

# A vehicle for change.

Demonstrating how lack of  
transportation affects people  
and their communities

September 2011

A Transportation Research Project of Disability Network/Lakeshore



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# Executive Summary

In October of 2008, Disability Network/Lakeshore of Holland, MI was awarded a Service Development and New Technologies (SDNT) grant from the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) for a study entitled, “A Vehicle for Change: Demonstrating the impact lack of transit has on a community without a public transportation system.”

The impact lack of public transit has on an entire community is complex and reaches beyond the individual without transportation to several other residents and stakeholders. Individuals without transportation do not have full access to the community in which they live. As natural supports and community organizations with which people are connected transition into the role of transportation providers, they are affected too. This issue raises these questions: What is the impact lack of transportation has on a community without public transit? For each person who is affected by lack of transportation, how many other people become involved and in what way? What is the most effective way to communicate this complexity?

A workgroup of 12 community partners representing social service organizations, schools, governmental entities, and private transit providers formed to answer these questions and demonstrate how lack of transportation affects people and their communities in Eastern Ottawa County.

Disability Network/Lakeshore partnered with Daniel Bergan, PhD, and Genevieve Risner, PhD from Michigan State University to conduct a four-phase study in Eastern Ottawa County including the areas of the City of Hudsonville, Jamestown Township, Blendon Township, Allendale Township and Georgetown (Jenison) Township.

The workgroup found several significant findings.

## People with unmet transportation needs:

- + 84% of people age 60 or older stated medical care as the purpose of their transportation trip
- + 59% can afford between \$2 and \$5 for one, one-way ride to where they needed to travel
- + 50% of all transportation needs are medically related
- + 36% of individuals with unmet transit needs are age 60 or older
- + 21% said a lack of transportation has prevented them from looking for, getting, or keeping a job

## Taxpayers:

- + 87% said that improving area public transportation is either somewhat or very important
- + 75% support public transportation services in Eastern Ottawa County
- + 68% said they are very or somewhat likely to support a public transportation millage in their community

- + 53% said traffic congestion was very or somewhat severe in Eastern Ottawa County

**Stakeholders:**

- + 98% said the need for regional transit will be very or somewhat important in the next three years
- + 65% said a lack of transportation results in their inability to get people the services they need

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

# Laying the Foundation

## Create a workgroup

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Meeting with Stakeholders

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

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

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

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

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

### Reevaluate your plan

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

## Get organized

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

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

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

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

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

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

# PHASE 1: Identify the Need

During Phase One of this study, the Eastern Ottawa Transportation Workgroup researched individuals with unmet transportation needs in the community. The workgroup used two research methods in order to complete an analysis of individuals including an individual unmet needs survey and one-on-one interviews with individuals and their networks.

## Individual Unmet Needs Survey

In order to begin understanding the unmet transit needs in Eastern Ottawa County, a survey created by Disability Network/Lakeshore was distributed to seven community entities including social service organizations, schools, governmental agencies, private transit providers, and a senior living center. The purpose of the unmet needs survey was to identify people with unmet transit needs and understand the barriers to their transportation. As no public transit system currently exists in Eastern Ottawa County, this survey allowed current transit providers and other community organizations to capture requests they had received and were unable to fulfill due to lack of transportation services available.

The community organizations that volunteered to administer the survey included: Love in the Name of Christ (LOVE INC.), Georgetown Seniors Transportation, Ottawa County Probation Office and Ottawa County 2-1-1. In addition, the survey was administered to students attending Allendale and Hudsonville Public Schools, as well as residents of the Sunset Association. In order to best understand the needs of students two additional questions were added to the school surveys.

Completed surveys were compiled through Survey Monkey and downloaded for a complete analysis. General findings were related to individuals' transit destinations, dates and times transit was needed, and transportation preferences. Data from the individual unmet needs survey was collected from February to August 2008. Complete data analysis concerning Phase 1 can be found in the Phase 1 Report published in April 2009. A copy of the Individual Unmet Needs Survey is provided in Appendix C.

## Results

A total of 449 unmet needs surveys were collected, with slightly more than half of transportation needs originating from females (58.7%) female compared to males (41.3%). Age responses were combined into five groups, under 30 (39.6%), aged 30-39 (5.3%), aged 40-49 (12.2%), aged 50-59 (6.7%), and aged 60 or older (36.2%). Almost all respondents (90.4%) noted that they did not need an accessible vehicle when traveling, while 9.6% stated they do need an accessible vehicle. Additionally, 93.6% stated they did not need personal assistance when traveling, while 6.4% stated they do need personal assistance.

Of the five municipalities in the study area, the following is the distribution of residency by respondents as seen in Figure 1: Georgetown / Jenison Township

(50.9%), City of Hudsonville (24.8%), Allendale Township (5.8%), Jamestown Township (2.5%), Blendon Township (1.1%) and Other (15.0%).

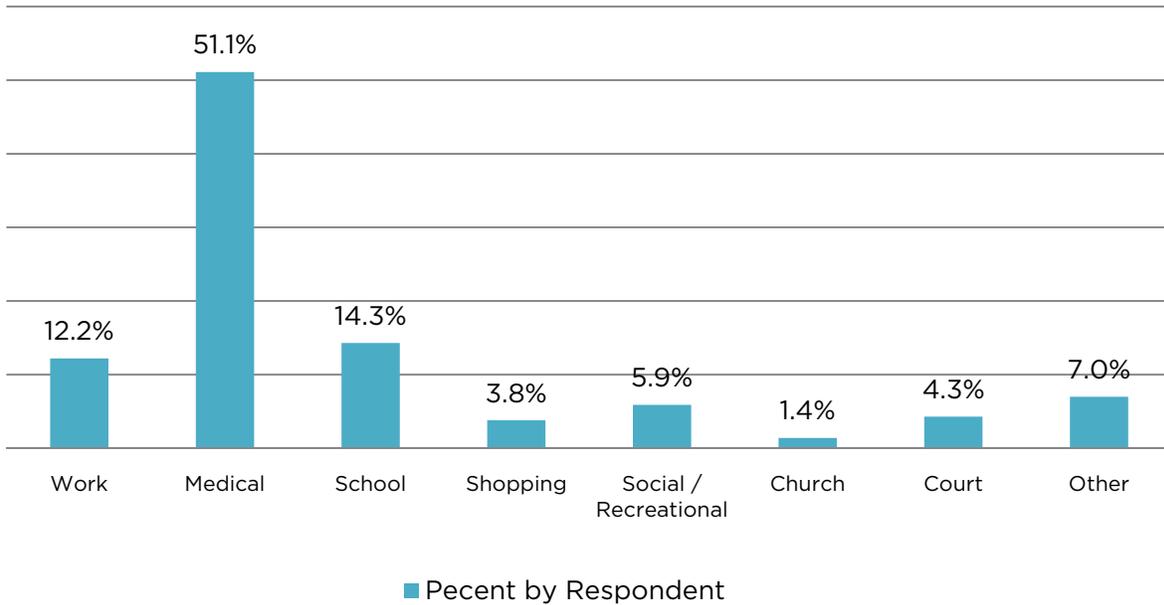
**Figure 1. Total Completed Surveys by Township / City**



Participants were asked to discuss their experiences with unmet transportation needs specifically relating to dates and times when transit was needed, affordable costs for traveling, impact on employability and schooling, transportation preferences, and types of destinations. While 449 respondents participated in this survey, not all respondents were asked or answered all questions. Specifically, only the school surveys included the questions related to school attendance. Therefore, the total number of responses varies in the school related questions. All percentages in this section reflect the proportion of respondents who answered a particular question.

Individuals were asked, “What is the purpose of your trip?” As shown in Figure 3, medical had the highest response frequency (51.1%), followed by school (14.3%), work (12.2%), social / recreational (5.9%), court (4.3%), shopping (3.8%), church (1.4) and other (7.0%).

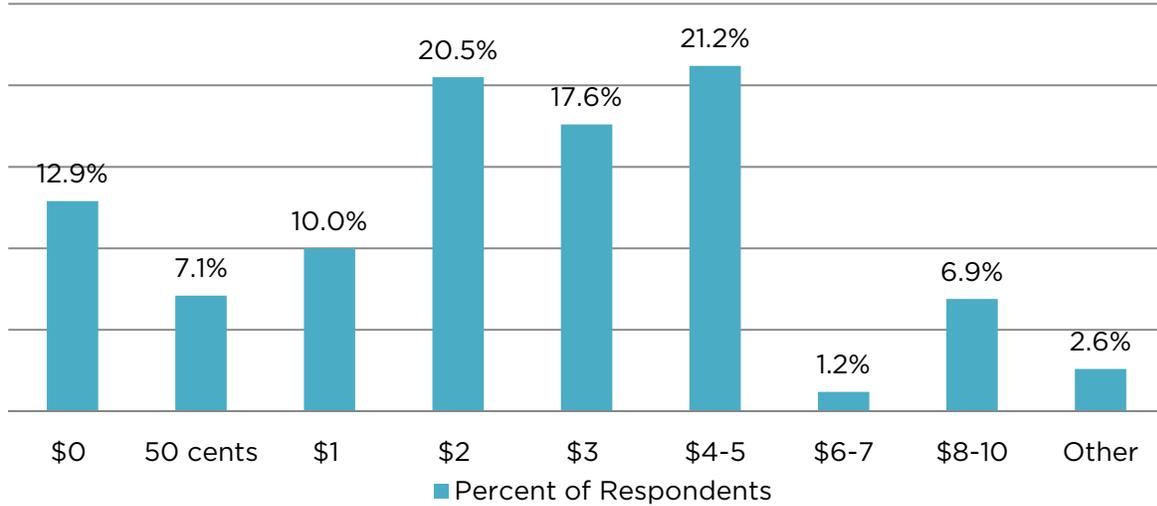
Figure 2. Total Completed Surveys by Purpose of Trip



While the top purpose of trips was medical, respondents of different groups did vary in their responses. In order to better understand these responses, Figure 4 shows Purpose of Trip by Age Group. Medical was the most frequently cited purpose of trip for aged 30-39 (50.0%), 40-49 (80.4%), 50-59 (72.4%), and 60 or over (84.7%). However, for respondents aged 30 or under both school (35.1%) and work (25.7%) ranked highest. Court was listed as the second (18.2%) top purpose of trip for age group 30-39, while work was listed as second (13.8%) for age group 50-59. Both shopping (3.8%) and church (1.4%) received the lowest percentages of responses from all age groups.

Figure 4 shows affordability for one, one-way ride. When asked, “What would be an affordable cost for one, one-way ride to where you need to travel?” 21.2% said \$4-5, followed by \$2 (20.5%) and \$3 (17.6%). 12.9% of respondents cited \$0, as they do not have money to pay for transportation.

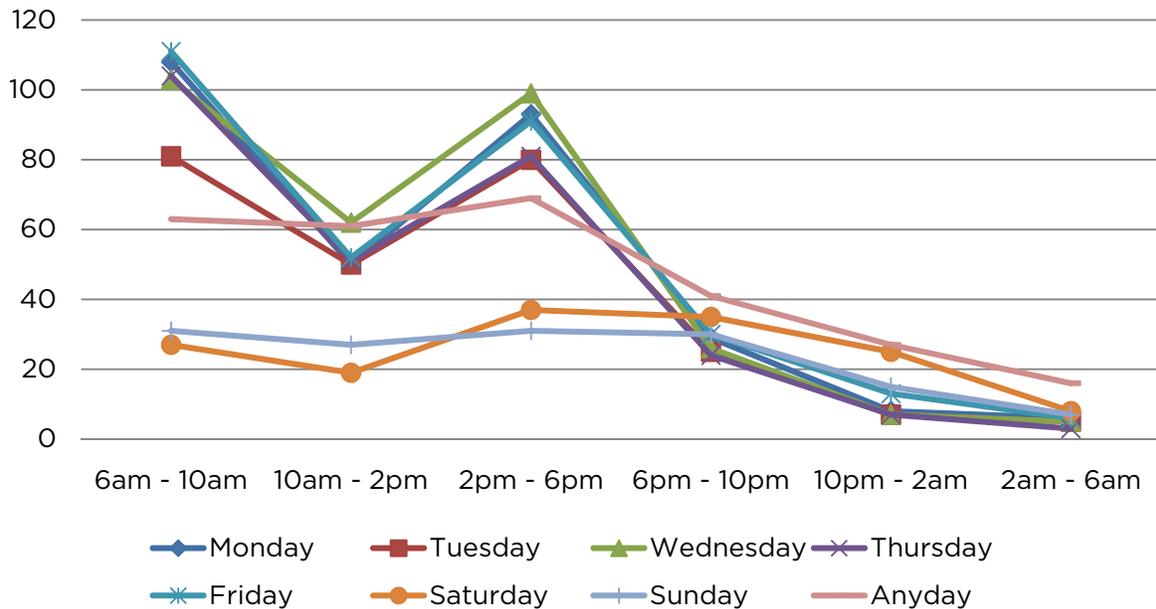
**Figure 3. Total Completed Surveys by Affordable Cost for One, One-way Ride**



Another important aspect in understanding affordability is by referencing residency. As this study engages five municipalities, Figure 7 shows percentage of respondents for an affordable cost for one, one-way trip by township/city. The City of Hudsonville is distributed evenly across cost amounts, with peaks at \$0 (21.5%), \$2 (17.8%), and \$4-5 (19.6%). Allendale Twp. peaked at \$4-5 (20.8%), followed by \$0 and 50 cents (16.7%). Blendon Twp. averaged between \$2 (40.0%) and \$4-5 (40%), with no responses (0.0%) for \$0, 50 cents, \$6-7, or \$8-10. Georgetown Twp. peaked at \$2 (26.0%) followed by \$3 (23.1%) and \$4-5 (22.6%). Lastly, those living in Jamestown Twp. cited \$2 (36.4%) as being most affordable, with 27.3% citing \$1 as affordable.

Peak times when transportation was needed were during weekday business hours, specifically at the start (6 - 10am) and end (2 - 6pm) of the day, as shown in Figure 8 (results of this chart are shown by response frequency, not percentages). After 6 pm., travel needs on weekdays were similar to those of the weekend. The day/time most needed for transportation was Fridays (111) from 6 to 10am, followed by Mondays (108), Thursdays (104) and Fridays (103) from 6 to 10am. The period of least need was Wednesdays (3) from 2 - 6am. As medical, work, and school were indicated as the top three purposes of trips (Figure 3), it is not surprising that transportation is most needed from 6am to 6pm during weekdays.

**Figure 4. Days and Time for Needed Transportation by Frequency of Response**



Students were asked: In the past year, has lack of transportation prevented you from going to school? Approximately three-fourths of students indicated “No” (78.6%), while 17.1% of students indicated they missed school due to a lack of transportation. A small percentage (4.3%) of students stated that they were unsure whether lack of transportation had prevented them from being able to go to and from school.

Respondents were asked whether, in the past year, lack of transportation had prevented them from looking for, getting, or keeping a job. One out of five (21.0%) respondents said lack of transportation prevented this. Thus, three-fourths (76.1%) of respondents stated they were not prevented from looking, getting, or keeping a job. 2.9% of respondents indicated they were unsure whether transportation had affected their employment.

Results of the individual unmet needs survey provided important insight into the current state of transportation needs in Eastern Ottawa County. These results indicate the type of complexity this region is facing in terms of unmet transportation needs, and how unmet transit needs impact access to destinations such as medical, employment and school. After summarizing the individual unmet needs survey results, the Eastern Ottawa Transportation Workgroup found it essential to elicit a better understanding of not only how unmet transportation needs impact individuals, but how their needs impact the people around them including their family, friends, neighbors, employers, and care providers.

### One-on-One Interviews

The Eastern Ottawa Transportation Workgroup conducted thirty-six interviews during October and November 2008. The one-on-one interviews consisted of individuals with unmet transportation needs and their networks including, friends, family members, employers, community organizations and churches. The purpose of

the interviews was to determine the extent of people's transit needs, and provide the workgroup with information about people's networks and the impact lack of transportation has on network members. As the results will demonstrate, the findings indicate that transportation affects a whole community, not just individuals who need rides.

Of these interviews, nineteen were conducted with people who have unmet transportation needs, twelve were conducted with people's friends, family or neighbors who provide people with rides, four were conducted with local community organizations, and one was conducted with a business. With the exception of one respondent, every respondent who participated was willing to be contacted again in the future.

Among individuals who have unmet transportation needs, most are currently using Georgetown Seniors Transportation to meet some of their needs. The second most identified resource is individuals' friends, family members, neighbors or co-workers. A couple of interviewees mentioned they rely on their church, ride a bike, or walk to their destination when possible.

Individuals who need transportation cited high costs, tardiness, and lack of transportation as the three most common reasons why they have been let down by current transportation options in their community. "Our babies need their shots but we can't get to the clinic because of [a lack in] transportation." "My transportation provider kept making me late to work, and I almost lost my job."

According to individuals who need transportation, many stated that consistent, reliable transportation could create many improvements in their lives. The most cited benefit is that people could be more independent; they would not have to rely on others for rides. "I would be much more independent. I would not have to rely on others to take me places." Interviewees also mentioned that consistent, reliable transportation would increase their quality of life. "I feel like I have become a bit afraid of strangers and more reclusive since I can't get out anymore." "I could have a social life and get a job." "I would have more free time to spend with my husband."

The most cited and ideal solution among individuals with transportation needs was a consistent and affordable transportation system. Nearly every respondent mentioned that the ideal solution would be some form of bus transportation. "Having public transportation available by bus." "An on call bus system, taxi service, fixed route bus lines or on-call bus lines."

When surveying networks of those with a lack in transportation, most respondents were providing transportation to medical appointments for their friends, family or neighbors who do not have transportation. Other common trip purposes include work, grocery shopping, or out for lunch.

Nearly all network members who participated in an interview stated that they were affected personally by the lack of public transportation in the community. The most common response was that providing transportation affects their freedom and time. "I am greatly affected by the lack of public transportation in the community. Right now I

home school our children so that I can cater to my husband's schedule of work and medical appointments." "Providing transportation for my sister interrupted my college career. At times, I had to leave work early."

Respondents reported variation in schedule changes due to accommodating friends, family or neighbor's transportation needs. When asked how often their schedule changed in order to accommodate transportation requests: three people reported almost every day or more, three people reported more than once a week, two reported a few times per month, and two people reported once a month or less. Two people did not respond.

The most frequently cited solution to improve current transportation needs in the community was public transportation. Other solutions included the expansion of Georgetown Seniors Transportation and the reinstatement of Pioneer Resources Transportation or a similar door-to-door service. "We could use a good dial-a-ride system in our area. Fixed route transportation would also be very helpful. We now have some people moving from this area because there is not a good transportation system."

Most people indicated that improvements to transportation in the community would improve their lives and those of the people to whom they are providing rides. "Life would be easier." "I would have less worries." "I worry about my sister. I wish she had more opportunities to visit doctors and socialize with friends."

Community organizations most frequently cited the need for medical transportation followed by transportation to school related activities. "Parents are unable to attend meetings such as parent teacher conferences. They also can't pick up their son or daughter if he / she becomes ill." "Residents have difficulty accessing transportation, particularly for medical trips."

The solution mentioned most often was door-to-door transportation. Transportation provided by nonprofit organizations was also recommended. "There is a need for door-to-door service, primarily for medical appointments." "I advocate for increasing the physical and social well-being of my clients and having a chance to get out of the house is a big part of that. I have one client I really worry about as she becomes increasingly sedentary and increasingly wary of outsiders."

One business participated in an interview. The respondent indicated that transportation for about 15 to 20 out of 54 total employees can be a problem from time to time, especially during the winter. When people do not have transportation and they walk to work, they often become ill, hurting the company's productivity. The respondent's solution was public transportation. "I know it's a rural area but to promote growth it would be necessary to add a bus route."

After reading the responses from the interviews, it is important to note that family, friends, community organizations, and businesses are all being impacted by a lack of transportation in the area. Most respondents indicated that a type of door-to-door transportation system would be most effective and that public transportation was an ideal solution to meeting the transportation needs in the community. Additionally, interviewees noted that increasing transportation options in the community would

create more freedom and independence for all individuals affected by a lack of transportation. A sample of one-on-one interview questions used for this study is located in Appendix D.

### Conclusions

The results of the individual unmet needs analysis provided valuable insight as the Eastern Ottawa Transportation Workgroup moved forward in demonstrating the impact lack of transit had on a community without a public transportation system, and developing the necessary tools to effectively communicate this complexity to local community members. Overall, individuals in Eastern Ottawa agreed that there was a large unmet transit need, especially for travel to medical appointments, school, and work.

Both the individual unmet needs survey and the one-on-one interviews helped in answering the question: What is the impact lack of transportation has on a community without public transportation? Individuals who participated in this process showed their freedom and independence had been compromised due to a lack of transportation services. Also, many seniors are unable to get back and forth from medical appointments, and individuals working to find employment or retain a job have had difficulty finding transportation in the community.

# PHASE 2: Community Input

## Community Messaging Survey

In April 2009, 1,000 phone surveys were conducted with residents in Eastern Ottawa County to determine which messages are most effective in increasing support for public transit, credibility among different potential transit sponsors, and the effect that unmet transportation needs have on the Eastern Ottawa County community. Respondents resided in Allendale Township (154), Blendon Township (69), Georgetown/Jenison Township (603), City of Hudsonville (105) or Jamestown Township (69). Response rates were based on population estimates for each unit of government, which accounts for the differential sample sizes. A sample of the Community Messaging Survey used in this study is located in Appendix E.

Most respondents were females (66%) with an annual household income between \$26,000 and \$50,000 (25%). Respondents were nearly equally distributed with regard to age; 30% were between 30 and 49 years old, 32% were between 50 and 65 years old, and 31% were over 65 years old. Half of respondents (50%) had used public transportation. Only 7% of respondents had an unmet transportation need in the past year, but 32% know someone who might use public transit if it was available and 33% have provided a ride to someone who could have used public transit if it had been available at the time.

Messages that were most effective in garnering respondent support were those that combined information about medical and employment needs. Of particular importance to respondents were messages that focused on the needs of seniors and people with disabilities. Also, respondents were more likely to support a public transportation millage of \$40 per year when the cost was framed as one candy bar per week. A sample of the messages used for this survey are located in Appendix F.

A neutral message resulted in the greatest support for expanded transportation services. Both medical messages were equally persuasive and resulted in the second greatest support for public transportation. Both employment messages were equally persuasive and resulted in the third greatest support for public transportation. The neutral message may have resulted in greater support for transportation services because it combined two argument topics - employment and medical - even though it did not provide any statistical evidence.

It is important to note that all messages were statistically very similar and resulted in a large majority of support for public transportation services. These findings suggest that 75% of people support expanded public transportation services in Eastern Ottawa County, 16% do not, and 9% are undecided.

Respondents were nearly evenly split when asked whether they have ever used public transportation: 498 (50%) of respondents said “yes” they had used public transportation, while 502 (50%) said no, they had not ever used public

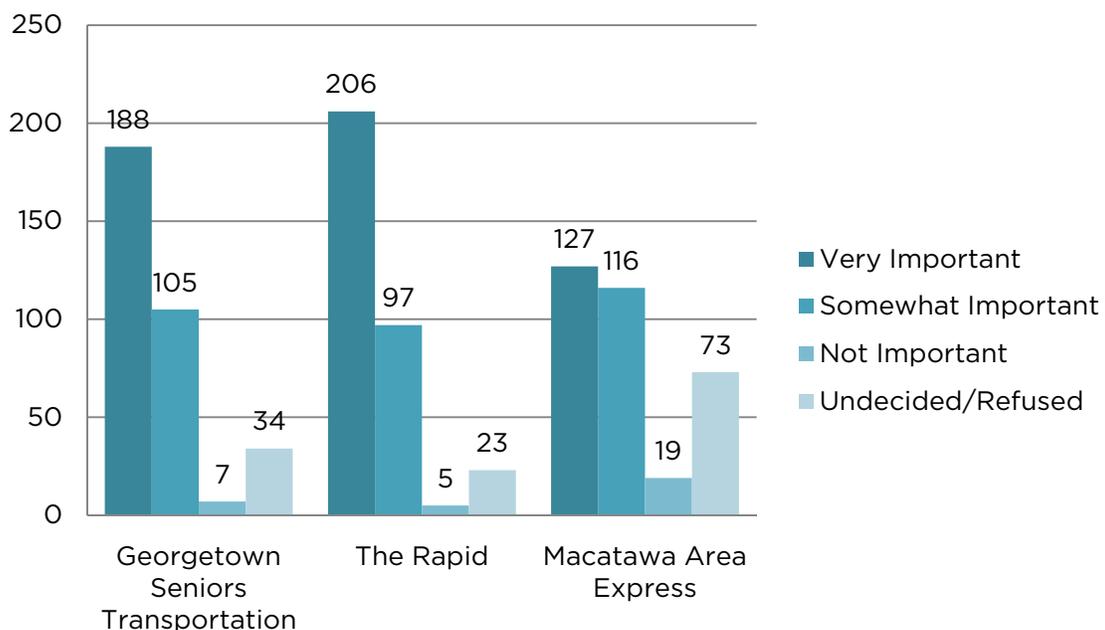
transportation. No respondents indicated they did not know whether they had ever used public transportation.

Although most respondents did not have unmet transportation needs themselves, about one-third (317, 32%) know someone who might use public transportation if it was available. The majority of respondents (628, 63%) do not know anyone who might use public transportation, and a few respondents were unsure whether they know anyone who might use public transportation if it was available (55, 5%).

In the past 12 months, approximately one-third of respondents (325, 33%) have provided rides to friends, family members or neighbors who could have used public transit to reach their destination if it was available. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (672, 67%) have not provided these types of rides for others. Only three people indicated they were unsure whether they had provided these types of rides in the past 12 months.

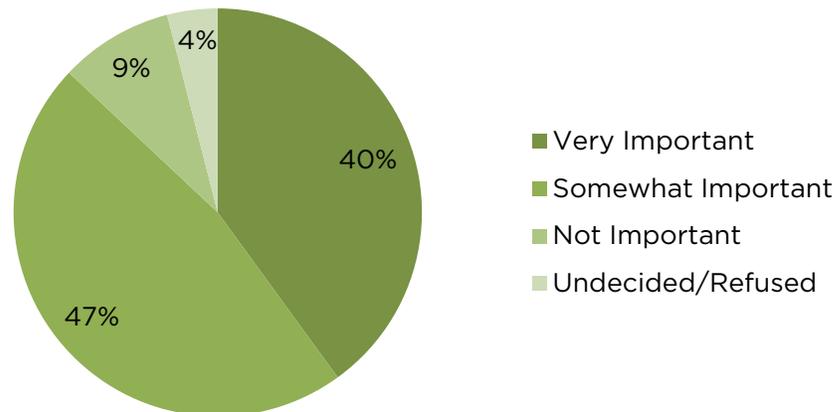
A comparison of the three transportation providers reveals indicated that The Rapid provided the most important services to the community (92% of respondents said The Rapid's services were very or somewhat important). Georgetown Seniors Transportation provided the second most important services to the community (88% of respondents said Georgetown Seniors Transportation services were very or somewhat important). Respondents indicated that the Macatawa Area Express provided the third most important services to the community (73% of respondents said MAX's services were very or somewhat important). Regardless of the provider, overall, all transportation services were viewed as important to the community.

**Figure 5. Importance of Transit Provider to the Community**



A large majority (87%) of respondents said that improving area public transportation was either very important (40%) or somewhat important (47%), while only 9% indicated that it was not important. Four percent of respondents were either undecided or refused to answer this question.

**Figure 6. Importance of Improving Area Public Transportation**



Slightly more than half of the respondents judged the traffic congestion problem in Eastern Ottawa County to be either very severe (10%) or somewhat severe (43%). Almost half of the respondents indicated traffic congestion in the area was not at all severe (43%). Four percent of respondents were either undecided or did not answer the question.

Respondents thought that some of the most important considerations about public transportation were that it helps people with disabilities get to their jobs, it increases the ability to get employment and training opportunities for the unemployed and underemployed, and it helps people transition from welfare to work.

Additional considerations that respondents said were important about public transportation were related to seniors. Respondents said that the fact 155 seniors have unmet transportation needs and 36% of people with unmet transportation needs are seniors, are important considerations. Furthermore, respondents thought that the greatest unmet transportation need being to medical appointments was an important consideration.

The 1,000 respondents surveyed were randomly assigned to one of four message frames about the cost of a public transportation millage, and then they were asked about their support. Overall, the majority of respondents were supportive of a millage for public transportation services in Eastern Ottawa County, regardless of the message frame used. Two-thirds (75%) of respondents indicated they were either very or somewhat supportive of public transportation services in Eastern Ottawa County. Also, when asked about supporting a millage for public transportation, 62% of respondents indicated being very or somewhat supportive.

The most effective frame was comparing the millage cost to one candy bar per week. When this frame was used, 68% of respondents were either very or somewhat likely to support a public transportation millage compared to 60% using the 77 cents per week frame, 63% using the \$40 per year frame, or 59% using the night at the movies frame.

Of the 1,000 respondents contacted, nearly half (488, 49%) agreed to have their names added to the list of public transit supporters to be shared with their local elected officials, while 51% of respondents (512) declined.

### Stakeholder Messaging Survey

During April 2009, approximately 125 stakeholder organizations were contacted via email. They were asked to complete a brief online transportation messaging survey to assist in identifying and creating effective messages to market public transportation. Twenty-six stakeholders participated in the survey. A sample of the stakeholder messaging survey is located in Appendix G.

Results from the survey indicate stakeholders find anecdotal evidence most persuasive. Specifically, stakeholders found the anecdotal employment message most persuasive (77%) and the anecdotal medical message a close second (73%).

Stakeholders found the one candy bar per week message most persuasive (77%) in framing the cost of a public transportation millage.

Fourteen stakeholders provided ideas for transportation marketing messages. Most of these ideas focused on making the message relevant and personal to the message receivers. Stakeholders discussed the need to determine how public transportation will personally benefit people, and craft a message according to those benefits.

### Conclusions

The results of the community messaging survey indicated the general public overwhelmingly supported enhanced public transportation options in Eastern Ottawa County. The survey provided sound research and data to then present to elected officials in conveying the lack of public transportation available to their constituents.

# PHASE 3: Educating Citizens

## Educational Transportation Tools

First, an educational DVD, *Transit Means More*, was created to educate elected officials on the impact that the lack of transportation has on their communities. The DVD communicates current unmet transit needs and the potential benefits of increasing public transportation in Eastern Ottawa County. Statistics and research from the previous two phases were used in the DVD, as well as eight community stakeholders including residents, a governmental official, a school and university officials, and a business manager. A template of the DVD brochure is located in the back of this report.

Secondly, using the Community Messaging Survey the most successful messages found to increase support of public transportation were used in the distribution of 6000 postcards in which the workgroup communicated the current transit needs to community residents. Three educational postcards were designed based on the responses from the Community Messaging Survey. Located in the book of this reports are the three different types of postcards used. Each postcard has the same back cover, with a different front cover based on an employment or medical message.

All 364 individuals from the Community Messaging survey who a) did not sign on to demonstrate their support of public transit and b) do NOT oppose public transportation receive a postcard.

**Table 1. Postcard Distribution by Municipality by Frequency and Percentage**

Town	Frequency	Percentage of Total
Hudsonville City	40	10.99%
Allendale Township	53	14.56%
Georgetown Township (Jenison)	220	60.44%
Blendon Township	27	7.42%
Jamestown Township	24	6.59%

Additionally, another 5,636 names that had not been surveyed in the Community Messaging Survey were chosen based on characteristics of individuals who were willing to give their name and address to demonstrate their support for public transit in the Community Messaging survey. The individuals in this list should therefore be responsive to appeals about public transit.

Postcards were delivered in October, 2009. A total of 35 respondents mailed back their postcard declaring their support for public transit. Sixty percent (21 respondents) of the respondents were motivated by the postcard stating, "A public transit system would give my son more independence, which would allow me to look for a job." Eight respondents (29%) were motivated by the postcard stating, "If my employees had more reliable transit, our company could be more efficient." Lastly, six respondents (17%) were motivated by the postcard stating, "If my clients had

affordable transportation, they could get more of the medical help they really need.” Thus, the message stating, “A public transit system would give my son more independence, which would allow me to look for a job,” was the most persuasive in motivating individuals to sign on to publicly support transit.

It is also important to note that over 23 respondents resided in Hudsonville, 5 respondents resided in Jenison, 4 respondents resided in Allendale, and 2 respondents did not disclose their residency.

Thirdly, a website ([www.transitmeansmore.org](http://www.transitmeansmore.org)) was created presenting the survey results, the educational marketing DVD, and a place for individuals to contact their local elected officials with a sample letter. This website was able to measure the effectiveness of the postcard mailing in persuading an individual to take action in bringing public transportation to Eastern Ottawa County as the website was printed on the educational postcards. A template of the website is located in Appendix H.

A total of 30 individuals utilized the internet to sign on to support public transit. Sixty percent of individuals were located within the study area: ten individuals resided in Hudsonville, six respondents resided in Jenison, and two individuals resided Allendale. The other forty percent of respondents resided throughout Ottawa County: four individuals from Holland, two individuals from Zeeland, two individuals from Grand Haven, one individual from Spring Lake, and one individual from Grandville.

### **Elected Official Presentation**

On November 2, 2009, the Eastern Ottawa Transportation Workgroup hosted a transportation forum with representatives of the City of Hudsonville, and the townships of Allendale, Blendon, Georgetown, and Jamestown. Forum attendees included workgroup members, elected officials, municipal staff, and various community partners. Approximately 25 people attended the event. The forum consisted of a series of presentations on transportation needs and opportunities in the Eastern Ottawa County community, statistics and personal stories that had been collected throughout the past year, viewing of a professionally produced DVD, and concluded with questions and further discussion. A sample Elected Official Presentation invitation (Appendix J), agenda (Appendix K), and PowerPoint (Appendix L) are located in the appendices.

At the end of the event, attendees were asked to complete a brief seven-question survey on their opinions about public transportation in their district. A sample of the Elected Official Survey is located in Appendix I.

Seven attendees completed the survey, which is approximately a 28% response rate. Of these respondents, 100% were elected officials: one represented Allendale Township, two represented Blendon Township, two represented Hudsonville City, and two represented Georgetown Township. No one from Jamestown Township completed the survey.

Respondents were asked how they find out how much members of their constituency support a given policy. Responses included: “usually by unsolicited

feedback from citizens”, “emails, in person, phone calls,” “phone calls, email, stopping into my business,” “ballot issue or speaking with them”, “board meetings,” or “surveys.” Throughout all of these responses, elected officials indicated that policy support is determined through interpersonal means and data from personal stories or large scale interviews.

Respondents were asked about the importance of expanding public transportation and their personal support for public transit expansion. Regarding importance of public transportation in their district, respondents were asked, “How important do you think that public transportation is in your district?” Among people who responded to this question, people seemed divided on how important public transportation is in their district. However, elected officials from the City of Hudsonville and Blendon Township tended to express more importance for the issue relative to elected officials from other municipalities.

Then, respondents were asked, “How supportive are you of expanding public transportation in your district?” Again, the most support came from elected officials in the City of Hudsonville and Blendon Township. Thus, even though elected officials may not think public transportation is important in their district, personally, they show slightly greater levels of personal support for expansion of public transportation services.

Respondents were also asked about the factors that have influenced their opinions about public transportation in their district. Responses included: “newspaper, cost analysis of driving, gas prices,” “newspapers, surveys, public comment,” “need, economics, bang for the buck,” “survey results,” “how does public transit system affect their lives,” “talking to Georgetown Seniors Transportation Director.” These results indicate that in much of the same way that elected officials determine their constituency’s support for a policy, they form their own opinion on the issue of public transportation. However, in addition to interpersonal factors, elected officials were more likely to look to survey data and newspapers also.

Finally, respondents were asked, “If an elected official committee formed to work on expanding public transportation in Eastern Ottawa County, how willing you would be to become a member?” Most elected officials were slightly unwilling to commit their time. Therefore, elected officials who participated in the survey seem to be relatively supportive of public transit, yet somewhat unwilling to participate on a committee to work on expanding public transit.

Finally, although the results are not generalizable to the broader population of elected officials due to the small sample size, elected officials in the City of Hudsonville and Blendon Township expressed the most support for public transit.

After the transportation forum, additional presentations were conducted in the study area. A total of four presentations: 1) Georgetown Township, 2) City of Hudsonville, 3) Ottawa County Commissioners, and 4) Blendon Township were held with elected officials and municipal staff during November 2009 thru April 2010. At the conclusion of each presentation, attendees were asked to complete a brief seven-question survey on their opinions about public transportation in their district.

# Phase 4: Next Steps

## Share findings with elected officials and community leader

The Eastern Ottawa Transportation Workgroup identified the need and support for public transportation in Eastern Ottawa County. Public transportation impacts everyone; whether it is a senior, a businessman, a student, an elected official or a teacher. In moving forward, Eastern Ottawa requires this amenity to provide economic growth, foster youth development, increase job opportunities, and provide freedom to its seniors and people with disabilities.

Citizens and community leaders are continuing to educate elected officials by collaborating with existing transit providers and coordinating potential transit options for Eastern Ottawa County. At the publication of this report, two public transportation coalitions had been formed, one in the City of Hudsonville and one in Georgetown Township. Using the research and data from the study, residents and stakeholders are able to discuss potential transportation options in their communities. Additionally, they are able to effectively communicate the need to elected officials using the educational materials that we designed.

The framework presented in this final report provides a foundation for any organization or transit agency to replicate an unmet needs study, including understanding how a lack of public transportation not only affects the direct individual without transportation, but also their networks. Additionally, a framework for educational transportation materials has been designed based on messaging that creates the highest support for public transportation. Using this messaging research will give organizations and transit agencies the opportunity to best communicate to different populations using the messaging that best ensure public support.

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

# APPENDIX

# APPENDIX A: Volunteer Description and Agreement

## TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH TEAM MEMBER DESCRIPTION + AGREEMENT

### Description

Position: Transportation Research Team Member

Timeframe: September 2008 - September 2011

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

### Goals:

- ★ Demonstrate the impact the lack of public transit has in Eastern Ottawa County
- ★ Develop effective tools to communicate this complexity

### Activities and Responsibilities:

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

### Required Skills and Abilities:

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

### Agreement

I have read and understand the activities and responsibilities of action team members. I am willing to commit at least 5 hours per month from September 2008 until January 2010 of my time, energy, and creativity to making this project a success.

---

Signature

Date

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*[Contact Information of Project Coordinator]*

**THANK YOU!**

# APPENDIX B: Project Outline

**TITLE** A Vehicle for Change: Demonstrating the impact lack of transit has on a community without a public transportation system

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

**STUDY AREA** Allendale, Blendon, Georgetown/Jenison and Jamestown Townships, and the City of Hudsonville

**TIMEFRAME** September 2008 to September 2011

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND GOALS** This community change study seeks to understand the current impact lack of public transportation has on a community without existing transit system. Discovering what the current unmet transit needs are and how to effectively communicate those needs to local stakeholders and elected officials.

## **PHASE 1: Individual Unmet Needs Analysis (September 2008 - February 2009)**

1. Conduct unmet needs survey with community residents. The purpose of the unmet needs survey is to identify people with unmet transit needs and understand the barriers to their transportation. As no public transit system currently exists in E. Ottawa County, this survey will allow current transit providers and other community organizations to track calls that come in and cannot be fulfilled because of a lack in transportation services.
2. Conduct one-on-one interviews with individuals learning about their transit needs and networks including, friends, family members, employers, community organizations, and churches. The purpose of the interviews is to determine the extent of individual's transit needs, and provide us with information about their networks and the affect lack of transportation has on them.

## **PHASE 2: Community Analysis (March - August 2009)**

1. Conduct a community survey by phone to test which messages best persuades local community residents in supporting public transportation. The survey will ask about residents' knowledge on current transit options, whether they support public transit and if so, what level of support currently exists.
2. Create a marketing educational DVD outlining the research outcomes from the phase 1 and phase 2 to educate elected officials on the impact that the lack of transportation has on their communities. Additionally, the DVD will communicate current unmet transit needs and the potential benefits of increasing public transportation in Eastern Ottawa County.
3. After conducting the community survey, the most successful messages found to increase support of public transportation will be use in the distribution of 6000 postcards in which we will communicate current transit needs to community residents. Additionally, a website ([www.transitmeansmore.org](http://www.transitmeansmore.org)) will be created that will include survey results, the marketing DVD, and a place for individuals to contact their local elected officials. This website will measure the effectiveness of the postcard in persuading an individual to take action in bringing public transportation to Eastern Ottawa County.

## **PHASE 3: Elected Official Analysis (September 2009 - May 2010)**

1. The Transportation Workgroup will hold an elected official presentation to present the study findings and marketing educational DVD. After presenting this information to the elected officials, a follow-up survey will be conducted with the purpose of gauging the increase in support for public transportation based on the messages and the information provided in the marketing DVD.

## **PHASE 4: Next Steps (May 2010 - September 2011)**

1. Develop final report for Michigan Department of Transportation and create Vehicle for Change Report.
2. Community Education with Stakeholders

## APPENDIX B: Project Timeline

	Activity	Month	Goals
<b>Pre-Project</b>			
	Recruit action team	July / August	10-12 members secured
	Secure participation commitment from transit providers + community organizations	July	8 organizations commit to collect data
<b>Phase One: <i>What are the unmet transportation needs in this community?</i></b>			
	Collect unmet needs data from transit providers + community organizations Follow up with transit providers + community organizations + provide incentives	September- January	500 surveys completed
	Develop interview questions and process	September	
	Secure 25 ppl. for interviews Train interviewers	October	25 ppl (5 per municipality.)
	Interview people and their transportation networks	November December January	
	Create report	April	1 report completed
<b>Phase Two: <i>What messages best persuade taxpayers to support transportation?</i></b>			
	Create Community Taxpayer Survey + Messages	March	
	Conduct Community Taxpayer Survey	April	1,000 completed
	Create and implement follow-up survey with stakeholders	April	75 stakeholders contacted
	Analyze results	May	1 report completed
	Design +print postcards including messages	June	
	Mail postcards to community members	July	6000 postcards mailed
<b>Phase Three: <i>How do we effectively communicate those needs to elected officials?</i></b>			
	Create elected official messaging and tool/s	July August	1 marketing DVD
	Test messaging by conducting presentations w/ elected officials	September	# of presentations
	Conduct follow-up survey with elected officials	October	# surveys completed
	Analyze results	November	1 report completed
<b>Phase 4: <i>Next Steps</i></b>			
	Community Education w/ stakeholders	November - September	
	Create final process report for MDOT	September	1 final report completed
	Completion of Vehicle for Change	September	

# APPENDIX C: Individual Unmet Needs Survey

## Transit Survey

A research team is studying the transportation needs of Eastern Ottawa County throughout 2008. The information collected will be used to identify transportation needs and opportunities within the area. Would you be willing to answer a few questions about your transportation needs please? The questions will take less than 5 minutes to answer.

1. Were you referred to our organization?

Yes

No

If, yes what organization referred the caller?

2. In what city or township do you live?

City of Hudsonville

Jamestown Township

Allendale Township

Jension/Georgetown Township

Blendon Township

Other (please specify)

3. What is the purpose for your trip?

Work

Shopping

Court

Medical

Social/Recreational

School

Church

Other (please specify)

4. Could you please tell me the starting point for your trip? (If they do not feel comfortable giving a home address, please ask them to share the nearest cross streets.)

Street Address

City

Zip

or Nearest Cross Streets

5. Could you please tell me the ending point for your trip? (If they do not feel comfortable giving an address, please ask them to share the nearest cross streets, or the specific name of the their destination (ex. Holland Hospital, Meijer, Grandville Mall, etc.))

Street Address

City

Zip

Name of Destination

or Nearest Cross Streets

6. What days and times do you need transportation?

	6a-10a	10a-2p	2p-6p	6p-10p	10p-2a	2a-6a
Mon.	€	€	€	€	€	€
Tues.	€	€	€	€	€	€
Wed.	€	€	€	€	€	€
Thurs.	€	€	€	€	€	€
Fri.	€	€	€	€	€	€
Sat.	€	€	€	€	€	€
Sun.	€	€	€	€	€	€
Anyday	€	€	€	€	€	€

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

Yes

No

8. Do you need some personal assistance when you travel?

Yes

No

9. What would be an affordable cost for one, one-way ride to where you need to travel?

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

\$3

50 cents

\$4-\$5

\$1

\$6-\$7

\$2

\$8-\$10

Other (please specify)

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

Yes

No

Unsure/Don't Know

11. What is your age range?

Under 18

40-49

70-79

18-29

50-59

80 and over

30-39

60-69

12. Could someone contact you in the future to talk with you more about your transportation needs? (If yes, please fill ask for the person's name and phone number.)

First Name

Last Name

Phone Number

(If no phone, enter email or physical address)

That was the last question. Thank you so much for your time and valuable input!

13. What was the caller's gender?

Male

Female

14. What organization completed this survey?

Ottawa County 211

Department of Health & Human Services

Georgetown Seniors

Michigan Works

Love INC Allendale

Ottawa County Circuit Court & Probation Office

Love INC Hudsonville

Evergreen Commons

Pioneer Resources

Sunset Association

Ottawa County Community of Mental Health

Allendale Public Schools

Other (please specify)

15. Name of person recording survey information?

16. Please enter the date and time the survey was completed.

MM DD YYYY HH MM AM/PM  
date/time  /  /  :

17. Was the caller referred to another organization?

Yes

No

If yes, what organization was the caller referred to?

Thank you for taking the time to collect this information!

# APPENDIX D: One-on-One Interview Questions

## ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### Unmet Needs Questions

1. What does your current transportation look like?
  - a. How do you get to work, school, medical, recreation, social activities (family, religious)?
2. Can you give an example of when you've been let down by the current transit options in your community?
3. How would your life change if you had consistent, reliable transportation?
  - a. What changes in your transportation situation would make life easier for you or your family?
  - b. If that change was made, how would that improve your family's life?
4. What would be some ideal solutions to your transportation needs be?
  - a. What would you like to see different?

### Network Question

1. How is your family's life affected by the lack of public transportation in the community?
2. How often is your schedule changed in order to accommodate your friend/family's transportation needs?
3. What is an affordable cost for providing public transportation for your family?
4. What would be some ideal solutions in order to fix the current transportation needs of the community?
  - a. What would you like to see different?

### Business Questions

1. How has the lack of transportation services for your employers/consumers/clients negatively impacted your business in the past year?
  - a. Is unreliable employee transportation a major issue? How much has it cost your business?
2. What does your business currently do to provide transportation to its employees?
  - a. What kind? How many people use it? How much does it cost your organization?
3. How many employees would you estimate to use public transit if it was available?
4. Do you see seasonal patterns of employment related to lack of transportation?
5. What would be some ideal solutions in order to fix the current transportation needs of the community?
  - a. What you like to see different?

### Community Organizations

1. How has the lack of transportation services for your members negatively impacted your organization in the past year?
2. Do you currently provide transportation to your members?
  - a. What kind? How many people use it? How much does it cost your organization?
3. Do you think the attendance at your events or programs would increase if public transportation was provided?
4. What would be some ideal solutions in order to fix the current transportation needs of the community?
  - a. What would you like to see different?

# APPENDIX E: Community Messaging Survey

## Eastern Ottawa County Transportation Survey

### Introduction

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

### **1. Do you live in Hudsonville City, Allendale Township, Georgetown Township (Jenison), Blendon Township or Jamestown Township?**

1. Hudsonville City
2. Allendale Township
3. Georgetown Township (Jenison)
4. Blendon Township
5. Jamestown Township

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

### **2. May I ask if you are a registered voter?**

1. Yes
2. No (If not a registered voter ask:)  
“Is there a registered voter at home with whom I may speak?”  
(If no, thank him/her and close the interview)

If a new person comes to the phone, start the introduction again.

**RANDOMLY ASSIGN RESPONDENTS TO ONE OF THE FIVE MESSAGE FRAMES \*message frames are provided in the attached document**

### **3. "Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement: I am supportive of expanded public transportation in Eastern Ottawa County."**

1. Strongly Agree
2. Somewhat Agree
3. Somewhat Disagree
4. Strongly Disagree
5. Undecided, Don't Know, Refused (Don't read this statement)

### **4. Have you ever used public transportation?**

- 1 yes
- 2 no
- 3 DK/R

### **5. Have you had an unmet transportation need in the past twelve months?**

- 1 yes
- 2 no
- 3 DK/R

### **6. Do you have a friend, family member or neighbor who lives in Eastern Ottawa County who might use public transportation if it was available?**

- 1 yes
- 2 no
- 3 DK/R

7. In the past 12 months, have you provided any rides to friends, family members or neighbors who could have used public transit to reach their destination if it was available?
- 1 yes
  - 2 no
  - 3 DK/R

8. What do you associate with the name “Georgetown Seniors Transportation”? (Do not read the answers below. Enter ONE number only.)
- 1. Any answer which relates “Georgetown Seniors Transportation” with the bus system. *(Please code responses as #1 if the respondent provides an answer that refers to rides, bus, bus system or Dial A Ride. This could include responses such as: the bus system, the name of the bus system, Dial-A-Ride, transportation for seniors, the senior bus, rides for people, rides for seniors, rides for people with disabilities.)*
  - 2. Unable to recognize or associate “Georgetown Seniors Transportation” name with the bus system, rides, or Dial-A-Ride. Don’t know.
  - 3. Refused. No answer

Read the following after completing Question 8:

Georgetown Seniors Transportation is the name for the local bus system serving area seniors and people with disabilities.

9. All things considered, in your opinion, would you rate the job Georgetown Seniors Transportation does in providing the community with bus service as very good, good, fair, poor or very poor? (Read options 1-5. Enter ONE number only.)
- 1. Very good
  - 2. Good
  - 3. Fair
  - 4. Poor
  - 5. Very poor
  - 6. Don’t Know, Refused

10. Do you feel the transportation services offered by Georgetown Seniors Transportation are..... (Read options 1-3. Enter ONE option only.)
- 1. Very important to the community
  - 2. Somewhat important to the community or
  - 3. Not important to the community
  - 4. Undecided, Don’t Know, Refused

.....

11. What do you associate with the name “The Rapid”? (Do not read the answers below. Enter ONE number only.)
- 1. Any answer which relates “The Rapid” with the bus system. *(Please code responses as #1 if the respondent provides an answer that refers to rides, bus, bus system, “ITP”, Interurban Transit Partnership, Fixed Routes, or Dial A Ride. This could include responses such as: the bus system, the name of the bus system, Dial-A-Ride, Fixed Routes, ITP, Interurban Transit Partnership, transportation for seniors, the senior bus, rides for people, rides for seniors, rides for people with disabilities, public transportation.)*
  - 2. Unable to recognize or associate “The Rapid” name with the bus system. Don’t know.
  - 3. Refused. No answer

Read the following after completing Question 11:

The Rapid is the name for the public transportation bus system serving citizens in the greater Grand Rapids area.

12. All things considered, in your opinion, would you rate the job The Rapid does in providing the community with bus service as very good, good, fair, poor or very poor?

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

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

13. Do you feel the transportation services offered by The Rapid are..... (Read options 1-3. Enter ONE option only.)

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

.....

14. What do you associate with the name "The Macatawa Area Express"? (Do not read the answers below. Enter ONE number only.)

1. Any answer which relates "The Macatawa Area Express" with the bus system.  
*(Please code responses as #1 if the respondent provides an answer that refers to rides, bus, bus system, "MAX", Macatawa Area Transit Authority, Fixed Routes, or Dial A Ride. This could include responses such as: the bus system, the name of the bus system, Dial-A-Ride, Fixed Routes, MAX, Macatawa Area Transit Authority, transportation for seniors, the senior bus, rides for people, rides for seniors, rides for people with disabilities, public transportation.)*

2. Unable to recognize or associate "The Macatawa Area Express" name with the bus system. Don't know.

3. Refused. No answer

Read the following after completing Question 14:

The Macatawa Area Express is the name for the public transportation bus system serving citizens in the greater Holland/Zeeland area.

15. All things considered, in your opinion, would you rate the job The Macatawa Area Express does in providing the community with bus service as very good, good, fair, poor or very poor? (Read options 1-5. Enter ONE number only.)

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

**16. Do you feel the transportation services offered by The Macatawa Area Express are....**

(Read options 1-3. Enter ONE option only.)

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

**17. Do you feel improving area public transportation is very important, somewhat important or not important?** (Read options 1-3. Enter ONE option only.)

1. Very important
2. Somewhat important
3. Not important
4. Undecided, Don't Know, Refused

**18. Would you judge the traffic congestion problem in the area as very severe, somewhat severe or not at all severe?** (Read options 1-3. Enter ONE option only.)

1. Very severe
2. Somewhat severe or
3. Not at all severe
4. Undecided, Don't Know, Refused

**19. Please indicate whether you think each of the following ideas are an excellent, good, fair or poor means of reducing traffic congestion in the area.** (Read options 2-4 for each statement. Enter ONE option only for each statement.)

<u>Statements</u>	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	DK, R
A. Building more roads to accommodate increased traffic	5	4	3	2	1
B. Widening already existing roads	5	4	3	2	1
C. Providing more public transportation options	5	4	3	2	1

**20. Would you say the following considerations about public transportation are very important, somewhat important or are unimportant?** (Enter ONE option only for each consideration.)

**ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF THESE CONSIDERTATIONS WILL BE RANDOMLY ASSIGNED TO EACH RESPONDENT**

	Very important	Somewhat important	Unimportant	Und., D/K, Ref.
A. Public transportation services help people with disabilities get to their jobs	4	3	2	1
B. Public transportation helps people transition from welfare to work	4	3	2	1
C. In these difficult economic times, public transportation grows businesses by transporting their customers and employees	4	3	2	1
D. Public transportation increases the ability to get employment and training opportunities for the unemployed and underemployed	4	3	2	1
E. Public transportation supports the	4	3	2	1

conservation of land

F. Public transportation helps reduce traffic congestion	4	3	2	1
G. Areas with public transportation options attract new residents.	4	3	2	1
H. Public transportation creates a hub for economic development.	4	3	2	1
I. Public transportation increases property values.	4	3	2	1

**21. Would you say the following considerations about public transportation are very important, somewhat important or are unimportant? (Enter ONE option only for each statement.)**

**ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF THESE CONSIDERTATIONS WILL BE RANDOMLY ASSIGNED TO EACH RESPONDENT**

	Very important	Somewhat important	Unimportant	Und., D/K, Ref.
A. Studies have found that for every \$1 invested in public transportation, \$6 are returned to the community in the form of economic opportunities, decreased congestion and saved parking costs	4	3	2	1
B. Ridership on The Rapid exceeded 9 million rides in fiscal year 2008	4	3	2	1
C. Over 400 people in Eastern Ottawa County have contacted a local community organization about their unmet transportation needs in the past 9 months	4	3	2	1
D. Thirty six percent of people with unmet transportation needs at seniors (age 60 and older).	4	3	2	1
E. Thirty eight percent of people with unmet transportation needs are of working age (between the ages of 18-59)	4	3	2	1
F. The greatest unmet transportation need in Eastern Ottawa County is to medical appointments	4	3	2	1
G. The second greatest unmet transportation need in Eastern Ottawa County is to places of employment	4	3	2	1

H. In the past 9 months, 81 people living in Eastern Ottawa County have indicated that lack of transportation has prevented them from looking for, getting or keeping a job

4                      3                      2                      1

I. In the past 9 months, 155 seniors living in Eastern Ottawa County have contacted a community organization with an unmet transportation need

4                      3                      2                      1

22. I'm going to read you the names of several groups and people in society, and I'd like you to rate your feelings toward each one as either very positive, somewhat positive, neutral, somewhat negative, or very negative. If you have not heard of the organization or person, just say so.

**ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF THESE GROUPS WILL BE RANDOMLY ASSIGNED TO EACH RESPONDENT**

	Very Positive	Somewhat Positive	Neutral	Somewhat Negative	Very Negative	D/K Name, Not Sure
A. Love In The Name of Christ (a nonprofit coalition of churches and faith based organizations)	6	5	4	3	2	1
B. Disability Network/Lakeshore (a nonprofit disability advocacy organization)	6	5	4	3	2	1
C. Georgetown Seniors (a senior center and transportation provider in Eastern Ottawa County)	6	5	4	3	2	1
D. Grand Valley Metro Council (a metropolitan planning organization)	6	5	4	3	2	1
E. Macatawa Area Express (the public transportation provider in the greater Holland area)	6	5	4	3	2	1
F. Grand Valley State University (a 4-year public university located in Allendale)	6	5	4	3	2	1

G. Allendale Public Schools (the Allendale public school system)	6	5	4	3	2	1
H. Hudsonville Public Schools (the Hudsonville area public school system)	6	5	4	3	2	1
I. United Way 211 (an information and referral call center that directs people to local social services and programs)	6	5	4	3	2	1
J. The Rapid (the public transportation provider in the greater Grand Rapids area)	6	5	4	3	2	1
K. Jenison Public Schools (The Jenison area public school system)	6	5	4	3	2	1
L. Resurrection Life Church (an independent church located in Grandville)	6	5	4	3	2	1
M. Nu-Wool Company (an insulation manufacturer)	6	5	4	3	2	1
N. Mars Hill Bible Church (a church located in Grandville)	6	5	4	3	2	1
O. Fair Haven Ministries (a church located in Hudsonville)	6	5	4	3	2	1

Now I'm going to read you a quick list of things that some people have done to express their views. For each one I read, please just tell me whether you have ever done it or not.

**23. Have you contacted or visited a public official - at any level of government - to ask for assistance or to express your opinion?**

- 1 yes
- 2 no
- 3 DK/R

**24. Have you signed a written petition about a political or social issue?**

- 1 yes
- 2 no
- 3 DK/R

**25. Have you worked as a canvasser - having gone door to door for a political or social group or candidate.**

- 1 yes
- 2 no
- 3 DK/R

**26. Have you contacted a newspaper or magazine to express your opinion on an issue?**

- 1 yes
- 2 no
- 3 DK/R

**27. Would you be very likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely, or very unlikely to support a millage for public transportation services in Eastern Ottawa County if it cost your household:**

**RANDOMLY ASSIGN SUBJECTS TO ONE OF THE FOLLOWING FOUR MESSAGE FRAMES:**

- One candy bar per week
- Seventy-seven cents per week
- Forty dollars per year
- A night at the movies for two people including tickets, popcorn and pop

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

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

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

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

**For statistical purposes only, please answer the following questions.**

**29. Please indicate into which range your age falls. Are you..... (Read options 1-4. Enter ONE option only.)**

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

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

- 1. Less than 25,000 dollars per year
- 2. 26,000 to 50,000 dollars per year
- 3. 51,000 to 75,000 dollars per year

4. Over 75,000 dollars per year
5. Undecided, Don't Know, Refused

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

---

31. By observation, indicate the respondent's gender
1. Male
  2. Female

# APPENDIX F: Message Frames

## Medical/Seniors

Statistical: Many people living in Eastern Ottawa County need transportation. Thirty six percent of people with unmet transportation needs are seniors, age sixty and older. Among seniors who need transportation, fifty one percent have indicated that their greatest unmet transportation need is to medical appointments. In the past year, over one hundred and fifty seniors in Eastern Ottawa County contacted a community organization with a transit need. Many of these needs have gone unmet because of lack of transportation resources in Eastern Ottawa County.

Anecdotal: Many people living in Eastern Ottawa County need transportation. Eleanor is one senior, over the age of sixty, who has unmet transportation needs. In particular, Eleanor's greatest transportation need is to get to her weekly kidney dialysis appointments. In the past year, she contacted several community organizations with her unmet transit need. Eleanor has not found a ride to her medical appointments because of a lack of transportation resources in Eastern Ottawa County.

## Employment

Statistical: Many people living in Eastern Ottawa County need transportation. Thirty eight percent of people with unmet transportation needs are of working age, between 18 and 59 years old. Among people of working age who need transportation, twenty one percent have indicated that lack of transportation has prevented them from looking for, getting or keeping a job in the past year. Forty percent of local community organizations say that the greatest unmet transportation need for their clients is to get to work. Many of these needs have gone unmet because of lack of transportation resources in Eastern Ottawa County.

Anecdotal: Many people living in Eastern Ottawa County need transportation. Susan is one person with unmet transportation needs who is of working age, between 18 and 59 years old. In the last year, Susan has lost two jobs because of a lack of transportation. She contacted several community organizations with her unmet transit need, and while one organization found a job for her, she couldn't work because she did not have a ride to get there. Susan is still not working because of a lack of transportation resources in Eastern Ottawa County.

## Neutral Message

Many people living in Eastern Ottawa County need transportation. People with unmet transportation needs include seniors and people of working age. People are not able to get to the places they need to go when they do not have transportation. When people do not have a ride, often, they contact community organizations about their transportation needs. Many of these needs have gone unmet because of lack of transportation resources in Eastern Ottawa County.

# APPENDIX G: Stakeholder Messaging Survey

Welcome!

Thank you for taking a few minutes to participate in our quick messaging survey! As you know, a transportation workgroup has been formed in Eastern Ottawa County to demonstrate the impact lack of transportation has on a community without a public transportation system. The following 10 questions include potential messages that the workgroup may be using for an upcoming educational marketing campaign beginning in August 2009. These messages will be shared with members of the Eastern Ottawa County community, thus your input will be very beneficial as we move forward in finalizing these messages.

Please read the following messages, then rate the persuasiveness of each one.

1. Many people living in Eastern Ottawa County need transportation. Thirty six percent of people with unmet transportation needs are seniors, age sixty and older. Among seniors who need transportation, fifty one percent have indicated that their greatest unmet transportation need is to medical appointments. In the past year, over one hundred and fifty seniors in Eastern Ottawa County contacted a community organization with a transit need. Many of these needs have gone unmet because of lack of transportation resources in Eastern Ottawa County.

How persuasive do you believe this message would be in Eastern Ottawa County to increase support for public transportation services?

1 Very persuasive

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10 Not very persuasive

2. Many people living in Eastern Ottawa County need transportation. Eleanor is one senior, over the age of sixty, who has unmet transportation needs. In particular, Eleanor's greatest transportation need is to get to her weekly kidney dialysis appointments. In the past year, she contacted several community organizations with her unmet transit need. Eleanor has not found a ride to her medical appointments because of a lack of transportation resources in Eastern Ottawa County.

How persuasive do you believe this message would be in Eastern Ottawa County to increase support for public transportation services?

1 Very persuasive

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10 Not very persuasive

3. Many people living in Eastern Ottawa County need transportation. Thirty eight percent of people with unmet transportation needs are of working age, between 18 and 59 years old. Among people of working age who need transportation, twenty one percent have indicated that lack of transportation has prevented them from looking for, getting or keeping a job in the past year. Forty percent of local community organizations say that the greatest unmet transportation need for their clients is to get to work. Many of these needs have gone unmet because of lack of transportation resources in Eastern Ottawa County.

How persuasive do you believe this message would be in Eastern Ottawa County to increase support for public transportation services?

jn 1 Very persuasive

jn 2

jn 3

jn 4

jn 5

jn 6

jn 7

jn 8

jn 9

jn 10 Not very persuasive

4. Many people living in Eastern Ottawa County need transportation. Susan is one person with unmet transportation needs who is of working age, between 18 and 59 years old. In the last year, Susan has lost two jobs because of a lack of transportation. She contacted several community organizations with her unmet transit need, and while one organization found a job for her, she couldn't work because she did not have a ride to get there. Susan is still not working because of a lack of transportation resources in Eastern Ottawa County.

How persuasive do you believe this message would be in Eastern Ottawa County to increase support for public transportation services?

1 Very persuasive

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10 Not very persuasive

5. Many people living in Eastern Ottawa County need transportation. People with unmet transportation needs include seniors and people of working age. People are not able to get to the places they need to go when they do not have transportation. When people do not have a ride, often, they contact community organizations about their transportation needs. Many of these needs have gone unmet because of lack of transportation resources in Eastern Ottawa County.

How persuasive do you believe this message would be in Eastern Ottawa County to increase support for public transportation services?

1 Very persuasive

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10 Not very persuasive

6. Increasing public transportation services in Eastern Ottawa County would cost your household one candy bar per week.

How persuasive do you believe this message would be in Eastern Ottawa County to increase support for public transportation services?

1 Very persuasive

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10 Not very persuasive

7. Increasing public transportation services in Eastern Ottawa County would cost your household seventy seven cents per week.

How persuasive do you believe this message would be in Eastern Ottawa County to increase support for public transportation services?

jm 1 Very persuasive

jm 2

jm 3

jm 4

jm 5

jm 6

jm 7

jm 8

jm 9

jm 10 Not very persuasive

8. Increasing public transportation services in Eastern Ottawa County would cost your household forty dollars per year.

How persuasive do you believe this message would be in Eastern Ottawa County to increase support for public transportation services?

1 Very persuasive

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10 Not very persuasive

9. Increasing public transportation services in Eastern Ottawa County would cost your household a night at the movies for two people including tickets, popcorn, and pop.

How persuasive do you believe this message would be in Eastern Ottawa County to increase support for public transportation services?

jn 1 Very persuasive

jn 2

jn 3

jn 4

jn 5

jn 6

jn 7

jn 8

jn 9

jn 10 Not very persuasive

10. If you were designing a message about the need for public transportation in Eastern Ottawa County, what message/s would you use? (This can be a message not provided in this survey.)

## Thank you!

Again, thank you for taking the time to complete this survey! Your input is invaluable as we move forward in this process of educating the Eastern Ottawa community on the need for transportation. A report of this survey, as well as the results of other surveys from this study will be available in June at [www.dnlakeshore.org](http://www.dnlakeshore.org). If you have any questions, please contact Kathryn Gillen @ 616.396.5326.



# TRANSIT MEANS MORE FOR EVERYONE.

More economic growth. More access to medical care. More freedom to find work. More options for families.

## Eastern Ottawa needs public transportation.

Since September 2008, Disability Network/Lakeshore has been conducting a study to increase awareness of and support for public transportation in Eastern Ottawa County. This region includes Allendale, Blendon, Georgetown/Jenison, Jamestown Township, and the City of Hudsonville, and it remains the only urban core left in West Michigan without its own public transportation system. This community is the missing link in our transportation network. Watch our educational video to learn more!

### Watch the video.



## Transit means more for everyone.

Community. Independence. Freedom. Opportunity. Choice. Connection. Those are just some of the many benefits that a public transportation system could bring to Eastern Ottawa County. Whether you're a businessperson, a student, a person with a disability, a senior, or an elected official, public transportation means more for everyone. The benefits include increased employment options for adults, more access to medical care for seniors, and more participation in after-school activities by students. The community recognizes this need for public transit. In fact 75% of people we surveyed support public transportation in Eastern Ottawa County.

**"Public transportation will provide opportunities. It would provide growth to a community. It provides a lot of options to the citizens of that community, and I think overall, it will be a stimulant to future growth...for every dollar spent, you're going to get several dollars back."**

**- Don Van Doeselaar Mayor, City of Hudsonville**

There is already one existing public transportation system in Eastern Ottawa County, The Rapid. Every day more than 16,000 students ride The Rapid bus to the Grand Valley State University (GVSU) campus in Allendale, totaling more than 2 million rides each year. But the GVSU transit line is just one small step towards a complete transportation system to serve all of Eastern Ottawa County, linking the community to the greater West Michigan area.

**"If we're going to keep young people in the State of Michigan, we're going to have to provide the amenities that matter to them. And bus transportation clearly is an amenity that matters to them."**

**- Jim Bachmeier, Vice President of Finance and Administration, GVSU**

## Sign Up to Support Transit in Eastern Ottawa

Add your name to the growing list of supporters.

## Connect with your Elected Official

Make your voice heard about transportation.

## Email your Elected Official

An easy link for immediate communication.

## Our Workgroup

Meet the individuals working on this transportation study.

## Study Info

Download a PDF.

## Study Results

Download a PDF.

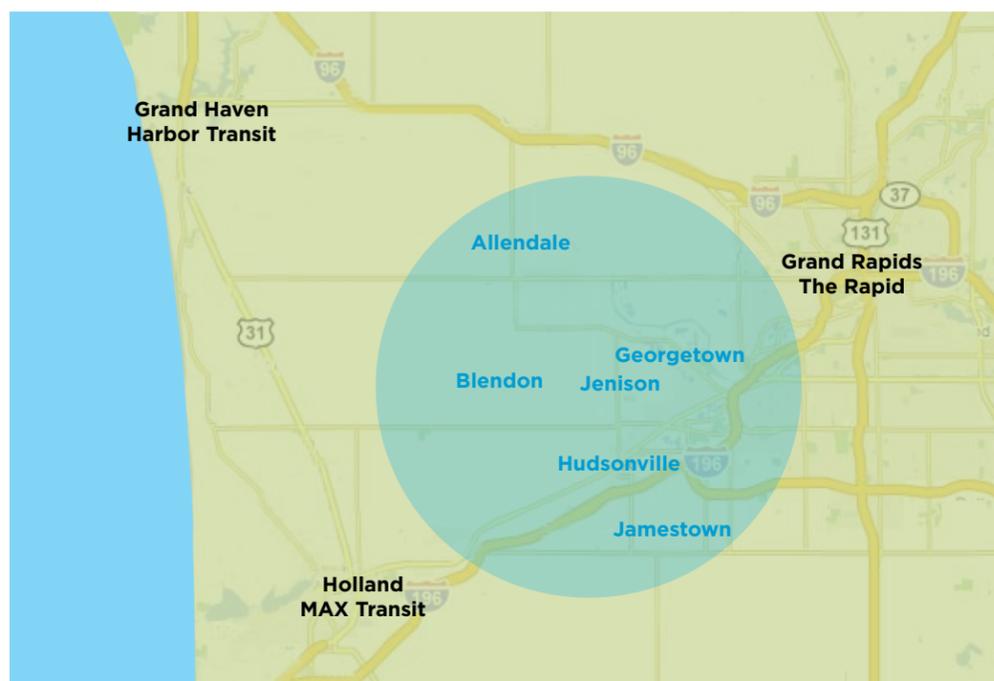
## Educational Postcards

See what others in the community are saying.



## Transit links

- MAX Transit
- The Rapid
- Harbor Transit





# TRANSIT MEANS MORE FOR EVERYONE.

More economic growth. More access to medical care. More freedom to find work. More options for families.

## WE NEED YOU!

Hundreds of individuals living in Eastern Ottawa County have already signed on to support public transportation options in your community. In order to bring public transportation to your area, we need people like you to support our efforts. Join this list of supporters today to show your elected official that transit means more for everyone, including you!

**Name\***

**Email\***

**Address**

**Phone**

**Submit**

\*Required fields

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- Harbor Transit



# TRANSIT MEANS MORE FOR EVERYONE.

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## Connect with your elected official.

Take time today to contact your elected official and let them know how important it is to you to have public transportation in Eastern Ottawa County. Elected Officials represent you and your voice needs to be heard. Use the contact information below to call or mail your elected official. If you would like to send a email to your elected official, click here.

### Allendale Township

Township Supervisor  
Jerry Alkema  
6676 Lake Michigan Drive  
Allendale, MI 49401  
616.895.6295  
jalkema@altelco.net

### Blendon Township

Township Supervisor  
Larry VerHage  
7161 72nd Avenue  
Hudsonville, MI 49426  
616.875.7707  
twpsuper@centurytel.net

### Jamestown Township

Township Supervisor  
James Miedema  
P.O. Box 88  
Jamestown, MI 49427  
616.896.8376  
jmiedema@twp.jamestown.mi.us

### Georgetown / Jenison Township

Township Supervisor  
Dale Mohr  
1515 Baldwin  
P.O. Box 769  
Jenison, MI 49429  
616.457.2340  
dmohr@georgetown-mi.gov

### City of Hudsonville

Mayor  
Don Van Doeselaar  
4512 Creek View Drive  
Hudsonville, MI 49426  
616.669.8045  
dvandoes@hudsonville.org

### City Manager

Pauline Luben  
3275 Central Blvd.  
Hudsonville, MI 49426  
616.669.0200  
pluben@hudsonville.org

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The Rapid  
Harbor Transit



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## Email your elected official.

Tell your elected official that public transportation is needed in Eastern Ottawa County. Complete the steps below to send a email letter to your local elected official urging them to support bringing public transportation options to Eastern Ottawa County.

### Step 1

### Step 2

### Step 3

#### Address information

Enter your information

First Name\*

Last Name\*

Email Address\*

Select the recipient:

- Jerry Alkema, Allendale
- Larry VerHage, Blenden
- James Miedema, Jamestown
- Dale Mohr, Jenison
- Don Van Doeselaar, Hudsonville
- Pauline Luben, Hudsonville

\* Required field

NEXT

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### Step 1

### Step 2

### Step 3

## Compose letter

Subject

Eastern Ottawa Needs Public Transit

Message

Dear Jerry Alkema,

I join citizens throughout Eastern Ottawa County in urging you to support increasing public transportation options in our community.

Eastern Ottawa County, including Allendale, Blendon, Georgetown/Jenison and Jamestown Townships, and the City of Hudsonville, remains the only urban core left in West Michigan without its own public transportation system. As a result, individuals across the area are impacted negatively and are struggling to find transit options that fit their needs.

There are many benefits to creating a public transportation system in our area, including: MORE opportunities for individuals to find work, MORE access to medical care for seniors, MORE economic growth for businesses, MORE freedom for families and young professionals, and MORE green options for our environment.

Please join with your fellow elected officials in building a public transportation system in Eastern Ottawa County. Consider forming a committee to discuss transit options in our community!

Sincerely,  
Lisa Dingman

BACK

NEXT

## Sign Up to Support Transit in Eastern Ottawa

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Make your voice heard about transportation.

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An easy link for immediate communication.

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## Email your elected official.

Tell your elected official that public transportation is needed in Eastern Ottawa County. Complete the steps below to send a email letter to your local elected official urging them to support bringing public transportation options to Eastern Ottawa County.

### Step 1

### Step 2

### Step 3

#### Preview letter

From: Lisa Dingman (lisa@squareonedesign.com)  
To: jalkema@email.com

Eastern Ottawa Needs Public Transit

Dear Jerry Alkema,

I join citizens throughout Eastern Ottawa County in urging you to support increasing public transportation options in our community.

Eastern Ottawa County, including Allendale, Blenden, Georgetown/Jenison and Jamestown Townships, and the City of Hudsonville, remains the only urban core left in West Michigan without its own public transportation system. As a result, individuals across the area are impacted negatively and are struggling to find transit options that fit their needs.

There are many benefits to creating a public transportation system in our area, including: MORE opportunities for individuals to find work, MORE access to medical care for seniors, MORE economic growth for businesses, MORE freedom for families and young professionals, and MORE green options for our environment.

Please join with your fellow elected officials in building a public transportation system in Eastern Ottawa County. Consider forming a committee to discuss transit options in our community!

Sincerely,  
Lisa Dingman

BACK

SEND

## Sign Up to Support Transit in Eastern Ottawa

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- Harbor Transit



# TRANSIT MEANS MORE FOR EVERYONE.

More economic growth. More access to medical care. More freedom to find work. More options for families.

## Meet our workgroup.

Over one year ago, 12 individuals made a commitment to their community by signing on to be a workgroup member for the Eastern Ottawa Transportation Workgroup. The individuals below have been working hard on increasing awareness of public transportation in Eastern Ottawa County. With over 10 organizations involved, the workgroup has been able to represent individuals across Allendale, Blendon, Jamestown, Georgetown/Jenison and Hudsonville.



**Linda Lefebre**  
Blendon Resident



**Sue Fritz**  
Hudsonville Resident



**Norma Berens**  
Love INC



**Pam Haverdink**  
Georgetown Seniors



**Andrea Dewey**  
Grand Valley Metro Council



**Kevin Wisselink**  
The Rapid



**Don Van Doeselaar**  
City of Hudsonville



**Lisa Keskitalo**  
Hudsonville Public Schools



**Dale Ranson**  
Jenison Public Schools



**Sue Busscher**  
Hudsonville Public Schools



**Candy Kraker**  
Allendale Township



**Kathryn Gillen**  
Disability Network/Lakeshore

## Sign Up to Support Transit in Eastern Ottawa

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# TRANSIT MEANS MORE FOR EVERYONE.

More economic growth. More access to medical care. More freedom to find work. More options for families.

## Educational Postcards.

These postcards were sent to over 6000 individuals living in Eastern Ottawa County.

TRANSIT MEANS MORE FOR EVERYONE.

"A PUBLIC TRANSIT SYSTEM WOULD GIVE MY SON MORE INDEPENDENCE, WHICH WOULD ALLOW ME TO LOOK FOR A JOB." -SUE FRITZ HUDSONVILLE RESIDENT

TRANSIT MEANS MORE FOR EVERYONE.

"IF MY EMPLOYEES HAD MORE RELIABLE TRANSIT, OUR COMPANY COULD BE MORE EFFICIENT." -MATT HEIDRICHSON OPERATIONS MANAGER, HUI-WOOL COMPANY

TRANSIT MEANS MORE FOR EVERYONE.

"IF MY CLIENTS HAD AFFORDABLE TRANSPORTATION, THEY COULD GET MORE OF THE MEDICAL HELP THEY REALLY NEED." -ANGELA DALMAN SOCIAL WORKER, SENIOR RESOURCES

## Sign Up to Support Transit in Eastern Ottawa

Add your name to the growing list of supporters.

## Connect with your Elected Official

Make your voice heard about transportation.

## Email your Elected Official

An easy link for immediate communication.

## Our Workgroup

Meet the individuals working on this transportation study.

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## Study Results

Download a PDF.

## Educational Postcards

See what others in the community are saying.



## Transit links

- MAX Transit
- The Rapid
- Harbor Transit

# APPENDIX I: Elected Official Survey

We are conducting a brief study of elected officials in Eastern Ottawa County to understand your opinion about public transportation in your district. The survey should only take a couple minutes to complete. Participation is voluntary and all individual responses will remain anonymous. The data collected from this study will be analyzed by Bergan Consulting and used to gauge support for expanded public transportation services in Eastern Ottawa County. If you have any questions about this survey, you may contact Dan Bergan, PhD at [bergan@msu.edu](mailto:bergan@msu.edu).

Q1. What unit of government do you represent?

- |                       |                                |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Allendale Township | 4. Jamestown Township          |
| 2. Blendon Township   | 5. Jenison/Georgetown Township |
| 3. Hudsonville City   |                                |

Q2. How do you find out about how much the members of your constituency support a given policy? That is, how do you find out about and track public opinion on issues that fall within your jurisdiction?

Q3. How important do you think that public transportation is in your district?

Not at all important      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      Extremely important

Q4. How supportive are you of expanded public transportation in your district?

Not at all supportive      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      Extremely supportive

Q5. What factors have influenced your opinion about public transportation for your district? (e.g. public comments, DVD, newspaper articles, survey results (data), etc...)

Q6. If an elected official committee formed to work on expanding public transportation in Eastern Ottawa County, how willing would you be to become a member?

Not at all willing      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      Extremely willing

**Thank you very much for your time!**

On behalf of the  
Eastern Ottawa Transit Workgroup,  
you are cordially invited to  
attend a presentation on:

### *TRANSIT MEANS MORE*

Monday, November 2, 2009

7:00 pm to 8:00 pm

at the

**GVSU Alumni House**

One Campus Drive, Allendale, MI 49010

*Refreshments & appetizers served at 6:45 pm.*

Eastern Ottawa County is the missing  
link in the Greater West Michigan  
public transportation network.

Join other officials in understanding the  
transit needs in **OUR** community!

Please visit [www.transitmeansmore.org](http://www.transitmeansmore.org)

Please RSVP by October 28th to Kathryn Gillen:  
616.396.5326 or [kathryn@dnlakeshore.org](mailto:kathryn@dnlakeshore.org)

## *TRANSIT MEANS MORE*

Monday, November 2, 2009

GVSU Alumni House

7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

### Agenda

#### Welcome

*by Mayor Don Van Doeselaar*

#### Study Findings

*by Kathryn Gillen*

#### Transit Means More DVD

*by Eastern Ottawa Transit Workgroup*

#### Peter Varga, CEO of The Rapid

*introduced by Kevin Wisselink*

#### Residential Impact

*by Sue Fritz*

#### Next Steps

*by Dale Ranson*

#### Questions?

*Thank you for your participation!!*



# TRANSIT MEANS MORE

a presentation by  
the eastern ottawa transit workgroup

Monday, November 2, 2009  
GVSU Alumni House



# A Vehicle for Change:

Demonstrating the impact lack of transit has on a community without a public transit system

Timeline: September 2008 – December 2009

Grant: MDOT– Service Development and New Technologies Grant

Study Area: Allendale, Blendon, Georgetown, Hudsonville, Jamestown

Objective: Understand the current impact lack of public transit has on a community without its own public transit system. Discover what the current unmet transit needs are and how to effectively communicate those needs to local stakeholders and elected officials

# Phase 1:

## Individual Unmet Needs Analysis

- ▶ 449 surveys completed with schools, govt. agencies and organizations to understand the need for transit in the community
- ▶ 34 one-on-one interviews with individuals with transit needs and their networks
  - Social Worker
  - Family/Friend/Neighbor
  - Supervisor
  - Teacher

# Phase 1: Results

- ▶ 400 residents have contacted a community organization for a transit need
- ▶ 84% of people 60 or over stated medical care as the purpose of transit trip
- ▶ 21% said a lack of transportation prevented them from looking for, getting or keeping a job
- ▶ 59% stated \$2 – \$5 would be an affordable cost for one, one-way ride
- ▶ Peak times for needed transportation are between 6 – 10am + 2–6pm

# Phase 2: Community Analysis

- ▶ 1000 surveys completed with residents to further understand their transit needs and gauge their support for public transit
- ▶ create a educational media DVD to convey the transit needs + benefits of transit in the community
- ▶ 6000 educational postcard mailing to increase awareness of transit in the community

# Phase 2: Results

- ▶ 75% of people support public transit services
- ▶ 87% said improving area public transit was either very or somewhat important
- ▶ 53% stated that traffic congestion is very or somewhat severe
- ▶ 62% indicated being very or somewhat supportive of a millage
- ▶ 49% signed on to publicly support transit in their community

# Phase 3: Elected Official Analysis

- ▶ Transit Means More Presentation to present key findings and educational DVD to community officials
- ▶ Survey with Elected Officials to gauge their willingness to participate in bringing public transit to Eastern Ottawa County



# TRANSIT MEANS MORE FOR EVERYONE

[www.transitmeansmore.org](http://www.transitmeansmore.org)





Everything Michigan

## Study poses transportation questions

Posted by Cathy Runyon November 24, 2008 16:53PM

Eastern Ottawa County is a great place to live and work - if you can drive. For those who cannot drive, getting to work, stores, or appointments can be a challenge.

A study now in progress seeks to identify transportation needs in the community. Interviewers want to hear from the individuals affected.

When Sue Busscher, with Hudsonville Public Schools, became aware that some employees were having a problem getting to work, she called Hudsonville Mayor Don VanDoeselaar.

"There was a small group that wanted to look at how to solve some transportation issues for some who were disabled and not able to drive and could not get to work, appointments, and that sort of thing," VanDoeselaar said. A committee was assembled and began an initial survey of providers and those who were being impacted by lack of transportation.

That committee, working through the Disability Network, applied to the Michigan Department of Transportation for funding to do a study on the needs in the community. They received a grant of \$99,000.

About that time another larger regional study was begun to try to determine whether it was feasible to connect major population centers with public buses serving Grand Valley State University and downtown Grand Rapids. Information gathered in the Disability Network study could be helpful to the regional study, VanDoeselaar said.

The Disability Network committee is now in the process of interviewing people who have been identified as needing transportation, but more contacts are needed, according to Kathryn Gillen, publicity specialist with the Lakeshore Disability Network.

The study is focused on the townships of Allendale, Blendon, Jamestown, and Georgetown, and the city of Hudsonville.

"We are missing people from Jamestown and Blendon township especially," said Gillen. "We are hoping to get names of people who live there for one-on-one interviews." She said the group hopes to complete the study by the end of the year.

Pamela Haverdink, director of the Georgetown Senior Center, is on the committee. She said Georgetown has the only transit network available at this time. The study may help determine whether it should be expanded, or whether a public system should be added for the area. Two seniors who use the Georgetown buses have been interviewed for the study, along with a driver.

The study seeks to determine transportation needs by asking people how they currently get to work, school, medical appointments, social events, and other activities in the region, and whether they have been disappointed in existing transit options.

Trained volunteers will conduct preliminary interviews with individuals from the community, including those who provide transportation for someone else, and representatives of businesses.

Some sample questions are: How are you personally affected by the lack of public transportation in the community? How often is your schedule changed in order to accommodate the person for whom you provide transportation? What changes in your transportation situation would make life easier for you or your family? What would be some ideal solutions to improve the current transportation needs of the community?

The study will include input from agencies and organizations by asking whether the lack of transportation services for members affected the organization, whether the organization provides transportation for members and how many use it, and what effect public transportation might have.

Volunteer interviewers will note the race, gender, and approximate age of the respondent, and evaluate the responses as to persuasiveness. Some respondents also will be asked if they would like to have their stories videotaped for later use in a presentation that can be used to communicate the transportation needs of the community to elected officials.

Anyone interested in being interviewed should contact Kathryn Gillen at the Disability Network, 396-5326.

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Everything Michigan

## Study shows demand, support for transit system in eastern Ottawa County

By Greg Chandler | The Grand Rapids Press

March 24, 2010, 11:05PM

OTTAWA COUNTY -- Pam Haverdink recently received a phone call from a refugee family living in Georgetown Township, asking about whether there was bus service in their area.

"They wanted to get hooked up (to a transit system) so we could get them to Grand Rapids," the director of the Georgetown Seniors program said.

Haverdink, whose program provides transit service to seniors and people with disabilities in eastern Ottawa County, says calls such as this underscore the need for a transit system serving the township, the county's largest municipality, as well as surrounding communities such as Allendale Township and Hudsonville.

**According to a recent study**, more than 400 residents in the eastern half of the county have called a community organization in the past nine months about an unmet transit need, with more than half of the calls related to medical needs. One in five said a lack of transportation has prevented them from looking for, getting or keeping a job.

"There's nothing available for people who are right on that line of having one car, or no car at all," Haverdink said.

The 70-page study from Disability Network/Lakeshore, made possible by a \$99,000 grant from the Michigan Department of Transportation, also indicated nearly 60 percent of those seeking transit service would be willing to pay \$2 to \$5 for a one-way trip.

"People are saying they will use public transit," said Kathryn Gillen, a public policy specialist for Disability Network, the point person for the study.

The study also included a phone survey of more than 1,000 residents, which showed 75 percent support the establishment of transit in eastern Ottawa County and 62 percent would support a millage to provide transit to the region.

The eastern Ottawa study is separate from a second study being undertaken in the county to explore potential transit linkages between Grand Rapids, Holland and Muskegon.

A 12-member workgroup has been presenting findings from its study throughout the area. It has already appeared before the township boards in Georgetown and Blendon, and this week presented its report to Ottawa County commissioners. The report soon will be presented to city officials in Hudsonville, Haverdink said.

"If we decided today to (start a transit system), it's going to take two to three years before it will come to fruition," she said.

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

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## Two studies eye area mass transit

By **PETER DAINING**  
**The Holland Sentinel**

Posted Mar 29, 2010 @ 05:30 AM

Holland, MI — How do you get to Grand Valley from Holland without a car? What about to a friend's house in Hudsonville, for that matter?

Two groups are now studying mass transit in West Michigan: one focused on linking the Grand Rapids, Holland and Muskegon areas, and another dedicated to eastern Ottawa County.

### Eastern Ottawa Transit Study

Whereas Holland has MAX Transit and Grand Rapids has The Rapid, eastern Ottawa communities like Jenison, Hudsonville and Allendale don't have a bus system.

A \$99,000 state grant paid to study the area and found 75 percent of residents support the system. In the last several months, Kathryn Gillen of Disability Network-Lakeshore has been presenting and asking for feedback from local government officials.

A bus system in eastern Ottawa would connect the area to Kent County, where people could ride The Rapid into Grand Rapids for jobs and appointments, she said.

She said the final report is due to the state by June, but it will be up to concerned citizens and officials to push the effort forward.

The study identified support for public transportation, but didn't address the feasibility of such a system.

And even if the region knew now exactly what scale mass transit system it wanted, the system would take around three years to implement.

"It's a very long process, she said.

For more on the study, go to [www.transitmeansmore.org](http://www.transitmeansmore.org).

### West Michigan Transit Linkages Study

Due out this fall, the West Michigan Transit Linkages Study is looking at the feasibility of connecting the area's urban centers.

While unrelated to the eastern Ottawa study, county planning director Mark Knudsen said the linkages study will take into account information from this and other reports.

The idea was hatched more than two years ago by local manufacturing plant owners interested in finding reliable regional transportation for their employees.

Now, the \$110,000 study is heading toward its last stop. But like the eastern Ottawa study, the end of the line is just another bump in the road on the way to actually expanding public transportation.

The needs assessment portion of the study is available at [www.gvsu.edu/westmitransitstudy](http://www.gvsu.edu/westmitransitstudy).

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Everything Michigan

## Eastern Ottawa called 'missing link' in public transportation

By Cathy Runyon | Advance Newspapers

March 30, 2010, 11:49AM

A study of public transportation needs and interests that began in September 2008 is drawing to a close. The next step, according to Kathryn Gillen, with the Disability Network Lakeshore, which received a grant to fund the study, will be up to local governing boards.

"We hope they will decide to ask for public support, possibly a millage, or vote to fund public transportation," said Gillen after a presentation last week to the Georgetown Township Board.

Gillen was introduced by Pam Haverdink, director of the Georgetown Senior Center, which operates its own small transportation system. The fleet supplies 16,000 rides per year. Seniors may arrange for door-to-door transportation for medical appointments or other needs. Haverdink said she has heard seniors say the service is the reason they moved to Georgetown, but it cannot serve the whole community.

"We are turning people away," Haverdink told the board. "Love INC is turning people away." Public transportation would serve many seniors and low-income residents at lower cost.

Gillen said that 84 percent of people surveyed who were age 60 or older stated medical care as the purpose of their trip supplied by some form of transportation other than their private vehicle (such as Georgetown buses or volunteer drivers working through local agencies). More than 400 people living in eastern Ottawa County have contacted a community organization in the last nine months about an unmet transit need, according to the study.

The study surveyed Georgetown Township/Jenison, Hudsonville, Jamestown Township, Allendale Township, and Blendon Township.

"Eastern Ottawa County is the missing link," Gillen said, "the only urban core without public transportation." The most likely way to bring public transportation to the area would be an expansion of The Rapid into Hudsonville and Jenison, Gillen said, but even if a decision were made immediately by the governments involved, it would be two to three years before a bus made a stop.

"Public transportation is not self-supporting," she said. "It is usually funded through a millage. Right now, we just want local governments to start thinking about it."

In the third phase of the study, area elected officials are being asked to supply information about local interest in and support for public transportation. Then another survey of residents will be completed. A final report from the Michigan Department of Transportation is due in June. Anyone with comments or questions on the study, or opinions about public transportation, should contact their local elected officials.

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Everything Michigan

## Hudsonville mayor pushes for expanded public transportation

By Matt Vande Bunte, The Grand Rapids Press

April 22, 2010, 12:01AM

HUDSONVILLE -- Public transportation "will be a stimulant to future growth" in Hudsonville, Mayor Don Van Doeselaar says in a video produced by a Holland nonprofit that studied the need for bus service in eastern Ottawa County.

Disability Network Lakeshore completed a grant-funded study and posted results, along with the video, at [transitmeansmore.org](http://transitmeansmore.org). Kathryn Gillen, the group's public policy specialist, said the organization now is talking with The Rapid about expanding transit services.

"We know that the need is there; we know the support is there. But what is the cost?" Gillen said. At a video screening this month, Van Doeselaar said it would be nice to bridge The Rapid's services with transit systems in Holland and Grand Haven.

"Someone could go from Grand Rapids all the way out to the lakeshore if there was some common connection in Ottawa County," he said.

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

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