

# TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

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COUNTY EXECUTIVE'S SUMMIT ON AGING  
DECEMBER 2015

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READ AHEAD PAPER

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

# TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

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## SENIOR AGENDA

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Vision: Montgomery County will have public and private transportation and mobility systems that enable older adults to go where they want to go, when they want to go and how they want to get there.

- Affordable senior transportation will be a priority
  - Planning will include in-neighborhood options to make transportation accessible and to make affordable escorted transportation available
  - Planning will encompass both the needs and safety of pedestrians and those who do not drive
  - Transportation planning will include a focus on the needs of older adults as their abilities change.
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## BACKGROUND

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Transportation has an incredible impact on seniors' ability to remain independent, age in place and stay connected to the community. Without transportation, seniors become isolated and their health and well-being can deteriorate. Montgomery County has a wide range of transportation initiatives for seniors including projects which address mobility and accessibility concerns. The projected growth in the senior population indicates that senior transportation needs will continue to grow. Proactively improving/expanding existing senior transportation services, implementing new senior transportation programs and addressing mobility and accessibility issues will help meet the transportation needs of the growing senior population. The County and its partners will not find one solution to the transportation challenge, but will need multiple strategies.

Eighty-eight percent of Age Friendly Community Survey respondents said they typically get around by driving themselves in a car. Research demonstrates that most older adults will outlive their ability to drive safely by six to ten years. Therefore, the County likely will need to find ways to keep older drivers safe on the roads, and help them transition to other forms of transportation.

The County has expanded transportation and mobility services for seniors since the first Senior Summit in 2008, and more investment is forthcoming. For example, the Council's approval of Bill 33-15 this year will expand the availability of transportation options by creating a Transportation Services Improvement Fund, designed specifically to increase mobility of seniors and people with disabilities.

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## SELECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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### **Maintained Free and Reduced Ride On and Metrobus Fares for Seniors**

- Maintained free fares (M-F 9:30am-3:00pm) and reduced fares (all other times) for seniors and people with disabilities.
- Ride On also continued to provide Transportation for seniors, from several senior residential facilities to grocery shopping, several days a week.
- Continued Montgomery County's bus stop improvement program, which is regarded as a national model; currently, 90% of bus stops are ADA compliant. Additionally, 100% of Ride On buses are ADA compliant.

### **Continued Call-n-Ride, Subsidized Taxi Service for Low-Income Seniors**

- Call-n-Ride currently serves over 5,000 people; 70% are seniors. The program also serves persons with disabilities.
- In April 2013, Call-n-Ride transitioned to an automated debit card system, reducing the average cost per trip significantly. By reinvesting savings from the technology upgrade, the program was able to expand income eligibility in FY15, enabling greater participation.

### **Introduced Escorted Transportation Service**

- Escorted Transportation is available on a sliding scale basis to low-moderate income older adults and adults with disabilities who require an escort. The program began as a pilot in FY13 and continues today.
- By end of FY15, 187 residents with an average income of \$14,337 had enrolled in the program. Although clients can access the program for any purpose, in FY15, 87% of the trips were for medical or dental purposes.

### **Improved and Expanded Transportation to Local Senior Centers**

- Service improvements began January 2014. Shuttles take participants from their homes to Damascus, Holiday Park, Long Branch, Margaret Schweinhaut and White Oak senior centers. These buses traveled 25,596 miles and provided 8,615 rides in the first six months of operation.

### **Improved Pedestrian Safety and Accessibility**

- Since 2010, the most severe pedestrian collisions, where pedestrians are killed or incapacitated have been reduced by 28%. Additionally, there have been significant reductions in collisions and speeding in areas where traffic calming measures have

been installed. In the County's High Incidence Areas where pedestrian collisions are more frequent, targeted efforts have reduced collisions by as much as 52% in these locations.

- The County is two-thirds finished retiming all the traffic signals to extend pedestrian crossing times to the latest national standards, which accommodate slower walking speeds. Additionally, many traffic signals have been upgraded to include accessible/countdown pedestrian signals and all other signals scheduled for future upgrades. For improved visibility, street name signs have been increased to five inches. Meanwhile, stop signs have been upgraded to 30-inch size (from 24 inch.)
- The County has constructed and repaired sidewalks to improve walkability. In the past five years, 172 miles of sidewalk have been constructed. And, since 2007, another 35 miles of sidewalks and ramps have been reconstructed to meet ADA standards, with 6,000 new ramps installed in the past five years. These projects include constructing structural improvements at intersections and corridor projects, to improve pedestrian safety for seniors, installing bump-outs, pedestrian refuge islands, installing highly visible pavement markings, traffic calming, installing new or upgraded lighting to provide improved visibility along corridors with heavy pedestrian traffic and improved lighting at pedestrian crosswalks and installing highly visible crosswalk markings.
- An effort to improve Pedestrian Safety in Parking Lots was initiated in 2013. This education campaign addresses avoiding collisions in parking lots, where one in four pedestrian collisions occurs. Seniors are particularly vulnerable to collisions in Parking lots.

### **Expanded Marketing and Outreach/Promoted Connect-A-Ride & Transportation Options**

- The number of people who use this service has tripled from 1,012 in FY07 to 3,124 in FY15. Connect-A-Ride educates callers who are 50+ and/or disabled about a wide range of public, private and volunteer transportation options. The service also helps callers fill out forms for transportation programs, links callers with transportation providers; and, provides travel training sessions to teach residents how to navigate the public transportation system.
- In FY15, older driver safety and transitioning from driving became an added Connect-A-Ride service.
- MCDOT, Connect-A-Ride, and DHHS staff disseminate information about senior transportation options to seniors, their families and caregivers

- Outreach activities include making presentations to senior groups and participating in various events throughout the County. In 2015, MCDOT and HHS partnered to place advertisements on Bus Shelters and Bus Sides to promote specific Senior Transportation programs such as seniors ride free on Ride-On and Metrobus M-F 9:30am-3:00pm; and Call-n-Ride.
- Commission on People with Disabilities updated its Transportation Network Directory for People with Disabilities and Seniors, found at: [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/tnd](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/tnd).

### **Improved Mobility Management for Seniors and People with Disabilities**

- In December 2013, the County hired a Mobility Manager to promote, improve and expand transportation options available to seniors and persons with disabilities.
- Jewish Council for the Aging, DHHS and MCDOT developed the federally funded “Getting all Around the County” transportation project. This project improves understanding of transportation and mobility needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities, includes them in the planning process, and promotes available transportation and mobility services.

### **Worked to Expand Accessible Transportation**

- In July 2015, the County enacted legislation to increase the number of wheelchair-accessible taxicabs and set a goal that the County’s fleet will become 100% accessible by 2025. The new Transportation Services Improvement Fund, collected as surcharges from transportation network companies, is dedicated specifically to this purpose.

### **Supported Volunteer Transportation**

- While volunteers do not charge for their trips, volunteer transportation programs are not free. Financial resources are necessary to recruit, vet, train, insure and support volunteers, and for ride scheduling and tracking software.
- Received financial support for volunteer transportation programs including two federal grants (for “Village Rides” and “Enhancing Montgomery’s Mobility”) and a Montgomery County community grant.

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## **CHALLENGES**

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The County aims to ensure that aging residents have adequate access to transportation that enables them to live independently in the community. Some of the challenges listed below are already being addressed by the County, but may need increased funding to

adequately satisfy the needs and the preferences of the growing senior population and their families.

- Accessibility:
  - Accessible sidewalks and bus stops
  - Too few accessible taxis
  - Pedestrian safety
- Older Driver safety:
  - Drivers' changing abilities
  - Transition-from-driving programs
- Transportation Network Companies: Ongoing concerns about the use of TNCs by older adults include the thoroughness of driver background checks; price variability; vehicle accessibility; and passenger participation requiring smart phone ownership.
- Others:
  - Lack of awareness of County transportation programs
  - Program Eligibility limitations
  - Coordination of public/private transportation services
  - Use of technology tools available for transportation services
  - Threat to the taxi industry posed by transportation network companies (and resulting threat to those who rely on taxis for transportation)

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION STEPS**

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The following recommendations were generated by the Transportation and Mobility Workgroup; recommendations from Summit will be added.

- Ensure that older adults are aware of their transportation options in the community and can access them, as appropriate. (see *COMMUNICATION & OUTREACH* section).
- Ensure that select communication and outreach materials are multi-lingual
- Expand older driver safety programs for older drivers who are nearing the end of their driving career
- Assist caregivers/families in accessing transportation resources
- Encourage the use of technology tools to access transportation and resources
- Encourage/Expand coordination and partnership between public, private and non-profit transportation-related entities
- Identify and pursue Federal and State grant funding opportunities
- Establish comprehensive, coordinated site for special transportation, like a “One-Call, One-Click” center.
- Support volunteer transportation
- Have a fully-accessible public transportation system (to include benches at bus stops, fully accessible bus stops, etc.)
- Explore ways to increase transportation options/services in the Up-County areas.
- Expand/Increase participation in Program Transportation - Grocery shopping and Senior Center