



Ride On Newsletter November 2024

Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich and County Councilmembers Honor Veterans with Operation Green Light Ride On Bus Unveiling



Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich and members of the County Council joined the County Commission on Veterans Affairs and community leaders on November 6 for the Montgomery County Department of Transportation’s (MCDOT) unveiling of the Ride On “Operation Green Light” themed bus at a ceremony to honor veterans.

[Operation Green Light](#), a program sponsored by the [National Association of Counties](#), honors veterans for their immeasurable sacrifices to preserve freedom. The program asks for displays of a green light, from Nov. 4-11, in a window of businesses or residences to honor veterans. The campaign also aims to highlight resources available to veterans for support.

“Operation Green Light is an opportunity to lift up our veterans and recognize the sacrifices they made so that we all may live in freedom,” said County Executive Elrich. “Through Operation Green Light we hope to raise awareness of the issues faced by veterans when they return home and highlight the resources available to them. I encourage all veterans, and their families, to connect with the County’s Commission on Veterans Affairs for ongoing support and services.”

Also attending the ceremonies were County Council Vice President Kate Stewart, County Councilmembers Will Jawando, Sidney Katz and Dawn Luedtke. County councilmembers, speakers and community leaders arrived at the ceremony on MCDOT's Operation Green Light Ride On bus on its inaugural journey. It finished at Montgomery County's Memorial Plaza, located adjacent to the County Executive Office Building in Rockville.

The bus is wrapped in a design depicting the U.S. flag, an outline of veterans, and highlighting Operation Green Light. The bus also features a neon sign reading "Operation Green Light" to illuminate the bus at night. The Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs [website](#) and resource phone line is printed on the back of the bus.

Montgomery County Council President Andrew Friedson, who could not attend the event, joined in his support for Operation Green Light.

"I am proud of this tribute to the men and women in our County who have served with the armed forces," said Council President Friedson. "Operation Green Light sends a signal to our veterans that our County recognizes the personal cost of their sacrifices and stands ready with the services and support they need to live and thrive in Montgomery County."

In addition, all Ride On buses have informational advertising cards on board with QR codes and a phone number for information on veterans' resources and services. Those services can be accessed by calling Serving Together at 855-738-7176 or visiting the Commission on Veterans Affairs [website](#).

"The Operation Green Light bus will circulate around the County throughout the month of November as a tribute to our veterans," said MCDOT Director Chris Conklin. "Ride On buses will have signs on board highlighting Operation Green Light and directing veterans to resources. We know many veterans rely on our Ride On buses, and we hope to make them aware of the support available to them."

The Operation Green Light bus will be deployed on bus routes throughout Montgomery County. Riders hoping to catch the Operation Green Light bus can follow @MCDOTNow on social media to find out where the bus is scheduled to run.

Look for photos of the Ride On Operation Green Light bus in motion on the MCDOT social media channels or by following the #OperationGreenLight hashtag. Riders are encouraged to post and share their bus photos in support.

More information about Operation Green Light is available [here](#).

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Ride On is Thankful for You: A Message of Gratitude for Our Riders



As we approach the holiday season, we at Ride On want to take a moment to express our heartfelt thanks to you, our dedicated riders. Every day you put your trust in us – whether you’re commuting to work, running errands, heading to class, or exploring our community. Your support and feedback are vital to making our service better every day, and we are grateful for the opportunity to be a part of your journey.

This past year has been filled with enhancements, new routes, and expanded services, all designed with your convenience in mind. We’ve introduced the Great Seneca Transit Network, expanded our Ride On ext*Ra* services, and continued to improve accessibility and reliability across our routes. We are driven by the goal of providing you with safe, efficient, and reliable transportation. Your support and feedback drive us to continually enhance our services, and your patience and understanding during changes allows us to improve and grow, keeping us motivated to serve you better. None of this would be possible without you.

This Thanksgiving season, we want you to know how much we appreciate each one of you. Thank you for riding with us, sharing your journeys, and supporting the Montgomery County community. As we move forward, we’re excited to bring you even better service and continue being a part of your daily commute. Here’s to more rides together and many more exciting things to come in the future! Thank you for choosing Ride On and being a valued member of our Ride On community.

With Gratitude,

The Ride On Team

Entry Deadline Extended for Ride On's What Drives You Contest



*How has Ride On
changed your life
for the better?*

*Share your
Ride On story
for a chance to win
a prize package.*

WHAT DRIVES YOU?

Since 1975 Ride On has helped people get to the places that are important to them.

MCDOT **Ride On**
Montgomery County Transit



Ride On is excited to announce that the "What Drives You" contest will now be open on a rolling basis, with winners chosen monthly. The second contest in the "What Drives You" campaign, which started November 1, previously had a deadline of November 30. Riders can now submit stories of how Ride On impacts their lives for the better without worry of missing a deadline.

In March, Ride On launched the "What Drives You" campaign aimed at amplifying voices and stories of riders. The year-long campaign collects rider experiences powered by a series of social media-based contests. The first of these contests asked riders to share memories of Ride On and detail how Ride On plays a positive role in their lives.

The first-place prize went to Malaka, who shared the story of his mother's journey to United States citizenship. "My mom always dreamed of becoming a U.S. citizen. But after we moved to Montgomery County, she worried transportation would hold her back. Then we discovered Ride On! Thanks to their reliable buses, Mom could attend English classes and citizenship prep courses at the senior center. Ride On wasn't just transportation, it was her bridge to a brighter future. Every ride was a step closer to her dream. And recently, that dream came true – Mom passed her citizenship exam! We're so incredibly proud of you, Mom!"

In our 49 years of service, Ride On has touched the lives of millions of riders. People have used the service to help them get to schools to earn degrees, get to work to provide for their family, go to medical appointments, and go on countless adventures across Montgomery County. We'd love to hear the story of how Ride On has impacted your life for the better!

Share your story with us in one of the three ways listed below to win a prize package including gift cards and Ride On giveaways.

1. Share your story on our website submission page by clicking [here](#).
2. Post your story on Instagram, X (Twitter), or Facebook and tag the @RideOnMCT account.
3. Email your experience to rideon.customerservice@montgomerycountymd.gov for a chance to win.

Eligible entries may be used to further publicize the contest. Contest will run indefinitely, with a winner chosen each month. Winners will be announced via email, Facebook, Instagram, and X within a week of the end of a month.

Ride On Reimagined Report to be Released



A Comprehensive Review of the Montgomery County Bus Network



Montgomery County Department of Transportation is nearing the release of the final report for the [Ride On Reimagined study](#), a major effort to assess and overhaul the county's bus transit network. This comprehensive study was designed to address current gaps, improve frequency, and make bus transit more accessible across the county. The final plan incorporates public feedback, collected over a year of community engagement, to reflect the needs of both regular and potential bus riders. This reimagined network aims to align more closely with the county's goals of expanding public transit access, reducing congestion, and promoting sustainable transportation options.

Key elements of the Ride On Reimagined plan include increased frequency on high-demand routes, new routes that allow cross-county travel, and the integration of other transportation modes, such as the Metro. This final design also explores on-demand transit options in certain areas, allowing for greater flexibility and coverage. The plan emphasizes connectivity, which should make transit more appealing and convenient for residents who rely on public transit to travel to work, school, and other daily destinations across Montgomery County.


The next steps involve securing funding to implement these changes, with the implementation plan start expected summer 2025. Once funded, the Ride On Reimagined plan will introduce improvements gradually, focusing first on high-priority routes and areas identified in the study. County officials are optimistic that this will lead to a more resilient and user-friendly transit network, helping to meet the county's environmental goals and improve quality of life for residents through better transit options.

Ride On Honors our Veteran Employees

HONORING

★ Ride On VETERANS ★

Montgomery County Transit



As we approach Veteran's Recognition month in November, Ride On is excited to highlight the selfless service and sacrifice of our veteran employees.


Bradley W. Baxter
Safety & Training Instructor
Time Serving in County Government: 11 years
Branch & Years of Military Service: U.S. Army, 33 years

Most Memorable Moment during your military service:
December 2008. Being Awarded the Purple Heart, in front of a packed house at the DC Armory, by a Two Star General.

What does Veterans Day mean to you?
The eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, in WW I when both sides signed the armistice. It's history.

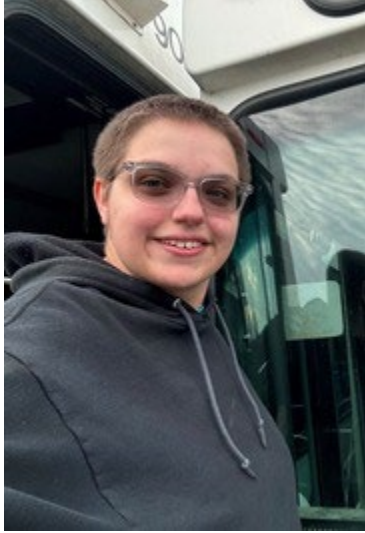
How your military service has shaped your career:
I'm a proud Army Veteran. Wherever I go I carry that with me. I am part of a brotherhood. No matter where I go, I am part of the Brotherhood of Warriors and Combat Veterans. I was a trainer in the Army for many years and a Platoon Sergeant the last 7 years of my career, including being responsible for over 40 men and women in an active combat zone.

What you're most proud about your military service:
To this day, 10 years after I retired I still hear how I impacted people and made a difference. I'm always proud that I carry the 101st Airborne Tab as my combat patch on all my uniforms. I am grateful that I made it home in one piece to my wife and baby girl.



★ MC DOT ★

Interview with Transit Advisory Group Member Elyse Horvath



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

I have been a Ride On passenger for most of my life, in various capacities, beginning in the early 2000s.

Why did you start riding Ride On?

At the very young age that I began riding, it was a matter of, "Ooooooh, bus, I want to ride!" without much regard for where it was going. As I have grown up, I still ride it just to ride it, but I also use it to get to work and to run errands.

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

I ride the 58 the most because it is my home route, and it gets me to Shady Grove. I take the 55 between Shady Grove and Montgomery College, as that takes me to and from my work at the college. I ride the 64, because it is the next-closest route to my house, and it provides an alternative way home after 58 service has ended.

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

As someone who is unable to get a driver's license, Ride On is my wheels. I am fully reliant on transit to get where I need to go, and between Ride On, WMATA, and the various other regional agencies, I can get pretty much wherever I want in the region using local transit. And if I really wanted to, I could take local transit - and only local transit - all the way to Boston.

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

I intend to advocate for people who are in my situation, i.e. people who are unable to drive on their own, but who are nonetheless night owls, who also deserve good transit as the night wears on.

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

I most certainly will recommend Ride On to someone else, because while the system may have its flaws, it is largely a reliable service that goes most places.

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!!

Montgomery County Department of Transportation Announces the Return of Decorated Winter Holiday 'Flash Lights' Buses



The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) is returning “Flash Lights” buses for the winter holiday season. Montgomery County residents and visitors can take in the roaming light display along Colesville Road/US 29 as five of the Flash Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) buses have been adorned with festive holiday lights. The buses will remain decorated throughout December.

The Flash Lights holiday buses made their 2024 debut on Nov. 16 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.

Riders are encouraged to post pictures of the Flash Lights buses on their Bluesky, X, Facebook, Threads and Instagram accounts and tag @MCDOTNow for a chance to win a \$25 gift card. One winner each will be randomly selected from all participants in a weekly drawing. The contest will run from Nov. 25 - Jan. 6. The first winner will be announced on Monday, Dec. 2. Full details for the contest can be found on [RidetheFlash.com](https://www.mcdot.org/ridetheflash).

Take Ride On to Montgomery County Shopping Centers



The holiday season is upon us! Montgomery County shopping centers have everything you need to fill your table with food and your home with gifts this year. Check out the list below for some great Ride On accessible shopping destinations to help you finish your to-do (and to-buy) lists in a hurry and on budget.

- **Montrose Crossing Shopping Center:** Featuring multiple supermarkets, clothing retailers, discount shops, and restaurants, this Rockville shopping center is a great place to prep for your holiday gathering or grab a few gifts for loved ones. To get to Montrose Crossing Shopping Center, take Ride On Route [46](#) or [extRa](#).
- **Westfield Wheaton Shopping Center:** Get everything you need for the holidays in and around the mall at this shopping center. Purchase enough food to feed your army at Costco and Giant, pick up gifts for everyone on your list, and ship gifts to faraway loved ones at UPS. To get to Westfield Wheaton Shopping Center, take Ride On routes [4](#), [9](#), [34](#), [38](#), or [48](#).
- **Orchard Center Shopping Mall:** This complex in White Oak features multiple grocery and department stores, discount retailers, and even a pet store to treat your furry friends. To get to Orchard Center Shopping Mall, take Ride On Route [27](#).
- **Plaza Del Mercado:** Pick up groceries, flowers, baked goods, and festive libations at this Silver Spring shopping center. Don't forget about yourself! This shopping center also includes a gym, salon and barber shop, and nail spa so you can look your best this holiday season. To get to Plaza Del Mercado, take Ride On routes [26](#), [49](#), or [51](#).
- **Montgomery Village Center:** This shopping center is a bargain hunter's dream! Grab holiday decor, groceries, and dinner on the way home at these shops. Visitors can also find a Latin grocery store and pharmacy on the property. To get to Montgomery Village Center, take Ride On routes [58](#), [59](#), [60](#), [64](#), or [65](#).
- **Germantown Commons:** This Germantown shopping center features a grocery store, pet store, and multiple discount retailers to make your season bright. To get to Germantown Commons, take Ride On route [97](#).

- **Quince Orchard Plaza:** Get everything you need for your holiday table, from food to decor and gifts, at this Gaithersburg shopping center. Treat yourself to a cup of coffee or lunch to go while you're out! To get to Quince Orchard Plaza, take Ride On routes [56](#), [71](#), or [78](#).
- **Bethesda Row:** This Bethesda shopping district has something for everyone on your list, including clothing, electronics, and jewelry. Make sure to grab some sweet or savory treats while you're there; on Bethesda row you can find cookies, cupcakes, bagels and burgers all within walking distance. To get to Bethesda Row, take Ride On Route [36](#).

Interview with Ride On Operator Desta Elias



What is your name?

Desta Elias

What is your role with Ride On?

A Bus Operator

How long have you been working with Ride On?

10+ Years

What inspired you to pursue a career as a transit operator?

I chose a career as a transit operator because it allows me to connect with and serve my community every day while also providing a stable, rewarding income. As a transit operator, I get to meet people from all walks of life, whether they're commuting to work, heading to school, or simply enjoying a day out. This role gives me a sense of purpose, knowing that I'm helping people reach their destinations safely and on time.

What do you enjoy most about working in transit? What keeps you motivated?

I take great pride in providing a valuable service to Montgomery County and its residents. Knowing that I'm helping people reach their destinations safely and efficiently gives me a deep sense of purpose. Each day, I see firsthand how our transit services make a difference. Seeing how our work impacts the lives of so many people is incredibly motivating.

I'm committed to doing my job to the best of my ability because I believe that safe, reliable transit options contribute to a stronger, more connected community. By making each trip smooth and secure, I aim to give every rider confidence in our system and ensure they have one less thing to worry about in their daily lives. Knowing I'm part of a team that supports the growth and well-being of Montgomery County keeps me inspired and focused on delivering the best service possible.

Share a memorable or rewarding experience you've had while working in transit.

One memorable experience that stands out to me involved a passenger who was visibly distressed, lost, and on the verge of tears. I noticed her standing alone, looking overwhelmed, and I immediately felt the need to help. Approaching her gently, I asked if she needed assistance, and she explained that she was unfamiliar with the area and worried she wouldn't make it to her destination.

Taking the time to listen to her concerns, I not only guided her with clear directions but also offered words of reassurance, letting her know she was not alone in navigating the situation. I could see her anxiety slowly ease as we talked, and by the end of our interaction, she expressed deep gratitude—not only for the directions but for the support and kindness. Moments like this remind me of the importance of empathy and the difference a small act of kindness can make. It's a powerful reminder that helping others goes beyond providing information; sometimes, it's about being there for someone in a moment of vulnerability.

What advice would you give to someone interested in pursuing a career in your field?

1. **Develop Strong Customer Service Skills:** As a transit operator, you'll interact with a wide range of passengers daily, each with different needs, questions, and concerns. Being approachable, polite, and helpful can make a big difference in your passengers' experience. Practicing empathy and patience can also help in challenging situations, ensuring everyone feels respected and valued.
2. **Maintain Reliable Attendance and Punctuality:** Consistency is essential in transit operations since schedules depend heavily on operators arriving on time. Maintaining strong attendance not only reflects professionalism but also supports the entire transit system, as other routes and operators rely on each person doing their part.
3. **Cultivate Patience and Stress Management:** Patience is crucial when dealing with high-traffic routes, unpredictable weather, or unexpected passenger issues. Being calm under pressure and managing stress effectively can help you stay focused, keep passengers safe, and handle challenging scenarios, such as delays or reroutes, without losing composure.

Of Note

Save the Date for Ride On's 50th

Ride On will mark 50 years of service in 2025, and we want to celebrate with you! Mark your calendars for May 15, 2025, and be on the lookout for how you can participate. We promise the festivities will be worth the wait!

Ride On extRa Pink & Lime Routes Now in Service, With Extended Hours on Lime Route

Have you ridden the new Great Seneca Transit Network extRa routes? These high frequency, limited stop routes run between the Shady Grove Metro Station and the Great Seneca Life Sciences Center, adjacent to the Universities at Shady Grove in Rockville. The Pink Line links the busy Shady Grove corridor with the Life Sciences Center via Medical Center Drive. The Lime Line uses I-370 to provide an express route to RIO, Crown Farm and the heart of the Life Sciences Center at Adventist HealthCare Shady Grove Medical Center.

As of November 17, extRa Lime route now offers extended service hours until 10:10 p.m. This change will make it easier for riders to enjoy later trips to and from work, school, or any evening plans around the Great Seneca area. Try the extRa Lime and Pink routes for "Less Stop, More Go"!

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, or text MONTGOMERY RIDEON to 468311 to receive text alerts.

Ride On Thanksgiving Schedule

Ride On will be operating on a Sunday Schedule for the Thanksgiving holiday on Thursday, November 28, 2024. We hope you have a safe and restful holiday!

- [Ride On Bus Service](#)—Will operate on a Sunday schedule. View route schedules [here](#).
- Ride On [extRa Pink](#) and [extRa Lime](#) - Will operate on a Sunday schedule.
- Ride On [Flash](#) Bus Service—The Orange Route will operate on a [Weekend/Holiday](#) schedule. The Blue Route (typically, weekday only) will not be in service.
- Ride On [extRa \(Route 101\)](#) and [Flex](#) - Will not operate.

Transit Trivia!

Test your familiarity with Ride On's routes, services, and more with our transit trivia! The answer will be in next month's edition of our newsletter so make sure you tune in next month to see if you answered correctly!

Question:

In celebration of Thanksgiving, we often think about giving back. Can you guess how many Montgomery County residents Ride On serves daily as a primary mode of transportation?

1. About 50,000
2. About 59,000
3. About 68,000
4. About 73,000

Last month's question:

What month is the Ride On Flash anniversary?

1. January
2. March
3. July
4. October

Answer: (4) October

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

If you need an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) reasonable accommodation to access Ride On bus service, contact MC311 by voice at 240-777-0311, by email RideOn.CustomerService@montgomerycountymd.gov or TTY 711.

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.