



Commission on People with Disabilities

May 8th, 2019

Welcome and Approval of April 2019 Meeting Summary Minutes:

Seth Morgan, Chair, convened the meeting. A motion was made to approve the April 2019 Meeting Summary Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken, and the April 2019 Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved as written. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cpwd.

Microtransit Pilot Program – Will Kenlaw, Program Manager II: Marketing, Advertising & Customer Service, and Deanna Archey, Senior Planning Specialist – Division of Transit Services Ride On, Montgomery County Department of Transportation

PowerPoint: <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A&D%20Docs/CPWD/DOTMay2019PPT.pdf>

Website: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot-transit/flex/index.html

Deanna Archey began by giving an overview of Ride On Transit Services. There are 79 fixed routes that vary from local bus service to limited stop service to express service. Ride On has 21 million riders annually and has 825 bus operators. It has 370 transit buses including CNG, a variety of hybrid and clean diesel, and electric coming soon. Ride On is part of the regional transit network that includes local service with Metrorail, MARC, and MTA Commuter Bus. Deanna noted that Ride On ridership has been declining in Montgomery County the last four years. Ridership is typically down during the summer months and November and December, with an increase during September and October. Ridership across the nation within the transit industry has been on a steady decline. Transit providers are looking for new and innovative ways to increase ridership or provide additional options that may appeal to those who are not currently using the services.

Ride On Extra launched a year and a half ago offering limited stops along the 355 corridor operating from the Lakeforest Transit Center to Medical Center. The new buses are equipped with WiFi, USB charging ports, and have comfortable seating. Ride On Extra service has done well.

Ride On Flash service will launch in 2020 along the 29 corridor operating from Burtonsville to the Silver Spring Transit Center with limited stops along the way. Service will be provided by articulated buses.

Deanna gave an overview of Ride On's new microtransit pilot program tentatively launching June 26th. Flex is an on-demand bus service where riders use a transit application (app) on their personal smartphone to request bus service within a well-defined geographical zone. Pick up locations will be pre-selected from a drop-down menu. The pilot project will focus on two small zones to test the concept – Rockville and Glenmont/Wheaton. The goal is to improve mobility in current underserved areas of Montgomery County; connect residents to nearby Metrorail stations and activity centers within their neighborhood; improve ridership on other Ride On, Metrorail, and Metrobus routes; possible expansion of the microtransit model to other underserved areas of Montgomery County; and using

microtransit as an alternative to route elimination for low-performing routes. Through this pilot DOT will be evaluating its performance and possibly testing in other areas.

The program will focus on shared rides using small 11-passenger vehicles that are ADA wheelchair accessible and can accommodate a maximum of two riders who use wheelchair. One vehicle has been designated for the Rockville zone and two vehicles have been designated for the Glenmont/Wheaton zone. The Rockville zone service will be available from 9am to 3pm and the Glenmont/Wheaton zone service will be available from 6am to 9am and 3:30pm to 7pm. The fare is comparable to the fixed route service and costs \$2.00 per ride. Ride On's reduced fare structure would be applied to this program as well.

Users would download the app, register using their name, e-mail and phone number, and request a trip. It is similar to Uber and Lyft but does not require a credit card. Users would pay like they do with regular fixed route service via SmarTrip® card, passes, tokens or cash. Users cannot load cash or tokens onto a SmarTrip® card on Flex. Users request a trip by selecting a pick-up and drop-off location within the designated zone. There are parameters in the app that if a location is selected outside of the zone will be highlighted as not accessible. This is a corner-to-corner service. Users will be directed to the nearest intersection as a pick-up point. However, if the rider uses a wheelchair the app will automatically default to become a curb-to-curb service and will direct the driver to the requested pick-up location.

The app is designed to find the most efficient way to get from point A to point B. Users are asked to be at their pick-up stop at the estimated pick-up time given by the app. The user will only have to provide their first and last name upon boarding. All trips must be reserved through the app. Users can reserve up to six individuals using their account, but individuals are asked to register their own accounts and book their trips.

The program does have a "no show" policy. Users that are "no shows" the 1st and 2nd time will receive a friendly reminder. A 3rd "no show" will result in a 7-day suspension. The policy will be strictly enforced to ensure the quality of the service.

Booking requirements are for the same day. Subscription service is not permitted. Walk-ons will not be accepted. Wifi will be available on these passenger buses. During the pilot phase, trips can only be booked via smartphones, but if the pilot becomes permanent a call center will be considered.

Rides must occur only within the one zone and cannot cross into other areas. The Rockville zone is one square mile and includes the Rockville Metro station, Rockville Town Center, and multiple activity centers. The Glenmont / Wheaton zone is a highly densely populated area that includes both the Glenmont and Wheaton Metro Stations, Westfield Wheaton Mall and many activity centers.

Will Kenlaw is in charge of marketing, communications, advertising and customer service. DOT is currently writing their materials. Will stated that their key word is pilot. The vendor they are working with has implemented this program over fifty times. DOT is talking to other pilot programs available throughout the country.

DOT continues to provide outreach sessions and will continue to have outreach sessions through the end of the calendar year. Focus groups have been convened in Glenmont and Rockville. They have included the Rockville Chamber of Commerce, the Rockville Economic Development, and the County's ADA Title II Compliance Manager. DOT has also met with the Commission on Aging. Invitations have

been sent to the Glenmont Exchange Civic Association, Glenmont Forest Civic Association, and to representatives of the two Regional Service Centers that serve the Glenmont/Wheaton zone.

The Flex paint scheme uses DOT's primary colors blue and green. The back of the bus includes the most basic level user guide possible – download the app, select your pick-up and drop-off location, then go to your pick-up point. The sides of the bus will be revealed on launch day. The logo includes the tag line "Book & Go!"

The floor was opened to questions.

How do you know how long the trip will take? The app will give you an estimated arrival time.

Can a user register as someone who uses a wheelchair? Yes, it can be noted in the registration process and it is saved in the system. Operators are trained on using wheelchair lifts for fixed route service however there will be a re-certification for those operators who are designated for this program.

What's the greatest distance a person can walk? It can vary depending on the individual's location and the closest intersection for pick-up. Within the geographical zone, every intersection in that zone has been designated as a permissible pick-up location unless it is a cul-de-sac or if the rider uses a wheelchair then the service becomes curb-to-curb

How is ride time affected if multiple people are using the service? The program is first come, first served. The zones are small to allow at most a 15-minute ride.

How will the service accommodate people with disabilities who do not use a wheelchair, such as those with visual or other mobility impairments, and who would need curb-to-curb service? This issue has been considered and DOT is working with the app provider to include other disabilities. Currently, the app only allows for users with wheelchairs to register as needing curb-to-curb service.

Is the mobile app available? DOT is still working with the contractor to get it ready and load all available pick-up locations within the zones.

Will the zones always be regionally finite, or will users be able to travel to other regions? At this point they are just testing the concept. DOT will hire a contractor during the pilot phase to evaluate the concept and make recommendations.

Is the app accessible to users who are blind? Yes, it has been tested by the provider and is in compliance.

How can the vehicle accommodate riders who has trouble climbing stairs to get on to the vehicle? There are three steps to enter the vehicle. There is a wheelchair lift at the back of the bus but Will have to check the policy to see if other riders can use it. DOT can also write the policy that best fits the community. The lift would raise the rider two and a half to three feet off of the ground and has rails to hold. It may depend on the person's disability. Because this is a passenger van and not a bus it cannot lower.

Does the rider have the ability to communicate to the driver if they are experiencing delays to reach the pick-up location due to disability or other issues? This comment is being taken back to

the DOT team. Drivers are trained on customer service and if they see the user coming down the street they will wait.

The service may almost exclusively be serving people with disabilities and older adults as individuals may not want to wait for the service if they can walk less than a mile to their drop-off location. DOT will see what happens during the testing phase.

It was suggested DOT invite Commissioners to use the service before it is made public in order to gain real-time feedback.

With Ride On, Metro and other public transportation options being limited the further away from 270, how will service be addressed once the pilot phase has ended? DOT is not trying to replace MetroAccess. For example, they are working to get more service into Boyds, and this pilot program could be used to get those individuals easier access to Shady Grove Station. The goal is to get more people into the transit network.

A brief real-time survey was held to gain feedback from Commissioners.

Will noted that more information the Flex pilot program will be forthcoming and all Commission input from tonight will be shared during the team meeting tomorrow.

Chair and Vice-Chair Report:

Seth Morgan, Chair, reported he will be attending an Affordable Housing Conference on May 17th. He will also be attending a bike infrastructure meeting with Councilmember Hans Riemer on June 4th. The Steering Committee will meet next Wednesday, May 15th from 5:30pm to 7p.m. at 401 Hungerford Drive, 1st Floor 1A Conference Room, Rockville. The Steering Committee will discuss future events and the general projection of the Commission moving forward.

Ex-Officio Member Updates:

Kathy Mann Koepke, Liaison to the Commission on Health (COH), reported her term will be ending at the end of September and the Commission will need a new liaison to COH. Seth stated the importance of Commissions working together on common goals which can be much more effective than working alone. He would like to re-establish a liaison to the Commission on Aging (COA). If a Commissioner has an interest in another topic, Betsy can find a Board, Committee or Commission for them to become a liaison.

Charlie Butler, Department of Recreation, reported Recreation is printing less hard copies of the recreation program guides as more people are registering for programs and classes online. Kathy commented that hard copies are useful for those who have challenges locating a particular class online. Charlie suggested she send her concerns to the Recreation Director.

Susan Smith, Liaison to the Mental Health Advisory Committee (MHAC), reported MHAC co-hosted its annual spring forum last week with the Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Advisory Council. She also reported Every-Mind is spearheading a new suicide survivor support group. Commissioners can contact Susan for more information.

Announcements:

Neal Carter, Commissioner, announced the National Council on Independent Living will be hosting a five-week online campaign training series where expert political consultants will teach individuals with

disabilities the skills needed to take their leadership to elected office. The series will explore a variety of core campaign skills from a cross-disability perspective, including operations, communications, fundraising, and voter outreach. The training services begins on June 3rd and there is a registration fee for non-members: <https://www.ncil.org/elevate/>.

Francie Gilman, Montgomery County Public Libraries, announced there will be a Make Wheaton Walkable event on Saturday, May 18th at 10:00 a.m. This free event will highlight opportunities for pedestrian and traffic improvements on the State highways and County roadways in and around the Wheaton CBD, including the need for basic safety and ADA compliance. Francie noted this would be a good opportunity for residents to make clear what pedestrians need in terms of safety. It will be attended by both County and State elected officials.

Willamae Williams introduced herself as the new County liaison for the Montgomery County Customized Employment Public Intern Project. She meets with different department managers within the County create a list of job tasks for an intern position. The County currently has several interns in various departments including Health & Human Services, Corrections & Rehabilitation, and at the Silver Spring Civic Center. These positions are for Montgomery County Government only and not the private sector.

Next Full Commission Meeting: Wednesday, June 12th, 2019 from 6pm to 7:30pm at the Executive Office Building, 101 Monroe Street, Lobby Auditorium, Rockville, MD 20850

Steering Committee Meeting: Wednesday, June 19th, 2019 from 5:30pm to 7pm at 401 Hungerford Drive, 1st Floor 1A / 1B Conference Room, Rockville, MD 20850.

Submitted by: Carly Clem, Administrative Specialist I
Betsy Tolbert Luecking, Community Outreach Manager

**Montgomery County
Commission on People with Disabilities
June 2019 Meeting and Events Calendar**

Wednesday, June 12th

Full Commission Meeting

6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

EOB – 101 Monroe Street, Lobby Level Auditorium, Rockville

Wednesday, June 19th

Steering Committee Meeting

5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

HOB – 401 Hungerford Drive, 1st Floor 1A Conference Room, Rockville