



SIERRA CLUB
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD

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

Feb 3, 2022

Subject: Supplemental Appropriation to the FY22 Operating Budget, MCDOT Transit Services, \$8,631,001

Dear Council President Alborno and Members of the County Council,

Sierra Club Montgomery County Group supports this supplemental appropriation to increase bus drivers' salaries --- it is very much needed, as outlined below.

Transit is a lifeline for many residents, serving frontline workers, essential service workers, families who need to get to jobs, and people in Equity Focus Areas (many who don't own cars). Meanwhile, a growing shortage of bus drivers has caused Ride On to reduce service. There are students who rely on public transit to get home after extracurricular activities, when activity buses may not be an option. And parents have experienced canceled school bus routes due to lack of MCPS drivers. We need our bus operators.

In the second half of 2021, across the country, more than 20 million people quit their jobs. Some call it the "great resignation." Bus drivers are leaving for a variety of reasons:

- exhaustion from working extra-long shifts to cover for absentee colleagues,
- fear of exposure to COVID,
- lack of childcare options, or
- simply opting for early retirement.

Salaries are a main issue confronting a workforce with an already difficult job, further complicated by the pandemic. A market study comparing County bus driver salaries with WMATA salaries showed:

- it takes MCDOT operators 24 years to reach a peak salary of approximately \$75,000
- WMATA operators reach that same salary in 6 years (or 1/4th the time!!) and go on to earn even more during their careers.
- and just this week, Metro announced it will offer a \$2,500 bonus to new hires to drive a bus.

MCDOT owns and operates nearly 400 buses. MCDOT promotes from within, cultivating professionals who know their jobs and who are role models for new employees. Increased salaries can reestablish MCDOT as an "employer of choice" and help us recruit new drivers.

Bus Rapid Transit and other initiatives to improve mass transit in the County are great goals, but we can't accomplish these goals without quality drivers --- drivers are the human infrastructure we need to operate the system! Please pass this appropriation to reward current drivers and bring new recruits on board.

Sincerely,

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