

# ON THE MOVE



2009 ANNUAL REPORT



## Table of Contents

2	Letter from the Leadership
3	Mission & Vision Statement
4	Rearview Mirror
8	Ridership
10	MAX Metrics
11	Moving Forward

## LETTER FROM THE LEADERSHIP

The Macatawa Area Express Transportation Authority is pleased to present its 2009 Annual Report. We continued to make system improvements this year by extending less productive routes into new neighborhoods to serve more residents, and adding a deviated fixed Route 8 to Zeeland. The Zeeland route is noteworthy because it connects all three communities served by MAX, provides Zeeland residents with regularly scheduled service, and still allows us to accommodate ADA-eligible passengers.

Implementing a “half mile” rule also assisted us in shifting the majority of able-bodied passengers from demand response to fixed routes. For the first time in our nine-year history of operating fixed routes, 70 percent of passengers now use the fixed routes with only 30 percent relying on demand response service.

Although double-digit increases in ridership leveled off since our major expansion in 2008, MAX still experienced a healthy 7.75 percent increase over the previous year. We provided more than 316,000 rides. Of those, 2,828 were rides provided through our new “Night Owl” demand response service that operates until midnight.

We also introduced a new “Summer Fun Pass” designed to encourage area youth and teens to ride the bus to their favorite destinations during the summer and to promote local establishments. The promotion received enthusiastic support from the community, and we plan to offer this special pass again next summer.

Investing in public transit clearly is an investment in our residents. This became evident from the results of our 2009 passenger survey, which revealed an astounding 86 percent of passengers are “captive,” riding MAX out of necessity. This means they either don’t drive or don’t have a car, so they rely on us to get to work, school, medical visits and shopping centers.

While we are making progress, we realize that our current services are inadequate for meeting the needs of many residents. We hear loud and clear that residents want and need expanded evening service, Sunday hours, and 30-minute headways for greater convenience. Additional services, however, would require a higher transit millage, which the Board cannot support considering the current economic climate and the financial hardships that many families face.

Like many other transit systems, our revenues are declining from lower property values and state assistance, and our costs increasing from higher fuel and oil prices. While other transit systems are being forced to cut services and hike fixed route fares, MAX has been able to sustain service and hold our fixed rate fares through careful fiscal management.

Faced with these challenges, the Board this year opted to bring all operations in house and discontinue using contracted services when our contract with the current provider expires in June 2010. They have served us well, but managing operations with Authority staff will save an estimated \$422,000 over five years, create a more cohesive workforce, and allow us to better control productivity and service.

Other improvements scheduled for 2010, funded by grants and economic stimulus money, include replacing retired vehicles with four new low floor buses, and implementing a state-of-the-art Intelligent Technology System. This paperless communication system will support increased productivity, efficiency, safety and a higher level of customer service.

As always, we are grateful for the community’s overwhelming support of MAX and our loyal passengers whom it is our pleasure to serve. Our residents need public transit now more than ever, and we will continue to do what we can -- with what voters have given us -- to provide the very best service possible.

MAX is on the move! We hope that you’ll join us on our exciting journey.

**Polly Diehl**, Authority Board Chairperson

**Linda LeFebre**, Director



# ON THE MOVE

## Authority Board Members

- Polly Diehl**, Chairperson  
City of Holland
- Joe Baumann**, Member  
Holland Charter Township
- Steve Bulthuis**, Member  
Macatawa Area Coordinating Council
- Al Dannenberg**, Ex-officio member  
City of Zeeland
- Michael DeVries**, Member  
City of Holland
- Dave Fackler**, Member  
Holland Charter Township
- Russ TeSlaa**, Vice Chairperson  
Holland Charter Township
- Robert VandeVusse**, Secretary/Treasurer  
City of Holland

## MISSION STATEMENT

To create a **sustainable transportation system** to be used by **all residents of the Macatawa area** with **linkages** to other transit systems.

# 316,578 RIDES

## Local Advisory Council

- Tony Harmer**, Council Chair  
City of Holland
- Ron Martin**, Vice Council Chair  
City of Holland
- Leigh Ann Bartels**, Member  
City of Holland
- Eric Heiberg**, Member  
Holland Charter Township
- Elizabeth Ferry**, Member  
Holland Township
- Lisa Scherer**, Member  
City of Holland
- Gert Vos**, Member  
City of Zeeland

## VISION STATEMENT

**Enhanced** mobility and community **access** that offer **efficient** and **attractive** transportation **options** for the citizens of the **Macatawa area**.



# REARVIEW MIRROR

» **October 2008**

## Night Owl Service Begins

MAX begins operating its "Night Owl" demand response service funded by an FTA New Freedom Grant and local matching funds. Using one driver with one vehicle, MAX offers scheduled demand response rides to passengers nightly from 7 p.m. to midnight after the fixed routes stop running. Offering evening service allows us to begin addressing a key unmet need. Most passengers using the service need transportation to and from their late shift jobs.

## Fixed Route Fares Held, DR Fares Increased

The Authority Board votes to increase Reserve-A-MAX fares from \$1 to \$3 per trip for able-bodied passengers only, but holds fares for ADA passengers and seniors at \$1 per trip. Fixed route fares remained unchanged. The increase was needed to help offset increased costs and revenue declines, but also to encourage non-ADA persons to use the fixed routes.

» **November 2008**

## 4th Annual "Stuff the Bus" Food Drive

The 4th Annual Stuff the Bus Food Drive is the most successful yet, resulting in an outpouring of donations from the community. Donations are used to restock the food pantry at Community Action House, which provides emergency relief, counseling and education services to eliminate hunger, poverty and homelessness in the local community.

The public and passengers are invited to pay their bus fare with donations for two weeks, or to drop off goods at event sponsors, which include The Holland Sentinel, JQ99 Radio, MacMedia and Charter Media.



» **January 2009**

## Board Adopts "Half Mile" Rule

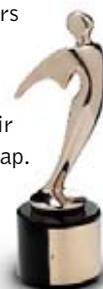
The Authority adopts a new "half mile" rule for passengers to qualify for demand response service. All able-bodied passengers must use the fixed routes if their origins and destinations are within one-half mile of a bus stop. Previously, MAX allowed persons more than one-fourth mile to use Reserve-A-MAX. The new rule gives us greater capacity to serve those who truly need demand response service.

» **February 2009**

## TV Ads Earn Bronze Telly Awards

Our two newly produced 30-second television commercials earn two 2009 Bronze Telly Awards. Produced by Grooters Productions of Holland, the TV spots highlight the benefits of public transit to passengers and the environment.

The "Savings" spot shows the variety of people who ride MAX, their reasons why, and the benefits they reap. The "Nature" spot promotes the environmental benefits. The spots air locally on several Comcast and Charter Media cable networks.





# REARVIEW MIRROR

» March 2009

## Free Rides for Energy Week

In observance of Holland West's local Energy Week, MAX offers free rides on its fixed routes. The event is designed to promote awareness of alternative energy and conservation. During this week, MAX participated in forums that educate the public on the environmental benefits of public transit and promote use of the bike racks on buses.

» April 2009

## Fixed Route Enhancements

Further improvements are made to several fixed routes, and an eighth deviated fixed route is added to connect Zeeland and Holland. Improvements include adding more bus stops to most of the routes and expanding routes to go through new neighborhoods to provide more service to residents.

A new route to and from Zeeland is established that provides hourly fixed route service to residents as well as demand response service for eligible passengers. The Zeeland route is added under a contractual agreement with the City of Zeeland, which

will pay approximately \$74,000 annually for the service.

» May 2009

## Arboc Buses Added to Fleet

Five new Arboc paratransit buses for demand response use are added to the fleet to replace vehicles that have reached the end of their useful life. The older vans and buses will be stripped of useful spare parts and sold as salvage to the highest bidder.

## Tulip Time Park-N-Ride

To reduce traffic, parking problems and congestion in downtown Holland during the annual Tulip Time Festival, MAX actively markets its Park-N-Ride Program to local residents, visitors and tourists. Motorists can leave their vehicles in secure parking lots with bus stops and ride the MAX bus into town for the festivities.

» June 2009

## Stimulus Bill Funds 4 New Gillig Buses

A total of \$1,609,413 in Recovery Act Funds for Transportation Upgrades is awarded to MAX for the purchase of four 29-ft. low floor Gillig buses and two replacement gasoline buses. Delivery expected early 2010.



## Dump the Pump Day

MAX joins other transit systems nationwide in promoting APTA's 4th Annual "Dump the Pump Day," which is designed to encourage people to ride public transit instead of driving their own vehicles to save money, conserve gasoline, and reduce the harmful greenhouse gases emitted into the environment. MAX served refreshments and presented promotional gifts to the first 400 passengers.



# REARVIEW MIRROR

» June 2009 continued  
**New Summer Fun Pass Promotion**

Partnering with 13 local establishments, MAX premieres its new Summer Fun Pass Promotion aimed at encouraging youth and teens to ride the bus to their favorite destinations during summer vacation. The \$30 pass gives teens unlimited rides on the routes until Labor Day, special discounts at sponsors, and a chance to win prizes in a random drawing. A total of 23 passes were sold in the first year of this program.



**Routes Detoured by Flood Damaged Roads**

Severe June storms resulted in extensive flooding and road damage in Ottawa and Allegan Counties, closing several roads. Several routes were detoured for three or more months while washed out roads were reconstructed.

» July 2009  
**New Shelters and Walkways Installed**

A \$20,000 New Freedom grant enabled us to construct sidewalk extensions for increased accessibility at Evergreen Commons Senior Center, where a bus shelter was placed. The remainder of grant funds was used for the installation of new bus shelters, sidewalk extensions, and landing pads at four new locations. These include the James Center on James St., Holland East School on 24th St., Smallenberg Park on Fairbanks Ave., and Youth for Christ on River Ave. The total cost of the project was \$23,445.

**Padnos Center Closed for Road Repair**

The Padnos Transportation Center, which serves as an intermodal hub shared by MAX, Amtrak and Indian Trails, is closed for about two months because of road reconstruction along Lincoln and 7th Street. Access was limited to foot traffic only, and buses were staged nearby for passengers to transfer hourly. Temporary ADA-compliant sidewalks were installed for passengers.

**Ford Fusion Hybrid Purchased**

MAX purchases a new 2010 Ford Hybrid Fusion 14 SEL that will be used as an official business vehicle. Local Holland dealer RE Barber Ford was awarded the sale in a competitive bid process. The Fusion hybrid is a standard four-door mid-sized sedan with an estimated combined city/highway fuel economy of 39 mpg.



# REARVIEW MIRROR

## » August 2009

### Board Votes to Take Operations In-House

Citing an opportunity to cut expenses and improve services through greater operational control, the Authority Board votes to assume daily operations of the transit system when the contract with MV Transportation expires June 30, 2010.

The move is expected to save more than \$420,000 savings over five years. The Authority will continue to contract with the City of Holland for support services, such as financial/payroll, human relations, and technology services.

### Authority Holds Millage to .35 Mills

Recognizing the economic hardships faced by area residents, the Authority Board votes to hold the transit millage for FY2010 at .35 mills, .5 mills less than what it is legally entitled to levy. The Board approved a \$4.2 million budget for fiscal year 2010 that allows for continuation of existing services.

## » September 2009

### Passengers Give MAX High Marks

MAX conducts its annual survey of fixed route passengers and, for the first time, surveys demand response customers. Results from the surveys that were offered to all boarding passengers were compiled, tabulated and analyzed by the Carl Frost Center for Research at Hope College.

In both surveys, the majority of passengers (over 90%) ranked the service provided by bus operators as good/excellent. The annual passenger survey of fixed route and demand response passengers reveals that 86% ride MAX out of necessity.

### Reserve-A-MAX Results

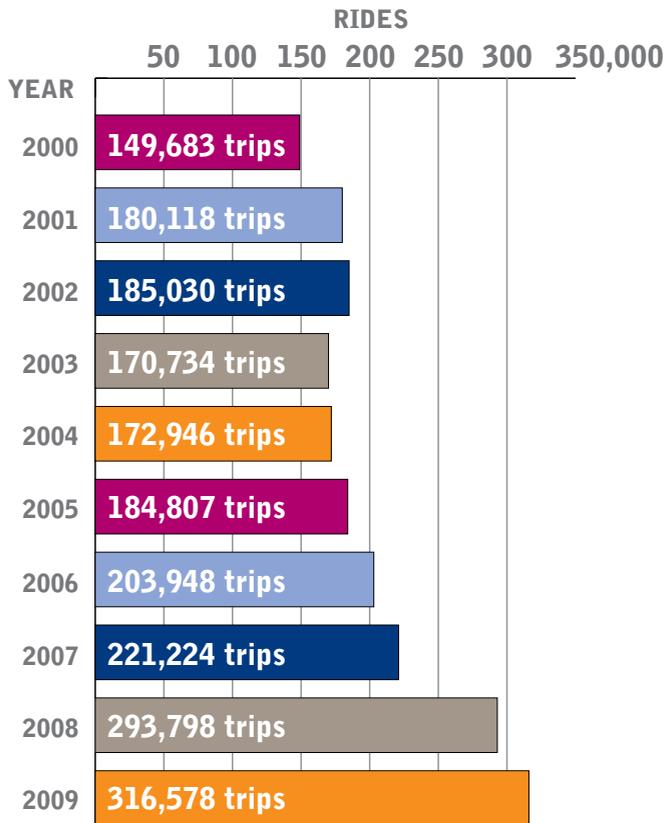
- » 84% used reserved ride service at least weekly
- » 68% would use bus service if it were offered on Sundays primarily to attend church
- » Appointments (45%), work (41%) and medical visits (39%) were the top destinations
- » 76% pay fares in cash instead of using a bus pass
- » 63% are over age 45
- » 68% have physical and/or cognitive disabilities, but only 27% require wheelchair assistance

### Fixed Route Results

- » 77% ride at least weekly and 60% have used the fixed routes for more than a year
- » Rte 1 N. Mall and Rte 5 Washington/S. River were the most used routes, and shopping and appointments were the top reasons for travel
- » 55% pay fares with cash
- » Only 52% have internet access at home
- » 60% rated the destinations served as excellent
- » Riders gave hours and days of operation slightly lower ratings with about two-thirds rating the service as excellent



# 10 YRS RIDERSHIP

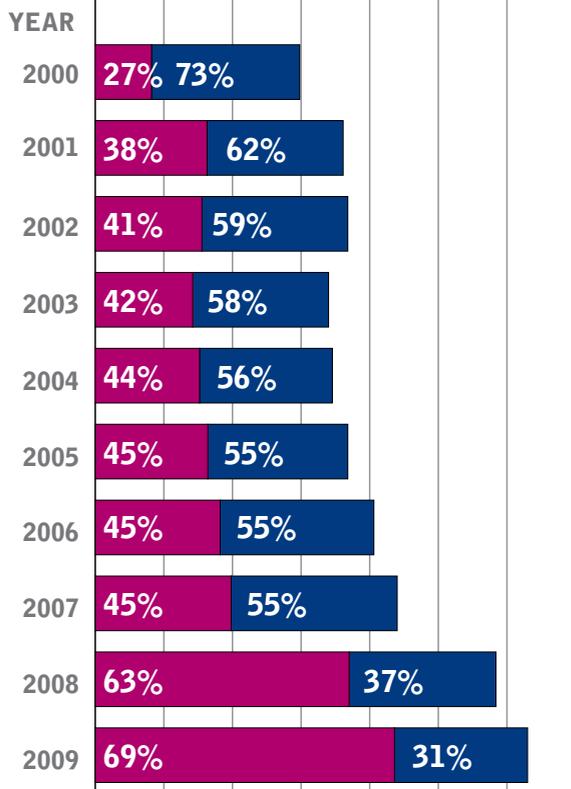


## A DECADE OF DATA

When you are on the move, it's important to know where you have been. Since we began operating three fixed routes and demand response service in the year 2000, we have provided more than 2.1 million rides. The graphs on the left clearly show steady growth in ridership numbers as well as a pronounced shift from use of demand response service to fixed route ridership.

### » Total Passenger Trips per Fiscal Year (2000-2009)

As the top left bar graph indicates, annual ridership has more than doubled from 2000 to 2009. What's interesting to note is that ridership continued to increase from 2003-2007 even though no system improvements were implemented. This may be attributed to higher fuel costs and rising unemployment. The sharp increase in ridership in 2008 is the result of our major expansion from three to seven fixed routes. An eighth deviated fixed route serving Zeeland was added in 2009.



- » Fixed Route Passenger Trips
- » RESERVE-A-MAX Passenger Trips

### » Comparison of Services Used Fixed Route vs. Demand Response per Fiscal Year (2000-2009)

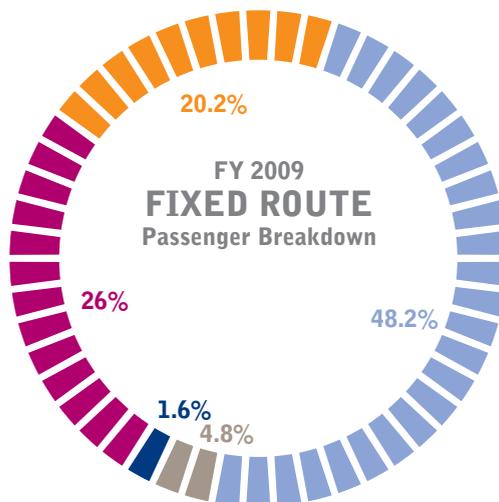
The lower left graph shows the percentage of passengers using the fixed routes compared with demand response service. In 2000, when MAX first introduced three fixed routes, the majority of passengers still preferred the former "Dial-A-Ride" service. With sustained marketing and public outreach programs, more passengers began using the fixed routes. Our major fixed route expansion in 2008 along with eligibility requirements for Reserve-A-MAX service resulted in a dramatic shift in usage from demand response to the fixed routes. This frees up more resources to allow us to better meet the needs of those who truly need and qualify for paratransit services.

# 2009 RIDERSHIP

## WHO RIDES MAX

Knowing and understanding who uses MAX and their reasons why helps us better meet the transportation needs of area residents. The circle graphs to the right show the breakdown of passengers by type for both fixed route and demand response service. The graph at the bottom shows the overall mix of passengers. MAX categorizes passengers into regular adult, seniors 65+, seniors with disabilities, ADA-eligible passengers, and youth (age 5-17).

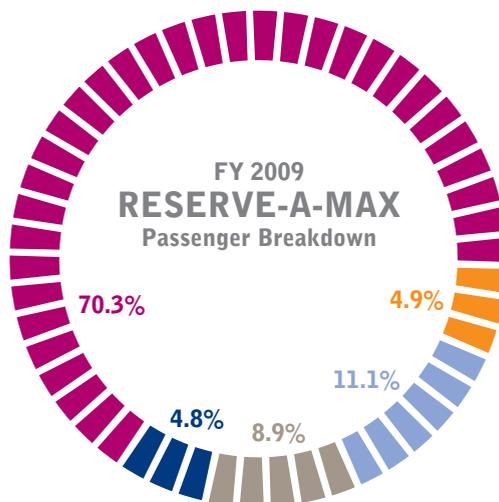
-  » Regular Passengers
-  » Senior Passengers
-  » Senior Disabled Passengers
-  » Disabled Passengers
-  » Youth Passengers



### » Fixed Route Passenger Breakdown

(FY Oct. 2008 - Sept. 2009)

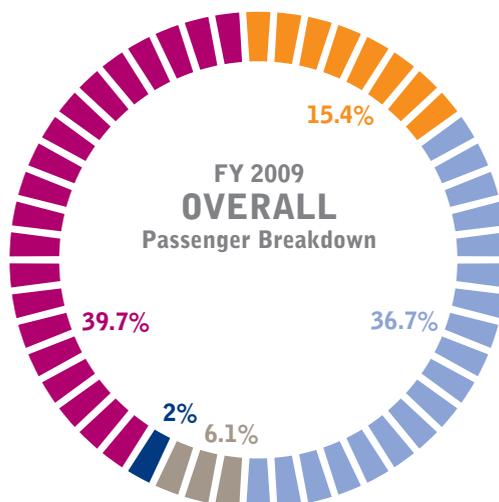
Not surprisingly, nearly half of all fixed route passengers are "regular adults," age 18-64. What is noteworthy is that 26% of our fixed route passengers are persons with disabilities, and about 20% are youth, many of whom are students riding the bus to and from school daily. Seniors and seniors with disabilities make up a very small percentage (6.4%) of passengers on the fixed routes.



### » Reserve-A-Max Passenger Breakdown

(FY Oct. 2008 - Sept. 2009)

Our paratransit services are reserved for those who are unable to use the fixed bus routes. Eligible passengers include persons with disabilities and seniors, who comprise 84% of our demand response passengers. Able-bodied persons may use Reserve-A-MAX services if their origin or destination is farther than one-half mile from a bus stop. Regular adults and youth make up only 16% of passengers for this premium service.



### » Overall Ridership Passenger Breakdown

(FY Oct. 2008 - Sept. 2009)

Fixed route and demand response passenger data is combined for overall ridership figures. In FY2009, ridership was almost evenly split between persons with disabilities and regular able-bodied adults. Students make up about 15% of system passengers, while seniors account for about 8% of total riders.

# MAX METRICS



Revenue	2009	2008	% Change
Passenger Fares	\$ 233,695	\$ 231,133	1.1%
Tax Levy	859,855	920,053	-6.5% ↓
Local Operating Assistance	78,408	122,106	-35.8% ↓
State Assistance			
Operating & Planning	1,680,660	1,241,887	35.3% ↑
Capital Grants	99,003	174,303	-43.2% ↓
Federal Assistance			
Operating & Planning	1,000,000	950,000	5.3%
Capital Grants	651,450	319,114	104.1% ↑
Interest & Other Revenues	40,831	47,482	-14.0% ↓
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 4,643,902</b>	<b>\$ 4,006,078</b>	<b>15.9% ↑</b>



Operating Expenses	2009	2008	% Change
Operations	\$ 2,745,855	\$ 2,778,129	-1.2%
Maintenance	365,388	325,941	12.1% ↑
General Administrative	556,734	519,651	7.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 3,667,977</b>	<b>\$ 3,623,721</b>	<b>1.2%</b>



Breakdown of Expenses	2009	2008	% Change
Purchased Services	\$ 2,353,979	\$ 2,256,663	4.3%
Wages / Salaries / Employee Costs	227,359	220,250	3.2%
Utilities	52,684	51,960	1.4%
Maintenance & Operations	701,497	793,512	-11.6%
Casualty & Liability Insurance	74,692	61,574	21.3% ↑
Other Operating Expenses	257,766	239,762	7.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 3,667,977</b>	<b>\$ 3,623,721</b>	<b>1.2%</b>



# MOVING FORWARD

## Authority Transitions to Assume Operations

The coming year will be a time of transition for us as we build an infrastructure to support a staff of approximately 55, all of whom will be direct employees of the Authority. Currently, the system is run by a handful of administrative/office staff who are employed by the City of Holland, and MV Transportation employees who serve as bus operators, supervisors, and managers.

Much work needs to be done to support this change, including the drafting of an organizational chart, job descriptions, and the development of a benefits package and employee handbook of policies and procedures.

The Authority anticipates a seamless transition with no disruption to services when it assumes direct operations on July 1, 2010. This operational change will allow us to bring about a more customer-responsive, efficient transit system.

## Updating Vehicle Fleet

We were fortunate to receive \$1.6 million in economic stimulus funding for the purchase of replacement buses in our fleet. While we had hoped to purchase alternative fuel buses, their high cost prohibited us from pursuing that option. Many of the buses in our fleet are at or near the end of their useful life of 10 years, and four must be replaced in 2010.

We expect to take delivery on four 29-ft. custom built Gillig buses next spring. It's interesting to note that although Gillig's manufacturing plant is based in California, many of the components used to build our buses are actually supplied by Michigan manufacturers.

## Installation of Intelligent Technology

MAX will be one of very few small transit systems in Michigan to install and use an Intelligent Technology System to track and collect real-time data about vehicle location, driver productivity and on-time performance.

Funded by a \$198,000 FTA New Freedom grant, the new technology system will include the installation of mobile data computers with GPS and AVL on buses, and of integration the equipment with our trip planning software. The new technology will provide us with the information needed to optimize performance, efficiency and customer service.

## Plans for New Bus Facility Get Underway

Plans for the development of a new \$3.5 million bus garage for MAX's fleet is expected to get underway in earnest in 2010. The Authority will seek competitive sealed bids for architectural and engineering services that will help us identify and evaluate possible sites and complete engineering studies.

Tentative plans for the 30,000 sq. ft. facility include offices for operations staff, adequate space for all fleet vehicles to be parked indoors, and a mechanics bay. Our fleet size has outgrown the 24th St. facility that has been in use since the 1980s. Many of our vehicles must be parked outside, subjecting them to the weather and potential vandalism.



## Transportation Service Providers Clearinghouse

Residents of Ottawa, Muskegon and Kent Counties will in late 2009 have an online resource to find a comprehensive listing of all private, public and medical transportation service providers that meet their needs.

As a member of the Ottawa County Transit Coalition led by Pioneer Resources, the Authority has been involved with the development of a new website,

[www.lakeshoreRIDElink.org](http://www.lakeshoreRIDElink.org)

Residents can search the online database by type of travel and destinations served to find transportation options.

The comprehensive list will include all options available including public transit, emergency and routine medical transports, private taxi and shuttle services, intercity bus service, rail service (Amtrak), and transportation provided by non-profit, social service and church groups.

Information from this database of providers will be used to develop a printed directory for distribution to the public, social service and governmental agencies, community groups and others. Funded with a \$67,000 FTA New Freedom grant, the printed directory will be made available by the fall of 2010.

## Keeping in Touch with Facebook and Twitter

Social networking sites are quickly becoming powerful tools for sharing instant information with customers, educating the general public, networking with other transit systems, and shaping public perception. To keep in touch with our passengers and constituents, the Authority is plugging into Facebook and Twitter.

We will be posting almost daily comments and updates, and using these sites as a way to gather meaningful input on passengers' needs and suggestions for improvement. These tools are especially helpful for reaching more youth, teens and college-age students, riders that we hope to motivate to use public transit.



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