

Renewal of the Lake Erie Transit bus service millage in Bedford Township will help preserve that community's quality of life.

# Bedford LET millage should be renewed

Bedford Township residents are being asked Aug. 2 to vote for a three-year renewal of the .25-mill tax that supports Lake Erie Transit services in the community.

This is, by no means, a trifling matter.

Last March, township voters defeated a .1-mill increase request for the bus service, which primarily would have helped subsidize the Bedford Dial-A-Ride Service. The .1-mill increase would have added 10 cents in tax for every \$1,000 in a home's taxable value, or a \$10 annual tax increase on a house worth \$100,000.

Dial-A-Ride is a service available to all but most often helps the most needy or infirm in the community — those who have neither the means nor ability to drive themselves.

The millage defeat hasn't crippled the system, and LET won permission to simply seek a renewal of its existing millage next month.

But there are some in the community who consider the LET contract a waste of public funds. They cite sometimes low ridership figures and the heavily subsidized cost of fares. Some even are suggesting that the system be privatized, as if that would guarantee to improve service and reduce costs.

What they and others often fail to understand is that a public transit system adds much to the quality of life and desirability of a community and has other intangible benefits that make the public investment in them worthwhile.

For example, a survey of Americans 65 and older found that non-drivers

take 15 percent fewer trips to the doctor, 59 percent fewer shopping trips and restaurant visits and 65 percent fewer trips for social, family and religious activities than those using an individual vehicle. Public transportation is a particularly important way for low-income seniors and disabled individuals to gain access to important services and activities, such as healthcare appointments, basic shopping, banking, education and employment opportunities. Taken together, that equates to greater commerce for a community. That's part of the reason it's estimated that every dollar invested in public transportation generates \$4 in economic returns.

Bus systems also have been shown to produce less pollution a passenger mile than cars, thanks to new power plants and technologies. That's important at a time when pollution in this country claims as many lives as traffic accidents.

Speaking of accidents, buses have fewer than passenger cars. Bus-related accidents have one-twentieth the passenger fatality rates of automobile travel. Car accidents are responsible for approximately 40,000 deaths a year, making them one of the largest causes of death for people ages 1 to 44. Traveling on public transit significantly diminishes this threat and its resulting societal costs.

As one of Monroe County's most populous and fastest-growing communities, Bedford Township needs to continue to invest in its future by approving the LET millage renewal on Aug. 2.