

March 9, 2020

To:
The Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: Montgomery County's 2020 State Transportation Priorities Letter

Sierra Club Montgomery County strongly urges the Montgomery County Council to include the following recommendations in the 2020 State Transportation Priorities Letter.

For too long, our transportation system has focused solely on cars; we need to focus on people. By building safe, walkable, bikeable, transit-convenient systems in our communities, we will help address climate change and reduce congestion, while connecting people to jobs, healthcare, education and recreation. Further, the goals of Vision Zero (adopted by the State and the County) demand this. Otherwise, we undermine the economic mobility and health of our communities, particularly for low-income people and frequently people of color.

Several things have changed in the County since the last Transportation Priorities letter in 2017.

- US 29 FLASH will open this year as the first bus rapid transit (BRT) system in the state. Buses will travel in dedicated lanes, but only in the northern half of the corridor. We need MDOT/SHA assistance, in coordination with the County-led US 29 Mobility and Reliability Study, to make improvements to reduce traffic congestion and increase transit reliability by adding a reversible, dedicated lane between Tech Road and downtown Silver Spring. This will secure high-quality BRT for the entire route.
- Last year, the Governor dropped the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) from the Consolidated Transportation Plan. The CCT needs to be funded to deliver the Great Seneca Science Corridor live/work community for bioscience and the County's largest concentration of tech companies. This will reap economic benefits for the State.
- The Purple Line construction is now well underway. We need improved sidewalks and bike infrastructure to connect neighborhoods to each station.
- To build the new North entrance to the White Flint Metro, MDOT can use its influence with the WMATA board to fund this project. Building this entrance will spur more retail, office, and residential development along the Pike, increasing revenue to the County and State.
- The County is electrifying its RideOn bus fleet. We need electric charging infrastructure at the three County transit depots.



- Finally, let's discuss the "elephant in the room" --- the 270/495 P3 Expansion project. We must expand transit options along this corridor and if the highway expansion project proceeds (which we hope won't happen), we need the state to reinforce its commitment that 10 percent or more of toll revenue will go to affected counties for transit. Reversible toll lanes will take less land. When rebuilding the American Legion Bridge, the State should include infrastructure for pedestrian/bike lanes to cross the Potomac, connecting access to parkland on both sides. And it should design the infrastructure to accommodate future light rail to connect Bethesda to Tysons Corner in Virginia. (MDOT should not plan for these improvements and then drop them, as was done with the Harry Nice Bridge.)

Sierra Club Montgomery County strongly urges the Montgomery County Council to include these recommendations in its 2020 State Priorities Letter.

Thank you.

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