



**Commission on People with Disabilities
Meeting Summary Minutes
May 10, 2023**

**** MEETING WAS HELD VIA ZOOM ****

Welcome and Approval of April 2023 Meeting Minutes

Trish Gallalee, Chair, convened the meeting. A motion was made to approve the April 2023 Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the April 2023 Meeting Minutes were unanimously approved as written. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cpwd.

Status of the Accessibility Project - Matt Johnson, AICP, Bikeways Coordinator, Division of Transportation Engineering, Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), and Jim Elliott, Consultant/Senior Planner, Toole Design

PowerPoint: <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CPWD/AccessibleDesignGuideProjectDisabilityCommissionPresentation.pdf>

Jim reviewed the PowerPoint presentation.

MCDOT will continue to keep this Commission updated as the project continues and will present at least one more time.

The floor was opened to questions.

Trish reported this Commission has previously sent letters to County Executive Elrich addressing its concerns regarding the pedestrian safety of floating bus stops and bike lane installation. She has specific concerns about the safety of the bike lanes installed along Old Georgetown Road. In particular, the right hand traffic lane moving towards Democracy Boulevard does not have a turning lane and vehicles turn from the middle lane onto the neighborhood street. There is difficulty for vehicles to see pedestrians crossing this street. She added that it can be a challenge for individuals who are blind or visually impaired that rely on sound or a service animal to navigate these bike lanes as well as floating bus stops. Trish also reported she does not see many bikes using the bike lanes. Matt reported that Old Georgetown Road is a state project that has had almost no County involvement. He will pass these comments along to the state.

Tonya Gilchrist, Commissioner, said she has concerns about e-scooters being left on sidewalks that can become obstacles. She also has seen e-scooters using bike lanes and asked if this was allowed. Matt reported that e-scooters should be used in the bike lanes and not on the sidewalks. The County is aware of the issues with e-scooters being left on sidewalks and is looking into installing designated e-scooter parking areas to encourage users to park them there than on the sidewalk.

The Commission included in its FY24 operating budget priorities that sidewalk installation should be the top priority in all parts of the County with pedestrian safety being the prime emphasis of all MCDOT projects. Trish reported snow removal on sidewalks continues to be of concern as well. She asked how MCDOT manages sidewalks that have been damaged by trees. MCDOT can use a porous flexible pavement that can be installed in some cases that can accommodate minor uplifting of the sidewalk caused by roots while maintaining an accessible pathway.

Tonya asked if accessible parking will be included in the accessible design guide. She drives an accessible van and often has challenges finding accessible spaces with access aisles to put down the van's ramp. She asked if

there could be another way to design the accessible spaces. Jeneva Stone, Commissioner, noted that accessible rear ramp vans tend to be longer and unloading occurs in a lane of traffic. She suggested installing additional accessible parking spaces with additional depth as well as installing accessible parking spaces away from main area traffic.

Sam Korper, Commissioner, asked about the lead time from project identification to completion as well as prioritization of ADA projects. Matt said the goal of this effort is to create better standards. While there are federal standards that must be followed, there are some issues that are not covered. Bike lanes and accessibility of bike lanes are not covered in the existing federal standards or at the local level. Interim projects like flexible curb extensions are also not covered. MCDOT is working to address some of those gaps with this guide. Matt reported MCDOT has a certain amount of funding every year in the budget for sidewalks. There are also developers who may have to rebuild sidewalks in front of their buildings or install street parking for their new developments. The guide will help to ensure all sidewalks installed meet the same design standards and not require remediation. There are hundreds of miles of streets in the county and many places need improvement. MCDOT also has a [sidewalk access ADA program](#) which specifically targets upgrading areas where facilities do not meet ADA standards. Many of those projects are complaint driven. MCDOT is working to involve an equity element into the sidewalk program and to be more proactive. Residents who are disadvantaged, lower-income or who do not speak English as their first language are less likely to contact MCDOT.

Commissioners with additional comments or questions can reach out to Matt directly at matt.johnson@montgomerycountymd.gov.

Ride On Changes and Updates – Phil Mclaughlin, Chief of Operations, Division of Operations, Division of Transit Services, MCDOT

Phil reported on project highlights for MCDOT:

- Director Chris Conklin created a leadership team comprised of Phil, Sam Oji, Chief, Enhanced Mobility & Customer Relations, and Sogand Seriafi, Deputy Division Chief, Management Services. Together the team makes decisions, sets priorities, and establishes policies. It has been a functional and effective effort. MCDOT is also focusing on a broader collaboration effort with staff and involving them more in day-to-day decisions. They have also formulated problem solving committees that work in group settings to offer constructive comments on how to solve problems.
- Focusing on providing a higher level of quality service. During the pandemic, customer complaints increased and on-time performance decreased. Pre-pandemic Ride On was averaging 70,000 riders during each weekday. For about two years during the pandemic Ride On was averaging 30,000 to 35,000 riders. In the past three to four months, ridership has increased to approximately 50,000. Riders may be reluctant to return to the service due to the quality.
- [Ride On Reimagined](#) 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. This study will take 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 also provide an opportunity to guide the future direction of Ride On through data analysis and community engagement. The study will have the primary goal of recommending system-wide changes that address the current and future needs of the community it serves for both Ride On and Metrobus services. Ride On Reimagined started 14 months ago and will be completed in 10 to 12 months with a target of Spring 2024 and implementation in Fall 2024. There is a formal public process before any changes will take place that could negatively impact existing riders. The study has conducted a considerable amount of public engagement through advocacy groups, pop-up sessions and a survey. Draft ideas and concepts will be shared during another round of public sessions this summer. The study has shown an increased demand for the Ride On Flex service that began in Summer 2019.
 - [Ride On Flex](#) is an on demand transit service that helps users get around in defined Rockville and Glenmont/Wheaton zones. Ride On Flex has no fixed stops or fixed schedules – it comes when you book a ride during regular service hours. Flex transportation is provided by a fully accessible 24-foot long 12-passenger van. Standard Ride On fares apply and the cost is no more than \$1.00 per ride. MetroAccess users ride free. Accepts ride requests to and from any location within the

serviced zone, including curb-to-curb for those with disabilities. Wait times are typically 7 to 8 minutes. Download the Ride On Flex app for free from the Apple or Google store, or if no smartphone, contact the call center at 240-301-3842. Call Center hours are 6am to 7pm, Monday through Friday. You must book rides only during the hours of operation in your selected zone. There are 80 to 90 regular users that are dependent on this service. MCDOT expects a significant expansion in Flex service ahead of the BRT from Veirs Mill Road and MD 355 which will launch within the time frame of June 2027/2028/2029.

- Two new routes in the Great Seneca corridor that would connect Shady Grove Metro, the Trville Transit Center and the Life Sciences area will launch June 2024. These will be limited stop services modeled after the Ride On Extra service that currently operates on 355 between Medical center and Lake Forest. The higher speed service has identified bus stops and transit signal priority.

The floor was opened to questions.

Trish reported that the expansion of bus routes also means MetroAccess routes are expanded. Phil reported MCDOT is focusing on broadening the coverage area and is aware of gaps in service where fixed route transportation was not provided in the past.

Tonya reported the Flash BRT in East County offers electronic tie-downs instead of the tie-down straps. She asked if Ride On buses offer the electronic tie-downs in the future. Phil reported that the electronic tie-downs are a new feature. MCDOT is preparing to purchase 100 new buses and he will check to see if this feature is available.

Developmental Disabilities Advisory Committee (DDAC) Update and Applicants for the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Commission (IDDC) – Eric Salzano and Karen Morgret, Co-Chairs, DDAC

The application deadline for IDDC ended May 8. Applications will be compiled by the Boards, Committees and Commissions (BCC) office and then applicants will be contacted for interviews. There is no timeline currently for interviews.

Effective June 30, 2023, Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) will end its [Appendix K flexibilities](#) and start normal waiver operations. The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) approved the DDA Waiver Renewals for the Family Supports, Community Supports, and Community Pathways programs. The renewal changes go into effect on July 1, 2023.

Commissioner Introduction of Issues/Barriers to Establish A Workgroup

None.

Chair and Vice-Chair Report

Acting Director of HHS is meeting with the Chairs of HHS Boards, Committees, and Commissions this evening. Due to the Commission's meeting this evening, Trish was not able to attend. Odile Brunetto, Chief, Aging and Disability Services, will be in attendance and will report back to Betsy Luecking, Staff, and Trish.

Next Commission meeting is June 14. Commission does not meet in July or August. Speaker suggestions for upcoming meetings:

- Affordable, accessible and subsidized housing in the County. Suggested inviting Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) to present.
- County's emergency management plan for persons with disabilities.
- Long-term planning and determining care for persons with developmental disabilities after parents have passed.
- County data collection as it pertains to persons with disabilities, how the information is analyzed and released to the public, and how that information can form budget development. Suggested inviting HealthMontgomery to discuss.

Steering Committee will meet next Wednesday May 17. Zoom link to be sent out.

Ex-Officio Member Updates

Candace Groudine, Human Rights Commission, reported HRC will be hosting the annual human rights conference this year from August 13 to 17 in Bethesda. The focus of the conference will include housing discrimination and fair housing practices.

Denise Isreal, MCDOT, reported MCDOT is ramping up their outreach to people with disabilities and older adults for the summer and fall. MCDOT has hired a temporary contractor part-time to work on this effort. She also reported Bender JCC Greater Washington will be hosting a Health and Wellness Expo on June 1 at Leisure World.

Matt Barkley, ADA Title II Compliance, Department of General Services (DGS), reported the County is working on making 14701 Avery Road and 14705 Avery Road ADA compliant and fully accessible. DGS is working with Health and Human Services to ensure there is no disruption of service. The new facility at 14703 Avery Road is fully accessible. Matt reported the Judicial Center is interested in making the building's north wing accessible. There are currently 17 court rooms in that wing that are not accessible. He also reported that the US Supreme Court has agreed to hear a case concerning whether a self-appointed "tester" of the Americans with Disabilities Act has the right to sue hotels over alleged violations of the civil rights law. The case will be evaluated in October 2023.

Public Comments

None

Meeting Adjourned – 7:21pm

Submitted by: Carly Clem, Administrative Specialist I
Betsy Tolbert Luecking, Community Outreach Manager

Attendees

Commissioners Present: Myra Coffield; Kaylee Davis; Patricia Gallalee, Chair; Tonya Gilchrist; Karen Goss; Michael Greenberg; Sammi Hampton; Samuel Korper; Cindy LaBon; Ricardo Lopez; Mandy McCarthy; Karen Morgret, Vice Chair; Coni Nepomuceno; Lisa Quinn; Eric Salzano; Richard Shermanski; Jeneva Stone; Teresa Villani; John Whittle; Melissa Wyman

Commissioners Absent: Karen Herson; Angela Hughes Byrd; Avner Shapiro; Najla Wortham;

Non-Voting Ex-Officio Members Present: Matthew Barkley, ADA Title II Compliance Officer, Department of General Services; Bob Green, Montgomery Parks; Candace Groudine, Human Rights Commission; Denise Isreal, Department of Transportation (DOT); Angela Luskey, Department of Recreation

Non-Voting Ex-Officio Members Absent: Simone Geness, Montgomery County Public Schools; Rebecca Grayson, Housing Opportunities Commission; Angelisa Hawes, Montgomery County Public Libraries; Karen Hochberg, Office of Human Resources;

County Staff Present: Odile Brunetto, Chief, Aging & Disability Services, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS); Kim Mayo, DHHS; Matt Johnson, DOT; Phil McLaughlin, DOT; Jim Elliott, Consultant, Toole Design

Commission Staff Present: Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison; Carly Clem, Administrative Specialist I

Public: Danicah Bethea (Sign Language Interpreter); Jill Lamoreaux (Sign Language Interpreter); Francie Gilman

Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities June 2023 Meeting and Events Calendar

Full Commission Meeting – Wednesday June 12

6pm to 7:30pm to be held via Zoom – link to be announced

Steering Committee Meeting – Wednesday June 14

5:15pm to 6:15pm to be held via Zoom – link to be announced