

Muskegon County Workforce Transportation - Position Paper --- DRAFT Revised

June 20th, 2018

Position Statement

The Muskegon Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce recommends that new or enhanced public and private transportation solutions be offered to support the working residents of Muskegon County.

Situation

Lack of access to reliable and **affordable transportation** has been identified by social and employment agencies as a primary **barrier to employment**. Getting to work on time is critical to the success of individuals who seek job security and advancement. And it is critical to the successful operations of business and industry as reliable transportation results in reliable employee attendance.

We have a number of local public and private transportation options that cater to seniors, students and unemployed individuals. Yet, options for residents with full or part-time work who cannot afford a car or may be transportation challenged are limited.

Also, research claims that millennial workers understand that public transportation promotes good environmental stewardship. **Younger workers prefer public and shared transportation** over privately owned automobiles. An **eco-friendly** public transportation system is now considered an asset by employers to attract workforce talent to the community, particularly young talent.

Currently, the MATS bus routes do not efficiently connect residential neighborhoods with highly dense employment centers. It takes too much time for area residents to get to work on the established bus routes. Some routes take up to two hours from home to work. Also, the timing of the routes is not always in sync with the start and stop times of industry.

There are some local private services currently assisting workers, yet employers have witnessed employees walking in rain and snow to get to work. They report **employees standing outdoors for long periods of time** waiting for friends and family to provide transportation. They also report tardiness or inability to accept positions due to the lack of affordable or reliable transportation.

It should be noted that some reports suggest providing each individual with an automobile as the answer to transportation access. Yet, studies also show that **maintaining two automobiles within one household can be cost prohibitive**. One auto per household

positively impacts family/individual budgeting which in turn promotes home ownership, high quality of life etc.

In a 2016 employer survey in the city of Muskegon, **25% of the existing workers in the Port City Industrial Park** stated they would consider a public transportation option for getting to and from work.

Recommendation - Faster, Safer, Better Access

The chamber is calling for more public and a private transportation system that **connects workers to jobs** for the betterment of the residents as well as the employers. Fast, safe and reliable options need to be accessible and affordable for residents along the Lakeshore. The Muskegon Lakeshore Chamber is offering a number of considerations.

1. **Change MATS bus routes** to accommodate the commuter patterns of the local workforce. The routes should be designed as **straight-line routes** down the major corridors to **create more frequent, faster, safer** routes with more neighborhood and commercial accessibility.
2. **Promoting private shuttles and ride sharing programs** paid for by employee or subsidized by employers to give workers more options.
3. Consider **private/ public partnerships** to support access and ensure quality and affordability for new and improved solutions.
4. **Research new transportation solutions** not yet available in Muskegon County

The chamber of commerce is willing to advocate to local, state and federal government officials to seek support and funding to implement such changes in a timely manner. The chamber is also willing to educate and solicit support from employers to assist in the transition to new and improved options

For more information contact Cindy Larsen, President of the Muskegon Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce via email at clarsen@muskegon.org.