

Item 14 - Correspondence

From: [Rob Wald](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Written Comment: Amherst Ave. Separated Bike Lanes, Mand. Ref. No. MR2023008
Date: Saturday, April 29, 2023 4:53:43 PM

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Dear Planning Department Chair,

Please accept this email as written testimony in support of developing separated bike lanes along Amherst Avenue in Wheaton, per Mandatory Reference No. MR2023008.

I live in Silver Spring and regularly ride my bike along the proposed route from my home to the Wheaton Library. I am a very experienced urban bicyclist and am adept at riding within automobile traffic. Although most drivers along Amherst Avenue are attentive and courteous to bicyclists, others are not. Part of the route can get congested, and there are many distractions for drivers. Personally, I'm tired of close calls; surviving a ride to the library shouldn't be a matter of luck, but sometimes it feels that way.

Adding bike lanes on Amherst Avenue is a logical, commonsense solution to turning what is in places a dangerous street into a safe street for all. Doing so would also help the county meet its Vision Zero goals.

Finally, I would like to note that not all bike lanes are created equal. I strongly encourage the county to separate the bike lanes from auto traffic with concrete barriers, rather than the flimsy plastic posts the county often uses and which, contrary to their stated purpose, do not provide protection when cars drive into them.

Sincerely,

Robert Wald
Silver Spring

From: [Coello, Catherine](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: FW: New submission from Sign Up to Testify
Date: Tuesday, May 2, 2023 10:40:58 AM

From: Planning Board admin <digitalteam@montgomeryplanning.org>
Sent: Sunday, April 30, 2023 1:22 AM
To: Coello, Catherine <catherine.coello@mncppc-mc.org>
Subject: New submission from Sign Up to Testify

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Upcoming Meetings

Select meeting item

May 4 - Item 14 - Amherst Avenue Separated Bike Lanes Mandatory Referrals

Speaker Information & Mailing Address

Name

Andrew Bzdega

Affiliated Group/Business/ Agency:

Property Owner

Address

11009 Amherst Ave.
Wheaton, MD 20855
[Map It](#)

Phone

(240) 460-5897

Email

bzdega@gmail.com

Testimony Information

Subject of testimony

Amherst Ave. Bikeway

Speaker Type

Applicant

Is your testimony in support of any other individual or group testifying at this meeting?

No

Would you like to testify in person or virtually?

In person

I certify that I am not sick and if I am sick on the day of the hearing, I will not attend and will contact chair's office.

☐ Yes

Additional Information

I am not going to re-write everything. You should have this on file other than...please consider speed humps! I hate speed humps however people treat Amherst as a drag strip daily. I don't think the narrowing of the drive lanes will fix that. Following is my statement I assume you have read already...I wish to provide some feedback from the mailer I received regarding the proposed design of the Amherst Ave. bikeway between Prichard and Reddie. I saw the meeting was originally scheduled for the 30th but according to your online agenda the topic has been postponed, however I do not see any info as to when it was postponed to. Could you please inform me when this topic is to be discussed? My comments on the project are below. 1) I noticed that you are showing some planting buffers to retain some street trees, however there is no buffer in place to preserve the tree located in front of 11009 Amherst Ave, Silver Spring, MD 20902. The tree is healthy and has been there over a decade and should be saved. Please make sure to include a planting buffer to save this tree. Furthermore, I do not see any buffers for new street trees. Amherst was once lined with street trees and this would be the final opportunity to replace those trees and help alleviate the effects of removing the planting buffer. Please seriously consider these additional tree buffers, especially the one in front of 11009 Amherst Ave, Silver Spring, MD 20902 as that tree is existing. A buffer in this location should not reduce the number of parking spaces, although perhaps one may be lost. 2) In the mailer you are showing a temporary easement. What is the purpose of this easement? Will the new sidewalk encroach into this temporary easement? Several homes have fences or plantings in this temporary easement area. How will these items be impacted if at all? 3) I see you are proposing permeable paving in place of the existing planting buffer. I have had poor results with projects involving permeable paving. What type of permeable paving are you proposing and how do you plan to maintain it? As I am sure you are aware, permeable paving requires constant maintenance to be effective.

Do you need any accessibility or language accommodations for your testimony?

No

From: [NINA KOLTNOW](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Amherst Bikeway input
Date: Wednesday, May 3, 2023 11:49:44 AM

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Dear MCP Chair -

I have examined the Amherst Bikeway Plan thoroughly, and I believe it presents a positive move forward in pedestrian and bicycle safety and mobility through Wheaton. The plan sanely creates a dedicated bikeway OFF of Georgia Avenue, which is the only way to go.

One improvement would be to continue the bikeway as a paved bike/pedestrian path to the NORTH of Arcola to Henderson on the DOT parcel called "Martin Lane." This would complete the ability of residents east of Georgia Avenue to have a safe way into Wheaton from as far north as Randolph Road. Please consider wrapping this into your plans.

Thank you - Nina Koltnow

NINA KOLTNOW
President, Wheaton Regional Park Neighborhood Association
Resident Member: Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee
301-219-5891
ninack@mac.com

From: [Cindy Crawford](#)
To: [MCP-Chair; "angel.cheng@montgomerycountymd.gov"](#)
Subject: Amherst Avenue Bikeway Project
Date: Wednesday, May 3, 2023 11:51:38 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

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Good morning,

I am writing to comment on the proposed Amherst Avenue Bikeway Project. I sent comments in last year after there was a meeting regarding the planning and if it was wanted by the residence. It looks like our comments have gone missing.

I am now writing again to express that I DO NOT want to see this type of construction in front of my house. I have spoke with my neighbors and we all have major concerns that are not being considered.

First – the current plan was NOT one of the options that were given at last year’s planning meeting with the residence. The single family homes should NOT have to suffer the consequences of mass density. Amherst Avenue is a dividing line (zoning) between the mass density of townhouses and apartments and the single family homes. Bike lanes are part of mass density and we should not have our parking disrupted.

My grandparents bought my house when it was built in 1951 and I purchased it from them 23 years ago. We have enjoyed the peaceful community living as a single family community since 1951. It was called Wheaton Forest when first built for the tree lined streets. But now it sounds like you want to cut down our trees and disrupt our community living forcing us into the mass density mess that is becoming Wheaton. Even with the planned inset parking, you are still taking away parking spaces. We need more parking not less. The county keeps allowing all these apartments without parking for them and we have to suffer. Even though we have permit parking it is rarely enforced. We have had individuals from the apartments threaten physical violence and the police had to be called due to lack of parking. This is only going to exacerbate the parking problems.

My other concerns are the Permeable sidewalks. I think this is going to cause water damage in our basements. Who will be responsible for these repairs when this occurs? Who will be responsible for snow removal? Many unanswered questions to be answered before this project moves forward here.

Also, I have tremendous concern over my property value! This will definitely HURT property values and not help them. NO ONE wants to buy a house and have to look at hideous construction type barriers 24/7 365 days a year.

I feel the residence of Amherst Ave are being treated like lab rats to see if this project even works

(you have NO proof that this will be utilized at all)! I also noticed that NO WHERE ELSE in the county are you putting these hideous bike barriers through other residential communities. Where is it in a Rockville, Chevy Chase, Bethesda or Potomac community. We feel you are trying out a pilot project and when it fails you do not care about this area.

Ike Leggett once quoted that “the county has to stop treating Wheaton like an ugly step child”. He is right! Stop treating the residence of Wheaton like second class citizens that don’t have a voice. This is once again a prime example. You do not care if our property values go down. If it was in Rockville, Chevy Chase, Bethesda or Potomac residential area (I’m not talking about the ugly barriers already on Old Georgetown Road), but physically surrounded by homes! Those communities would not allow it due to decrease property value and Montgomery County supports those districts over our district.

There is plenty of room to put this bike lanes down Georgia Ave. The county is being very greedy by putting parking meters up instead of the bike lanes!

If you would like to contact me to discuss my concerns further, please feel free to call me at 240-793-5572.

Cindy Crawford
11103 Amherst Avenue
Wheaton, MD 20902

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From: [Rushika Mehta](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); angel.cheng@montgomerycountymd.gov
Subject: Amherst Bikeway Project
Date: Wednesday, May 3, 2023 11:58:43 AM

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Dear Chairman,

I am a resident and homeowner of a single family property on Amherst Ave, specifically on the stretch between Prichard and Reddie that is directly affected by the Amherst Ave bikeway proposal. I am writing to express my sincere concerns about the proposed project. I sent comments previously as well, and do not see them included in the hearing documents. I am therefore resubmitting my comments, and hope they will be heard!

1. The residents and businesses on Amherst Ave have not been sufficiently notified about the project, or the status of the hearings. In 2022, we were given a 2-3 few weeks notice via a mailer about a hearing. This was the first time most of the residents of Amherst had even heard about this project. This was followed by 4 proposed options, and a vote of sorts via comments collected. In Feb. 2023, we received another mailer, with a completely different layout, that was not proposed before. None of the 4 proposed options were utilized. Again, we were given only a few weeks to submit comments for the hearing. When the hearing was postponed, none of the affected residents were notified. Even today, very few of the directly affected homeowners are informed that there is in fact a hearing on May 4th. This is important, because the residents and homeowners here are feeling very unheard and dismissed about their concerns. I have spoken to Ms. Cheng about these concerns over a phone call, and expressed the need for more transparent communication and more involvement of the directly affected community. This was one of the same issues with the University Blvd. bike lanes, where the affected communities' concerns were not heard prior to the implementation of the project. While I understand the sentiments of the folks who would really like to see bike lanes added, it is still very important to take the time to hear AND address the directly affected communities' concerns.

2. Taking away the grass buffers is also an issue. This goes against the "more green areas" in Wheaton initiative. The sidewalks on the single family homes side of the Prichard to Reddie stretch are barely wide enough to fit a stroller. Taking away the grass buffer will make it very unsafe! We have young children, elderly, and disabled folks here, who would be very negatively affected by this change. There is nothing in the proposal about widening this sidewalk, and addressing these safety issues. This area is called the Wheaton Forest area - removing the green spaces is completely contradictory to what this area should be.

3. Creating parking bays is great for keeping a few spots, however, this will drastically reduce the number of available spots for the single family homeowners. In an area, where even with permitted parking, sufficient parking is a big issue, we are constantly dealing with parking and enforcement issues. The garages and the metered parking have only gone up in the cost for usage. This is not sustainable for many of the residents here.

4. Snow removal is also a concern. How will the snow removal process work for the bike

lane? How will the process work for the parking bays? From my conversation with Ms. Cheng on the issue, I was left even more concerned about the matter, as there was no clear indication about the actual removal process, and I was informed we would need to contact the county when the issue comes up. This is a problematic response. Being constantly told to contact the county for parking permit enforcement issues, litter and trash issues, snow removal issues has left us very fatigued. This is a band aid solution to a problem that is being created. These issues need to be taken into consideration during the planning process. The solution can NOT be that the homeowner will just need to deal with the issues. There needs to be a plan in place for consistent support and follow through after implementation of any of these changes, and a commitment to rectify any issues that come up.

5. Permeable pavements: Almost everyone that I have had a conversation about these permeable pavements has expressed serious concerns. The residents here have not been provided any unbiased, informative literature or an understanding of what this means for their property. What type of permeable pavements are being considered? What sort of maintenance is required for these? The residents need to be informed of the specifics, and, more importantly, their concerns need to be heard and addressed.

We have many more concerns, but we are feeling very unheard. I ask that you please reconsider this proposal, and do NOT pass this project as is.

For reference, my address is: 11105 Amherst Ave.

Thank you for your time and consideration. You can reach me via email or phone at (240) 480 - 1188

Sincerely,
Rushika Mehta

From: [Peter Gray](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); [Glazier, Eli](#); [Anspacher, David](#); [Sartori, Jason](#)
Subject: WABA Testimony - Amherst Avenue Separated Bike Lanes attached
Date: Wednesday, May 3, 2023 12:34:02 PM
Attachments: [Montgomery Planning Board Testimony - May 4, 2023 Hearing - Amherst Avenue Separated Bike Lanes.pdf](#)

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Dear Chair Zyonts,

Attached is WABA's testimony for tomorrow's meeting. I plan on attending and testifying in person.

--

Peter A Gray
Montgomery County Organizer
Washington Area Bicyclist Association
Email: peter@waba.org
Phone: (202) 970-6816
Pronouns: he/him
Find us on Facebook, Twitter & Instagram - @wabadc

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Montgomery Planning Board Testimony - May 4, 2023 Hearing - Amherst Avenue Separated Bike Lanes

My name is Peter Gray and I am testifying on behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association and the 750+ WABA members who live in Montgomery County, plus the additional thousands of other County residents who have joined in actions in support of better bicycling in the region.

WABA wholeheartedly supports the construction of the Amherst Avenue Separated Bike Lanes as described in the staff report recently released to the public. As noted in that report, this Bicycle Master Plan Breezeway segment will provide safe access for bicycling along the east side of the Wheaton CBD and improve safety for all who bike and walk along Amherst Avenue for the 1.1 mile length of the lanes. WABA endorses all of the staff recommendations in Section 5 of the report, especially those that improve separation of the separated lanes from motor vehicles.

The only improvement WABA would recommend, is to find a way to widen the 8 foot bike lanes themselves. It is understandable that the right-of-way constraints on Amherst Avenue make it a difficult engineering challenge to make the separated lanes wider, but the staff report does note that the Complete Streets Design Guide developed by Planning and MCDOT has a default width for two-way bike lanes of 11 feet. Even a 9 foot wide separated lane is much better than the 8 foot wide lanes proposed here. Any means of widening the lanes beyond 8 feet is welcome and will make the lanes far safer, especially as part of a breezeway, which by definition is meant to accommodate a large number of cyclists.