

"Federation Corner" column
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County Recently Improved Ride On Service

On September 5 the first installment of additional buses was placed in service under County Executive Duncan's Go Montgomery Program. The buses are used in part to improve frequency - shorten the time between successive buses so people don't need to wait as long. The buses also are used to improve schedule reliability by allowing the bus operators to remain closer to schedule.

The improved bus service was one of MCCF's priorities during the Transportation Policy Report (TPR) Task Force. The TPR process and report lead to Mr. Duncan proposing his Go Montgomery Program, the Council adopting their priorities and MCCF adopting its plan. All parties agree that the bus improvements are a way to address increased road congestion that would occur without good bus service.

The additional buses are over and above the other new buses that replace the oldest and most polluting diesel buses in the fleet. All the new buses operate on compressed natural gas (CNG) which produces much less pollution. Ride On now has 57 CNG buses, or 16 percent of the entire fleet.

The new buses are low-floor, accessible buses that allow a driver to automatically or manually operate a wheelchair ramp that opens from the floor. No wheelchair lifts are required. The new buses are wide and roomy, with large, low windows, and a new interior color scheme that sports multi-color upholstery. The exterior of the buses are painted in the distinctive green design of the County's other CNG buses.

The Ride On improvements include service to two new transit centers. The Traville Transit Center, located at Shady Grove Road and Traville Road, will be served by Routes 43, 66, 67, and 127. The new Rockville Regional Transit Center, in the Falls Grove Village Center between Falls Grove Boulevard and Blackwell Drive and across from Shady Grove Hospital, will be served by Route 43. The hospital will receive more frequent bus service.

There were minor changes to 14 other routes. In addition, more significant changes were made to the following routes:

- Route 9 – Frequency
- Route 10 – Service reliability and longer service hours
- Route 14 -Two more hours of service on Saturday mornings in each direction
- Router 16 – Service reliability and frequency
- Route 26 - Service reliability
- Route 43 - Time between buses reduced from 20 to 15 minutes during peak periods
- Route 46 - Frequency and service reliability
- Route 47 - Time between buses reduced from 30 to 20 minutes during peak periods
- Route 49 - Frequency and service reliability
- Route 54 - Frequency
- Route 55 - Frequency and service reliability
- Route 56 - Frequency and service reliability
- Route 60 - Time between buses reduced from 30 to 20 minutes during peak periods
- Route 63 - More direct service into the industrial park on Gaither Road

- Route 73 - Employees in the Century Boulevard area or Seneca Meadows commercial areas now have a choice of 5 buses each way from and back to Shady Grove Metro.

Detailed bus schedules are available by calling the County's Transit Information Center at 240-777-7433, or by going to the County's website at www.montgomerycountymd.gov, and clicking on Ride On.

Metrobuses Now Have SmarTrip.

All 1,450 Metrobuses in the region, including all Metrobuses operating in Montgomery County, now have high-tech fare boxes that accept SmarTrip cards. SmarTrip is Metro's permanent rechargeable fare card that customers can load with dollar value, use repeatedly, and reload with more value as needed. SmarTrip cards can be used on Metrorail, Metrobus, and to pay for parking at Metro-operated parking lots. The SmarTrip card is planned for Ride On and other transit services in the region.

Customers touch the card to the SmarTrip reader and the reader automatically deducts the correct fare from the stored amount. This technology was supported by MCCF, since riders no longer need to worry about always having correct change for fares. It also is faster than exchanging or depositing cash.

Board of Education Candidates Forum

The MCCF Education Committee invites you to a Board of Education Candidates Forum. The Forum will be held on Thursday, October 14, from 7:30 PM until 9:00 PM in the 2nd floor Grand Courtroom of the Red Brick Courthouse, 29 Courthouse Square, Rockville. Ample parking is available nearby at the County Council Office Building (free) and, for a modest charge, at the gated lot adjacent to the Rockville Regal Center. Come any time after 7:00 PM to chat informally with the candidates prior to the start of the forum.