



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL**

March 29, 2021

Christopher Conklin, Director  
Montgomery County Department of Transportation  
101 Monroe Street, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Director Conklin,

We are disappointed to learn that Ride On will resume fare collection on April 5. That same week, a state mass vaccination site will open at the Montgomery College Germantown campus, a site chosen in part due to its access to Ride On. While we are under a State of Emergency due to the pandemic, reintroducing fares is both poor timing and ignores the needs of our residents who currently rely on Ride On for their daily responsibilities and those who will rely on it to get vaccinated.

We appreciate the important role Ride On has served during this pandemic, supporting our low income residents who needed to get to work and daily errands despite the ongoing health crisis. Fare-free service has saved these individuals hundreds of dollars in commuting costs at a time when many are struggling to make ends meet due to lost wages from pandemic-related closures. A recent report by the Council's Office of Legislative Oversight showed that 47% of Ride On customers have a household income below \$30,000 per year, 78% are people of color, and 42% speak a language other than English at home.

We know that many county residents riding the bus during the pandemic have been working in essential jobs, such as grocery store clerks and cleaning staff. These hard-working individuals have been waiting to become eligible for the vaccine to reduce the risks they face daily at their in-person jobs. With vaccine eligibility soon expanding to broader segments of the population, a bus ride to the vaccination site may be the most important transit trip they make this year.

Simply stated, Ride On should remain fare free through the current State of Emergency to ensure equitable access to the vaccine while also signaling our continued support for essential workers. This pandemic has highlighted the immense value transit provides our community. Keeping fares suspended eliminates the cost burden from our lowest-income residents as they continue to use Ride On to reach their jobs, fulfill essential activities, and get vaccinated.

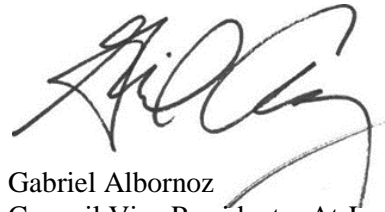
Sincerely,

Craig Rice  
Councilmember – District 2

Evan Glass  
Councilmember – At-Large



Tom Hucker  
Council President – District 5



Gabriel Albornoz  
Council Vice President – At-Large



Nancy Navarro  
Councilmember – District 4



Sidney Katz  
Councilmember – District 3



Will Jawando  
Councilmember – At-Large



Andrew Friedson  
Councilmember – District 1



Hans Riemer  
Councilmember – At-Large

cc: Richard Madaleno, CAO  
Dan Hibbert, Chief, Operations Section, MCDOT