



Fairbanks North Star Borough

DEPARTMENT OF THE ASSEMBLY
Division of Boards and Commissions

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December 16, 2021

Mayor Bryce Ward
907 Terminal Street
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Subject: Recommendation for use of the unallocated American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for the welfare of FNSB Senior Citizens

The FNSB SCAC met on November 18, 2021 and held a discussion regarding recommendations to the Administration for use of unallocated ARPA funds to address the needs of older adults living in the Borough. Based on our understanding, the FNSB Assembly advanced ordinance 2021-20-1D on September 23, 2021 which approved acceptance of \$18.8 million in ARPA funds for the Borough and allocated roughly \$12 million for Borough projects, leaving \$6.75 million unallocated for future budget deliberations by the Assembly and Administration. Regarding utilization of the unallocated ARPA funds, the FNSB SCAC believes that the Borough work to improve transit services for Fairbanks seniors using a small amount of the ARPA funds to produce a Coordinated Transportation Plan. Reliable and safe transportation is vital for all of us, but especially for seniors who do not drive, and connects our older people to senior programs and activities provided by the FNSB, as well as the means to make other essential trips. An allocation to enhance senior transit services would promote the welfare of the growing number of seniors living in the FNSB and falls within the powers of our second-class Borough.

Senior Transportation, Investment in a FNSB Coordinated Transportation Plan. The FNSB SCAC, in collaboration with the FNSB Parks and Recreation Department, are in the process of distributing a Senior Transportation Survey, from December 1, 2021 through January 31, 2022 (survey attached). The purpose of this survey is to gather data from seniors regarding their transportation needs, particularly older adults who no longer drive. Older people require reliable, affordable, and safe transportation to medical appointments, activities, visits to family and friends, and community life which are essential for senior health and well-being. Transportation has been particularly problematic during the pandemic as some providers have limited this service due to workforce shortages and for healthy/safety reasons, leaving seniors who do not drive with few options to get to their destinations.

According to the [2019 FNSB Senior Needs Assessment](#) (p.26), transportation was identified as one of the highest needs for seniors by FNSB provider interviews. The FNSB senior population is projected to peak in 2025 and continue to grow slowly through 2045. In 2019, the FNSB



provided approximately 133,000 MACS senior trips annually (or 182/daily) and Van Tran provided 1,000 trips/year (including seniors and people with disabilities). Unfortunately, current data regarding senior rides from the Transportation Department is not available because no fares have been charged since the pandemic, which is the main criteria the Department uses to identify its senior passengers. According to the projection in the FNSB Senior Needs Assessment, the average number of MACS senior rides is expected to increase to 231 daily by 2035, an increase of 49 daily rides from 2019. There are few options to compensate for this increase as there is no additional capacity for the door-to-door Van Tran service and accessible taxis are limited in the Borough.

A borough-wide Coordinated Transportation Plan between all agencies providing senior transportation services is needed to reduce duplication of effort and to maximize limited funding for our growing senior population's transit needs. This Plan would help to coordinate scheduling, purchase insurance, vehicle maintenance, make bulk fuel purchases, and address other logistics to reduce burden on transportation providers who are at or over capacity, including Van Tran. The SCAC recommends that the FNSB contract with a consultant to convene transportation providers to produce a workable coordinated transportation plan that could effectively increase ridership at the lowest cost. Findings from the senior survey can be used to inform development of this plan by identifying specific unmet senior transportation needs, areas in the Borough most affected, and explore suggestions from seniors and the FNSB Transportation Department of ways to improve services. The survey findings will be shared with the Administration as well.

We appreciate your consideration of this recommendation as we work together to improve the quality of life for our growing senior population. Please let me know if you would like further information. Thank you and Happy Holidays!

Sincerely,

Denise Daniello

Denise Daniello (Dec 17, 2021 09:02 AKST)

Denise Daniello

FNSB Senior Citizens Advisory Commission Chair