



SIERRA CLUB
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD

To,
The Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland

October 26, 2021

Reg: Fair Equity Study: Zero Fares for all riders

Dear Council members,

Sierra Club Montgomery County group supports Alternative A: Zero fare for all riders – all day, every day. While this will remove \$18 million of fare revenue in the county's budget, we hope it can be made up elsewhere – perhaps from borrowing some money from roadway expansion projects.

Inclusivity is the big benefit of Free Fares for all. It welcomes everyone – all riders, all ages, all incomes. Transit isn't only for home-to-work trips, it's also for trips to schools, shopping, medical visits, and libraries. The zero fare system will save people money -- people who really need the money for housing and food.

The average income of a Ride On rider is \$35,000. Regionally nearly 80% of bus riders are people of color. Free fares will overwhelmingly benefit workers and people who struggle to make ends meet. Yes, Ride On will have a deficit in fare revenue, but money saved by riders will flow back into our local economy.

Finally, free fares will eliminate disputes that riders have with bus operators and eliminate the need for enforcement.

Promoting Ride On as fare free will let everyone in the county know that they can hop on a bus for any trip they need to make. And this will help us promote our already very good Ride On system!

We'll have to figure out how to coordinate this program in the future with WMATA (who is currently re-examining their bus system), but perhaps we can stand out in the short term and become a regional and national leader by making Ride On permanently Fare Free.

The Sierra Club urges the Council to group support Alternative A: Zero fare for all riders – all day, every day.

Sincerely,

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