

CHEER Fights for You at Transportation Hearings By Jesse Lanier (CHEER Marketing)

CHEER's transportation service opens doors for seniors in Sussex County—allowing them a degree of mobility and independence that would be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to obtain otherwise. To help preserve this service, CHEER testified at DelDot's Joint Finance Committee hearing in Dover on February 16, 2010. The hearing is a part of the state's yearly budgeting process.

"I am asking that you ensure community-based and essential core services," CHEER's Ken Moore said at the hearings. Moore pointed out that Sussex County's senior population was a major constituency in the county: "Sussex County's elderly population is growing at rates that exceed national averages. The average age of senior citizens is higher than the national average."

CHEER transportation provides more than 8,500 trips each month to Sussex County seniors: taking seniors from their homes to activity centers, to errands and activities, and then back home again. For CHEER members who are unable to drive (and don't have friends or family nearby to help), this service is vital. Without it, many would be unable to get to CHEER Centers for food, for companionship, and for group-organized errands. The availability of CHEER transportation makes it possible for many seniors to remain in their own homes and reduces isolation.

Just as seniors depend upon us, CHEER depends on the State to fund transportation. We aren't asking for much, just that legislators don't cut the amount of funding we receive.

CHEER's gas costs and insurance costs (not to mention the number of seniors in need of our transportation service) have increased a great deal since 2004. The level of funding we receive from the state, however, is unchanged since that year.

"I am not asking for more money, I know the current economy does not allow it," Moore told the Committee. "I am asking that you ensure continuance of the transportation program which fosters personal independence and prevents rural senior citizens from becoming isolated in their homes, away from vital community services."

Without CHEER's transportation service, Delaware's state-operated Paratransit system would have to expand to incorporate hundreds of seniors in Sussex County. What's more: the Paratransit system costs more than CHEER's. Keeping CHEER transportation up and running is imperative for the state and for Sussex County seniors.

"Recognize that we are a vital part in a transportation network that would cost more and serve less if we were not present," Moore told the Committee.

The Legislature must vote on the State's annual budget by June 30, 2010.