



HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Karen Burditt
Chair

September 5, 2025

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

Subject: Historic Preservation Commission's Recommendation on the Designation of Resources Associated with Rocky Hill as part of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan

Dear Chair Harris and Members of the Planning Board,

On January 8, 2025, the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) held a public hearing and worksession to evaluate two resources for listing in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* as part of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan: the Community of Faith United Methodist Church & Cemetery as a Master Plan Historic Site, and Clarksburg Heights as a Master Plan Historic District. These resources are critical to preserving the legacy of Rocky Hill, one of the earliest African American communities in Clarksburg, and improving our understanding of its historical and cultural significance.

In accordance with its responsibilities under §24A of the Montgomery County Code, the HPC regularly reviews master plan updates that impact historic resources, recommends properties for designation, and highlight sites of historic interest. In this role, I am pleased to offer the Commission's recommendations to the Planning Board

Following a thorough review, the HPC found that the both the proposed Community of Faith United Methodist Church & Cemetery Master Plan Site and Clarksburg Heights Master Plan Historic District satisfy the designation criteria outlined in §24A-3 of the County Code. The Commission recommends that the Planning Board affirm these findings, list the properties in the *Locational Atlas & Index of Historic Sites*, and advise the County Council to designate the resources in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*.

The HPC found that the resources satisfied the following designation criteria:

Community of Faith United Methodist Church & Cemetery: Staff finds that the Community of Faith United Methodist Church & Cemetery satisfies three designation criteria, two for historical and cultural significance (1.A and 1.D) and one for architectural and design significance (2.E), as listed in §24A-3 of the Montgomery County Code.

1.A The historic resource has character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the county, state or nation.

The Community of Faith United Methodist Church and Cemetery represents an early twentieth century, gothic revival church attended by the residents of Rocky Hill—the earliest African American community in Clarksburg—and the surrounding region. The church reflects the development pattern associated with the formation of the Rocky Hill community and the lives of African Americans during an era of segregation in

Montgomery County. Churches and schools provided parishioners the opportunity for education, social engagement, and leadership opportunities. Influential members of the Rocky Hill and Clarksburg community including the Davis, Foreman, Mason, Snowden, and Wims families are all buried at the church cemetery.

1.D The historic resource exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political or historical heritage of the county and its communities.

The Community of Faith United Methodist Church serves as a visible reminder of segregated life and the resilience, achievements, and contributions of African Americans residents in the early twentieth century. After the original wood-frame church burned in 1924, the congregation pressed forward with the construction of an imposing Gothic Revival-styled brick church. The church trustees hired Charles W. Spurgeon Graves and Charles Green, highly skilled African American builders from Washington, D.C., to construct the building for \$7,500 in 1925. These actions by the congregants—who worshiped more than 30 miles away from the nation’s capital in a rural section of the county—reflect the prosperity of the church and its function as a religious, educational, and social center for the African American community. As noted in *Black Historical Resources in Upper Western Montgomery County, Maryland* (1979), Community of Faith United Methodist Church was one of the largest and most architecturally notable African American churches.

2.E The historic resource represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or county due to its singular characteristic or landscape.

The Community of Faith United Methodist Church and Cemetery is the last public site associated with the Rocky Hill community in Clarksburg. The church and cemetery serve as a tangible link to the African American community’s past, providing a sense of continuity, orientation, and place as a former center of religious, social, and educational activities. The imposing front-gable brick church with an integrated tower has stood in its original location along Frederick Road for nearly a century.

The Rocky Hill community, however, lost its other community landmark along with other significant resources. In the 1960s, Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning demolished the Rocky Hill Elementary School, a two-room segregated Black elementary school. Additionally, many homes of early Rocky Hill and Clarksburg community members identified in previous architectural surveys, such as the Lloyd and Sarah Gibbs House, Arthur and Ella Mae Gibson House, William and Mary Hackey House, Clifton and Rachel Snowden House, Benjamin F. and Elizabeth Wims House, and John Henry and Emma M. Wims House, have been demolished. Most of these individuals were buried in the church cemetery, and there are no limited sites that reflect their contributions to the development of Rocky Hill or Clarksburg in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*. Therefore, the church remains as an essential feature of the built environment and its preservation would retain the legacy of the community.

Clarksburg Heights: Clarksburg Heights satisfies three designation criteria for historical and cultural significance (1.A, 1.C, and 1.D) as listed in §24A-3 of the Montgomery County Code.

1.A The historic resource has character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the county, state or nation.

Clarksburg Heights is a unique example of a mid-twentieth century subdivision in Clarksburg, planned, built, and owned by African Americans. In Montgomery County, African Americans faced widespread and pervasive discrimination by land developers, property owners, and the government who used or supported

de jure or de facto segregation to limit housing opportunities. Between 1890 and 1960, the Black population in Montgomery County stagnated and occasionally declined, while the white population experienced exponential growth. In particular, African American educators struggled to acquire housing in the county. The NAACP estimated that ninety percent of African American teachers commuted to Montgomery County from Washington, D.C. because of discriminatory housing practices. In 1963, F. Wilson Wims, an African American builder, and Sarah L. Wims, sought to address the housing crisis with the construction of Clarksburg Heights, a small subdivision of modern, middle-class housing in the Rocky Hill community of Clarksburg. African American purchasers included at least three Montgomery County Public School teachers including Mary E. Johnson, Katie R. Harper, and Edith J. Gregg. Clarksburg Heights represents the efforts of the African American community to expand housing options prior to the passage of Montgomery County's Fair Housing Ordinance (1967) and Fair Housing Law (1968) and the Federal government's Fair Housing Provisions of the United States Civil Right Act (1968).

1.C The historic resource is identified with a person or group of persons who influenced society.

Clarksburg Heights is significant for its strong association with F. Wilson and Sarah L. Wims, leaders of the Clarksburg community, who subdivided, planned, and built this middle-class subdivision. The Wims supported African Americans who wanted to move to the suburbs, but faced intense discrimination. Montgomery County has recognized Wilson Wims for his dedication to the advancement of the African American community, his actions to create an inclusive community through youth athletics, and his participation in civic organizations. In 2006, the Montgomery County Office of Human Rights inducted Wims into the Human Rights Hall of Fame. The following year, Clarksburg High School named their new baseball field "Wims Field" in his honor. In 2014, Montgomery County Public Schools named the new elementary school in Clarksburg "Wilson Wims Elementary" at the behest of the greater community.

The significance of Clarksburg Heights is enhanced by its association with its first and long-standing owners who influenced local affairs. This report highlights the contributions of Mary E. Johnson, Katie R. Harper, and Edith J. Gregg, three African American women who taught at both segregated and integrated Montgomery County public schools, and James R. Gregg who challenged discriminatory practices at country clubs and worked to improve conditions for African American residents.

There are no historic sites or districts listed in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* that reflects the contributions of these individuals to Clarksburg or Montgomery County.

1.D The historic resource exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political or historical heritage of the county and its communities.

Clarksburg Heights serves as a poignant reminder of segregated life and the resilience, achievements, and contributions of African Americans residents in mid-twentieth century Montgomery County. F. Wilson and Sarah L. Wims had the knowledge, skills, and determination to counter rampant discriminatory housing practices and provide much-needed middle-class housing for African Americans. Clarksburg Heights represents the productive life of the African American community in Clarksburg. The Wims, Johnson, Harper, and Gregg families all tirelessly worked to improve conditions for African Americans who lived in Montgomery County.

The HPC looks forward to working with you as the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan progresses and is available for any questions during the public hearing and worksessions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Karen Burditt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Karen" and last name "Burditt" clearly distinguishable.

Karen Burditt, Chair
Historic Preservation Commission

Cc: Members, Historic Preservation Commission

**Email**

Testimony on the Clarksb...

Owner

MC...

Email

Regarding

[Testimony on the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan](#)

Subject

Testimony on the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan

From

Celeste Torio

To

<MCP-Chair MCP-Chair>; MCP-Chair@mncppc-mc.org

Cc

Bcc

Date Sent

Date Received

9/8/2025 7:50 PM

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Dear Chair Harris,

My name is Celeste Torio, and I am a resident of Clarksburg living in the Clarksburg Square area. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan Update. While I support thoughtful growth for our community, I have serious concerns about the proposed zoning and housing changes and their potential impacts.

First, shifting large areas from employment-focused zoning to commercial-residential (CR/CRT) raises questions about balance. Clarksburg already struggles with traffic congestion, limited infrastructure, and overcrowded schools. Allowing higher-density residential development without guaranteed transportation and school capacity improvements could worsen these problems and reduce quality of life for current residents.

Second, while I support the goal of affordable housing, the plan's blanket requirement for 15% MPDUs and incentives for larger family units could lead to significantly denser projects than our infrastructure can handle. These changes may also affect property values in existing communities, especially townhome neighborhoods like mine, by introducing large-scale developments that alter the character of our area.

Third, redevelopment of the COMSAT site as a mixed-use activity center deserves careful scrutiny. If the zoning changes create unchecked residential growth, we risk creating another overbuilt corridor without the transit, road capacity, or green space protections needed to support it.

I urge the Planning Board to:

Tie any new residential zoning to firm commitments for infrastructure, including road upgrades, public transit expansion, and school capacity.

Limit the scale of high-density housing near established neighborhoods to prevent incompatibility and property devaluation.

Ensure that environmental protections and open space preservation are not compromised by zoning flexibility.


Clarksburg deserves growth that enhances our community, not one that overwhelms it. I respectfully ask you to revisit the zoning and housing recommendations to ensure they truly reflect the long-term sustainability and livability of our community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Celeste Torio, PhD, MPH

Attachments

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Marc Elrich
County Executive

Christopher R. Conklin
Director

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

M E M O R A N D U M

September 12, 2025

TO: Artie Harris, Chair
Montgomery County Planning Board

FROM: Haley Peckett, Deputy Director for Transportation Policy
Department of Transportation

SUBJECT: Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan
Public Hearing Draft – MCDOT Agency Comments

Thank you for the opportunity to review the July 2025 Public Hearing Draft of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan. We support the overall goal of expanding travel options and accessibility through the Clarksburg area, including the development of a denser grid network of streets, proposals for new bike and pedestrian connections, and continued emphasis on the growth of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and express bus network. However, we want to express our concern that the proposed level of growth may lead to significant negative impacts on the transportation network, even with new transit and road investment. Additionally, we offer the following comments on the Observation Drive realignment, removal of the proposed Little Seneca Parkway interchange, and proposal for BRT service.

- 1) **TRANSPORTATION METRICS:** The Plan's transportation metrics (Appendix K) move notably in the wrong direction. ***MCDOT expresses concern that, based on the results of the travel model, the Plan will reduce overall job accessibility, increase travel time and increase vehicle miles traveled (VMT)*** as compared to the existing Plan as well as to present conditions. This is an area of the county that already experiences some of the longest travel times across all modes and experiences significant job and services accessibility challenges. Clarksburg residents frequently lead with concerns about traffic congestion and accessibility during public engagement events.

Across all three infrastructure scenarios, residents will have access to fewer jobs within 45 minutes of vehicle travel (between 20,000 to 40,000 fewer jobs, as compared with the baseline scenario). Average vehicle travel time increases roughly by one minute in the

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three scenarios, compared to baseline, and two minutes compared to present day conditions. Transit travel time increases by roughly an additional three minutes (to between 66-67 minutes total), even with significant additional transit infrastructure and service assumed. Buses will travel slower due to increased congestion, while still having to travel long distances to desired destinations. With these lengthening transit times, the model shows that transit cannot reasonably serve as an alternative for most trips. Quality of service across all modes will be degraded.

As the analysis concludes, the transportation metrics perform poorly due to proposed changes to land use. The Plan expects to result in an additional 8,800 new residents and 2,500 new jobs. As a transportation agency, we are not the experts on housing or job needs for the County. However, we can see that the growth proposed in the Clarksburg Plan runs a high risk of not meeting Adequate Public Facilities requirements, even if we were to invest in all infrastructure envisioned in the Plan. Given the distance between Clarksburg and regional activity and employment centers, we are concerned that the level of population growth proposed will exacerbate current levels of congestion.

We would request that Planning share results of modeling scenarios using lower future growth levels to better determine the sensitivity and performance of the three proposed infrastructure scenarios. MCDOT is concerned that, as proposed, there is not adequate transportation capacity and multimodal transportation options to accommodate the proposed land use changes. However, we would be interested in exploring options at lower levels of growth.

- 2) **OBSERVATION DRIVE BRIDGE LOCATION AND ALIGNMENT:** The Plan proposes to shift the alignment of Observation Drive to the west to intersect with Gateway Center Drive in the north. This will remove the alignment from the Little Seneca Creek and Coolbrook Tributary stream valleys. *MCDOT supports the revised recommended alignment*, including retaining the Little Seneca bridge alignment, as this will reduce environmental impacts, reduce construction constraints, and support proposed new communities. However, the new alignment will increase the overall project schedule, as much of the prior planning and design work underway prior to the Master Plan process will not be applicable.

As proposed in the Plan, *MCDOT recommends that the Plan maintain the existing Little Seneca bridge crossing alignment* to limit design changes to current bridge plans, environmental impacts, and property needs. The remainder of the alignment north of the bridge should respect topography, natural resources, property boundaries, and redevelopment potential while providing a direct path of travel to minimize VMT and transit travel time.

- 3) **OBSERVATION DRIVE CROSS SECTION:** The Plan proposes to limit the cross section of Observation Drive to two travel lanes and two dedicated bus lanes (one travel lane and one bus lane in each direction). The prior configuration included four travel lanes (two in each direction). The reduced capacity of Observation Drive may limit its utility as a bypass of MD 355, as prior plans had imagined. With this recommended capacity reduction for Observation Drive, *MCDOT recommends that the Plan include parallel north-south road connectivity through the proposed street grid* to provide additional capacity and redundancy for this area. This concept appears to be implicit in the proposed framework,

but a secondary corridor is not explicitly identified. We suggest that multiple smaller roads are more effective than one larger road to provide network redundancy.

As an interim condition, Planning Staff is recommending that the bus lanes be used as general-purpose lanes until BRT/express bus operations are initiated, at which time the lanes could be switched to dedicated bus lanes. MCDOT supports this approach based on similar approaches implemented in the Crown area of Gaithersburg on Fields Road (a County road) and Decoverly Drive (a City street). In both cases, development fronts the road and additional width for on-street parking is provided. The resulting sections have worked well for repurposing of the rightmost travel lane as a bus-only lane. However, MCDOT acknowledges challenges with assuming lane repurposing, given that the future context is unknown to planners today.

Given plans to convert a travel lane to a bus lane, MCDOT recommends that the Plan include additional width for on-street parking and loading where development is proposed to front the road. In our observations, the parking lane reduces conflicts with the bus lane, including loading, drop-off, and parking and stopping maneuvers. A parking lane is not needed in areas where adjacent land use does not induce curbside demand.

- 4) **LITTLE SENECA PARKWAY INTERCHANGE:** The Plan proposes to remove the interchange between Little Seneca Parkway and I-270. Instead, the Plan proposes to extend Little Seneca Parkway as a two-lane bridge to the Cabin Branch community. ***MCDOT does not support this recommendation; instead, we suggest that the Plan maintain the interchange recommendation*** and explore a range of interchange options that can work with present and future conditions. We recognize that the interchange would only be feasible with state or federal funding. While neither is likely in the short term, the interchange could be integrated into future I-270 improvements, but only if it remains in the Master Plan.

The Plan's transportation analysis finds that the interchange (as studied in Scenario 2) would increase job accessibility by car by 20,000 in comparison to scenarios without the interchange. Additionally, neighborhoods near the interchange would experience drive time improvements of up to 3.3 minutes. Recognizing the travel model shows that improvements are limited to a few Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZs), MCDOT hypothesizes that travel time savings would extend to additional TAZs, based on our understanding of travel and land use patterns.

Maintaining the interchange recommendation is important to support potential commercial use in this Plan area. The additional connectivity to I-270 will reduce pressure on the MD 121 interchange to the north and the Father Hurley Boulevard interchange to the south. It will also reduce north-south travel on Observation Drive, reinforcing the preliminary recommendation to reduce its cross-section.

The bridge-only alternative would come at a high cost for little benefit. A non-interchange connection across I-270 already exists 1,000 feet to the south using West Old Baltimore Road. MCDOT believes that the cost of constructing the overpass without an interchange is not justified.

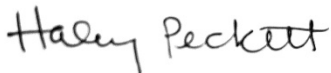
The Plan should recommend that any future interchange configuration support the goals of compact design, urban character, and significantly reduced environmental impact. For instance, the footprint of the interchange should be minimized to avoid impacts to adjacent streams, forest and developable areas. The reduced-footprint interchange should convey a “local road” character for Little Seneca Parkway to serve the planned new community and existing Cabin Branch community. Options should consider a minor realignment of southbound I-270 within its right-of-way to increase the space available. The Plan should also recommend that any major adjacent development provide support for the interchange, including producing initial designs and providing necessary land dedication.

- 5) **PROPOSED BRT/PARK AND RIDE:** The Plan reimagines the Milestone/COMSAT East Clarksburg Corridor Connector as a full BRT with dedicated lanes and stations, travelling from Clarksburg Town Center in the north to Germantown Town Center in the south. ***MCDOT recommends that the Corridor Connector designation remain without specifying a service type.*** We recommend a flexible approach to bus infrastructure along the corridor. We do not want to make a commitment to any specific design or service (eg, BRT vs. express bus) until additional study and/or preliminary designs have been completed. Maintaining a flexible recommendation will accommodate an operational needs-based analysis in the future to determine the type of service.

MCDOT recommends that the Plan consider a location(s) for a regional intercept park-and-ride facility. There are few, if any, locations for such a facility elsewhere along I-270. Such a facility would allow greater access to transit for riders beyond station walksheds in Clarksburg. A parking facility would also reduce the burden on small park-and-ride lots in Germantown, which route regional traffic through Town Centers. The Little Seneca Parkway interchange area or the northern extent of Observation Drive may be useful intercept locations for long distance commuters from the north, reducing traffic impacts to town centers and residential areas.

Thank you again for opportunity provide comment on this important Plan. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me.

Sincerely,



Haley Peckett
Deputy Director for Transportation Policy
Montgomery County Department of Transportation

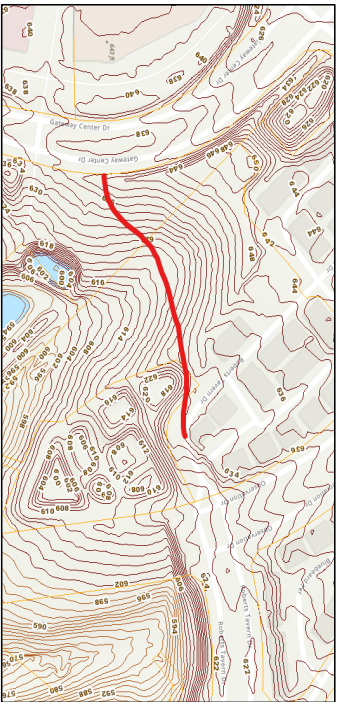
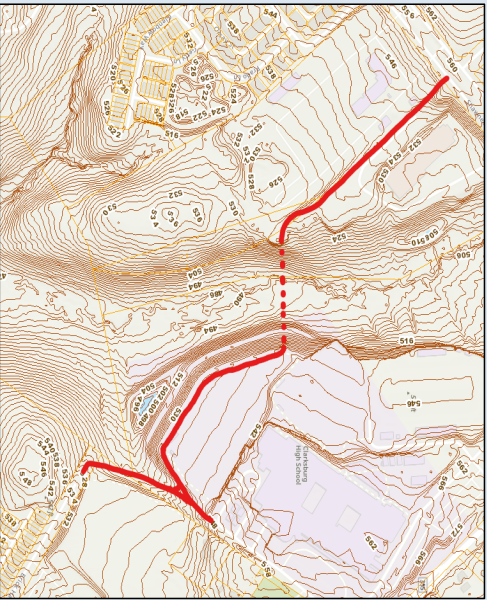
cc: Chris Van Alstyne, MCDOT
Corey Pitts, MCDOT
Andrew Bossi, MCDOT
Clark Larson, MNCPPC
Richard Brockmyer, MNCPPC

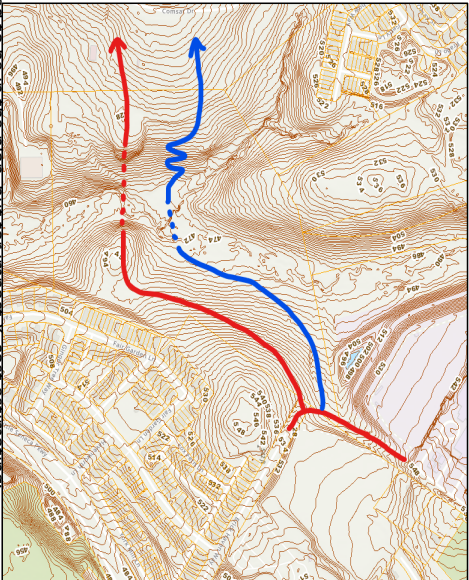
0	Team	Page	Section	Summary	Comment
1	Policy	37	Overall	Critical Comment	MCDOT recommends that the plan maintain the existing Little Seneca bridge crossing alignment to limit design changes to current bridge plans, to environmental impacts, and to property needs. The remainder of the alignment north of the bridge should respect topography, natural resources, property boundaries, and redevelopment potential while providing a direct path of travel to minimize vehicle-miles-traveled and transit travel time.
2	Policy	43	Overall	Critical Comment	Observation Drive Cross Section: The Plan proposes to limit the cross section of Observation Drive to two travel lanes and two dedicated bus lanes (one travel lane and one bus lane in each direction). The prior configuration included four travel lanes (two in each direction). The reduced capacity of Observation Drive may limit its utility as by-pass of MD 355, as prior plans had imagined. MCDOT will await traffic analysis to ensure this lane reduction will not result in a meaningful degradation in area-wide through movement. With this recommended capacity reduction for Observation Drive, MCDOT recommends that the plan include parallel north-south road connectivity through the proposed street grid to provide additional capacity and redundancy for this area. This concept appears to be implicit in the proposed framework, but a secondary corridor is not explicitly identified. We suggest that multiple smaller roads are more effective than one larger road.
3	Policy	43	Overall	Critical Comment	As an interim condition, Planning Staff is recommending that the bus lanes be used as general-purpose lanes until BRT/express bus operations are initiated, at which time the lanes could be switched to dedicated bus lanes. MCDOT supports this approach based on our experience with lane repurposing elsewhere. A similar approach was implemented in the Crown area of Gaithersburg both on Fields Road (a County road) and Discovery Drive (a City street). In both of these cases, development fronts the road and additional width for on-street parking is provided. The resulting sections have worked well for repurposing of the rightmost travel lane as a bus-only lane.
4	Policy	39	5-D	Critical Comment	<p>The Plan proposes to remove the interchange between Little Seneca Parkway and I-270. Instead, Little Seneca Parkway is proposed to extend as a two-lane bridge to the Cabin Branch community. MCDOT does not support this recommendation at this time; instead, we suggest that the plan maintain the interchange recommendation and explore a range of interchange options that can work with present and future constrained conditions. Additionally, a connection across I-270 is already possible a short distance to the south using West Old Baltimore Road. The cost of constructing the overpass without an interchange does not appear justified if it does not facilitate connectivity to I-270.</p> <p>Maintaining the interchange is important to support potential commercial use in this plan area. The additional connectivity to I-270 will also reduce traffic pressure on the MD 121 interchange to the north and the Father Hurley Boulevard interchange to the south and will reduce north-south travel on Observation Drive, reinforcing the preliminary recommendation to reduce its cross-section. Increased connectivity to I-270 will also reduce vehicle-miles traveled through residential and proposed town center areas both within and outside this plan area, resulting in improved safety and reduced negative impacts from through traffic flow.</p> <p>The plan should consider a range of configuration options for this interchange that aim to maximize benefit while minimizing impacts and costs. The footprint of the interchange should be minimized to avoid impacts to adjacent streams, forest and developable areas. The reduced-footprint interchange should convey a "local road" character for Little Seneca Parkway to serve the planned new community and existing Cabin Branch community. Options should consider a minor realignment of southbound I-270 within its right-of-way to increase the space available. A compact diamond interchange, possibly with roundabout ramp terminals may be appropriate. A partial example of this type of interchange can be found at Old Columbia Pike and US 29, just to the north of Burtonsville.</p>


0	Team	Page	Section	Summary	Comment
5	Policy	34	Transportation	Critical Comment	the only proposal to reduce imperviousness is to remove travel lanes. The number of residential dwelling units should also be considered to be reduced so that the roads don't become congested. The suggested notion that having transit will make people take it, won't work as you will never achieve the level of congestion and the area is too far out of where people work.
6	Policy	39	Transportation	Critical Comment	1-270 interchange should be left in the plan to allow for future development. Without it, all you get are homes with no way to get around due the existing roads being congested. No one wants to build a bridge that doesn't bring additional economic prosperity. The ramps should remain. (HP - Concur and also note that unlike other roadway capacity improvements, this would likely only advance if funded by MD or FHWA as part of the I-270 Phase 2 improvements. Additionally, this interchange would transfer VMT from local roads to the interstate and therefore allow local roads to be safer and more hospitable to transit/walking.)
7	Transit	19-20	Transportation	Critical Comment	The Plan refers to BRT and Enhanced Stations along Observation Drive. This is unlikely to be BRT, but instead some sort of express bus. The term 'BRT' should be removed from the text and framework graphic as it not actually going to be Flash BRT. The planned MD 355 Flash service will operate along Stringtown Road.
8	Policy	K 18	Travel Analysis	Critical Comment	Planning notes that Scenarios 1-3 perform very similarly, and "land use changes alone generally drive the direction of metric differences between the baseline 2045 and the scenarios." The magnitude of land use changes makes it difficult to compare between the scenarios. MCDOT would like to see how the scenarios perform in an interim or reduced growth outlook. We'd be interested in understanding how the various scenarios perform in the event of 25% or 50% of buildout.
9	Policy	K 16-17	Travel Analysis	Critical Comment	Overall, all metrics move significantly in the wrong direction. The number of jobs accessible goes down by 20K-40K from baseline. Transit travel time <i>increases</i> , even with significant additional transit service assumed, meaning buses are stuck in traffic. MCDOT is concerned that there is not transportation capacity to accommodate the proposed land use changes. Given the distance of Clarksburg from other destinations in the region and the jobs/housing imbalance in the Clarksburg area, we are concerned that the level of population growth proposed will lead to unacceptable levels of congestion for many key routes. Even with growth focused on transit corridors, transit cannot reasonably accommodate the growth due to limited capacity of buses and large distances between O/D.
					The only metric that appears to be driven by transportation infrastructure assumptions is the auto accessibility, which performs significantly better under Scenario 2, likely due to the added interchange.
10	Policy	Appx K: p16-17 p24	Master Plan Adequacy Performance Metrics Impact of Removing I-270 / Little Seneca Parkway Interchange	Worsening Results	<p>Compared to the Baseline all scenarios:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Worsen auto job accessibility - Worsen transit job accessibility - Worsen auto travel times - Worsen transit travel times - Worsen VMT per capita <p>The only metric that appears to improve is NADMS, which is somewhat moot alongside the increases in VMT.</p> <p>Furthermore, Scenario 1 (the Recommended Scenario) appears to fare the worst of all the scenarios.</p> <p>This implies that this current plan does not meet the transportation adequacy goals established by Council.</p>

0	Team	Page	Section	Summary	Comment
11	Policy	42	Street Classification and Right-of-Way Recommendations	Critical Comment	While curbless and shared streets are an interesting concept we want to advance, it seems unlikely Street A would work as such. Being the continuation of a significant street and providing access to the commercial core, this is likely to be quite heavily trafficked. Without dedicated bike facilities, it will likely be a very high stress environment.
12	Policy	43	3-B	Normal Comment	We recommend that additional width for on-street parking and loading be provided where development is proposed to front Observation drive. The parking lane reduces loading/drop-off and bus lane obstructions and the bus lane reduces conflicts with parking and stopping maneuvers. In other areas, where this additional space for parking and loading is not provided, we have observed greater conflicts with the repurposed bus lanes. A parking lane is not needed in areas where this interaction with adjacent land use does not occur.
13	Policy	34	Transportation	Normal Comment	most of this area is newly built. MCDOT or any other developer will not rebuild any of these streets and most already meet complete streets. New roads should be constructed to enhance people's mobility until more transit options are funded and operational.
14	Policy	37	Transportation	Normal Comment	Observation Drive should be considered an alternative to MD 355 and should be designed to be economical where it does not represent something that is infeasible to be built due to environment or construction costs.
15	Policy	38	Transportation	Normal Comment	A Circulator type route may infeasible to operate unless there is clear demand from Clarksburg residents. This simply may not connect enough residents to destinations. There should be a caveat, such as "if further study warrants this service."
16	Policy	39	Transportation	Normal Comment	Consider adding a goal to street network "Efficiently and safely direct vehicles traveling outside of Clarksburg to I-270 and major arterials to reduce traffic volumes on local roads."
17	Policy	52	Transportation	Normal Comment	We can expand a dockless service area but it's not clear there's a viable business model for dockless in Clarksburg, given the distance for vendors to maintain. The County may prefer to prioritize location incentives to areas with greater equity needs.
18	Policy	K 25	Travel Analysis	Normal Comment	MCDOT questions some of the O/D assumptions, in that we believe that Scenario 2 should pull traffic off of local roads and onto 270. The Gateway Center/Stringtown intersection shows much better performance under Scenario 2 (we don't know what the mitigation is for Scenario 1).
19	Policy	K 27	Travel Analysis	Normal Comment	MCDOT believes that the Cabin Branch area (and potentially other TAZ) would have travel time savings from the interchange.
20	Policy	K 20	Travel Analysis	Normal Comment	We assume that the NADMS goals are driven by greater pedestrian and bike connectivity, as well as increased transit? It would be interesting to learn more about how this changes from current.
22	Policy	40	Street Network	Normal Comment	it's not really clear what the bold letters on the Master Planned Roadways Network Map refer to RE: #7 "Designate Observation Drive as a Growth Corridor, instead of Frederick Road"
23	Policy	39	Transportation	Growth Corridor Limits	Consider providing a map to show how exactly this would work. Does this imply that the MD 355 Growth Corridor ends abruptly at MD 118, where it shifts over to continue on Observation?

0	Team	Page	Section	Summary	Comment
24	Policy	39	Transportation	Growth Corridor Classification	RE: #7 "Designate Observation Drive as a Growth Corridor, instead of Frederick Road" Just to confirm: is this only a "Growth Corridor" insofar as a Thrive designation, and now a street classification? The map on p40 shows Observation as a Town Center Boulevard.
25	Policy	42 46	Transportation	Commercial Shared Street	While the Code does use Residential & Commercial Shared Street as placeholders, since the publication of the Curbless & Shared Streets Design Guide (and also in the pending Ch.49 Regs about to be published in the Register) we are going to be using "Curbless Street" and "Shared Street" into the future. Consider changing all references of "Commercial Shared Street" to "Curbless Street", which appears to correspond to the size, alignment, traffic loading, and target speed of the roadway. RE: Cross-Section D, Little Seneca Pkwy Ext
26	Policy	44	Transportation	Cross-Sections	Consider whether a median is necessary. If it is: the 4' median should be shown as monolithic concrete, as that is what would be constructed in such a narrow width. If greenery is desired within the median it needs to be at least 6' wide. RE: Cross-Section F, W Old Baltimore Rd
27	Policy	45	Transportation	Cross-Sections	7' parking lanes are substandard and not acceptable for a master planned facility such as this. Either identify a means of widening to 8', or consider the need for the parking lanes in the first place. RE: Cross-Section G, New Street A
28	Policy	45	Transportation	Cross-Sections	The Bike Master Plan (and reaffirmed by Complete Streets and the Ch.49 regs about to be published in the Register) specify that bikeways should be within the Active Zone, not the Street. As this is essentially a greenfield site we should not be planning for substandard facilities. RE: Cross-Section A/B, Observation Dr Interim
29	Policy	47	Transportation	Cross-Sections	The text notes on p46 constructing the Active Zone facilities along Observation Dr in their ultimate location, but the interim cross-section does not reflect this. The interim has an 8' Street Buffer on the west side, and a 7' Street Buffer on the east side. The 105' Typical has an 8.5' Street Buffer on the west, and a 6.5' Street Buffer on the east. It's an easy fix: just move 0.5' from one side to the other. I suggest moving it in the interim from the east side to the west side. RE: #20, renaming portions of the old Observation alignment
30	Policy	47	Transportation	Street Names	Consider at some point also, for consistency, renaming Gateway Center Dr to Observation Dr.

0	Team	Page	Section	Summary	Comment
31	Policy	49-50	Transportation	Additional Trail Connections	<p>Consider extending Roberts Tavern Dr as a trail to Gateway Center Dr (approx 750')</p> 
32	Policy	49-50	Transportation	Additional Trail Connections	<p>Consider extending the existing north section of Observation Dr as a trail southeastward from the Clarksburg Square community to Brick Haven Way, linking the area to the schools -- something frequently requested during community meetings. This may also double as a recreational trail within the forested area. This might be implemented by MCDOT or by Parks.</p>  <p>This detail does not need to be in the plan, but for impact & cost estimating: This would be a length of approx 2450' and include one bridge across the Coolbrook Stream, likely spanning from the steep west bank directly to the top of the east bank by the high school's athletic fields (a 400' long gap).</p>

0	Team	Page	Section	Summary	Comment
33	Policy	49-50	Transportation	Additional Trail Connections	<p>Consider extending Wims Rd as a trail westward from Brick Haven Way to the new Observation Dr alignment to link the schools and the new activity center -- something frequently requested during community meetings. This may also double as a recreational trail within the forested area. This might be implemented by MCDOT or by Parks.</p>  <p>This detail does not need to be in the plan, but for impact & cost estimating. This would be a length of approx 1800' and include one or two bridges across the Coolbrook Stream. It might generally follow existing grades on the east bank, either crossing with a bridge of about 380' to the west bank or using a shorter bridge over the stream and using switchbacks on the west bank.</p>

0	Team	Page	Section	Summary	Comment
					<p>Consider extending Shawnee Ln as a trail westward across I-270 to Petrel St &/or the Outlets parking lots, more directly linking this plan area with Cabin Branch. This would be implemented by a mixture of new development (the east side) and MCDOT/SHA (structures & west side)</p>  <p>This detail does not need to be in the plan, but for impact & cost estimating: This would be a length of approx 1850'-2500' and include between 1 to 3 structures across I-270, Cabin Branch, and Little Seneca Creek. The above image shows three segments (the lower segment with two different potential alignments), of which only 1 or 2 segments would be necessary for connectivity.</p>
34	Policy	49-50	Transportation	Additional Trail Connections	
35	Policy	50	Transportation	Show Trail Connections	Show the trail connections from p49 also on the map on p50.
36	Policy	50	Transportation	Bicycle Parking Stations	Figure 13 shows several Bicycle Parking Stations, but there is no accompanying narrative describing these. Pull info for these from the Bike Master Plan and add into this section.
37	Policy	54	Community Design	On-Street Parking Priority	RE: S4, "All new streets should accommodate on-street parking, where possible"
					Consider whether this is intended to affect Complete Streets' Prioritization, which generally assigns Parking (Curbside Zone) a Low or Medium Priority. Parking areas are often among the first to be cut from a cross-section when necessary to achieve other purposes, such as larger Active Zones. Is it the intent of the plan that in such cases: parking be preserved & Active Zone elements be narrowed?
38	Policy	58	Community Design	Alley Landscaping	RE: K4C, "incorporate landscaping within alleys to help soften their utilitarian purpose"
					Is it the intent that alleys have landscaping *within* their cross-section, or *along* their cross-section? I suggest changing this to "along" If it is indeed within: note that the 16' Residential and 20' Non-Residential Alley cross-sections do not allow any space for landscaping. Additional ROW will need to be dedicated to implement this recommendation.
39	Policy	100	Capital Improvements Program	Blank table	The CIP table is empty; this should include all new large-scale projects (particularly the little seneca extension, large bike/ped projects, and wildlife bridges)

0	Team	Page	Section	Summary	Comment
40	Policy	General	General	Glossary	Consider including a Glossary of Terms. Previous master plans have done some good work drafting these; consider copying from examples such as the Veirs Mill Plan and updating as needed with any new terms.
41	VZ	49	21	Traffic Calming	In general, master plans should not be recommending operational studies or interim facilities. Recommendations need to conform with Planning's role.
42	VZ	52	25	Brick Pavers	Brick pavers are not recommended due to accessibility and maintenance concerns.
43	Policy	77	Parks, Open Spaces, and Recreation	Wildlife Passage Separation	RE: "Wherever possible, the roadway should be separated from the wildlife passage by fencing or jersey barriers" Consider rephrasing this to "The roadway should be separated from the wildlife passage, such as with fencing or jersey barriers" Rationale - There may be many different means of separation, and Jersey barriers might be consider both unsightly as well as rather ineffective at wildlife separation. Also removing a use of "possible"
44	Policy	General	General	Possible vs Feasible	Review all uses of the word "possible". The word "possible" implies something that is fiscally unconstrained. Consider replacing with the word "feasible" which more clearly establishes bounds. Some specific examples to consider are: - p57, #54 - "All new streets should accommodate on-street parking, where possible" - p68, #7 - "exceed standards where possible" - p77, left column, last paragraph - "Bridges should be as long as possible" - p77, right column, top paragraph - "culverts should be as large as possible" - p77, right column, top paragraph - "Open-bottom culverts with natural substrate should be utilized when possible." - p77, right column, last paragraph - "Where a 150-foot buffer is not possible"
45	Policy	Appx K, p23, 33-95	Impact of Removing I-270 / Little Seneca Parkway Interchange	Observation & Ridge	How is traffic being distributed without the interchange? What are is heading south toward Observation/Ridge as compared to north toward Clarksburg/Stringtown? It's a surprise that Observation/Ridge is functioning at D/D. Confirm the traffic distribution doesn't disproportionately weight toward the Clarksburg/Stringtown, minding that travelers may be pre-disposed to go south toward Ridge if their ultimate destination is southward.
46	Policy	Appx K, p27-29	Impact of Removing I-270 / Little Seneca Parkway Interchange	Cabin Branch Travel Time Deltas	In the figures showing the change in travel times with/without and interchange: why doesn't Cabin Branch benefit? Given their proximity it is a surprise that they show no changes. Is it due to the Transportation Analysis Zone being too large & encompassing all of Cabin Branch?
47	Policy	27, 34, 63, 67	General	Impervious Surfaces	Consider how impervious limits are tallied insofar as planned infrastructure. These limits should not restrict the implementation of master planned infrastructure, noting past difficulties with building new bikeways within the Ten Mile Creek area.
48	Policy	K 4	Travel Analysis	Normal Comment	Agree with long-term project assumptions listed on page 4.
49	Policy	36	Transportation	PLOC Map	Consider resizing Figure 9 (the PLOC Map) onto its own page to improve legibility.

0	Team	Page	Section	Summary	Comment
50	Policy	38	Transportation	Lakewood Dr	Is Lakewood Dr the correct street? I'm not recalling where this is nor finding it online, but I'm guessing it's either Lake Ridge Drive, or the future extension of Cabin Branch Ave?
51	Policy	39	Transportation	Reference Errors	RE: #58 - Fix the two reference errors
52	Policy	73	Parks, Open Spaces, and Recreation	State Highway Assoc	Under #8, change "State Highway Association" to "State Highway Administration"
53	VZ	88	Telecommunications	Recommendations	The plan notes that residents expressed concerns about spotty cell phone service. Is this something that is regularly in a master plan? If so, should the plan recommend areas for additional towers?

Email

Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan Meet...

Owner

 MCP-Chair #

Email

Regarding

 [Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan Meeting on September 25, 2025](#)

Subject

Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan Meeting on September 25, 2025

From

 Geza Serenyi

To

 <MCP-Chair MCP-Chair>;  MCP-Chair@mncppc-mc.org

Cc

Bcc

Date Sent

Date Received

9/15/2025 12:51 AM

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

Dear Planning Board Members and Chair Harris:

I worked for 25 years at the COMSAT Labs in Clarksburg. As a current resident of Montgomery County, I am asking you to preserve the COMSAT building which has so much history associated with the development of satellite communications.

Already my coworkers from COMSAT have documented the historic significance of this building. Maury Mechanick, the President of the COMSAT Alumni and Retirees Association, recently submitted to you the document attached below.

What I am asking you to do is to develop a plan that will extend the life of the building for another 25 or 50 years by doing the following:

- Set aside a part of the building as a museum of satellite communications and a teaching facility that will encourage high school students to explore the latest trends in satellite communications.
- Set aside a part of the building as a research laboratory, perhaps for biomedical research.
- Set aside a part of the facility for recreational purposes.
- Set aside a part of the building for retail purposes.

The current owners of the land and the building deserve a chance to develop the extensive land around the building, but you have an obligation to set aside the building itself for preservation and reuse. I would like to see some of my yearly County property tax and income tax payments used for this purpose.

Please enter my comments into the public records for the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan Meeting on September 25, 2025.

Please let me know what your final decision will be with regard to the preservation of the COMSAT building.

Geza Serenyi

Attachments

File Name	File Size (Bytes)	
COMSAT Labs Historical Significance.docx	31,799	
1 - 1 of 1 (0 selected)		Page 1

Email

Re: Automatic reply: Clark...

Owner

 MC...

Email

Regarding

 [Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan Meeting on September 25, 2025](#)

Subject

Re: Automatic reply: Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan Meeting on September 25, 2025

From

 [Geza Serenyi](#)

To

 <MCP-Chair MCP-Chair>;  MCP-Chair@mncppc-mc.org

Cc

Bcc

Date Sent

Date Received

9/15/2025 1:21 AM

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

My mailing address is

14512 High Meadow Way, North Potomac, MD 20878

Please add this information to the email that I sent to you earlier today.

Geza Serenyi

On Sun, Sep 14, 2025 at 8:51PM MCP-Chair <mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org> wrote:

Thank you for contacting the Planning Board Chair's Office. This confirms receipt of your message for distribution to appropriate staff to review. If you have submitted an inquiry, we will respond in a timely manner. You may also leave a voice message at (301) 495-4605 and a staff member will return your call.

IMPORTANT: If you have submitted written testimony for a Planning Board item, please be sure to include your mailing address to satisfy proper noticing requirements. If this was not already included, please reply to this email with that information. Written testimony submitted before the deadline of 12pm, two business days before the scheduled Planning Board meeting, will be distributed to the Board and staff and included in the public record. Written testimony received after the deadline will only be distributed to staff to review.

For more information about the Chair's Office, please visit: <https://montgomeryplanningboard.org/>

Perspectives on the Historical Significance of the Research and Development in Satellite Telecommunications Undertaken at COMSAT Laboratories

Submitted by Maury J. Mechanick, President, on behalf of the COMSAT Alumni and Retirees Association (COMARA)

September 2024

Executive Summary

COMSAT Laboratories is where the foundation of modern satellite technology was invented and developed. Virtually all the communications satellites we rely on today can trace their technology back to COMSAT Laboratories. The idea behind the creation of COMSAT Laboratories can trace its roots to the speech given in 1961 by President Kennedy committing the United States, among other things, to put a man on the moon by the end of this decade, and represents the embodiment of President Kennedy's commitment to bring the benefits of satellite telecommunications technology to all countries of the world, and thereby promote greater world peace and understanding. Over the years, hundreds of engineers from around the world learned about satellite technology at COMSAT Laboratories, which they were then able to share this knowledge with their home countries. In recognition of the groundbreaking work done there, COMSAT Laboratories received several awards, including two Emmys and the NASA/US Space Foundation Space Technology Hall of Fame Award. As of 1999, COMSAT Laboratories had a patent portfolio covering numerous aspects of satellite communications technology, including approximately 100 active patents, with another 70 in the filing process.

* * * * *

To fully appreciate the historical significance of COMSAT Laboratories, it is first necessary to step back in time to the early 1960s and the global geopolitical/ideological battle being waged between the United States and the Soviet Union, each attempting to win over the hearts and minds of the rest of the world, albeit accompanied by radically different visions of the desired world order that would come from those efforts. One of the most consequential battlegrounds involved outer space, including both the race to the moon and the development of space-based technologies intended to significantly improve the ability of the world to communicate and interact with one another.

On May 25, 1961, President Kennedy, in his historic speech on "Urgent National Needs," shared his vision on the United States' future in space with the U.S. Congress. That speech was most famous for his oft-quoted declaration expressing his belief "that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth." This commitment was critical to winning "the battle that is now going on around the world between freedom and tyranny . . . [and] the impact of this adventure on the

minds of men everywhere, who are attempting to make a determination of which road they should take.” Less well remembered, but equally important, President Kennedy in the same speech also called for the creation of an international communications satellite system, committing “an additional 50 million dollars [to] make the most of our present leadership, by accelerating the use of space satellites for world-wide communications.” These commitments in the space race were crucial components of the ongoing competition between the United States and the Soviet Union as to which would prevail in their global geopolitical/ideological struggle, undertaken at a time when it appeared that the Soviet Union was clearly well ahead in space technology.

To spearhead this effort, the U.S. Congress boldly enacted the Communications Satellite Act of 1962, which represented an audacious but ultimately exceptionally forward looking approach for bringing the benefits of satellite technology to the world. Through this legislation, the foundation was laid for the creation of a private company, the Communications Satellite Corporation (COMSAT), to serve as the United States’ “chosen instrument” for sharing the benefits of satellite technology with the rest of the world. This ultimately involved two distinct prongs. The first prong involved the creation of the political and commercial apparatus needed to operate a global satellite network, which led to the creation of an international organization that later became INTELSAT (International Telecommunications Satellite Organization), with the mission of bringing affordable satellite telecommunications service to all countries of the world. The second prong addressed the means required to develop the necessary technologies that made satellite services possible and then to share them with the rest of the world. It was that prong that led to the creation of COMSAT Laboratories, as the chosen instrument to serve as the primary research engine for development of satellite technology throughout the formative days of the satellite industry. Needing a permanent location from which COMSAT Laboratories would operate, COMSAT announced on November 1, 1966, that it had purchased 210 acres of land outside of Clarksburg, Maryland. Less than three years later, its doors opened for business on September 8, 1969.

While the original idea for utilizing the geosynchronous orbit for communications purposes was put forward by the renowned scientist and science-fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke in an article he authored appearing in the October 1945 issue of *Wireless World*, the reality of the potential of this technology to revolutionize the way in which the world communicated did not come to fruition until nearly two decades later.

Ensuring the ability to provide reliable and cost-efficient telecommunications services utilizing satellites operating 22,300 miles above the earth’s surface presented COMSAT Laboratories with a myriad of technical and engineering challenges that were not present in the case of other modes of communications and thus unlike any that had been undertaken before. The hurdles began with addressing the unique characteristics of radio signal transmission and propagation over extremely long distances (in this case 22,300 miles up to the satellite and then back to earth), including minimizing the effects of interference, echo, and transmission delay. Then there was the need to design a device (satellite) that could operate 22,300 miles in space with no credible way to effectuate in-orbit repairs in the event of any system failure or in-orbit mishap, so measures to ensure the long-term sustainability of a satellite containing sophisticated electronics in orbit were essential, including state of the art electronic systems and sufficient

built in redundancy to address potential system failures in orbit. There was also the matter of assuring the availability of on-board power to maintain the functioning of the satellite and to maintain its proper location in orbit over a multi-year time period, which among other things required the development of extended lifetime batteries and the ability to effectively harness solar power through sophisticated solar cell technology. There were concerns as to durability, both for the sensitive electronic components to survive the pressures of launch and then to operate in an environment completely different than being on earth – that of outer space. Each satellite in orbit had to be capable of surviving passage through two harsh environments: the tremendous mechanical stresses of launch and the vacuum of space with its accompanying radiation. An equally daunting separate set of issues then arose in connection with the ground infrastructure needed to communicate with satellites in space, as well as the ground control facilities to maintain the satellite's healthy operation. Finally, to allow this revolutionary technical advance to be shared with the entire world, the economics had to be such, both in space and on the ground, that the services provided were as economical and low cost as possible.

To meet these challenges, so as to meet the commitments embodied both in President Kennedy's May 1961 address, and the subsequent resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 21, 1961 (Resolution 1721 (XVI)), calling for the availability of "communication by means of satellites . . . to the nations of the world as soon as practicable on a global and non-discriminatory basis," it was necessary to bring together the leading experts in a variety of fields necessary to fully develop the potential for satellite technology, and to provide them with state-of-the art laboratory facilities to allow them to conduct their research. By the early 1970s, COMSAT Laboratories had assembled in Clarksburg a professional staff of over 400 individuals committed to tackling the challenges posed by space based telecommunications.

To successfully discharge its multi-faceted mission, COMSAT Laboratories was equipped with a number of large chambers to test whole satellites, as well as smaller chambers to test systems and specific components, such as antennas and attitude control systems. The internal organizational structure (subject to some refinement over time) was built upon the expertise and work of six distinct divisions or programs: Communications Techniques Division; Network Technology Division; Microwave Technology Division; Microelectronics Division; Spacecraft Technology Division; and System Development Division. Additionally, a separate unit was formed in the 1980s to spearhead COMSAT's participation in NASA's Advanced Communications Satellite Technology (ACTS) Program, for which COMSAT designed and implemented the ground segment and control station for the ACTS Satellite. Not only was significant research conducted at COMSAT Laboratories throughout its operational existence, but through a very generous and creative internship program, engineers and scientists from around the world were able to come to COMSAT Laboratories and to learn firsthand the basic technologies involved, which they were then able to share back in their home countries. This internship program was part of the larger effort to share the benefits of satellite technology with the entire world.

Since its creation, COMSAT Laboratories engineers and scientists tirelessly worked to improve the efficiency and quality of satellite communications in numerous ways, including the following key developments:

- To address the distortive impacts on voice communications transmitted via satellite, COMSAT Laboratories, through the application of adaptive digital techniques, developed an echo canceller that virtually eliminated echo.
- To improve the efficiency and reduce the cost of satellite transmission without impairing transmission quality, COMSAT Laboratories developed specialized filters that enabled transmit of multiple separate signals (carriers) with well-defined bandwidths through a transponder, achieving significant reductions in size and mass without sacrificing quality.
- COMSAT Laboratories developed SPADE (short for “Single channel-per-carrier Pulse Code modulation multiple Access Demand Assignment Equipment”), the world’s first international digital voice communications service specifically addressed to facilitating efficient transmission of smaller bit streams, thereby allowing for more economical use by developing countries.
- COMSAT Laboratories spearheaded development of the world’s first commercially viable flat plate antenna for direct broadcast satellite TV reception.
- To significantly improve the throughput of communications links via satellite, COMSAT Laboratories helped develop an entirely new transmission technique, focusing on the allocation of satellite capacity as a function of time rather than by frequency. This technique, which came to be known as TDMA (Time Division Multiple Access) revolutionized the efficient operation of satellite transmissions and is a hallmark of the satellite industry today.
- To significantly improve battery performance, COMSAT Laboratories led the way in the development of the nickel hydrogen oxide battery.
- COMSAT Laboratories conducted extensive research on the transmission and reception of communications signals over satellites using very small antennas, different frequencies and mobile earth stations. These experiments led to field trials that paved the way for providing mobile maritime communications services via satellite, which today serves as the foundation for mobility services provided over air, ground and sea, including satellite news gathering activities.
- More recently, in the 1990s, COMSAT Laboratories was recognized for its role in the development of monolithic microwave integrated circuits (MMICs), which are important for their ability to integrate multiple essential functions in a single chip. These efforts, providing for enhanced reliability, miniaturization, weight reduction and cost efficiency in circuit design, resulted in significant cost saving for large scale MMIC production.
- Through much of the 1980s and 1990s, COMSAT Laboratories was a key participant in the Advanced Communications Technology Satellite (ACTS) Program, a program spearheaded by NASA to develop an experimental satellite that played a central role in the development and flight-testing of technologies today being used on the latest generation of commercial communications satellites. The ACTS Satellite, as the first all-

digital communications satellite, supported standard fiber-optic data rates, operated in both the Ku- and Ka-frequency bands, and pioneered dynamic hopping spot beams and advanced onboard traffic switching and processing.

Given that a critical aspect of COMSAT Laboratories mission was to share the technical knowledge and the understanding of communications satellites developed with the rest of the world, in addition to the internship program previously mentioned, COMSAT Laboratories originated the first journal devoted exclusively to satellite communications technology and systems. Since the first issue appeared, the COMSAT Technical Review (CTR) published over 400 papers and notes initiated by members of COMSAT's professional staff and collaborators, confirming COMSAT's reputation for R&D excellence. By the early 1990s, the CTR was a key resource for scientists and engineers in more than 70 countries, presenting state-of-the-art advances, trends, and applications of communications technology in support of an expanding market for communications services in the global community.

COMSAT Laboratories also prioritized good citizenship in support of its home state of Maryland. COMSAT Laboratories hosted the 4-H Adventures in Science Program, which matches volunteer scientists and professionals with children ages 8 to 15 and their parents for extracurricular, hands-on participation in science and technology projects. And through the Maryland Industrialist Partnerships (MIPS) program, COMSAT Laboratories carried out joint research programs with University of Maryland researchers, fostering the commercialization of technology and economic progress in the state of Maryland.

In recognition of its efforts in support of satellite news gathering, COMSAT received an Emmy issued by the National Academy of Arts & Sciences in 1993 for its outstanding achievement in the sciences of television technology for miniature, lightweight, rapid deployment earth terminals for satellite newsgathering. Newsgathering via satellite had become an indispensable element in the virtually instantaneous reporting then and now demanded by the global community. This technology played a crucial role in bringing the people of the world face to face with the human side of major events and rapidly unfolding political crises worldwide. COMSAT had previously (1974) been the recipient of the International Directorate Emmy Award, issued by the International Academy of Arts & Sciences, honoring individuals or organizations for their outstanding contributions to international television.

In 1997, COMSAT Laboratories was one of the recipients of the 1997 NASA/US Space Foundation Space Technology Hall of Fame Award, in recognition of COMSAT Laboratories significant contributions to the success of the Advanced Communications Technology Satellite (ACTS) Program.

As of 1999, COMSAT Laboratories had a patent portfolio covering numerous aspects of satellite communications technology. The portfolio includes approximately 100 active patents, with another 70 in the filing process.

The research and developmental work that was performed at COMSAT Laboratories served as the backbone for all aspects of satellite technology as it has evolved. Moreover, that

work led to developments in related fields that today are utilized in a multitude of important ways, including the development of the solar power industry and advancements in extended battery lifetimes, which can sustain a broad range of commercial activities, such as the cost-effective development of electronic vehicles. Nor is it a stretch to say that the seminal research conducted at COMSAT Laboratories regarding the transition from analogue to digital transmission of radio signals lies at the foundational core of today's internet. All told, the many contributions made by COMSAT Laboratories represented an essential element of the United States' ability to honor its commitment to share with the rest of world the benefits of satellite telecommunications, so as to promote greater world peace and understanding.

September 18, 2024

Jason Sartori, Planning Director
Montgomery County Planning Department
2425 Reddie Drive, Floor 14
Wheaton, MD 20902

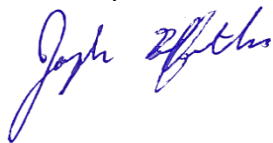
Re: Public Hearing Draft Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan
Amendment to Thrive 2050

Dear Director Sartori:

The Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) received the above referenced public hearing Draft Plan as part of the distribution in an email dated August 28, 2025, from Clark Larson (on your behalf) to Secretary Rebecca L. Flora. MDP recognizes the significant and thoughtful effort that Montgomery County Planning Department, the Montgomery County Planning Board, and stakeholders applied to the development of the Draft Plan. We understand that a public hearing is scheduled for September 25, 2025.

MDP sent this Draft Plan to the Maryland Department of Transportation. Attached is their analysis as well as our check list of the elements required under the Land Use Article for your use as a self assessment integrated into our analysis of the Draft Plan.

Sincerely,



Joe Griffiths, AICP
Director, Planning Best Practices

cc: Marin Hill, Montgomery County Planning Department
Clark Larson, Montgomery County Planning Department
Susan Llareus, Planning Supervisor, Maryland Department of Planning



Maryland Department of Planning
Public Hearing Draft Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan
Amendment to Thrive Montgomery County 2050
September 2025

The Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) offers the following as suggestions to improve the Draft Plan and better address the statutory requirements of the Land Use Article. The Maryland Department of Transportation, as noted below, has contributed comments.

2025 Legislation Impacting Local Planning

MDP identified the following bills, adopted by the General Assembly during the 2025 session, that may impact local planning, implementation, and reporting. MDP cannot determine at this time how they may impact your jurisdiction. In partnership with other state agencies, MDP is analyzing the bills and will be developing guidance. Other bills have been noted in reference to the required elements of the plan

Local Land Use Reporting

- [HB 1193](#) - Maryland Housing Data Transparency Act

Energy

- [SB 931/HB 1036](#) - Renewable Energy Certainty Act
- Natural Resources and Comp Plans, effective July 1, 2025

Housing

- [HB 1466/SB 891](#) Accessory Dwelling Units - Requirements and Prohibitions, effective October 1, 2025

Plan Analysis

MDP commends Montgomery County Department of Planning for effectively incorporating the new Sustainable Growth Planning Principles, adopted by the General Assembly with 2025's HB 286, signed by Governor Moore into law on April 8, 2026, and effective October 1, 2025. The Draft Plan addresses the 8 Planning Principles. MDP intends to share this draft as an example with other jurisdictions desiring to similarly address these new planning principles.

Maryland's Land Use Article Sections 1-406(a) and (b) require the inclusion of certain elements within the general plan. The following checklist provides for each required plan elements for a Charter County and the Maryland Code reference. This check list is intended to help the county determine consistency with the Land Use Article.

Checklist of Maryland Code (Land Use Article)-Charter County Division I, Title 1, Subtitle 4 Required Elements Division II, Section 21-104(a) Required elements.		
State Comprehensive Plan Requirements	MD Code Reference and Additional MD Code Reference	
(1) The planning commission for a charter county shall include in the comprehensive or general plan the visions under § 1-201 of this title and the following elements:	L.U. § 1-406 (a)	
(i) a development regulations element	L.U. § 1-406 (a) (1) (i) L.U. § 1-407 -- Development Regulations Element	
(ii) a housing element	L.U. § 1-406 (a) (1) (ii) L.U. § 1-407.1 -- Housing Element	
(iii) a sensitive areas element	L.U. § 1-406 (a) (1) (iii) L.U. § 1-408 -- Sensitive Areas Element	
(iv) a transportation element	L.U. § 1-406 (a) (1) (iv) L.U. § 1-409 -- Transportation Element	
(v) a water resources element	L.U. § 1-406 (a) (1) (v) L.U. § 1-410 -- Water Resources Element	
(2) a mineral resources element, IF current geological information is available	L.U. § 1-406 (a) (2) L.U. § 1-411 -- Mineral Resources Element	
(b) A comprehensive plan for a charter county MAY include a priority preservation area (PPA) element	L.U. § 1-406 (b) For PPA Requirements, see § 2-518 of the Agriculture Article	
(4) Visions -- A county SHALL through the comprehensive plan implement the 12 planning visions established in L.U. § 1-201*	L.U. § 1-414 L.U. § 1-201 -- Visions	
(5) Growth Tiers -- If a county has adopted growth tiers in accordance with L.U. § 1-502, the growth tiers must be incorporated into the county's comprehensive plan	L.U. § 1-509	

*SB266, Local Comprehensive Planning and State Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Policy - Planning Principles passed with an effective date of October 1st, 2025. This bill overhauls the State's Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Policy (Policy) by consolidating the Policy's 12 Visions into 8 Planning Principles that will guide and inform state and local planning practices. The new Planning Principles are Land, Transportation, Housing, Economy, Equity, Resilience, Place, and Ecology, and collectively they are intended to foster a high quality of life for all residents by creating sustainable communities and protecting the environment. As noted above, MDP is please to see that this Draft Plan includes a discussion of the new 8 Planning Principles.

Conformance with Section 3-102 of the Land Use Article

The following analyzes how the Draft Plan meets the requirements of municipal comprehensive plan elements, in accordance with the Land Use Article.

1. Development Regulations Element – Synopsis

The element is required to include the planning commission's recommendations for land development regulations to implement the plan. Regulations are required to be flexible to promote innovative and cost saving site design, protect the environment and identify areas of growth. The areas identified for growth are required to encourage flexible regulations, which should further promote economic development using innovative techniques, streamlining the review of applications, including permit review and subdivision processing.

Plan Analysis

HB538, Housing Expansion and Affordability Act passed in 2024 with an effective date of January 1, 2025. The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development drafted [Frequently Asked Questions](#) to help local governments understand and implement the Act. This state mandate may override local zoning density for multifamily, and unit types where single-family detached dwellings are permitted, in certain circumstances and only for qualified projects.

Housing Element - Synopsis

The housing element is required to address the need for housing within the jurisdiction that is affordable to low-income and workforce households. The housing element is also required to assess fair housing and ensure that a jurisdiction is affirmatively furthering fair housing through its housing and urban development programs.

Plan Analysis

MDP reminds Montgomery County about [HB 1466's](#) requirement that all jurisdictions adopt a local law meeting accessory dwelling unit provisions by October 1, 2026. MDP is aware of the county's ADU legislation but has not analyzed the current local ADU legislation to determine if it is consistent with HB 1466. MDP suggests that the planning department complete such an analysis.

Sensitive Areas Element – Synopsis

The sensitive areas element is required to include the goals, objectives, principles, policies, and standards designed to protect sensitive areas from the adverse effects of development (more recently referred to as climate change impacts). The Land Use Article also assigns sensitive areas element data

provision and review responsibilities to the Maryland Departments of the Environment (MDE) and Natural Resources (DNR).

Plan Analysis

MDP notes that there may be an opportunity to address this new legislation: [HB 731](#) - Wildlife - Protections and Highway Crossings, effective July 1, 2025.

Transportation Element - Synopsis

The transportation element is required to reasonably project into the future the most appropriate and desirable location, character, and extent of transportation facilities to move individuals and goods, provide for bicycle and pedestrian access and travelways, and estimate the use of proposed improvements.

Plan Analysis

MDP is pleased to note that Montgomery County plans to create “a more complete, connected, and sustainable” community (page 19) for the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan Area. The Draft Plan supports a complete, connected, and sustainable land use pattern, prioritizing “higher-capacity transit services over single-occupancy vehicle infrastructure” (page 34) and including a planned Complete Streets network, which will promote alternative transportation, e.g., taking transit, walking, biking, and rolling, to travel by single-occupancy vehicle. These policies are consistent with the Maryland Transportation Planning Principle.

With the proposed land use and zoning changes to the area east of I-270, from employment/office/industrial oriented uses to mixed commercial and residential uses, the county recommends removing a formally planned interchange with I-270 and replacing it with an east-west Little Seneca Parkway over I-270 to help form a connected local roadway network. MDP supports this recommendation. We recognize that this aligns with the sector plan’s vision and the transportation goals, as discussed above.

MDP provides the following suggestions relating to the Draft Plan

- If feasible, it would be helpful to provide a map to illustrate the proposed public transportation recommendations (pages 37 and 38) if feasible.
- The Draft Plan promotes “safe routes to school” and includes recommendations for improving pedestrian and bicycle crossing at several intersections near Rocky Hill Middle School and Clarksburg High School. MDP staff suggests the county consider the following to further enhance walking and biking to schools
 - Include an additional illustrative map (see page 49) that depicts a potential publicly accessible trail(s)/connection(s) to Rocky Hill Middle School and Clarksburg High School from the area west of the schools.

- Consider improving the existing pedestrian and bicycle facilities connecting to the high and middle schools along Frederick Road, since Figure 9 (page 36) shows either “Undesirable” or “Uncomfortable” for the pedestrian level of comfort on the segment of Frederick Road.

Water Resources Element – Synopsis

The water resource element is required to consider available data provided by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to identify drinking water that will be adequate for the needs of existing and future development proposed in the plan, as well as suitable receiving waters and land areas to meet stormwater management and wastewater treatment and disposal needs. MDE and MDP are available to provide technical assistance to prepare the water resources element, ensuring consistency with MDE programs and goals. MDE and MDP jointly developed WRE guidance to demonstrate how local governments can ensure compliance with the WRE requirements. Local jurisdictions are expected to implement the most important aspects of the [MDE/MDP WRE guidance](#).

Plan Analysis

The County Council approved the [Water Resources Plan](#) (WRP) in July 2010, which was adopted by the full Commission in September 2010, and states the following:

“The Plan provides information on County water and sewer service capacity in light of planned growth to 2030, summarizes an estimate of nutrient loadings on watersheds for existing and future conditions, and identifies the policies and recommendations to amend the General Plan that are needed to maintain adequate drinking water supply and wastewater treatment capacity to 2030, and meet water quality regulatory requirements as the County continues to grow. It is meant to satisfy the requirements of House Bill 1141.” (Abstract of the Approved and Adopted Water Resources Functional Plan)

This suggests that an amendment to the general plan would address policies and recommendations relating to maintaining an adequate drinking water supply and wastewater treatment capacity to 2030, continuing to meet the needs of the county. Thrive did not include the policies suggested in the 2010 WRP but instead adopted it by reference. The WRP used pre-2010 data to examine Montgomery County’s land use, growth, and stormwater management capabilities, as related to adequate drinking water supplies, wastewater treatment capacity, water quality regulatory requirements, and inter-jurisdictional commitments. As redevelopment occurs, the increases in density proposed in this Draft Plan, and in other master plans, will likely impact the waters of the state and existing water, sewer and stormwater infrastructure capacities.

The Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) should review the WRP and determine if it accounts for the Draft Plan’s revised development capacities. This analysis should consider stormwater infrastructure, water and sewer capacity analysis, and finally, upgrading old systems that may be failing or improperly sized for increased development. MDP encourages updating the WRP since it impacts all master plans and the Montgomery County Ten-Year Comprehensive Water Supply and Sewerage Systems Plan.

**Maryland Department of Planning Review Comments
Draft Plan**

STATE AGENCY COMMENTS

The following are state agency comments in support of MDP's review of the draft plan. Comments not included here may be submitted under separate cover, or via the State Clearinghouse. If comments from other agencies are received by MDP, the department will forward them to [Name of jurisdiction] as soon as possible.

Attachments

Page #7: Maryland Department of Transportation

September 17, 2025

Ms. Susan Llareus
c/o Rita Pritchett
Maryland Department of Planning
120 E. Baltimore Street, Suite 2000
Baltimore MD 21202

Dear Ms. Llareus:

Thank you for coordinating the State of Maryland's comments on the 2025 Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan (the Plan) in Montgomery County, Maryland. The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) offers the following comments on the Plan for consistency with the State of Maryland and MDOT's goals and objectives:

General Comments

- In general, the Plan is consistent with MDOT plans and programs. The MDOT supports the goals of the Plan, including the vision of a multi-modal transportation future for Clarksburg that is characterized by safe streets and human-centered design that serves a Complete and Compact Community and supports environmentally responsible growth.
- Shifting transportation mode choice towards transit and active transportation, shortening automobile trips, and increasing carpooling and vanpooling, are critical components to building efficient, equitable, and sustainable places, and is also essential to accommodating Maryland's changing demographic composition. The MDOT manages several active transportation programs:
 - Transportation Alternatives (TA) Program: a reimbursable, federally funded program for local sponsors to complete community projects designed to strengthen the intermodal transportation system. The program provides funding for projects that enhance the cultural, aesthetic, historic, and intermodal transportation system. The program can assist with projects that create bicycle and pedestrian facilities, restore historic transportation buildings, convert abandoned railway corridors to pedestrian trails, mitigate highway runoff, and other transportation-related enhancements. Project sponsors are required to provide a minimum 20 percent of the total project as a match.

Ms. Susan Llareus
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- Recreational Trails Program: a federally funded program that the State Highway Administration (SHA) administers on a reimbursement basis. Like the TA Program, the Recreational Trails Program may reimburse a local project sponsor up to 80 percent of the project's total eligible costs to develop community-based, motorized, and non-motorized recreational trail projects.
- The MDOT's Kim Lamphier Bikeways Network Program: a program that allocates State transportation funds administered by the MDOT Secretary's Office to promote biking as an alternative transportation mode.
- For more information on MDOT's active transportation planning and programming efforts, please see our Maryland's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans and Programs web page:
<https://www.mdot.maryland.gov/tso/pages/Index.aspx?PageId=24>.
- Commuter Choice Maryland is MDOT's Travel Demand Management (TDM) program, and it could be incorporated into the Plan as a strategy to support the Plan. The program offers an extensive menu of commuter transportation services, such as ridesharing and incentives. Please visit the Commuter Choice Maryland web site at <https://www.mdot.maryland.gov/tso/pages/Index.aspx?PageId=29> for more information.
- The MDOT supports continued improvements to expand and enhance transit options. Please coordinate with the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) Office of Statewide Planning for any coordination regarding regional transit and the coordination of MDOT supported locally-operated transit services (LOTS). The MTA also supports park and ride (with SHA), demand response services, paratransit, medical services, and senior-center transportation options. For regional transit planning, please contact Mr. Stephen Miller, Chief of Strategic Planning, via email at SMiller6@mdot.maryland.gov or phone at 410-767-3869. For local transit service planning, please contact Mr. Jason Kepple, MTA Regional Planner, via email at Jkepple@mdot.maryland.gov.
- A Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Program was established within MDOT to provide services including identifying potential TOD opportunities and evaluating existing and future needs of public transportation facilities. For TOD related data resources please visit the Transit-Oriented Development in Maryland web page: <https://data-maryland.opendata.arcgis.com/pages/tod>
- Relative to MDOT implementing resilience strategies and initiatives to withstand the impacts of climate change on transportation infrastructure, please review the MDOT SHA Climate Change Vulnerability Viewer online ArcGIS web application map: <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=86b5933d2d3e45ee8b9d8a5f03a7030c>. The map showcases geospatial data products related to climate change and the potential impacts on State transportation infrastructure. The purpose of this application is to support efforts to avert and mitigate potential impacts of sea-level rise that result from global climate change on State roadway and bridge infrastructure. To review other MDOT Climate Change programs and to access this information please visit: <https://www.mdot.maryland.gov/tso/pages/Index.aspx?PageId=169>.

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Chapter 2: Plan Vision and Framework

- p. 19-21. Consider bike-ability for both short- and long-term trips in the concept framework plan. Consider walking, biking, and rolling needs on connectors that prioritize travel through the Plan Area.

Chapter 3 B: Transportation Comments

- p. 48, 19. The MDOT supports the County's vision to pursue complete streets design that encourages the efficient use of land and transportation resources. Such planning is in line with MDOT's emphasis on improving connectivity, access, and mobility for all users as emphasized by SHA's Context Driven initiative, which focuses transportation practitioners on implementing context-appropriate improvements to emphasize safety, access, and mobility for all users, especially those more vulnerable such as pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Consider incorporating bicycle and pedestrian connectivity to and pedestrian-friendly amenities at local bus stops, in addition to major transit stations.
- Use MDOT's Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress typology to support the Plan's data-driven approach to active transportation improvements and complement the County's Pedestrian Level of Comfort analysis.
- Clarify the County's policy or approach to improving walking conditions on existing roadways. If the County anticipates certain right-of-way needs, MDOT encourages the County to discuss this in the recommendations.
- Consider future context-sensitive countermeasures, particularly at intersections and crossings, to expand on the Plan's typical sections.
- Upon implementation, please share any new sidewalk or shared-use path data with MDOT.
- Consider the ongoing maintenance needs of bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout the Plan area. Coordinate maintenance needs with the planned MD 355 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor.
- Continue to prioritize Safe Routes to School (SRTS) engineering improvements to the three schools located in the Plan area in the Plan's implementation and through the County's SRTS program.
- The MDOT recommends coordinating with Luis Gonzalez, Chief of the SHA Active Transportation Division for pedestrian and bicycle accommodations along MD 355 (Frederick Road).

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Thank you again for the opportunity to review the Plan. If you have any additional questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Nicole Condol, Transportation Planner, MDOT Office of Planning, Programming, and Project Delivery (OPPPD) at 410-230-6614, or via email at ncondol@mdot.maryland.gov. Ms. Condol will be happy to assist you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Geoff Anderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Geoff" and last name "Anderson" clearly distinguishable.

Geoff Anderson
Chief, OPPPD, MDOT

cc: Ms. Nicole Condol, Transportation Planner, OPPPD, MDOT
Mr. Luis Gonzalez, Division Chief, SHA
Mr. Jason Kepple, Regional Planner, MTA
Mr. Stephen Miller, Chief of Strategic Planning, MTA
Ms. Kari Snyder, Regional Planner, OPPPD, MDOT