

TRANSIT FIRST!

Coalition members (list in formation): Action Committee for Transit, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 689, Audubon Naturalist Society, Clean Water Action, Coalition for Smarter Growth, Greater Greater Washington, MCGEO — UFCW Local 1994, Prince George's Advocates for Community-based Transit, Progressive Maryland, Save Maryland Area Rail Transit

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 16, 2009

LESS TRANSIT, MORE TRAFFIC — WRONG MIX FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Today's Montgomery County budget proposal would take the county's transportation system in the wrong direction by cutting transit service, a coalition of transit riders, environmentalists, and workers charged. The Transit First! Coalition said that funding priorities should be reversed to take cars off the roads instead of spending money to create more traffic.

The group proposed restoring [planned cuts in Ride-On](#) bus routes, which would save \$4.8 million, by eliminating an \$8 million parking subsidy. The county currently [transfers parking fines](#) collected in Bethesda, Silver Spring, and Wheaton to local parking districts, which use the funds to run their parking garages at a loss. A December [report](#) commissioned by the council's Transportation & Environment Committee found that the subsidy could be discontinued without violating any law or bond covenant.

Ethan Goffman, transportation chair of the Montgomery County Sierra Club, pointed out that subsidized parking encourages commuters to drive alone and creates traffic congestion and air pollution. “The county says all the right things about sustainability and promoting non-automobile transportation,” Goffman commented. “Now is the time to put our money where our mouth is.”

Planned Ride-On cuts will cause hardships for many riders who depend on the buses to get to work, said Action Committee for Transit president Ben Ross, and would be disruptive to employers as well. The elimination of weekend service on the T2 route to Potomac, for example, would make the bus line useless for retail employees who must work weekends.

Coalition members plan to ask the County Council to transfer the parking subsidy money to Ride-On. They will also speak out at a public hearing to be held by Ride-On on March 24.

The Transit First! Coalition is chaired by Action Committee for Transit president Ben Ross; vice-chairs are David Alpert, editor of the Greater Greater Washington blog, and Jason Rylander, Arlington environmental lawyer and transit activist.