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County Executive


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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

MEMORANDUM

September 12, 2024

TO: Artie Harris, Chair
Montgomery Planning Board

FROM: Haley Peckett, Deputy Director for Transportation Policy
Department of Transportation (MCDOT) 
Haley Peckett (Sep 12, 2024 14:30 EDT)

SUBJECT: Master Plan of Highways and Transitways
Public Hearing Draft – MCDOT Comments

Thank you for the opportunity to review the July 2024 Public Hearing Draft of the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways (MPOHT). We appreciate the efforts throughout this process to obtain feedback on the proposed changes. We offer the following comments:

- 1) **M-83:** We recommend the removal of the extension of M-83 (Midcounty Highway) between Montgomery Village Avenue and Ridge Road. We believe our ongoing investments in transit along MD 355, as well as other Corridor Connectors identified in the I-270 Corridor Forward Plan, all represent a more sustainable path forward for connecting the Clarksburg, Germantown, and Gaithersburg areas.
- 2) **GROWTH CORRIDORS:** We support the intent of Growth Corridors to benefit transit ridership with more urban street layouts and denser blocks. However, Growth Corridors also risk penalizing upstream transit riders as their buses must stop at more of these denser intersections.

We strongly urge that the application of these corridors be limited in length to areas where BRT stations are within overlapping walksheds. Where BRT stations are more distant, in lieu of classifying a full corridor as a Growth Corridor street type, we suggest selectively apply Town Center classifications around station areas. This may allow urban

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design and land use around BRT stations while reducing the impedances between activity centers.

The Growth Corridor street types must also not be put into effect unless corresponding land use densities have been approved. The additional densities are necessary to justify the operational impacts of the more urban street design, and we expect both to be implemented concurrently.

- 3) **OLD COLUMBIA PIKE:** Consider reducing the number of planned lanes along Old Columbia Pike between Stewart Lane and Tech Road from 4 lanes to 2 lanes. The four lanes were planned by the White Oak Science Gateway Plan, and at the time we noted the impracticality of such widening. Since that time, Thrive Montgomery 2050 has deprioritized widening roads to four lanes, and our ongoing CIP project is unlikely to move forward with a four-lane alternative.
- 4) **RAILWAY ROW:** Consider including rights-of-way along the CSX and Red Line corridors in the Appendix (*p86*). It can be difficult to assess right-of-way needs on developments alongside these corridors due to the inconsistent availability of this information. Centralizing the right-of-way requirements in this document will assist with gradually implementing long-term master planned efforts such as third tracking the Brunswick Line and extending the Red Line to Germantown.
- 5) **BRT COMMENTS:** Detailed comments on the transit elements are as follows:
 - a. **MD 355 North** (*p121*) – We have an ongoing Facility Planning study looking at adding a reversible BRT lane along MD 355 north of Ridge Road. This draft MPOHT, however, shows all stations along MD 355 being eliminated in favor of a pair of stations along Snowden Farm Parkway. It may be premature to eliminate these stations before the Facility Planning study is completed.
 - b. **MD 355 North** (*p121*) – The station at Stringtown Rd / St. Clair Rd is currently expected to be a potential infill station. Removing it may make it difficult to add in the future.
 - c. **New Hampshire** (*p118-119*) – The FDA-Lockwood Connector may be in one of several alignments:
 - One alignment is as shown, between the commercial and residential properties but aligning with FDA behind their secured area.
 - Another alignment would align opposite FDA’s loop road.

- A third alignment might align with Michelson Road’s north-south segment. We are grateful to see this connection included in the master plan, but the narrative on p118 should note these other options. Our ongoing design work with the New Hampshire BRT is currently evaluating the options.
- d. **US 29 (p124)** – We do not currently expect a station at FDA as part of the US 29 BRT corridor. However, such a station *is* likely as part of the New Hampshire BRT corridor. Consider removing the Lockwood-FDA Connector and the FDA Station from the US 29 portion of this Plan but include them in a newly added pair of pages for the New Hampshire BRT. What’s currently shown on p124 risks giving the impression that the US 29 BRT will directly serve FDA’s frontage.

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