

## Long-term transit plan for Mid-County

Christine Dibble <christinedibble@outlook.com>

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To: Peter Nagrod <pnagrod@msn.com>; Georgette Cole <georgettewg@gmail.com>; Robert N. Johnson <rnj@elecdev.com>; Deb Mehlferber <dkmehlferber@gmail.com>; Jon Cohen <jdcca66@gmail.com>; Wendy Harris <wharris.cragsmoor@gmail.com>; boohfamily@comcast.net <boohfamily@comcast.net>; David Stopak <dstop4@gmail.com>; Mimi Styles <mimistyles6464@yahoo.com>; John Compton <johncompton@me.com>; John Compton <johncompton@me.com>; Darrell Anderson <deanderson47@verizon.net>; Patrice Klein <patriceklein@hotmail.com>; Barbara Raimondo <baraimondo@me.com>; Gray Yachup <gyachup@gmail.com>; Christine Dibble <christinedibble@outlook.com>; David Cosson <dcosson@rcn.com>

Cc: Grove Listserv <wgrove@googlegroups.com>

Hello HPC, PC and Council members and Mayor Compton,

I am writing to urge that the Town takes a stand NOW to oppose the Corridor Forward I-270 Transit Plan ("Transit Plan") released by Montgomery Planning this month and that the town have one or more representatives testify about the Transit Plan in December.

### What Does the Transit Plan recommend?

MoCo Planning evaluated six transit options, which include:

- enhanced MARC service,
- extending the Red Line,
- creating bus rapid transit along 270,
- proceeding with the Corridor Cities Transitway, and
- extending the Purple Line from Bethesda to Tysons.

The proposed recommendation consists of:

- in the undefined near-term, adding dedicated bus lanes to roads like parts of 124 (but not near us) and Great Seneca Highway. Dedicated bus lanes for 355 are already in the works.
- in the undefined long-term, extending the Red Line to Germantown.

### What's So Terrible About the Transit Plan?

Although the near-term part of the plan should not affect the Grove, the long-term part of the plan will produce catastrophic effects to our property values and to our quality of life. The Red Line extension will run along the far side of the CSX tracks past the town.

- If the extension is at grade, it will cut us off from Oakmont, and thus WGES and Shady Grove Road.
- If it is elevated, it will have tremendous effects on our viewshed.
- No matter whether it is at grade or elevated, the extension:
  - would add considerable noise levels to the town.
  - would necessitate demolishing the humpity bridge and replacing it with a monstrously large, modern bridge (or with nothing at all).
  - might result in increased property values due to our new proximity to the Red Line stop in Olde Towne Gaithersburg; however, IMHO the changes to our noise levels and viewshed will more than offset this increase and result in decreases to our property values.
  - would result in the end of MARC train service at Washington Grove.
- MoCo Planning is making this recommendation largely because it's the best option to reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and to reduce transit travel times (TTT). However, covid and the prospect of future pandemics will undoubtedly have considerable impacts on both VMT and TTT projections; MoCo Planning hasn't considered these impacts. They have also failed to consider the enormous effects that the electrification of vehicles will have on using VMT as a basis of their recommendation.

### Why the Urgency Now?

This is a billion-dollar plan, and I can imagine that many of you are thinking that none of this will happen in your lifetimes. And if you are over 50, you are probably right. BUT there is in fact a reason to start opposing this now: next month, the Planning Board will receive the working draft, and a public hearing is scheduled for early December (tentatively the 9th). We should have one or more residents testify at this hearing. Also, the County Council is scheduled to review this in Spring 2022.

We should also consider annexing property on the other side of the railroad tracks because having land on both sides may give us more leverage when the County seeks to gain easements on the land. (Note that I am not sure whether we would need to deal with CSX in order to annex this property).

We should also talk to Hershey's owners to ensure that they are aware of this proposal, and to the City of Gaithersburg Planning Department, to understand whether they believe this will benefit Gaithersburg (as opposed to the other options that MoCo Planning considered).

## Where Can I Learn More?

- MoCo Planning made a presentation this month. [You can view the 40 slides here.](#) [You can view and listen to a recording of the event here.](#) (One hour and 15 minutes)
- You can join the mailing list [by clicking here, entering your email address and checking the Corridor Forward box.](#)
- If you have a question or an opinion, you can email these MoCo Planning folks: [jessica.mcvary@montgomeryplanning.org](mailto:jessica.mcvary@montgomeryplanning.org), [patrick.reed@montgomeryplanning.org](mailto:patrick.reed@montgomeryplanning.org), [jesse.mcgowan@montgomeryplanning.org](mailto:jesse.mcgowan@montgomeryplanning.org) . What are their roles? Jessica is a planner coordinator for this project. Patrick is the lead for mid-county planning. Jesse is the lead for countywide planning and policy.

Thanks to Nancy Helme for bringing this to my attention.

Cheers,

Christine

240-702-6719

[christinedibble@outlook.com](mailto:christinedibble@outlook.com)

The best way to get a quick response from me is to email me rather than to call or text me.

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Do not get lost in a sea of despair... Be hopeful, be optimistic. Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble.

-- John Lewis