

Item 7 - Correspondence

From: [Luecking, Betsy](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Glazier, Eli](#); [Brunetto, Odile](#)
Subject: Commission on People with Disabilities Pedestrian Safety Remarks for Public Hearing
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 5:26:43 PM
Attachments: [Pedestrian Master Plan2023 TGComments.pdf](#)

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Please see the attached. Patricia Gallalee, Chair, Commission on People with Disabilities will not be testifying in person. If you have any questions, please let me know.

Kindest Regards,

Betsy Tolbert Luecking, Community Outreach Manager

Commission on Veterans Affairs - Commission on People with Disabilities
Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, Aging and Disability Services
401 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, Maryland 20850

Direct: (240) 777-1256 | Cell: (240) 418-4865 call or text

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Commission on People with Disabilities
Pedestrian Master Plan Public Hearing
March 23, 2023
Patricia Gallalee, Chair

The Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities thanks the Montgomery County Planning Department on its proposed Pedestrian Master Plan and for consulting with the Commission during its development.

We continue to be very concerned about the continued installation of designated bicycle lanes that appear to be rarely used by bicyclists. The designated bike lanes pose a great risk to pedestrians when trying to cross them. The design of the bike lanes affect available accessible and typical parking spaces, narrow the amount of space to safely exit a vehicle on the driver's side, and challenge persons using a wheelchair or other assistive device. From page 115, the approach detailed in the Prioritization Methodology appendix state the Planning Department ensures that the areas with the greatest need for pedestrian and bicycle improvements receive that investment by prioritizing areas of the county: • with low levels of pedestrian and bicycle comfort • near schools and transit stations • with high pedestrian and bicycle demand • with more pedestrian and bicycle crashes. Instead, we ask that the County limit the installation of designated bike lanes as they have a negative impact on pedestrian safety and persons who need to drive and park.

For example, the current design on Old Georgetown Road poses many liabilities. The lanes have been seen full of trash, make it impossible to access accessible street parking for shopping (or medical appointments), and put pedestrians in danger as they stand in the bike lane when waiting in the crosswalk, and frustrated drivers have shorter distances to make a right turn which gives the driver less time to look for pedestrians who may be crossing the neighborhood street. We believe that more studies should be conducted on the design of designated bike lanes by taking an approach that puts pedestrian safety first and includes consideration for individuals on bikes that do not have easily enforceable safety laws.

As the plan notes on page 11, "The ability to walk" [or roll] "safely, comfortably and conveniently in one's community is the minimum expectation a Montgomery County resident should have".

We disagree with the assertion on page 42 that, "Missing sidewalks on local streets are not classified as sidewalk gaps because traffic volumes and speed limits often allow for a comfortable experience for those pedestrians travelling in roadways." As mobility impaired individuals, low vision/blind pedestrians and or those with low hearing (amongst other disabilities), we know that walking in roadways is never safe or comfortable and must not be the only option for pedestrians of all ages. We are concerned about crosswalks that are at an angle. We recommend tactile crosswalks. It isn't uncommon for a person to be crossing a street only to have a car pull more than halfway over the crosswalk and when if the person can't see the crosswalk, they aren't certain if they are walking correctly. A person cannot walk in front of the car because they will be in an intersection and if a person tries to walk

behind the car the second car could be on the first drivers bumper or it is easy to get confused. If the crosswalk is tactile then a blind person can easily figure out where they are.

As noted on page 69, “The public process around sidewalk construction should be reframed to focus on how the sidewalks in question can best be constructed, not whether they should be constructed at all.”

On page 115 - **Provide additional on-street parking corrals for dockless vehicles in high-use areas and coordinate with operators to provide incentives to encourage their use.** We appreciate the inclusion of recommendation EA-2c as movable sidewalk obstructions, such as electric scooters, pose barriers to people of all types of disabilities traveling down a sidewalk.

We hope that planners will take a more careful look at the installation of designated bike lanes with, more importantly, input from the communities they impact. We are hopeful more thought will be given to the process of ongoing improvement in pedestrian safety in Montgomery County. We look forward to continuing in our advisory capacity as a resource to Montgomery County as plans evolve further.

From: [Barbara Sanders](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: March 23, item 7: Pedestrian master plan testimony
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 8:48:07 PM
Attachments: [Ped MP Testimony - Sanders .docx](#)

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TO: Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board

RE: Thursday, March 23, 2023, item 7: **Pedestrian Master Plan**

FROM: Barbara Sanders, 1710 Noyes Lane, Silver Spring MD 20910,
bsanderslwv@gmail.com, 301-587-1323

I am writing in strong support of the proposed Pedestrian Master Plan. My husband and I moved to this County in 1979 to be within walking distance of a Metro station to our central DC office jobs, as well as retail, entertainment and recreational opportunities near our Woodside home. After over two decades of commuting to downtown 99.9% of the time by Metro, I am still an avid user of Metro. I also continue to walk to local retail and entertainment in downtown Silver Spring and Montgomery Hills for the last two plus decades. I have long awaited the completion of the original Georgetown Branch trolley/now Purple Line light rail and the completion of the Capital Crescent Trail into Silver Spring.

I was very happy to see and compliment the staff on the inclusion of the County's Purple Line stations in the details of current conditions of pedestrian access. As a longtime supporter of this cross-county transit line, I will highlight only a few of the pedestrian master plan goals and recommendations that I think are vital to the Purple Line's success, and the County's future for an equitable, energy-efficient and climate-aware system of movement that does not rely on motor vehicles.

It is imperative that major County infrastructure -- transportation facilities, government offices, schools, recreational, entertainment and retail centers -- be made accessible to walkers and rollers, not just from their "front door" to the first available parking space, but also on a safe path/sidewalk to adjoining community sidewalks and paths, as well as any parking facilities. The Pedestrian Master Plan highlights the need to have this off-site connectivity to transit stations included in main capital projects or in parallel efforts (B-7g, page 84). It also has similar recommendations for CIP funding to improve pedestrian access to other community assets.

I am also delighted to see the recommendation to "pivot the Annual Sidewalk Program from a reactive, request-driven process to an equitable, data-driven process." (B-1a, page 63.) Some of the Woodside residents find it remarkable that the County is constrained by the current Sidewalk Program to require citizen-initiative for sidewalks. For the safety of our Woodside and Woodside Park residents heading to the Woodside/16th St. station, it is important to recognize the need to make at least two safe pedestrian connections from our community sidewalk network on Second Avenue to the 16th St. stairway/ramp and the Capital Crescent trail access points on Third Avenue before the Purple Line becomes operational. This is a glaring example of a deficiency in our current County pedestrian efforts that ignores the gaps

in making small additions that would allow major capital improvements to be truly accessible to all.

These are just a couple of the important goals and recommendations that I found in this Pedestrian Master Plan. I urge the Planning Board members to accept this skillfully researched document and its impactful goals and tasks with a minimum delay. We need this plan to move into implementation quickly if our County is to grow and allow all its citizens to take advantage of its many strengths.

TO: Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board

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From: [Sanjida Rangwala](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Written Testimony - March 23 - Item 7 - Pedestrian Master Plan Public Hearing
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 9:24:01 PM

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Dear Planning Board,

I am writing to express my strong support of the Pedestrian Master Plan as drafted by the Montgomery Planning (February 2023). This plan is nothing less than a revolutionary document that, if implemented, will bring much-needed safety improvements and connectivity to our county streets and roads.

Although Vision Zero was announced as a goal years ago, deaths and injuries from vehicles remain high, often outpacing other types of violent deaths in the county such as those by firearms. Yet, they fail to elicit a level of outrage befitting their frequency. We need to take bold actions to make meaningful progress to Vision Zero, and this plan is an important step in that direction.

The most important element of the Pedestrian Master Plan is the push for proactive audits of sidewalk infrastructure. Currently, sidewalks and other standard pedestrian infrastructure are planned mainly in response to community requests. This means that neighborhoods that neglect to ask for (or actively oppose) such infrastructure are left in active non-compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act. This is absurd, not to mention inequitable. Everyone deserves to have safe, pleasant, and practical routes for walking and rolling, no matter where they live, and whether their neighbors want them to or not. This is why the ADA exists. Getting community vetoes out of essential infrastructure planning is a fundamental, necessary step to achieving public safety.

Another part of the plan that makes me happy is the recommendation that the county take more responsibility for snow and vegetation clearance particularly along major thoroughfares, including state-administered highways (MA-2). I live near one such road, University Boulevard. After heavy snowfalls, snowplows bury sidewalks in snow and ice. Walk and ramps may remain inaccessible for days or even weeks, long after snow has melted elsewhere in the county. This produces an extreme safety hazard, as non-drivers, especially those with stroller or mobility devices, may be unable to access the sidewalks and may be forced to walk in the road alongside high speed vehicles.

But it doesn't snow too often here - as this last winter proved. An even greater and more common hazard comes from erosion of vegetation, soil, or debris from adjoining properties. This erosion buries the sidewalks, effectively narrowing the passable space. County-owned

parks properties, such as next to Sligo Creek Parkway and University Boulevard, are often the worst offenders. I am pleased to see the Pedestrian Master Plan acknowledge that vegetation overgrowth needs to be audited, monitored, and remedied. Moreover, the plan acknowledges and recommends that more permanent sidewalk obstructions, such as utility poles (EA-2), should also be moved out of the right of way.

These are just a few items that I love about this Plan. The Pedestrian Master Plan also provides a framework for many more wonderful things - such as increased pedestrian crossings, public restrooms, and placemaking elements.

I recommend you approve the Pedestrian Master Plan without delay so we can start the tough, necessary, work of budget allocation and implementation.

Best regards,

Sanjida Rangwala
711 Dryden Street
Silver Spring
(314) 435-7089

From: [David N Heller](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Glazier, Eli](#)
Subject: Written Statement re: MoCo Pedestrian Master Plan
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 9:55:03 PM
Attachments: [SPHCA statement on MC Pedestrian Master Plan.pdf](#)
[SPHCA statement on MC Pedestrian Master Plan.docx](#)

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To: Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board

I am submitting a written statement from the Sligo Park Hills Community Association, in regard to the Montgomery County Planning Board meeting scheduled for Thursday March 23, 2023, at 6:00 pm, on the topic of the County's Pedestrian Master Plan. The written statement is attached as an MS Word document and a PDF.

I represent the 300 households of Sligo Park Hills as the Vice-President of the Community Association. My contact information is:

David Heller

14 Sunnyside Road, Silver Spring, MD 20910. dn.heller@verizon.net. 301-602-2975.

Written Statement *re:* Montgomery County Pedestrian Master Plan
Submitted by Sligo Park Hills Community Association, Silver Spring, MD

March 21, 2023

Submitted by David Heller, SPHCA Vice-President.

14 Sunnyside Road, Silver Spring, MD 20910. dn.heller@verizon.net. 301-602-2975.

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WHO WE REPRESENT

Sligo Park Hills is a community of 300 residences located between Piney Branch Road and Sligo Creek Park. The Community Association represents 138 member households and acts on behalf of all residents and visitors.

Our neighborhood shares a 0.8 mile border with Sligo Creek Park. Piney Branch Road runs along and through our community for 0.6 miles. Piney Branch is a busy, state-owned, commuter route which our residents must walk along or cross to attend school, access public transportation, or shop.

Most of Sligo Park Hills was laid out in 1930 as a suburban community with narrow road beds and no sidewalks. Most of our neighborhood roads are categorized as “Uncomfortable” on the county map of Pedestrian Level of Comfort.

APPRECIATION

We appreciate that the county has developed the Pedestrian Master Plan. We thank the Planning Board for the opportunity to submit a written statement regarding this Plan.

SUPPORT FOR THE PLAN’S GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our association enthusiastically supports all four major Plan Goals and all Recommendations. We support the Plan’s goals and recommendations county-wide, and we express our solidarity with all residents and communities who need improvements in pedestrian accessibility, comfort, and safety.

We agree it is time to correct the unfortunate fact that, as stated on page 6, “the Montgomery County transportation system was designed for motor vehicle travel to the exclusion of people walking and biking.”

We support a focus on pedestrian safety. As stated on page 50, pedestrian safety includes “shifting from a focus on maximizing motor vehicle efficiency to ensuring that the transportation system is safe for all, regardless of travel mode.”

SUPPORT FOR IMPROVED AND EQUITABLE PROCESSES

It is appropriate, as stated in section B-1a (p. 63), to “Pivot the Annual Sidewalk Program from a reactive, request-driven process to an equitable, data-driven process.” It is welcome to read (p. 6-7) that “The plan guides the county to update policies and procedures that may currently benefit connected individuals and communities that have the time and resources to advocate for themselves at the expense of communities that may have greater need for pedestrian infrastructure and amenities.” While we hope to participate with the county to address our own local issues, we don’t want this to come at the expense of other communities’ needs. Where the data show that improvements to pedestrian safety are needed, that’s where resources should be prioritized.

We support the many reasonable recommendations which aren't relevant to our neighborhood, such as those relating to downtowns, town centers, newer suburban communities, and country areas.

SUPPORT FOR PLAN ELEMENTS RELEVANT TO OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Objective 2.3 (page 15): "Comfortable pedestrian access to parks." Sligo Creek is an important amenity for the entire county. Access for many county residents to the west of Sligo Park Hills is by foot through our neighborhood.

Recommendation B-1e (page 65): "Explore use of temporary materials to create dedicated pedestrian spaces where sidewalks are not feasible." We support the type of pedestrian enhancements implemented along Grove Street in East Silver Spring, where many of our residents walk *en route* to downtown Silver Spring. This solution would be relevant to streets within Sligo Park Hills and similar older neighborhoods lacking sidewalks.

Recommendation B-4g (page 77): "Make the Open Parkways along Beach Drive and Sligo Creek Parkway permanent." It's not clear whether the recommendation would be to continue the current three-day-a-week closure for Sligo Creek Parkway or make it seven. The current system is very popular among our residents. It is worth consulting the local neighborhoods whether to extend the current system to more closure days.

We support Recommendation B-6: "Reduce pedestrian pathway temperatures." Our neighborhood's tree canopy is roughly 70%. We benefit greatly from the shading provided to our pedestrians, and we want all county neighborhoods to share this advantage. We encourage the county to expand all tree planting programs.

Recommendation B-7c applies to Sligo Park Hills, given the number of pedestrians entering Sligo Creek Park via the neighborhood: "Create a new Capital Improvement Program (CIP) project to build pedestrian and bicycle connections to park land."

Recommendation B-9: "Make traffic calming easier to implement. Traffic calming measures should be installed wherever target speeds as defined in the CSDG or relevant master plans are not being met." This is key, as it shows how neighborhoods like ours can benefit from traffic calming measures.

Recommendation B-10 (page 88): "Assume county control of state highways." The Plan does not recommend this for all state highways in the county, and it seems that Piney Branch Road isn't included. **We ask that Piney Branch Road be included in the recommendation. We regularly witness traffic violations along Piney Branch Road which threaten pedestrian safety. These violations include speeding in general, treating the center turn lane as a high-speed passing lane, and ignoring existing traffic restrictions.** Some might argue that this isn't a pedestrian safety issue, but we know that it is, as cars speeding through the turning lanes endanger pedestrians trying to cross Piney Branch. We ask that the county study how to prevent misuse of central turning lanes (on both county and state roads), via enforcement, erecting physical barriers, or other options.

Recommendation P-2a: "Develop a methodology for identifying and prioritizing implementation of new protected crossings at mid-block or uncontrolled locations" We ask that the county investigate improvements to all pedestrian crossings along Piney Branch Road from Long Branch to Takoma Park, including Sligo Avenue (where children cross *en route* to school and parks) and Mississippi Avenue (where pedestrians cross *en route* to Sligo Creek Park).

Recommendation P-2g: “Remove free-flow channelized right turn lanes where roadway geometry allows and improve their design where it does not.” This issue applies to the right-turn lane of southbound Piney Branch at Sligo Avenue, where drivers coming up this channelized lane don’t yield to pedestrians, (nor to drivers entering Sligo Avenue from northbound Piney Branch Road or from west-bound Park Valley Road).

Recommendation EA-8a: “Pursue a modification to the Maryland Code clarifying that drivers, bicyclists, and scooter riders are required to yield the right of way to pedestrians on shared streets.” We agree that “As the most vulnerable user in a shared street environment, pedestrians should have the right of way.”

In Tables 29-31, several pedestrian arteries near SPH are listed at “Tier 1-3” for future BiPPA improvements. We support future funding for these zones, which include: Piney Branch Rd from Sligo Ave to Long Branch Town Center, Piney Branch Rd from Sligo Rd to Philadelphia Ave, and Sligo Ave from Downtown Silver Spring to Piney Branch Rd.

An Example Monitoring Report is shown on page 267. Is there a way to report and tally “near misses,” i.e., an incident which doesn’t result in a police investigation or hospitalization?

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDITIONS TO THE PLAN

Places To Pause

The Plan assumes that all pedestrian travel is purpose-driven: commute to work, attend school, shop, or engage in recreation. However, in our neighborhood – and doubtless many other neighborhoods – walking along public roads and sidewalks is a social activity in itself. **We ask that consideration be given along sidewalks and pathways for people to stop, gather, and talk.** These little meeting places could be a cut-out shaded by a tree, or a small grassy area with a bench. Potential users would be parents pushing a stroller, dog walkers, neighbors getting to know each other, people discussing local issues, and people with mobility challenges taking a breather. This request would expand Recommendation B-4h to include Suburban neighborhoods: “Provide public seating, restrooms and other pedestrian amenities in Downtowns, Town Centers, and along Boulevards.”

Pocket Parks

In recent decades the concepts of Pocket Parks (Miyawaki Forests) have been developed, to provide compact natural areas in densely-developed, highly paved, or treeless neighborhoods. These mini-forests can be as small as 100 or 200 square yards. They can be inserted into large paved areas such as parking lots, to provide local residents a local park-like destination, as well as mitigating the heat island effect of paving. In environmental terms, selectively removing paving to install Pocket Parks can offset the increase in paved sidewalks resulting from this Plan’s implementation. We ask that this option be included under Recommendation B-6c, mitigating heat islands.

Provide Online Guide to Pedestrian-Friendly Infrastructure Options

On page 5 it is stated that the “Plan prioritizes areas for investment, rather than what those specific investments should be.” The Plan’s Appendices include a Design Toolkit. The toolkit will be extremely helpful to all residents as a sourcebook for specific solutions, because our residents are not infrastructure experts. Given that the Pedestrian Master Plan is high-level and focused on prioritization,

goals and measures, we request that an online guide be created from the Design ToolKit, for Montgomery County residents to use as a reference. We would all benefit from photographs of implementations, brief descriptions, and assessments of these engineering options.

Process For Requesting a Review of a Neighborhood's Pedestrian Safety

We support the process of prioritizing neighborhoods by need, for example, the tiered approach to providing BiPPA improvements. We ask that this approach include a process for community associations to request a safety review by a Traffic Engineer, to acquire data, assess the local level of need, identify local problems, and consider feasible solutions.

Recommendation B-9b seems to address this issue: "Deemphasize pedestrian volumes as a determining factor in deciding where to install pedestrian or connectivity improvements. Through the Traffic Engineering Study process, community members can identify safety and connectivity issues and request MCDOT address them with the appropriate treatments." Communities need an easy process to request a Traffic Engineering Study.

Process for Temporary Road Closure

We've noticed that other jurisdictions (e.g., Washington DC) allow for certain residential blocks to be closed for a few weeks to vehicular traffic, except for access by residents. Temporary barriers and official signage were placed at the entrance to those blocks. This can give a short-term respite from heavy traffic. We ask that this option be available for Montgomery County's residential areas.

Enforce Existing Regulations Along Problematic Roads and Intersections

The Executive Summary (p.2) mentions "increasing the number of Automated Traffic Enforcement locations," specifically for enforcing speed limits and no-turn-on-red. We ask that ATE and other enforcement tools be used for additional violations, such as running stop signs, ignoring posted restrictions against rush-hour entry / egress, or using a left-turn lane as a high-speed passing lane.

Help Community Associations Work with the State of Maryland

If the county is unable to influence state planning for pedestrian safety and comfort on state roads in Montgomery County, we ask that the county provide guidance for community associations on engaging with the Maryland Department of Transportation.

From: [Lauren Saunders](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Comments on Pedestrian Master Plan
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 11:04:00 PM
Attachments: [Pedestrian master plan written comments.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chairman Zyontz,

Attached please find my comments on the draft Pedestrian Master Plan. Thank you for considering this input.

Lauren Saunders
7000 Millwood Rd.
Bethesda, MD 20817

7000 Millwood Road
Bethesda MD 20817

March 21, 2023

By email to mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org
Chairman Jeff Zyontz
Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reedie Drive
Wheaton, MD 20902

Re: Pedestrian Master Plan

Dear Chairman Zyontz,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Pedestrian Master Plan. I applaud the County for taking a holistic look at the multiple factors that go into developing a safe, comfortable and appealing network for walking, biking and rolling.

I write these comments from the perspective of a resident of Kenwood Park, which in late January suddenly received a proposal from the Annual Sidewalk Program. That experience has revealed the multiple flaws of the Sidewalk Program and its approach that is divisive, antiquated, not holistically focused on safety, and counter to County environmental and other goals.

The proposal was developed with virtually no neighborhood input, is based on no data, and makes little sense. It proposed to remove 148 trees and to build sidewalks on quiet, rarely used streets, ignoring other streets that have much more pedestrian and vehicular traffic. The proposal, which is similar to others in the County, gave virtually no thought to numerous alternatives that would save trees and improve pedestrian safety, while also meeting goals of the pedestrian plan to shade sidewalks and enhance the pedestrian experience.

Some of these flaws are acknowledged and addressed in the draft Pedestrian Master Plan. In particular, I strongly support the recommendation (B-1a) to pivot from a reactive request-driven process to an equitable, data-driven process to ensure that the highest-priority connections are made and that resources are expended equitably.

But I have three key suggestions on how the draft plan can be improved.

First, I disagree with the proposal to limit public input into whether and where sidewalks should be built. Instead, the County should allow earlier, more meaningful input to ensure that sidewalks are built where they make sense and are a priority given limited resources. It is undemocratic to cut out public input, and the County should not artificially limit what information the public can supply.

Second, the Master Plan should recommend a more profound overhaul of how sidewalks are built in neighborhoods. Montgomery County has the opportunity to change the Sidewalk Program from a siloed program narrowly focused on its own tools and goal of adding linear feet, to a best-in-class, holistic, cross-County effort to maximize neighborhood safety, preserve trees, and enhance the pedestrian experience. In particular:

- The Sidewalk Program should work together with the Traffic division to consider street alterations that calm traffic and save trees, and
- The Program should work with the Department of Environmental Protection and the Planning Department to draw on experience around the country about how to use state of the art techniques to build and maintain walkscapes while saving trees.

Progressive Montgomery County can set the standard and do so in a democratic way. The combination of early public input and a more thoughtful approach to enhancing pedestrian safety while preserving the environment are more likely to help the community to see a sidewalk plan as a positive opportunity to improve the neighborhood, rather than as something that is being imposed on it.

Third, the County should make efforts to inform homeowners, landscapers and others about the right of way that the County asserts on many properties and the possibility of future sidewalk construction in order to encourage landscaping and other improvements to be made in ways that will not interfere with future sidewalk construction.

1. The Pedestrian Master Plan Should Not Stifle Public Input.

Recommendation B-1b states that public engagement should be reimagined so that members “can share valuable local perspectives.” Yet the explanation of the recommendation undermines the importance of those perspectives by stating that the public process should be reframed to focus on “how” sidewalks can be constructed, not “whether they should be constructed at all.” But it is counter to democracy – and to the goal of an equitable, data-driven process – to limit data that comes from local perspectives.

Those who live in a neighborhood know what the traffic and pedestrian patterns are. They have valuable information that should be incorporated much earlier into the process. The decision to build sidewalks in our neighborhood and to select the streets on which to build them seem to have come primarily from three sources: the vagaries of requests from a couple of individual residents; a political opportunity created by a tragic but completely unrelated accident; and the opportunity to build a large number of linear feet in one neighborhood and achieve a third of the Sidewalk Program’s annual goal in one place.

After three years of development, the Sidewalk Program has now made a proposal that is not based on any data on pedestrian or vehicle traffic. It simply does not make sense from the perspective of where in our neighborhood sidewalks may be needed. It also may be that other neighborhoods in Montgomery County have much greater needs.

While the Sidewalk Program has held a hearing on the proposal and is taking public comment, it is clear that the program is already very invested in the proposal that they have been working on for three years.

Earlier public input would have supplied valuable data from local knowledge that should be incorporated into the decision of whether and where to build sidewalks. Incorporating that input would enhance the goal of an equitable, data-driven process. Equity is not served by limiting public input. Data is not served by ignoring important information about pedestrian needs.

While the draft Plan indicates that the County has conducted surveys and collected data that will be considered in assessing where to build sidewalks, that data is incomplete, and also is static. The County

has not monitored pedestrian and traffic patterns in neighborhoods, and thus community input on those factors is critical.

Earlier notice and public input would also help to avoid some of the controversy around sidewalk proposals. A large part of the frustration of our neighborhood is the realization that a fully formed proposal has been stealthily planned for three years and has suddenly been sprung on us, given us only 5 weeks to a hearing, with little time to get information, ask questions, and figure out what has been going on. The opportunity to provide more meaningful input, actively considered, would make it easier for neighborhoods to welcome or at least accept sidewalk construction when it comes.

Earlier notice would also give people in neighborhoods time to adapt to coming sidewalk construction and prevent homeowners and home builders from investing money in landscaping and other improvements that will be destroyed. Our family, for example, just completed a major landscaping project and tree planting last year, completely unawares, much of which will now be ripped out. We could easily have built it differently had we known. Other neighbors have installed invisible dog fences and irrigation systems that will also be removed, but could have been installed outside of the path of the planned sidewalks.

Finally, together with a more holistic approach to how to build sidewalks, enhance safety, and save trees, as discussed in the next section, early public input will help the entire neighborhood to see a potential sidewalk plan as a positive opportunity to improve the neighborhood, rather than as something that is being imposed on it. In short, the point of allowing earlier public input, without artificially limiting what the public can comment on, is not to make it easier to kill sidewalk proposals, but to make them better and to achieve all of the County's goals.

2. The sidewalk program should be overhauled to create a best-in-class, holistic, cross-department approach that is not singularly focused on sidewalks but rather on the best way to maximize neighborhood safety, preserve trees, and enhance the pedestrian experience.

The original sidewalk proposal in our neighborhood called for taking 8 feet from yards to build sidewalks with a grass buffer, removing 148 trees, many of them large, mature trees and the signature cherry trees that give our neighborhood its beauty and character. Two other neighborhoods, Willerburn Acres and Rock Creek Manor, received similar proposals that that, collectively with our neighborhood, put over 300 trees at risk.

Removing that large number of trees – in just three of the many neighborhoods where the Sidewalk Program expects to build sidewalks – conflicts with several County goals of the draft Pedestrian Master Plan and the County's Climate Action Plan, as outlined below.

While the Sidewalk Program claims that it will plant three trees somewhere in the County for every one removed, that is insufficient. First, it is clear that most of these trees will not be in the neighborhoods where trees are being removed. Most shrunken yards cannot accommodate additional trees, and a document produced by the Sidewalk Program indicates that of the 46 trees removed in FY 2022, only 3 were replaced in those neighborhoods. It is not clear where or even whether the additional 135 promised trees will be planted.

Second, three small trees are not the equivalent of one large, mature tree. For example, one of the trees originally proposed to be removed in our neighborhood is a Pin Oak with a 30" diameter that is perhaps

40 feet tall. According to the U.S. Forest Tree Calculator,¹ over 20 years, that one tree has \$1,708.71 in environmental benefits, including carbon dioxide uptake, storm water mitigation, air pollution removal and other benefits. A replacement tree with a 2" diameter has only \$77.61 in the same benefits, even over 20 years. Thus, even 3 for 1 replacements are not nearly enough.

After an enormous outcry, the Sidewalk Program has now revised the tree reports for the Kenwood Park and Willerburn Acres plans to incorporate use of flexi-pave, detours around trees, and other methods to attempt to save many of the trees. The number of trees that will ultimately be saved is unknown; many have been moved from the "remove" category to "air excavation" for an assessment of whether they can be saved.

The Rock Creek Manor proposal is apparently about to start as proposed, removing 48 trees, despite a majority of the neighborhood being opposed.

The new willingness to use flexi-pave and to wind around trees is welcome. However, it is clear that many trees will still be removed. In addition, in many places the new sidewalk paths will encroach much deeper into yards, closer to houses, adding to the disruption of the sidewalks.

The Sidewalk Program still seems unwilling to work with the Traffic Division to consider street alterations, even minor ones, which are in the jurisdiction of the Traffic Division. Yet street alternations would allow sidewalks to be built in a way that would calm traffic, enhance safety and save trees all at the same time. For example, sidewalks could be bumped out around trees, creating more of a winding "parkway" feel that would force cars to slow down – while making the neighborhood more walkable. In addition, the streets in our neighborhood are far wider than they need to be for neighborhood traffic – which encourages fast driving – and we have ample parking, with few cars using street parking. Thus, streets could be narrowed and/or parking could be limited to one side of the street to allow for sidewalk construction that does not conflict with trees. These changes, too, would slow down traffic.

Relatedly, one of the recommendations in the draft plan, B-1e, is to consider other ways to create dedicated pedestrian walkways where sidewalks are not feasible. As the plan notes, Seattle uses walkways in roadways to preserve trees and other environmental features. In quiet neighborhoods like ours with wide streets, pedestrian walkways built into the street area using flex posts, jersey barriers or other materials may be quite sufficient.

It is also important for the Sidewalk Program and the Traffic Program to work together because sidewalks alone are not the best way to improve safety. In fact, as explained at greater length in written comments by our neighbor Linda Tilchin, modern approaches to pedestrian safety show that slowing down traffic is more important than building sidewalks. Thus, the two divisions should assess what the needs of a neighborhood are and how best to achieve them through a combination of traffic measures and sidewalks.

In addition, our quick research has revealed that there are many techniques that can be used to build sidewalks while saving trees, and to save trees that start to encroach on sidewalks. These, too, are explained in Linda's memo, which draws on just a small amount of research going on around the country, including from a recent webinar from Penn State on how to avoid tree-sidewalk conflicts. For

¹ <https://mytree.itreetools.org/#/benefits/individual>.

example, sidewalk “bridges” can go over tree roots, and multiple techniques can be used to move and save roots.

Thus, the County should take a more holistic approach to building walksapes that relies not just on the Sidewalk Program’s knowledge, goals, and jurisdiction, but also on those of other parts of the County, including the Traffic Division, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the Planning Department. And, the County should seek out knowledge around the country, as these issues are not unique to Montgomery County.

A revamped program would better achieve the overarching goal of developing safe, comfortable and appealing pedestrian experiences. In particular, a best-in-class approach to building sidewalks that incorporates public input, preserves trees and considers street alterations would achieve these goals of the draft Pedestrian Master Plan:

- **B-1a Use a data-driven approach and use limited resources efficiently.** Pedestrian safety should be the goal, not sidewalks per se. The traffic and sidewalk divisions must work together and consider a variety of approaches.
- **B-1e Explore dedicated pedestrian spaces where sidewalks are not feasible,** whether to preserve trees or for other reasons.
- **B-4 Build More Walkable Places.** Sidewalks that are in neighborhoods that preserve their trees, vegetation and neighborhood character, and have more of a parkway feel, will be more inviting to pedestrians.
- **B-6: Reduce pedestrian pathway temperatures.** Preserving trees along sidewalks would meet the goals of ensuring shading of sidewalks (B-6(a)) and investing more in street tree preservation and maintenance (B-6(b)).
- **B-9 Make traffic calming easier.** The Sidewalk Program should be required to work holistically with the Traffic Division to incorporate traffic calming measures when sidewalks are being considered.

A revamped, holistic program would also help achieve these goals from the Climate Action Plan:

- **Retain and increase the tree canopy**
- **Update public space and streetscape design to require cool-colored permeable surfaces.** The Sidewalk Program should explore the best ways to build sidewalks that not only accommodate trees but also reduce the amount of concrete and include more permeable surfaces.

Importantly, a revamped Sidewalk Program that made more significant efforts to save trees and to calm traffic in neighborhoods would engender less controversy. When neighborhood input is added in earlier in the process, sidewalks can still be built with much more community support and a far better outcome in achieving the County’s multiple goals.

3. Inform homeowners, landscapers and others about County right of ways and encourage improvements that do not interfere with future sidewalk construction.

One of the biggest frustrations we have had with the Kenwood Park Sidewalk Proposal is that we had no idea that the County claimed a right of way on our property or that a sidewalk plan was under development. We spent tens of thousands of dollars last year on landscaping that is now going to be

ripped out, and the initial proposal also called for the removal of 5 cherry trees that we planted, two last year and three about 15 years ago. Had we known, we could have done things differently.

Similarly, neighbors have installed invisible dog fences, irrigation systems, and other improvements that will now be removed and could have been installed further back from the street.

There were several points at which we could have been informed:

- When we bought our house. Neither our realtor nor the title insurer said anything. The plat map provided with our title policy clearly showed the drainage easement in the rear of our home, but nothing about a claimed 17 foot right of way along the street. Even had we seen the larger plat for the entire neighborhood, we would have never known that the tiny number “60” up the street meant that the County claimed 30 feet in either direction from the center of the street.
- When the neighborhood association encouraged people to plant cherry trees. About 15 years ago, our association embarked on a campaign to ask people to restore the original cherry trees in our neighborhood, which were getting old. No one indicated that they should be planted back from the street to accommodate a right of way and future sidewalks.
- When the County began serious work on the sidewalk proposal in our neighborhood. Our neighborhood was prioritized for sidewalks in early 2020 and the tree report was completed that year. Yet the Sidewalk Program did not mention a word of it to our neighborhood until late January 2023.
- When we did landscaping last year. The landscaper said nothing, and seemed as surprised as we were when we contacted them this year after getting the sidewalk plan.

Similarly, we have seen many new homes built in our neighborhood that have planted trees within the planned sidewalk zone, even though they had plenty of flexibility as to where to put them.

Given the County’s apparent plans to continue building sidewalks in a number of neighborhoods, the County needs to undertake greater efforts to let the public know of those plans, of the rights of way the County holds, and of the importance of making property improvements that will accommodate sidewalks.

Potential options include:

- A required notice or map when a home is sold.
- Outreach to realtors, landscapers and gardening centers.
- Notice to homeowner associations.
- Notice from the sidewalk program as soon as a neighborhood is under serious consideration.
- General publicity through the County Executive’s newsletter and other channels.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments.

Yours very truly,

Lauren Saunders

From: [Doug Scott \(Comcast\)](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: Anne.Kaiser@house.state.md.us
Subject: For Thursday's Hearing on Pedestrian Safety
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 11:44:19 PM
Attachments: [Riding Safety.docx](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Sometimes you do not run out of changes, just time.

I hope this is useful. I will confine my self to three minutes or less. I will probably focus on lights and the wooden bridge issues as I firmly believe those two issues are where we can make a meaningful dent in the short term.

Doug

Riding Safety

I have looked at the County pedestrian vision. There is little in it that one could say is objectionable in the words and charts. It is the execution to date that concerns me.

I am 62, I have ridden a bicycle as my principal sport/exercise since I was 14 growing up in Fairfax County. I have raced extensively, ridden cross country, but mostly just ride. Currently, my annual miles range from 3,000 to 6,000 for the last 8 years. You can't do long weekend rides in the hills without a minimum of 2-3 rides during the week. I used to do neighborhood errands and rides through Rockville, I rarely do this anymore. It is a risk/reward calculation. It is also a parking/theft issue.

A ride is between 35 and 80 miles, it traverses many communities. As a community ourselves, we lack any sort of physical or geographic center of mass. So, we are mostly unaware of or left out of community level discussions. In my cohort, there is a tendency for DC and VA cyclists to cross into MD. We tend to head to Frederick County on the weekend but remain in MoCo during the week (or indoors now). The AG Reserve is a huge asset to us, but the deterioration of the asphalt at the sides of the Milk Roads has us seeking more travelled routes. The joint between the old concrete and the paved sides is increasingly problematic.

I avoid the MUT's. Lots of reasons, mainly pedestrians, dog walkers with long leashes and cyclists do not mix. I do think for the major commuter trails, one might consider legislating bike commuter only hours much like HOV lanes. My parents lived along the Mt. Vernon trail, there view was cyclists at high speeds terrorized them.

E-bikes are a multidimensional challenge, 55-60 pounds of steel moving at 28mph creates a lot of energy. It takes skill discipline for an e-bike rider to integrate with regular bikes, even experienced riders struggle. You can go uphill at high speed but you fall back downhill. I get the popularity, many of my friends are moving to e-bikes.

I am boggled by the notion any group could think it is a good idea to build two-way bike lanes on one side of a road with driveways and cross-streets. But, that is Water street in DC today, it is also a small stretch of the Capitol Crescent Trail in Bethesda and the revised Haines Point configuration (there are fewer cross streets there but other issues boggle the mind). The mindset changes of getting both riders and drivers to look both ways when crossing these lanes are huge. I won't use them, I hope the mother of today's 14-year-old understands they are a terrible risk. Again signs should be posted.

I think often of the today's 14-year-old and how their parents might "rely" on some of these safety innovations. Vision Zero, has is a catchy name of consequence initially pitched as an approach to address a misleading 26% year over year spike in road fatalities a few years back. Cycling fatalities have run between 700 and 1,000 every year since 1964. That spike was statistically and factually irrelevant.

The first fatality I encountered was in 1977. Steve was a racing friend; he was right behind me I still can hear the sound of his bare rim sliding on concrete.
Steve, Mike, Miji, Debbie, the 3 on 121 in Allen, TX,

I have been in contact motor vehicles 5 times over the years. Three were the result of a motorist passing without enough room on the paved surface. The last of these was a county Ride-On Bus, a county police officer was a witness and equated the contact by the bus to a car going over the posted limit by 9-mph. It was far more serious but hard for an inexperienced police officer to appreciate the skill involved in staying upright. Lack of enforcement is a huge problem today.

Vepco, Car Door, McLean, Texas and Ride-on Bus

The County accident database is missing two 911 involved accidents (no car involved), a couple more I was around for and a slew of non-911 incidents that ended up in ER's. The DC database misses the accident I had on the Mt. Vernon trail. I believe that going after the source of accidents is probably better for society and more fruitful than going after fatalities. The reporting is better than in the past, but I suspect it is understated.

There are five basic car involved on the road accidents for cyclists:

Rear Ender – This is the distracted driver or the low sun in the eye's situation. It is also the Landscape truck accident. This is a newer issue where the driver understands the width of the his/her vehicle but loses track of the significantly wider trailer. NHSTA data suggests the rear ender is by far the predominate cause of fatalities. It is also the fingerprint of the most horrific deliberate accidents.

Squeeze – A car passes with out enough room in the lane or the will/ability to move further left, cyclist is forced off the road either by contact or avoiding contact. This is 3 of my five vehicular incidents.

Left Hook – Car is passing a cyclist just as the cyclists initiates a left turn. Often, the driver sees the potential turn coming, but their reaction is to accelerate to get beyond the issue and back to their correct lane. This risk is mostly manageable by a cyclist but noiseless EV's are an area of concern. Garmin and a couple of others make good radar units that provide a reasonable understanding of what is approaching, but only a tiny minority of the cycling public is so equipped. My experience is this is mostly a suburban and rural accident.

Right Hook – This is the recent Langenkamp accident, most of us see and understand this constant threat. There are two variants: first, the car passes the cyclists but not fully then slows and makes a right turn often into some type of sideroad or driveway. The second is at a light or in traffic. The cyclist uses the bike lane or space on the right to advance in the queue. The vehicle does not see the bike passing on the right and turns right. This is why I see the present implementation of bike lanes and "Protected" bike lanes as deceptive.

The head-on - A less frequent but dramatic accident, this is mostly on sharp high-speed curves where the cyclist or car crosses the yellow line. It also happens where a cyclists encounters unexpected gravel in a high speed left turn and has to increase the radius of their turn because it is too late to brake. (Hipsley Mill at Annapolis Rock is an example where Howard County helped greatly by improving drainage)

There is a world of cyclist only accidents each has a root cause mainly in poor communication or momentary distraction. Usually, it is two things together that make the accident inevitable. My

overall view is rider skills are often underdeveloped. Many riders my age are former runners taking care of their knees and hips. We use a term “protect your front wheel” as even the most momentary failure to concentrate on threats to the front wheel will cause an accident. It takes a while to appreciate the importance of this statement.

In June '22, I was saved on the “protected” lanes on M Street in DC when the pedestrian detection system in a Volvo XC 90 turning across the protected lane to a parking garage safely brought the car to a stop about 2' from my knee. I no longer ride in those lanes, cross traffic for parking garages 2x per block are too dangerous. These lanes reflect a basic failure to understand the differences between small European cars and US SUV's and Amazon vans.

I avoid areas like where the Langenkamp accident happened on River Rd. east of Goldsborough and Old Georgetown Rd anywhere. There are simply too many alternative routes, and these primary roads are littered with entrances and exits on the right side. I sort of woke up when I heard about that accident as I realized there were cyclists out there unlike my gang that saw those lanes on those roads as somehow safe. For several years, I used to go from the Marriott HQ area to I can imagine 14-year-old me telling my mom I am going to ride the “protected lanes” on OGR to a friend's and her thinking that was great. Rockledge to Fernwood, or the Trolley Trail to Fleming connecting to Grosvenor remain the safe routes today, not the OGR protected lanes. These lanes were a mistake and any cycling group that lobbied for them should be ashamed.

If I am caught in one of these roads my approach is as follows:

- Ignore the bike lane, ride in the middle to middle-left of the lane. I want to be as visible as possible and as hard to pass as possible. Some think the lane on the far right provides for their safety, it does not. In the bike lane or far right, experience says you are easily “passed” and forgotten. The painted bike lane is a deceptive trap for the trusting or inexperienced. I think this gets worse with the separation afforded by “protected” lanes. On the far side of the flexiposts the cyclist is out of sight and out of mind. It is worse in the District where parked SUV's and Amazon vans form the separation which becomes a tunnel.
- I have stopped advancing on the right in traffic in most circumstances. Exceptions might be as on Rt.28 at Quince Orchard. Where I am going straight and there is a right turn lane next to me. I will move up to the relative safety of a concrete island protecting my right side.

The county got the Carl Hein Trail right where it crosses 270 at 28. Users of the trail experience the flyover as a non-event. Cyclist's like me make a quick jig off 28 and are on the flyover approach with the other end is equally close Rt. 28. The actual interchange itself is far less dangerous than OGR and the 270 Spur. I am not convinced any amount of colored paint makes OGR and the 270 Spur “protected”.

Let's look at another example: MacArthur Blvd at Old Angler's

Iconic road and important access for area cyclists. Long ago we used to have access to the Clara Barton now we are all on MacArthur.



The right-of-way is way below any current standard for the traffic.

The Venn diagram that solves this are for all parties probably shows no solution.

These flexiposts and curbs extend 0.5 miles.

The gravel contains fine steel wire from radial tires, there will be flats. How do riders get off roadway safely?

This is at the base of long downhill, at the exit of a blind curve.

The posted speed limit 30, I exit turn at 30-35 mph. I want to carry as much speed as I can through that turn or, if possible, be "stuck" behind a slow car. This is to discourage an impatient driver from passing before they have a full view of oncoming traffic and "squeeze" me into the gravel/flexipost. It is too complicated; I have abandoned the idea of riding one of my favorite roads since 1974.



The MoCo flexipost is higher than my handlebars. In a "squeeze" the bars will contact the flexipost, a rider will then be driven into the curb in the MacArthur example above. The injuries are likely horrific. The triangular vs. tubular shape used in the District (below) make the county's much more resistant to yielding on impact.

I mentioned these concerns to a country road engineer in a meeting last summer. He did not contest the safety issues, he simply observed "this is a Vision Zero Project and it will not change."

I belong to an area Listserv said to be 4,000 cyclists long when I asked if anyone was involved or consulted in our community, I got no response.

Perhaps the County could consider a sign? "Caution "Vision Zero" infrastructure ahead, unsafe for cyclists"?

A better approach in the District:



Bars clear the post.

Round post yields to impact of front tire. It may be possible survive contact without an accident. I survived contact with a similar post in NJ with a different base.

No curb, no debris to add risks.

I have seen photos in Northern Europe of 2 low 3' rubber strips placed diagonally between posts. You would know if you hit these but probably survive.

Some data suggests nearly 500,000 bicycle related accidents annually. I would offer getting after some of the causes here will have more benefit than a questionable bike lane on OGR.

My ideas? Go after the 500,000+ accidents, not the fatalities.

Bike lights work in daylight, at night, in shadows, and significantly lights can overcome direct low level sun coming into a driver's eyes. With a little work, the County or State could acquire nice rechargeable light sets for under \$20/pair. Trek is taking this issue on with my crowd, perhaps some PSA's and school giveaways could be implemented? We need to meet riders where they are, not at events for established cyclists or enthusiasts'.

Lights need to become like helmets, -do not get on your bike without them.

Pressure treated wood should be banned and removed as a bridge surface by all MUT's, State and National Parks. When I rode to the Langenkamp memorial event in DC, the three of us hanging out all realized we had each had low speed (5mph) topples at the wooden bridge on the Mt. Vernon Trail at Roosevelt Island. That was 1 broken hip, 3 broken collar bones and 2 with broken ribs (to hospitalizations, 3 surgeries). Go to any bike shop nearby and they all know

the accident. Go to the Park Service? The few that get through get a lecture about wetlands and chemicals. The French have solved this, so have the Danes and the Dutch. States and counties are not free of issue here. A similar bridge in Loudon County cost a friend his femur. Another friend is paralyzed in Frederick, we do not know the cause of his solo spinal injury, but hikers found him suspiciously on one of these bridges.

There is a cost issue here, but if the aggregate costs of the accidents or liability for them were transferred to the builder/designers/owners the pressure treated wood would be gone in a heartbeat. That surface when damp is like oil on glass and in shaded areas it stays damp long after a rain. We do not even have the decency to post signs pointing out the likely danger.

Bike theft/Secure Parking is a separate unaddressed issue. Bikes have serial numbers that are traceable, there ought to be a national registry tracked to the original purchaser where thefts can be registered. Altering one ought to be the equivalent of altering a VIN on a car. It is a dirty secret the industry presently sees a net gain through insurance replacements. Thefts come from sources as simple as joyriders to professional gangs. There is not a portable lock in the world that will not yield quickly to a battery powered cutoff saw.

My experience is casual riders (my daughter for example) simply give up after a theft or the combination of theft risk and accident risk is perceived to be too much. People have a lot of financial and emotional investment in their bicycles. Without secure parking, bicycles are not reliable transportation. Secure parking/storage is not widely available.

Riding skills are also an issue. In my youth the invitation to good rides was word of mouth. It was earned by both power and skill. The decline of clubs in the area is in no small part that rides are posted on the internet so anyone can show-up. I have seen tons of riders way more powerful than me, without the most basic skills. My group rides are invitation only. I recognize this is exclusionary, but in 8 years we have had three accidents only one of which involved rider contact. On my "posted public" 2x weekly ride we are having 2-3 serious contact accidents a season. That is unacceptable.

44 years on I am proud of what I see in many dimensions of our sport. Women are no longer a rarity. If you can't deal with being around women who are stronger than you, cycling is not your activity. Viet Velo is something like 400 strong in the DMV area and the strongest club in the area is predominantly black. I raced all over the country, Patrick Gellineau, a Trinidadian was the sole black racer, and the Mattes brothers represented the Asian community. We are far from perfect, but the change is unmistakable.

From: [Paula Whyman](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Pedestrian Master Plan
Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 11:54:56 PM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chairman Zyontz,

Thank you for the chance to comment on the proposed Pedestrian Master Plan. In the interest of time and space, I will keep my comments short. It's of crucial importance that citizens retain the ability to evaluate and comment on all construction projects that impact their homes and communities. I'm deeply concerned—shocked in fact—that the Plan proposes to eliminate community input on whether or not sidewalks should be built—as if it's not a question of “whether” to build sidewalks in a given location of the County's choosing, only of how to do so. The first question to ask when considering sidewalk construction should be, does the community *want* more sidewalks? In fact, I suspect eliminating community input would be unconstitutional either by county or state statute, if not both.

The answer is not to silence the input, as if the County doesn't want to know what citizens will say, doesn't want to hear potentially opposing views, doesn't want to consider that there might be a better way of meeting the same safety and other goals. The answer is to reexamine the plans and try to understand why they drew a negative community response in the first place. The best answer, though, is to begin the process in concert with the community, even at the stage of proposing data-collection, with community support and with their full knowledge.

We have seen in our community what happens when the County announces a sidewalk plan without such preliminary engagement with citizens. In our case, plans were in the works for 3 years before the community was informed by the County, and then only a fraction of our neighbors received announcements that should have gone out to all community members.

I've lived in Montgomery County all my life, and I've always spoken of the County proudly when talking with people from other jurisdictions, in particular as a place that believes in participatory government, a place that listens to its citizens. I'd like to be able to continue boasting about that feature of life here.

My neighbor, Lauren Saunders, has submitted detailed testimony that I fully support; her comments include the above issue, as well as many other aspects of the plan. Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Paula Whyman

paulawhyman.com

@paulawhyman@writing.exchange (Mastodon)

MAD LAND: Rediscovering the Wild, One Field at a Time, forthcoming, Timber Press/Hachette Book Group

Editor in Chief, [Scoundrel Time](#)

[YOU MAY SEE A STRANGER](#), TriQuarterly Books: "*Honest & sharply observed. . . smart, artful stories capture a woman's life & the moments that define her.*" — *PW*, starred review

From: [Nate Engle](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Mayor & Council](#)
Subject: Written testimony for March 23 Public Hearing - Agenda Item 7 - Pedestrian Master Plan
Date: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 8:02:15 AM
Attachments: [ToK testimony Ped Mast Plan March22.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chair Zyontz,

I'm submitting the attached testimony on behalf of the Town of Kensington in support of the March 23 agenda item regarding the Public Hearing for the County's Pedestrian Master Plan.

I will also be providing in-person testimony during the meeting tomorrow to highlight key points in our attached written testimony.

Kind regards,

Nate Engle
Councilmember, Town of Kensington

Mayor Tracey Furman

**Council Member Darin Bartram
Council Member Nate Engle**



**Council Member Conor Crimmins
Council Member Ann Lichter**

March 22, 2023

Montgomery Planning Board
Jeff Zyontz, Chair
2425 Reddie Drive, 14th Floor
Wheaton, MD 20902

Dear Chair Zyontz,

I write on behalf of the Town of Kensington to express support for the County's Pedestrian Master Plan. The document covers an impressive range of issues and offers targeted solutions for increasing walking rates and pedestrian satisfaction, creating a comfortable, convenient, and connected pedestrian network that is equitable and just, and enhancing pedestrian safety.

The process to produce the plan was data-driven and involved considerable outreach and public engagement. Eli Glazier, the lead for the Pedestrian Master Plan for Montgomery Planning, provided a briefing to our Town Council on the Plan's progress in 2022, and we worked with him on several occasions to explore synergies between the Plan and our Town's Pedestrian and Bicycling Access and Safety Working Group. Overall, we are encouraged by the collaborative spirit and approach embodied by this Plan.

There are several substantive aspects of the Plan that resonate with the Town of Kensington. In the Plan, the Town of Kensington is designated primarily as a "Town Center". The data regarding the fatality and severe injury rates is particularly striking, with "30% of crashes involving pedestrians on streets with a posted speed limit of 45-mph or higher result in a severe injury or fatality, [whereas] only 11% of crashes on streets with a 25-mph posted speed limit result in a severe injury or fatality...pedestrian crashes along a street (rather than at an intersection) are disproportionately likely to result in a severe injury or fatality". Furthermore, the Plan highlights that Town Center Boulevards are amongst the most dangerous street types and are flagged for prioritized improvements.

These data speak to two key points that the Town has pursued over the past few years. The first is lowering speed limits on all streets, and the second is improving pedestrian and bicycling safety and access along our Town Center Boulevards; primarily Connecticut Avenue, Knowles Avenue, Plyers Mill Road, Metropolitan Avenue, and University Boulevard. In 2022, the Town Council successfully lowered the speed limit on all Town-owned roads to 20 mph and has actively pursued grant and program opportunities to bring together our transportation partners at the state and county levels to evaluate improvements to the above-mentioned boulevards. This includes working with the Montgomery County

**Town of Kensington 3710 Mitchell Street Kensington, MD 20895
Phone 301.949.2424 Fax 301.949.4925
www.tok.md.gov**

Mayor Tracey Furman

Council Member Darin Bartram
Council Member Nate Engle



Council Member Conor Crimmins
Council Member Ann Lichter

Department of Transportation (MCDOT) in 2021-2022 on a Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) grant to improve connectivity, safety, and access along Connecticut Avenue, and securing Maryland Department of Transportation State (MDOT) State Highway Administration (SHA) Bicycling and Pedestrian Priority Area (BPPA) designation. The BPPA plan is currently being developed, and it will match the County's BiPPA designation boundaries to improve linkages with County processes. Still, while we have seen progress over the past two years, we face considerable challenges with making the improvements we desire along the non-Town roads. This is mainly the case for the Town Center Boulevards noted earlier, which are all Maryland state roads. These state roads intersect with various Town and County roads, creating a complicated web of jurisdictional responsibilities. Moreover, coordination with MDOT SHA to prioritize improvements, while improving in recent years, remains a protracted process that often results in the deemphasis of pedestrian access and safety. For example, we are continually rebuffed by MDOT SHA in our request to lower the speed to 25 mph along Connecticut Avenue. **Thus, we foresee considerable benefit in prioritizing the recommendation to explore transferring control of these state roads in Town Centers to the County.**

We also note several other recommendations that align particularly well with the ongoing efforts of the Town to increase pedestrian and bicycling access and safety. These include, inter alia, the data-driven program to build more sidewalks faster, raised crosswalks, pedestrian recall, marked cross walks at all legs, no-turn on red limitations, leading pedestrian intervals, driver yield requirements, shading improvements along pedestrian pathways, improving education programs (including in MCPS), traffic gardens, and deemphasizing pedestrian volumes as a determining factor in deciding where to install pedestrian or connectivity improvements. These and other recommendations create an excellent roadmap for the County to follow. Although the Kensington Town Center BiPPA is listed in the Tier 3 category*¹, **most of the pedestrian improvements we urgently seek are contained in the Tier 2 BiPPA list (i.e., the entire stretch of Connecticut Avenue, Knowles Avenue, and Summit Avenue), and thus we encourage the County to progress from Tier 1 implementation to Tier 2 implementation in the CIP as quickly as possible.**

One area in which the County's Pedestrian Master Plan falls short, however, is that it does not list municipalities as key agencies and implementation partners (see page 61). **As a result, municipalities are excluded as stakeholders in the key actions and recommendations.** This is unfortunate because many of these jurisdictions, like the Town of Kensington, maintain ownership over the roads within their boundaries, which often intersect with County and State roads, as previously noted. This is a missed opportunity to identify specific areas for collaboration from the perspective of the County, so we are left with having to self-identify where to plug into the process and prioritize. An example of this would be to identify processes for municipalities to ensure pedestrian improvement projects within our boundaries are on the list in County plans for accessing federal funding.

* Plyers Mill Road is also a Tier 3

Mayor Tracey Furman

Council Member Darin Bartram
Council Member Nate Engle



Council Member Conor Crimmins
Council Member Ann Lichter

Finally, the Town has conducted biennial walkability/bikeability audits, starting in 2020. **We will continue to draw the linkages with this effort and will endeavor to sync our biennial audits** with the Pedestrian Master Plan biennial monitoring report (action MO-1a) and the biennial pedestrian and bicycling survey (action MO-1b) so that the data in each are as current as possible.

Again, there is much to applaud in this Pedestrian Master Plan. We look forward to working with the County to pursue the opportunities and address the issues flagged above, and in so doing, continue partnering on pedestrian and bicycling safety and access improvements in the Town of Kensington and beyond.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nate Engle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nate" and last name "Engle" clearly distinguishable.

Nate Engle
Councilmember, Town of Kensington
Co-Chair, Pedestrian and Bicycling Access and Safety Group
Co-Chair, Mobility and Traffic Committee

From: [Alison Gillespie](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); [Glazier, Eli](#)
Subject: Testimony
Date: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 8:26:17 AM
Attachments: [Pedestrian Master Plan Testimony from Alison Gillespie.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Here is my testimony for Thursday's planning board hearing on the Pedestrian Master Plan.

Thanks.

Alison Gillespie
301-385-0313

For the record I am Alison Gillespie.

I am here today to show my enthusiasm for the Pedestrian Master Plan. I am past president of my civic association and I raised two children in Montgomery County. When they were younger, I served as president at the middle school PTA, and then went on to start the countywide PTA Safe Routes to School committee when they were in high school.

My husband and I were overjoyed to find a house near Metro twenty years ago, and we both walk and ride buses a lot. My kids walked to school at some points, rode the bus and then drove themselves to school eventually. They also took mass transit everywhere and they still do as college students. One of the great joys of living in the Forest Glen area between Silver Spring and Wheaton is that there are a lot of transit options to choose from.

But one of the nightmares is we have some incredibly dangerous roads that you must walk along to get to that mass transit.

I have spent hundreds of hours advocating for safety upgrades and pedestrian infrastructure – not just for my own family, school, or neighborhood but for places across the county. At first when I moved here I thought things were bad for walking because we had chosen an older neighborhood that needed retrofitting, but years of advocating and also years of working in the up county proved this was not the case. We simply are not putting pedestrian needs first. We don't do it in older neighborhoods and far too often we don't do it in newer neighborhoods either. And we all suffer for it. It takes a toll on quality of life and it is increasingly taking lives. Too many people are dying on our roads as they try to walk or roll to daily activities.

I am here tonight to express my support for the Pedestrian Master Plan because I see that it could help us fix a lot of our toughest roads and make them safer for all. I have watched as the planning staff has worked incredibly hard on this plan. Their diligence, care and extreme professionalism are demonstrated in every paragraph and word. It is a really magnificent plan and we all should be proud of it and I hope you will enact it.

The recommendations are wide-ranging, but I believe that they have to be – and I support that. The pedestrian environment is about more than just sidewalks and crosswalks. This isn't a plan about infrastructure. It's a plan that seeks to change our culture from being car-centric to pedestrian friendly. That means we must think about not just what we build but how we enforce rules, how we design, and how we define accessibility for all.

So many people are getting injured and killed in crashes on our roads. Making roads safer for all is a huge and daunting problem. I salute the way this plan goes above and beyond what master plans typically do. There's no time to waste. We've lost too many people already and too many people from marginalized communities and low income neighborhoods especially.

I think that the more places these types of recommendations are made, the more visible they are, and the more likely they are to be implemented. Having recommendations in multiple places is great.

I literally have nothing to criticize in this plan – but I did want to call out my favorite part. I especially love the “Build More Walkable Places” section. For years we, as parents, have asked MCPS to site schools and other public buildings to prioritize providing safe and direct pedestrian access. We’ve also been asking to revise the minimum acreage requirements for school sites. It is wonderful to see those requests in writing and I want to help our county make them a reality.

I also would love to see you all vote to make the Open Parkways along Beach Drive and Sligo Creek Parkway permanent. As one of the three founders of Open Streets Montgomery I spent a lot of time during the pandemic getting more streets open to pedestrians. Those two areas have transformed my weekends and have changed my neighborhood for the better. Let’s make the open parkways permanent!

Thanks for being leaders who listen and thanks for considering my input.

From: [Maddy Glist](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Pedestrian Master Plan - Kenwood Park
Date: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 10:12:11 AM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

As a homeowner in the Kenwood Park neighborhood. I'd like to submit my thoughts on the new Pedestrian Master Plan.

I'd support the recommendation (B-1a) to pivot from a reactive, request-driven process to an equitable, data driven process, but that data should include the input and interest of the community that knows the neighborhood and where sidewalks are needed. I'd reject the recommendation (B-1b) that public engagement should be limited to how sidewalks should be constructed, not whether. Community notice and involvement must be incorporated earlier in the process. Earlier notice and involvement also help people to make landscaping and other decisions while a sidewalk plan is being developed to reduce conflict.

The sidewalk program should be revamped to create a best-in-class, holistic, cross-department approach that is not singularly focused on sidewalks but rather on the best way to maximize neighborhood safety, preserve trees, and enhance the pedestrian experience. This includes: (1) working together with the Traffic division to consider street alterations that calm traffic and save trees; (2) developing a comprehensive approach to how to build sidewalks while saving trees, drawing on the work of others across the country, including not only the use of flexi-pave but also of other state of the art techniques such as root bridges, as a way to save roots.

The Pedestrian Master Plan should bring together these elements into a recommendation specifically focused on reworking the sidewalk program. This would achieve these County goals, which are not specifically incorporated into sidewalk program recommendations.

Best,

Madelyn Glist & Tim Pohle
6106 Lenox Road
Bethesda, MD 20817

From: [MICHAEL HEYL](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Pedestrian Master Plan Public Hearing – March 23, 2023 - Written Testimony of Byeforde Rock Creek Highlands Citizen's Association
Date: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 10:27:46 AM
Attachments: [BRCH Master Plan Comments.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chairman Zyontz and Members of The Planning Board

The Byeforde Rock Creek Highlands ("BRCH") Citizen's Association, Inc. is hereby submitting the attached comments to express our concerns with the county's proposal to make closures of certain sections of Beach Drive permanent, as included in section B-4g of the proposed Pedestrian Master Plan. While we support the objectives of the Pedestrian Master Plan to create safer, more comfortable experiences for county pedestrians, this particular aspect of the proposal is inconsistent with the goals of the Pedestrian Master Plan, Vision Zero and Thrive Montgomery 2050. Moreover, Montgomery Parks has not sufficiently evaluated or researched the impacts that the existing weekend and holiday closures have already created.

Our written statement is attached.

Sincerely,

Michael S. Heyl, Esq.
Mark Redmiles, Esq.

March 21, 2023

By email to: mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org

Mr. Jeff Zyontz
Acting Chair Montgomery County Planning Board M-NCPPC
2425 Reedie Drive 14th Floor
Wheaton, MD 20902

Re: Pedestrian Master Plan Public Hearing – March 23, 2023
Written Testimony of Byeforde Rock Creek Highlands Citizen's Association

Dear Chairman Zyontz and Members of The Planning Board:

The Byeforde Rock Creek Highlands ("BRCH") Citizen's Association, Inc. is hereby submitting these comments to express our concerns with the county's proposal to make closures of certain sections of Beach Drive permanent, as included in section B-4g of the proposed Pedestrian Master Plan. While we support the objectives of the Pedestrian Master Plan to create safer, more comfortable experiences for county pedestrians, this particular aspect of the proposal is inconsistent with the goals of the Pedestrian Master Plan, Vision Zero and Thrive Montgomery 2050. Moreover, Montgomery Parks has not sufficiently evaluated or researched the impacts that the existing weekend and holiday closures have already created. Montgomery Parks has not been transparent and has ignored community concerns raised regarding the unsafe situation created in adjacent neighborhoods due to the redirection of excessive volumes of "cut through" traffic in the BRCH neighborhood. Moreover, as drafted in the Pedestrian Master Plan proposal, it is ambiguous as to whether "permanent" refers to the existing weekend and holiday closures, or whether the proposal actually is seeking a 7 day a week closure. Permanent closure of Beach Drive would be incredibly short-sighted. The closures are not needed to achieve the cited goals of the Pedestrian Master Plan as adequate pedestrian pathways parallel to Beach Drive already exist. Weekend and holiday closures have already led to the very situation that the Pedestrian Master Plan seeks to avoid. Other practical and achievable alternatives, such as the creation of designated bikes lanes on Beach Drive are available, yet not being considered. We urge the Parks and Planning Commission to delay any vote on the Pedestrian Master Plan until the Commission is seated with five full time members. We also urge the removal of this ill-conceived and unsupported provision from the Pedestrian Master Plan until additional due diligence and dialogue with county transportation officials and local residents adversely impacted by this provision is performed.

The BRCH Citizens Association has authorized the substance of these comments.

Background

BRCH Citizen's Association

The BRCH Citizens Association was established in 1976. One of the key principles upon which the association was formed was to ensure the safety of our residents from traffic. Although the association was inactive in recent years due to people moving away and passing on, we have recently revived the association. The primary purpose of reviving the association is to address the safety issues created by the weekend and holiday closure implemented as part of Montgomery Parks' Open Parkways program.

Byeforde Rock Creek Highlands sits between Connecticut Ave. to the East, Beach Dr. to the South, Cedar Lane to the West and Saul Road to the North. Culver Street is parallel to Beach Dr. and runs from Connecticut Ave., connecting to Cedar Lane via a small portion of Delmont Lane.

Open Parkways

In April of 2020, Montgomery Parks initiated the Open Parkways program as a COVID-oriented program. Under the program, the 2.6 mile stretch of Beach Dr. between Connecticut Ave. and Knowles Ave. was closed Fridays through Sundays to allow residents to get outside and safely social distance from one another. At that time, the pandemic essentially created exigent circumstances warranting such closures. However, as time went on and the county re-opened, residents in BRCH became increasingly concerned with the volume of traffic using Culver Street as a detour when Beach Dr. was closed. Working through then County Council President Gabe Alborno, and representatives from MCDOT, common sense and reason prevailed and Montgomery Parks was persuaded to amend the program by limiting the closures to Saturdays and Sundays. This opening of Beach Drive on Fridays occurred in mid-December of 2022. If the proposed closure of Beach Drive is intended to be seven days a week, the proposal would undermine the decision not to include Fridays – a decision which had the support of the County Council, MCDOT and the then newly appointed interim Parks and Planning Chair.

Although traffic volume on Fridays has decreased 46%¹ from the excessive and unsafe volumes experienced when Beach Drive was closed (as evidenced by the traffic volume data summarized on the attached **Exhibit 1**), the closure of Beach Drive on weekends and holidays still funnels an unsafe and excessive volume of non-local/cut-through traffic on Culver Street - a narrow, residential street that does not have sidewalks, speed humps, parking lanes or yellow lines. The average Saturday traffic volume alone is double the average daily traffic volume on Culver Street on Monday through Thursday. And, including Sunday, the weekend traffic volume on Culver Street when Beach Drive is closed increases 1.7 times the average daily traffic volume experienced on Monday through Thursday.

For the purpose of context, BRCH is concerned with the closure of the .60 mile stretch of Beach Drive that extends between Cedar Lane and Connecticut Ave. This is the stretch that parallels Culver Street in the BRCH neighborhood. It also is coincidentally the only stretch of Beach Dr. that leads commuters right to and from the intersection of Connecticut Ave. and the I-495 Beltway and Bethesda and Rockville. This is a heavily relied upon stretch of road based on location alone. For example, it provides direct access to the Beltway for traffic flowing to and from NIH, Bethesda Naval and Walter Reed – each of which have shifts that operate 7 days a week. The stretch also provides an alternate route to Stone Ridge High School as well as commuters traveling to and from Rockville or Bethesda and the Capital Beltway.

Impact of Beach Drive Closures on BRCH

While the citizens of BRCH support the overall goals of the Pedestrian Master Plan, we are concerned with the proposal to make the weekend/holiday Beach Drive closure permanent. The closure of the aforementioned section of Beach Drive redirects significant volumes of non-local traffic² from all over the DMV onto a residential street as a cut through. Traffic uses Culver Street

¹ Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) has conducted four tube count style traffic studies on Culver Street since Montgomery Parks started the Open Parkways Program. Attached as Exhibit 1 is a summary of the traffic volume data contained in the four studies. A copy of each individual study's traffic volume and speed is also attached as pages 2-5 of Exhibit 1.

² Non-Local Traffic is defined as those vehicles entering or exiting a neighborhood street and having a registration address further than 3/4 mile (4000 feet) straight line distance from any point on the street under evaluation; estimated by means of a license tag survey sample or other appropriate

with access points from Connecticut Ave. as well as a small portion of Delmont Lane which intersects with Cedar Lane. Specifically, traffic is re-directed:

- From Beach Drive, which has:
 - a paved pedestrian footpath adjacent to the road that has been in place since the 1970s and 1980s;
 - a double yellow-line;
 - Parking lots; and
 - No residential homes.
- To BRCH (Culver Street), which:
 - does not have sidewalks;
 - is a narrow residential street with houses and families aligned on both sides of the street;
 - no speed humps;
 - has on-street parking, but no parking lanes thereby reducing traffic to one narrow lane;
 - has several blind spots (hills and curves) and;
 - does not have a double yellow-line.



Image 1: Culver Street. No sidewalks; No parking lanes; narrow throughway; No speed humps.



Image 2: Culver Street. One of many blind spots.

Moreover, many of the cut-through drivers are distracted holding their phones to see the detour – not paying attention to what's in front of them as they are non-local and not familiar with the area. This

methods. Montgomery County Code §31.69.01.02, COMCOR 31.69.01, *Through Traffic Volume Access Restrictions in Residential Areas*.

also has led to altercations between cut-through drivers and BRCH residents merely trying to walk in their neighborhood. There also have been numerous reports of sideswipe hit and run accidents damaging cars on Culver Street. In addition to numerous mirrors being sheared off, cars have even been sideswiped.

The local impacts of the closure of Beach Dr. is completely at odds with two of the primary goals of the county's Vision Zero implementation plan: (i) access to maintained sidewalks for pedestrians in high traffic volume areas (see Action S-12 Montgomery County Vision Zero FY22-23 Work Plan)³; and (ii) safe access to public transportation (See e.g., Action T-2 Montgomery County Vision Zero FY22-23 Work Plan)⁴. With bus stops located at Connecticut Ave. and Culver, as well as on Cedar Lane, BRCH residents are forced to walk to bus stops while dodging speeding cut-through traffic.

This proposal also is contrary to several of the primary goals of the Pedestrian Master Plan. For example, forcing excess cut-through traffic into a residential neighborhood makes walking and bicycling in the BRCH neighborhood inherently less safe. This by no means is the program "enhancing pedestrian safety" in the BRCH neighborhood. Rather, it has made walking on the street unsafe and has created a real risk of harm to any pedestrian brave enough to walk on Culver Street.

Closing Beach Drive also does not "Create a Comfortable, Connected, Convenient Pedestrian Network." As noted above, there already is an established pedestrian footpath and bike trail that runs parallel to Beach Drive through the areas subject to the Open Parkways program. Indeed, the plan for building the footpath dates back to the 1960s. Ironically, the purpose for building the trail was to establish a connected series of paths and trails for citizens to walk and bicycle throughout the county. Construction of the paved path parallel to Beach Drive was initiated in 1971. The section running between Connecticut Ave. and Cedar Lane and Knowles Ave. was built in the 1975-1977 timeframe. For decades, this pathway has served to provide a comfortable, connected and convenient network for pedestrians and bicyclists alike. As a result, including the Open Parkways and associated Beach Drive closures in the Pedestrian Master Plan is not warranted. Moreover, and as addressed in more detail below, the county has not presented any evidence or data demonstrating, or even suggesting, that the existing pedestrian pathway is somehow overcrowded or otherwise insufficient to meet the goals to "Create a Comfortable, Connected, Convenient Pedestrian Network" as articulated in the Pedestrian Master Plan.

As stated in the Pedestrian Master Plan, pedestrian *"Comfort" is not the same as "safety." While safety will always be the bedrock principle of the transportation system (and is the focus of Goal 3), increasing pedestrian comfort can also help create a pedestrian experience in Montgomery County that residents and visitors enjoy and look forward to, not just tolerate or overcome.* The same logic applies to the impact of the weekend and holiday Beach Drive closure on the BRCH neighborhood. Safety should be the priority. The impact of the Beach Drive closures has made it less comfortable to walk in the BRCH neighborhood. At present, residents on Culver Street cannot safely walk their dogs, or even walk or bicycle safely on their street on the weekend. The weekend traffic is twice the amount of weekday traffic and something that our residents do not look forward to – due to the safety issue created, it is something that cannot just be tolerated and overcome. Making the closure permanent – either as 7 days or the weekend – subjects the residents of BRCH to significant risk. It is placing the "comfort" of an unneeded duplicative pedestrian pathway over the safety of county residents.

Montgomery Parks is simply looking for a basis to justify the continuation of a COVID-era program that is no longer **needed**. Open Parkways was creative and provided an outlet for residents to get

³ Montgomery County Vision Zero Work Plan, FY22-23, available at [Vision Zero Fiscal Years 2022-2023 Work Plan \(montgomerycountymd.gov\)](https://montgomerycountymd.gov/VisionZero/FY22-23-Work-Plan), (last accessed March 17, 2023).

⁴ *Id.*

outside and safely distance from one another. There were exigent circumstances as the world was facing a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic. However, as the pandemic has waned, public health emergency orders lifted and life has gotten back to normal, there is no longer a need for wider spaces on existing public trails. Because the footpath already meets the goals of the Pedestrian Master Plan, the resources being allocated to support the Open Parkways should be redirected to other projects, such as building a designated bike lane on Beach Dr. for advanced cyclists, or building new trails in other areas of the county which better meet the racial equity and social justice objectives of the Pedestrian Master Plan.

Traffic Volumes Are Excessive for a Residential Street

Shortly after the Open Parkways program was initiated in April of 2021, residents in BRCH noticed an increase in the volume of cars traveling in the neighborhood, many at dangerous speeds, on Fridays through Sundays. As noted above, at that time, Beach Drive also was closed on Fridays. Residents quickly reached out to the MCDOT to express their concerns. In response to these concerns, MCDOT commissioned traffic studies that were conducted the weeks of: October 7 - October 13, 2020; January 5 - January 11, 2021; March 13-March 19, 2021; and January 18-January 24, 2023. Each study records and reports the speed, volume and vehicle class for motorized vehicles traveling North and South bound on Culver Street for a specified 7-day period. These studies showed an increase of car volume of over 300% between weekdays and weekends (including Fridays).⁵ The results of these traffic studies are attached as pages 3-5 of the attached Exhibit 1. They also are available from MCDOT.

A more recent MCDOT traffic study was performed in January of 2023.⁶ As with the other 3 studies, a tube count was performed at a single designated location on Culver Street. Due to there being just one tube counter, the results do not reflect the total volume of traffic on Culver Street, which would have included the volume of residential trips that did not involve passage over the tube. Nonetheless, due to the placement of the tube counter at the midway point on Culver St., the traffic counts predominantly reflect the volume of cut-through traffic running between Connecticut Ave. and Delmont Lane/Cedar Lane. Similar to the counts taken during the pandemic, traffic volumes on Culver Street doubled on Saturday as compared to the weekday average traffic volume.

The data from the 4 studies has been summarized into a single page – page 2 of attached **Exhibit 1**. The data using all 4 studies establishes that traffic volume on Culver Street from Monday through Thursday⁷ when Beach Drive was open averaged 350 vehicles per day. In contrast, the average traffic volume on the 4 Saturdays in the studies, when Beach Drive was closed, was 692 vehicles per day. This Saturday volume is almost double the Monday-Thursday traffic volume. The average traffic volume for the 8 weekend days (Saturday and Sunday) in the studies, when Beach drive was closed, was 591 vehicles per day. The combined weekend day volume is 1.7 times the Monday - Thursday daily average.

Beach Drive was closed on Fridays during the first 3 studies (2020 and 2021) and traffic volume averaged 955 vehicles on Fridays in those 3 studies. During the fourth study, Beach Drive was open, and on Friday January 20, 2023, traffic volume was 437 vehicles. This is a 46% reduction (437 vehicles down from 955 vehicles) with Beach Drive open compared with the 3 Fridays when Beach was closed. By re-opening Beach Drive on Saturday and Sunday, a similar 46% traffic volume reduction could be expected. As a result, traffic volume on weekend days would be expected to return to more normal traffic volume of fewer than 400 vehicles per day (instead of 500-

⁵ See attached Exhibit 1, p. 3-5.

⁶ See attached Exhibit 1, p. 2.

⁷ Monday October 12, 2020 was the Columbus Day holiday, so it was not included in the non-holiday Mon. - Thur. average for the data summary page.

800 vehicles per day) - which is a safer traffic volume level for a residential street not designed nor intended to carry this volume of traffic, especially with the characteristics of Culver Street.

As noted above, due to its location with access to the and from the Capital Beltway, Culver Street serves as the “alternate route” that is used when Beach Dr. is closed. The weekend traffic is unsafe and excessive. Moreover, Culver Street is just one Beltway incident away from being jammed with cars from Connecticut Ave. to Cedar Lane. The images below depict one such event on a Saturday in November of 2022, as well as a Saturday on Culver Street. It goes without saying that the traffic jam that occurred in November of 2022 (shown below) took place at night when Beach Drive sat closed and empty.



Image 3: Culver Street. Traffic Jam, Saturday, November 19, 2022



Image 4: Culver Street. Traffic Jam, Saturday, November 19, 2022



Image 5: Culver Street traffic on a Saturday in December 2022

Montgomery Parks Has Either Not Conducted or Disclosed any Traffic Studies to Support Permanent Beach Drive Closures

We continue to have concerns about the lack of diligence conducted prior to the implementation of the Open Parkways and the associated lack of data supporting its continuation. As noted above, Montgomery Parks implemented the Open Parkways at the outset of the pandemic in April of 2020. Due to the exigent circumstances, it appears that the decision to close Beach Drive was made without any type of assessment of traffic volumes or the potential for cut-through traffic into adjacent neighborhoods. Moreover, no such data have been collected since the program was initiated. Thus, it does not appear that Montgomery Parks has any data showing the volume of traffic that relies on this particular section of Beach Dr. during the week or on the weekends. Despite requesting such data in multiple Montgomery Public Information Act (“MPIA”) requests, if such data do exist, it has not been provided (even in redacted form) in response to these requests for this information.

Moreover, prior to the implementation of the Open Parkways program, there was little to no coordination between Montgomery Parks and MCDOT to gauge the level of potential spill-over traffic onto residential roads that would result from the closure. This was confirmed through a series of communications between BRCH residents and representatives from MCDOT in 2020 and 2021. Although MCDOT has performed multiple traffic counts clearly showing the detrimental impact on local roads resulting from the Beach Drive closure, no consideration (or re-consideration) was undertaken by Montgomery Parks with respect to the program as a whole. Only after the increased involvement of MCDOT and political pressure was applied by the County Council in Q4 of 2022 did Montgomery Parks amend the program to apply only to Saturdays and Sundays. Nonetheless, as

the traffic studies discussed above show, this modification has had limited effect with Saturday and Sunday traffic still being an issue.

Having Montgomery Parks Responsible for Traffic Remediation Creates a Conflict of Interest

It was explained to BRCH residents by county officials that there is a Montgomery County policy whereby if a county agency implements a program that disrupts the flow of traffic, that agency is responsible for the remediation of such disruptions. As a result, it is Montgomery Parks that is responsible for resolving the adverse traffic impacts resulting from the Open Parkways program. This includes addressing the unsafe cut-through traffic volume in the BRCH neighborhood. However, Montgomery Parks' jurisdiction and mission is dedicated to the betterment of the county's parks and providing county residents access to the parks.

In fact, on a town hall type Zoom call held by Maryland State representatives regarding Little Falls Parkway on October 24, 2022,⁸ Montgomery Parks' Director Mike Riley stated his priority and only concern is providing access to the parks and any transportation related issues or safety concerns caused by any changes made by Montgomery Parks are not his concern. This attitude should not be tolerated by the Planning Department. Beach Drive and other roads that traverse the interior of some Montgomery County Parks are significant arteries in the county and facilitate significant amounts of traffic volume. Montgomery Parks should be a "good neighbor" with the rest of Montgomery County and county residents and its road policies should maximize safety on neighboring roads and not just park access.

As a result, having Montgomery Parks in charge of resolving the deleterious and unintended consequences of the very program that it initiated and support creates a significant conflict of interest. It defies logic that an agency whose mission is to "Protect and interpret our valuable natural and cultural resources; balance demand for recreation with the need for conservation; offer various enjoyable recreational activities that encourage healthy lifestyles; and provide clean, safe, and accessible places" is responsible for identifying and implementing remedial measures that impact the very programs that it puts in place. There is a very obvious conflict of interest in having Montgomery Parks in charge of resolving these traffic and safety issues. Parks' goals are met by closing Beach Drive – not by resolving the resulting traffic issues created on county roads.

It also is unclear as to why personnel whose training, experience and vision is dedicated to providing enjoyable, accessible, safe, and green park system that promotes community through shared spaces and treasured experiences, would be responsible for handling issues that fall outside of their jurisdiction.

The impact of such a conflict of interest is clearly demonstrated by Montgomery Parks' unwillingness to engage in regular dialogue with representatives from the BRCH neighborhood. Even more demonstrative is the lack of adequate and meaningful actions and plans being considered to detour traffic away from BRCH. As a result of this conflict of interest, BRCH residents have been treated as adversaries rather than advocates offering alternatives that achieve mutual objectives. Moreover, if the intent of the word "permanent" in the Pedestrian Master Plan proposal is for a 7 days a week closure of Beach Drive, this would clearly undermine and run contrary to Parks Director Riley's statement in December 2022 when he stated, "In response to community feedback about an increase in neighborhood vehicle traffic, our engineers examined traffic data and concluded that reopening the parkway to vehicles on Fridays would alleviate traffic resulting from the closure and

⁸ Little Falls Parkway was also impacted by Montgomery Parks' Open Parkways program. Sligo Creek Parkway is the third road impacted by the program.

improve neighborhood safety.”⁹ Although re-opening Beach Drive on Fridays was the absolute right thing to do in the name of neighborhood safety, it was not a zero-sum game. Ensuring the safety of the citizens of Montgomery County and BRCH is not a Monday to Friday endeavor. Additional actions need to be taken on the weekends as well.

The Traffic Abatement and Street Signage Placed By Montgomery Parks is Inadequate

By placing Montgomery Parks in charge of addressing the disruption of county traffic flow on non-Parks regulated roads, it makes sense that the few signs that have been placed have had, and will continue to have, zero impact. The signs are not visible and some are even inaccurate. They also are not identified as “detour” signs, but rather, advise drivers to seek an alternative route. For example:

1. On NB Cedar Lane, there are no signs between Beach Drive and Delmont Ln., the entrance to our neighborhood providing access to Culver Street. The only “Alt. Route” sign appears AFTER the Delmont entrance to the neighborhood.

Moreover, that sign erroneously directs traffic to Rt. 355 when it should say Rt. 185 (Connecticut Ave.).



Image 6: Sign placed after BRCH entrance; wrong road identified

2. The Alt. Rt. signs on Knowles Ave. redirecting traffic from the Beach/Knowles intersection actually lead traffic right to Delmont Road and into our neighborhood.
3. On NB Connecticut Ave., there are no signs preventing cars from turning left onto Culver Street. Rather, there is an “Alt. Rt.” sign on the other side of the road. It is too small to read in addition to being placed 30 yards up the road and across three lanes of traffic. Based on this location, it also is typically obstructed by vehicles traveling on Connecticut Ave.
4. There are no signs at the Beach Dr. intersections (or blockage gates) that even suggest that there is a detour. As noted, on Connecticut Ave. the Alt. Rt. sign is 30 yards up the road and across three lanes of traffic. There already is a no U-turn sign and post right at the Culver Street Connecticut Av. Intersection. It would be very easy to replace this sign with an appropriate “No Through Traffic” or “No Access to Cedar Lane” sign. As noted, on Cedar Lane, there are no signs at all prior to Delmont.

⁹ Montgomery Parks, Press Release, *Montgomery Parks to Modify open parkways schedule on Beach Drive*, December 7, 2022, available at [Montgomery Parks to modify open parkways schedule on Beach Drive - Montgomery Parks](#) (last visited March 19, 2023).

On January 3, 2023, MCDOT submitted to Montgomery Parks a revised detour proposal to address collateral traffic concerns on Culver Street when Beach Drive is closed on weekends and holidays. The revised detour proposal included barricades and “no through traffic” signage at Connecticut Ave. and Culver Street and the Cedar Lane and Delmont Street intersections. These are the two intersections that provide access to Culver Street for cut-through traffic on weekends and holidays. According to MCDOT Montgomery Parks has not agreed to follow MCDOT’s expert recommendation and has not agreed to erect the barriers with signage on weekends and holidays. MCDOT has also recommended to Montgomery Parks that it only close Beach Drive between Cedar Lane and Knowles Avenue. This is because the neighborhood road configuration in Parkwood is different than BRCH. For example, there are sidewalks and there is no road providing access to Connecticut Avenue and Beltway access parallel to Beach Drive in Parkwood. Montgomery Parks has also ignored this astute input from the transportation experts at MCDOT. It is not only inconceivable for Parks to ignore MCDOT suggestions, but also dangerous.

Lack of Transparency to Explain Why Beach Drive is Not Closed Between Connecticut Ave. and Stonybrook Dr.

The BRCH Citizens Association also is concerned with the lack of transparency from Montgomery Parks regarding why certain sections of Beach Dr. were selected for closure under the Open Parkways program while others were not. Although this rationale and associated documentation has been requested at meetings and in the MPIA requests, as of the date of submission of these comments, we have yet to receive a response. This particular section of Beach Dr. is contiguous with the section that is closed between Connecticut Ave and Cedar Lane and the Rock Creek Hills neighborhood road configuration is more like the Parkwood neighborhood without a single street running parallel to Beach Drive. It also is a frequently used stretch of Beach Dr. for bicyclists coming from the Washington DC portions of Beach Dr. Hence, if the goal of closing Beach Dr. on weekends is to provide a pathway for serious bicyclists, it is unclear why Montgomery Parks chose not to close the section used to connect bicyclists with the other sections of Beach Dr. in the District.

Unfortunately, this issue and the associated lack of transparency raises a perceived conflict of interest due to the residents who live in Rock Creek Hills. For example, Montgomery Parks Director Michael Riley lives in Rock Creek Hills on a street that connects to Beach Drive. In addition, two state delegates and a U.S. Senator live in this neighborhood. Due to the disparity in traffic impacts between BRCH and Rock Creek Hills resulting from the Open Parkways program and the associated closures of Beach Drive, Director Riley should have recused himself from the decision-making associated with this program. Ignoring document requests, meeting requests and the overall concerns of the BRCH community is not the same as a recusal.

Beach Drive Pedestrian Counts Are False and Their Presentation is Misleading

Throughout the entirety of the Open Parkways program, Montgomery Parks has consistently relied upon its counts of people using the Open Parkways as its basis to continue the program. The program has repeatedly been described by Parks as popular and that the popularity of the program justifies its continuation. However, the data upon which Montgomery Parks is relying lack statistical validity. The data as presented also are misleading, particularly with respect to the stretch of Beach Dr. between Cedar Lane and Connecticut Ave. For example:

- **There are no pedestrian counting sticks on the stretch of Beach Dr. between Cedar Lane and Connecticut Ave.** Thus, Montgomery Parks has zero data upon which to claim that the closure of Beach Dr. between Connecticut Ave. and Cedar Lane is “popular” or to justify the closure of this segment based on volume of usage.
- The counting device that Montgomery Parks has been relying upon actually is 1/3 mile north of the Cedar Lane intersection at Wildwood Ave. This device only counts on that stretch of

Beach Drive – not the stretch between Cedar Lane and Connecticut Ave. There is no rational basis to support any representation of these numbers as applicable to the stretch between Cedar Lane and Connecticut Ave. There are no real data demonstrating the number of people who use this stretch of Beach Dr. when it is closed. Absent any such data, the characterization of the “popularity” of this closure is misleading. If such data exist, it was not provided (even in redacted form) in response to multiple MPIO requests for this information.

- Montgomery Parks does not use any statistical algorithms to normalize the data that it collects on pedestrian usage when Beach Dr. is closed. For example, Montgomery Parks does not take into account the volume of people who follow Beach to the end of the closed portion (e.g., at Knowles Ave., etc.) and then turn around and pass the counting stick again. Rather, it appears that these people are counted twice.

Moreover, when taking into account the other counter at the Knowles Ave. intersection, when aggregate numbers are tallied, a single user could be counted as many as four times per use. See “Total Counts” in **Image 7** below. Montgomery Parks has consistently been touting these aggregate raw counts which artificially inflate the volumes of people using Beach Dr. As a result, representing that in excess of 1.5 million people have taken advantage of the Open Parkways on Beach Dr. is false and materially misleading. If a data normalization equation or algorithm is used, it was not provided (even in redacted form) in response to our MPIO requests for this information.

Based on the forgoing, the volume of people using Beach Drive on weekends is grossly exaggerated. The image below demonstrates how Montgomery Parks is presenting the data that it collects. The chart below presents the counts collected on January 21, 2023. The number at the top characterized as “Total Counts” actually aggregates the counts taken at both Wildwood Ave. and Knowles Ave. There also are no disclaimers or qualifying language regarding the double and quadruple counting of actual users. This shortcoming was finally acknowledged by a representative of Montgomery Parks on a call with representatives of the Kenwood Neighborhood Association on February 15, 2023.

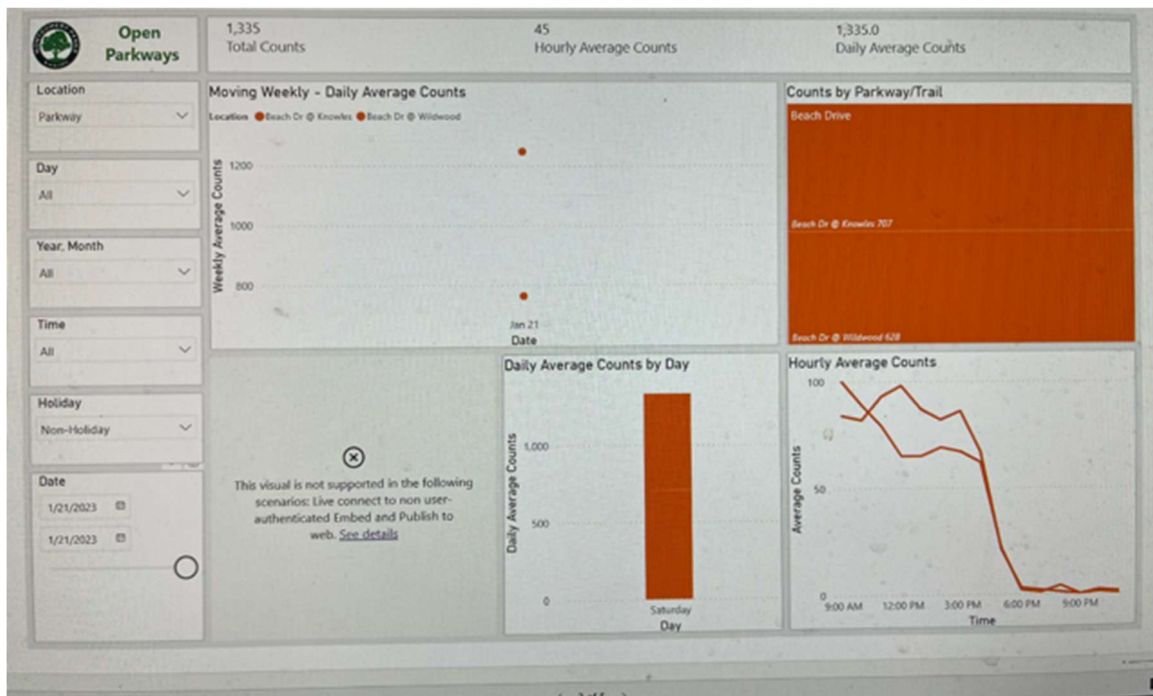


Image 7: Parks Counts at Beach Dr. and Wildwood Ave., January 21, 2023

The image above shows a gross total of 628 “counts” taken at Beach Dr. and Wildwood Rd. on Saturday January 21, 2023 – one of the days included in the most recent MCDOT study during which traffic was counted on Culver Street in the BRCH neighborhood. Even if no reduction is taken into account for people being double counted at this stick, this number is still significantly less than the 788 cars funneled to Culver Street. Taking into account that most people on Beach Dr. are being counted twice, the disproportionate number of cut-through cars redirected to Culver St. compared to the small number of people actually using Beach Dr. is staggering.

The images below also show segments of Beach Dr. on two random Saturdays in 2022 and 2023.



Image 8: Empty section of Beach Dr., weekend of February 25-26, 2023



Image 9: Empty section of Beach Dr., weekend of November 5-6, 2022. Note the runners still using the footpath.

It should also be noted that popularity should not be used as a metric to support what are intended to be safety oriented programs. Popularity is not one of the goals of Vision Zero or the Pedestrian Master Plan. Indeed, the word popular only appears once in the Pedestrian Master Plan – and it is the characterization of Beach Drive as being one of the most popular trails in the county. Assuming there are even data supporting the statement, it most certainly is because there is already a pedestrian pathway there. The only other interpretation would be that it is popular for commuters driving to the Beltway, which clearly demonstrates why it's closure forces cars onto Culver Street. Moreover, as noted above, there are no data demonstrating, or even suggesting, that the existing pedestrian pathway parallel to Beach Drive is somehow overcrowded or insufficient to meet the goals of the Pedestrian Master Plan.

In sum, we remain concerned by the reliance upon raw data to justify the “popularity” of the Open Parkways and its extrapolation to a section of a section of Beach Drive where Parks has no data.

The Impact of Open Parkways Has Exacerbated an Already Problematic Traffic Issue in BRCH

The BRCH Citizens Association was formed in 1976 to address, among other things, traffic safety concerns in our neighborhood. Although some degree of cut through traffic is expected on any residential street, the traffic issues in BRCH increased exponentially in 2012 when Walter Reed was moved the NIH Bethesda campus. This move alone was projected to result in: (i) 3,600 new employees; (ii) an increase to the base's total workforce of 44%, increasing the volume to 11,686

people; (iii) patient visits doubling to an annual 1 million, with most expected to arrive by car. *Source, Washington Post, Aug. 6, 2012.*

Based on a review of traffic planning documentation related to the Walter Reed move, significant effort was placed to ensure that the local area could accommodate this increased volume of traffic. Roads, ramps and intersections were widened and pedestrian access was enhanced on the east side of campus on Jones Bridge Road. The Jones Bridge Road intersection at Connecticut Ave. was envisioned to be the primary route for commuters and employees to gain access to the Beltway. As a result, the majority of traffic mitigation efforts were placed there. Unfortunately, little to no attention was paid to the “back-way” to obtain access to the Capital Beltway. This pathway simply has commuters traveling on the other side of campus via Cedar Lane and then either using Beach Drive or cutting through BRCH to access Connecticut Ave. at the beltway intersection. Little to no attention was made to the Cedar Lane side and resulting traffic flow there – particularly when the Jones Bridge and Connecticut Ave. intersection is backed-up. The increased use of navigation apps such as Waze and GoogleMaps since 2012 has only served to direct higher volumes of non-local traffic into the BRCH neighborhood.

Until April of 2020, Beach Dr. served as the primary access-way to reach the Beltway for commuters traveling between Cedar Lane and Connecticut Ave. With Walter Reed and Bethesda Naval operating shifts 7 days a week, closing Beach Dr., if even just on weekends let alone permanently, would continue to funnel an already unsafe volume of cut-through traffic into the BRCH neighborhood forcing Culver Street to serve as the primary access thoroughway to/from Connecticut Ave. and the Beltway. Simply put, the existing weekend closure of Beach Dr. has eliminated and would continue to eliminate the primary roadway used to access the Beltway, thereby forcing traffic into the BRCH neighborhood.

The Open Parkways Program Has a Disproportionate Impact on the BRCH Neighborhood

The impact of the Open Parkways also has had a disproportionately adverse impact to residents in the BRCH neighborhood as compared to the other neighborhoods affected by the closure of park roads by Montgomery Parks. For example, the road that parallels Sligo Creek Pkwy (which also is closed under Open Parkways), Tenbrook Dr., has sidewalks, a wider road with a double yellow divider line, and even parking lanes on both sides of the road. Culver Street has none of those. An even greater disparity exists when BRCH is compared to the neighborhood directly across Connecticut Ave. Rock Creek Hills is not impacted at all as the portion of Beach Dr. that runs adjacent to that neighborhood remains open. Moreover, Montgomery Parks placed a “No Turn on Weekends” sign placed for that stretch of Beach from Connecticut Ave. creating an even greater disparity between Rock Creek Hills (Director Riley’s neighborhood) and BRCH. Residents of BRCH have asked for the rationale supporting why a contiguous stretch of Beach Dr. in South Kensington remains open while the stretch next to BRCH is closed. To date, despite being asked directly, and as part of our MPIA requests, we have not received any justification.

The Comparison of Open Parkways to JFK Blvd. in San Francisco (Section B-4g of the Pedestrian Master Plan) Is Misguided

Section B4g of the proposed Pedestrian Master Plan refers to the closure of JFK Drive through Golden Gate Park as a precedent for closure of Beach Drive. BRCH is gravely concerned with the use of this precedent as the JFK closure is a permanent, 7 day a week closure.¹⁰ A similar such closure on Beach Dr. would have a significant and deleterious impact on BRCH, as is described throughout this comment.

¹⁰ See [JFK Promenade | San Francisco Recreation and Parks, CA \(sfrecpark.org\)](https://sfrecpark.org/) (last visited March 19, 2023).

BRCH also questions such a comparison as the demographics are clearly distinguishable from one another. For example, JFK Drive is located in an urban area and does not serve as a throughway to gain access to an interstate. By way of comparison, Beach Drive is located in a residential area and provides access for commuters to and from a major interstate (I-495). Moreover, the issues regarding redirected traffic are entirely different. For example, as noted above, traffic from Beach Dr. is being funneled to a residential street that (i) does not have sidewalks; (ii) is populated with single family homes; (iii) has no designated parking lanes for residents, thereby making it a single lane road in parts; and (iv) has several blind spots due to curves and hills. On the other hand, the roads that parallel JFK Dr. in San Francisco (Lincoln Way and Fulton Street) have: (i) four lanes each with concrete island dividers separating them; (ii) sidewalks on both sides of the street; (iii) designated parking lanes on both sides of the street; and (iv) apartments buildings and commercial dwellings on one side only as the park is on the other side of the street.

As a result, the only comparison that can be made between the closure of JFK Blvd. and the proposed closure of Beach Dr. is that both were closed during COVID. This is clearly not a one-to-one comparison as the location and demographics are entirely different.

Montgomery Parks Has Not Considered Reasonable Alternatives

There are other very obvious and very reasonable alternatives to meet the goals of Open Parkways while not creating a dangerous situation for county residents. Ensuring the safety of the residents of BRCH and providing a path for cyclists on Beach Dr. do not need to be mutually exclusive. For example:

Establishing Designated Bike Lanes on Beach Dr.: Establishing designated bike lanes on Beach Dr. between Connecticut Ave. and Cedar Lane would be a win-win. Bike lanes with barriers would allow Beach Dr. to remain open while providing safe bike access 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. There also is plenty of space to pave such a bike lane either off of Beach Dr, itself, or as a new lane to the existing pedestrian foot path.

It should be noted that this exact concept was addressed in the MNCPP Countywide Park Trails Plan in September of 2008. That plan described the planning processes and outlined a plan for the development of Countywide Park Trails in Montgomery County. It contained materials on natural and hard surface trail corridors and planning, needs assessments and implementation strategies. Among other things, the plan included a recommendation to “Provide shoulders along Beach Drive in Rock Creek Park and Sligo Creek Parkway to accommodate advanced cyclists.” Ironically, both of these stretches of road do not presently have designated bike lanes and instead are subject to weekend closures as a result of the Open Parkways program.

Such a measure also is consistent with the goals of Vision Zero, the county's current Vision Zero implementation plans as well as the Pedestrian Master Plan. Moreover, if Parks is looking for something that truly would be popular, this would certainly be it – BRCH residents and Beach Drive users/cyclists alike would most certainly support this endeavor in the name of pedestrian/bicycle safety.

If Beach Drive is to remain closed on weekends, more has to be done to prevent traffic from using Culver Street as a cut-through and to ensure the safety of the BRCH neighborhood which is disproportionately impacted.

Identification of Detour and Placement of Detour Signs: As noted above, the “Alternate Route” signs that have been placed are not adequate and have not been remotely successful in curtailing the volume of cut through traffic. The designation of a defined “Detour” rather than deferring to drivers to seek an alternate route should have been considered long before now. The alternate route that is

being sought is through the BRCH neighborhood rather than to Saul Road, which is the Primary Residential road that is designated in the County Master Plan to connect Connecticut Ave. and Cedar Lane. Saul Road also contains traffic calming measures, including speed humps and painted lane divides. It also has a sidewalk.

Moreover, the detour signs should be placed at meaningful intersections and locations. For example, detour signs should be placed at the entrances to Beach Dr. and at the entrances to the BRCH neighborhood (Culver St. and Connecticut Ave.; Delmont Lane and Cedar Lane) to direct traffic to the designated detour. In fact, this is what MCDOT recommended as part of its revised detour recommendations it submitted to Montgomery Parks on January 3, 2023. To date, the placement of the “Alt. Route” signs make no sense as they cannot be seen or otherwise are currently placed AFTER the entrances to the BRCH neighborhood.

Placement of “No Through Traffic” signs: As part of or in addition to the Detour signs contemplated above, the county also should place “No Through Traffic to Connecticut Ave.” and “No Through Traffic to Cedar Lane” signs at the entrances to the BRCH neighborhood (Delmont Lane and Cedar Lane; Culver St. and Connecticut Ave. respectively). Again, this is what MCDOT recommended as part of its revised detour recommendations it submitted to Montgomery Parks on January 3, 2023. At a minimum, Montgomery Parks should be required to follow the recommendations of the County’s traffic management experts and install the recommended barriers and “no through traffic” signage. MCDOT should have the authority, or be allocated the resources to place these signs. Having them tied to decision-makers at Montgomery Parks defies logic and reason.

As part of this proposal, barricades also could be placed at the entrances to the BRCH neighborhood. Barricades were placed for a two weekends in 2021 and were effective.

Closure of Delmont Lane on Weekends: As part of or in addition to the proposals identified above, another option that has not been contemplated is the closure of Delmont Lane on weekends. Delmont Lane serves as the entrance point to the BRCH neighborhood from Cedar Lane. If this road is closed concurrently with weekend closures of Beach Dr., there would be no access between Cedar Lane and Connecticut Ave. Such a closure also should be accompanied with “No Through Traffic” signs.

Changes to GPS Algorithms: An added advantage of placing more meaningful and permanent signs or taking the actions described above is the ability to petition GPS App vendors to change their algorithms. In discussions with a representative from the Town of Kensington, we understand that there is precedent for Waze and GoogleMaps changing their GPS algorithms to re-direct traffic away from a residential neighborhood so long as there is adequate signage also directing traffic away from the neighborhood. As with each of the alternative proposals described above, it is disappointing that this issue has not been contemplated or even discussed with the BRCH neighborhood.

Inclusion of Permanent Closures of Beach Drive in the Pedestrian Master Plan Likely Violates the Capper Crampton Act

As the subject portion of Beach Drive was acquired by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission with federal funding appropriated pursuant to the Capper-Crampton Act of 1930. 46 Stat. 482, Montgomery Parks is required to follow certain administrative procedures, or seek approval of an exemption therefrom. This law governs programs that impact Park lands and requires program sponsors, such as Montgomery Parks, to follow an administrative procedure that includes (i) a Pre-Submission Briefing; (ii) Concept Review; (iii) Preliminary Review; (iv) Final Review; and (v) a public hearing. It does not appear that Montgomery Parks has initiated this process as information regarding compliance with the Capper-Crampton Act with respect to the closure of Beach Dr. has not been disclosed to the public or provided to BRCH despite numerous

requests and MPIA submissions seeking such information. Pushing Beach Drive closures through as part of the Pedestrian Master Plan is not only forcing a square peg into a round hole, it also may appear to be a means to usurp compliance with the Capper-Cramton Act.

Although there are a number of exceptions in the Capper-Cramton Act that would allow Montgomery Parks to deviate from this process, Montgomery Parks must receive confirmation from the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) during a Pre-Submission Briefing that the project falls under one of the exceptions. It is unclear whether the Open Parkways, or this portion of the Pedestrian Master Plan, was submitted to the federal NCPC for any such review or concurrence that it falls under an exception. Numerous requests for this information, including MPIA requests, have gone ignored – which again shows Montgomery Parks’ lack of transparency and another result of the conflicts of interest discussed above.

Nonetheless, permanently closing Beach Dr. does not represent a change that is consistent with a public park use. In particular, the section of the Pedestrian Master Plan under which the Beach Drive closure is placed is focused on “building more walkable places.” In particular, “creating and enhancing places where people can easily, quickly, and directly access many destinations on foot or using a mobility device Good land-use planning and site design result in shorter and more rewarding trips, making walking a preferred way to travel.” As a safe pedestrian sidewalk and a pedestrian access pathway already exists, it is unclear how closure of Beach Drive accomplishes this goal. Due to its lack of data, in particular the lack of data regarding use of Beach Dr. between Cedar Lane and Connecticut Ave., Montgomery Parks does not offer one scintilla of support for why the existing pathway does not already meet this goal of the Pedestrian Master Plan.

Moreover, Parks has not provided any residents affected by the Open Parkways - in a public hearing or otherwise - any basis indicating why the benefits of closing Beach Drive outweigh the risks associated with redirecting thousands of cars onto a narrow residential street that does not have sidewalks. All Parks has said is that it is popular – a characterization that lacks any meaningful data to support the closure between Cedar Lane and Connecticut Ave. As noted above, popularity should not outweigh safety for a program intended to improve pedestrian safety.

Conclusion

Based on the foregoing, the BRCH Citizens Association hereby urges the Montgomery County Planning Board to delay any votes or decisions on the Pedestrian Master Plan until (i) additional research and diligence is performed regarding the deleterious impacts of closing Beach Drive on weekends and holidays in light of these comments; (ii) the reasonable alternatives identified above are properly assessed; (iii) the detour recommendations and other Beach Drive closure input from MCDOT provided to and considered by the Planning Board and (iv) there is a full time Planning Board and Planning Board Chairperson appointed in June 2023. Due to the transitory status of the Board, decisions which will impact the county for years to come should not be made until all five seats are filled with permanent Board Members and a duly appointed chair.

Residential streets were not designed nor intended to serve as a major through-way for non-local traffic. A simple review of the county’s Master Plans clearly shows this. The unintended consequences of the weekend and holiday closures as part of the Open Parkways program has put the residents of the BRCH neighborhood at risk and more needs to be researched and implemented before making any decision to make it permanent. The program does not meet its intended purpose of expanding the county’s pedestrian footprint due to the presence of an existing footpath that was built for this purpose almost 50 years ago. The program also undermines several of the tenets of the county’s Vision Zero program. Due to the lack of research performed, this is an issue that requires more fulsome data, consideration of better alternatives and impact assessments as well as the involvement and cooperation of government agencies working together at all levels to find a

commonsense solution that meets the goals of the county and its residents. Rash decisions based on self-serving popularity and without sufficient data or the input of those impacted will have consequences. So far, only cars and property have been damaged. It shouldn't have to take a tragedy for a commonsense solution to be implemented, let alone considered.

We appreciate your time and consideration.

Submitted by:

Michael S. Heyl, Esq.
9609 Culver Street
Kensington, MD, 20895

Mark Redmiles, Esq.
9635 Culver Street
Kensington, MD, 20895

Exhibit 1

MCDOT CULVER STREET TRAFFIC STUDY DATA SUMMARY					
DAY	DATE	NB VOLUME	SB VOLUME	TOTAL VOLUME	SIGNIFICANT DATA POINTS
MON	1/23/23	135	148	283	Avg. volume 15 days M-TH (non-holiday) = 350 vehicles per day 46% less volume w/Beach open on Friday Avg. volume for 4 Saturdays = 692 vehicles per day (DOUBLE M-TH volume)
TUE	1/24/23	154	179	333	
WED	1/18/23	165	209	374	
THUR	1/19/23	205	189	394	
FRI	1/20/23	190	247	437	
SAT	1/21/23	401	365	766	
SUN	1/22/23	263	232	495	
MON	3/15/22	129	145	274	Avg. volume 8 Saturdays/Sundays = 591 vehicles (1.7x M-TH volume)
TUE	3/16/22	132	162	294	
WED	3/17/22	120	149	269	
THUR	3/18/22	116	142	258	
FRI	3/19/22	368	584	952	
SAT	3/20/22	351	336	687	
SUN	3/21/22	253	206	459	
MON	1/11/21	167	209	376	
TUE	1/5/21	165	190	355	
WED	1/6/21	201	206	407	
THUR	1/7/21	190	207	397	
FRI	1/8/21	320	538	852	
SAT	1/9/21	331	325	656	
SUN	1/10/21	268	234	502	
MON	10/12/20	135	189	324	Columbus Day, so day not included in M-TH
TUE	10/13/20	168	208	376	
WED	10/7/20	214	242	456	
THUR	10/8/20	176	224	400	
FRI	10/9/20	434	627	1061	
SAT	10/10/20	314	335	659	
SUN	10/11/20	261	244	505	

Culver Street Near 9629 Culver Street					
Date	85% Speed (MPH)		Volume		Total Volume
	NB	SB	NB	SB	
1/18/2023	27	27	165	209	374
1/19/2023	27	29	205	189	394
1/20/2023	25	27	190	247	437
1/21/2023	26	28	401	365	766
1/22/2023	26	28	263	232	495
1/23/2023	26	28	135	148	283
1/24/2023	27	29	154	179	333



SUMMARY SHEET - SPEED

POSTED SPEED LIMIT:

DAILY	NB								SB							
	13-Mar-21	14-Mar-21	15-Mar-21	16-Mar-21	17-Mar-21	18-Mar-21	19-Mar-21		13-Mar-21	14-Mar-21	15-Mar-21	16-Mar-21	17-Mar-21	18-Mar-21	19-Mar-21	
	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday		Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	
85th	28 MPH	28 MPH	27 MPH	26 MPH	27 MPH	25 MPH	26 MPH		28 MPH	28 MPH	27 MPH	26 MPH	27 MPH	27 MPH	28 MPH	
Mean Speed	23 MPH	24 MPH	22 MPH	21 MPH	23 MPH	20 MPH	22 MPH		24 MPH	24 MPH	22 MPH	22 MPH	23 MPH	23 MPH	24 MPH	
10 MPH Pace	21-30 MPH	21-30 MPH	16-25 MPH	16-25 MPH	21-30 MPH	16-25 MPH	16-25 MPH		21-30 MPH	21-30 MPH	21-30 MPH	16-25 MPH	21-30 MPH	17-26 MPH	21-30 MPH	
AM Peak Hour	11:00 AM	9:00 AM	6:00 AM	10:00 AM	7:00 AM	8:00 AM	8:00 AM		9:00 AM	10:00 AM	6:00 AM	7:00 AM	10:00 AM	9:00 AM	11:00 AM	
85th	27	28	29	28	24	24	27		29	24	24	24	27	27	31	
PM Peak Hour	1:00 PM	12:00 PM	4:00 PM	3:00 PM	1:00 PM	4:00 PM	2:00 PM		5:00 PM	2:00 PM	4:00 PM	5:00 PM	2:00 PM	4:00 PM	4:00 PM	
85th	26	28	24	23	28	24	27		26	29	27	24	28	28	29	

SUMMARY SHEET - CLASS

VEHICLE CLASS TYPE	NB (Volume)								SB (Volume)							
	13-Mar-21	14-Mar-21	15-Mar-21	16-Mar-21	17-Mar-21	18-Mar-21	19-Mar-21		13-Mar-21	14-Mar-21	15-Mar-21	16-Mar-21	17-Mar-21	18-Mar-21	19-Mar-21	
	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday		Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	
Motorbikes	0	0	3	0	0	1	0		0	0	0	0	0	1	1	
Auto / P.U.	338	248	118	123	109	106	354		325	202	132	152	142	134	565	
Buses	0	0	0	2	1	1	1		0	0	3	3	0	0	1	
Trucks	13	5	8	7	10	8	13		11	4	10	7	7	7	17	
TOTAL	351	253	129	132	120	116	368		336	206	145	162	149	142	584	
VEHICLE CLASS TYPE	NB (Percentage)								SB (Percentage)							
	13-Mar-21	14-Mar-21	15-Mar-21	16-Mar-21	17-Mar-21	18-Mar-21	19-Mar-21		13-Mar-21	14-Mar-21	15-Mar-21	16-Mar-21	17-Mar-21	18-Mar-21	19-Mar-21	
	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday		Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	
Motorbikes	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%		0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.2%	
Auto / P.U.	96.3%	98.0%	91.5%	93.2%	90.8%	91.4%	96.2%		96.7%	98.1%	91.0%	93.8%	95.3%	94.4%	96.7%	
Buses	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%	0.8%	0.9%	0.3%		0.0%	0.0%	2.1%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	
Trucks	3.7%	2.0%	6.2%	5.3%	8.3%	6.9%	3.5%		3.3%	1.9%	6.9%	4.3%	4.7%	4.9%	2.9%	

SUMMARY SHEET - SPEED

POSTED SPEED LIMIT:

DAILY	NB							SB						
	05-Jan-21	06-Jan-21	07-Jan-21	08-Jan-21	09-Jan-21	10-Jan-21	11-Jan-21	05-Jan-21	06-Jan-21	07-Jan-21	08-Jan-21	09-Jan-21	10-Jan-21	11-Jan-21
	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
85th	27 MPH	26 MPH	27 MPH	26 MPH	26 MPH	27 MPH	26 MPH	28 MPH	28 MPH	29 MPH	29 MPH	28 MPH	29 MPH	28 MPH
Mean Speed	21 MPH	20 MPH	22 MPH	22 MPH	22 MPH	21 MPH	20 MPH	23 MPH	22 MPH	24 MPH	24 MPH	23 MPH	24 MPH	23 MPH
10 MPH Pace	16-25 MPH	16-25 MPH	16-25 MPH	16-25 MPH	16-25 MPH	16-25 MPH	16-25 MPH	21-30 MPH	21-30 MPH	21-30 MPH	21-30 MPH	21-30 MPH	21-30 MPH	21-30 MPH
AM Peak Hour	9:00 AM	9:00 AM	9:00 AM	10:00 AM	11:00 AM	11:00 AM	10:00 AM	11:00 AM	9:00 AM	10:00 AM	10:00 AM	11:00 AM	10:00 AM	10:00 AM
85th	19	28	25	25	24	28	27	28	24	28	31	24	29	28
PM Peak Hour	2:00 PM	5:00 PM	12:00 PM	5:00 PM	2:00 PM	1:00 PM	5:00 PM	6:00 PM	5:00 PM	6:00 PM	6:00 PM	2:00 PM	1:00 PM	3:00 PM
85th	28	27	30	24	27	26	24	26	33	30	28	29	29	28

SUMMARY SHEET - CLASS

VEHICLE CLASS TYPE	NB (Volume)							SB (Volume)						
	05-Jan-21	06-Jan-21	07-Jan-21	08-Jan-21	09-Jan-21	10-Jan-21	11-Jan-21	05-Jan-21	06-Jan-21	07-Jan-21	08-Jan-21	09-Jan-21	10-Jan-21	11-Jan-21
	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Motorbikes	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	3	0	0	3	1	1	1
Auto / P.U.	159	199	187	314	327	266	165	182	200	205	519	319	232	204
Buses	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Trucks	6	2	2	5	3	2	2	5	6	1	10	5	1	4
TOTAL	165	201	190	320	331	268	167	190	206	207	532	325	234	209
VEHICLE CLASS TYPE	NB (Percentage)							SB (Percentage)						
	05-Jan-21	06-Jan-21	07-Jan-21	08-Jan-21	09-Jan-21	10-Jan-21	11-Jan-21	05-Jan-21	06-Jan-21	07-Jan-21	08-Jan-21	09-Jan-21	10-Jan-21	11-Jan-21
	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Motorbikes	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	0.3%	0.4%	0.5%
Auto / P.U.	96.4%	99.0%	98.4%	98.1%	98.8%	99.3%	98.8%	95.8%	97.1%	99.0%	97.6%	98.2%	99.1%	97.6%
Buses	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Trucks	3.6%	1.0%	1.1%	1.6%	0.9%	0.7%	1.2%	2.6%	2.9%	0.5%	1.9%	1.5%	0.4%	1.9%

SUMMARY SHEET - SPEED

POSTED SPEED LIMIT:

DAILY	NB							SB						
	07-Oct-20	08-Oct-20	09-Oct-20	10-Oct-20	11-Oct-20	12-Oct-20	13-Oct-20	07-Oct-20	08-Oct-20	09-Oct-20	10-Oct-20	11-Oct-20	12-Oct-20	13-Oct-20
	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
85th	26 MPH	25 MPH	28 MPH	28 MPH	28 MPH	27 MPH	26 MPH	26 MPH	26 MPH	28 MPH	26 MPH	27 MPH	27 MPH	25 MPH
Mean Speed	20 MPH	20 MPH	22 MPH	23 MPH	22 MPH	22 MPH	20 MPH	21 MPH	20 MPH	23 MPH	22 MPH	22 MPH	22 MPH	21 MPH
10 MPH Pace	20-29 MPH	16-25 MPH	21-30 MPH	21-30 MPH	21-30 MPH	21-30 MPH	21-30 MPH	16-25 MPH	16-25 MPH	21-30 MPH	16-25 MPH	21-30 MPH	19-28 MPH	16-25 MPH
AM Peak Hour	9:00 AM	9:00 AM	9:00 AM	11:00 AM	11:00 AM	11:00 AM	9:00 AM	8:00 AM	10:00 AM	11:00 AM	11:00 AM	9:00 AM	11:00 AM	9:00 AM
85th	25	25	30	28	25	28	23	25	25	27	28	27	28	23
PM Peak Hour	3:00 PM	5:00 PM	5:00 PM	5:00 PM	12:00 PM	3:00 PM	4:00 PM	3:00 PM	5:00 PM	4:00 PM	3:00 PM	4:00 PM	3:00 PM	5:00 PM
85th	27	24	24	26	29	27	27	26	27	28	28	29	24	26

SUMMARY SHEET - CLASS

VEHICLE CLASS TYPE	NB (Volume)							SB (Volume)						
	07-Oct-20	08-Oct-20	09-Oct-20	10-Oct-20	11-Oct-20	12-Oct-20	13-Oct-20	07-Oct-20	08-Oct-20	09-Oct-20	10-Oct-20	11-Oct-20	12-Oct-20	13-Oct-20
	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
Motorbikes	1	4	2	1	1	2	3	3	2	2	1	4	1	1
Auto / P.U.	210	170	424	312	260	133	159	236	218	616	331	237	184	200
Buses	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Trucks	2	2	8	1	0	0	6	3	4	8	3	3	4	7
TOTAL	214	176	434	314	261	135	168	242	224	627	335	244	189	208
VEHICLE CLASS TYPE	NB (Percentage)							SB (Percentage)						
	07-Oct-20	08-Oct-20	09-Oct-20	10-Oct-20	11-Oct-20	12-Oct-20	13-Oct-20	07-Oct-20	08-Oct-20	09-Oct-20	10-Oct-20	11-Oct-20	12-Oct-20	13-Oct-20
	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
Motorbikes	0.5%	2.3%	0.5%	0.3%	0.4%	1.5%	1.8%	1.2%	0.9%	0.3%	0.3%	1.6%	0.5%	0.5%
Auto / P.U.	98.1%	96.6%	97.7%	99.4%	99.6%	98.5%	94.6%	97.5%	97.3%	98.2%	98.8%	97.1%	97.4%	96.2%
Buses	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Trucks	0.9%	1.1%	1.8%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	3.6%	1.2%	1.8%	1.3%	0.9%	1.2%	2.1%	3.4%

From: [David Engel](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Glazier, Eli](#); [Wayne](#); [Aviv, Pazit](#)
Subject: Pedestrian Master Plan: Support by Montgomery County Commission on Aging
Date: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 10:58:49 AM
Attachments: [CoA Pedestrian Master Plan Support Letter 2023.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

To: Chair Planning Department

Please see the CoA letter of Support for the Pedestrian Master Plan with recommendations regarding the Older Adult Population.

The highlight of our letter is that while the CoA supports the goals, recommendations, and policy objectives of the Master Plan, we do feel that it needs to recognize the growing older adult demographic in the County more explicitly and the areas where they tend to live and be active, such as apartment complexes, parks, shopping areas, and recreational centers. The plan, rightly so, provides recommendations for areas where school and playgrounds are located, but seems to fall short in recognizing that pedestrian improvements also need to be a focus for areas where older adults live and are active. Projects like curb cuts, better sidewalk / intersection lighting, and longer signal timing to cross busy intersections are important in areas where older adults are active.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this input.

David Engel
Chair
Montgomery County Commission on Aging
cell: 240-620-4783
email: david@davidengelrealty.com
pers. email: dbe8027@gmail.com
[Watch 50+ in Montgomery County](#)



COMMISSION ON AGING

March 20, 2023

To: Chair, Montgomery County Planning Department

From: David Engel, Chair
Montgomery County Commission on Aging

Subject: Support for Pedestrian Master Plan

The Montgomery County Commission on Aging (CoA) appreciates this opportunity to offer its support for the new Pedestrian Master Plan. The CoA is authorized by the Older Americans Act and was established by Montgomery County in 1974 to advise County government on the needs, interests, and issues of older adult residents, and to advocate on their behalf at the local, state, and national levels. We offer this input for your consideration at the March 23rd public hearing.

The CoA commends the Montgomery County Planning Department for taking the important initiative to prepare such a comprehensive, thoughtful, and unique long-term plan for pedestrian safety improvements. We have followed the development of the master plan over the last two years. Mr. Eli Glazier from your Department spoke to our Commission twice, in September 2021 and again in October 2022. He did a great job presenting the master plan and responding to our questions. The Commissioners learned a lot from his presentations.

While overall we support the goals, recommendations, and policy objectives of the Master Plan, we do feel that it needs to recognize the growing older adult demographic in the County more explicitly and the areas where they tend to live and be active, such as apartment complexes, parks, shopping areas, and recreational centers. The plan, rightly so, provides recommendations for areas where school and playgrounds are located, but seems to fall short in recognizing that pedestrian improvements also need to be a focus for areas where older adults live and are active. Projects like curb cuts, better sidewalk / intersection lighting, and longer signal timing to cross busy intersections are important in areas where older adults are active.

Data from the County's Vision Zero initiative, that has been also presented to the CoA, indicates that over 50 percent of the total pedestrian injuries and fatalities, per 100,000 population, are people over 50 + years old. We urge the Planning Board to recognize pedestrian safety needs of older adults as part of the policy and recommendations sections of the Master Plan, before it is approved.

We hope this input will help as you work to approve the Pedestrian Master Plan. We look forward to working with County staff and the County Council to ensure that the goals and recommendations of this plan are realized going forward.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide this input.

Sincerely,

David Engel

David Engel, Chair

Department of Health and Human Services

401 Hungerford Drive, 4th Floor, Rockville, Maryland, 20850 240-777-1120, FAX 240-777-1436

www.montgomerycountymd.gov/hhs

From: [Fonner Family](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); [Glazier, Eli](#); [Fonner Family](#)
Cc: [Katharine Dellenoci](#); [Eleni Athanasakis](#); [Boyer Household](#); [rbutrum@verizon.net](#); [Uchoi913@gmail.com](#); [Sandy and Tom Dean](#); [Rubi Defensor](#); [rdefensor@nih.gov](#); [JOHN DILLON](#); [Jim Doherty](#); [Patti Doherty](#); [deutschsoldat46@gmail.com](#); [Harmison, George \(NIH/NINDS\) \[E\]](#); [Henjum Household](#); [Norbeck Woods Homeowners Association](#); [Karen Lanni](#); [fionata@msn.com](#); [Jackson, John Household](#); [mar21jackson@gmail.com](#); [Beverly Jackson](#); [Daniel Johnson](#); [Mbulaiteye Household](#); [Dion Trahan](#); [Kacornell9@gmail.com](#); [Glen Muir](#); [Mesfin Household](#); [Douglas Noll](#); [Kirti Patel](#); [Fred Paul](#); [msp525@gmail.com](#); [WENDALLPOULSEN@GMAIL.COM](#); [CJPOULSEN@AOL.COM](#); [Natalie S.](#); [dasfpe1@gmail.com](#); [Judy Sullivan](#); [Doug Trolan](#); [Rudy Watson](#); [aremita@aol.com](#); [Jesse Fonner](#)
Subject: Concerns re: lack of Pedestrian Sidewalks in the Master Plan
Date: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 11:03:29 AM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Greetings!

I am unable to attend the public hearing but would like to voice my concerns regarding what seems to be a lack of Pedestrian Sidewalks in the Master Plan on the very busy Norbeck Road/Route 28. While the Pedestrian Master Plan does not make specific sidewalk recommendations for any roadway in Montgomery County, it does make recommendations that should lead to more sidewalks being constructed countywide.

The Master Plan needs to address the **lack of sidewalks on Norbeck Road** (Route 28) between Wintergate (at the the bridge over the ICC) and Twin Valley Court on one side of Norbeck and Laughlin Lane on the other? If any one tries to walk to the Norbeck Animal Clinic for a vet appointment, which is just two blocks from my home, or if the kids living in my neighborhood want to walk to the East Local Norbeck Park across from Bailey's Lane, we put our lives in peril! Not everyone has a car or can drive so walking is often not a choice but a necessity and often involves walking in the busy road!

There is a hodgepodge of pedestrian paths from Bailey's Lane North towards Georgia Ave but nothing from Baileys Lane East on Norbeck. There is a short bit of sidewalk on the bridge (at Norbeck and Wintergate) but nothing after it going East towards Layhill Road.

From what I understand it looks like Norbeck Road (Route 28) is not going to be addressed, is that correct? What a shame since there is NO pedestrian sidewalk or walkway of any kind basically from Georgia Avenue East to Layhill Road. That's quite a long stretch which cars and trucks whiz down much faster than the posted 40 mile an hour speed limit!

I have lived here over 33 years and Norbeck Road is still pretty much the same in terms of lack of pedestrian safety (except for the traffic light at Wintergate that a neighbor Barbara Dillon and I were instrumental in getting the County to install after several years of terrible car accidents which we documented). The only improvements in terms of sidewalks that have been made are by private companies building condos etc. This lack of support for the safety of our residents in the Pedestrian Master plan is shameful!

Thank you for adding my voice to this discussion.
Davida Fonner
2402 Twin Valley Lane,

Silver Spring, MD 20906
fonnerfam@gmail.com
301-455-3112

From: [Christine Scott](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Purple Line NOW Testimony
Date: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 11:09:00 AM
Attachments: [Planning Board Testimony.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Hello,

Please accept written testimony (attached) from Purple Line NOW for tomorrow, March 23, Pedestrian Master Plan Public Hearing. Please let me know if there is anything else you might need.

Thank you,

Christine Scott

=====
Christine Scott | Executive Director | Purple Line NOW
☎:: 301.5000.PLN (1-301-500-0756) or (c) 865.300-7959
✉:: cscott@purplelinenow.com • www.purplelinenow.com



DATE: March 23, 2023
TO: Montgomery County Planning Board
FROM: Purple Line NOW Board of Directors
RE: Pedestrian Master Plan Public Hearing

Purple Line NOW advocates for the completion of the light rail line from New Carrollton to Bethesda and the Capital Crescent Trail from Bethesda into Silver Spring, with connections to the other bicycle/pedestrian trails along its route. Along with the Purple Line Corridor Coalition, we are also strong supporters of having the Purple Line light rail stations directly accessible by pedestrians, bicycles and other mobility aids into the neighboring communities and adjacent bus and Metro network stops to facilitate an integrated transportation system that reduces the need for automobiles and furthers the equity goals of the County.

We appreciate the staff's recognition that the Purple Line is a major component of our future transit network and its inclusion in this pedestrian Master Plan when evaluating the existing pedestrian conditions and in the recommendations, implementation, and monitoring goals. Since the current State-administered Purple Line contract only covers a small radius around the stations, Purple Line NOW strongly recommends the inclusion of all the suggested implementation goals that connect the transit locations with pedestrian and rolling connections into the adjoining business and residential communities. Also, we support the equity goals of having this light rail system, along with all other transit options, accessible to everyone along their length and from access points crossing its stations.

The following objectives are of special interest to us and the future riders of the Purple Line:

- Objective 1.4 expects 70% of the riders will walk to MDOT Purple Line stations. This is a crucial point since there are no parking spaces available at the non-Metro community stations. We want to make sure the surrounding communities have good connections to their sidewalk networks beyond the MDOT contract sidewalks. [page 11 of document 16 on website]
- Objective 2.4 anticipates increasing the comfort level for pedestrians to access Purple Line stations from 79 to 90-95%. We applaud this goal of making sure those within a walkshed distance of one mile have good access. [page 15 of document 20 on website, Purple Line walkshed distance specifics on pages 44-45/49-50]



Post Office Box 7074
Silver Spring, MD 20907

(301) 500-0756
contact@purplelinenow.com
www.purplelinenow.com

- Objective 4.3 hopes to decrease the difference between the access comfort along pathways to the MDOT Purple Line stations, currently rated at 73% from Equity Focus Areas and 81% from non-EFAs. This 8% differential is considerably worse for EFAs on the Purple Line than the pathway comfort to stations on the other transit lines reviewed, which are higher for EFAs than for non-EFAs: WMATA Red Line (85% EFA to 88% non-EFA) and MARC Brunswick Line (83% EFA to 88% non-EFA). [pages 18/23 and 58/63]

Purple Line NOW strongly supports the two following recommendations that address shortcomings in existing conditions:

- 1) Design, Policy and Programming systemic changes that identify, build, and maintain the **“pedestrian amenities - better, faster, safer and more equitably.”**
- 2) Bicycle Pedestrian Priority Area Prioritization of bicycle and pedestrian capital improvements **“in a data-driven way based on equity, comfortable access, safety and other metrics.”**

It is our hope a major area for prioritizing improvements is where State and County investments are already being made to reach their highest potential. These recommendations should facilitate having new and improved connections to MTA Purple Line station areas from the surrounding communities in a timely manner to maximize the investment from its opening day. [Pages 60/65]

These include such key actions as changing Annual Sidewalk Program improvements from instigation by individual requests to using the limited resources to achieve the highest-priority connections that also improve equity. Local perspectives on how to build are to be sought, rather than permission to do a project. [Pages 63/68] Additionally, we strongly support the encouragement of nonmotor residential access to be as highly planned and funded as motor access, including pedestrian access always signalized at intersections with rail stations, community amenities, schools, and retail to allow pedestrian movement as easily as that of motor vehicles.

In conclusion, our major support is for recommendation B-7g:

Fund off-site pedestrian and bicycle access improvements to transit stations as part of the main capital project or through a parallel effort.

In order to have these accessibility options available from the opening day of the Purple Line, there is no time to waste! As a joint Maryland/Montgomery County project, the Purple Line pedestrian accommodations are a great place to start the cooperation that will be needed across jurisdictional and administrative boundaries to improve the pedestrian experience in our County, and hopefully, the State. We urge the adoption of this Master Plan and the implementation of its goals now!

From: [Goshen Association](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Pedestrian Master Plan Testimony
Date: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 11:19:33 AM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Good evening:

Our neighborhood sits uniquely between two parks, The Milton Kauffman Park and the [Great Seneca Creek Stream Valley Park with the Seneca Creek Greenway Trail](#) on Wightman Road in Gaithersburg. Both parks are within walking distance of each other, yet none of the residents can do that due to a road that is not pedestrian friendly, narrow and lacks sidewalks.

There is actual parking at the Milton Kauffman Park, which is the only real parking between the two parks, and there is a sidewalk system from the Milton Kauffman Park which will take residents to bus stops and shopping in Montgomery Village.

We are requesting sidewalks from Milton Kauffman Park to [Great Seneca Stream Valley Park](#) so that the residents can walk to both parks. Also, there is a Senior Living complex with sidewalks from that development right at the corner of Warfield and Wightman Roads. If sidewalks were installed up Warfield to the back entrance of the [Kauffman Park](#), it would make crossing Wightman Road safer for those residents.

The [Montgomery Parks Trails Department](#) is in concurrence with this request and we have previously entered a request for these sidewalks.

Please give this serious consideration for the safety and betterment of our community,

Regards,
The Greater Goshen Civic Association
Kathleen Sentkowski 301-212-9896

From: jeff.karns@verizon.net
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Calverton Comments Pedestrian Master Plan Hearing 3232023
Date: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 11:23:55 AM
Attachments: [Calverton Comments Pedestrian Master Plan Hearing 3232023.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Good morning,

Hope your day (hump day) is going well.

I have attached the Calverton Citizens Association Comments for the Pedestrian Master Plan Hearing on March 23, 2023.

Thank you,

Bernadine (Bernie) Karns, President
Calverton Citizens Association
3005 Gazebo Court
Silver Spring, MD 20904
301-572-8018 (H)
301-538-5280 (CP)

Calverton is bi-county community located in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties

Calverton Citizens Association

P. O. Box 21

Beltsville, Maryland 20704-0021

March 21, 2023

Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reddie Drive, 14th Floor
Wheaton, Maryland 20902

RE: Montgomery County's Pedestrian Master Plan Hearing March 23, 2023

The Calverton Citizens Association knows that the Montgomery County Pedestrian Master Plan has been a long time in the making and has been developed from the results of many people doing their part(s). Thank you for your hard work.

Prioritizing the projects across the county is the only way to ensure that all the projects eventually get done over the span of time that is needed to complete the Pedestrian Master Plan. Prioritizing also helps with budgeting the amount of money required throughout the project time frame to ensure that the Pedestrian Master Plan gets completed. The monitoring part is important to ensure that the schedule is being kept and that the projects are getting done on time and in an equitable and fair process.

Calverton appreciates the Complete Street Design Guide. What is the point of improving roadways if the improvements don't give communities a nice, safe, accessible community? The East County already has many communities without sidewalks that are not walkable because too many vehicles parked on the roads, there is no place to go when a vehicle comes down the road. The East County already has bike lanes that go nowhere, just look at Calverton Boulevard. We already have bike lanes that are too narrow and have no protection nor separation from vehicles, just look at Broadbirch Drive. The East County already has missing sidewalks/paths that were not done when road improvements were done, just look at Briggs Chaney Road between Fairland Road and the ICC. The East County already has sidewalks/paths that get flooded during rainstorms and freeze in the winter because they dip down so that puddles form, just look at the sidewalk/path on Fairland Road from Galway to the Calverton Fairland Park and look at the sidewalk/path at Route 29 and Fairland Road. The sidewalk/path at Route 29 and Fairland Road is a very unsafe path that goes behind trees and tall brush to get to the light at Route 29. Unsafe not only for healthy people but terribly unsafe for people with people with disabilities.

It is going to be hard for all residents to wait for improvements to come to their community. Waiting is okay if projects are not getting bumped or pushed back even longer because some community is shouting and screaming at the County and then the County gives in and allows

the “squeaky wheel gets the oil/grease.” The East County of Montgomery County and the Calverton Citizens Association are tired of hearing that saying when it comes to building projects, road repairs, and other Montgomery County situations. We are tired of getting the shaft for many, many years. When it came to transferring MPU’s from Potomac, Chevy Chase, and Bethesda the MPU’s from those areas of the county were transferred to the East County. We are tired of being ignored when it comes to making the East County a nice, safe, accessible community for people to live and to get around like Potomac, Chevy Chase, and Bethesda. It is now our time to get the resources, projects and improvements that have been given to other parts of the County. We hope that this plan works equitably and strives for equity for all communities in Montgomery County. We hope the County sticks to the plan and works hard to make sure that money is available to keep the Pedestrian Master Plan on schedule.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony on the Pedestrian Master Plan.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bernadine (Bernie) Karns". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bernadine (Bernie) Karns, President
Calverton Citizens Association
3005 Gazebo Court
Silver Spring, MD 20904
301-572-8018 (H)
301-538-5280 (CP)

Calverton is a bi-county community located in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties

From: [diana.huffman](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Sidewalk plan for Kenwood Park
Date: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 11:51:16 AM
Attachments: [sidewalks.docx](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Attached is our comments on this plan

Diana Huffman

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

Diana Huffman and Kenneth Levine
7100 Millwood Road
Bethesda, Maryland 20817

By email to mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org
Chairman Jeff Zyontz
Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reedie Drive
Wheaton, MD 20902

Re: Pedestrian Master Plan

Dear Chairman Zyontz:

We are the property owners at 7100 Millwood Road, one of the properties that will be dramatically impacted negatively by the Kenwood Park Sidewalk program. We have lived at that address since 1983 and adamantly oppose the sidewalk proposal for Kenwood Park on two grounds: 1. The process of developing the plan and procedures up to date for implementing it. 2. The substance of the proposal, which will dramatically alter the character and appearance of a 60-year-old neighborhood without a shred of evidence or data to support the need for sidewalks.

First, we will address the process. This proposal was based on the request of two individuals for sidewalks in 2020 and 2018. Those two individuals identified themselves as representing the Kenwood Park Citizens Association. In fact, they did not and do not represent the members of the KCPA nor the community at large. They never consulted with the community or even informed the community of their request. The first residents knew about the proposal was when we received a letter informing us of a plan to remove 148 mostly mature trees and replace them with a width swath of cement.

Two days before a virtual hearing on the proposal, the Department of Transportation created a new plan, after many residents had already prepared their hearing statements. This one purported to vastly reduce the number of trees to be destroyed, but when read carefully it gave no assurance that most of the trees would be saved. Instead it said an evaluation of each tree would be made by the county, again with no input from residents. Understandably, residents did not believe the county wanted to minimize the trees loss but instead was trying to mollify a community that clearly did not support the sidewalk proposal and intended to fight it vigorously.

Then we received a third proposal, which again claimed it would not destroy 148 mature trees (an unthinkable idea to begin with) and was addressing the community's concerns. What the Transportation Department fails to understand is a vast number of community residents oppose the plan and never asked for sidewalks. The county just assumed that the two people making the request represented the community without even checking. By the way, the membership of the KPCA does not represent even the majority of Kenwood Park residents.

The final and most important problem with the process is that it is based on absolutely no evidence or data. In fact, the Department told residents that it conducted no traffic or pedestrian studies and developed no evidence of incidents in Kenwood Park that happened because of the lack of sidewalks, much less that sidewalks would solve what ever perceived problem there was. And they said they did not have to and did not intend to. That this proposal was based on nothing is outrageous and demonstrates the need to completely overhaul the sidewalk program procedures and ensure oversight by the County Council and County Executive. What our experience exposed was that a group of bureaucrats and engineers had and still have the ability to impose their preferences without consulting those affected and without considering many other options that would preserve trees and green space and not destroy the character of the neighborhood permanently. That the county would commit to spending millions of dollars on a plan supported by no data or need is unbelievable. Is this supposed to be “good government.”

The final outrageous part of the procedure was we were told that the county would contract with a third party to install the sidewalks, but if there were any issues or damage to residents’ property it was up to the resident to get the contractor to fix the problem. In other words, the county would wash it’s hands of the project.

The Department now proposes to limit community input even more by restricting that input to how sidewalks are constructed not where or whether they should be. Restricting the input of county citizens (who last time I checked paid the salaries of department employees) on issues that directly affect not only how their property looks but also significantly reduces their value by substituting cement for trees and grass and shrubs is simply an abuse of power. If all country residents learned of this, idea the outrage would be far greater that what has been demonstrated by Kenwood Park residents.

It is clear that the county is trying to mollify residents by continually changing the plans because they have figured out this proposal will be opposed by all means, including litigation, which will not only delay the project for some time, but also cost the county a lot of money. The bottom line is that the county does not care that the residents DO NOT WANT sidewalks.

Our second reason for opposing the plan has to do with what the county actually wants to do. The plan to destroy the tree canopy runs counter to the county’s commitment to reducing climate change. Many of us moved to Kenwood Park because it had mature trees and significant amounts of grass. Even when houses are being torn down in our neighborhood established trees have been protected from builders who want to cut down as many trees as possible. Kenwood Park was not laid out with sidewalks and to add them 60 years later and after many residents have spent a good deal of money on landscaping (some very recently) is not only unfair, but against the wishes of the community. And it WILL destroy the character of our neighborhood. Those of us affected directly (most of those supporting the plan are homeowners whose property will not be affected) will see our front yards become cement and our property values diminished.

Not only did the county develop this plan based on no studies, data or evidence of a need, but it refuses other options and designs that have worked in other places and would reduce the amount of cement. The goal should have been to limit the destruction of trees, grass and shrubs, but clearly the county disagrees with that.

The streets in Kenwood Park have always been pedestrian friendly, I have walked on Millwood Road for 30+ years and never felt unsafe. Countless residents walked our neighborhood streets during Covid without any pedestrian incidents. Last year after major back surgery, I walked through the neighborhood using a walker and then a cane and never was concerned that there were no sidewalks. At least one resident supports sidewalks so her child can ride a bike on them. If the sidewalks are used for biking, pedestrians will have no choice but to walk in what would then be a much narrower street. It is also unclear how the county determined which streets would be included or what side of the street would get sidewalks. What is clear is that preserving greenery was not part of the equation.

This entire process has exposed the major flaws in the sidewalk program that are as troublesome as the plan to destroy mature trees. We remain opposed to the plan.

Sincerely,

Diana Huffman
Kenneth Levine

From: [Jim Laurensen](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Testimony for Pedestrian Master Plan Public Hearing
Date: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 11:57:06 AM
Attachments: [Testimony on the Pedestrian Master Plan - CAP Coalition 3-23-2023.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chair,

Attached please find the written testimony that will accompany oral testimony to be given at the Item 7 hearing tomorrow, March 23, at 6 pm.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jim Laurensen

5916 Melvern Dr.

Bethesda, MD 20817

james.p.laurensen@gmail.com

703-342-9496

Written Testimony:
Montgomery County Pedestrian Master Plan and Climate Assessment Tools

Submitted March 23, 2023 to the
Montgomery County Planning Board

by the
Montgomery County Climate Action Plan Coalition
moco.cap.coalition@gmail.com

Thank you for considering these comments from the Montgomery County Climate Action Plan (CAP) Coalition (“Coalition”) about the upcoming climate assessment of the Pedestrian Master Plan (PMP).

The Coalition represents 18 grass-roots community organizations, and many unaffiliated individuals. In 2017, many of these organizations successfully advocated that the county adopt the Climate Emergency Declaration in which the County committed to reducing Greenhouse Gasses (GHGs) by 80% by 2027 and 100% by 2035, and equitably build resilience to climate impacts. Since then, we have worked with the County Executive, the County Council, and County staff to adopt legislative measures and executive branch programs to work towards these goals, consistent with emergency action.

Our mission is to ensure robust and equitable implementation of, and improvements to, the Climate Action Plan consistent with emergency action.

The Coalition also was fundamentally involved in developing and passing the Climate Assessment legislation that requires climate assessments of all legislative bills, as well as assessments of all master plans, master plan amendments, and zoning text amendments.

These comments are a continuation to comments submitted previously by the CAP Coalition, which were submitted on the Climate Assessment Tools, <https://montgomeryplanningboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/MCPB-12.8.22-Item-8-Coordination-Climate-Assessment-tools-for-master-plans-and-ZTAs-per-Bill-3-22.pdf>, but now through the lens of the first Master Plan to undergo such an assessment. As a reminder, key points from that testimony are that we:

- enthusiastically applaud the shift to conducting the Climate Assessment for Master Plans during the initial phases and throughout the planning process;
- recommend that the Planning Staff be provided with sufficient resources to ensure development of the QUANT tool, the data inputs, and a public facing dashboard;
- request that stakeholders, including the Coalition, be allowed to further comment on the results of the pilot testing of the template; and
- urge the Planning Department to mount a systematic focus on improving the availability and quality of climate change related data for the County to ensure optimal outcomes.

As we began reviewing the PMP, additional issues arose:

- One is that during template development, we understood that there would be three stages in the master plan process where climate change would be factored in, and public involvement allowed. However, we now understand that we won't see any data or assessments until they are transmitted to Council. Thus, we won't have an opportunity to review preliminary data and analysis, and provide timely input. We recommend that the climate assessment process for this and future master plans provide a formal opportunity for public review and input prior to transmission to the Council.
- The county also needs to ensure that the climate assessments follow the recommendations of the county's experts¹ that each master plan climate assessment be primarily quantitative, with only some qualitative elements. Unfortunately, we learned recently that mainly only a qualitative assessment is planned for the PMP.
- We also urge that the assessments follow the experts' recommendations that all consumption-based and embodied carbon emissions be included, as many in the Coalition have requested over the years.
- Finally, the Coalition recommends that a systematic focus is used on improving the availability and quality of climate change-related data across the entire planning sphere, in order to ensure optimal outcomes using a systems, rather than reductionist (or siloed), understanding.

To illustrate the importance of these more recent points, the omitted emissions have been estimated to be more than half of our overall emissions, and when they are included indicate that county-attributed emissions are likely still increasing, or at least not decreasing as the county repeatedly claims.² Also, relying primarily on a qualitative assessment is a missed opportunity to think deeper and quantitatively estimate the PMP's potential. And, as we have previously noted, if data are insufficient, then the county should systematically work to improve the availability and quality of climate change-related data.

Regarding the PMP itself, we offer three overarching comments.

- First, the PMP should focus much more on climate. The almost 300 page document refers to climate only in three brief instances, only one of which—using parking market rates to reduce car use—directly relates to reducing GHGs. The PMP must clearly emphasize the relationship between our existential crisis, and the reduction of GHGs that an improved pedestrian infrastructure brings by encouraging people to transition out of cars into a safer walking environment and onto transit, bikes, or scooters. Such messaging helps the planners develop a more effective plan; helps those who conduct the climate assessment; and helps the general public who ultimately are the ones who need to transition and thus need to understand the

¹ ICF, 2022, Final Report Climate Assessment Recommendations for Master Plans and Zoning Text Amendments in Montgomery County

² <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/global-greenhouse-gas-emissions-data#Sector>

connection, and who can also contribute to the assessment (see next comment) from their real-life user perspective.

- Second, many components of the plan can be more explicitly connected to climate impacts and mitigation/resilience, which provides a clearer path for the climate assessors who can thus convert the component quantitatively to GHGs. We understand that the climate assessment of the PMP is a separate step that is currently in progress, but it's imperative that the connections between key factors are clearly noted for the benefit of not only the climate assessors, but also for the planning staff who could then expand on the relevant data, and for the general public who bring a ground-level—literally—user perspective.

For example, the qualitative benefits noted in the PMP of tree canopy could be highlighted and quantified more deeply by planners, thereby allowing for a quantitative assessment of its benefits such as carbon sequestration. Similarly, increased walking rates can be tied to reductions in vehicle miles traveled, etc.

We understand the difficulty of converting metrics into quantitative estimates of climate impacts, and the temptation to conduct only qualitative analyses. And we recognize the complexities of a broader systems approach to the climate assessments and Master Plans. But the uncertainty can be readily addressed by, for example, using a reasonable range of parameters to obtain bounded low-end and high-end results.

- Third, the PMP is part of the broader interconnected system of transportation—including the Bicycle Plan and the Transit Plan—and other plans. Combining the climate assessments, if not also the Plans, could provide a more informed “systems” understanding of their potential to meet GHG reduction and other environmental and societal goals.

Examples from the PMP that support these comments are in the **Attachment** below.

We believe that the benefits to implementing our suggestions could be enormous, as the results could provide a much clearer understanding of the extent to which we will meet the overall County GHG goals, and thus in turn guide us toward the most effective mitigation for our predicament.

As you know, Montgomery County, and the DMV more broadly, has perhaps the largest concentration of federal and international employees in the country, if not the world. What we do to reduce our GHG footprint will be noticed, and perhaps, in turn, replicated.

We look forward to working with you.

Thank you,
The Montgomery County CAP Coalition
Organization Members:
350 Montgomery County
ACQ Climate (Ask the Climate Question)

Bethesda Green
Biodiversity for a Livable Climate
Chesapeake Climate Action Network
Elders Climate Action
Environmental Justice Ministry Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church
Ecosystems Study Group
Friends of Sligo Creek
Glen Echo Heights Mobilization
Green Sanctuary Committee of the Unitarian-Universalist Church of Silver Spring
Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions
One Montgomery Green
Poolesville Green
Safe Healthy Playing Fields
Sugarloaf Citizens' Association
Transit Alternatives to Mid-County Highway Extended/M-83 (TAME)
The Climate Mobilization Montgomery County
Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee (TPMEC)
Zero Waste Montgomery County

ATTACHMENT

The approach to developing the PMP highlights a number of opportunities and concerns with respect to the climate tools. Various members of the Coalition have provided examples from the PMP, which have been loosely organized into the following categories:

- Focus on Climate
- GHG Metrics and Data/Statistics
- Integration With Other Plans
- Other

Please note that most of these examples cut across several categories.

Focus on Climate

Climate has been incorporated into the PMP as follows:

- how the PMP is “an important element in the county’s...2021 Climate Action Plan” (p. 1),
- the goal of reducing pedestrian pathway temperatures by implementing the CAP recommendation to retain and increase tree canopy (p. 79), and
- charging market rates for parking, which reduces driving/car ownership, lowers vehicle miles traveled, and helps achieve climate goals (p. 125).

Unfortunately, these are the only mentions of climate in the 282 page PMP.

There also is very little mention or messaging of how an improved pedestrian infrastructure would encourage people getting out of their cars and into not only a safer walking environment, but also into transit and on to bikes and scooters. This is somewhat implicit, but needs to be explicit.

Another concern is that there is only brief mention of changing the infrastructure to better withstand the increasing heat from the climate crisis.

GHG Metrics and Data/Statistics

The PMP has an outstanding volume of data and statistical analyses to support it, which in turn bodes well for how the data could be used for climate assessment. Per above, it is unfortunate that little is mentioned on connecting that data to GHG assessment. Therefore these comments are provided to not only improve on the PMP, but also to highlight some of the ways the data and analysis could be more explicitly connected and/or affect the assessment of GHGs.

- Any good study supporting such a plan will have accurate, sound data collection and analysis that is accessible to the reader. The survey sent to 60,000 randomly selected households, however, is only described briefly on pgs. 2 and 20 and yet is referenced throughout the PMP. There appears to be a substantial amount of data,

and claimed to be “statistically valid”, but little could be found on the location of the actual data and analysis. Some survey details were eventually found at <https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/transportation/pedestrian-planning/pedestrian-master-plan/pedestrian-master-plan-tools-and-resources/>, as Appendix D to the Pedestrian Master Plan Existing Conditions Report. But this is a relatively short appendix—12 pages. The full report, it turns out, is referenced in a footnote. Data and analyses such as these, and of the statistical validity metrics, such as whether/how cohort stratification was conducted pre- or post-survey, etc., need to be highlighted prominently in the PMP so they could be more readily used in the climate assessment.

- The PMP has many good perspectives on how differing levels of socioeconomic equity can affect the lived experiences of county residents, but it is unclear whether the same level of intentionality was applied to the survey. For example, someone with less political efficacy, tougher financial situation, more tenuous immigration legitimacy status, and/or a preoccupation with surviving what they might perceive as a car-dependent hellscape they live in might not have the wherewithal to complete a survey randomly sent to them. Thus, the respondent pool might be skewed towards those who have more socioeconomic resources and the leisure time to devote to answering surveys from their county government. It’s important to consider how civil rights, socioeconomic justice, and transportation equitability intersect and can affect even the research intended to right the historical wrongs of redlining and racism, and it is unclear whether the data analysis considered these factors, which in turn could skew the GHG assessment.
- Given the focus on righting wrongs of the past in terms of ignoring people with disabilities, a thorough assessment of the PMP by representatives of that user group—if not already included—would be valuable, and would also bring greater legitimacy and accuracy to the assessment of GHGs.
- An analysis of pedestrian conditions along all streets and crossings in the county (e.g., p 42) indicates that there are large areas of the county where it is uncomfortable to walk and many locations where it is undesirable to do so. Figure 14 summarizes pedestrian comfort along pathways: “Comfort levels in urban (65%) and transit corridors (69%) are greater than in exurban/rural (48%) areas of the county. Pathway comfort levels are substantially higher in EFAs (Equity Focus Areas) (73%) than non-EFAs (58%), likely due to where these areas are located and when they were developed.” An alternative result: perhaps people in EFA’s, aka swathes of land where the county’s data show that inequality is more present, are more likely to walk because they don’t have cars. Thus, they are more likely to have more experience walking for utility purposes.

- On p. 19 is a very chilling point about EFAs:

Objective 4.5:

Eliminate the disparity in the rate of pedestrian fatalities and severe injuries between EFAs (Figure 2) and non-EFAs. In 2020, there were 4.8 times more severe pedestrian injuries and fatalities inside EFAs than outside them.

Metric

Ratio of pedestrians killed or severely injured per mile of roadway inside EFAs compared with outside EFAs

This again highlights the disparities in our pedestrian infrastructure that can be quantified in terms of disparities of impacts from the climate crisis.

- Pgs. 26 & 27

While walking departure rates from school are generally below 20%, there is wide variation in walking rates among individual schools. In some cases, walking rates exceed 30 or 40% of school access mode share. Table 5 shows those elementary, middle, and high schools with the highest walking departure rates. Many of the schools with the highest walking rates are schools designated as Title I/Focus or high FARMS rate schools. High walking rates may be related to shorter walking distances, neighborhood conditions conducive to comfortably and safely walking to/from school, and whether

walking is the only option because busing is not provided (within a certain distance of the school) and parents or guardians are not available to drive the student.

Table 5. Schools with the Highest Walking Departure Rates by School Type

Schools	Walk Mode Share
Elementary Schools	
<i>Glen Haven Elementary School</i>	50%
<i>Snowden Farm Elementary School</i>	49%
<i>Gaithersburg Elementary School</i>	48%
<i>New Hampshire Estates Elementary School</i>	43%
Middle Schools	
<i>Montgomery Village Middle School</i>	46%
<i>Hallie Wells Middle School</i>	43%
<i>Takoma Park Middle School</i>	36%
<i>Gaithersburg Middle School</i>	34%
High Schools	
<i>Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School</i>	24%
<i>Wheaton High School</i>	20%
<i>Albert Einstein High School</i>	19%
<i>Rockville High School</i>	17%

Source: Montgomery County Student Travel Tally

We recommend polling students from the higher walking-rate schools. Let them tell their story. Hear their experiences! This can get other students teetering on a modal switch to try walking etc. Maybe ask students from high/low walk schools to draw the route from their house to school—they'd love that!—and use those drawings as a sort of visceral visual comparison. As w/the above comments, this can also contribute to differential impacts.

- Pg 28

Walk Purpose

Pedestrian trips are made for many reasons, from recreational walking and exercise to walking to work or to complete errands. Figure 5 summarizes why respondents have taken trips in the past month. No matter the land use type, exercise and outdoor recreation are the most common reasons for walking. More than 90% of respondents walked for recreation in the past month.

Utilitarian pedestrian trips—where the purpose of walking is accomplishing errands or getting to a destination—are more common for residents in urban areas (shown in blue in Figure 5) than residents of transit corridors or exurban/rural areas (shown in orange and grey, respectively).

People in less urban areas likely would walk for utility purposes more if land-use policy was less favorable to car-dependent land-use. Corner stores, denser housing—rehabilitate the suburbs! All of which supports the need for a more systems view of the master plans.

- From county Facebook posts, e.g., <https://www.facebook.com/100064738386290/posts/pfbid02JzqXLPbwQj4qQKC5zE7RYqvqMcK6gpX6zeAhLwKAjvRRKqYhs74CQ4g8fT3synrZl>, which we suspect the county is assessing too, but some seem more important than others, such as:
 - “...putting the crosswalks at intersections where the bus stop is. People are not going to cross the street in the opposite direction they want to go to get to a crosswalk that is in the direction they want to go.” This is an example of how combining plans can be useful.
 - “There is not enough time to successfully cross some of the streets. The time needs to be lengthened by at least 10 to 15 seconds.” This gets at the potential increase in pedestrian miles.
 - “Traffic laws are not adequately enforced here. So many speeders, who do not stop for red lights or traffic signs. Very dangerous place to drive, bike or walk!” Clearly a call for better enforcement, which in turn could result in an increase in use.
- Under the various Design, Policy, and Programming sections of the plan, starting on p. 61, there are a number of other metrics that could be used, for example:
 - B-1c: Require all new public buildings, as well as major renovations, to design and construct bikeways and walkways along their frontage as recommended in master plans and the CSDG, as well as to dedicate right-of-way where required.
 - B-2: Eliminate the need to press a button to cross the street.
 - B-4f: Develop and implement a comprehensive pedestrian wayfinding system for the county.
 - B-10: Assume county control of state highways. Thrive Montgomery 2050, the county’s General Plan, envisions transforming activity centers and growth corridors into safe, comfortable, and irresistible multimodal environments.
 - MA-1a: Create a plan for proactively inspecting and repairing Montgomery County sidewalks and pathways equitably across the county and track implementation.

- P-4a: Conduct pedestrian and bicycle safety educational programs in partnership with agencies such as MCPL, MCPS, and MCR.
- MO-1 (on Monitoring, p. 264): Track implementation of the Pedestrian Master Plan. The Pedestrian Master Plan contains performance measures to better understand progress toward achieving plan goals over time. A biennial monitoring report would allow planners, elected officials, and members of the public to track progress on Pedestrian Master Plan implementation, help guide future priorities, and provide more timely climate assessment data.

Integration With Other Plans

- It is critical to combine the master plans—or at least the climate assessments—in some way, given they are part of the broader interconnected system of transportation, housing, business, and all other aspects of living in a shared environment, whereby a change in one plan usually affects changes in the other, including regarding climate.
- P. 18, If you build it, they will come! I.e., use induced demand. More frequent service on the MARC line, service in both directions not just trains into DC in the morning and out to Frederick in the evening, and electrification of the line so we can stop using pollution-heavy diesel locomotives, all will improve the pedestrian experience. Simply making the areas around transit stations more ped-friendly is not enough, but a multi-faceted approach will have multiplicative effects
- Facebook comment above about the need for crosswalks near bus stops

Other Recommendations

- The plans need a lot more messaging (or plans thereof) to highlight the climate crisis, health, etc. to win over drivers who are addicted to their cars due to a century of the truly amazing—but now known to be misguided—car-centric culture. The harsh reactions to recent road diets have been sobering!

- Love the shortcuts focus. Have you contacted Google maps staff? They have a similar project that allows public input, which is always available. For example below is a view of a bike and walk path and bridge (circled in first figure, from Google Maps) that connects a neighborhood with a well-known path that avoids the dangerous hill (for pedestrians etc.) on Cedar Lane. One of our members used the Maps contribution feature, and within days it recently was added, as shown here, although it's not in the PMP shortcut map (second figure).



From: [Pat Mulready](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: I am sharing "Mulready Pedestrian testimony summary" with you
Date: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 11:57:55 AM
Attachments: [Mulready Pedestrian testimony summary.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Patricia M. Mulready, M.S.,M.Phil.

10233 Capitol View Ave

Silver Spring, MD 20910

Pmulready13@gmail.com

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY FOR PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLAN 3/23/23 HEARING

RE: NO MENTION OR RESPECT FOR HISTORIC DISTRICTS OR PROPERTIES; DEVASTATION OF FORESTED PARK LANDS

Historic districts show what was and should remain as they are, especially when there are walkable routes close by. This is especially true when 100+ year old trees will be killed in order to put in sidewalks – removing green canopy for the black paved roads, homeowners property, and surrounding areas. Temperatures around my 111 year old house are typically 15° less than surroundings so this isn't theoretical.

People who move into Historic Districts have notification when they buy the property and shouldn't expect to change it.

Historic districts should be treated equally. Poorer, diverse ones shouldn't be punished with ADA impermeable sidewalks which actually destroy >15' while areas like Brookeville Rd in Chevy Chase have 2-1/2' permeable ones which don't kill trees and maintain the look of the neighborhood. Brookeville did sidewalks correctly and other historic districts should be allowed to do the same (especially when no RoW in front of houses).

The idea of putting lit ADA impermeable sidewalks into the back areas of parks, forested areas, and wetlands defeats the purposes of those areas which includes protection of wildlife. Especially structures such as the "bridge" shown in the draft Master Plan. Many animals wouldn't be able to get over them safely. Lighting hurts biological clocks. And German arborists' research has established that killing one tree in an area causes the others to die.

Also, I am a handicapped pedestrian and have been for the past 6 years. I have had far more close calls with persons using bicycles and motorized scooters than cars who pay attention to people walking and give them the right of way. Plus can hear most cars.

Thanks.

From: [Tim Soderquist](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Public Testimony on Pedestrian Master Plan
Date: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 12:01:14 PM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Pedestrian Master Plan Public Hearing, Item 7, March 23, 2023

Dear Planning Board,

I strongly support the approval and implementation of the Pedestrian Master Plan. Walking is a normal, healthy, environmentally sound mode of transportation that needs to be encouraged and made safe, comfortable and dignified. This plan will do just that. Here are three points in particular I would like to emphasize:

-Our sidewalk program is not working. Restructuring is as outlined in the plan and increasing funding will help neighborhoods that need sidewalks get them faster, and without having to fight and advocate for limited resources.

-We need Safe Routes to School. I live across an arterial street from a large high school. There are traffic lights where students as young as middle school age cross that allow right turns on red, have no leading pedestrian interval and misaligned crosswalks that make it difficult for drivers to see pedestrians. This plan should emphasize creating Safe Routes to School as soon as possible.

-Extra urgency should be given to taking control of SHA maintained roads. The MDSHA does not share the same values as Montgomery County. By taking control of roads in Town and Urban Centers, Transit Corridors and School Zones, we can ensure that proper, safe, welcoming pedestrian infrastructure is installed.

Thank you,

Tim Soderquist
9920 Cherry Tree Ln.
Silver Spring, MD 20901

From: saundersbarrett@verizon.net
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Draft Pedestrian Master Plan Comments from Bernard J. Barrett
Date: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 12:02:11 PM
Attachments: [Pedestrian master plan written comments from Bernard J Barrett.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

My comments are attached.

7000 Millwood Road
Bethesda MD 20817

March 22, 2023

By email to mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org
Chairman Jeff Zyontz
Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reedie Drive
Wheaton, MD 20902

Re: Pedestrian Master Plan

Dear Chairman Zyontz,

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the current draft Pedestrian Master Plan. I moved with my wife and then young children to the Kenwood Park neighborhood almost 20 years ago— attracted by the overall quality of life in the County and particularly in Kenwood Park. Every member of my family has always been an enthusiastic walker or biker. Over the last five years my wife and I have walked compulsively on average five days a week principally in and around Kenwood Park. We have been very happy with our pedestrian environment. In the past I have appreciated what appeared to be a responsive county government committed to the well-being of all residents and the quality of life for all. I applaud this effort to choose a holistic street masterplan for all residents of our County. However I write to express my deep concerns with this draft Master Plan as well as dissatisfaction with County processes and trepidation about the County's direction.

I write these comments from the perspective of a resident of Kenwood Park, which is the subject of a suddenly revealed rush proposal from the Annual Sidewalk Program. Without any analysis of the character of our neighborhood, the nature of the pedestrian "walkspace," actual safety information, the impact on the environment of the proposal, the interests of the majority of the residents, the readily available data, or the best uses of the County's resources, the County proposes to impose one-size-fits-all sidewalks on Kenwood Park to meet the Program's linear feet goal and get its budget spent this fiscal year.

The draft Master Plan appears to be a similar mad rush to expedite sidewalk construction wherever possible as fast as possible. (See B-1a, the first recommendation under "Build", "Build more sidewalks faster.") Pedestrian and other human powered travel should be carefully developed across the County in a measured and thoughtful manner. Sidewalks and other improvements should be built first in places where needed most; should be built in a manner that promotes environmental and other County goals; and should preserve the character of our neighborhoods.

I have concerns about this master plan process similar to my concerns about the sidewalk process for our neighborhood. I heard about the draft Master Plan late in the process and still do not fully understand how the process works. The draft Master Plan recommends that public input on whether to build sidewalks should be foreclosed. (See B-1b, the second recommendation under "Build", preclude consideration of "whether [sidewalks] should be constructed at all.") I fear that the policy decision to rely on the willy-nilly building of sidewalks has already been made.

I believe that, overall, the County needs to make an open public decision as to whether the County will spend its resources and place sidewalks on home lawns: 1) on both sides of all streets in the county; 2) on selected streets throughout the county; 3) on selected streets in selected neighborhoods; or 4) no where in the County. I support a thoughtful decision through an open public policy process to build sidewalks now where immediately needed and wanted in conjunction with the development of a careful long term plan to improve the overall pedestrian and biking environment across our County for the long term.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments.

Yours very truly,

Bernard J. Barrett, Jr.
Bernard J. Barrett Jr.

From: [Lee Keiser](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: (In-Person) Testimony for Ped Master Plan, March 23
Date: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 2:11:00 PM
Attachments: [Keiser Testimony Ped Master Plan 23 March 2023.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Good Afternoon,

Thank you for your telephone call this afternoon confirming my in-person testimony tomorrow evening. The PDF file of my testimony is attached. I appreciate your assistance!

Thank you,

Lee R. Keiser

--

Lee R. Keiser
Sr. Leadership Montgomery (2019)
PO Box 31224, Bethesda 20824

E-mail: lee@ourcivicvalue.com

Testimony by Lee R. Keiser on the *Pedestrian Master Plan*

Montgomery Planning Board, Wheaton, MD; March 23, 2023

Good evening Chairman Zyontz and Planning Board. I am Lee Keiser, a county resident for nearly 30 years. Having served as Patrol Captain at my MCPS elementary school, my pedestrian safety advocacy comes naturally, and was reinforced more recently as a pre-pandemic leader of my neighborhood's civic association, whose dual-zip-code community is bisected by a two-lane state road (MD-191, photos below). I continue to track closely the many long-standing Capital Improvement Program (CIP) projects that would bring basic infrastructure to support safer multi-modal travel. Several of these projects, including the one in my Bradley Blvd. (MD-191) community (CIP# P501733), were first referenced in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan of 1990. Seemingly stuck in Final Design stage, construction on our project's proposed sidewalk might start by the end of this decade, or 40 years after infrastructure was first recommended by this agency.



Accordingly, I found the *Pedestrian Master Plan* scope of work, and resulting draft proposal, to be a fascinating and comprehensive civic undertaking. My testimony focuses on four areas of proposed enhancements to uphold Montgomery Planning's historic high bar for its own initiatives.

#1 Enhance Transparency in the Prioritization Methodology for Project Tier "BiPPAs."

The *Pedestrian Master Plan* (p. 128) identifies on Tables 28 through 31 "BiPPA areas within the top four BiPPA tiers." The highest tier is reserved for those areas "currently funded in the Capital Improvements Program," while "other BiPPA areas are broken into tiers based on their Prioritization Methodology score." The Plan notes that its "prioritization approach" can be adopted by the Montgomery County Dept. of Transportation and the MD Dept. of Transportation (p. 260). Yet the term "Prioritization Methodology" is not listed in the Plan's Glossary, nor is it detailed in any example in the Plan.

The Prioritization Methodology is addressed in the Plan's *Appendices* (a separate document, online pps. 126-130). A table shows 10 factors, and their respective weights, in "Step One" of the prioritization process. The "Step Two" process has a single factor, "Equity," that indicates if a geographic area falls within an Equity Focus Area. After various mathematical calculations, then a "Final Score" is produced.

A minimum of two examples of arriving at a Final Score – with real locations, perhaps one in an EFA and one that’s not – should be added to the *Pedestrian Master Plan* report itself. Moreover, in the “Step One” factors of school and transit access, what is the geographic scope of “access?” For example, with the county’s extensive RideOn bus network, access may be possible for many residents; some incur a 20-minute ride to their destination, others may have an option of a 20-minute walk. Yet weights of “12” are assigned to both “school access” and “transit access.” Such equal weighting distorts a particular location’s proximity to a Central Business District or primary BiPPA area.

#2 Cross-reference existing CIP projects, where applicable, to Project Tier “BiPPAs.”

The Plan distinguishes between BiPPA areas that “are currently-funded in the Capital Improvement Program,” and those that are not. Those currently-funded appear in the highest tier (p. 128-129). The term “currently-funded” needs to be defined: does this mean a CIP project that exists in the current fiscal year budget; or is engaged in its actual “Construction” stage? Long before construction begins, capital funds are expended on sidewalk/bikeway CIP projects that are in various “design” stages. Understandably, given the funding prioritization negotiations that occur between the County Executive and County Council, determining which projects are “currently-funded” can be challenging. Once a decision is made by the Pedestrian Master Plan team, a possibly-revised list of highest-tier BiPPAs should include a new, adjacent column that specifies the associated CIP project number with each geographic location. Practically, relevant CIP project numbers should be referenced regardless of assigned tier. Such an addition will further assist with prioritization transparency, and help to inform considerations by elected officials and community advocates alike.

#3 Re-examine the Plan’s assumption about expediency if the county takes control of state roadways.

The Plan proposes to assume county control of state highways (p. 88). This would permit “flexibility to retrofit these state roads to prioritize walking, bicycling, and transit, and allow it to do so much faster than can happen today.” This assumption may not always play out. For example, the original Bradley Blvd. Improvements Project (CIP #P501733) focused on adding to a one-mile stretch of State Road 191 (aka “Bradley Blvd.”) sidewalks, a shared use path, crosswalks, stormwater management, and enhanced lighting. The original scope also called for adding dedicated left-turn lanes at the intersection of MD-191 and MD-188 (Wilson Lane), seen below.



Due to concern by Montgomery County DOT about perpetual delays in this project’s funding schedule, alongside their increasing concerns about safety and traffic management at this well-travelled intersection, they pulled the left-turn-lane addition out of the sidewalk CIP and placed it into MCDOT’s own “Spot Intersection

Improvements” CIP (#P507017), over which they have more direct control. This switch occurred five years ago, in 2018. While MCDOT may at last be visibly edging closer to actual construction at this intersection, those dedicated left-turn lanes – first recommended in the 1990 B-CC Master Plan – do not yet exist.

Relatedly, if an existing CIP sidewalk/bikeways project calls for additional un-signalized crosswalks within the project scope – un-signalized meaning that they involve painting the pavement – if the county DOT assumed full control of the original Bradley Blvd. project (#P501733), could one assume that those new crosswalks would be painted more expeditiously, without having to wait many more years for the project’s full implementation and construction? With many of our state roads representing communities’ “Main Streets,” the Plan’s proposed takeover of state roads is very important, and thus understanding of how it might play out would benefit from a few case studies or possible scenarios. The Plan references application in “Downtowns, Town Centers, and along Bus Rapid Transit corridors” (p. 89), but residential “Main Street” scenarios should also be presented.

#4 Address inconsistencies in Tier Assignments.

Tier 2 includes **Wilson Lane**, from Bradley Blvd. to Downtown Bethesda. This 1-mile stretch of Wilson Lane (MD-188) already has sidewalks (consistently on the EB-side, inconsistently on the WB side), plus seven crosswalks. Tier 3 includes Bradley Blvd., from Huntington Parkway to Downtown Bethesda. There are no sidewalks (until close to MD-614, Goldsboro Rd.), and crosswalks are about every half-mile. Further, a one-mile portion of this **Bradley Blvd.** segment is within the scope of CIP #P501733, referenced earlier. Without transparency for geographic-specific Prioritization Final Scores, it is confusing to see on a lower tier a roadway that presently has zero infrastructure (no sidewalks, crosswalk distance of half a mile) that is part of an existing CIP project, versus a location literally around-the-corner that has had for decades both sidewalks and crosswalks.

Similarly, Tier 3 includes Wilson Lane from Bradley Blvd. to River Rd. This section of Wilson Lane also has sidewalks, and encompasses two schools. Thus, Tier assignment confusion arises, in part, in not knowing the extent to which existing pedestrian safety infrastructure counts toward a Final Score.

Miscellaneous Recommendations:

1. The Plan includes many maps: Complete Street Maps and Pedestrian Shortcut Maps. Where relevant within each map’s scope, Metro (and perhaps planned Purple Line) stations, and libraries, should be “pinned,” accordingly. Their absence was likely an inadvertent oversight.
2. The Plan uses the word “country” often, instead of “county.” This appears throughout the narrative, and on the Montgomery County map title (p. 208).

Thank you for the opportunity to share my feedback to enhance the practical value, for many stakeholders, of this comprehensive Pedestrian Master Plan.

Lee R. Keiser

From: [Diana Huffman](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Re: sidewalks comments
Date: Thursday, March 23, 2023 1:50:27 AM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

i submitted it at 11:30 am but it bounced back and kept saying domain name not recognized. I certainly hope my comments were included because i met the deadline and sent to the correct address.

Diana Huffman
dianahuffman19@gmail.com
Sent from my iPhone

On Mar 22, 2023, at 1:52 PM, MCP-Chair <mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org> wrote:

Good afternoon,

The correspondence packet will be distributed to the Board momentarily. We will need to know now whether to include Ms. Huffman's comments (if submitted before the deadline) or to send directly to staff to include in the record.

Thank you,

Catherine Coello, Administrative Assistant

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
Montgomery County Chair's Office
2425 Reddie Drive, Wheaton, MD 20902
Main: 301-495-4605 | Direct: 301-495-4608
www.MontgomeryPlanningBoard.org

From: Lauren Saunders <laurenksaunders1@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 4:06 PM
To: MCP-Chair <mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org>; Diana Huffman <dianahuffman19@gmail.com>
Subject: Re: sidewalks comments

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Diana, can you confirm when you first tried to submit the comment? Thanks.

On Wed, Mar 22, 2023 at 3:42 PM MCP-Chair <mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org> wrote:

Good afternoon,

May you please confirm that this was initially submitted prior to the 12pm, noon deadline today? If so, I will include in the correspondence packet for the Planning Board's review. If not, it will go directly into the record for Planning staff to review.

Thank you,

Catherine Coello, Administrative Assistant

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
Montgomery County Chair's Office
2425 Reedie Drive, Wheaton, MD 20902
Main: 301-495-4605 | Direct: 301-495-4608
www.MontgomeryPlanningBoard.org

From: Lauren Saunders <laurenksaunders1@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 3:37 PM

To: MCP-Chair <mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org>

Subject: Fwd: sidewalks comments

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

I have been asked to forward this.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Diana Huffman** <dianahuffman19@gmail.com>

Date: Wed, Mar 22, 2023 at 1:57 PM

Subject: sidewalks comments

To: Lauren Saunders <laurenksaunders1@gmail.com>

i have sent this half dozen times and it keeps bouncing back

Can you please forward it

Diana Huffman

dianahuffman19@gmail.com

Sent from my iPad

Diana Huffman and Kenneth Levine
7100 Millwood Road
Bethesda, Maryland 20817

By email to mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org
Chairman Jeff Zyontz
Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reedie Drive
Wheaton, MD 20902

Re: Pedestrian Master Plan

Dear Chairman Zyontz:

We are the property owners at 7100 Millwood Road, one of the properties that will be dramatically impacted negatively by the Kenwood Park Sidewalk program. We have lived at that address since 1983 and adamantly oppose the sidewalk proposal for Kenwood Park on two grounds: 1. The process of developing the plan and procedures up to date for implementing it. 2. The substance of the proposal, which will dramatically alter the character and appearance of a 60-year-old neighborhood without a shred of evidence or data to support the need for sidewalks.

First, we will address the process. This proposal was based on the request of two individuals for sidewalks in 2020 and 2018. Those two individuals identified themselves as representing the Kenwood Park Citizens Association. In fact, they did not and do not represent the members of the KCPA nor the community at large. They never consulted with the community or even informed the community of their request. The first residents knew about the proposal was when we received a letter informing us of a plan to remove 148 mostly mature trees and replace them with a width swath of cement.

Two days before a virtual hearing on the proposal, the Department of Transportation created a new plan, after many residents had already prepared their hearing statements. This one purported to vastly reduce the number of trees to be destroyed, but when read carefully it gave no assurance that most of the trees would be saved. Instead it said an evaluation of each tree would be made by the county, again with no input from residents. Understandably, residents did not believe the county wanted to minimize the trees loss but instead was trying to mollify a community that clearly did not support the sidewalk proposal and intended to fight it vigorously.

Then we received a third proposal, which again claimed it would not destroy 148 mature trees (an unthinkable idea to begin with) and was addressing the community's concerns. What the Transportation Department fails to understand is a vast number of community residents oppose the plan and never asked for sidewalks. The county just assumed that the two people making the request represented the community without even checking. By the way, the membership of the KPCA does not represent even the majority of Kenwood Park residents.

The final and most important problem with the process is that it is based on absolutely no evidence or data. In fact, the Department told residents that it conducted no traffic or pedestrian studies and developed no evidence of incidents in Kenwood Park that happened because of the lack of sidewalks, much less that sidewalks would solve what ever perceived problem there was. And they said they did not have to and did not intend to. That this proposal was based on nothing is outrageous and demonstrates the need to completely overhaul the sidewalk program procedures and ensure oversight by the County Council and County Executive. What our experience exposed was that a group of bureaucrats and engineers had and still have the ability to impose their preferences without consulting those affected and without considering many other options that would preserve trees and green space and not destroy the character of the neighborhood permanently. That the county would commit to spending millions of dollars on a plan supported by no data or need is unbelievable. Is this supposed to be “good government.”

The final outrageous part of the procedure was we were told that the county would contract with a third party to install the sidewalks, but if there were any issues or damage to residents’ property it was up to the resident to get the contractor to fix the problem. In other words, the county would wash it’s hands of the project.

The Department now proposes to limit community input even more by restricting that input to how sidewalks are constructed not where or whether they should be. Restricting the input of county citizens (who last time I checked paid the salaries of department employees) on issues that directly affect not only how their property looks but also significantly reduces their value by substituting cement for trees and grass and shrubs is simply an abuse of power. If all country residents learned of this, idea the outrage would be far greater that what has been demonstrated by Kenwood Park residents.

It is clear that the county is trying to mollify residents by continually changing the plans because they have figured out this proposal will be opposed by all means, including litigation, which will not only delay the project for some time, but also cost the county a lot of money. The bottom line is that the county does not care that the residents DO NOT WANT sidewalks.

Our second reason for opposing the plan has to do with what the county actually wants to do. The plan to destroy the tree canopy runs counter to the county’s commitment to reducing climate change. Many of us moved to Kenwood Park because it had mature trees and significant amounts of grass. Even when houses are being torn down in our neighborhood established trees have been protected from builders who want to cut down as many trees as possible. Kenwood Park was not laid out with sidewalks and to add them 60 years later and after many residents have spent a good deal of money on landscaping (some very recently) is not only unfair, but against the wishes of the community. And it WILL destroy the character of our neighborhood. Those of us affected directly (most of those supporting the plan are homeowners whose property will not be affected) will see our front yards become cement and our property values diminished.

Not only did the county develop this plan based on no studies, data or evidence of a need, but it refuses other options and designs that have worked in other places and would reduce the amount of cement. The goal should have been to limit the destruction of trees, grass and shrubs, but clearly the county disagrees with that.

The streets in Kenwood Park have always been pedestrian friendly, I have walked on Millwood Road for 30+ years and never felt unsafe. Countless residents walked our neighborhood streets during Covid without any pedestrian incidents. Last year after major back surgery, I walked through the neighborhood using a walker and then a cane and never was concerned that there were no sidewalks. At least one resident supports sidewalks so her child can ride a bike on them. If the sidewalks are used for biking, pedestrians will have no choice but to walk in what would then be a much narrower street. It is also unclear how the county determined which streets would be included or what side of the street would get sidewalks. What is clear is that preserving greenery was not part of the equation.

This entire process has exposed the major flaws in the sidewalk program that are as troublesome as the plan to destroy mature trees. We remain opposed to the plan.

Sincerely,

Diana Huffman
Kenneth Levine