

EASTERN OTTAWA COUNTY: A Community Change Transportation Study

TITLE A Vehicle for Change: Demonstrating the impact lack of transit has on a community without a public transportation system

GRANT A Service Development and New Technology (SDNT) Grant from the Michigan Department of Transportation

STUDY AREA Allendale, Blendon, Georgetown/Jenison and Jamestown Townships, and the City of Hudsonville

TIMEFRAME September 2008 to January 2010

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND GOALS This community change study seeks to understand the current impact lack of public transportation has on a community without existing transit system. Discovering what the current unmet transit needs are and how to effectively communicate those needs to local stakeholders and elected officials.

PHASE 1: Individual Unmet Needs Analysis (September 2008 – February 2009)

1. Conduct unmet needs survey with community residents. The purpose of the unmet needs survey is to identify people with unmet transit needs and understand the barriers to their transportation. As no public transit system currently exists in E. Ottawa County, this survey will allow current transit providers and other community organizations to track calls that come in and cannot be fulfilled because of a lack in transportation services.
2. Conduct one-on-one interviews with individuals learning about their transit needs and networks including, friends, family members, employers, community organizations, and churches. The purpose of the interviews is to determine the extent of individual's transit needs, and provide us with information about their networks and the affect lack of transportation has on them.

PHASE 2: Community Analysis (March – August 2009)

1. Conduct a community survey by phone to test which messages best persuades local community residents in supporting public transportation. The survey will ask about residents' knowledge on current transit options, whether they support public transit and if so, what level of support currently exists.
2. Create a marketing educational DVD outlining the research outcomes from the phase 1 and phase 2 to educate elected officials on the impact that the lack of transportation has on their communities. Additionally, the DVD will communicate current unmet transit needs and the potential benefits of increasing public transportation in Eastern Ottawa County.
3. After conducting the community survey, the most successful messages found to increase support of public transportation will be use in the distribution of 6000 postcards in which we will communicate current transit needs to community residents. Additionally, a website will be created that will include survey results, the marketing DVD, and a place for individuals to contact their local elected officials. This website will measure the effectiveness of the postcard in persuading an individual to take action in bringing public transportation to Eastern Ottawa County.

PHASE 3: Elected Official Analysis (September – December 2009)

1. The Transportation Workgroup will hold an elected official presentation to present the study findings and marketing educational DVD. After presenting this information to the elected officials, a follow-up survey will be conducted with the purpose of gauging the increase in support for public transportation based on the messages and the information provided in the marketing DVD.

POST STUDY: Final Report (January 2010)

1. Develop final report for Michigan Department of Transportation and create Vehicle for Change Report.