MONTGOMERY COUNTY: A COMMUNITY FOR A LIFETIME

SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS
FY2008-FY2015

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

Transportation

Maintained Free and Reduced Ride On and Metrobus Fares for Seniors

- Maintained free fares (M-F 9:30 a.m.- 3:00 p.m.) and reduced fares (all other times) for seniors and people with disabilities who obtain a $2.00 Senior SmarTrip card, e.g., at the library.

- 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.

Tripled Number of People Using Connect-A-Ride; Added Support to Help Transition from Driving

- The number of people who use this service has tripled from 1,012 in FY07 to 3,124 in FY15. Connect-A-Ride helps callers who are age 50+ and/or disabled learn 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 older residents how to navigate the public transportation system.

- In FY15, transitioning from driving became an added Connect-A-Ride service.

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 was transitioned to an automated debit card system. 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- and moderate-income older adults and people with disabilities who require an escort. The program began as a pilot in FY13.

- 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 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

- Improved Pedestrian Crossings: 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, some traffic signals have been upgraded to include accessible/countdown pedestrian signals. For improved visibility, street name signs have been increased to five inches for better legibility. Meanwhile, stop signs have been upgraded to 30-inch size (from 24 inch.)

- Pedestrian Safety Initiative: Since 2010, the most severe pedestrian collisions have been reduced by 28%. Additionally, there have been significant reductions in collisions and speed in areas where we have installed traffic calming measures.

- Constructed and repaired sidewalks to improve walkability. In the past five years, 175 miles of sidewalk have been constructed. And, since 2007, another 35 miles of sidewalks and ramps have been reconstructed to meet ADA standards. Finally, 6,000 new ramps have been installed in the past five years.

- Improving Pedestrian Safety in Parking Lots was initiated in 2013. This education campaign addresses avoiding collisions in parking lots, where one in four pedestrian collisions occur.

Mobility Management

- 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, HHS and DOT 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, further includes such populations in the planning process, and promotes available transportation and mobility services.

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.

Health and Wellness

Increased Senior Center Hours and Accessibility

- Increased operating hours, programs and services at three Senior Centers (i.e., Schweinhaut, Damascus, and Holiday Park) that offer social opportunities, health and wellness programs, lifelong learning and educational programs, exercise classes, dance classes, lectures, cultural programs, vegetable gardens, and a variety of county services.

- Curb-to-curb transportation services were expanded via a contract with JCA to provide M-F services at all five county senior centers.

Expanded 55+ Recreation, Health Promotion & Exercise Options; Maintained Other Services

- **55+ Active Adults Recreation Programs** were expanded to pre-2009 hours at thirteen of the County Recreation Centers where boomers and older persons gather for educational programs, friendship, entertainment and sports. (The County also continued exercise classes for people age18+ at a dozen additional locations.) Today, Montgomery County offers 60% more health, exercise and wellness classes, compared with 2009 – including additional Bone Builders and Zumba classes.

- For a $50 annual fee, thousands of County residents age 55+ work out using the weights and exercise facilities – including Fitness Clinics – at the 17 County Recreation Centers, M-F until 3 p.m. Thousands of older adults swim at County Aquatic facilities each year. Hundreds more enjoy mini-trips offered quarterly to destinations and events in the metro Baltimore/DC areas. Over 2,000 active adults take Senior Outdoor Adventures in Recreation (SOAR) day trips. More than 800 seniors competed in 2,500 events at the 2015 Maryland Senior Olympics, hosted by Montgomery County.

- Through County partnerships with local hospitals, the number and variety of programs and services offered to seniors in Recreation Department facilities have increased substantially. Examples include the "Senior Fit" exercise program offered by Holy Cross Hospital and, the "Senior Shape," exercise program and Heartwell nurse programs offered by Suburban Hospital. The "Bone Builders" exercise program, a joint HHS, Aging & Disabilities and Recreation Department evidence-based program, expanded from ten classes in 2012 to 18 classes in 2015.

Home- and Community-Based Services

Expanded Senior Nutrition Program (SNP) Congregate Services

- Served 225,555 meals to 4,407 seniors at 42 congregate meal sites in F15, i.e., 20% more clients served than FY13.

- Expanded such congregate meals services to four Adult Day Centers, two Congregate Housing Service Programs and six ethnic contractors serving residents with limited English skills. Recently opened new lunch programs at White Oak and Mid-County Recreation Centers. Improved choice by offering either hot or cold meals option.

Doubled SNP Home Delivered Meals for Frail and Vulnerable Homebound Residents age 60+

- Served 1,977 homebound seniors with meals delivered to their homes in FY15, i.e., served twice as many clients compared with FY13, after expanding the number of buildings served to include 900 seniors residing in 18 low-income housing sites.

- Initiated criminal background checks for all volunteers.

Promoted Expansion and Growth of Villages; local organizations that help older adults to age in place

- From 2009 to 2015, the number of villages in Montgomery County grew from 4 active villages to 14 active villages (with nine more villages in development.) Montgomery County has been promoting villages through its Regional Service Centers. Since Jan. 2014, a Village Coordinator has been helping to expand the number and capacity of Villages across the County.

- Active villages are located in Bethesda, Cabin John, Chevy Chase, Garrett Park, Sandy Springs, Silver Spring, Takoma Park, Olney and Potomac. Nine villages in development are located in areas such as East County, Kensington, Kentland and Rockville.

- County support includes online resources to initiate a Village, i.e., Village Blueprint, bylaws, community survey, flyers and an online map of Villages. The County also provides outreach across diverse communities, technical assistance to address sustainability, and pilot programs such as VillageRides™ to build Village capacity to recruit, train and schedule volunteer drivers.

Continued Community-Based Health and Social Support Services, e.g.,

- Continued in-home nurse monitoring for more than 2,000 senior and disabled clients (FY15) through Community First Choice Program, a Medicaid waiver. Also increased State Senior Care Gateway Grant to expand senior care service capacity and avoid institutionalization.

- Continued in-home personal care and chore services (sliding fee scale), assisting more than 300 vulnerable seniors in remaining safe and cared for in the community, while preventing unnecessary institutionalization; 76 are on the waitlist. Medical Assistance Personal Care received 410 new applicants over a recent six-month timeframe.

- Continued public guardianship program – recently expanded span of program as the caseload increased by almost 25% in one year, from 77 individuals to 101 individuals.

- Increased Adult Foster Care reimbursement rate for 122 clients in senior assisted living homes (increased from $1,350/month in 2012 to $1,550/month.) Also continued Group Homes Subsidy.

- Continued Medication Management program that distributes File of Life medical cards throughout the community and 4x/day, 7 days/week pill boxes to HHS clients who need them.

Continued Support for Family Caregivers

- Continued to offer respite service, on a short-term basis, to family caregivers who support frail elders. Currently, 453 caregivers are being served; 20% are seniors.

- Increased subsidies for Adult Day programs to help 30 individuals access the program two days per week, starting in 2014. Such programs provide clients socialization and medical supervision while providing respite for family caregivers.

- To provide better support to caregivers, recently approved a Senior Fellow position, along with operating funds, to coordinate outreach regarding available services.

Continued to Assist Residents With Serious and On-Going Medical Challenges

- Continued to support and promote Chronic Disease Self-Management Course offered by Holy Cross Health. This evidence-based, six-week program is for adults with chronic medical conditions, family members, friends and caregivers.

- HHS serves as lead agency of the Montgomery County Coalition for Care at the End of Life to encourage advance care planning, especially discussion and preparation of advance directives.

Continued convenient collection of refuse and recycling for frail residents who are unable to bring containers to the curb, due to physical limitations. Currently 1,149 residents use this exemption.

Housing

Protected Availability of Affordable Rental Housing

- Existing Units: The County has created partnerships to acquire or preserve thousands of existing units of affordable housing. These include: Victory Forest (136 units) Silver Spring; Marian Assisted Living (9 units) Olney; Town Center Apartments (110 units) Rockville; Bauer Park Apartments (142 units) Rockville; Charter House (212 units) Silver Spring; Washington-McLaughlin Apartments (9 units) Takoma Park; Lakeview Apartments (152 units) Bethesda; Victory Court (86 units) Rockville; and Interfaith Group Home (9 units) Rockville.

- The County has partnered with private and non-profit developers to build new affordable housing for seniors. The following are either in the planning stage or under construction. Aspen Hill (110 units); Churchill II (133 units) Germantown; The Bonifant (149 units) Silver Spring; White Oak (105 units); Silver Spring (75 units); Glenmont (110 units); East County (151 units); and White Flint (150 units).

- Continued partnering with the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) and Department of Health and Human Services to provide rental assistance to low-income seniors.

Expanded Property Tax Credits for Homeowners with Modest Assets

- Maintained the property tax credit for homeowners with limited assets, along with an additional such credit for seniors. This credit applies to those who fill out the application and qualify based on modest financial resources.

- In FY2015, over 2,900 seniors with limited assets received an estimated average of $720 in Homeowners and Senior's property tax credits. Beginning in July 2015, Montgomery County doubled the rate of the Senior Tax Credit and expanded eligibility to include homeowners who are 65 to 70 years old (the credit, until this year, was limited to homeowners 70 years and over.) Next year, homeowners age 65-plus with limited savings can apply to receive an estimated average of $870 per year in property tax credits.

- In total, such property tax credit support for older homeowners who have modest savings are estimated to grow from about $2 million per year to approximately $3 million per year. For residents age 70-plus, retroactive applications for this credit may be made for the prior three years.

Shortened Timeframe for Homeowners Seeking Approval for Accessory Housing

- In 2013, the County began offering homeowners a swifter approval process for accessory apartments, i.e., one way to expand affordable housing for seniors. Currently, 60 accessory apartments have been licensed and nearly four dozen are in the pipeline.

Introduced Incentives for Home Owners and Builders to Install Accessible Housing Features

- Design for Life, managed by Department of Permitting Services, provides partial tax credits to property owners or homebuilders who install measures that improve accessibility, visit-ability and/or live-ability of residential homes.

- This model program was initiated in Montgomery County to improve the ability of all residents to manage more successfully in homes, to improve people's ability to age in place and to make homes more accessible to visitors of all ages. The Design for Life program took effect July 2014.

Civic and Social Engagement

Improved Volunteer Resources

- The Montgomery County Volunteer Center launched a user-friendly website in 2011 that made it easier for individuals to find ways to engage and help others. Over the last three years, 33,000 volunteers of all ages have accessed this system to find volunteer opportunities.

- In a recent year (Spring 2014-Spring 2015), nearly 500 Retired Senior Volunteer Program volunteers helped 33 nonprofits/agencies, serving 68,554 hours, which included helping 3,000 county residents fill out tax forms and access $4.3M in refunds. It also includes more than 250 seniors who tutor and mentor children through Interages and three dozen Grandreaders who read to children weekly at six libraries during the summer.

Expanded Vital Living Resources

- Continued outreach via "The Networker," an online compilation of opportunities for engagement, accessible at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/senior

- Increased the number of courses offered through Montgomery College Lifelong Learning Institute while expanding class locations, including MCPL (which hosted 23 such events, engaging 328 seniors).

Continued to Support Training and Employment Resources

- Continued to fund and publicize the annual 50+ Employment Expo, sponsored by JCA, which benefits thousands of County residents by offering resume and job hunting advice and connecting them to employers. In 2015, County Executive Isiah Leggett presented the second annual Experience Counts Best Practices Awards at the 50+ Employment Expo to Social and Scientific Systems, Inc., Dynaxis LLC and the Beacon Newspaper, Inc.

- Montgomery College continued to provide Senior Tuition Waivers for Maryland residents, age 60-plus, to enroll in classes after the regular registration period has passed by paying only fees.

- Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL) continued to offer residents aggregated online access to a wide range of career, enrichment and study support resources.

Expanded Library Hours and Services

- MCPL operating hours increased by 11% and began a cycle of major refresh projects to enable library collections, space and services to meet the needs of a wide range of communities, including Boomers and older persons.

- MCPL expanded technology training with more classes in using computers and devices, downloading e-books and music, sharing via Facebook and using email – and also continued to offer classes in finance, health, consumer issues, English language learning, etc.

Safety

Invested in Fire & Rescue Facilities, Operations and Personnel; Reduced Response Times

- Since 2009, Montgomery County built 5 fire-rescue stations to address emerging and continuing needs, i.e., new Fire Station 22 - Germantown/Kingsview (2009), new Fire Station 34 - Germantown/Milestone (2010), rebuilt Fire Station 2 - Takoma Park (2010), new Fire Station 32-Travilah (2014) and rebuilt Wheaton Rescue Squad (2014) at a new site.

- This compares with 2 new fire stations built or renovated over previous 12 years, i.e., Fire Station 1 in Silver Spring (2006) and Fire Station 35 in Clarksburg (interim station opened 2005)

- In the last decade, Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) began assigning firefighter paramedics to Engines and Aerial Units, enabling MCFRS to quickly deliver 4 well-trained personnel, including a paramedic, to the scene of fires and critical emergency medical calls. Today, there are 28 Paramedic Engines and one Paramedic Aerial Tower in service.

- Reduced response times: In the context of this improved investment in facilities, operations and personnel, response times for advanced life support (ALS) have improved throughout the County. Quicker response times translate into lives protected and saved. Looking at average response times to ALS incidents, between FY09 and FY15, such response times improved by:
  - 1% in urban areas
  - 8% in suburban areas
  - 25% in rural areas

- Excellence in definitive intervention for heart attack victims: Also in the context of these investments in personnel, operations and facilities, and in cooperation with hospital partners, MCFRS is meeting or exceeding national standards in Stroke and Heart Attack care. For example, in October 2015, from the time of the 911 call, MCFRS was able to transport stroke and heart attack patients to the emergency department door in an average of 33 minutes.

The American Heart Association has identified an ambitious goal of 90 minutes from time of 911 call to definitive intervention for Heart Attack victims: MCFRS excels in this category, which translates into lives saved.

Promoted Fire Safety Among Seniors

- While the overall fire death rate in Montgomery County is one of the lowest in the country, senior citizens have been disproportionately represented. In 2008, the County Executive convened the Senior Citizen Fire Safety Task Force, which was charged with developing an aggressive approach to address and reverse the trend of fire risk among seniors.

- Since then, fire fatalities among seniors have fallen from an average of five per year from 2005-2007 to an average of two per year from 2008-2014.

- The Task Force identified 37 recommendations. One of the most successful and high profile recommendations implemented has been the fire department's home safety program: Fire department representatives visit the homes of senior citizens and persons with disabilities to check smoke alarms, identify and correct any potential safety risks and ensure that the resident has a home fire escape plan. Using an appointment-based scheduling system, the department has visited more than 1,000 senior homes in the first ten months of the program.

- Additionally, Fire and Rescue personnel partner with communities, neighborhood organizations and residential building managers to develop fire evacuation and escape plans. And, MCFRS provides "Fire safety awareness" training to any group that may interact with "At Risk" seniors in their home – alerting them to check smoke alarms, space heaters and cooking practices to help prevent fires.

Expanded Crime Prevention Services; Locating At-Risk Seniors

- In 2009, MCPD launched "Keeping Seniors Safe" crime prevention outreach program. Keeping Seniors Safe addresses financial and other frauds and scams; identity theft; shopping safety; and emergency preparedness. With presentations from Community Outreach Officers and command staff, and brochures distributed widely, the program reaches thousands of seniors each year.

- MCPD Officers continued to conduct home security surveys in seniors' homes.

- MCPD Officers also manage Project Lifesaver to help locate seniors with Alzheimer's disease. Formed the Montgomery County Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse Task Force

Added Unit on Crimes Against Seniors and Vulnerable Adults Abuse

- In June 2014, added the Crimes Against Seniors and Vulnerable Adults Abuse Unit to the Montgomery County Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse Task Force. Representatives from Montgomery County Police Department, the State's Attorney's Office, Adult Protective Services, County Attorney's Office, Ombudsman and Licensure and Regulatory Services partner with the Department of Health and Human Services to prevent elder abuse, raise public awareness, support legislative efforts to establish stronger and better laws and, aggressively investigate and prosecute those who commit elder abuse.

- Between 2010 and 2040, the Montgomery County senior population is projected to grow from 120,000 to 255,000, a growth of 113%. In recognition of that changing demographic, in 2014, the State's Attorney's Office created the Crimes Against Seniors and Vulnerable Adults Unit to aggressively prosecute crimes against seniors, including physical abuse, financial exploitation and neglect. This unit includes two specialized Assistant State Attorneys and a Program Manager to track all incidents of elder abuse in Montgomery County.

- Established an investigative Elder Abuse Section in MCPD, as part of the County's new Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse Task Force, to educate the community and aggressively investigate reports of fraud.

- Added funds (FY15) for a Social Worker in Adult Protective Services to address growing investigations of financial exploitation resulting from new mandatory bank reporting requirements. In FY14, there were 776 Adult Protective Services investigations.

Promoted Emergency Planning:

- Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security continues to deliver preparedness messages throughout the County, educating seniors about becoming better prepared for an emergency.

Communications

Created New Information Products for Boomers and Older County Residents

- Developed, distributed and publicized recognizable, understandable, timely and accessible series of informational flyers, i.e., Transportation Options, Senior Vital Living, Caregiving, and Older Driver Safety; Living and Thriving in Montgomery County, The Senior Agenda, Transportation Network Directory for People with Disabilities and Seniors and, Senior Resource Information Guide.

- These branded products on key issues are disseminated online and via senior centers, libraries, senior housing, community centers/groups, tax bill and targeted mailings, the County fair, the Beacon newspaper and more.

Created New Channels of Communication; Strengthened Existing Channels

- New online resources: The new seniors website, introduced in 2009, is a central portal offering timely information to seniors and caregivers about county services and programs. Information is organized in nine sections, i.e., consumer issues, employment and volunteering, health, recreation and libraries, safety, senior housing, social support, transportation and tax and finance. In each section, eligibility requirements are specified (e.g., no cost, fee-based, income-related) along with contact information.

- New telephone resources: Montgomery County government's non-emergency number re: government programs and services, 311, was initiated in 2010 and is staffed from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Callers can learn information and track service requests on a wide range of topics, including senior issues. Additionally, the Aging & Disability Senior Resource Line (240-777-3000) is a phone resource for more detailed questions regarding program services and eligibility.

- Continued e-newsletters: 1) Paperless Airplane, an online publication sent twice-monthly to 140,000 subscribers provides County news and information, including items of interest to boomers and older persons; and, 2) Health and Human Services – Aging and Disability Services sends monthly e-newsletter to increase awareness of senior services and events in the County.

- Continued providing communications addressing senior issues via County Cable TV (e.g, "Seniors Today" and "Make a Difference" "Montgomery al Dia"), mailings, bus ads, public forums, County Fair, and posters at libraries, recreation facilities, health clinics and senior centers. Also worked with Montgomery County Media to provide information to seniors via the internet, social media and print material. Finally, the Office of Landlord Tenant Affairs continued to conduct seminars for owners, landlords and residents of multi-housing units to build awareness of services and programs available to older County residents.