



Montgomery County Increased Ride On Bus Service Starting Sunday, May 8; Direct Service From Kensington to Wheaton Was Added



The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) is announcing a Ride On bus service change which began Sunday, May 8. The new schedule increased bus service to 90 percent of pre-COVID levels.

All routes, except route 301, underwent schedule changes. The new schedules are available at rideonbus.com and are also available in print.

Ride On also extended bus Route 4, from Kensington to Wheaton. The revised routing provides a direct connection from the Kensington MARC Station to the Wheaton Metro Station. The route previously went as far as Connecticut and Howard Avenue, in the Kensington area, and now continues down University Boulevard and onto Veirs Mill Road to the Wheaton Metro Station. Route 4 will continue to operate on weekdays, with no additional changes “We know that many residents depend upon the Ride On bus system for daily trips throughout the County such as work, daycare, health services and other essential trips,” said MCDOT Director, Chris Conklin. “These service improvements are a step in the right direction. They provide access and opportunity to residents who need it.”

Passengers using Montgomery County's Ride On buses are encouraged to wear a mask but are no longer required to wear them. The change to the County's masking policy comes after the announcement on April 18 that the [Transportation Security Administration](#) (TSA) decided to suspend enforcement of a mask mandate on all modes of public transportation. TSA's decision came after a federal judge's ruling that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's mask mandate was unconstitutional.

"Ride On is committed to safety and we will continue to provide masks for our riders," said MCDOT Division Chief of Transit Services Dan Hibbert. "Use of masks is still highly encouraged as COVID-19 remains a threat to our vulnerable."

Bus interiors will continue to be cleaned by the County's Department of General Services with hospital-grade disinfectant. Bus filter and ventilation systems are also treated with a disinfectant.

Ride On bus service remains free for all riders until at least July 2. Riders can plan trips online with [Ride On Real Time](#).

For the most up-to-date service information, riders should follow @RideOnMCT on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#) and [Instagram](#). In addition, information is available at [RideOnBus.com](#), by subscribing to receive email alerts at [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 on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and [subscribe](#) to MCDOT's "Go Montgomery!" newsletter.

MCDOT Ride On Annual Food Drive – May 15-22, 2022

The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) Ride On Transit Services is conducting a food drive from May 15-22, 2022. MCDOT has conducted this food drive for over 30 years, in partnership with Manna Food Center. This effort has been suspended for the past 2 years, due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

This year, the food drive will be conducted in partnership with [Manna Foods](#), [Montgomery County Public Libraries](#) and [Regional Services Centers](#).



Non-perishable food items can be dropped off on all Ride On buses or at County-owned facilities, certain libraries & regional services centers.



Visit [RideOnBus.com](https://www.RideOnBus.com) for drop-off locations.



Non-perishable food items can be dropped off on all Ride On, extRa, Flex and Flash buses. A donation bag will be available next to the farebox.

Food donations will also be accepted at the following locations:

County-Owned Buildings

- **Executive Office Building:**
101 Monroe Street
Rockville, MD 20850
240-777-5880
- **County Council Office Building:**
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850
240-777-5870
- **Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Service Center:**
4805 Edgemoor Ln
Bethesda, MD 20814
240-777-8200
- **East County Community Recreation Center:**
3310 Gateshead Manor Way
Silver Spring, MD 20904
240-475-6527
- **Mid-County Regional Service Center:**
2425 Reedie Drive
Wheaton, MD 20902
240-777-8103

- **Silver Spring Regional Service:**
One Veterans Place
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
240-777-5300
- **Upcounty Regional Service Center:**
12900 Middlebrook Road
Germantown, MD 20874
240-777-8000
- **White Oak Library:**
11701 New Hampshire Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20904
240-773-9555
- **Olney Library:**
3500 Olney-Laytonsville Road
Olney, MD 20832
240-773-9545
- **Long Branch Library:**
8800 Garland Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20901
240-777-0910
- **Davis Library (North Bethesda):**
6400 Democracy Boulevard
Bethesda, MD 20817
240-777-0922
- **Gaithersburg Library:**
18330 Montgomery Village Avenue
Gaithersburg, MD 20879
240-773-9490

Manna Food Center Locations

Manna Food Center Warehouse:

9311 Gaither Rd
Gaithersburg, MD 20877
301-424-1130

Manna Food Center, Administrative Office:

12301 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, MD 20904
301-424-1130



MCDOT Director Chris Conklin takes the wheel in preparation for the annual food drive.

All food donations will go to Manna Foods Center to help members of our community who are in need. Thanks in advance for your support! We can make a difference.

For more information visit our Food Drive webpage [here](#).

Virtual Ride On Public Forum on Proposed New Bus Route 27 to the Adventist Healthcare White Oak Medical Center to be Held on Thursday June 2.

On Thursday June 2, starting at 6:30 p.m., the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), Division of Transit Services will hold a virtual public forum to discuss the proposed new bus route which will provide direct service to Adventist Healthcare White Oak Medical Center. The new proposed route 27 will operate between Hillandale Transit Center and Tech Road Park and Ride lot with a stop at the Adventist Healthcare White Oak Medical Center. This proposed routing will have stops along Powder Mill Road, Cherry Hill Road, Plum Orchard Drive, Broadbirch Drive, Tech Road and terminate at the Tech Road Park and Ride lot.

The proposed route will have connections with Metrobus, Ride On, and Flash bus routes, as well as other transportation services within the network.

As part of the County's commitment to engage the public prior to any changes, a virtual public forum is being conducted on the proposed new route. This process allows MCDOT, to receive input and feedback regarding this proposed new service to provide the best opportunity for implementing a successful service.

For additional information prior to the public forum regarding these proposed changes, please access the Public Forum webpage [here](#).

MCDOT hereby notifies the public and other interested parties that a virtual public forum will be held on **Thursday, June 2, 2022**, starting at 6:30 p.m. and ending after the last speaker.

Community members can join the virtual public forum in two ways:

- By computer click on this link: <https://bit.ly/37OuLVN> or [Click here to join the meeting](#)
- By phone call: 1 443-692-5768; Phone Conference ID: 695 786 632#

Individuals and representatives of organizations who would like to speak at the public forum are requested to provide in writing by email, on or before **May 30, 2022**, their name, home address, telephone number, e-mail address and organization to the Division of Transit Services, Ride On Public Forum at mcdot.rideonpublicforums@montgomerycountymd.gov. Individuals who have signed up to speak must provide a copy of their testimony by email, for the record by June 1, 2022.

Sign language and interpreter services will be provided upon request. Requests must be received no later than 5 business days prior to the date of the forum. Large print format will be available upon request. All comments are welcomed and will be considered before any changes are finalized.

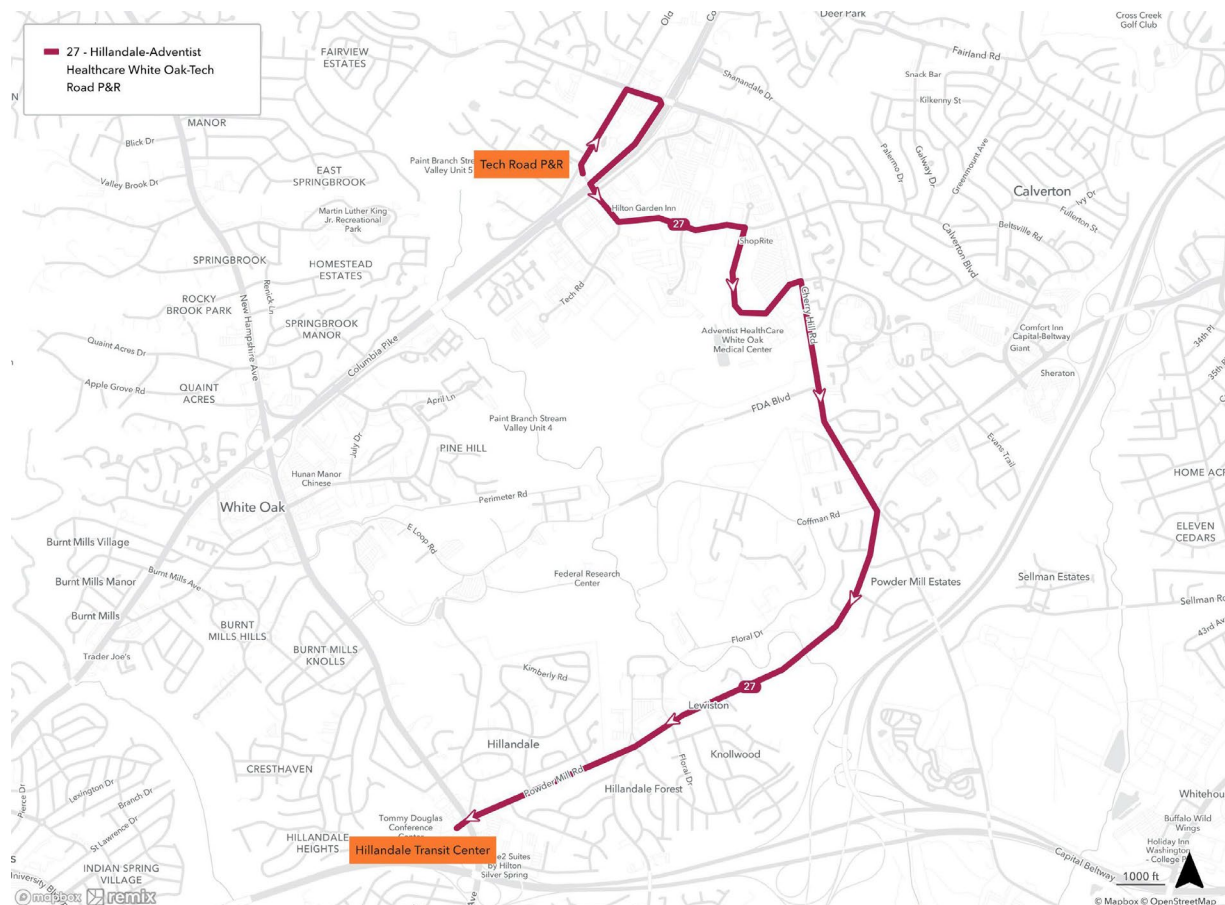
Comments may be written, faxed, or e-mailed on the proposed service changes to the Division of Transit Services by 5:00 p.m. on June 12, 2022.

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

Under 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.



Feature Interview with MCDOT Transit Communications Leader –



Gustavo Ilaja

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

My journey with MCDOT began fifteen years ago. I started working as a Ride On bus operator, where I had the opportunity to interact with many members of my community. I find it intrinsically rewarding being able to get them to their destinations in a safe and timely fashion. A few years later, I became a Transit Coordinator, where I helped operators resolve issues they encountered and conducted the appropriate investigation to avoid those issues in the future. Currently, I work as a Central Communications Leader at Central Communications, where I help operators provide a smooth service to the community by lowering the delay time, they could encounter from incidents like road closures or broken-down buses.

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

One of the most important parts of my work is relaying information. For that reason, having missed routes uploaded in a timely manner to the internet is one of my priorities. This allows the riders to be informed of any changes, as quickly as possible.

Covering open runs is another task I do. It involves calling operators that are at the end of their runs and getting them to pick up runs that are still open due to lack of personnel.

Other everyday tasks include dealing with broken-down buses, incidents on buses, and accidents involving our buses or roads closure/blocked. Broken-down buses are dealt with using a two-step process. The first step is to find a replacement bus and second is to call mechanics to fix the broken-down bus. Dealing with incidents in the bus and with accidents, involves calling paramedics and police if the situation requires it. Dealing with roads closed/blocked involves sending the proper detours to the buses to minimize delays. Lastly, keeping upper management abreast via calls and e-mails when serious incidents occur.

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

One example, in the winter when snow falls and causes some roads to be hazardous, I must immediately find alternative routes and send them to the buses as soon as possible, to make sure that the riders do not experience much delay.

What other organizations does your team interface with to ensure successful operations?

We always receive prompt assistance from the Montgomery County Police, Highway, other Law enforcement and Paramedics.

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 continued its services?

During the pandemic, my team and I made sure to work as efficiently as possible to deal with the issues that happened on buses to keep the routes on schedule. Such as coordinating the provision of sanitizing materials to our operators and enforcing the use of masks by our customers while they were on the buses.

The COVID-19 pandemic led many organizations to reevaluate their services and operational protocols. What impact did that have on your team and how did they respond?

At Central Communications, we had a reduction of personnel on site for several months that forced us to step up on our daily activities. Although it was a bit challenging, we were able to fulfill all the tasks we were required to.

What are the most challenging parts of your job?

I think that dealing with people is the most challenging part of any job. For that reason, I prioritize this area so I can positively affect the normal development of their activities on a day-to-day basis.

What is the best part of your job?

At the end of the day, I feel great satisfaction of having helped our operators solve issues they encountered during their workday. I feel it is very rewarding.

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

Some personal characteristics that best match this job are patience and perseverance. Other than that, being knowledgeable about the routes around the County and having experience using computers is paramount to fulfill the tasks for this position.

If you could improve one thing about your job, what would it be?

The only thing I always require in any job is to have the proper tools and enough training to use these tools to provide the best service to our customers.

Masks Now Encouraged but not Required on Montgomery County Ride On, extRa, Flex and Flash Buses



Passengers using Montgomery County's Ride On buses are no longer required to wear a mask but are strongly recommended to voluntarily wear them. The change to the County's masking policy comes after the announcement on April 18 that the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) decided to suspend enforcement of a mask mandate on all modes of public transportation. TSA's decision came after a federal judge's ruling that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's mask mandate was unconstitutional. Ride On bus operators will no longer be required to wear a mask because of this change.

"We think this is a bad decision by a Trump judge, who has no expertise in public health, to over-rule our nation's public health experts," said County Executive Marc Elrich. "Not only will this increase risk during the current surge, but it undermines potential tools available for public health officials for future surges or future diseases. As we join the region and comply with this legal decision, we are going to continue to monitor our transmission rates and legal options regarding masking. We

highly encourage all residents to wear masks on our buses, as well as in crowded indoor areas. And, as we currently see our COVID rates increase, it is imperative that everyone stays up to date on their vaccinations.”

The County’s decision to lift the mask mandate on public transportation was done to provide passengers and operators with consistency with WMATA (Metro) and other regional transportation systems. WMATA announced that it was lifting the mask mandate throughout its transportation system. County health officials continue to strongly recommend masking, particularly for those riders who are unvaccinated, immunocompromised or have chronic diseases that put them at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19.

“To provide consistency within the region, masks will not be required on County buses at this time,” said County Department of Transportation Director Chris Conklin.

“However, I encourage the continued use of masks to protect yourself and others as there are members of our community who remain vulnerable to serious illness from COVID-19. Our operators will continue to provide masks to riders who need them.”

Ride On continues to offer free fares to all riders until at least July 2, 2022.

For more information on COVID-19 testing and vaccination, visit the County’s [COVID-19 website](#). For more information about Ride On, visit their [website](#).

Ride On Transit Advisory Group (TAG) Member Spotlight:



Patrick Benko

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

I grew up in Montgomery County and I’ve been riding Ride On for 34 years, since 1988.

Why did you or your family select Ride On to begin your public transit experience?

The first ride was probably just for fun to get to the library. That morphed into getting to the Metro for trips downtown. Then when I was a little older, I was able to take solo trips on my own without having to ask for a ride. That was huge for a kid in the suburbs.

What routes have you ridden the most over the years and for what reasons?

The 76, which runs along Rt 28, is the winner when measuring time and frequency. It was fun when my mom would ride to her job from her house, and we'd randomly see each other every so often.

What do you like the most about your Ride On experiences?

I don't think it is luck that nearly all my experiences with Ride On have been positive. The drivers are friendly and helpful. The buses are clean. And with all the new technology there is more predictability and less guessing. So, what I like most is that I can just focus on if Ride On is faster or easier than other options, since the experience is just as given.

How has Ride On changed over the years from a rider's perspective?

In my eyes, Ride On has always been an innovator, which means change has been constant. I remember the first green buses hitting the streets and now we have on demand buses. At the same time, Ride On has made it easier with apps and other tech to just know when the bus is going to be there.

How has riding changed during the pandemic?

My riding has changed from a commute to running errands or leisure trips. Which means I've been riding non-peak times. Just given that, the pace is a bit easier and the space between folks is a little greater. Maybe a little less interaction between people, which can be a positive or negative depending on the person and the day.

What other family members use the Ride On system and for what purposes?

My mom would use Ride On as her primary mode of transportation. She's also the one who took me on those first trips 30+ years ago. More recently, I took my wife on her very first Ride On ride even though she had grown up in Montgomery County as well. And now with three boys who are enthralled with busses, we use any excuse we can to take a ride.

What recommendations do you have for Ride On?

I mentioned the innovation and ideas coming out of MCDOT, I'd say if they continue to be forward looking like that Ride On will be in great shape. I am really excited about the route optimization project, which will hopefully cut down on the one thing that gets me sometimes and that is trip times.

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

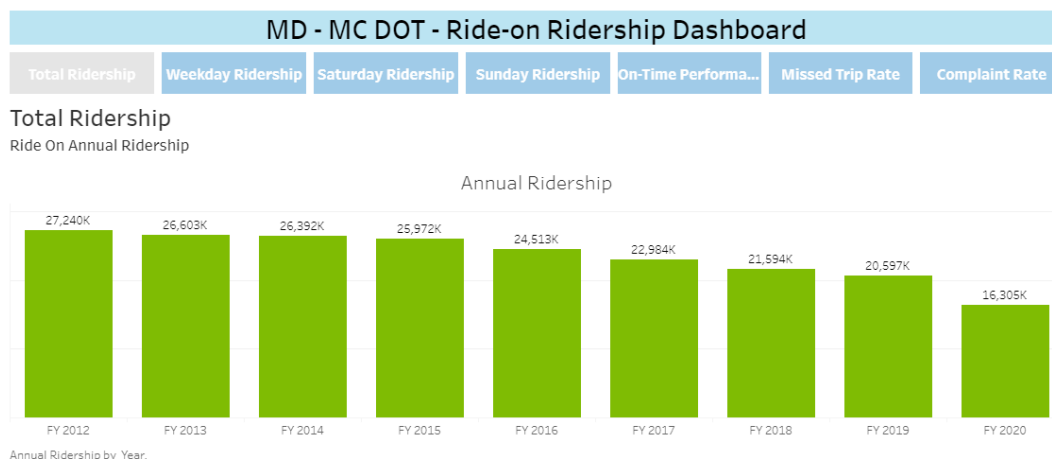
The role has three parts for me. One is being part of a focus group that MCDOT can use for quick and relevant feedback. Two, is bringing new ideas and being a representative voice for riders. Third, is being a rider who can talk about my experiences and report on actual happenings.

What have you learned the most as a TAG member?

I've learned how important it is to have a diverse group of voices in the room along with a diverse group of listeners. MCDOT has been very good at giving opportunities for TAG members to be part of the process and acting on our feedback. A new member joining today would quickly also learn how important and powerful their voice can be when in front of those in charge of when, how, and where the buses go.

MCDOT Publishes Ride On Performance Data on County Website

Ride On Performance Dashboard



Ride On performance data is published on the County Website. This is in response to recommendations made by the [Office of Legislative Oversight](#) (OLO) in a study - [OLO Report 2020-10: Ride On Bus Routes and Services](#), which asked the department to make Ride On reports and data publicly available on the County website. The performance dashboard includes data such as total ridership, annual ridership as well as service quality related information, such as missed trips rate and On Time Performance percentage.

The new performance dashboard is available now for public viewing on the Ride On website at: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot-transit/dashboard/index.html>

Of Note

Dedicated Bus Lanes at the Germantown Transit Center

MCDOT [introduced new dedicated bus lanes](#) at the [Germantown Transit Center](#). The lanes, which have been painted red and are located on Crystal Rock Drive, Century Boulevard, and Aircraft Drive, allow buses to easily access the transit center. Red pavement markings are a proven tool to improve compliance with bus lanes and increase bus speeds.

Ride On Reimagined Study Updates



The Ride On Reimagined Study is a comprehensive, forward-looking assessment of the bus network that will result in significant recommended changes to how transit operates in Montgomery County based on current and future needs. Taking an in-depth look at Montgomery County's existing and planned transit systems, including Metrobus services that operate within the County limits and the future Purple Line, the study will provide an opportunity to guide the future direction of Ride On through data analysis and community engagement. More [information about the study](#) can be found on our website.

SmarTrip® Cards Issued Before 2012 Are Due for Replacement

WMATA has installed new faregates at rail stations and will begin upgrading fareboxes on buses this fall. As a result, as of March 1, 2022, SmarTrip cards purchased before 2012 no longer work and must be replaced. If the serial number on the back of your card does not include "0167," it needs to be replaced. For [step-by-step instructions](#) on how to replace old cards or transfer balances including SmartBenefits to another card,

visit the [SmarTrip Card Replacement](#) page. Customers can easily replace their old farecards by mail, online, phone or in-person, and transfer any balance to a new or existing SmarTrip card or virtual card through [SmarTrip mobile pay](#) for iOS and Android.

Seniors, Persons with Disabilities and Kids Ride Free.

Did you know that with an ID, seniors, persons with disabilities, and young Montgomery County residents can take most Metrobuses in the County for free. Fares remain free on Ride On through July 2, 2022. More information on these fares is at rideonbus.com.

Free COVID-19 Vaccination and Testing Taxi Service

MCDOT is providing FREE Taxi service to COVID-19 vaccination and testing sites, as well as County libraries to pick up N95 masks, for residents 65+ and residents with disabilities. To schedule a trip, call Connect-A-Ride at 301-738-3252 to get your free taxi code. Then call one of the following taxi services: Action Taxi 301 840-1000, Anytime Taxi: 301-637-9292 or Regency Taxi 301-990-9000 to schedule your trip.