

Ride On Newsletter

March 2024

What is the Flex?



Ride On Flex bus service is an innovative on-demand e-hailing service that caters to the unique needs and schedules of riders in Montgomery County. Unlike traditional fixed-route buses, the Flex bus offers a flexible alternative, allowing passengers to request pickups and drop-offs at locations and times that align with their individual routines. With its user-friendly mobile app, passengers can easily book rides, track their bus in real-time, and receive updates on estimated arrival times, enhancing the overall passenger experience. There is also a call center option (240-301-3842) for riders without cellphones.

In the future, the Flex bus is set to undergo a significant expansion, transitioning from servicing two zones to encompassing 15 or more zones across Montgomery County. This expansion aims to broaden the accessibility and reach of the service, ensuring that more communities have access to convenient and flexible transportation options. As part of this expansion, there will be various types of zones introduced to accommodate different travel needs and preferences. These zones will include on-demand zones where the Flex bus operates solely based on passenger requests, allowing for tailored and personalized transportation experiences. Additionally, there

will be zones where the Flex bus follows a fixed route during certain hours but transitions to an on-demand service model in specific areas or at designated times. This hybrid approach provides passengers with the convenience of both scheduled and on-demand transit options, catering to diverse commuting patterns and preferences.

Moreover, the expanded Flex bus service will introduce larger zones with extended service times. This ensures that passengers have access to reliable transportation throughout more significant portions of the day. By offering longer service hours in select zones, the Flex bus aims to accommodate varying work schedules, school routines, and leisure activities, further enhancing its role as a versatile transit solution for Montgomery County residents. As the Flex bus service continues to evolve and expand, MCDOT remains committed to revolutionizing the way people travel, prioritizing flexibility, convenience, and accessibility in modern transit services. Visit our website ([RideOnBus.com](https://www.rideonbus.com)) or your mobile app store to download the Flex bus app today and let us do all the driving for you!

Celebrating Women's History Month: Trailblazers in Transit and Beyond



March marks Women's History Month, a time to recognize and honor the achievements and contributions of women throughout history. At Ride On, we take pride in celebrating the women who play pivotal roles in shaping our transit system and community. As we commemorate Women's History Month, we reflect on the progress made in promoting gender diversity and equality, especially within the transit industry.

Historical Women in Montgomery County

Rachel Carson, renowned as the pioneer of the modern environmental movement, resided in Silver Spring, where her historic home remains a testament to her legacy.

Clara Barton (pictured), recognized as the founder of the American Red Cross, has a significant connection to Montgomery County, with her historic home located in the Glen Echo area.

Emily Edmonson, a key figure in the abolition movement, worked alongside Frederick Douglass and her descendants continue to reside in our county. Despite her invaluable contributions, Edmonson's remarkable achievements were overlooked due to gender biases of the time.

Historical Women in Transit

Rosa Parks: Often referred to as the "Mother of the Civil Rights Movement," Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her seat on a segregated bus in Montgomery, Alabama, sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott and became a pivotal moment in the fight against racial segregation in the United States. Transit Equity Day, celebrated last month, was created in honor of Rosa Parks.

Elizabeth Jennings Graham: In 1854, Jennings, an African American woman, refused to leave a segregated streetcar in New York City, leading to a landmark court case that ultimately desegregated the city's transit system.

Mary Walton: Mary Walton, an inventor and engineer, is credited with inventing the noise-canceling technology used in New York City's elevated trains in the late 19th century. Her innovation helped mitigate the noise pollution caused by the trains, improving the quality of life for residents living nearby.

Olive Dennis: Olive Dennis was an early pioneer in the field of transportation engineering. As a civil engineer for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, she designed innovations such as improved lighting and seating arrangements for passenger cars, making train travel safer and more comfortable.

Beverly Scott: Beverly Scott is a transportation executive who has held leadership roles at several major transit agencies, including the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority and the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority. She is known for her advocacy for public transit and her efforts to improve service reliability and accessibility for riders.

Join us in celebrating Women's History Month by recognizing the invaluable contributions of women in transit. Throughout the month, Ride On will highlight the stories of women who have made significant impacts in transit. Stay tuned to our social media channels as we share inspiring stories and honor the remarkable women who help keep Ride On moving forward.

Ride On Launches "What Drives You" Campaign and Contest



On Wednesday, March 13, Ride On launched the new "What Drives You" campaign aimed at amplifying voices and stories of riders. The year-long campaign will collect rider experiences powered by a series of social media-based contests.

The first of these contests, which also began March 13, asks riders to share memories of Ride On and detail how Ride On shaped their lives up to today. Lifelong rider Susanne shares, "In 1975, when my resourceful mother needed a way for me to get to school and back, Ride On offered an ideal solution! The service offered a safe, reliable, and cost-effective alternative to packing all of us into the car – I don't even want to think about what a procedure it must have been to get us all ready! With Mom's call to the dispatchers and a quarter in my pocket, I was on my way."

In our 49 years of service, Ride On has touched the lives of millions of riders. People have used the service to help them earn degrees, provide for their family, and go on countless adventures across Montgomery County. We'd love to hear the story of how Ride On has impacted your life for the better!

To share your story and enter to win one of three gift cards (\$100 Amazon, \$75 Visa, or \$50 Barnes & Noble), post on Instagram, X, or Facebook and tag the @RideOnMCT account. Alternately, riders can email their experience to rideon.customerservice@montgomerycountymd.gov for a chance to win. Eligible entries may be used to further publicize the contest. Contest ends April 30, 2024. Winners will be announced via Facebook, Instagram, and X by May 10, 2024.

Interview With Ride On Operator Carlos Nicolai



What is your name?

Carlos Nicolai

How long have you been working with Ride On?

I have been with Ride On for 16 years.

What are some of your favorite routes to drive? Why?

Some of my favorite routes to drive are 6, 38, 42, 96, and 98. I like these routes because the riders are polite and they respect the bus operators.

What is a positive message you would like to share with everyone?

Treat others the same way you would like to be treated.

What is some advice you would give to someone who is looking to start their career with Ride On?

Some advice I would give to someone who is looking to start their career with Ride On is to just come on and take that leap of faith. Ride On is a great place to work.

What has Ride On done for you and your family?

Ride On gave me an opportunity to build a better life and created stability for my family.

What do you like most about being a transit operator?

I like that I am able to provide transportation to people who may not have any. I also like that people can rely on me to get to work and get home safely. Safety is a big part of Ride On and I am happy to be apart of it!

What lesson(s) has being a bus operator taught you?

I have learned how to communicate better with people. Riders come from all walks of life and I have learned how to communicate with riders effectively in a way that is respectful to them and others.

Celebrating 49 Years of Ride On Service



Montgomery County's Ride On bus service celebrates 49 years in service this month! The Ride On bus system is the second largest in the region, and one of the busiest, operating 7 days a week on over 80 routes.

Making its debut in 1975 with just 20 buses, Ride On was the first county-run bus service in the Washington, DC area, designed to provide service in Takoma Park and Silver Spring where large buses could not travel. Within weeks of its introduction, the bus service was transporting twice the number of riders originally projected – nearly 2,000 passengers each day. Three years after Ride On started service, in 1978, Montgomery County expanded the popular bus service to 22 routes with 79 buses. This move increased ridership from about 4,000 passengers per day to more than 12,000. Eventually, the bus service extended to include Takoma Park, Langley Park, White Flint, Gaithersburg, and Wheaton, with Silver Spring Metro station as the focal point.

In 2000, Ride On celebrated its 25th anniversary by painting two buses uniquely to commemorate the milestone and offered 25-cent daily fares and \$1.50 regional passes for all passengers for the rest of the year. In 2006, Ride On began accepting SmarTrip® cards. In addition, Ride On debuted its first hybrid-electric buses and had 13 operating by the end of 2007. In recent years, Ride On has expanded to operate three additional services: Ride On extRa, Ride On Flex and Flash Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). Ride On's first four all-electric buses began service in 2020 in Silver Spring/Takoma Park. The electric buses can run a full day on a single charge and offer sustainable mobility solutions, since they significantly reduce GHG emissions, air and noise pollution, and dependence on fossil fuels.

Ride On has also introduced new initiatives as part of its dedication to service improvements. The Ride Reimagined Study aims to take a critical look at the County's current and future bus network and transit systems, including Metrobus and the planned Purple Line, to pinpoint where improvements can be made, based on experience and feedback from the community. Another program is the Bus Priority Program which was created by a group of MCDOT and Montgomery County staff members in 2021. The program focuses on advancements for bus operations including dedicated bus lanes, bus signal prioritization and enhanced bus stops. The Great Seneca Transit Network which will create hubs at Shady Grove Metrorail Station, the Universities at Shady Grove, and Adventist Shady Grove Hospital is also currently in progress. Slated to start in 2024, this service which will be branded as Ride On extRa and will include 24 bus stops, dedicated bus lanes, transit signal priority at seven intersections and new bike and pedestrian connections. Today, Ride On is on track to achieve an emissions-free bus fleet by 2035.

March is Developmental Disability Awareness Month – How Ride On Serves Riders with Disabilities



Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month is an annual event that takes place in March to spread awareness about developmental disabilities. President Reagan declared March as National Developmental Disabilities Month and was first observed in 1987. The goal was to increase public awareness of the needs and the potential of Americans with developmental disabilities and to provide the encouragement and opportunities they need to lead productive lives and to achieve their full potential. Disability awareness signifies educating society regarding disability and how we as individuals can bring about the necessary change. This month is about understanding the relationship between the way people function and how they

participate in society and making sure everyone has the same opportunities in every aspect of life to the best of their abilities.

Ride On serves our riders with disabilities in various ways one of which is through wheelchair securement. Our drivers pull the ramp out all the time, for every passenger with special needs. They inform disabled customers who are using a wheelchair, walker, or other mobility device that it needs to be secured. Operators perform pre-trip inspection of American with Disabilities Act (ADA) equipment which is the ramp and lift, PA system and Q-strait which secures the wheelchair to the bus.

Every transit system is required by law to eliminate transportation discrimination for senior citizens and persons with disabilities. Facilities and equipment must be designed to provide access to everyone, so our operators are trained to provide that for our customers. The ADA requires operators to make announcements for customers, help with boarding and securement, understand the laws and rights of people with disabilities.

To learn more about how Ride On works to serve our riders with disabilities, [watch this short video](#).

Montgomery County Receives More Than \$87 Million to Support Flash Bus Rapid Transit and Pedestrian Safety Projects from Maryland Board of Public Works



Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich announced last month that the Maryland Board of Public Works (BPW) approved more than \$87 million in funding for pedestrian improvement projects and advancing the Flash Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) network in Montgomery County.

The State funds were allocated to the County through a General Assembly Bond Bill passed in 2022. An additional \$6 million was allocated to the MD355 Flash BRT corridor in a fiscal year 2021 bond bill.

The funding also will be used as a local match for two Federal transportation grants including the Federal Small Starts Capital Investment grant for Veirs Mill Road Flash BRT and the Federal New Starts grant for MD 355 Flash BRT.

Flash is Montgomery County's BRT service. BRT is a limited-stop bus service that is gaining popularity in metropolitan areas across the U.S. and worldwide. BRT systems such as Flash are designed to arrive every few minutes, have upgraded amenities, pre-boarding payment, priority traffic light signaling and dedicated lanes where possible.

"I want to thank the Maryland Board of Public Works - Governor Wes Moore, Treasurer Dereck Davis and Maryland Comptroller Brooke Lierman - for their unanimous approval of over \$87 million dollars funding for the County's Flash Bus Rapid Transit network as well as pedestrian improvement projects," said County Executive Elrich in his remarks at the BPW meeting. "These funds will allow us to invest in infrastructure that will be more equitable, efficient and reliable. Building out the Flash Bus Rapid Transit Network will help alleviate congestion while helping us achieve our Climate Action Plan goals of reducing 100% greenhouse gas emissions by 2035. Flash is also important to our economic development and job growth efforts. If we want to see the kind of economic growth that Northern Virginia has experienced over the last decade, then improving our infrastructure is the key."

On Jan. 16, County Executive Elrich released his [recommended FY25-30 Capital Improvements Program and FY25 Capital Budget](#). The Capital Budget contains \$1.7 billion for transportation projects including the completion of the Flash BRT corridors along Route 355 and Veirs Mill Road.

The Montgomery County Department of Transportation has one Flash corridor operating along US 29 Colesville Road connecting Downtown Silver Spring to Burtonsville. The US 29 Flash is one of the County's most popular bus routes, typically ranking among the top three for ridership.

The [completed Flash network](#) will include nine routes (including a US 29 extension to Howard County) with more than 100 stops. Flash fare is the same as other County buses. The fare is \$1 per ride. Seniors 65-and-over, persons with disabilities and youth 18-and-under ride County buses free using specialized SmarTrip cards.

"I am thrilled that the Board of Public Works has approved this essential funding to advance Flash and improve pedestrian safety in Montgomery County," said Montgomery County Department of Transportation Director Chris Conklin. "Funding from our State and Federal partners will move forward our goal of advancing BRT, will allow us to purchase zero-emission buses and advance a number of pedestrian safety infrastructure projects. This transportation investment will move more people through central areas to help drive growth and vibrancy."

The funds from the 2022 bond bill will support transportation projects in Montgomery County, including:

- \$63.4 million [General Bus Rapid Transit](#)
- \$8.8 million [Zero Emission Buses](#)
- \$6 million [Norwood Road Bike Path](#)
- \$4 million [Cherry Hill Road Bike Facility](#)
- \$2.5 million [Great Seneca Science Corridor Transit Network](#)
- \$1.5 million [Bowie Mill Bike Trail](#)
- \$1 million [Oak Drive & MD 27 Pedestrian Upgrades](#)

Additional funding from the 2021 bond bill will support:

- \$6 million [355 Flash BRT](#)

Ride On Bus Operator Helps to Locate Missing Woman



On February 23 at approximately 6:35 p.m., Ride On Central Communications Leader Jason Klein received a phone call from Montgomery County Police asking to pass along a critical lookout for an elderly woman with dementia in Gaithersburg. Mr. Klein sent messages to all bus operators in Gaithersburg and made a general announcement, asking them to be on the lookout for the missing woman.

A few minutes later, bus operator Antonio Lucas (pictured, left, with Gaithersburg Depot Chief Allan Watts) found the missing woman at the Germantown Transit Center. He

escorted her to a nearby restaurant, bought her food to eat, and waited with her until police arrived.

WUSA 9 aired an exclusive feature on March 3 interviewing Antonio Lucas and Jason Klein about their efforts reuniting the missing woman with her family. This interview can be viewed [here](#). Governor Wes Moore telephoned Mr. Lucas on March 14th to thank him for his service. Mr. Lucas was grateful for the call and invited him to dinner next time he's in Montgomery County.

Ride On would like to recognize the great job done by Communications Leader Jason Klein and Bus Operator Antonio Lucas. Thank you to both outstanding employees for reuniting this resident with her family.

A Ride On Guide to Montgomery County Medical Centers

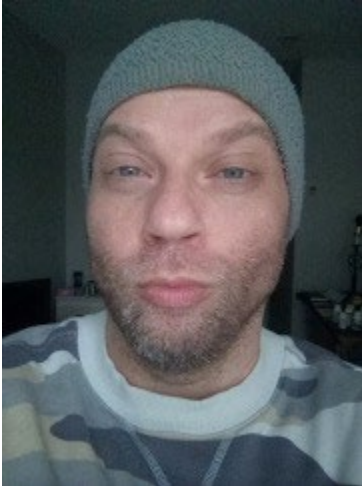


At Ride On, we're committed to helping Montgomery County residents and visitors get where they need to go quickly and efficiently. While Ride On allows riders to explore all the wonders of Montgomery County, providing a lifeline to work, school, shopping, and medical care is at the heart of what we do. To help you navigate travel to your essential appointments, we've put together a list of local medical centers and the Ride On routes that travel there.

Whether your medical appointment is up county or on Bethesda Row, Ride On provides a reliable way to get there. Remember, Ride On riders with disabilities, age 65+, or under age 19 ride for free 24/7, 365. For more information on discounted fares for these audiences, visit [here](#).

- **Medical Center:** The [Medical Center Metro Station](#) services many medical providers including [Walter Reed National Military Medical Center](#), the [National Institute of Health \(NIH\)](#) campus, and [Suburban Hospital](#), among others. In addition to the Metro trains and buses that service this station, Ride On routes [30](#), [33](#), [34](#), [46](#), [70](#) and [101](#) come from across the county to get you to your appointments in this area.
- **Medical Centers at Shady Grove:** Located in Rockville, [Adventist Shady Grove Medical Center](#) is a hub for medical care for every stage of life, from fertility doctors to family care to surgeons and in-patient care, this area has it all. Depending on your exact appointment location, Ride On Routes [43](#), [45](#), [54](#), [56](#), [66](#), [67](#), [301](#) all serve the area.
- **Holy Cross Hospital (Silver Spring):** Holy Cross Hospital Silver Spring is one of the largest hospitals in Maryland. Founded in 1963 by the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross, today Holy Cross Silver Spring is a 449-bed, not-for-profit teaching hospital caring for more than 36,000 inpatients each year. To get to Holy Cross in Silver Spring, take Ride On Route [8](#).
- **Medstar Montgomery Medical Center:** Located in Olney, Medstar Montgomery Medical Center houses a variety of specialized care providers including women's health, physical therapy and rehabilitation, cardiology, and oncology. To get to Medstar Montgomery, take Ride On Routes [52](#) or [53](#).
- **Adventist Healthcare White Oak Medical Center:** White Oak's new hospital contains the first comprehensive cardiac center in Montgomery County, as well as emergency, stroke, maternity, cancer, surgical and orthopedic care for inpatient and outpatient services. To get to Adventist White Oak Medical Center, take Ride On Route [27](#).
- **Holy Cross Hospital (Germantown):** Holy Cross Germantown Hospital provides health specialty services including a full-service emergency department for adults, seniors and children, trusted maternity care for mothers and their newborns, state-of-the-art diagnostic and surgical services, and emergency and voluntary inpatient psychiatric care. To get to Holy Cross in Germantown, take Ride On Route [83](#).

Interview with Transit Advisory Group Member Gregory Milner



How long have you been riding with Ride On and what year did you begin?

I have been riding on the Ride On bus system since July of 2021.

Why did you start riding Ride On?

I rely mostly on bus and cab services for my day-to-day transportation needs and Ride On has excellent, efficient, and thoughtful service.

What routes do you ride the most and for what reasons?

I mostly use Route 10 Twinbrook/Hillandale to visit family, Route 27 Tech Rd/Hillandale to get to the grocery store, and sometimes the Flash bus to visit downtown shopping, library, and the farmer's market.

What do you like the most about riding with Ride On?

Ride On is easy for me to access, the drivers are almost always polite and caring, people are usually civil and kind to one another, and the service helps me achieve the goals I set to achieve daily.

How do you view your role as a Ride On Transit Advisory Group (TAG) member?

As a Transit Advisory Group member, I hope to bring attention to the needs of the community by listening to other people's concerns, adding my input when needed, and being a part of our county's community dynamic.

How likely are you to recommend Ride On to someone else?

I recommend Ride On to anyone looking to save on gas, anyone in need of reliable transportation beyond driving a car, and anyone who might just be interested in an adventure around town – it's kind of like taking a trip on an airplane!

Of Note

Senior SmarTrip Cards Are Now Free

As part of Metro's ongoing commitment to expand access and affordability to public transit, the Senior SmarTrip program has joined all other Metro reduced fare programs in offering SmarTrip cards at no additional cost as of January 16, 2024. Senior SmarTrip cards are available at all County libraries, TRiPS stores, and the County Treasury office in Rockville. Please bring a proof of age. Get yours and ride free on all Ride On buses and most Metrobuses in the County.

Youth Cruiser SmarTrip Card Team Visits Montgomery County Schools

The Youth Cruiser card is a SmarTrip card for Montgomery County residents under 19 years old that provides free rides on all MCDOT buses and most Metrobuses within the County. The Ride On marketing team is visiting high schools in the county to inform students about the benefits and help them register for cards. Students can also get the cards at their school or county libraries. More information can be found [here](#).

We would love to come to your school to provide students with FREE cards! If you would like us to come to your school, please send an email to rideon.customerservice@montgomerycountymd.gov.

Connect With Ride On

Are you following Ride On's social media accounts yet? Ride On communicates and connects to our riders using Instagram, X, Facebook, Threads, and YouTube. Our social media presence allows us to share exciting news and new programs as well as keep riders up to date on any detours, stop changes, or construction impacting our routes. On our Instagram account you can find interviews with riders and operators, featured trips to locations on Ride On routes, and regular updates through our new "Ride On Run-Down" series. Find us at @RideOnMCT on your favorite social media platform.

We also communicate with customers directly through our email and text subscription service. Subscribing to these alerts means you'll get the latest Ride On service and program information sent straight to your inbox. To subscribe, visit www.montgomerycountymd.gov/govdelivery, or text MONTGOMERY RIDEON to 468311 to receive text alerts.

Transit Trivia!

Test your familiarity on Ride On's routes, services, and more with our transit trivia! The answer will be in next month's edition of our newsletter so make sure you tune in next month to see if you answered correctly!

Question: When was Ride On established?

1. 1980
2. 1975
3. 1965
4. 1985

Last month's trivia Q&A:

Question: In what year did Ride On launch its first electric buses?

1. 2018
2. 2019
3. 2020
4. 2021

Answer: (3.) 2020

For the most up-to-date service information, riders should follow @RideOnMCT on [X](#), [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), and [Instagram](#). In addition, information is available at RideOnBus.com, by subscribing to receive email alerts at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/govdelivery, or texting MONTGOMERY RIDEON to 468311 to receive text alerts.

For information on MCDOT programs and services visit montgomerycountymd.gov/mcdot, follow @MCDOTNow on [X](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and [subscribe](#) to MCDOT's "Go Montgomery!" newsletter.

Title VI: Montgomery County assures that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, as provided by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Civil Rights Act of 1987, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity.