

From: [REDACTED]
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Replacement of Zion Rd Bridge no. M-0121 over the Hawling River, October 16 Hearing-Item 6
Date: Tuesday, October 14, 2025 6:46:06 PM

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

My name is [REDACTED] and I live at [REDACTED] Zion Road. I am writing to voice my strong opposition to the proposed replacement of Zion Road, a one lane bridge over the Hawlings River, a quiet rural route that has long served our agricultural community effectively and safely in its current form.

As a resident who depends on this road regularly, I believe expanding the bridge would bring more harm than benefit. The current one lane design serves as a natural traffic calming measure, helping maintain the peaceful, low traffic character of our area. Widening it will inevitably invite increased traffic, faster speeds, and potentially more accidents, all of which threaten the safety of both local drivers and farm equipment operators.

This bridge and the road it connects are part of the historic and agricultural character of our community. The narrow design has served not only as a functional crossing, but also as a natural traffic calming measure, encouraging drivers to slow down, yield and respect the rural setting. Expanding it to two lanes would fundamentally alter that dynamic.

Moreover the character of our rural community is rooted in its simplicity, slower pace, and deep connection to the land. Expanding this bridge is not a neutral infrastructure upgrade but a step toward changing the fabric of our area. We risk encouraging development and through traffic that do not align with the values or needs of those who live and work here

- **Preservation of Rural Character**

The one lane bridge contributes to the quiet, scenic, and historic nature of this area. Widening would invite higher speeds, more through traffic, and potentially larger commercial vehicles not suited for a rustic farm road. This change would erode the very qualities that make our agricultural district special and that our comprehensive plan seeks to protect.

- **Agricultural and Environmental Impacts**

The surrounding lands are active farms and open spaces. Construction disturbance, heavier traffic, and increased runoff could threaten nearby fields, waterways, and wildlife habitats. Maintaining the bridge's current footprint minimizes environmental impact and helps sustain farming viability.

Expanding the bridge could disrupt local waterways, habitats, and agricultural drainage systems, especially if heavy construction equipment is brought in. Such changes should not be taken lightly, especially when the existing infrastructure has functioned well for decades.

- **Fiscal Responsibility and Practical Need**

There is no demonstrated need for expansion. The existing bridge adequately serves the local community. Investing in major reconstruction for marginal convenience is an unnecessary expense when maintenance and safety improvements could achieve the same goal without sacrificing character.

- Alignment with Local Plans and Policies

The county's Agricultural Preservation District guidelines emphasize maintaining the rural scale of infrastructure in agricultural areas. Keeping this bridge as a one lane structure aligns with those values.

In summary, I ask that you preserve the one lane bridge as it is not out of resistance to change, but out of respect for the rural lifestyle, agricultural use, and environmental balance that make this area unique and livable. This bridge works both practically and symbolically as a reminder of our rural roots. Once it's widened, that sense of place is lost forever. I urge the Board to reject the proposed expansion and instead support a maintenance or rehabilitation plan that preserves the existing one lane design.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

From: [REDACTED]
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Public Testimony: Replacement of Zion Rd Bridge no. M-0121 over the Hawling River
Date: Tuesday, October 14, 2025 7:32:26 PM

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Dear Chair Harris and Members of the Montgomery County Planning Board,

Thank you for your service in planning and protecting our community. My wife and I are residents of Zion Road, where we operate a small farm devoted to honeybees and rescued animals. We are deeply appreciative of the foresight that led to the planning and zoning of Montgomery County. This protection allows Montgomery County's urban and suburban residents ready access to natural treasures such as the Rachel Carson Conservation Park, also located on Zion Road.

Degrading a Rustic Road

Because Zion Road is a designated Rustic Road, we are concerned by the proposal to replace the one-lane bridge over the Hawlings River with a two-lane bridge. Although the bridge itself may not be historic, a one-lane bridge is *essential* to preserving the Rustic Road character and discourages large trucks that damage the forest canopy and endanger drivers.

The Planning Board's own Rustic Roads website affirms:

"Preservation of rustic roads must be achieved by retaining certain physical features of rustic roads and by certain right-of-way maintenance procedures."

The Planning Board's inventory of Zion Road identifies two such features:

"Pleasant road blending into adjacent land
Forest canopy over northeastern section of road"

The proposed two-lane bridge lies at the center of this forested section and would invite heavy truck traffic that threatens the canopy itself. Approving this project would not align with the first consideration for Mandatory Referrals:

"whether the proposal is consistent with the County's General Plan, functional plans such as the master plan of highways, environmental guidelines, the approved and adopted area master plan or sector plan, and other public plans, guidance documents, or programs for the area."

A one-lane replacement could meet structural needs while maintaining the Rustic Road's defining features and safety.

Incomplete Environmental Review

The environmental study appears to have examined only the immediate bridge site, not the broader corridor impacts of heavier truck traffic. Allowing taller, heavier vehicles will degrade the forest canopy and increase pollution along the northern corridor of Zion Road. There is no evidence of a plan to mitigate these effects or protect Rachel Carson Conservation Park. Expanding the bridge would invite precisely the traffic that endangers the area the Agricultural Reserve was designed to protect. The study as presented also does not contemplate the likely overall increase in traffic from expanding the bridge from one lane to two. It merely states that the bridge will help with the projected increase in volume by 2037 - but it is likely that a wider bridge will not only invite large trucks but will also increase the overall use of Zion as a commuter route on a road not designed as such.

Endangering Bicyclists

Zion Road is a well-known and much-used cycling route, cited in the County's Bicycle Master Plan. Expanding the bridge to accommodate large trucks would significantly increase danger for cyclists, particularly along portions of the road without shoulders - the northern section near the bridge. This change would conflict with the County's broader goals of improving safety and accessibility for bicyclists.

This project was not requested by residents, will erode the Rustic Road character of Zion Road, and will heighten risks for drivers and cyclists alike. It is the wrong solution. If the bridge must be replaced, we respectfully urge the Planning Board to preserve the Rustic Road designation and rebuild it as a one-lane bridge that maintains the safety, beauty, and integrity of Zion Road.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Zion Rd, Brookeville, MD 20833