



PRESS RELEASE



For Immediate Release

April 7, 2020

Beginning April 13, Mason Transit Authority will be reducing more services due to decreasing ridership and driver shortage. This is the second reduction MTA has made since the start of the COVID-19 crisis as ridership has declined due to social distancing measures put in place under Governor Inslee's Stay at Home order and concern with employee exposure. "We are finding many riders are staying home as directed and ridership has continued to decline. MTA ridership is down approximately 85%," said Danette Brannin, MTA's General Manager. "Additionally, nearly half of our drivers are opting to stay home and self-quarantine because they or a family member fall into the high-risk category. They are vulnerable and I want to respect their need to protect themselves and their family," said Brannin.

Trips into Olympia will be serviced via Dial-a-Ride beginning Monday. Riders will need to call Customer Service to schedule a ride to Olympia. This includes Cole Rd and Kamilche stops that are serviced by Route 6 and 26. Riders will be able to set up a subscription service for their ride, allowing the rider to lock into a set time each day to ensure their ride. Rides will be limited to essential needs, such as work and medical appointments. Riders will not be dropped off at the Olympia Transit Center but to their essential location.

Along with the reduced service, the Customer Service line will not be available on Saturday beginning April 11. The Customer Service line will allow for messages to be left and staff will return calls on Monday, if not sooner.

The Authority is also concerned with running buses empty, especially on trips out of Mason County. "We want to be good stewards of our resources and it does not make sense to run empty buses on routes not being utilized," said Brannin. She added many of MTA's riders rely on public transportation to reach essential services such a medical appointment for life-sustaining or another crucial services, work and the grocery store so it is necessary to provide service to those in need of transit while assuring the public that resources are used wisely.

MTA has placed measures throughout the system for social distancing and cleaning. The Authority is asking riders to enter and exit through the back door if able. The ramp and lift are still available for those needing assistance. Routes 3, 23, 6 and 26 are fare-free through April 30 or until the Stay at Home order is lifted so able riders can use the back door and not worry about inserting fare into the fare box next to the driver. Some buses have taped off areas for riders to remain behind so the proper distance between the rider and driver is maintain. Buses are wiped down with a disinfecting solution or wipes in between routes as much as feasible. There is a limit of 10 riders per coach on routes within the County. “Our service is frequent enough on most of our in-county routes that another bus will be by the bus stop soon to pick up riders. We feel this is the best way to help keep our drivers and passengers alike as safe as possible from exposure,” said Brannin.

MTA appreciates the cooperation during this time from riders and ask that all rides be kept to essential needs only. “We want to do our part in helping reduce the spread of COVID-19 and still be here for our community,” said Brannin.

Please visit our website for more information regarding route changes and look for Rider Alert on our Facebook page as well. Customer Service can be reached Monday – Friday from 8:00am to 5:00pm to assist you with questions or scheduling rides.