



## Ride On Newsletter

September 2023

**Ride On Reimagined Virtual Open House Thursday,  
September 28 and Several Pop-up events in October**



**Let's shape the future  
of transit together!**

**Learn More**  
**Thursday, September 28**  
**6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.**



The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) invites you to join us for a series of community outreach events to talk about the new Montgomery County bus network!

Ride On Reimagined Virtual Open House will take place Thursday, September 28 at 6:30 p.m. What to expect at the open house:

- See an overview of proposed service changes to the countywide bus network
- Hear from transportation experts, ask questions, and provide your feedback on the plan
- Learn when and where you can find out more about changes to your bus route

Visit [bit.ly/3svd0EK](https://bit.ly/3svd0EK) to register.

### **Upcoming Pop Up Events!**

The Ride On Reimagined Project Team will be conducting 8 Pop Up events throughout the month of October to share proposed changes to individual routes, at the following locations:

#### **Germantown Transit Center**

Monday, October 2, 2023

7:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

#### **Bethesda Metro Station**

Tuesday, October 10, 2023

7:00 a.m – 10 a.m.

#### **Silver Spring Transit Center**

Tuesday, October 17, 2023

7:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

#### **Lakeforest Transit Center**

Monday, October 23, 2023

3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

#### **Rockville Metro Station**

Thursday, October 5, 2023

11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

#### **Shady Grove Metro Station**

Wednesday, October 11, 2023

11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

#### **Wheaton Metro Station**

Thursday, October 19, 2023

3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m

#### **White Oak Transit Center**

Wednesday, October 25

7:00 a.m – 10:00 a.m.

## **Free Rides for Youth, Seniors, Persons with Disabilities and Montgomery College Students on all Ride On Buses**



As Montgomery County students head back to school, yellow school buses aren't their only means of getting to school on time. All Montgomery County residents 18 years old and younger can ride free on all MCDOT and most Metrobuses within the County with a Youth Cruiser card. The County also offers free rides to seniors and persons with disabilities and all Montgomery College students who are currently enrolled.

The Youth Cruiser card is a SmarTrip card that allows kids to ride for free all the time on Ride On buses, including Ride On extRa, Ride On Flex and Flash. Children under 5 must be accompanied by an adult.

Students should get a Youth Cruiser SmarTrip card to ride for free. Youth Cruiser Cards are easy to get, just complete the application form from your school's administrative office or go to <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DOT-Transit/fares/youth-cruiser.html>. Download and fill out the form and bring it to the designated office at your school. Get your card on the spot!

Montgomery County is also committed to providing mobility to seniors and persons with disabilities. Riders over 65 and persons with disabilities can also ride for free all day every day. To ride, they just need to show the bus operator their Senior, Reduced Fare or Metro Access SmarTrip card and then tap it on the farebox. Additionally, students enrolled at Montgomery College can ride at no cost. They just need to show an ID sticker valid for the current session. Students can obtain an ID and current sticker at Public Safety on any campus to ride the bus for free. Regular fares have been reduced to \$1 from \$2 post-pandemic and a Ride On monthly pass costs \$22.50 per month.

In addition, Ride On was recently ranked as the largest transit agency between DC and Atlanta. Based on data from the Public Transportation Ridership Report, the first quarter of 2023 showed Ride On ridership to be at 46,000 trips per average weekday. This statistic places Ride On with the third highest ridership in DC, Maryland, and Virginia, behind WMATA and the Baltimore MTA. Aside from Atlanta, Ride On has a larger ridership than any agency in the Carolinas and Georgia, beating out Charlotte and Raleigh. As one of the larger local agencies both regionally and nationally, Ride On is not only focused on growth in ridership but also in greater fare equity, excellent customer service, safe and reliable service delivery for riders.

Visit [RideOnBus.com](https://RideOnBus.com) for more information.

## New Ride On Video Series: *Ride On Run-Down*



Ride On is excited to release a new video series we're calling the *Ride On Run-Down*. *Ride On Run-Down* is a social media video series, posted bi-weekly, where we talk about all things Ride On. This series will include informational videos on topics you care about, like Ride On Trip Planner tutorials, information and user guides on Youth Cruiser and Senior SmarTrip cards, upcoming Ride On events, future detours and route changes you should know about and more!

We want to invite you to join the Ride On Community through this video series. This series is designed to keep you up-to-date with everything Ride On related. The *Ride On Run-Down* will be posted every other Monday, so mark your calendars and find out what Ride On is up to in Montgomery County. The first Ride On Run-Down was released on September 18. Click this link to [check it out!](#)

## Employee Spotlight Interview - Kebila Fonkem



**How long have you been a bus operator?**

I have been a bus operator for 20 years.

**What is the biggest change you have seen since you started working with Ride On?**

There have been many changes over the years. The most noticeable is the transformation from fuel to having electric buses.

**What do you like most about your job?**

I appreciate the way management listens to employees and tries to incorporate the new ideas that are brought forward to them. There is also opportunity for employees to move up the ladder and into higher administrative roles. Meaning there is room for growth here with Ride On.

**What has Ride On done for you and your family?**

Over the years Ride On has provided me with financial stability. Ride On has provided me and my family good benefits, most notably health insurance. These benefits have given me peace of mind and a very stable home.

**What is your customer service mantra?**

Understanding that our customers are the reason that Ride On exists. Treating customers with respect, empathy, and courtesy is the primary goal.

**What lessons has being a bus operator taught you?**

Getting to understand cultural differences from our diverse customers from various backgrounds. Treating people with respect, listening to everyone, and not pre-judging anybody.

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

The world is a better place and would be much better if we all respect the opinions of others. Different opinions are a strength and not a weakness. People should learn to disagree with others but take into consideration that everybody's opinion counts.

## A Ride On Guide to Montgomery County Theatrical Venues



As Maryland's most populous county, Montgomery County is a great place to experience the arts and humanities. Residents are fortunate to have a wide variety of cultural venues from which to choose - plays, concerts, exhibits, lectures - as well as arts education programs - are all easily accessible no matter where in the county you reside.

If you're interested in experiencing some of the theatrical productions that Montgomery County has to offer this fall, Ride On is ready to help get you there. Read below for a selection of the area's theatrical venues and which Ride On Routes to take to get you in your seat before curtain goes up!

- [Round House Theater](#) - Take Ride On [Route 34](#) to the Round House Theater in Bethesda. Round House Theatre is one of the “Big Six” professional theatres in the Washington, DC area, featuring theatrical and educational experiences that inspire empathy and demand conversation.
- [Rockville Little Theater](#) - Take Ride On [Route 45](#) to Rockville little theater in Rockville. Founded in 1948, Rockville Little Theatre is the oldest continuously operating live theatre in the Rockville area, providing high quality performances at reasonable prices.
- [Silver Spring Stage](#) - If community theater is your thing, take Ride On Routes [9](#), [19](#), [21](#), or [22](#) to the Silver Spring Stage in Four Corners. In most years, Silver Spring Stage produces a season of seven full-length productions plus a one-act festival and a winter holiday show.
- [Robert E Parilla Performing Arts Center](#) - Take Ride On Routes [46](#), [55](#) or [101](#) to Montgomery College's Robert E Parilla Performing Arts Center in Rockville. This venue hosts a wide variety of performances including music, drama, dance, and comedy.

- [Silver Spring Black Box Theater](#) Take Ride On Flash, [8](#), [9](#), [12](#), [13](#), [14](#), [16](#), [17](#), [20](#), [21](#) or [22](#) to downtown Silver Spring to visit the Silver Spring Black Box Theater, home of the Theatre Consortium of Silver Spring.
- [Black Rock Center For The Arts](#) - Take Ride On [Route 97](#) to BlackRock Center for the Arts in Germantown for musical, dance, and theatrical performances, free gallery exhibitions, and arts education classes in a welcoming and intimate setting.
- [Olney Theater Center](#) - Take Ride On [Route 53](#) to Olney for the Olney Theater Center. Olney Theatre Center for the Arts produces theatrical performances for the diverse audiences in our community, and educates, learns from, supports and inspires a more inclusive generation of theater-makers.
- [Adventure Theater at Glen Echo Park](#) - If you're looking for something for the younger members of the family, take Ride On [Route 29](#) to the Adventure Theater at Glen Echo Park for child-friendly performances as well as a range of classes for even your littlest thespians.

## Ride On Transit Advisory Group (TAG) is Looking for New Members



Are you interested in transit? Do you have feedback on how Ride On could run more smoothly? The Ride On Transit Advisory Group could be a great fit for you!

The Transit Advisory Group (TAG) was created in 1997 by the Division of Transit Services. TAG is a consumer advocacy group that serves as an advisory board for the Division of Transit Services and provides feedback on Ride On policies and programs, passengers' and community needs. TAG members offer important suggestions for improvements, new ideas, and are the first to know about any changes happening with Ride On. TAG also serves as the eyes and ears of Ride On management. TAG consists of 18 Montgomery County volunteers committed to serving a two-year term. Members of the Transit Advisory Group and administrators of Ride On meet 3 or 4 times a year.

The Transit Advisory Group is actively recruiting new members! If you or someone you know is interested, especially those who are disabled, high school students or bilingual, please email us at [rideon.customerservice@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:rideon.customerservice@montgomerycountymd.gov) to apply to be a member. Your membership is free, and you will have a chance to make a difference within Montgomery County. Let your voice be heard!!

## Great Seneca Transit Network Construction Update

The Great Seneca Transit Network project, located in Gaithersburg, Maryland provides for the construction of a designated bus-lane and the installation of 24 bus stops which will connect the Shady Grove Metrorail Station to the Traville Transit Center at the Universities at Shady Grove (Pink and Lime Lines), including stops at Medical Center Drive & John Hopkins University; Medical Center Way & Adventist Medical Center; the Traville Transit Center at the Universities at Shady Grove, Crown Farm, and Broschart Road. The proposed work also includes storm drain installations, sidewalk, curb and gutter reconstruction and landscaping.



The scope of work will consist of but not be limited to the following:

- Implementing sediment and erosion controls;
- Implementing traffic control plans and Maintenance of Traffic;
- Constructing road pavement, sidewalk, and curb & gutter;
- Constructing storm drain structures and storm water management facilities;
- Installing pavement markings and signs;
- Installing Bus Shelters, benches, signs, bike racks, and trash cans;
- Installing landscape plantings;
- Utility relocation work.

Construction will take place **Monday thru Friday between 7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.**. Occasional evening and Saturday work may be necessary to make up for poor weather days. The County will work to minimize any disruption to the surrounding residents and business communities.

### **Project Highlights**

- Construction to begin on, or about October 1, 2023.
- Work to be performed under lane closures and flagging operations.
- Construction will take approximately 9 months to complete.
- Essential County services will continue to be provided.

## **Montgomery County Department of Transportation Ride On Bus Ridership Trends Up With Summer Surge in Riders**



The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) announced today that it delivered more than five million rides on its Ride On bus transit system from March 2023 through June 2023, the last quarter of the 2023 Fiscal Year. This represents a nine percent increase in ridership over the same period the previous year. The trend accelerated over the summer, with June recording a nearly 16 percent ridership increase over 2022. July had a 29 percent increase and August reported 31 percent growth. MCDOT has seen overall bus service improve, with timing and bus reliability trending upward throughout summer months as well.

“Higher rates of Ride On ridership benefit everyone by reducing the number of cars on the roads, improving traffic congestion, and helping our environment,” said Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich. “I hope to see this trend continue. Increased bus ridership is important toward the County reaching our Climate Action Plan goal of a [100 percent carbon emission reduction by 2035](#). We have invested significant resources into creating a modern, accessible, and customer-focused transit network. We have more exciting plans to come for Ride On including fully transitioning to a zero-emission bus fleet while continuing to provide our riders increased amenities, improved routes, and better on-time performance. If you haven’t tried Ride On recently, please consider getting on board soon.”

Encouraging people to return to public transit following the pandemic has been a priority for MCDOT. In August 2022, the department announced the return of bus fare, but at the discounted rate of one dollar per ride. [Older adults](#), [persons with disabilities](#) and [students](#) under the age of 18 are still able to ride for free.

The department was greatly impacted by the national shortage of bus operators both during and after the pandemic. Salary increases implemented last year and ongoing hiring and training efforts is steadily building back staffing levels.

“We are continually looking to hire and train operators and those numbers have been trending upwards as well,” said MCDOT Director Chris Conklin.

Other MCDOT Ride On initiatives have focused on making the transit network faster, easier to use and more accessible.

“Accessibility improvements, service adjustments based on ridership and gradual service increases have helped support the steady recovery from pandemic impacts,” said Director Conklin. “Our Ride On Trip Planner app, launched this past July, allows customers to plan their routes in advance, and track bus arrivals in real-time. It has never been easier, and our fares are still only \$1, which is a lot cheaper than driving.”

## **Of Note**

### **Customer Appreciation Days**

Ride On wants to thank our riders for their support and ridership; without riders there would be no Ride On! To show our appreciation, Ride On marketing staff hold an appreciation event one day per month at a popular stop. Staff bring a table with information on Ride On programs and services, as well as lots of exciting giveaways. Be on the lookout for Ride On Marketing staff at your favorite Ride On bus stop!

### **Free Travel Training for Older Adults 65+ Covers Taking Metro and Ride On**

Get confident and comfortable taking public transportation in the region with the free Travel Training workshop from 9 a.m. to Noon on Wednesday, Sept. 27 at the Jewish Council for the Aging at 12320 Parklawn Dr., Rockville. This seminar/field trip focuses on using public transit to get around the DMV. It features a Metro train ride, Ride On bus info., safety & accessibility tips and explains how-to use the Metro and Ride On Trip Planner apps.

Advanced registration is required. Contact Connect-A-Ride at 301-738-3252 or [connectaride@accessJCA.org](mailto:connectaride@accessJCA.org) to register.

Hear from local seniors here, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NlpY77yi\\_wc&t=8s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NlpY77yi_wc&t=8s)

### **Ride On Courtesy Stop Program**

Montgomery County Ride On bus riders are now able to request to be dropped off between stops when traveling late at night. Available after 9 p.m., the Courtesy Stop program lets riders request to be dropped off at any point along the regular bus route, in addition to designated bus stops. Riders can request a Courtesy Stop on any MCDOT Ride On bus or WMATA Metrobus. However, Metrobus Express and Limited Stop buses, such as Flash, operating in Montgomery County, are excluded from the program. The requested stop must be along the regular bus route, and cannot be at an intersection, along a highway or freeway. A bus operator can refuse a requested stop if the driver deems the undesignated stop as unsafe.

### **No Service Change this September**

Ride On is constantly looking for ways to enhance the riding experience for our customers. To help ensure that estimated arrival times are accurate, this September we will be focusing on improving our bus tracking technology. This work will take place in lieu of any changes to our scheduling. Schedule adjustments will take place again in January. As always, we thank you for riding with us.

## **Ride On extRa Celebrates 6 years of Community Service**

Montgomery County's [Ride On extRa](#) limited-stop service is celebrating six years of helping riders get around Route 355 quickly and efficiently. The service, which launched in 2017, is an interim step to the Bus Rapid Transit system that MCDOT envisions for MD 355.

Ride On extRa makes just 13 stops and operates every 20 minutes Monday through Friday, 5:25 – 9:30 a.m. and 3:25 – 7:30 p.m. between the Lakeforest Transit Center in Gaithersburg and the Medical Center Metro Station in Bethesda. Boarding is at one of 13 specially designed stops along the fourteen-mile route. Celebrate with us by riding the extRa today.

## **Phase Four of Glenmont Metro Station Bus Bay Closures Began August 21**

Metro began replacing the glass canopies at the Glenmont Station on Sept. 12, 2022. During the glass canopy construction, some bus bays have been closed in phases and the associated bus routes have been temporarily relocated. Phase four began August 21, 2023, with the closing of Bay E. Work is projected to last through Mid October.

For the most up-to-date service information, riders should follow @RideOnMCT on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), and [Instagram](#). In addition, information is available at [RideOnBus.com](#), by subscribing to receive email alerts at [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/govdelivery](http://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](http://montgomerycountymd.gov/mcdot), follow @MCDOTNow on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and [subscribe](#) to MCDOT's "Go Montgomery!" newsletter.