

VAN BUREN PUBLIC TRANSIT
STUDY

Prepared by the Southwestern Michigan Commission
November 2005

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
INTRODUCTION.....	7
Study Purpose	7
Transit Study Methodology	7
HISTORY OF PUBLIC TRANSIT.....	9
National Perspective	9
Michigan Perspective.....	10
VAN BUREN PUBLIC TRANSIT	12
Overview	12
Area Served	12
Governance.....	13
Administration and Personnel.....	14
Building/Offices.....	15
Fleet Inventory and Maintenance.....	15
Services Provided	18
<i>Map #1 Service Area</i>	<i>21</i>
Contacting VBPT	22
Dispatch and Ride Scheduling.....	22
Transportation Brokers.....	22
Level of Rider Assistance Provided.....	23
Fiscal Status.....	24
Revenues	24
<i>Map #2 Funding and Ridership per Municipality</i>	<i>26</i>
Expenses.....	29
VBPT Ridership	31
Common Origins and Destinations	34
<i>Map #3a Common Origins and Destinations- Paw Paw.....</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Map #3b Common Origins and Destinations- South Haven</i>	<i>38</i>
Performance Indicators.....	39
Peer Comparisons	44
TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS	47
Geographic Location	47

Population Density and Transportation	47
Transportation Modes.....	47
<i>Map #4 Van Buren County Population Density.....</i>	<i>52</i>
TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED POPULATIONS	53
Overview	53
Age.....	55
<i>Map #5 Population distribution of residents age 60 years and over.....</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>Map #6 Distribution of children less than 6 years of age and licensed day care facilities.....</i>	<i>60</i>
<i>Map #7 Population distribution below 17 years of age.....</i>	<i>62</i>
Disabilities.....	63
<i>Map #8 Population distribution of residents with disabilities.....</i>	<i>64</i>
Low Income	65
<i>Map #9 Percentage of residents below poverty level.....</i>	<i>66</i>
No Vehicle Available.....	67
<i>Map #10 Number of households with no vehicle.....</i>	<i>68</i>
<i>Map #11 Home to work trips for all employees using a bus.....</i>	<i>69</i>
Non-English Speaking	70
ECONOMIC IMPACT OF PUBLIC TRANSIT.....	72
Trip Types.....	73
Employment.....	74
<i>Map #12 Employment clusters as of September 2002.....</i>	<i>76</i>
<i>Map #13 Distribution of employees per municipality.....</i>	<i>77</i>
<i>Map #14 Home to work trips for all employees.....</i>	<i>78</i>
<i>Map #15 Home to work trips for employees below poverty level.....</i>	<i>79</i>
Retail and Medical Services	80
Education and Training Services	80
Tourism Related Travel	81
Human Service Agencies	82
<i>Map #16 Department of Human Services Client/Program Participation.....</i>	<i>84</i>
INNOVATIONS, STRATEGIES, AND TRENDS	89
Changing Climate for Public Transit.....	89
Coordination Strategies.....	90
Technology Implementation Strategies.....	98
Combining Coordination and Technology	100
User Friendly System/Public Education	102
Increasing Efficiency with Flex-Routes	103
FUNDING OPTIONS.....	107
Transit Funding Sources	107

Local Dedicated Taxation.....	107
Fare Box Revenue	109
Other Federal Funds.....	110
Sales of Services and Products.....	110
Leveraging Funds.....	112
Increasing Coordination.....	112
Private Sector Partnerships	112
Alternative Fuel Vehicles	113
CREATING A VISION.....	117
Agency Transportation Survey Summary.....	117
SWOT Workshop Summary.....	117
THE NEW VISION	121
Proposed Mission Statement.....	121
Proposed Goals and Objectives	121
IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS	123
PERFORMANCE MEASURES.....	124
CONCLUSION	127
APPENDIX.....	128
STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS	129
GRANT DEFINITIONS.....	130
AGENCY TRANSPORTATION SURVEY	131

An Implementation Handbook and Toolkit is available as a companion document to this study. The Handbook contains a detailed Action Plan to guide the future efforts of VBPT and the Toolkit contains several resources to assist in implementing the recommendations. To obtain a copy of the Implementation Handbook and Toolkit, contact the Southwestern Michigan Commission at 269-925-1137 x 25, or download the file from the SWMC website:

www.swmicomm.org

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Van Buren Public Transit (VBPT) Study provides an extensive investigation of the VBPT system and operations from its governance to its financial records and performance measures. The study also delves into how VBPT fits into the overall transportation system in the county and region.

The study also explores the population characteristics of Van Buren County and the potential population sectors that most likely use or would use public transit. Van Buren County's population is expected to grow and with this growth the need for public transit will also grow. VBPT mostly serves and will continue to serve the transportation disadvantaged, which includes the elderly, disabled, low income and individuals without a vehicle. VBPT will also face the challenges of serving a growing population of Hispanics that may not speak English well.

The study concludes that VBPT will have the most economic and community benefit if it focuses on providing transportation for disadvantaged populations for the following trip types:

1. Employment
2. Retail and Medical Services (especially dialysis)
3. Education and Training

There may also be an opportunity to build upon the tourism industry to provide additional contracted services to communities and businesses. Most importantly, VBPT can increase ridership and efficiency by **collaborating and coordinating** with human service agencies to better meet the transportation needs of their clients.

The study also explores innovations, strategies and trends in rural public transit and provides information relevant for VBPT to start implementing these strategies. These innovations include coordination, the use of technology, public outreach and flex routes. There is also a section of the report that focuses on funding options for public transit.

Finally the study defines the new vision for VBPT that was created by a very committed group of steering committee members. This new vision entails a proposed new mission statement and seven goals with specific objectives.

The proposed mission statement for VBPT is:

It is the mission of Van Buren Public Transit to meet the dynamic transit needs of Van Buren County with innovative, economical and flexible service.

Following is the list of proposed goals and objectives that were developed.

GOAL #1: Develop a coordinated, centralized, countywide transportation system with regional connections.

- Expand LAC to become an interagency/user/private provider transportation focused group to build partnerships and communication
- Assess all resources (including funding, people, fleet) and gaps in transportation services being provided by all agencies and private providers.
- Explore and implement an inter-agency provided centralized dispatch.
- Increase efforts for a regional, inter-connected system.
- Encourage municipal/county future land use decisions to promote smart growth principles, which include the use of public transportation.

GOAL #2: Increase stakeholder satisfaction.

- Provide easily accessible information to riders/agencies.
- Identify, understand and respond to users/agencies transit needs.

GOAL #3: Improve leadership at all levels.

- Identify and improve processes that enhance board effectiveness.
- Develop and update operational and procedural policies.
- Maintain positive labor relations.
- Increase employee professional growth and leadership.

GOAL #4: Increase operational efficiency and productivity.

- Streamline processes.
- Create additional performance indicators to measure efficiency and productivity.
- Develop flex routes.

GOAL #5: Create awareness in the community of VBPT services, costs of services, funding sources and the need for public transit.

- Determine most effective public outreach methods/products to reach target audiences.
- Develop, improve and implement public outreach methods/products.
- Publish an annual report.
- Generate support for a millage to fund VBPT.

GOAL #6: Ensure fiscal stability.

- Develop a strategic financial plan.
- Identify and meet requirements to maintain state and federal funding.
- Institute an adequate and equitable fee structure for all services.
- Identify and secure private source funding whose customers are served by VBPT.
- Increase special services contracts.
- Identify and maximize all federal and state funding sources.
- Identify and implement cost saving initiatives.

GOAL #7: Provide safer service.

- Ensure safe buses.
- Ensure safety for customers
- Be prepared for countywide emergencies.

The VBPT Study includes a detailed Action Plan and several resources on how to implement the recommendations in the Study. The Action Plan and resources are contained in separate document titled the Van Buren Transit Study Implementation Handbook and Toolkit.

INTRODUCTION

Study Purpose

The Van Buren Public Transit Study was authorized by the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners in 2005 to assess the feasibility of continuing to operate the Van Buren Public Transit (VBPT) in the future. The Board of Commissioners requested Southwestern Michigan Commission (SWMC) to conduct the study, which would examine the current system and develop goals and objectives with an action plan for a more sustainable and efficient system in the future.

Transit Study Methodology

To study and evaluate all aspects of the transit system, the project team used several different approaches, including:

On-site observations were made at VBPT by SWMC staff. These observations of the facilities and dispatch procedures provided a better understanding of the internal daily operations at VBPT.

Interviews were conducted with VBPT staff and staff from key agencies that provide or schedule transportation for their clients. An interview was also conducted with Transportation Management Incorporated, (TMI) which provides a transportation brokering service for VBPT and Work First/Welfare to Work clients using Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) funds. The interviews helped to gain a better understanding of the current transit environment in Van Buren County and of the current and future transit needs in the County.

Steering Committee meetings were held with members who were selected to represent a variety of stakeholders such as contracted agency representatives, transit board members, municipal and business leaders, and the general public. (See Appendix for list of members.) The Steering Committee's role was to assist the SWMC in creating a new vision for VBPT and to establish the future direction for public transit in Van Buren County. Some of the

processes utilized are explained in the section of the report titled *Creating a Vision for Van Buren Public Transit*.

The Southwestern Michigan Commission and the Steering Committee members participated in ten meetings between April and September 2005. Information and ideas generated at these meetings are incorporated throughout the study and became the foundation for the new vision, which includes a mission statement, goals, objectives, and an action plan.

Surveys were conducted including an *Agency Transportation Survey*, which was sent to twenty-eight social service agencies with clients in Van Buren County. The results of that survey are utilized throughout the report; the complete survey results are included in the Appendix. Information collected from the surveys was used by the SWMC to assess the agencies' needs for transportation and to identify potential coordination opportunities between the agencies and VBPT.

Analysis of Demographic Reports from the U.S. Census Bureau and the State of Michigan were consulted to determine the current needs and potential future needs of a public transit system in Van Buren County.

Analysis of operating system reports and data such as VBPT's financial records and performance data were conducted to gain an understanding of the current system. The information was utilized to determine VBPT's current service levels, efficiencies and present funding sources. This information was then used to make recommendations for the future of VBPT in terms of operational efficiency and fiscal stability.

Comparisons of other public transit systems serving counties with similar populations and demographics were done. Many other public transit systems are facing similar issues as VBPT. There are a few systems that have found innovative solutions that can be utilized in Van Buren County. Similar systems can also be used to provide benchmarks for VBPT.

HISTORY OF PUBLIC TRANSIT

National Perspective

The following overview of public transportation is taken from the *Report of the Michigan Act 51 Transportation Funding Study Committee*.¹

The history of mass transportation in the United States dates back to 1827 when the first horse-drawn carriage or “omnibus” began carrying passengers in New York City. From this humble beginning 173 years ago, public transit experienced almost continuous growth until 1946 when mass transit ridership had grown to an all-time national high of 23.4 billion passengers.

In the 1960s, Congress passed the Urban Mass Transportation Act (UMTA) to coordinate capital assistance for transit. It was not until 1970 that the first use of state funds to match federal transit funds was initiated. By 1995, State and local government provided roughly 73 percent of the capital and operating assistance for public transportation. The federal government now only provides 25 percent of the cost.

According to the American Public Transportation Authority (APTA), transit ridership in the United States is currently experiencing growth when all forms of mass transportation are included. APTA reported 8.7 billion trips were taken utilizing public transportation in 1998. William W. Millar, president of APTA, equates the growth to mass transit systems becoming an increasingly more attractive alternative to the automobile.²

Public transportation is available in approximately 60 percent of all rural counties nationwide, for a total of about 1,200 systems. About two-thirds of rural systems operate in single counties or are city/town in scope; only about one out of four rural transit providers operate in a multi-county area. About 60 percent of rural transit providers are public bodies,

¹ “Report of the Michigan Act 51 Transportation Funding Study Committee,” 1 June 2000
http://www.michigan.gov/documents/part3_19172_7.pdf.

² “Act 51 Report” http://www.michigan.gov/documents/append-h_19255_7.pdf

and roughly a third are nonprofit agencies; only 5 percent are private companies or tribal entities.

Many rural transit systems are funded under Section 5311 of the Federal Transit Act, a formula grant program that authorizes both capital and operating assistance grants to public transit systems in areas with populations less than 50,000. Such “5311” transit systems are county-based and tend to be found in the more populated rural areas. Few are found in the most rural, isolated areas. These systems range in size from one to over fifty vehicles. In a recent survey, it was found that between 1994 and 1999 the average fleet size in rural areas increased by 60 percent with ridership increasing by 62 percent.³

Nationwide, rural transit agencies are facing many challenges including reduced funding and increased costs. Rural transit agencies need to respond by maximizing benefits by tailoring services to the needs of their communities. Transit agencies should focus on particular trip types (e.g., employment, education, medical services, and promoting independent living), provide services at the times required by customers at fares appropriate to the customers served, and focus on a small number of system variables that can be locally controlled (e.g., destinations, hours of service, and fares).

Michigan Perspective

The first fixed-route bus transportation operation in Michigan was initiated in Detroit in 1925. Private companies provided public transportation until the 1960s. The State did not get involved in funding until 1971 when the first urban “dial-a-ride” service was implemented in Ann Arbor. In 1972 Michigan passed a transit package calling for a one-half-cent set aside of the nine-cent gas tax for public transportation. Public Act 51 of 1951 was amended to create the general transportation fund. In 1974, the first *non-urban* Dial-A-Ride service was established, and by 1975 non-urban ridership exceeded one million passengers per year.⁴

³ Dennis Brown, “Public Transportation on the Move in Rural America,”
<http://www.nal.usda.gov/ric/ricpubs/publictrans.pdf>

⁴ “Act 51 Report,” http://www.michigan.gov/documents/append-h_19255_7.pdf

In 1978, Public Act 140 was passed which amended Act 51 to require wheelchair lifts on all fixed-route buses purchased, leased, or rented. As part of this act, the local advisory councils (LAC) were established for the purpose of reviewing and commenting on accessibility plans for transit providers.

By 1980, Michigan's non-urban ridership had grown to over four million passengers per year. By the late 1980s federal funding was declining putting more of the burden on state and local providers to provide funds.⁵

Today there are 57 non-urbanized transit systems and 19 urbanized systems in the state of Michigan.⁶ Although the rural atmosphere of Michigan is not unique, Michigan does have certain features, which affect the funding and delivery of public transit. Michigan is the 22nd largest state in the U.S. in land area, 8th largest in population, and 14th most densely populated. However, approximately 38 percent of Michigan's population and jobs, and 95 percent of the land, are in non-urban areas. About 79 percent of its roads are rural. Federally owned lands amount to less than 13 percent of the state's land area and, of Michigan's 117,520 miles of roads, approximately eight percent are state controlled, while none are federal. Of the total miles of rural roads, nine percent are state controlled, 87 percent are county-controlled, none are township, and four percent are municipal and other.⁷

Approximately 38 percent of Michigan's population and jobs, and 95 percent of the land, are in non-urban areas. About 79 percent of its roads are rural.

⁵ "Act 51 Report," http://www.michigan.gov/documents/append-h_19255_7.pdf

⁶ "State of Michigan," <http://www.michigan.gov/mdot>

⁷ "The Rural Context for Transportation Consultations," <http://www.ruraltransportation.org/library/mi.shtml>

VAN BUREN PUBLIC TRANSIT

Overview

Van Buren Public Transit (VBPT) began operations in 1979 and was located in Arlington Township at the corner of 52nd Street and 34th Avenue. With a 1988 Michigan Department of Transportation grant, the County was able to purchase an industrial park lot from the City of Bangor's Economic Development Corporation and construct a new vehicle storage, maintenance/repair facility, and office building at 610 David Walton Drive in Bangor. VBPT operates an average of 250 days per year and is currently one of 57 rural transit agencies in Michigan.

The following mission statement was adopted by VBPT on February 2, 1993.

To provide the community with public transportation services that are dependable, convenient, safe, cost effective and accessible for all who require same, meanwhile contributing favorably to the environment.

Area Served

Van Buren County is the 45th largest county (of 83) in Michigan with a total area of 1,090 square miles – 611 square miles of land and 479 square miles of water. VBPT serves all of the municipalities in Van Buren County with a total population of 76,263.⁸ Following is a list of municipalities, and corresponding populations, in Van Buren County.

Cities	Villages	Townships	
Bangor – 1,933	Bloomingtondale – 528	Almena – 4,226	Hamilton – 1,797
Gobles – 815	Breedsville – 235	Antwerp – 10,813	Hartford – 3,159
Hartford – 2,476	Decatur – 1,838	Arlington – 2,075	Lawrence – 3,341
South Haven – 5,021	Lawrence – 1,059	Bangor – 2,121	Keeler – 2,601
	Lawton – 1,859	Bloomingtondale – 3,364	Paw Paw – 7,091
	Mattawan – 2,536	Columbia – 2,714	Pine Grove – 2,773
	Paw Paw – 3,363	Covert – 3,141	Porter – 2,406
		Decatur – 3,916	South Haven – 4,046
		Geneva – 3,975	Waverly – 2,467

⁸ U.S. Census 2000

Total populations per municipality *type* are: 10,245 in cities, 11,418 in villages, and 66,299 in townships. (The U.S. Census reports each township's total population and then, in addition, reports the village populations within that township.)

Governance

The Van Buren County Board of Commissioners appoints a five-member board to oversee the operations of VBPT. These board members are appointed to three-year terms of office except for the County Commissioners who are appointed to two-year terms. Per Michigan's Public Act 51 of 1951, the Local Advisory Committee (LAC) is also appointed by the County Board of Commissioners and represents the current service population.⁹ The following criteria for selecting VBPT board members are in the current Bylaws:

- Not more than two of the members may be members of the county board.
- A member of the Board must maintain his /her primary residence in Van Buren County.
- One member of the board shall be the CEO, or his/her designee, of Van Buren County Community Mental Health Authority.

The board holds regular monthly meetings which open to the public. The VBPT director reports monthly ridership, revenues, expenses, and performance indicators. The Local Advisory Committee (LAC) provides a written report detailing action items for the board, along with background information and recommendations. There are no current board members or members of the LAC that are regular users of VBPT. Some members of the Board and LAC are employees of agencies that contract for services with VBPT.

2005 Van Buren Public Transit Board – Appointed by Board of Commissioners

(Name, affiliation, position on Board)

John Clement, Director of Mental Health	Dean Beckwith, Citizen's Representative,
Harold Johnson, County Commissioner	Chairman
Richard Freestone, County Commissioner	William Myrkle, Citizen's Representative

⁹ VBPT 9/7/05

2005 Local Advisory Committee (LAC) – Appointed by Board of Commissioners

(Name, interest/sector represented, position on Committee)

Sue McCauley - Low Income - Secretary	Leeon Arrans - Education
David Rigozzi Jr. - Seniors/Transit User	Larry Nielsen – Planning, Chairman
Rick Bowser, Disabled - Vice Chair	Judy Lammers – Area Agency on
Todd Brugh – Disabled	Aging/Seniors

Administration and Personnel

VBPT’s daily operations are overseen by the following personnel:

- Darryl Q. Mosley, Interim Co-Director (previously Operations Supervisor)
- Laurie D. Schlipp, Interim Co-Director (previously Secretary/Bookkeeper)
- Allen Briggs, Part-time mechanic

Prior to August 2005, VBPT employed 11 full-time and 7 part-time staff; however, staff positions were recently reduced to 9 full-time and 5 part-time employees. The following table illustrates the changes in personnel.

Table 1

VBPT Employees				
Staff Role	Prior to August 2005		Effective August 2005	
	Full-Time Equivalent	Part-Time Equivalent	Full-Time Equivalent	Part-Time Equivalent
Drivers*	7	7	6	4
Mechanic*	1		0	1
Dispatcher*	1		1	
Operations	1		0	
Secretary	1		0	
Executive Director	0		2 (Interim Directors)	
Total	11	7	9	5

*Union worker-health, vacation, pension

All drivers, the dispatcher, and the mechanic have Michigan Department of Transportation certified driver’s licenses and have passed the MDOT-approved health physical. All full-time transit employees are eligible to participate in a retirement plan. VBPT contributes up to 5 percent of the employee’s salary/wage to the retirement plan. All full time VBPT

employees receive medical benefit insurance through Michigan Municipal Liability and Property Pool.¹⁰ All drivers, the dispatcher and mechanic are members of a union and pay dues of \$30.05 per month.

Building/Offices

Located in the City of Bangor's industrial park, the VBPT building is steel-framed with a metal roof and siding. There are offices for the executive director, secretary/bookkeeper, dispatcher, and mechanic. The operations manager utilizes a portion of the conference room for an office. The building also



has a lounge for the drivers and a conference room where the monthly meetings of the transit board are held. This facility is handicap accessible and is used as a transfer point for customers.

MDOT funds (5311) were used in 2005 to make many capital improvements including the installation of energy saving lighting for the entire facility, central air conditioning, a furnace and exhaust fans in the shop area. The remaining capital improvement funds must be spent by March 2006 and will be used for new carpeting and roof, and replacement of the vandalized exterior sign. An \$8,000 Surface Transportation Program (STP) grant will pay for a new bus wash system in 2006.

The building and grounds (mowing, snowplowing) are maintained by outside companies selected through a bidding process. There is no budget for daily custodial services; offices are cleaned by VBPT staff/employees.

Fleet Inventory and Maintenance

As of September 2005, VBPT had a total fleet of 14 vehicles with 12 buses and two vans as described in Table 2 below. The vehicles with the highest mileage will be replaced in 2006.

¹⁰ VBPT Employee Handbook

It is expected that grant funds will be available to replace Bus 10 and Van 14 in early 2006 and Bus 9 in late 2006. All of the buses are lift equipped, but the two vans are not. All buses are smoke free and no eating or drinking is allowed. All vehicles are stored inside when not in use. VBPT maintains records for each bus/van in the fleet, which include all daily pre-trip checks (received from drivers) and maintenance/repair work orders. There is also a separate folder for each vehicle with title information, cost, and other related documents. When buses are to be discontinued for use, the Board advertises and requests bids for purchase.

Table 2

Vehicle Inventory as of September 2005						
Local Vehicle Number	Model Year/Chassis Type	Seating Capacity	Lift-Equipped	Mileage as of 1/1/05	Funding Source	
1	04 Ford/EIDorado	11 + 1/15	Yes	5,983	5311/STIP	
2	04 Ford/EIDorado	11 + 1	Yes	8,239	5311/STIP	
3	03 EIDorado/INT	14 + 2	Yes	31,983	Sec. 3	
4	03 EIDorado/INT	22 + 2/28	Yes	9,010	Sec. 3	
5	02 EIDorado/INT	14 + 2	Yes	79,962	Sec. 5309	
6	02 Ford/EIDorado	11 + 1	Yes	50,911	Sec. 5309	
7	02 EIDorado/INT	14 + 2	Yes	116,186	Sec. 5309	
8	02 EIDorado/INT	14 + 2	Yes	114,339	Sec. 5309	
9	00 EIDorado/INT	14 + 2	Yes	209,901	5311	
10	99 EIDorado/INT	14 + 2	Yes	188,416	Sec. 5309	
11	03 EIDorado/INT	12 + 3/18	Yes	19,036	Sec. 5309	
12	02 Ford/Coach	11 + 1	Yes	47,903	Sec. 5309	
13 – Van	02 Dodge Grand Caravan	7	No	24,313	5311/STIP	
14 – Van	98 Ford/Van	12	No	152,295	Local	



VBPT adheres to MDOT's preventive maintenance procedures and has a fully equipped shop with a hydraulic lift and two bays for mechanical work. Maintenance information is updated annually for MDOT and reported on MDOT's "Passenger Transportation Management System" (PTMS) on the Internet. Until recently, a full-time certified mechanic provided all oil changes, under-carriage lubrication, and tire replacements and rotations. The mechanic also monitored the vehicles for any needed brake work. With the exception of warranty work, most major repairs were done on site. Currently, VBPT has a part-time mechanic on staff to perform basic repairs on the buses. Tires are purchased and mounted on spare rims to be available when needed. Individual drivers are responsible for checking tire pressure, fluid levels, and vehicle cleaning. The garage area has a bay for washing the vehicles. A wrecker service is contracted and procured through a bidding process.

Motor oil, transmission fluid, anti-freeze, and other typical maintenance items are purchased in bulk to reduce cost. Two 10,000-gallon fuel tanks have been installed on the grounds allowing the purchase of fuel at the lowest possible price. These tanks are fairly new and in good working condition.

Services Provided

VBPT provides separate Dial-A-Ride services for South Haven and Paw Paw. VBPT also offers a countywide service with a 24-hour reservation. VBPT can be contracted to provide special transportation services, at an hourly rate, to groups and organizations. (An example is providing bus transportation for the South Haven Regional Airport's Fly-In during Blueberry Festival in August 2005.) VBPT also provides contracted services to several human service agencies within the county.



Dial-A-Ride provides curb-to-curb services for 18,000 people within the Paw Paw and South Haven areas. Following is a description of the two Dial-A-Ride services. In 2004, ***South Haven Dial-A-Ride*** represented 34 percent of the total VBPT ridership¹¹ and serves all of South Haven City, South Haven Township, the west part of Geneva Township (to 68th Street)

¹¹ VBPT Records

and North Shore Drive to Blue Star Highway. This area is divided into two zones, each with a different fee schedule. (See below) Travel within Zone 1 does not require a 24-hour reservation, but travel within Zone 2 or between Zone 1 and 2 requires a 24-hour reservation. South Haven Dial-A-Ride service hours have been reduced to Monday - Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. The hours were 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. before the cuts in service in August 2005. The average fare for the South Haven Dial-A-Ride was \$2.62 and is now \$4.13. Fares are for one-way trips.

South Haven Dial-A-Ride Fares

Zone	Area Covered	Fares* (prior to August 2005)	Fares* (after August 2005)
1	North Shore Drive to Baseline Road to 71½ Street to 8 th Avenue to 72 nd Street to 12 th Avenue to M-140 to 14 th Avenue.	Travel within Zone 1 is \$3.00 full fare and \$1.50 for seniors, disabled, students, and children age 2-12 years.	Travel within Zone 1 is \$5.00 full fare and \$2.50 for seniors, disabled, students, and children age 2-12 years.
2	Baseline Road East from 71½ Street to 68 th Street to 24 th Avenue	Travel within Zone 2 is \$4.00 full fare and \$2.00 for seniors, disabled, students, and children age 2-12 years.	Travel within Zone 2 is \$6.00 full fare and \$3.00 for seniors, disabled, students, and children age 2-12 years.

* Infants are free with paid adult fare. Student rate is to and from school within Van Buren County.

Paw Paw Dial-A-Ride service requires a 24-hour reservation and in 2004 represented 5.7 percent of the total VBPT ridership.¹² Paw Paw Dial-A-Ride service hours have been cut to Monday - Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. The hours were 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. prior to the service cuts in August 2005. The average fare for Paw Paw Dial-A-Ride was \$2.25 and is now \$3.75.

Paw Paw Dial-A-Ride Fares

Area Covered	Fares (prior to August 2005)	Fares (after August 2005)
From Paw Paw, north to 44 th Avenue, south to I-94, east to CR 653, and west to 41 st Street	Full travel fare is \$3.00 . Seniors, disabled, students, and children age 2-12 years pay \$1.50* .	Full travel fare is \$5.00 . Seniors, disabled, students, and children age 2-12 years pay \$2.50* .

*Infants are free with paid adult fare. Student rate is to and from school within Van Buren County.

¹² VBPT Records

Countywide service represented 5 percent of total VBPT annual ridership in 2004.¹³ This service requires a 24-hour reservation for travel within the boundaries of Van Buren County and operates Monday through Friday from 8:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Before service cuts, the hours of operation were from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. VBPT will also transport customers outside of Van Buren County if a vehicle is available. The county is divided into four zones to determine passenger fares.

Countywide service –schedule and zones

Pickups are between 8:45 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. Returns are from 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.	
Zone A	Townships of South Haven, Geneva, Columbia, Covert, Bangor, Arlington, and the cities of South Haven and Bangor.
Zone B	Townships of Bloomingdale, Pine Grove, Almena, Waverly and the Village of Bloomingdale and the City of Gobles.
Zone C	Townships of Hartford, Lawrence, Keeler, Hamilton, and the City of Hartford and the Village of Lawrence.
Zone D	Townships of Paw Paw, Antwerp, Decatur, Porter, and the villages of Paw Paw, Lawton, Mattawan, and Decatur.

The fee schedule for countywide service is shown below. The fees “Prior to August 2005” were adopted in July 2001. The fee schedule shown “After August 2005” became effective September 1, 2005. The average fare traveling within the county prior to August 2005 was \$4.12 and it is now \$5.62. Fares are for one-way trips unless otherwise specified.

Countywide service – fares*

For travel within a zone:	Prior to August 2005	After August 2005
Full fare	\$5.00	\$7.00
½ fare for seniors, disabled, children, students	\$2.50	\$3.50

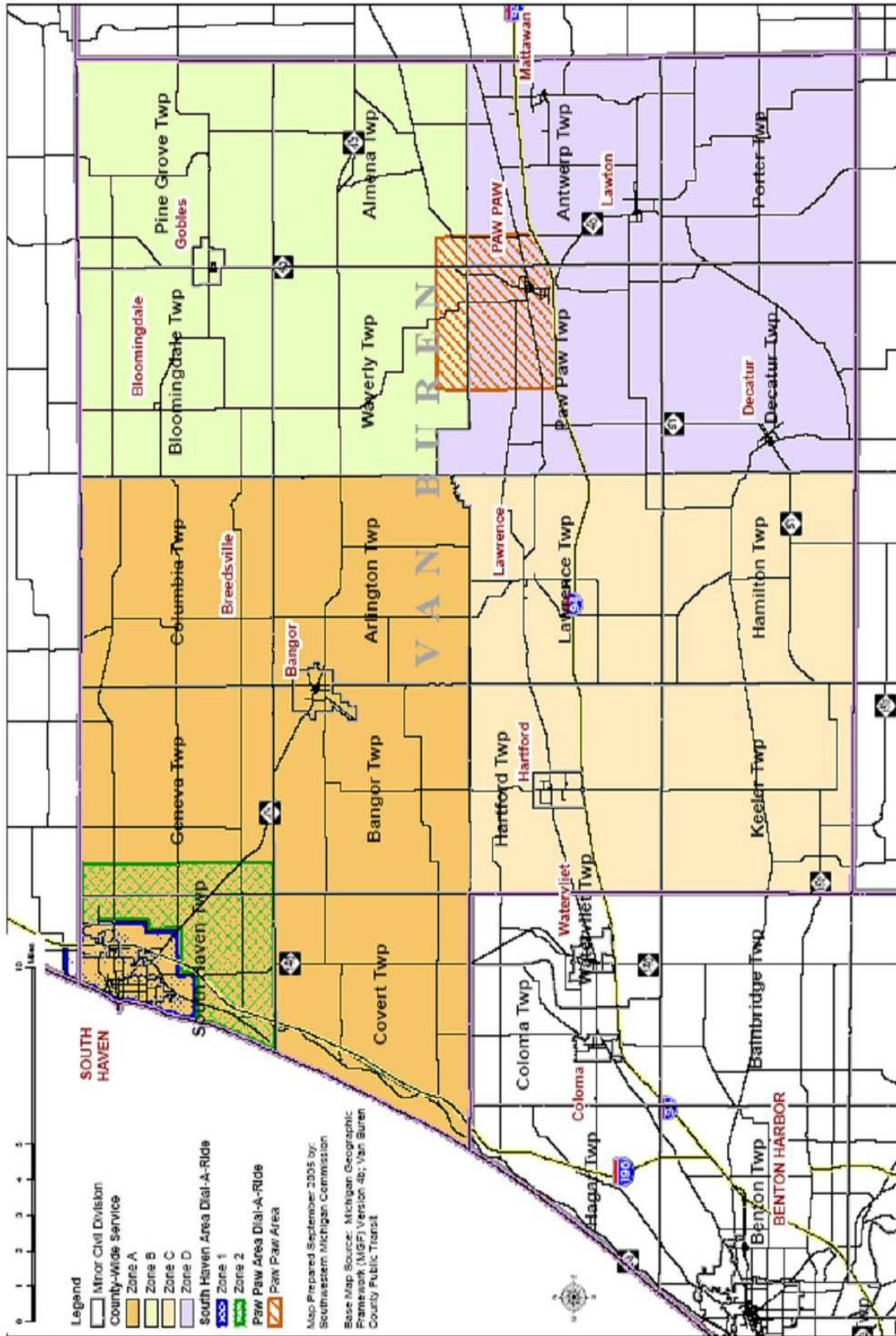
For travel from zone to zone:	Prior to August 2005	After August 2005
Full fare	\$6.00	\$8.00
½ fare for seniors, disabled, children, students	\$3.00	\$4.00

For travel outside of county:	Prior to August 2005	After August 2005
Round trip	\$20.00	\$20.00
One-way trip	\$10.00	\$10.00

* *Infants are free with paid adult fare. Student rate is to and from school within Van Buren County.*

¹³ VBPT Records

Map #1 Service Area



Contacting VBPT

VBPT schedule and fare information is available through brochures (at the transit office), word-of-mouth, caseworkers, the Internet (<http://www.vbco.org/government755146.asp>), a toll-free phone number (1-800-828-2015), a local phone number (269-427-7921), or via e-mail (vantrans@a1access.net). In addition, both MDOT and the South Haven Visitor's Bureau website provide a link to VBPT's website.

Dispatch and Ride Scheduling

VBPT uses a manual scheduling process utilizing hand written customized reservation slips and customer information cards. The scheduling process relies heavily on the dispatcher's knowledge of the county's geography and the client's travel patterns. VBPT gives priority to contract agency clients and general ridership is limited to open seats on contracted buses. To schedule a reservation for VBPT, the customer calls the dispatch office and gives name, pick-up address, pick-up time, destination, and return pick-up time. The dispatcher records the information on a customized reservation slip and customer information card. The dispatcher then transmits the information to the driver. When the trip is completed, the driver reports back to dispatch.

For contract riders, the dispatcher records a standing reservation with a referral number and then transfers the reservation information onto a colored 3 x 5 card (there is one color for each day of the week Monday through Friday). A card is completed for each daily one-way trip. The cards are arranged by color/day and by pick-up time. The dispatcher then creates a handwritten driver manifest for the next day. Additions or cancellations can be made until 6:00 p.m. the day before the trip is scheduled. After the trip is completed, the dispatcher files the information in a billing folder for monthly billing of the contract agency.

Transportation Brokers

VBPT commissions Transportation Management Incorporated (TMI) to broker transportation services for Work First/Welfare to Work clients. TMI is contracted to schedule rides for the clients, while VBPT is responsible for obtaining the grant funding, the third party

transportation providers and associated contractual agreements, and for the billing to each third party provider.

The current process involves TMI receiving a referral from a Michigan Works! Work First Program caseworker for a client who needs a ride. TMI forwards the ride request to a third party contract provider who generates the ride. This third party is usually a private provider such as a cab service. The third party contracts currently in effect with Van Buren County are:

- Cardinal Cab Service
- Mr. G's Express
- Blue Stone Transportation
- Cass County Public Transportation
- Lewis Cass Intermediate School District

TMI receives and reviews all invoices from the third party contract providers on a monthly basis. TMI forwards the reviewed and approved third party provider invoices to VBPT to process and pay. VBPT then generates a quarterly report to MDOT showing total revenues and expenses. MDOT issues payment to VBPT for these billed expenses. MDOT is only required to pay up to 25 percent of the total grant funds awarded per quarter. In 2005, all of the grant money budgeted for the fiscal year, was spent in the first and second quarter leaving VBPT waiting for its money from MDOT until the end of the year.

Level of Rider Assistance Provided

Disabled riders must meet the transportation provider at curbside. The customer is allowed to bring one assistant free of charge. Drivers are able to assist persons in wheelchairs via mechanical lifts. VBPT also does not offer TDD (Telecommunications Device for the Deaf) service. No transportation trip planning assistance is available. (Trip planning assistance is when the user receives detailed information on how to use public transit and how it may connect to other transportation providers to most efficiently complete a trip within or between counties. Trip planning assistance can be delivered by the dispatcher, on a recorded phone system, over the internet or by agency caseworkers.)

Fiscal Status

According to the financial report done by Plante & Moran for FY2004, VBPT's financial position declined slightly during the year ending September 30, 2004. The report states that operating income combined with non-operating revenue was not sufficient to cover the current operating expenses. Unless otherwise indicated the revenue and expense information in this section was reported by VBPT to MDOT for FY2002 – FY2004 and the FY2005 and FY2006 revenue and expense information is from the VBPT *budget*. The following table indicates the total VBPT revenue and expenses for FY2002 – FY2006.

Table 3

VBPT Revenues and Expenses FY2002 – FY2006					
Fiscal Year	2006 (Budget)	2005 (Budget)	2004	2003	2002
Total Revenue	\$574,370	\$728,000	\$591,601	\$596,863	\$567,492
Total Expenses	\$570,870	\$728,500	\$876,323	\$770,576	\$720,115
Gain/(Loss)	\$3,500	\$(500)	\$(284,722)	\$(173,713)	\$(152,623)

Revenues

VBPT's revenue sources include voluntary local contributions from municipalities, general passenger fare box, contracts with agencies and organizations to provide transportation to clients, special service contracts for private and public events, and state and federal grants. Following is a discussion of the main revenue sources for VBPT.

Local Contributions

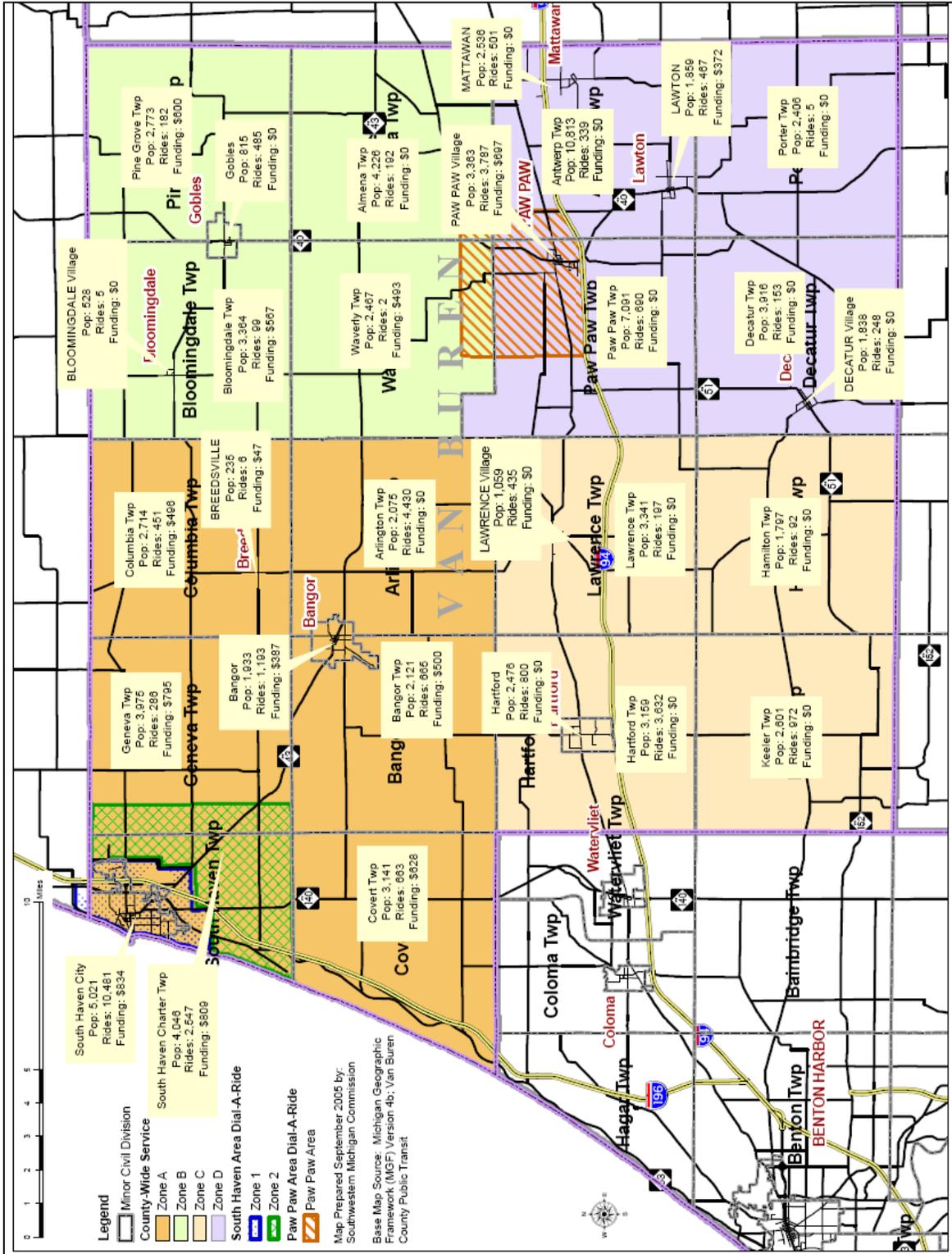
A per capita contribution of twenty cents is requested from each municipality in Van Buren County to support the VBPT. If each municipality contributed the requested amount, VBPT would receive over \$15,000 annually. VBPT received \$7,640 in FY2004. The following map (Map #2) shows the population, ridership, and dollar amount contributed for each municipality for 6/23/03-5/1/04. The ridership numbers indicated on the map indicate the number of rides originating from the municipality, not the place of residence for the rider. In addition, Van Buren County has been providing \$10,000 worth of in-kind services (administration of benefits, payroll, etc.) to VBPT that is counted towards local match for state and federal funds.

Table 4

VBPT Local Revenue FY2002 - FY2006					
Fiscal Year	2006 (Budget)	2005 (Budget)	2004	2003	2002
Cities, Villages, Townships Contribution	\$7,000	\$10,700	\$7,640	\$10,741	\$9,831
General Fund	\$155,120	\$121,576	\$0*	\$0	\$0
County In-Kind Services	\$9,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$9,233

*In the 2004 Budget provided by VBPT, the general fund income was listed as \$115,829; however, there was no general fund income listed in reports to MDOT PTMS

Map #2 Funding and Ridership per Municipality



Fares

There are two fare sources, those generated from contracts and those from fare box, which are received from general public riders. In 2003, general public fare box revenues were \$42,026 and in 2004 they were \$39,711, a decrease of \$2,315. With cuts in service in 2005, fare box revenue is expected to decrease in 2006. VBPT also generates fares from contracted services with agencies and organizations. The following table shows the amount of revenues collected from contracts with organizations and agencies. The contracts are negotiated by VBPT and the agency or organization listed in the table. The 2004 contract revenue was \$149,428 and in 2003 it was \$142,906, an increase of \$6,522. There is an expected increase in contract revenue in 2005 and 2006. The largest contract customer has consistently been Van Buren County Mental Health Authority. VBPT also generates revenue from special services contracts for providing transportation for festivals, events, weddings and other occasions. The revenue from this activity increased from \$5,030 in 2003 to \$7,732 in 2004, but is expected to decrease in 2005 to \$5,000.

Table 5

VBPT Fare Revenue FY2002 - FY2006					
Fiscal Year	2006** (Budget)	2005 (Budget)	2004*	2003*	2002**
Passenger Fares					
General public (fare box revenue)	\$20,130	\$42,000	\$39,711	\$42,026	\$40,908
Contract Fares					
Lakeview Hospital		\$100		\$90	
HMO		\$500	\$2,932	\$458	
Dowagiac Schools			\$629	\$377	
Mental Health MTI		\$73,780	\$81,482	\$68,530	
Mental Health HOPE			\$41,375	\$47,970	
VB/Cass Health Dept.		\$6,287	\$5,463	\$5,307	
FIA/Human Services		\$100	\$974	\$30	
South Haven Hospital			\$38		
Autumn House			\$7,555	\$7,856	
Hartford FRC		\$1,000		\$946	
South Haven Schools		\$2,000	\$808	\$5,032	
Other Mental Health		\$60,701			
Special Service Contracts		\$5,000	\$7,732	\$5,030	
Other Services (bus washing, etc)		\$1,200	\$440	\$1,280	\$760
Total Contract	\$247,500	\$150,668	\$149,428	\$142,906	\$136,776
Total Fare Revenue	\$267,630	\$192,668	\$189,139	\$184,932	\$177,684

*Amounts are from the Plante & Moran 2004 financial report of VBPT – amounts are not the same as those in MDOT PTMS reports. Plante & Moran numbers were used because there was more detail on the individual contract amounts than the MDOT reports

**The breakdown of contract amounts was not available for 2002 or 2006.

State and Federal Funds

VBPT receives annual awards of state and federal funds to assist with providing public transit to Van Buren County. The State of Michigan provides VBPT with local transit operating assistance through Act 51, Comprehensive Transportation Fund, which is generated mostly by a sales tax on automotive related items. MDOT receives federal funds that are passed on to local transportation agencies. VBPT receives the following federal funds through MDOT: Section 5311, RTAP and JARC. Section 5311 federal funds are specifically for non-urban public transportation systems and can be utilized to support administrative, capital or operational costs of local transportation providers. The Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) provides federal funds for transit research, training and technical assistance to states or any individual or group dedicated to mass transportation. Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) funds are part of the TEA-21 legislation and can be used to develop transportation services designed to transport welfare recipients and low income individuals to and from jobs and to develop transportation services for rural and suburban areas to suburban employment opportunities. Emphasis is on projects that utilize mass transportation services. The federal funds that VBPT receives are usually matched by local and state funds.

VBPT receives the following federal funds through MDOT:

- Section 5311
- RTAP
- JARC

Table 6

VBPT State and Federal Revenue FY2002 – FY2006¹⁴					
Fiscal Year	2006 <i>(Budget)</i>	2005 <i>(Budget)</i>	2004 <i>(Actual)</i>	2003 <i>(Actual)</i>	2002 <i>(Actual)</i>
State operating assistance (Act 51)	\$220,730	\$307,646	\$285,108	\$275,756	\$286,404
Section 5311	\$62,510	\$79,771	\$66,392	\$68,564	\$69,679
JARC (Section 3037)	**	\$95,232*	\$226,614	\$232,900	\$437,577
RTAP	\$3,500	\$3,500	\$2,033	\$3,527	\$2,585
Total	\$286,740	\$486,149	\$580,147	\$580,747	\$796,245

*Amount received for first two quarters of FY2005.

**Funding levels for JARC is not known for FY2006.

¹⁴ “MDOT Public Transportation Management System,”
<http://mdotwas1.mdot.state.mi.us/public/tms/index.cfm?see=pubtran>

Expenses

VBPT main expenses include wages, fringes, services such as advertising and audit, office supplies, fuel and fleet maintenance, utilities, insurance and leases.

Labor (Wages and Fringe)

The average VBPT full time driver pay is currently \$8.39 per hour and increasing to \$8.59 per hour in 2006. All full time employees receive health and retirement benefits through Van Buren County. Employees contribute 5 percent (pre-tax) of the health insurance costs. In FY2005, the employee's share of the monthly cost for health care is \$48 for family coverage, \$40.60 for a married couple and \$18.90 for a single person. VBPT offers an employer match of up to 5 percent of the employee's salary/wage to the retirement plan and VBPT is budgeted to pay \$7,846 in FY2006. In FY2004, VBPT contributed \$10,219 and in FY2003 \$10,217 was contributed to employee's retirement plans. Total labor expenses are expected to decrease in FY2006 due to staffing reductions in August 2005.

Table 7

VBPT Labor Expense FY2002 – FY2006					
Fiscal Year	2006 <i>(Budget)</i>	2005 <i>(Budget)</i>	2004 <i>(Actual)</i>	2003 <i>(Actual)</i>	2002 <i>(Actual)</i>
Wages					
Operators	\$150,000	\$184,000	\$170,148	\$238,986	\$170,665
Dispatchers	\$86,044	\$30,900	\$25,806	\$24,524	\$28,931
Other	\$23,380	\$140,600	\$125,836	\$55,331	\$120,925
Total Wages	\$259,424	\$355,500	\$321,790	\$318,841	\$320,521
Fringe					
Other Fringe	\$178,400	\$220,400	\$219,293	\$187,411	\$148,196
Pension	\$7,846	\$10,500	\$10,219	\$10,217	\$10,735
Total Fringe	\$186,246	\$230,900	\$229,512	\$197,628	\$158,931
Total Labor – Wages & Fringe	\$445,670	\$586,400	\$551,302	\$516,469	\$479,452
Percent fringe of total labor	42%	39%	42%	38%	33%

Fuel

Fuel costs have been increasing dramatically, which will negatively impact VBPT's expense budget. VBPT staff purchase fuel in bulk and attempt to make purchases when prices are low to help alleviate the rising costs. According to VBPT staff, fuel costs per gallon have

increased from \$0.66 in 2001 to \$1.97 in 2005. As the table below indicates, the fuel and lubricant cost per vehicle mile has increased from \$0.08 in 2002 to \$0.12 in 2006. Even though less vehicle miles are planned for 2006, the amount VBPT expects to pay for fuel has increased.

Table 8

VBPT Fuel Expense and Vehicle Miles			
Fiscal Year	Fuel & Lubricants	Total Vehicle Miles	Fuel Cost/Vehicle Mile
2006 <i>(Budget)</i>	\$41,000	341,750	\$0.12
2005 <i>(Budget)</i>	\$37,500	352,000	\$0.11
2004	\$36,716	363,215	\$0.10
2003	\$35,458	352,520	\$0.07
2002	\$29,459	348,909	\$0.08

Utilities

Utility costs are also increasing and will affect VBPT's budget. In FY2006, utilities are projected to be \$15,400 compared with only \$12,869 in FY2002.

Table 9

VBPT Utility Expenses	
Fiscal Year	Utilities Expense
2006 <i>(Budget)</i>	\$15,400
2005 <i>(Budget)</i>	\$14,900
2004	\$13,446
2003	\$14,145
2002	\$12,869

Marketing/Advertising

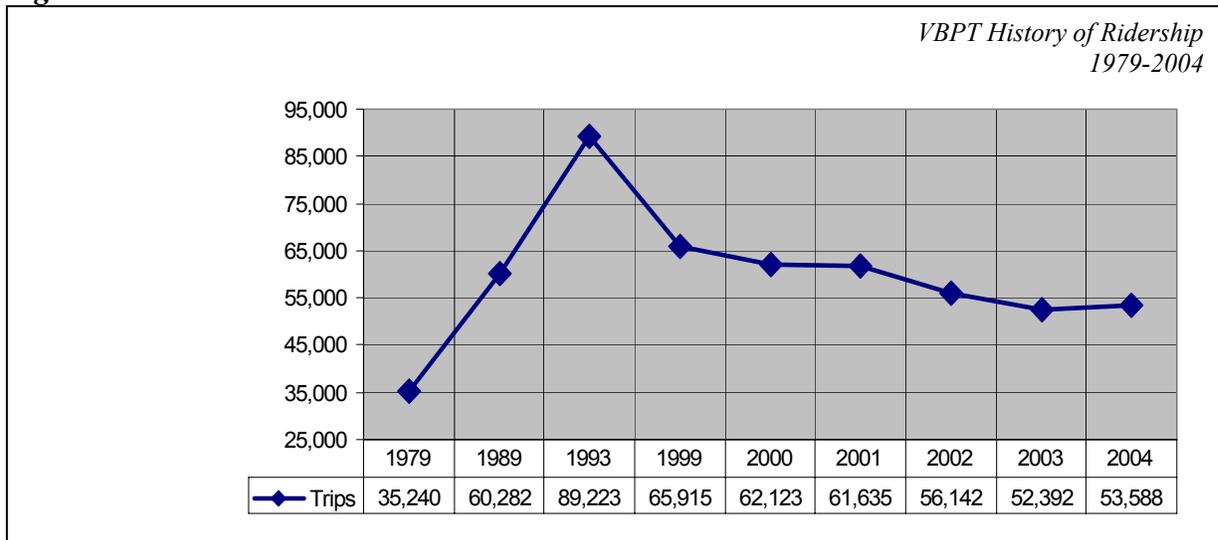
Following is the amount spent or budgeted yearly for VBPT marketing and public outreach. *(Table 10)* The advertising expenses are primarily for a listing in the yellow pages. The advertising budget has decreased substantially for FY2006. With this slim budget and the desire to increase ridership, VBPT may need to utilize low cost advertising methods such as press releases, the Internet, public service announcements, and coordination with other agencies to promote VBPT services and benefits to the community.

Table 10

VBPT Advertising Expenses	
Fiscal Year	Advertising
2006 (Budget)	\$2,500
2005 (Budget)	\$10,000
2004	\$9,309
2003	\$10,226
2002	\$10,750

VBPT Ridership

Over 1.5 million passenger trips have been provided since VBPT began operations in 1979. The greatest number of passenger trips was recorded in 1993 with over 89,000 rides.

Figure 1

VBPT total ridership has been decreasing since 2002, with the exception of a slight increase between 2003 and 2004. Current ridership is over 50,000 per year and VBPT expects ridership to decrease to 43,000 rides in FY2006. In FY2006, VBPT expects its largest customers to remain the disabled population under the age of 59 (representing 64% of the ridership). The second largest customer is expected to remain passengers under 60 and not disabled (representing 24% of ridership). The table reflects total ridership and the number of rides for each passenger category from 2002 to 2006.

Table 11

VBPT Ridership by Passenger Characteristic ¹⁵					
Passenger Category	FY2006*	FY2005*	FY2004	FY2003	FY2002
Senior Citizens (over 60)	3,450	6,486	4,100	6,443	8,278
Disabled	27,500	31,005	30,789	30,292	30,301
Senior and Disabled	1,750	3,183	2,266	3,051	3,328
Under 60 not disabled	10,300	11,226	16,433	12,606	14,967
Total	43,000	51,900	53,588	53,392	56,874

*Budget estimates

The following table shows the types of trips taken by demand response riders of VBPT as recorded by VBPT drivers. The most common trip type was for personal business (37% of total) and the second most common trip type was for employment purposes (31% of total). The records for trip types for FY2005 have not been tabulated yet.

Table 12

VBPT Number of Trips by Trip Type FY2004		
Trip Type	Number of Trips	Percent of Total Trips Recorded
Work	10,692	31%
Going to school	2,358	7%
Going shopping	3,690	11%
Medical visit	3,282	10%
Personal business/go home	12,693	37%
Social or recreation trips	1,290	4%
Total Trips Recorded	34,005	

Table 13 (below) indicates the number of passengers by service from 2000 to 2004. The services include South Haven and Paw Paw Dial-A-Rides, countywide reservations, special contracted services and the various agency-contracted services. In FY2004, **South Haven Dial-A-Ride** represented **34 percent of the total** VBPT ridership. **Paw Paw Dial-A-Ride** service represented **5.7 percent of the total** VBPT ridership. **Countywide reservation service** represented **five percent** of total VBPT ridership. In 2004, special contracts accounted for six percent and **agency contracts accounted for 49 percent of total ridership.**

¹⁵ MDOT PTMS and VBPT Application for 2006 Funding 5311

Table 13

Service/Contracting Agency	Number of Passengers By Service ¹⁶					
	FY2004	FY2003	FY2002	FY2001	FY2000	
	# of Passengers	# of Passengers	# of Passengers	# of Passengers	# of Passengers	# of Passengers
Paw Paw Dial-A-Ride	3,062	3,017	3,365	4,254	4,043	4,043
South Haven Dial-A-Ride	18,141	17,787	18,819	19,651	18,857	18,857
Countywide Reservation	2,720	2,935	2,659	3,097	2,947	2,947
Special Contracts (events & trolley)	3,287	1,700	3,784	3,255	2,387	2,387
Mental Health-Rehabilitation	15,762	14,043	13,818	17,472	20,109	20,109
Mental Health-PSR	7,716	9,461	10,611	10,950	10,825	10,825
Mental Health - Day	365	385	421	623	925	925
Rehab/Work	0	0	0	0	804	804
Autumn House	1,194	1,304	1,206	567	0	0
Family Resource	0	162	0	0	0	0
Public Health	436	470	391	536	780	780
Community Education – Bangor	0	0	196	581	0	0
Dowagiac Schools	450	296	0	0	0	0
South Haven Public Schools	101	663	872	555	359	359
South Haven Hospital/Youth & Co.	0	0	0	94	0	0
P.H.P./Hospital	140	0	0	0	0	0
MI Works - Work First	0	0	0	0	96	96
MI Works - Job Access	214	169	0	0	0	0
Total	53,588	52,392	56,142	61,635	62,132	62,132

¹⁶ VBPT Records

Common Origins and Destinations

During the study period, VBPT dispatch provided SWMC with common origins and destinations of riders. The locations were mapped for the South Haven and Paw Paw areas (see maps 3a and 3b). Below countywide common origins and destinations identified by VBPT dispatch are listed, followed by out-of county destinations and senior housing locations in Van Buren County. The SWMC also collected information from the Van Buren County Department of Human Services regarding clients' locations. (See Human Service Agency section later in the report for a map.) Further, SWMC collected information from VBPT about the locations of Van Buren County Mental Health clients. This information has not been mapped, as it would be a very intensive effort. However, to begin the planning and implementation of flex routes, this mapping will be crucial. Once all of the maps are developed, the maps can then be combined to identify common routes that may become feasible informal flex routes. (See section on Increasing Efficiency with Flex Routes.)

Common Origins

Lakeview Continuing Care Center, 99 Walker Street, Lawton

Harding's Market, 14 W. Monroe, Bangor

Group homes and Senior Apartments (see next page)

Common Destinations

Wal-Mart Supercenter, 201 73rd Street, South Haven

Van Buren County Courthouse, 212 E. Paw Paw Street, Paw Paw

Van Buren County Department of Human Services, CR 681, Hartford

Van Buren County Courthouse, Wells Street, South Haven

Save-A-Lot, South Haven

Rainbow Lanes, Inc, 38656 Red Arrow Highway, Paw Paw

Van Buren County State Park, 23960 Ruggles Road, South Haven

Van Buren County Community Mental Health Authority

MTI, Bangor

HOPE Center, Hartford

Autumn House, Paw Paw

Doctor's Offices in Mattawan, Lawton, Paw Paw, & South Haven

Out of County Common Destinations

Bronson Hospital, Kalamazoo

Lakeview Memorial, Battle Creek

Watervliet Hospital

Elder Housing in Van Buren County**Autumn Wind**309 E. Arlington St.
Bangor, MI 49013
427-7809**Briar Hills**73755 6th Ave.
South Haven, MI 49090
637-1782**Corcoran Apartments**508/510 W. Van Buren
Gobles, MI 49055
657-2747**Creekside Manor**24810 W. McGillen
Mattawan, MI 49071
668-2854**East Brook Apartments**301 Cemetery Rd.
Bangor, MI 49013
637-2167**Grierson I II**306-310 Prairie Ronde
Decatur, MI 49045
423-8536**Lawrence Downs**599 A-2D S. Paw Paw
Lawrence, MI 49064
674-4157**Maple Glen**230 Baseline Rd.
South Haven, MI 49090
637-2301**Black River Common**820 2nd St.
Bangor, MI 49013
427-5535**Brush Creek**400 S. Paw Paw Ave.
Lawrence, MI 49064
674-3019**Covert Public Housing**73860 Lake St.; PO Box 66
Covert, MI 49043
764-8881**Decatur Downs I II**413 1/2 Edgar Bergen
Decatur, MI 49045
423-8568**Elm Tree/Grapefield
Apartments**Morrill St.
Lawton, MI 49065
435-8124**Harbor View**220 Broadway
South Haven, MI 49090
637-5755**Lyons Apartments**518 or 520 River Rd.
Paw Paw, MI 49079
657-2747**McDowell Apartments**55921 CR 687
Hartford, MI 49057
621-2089**White Apartments**320 W. Kalamazoo St.
Bloomington, MI 49026
521-7700**Woodside Apartments**215 Wendell St.
Hartford, MI 49057
621-2438**South Street Apartments**325 South St.
Lawrence, MI 49064
674-8015**Village Commons Apartments**121 Walker Street #11
Lawton, MI 49065
624-1845**Vintage Apartments**806 E. St. Joseph St.
Paw Paw, MI 49079
657-7154**Westland Park Apartments**5777 Western St.
Mattawan, MI 49071
657-7154**White Oaks Retirement**300 White Oaks Rd.
Lawton, MI 49065
624-4811**Orchard View Manor**602 W. Van Buren St.
Gobles, MI 49055
628-5279

Miller Court Sr. Apartments
205 Miller Ct.
Paw Paw, MI 49079
657-4776

Tannahill Apartments
520 S. Center St.
Hartford, MI 49057
621-2321

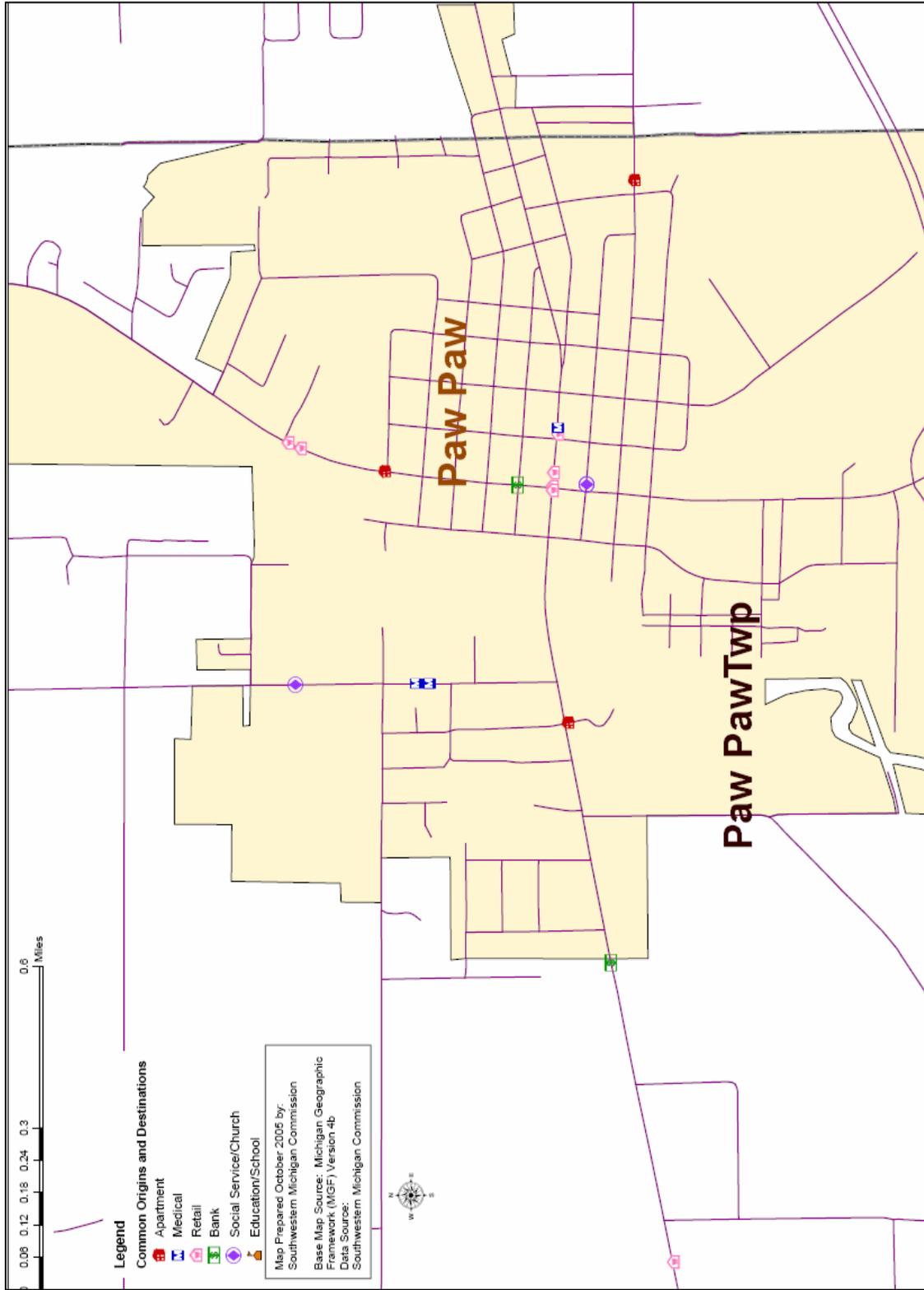
Village View Senior
899 Bailey Ave.
South Haven, MI 49090
637-2167

River Terrace
220 Broadway
South Haven, MI 49090
637-5755

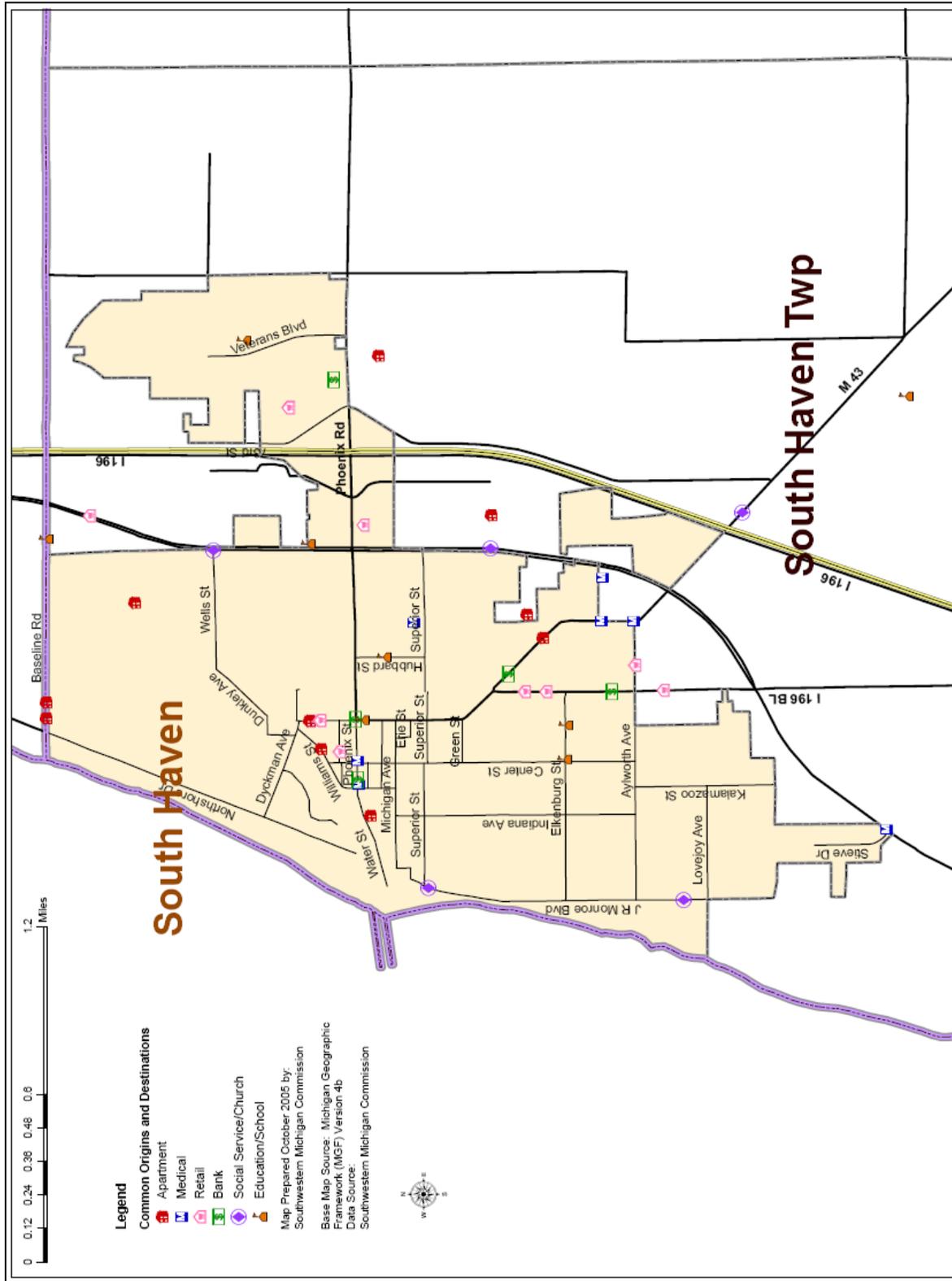
Vintage Court
401 Orchard St.
Lawton, MI 49065
624-1536

**Source: Area Agency on Aging website*

Map #3a Common Origins and Destinations- Paw Paw



Map #3b Common Origins and Destinations- South Haven



Performance Indicators

Measuring the performance of public transit is a difficult task because many of the community and economic benefits provided by public transit cannot be easily quantified. According to Dennis Brown, Regional Economist with the US Department of Agriculture, rural transit is cost efficient. A recent study estimated average benefit/cost ratios of rural transit as approximately 3.1 to 1; for every additional dollar spent on transit (typically by a transit agency), rural areas derive about 3.1 dollars in benefits.¹⁷ Rural transit systems that significantly expanded access to employment facilities were found to have among the highest benefit/cost ratios, as were systems that fostered independent living and those that provided access to critical medical services (such as dialysis treatment).

Performance indicators are being utilized more and more to measure service quality, efficiency, effectiveness, and overall performance. VBPT is required by MDOT to submit performance indicators with the level of acceptable performance for each indicator. VBPT operates in a service area that is not only geographically large, but major trip generators are scattered across the county, with most government services on the east side of the county and big box discount shopping located in the west side of the county.

The VBPT system, which is predominately an on-demand/paratransit service, exhibits low productivity and high cost per passenger trip, which is inherent in a large rural service area. In 2005, VBPT provided three passenger trips per vehicle hour with an average cost of \$13.97 per passenger trip.

¹⁷ Brown, <http://www.nal.usda.gov/ric/ricpubs/publictrans.htm>

Table 14

VBPT Performance Indicators¹⁸					
	FY2006 <i>(projected)</i>	FY2005 <i>(projected)</i>	FY2004	FY2003	FY2002
Performance Indicator					
Annual passenger count	43,000	51,900	53,588	53,392	56,874
Annual vehicle miles	341,750	352,000	363,215	352,520	348,909
Passenger count per mile	0.13	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.16
Annual vehicle hours	16,600	17,200	19,606	17,291	18,067
Passenger count per vehicle hour	2.59	3.02	2.73	3.09	3.15
Cost per mile	\$1.68	\$2.06	\$1.90	\$2.01	\$1.82
Cost per hour	\$34.60	\$42.15	\$35.28	\$40.89	\$35.22
Cost per passenger trip	\$13.35	\$13.97	\$12.91	\$13.49	\$11.19
Fare box/Passenger Trip	\$6.22	\$3.69			

Other performance indicators are annual per capita usage and fare box recovery. The per capita usage is highest for the South Haven Dial-A-Ride service and lowest for the countywide reservation service.

Table 15

Annual Per Capita Usage FY2003			
Service Type	Service Area Population	Passenger Trips/Year	Trips Per Capita
Countywide reservation	76,263	2,720	0.04
South Haven DAR	9,097	18,141	2.00
Paw Paw DAR	10,454	3,062	0.30

The fare box recovery ratio is best for the countywide reservation service and least for the Paw Paw Dial-A-Ride. However, this comparison is limited because of the cost per passenger trip is system wide and not according to the type of service.

¹⁸ MDOT PTMS and VBPT Application for 2006 Funding 5311

Table 16

Average Fare Revenue/Cost (Fare box Recovery) FY2003					
Service	Average Fare Per Trip	Cost Per Passenger Trip*	Average Loss/Subsidy Per Trip	Annual Average Fare Revenue	Annual Average Loss/Sub (LxPT-R)
Countywide reservation	\$4.12	\$13.49	\$(9.37)	\$11,206	\$(14,280)
South Haven DAR	\$2.62	\$13.49	\$(11.00)	\$47,529	\$(15,202)
Paw Paw DAR	\$2.25	\$13.49	\$(11.40)	\$6,889	\$(28,017)

*Because of the limitations on how data is collected, the cost per passenger trip is the same for each service. Better data on the cost for each service would result in more accurate performance measurements.

In 2004, there was an average of 10 buses utilized per day between the four services illustrated as illustrated in Figure 2. For each service listed, the average daily deficiency per bus is indicated in the last column of Table 17. The deficiency is calculated by subtracting the average contract and fare revenues from average costs of service per day. This deficiency is covered by federal, state and local funds to keep fares affordable for riders. The problem is that current operating income is not covering operating expenses. The solution may be a combination of increasing ridership and local funding and improving efficiency with the addition of flex routes.

The countywide reservation service averages only slightly more than one person per service hour resulting in a high deficit to be subsidized. This is typical in a rural system; however, some rural transit agencies are finding creative ways to increase ridership with flex routes and other methods. The deficiency per passenger for countywide service averages \$28.31 compared to \$3.24 per rider on the Paw Paw service and the South Haven Dial-A-Ride deficiency is \$6.14. The obvious is to increase the ridership and local funding. If that is not feasible, consideration should be given to cutting back or eliminating that particular service.

Mental Health service has the highest average daily revenue deficiency, but the per-passenger deficiency is \$7.14. The service might be the most likely candidate for improving contract/fare revenue stream. This could be accomplished in several ways including the most obvious, which would be to increase fares or add additional non-contract riders.

Figure 2

Normal Daily Bus Schedule By Service, 2004

Time In/Out	6:00am	7:00am	8:00am	9:00am	10:00am	11:00am	12:00pm	1:00pm	2:00pm	3:00pm	4:00pm	5:00pm	6:00pm
Bus 1													
Bus 2													
Bus 3													
Bus 4													
Bus 5													
Bus 6													
Bus 7													
Bus 8													
Bus 9													
Bus 10													

Table 17

VBPT Performance Indicators By Service Type FY2004										
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	
# of Buses	Hours of Operation Per Bus Daily	Average Daily Ridership *	Average Daily # of Passengers Per Bus	Average Passenger per bus per hour of service	Cost of Service per Bus**	Cost of Service per Day**	Average Daily Fare Revenue per Bus	Average Daily Total Fare/Contract Revenue	Average Daily Fare/Contract Revenue Deficiency	Daily Deficiency per Bus
6	6	100	16.6	2.76	\$211.68	\$1,270.08	\$92.63	\$555.78	(\$714.30)	(\$119.05)
2	9	72.5	36.25	4.02	\$317.52	\$635.04	\$94.98	\$189.96	(\$445.08)	(\$222.54)
1	6.5	41.8	41.8	6.43	\$229.32	\$229.32	\$94.05	\$94.05	(\$135.27)	(\$135.27)
1	10	10.88	10.88	1.08	\$352.80	\$352.80	\$44.82	\$44.82	(\$307.98)	(\$307.98)
Formula Used (see letters at top of row 1)		Total ridership/250 days	C/A	D/B	F*A	F*A	D*Average Fare***	H*A	I-G	J/A

*Based on 2004 Ridership with 250 days of service **Based on vehicle hour cost of \$35.28.

***Average fare: Mental Health \$5.58; South Haven Dial-A-Ride \$2.62; Paw Paw Dial-A-Ride \$2.25, Countywide Reservation \$4.12.

Another way to determine the performance of VBPT is to investigate whether the current level of service offered is meeting riders' needs. To better understand service demand and VBPT's ability to meet demand, VBPT dispatch was asked to record the number of met and unmet requests for transportation service during the study period. The tabulated results only represent one month, but shows that VBPT met 1,077 trip needs, but was unable to meet 92 requests for service. If the same number of rides were not met for each month in a year, this would result in over 1,100 trips not being met in the next year.

Table 18

Trip Requests September 2005		
	8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.	
Type of Trip	Met	Unmet
Employment	179	9
Education	39	23
Day Care	56	1
Human Services	29	2
Medical Services	225	28
Shopping	435	8
Entertainment	27	5
Other	87	3
Before or After 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.		13
Total for Month	1,077	92

Peer Comparisons

The evaluation of service performance is both qualitative and quantitative, based on observation of the dispatching office, interviews, and operational data provided by VBPT. It is also helpful to view key indicators in the context of peer on-demand systems. The following peer comparison table provides performance information for similar public transit systems in Michigan.

Table 19

Michigan Countywide Rural Demand Response Service System Peer Comparisons FY2003									
County	Van Buren 611sm 125pop/sm	Iosco 549sm 50pop/sm	Roscommon 521sm 49pop/sm	Ogemaw 564sm 38pop/sm	Clare 56sm 55pop/sm	Lake 568sm 20pop/sm	Mecosta 556sm 73pop/sm	Manistee 544sm 73pop/sm	
Total land area (sm=square miles)									
Population density									
Operating Data									
Population of service area	76,263	23,996	25,456	20,230	31,252	11,795	63,000	22,164	
Operating costs	770,576	298,775	1,359,750	378,987	982,983	1,311,847	377,257	1,441,411	
Fare box revenue	42,056	34,411	65,641	21,731	57,535	29,868	12,627	126,154	
Contract fare revenue	146,467	7,668	110,476	35,230	199,553	500,905	106,566	193,155	
% of costs covered by local millage	No Millage	No Millage	62%	35%	19.7%	Millage Passed 2004	No Millage	7.8%	
Passenger trips	52,392	24,120	133,985	49,209	130,887	173,285	30,209	201,723	
Revenue miles	352,520	155,014	662,953	183,159	576,328	512,586	181,330	472,277	
Revenue hours	17,291	7,915	29,718	9565	30,454	28,724	7,359	30,580	
Performance Indicators									
Cost/Passenger Trip	13.49	12.39	10.15	7.70	7.51	7.57	12.49	7.15	
Cost/Hour	40.89	37.75	45.76	39.62	32.28	45.67	51.26	47.14	
Cost/Mile	2.01	1.93	2.05	2.07	1.71	2.56	2.08	3.05	
Miles/Trip	6.73	6.42	4.95	3.72	4.40	2.96	6.0	2.34	
Passenger/Mile	0.15	0.16	0.02	0.27	0.23	0.34	0.17	0.43	
Passenger/Hour	3.03	3.05	4.51	5.14	4.30	6.03	4.11	6.60	
% of costs covered by fare box revenue/contract	5.9	11.5%	4.8%	5.7%	5.8%	2.3%	3.3%	8.7%	
% of costs covered by contract	20.9%	2.5%	8.2%	9.2%	20.3%	38.2%	28.2%	13.4%	
Passenger trips/Capita	0.69	1.01	5.26	2.43	4.19	18.47	1.09	9.10	

The systems compared in the peer comparison table are all non-urban systems and are the sole countywide provider of transit within the county. Further, the comparison systems all serve counties with a higher than average poverty level, with 12-18 percent of the population receiving public assistance payments. Van Buren County is the largest, measuring 611 square miles with the highest population density at 125 people every square mile. Peer counties' average size was 552 square miles with an average of 51 people every square mile. Van Buren County is in the mid-range of the peer systems for poverty with 14 percent of the population receiving public assistance payments.

VBPT has the lowest per passenger ratio with less than one person utilizing transit per capita.

Compared to the other systems, VBPT has the lowest per passenger ratio with less than one person utilizing transit per capita. VBPT has a higher than average cost per passenger. VBPT has the lowest passenger per hour ratio and the highest miles per trip. Approximately 24 percent of VBPT's operating costs are covered by contract and fare box, while two systems (Lake and Mecosta County) have a higher amount being covered by contract and fare box, 40.5 percent and 31.5 percent respectively. Lake County (Yates Transit) has the highest percentage (38%) of their costs covered by contract service while VBPT has only 20.9 percent of costs covered by contract services. Through coordination, Yates Transit provides the majority of social service agencies with transportation using 5311 and 5310 funding sources. Lake County has the highest percentage of total population receiving public assistance payments in the state of Michigan. The only other transit system with higher contract cost recovery than VBPT is Mecosta County at 28.2 percent. Maintaining and increasing contract service is an important aspect of maintaining and increasing ridership.

VBPT does not have a local millage supporting its operations. Five of the other seven systems do have a local millage supporting public transit. The revenue collected from local millages covers anywhere from seven to sixty-two percent of the transit operating costs. The peer transit systems that collect a local millage have higher passenger trips per capita ranging from 2.43 to 18.47 while VBPT has 0.69 passenger trips per total population. Most significantly, the systems collecting a millage have up to a 45 percent lower cost per passenger trip than VBPT because of the higher ridership achieved in these systems.

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

Geographic Location

Van Buren County, located in southwestern Michigan, covers 1,090 square miles (this includes 611 square miles of land and 479 square miles of water) - the 45th largest county (of 83) in the state of Michigan. The county is bordered by Lake Michigan and Berrien County to the southwest, Cass County to the south, Kalamazoo County to the east, and Allegan County to the north.

Major cities and metropolitan areas within close proximity to Van Buren County include Chicago, Illinois (approximately 100 miles from the southwestern portion of the county), Detroit, Michigan (approximately 200 miles east), and Indianapolis, Indiana (approximately 200 miles south). Also within a one-hour drive of Van Buren County are the cities of Holland, Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, and Battle Creek in Michigan, and South Bend, Indiana.

Population Density and Transportation

For smaller communities with greater geographical distances between built-up areas and low population densities, public transit can help bridge the spatial divide between people and jobs, services, and training opportunities. The population density of Van Buren County is 125 persons per square mile.¹⁹ There are 33,975 housing units in Van Buren County which equates to an average density of 56 houses per square mile. This low density provides challenges for a transportation agency to efficiently meet the demands of such a rural, spread out population. Map #4 shows the population density (per square mile) by census block in Van Buren County and the relationship of the road systems to populated areas. The two most densely populated areas in the County are South Haven and Paw Paw.

Transportation Modes

In addition to the public transit service provided by VBPT, the overall transportation system of Van Buren County includes the modes listed below. These modes may be potential links or alternative options to the services provided by VBPT.

¹⁹ U.S. Census 2000

Private services – There are several private transportation providers serving Van Buren County. The following table lists several of these providers. These private providers are often utilized by the human service agencies because of the flexibility of their services in terms of hours of operation and ease of transporting across county lines. The private providers can be seen as competitors to Van Buren Public Transit; however, VBPT will never be able to accommodate all transportation needs within the county. Instead VBPT should view the private providers as another option and find ways to coordinate transportation services with the private sector to meet customers’ needs.

Table 20

Private Transportation Providers		
Transportation Provider	Type of Service	General Area Served
Van Buren Transportation Services	Taxi	Berrien Cass Van Buren Kalamazoo
Mr. G’s Express	Wheelchair-lift vehicles, cars, mini- and full-size vans. 24 hours/7 days	Berrien Cass Van Buren
Advance Cab	Taxi - Demand-responsive	
Blue Stone Transportation	Taxi	Berrien Cass Van Buren Kalamazoo
Van Buren Care-A-Van	Will-call operation 5:30 a.m. - 11:00 p.m.	
Region Care-A-Van	Door to door per client	
Bumble Bee Cabs	Taxi – 24 hour operation	Berrien Cass Van Buren Kalamazoo
SMACAS	Non-emergency medical transportation	
Red’s Taxi	Demand-responsive	
VBEMS	Ambulance service	
Wil Care Nursing	Door to door per client	

Public Transit Systems – The counties listed in *Table 21* are adjacent to Van Buren County and have public transit systems available. These systems are potential partners and/or resources to connect Van Buren County with neighboring counties and to enable a more regional scope of service.

Table 21

Adjacent County Public Transit Systems		
Allegan County	Type of Service	Area Served
Allegan County Transportation	Reservation/demand response bus system	Allegan, Otsego, Plainwell, Pullman, Fennville, Hamilton, Holland, Wayland, Dorr, Martin, and Shelbyville
Macatawa Area Express (MAX) Transit	Fixed routes Mondays - Saturdays	Macatawa, Greater Holland Area
Saugatuck Township Interurban Transit	Door-to-door demand-response service – operates daily in summer	City of Saugatuck and Saugatuck Township (including the Village of Douglas)
Berrien County	Type of Service	Area Served
Berrien Bus	Non-urban system includes both semi-fixed route service and demand-response service.	Berrien County
Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority (TCATA)	Demand response service, and standing order requests for fixed daily rides	City of Benton Harbor, Benton Charter Township, the City of St. Joseph, and part of St. Joseph Charter Township.
Niles Dial-A-Ride	Demand-response service	Niles and regular shuttle service to the City of Buchanan
Buchanan Dial-A-Ride	Demand-responsive	City of Buchanan
Cass County	Type of Service	Area Served
Cass County Transportation Authority	Demand-response and semi-fixed route mode.	Cass County
Dowagiac Dial A Ride	On demand service and requires reservations for pick-up.	Dowagiac with service extended out to Southwest Michigan College.
Kalamazoo County	Type of Service	Area Served
Kalamazoo Metro Transit	Metro Transit accessible, fixed-route service and Metro Van paratransit service. Metro Van provides curb-to-curb transportation service.	Kalamazoo urbanized area, consisting of the cities of Kalamazoo, Portage and Parchment and the townships of Comstock, Cooper, Kalamazoo, Texas and Oshtemo
Care-A-Van		Kalamazoo County

Highways - The major highway transportation routes traversing Van Buren County and connecting its cities, villages, and townships are the east-west highways of Interstate 94 and M-43 and the major north-south highways of Interstate 196, M-140, and M-40.

Railroads - Passenger railway transportation can be accessed at the newly renovated train depot in the City of Bangor, which provides service for Amtrak's Pere Marquette line offering daily trips from Grand Rapids to Chicago. Recently ridership on Amtrak has risen. In Bangor, September 2005 was a good month for Amtrak with 260 people getting on and off the train. This was a 26.8 percent increase over September 2004 (205 people) and a 76.9 percent increase over September 2003 (147 people). Statewide, September had the highest ridership (614,600) and revenue (\$16.6 million) since Amtrak began providing service in the 1970s. This is a 12.1 percent increase in ridership and 16.1 percent increase in revenue over FY2004. In September 2005, the Pere Marquette line, which services west Michigan (including Bangor), exhibited the highest ridership (96,471) and revenue (\$2,144,443) in its history. Currently VBPT's service hours would not easily accommodate anyone connecting with Amtrak services in Bangor.

Commercial Bus Station - Commercial bus transportation includes Greyhound with stations in South Haven and Paw Paw, and Indian Trails with a stop in Paw Paw. The Paw Paw Bus Stop is located at Grape Vine News at 217 E. Michigan Avenue. The hours of operation for Greyhound are Monday through Friday from 7:00 am to 2:00 pm, Saturday from 7:00 am to 1:00 pm and closed Sundays and holidays. The South Haven bus station is located at 1210 Phoenix Road, Suite 4. The hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 12:00 pm to 6:00 pm, Saturday from 12:00 pm to 5:30 pm and closed Sundays and holidays. VBPT with its current service hours would be able to accommodate some of the hours that these bus stations are in operation.

Airports - Airports certified for carrier operations include the Kalamazoo/Battle Creek International Airport, the Gerald R. Ford International Airport in Grand Rapids, and the South Bend Regional Airport. The South Haven Regional Airport and the Southwest Michigan Regional Airport (located in Benton Harbor) provide charter and services to private aircraft owners (individual or corporate).

Marinas - Marinas are available in South Haven for private boat owners and fishing charters. The public marinas in South Haven are within easy walking distance to downtown services.

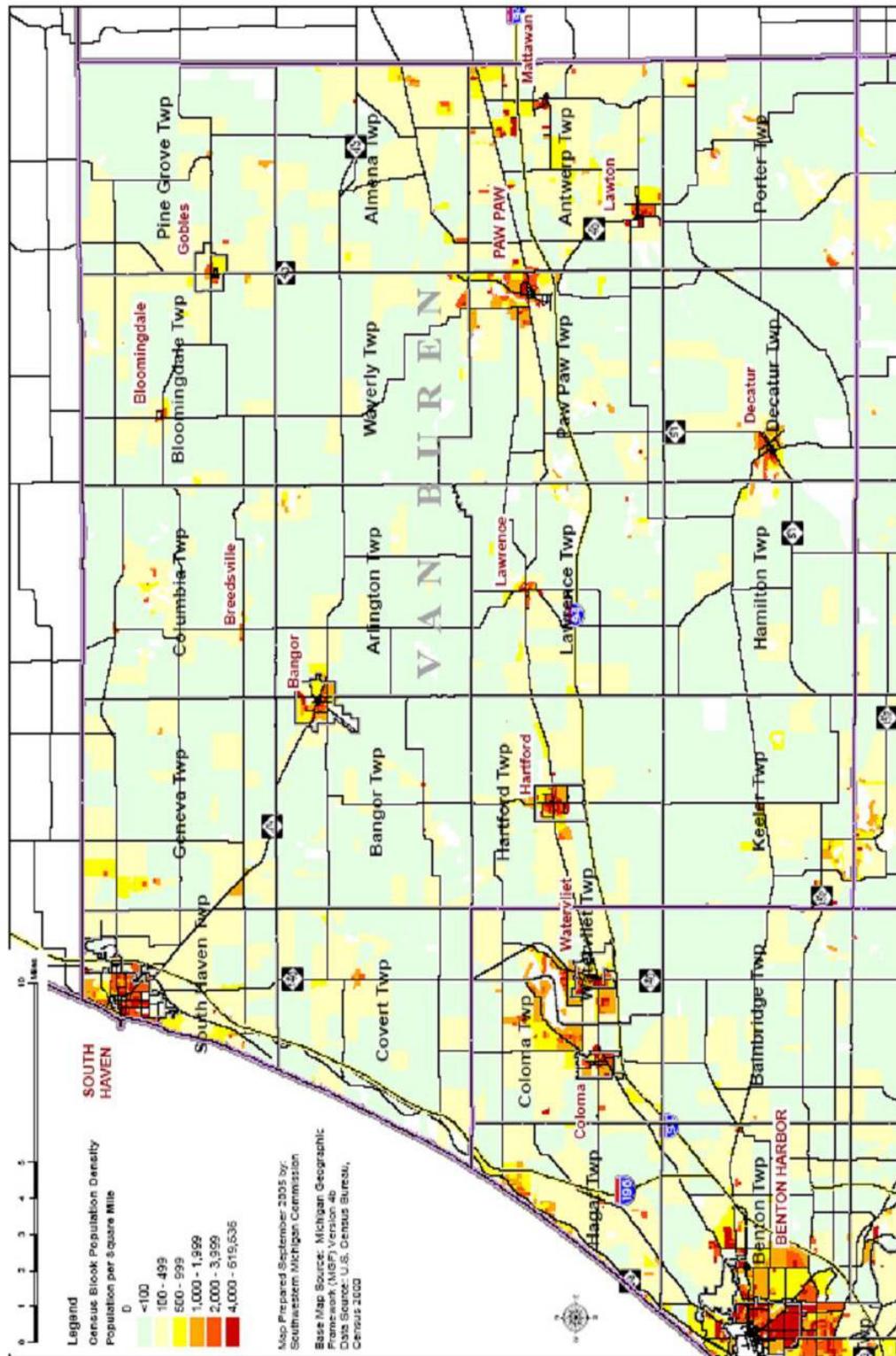
Ports with passenger ferry services are located north of Van Buren County in Muskegon and Ludington.

Non-motorized – Non-motorized transportation (walking and biking) is often another option besides public transit for those without a car. Numerous roadways in Van Buren County have paved shoulders and are suitable for bicycle riding and walking. Van Buren County is also home to the 14-mile Van Buren Trail and the 33.5-mile Kal-Haven Trail. The Kal-Haven trail is a linear multi-use trail that links Kalamazoo to South Haven and the Van Buren Trail links South Haven with Hartford. Both of these trails are suitable for hiking, biking, and horseback riding and both are open in the winter for cross-country skiing; snowmobiling is allowed when there is a four-inch base. The Bangor/South Haven Heritage Water Trail is a canoe and kayak trail encompassing 20 miles of the South Branch of the Black River between the cities of Bangor and South Haven.²⁰

VBPT could consider amenities such as bus pick-up areas and bike racks on buses to encourage users to utilize non-motorized transportation as a link to VBPT. To improve non-motorized transportation options, local officials can restructure planning and site design to: 1) promote development that mixes land uses, 2) enhance pedestrian facilities, 3) promote infill and redevelopment, and 4) increase density.

²⁰ “Van Buren County Community Center,” <http://www.vbco.org/natfeat0010.asp>

Map #4 Van Buren County Population Density

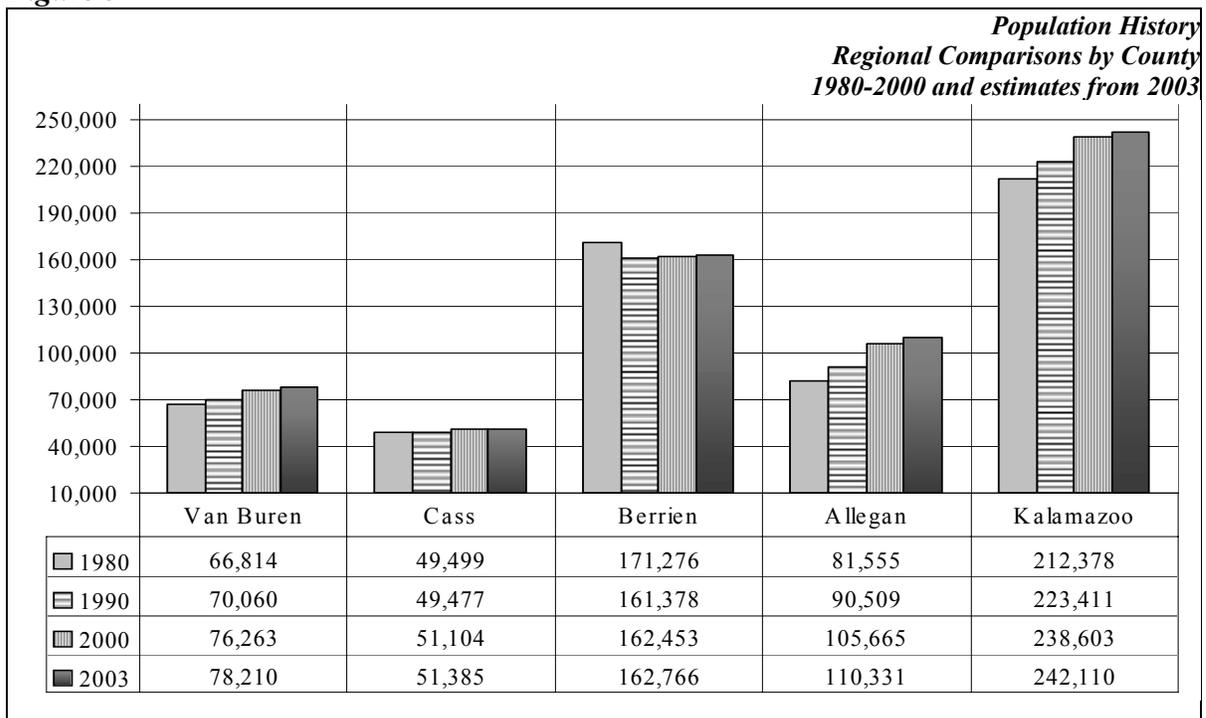


TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED POPULATIONS

Overview

With a growing population, Van Buren County has a growing need for public transit. Van Buren County recorded a 12 percent increase in total population from 1980 to 2000. The county also experienced an approximate 2.6 percent increase from 2000 to 2003 with an *estimated* population count of 78,210 in 2003.²¹ From 1980 to 2003, the surrounding counties of Allegan and Kalamazoo experienced similar population growth. However, Cass and Berrien Counties showed a much slower rate of growth.

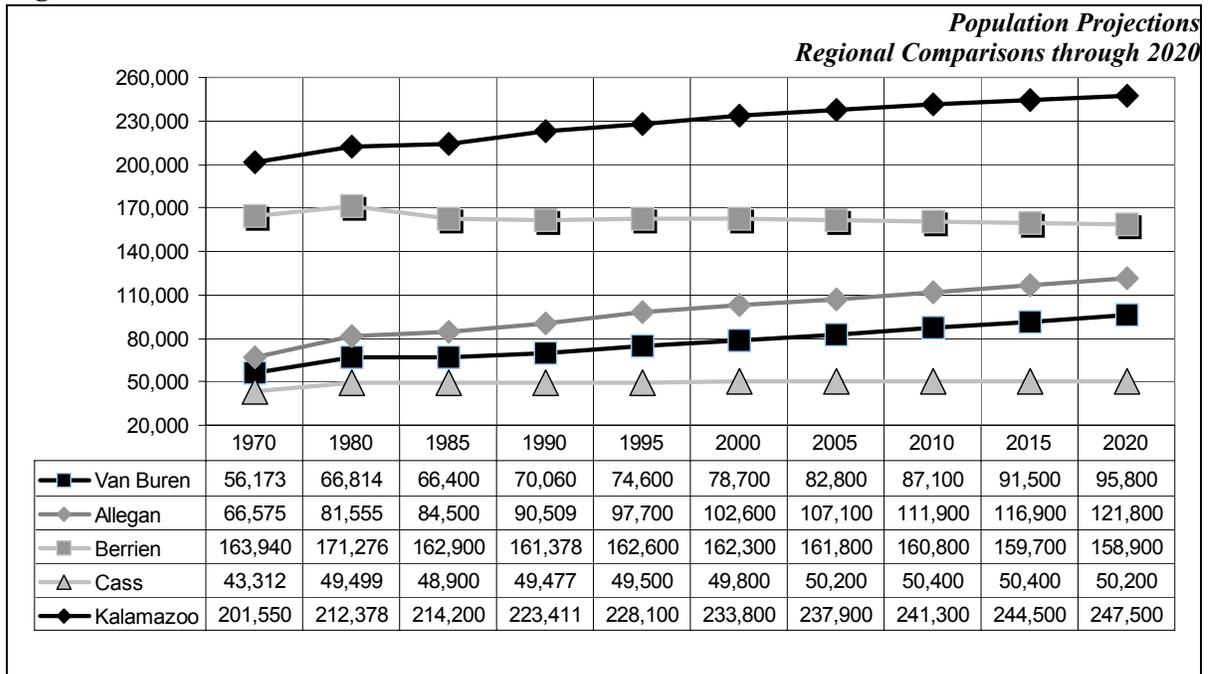
Figure 3



Van Buren County can expect to see a continued steady population growth according to the most recent county-level population *projections* available, which are based on the 1990 U.S. Census. Van Buren County’s population is expected to grow to almost 100,000 by 2020. Population projections for the surrounding counties of Allegan, Cass, and Kalamazoo also show steady growth, however Berrien County’s population is projected to decline slightly.

²¹ U.S. Census 2000

Figure 4



With this growing population in Van Buren County, there is a growing need for public transit especially for certain disadvantaged segments of the population. Nationwide in rural areas; in comparison with metro areas, rural counties have higher levels of poverty and have larger shares of disabled and elderly residents.²² In 1999, approximately 7.9 million people in non-metro areas lived in poverty, representing about 14.6 percent of the rural population, compared to a metro poverty rate of 11.8 percent (26 million individuals). And, 11 million individuals (excluding those under 5 years old) in non-metro areas were classified as disabled in 2000, accounting for 21.5 percent of rural America, compared to a disability rate of 18.8 percent in metro areas (38.8 million disabled individuals). Non-metro areas had 7.8 million elderly residents (at least 65 years of age) in 2000, accounting for 13.8 percent of the non-metro population, compared to an elderly rate of 11 percent for metro counties (25.6 million elderly metro residents).²³

²² U.S. Census 2000

²³ Brown, <http://www.nal.usda.gov/ric/ricpubs/publictrans.htm>

Transportation service is vital for rural America's 30 million non-drivers, who include senior citizens, low-income families, and persons with disabilities. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Van Buren County has 1,394 households without a vehicle. In this section, transportation disadvantaged populations are described to offer insight into the growing need for public transit in Van Buren County.

Age

The Senior Population

Transportation is one of the greatest concerns expressed by the senior population. Access to transportation affects a person's ability to eat, to get medical treatment, to work, and to socialize. In general, the limitations of a transportation system will impose special burdens not only on the aging population, but also on relatives and social service and health-care institutions on which many elderly citizens depend.

In the *2004 Annual Report of the Michigan State Advisory Council on Aging*, the Council identified five interdependent factors/characteristics that create an "elderly-friendly" community. Transportation was one of the factors that lead to an elderly-friendly community along with supportive community systems, access to health care, safety and security and housing.

The loss of license will precipitate a personal crisis, unknown to previous generations.

In 2002 the Michigan Department of Career Development commissioned a report summarizing regional strategic plans.

For the Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren County region the report listed emerging trends which showed housing and ***lack of transportation*** as barriers to employment as well as an aging workforce and young adults moving away from the region when they are old enough to leave home.

Contrary to previous generations, the current older population grew up in a physical landscape and personal lifestyle dominated by the use of the automobile; approximately 95 percent of those persons who will reach age 65 in 2010 have driver licenses. It is clear that as a result of better health and improvements in health science, a greater percentage of

elderly will be able to continue driving. At the same time, the report *Mobility and Independence: Changes and Challenges for Older Drivers*²⁴ states that older drivers who face the prospect of reducing or terminating their driving will suffer a variety of undesirable consequences, including: reduced mobility, loss of personal independence, social isolation, and a reduction in their access to essential services. The loss of license will precipitate a personal crisis, unknown to previous generations.²⁵ More than one in five Americans (21 percent) age 65 years and older do not currently drive. In rural areas, 61 percent of older non-drivers stay home on a given day compared with 43 percent in more urban areas.²⁶

The demographic shape of the population in the United States will shift dramatically in the next 20 years and transportation agencies will find themselves confronted with a very different customer base.²⁷ In 2002, 12 percent of the population in the United States was age 65 years or older. By 2025, the number of seniors will have gone up by 79 percent, and an estimated 18 percent of the population will be 65 or older. The U.S. Census estimates the total population of people aged 65 and over to be 62 million in the year 2025. In 26 states, more than 20 percent - one in five residents - will be over the age of 65.

Recent population projections show Van Buren County's growth trends to be similar to national trends and will also likely experience a growing elderly population. The following table shows projected changes in the total population and the population of persons age 55 years and older in Van Buren County from 2000 to 2030.

Table 22

Projected Changes in Population 2000 to 2030 Van Buren County²⁸				
	Total Population	Percent Change	Population Age 55 years and older	Percent Change
1990	(Actual) 70,060		15,045	
2000	(Actual) 76,263	+8.9%	16,448	+9.3%
2030	(Projected) 89,468	+17.3%	27,544	+67.5%

²⁴ Jon Burkhardt, et al., "Mobility and Independence: Changes and Challenges for Older Drivers," 1998, <http://www.ctaa.org/ct/sep09/burkhardt.asp>

²⁵ Brendon Hemily, "Trends Affecting Public Transit's Effectiveness," Nov. 2004, https://www.apta.com/government_affairs/policy/documents/trends_affecting.pdf

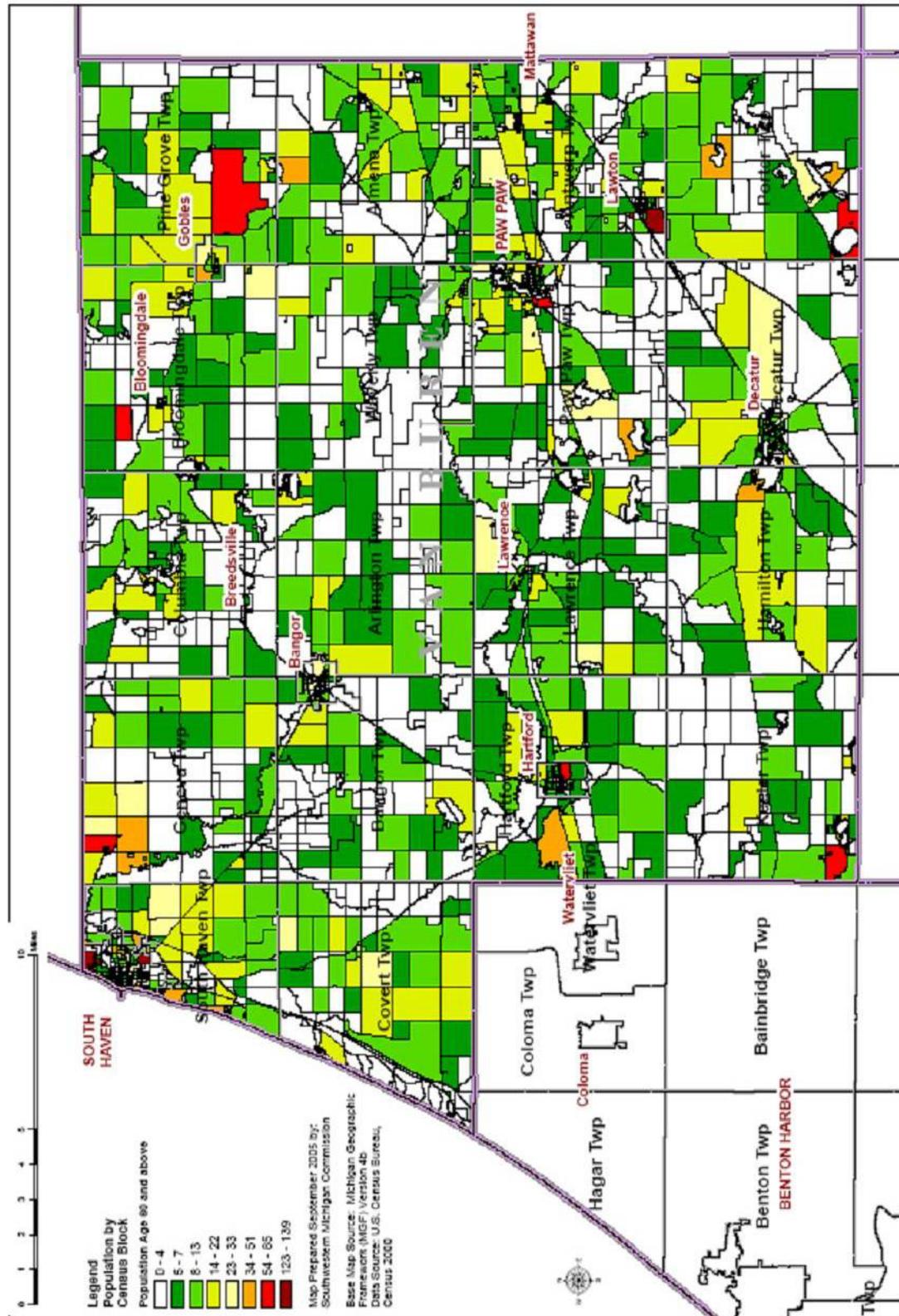
²⁶ Linda Bailey, "Surface Transportation Policy Project," April 2004, <http://www.apta.com/sim/stranded.html>

²⁷ Bailey, <http://www.apta.com/sim/stranded.html>

²⁸ SWMC 2000 Extract

Map #5 shows the current distribution of the 60⁺-year-old population in Van Buren County. There are a few clusters of elderly, but the population is generally spread throughout the county. Earlier in the study, in the Common Origins and Destinations (part of the Van Buren Public Transit section), there is a list of senior housing in Van Buren County from the Area Agency on Aging. In the future, these housing locations could be mapped to help establish flex routes. In the future, the growing elderly population will impose greater demands for public transit in Van Buren County and the distribution of this population will continue to provide challenges to efficiently provide transportation for the elderly to get to the places they need to go for medical services, shopping and other necessities.

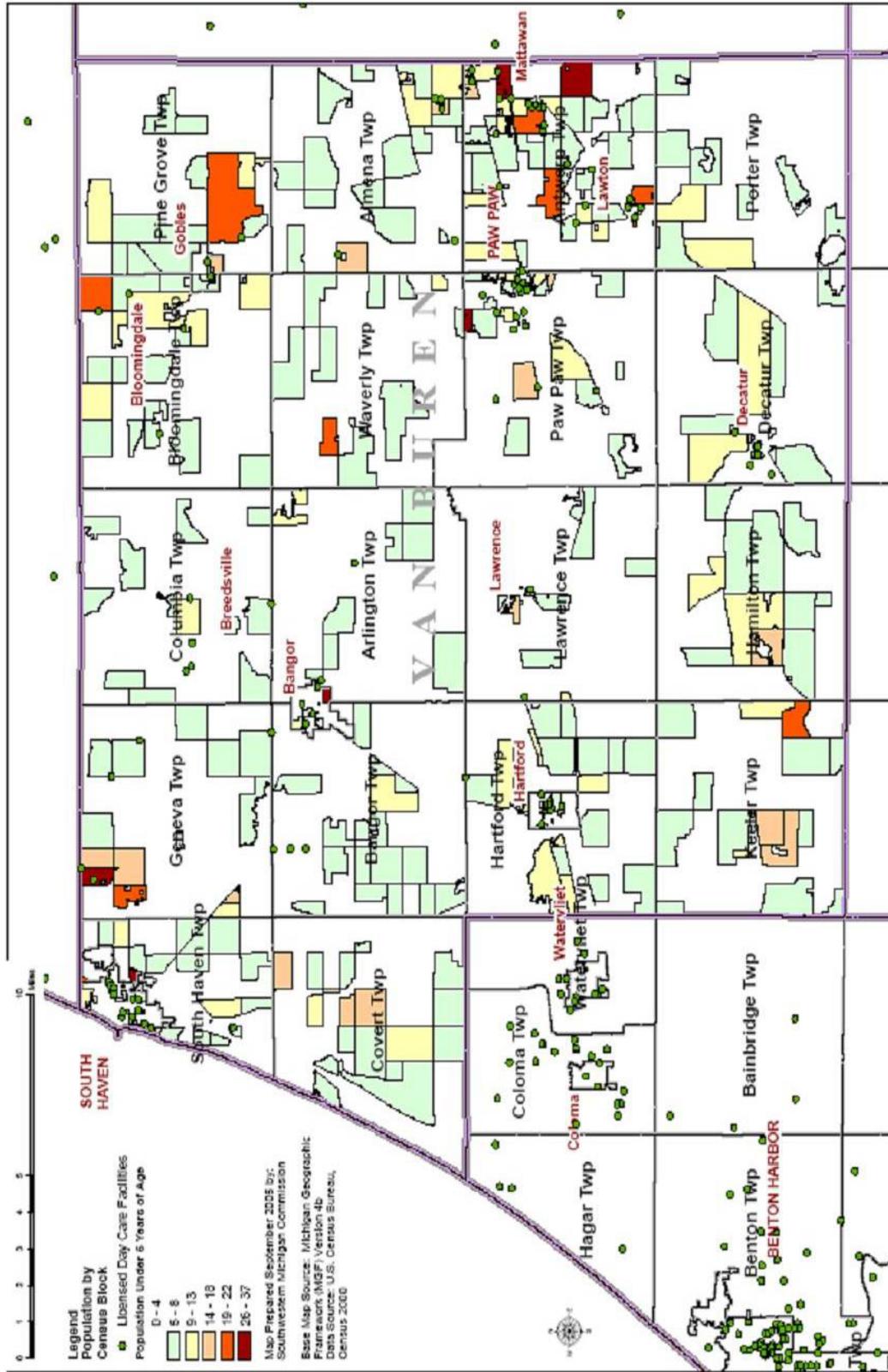
Map #5 Population distribution of residents age 60 years and over



The Younger Population

In addition to the impact on public transportation needs generated by the projected increase in the elderly population, there are two other age groups that may increasingly rely on public transportation; 1) families with children less than six years of age, and 2) teens less than 17 years of age. Map #6 displays the location of children less than six years of age and the location of licensed day care providers. This map indicates that often the daycare centers are not located near the populations; another example of a disconnect between people and the places they need to go in a rural landscape. For parents (especially those with no vehicle available) with children less than six years old, may find that transportation to daycare is a barrier to finding and maintaining employment. Public transit could examine the demand and the costs to better accommodate this need.

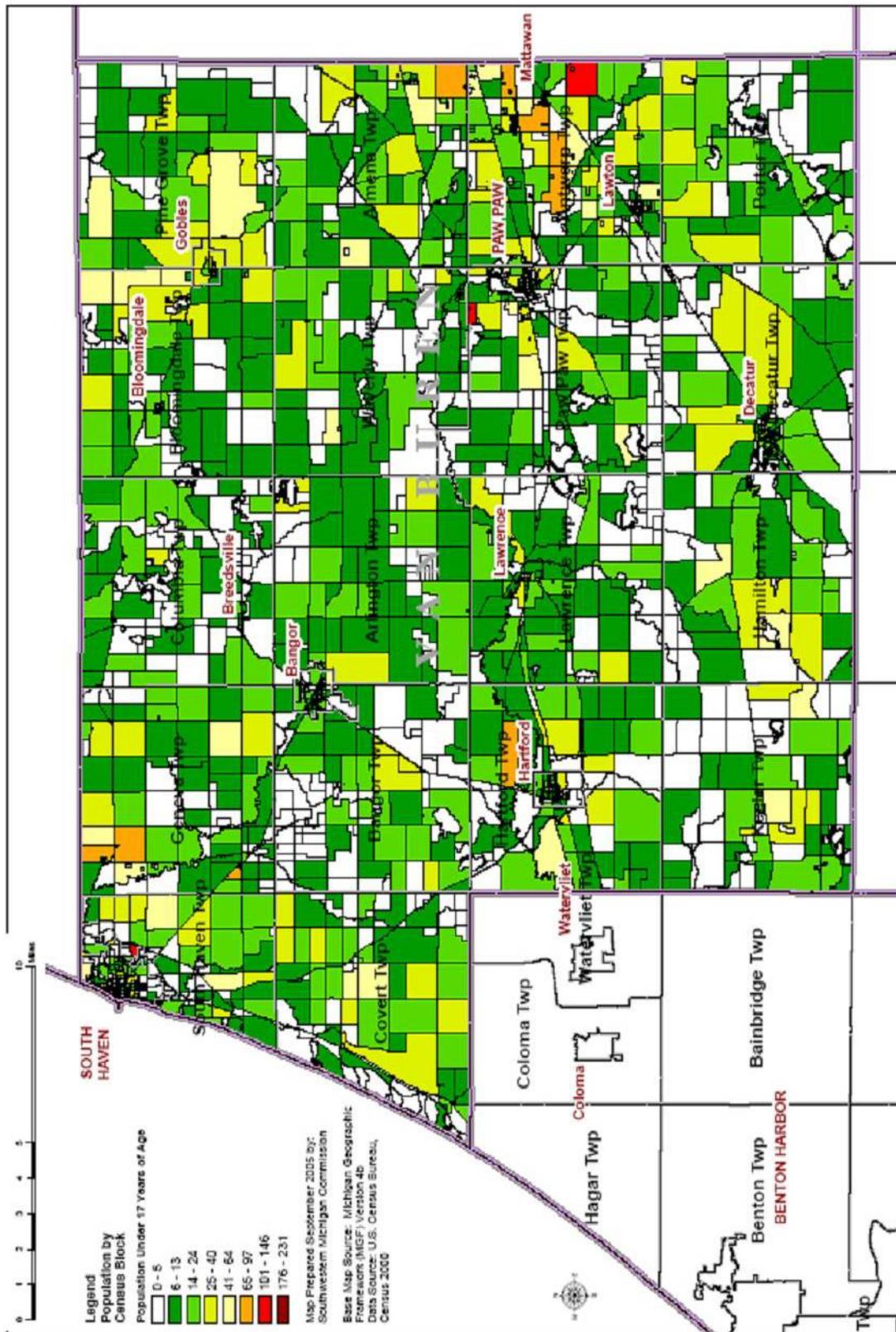
Map #6 Distribution of children less than 6 years of age and licensed day care facilities



For the population of school age (over 6 years) but less than 17 years of age, there are possible transportation needs for recreation, school, and/or work related purposes that could be served by public transit. A consideration, especially for the less than 17 years old population is that the National Safety Council estimates that riding the bus is over 170 times safer than automobile travel. Many transit systems now formally serve as safe havens for children and students moving throughout communities in the U.S.²⁹ VBPT could institute specific marketing efforts and incentives to attract these younger riders who may not have access to a vehicle.

²⁹ “How Public Transportation Serves and Benefits U.S. Communities,” 17 April 2002, http://www.apta.com/government_affairs/aptatest/04172002.cfm

Map #7 Population distribution below 17 years of age



Disabilities

In the United States, there are 49.7 million persons with disabilities; 21.2 million report having a condition that limits basic physical activities such as walking, reaching, lifting or carrying.³⁰ Of the disabled population 30 percent cite having problems with inadequate transportation compared to 10 percent of the general population.³¹ Public transit can help the disabled population participate more fully in the economy and society in general by providing access to jobs and to community functions.

Historically, disabled persons have made up the majority of VBPT's ridership. In FY2004, 33,055 of the 53,588 total rides on transit were disabled persons. The chart below compares the number of persons over age 5 years with a disability in Van Buren County with those in the State of Michigan and the United States. In 2000, Van Buren County had a higher percentage of disabled persons than the State of Michigan and the U.S. The following map shows the distribution of disabled persons in Van Buren County. The highest concentrations of disabled persons are in Covert, South Haven, Lawrence and Paw Paw areas.

Table 23

Disabled Population 2000³²			
	Van Buren County	State of Michigan	United States
Total population	76,263	9,938,444	290,809,777
Persons with a disability, age 5+	15,116	1,711,231	49,746,248
Percent of population	20%	17%	17%

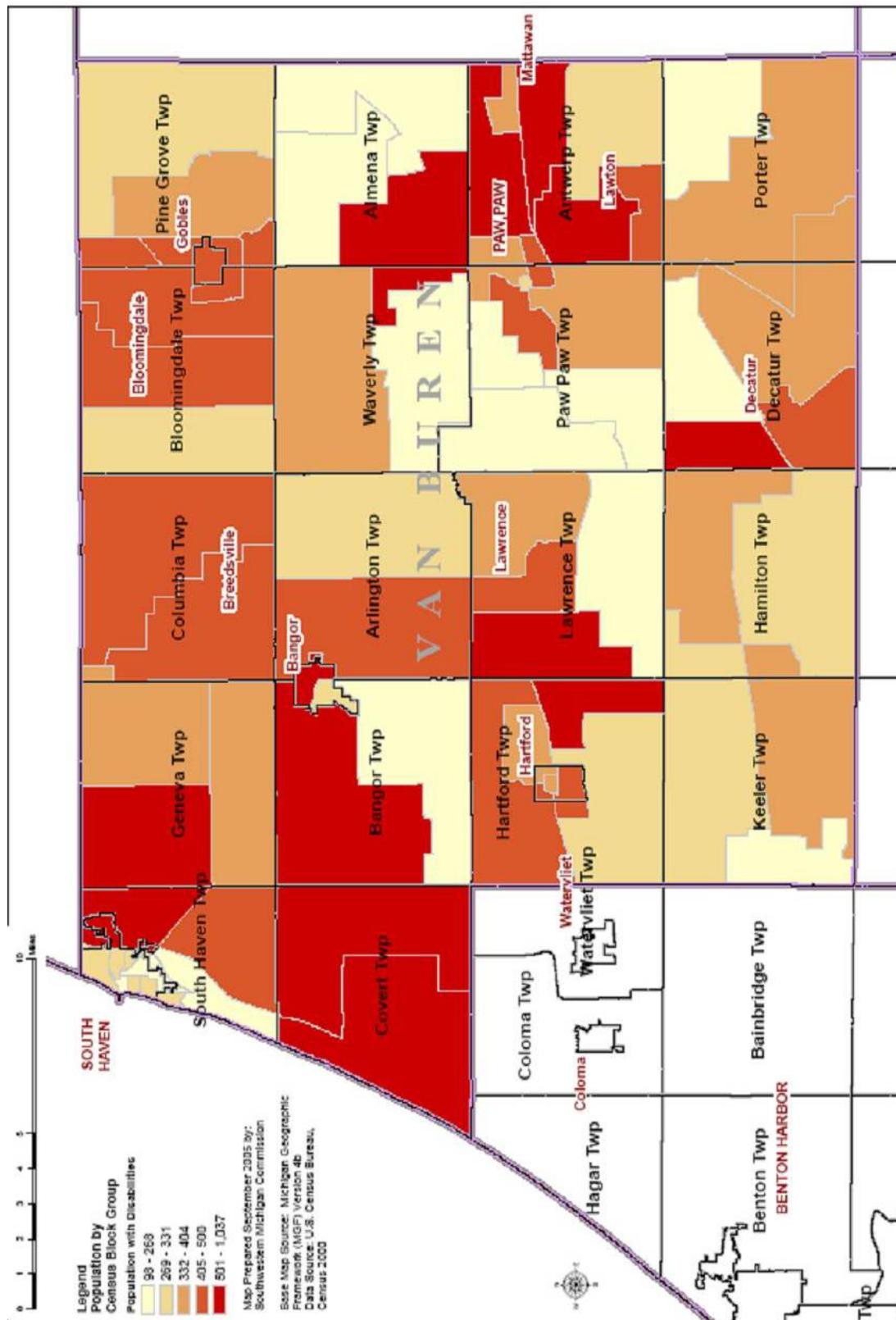
Public transit options are a vital link for citizens with disabilities. Many disabled persons do not own or operate a personal vehicle and may rely on public transportation for access to employment, education and training, medical services and independent living opportunities. The high percentage of disabled persons in Van Buren County poses some unique challenges to VBPT. VBPT must ensure that its vehicles continue to be accessible to disabled populations and that its services and employees meet the needs of this population.

³⁰ U.S. Census 2000

³¹ "The Harris Poll #34," 5 July 2000, http://www.harrisinteractive.com/harris_poll/index.asp?PID=97

³² U.S. Census 2000

Map #8 Population distribution of residents with disabilities



Low Income

Public transportation offers mobility for residents of rural America, particularly people without cars, who tend to be lower-income. Overall usage of transit services in rural America is not high - only 0.5 percent of non-metro residents use public transit as the primary means of transportation to work.³³ In areas suffering from high unemployment, vulnerable populations have a particular need for public transportation because their options for personal mobility may be severely limited. The per capita income in Van Buren County is \$17,878. As seen in the following table, the 1999 median household income and the per capita money income in Van Buren County are lower than the State of Michigan.

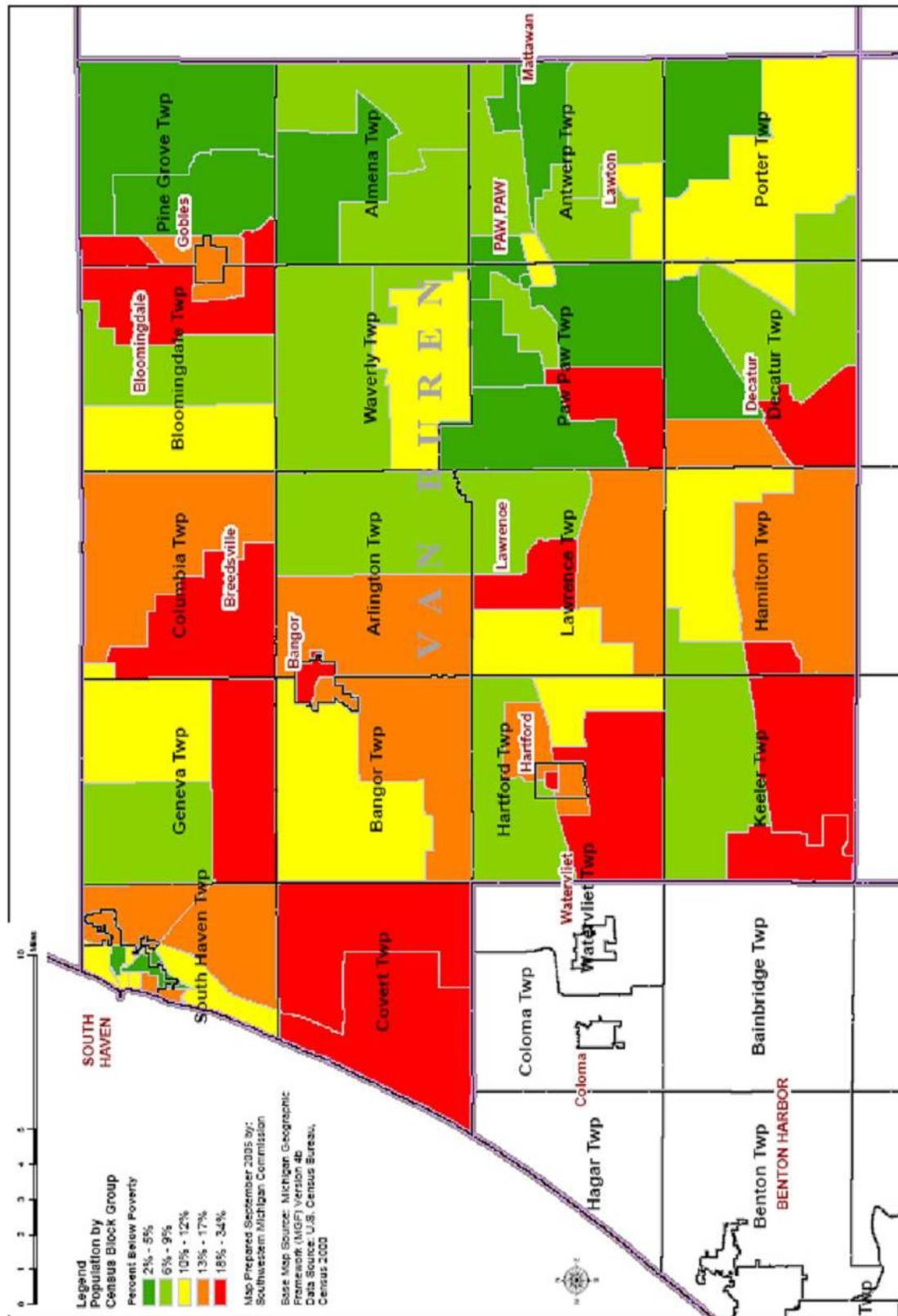
Table 24

Income Levels 1999		
	Median household income 1999	Per capita money income 1999
Van Buren County	\$39,365	\$17,878
State of Michigan	\$44,667	\$22,168

In Van Buren County, 8,465 residents are below poverty level (11.10 percent in 1999). This means that 7.8 percent of the families are living below the poverty line. According to a Standard and Poor's 2005 report, 42 percent of Van Buren County's population is economically disadvantaged. In comparison, the State of Michigan reported 10.5 percent of persons below poverty level in 1999 and 34 percent as being economically disadvantaged. People living in poverty, including low-income working people and low-income families, comprise a significant portion of transit riders. Map #9 shows the locations of residents in Van Buren County that are below the poverty level. Many of the highest concentrations of these residents are not located near employment, retail or medical centers. An important consideration for those living below the poverty level is the fare charged for using public transit. High fares will pose another roadblock to low-income individuals and families who are looking for work, going to work, or attempting to access necessities such as nutritious food, health care, childcare and other integral components of life.

³³ U.S. Census, 2000

Map #9 Percentage of residents below poverty level



No Vehicle Available

Census data reveals that the vehicle ownership rate is higher in rural America than in metro areas, with 92.7 percent of rural households having access to a car in 2000, compared to 88.9 percent for metro counties.³⁴ Still, nationwide more than 1.6 million rural households do not have access to a car.

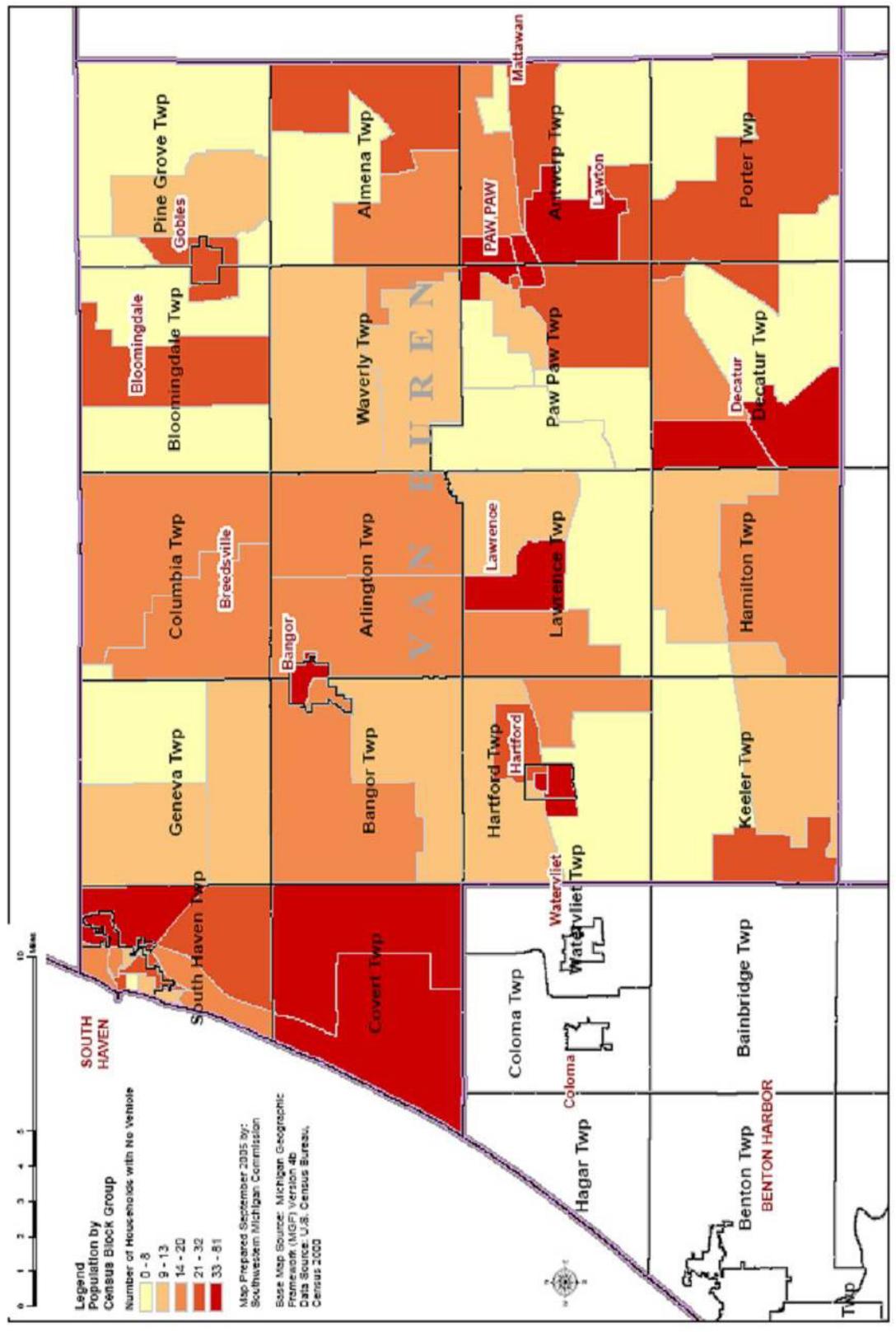
Among public assistance recipients nationally, almost 94 percent do not own cars, and rely on public transportation for basic mobility. Under TEA-21, the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program brings together transportation planners and operators to tackle the unique challenges of job-seekers from low income areas; it is successfully producing a diverse set of services to meet these needs. Many of the services are paratransit services, such as guaranteed-ride home programs, special shuttle and van services, demand-responsive Dial-A-Ride services, and late night and weekend services.³⁵

There are a total of 1,394 households with no vehicle in Van Buren County according to the 2000 U.S. Census. The following maps show the general locations of households with no vehicle in Van Buren County and those who rely on public transportation (bus) to get to work. Public transportation can help to bridge the mobility divide existing for individuals in rural areas without vehicles, opening up access to employment, training, and social services.

³⁴ U.S. Census 2000

³⁵ Jennifer Dorn, "Report to Subcommittee on Highways and Transit," 17 April 2002, <http://www.house.gov/transportation/highway/04-17-02/dorn.html>

Map #10 Number of households with no vehicle



Map #11 Home to work trips for all employees using a bus



Non-English Speaking

As the population's cultural and ethnic diversity continues to change, there are a growing number of individuals in Van Buren County who are not able to speak or read English well. In addition to the impact this might have on the ability to obtain a driver's license for a growing number of people, there is also the potential for a significant communication problem to develop between those needing transportation services and those who are able to provide it. Many public agencies are beginning to provide information in both English and Spanish to accommodate a growing Hispanic population in the area.

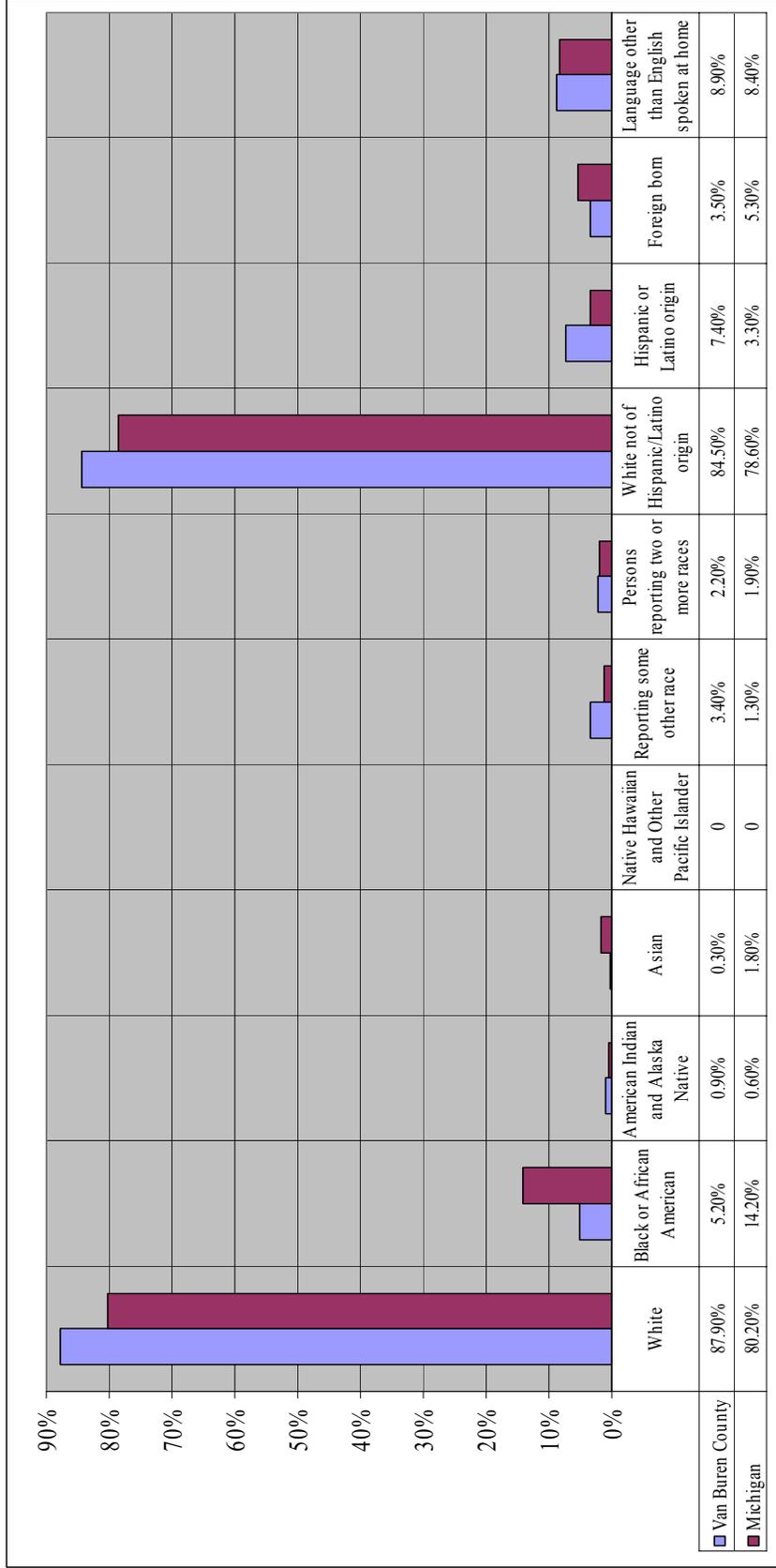
In Van Buren County, 8.9 percent of the population speaks a language other than English at home. There are also populations that do not speak English at all; 7 percent of the non-English population in Van Buren County speaks only Spanish.

Table 25

Population and Language Spoken			
Area	Population age 5+	Speaks only English	Speaks a language other than English
United States	262,375,152	82.10%	17.90%
Michigan	9,268,782	91.60%	8.40%
Van Buren County	71,045	91.10%	8.90%

Figure 5 on the following page shows the distribution of cultural diversity in Van Buren County compared with the State of Michigan. Van Buren County has a higher percentage of Hispanic or Latino origin population than the State of Michigan and a higher percentage of those speaking a language other than English.

Figure 5



ECONOMIC IMPACT OF PUBLIC TRANSIT

Transportation is about connecting people and places. Public transit is a component of the overall transportation system. Some people *choose* to ride public transit, others *depend* on public transit to get to work, medical appointments and for other necessary travel. Transportation is a lifeline. Without the ability to reach jobs, health care, and other community support services, it is difficult for citizens to join the economic mainstream or to fully participate in community life.

Some people *choose* to ride public transit, others *depend* on public transit... transportation is a lifeline.

Individuals cannot get a job if they cannot reach a job. Individuals cannot avoid acute medical care costs if they cannot reach routine, preventive health care facilities. The lack of affordable and useable transportation options frustrates the ability of many citizens to achieve economic and personal independence.

Public transportation enhances local rural economic growth in many ways. For example, it can increase the local customer base for a range of services, including shopping centers, medical facilities, and other transportation services. Residents interested in attending community colleges or other local educational facilities may gain access to such training opportunities with public transit service.

Rural locations with amenities may gain potential tourists who otherwise would not have visited such communities without transit. Especially in communities where residents commute to adjacent metropolitan areas, transit can reduce congestion, thereby enhancing the quality of life. Availability of public transportation may also increase the ability of human service agencies to serve individuals on public assistance and transport low-income residents to jobs, training opportunities, and other support services.

According to a 2003 report by a regional economist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, poor rural communities, and/or those with large concentrations of other transit-dependent individuals (the disabled, the elderly, those with no vehicle) and areas suffering from high

levels of unemployment will benefit from transit because it promotes economic well-being and reduces economic and social inequalities.

Residents who depend on VBPT face even greater challenges. For example, many of the entry level jobs that are available within Van Buren County are in the service sector and require workers to have non-traditional hours of work over seven days a week. Therefore, relatively few general fare passengers make use of VBPT because of the limited hours of service offered. At the current level of service provided by VBPT, a worker could utilize the service if their work schedule was between Monday and Friday within the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The fare for that round trip could be as much as \$12.00 per day - prohibitive for employees working a 3.5- hour workday with a minimum wage job paying only \$5.15 per hour.

Relatively few general fare passengers make use of VBPT because of the limited hours of service offered.

VBPT faces the challenge of designing a system that balances efficiency with flexibility and affordability to meet the public's need to travel to places they need to go for work, shopping and medical services in a rural spread out landscape.

Trip Types

VBPT's hours are not extensive or frequent enough to meet the needs of casual riders who have other options. Given the funding and budget, VBPT is geared to serve those who have no other options and need public transportation to reach their destination. Serving the needs of entry-level workers, seniors, and the disabled could generate the largest economic benefit to VBPT as well as the entire county. VBPT can maximize the economic benefits to riders and the community if focus is placed on generating the types of trips that are traditionally shown to create the largest economic benefits, which include 1) employment, 2) education and training, 3) medical services (particularly dialysis), and 4) trips that promote independent living, especially for the elderly and persons with disabilities.

It is clear that other trips are beneficial as well; however, the four types of trips listed above offer the greatest economic potential for the communities VBPT serves. An overall issue for

VBPT to consider is being responsive to the needs of the passengers or potential passengers. In order to serve trips of the four types identified above, Van Buren Public Transit will need to meet the specific requirements that must be fulfilled by each type of trip. The most important requirements are *destinations, hours of service and costs*. Trips must be offered at the times (hours of the day; days of the week) required by the nature of the trip purpose. Each of the trip types requires separate consideration. If these trip requirements cannot be met, VBPT's service will not be successful in keeping current riders and attracting new riders

Employment

Employment trends affect how public transit service is delivered. Nationally, the proportion of work travel in peak hours is decreasing, and spreading into other time periods. In general employment sites are increasingly dispersed. With over 70 percent of civilian employees in the service sector, this type of employment presents some unique transportation needs. The job growth in the service sector is dispersed, not concentrated. Service businesses tend to be smaller in size and employees' schedules vary over the short-term.³⁶ VBPT may need to be more flexible in service hours and be creative to efficiently meet the needs of a low population density with an employment base that is scattered throughout the county and often in neighboring counties.

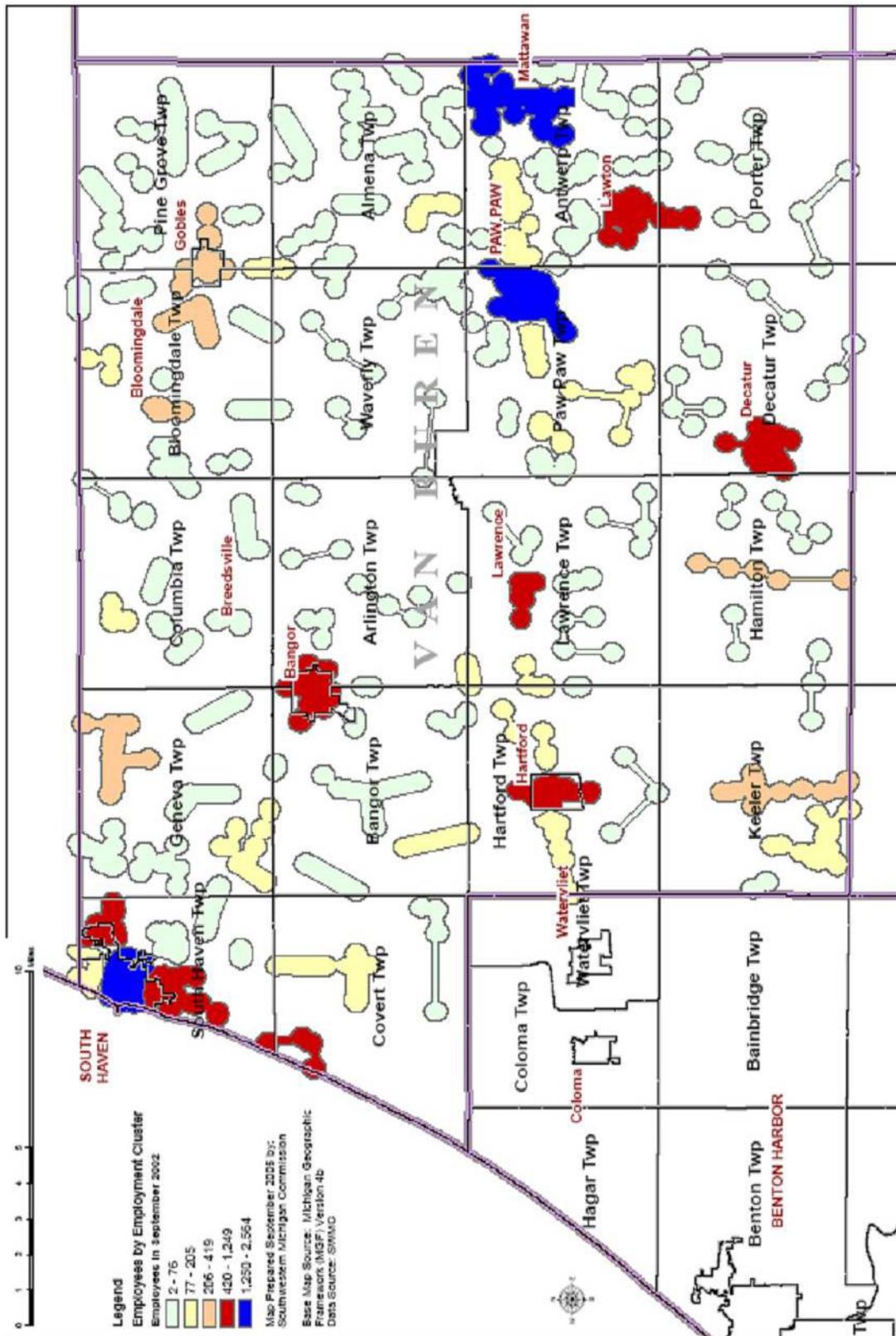
To better understand the employment and travel patterns in Van Buren County, the following maps will show the employment clusters in Van Buren County, the distribution of employees by municipality, and the number of trips potentially transportation disadvantaged workers take from home to work.

Primary employment clusters are in the South Haven, Paw Paw, and Mattawan areas. Secondary employment clusters are in Bangor, Hartford, Lawrence, Decatur, and Lawton. (See Map #12.) The municipalities that have the highest number of employees are the City of South Haven and South Haven Township, Paw Paw Village, Mattawan Village, Lawton Village, City of Bangor and Covert Township (see Map #13). As shown in Map #14, there are many Van Buren County residents traveling to work out of the county. Map #15 shows

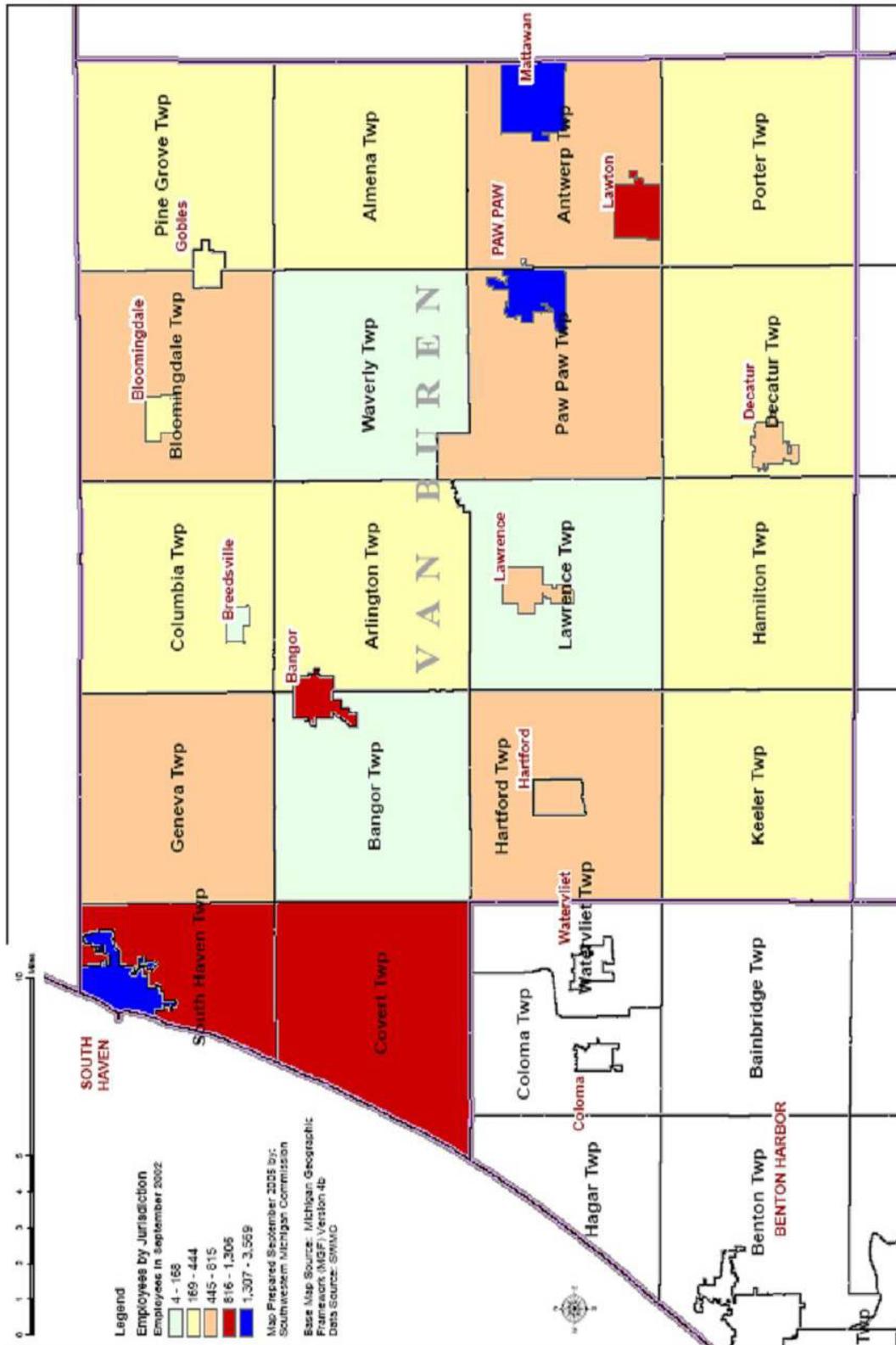
³⁶ Hemily, https://www.apta.com/government_affairs/policy/trends_affecting.cfm

that the workers that may fit the transportation disadvantaged characteristics (those without vehicles and those below the poverty level) are also traveling outside of Van Buren County for employment. Currently, VBPT does not provide much out of county transportation. VBPT could examine the possibility of connecting to the Kalamazoo Public Transit system to serve those living on the eastern edge of Van Buren County and traveling to Kalamazoo for employment.

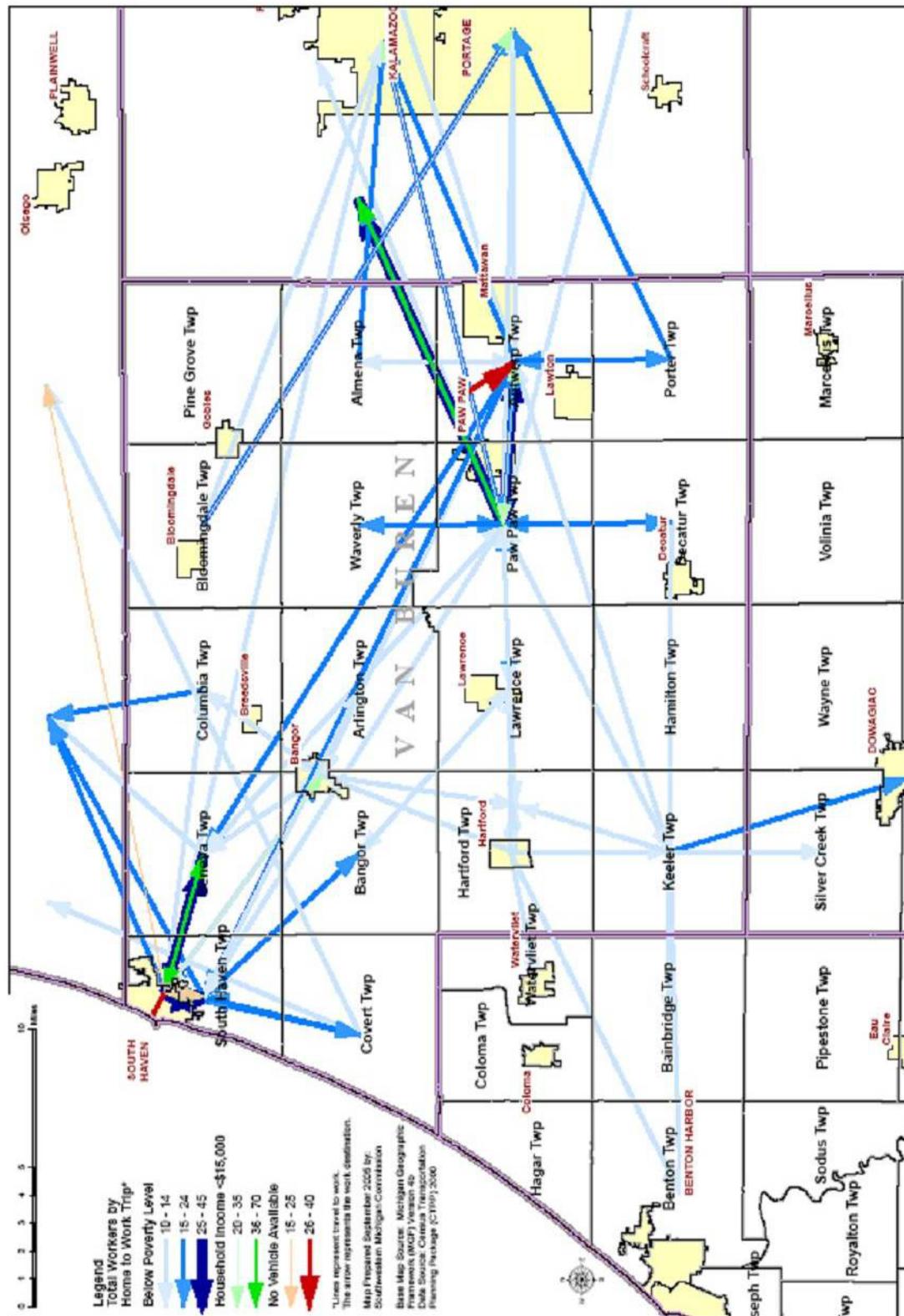
Map #12 Employment clusters as of September 2002



Map #13 Distribution of employees per municipality



Map #15 Home to work trips for employees below poverty level



Retail and Medical Services

A large trip generator for VBPT is retail and medical services. The majority of retail shopping centers and medical service providers are located in the South Haven and Paw Paw areas. The two hospitals within Van Buren County are South Haven Community Hospital in South Haven and Lakeview Community Hospital in Paw Paw. In addition, each village and city in the county also has some shopping, services and medical offices or clinics.

Specifically, grocery stores are located in South Haven, Paw Paw, Bangor, Hartford, Gobles, and Decatur. For many residents, traveling to Benton Harbor, Kalamazoo, Holland, or even Grand Rapids for shopping and medical services is often preferred and/or sometimes necessary. VBPT could form partnerships with retail and medical services to better serve client needs and to increase ridership.

Education and Training Services

There are few education and training site locations in Van Buren County. Therefore there may be opportunities to group larger numbers of people for travel to education and training sites. There are basically four types of education and training trips to serve in Van Buren County: 1) Worker training programs through Michigan Works! Work First Program, 2) Secondary education, 3) K-12 education, and 4) Daycare.

Michigan Works! offices providing training for clients are located in South Haven and Paw Paw. VBPT could consider working with Michigan Works! staff to coordinate rides for clients in the most efficient manner.

Schools and colleges can also be trip generators for VBPT. Lake Michigan College (LMC) is the only secondary education institution located within Van Buren County. LMC is located on the northeast corner of the City of South Haven. This area of South Haven also contains a large retail store, a dialysis center and a low-income apartment complex. Many residents attend colleges outside of Van Buren County, such as LMC in Benton Harbor, Southwestern Michigan College in Dowagiac or Niles or one of the many universities in Kalamazoo. Because of class schedules it would probably be difficult for VBPT to serve the colleges and universities outside of the county, but there may be an opportunity to partner

with LMC’s South Haven campus to provide more accommodating transportation services for their students.

The school districts in Van Buren and Cass Counties have utilized VBPT’s services. With the recent cuts in hours and drivers, VBPT is now having difficulty serving school district needs. If VBPT service is expanded, the school systems and Head Start should be thought of as potential partners. The school districts in Van Buren County include:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Bangor Public Schools | Lawrence Public Schools |
| Bloomington Public Schools | Lawton Community Schools |
| Covert Public Schools | Mattawan Consolidated Schools |
| Decatur Public Schools | Paw Paw Public Schools |
| Gobles Public Schools | South Haven Public Schools |
| Hartford Public Schools | Van Buren Intermediate School
District and Vocational Tech Center |

Day care locations are shown in Map #6 and are also potential trip generators. VBPT could provide and market services directly to parents through the day care providers or through the human service agencies that assist parents in day care arrangements and transportation.

Tourism Related Travel

Several high-growth, non-metro, recreation counties are among the highest users of public transportation in rural America. In these rural counties, the highest demand on public transportation is often from low-income workers and tourists. For example, in Colorado, Eagle County (home of Vail) and Summit County (where Breckenridge and Copper Mountain ski resorts are located) both had high rates of population growth during the 1990s and they have a high rate of ridership on public transportation (with more than 5 percent of their workers using transit as a primary means of transportation to work). Other non-metro counties with high growth and relatively high transit use are Dukes, Massachusetts (home of Martha’s Vineyard); Worcester, Maryland (Ocean City); and Beaufort, South Carolina

(Hilton Head Island). Local officials in these areas have recognized that transit is an important tool for making local recreation-based economies run more efficiently, bringing in workers, reducing congestion, and providing mobility options for residents and tourists.

Van Buren County also has a significant tourist economy. VBPT may be able to market and provide services to high demand destinations such as Van Buren State Park, the beaches in South Haven and to downtown South Haven from local hotels. There are many festivals held throughout the year that VBPT could market and provide contract services. Below is a list of some of the most popular festivals in the area.

Table 26

Festivals in Van Buren County		
Community	Festival	Time
South Haven	Ice Breaker	February
	Harbor fest	June -Father's Day Weekend
	Annual Fine Art Fair	4 th of July Weekend
	4 th of July Celebration	4 th of July Weekend
	Festival of Cars	July
	Garden Walk	July
	National Blueberry Festival and Fly-In South Haven Airport	2 nd full weekend in August
	Annual All Crafts Fair	Labor Day Weekend
	Hometown Holidays Hospice Home Tour	December
	Holidays in the Village	November – December
Bangor	Apple Festival	2 nd Weekend in October
Lawrence	Ox Roast	Labor Day Weekend
Paw Paw	Wine and Harvest Festival	Weekend after Labor Day
	Christmas in the Village	December
Other	Michigan Flywheelers Antique and Tractor Show	Weekend after Labor Day
	Van Buren County Fair	Mid-July

Human Service Agencies

Van Buren County faces many challenges delivering social services to its residents because of its low population density and the high rate of its population receiving public assistance payments.

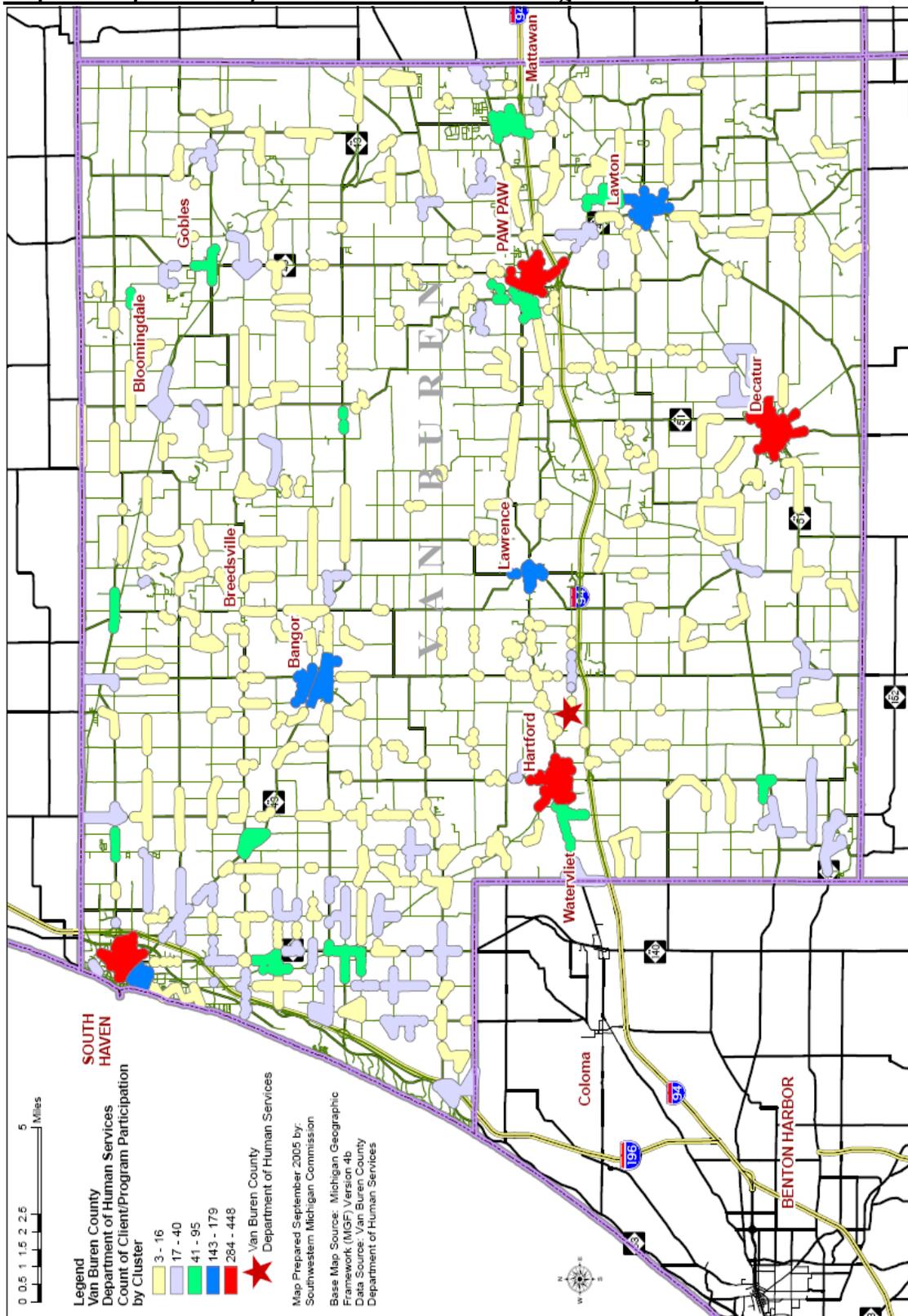
In 2004 the Michigan Department of Human Services reported that 14 percent of Van Buren residences were receiving some form of public assistance. The entire state of Michigan's

overall percentage in 2004 was 10 percent of the population receiving public assistance payments.

The costs per capita associated with service delivery tend to be higher in Van Buren County because of the lower population density. With the current decline in state revenues, agencies are reexamining their priorities in service provision and are striving to provide the best support possible in the most cost-effective manner. As evidenced in Map #16, the locations of the Department of Human Services clients are spread throughout the county. However, a few clusters of clients do emerge on the map and this map could be utilized to develop a more coordinated transportation service for these clients needing to get to agency office locations or to provide other trips such as training, employment, medical or independent living trips. The number of clients in Map #16 may be recipients of multiple programs and therefore be counted more than once. A more detailed map is available at SWMC, but not published in this report because of confidentiality issues.

Often, human service agencies need to find or provide transportation to their clients, which can be very challenging and costly in a rural community. The role of these entities varies, with some agencies engaging in the purchase of vehicles and hiring of drivers, some utilizing volunteers or private providers (taxi services) and others contracting with rural transit operators such as VBPT. It is often difficult to measure the magnitude of these services since transportation costs are often bundled with the overall cost of providing service to the client.

Map #16 Department of Human Services Client/Program Participation



An *Agency Transportation Survey* was sent to twenty-eight social service providers with clients in Van Buren County. Thirteen surveys were returned and compiled. (Complete results are in the Appendix.) The survey results will provide a better understanding of the transportation needs of the agencies and will point out opportunities to coordinate or provide services.

Services provided by the surveyed agencies include job placement, senior services, health and medical assistance, education, and the provision of meals. Assistance is provided to residents of all ages (defined as age 3 years – 60⁺ years). Seven of the responding agencies serve all of Van Buren County; two include Cass County and three include Berrien County. The number of clients served per year range from 300 to 7,000. The typical agency provides services Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. with one being available twenty-four hours per day, seven days a week, and one offering services only from September through May (Head-Start). Seven agencies provided services to clients at more than one location.

When asked how many clients are unable to drive themselves, or do not have a car available, the answers varied from at least 200 clients to the vast majority of all clients. Some reported that between 45 and 65 percent of their total clientele were unable to drive themselves. Agencies reporting the transportation methods used by clients include: nine agencies reporting that their clients ride with family or friends; eight drive themselves; five carpool with other clients; four have volunteers bring them; and four use the public transportation system. Other methods included the use of agency-owned vehicles and private taxi service.

Survey Question: "How do clients get to your center/site?" (Check all that apply)

# of Responses	Response
9	Ride with family or friends
8	Drive themselves
5	Carpool with other clients
4	Public transportation system
4	Volunteers bring them
3	Agency operates vehicles
3	Staff brings them
1	Taxi
1	Live in group home/transported in group home vehicle
1	Another agency transports them
1	Consolidated agency transportation system
1	Other: Parents/Guardians

The following table shows the transportation service providers used by social service agencies in Van Buren County as reported in the *Agency Transportation Survey* taken in May 2005 and from invoices from the Michigan Works!, Project Zero program.

Table 27

Transportation Service Providers Utilized by Agencies	
Organization/Agency	Transportation Service Provider
Van Buren County Human Services	Van Buren Public Transit Volunteer Drivers
Work First/Welfare to Work	Mr. G's Express Advance Cab Bumble Bee Cab Van Buren Transportation Services Lewis Cass ISD Cass Co. Public Transit
Van Buren Community Mental Health Authority	Mental Health Vans Van Buren Public Transit
Area Agency On Aging	Van Buren Care-A-Van Region Care-A-Van Region Medic Choice Van Buren EMS Wil Care Nursing
South Haven Senior Center	Senior Center Vans

When asked to what extent their current transportation providers met the needs of wheelchair-using clients, the responses included problems with scheduling, volunteers not authorized to handle wheelchair-bound clients, and transportation not being handicap

accessible. The need for more options for dialysis patients, assistance in and out of vehicles, and infant/child car seats was also listed.

Three of the agencies responding (Van Buren Community Mental Health Authority, Tri-County Head Start and South Haven Senior Center) own and operate their own vehicles to provide client transportation. Community Mental Health Authority provides transportation to clients for medical appointments, employment, therapeutic social and recreational activities and community integration activities with an average trip length of fifteen miles. The Senior Center accommodates about 15 to 20 riders per day, Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m and services the City of South Haven and the townships of South Haven, Geneva and Casco. The South Haven Senior Center also contracts charter services for their clients for events outside of the county.

Ten of the thirteen survey respondents indicated the following problems with their current method of getting clients to their site or service.

- Public Transit is not flexible in timing and scheduling.
- Poorly trained drivers at Public Transit, discussions about clients with other clients, inappropriate discussions about religion and sex by drivers.
- FIA not providing medical transportation, others must pick up slack.
- Our fleet is aging with limited resources to replace vehicles.
- Rising fuel costs an issue for CMH employees driving own vehicles.
- Geographic distances in county present challenges.
- Need alternatives for transporting frail clients to medical appointments and dialysis (door to door wheelchair).
- We use only volunteers, if there are not enough it is a problem. As gas prices increase, we lose volunteers.
- Transportation doesn't run near homes on a regular basis.
- No drivers or transportation for veterans to doctor.
- Care-A-Van is overbooked.

- State/federal funds have been eliminated. We are using 100 percent of program funds to pay for transportation for all clients that need it. If we lose more funds in the future the program may not be able to transport/help them.
- We are unable to service our entire service area and cannot transport wheelchair clients or clients who are unable to get in or out of the minivan. There are many medical needs we cannot accommodate as well; most of our transportation is to and from the senior center for meals and services.

Eight of ten agencies responded that additional transportation services, beyond those now available, are needed in order for their clients to have full access to the services their agency provides. The following comments were received when asked if the agencies had problems with getting their clients to their site or service.

- Transportation options would be great.
- No way to get back and forth to work.
- Clients can't get to our office, our pantries, or to Hartford or Allegan to apply for help. Even the public transit service is too expensive for some of them.
- No cross-county service.
- Could shift more CMH provided service to Public Transit; Public Transit could offer evening/weekend service.
- VB County has only two providers that are cost effective. Providers from other counties/areas are too expensive. We are only able to transport a set number of clients based on the availability of the provider's cars; if they lose cars, go out of business, then some clients will be without transportation.

INNOVATIONS, STRATEGIES, AND TRENDS

Changing Climate for Public Transit

Until the late 1940s, private companies provided the vast majority of public transit service. In 1947, private transit systems in Boston and Chicago were converted to public ownership and operation. Nationwide, by the early 1970s, most transit services had shifted from private to public operation.

Trends that affected this change included the shift from a war-based economy to a domestic-based economy, urbanism, reemergence of auto availability, and public policies and programs that either directly or indirectly reinforced these trends. For thirty years, transit service maintained this public sector model of transit ownership, operation, and subsidies.

Currently, the most significant change has been that the cost of transit that is not paid by users has shifted to local, state, and federal governments. Despite gains in transit ridership, the institutional structure and traditional business practices of traditional transit organizations are being increasingly called into question around the United States.

A potential crisis looms for public transportation in the form of increasing cost and the inability of public transit to respond to emerging travel demands and customer expectations. Several communities around the country are rethinking and reorganizing public transportation. To a considerable degree, these changes in reorganization echo the kinds of change that are occurring in a variety of other organizations and industries. Current trends are reflected in the following illustration of changing paradigms.³⁷

Industrial Age Paradigm

- Operational efficiency
- Focus on a small piece
- Autonomous and adversarial
- Command and control
- Machines and building materials

>>>>>>

Information Age Paradigm

- Flexibility and adaptation
- Focus on whole systems
- Collaborative
- Employee involvement
- Information and people

³⁷ TCRP Report 58, "New Paradigms for Local Public Transportation Organizations," 2000
http://gulliver.trb.org/publications/tcrp/tcrp_rpt_58.pdf

The time is fast approaching for fundamental change in public transportation, which has remained largely unchanged and unresponsive to change over the past 30 years. Many public transit agencies are using techniques to increase ridership and increase efficiency. Most investments are being made in coordination, technology, meeting users' needs, and public education.

“We cannot afford, either literally or figuratively to do business as usual. Let us recognize that our focus should be on using our skills as mobility managers, not necessarily as service providers, to improve mobility and efficiency.”³⁸

Coordination Strategies

What is coordination? Coordination is a technique for better resource management, in which improved organization strategies are applied to achieve greater cost-effectiveness in service delivery. The United States Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) have been working together for more than 10 years to foster increased coordination among the transportation services sponsored by each agency. Coordination experiences encompass a vast array of strategies, including complementary service planning, joint equipment and vehicle procurements, maintenance and facilities sharing arrangements, coordinated service delivery, and consolidated services operation.

In the Van Buren County agency survey, seven agencies responded that they would like to see more coordination of client transportation among the various agencies in the county. Two respondents were not sure.

According to a conservative estimate from a study conducted by the National Academy of Science's Transportation Research Board, \$700 million could be saved nationally from coordination efforts.³⁹

³⁸ TCRP Report 58, http://gulliver.trb.org/publications/tcrp/tcrp_rpt_58.pdf

³⁹ TCRP Report 91, “Economic Benefits of Coordinating Human Services Transportation and Transit Services,” 2003 http://gulliver.trb.org/publications/tcrp/tcrp91/tcrp91_covers-fm.pdf

Coordination has many benefits including the following:

- Increases transportation availability and access to jobs
- Enhances service quality
- Eliminates duplicative efforts
- Substantially improves the cost of transportation

In 2003, the Federal Transportation Administration sponsored the Transportation Research Board to identify agencies using innovative and successful coordination strategies and practices in rural, suburban, and urban regions. A survey was produced and conducted. Based on the data collected and several case studies, innovative and successful coordination strategies and practices that have wide applicability were identified. Following is synopsis of some successful coordination strategies.

The public transit system contracts to provide trips to Medicaid or other human service agency clients.

In many communities, Medicaid agencies have not made full use of fixed route transit services, opting for more costly paratransit services instead. As shown in numerous cases, moving only a small proportion of Medicaid clients to fixed route transit service saves the Medicaid

Coordination and cooperation are keys to maximizing the level of service and performance in rural areas.

agency very large sums of money, substantially increases revenues of the public transit agency at no additional operating cost, and provides mobility benefits for Medicaid clients.

Human service providers provide ADA paratransit services under contracts to public transit.

In a number of communities, human service agencies have been providing paratransit services for a longer period of time than some transit agencies. Typically operating as private nonprofit organizations, the human service agencies often have cost structures that are less expensive than those of the transit agencies and can thus create significant savings for the transit agencies in providing the ADA-mandated services. (Using volunteers for drivers or other staff positions is one important way that human service agencies can

generate large cost reductions.) For transit operators, contracting with human service transportation providers can be considered to be a key cost reduction strategy.

Transit systems and/or human service providers offer incentives to paratransit riders to use fixed/flex route transit services. Paratransit trips are often substantially more expensive than fixed/flex route trips. By offering incentives, including travel training, to frequent paratransit users, some of those paratransit riders will switch their regular travel mode to the fixed route service. This strategy has real shown cost reduction benefits for the paratransit program, the fixed/flex route operator, and human service agencies who sponsor trips for particular clients, and the riders themselves.

Human service agencies coordinate or consolidate their separate transportation services and functions to create a general public transportation system. Sometimes referred to as the “classic” coordination example; human service agencies band together to form a “critical mass” of service that can qualify for general public funding and offer real travel options throughout the entire community. This is a key productivity enhancement strategy that can be referred to as a synthesis or synergy strategy. This type of coordination is often combined with cost reduction, service enhancement, and mobility enhancement strategies.

Transportation providers institute a community-wide coordinated dispatching operation so that all vehicles in use can accommodate all types of passengers at all times. Often entitled “ridesharing,” this technique ensures the most cost effective application of driver and vehicle resources. Judiciously applied, it can eliminate the typical pre-coordination situation of overlapping and inefficient routes and schedules. In particular, the benefits of providing trips for ADA paratransit clients at the same time and on the same vehicle, as other travelers create much lower per trip costs, thus generating real savings for public transit operators. This is a key productivity enhancement strategy.

Travel services are expanded to more residents of the community through a variety of low-cost strategies. Some of the greatest dollar savings evidenced in the case studies of coordinated systems are those generated by the effective use of volunteers. Volunteers are

most cost effectively used when specific trips have special requirements, such as the need for hands-on or escorted services; when providing the trip would ordinarily tie up a vehicle and a driver for a relatively long time; or in other circumstances where ridesharing would be difficult to implement. This is a key service expansion strategy that strongly relates to some cost reduction strategies.

Just as there are transportation coordination strategies to embrace, there are also significant transportation service strategies that were indicated to avoid. Most characterize situations of little or no coordination.

Vehicles and drivers are used to serve only one client or trip type. Agencies provide trips for only their own clients; agencies provide trips only to certain destinations (e.g., medical facilities) and not to other needed destinations.

Dispatch facilities and other administrative operations are performed by different agencies. Each agency using dispatch personnel dedicated to only the needs of that particular agency; multiple agencies in the same community investing in independently operated Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) systems.

Vehicles are idle during large portions of the day. The existence of significant under utilized vehicle capacity - routes being run with less than full passenger capacity.

Low productivities (passengers per hour, passengers per mile) are observed. Performance statistics are significantly below other operations of a similar nature in similar communities.

Routes and services are duplicated. Vehicles of different agencies running the same routes, perhaps even at the same times of day. (This is especially a problem when there are also areas lacking any service at all in a given community.)

Per trip costs are unusually high. Per trip costs are significantly higher than other operations of a similar nature in similar communities.

If any of these conditions are present in a locality, their presence should be taken as a clue that the coordination of human service transportation and public transit services may bring real benefits.

Potential problems with implementing coordination may involve politics, differing service priorities, local control and cost issues, lack of stable funding, and building permanent coordinated relationships. Each of these issues is explored below.

Politics - Not recognizing coordination as a political process has led to the downfall of some otherwise vital and beneficial coordinated transportation operations. Individuals and organizations with vested interests in “the status quo” will often view expanded transportation services as a threat to their own power or influence and may, therefore, take steps to derail both personal and organizational capital invested in the coordinated transportation system. (Some persons have suggested that organized labor might oppose certain kinds of coordination efforts. Although this could possibly occur, the study did not find any instances of organized labor opposition to coordinated transportation services.)

In the Van Buren County agency survey, the following agencies were listed as potential partners in a coordinated system:

Van Buren Public Transit
 Van Buren Community Mental Health
 Department of Human Services
 Health Department
 Van Buren ISD
 Local School Districts
 Areas Agency on Aging
 Senior Centers (Covert & South Haven)
 Care-A-Van
 Van Buren Emergency Medical Services
 Hospitals/Medical Facilities
 MSU Extension
 Community Action Agency
 Taxi companies
 We-Care INC
 Coloma Transportation Service Center

Differing Service Priorities - Recent experiences in a California county illustrate how differing objectives and priorities can impact coordination. A non-profit agency provides coordinated services including ADA paratransit and transportation to adult day services, a large senior meal program, and day

programs for people with developmental disabilities. All of the services are provided under contracts with the various responsible public and quasi-public agencies. The coordinated provider is the sole applicant for FTA Section 5310 vehicles, which it uses initially for the ADA service and then for the human service transportation. Although riders are not mixed together on vehicles, drivers and vehicles are shared among the programs, and costs for facilities, administration, driver training, and dispatching costs can be spread over multiple programs.

In 2002, the regional agency responsible for services to people with developmental disabilities decided to terminate its contract with the coordinated provider and contract instead with several for-profit and nonprofit organizations. The decision was based on the agency's urgent need to control costs and the ability of the other providers to offer a substantially lower cost, at least partly due to increases in overhead at the coordinated provider. These overhead increases appear to be largely a result of pressure to respond to concerns about service quality for ADA paratransit services. For example, driver wages and benefits were improved to help reduce turnover. Staff of the coordinated provider expressed concerns about driver qualifications and benefits at the new providers. Staff at the development disabilities agency implicitly acknowledges some start up problems with the new providers but felt that the service is in "pretty good shape" now. The coordinated provider indicates that it has been able to find other business to use the capacity left by the loss of this one large contract. In this case, one agency's priority regarding cutting costs conflicted with another agency's need to maintain a high level of service quality in order to maintain ADA compliance. The case also illustrates that coordination is commonly implemented through contracts between agencies that are voluntary and subject to modification and cancellation.

Local Control and Cost Issues - An unsuccessful attempt at service consolidation illustrates the importance of political support and also appropriate cost accounting. This effort occurred in a rural Northern California county and involved several cities, a county rural transit system, and human service agencies. A major consolidation study demonstrated significant benefits from consolidating and developing support from representatives of transit-dependent

groups. However, political leaders from the largest city were troubled by likely loss of policy control and cost increases. The fixed route hourly operating costs budgeted for FY2001 largest city was \$41.89 (for 35,888 service hours), while the county intercity system had per hour operating costs of \$58.71 (for 16,730 service hours). A second city's fixed route services were in the \$55 per hour range. Paratransit services throughout the county were generally in the mid-to-upper \$30 per hour range. A single contractor already operated services for the two cities and the county. In estimating potential costs for a combined service contract, the contractor proposed an hourly cost somewhere in the middle of the city and county service costs.

The result was dramatic savings for the county but increases for the largest city and two smaller systems. The county liked the expected cost savings, but the largest city was not willing to pay a higher cost per hour under a new countywide service contract. The city was also concerned about loss of control with a combined governing body. Despite exploring a variety of creative ways of allocating service costs among the jurisdictions, no solution was found that satisfied all the parties. This effort did finally result in significant coordination. The study showed that there would be substantial savings from consolidating administration of several services. As a result, two cities contract with the county to administer their transit services along with the county's transit services, and a third city is planning to do the same. These jurisdictions all use the same private contractor. However, all the entities maintain separate policy control; set their own routes, schedules, and fares; and fund their services separately.

Lack of Stable Funding - Lack of stable funding has been cited as a serious deterrent to coordination between human service transportation and transit service. One rural public transportation provider spent significant political capital changing buses dedicated to individual agencies' clients into geographically based routes. Funded clients were assigned to routes based on where they lived and not on routes exclusive to the agency that funded their trips. The goal was to offer a fixed transit route with scheduled stops to the public by overlaying a rural transit route on existing subscription services. After enthusiastic community acceptance of the new coordinated system, the agency lost a key contract to a

competitor. In this case, the contractor, which was another government agency, chose a lower bid price over the concept of coordinated services with other agencies. As a result, the public transportation provider had to abandon the coordinated system that made the fixed route general public service possible. Funding problems of this nature are now occurring in various states with regard to state non-emergency Medicaid transportation programs.

Whereas Medicaid transportation costs are still, on average, less than 1 percent of all state-Medicaid expenses, Medicaid transportation costs are very substantial and are increasing rapidly. In contrast to other sources of transportation funds, Medicaid looms large as a potential fund provider. In many states and localities, Medicaid funding is the backbone that enables community transportation services to grow and prosper. Therefore, apprehension is being felt in a number of states in which the Medicaid program has decided to cut transportation expenses to the bare minimum, often eliminating higher quality coordinated transportation providers for the lowest cost competitors. Without Medicaid funding, some coordinated operators will not be able to achieve the economies of scale that they need to offer competitive services to other agencies. In this case, looking beyond the needs of only one agency may be necessary to maintain vital transportation services.

Building Permanent Coordinated Relationships - Fluidity of coordination relationships was recognized as a major factor in the longevity of coordination arrangements.

The following steps were identified to increase the permanence of these relationships.

- Make coordinated services less dependent upon the persons involved and more dependent upon long-standing written agreements between agencies.
- Key individuals in the coordination process should strive to make their agreements relatively permanent by committing these agreements to paper with the signatures of the heads of the respective agencies involved. These papers should include action plans that specify lists of activities to be undertaken over time, with milestones for joint meetings and jointly developed products.
- Developing realistic expectations about coordination's expected outcomes is another key tool in implementing successful coordinated transportation.

Many public transit agencies are moving towards coordination. The pooling of resources associated with coordination is attractive in the current climate of increasing costs and decreasing funding. VBPT has the opportunity to be the lead agency in bringing stakeholders together to begin coordinating transportation services in the county.

Technology Implementation Strategies

With or without increased coordination of services, technology is being relied on by several public transit agencies to provide more effective and efficient service to its customers. Over the past ten years there has been steady growth in the use of custom communications and information technology systems in public transit operations.

While technologies have been demonstrated successfully in many larger transit environments, rural and small public transit operations have not yet taken full advantage of transit technology systems.

These systems have been used primarily to automate manual processes, increase the amount and quality of operations data collected, increase system efficiencies, and enhance operating productivity. Technology can result in data that will be useful to link and measure customer needs with the services provided and to better understand trends to support the consideration of new strategies. While technologies have been demonstrated successfully in many larger transit environments, rural and small public transit operations have not yet taken full advantage of transit technology systems.

Some technology applications that are low cost, connect readily to many different products, and are easy to use are emerging in the consumer and business electronics markets. Many of these technology systems are being adapted in rural transit systems and include the following:

- Mobile Data Devices – Palm computers, PDAs (personal data assistants).
- Public Data Networks - Cellular communications network.
- Internet- Seamless connections between transit offices and agencies.
- Application Service Providers (ASP) - Firms that rent the use of technology, usually software applications, installed and maintained on the equipment of the ASP.

Identifying and implementing improved technology in VBPT operations will not be a one-time event. It has to involve a process and a plan to carry out that process. As indicated in the goals and objectives of the VBPT study a broad based team needs to be formed to help in the technology selection and acquisition process no matter how simple or complex the system may be. The team should be comprised of people with a variety of skills and transit system perspectives including:

- VBPT management and operations staff.
- Professionals from related information departments.
- Leaders from human service agencies that currently or in the future may purchase service from VBPT.
- Board members, local government managers whose support is critical to procuring new technology.

Several goals and objectives highlighted in the study could be effectively addressed through automation. They included:

- More accurate and detailed reports.
- Increased coordination between human service agencies and VBPT.
- More accessible, more useful customer information.
- Improved scheduling productivity.

When assessing if automation will greatly improve these needs, several questions need to be answered. The technology team needs to thoroughly understand what existing business practices can be streamlined, and what policies need to be modified to streamline those practices.

The Transit Cooperative Research Program Report 76 suggests that technology review teams keep the following factors in mind as they evaluate technology options:

System

- System goals and objectives
- Funding availability

Staff

- Willingness to change current procedures
- Select a “Champion” to lead effort
- Experience and skills using computers and other technologies

Services

- Current and planned service levels
- Types of passengers
- Size of service area

Technology and Communications

- Current use of computer hardware and software
- Quality of coverage, type (analog or digital) and availability of radio, and other wireless communication services
- Quality, type and availability of communication services to connect to the Internet and public data networks
- Quality and availability of local technical support for computer and communication systems

Once the above factors are clearly understood and agreed upon by the technology review team, the technology team should consult TCRP Report 76 “Guide for Selecting Technology for Rural and Small Urban Public Transportation Systems”. The report can be downloaded at: http://gulliver.trb.org/publications/tcrp/tcrp_rpt_76.pdf

Combining Coordination and Technology

Coordination will require investments in technology. Client Referral, Ridership, and Financial Tracking system (CRRAFT) is a web-based software program that has been developed to promote coordination in smaller systems. Originally developed for transit

systems in New Mexico, it is now being utilized in other transit systems throughout the county. This system was developed for and is being utilized by rural transit agencies. The system can be customized to meet the unique needs of each transit system.

In 1997, the Alliance for Transportation Research Institute (ATR), acting as a change agent for the State of New Mexico began initial efforts to bring about interagency coordination of transportation. Working with the New Mexico Department of Transportation, Public Transportation Programs Bureau the ATR Institute conducted groundbreaking research with their studies on the lack of transportation alternatives for the State's poorest and most disadvantaged citizens. This body of research gave the ATR Institute an overview of the transportation needs of clients who received State-funded transportation benefits as part of the delivery of human services, an inventory of State-owned transportation and transit vehicles, the needs of agency funding sources, and local transit providers. During this period, New Mexico's small, rural transit providers manually tracked agency-funded rides and spent many staff hours each day reconciling cash receipts and trips with schedules, and transferring all the data onto spreadsheets. Then, at the end of each month, the transit providers had to spend days producing the reports needed by the various State funding programs.

The ATR Institute (ATRI), University of New Mexico, under contract with the Public Transportation Programs Bureau, New Mexico Department of Transportation, developed the web-based software program, Client Referral, Ridership, and Financial Tracking system (CRRAFT). For the transit operators, CRRAFT standardizes invoicing, ridership and financial reporting, and simplifies scheduling. It also allows for many users to access the system by the use of a password. With this capability, partner agencies can gain access to relevant information and reports as needed. For human service agencies, CRRAFT standardizes client transportation referral, improves accountability of transportation use and costs, and may reduce misuse of transportation assistance. Because CRRAFT is Web-based, and therefore available to be used at any time, from any place, by authorized users, funding agencies can view reports in real-time and track their transportation funds as they are being utilized. With funding from the FTA/Federal Highways Administration Joint Program

Office, ATRI is enhancing CRRAFT to generate financial and client tracking reports for each agency that sponsors clients. CRRAFT also can generate FTA Sections 5311, 5310, and 3037 reports.

In New Mexico, the following human service agencies are referring clients for transportation through CRRAFT: selected developmental disability service providers; the Welfare-To-Work Program of the New Mexico Department of Labor; and the Temporary Assistance For Needy Families and Food Stamps Programs of the New Mexico Human Services Department. The cooperating rural transit operators also receive funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Sections 5311, 5310, and/or 3037 Programs.

Technology is becoming prevalent in all businesses and public transit is no exception. Recently more and more rural transit systems are relying on improved technologies to improve efficiency and reporting. VBPT should consider increasing its use of technology to meet the demands of increased coordination, better reporting and increased efficiency.

User Friendly System/Public Education

Many public transit agencies have been able to increase ridership by providing a more user-friendly system that meets rider's needs and also by providing better rider education to new users. Some of the most prevalent requests from public transportation users pertain to service expansion. By adding service hours and tailoring routes to meet riders' needs, transit agencies are seeing repeat customers. The information contained in this report can help VBPT begin to decide which populations and types of trips to focus on and target. VBPT will also need to continue communications with human service agencies to understand and begin meeting their client's transportation needs.

Increasingly, public transit agencies are reaching out to prospective riders through education. Creating system awareness is crucial to attracting riders. VBPT is providing critical services to Van Buren County, but it may not be fully understood by the community at large. Through advocacy and public relations the citizens of Van Buren County can gain a better understanding of:

- The populations that depend on VBPT
- VBPT's services and strengths
- Actual costs of service
- How transportation services affects the lives of citizens in need of accessing medical services, education, shopping, social services and much more
- How VBPT helps people live more independently
- What would it mean to the customers of VBPT and the county as a whole if VBPT would cease transit operations?

Some transit operators have developed television or radio commercials and installed new bus stop signs to boost their presence in the community. Riding public transit may be daunting for new riders. Rider education programs can help. One public transit agency developed a how-to video explaining various aspects of the system. The video could show how to use public transit and provide information for riders with disabilities. The video could be available in Spanish to serve that growing population in the region. Distribution sites for a video could include schools, social and civic organizations and employer worksites around the community.

Many transit agencies utilize an advocacy group, such as a Friends of Transit group, to implement additional rider education programs. One successful program has been for transit agencies to provide a volunteer to assist new riders. The volunteers can be part of the Friends group. For more information on forming a Friends of Transit advocacy group, see the Implementation Handbook and Toolkit.

Increasing Efficiency with Flex-Routes

Many rural systems cannot support a fixed route service because of low density in rural areas. However, many rural systems are finding that flex-routes are a feasible option and can increase ridership and efficiency. A flex-route is a hybrid of a fixed route and a paratransit service. It usually begins with adding time for Dial-A-Ride and general public passengers on its subscription service vehicles. Characteristics of a flex-route are:

- Bus stops, which are open to the public, are overlaid on an existing subscription service.
- Funded clients are assigned to routes based on where they live, not on routes exclusive to the agency that funds their trip.
- Drivers serve the general public as published stops according to a bus schedule, as they pick up and drop off funded clients at their doorstep.

VBPT offers an informal flex-route by adding general public riders to the contracted mental health buses when it can be accommodated. The flex-route system described in this study would set permanent bus stops that would be publicized to the general public. For example, the route from Decatur/Paw Paw area to Bangor for MTI would also continue to South Haven and offer bus stops along the way. So if someone had to get to Bangor or South Haven from the Decatur/Paw Paw area they would know to be at a scheduled bus stop at a certain time.

Many benefits can be achieved by offering flex-routes. Often flex-routes can reduce duplicative routing, decrease miles traveled, fill empty seats and create new revenue. These benefits could greatly help VBPT's service. An intangible benefit to VBPT would be more publicity and use by other riders generated by the publicity of the new bus stops and schedules. VBPT may seem more accessible to the general public with the

One transit system utilizes the following numbers for planning schedules:

- 45 miles/hour average vehicle speed
- 3-minute boarding time
- 5-10 minutes flex time for occasional demand response trips
- Up to 20 minutes flex time in parts of the route where a substantial number of demand response trips are anticipated

introduction of publicized flex-routes. The published schedule provides predictability and the ability of riders to schedule appointments to meet the schedule. Further, there is integration of the disabled population with other passengers. This furthers the ADA's goal of inclusion. One interesting benefit that may result with flex-routes is that cost savings may be realized for human service agencies. As general ridership grows, fares may offset expenses allowing the transit provider to reduce trip costs for agencies that are billed on a per client basis.

To implement a flex-route, a public transit agency should determine a threshold of riders to support the route, determine a stable source of funding, negotiate with the funding agency and enlist community support. An advocacy or friends group can provide support for building community support for a flex-route. The next step is to plan the flex-routes. Current origins and destinations and key public destinations should be mapped. (The process of mapping has begun with this report.) The routes must then be mapped (be sure to continue to meet the contracted agency clients' needs). Develop the stops and schedule. The bus stops should be located in convenient and accessible places. Utilize the Friends advocacy group to help secure the bus stops. Then set the fare for the service. Often fares for the general public riding the flex-route are lower than what the contract agency is paying. The contract agency must realize that the customers are receiving different levels of service (the contract rider is picked up and dropped off at their door while the general public rider is using a bus stop). Also the contract rider service includes charges for scheduling, billing and data entry. Some transit agencies offer introductory fares to establish ridership. A policy should be set on seats available for non-contracted riders. Schedule adherence should be a top priority of the transit agency.

Elements of Success:

- Build upon a core of existing services.
- Design a flex route that responds to identified community needs.
- Earn community support.
- Involve community leaders.
- Demonstrate greater efficiency and effectiveness.
- Communicate to all stakeholders.
- Develop a problem-solving attitude.
- Appoint a project manager.

The transit agency should implement a marketing campaign to introduce the flex-routes. This campaign could include key presentations to interested groups and making personal contacts with targeted groups such as doctor's offices, churches, elected officials, and business functions.

The most common barriers to flex-route implementation are establishing differential fares, convincing agencies of the cost effectiveness of the service, and resolving contracting agencies desire for control.

Successful flex-routes will decrease costs and increase efficiency of public transit in rural areas. VBPT should consider the introduction of flex-routes to improve its community image and to increase efficiency and ridership.

The Implementation Handbook and Toolkit, accompanying this study, expands on how VBPT can begin to implement coordination, technology, public education efforts and flex routes.

FUNDING OPTIONS

There are many creative funding options that are available to VBPT. This section describes many of these potential options. The options vary greatly from increasing coordination, utilizing alternative fuel vehicles, developing partnerships, to trading services.

Transit Funding Sources

The provision of demand-response rural transit is an expensive proposition. On a nationwide basis, the average per passenger cost for demand response service is \$13.16 compared with \$1.98 for a conventional line haul bus. It is clear that demand-response is a low cost-recovery form of transit service.⁴⁰ Nationally, the three measures of costliness, cost-efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and service-effectiveness have worsened steadily since 1989.⁴¹

On a nationwide basis, the average per passenger cost for demand response service is \$13.16 compared with \$1.98 for a conventional line haul bus. It is clear that demand-response is a low cost-recovery form of transit service.

Federal funding for public transit has failed to keep pace with inflation. By necessity, many transit agencies have been forced to look beyond the federal government for funding. The sources of funding outside the federal government generally fall into the following categories: local dedicated taxation, fare box increases, leveraging limited funds through low interest financing, use of assets to generate additional revenue streams, partnerships with private sector and transit users. Of the categories listed, some have the potential to provide significant funding and some are on the other end of the budgetary spectrum.

Local Dedicated Taxation

The nationwide trend has shown a rapid increase in dedicated funding through local taxation. These sources include local taxes and other dedicated funds at the state, local, and agency-jurisdictional levels. As of 1998, dedicated funding was the largest funding component after

⁴⁰ TCRP Report 31, "Funding Strategies for Public Transportation, Final Report," 1998, http://gulliver.trb.org/publications/tcrp/tcrp_rpt_31-1-a.pdf

⁴¹ TCRP Report 31, http://gulliver.trb.org/publications/tcrp/tcrp_rpt_31-1-a.pdf

the fare box.⁴² Sales taxes apply to goods and services sold in a specific area. The sales tax is the most common transit system funding source in America for dedicated local revenue. The strength of retail sales in an area can have a significant impact on the effectiveness and stability of the revenue stream from the sales tax. Beyond the sales tax, other options include a tax on utility use.

One system that benefits from such a tax is the transit agency in Pullman, Washington. Pullman's utility tax is levied on the use of telephone, water and sewer, electric, gas, and garbage utilities. Utility rates themselves, a component outside the control of the transit agency, will determine the amount of revenue received. All other things being equal, if the rates do not rise at a level consistent with inflation, the revenue derived through the tax will become a smaller percentage of the overall transit budget over time. Additionally, because utility usage is generally consistent over time, utility tax revenue can tend to remain flat as a result.

Nationwide, an astonishing 70 percent of all proposed transit related ballot initiatives passed in 2004 (42 of 53).

The average transit initiative garnered 62 percent support from voters.

These adopted initiatives represent a taxpayer-endorsed investment of \$55 billion.

In a polarized election year, transit won in every region of the country and in communities large and small.

Initiatives were approved in 13 different states from West Virginia to California.

10 Keys to Electoral Success

1. Timing
2. Specific Plan, Simple Issues
3. Committed Champions
4. Clear Benefits
5. Early Public Involvement
6. Enlist the Community and Deal with Critics
7. Regional Balance
8. Governance & Accountability
9. Creative Solutions & Professional Campaigns
10. Adequate Funding

Of the 83 counties in the State of Michigan, 23 had countywide levies dedicated to transit in 2001. The amount of the levy ranges from 0.0995 mills in Iosco County to 0.7500 mills in Bay County. This information is less than complete however. Forty-three systems benefit from municipal levies that are not listed as "countywide" levies. Many of those millages are considerably larger than the countywide levies.

⁴² TCRP Report 31, http://gulliver.trb.org/publications/terp/terp_rpt_31-1-a.pdf

Research has shown that three considerations are vital when transit agencies implement local taxes. First, a successful ballot initiative for taxation requires transit agency outreach, a solid agency reputation for service, and realistic goals for future transit service. Larger systems have solicited political consultants to wage campaigns to connect to the public. Outreach should seek to connect the benefits of the transit system to people's lives. Ephemeral concepts like reductions in roadway congestion or improved air quality do not seem to connect to the electorate. Successful local taxation efforts have relied on local business support as a resource to raise money necessary for the promotion of the ballot measure. Next, the uses of the tax funds should not be limited. And finally, tax revenue will fluctuate based on factors external to the transit agency including economic conditions and social trends (e.g. population migration).⁴³

In Van Buren County, the filing deadlines for the 2006 general election are as follows:

Filing Deadlines: County and Local Proposals

By May 16, 2006	Petitions to place county and local questions on the August primary ballot filed with county and local clerks. (If governing law sets an earlier petition filing deadline, earlier deadline must be observed.) (168.646a)
By May 30, 2006	Ballot wording of county and local proposals to be presented at the August primary certified to county and local clerks; local clerks receiving ballot wording forward to county clerk within two days. (168.646a)
By August 15, 2006	Petitions to place county and local questions on the November general election ballot filed with county and local clerks. (If governing law sets an earlier petition filing deadline, earlier deadline must be observed.) (168.646a)
By August 29, 2006	Ballot wording of county and local proposals to be presented at the November general election certified to county and local clerks; local clerks receiving ballot wording forward to county clerk within two days. (168.646a)

Fare Box Revenue

Nationally, total fare box revenues constitute an average of approximately one-third of total operating funds. The majority of transit agencies have continued to increase their average fares but only one-half of the increases have outpaced inflation. Adding to the futility of fare increases is the fact that even with increases in fuel costs, automobile out-of-pocket costs

⁴³ TCRP Report 31, http://gulliver.trb.org/publications/terp/terp_rpt_31-1-a.pdf

have increased significantly below the rate of inflation. This paradox sometimes engenders an image problem for transit as the more expensive or inefficient mode.⁴⁴

Other Federal Funds

There are many other federal funds than the traditional sources that can be utilized for public transit. For example, CMAQ funds can be and are typically spent on purchasing buses, vans or transit passenger facilities. CMAQ funds can also be used for operating support for transit service. Less common, but still acceptable uses include: providing fare-free transit on days with unusually heavy air pollution; supporting transit marketing campaigns; and supporting ridesharing and guaranteed ride home programs. CMAQ funds can also support transit provided from attainment areas into non-attainment areas. In the Implementation Handbook and Toolkit accompanying this report, there is a listing of several federal funding sources and their application to public transit.

Sales of Services and Products

Several transit agencies utilize their current assets and expand services to generate additional income. A public transit agency should consult with an accountant on any tax consequences before selling any non-ride services. One of the most common sources of unrelated income is the sale of advertising space inside or outside the vehicles. Strict sign ordinances can restrict billboards or other signage to make it a less than practical option for advertisers. In this instance, buses can provide a desirable option for advertisers. Even where billboards are an option, buses can be the preferred choice as a rolling advertisement space. This decision must begin with the transit agency itself. Some communities have expressed a concern that advertisements on buses are unattractive. If the decision is made to advertise through buses, the agency must establish how they will implement their program. Be prepared with information on the number and types of passengers you transport, the areas where your vehicles usually travel, and the miles traveled per year.

A range of involvement for the transit agency is possible. Some agencies have implemented an advertisement program through a third party advertising vendor that receives commission

⁴⁴ TCRP Report 31, http://gulliver.trb.org/publications/terp/terp_rpt_31-1-a.pdf

on the advertising sales while others manage the program in-house. If the agency elects to pursue vendors, a request for proposals is the chosen route. Critical issues to be considered in the contractual relationship between agency and vendor include guaranteed minimum payment amounts, defining the percentage of the advertising revenues the vendor will receive, penalties for untimely replacement of outdated advertising, explicit statements about the responsibility for the maintenance of the advertising infrastructure and installation of advertisements.⁴⁵

One successful strategy a transit agency used was to sell sponsorships to businesses that are frequented by public transit riders. Another example of selling services is from FREDericksburg Regional Transit (FRED), in Fredericksburg, Va. They sell copies of the local daily newspaper, the *Free Lance-Star*, on its vehicles. *Free Lance-Star* officials approached FRED about placing newspapers at the fixed-route stops. Instead, FRED accepted the newspapers for sale on the vehicles. The newspaper company installed a holder for the newspapers on each vehicle and a supply of papers is delivered to the FRED office each morning. Passengers simply drop 50¢ into a can on the holder when they take a paper. FRED receives a commission on the papers sold and in return the newspaper runs a free advertisement for FRED.

The ongoing CPR, First Aid, and passenger sensitivity training provided to public transit staff may be a source of revenue. Other agencies may need the same training for their staff. The transit agency can become a vendor, providing classes for a fee. Transit agencies have started by selling an extra seat or two in a class that is already being held. Since the transit agency is already paying for the instructor and supplies, any revenue from selling the extra space is pure profit. To find agencies to purchase these services, start with current public transit users.

These are just a few examples from other systems, VBPT must evaluate its strengths and opportunities to decide which types of services and products would be the most profitable. The key is to be open to recognize opportunities and also to be proactive in pursuing opportunities for providing or trading services with both public and private entities.

⁴⁵ TCRP Report 31, http://gulliver.trb.org/publications/terp/terp_rpt_31-1-a.pdf

Leveraging Funds

Transit agencies are increasingly searching out opportunities to leverage federal funding by generating match funds from outside sources. The value from existing assets often allows access to funds through revolving loan programs and advanced construction authority. This type of funding is most often used to generate capital funds rather than operating funds. Historically, larger transit organizations have been the most common candidates for debt financing.⁴⁶ Like all debt financing, agencies must balance the need for capital funds with the danger of becoming over-leveraged.

Another non-traditional source of funding could be through a State Infrastructure Bank (SIB). The State of Michigan operates a State Infrastructure Bank through the MDOT Office of Transportation Economic Development and Enhancement. The State Infrastructure Bank loan program has a limited amount of money for low-interest loans for transportation improvements, credit enhancements (e.g. loan guarantees or letters of credit), interest rate subsidies, leases, and debt financing securities.

Increasing Coordination

Many small transit agencies have succeeded by developing technology systems that increase coordination of transportation services and benefit related social service providers, highway maintenance and operations, and private businesses. By partnering and coordinating transportation services, the parties share the cost and the benefits of new technology. Partnerships can also broaden the landscape for funding the purchase and implementation of new technologies.⁴⁷

Private Sector Partnerships

Partnerships with the private sector can take many forms. One of the most common is for the transit agency to contract directly with a particular client or organization to provide services.

⁴⁶ TCRP Report 31, http://gulliver.trb.org/publications/tcrp/tcrp_rpt_31-1-a.pdf

⁴⁷ Advanced Public Transportation Systems for Rural Areas: Where Do We Start? How Far Should We Go? Transit Cooperative Research Program, Transportation Research Board-National Research Council (National Academy Press, Washington, D.C., 2001) 19.

Similarly, whether through direct funding for specific services or partnerships with local businesses, transit agencies can go directly to user groups to find out what kind of service they want and negotiate for the funding assistance to provide it.

VBPT could also explore expanding the token program. Currently the South Haven Senior Center purchases tokens from VBPT to provide to their clients. For example, VBPT could market the tokens to retailers. The retailers could purchase tokens from VBPT and then provide their customers with tokens for a free ride home with a minimum purchase from their store.

Partnerships with the private sector can also take the form of arrangements with suppliers (contracts with fuel suppliers-the proposed biodiesel plant in Bangor would appear to be a possible partnership opportunity), investors (cross-border leases), or retailers (credit card fare payment using ticket issuing machines), or groups of users or entire communities (including impact fees, local sales or utility taxes, direct operating support, and the use of multi-ride passes).

Alternative Fuel Vehicles

A technological innovation that can reduce costs in the long run is alternative fuel. Alternative fuels and public transit is a natural match. Economies of scale begin to yield measurable results because of the size of transit fleets. A system-wide change can create significant cost and efficiency savings if the conditions are right for a particular transit agency. In addition, opportunities for centralized fueling and technicians on staff who can be trained consistently also make for strong logic in favor of considering alternatives. Arguments can also be made for a diversity of vehicle fuel types. Through diversity, agencies can better withstand fluctuations in fuel supply and price.⁴⁸ The primary fuel alternatives are also readily available through all major transit motor coach suppliers.

⁴⁸ Alternative Fuels in Public Transportation: A Match Made on the Road, Community Transportation, Spring/Summer 2005: Vol. 23 Number 3, p. 15

The initial cost of alternative fuel buses tends to be 20 to 40 percent more expensive than diesel buses. However, the increased capital costs are often offset by the savings derived from lower fuel costs, lower service costs, grants, credits, and rebates from groups who offer incentives.⁴⁹ Funding can come from a variety of public sources. Since Van Buren County has recently been reclassified as a non-attainment area for the Environmental Protection Agency's 8-hour Ozone conformity standard, the County is now eligible for Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funding through the U.S. Department of Transportation. Projects that reduce congestion and projects that improve air quality are supported through this funding. Public transit projects are often high priorities for CMAQ funding. Another funding source that supports alternative fuel applications is the U.S. Department of Energy's State Energy Program.

A critical partner who commonly enables a transit agency to successfully transition to alternative fuels is a local utility or fuel provider. The transit agency represents a potential catalyst in the community to enlarge the market for alternative fuels. Agencies are often able to install fueling stations that can be accessed by government departments and the public alike.

Fuel Types

Alternative fuels that have been utilized by other public transportation systems include, compressed natural gas, liquefied natural gas, liquefied petroleum gas, biodiesel, fuel ethanol blends, battery-electric power, and to a very limited extent - hydrogen. Nationwide, compressed natural gas (CNG) is the most common alternative fuel for buses. Estimates showed in 2000 that six percent of all buses ran on compressed natural gas. Since then more than 20 percent of all buses ordered have been CNG fueled.

Liquefied natural gas (LNG) is less common as an alternative fuel than CNG. On the one hand it tends to offer driving ranges that approach a typical diesel bus. But on the other hand, there are highly specialized needs for storage and delivery because the fuel must be cooled to -250°F. Proximity to a natural gas main line can make CNG or LNG either an

⁴⁹ Alternative Fuels (2005)

unlikely option or a much more realistic one. The transportation of the fuel can raise the cost considerably.⁵⁰

Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) or propane is the most widely used alternative fuel for light duty applications. Transit uses are typically in medium and small buses. Only 40 propane buses were active in 2001.⁵¹

Biodiesel is a diesel fuel that is the product of processing the oil from renewable, biological sources like soybeans. The fuel tends to burn cleaner in most categories than standard diesel fuels. Various mixes of biodiesel fuel are typically marketed, beginning with a two percent mix, graduating to a 20 percent mix (B20), and finally to a 100 percent pure (B100) form. Only the B100 form requires major engine modifications. B20 requires only minor engine modifications from standard diesel fuel.⁵² The minor changes required for existing fleets makes this an attractive alternative for some agencies. Van Buren County appears close to adding a biodiesel processing plant in Bangor. Biodiesel prices tend to vary considerably by region so the proximity to a major processor could make this a particularly attractive alternative for Van Buren Transit.

Fuel ethanol blends are similar to biodiesel in that the ethanol additive is derived from renewable, agricultural crops. The blends range from 10 percent ethanol to a blend that is 85 percent ethanol.

Battery electric power allows for buses that are quiet and produce no tailpipe emissions. They do have drawbacks that include limited range because of the limited storage capacity of battery technology, and agencies must add charging infrastructure. In 2002, 32 battery powered buses were in use nationwide.⁵³

⁵⁰ Alternative Fuels (2005)

⁵¹ Alternative Fuels (2005)

⁵² Alternative Fuels (2005)

⁵³ Alternative Fuels (2005)

Hydrogen has become one of the most talked-about alternative fuels recently. It is the enormous potential of the fuel that has produced the excitement. However, it is still rather early in the development of this fuel and very few test buses have reached the road.

Ultimately, the consideration of alternative fuel buses has to include the cost of the vehicles, the fueling infrastructure, and the maintenance facilities. Some issues of proximity and the potential partners make some choices more viable than others. The right partners can make a tremendous difference. Likely partners may include a bus manufacturer, fuel provider, local fire department, and training facilities. Finally, to be successful with alternative fuel buses, training is vital for operators and mechanics.

CREATING A VISION

A combination of methods was utilized to create a new vision for VBPT including an agency transportation survey and several workshops with the steering committee. These exercises with the steering committee involved stakeholders to identify the future needs and direction for VBPT.

Agency Transportation Survey Summary

Surveys were sent to 28 agencies in May 2005 requesting information regarding client transportation needs and current usage. Thirteen agencies responded of which six identified their organizations as private, non-profit; two as public; one as government; and four did not specify.

The results of the survey have been incorporated into various sections of the report and the complete survey results can be found in the Appendix.

The Agency Transportation Survey was sent to 28 agencies – 13 responded.

SWOT Workshop Summary

(Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

At the June 3, 2005 Steering Committee Workshop, members worked through an exercise designed to identify major strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to VBPT. There were many ideas submitted for each section and at the conclusion of the meeting the priorities were identified as follows:

Strengths include:

- potentially broad customer base
- committed board (willing to make changes)
- dedicated staff that is well trained
- equipment and buses in great condition
- friendly drivers who care about their riders

Weaknesses include:

- no strategic plan or vision
- lack of flexibility in hours and locations
- no county millage
- little if any public relations or self promotion
- no defined outreach program
- few connections with other providers
- an overall image of being a “handicap” bus service
- lack of communication to users about schedule and service
- lack of leadership or authority to make decisions
- lack of secure local funding from cities, townships and villages
- lack of coordinated transit system

Opportunities include:

- potential to capture untapped ridership
- increased efficiency to deal with cutbacks
- improve image
- develop a plan
- identify common locations and schedules
- secure stable local funding
- distribute information to untapped ridership opportunities (ie. people who have lost driver’s license)
- improvement in transit advertising in general

Threats include:

- funding that is not adequate or sustainable
- resistance to change
- decreased funding and decreased ridership from Mental Health clients
- competition with private providers
- lack of success in acquiring funding

Framework for Action Workshop Summary

At the June 10, 2005 steering committee workshop, SWMC led the group through a self-assessment exercise developed by United We Ride called *Framework for Action*. The exercise assessed five core elements that make up a fully coordinated transportation system for a community. Under each element, participants were asked diagnostic questions, and using a set of "decision helpers," were asked to assess how much effort is needed to become more fully coordinated (*needs to begin, needs significant action, needs action, and is done well*). The results are summarized below and comments recorded during the session are included.

Table 28

Framework for Action Workshop Summary		
Core Element of Coordination	Assigned Level of Effort Needed	Comments
Making things happen by working together	<i>needs to begin and needs significant action</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ need for a better definition of the governing body ▪ need to demonstrate efficiencies ▪ lack of inter-governmental and agency communication ▪ lack of vision
Taking stock of community needs and moving forward	<i>needs significant action</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ no consistent plan or reaction to crisis ▪ lack of awareness ▪ need for informal routes ▪ not much use of technology ▪ too many assumptions – no hard data or statistics on riders
Putting customers first	<i>needs to begin and needs action</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ lack of public education/marketing ▪ need to get feedback from users ▪ more flexibility for customers
Adapting funding for greater mobility	<i>needs to begin, needs significant action and is done well</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ need for good internal tracking ▪ need for automated billing ▪ lack of awareness of the transit system's financial health ▪ lack of data sharing across programs
Moving people efficiently	<i>needs to begin and needs action</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ dispatch system and facility are adequate and in a good location ▪ need for more flexibility in services, hard data, and coordination between support services

Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles were developed from assessing VBPT's needs. These four principles should be woven into all aspects of VBPT's future efforts to ensure success.

Develop Community Benefit

To provide the county with benefit in an overall, not just a transit focused manner. By enhancing the ability of people to make a number of choices for transportation and by providing alternative transportation for those who have no choice, the County's viability, diversity and livability is improved.

Connectivity

To create ease of service between people, places and modes, by assuring that reasonable ways to connect between different providers (of transit service) and different modes are not only available, but are easy to understand and easy to use.

Geographic Reach

To assure that the geographic locations and concerns of stakeholders, are thoughtfully integrated into planning and delivery of transit services to the greatest degree possible.

Customer Satisfaction

To make the customer the focal point of our processes, and to assure that the ease of use, flexibility of service, and satisfaction of the customer is top priority.

THE NEW VISION

Following the assessment portion of the study, the steering committee members developed the following new proposed mission statement, goals, and objectives for VBPT. The proposed mission statement defines VBPT's unique purpose and answers the questions, "who we are?" and "what do we do?"

Proposed Mission Statement

It is the mission of Van Buren Public Transit to meet the dynamic transit needs of Van Buren County with innovative, economical and flexible service.

Proposed Goals and Objectives

Seven goals were developed along with several objectives that need to be implemented to achieve the goals and mission statement.

GOAL #1: Develop a coordinated, centralized, countywide transportation system with regional connections.

- Expand LAC to become an interagency/user/private provider transportation focused group to build partnerships and communication
- Assess all resources (including funding, people, fleet) and gaps in transportation services being provided by all agencies and private providers.
- Explore and implement an inter-agency provided centralized dispatch.
- Increase efforts for a regional, inter-connected system.
- Encourage municipal/county future land use decisions to promote smart growth principles, which include the use of public transportation.

GOAL #2: Increase stakeholder satisfaction.

- Provide easily accessible information to riders/agencies.
- Identify, understand and respond to users/agencies transit needs.

GOAL #3: Improve leadership at all levels.

- Identify and improve processes that enhance board effectiveness.
- Develop and update operational and procedural policies.
- Maintain positive labor relations.
- Increase employee professional growth and leadership.

GOAL #4: Increase operational efficiency and productivity.

- Streamline processes.
- Create additional performance indicators to measure efficiency and productivity.
- Develop flex routes.

GOAL #5: Create awareness in the community of VBPT services, costs of services, funding sources and the need for public transit.

- Determine most effective public outreach methods/products to reach target audiences.
- Develop, improve and implement public outreach methods/products.
- Publish an annual report.
- Generate support for a millage to fund VBPT.

GOAL #6: Ensure fiscal stability.

- Develop a strategic financial plan.
- Identify and meet requirements to maintain state and federal funding.
- Institute an adequate and equitable fee structure for all services.
- Identify and secure private source funding whose customers are served by VBPT.
- Increase special services contracts.
- Identify and maximize all federal and state funding sources.
- Identify and implement cost saving initiatives.

GOAL #7: Provide safer service.

- Ensure safe buses.
- Ensure safety for customers
- Be prepared for countywide emergencies.

IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for VBPT are summarized into four main areas: 1) funding, 2) public outreach, 3) service, and 4) partnerships. These areas were defined by the results of the study's assessment process:

- **Secure Stable Funding.** Secure long-term funding from local, state, and federal sources to insure a financially stable transit system.
- **Public Education & Public Outreach.** Promote public transportation through building a better understanding of the benefits to the community, and building grassroots support for future funding discussions.
- **Providing Efficient Services/Maximize Service.** Focus on enhancing existing services by maximizing available resources, coordinating services to increase the benefit to the existing and potential passengers, and developing mobility management strategies through integration of transportation providers and facilities.
- **Develop, Improve, and Increase Partnerships.** Develop community partnerships with public sector and private sector leaders and stakeholders.

The accompanying Implementation Handbook and Toolkit is a step-by-step guide that can be used by VBPT to fulfill the objectives, goals, and mission statement proposed by the steering committee. This Handbook includes an implementation matrix that lists the goals, objectives, and recommended action steps. The matrix also lists the resources needed, the lead agency/person, the key partner(s), the priority level, the indicator(s) of success, and comments on the progress of each action step.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Performance measures are used by transit agencies for three main reasons: 1) because they are required by state and federal agencies (such as passengers per hour and mile, fare box recovery ratio and cost per passenger); 2) because it is useful to the agency to do so (to identify how well service is being provided, identify areas where improvements can be made, and measure the effects of actions/changes); and 3) because others outside the agency need to know what is going on (such as contracting agencies, county board of commissioners, local municipal officials and the general public).

There are also four different perspectives for measuring performance: 1) the customer, 2) the community, 3) the agency, and 4) the vehicle driver. In VBPT's case, the vehicle driver viewpoint is not much of a concern. This interest is more of an urban issue where buses impact automobile travel and vice versa. The following table describes the interests of the three perspectives relevant to VBPT.

Table 29

Perspective	Interest/Concern
Customer	Spatial availability: Where is service provided and can one get to it?
	Temporal availability: When is service provided?
	Information availability: Does the customer know how to use the service?
	Capacity availability: Is passenger space available for desired trip?
	Service delivery, travel time, safety and security and maintenance of vehicle.
Community	Provision of services to persons without a vehicle, including seniors and disabled.
	Job accessibility for economically disadvantaged.
	Amount of taxes directly or indirectly paid for service.
	Visual attractiveness of facilities and buses.
Transit Agency	Perception of waste or inefficiency of service and empty buses
	Operating efficiently and effectively
	Addressing customer and community concerns
	Addressing employee concerns

A successful performance measurement program is integrated with the transit agencies goals and objectives. Further performance measures should be realistic and attainable. An agency should not try to track more than 20 measures. Targets should be realistic, but set a little high to encourage employees to find ways to improve performance. Many performance

measures will be easier to calculate if technology is improved or implemented. Performance measures will allow the use of data versus using anecdotal observations to adjust service levels or to make other changes.

It must be recognized that VBPT is a rural transit operation and differs greatly from urban and suburban systems. Transit service in rural areas will, as a rule, be substantially more expensive on a per passenger basis largely due to lower densities and longer trip lengths. However, there is usually room for improvement in all systems in terms of efficiency and cost effectiveness. There are eight general categories of performance measures applicable to both ADA complementary paratransit service and general demand response service. The categories and their respective measures are listed in the table below.

Table 30

Performance Category	Measurement
Availability	Service coverage
	Span of service/frequency
	Service hours
	Revenue hours
	Service denials
Service Monitoring	On time performance
	Missed trips
	Complaint rate
	Percentage of missed phone calls/customer service response time
	Response time
	Service miles per revenue miles (amount of time vehicles travel empty)
Community	Welfare to Work accessibility
	Provision of information to the public
	Provision of services to human service agencies (number of persons served, number of agencies contracted with)
Travel Time	System speed
Safety and Security	Accident rate
Maintenance and Construction	Road calls
	Fleet cleaning
Economic	Ridership
	Cost efficiency (cost/hour)
	Cost effectiveness (cost/passenger)
	Productivity (passengers/hour)
	No shows and late cancellations
	Number of revenue sources
Employee Satisfaction	Employee productivity
	Employee relations
	Employee work days lost to injury

Several performance measures for VBPT are suggested in the Implementation Handbook and Toolkit. Specifically, the Implementation Matrix identifies indicators of success. These indicators are often specific performance measures. These suggested measures will assist VBPT in determining if the proposed objectives and goals are being met. There may be other performance measures that are appropriate for VBPT. A discussion about other useful measures should be undertaken by VBPT staff and the board.

CONCLUSION

The need for public transit in Van Buren County is evident. It will be a challenge for VBPT to provide flexible, cost effective, efficient and affordable service with decreasing state and federal funds and increased and changing needs of the elderly, disabled and low-income populations. VBPT has proposed a new vision in this study to meet these challenges. This new vision entails a proposed new mission statement and seven goals with specific objectives. Further the Implementation Handbook and Toolkit provides a step-by-step guide to move forward with implementing the new vision. Above all, the steering committee members determined that better coordination of transportation services to serve the transportation disadvantaged is the key to future success. Coordination of transportation services for human service agencies will better serve the agency clients' needs and provide the most cost effective and efficient transportation for their clients. VBPT has the opportunity to be a leader in this coordination effort.

APPENDIX

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Following is a list of invited steering committee members; those with an asterisk attended at least one meeting. The members are listed in no particular order.

- *Marc Del Mariani, Van Buren Human Services
- *Paul VandenBosch, South Haven City
- *Jennifer Carver, South Haven Area Senior Services
- *Arles Odette, South Haven Area Senior Services
- *Greta Williams, Van Buren County United Way
- *Lindsay Bay, Van Buren County United Way
- *Yemi Akinwale, Hartford City
- *Carole Adam, Lakeview Community Hospital
- *Nancy Murton, Tri-County Head Start
- *Debra Hess (John Clement), Van Buren County Mental Health Authority
- *Rick Bowser, Van Buren County Mental Health Authority
- *John Faul, Van Buren County
- *Larry Nielsen, Bangor City
- *Mike Tucker, Michigan Works!
- *Lynne Myers, Michigan Works!
- *Daryl Mosely, Van Buren Public Transit
- *Laurie Schlipp, Van Buren Public Transit
- *Dean Beckwith, VBPT Board
- *Harold Johnson, VBPT Board
- *Judy Lammers, Area Agency on Aging
- *Richard Freestone, VBPT Board
- *William Myrkle, VBPT Board
- *Tom Tanczos, Van Buren County Commission
- *John Tapper, Van Buren County Commission
- Sue McCauley, Van Buren County Human Services
- Todd Brugh, VBPT
- Leeon Arrans, Van Buren County ISD
- Myrna Stevenson, Lewis Cass ISD
- Patty Holden, Michigan Works!
- South Haven Community Hospital
- Brad Noeldner, Paw Paw Village
- Jeff Elliott, Van Buren/Cass Health Department
- David Rigozzi, LAC, Citizen Representative

GRANT DEFINITIONS

5311 Non urbanized Area Formula Transit Grant⁵⁴

Section 5311(a) would define an eligible recipient and subrecipient of other than urbanized area program funds.

Section 5311(b) would allow other than urbanized area formula grants to be used for capital transportation projects, or operating assistance projects, including the acquisition of transportation services, provided the projects are contained in a State program of public transportation service projects (including agreements with private providers of public transportation services).

This is a program of formula funding to states for the purpose of supporting public transportation in areas with populations of less than 50,000. Funds may be used to support administrative, capital or operation costs of local transportation providers.

JARC Job Access and Reverse Commute⁵⁵

The purpose of this grant program (TEA-21, Section 3037, authorized through FY2003) is to develop transportation services designed to transport welfare recipients and low income individuals to and from jobs and to develop transportation services for residents of urban centers and rural and suburban areas to suburban employment opportunities. Emphasis is placed on projects that use mass transportation services.

This program promotes transportation services in urban, suburban and rural areas that assist welfare recipients and low-income individuals in accessing employment opportunities. Discretionary grants are awarded to state and local units of government and private nonprofit entities, and may be used for transit operating and capital assistance.

RTAP Rural Transit Assistance Program⁵⁶

The RTAP program consists of federal funding for transit research, training and technical assistance. Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grantees, as well as any group or individual dedicated to mass transportation, are eligible for these funds. Application for training assistance is advertised annually and is welcome anytime throughout the year. Reimbursement is usually 100%, provided the successful completion of training, and after all required paperwork has been submitted (such as airplane ticket stubs, hotel receipts, registrations, etc.). RTAP funds can be used for in-state and out-of-state training opportunities.

⁵⁴ http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/reauthorization/ssa_title3.htm

⁵⁵ http://www.fta.dot.gov/grant_programs/specific_grant_programs/job_access_reverse_commute/

⁵⁶ <http://www.nationalrtap.org/>

AGENCY TRANSPORTATION SURVEY

Compilation of Results

May/June 2005

Agency Name:

Abbreviation or Acronym:

Contact Person:

Mailing Address:

Street Address (if different):

Date Survey Completed:

Title:

Telephone:

Fax Machine:

Surveys were received from the following:

1. Tri-County Head Start	Paw Paw
2. Michigan Works – Work First	Cassopolis
3. South Haven Area Senior Services	South Haven
4. The Salvation Army	Benton Harbor
5. Van Buren County United Way	Paw Paw
6. Michigan Rehab Services	Kalamazoo
7. Van Buren United Civic Organization	Covert
8. We Care in the Name of Christ	South Haven
9. Disability Resource Center	Kalamazoo
10. Area Agency on Aging	St. Joseph
11. Van Buren Department of Human Services	Hartford
12. Lakeview Community Hospital	Paw Paw
13. Lakeview Behavioral Health at Lakeview Community Hospital	Paw Paw

A. AGENCY INFORMATION

This section requests information about your organization and the type of services provided to your clients.

1. Which of the following best describes your agency?

6 Private, non-profit 0 Private, for profit 2 Public 1 Other (**Government**)

2. Which services does your agency provide? (please check all that apply):

<u>0</u>	Adult Day Care	<u>2</u>	Job Placement	<u>1</u>	Senior Center
<u>2</u>	Child Day Care	<u>2</u>	Medicaid	<u>1</u>	Sheltered Employment
<u>1</u>	Chore Services	<u>1</u>	Medical/Dental	<u>2</u>	Supported Employment
<u>1</u>	Congregate Nutrition	<u>1</u>	Mental Health	<u>4</u>	Transportation
<u>2</u>	Counseling	<u>3</u>	Recreational/Social	<u>6</u>	Volunteer Opportunities
<u>4</u>	Education/Training	<u>3</u>	Rehabilitation	<u>2</u>	Welfare/Food Stamps
<u>2</u>	Head Start	<u>1</u>	Religious	*	*Other: (See below)
<u>0</u>	Home Delivered Meals	<u>2</u>	Residential Care		
*Other: <u>Inpatient Psychiatric Services; Carewatch; Information and Assistance; Funding for community needs and problem solving/service referral; Vocational Counseling; Community Distribution site; food, personal care items, medical loan closet, clothing, heat, holiday help, budget program, furniture, etc; Independent Living, Driver's Training; Senior in-home care management, Senior information referral; Hospital;</u>					

*Please attach a brochure or description of services you provide to your clients.

3. Does your agency have eligibility requirements for clients? 9 Yes 1 No

If YES, please check all that apply:

- 6 Age – please specify: **(16+; 60+; Ages 3-5; 16-65; 55+)**
- 5 Disability – please specify: **(Developmental Disability and/or Serious and Persistent Mental Illness; Able to work)**
- 5 Income – please specify: **(Be below federal poverty level)**
- 3 Other – please specify: **(Verified need; geographic location; acute mental health problems)**

4. What geographic area do you serve?

The entire county of: 7 Van Buren 2 Cass 3 Berrien

The entire city of: **South Haven, Bangor, Paw Paw, Lawton, Mattawan, Decatur, Marcellus, Gobles**

Other – please specify: **Townships of Arlington, Bangor, Casco, Columbia, South Haven, Geneva; Covert, Grand Junction, Lacota, Glenn,;**

5. How many clients (unduplicated) does your agency serve in a year?: **1,200; 300+; 7,000+; 25,000; 4,000; 1,500; 3,500;**

6. What are your agency program hours? 5 8-5; 2 9-5; 2 24/7; 1 9:30-12:30; 1 Varies

What days per week? 2 M-F; 1 M-Th

Do you provide services year round? 9 Yes 1 No

If NO, what months? **September-May**

7. Do you provide services to clients at more than one location? 7 Yes 2 No.

If YES, please list the towns (other than your mailing address) in which your other sites are located: **Bangor, South Haven, Hartford, Lawrence; Paw Paw; Lawton, Bloomingdale, Decatur, Benton Harbor, Cassopolis, Niles, Stevensville, Dowagiac, Townships of Casco, Geneva, Columbia, Arlington**

B. OVERVIEW OF CLIENT TRANSPORTATION NEEDS AND AVAILABLE SERVICES

This section examines the variety of ways clients access your agency’s programs and the adequacy of available services.

8. How do clients get to your center/site? (please check all that apply):

<u>8</u>	Drive themselves	<u>9</u>	Ride with family or friends	<u>3</u>	Agency operates vehicles
<u>4</u>	Volunteers bring them	<u>3</u>	Staff brings them	<u>1</u>	Taxi
<u>5</u>	Carpool with other clients	<u>4</u>	Public transportation system	<u>1</u>	Consolidated agency transportation system
<u>1</u>	Live in group home/transported in group home’s vehicle	<u>1</u>	Another agency transports them	<u>1</u>	Other: Parents/Guardians

9. How many of your clients are unable to drive themselves or do not have a car available and thus are dependent upon some sort of transportation assistance?

At least 200; Occasionally use Dial-A-Ride; 35-45% of all; Many; 60%; 20%; 65%; 250; Vast majority

Is the transportation needed generally available to these clients to the extent that they can have full access to the services your agency provides? 6 Yes 2 No

10. How many of your clients must use a wheelchair and need a specially equipped vehicle (such as a lift-equipped van with wheelchair tie-downs)?

Approximately 20; Most; Many; 235; 25%; Very few; 35; 5%; 0; None right now.

Are you able to meet the agency-related transportation needs of your wheelchair-using clients? 4 Yes 2 No

If NO, please indicate to what extent their needs are met:

Our transportation is not handicap accessible; Need more options for Dialysis; Volunteers not authorized to handle wheelchair-bound clients; Scheduling problems with VBEMS and other ambulance services, cost is prohibitive.

11. How many of your clients need some other specialized transportation assistance or equipment (such as an escort or infant car seats)?

None at present; Approximately 80% ride in car seats; 15%; Many

Please describe these needs in detail:

Occasionally there has been a need for an escort; Need assistance getting in and out of vehicles, carrying groceries; Many requests for infant car seats; Escorts; Most clients need some level of supervision, have significant dementia.

12. To what activities do you provide, purchase, or reimburse for client transportation? (Please check all that apply):

<u>1</u>	Adult Day Care	<u>3</u>	Job Placement	<u>1</u>	Senior Center
<u>0</u>	Child Day Care	<u>4</u>	Medical/Dental	<u>1</u>	Sheltered Employment
<u>1</u>	Congregate Nutrition	<u>3</u>	Mental Health	<u>1</u>	Social Services
<u>2</u>	Counseling	<u>1</u>	Recreational/Social	<u>2</u>	Supported Employment
<u>2</u>	Education/Training	<u>2</u>	Rehabilitation	<u>1</u>	Volunteer Opportunities
<u>1</u>	Head Start	<u>0</u>	Religious	<u>0</u>	Other

If your agency provides, purchases, or reimburses for client transportation, please continue on to the next page. If you provide no transportation services or assistance, please turn to page 9 FUTURE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

C. AGENCY-OPERATED TRANSPORTATION

If your agency operates its own vehicles to transport clients, please complete this section. If you do not operate vehicles to transport clients, please skip to Section D (page 5).

13. What types of transportation services do you provide? (Please check all that apply):

1 Demand-responsive service: origins, destinations, and schedules vary according to service request; no specific routes or schedules

1 Subscription service: routes and schedules are tailored to regular riders and are adjusted as riders leave or new riders join the route.

0 Route or Point Deviation service: schedule of major stops is fixed; route varies according to specific requests for service.

1 Fixed-route transit: routes, stops, and schedules do not vary; traditional bus service. **(Varies year to year based on enrollment)**

1 “Charter”-type service: group transportation for special events. **(We purchase this regularly for Senior Trips)**

0 Other – please describe:

14. With whom do clients schedule demand-responsive or subscription transportation services?

<u>0</u>	Dispatcher/Scheduler	<u>0</u>	Driver	<u>1</u>	Caseworker
<u>1</u>	Manager	<u>1</u>	Secretary Receptionist	<u>1</u>	Other: All Staff

15. How far in advance must clients request demand-responsive service?

Depends on service, usually at least 24 hours in advance; Prefer 24 hour or early a.m. day of service

16. How does the dispatcher/manager contact drivers?

<u>1</u>	Trip sheets/ written directions	<u>0</u>	Pager and call-in	<u>0</u>	Mobile radio
<u>1</u>	Car phone	<u>2</u>	Other: Cell phone; Weekly schedules		

17. Who operates the vehicles? (please check all that apply):

<u>X</u>	Full-time drivers	<u>X</u>	Part-time drivers	<u>XX</u>	Volunteer
<u>17</u>	How many?	<u>2</u>	How many?	<u>3,1</u>	How many?
<u>X</u>	Full or part-time staff with other primary job functions				
<u>75</u>	How many?				
	What is their primary job function? Case Manager, Job Coach, Personal Assistant				

18. Do your drivers receive any sort of formalized driver training program?: 2 Yes 1 No

If YES, please describe (include course name, who provides training, length of training, certification, etc.):

Approximately 1 hour as part of overall agency training; State of Michigan Pupil Transportation Training, Continuing Ed – 3 days, Pre-service – 1 day, In-service – 4 days.

19. Please list all vehicles you now operate. For each, specify vehicle ID number, current mileage, miles driven during the last 12 months, and your assessment of the vehicle's current condition:

A. VB Community Mental Health - We have at present 26 vehicles. They range in model year from 1994 to 2001, and some are in poor condition. 9 are full-size vans, 12 are mini-vans, 4 are cars and 1 is a large cargo truck. Vehicles are driven on average about 12,000 miles each. B. Tri-County Head Start - 17 buses from 1996-2005, the newer the better regarding condition. Mileage varies depending on

community. C. South Haven Area Senior Services - Minivan near 100,000 miles, 22,445 miles during last 12 months, current condition is good.

20. Please indicate how each of these vehicles is used. Include information on route origins and destinations, trip purpose, one-way trip lengths, usual numbers of riders per day, and hours per day operated.

Vehicles are used for a variety of purposes including transporting clients to outside medical appointments, agency medical appointments, employment, therapeutic social and recreational activities and community integration activities. The average one-way trip length is about 15 miles. School bus routes, trips vary per community as do number of riders. Origin Warren Senior Center, average 15-20 riders per day, hours of operation 8-4 M-F, Transportation service area is the city of South Haven and the townships of South Haven, Geneva, and Casco.

21. Where are your agency’s vehicles maintained?

- 3 At a private garage, repair shop, or dealership
- 0 By a governmental agency – please specify:
- 1 In-house – please describe: **For regular maintenance, etc.**

22. If you provide demand-responsive service, what are the geographic limits of this service?
Usually Van Buren County but may extend into Berrien or Kalamazoo. City of South Haven, Townships of Geneva, South Haven, and Casco.

What are the hours of availability of this service?

- 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.**
- 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

Days per week:

- Usually 5**
- Mon-Fri**

23. How many **one way** passenger trips did your agency provide during the past fiscal year?

One-way trips	Estimate Yes?	Estimate No?
<u>19,000</u>	<u>X</u>	
<u>2,049</u>		<u>X</u>

Note: a one way passenger trip means each time a person boards and then alights from a vehicle is counted as one trip. Return trips are counted as a second trip.

24. How many **vehicle miles** of service did your agency provide during the past fiscal year?

Vehicle miles	Estimate Yes?	Estimate No?
<u>285,000</u>		<u>X</u>
<u>18,187</u>		<u>X</u>

25. How many vehicle hours of service did your agency provide during the past fiscal year?

Vehicle hours	Estimate Yes?	Estimate No?
<u>5,700</u>	<u>X</u>	
<u>2,000</u>	<u>X</u>	

26. Does your agency charge fares or request contributions for transportation? 1 Yes 3 No
If YES, which?

0 Fare – please specify the amount:

1 Contributions – what is the suggested contribution? \$1.00 one-way.

27. Do you place restrictions on who is eligible to use your transportation services?
2 Yes 1 No

If YES, please explain:

Must be open clients of agency. The only exception is monthly Saturday shopping trips that are open to family, friends, and other community members. Must be physically able to get in and out of vehicle and own home with minimal assistance; Head Start enrolled children only and parent volunteer.

28. Do you currently transport clients of any other agencies or organizations? 1 Yes 2 No

If YES, please provide the number of one-way passenger trips you provided in the last fiscal year, the billing rate and basis, and the total charge for the past fiscal year for each agency or organization: **Just for service; Per need basis;**

Organization Name, Contact Person, Telephone Number	One-Way Passenger Trips	Unit Charge (\$ per mile, \$ per pass.)	Total Charge for the Past Fiscal Year
<u>No tables were filled out by respondents.</u>			

D. REIMBURSEMENT OF STAFF/VOLUNTEERS

29. Does your agency reimburse staff or volunteers to transport clients using personal vehicles?

3 Staff 5 Volunteers 2 Neither – please go to Section E

30. . What is your reimbursement rate? **\$.32 per mile; .375; .345;**

31. How many miles of client transportation did you reimburse during the past fiscal year?
Approximately 350,000

32. What was the total amount spent on staff/volunteer reimbursement for client transportation during the past fiscal year? **\$112,000; approximately \$20,000;**

33. On the average, how many staff hours per week are spent transporting clients in personal vehicles? **175;**

34. How many one-way passenger trips were provided in this manner during the past fiscal year? (Please estimate if necessary): **14,000; 150-200 per month;**

E. REIMBURSEMENT OF CLIENTS

35. Does your agency reimburse clients for providing their own transportation? **2** Yes **4** No
If NO, please go to Section F.

36. What is your client reimbursement rate? **\$.12 per mile; .10 per mile**

37. How many miles of self-provided transportation did you reimburse in the last fiscal year?
Approximately 67,692

38. What was the total amount spent on client reimbursement during the past fiscal year?
\$22,000

F. PURCHASE OF SERVICE FROM ANOTHER ORGANIZATION

39. Does your agency purchase client transportation from another organization? **3** Yes **2** No

If YES, please complete the table below. If NO, please go to Section G.

Name of Organization from which Service is Purchased	Type of Organization (taxi, transit authority, agency, etc.)	Contact Person & Phone Number	Description of Service Purchased	Unit Cost (per mile, hour, or trip?)	Total Cost During Past Fiscal Year	Total One-Way trips During past Fiscal Year
VAN BUREN COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH AUTHORITY						
<u>Van Buren Public Transit</u>	<u>Public entity</u>	<u>Darryl Mosely 269 427 7377</u>	<u>Per ride contract</u>	<u>Avg. \$5.17 per trip</u>	<u>\$129,443</u>	<u>25,039</u>
MICHIGAN WORKS – WORK FIRST PROGRAM						
<u>Mr. G's</u>	<u>Taxi</u>	<u>Holly</u>	<u>Demand-responsive</u>		<u>\$64,000</u>	<u>n/a</u>
<u>Advance Cab</u>	<u>Taxi</u>		<u>Demand-responsive</u>		<u>\$40,000</u>	<u>n/a</u>
<u>Bumble Bee</u>	<u>Taxi</u>	<u>Dale</u>	<u>Demand-responsive</u>		<u>n/a</u>	<u>n/a</u>
WE CARE IN THE NAME OF CHRIST						
<u>Van</u>	<u>Bus</u>		<u>Demand-</u>	<u>Varies</u>		

Name of Organization from which Service is Purchased	Type of Organization (taxi, transit authority, agency, etc.)	Contact Person & Phone Number	Description of Service Purchased	Unit Cost (per mile, hour, or trip?)	Total Cost During Past Fiscal Year	Total One-Way trips During past Fiscal Year
<u>Buren Public Transit</u>			<u>responsive</u>			
<u>Red's Taxi</u>	<u>Taxi</u>		<u>Demand-responsive</u>	<u>?</u>		<u>Estimate 5</u>
AREA AGENCY ON AGING						
<u>VB Care-A-Van</u>	<u>Non-Profit</u>	<u>Heather 468-3186</u>	<u>VB Medical Appointments</u>	<u>\$40 per unit</u>	<u>\$10,000 (05)</u>	<u>250 units</u>
<u>Region Care-A-Van</u>	<u>Non-Profit</u>	<u>468-3186</u>	<u>Door to door per client</u>	<u>n/a</u>	<u>\$86,685 (04)</u>	
<u>Region Medic Choice</u>	<u>Private Trans.</u>	<u>684-0840</u>	<u>Door to door per client</u>	<u>n/a</u>	<u>\$40,167 (04)</u>	
<u>VBEMS</u>	<u>Amb. Service</u>	<u>657-2996</u>	<u>Door to door per client</u>	<u>n/a</u>	<u>\$825 (04)</u>	
<u>Wil Care Nursing</u>	<u>In-Home Care</u>	<u>800-766-5171</u>	<u>Door to door per client</u>	<u>n/a</u>	<u>\$5,686 (04)</u>	

40. What was the total amount spent on purchase of transportation services from other operators during the past fiscal year?: **\$138,337; We have funds in collaboration with Work First; \$140,000+ for three-county area; \$1,280 for VB tokens**

G. COSTS TO PROVIDE CLIENT TRANSPORTATION

This section identifies the costs involved in transporting clients or reimbursing for their transportation.

41. What is your fiscal year? **October 1 To September 30; 2/1-1/31; Oct-Sep; 7/1-6/30**
For which year is the data on this survey reported? Please specify: **2 answered 2003-2004**

42. What were your agency's administrative outlays and expenditures during the past fiscal year for transporting clients? Please apportion salaries and other expenses attributable to transportation. For example, if your bookkeeper spends one day per week on transportation tasks, list 20 percent of his/her salary and fringe.

<u>Administrative and Indirect Expenses</u>	<u>Dollar Cost</u>
1. Director's salaries	<u>N/A</u>
2. Director's fringe benefits	<u>N/A</u>
3. Secretarial salaries	<u>N/A</u>

4. Secretarial fringe benefits	<u>N/A</u>
5. Bookkeeper's salary	<u>N/A</u>
6. Bookkeeper's fringe	<u>N/A</u>
7. Office supplies, materials, rent, telephone, & utilities	
8. Administrative travel	
9. Non-vehicle casualty and liability costs	
10. Other – please specify:	\$67,618 (15% of #43)
Administrative Expenses Total	<u>\$67,618; \$26,300; \$30,000;</u> <u>\$10,630; \$30,000</u>

43. What were your operating expenditures for transporting clients in the past fiscal year? If full-time staff function as drivers part-time, please apportion their salaries accordingly and list under drivers' salaries.

Operating Expenses	Dollar Cost
1. Drivers' salaries	<u>\$105,000; \$12,839</u>
2. Drivers' fringe benefits	<u>\$19,950</u>
3. Dispatchers' salaries	
4. Dispatcher's fringe benefits	
5. Fuel and oil	<u>\$16,500; \$2,283</u>
6. Maintenance and repairs	<u>\$39,000; \$2,685</u>
7. Tires, parts, materials and supplies	
8. Titles, fees, and licenses	
9. Taxes	
10. Vehicle and equipment leases and rentals	
11. Vehicle insurance	<u>\$1,199</u>
12. Staff and volunteer mileage reimbursements	<u>\$112,000</u>
13. Client reimbursement	
14. Purchased transportation	<u>\$138,337; \$1,280</u>
15. Other - <u>Driver checks</u>	<u>\$48</u>
Operating Expenses Total	<u>\$450,787; \$20,334</u>

44. What was the total of your administrative (question 42) and operating (question 43) expenses for the past fiscal year? **\$518,405; \$30,964;**

45. What are the funding sources for the expenses identified in 42 and 43? Please identify the major sources of funds for your agency's transportation services and the amount contributed by each in the past fiscal year. If transportation is funded out of various agency programs, please list those programs and estimate the approximate amount attributable to client transportation in each.

<u>Assistance Program</u>		<u>Amount of Funding Used for Client Transportation (excluding capital purchases)</u>
<u>Federal/State:</u>	Adult Developmental Activities Program	
	Community Services Block Grant	
	Day Care	
	Head Start	
	Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA)	
	Mental Health/Mental Retardation	
	Section 5310	
	Section 5311	
	TANF	\$104,000
	Title III B	\$10,000;
	Title XIX (Medicaid)	\$450,000; \$146,000
	Title XX (Social Services Block Grant)	
	Vocational Rehabilitation	\$10,000
	Smart Start	
	JOBS	
	Other – please specify :	
	Other – please specify: State General Fund	\$50,000
	Other – please specify:	
	Total Federal/State Funds:	\$510,000
<u>Local:</u>	City/Town – please specify:	\$30,589
	County	
	Another County – please specify:	
	Client Fees	
	Contracted Service – please specify each major contract:	
	Donations/Contributions	\$375
	Fares	
	United Way	
	Workshop Revenue	
	Other – please specify:	
	Other – please specify:	
	Total Local Funds	\$104,000; \$30,964

46. Total Funding for Client Transportation (should be equal to or greater than the amount in question 44): \$518,405; \$30,964

H. FUTURE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

47. Are you having any problems with your current method of getting clients to your site or service?

10 Yes 3 No If YES, please explain:

- Public Transit not flexible in timing and scheduling
- Poorly trained drivers at Public Transit, discussions about clients with other clients, inappropriate discussions about religion and sex by drivers
- FIA not providing medical transportation, CMH must pick up slack
- CMH fleet aging with limited resources to replace vehicles
- Rising fuel costs an issue for CMH employees driving own vehicles
- Geographic distances in county present challenges
- Need alternatives for transporting frail clients to medical appointments and dialysis (door to door wheelchair)
- We use only volunteers, if there are not enough it is a problem. As gas prices increase, we lose volunteers
- Transportation doesn't run near homes on a regular basis
- No drivers or transportation for veterans to doctor
- Care-A-Van is overbooked
- State/federal funds have been eliminated. We are using 100% of program funds to pay for transportation for all clients that need it. If we lose more funds in the future the program may not be able to transport/help them
- We are unable to service our entire service area and cannot transport wheelchair clients or clients who are unable to get in or out of the minivan. There are many medical needs we cannot accommodate as well, most of our transportation is to and from the senior center for meals and services

48. Do you feel that additional transportation services, beyond those now available, are needed in order for your clients to have full access to the services your agency provides?

8 Yes 2 No If YES, please describe:

- Transportation options would be great
- No way to get back and forth to work
- Clients can't get to our office or our pantries - or to Hartford or Allegan to apply for help. Even the public transit bus is too expensive for some of them
- No cross-county service
- Could shift more CMH provided service to Public Transit, Public Transit could offer evening/weekend service
- VB County has only two providers that are cost effective. Providers from other counties/areas are too expensive. We are only able to transport a set number of

clients based on the availability of the provider's cars. If they lose cars, go out of business, then some clients will be without transportation.

49. Do you have a waiting list for clients because these individuals have no way to get to your services?

1 Yes 7 No. If YES, how many?

Exact number unknown, but it is difficult for clients in remote areas to access community activities and employment opportunities

50. Are there geographic areas, in or out of the County, in which you would like to see more client transportation services operated?

6 Yes 1 No. If YES, which areas/communities?

- **Bangor, Hartford, Lawrence, Gobles, Decatur/Sister Lakes, Kalamazoo, Benton Harbor, Holland, Battle Creek, Grand Rapids,**
- **In and out of Van Buren County (Battle Creek VA Hospital and Ann Arbor)**
- **Kalamazoo and Benton Harbor for Medical Appointments**
- **Bangor, Lawrence, Covert**
- **Bangor, Hartford, Lawrence, Gobles, Decatur/Sister Lakes, Kalamazoo, Benton Harbor, Holland, Battle Creek, Grand Rapids**
- **More services to Kalamazoo area, Kalamazoo has more job opportunities**
- **Casco, Columbia, Arlington, Bangor, and Covert Townships**

51. Are there activities or destinations which need more transportation services?

7 Yes 1 No. If YES, what are they and where are they located?

- **Employment, Community Integration, Medical Appointments, Court Appointments, Social Services and Social Security, Community Colleges, and Adult Education Programs**
- **Transporting VB clients to dialysis units in St. Joseph or Kalamazoo**
- **Clients need shopping, laundry, etc.**
- **Doctor visits, especially veterans**
- **Some clients are employed as home health providers. They have to make multiple stops during the day. We are not able to provide them transportation because that would tie up one car all day and not be cost effective**
- **Some days we have activities and services at Columbia and Arlington Township Halls and at Simpson Church in Bangor.**

52. What plans do you have during the next five years to expand (or reduce) agency programs or services? What impacts will these changes have on your client transportation needs?

- **The trend has been for demand to increase while funding has decreased. More people with disabilities are seeking community access and inclusion. Aging baby boomers will have increasing mobility issues over time. Also, the main source of growth in Van Buren County has been residential growth. The number of jobs available has not kept up with population increases, and this has made fewer local jobs available for people with disabilities and other mobility issues**

- Hoping to not reduce programs due to state funding reductions
- May decrease bus service and require parent transportation in some areas due to extreme cost to agency
- No specific plans to expand. Michigan Works may close the SH site and relocate those programs to a central location. This will increase the number of clients and the distance they travel which will in turn increase the funds used to get them to the new center
- Our board is also analyzing the future of transportation provided by SHASS as the mini-van continues to age, SHASS will need to decide if they will purchase another vehicle or look at alternative methods.

53. Is there duplication of transportation services in your service area?

2 Yes 8 No If YES, please describe the agencies involved, and the areas and times when duplication exists.

- CMH workers are providing DHS/FIA medical transportation
- VB lacks transportation services, that is why we use volunteers
- There are multiple providers that can perform the same service
- There is a significant amount of transportation needs that current providers do not meet.

54. Would you like to see more coordination of client transportation among the various agencies in the county?

7 Yes 2 Not sure If YES, please indicate the agencies which you would like to see involved.

- Van Buren CMH, Department of Human Services (formerly FIA), Van Buren Health Department, Van Buren Public Transit, Van Buren Intermediate School District, Local School Districts, Area Agency on Aging, Senior Centers, Care-A-Van, Van Buren Emergency Medical Services (VBEMS), Hospitals/Medical Facilities, MSU Extension, Community Action Agency
- Senior centers/VB Public Transit/DHS/CMH/VA
- Our volunteers can only service clients of DHS. If our clients are not eligible for services through DHS, our volunteers cannot transport them
- Van Buren Transit with VBISD
- All agencies, lack of transportation is a huge barrier to helping our clients find and keep a job. I am certain that all agencies need assistance in this area
- VB Transit, Area Agency on Aging, SH Area Senior Service, DHS, taxi companies, We Care, Covert Senior Center, VB County Commission, CAA, Coloma Transportation Service

55. What is the most important thing that could be done to improve transportation services for your clients?

- Increased service availability-evenings and weekends, Increased communication and coordination between providers, Decreased cost to riders, Easier to access by riders-more user-friendly

- More funding to create more competition and better services – need a dependable door to door wheelchair service in VB
- Make public transportation more available and more affordable
- Public transit available more hours and less expense, not sure if feasible in far-flung rural area. Regular run to Hartford and Allegan (FIA) and Lawrence (CAA) might be helpful
- Keep prices down
- State/county run transportation. The county should purchase vehicles to transport clients to and from work/school/training/WF. It would be more cost effective and easier to oversee
- Provide transportation in and out of county for medical care; be available in all areas of county, provide transportation to meals and events at senior center locations, less waiting periods for pick ups, increased demand-response, door to door service, longer hours to include evenings and weekends

56. What, if any, are the major obstacles or concerns you think should be addressed in attempting to improve client transportation services?

- Lack of innovation and coordination between organizations that provide transportation-need to ‘think outside the box, Increasing flexibility in hours of service, crossing county lines, and accessibility
- Door to door vs. Curb to curb union restrictions, Dialysis units don’t bill frequently enough to prevent cash flow issues
- People need public transportation available after 4 or 5 p.m., Certainly need it on Saturdays, If used for getting to work, needs to start before 8:00 a.m.
- Keep prices down
- Funding, lack of funds is always an issue when providing transportation. As gas prices increase so will the provider’s charges to the programs.
- Lack of coordination and communication, cost to low income clients, current image of VB Transit.

57. If you are receiving funds from either Smart Start of JOBS, please indicate how the funds are being utilized: 6 N/A or No