



## Seneca Creek Watershed Partners

May 17, 2024

The Honorable Andrew Friedson, President  
Montgomery County Council  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, MD 20815

Dear Council President Friedson and Councilmembers,

Seneca Creek Watershed Partners is an all-volunteer grass roots non-profit organization dedicated to protecting and improving the ecological health of the Seneca Creek Watershed, the largest watershed in Montgomery County. **We urge you to take action now to remove Mid-County Highway Extended (M83) from the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways (MPOHT) technical update, and all master plans.**

The high drainage density and extensive wetlands of the Seneca Creek watershed make it an inappropriate location for new roads. The 5-mile M83 ROW goes through some of our watershed's best old forests, streams, wetlands, floodplains, public lands, and the visionary Agricultural Reserve. These increasingly rare features help to manage stormwater, modulate flooding, filter water and support native Maryland habitats. Park land, trails and green space mitigate climate change, air, light and noise pollution and provide for our enjoyment and well-being.

The Seneca Creek watershed is already stressed by dense development and roads including I-270 widening, toll lanes, transit facilities, access roads, Watkins Mill interchange, Clarksburg bypass, extensions of Little Seneca Parkway and Observation Drive, and Dorsey Mill bridge. Interestingly, at the same time M83 (and other roads) are being proposed in equity areas of Gaithersburg, Germantown, and Clarksburg, roads in the Rockville area are now proposed to be *reduced* in width and replaced with bike and transit. This appears to be an environmental inequity.

Proposed M83 would directly and significantly impact Great Seneca Creek and its tributaries Little Seneca, Dayspring Creek, Wildcat Branch and Whetstone Run and wetlands. It would virtually eliminate Blohm Park and fragment the FIDS habitat of North Germantown Stream Valley Park. The 206-acre interfaith Dayspring Silent Retreat Center, which currently welcomes visitors to experience meditation within a beautiful woodland where sounds of birds punctuate the quiet, would suffer loss of its core service. It would place a highway next to Watkins Mill Elementary School grounds and play fields. The ROW parallels a popular section of the Seneca Greenway trail. Should M83 be built, the constant road noise would severely impair wildlife behavior as well as public enjoyment of quiet.

A better use of the M83 ROW is to expand the Seneca Greenway and Stream Valley Park into **a trail network connecting Gaithersburg, Montgomery Village, Germantown and Clarksburg.**

Council Resolution 18-957 (Transportation Solutions for Northwest Montgomery County) set in motion the removal of M83 from County master plans. **We ask you to take this action to its *logical conclusion* and remove M83 from the MPOHT technical update and all master plans.**

Thank you for taking this critical, far-reaching action to protect our communities and the Seneca Creek watershed.

Sincerely,  
/S/ Kevin Misener  
President  
Seneca Creek Watershed Partners

Cc:  
Marc Elrich, Montgomery County Executive  
Montgomery County Planning Board