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## Grand Haven Township millage proposal would fund Harbor Transit, road maintenance

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By **John S. Hausman | Muskegon Chronicle**

**Grand Haven Township** is asking voters Tuesday to approve a 0.95-mill, five-year increase in property taxes to link the township with the **Harbor Transit** bus system and to maintain township roads and bridges.

The tax is expected to generate approximately \$605,200 in 2011, if approved. Roughly half of that would go to Harbor Transit, the remainder to roads. The ratio would fluctuate year to year depending on how much it costs to operate the bus system.

The millage would levy 95 cents of tax annually for each \$1,000 of a property's taxable value. Taxable value is one-half or less of the property's market value.

Harbor Transit is an on-demand public transportation service that now serves residents of Grand Haven and Ferrysburg and the village of Spring Lake, which fund the service. It also offers rides to Meijer Inc. in Grand Haven Township as well as Orchard Foods and Lloyds Bayou Senior Complex in Spring Lake Township.

If Grand Haven Township voters approve the millage, service will be extended to township residents, and rides will be offered to other destinations in the township including major retail stores, factories and schools.

Township Superintendent Bill Cargo said Harbor Transit expansion should benefit both the system, which has excess capacity, and the township, which he said has need of the service.

Under the proposal, Harbor Transit — originally a city of Grand Haven-run operation — would be governed by an authority consisting of all four local governments on an equal basis, Cargo said.

Financial support also would be equalized, with residents of all four municipalities paying the same millage rate. The exact rate levied for Harbor Transit, expected to be roughly 0.45 to 0.49 mill in 2011, would be based on the system's operating costs each year, Cargo said.

The rest of Grand Haven Township's 0.95 mill not needed for the bus system would go to maintain, repair



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and reconstruct streets, roads, bridges and drainage structures in the township.

That money would be used to supplement the township general-fund dollars that already go to help pay for road maintenance. The rest of the money for roadwork comes from the Ottawa County Road Commission, using state gasoline-tax dollars.

Both funding pools have been shrinking in recent years.

Email: **[jhausman@muskegonchronicle.com](mailto:jhausman@muskegonchronicle.com)**

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