

**MCDOT**

# **Ride On News & Information**

**Ride On****September 2021**

## **Montgomery County Integrated Microgrid and Charging Infrastructure Project will Increase Green Operations at Ride On**

Montgomery County held its groundbreaking event on September 9, 2021, on an innovative bus electrification program at MCDOT's Ride On Brookville Smart Energy Bus Depot. MCDOT is building its first micro-grid solar energy project to power its expanding fleet of electric buses. MCDOT plans to add ten (10) new electric buses this year to the four (4) added to the fleet last September. The Brookville Smart Energy Bus Depot will be built and operational by mid-2022, servicing 44 new electric buses within MCDOT's Ride On fleet by 2023.

MCDOT's goal is to transition its fleet of buses to all electric by 2035. MCDOT currently replaces an average of 10% of the buses per year, per [Federal Transit Administration](#) (FTA) and [Maryland Transit Administration](#) (MTA) guidelines.

"The Brookville Smart Energy Bus Depot project falls in line with our ambitious climate action plan to reduce all carbon emissions by 2035," said County Executive Marc Elrich. "This bus depot is one component of many County projects that is making a difference for our environment such as converting our fleets to electric and reducing harmful emissions. This infrastructure project will improve the County's resilience and we are proud to be at the forefront amongst local governments when it comes to projects like this."

"MCDOT has committed to a zero-emissions fleet by 2035," said MCDOT Director Chris Conklin. "We've started the transition with the purchase of fourteen electric buses so far. The Brookville microgrid project will charge these and future buses allowing us to provide great service in an environmentally responsible way."

Electric bus charging, incorporating clean energy production technologies will enable the County to provide sustainable, resilient, and reliable energy supply for bus charging and site operations. The project will include the following:

- 2 Megawatts (MW) of solar photovoltaic canopies that will provide electrical power to the buses and to the battery storage systems

- 4.3 Megawatt Hours (MWH) battery storage
- 2 MW of natural gas generation
- Microgrid controller



This program is a public-private-partnership or P3, an agreement with AlphaStruxure, a leader in Energy as a Service (EaaS) solutions. The project will enable at least 44 buses in the Ride On Montgomery County's transit fleet to transition from diesel to electric power. This advances the County's goal to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2035, reducing lifetime emissions by over 155,000 tons, while delivering resilience to climate events and power outages.

The [Brookville Smart Energy Bus Depot](#) is a first-of-its-kind integration of microgrid and EV charging infrastructure, delivering sustainability, reliability and resilience for the County's public transportation system. AlphaStruxure, a joint venture of Schneider Electric and the Carlyle Global Infrastructure Opportunity Fund, will design, build, finance, own and operate the project to enable Ride On's growing electric bus fleet. The project is scheduled to be completed in late spring 2022 and is designed to deliver the following benefits and outcomes:

**Bus Electrification:** Enabling the County's transition from fossil fuel buses to electric buses with a customized energy and infrastructure solution

**Environmental Sustainability:** 62 percent carbon emissions reduction with electric buses powered by the microgrid and lifetime greenhouse gas benefit of over 155,000 tons

**Climate Resilience and Operational Reliability:** Ensures uninterrupted bus services during any long-term power outages caused by severe weather as well as any short-term disturbances or perturbations of the utility grid

**Flexible Fleet Operations:** Avoidance of utility demand charges and time-of-use tariffs provides fleet operations with ultimate dispatch flexibility

**Financial Benefits:** Energy as a Service approach eliminates upfront cost to the County for the project including all microgrid and charging infrastructure, and provides long-term cost predictability for energy supply

**Economic Development:** Creates more than 50 construction jobs

Click [here](#) for more information.

## **The Upcoming One Year Anniversary of MCDOT'S Flash Rapid Bus Service**



On October 14, 2020, the Flash rapid bus service officially started operations. The Flash along the US 29 corridor is MCDOT's first rapid transit service. Studies are currently under way for potential Flash service expansion to the MD 586/Veirs Mill Road and the MD 355 corridors.

Flash currently transports 1,800 riders per day, which is a great start for this new route, since it usually takes up to three years for a route to reach maturity.

It operates on Colesville Road/ Columbia Pike (US 29) and Lockwood Drive, with destinations including downtown Silver Spring, Four Corners, White Oak, Fairland, and Burtonsville. With Flash, you can hop on and off along the route to get to places in your community or make easy connections that will take you throughout the region.

In Burtonsville, you can connect with MTA buses to Baltimore. At Four Corners riders can connect to eight (8) Ride On routes as well as several Metrobus routes. At the Silver Spring Transit Center, riders can connect with over 25 routes or hop on the Metrorail system, or buses to New York and Boston.

This frequent and reliable service uses the largest vehicles (60 feet long buses) in our fleet. The buses are the only "articulated" (two-part buses that bend in the middle) vehicles in our fleet and can carry up to 80 passengers.



**FLASH** STOPS AT **ALL STATIONS**  
ALONG THE ROUTE



Some of the features of the Flash service include:

- **Frequent, reliable service:** Never wait more than 15 minutes for a bus on the Orange Route. Buses come every 7.5 minutes during rush hour where the Orange and Blue routes overlap.
- **You don't need to plan or look at a bus schedule.** You can walk out your door and know the Flash will be here when you need it. If you want more specific information, **real-time information** is available online and on screens at every station.
- **Large vehicles with free WiFi and USB charging ports.** The colorful 62' Flash buses are the longest in the MCDOT fleet and come fully equipped with all the amenities.
- **Faster boarding** through three doors. All three doors open when bus arrives, and riders can enter or exit from any door without waiting in one line.
- **Level boarding** (no steps to get on or off bus) allows for faster, easier boarding for riders with disabilities, bicycles, and strollers. Just roll on in.
- **Unique stations** are easy to find and have weather protection, pre-payment stations, and real-time transit information.
- **Automated wheelchair securement system** provides improved experience and independence for wheelchair and scooter users. With the Quantum automatic system, passengers can safely secure themselves without assistance from bus operator (unless requested).
- **Bring your bike inside the Flash.** Roll it on through the back door and secure it inside the bus. Flash is the first in the region to have bike racks inside of the bus
- **10 new Capital Bikeshare stations** installed along the corridor to help people access Flash.
- **Flash stations** are located at **3 existing Park & Ride lots**, so you can also drive or carpool and then get on the bus and relax for the rest of the ride.

Thanks to all who have taken rides on the Flash. For more information, visit [ridetheflash.com](http://ridetheflash.com)

## Q&A with Ride On Chief of the Gaithersburg Depot, Allan Watts



### **Q. Please describe your position and responsibilities with Ride On**

A. As the Chief of Gaithersburg depot, I'm responsible for the day-to-day operations and service provided to the transportation area of Montgomery County. I am tasked with monitoring the operating budget, scheduling bus service, developing and implementing operations procedures. I review and investigate vehicle accidents as well as provide recommendations for safety programs. In addition, I supervise the selection and promotion process of transit employees and train direct reports on supervisory responsibilities. I review operations data and develop recommendations to address operational concerns. I lead a large, diverse workforce that provides direct service to the public; I work with the Union regarding workforce policies, disciplinary actions, alternative

dispute resolutions, and grievances. I coordinate with other transit agencies concerning recommendations to develop standard operating procedures. My leadership consists of customer service, commitment to diversity, communication, and teamwork.

### **Q. Please describe your career path with MCDOT**

A. I began my career with MCDOT in 1988 as a bus operator. I drove for eleven years before my first promotion to Transit Coordinator. Six months later, I was promoted to Transit Operations Supervisor. Later, a lateral transfer landed me in a newly created position of Front Desk Supervisor. I continued to work my way through the ranks and became a Transit Services Supervisor in 2013. Then, in March 2016, I was promoted to Section Chief of the Nicholson Court depot. While in that position, I was temporarily assigned to Acting Chief of Operations based at the Executive Office Building (EOB). After that, I was transferred to Central Communication as the Chief of that section. In July 2019, I became Section Chief of the Gaithersburg depot. I have been the Acting Chief of Information and Electronics since August 2021 while simultaneously continuing my duties as Chief of the Gaithersburg depot.

### **Q. How will the Rockville Station/Shady Grove construction affect Ride On?**

A. The Rockville /Shady Grove construction project will alter pedestrians' crosswalks, impede access at the metro stations and change traffic patterns. In addition, the construction may create confusion as to where to board buses; there will be adequate signage to assist passengers. Ride On's schedules will be affected; buses arriving and departing may be delayed as they navigate safely through construction zones.

**Q. When do you anticipate returning service and bus schedules back to the pre-COVID levels?**

A. We were expecting to be back to regular service in spring 2022, but with the resurgence of COVID-19, that may not be achievable, and a new date has not been planned.

**Q. When will Ride On resume fare collections?**

A. Fare collection was expected to begin in the Fall of 2021, but no date for collecting fare on Ride On buses has been officially established.

**Q. There are shortages of bus operators during this time. What is Ride On doing to retain their operators as well as recruit new operators?**

1. Recognize employee achievements
2. Employee of the year ceremony
3. Yearly bus Rodeo and picnic event
4. Bus operator's compliments and letters posted in the depots

**Q. What are the advantages and the disadvantages of being a bus operator?**

A. As a bus operator, you'll receive competitive wages, flexible work schedules, excellent training, health benefits, paid holidays, vacation time, and complete uniforms, including a jacket, sweater, hat, shoes, and winter boots.

**Q. What is the best part of your job?**

A. Knowing that everyone has the same vision; providing quality service to the residents and visitors of Montgomery County, foreseeing daily challenges, and finding resolutions while making the necessary adjustments to keep our buses moving.

## Mask Mandate – On Going Health and Safety Measures

***Attention: Ride On Passengers***  
***Atención Pasajeros de Ride On***

***Face coverings required & available for riders.***

***Se requieren cubiertas para la cara y están disponibles para los pasajeros.***



**MCDOT**  
Montgomery County Department of Transportation

**RideOnBus.com**

**Ride On**  
Montgomery County Transit

The Transportation Security Administration extended the requirements for face coverings on all public transportation until January 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. All MCDOT buses have a supply of face coverings for

riders who cannot provide their own.

Ride On services remain free to all passengers—a temporary change made during the health crisis.

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

## Rockville and Shady Grove Metro Station Construction and Closures

The Rockville and Shady Grove Metro stations will be closed for three months from September 11 through December 4, 2021 to allow work crews to demolish and replace the concrete canopy at the Rockville Metro station. The Rockville Canopy Replacement Project will replace the aging platform canopy and provide additional customer improvements at Rockville Station. During the closure, Metro will perform additional work to rehabilitate and repair parking lots at Rockville, repair the platform canopy at Shady Grove, as well as track work required to maintain a state of good repair. Metro will waive parking fees for customers at Shady Grove and Rockville while the two stations are closed for canopy reconstruction and repairs.

Passengers can bypass the station closures by using the Twinbrook, White Flint, or Grosvenor-Strathmore Stations instead.

The pedestrian tunnel between the east and west side of the Rockville Station will remain open during construction so that riders can access bus stops and shuttle services on either side of the Station.

Free shuttle buses will replace trains and take riders to and from the closed stations (between Shady Grove and Twinbrook stations). **Shuttle buses will pick up/drop off at: 1) Twinbrook bus bays B & C, 2) Rockville temporary stops T7 and T8, 3) Shady Grove West Kiss & Ride Lot**

Route <i>Ruta</i>	Destination <i>Destino</i>	Bus Stop <i>Parada</i>
<b>FREE SHUTTLE BUS SERVICE</b>		
<b>Red Line Local</b>	Twinbrook	<b>T4</b>
<b>Red Line Local</b>	Shady Grove	<b>G</b>
<b>RIDE ON</b>		
44	Twinbrook	<b>T2</b>
46	Medical Center/Montgomery College-Rockville	<b>T1</b>
47	Bethesda	<b>T3</b>
54	Lakeforest Transit Center	<b>T5</b>
55	Germantown Transit Center	<b>T6</b>
56	Lakeforest Transit Center	<b>T5</b>
63	Shady Grove	<b>T5</b>

Route <i>Ruta</i>	Destination <i>Destino</i>	Bus Stop <i>Parada</i>
<b>RIDE ON</b> <i>Continued</i>		
81	White Flint	<b>T2</b>
101	Medical Center	<b>T1</b>
101	Lakeforest Transit Center	<b>G</b>
Flex	Rockville	<b>T2</b>
<b>METROBUS</b>		
Q1, Q2, Q5, Q6	Shady Grove	<b>G</b>
Q1, Q2, Q4	Silver Spring	<b>A (eastside)</b>
Q5, Q6	Wheaton	<b>A (eastside)</b>

**None of the Ride On routes will experience routing changes during this time, except for the location of the Rockville station bus stops.** Ride On Flex will drop off/pick up at the T2 stop. All buses on the west side have shifted to temporary stops in the Kiss and Ride Lot.



Metrorail service will be unavailable at the Rockville and Shady Grove Stations. Red Line trains will operate normal service between Glenmont and Twinbrook only. MARC and Amtrak service will operate at Rockville with no service disruption.

Please be prepared for loud noise and changes in traffic and pedestrian access throughout construction.

## **Interview with 9/11 Bus Operator - Exa Juarez on the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**



On September 11 2001, Ride On received calls from Montgomery County Police and Fire/Rescue, requesting for buses to be sent to Pentagon after the terrorist act. The buses were used by first responders during breaks to cool off and relax. No employee was obligated to accept this assignment. The following is a profile of a Ride On employee who volunteered for this assignment.

### **How long have you been with the County?**

I have been with Ride On for 25 years. I started as a bus operator but also held other positions such as transit coordinator and front desk supervisor.

### **What has been your favorite position so far?**

I enjoyed all positions, but I really liked working as a Transit Coordinator because I got to help the public as well as the operators.

### **How did you end up going to the Pentagon that day?**

I had my last normal bus trip in the morning, and I came back to the depot. When I got there, the plane has already landed. They were asking if anyone would like to help out and I volunteered to help.

### **What was going through your mind as you were driving there?**

The drive to the Pentagon was okay because we had the assistance of the police. They were blocking and clearing the roads for us. I was also with other rescue people and they were humorous in attempts to lighten the situation.

### **What was it like being the only female with them?**

I have always been the only female working with the guys and I get along with them well. I also enjoy it because I like the challenge. It was great because the guys looked out for me a lot. They would always ask how I was doing and if I needed anything.

**What was the experience like being at the pentagon that day?**

By the time we got there, they had already evacuated the place, but there were still some news reporters and rescue people around. It is one thing to hear about it but seeing it firsthand was different. It was sad to know that many people did not make it home that day. People were in disbelief that something like this could happen to us. (Tearfully recounting her experience) I remember a guy who used to ride the bus I drove every morning and after this incident, I never saw him again. You can see how fragile life is.

**What 3 things stand out to you the most about this experience?**

We were supposed to meet the President, but we met the Vice President at that time, Al Gore. He came out and shook our hands and thanked us for being there. I also remember eating breakfast in the morning and all of a sudden, Senator Ted Kennedy came and gave me a big hug. He thanked us for being there. Mostly, I am grateful that I had the opportunity to help out.

**How has this experience changed you, if at all?**

I have learned to appreciate life and all it has to offer. I am always grateful to God for another day because it is not promised. I always say, "God Bless America" and I also thank God for Montgomery County and even Fairfax County because we helped transport people over there.

**What advice would you give other operators in the position to help out if they could?**

Please follow your heart. Things affect everyone differently. I am grateful for the opportunity to help and would do it over again if I could.

**Can you share some lessons you have learned?**

There are still some very nice people in the world. I made some friends. No matter how hard life is, do your best and use your experiences to make you a better person. Everyone should appreciate the life they have. One thing I am grateful for is that they brought the third plane down so that it did not cause more harm. I am grateful for that.

## Ride On Gaithersburg Depot's Relief Support for Haiti: The Silver Can Lady



MCDOT employees who work in the Gaithersburg Ride On Depot, probably have met the “Silver Can Lady,” June Ann Nobrega, Office Services Coordinator at the Depot, who often offers them the opportunity to give back.

In efforts to help Haiti following the recent devastating earthquake they experienced, the Little Things Matter Team (LTMT) in the Gaithersburg Depot coordinated a fundraiser, in coordination with the [Washington Midtown Lions Club](#) to help mitigate the impact of the natural disaster.

“Every little bit counts, especially when helping people in need,” said June Ann,. “when our staff see me with the silver can, they know what time it is.”

The monetary contributions will help improve the living conditions of those persons affected by the earthquake, in an island nation already struggling with poverty, thousands more are without adequate food, water and proper housing. The team exceeded its goal and forwarded the funds to the Lions Club.

Since Montgomery County is one of the most diverse in the nation, with 30% of the population born outside the United States, it’s no wonder the MCDOT employees wish to help others. While these employees are far from rich, they care about others and respect those less fortunate than themselves. We applaud the efforts of our Gaithersburg Depot Staff.

## Montgomery County Department of Transportation is Providing FREE Taxi Service to COVID-19 Vaccination and Testing for Residents 65+and Residents with Disabilities.

Taxicab companies operating in Montgomery County ([Action](#), [Anytime](#) & [Regency/Barwood](#)) can provide roundtrip transportation to older adults and residents with disabilities to COVID-19 Vaccination and Testing locations at no cost to the rider. Montgomery County Department of Transportation will reimburse taxi companies for the trips.

## To Schedule a Trip

- Call Connect-A-Ride at **(301) 738-3252** and provide your name, address, phone number, age to receive a “Free COVID Taxi Code.”
  - Then, call one of the Taxicab companies listed below and provide the following:
    - Your “Free COVID Taxi Code”
    - Name, phone number, trip information – date, time, origin and destination
  - At the end of each trip, the rider signs a trip voucher.
  - Drivers and riders must wear face coverings for the duration of the trip.
- 

Here are the taxicab providers who are available to provide transportation to COVID-19 Vaccination and Testing locations:

**Action Taxi: (301) 840-1000**

**Anytime Taxi (301) 637-9292**

**Regency/Barwood Taxi: (301) 990-9000 or (301) 984-1900**

## Of Note

**Bus Operator Recruitment** - MCDOT is [hiring](#) full and part time bus operators to fill positions in all three depots – Silver Spring, Nicholson Court and Gaithersburg. Applicants must be over 21 years old, have a valid driver’s license and three years driving experience with no more than one point on driving record. The application deadline is September 15. Visit [rideonbus.com](https://rideonbus.com) for more information.

**MC311** - We appreciate your concerns, compliments, and feedback. Be sure to give us a call by dialing 311 if you are inside the County. Dial 240-777-0311 if you're outside Montgomery County or visit the [MC311 website](#). For the hearing impaired the TDD number is 240-773-3556.

**The Flex is Back** – The on-demand [Ride On Flex](#) has been in operation since its return on July 19<sup>th</sup>. To book a ride, please download the Ride On Flex app or call 240-301-3842, a new call center option for riders with special needs or without smartphones. Flex provides curb to curb service for individuals with disabilities and corner to corner service for all others, within the defined [Rockville and Glenmont/Wheaton](#) zones. Ride the Flex today. It is temporarily free.

**Executive Blvd Construction** - The construction along Executive Boulevard at Old Georgetown Road has been completed. Ride On routes [5](#), [26](#), and [81](#) resumed their normal “Executive Connector” routing patterns September 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Service Changes** – Ride On’s usual September service change has been delayed until October 10<sup>th</sup>. The upcoming changes will increase service and improve efficiency. Please stay tuned for more information.

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

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