

Focus Group One
Small and Temporary Employers
5 group members

“How does this information compare with the unmet transit needs of your employees/customers?”

Small and temporary employers agreed that the summary data was comparable to what they see as stakeholders. Transit concerns for small and temporary employers were distance from location at stops, lack of education about public transit for employees, language barriers, and confusing information, maps, and website. Issues of liability and personal safety were raised.

I think it's very comparable. A lot of people don't know where we are. I don't think a lot of our employees would understand how to get transit to and from work. Most of our employees are Asian or Hispanic. Language is definitely a barrier. Also, maps and charts on the internet are confusing and difficult to understand.

I've driven with both hands on the steering wheel because we don't know who's sitting next to you (personal safety).

I see some real transit gaps for people with special needs and elderly. People don't have internet access, don't have maps, and don't know who to call. Where there are individuals with a caregiver, their caregiver has to figure this out. Getting to stops is difficult. I look at an elderly parent who can't walk two blocks to get to a stop. There are a lot of specialized needs including childcare - a need to get kids to daycare or school - then get to work so it's very difficult and complicated.

“What transportation changes or improvements would allow you/your organization to provide better service to your customers and employees? What transit improvements would help your business?”

Small and temporary employers reported that their employees would use public transit if it were affordable, stopped at their location of employment, and reliable, meaning on time or at the times needed for shift work.

Most of my employees would use MAX. We have a lot of times that we find a job for someone, but people can't use MAX because the bus doesn't start running early enough or doesn't go to the location where the job is.

We have a lot of people who work second shift. The hours are not workable for our second shift workers.

I think MAX right now is the only really affordable transportation. Our number one challenge is getting people to work. A lot of people will take a cab to work. Cabs are too expensive for low income people.

Members of the chamber of commerce participated in this focus group and discussed improving transit for tourists, especially boaters, to get to shopping areas and grocery stores.

I really think we have a lot of opportunity for boaters and campers who want to get into town on both sides of the lake. The MAX beach run is a great start. Those are dollars (coming from tourists) to be spent in our community.

Equally important is getting hotel people out to the parks. There should be stops at the marinas. They need signage and need to ensure the bus is there when it says it will be.

“How might these improvements be paid for? What resources are available?”

Focus group members talked about combining resources for efficiency, shuttle vans, car pooling, business support, and employer contributions.

The hotels should be challenged to shuttle people from downtown or downtown to the next town so people can move around without having to rely on public transit. Hotels could join together to fund a van to run between each of them.

I can't think of anyone who's going to want to pay for it. I wish our employers would see a value in it and want to fund it. We have some generous businesses in the community so that's a possibility.

I think a lot of employers would be willing to chip in if it got people to work on a regular basis.

There are carpooling sites already in town. It's not talked about a lot now. Gas prices will affect transit again. Gas prices will make personal transit cost prohibitive. At one time carpool lots were promoted big time.

Sometimes I think if liability issues could be taken care of... this huge pool of baby boomers are going to retire and (might) be willing to volunteer. Maybe transit could be one way of volunteering.

“What is the best way to reach the people you work with who have unmet transit needs?”

Could you drop off surveys (on-site)?

Maybe we could put a survey in check stubs.

“How would you like to be informed about the information gathered through this process?”

We need more education about what we already have.

Next step should be a spring board for our next steps.

**Focus Group Two
Transit providers
10 group members**

“How does this information compare with the unmet transit needs of your customers?”

Transit providers identified getting people to work and medical appointments as the top two concerns. They identified issues they have as transit providers meeting the need. These issues included time and schedule of public transit, limits with fixed stops vs. availability of door-to-door service, and geographic limitations of current geographic area of service. Transit providers agreed there is a need for regional transit. Transit providers expressed concerns about meeting the transit needs of special needs and elderly customers.

From the perspective of impoverished families that we work with, the need we see is for rides to work. A lot of people don't have licenses or have bad driving records.

I see that as a need for regional transit service – to get to the airport at reasonable process at top quality service.

The biggest concern I hear is punctuality of getting to work because we work with a lot of people who need to get to work.

I hear from seniors about the need to get to medical appointments.

Most of the calls that come into our office are to employment or medical appointments. For medical calls, we get a lot of calls for trips to Grand Rapids or Muskegon.

Our issues are mostly people who live outside of our service area.

We turn down requests constantly during certain times

Another huge issue is no shows. If people who don't show would take into consideration the other riders – they're taking up space that other people could use

We get calls constantly from people who need to get to the courthouse in Ottawa County.

“What transportation changes or improvements would allow you/your organization to better serve your customers?”

Transit providers agreed regional transit is needed. They also explored ideas for increased resources and the need for resources for transporting people with medical or physical disabilities.

I feel there needs to be improvements around transportation information so that clients could have all the information about resources that are available to them.

What we hear from our customers is that there is no regional transit – especially among senior citizens.

Funding, funding, and funding, we're at maximum capacity. We could serve more passengers if we had more funding. It would be helpful if we had a countywide authority to help coordinate services.

Funding to help with specialized vehicles; it's too costly. As far as those people who need the wheelchair service multiple times per week, Medicare and Medicaid doesn't pay for it. It drains all their resources.

It's important that people who need transportation communicate that to their legislators.

“How might these changes or improvements be paid for? What resources are available?”

Transit providers suggested grants from local community foundations, local revenue increases, raising fees for service, more use of community volunteers, and better agency consolidation and coordination.

The community has to realize the difference between state and federal funds. There are state and federal funds available but there has to be a local match in order to even apply for the money. We have to raise local funds. That would help local transit so we can apply for state and federal money. The bigger issue is how to bring more money into the state. Every program that receives state funds is affected.

Consolidating and coordinating programs. When each organization provides their transit, it's more costly. Agencies only take care of their clients, whereas as a public transit provider we can serve everyone.

Medicare and Medicaid changes would play a big role. The only other thing I've proposed is to raise the rate so that we can do it efficiently and just work with the people who can afford the service.

I think there is one thing from a public standpoint – the term limitation places a very severe role in what happens on our level. With the continuous change of legislators, the only thing they can do is come up with more hoops for people to jump through.

“What is the best way to reach the people you work with who have unmet transit needs?”

Transit providers recommended that we conduct surveys at the Vet's club, churches, volunteer-based organizations, senior centers and contact Ottawa County 211. A point-in-time study was suggested.

“How would you like to be informed about the information gathered through this process?”

Bullet point format that highlights information gathered that we could share with legislators – a tool to take information to others in the community.

Focus Group Three
Courts
2 group members

“How does this information compare with the unmet transit needs of your customers?”

Court employees discussed the unmet transit needs of their clients based on geographic locations for the court/corrections system given main sites are in Holland, Grand Haven, and on Fillmore in West Olive. They identified issues of liability in transporting clients, personal safety issues, high costs for transportation. Also, the ability of their clients to get and keep a job based on unmet transit needs.

I'd say it's pretty close to what's going on right now. Our biggest issue is that our court is in Grand Haven but our office is in Holland. We have volunteers who are running a van up there every other week.

One of the number one issues is jobs. One of the problems that people have is that they don't have a driver's license and they can't afford to get their license back. The Secretary of State implemented a driver responsibility fee on top of reinstatement fees.

They don't have transit to look for a job or they lose their job. We work with the Work First program and they do provide some services to people who have a job, they help people find a job and provide transit for 90 days during their orientation. They provide limited transportation on a temporary basis.

We have about 650 people who report for probation at the Holland office. About 20 percent need transportation.

“What transportation changes or improvements would allow you/your organization to better serve your customers?”

Court employees recommended expansion out of the general area, between Holland and Grand Haven and between Holland and Fillmore and expansion of hours. Affordable transportation and expanded hours of service were discussed.

Affordability is an issue and transit times. Even though \$1 or \$2 seems like a small amount, especially in situations where people have been in prison for a while, even \$1 or \$2 is high.

“How might these changes or improvements be paid for? What resources are available?”

Expansion of the services bonds or county tax proposal. As far as looking for bus tickets, I think there are businesses that might be willing to donate.

We need a volunteer organization to help.

Maybe we should involve people already working at that company to help people get a ride who need it (transportation network).

I wish I knew someone who could help them fix their car – someone to refer them to or an agency that could loan cars out until they could get them fixed. To help them get their license back – help people take out a loan and let them repay it very slowly so they can get back on their feet.

What is the best way to reach the people you work with who have unmet transit needs?

Court employees recommended on-site interviews.

How would you like to be informed about the information gathered through this process?

Email the final report, website is good too.

Focus Group Four
Senior and Health Care Organizations
8 group members

“How does this information compare with the unmet transit needs of your customers?”

Senior and health care organizations were very descriptive about the unmet transit needs of their customers/patients. They described the limits of public transit including lack of specialized vehicles and need for specialized training for staff. Also mentioned were the limits of time/hours of public transit, geographic limitations and the unmet need for regional transit.

I have patients who can't make it to their dialysis run because on Saturday mornings there isn't a MAX bus that can get them to dialysis. They have to arrange rides with volunteers. I have a patient who can't ride the MAX bus because she wouldn't get off at a MAX stop. That's an issue, some patients have dementia or who are hooked up to a dialysis machine and haven't eaten...

My biggest issues is that we have seniors who need transit in the winter – seniors don't want to drive in winter or when friends or family leave to go snow birding in the winter – they don't have transit anymore. I see a huge need for Sunday transportation.

From my perspective, I see people who should not be driving but who do drive because there is no other option. There is no Sunday route. It's really difficult to use MAX for a medical appointment because of the uncertainty of the appointment. They don't want to be late. They are used to being on time – very on time. It's not so much the dropping off as it's the picking up time.

I deal with a special needs population, they need more than curbside pick up – they need door-to-door. What we're talking about are people with dementia who can't ride a bus without an attendant. The other group is people who are wheelchair dependent – they may not have a caregiver at home who can wheel them out of the house – so they need an attendant who can do that.

I deal primarily with the homebound population. They need assistance – there are time and liability factors – in helping people in and out of cars.

If there was an integrated system – more community wide – for events – maybe people would become more used to using it. Just having transit doesn't mean people will use it. People are afraid to use it.

“What transportation changes or improvements would allow you/your organization to better serve your customers?”

Senior and health care organizations suggested that improvements start with education to increase participation and eliminate stigma associated with public transit. They also suggested expansion of the geographic area, increased days and hours of service, and removal of language barriers.

More education is needed about how to use the bus system. Cost is always an issue. We should get rid of the stigma.

I agree with changing the public perception – making mass transit more commonplace here. I'm looking at it from a slightly different perspective – gas prices – if people embrace mass transit they will use it more and save money. I also see the benefits of using MAX for people with special needs. Geography – yes maybe people can get to the hospital by bus but they may be living somewhere without access to the bus. I like the idea of long distance transportation. A lot of our staff live in Grand Rapids. People often talk about how much they're spending on driving, especially with our part-time employees.

I think we need to expand the geographic area and expand the Saturday transportation and also along with the language, with Hispanics, we also have an Asian population. Language is a barrier.

Maybe we need a champion in each community like a senior who uses transit. Maybe another thing that could be discussed is training for the drivers about dealing with seniors – what to do and what to expect. If I was coming at this from a driver – I might be concerned about my responsibility and what's expected from me. We've had one resident who's had good experiences with MAX and has shared that with everyone else.

One thing is to focus on volume; we need to appeal to the general public. Busing is for everybody. It's not just for people without transit.

I think it would be important for us to explore successful models of what other communities are doing. Midland seems to have a very successful model of transportation, so does Ann Arbor.

“How might these changes or improvements be paid for? What resources are available?”

Senior and health care organizations suggested that providers secure more grant funding, tax increases, and increased rider fees.

There are some grants, and I know that's getting tighter and tighter. The case could be made that there's a greater community benefit to more transit and to ask people to pay for that through taxes.

I would say for my residents, they would be willing to pay for their rides. They would pay more than \$1. I don't think they're looking for a handout. Maybe that's part of the education – if you ride on this system it's this much versus this much. If we had a reliable transit system that seniors felt comfortable using, at least my residents will be comfortable using it. From my understanding they're just looking for something they can use comfortably and reliably.

The more people you can appeal to, the more people you can meet the need. I like the idea of appealing to diverse people (age, diversity). It might be just another niche of marketing.

I go right to the strategic alliance – integrating those three areas. Partnerships are important and exploring other models to see where people get their funding, knowing that state and federal grants will go down to the cities.

“What is the best way to reach the people you work with who have unmet transit needs?”

Senior and health providers suggested on-site interviews.

I think having someone coming to our lobby would work well. Give them a free bus pass. Many of our people come from the mission or are right out of prison.

I like the idea of talking to the current ridership. If they don't have an unmet need, they probably know someone who does.

“How would you like to be informed about the information gathered through this process?”

I would like something that could go to direct care workers.

I would like to know the information and the strategic plan. The strategic plan – what are the steps that we are going to do is what I'm interested in. I am willing to participate as long as we can see results.

We need a second layer of feedback. People on the front lines might be able to substantiate the feedback. A strategic plan is essential.

**Focus Group Five
Large Employers
3 group members**

“How does this information compare with the unmet transit needs of your employees?”

Large employers reported that most full-time employees have their own transportation and that when gas prices go up they see more carpooling among employees. Large employers had more concerns about part-time and temporary employees who receive lower salaries and experience more transportation issues with getting to work with high gas prices. Temporary employees are more likely to use public transit and then employers are concerned with the reliability and access issues. They also reported some concerns with the availability of public transit to transport employees who experience medical or on-the-job accidents. With “no-fault” absence policies, employers are less likely to know the reasons their employees miss work but they know anecdotally that transportation is a contributing factor.

Most employees have transportation. What jumps out to me is that we have an attendance policy that they can miss 5 days in a year. What are the reasons that people are missing work? Transportation can be in those reasons for missing work. It's a no-fault attendance policy.

For employees that do not have a license, they have to rely on people to drive them or they rely on MAX. We have a stop right in front of our facility that is used quite often. 97% of our employees come from outside the area. The other issue is that we employ a temporary workforce, so that's a group that we can tell when we have more temps than normal that the MAX stops more often than normal (high costs of own transportation).

Legal issues are reasons why employees don't have a license. Temporary medical issues prevent people from being able to drive. Shift workers it is more of an issue – depending on the shift – 2nd or 3rd shift.

Our shifts run 6 am to 6 pm. They can get to the 6 pm. But when people need to get to 6 am, they need another way to get to work.

The more that gas goes up, the more people will carpool. Our onsite temporary manager wanted to know that with increasing gas prices, what could they do – a worker was going to quit and draw unemployment because she couldn't afford to make the drive from Muskegon to work.

“What transportation changes or improvements would allow you/your organization to better serve your customers?”

One issue identified strongly by this group is the lack of public transit at hours to accommodate shift workers and to expand geographic regional transit.

Better hours to accommodate shift schedules.

We need an on-call type of transportation because you don't need a big bus to pick people up (employees need is immediate).

Sometimes we have to call an ambulance to have people brought to emergency room (no taxis available) and that's a huge cost to the employer.

We need transit coverage for a wider area.

“How might these changes or improvements be paid for? What resources are available?”

When you look at what people say they're willing to pay, that's not very much. I tell employees that if their car doesn't work, and you get an unexcused absence and lose your job, then is \$5 for a ride unreasonable? (Increase costs - \$ come out of employees' pockets.)

There might be time that as an employer we might be willing or encouraged to pay for transit when an employee is injured to get that person back to work, like a voucher system.

“What is the best way to reach the people you work with who have unmet transit needs?”

Employers recommended contact through temporary employers and Michigan Works office.

“How would you like to be informed about the information gathered through this process?”

Email.

Focus Group Six
Human Service Organizations
5 group members

“How does this information compare with the unmet transit needs of your customers and clients?”

Human service organizations were concerned about unmet transit needs for their clients. They work with people with disabilities and people who are poor/unemployed who struggle with transportation issues for getting to work, agency appointments, and medical appointments. Human service providers discussed the geographic limitations, time constraints, and funding issues affecting transit accessibility and availability.

There are some real issues with capacity at this time to get people with developmental disabilities to get people to day services. We are creatively finding ways to get people to jobs in outlying Zeeland areas. We cannot provide transit ourselves.

I would say at first glance in terms of the survey results it is very representative of the people we serve. It's unrealistic to think that people we work with will live, work and shop all within MAX boundaries. In order to get people to work, they need access to a broader geographic region. Getting local units of government to do it (regional planning) is a huge roadblock.

Our people from Coopersville who have to get into Holland for Work First; they need daycare. It would be nice if everyone could have their own car, but we run into an issue a lot about horrendous fines that they owe between \$1,000 and \$2,000 to get their licenses.

We have so many people that have to go to dialysis and that's in Zeeland, Grand Rapids, and Muskegon. If you have to go to dialysis you have to go 3 times per week and you have to go during crappy hours. We look for volunteer drivers. Between churches and family and friends, people manage to get there and back. .

We work with Pine Creek Schools, and we have transit issues. If our kids want to stay after school they don't have a way to get home. If you want your child involved in after-school activities, you have to have a way to get them home.

There seem to be peak times where you can't get anything scheduled in. If you want anything booked before 8:30, you might as well forget about it. The transit system is not available to do rides. We have to slip in before major runs in mornings. You have to wait until like 10:30. Just because you request on-demand service does not mean you receive on-demand. You have to pick another time that's close to that. You would want to request an hour ahead of where you want to be. You could be left sitting out in the cold because they couldn't pick you up. If we have anyone who has a daycare drop off, that's one ride. Then you have to wait for another ride. It could be an hour or an hour and a half later. I can't schedule anyone who has a child to take a route bus. (The bus needs to have wait time for parents to come back out, and riders have to pay again for the second ride).

It comes down to – you tell people don't take a job (because they can't get there). We're trying to get people off public assistance and help them be self sufficient, but we're limiting people's

options because we can't meet their transportation needs. We try to explain to people that we can only provide temporary transit, in 60 days they need to provide their own transit.

It's gotten worse because our resources and our ability to provide and pay for transportation have gone away. We used to have a huge pot of money from MDOT to pay for transit. They've started to reinstate those funds but they weren't reinstated in a helpful manner. It was poor planning. Now we have \$70,000 coming into Ottawa County to pay for transit, but

Lakeshore Vineyard hands out free food but we put flyers up and tell our clients, are you taking advantage of these? People will say that they are unable to get there. These are places that give our free turkeys, etc. some people can't even take advantage of resources in our communities because of transportation.

For 90 percent of our people it's unrealistic for people to own a car. Given the time they work and place they work, transportation is limited.

“What transportation changes or improvements would allow you/your organization to better serve your customers?”

Human service providers suggested changes or improvements to transit that include regional planning, better coordination of service, collaboration with other organizations, a transit hub for outlying areas, and improved accountability for transit resources coming into the area from state sources.

I don't know that we're ever going to find a system that meets all of our needs, yet be funded in a way that would keep it running. The extension into these townships would be very helpful. The folks I work with on transit will never be able to use the routed system. They will always need to door-to-door system.

We know where our clients live and where they need to get to. The unknown is when they get the job. It would be nice to overlap clients. If we plotted out where our clients live and they're in certain housing complexes, and they are in the MAX route, but it would be nice to see a comprehensive map of where people need to go.

(How can we work together?) We were just 3 agencies that aligned. If MAX doesn't meet our needs, then we have to purchase transit services from someone else. When schools are closed, Pioneer shuts down transit which meant people couldn't make it to work.

If we could call and say we have 10 more riders, maybe they could send additional buses because it's more cost effective than putting more buses on the road for only two people.

In Hudsonville where community buildings are, if there was a hub of transportation, that could serve your Hudsonville, Jenison transportation. That could help employees. You could save a lot of the cost if you had a hub in other places.

“How might these changes or improvements be paid for? What resources are available?”

While transit funds have been reduced, human service providers were concerned with the inefficient use of money that is available and suggested that there could be better coordination and collaboration among those who provide and need transit in the county.

JARC funds, we got \$70,000.

Examine where all these dollars are going in our community and overlay all the rides. Look at are the funds being leveraged in a cost effective measure?

They need rides at 1 in the morning and there won't be a lot of carpooling opportunities at that time.

We'll buy people monthly passes for MAX if they live on the route. It gives people more flexibility because they can use it to go other places and it doesn't count against their 60 days of transportation.

Sometimes we'll give someone \$100 in gas vouchers to help with the first few days of employment. This money comes from our budget – for supported services.

“What is the best way to reach the people you work with who have unmet transit needs?”

Human service providers were willing to share their client database for survey purposes, but also suggested on-site surveys as the best way to reach people with unmet transit needs.

We could do a preliminary map because we have everyone in our database. We could abstract a list of people who have transit needs and provide it as a map.

On-site surveys, you'll get a snapshot of 60 people who are there right now – more even because of both sites. Even if people have the opportunity for work, they don't know where they'll be living in a month, so they don't want to take a job and have to quit.

“How would you like to be informed about the information gathered through this process?”

Email final report.

Focus Group Seven
Education, Government, Tourism, and Environment
12 group members

“How does this information compare with the unmet transit needs of your customers and clients?”

This focus group heard the results from both the stakeholder online survey and the prior six focus groups. They concurred with prior findings and additionally focused on transit issues including road commission concerns for location of stops, turn around space, and vehicle size. Some members shared the history of public transit in the Holland area and shared their perceptions of prior focus groups findings.

I was thinking about the people who need to go to Grand Haven from Holland, other than a cab, there is nothing unless you can find someone who wants to take you there. I would think maybe passenger vans would be more economical for those types of trips.

The main thing is to the hospital (Zeeland). We've taken care of that problem but not for our own residents. We pay to get people back home from the hospital, we did that because most people were used to that service.

The very first dial a ride system was here in the City of Holland. In 1980 Michigan was awarded a national honor by President Carter for a carpool program which was the first one in the nation. You would think that with the amount of time that's gone by and the ways transit has been examined that something could have been learned over all these years at the local level and how people are still having unmet transit needs.

Something that struck me was that did we look at the transit needs between Holland and Grand rapids. It's an important thing as we develop into a metro area.

The first transit system we had is in Saugatuck Township. Some of the special needs were taken care of by that system.

I view transportation in much larger definition as broader. This may sound a little cold hearted, the first dial a ride system was run as a taxi system, layered on top of that was a process to try to wean people from the door-to-door service. We need to discuss what the mission is of our transit system. I'm not convinced that our mission is to transport people at whatever time of day they need to go someplace. I've heard about the need for Sunday service, but I've also seen church vans in the parking lot.

“What transportation changes or improvements would allow you/your organization to better serve your customers?”

This focus group recommended learning from research on the topic and learning what works from other communities. They emphasized the importance of the use of technology in any improved transit system.

I brought up earlier about the Rapid Transit, they're transporting half a million students during the school year. Why can't we do it to move kids all around? The school is covering some of that cost. I don't know if it's cheaper for schools to do it through public transit. You almost have to look at a regional wide transit millage.

I think it has to be "easy pay."

I come from the wireless industry, and wireless phones can be used to debit cards. I don't think we're that far away from that kind of technology coming here. Every kid I saw in the high school has a cell phone.

It's almost like you need two systems. You can have vans go out to an area where there aren't that many folks (Laketown) for those who need to get to the doctor. Then, in more high traffic areas, we can use mass transit.

I suspect so much time has gone by that there must be some studies where we could learn something. I just have to believe that American ingenuity is such that, we certainly have the incentive with the way gas prices are right now... that must be a way to help wrestle these vehicles away from individuals.

I still come back to the issue of collaboration. I'm interested in seeing how we can work together.

I was from Atlanta before I lived here and I didn't use public transit. I don't think we'll ever wrestle Americans away from their cars. When I had a long commute, I used public transit. If you want to talk about urban sprawl, we had people commuting 3 hours each way. Atlanta built huge parking lots near the transit systems, so you could drive your car somewhere. We're trying to fill a gap, so we should determine where the greatest need is and try to fill that gap. We'd look at MAX and determine whether MAX has been successful then determine whether we want that type of service in Park Township. I made the transition to public transit because I could keep a schedule. I knew I'd be on time.

The reason I say trains is that it's a transit vehicle that is there. It is a means of getting someplace. If you needed to get to Kent County, you could take the bus to get to the train station, then that the train to get other places.

Expanded fixed routes are a good thing. The transfer station at the train station is a good thing. The current ridership numbers are a good thing. Grand Rapids is a necessary thing. The number of medical facilities is going up in Grand Rapids and I think that will require transit to GR. I think we need transit to the North. It's got to be convenient, affordable and timely.

“How might these changes or improvements be paid for? What resources are available?”

This focus group explored ideas for funding an improved transit system.

State, federal and local units don't have money. There are too many other needs. To increase the state sales tax, to increase the gas tax, none of that is going to go through, unless we have a millage and then we need a regional millage for transportation.

We don't have enough gas tax money to fix the roads.

One thing I can say is that we already have rail between Holland and Grand Rapids.

Let's ask people around this table for a nice contribution. There's nothing wrong with asking people for money. You need to look under all the rocks. Write grants. You never know. Grand Rapids just passed an increased millage for public transit.

Where I've seen philanthropic donations come into the transit system, it usually is around a specific transit dependent group.

I'm in the millage arena. I've got a view that when the economy turns around, and in 2008 that other millages will be sought. Maybe this philanthropic idea will work. Put them all together and maybe we can get this to work.

I think eventually the people who get left behind are the people at big box workers on US 31 to fill all these jobs. The private sector could step up and fund these things because stores need to have workers. There's an economic need there. That might be one of our focus areas.

You don't have to do this today. All these ideas like funding are something to look at. Some of the things that have been talked about are real good ideas. Growth is there. This is a big thing.

The issue of philanthropy – two summers ago national headlines reported that this region had the greatest amount of donations. But usually philanthropic helps to have a discussion like we're having here, but not usually public infrastructure. Jeff is going in the right direction talking about public/private partnerships. When I sit down with people what I hear about steady employment for people is that the hardest thing is getting people to work. Depending on employer attitudes, maybe we need a different approach.

“How might we be able to connect with people with unmet transit needs?”

Temporary Services, The mission, Women in Transition, Community Health, Mental Health, Michigan Works

“How would you like to be informed about the information gathered through this process?”

Website, MACC, West Michigan Strategic Alliance