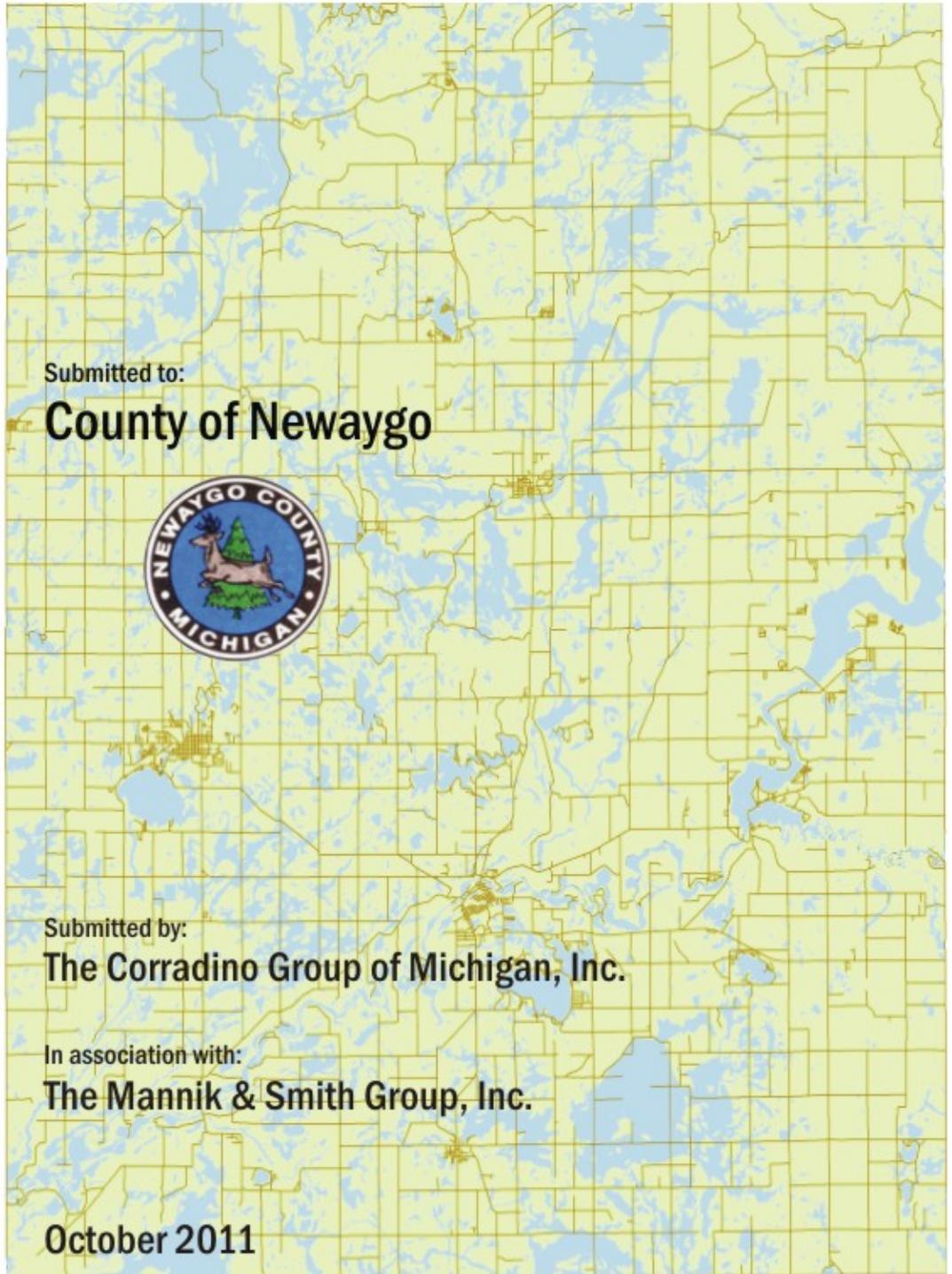




# Newaygo County Transportation Needs Study



Submitted to:  
**County of Newaygo**



Submitted by:  
**The Corradino Group of Michigan, Inc.**

In association with:  
**The Mannik & Smith Group, Inc.**

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# 1 Introduction

The area of focus for this study is Newaygo County. It is a rural county located in the west central portion of Michigan’s Lower Peninsula, comprised of four cities, one village, and 24 townships (Figure 1-1). Over half the county is contained in the Manistee National Forest. There are limited transportation options available to Newaygo County residents. Currently, only specialized services and agency-based transportation services are available; the County does not offer any public transportation programs.

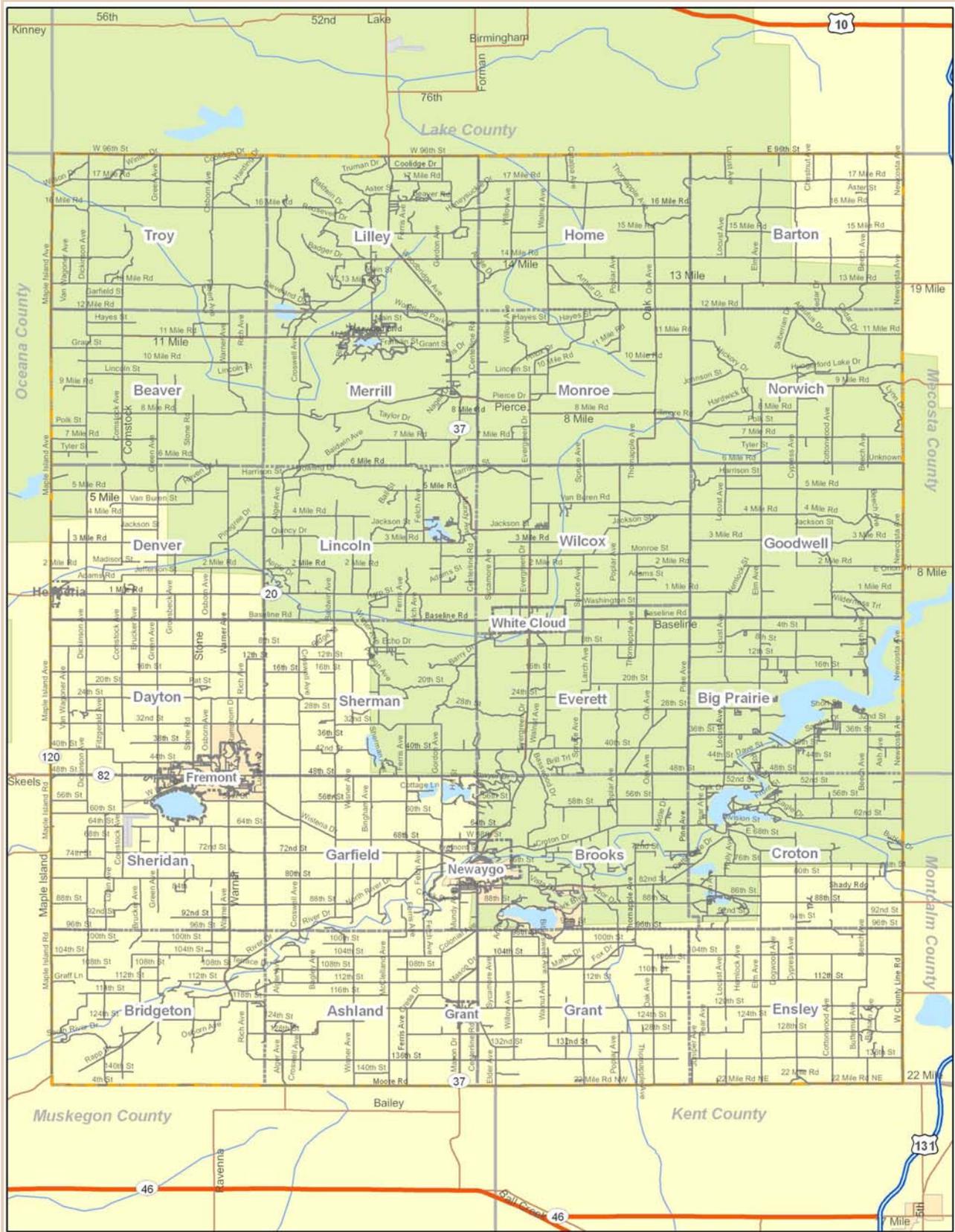
The Newaygo County Board of Commissioners is exploring the feasibility of developing a public transportation system and has appointed a Transportation Committee to work with a consultant team, The Corradino Group in association with The Mannik & Smith Group, to conduct a transportation needs study. The Transportation Committee consists of representatives from the Board of Commissioners, the Commission on Aging, the Road Commission, the Newaygo County Community Consortium, and the Newaygo County Economic Development Office.

The Newaygo County Transportation Needs Study consists of the following six tasks:

- Inventory of Existing Transportation Services;
- Determination of Need;
- Service Options;
- Funding Sources;
- Governance and Organizational Strategy; and,
- Plan to Expand Transportation Options.

This is the final report of the study and provides documentation of all six tasks of this study.

Figure 1-1  
Study Area



# 2 Existing Conditions

The current population of Newaygo County, as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau's 2010 Census of population, is 48,460. As shown in Table 2-1, the population of the county has increased slightly from 47,874 as reported in the 2000 Census to 48,460 as reported in the 2010 Census. This is a 1.2 percent increase over the ten-year period between the 2000 and 2010 Census. The county's population reached a high of 49,368 in 2005 and has gradually decreased since then.

**Table 2-1  
Population (2000 - 2010)**

|                            | 2000<br>Census | Census Estimates |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        | 2010<br>Census | %<br>Change<br>2000-<br>2010 |
|----------------------------|----------------|------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|----------------|------------------------------|
|                            |                | 2001             | 2002   | 2003   | 2004   | 2005   | 2006   | 2007   | 2008   | 2009   |                |                              |
| Ashland Township           | 2,570          | 2,603            | 2,605  | 2,618  | 2,622  | 2,625  | 2,607  | 2,604  | 2,591  | 2,569  | 2,773          | 7.9                          |
| Barton Township            | 820            | 835              | 840    | 841    | 843    | 848    | 846    | 847    | 844    | 848    | 717            | (12.6)                       |
| Beaver Township            | 608            | 588              | 596    | 605    | 612    | 618    | 616    | 618    | 616    | 611    | 509            | (16.3)                       |
| Big Prairie Township       | 2,465          | 2,526            | 2,536  | 2,552  | 2,561  | 2,559  | 2,552  | 2,541  | 2,522  | 2,493  | 2,573          | 4.4                          |
| Bridgeton Township         | 2,098          | 2,201            | 2,230  | 2,278  | 2,318  | 2,362  | 2,383  | 2,414  | 2,412  | 2,388  | 2,141          | 2.0                          |
| Brooks Township            | 3,671          | 3,712            | 3,704  | 3,713  | 3,708  | 3,702  | 3,672  | 3,663  | 3,645  | 3,612  | 3,510          | (4.4)                        |
| Croton Township            | 3,042          | 3,146            | 3,171  | 3,244  | 3,307  | 3,352  | 3,376  | 3,410  | 3,417  | 3,407  | 3,228          | 6.1                          |
| Dayton Township            | 2,002          | 1,981            | 1,981  | 1,991  | 1,994  | 1,998  | 1,986  | 1,986  | 1,978  | 1,962  | 1,949          | (2.6)                        |
| Village of Hesperia (pt.)  | 364            | 364              | 361    | 361    | 359    | 358    | 355    | 354    | 352    | 349    | 954            | 162.1                        |
| Balance of Denver Township | 1,607          | 1,640            | 1,648  | 1,661  | 1,666  | 1,670  | 1,659  | 1,656  | 1,647  | 1,631  | 974            | (39.4)                       |
| Ensley Township            | 2,474          | 2,487            | 2,506  | 2,536  | 2,561  | 2,595  | 2,618  | 2,651  | 2,657  | 2,641  | 2,635          | 6.5                          |
| Everett Township           | 1,985          | 2,010            | 2,017  | 2,030  | 2,035  | 2,038  | 2,024  | 2,021  | 2,009  | 1,990  | 1,862          | (6.2)                        |
| City of Fremont            | 4,224          | 4,293            | 4,271  | 4,270  | 4,255  | 4,241  | 4,201  | 4,189  | 4,165  | 4,128  | 4,081          | (3.4)                        |
| Garfield Township          | 2,464          | 2,417            | 2,416  | 2,425  | 2,426  | 2,428  | 2,411  | 2,410  | 2,399  | 2,380  | 2,537          | 3.0                          |
| Goodwell Township          | 551            | 563              | 570    | 579    | 586    | 592    | 591    | 593    | 592    | 587    | 547            | (0.7)                        |
| City of Grant              | 881            | 884              | 879    | 878    | 875    | 872    | 864    | 862    | 857    | 850    | 894            | 1.5                          |
| Grant Township             | 3,130          | 3,171            | 3,174  | 3,189  | 3,192  | 3,194  | 3,170  | 3,166  | 3,149  | 3,121  | 3,294          | 5.2                          |
| Home Township              | 261            | 268              | 273    | 279    | 283    | 287    | 287    | 289    | 288    | 286    | 232            | (11.1)                       |
| Lilley Township            | 788            | 798              | 799    | 803    | 801    | 798    | 799    | 799    | 797    | 791    | 797            | 1.1                          |
| Lincoln Township           | 1,338          | 1,355            | 1,357  | 1,365  | 1,367  | 1,369  | 1,360  | 1,359  | 1,353  | 1,341  | 1,275          | (4.7)                        |
| Merrill Township           | 590            | 599              | 601    | 604    | 606    | 607    | 603    | 602    | 599    | 594    | 667            | 13.1                         |
| Monroe Township            | 324            | 332              | 337    | 342    | 346    | 350    | 349    | 350    | 349    | 346    | 320            | (1.2)                        |
| City of Newaygo            | 1,670          | 1,759            | 1,750  | 1,749  | 1,743  | 1,737  | 1,720  | 1,715  | 1,704  | 1,689  | 1,976          | 18.3                         |
| Norwich Township           | 557            | 570              | 579    | 589    | 598    | 606    | 607    | 610    | 609    | 605    | 607            | 9.0                          |
| Sheridan Charter Township  | 2,423          | 2,431            | 2,424  | 2,430  | 2,429  | 2,431  | 2,414  | 2,413  | 2,404  | 2,386  | 2,510          | 3.6                          |
| Sherman Township           | 2,159          | 2,194            | 2,209  | 2,215  | 2,231  | 2,232  | 2,241  | 2,250  | 2,252  | 2,241  | 2,109          | (2.3)                        |
| Troy Township              | 243            | 263              | 269    | 275    | 280    | 285    | 286    | 288    | 288    | 286    | 283            | 16.5                         |
| City of White Cloud        | 1,420          | 1,427            | 1,422  | 1,422  | 1,418  | 1,414  | 1,403  | 1,400  | 1,392  | 1,381  | 1,408          | (0.8)                        |
| Wilcox Township            | 1,145          | 1,171            | 1,179  | 1,190  | 1,196  | 1,200  | 1,193  | 1,192  | 1,185  | 1,173  | 1,098          | (4.1)                        |
| Newaygo County Total       | 47,874         | 48,588           | 48,704 | 49,034 | 49,218 | 49,368 | 49,193 | 49,252 | 49,072 | 48,686 | 48,460         | 1.2                          |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Branch, Estimates of Subcounty Population for 2000-2009, released June 2010. These estimates were prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau through the Federal-State Cooperative for Population Estimates.

Areas that have experienced an increase in population since 2000 are townships in the northwest portion of the county (Troy, Lilley, and Merrill), the southwest (Sheridan, Garfield, Bridgeton, and Ashland), the southeast (Big Prairie, Croton, Ensley), the cities of Newaygo and Grant, and the village of Hesperia.

Table 2-2 contains population projections for Newaygo County and the units of government for the period 2010 through 2035. The projections were developed by the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission. The projections are based on a 4.5 percent increase in population for each five-year increment. Thus the population of Newaygo County is projected to increase by nearly 14,000 in 2035 from the 2010 Census population of 48,460, a 28 percent increase.

**Table 2-2  
Population Projections (2010 - 2035)**

|                             | 2010<br>Census | Projections   |               |               |               |               |
|-----------------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
|                             |                | 2015          | 2020          | 2025          | 2030          | 2035          |
| Ashland Township            | 2,773          | 2,746         | 2,871         | 3,001         | 3,136         | 3,279         |
| Barton Township             | 717            | 892           | 932           | 974           | 1,018         | 1,064         |
| Beaver Township             | 509            | 652           | 682           | 713           | 745           | 779           |
| Big Prairie Township        | 2,573          | 2,644         | 2,764         | 2,889         | 3,020         | 3,157         |
| Bridgeton Township          | 2,141          | 2,552         | 2,668         | 2,789         | 2,915         | 3,047         |
| Brooks Township             | 3,510          | 3,858         | 4,033         | 4,215         | 4,406         | 4,606         |
| Croton Township             | 3,228          | 3,626         | 3,790         | 3,962         | 4,141         | 4,329         |
| Dayton Township             | 1,949          | 2,105         | 2,200         | 2,300         | 2,404         | 2,513         |
| Village of Hesperia (pt.)   | 954            | 376           | 393           | 410           | 429           | 448           |
| Balance of Denver Township  | 974            | 1,736         | 1,815         | 1,898         | 1,983         | 2,073         |
| Ensley Township             | 2,635          | 2,822         | 2,950         | 3,083         | 3,223         | 3,369         |
| Everett Township            | 1,862          | 2,132         | 2,229         | 2,330         | 2,435         | 2,546         |
| City of Fremont             | 4,081          | 4,463         | 4,666         | 4,877         | 5,098         | 5,329         |
| Garfield Township           | 2,537          | 2,624         | 2,743         | 2,867         | 2,997         | 3,132         |
| Goodwell Township           | 547            | 628           | 656           | 686           | 717           | 749           |
| City of Grant               | 894            | 911           | 952           | 995           | 1,040         | 1,087         |
| Grant Township              | 3,294          | 3,336         | 3,487         | 3,645         | 3,810         | 3,982         |
| Home Township               | 232            | 305           | 319           | 334           | 349           | 365           |
| Lilley Township             | 797            | 844           | 882           | 922           | 964           | 1,007         |
| Lincoln Township            | 1,275          | 1,434         | 1,499         | 1,567         | 1,638         | 1,712         |
| Merrill Township            | 667            | 634           | 663           | 693           | 724           | 757           |
| Monroe Township             | 320            | 369           | 386           | 403           | 422           | 441           |
| City of Newaygo             | 1,976          | 1,730         | 1,808         | 1,890         | 1,976         | 2,065         |
| Norwich Township            | 607            | 648           | 677           | 708           | 740           | 774           |
| Sheridan Charter Township   | 2,510          | 2,529         | 2,644         | 2,763         | 2,889         | 3,019         |
| Sherman Township            | 2,109          | 2,398         | 2,507         | 2,620         | 2,739         | 2,863         |
| Troy Township               | 283            | 304           | 318           | 332           | 348           | 363           |
| City of White Cloud         | 1,408          | 1,479         | 1,546         | 1,616         | 1,689         | 1,766         |
| Wilcox Township             | 1,098          | 1,248         | 1,305         | 1,364         | 1,425         | 1,490         |
| <b>Newaygo County Total</b> | <b>48,460</b>  | <b>52,025</b> | <b>54,385</b> | <b>56,846</b> | <b>59,420</b> | <b>62,111</b> |

Sources: Census Bureau, Internal Revenue Service and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Forecast by the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission.



The most recent demographic data available for Newaygo County is from the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2010 Census. Only basic data related to population, race, age, and households are available from the 2010 Census. More detailed data on income, employment, disability status, and transportation are available from the American Community Survey. These data are three-year estimates, 2006 through 2008, for areas with a population of 20,000 or more. For the purpose of analysis the following review of population characteristics includes data from the 2010 Census, where available, and the American Community Survey for data items not available through the 2010 Census.

Table 2-3 shows the 2010 population for Newaygo County. The total population of 48,460 is slightly lower than the 2009 Census estimate of 48,686. The data are also broken down by age group. Those 65 years and older comprise 15.6 percent of the Newaygo County population. This can be compared with the 2000 Census data that showed 12.8 percent of the Newaygo County population over the age of 65. Senior citizens typically use public transportation at a higher rate than other segments of the population. In comparison, those 65 and older comprise 13.8 percent of the population for the state of Michigan, and 13 percent of the U.S. population. The median age in Newaygo County is 40.9 years as compared with that of the state of Michigan at 38.9 years. Thus, the population of Newaygo County is slightly older than that of the average for the state. Also evident is the trend throughout the U.S. of aging of the population. This is present in Newaygo County and indicates an increasing need for public transportation in the coming years.

**Table 2-3**  
**Population by Age (2010)**

| Age                  | Number | Percent |
|----------------------|--------|---------|
| 19 years and younger | 13,375 | 27.6    |
| 20 to 34             | 7,578  | 15.6    |
| 35 to 64             | 19,979 | 41.2    |
| 65 to 85             | 6,672  | 13.8    |
| 85 years and over    | 856    | 1.8     |
| Total                | 48,460 | 100.0   |
| Median Age (years)   | 40.9   | --      |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

In terms of race, Newaygo County is predominantly white (94.2%) with approximately five and a half percent of the population being Hispanic or Latino (Table 2-4). There are also small percentages of African Americans (1.0%); American Indians and Alaska Natives (.8%); and, Asians (.4%).

**Table 2-4**  
**Population by Race (2010)**

| Race   | Number | Percent |
|--|--------|---------|
| White alone                                      | 45,625 | 94.1    |
| Black or African American alone                  | 495    | 1.0     |
| American Indian and Alaska Native alone          | 372    | 0.8     |
| Asian alone                                      | 187    | 0.4     |
| Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone | 11     | 0.0     |
| Some other race alone                            | 942    | 1.9     |
| Two or more races                                | 828    | 1.7     |
| Hispanic or Latino                               | 2,663  | 5.5     |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The majority of workers (78.7%) living in Newaygo County drive alone to work (Table 2-5). About 13 percent are part of a carpool with 0.2 percent indicating they use public transportation. The mean travel time to work for those living in Newaygo County is 28.9 minutes. This compares with the state of Michigan mean travel time at 24.1 minutes and a national average of 25.5 minutes. It is difficult for public transit to achieve a work commute of less than 30 minutes.

**Table 2-5**  
**Means of Transportation to Work**  
**(Workers 16 and Older)**

| Mode                                      | Number              | Percent      |
|---|---------------------|--------------|
| Drove alone (car, truck or van)           | 16,034              | 78.7         |
| Carpooled (car, truck or van)             | 2,561               | 12.6         |
| Public transportation (excluding taxicab) | 50                  | 0.2          |
| Walked                                    | 402                 | 2.0          |
| Other                                     | 262                 | 1.3          |
| Worked at home                            | 1,065               | 5.2          |
| <b>Total</b>                              | <b>20,374</b>       | <b>100.0</b> |
| <b>Mean Travel Time</b>                   | <b>28.9 minutes</b> |              |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008 American Community Survey

In Newaygo County, approximately half of the households have an annual income of less than \$50,000 per year, with more than nine percent of the households having an annual income in excess of \$100,000 (Table 2-6). The median annual household income for the county is \$45,235 and compares with a U.S. median household income of \$52,175 and the State of Michigan at \$49,694.

**Table 2-6**  
**Household Income**  
**(2008 Inflation-adjusted Dollars)**

| Household Income                         | Number          | Percent     |
|--|-----------------|-------------|
| Less than \$10,000                       | 1,377           | 6.5         |
| \$10,000 to \$14,999                     | 1,318           | 6.3         |
| \$15,000 to \$24,999                     | 2,641           | 12.6        |
| \$25,000 to \$34,999                     | 2,088           | 9.9         |
| \$35,000 to \$49,999                     | 3,140           | 14.9        |
| \$50,000 to \$74,999                     | 4,279           | 20.3        |
| \$75,000 to \$99,999                     | 2,241           | 10.7        |
| \$100,000 to \$149,999                   | 1,373           | 6.5         |
| \$150,000 to \$199,999                   | 305             | 1.5         |
| \$200,000 or more                        | 269             | 1.3         |
| <b>Total households</b>                  | <b>19,031</b>   | <b>90.5</b> |
| <b>Median household income (dollars)</b> | <b>\$45,235</b> |             |
| <b>Mean household income (dollars)</b>   | <b>\$54,778</b> |             |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008 American Community Survey



There are just over 19,000 households in Newaygo County. Of these, nearly 900, or about five percent, do not have access to a vehicle (Table 2-7). Another 30 percent of households only have one vehicle which makes transportation difficult in households with two working adults.

**Table 2-7**  
**Household Vehicles Available**

| Vehicles                     | Number | Percent |
|------------------------------|--------|---------|
| No vehicle available         | 895    | 4.7     |
| 1 vehicle available          | 5,693  | 29.9    |
| 2 vehicles available         | 7,269  | 38.2    |
| 3 or more vehicles available | 5,174  | 27.2    |
| Total                        | 19,031 | 100.0   |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008 American Community Survey

Of the 49,034 residents of Newaygo County, as estimated by the American Community Survey, 21,032 are employed (Table 2-8). The largest concentrations of workers are in the manufacturing industry (21.5%); the educational services, and health care and social assistance industry (18.5%); and, retail trade (11.8%).

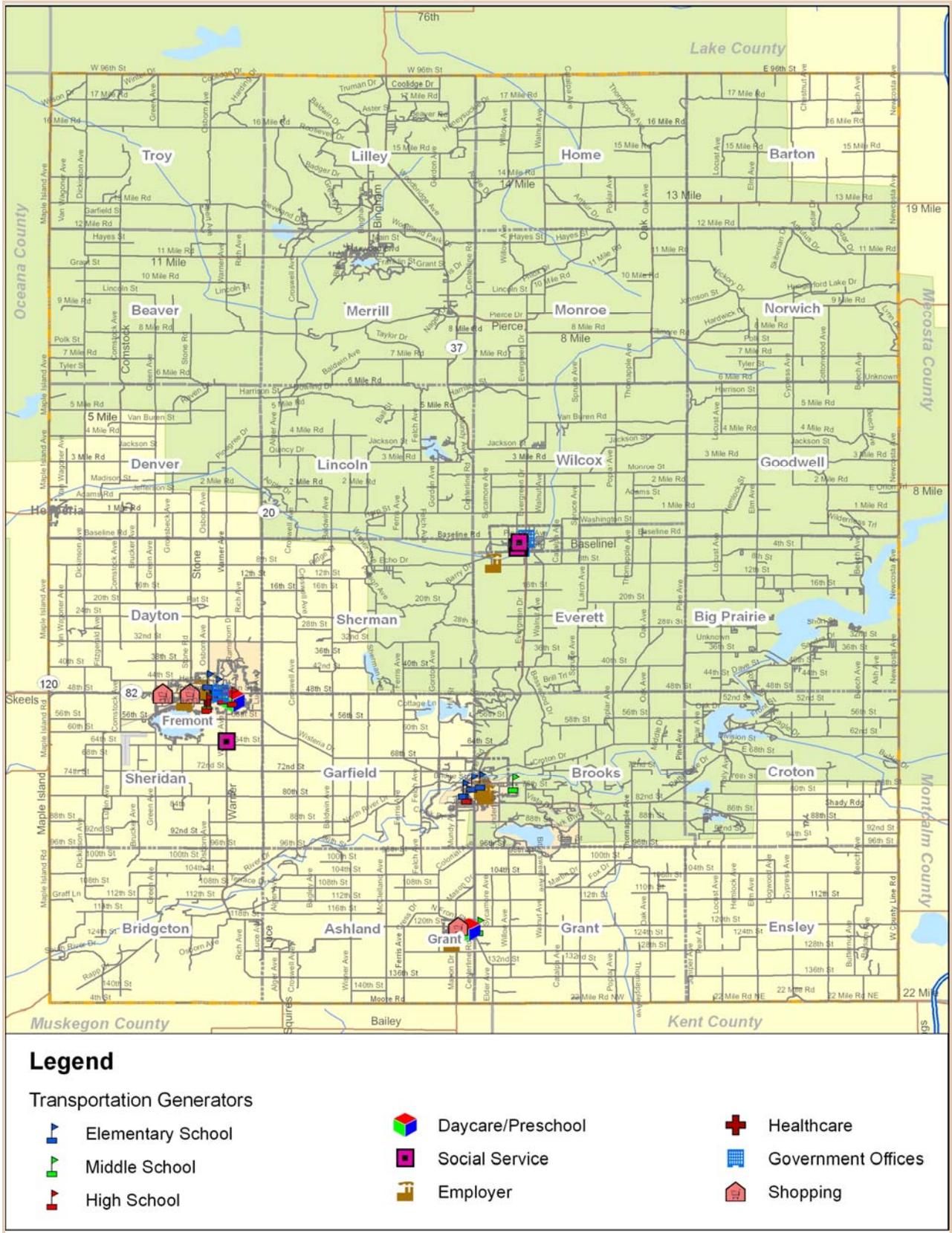
**Table 2-8**  
**Employment by Industry**  
**(Civilian Population 16 Years and Older)**

| Industry   | Number | Percent |
|--|--------|---------|
| Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining                                     | 1,077  | 5.1     |
| Construction   | 1,755  | 8.3     |
| Manufacturing  | 4,526  | 21.5    |
| Wholesale trade  | 509    | 2.4     |
| Retail trade   | 2,486  | 11.8    |
| Transportation and warehousing, and utilities  | 994    | 4.7     |
| Information  | 266    | 1.3     |
| Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing                              | 1,174  | 5.6     |
| Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services | 1,041  | 4.9     |
| Educational services, and health care and social assistance                                | 3,892  | 18.5    |
| Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation, and food services                  | 1,571  | 7.5     |
| Other services, except public administration   | 1,110  | 5.3     |
| Public administration  | 631    | 3.0     |
| Total  | 21,032 | 100.0   |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008 American Community Survey

Most of the transportation generators or major destinations in Newaygo County are located in or near the county's cities. As shown in Figure 2-1, these consist of schools, social service providers, major employers, healthcare facilities, government offices and shopping locations. Fremont is the largest city in the county and also the location of Gerber Memorial Hospital, several elementary, middle and high

**Figure 2-1  
Transportation Generators**



schools, and major employers such as Gerber Products and Dura Operating. In addition, there are retail stores such as Walmart and Shop-N-Save along with City Hall and Newaygo County Community Services.

The City of Grant has several schools and a major employer, Wm. Bolthouse Farms along with a grocery store, Gene's Family Market. Grant also has a healthcare provider, Grant Medical Center. The City of Newaygo also has several schools and two of the county's major employers and a major grocery store located in a small retail shopping center. White Cloud is the center of county government with the county offices and social services along with several schools and a major employer.



# 3 Existing Transportation Resources

## Newaygo County

There is no public transportation service in Newaygo County. There are several agencies and organizations that provide limited transportation to specific groups.

## Newaygo County Commission on Aging

The Newaygo County Commission on Aging provides a variety of services for the County's senior citizens. These are residents that are age 60 and older. The Commission on Aging operates three transportation programs.

## Volunteer Transportation

This program provides transportation for specialized medical appointments outside of Newaygo County. Those eligible for the service must be ambulatory. Under this program, volunteers use their own vehicle to provide transportation and are reimbursed for mileage at a rate set by the Newaygo County Board of Commissioners. In-county medical trips may be arranged if no other transportation is available.

## Health Care Van Transportation

The purpose of this program is to provide transportation for medical appointments within Newaygo County for ambulatory and wheelchair-bound clients age 60 and over. The Commission on Aging maintains a fleet of six lift-equipped vans that are operated by paid, part-time staff. This service is extended to wheelchair-bound clients seeking medical transportation outside Newaygo County as scheduling allows.

## Senior Transit Buses

This service provides transportation to seniors and individuals with disabilities to access services such as banking, shopping, errands and senior meal sites. The Senior Transit Buses are scheduled in Newaygo County communities on various days of the week. The service is provided with a fleet of five buses using paid, part-time staff.

## **Newaygo County Department of Human Services - Volunteer Services**

This service is offered to Medicaid or Protective Services clients for medical appointments and foster care visits. Volunteers provide the transportation using their own vehicles and are reimbursed at the rate set by the Newaygo County Board of Commissioners for departmental and volunteer programs. Newaygo County, Medicaid, Foster Care, and the Childcare Fund provide the funding for this volunteer service.

Common medical destinations for this volunteer transportation service are facilities and medical offices in Fremont, White Cloud, Grant, Grand Rapids, Muskegon, Big Rapids, Ann Arbor, and Detroit. Foster Care visits are typically to White Cloud, Baldwin (in Lake County), and sometimes other counties.

## **Newaygo County Mental Health**

Newaygo County Mental Health offers mileage reimbursement for volunteer drivers who provide transportation for Medicaid recipients accessing Medicaid reimbursed services. Newaygo County Mental Health has a small group of drivers that also volunteer with other agencies.

## **Foundation for Behavioral Resources**

The Foundation for Behavioral Resources provides job search and employment transportation for Michigan Works! Clients in Newaygo County, as well as Mason and Lake counties. The service is provided with through contracts and with agency vans.

## **Michigan Works!**

Michigan Works! operates six minivans used to take eligible clients to and from work. Destinations are Newaygo County and employers in surrounding counties.

## **Disability Connection**

The Disability Connection operates a voucher program to provide transportation for employment, job search medical appointments, independent living errands and leisure activities for individuals with disabilities in Newaygo County. Transportation is provided by volunteers using their own vehicles. They are reimbursed at a rate of \$.40 per mile. The program is funded with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) New Freedom Funding with a 50 percent local match.

## **Catholic Social Services - Senior Companion Program**

Under this program, volunteers provide transportation to the frail, homebound elderly or developmentally disabled adults. Transportation is provided for shopping, health care and prescription pick-up.

## Adjacent Counties

Newaygo County borders on the following counties: Mason, Lake, Osceola, Mecosta, Montcalm, Kent, Muskegon and Oceana counties. There is some form of public transportation service offered in each of the surrounding counties. These public transportation services range from countywide service in Lake, Osceola, Mecosta, Muskegon and Kent counties, to small community and specialized services in Montcalm, Oceana and Mason counties. Table 3-1 summarizes the services available in the adjacent counties.

In accessing and addressing the transportation needs of Newaygo County citizens, options regarding the actual provision of public transportation service were examined. Among the options for the provision of public transportation services in Newaygo County that were examined was the potential of partnering or contracting for transportation services with one or more of the transportation service providers in adjacent counties.

**Table 3-1**  
**Public Transportation Services in the Counties Adjacent to Newaygo County**

| County                          | Service Provider                          | Service Area   | Type of Service  | Hours of Service   | Passengers & Expenses            | Vehicles                                     |
|---------------------------------|---|--|--|--|----------------------------------|--|
| Mason County                    | Ludington Mass Transportation Authority   | City of Ludington<br>City of Scottville<br>Parts of two Townships                            | Demand Response & Contract Services  | M-F 6:00 AM - 7:00 PM<br>Sat 8:00 AM -4:00 PM<br>Sun 8:00 AM - 2:00 PM   | 156,209 (Pass)<br>\$1,327,375    | 19 lift equipped vehicles                    |
| Lake County                     | Yates Township Transportation System      | County wide  | Demand Response & Specialized Services   | M-F 6:30 AM -6:00 PM<br>SAT 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM                            | 210,743 (Pass)<br>\$1,390,508    | 26 vehicles of which 18 are lifted equipped. |
| Osceola County & Mecosta County | Mecosta Osceola Transit Authority         | County wide in Osceola & Mecosta (excludes Big Rapids City Service)                          | Demand Response  | M-F 5:30 AM - 6:00 PM  | 54,533 (Pass)<br>\$569,183       | 9 vehicles of which 8 are lifted equipped.   |
| Mecosta County                  | Big Rapids Dial - A- Ride                 | City of Big Rapids   | Demand Response  | M-F 6:30 AM - 6:30 PM<br>SAT 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM                           | 61,842 (Pass)<br>\$377,870       | 7 vehicles of which 6 are lifted equipped.   |
| Montcalm County                 | Greenville Transit                        | City of Greenville & Eureka Township   | Demand Response  | M-F 6:00 AM - 6:00 PM<br>SAT 9:00 AM - 5:30 PM                           | 30,072 (Pass)<br>\$278,123       | 7 vehicles all are lifted equipped.          |
| Montcalm County                 | Commission on Aging                       | County wide  | Demand Response  | M-F 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM  | 1,609 (Pass)<br>\$ N/A           | 3 vehicles                                   |
| Kent County                     | Interurban Transit Partnership -The Rapid | Grand Rapids, East Grand Rapids, Grandville, Kentwood, Walker and Wyoming                    | Fixed Route (Cities) Contract Services (Townships - GVSU) Demand Response (County Wide)          | M-F 5:45 AM - 11:15 PM<br>SAT 6:30 AM - 9:30 PM<br>SUN 8:15 AM - 6:45 PM | 8,664,285 (Pass)<br>\$32,486,075 | 195 vehicles all are lifted equipped.        |
| Muskegon County                 | Muskegon Area Transit System              | City of Muskegon, Muskegon Heights, Roosevelt Park, and Norton Shores & County wide - Go Bus | Fixed Route (Cities) Demand Response<br><br>Specialized Services pass through to three providers | M-F 6:28 AM - 10:40 PM<br>SAT 9:30 AM - 5:45 PM                          | 617,828 (Pass)<br>\$2,417,897    | 23 vehicles all are lifted equipped.         |
| Oceana County                   | Council on Aging                          | County wide<br><br>Out County -Volunteer Drivers   | Demand Response<br><br>Priority given to seniors and disabled                                    | Flexible hours based on Advance 24 hrs reservations                      | 22,378 (Pass)<br>\$ N/A          | 5 vehicles                                   |

Primary Source of Information: Michigan Department of Transportation and the individual Transit Providers.

Muskegon Area Transit System Specialized Service Pass through Providers are: Goodwill Industries, Pioneer Resources and American Red Cross.

The delivery of service options are presented in Chapter 7 of this report. Some of the factors that impact the decision to explore in detail partnering and or contracting for services from one or more of the surrounding transportation providers include the transportation needs of Newaygo residents and the ability of the transportation provider to address those needs; the existing working relationships if any between the transportation provider and Newaygo County; the willingness and ability of the transportation provider to provide services within Newaygo County; cost and level of service considerations; and the like. There are some other practical considerations that also must be taken into consideration when examining partnering or contracting opportunities with one or more of the surrounding counties, such as the ease of providing the services. Roadway access between the counties that facilitate the efficient delivery of transportation services is also an important element. Based upon the services detailed in Table 3-1 and major road corridors connecting Newaygo County with the surrounding counties, the opportunity for partnering or contract services is highest with:

- Lake County – Yates Township Transportation System;
- Mecosta County – Big Rapids Dial –A- Ride and or Mecosta Osceola Transit Authority;
- Kent County – Interurban Transit Partnership -The Rapid; and,
- Muskegon County – Muskegon Area Transit System.

Table 3-2 reflects the driving time and miles between population centers in Newaygo County and the location of the public transportation providers noted above. All five of the existing public transportation service providers in the surrounding counties that could be potential partners or contract providers are within a one hour drive time and less than 50 miles (one way) from the three largest communities in Newaygo County.

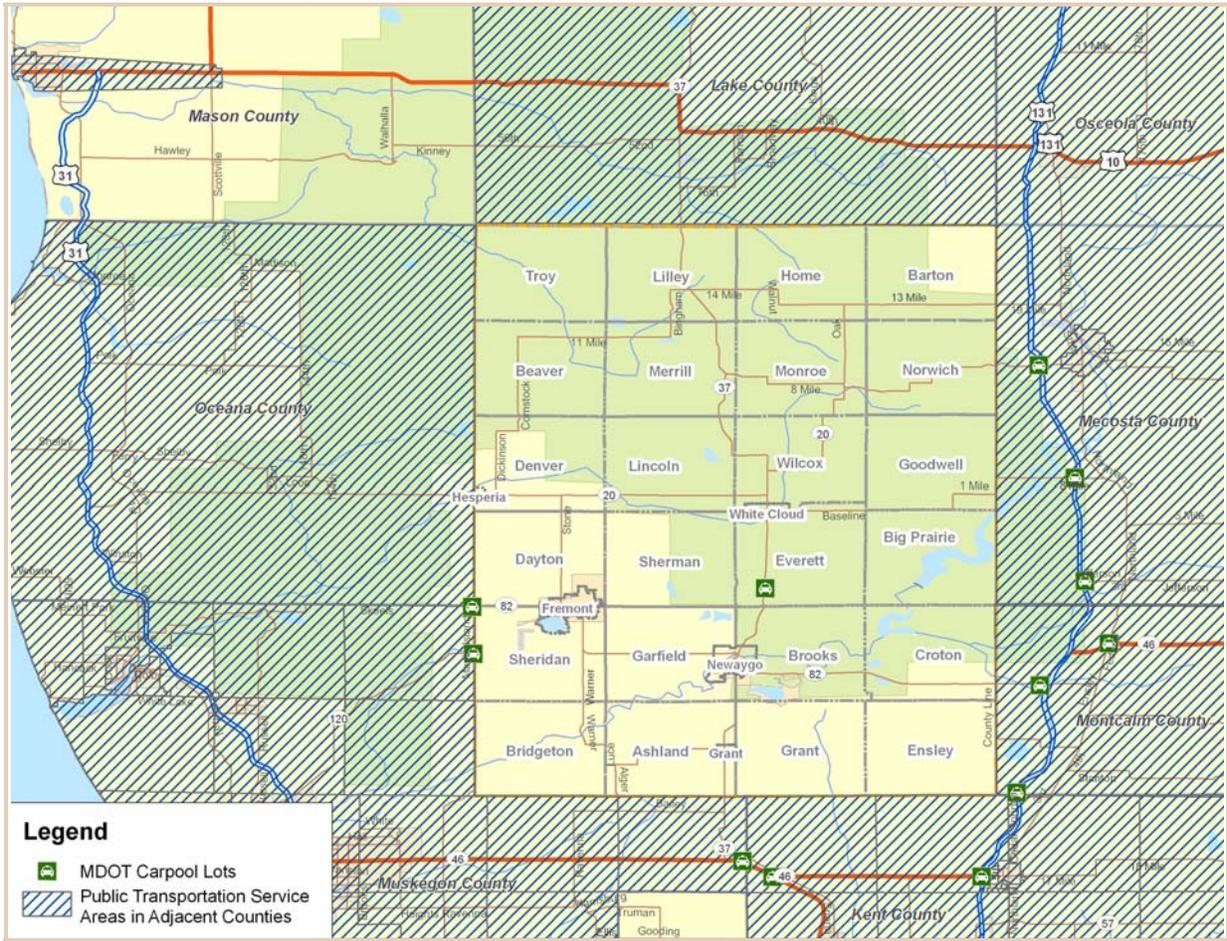
**Table 3-2**  
**Driving Time – Driving Distance**  
**(closest connections in bold)**

| Newaygo County Location           | Adjacent County Location | One-way Time                      | One-way Miles                           | Route for Closest Connections |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| Fremont<br>Newaygo<br>White Cloud | <b>Muskegon</b>          | <b>37 min</b><br>50 min<br>54 min | <b>27 miles</b><br>36 miles<br>42 miles | <b>M-120 &amp; M-82</b>       |
| Fremont<br>Newaygo<br>White Cloud | <b>Idlewild</b>          | 51 min<br>46 min<br><b>34 min</b> | 43 miles<br>36 miles<br><b>28 miles</b> | <b>US -10 &amp; M-37</b>      |
| Fremont<br>Newaygo<br>White Cloud | <b>Big Rapids</b>        | 49 min<br>43 min<br><b>31 min</b> | 41 miles<br>40 miles<br><b>26 miles</b> | <b>US-131 &amp; M-20</b>      |
| Fremont<br>Newaygo<br>White Cloud | <b>Grand Rapids</b>      | 57 min<br><b>48 min</b><br>60 min | 45 miles<br><b>36 miles</b><br>46 miles | <b>M-37</b>                   |

Source: Travelmath - One way travel time and one way miles

As noted above potential partnering and or contract service opportunities with any of the five public transportation providers referenced above are explored further in Chapter 7. Figure 3-1 shows the service areas of public transportation in adjacent counties, as well as MDOT Park-and-Ride lots that could be used as transfer points.

Figure 3-1  
Transportation Resources in Adjacent Counties





# 4 Household Survey

A transportation needs survey was mailed to 3,500 randomly selected households across Newaygo County in May 2011. Over 800 questionnaires were completed and returned by Newaygo County residents. The questionnaire was designed to determine the level of use of existing agency and organization transportation services, the level of need for public transportation in the county, the type of service that would best fit the needs of residents, the days and times they would most likely use public transportation and gauge support for public transportation funding in the form of a millage.

The survey packet that was mailed out consisted of a cover letter explaining the Transportation Needs Study and the survey; a one-page, two-sided questionnaire; and a postage-paid return envelope. A copy of the cover letter and questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

Upon data entry and review of the returned questionnaires, it was determined that 810 questionnaires were valid and included responses to all or the majority of the questions. The following is a summary of the results.

Given that there is no existing public transportation available in Newaygo County, residents must rely on a group of public and private agencies and organizations to meet their transportation needs. As shown in Table 4-1, 78 respondents (9.6%) indicated that they or someone in their household used transportation provided by a local Newaygo County agency or organization. This is a relatively high rate of use of agency or organization provided services.

**Table 4-1**  
**Do you, or anyone in your home, use transportation services such as the service provided by the Newaygo County Commission on Aging, Disability Connection, Foundation for Behavioral Resources, Catholic Social Service Senior Companion Program, Newaygo County Mental Health or any other agency or organization?**

| Response | Number | Percent |
|----------|--------|---------|
| Yes      | 78     | 9.6     |
| No       | 732    | 90.4    |
| Total    | 810    | 100.0   |

Table 4-2 shows what types of trips residents using agency or organization provided transportation make using those services. Nearly 86 percent are using the services to get to medical or dental appointments. The next most frequent trip purpose is shopping at 37.2 percent. Some, 24.4 percent, use the services for social or recreational activities while nine percent use transportation provided by agencies or organizations for working or seeking employment, attending training or school and other miscellaneous purposes. These numbers make sense in terms of the types of services offered by agencies and organizations given that a large number of the agencies that provide some type of transportation service, focus on medical trips.

**Table 4-2**  
**If yes, what type of trips do you make? (check all that apply)**

| Response                       | Number | Percent* |
|--------------------------------|--------|----------|
| Working or seeking employment  | 7      | 9.0      |
| Shopping                       | 29     | 37.2     |
| Attending training or school   | 7      | 9.0      |
| Medical/dental appointments    | 67     | 85.9     |
| Social/recreational activities | 19     | 24.4     |
| Other                          | 7      | 9.0      |

\*Percent of 78 respondents that use some form of transportation service provided by a local agency or organization.

Those surveyed were asked if they or others in their home had difficulty meeting transportation needs. Of the respondents, 11 percent indicated a difficulty in meeting transportation needs (Table 4-3). Table 4-4 shows what type of trips those with difficulty meeting their transportation needs were unable to make. Sixty-nine percent indicated that their lack of transportation kept them from getting to medical or dental appointments. Shopping trips were indicated by 64 percent of the respondents as something they couldn't do given their lack of transportation. Social or recreational activities were the third most common type of missed event or activity listed by 54 percent of those that had difficulty meeting transportation needs. The other significant category of trips that were not made were those for working or seeing employment by 34.5 percent of those lacking transportation.

**Table 4-3**  
**Do you, or others in your home, have difficulty meeting your transportation needs?**

| Response | Number | Percent |
|----------|--------|---------|
| Yes      | 87     | 11.0    |
| No       | 703    | 89.0    |
| Total    | 790    | 100.0   |

**Table 4-4**  
**If yes, what type of activities does your lack of transportation keep you from doing? (check all that apply)**

| Response                       | Number | Percent* |
|--------------------------------|--------|----------|
| Working or seeking employment  | 30     | 34.5     |
| Shopping                       | 56     | 64.4     |
| Attending training or school   | 10     | 11.5     |
| Medical/dental appointments    | 60     | 69.0     |
| Social/recreational activities | 47     | 54.0     |
| Personal business              | 4      | 4.6      |
| Attending church               | 2      | 2.3      |
| Other                          | 2      | 2.3      |

\*Percent of 87 respondents that have difficulty meeting transportation needs.

Often people have a means of transportation but have some limiting factors that prevent them from making certain trips. Respondents were asked if they limited their amount of driving. As shown in Table 4-5, just over 31 percent of respondents indicated they or other adults in their household limited their amount of driving. Table 4-6 is a listing of respondents' primary reasons for limiting their driving. As shown, nearly 37 percent are not comfortable driving at night, approximately 33 percent don't drive when the weather is poor and almost 21 percent indicate they have a disability that prevents them from driving. There are also factors associated with owning and operating a vehicle that were cited by a significant number of respondents. Over 17 percent indicate they experience mechanical difficulties with their

vehicle, 14 percent list the cost of the vehicle, insurance, maintenance and/or fuel as a factor and 15 percent don't own a vehicle.

**Table 4-5**  
**Are there reasons why you, or other adults in your home, don't drive or limit their amount of driving?**

| Response | Number | Percent |
|----------|--------|---------|
| Yes      | 246    | 31.3    |
| No       | 539    | 68.7    |
| Total    | 785    | 100.0   |

**Table 4-6**  
**If yes, please explain why you don't drive or limit your amount of driving (check all that apply).**

| Response  | Number | Percent* |
|---|--------|----------|
| Don't drive in poor weather                         | 81     | 32.9     |
| Don't drive at night                                | 90     | 36.6     |
| Vehicle mechanical difficulties                     | 43     | 17.5     |
| Don't own a vehicle                                 | 37     | 15.0     |
| Not licensed to drive                               | 33     | 13.4     |
| Have a disability and cannot drive                  | 51     | 20.7     |
| Age   | 6      | 2.4      |
| Cost of vehicle, insurance, maintenance and/or fuel | 35     | 14.2     |
| Don't drive long distances or in heavy traffic      | 11     | 4.5      |
| Prefer to walk                                      | 2      | 0.8      |
| More drivers than vehicles in the household         | 2      | 0.8      |
| Other   | 1      | 0.4      |

\*Percent of the 246 respondents that don't drive or limit their amount of driving.

Survey respondents were asked if they or members of their household would consider using a public transportation service if it met their needs. Just over 39 percent indicated they would consider using a public transportation service (Table 4-7). As a follow-up, they were asked if they would prefer a regularly scheduled bus route, a door-to-door service or some other type of public transportation service (Table 4-8). Respondents could indicate any or all of the three choices and were closely split between a regularly scheduled bus route (63.1%) and a door-to-door service (69.7%) Other suggestions offered included a taxi service, train service and some type of medical transportation service.

**Table 4-7**  
**Because of the cost associated with owning and operating a vehicle, concern for the environment, or other convenience or personal reasons, would you or other members of your household consider using a public transportation service if it met your needs?**

| Response | Number | Percent |
|----------|--------|---------|
| Yes      | 317    | 39.2    |
| No       | 491    | 60.8    |
| Total    | 808    | 100.0   |

**Table 4-8**  
**If yes, what type of service would you consider using? (check all that apply)**

| Response   | Number | Percent* |
|--|--------|----------|
| A regularly scheduled bus route (designated bus stops and pick-up times) | 200    | 63.1     |
| A door-to-door service   | 221    | 69.7     |
| Train service  | 5      | 1.6      |
| Taxi service   | 6      | 1.9      |
| Medical transportation   | 6      | 1.9      |
| Regional service to Grand Rapids, Muskegon, Big Rapids                   | 2      | 0.6      |
| School bus for after school activities                                   | 1      | 0.3      |
| More COA service   | 1      | 0.3      |
| Park-and-ride  | 1      | 0.3      |
| Other  | 15     | 4.7      |

\*Percent of 317 respondents that would use public transit service.

To further define how respondents would use a public transportation service, they were asked what days of the week and hours of the day they would use public transportation (Table 4-9). Consistent with two of the primary needs being medical/dental trips and shopping related trips, the majority of respondents indicated they would use the service Monday through Saturday between the hours of 6:00 AM and 6:00 PM with demand dropping off into the evening and late night hours, as well as on Sunday.

**Table 4-9**  
**What days of the week and times of the day do you feel you, or others in your home, would be most likely to use public transportation? (check all that apply)**

| Response                              | Mon. | Tues. | Wed. | Thurs. | Fri. | Sat. | Sun. |
|---------------------------------------|------|-------|------|--------|------|------|------|
| Morning (6am - 12pm)                  | 175  | 169   | 172  | 161    | 167  | 100  | 79   |
| Afternoon (12pm - 6pm)                | 173  | 164   | 181  | 163    | 169  | 112  | 84   |
| Evening (6pm - 10pm)                  | 75   | 76    | 78   | 76     | 84   | 73   | 54   |
| Late Night/Early Morning (10pm - 6am) | 21   | 19    | 21   | 20     | 25   | 24   | 20   |

Transportation needs do not end at the county line. Respondents were asked where they wanted to go within Newaygo County, as well as where they wanted to go outside of Newaygo County. Within Newaygo County (Table 4-10), the cities of Fremont, Newaygo, White Cloud and Grant were relatively high on the list. People also wanted to go to doctors and the hospital in Fremont. Grocery stores including Bill's and Plumbs were also common requests as was shopping in general and Walmart. Finishing out the most requested locations were work, the library, community/social events and NCCS (now known as TrueNorth Community Services).

Outside Newaygo County (Table 4-11), commonly cited destinations were larger cities such as Grand Rapids, Muskegon and Big Rapids with some smaller municipalities such as Baldwin and Sparta included. Doctors and hospitals were also a commonly requested destination outside Newaygo County as were shopping destinations such as malls, Meijer and Walmart.



**Table 4-10**  
**Where would you like to go in Newaygo County?**

| Location                            | Number |
|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Fremont                             | 102    |
| Newaygo                             | 83     |
| Doctor                              | 77     |
| Shopping                            | 54     |
| White Cloud                         | 44     |
| Walmart                             | 38     |
| Grocery Shopping                    | 25     |
| Grant                               | 24     |
| Work                                | 14     |
| Bills Grocery                       | 13     |
| Library                             | 11     |
| Community/Social Events             | 9      |
| Hospital                            | 9      |
| Plumbs                              | 9      |
| Restaurants                         | 9      |
| NCCS (TrueNorth Community Services) | 7      |

**Table 4-11**  
**Where would you like to go outside Newaygo County?**

| Location     | Number |
|--------------|--------|
| Grand Rapids | 58     |
| Doctor       | 53     |
| Muskegon     | 46     |
| Big Rapids   | 45     |
| Mall         | 18     |
| Shopping     | 18     |
| Meijer       | 10     |
| Hospital     | 9      |
| Baldwin      | 8      |
| Sparta       | 8      |
| Walmart      | 7      |

After the questions on needs and preferences, respondents were asked if they would support a millage or dedicated funding source for public transportation in Newaygo County (Table 4-12). Not all of the 810 respondents answered the question, but of the 743 that did, 319 (42.9%) indicated they would support a millage for public transit while 55.9 percent would not and 1.2 percent were undecided.

**Table 4-12**  
**Public transportation systems typically receive funding from several sources. These include the federal government, the state (Michigan Department of Transportation), and local funds. Would you support a millage or special assessment to help support the local funding component of a public transportation system in Newaygo County?**

| Response         | Number | Percent |
|------------------|--------|---------|
| Yes              | 319    | 42.9    |
| No               | 415    | 55.9    |
| Unsure/Undecided | 9      | 1.2     |
| Total            | 743    | 100.0   |

To get an idea of how many people comprise the households that were surveyed, respondents were asked to indicate how many people by age group made up their household (Table 4-13). The total was 1,843. Of these, 18.3 percent were 18 and younger, 55.5 percent were between the age of 19 and 64 and 26.2 percent were 65 years or older. The respondents in the 19 to 64 age group are somewhat consistent with the composition of the Newaygo County population with approximately 68.6 percent of the population in this age group. The residents of survey respondent households were somewhat under-represented in the 18 and younger category given they comprise about 25 percent of the county population and those 65 and older were somewhat over-represented in the survey since they comprise 15.6 percent of the Newaygo County population.

**Table 4-13**  
**How many people in the following age groups make up your household?**

| Age            | Number | Percent |
|----------------|--------|---------|
| 18 and younger | 337    | 18.3    |
| 19 to 64       | 1,023  | 55.5    |
| 65 and over    | 483    | 26.2    |
| Total          | 1,843  | 100.0   |

As a final question on the survey, respondents were asked if they had any suggestions regarding public transportation in Newaygo County and if there were any issues that should be addressed or considered as part of the Transportation Needs Study. These open-ended responses are listed in Appendix B.

# 5 Transportation Needs

Public and stakeholder outreach has been used to better understand the transportation needs of those living in Newaygo County. A set of stakeholder meetings were held in December 2010, public meetings were held in March 2011, and the mail-out survey was conducted in May 2011. The information collected from these activities has all been used to document the transportation needs in Newaygo County.

## Stakeholder Meetings

Stakeholder Meetings conducted in December 2011 included the Rotary Club, NC3, Township Officers Association and school superintendents.

The consultant team was on the agenda of the Rotary Club’s regularly scheduled meeting. A short presentation was made in which the purpose of the study was discussed and then Rotary Club members had the opportunity to ask questions and provide input. Some of the questions focused on what type of system could be developed in Newaygo County. It was explained that this was dependent on the type of need to be documented and that typically in low-density population areas such as Newaygo County, a demand response-type service is often the most feasible. The needs as perceived by Rotary Club members were generally for those without other means of transportation to work, medical appointments, shopping, etc.

The meeting with the NC3 members included a short presentation on the study. Graphics were presented showing the clustered transportation generators in the county and public transportation in surrounding counties. Many at the meeting were associated with health care and human service agencies and pointed to the challenges senior citizens and low income families have getting to medical appointments, grocery shopping, college classes, and seeking employment and getting to work.

Those attending the Township Officers Association meeting also received a brief presentation on the study and had the opportunity to review maps showing the transportation generators and the public transportation available in adjacent counties. Most present at the meeting were unsure if there was significant demand for public transportation in Newaygo County. It was also felt that finding local funds to support public transportation would be difficult. It was suggested that perhaps organized trips to destinations such as a casino or shopping malls in adjacent counties on a weekly or monthly basis might be an option to a transit service that connected locations within Newaygo County.

The consultant was an agenda item at a regularly scheduled meeting of the school superintendents. The superintendents could not speak to the transportation needs of anyone other than students. They felt that students had adequate transportation to and from school, but that public transportation could potentially be used to allow more students to access after-school activities.

## Public Meetings

The public meetings were held on March 29, 2011. They were drop-in style meetings and were held at the following locations:

- Grant Family Health Care,
- Plumb's Shopping Center,
- Michigan Works! Newaygo County Workforce Service Center, and
- Newaygo County Administration Building.

The consultant team was at each location for an hour and a half with presentation boards and comment cards. Those attending the drop-in sessions also had the opportunity to discuss their transportation needs with the consultant team. Several comment cards were collected at each location and additional comment cards were mailed, faxed and e-mailed in after the meeting.

Common issues expressed included a need for a low-cost transportation service to allow people to get to medical appointments, shop for groceries and get to work. Others indicated the need for a connecting service to the public transportation systems in Grand Rapids and Muskegon. Many filling out comment cards expressed the desire to be able to attend social and recreational functions. Others felt that public transportation would allow them more independence in their lives and eliminate the need to rely on family and friends for all of their transportation needs.

## Survey

The Transportation Needs Survey as presented in Chapter 4, provides a wealth of information on the transportation needs of Newaygo County residents. It represents 810 of the 18,406 households in the county.

Of the respondents, 9.6 percent had used a transportation service provided by a Newaygo County agency or organization. This figure is significant and is typically two to three percent at most. This shows that people are already using what little transportation that is provided in the county. Eleven percent of the households indicated they had difficulty meeting transportation needs. If you assume the rate is the same for Newaygo County, 2,025 households in the county have issues with transportation. The key areas of need as shown in the survey are medical appointments, social/recreational activities, and shopping.

When asked if they or members of their household didn't drive or limit their amount of driving, more than 31 percent responded yes. The primary reasons may be tied closely to the high survey response rate by those 65 and over. They included not driving at night or in poor weather, having a disability and not driving long distance or in heavy traffic. It is important to note that of the households surveyed, 26 percent of the household members were 65 and over as compared to the population of Newaygo County where 15.6 percent of the population is 65 and over. Other often cited factors for not driving could be grouped into a category of income related reasons and included vehicle mechanical difficulties, do not own a vehicle, cost of vehicle, insurance, maintenance and/or fuel. These factors would point to a type of transportation that would serve the needs of seniors and low income residents.

There was willingness on the part of the respondents to consider and use public transportation if it were available. Just over 39 percent of those surveyed indicated they would consider using a public transportation service if it met their needs. They were nearly evenly split between a regularly scheduled bus route and a door-to-door service. For the majority of respondents, a 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM, Monday



through Saturday service would fit their needs. In terms of where people need and want to go within Newaygo County, the cities of Fremont, Newaygo, White Clout and Grant were popular destinations with trips for shopping, healthcare, work and social/recreational activities. For trips outside the county, healthcare and shopping were the primary needs with trips to Grand Rapids, Muskegon and Big Rapids being key destinations.

## Conclusions

It appears that there is a need for some type of public transportation to serve the residents of Newaygo County. The survey indicated 11 percent of the respondents had difficulty meeting transportation needs. This combined with comments received at the public meetings and input received from stakeholder groups indicates a need for public transportation targeted toward seniors and those with low incomes. There appears to be a need for transportation inside the county to access medical care, and employment destinations, as well as outside the county to Grand Rapids, Muskegon and Big Rapids for the same purposes. In addition, based on survey results, there appears to be a willingness to use public transportation to expand the transportation options available to Newaygo County residents.



# 6 Need and Feasibility

There is a need for some type of public transportation to serve the residents of Newaygo County. Survey results indicated 11 percent of the respondents had difficulty meeting transportation needs. This combined with comments received at the public meetings and input received from stakeholder groups indicates a need for public transportation targeted toward the economically disadvantaged and those without other transportation options.

Transportation needs for trips inside the county include access to medical care, shopping and employment destinations. There is a segment of the population that would also like to travel outside the county to Grand Rapids, Muskegon and Big Rapids for the same purposes.

Survey responses also showed that there was support for public transportation beyond those that had no personal means of transportation. While 11 percent of those surveyed indicated that they had difficulty meeting their transportation needs, 39 percent would consider using public transportation if it existed in Newaygo County.

A need for public transportation does not indicate public transportation is feasible. The cost per trip or per person served must be a cost that Newaygo County's elected officials are comfortable with and the county must also have the resources to apply to the provision of public transportation.



# 7 Preliminary Service Options and Analysis

This chapter presents the preliminary service options and a brief analysis of the options.

## Service Options

The consultant identified the following ten preliminary service options.

1. **Do nothing**, assuming a public transportation system is not feasible at this time.
2. Establish a **countywide demand response** focused public transit system serving the entire county from a central base (Figure 7-1). Due to the county size, advanced reservations should be utilized.
3. Establish a **countywide zone-based demand response** public transit system. The county would be divided into operating zones with coordination points established for transfer between the zones (Figure 7-2). There would be common fares in each zone with an additional fare applied to travel in multiple zones.
4. Establish a **quad-city (White Cloud, Fremont, Newaygo and Grant) demand response** public transit system. Demand response service would be provided within each community and transfer points between each community would be established (Figure 7-3). There would be common fares in each community with an additional fare to transfer between communities.
5. Establish a **countywide fixed route (intra-county)** public transit system connecting the major communities and travel destinations within the county (Figure 7-4). Regularly scheduled fixed routes and stops would provide a backbone service within the county. Individual communities could augment services within their city as they deem appropriate by purchasing service from the fixed route operator.
6. Establish a **countywide fixed route (inter-county)** public transit system connecting the major communities and travel destinations in the county (Figure 7-5). Regularly scheduled fixed routes and stops with service/connections to surrounding counties, cities, transit operations, intercity bus operations and/or fixed destinations would be developed. Individual communities could augment services within their city as they deem appropriate by purchasing services from the fixed route operator.

**Figure 7-1**  
**Option 2: Countywide Demand Response**

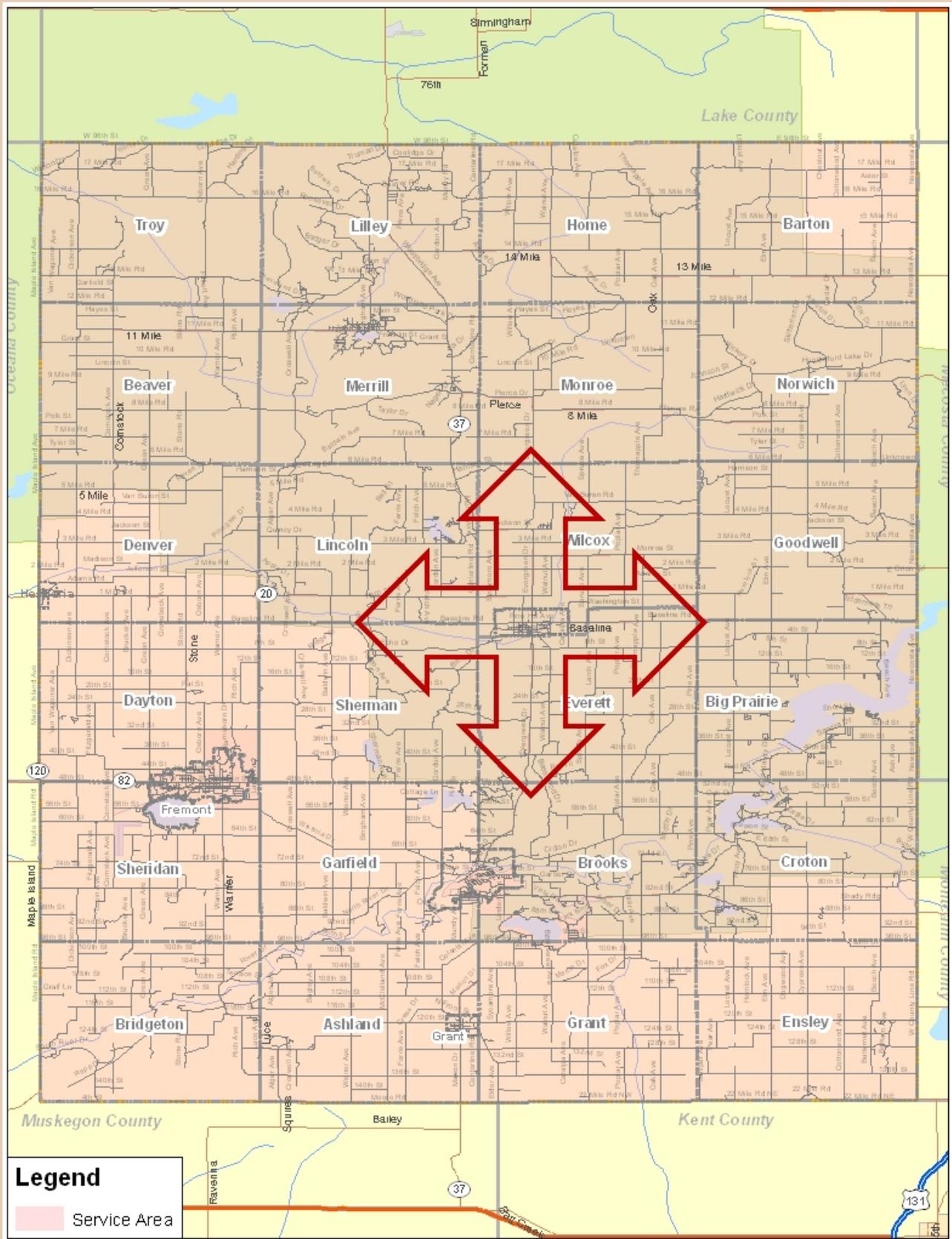
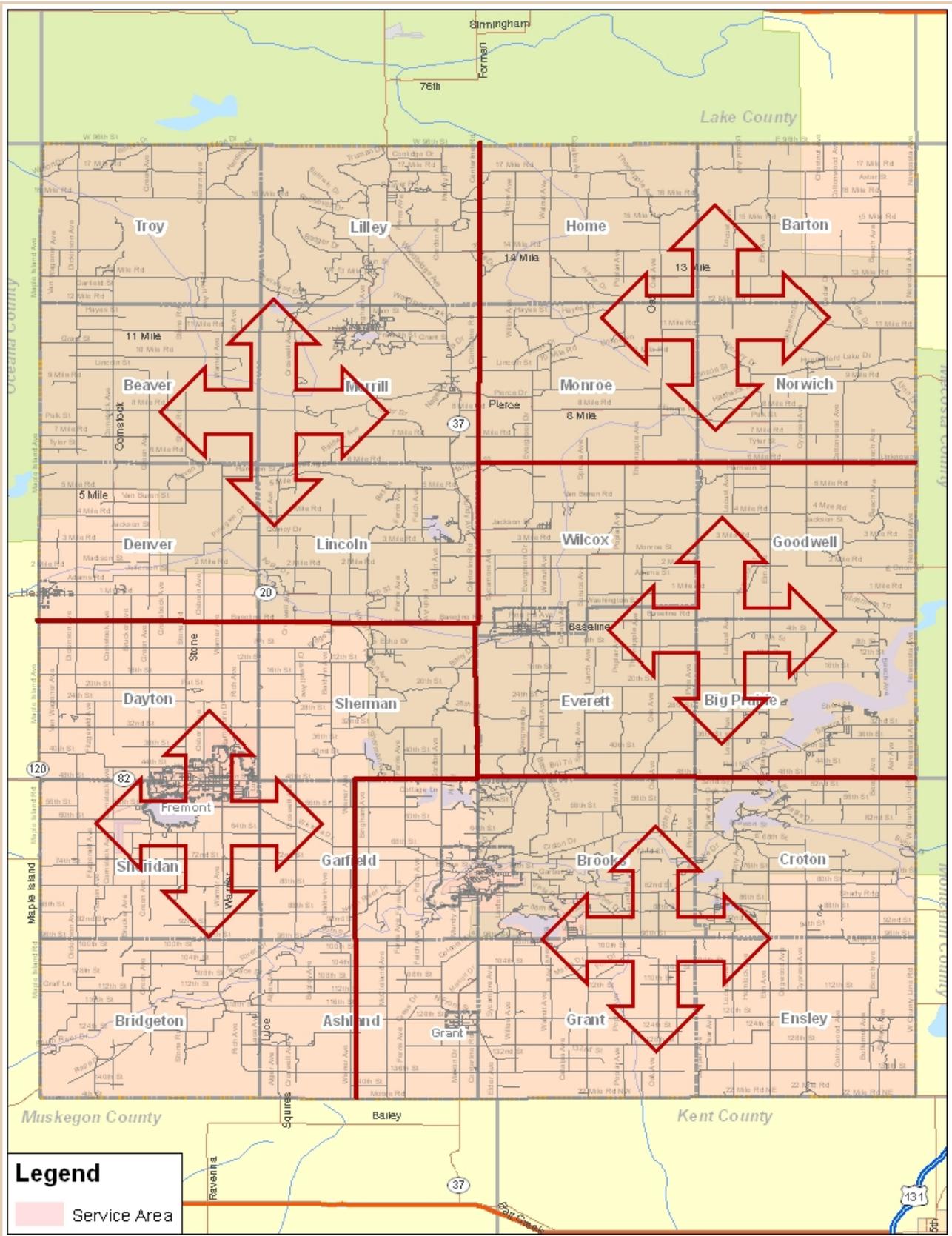


Figure 7-2  
Option 3: Countywide Zone-based Demand Response



**Figure 7-3**  
**Option 4: Quad-city Demand Response**

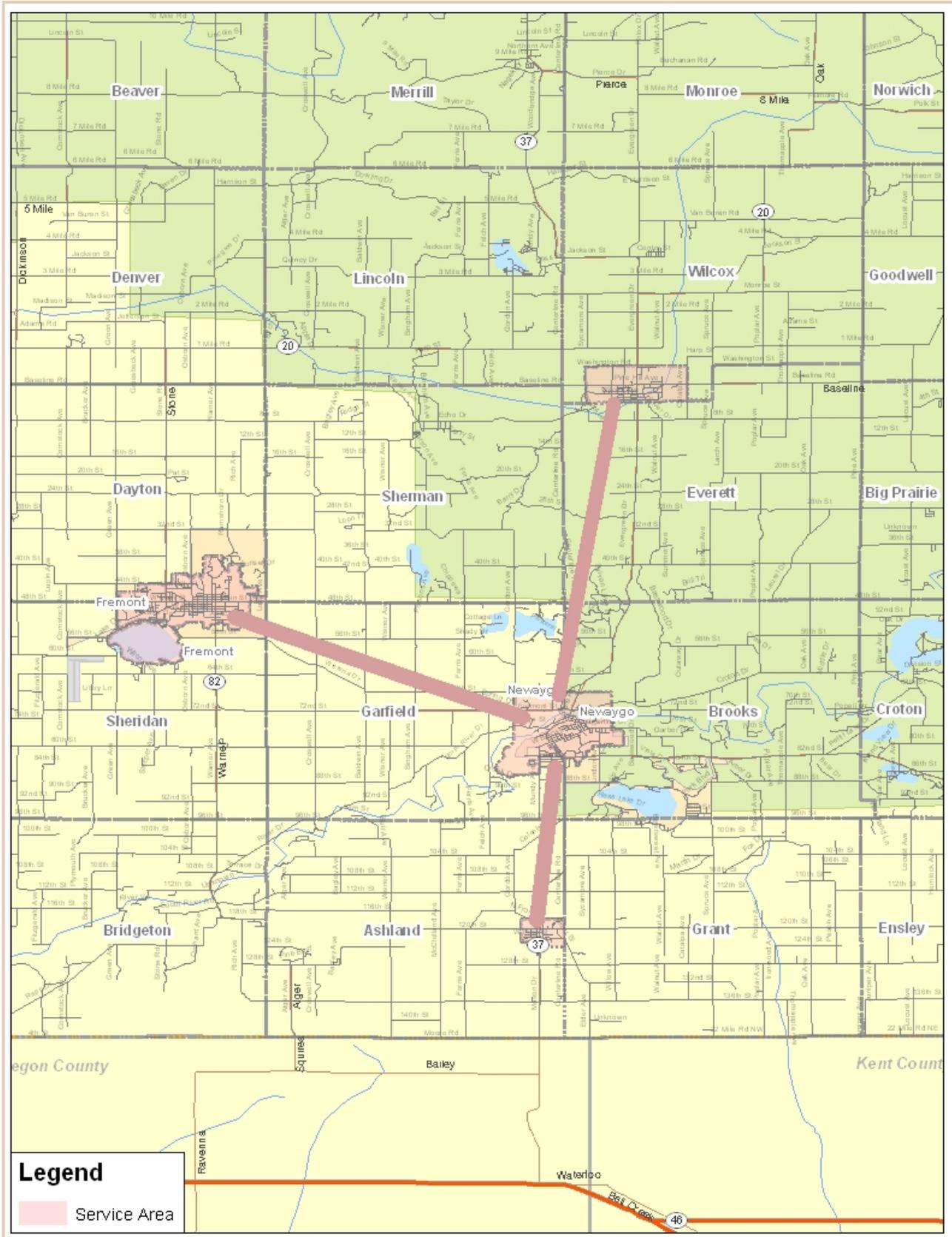
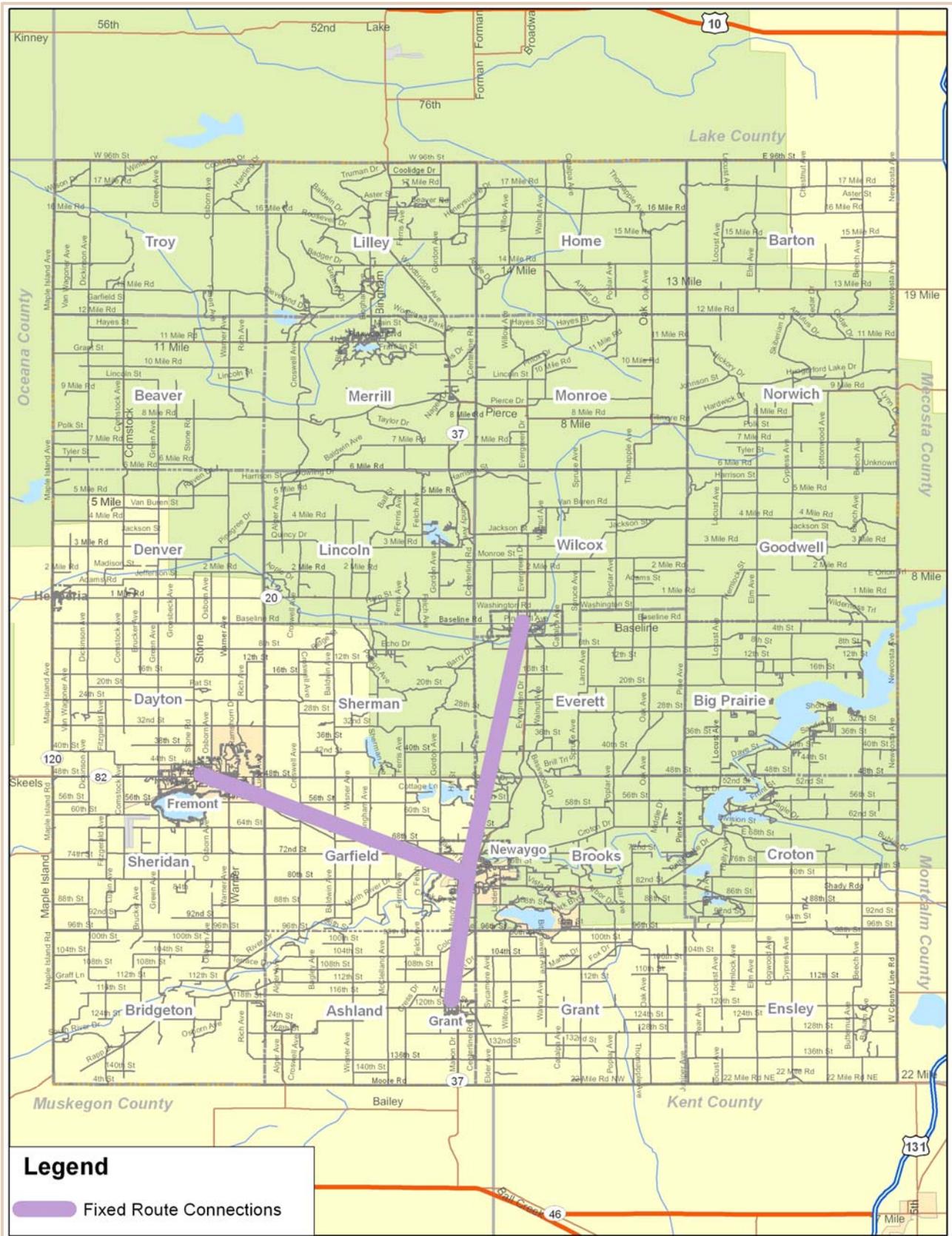
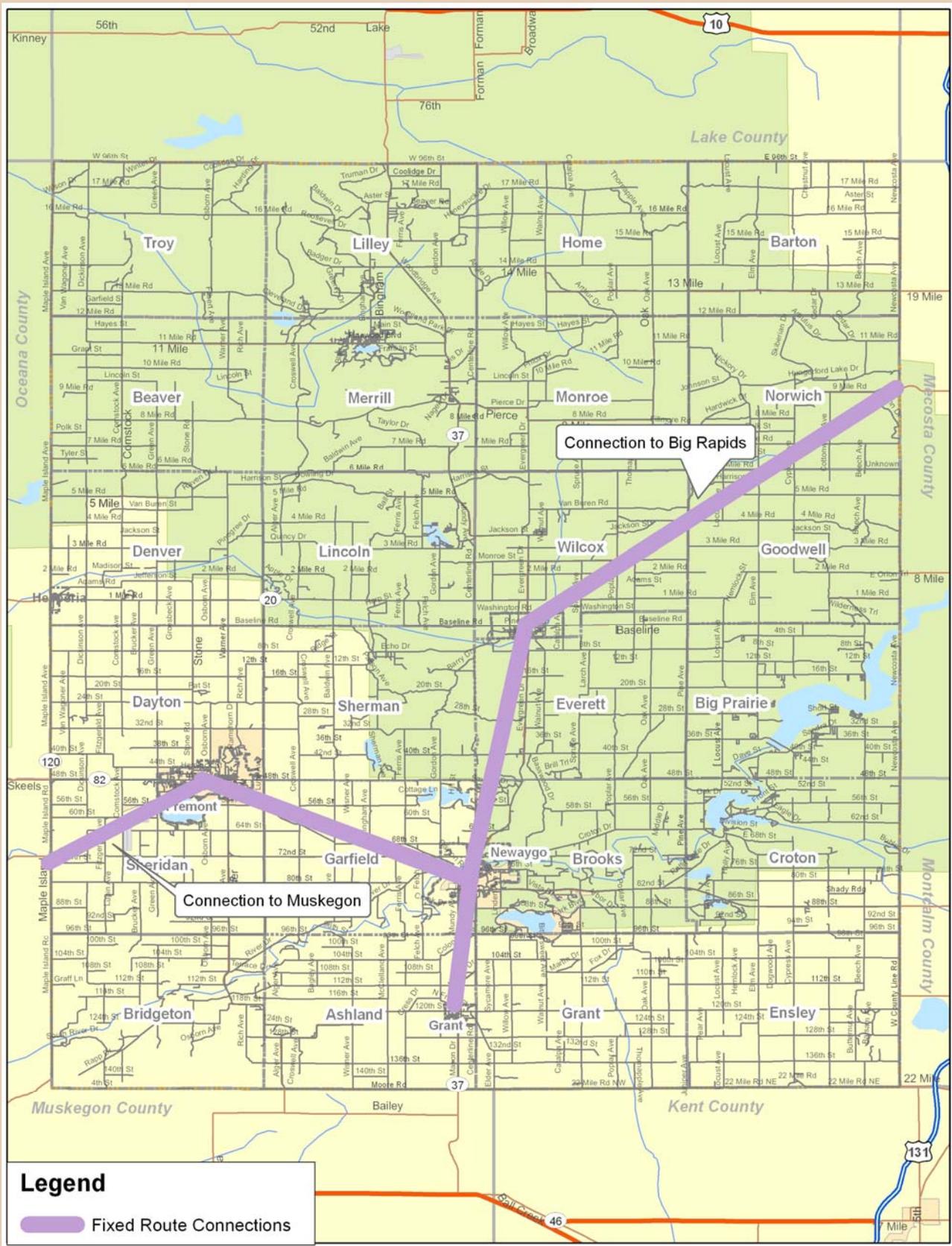


Figure 7-4  
Option 5: Countywide Fixed Route (intra-county)



**Figure 7-5**  
**Option 6: Countywide Fixed Route (inter-county)**



7. Establish a **countywide demand response and fixed route public transit system** with a core fixed route connection between quad communities and out county destinations with a small demand response system serving each of the quad cities and the area surrounding the cities (Figure 7-6).
8. **Purchase services from providers in adjacent counties** (Muskegon County and/or Mecosta Osceola Transit Authority). Muskegon and Mecosta-Osceola Transit Authority would have to agree to provide services and a contract for services would be needed. Although it is a system in an adjacent county, the Rapid in Grand Rapids does not have service abutting Newaygo County. The services provided could be demand response or fixed route and coverage could be the entire county or only a portion of the county.
9. Establish a **multi-county authority** by petitioning to join the Muskegon and/or Mecosta-Osceola Transit Authority and expanding either of their respective authorities to encompass all or a portion of Newaygo County. Newaygo County would then be a member of an authority. The type of service, demand response, fixed route, or some other form, could be negotiated.
10. **Restructure the existing Senior Transit Bus services** currently provided by the Newaygo County Commission on Aging and provide service to the general public (Figure 7-7). The COA provides bus service four days per week in Fremont, White Cloud, and Newaygo and one day per week in Grant. Under this option, the service would be expanded to include service for the general public, not just seniors and the disabled as are currently the riders of the COA service.

The service could include linkages between the cities along with service to major destinations such as the existing senior meal sites; shopping destinations such as grocery stores and Walmart; social service agencies such as CMH and DHS offices; public facilities including libraries and city and county offices; the Newaygo County Regional Education Service Agency; banks; and, health care providers and pharmacies.

This service could be operated by converting the existing COA bus service to a general public transit system or by acquiring new vehicles and operating them as a public transportation system, separate from the COA. This option would not affect the COA's volunteer medical transportation program or the healthcare van service.

**Figure 7-6**  
**Option 7: Countywide Demand Response and Fixed Route**

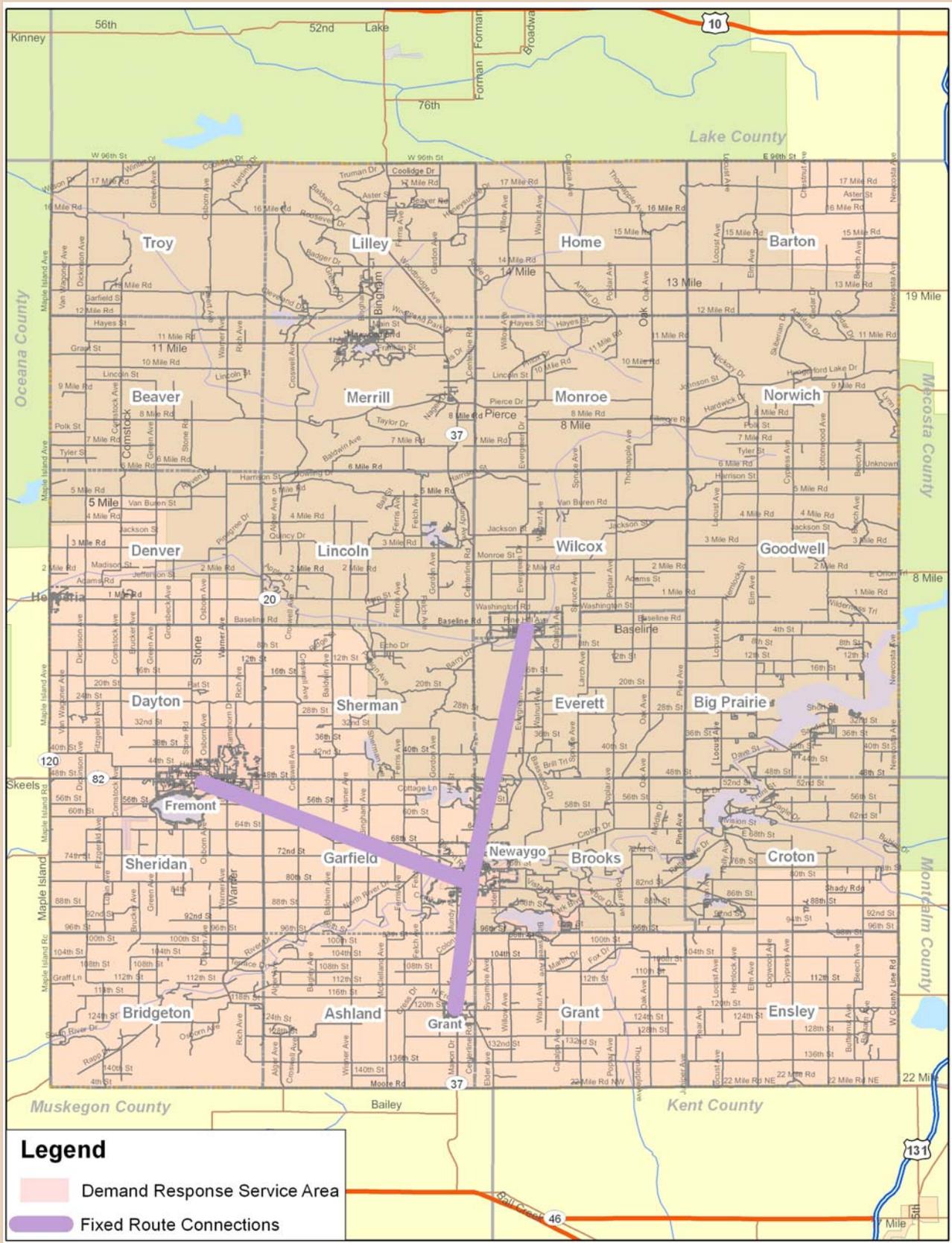
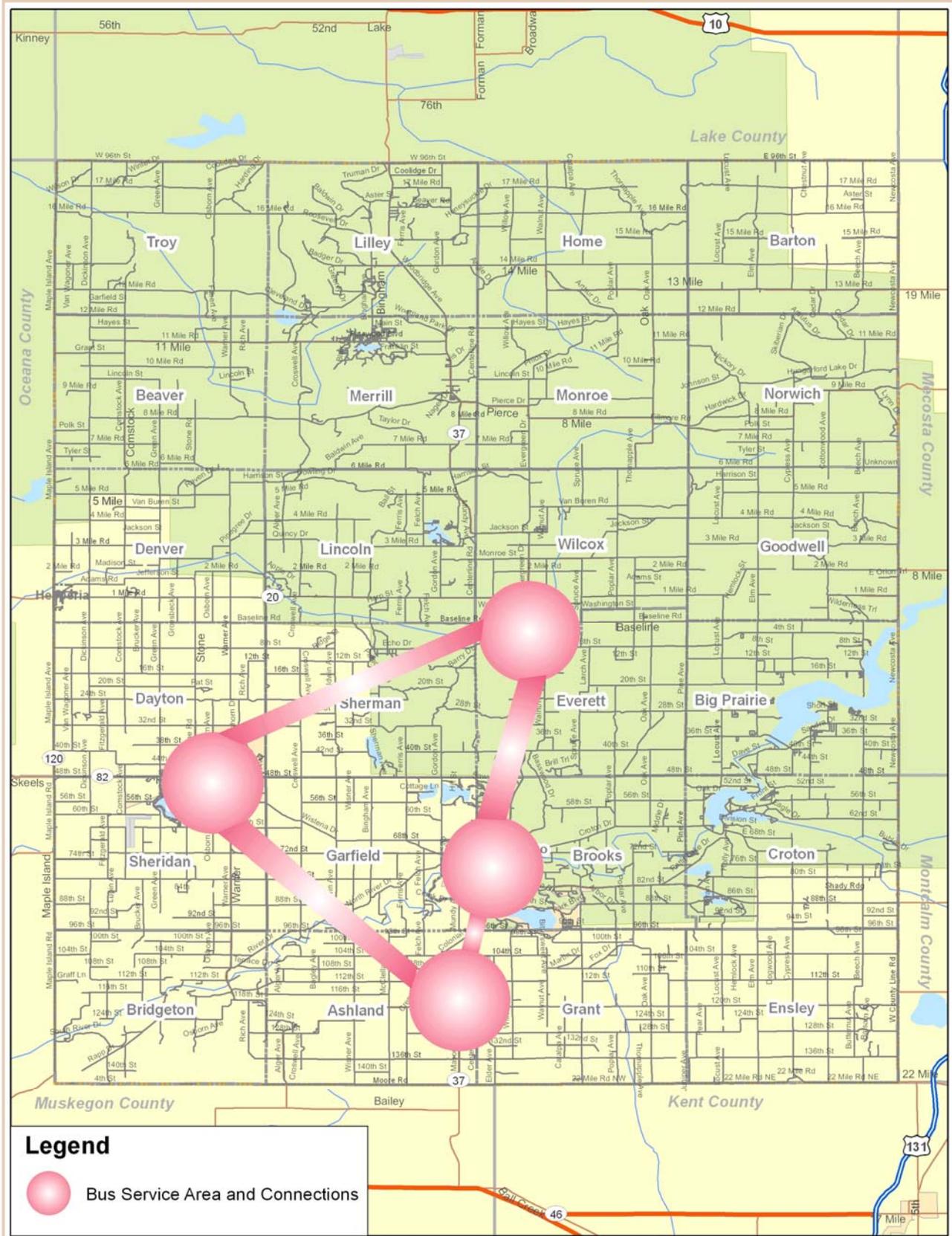


Figure 7-7  
Option 10: Build on Existing Senior Transit Bus Service



## Analysis

### Option 1: Do Nothing

Option 1, do nothing, is always a valid option if it is assumed that Newaygo County residents and their elected officials don't want or need public transit. From the survey data, there is a group of individuals that need some form of public transportation and a somewhat larger group that would consider using it if it were available. In addition, the need for public transportation will only increase in the coming years as the population ages.

### Option 2: Countywide Demand Response

Given that there is currently no public transportation available in Newaygo County, to go from no service to the entire county would be a very ambitious undertaking. In addition, there are parts of Newaygo County that are very sparsely populated. The Commission on Aging (COA) currently provides demand response service to the entire county for the elderly and disabled under the agency's Health Care Van transportation service. The Department of Human Services (DHS) operates a transportation service for their clients using volunteers driving their own vehicles. They operate throughout the county and take clients to medical trips and children in the foster care program to supervised visits to locations inside and outside Newaygo County. Community Mental Health (CMH) operates a volunteer based transportation service that picks clients up from all parts of the county and transports them to the CMH office in White Cloud. Thus, the countywide demand response needs are being met for the elderly and disabled and for health care and mental health needs, as well as for segments of the population without other means of transportation. The population groups with the most need currently have some options. A more manageable starting point would be a system that targets the higher population density areas with a more focused service.

### Option 3: Countywide Zone-based Demand Response

As with non-zone-based countywide service, this too would be difficult to provide considering the county would start from a base of no service. Although demand response service would probably be more efficient to provide in a zone-based configuration, the logistics make it more difficult to administer and confusing for riders. In addition, there is still the difficulty associated with serving parts of the county with very low population densities. Starting with the more developed areas of the county and, perhaps, eventually growing the system to include countywide service, is more manageable and more feasible.

### Option 4: Quad-city Demand Response

Under this option, each of the four cities in Newaygo County would have a demand response system. There would be transfers between them, but it would still be difficult to get from one city to another. For example, if you wanted to go from Grant to Fremont, you would have to get on the Grant bus, transfer to the Newaygo bus, to then connect to the Fremont bus to get to your final destination.

### Option 5: Countywide Fixed Route (intra-county)

This option would allow people to ride between the cities within Newaygo County, but it would be difficult for them to access the fixed routes. Given the population density of Newaygo County, fixed route service would be difficult to provide without providing some means for people to get to the fixed routes.

### Option 6: Countywide Fixed Route (inter-county)

This option, although it provides connecting service to adjacent counties, would have the same issue as the previous option. There would need to be a service to get people to the fixed route. It is also difficult to go from no transit in a county to a county service with connections to adjacent counties. Providing service that connects with other areas is something that is done best when the in-county service is well established.

### Option 7: Countywide Demand Response and Fixed Route

This would be the ideal option if funding were unlimited. Residents would have the benefit of a demand response service that would cover the sparsely populated areas of the county with the access to fixed routes that could take them to major destinations within the county. Given that this is a very high level of service, the cost of providing this service is also very high. A service of this type would typically need to be phased in over several years and would be difficult to maintain as a start-up system.

### Option 8: Purchase Services from Adjacent Counties

The most logical choices for providers in adjacent counties are Muskegon County or Mecosta-Osceola Transit Authority given that these two providers have countywide service. This could open up service to Muskegon or Big Rapids. Still, with shrinking budgets associated with their existing operations and the need for additional vehicles to provide service into Newaygo County they would most likely not have the vehicle and staffing resources available to provide contract service.

### Option 9: A Multi-county Authority

If Newaygo County were to petition to join either Muskegon County or Mecosta-Osceola Transit to form a multi-county transit authority, Newaygo County would need to give the other authority a firm commitment to provide transit services for the long-term. Starting with an authority would mean that there would be no demonstration routes or services, just the initiation of permanent service, as well as a significant financial contribution based on the level and quantity of service provided. An arrangement such as this is best left to a mature service with clearly documented demand.

### Option 10: Build on COA Senior Transit Bus Service

Under this option, it is assumed that most of the COA Senior Bus clients could be transitioned to a public transit service. In FY 2010, the COA provided 13,395 one-way trips to 176 clients. In addition to capturing some of the COA trips, some of the existing trips provided by the CMH volunteer service could be transitioned to a Newaygo County bus service. In 2010, CMH provided approximately 50 round trips

per month to its clients. Some (about half) of the 50 trips involve two clients in the vehicle. So, some portion of the approximately 150 one-way CMH volunteer trips could also use a public transportation service.

DHS operates a volunteer transportation service providing approximately 350 round trips (700 one-way trips) per month. A portion of these trips involve small children that could not ride on public transportation and some trips have an origin or destination that is out of the county because DHS has a two-county service area. Still it is assumed that some portion of approximately 450 adult one-way trips could use public transportation.

Contracting with COA, CMH and DHS would provide the service with an existing ridership base at its inception. It is also assumed that by pooling the resources, the existing trips could be provided at a reduced cost per trip and that service could be extended to the general public with little additional cost and the opportunity exists for additional federal and state funding.

This service could be provided using the existing COA buses and essentially transitioning the COA service into a public service or additional buses could be leased or purchased and operated separate and apart from the COA service. It is recommended that the service use at least two vehicles and set periods of time are established for drop-offs and pick-ups in each city. The buses could then make a loop connecting the four cities with one bus traveling in a clockwise direction while the other would travel in a counter clockwise direction.

# 8 Funding

The cost associated with the provision of public transportation services can be broken into two primary financial categories - operating and capital costs. (1) Operating cost include items such as: wages and benefits for bus drivers and administrative staff, fuel, insurance, etc., and (2) Capital costs which includes items such as: the purchase of buses, rehabilitation of buses, radio/dispatching equipment, transit facilities including bus garages, administrative buildings, bus shelters, and certain furniture, fixtures and equipment, etc.

Public Transportation operations in Michigan are typically financed from three funding sources. These funding sources are: The United States Department of Transportation through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), The State of Michigan through the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and from funds generated locally. Public transportation capital costs have traditionally been financed by the FTA and MDOT. Due to the shortage of MDOT transit capital funding, in recent years local funds have been required to match capital projects. The following summarizes the FTA and MDOT funding opportunities that could be used to support the provision of public transportation services in Newaygo County. In addition, local funding options that could be used in Newaygo County are also presented.

## Federal Transit Administration Programs and Funding

The U.S. Department of Transportation (US DOT) through its modal operating structure administers many programs which address the transportation needs of both urban and non-urban areas. The focus of this review will be on the rural programs and the associated funding opportunities administered by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

In the late 1970s the US DOT began to take on a multimodal approach with the incorporation of transit programs in the Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1978. The multi-modal approach continued to expand in subsequent years with the passage of The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) in 1991, The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) in 1998 and The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) in 2004. Each of these landmark transportation authorization acts set the stage for the Federal Transit programs currently administered by the FTA.

The SAFETEA-LU of 2004 is the most recent multi-year transportation authorization act passed by Congress and signed by the President. SAFETEA-LU established transportation program and funding levels for the period 2005 through 2009. SAFETEA-LU expired in 2009. Congress, however, has not enacted new transportation authorization legislation to replace SAFETEA-LU, but rather has, through a series of continuing resolutions and most recently the passage of the Surface and Air Transportation Program Extension Act of 2011 (HR 2887 – signed by the President September 16, 2011), extended SAFETEA-LU until March 31, 2012. The extension also substantially maintains the 2011 program funding authorization levels through March 31, 2012, on a pro-rated basis.

The President’s Fiscal Year 2012 Budget Recommendation included a recommendation for the enactment of a new six-year transportation reauthorization legislation which would authorize approximately \$556 billion over the six-year period. Entitled “Investing in Tomorrow and Creating Jobs Today,” the President’s Reauthorization proposal includes increased funding for the Federal Transit Program (operating and capital), as well as a \$50 billion upfront economic boost to help jump-start job creation. The \$50 billion up front funding includes over \$10 billion for Federal Transit Programs. Congress is currently working on legislation to re-authorization the transportation act. At this point it is unclear when a transportation reauthorization bill will be considered or voted on by the Congress. Likewise while the President’s proposal increases Federal Transportation Program Authorization levels, there are some members of Congress that are proposing to reduce federal programs and spending as part of the effort to reduce the deficit. At this point it is not possible to predict when new transportation reauthorization legislation will be enacted and what the program authorization levels will be or what other important program provisions the legislation may contain.

In the review of the Federal Transit Programs described below it is important to note that a new transportation re-authorization act may refine, expand or delete any of the programs described below, and likewise it is also possible that new transit programs may be authorized by Congress beyond those described below.

The Federal Transit Programs described below are those programs that can be used to secure financial support for the provision of local public transportation services in non-urbanized areas such as Newaygo County and/or in local communities such as the cities of Newaygo, Fremont, White Cloud, and Grant, or any of the other local governmental entities within Newaygo County.

## The Non-Urbanized Area (Rural) Formula Program – Section 5311

This federal transit program provides formula funding to the states for the purpose of supporting public transportation in areas with a population of less than 50,000. There are five goals for the Section 5311 program: (1) to enhance the access to public transportation in non-urbanized areas to health care, shopping, education, employment, public services and recreation; (2) to assist in the maintenance, development, improvement and use of public transit systems in rural and small urban areas; (3) to encourage and facilitate the most efficient use of all federal funds used to provide passenger transportation services in non-urbanized areas through the coordination of programs and services; (4) to provide for the participation of private transportation providers in non-urbanized transportation to the maximum extent feasible; and, (5) to assist in the development of and support of intercity bus transportation service. Section 5311 funds are apportioned to each state for distribution to eligible recipients. Eligible recipients of this funding include: the state and local governments, Indian Tribes, non-profit organizations, and public transportation operators. Each year these eligible recipients must submit an application to MDOT for funding through this program. The Section 5311 federal funds may be used for capital, operating, planning and administrative purposes. The maximum federal share for capital projects and project administration is 80 percent. The maximum federal share for operating assistance is 50 percent of eligible operating expenses. For planning purposes MDOT has advised public transportation agencies to anticipate in their individual budget plans that the Section 5311 operating funds will cover approximately 16 percent of eligible operating expenses in FY 2012. The federal apportionment to Michigan under the Section 5311 Program for FY 2011 is approximately \$17.2 million.



## Elderly and Individuals with Disabilities – Section 5310

This federal transit program provides formula funding to the state for the purpose of assisting private non-profit groups in meeting the transportation needs of the elderly and persons with disabilities, when traditional transportation service is unavailable, insufficient or inappropriate. The program goal is to improve the mobility for elderly individuals and individuals with disabilities in urban, small urban and rural areas of a country. Section 5310 funds are apportioned to each state for distribution. Eligible sub-recipients of this funding are private non-profit organizations or a governmental authority. The Section 5310 federal funds may be used for capital expenses to support the provision of transportation services. Eligible project activities include purchase or lease of buses, vans, radios, vehicles, and wheelchair lifts, etc. The maximum federal share is 80 percent, except for vehicle-related equipment and facilities required by the Clean Air Act (CAA) or the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in which case the maximum federal share is 90 percent. Applications for these funds are made through the Michigan Department of Transportation annually. Proposed project must be derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan. The federal apportionment to Michigan under the Section 5310 Program for FY 2011 is approximately \$4.3 million. The Newaygo Commission on Aging has received grants from this program in the past for capital items.

## Bus and Bus Facility Discretionary Grant Program – Section 5309

This federal transit program provides capital assistance for new and replacement buses, related equipment and facilities. The program goal is to support, maintain and expand existing transit services and support development of new and expanded transit services. Eligible recipients of this funding are states, public transit agencies, public boards and commissions, Indian Tribes, etc. Eligible project activities include purchase or lease of buses, construction or purchase of bus maintenance and administrative facilities, intermodal terminals, park-and-ride stations, shelters, signs, parts, radios, computers, and shop and garage equipment, etc. The maximum federal share is 80 percent. SAFETEA-LU provides the Secretary of Transportation the discretion to allocate these funds, although historically Congress has fully earmarked all available funding under this program. Transit operators in Michigan have in the past worked closely with MDOT and their Congressional Representative and U.S. Senators to secure funding from this Federal Transit Program for transit capital projects.

## The Job Access and Reverse Commute Program (JARC) – Section 5316

This federal transit program was established to address the unique transportation challenges faced by welfare recipients and low-income persons seeking to obtain and maintain employment. Many new jobs are located in suburban areas and many entry level jobs require working late at night or on weekends, when traditional transit services may be reduced or not available. Across the United States, the eligible direct recipient of this funding in non-urbanized areas of a state is the State. The Michigan Department of Transportation is the direct recipient for non-urbanized areas in Michigan. Eligible sub-recipients include private non-profit organizations, state or local governmental authorities and operators of public transit services. Eligible Project activities include late-night and weekend service, guaranteed ride home, demand response service, marketing activities, etc. The maximum federal share for capital projects is 80 percent and the maximum share for operating cost may not exceed 50 percent of the net operating cost of the proposed activity. Some technical and planning cost can be funded at 100 percent federal share. The federal apportionment to non-urbanized areas in Michigan for FY 2011 is approximately \$1 million. Application for JARC funding in non-urbanized areas is made through the MDOT annually. The

proposed project must be derived from a locally developed coordinated public transit – human services transportation plan.

### **The New Freedom Formula Grant Program – Section 5317**

This federal transit program seeks to reduce barriers to transportation services and expand the transportation mobility options available to persons with disabilities beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Eligible direct recipients of this funding for the non-urbanized areas are state departments of transportation. Eligible sub-recipients include: private non-profit organizations, state or local governmental authorities and operators of public transit services. Eligible Project activities include: new transportation services beyond ADA requirements, enhancing paratransit beyond minimum requirements of ADA. Funds may also be used to purchase and operate accessible vehicles for taxi use, ridesharing or carpooling, support for new volunteer driver and aide programs, and other innovative approaches. The maximum federal share for capital projects is 80 percent and the maximum share for operating cost may not exceed 50 percent of the net operating cost of the activity. Some technical and planning cost can be funded at 100 percent federal share. Application for New Freedom funding in non-urbanized areas is made through the Michigan Department of Transportation annually. The federal apportionment to non-urbanized areas in Michigan for FY 2011 is approximately \$670,000. The proposed projects must be derived from a locally developed coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan. The Disability Connection of West Michigan (Fremont Office) has received New Freedom Program funds for a Transportation Voucher Program in Newaygo County.

### **Transit in the Park Discretionary Program – Section 5320**

This federal transit program funds capital and planning expenses for alternative transportation systems in parks and public lands. The goals of the program are to conserve natural, historic and cultural resources, reduce congestion and pollution, improve visitors' mobility and accessibility, enhance visitors experience and insure access to all, including persons with disabilities, through alternative transportation projects. Project can range from the purchase of buses, the purchase or construction of bus facilities, installation of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), bike way and trail connections (that mitigate the number of automobile trips) to feasibility studies. Eligible recipients of this funding include Federal Land Management Agencies, state DOTs, and Tribal and local governments acting with the consent of the Federal Land Management Agency. The National Forest Service is an eligible Federal Land Management Agency. This is a very competitive program with a yearly call for projects. In 2010 a total of \$26.8 million was appropriated for this program and a total of 73 applications were received for projects totaling \$83 million. Projects can be funded at up to 100 percent federal share.

## **Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) State Transit Programs and Funding**

In addition to the federal transit programs described above, the State of Michigan through the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) also provides state funds for the support of various public transit programs. The MDOT transit programs and funding are authorized in Public Act 51 of 1951 as amended (Public Act 51). The direct participation in the MDOT financed transit programs are limited to eligible authorities and eligible governmental agencies as defined in Public Act 51.

The MDOT financed transportation programs complement and support many of the Federal Transit Administration programs by providing all or a portion of the non-federal match for capital projects or supplement the federal and local funding for eligible operating expenses. The MDOT transit programs described are those programs most applicable to the provision of local public transportation services in non-urbanized areas such as Newaygo County.

## Local Bus Operating Assistance

The Local Bus Operating Assistance program provides a distribution of MDOT funds to eligible authorities and governmental agencies for the payment of eligible transit operating expenses. The Local Bus operating assistance distribution supplements federal and local funds used to pay transit operating expenses. Funds are distributed based upon eligible expenses. Public Act 51 authorizes non-urban transit systems to receive up to 60 percent of their eligible expenses through this program. Due to limited state revenues, MDOT has advised transit agencies to assume that the FY 2012 Local Bus Operating Assistance will provide approximately 37.12 percent of the eligible operating expense for non-urban/rural transit systems. This is MDOT's largest public transit program, distributing approximately \$166.6 million to more than 70 transit systems across the state.

## Bus Capital

MDOT assists local transit agencies by providing matching funds for the non-federal share of capital grants. Capital grants can include the purchase of buses, the purchase or construction of bus facilities, certain equipment, bus shelters, radio and dispatch equipment, fueling facilities, etc. Historically MDOT has provided the 20 percent match for federal transit capital grants. However, due to the lack of state transportation revenue in recent years, MDOT has not been able to match all of the federal capital funds and has prioritized the use of the bus capital funds, giving a higher priority to capital replacement items such as the replacement of buses over expansion or new items. In FY 2012 MDOT was appropriated approximately \$16.7 million of Comprehensive Transportation Funds (CTF) to distribute as match for bus capital projects across the state. When available, MDOT has also used toll credits as a match for Federal Transit Capital Funds.

## Specialized Service Program

The Specialized Service Program focuses on supporting transit services specifically for the elderly and handicapped in areas where public transit service does not exist or where public transit services do not meet the needs of the elderly and handicapped. Coordination with public transit operators, existing Section 5310 agencies and non-profit corporations representing specialized service interest, such as an area agency on aging, is required for submittal of an application for funding. This program provides operating financial support and complements the Federal Section 5310 Program mentioned above. Operating funds are based on a rate per mile or a rate per one-way passenger, with an established maximum dollar amount. In FY 2012 the appropriation for this program is approximately \$3.9 million from the CTF. The Newaygo County (Office of Commission on Aging) is a recipient of funds from the Specialized Service Program. In FY 2012 the maximum funding to Newaygo County for this program is \$32,410.

## Transportation to Work

The Transportation to Work Program provides state funds to match the Federal Section 5316 Jobs Assess/Reverse Commute Program and Federal Section 5317 New Freedom Funds Program. As noted above, the Section 5316 program focuses on providing transit services to address the unique transportation challenges faced by welfare recipients and low-income person seeking to obtain and maintain employment, while the Section 5317 program focuses on reducing barriers to transportation services and expanding transportation mobility options to person with disabilities beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. In FY 2012 approximately \$ 4.7 million was appropriated for this program from the CTF.

## Van Pooling

MDOT provides limited operating support for the Michigan Van Commuter Vanpool Program. The program is administered by VPSI Inc. This program is designed to provide commuters who live and work in the same area the ability to ride to and from work each day in a comfortable van. There can be more than one pick-up and drop off point. The person designated to drive the van rides free in exchange for taking care of the van. Taking care of the van includes washing and cleaning the van, providing scheduled and unscheduled maintenance and preparing and submitting reports per MDOT requirements. Vans range in size from a seven-passenger minivan to a 15-passenger full-size van. The driver also may use the vehicle after work and on weekends for up to 200 miles per month. The riders are assessed a monthly fee that can be paid by the rider, an employer, or a combination of both. The minimum ridership requirement, including the driver, is five people. The monthly passenger fill is based upon the miles and size of the van. Prices can range from \$60.00 per month per person for use of a 15-passenger van traveling 0-30 one way miles per day to \$220.00 per month per person for use of a seven-passenger van traveling 61-90 one way miles per day. The Van Pooling Program was appropriated \$195,000 in Fiscal Year 2012 from the CTF.

## Intercity Bus Program

In addition to the MDOT State Transportation Program listed above both the Federal Transit Administration through the Section 5311 Program and MDOT through the Intercity Bus Program provide operating and capital funding to support intercity bus service. MDOT subsidizes intercity bus service along the U.S. 131 corridor from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan to Grand Rapids. This service is provided by Indian Trails through an operating contract with MDOT. Intercity bus riders have the opportunity to travel to locations in Michigan and the United States through interline connections. MDOT encourages Indian Trails to work with local transit providers in the coordination of transportation services and facilities.

Within the context of intercity bus service, Ferris State University and the Interurban Transit Partnership (“The Rapid”), in Grand Rapids have entered into a pilot program for “The Rapid” to provide weekday service from Grand Rapids to the Ferris Campus in Big Rapids, using the U.S. 131 Corridor, four times a day (two morning and two afternoon trips) starting in the fall of 2011. There is no direct state or federal support for this Ferris State to Grand Rapids service.



## Locally Generated Funding Options to Support Public Transit Services

There are four primary sources of locally generated funds to support public transit services. It is important to note that local transit agencies have traditionally utilized and depended on a combination of these four funding sources to provide the locally generated funds to support their operations.

### Local Tax Support

There are two options:

- (a) **Local Public Transit Dedicated Millage:** The authority to seek voter approval for a dedicated millage to support Public Transit operations is dependent on the organizational structure under which the transit agency is established. Certain Public Acts allow public transit agencies to seek a dedicated millage. Approximately 59 Michigan transit agencies have a dedicated millage. The millages vary significantly in amount and duration between individual local transit agencies. See Structure and Governance Section of this report for more information on the transit related Public Acts that allow local millages.
- (b) **Local Governmental Contribution:** Local governments, through their respective budget process, can and do allocate local tax dollars to support the provision of public transit services. This is most common in City and County operated transit service.

### Farebox Revenue

All transit systems in the state charge their passengers a fare to ride. State law provides that transit agencies must provide senior citizens and disabled/handicapped riders half-fare during non-peak hours. The amount of the fare is established locally. There are a number of factors that can go into establishing a fare structure including distance traveled, time of day, ease of collection, fares for other services, etc. Another factor that can drive the establishment of the fare structure is the philosophical/policy considerations involving how much a user of the transit service pays versus how much non-users pay through the local tax support. This is often influenced by how local leaders view public transit. It is important to establish a fare policy when starting a new public transit system.

### Contract/Purchase of Service Agreements

Many local transit agencies enter into contracts with other organizations, often human service agencies, for purchase of transit service for agency clients. The contract service rate, type of service, hours of service and other service elements are negotiated by the local transit agency and the organization purchasing the services. Structured properly, the purchase of services agreement can benefit both the local transit agency and the organization purchasing the services. A purchase of service agreement between a local transit agency and a human services agency for example can benefit the local transit agency by providing a continuous source of revenue and ridership to the local transit agency, while likewise benefiting the human service agency by relieving the agency from the burden of providing transportation services for their clients, which allows them to focus on their core mission.

## Advertising Revenue

Local transit agencies can also generate local revenue by allowing advertising on their vehicles or on printed materials such as schedules or on other agency owned assets, such as bus shelters, benches, etc. The decision to pursue advertising revenue should proceed only after the development and adoption of a policy or guidelines that identify the type of advertising that will be allowed, the rates, the duration of the advertising and other related issues.

# 9 Governance and Organization

The identification and selection of a particular service option should not be a stand-alone decision but should be made in conjunction with a basic understanding of governance and organizational options that best fit the existing and future operating environment within Newaygo County.

## Statutory Governance Options

The establishment of a public transit provider in Newaygo County requires legal incorporation of a public transit provider under a specific state statute. The legal incorporation of the public transit provider will make that public transit provider eligible for funding from state and federal transportation programs. The selection of the appropriate state statute under which the transit provider is organized is a very important decision. The statute will define not only the governance structure of the transit provider but also contain important provisions addressing items such as the operating service area of the transit system, and local funding options.

The list of state statutes which can be used to incorporate a public transit provider and allow that provider to be eligible for state and federal funding can be found in Public Act 51 of 1951 as amended. Public Act 51 of 1951 as amended (PA 51) is the public act that establishes the State of Michigan's Transportation Program, including the Comprehensive Transportation Fund (CTF). The CTF funds a portion of operating expenses and capital costs of public transportation projects in the State of Michigan. PA 51 defines who is eligible to receive funding from the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) for the provision of public transit services and PA 51 also establishes the method for distributing the CTF to local transit providers.

There are two key definitions contained in PA 51 that identify who is eligible to receive CTF funds from MDOT for public transit services. Those two definitions are:

- (1) "Eligible Authority" - Section 10c (b) of PA 51 defines an "Eligible Authority" to mean an authority organized pursuant to Act No. 204 of the Public Acts of 1967 – (The Metropolitan Transportation Authorities Act of 1967).
- (2) "Eligible Governmental Agency" - Section 10c(c) of PA 51 defines "Eligible Governmental Agency" to mean a county, city or village or an authority created pursuant to one of the following Public Acts, (listed by date of enactment):
  - Act No. 94 of the Public Acts of 1933 - (The Revenue Bond Act of 1933)
  - Act No. 35 of the Public Acts of 1951 - (Intergovernmental Contracts Between Municipal Corporations)
  - Act No. 55 of the Public Acts of 1963 - (The Mass Transportation System Authorities Act of 1963)
  - Act No. 7 of the Public Acts of the Extra Session of 1967 – (Urban Cooperation Act of 1967 Ex Session)

- Act No. 8 of the Public Acts of the Extra Session of 1967 – (Intergovernmental Transfer of Functions and Responsibilities Act of 1967 Ex Session)
- Act No. 196 of the Public Acts of 1986 – (Public Transportation Authority Act of 1986)

As stated above a public transit provider must be an “eligible authority” or an “eligible governmental” agency to be considered eligible to receive CTF operating and or capital funds from MDOT.

There are 78 public transit providers in the State of Michigan, providing fixed route and or demand response services. Of the 78 public transit providers 19 are classified as urbanized public transit agencies because they operate primarily in urbanized areas and the remaining 58 are classified as non-urban public transit agencies because they operate primarily in non-urbanized areas of the state.

The number of public transit systems organized under each of the specific Public Acts listed above is summarized as follows:

- Act No. 204 of 1967 - 1
- Act No. 94 of 1933 – 21
- Act No. 35 of 1951 – 0
- Act No. 55 of 1963 – 4
- Act No. 7 of 1967 Ex Session - 8
- Act No. 8 of 1967 Ex Session - 0
- Act No. 196 of 1986 – 22

In addition to the specific public acts identified above, a public transit provider can, as described above, an “eligible governmental agency” as part of a county, city or village.

Of the 78 public transit providers in the State of Michigan, 21 of the transit providers are operated as a department or agency of the county. Because there is no general public act with respect to county services, Act No. 94 of 1933 (The Revenue Bond Act of 1933) is used as the legal basis of eligibility for all 21 county transit providers. The following is a list of the 21 counties that operated transit service directly or indirectly.

|                   |                   |                    |
|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Allegan County    | Gladwin County    | Muskegon County    |
| Antrim County     | Huron County      | Ogemaw County      |
| Barry County      | Iosco County      | Ontonagon County   |
| Berrien County    | Lenawee County    | Otsego County      |
| Charlevoix County | Livingston County | Sanilac County     |
| Cheboygan County  | Manistee County   | Schoolcraft County |
| Clare County      | Midland County    | Van Buren County   |

It is important to note that other counties may have been involved in the incorporation of other transit providers through one of the other public acts mentioned above.

Act No: 279 of the Public Acts of 1909 – (The Home Rule City Act) is the public act which provides for the incorporation of a city and authorizes various city functions including the provision of transportation services. In Michigan 21 public transit systems operate under the Home Rule City Act. The following is a list of the 21 cities organized and providing public transit services under The Home Rule City Act.

|              |             |                  |
|--------------|-------------|------------------|
| Adrian       | Dowagic     | Ionia            |
| Alma         | Grand Haven | Kalamazoo        |
| Alpena       | Greenville  | Marshall         |
| Battle Creek | Hancock     | Midland          |
| Belding      | Hillsdale   | Milan            |
| Buchanan     | Holland     | Niles            |
| Detroit      | Houghton    | Sault Ste. Marie |

Although not specifically referenced in PA 51, information provided by MDOT indicates that a public transit provider may legally organize under Act No 359 of the Public Acts of 1947 – (The Charter Township Act) based upon an Attorney General's Opinion No. 5043 dated June 24, 1976. In that opinion the Attorney General determined in part that chartered or un-chartered townships may establish public transportation systems either independently or through a joint entity created pursuant to the Urban Cooperation Act of 1967 (Act No. 7 of 1967 Ex. Session). Further that a chartered or unchartered township may avail itself of the financing alternatives (special assessments and special assessment bonds) available under the Township and Village Public Improvement Act (Public Act No. 116 of 1923) and the Revenue Bond Act (Public Act No 94 of 1933). There is only one public transit systems organized under Act No. 359 of the Public Acts of 1947 – (The Charter Township Act) and that transit system is Yates Township Dial-A-Ride.

Of the list of the statutory options under which a transit provider can be established, there are certain statutory options that are not applicable to the establishment of transit services in Newaygo County. The following public acts are not being considered as the legal basis for the establishment of a new public transit provider in Newaygo County for the following reasons:

- Public Act No. 204 of 1967 – The Metropolitan Transportation Authorities Act of 1967 –because the provisions in Act 204 are only applicable to the Detroit Metropolitan area.
- Public Act No. 35 of 1951 – Intergovernmental Contracts Between Municipal Corporations – because no public transit systems in Michigan are organized under this act
- Public Act No. 8 of the Extra Session of 1967 – Intergovernmental Transfer of Functions and Responsibilities Act of 1967 Ex Session – because no public transit systems in Michigan are organized under this act and there is no existing public transit function in Newaygo County to be transferred.
- Public Act No 359 of 1947 – The Charter Township Act –because it is not one of the public acts identified in PA 51. As reflected in the Attorney General’s opinion referenced above a Township chartered or unchartered can own, operate, etc a public transit system under the authority provided within the Urban Cooperation Act or the Revenue Bond Act, which will be summarized below. Further the Attorney General’s opinion was written in 1976, prior to the passage of PA 196 of 1986. Public Act 196 incorporates Townships as entities that can form public transportation authorities.
- Public Act No. 55 of 1963 – Mass Transportation Authorities Act – because only cities with a population of less than 300,000 can organize a transit system under this Public Act.
- Public Act No. 279 of 1909 – The Home Rule City Act – because only a city can organize a transit system under this Public Act.

Table 9-1 contains a summary of the key provisions of three Public Acts under which Newaygo County could organize a public transportation system. Fifty-one of the 78 public transit systems in Michigan are established under these three acts. These public acts provide alternative organizational options that can be used to establish a transit system that can best serve the citizens of the county.

**Table 9-1  
Summary of Public Acts**

|                          | <b>PA 94 of 1933<br/>Revenue Bond Act</b>   | <b>PA 7 of 1967 Ex Session<br/>Urban Cooperation Act</b>   | <b>PA 196 of 1986<br/>Public Transportation<br/>Authority Act</b>  |
|--------------------------|---|--|--|
| <b># of Systems</b>      | <b>21</b>   | <b>8</b>   | <b>22</b>  |
| <b>Who can organize:</b> | <b>One of the following or a combination:</b>   | <b>Two or more of the following:</b>   | <b>One of the following or a combination:</b>  |
| <b>City</b>              | Yes   | Yes  | Yes  |
| <b>Village</b>           | Yes   | Yes  | Yes  |
| <b>Township</b>          | Yes   | Yes  | Yes  |
| <b>Ch. Township</b>      | Not identified  | Yes  | Not identified   |
| <b>County</b>            | Yes   | Yes  | Yes  |
| <b>Others</b>            | Yes   | Yes  | No   |
| <b>Organization</b>      | A Public Corporation  | An administrative/legal entity i.e. commission, board or council   | A Public Authority   |
| <b>Board Membership</b>  | If necessary established by Charter of Public Corp.   | Established in a contract between Governmental entities  | Established by Articles of Incorporation   |
| <b>Activities</b>        | Undertake Public Improvements set forth in statute; including: transportation system                | Joint exercise of powers that agencies share in common and that each might exercise separately.                    | Plan, promote, finance, improve, enlarge, extend, own, construct, operate, maintain, and contract for public transit services. |
| <b>Taxing Authority</b>  | No  | No   | Yes  |
| <b>Bonding Authority</b> | Yes   | Yes  | Yes  |
| <b>Service Area</b>      | Within Corporate limits and outside of corporate limits subject to legal rights of the subdivision. | Limited to the jurisdiction of the member units  | Established by Articles of Incorporation – may follow precinct lines   |
| <b>Comments</b>          | Used by 21 Counties as legal basis to operate a Public Transit Service and secure MDOT funds.       | Not Public Transit focused but can be used to carry out transit services. Flexible, but requires Governor approval | Public Transit focused. Flexible. Most comprehensive Public Transit Leg. Powers defined.                                       |

## Governance and Organizational Policy Issues

The determination of which of the three public acts will be used to establish a transit system for Newaygo County requires at a minimum the review and consideration of the following five primary governance and organizational policy issues:

- Governing Body
- Membership
- Service Area
- Funding
- Operations/Staffing

It is important that there be general concurrence concerning the governance and organizational policy issues early in the process in order to avoid conflicts when actually establishing a transit system. The



governance and organizational policy issues should also be reviewed at a later date with the development of the service plan options to assure proper integration of the governance/organizational structure with the preferred service plan.

## Governing Body

A governing public body must be in place to oversee and guide the operation of the transit agency. The role and responsibility of the governing body may include items such as hiring the director of the transit system, approving contracts, accepting federal and state funding, approving budgets, setting hours of operation and fares, making decisions on local funding and other operating actions and policy considerations as required by federal and state statutes.

**Policy Consideration:** Who should undertake the role of the governing body in Newaygo County? Should it be the County Commission or an authority established by the County Board or some other entity?

## Governing Body Membership

Local officials or members of the public may comprise the membership of the governing body. If the transit system is established as a county department or agency of the county the governing body membership will most likely be comprised of the County Commissioners. However if an authority, commission or board is used to govern the transit system, the makeup of the governing body membership will have to be determined, including number of members, term, quorum, etc.

**Policy Consideration:** What should be the makeup of the governing body in Newaygo County?

## Service Area

Each transit system in the State of Michigan has a specific service area within which it is authorized to provide service. Service areas limits are set forth within the public acts listed above. The service area of a transit system can range from the entire county to individual cities within the county or to specific geographic areas in the county. The service area consideration and the preferred service plan must be compatible to the extent that the actual transit services do not operate outside of the service area. The consideration of the service area can also impact the decision on governing body membership and local funding options.

**Policy Consideration:** Should the service area for Newaygo County be the entire county or a focused geographic area such as a city or group of cities?

## Funding

The funding structure for transit system operations in the State of Michigan established in Public Act 51 of 1951 as amended requires the establishment of a local source of funds to support the provision of transit service. The local source of funds can include: a contribution of funds from the county or other governmental agencies or special voter approved taxes to support transit service. As noted above consideration and decision on local funding can very likely impact service area and governing body membership.

**Policy Consideration:** How should local funding be provided for a transit system in Newaygo County?

## Operations/Staffing

The day-to-day operation of a transit system in Newaygo County will require bus drivers, dispatchers, administrative staff and perhaps the use of mechanics. To the extent that individuals will be hired for these positions, those employees will be entitled to wage and benefit packages made available from their employer. Thus for a county-run transit system the employees would most likely be subject to county wage and benefit packages. Likewise employees of an authority, commission or board would be subject to the wage and benefit package established by the governing body for authority, commission or board. In lieu of hiring new employees it may be possible to re-assign existing employees to the transit system. Another alternative is to solicit competitive bids for the provision of transit service from private service providers. The range of services provided by a private provider can be limited to just management staff or extend to full staffing including drivers, mechanics, etc.

**Policy Consideration:** Does Newaygo County have a preference on government or privatized operation and a preference on staff compensation/benefit issues?

# 10 Plan to Expand Transportation Options

The preliminary service options were discussed with the Transportation Committee and a recommended option was developed.

## Recommendation

After consideration of all of the transportation options, Option 10, Restructure the Existing Senior Transit Bus service is the most feasible. Under this option it is recommended that the COA continue to operate the service, but open it up to the general public. The bus service should be offered to the community as a demonstration service. The demonstration period should be a year. It will take a year to get the service up and running, advertise it and generate a general public ridership base. If after a year of operations, it is determined that the service has not been successful, it should be discontinued and the COA operations can revert to their previous configuration. It is also important to note that this is not countywide service. It is targeted at the population centers, the cities in Newaygo County, and connections between them. If successful, the initial service can be augmented and new and/or additional services can be added in the future. These could include demand response to more parts of the county, connections to adjacent counties or more hours of service per day or more days of service per week. Once the system starts operating, the ridership and the community will be able to provide input on what they need in terms of additional service.

This is the most feasible option due to the fact that it is already a functioning transportation service and has an established ridership. The goal of converting it to a public system will be growing the ridership. It is also assumed that by standardizing the operations and formalizing the routing that more trips can be provided and more citizens served with minimal additional investment. Making the existing senior bus service a public transportation service also opens up options for additional state and federal operating funds. There are also funding mechanisms through the FTA and MDOT for vehicle replacement and acquisition when needed. By making the service available to the public, it also makes it an option for other agency clients such as those of DHS and CMH that might be able to use the service rather than using the volunteer service offered by the two agencies. The agencies may be able to develop contracts with the public transportation systems or billing arrangements for a portion of their trips currently provided through volunteer services.

The system would be a public transportation system operated by Newaygo County under Act No. 94 of 1933 (The Revenue Bond Act of 1933). There are currently 21 Michigan public transit systems that operate in this manner. The board for the transit system would be the County Commissioners. It is assumed that the transportation director for the COA would continue to run the day-to-day operations of the system. In addition, the existing COA staff that performs transportation functions would continue to do so if the system was to go public.

In terms of actual operations, a good starting place would be to operate at least one bus in each direction of the loop that is formed by connecting Grant, Fremont, White Cloud and Newaygo (Figure 10-1), spending at least a half hour in each city picking up people and dropping them off at various destinations. An additional vehicle could be added to each direction as needed. One bus could also be reserved if necessary to do the COA adult daycare runs if it is determined that these individuals need more assistance than can be provided on the regular general public routing. However, this vehicle would need to remain an open door vehicle and accommodate general public trips if necessary while doing the adult daycare service. Hours of service should be approximately 8:00 AM to at least 4:00 PM initially, Monday through Friday. Currently the COA service does not operate on Friday. Additional funds will need to be added to cover Friday service.

The provision of public transportation by the COA will not impact the other two COA services, the Health Care Van and the volunteer service. They serve a very specific purpose and should remain in place and continue to operate as they have done in the past.

## Funding

The Newaygo County Commission on Aging (COA) operates three transportation services focused on meeting the transportation needs of the elderly and handicapped individuals in Newaygo County. The three services are: (1) Health Care Van, (2) Volunteer Medical Transport and (3) Senior Transit Bus Service. The focus of this funding strategy is to transition the COA Senior Transit Bus Service to an open door public transit service. The operating cost of the existing Senior Transit Bus Service in FY 2012 is \$110,885 and it is financed in part with approximately \$32,400 from the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) Specialized Service Program.

The transition of the existing COA Senior Transit Bus Service to an open door public transit system will make the open door service operating budget ineligible to receive MDOT Specialized Service funds. However the COA Health Care Van and Volunteer Medical Transport service will remain eligible recipients for the MDOT Specialized Service Program as they continue to provide services to the elderly and individuals who are handicapped.

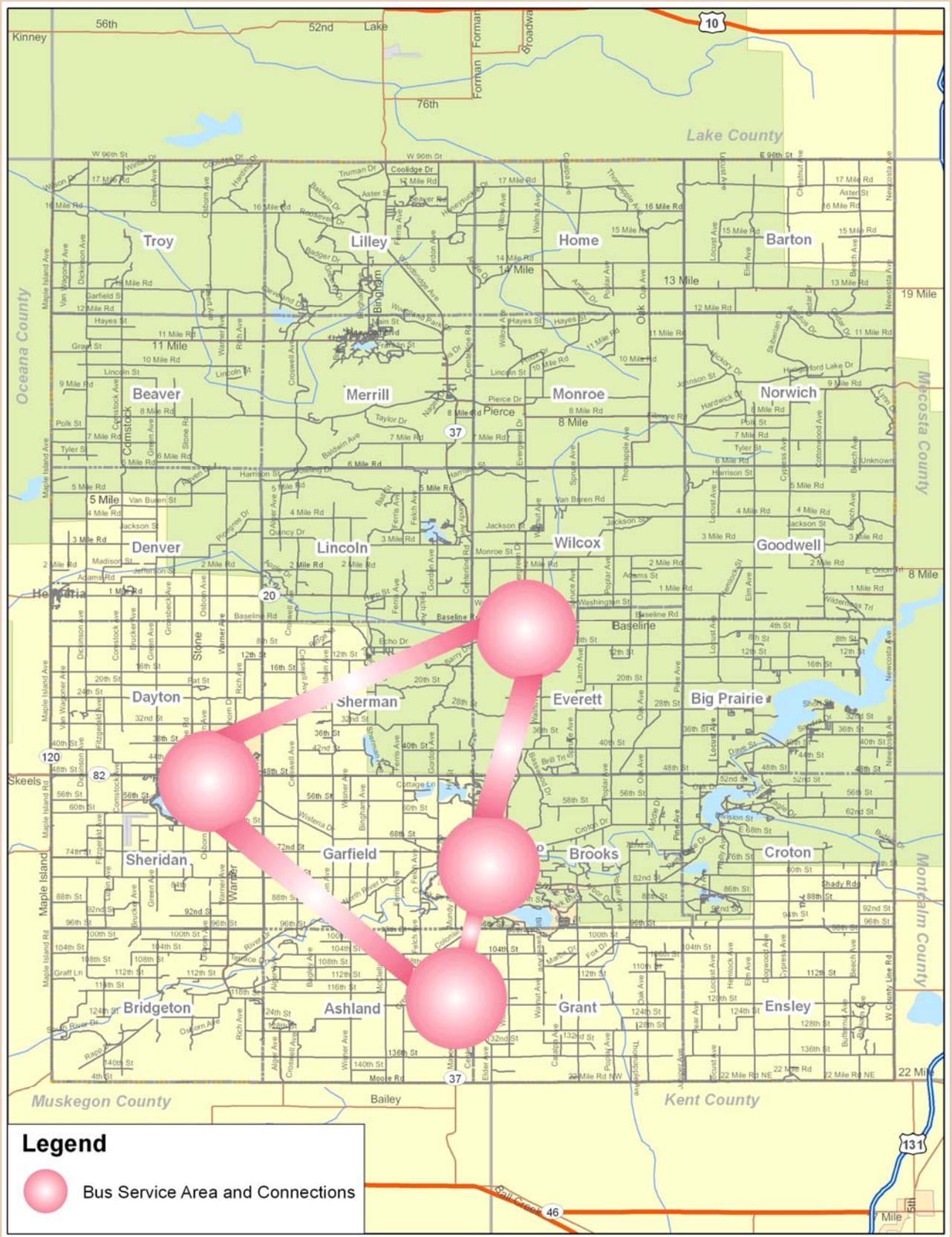
The transition to an open door public transit system will make Newaygo County eligible to apply for other FTA and MDOT Programs that supports the operating and capital cost associated with the provision of open door public transit service. The FTA and MDOT programs are described below along with the projected impact on the COA budget.

## FTA & MDOT Funding Programs for Open Door Service

The provision of open door public transit service would make Newaygo County eligible for FTA and MDOT transit program funds through the following primary programs:

- **FTA - Section 5311 (Non-Urbanized Area Rural Formula Program - Operating & Capital)** – The FTA allocates Sec 5311 Program funds to the states for distribution to non-urban transit systems. MDOT allocates these funds to individual transit systems based upon eligible expenses. Likewise MDOT allocates capital funds available under this FTA program based upon capital requests. In FY 2012 MDOT projects that non-urban transit systems will receive approximately 16 percent of their eligible operating expenses under this program. (The maximum Federal Share of eligible operating expenses through the Section 5311 Program is 50%).

Figure 10-1  
Recommended Service Option



- **FTA – Section 5309 (Bus and Bus Facility Discretionary Grant Program)** – Section 5309 is an annual grant program that provides capital assistance for buses, related equipment and facilities. The maximum federal share is 80 percent. Eligible recipients include the state, public transit systems, etc.
- **MDOT – Local Bus Operating Assistance** – The State of Michigan through MDOT provides approximately \$166 million each year to local transit systems for operating cost through the State Local Bus Operating Assistance Program. These funds are distributed to eligible transit systems across the State based upon eligible expenses. MDOT projects the non-urban transit system will receive approximately 37.12 percent of their eligible operating expenses in FY 2012. (The maximum state share of eligible operating expense for non-urban transit systems through this program is 60%).
- **MDOT – Bus Capital** – MDOT assists public transit systems match FTA Capital grants by providing the 20 percent non-federal match. These funds can be used for the purchase or rehabilitation of buses, equipment and facilities. Since there are insufficient bus capital funds available to match all of the FTA capital grants MDOT has established a prioritization ranking that provides a higher ranking to the replacement of buses, equipment and facilities over similar expansion items.

There are other FTA and MDOT Programs that the public transit systems can also pursue to finance open door public transit services (see the Funding Section in Technical Memo 2 for additional information)

## Financial Analysis of the Open Door Service

The financial analysis of the open door public transit service starts with the assumption that the operating expenses for open door service are the same as those expenses budgeted for the COA Senior Transit Bus Service in FY 2012. The COA Senior Transit Bus Service operating expenses budget for Fiscal Year 2012 (Oct 2011 to Sept 2012) is \$110,885. The financial analysis is focused on the financing/revenue sources.

The FY 2012 COA Senior Transit Bus Service budget of \$110,885 is finance from the following revenue sources:

|                                      |                  |                                     |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| FACF 2012 (Jan –Sept) (3/4 of grant) | \$43,200         |                                     |
| FACF 2011 (Oct –Dec)                 | 14,675           |                                     |
| MDOT (Based on \$1.20 per mile)      | 33,210*          | (Note the contract max is \$32,410) |
| Adult Day Care Bus Transport         | 14,400           |                                     |
| Medicaid Waiver (through AAAM)       | 800              |                                     |
| Client Donations                     | <u>4,600</u>     |                                     |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                         | <b>\$110,885</b> |                                     |

As noted above the \$33,210 of MDOT Specialized Services would no longer be used for the Senior Transit Bus Service. The Specialized Services funds would be replaced with FTA Section 5311 and MDOT Local Bus Operating Assistance Program funds. These two programs would provide approximately \$58,902 or approximately 53.12 percent of the eligible operating expense (or approximately \$58,902. of the \$110,885 budget). This would result in approximately \$25,692, of the existing revenue that would be available for reallocation. (Note -The COA Senior Transit Bus Services budget and the percentages used for the Section 5311 and Local Bus Operating Program are for FY 2012 and do not reflect an actual formula distribution that would be undertaken by MDOT)

Under this hypothetical reallocation (Table 10-1) approximately \$25,692 of Fremont Area Community Foundation (FACF) funding could be allocated to expand the public transit system service (possible additional hours and or days, marketing or other miscellaneous costs). If the \$25,692 were included in the public transit system budget it would generate additional Federal and State Funds. As an alternative the \$25,692 could be allocated to expand the Health Care Van and or Volunteer Medical Transport Service. There also maybe other non-transportation options that could be considered.

**Table 10-1  
Hypothetical Funding Reallocation**

| Funding Sources                | Existing Allocation | New Allocation   | Comment                                    |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|--|
| FACF 2012 (Jan -Sept) ¼ Grant  | \$43,200            | \$32,183         | \$11,017 available for reallocation        |
| FACF 2011 (Oct - Dec)          | 14,675              | 0                | \$14,675 available for reallocation        |
| MDOT Specialized Services      | 33,210              | 0                | Reprogrammed to other COA Transit Programs |
| Adult Day Care Bus Transport   | 14,400              | 14,400           | No Change                                  |
| Medicaid Waiver (through AAAM) | 800                 | 800              | No Change                                  |
| Client Donations               | 4,600               | 4,600            | Consider establishing fares                |
| FTA Section 5311               | 0                   | 17,742           | New Funding                                |
| MDOT Local Bus Assistance      | 0                   | 41,160           | New Funding                                |
| <b>TOTAL Revenues</b>          | <b>\$110,885</b>    | <b>\$110,885</b> |  |

The transition from the COA Senior Bus Service to a county public transit system would include the five buses currently in use. This would eliminate the immediate need for new buses. As a public transit system the county would be eligible to apply for both FTA and MDOT capital funds in the future to replace the existing fleet. Traditionally the federal transit funds finance 80 percent of the capital cost of items such as buses through the 5311 Capital Program, Section 5309 Bus and Bus Facilities Discretionary Grant Program and MDOT traditionally has financed the remaining 20 percent, through the MDOT Bus Capital Program. (See Summary FTA and MDOT Funding Programs for Open Door Service above and also Tech Memo 2 for additional information on the capital funding sources.)

## Organizational Strategy

Public Act 51 of 1951 as amended (PA 51) identifies the governmental units, entities and authorities that are eligible to receive public transit funds administered by the MDOT and specifically the public acts under which those governmental units, entities and authorities must be organized.

The transition of the COA Senior Transit Bus Service to open door public transit services will require Newaygo County to formally incorporate the public transit system under one of the public acts identified in PA 51 to be eligible for public transit funding from MDOT. In order to provide for the orderly transition for the Specialized Services Program to open door public transit services while maintaining the COA and Newaygo County’s active involvement in the open door public transit service, the initial provision of public transit service in Newaygo County can be accomplished under Public Act 94 of 1933 as amended, the Revenue Bond Act. This is preferred over the establishment of a new public authority that would be responsible for the public transit service.

MDOT data indicates that 21 counties currently provide public transit services under the Revenue Bond Act. The utilization of the Revenue Bond Act for the establishment and development of the initial public transit service does not preclude reorganizing or reestablishment of the public transit service in the future

through one of the other public acts described in PA 51. (See Technical Memorandum No. 2 for additional information on organizational structure.)

Important definitions in PA 94 of 1933 include:

- “Public corporation” means among other entities “a County;”
- “Public improvements” means among other things “transportation system;” and,
- “Governing Body” means “for a county, the board of commissioners.”

Relevant sections of PA 94 of 1933 include:

- Section 4 – provides in part that, “Any public corporation is authorized to purchase, acquire, construct, improve, enlarge, extend or repair one or more public improvements and to own, operate and maintain the same, within or without its corporate limits, and to furnish the services, facilities, and commodities of any such public improvements to users within or without its corporate limits....”  
Section 4 further states, “The powers in this act granted may be exercised notwithstanding that no bonds are issued hereunder.”
- Section 6 – provides in part that, “The governing body of a public corporation by the affirmative vote of a majority of its elected members, at the meeting at which it is introduced or any subsequent meeting, may adopt an ordinance relating to the exercise of the powers granted in the act and to other matters necessary or desirable to effectuate this act, to provide for the adequate operation of a public improvement established under this act, and to insure the security of bonds issued.” This section goes on to discuss the adoption of the ordinance by providing, “An ordinance adopted under this act shall become effective upon adoption unless otherwise specified in the ordinance.” Further, “The ordinance shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting of the governing body of the public corporation as soon as practicable after its passage.” Further, “The ordinance shall be published once in a newspaper of general circulation within the boundaries of the public corporation.” Further, “except as otherwise provided in this act, this section shall constitute the sole requirements in respect to the adoption and publication of an ordinance and shall not be limited by a charter or statutory provision.”

To transition from a Specialized Services Program to an open door public transit system and fulfill the PA 51 requirements to be eligible for public transit funding, the county board of commissioners would adopt (by a majority vote) an ordinance, resolution or other appropriate legislative enactment authorizing the county to undertake public improvements, specifically transportation systems. The ordinance or resolution, etc. shall be published as a part of the minutes of the meeting at which it was adopted, and shall be considered a publication in conformance with the requirements for this act.

The information provided in this document is not to be construed as legal advice, analysis or opinion. The Corradino Group and The Mannik & Smith Group are not licensed to practice law or give legal advice. Newaygo County legal counsel should review Public Act 94 of 1933 as amended, and provide the County Commission with the appropriate legal documentation prior to the County Commission taking any action under this statute.

## Implementation

There are several implementation steps that must take place in order to implement public transportation in Newaygo County. The following is a summary of these steps. They are in chronological order, but some steps can be done concurrently.

- Discuss plans with MDOT. This includes getting approval to transition the senior transit buses over to a public system and reallocating the Specialized Service Funds from the Senior Bus Transit Service to the Healthcare Van Service and Volunteer Medical Transport Service.
- Work with legal counsel to set up public transportation service under Act No. 94 of 1933 (The Revenue Bond Act of 1933).
- Complete an application for funding with MDOT under the Local Bus Operating Assistance Program and for Section 5311 – Non-Urbanized Area Rural Formula program. These applications would be due in February 2012 for fall 2012 operating funds. A target date for implementation will need to be set.
- Work with COA to develop routing by looking at where and when passengers are currently riding.
- Establish operating guidelines for a public transportation system. This would include establishing an accounting system, determining how future grant applications will be prepared, developing systems for dispatching and incoming calls to access the transit system, procuring insurance, and documenting employee training requirements.
- Work with other agencies, specifically CMH and DHS to develop purchase of service agreements or direct billing arrangements.
- Develop marketing materials and a community outreach mechanisms to promote the system and notify the public that is available. This includes outreach to other social service agencies and organizations.



# A

## Appendix



Survey Cover Letter  
and Questionnaire





## Board of Commissioners

PO Box 885  
1087 Newell  
White Cloud, Michigan 49349  
Phone: (231) 689-7200  
Fax: (231) 689-7205

April 4, 2011

«Name»  
«Address»  
«City», «State» «Zipcode»

Re: Community Survey

Dear Newaygo County Resident:

The Newaygo County Board of Commissioners is exploring the feasibility of expanding the existing transportation system, which is currently available only to the elderly and to those with medical needs. The Board has appointed a Transportation Committee, comprised of representatives of the Board of Commissioners, the Commission on Aging, the Road Commission, the Newaygo County Community Consortium, and the Newaygo County Economic Development Office, to work with a consultant to conduct a transportation needs and feasibility study. The Consultant, with input from the Transportation Committee, will develop an accurate inventory of current transportation resources, determine the level of need for public and agency transportation services, identify and evaluate the feasibility of options to improve transportation for residents, identify funding sources available to finance transportation improvements, and develop a realistic and implementable plan, should there be a need, to expand transportation options in Newaygo County.

Your input is critical in determining the level of need for public and agency transportation services. Enclosed is a brief questionnaire. An envelope with pre-paid postage has been included for you to use when returning the completed questionnaire. All information you provide is completely confidential. Please complete and return your questionnaire within the next two weeks, so that we may include your input in our analysis.

If you would like more information on the study you may call Marcy Dix, Grants Manager for Newaygo County, at (231) 689-7223, or if you have questions about completing the survey questionnaire you may call Consultant Project Manager Alison Townsend at (800) 880-8241.

On behalf of the Transportation Committee, I thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Commissioner Chuck Trapp  
Chairman, Transportation Committee





## Newaygo County Transportation Needs Survey

1. Do you, or anyone in your home, use transportation services such as the service provided by the Newaygo County Commission on Aging, Disability Connection, Foundation for Behavioral Resources, Catholic Social Service Senior Companion Program, Newaygo County Mental Health or any other agency or organization?

<sub>1</sub> Yes      <sub>2</sub> No

If yes, what type of trips do you make? Check all that apply.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> Working or seeking employment | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> Medical or dental appointments    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> Shopping                      | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> Social or recreational activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> Attending school or training  | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub> Other _____                       |
- Please describe

2. Do you, or others in your home, have problems getting your transportation needs met?  
<sub>1</sub> Yes      <sub>2</sub> No

If yes, what does this lack of transportation keep you or others in your home from doing? Check all that apply.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> Working or seeking employment | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> Medical or dental appointments    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> Shopping                      | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> Social or recreational activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> Attending school or training  | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub> Other _____                       |
- Please describe

3. Are there any reasons why you, or other adults in your home, don't drive or limit the amount they drive?

<sub>1</sub> Yes      <sub>2</sub> No

If yes, please check all that apply?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> Don't drive in poor weather     | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub> Not licensed to drive              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> Don't drive at night            | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub> Have a disability and cannot drive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> Vehicle mechanical difficulties | <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>7</sub> Other _____                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub> Don't own a vehicle             |  |
- Please describe

4. Because of the cost associated with owning and operating a vehicle, concern for the environment, or other convenience or personal reasons, would you or other members of your household consider using a public transportation service if it met your needs?

<sub>1</sub> Yes      <sub>2</sub> No

If yes, what type of service would you consider using? (Check all that apply)

- |  |
|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub> A regularly scheduled bus route (designated bus stops and pick-up times) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub> A door-to-door service   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub> Other _____  |

The survey continues on the back of this page.



# B

## Appendix



### S u r v e y C o m m e n t s



**Do you have any suggestions regarding public transportation in Newaygo County? Are there any issues we should address and consider as we conduct the Newaygo County Transportation Needs Assessment?**

|  |
|--|
| <p>\$14 trillion in federal debt. State trying to make budget. Time for cutting, not increasing. Need to cut a lot of bad and some good for our country to make it. Thank you, Rich Laricot</p>  |
| <p>A bus route on main roads 10 am 2:00 - 6:00 from WC to Croton Hardy Dr. up to 36th over dam to M37 S to Newaygo. Could stop @ Chestnut &amp; Jefferson to pick up people at trailer parks there.</p>  |
| <p>A decision based on the rural nature of our county and individual/family needs within.</p>  |
| <p>A lot of people can't afford to pay for rides, then how do they ride? You should have token for them to pay for their ride. Given to them in advance for that purpose.</p>  |
| <p>A regularly scheduled bus route that goes from W.C., Newaygo, Grant, Fremont &amp; Hesperia would be awesome. Or low cost tax. More people could get to appointments or even to vote. Would also help economy. People can't get to stores to spend their money because of gas and car insurance.</p>  |
| <p>Address the need for an on-call system to access the rural areas and access for the northern part of the county.</p>  |
| <p>An expanded transportation system will mostly be used by citizens with few resources because citizens with sufficient resources will want the convenience of their own vehicles. So, this transportation system will probably require public funding. Thus, I suggest the users of this system pay an increasing fee for increasing miles used on the system (i.e., 100 miles/week = \$0.20/mile, 100-200 miles/week = \$0.40/mile, 200+ miles/week = \$1/mile). This will insure those with few resources have access to inexpensive transportation for basic needs while preventing the public from footing the bill for many frivolous or pleasure trips. The exception might be for medical trips (doctor, dentist, prescription medicines) the fee might be kept at the lowest level.</p>  |
| <p>Any additional public transportation should be self supporting! That means NO new taxes! Family, friends, neighbors and good hearted people like yourselves can provide these services. Maybe you can get an Amtrak route! This "survey" is not specific to any known needs - it is a fishing effort to justify an agenda. Question #5 is a classic example of government pork - with a trough at each level of government - another needless "service" that generates more debt. This system just feeds itself and taxpayers can't afford it in these economic times. Transportation system in a rural area - ludicrous! Fix what you have if you want to spend money. Per the May 15 Grand Rapids Press, "the state is losing economic competitiveness because of bad roads." You can start on Cypress Ave. where I live! Everywhere you look, roads and bridges are in need of repair. Was this survey sent to everyone in the county or to a select few who might respond in a predetermined fashion? Tom &amp; Leslie Karrer, 12956 Cypress Ave., Sand Lake MI 49343</p> |
| <p>Appreciate thoughts on environment savings and elderly neighbors.</p>   |
| <p>As a physician, I see many patients that have difficulty making appointments due to transportation. This would be a big benefit for many in Newaygo County to access medical care.</p>  |
| <p>As one gets older, we all know someday we may not be able to drive.</p>   |
| <p>At some point in the future, I should be able to help with transportation. But only with my vehicle. Call me if that will work for you. 231-652-2495. Francis Hall</p>  |
| <p>At the present time, I am able to drive the Newaygo Co. area and family for out of town. If I should be unable to drive, I would appreciate the driving assistance locally.</p>   |
| <p>At the present time, my wife does most of the driving, but we both are in our sixties, and who knows how long it will last.</p>   |
| <p>At this point in my life, I am still able to get around independently, but at some point would probably appreciate transportation help.</p>   |
| <p>At this point in our financial times, we do not need to expand transportation. We cannot afford it! Cut spending, not increase.</p>   |
| <p>At this time I'm not familiar enough to think of any suggestions.</p>   |
| <p>At this time, we do all our transportation.</p>   |
| <p>Basically, having bus stops that would accommodate the needs of the residents, just like the big cities.</p>  |
| <p>Be able to call a bus, etc. Get ride at times of needs.</p>   |
| <p>Be sure drivers are "people" persons who are good with elderly, ill, hard of hearing, etc. Must be patient, friendly, kind, honest, loving and able to recognize emergency health situations.</p>   |
| <p>Be sure pets are allowed for vet visits and such. Also, don't forget the citizens in very rural areas. If the nearest stop is a mile away, the transportation would be pointless.</p>   |
| <p>Better ways to spend money.</p>   |

**Comments continued**

|  |
|--|
| Bus route or taxi cab would be great, mostly in winter months.   |
| Can't say. Only lived in Newaygo County 6 months. I don't know what's available in White Cloud or locally. No "Welcome Wagon" here to tell you about the area.   |
| Check with the local schools and see if there is a need to help transport students to and from school.   |
| City bus service is often a benefit. Other than Fremont, no city/town would have a need to balance off the cost.   |
| Concerns are miles and rural area to cover. Costs involved. How efficient could a bus be in such a rural area?   |
| Connecting to larger cities would be critically beneficial!  |
| Cost effectiveness   |
| Cost of fuel and labor for public transportation is high. We would like to continue the services for the elderly and medical needs patients. Please don't expand this to make it unaffordable for the tax base to support it.  |
| Cost of gas.   |
| Cost per trip  |
| Cost.  |
| Could local transportation help out local school age children get to and from school activities including summers - NCCS - True North offerings/concerts @ Dogwood Center/plays at all locals  |
| Could the county provide transportation for special needs students to and from schools and/or to and from other services offered in the county? (Examples might include county mental health, dental/medical services, or job skills training/Newaygo County Voc/Tech Center, etc.)  |
| Don't ask me to pay for it!  |
| Don't be spending any more money!  |
| Don't do it.   |
| Don't go much. Drive to store. Most time home working in my yard.  |
| Don't need it, my taxes are high enough.   |
| Don't waste any money studying this. We don't need it.   |
| Door-to-door for only seniors with disabilities.   |
| Effectiveness vs. cost. Much "rural" are in the county -- probably means those using this system will be spread out -- making cost per person rather high.   |
| Elderly or handicapped people, no welfare or undeserving people. There are too many young people that don't work because they're lazy.   |
| Establish regular routes and times wherever possible to reduce operating costs.  |
| Every effort to reduce taxes and government spending needs to be considered at this time. I would support public transportation only if it can be proven to increase revenue overall. DON'T raise my taxes.  |
| Fortunately, I'm still very capable of driving myself. However, there is a great need for this type of service for those in Newaygo County who cannot drive themselves and this will probably increase as the baby boomers really start coming of "age"!   |
| Good luck! Newaygo is extremely rural - difficult to justify public transportation   |
| Good trailways for hiking or biking could solve some of the barriers to people moving about, especially in light of high gas prices.   |
| Great idea - greater need as unemployment consumes the area. Regularly scheduled trips to/from Muskegon/Grand Rapids. It would be great to work with Grand Rapids/Muskegon public transit.   |
| Great idea but bad timing! I feel program would run the risk of being a huge burden on taxpayers for many years. People are driving more to shop, school events, etc. because of privacy and freedom to go and do what they want when they want. Baby boomers won't have it any other way. Bike trails I feel would make a better investment for the county. People are biking by an increasing number and by connecting cities with a designated trail, this would bring a unity and a useful novelty to the county. Think about it, not only cities, but wildlife and parks as well. The county could take the lead in endorsing this added infrastructure. The cities themselves have to better their own public transportation because they better understand specific needs and daily use. Kent County -- do they have public transit figured out yet? GR? Hard nut to crack! You have good intentions. You don't have to spend money -- we know you guys are working! Keep up the good work. -- DS |

**Comments continued**

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|---|
| Handicap accessible   |
| Have CMH, COA, and DHS hand your survey out to the people they serve as they might not be on your mailing list. Expand eligibility criteria to all those eligible for a DHS program - cash or food or Medicaid. Good luck!  |
| Have more fuel efficient vehicles.  |
| Have you checked with other counties that have the service to see how they like it in the county?   |
| Hesperia needs some kind of public transportation. Taxi service or something.   |
| How is it they can come up with funding for public transportation, but they can no longer pay volunteer drivers? If our doctors don't work out of the Specialty Clinic in Fremont . . . The rest of us need to find our own ride . . .  |
| How will we see the results?  |
| How would Newaygo County services connect with Mecosta and Osceola County services since we live near all three.  |
| I am currently able to borrow a car for most of my needs. However, I am raising my grandchild and his mother visits via arranged transport. She visits only 1 time a month due to transport issues (the child is 20 months old). If I were unable to borrow a car, my transport needs would increase to needing rides for groceries, etc. As I live in the country walking is not feasible. I see great need for such services in our area.   |
| I am happy that you are there for disabled people and for people who don't drive. It helps a lot of people. Thanks to all of you.   |
| I believe it is wrong for people to look to government to fill this type of need. This is a family responsibility. My mother recently passed away at 100 years old. When she stopped driving at age 92 it was my responsibility to take care of her transportation needs - grocery shopping, church, doctor, etc. Churches should also step up and fill part of this need through volunteer groups. I agree that people do have a need for transportation and this need will continue to grow with our aging population. But, additional taxes or special assessments never end and only grow to support the expanding bureaucracy. William A Hall Sr, 429 Chippewa Dr, Fremont, MI |
| I believe that there is a valid need for public transportation between pick-up locations in Newaygo County to a designated location in Grand Rapids.  |
| I believe the current services being offered are adequate.  |
| I didn't answer #5 because as much as I feel people could really use the money for public transportation, I feel that all extra federal/state/local funds should go into education.   |
| I don't know enough about the services offered, but I think it is needed. As I age, there certainly might be a time when I will need it.  |
| I don't think in these hard times coming we will be able to afford it. When everybody gets hungry they will turn to the County.   |
| I feel that everyone should be charged something to ride. It is not fair to put all the cost on the homeowners. The people that are on Medicaid should also have to put forth money to ride. Seniors 70 and older should not have to put any money in at all - they have done their share.  |
| I feel that I pay for my transportation, they should. Thank you. PS - I pay enough taxes.   |
| I feel that there is too much distance for public transportation. This is not Grand Rapids where there are a lot more people!   |
| I feel there is definitely a need, but the cost of operation for the long-term operation of transportation would make this not feasible. In today's economy, any obligation to our residents would be asking too much. If I remember correctly, this transportation issue was studied at great length approximately 20 years ago. Save your time and taxpayer money and look into the old study. I would imagine little has changed except for greater costs to operate. Our county is too large and sparsely populated to support such an endeavor without subsidies which come from taxpayers' pockets.   |
| I feel this survey is a big waste of taxpayers' dollars!!! In these economic times, there should be a lot more worries and a lot less money spent on surveys!   |
| I have access to transportation aid right now but worry about the future. I live in the country. Will there be a volunteer or bus program for residents outside of city limits?   |
| I have friends who use public transportation and it is a blessing to them. Thank you, Ms. Maxine Luchies, 5039 S Luce Ave, Fremont, MI 49412-7377   |
| I have not thought about this yet. Thank you.   |

## Comments continued

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| I hope this happens. Parking is such a problem when you go to special events. We are seniors and it would be much easier. Grand Rapids, art price, museums, festivals, shopping, airport, Muskegon, waterfront.  |
| I just like the idea of having a backup form of transportation in case my vehicle breaks down. I know that if there was public transportation, more people would be able to go to work and especially a good idea considering the price of gas.  |
| I like the idea of scheduled stops around town throughout the day.   |
| I live in rural Barton Township. Nothing is available or feasible for public transportation in this area.  |
| I live in the NE corner of Newaygo Co. Consider how to serve outlying areas cost-effectively.  |
| I live on a non-county road that is not plowed or graded which makes travel very difficult at times in inclement weather!  |
| I normally do not take the time to fill out such surveys; however my wife and I did take the time to fill in this information for you. My wife and I both live in Newaygo County and do very well as far as the economic side of things go as I have been in financial planning for 20 years and my wife teaching school for the past 16 years. So together I suspect we have an above average household income for our area. I only write to you in an effort that you may carry our voice to a higher power or authority. I am fully aware of the current and increased financial strain on our fellow community members who are either at the poverty line or just slightly above. I know these folks need help and can or could benefit from such a service like expanded public transit. However I believe the problem runs much deeper and believe that folks in charge of overseeing fuel and gas pricing and other vehicle related issues need to or start to be held accountable. I struggle to see any reason for this outrageous spike in gas prices other than pure greed either by part of the oil companies right on down to the stations providing the fuel and ultimately crippling folks not just in our county but many other small communities across our state. So we might want to work on some sort of effort in an attempt to lighten the burden on the middle class and give them a chance to thrive. I feel as though it is becoming more and more apparent society is becoming the haves and the have nots and those in the middle are being forced into the have not category more and more each day. Thank you for your consideration and attention to all of this and I apologize if I fell completely off subject. |
| I really don't know much about the public transportation system in Newaygo County.   |
| I really liked the shuttle provided at Hope College. A student could call and the van would pick up and drop off. I think Newaygo would be small enough to use a like system.  |
| I see the need as there are a lot of homeless people whom need help finding their way for a job and medical attention. So this cannot come soon enough for some. :-)   |
| I seldom see more than three people including the driver on the buses. I think it's a waste of my tax dollars and that is wrong! Do away with it entirely! It's another government program that taxes the property owners, among others, for the benefit of a few.   |
| I strongly disagree with public transportation in Newaygo County. If you can't afford a car, then you shouldn't get a free ride to go shopping.  |
| I think a call-ahead taxi-type service would be great for people who need to do weekly grocery shopping. Maybe just on a trial basis to start, to see if it's affordable for the recipients while still covering expenses for the providers.   |
| I think it could be supported by state and federal funds for low income people. But not for people like me. I think we could take away some of the benefits our representatives receive and apply it to things like this.  |
| I think it would be a good service. I think even people would pay to ride to and from home.  |
| I think it would be helpful to the elderly who won't drive after dark or in snowy conditions. I also think it appropriate to charge a small fee/ride.  |
| I think it's a bad time to be asking taxpayers to foot the bill for this. Maybe it should be a pay-as-you-use-it.  |
| I think it's great that it's being looked into. Maybe re-address it at a later date?   |
| I think public transportation is important for older folks who can't drive themselves and for mentally challenged people.  |
| I think the government should subsidize this or state. We don't need more taxes.   |
| I think this would be a wonderful idea. I may not need transportation right now, but maybe in the future. I think it would be a good asset to those who do need it.  |
| I think we are already paying for too many millages and fundings. After all, we support government through taxes and you want us to pay more through millages and fundings. Anytime government gets involved, we pay more and more.  |
| I think we need to reduce county taxes, not increase them. This is too much a welfare county.  |
| I use a wheeled walker so I need a vehicle and someone that can handle it for me. Now I depend on family and friends.  |
| I used to drive for many years ago. Get great drivers and have excellent vehicles.   |
| I was told until I had Medicaid I would not be given a ride to CMH. We are low income yet don't qualify for help with transportation. Sometimes using money for fuel takes from other needs (i.e., propane, electric, meds, etc.).   |

**Comments continued**

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| I was unable to drive after an accident, but the "senior bus" could not take me to shop in Fremont because I live closer to White Cloud. They said I could only go to doctors' appointments in Fremont. They go to Fremont. Why not take me then?  |
| I work 3rd shift. I would love to have public trans. from approx. 9:30 p.m. to 8:00 a.m.   |
| I work at a local nonprofit and have seen how difficult it is for clients to access much-needed services because of the lack of transportation. I think that putting a public transportation system in place is very important in Newaygo County.  |
| I would fight any millage attempt! Newaygo County is a rural county. The cost to service such a wide area would be too costly.   |
| I would like to know how many miles are driven for each of the seven days and how many people are presently being served during this period selected at random.  |
| I would like to know how many Newaygo County residents actually use public transportation? They go by my house and I have never seen anyone on board. What is the actual cost per rider? Is this info available? Thank you.  |
| I would like to see the bus route be like the Rapid Bus route in Grand Rapids.   |
| I would not support this because I live too far away from Newaygo and White Cloud for it to be of service to me.   |
| I would suggest to let family and friends also churches to take care of these needs. Not government.   |
| I'm able to drive now, but in the future?  |
| I'm not for it at all. The U.S. government should allow more oil drilling to bring down the price of gas, then most of the need for public transportation would disappear.   |
| If it is funded completely by those who use it, fine. If any taxpayer money is spent (including federal grants) I am adamantly opposed. There are already services that cover those who need it. This would just further enable many who are lazy and/or make bad choices.   |
| If public transportation is used - main roads (outlying areas) transportation routes would be desirable.   |
| If there is a real need for public transportation beyond what is available for the elderly or medical need, then a privately owned business might be better suited for this enterprise. Our taxes are high enough in Michigan. If you need a ride, pay for the service or ride a bike, or walk. Newaygo Co. cannot sustain another tax for the benefit of those that don't have cars. Maybe a history lesson on our forefathers and their hardships. |
| If this is going to cost us taxpayers more money, I'm totally against it!  |
| In the future when we are no longer able to drive, the transportation to doctor appointment and to get groceries would be very handy!  |
| In these lean times, a new millage is a very poor idea. Housing prices are continually decreasing while everything else is rising. People on disability or fixed income haven't had a raise in two years. I will continue to vote not on all new millages.   |
| In this time of austerity, we don't believe that it could be successfully carried out.   |
| It appears, by the questions, you have already decided to implement this program. This state and this country is broke. Why would you even consider this at this time?   |
| It could be a very viable program. My biggest concern is that I would only support a "pay for it as you use it" plan. As a home owner in the city of Fremont, I cannot justify or support anything involving additional millages, assessments, or taxation.  |
| It is not economical, practical, convenient, or sensible to suggest or consider public transportation for Newaygo County.  |
| It may be time to think outside the box with public transportation. If public school transportation systems were incorporated, it may be more feasible for a county-wide system to be implemented.   |
| It should not be the responsibility of federal government, state government or local government. Families and churches should take care of this!   |
| It would be great to have transportation down M-37, possibly to some shopping (Walker), doctors, dentist, pharmacy, grocery, job.  |
| It would cost way too much in taxes.   |
| It's my belief that a successful public transportation system in Newaygo Co. would require several components. 1. Transportation between population centers. 2. Transportation within those population centers. 3. Limited curbside to destination public or privately funded options!   |
| Keep the process out of the political arena so it does not bounce in and out of coverage for the service.  |

**Comments continued**

|   |
|---|
| Let family and private charitable organizations take the responsibility for those in need. If there is a market beyond that, let the private market step in and fill it as a profit making service. NO MORE GOVERNMENT FUNDED SERVICES! CUT BACK! Not expand. We already owe our children's future (federal and state dollars come from us, too). |
| Let people catch a ride to town on a school bus - they already cover most roads.  |
| Live in Bitely - Rural America, Population 10! Transport is needed out here big time. If I couldn't get to my appointments without disconnections. Thank you!   |
| Lots of people need help getting from Point A to Point B which is fine. Myself, I look at the road that need so much help for repair.   |
| Make sure all or at least most busses have handicap lifts and small steps to enter them. Steps no more than 6" to 8" tall.  |
| Make sure the buses have bicycle racks.   |
| Making sure that all Newaygo County residents have access to health care/medical appointments in other counties, as well as Newaygo County.   |
| Making the public transportation affordable.  |
| Many NO answers on this survey will change in the future. I generally support public transportation and these answers are tied to the challenge of economy and recovery of our economical health in 2011.   |
| Many patients and family members need rides to/from the hospital, especially after hours.   |
| Many people in Newaygo County work in Grand Rapids. It would be nice if the appropriate government agencies could partner to establish a commuter rail into and out of downtown Grand Rapids, particularly with gas prices at an all-time high.   |
| May want to consider offering jurors rides to courthouse. More seniors choose not to own a vehicle (cost/upkeep). May want to consider - drivers or bus routes - some young people have not vehicles or no license - jurors are compensated at a rate of \$0.10 per mile - we need help.  |
| Maybe a dial-a-ride service.  |
| More communication that it's available.   |
| More taxes and commissions. Enough already. Spend spend spend taxpayers' money! When is enough enough?  |
| Muskegon Mall, airport, Grand Rapids Airport and Amtrak to Chicago  |
| Must be able to handle walkers, etc. for individuals with disabilities.   |
| My dad (86 yrs. old) can't drive and it would be nice to have a way to get to Big Rapids or some town for social interaction. He also lives in Newaygo County, but doesn't have money to pay for transportation.  |
| Need to include all of the county, NOT just in the towns/cities. Needs to be very low cost if we are going to be taxed on it as well.   |
| Need transportation for elderly and disabled for other than medical issues.   |
| Newaygo County is too sparsely populated to support public transportation and should not even be considered!  |
| Newaygo County's rural aspect makes public transportation a large and "far reaching" consideration. Wishing you luck in planning it.  |
| Newaygo is too big of a county for affordable public transportation. I live in the southwest corner of Newaygo Co. I would never see a bus go by my house. I vote no. But that's just me.   |
| No  |
| No - bad idea! Too many taxes now! Stop paying public officials' wages with P.I.L.T. money. That's not what it's for!   |
| No longer living in Newaygo County  |
| No more tax!  |
| No more taxes!  |
| No more taxes.  |
| No new millage. Have the users pay for it. Pay as you go.   |
| No new taxes!!!   |
| No new taxes/no new millage increases!!!  |
| No vans. Possibly a senior helper. My children are good but are quite busy.   |
| No! No! No! No! No! No Added Taxes! Let people help themselves. No added or new taxes.  |
| No. I am very unfamiliar with transportation in Newaygo County.   |

**Comments continued**

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| None at the present time. The price of fuel is one thing that should be addressed.  |
| None at this time.  |
| None I am aware of. Perhaps contact people who use public transportation.   |
| None that I can think of.   |
| Not at this time . . . I'll have to talk with my friends and give it some thought.  |
| Not at this time.   |
| Not aware of many of the services at this time.   |
| Not necessary for ourselves, but I see where work age group needs transportation help to break poverty cycle of not working at all - even if it's job center training programs!   |
| Not needed and not practical due to the low density and high distance of our population.  |
| On Question 5, I agree to help elderly and/or special needs people, but being without a job and assistance, I could not vote yes for more taxes. We are tapped out of money.  |
| Open to ideas.  |
| Our county is large and rural and would be expensive. We live in the southeast corner of the county. Our needs would be into Kent County.   |
| Pay more attention to the farther out part of Newaygo County  |
| People in the rural areas need transportation and right now it's not always available (i.e., family, friends and public transport).   |
| Perhaps a call-as-needed system using small vehicles similar to those helping others get to medical appointments.   |
| Please consider fixing the road going into Lake Lilly. My brother lives there and my car hit such an awful hole, it knocked the system out and my car wouldn't work. Had to get it fixed. It was very frightening.  |
| Please continue the senior transports and look to expand these as well as offer transportation for individuals to work - to Fremont and Newaygo.  |
| Please do not consider another tax on us. I pay my own way or stay home now. I live on \$694 a month. Let all others do the same. Or raise the property level!  |
| Please let's stop using fed and state funds! Develop personal responsibility.   |
| Prices should be based on fair price. I have (long time ago) used a county service where the drivers set the price and some REALLY abused it.   |
| Private enterprise should do this, not more taxes.  |
| Public funding based on financial needs. Are current services for medical needs still adequate?   |
| Public transportation for Newaygo County would require much planning to be feasible. I am sure there are times it would be a life saver for many, but there will never be a way to please all and for some you will never be able to do enough.   |
| Re #5 - I would if it was for a "mini" bus type system. People can call and request pickup and drop off. But don't think a regular bus is necessary.  |
| Re #5 - Unable to afford any added taxes. Retired and on social security with no cost of living increases for three years. The economy is NOT FLAT! Prices for basic necessities - food, utilities, gasoline - have all been increasing without an end in sight!  |
| Regularly scheduled routes with place to park vehicle, if we have to drive to a bus route stop. To then take bus to where I need to go.   |
| Safety, especially for senior citizens  |
| Should have emergency numbers for those that come into a crisis who do have transportation but issues arise. I believe emergency transportation for those who have a vehicle break down and cannot miss a day of work due to loss of employment, the same with schooling/college. The people who are borderline poverty line level have issues with these needs which puts them back to square one! |
| Signed, Lulu Harvey. Glad to live in Newaygo County.  |
| Small buses are not very comfortable. I think longer ones would work far better.  |
| So far, I am able to drive around Fremont, White Cloud, Newaygo and Hesperia. However, if the time comes, public transportation would be a great help to get groceries, go to programs, etc.  |
| Some doctors' appointments go as far as the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. That's a big problem.  |

**Comments continued**

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| <p>Stop spending and start cutting. Let people take care of themselves. The more they get from government, the more they want. All these organizations [federal, state, local] are - as they say - broke. Eliminate the existing program and let people take care of themselves.</p>   |
| <p>Stop wasting money on committees and put the money into gas price relief. How much does a "committee" cost to do a "survey" and discuss this stuff. Leave the transportation up to churches and family members and stop wasting our tax money!</p>  |
| <p>Taxes too high already. NO PUBLIC TRANSIT!</p>  |
| <p>Thank you. I am willing to pay so others can use this service. If this service became available, I could use it as I needed to, especially in winter months. Thanks for asking.</p>   |
| <p>The 18 year old with us is pregnant - so WIC appts. and dr. appts. for her would be nice to have help to get her to her appts.</p>  |
| <p>The cost will not justify a program like this. The federal government and state governments are broke financially. There are many ways for all people to get where they need to go without public funds.</p>  |
| <p>The federal government is broke! Dissolve the program.</p>  |
| <p>The government or people can't afford this at this time.</p>  |
| <p>The individuals that need this kind of transportation pay a fee just like a public bus service.</p>   |
| <p>The people who don't use it shouldn't have to pay for it. I don't want to pay for something I don't or won't use.</p>   |
| <p>The population in this area has increased dramatically. In addition to this, people are living longer due to the many medical advancements that have taken place through the years. However, there comes a time in our lives when we become "held back" due to some medical problem that prohibits us to drive. There are also a lot of older folks who have trouble getting around.</p>  |
| <p>The transportation committee should think about ways to utilize the school transportation system that traverses the entire county twice a day, 9.5 months of the year. That's a transportation system that is already in place.</p>   |
| <p>There is a high rate of poverty in Newaygo County, and I think that the little extra on our taxes would absolutely be worth the assistance public transportation would provide. No one can even afford gas, never mind insurance or plate renewal.</p>  |
| <p>There is a need for it, yes, but people are taxed beyond belief already. I live in Robinson Lake area and if a bus system [was] instituted, then I would probably use it, but not if I had to walk all the way to White Cloud just to hop a bus. There would have to be a stop out here, as I am not the only one with transportation issues out here. Plus, a system of vouchers or tokens could be used, say, for those on the DHS/poor end of life. Maybe 8 vouchers a month that could equal so many tokens for rides (covering both ways, etc). A set rate should be set not to exceed the cost of expenses, if rider used own vehicle as opposed to riding a bus. Say, \$50 buys a variety of tickets to different destinations, or as rider needs, for two-week period. The vouchers or tickets could be punched by the driver when used &amp; if return trip necessary - then punched, again. Completed tickets/vouchers/tokens turned in for driver compensation and evaluation of area of most need. Possibly, DHS could help by adding bus vouchers to a client's grant; depending on need (working or other needs), but as a service and not to add cost (much) to client. Taxpayers pay for road fixing, bridge rebuilding - yet we can't manage to get a decent snow plowing done without losing a few mailboxes. Potholes remain year after year. The DOT needs to do something to help the taxpayers rebuild this state - and an available bus system in this county would help immensely. Thank you for considering my viewpoint. I hope it helps. Sincerely, Michelle Weustra</p> |
| <p>There is a need for public transportation</p>   |
| <p>There seems to be low income and we are unable to support by taxes or special assessment but would use public transport.</p>  |
| <p>This cannot be a burden on taxpayers/homeowners. If Newaygo chooses to do this option renters or other people - mainly those who use it need to be the people who pay for it. This is a silly idea to suggest for our area and I cannot believe you wasted tax dollars on this survey!</p>  |
| <p>This is a worthy service but new millages, no. Because once you start paying the bill never ends. Government bureaucracy - ANOTHER unending pit.</p>  |
| <p>This seems more central to White Cloud, Newaygo and Fremont and outlying areas. Norwich Township is kind of just "out there"! Thanks for considering this for those that really need it.</p>  |
| <p>Transportation available for the elderly and those with medical needs is great. We do not see a need for any other services.</p>  |
| <p>Use a voucher/charge card system to avoid needing cash to use the bus. Thanks for working on this project!</p>  |
| <p>Use smaller, more efficient vehicles. The ones you have are never full.</p>   |

**Comments continued**

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| Walk with a walker.   |
| We (wife and I) are unaware of the services available to us in our area (Bitely).   |
| We already have Hope Network that drive folks. MI Works helps folks starting jobs with no car. No more taxes!   |
| We are in a remote area - 5 miles out of Grant - and can drive ourselves or get rides from family and friends. But we would support funding for transportation in more heavily populated areas.   |
| We are taxed too much already. Try reducing the size of county administration - such as commissioner's "free" benefits prior to taxing us even more!  |
| We cannot afford any more taxes in this economy or in this state.   |
| We do not need more. Those of us in Newaygo County that are fortunate enough to still be working, plus the underemployed and unemployed, do not need another tax. We are taxed to death and charged to death for everything. It's hard to survive now. If people need a ride somewhere, most of the time (I know not always), family or friends can step in. With the Rapid bus line in Grand Rapids as an example, once it starts, asking for more money never ends. I am not a "party pooper," but we do not need this. |
| We don't need anything that will increase the tax burden we already have during this time of economic recession.  |
| We don't need it yet. But down the road it would be nice to have a system in place.   |
| We don't have the money. Stop getting grants we have to pay for! Consider or refuse to take money from the government!  |
| We have no personal needs now but there are people I know who do. Is there a number to call for people who have a need?   |
| We have so many taxes now with the new school. The economy is bad, jobs hard to find. So many states with devastation, they need help to rebuild, etc. And] no one [who] is a senior on one income can do any more than just survive now.   |
| We know of many others who also need this transportation.   |
| We need a public transportation system. If it can't be government subsidized, the fund raisers, volunteers and ticket prices to support the system.   |
| We need to cut cost, not increase taxes and debt.   |
| We need to cut federal and state spending - not add more programs that increase our taxes! We are not in favor of this idea!  |
| We pay in property tax.   |
| We should be cutting federal and state funding at this time - not adding more!  |
| We strongly support mass transit efforts. Our responses to questions 2, 3 and 6 will very likely have shifted before such a system exists. Let's get going!   |
| Whatever source you use, it's still the working man that supplies the money. NO - more government - more taxes - welfare.   |
| When a school bus isn't in use for school activities, put these buses in service, may they be handicap with lifts, short head start buses or van. I did this in Muskegon and Fruitport, Whitehall and Montegue, MI. I did this in the 80s and 90s. Just a thought. Susan Meyers   |
| When I see buses they usually have only a few people in them. If gas gets really high it may help, but as I see it (especially in Grand Rapids) the buses are huge but the riders few. Just what I've seen. Thanks, Webb  |
| When will we get the message -- SMALLER GOVERNMENT - TOO MANY SO CALLED "FREE" programs have gotten us where are at. BROKE!   |
| While I don't need help with transportation, I do think more help is needed for the handicapped (including deaf people) in the area.  |
| While it seems quite beneficial, feasibility seems very low.  |
| Will these vehicles be able to handle adverse road conditions such as when going down dirt roads in the winter time/muddy road in the spring/fall? We have a new high school to pay for - not interested in adding another deduction in paying property taxes twice a year.   |
| With the new Fremont High School, we can't add any more to our taxes.   |
| With the price of gas, lack of jobs and people on assistance, a little break as to public transportation would be great.  |

**Comments continued**

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| Would it be more appropriate to have a voucher or subsidized private transportation provider than fully public funded transportation system. This could potentially benefit a large group with limited and/or no public assistance needs. |
| Would like newsletter telling routes, cost and times.   |
| Would possibly be interested in driving as I have driven school bus for 15 years, raised 5 kids myself, and have good public relations skills. 231-335-8184   |
| Would this service be available to people in northern Newaygo County? Re: Bitely - Probably not!  |
| Yes. Wrap school busing into public transportation making all public transportation more cost effective. I could support millage for this change.   |
| You could plow my road in the winter when it snows so I can get to work. I live on the paved portion of Rich Ave. north of Grant. I pay taxes, too!   |
| You have covered everything.  |
| Your best bet would be to send these questionnaires to the people who are affected by this.   |