

## Reduced Ride On Bus Service Started January 16



Due to a growing number of bus operators sick from, or exposed to, COVID-19, MCDOT implemented a temporarily reduced service plan on Sunday, January 16. This decision will be revisited within six to eight weeks, or once bus operator availability begins to return to normal levels.

As part of the reduced service, [Ride On Flex](#) and [extRa](#) are both suspended, and the [Flash](#) will run a new schedule to include the Food and Drug Administration in White Oak on weekdays.

The temporary service change will maintain capacity for students and continue the Senior Program Transportation service.

The schedule changes offer considerably more service than the previous pandemic-related cuts, but the system will have fewer trips on about half of its routes while maintaining the same span of service. Overall, service was reduced by about 9 percent from the previous schedule.

“We are doing all we can to ensure consistency within our transit system for our community members who depend on it,” said MCDOT Director Chris Conklin. “It is imperative that riders know what to expect. This service change will provide a more reliable service.”

The surge in COVID-19 caseloads arrived as transit agencies around the region have been struggling to attract operators. Montgomery County is actively recruiting bus operators. Ride On bus service remains free for all riders until at least July 2. Protective barriers are still in place for drivers. Bus operators have mandated COVID-19 vaccinations or a weekly test process—as do all County employees.

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

All passengers are required to wear face coverings when traveling by public transportation. Riders must continue wearing the covering for the entire time of their trip. All MCDOT buses have a supply of face coverings for those who cannot provide their own.

New schedules are available [here](#). For more information, please visit [rideonbus.com](https://rideonbus.com).

## **WMATA Reopens Rockville and Shady Grove Metro Stations**



The Shady Grove and Rockville Metrorail stations reopened on Sunday, January 16, after a four-month long shutdown for the Rockville Canopy Replacement Project. The closure allowed Metro to safely demolish the old canopy at the Rockville Station and build a new steel canopy structure.

Riders at the Rockville Station will benefit from several user experience improvements on the station’s platform including brighter, more efficient LED lights, upgraded speakers and new digital passenger information screens. At the Shady Grove Station, the platform canopy, roof, and escalators have been repaired. Both stations also will have new, upgraded faregates to make accessing transit easier as part of Metro’s system-wide initiative to modernize fare equipment to be faster and more reliable.

While the new canopy at Rockville Station provides cover for customers, it remains temporarily unfinished while Metro determines the best type of exterior panels needed to complete the project. Metro and its contractor are working to develop a permanent solution and will communicate details when available. Customers can expect some continuing construction activities on customer experience improvements. All additional work will be completed safely, while the stations remain open.

Temporary bus stops in the west side Kiss & Ride lot will stay in operation until February. The Park & Ride Lot at the Rockville Station is fully repaved to provide customers with safer and more accessible parking. However, some ongoing parking closures will remain in effect as Metro completes improvements and restores the parking facilities at both stations over the coming weeks.

## **Feature Interview with Ride On Nicholson Depot Chief - James Ryan**

**Please explain your role and its direct impact on Ride On operations.**

Currently I am doing two jobs, I am the Depot Chief at the Nicholson Court Depot and I am the Acting Chief at Safety, Training, and Security. As a Depot Chief, I support the bus operators and the supervisors to keep our services running to meet our customer's needs. The impact of my role with Ride On is due to the hard work of our operators, supervisors, communications leaders, and coordinators. They are the people who take the finished product and make the operation work. I make sure I am available for them when they need me to be available. I think it is extremely important to be available for your staff to discuss work related things but more importantly personal things that may be impacting their work. I have received some great ideas from the bus operators during some of the conversations I have had with them that we have implemented.



At Safety, Training, and Security, my role is different. We are fortunate to have a highly skilled group of trainers and managers there to train our new operators and support our current operators with any additional training and support they may need. Just like in the depot, I make myself available to them to make sure they have everything they need to do their jobs successfully. At the end of the day, the impact I have on the depot or at Safety & training is a direct result of everyone's dedication and hard work.

**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?**

I remember a very early morning in April of 2020 when the CAO and the Director came to the Nicholson Court Depot to meet with Dan, Mike, Allan, Andre, and me. It was dark and a bit chilly and there was a sense of unease among us. We were a few weeks into the pandemic and none of us knew what the future held. Schools were closed and nobody really knew what was going to happen next, but we knew we had to keep the buses moving to be there for our passengers, seeing that many of them are frontline workers and needed to get to their jobs.

The Director asked how we are managing and what we are doing to keep the service going? We all explained how we are managing things at our specific depot differently because all the depots are different. The new procedures that we put into place; limiting the number of people in the depot, rotating schedules, setting up folders outside for paperwork, enhanced cleaning of the buses, rear door boarding, and supplying masks for our passengers really kept the impact of the virus out of the depots allowing us to operate as best we could. It took a lot of sacrifices from a lot of people to make it work and those sacrifices continue almost two years later. I am really proud of our operators and staff for all that they have done during that time. Their dedication really made the difference.

**The COVID-19 pandemic led many organizations to reevaluate their services and operational protocols. Has that been the case for Nicholson Depot and the Safety and Training teams? If so, how?**

I think the pandemic has caused us all to evaluate many aspects of our lives, not just at work. We put in some strict procedures to ensure the safety of our employees and passengers. We implemented testing in the depot as well as hosting vaccine clinics for the employees and their families. We switched our operator meetings, open doors, and staff meetings to virtual meetings, and even conducted our picks without any operators coming into the building and pick packets are now issued via email.

At Safety & Training we changed the size of the classes and limited how many trainees are on a bus at a time. If we do have a larger class, and we did, we utilized the large meeting rooms at the Gaithersburg depot and that worked out really well. It also gave the trainees a good look at how the depot runs their operation. We also ran three classes at the same time, but each started on a different day/date, so we were able to increase the number of new operators using the same timeframe.

**Ride On recently announced a new service change with a reduced service. What factors contributed to this and what percentage of service was reduced?**

One word, Omicron.

It seems just as we were reading about this new variant and trying to understand it and the potential impact it would have on our operation, we were hit by it and hit hard. In a matter of days, this highly contagious variant did not spare Ride On, we were hit hard by the number of operators who tested positive for it. Fortunately, our testing at the depot made it very easy for everyone to get tested and that helped us identify those who needed to stay home very quickly. The good news is that they all bounced back quickly and hopefully any impact causing

the reduced service will be short lived. I believe we reduced service by 9% to adjust for the Omicron impact.

### **What efforts are being made to hire more bus operators?**

We all know that most businesses are being impacted by the virus and hiring new employees is becoming more and more competitive each day. We are looking to be more creative in how we recruit operators. We currently have a contest between the depots to see who can refer the most applicants, we are placing 100 bus ads on our buses that feature our bus operators, we are in the process of redoing our website and are creating new marketing materials to strengthen the recruiting effort.

### **We are Hiring Bus Operators**



**WE R  
HIRING!**

**Immediate openings  
for full- and part-time  
Ride On bus operators.**

*Paid CDL license training  
Competitive salary & benefits packages  
Professional development*

**Grow your career with Ride On!  
Learn more at [RideOnBus.com](http://RideOnBus.com) &  
click on the Jobs tab**

**MCDOT** Montgomery County Department of Transportation **Ride On** Montgomery County Transit

MCDOT is currently recruiting full time and substitute bus operators to fill positions in all three depots – Silver Spring, Kensington, and Gaithersburg. Experience is not necessary and applicants without CDL licenses are encouraged to apply. We offer paid commercial driver’s license training, great benefit packages and opportunities for advancement.

Transportation is one of the County’s most important resources. MCDOT’s Ride On bus service achieves an essential mission of the County by connecting people, communities, workplaces, educational institutions, and many other essential destinations. MCDOT owns and operates nearly 400 buses.

Looking for a meaningful career in public service? Consider being a bus operator. Our bus operators play an integral part in the communities they serve, even before the pandemic. They are committed to safety, customer service and a genuine care for the community. Does this sound like you? Then we want to hear from you.

Applicants must be 21 and over to [apply](#). Learn more at [rideonbus.com/jobs](https://rideonbus.com/jobs).

## Meet our Bus Operators

### Alexander Folgar, Ride On bus operator

#### How long have you been working for MCDOT?

I was young when I first started. Initially, I wanted to be here for 2 to 3 years, but here I am 20 years later and still having a great time. It is not just a job to me. It is a career and I look forward to my 40<sup>th</sup> year with MCDOT.



#### What advice would you give future operators?

Try to be laid back and don't take things personally, especially when people are having a bad day. It is always a pleasure serving the customers. I try to make the best out of every situation.

#### What do you like about working for MCDOT?

I like the sense of security, the great benefits, opportunity of advancements and the activities. I placed 7<sup>th</sup> place in the International Rodeo in 2015.

**Noemy Bonilla, Ride On bus operator**



**How long have you been with MCDOT?**

I have been here for 7 years. My husband encouraged me to apply and at first, I didn't think I had a chance and here I am 7 years later.

**Since you didn't have operator experience, were you intimidated by the job requirement?**

I was not intimidated at all. You never know what your body and mind can do to overcome fears. Just give yourself a try.

**What do you like about working for MCDOT?**

I like how supportive MCDOT has been for women in the workforce. I also enjoy the great benefits, great pay, and opportunities for advancement. I look forward to my next opportunity when the time is right.

**New Dedicated Bus Lanes Introduced Around Germantown Transit Center**



MCDOT introduced the newly painted dedicated bus lanes around the Germantown Transit Center less than two months ago. The lanes, which were painted red, are located on Crystal Rock Drive, Century Boulevard, and Aircraft Drive, and 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. Red bus lanes installed in Washington, D.C., Baltimore, New York, Chicago, San Diego County and elsewhere have improved bus operations.

A special paint that includes glass particles is used to create a high-friction surface. The glass also helps filter out UV rays, adding to the longevity of color. The Germantown Transit Center has six bus bays serving eight routes. More than 1,900 people board buses at the bus transit center each day. The center had an average of 2,700 people boarding prior to the start of the COVID-19 health crisis.

This is the debut project in the [Bus Priority Program](#), which provides for targeted and quickly implementable improvements that make buses faster and more reliable. Residents are encouraged to engage with MCDOT to help shape future public transportation projects, such as [Flash Bus Service](#) and the [Ride On Reimagined](#) study.

## **Ride On Bus Routes Connect You to County Hospitals**

Accessibility to the hospital is important, especially during these times and Ride On is here to help get you there. Ride On has several routes connecting you from Transit Centers and Metro stations to the following hospitals:

Holy Cross Silver Spring (1500 Forest Glen Rd, Silver Spring): Ride On [Route 8](#) (buses coming East from Forest Glen Metro Station only) between Wheaton and Silver Spring Transit Center.

Sibley Memorial Hospital (5255 Loughboro Rd, NW Washington): Ride On [Route 23](#) between Friendship Heights Metro Station and Sibley Memorial Hospital.



Montgomery General Hospital (18101 Prince Phillip Dr, Olney): Ride On [Route 52](#) between Montgomery General Hospital and Rockville Metro station.

Shady Grove Adventist Hospital (9901 Medical Center Dr, Rockville): Ride On [Route 56](#) between Lakeforest Transit Center and Rockville, Route 43 between Shady Grove and Traville Transit Center.

Suburban Hospital (8600 Old Georgetown Rd, Bethesda): Ride On [Route 70](#) between Germantown Transit Center and Bethesda Metro Station.

Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (8901 Rockville Pike, Bethesda): Ride On [Route 70](#) between Germantown and Bethesda Metro Station and Route 46 between Rockville and Medical Center Metro stations.

Holy Cross Germantown Hospital (19801 Observation Dr, Germantown): Ride On [Route 83](#) between Holy Cross Germantown and Germantown Transit Center.

The health and safety of our customers continues to be our priority. For more information about our routes and schedules, please visit [rideonbus.com](http://rideonbus.com).

## Celebrating Mrs. Rosa Parks on Transit Equity Day, February 4<sup>th</sup>

Transit Equity Day is observed annually on February 4<sup>th</sup>, Mrs. Rosa Parks birthday, to commemorate her life and legacy. Rosa Parks became a key figure in the Civil Rights era when she refused to give up her seat on a segregated Montgomery, Alabama public transit bus and was arrested in 1955. Her actions sparked the Montgomery bus boycott and the U.S. Supreme Court decision declaring segregation on buses unconstitutional. The actions and legacy of Rosa Parks are tied to the concept of transit equity for all.

**Celebrating Equal Rights**  
**Celebrando la igualdad de derechos**

*Dedicated to the memory of Rosa Parks*

On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks took a seat on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama . . . and her refusal to give up her seat changed the course of American history . . .

*Dedicado a la memoria de Rosa Parks*

El 1 de diciembre de 1955, Rosa Parks tomó asiento en un autobús en Montgomery, Alabama . . . y al negarse a ceder su lugar, cambió la historia americana . . .

ROSA PARKS  
1913 - 2005

**Ride On**  
Montgomery County  
Department of Transportation

**MCDOT**  
Montgomery County  
Department of Transportation

**HR**  
Harrisburg

In recognition of her history altering bravery, MCDOT posted commemorative bus cards on all buses in December 2020 and 2021. The County Executive also proclaimed December 1, 2021 “Rosa Parks Day”. Transit Equity Day began in 2017, when a network of labor unions, community organizations, and environmental groups declared February 4 “Transit Equity Day,” a national day of action to commemorate Parks and other civil rights icons, and to advocate for accessible, reliable, and affordable transit powered by renewable energy.

MCDOT is committed to providing equitable transportation for all. Montgomery County is stronger when everyone has access to reliable and affordable transportation. MCDOT continues to connect people to jobs, health care, schools, grocery stores, housing, public services, and more, while eliminating barriers to transit.

*“I believe we are here on the planet Earth to live, grow up and do what we can to make this world a better place for all people to enjoy freedom.”*

*- Rosa Parks*

## **Transit and COVID 19**

The COVID 19 pandemic altered the state of work in this country. While teleworking grew dramatically as a response, workers in essential services like healthcare, food and agriculture, emergency services, transportation and transit, residential facilities, and grocery stores, didn’t have the option to work from home. Although MCDOT initially reduced our services due to a 78% drop in ridership, we have continued operating throughout the pandemic, ensuring equitable access to employment and wages for many. MCDOT was first in the region to offer free fares, free masks, rear door boarding, and social distanced seating on our buses; all implemented to ensure everyone’s safety when using public transportation. MCDOT also implemented numerous internal COVID safety protocols following Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidance, including disinfecting all buses twice per day with a hospital grade anti-viral disinfectant. MCDOT launched a public communications plan in the summer of 2020, and in the fall of 2020, joined the American Public Transportation Association’s (APTA) Health and Safety Commitments Program along with over 200 transit agencies. Disseminating common and consistent rider safety information was a critical part of this program.

## **Transportation and Sustainability**

Equitable transportation in Montgomery County includes investing in clean transportation options and infrastructure. In September 2020, MCDOT launched our first four electric buses and ordered ten more, to reduce greenhouse gases from the transportation sector. The goal is to convert the entire fleet of buses to electric by 2035, thus dramatically reducing our carbon footprint. In September 2021, MCDOT hosted the groundbreaking ceremony for the first in the region Integrated Microgrid and Charging Infrastructure Project for Ride On Electric Bus Fleet at Brookville Smart Energy Bus Depot. This one-of-a-kind project which has been [featured](#) on a

global list of intriguing microgrid projects to watch in 2022, is expected to be operational by mid-2022 and will support the first 44 electric buses planned for deployment.

### **Title VI of the Civil Rights Program**

MCDOT works closely with the Maryland Transit Administration to meet its Title VI program requirements which help ensure our public transportation service is provided in a non-discriminatory manner. 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.

### **Ride On Riders Rights and Responsibilities**

As a valued Ride On customer, you have rights as well as responsibilities, to ensure you have an overall great experience while riding with us. As always, we are dedicated to providing a safe and reliable transportation service which meets your needs.

#### **Rider Rights:**

1. Ride in a safe and clean vehicle, in good condition
2. Be treated with value, respect and dignity while traveling with us
3. Be informed about the services available to you, including different language and skills
4. Be picked up/dropped off at the scheduled time
5. Provided information about route detours and delays
6. ADA accessibility for those who need it
7. File a complaint if service is not satisfactory

#### **Rider Responsibilities:**

1. Be respectful of the staff and fellow passengers on board and while at the stops
2. Pay the exact fare (when we return to fare collection)
3. Be sure to clean up after yourself while at the bus stops and on board
4. Keep your property including service animals under control at all times
5. Notify staff of any relevant matter that may affect your care or your fellow passengers

### **Of Note**

**Montgomery County commended for good bus service** - [A report](#) released by a regional coalition of business and smart growth organizations commends Montgomery County for its

Flash bus service, free fares for Ride On service, and considered a leader in many respects in regards to regional bus service.

**Free COVID-19 Vaccination and Testing Taxi Service** MCDOT is providing FREE Taxi service to COVID-19 vaccination and testing sites 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.

**Essential Delivery Services** – Call-N-Ride taxi companies can assist program participants with pick-up from grocery stores, food banks or restaurants, and provide a contactless delivery to participants’ residence, until the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**TSA Mandate** - The [Transportation Security Administration](#) extended the requirements for face coverings on all public transportation until March 18, 2022. This regulation covers all Ride On buses and the Flash. All riders must continue wearing face coverings for the duration of their trip.

**Free Fare Extension** – Free Fares on all County buses extended to July 2, 2022 Free Fares are also available on Metro buses in the County for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and Youth Cruiser card holders.

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For the most up-to-date service information, riders should follow @RideOnMCT on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#) and [Instagram](#). In addition, information is available at [www.rideonbus.com](http://www.rideonbus.com), by subscribing at [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/govdelivery](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/govdelivery) to receive email alerts or text MONTGOMERY RIDEON to 468311 to receive text alerts.

For other Montgomery County transportation information, follow [@MCDOTNow](#) on Twitter, and [subscribe](#) to MCDOT’s Go Montgomery! biweekly newsletter.