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Possible Allegan County plan to expand bus service would require new property tax

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By Rod Smith | Special to the Kalamazoo Gazette

ALLEGAN — It might someday be possible to take a bus from any point in Allegan County.

The Allegan County Board of Commissioners on Thursday approved a five-year plan for Allegan County Transportation. It includes increased hours, seven-day-a-week service and a reservation system that would allow, for example, someone in Casco Township to visit relatives in Leighton Township, or someone in Plainwell to spend time camping in Allegan State Game Area.

The plan, however, is a concept, and Thursday's board approval is not a go-ahead.

Last year, the county bus system provided 58,187 passenger trips. However, according to Director Dan Wedge, about 90 percent of them were for people whose rides were paid by various programs, such as Community Mental Health or disability programs.

The other 10 percent were for the general public unconnected to any program.

The general public can only get a seat if the bus already is going that way.

The system also only operates from 5:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and generally is confined to within a mile of three routes: diagonally across the county from Holland to Plainwell; north and south from Plainwell to Wayland; and a circular route from Allegan to Fennville to Pullman and back.

The plan recommends extending operating hours to 9:30 to 11 p.m. Monday through Friday and operating on weekends. Ride cost would run \$2 for adults and \$1 for seniors.

Wedge said implementing the plan likely would require a property-tax levy. At the service level recommended, the bus service would need 0.308mill.

Such a request may come through a citizen group, said Wedge.

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