

NEIGHBOR RIDE, INC.  
TESTIMONY TO HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL  
OPERATING BUDGET – DEPARTMENT OF CITIZEN SERVICES  
COMMUNITY SERVICE PARTNERSHIPS

April 29, 2015

Good evening, I am Bruce Fulton, Executive Director of Neighbor Ride. We are located at 5570 Sterrett Place, Suite 102, Columbia, MD 21044. As you know, we are a non-profit that provides door-to-door transportation for Howard County residents 60 and over. The service is provided by generous volunteers who schedule the rides and drive seniors using their own vehicles.

In our 11<sup>th</sup> year of operations, Neighbor Ride volunteers are currently completing over 98% of the requested rides. Within the next two weeks, we will provide our 100,000 trip since our service began. Our office volunteers handle approximately 2,500 calls each month while our volunteer drivers are averaging almost 15,000 miles per month. We added 172 passengers in FY14 and have already added nearly 150 more in FY15. Our growth has resulted in the need for more office and driver volunteers to support our passengers. Ensuring that the county's seniors maintain their health and community connections will be assured by spreading the increasing demand across more volunteers. Thank you all for your continued help to Neighbor Ride in finding volunteers and local partners.

While we received \$44,400 in the proposed FY16 budget, we had requested an operating grant for \$48,000. The impact of this shortfall will be felt most in our

volunteer recruitment efforts which could lead to a reduction in our ride request completion rate.

This year we will continue to give back to the community through CarFit sessions in cooperation with the Office on Aging and the Police Department.

With 4 part-time staff supporting the more than 335 volunteers who generously serve on the Board, do special projects, provide administrative support, coordinate ride requests and provide the rides, we are a very cost efficient model of supplemental transportation. In fact, for FY15, leveraging of our CSP grant with other income sources, and including volunteer time, the return on investment to Howard County residents is being maintained at about 16:1.

Additionally, I would like to emphasize that we realize we are one of many organizations in the county dependent on the CSP budget. We very much appreciate County Executive Kittleman's funding for CSP grants. Thank you for your continuing support as well.

I would like to close with thoughts from passengers and the families of passengers:

From Passengers' Families:

My brother works full time and I live out of state. My mother and father have been married a long time but my father developed health issues and needed to be in a nursing home. This has been a very difficult transition for all my family, especially

for my Korean speaking parents. Then I found Neighbor Ride's website and learning my mother could use this service to visit my father in the nursing home. She goes three times a week to spend time with my Dad and to take him the Korean food he so enjoys. This volunteer transportation service has been a godsend for our family during this difficult time.

From Passengers:

"Neighbor Ride's volunteers are courteous, thoughtful and caring individuals. This is a remarkable service that takes the stress of finding a ride and turns it into a positive feeling of community."

Again we greatly appreciate the support we've received from Howard County. Thank you for your time this evening.