

BUDGET TESTIMONY, MARCH 8, 2017

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THANKS FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO TESTIFY.

FIRST, I WOULD LIKE TO COMMEND YOU ON THE RECENTLY PASSED:

1. AGING IN PLACE PROPERTY TAX CREDIT
2. CHANGING THE ELIGIBILITY AGE FOR THE SENIOR PROPERTY TAX CREDIT TO 65, AND
3. THE EXPANSION OF THE LIVEABLE HOMES PROPERTY TAX CREDIT THAT COMPREHENSIVELY ALLOWS HOME IMPROVEMENTS.

A RECENT ARTICLE IN AARP STATED THAT HOWARD IS ONLY ONE OF THREE COUNTIES THAT PROVIDES THESE PROPERTY TAX CREDITS.

SO WHAT ARE THE ASKS THAT HCCA WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN YOUR BUDGET?

FIRST, YOU ARE DEVELOPING A NEW TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN. TRANSIT BECOMES THE LIFELINE FOR OLDER ADULTS WHEN THEY CAN NO LONGER DRIVE. MOST OLDER ADULTS HAVE NEVER USED TRANSIT BUT SHOULD START NOW SO THAT THE USE OF PARATRANSIT IS MINIMIZED. PARATRANSIT IS VERY COSTLY AND CAN RUN \$44 PER TRIP. OUR ASK IS TO HAVE TRANSIT FREE FOR THOSE OVER 65 DURING NON PEAK HOURS AND ON WEEKENDS. WE HAVE TOO MANY BUSES THAT ARE RUNNING NEARLY EMPTY DURING NON PEAK HOURS. AN ESTIMATE DONE A FEW YEARS BACK SHOWS A LOSS IN REVENUE OF ONLY ABOUT \$20,000.

SECOND, IT IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT FOR OLDER ADULTS TO TESTIFY BEFORE THE HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL AND TONITE BEFORE YOU. THE LACK OF GOOD NIGHT VISION FOR OLDER ADULTS IS A REAL PROBLEM WHICH PRECLUDES ANY DRIVING AT NIGHT. TRANSIT DOES NOT STOP HERE AT NIGHT AND NOR DOES NEIGHBOR RIDE. OLDER ADULTS WOULD LIKE TO CONTINUE TO BE PART OF THE CIVIC FABRIC IN HOWARD COUNTY. WE ARE NOT VISIBLE AT HEARINGS AND THEREFORE NOT THOUGHT ABOUT. HCCA SUGGEST THAT SKYPE BE USED FOR TESTIMONY. (I USE THIS ALL THE TIME WITH MY DAUGHTERS FAMILY IN AUSTRALIA AND IS NOW COMMONLY USED). YOU CAN TRY THIS ON A PILOT BASIS AND SEE HOW WELL IT WORKS. WHEN YOU REALLY THINK ABOUT THIS, IT IS AN ADA ISSUE.

TO SUMMARIZE, HOWARD COUNTY CURRENTLY HAS ABOUT 45,000 PEOPLE OVER 65 AND THIS IS DUE TO GO TO 60,000 SHORTLY. BOOMERS

WILL BEGIN HITTING 80 IN ANOTHER 9 YEARS. WAIT AND SEE IS NOT A PLAN. WE PROVIDE VERY WELL FOR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN - THE SAME NEEDS TO BE DONE FOR OLDER ADULTS SO THAT HOWARD COUNTY IS A COMMUNITY FOR ALL AGES.