

LETTER — MAX transit system benefits Holland area in many ways

By Kathryn Gray

Reader contributor

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Holland, MI — Public transit is twice as efficient as using a private automobile. It is more cost-effective, reduces carbon emissions and minimizes traffic build-up on the roads. Holland-Zeeland area residents can take advantage of public transit with the MAX Transit Authority. The authority's bus fleet currently serves nearly 340,000 rides annually. With route coverage all over the Holland area and conveniently located bus stops, MAX riders can get around town with ease.

The Lakeshore Friends of Transit, a Holland-based coalition, promotes public transportation at the local and regional levels of West Michigan. The coalition actively endorses MAX Transit and its expansion endeavors.

In 2006, the first MAX Transit millage was passed by 75 percent of voters. The millage helped establish the MAX Transit Authority as a premier public transit system with an increased number of fixed routes and expanded service hours. Ten new vehicles were also added to the fleet and the Padnos Transportation Station was reconfigured to become its service hub. Free fares were offered to seniors, the disabled and Medicare cardholders, on top of the already affordable fares for the general public.

This May, the MAX Transit Authority will seek a renewal millage. No additions have been made to the millage but the renewal is essential for the accustomed high-quality service to continue. The authority intends to use 0.35 mill of the 0.4 mill available through this levy to help pay for its operating costs.

MAX provides many benefits to its riders and the overall community. With its modest operating budget, MAX has generated over \$7 million in new economic activity to the local economy. For every \$1 invested in MAX Transit, \$6 is generated in economic return.

Students getting to and from school account for 15 percent of ridership. Seniors and persons with disabilities rely on the MAX to get to medical appointments, while another 26 percent of riders use the MAX for shopping and groceries. More than half of MAX riders use the transit system daily. Without the passage of the MAX Transit millage renewal, all of these people will require more costly and less efficient modes of transportation. Local business revenues might also take a hit since most of MAX's riders are getting to and from places to earn and spend money.

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