

South County Democratic Club

Policy Paper: Transportation

August 30, 2022

The Issue: Transportation is an essential governmental service. It allows citizens to participate in their communities, to access jobs, healthcare and shopping and government services. Adequate transportation requires a significant public investment in infrastructure. We need good roads and bridges. We also need mass transit that serves our people—whether they live in urban areas or rural area. Unfortunately, transportation infrastructure has often been at the bottom of the list of governmental funding priorities. Transportation is seriously underfunded nationally and on the state and local levels, but on a positive note, President Biden’s Infrastructure Plan promises substantial funds to update America’s transportation infrastructure.

Transportation Needs in South County: Access to public transportation presents unique problems in low density areas such as South County. South County is primarily rural. There is no regular bus service in South County and yet, South County residents need to get to doctor’s appointments, the grocery store and to access public services. Fortunately, for those in South County, the County has implemented an “on-demand” public transportation program. The program operates free of charge to those living in the following communities in South County: Edgewater, Mayo, Shady Side, Lothian, Galesville, Deale, South Colony, Bristol, Harwood, West River, Owensville, Sudley and Tracy’s Landing. Here’s how it works: bus or van service is provided Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. excluding holidays. Residents must call for service at least two hours before the requested pick-up time. Residents can go anywhere in South County or to the Edgewater Library. Demand for Call-n-Ride services have increased over the last year, but many South County residents simply do not know about the program.

Our Policy Recommendations:

- 1) Anne Arundel County needs to spend more on transportation. To put the need in perspective, the Anne Arundel County transportation department is allocated approximately \$6 million in the FY23 budget. Of this, \$4.3 million is used for public transit operations.

By comparison, Howard County allocates \$17 million, Prince George’s \$31 million and Montgomery County \$138 million for transportation. Anne Arundel County is larger and more populated than Howard County. Our transportation budget should reflect this. Accordingly, we recommend that the current transportation budget be increased by \$10.5 million to \$16.5 million in the FY 2024 budget.

- 2) The availability of Maryland Transit funding is based on a population density formula. The denser the population, the greater the funding. While there are merits to a population density approach (*i.e.*, it tends to concentrate development), this formula penalizes those in need of public transit in low-density (especially rural) area. A review of County transportation funding reveals that South County is significantly disadvantaged by the

current formula. Accordingly, we urge the Governor and General Assembly to revise the formula to add an “equity factor” to the state MDOT funding allocation. Under this approach, counties with low density areas such as South County would receive additional funds targeted for these areas.

- 3) Call ‘n Ride. This program has been a success in South County, but it could be even better. First, more folks in South County need to know about the program and how it works. The County should fund a major outreach effort to the people of South County and if feasible, target residents who do not have a vehicle registered with MVA.

Second, the County should increase funding for the program to allow for some weekend service. Alternatively, the County should consider modifying service to make it available Tuesday – Saturday, creating some weekend availability for the service.

Finally, the County should consider a pilot program to allow for service into Annapolis. Currently, service is only available to the Edgewater Library and users must then switch to a bus to access Annapolis. We propose on limited days, Call ‘n Ride be available to access limited sites outside of South County including municipal offices and Anne Arundel Medical Center.

Transportation is not a luxury; it is a necessity.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Contact George Donohue, Chairman of the Policy Committee of the South County Democratic Club. He can be reached at: donohuebvp@gmail.com. You may also contact Mike Spivey, President at mike@southcountymclub.org.