

Wilmington, Delaware
June 15, 2023

#0320

Sponsor:

**Council
Member
Darby**

WHEREAS, in 2021, individuals aged 65 and older were found to be the fastest-growing segment of Delaware’s society. Since 2010, there has been a 55% increase in the number of seniors in our State. Collectively, Delawareans over age 65 account for nearly a quarter of the population; and

Co-Sponsor:

**Council
Member
Oliver**

WHEREAS, nationally, seniors are among the most economically insecure. Over 15 million adults over the age of 65 are living at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. For many individuals with fixed monthly incomes, balancing life’s necessities can be financially challenging; and

WHEREAS, financial strain, compounded with limitations to mobility, such as health conditions that prevent seniors from driving or their lack of reliable transportation, are significant barriers to health and social connections for older Delawareans. The recently released U.S. Surgeon General’s Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community identified individuals over the age of 65 as having the highest risks of social isolation. The impacts of social isolation on an individual’s risk of premature death are similar to those of smoking up to 15 cigarettes daily. The U.S. Surgeon General’s report estimates that \$6.7 billion in Medicare spending on hospital and nursing facilities is associated with social isolation among older Americans; and

WHEREAS, public transportation can be a lifeline for seniors, especially those who are aging in place, to reach food stores, health facilities, and other essential services, as well as family and friends. Allowing elderly riders to access DART (Delaware Authority for Regional Transit) services free of charge would eliminate financial considerations as a factor in whether

they can travel to get food or medicine, attend medical appointments consistently, or engage with their social support systems at the local level; and

WHEREAS, DART First State buses and paratransit currently discount regular fares by 60% for adults older than 65 and adults with disabilities who present a Medicare card or proof of disability. To supplement the demands for transportation among seniors, DART First State also implemented the Senior Citizens Affordable Taxi (SCAT) program, which provides a 50% discount on taxi fares. While these programs serve numerous seniors, even the reduced costs can be prohibitive, considering inflation and the many other food, medical, and other expenses seniors incur.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILMINGTON the Wilmington City Council encourages the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) to offer free rides for Delawareans over the age of 65 on all DART (Delaware Authority for Regional Transit) buses and paratransit vehicles throughout the state of Delaware.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED this policy would reduce the financial burden placed on seniors relying on public transportation to move freely throughout the state and complete their daily responsibilities, as well as empower them to remain engaged in their local community despite the barriers they face.

Passed by City Council,

ATTEST: _____
City Clerk

SYNOPSIS: This Resolution encourages the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) to offer free rides for Delawareans over the age of 65 on all DART (Delaware Authority for Regional Transit) buses and paratransit vehicles throughout the state of Delaware. Seniors are among the most financially insecure and have the greatest risk of experiencing social isolation. Public transportation can be a lifeline for elderly Delawareans, especially those who are aging in place, to reach food stores, health facilities, and other essential services, as well as family and friends.