



Local News

Goodbye, Green Route

TwinCATS to end Benton Township route on Dec. 1

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Published: Saturday, November 20, 2010 1:01 PM EST

BENTON TOWNSHIP - Numbers don't lie - which is why the Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority will pull the plug on its Green Route on Dec. 1.

TwinCATS Dial-A-Ride Assistant Director T.J. Taylor broke that decision to the agency's local advisory board during Friday's meeting at Super Buffet on Pipestone Road. The advisory board's members meet to discuss transportation issues affecting their agencies and the people they serve.

Figures compiled by the agency showed an average of just nine to 10 riders per day using the Green Route, which runs from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Mondays through Fridays, Taylor said. Most of the route's stops are residential areas in the Benton Township as well as the Orchards Mall and Save-A-Lot store, he added.

Figures for the Red Route, which takes riders from Benton Harbor to major employment centers in St. Joseph and Stevensville, show 40 riders per day, Taylor said.

The Blue Route, a half-hour loop running through Benton Harbor and the Fairplain Plaza/Orchards Mall area, remains most popular, with an average of roughly 90 riders per day, he said.

"This is why we're stopping now, during the winter - it doesn't make sense putting that bus out there, carrying eight to 10 people per day," Taylor said. "We could put it in the system and it could carry 40. So that's the reason we used."

Taylor wasn't sure how much money TwinCATS could save by closing the Green Route. He noted that the agency last tried a township-oriented route about eight years ago, with similar results. "It's all about ridership," he said.

Taylor said the reasons for the lack of demand aren't immediately clear. However, Matt Aslesen, mobility manager for the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission said he's working on an analysis that he hopes to submit by the advisory board's next meeting on Jan. 21 at Super Buffet.

"It could just that be there aren't that many people coming from Benton Charter Township (to use Dial-A-Ride), but we just don't know," he said.

Aslesen welcomes public comment on the matter, which can be directed to him and fellow Mobility Manager Christina Phippen. For more details visit the commission's website, www.swmpc.org.

Other major participants attending Friday's meeting included Region IV Area Agency on Aging Chief Information Officer Richard Martin; Thelma Branch, executive director of the Benton Harbor/Benton Township Senior Services Center; and Benton Township Trustee Rosie Hudson.

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