

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPT. OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

Alaska Commission on Aging

SEAN PARNELL, GOVERNOR

P.O. BOX 110693
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99811-0693
PHONE: (907) 465-3250
FAX: (907) 465-1398

February 21, 2011

Senator Johnny Ellis
Alaska State Capitol, Room 103
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Subject: Support for SB 77

Dear Senator Ellis:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) is pleased to offer our support of SB 77, a bill to appropriate \$3 million from the State's General Funds to the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities to incentivize local transit systems so that they are able to leverage maximum federal financial assistance to support operating expenses for their public transit projects that could amount to \$12 to \$15 million of additional funds to Alaska for transit purposes.

Safe, accessible and affordable transportation options are essential for older Alaskans and people with disabilities so that they are able to access medical care, get to their job and volunteer placements and to participate in community life. Transportation is one of the top needs consistently identified in statewide surveys of these populations, including the elder-senior community forums and a statewide senior survey recently conducted by ACoA to determine priority concerns of older Alaskans.

Community transportation is a life-line for seniors and people with physical and cognitive disabilities to ensure a healthy quality of life. As the number of seniors in Alaska grows at a pace of four times the national average, the ACoA recommends that the state of Alaska support legislation and adequate funding for community transit systems that serve special needs populations.

Alaska is one of only three states that does not provide financial support to operate public and community transportation systems. Transportation costs are rising dramatically. Fuel costs, maintenance and insurance premiums are going up and providers are responding by reducing hours of service and raising fares. These changes impact seniors and others with disabilities who live on a fixed income and depend on community transit services.

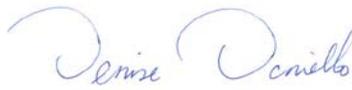
Please accept our sincere appreciation for your efforts to support improvements to community transit services for older Alaskans and others with disabilities. We believe that SB 77 will help build local community transportation services to improve services for all users, particularly for Alaska's most vulnerable citizens. Please feel free to contact Denise Daniello, ACoA's executive director (465-4879 or denise.daniello@alaska.gov) should you require additional information about our position. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Sharon Howerton-Clark
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,



Denise Daniello
ACoA Executive Director