

It's in our power to change.

THE INITIATOR

OCTOBER 2007

Seeking Transportation Solutions

How well are the cities of Holland and Zeeland and the townships of Holland, Zeeland, Park, Laketown, and Fillmore serving their community's transportation needs? That's the goal of Disability Network's current transportation study.

Backed by a \$90,000 MDOT grant, Disability Network is leading the multi-phase process. Steps include:

1. seeking input from community organizations
2. listening to people with unmet transportation needs
3. getting feedback from taxpayers
4. sharing findings with stakeholders and developing solutions

"The number one issue we've identified so far is getting to work, followed by getting to medical care," says Genevieve Risner, Director of Public Policy at Disability Network. "As businesses and hospitals move out of cities to areas without public transportation, it raises a challenge for people with disabilities."

Marianne Borst, whose brother with disabilities works at a restaurant six days a week, agrees. "It's only a five-minute drive from my brother's home in Zeeland to his job in Zeeland Township, but he can't cross the busy streets by himself. We're all at work when he needs a ride, and a taxi would cost more than he makes each day. It would be nice if MAX transportation were available."

The study has sought input from over 80 organizations such as the Department of Community Mental Health, hospitals, senior organizations, and other non-profit groups. Now in Phase 2, Risner has interviewed 15 people with unmet transportation

needs and distributed 5,000 surveys throughout the community.

Asked what challenges have been uncovered so far, Doug Bazuin, Herman Miller Researcher and member of MAX Transportation Authority Board says, "We've uncovered some specific needs I wasn't aware of, including a big demand for personalized transportation service - for example, reminding someone when to get off the bus, or assisting someone from the house to the bus."

"Hopefully, the survey will help us understand whether there are several small, unique needs, or a broader issue we need to address. As a community, we have to decide what needs to be done, and by whom, and what kind of partnerships that will involve. Disability Network has been key in bringing various social service and government groups together."

John Van Iwaarden, a Park Township Trustee and member of the Transportation Action Team, says, "Our early findings show that the biggest challenge is getting to work. When people can't get to work, they lose their jobs, and their process of trying to upgrade themselves collapses like a house of cards. If we can solve part of the transportation problem, we're one step closer to helping people improve their lives."

The results of the survey will be completed by June 2008.



"We've uncovered a whole group of transportation needs that just aren't being met. Our next step will be studying them to develop a system that fills the gaps in the community." —Doug Bazuin

Also in Motion

Disability Network is currently: Creating a Friends of Transit group to encourage Hudsonville/Jenison officials to provide public transportation

Meeting with stakeholders to develop consensus for a long-range, regional transportation planning process

Partnering with area churches and faith-based leaders to support public transit through Faith in Motion

Working on a strategic plan for Allegan County Transportation to increase public awareness and support for a public transit millage in 2009

Volunteers

We rely on our wonderful volunteers for so much of what we accomplish. To find an opportunity that fits your skills, interests, and schedule, please contact:

Kim Romero
616 396 5326

Donations

As a non-profit organization, we welcome gifts of all sizes. You may make a tax-deductible contribution by calling 616 396 5326 or mailing a check (payable to Disability Network/Lakeshore)

Disability Network/Lakeshore

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Join Us

Your gifts of time and resources can help us change everything for the better.



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Who we are

Most people equate disability with limitations. But it's our job to change the perceptions and realities that prevent people with disabilities from sharing in the community. Every year, we provide training, mentoring, and referrals to help people with disabilities and their families live productive lives. Because disability touches so many people, we also work on a larger scale, helping governments and businesses make changes that benefit not just those with disabilities, but everyone in the community.