Commission on Aging
Aging in Community Committee
June 10, 2025
9:30 am-11:30 am

"CoA Advocacy and Budget Priority Planning

[Join Zoom Meeting](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82315344483?pwd=U0FxeWxDK0hSaGxwb0krQjY2RUFUZz09)
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Agenda

- **Welcome and Introduction**

- **Review and Approval of May 13, 2025 minutes.**

- **Meeting Overview:** At this meeting we will do the following:

  - Debrief on the Forum: what did we learn, and are there issues that the CoA should follow up on?

  - Discuss the timetable and voting process for establishing the budget priorities for 2027.

  - Developing 2027 budget priorities: Review 2026 budget priorities and answer the following questions: Should the COA continue to pursue it as a priority? If yes, why is it still important? Is it achievable? How does this priority support COA and A&D missions? What changes should be considered? See if we can provide a recommendation on all priorities. Use the attached document.

  - Additional Priorities: Are there new issues that have come up that should be included as 2027 budget or advocacy priorities?

- **Business Meeting:**
  - Update on County Issues
  - Other Business

- **Next Scheduled Meeting:** Do we need a July meeting? September meeting- September 10, 2025. Topic TBD

FY26 Priority	Proposing Committee	Current status – what progress has been made?	Should the COA continue to pursue as a priority? If yes, why is this still important? Is it achievable? How does this priority support COA and A&D missions? What changes should be considered?
1) Create a permanent Marketing and Outreach position in the Department of Aging Disability Services, to be filled by either staff or broker, to promote the many beneficial County programs available to older adults.	Communications		
2) Provide $10,000 to fund the Commission on Aging's annual public forum that brings together noted experts with members of the public to discuss issues important to older adults.	Communications		
3) Provide funding for the translation of printed materials specific to older adults. Continue funding for important older adult publications such as ads for *The Beacon* and production of the public access TV program, *50+ in Montgomery County*.	Communications		
4) Funding Request of $180,000 to fund crucial initiatives that will advance the ability of older people in	Aging in Community		

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Montgomery County to be in safe, accessible, affordable, and desirable housing.			
5) Funding Request of $60,000 to support a pilot program that will allow MCDOT to provide backup transportation services, especially to Recreational Centers, so that older adults and people with disabilities are not stranded or left behind.	Aging in Community		
6) Funding Requested of $50,000 to prepare curricula within Montgomery College and the Gudelsky Institute leading to Universal Design (UD) certification (or degree if warranted), recruit faculty, identify on-the-job training and mentorship opportunities, and relevant UD guidance for developers.	Aging in Community		
7) Funding of $250,000 to evaluate and expand the Access HEARS pilot program to cover the expense of additional devices and support for more needy County residents who are	Health & Wellness		

FY26 Priority	Proposing Committee	Current status – what progress has been made?	Should the COA continue to pursue as a priority? If yes, why is this still important? Is it achievable? How does this priority support COA and A&D missions? What changes should be considered?
experiencing hearing loss and its adverse outcomes.			
8) Funding of $250,000 for The Arc of Montgomery to provide respite services to unpaid, live-in, primary caregivers, who are often family members.	Health & Wellness		
9) Funding $120,000 to provide for mental health services for older adults in Montgomery County, particularly for in-home counseling services.	Health & Wellness		
10) Funding for the expansion and service levels of in-home care services to older County residents by 1) increasing funding for In-Home Aide Services (IHAS) 2) increasing funding for additional DHHS staff and 3) increasing funding for supporting contractors and non-profits that provide the In-Home Aide Services.	Health & Wellness		
11) Provide $60,000 in funding to clear the waiting list for a program in senior centers providing structured activities, socialization, and support designed to meet the	Health & Wellness		

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needs of older county residents with early-stage memory loss who are aging in place. In partnership with the Recreation Department, a small site in another part of the county could be opened.			
12) Funding for one FTE at a pay grade sufficient to carry out the duties of a full-time Implementation Manager to lead, coordinate, and manage the Implementation Team recommended by the Home and Community-Based Workforce Task Force.	Health & Wellness		
13) Conduct an independent review of the Office of the Montgomery County Grants Management system equitable distribution of grants, assess the need for further reform, and address shortcomings.	Public Policy		
14) Fund a baseline countywide older adult community needs assessment survey to provide insights into the views of our residents on	Public Policy		

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the quality of life in Montgomery County, the effectiveness of current programs in supporting older residents, and areas where additional support is needed.			
15) Reestablish the Senior Fellow program and authorize funding for four Senior Fellow positions for older professionals whose skills and expertise will enhance the ability of county government meet the needs of residents.	Public Policy		
16) Advocate with State delegation and other key actors: to enact legislation enabling delegation authority to Counties for nursing home inspections; to re-establish delegation of nursing home inspections to County via MOU with State (pending permission from CMS), to fully restore the budget for inspections and on-site complaint inspections by the LTCO with additional funding from the State. After executing the MOU, allocate County Funding of $525,000 to hire, train,	Public Policy		

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and onboard a team of nursing home inspectors.			

ATTACHMENT #4

Request - Provide transportation services for older adults and residents with disabilities that fill existing gaps.
FY24 Funding Request- $120,000

BRIEF STATEMENT
The MC Commission on Aging (CoA) urges the requested funding to the MC Department of Transportation (MCDOT) to provide "gap-filling" transportation services for older adults and people with disabilities. This funding would deliver an essential service that prevents individuals with an immediate need for transportation from falling through the cracks in accessing their medical and life care needs. The service would be modeled after the successful MC DOT's Emergency COVID Vaccination Transportation Service.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE
Many County residents miss crucial medical appointments and important life opportunities due to a lack of access to transportation. Montgomery County residents were vaccinated at a higher rate than in many communities because the Montgomery County government committed to overcoming barriers to vaccination, including transportation to clinics. The County's COVID transportation program utilized existing contracts with Connect-A-Ride and local taxi companies to ensure access to vaccination clinics; this program can also be expanded to address additional needs.

Connect-A-Ride is a program operated by the Jewish Council for the Aging under contract with MCDOT. Typically, its services primarily focus on providing information and referrals to older adults and residents with disabilities regarding the various programs available to meet their transportation needs, such as Metro Access, volunteer transportation, and discounted taxi services. The COVID transportation program enabled Connect-A-Ride staff to connect residents with free taxi rides when these other options were unavailable. This program could be expanded to provide transportation for additional needs, including trips to medical appointments and opportunities essential for maintaining a good quality of life. Such a program would help ensure that older adults and residents with disabilities reach their destinations as needed.

311 operators are familiar with the Connect-A-Ride service and can connect callers directly to it. Under the current contract, Connect-A-Ride must conduct outreach to inform County residents about its availability. Funding for this project would support staffing and promotion of Connect-A-Ride, as well as cover taxi fares.

ATTACHMENT #5

Recommendation - Establish a safety, accessibility and customer service training program for all Montgomery County taxicab drivers.
Cost - $190,000 annually

BRIEF STATEMENT
Enhance services offered by taxi and other transportation companies to older adults and residents with disabilities by funding the Passenger Assistance Safety and Sensitivity (PASS) program training. A nationally-recognized industry standard, PASS training ensures that passengers are transported in the most safe, sensitive and careful manner possible. These funds would enable Montgomery College staff to deliver the training to drivers, and DOT to compensate drivers for their time.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE
The MC Commission on Aging (CoA) recognizes the need to provide better training for taxi drivers who serve older adults, people with disabilities, and low-income residents. The CoA has received numerous reports about drivers who are verbally abusive, insensitive, and lack understanding of appropriate customer service techniques for their clientele, as well as the proper use of wheelchair-accessible vehicles and equipment. We strongly believe the County needs to offer periodic sensitivity-based customer service training for every driver serving older adults, people with disabilities, and low-income residents. Drivers should be compensated for their time to encourage participation in order for them to attend. The CoA urges the development and implementation of a certified training program that is mandatory for all taxi drivers and is based on national standards, such as those developed by the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA).

The Commission on Aging and the Commission on People with Disabilities have advocated for more comprehensive training to ensure that taxicab drivers understand their responsibilities when transporting individuals with disabilities and seniors, particularly when using wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAV). Respondents to a recent survey about taxicab usage, conducted by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Transportation, indicated that patrons believe taxicab drivers generally lack awareness of the proper protocols for transporting individuals with disabilities. The County's Call-n-Ride subsidized trip programs, which involve residents with higher needs, represent a growing percentage of taxicab trips. This highlights the importance of such a certified training program.

ATTACHMENT #6

TITLE Certification Program for Stronger Universal Design Implementation for Senior Housing

BRIEF STATEMENT
The MC Commission on Aging (CoA) urges the development and implementation of a Universal Design training and certification program for all developers in Montgomery County as well as staff from the County's offices of Housing, Aging, and Disabilities. Such a training and certification program would be necessary to ensure that options for Universal Design features are adequately considered and implemented in new, existing, and rental housing for older adults. This effort would be conducted jointly with the MC Offices of Aging and Disabilities, Office of Permitting Services, and the Housing Opportunities Commission. The initiative would also engage developers in the County.
FY 2023: Advocacy to County Council for this effort to build a constituency and support. Work with national organizations to frame a concept for a training and certification program.
FY 2024: Funding Requested of $50,000.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE
It is envisioned that this initiative will have the following outcomes:
1. All developers in Montgomery County should have a staff member certified in UD to review all housing intended for seniors or people with disabilities, whether for sale or rent. The County Housing Department should also have staff certified (not just familiar with, but certified) in UD, and all housing plans for seniors should be reviewed through that perspective.
2. All developers marketing homes to seniors should ask the buyer to sign a document stating which, if any, UD features he wishes or does not wish to be installed prior to moving in. The list of UD features on the document can include the additional price for each feature if installed. Prices should be based on market rates and verified by the County housing department, comparing them with similar costs for non-profits.
3. The County Housing Department should prepare a minimum list of UD features to share with potential renters and purchasers.
4. All new senior housing, as well as refurbished rental senior housing in Montgomery County, should be pre-equipped with robust broadband capability that can support various tech health, safety, and entertainment features seniors may need, such as cell phones, personal alarms, streaming services, electronic personal assistants like Alexa, virtual medical appointments, and remote work or banking needs.