

Joint Transportation Management District
Advisory Committee
Friendship Heights/Silver Spring/Greater Shady Grove/Bethesda/North Bethesda
July 10, 2024

Item 1 – Introductions: Jim Carlson called meeting to order. Introductions were tabled due to number of attendees.

Item 2 – Great Seneca Transit Network: Deanna Archey reported on the new “limited-stop” Ride On extRa service project, now in Phase One of two phases. There are three goals of the program that include economic growth and providing transit for essential workers. Connectivity to Shady Grove was one of the main reasons the project was envisioned in 2020, as the Covid crisis highlighted a need for the service. 2022 was the preliminary planning and design process leading up to the current construction phase - September 8th is the service launch. The service has two routes that will begin near Shady Grove station and terminate at the Universities at Shady Grove (USG) campus: the Lime line along the 370-corridor, consisting of seven stops; and the Pink line that will run along Shady Grove Road, consisting of six stops.

- Service will run in dedicated lanes during the peak period 10 minutes, 15 minutes off-peak, and 30 minutes on weekends - red paint will denote dedicated lanes, with hashmarks showing where vehicle turning is allowed
- Buses will have transit signal priority at six locations along routes
- The stand-alone bus shelters will contain real time bus information, bike racks, trash cans and well-lit totems with local transit information, well-lit at night

Ms. Archey discussed the benefits of the service that include economic growth, transit improvement, connectivity, and sustainability of climate goals. She highlighted the battery operated, zero emission bus fleet that will be integrated into the system when they arrive in January; however, the red paint for the dedicated lanes is already on the ground. Additionally:

- Charging stations along the route are not required
- Vehicles will have the same features as the Ride On extra of the 355 route that include USB ports and cushion seating
- There is no stopping inside the Medical Center hospital complex due to reconstruction, so stopping will be along the complex outside, and no ads at the limited-service bus shelters
- The total travel time for the Lime line is 47 minutes and 56 minutes for the Pink.
- Ride On is working with WMATA to test an automated ticketing pilot until next August.

Wil Kenlaw provided an overview of the marketing plan for the service, stating that the target audience is residents 18+ years, employers of the biotech & real estate industries, and the area hospital. The marketing goals will be to create awareness so the community will use the service and inform & educate in eight languages, same as the Ride On exTra 355 route. **Mr. Kenlaw** also reported:

- The service line is an extension of the Ride On extRa with the “Less Stop, More Go” tagline to highlight the faster service - seven stops on Lime & eight stops on Pink
- Communication and outreach began at the end of June, with social media postings every week such as Next Door, and including pop-ups and presences at the upcoming MoCo fair
- Paid advertising August-October with local media venues - media event Monday, September 9th for service opening

- The key stakeholders are businesses near stops
- Social media advertising until year's end includes 18 outreach events with giveaways such as towels and rain ponchos - five pop-up events in July and planning for an additional 12 events
- Same fare as other local service: \$1
- FareShare program can buy down the cost of transit - \$25 gets you up to \$315 of transit, car/vanpool assistance

Item 3 - Fairfax Connector: Kyle Davis announced the new Rt.798 express bus service along the American Legion Bridge express toll lanes with stops at NIH, Montgomery Mall and Tyson's. The Connector team is coordinating with area agencies and public management for an August 26th launch, as the service will operate in two phases. Phase 1 will begin in August with service of 20-40 minutes and Phase 2 will add a bus in 2026. Also reported:

- Morning service will start in Rockville along Rockville Pike to Tysons Va., and evening service will begin in Va. and travel to Rockville.
- Bus will stop in the same bus bay as WMATA in front of the Walter Reed bus loop, not inside Medical Center Metro Station.
- Bethesda station as shown on time table map will stop at Montgomery & East Lane
- Express bus fare will be \$4.80 one way
- Express buses will have branded signage

Head of Marketing for Fairfax Virginia **Kala Berry**, reported:

- The branding service objectives are for connectivity targeting white collar professionals, government employees, and commuters in the Fairfax & Montgomery County communities
- Strategies and tactics include managing expectations due to construction on the American Legion Bridge, both sides of the Potomac.
- Distributing schedules to government offices in Fairfax, highlighting stop locations
- Distributing free ride coupons-transfer fare reduction of \$2.25
- A landing page of information 798 service only- not available for other routes
- Providing testimonials and interior photos of buses to manage expectations
- Broadcasting information on X & Facebook and using a contractor for other social media- Facebook links provided at end of today's presentation
- Virtual 'lunch & learns' provided as part of media campaign
- Highlighting the use of transit subsidies such as FareShare
- Other media events are being worked through in a collaboration with Montgomery County and Fairfax advocacy groups, such as Tyson's Alliance.

Ms. Berry stated that ads will broadcast on WTOP and digitally, stressing the free ride coupons that will be tracked to see how many commuters are being reached with the information. She explained that there are discussions regarding having ambassadors at stops with Duck Donuts informing commuters of services and responding to inquiries. Also discussed:

- Providing a feedback mechanism using MC311 & email feedback tools to adjust planning and service updates
- A soft launch is planned for weekday service on August 26
- Not promoting the service as faster but will be relaxing, better, and cheaper than driving

- Customer information hours will be provided for assistance.

Kyle Davis and Kala Berry continued:

- In the process of planning schedules
- **Pete Fosselman** is the point of contact for Montgomery County Executive office that can provide information to the Montgomery County community
- The free ride coupons will be given for round trip only, not for a week – number coded for tracking purposes
- “Drop & Go” service means buses stop on the road in front of and do not enter major landmarks such as Metro stations - no idling
- Bus tracker app to sign up for stop & route 798 info - for detours and delays
- The estimated bus run time is 46-52 minutes one way
- Showing a hyperlapse video of a ride to see experience

Item 4 – Updates: Sande Brecher announced:

- FareShare is on a use it or lose it basis for future budgets, making it imperative that new employers are enrolled to receive up to \$315 in benefits for their employees
- An upcoming T&E Council work session on the Executive Regulations 8-21 elements in the County Code
- The contractor used to conduct analysis for the Commuter Survey has gone out of business and as time is limited to find a new Contractor, the next survey may be delayed until Spring 2025 (still FY25)
- A residential component has been added to the Commuter survey, prompting increased outreach to multi-family areas
- The micromobility survey is available on the CSS web site

Adjourn