

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