

Rapid moving into Allendale explored

\$110,000 grant to allow Ottawa County to explore linking all existing public transportation in West Michigan



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Expanded busing: An Ottawa County study will examine the need and feasibility of expanding busing into Allendale, and linking existing public transportation throughout West Michigan.

By Jenny Whalen

GVL Managing Editor

Though numerous businesses and housing developments extend beyond 48th Avenue, public transportation does not. But a solution to this discrepancy is in development.

Two years ago, Allendale Township, the Chamber of Commerce and Grand Valley State University partnered together for a one-year experiment in which the Rapid bus route was extended into the business district of Allendale.

At the end of the experiment year, data regarding ridership in relation to expense was compiled, but the project was deemed too costly to continue.

"From what I understand, expenses (of the experiment) exceeded what (the partners) believed was worthwhile in

regards to the number of riders," said Phil Brummel, administrator of the Allendale Department of Planning & Community Development. "They not did believe the expense was warranted."

In 2007, a \$110,000 Service Development and New Technology Grant was awarded to Ottawa County by the Michigan Department of Transportation. The grant will allow the county to complete

a needs assessment and feasibility study of public transit services in West Michigan.

"There's a movement afoot to be able to take a number of bus routes that will interconnect in Allendale and then be able to go downtown," Brummel said. "At least that is the attempt."

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PHIL BRUMMEL
ADMINISTRATOR OF
ALLENDALE DPCD

The Ottawa County study will look at the linkages between existing transit systems and consider the need and feasibility of connecting the systems of Muskegon Area Transit, Holland Area Transit, Grand Haven Harper Transit and the Rapid in Grand Rapids.

"(The study) will look at three things, the need and feasibility of

providing some level of transportation to parts of the county without their own transit programs, connecting existing transit providers and providing transportation for people who do not have transportation to work," said Meghann Rauscher, transportation planner for Ottawa County.

Conducted by Nelson and Nygaard Associates, the study will examine whether expanded transportation is needed, how such transportation can be implemented and what the overall costs of such an endeavor would be to the county.

"As this project has gone about, we

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have been looking at Allendale Township as a potential hub for the system," Rauscher said.

Because the expanded system would cross over county lines, officials of Ottawa County turned to GVSU as a third party to help facilitate meetings between different county representatives. GVSU will assist the county in facilitation and coordination of the study and members of the GVSU community can follow the study's progress via the Web site, <http://www.gvsu.edu/westmitransitstudy/>.

The Student Senate Political Affairs and Campus Affairs committees have also taken the

initiative to expand busing, but have focused their attentions on Allendale.

"Our goal is to have another bus go down Lake Michigan Drive to 52nd Street," said Katie Scott, vice president of the Campus Affairs Committee. "It could take students to Family Fare and some of the off-campus housing, but would probably be its own route. The Political Affairs Committee has really taken the point on this issue."

Though adding another bus route is not feasible this year, Scott added, the Student Senate is hoping to achieve busing into Allendale as early as next year.

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