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Great Seneca Transit Network Sees Significant Increase in Ridership After One Year of Service

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MCDOT
Montgomery County
Department of Transportation

The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) is experiencing a significant increase in ridership as it celebrates the one-year anniversary of the Great Seneca Transit Network (GSTN). The GSTN is an upgraded, express bus service operating along the Life Sciences Corridor in Gaithersburg.

The GSTN operates two Ride On extRa bus lines, designated as “Pink” and “Lime,” offering faster, more frequent service between the Shady Grove Metro Station and Traville Transit Center. The GSTN launched in Sept. 2024, serving around 500 riders each weekday, a number that has since doubled to more than 1,000.

While some riders have shifted from local bus routes to the new express service, the GSTN is attracting new riders as well. MCDOT ridership numbers show a more than 70% increase in total bus ridership on a key bus route along Shady Grove Road, formerly served by local bus route 43 alone. That route is now serviced by the express Pink route in addition to the local route 43 which travels a slightly different route and has additional stops.

“The Great Seneca Transit Network supports our growing Life Sciences Corridor, creating crucial links between universities, healthcare centers and private sector companies that foster collaboration and support innovation,” said County Executive Marc Elrich. “The Life Sciences Corridor has become a global hub for biotech research and development institutions and continues to attract investment. The Great Seneca Transit Network is a result of our commitment to building smart infrastructure that is accessible, sustainable and scalable for future growth.”

The bus routes offer express service to major shopping, education, and employment destinations along the corridor. The Pink route links Shady Grove Metro and the Life Sciences Center traveling down Shady Grove Road and Medical Center Drive. The Lime route connects Shady Grove Metro to RIO, Crown Farm, and the Life Sciences Center, along I-370.

Both bus routes offer more frequent service than the typical Ride On service, every fifteen minutes during weekdays, and every 30 minutes during weekends. The routes operate with sections of dedicated bus lanes and traffic signal priority, which gives a longer green light to the buses for faster service.

“The Pink and Lime routes strengthen critical east-west transit connections in the northern part of the county,” said MCDOT Director Chris Conklin. “Great Seneca has experienced a 20% population increase since 2010—more than 40% since 2000. These extRa bus routes provide faster, more frequent service, helping move people efficiently and supporting economic growth along these rapidly developing corridors.”

The Pink and Lime routes are the first in a planned two-phase development plan for the network. Phase Two, which is included Ride On Reimagined five-year plan, includes two additional routes and an extension of the Lime route. The Phase Two expansion will provide connections between the Kentlands, Crown Farm, King Farm, the Universities at Shady Grove, Adventist Shady Grove Hospital, Shady Grove Metro, Rockville and other key destinations.

The County has also implemented a zero-fare policy, that went into effect over the summer, on June 29 for all Ride On, Ride On extRa, Ride On Flex and Flash buses.

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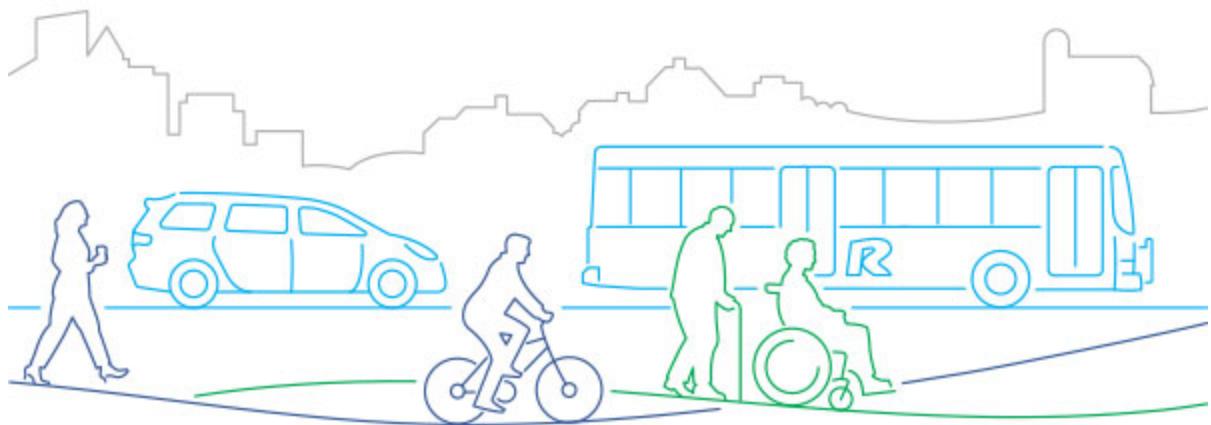
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-Marc Elrich, Montgomery County Executive

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