



FY17 CAPITAL BUDGET TESTIMONY

Presented by

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To the

Maryland Senate – Budget & Taxation Capital Budget Subcommittee

James DeGrange, Sr., Chair

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And the

Maryland House – Appropriations Capital Budget Subcommittee

Adrienne A. Jones, Chair

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Mission Statement

MPT’s mission is to educate, entertain and enlighten the people of Maryland and beyond through creative programs and services of the highest quality, delivered through traditional public broadcasting and new multimedia technologies. MPT’s commitment to excellence, innovation, diversity and the values of Marylanders is essential to its mission.



FY17 Capital Budget appropriation for MPT

Governor Hogan’s FY17 capital budget includes \$50,000 to replace exciters at our Hagerstown transmitter and \$100,000 to fund equipment (dish, waveguide, receiver, fiber, etc.) at tower sites across the state.

The \$150,000 capital budget inclusion for FY17 follows on the heels of capital appropriations in FY15 and FY16. As we pointed out two years ago, the FY15 allocation was the first MPT capital funding in roughly 10 fiscal years.

We are grateful for this third consecutive appropriation, which certainly will go a long way toward sustaining and improving MPT’s service to Marylanders.

A legacy of service: entertainment, education, public safety and citizenship

Maryland Public Television (MPT) is a valuable service organization for the citizens of this state. When our founding legislation was enacted by the Maryland legislature in 1966, lawmakers undoubtedly had no idea what form that service would take.

Since that time, MPT has created a service model that incorporates entertainment, education, public safety and citizenship. We are the state agency that delivers to Marylanders an array of information, engagement and entertainment that genuinely promotes the well-being of our citizens and our communities from Garrett County to the Eastern Shore.

Because of the support of the people of Maryland, we relate to all our stakeholders with a service, rather than a sales, orientation. And our stakeholders comprise a wide range of groups within the state. They are television viewers and “just average citizens” ... news junkies and artists ... students and teachers ... business persons and non-profit groups ... senior adults and children in childcare ... and even elected officials. When service is the mission, the test of whether we are “delivering the goods” is in the response of citizens to our programming and the endorsement of civic, educational, governmental, and organizational leaders.

MPT – Television since 1969

On October 5, 1969, MPT went on the air with its telecast of *Nightmare’s Child*. From that simple broadcast from a single transmission tower in Owings Mills, MPT expanded to its present-day lineup of three separate channels (MPT-HD, MPT2, and V-me, a Spanish language channel) transmitted from six statewide towers and carried on numerous cable and satellite systems.

“Television” is our middle name, and it’s the primary way in which most citizens connect with MPT. We maintain that – unlike a majority of network and cable fare – MPT’s programming truly enlightens, educates and entertains. It does not insult the intelligence of the people who tune in. We believe that the many awards we earn every year for our programs – including eight Emmy® Awards in FY15 alone – and the increasingly favorable Nielsen ratings and the voluntary financial contributions of nearly 66,000 households, hundreds of businesses, and dozens of foundations all mean that MPT’s broadcast service is sought-after, appreciated, recognized, respected and rewarded for its high quality and value.

As we engage with the Maryland legislature in pursuit of FY17 state funding, several key facts about MPT as “television” demand emphasis:

First, and most important, MPT is a television station with a free statewide broadcast signal. No other Maryland broadcaster can make that claim or, more important, take on that significant responsibility. In FY15, 1.7 million viewers tuned in to MPT on a monthly basis. In addition, MPT’s content is accessed by citizens through an online video player that in FY15 accounted for more than 405,000 page views made by 124,000-plus users.

Second, as a state licensee of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), MPT is a conduit for disseminating quality PBS programming to all corners of Maryland along with our own locally produced programs and series. Over the course of a year, 82 percent of all U.S. television households – and 198 million people – watch PBS programs. PBS continues to be one of this nation’s most trusted media brands and MPT is, simply put, the conduit of PBS in Maryland. MPT remains the eighth largest of 161 PBS member stations across the country.

Third, MPT delivers highly regarded local productions and specials as well as programs with national appeal.

On the local level, MPT covers our state like no other medium headquartered in Maryland or elsewhere. In FY15 we offered our viewers a total of 245 individual, locally produced programs accounting for 128 hours of broadcast time. Being a Maryland institution, MPT’s program lineup has a distinctively Maryland-centric emphasis. Our regular weeknight series – *Direct Connection, Your Money & Business*,

State Circle, Outdoors Maryland, Maryland Farm & Harvest, Artworks and Chesapeake Collectibles – are sought out by viewers for their coverage of the news, politics, culture, industry and civic affairs of the Free State.

But Maryland-centered specials are a significant part of the program lineup as well. In FY15, MPT brought to its viewers such programs as the *Concert for the Chesapeake Bay 2015, The Chesapeake Bay Summit: Charting a Course*, the Maryland gubernatorial debates, and the stunning documentary *Potomac by Air: Our Nation's River*.

Other local programming provides a service to viewers that is not available from our commercial counterparts. *Fighting Cancer: Q&A, You Can Afford College*, and *Unlocking Invisible Fences* are examples of this service-oriented programming provided by MPT to Maryland citizens.

Either as a full producer or in the role as presenting station, in FY15 MPT was responsible for producing or acquiring entertaining programs that spanned state borders and viewer generations in their appeal and reach. These programs certainly support the business and tourism interests of Maryland and, in general, put our state front-and-center on the national map.

Examples are: *Great Performances: Star-Spangled Spectacular: Bicentennial of Our National Anthem* (1.88 million viewers, 96% of all U.S. television households); *Handel's Messiah: A United States Naval Academy Tradition*; the *2015 National Geographic Bee*; and *Thinking Money: The Psychology behind Our Best and Worst Financial Decisions*.

Also on the national stage, the MPT-produced *MotorWeek* reached audiences across the nation in its remarkable 34th season, and newcomer to the national schedule Steven Raichlen's *Project Smoke* proved a worthy successor to the hall of fame chefs featured in other productions under MPT auspices.

Finally, from its earliest days, MPT has provided instructional TV programs to help fulfill the station's commitment to education. For three hours each day, seven days a week, on our MPT2 secondary channel, we offer programs that are targeted to teachers and parents. This service accounts for nearly 1,100 televised hours each year. Samples of what educators are viewing during these hours include the courses "Biography of America" and "Making Civics Work."

For the young viewers themselves, MPT airs children's programs whose content helps prepare the youngsters for formal schooling. On-air content for children is, of course, free, safe and trusted by parents and childcare professionals. This programming airs on MPT-HD for seven hours each weekday and for three hours on Sunday mornings. Children's programs also air on MPT2 for five hours on Saturday mornings and for one hour on Sunday mornings. All told, children's programs accounted for 2,122 hours on MPT in FY15.

If television were all that MPT was about, we might simply request continued funding to make quality TV accessible to citizens across Maryland. We would commit to keeping our six transmitters running and six large towers secure. We would simply pledge to continue producing Maryland-centric series to supplement PBS fare. If MPT meant only TV, we would continue delivering quality programming to underserved groups – such as rural populations and citizens unable to afford cable, satellite or mobile transmission – and keep covering local and state issues that affect our citizens and communities. We would continue to ensure that all Marylanders enjoy the same access that they've had to public broadcasting since we went on the air in 1969.

Fortunately, state officials back in the 1960s wisely decided that MPT would be – in the words of a former local advertising slogan – "bigger than television." And so we are.

Beyond television

MPT also is a free classroom, a free stage for the arts, a convener of concerned citizens, a storyteller of Maryland history, and a trusted source of important information – all beyond what is seen on the television screen.

Vietnam Initiative

Already three years in the making, MPT's salute to Maryland service members of the Vietnam era – our largest-ever initiative – culminates in 2016 as a long-overdue thank you to those who worked and fought in an unpopular war. ***MPT Salutes Vietnam Veterans*** comprises these major components:

- ***Maryland Vietnam War Stories*** – a three-hour documentary film airing in three parts, May 24-25-26. This ambitious documentary features the stories of nearly 100 Vietnam-era veterans from the Maryland area, presented in their own words. We obtained these stories as the result of conducting 20 listening sessions over three years with more than 250 veterans in locations across the state. All footage from recorded video interviews is being preserved permanently by the Maryland Historical Society so that this important oral history is available to all Marylanders in the future.
- ***LZ Maryland*** – a major weekend event, June 18-19, at the Maryland State Fairgrounds in Timonium. This Father's Day weekend gathering of tens of thousands of area veterans, family members and friends (and the general public, of course) will be a time for reflection, remembrances, camaraderie and honor, with a special tribute to the more than 1,000 Marylanders who were killed or are missing in action as a result of the war. Events include a solemn tribute ceremony, the stirring conclusion of a motorcycle "Honor Ride" featuring Vietnam and other military veterans from across the mid-Atlantic region as a salute to fallen and missing service members; the display of "The Wall That Heals," the traveling half-size replica of Washington, D.C.'s Vietnam Veterans Memorial; displays of a Huey helicopter and other aircraft, vehicles, and military gear and equipment of the era; a mobile Army surgical hospital (MASH) unit; nationally known musical entertainment from the Vietnam years; and much more.
- ***MPT Salutes Vietnam Veterans Traveling Exhibit*** – This popular traveling exhibit has been making its way around Maryland since May 2015 to celebrate the military service of Marylanders during the Vietnam War. The exhibit features both current-day and wartime images of 16 men and women along with their recollections of incidents from the war. An artifact display includes items from the war. Also offered at the exhibit is an opportunity for children to color pages to thank veterans as well as stationery for visitors to craft messages to veterans or share their own stories. More than two dozen stops are planned throughout Maryland and the District of Columbia. The exhibit was on display at the Miller Senate Office Building from February 9 - 21 and will continue its statewide tour through 2016.
- ***Vietnam history for Maryland schools*** – a companion guide to the MPT documentary will be provided to teachers so that students can learn about the war. Educators, students and families gain awareness of the Vietnam conflict through MPT-provided content aligned with curriculum standards and through activities that engage all in exploring the historical time period through the experiences of Maryland's Vietnam veterans.

All of these activities coincide with the nation's 50th anniversary commemoration of the Vietnam War. MPT is proud to be an official partner in the 50th anniversary observance of the Department of Defense Vietnam War Commemoration. The Commemorative Partner Program is designed for federal, state and

local communities, veteran organizations and other nongovernmental organizations to assist a grateful nation in thanking and honoring our Vietnam veterans and their families.

Given all that our state's more than 130,000 Vietnam veterans have endured, Maryland Public Television is compelled to address the issue through this unprecedented multi-faceted initiative.

Education

From its earliest days, MPT has recognized and embraced its educational mission. We consider ourselves to be a Maryland educational institution that reaches into far more communities, schools and homes than do all of our state's colleges and universities combined.

MPT's educational initiatives continue to place an emphasis on the development and delivery of high-quality products and services for Pre-K – 12 schools, childcare providers, communities and families. A key focus in education is the creation and delivery of professional development and the integration of innovative multimedia resources into curriculum-based learning.

At the center of MPT's educational outreach is *Thinkport.org*, a robust web portal housing a dynamic collection of interactive resources, multimedia, online learning adventures, curriculum-based lesson plans, and innovative technology tools. *Thinkport* made its debut as a resource to educators in 2003. In FY15, *Thinkport* recorded 18.4 million page views and more than 1.85 million visitor sessions. These statistics underscore that this centerpiece of MPT's education enterprise is vibrant, sought-after, and highly useful to our citizens who have come to rely upon it throughout the years.

To date, there are approximately 48,000 registered users of *Thinkport*. These are overwhelmingly educators, but children, parents, and childcare providers also are users. By registering (for free), an individual has access to the following tools that the casual visitor to the *Thinkport* site doesn't see: a classroom website builder, online storage space to save and store resources, and a lesson builder. Educators also come to *Thinkport* for valuable online courses and diverse professional development opportunities.

During the 2014-2015 school year, 1,523 educators and childcare providers took one or more of our 68 credit-bearing course offerings for licensure and/or certification in early childhood or K-12 education.

Enlisted by the Maryland State Department of Education to produce a new online developmental screening course of childcare providers in Maryland, MPT is serving as the sole course provider and facilitator. The online training opportunity, reaching 30,000 providers, meets a state requirement that takes effect July 1, 2016.

Outreach

MPT's service to communities is by no means relegated to whatever content is broadcast on our three TV channels or posted to our websites. Community engagement – literally our team members being out in communities around the state and inviting the community into our studios – is crucial to MPT's service orientation and deepens our understanding of community issues and helps us learn about where, when and how MPT can assist. Here are some community engagement highlights from FY15:

- ***Downton Abbey*** – MPT celebrated the Season 5 premiere of the popular *Downton Abbey* series in January 2015 with a Baltimore screening event, complete with costume contests and “selfie” photos in front of a large photo backdrop of Highclere Castle. More than 200 enthusiastic fans were treated to a sneak preview of the new season.

- **Financial Literacy** – MPT presented *Thinking Money*, a multifaceted project focused on financial literacy that included two productions, live audience discussions, online access and exhibits – all aimed at reaching citizens to educate them about money and financial well-being. We also presented our 33rd annual broadcast of *You Can Afford College* in November 2014, during which more than 100 parents and high school students called into our studio to speak with financial aid experts to learn more about financing higher education.
- **Supporting the bay** – *Chesapeake Bay Week*[®] is part of MPT's ongoing commitment to the bay and our environment. Held each April, it offers our citizens programs that spotlight the history, heritage and splendor of the Chesapeake Bay and highlight its most critical issues. Stories of past and present offer a lively, local and insightful look at this mighty yet fragile source of wonder – and help put the future of the bay in perspective. Among FY15 highlights: we presented the very first *Chesapeake Bay Summit*, a live, 60-minute program during which a panel of environmental experts and journalists explored bay-related issues; and we staged the annual *Concert for the Bay*, which also encourages viewers to volunteer their time to support bay preservation.
- **“The Big Read” program** – In partnership with the Frederick County Public Library and Baltimore County Public Library systems, MPT participated in “The Big Read,” a program of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with Arts Midwest. The program staged 16 events at libraries in the May – June 2015 timeframe. Activities included panel discussions about books and the MPT Reads Online digital book club.
- **Tours** – As in past years, MPT made its Owings Mills facility a public space for our communities by hosting approximately 30 tours throughout the fiscal year for groups from across the state, ranging from educational groups and scout troops to volunteer and service organizations. We enjoy the positive feedback we receive as the result of welcoming members of our community into our studios. Samples of comments we received include: “*The tour was informational and fantastic. The boys really enjoyed it.*” (Boy Scout pack on 4/2/15); and “*On a scale from 1-10 it was a 100, hands down. I never saw MPT this way before.*” (Local family on 4/3/15).
- **Veterans Outreach** – In April 2015, MPT hosted a screening of the film *Last Days in Vietnam* and brought to it dozens of Maryland Vietnam-era veterans. Attendees at MPT studios were linked to viewers attending the screening nationwide through an online engagement tool. On at least five other occasions public screenings were held during the year featuring other documentaries of interest to the community.

Online

Marylanders increasingly rely on the valuable content they find on our primary online platform – *mpt.org* – where we have built a dynamic presence over the past two decades. At this website alone, in FY15 we had more than 3 million page views (representing one year growth of more than 60 percent) from more than 567,000 unique users (representing an increase of nearly 40 percent in one year). What viewers find there is the complete daily schedule for our three MPT channels (MPT-HD; MPT2; and V-me), online (on-demand) video, in-depth program information, web-exclusive content, and much more.

In FY15, all three MPT-created websites (*mpt.org*; *Thinkport.org*; and *MotorWeek.org*) together accounted for 25.8 million page views. This represents an increase of 1.7 million page views over the previous year.

In addition, MPT continued to build its own YouTube® presence. In FY15, the MPT channel garnered 232,000-plus views (representing 886,000 minutes of viewing).

And finally, during FY15 we initiated plans to launch the MPT App, a handy and mobile version of MPT's popular website and much more. The free app launched in 2016 and works with iOS and Android-based devices as well as Amazon Kindle to offer on-demand video content; access to our schedule and social media messages.

Public Safety & Communications
For Local / State / Federal Agencies and Municipalities

Maryland Public Television spends \$3 million annually to operate, maintain and repair seven transmission towers located in communities across the State of Maryland.

Our towers, erected between 1970 and 2005, bear sophisticated transmitters to deliver the station's television broadcast signals to homes, businesses and institutions throughout Maryland and into contiguous states and the District of Columbia. But these same towers also carry equipment that belongs to a variety of Maryland governmental agencies and units. MPT makes its towers available for such public safety and communications transmissions without cost to the agencies involved.

Here is a rundown of MPT tower "tenants":

Owings Mills, MD

- Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS)
- Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA)
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- Maryland Transit Authority (MTA)

Annapolis, MD

- State Highway Administration (SHA)
- Maryland State Police
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

Salisbury, MD

- Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

Oakland, MD

- Frostburg State University Radio Station 91.9 WFWM
- Garrett County Emergency Management (high-band repeater for emergency fire/rescue dispatch)
- Garrett County Government
- Garrett County Sherriff's Office
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS)

Hagerstown, MD

- Antietam Radio Club
- Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS)
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio
- Washington County Board of Education
- Washington County Government
- Washington County Health Department
- Washington County Highway
- Washington County Sanitation
- Washington County Sherriff

Frederick, MD

- Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- State Highway Administration (SHA)

As part of its broadcast signal, MPT provides messages of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) on all its channels. MPT transmits to mobile devices all EAS signals under the FCC's Warning, Alert and Response Network Act ("WARN Act"). And MPT works with State of Maryland on **Maryland First**, a statewide radio network linking state and local first responders; this is part of the state's public safety project (the Maryland Statewide Public Safety Communications System).

Conclusion

My intent is that all the initiatives and programs I've cited in this testimony provide ample evidence of a vibrant, valuable, multi-platform institution that not only comes before you today to express what it needs but comes to reinforce how it delivers on a promise to our citizens.

We commit to you that MPT and its employees will continue to work hard to remain relevant to and have favorable impact on all the communities we serve in the state. We understand that by partnering with other institutions and organizations MPT extends the reach and value of its partners, as well as its own. So even those contributions encouraged by pledge drives or earned through sponsorship sales are truly pass-through gifts to the homes, schools and institutions MPT reaches every day of the year.

MPT remains an important point of entry to all the distribution platforms with broadcast content that matters to Maryland citizens. We will continue to help train and inform teachers, childcare providers and students; to engage active volunteers by the droves; and to serve up marquee programming viewable on platforms ranging from large screens to smart phones.

MPT will always be the place to go for the familiar faces of personalities whom you know as on-screen neighbors and on-site experts – the destination for educators, political leaders, CEOs, moms and dads, the curious, the early-adopters, and the brave of heart of who use on-air and online MPT resources for everything from lesson plans to lessons of life.

Recommendation

The inclusion of the above-referenced capital items in the governor's plans is a welcome development and, we believe, recognition of the significant service MPT provides to the citizens of Maryland.

Concurring with the recommendation, MPT expresses its appreciation to the governor and to the Department of Budget and Management for the FY17 capital budget appropriation.

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