



To,
The Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland

February 15, 2022

Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan

Position: Support

Dear Council President Alborno and Council Members,

The Sierra Club Montgomery County Group supports moving forward briskly with improved transit in the I-270 corridor!

Sierra Club is a strong supporter of Smart Growth and has enunciated a number of Smart Growth principles that serve as the foundation for our position on specific plans, such as this one.

Pertinent here are these key principles –

- Encourage investment in a variety of transit (including MARC BRT, RideOn and other buses);
- Encourage programs and policies that make transit more safe, convenient, pleasant, frequent;
- Discourage any investment in building new roads.

Thus, we strongly oppose adding lanes to I-270 and oppose re-purposing its current HOV lanes to become toll lanes.

We believe that it is not sufficient to oppose a bad plan (such as Governor Hogan's ill-conceived 270 expansion). We also need to advocate for a sensible and responsible alternative.

In this case, we strongly support creating a robust transit alternative that will truly give up-county residents a fast and pleasant transit option to get where they want and need to go for many daily and weekly trips.

The 270 Corridor Plan presents two such transit proposals --

- BRT - The immediate creation of BRT on 355 and on Veirs Mill Road; and
- Commuter Rail – we prefer acting sooner on MARC expansion rather than wait for the longer-term extension of Metro's Red Line to Germantown. The WMATA extension project would require an entirely new right of way, whereas MARC service can be increased incrementally in the existing rail corridor as funds are available -- and there is significant Federal funding for passenger rail in the infrastructure bill.

We heartily support the proposal to create a BRT on 355 and on Veirs Mill Rd. And we have reviewed a recent Action Committee for Transit (ACT) analysis of the proposed Red Line to Germantown. ACT suggests that perhaps an expansion of MARC service might turn out to be more cost-effective than Metro extension to Germantown.

Based on that analysis, we urge the Council to give the ACT perspective serious consideration.



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In particular, when comparing Metro extension vs. MARC expansion, please bear in mind the difference in the timing of impact. We find compelling the argument that Metro expansion will take many years to offer improved transit to riders; in contrast, improvements in MARC service can be phased in over time, incrementally, with some benefits kicking in immediately.

Transportation investment to provide significantly improved transportation options along the 270 corridor is important.

By far the wiser investment – with substantial benefits for residents and the climate – is moving forward with transit proposals (such as those spelled out in this plan). In contrast, Governor Hogan’s Lane expansion proposal will have no benefits for improving transportation options for residents and will have negative impacts on the climate.

In sum, Sierra Club commends the 270 Transit Plan; and we urge that it be re-evaluated and updated quickly and then passed along to the County Council and implemented. There’s no time to waste for residents stuck in traffic and for saving our planet from the ravages of climate change.

Sincerely,

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