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Comments:

Dear Task Force members,

It seems that not as much progress has been made on the "no path option" as on other sections of the pending report. Therefore, I am sending the attached to all the members of the task force so you have a chance to read it before the next meeting in two days. It concerns consequences to the Town and lost opportunities if the shared use path is not built. The consequences are not so much "fact-based" as views shared by a number of Town residents. The 9 lost opportunities are mostly driven by knowledge and research. I ask that you look them over and incorporate into the report the bits that you consider useful.

All the best,

Jay Everhart

What would be lost if the shared use path is not built?

I see two general consequences if the WG Connector is not built and several specific lost opportunities.

The Town's credibility will slip if the WG Connector is not built. We will not be viewed as a reliable partner by Montgomery County and our neighboring jurisdictions. Outside observers could conclude that it is simply not worth trying to work with WG.

The trust of many town residents will also be eroded if the path is not built. Many already feel that the town does not move forward on significant or controversial issues because a tiny number of residents might be opposed. As a result, one often feels like this is the little town that couldn't. It has been a disincentive to participate in town activities during this drawn out and sometimes rancorous process. It will be worse if nothing comes of it.

We should examine the path as an amenity that could provide numerous benefits to the Town, all of which will be lost if the Connector is not built. The WG Connector is the only way we will have a safe and pleasant non-vehicular route out of town that goes much of anywhere useful. While it is safe and pleasant to walk/run/ride in circles on Washington Grove streets, the recreational benefits are limited.

Here are some of the missed opportunities:

1) First and foremost is non-vehicular access from Town to Shady Grove Metro Station, which would be about two miles for most residents. For many who would like to reduce short trips by private automobile, this is a huge advantage.

2) Bus connections. Not only would a shared use path provide access to the subway, but it would also link to the extensive system of 21 Ride-on and MTA buses from Shady Grove Metro.

3) Access lightly traveled roads to King Farm, Montgomery College Rockville Campus, and central Rockville.

4) Connections to dozens of miles of other paved trails, including:

- Needwood Road which connects to the Rock Creek trail that runs deep into the District and to the ICC trail, which currently reaches Layhill Road in NE Montgomery County.

- Access at Gude Drive to the Carl Henn Millennium Trail which encircles Rockville and connects to Shady Grove Medical Center and the Universities at Shady Grove.

These trails and their numerous spurs are part of a concerted effort by Montgomery County over the last three decades to make bicycling a viable form of transportation for county residents. This effort is in keeping with a national effort to connect existing bits and pieces of trails into large networks of comfortable places to ride.

5) Improved access to retail. The Grove Shopping Center at Crabbs Branch and Shady Grove Road would be about a mile from much of the Town. Current stores/entities and restaurants include a Giant, restaurants, and childcare. However, this shopping center is expected to have extensive renewal due to the high-density residential development between it and the Metro. In addition, more than 40,000 square feet of retail space is being built at Westside between the Metro and Shady Grove Road. Such improved access could be especially important for persons with limited mobility.

6) Counterbalance negative environmental effects that the Town has to endure. The southern outskirts of town (Oakmont Ave, the rail corridor, Roberts Oxygen, and the Montgomery County highway service center) are industrial and less than inviting. A shared use path would help humanize this environment.

7) Traffic calming in the Town. The presence of cars speeding through town has long been a safety concern. Bicyclists on our streets, especially during commuting hours, will slow and even deter speeders from cutting through town. Observance of our 15 mph speed limits would be more likely.

8) Future improved connections to Gaithersburg. For years, the City of Gaithersburg has wanted to connect Old Town to the Metro by a shared use path, yet has been stymied by a perception that Washington Grove was opposed. Once the WG Connector is in place, then Gaithersburg would have a stronger motivation to develop trails in and around Old Town and points to the east, north and west, which would also benefit WG.

9) Greater visibility for the Town. Washington Grove is contiguous with the 4th most populous incorporated city in Maryland and immediately north of the 3rd most populous. The Town is a unique and lovely community that many residents of these cities and other communities are unaware of, much less know how to find. For a few Town residents, this may be intentional. However, the wider community's ignorance has the potential effect of suppressing property values. A trail would allow many more people to experience our town without disturbing what makes it special.