



Big changes for public transportation in Berrien County

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By Veronica Jean Seltzer, Multimedia Journalist - [email](#)

Berrien county has four bus agencies...and that's three too many according to the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission.

"You will not find another county in Michigan or really you're hard pressed nationwide to find another county that has four transit providers," John Egelhaaf, Executive director of SWMPC, said.

Egelhaaf says that makes things confusing and costly for bus riders. When trying to go from Buchanan to another Berrien town, for example,

"You go from a two dollar fare to a five dollar fare and ultimately you might have a seven dollar combined cost," Egelhaaf said.

The lack of universal management also costs the County more. That's why SWMPC just proposed a consolidation to County Commissioners. They want to unite the four agencies under one authority.

"Look at shared policy and look at shared fare structure and look at ways that resources can be shared and from the rider's perspective how more seamless service can be delivered," Egelhaaf said.

With the consolidation, the planning commission says it'll be a lot more cost effective and time efficient for bus riders.

"You would pay a single fare that would get you from one point to the other point," Egelhaaf said.

Bill Purvis is the Executive Director of one of Berrien's transit authorities. He likes the idea. He wants to diminish the public's fears about job-cuts.

"You'll have more busses so you'll have more maintenance and more callers because you're gonna be servicing more," Purvis said.

He says a better bus system will bring Berrien County residents greater peace of mind.

"You don't think about it if you don't have to have it, but then when you actually need it...you need your Mother picked up-you wanna know where it's at," Purvis said.

We're told change won't happen overnight. The County Commissioners still have to approve the consolidation.