

**AGING IN COMMUNITY COMMITTEE
OF THE
COMMISSION ON AGING**

Date: May 10, 2022
9:30am-11:30 am

“Transportation for Older Adults – A County and a Regional Perspective”

In Attendance: Mary Sweeney (co-chair, AIC), Wayne Berman (co-chair, AIC), Barbara Selter, Marsha Weber, Mona Grieser, Joyce Dubow, Betsy Carrier, Eddie Rivas, Nanine Meiklejohn.

Staff: Shawn Brennan, MC AAA

Guests: Sam Oji, Senior Planning Specialist, MoCo Department of Transportation; Lynn Winchell-Mendy, Transportation Planner III, Metro Washington COG; Marcia Pruzan, Age Friendly Montgomery; Sara Fought, Jewish Council for the Aging

Opening Remarks from the Co-Chairs: Wayne and Mary welcomed everyone and asked that they introduce themselves. Wayne then reviewed the agenda with the featured topic on “Transportation for Older Adults – A County and a Regional Perspective”

Approval of the Minutes: The minutes of the April 12, 2022 meeting were approved.

PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS: “Transportation for Older Adults – A County and a Regional Perspective” Wayne started the session and introduced the two featured presenters: Sam Oji, Senior Planning Specialist, MoCo Department of Transportation; and Lynn Winchell-Mendy, Transportation Planner III, Metro Washington COG; Shawn Brennan, MC AAA.

Sam Oji:

Mr. Oji spoke about the Montgomery County Department of Transportation’s vision for transportation is: “to provide a seamless transportation system for people of all ages, incomes and abilities that supports a vibrant and sustainable community.” The related mission of the MC DOT is “to move people and connect places with the best transportation choices and services.”

Sam spoke about the County’s efforts to provide transportation services for older adults in seven key areas:

- **Call-n-Ride:** This is a discounted taxi service aimed at improving mobility for low-income seniors 65 years and older and persons with disabilities 18 years and older. This service currently has 5,668 participants, 70% are seniors.
- **Same Day Access:** This is an ADA/Paratransit subsidy program for certified Montgomery County MetroAccess participants. Participants can get “same day” taxi service; MetroAccess trips must be scheduled at least one day in advance of the desired travel date

- **Ride On Fixed Route:** There are several notable aspects of the County’s Ride-On Fixed Route services that include the following: Free Rides, Flex, Flash, Zero Emission Bus Transition, Service Planning, Ridership, Ride On Reimagined Study, and IT Enhancements
 - A major topic of this conversation was the County’s transition to zero emission buses. Montgomery County’s mission is to lower emissions and has 4 Electric Buses in service out of the Silver Spring depot. Montgomery County is purchasing 10 more Electric Buses which will be in service by late June 2022. Montgomery County will have at least 65-70 Electric Buses by 2025 in our fleet. The Silver Spring Smart Energy depot Micro-Grid started in November 2021 and will be finished by July 2022 to power the buses.
 - Also discussed was Ride-On Reimagined Study. This will be a complete Montgomery County bus network study with Regional coordination and strong community and partner agency collaboration. The study is expected to be complete by winter 2023/2024 with implementation in the spring 2024. The CoA will be asked to participate in the study.
- **Medicaid Transportation:** This is a State supported program (Maryland Medicaid Transportation Program) that Provides a “safety net” transportation system to medical services for Montgomery County Medicaid clients with no other means of transportation or whose medical or physical needs prevent them from using such available transportation. The program utilizes Taxicabs, Wheelchair Vans, Non-Emergency Ambulance and Aero Transport Vendors. Average trips per month were 6,500 Pre-COVID and currently 4,500.
- **Awareness, Education, and Outreach:** Ongoing outreach activities include presentations, seminars, dissemination of transportation resource and information at senior residential facilities, senior recreation centers and other locations where seniors frequent. The DOT conducts travel training sessions with Ride On buses to teach residents how to navigate the public transportation system and all its features. The DOT received a \$693,000 COG Grant to purchase a travel training bus and enhance our travel training program. The DOT also participates in Community events throughout the County to disseminate senior transportation information, options and resources.
- **Connect-A-Ride:** For this innovative program, the County contract with the JCA to provide senior transportation information and referral service - about available transportation options and resources for seniors. This program links callers with public, private, and volunteer transportation options; and assists with program applications for services like Call-n-Ride, MetroAccess and other senior transportation services.
- **Transportation Service Improvement Fund (TSIF):** The TSIF is used to greater funding for the improved availability and use of wheeled Chair Accessible (WAV) for older adults and people with disabilities. Mr. Oji reviewed the key aspects of the County Council’s proposed recommendations for the TSIF in 2024. These include:
 - Recommendation: Increase the per mile payment to taxi operators from \$0.10 to \$0.40 (instead of to \$0.25).
 - Recommendation: Increase the per trip payment for taxi’s to from \$15 in the daytime and \$20 overnight to \$25 all the time (instead of to \$20 all the time).
 - Recommendation: Increase the reimbursement for new WAV and retrofit from \$15,000 to \$45,000 (instead of \$30,000).

- Maintain Recommendation at \$800,000 to allow MCDOT to also award TSIF grants for operating expenses, at their proposed capital-to-operating ratio of 4:1.
- It was also recommended to fund other TSIF-type projects from the County's Reconciliation list. For example, put \$350,000 of the \$550,000 proposed to allow the Recreation Department to purchase a bus to support its senior programs.

Lynn Winchell-Mendy

Ms Winchell-Mendy gave an overview of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) and the roll that it plays in helping to advance and support innovative transportation services for older adults. The COG is a Non-profit membership association made up of 24 regional member jurisdictions represented by 300 elected officials. The COG helps officials and residents address the region's major challenges like Transportation, Environment, Community, Public Health, Public Safety as a forum for regional discussion and trust source of date and analysis. The Transportation Planning Board (TPB) is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) made up of 23 member jurisdictions in DC, Suburban MD, and Northern VA, including local, state, regional, Federal partners. The TPB function is for coordination, data, analysis, and convener (but not as implementator).

Lynn explained the Enhanced Mobility Program (Section 5310) of the Federal Transit Law. Approximately \$3.3 million in Federal Transit Administration funding is available every year (\$5 million for 5 years under the new Infrastructure law). A local match is required. The COG is the Designated Recipient for the Washington DC-VA-MD Urban Area for these funds. The program funds projects that remove barriers to transportation services and expand transportation mobility options for people with disabilities and older adults. The unique role for TPB is to prioritize, select, and fund these types of projects. The projects types include Mobility Management, Vouchers, Service operating costs, Bus stop & Sidewalk Improvements, Vehicle Acquisition, Buses and Minivans, and Equipment. Funds from this program have helped Montgomery County.

As part of her presentation, Lynn gave a few local examples of projects that the TPB has funded and supported. Two of these include:

- Capitol Hill Village:
 - Mobility Management services in partnership with "Villages" – volunteer drivers, travel training (including ride-hailing), mobility counseling, all modes
 - Teaching use of technology for accessing transportation options yet also working to help those without smart phones
 - Peer Health Coordinators/"Office Hours"
- The Arc of Northern Virginia:
 - "Train the travel trainer" program that uses specialized "TravelMate" software to provide step-by-step instructions to support adults and students with intellectual disabilities to independently travel on bus and rail
 - Embeds travel training into disability organizations, schools, private employers, and works one-on-one with individuals and their families.

To wrap up her presentation Ms. Winchell-Mendy gave some ridership statistics for older adult transportation services in other counties in the Washington region. Also she cited some of the

problems that other counties are facing in delivering these services. The shortage of drivers seems to be a significant problem faced by many local governments in the delivery of transportation services to older adults.

Shawn Brennan

Shawn gave a perspective of transportation services for older adults in Montgomery County by expanding on some of the services that Sam Oji spoke about. She gave a few more thoughts on the Connect-A-Ride programs and the Jewish Council for the Aging's (JCA) Volunteer Transportation programs including Village Rides. Shawn also talked about the Senior Connection program to provide transportation services to older adults.

There was a significant amount of questions and answers that followed the presentations. Ideas on follow-up actions that the AIC might take will be discussed at the June meeting as time was getting late and the meeting was about to be adjourned.

NOTE: The presentations of Sam Oji and Lynn Winchell-Mendy will accompany these minutes.

OTHER COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Wayne mentioned that the COA Budget meeting will be held July 28th. All committees need to be prepared to present their recommendation for FY 2024 budget and advocacy priorities.

UPCOMING MEETING: The next AIC meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 14, 2022 at 9:30 am. The focus of the meeting will be on preparing a draft listing of budget and advocacy priorities for the AIC to present at the July 28 CoA Budget meeting. This meeting will be facilitated by Wayne Berman and Mary Sweeney.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 11:35 am