

April 28, 2020

Montgomery County Council
Council Office Building
100 Maryland Ave.
Rockville, MD 20850

Resolution to Approve FY21 Transportation Fees, Charges, and Fares

Testimony for April 30, 2020

Jane Lyons, Maryland Advocacy Manager

President Katz and Councilmembers, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the Resolution to Approve FY21 Transportation Fees, Charges, and Fares. Please accept these comments on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the leading organization in the D.C. region advocating for walkable, inclusive, transit-oriented communities.

Firstly, we would like to thank the county for suspending Ride On fares thus far during the novel coronavirus crisis. This action has protected transit workers and riders. Transit continues to be an essential public service right now, ensuring that our front-line workers are able to get to work and that those without private vehicles are still able to get food, prescriptions, and other necessary goods.

Therefore, **we urge the county to continue Ride On fare suspension throughout the duration of the public health emergency.** Fare revenue this quarter is already nearly half of the budgeted fare revenue, and even under normal circumstances is less than 10 percent of total revenue in the Mass Transit Fund.

We also urge you to begin thinking about transit after COVID-19. There is an opportunity to “reopen” the county’s transportation network in a way that increases our climate resiliency, furthers racial and socioeconomic justice, and aids in our economic recovery. These functions cannot be achieved without transit. We don’t have to go back to the same congestion, dangerous roadways, and air pollution.

Further, once the immediate public health threat has been addressed, we will need to rebuild trust in public transit so that ridership may recover. To do that, transit must be attractive, easy, frequent, and safe. We urge you to consider:

- Suspending Ride On fares in perpetuity;
- Redesigning the Montgomery Ride On and WMATA bus network through a public process to improve service in a budget neutral way;
- Expanding public employees’ telework allowances;
- Rebalancing road space to prioritize walking, biking, and transit; and
- Increasing routine bus cleaning.

Thank you for your consideration.