



Techniques to Market Countywide Rural Transportation

in Allegan County, MI

A Stakeholder Analysis:
Stakeholder Survey and Focus Group
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Executive Summary

In October of 2008, Disability Network / Lakeshore of Holland, MI was awarded a Service Development and New Technologies (SDNT) grant from the Michigan Department of Transportation for a study entitled, “Techniques to Market Countywide Rural Transportation.”

Disability Network / Lakeshore has partnered with Daniel Bergan, PhD, from Michigan State University to conduct this six-phase study in Allegan County, MI. This community change study seeks to increase awareness of and support for Allegan County Transportation (ACT). Additionally, a workgroup has been formed, Allegan County Transportation Workgroup, to develop and implement a five-year community supported strategic plan for ACT with the goal to effectively and efficiently meet the transit needs of Allegan County residents.

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

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

The online stakeholder survey was created to determine unmet transportation needs and opportunities in the Allegan community from the perspective of the local stakeholder. The survey began in November 2008 and continued through January 2009. Second, the workgroup conducted six focus groups with participants who had previously completed the online stakeholder survey. In January 2009, in order to understand specific transit needs from all areas in Allegan County, the workgroup outlined five specific regions including: the Center of Allegan, Southwest Allegan, Northwest Allegan, Southeast Allegan, and Northwest Allegan. A focus group was held in each region, with two focus groups being held in the Center of Allegan.

Overall, after analyzing the data in this report, the following are key findings of phase one based on stakeholders’ perspectives of unmet transit needs in Allegan County.

- + 34.8% noted they use volunteers to help meet unmet transit needs
- + Work and medical appointments were the number one traveled destinations
- + 52.4% stated the inability to get people the services they need is how transit needs affected their organization or business
- + 83.6% said they either strongly or somewhat strongly supported increased transit services
- + 92.1% cited the need for regional transportation in the next three years as very or somewhat important

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Part One: Online Stakeholder Survey

I. Survey Design and Data Collection

In order to begin understanding the unmet transit needs in Allegan County, an online survey, created by Disability Network / Lakeshore and Daniel Bergan, PhD, of Michigan State University, was developed and distributed to community members as identified by the Allegan County Transportation Workgroup. The community members were selected as those who work with people having unmet transportation needs including, but not limited to, non-profit agencies, employers, faith-based organizations, and units of government. To access the survey, participants were given the URL via an email letter, and asked to complete the survey in its entirety. Survey collection was completed between November 2008 and January of 2009. A copy of the survey is provided in Appendix A.

II. Data Analysis

Completed surveys were compiled through Survey Monkey and downloaded for a complete analysis. Frequency and percentage tables for all questions in the survey appear in section IV entitled “Survey Results.”

III. Survey Summary

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

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

The top five municipalities in Allegan County that respondents noted serving were: All (43.0%), Saugatuck Township (25.2%), Allegan Township (25.2%), City of Allegan (24.4%), and the City of Saugatuck (22.2%).

When asked how they currently meet people’s transit needs, stakeholders stated: Volunteers (34.8%), Allegan County Transportation (27.0%), Saugatuck / Douglas Interurban Transit (12.8%), Macatawa Area Express (9.2%), Love In the Name of Christ (2.8%), In-house transit system (7.1%), Taxis (2.8%), and Voucher Program (2.1%). Just over one-third (36.2%) do not provide or pay for transportation. One-fifth of respondents (22.7%) provide transportation through other venues.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Part Two: Stakeholder Focus Groups

I. Focus Group Design and Data Collection

In January 2009, the Allegan County Transportation Workgroup conducted a series of six focus groups with over 45 community members representing organizations and businesses throughout Allegan County, using trained volunteer facilitators from the Transportation Workgroup. The purpose of the focus groups was to gather feedback on the online stakeholder survey results, discuss community perceptions of needs in specific areas of the county, and identify people with unmet transit needs. In order to illicit responses that were specific to the needs of certain geographies within the County, the focus groups were held in five separate regions throughout the County including Southwest Allegan, Northwest Allegan, Southeast Allegan, Northeast Allegan, and the City of Allegan. Participants in the focus groups included non-profits, employers, government agencies, faith-based organizations, medical institutions, transit providers, senior care organizations, tourism groups, educational organizations, financial institutions, and an elected official. Each focus group lasted between 60-80 minutes, and consisted of six open-ended questions. All focus groups sessions were tape-recorded for accuracy, however, after a full analysis was completed, the tapings were destroyed for confidentially purposes.

II. Data Analysis

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

III. Focus Group Summary

The following provides a summary for each open-ended question asked during the focus group sessions.

A. General Reactions to the Online Stakeholder Survey Results

Each group was asked to give feedback on the online stakeholder survey results. The results of the survey were not overly surprising to anyone and were consistent with what each focus group identified as needs. Several members commented that it verified what they see as the needs in the area. Some commented that the survey results clearly showed how Allegan County transportation needs are unique in the each region due to being a large rural county and also very reliant on volunteers and churches to meet the current transit needs. Obviously, this volunteer system has certain limitations for meeting the variety of needs in Allegan County. Some of these limitations include a coordinated communication system, insurance costs and liability for vehicles, seasonal reliability and other variables associated with volunteer resources.

B. Unique Transit Needs by County Regions

Groups were asked to describe any transit needs that they felt were specific to their city or area of the county.

i. Center: Region 1

A concern this group discussed was that of jail inmates. When inmates are released there is no place for them to go, so they immediately look to downtown businesses and organizations to find transportation options. Another concern was domestic violence of women. How do we find transportation for women and their children when ACT does not provide services

during the night hours? Usually these women have to be transported out of the county for their safety, and it is very hard to find transportation, especially private transportation.

ii. *Northeast: Region 2*

The current system is not reliable when it involves taking people to major medical centers out of the county. It requires people to plan ahead and have education about what transit options are available that fit their schedules. This takes time and forethought, while many needs are immediate and urgent.

iii. *Southeast: Region 3*

This region was self-identified as a more commercially developed area of the county with an increased need for transit that works for employers and employees. Those living a bit off the main routes are finding it difficult to get to jobs and the necessary social services.

iv. *Northwest: Region 4*

The group talked about the economic development potential of public transit for this area. There was talk about the need for a Lakeshore route that connected communities including Holland, Saugatuck, Douglas and Fennville to boost the tourism industry.

v. *Southwest: Region 5*

This group had concerns over having to find transit to areas outside of the county. There were questions over the long-term impact to the community if seniors are no longer able to live in the area because of the lack of family support and public transit.

C. *Types of People with Transit Needs*

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

D. *Organizational and Business Impact*

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

E. *Changes or Improvements*

Groups were asked to identify positive changes or improvement they might like to see.

- + There should be more regular routes around population centers and more on-demand, door-to-door service in rural areas. At some point, the service needs to get to the level where there can be one hour advanced notice, not one day, while still remaining affordable.
- + There should be one phone number or website to go to for transit questions, linking people to appropriate resources.
- + There is a need to link local service to a more regional transit system that would help connect people to jobs. People explored the idea of local circulator routes in the various regions of the county, linked to a system that runs to other population centers inside and outside the county.
- + People want more service, but realize the constraints that exist in a more rural county with less population density. There may be an opportunity for larger vans running more regular routes and smaller vans for on-demand services.
- + There is satisfaction with the quality of current service by those with a contract with ACT, but the county could be more data driven to understand actual needs and demands.
- + There needs to be improved hours of operation to capture people working second and third shifts, weekends, etc.
- + There needs to be a more comprehensive communication and awareness campaign so people know what is available and what to advocate for.
- + There needs to be a culture that supports public transit.
- + There should be safe enclosures and stations to protect people from adverse weather.

F. *Support for Increased Transit Services*

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

G. *Resources and Funding*

Groups were asked to identify resources or alternative funding sources for improved transit services. Most groups felt there was a need to diversify funding sources for transit. A transit millage came up in several groups, and people saw it as a viable option but worried that it could not be passed in this current economic climate. There might also be smarter ways to allocate the money already existing within the county. The county was encouraged to research additional grants.

H. *Reaching People with Unmet Transit Needs*

Groups were asked to identify methods or strategies to reach population groups with unmet transit needs. Most groups were able to compile a quick list of possible options for reaching vulnerable populations. This included mailing materials through a local municipal mailing (taxes, water bill, etc.). There were several institutions that could also disseminate information, like schools, churches, and hospitals. It needs to be a multi-tiered effort that clearly communicates how people can get connected.

I. *Moving Forward*

Focus group participants were asked to take one-on-one interview invitation cards (Appendix F) to give to those individuals they work with who may be interested in participating in a 30 minute phone interview for phase two of the transportation study. These individuals are considered as persons with unmet transit needs.

J. *Community Voices*

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

“Transportation is more than just a transportation development system, it is how we affect the people who ride.”

“Increasing hours are a great thing, expanding outside of Allegan County, expanding geographical area because no jobs are in Allegan County – they could do these jobs but I cannot get them to these places for these jobs. If we could link these systems from MAX and Interurban that would be good.”

“One of my biggest concerns is people don’t know about how to get a ride and about the [ACT] system. We need to learn about the various transit needs and educate the public on that and the transit systems.”

“Transportation affects our organization, it affects who goes. We could have the best program in the world and people not go because they can’t get there. We use ACT transportation, and we would love to have more people come in, but they can’t because ACT can’t afford it. A lot of it has to do with how much it costs to take it. They could improve their routes....not going all over the county, but maybe having a bus in each quadrant. I could dictate my hours of operation based on transportation service hours.”

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

“Connections to other counties is going to be important, as an example I needed to go to COA (Commission on Aging) in Barry County, and I had no way of going there. No connection between counties.”

“Amazed at how high the volunteers number was – rural nature people rely on their churches and volunteers more than their public transit.”

“Unique needs for inmates. They are released at 8:00am and have no way to get anywhere because they don’t have transportation. They either end up at downtown businesses or the Allegan County United Way and that affects those businesses’ safety. They [inmates] are trying to get somewhere in Allegan County or out of the County...”

“I am surprised about the seasonal trends for transit. For our organization the migrant population is here in the summer so they need more transportation in the summer.”

“Also it makes sense why medical is so high because appointments have to be scheduled during the day and usually families only have one car, and they take that to work so people end up needing transit during the day.”

“Connecting the buses would be real big. If there was some way a route existed where a bus stayed in each little area (specific regions) with another bus going around in a circle to get people to different regions of the county that would be great. So a fixed circle route, and a demand response in each region.”

“If we can’t get patients in [because of their lack in transportation], then that affects our income, and then you have to lay people off and that starts a vicious cycle. Yesterday, we had a patient that couldn’t come in because he had no transportation, so the doctor made a house call and he ended up going to the hospital. A lot is on the line - sometimes we are talking about the life or death of a person.”

Part Three: Conclusions

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

In not only understanding how unmet transit needs affect the stakeholders' service population, it was also important to understand how transit needs affect their organization or business. Stakeholders cited a decrease in participation in the programs offered and an inability to get people the services they need as being the top two ways their organization or business is affected. Furthermore, stakeholders noted that a loss in revenue was seen as a result of unmet transit needs. Volunteers were ranked number one in how organizations or businesses try to meet the transit needs of their service population. Finally, when reviewing transit needs in terms of seasonality, stakeholders stated that transit needs were the greatest in the winter months. However, both Northwest and Southwest Allegan stakeholders mentioned that summer months were a time of great transit needs because of the boost in tourism in the Lakeshore area.

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

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

Overall, the information the Allegan County Transportation Workgroup received through phase one of this study provides a solid foundation in moving into phase two: understanding individual unmet transit needs through individual residential research methods.

APPENDIX A: Copy of Online Stakeholder Survey

1.

Welcome to the Allegan Stakeholder Survey!

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

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

2.

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

3.

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

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

2. Please indicate what type your organization is:

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

Other (please specify)

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

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

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

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

Other (please specify)

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

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

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

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

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

1 - 19

20 - 49

50 - 79

80 - 99

100 or more

Did not receive any requests

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

1 - 49

50 - 149

150 - 249

250 - 349

350 or more

Did not provide any rides

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

Lost revenue

Loss of current employees

Decreased pool of potential employees

Decreased pool of potential volunteers

Decreased productivity

Decreased participation in programs

Inability to employ people

Inability to get people services they need

Does not affect the organization

Other (please specify)

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

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

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

Yes No Don't know

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

Spring Summer Fall Winter

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

1 = greatest impact

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

Other (please specify)

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

- Strongly support
- Somewhat support
- Neutral
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose

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

Very important

Somewhat important

Not at all important

Don't know

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

Kalamazoo County (Kalamazoo)

Van Buren County (South Haven)

Kent County (Grand Rapids)

Ottawa County (Holland)

Other (please specify)

5.

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

17.

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

Name:

City/Town:

ZIP:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

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

Yes

No

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

Yes

No

7.

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

Please visit the transportation page at www.dnlakeshore.org to learn more about this transit project.

APPENDIX B: Online Stakeholder Survey Results

The following is a complete set of tables indicating the frequency and percentages of survey responses.

Table S.1

Please indicate what type your organization is:		
	Percent	Frequency
Church or faith based	27.8%	32
Organization serving people with disabilities or low incomes	22.6%	26
Unit of Government	13.9%	16
Education	8.7%	10
Employer	8.7%	10
Senior or health care	7.8%	9
Realty/Housing	3.5%	4
Chamber of Commerce	2.6%	3
Transportation Provider	2.6%	3
Tourism or recreation related	1.7%	2
Court of rehabilitation related	0.0%	0
Environmental	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)		35
<i>answered question</i>		115
<i>skipped question</i>		28

Other Responses:

- + CMH
- + Housing Resource Center
- + victims of domestic violence
- + employment agency
- + non-profit hands-on museum
- + service industry - cpa firm
- + Unit of Government for the Village of Hopkins
- + retail - winery
- + Title Insurance
- + Community Action Agency
- + domestic and sexual assault agency
- + Health Care
- + Community Rehabilitation Service Provider (Non-profit)
- + Eye Doctor
- + Membership Based Arts Center
- + Non-Profit
- + convention & visitors bureau
- + retail store
- + Health Department
- + Marketing Communications
- + Community Foundation
- + acute care hospital
- + Service Club
- + Business in the downtown district
- + A family foundation servicing Allegan County
- + Michigan works many programs including poverty program
- + Physical rehabilitation
- + Business
- + Farm Bureau
- + Bed and Breakfast
- + Library
- + Non-profit youth camp
- + Hospice
- + Fitness

Table S.2

My organization is completing this survey to represent the transit needs of _____.		
	Percent	Frequency
Clients/Consumers	51.8%	73
Individuals with low incomes	39.7%	56
Individuals with physical disabilities	36.2%	51
Seniors	31.2%	44
Individuals with developmental disabilities	31.2%	44
Members/Parishioners	24.1%	34
Employees	20.6%	29
Individuals with severe mental illness	20.6%	29
Taxpayers	19.9%	28
Students	17.0%	24
Other (please specify)	13.5%	19
<i>answered question</i>		141
<i>skipped question</i>		2

Other Responses:

- + CMH
- + Housing Resource Center
- + victims of domestic violence
- + employment agency
- + non-profit hands-on museum
- + service industry - cpa firm
- + Unit of Government for the Village of Hopkins
- + retail - winery
- + Title Insurance
- + Community Action Agency
- + domestic and sexual assault agency
- + Health Care
- + Community Rehabilitation Service Provider (Non-profit)
- + Eye Doctor
- + Farm Bureau
- + Bed and Breakfast
- + Library
- + Membership Based Arts Center
- + Non-Profit
- + convention & visitors bureau
- + retail store
- + Health Department
- + Marketing Communications
- + Community Foundation
- + acute care hospital
- + Service Club
- + Business in the downtown district
- + A family foundation servicing Allegan County
- + Michigan works many programs including poverty program
- + Physical rehabilitation
- + Business
- + Non-profit youth camp
- + Hospice
- + Fitness

Table S.3

What municipalities in Allegan County does your organization serve?		
	Percent	Frequency
All	43.0%	58
Saugatuck Township	25.2%	34
Allegan Township	25.2%	34
Allegan City	24.4%	33
Saugatuck City	22.2%	30
Ganges Township	17.8%	24
Holland City	17.8%	24
Douglas City	17.8%	24
Otsego Township	16.3%	22
Laketown Township	15.6%	21
Hopkins Township	15.6%	21
Otsego City	15.6%	21
Dorr Township	14.8%	20
Plainwell City	13.3%	18
Wayland Township	13.3%	18
Martin City	12.6%	17
Trowbridge Township	11.9%	16
Watson Township	11.9%	16
Wayland City	11.9%	16
Monterey Township	11.1%	15
Cheshire Township	11.1%	15
Valley Township	11.1%	15
Martin Township	11.1%	15
Manlius Township	10.4%	14
Casco Township	10.4%	14
Clyde Township	9.6%	13
Fillmore Township	9.6%	13
Lee Township	9.6%	13
Heath Township	8.9%	12
Leighton Township	7.4%	10
Overisel Township	7.4%	10
Salem Township	7.4%	10
Fennville City	7.4%	10

Gun Plain Township	6.7%	9
Other (please specify)		17
<i>answered question</i>		135
<i>skipped question</i>		8

Other Responses:

- + anyone regardless of demographics
- + All Allegan County and surrounding areas
- + Out of State visitors as well requesting transportation
- + Unknown
- + ACCMH covers all Allegan County residents
- + Village of Hopkins
- + All of Allegan and Ottawa County
- + Grand Junction
- + We serve people from all Allegan county but are in Holland.
- + some out of county individuals
- + Southwest Michigan
- + Also Others that are interested
- + occasionally Kalamazoo and grand rapids area
- + manufacturer potentially drawing employees from all areas
- + Some transportation out of county for interviews and jobs
- + The elbow of neglect is Ganges, Fennville, homebound no transportation

Table S.4

Currently, in what ways, if any, is your organization helping meet the transportation needs of the people it serves?		
	Percent	Frequency
We do not provide or pay for any type of transportation.	36.2%	51
Volunteers	34.8%	49
Allegan County Transportation (ACT)	27.0%	38
Other (please specify)	22.7%	32
Saugatuck/Douglas Interurban Transit	12.8%	18
Macatawa Area Express (MAX)	9.2%	13
In-house transit system	7.1%	10
Taxis	2.8%	4
Love in the Name of Christ (Love INC.)	2.8%	4
Voucher Program	2.1%	3
<i>answered question</i>		141
<i>skipped question</i>		2

Other Responses:

- + Children to Youth Programs
- + Provide transit provider contact information to people.

- + staff and providers
- + refer pregnant women to MISS
- + charter services
- + Allegan County Commission of Aging millage
- + staff transport
- + staff
- + Michigan Rehab. Services
- + Staff
- + bussing for students
- + We sometimes pay for gas
- + Pioneer Resources
- + Fund a transportation pilot project.
- + Family members-AmbuCab
- + maintenance and upkeep of local road system and local airport
- + MIHP mileage reimbursement
- + volunteers for very short term needs
- + 1 clinic each month in Otsego
- + Some funding of non-profits may go toward transportation for their client base.
- + church activities
- + we do provide a data base for carpoolers and bike riders looking to ride together
- + advocates for needs and crisis Fennville, Ganges, Allegan
- + families but sometimes at great hardship, volunteers through patient's churches
- + Busing for all day students
- + Emergency, safety related, Tran
- + mileage reimbursement
- + school transportation
- + Outreach
- + Provide own transportation, use parents of youth

Table S.5

Would your organization be willing to implement programs in order to offer transportation to the population your serve or your employee?		
	Percent	Frequency
I don't know	50.7%	68
Yes	33.6%	45
No	15.7%	21
<i>answered question</i>		<i>134</i>
<i>skipped question</i>		<i>9</i>

Table S.6

In the last 30 days, how many requests for rides did your organization receive?		
	Percent	Frequency
1 - 19	43.3%	58
Did not receive any requests	34.3%	46
100 or more	11.9%	16
20 - 49	6.0%	8
50 - 79	3.0%	4
80 - 99	1.5%	2
<i>answered question</i>		134
<i>skipped question</i>		9

Table S.7

In the last 30 days, how many rides did your organization provide?		
	Percent	Frequency
Did not provide any rides	49.3%	68
1 - 49	30.4%	42
350 or more	8.7%	12
50 - 149	7.2%	10
150 - 249	2.9%	4
250 - 349	1.4%	2
<i>answered question</i>		138
<i>skipped question</i>		5

Table S.8

How do unmet transportation needs affect your organization?		
	Percent	Frequency
Inability to get people services they need	54.2%	77
Decreased participation in programs	44.4%	63
Lost revenue	22.5%	32
Does not affect the organization	20.4%	29
Decreased productivity	17.6%	25
Other (please specify)	17.6%	25
Decreased pool of potential volunteers	12.7%	18
Decreased pool of potential employees	11.3%	16
Inability to employ people	9.2%	13
Loss of current employees	4.9%	7
<i>answered question</i>		142
<i>skipped question</i>		1

Other Responses:

- + loss of field trip activities.
- + Seniors needs are not met
- + Didn't anticipate how great the need was and the cost so went over budget
- + Inability to find jobs for people with developmental disabilities and mental illnesses.
- + We provide transportation
- + Since we provide vital services to people who cannot access them independently, whenever other resources cannot be found my staff must provide the transportation - this is a very costly & inefficient use of staff time.
- + people with disabilities unable to get to work or medical appointments
- + It affects families and the ability to get to school related events. Also effects attendance when students miss busses.
- + I may not know how it affects. I suppose if there was transportation provided for worship services a few more people would attend.
- + It greatly affects the agencies that we fund.
- + Additional work for staff who are trying to help clients get the clinic for appointments
- + limits tourists options to visit here without personal cars. Inhibits train and airport tourism to this area
- + It is hard to have to say no to those that need help
- + no shows for appointments, a problem when we are paying Nurse Practitioners and other employees to be here to serve the client
- + As a bank the transportation service is vital to our clients in the area. As a representative of the business association, the transportation service is vital to locals and consumer traffic.
- + inability to have people attend our activities
- + Overwhelmed by crisis of economy and needs of elders, lack of jobs, no transportation, no money for gas etc.
- + It effects the safety, health and well being of our most vulnerable frail and disabled population;

those who need specialized services because of a wheelchair or other needs and can't afford the cost of the ride.

- + Veterans need to access medical centers not only for health reasons but for compensation and pension exams, treatment of ongoing service connected injuries, mental health evaluations, ongoing group support for PTSD. They also need to access employment services and go on job interviews.
- + Some people cannot get to the library
- + Does Not - members take care of each other.
- + We cannot effectively serve the needs of the physically handicap individuals in our area-especially seniors or those in wheelchairs who do not have access to family or appropriate transportation equipment to get them to an appt safely and several times per week which is required for rehab and to help them progress and become less dependent
- + We must provide transportation to special needs students so we are a bit uncommon.
- + Makes it very difficult to get our consumers to/from work or get other workers placed.
- + Inability to leave home.

Table S.9

Based on your experience, please rank the top three destinations that people who live in Allegan County have the greatest difficulty reaching.										
	Work	School	Grocery or Retail Store	Medical	Social Service Organization	Church or Worship	Court	Social or Recreational	Other	Frequency
1 = greatest	48	4	12	46	7	5	3	3	4	132
2 = second greatest	20	12	17	35	18	4	8	9	2	125
3 = third greatest	16	4	19	16	29	13	7	14	5	123
<i>answered question</i>										133
<i>skipped question</i>										10

Table S.10

Does your organization notice any seasonal trends when transit needs are greatest?		
	Percent	Frequency
Yes	41.5%	59
Don't know	29.6%	42
No	28.9%	41
<i>answered question</i>		142
<i>skipped question</i>		1

Table S.11

If you answered "yes" to questions 11, in what season do people you work with have the greatest unmet transportation needs?		
	Percent	Frequency
Winter	71.7%	43
Summer	31.7%	19
Spring	15.0%	9
Fall	15.0%	9
<i>skipped question</i>		60
<i>answered question</i>		83

Table S.12

Please rank the following factors according to which ones you believe would have the greatest impact in improving the current transit system.					
Answer Options	1	2	3	Rating Average	Frequency
Improving services in existing areas	24	19	13	1.80	56
Consolidating services	4	3	9	2.31	16
Expanding geographic area covered	55	20	10	1.47	85
Increasing hours of service	11	33	16	2.08	60
Increasing days of service	5	10	19	2.41	34
Lowering cost of service	7	10	10	2.11	27
Improving customer service	4	4	12	2.40	20
Increasing accessibility of vehicles	9	8	7	1.92	24
Adding amenities (benches, shelters, etc...)	2	4	7	2.38	13
Don't know	14	1	3	1.39	18
Other (please specify)					11
<i>answered question</i>					137
<i>skipped question</i>					6

Other Responses:

- + Getting more information re service area out to public.
- + Expanding into rural areas
- + promotion/publication of transit services offered (I have no idea what is available)
- + I don't think I know enough about what is available.
- + Beyond ADA requirements (ex: door to door, riding assistants...)
- + Public Knowledge of Services Available
- + same day service
- + In Fennville, Ganges, people are in crisis for transportation.
- + Providing services for after school programs and noon time kindergarten.
- + It seems like there are specific times of the month and specific places people want to go. For example

at the beginning of the month when people on limited income receive their social security checks. Plan like every 1st Friday of the month, a bus will be at such and such a place (like a parking lot at a congregate meal site) to take seniors to Walmart or Meijers for a couple of hours then take them home.

- + Expanding service areas, Improving accessibility and existing service areas

Table S.13

How strongly would your organization support increasing transportation in Allegan County?		
	Percent	Frequency
Strongly support	56.3%	72
Somewhat support	27.3%	35
Neutral	16.4%	21
Somewhat oppose	0.0%	0
Strongly oppose	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		128
<i>skipped question</i>		15

Table S.14

A regional transportation system is a transit network that connects surrounding counties. In the next three (3) years, do you believe the need for regional transit will be:		
	Percent	Frequency
Very important	56.4%	79
Somewhat important	35.7%	50
Don't know	6.4%	9
Not at all important	1.4%	2
<i>answered question</i>		140
<i>skipped question</i>		3

Table S.15

If you answered "very important" to question 15, which surrounding county/ies would you like to see Allegan County connect with in the next three (3) years?		
	Percent	Frequency
Ottawa County (Holland)	82.0%	105
Kalamazoo County (Kalamazoo)	60.2%	77
Kent County (Grand Rapids)	46.9%	60
Van Buren County (South Haven)	36.7%	47
Other (please specify)	3.1%	4
	<i>answered question</i>	128
	<i>skipped question</i>	15

Other Responses:

- + Battle Creek - VA Hosp
- + Douglas, Michigan
- + Calhoun County
- + Calhoun County

Table S. 16

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

- + We occasionally have folks who need rides to health care facilities.
- + Getting to doctor's appointments
- + We have many moms that cannot bring their children in for their appointments during the day because the dad is at work and they only have 1 car. We do provide a late night but it is not enough for all the people that would like late afternoon appointments.
- + Sunday Church would be great
- + I know alot of senior citizens who would take the interurban to church on Sunday and to Holland if possible
- + I know alot of senior citizens who would use the interurban on Sunday's to go to church
- + There was a person In Plainwell with a wife and two-year old child. We had to take the gas voucher to him and get them set up in a hotel.
- + There is a person in the Pullman area who takes care of her sick mom. She does not have transportation. She has called many times for assistance with medical appointments, getting to the store, getting medications, etc.
- + I have people that I am developing for that have jobs available in South haven and Holland. They live in Pullman. One man had walked to work all summer at Birds Eye proved himself worthy. And still could not get a ride to any bigger city for work. I have a lady in Fennville that could have work in Holland No ride.

- + An individual I work with will lose his job if he is not able to take ACT to get to work. He lives and works in Allegan. He is not on the route however and because his schedule varies, ACT cannot accommodate his needs. It's a struggle getting him to work every day and keeping him employed. ACT will transport him if ACCMHS pays them to do it but they will not transport him otherwise.
- + Individuals on probation, needing rides to court house, jobs, second and third shift: my son can't get to these places without the supports of his family having to work around their jobs, and life. This is very huge not only for him but at least 6 other young adults in Allegan County. Putting stress on families, and limiting their employment opportunities that they need to make their lives more productive.
- + I know of lots of situations where individuals have transportation needs but they are not met because they don't live in the right area.
- + A young man in the Fennville area rides his bike and has special needs in which he relies on public transportation. This individual has missed doctor's appointments due to the public transit failing to pick him up on time.
- + 10-12 employees out of 60 need or use others for ride to work. Names and stories could be found if needed.
- + In the City of Allegan I know of one gentleman that is not able to attend Mass, go grocery shopping, or seek medical attention unless he walks. The church will not take on the responsibility of transporting him due to the liability that they would expose themselves to.
- + Many young children across Allegan County are unable to receive extended learning opportunities outside of the classroom due to the lack of transit in our county. Many local extended learning organizations have to continuously cancel classes and programs due to lack of participation as a result of lack of transportation to and from these programs. Studies conducted Nationwide have proven that children who struggle early on in education increase the truancy and dropout rates nationwide which in turn results in higher crime rates, unemployment rates, etc. When services and programs are made available, but the general public are unable to participate due to lack of transportation results in discrimination against those rural and low income families unable to provide transportation to and from such program.
- + There are some special need kids who live in Allegan and have no transportation available. Parents have recently died. There are seniors who need rides to medical services.
- + We have frequent requests from "drop-ins", (people coming in off the street), who either have no car or can't afford the gas who need to get to work or the doctor's. We also have a free meal every Thursday evening, and have discovered that there are people who can't get to it because they lack transportation.
- + Today I met with a client who discussed her struggle with the lack of public transportation in Allegan County. She described how she would walk to get to the grocery store, which was not close, and would feel the wear on her body following this endeavor. She also detailed about how she knows the services she needs to access i.e. help with food, medical attention, etc. but without a vehicle or people available to drive her, she is unable to access these services. She is planning on moving out of Allegan in order to access other counties public transportation. Without the ability to access transportation, she struggled with isolation and lacking basic necessities. This is not the only client in Allegan who has experienced frustration and isolation because of transportation, or lack thereof. We may never meet the others who have similar stories because they cannot attend appointments with no one to drive them. I feel that expanding existing services and implementing new transportation solutions will help clients' access social services and improve their quality of life.
- + Members of the church need rides on Sunday. Also, people living in Arbor Creek or Spring Arbor Apartments have no way of taking any transit system.
- + A consumer of services who was recently homeless has been placed in housing. Unfortunately this housing is in another community. He has no income currently, and has approved for ABW insurance

only. He has intense mental health symptoms, but no way to come for appointments. (He knows no one in the new community and doesn't qualify for ACT transportation because of no Medicaid.) He is in danger of losing his housing again if he does not receive the necessary mental health services to reduce and stabilize his symptoms.

- + I help coordinate transportation for individuals with serious mental illness. This transportation need is currently being met by our organization through our own budgetary efforts. Due to excessive costs in that arena, persons with serious mental illness may become unable to attend our program that focuses on peer support. This program improves socialization, has therapeutic value and provides opportunities for persons with a serious mental illness to battle stigma and reduce stress while gaining the support of others who suffer from this disease.
- + A great deal of our clients are searching for work. It is a very big challenge to find employment positions in the first place. But more often, some of those positions must be turned down because the individual does not have transportation to and from that position.
There is also VERY limited accessibility in rural parts of the county.
- + I have a consumer who lives out in the country, away from the city of Allegan, who would like to obtain his GED, however, has no means of transportation to get back and forth to class
- + Most of the jobs available to consumers are second shift. Transportation does not run then. Also, the individuals in Pullman, South Haven, Fennville, and other outskirts have ZERO transportation and can't get rides to work, social events, appointments, etc. I cannot include names because of confidentiality.
- + I work with an individual who has a part-time job, and CMH has been paying for his transportation. We are unable to continue to pay for transportation, but ACT will not take him without us providing the funding, because they said he lives too far off their route (6 miles off of M-89), so he will probably lose his job, due to lack of transportation.
- + We have seniors that need rides occasionally to doctor appointments. We have people contact us that would like to come to church activities, however, do not have a ride. We have people contact us that don't attend our church, however, need a ride to go to a job interview, etc.
- + Seniors need to connect with medical appointments. Individuals who have physical limitations have a real need.
- + We have so many clients where transportation is a huge barrier to accessing needed services and/or medical attention. Often the lack of transportation, particularly in rural areas, limits their ability to leave abusive relationships and get connected to agencies that can provide support.
- + We learned recently of a person who was told that the public transportation did not come to their address/area. They have had to walk about 2 miles at least to get to their physical therapy appointment and back. Keep in mind they had to endure the therapeutic manipulation then walk home. These were visits that were more than once a week. Especially notable in this story is the fact that the public transportation vehicle went right by them consistently while they had to walk. Most of Allegan County is not pedestrian friendly. There are not many options for getting from place to place without encountering close proximity to moving vehicles.
- + Many clients I work with are ready, willing and able to work but are unable to do so due to living "in the sticks." Imagine the following trip to work: you live in Pearl, so you ask a neighbor for a ride to "downtown" Fennville (the nearest ACT pick-up location). You are dropped and stand and wait for one hour in cold/snowy weather; then you ride ACT for as long as one hour through multiple other pick-ups, and are eventually dropped off (two hours after departure from home) one mile from work. You walk to work, then you work for four hours (because you need to begin the trip home while ACT is operational). You walk one mile back to the ACT pick-up, have a one hour trip back to Fennville, and then you get stuck in Fennville-your neighbor never shows to pick you up at a prearranged time.

You have no money, no cell phone, it's still snowing and it will be dark soon. or imagine your workplace calling to tell you they're over scheduled during that two hours that you're on the road. Imagine you workplace calling to ask you to come in for extra hours later that day, but you can't get a ride because there is a 24 hour lead time to schedule an ACT ride, and/or the work hours are available after ACT closes (or on a Saturday). These are all common scenarios for our clients.

- + I have a client who lives in Plainwell. She wanted to live there in order to be near her mother and father who are her transportation to medical appointments and shopping. However, living so far from the clinic and the age of her parents prevents her from fully participating in treatment. They do not bring her to Allegan for appointments because of the distance. I believe that her participation in treatment would be greatly increased with better transportation options. She can use ACT but the scheduling of the rides for her is an issue as she has no phone. She also has no income at this time. She can only use her family for transportation. If there was a bus system or public transportation beyond ACT she could increase her participation in her own recovery.
- + At the mission we regularly have men who need to go to court or probation in Allegan and have difficulty getting there.
- + tourists (foreigners traveling without cars or downtown Chicago residents) are unable to access the lake shore area easily by public transportation because there is no public transportation from the Amtrak station in Holland or the Kent County airport to Allegan County and the lake shore. I also know a dialysis patient who is not fit to drive and must beg rides to the Holland medical facility from Saugatuck three times a week because there is no public transportation...particularly door to door transport. Shameful!!!
- + We have a volunteer from Ottawa County that called to see if they could pick her up. They told her that it would be \$2.00 a ride and she has no income. This is per ride \$2 here and \$2 back. She is doing community service so she has no income. she is a good worker and is trying to better herself, this is very difficult when you have to rely on family, friends or neighbors.
- + Currently have one employee that needs transportation services for work.
- + Please call our MIHP coordinator, Angela Winfrey, for several client stories. See her contact information in question #18.
- + We have had people need rides to drug rehab and mental health.
- + There is a person in our congregation who is in the early stages of dementia and really should no longer be driving. This is dangerous for this person and for the community. But the limited public transportation options, particularly getting to doctors and stores in Holland or Grand Rapids, make it difficult for this person to give up driving ~ and for us to argue that she will still be mobile and able to get about. If there was greater connection between transit systems in the region, these cases would be easier to deal with and the whole community would be healthier.
- + We know of seven residents that would benefit from coming to our Adult Day Services programs living in the Fennville - Hamilton area if there was transportation with beyond ADA accessibility. A number of our clients out in the Wayland area do not have access to any transportation i.e. grocery stores, doctors, pharmacy. Just recently 12/04/2008 we assessed an individual who moved to Allegan County. She is trying to find a church that would have a wheel chair accessible bus to transport her to church on Sundays. Presently is not able to find one.
- + We have a family, that we serve, that has big hardship problems. We have taken them to doctor appointments, court dates, food pantries, grocery stores, and had to help them in many other ways!
- + a woman who will be out of her contraceptive method if she is not able to be at our clinic by a certain day-could mean an unplanned or even unwanted pregnancy
- + My work is indirect to the clients who need transportation assistance. Is it only occasionally that we have a call asking for assistance and we refer them on.

- + Customers and local residents need transportation for daily activities. Many elderly people use the transportation service for medical appointments, attend church services, shop at grocery stores, or simply to complete their banking needs. Due to the small amount of medical facilities or larger retail shops in the area, many need rides to doctor appts. outside of the usual route.
- + Since we have no physician in the local area (Douglas/Saugatuck) we have several people who need transportation for doctors visits and treatments into Holland.
- + We had a lady who had no extended family that could take her to many of her medical appointments. Chemo weekly ~ in Grand Rapids, and doctor's visits in Holland, plus a stay at a clinic in Chicago ~ all were needed. We ended up with volunteers.
- + In a resort area like Saugatuck, people come to play. Our restaurants and Bars are an essential part of our economy. For safety sake, it is vital that there is public transportation to and from these facilities so people can safely be transported as they drinking is part of our recreational activity. For this reason it is important that transportation be available later in the evenings and the bars and restaurants urge their patrons to take advantage of these services.
- + Main transportation problems include getting to and from games. Also, a new student is looking to come to the school next year, but transportation is a barrier as to whether that student can attend the school.
- + Most of the time it is providing patients rides home after a hospitalization or emergency
- + I have a client who needs to take parenting classes in order to get her child back, but she does not have transportation to get her here for the classes.
- + Aaron Spreitzer - employee, due to impaired vision, he requires transportation 3 times per week to get to work @ Edward Jones - Douglas 8:30-5:00.
- + We have a few families that cannot make it to the ministry center to pick up food. We have families that do not have jobs because of transportation issues.
- + We have two people who need help with transportation to work in Kent County and to church on Sundays.
- + We work with 2 seniors- a married couple who both have lost the ability to drive. Their children all live out of state. Most of their friends have died or also cannot drive. One has cancer. She has no way to get to the hospital in South Haven for her chemo-therapy. They also need help getting to other MD appointments, grocery store etc. They have no options except for our volunteer transportation program.
- + We often get requests from individuals needing rides to our church activities.
- + None to share
- + I believe one of the issues is special needs clients. People with disabilities have the most difficulty
- + We provide therapy services to a man in a motor wheel chair. In the summer he is able to get to our office relatively safely even though he has to cross a rural highway. However, in the winter, his chair is unsafe due to the cold weather and slippery roads. He has met resistance to getting rides lately for his medical needs due to financial constraints and the fact that his insurance is not currently paying for his rides (even though he has Medicare for disability). Please help.
- + I have tried to help those who do not have the resources to transport their paperwork to DHS. I work in the building and request that they seal their information in an envelope and I drop it off. There are many times when they need to met face to face with their case worker and gas, transportation etc is a large problem. It would be nice to have more availability for transportation in our area.
- + I could schedule better if we had the interurban in Saugatuck providing rides on Sundays
- + Have an elderly gentleman who lives 10-11 miles from the dialysis unit who is transporting his wife who is an amputee. This means he needs to lift her in and out of the car and this is especially difficult in the winter.

- + We have a client who is disabled who relies on people to bring him to work at our store once a week on Sunday mornings.
- + There are students in local high schools that need transportation after school but cannot be guaranteed a ride home for the \$2/ride because the time of day is not part of the route. These students do not qualify for funding to cover transportation because they don't fall under the extremely low poverty guidelines, but still do not have the means to get home and therefore cannot participate. It's a matter of having an expanded route that allows for more \$2 rides.
- + Melvin Jones has been very frustrated with trying to schedule rides and has had some very poor customer service. I don't think he'd mind sharing his stories.
- + Students at the high school who cannot drive or do not have a car, and who's parents cannot pick them up, are entirely at the will of our transportation system. As a result, not all kids are able to participate in extracurricular activities. The employees, as far as I know, all have reliable vehicles so that is not an issue.
- + Have two elderly that use the Van Buren transit system.
- + People needing to get to doctors appointment and church is a huge need in the community.
- + Our camp has several Families/campers who are low income that can't get their children out to our camp for our programs. If we had a central pick up in a few different place within the county that could get the kids out here, it would be most beneficial to them as well as our program.
- + We have had many students withdraw from our school in the past three years because parents told us that they could no longer afford the cost of gas or didn't have transportation at the time.
- + Last year my son needed to go to summer school in Holland to makeup a required class because Saugatuck didn't offer summer school. There was no connection from the Saugatuck service to the Holland service, so I had to leave work to get him to and from school.
- + I am a manager of a rehabilitation facility in Plainwell and am also connected with rehab offered at Allegan General Hospital. One specific example in the recent past is that I was seeing a patient for home therapy services for nearly 6 weeks. It was time to make a transition to outpatient therapy where he would go to a hospital or clinic to allow increased intensity of the therapy through the use of the equipment additional staff. The family and I agreed to commit to this plan but it was difficult if not impossible for the patient to be transferred from his wheelchair into their car 4 times in order to make it to his appt and back home. Family could not physically do this safely and regularly. In order for the patient to progress with therapy it is important to see this type of patient 3 times per week or 2 times per week at the least. The current transportation service through ACT is so limited in its available times and is unable to commit to any time of pick up and drop off for single individuals who are not a part of their contracted facilities. The facilities that have contracts with them and utilize them regularly get first choice and more specific pick up and drop off times. Again, it all comes down to money-just like everything. Meanwhile, a patient that has suffered a stroke cannot get the transportation needed in order to improve his quality of life and increase his independence. After trying to work out a few scenarios for pick up and drop off it became to frustrating for the family and they just gave up. The number of vehicles available are too limited and do not allow enough flexibility to the customer. A reasonable window of time is not able to be given nor a commitment on whether a patient could even be picked up given 1-2 weeks notice to ACT on when the appointments are scheduled for. Facilities like a hospital could regularly use a service like this if the service offered reasonable solutions and had the capability to schedule and commit to pick up times and then come back and pick the person up after their appt. Very underserved population we have with seniors and those with physical disabilities trying to better themselves and their health by making it to regularly scheduled appts.

- + Just yesterday we had a patient who couldn't get to the health center due to transportation. Our provider did her first house call. The provider deemed it necessary for the patient to be transported to the hospital and arrangements were made. This house call very well saved the patient's life.
- + Due to HIPPA regulations I am unable to provide any information at this time.
- + It is crucial for our clients - those that are homeless and those with a disability - to have access to reliable transportation in order to obtain and maintain affordable housing. Access to medical facilities, banking, grocery, social service buildings (DHS, ACCMH) are all vital to sustaining permanent housing.
- + I have had to give up serving my community because of no transportation problems, I have had to miss meetings because of transportation problems, it cost a lot of money (\$10) for me just to go to town and I have become house bound because of transportation problems.
- + Older parishioners unable to go to medical appointment due to lack of transportation.

APPENDIX C: Focus Group Invitation Letter

Dear (Invitee name),

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

Date:

Time:

Location:

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

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

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

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

With sincere appreciation,

Kathryn Gillen
Public Policy Specialist
Disability Network/Lakeshore

APPENDIX D: Schedule of Focus Groups

ALLEGAN COUNTY TRANSPORTATION STAKEHOLDER FOCUS GROUPS

Schedule of Dates, Locations, and Times

Region #1 (Center of Allegan)	Tuesday January, 27, 2009	12:30 pm to 1:45pm	Allegan County Office Department of Human Services Zimmerman Room
Region #1 (Center of Allegan)	Tuesday January, 27, 2009	2:15 pm to 3:30 pm	Allegan County Office Department of Human Services Zimmerman Room
Region # 2 (Northeast)	Wednesday January 21, 2009	10:30am to 11:45am	City Hall of Wayland Council Chambers
Region # 3 (Southeast)	Wednesday January 21, 2009	1:00pm to 2:15pm	City Hall of Otsego Commissioner Room
Region # 4 (Northwest)	Tuesday January 20, 2009	9:00am to 10:15am	City Hall of Fennville Commissioner Room
Region # 5 (Southwest)	Tuesday January 20, 2009	11:00am to 12:15pm	City Hall of Fennville Commissioner Room

APPENDIX E: Focus Group Agenda

Allegan County Transportation Stakeholder Focus Group Agenda

1. Welcome (8 minutes)
 - a. Introductions
 - b. Purpose of focus group
 - c. Brief description of ACT Study
2. Overview of ground rules (3 minutes)
3. Review survey results from the online stakeholder survey (5 minutes)
4. Discussion (50 minutes)
 - Any other general reactions to the survey results we have collected?
 - As an organization or business serving (Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, Northwest, or Center of Allegan), do you see any unique transit needs specific to your part of the county?
 - How do unmet transportation needs affect your organization or business?
 - What types of people have unmet transportation needs?
 - What transportation **changes** or **improvements** would allow your organization or business to provide better services to your employees, customers, clients or members?
 - In the survey, 55.6% of stakeholders said they would strongly support increasing transit services in the County. Building on some of the ideas you presented in question #4, do you have suggestions for what resources or funding we could use to achieve these improvements or changes?
5. Next steps in the process (7 minutes)
 - What is the best way to reach the people you work with who have unmet transit needs?
 - How would you like to be informed about the information gathered through this process?
6. Thank you (2 minutes)

APPENDIX F: One-on-One Interview Invitation Card

SIDE A

Transportation Interviews

The Allegan Transit Workgroup needs your help to identify people with unmet transportation needs in the Allegan County.

The next step in our research process is to conduct one-to-one interviews with approximately 15 diverse people who live in Allegan County and have different unmet transit needs. All individual responses will be kept anonymous. The data collected through this process will be used to develop a community supported five-year strategic plan for Allegan County Transportation.

Please help us by sharing 3 to 4 names of people with whom you know who would be willing to talk with us about their personal needs for transportation. To share names, kindly fill out the reverse side of this card, and mail it back to us by **January 23**.

If you have questions, please contact Kathryn Gillen at 616.396.5326

SIDE B

Interviewee Information

Your Name: _____

Prospective Interviewee Information

Name: _____

Phone number: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____

City or township: _____ Zip Code: _____

If the individual has a disability, please describe:

Please briefly describe the unmet transit need:

Did this person give you permission to share his/her information with us? Y N

Mail to: Disability Network, Kathryn Gillen, 426 Century Lane, Holland, MI 49423
Or email to: kathryn@dnlakeshore.org



Disability Network / Lakeshore

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