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The Commuter Information Source for Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia



## THREE METRORAIL STATIONS TO CLOSE FOR SUMMER CONSTRUCTION

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and other commuter service providers are already planning to help riders navigate the second phase of Metro's Platform Improvement Project that will begin this summer. Phase II of the program includes rebuilding deteriorating platforms at four outdoor Orange Line stations in Virginia.

Three stations will be closed to customers from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day: Vienna, Dunn Loring, and East Falls Church. Although the East Falls Church Station will be closed, trains will be permitted to single-track through the station work area. The West Falls Church Station will remain open during the project, as it is equipped with two platforms that can be reconstructed one at a time, although service will operate less frequently than normal. The West Falls Church Station will serve as the de facto end of the Orange Line until all stations reopen. Silver Line stations from McLean to Wiehle-Reston East will remain open, but with reduced service.

The previously announced platform work on the Green Line (in Prince George's County) was cancelled for 2020 and will be addressed in a later phase of the overall initiative.

The Platform Improvement Project is part of Metro's 10-year, \$15 billion capital program, which is designed to improve the customer experience and keep the region's infrastructure in a state of good repair by investing in new railcars and buses; improving stations and platforms, and upgrading fire-suppression and emergency response systems. Tracks, tunnels, bridges, signals and communications systems will be repaired or replaced. The program will also rebuild decades-old bus garages and provide modern customer amenities such as passenger information systems.



*Photo courtesy WMATA*

To date, the Platform Improvement Project has successfully reconstructed six stations on the Blue and Yellow lines in Virginia.

Metro is partnering with local communities and transportation agencies to develop alternative travel options such as free shuttle buses. Support will also be provided by the Commuter Connections network to promote its free carpool and vanpool ridematching services, and offer its various incentives programs such as CarpoolNow, incenTrip, 'Pool Rewards, and Flextime Rewards. More specifics about travel alternatives and rail service details will be announced in early March. Metro will use extensive public outreach to be sure that riders are aware of the project and its full impacts.

For more information about the Platform Improvement Project, visit [www.wmata.com/platforms](http://www.wmata.com/platforms). For information regarding ridematching and Commuter Connections incentives programs, visit [www.commuterconnections.org](http://www.commuterconnections.org), or call 800-745-7433.

# PROTECTED INTERSECTION IMPROVES SAFETY IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Fatality Analysis Reporting System, in 2018 there were 88 pedestrian and five bicyclist fatalities, accounting for nearly one third (32%) of the 290 total traffic fatalities in the Washington, DC region. In 2019, Montgomery County's percentage was higher than the region, as 45 percent of total traffic fatalities were pedestrians or cyclists.

A protected intersection was introduced this past fall in downtown Silver Spring, making it the first intersection of its kind in the mid-Atlantic region. There are about three dozen protected intersections in the U.S., providing improved safety for pedestrians and cyclists. The protected intersection connects Montgomery County Department of Transportation's new cycle track with a previously completed bike route to form a 1.2 mile bikeway with a physical separation between motor vehicles and bicycles. The bikeway will connect to the Paul Sarbanes Transit Center in Silver Spring.

The main features of the intersection are corner islands that encourage drivers to slow when turning, providing improved visibility of pedestrians and bicyclists at the crossing. The islands also reduce crossing distances from one side of the street to the other. These elements reduce the possibility of collisions, and if a collision does occur, the likelihood of death or severe injury is reduced because of the lower turning speeds. Another feature of the project is the County's first digital "bikeometer" that counts the number of cyclists using the cycle track. A roadside sign



will display the number of cyclists passing through the intersection both daily and over the course of each year.

The protected intersection supports the Street Smart safety campaign, a program of the Council of Governments and the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board. The campaign works with local law enforcement agencies and educates drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists about safe use of roadways in the Washington, DC region.

Montgomery County has plans to create more protected intersections at Bethesda and Woodmont avenues in Bethesda and at Cameron and Fenton streets in Silver Spring. For more information on bicycling and walking, have your employees visit the "Commuters" section at [www.commuterconnections.org](http://www.commuterconnections.org) or in Montgomery County visit [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot-dir/commuter](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot-dir/commuter).

## NEW YEAR, NEW ROUTINE, NEW COMMUTE

The New Year is a great time to try a new commute. As an employer, you can target the first quarter of the calendar year as a time to recharge your company's commute program and promote transit.



- Assess the transit options you have at your site. If a Metro station is more than a 10 minute walk, consider operating a shuttle to bring employees between the station and your site. You might even share shuttle costs with nearby employers.
- An important strategy you can use to boost transit ridership is to offer the pre-tax commuter benefit. For 2020, the IRS-mandated limit for pre-tax contributions to commuter benefits accounts is \$270 per month for transit expenses and \$270 per month in parking expenses. Your Commuter Connections network partner can assist in setting this up for your company.
- Leverage regional transportation events, such as Car Free Day.

# BIKE TO WORK DAY – FRIDAY, MAY 15, 2020

It will be spring before you know it. Join thousands of like-minded commuters this year at the Washington, DC region's Bike to Work Day (BTWD) event, scheduled for Friday, May 15th. Started nationally in 1956 and locally in the Washington, DC metropolitan region in 2001, BTWD has grown from a small gathering of bicyclists to nearly 18,000 registrants.

"We are so excited to see the success of Bike to Work Day in the region," said Nicholas Ramfos, Director of Commuter Connections, which co-organizes the event along with the Washington Area Bicyclist Association. "With a growing network of bike paths and lanes, the region is becoming more bike-friendly and bicycling to work has become a real and viable option for so many commuters."

Riders can use the Commuter Connections Bicycle Route Finder tool at [www.commuterconnections.org](http://www.commuterconnections.org) to discover the best bicycling route to work. Thousands of cyclists have used the Finder since it was introduced last year. The Finder is a free web-based service that makes getting around the region by bicycle easier, using the safest routes. It features more than 2,150 miles of trails, on-street lanes, paths and facilities. Users can even check Capital Bikeshare locations and the availability of bikes at each.

On BTWD, thousands of cyclists will start the morning at one of 120 "pit stop" celebrations organized by an array of non-profits, private, and public-sector entities around the region. The pit stops are rallying points where the first 20,000 registered cyclists can get a free T-shirt, plus refreshments, and promotional items while supplies last, and a chance to win great raffle prizes including a bike.

In addition to the District of Columbia, BTWD pit stop locations are within the following jurisdictions around the region: Arlington County, City of Alexandria, City of Falls Church, Fairfax County, Loudoun County, and Prince William County in Virginia; Charles County, Frederick County, Montgomery County, and Prince George's County in Maryland. See the full list at [www.biketoworkmetrodc.org](http://www.biketoworkmetrodc.org).

Bicycle convoys will be led by experienced bicyclists and travel to and through various points around the region including residential neighborhoods, employment centers and pit stop events. Many of the bicycle convoys end at the Freedom Plaza pit stop in downtown DC. A list of confirmed convoys for 2020 can be found at [www.biketoworkmetrodc.org](http://www.biketoworkmetrodc.org) in early May.

Continued on page 4

**BIKE TO WORK DAY 2020**

**Friday May 15**  
FREE EVENT - REGISTER AT [BikeToWorkMetroDC.org](http://BikeToWorkMetroDC.org)

REGISTRATION OPENS EARLY MARCH

Pre-Register by May 8 for **FREE T-SHIRT\* & BIKE RAFFLE**  
Free refreshments & giveaways while supplies last.

Register free at [BIKETOWORKMETRODC.ORG](http://BIKETOWORKMETRODC.ORG)  
800.745.7433

Visit [biketoworkmetrodc.org](http://biketoworkmetrodc.org) for pit stop locations and times.  
\*T-Shirts available at pit stops to first 20,000 who register.  
Over 100 pit stops throughout D.C., Maryland, and Virginia.

Bike to Work Day is funded by DDOT, MDOT, VDOT, and USDOT.

bike to work day 2020

BTWD is a fun opportunity for employers to launch or jump-start a bicycle commuting program at their site. Below are tips to promote and enjoy Bike to Work Day within your organization:

1. Get management buy-in. Excitement and encouragement about bicycling can be even more meaningful and effective coming from the top.
2. Assign a BTWD point-person at your company who can spearhead efforts to encourage bicycling to work on BTWD.
3. Promote BTWD within your company. Include articles about biking and BTWD in your company newsletter. Encourage participation through your intranet, emails, and staff meetings. Develop a flier that describes specific incentives, challenges, and activities at your work site.
4. Make participation in BTWD easy: include a link to BTWD registration from your intranet site, get management approval for flexible work hours, offer bicycle parking, and make BTWD a casual dress code day. If you don't have showers and lockers onsite, consider making arrangements to partner with a local gym for the day.
5. Host an unofficial BTWD pit stop at your work site by offering snacks, prize drawings, etc.
6. Issue a press release about your company's participation. Let it be known that your organization supports bicycling and is in favor of better bicycling infrastructure.
7. Have fun! BTWD is a fun and rewarding event for your employees and it's great for morale! Challenge nearby companies to a friendly competition of employee participation.

To learn more about hosting an official pit stop next year (May 2021), or regional sponsorship for BTWD 2021, please contact Commuter Connections at [ridematching@mwkog.org](mailto:ridematching@mwkog.org). To use the Bike Router, employees can login to their Commuter Connections account. If no current account exists, one can be set up for free at <https://tdm.commuterconnections.org/mwkog>.

Look for registration to open for BTWD 2020 in early March. For more information, please visit [www.biketoworkmetrodc.org](http://www.biketoworkmetrodc.org) or call 800-745-7433.



## Why Should You Encourage Employees to Bike to Work?

### Reduce Health Care Costs

According to the Centers for Disease Control, moderate physical activity (such as bicycling to work) saves 5 to 12 percent in annual medical costs, compared to a 6.5 percent savings from employees who do not smoke. The fitness program at General Electric's Aircraft Engine unit saves an estimated \$540,000 annually, including 760 fewer hospital days per year.

### Decrease Absenteeism & Turnover

A study by the National Center for Health Statistics found that physical activity is one of the few factors that have a statistically significant effect on absenteeism. Physically fit employees are absent an average of two fewer days per year.

### Increase Productivity

Bicyclists and walkers arrive at work with less stress than those who commute by automobile. The Berkeley Wellness Letter reports that "chronic exposure to traffic congestion produces an increase in baseline blood pressure, lowering of frustration tolerance, increases in negative mood, and aggressive driving habits." In contrast, bicyclists and walkers often report feeling relaxed and more alert after arriving at work, ready for a productive day.

### Reduce Parking Costs

Between 6 and 20 bicycles can be parked in the space that a motor vehicle requires. It is not unusual for employers to spend over \$60 per employee per month for a conventional parking spot. At over \$800 per year, per employee, considerable savings can be achieved when employees use alternative means of getting to work.

# CLOSING THE FIRST MILE/LAST MILE GAP

Transit is a great way to commute – ideal if an employee can walk to and from the transit stop on both the home and work ends. With more transit-oriented developments in the region, transit has become a convenient way of life for a growing faction of the population. The commuters who live and work close to, but not within a walkable distance from transit, face the age-old challenge known as the “first mile/last mile” FMLM.

Transit agencies are always looking for additional ways to close the FMLM gap. For example, goDCgo, a program of the District Department of Transportation and part of the Commuter Connections network, encourages area commuters to use such options as Capital Bikeshare, dockless bikes and scooters, Zipcar, UberPool, and CarpoolNow.

“We want to remove any barriers that would prevent commuters from using public transit, so we promote the multi-modal network of travel options in DC to help make the first mile, last mile less of a challenge,” said Danelle Carey, goDCgo Program Director. In 2018, goDCgo launched the Transportation Ambassadors Program working directly with employers to offer robust transportation benefits programs and sustainable amenities. As part of the program, goDCgo recognizes employers for their efforts as transportation leaders. As a result of goDCgo’s efforts, between July 2018 and June 2019 they helped to keep 45,000 cars off the road each day by promoting active transportation and public transit to the city’s employees, residents, and visitors.

“In the residential space, there’s an increasing number of properties that find value in working with goDCgo because

they understand that access to reliable transportation options are a key factor for their residents and prospective tenants,” said Carey. “We provide *Get Around Guides* that feature alternative travel options in close proximity to the property, personalized commute plans, and transit brochures.” goDCgo also distributes a monthly newsletter that provides up-to-date information for each of their program audiences.

“Solving the first mile/last mile problem opens up possibilities for people who otherwise wouldn’t use transit,” said Carey. “Whether they are going to work, or shopping, or for entertainment, if they can access transit that’s one less vehicle on the road.”

For more information about goDCgo, visit [www.godcgo.com](http://www.godcgo.com)



## 4 EASY STEPS TO UPDATE YOUR COMMUTE PROGRAM

### 1. Boost Your Social Media Plan

Promoting your commute program via social media is a low-cost way to spread commuter news, make new service or event announcements, etc. It is particularly effective when the message features real people. For example, employees might share how they enjoy their carpool, vanpool, bicycle, or transit commute.

### 2. Participate in Regional Events

Promote regional commuter events including Car Free Day (September) and Bike to Work Day (May). Recruit bicyclists to form a bicycle team for Bike to Work Day and plan a celebration breakfast when your bicyclists arrive at work. Be sure to get photos for your social media posts!

### 3. Hold a Pop-Up Transportation Fair

Use a break room, conference room, vestibule etc. to turn it into a mini-fair. Focus on one commute option each time (for example, transit or vanpool) and invite one or two representatives from that related service to provide personal commute coaching.

### 4. Tap into Free Regional Incentives

IncentTrip, Pool Rewards, Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH), Flextime Rewards, and CarpoolNow. Commuter Connections offers great commuter incentive programs within the Washington, DC region, and GRH in the Baltimore region as well. Contact your Commuter Connections network representative at 800 745-7433 to help you promote these programs within your company and explain how each work.



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## BIKE TO WORK DAY – FRIDAY, MAY 15, 2020

**Bike to Work Day is  
Friday, May 15th, mark  
your calendar and see  
how you can get your  
employees pedaling!**

See more inside



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