

Response to Questions on the FY 2010 County's Line of Business & Schools Program Review Processes Fall 2008

Request By: Supervisor Hudgins

Question: What is the population served by the Seniors On-The-Go! Program and where would the customers go if the program was eliminated?

Response: The Seniors On-The-Go! (SOTG) program provides opportunities for seniors to maintain independence and remain living in their homes through use of the County's taxi cab network. Since its inception and combined with other transportation resources in the County (fixed route bus services; TaxiAccess; community-based volunteer drivers; FASTRAN Dial-a-Ride), SOTG has provided a reliable and flexible transportation option for moderate to low income seniors. Through this program, eligible senior citizens buy discounted coupons for taxicab service, allowing seniors to travel 24 hours a day, seven days a week. SOTG was created in recognition of the traveling challenges faced by seniors due to difficulties in using public transportation, limited hours of FASTRAN availability, and/or the existence of physical and mental disabilities. The program currently serves about 4,500 Fairfax County residents. The majority of participants are female (76 percent), age 76 and above (74 percent), and have an annual income of \$25,000 or less (68 percent). Residents with an annual income of over \$50,000 are not eligible for the program.

Elimination of SOTG would present program users with a real and distinct crisis, since they would have to rely on other means of transportation which may not be as appropriate or flexible:

- Some participants with no health issues could use the fixed-route bus service provided by Fairfax Connector and regional Metrobus routes.
- For participants with medical needs, community-based faith organizations might respond to some ride requests. However, this type of transportation is not always available or reliable. It also would add another burden to the already strained resources of volunteer organizations.
- A final but very finite resource for Seniors On-The-Go! users would be the FASTRAN Dial-a-Ride Program (DAR). However, this program has: (1) limited weekday service hours (10 AM – 2 PM); (2) restrictions in cross-county trip availability; and (3) restrictive income parameters (ridership based on 225 percent of the Federal Poverty Guideline. It is important to note that Community and Recreation Services, the parent agency of DAR, has recommended severe cuts in the DAR program in its LOBS with a potential impact on at least 1,000 of its current users.