




OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Marc Elrich  
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*Chief Administrative Officer*

September 10, 2024

TO: Artie Harris  
Board Chair Montgomery County Planning Board

FROM: Marc Elrich, County Executive 

RE: Remove proposed M83 Highway from the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways.

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Montgomery County is committed to improving transit, including in the Upcounty, reducing carbon emissions, and expanding the stock of affordable housing. By canceling M83 through removing it from the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways (MPOHT), we remove an obsolete highway project that threatens Upcounty communities – and we clear away an obstacle that blocks progress in our climate, transit, and housing programs.

Clarity in transit planning and investment requires removal of M83 from the MPOHT. The Transportation Planning Board, at the request of Montgomery County, removed proposed M83 highway from Visualize 2045, the federal funding priorities list for transportation projects. And M83 is also expected to be removed from Visualize 2050. Given that this project is not eligible for federal funding, and no one is planning to build it, begs the question: *Why is M83 in our master plans? There is no good reason to keep it in our master plans, therefore we need to remove it from all the plans including the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways.*

Canceling the entirety of proposed M83 highway by removing it from MPOHT clears the way to focus on Upcounty transit, including completing Bus Rapid Transit on Route 355. Removing M83 highway also clears the way for supporting affordable housing projects in walkable, transit-served communities adjacent to public parks and forests in Germantown, Gaithersburg, and Montgomery Village.

Building affordable housing in existing transit-served communities is the essence of smart growth that is also smart for the climate. We will meet our climate commitment in the

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transportation sector by reducing Vehicle Miles Traveled – through helping people live affordably near transit and near where they work. Electric Vehicles are important too when coupled with reducing Vehicle Miles Traveled.

Proposed M83 Highway would worsen summer heat emergencies. We need to reduce, not expand, the blankets of pavement that form urban heat islands and heat corridors. Through removing the entirety of M83 (or whatever name you're calling it) from the master plans, we will prevent the expansion of heat corridors in the Upcounty.

I was on the Council in October 2017 when we passed Resolution 18-957, Transportation Solutions for Northwest Montgomery County, which prohibits inclusion of M83 in master plans from that point forward. Yet, in 2018 proposed M83 highway was inserted into the Bicycle Master Plan - which makes no sense. This confusion shows us M83 is an obstacle to sound transportation planning. Let's clear the air by removing M83 from the MPOHT.

Thank you.