

Contract No. 2008-0201, JN 102871
Grand Valley State University
Intercity Passenger Rail Station Community Benefit Study

The objective of this study was to determine the economic impacts (both direct and indirect) of passenger rail facilities to their respective communities and to consider the positive and negative variables that affect the use of these facilities. This study was the first of its type. Each of the 22 Michigan communities currently served by rail passenger service was surveyed and analyzed. Community leaders such as Chambers of Commerce, Travel Bureaus, Convention/Visitor Bureaus, as well as surrounding businesses were contacted and their responses included in the study. Amtrak station activity was used in combination with the data collected to develop the final report. In addition, this study looks at connectivity between modes. Several of the existing stations are already intermodal.

Data collected will be used to lay the groundwork for an operable computer based Community Benefits Assessment Model that can be used in conjunction with MDOT's Transportation Management System/Intermodal Management System (TMS/IMS). This will be similar to the Community Benefits Assessment model already developed for general aviation airports.

The final report was completed in October of 2009. It provides a summary for each facility and ascertains the dollar value an Amtrak station adds to the community. The data compiled gives MDOT and communities a quantifiable method to assess local benefits and evaluate investments. Amtrak ridership has been going up each year, and it is important that Michigan's passenger rail stations provide appropriate service to their respective communities. Since ridership is increasing, it is also important that the Amtrak stations are suitable to accommodate additional passengers. One of the benefits of this study is that it will provide MDOT staff and community leaders the information necessary to identify and prioritize future passenger rail station investment needs.