



**PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

December 10, 2020

**CONTACT:**

Jane Lyons, Coalition for Smarter Growth  
jane@smartergrowth.net | (410) 474-0741

**Campaign for better buses in Mont. Co. launches at noon**

**Montgomery County, Md** – Today, over 25 organizations will launch a campaign advocating for better bus service in Montgomery County. The coalition — which includes labor, climate and transit advocates, service providers, and community organizations — wants bus routes redesigned, fares to stay free after the pandemic, and a carbon-neutral fleet.

The campaign will be officially announced at a virtual event featuring at-large Montgomery Councilmember Evan Glass; Shruti Bhatnagar, President of Montgomery County Sierra Club; Ashanti Martinez, Research and Policy Analyst for CASA; and Clint Sobratti, a bus operator and shop steward of UFCW Local 1994 MCGEO. Register [here](#).

The launch of the campaign follows WMATA's announcement that it could cut half of its bus routes if Congress does not step up to provide emergency funding. Montgomery bus advocates argue that local bus systems must step up to maintain service in the short-term, and create a plan to reimagine regional bus service over the next decade.

The Montgomery County Council had previously programmed \$1.5 million for a Ride On restructuring study, set to begin in 2022, but advocates would like the scope of the study to be expanded; include a deep community outreach component; start earlier; and be completed in partnership with WMATA, who operates Metrobus.

The full platform with the full list of co-signers can be viewed [here](#).

“Montgomery County can make its bus system more effective by improving frequency, reliability, and connections to major destinations,” said **Stewart Schwartz, Executive Director of the Coalition for Smarter Growth**.

“We know from county data that 78% of Ride On bus riders are people of color, 42% speak a language other than English at home, and almost half have an annual household income below

\$30,000,” said **Basav Sen, Climate Policy Director of the Institute for Policy Studies**. “It is imperative for racial and economic justice, especially during the COVID crisis, to provide high-quality bus service for free.”

"Many of CASA's members in Montgomery County rely on Ride On to navigate the County. From commuting to work, taking their kids to school, or simply buying groceries — bus is how our members move. It's time we created a transit system that's centered around them and their needs," said **Ashanti Martinez, Research & Policy Analyst of CASA**.

“Buses are the backbone of a sustainable, equitable transportation system and a thriving local economy,” said **Jane Lyons, Maryland Advocacy Manager of the Coalition for Smarter Growth**. “There is no economic recovery without a healthy transit system.”

“An equitable transit system is not a goal: it is a journey of continuous improvement, that will address economic challenges within low income communities. It will also help foster access to reliable transportation, affordable housing and better employment opportunities,” said **Clint Sobratti, Ride On bus operator and shop steward for UFCW Local 1994 MCGEO**.

"The Montgomery County Food Council is proud to support the Better Buses platform, which seeks to address the transportation barriers that affect food insecure residents and will foster enhanced community access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food," said **Heather Bruskin, Executive Director of the Montgomery Food Council**.

"Montgomery County residents are proud of our Ride On bus service and its dedicated drivers and maintenance staff, and we support its improvement to better serve all people, including residents of Germantown, Gaithersburg, and Montgomery Village," said **Diane Cameron, Director of the Transit Alternatives to Mid-County Highway Extended (TAME) Coalition**.

###

The Coalition for Smarter Growth is the leading organization in the Washington, DC region dedicated to making the case for smart growth. Our mission is to advocate for walkable, bikeable, inclusive, transit-oriented communities as the most sustainable and equitable way for the region to grow and provide opportunities for all.