

Ride On Newsletter

September 2024

Montgomery County Launches Great Seneca Transit Network with ‘Pink’ and ‘Lime’ Bus Routes, Bringing Fast, Equitable Access to Medical Centers, Education and Life Sciences Facilities



Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich, County Council President Andrew Friedson and other State and local officials and the County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) today celebrated the launch of Phase 1 of the [Great Seneca Transit Network](#) (GSTN) at the Trville Gateway Transit Center in Rockville.

The GSTN, which began service on Sept. 8, offers commuters and residents faster, more frequent transit through two new [Ride On extRa bus lines](#), designated as “Pink” and “Lime.” The routes operate from 5 a.m.-7:45 p.m. on weekdays and from 6:15 a.m.-7:30 p.m. on weekends, with service every 10-15 minutes during peak periods on weekdays.

Among those attending the ceremonies were Maryland Delegates Lily Qi and Joe Vogel; Montgomery County Council Vice President, Kate Stewart; Councilmembers Gabe Albornoz; Marilyn Balcombe; Evan Glass; Natali Fani-González; Dawn Luedtke; and Laurie-Anne Sayles; City of Gaithersburg Mayor Jud Ashman; City of Rockville Mayor Monique Ashton; Joe McAndrew, assistant secretary of the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT); Chris Conklin, director MCDOT; and Anne Khademian, executive director of the Universities at Shady Grove.

Prior to the event, local business owners and elected officials provided remarks about the impact of the new service in a [series of videos](#) available on the MCDOTNow YouTube channel.

“The Great Seneca Transit Network will make transit a viable option for people going to work and school,” said County Executive Elrich. “These new express bus routes with signal priority, access to Metrorail and some portions of dedicated bus lanes provide a crucial link to the more than 9,000 private sector life sciences jobs and to the Universities at Shady Grove, and Adventist Medical Park. This new service reflects our commitment to improving daily life for our residents and supports a flourishing economic hub that will continue to attract employers, students and workers.”

The new bus lines run east-west connections between the Shady Grove Metro and the Traville Gateway Transit Center, adjacent to the Universities at Shady Grove in Rockville. The Pink Line links the busy Shady Grove corridor with the Life Sciences Center via Medical Center Drive. The Lime Line uses I-370 to provide an express route to RIO, Crown Farm and the heart of the Life Sciences Center at Adventist HealthCare Shady Grove Medical Center.

“The Great Seneca Transit Network is a tremendous step forward in our plan to create a thriving and diverse community connected by a safe and reliable transportation system,” said Council President Friedson. “We envision the Life Sciences Center as a complete community with affordable housing options, education and employment opportunities, and entertainment and shopping centers, that is accessible by a comprehensive transit infrastructure that prioritizes public transportation, pedestrian and cyclist access.”

Both bus routes will operate with sections of dedicated bus lanes and signal priority, which involves the controlling of traffic lights to prioritize buses so they can reach their destination faster.

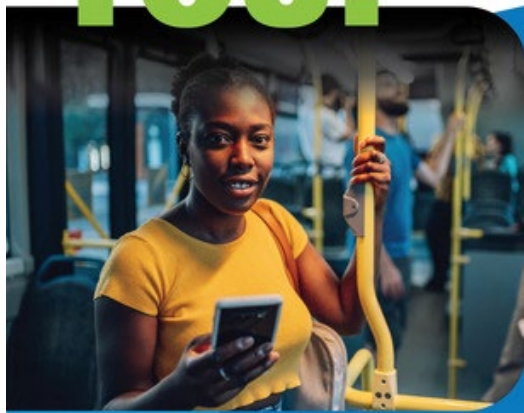
“We designed the Great Seneca Transit Network around the needs of the community it serves,” said MCDOT Director Conklin. “The express routes will significantly reduce commute times for key destinations. Transportation from the Shady Grove Metro station to Adventist Medical Center via the Pink line will take 21 minutes, less than half of the current 43-minute commute on the existing route. The buses offer fast, frequent service and accommodate shift changes and student schedules.”

Maryland is one of the partners working with Montgomery County to expand its transportation options.

“The State is working closely with Montgomery County to ensure projects such as this, that are primarily on State roads, are progressing quickly. We understand how impactful they are to a community,” said Deputy Secretary Samantha Biddle of the Maryland Department of Transportation.

We Want To Hear From You! Take Our 2024 Rider Survey

**WE WANT
TO HEAR
FROM
YOU!**



Take our survey
to tell us how
you're using
Ride On services
and how we can
better serve you.

Do you use Ride On Transit Services? You're invited to take the 2024 Rider Survey! Your responses will help the Montgomery County Department of Transportation understand who is using the system and how they can better serve you.

[Take Rider Survey](#)

Ride On is required to conduct this survey to continue to qualify for federal transit funding. Your responses will help ensure all service changes equitably benefit Montgomery County residents and inform future fixed route, microtransit, and express bus services.

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact rideonsurvey@wrallp.com. We look forward to hearing from you!

Ride On Trip Planner App: A Back to School Essential and Your Go-To Tool for Getting Around



As students and families in Montgomery County gear up for another school year, transportation remains a key part of ensuring everything runs smoothly. Whether you're a student heading back to school or a parent coordinating transportation, the Ride On Trip Planner app is your ultimate travel companion! Plus, the Youth Cruiser SmarTrip® card is a must-have for students commuting to school, offering affordable and convenient access to buses throughout the region.

Why Use the Ride On Trip Planner App?

The Ride On Trip Planner app is designed to make your commuting experience easier and more efficient. Whether you're heading to school, work, or anywhere else, this app helps you plan your bus routes, giving you real-time information on:

- **Bus Schedules:** Quickly find schedules for Ride On buses, including up-to-date departure and arrival times.
- **Bus Stop Locations:** Use the map to locate nearby bus stops.
- **Route Planning:** Input your starting location and destination to get the best routes and transfer points, including regional transportation partners like MARC, Metro, bikeshare, scooters, and walking. Utilize the notification feature to get reminders that your stop is approaching.
- **Real-Time Updates:** Stay in the know with real-time service alerts, including delays and schedule changes.
- **Trip Estimation:** Get an estimated arrival time for your bus at any given stop, so you're never left guessing when it'll arrive.

The app is available for both iOS and Android, and it's easy to [download](#) and set up. With user-friendly features, you can customize the app based on your preferences, making your Ride On experience even more personalized.

Back-to-School Tip: Get Your Youth Cruiser SmarTrip® Card

As part of back-to-school prep, the Youth Cruiser SmarTrip® card is a fantastic resource for students ages 5 to 18. This card allows students to ride Ride On buses and regular Metrobuses within the county for free as well as other regional transit services, such as Metrorail, by adding value to the card.

Why Get the Youth Cruiser SmarTrip® Card?

- **Ride Free: Kids ride free all day every day.**
- **Perfect for School Commutes:** The card makes getting to and from school, after-school activities, or weekend outings affordable and easy.

To get a Youth Cruiser SmarTrip® card, bring ID and visit one of the Montgomery County libraries, TRiPS Silver Spring or Mobile Commuter store or your school.

Start the School Year Off Right with Ride On!

Whether you're planning your commute using the Ride On Trip Planner app or taking advantage of the Youth Cruiser SmarTrip® card, Ride On is here to make the school year smoother. With easy-to-use technology and affordable travel solutions, students and families can focus on what matters most — getting to class on time and enjoying the new school year.

Stay safe and happy commuting!

A Ride On Guide to the NEW Pink & Lime extRa Routes



The Ride On extRa Pink & Lime routes are now in service, allowing riders to get to more locations in the Great Seneca Science Corridor quicker and easier than ever. Looking for medical care, education, or shopping? The Pink & Lime routes can get you there! Read on for a list of destinations served by the new extRa routes.

- [Shady Grove Metro Station](#): The [Lime](#) and [Pink Route](#) both start at Shady Grove Metro Station, creating a quick and efficient link to bus service from Ride On and Metro, as well as Red Line service.
- [Adventist Healthcare Shady Grove Medical Center](#): Adventist HealthCare is nationally recognized for services such as cancer care, cardiac and vascular care, orthopedics, joint replacement and maternity care. To get to the hospital, take the [Lime Route](#) or [Pink Route](#).
- [Universities at Shady Grove](#): The Universities at Shady Grove (USG) offers nearly 80 undergraduate and graduate degree programs from nine Maryland public universities on one convenient campus in Montgomery County. To get to class in a hurry, take either the [Lime Route](#) or [Pink Route](#) to Trville Transit Center.
- [Downtown Crown](#): Downtown Crown is located in Gaithersburg and includes shopping, dining, and community events located near various residential options. Take the [Lime Route](#) to visit this community hub.
- [Rio](#): The Rio shopping center is a lakeside outdoor mall that includes locations of some of your favorite big box retailers, boutique clothing stores, eateries, and key services like eyewear and grooming. Take a break catch a movie or grab dinner with the family while you're there. Ride On's new [Lime Route](#) will get you to the Rio fast!

Interview with Transit Advisory Group Member Tristan Keener



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

I started using Ride On to get to my voice lessons at GIGS in Kensington last July. After my lesson, I thought to myself, "what if I just stay on?" The bus took me all the way to Twinbrook Station. I enjoyed riding the bus so much that I started riding every route from start to finish. By the end of the 2023-2024 school year, I had ridden every single Ride On route from start to finish.

If you ever see one of those blue signs, I've been there!

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

The 5 connects me from my house in North Woodside (2nd Ave) to Downtown Silver Spring, Kensington, and Pike and Rose (North Bethesda). I also use the 53 to connect me from Magruder High School to Y2/Y7/Y8 south to get home after school.

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

When I ride public transportation, I enjoy looking out the window, taking a nap, and thinking about where I could go and the practical uses of the route.

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

As a TAG member, I will give feedback on current bus routes and future plans by using my knowledge of road design and experience with Ride On. I will also take the time to go ride the route in question so I can see any issues with my own eyes.

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

For anyone who lives in Silver Spring, Rockville, Bethesda, and Wheaton areas, I would highly recommend using Ride On when no transfers are required.

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 visit our TAG webpage [here](#) 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!!

Montgomery County Department of Transportation Hosts Bicycle Drive for Community Service Month

Celebrate Community Service Month with MCDOT on FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2024

DONATE A BIKE

7:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

100 Maryland Avenue in Rockville, MD
20850

Outside the Council Office Building Garage

Please: NO BIKE HELMETS

Repaired bikes will be provided to low-income Montgomery County residents.

MCDOT For more information, contact:
commuter.services@montgomerycountymd.gov

RBH

In honor of Community Service Month, the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) is proud to announce an exciting Bicycle Drive on Friday, October 11, 2024. This impactful event will run from 7:00 AM to 2:00 PM and will be held outside the Council Office Building Garage, accessible via the East Jefferson Street entrance. This drive is a wonderful opportunity for residents to contribute to a meaningful cause while supporting sustainable transportation solutions within our community.

The Bicycle Drive is organized in partnership with the Rockville Bike Hub, a local organization dedicated to providing access to reliable transportation for those in need. By participating in this event, you will help ensure that repaired bicycles are distributed to low-income Montgomery County residents. These bicycles will serve as a vital resource, offering enhanced mobility and independence to individuals and families who might otherwise struggle with transportation barriers.

We encourage all residents to participate by donating any unused or gently used bicycles they may have. The Rockville Bike Hub team will be on hand to accept and repair these bikes, ensuring they are in excellent condition before they are given to those who need them. This initiative not only helps improve transportation access but also supports the broader goals of environmental sustainability and community engagement.

Bikes are welcome on all Ride On buses! Buses are equipped with racks either on the front or inside the bus. Flash buses also feature near-level boarding, making bringing bikes, wheelchairs, and strollers onboard that much easier.

For more information or if you have any questions about the Bicycle Drive, contact MCDOT Commuter Services at commuter.services@montgomerycountymd.gov. Your support and participation in this event are greatly appreciated and will contribute significantly to making a positive impact in our community. We look forward to seeing you there and working together to support those in need through this meaningful effort.

An Interview With Ride On Transit Communications Leader Derek Haber



What is your name?

Derek Haber

What is your role with Ride On?

Transit Communications Leader

How long have you been working with Ride On?

I have been working with Ride On since 2013.

What inspired you to pursue a career in transit communications?

I've always had a deep passion for transportation, which initially drew me into the field. After spending several years working in planning, I realized that my true interest lay in the real-time aspects of transit operations. What excites me about being a transit communications leader is the need to address and resolve issues as they happen, rather than working solely from a long-term strategy. This role keeps me engaged with the

immediate challenges and dynamic nature of transit systems, where quick thinking and effective communication are crucial. It allows me to blend my enjoyment of transportation with the fast-paced, problem-solving environment that I thrive in, making each day both challenging and rewarding.

What do you enjoy most about working in transit? What keeps you motivated?

What I enjoy most about working in transit is the sheer variety and unpredictability of each day. Every day presents new challenges and opportunities, which keeps me engaged and constantly learning. This dynamic environment allows me to gain insights into the diverse needs and concerns of the community we serve. I find it incredibly rewarding to see how our work impacts people's daily lives and to adapt our strategies to better meet their needs. The continuous interaction with the community and the chance to address real-time issues keeps me motivated and passionate about my role, as it makes every day a unique learning experience and an opportunity to make a tangible difference.

Share a memorable or rewarding experience you've had while working in transit.

One of my most memorable and rewarding experiences in transit happened years ago when I was driving Route 47. A passenger boarded the bus at Montgomery Mall and asked if I was heading to Greentree. I responded, somewhat casually, asking if she meant the church. To my surprise, she hadn't been on the bus for weeks and was genuinely astonished that I remembered her and her destination. It was a small moment, but it highlighted the personal connections we can build with our passengers and the impact that a little bit of attention and familiarity can have. It was incredibly fulfilling to realize that, beyond just operating a bus, I had made a meaningful impression on someone's day and demonstrated the personal touch that makes our service more than just a means of transportation.

What advice would you give to someone interested in pursuing a career in your field?

If you're interested in pursuing a career in transit communications, my advice would be to embrace the fact that each day brings something new and unexpected. This field demands flexibility and the ability to respond effectively to the information you receive, often with limited time to make decisions. It's important to stay adaptable and focus on solving problems as they arise. One key aspect is to take pride in the decisions you make, even when faced with challenging circumstances. Every choice you make has a ripple effect on the service we provide and the community we support. By staying committed to making thoughtful, well-informed decisions and remaining proud of your contributions, you'll find the role both fulfilling and impactful.

Ride On Celebrates National Drive Electric Week: Embracing a Greener Future



As our ongoing commitment to sustainability and eco-friendly transportation Ride On is excited to support National Drive Electric Week from September 27 to October 6, 2024. Drive Electric Week is an annual, nationwide celebration to raise awareness of the many benefits of all-electric and plug-in hybrid cars, trucks, motorcycles, and more. It highlights the importance of electric vehicles and their potential to reduce emissions, improve air quality, and create a cleaner, healthier, environment for all. Through both [in person and online community events](#), volunteer opportunities, and educational awareness, National Drive Electric Week encourages people to consider making the switch to electric, whether it's for personal vehicles, public transit or commercial vehicles.

The Montgomery County Department of Transportation is proud to lead by example in adopting green transportation solutions. The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) and the County Department of General Services (DGS) have released a Zero Emission Bus (ZEB) Transition Plan to convert the County's transit fleet of nearly 400 Ride On buses to zero-emission vehicles by 2035. The ZEB plan is purposely flexible to accommodate for emerging technology and relies heavily on State and Federal grants that MCDOT has so far been successful in receiving. Recent grant awards have totaled more than \$30 million for environmentally friendly transportation solutions over the last two years. For more information and to view the Zero Emissions Bus Transition Plan, visit [MCDOT - ZEB Transition Plan \(montgomerycountymd.gov\)](https://montgomerycountymd.gov/MCDOT-ZEB-Transition-Plan). Stay tuned for more updates as we continue to expand our electric bus fleet and support sustainable transportation!

Montgomery County Department of Transportation Will Offer Free Fares on all Ride On Buses in Support of Car Free Day on Monday, September 23

CAR FREE DAY SEPTEMBER 23



FREE FARES ALL DAY



The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) is excited to support the global Car Free Day event on Monday, September 23. All Ride On, Flash, extRa and Flex buses will waive the \$1 fare to encourage an increased use of public transportation. Car Free Day is an annual initiative encouraging motorists to take a break from driving and explore alternatives like public transit, walking, riding a bicycle, taking the bus, carpooling or teleworking. Whether using buses or trains to travel for work, school, health care or recreation, riders will have plenty of options to experience the many benefits of public transportation. Additionally, by choosing transit, riders will help to decrease roadway congestion and vehicle emissions throughout the region by traveling in ways that are greener. As people around the world help to improve air quality and reduce road congestion by leaving their cars at home, MCDOT is making it as attractive as possible for riders throughout our county to make public transit their first choice option.

Residents can also take the regional pledge online at carfreemetrod.c.org/pledge-page to participate in Car Free Day and be entered into a raffle for [prizes](#) such as a Samsung Galaxy. Each registrant will also receive a Capital Bikeshare promocode for a free, 30-minute ebike or classic bike ride, applicable to new riders only on Car Free Day. Participants can also take the MCDOT Commuter Services pledge [online](#) to be entered in raffle drawings to win even more prizes, including \$25 gift cards and a \$200 SmarTrip card.

If you're a regular rider – enjoy the free ride as Ride On waives the \$1 fare for the day. If you're trying transit for the first time, residents are encouraged to download the free [Ride On Trip Planner app](#) to plan regional travel across multiple transportation systems. It's the perfect time to try out Ride On's reliable services, discover our [new extRa Lime and Pink routes](#), and explore Montgomery County's public transit.

Of Note

Fairfax Connector Route 798 Express Bus Service Now Available

Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) and Fairfax County are excited to announce the launch of the new Fairfax Connector route 798 express bus service. This new service offers a convenient, efficient, and eco-friendly transportation option for commuters traveling between Tysons Corner and Bethesda, including stops near the Bethesda Metro Station, National Institutes of Health (NIH), Walter Reed National Medical Center, and the Westfield Montgomery Mall Transit Center.

The service operates Monday to Friday during peak hours morning and evening. The one-way fare is \$4.80, with a \$1.00 discount on transfers from Ride On. To see the route schedule, click [here](#).

Ride Free with the Youth Cruiser SmarTrip Card

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. Students can also get the cards at their school or county libraries. To learn more, visit RideOnBus.com.

Transit Advisory Group is Recruiting!

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 visit our TAG webpage [here](#) 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!!

VanGo & Bethesda Free Circulators and Free Shuttles

Did you know that Montgomery County has two free circulators? The VanGo Circulator, or Ride On Route 28, makes traveling through Downtown Silver Spring easy and convenient. Buses run every 30 minutes and serve Silver Spring's art district as well as community and health centers, lodging, shopping, and transportation connections. Visit [here](#) for more details.

The Bethesda Circulator connects riders to 8 public parking garages, the Bethesda Metro Station and 20 convenient stops along the way that get you to and from your favorite Bethesda destination - all for free! Three circulators on route arrive at each stop every 10-15 minutes. Visit [here](#) for more details.

MCDOT also provides free shuttles to recreation centers, shopping, and medical appointments for some senior populations. Shuttles provide point to point service while circulators travel a specific route with multiple bus stops.

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:

What year did Ride On launch its first electric buses as part of its transition to a greener, more sustainable fleet?

1. 2019
2. 2024
3. 2021
4. 2020

Last month's question:

What 2 new Ride On extRa routes are launching in September?

1. Pink and Lime
2. Blue and Lime
3. Pink and Yellow
4. Lime and Yellow

Answer: (1) Pink and Lime

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.

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.