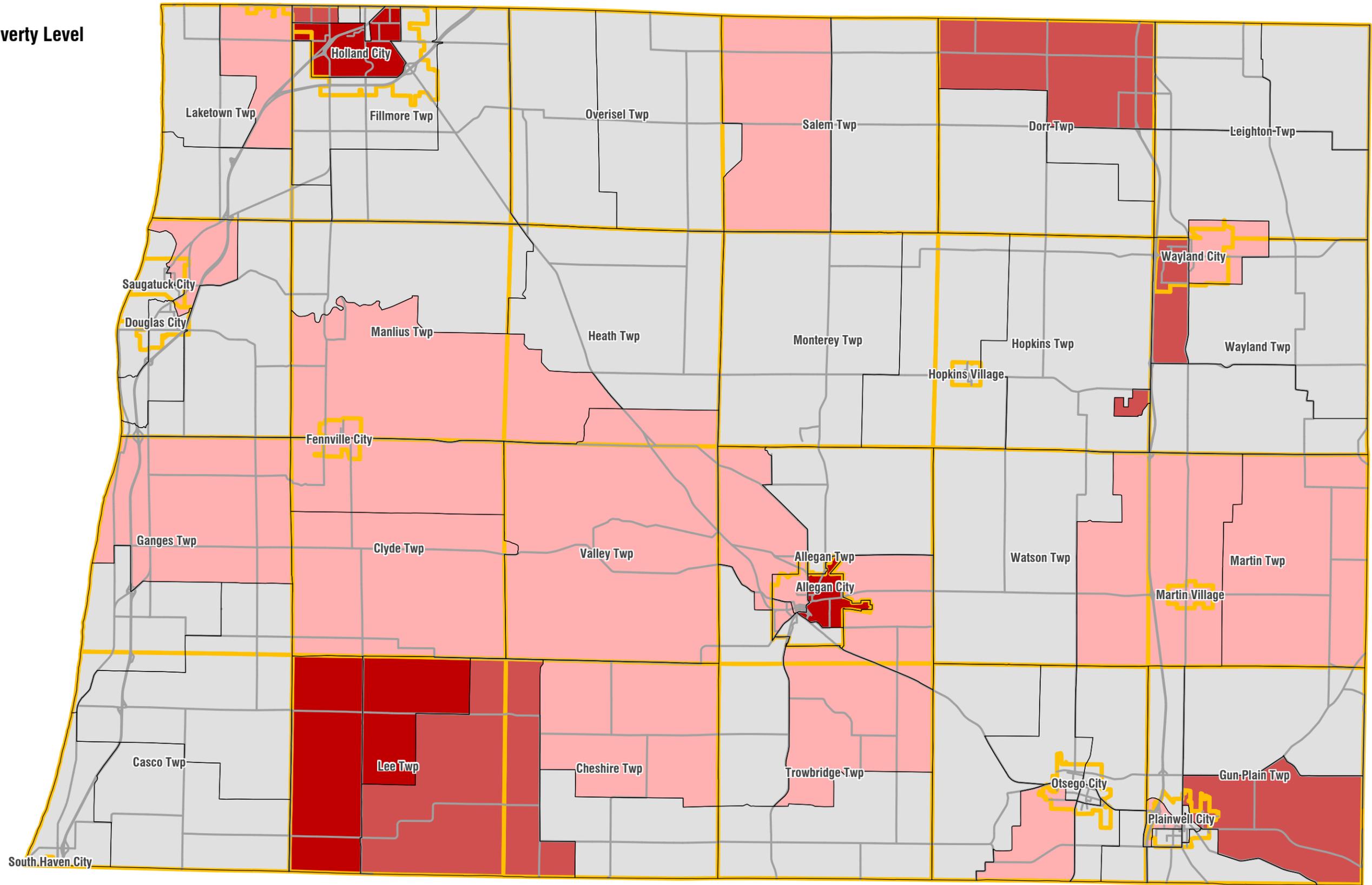


**1999 Household Income, Less than \$10,000  
Allegan County, Michigan**

Allegan County Land Information Services assumes no liability for the conclusions drawn from the use of this data.

Map Scale: 1 : 175000  
Map Printed: 5/21/2009

**Population Under Poverty Level  
By Block Group**

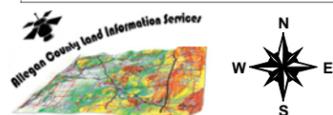
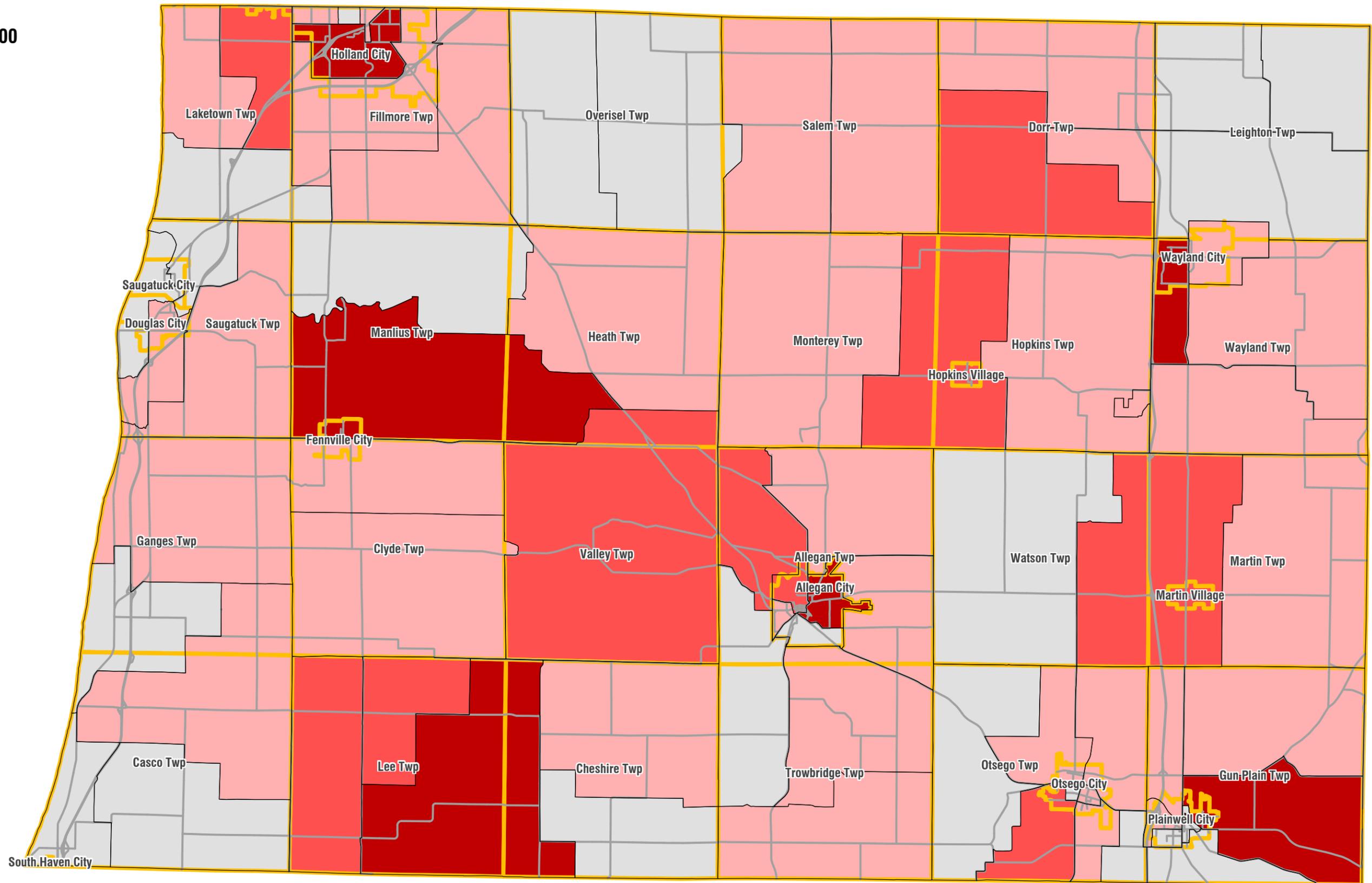


**Persons Below the Poverty Level  
Alleghen County, Michigan**

Alleghen County Land Information Services assumes no liability for the conclusions drawn from the use of this data.

Map Scale: 1 : 175000  
Map Printed: 5/21/2009

**Disability Status, 2000  
By Block Group**

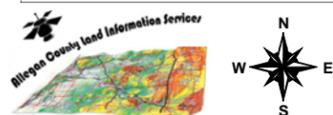
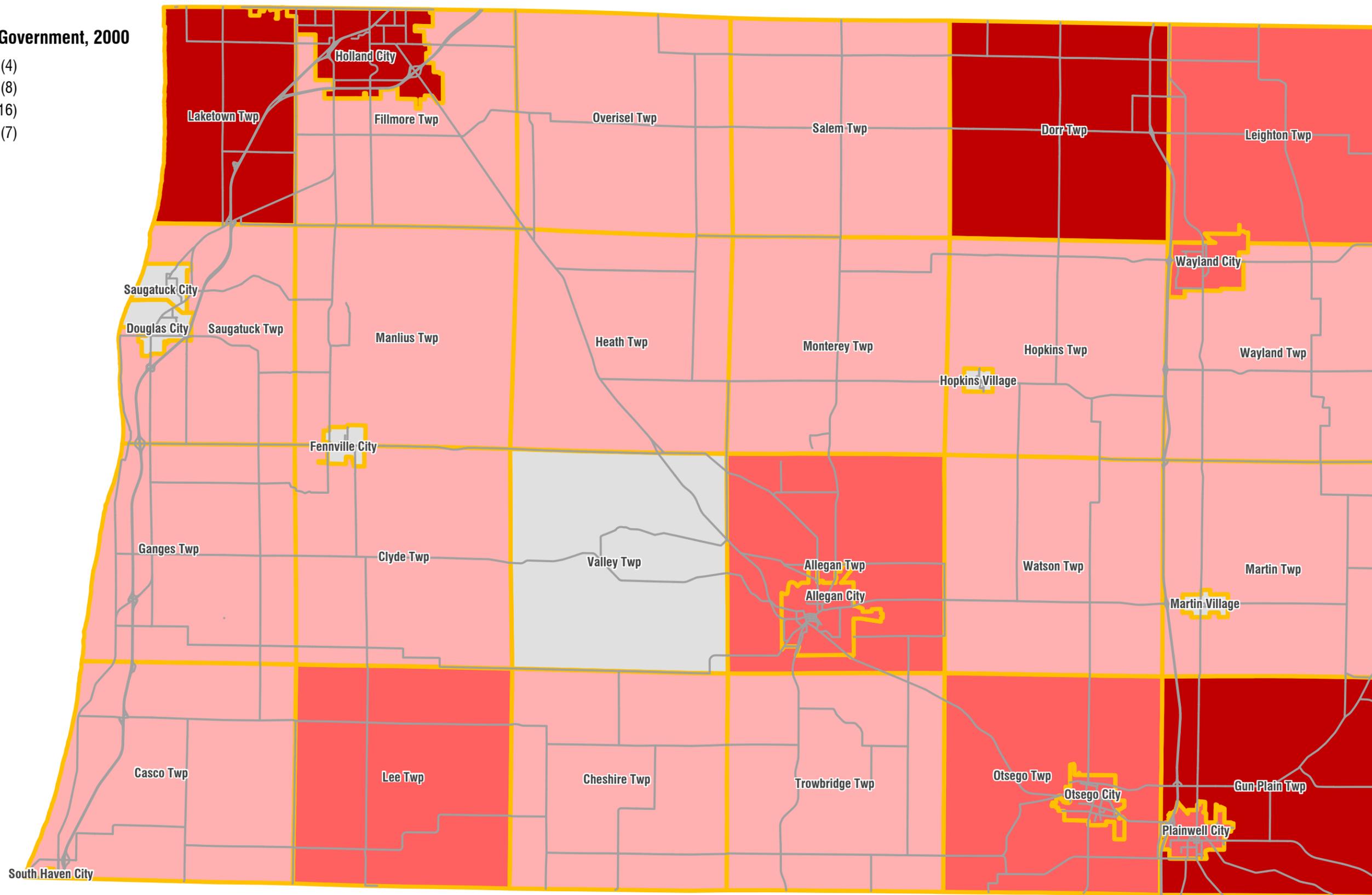
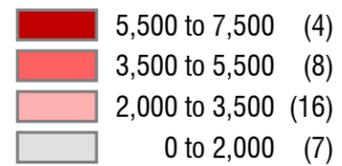


**Disability Status, 2000  
Allegan County, Michigan**

Allegan County Land Information Services assumes no liability for the conclusions drawn from the use of this data.

Map Scale: 1 : 175000  
Map Printed: 5/21/2009

**Population by Unit of Government, 2000**



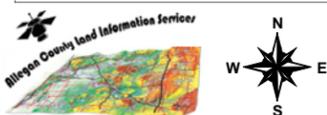
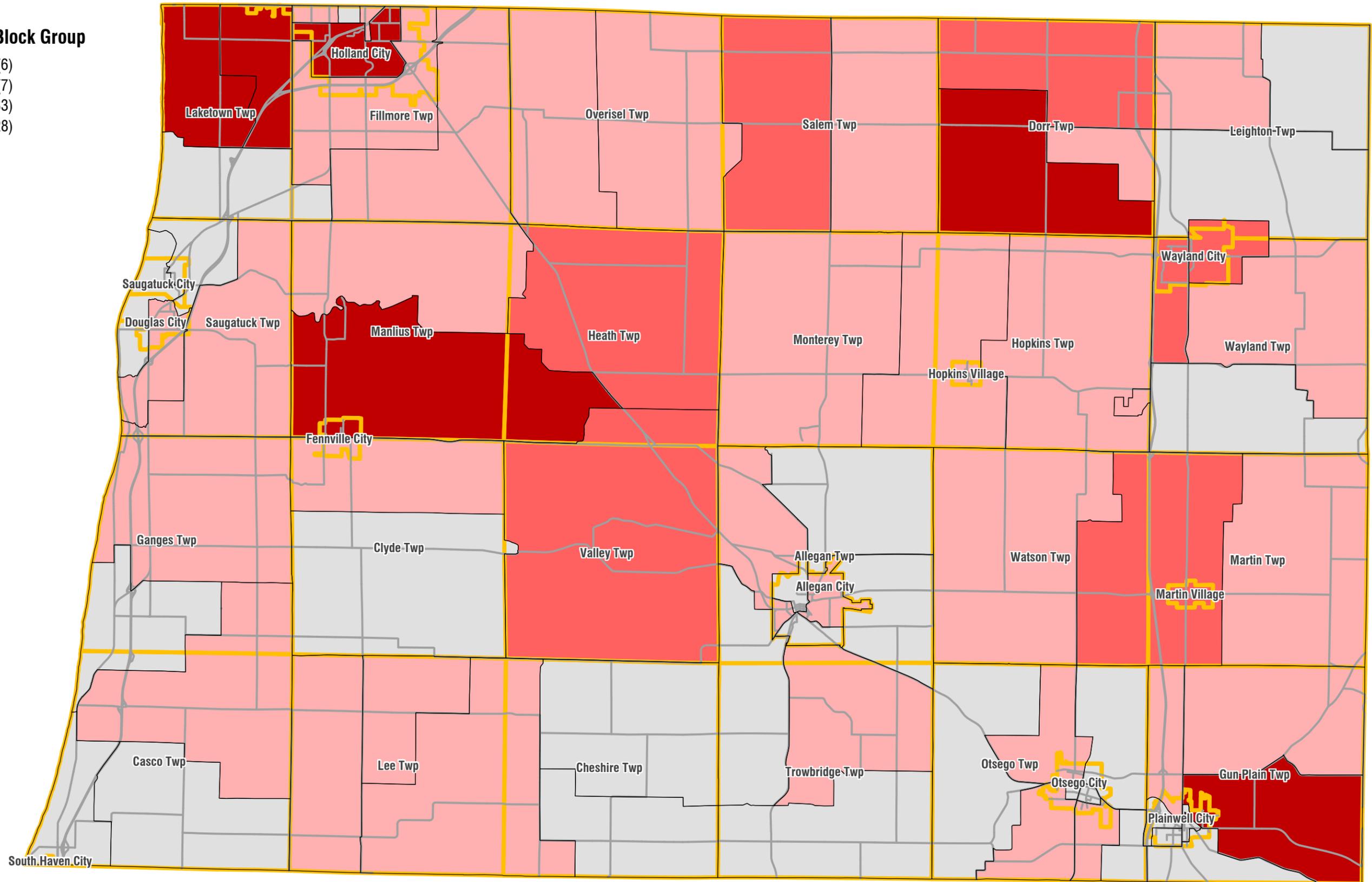
**Population by Unit of Government  
Allegan County, Michigan**

Allegan County Land Information Services assumes no liability for the conclusions drawn from the use of this data.

Map Scale: 1 : 175000  
Map Printed: 5/21/2009

**Total Population by Block Group**

- 2,400 to 3,000 (6)
- 1,800 to 2,400 (7)
- 1,200 to 1,800 (33)
- 600 to 1,200 (28)



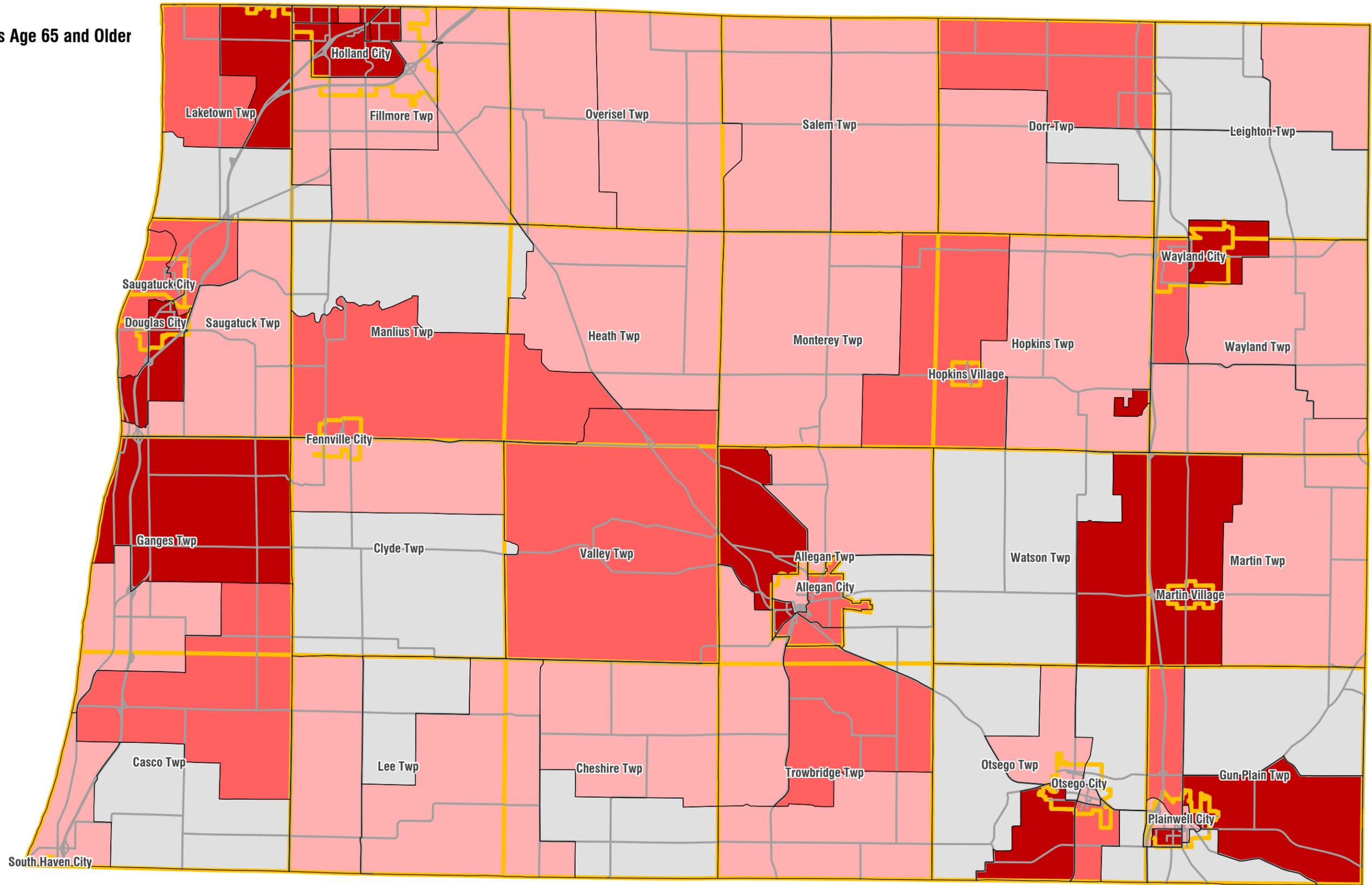
**Total Population by Block Group  
Allegan County, Michigan**

Allegan County Land Information Services assumes no liability for the conclusions drawn from the use of this data.

Map Scale: 1 : 175000  
Map Printed: 5/21/2009

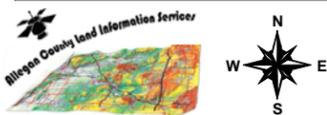
**Population of Seniors Age 65 and Older  
By Block Group**

- 200 to 625 (13)
- 150 to 200 (15)
- 100 to 150 (29)
- 0 to 100 (17)



**Population of Seniors Age 65 and Older  
Allegan County, Michigan**

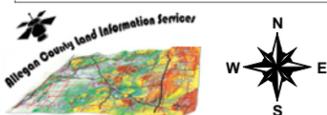
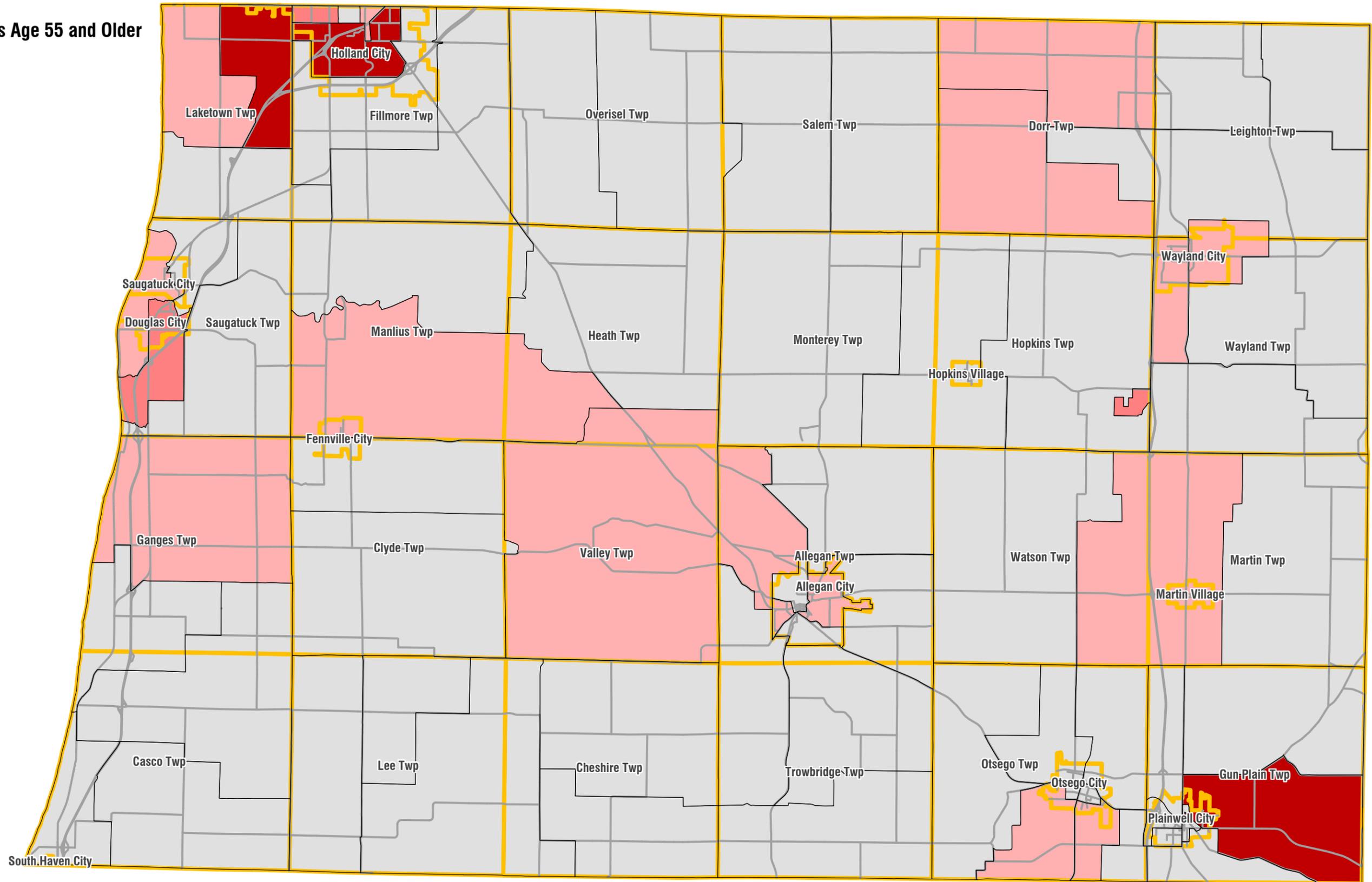
Allegan County Land Information Services assumes no liability for the conclusions drawn from the use of this data.



Map Scale: 1 : 175000  
Map Printed: 5/21/2009

**Population of Seniors Age 55 and Older  
By Block Group**

- 600 to 800 (3)
- 450 to 600 (2)
- 300 to 450 (16)
- 100 to 300 (53)

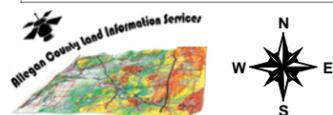
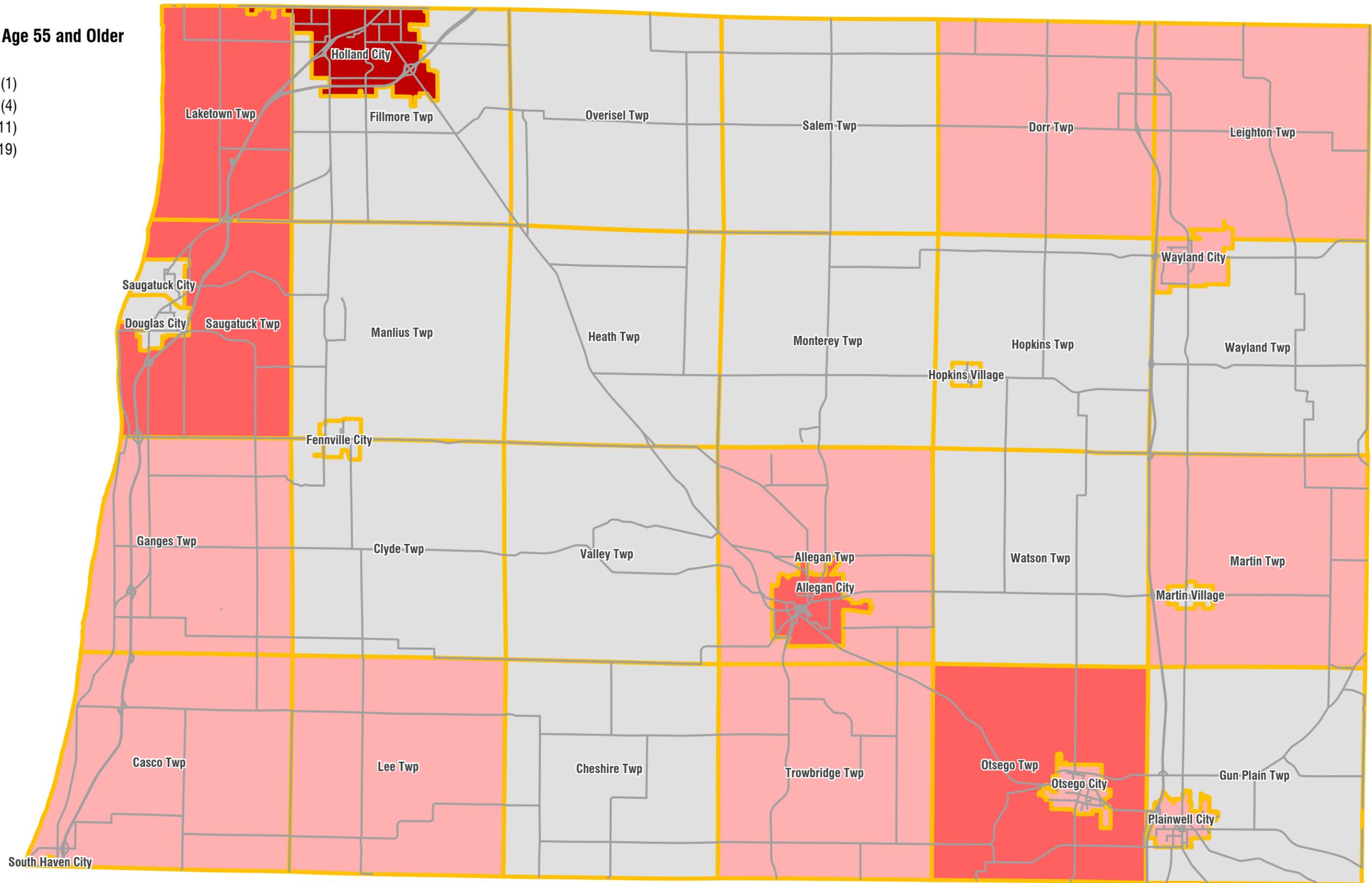
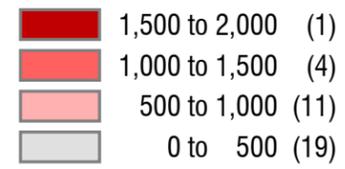


**Population of Seniors Age 55 and Older  
Allegan County, Michigan**

Allegan County Land Information Services assumes no liability for the conclusions drawn from the use of this data.

Map Scale: 1 : 175000  
Map Printed: 5/21/2009

**Population of Seniors Age 55 and Older  
By Unit of Government**

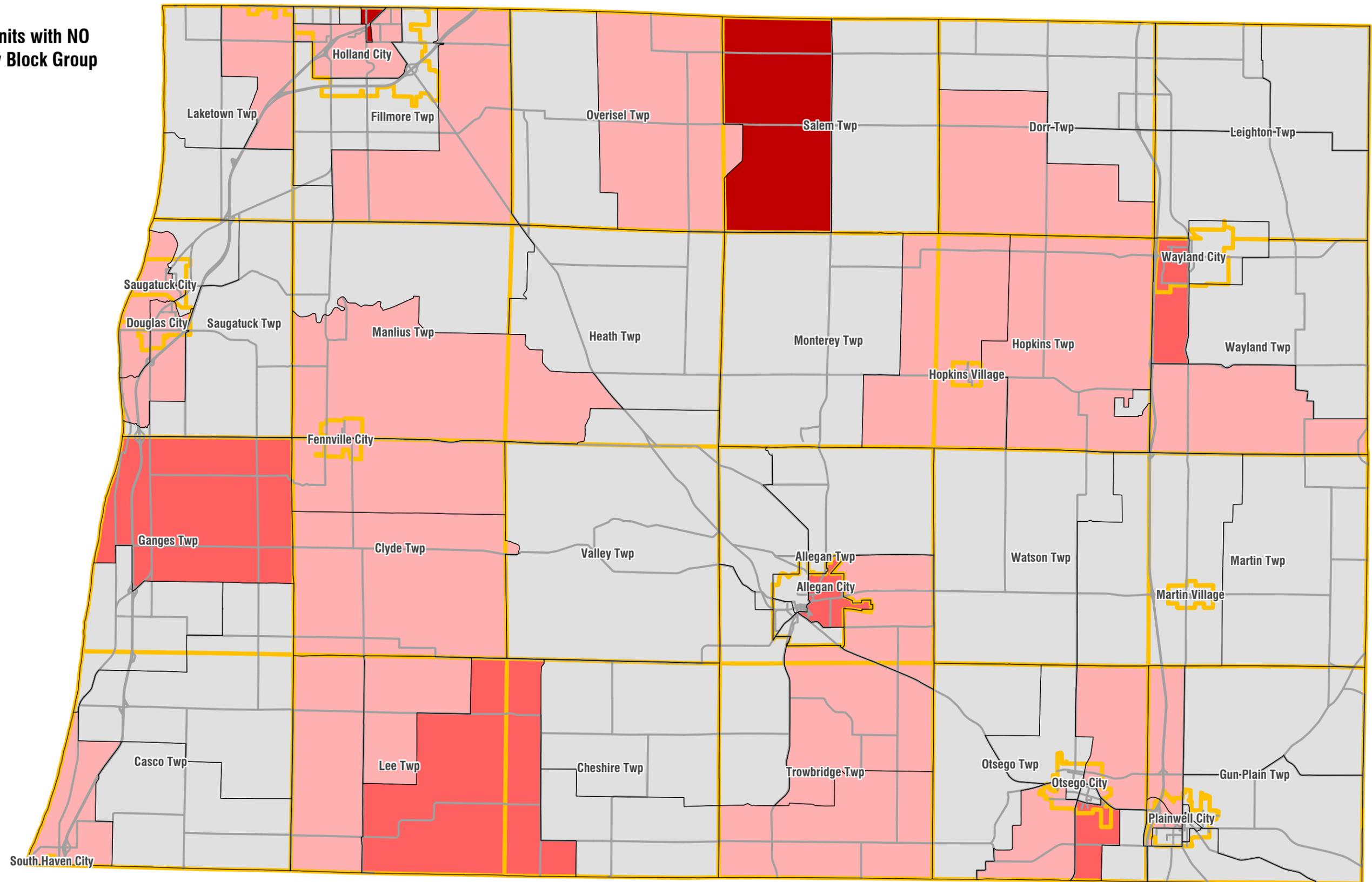
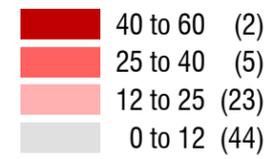


**Population of Seniors Age 55 and Over by Unit of Government  
Allegan County, Michigan**

Allegan County Land Information Services assumes no liability for the conclusions drawn from the use of this data.

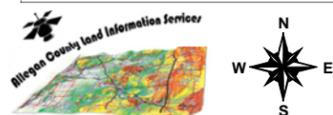
Map Scale: 1 : 175000  
Map Printed: 5/21/2009

**Occupier Housing Units with NO Vehicle Available by Block Group**



**Occupier Housing with No Vehicle Available  
Allegan County, Michigan**

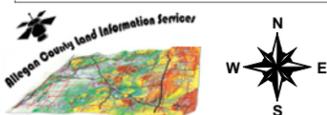
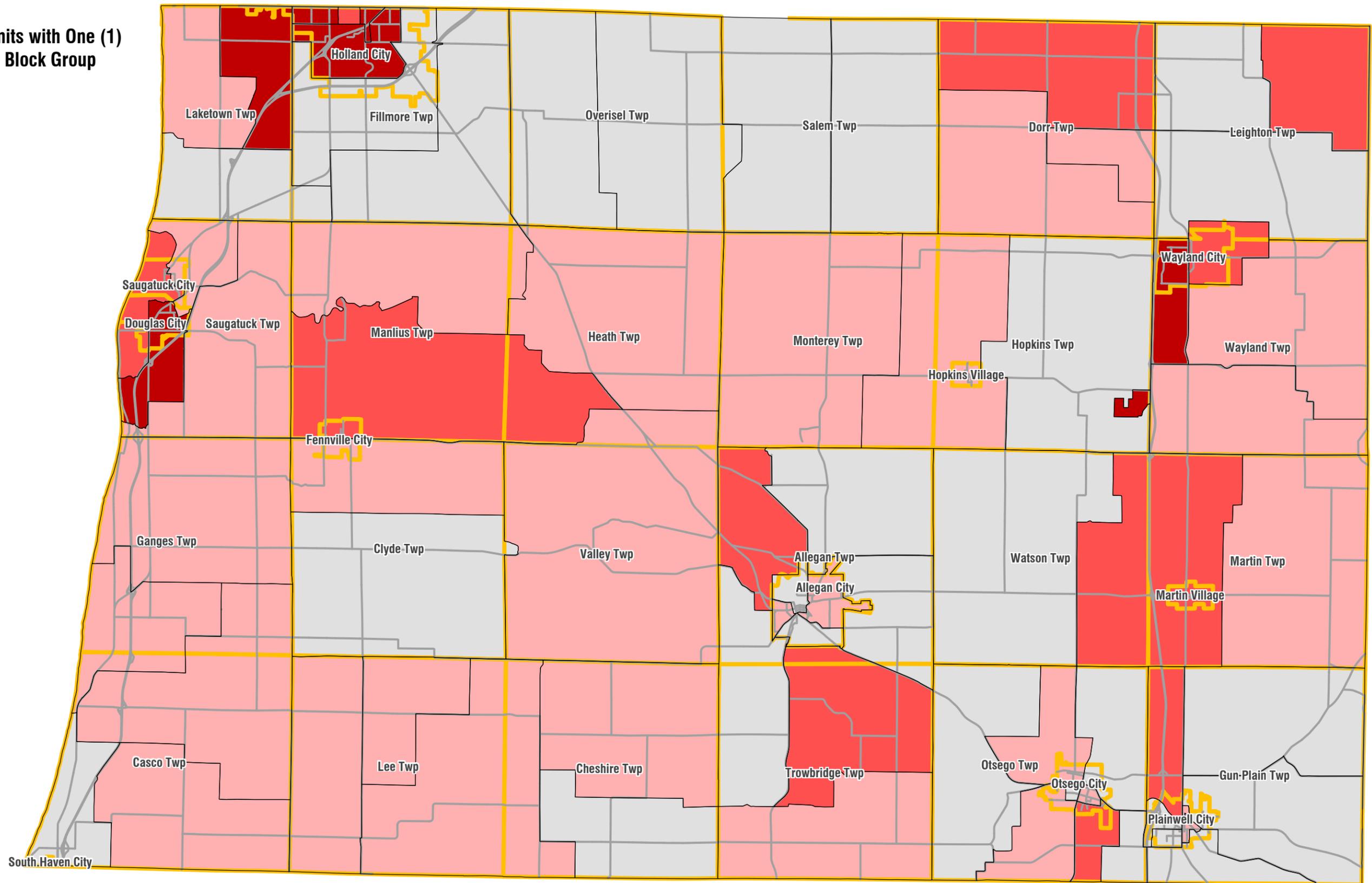
Allegan County Land Information Services assumes no liability for the conclusions drawn from the use of this data.



Map Scale: 1 : 175000  
Map Printed: 5/21/2009

**Occupier Housing Units with One (1) Vehicle Available by Block Group**

- 175 to 250 (6)
- 125 to 175 (11)
- 75 to 125 (29)
- 20 to 75 (28)

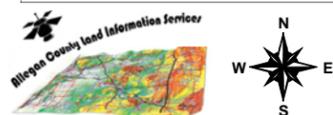
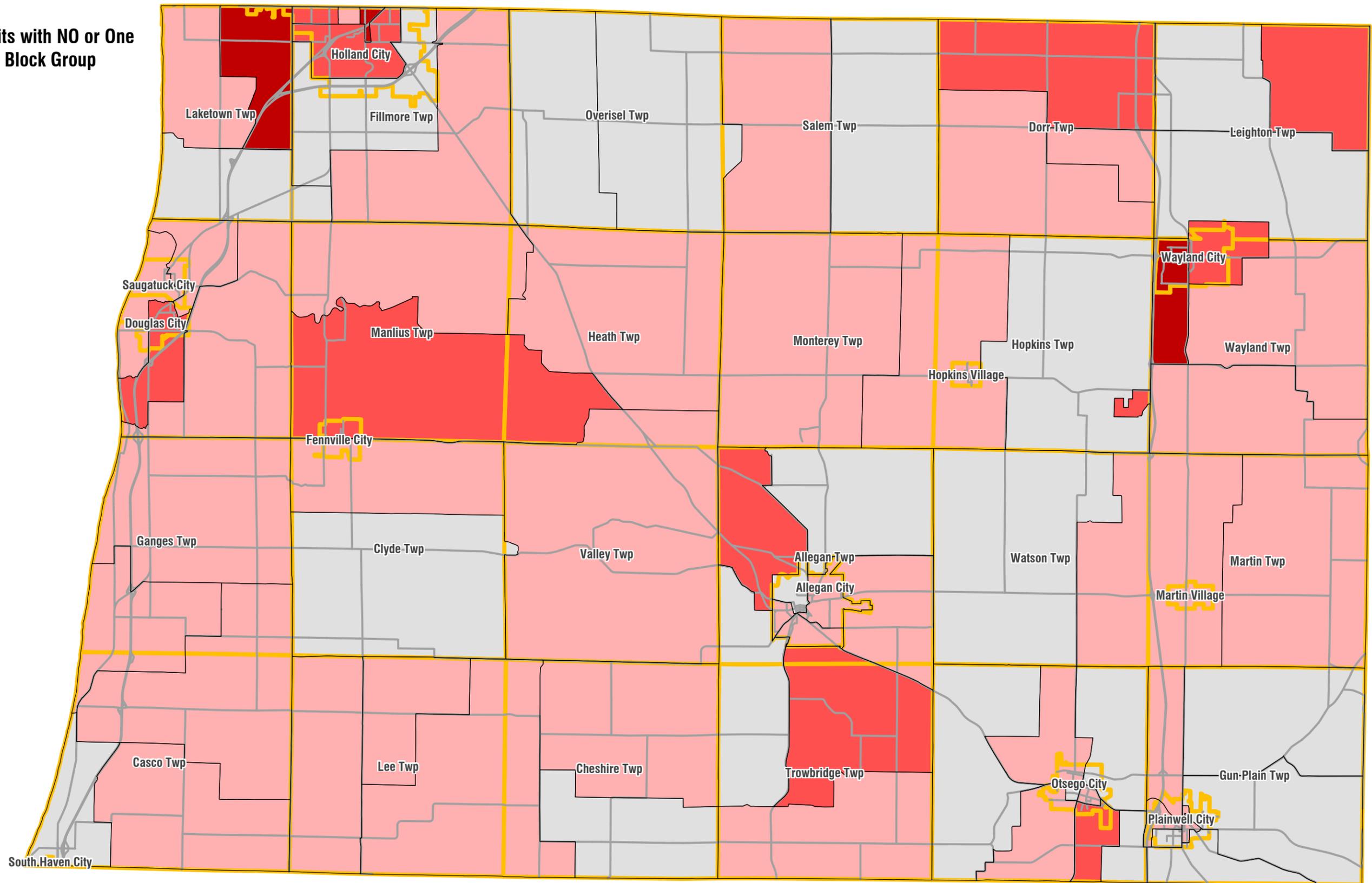


**Occupier Housing with One Vehicle Available  
Allegan County, Michigan**

Allegan County Land Information Services assumes no liability for the conclusions drawn from the use of this data.

Map Scale: 1 : 175000  
Map Printed: 5/21/2009

**Occupier Housing Units with NO or One Vehicle Available by Block Group**



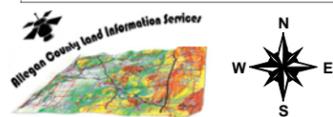
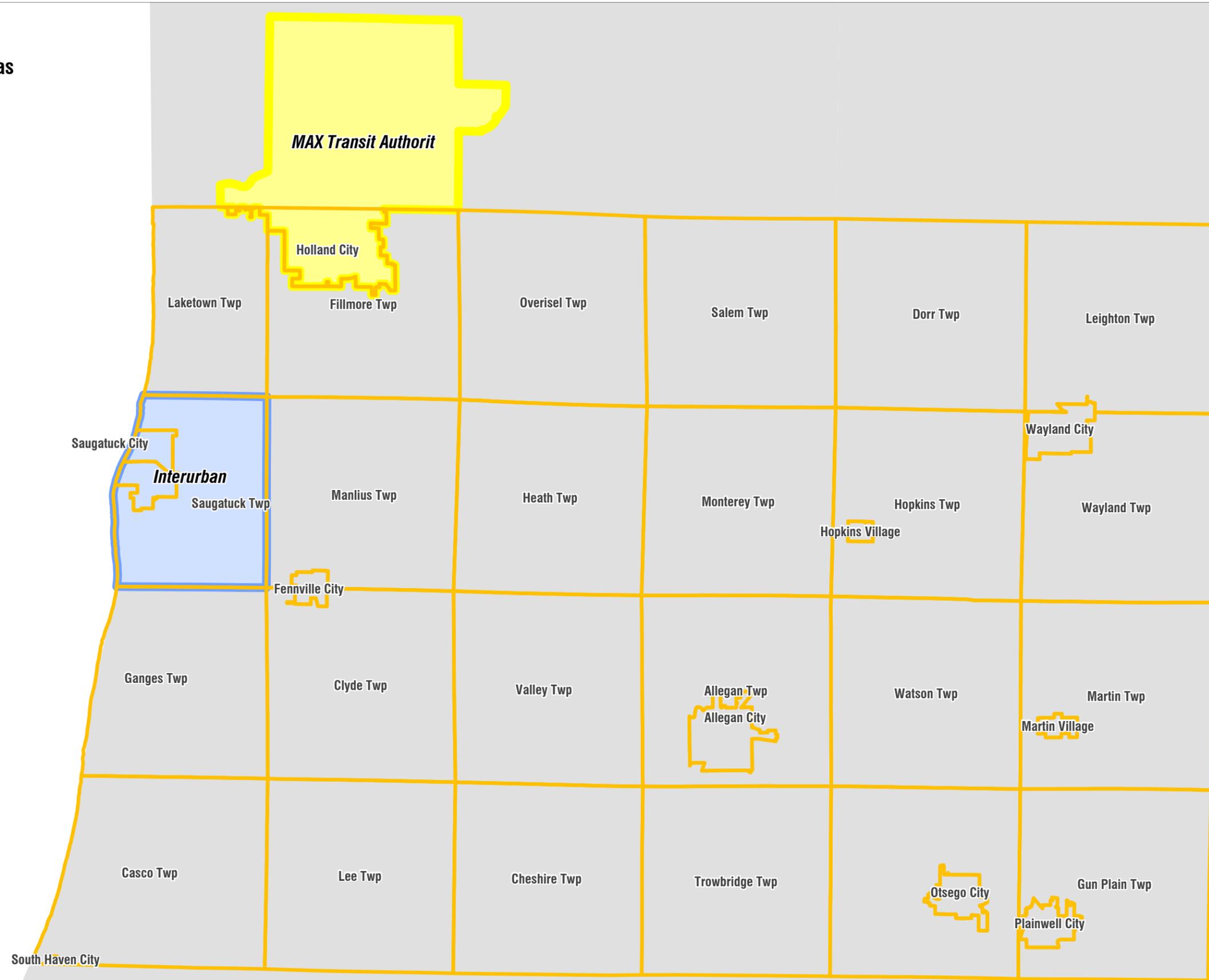
**Occupier Housing with NO or One Vehicle Available  
Allegan County, Michigan**

Allegan County Land Information Services assumes no liability for the conclusions drawn from the use of this data.

Map Scale: 1 : 175000  
Map Printed: 5/21/2009

**Public Transit Service Areas**

- MAX Transit Authority
- Interurban

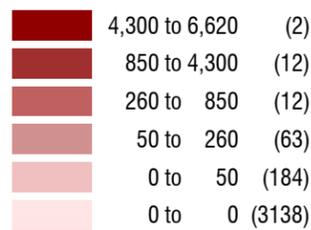


**Public Transit Provider Service Areas  
Allegan County, Michigan**

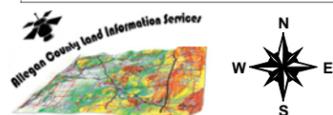
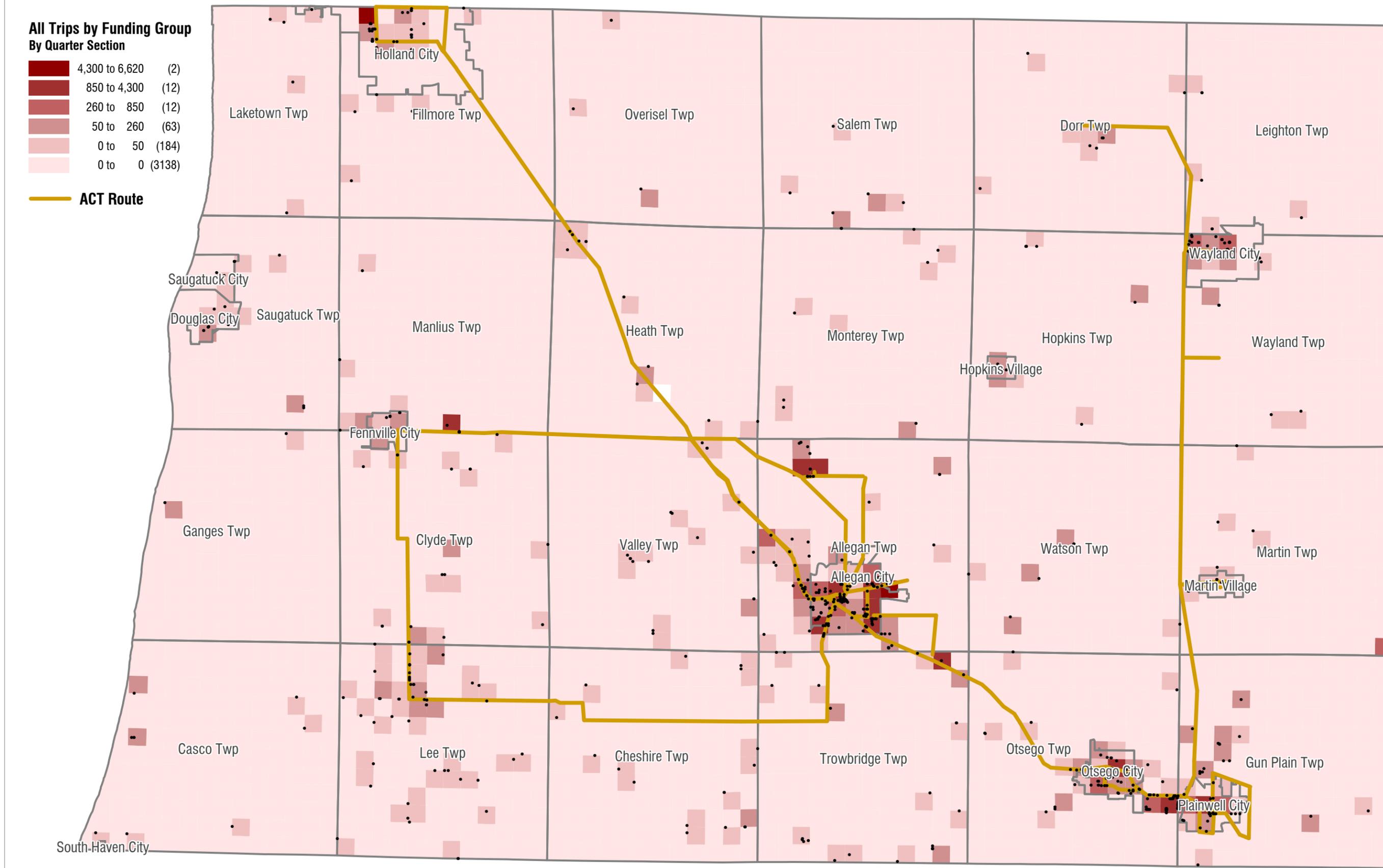
Allegan County Land Information Services assumes no liability for the conclusions drawn from the use of this data.

Map Scale: 1 : 210000  
Map Printed: 5/21/2009

**All Trips by Funding Group  
By Quarter Section**



ACT Route

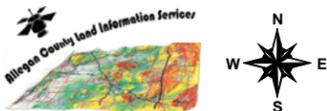
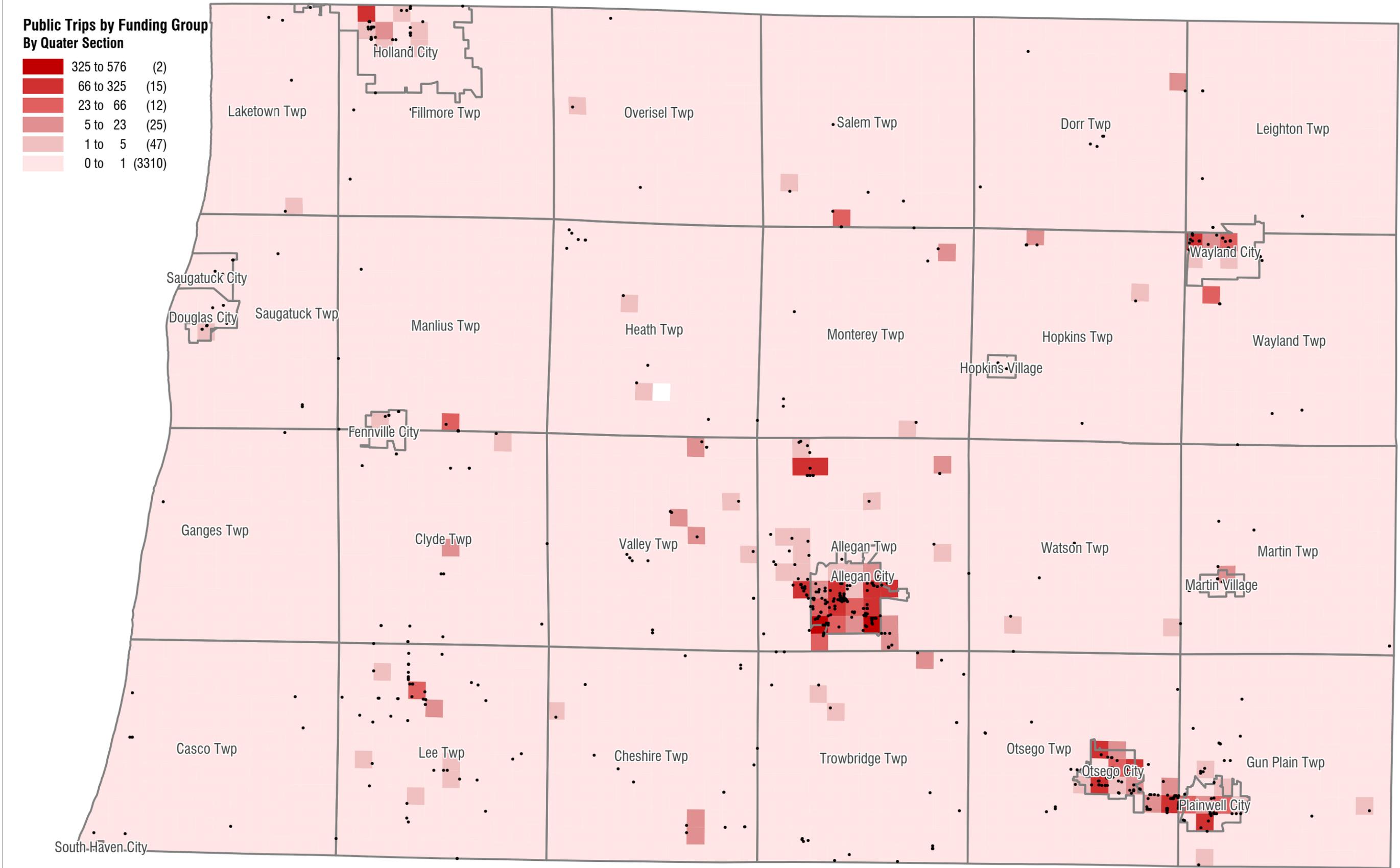
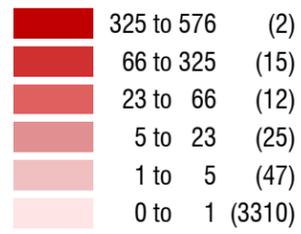


**ACT: All Trips by Funding Group, 2009**

Allegheny County Land Information Services assumes no liability for the conclusions drawn from the use of this data.

Map Scale: 1:168000  
Map Created: 6/5/2009

**Public Trips by Funding Group  
By Quater Section**



**ACT: Public Trips by Funding Group, 2009**

Allegheny County Land Information Services assumes no liability for the conclusions drawn from the use of this data.

Map Scale: 1:168000  
Map Created: 6/5/2009

# APPENDIX H: Community Survey

## COMMUNITY SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Michigan State University  
East Lansing, MI

### Introduction

Good afternoon/evening. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am calling from \_\_\_\_\_. We are conducting a survey about local transportation issues. Your answers will be extremely important in helping shape transportation solutions in your community. We would be very grateful for your time to talk about local transportation.

**1. In what city or township in Allegan County do you live?** [If respondent doesn't specify city or township, please clarify before selecting a residence.]

1. Allegan City
2. Allegan County
3. Allegan Township
4. Casco Township
5. Cheshire Township
6. Douglas City
7. Fennville City
8. Holland City
9. Clyde Township
10. Dorr Township
11. Fillmore Township
12. Ganges Township
13. Gunplain Township
14. Heath Township
15. Hopkins Township
16. Hopkins Village
17. Laketown Township
18. Lee Township
19. Leighton Township
20. Manlius Township
21. Martin Township
22. Martin Village
23. Monterey Township
24. Otsego City
25. Otsego Township
26. Overisel Township
27. Plainwell City
28. Salem Township
29. Saugatuck City
30. Saugatuck Township

31. South Haven City
32. Trowbridge Township
33. Valley Township
34. Watson Township
35. Wayland City
36. Wayland Township

(If respondent does not live in one of these areas, thank him/her and close the interview.)

**2. Are you at least 18 years old?**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

(If respondent is not at least 18 years old, thank him/her and close the interview.)

**APPENDIX A. RANDOMLY ASSIGN RESPONDENTS TO ONE OF THE MESSAGE FRAMES**

**3. Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement: "I am supportive of expanding public transportation in Allegan County."**

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Somewhat Disagree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Somewhat Agree
5. Strongly Agree
0. Don't Know, Refused (Don't read this statement)

**4. Have you or anyone you know who lives in Allegan County had an unmet transportation need in the past twelve months?**

1. Yes
2. No
0. DK/R

**5. What do you associate with the name "Allegan County Transportation"?** (Do not read the answers below. Enter ONE number only.)

1. Any answer which relates "Allegan County Transportation" with the bus system. *(Please code responses as #1 if the respondent provides an answer that refers to rides, bus, bus system or Dial A Ride. This could include responses such as: the bus system, the name of the bus system, Dial-A-Ride, transportation for seniors, the senior bus, rides for people, rides for seniors, rides for people with disabilities.)*

2. Unable to recognize or associate "Allegan County Transportation" name with the bus system, rides, or Dial-A-Ride. Don't know.

0. Refused. No answer

**Read the following after completing Question 5:**

**Allegan County Transportation is the name for the local bus system.**

**6. All things considered, in your opinion, would you rate the current services of Allegan County Transportation as very good, good, fair, poor or very poor?**

(Read options 1-5. Enter ONE number only.)

1. Very poor
2. Poor
3. Fair
4. Good
5. Very good
0. Don't Know, Refused

**7. All things considered, in your opinion, would you rate the job Allegan County Transportation does in meeting the transportation needs of the community with the resources available as very good, good, fair, poor or very poor?** (Read options 1-5. Enter ONE number only.)

1. Very poor
2. Poor
3. Fair
4. Good
5. Very good
0. Don't Know, Refused

**8. Do you feel the transportation services offered by Allegan County Transportation are...** (Read options 3-1. Enter ONE option only.)

3. Very important to the community
2. Somewhat important to the community or
1. Not important to the community
0. Undecided, Don't Know, Refused

**9. Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statements:**

Strongly agree (5), somewhat agree (4), neither agree nor disagree (3), somewhat disagree (2), or strongly disagree (1), don't know/refused (0)

**[Randomize order]**

**[Social justice]**

- a. Public transportation services help people with disabilities get to their jobs
- b. Public transportation increases the ability to get employment and training opportunities for the unemployed and underemployed

**[Economic development]**

- c. Studies have found that for every \$1 invested in public transportation, \$6 are returned to the community in the form of economic opportunities, decreased congestion and saved parking costs
- d. Public transportation increases property values

**[Transportation service]**

- e. In 2008, ACT provided about 45,000 rides.
- f. Since the start of 2009, ACT had to turn away hundreds of potential riders because of insufficient resources to meet the demand.

**[Environmental]**

- g. Public transportation supports the conservation of land.
- h. Public transportation provides an affordable solution to rising gas prices.

**10. For each of the following, do you think you would be more likely or less likely to support Allegan County Transportation (ACT) if...** (Read options A-C for each statement. Enter ONE option only for each statement.)

	More	Less
D/K	Likely	Likely
Ref.		
A. Transportation service hours were dedicated evenly throughout Allegan County 0	2	1
B. Seniors could get to meals sites in many locations 0		2      1
C. People could get to Freisnuf Medical Center, the only dialysis clinic in Allegan County 0	2	1

**11. Did you know that if Allegan County Transportation (ACT) does not have local funding, the following will happen:** (Read options A-C for each statement. Enter ONE number only for each statement.)

	Yes	Did not	NA, Ref
A. Many senior citizens and persons with disabilities will be unable to get around		2	1      0
B. ACT will not be able to meet the transportation needs of many Allegan County residents 0		2	1
C. ACT will lose the opportunity to bring state and federal transportation dollars into Allegan County 0		2	1

**APPENDIX B: RANDOMLY ASSIGN RESPONDENTS TO ONE OF THE MESSAGE FRAMES**

**12. Using a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being strongly oppose and 5 being strongly support, please tell me what number best indicates your attitude toward the Allegan County Transportation Five-Year Plan.**

- 1 Strongly oppose
- 2 Somewhat oppose
- 3 Neutral
- 4 Somewhat support
- 5 Strongly support
- 0 Don't Know

**13. Using a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree, please tell me how much you agree with the following statements.**

**[Randomize]**

- a. I don't think public officials in Allegan County care much about what people like me think. (\*reverse code)
- b. In general, people like me have an influence in local politics in Allegan County.
- c. Generally speaking, the opinions of people like me are important to Allegan County public officials.

**14. Would you be very likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely, or very unlikely to support a millage for public transportation services in Allegan County if it cost your household \$\_\_\_\_\_ per year:**

**APPENDIX C: RANDOMLY ASSIGN SUBJECTS TO ONE OF THE MESSAGE FRAMES.**

- 4 Very likely
- 3 Somewhat likely
- 2 Somewhat unlikely
- 1 Very unlikely
- 0 Don't know/Refused

**15. We are collecting names of people who support public transportation to share with elected officials in your community. Your name will not be connected to your survey responses in any way. Your name will not be sold to any other agency; it will only be used to share your name with elected officials. May I add your name to the list of public transit supporters?**

- 1 yes
- 0 no

**If yes,**

First name \_\_\_\_\_

Last name \_\_\_\_\_

**I have a few more questions for statistical purposes only.**

**16. Please indicate into which range your age falls. Are you.....** (Read options 1-5. Enter ONE option only.)

1. 18 to 24
2. 25 to 30
3. 31 to 49
4. 50 to 65
5. Over 65
0. Undecided, Don't Know, Refused

**17. Into which of the following ranges did your annual household income for 2008 fall?** (Read options 1-4. Enter ONE option only.)

1. Less than 25,000 dollars per year
2. 25,001 to 50,000 dollars per year
3. 50,001 to 75,000 dollars per year
4. Over 75,000 dollars per year
0. Undecided, Don't Know, Refused

**This concludes our survey. If you would like to view the survey results, they will be available online at [www.dnlakeshore.org](http://www.dnlakeshore.org) in about a month. Thank you very much for your time. Good-bye.**

---

**18. By observation, indicate the respondent's gender**

1. Male
2. Female

## COMMUNITY SURVEY PRIMING MESSAGES

1. Please tell me about a time when transportation worked well for you and it was enjoyable. Transportation could mean a car, bike, motorcycle, plane, train, bus or any other vehicle that allows someone to travel.

There are a lot of people in Allegan County who would benefit from expanded public transportation, allowing them to travel throughout the community to get to medical facilities, grocery stores, and places of employment.

2. Please tell me about a time when transportation did not work well for you and it was frustrating. Transportation could mean a car, bike, motorcycle, plane, train, bus or any other vehicle that allows someone to travel.

There are a lot of people in Allegan County who are frustrated by a lack of public transportation, which makes it difficult for them to travel throughout the community to get to medical facilities, grocery stores, and places of employment.

3. No message

## COMMUNITY SURVEY PARTICIPATION MESSAGES

Allegan County Transportation has developed a five-year plan to improve transportation services for residents of Allegan County. It calls for dedicating service hours throughout Allegan County, providing rides to the senior meal sites, and offering rides to the only dialysis clinic in the County.

1. This plan was created after conducting several meetings, surveys, and input sessions during the past two years with Allegan County residents like you.
2. This plan was created after conducting several meetings, surveys, and input sessions during the past two years with Allegan County community leaders.
3. This plan was created after conducting several meetings, surveys, and input sessions during the past two years with 1,000 Allegan County residents like you.
4. This plan was created after conducting several meetings, surveys, and input sessions during the past two years with 200 Allegan County community leaders.
5. No Message

## COMMUNITY SURVEY MILLAGE MESSAGES

1. Twenty-four dollars per year
2. Two gallons of laundry detergent per year
3. Four dinners at a fast food restaurant like McDonalds per year
4. Forty-six cents per week
5. One apple per week
6. One donut per week
  
7. Nine dollars per year
8. One piece of bubble gum per week
9. Four 2-liters of pop per year
  
10. Eighteen dollars per year
11. One miniature candy bar per week
12. Four gallons of ice cream per year

# Alleghan County Transportation



## 2009 Annual Report

# DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

## Dan Wedge, Transportation Director

Dan joined the department upon the inception of the transportation department in 1999, and has serviced as director since that time. He has a Bachelor of Applied Science from ITT Technical Institute in Automated Manufacturing Technology and a Associate of Science Degree in Business Management from Davenport College of Business. He has worked in various County positions for the past 21 years.



## Ashley Thomson, Administrative Secretary

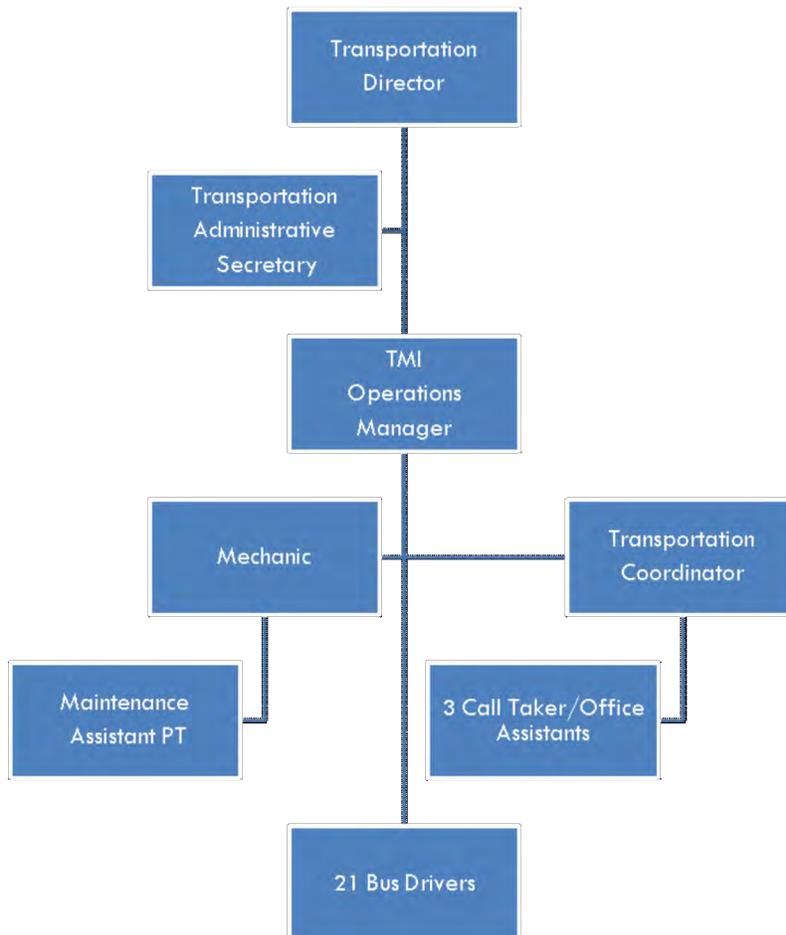
Ashley has been with the department since 2003. Her education includes credits from the Olympia Career Training Institute. She has work for several County Departments including: County Administration, Bio-terrorism, Health Department and the Parks Department.



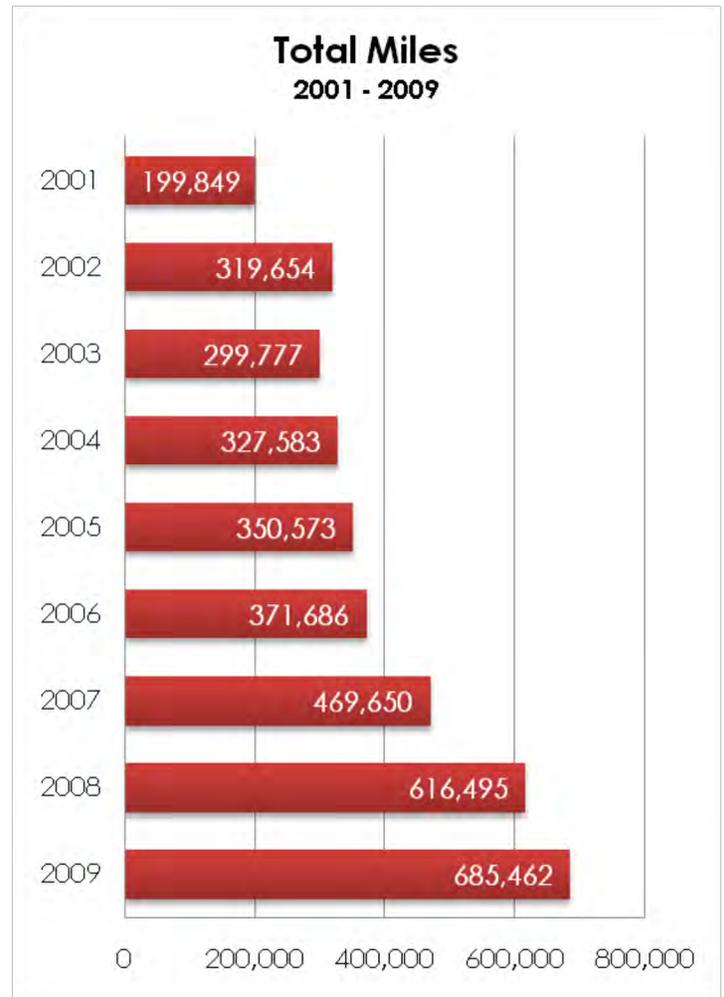
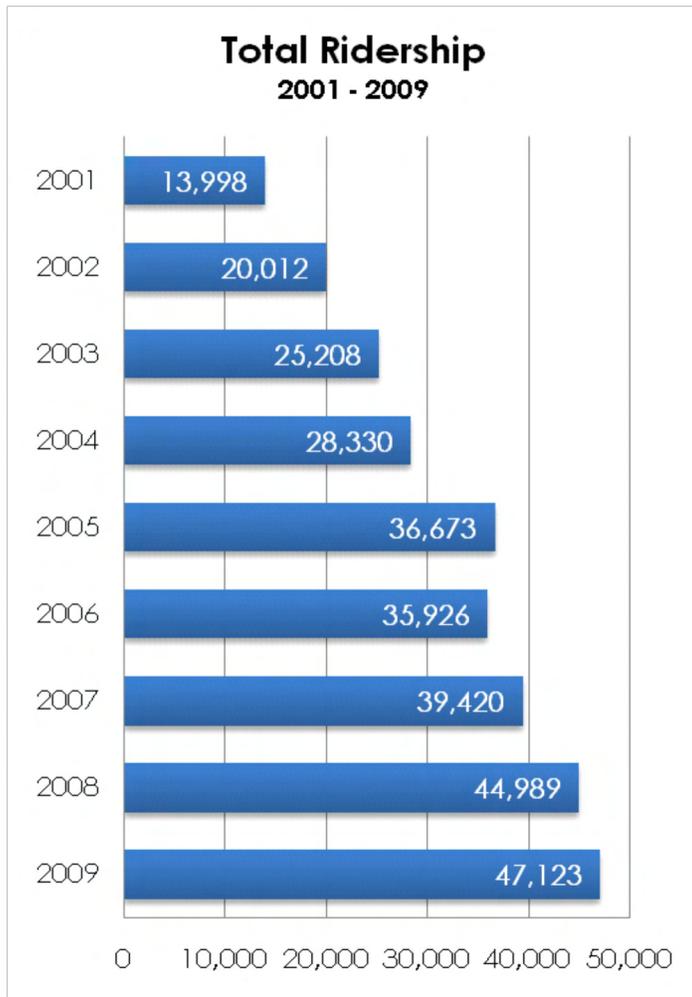
## Transportation Management Inc., Transit Contractor

Allegan County contracts with Transportation Management Inc. to provide on-site operations for the Transportation Department including schedulers and drivers.

## Department Overview



# A DECADE OF DATA



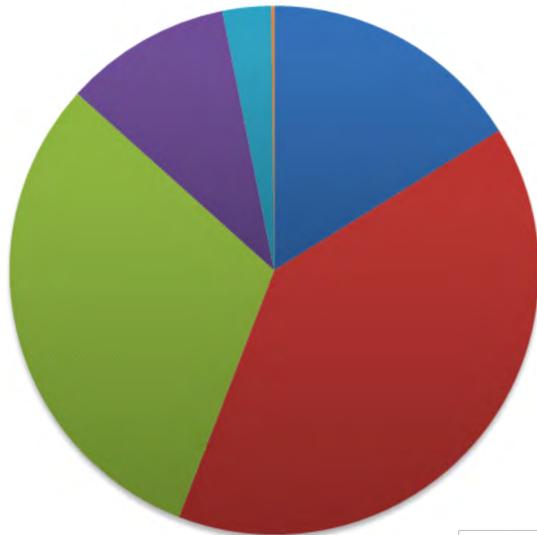
## SINCE ITS INCEPTION...

- ACT has provided over **290,000 passenger trips**. The transportation service has had a steady growth of passengers over the last 10 years. A majority of ACT passengers are made up of persons with disabilities and seniors.
- ACT has grown its vehicle fleet from utilizing just three vans in 2000 to **28 vehicles** in 2010 to keep up with the growing demand of Allegan County residents. Several vehicles are needed to cover the rising demand of traveling to and from various passenger destinations.
- ACT has traveled more than **3.6 million miles** over the course of the last 10 years. Allegan County is one of the largest counties in the state with over 112,900 residents spanning across 827 sq. miles.
- ACT has spent **151,412 hours** on the road servicing the residents of Allegan County. In 2009, ACT spent just over 585 hours per week servicing residents by providing necessary medical, employment, and recreational transportation trips.

# ACT FINANCIALS

## REVENUES

2009



- Federal Assistance
- State Assistance
- Agency Contracts
- Passenger Fares
- Allegan County
- Non-Operating

2009

2008

Federal Assistance	\$218,754	\$176,062
State Assistance	538,385	452,868
Agency Contracts	417,110	405,356
Passenger Fares	138,229	133,448
Allegan County	40,500	42,625
Non-Operating	2,226	555

## EXPENSES

2009

2008

\$1,104,428	\$985,402
\$89,886	\$86,152
\$128,428	\$114,986

- Regular Service
- Job Access Reverse Commute
- Specialized Services

2009



**REGULAR SERVICE** funding primarily provides transportation to the customers, clients and consumers of organizations that contract with ACT for service. These organizations include, but are not limited to, Allegan Community Mental Health, MI Works!, and Dept. of Human Services.

**SPECIALIZED SERVICE** is a state funded program that provides medical, shopping or recreational trips for seniors and persons with disabilities.

**JOB ACCESS REVERSE COMMUTE (JARC)** is a state funded program that provides trips for<sub>129</sub> employment related services.

# FAST FACTS

## OPERATIONS

ACT is a department of Allegan County and is governed by the Board of County Commissioners. ACT service is available Monday through Friday from 5:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. All reservations must be made 24 hours in advance; however, limited demand response (same-day) service is available for emergency related trips as vehicles are available.

## SERVICE AREA

The current ACT service area encompasses the City of Allegan with transportation service following the M-40 corridor to Holland, the M-89 corridor to Otsego and Plainwell, and the M-89 route to the City of Fennville and Pullman. Additionally, ACT serves the US 131 highway cities of Shelbyville, Martin, Dorr and Wayland. The service area includes a one-mile radius around the road corridors listed. ACT does not provide a fixed route service.

## LOCATION

In 2008, ACT began construction of a new transit facility located at 750 Airway Drive, Allegan, MI. This facility houses all ACT operations in one location, which increases efficiency of operations and the management of the transit system. Construction was completed in April 2010.

## FARES

For one, one-way trip through the reservation service, fares are \$2.00 for the general public or \$1.00 for seniors, persons with disabilities, and children ages 5 through 12. Children under 5 years of age with an adult ride for free. For Specialized Service trips, the passenger fare amount is the remaining balance of total hours (\$45.00/hour) subtracted by the state grant funding (\$1.20/mile traveled).

# MOVING FORWARD

## Research Study

In September 2008, Disability Network/Lakeshore began a study, in partnership with ACT, to increase awareness of and support for ACT in order to develop a community supported five-year strategic plan for ACT. This strategic plan would outline steps in order to effectively and efficiently begin meeting the transit needs of residents in Allegan County. This study will conclude in June 2011.

## Technology

To keep up with the pace of several new transportation technologies, ACT will be up-grading their scheduling software to include new Mobile Data Computers and an AVL System, which will allow drivers to track miles driven and stops made. This software also enables schedulers to have GPS navigation of all vehicles on the road. Lastly, ACT will be replacing nine buses and two mini-vans for more efficient and reliable transportation trips.

## Nationally

Transportation Director, Dan Wedge, will serve as Michigan State Delegate for the "Community Transit Association of America" to aid with the Federal Transportation Reauthorization 2011-2016.

# APPENDIX J: 2010 ACT Annual Report



**BETTER TRANSIT = BETTER LIFE**

**Allegan County Transportation  
2010 Annual Report**



**“IT’S VERY HELPFUL TO GET FEEDBACK FROM THE COMMUNITY, TO LEARN WHAT THEY VALUE IN PUBLIC TRANSIT AND HOW THEY ENVISION A TRANSIT SYSTEM MEETING THEIR NEEDS.”**



**LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR**

This was an exciting year for Allegan County Transportation as we celebrated the grand opening of the new 22,788 square-foot transit facility. The new facility is a result of \$3,500,000 in state and federal grants. The new building features space for transit administration, vehicle maintenance, bus washing, inside storage, and outside parking. This facility will house all Allegan County transit operations.

Other highlights of the year included the implementation of a mobility manager position, the completion of an educational DVD video on transit in Allegan County, the completion of the Five Year Strategic Plan for public transit, the implementation of a major software upgrade on the scheduling/dispatch system, and a successful Triennial Review by the Federal Transportation Administration.

We were able to make service efficiency improvements through the purchase of equipment items funded by federal and state grants:

- Installation of power wash equipment
- Purchase of a scissor lift
- Purchase of a tire changer and balance equipment
- Replacing 4 vehicles that have met their useful life

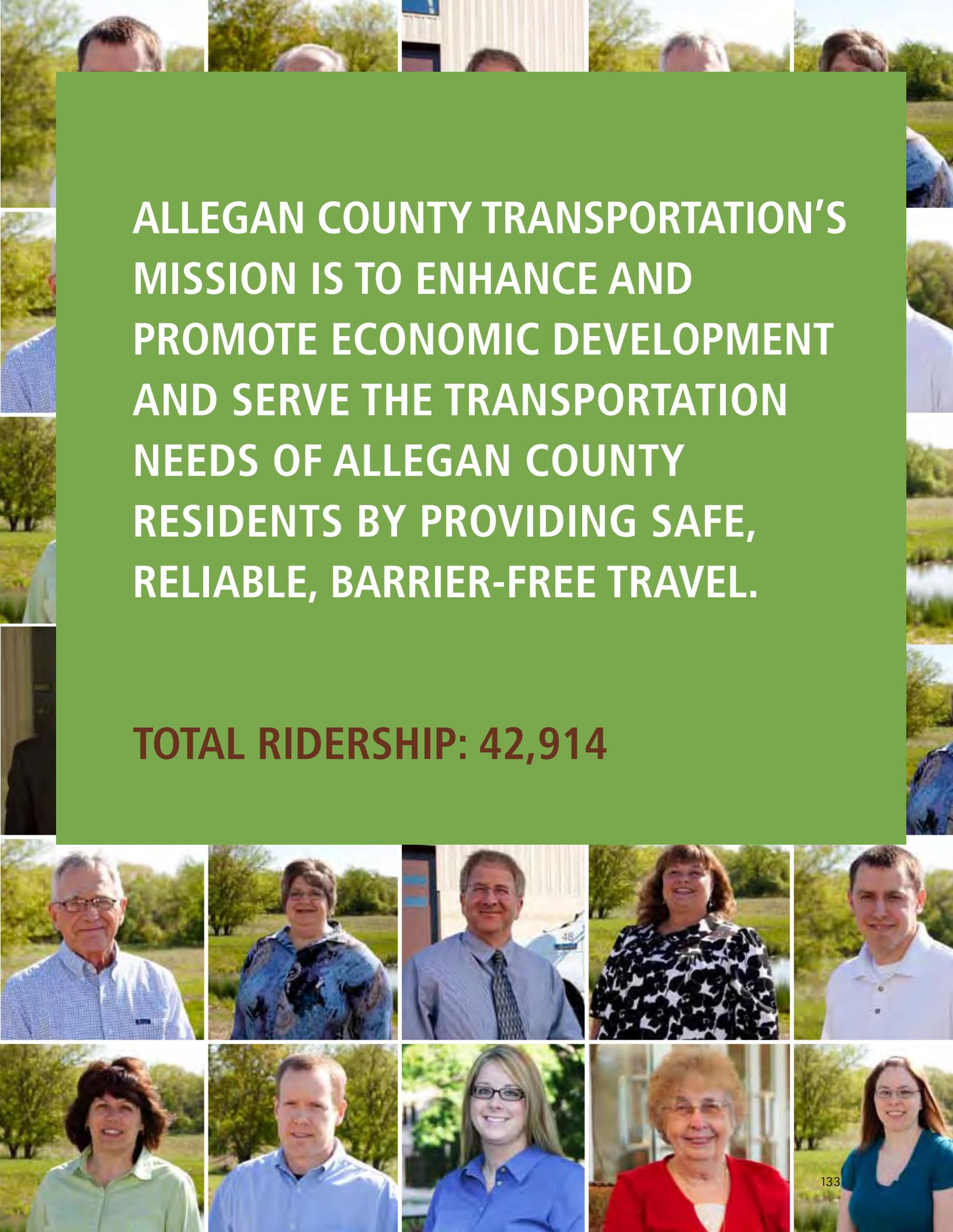
One challenge ACT continues to encounter is how to provide exceptional service while local, state and federal revenues keep declining. This year we had a slight decrease in ridership and vehicle miles because of a lack in operational funding.

Looking into the future we will continue to take full advantage of our resources to maintain and improve services that are so important to our community.

Dan Wedge  
Transportation Director

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**ALLEGAN COUNTY TRANSPORTATION'S  
MISSION IS TO ENHANCE AND  
PROMOTE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
AND SERVE THE TRANSPORTATION  
NEEDS OF ALLEGAN COUNTY  
RESIDENTS BY PROVIDING SAFE,  
RELIABLE, BARRIER-FREE TRAVEL.**

**TOTAL RIDERSHIP: 42,914**



## LOOKING BACK

**290,000 PASSENGER TRIPS**

**3.6 MILLION MILES TRAVELED**

**112,900 RESIDENTS**

**827 SQUARE MILES**

**151,412 HOURS ON THE ROAD**



### MOBILITY MANAGER HIRED

Funded by a \$20,000 New Freedom Grant through the Michigan Department of Transportation, ACT partnered with Senior Services to hire a Mobility Manager (part-time). The Mobility Manager is designated in working with people with disabilities and seniors in order to best effectively meet their transportation needs. A final analysis will be completed to further understand what transit options best fit the needs of people with disabilities and seniors.

### DVD VIDEO SHOOT

In June, an educational DVD was created summarizing the economic, social, and environmental benefits of Allegan County Transit to the community. Respected local stakeholders were interviewed explaining how transit impacts their employees, clients, citizens, seniors and people with disabilities. The video can be viewed on ACT's website.

### NEW BUS FACILITY

An open house was held on July 8 showcasing Allegan County Transportation's new, \$3.5 million transit facility located at 750 Airway Drive, southeast of downtown Allegan near the industrial park. The 22,788 square-foot facility features areas for

administration, vehicle maintenance, bus washing, and vehicle storage. The facility was funded with federal and state funds provided by the MDOT, including funds from the Recovery Act, which allowed for completion of the facility.

### DEMAND FOR TRANSIT INCREASES

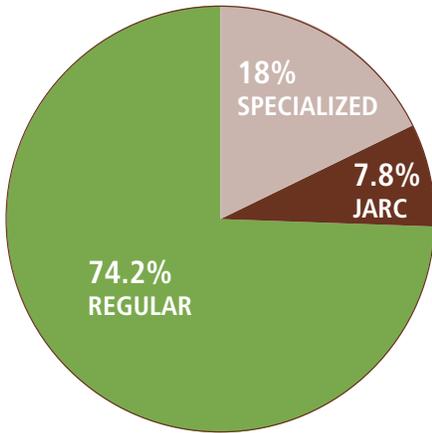
ACT has had to turn away hundreds of people requesting transportation over the years because the demand for rides exceeds the availability of transportation. Jan. 2010 thru Dec. 2010, ACT was unable to service over 575 individuals, roughly 1.5 persons per day. A quarter of those trips were medically related followed by employment related trips. Each month, more residents are turned away from ACT's services because of a lack in funding to provide more transit.

### DIRECTOR MEETS WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

Dan Wedge met with elected officials in Lansing for the Michigan Public Transportation Association's mid-year legislative conference. Citing declines in revenue from state funding, Dan urged elected officials to approve legislation for supporting continued funding for state transportation.

# RIDERSHIP

## 2010 RIDERSHIP

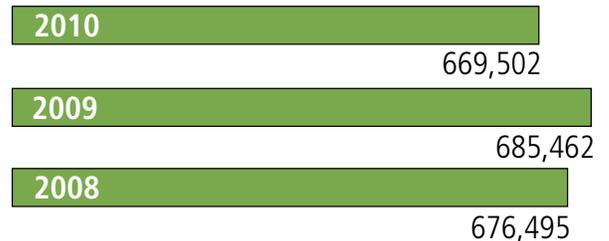


	2010	2009	2008
<b>SPECIALIZED SERVICES RIDES</b>	7,721	7,823	7,051
	18%	16.6%	15.7%
<b>JOB ACCESS REVERSE COMMUTE (JARC) RIDES</b>	3,330	3,483	3,486
	7.8%	7.4%	7.7%
<b>REGULAR RIDES</b>	31,863	35,817	34,452
	74.2%	76%	76.6%

## TOTAL RIDERSHIP

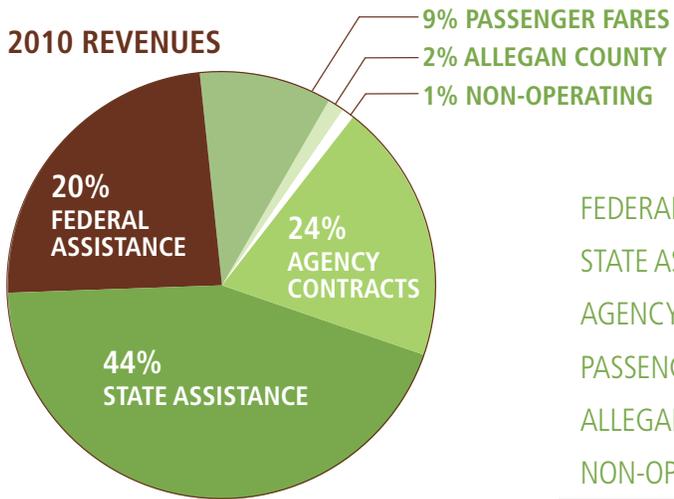


## VEHICLE MILES



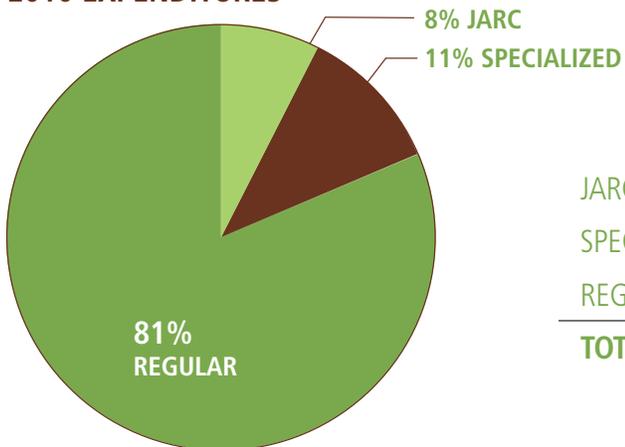
# FINANCIALS

## 2010 REVENUES



	2010	2009	CHANGE
FEDERAL ASSISTANCE	\$248,407	\$221,966	11.9%
STATE ASSISTANCE	547,686	538,385	1.7%
AGENCY CONTRACTS	298,893	417,110	-28.3%
PASSENGER FARES	122,646	138,229	-11.3%
ALLEGAN COUNTY	17,250	40,500	-57.4%
NON-OPERATING	8,992	2,633	341.5%
<b>TOTAL REVENUES</b>	<b>\$1,243,874</b>	<b>\$1,358,823</b>	<b>-8.5%</b>

## 2010 EXPENDITURES



	2010	2009	CHANGE
JARC	\$100,391	\$89,886	11.7%
SPECIALIZED SERVICES	144,305	128,425	12.3%
REGULAR SERVICE	1,069,484	1,104,428	-3.2%
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$1,314,180</b>	<b>\$1,322,739</b>	<b>-0.6%</b>

## DEFINITION OF EXPENDITURES

JOB ACCESS REVERSE COMMUTE (JARC) is a state funded program that provides trips for employment related services.

SPECIALIZED SERVICE is a state funded program that provides medical, shopping or recreational trips for seniors and persons with disabilities.

REGULAR SERVICE funding primarily provides transportation to the customers, clients and consumers of organizations that contract with ACT for service.

# DRIVING FORWARD

## 13 ACCESSIBLE VEHICLES GENERAL PUBLIC, RESERVE-A-RIDE NEW ADVOCACY GROUP



### NEW VEHICLES

This coming year, ACT will receive 13 accessible vehicles to add to their growing fleet. Twelve of the 13 vehicles are wheelchair accessible and will be replacing older buses that have reached the end of their useful life. The new vehicles will assist ACT in providing more efficient services to the increasing number of riders, as well as be more sustainable and environmental friendly to meet the growing miles driven from the ACT fleet.

### FIVE YEAR PLAN

The ACT Five Year Plan is culmination of over two years of collaborative facilitated by Disability Network/Lakeshore. During the research process, the ACT Workgroup conducted surveys, one-to-one interviews, and community input sessions, held several meetings, and performed extensive research, data collection, and analysis. The research and analysis has always centered on one central goal: how to best improve general public transportation services for the residents of Allegan County.

As a result, the Workgroup decided to recommend the following improvements to Allegan County Transportation

over the next five years: offer general public transportation in Allegan County through a Reserve-A-Ride, five community service area system Monday through Friday from 5:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., with limited employment related service from 9 p.m. to 11 p.m.

### LAKESHORE TRANSIT ADVOCACY GROUP FORMED

Transit systems along the lakeshore will receive the support of a newly formed advocacy group, Lakeshore Friends of Transit (LFOT). Organized by Disability Network/Lakeshore, the coalition is a group of 1,600 local business and community leaders, organizations, and individual residents throughout Allegan and Ottawa Counties that support improved, expanded and coordinated public transportation.

MAX and LFOT will work closely together in the coming year to educate the business community, elected officials and residents of the value of public transportation in supporting economic development and promoting more livable communities. More information about LFOT can be found online at [www.transitmeansmore.org](http://www.transitmeansmore.org).



“ACT’s has strategically aligned itself with the County’s vision of providing our citizens superior and innovative services. ACT is doing that by creating efficient business processes that are cost effective and by providing transportation services that are easily accessible. Additionally, ACT maintains a high level of quality service by educating and promoting healthy behaviors ensuring access to medical care for hundreds of citizens.”

– Dan Wedge

“This is the biggest irony because it is our vulnerable populations: people with disabilities, low income, senior citizens—shame on us, we need to find the political power, if we don’t change this we are failing.”

“What we bring in strengthens the economy. By bringing people into the area, we are bringing money to the area. But we need transit to bring people here.”

“If we can’t get patients in [because of a lack in transit], then that affects our income, and then you have to lay people off and that starts a vicious cycle. A lot is on the line—sometimes we are talking about the life or death of a person.”



750 Airway Drive  
Allegan, MI 49010  
[www.allegancounty.org](http://www.allegancounty.org)  
269 686 4529



# BETTER TRANSIT = BETTER LIFE

Providing valuable and necessary quality services to our customers

Allegan County Transportation  
2011 Annual Report



## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

This was another exciting year for Allegan County Transportation (ACT), in February the Allegan County Board of Commissioners approved the Allegan County Transportation five-year plan. The plan was developed by the Allegan County Transportation Workgroup and involved three years of intensive research and analysis including surveys and focus groups. The best practices defined within the plan align with ACT's mission of enhancing and promoting economic development and serving the transportation needs of Allegan County residents by providing safe, reliable, and barrier free travel. As we continue to implement this plan more residents will be provided access and mobility throughout their community.

The improvements to Allegan County Transportation over the next five years offer the general public transit options throughout Allegan County through a Reserve-A-Ride, five community service area system. Over 400 Allegan residents have signed on to publicly support Allegan County Transportation, as well as 20 Letters of Support were collected in support of the plan. Visit Lakeshore Friends of Transit, [www.transitmeansmore.org](http://www.transitmeansmore.org) for more information in supporting public transit and the plan.

ACT also selected a new contractor to provide transportation services for our public transit system. Ride Right, LLC of St. Louis, Missouri was the firm selected to provide staffing for ACT. Ride Right replaced Transportation Management Inc. the provider since inception of ACT in 1999. It was a long and difficult decision, Transportation Management Inc, has been a good partner with the

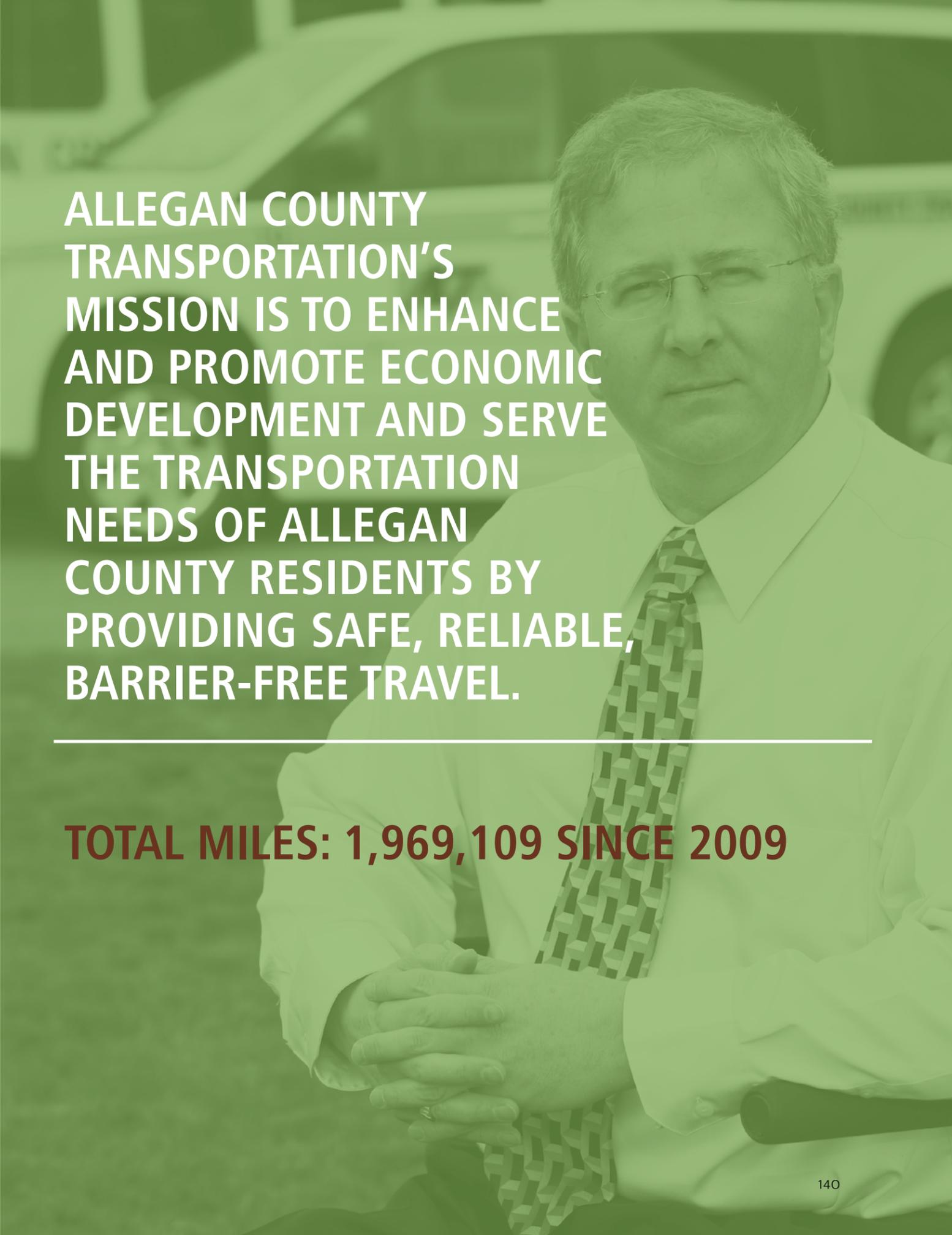
County, but the proposal from the new contractor showed several added benefits to the County at a reduced cost. The new three year contract went into place on June 1st 2012.

Other highlights of the year included participating with the Michigan Department of Transportation in the building of two pilot busses. This provided an opportunity to aid in the development of vehicle spec's, design and building of the busses for sale to transit agencies statewide on the MiDEAL contract. We began to develop the marketing part of the Five-year plan by developing a comment/questioner for customer feed back, an ADA ridership guide and several new marketing informational materials for ACT.

We were able to make several system improvements through the purchase of capital items funded by federal and state grants: installation of a back-up generator to provide uninterrupted power to the ACT facility, installation of a fluid distribution system for the maintenance garage, and were able to replace 7 vehicles that had met their useful life.

Going forward, we will continue to focus and develop ways to improve service despite financial constraints. We are encouraged to see the general public ridership grow and more residents using ACT.

Dan Wedge  
Allegan County  
Transportation Director

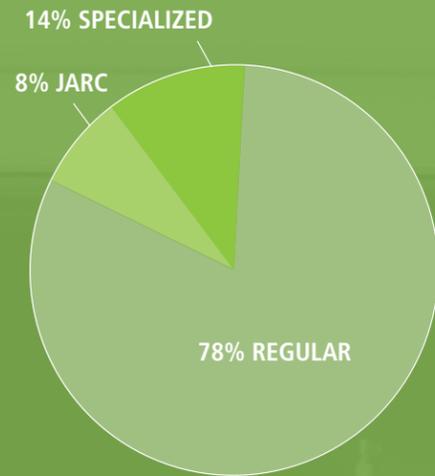


## ALLEGAN COUNTY TRANSPORTATION'S MISSION IS TO ENHANCE AND PROMOTE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SERVE THE TRANSPORTATION NEEDS OF ALLEGAN COUNTY RESIDENTS BY PROVIDING SAFE, RELIABLE, BARRIER-FREE TRAVEL.

---

## TOTAL MILES: 1,969,109 SINCE 2009

# RIDERSHIP



2011 RIDERSHIP

## DEFINITION OF EXPENDITURES

**JOB ACCESS REVERSE COMMUTE (JARC)** is a state and federal funded program that provides trips for employment related services.

**SPECIALIZED SERVICE** is a state funded program that provides medical, shopping or recreational trips for seniors and persons with disabilities.

**REGULAR SERVICE** funding primarily provides transportation to the customers, clients and consumers of organizations that contract with ACT for service.

	2009	2010	2011
SPECIALIZED SERVICES RIDES	7,823	7,721	5,801
JOB ACCESS REVERSE COMMUTE (JARC) RIDES	3,483	3,330	3,401
REGULAR RIDES	35,817	31,863	31,601
<b>TOTAL RIDES</b>	<b>47,123</b>	<b>42,914</b>	<b>40,803</b>

	2009	2010	2011
<b>TOTAL VEHICLE MILES</b>	<b>685,462</b>	<b>669,502</b>	<b>614,145</b>

# LOOKING BACK

## NEW CONTRACTOR SELECTED

The County of Allegan has selected a new contractor to provide transportation services for the public transit system. Ride Right, LLC of St. Louis, Missouri was the firm selected to provide staffing for ACT. Under the direction of the Transportation Director, Ride Right LLC will over see the day to day operations. The new contractor showed several added benefits to the County at a reduced cost. Ride Right was able to retain the current staff at ACT and provide some added benefits to operations. They employ a General Manager, Reservationist/Dispatchers, Drivers, a Mechanic and a Mechanic assistant. The new three year contract went into place on June 1st.

## DIRECTOR RECEIVES ABILITY AWARD

Disability Network/Lakeshore presented its first-ever Ability Award to Allegan County Transportation Director, Dan Wedge on October 25th at Boatwerks Restaurant. This award is presented to an individual in Allegan or Ottawa County who persists in the vision of a community without barriers where people can participate, contribute and belong regardless of ability; the award honors the legacy of Ruth Stegeman.

## NEW ADA GUIDE OFFERED

ACT has developed an ADA passenger guide to ensure people with disabilities understand their rights as well as our policies and procedures for ensuring their transportation needs are met. ACT believes that all persons with disabilities should have access to public transportation in order to lead full and productive lives. We are committed to full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which grants eligible persons with disabilities certain rights.

## HOSTED VOLUNTEER DRIVER APPRECIATION DAY

A Volunteer Driver Appreciation Day was held at the transit facility on August 29th in collaboration with Allegan County Senior Services. Over 25 volunteers from across Allegan County participated in the event. ACT's mechanic provided vehicle inspections and car washes for all the volunteer vehicles. ACT is currently partnering with Senior Services in order to provide the most effective and reliable transit services to seniors. As transportation needs throughout the County continue to increase, volunteer drivers have become essential in serving the senior population.

## NEW ADA REPLACEMENT VEHICLES

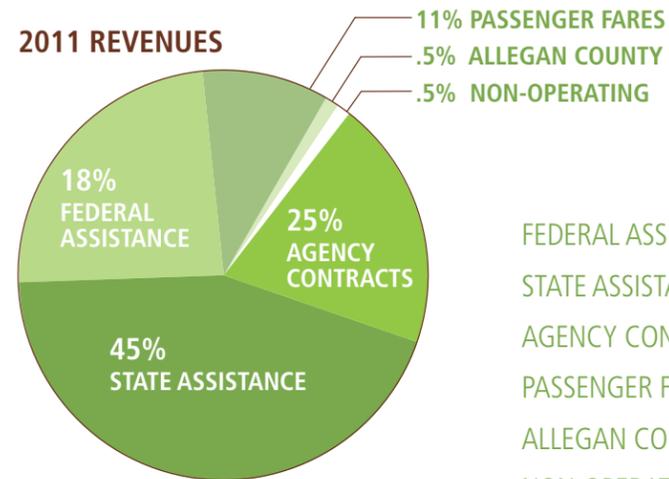
ACT added seven (7) new vehicles including four (4) busses and three (3) new ADA mini-vans. These will be replacing vehicles that had met their useful life according to Michigan Department of Transportation standards. The addition of these vehicles will ensure that all ACT passengers continue to be transported in a safe and reliable manner.

## NEW LOGO AND MARKETING MATERIALS

Over the last year, ACT has rebranded itself, including a new color scheme and logo to match the new transit facility. ACT works to ensure that all of its materials and staff members are consistent in the mission of ACT. Improving upon the look of ACT will only increase the community's understanding of ACT's services.

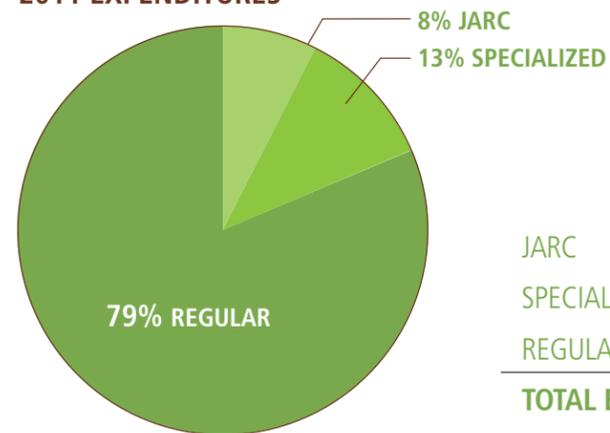
# FINANCIALS

## 2011 REVENUES



	2009	2010	2011
FEDERAL ASSISTANCE	\$221,966	\$248,407	\$225,388
STATE ASSISTANCE	538,385	547,686	567,212
AGENCY CONTRACTS	417,110	298,893	314,762
PASSENGER FARES	138,229	122,646	144,414
ALLEGAN COUNTY	40,500	17,250	4,000
NON-OPERATING	2,633	8,992	3,999
<b>TOTAL REVENUES</b>	<b>\$1,358,823</b>	<b>\$1,243,874</b>	<b>\$1,259,775</b>

## 2011 EXPENDITURES



	2009	2010	2011
JARC	\$89,886	\$100,391	\$97,515
SPECIALIZED SERVICES	128,425	144,305	160,586
REGULAR SERVICE	1,104,428	1,069,484	949,621
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$1,322,739</b>	<b>\$1,314,180</b>	<b>\$1,207,722</b>

# DRIVING FORWARD

## DEVELOP TRI-FOLD INFORMATIONAL BROCHURE

We are in the process of developing a tri-fold informational brochure for passengers interested in learning how to use ACT's services.

## AVL SYSTEM

ACT is looking to implement a new Automatic Vehicle Locator (AVL) system utilizing Global Positioning Systems (GPS) Technologies. Also with the use of Mobile Data Computers, ACT can move towards paperless manifests, be able to send and collect trip information, easily view drivers in real time and provide navigational information. There is a plan to equip 26 vehicles with this new technology. This will provide time saving benefits and improve options for the customer.

## NEW VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT

This coming year, ACT will receive five (5) accessible vehicles to replace older vehicles that have reached the end of their useful life, one ADA van and four busses. The new vehicles will assist ACT in continuing to provide more efficient services. There is funding to additional 800 MHz radio to the vehicles in place of the current hand held portables.

## SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

This coming year, ACT is committed to add a monthly option for Veterans seeking services from the VA medical center located in Battle Creek. This would be a selected day per month with round trip service out of County to the VA medical service center.

# WHO DO WE SERVE?

# 111,408

TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE LIVING IN ALLEGAN COUNTY

# 25%

OF INDIVIDUALS LIVING IN ALLEGAN COUNTY ARE AGE 55 AND OLDER

# 135

INDIVIDUALS PER SQUARE MILE LIVING IN ALLEGAN COUNTY

# 13,236

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES LIVING IN ALLEGAN COUNTY



750 Airway Drive  
Allegan, MI 49010  
[www.allegancounty.org](http://www.allegancounty.org)  
269 686 4529



# APPENDIX L: ACT Educational Mailer

## REGULAR SERVICE

Primarily provides transportation to the customers, clients and consumers of organizations that contract with ACT for service.

## SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Program providing medical, shopping or recreational trips for seniors and persons with disabilities.

## JOB ACCESS REVERSE COMMUTE (JARC)

Program that provides trips for employment related services.

## SCHEDULING TRIPS

Trips must be scheduled before 12 p.m. the day before travel, but may be made up to 14 days in advance. Customer service representatives will take your trip information when you call. As the schedules are developed, the request will be added into the schedule where possible.

The passenger should call to confirm if the request was accepted. Some trips may be unavailable or not confirmed until the day prior. It is recommended that the passenger confirm the pick-up time the day prior.

Passengers should be ready for the bus within 15 minutes of the pick-up time. The bus may arrive up to 15 minutes before and 15 minutes after the scheduled pick-up time. The bus will wait up to five (5) minutes for the passenger to board. A delay by the passenger in boarding more than five (5) minutes after the pick-up time may result in a No Show. Service availability is dependent on available funding.

## SERVICE AREA

The regular service area is within the city limits and within one mile of the connecting roads:

- Allegan
- Fennville
- Plainwell
- Hamilton
- Otsego

Limited service to:

- Pullman
- Holland
- Martin
- Hopkins
- Dorr
- South Haven
- Wayland

## GENERAL OPERATIONAL HOURS

Monday - Friday from 5:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (Hours subject to change) **All reservations should be made by noon on the prior business day.** (Customers should call to confirm pick-up times.)

## FARES

One-way trip, fares are \$2.00 for the general public or \$1.00 for seniors, persons with disabilities, and children ages 5 through 12.

Children under 5 with an adult ride for free.

Specialized Service fares are based on hours of service. Contact ACT for more information.

## CONTACT US

750 Airway Drive  
Allegan, MI 49010  
269.673.4229



[www.allegancounty.org/transportation](http://www.allegancounty.org/transportation)

## Allegan County Transportation

**PROVIDING SAFE, RELIABLE,  
BARRIER-FREE TRANSPORTATION**



Providing valuable and necessary quality services to our customers.



### RECURRING (SUBSCRIPTION) SERVICE

Recurring subscription service is offered to passengers who have travel patterns to and from the same destinations, during the same days and hours, at least one day per week. Individuals with frequently changing schedules are ineligible for recurring service. Service availability is dependent on available funding. Recurring service is offered as a convenience to our passengers, and availability is on a first come-first served basis. Certain restrictions may apply due to capacity constraints.

### CHANGING SCHEDULED TRIPS

Trip changes will be accepted until 4 p.m. one business day before the scheduled trip. Same day changes to your trip time or pick-up/drop-off locations cannot be accommodated. Drivers are prohibited from deviating from the daily passenger manifest and mandated to follow the schedule.

### CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS

Passengers calling to schedule a trip may be advised that financial constraints or excessive demand exists for a particular trip time, and an alternate time may be offered. Operational demands and delays beyond ACT's control (weather, traffic congestion, etc.) do not necessarily indicate capacity constraints as all vehicular traffic is subject to these conditions.

### CANCELLATIONS, LATES AND NO SHOWS

Passengers must cancel unwanted trips at least one (1) hour prior to their scheduled pick-up time to avoid penalty. Failure to be ready for your scheduled pick-up time or failure to cancel a scheduled trip in advance will be considered a "No Show," which may result in denial of future service. Passengers with out of county No Shows may be required to pay the fare due in full before being allowed to schedule another trip.

### NO SHOW POLICY

A "No Show" is defined as:

- A trip scheduled by the passenger for service and the passenger fails to be ready at the scheduled pick-up time.
- A scheduled trip is canceled by the passenger less than one (1) hour before the scheduled pick-up time.
- The passenger is not ready to board within five (5) minutes after the arrival of the vehicle. If the vehicle arrives early, the rider does not have to board until five (5) minutes after the actual scheduled pick-up time.
- If a passenger "No Shows" the first portion of a trip, the return trip is automatically canceled. Passengers must call two (2) hours in advance to keep their return trip.
- If a passenger accumulates three (3) "No-Shows" within a rolling 30 day period, his or her ACT services will be suspended for 30 days. A suspension means that he or she will not be able to schedule or receive any trips during a 30 day period. Final reinstatement of ridership privileges will only occur after all previous fees are paid. Agencies reserve the right to implement a more restrictive No Show policy for their prepaid trips.

### ADA CERTIFICATION PROCESS

In order to maintain ADA eligibility, passengers must complete an ADA certification application by completing and returning the application to ACT. Applications are available by calling the ACT office or visiting the ACT website. An ADA Guide is available by request. For an application, contact 269.673.4229.



## ALLEGAN COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COMPLIMENT/COMPLAINT FORM

If you have a compliment or complaint, please fill out this form and give it to the driver or drop it off at the ACT office. You must provide your name and contact information if you would like to receive a response.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

HOME PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

WORK PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

INDICATE THE NATURE OF YOUR COMMENT:

\_\_\_\_\_ COMPLIMENT \_\_\_\_\_ COMPLAINT

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SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

# APPENDIX N: Published News Articles



Everything Michigan

## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### Group studying county bus system

Monday, September 22, 2008

Kalamazoo

BY ROD SMITH

Special to Hometown Gazette

ALLEGAN -- A Holland-based nonprofit organization has undertaken a study of the Allegan County Transportation Department.

"Disabilitynetwork, in partnership with Allegan County Transportation, will be conducting a transportation study," said Kathryn Gillen, the network's public policy specialist.

Gillen said the study, which is already under way, will look "at the unmet needs of all of Allegan County." Although the network helps the disabled, the study itself will be for all residents of Allegan County.

The purpose is to develop a five-year strategic plan for the bus system. The study will continue through January 2010. Researchers will conduct community input sessions as well as surveys. They will work with different businesses, nonprofits and residents.

"We received the funding for this from the Michigan Department of Transportation," Gillen said.

To give feedback, call Gillen at (616) 396-5326 or e-mail her at [kathryn@dnfakeshore.org](mailto:kathryn@dnfakeshore.org).

The bus system opened under a grant program in July 2000. Earlier this year, Director Dan Wedge told county commissioners that, by the end of this year, he estimated the system would make 56,288 trips. It made 39,402 in 2007.

The system has three main routes. One main route is a diagonal route from Holland to Allegan to Plainwell. Another is a loop route from the County Services Complex at Dumont Lake to Allegan to Pullman to Fennville and back to the complex. The third runs north from Plainwell to Wayland and Dorr.

Buses will deviate by a mile from the route to pick up riders.

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The Allegan  
**County News** 

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**The Commercial Record** Contact Us:  
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Allegan, MI 49010  
Phone: (269) 673-5514  
Fax: (269) 673-5515

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The Plainwell & Otsego  
**Union Enterprise**

## Group aims to define, help solve transport needs in county

**By Daniel Pepper**  
**Staff Writer**

**Wednesday, September 24, 2008 4:26 PM EDT**

As a way to emphasize the county's needs for public transportation, the United Way ceremony was set next to the construction site of the new transportation facility.

A Holland-area non-profit hopes to find out what those transportation needs are.

Kathryn Gillen of Disability Network Lakeshore spoke to the Allegan County Board of Commissioners at its Thursday, Sept. 11, meeting.

"We will be conducting a study on the county with regard to unmet needs," Gillen said. "Plus, we're looking to develop a five-year strategic plan and increase support for public transit in the county."

The Disability Network is a disability advocacy group, but it is branching out to deal with transportation for the general public.

"Transport is focused on all residents, not just those with disabilities," Gillen said.

The first step, she said, will be to determine the public's transportation needs.

"We're looking at the unmet needs and then coming up with the best strategic plan for Allegan County," she said.

The effort, Gillen said, will include trying to figure out the practicalities of improving transportation.

As the study continues, the network will organize community input meetings and conduct resident surveys.

The plan is to form a group of 10 to 15 people and work with businesses, non-profits, churches, organizations and residents to develop plans.

The group plans to break the county into five regions and make sure it gets input from each one.

The study is funded by a grant from the Michigan Department of Transportation and will run from September 2008 to 2010.

Allegan County Transportation director Dan Wedge said his department had been involved in originally seeking the grant, which was funded in its second year.

Wedge said the Disability Network had a proven track record, doing similar studies of the City of Holland's bus system and for Ottawa County.

"They were very successful in getting consumer-driven information, not just what this agency feels and the other agency feels," Wedge said.

Having an outside agency conduct the survey, rather than his department, was an advantage, Wedge said.

"Well, first of all I'm sort of a one-man department, so I need to be up on the day-to-day operations," he said. "I think having someone from the outside gives a more unbiased perspective.

Anyone wishing to offer input or ask questions should contact Gillen at (616) 396-5326 or [kathryn@dnlakeshore.org](mailto:kathryn@dnlakeshore.org).

Dan Pepper can be reached at [dpepper@allegannews.com](mailto:dpepper@allegannews.com) or at (269) 673-5534 or (269) 685-5985.

**The Allegan Area Educational Service Area** has always been one of my favorite Allegan County jewels ... They are innovative and always have things working that are going to benefit the students in Allegan County ... This is a comparatively young group of educators whose talents cover almost every field and they work for leaders who encourage them to "dream" about things they would like to see happen in their educational areas ... Now under superintendent Mark Dobias, the AAESA, has suddenly come up with a way to help a lot of folks in the county who are in serious need ... In conjunction with the Social/Intellectual Committee of the Multi-Agency Collaborative Council, Allegan County United Way, AAESA, and Martin Resource Center, all are partnering to launch a county transportation pilot ... This is separate from a study recently announced of the Allegan County transportation needs by a Holland group ... The local group is trying to learn and identify current transportation resources in our county and demonstrate the need to improve the system we already have ... The groups quickly realized that the AAESA and local school districts have buses on county roads Monday through Friday that have "down-time" during the day while their regular passengers are in school ... A pilot project was launched that will provide service on some of these buses between the Martin Resource Center, Plainwell, Otsego and Allegan ... "The United Way Board has identified transportation as a major focus for this year," stated Mimi Gabriel, UW Executive Director ... "If this works like we hope it will, perhaps this pilot can be duplicated across the county" ... All of this study of a major problem in Allegan County is being done in addition to the on-going research county transportation director Dan Wedge does to find additional funding for his department.

## Allegan County public transportation topic of forums

By JIM HAYDEN

The Associated Press

Posted Sep 19, 2009 @ 10:59 PM

Allegan County, MI — Naomi Whetzel hasn't driven a day in her life because of a medical condition. The 87-year-old Dorr area residents uses the Allegan County Transportation bus system to get to appointments.

Whetzel has to schedule bus pickups at least two days in advance, but appreciates the service.

"I'd be stuck," she said, if the county service wasn't available.

Those who work with the county's transportation system know there are more people like Whetzel and they want the bus service to help them as well.

The Disability Network/Lakeshore and the transportation service have set several community forums in Allegan and Saugatuck to get input for a five-year plan that includes possibly connecting the county system to Saugatuck's bus service.

The Saugatuck meeting is 6:30 p.m. Monday at Saugatuck Christian Reformed Church, 6591 Old Allegan Road.

The county bus system has a limited reach because of its funding sources, according to Kathryn Gillen of Disability Network/Lakeshore.

The service area includes the city of Allegan with service along routes within a one-mile radius of M-40 to Holland, M-89 including Otsego and Plainwell and Fennville. Pullman, Shelbyville, Martin, Dorr and Wayland also receive service.

The county system does not go into the Saugatuck area, which has its own on-demand bus system that operates within the Saugatuck Township borders, including the cities of Saugatuck and Douglas.

"We're hoping, down the road, that they can expand their hours and service and transportation options for our area," said Cherie Giller of the Saugatuck area Interurban Transit Authority. "It would be nothing but a win-win situation."

Gillen agrees, saying people along the lakeshore need to get to Allegan for medical appointments and county services, such as the court house or treasurer's office.

"We're hoping with our five-year plan that we will connect to Saugatuck," Gillen said.

Allegan County Transportation is funded by organizations such as Allegan County Community Mental Health, Michigan Works and the county's intermediate school district. People who need these services can use the bus service.

"ACT is not really a public system," Gillen said.

That creates misunderstandings with county residents, many who think it is an on-demand service they can call to get to an event or another person's home.

In the draft of the five-year plan, the county bus service is examining ways to create a true countywide transportation system.

The meetings with community members are an important part of reaching that goal, Gillen said.

### FORUMS

#### BUS FORUMS

If you want to give input into transportation plans for Allegan County:

- 10 a.m. Monday: Wings of Hope Hospice, 530 Linn St., Allegan
  - 6:30 p.m. Monday: Saugatuck Christian Reformed Church, 6591 Old Allegan Road
  - 7 p.m. Oct. 5: Downtown Development Board, Allegan
- For more information, call (616) 396-5326.

#### Facts about Allegan Co.

##### Transportation:

- Founded: July 2000
  - Service: City of Allegan with service along routes within a one-mile radius of M-40 to Holland, M-89 including Otsego and Plainwell and Fennville. Pullman, Shelbyville, Martin, Dorr and Wayland also receive service.
  - Riders: In 2008, 44,900 passenger trips (one ride equals a passenger trip); in 2007, 39,420 passenger trips
  - Fleet: 28 vehicles (vans and buses); 16 of the vehicles are wheelchair accessible
  - Fees: \$2; \$1 for seniors, persons with disabilities and children 5-12.
- Source: Allegan County Transportation Five-Year Strategic Plan, draft 1, August 2009

"The purpose of these sessions is to gain valuable feedback and suggestions on the potential transportation options offered in the ACT plan," she wrote in a press release.

So far, a workgroup has surveyed county residents, interviewed people and held focus groups to help develop the five-year plan.

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Everything Michigan

## Public transit could be an option for more Allegan County residents

Published: Tuesday, March 01, 2011, 11:14 PM Updated: Tuesday, March 01, 2011, 11:18 PM



By **Greg Chandler** | **The Grand Rapids Press**

ALLEGAN — A proposed five-year plan seeks to make public transit available to more Allegan County residents.

A two-year study by a county-wide work group proposes to expand the present Allegan County Transportation service to include a five-day-a-week reservation-based service known as demand response.

Currently, the 11-year-old ACT service generally serves clients of various agencies and organizations that have contracted with the transit service. Because of a lack of local funding, most county residents cannot get access to the transit system, said Kathryn Gray, a public policy specialist with Disability Network Lakeshore.

"With the implementation of this plan, more residents (will be) provided access and mobility throughout their community," Gray said.

Governed by the county Board of Commissioners, ACT serves an area that includes the county's major transportation corridors — M-40 from Holland to Allegan, M-89 from Plainwell to Fennville and the area near U.S. 131 between Wayland and Martin. Its customers are generally people who use it to get to either their jobs, job-training programs or access services such as Community Mental Health, but supporters say there's a greater need for residents to access transit to get daily tasks done.

"The work group has identified a need for additional local funding that is not tied to contractual agreements with local organizations or grant sources," ACT Director Dan Wedge wrote in the report, presented last week to the Board of Commissioners. "With fewer restrictions on the people ACT can serve and the trip types ACT can provide, the transit system would have resources to offer rides to the general Allegan County public."

Under the proposal, ACT would operate weekdays from 5:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. with limited additional transportation until 11 p.m. for people going to or from second-shift jobs. Weekend hours would also be offered on a limited basis. Currently, ACT runs only on weekdays from 5:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

ACT has seen its service grow from nearly 14,000 passenger trips in its first year of service in 2001 to more than 47,000 in 2009. Despite that growth, the service has had to turn away residents because they don't live close enough to the transit's main corridor routes.

3/2/2011

Public transit could be an option for mo...

Specifics on whether a county-wide millage might be offered to help fund ACT still must be discussed with county officials, Gray said.

*E-mail the author of this story: [localnews@grpress.com](mailto:localnews@grpress.com)*

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# The Allegan County News



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**The Commercial Record**



*The Plainwell & Oberg*

**Union Enterprise**

## 5-year transit plan seeks efficiency, also needs funding

By Ryan Lewis  
Editor

Wednesday, March 2, 2011 1:06 PM EST

Although a strategic plan for public transportation in Allegan County points to a pressing need for more availability, implementing it will require more funding.

Pressed by Allegan County Board of Commissioners at their Thursday, Feb. 24, meeting to put a bottom line on his department's five-year strategic plan, Allegan County Transportation director Dan Wedge said a .3-mill tax would cover the costs of full implementation. The plan does not recommend any particular form of funding.

"You could fund this locally out of the (county's) general fund," Wedge said. "The likelihood of that, I've been told, is slim."

Wedge was acknowledging the county's recent history of budget cuts, with more on the way for next year given sagging property tax revenue and expected cuts to revenue sharing from the state.

Despite the budget crunch, the need for public transit persists.

Kathryn Gray is a public policy specialist for the Disability Network/Lakeshore. Her organization secured the Michigan Department of Transportation grant to fund the creation of the 54-page five-year plan.

"There is a huge public need for this service," Gray said.

According to the six studies conducted during the last three years by the Disability Network, 65 percent of current and prospective riders indicated the need for increased regional transportation in West Michigan during the next three years. As for employment, 25 percent of those same riders said the lack of transportation prevented them from keeping or looking for a job; 36 percent said they were prevented from attending medical appointments in the last year; 81 percent said the service was "very" or "somewhat important" to the community.

In a press release, Gray said, "Whether you're a businessperson, a student, a person with a disability, a senior or an elected official, public transportation means more for everyone. The benefits include increased employment options for adults, more access to medical care for adults, more access to medical care for seniors and more participation in after-school activities by students."

The plan would not radically change the service already offered. Riders would continue to reserve in advance spots on buses, but hours would expand from its current 8.5 hours between 5 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. on weekdays.

In the new plan, riders could reserve rides Monday through Friday from 5:30 a.m. to 9 p.m., with some service from 9 p.m. to 11 p.m. for destinations with heavier traffic. There would also be up to 115 hours available for Saturday-Sunday service.

Fares would remain the same: \$2 per one-way trip per adult; \$1 for senior citizens, people with disabilities and children.

The Disability Network said that in a taxpayer survey, 78 percent said they were either "very" or "somewhat likely" to support a county transit millage.

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Even if a millage is delayed or defeated, that does not abort the entire plan.

Wedge said that while adding additional hours of service would definitely increase expenses, "There are pieces we can add without adding additional cost."

Getting the department's major users—Allegan County Mental Health and Michigan Works!—to commit to certain days of service to particular regions of the county, ridership can be concentrated and made more efficient. In addition, sticking to a regular regional schedule will allow the general public to rely on the service and piggyback on those days.

"We're developing a plan to get at least two days a week in each of four areas of the county," Wedge said.

He said he is also working to form regional partnerships that help free up the department's vehicles.

A veteran, for example, headed to the VA hospital in Battle Creek could be taken to the Kalamazoo County line, be met and picked up by that county's transit service to go the rest of the way, because it already makes several stops there daily. The Allegan bus can make other stops and then pick the veteran back up in the same spot (instead of idling in Battle Creek during the veteran's appointment).

"There's a huge need for regional transportation, primarily for medical appointments," Wedge said.

Commissioner Steve McNeal voiced concern over the entire county bearing the cost of a service that tends to be less cost-efficient outside of urban areas.

"I have real mixed feelings about this," McNeal said. "(Riders) with special needs are one thing. As far as a transportation system for those who use it by choice, it's difficult for me to see a tax on corn stalks paying for an urban service. I'm not sure it makes sense to fund it."

Wedge said 15 of 16 recent county transit millages elsewhere in Michigan passed by wide margins and that public transportation services functioned like a form of insurance for riders who might lose access to personal transportation.

"Just like you might never need the fire department, (if you do) you sure are grateful," Wedge said. "This isn't really about the millage; it's about the county taking accountability that there are needs that need to be met."

Contact [Ryan Lewis](#) at [rmlewis@allegannews.com](mailto:rmlewis@allegannews.com) or (269) 673-5534.



Everything Michigan

## Possible Allegan County plan to expand bus service would require new property tax

Published: Friday, March 11, 2011, 7:55 AM Updated: Friday, March 11, 2011, 7:57 AM



By Rod Smith | Special to the Kalamazoo Gazette

**ALLEGAN** — It might someday be possible to take a bus from any point in Allegan County.

The Allegan County Board of Commissioners on Thursday approved a five-year plan for Allegan County Transportation. It includes increased hours, seven-day-a-week service and a reservation system that would allow, for example, someone in Casco Township to visit relatives in Leighton Township, or someone in Plainwell to spend time camping in Allegan State Game Area.

The plan, however, is a concept, and Thursday's board approval is not a go-ahead.

Last year, the county bus system provided 58,187 passenger trips. However, according to Director Dan Wedge, about 90 percent of them were for people whose rides were paid by various programs, such as Community Mental Health or disability programs.

The other 10 percent were for the general public unconnected to any program.

The general public can only get a seat if the bus already is going that way.

The system also only operates from 5:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and generally is confined to within a mile of three routes: diagonally across the county from Holland to Plainwell; north and south from Plainwell to Wayland; and a circular route from Allegan to Fennville to Pullman and back.

The plan recommends extending operating hours to 9:30 to 11 p.m. Monday through Friday and operating on weekends. Ride cost would run \$2 for adults and \$1 for seniors.

Wedge said implementing the plan likely would require a property-tax levy. At the service level recommended, the bus service would need 0.308mill.

Such a request may come through a citizen group, said Wedge.

# ALLEGAN COUNTY TRANSPORTATION ADA GUIDE





ALLEGAN COUNTY TRANSPORTATION (ACT) BELIEVES THAT ALL PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES SHOULD HAVE ACCESS TO PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IN ORDER TO LEAD FULL AND PRODUCTIVE LIVES. WE ARE COMMITTED TO FULL COMPLIANCE WITH THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA), WHICH GRANTS ELIGIBLE PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES CERTAIN RIGHTS.



ACT HAS DEVELOPED THIS ADA PASSENGER GUIDE TO ENSURE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES UNDERSTAND THEIR RIGHTS AS WELL AS OUR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR ENSURING THEIR TRANSPORTATION NEEDS ARE MET.

OUR GOAL IS TO PROVIDE INCREASED MOBILITY TO AS MANY ADA PASSENGERS AS POSSIBLE.

## SERVICE HOURS AND SERVICE AREA

ADA eligible passengers are entitled only to service within ACT's defined service area and/or jurisdictional boundaries and within normal operating hours. See ACT website for service area and operating hours.

## SCHEDULING TRIPS

ADA eligible passengers need to follow the same procedures for scheduling a trip as other passengers. Trips must be scheduled before 12 p.m. the day before travel, but may be made up to 14 days in advance. ADA service out of the county requires a minimum of three (3) days advance notice. Please have the following trip information available to give to the ACT customer service representative:

- Passenger name
- Exact street address of all pick-up and drop-off locations
- Name of complex/subdivision, as well as the building, apartment or suite number
- Easily identified pick-up points, when applicable, such as hospital, shopping mall, or doctor's office
- Your desired arrival time for the appointment
- If the passenger is traveling with a personal care attendant, companion or service animal
- If a wheelchair lift is needed
- Return trip information, including pick-up time and exact address location

Customer service representatives will take your trip information when you call. As the schedules are developed, the request will be added into the schedule where possible. The passenger should call to confirm if the request was accepted. Some trips may be unavailable or not confirmed until the day prior. It is recommended that the passenger confirm the pick-up time the day prior. Passengers should be ready for the bus within 15 minutes of the pick-up time. The bus may arrive up to 15 minutes before and 15 minutes after the scheduled pick-up time. The bus will wait up to five (5) minutes for the passenger to board. A delay by the passenger in boarding more than five (5) minutes after the pick-up time may result in a No Show. See No Show Policy

Negotiations for scheduling trips are permissible under ADA laws if the requested pick-up time is unavailable. Service availability is dependent on available funding.

## RECURRING (SUBSCRIPTION) SERVICE

Recurring subscription service is offered to passengers who have travel patterns to and from the same destinations, during the same days and hours, at least one day per week. Individuals with frequently changing schedules are ineligible for recurring service. Service availability is dependent on available funding.

Recurring service is offered as a convenience to our passengers, and availability is on a first come-first served basis. Recurring service is not required under the ADA; therefore, certain restrictions may apply due to capacity constraints.

## CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS

Passengers calling to schedule a trip may be advised that excessive demand exists for a particular trip time, and an alternate time may be offered. Operational demands and delays beyond ACT's control (weather, traffic congestion, etc.) do not necessarily indicate capacity constraints as all vehicular traffic is subject to these conditions.

## CHANGING SCHEDULED TRIPS

Trip changes will be accepted until 4 p.m. one business day before the scheduled trip. Same day changes to your trip time or pick-up/drop-off locations cannot be accommodated. Drivers are prohibited from deviating from the daily passenger manifest and mandated to follow the schedule.

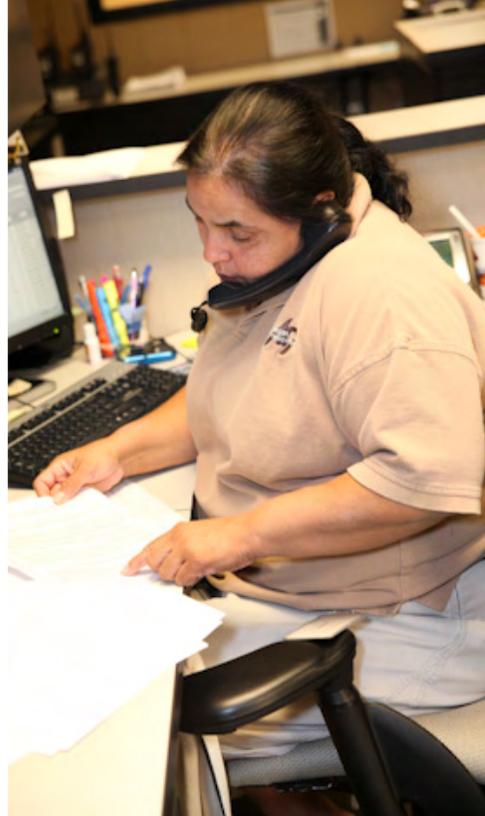
## CANCELLATIONS, LATES AND NO SHOWS

Passengers must cancel unwanted trips at least one (1) hour prior to their scheduled pick-up time to avoid penalty. Failure to be ready for your scheduled pick-up time or failure to cancel a scheduled trip in advance will be considered a "No Show," which may result in denial of future service. Passengers with No Shows must pay the fare due in full before being allowed to schedule another trip.

## NO SHOW POLICY

A "No Show" is defined as:

- A trip scheduled by the passenger for service and the passenger fails to be ready at the scheduled pick-up time.
- A scheduled trip is canceled by the passenger less than one (1) hour before the scheduled pick-up time.
- The passenger is not ready to board within five (5) minutes after the arrival of the vehicle. If the vehicle arrives early, the rider does not have to board until five (5) minutes after the actual scheduled pick-up time.
- If a passenger "No Shows" the first portion of a trip, the return trip is automatically canceled. The passenger is charged the fare for the first portion of their trip during which the "No Show" occurred. Passengers must call two (2) hours in advance to keep their return trip. If a passenger calls two (2) hours in advance of their return trip, the passenger will only be charged a "No Show" for one trip.
- If a passenger accumulates three (3) "No-Shows" within a rolling 30 day period, his or her ACT services will be suspended for 30 days. A suspension means that he or she will not be able to schedule or receive any trips during a 30 day period. Final reinstatement of ridership privileges will only occur after all previous fees are paid.



### THIRD PARTY SCHEDULING

Because some individuals require or desire a third party to schedule their trips on ACT, and because penalties exist for individuals who fail to show for a trip or cancel a trip in a timely manner, the following policy has been adopted:

- All third party schedulers must first be approved by the passenger and ACT. Upon approval, the individual will then be added to the pre-approved scheduler list.
- Passengers will be held responsible for all trips scheduled or canceled by themselves or a third party who is on the pre-approved third party scheduling list.
- Third party schedulers will be informed of this policy when scheduling trips.
- This does not apply to parents or legal guardians.

### CAREGIVER RESPONSIBILITIES

Passengers with disabilities may travel without an attendant as long as they exhibit safe behavior and are able to follow basic rules. However, an attendant or caregiver must be present at the pick-up point and drop-off locations for those who cannot be left alone. If no attendant or caregiver is present at the pick-up and drop-off locations, service to the passenger may be suspended and the matter reported to the appropriate local or state agencies.

It also is the responsibility of the passenger's caregiver or family members to inform ACT of any special passenger needs so that the driver can take appropriate actions. However, drivers cannot serve as personal care attendants for passengers.

### PERSONAL CARE ATTENDANTS (PCAS)

One (1) Personal Care Attendant (PCA) may accompany ADA passengers at no additional charge if the ADA certification provides for a PCA. Additional travelers that accompany the passenger are considered companions and must pay the regular fare. A PCA is anyone whose purpose is to help passengers meet their disability-related personal needs. A trip for the PCA must be reserved at the time the passenger's trip is scheduled, and the PCA must have the same origin and destination as the eligible passenger. ACT personnel are able to assist all passengers with boarding, disembarking and stowing personal belongings; however, ACT personnel cannot assume the duties of a PCA. Under certain circumstances ACT management may strongly recommend a PCA for passengers with lost sensory or motor functions to such an extent that they need assistance with personal needs, behavior, and/or general safety. The use of a PCA must be indicated on the ADA application form.

### COMPANIONS

A companion is a friend, relative, or other person who is traveling with you, but is not coming along primarily to assist the passenger because of a disability. When reserving a trip, be sure to make a reservation for both you and your companion. Companions pay the same fare as regular passengers.



## **SERVICE ANIMALS**

Service animals are allowed on ACT vehicles without being caged, provided they are properly constrained and do not pose a threat to others. There is no fare for service animals. For safety reasons, drivers are not allowed to carry cages or handle service animals.

## **TRANSPORTING PACKAGES & BAGS**

For safety reasons, passengers may not transport more bags/packages than they can manage themselves. Each bus passenger is allowed up to two (2) packages or bags to carry. Passengers should make other transportation arrangements if they have excessive bags, packages, or heavy items exceeding 60 lbs. (ACT is unable to allow excessive luggage, boxes or packages on board as we're unable to safely store and secure these articles and they may pose a hazard in a moving vehicle.) ACT personnel may assist with loading up to two (2) bags into the vehicle, but are not required to carry packages for passengers. ACT encourages the use of portable folding two-wheeled carts to safely transport items to and from the pick-up/drop-off location.

## **WHEELCHAIRS & SCOOTERS**

Passengers unable to use the steps to enter the vehicle may stand on the lift to board the vehicle. Ambulatory passengers who use the wheelchair lift must be able to stand without assistance and to hold onto the handrails.

Passengers in wheelchairs also will board the vehicle using the lift. Wheelchairs must meet the ADA-regulated definition of a common wheelchair by not exceeding 30" in width, 48" in length, and 600 pounds when occupied. Wheelchairs and their occupants are secured at all times for passenger safety while on the vehicle.

Scooter-type devices tend to be unstable on wheelchair lifts and on the bus, and may exceed allowable weight and ADA dimensions. Passengers who use scooter-type mobility devices who are capable of transferring to a vehicle seat are strongly encouraged to do so during transport.

Mobility devices should be backed onto the wheelchair lift as recommended by the manufacturer. Passengers using wheelchairs or scooters are required to be secured using a four-point tie-down system at all times while in the vehicle. Failure to cooperate with these safety policies may result in a loss of service. ACT cannot transport passengers with inoperable mobility devices.

## **OPEN SORES & WOUNDS**

For the safety of all passengers, ACT cannot transport passengers with open wounds or sores. An open sore or wound may include but is not limited to a medically-related opening which creates leaking or discharge of bodily fluid (dialysis pick-line, colostomy bag, vomiting, diarrhea, etc.) or an injury that causes an external break in body tissue.

Wounds include abrasions, incisions, lacerations, punctures, and avulsions. Wounds must be properly dressed and leakage/discharge must be controlled to prevent the threat of transmission of biohazards

to transit personnel and other passengers. In some cases, passengers may be required to exit the vehicle to address biohazard concerns.

ACT personnel are not responsible for assisting passengers in dressing wounds and controlling bodily fluid leakage/discharge. This is the passenger's or personal care attendant's responsibility. If medical assistance becomes necessary while the passenger is being transported by ACT, personnel will contact emergency medical services (911) to administer aid at the passenger's expense.

## **MEDICATION & TRANSPORTING LIFE SUPPORT EQUIPMENT**

Passengers may travel with respirators, portable oxygen, and other life-support equipment, provided such transport does not violate laws or rules related to transportation of hazardous materials. Passengers traveling with respirators, portable oxygen and other life-support equipment must follow safety procedures to ensure the protection of all passengers and transit employees.

A portable oxygen tank or intravenous stand will only be transported by ACT when it is medically necessary for the passenger. Passengers may board the bus with no more than one (1) portable oxygen tank. The portable oxygen tank may not exceed 15 lbs. in total weight; 29 inches in height; and 4 inches in diameter. ACT personnel will inspect any portable oxygen tank before a passenger may board the vehicle. Defective, leaking or otherwise unsafe or unfit tanks will not be allowed on the vehicle. Portable oxygen tanks must be turned off when not in use; or the oxygen mask must be secured to the user's face when in operation.

ACT personnel will secure oxygen tanks and intravenous stands in an upright position using a secured belt or system-approved cargo belt. Precautions will be taken to avoid pinching or kinking an oxygen line. Oxygen tanks may be secured in an unoccupied area away from the sidewall of the bus; to an aisle-side seat back; or another area designated by ACT personnel. Passengers who wear or carry portable oxygen tanks are encouraged to wear the seat belt provided.

Passengers requiring medication or oxygen at regular intervals should be advised that travel time on transit vehicles can be up to one hour. Public transportation is subject to unpredictable conditions such as traffic delays and mechanical problems that may result in longer than expected travel times.

ACT personnel may not administer or assist with the administration of any medication. Any passenger requiring assistance with meds or oxygen while on the vehicle must travel with a personal care attendant. Should the administration of medications or oxygen become necessary while a passenger is aboard a vehicle, ACT personnel will contact emergency medical services (911) for help at the passenger's expense. Repeated incidents in which the administration of medication and/or oxygen disrupt or delay other ACT passengers may result in the evaluation of the individual's suitability to use ACT services.

Passengers using such equipment are strongly advised to use medical transportation and/or travel with a personal care attendant and may not be allowed to carry additional oxygen tanks if transported in an unsafe manner.

## ACCESSIBILITY

ACT will pick-up and drop-off passengers from the safest accessible curb or location. If a passenger needs additional help, a personal care attendant is advised. Passengers must specify the physical address and exact location for pick-up. Passengers being picked-up or dropped-off at large complexes must meet the vehicle at the curb closest to their building/unit or at the curb by the main lobby/building, unless otherwise instructed.

If the complex is inaccessible to ACT vehicles, passengers must meet the vehicle at the main entrance. Passengers must inform ACT if their residential community is gated and provide access codes or procedures when the reservation is made.

Passengers who are not at the proper pick-up location within the designated time frame and within the five (5) minute waiting period will be considered a "No Show." ACT may call sight-impaired passengers to notify them when a vehicle is arriving, if requested.

## DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

Service will be denied on a long-term basis to passengers who engage in violent, seriously disruptive or illegal behavior. Such behavior includes, but is not limited to:

- threats or fear of physical or verbal abuse
- unlawful harassment, including unwelcome verbal, nonverbal, or physical behavior making sexual or racial connotations
- unauthorized use of equipment on the vehicle
- voluntarily and repeatedly violating passenger rules
- smoking, eating and/or drinking on the bus
- moving about while the bus is in motion
- destroying or defacing the bus or equipment
- refusing to comply with other ACT rules

## SUSPENSION POLICY

Passengers must not engage in activities that misuse the transit system by unnecessarily scheduling trips that could otherwise be given to other passengers who need transportation. Example of misuse include, but are not limited to, failing to show up for scheduled trips (No Shows), failing to board the bus immediately upon arrival (lateness), providing late cancellation notice, and providing false information to qualify for ADA certification.



## **ADA CERTIFICATION PROCESS**

In order to maintain ADA eligibility, passengers must complete an ADA certification application by completing and returning the application to ACT. Applications are available by calling the ACT office or visiting the ACT website. For an application, contact 269.686.4529.

## **ADA APPLICATION OR TRIP DENIAL APPEALS**

Persons may appeal an ADA certification eligibility denial as well as any conditional eligibility requirements. Appeals must be filed in writing within 60 calendar days from the date of the post mark on the envelope containing the eligibility notification letter. Final decisions on all appeals will be made to the ACT Appeals Panel. Trip denials or suspension from service also may be appealed to ACT within 14 calendar days from the date of the eligibility notification letter.

## **WRITTEN APPEALS SHOULD BE MAILED TO:**

ACT ADA Appeals Panel  
750 Airway Drive  
Allegan, MI 49401



750 Airway Drive  
Allegan, MI 49010  
[www.allegancounty.org](http://www.allegancounty.org)  
269.686.4529

Allegan County Transportation

# PROVIDING SAFE, RELIABLE, BARRIER-FREE TRANSPORTATION



## OUR TRANSIT SERVICES

Providing valuable and necessary quality services to our customers.

### REGULAR SERVICE

Primarily provides transportation to the customers, clients and consumers of organizations that contract with ACT for service.

### SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Program providing medical, shopping or recreational trips for seniors and persons with disabilities.

### JOB ACCESS REVERSE COMMUTE (JARC)

Program that provides trips for employment related services.

## SERVICE AREA

The regular service area is within the city limits and within one mile of the connecting roads:

- Allegan
- Fennville
- Plainwell
- Hamilton
- Otsego

Limited service to:

- Pullman
- Holland
- Martin
- Hopkins
- Dorr
- South Haven
- Wayland

## GENERAL OPERATIONAL HOURS

Monday - Friday from 5:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

(Hours subject to change) **All reservations should be made by noon on the prior business day.** (Customers should call to confirm pick-up times.)

## FARES

One-way trip, fares are \$2.00 for the general public or \$1.00 for seniors, persons with disabilities, and children ages 5 through 12.

Children under 5 with an adult ride for free.

Specialized Service fares are based on hours of service. Contact ACT for more information.

## CONTACT US

750 Airway Drive  
Allegan, MI 49010  
269.673.4229



[www.allegancounty.org/transportation](http://www.allegancounty.org/transportation)

# A vehicle for change.

Demonstrating how lack of  
transportation affects people  
and their communities

A Transportation Research Project of  
Disability Network/Lakeshore

The impact lack of public transit has on an entire community is complex and reaches beyond the individual without transportation to several other residents and stakeholders. Individuals without transportation do not have full access to the community in which they live. As natural supports and community organizations with which people are connected transition into the role to transportation providers, they are affected too. This issue raises these questions: What is the impact lack of transportation has on a community without public transit? For each person who is affected by lack of transportation, how many other people become involved and in what way? What is the most effective way to communicate this complexity? Funded by a \$99,000 MDOT Grant, a team of community partners formed to answer these questions and demonstrate how lack of transportation affects people and their communities in Eastern Ottawa County.

#### PHASE 1: IDENTIFY THE NEED

Listen to people with transportation needs

#### PHASE 2: COMMUNITY INPUT

Gather feedback from taxpayers

#### PHASE 3: EDUCATING CITIZENS

Create educational DVD and website to inform community of transit needs

#### PHASE 4: NEXT STEPS

Share findings with elected officials and community leaders

1,000

taxpayers surveyed via phone

449

people with unmet needs surveyed within a nine month period

36

one-to-one interviews conducted with people who need transit and their networks

553

people signed on to publicly support transit

22,309

people with disabilities living in Ottawa County

21%

population of individuals age 55 and older living in Ottawa County

26

stakeholder organizations participated in an online survey



## COMMUNITY VOICES.

### Individuals with unmet transit needs:

"I would be much more independent. I would not have to rely on others to take me places."

"I feel like I have become a bit afraid of strangers and more reclusive since I can't get out anymore."

"I could have a social life and get a job."

"My transportation provider kept making me late to work, and I almost lost my job."



### Their Networks:

"I am greatly affected by the lack of public transportation in the community. Right now I home school our children so that I can cater to my husband's schedule of work and medical appointments."

"We could use a good dial-a-ride system in our area. Fixed route transportation would also be very helpful. We now have some people moving from this area because there is not a good transportation system."



### Community Organizations:

"I advocate for increasing the physical and social well-being of my clients and having a chance to get out of the house is a big part of that. I have one client I really worry about as she becomes increasingly sedentary and increasingly wary of outsiders."

"I know it's a rural area but to promote growth it would be necessary to add a bus route."



# SURVEY RESPONSES

Eastern Ottawa County indicated both a need and support for transportation services.

## People with unmet transportation needs:

84% of people age 60 or older stated medical care as the purpose of their transportation trip

59% can afford between \$2 and \$5 for one, one-way ride to where they needed to travel

50% of transportation needs are medically related

36% of individuals with unmet transit needs are age 60 or older

21% said a lack of transportation has prevented them from looking for, getting, or keeping a job

## Taxpayers:

87% said that improving area public transportation is either somewhat or very important

75% support public transportation services in Eastern Ottawa County

68% said they are very or somewhat likely to support a public transportation millage in their community

53% said traffic congestion was very or somewhat severe in Eastern Ottawa County

## Stakeholders:

98% said the need for regional transit will be very or somewhat important in the next three years

65% said a lack of transportation results in their inability to get people the services they need



## NEXT STEPS

xxx

# THANK YOU

Allegan County Transportation Workgroup Members

BETH DURKEE

Allegan Community Mental Health  
Director of Services for People with  
Developmental  
Disabilities

KATHRYN GILLEN

Disability Network/  
Lakeshore

FRITZ SPREITZER

Allegan County  
Commissioner

DAN WEDGE

Allegan County  
Transportation Director

For more information, please contact Disability  
Network/Lakeshore at 616 396 5326. Full research  
reports are available at [www.dnlakeshore.org](http://www.dnlakeshore.org).



\*Statistics taken from the



BETTER TRANSIT=  
BETTER LIFE.

ALLEGAN COUNTY TRANSPORTATION

## STATISTICS

**65%** OF RESPONDENTS INDICATED THE NEED FOR INCREASED REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION IN WEST MICHIGAN OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS.

**25%** OF RESPONDENTS STATED THAT A LACK IN TRANSPORTATION PREVENTED THEM FROM LOOKING FOR, GETTING, OR KEEPING A JOB.

**36%** OF RESPONDENTS STATED THAT A LACK IN TRANSPORTATION SERVICES PREVENTED THEM FROM ATTENDING MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS IN THE LAST YEAR.

**81%** OF RESIDENTS INDICATED THAT THE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES OFFERED BY ALLEGAN COUNTY TRANSPORTATION ARE VERY OR SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT TO THE COMMUNITY.

**52%** STATED THE INABILITY TO GET PEOPLE THE SERVICES THEY NEED BECAUSE OF A LACK IN TRANSIT OPTIONS.

WATCH THE VIDEO

# OUR WORKGROUP

Sixteen individuals made a commitment to their community by signing on as members of the Allegan County Transportation Workgroup. The individuals below have been working hard on understanding the unmet transit needs and developing solutions for the County in order to better serve the transportation needs of area residents.

## DOUG BAZUIN

Herman Miller

## SUSIE HERNANDEZ

Pullman Health Clinic -  
WIC Office

## GEORGE SMEENGE

Laketown Township  
Resident

## CHAD BROERSMA

Allegan County  
Transportation

## DEAN KAPENGA

Allegan County  
Commissioner

## FRITZ SPREITZER

Allegan County  
Commissioner

## BETH DURKEE

Allegan County  
Community Mental  
Health

## SHANNON MCVOY

Michigan Commission  
for the Blind

## ASHLEY THOMSON

Allegan County  
Transportation

## CHERIE GILLER

Interurban Transit  
Authority

## TRINDAD "TRINO" PEREZ

Commission on Aging

## SHERRY TORRES

Allegan County Senior  
Services

## KATHRYN GRAY

Disability Network/  
Lakeshore

## BOB POETSCH

Interurban Transit  
Authority

## DAN WEDGE

Allegan County  
Transportation

## LISA SHEAFFER

City of Fennville

# THANK YOU

Thanks to those who gave their time for this project.

## NORA BALGOYEN- WILLIAMS

Allegan County  
MIWorks Manager

## LINDSAY JONES

Narrator

## FRITZ SPREITZER

Allegan County  
Commissioner

## BETH DURKEE

Allegan County  
Community Mental  
Health

## VICKI KNUCKLES

City of Allegan DDA  
Director

## JOSH TYRON

Narrator

## BLAINE KOOPS

Allegan County Sheriff

## DAN WEDGE

Allegan County  
Transportation Director

## MIMI GABRIEL

Allegan County United  
Way Director

## ELEANOR NIELSEN

Lifelong Learners  
Director

**Allegan County Transportation  
269 673 4229**





**Allegheny County Transportation**  
**269 673 4229**