



Montgomery County Council

For Immediate Release

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Montgomery College, preservation of green space, public safety among highlights...

COUNCIL APPROVES \$2.9 BILLION OPERATING BUDGET THAT FULLY FUNDS SCHOOLS, BOOSTS ROADS & TRANSIT

***Montrose Parkway, transit improvements, new elementary
school gyms, more red light cameras get go-ahead***

The Montgomery County Council today unanimously approved a \$2.9 billion operating budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, approving as well a six-year Capital Improvements Program, that invests heavily in transportation and education while continuing County efforts to bolster public safety and preserve open space.

"Montgomery County has come together to craft a budget that puts our kids first, attacks traffic congestion with roads and transit, and maintains services for the most vulnerable among us," said Council President Steve Silverman.

"The Council has tackled traffic congestion. Thanks to this budget, County residents will see more roads and more transit. The Montrose Parkway will relieve traffic congestion between I-270 and Rockville Pike. We restored \$817,000 to fully fund our successful 'Fare Share' program, which works with businesses to encourage their workers to use mass transit. And we also funded \$550,000 to continue free and reduced fares on certain Ride On and Metro bus routes in the I-270 corridor and to expand this initiative to the Route 29 corridor.

"The Council also approved a development impact tax that requires developers to pay a portion of the costs of their development toward road and transit projects," added Silverman. "The \$6.5 million from the tax will be matched by the County budget and more than double our current County spending on transportation.

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“Three and a half years ago, the Council launched its ‘Children First Initiative.’ Today, we have made good on our pledge. Then, only nine elementary schools had all-day kindergarten. Next year we’ll have 56 – together with complete early childhood programs, well-trained teachers, and smaller class size in the early grades.

“We have fully funded the school system’s operating budget request, “ said Silverman. “And a new recordation tax we approved will target \$115 million over the next six years to build and modernize more schools and construct gyms for elementary schools. It will allow us to address the critical technology needs of Montgomery College, attended by 40 percent of our County’s high school students within two years of graduation. We will be able to fund the school system’s capital budget construction needs on schedule – just as the School Board requested.”

In addition, the Council funded the Housing Initiative Fund at a \$15.6 level to promote affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization. It restored \$3 million in the capital budget to the County’s Legacy Open Space program to preserve green space, historic sites, and environmentally significant land from development.

The Council also restored staffing and operating hours at recreation and senior centers around the County and appropriated \$90,000 to keep three Parent Resource Centers slated to close open for another six months while federal funds are being sought. The Council also added \$40.5 million for construction of a much-needed new Circuit Court Annex to meet the demands of the criminal justice system.

The budget approved by the Council totals \$2.926 billion – a 6.4 percent over last year’s \$2.750 billion – and \$8 million more than the County Executive’s recommended adjusted budget which was, at \$2.918 billion, a 6.1 percent increase over last year’s.

Among other highlights:

Transportation

In addition to approving the \$62 million Montrose Parkway, the Council:

- Approved Impact Tax on developers to raise \$6.5 million annually for traffic congestion relief, to be matched by dollar-for-dollar by County government
- Restored \$817,000 for the “Fare Share/Super Fare Share” program
- Added \$550,000 to continue reduced or free fares on some Ride-On and Metro bus routes along the I-270 corridor, with expansion to the Route 29 corridor
- Approved \$500,000 in future revenue from advertising on Ride-On buses with revenues targeted to transit services
- Added \$250,000 to extend the seniors’ “Call-n-Ride” transportation program and to lower the eligibility age from 68 to 67.

Schools

The Montgomery Public Schools – with nearly 139,000 students -- will receive \$ 1.4 billion under the budget just approved -- nearly half the total and a 6 percent increase over last year. (more...)

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The Council:

- Approved the expansion of all-day kindergarten from 35 to 56 schools, with a ratio of one teacher for every 15 children.
- Expanded the Council's class-size reduction initiative in grades one and two to cover all elementary schools with a high ratio of children on free or reduced meals.
- Added funds for the construction of gyms at Lakewood, Greenwood, Ashburton, Charles Drew, Sally Ride, and Somerset elementary schools
- Approved the strengthening of math and reading programs for middle and high school students in six school clusters and the addition of math specialists in 13 elementary schools.
- Approved \$67.5 million for construction of new middle school and new high school in Clarksburg
- Approved construction of Northeast Consortium Elementary School # 16 in the East County (\$12.2 million), construction for reopening of Wheaton Elementary School #6 in Connecticut Park (\$9.4 million), construction for reopening Belt Middle School in Wheaton (\$21.1 million), and construction for reopening of Northwood High School in Silver Spring (\$14 million)
- Added \$600,000 for new science labs at Richard Montgomery High School
- Extended a violence prevention program to all 35 middle schools
- Expanded basic adult education
- Approved a \$1 million increase in English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs

"Thanks to our County's success in Annapolis with the Thornton Commission, we are receiving \$8.6 million more than we expected in state aid," said Council President Silverman. "That money is going to go right where it's needed most – into the classrooms." Among other initiatives, the dollars will go toward the creation of a Downcounty Consortium, which will enrich programming choices for students at Blair, Einstein, Wheaton, and Kennedy high schools.

Health & Human Services

In the operating budget, the Council

- Added a two percent inflation increase for private contractors with the Department of Health & Human Services
- Expanded the "Linkages to Learning" program at Maryvale and Gaithersburg Elementary Schools – with another to be determined later
- Approved \$525,000 for the African American Health Initiative
- Approved \$525,000 for the Latino Health Initiative
- Approved \$250,000 in improvements to the Betty Ann Krahnke Center for victims of domestic violence
- Approved \$410,000 for a bio-terrorism team
- Approved \$234,000 for the Baby Steps program and \$342,500 for Healthy Families Home Visiting
- Increased funding for adult foster care (\$130,000) and home care (\$135,000), while also boosting respite care (\$67,500)

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- Increased senior transportation services to senior centers and escorted transportation services
- Increased case management for children with special needs by \$123,000
- Increased health care for the uninsured (\$70,000) and the “Care for Kids” program (\$50,000) and funded the Montgomery Community Partnership Prevention Center for six months (\$86,900)
- Added support for people with disabilities by adding \$400,000 for the CHI-Hillandale Center and \$50,000 for the ARC after-school program for children with disabilities
- Added \$400,000 for the Saturday school programs at the George Thomas Learning Center and \$11,500 for the African American Festival for Academic Excellence
- Added \$200,000 for additional security measures for Jewish Federation facilities in the County
- Added \$50,000 for the Family Learning Solutions program in Rosemary Hills
- Added \$95,000 for Catholic Charities, \$45,000 to Top Banana for food delivery to frail elderly and persons with disability, and \$14,500 to Food and Friends, which delivers meals to persons with AIDS/HIV

Public Safety

The Council moved to protect the people and property of Montgomery County residents as it:

- Approved 20 new red light cameras to deter red-light runners and protect motorists and pedestrians alike – bringing the County camera total to 45
- Approved funding for a new fire station in Clarksburg, in addition to the new East and West Germantown stations already approved
- Added a new Circuit Court Annex for \$40.5 million to fully implement Family Court and meet growing court needs
- Approved the operating budget needs for the new jail in Clarksburg, slated to open this summer
- Added an additional Fire Code Inspector and restored an administrative Fire support person in Rockville
- Restored funding for an additional Fire truck
- Approved \$6.2 million for the Integrated Justice Information System to improve coordination between various criminal justice agencies
- Approved \$21.9 million for use of the old County jail for central processing, court commissioner, police warrant & fugitive space
- Approved construction for new district police stations in Silver Spring and Gaithersburg/Montgomery Village
- Restored the Gang Prosecutor and a Field Community Prosecutor, and added three attorneys to the State’s Attorney’s budget
- Approved two new crossing guards at Newport Middle School
- Added an additional animal code enforcement officer
- Added \$160,000 for a traffic signal on Route 108 for the new Olney Boys & Girls Club ballfields

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Libraries

- Approved an operating budget with no cut in library hours
- Approved \$22 million to construct a new Rockville library by 2005
- Approved \$18 million to construct a new Germantown Library by 2005

Montgomery College

- Approved funding for expansion of the college's Takoma Park campus
- Approved \$2.1 million for salary improvements, new faculty, emergency preparedness, and the College Institute at Wootton and Gaithersburg high schools
- Added \$3 million for critical College technology needs

Parks & Recreation

- Restored \$3 million for Legacy Open Space so that Park and Planning can move to acquire and preserve critical properties throughout the County
- Approved construction of the Germantown Indoor Swim Center and the Damascus Recreation Center, as well as opening of Martin Luther King Jr. outdoor pool in White Oak and the renovated Bethesda pool
- Restored hours and staff at 16 recreation centers
- Approved \$920,000 for automated system to improve park maintenance
- Approved \$100,000 for Glen Echo operations
- Restored \$725,000 for Montgomery County Park and Planning

Housing and Community Development

- Funded the Housing Initiative Fund at \$15.6 million for the coming year
- Approved concept for \$9.4 million Silver Spring Civic Building
- Restored \$56,600 for one-stop job training
- Restored \$150,000 for Casa of Maryland for work on affordable housing and community development
- Restored \$20,000 for Housing Opportunities Commission children's summer camp

The Arts

- Approved \$500,000 for the American Film Institute in Silver Spring
- Approved \$100,000 for BlackRock Center for the Arts in Germantown
- Added \$100,000 for BAPA Imagination Stage in Bethesda
- Added \$125,000 for Olney Theatre Center in Olney
- Added \$62,500 for Pyramid Atlantic in Silver Spring
- Added \$75,000 for The Puppet Theatre in Glen Echo
- Approved \$60,000 for the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra at Strathmore Hall
- Added \$60,000 for National Chamber Orchestra at Strathmore Hall

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"New Americans" Communities

- Approved \$525,000 for the Latino Health Initiative
- Restored \$150,000 to Casa of Maryland for housing and community development
- Added \$30,720 for Korean American Association, \$20,000 for the League of Korean Americans of Montgomery County, \$20,000 for the Korean American Senior Citizens, and \$25,000 for the Korean Community Center for social services and language instruction
- Added \$30,000 for the Chinese Culture & Community Service Center
- Added \$43,350 for Centra Familia Institute for Family Development

Miscellaneous

- Approved \$656,000 to expand use of 60-gallon rolling carts for mixed-paper recycling, which has resulted in a 50 percent recycling rate increase in pilot neighborhoods
- Approved a Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission budget with zero rate increases for water and sewer services – for the fifth consecutive year

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