

Ride On Newsletter November 2023

Montgomery County Grant Program Seeks Providers to Assist Disabled, Older Adults and Low-Income Residents with Transportation Needs



The Montgomery County Department of Transportation is soliciting applications for the Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) Enhanced Mobility Grants Program from qualified organizations to provide direct transportation services in the County. This program aims to increase access to transportation services for County residents who are disabled, individuals with limited incomes, older adults and other vulnerable populations (specifically in underserved communities). A total of \$800,000 in funding is available for FY24.

County Executive Marc Elrich proposed, and the County Council approved, \$800,000 for a joint capital and operating grant program. Of that amount, \$640,000 was allocated to capital expenses and \$160,000 to operating expenses. At present, the funding is available for one year, so all funded activities must be implemented within 12 months.

The deadline for potential transportation providers to apply for grants is 11:59 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 8. An MS Teams Live online grant program information session will be held from 2-3:30 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 20. To join the online session, register [here](#).

“Last year, we saw strong interest and utilization from our nonprofit organizations for our inaugural Mobility Grants Program,” said County Executive Elrich. “Access to transportation options is critical for our disabled, older adults and low-income residents. Furthermore, ensuring that underserved communities have access to reliable and affordable transportation options is a matter of social justice. I encourage nonprofit organizations serving residents with transportation needs to consider applying for these grants.”

The grants program will prioritize funding to nonprofit organizations that aim to increase access to transportation for residents who are:

- Individuals with physical, emotional and/or intellectual disabilities.
- Older adults 63 years old and older (same eligibility for MCDOT’s Call-n-Ride Program).
- Individuals with limited incomes aged 18-62.
- Other vulnerable populations residing in Montgomery County, specifically in underserved communities. Organizations are encouraged to consider and apply for support from the FY24 TSM Capital and Operating Grant Programs.

“I am thankful for the Transportation Services Improvement Fund for funding this program for a second year,” said MCDOT Director Chris Conklin. “The program helps address transportation disparities by supporting transportation providers and our community nonprofits in their vital work. These services have a significant impact on the overall quality of life for these residents.”

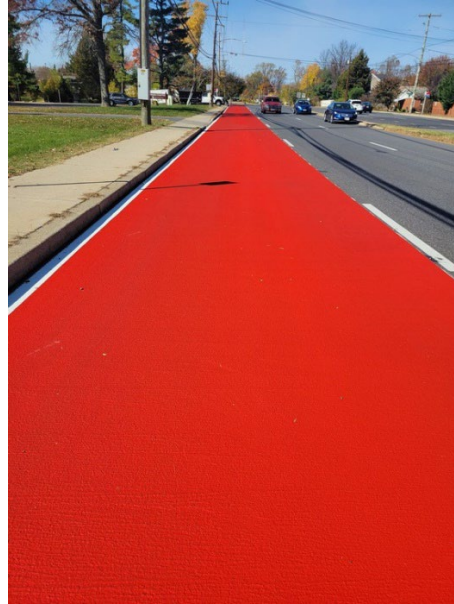
More information about the FY24 Enhanced Mobility Program is available at [the Montgomery County Grants Application portal](#).

Key dates for these programs are:

- Program opens for applications: Monday, Nov. 13.
- MS Teams Live online grant program information session: Monday, Nov. 20. 2-3:30 p.m.
- Submission deadline: Monday, Jan. 8. 11:59 p.m.

Applicants with questions about the application process should contact Olga Kravets in the Office of Grants Management by calling 240-773-3344 or by email at grants@montgomerycountymd.gov.

Montgomery County Department of Transportation Adds Dedicated Bus Lanes on University Boulevard in Wheaton



The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) has started lane painting to create dedicated bus lanes on University Boulevard (MD 193) between Amherst Avenue and Dennis Avenue in Wheaton. MCDOT expects to complete the project in early December. The dedicated bus lanes will provide faster Ride On and Metrobus service on this vital corridor, improving the connection between Four Corners and Metrorail at Wheaton Station.

The new lanes will be designated with red paint and “Bus Only” text. Installation of the bus lanes will involve paint and signage with minimal construction impacts to travelers, community members and local businesses. The dedicated bus lanes will be closely monitored by MCDOT as a pilot program for 12 months. An evaluation will be done in December 2025 to confirm that the bus lanes are beneficial on this corridor.

“Montgomery County continues to enjoy tremendous growth; we are projected to have an almost 30-percent increase in jobs in our region over the next 30 years,” said Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich. “An efficient and reliable public transportation system is key to accommodating a growing population. The dedicated bus lanes along University Boulevard will ensure riders are able to access jobs or other opportunities with less traffic congestion and a lower environmental footprint than by car.”

The addition of dedicated bus lanes along the two-mile corridor between Amherst Avenue and Dennis Avenue will allow buses to travel without traffic obstruction

along one of the area's busiest corridors. The [Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority \(WMATA\)](#)'s C2 and C4 Metrobus lines, which operate along the route, carry more than 9,000 riders each weekday, the second-highest ridership in the D.C. region.

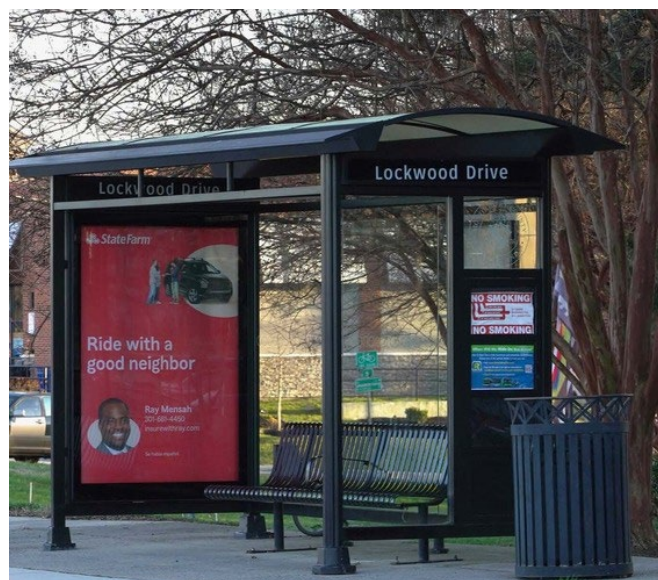
The bus lanes are an initiative of the [MCDOT Bus Priority Project](#) to improve bus service in Montgomery County. WMATA partnered with MCDOT to seek approval for the project from the [Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration \(MDOT/SHA\)](#), which maintains jurisdiction over the State road.

The new bus lanes also will allow for emergency vehicles and bicycles. Cars can enter the bus lane only to make a right turn, no more than 100 feet before the turn.

"Dedicated bus lanes benefit everyone," said MCDOT Director Chris Conklin. "The intended outcome is to increase bus ridership by providing more reliable and faster service. We know that if we want more people to use the bus, we have to compete with cars by being faster and more convenient. This project will help us achieve that. Additionally, the bus lanes will provide more separation from higher-speed traffic for people walking along University Boulevard and will reduce the number of cars in the right lane, improving conditions for bicyclists."

Details about the dedicated bus lane project on University Boulevard can be found on the [Bus Priority University Boulevard project page](#).

A Conversation on Bus Shelter Maintenance with Passenger Facilities Manager Wayne Miller



What amenities can passengers expect to find at Ride On bus shelters?

A typical bus shelter is internally lit, has seating for up to 4 persons and has a significantly larger waiting area than a typical bus stop. Shelters also have larger trash cans. A select few shelters also have Realtime information screens with some having on-call audio announcements of routes and arrival information via a push button.

How does Ride On select locations for bus shelters, and what factors are considered in the process?

Locations are typically selected based on average daily boardings (>50), and the needs of vulnerable community members such as schools and senior residences. However, location selections are dependent on the availability of sufficient public right of way to allow for the larger footprint of a bus shelter and its related amenities.

Can you explain the process of creating new bus stops and shelters for areas that currently lack them?

New bus stops are usually driven by community activity and the availability of sufficient public right of way to construct ADA compliant access and waiting areas for transit users. Typically rural areas may have greater distances between bus stops, followed by suburbs, with urban areas likely to have bus stops at each block to minimize the conflict between users and traffic. Ideally bus stops are placed at intersections, before or after depending on turning movements, close to street lighting and accessible by sidewalk. The primary difference between siting of a regular bus stop verses a shelter is the space available.

Are there plans to expand the number of bus shelters in the area?

Since the end of the County's franchise agreement in 2019, the County has lost 24 bus shelters which would be our first priority for replacement once funding became available. The next plan would be to provide shelters across the educational institutions that are currently without, followed by other locations on a case by case basis. The current 490 shelters are approximately 11-15 years old and will need to be replaced on a phased basis as many are beyond their useful life and would exceed the cost of a new shelter to repair.

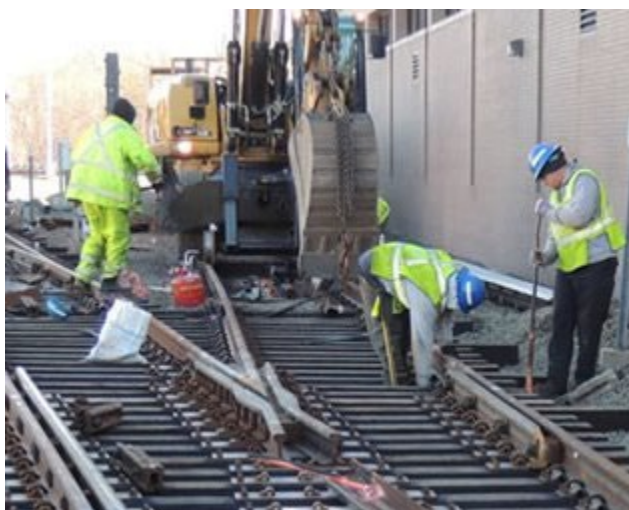
What's the significance of knee walls in bus shelter design, and how do they benefit passengers?

Knee walls are a creative solution to inadequate funding for bus stop furniture. They serve the purpose of delineating the bus stop, protects users from a change in grade behind the bus stop, and also provide an solid surface for seating.

How does Ride On ensure the maintenance and cleanliness of bus shelters? Ride On currently has a maintenance contract for repairs and cleaning of

the bus shelters on a weekly basis, with monthly power washing, quarterly sanitization as well as landscaping as needed. In addition, we also leverage another contractor to provide trash collection at all the County maintained bus shelters and numerous bus stops.

Metro to Shut Down Red Line Service at Three Stations in December for Critical Repairs and Upgrades



On Monday, December 18, Metro will begin a two-week construction project on the Red Line to perform critical safety repairs to the tunnel and track infrastructure, upgrade signal and communications systems, and install new platform edge lights.

During construction, Red Line service will be unavailable at Farragut North, Metro Center, and Gallery Place stations with free shuttle buses replacing trains from December 18 through Saturday, December 30. While the Red Line is closed, service will continue to be available on the Blue, Orange, and Silver lines on the lower level at Metro Center and Green and Yellow line service on the lower level at Gallery Place.

In addition, the Judiciary Square Station will be closed from Friday, December 22, through Sunday, December 24.

To complete this work as safely and efficiently as possible, both tracks must be taken out of service. Crews will address structural issues in the tunnels which are nearly 50 years old and date back to the original stations. The work will involve building supports to repair a concrete beam overhead. Crews will need to remove

the concrete and pour approximately 1,000 square feet of concrete for the new beam, reinforced with additional rebar.

Customers will continue to have normal or near-normal service outside the work zones, with Red Line service every eight minutes from Shady Grove to Dupont Circle and Union Station to Glenmont.

For more information, click here to view full news release:

<https://www.wmata.com/about/news/Red-Line-Construction.cfm>

Ride On Public Forum on Proposed Changes to Route 76 will be held on Tuesday, December 5



Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), Division of Transit Services is proposing to change the Route 76 pick-up and drop off location for Quince Orchard High School to one half block away to state route 28 (Darnestown Road) as well as an extension of the route to the Crossvines in Poolesville for weekday rush hour trips. For additional information prior to the public forum regarding this proposed change, please access the Ride On website at rideonbus.com.

Montgomery County hereby notifies the general public and other interested parties that a public forum will be held in the Quince Orchard High School cafeteria on **Tuesday, December 5, 2023** starting at 6:30 p.m. and ending after the last speaker.

Individuals and representatives of organizations **who would like to speak at the public forum are requested to furnish in writing by email, on or before December 1, 2023**, their name, home address, telephone number, e-mail address and organization to Division of Transit Services, Ride On Public Forum at mcdot.rideonpublicforums@montgomerycountymd.gov. Individuals who have signed up to speak must **provide a printed copy of their testimony** for the record **by December 4, 2023**. Sign language interpreter services will be provided only upon request with notice as far in advance as possible but not less than 5 business days prior to the date of the forum. Large print format is available upon request. All comments will be considered before any changes are finalized.

Comments on the proposed service changes may be written, faxed, or e-mailed to the Division of Transit Services **by 5:00 p.m. on December 15, 2023**. Send your comments to:

Division of Transit Services
Ride On Public Forum
101 Monroe Street, 5th Floor
Rockville, Maryland 20850
(240) 777-5800 (phone)
(240) 777-5801 (fax)

mcdot.rideonpublicforums@montgomerycountymd.gov

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.

Employee Spotlight Interview - Innocent Nartey



Tell us how long you have been with MCDOT and describe your career path within MCDOT.

I have been with the county for a total of 25 years. I drove a Ride On bus from 1998 to 2008. I went to the Finance Department for 6 years. I returned to MCDOT in 2014 as a Transit Operations Supervisor, until my recent promotion to Program Manager II

Please describe the day-to-day activities pertaining to your work.

I monitor the activities of the front desk, making sure all runs are covered and on time, minimize missed trips, handle safety issues at the depot, approve operator leave, assign work to substitute operators and prepare the relief board.

Please provide some examples of your role's direct impact on Ride On operations.

I help new operators get to know the job. I also make sure each operator has a run (what routes they are driving that day) and is comfortable with what he or she is doing.

What are the most challenging parts of your job?

One of the most challenging parts of my job is making sure all runs are covered when operator call outs increase suddenly.

What is the best part of your job?

I love getting to work with people from different countries and different cultures.

What experience and personal characteristics are the best matches for this job?

In this position knowing how to manage people is very important, as well as knowing how to stay calm in stressful situations.

A Ride On Guide to Montgomery County Parks



Montgomery County residents are taking every opportunity to enjoy the outdoors before winter weather arrives. Montgomery County has a great selection of parks to enjoy - many of which are easily accessible no matter where in the county you reside.

If you and your family need to get out of the house and into nature this fall, Ride On is ready to help get you there. Read below for a selection of the area's parks and which Ride On routes you can take to get you there.

- **Wheaton Regional Park:** Visit Wheaton Regional Park in Silver Spring for fun for every member of your family. This park features multiple playground structures, lots of walking trails, sports fields and venues, and even a dog park. Take the kids for a ride on the carousel or ride the miniature train to see holiday decorations for a day they'll be begging to repeat. Feeling festive? The Wheaton Ice Arena has open skate times to make you feel like the holidays have come to stay. Take Ride On Routes [31](#) or [9](#) for access to this fun-filled spot.
- **Cabin John Regional Park:** Cabin John Regional Park attractions include various athletic fields, tennis on both indoor and lighted outdoor courts, and even ice skating in any weather at the fully enclosed Cabin John Ice Rink. Visitors can become entranced by a ride on the model train, spend the afternoon relaxing with family and friends at various picnic and playground areas. Want to camp without leaving the city? The Robert C. McDonell Campground offers seven walk-in primitive sites. Take Ride On Route [37](#) to arrive right in the middle of the park, no parking spot necessary.
- **Seneca Creek State Park:** Seneca Creek State Park spans 6,300 acres, including the 90-acre Clopper Lake. Picnicking, boat rentals, trails and a tire playground are just some of its recreational opportunities. A restored 19th century cabin and a self-guided path interpret the history of the area. Over 50 miles of trails are open for hiking, horseback riding and bicycling which wind through a variety of habitat. To visit Seneca Creek State Park, take Ride On Routes [61](#), [71](#), [74](#), or [78](#).

- **[Rock Creek Regional Park:](#)** Rock Creek Regional Park stretches across approximately 1,800 acres and includes the 75-acre Lake Needwood and the 55-acre Lake Frank. Meander along 13 miles of trails through woodlands and along the lake shores, or go picnicking, fishing, or boating while viewing the many species of resident wildlife. Other park amenities include playgrounds, Needwood Boat Rental and Snack Bar, Meadowside Nature Center, and lake tours on the *Needwood Queen*. Take Ride On Route [53](#) (or [59](#) if you like to hike) to visit this gem.
- **[South Germantown Recreational Park:](#)** South Germantown Recreational Park is one of Montgomery Parks' most active parks. The large park offers a variety of activities to choose from, including hiking, biking, archery, miniature golf, swimming, soccer, picnicking, and adventure play, to name just a few. Whether you're a BMX biker or a cricket player, South Germantown Recreational Park has something for everyone. Ride On Route [98](#) passes directly through the center of this park, getting you right where you want to go.

Winter Public Transportation Rider Tips



Autumn is here, and Winter weather is right around the corner. Taking public transportation is a great alternative to avoid the hassle of driving in poor weather conditions. Our valued customers can count on [Ride On](#) to be safe and reliable, getting you to your destination while you stay warm and relaxed in our buses.

The safety of our customers continues to be our top priority. Here are seven safety tips we recommend you take while riding with us during the Winter weather:

- **Plan for extra time in your commute.** Winter weather conditions such as snow and ice may cause delays to the bus schedule. Planning extra time may ensure that even with the delays, you can get to your destination on time.
- **Dress accordingly.** Be prepared to wait extra time for the bus to arrive. As a result, what you wear is crucial to staying warm while waiting on the bus or walking to your destination.
- **Consider getting a virtual SmarTrip Card.** Our hands tend to suffer the most during the Winter weather because they are usually exposed due to activity. With a virtual SmarTrip card, you can simply use your phone to pay for fares while still wearing your gloves. It also saves you time looking for the physical card while staying contactless during this time. The virtual SmarTrip card is available for iOS and Android.
- **Be Visible.** It gets dark early so be sure to make yourself visible to an approaching bus. Hold a flashlight or use your cell phone's light so that the bus operator can see you at the stop. If possible, wear reflective apparel or safety items (bands, pins) for more visibility on your coat or clothing.
- **Stand clear from the curb.** Standing close to the curb is dangerous especially during inclement weather. Buses may slide on snow as they approach the curb. Be sure to stand clear from the curb until the bus comes to a complete stop and is ready for boarding. NEVER stand in the street.
- **Be careful when boarding and stepping off the bus.** Wait for the bus to come to a complete stop before trying to board. Bus steps can become slippery from snow. Try to clean the snow off your shoes before boarding. Be sure to always use the handrails while getting on or off the bus and take your time.
- **Use our Trip Planning App.** Plan your trip, check bus arrival times, and get alerts when your stop is approaching with the new Ride On Trip Planner app. The app is available for download for iOS and Android devices, and in a desktop version. Download the app [here](#).

MCDOT Welcomes New Ride On Bus Operators



MCDOT is continually hiring and training new bus operators. Bus drivers are instrumental to transportation access. Residents depend on them to get where they are going and provide a watchful eye.

The latest class of Ride On bus operators graduated on Friday, October 13. MCDOT's Bus Operator training is a 6-week course that covers a variety of topics. In order to pass the course, aspiring operators must successfully complete a "Skills Pad" driving course and master customer service skills.

Congratulations to the recent graduates. MCDOT is appreciative of the work that all our operators do to provide the best transportation service in the region.

- Brian Johnson
- Maryam Bilaal-Gray
- Robert Cathron
- Donald Washington
- Byran Greenlee
- Stafford Owens
- Richard Bright
- Bereket Kelbore

- Calvin Parker
- Sabir Lynch
- Fernando Allen, Jr.
- Jerome Brown
- Salima Randall
- Tilahun Faris
- Wisdom Adoble
- Imal Lama
- Alemayehu Weldeamanuel

Of Note

Ride On Flash Celebrates 3 years of Community Service

MCDOT celebrated the three-year anniversary of the County’s first rapid transit service—the Flash—on October 14, 2023. The Flash currently operates on Colesville Road/Columbia Pike (US 29) and connects downtown Silver Spring Transit Center, White Oak, Briggs Chaney and Burtonsville with stops along the way. Flash buses feature bike racks inside, free WiFi service and USB ports.

The Flash has two routes that each start at the Silver Spring Transit Center. The Orange route makes 10 stops from the Transit Center to Briggs Chaney. The Blue route makes five stops from the Transit Center, ending at the Park and Ride in Burtonsville. The service—which uses 60-foot-long articulated buses—carries more than 1,800 riders per day.

Ride On’s Partnership With Glenstone Museum

Ride On has partnered with Glenstone Museum to give our riders access to this cultural haven. Glenstone tickets are reserved within hours of release, or you can ride with us on the Route 301 and visit anytime during normal hours. Remember: there is no public parking at Tobytown. Please park at the Nancy Dacek Community Center or Rockville Metro Station.

Youth Cruiser SmarTrip Card Now Available in Over 100 schools

With the Youth Cruiser SmarTrip card kids under 19 ride for free on all Ride On buses throughout the County and most Metrobuses within the County. The Youth Cruiser SmarTrip card can be obtained at any [county library](#), the [Silver Spring](#) and [Mobile](#) TRiPS stores, the [Montgomery County Division of Treasury](#) in Rockville, and now in over 100 schools across the county. See if your school participates [here](#).

Courtesy Stop Program

Montgomery County Ride On bus riders are now able to request to be dropped off between stops when traveling late at night. Available after 9 p.m., the Courtesy Stop program lets riders request to be dropped off at any point along the regular bus route, in addition to designated bus stops. Riders can request a Courtesy Stop on any MCDOT Ride On bus or WMATA Metrobus. However, Metrobus Express and Limited Stop buses, such as Flash, operating in Montgomery County, are excluded from the program. The requested stop must be along the regular bus route, and cannot be at an intersection, along a highway or freeway. A bus operator can refuse a requested stop if the driver deems the undesignated stop as unsafe.

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 email us at rideon.customerservice@montgomerycountymd.gov 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!!

Follow Ride On's Social Media Accounts

Are you following Ride On's social media accounts yet? Ride On communicates directly 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](https://www.instagram.com/RideOnMCT) on your favorite social media platform.

For the most up-to-date service information, riders should follow [@RideOnMCT](https://www.instagram.com/RideOnMCT) on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/RideOnMCT), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/RideOnMCT), [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/RideOnMCT), and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/RideOnMCT). 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](https://www.instagram.com/MCDOTNow) on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/MCDOTNow), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/MCDOTNow) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/MCDOTNow) and [subscribe](#) to MCDOT's "Go Montgomery!" newsletter.