

Garrett Transit seeking more than \$2.5 million in grant funding

by Renée Shreve
STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND — Garrett County Community Action's fiscal year 2019 Transportation Plans Grant application requests total more than \$2.5 million, agency officials informed the county commissioners last week.

"This is an application for state and federal funding through the Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Transit Administration," Mike Hill, director of Community Action's Garrett Transit Service, told the commissioners.

He noted it has taken several months to prepare the application.

GTS is applying for \$2,249,954 for operational assistance, made available by the Public Transportation and Statewide Special Transportation Assistance programs. Of that funding, \$1,746,854 is federal and state money.

"The remainder of that is a county and local match," Hill said.

Capital requests total \$419,944, of which \$377,950 is federal and state money.

"That will be used to purchase two replacement vehicles this year, two of our buses, and preventive maintenance of our fleet," Hill said.

He provided an overview of recent GTS statistics.

"We received 11 new buses, replacing ones that were past their 'useful life benchmark,' as set up by the Federal Transit Administration," Hill said.

GTS currently has a fleet of 39 vehicles, 23 of which are transit buses.

"We hired two full-time and one substitute driver in the past year, which brings our total number of employees to 32, and 23 of those are drivers," Hill said.

In FY 2017, GTS transported 99,550 passengers a total of 922,460 miles, according to the director.

"Is all your transportation predetermined routes?" Commissioner Jim Hinebaugh asked.

"No," Hill replied. "It's ac-



Staff photo by Lindsay Mulliken

Garrett Transit Service Director Mike Hill reviews a transportation grant application during the county commissioners' meeting last week.



Staff photo by Lindsay Mulliken

Duane Yoder, president of the Garrett County Community Action Committee, talks about rural transportation issues with the county commissioners.

tually the opposite. We're totally demand-response, meaning someone calls in and can be picked up right at their door."

He described it as "door-to-door" service, with passengers being transported to work, medical appointments, hair stylists, shops, pharmacies and numerous other places.

See TRANSIT, B7

Thursday, April 12, 2018

THE REPUBLICAN

TRANSIT

(Continued from Page B1)

"We actually don't have any fixed routes at all," Hill said.

Fixed routes have been tried in the past, with no success, he indicated. He said Garrett County's rural setting is not conducive to fixed routes with established bus stops.

"People just can't walk down the sidewalk and get to them," Hill said. "Many people can't."

Hinebaugh also asked about

passenger fees.

For the general public, the cost is \$2 for a one-way trip within a 16-mile radius of Oakland. The basic fee increases based on the number of miles outside that radius.

For disabled persons and senior citizens age 60 and over, the cost is \$1.50 for a one-way trip within the Oakland radius.

Hill noted that GTS has expanded its hours. It now operates from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. The

office used to close at 4:30.

"But now we are open, available, and have buses on the road until 6 p.m.," he said, noting the additional time is especially beneficial to riders who don't get off work until 5 p.m. "That seems to be catching on, seems to be working well."

For more information, call 301-533-9010 or 301-334-9431, Ext. 6300.

Staff writer Renée Shreve can be reached at 301-501-8394 or by email at rshreve@therepublicannews.com.