



Two studies eye area mass transit

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Holland, MI — How do you get to Grand Valley from Holland without a car? What about to a friend's house in Hudsonville, for that matter?

Two groups are now studying mass transit in West Michigan: one focused on linking the Grand Rapids, Holland and Muskegon areas, and another dedicated to eastern Ottawa County.

Eastern Ottawa Transit Study

Whereas Holland has MAX Transit and Grand Rapids has The Rapid, eastern Ottawa communities like Jenison, Hudsonville and Allendale don't have a bus system.

A \$99,000 state grant paid to study the area and found 75 percent of residents support the system. In the last several months, Kathryn Gillen of Disability Network-Lakeshore has been presenting and asking for feedback from local government officials.

A bus system in eastern Ottawa would connect the area to Kent County, where people could ride The Rapid into Grand Rapids for jobs and appointments, she said.

She said the final report is due to the state by June, but it will be up to concerned citizens and officials to push the effort forward.

The study identified support for public transportation, but didn't address the feasibility of such a system.

And even if the region knew now exactly what scale mass transit system it wanted, the system would take around three years to implement.

"It's a very long process, she said.

For more on the study, go to www.transitmeansmore.org.

West Michigan Transit Linkages Study

Due out this fall, the West Michigan Transit Linkages Study is looking at the feasibility of connecting the area's urban centers.

While unrelated to the eastern Ottawa study, county planning director Mark Knudsen said the linkages study will take into account information from this and other reports.

The idea was hatched more than two years ago by local manufacturing plant owners interested in finding reliable regional transportation for their employees.

Now, the \$110,000 study is heading toward its last stop. But like the eastern Ottawa study, the end of the line is just another bump in the road on the way to actually expanding public transportation.

The needs assessment portion of the study is available at www.gvsu.edu/westmitransitstudy.

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