



Ride On News & Information

Ride On Newsletter

May 2021

Bus Schedule Changes Implemented on May 9, Increased Service and Improved Efficiency

Ride On bus service schedules were adjusted by Montgomery County's Department of Transportation (MCDOT) on May 9, to increase overall service and improve efficiency. The changes reflect the continuing shift of resources toward schedule patterns prior to the COVID-19 health crisis. All County-operated transit services remain free of charge to riders and front-door boarding has resumed.

[Flash](#), the high frequency MCDOT service that has been operating since October on Colesville Road/ Columbia Pike (US 29) and Lockwood Drive, will continue to be fully operational. Flash destinations include Downtown Silver Spring, Four Corners, White Oak, Fairland, and Burtonsville.

The pilot on-demand Flex service in the Rockville and Wheaton/Glenmont will be reinstated in July.

Ride On planners have monitored ridership data and on-time performance feedback to identify routes that could achieve more efficiency with schedule updates.

The information led to the 30 routes that had schedule changes starting May 9.

These routes include:

[5](#), [6](#), [8](#), [10](#), [11](#), [14](#), [17](#), [19](#), [20](#), [21](#), [22](#), [23](#), [26](#), [28](#), [29](#), [30](#), [32](#), [33](#), [34](#), [39](#), [43](#), [46](#), [52](#), [54](#), [55](#), [56](#), [59](#), [73](#), [79](#), [81](#).

Extra buses continue to be stationed at all Metro stations in the County and are ready to deploy to nearby service routes experiencing levels of demand that cannot be met by buses under the standard schedule.

All Ride On buses returned to front-door boarding on April 5.

On Flash, all doors can be used by passengers. This measure makes more space available for passengers inside the buses. Mobility devices should use the front door and bike riders should use the rear/third door.

All Ride On routes are in operation, but ridership capacity remains limited to support safe distancing between riders. All passengers are required to wear a face covering to board and must continue wearing

the covering for the entire time on the bus. All buses have a supply of face coverings for riders who cannot provide their own.

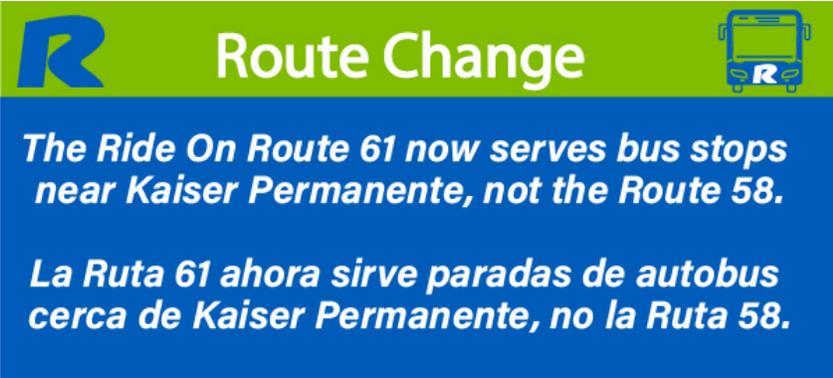
Riders are asked to maintain maximum physical distance between themselves and other riders who are not from the same household.

Bus interiors will continue to be cleaned by the County’s Department of General Services twice daily with hospital-grade viral disinfectant. Bus filter and ventilation systems are treated each night with a disinfectant.

Ride On’s New Way to Kaiser Permanente Gaithersburg

Ride On had its first service changes earlier this year on February 28. Due to those, riders on [Route 58](#) going to the Kaiser Permanente Center will have to transfer to [Route 61](#) at the Lakeforest Transit Center.

Route 61 now serves Watkins Mill Road, including the Kaiser Permanente Center, and will continue to the Lakeforest Transit Center along MD355. Riders going to MARC and the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) office would transfer to [Route 78](#) along Clopper Road. Riders going to locations along Firstfield and Quince Orchard roads would transfer to [Route 56](#) on Clopper Road and Firstfield.



Route Change

The Ride On Route 61 now serves bus stops near Kaiser Permanente, not the Route 58.

La Ruta 61 ahora sirve paradas de autobus cerca de Kaiser Permanente, no la Ruta 58.

 [Learn more at rideonbus.com](http://rideonbus.com) 

For more information on the latest service changes, visit us at rideonbus.com.

Interview with Phil McLaughlin, Chief of Planning and Implementation

1. Please explain your team’s role and its direct impact on Ride On operations.

Planning & Implementation (P&I) designs bus service and maintains passenger amenities for Ride On and the Flash. The bus service is designed for Ride On customers by best matching demand and policy with available resources. This bus service is then packaged into weekly bus operator work assignments adhering to strict MCGEO (local union organization) and Montgomery County work rules. The service and bus operator work assignments generally change three times per year. The bus operator work assignments, vehicle assignments, and other associated operational support materials are prepared for

(operator) work picks which generally occur 3-4 weeks prior to service implementation. P&I regularly talks with Operational staff to most effectively and efficiently design bus service and work assignments. Our planning analysts are all former bus operators and also go out into the field to ride the bus routes when adjustments are needed.

2. Many organizations were forced to close or suspend operations due to the pandemic but Ride On never shut down operations. What role did you and your team play to ensure that Ride On continues its services?

Over the past 15 months, P&I designed and implemented 10 different service plans matching available resources with ever changing ridership demand and new social distancing policies while remaining within the budget.

3. The COVID-19 pandemic also forced many organizations to reevaluate their services. Has that been the case for planning and implementation of Ride On services? If so, how?

Ride On has modified service levels on every route. Currently, Ride On is operating about 80% of Pre-Covid service levels. Ride On has operated a low of about 30% of Pre-Covid service levels up to its current 80%. Most routes are currently operating less service than Pre-Covid. However, there are 2-3 routes that are operating with higher service levels where ridership has not been as impacted as other routes. The additional service on these routes allows for appropriate social distancing. For FY22, Ride On will return to Pre-Covid service levels. The service will be variable by route, best matching that route's service level with demand.

4. The Ride On Vaccination Shuttle is now in service. How long did it take to plan and implement this additional service?

The Vax shuttle came together fairly quickly. The shuttle was designed to allow those visiting the Montgomery College Germantown Vax site connectivity to the transit network. Shady Grove Station was selected as the best way riders could connect to the transit network. The shuttle provides direct service from Shady Grove to MC Germantown. Shady Grove allows for connectivity to the Metro Red Line, Metrobus service, MTA service, and 22 Ride On routes.

5. What is the plan to restore service to pre-COVID-19 level?

Ride On will phase in service during Fiscal Year 2022 eventually returning to Pre-COVID service levels. Ride On is currently operating 80% of Pre-COVID levels. It will grow to 81% in July 2021, to 96% in

September 2021 and eventually to 100% in January 2022. However, bus operator availability may be a challenge which may require modifications to the service plans.

6. What tools do you use for overall route planning across the County?

There are a handful of technology tools that we use including Trapeze, Onestop, Xerox, and Remix. We also use regular workgroup meetings with Operational staff, customer feedback, regional coordination, and occasional consultant support for planning.

7. When will the on-demand Flex transit service return and will there be any differences in service?

The Flex is set to re-launch on July 18, 2021. The original two zones will return on July 18, 2021. There are no immediate plans to modify the service at this time. The Flex had only been in operations for 8 months before the Covid-19 shut down.

8. When are the next service changes and how do you determine these changes?

The next service change is planned for July 18, 2021. This change will include an increase in service of about 1%. The added trips are targeted to the routes and services where the demand for ridership is the strongest. Xerox APC data allows us to determine where the heaviest ridership is regularly occurring and target the additional trips for these areas.

9. What is the role of your passenger facilities team and what are they currently working on?

Passenger Facilities maintains all of the 5,400 bus stops in Montgomery County. Included in these 5,400 bus stops are over 500 sheltered locations and 18 Flash Stations which require a higher level of maintenance. Passenger Facilities collaborates closely with MCDOT Planning for future passenger amenity designs.

Flash Stations feature innovative designs and technology.



Montgomery County Department of Transportation’s newest bus service - [the Flash](#) - has been operating for over 7 months, with service from Burtonsville to Silver Spring along the US 29 corridor. Each of its uniquely designed easy-to-find stations feature weather protection, seating, real-time transit information and a marker pole that flashes when the bus is just moments away.

While waiting for the bus, riders can tap their SmarTrip card to pre-pay their fares, purchase fare tickets at the ticket vending machine, enjoy the inlaid mosaics on the platform of the stations created by teen artists from [Arts on the Block](#), or browse the Smart kiosks.

These kiosks represent a new era of [Smart Media](#) in Montgomery County. MCDOT partnered with Smart City Media to provide these interactive digital screens – known as City Post – that mixes curated local posters and city apps for enhanced street level communications. Each kiosk includes public interest information available in nine languages, real-time bus information, local content, an interactive map, USB ports and a free WiFi hotspot. For a touchless experience, riders can scan the QR code on the screen with their camera app and navigate from their phones.

These kiosks will be installed at each Flash Station – except the Silver Spring Transit Center and FDA locations. Currently, there are kiosks installed at the White Oak and Briggs Chaney stations.

Passengers can conveniently access one of the Flash’s 18 stations by walking to the station, [e-scoot](#), using [Capital Bikeshare](#) and returning to one of the 10 newly installed bikeshare docks, or bringing their own bike and simply rolling it on the bus. Passengers can also get dropped off or drive and park at one of the three Flash Stations with free Park and Ride lots (Burtonsville, Tech Road, and Briggs Chaney).

Learn more at ridetheflash.com



Ride On Pandemic Safety - Part 3 of 4: Moving Forward

MCDOT continued to move forward in restoring and rethinking our services during the health crisis. On August 2nd, we implemented our sixth service change in five (5) months. All routes were placed back in service. Due to the need for continued social distancing on the buses, this was accomplished with shorter spans of service and less frequency of service on lower ridership routes, while increasing frequency on higher ridership routes. Our ridership dropped 78% in April 2020 but rebounded with 8 to 10 percent increases in service in May and June, and another 10 percent in September/October.

COVID Recovery Outreach Plan

With significantly increased teleworking among riders, we may not get back to normal ridership, but a COVID Recovery Outreach Plan was developed to communicate our safety protocols to ensure the safety of our riders and employees, our active participation in the phased reopening of the County, the value of public transportation, and to encourage riders to use our service.

This outreach plan was executed using advertising on bus exteriors and interiors, bus shelters, our websites, our social media, radio and other communication channels. Our major themes are safety, connectivity, partnership, empathy and hope that things get back to normal soon. The campaign is projected to last up to 12 months or as needed.

Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich Announces P3 Agreement with AlphaStruxure That Will Enable County to Transition More Than 40 Buses from Diesel to Electric Power



Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich recently announced an agreement with AlphaStruxure, a leader in Energy as a Service (EaaS) solutions, to deploy an integrated microgrid and electric bus charging infrastructure project at the Brookville Bus Depot, 8710 Brookville Rd, in Silver Spring. The project will enable at least 44 buses in the Ride On Montgomery County's transit fleet to transition from diesel to electric power. This event, advancing the County's goal to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2035,

reducing lifetime emissions by over 155,000 tons, while delivering resilience to climate events and power outages.

"This advanced infrastructure project drives forward several of our priorities—converting our fleets to electric, reducing harmful emissions, and ensuring safety and security—in alignment with our ambitious climate goals," said County Executive Elrich. "I'm pleased that this project will also improve the County's resilience, so we can continue providing transportation services even in the event of prolonged power outages."

The [Brookville Smart Energy Bus Depot](#) is a first-of-its-kind integration of microgrid and EV charging infrastructure, delivering sustainability, reliability and resilience for the County's public transportation system. AlphaStruxure, a joint venture of Schneider Electric and the Carlyle Global Infrastructure Opportunity Fund, will design, build, finance, own and operate the project to enable Ride On's growing electric bus fleet. The project is scheduled to be completed in late spring 2022 and is designed to deliver the following benefits and outcomes:

Bus Electrification: Enabling the County's transition from fossil fuel buses to electric buses with a customized energy and infrastructure solution

Environmental Sustainability: 62 percent carbon emissions reduction with electric buses powered by the microgrid and lifetime greenhouse gas benefit of over 155,000 tons

Climate Resilience and Operational Reliability: Ensures uninterrupted bus services during any long-term power outages caused by severe weather as well as any short-term disturbances or perturbations of the utility grid

Flexible Fleet Operations: Avoidance of utility demand charges and time-of-use tariffs provides fleet operations with ultimate dispatch flexibility

Financial Benefits: Energy as a Service approach eliminates upfront cost to the County for the project including all microgrid and charging infrastructure, and provides long-term cost predictability for energy supply

Economic Development: Creates more than 50 construction jobs

Click [here](#) for more information visit:

Off Note

Ride On Vaccine Shuttle: Ride On provides a free shuttle bus service between the Montgomery College Germantown Campus mass vaccination site and the Shady Grove Metro Station. The shuttle service is marked “Vaccine Shuttle” and operates Monday through Friday every 30 minutes between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Learn more at Rideonbus.com.

On Flex is coming soon! Ride On Flex a 2020 National Association of Counties (NACo) Innovation Award Winner will be returning soon.



Ride On Flex – Resuming service soon!

The wait is almost over – Ride On Flex will be back soon!

Use the **Ride On Flex app** or **call** to book your ride in the Rockville or Wheaton/Glenmont zones.

Face coverings are required. Available for those without.

 [Learn more at RideOnFlex.com](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/rideonflex) 

Memorial Day: Ride On will operate a Sunday schedule on Monday, May 31, Memorial Day. To learn more about our holiday schedules, please visit rideonbus.com

New service changes coming soon: Ride On plans to implement new service changes on Sunday, July 18th. The changes will continue to support efforts toward schedule patterns prior to COVID-19. Stay tuned for more information.

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To find more information about Ride On, go to [RideOnBus.com](https://www.RideOnBus.com). To receive updates, sign up for [email alerts](#), and for text alerts, text MONTGOMERY RIDEON to 468311. Follow Ride On on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) and [Instagram](#).

For the most up-to-date local transportation information, follow @MCDOTNow on Twitter, visit MCDOT’s transportation resource page for COVID-19, or subscribe to MCDOT news releases and Ride On Services at www.MontgomeryCountyMD.gov/govdelivery.



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