

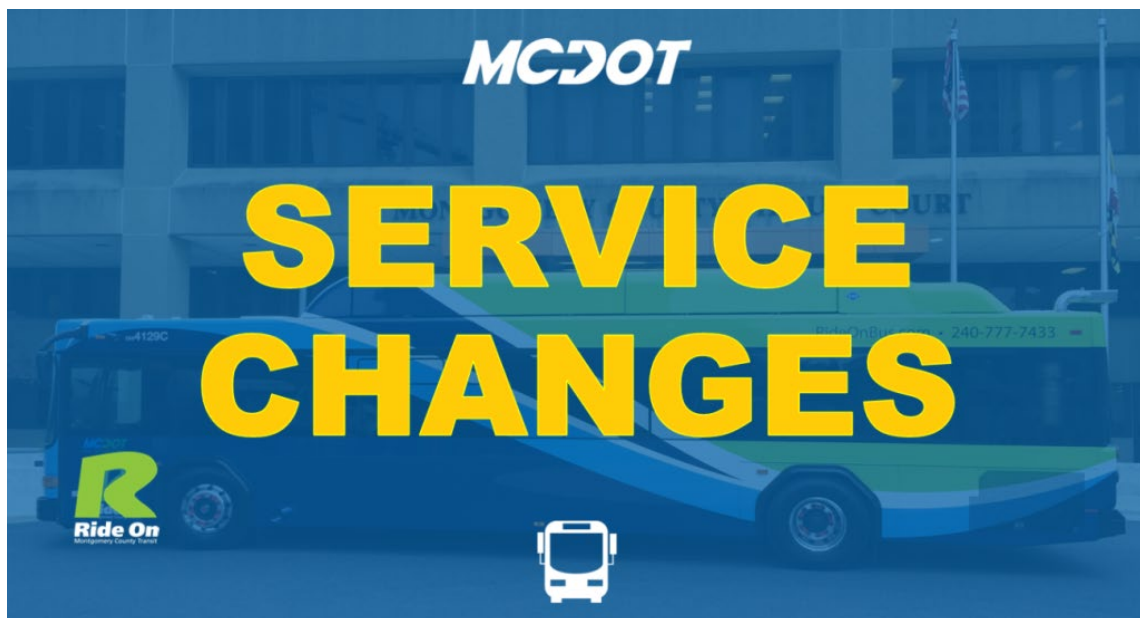


## Ride On Newsletter

January 2024

### Ride On Bus Schedule Changes on January 14, 2024

The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) will adjust 23 Ride On bus route schedules starting January 14, 2024, to improve efficiency and on-time performance. Although service levels are staying relatively the same, the changes reflect a shift of resources to allow for more reliable service where there is higher demand. The new schedules will be available at [rideonbus.com](http://rideonbus.com) and in print.



Route changes include:

- 21 routes have timetable changes: [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [15](#), [20](#), [21](#), [23](#), [31](#), [32](#), [37](#), [38](#), [45](#), [46](#), [47](#), [53](#), [55](#), [57](#), [64](#), [76](#), [83](#) and [90](#)
- Four routes have slight map changes: [17](#), [18](#), [53](#) and [76](#)

Here are the details of each route affected:

- [Route 8](#): Trip time changes on weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.
- [Route 9](#): Trip time changes on weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.
- [Route 10](#): Trip time changes on weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.

- [Route 15](#): Trip time changes on weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.
- [Route 17](#): Map and bus stop changes on weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.
- [Route 18](#): Map and bus stop changes on weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.
- [Route 20](#): Trip time changes on weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.
- [Route 21](#): Trip time changes on weekdays.
- [Route 23](#): Trip time changes on weekdays.
- [Route 31](#): Trip time changes on weekdays.
- [Route 32](#): Trip time changes on weekdays.
- [Route 37](#): Trip time changes on weekdays.
- [Route 38](#): Trip time changes on weekdays.
- [Route 45](#): Trip time changes on weekdays.
- [Route 46](#): Trip time changes on Sundays.
- [Route 47](#): Trip time changes on weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.
- [Route 53](#): Increased trips on weekdays and map change.
- [Route 55](#): Trip time changes on weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.
- [Route 57](#): Trip time changes on weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.
- [Route 64](#): Trip time changes on weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.
- [Route 76](#): Move stop at Quince Orchard High School to State Route 28 in front of the McDonalds, extend service to Poolesville Crossvines Golf Club.
- [Route 83](#): Trip time changes on weekdays.
- [Route 90](#): Trip time changes on weekdays.

## A Conversation with MCDOT Ride On General Manager Phil Mclaughlin



**How long have you been with MCDOT?  
Please describe your career path before and within MCDOT.**

I have worked in MCDOT since 2000. Prior to joining MCDOT, I worked for SEPTA in Philadelphia for 14 years and at Houston Metro in Houston Texas for 4 years. My primary role included Senior Leadership in Service Planning and Scheduling. While here at MCDOT, I have served as the Chief of Operations Planning for most of my time. My overall responsibilities included Ride On service design, scheduling, and oversight of Ride On infrastructure improvements.

**Over a year ago, MCDOT decided to put in place a leadership team of three, to guide and advance the mission of the Division of Transit Services. What was the outcome of that unprecedented management approach in the County?**

In December 2022, our Division Chief retired after 20 years with MCDOT. Our director, in lieu of selecting a single individual to fill this position, chose to elevate three individuals to serve as the Transit Leadership Team until the position could be filled permanently. Sogand Seirafi, Sam Oji and I were selected to serve in this role. The results were extremely successful. As a Leadership Team, we spent the first three months on a “listening tour”. We met with each Ride On work class including hundreds of bus operators learning about our organization. We learned what was working well and where we needed to focus on improvements. We created problem-solving committees represented by each work class throughout the organization to focus on broader challenges. These problem-solving committees are ongoing and likely will be a Ride On fixture moving forward. Over the last year, our customer service, employee morale and overall service delivery have dramatically improved. Customers have begun to return to the system from the pandemic and most importantly, our customers are more satisfied.

**As a leader of an organization this large, which provides much needed services to our county residents, please describe the day-to-day activities pertaining to your work.**

I have many day-to-day functions such as managing our zero emissions transition, overseeing safety priorities, preparing for BRT expansion, and ensuring budget compliance but my two primary focuses while serving in this new role are customer service and staff development. I believe that customer service is our core mission. Customer satisfaction and service equity are essential to successfully maintaining and growing our ridership helping to further the County’s environmental goals and equitably serving Montgomery County residents. Strengthening our staff skills is another priority. Ensuring organizational goals such as high-quality customer service requires the entire transit team. Each member of the team needs to be prepared to fill staffing gaps where needed and be prepared to move to the next level.

**What is your vision for Ride On, especially related to customer service, safety and security of our customers and employees?**

I believe customer service is a high priority. 15 years ago, Ride On was carrying nearly 100,000 riders per day. Since that time, population and employment have grown throughout the county. Today, we are carrying about 60,000 riders. I want us to return to those days by ensuring that we provide high quality, safe and secure service for our customers. We have been and will continue to utilize new technologies to help achieve this goal. Recently, we have migrated key software to update computer-aided dispatch/automatic vehicle location (CAD/AVL) technology which allows us to provide more accurate real time information for our customers. This new technology allows us to better communicate with our teams in

the field and even remotely observe incidents that are occurring on the bus in real time. It also allows us to make quicker decisions and mitigate unsafe situations more rapidly, helping to keep our customers and employees safe.

**Many organizations were forced to close or suspend operations due to the pandemic, but Ride On never shut down operations. How important was it for you to ensure that Ride On continued its services?**

Ride On service is a lifeline for many of our county residents. They use our service to not only access employment but also to shop, attend school activities, access medical appointments and pick-up prescriptions, and for those reasons it became critical that service continued throughout the pandemic. Early in the pandemic only essential routes were operated due to a shortage of bus operators. As bus operators were able to return to work, we began to increase the number of routes that were operated and currently most of our services have been restored to pre-pandemic levels. While in winter season, we have operating plans in place to provide service for residents so that they can access essential facilities and for those who are essential employees themselves, they can access their job.

**Please provide some examples of the direct impact of your role on Ride On operations and ensuring customer satisfaction.**

While serving as the Chief of Operations and as a member of the Transit Leadership Team, it became obvious that operationally we were struggling coming out of the pandemic. Our service quality was not very strong. My focus in this role was to begin to return our service quality to excellence. We have made great strides in this area with more work required. Our service quality has improved significantly, and our customers are more satisfied. This is critical for the retention of riders and to prepare us for growth.

**What other regional transit organizations does Ride On interface with to ensure successful operations and delivery of the best service to our customers?**

We have an ongoing operational relationship with each of the service providers throughout the region. However, the most important relationship that we have in our region is with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). Currently, we both are conducting comprehensive bus network studies. Our study is called Ride On Reimagined and WMATA's is called the Better Bus Network Redesign. In Montgomery County, about two thirds of the local bus service is provided by Ride On and about one third is provided by WMATA. A fundamental planning principle for both Ride On and WMATA, practiced since Ride On began in 1975 is to provide complimentary, not competitive services throughout the county. This allows for the largest possible service area and the highest number of Montgomery County residents and employers to have access to public transportation. Close coordination and partnership during these study periods has been critical in helping to ensure this fundamental planning principle into the future. We also coordinate with our regional planning organization Metropolitan

Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC) on planning activities throughout the region.

### **What are the most challenging parts of your job?**

Ride On provides service 22 hours per day, 7 days per week and 365 days per year. Our operational units function 24 hours per day to help ensure high quality service delivery. I personally like to talk with as many employees as possible to understand how their job functions, what could be different and what is working well. With a large organization and a 24-hour span of service, this can be challenging to reach everyone. Since most of our team works in the operational units, I take every opportunity possible to visit these locations during normal work hours and I make it a point to stop by the operational units in the evenings and on the weekends from time to time. However, there are still employees who I have not met yet but hope to do so over time.

### **What is the best part of your job?**

Customer Satisfaction. I began using public transportation in high school and I exclusively relied on it during my early adult years. I am very aware from a customer perspective how important it is to have on-time, reliable and safe service. I still ride from time to time; more importantly, I talk with many different customers each week who gladly share their experiences with me. There are many acknowledgements that we are trending in a very good direction. I am proud of the measures that we have taken to improve our service quality. I will remain focused and keep our team focused on continuing to improve our service quality.

## **Metro Eliminates \$2 SmarTrip Card Fee for Seniors**



As part of Metro's ongoing commitment to expand access and affordability to public transit, the Senior SmarTrip program joins all other Metro reduced fare programs in offering SmarTrip cards at no additional cost. Metro will begin to offer Senior

SmarTrip cards at no cost to customers aged 65 and older on Tuesday, January 16, 2024.

The elimination of the \$2 fee removes the need for a third-party payment collection, which is currently a barrier to participation for social service agencies and other organizations to distribute the card. With the elimination of the card fee Metro is even more affordable for seniors.

Senior SmarTrip cards are available at all County libraries, TRiPS stores, and the County Treasury office in Rockville. Please bring a proof of age. Get yours and ride free on all Ride On buses and most Metrobuses in the County.

## Temporary Bus Stop Relocation on Shady Grove Road Impacts Ride On Routes 43 and 61



The last stop for Ride On Routes 43 and 61 on Shady Grove Road has been temporarily relocated to the far side of Crabbs Branch Way to facilitate construction of the new Great Seneca extRa bus stop. Riders are directed to use the crosswalk on the east side of the intersection as the west side will be closed.

This relocation is projected to last through late January 2024.

# Bus Loop Construction at Friendship Heights Impacting Ride On Routes

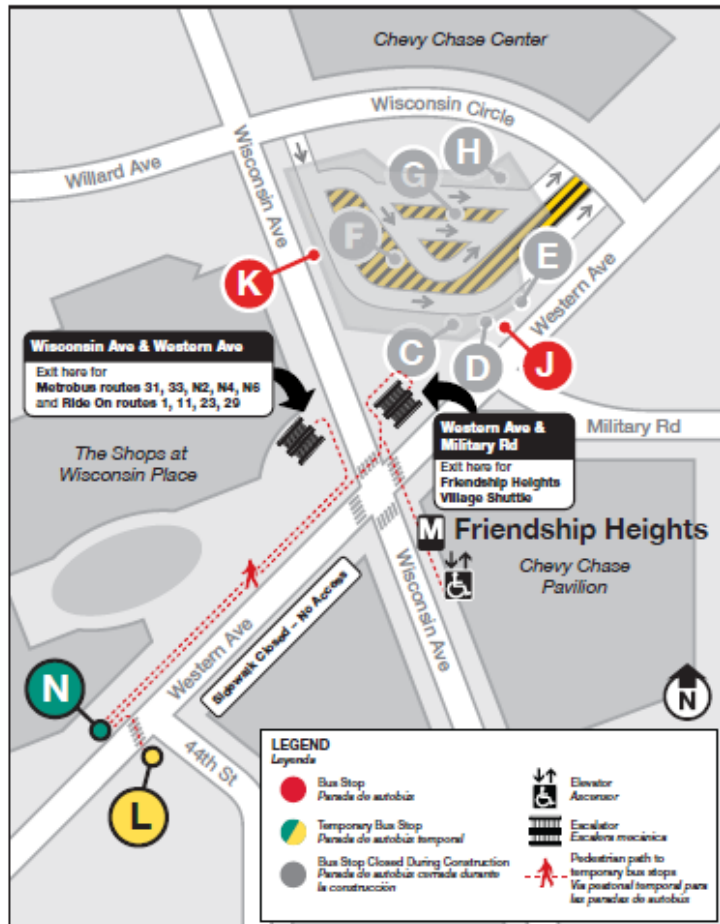
## METROBUS

Route Ruta	Destination Destino	Stop Parada
31	Potomac Park	L
33	Federal Triangle	L
E4	Fort Totten M	J
E4	Riggs Park	J
L8	Aspen Hill (Weekdays)	K
N2	Farragut Square M	L
N4, N6	Farragut Square M	L
T2	Rockville M (Weekdays)	J

## RIDE ON

Route Ruta	Destination Destino	Stop Parada
1, 11	Silver Spring M	N
23	Sibley Hospital	N
29	Bethesda M	N
34	Wheaton M/Aspen Hill	K
L8	Aspen Hill (Sat-Sun)	K
T2	Rockville M (Sat-Sun)	J

Friendship Heights Village Shuttle Board at Stop J



The bus loop at Friendship Heights is closed for approximately six weeks due to concrete replacement. During the closure, all Metrobus and Ride On routes normally served inside the loop have been temporarily relocated.

Throughout construction, all bus services will continue operations. However, routes serving bus bays C, D, E, F, G and H have been relocated. The temporary bus stop locations have been established along Western Avenue and 44th Street for Metrobus routes 31, 33, N2, N4, and N6 and Ride On bus routes 1, 11, 23, and 29. Follow all posted signs for the temporary bus stop locations. Bus bays J and K located on the exterior of the facility will not be impacted. The station and all entrances remain open. See map for additional details.

## Return of Montgomery County Department of Transportation Decorated Winter Holiday "Flash Lights" Buses Lights Up Another Year



The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) “Flash Lights” buses returned again for the 2023 winter holiday season. Montgomery County residents and visitors took in the roaming light display along Colesville Road/US 29 as five of the Flash Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) buses were adorned with festive holiday lights throughout December.

“The decorated Flash buses have become a tradition in our County and are a good way for residents and visitors to experience the holiday season,” said County Executive Marc Elrich. “The Flash US 29 bus route provides express service to some of our County’s most popular destinations. We hope the lights will encourage people to shop locally, enjoy our County’s vibrant performing arts scene at one of our music venues or theaters, or take a spin around the outdoor ice-skating rink in downtown Silver Spring.”

The decorated Flash buses ran along Colesville Rd/Columbia Pike (US 29) between the Silver Spring Transit Center, Briggs Chaney and Burtonsville, with stops along the way. The County-operated bus line began in 2020 and offers fast, convenient service running every seven to 15 minutes on weekdays and every 30 minutes on weekends.

Fare on Ride On for most riders is only \$1 per ride. [Seniors](#) (age 65 and older), [persons with disabilities](#) and [youth](#) under 19 ride free with specialized SmarTrip cards. The US 29 Flash buses are the first of a series of BRT corridors planned for the County to provide a premiere bus service, often with dedicated lanes and signal priority.

The Flash Lights holiday buses made their 2023 debut on Nov. 18 at the Silver Spring Thanksgiving parade where a Flash bus decorated in a “Let It Snow” theme made its way down the parade route. During the parade, a snow machine was used



to create a winter wonderland for onlookers. The decorated buses began circulating on the US 29 route in late November.

“The Flash BRT has consistently been one of our most popular bus services since its debut in 2020,” said MCDOT Director Chris Conklin. “It consistently places within the top four for the highest ridership of our bus routes. The express service to popular destinations, combined with family-friendly features such as level boarding for wheelchairs and strollers, has made riding the Flash an appealing option for anyone in need of convenient and reliable transportation along US 29. We started the Flash Lights campaign in 2021 to create a fun and memorable experience for the community. This is the third year we have done this, and we know our riders look forward to catching a Flash Lights bus during the holiday season.”

## Montgomery County Commemorates Rosa Parks



Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich and the Montgomery County Council recognized the contributions of Civil Rights legend Rosa Parks by proclaiming the month of December as “Rosa Parks Public Transportation Month” in the County. The County’s annual celebration of Rosa Parks is designed to recognize her refusal to give up her seat to a white man on a Montgomery, Alabama, bus on Thursday, Dec. 1, 1955, an act that became one of the most pivotal and inspirational events of the Civil Rights movement in the 20th Century.

In commemoration of the 68th anniversary of this historic event, the County Department of Transportation’s (MCDOT) Ride On bus service installed placards on each County-operated bus that states:

“Rosa Parks: Celebrating a Civil Rights Legend. On Dec. 1, 1955, Rosa Parks’ single act of courage on a public bus in Montgomery Alabama created an unstoppable march toward justice. Her refusal to give up her seat ignited a spark

that changed the course of American Civil Rights. Montgomery County Government is committed to making the County more equitable for all its residents.”

“Rosa Parks' brave decision to challenge segregation norms by refusing to relocate to the back of the bus served as a catalyst for the Civil Rights movement,” said County Executive Elrich. “Despite facing arrest, incarceration, job loss and threats of violence, her resolute resistance left an indelible mark on American history. We can take great inspiration from her unyielding commitment to a better world and her unconquerable will to battle injustice for the greater good. She set an example that we all have the power to make change if we stand up for justice and equality.”

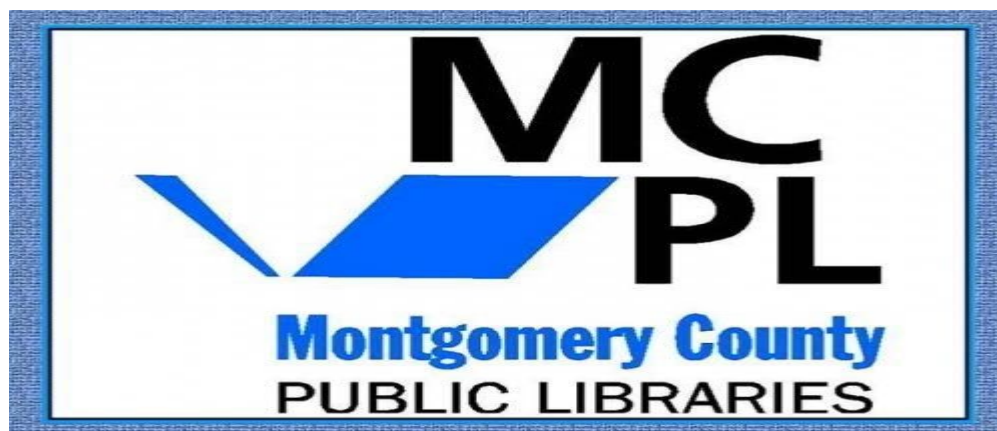
The Montgomery County Ride On bus placards are in English and Spanish. They remained on every bus in a visible location to bus passengers throughout December.

A joint proclamation from the County Executive and the County Council was presented on Tuesday, Dec. 5.

Ms. Parks' arrest sparked the Dec. 5 boycott of city buses by 42,000 African Americans that brought the City of Montgomery to a standstill, ignited the Civil Rights movement and changed the course of America for millions of disenfranchised people. The Montgomery Bus Boycott lasted 381 days, ending on Dec. 21, 1956, following the U.S. Supreme Court ruling on Nov. 13, 1956, that segregation on public city buses was unconstitutional.

County residents are encouraged to remember Rosa Parks' tireless commitment to a better world and her fearless will to battle injustice. Books and other information on Rosa Parks are available through the [Montgomery County Public Library System](#).

## A Ride On Guide to Montgomery County Libraries



As the weather gets colder and outside activities are no longer plentiful, Montgomery County residents look for other sources of entertainment to get them through the darker days. Luckily, the County has 21 public library locations, ensuring there's always a public library near you! Everyone knows libraires are a great place to read, but our county libraries also include a variety of internal activities, attached community centers, and so much more.

If you and your family need to get out of the house while still staying toasty warm indoors, Ride On is ready to help get you there. Read below for a selection of the area's public libraries and which Ride On routes you can take to get you there. Before you go, visit <https://mcpl.libnet.info/events?r=today> to find an event that meets your family's needs.

- **Noyes Library for Young Children:** Young children realize immediately that this charming one-room library is just for them. Noyes offers books and programs specifically for early childhood, along with a comfortable space for babies, toddlers and preschoolers to read and play together with their special adults. To get to this branch, take Ride On Routes [4](#) or [33](#).
- **Rockville Memorial Library:** Located in Rockville Town Square, this library offers all the programs and services library patrons have come to depend on in a convenient location. Stop in for a book or periodical while running errands or picking up dinner. To get to this branch, take Ride On Routes [45](#), [46](#), [55](#), or [301](#).
- **White Oak Library:** Visit the White Oak branch of the Montgomery County Public Library in East County off of New Hampshire Avenue. Programs cover a range of ages and interests, including story times, finance and investing seminars, and Tai Chi & Qigong classes. To get to this branch, take Ride On Route [21](#).
- **Damascus Library:** Our northernmost library location, Damascus library can be found right in the center of town. Programs at this location include games & crafts for teens, computer help and repair, and weekly bluegrass music jam sessions. To get to this branch, take Ride On Route [90](#).

- **[Wheaton Library](#)**: Located off of Georgia Avenue in Wheaton, Wheaton Public Library is a destination for the whole family. The jointly housed Wheaton Community Rec Center includes activities ranging from sports, fitness, dance, music and art, while the outdoor playground is a draw for children on a rare warm winter day. An incredibly unique feature is an indoor track for walking or running. To get to this branch, take Ride On Routes [9](#) or [31](#).
- **[Gaithersburg Library](#)**: The Gaithersburg branch has something for everyone when it comes to its programs. Attend a pro bono legal clinic, participate in the Intergenerational Graphic Novel Book Club, or join an English Conversation club. The [Charles W. Gilchrist Immigrant Resource Center](#) and [Montgomery College Community Engagement Center](#) are also located on the second floor. To get to this branch, take Ride On Routes [55](#), [56](#), [58](#) or [59](#).
- **[Little Falls Library](#)**: Tucked deep into the neighborhoods of Bethesda, the Little Falls Public Library is our southernmost branch. This location features tons of programming for children, including story times, play hours, and a weekly Mandarin Chinese lesson for children ages 5-10. To get to this branch, take Ride On Routes [23](#) or [29](#).

## Interview with Transit Advisory Group Member Kevin Barth



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

I've been riding Ride On for nearly 40 years. I was using it occasionally as a teen in the 80's and have been doing so ever since. Although, my usage patterns have changed since, as my life and transportation needs have changed.

**Why did you start riding Ride On?**

Originally, public transit represented my ability to get around without having to always get one of the parents to drive me.

When I got old enough to drive myself, I realized that I didn't particularly enjoy doing it, and would much rather continue to use public transportation to get where I needed to go. The financial and environmental benefits that have accrued over the last 30 years are icing on the cake.

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

I most frequently travel between Glenmont Metro station and Rockville (Routes 49 & 59), Gaithersburg (Routes 55 & 56), and Olney (Route 53). I use them to go to work/volunteer, to see family, and to run errands.

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

The buses are for the most part well-maintained with functioning climate controls, and they do a pretty good job of running on time. They don't go everywhere I need to go, but in a county as large as Montgomery County, no public transit system possibly could.

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

I think that my role is to provide input about proposed changes to the Ride On program and advocate for portions of the county which may be underserved currently by existing Ride On routes and services. Also, to advise MCDOT where I have noticed issues which I feel need to be addressed.

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

I do so regularly, providing there is a route servicing them. Clearly not everybody is going to get rid of their cars and use public transit exclusively, but many could be using it more than they do, and there are real advantages to doing so.

## **Of Note**

### **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!!

### **Download the Ride On Trip Planner App**

Have you downloaded the Ride On Trip Planner App yet? This new, innovative app allows riders to plan their next trip and to tell how crowded a Ride On bus is – before it arrives – with the crowdedness indicator on the app. Riders can choose if

they want to get on the arriving bus, wait for the next bus depending on how many people are on the bus, or choose another travel option, such as other local transit services, bikeshare, and scooter. It gives riders more control over their transportation experience. The Ride On Trip Planner app is easy to use and can be downloaded from the [Google Play](#) or [Apple](#) app store, or accessed with our [desktop version](#).

## **Connect With Ride On**

Are you following Ride On's social media accounts yet? Ride On communicates and connects to our riders using Instagram, X, Facebook, Threads, and YouTube. Our social media presence allows us to share exciting news and new programs as well as keep riders up to date on any detours, stop changes, or construction impacting our routes. On our Instagram account you can find interviews with riders and operators, featured trips to locations on Ride On routes, and regular updates through our new "Ride On Run-Down" series. Find us at [@RideOnMCT](#) on your favorite social media platform.

We also communicate with customers directly through our email and text subscription service. Subscribing to these alerts means you'll get the latest Ride On service and program information sent straight to your inbox. To subscribe, visit [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/govdelivery](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/govdelivery), or text MONTGOMERY RIDEON to 468311 to receive text alerts.

## **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.

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](http://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 [X](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and [subscribe](#) to MCDOT's "Go Montgomery!" newsletter.

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.