

**Election 2018: Candidate Information Session**

**Transportation**

**Policy Issue #1: Compliance with Americans for Disabilities Act (ADA) to ensure bus stop safety and access.**

*Background*

* 490 RTA bus stops in Howard County of which approximately 50 have shelters leaving only “poles” in the ground for the remaining 450.
* Most stops lack basic amenities such as concrete pad to stand on, a bench, trashcan or adequate lighting.
* Many stops aren’t connected to a sidewalk; and even some that are connected are not fully accessible to persons with disabilities.
* Since 211, 140 stops have been improved but not all to fully meet ADA requirements.
* With carryover from prior years unspent Capital funding, Office of Transportation (OTA) has projected $584,000 is available for FY 2019 improvements, sufficient to improve about 50 bus stops.

*Policy opportunities to address issue*

* Provide FY 2020 resources to develop and begin implementation of a Bus Stop Plan that will bring together in one place a set of coordinated recommendations from the TDP, WalkHoward and BikeHoward.
* Increase FY 2020 thru FY 2022 capital projects funding that will ensure complete Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance of all Howard County bus stops by FY 2022.

**Policy Issue #2:** **Enhancing transit options and reliability for individuals with mobility issues, such as seniors and persons with disabilities.**

*Background*

* $4.3 million allotted to paratransit services in FY 2019 County budget
* County estimates $56.33 per paratransit trip
* July 2016 paratransit ridership

Riders #Trips

Total 356 3,983

>20 trips in the month 66 1,805

<20 trips in the month 290 2,178

*Policy opportunities to address issue*

* Administration prioritization of implementation of Mobility Access Plan recommendations (anticipated to be available by February 2019).
* Ongoing integration of County services with complimentary for-profit and nonprofit agencies and organizations that provide specialized transportation services.
* Fund OTA Efforts to shift paratransit riders to fixed routes to free up resources for residents most critically in need of paratransit services, while minimizing negative impact on current ridership.
* Identify and secure State funding for improvements in paratransit services, including funding for additional buses and drivers.
* Explore paratransit service alternatives, such as taxi vouchers/subsidies, ridesharing, etc.

**Policy Issue #3: Development of approved Columbia Downtown Transit Center is almost 10 years away according to County plans.**

*Background*

* Not only a core element of improving ridership and cutting wait times but the new Multi-model Transit Center is also linked to 150 units of affordable housing promised in the Downtown Columbia Plan.

*Policy opportunities to address issue*

* 2016 Transportation Demand Management Plan for Downtown Columbia. New Transit Center location located within a 5 to 10 minute walk from downtown neighborhoods.
* Consultants advised need 20 households per acre to support the Downtown Shuttle, a proposed 2.8-mile route, capital cost $150,000 and operating annual costs $340 to $420 thousand. Time frame 10-15 years.

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**Additional Background**

* Transportation Development Plan (TDP), County Council approved May 2018 (CR48-2018)
* TDP Mobility Section Excerpt