



COMMISSION ON AGING

September 27, 2018

The Honorable Roger Berliner
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Councilmember Berliner:

The Montgomery County Commission on Aging (COA) writes to express the COA's continued opposition to Expedited Bill 13-18, Taxicabs – Transportation Services Improvement Fund – Use of Fund, which was introduced during the County Council Session on April 3 of this year.

The Bill expands the purpose and use of the Transportation Services Improvement Fund (TSIF) to include "any transportation purpose in the County." The purpose of the TSIF was created to "improve the delivery of:

- accessible transportation services in the County;
- transportation for eligible senior citizens; and
- transportation for persons of limited income

As COA Chair Isabelle Schoenfeld testified on behalf of the COA on April 20 of this year, "The bill's objective is in direct opposition to the original intended purpose of the TSIF." It is still important to provide accessible transportation for people with disabilities, older adults, and people with limited income, especially when Transportation Network Companies (TNCs), such as Uber and Lyft, continue to not provide enough accessible vehicles.

While the County will require all taxis to be accessible by 2025, only 5 percent currently meet this goal. As the COA noted earlier, the regulations that implement TSIF do not provide adequate incentives for taxi operators to provide accessible vehicles and for taxi drivers to use the accessible vehicles. The County should take a fresh look at TSIF and its purposes of getting more accessible transportation. Some ideas that would provide more incentive than the current Department of Transportation regulations include:

- frontloading the cost of retrofitting vehicles;
- setting higher per-mile reimbursement rates;
- subsidizing driver leases for accessible vehicles;
- removing jurisdictional restrictions; and
- compensating drivers for giving return trips to passengers who must travel outside the county.

This list is not exhaustive, and COA would be open to other ideas that give greater incentives to taxi drivers/operators for providing more vehicles with accessibility features and for using those vehicles. COA is willing to work with stakeholders, including Commission on Disabilities, DOT and taxi drivers/operators, to come up with workable solutions.

Thank you for your consideration of COA's views.

Sincerely,

Isabelle Schoenfeld
Chair Commission on Aging

cc: Councilmembers