



Ride On Newsletter

March 2026

Ride On Celebrates 51 Years of Connecting Montgomery County



This year, Ride On proudly marks 51 years of service to the people of Montgomery County, more than five decades of connecting neighborhoods, supporting local businesses, and helping residents get where they need to go. What began as a small but ambitious community service has grown into one of the most relied upon transit networks in the region.

The Early Days: A Big Idea Takes Off

When Ride On launched in 1975, it did so with just 20 buses and a bold goal: to provide safe, reliable, county-run transportation for the Takoma Park and Silver Spring communities. Almost instantly, the idea caught on. Within weeks, Ride On buses were carrying nearly 2,000 riders each day, twice what planners expected. Montgomery County expanded the system quickly, and by 1978 Ride On had grown to 22 routes and 79 buses, moving more than 12,000 passengers a day. As the county developed, Ride On expanded right along with it, reaching Langley Park,

White Flint, Gaithersburg, Wheaton, and ultimately transforming the Silver Spring Metro station into one of the network's busiest hubs.

Ride On Today: A Future Focused Transit System

More than half a century later, Ride On continues to evolve. In recent years, the system has made major strides to become cleaner, greener, and more accessible for every resident.

Montgomery County's Path to Zero Emission Transit

Ride On introduced its first four all-electric buses in 2020, serving Silver Spring and Takoma Park. Today, the electric fleet has grown to 72 buses capable of completing a full day's service on a single charge. In 2024, the County released its Zero Emission Bus Transition Plan, a roadmap to convert nearly 400 Ride On buses to zero emission vehicles by 2035. This long-term investment reflects a commitment to improving air quality, reducing noise, and supporting the health of the community for generations to come.

Zero-Fare: Making Access Equitable for Everyone

On Sunday, June 29, Ride On took another historic step by eliminating fares across all services, Ride On, Ride On extRa, Ride On Flex, and Flash. This change removes a major barrier for many residents, making it easier for people to reach jobs, schools, medical appointments, and community resources. Zero-fare service brings Ride On back to its core purpose: making mobility accessible for all.

Ride On Reimagined: Meeting the Needs of a Growing Community

The Ride On Reimagined study served as the most comprehensive look at the system in its history. It examined how transit can better support today's travel patterns and tomorrow's growth. One outcome of the study was the creation of Flex Zone 918, a new on-demand service providing convenient, peak period transportation for Ednor, Sandy Spring, Norwood, Cloverly, and the New Hampshire Avenue corridor from Maryland Route 108 to the White Oak Transit Center. Flex 918 offers riders more flexibility and shorter waits, an example of how Ride On is adapting to the changing needs of Montgomery County.

A Legacy of Service

For 51 years, Ride On has been more than just a bus system; it has been a lifeline for students, families, workers, and seniors. It has supported economic development, promoted environmental progress, and helped build a stronger, more connected community. As Ride On looks toward its next chapter, one thing remains unchanged: its commitment to helping Montgomery County move forward, together.

Ride On Bus Service Changes Coming May 3, 2026



The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) will adjust 18 Ride On bus route schedules beginning Sunday, May 3, 2026, to improve efficiency and on-time performance. These updates shift resources to provide more reliable service where demand is higher. The new schedules will be available at rideonbus.com and in print.

Route changes include:

- Ten routes will have new trip times: **12, 15, 16, 17, 20, 26, 29, 34, 40, 47**
- Eight routes will have adjustments to improve on-time performance: **33, 48, 49, 57, 97, 98, Flash Orange, and Flash Blue**

Here are details for each affected route:

Routes	Service Notes	Weekdays	Saturdays	Sundays
12	New trip times		X	X
15	New trip times		X	X
16	New trip times		X	X
17	New trip times		X	
20	New trip times		X	X
26	New trip times		X	X
29	New trip times		X	
33	Running Time Adjustments	X		
34	New trip times		X	X
40	New trip times / Running time adjustments	X	X	X
47	New trip times		X	X
48	Running Time Adjustments	X	X	X
49	Running Time Adjustments	X	X	X
57	Running Time Adjustments / Trips	X	X	X
97	Running Time Adjustments	X	X	X
98	New Trip Times / Running Time Adjustments	X	X	
Flash Blue	Running Time Adjustments	X		
Flash Orange	Running Time Adjustments	X	X	X

Stay tuned for more updates regarding the May Service change.

March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month: Supporting Inclusion and Access in Our Community



March is recognized nationally as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. This designation dates back to 1987, when President Ronald Reagan called for greater public awareness of the needs and potential of Americans with developmental disabilities, and for ensuring they have the encouragement and opportunities needed to lead productive lives and achieve their full potential.

For Montgomery County, this month is a meaningful reminder of our shared responsibility to build a community where every member of our community feels supported, valued, and able to navigate daily life with dignity and independence. Accessible transportation is an important part of that promise.

Community Resources for Residents with Disabilities

The Montgomery County Disability Network Directory provides a comprehensive list of service providers, agencies, businesses, and advocacy organizations that support people with disabilities. The County also offers links to trusted partner resources through the Department of Health and Human Services.

A paper copy of the directory can be requested by emailing: MCCPWD@montgomerycountymd.gov.

Ride On's entire fleet of buses is ADA compliant, ensuring accessible boarding and travel for riders of all abilities.

Ride On Flex Offers Curb-to-Curb Pickup: A More Accessible Way to Travel



As part of our commitment to helping seniors and people with disabilities travel safely, confidently, and independently, Montgomery County offers Ride On Flex, an on-demand transit service designed to meet riders where they are.

Curb-to-Curb Pickup

While all Ride On services are zero-fare, Flex provides an additional accessibility feature for riders who need extra support: curb-to-curb pickup. Instead of walking to the nearest intersection, riders can be met right at their curb. This small adjustment can make a big difference, making boarding safer, easier, and more comfortable for individuals with mobility challenges or limited walking ability.

Where Flex Operates

Ride On Flex operates in three service zones: Rockville, Wheaton/Glenmont, and Sandy Spring/White Oak (Zone 918), which restores service to neighborhoods previously served by Metrobus Z2.

Flex makes short, local trips within each zone, helping riders reach grocery stores, medical appointments, community centers, workplaces, and nearby Metro stations. Riders may book from outside a zone as long as their pickup location is inside the service area.

How to Book a Ride

Booking a Flex ride is simple:

- Use the Ride On Flex app or call 240-301-3842
- Enter your pickup and drop off locations
- Choose accessibility options to request curb to curb service
- A Flex vehicle will arrive during regular service hours and take you to the closest safe point near your destination

Service Hours

- Rockville: 9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
- Wheaton/Glenmont: 6:00 – 9:00 a.m. and 3:30 – 7:00 p.m.
- Sandy Spring/White Oak (Zone 918): 6:00 – 10:00 a.m. and 2:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Supporting Daily Independence

Ride On Flex is more than a transit service, it reflects Montgomery County’s commitment to reducing barriers and supporting the independence of seniors and people with disabilities. Whether through curb-to-curb pickup, flexible scheduling, or accessible service zones, Flex is designed to make daily travel more manageable, more comfortable, and more empowering for those who rely on it.

Medical Center Bus Loop Sunday Closure: Final Date Approaching



Due to ongoing Metrorail construction, the bus loop at the Medical Center Metro Station will close one final time this spring, on Sunday, May 3, 2026, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

During the closure, Ride On Routes 34 and 46 will be reassigned to nearby stops on Rockville Pike:

- Routes 34 to Wheaton and 46 to Montgomery College Rockville will use Bus Bay H (stop #25504).
- Routes 34 to Bethesda and 46 to Medical Center will use Bus Bay G (stop #25646).

Other Ride On routes that typically use the loop on weekdays are not affected, as they do not operate on Sundays.

A Quick Look at Ride On extRa's Pink and Lime Routes



Many riders have seen the new Pink and Lime Ride On extRa buses around the Shady Grove and Great Seneca area. If you have ever noticed them and wondered where they go or how they might fit into your own travel routine, here is a friendly rundown of what each route offers.

Pink Route (Shady Grove Metro to Trville Transit Center and USG)

The Pink Route provides a quick ride along Shady Grove Road and Medical Center Drive. It connects Shady Grove Metro, Shady Grove Medical Center, and the Universities at Shady Grove. This route is helpful for anyone heading to medical offices, campus locations, or workplaces in the Life Sciences corridor. The Pink Route runs every 10 minutes on weekdays and every 30 minutes on weekends, so it is easy to catch throughout the week.

Lime Route (Shady Grove Metro to Trville Transit Center and USG via Crown and Rio)

The Lime Route travels through Downtown Crown, the Rio Washingtonian Center, and Crown Central before reaching the university and medical area. It works well for riders going to restaurants, shops, entertainment, or traveling between Crown, Rio, and Shady Grove Metro. The Lime Route comes every 15 minutes on weekdays and every 30 minutes on weekends, offering steady service every day.

What riders notice

- Faster trips with fewer stops
- Reliable service every day
- Easy access to Metro, Crown, Rio, Shady Grove Medical Center, and USG
- Comfortable buses and improved stops

The Pink and Lime routes offer a smooth and reliable way to travel through one of the busiest parts of Montgomery County. If you have been curious about trying them, this is a great time to see how they can make your daily trips a little easier.

Women’s History Month Spotlight

LaTika Ochieng: A Trailblazing Leader Making History and Shaping the Future of Ride On



WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH

Celebrating Ride On’s First Woman of Color Depot Chief



The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT)’s Ride On is proud to celebrate a historic milestone during Women’s History Month: the appointment of LaTika Ochieng, the first Woman of Color to serve as a Depot Chief in Ride On’s history.

LaTika’s journey with Montgomery County began in 2007 when she joined the department as a Transit Bus Operator. Driven by a desire to create a brighter future for her family and a deep commitment to public service, she embraced the opportunity to connect with riders from every corner of the community. Each interaction reaffirmed her belief that reliable, welcoming transit service plays a vital role in people’s daily lives.

Her passion for service and talent for developing others quickly became evident. As a Transit Training Instructor, LaTika guided new operators through the skills and confidence they needed to succeed. Later, as a Transit Operations Supervisor, she became a dependable source of support and leadership, strengthening teamwork across the operations staff.

Over nearly two decades with MCDOT, LaTika has grown as a leader, problem solver, and advocate for continuous improvement. She highlights the success of others as the most rewarding part of her career, watching colleagues reach their goals and forging strong relationships along the way.

Her accomplishments reflect both her vision and her dedication. She helped launch the first Ride On Bus Roadeo Committee, led efforts to modernize Ride On's Standard Operating Procedures through the Blue Book Committee, and now takes on her most groundbreaking achievement yet: becoming the first Woman of Color to serve as a Depot Chief.

MCDOT is honored to have LaTika as part of our leadership team. Her commitment to excellence and her passion for service continue to help strengthen Ride On for both employees and the residents of Montgomery County.

What Riders Need to Know About Metrorail Service Changes This Spring and Summer



planned metrorail track work advisory for our community



Free Shuttle Service

Effective July 6 - Sept. 7 | Shuttles available during Metro Rail operating hours



North Bethesda
Grosvenor-Strathmore
Medical Center
Bethesda
Friendship Heights

- Express service between North Bethesda and Friendship Heights
- Local service between North Bethesda, Grosvenor-Strathmore, Medical Center, Bethesda and Friendship Heights

 closed |  Station closed



WMATA has announced several Metrorail and Metrobus adjustments to support essential maintenance and prepare for major Red Line construction later this year.

Grosvenor–Strathmore Platform Work (now through September 7)

Part of the north end of the platform is closed.

- Full station closure: July 6 – September 7
- No Red Line service between North Bethesda and Friendship Heights during the closure

Crystal City Weekend Closures Resume May 9

Weekend shutdowns for the new Crystal City entrance project will resume on May 9.

Track Work in March and April

Riders may see:

- Single-tracking
- Reduced train frequency
- Shuttle buses on select lines

Special note:

- April 25–26: Shuttle buses will replace Blue and Silver Line trains between Stadium-Armory and Downtown Largo

Major Red Line Shutdown (July 6 – September 7, 2026)

Red Line service will be suspended between North Bethesda and Friendship Heights.

Closed stations:

- Grosvenor–Strathmore
- Medical Center
- Bethesda

Shuttle service:

- Local Shuttle stopping at each station in the work zone
- Express Shuttle running directly between North Bethesda and Friendship Heights

Train service will operate in two segments:

- Shady Grove → North Bethesda
- Friendship Heights → Glenmont

Why This Work Matters for Riders

Although these service changes may be inconvenient, this work helps prevent larger disruptions in the future. Maintenance crews are repairing tunnel leaks, improving track alignment, modernizing aging infrastructure, and reducing the risk of smoke or fire incidents.

For riders, these upgrades lead to:

- fewer unexpected delays
- safer, more reliable trips
- smoother and quieter rides
- an easier-to-navigate system, including a future additional entrance at Bethesda

This short-term inconvenience supports long-term improvements that will make Red Line travel safer, more dependable, and more comfortable.

Stay Updated

For the latest information, visit WMATA's Planned Track Work webpage:

<https://www.wmata.com/service/track-work.cfm/>

Ride On Reminders

Ride On Zero-Fare Policy

Beginning June 29, 2025, Montgomery County's Ride On transit system implemented a zero-fare policy across all services, including Ride On, Ride On ext*Ra*, Ride On Flex, and Flash.

The zero-fare policy eliminates passenger fares on all Ride On services, allowing riders to travel at no direct cost. The primary goal is to expand mobility for low-income and transit-dependent residents while advancing the County's broader commitments to social equity, environmental sustainability, and economic opportunity. By removing fare barriers, the County aims to encourage ridership and make public transit a more accessible option for all.

Beyond improving affordability, the policy also streamlines the boarding process by removing fare collection equipment. This reduces dwell times at stops and helps minimize fare-related conflicts. The zero-fare initiative also supports Montgomery County's climate goals by encouraging a shift from private vehicle use to public transit, contributing to reduced traffic congestion and lower greenhouse gas emissions.

Zero-Fare Metrobus Access for Students, Seniors, and Riders with Disabilities

Montgomery County's Metrobus zero-fare programs for eligible riders are now fully in effect. These updates help ensure consistent and efficient access for students, seniors, and persons with disabilities riding Metrobuses within the County at no cost. Riders in these groups must use the appropriate SmarTrip card and tap the farebox when boarding. Fare payment remains mandatory for all other riders.

For students, the Youth Cruiser SmarTrip card is now required for zero-fare Metrobus travel. Student IDs and flashing cards are no longer accepted. Youth Cruiser cards are widely available through Montgomery County Public Schools, including all high schools, most middle schools, several elementary schools, and many private schools. They are also offered at no cost at County libraries, the Montgomery County Division of Treasury in Rockville, the Silver Spring TRiPS Store, and the Mobile Commuter Store. Proof of age and residency is required when obtaining a card.

Seniors (65+) and persons with disabilities may ride Metrobuses within Montgomery County at zero-fare using their Senior SmarTrip, Reduced Fare, or MetroAccess SmarTrip card. As with students, flashing cards are no longer accepted, and eligible riders must tap the farebox for validation. Senior and Reduced Fare cards are available at the same County locations listed above and are also provided at no cost with proof of age and residency.

Of Note

Ride On Discontinues Route 38 Bus Stop

Riders who use Route 38 should be aware that the bus no longer serves the stop at Veirs Mill Road and Gail Street (Stop ID 26828). To continue using Route 38, riders can now board or exit the bus at the nearby stop on Veirs Mill Road at Centerhill Street (Stop ID 26826), which is just a short walk away.

There are no changes for other riders at this location. Routes 40 and 48, along with Metrobus service, will continue to stop at Veirs Mill Road and Gail Street as usual. Only Route 38 has been adjusted, and all other service remains the same.

Plan Your Next Trip with the Ride On Trip Planner App

Have you downloaded the Ride On Trip Planner App yet? This new, innovative app allows riders to plan their next trip and to tell how crowded a Ride On bus is – before it arrives – with the crowdedness indicator on the app. Riders can choose if they want to get on the arriving bus, wait for the next bus depending on how many people are on the bus, or choose another travel option, such as other local transit services, bikeshare, and scooter. It gives riders more control over their transportation experience. The Ride On Trip Planner app is easy to use and can be downloaded from the Google Play or Apple app store, or accessed with our desktop version.

New Taxicab Meter Rates Now in Effect

Montgomery County taxicabs, including wheelchair-accessible vehicles, began implementing a rate change on Feb. 1 from \$2 per mile to \$2.50 per mile. Additionally, a nighttime surcharge of \$1 is now in effect for trips between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m.

The County's Call-n-Ride program continues to provide subsidies to help offset on-demand taxi transportation costs for qualifying residents. To learn more about Call-n-Ride, visit the Call-n-Ride website or call 301-948-5409 Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

For more information about taxicab operations in Montgomery County, visit the Montgomery County Taxicab Regulation Office website at montgomerycountymd.gov/dot-dir/taxi_reg/taxi_user.html.

Ride On Gratitude Corner

This month's message of appreciation comes from a longtime Route 56 rider who regularly travels between Rockville and Lakeforest. She wanted to recognize Bus Operator Charlie for his outstanding care and attentiveness:

"I would like to compliment Charlie. At Rockville, an older woman who didn't speak much English was trying to get to the College. Charlie told her which bus she needed and showed her where to go. As we pulled away, he realized she had boarded the wrong bus. He stopped, spoke to the other operator, and made sure she made it onto the right one.

He didn't have to do any of that — but he watched out for her, corrected the situation, and ensured she reached her destination safely. That is true customer service. Charlie is always polite, thoughtful, and a pleasure to ride with. I know excellent passenger care when I see it. I was a Purser with Pan Am for 26 years, and at age 83, I truly appreciate the kindness and professionalism he shows."

Thank you, Charlie, for your exceptional service and for making Route 56 a welcoming place for all riders.

Transit Trivia!

Test your familiarity with 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:

Which of the following Ride On routes is known for serving Montgomery College Rockville?

- A) Route 26**
- B) Route 44**

- C) Route 47
- D) Route 55

Last month's question:

What year did Ride On begin accepting SmarTrip® cards for fare payment?

- A) 1999
- B) 2003
- C) 2006
- D) 2008

Answer: (C) In 2006, Ride On began accepting SmarTrip cards and in August of that year, all the Ride On buses started getting equipped with fareboxes.

For the most up-to-date bus service information, riders should follow @RideOnMCT on [X](#), [Bluesky](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Threads](#) and [YouTube](#). In addition, information is available at rideonbus.com, by subscribing to receive email alerts or by texting MONTGOMERY RIDEON to 62463 to receive text alerts. *Message and Data rates may apply. Message frequency varies. Reply HELP for help or contact support@qranicus.com, reply STOP to cancel. Visit [Montgomery County's Wireless Terms and Conditions and Privacy Policy](#) for more information.*

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

If you need an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) reasonable accommodation to access Ride On bus service, contact MC311 by voice at 240-777-0311, by email RideOn.CustomerService@montgomerycountymd.gov or TTY 711.

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.