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MAX Night Owl service gives riders more freedom

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The Holland Sentinel

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Holland, MI — When Kathy Oliver worked at Meijer, she had to stick to the day shift.

She didn't have a car and the MAX bus she often rode to work each day stopped running at 7 p.m.

"I don't drive and I take the MAX all the time," said Oliver, 34. "It was hard when I had the job at Meijer. I would have to try to catch the last bus a lot."

As Oliver looks for a new job, she's happy that opportunities to work later evening hours have opened up.

The Macatawa Area Express Transportation Authority began offering its Night Owl evening reserved ride service on Wednesday night. The service begins at 7 p.m. and runs through midnight.

Oliver used the Night Owl service to be picked up from Bible study at her church on East 16th Street on Wednesday night.

The service allows riders to call ahead to schedule rides after the regular bus schedule routes end at 7 p.m.

Oliver said using the new service will help her be a more desirable employee.

"Once I get a new job, I can work second shift," said Oliver, who is considering employment at a hotel or restaurant.

Passengers must call to reserve their ride by 4 p.m. the day prior to travel. The cost for a one-way trip is \$3 per adult and \$1 for seniors and children.

Oliver said she does not have a license because of a disability with her hands that prevents her from writing or driving.

Providing transportation during the later hours for people with disabilities is one goal of the night service, said MAX Coordinator Linda LeFebre.

"We realize that our service shutting down at 7 p.m. limits when people can work and have a social life," she said.

LeFebre said MAX will give the reserved ride service a trial run for a year.

She said she would consider the service a success if they give at least three or four rides per hour each evening.

On its first night, LeFebre said MAX had three passengers scheduled to be picked up.

She said without the night service, people like Oliver might miss out on having an evening social life.

"This way, she'll be able to attend a church activity that she may not have been able to go to in the past," LeFebre said.

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