



## COMMISSION ON AGING

October 1, 2021

Chris Conklin, Director,  
Montgomery County Department of Transportation  
101 Monroe Street, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Rockville, MD 20850

Subject: Recommendations for use of the Transportation Services Improvement Fund (TSIF)

The Montgomery County Commission on Aging (CoA) appreciates the opportunity to provide recommendations to the Department of Transportation regarding the future use of the Transportation Services Improvement Fund (TSIF). The CoA is authorized by the Older Americans Act and was established by Montgomery County in 1974 to advise County government on the needs, interests, and issues of older adult residents, and to advocate on their behalf at the local, state, and national levels.

Given our perspective on issues affecting older adults, and our familiarity with transportation services provided by the County, the CoA is pleased to offer four recommendations that we believe support TSIF's mandated goal of "improving or expanding transportation options for persons with disabilities, eligible senior citizens, and persons of low income" in the County. Our recommendations, provided below, were recently discussed with Mr. Sam Oji and Mr. Walton Harris of your Department. In addition, we have reviewed and generally support the recommendations sent to you by the Montgomery County Taxicab Commission.

To more fully utilize the Transportation Services Improvement Fund, the COA recommends the following (listed in priority order):

- Provide better training to drivers who serve older adults, people with disabilities, and low-income residents and compensate them for their time to incentivize participation. The CoA has heard on numerous occasions about drivers who are verbally abusive, insensitive, and lack proper understanding of the equipment. We strongly believe the County needs to provide periodic sensitivity-type customer service training to every driver who serves older adults, people with disabilities, and low-income residents. The training should be required of all organizations and drivers receiving TSIF funds.
- Allow more flexibility. The CoA envisions an increase in the overall number of rides, not just rides provided by a struggling taxi industry. The funds can be used to support government agencies and non-profit organizations providing transportation to the target populations in urban, suburban, and rural communities throughout the County, including Recreation and Health and Human Services contractors, aging-in-place villages, and more.

**Department of Health and Human Services**

---

401 Hungerford Drive, 4th Floor, Rockville, Maryland, 20850 240-777-1120, FAX 240-777-1436  
[www.montgomerycountymd.gov/hhs](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/hhs)

- Expand eligibility for Call-n-Ride. We support the Taxicab Commission's recommendation to increase income limits for the Call-n-Ride Program. We agree that increasing these income levels can result in more people being eligible for discounted services and help to create new demand for taxi trips. Also, adding a new category of eligibility for non-disabled residents between the age of 50 and 65 years old will also create more demand for services.
- Develop a MCDOT cell phone App for each driver to use to report real-time data directly to the County on each trip's duration, origin and destination, charge/fee, and type of service user (e.g., low income, elderly, and/or disabled). Such an App would provide important data to the County on service delivery independent of the taxi dispatcher information. Together, the App and dispatcher data would reinforce each other's data, presenting an accurate accounting of program costs and delivery. Training on the use of this App can be done with the sensitivity-type training discussed above. The availability of this data would enable better reporting and transparency on the use of TSIF program funds.

We hope these recommendations will help you formulate plans for the TSIF and we look forward to discussing them further with you and/or your staff.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide these recommendations.

Sincerely

*Barbara Selter*

Barbara Selter, Chair  
Commission on Aging