



Transit Alternatives to Mid-County Highway Extended

To: Chair Harris, Vice Chair Pedoeem, Commissioners Bartley, Linden and Hedrick
CC: Planning Staff Aldrich, Sartori, Anspacher and Kronenberg
Fr: Diane Cameron, Margaret Schoap and Tim Goodfellow for Transit Alternatives to Midcounty Highway Extended/M83 (TAME Coalition)
Re: “Southern Segment” of proposed Midcounty Highway Extended/M83
Date: February 27, 2025

From our review of information points and the Commissioners’ and staff’s discussion at the Planning Board’s February 13th worksession, this memo is requesting clarification regarding the Southern Segment of proposed Midcounty Highway Extended/ M83.

We also request removal of the proposed Southern Segment of M83 from the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways, for the same reasons given for removal of the entire Northern Segment.

While we know that the formal public comment period for the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways (MPOHT) is past, we appreciate your serious consideration of our requests, particularly in advance of the March 6 Planning Board worksession on this topic.

Summary of this memo:

TAME Coalition Supports the Planning Board’s decision to recommend removal of proposed M83 Highway Northern Segment, and requests that the Planning Board also recommend removal of the Entirety of Proposed M83 Highway from the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways (MPOHT) – including the proposed M83 Southern Segment.

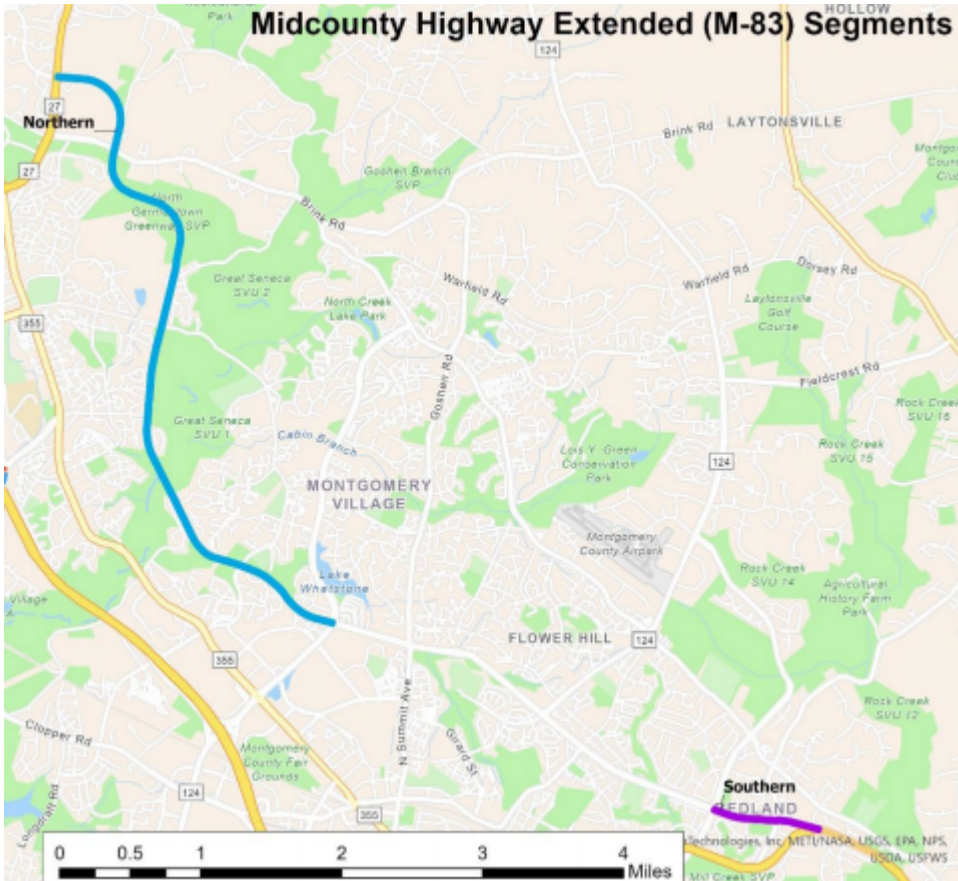
> We support the Planning Board’s recommendation made by majority vote on February 13, 2025, to recommend removal of the entire Northern Segment of proposed M83 highway from the MPOHT.

> We request that the Planning Board in its March 6, 2025 work session, recommend removal from the MPOHT of the Southern Segment of proposed M83 highway.

> We request clarification regarding the Transportation Adequacy Analysis, and for points made verbally by staff during the 2/13/2025 worksession, regarding proposed M83 Southern Segment.

**TAME Coalition – Transit Alternatives to Midcounty Highway Extended/M83
Briefing on the “Southern Segment” of proposed Midcounty Highway Extended/M83.
February 25, 2025**

Location of Proposed M83 Highway Southern Segment

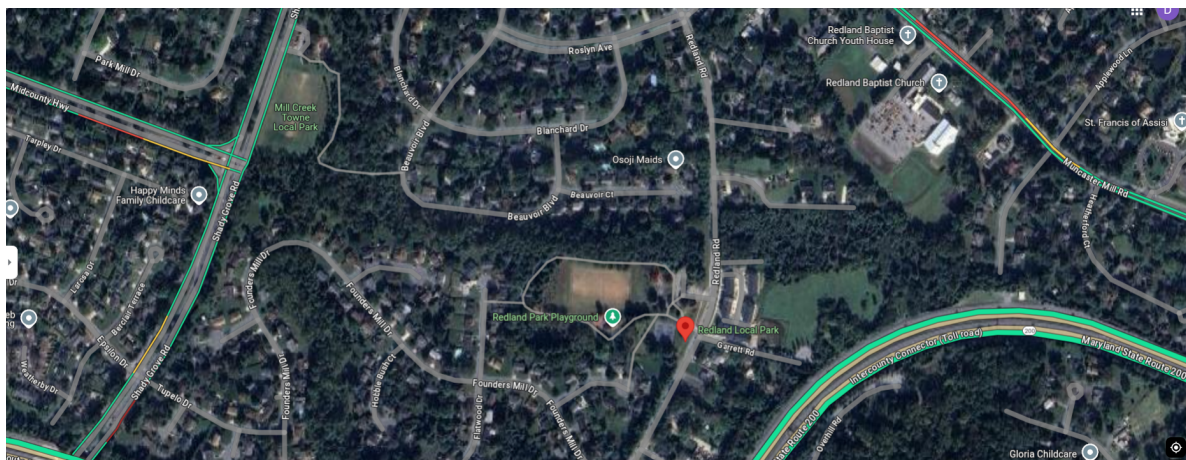


The Southern Segment of proposed M83 highway is depicted in the map to the left by the short purple line in the lower right-hand corner of the map.



Size

The proposed M83 highway Southern Segment is roughly 0.72 miles long with a 250-foot Limit of Disturbance (includes area to be paved plus the construction area beyond the pavement). The resultant total area is 22 forest acres that would be damaged and destroyed by M83 Southern Segment.





Above map shows proposed M83 Highway Southern Segment as a dashed red line. **The proposed Southern Segment would destroy 22 acres of forest land and damage two local parks – Mill Creek Towne Local Park and Redland Local Park.**

Damages

There would be 22 acres of forest destroyed by the construction of the M83 Southern Segment, plus two local parks abutting the highway would be damaged by air and noise pollution combined with the loss of the 22 acres of forest that now surrounds them and buffers the parks and residences from the noise and pollution from the existing surrounding highways.

The local parks in the cross-hairs of the proposed M83 Southern Segment are **Mill Creek Towne Local Park** (western oval in above map) **and Redland Local Park** (eastern oval in above map).

Planning Board Decisionmaking Regarding the M83 “Southern Segment”

Excerpts from staff packet for the February 13, 2025 Planning Board Worksession

MASTER PLAN TRANSPORTATION ADEQUACY

All master plans and sector plans are required to conduct a transportation adequacy analysis. While the MPOHT is a functional plan, any changes to the transportation system may impact master plan adequacy for other master plan areas. The focus of this effort is to determine the impact of removing the southern segment of Midcounty Highway Extended. Removing the northern segment was not evaluated, as County Council Resolution No. 18-957 “directs the Montgomery County Planning Board not to assume additional road capacity from the northern extension of Midcounty Highway when calculating the land use - transportation balance in future master plans”. Therefore, evaluating the removal of a highway that is assumed not to exist will not have an impact on transportation outcomes.

The master plan adequacy metrics are:

- **Auto and Transit Accessibility:** The average number of jobs that can be reached within a 45-minute travel time by automobile or walk access transit.
- **Auto and Transit Travel Time:** The average time per trip, considering all trip purposes.
- **Vehicle Miles Traveled per Capita:** The daily miles traveled per “service population,” where “service population” is the sum of population and total employment for a particular TAZ.
- **Non-Auto Driver Mode Share:** The percentage of non-auto driver trips (i.e., HOV, transit and nonmotorized trips) for trips of all purposes.
- **Bicycle Accessibility:** The Countywide Connectivity metric documented in the 2018 Montgomery County Bicycle Master Plan.

The results of the analysis are shown in Table 7. Removing the southern extension has limited impacts countywide but has more localized impacts in the Derwood Policy Area. It would reduce the number of jobs that are accessible within a 45-minute travel time by automobile by 5.5%.

Table 7: Evaluation of Southern Segment of Midcounty Highway

Study Area	Job Access Auto	Job Access Transit	Travel Time Auto	Travel Time Transit	VMT per Capita	NADMS	Bicycle
Derwood Policy Areas	-5.5%	-0.1%	0.6%	0.4%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%
Montgomery County	-0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Questions for Planning Staff

Re: Clarification Requested for Transportation Adequacy Analysis for proposed M83 Southern Segment:

- (1) What set of assumptions, and future scenarios, is the above “Job Access” analysis based upon, regarding the proposed M83 highway Southern Segment?
- (2) It appears (but requires clarification) that this analysis is not comparing work commute travel times for existing conditions versus a decision to be made – but rather, it’s comparing two alternative future scenarios, but it’s not clear what those scenarios consist of.
- (3) Still more clarification is needed, because we don’t understand what exactly is the baseline used here for work commute travel times, nor do we know the assumption about what happens to that baseline under a decision for M83 Southern Segment removal from MPOHT?
- (4) Since the proposed M83 Southern Segment does not exist, how does its removal from the master plan cause a change in travel time for existing commutes/job access? Please clarify.

Re: Clarification Requested for staff points regarding the proposed M83 Southern Segment, made during February 13 worksession:

The material in the quotes below are from staff points regarding the proposed M83 highway Southern Segment, made during the February 13, 2025 worksession. We did our best to take accurate notes; please provide corrections as needed, along with the clarifications we request for each statement.

- (1) *“there are construction challenges to make the southern M83 connection to the ICC--constrained geometry and it's very expensive to construct this interchange”* Please provide links to documents with details on the construction challenges, costs, and any impact analyses, for the proposed Southern Segment of M83 highway.
- (2) *“removal of southern M83 will increase strain on Shady Grove Road”* Please clarify the basis for, and provide documentation for what is meant by, *“will increase strain on Shady Grove Road”*. Specifically, what is the baseline, and, what are the assumptions, and analysis /modeling method(s), used to make this prediction?
- (3) *“additional study of Southern Segment of M83 is needed to increase safety and flow of traffic”* We don’t see why this is needed. The same reasons the Planning Board majority gave for voting for removal of the Northern Segment of M83 from the MPOHT – including inconsistency with Thrive Montgomery 2050 and the County’s Climate Action Plan – apply to the Southern as well as to the Northern Segment of M83.
- (4) *“removal of Southern Segment of M83 would enable to county to preserve Right of Way in the Northern Segment of M83.”* If we heard correctly, we request clarification of this statement because we don’t understand how the removal of the Southern Segment would affect the Right of Way status for the Northern Segment.

Planning Board Decision Regarding M83 “Southern Segment” at the March 6, 2025 Worksession

On page 21 of the February 13 planning staff presentation, here’s the staff’s recommendation:

In summary, Planning Staff recommend that the northern section of Midcounty Highway Extended should be removed from the MPOHT as it is inconsistent with Thrive Montgomery 2050 and the Climate Action Plan but that the southern section of Midcounty Highway Extended should be retained for the time being.

* The Planning Board’s majority decision on February 13, 2025 is to recommend removal of the entire 5-mile Northern Segment from the MPOHT and to study upcounty travel needs focused on the Midcounty Corridor between Clarksburg and Germantown.

* We understand that the Planning Board will make a decision on whether to recommend removal of the Southern Segment of proposed M83 highway, during its March 6, 2025 work session on the MPOHT.

CONCLUSION: We Request Removal of the Entirety of Proposed Midcounty Highway Extended from the MPOHT.

TAME Coalition Supports and Requests Removal of the Entirety of Proposed M83 Highway from the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways (MPOHT).

> TAME Coalition supports the Planning Board’s recommendation made by majority vote on February 13, 2025, to recommend removal of the entire Northern Segment of proposed M83 highway from the MPOHT.

> TAME Coalition requests that the Planning Board in its March 6, 2025 work session, recommend removal from the MPOHT of the Southern Segment of proposed M83 highway.