

A Tour of the Proposed Mid-County Highway Extended (M83) In Montgomery County, Maryland

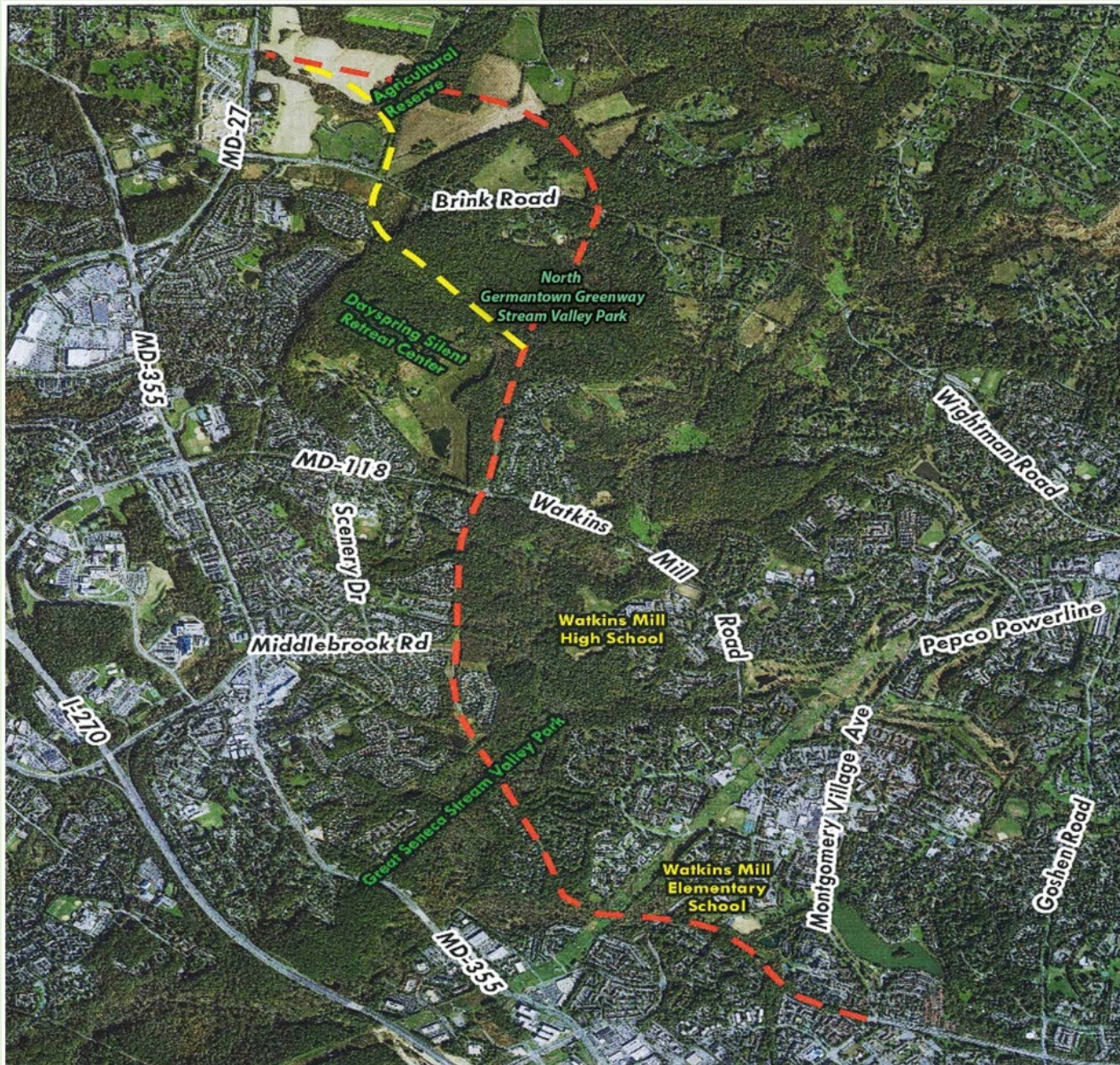
Communities threatened ° People endangered
Neighborhoods harmed ° Health imperiled
Parkland & Natural Resources destroyed



WWW.TAMECOALITION.ORG



TameCoalition@gmail.com

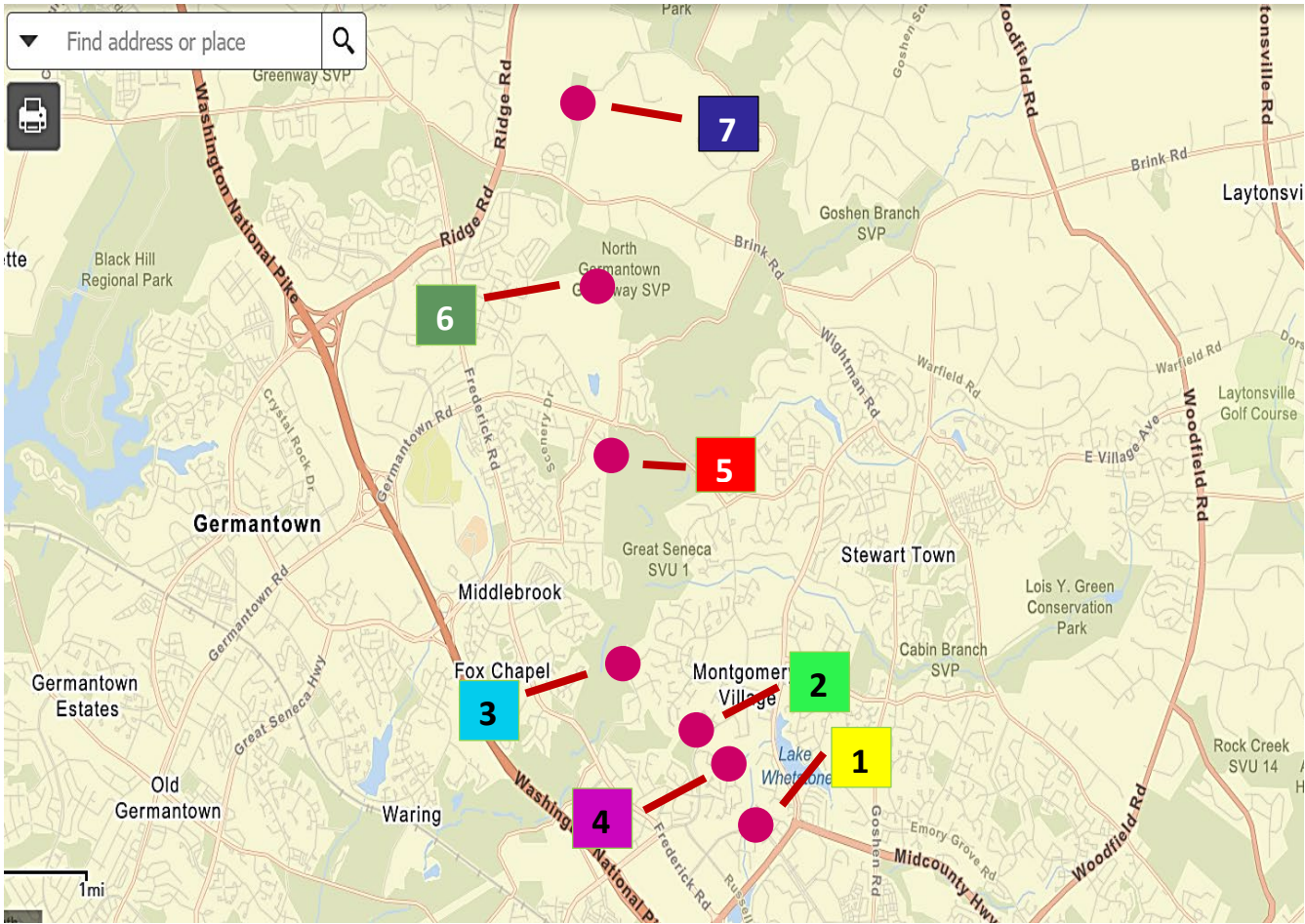


- M83 Highway Right-of-Way Alignment 9 - Montgomery County Dept. of Transportation
- M83 Highway Right-of-Way Alignment 9A - Montgomery County Dept. of Transportation

Proposed Mid-County Highway Extended (M83)

- A proposed 5 mile, 4-6 lane highway from Montgomery Village to Clarksburg
- Price tag: 1.3 Billion dollars
- Alignment abuts over 500 residences, and thousands of people who live in Montgomery County rely upon the irreplaceable forests threatened by the proposed M83 highway
- Loss and destruction of wildlife habitat, community forests, public parkland:
 - Montgomery Village Open Space + South Valley
 - Blohm Park (City of Gaithersburg)
 - Great Seneca Stream Valley Park
 - North Germantown Greenway Stream Valley Park
 - Wildcat Branch Stream Valley Park
 - Seneca Crossing Local Park
 - Seneca Creek Greenway Trail
- Negative impacts to community health, property values, air & water quality, peaceful quietude
- Realistic, viable alternatives exist to building M83

Focus Areas on the Tour of the Proposed M83 Highway Alignment



Fields and forest at the Dayspring Silent Retreat Center

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All seven (7) Focus Areas highlight notable landscape features, natural resources, and community amenities present within the alignment of the proposed M83 highway that would be destroyed, decimated, degraded, and harmed if M83 was constructed.

Focus Areas 1, 2, 3, and 4 illuminate the neighborhoods, community open space, recreational resources, and schools within and adjacent to the proposed M83 highway, and are easily accessible for viewing and experiencing the fabric of Montgomery Village and Gaithersburg.

Focus Areas 5, 6, and 7 showcase and describe elements of the ecological environment in Germantown—the resources, habitats, and parkland within the proposed M83 highway alignment.



December 2023

A community hike in Montgomery Village forestlands in the alignment of the proposed M83 highway.

Summary

Protect - Don't Damage or Destroy – Our Upcounty Forests and Streams.

The framers of Montgomery County's government, including the founders of our park system, bequeathed to us a deep heritage of publicly-owned natural areas. Now it's up to us – residents and government officials working together - to be careful stewards of all of our forests and stream valleys.

* * *

Environmental and Climate Justice principles demand that we preserve and celebrate all of the publicly-owned natural areas of Montgomery Village.

In Montgomery Village, the proposed M83 alignment crosses Walkers Run and actually parallels Whetstone Run, incredibly sensitive aquatic environments that need continued protection, not obliteration. These forested stream valleys and community open spaces provide a respite in nature for thousands of people. These include trail-runners, picknickers, bird-watchers, and hikers who reside in Christopher Court, Breckenridge, Stedwick, Normandie, Walkers Choice, and other neighborhoods located within Equity Focus Areas. For many residents of Montgomery Village, these community parklands and stream valleys are their sole access to nature.

In Gaithersburg and Germantown, many residents chose to purchase their home in locations near nature along the Seneca Creek Greenway Trail, the North Germantown Greenway Stream Valley Park, and other publicly-owned forests and stream valleys.

In all our Upcounty communities, we need all of our forests, streams, and parks for public health, nature-based recreation, and climate justice. These public natural areas protect us from heat emergencies, toxic air and water pollution, and noise pollution. So, we must protect, not damage nor destroy, our forests, parks, and stream valleys, including here in the Upcounty.

* * *

Proposed M83 highway would harm our communities – so we need to permanently cancel it.

The Mid-County Highway Extended, also known as "M83" from its depiction on County transportation maps from the 1960's, is a relic that fails to address modern-day travel, land-use, mobility, and climate realities. Proposed for 5 miles through forestland, wetlands, and significant habitats, the M83 highway would harm communities, destroy resources and fragment public parkland along its proposed 5-mile route from Montgomery Village to Clarksburg. Over 500 residences abut the alignment of the proposed M83 highway.

Montgomery County has an obligation to be stewards of public parkland, forest habitats, floodplain and wetland functions. Montgomery County has a duty to ensure communities are not harmed and that public health is protected. **Citizens also have a duty to act when we see a clear change that's needed – in this case cancelling proposed M83 highway – and so we need to work with responsive local government officials to make this change happen.** Cancelling the proposed M83 highway and removing it from all County master plans is sound, wise, and progressive governance that safeguards the health, safety, and welfare of all residents for Montgomery County's future.

* * *

There are many transportation alternatives for Upcounty communities – so we don't need proposed M83 highway. Let's fully cancel it now.

Transportation alternatives include upgrading existing transit systems like Ride-On Bus service, and creating new transit such as Bus Rapid Transit on Route 355. Other alternatives include selective widening of existing roadways, improving

intersections, expanding pedestrian and bicycling networks, in order to address current traffic and the future growth in traffic volumes in the Midcounty corridor. **In 2017, Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) found that this package of transportation alternatives provides better mobility while reducing Vehicle Miles Traveled, compared with the option to build M83 highway.** <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/corridor/>

There are functionally realistic alternatives to constructing the proposed M83 highway. A combination of enlightened policy decisions and sound actions by County leaders can address regional mobility needs and alleviate traffic congestion delays and commuting times in the Midcounty corridor. Utilizing existing transportation infrastructure (e.g. through the “Fix It First” policy) and enhancing transit are sound transportation planning approaches for the 21st century.

* * *

Dayspring Silent Retreat Center’s core mission – to provide a silent retreat open to all - would be destroyed by highway noise and pollution if proposed M83 highway were to be built. Let’s act now to prevent that catastrophe by removing M83 from all eight County master plans.

Dayspring Silent Retreat Center in Germantown hosts thousands of visitors each year, from all ages, all religions, and no religions, who come to its forests and fields for a respite from their noisy, busy lives. The silence of nature, provided at Dayspring, depends largely upon the ecological health and integrity of its neighboring parks, including the surrounding interior forest of North Germantown Greenway Stream Valley Park. Proposed M83 highway would damage, fragment, and destroy the fragile ecosystem of this and other parks, thus destroying the silence of nature that is the core mission of Dayspring Silent Retreat Center.

By taking concerted action now, residents together with local government decisionmakers can and must permanently cancel proposed M83 highway – by removing it from all eight master plans in which it appears. In so doing, we are acting as stewards for current and future generations – and honoring the natural legacy that prior County civic leaders bequeathed to us.

* * *

As long as proposed M83 highway remains in master plans, it remains an imminent threat to our communities, because it can legally be built at any time.

We stand with environmental stewards, smart-growth advocates, transit boosters, sound transportation supporters, neighborhood protectors, and park proponents all over Montgomery County and Maryland, calling for good governance, and thoughtful, insightful decision-making for our community’s future. Montgomery County must remove the proposed M83 from its Master Plan of Highways and Transitways and all other area, sector, and functional master plans in which M83 is listed. (Below is a text box listing the eight County master plans that now contain proposed M83 highway.)

TAME Coalition and its allies call upon the Montgomery County Council, in concert with the County Executive and Planning Board, to permanently cancel proposed M83 highway by removing it from all eight master plans.

List of County Master Plans that include proposed M83 highway:

- Bicycle Master Plan
- Clarksburg Master Plan and Hyattstown Special Study Area
- Germantown Master Plan
- Master Plan of Highways and Transitways
- Montgomery Village Master Plan
- Shady Grove Sector Plan
- Shady Grove Sector Plan, Minor Master Plan Amendment
- Upper Rock Creek Area Master Plan
- City Master Plan (City of Gaithersburg)

TAME Coalition and our allied groups call upon the Montgomery County Council to fully and permanently cancel proposed M83 highway by removing it from all eight Master Plans.

M83 Reclassification: It’s Still a Destructive Highway Proposal, No Matter What It’s Called.

Reclassified from a ‘Major Highway’ to a ‘Boulevard’ through Bill 24-22 (*Streets and Roads Classifications and Standards*) adopted by the Montgomery County Council in 2022, M83 is planned for 4—6 lanes with a minimum 150-ft. right-of-way. Whether called M-5 (shown on some historical maps), M83, Snowden Farm Parkway Extended, or Mid-County Boulevard, the Mid-County Highway Extended would result in a cleared and denuded path through the forest up to 200 feet wide to accommodate stormwater management, construction staging, soil stockpiling, and sediment and erosion control devices.

* * *

Speed Kills – and Boulevard-Highways Remain Dangerous for Pedestrians and Cyclists, So We Must Permanently Cancel Proposed M83 highway To Protect Public Safety.

M83 highway’s Major Highway classification and its definition from the 2005 *Master Plan of Highways and Transitways*:

A Major Highway is a road meant nearly exclusively for through movement of vehicles at a moderate speed. Access must be primarily from grade-separated interchanges and at-grade intersections with public roads, although driveway access is acceptable in urban and denser suburban setting.

M83 highway’s 2023 classification as a Boulevard in the County’s 2023 amendment to the *Master Plan of Highways and Transitways*:

A Boulevard is a road that typically connects employment and entertainment centers, civic, commercial, and institutional land uses, and may also provide cross-county and regional connections. Pedestrian, bicycle, and transit users are to be accommodated. Some access to abutting properties expected. These roads were previously classified as major highways and arterials.

Table 25. Pedestrian Crashes by Roadway Type

Street Classification	Percent of Roadway Miles	Percent of Pedestrian Crashes	Percent of Pedestrian Severe Injuries and Fatalities (KSI)
Controlled Major Highway	1%	3%	5%
Major Highway ●M-83	5%	● 33%	● 39%
Parkway	0%	0%	0%
Arterial	8%	11%	9%
Minor Arterial	2%	5%	3%
Business	2%	22%	20%
Primary Residential	7%	16%	15%
Industrial	0%	1%	0%
Country Arterial	2%	0%	0%
Country Road	1%	0%	0%
Rustic & Exceptionally Rustic	6%	0%	1%
Local	67%	10%	7%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Page 54 of the 2023 *Montgomery County Pedestrian Master Plan*. Note the new street classification name of Boulevard is not shown in the above chart.

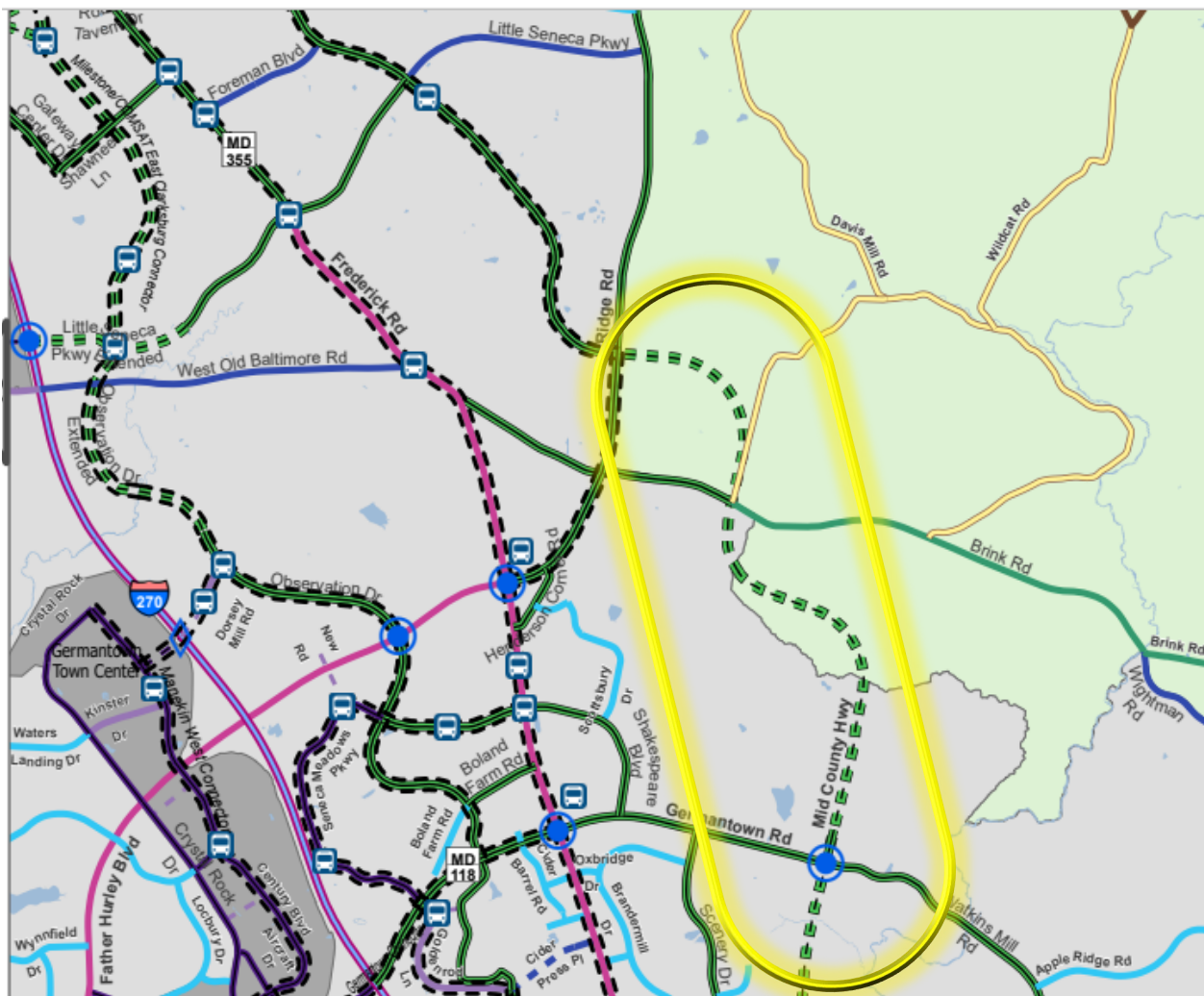
<https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/transportation/pedestrian-planning/pedestrian-master-plan/>

Pedestrian crashes and fatalities are the highest on the “Major Highway” street classification, which is the M83 highway’s previous designation in the *Master Plan of Highways and Transitways* (MPOHT).

Despite the nomenclature change from Major Highway to the pleasant-sounding, halcyon title of “Boulevard,” the fact remains that M83 is an obsolete, out-moded transportation remnant from the past that needs to be cancelled. The

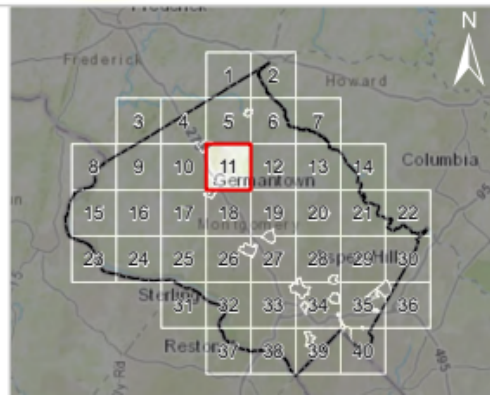
proposed M83 highway, if constructed, would seriously harm neighborhoods, degrade public parkland, and destroy over 100 acres of forest. It would cause irreversible, detrimental impacts to streams, floodplains, wetlands, and air quality. Montgomery County’s water quality-protecting, air-purifying, habitat-providing forestlands present within the proposed M83 alignment are too valuable to lose to an outdated, expired, destructive 4—6 lane highway.

Montgomery County’s Master Plan of Highways and Transitways ‘Mapbook’ and Classification Table can be found here: <https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/transportation/highway-planning/master-plan-of-highways-and-transitways/>



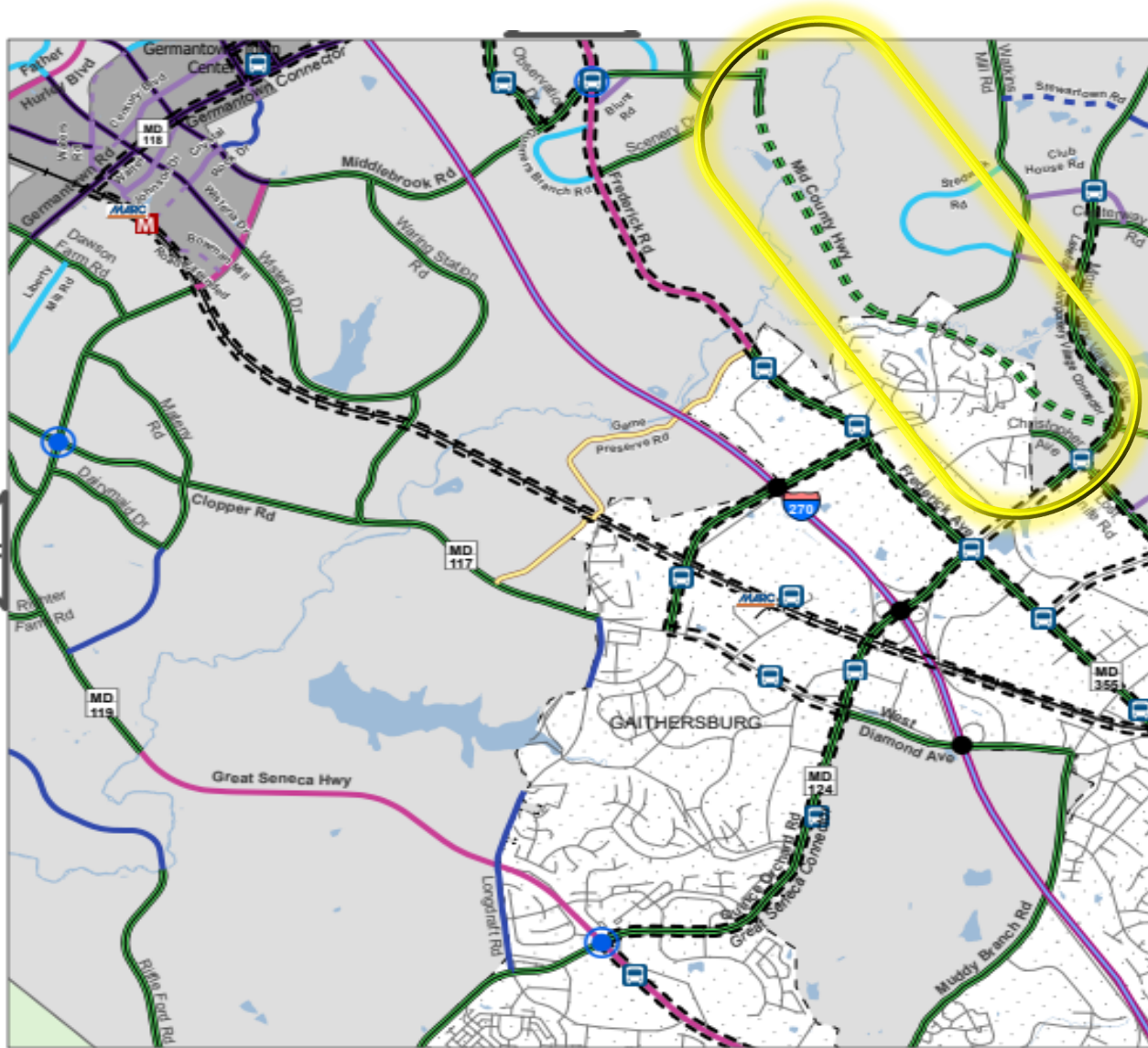
Master Plan of Highways and Transitways Designations

- Boulevard
 - - Boulevard (Planned)
 - Town Center Boulevard
 - - Town Center Boulevard (Planned)
 - Town Center Street
 - - Town Center Street (Planned)
 - Area Connector
 - - Area Connector (Planned)
 - Neighborhood Connector
 - - Neighborhood Connector (Planned)
 - Country Connector
 - Country Road
 - Controlled Major Highway
 - Freeway with HOV Lanes
 - Rustic Road
 - - Transitway (Planned)
- 0 0.45 0.9 1.8 Miles



Master Plan of Highways and Transitways February 7, 2023 Mapbook, page 11.

Dotted area inside yellow oval is the proposed M83 highway between MD 27, Ridge Road to south of Germantown Road/Watkins Mill Road in Germantown, Maryland.



Master Plan of Highways and Transitways Designations

- Boulevard
- - Boulevard (Planned)
- Town Center Boulevard
- Town Center Street
- - Town Center Street (Planned)
- Area Connector
- - Area Connector (Planned)
- Neighborhood Connector
- Controlled Major Highway
- Freeway with HOV Lanes
- Rustic Road
- - Transitway (Planned)
- + — MARC - Brunswick Line



Master Plan of Highways and Transitways February 7, 2023 Mapbook, page 18.

Dotted area inside yellow oval is the proposed M83 highway between Montgomery Village Avenue and Middlebrook Road in Gaithersburg and Germantown, Maryland.

Focus Area #1 Christopher Court, Breckenridge & Normandie Condominiums, Hellingly Place/Boysenberry Drive

Directions: Turn onto Christopher Avenue from Montgomery Village Avenue (Gaithersburg Library at this intersection). Take the first right on Hellingly Place and proceed to stop sign. As you turn right onto Hellingly Place OR left on Boysenberry Drive, see the long expanse of forest in these communities that is the alignment of the proposed M83 highway.



These condominium communities are directly adjacent to the proposed M83 alignment, which is forested and provides open space, clean air, sound buffering and cooling in these high-density neighborhoods. These environmental resources and ecosystem services would be eliminated and residents would suffer increased air pollution, disruptive noise, and heat stress if the proposed M83 highway is constructed.

This area (Census Tract 700721) is one of three Equity Focus Areas that the proposed M83 highway would bisect, negatively impacting neighborhoods that have greater economic burdens compared to other areas in the county.



Focus Area #1 *Continued*

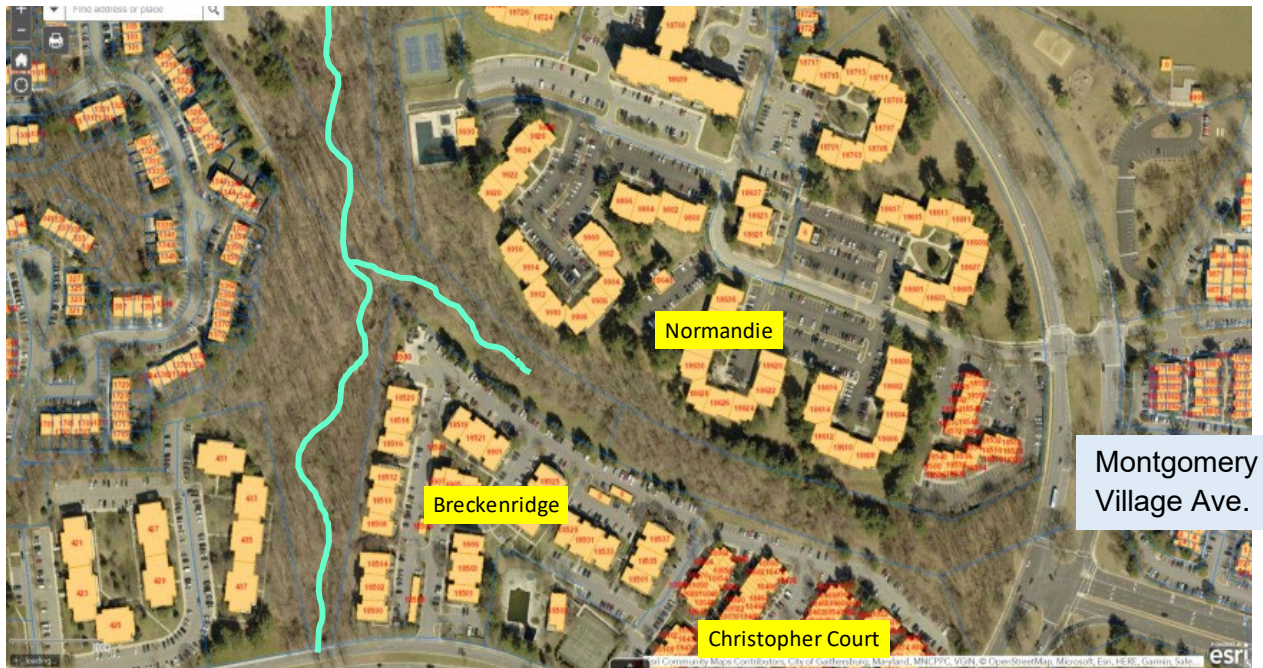


Community members hiking in the middle of the proposed M83 highway alignment adjacent to Breckenridge Condominiums, led by the TAME Coalition.

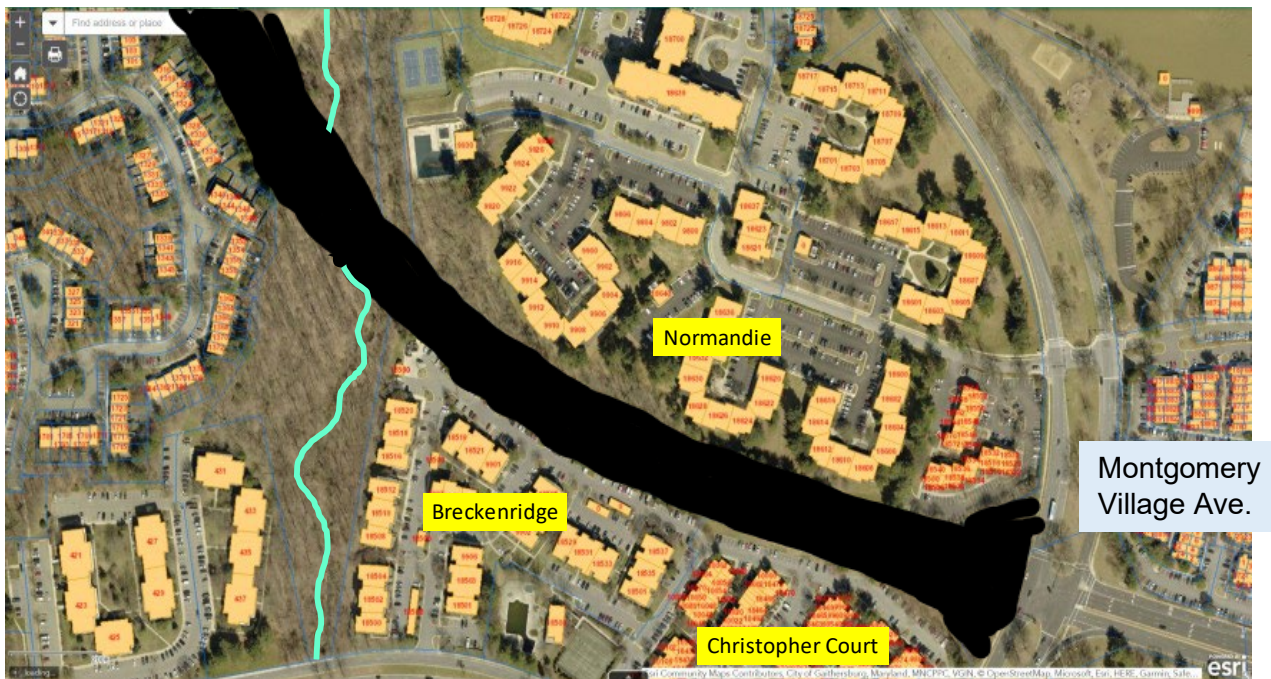


Note the dense buffer of trees within the proposed M83 alignment adjacent to Breckenridge Condominiums. These natural—and community—assets would be destroyed by the construction of the proposed M83 highway.

Focus Area #1 *Continued*



Bottom right of photo is the existing Montgomery Village Avenue/Mid-County Highway intersection.



Same photo showing the alignment of the proposed M83 Highway in black. Note the entirety of the forest loss in these communities.

Focus Area #1 Continued



3 minute video

A short clip from the TAME Coalition film,

***“Road to Ruin. A Moral Choice.
Cancelling Proposed M83 Highway in Montgomery County, Maryland.
An Injustice to Climate and Community.”***



4 minute video

A short clip from the TAME Coalition film,

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**Focus Area #2 South Valley Park/Montgomery Village Athletic Fields,
Watkins Mill Elementary School, 19003/19001 Watkins Mill Rd.**

Directions: Turn into the access lane off Watkins Mill Road, sandwiched between the Watkins Mill Elementary School and Smoothstone Way in the Heron's Cove community. Follow lane to its end in a parking lot. The Montgomery Village Athletic Fields will be on the left and Watkins Mill Elementary on the right.



*Students at
Watkins Mill
Elementary School*

from MCPS website:
www2.montgomerycountyschools.md.org/schools/watkinsmilles/event-photos/

Focus Area #2 Continued



The forest you'll see shelters Whetstone Run which, astonishingly, is the actual alignment of the proposed M83 highway within Montgomery Village Open Space and adjacent to the Watkins Mill Elementary School & Montgomery Village Athletic Fields. The Windbrooke Condominium and the Woodlands Hills are visible on the other side of the stream.



The black line represents the location of the proposed M83 alignment. A highway in this location will put children's health at risk from automobile pollution, and destroy floodplain function and aquatic habitat.

Focus Area #2 Continued



The rich floodplain forest along Whetstone Run and adjacent to Watkins Mill Elementary School is threatened by the proposed M83 highway.



TAME Coalition members & community residents entering the Whetstone Run floodplain forest, in the path of the proposed M83 highway, adjacent to the communities of Woodland Hills, Windbrooke, and South Valley in Montgomery Village.

Focus Area #2 Continued



An early spring community hike along Whetstone Run, which is the actual alignment of the proposed M83 highway. This riparian forest is the closest publicly-accessible nature for thousands of people.



5 minute video

A short clip from the TAME Coalition film,

***“Road to Ruin. A Moral Choice.
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Focus Area #3 Seneca Spring Way, Montgomery Village (Stedwick Community)

Directions: Follow Seneca Spring Way to its terminus where it meets a forested landscape. This forest is the alignment of the proposed M83 highway. A small area exists at the end of Seneca Spring Way for parking.



Wetlands are natural areas where the soil is frequently saturated with water. Wetlands play unique roles in our ecosystems – they are like the kidneys of our watersheds, they filter and cleanse the water and remove sediment.

Located next to Seneca Spring Way is a large floodplain wetland of increasingly-rare, high quality. Its large patch of “Skunk Cabbage” is a definitive wetland indicator plant.

Both the wetland and its adjacent forest would be destroyed by the proposed M83 highway; the loss of these unique resources would pollute Seneca Creek and downstream clean drinking water supplies.

Focus Area #3 Continued



A short clip from the TAME Coalition film,

“Road to Ruin, A Moral Choice. Cancelling Proposed M83 highway in Montgomery County, Maryland. An Injustice to Climate and Community.”



4 minute video



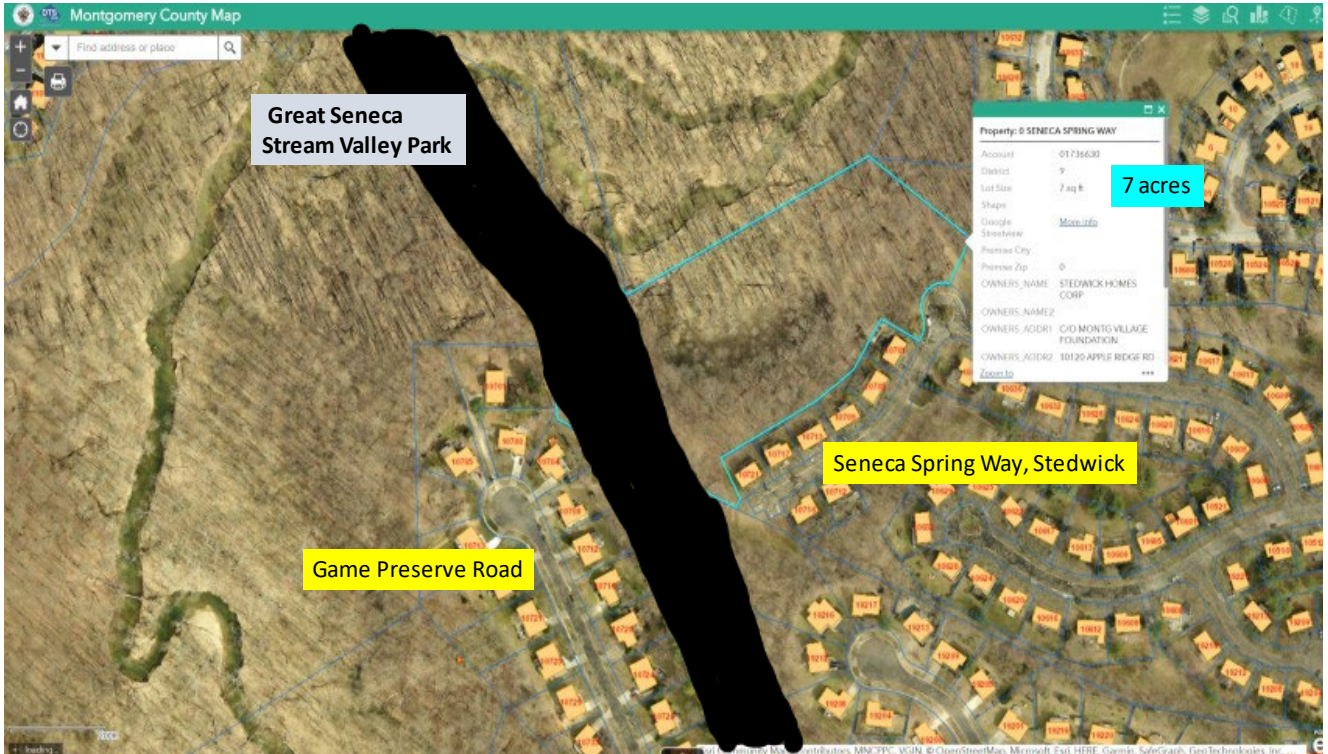
Circled in red is the location of the high-quality wetlands adjacent to Seneca Spring Way that are increasingly rare in Montgomery County, and that would be damaged and destroyed if M83 highway were to be built (as now called for in 8 master plans).

TAME Coalition calls upon Montgomery County decisionmakers, including all 11 councilmembers, to act now to remove proposed M83 from all 8 County master plans.

Focus Area #3 Continued



A predominately forested landscape. Outlined in blue is a Montgomery Village Community Open Space that contains the high-quality Seneca Spring Way wetlands.



The proposed M83 highway would replace the beneficial forest next to the homes on Seneca Spring Way, Gatlin Drive, Jericho Drive, and Game Preserve Road, and extend into and degrade the County's Great Seneca Stream Valley Park with a 500-ft. bridge to span the massive floodplain of Seneca Creek.

Focus Area #3 Continued



The forest adjacent to the homes on Seneca Spring Way, Gatlin Drive, Jericho Drive, and Game Preserve Road provides environmental, social, and economic benefits that would be wiped-out by construction of the proposed M83 highway.



Community members and the TAME Coalition with District 39 Delegate Gabe Acevero & former District 39 Delegate Kirill Reznik discussing M83 adjacent to the Seneca Spring Way wetlands.

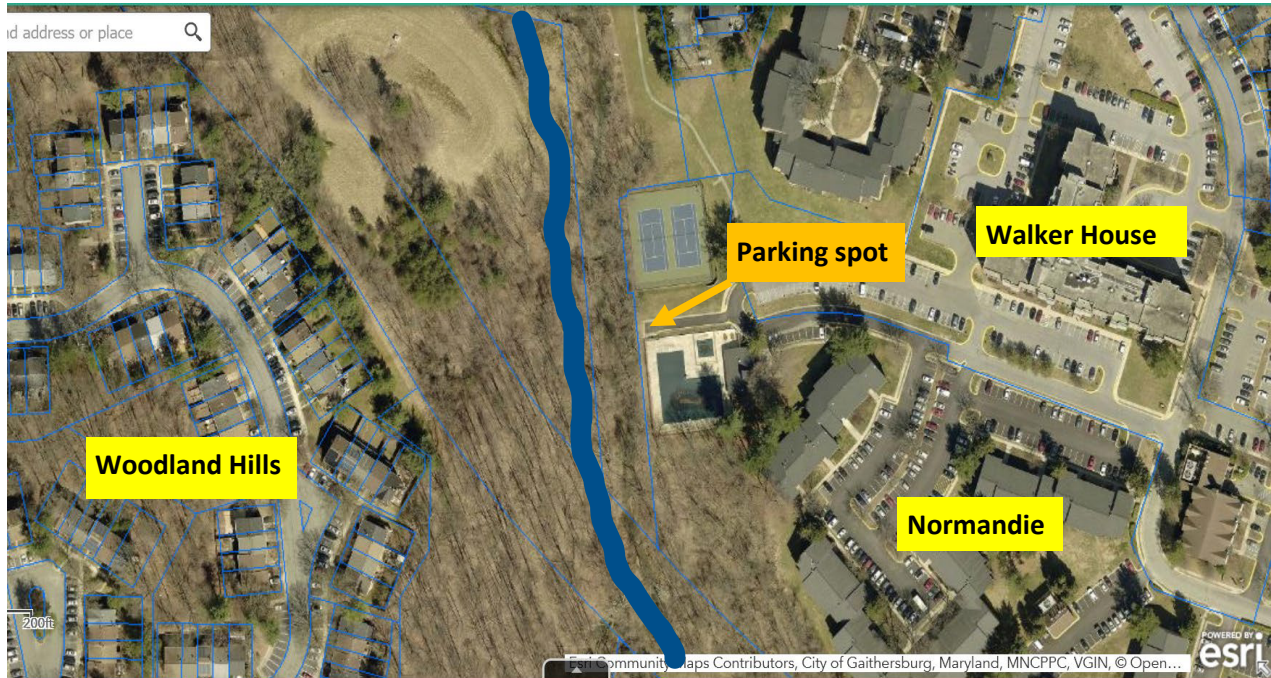
Focus Area #4 Walker House and Normandie communities, 9930 Walker House Rd.

Directions: From Montgomery Village Avenue, turn onto Walkers Choice Road, opposite Lake Shore Drive. Follow Walkers Choice Road approximately 0.2 miles and then turn left onto Walker House Road. Proceed past the Walker House high-rise apartment building to the road's end between the swimming pool and the tennis courts.

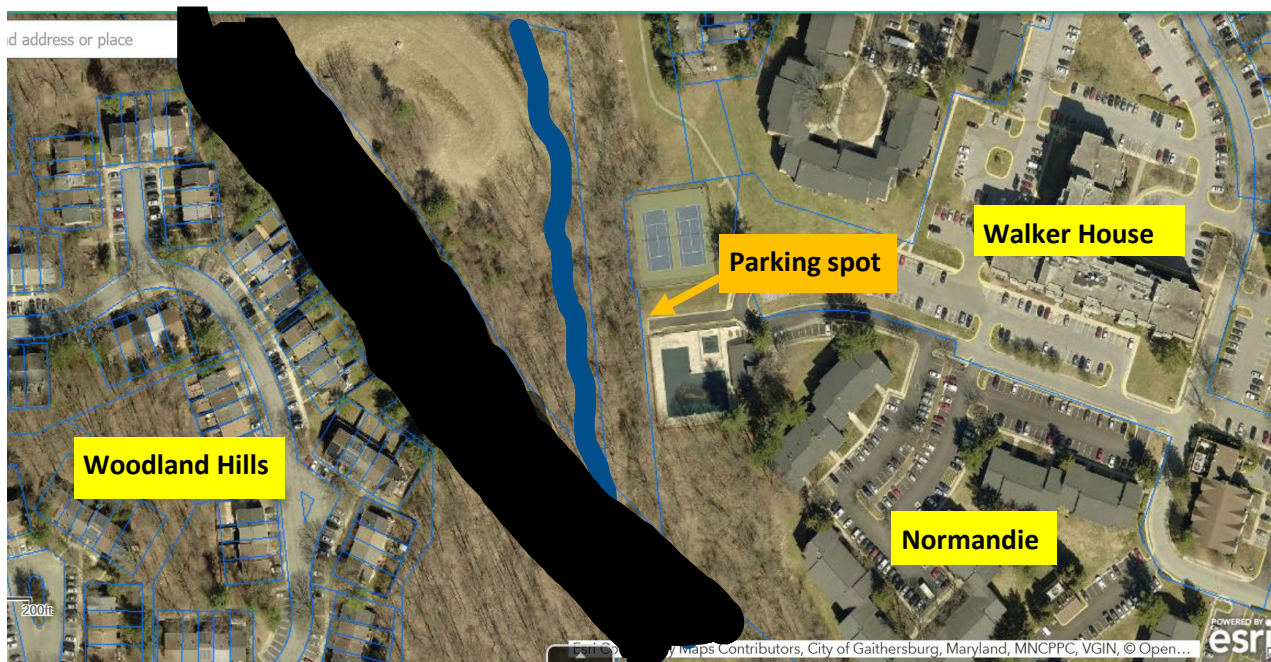


The forested Walkers Run stream system you'll see is the path of the proposed M83 highway, which continues through the Montgomery Village Foundation's South Valley Park. If constructed, the proposed M83 highway would degrade and eliminate wildlife habitat, community parkland, and climate-resilience forest.

Focus Area #4 *Continued*



These communities and amenities have beneficial forestlands as neighbors.



The construction of the proposed M83 highway (alignment indicated in black) would replace tranquil open space and forestlands with asphalt. It is unnecessary to destroy neighborhood woodlands with construction of the proposed M83 highway when alternatives exist, such as expanding transit, improving intersections, and enhancing existing roadway networks.

Focus Area #4 Continued



A community hike follows the forested alignment of the proposed M83 highway over Walkers Run, adjacent to the Breckenridge and Normandie communities in Montgomery Village. The preservation of natural areas is critically important to both the human and environmental health of our communities.



The tranquil and forested background setting of the Gordon Bowie pavilion in Montgomery Village's South Valley Park will be degraded, with concerts overwhelmed by traffic noise if the proposed M83 highway is constructed.

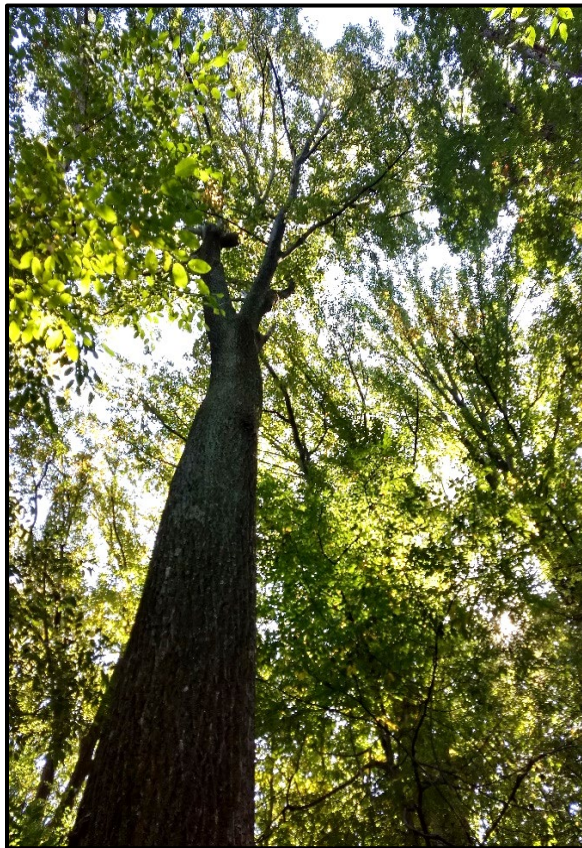
Focus Area #4 Continued



6 minute video

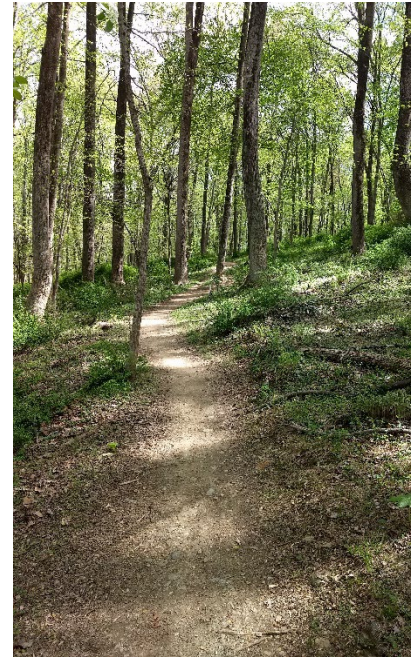
A short clip from the TAME Coalition film,

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The ‘grand canopies’ of Whetstone Run would be bulldozed by the proposed M83 highway construction and end their air-cleansing and habitat provisions.

Focus Area #5 Great Seneca Stream Valley Park & Seneca Creek Greenway Trail



The red line represents the alignment of the proposed M83 highway in Germantown, Maryland. Over one thousand Montgomery County residents live adjacent to the proposed 5-mile alignment. The M83 highway, if constructed, would harm neighborhoods and subject residents to air, noise, and heat pollution, destroy forestlands and degrade the Great Seneca Stream Valley Park, with the highway replacing sections of the Seneca Creek Greenway Trail.



A community hike with Montgomery County District 2 Councilmember Marilyn Balcombe in the forested alignment of the proposed M83 highway within the Great Seneca Stream Valley Park north of Middlebrook Road in Germantown, Maryland. Thousands of people derive health benefits and mental sustenance from the park and recognize the transcendent importance of natural areas. Public officials have a duty to protect and maintain full access to public parkland and ensure parks are not damaged or degraded in any way.



Seneca Creek Bottomlands, winter view

This photo shows the actual alignment of the proposed M83 highway within the Great Seneca Stream Valley Park and through the Seneca Creek Greenway Trail, north of Middlebrook Road. Steep topographical gradients are present on both sides of this flat 'bottomland,' and a long bridge to span this area would severely disrupt and forever degrade this natural landscape. The bottomlands at the toe of this slope are the floodplain of the Brandermill Tributary to Great Seneca Creek that contains sensitive wetlands, providing food and habitat for amphibians and other wildlife, and attenuating flooding events that are now commonplace. These natural ecological functions, processes, and recreational resources provide public benefits and would be wiped away by construction of the M83 highway.

Focus Area #5 *Continued*

The photograph below shows beautiful spring Skunk Cabbage within the floodplain and wetland area of the Brandermill Tributary to Great Seneca Creek, inside the Great Seneca Stream Valley Park and adjacent to the homes on Yellow Leaf Way, Yellow Leaf Terrace, and Cross Laurel Drive in Germantown, Maryland.

This wetland, floodplain, and forest complex is directly in the path of the proposed M83 highway and would be destroyed if M83 were constructed. Clearing and fragmentation of the forest due to M83 would directly destroy forest-interior habitats, leading to significant declines in the populations of forest-interior dwelling species. The social, environmental, and neighborhood harm caused by constructing M83 would be catastrophic.

There are viable, realistic transportation options and alternatives to the proposed M83 highway that exist in Montgomery County, Maryland, such as Bus Rapid Transit on MD 355; all-day, two-way MARC rail service; intersection improvements; select capacity enhancements to existing roadways; and expansion of pedestrian and bicycling networks. Public officials have a legal and moral obligation to select the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative when making decisions on major transportation projects. This means that the proposed M83 highway must be cancelled and permanently removed from all master plans, sector plans, and functional plans in Montgomery County, Maryland.



Seneca Creek Bottomlands, spring view

Seneca Creek Greenway Trail



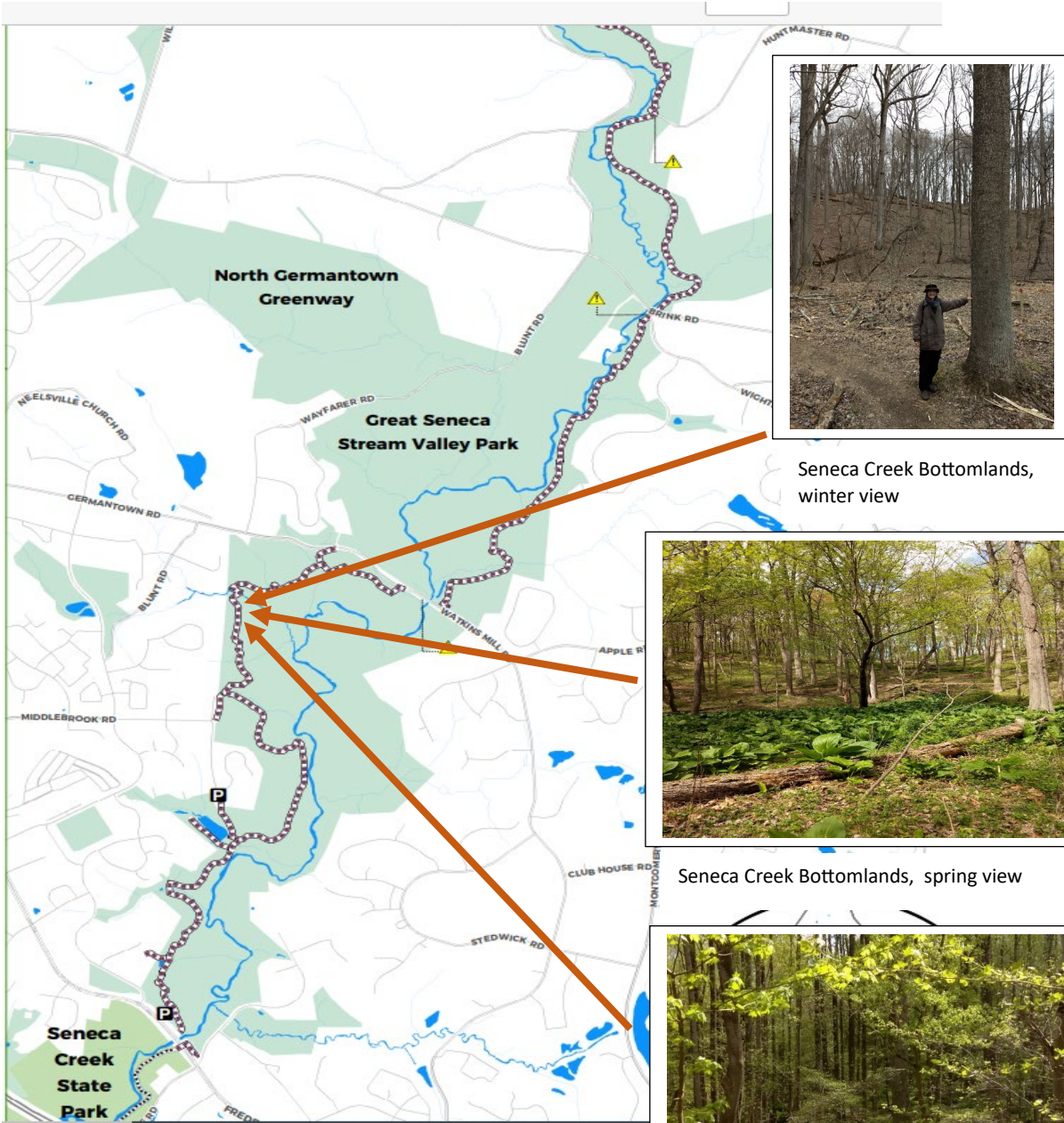
A typical 'wilderness experience' along the Seneca Creek Greenway Trail

The natural-surface Seneca Greenway Trail meanders through the 1,557-acre Great Seneca Creek Stream Valley Park for 7.8 miles from Frederick Road, MD 355, north to Damascus, connecting to the Magruder Branch Stream Valley Park Trail, for a total forest trail length of 13.6 miles. The proposed M83 highway will bisect the trail and, according to Montgomery County Parks, will "affect a contiguous 2.9-mile section of the trail that offers a unique, nearly 'wilderness' experience."



Seneca Creek Greenway Trail

MontgomeryParks.org



Seneca Creek Bottomlands, winter view

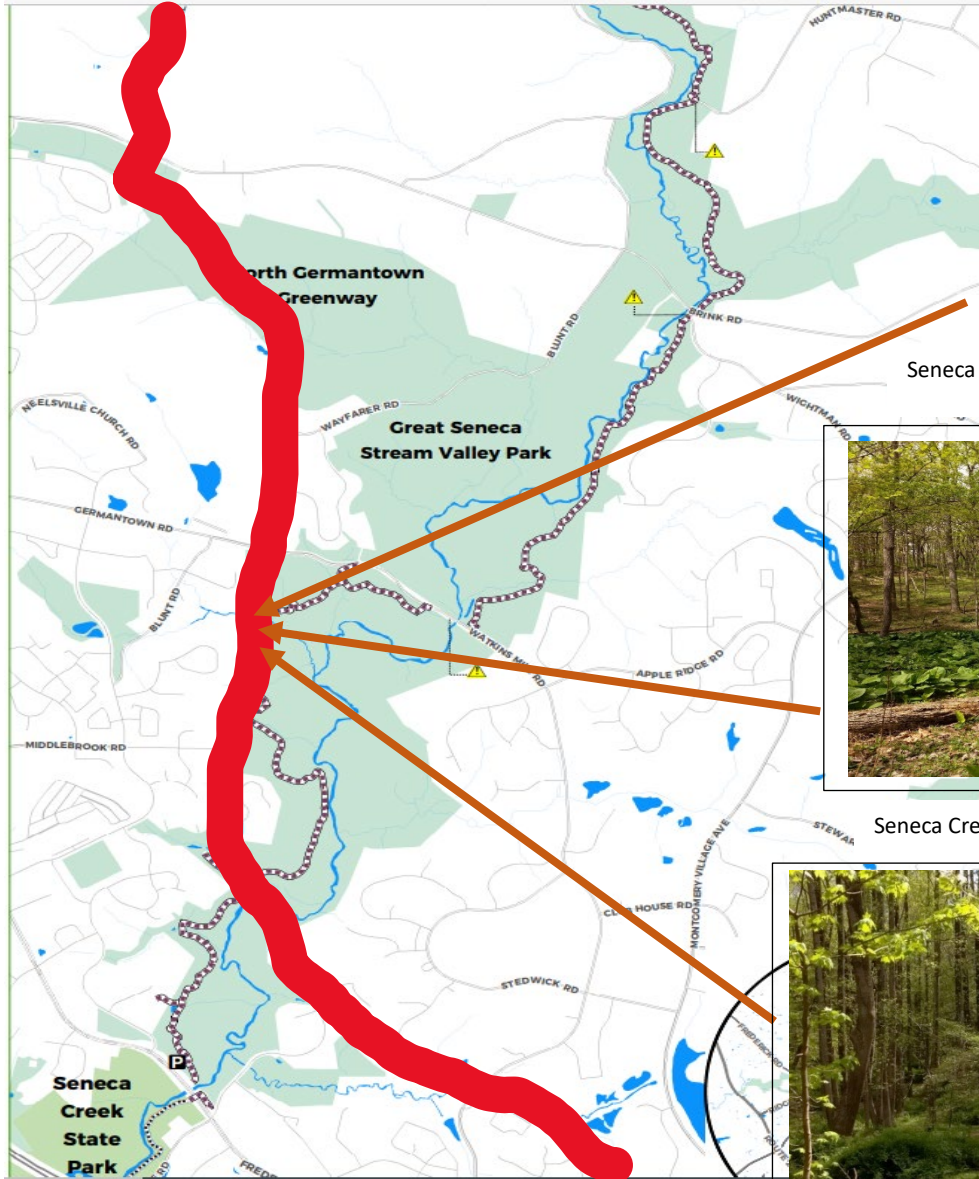
Seneca Creek Bottomlands, spring view

Wilderness experience on the Seneca Creek Greenway Trail

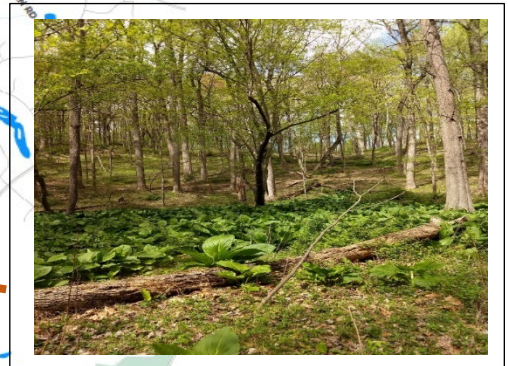
Photos from preceding pages showing these locations on the Seneca Creek Greenway Trail within the Great Seneca Stream Valley Park.

Seneca Creek Greenway Trail

MontgomeryParks.org



Seneca Creek Bottomlands, winter view



Seneca Creek Bottomlands, spring view



Wilderness experience on the Seneca Creek Greenway Trail

Note in red the alignment of the proposed M83 highway (Master Plan alignment 9A/8A) that would short-circuit the Seneca Creek Greenway Trail and degrade, shrink, and fragment the Great Seneca Stream Valley Park as well as the North Germantown Greenway Stream Valley Park. The proposed M83 highway, if constructed, would eliminate major sections of the trail, reduce trail access and parking, and cut-off adjacent neighborhood linkages and community-connector trails, depriving thousands of people access to a public recreational amenity in Montgomery County, Maryland.

Focus Area #5 Continued



Meet Rose and Tighe, avid users of the Seneca Creek Greenway Trail. Listen to their recreation stories and testimonials about the benefits of Montgomery County's Great Seneca Stream Valley Park....and their dismay at the prospect of losing open space, trails, and parkland to the M83 highway.


View this 4 minute clip from the TAME Coalition film, ***"Road to Ruin. A Moral Choice. Cancelling Proposed M83 Highway in Montgomery County, Maryland. An Injustice to Climate and Community."***



Hikers and bikers using the Seneca Creek Greenway Trail. The density and diversity of the forest is part of the wilderness experience of the trail that draws thousands of people to the park.



Focus Area #5 Continued

 **MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS**
THE MARYLAND - NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

Attachment E MCPB Item # 9
November 21, 2013

MEMORANDUM

November 14, 2013

TO: Montgomery County Planning Department

VIA: Mary Bradford, Director of Parks *M Bradford*
Mike Riley, Deputy Director of Parks *M Riley*
John E. Hench, Ph.D., Chief, Park Planning and Stewardship Division *J Hench*

FROM: Jai Cole, Natural Resource Manager, Park Planning and Stewardship Division *J Cole*
Rob Gibbs, Natural Resource Manager, Park Planning and Stewardship Division *R Gibbs*

PROJECT: M-83 Midcounty Highway Park Impacts

This memo is being provided in support of the Planning Department's recommendation to the Board on M-83, Midcounty Highway

RECOMMENDATION

In the 24 years since M-83 was last incorporated into the Germantown Master Plan, land use decision making has become more balanced with more attention being paid to impacts to sensitive areas and smart growth. Based on the significant environmental impacts to parkland from the Master Plan alignment, and the recommendation from the 1994 Clarksburg Master Plan to analyze the need for the road largely due to these impacts; staff recommends that the Planning Board support the Department's recommendation to evaluate a transit alternative that considers elements of Alternatives 2 and 5 and that the Master Plan alignments be removed from further consideration.

This memo is being provided in support of the Planning Department's recommendation to the Board on M-83, Midcounty Highway

RECOMMENDATION

In the 24 years since M-83 was last incorporated into the Germantown Master Plan, land use decision making has become more balanced with more attention being paid to impacts to sensitive areas and smart growth. Based on the significant environmental impacts to parkland from the Master Plan alignment, and the recommendation from the 1994 Clarksburg Master Plan to analyze the need for the road largely due to these impacts; staff recommends that the Planning Board support the Department's recommendation to evaluate a transit alternative that considers elements of Alternatives 2 and 5 and that the Master Plan alignments be removed from further consideration.

The County Parks Department cites “**significant impacts to parkland**” from the M83 Master Plan alignment and supports the Planning Department Staff’s recommendation to the Montgomery County Planning Board to evaluate intersection improvements and transit alternatives to M83, and that the “**Master Plan alignments be removed from further consideration.**”

<http://tamecoalition.org/videos-studies/>



Brandermill Tributary to Great Seneca Creek with Seneca Creek Greenway Trail in the distance

Focus Area #5 Continued

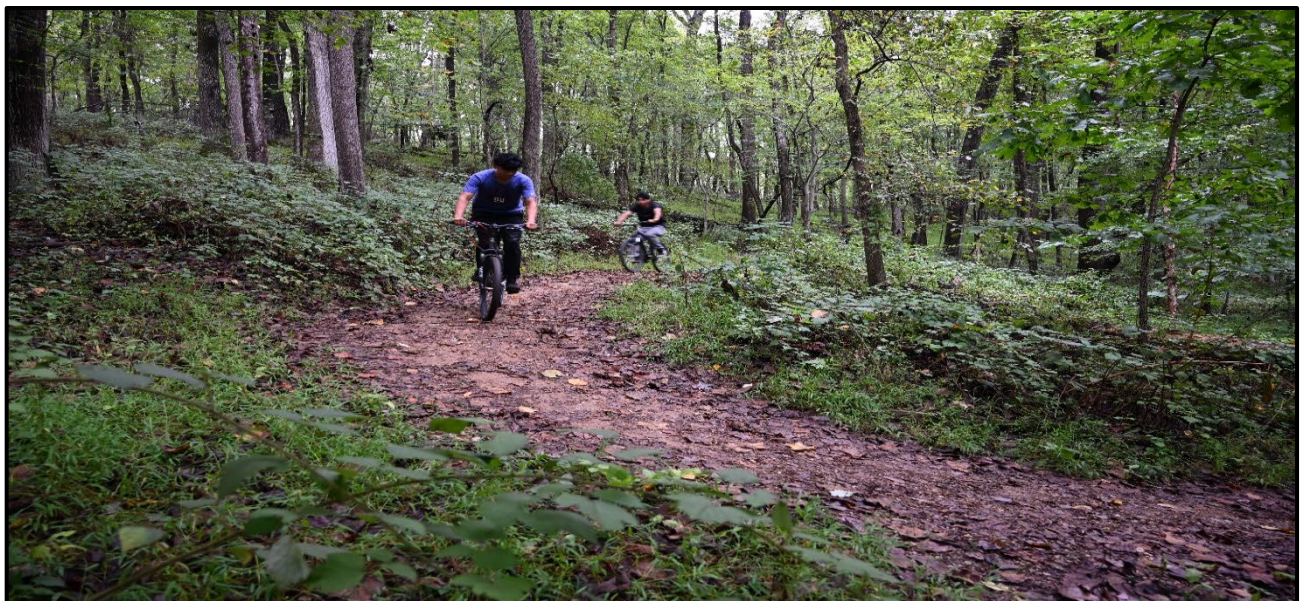
Montgomery County Parks - Park Planning and Stewardship Division

Total M-NCPPC Park Impacts by Built Alignment

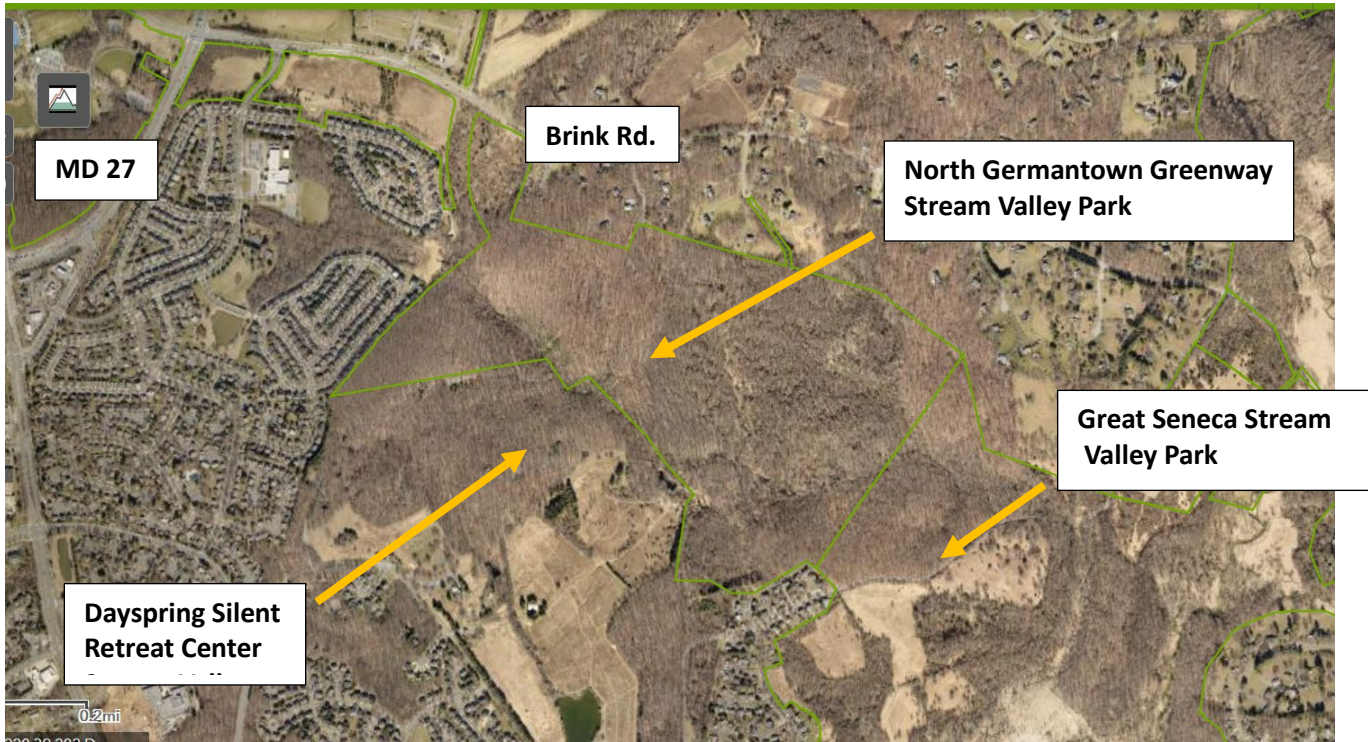
	Alternative 8A and 9A
Total Acres of Park Impact	40.47 acres
Biodiversity Area	20.65 acres
Forest Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS) Habitat	79.63 acres
Impacts to Resource-based Recreation	High
Forest	32.03 acres
Streams and their buffers	7.47 acres
Wetlands and their buffers	1.47 acres
Areas of high and moderate prehistoric archaeological potential	31.29 acres
Areas of high and moderate historic archaeological potential	4.13 acres
Natural Surface Trail/Hard Surface Trail (including sidewalks)	545 ft./0
Managed Open Space	2,474 sq. ft.

The proposed M83 highway would cause severe and negative impacts to 9 of the 11 resource categories evaluated by the Montgomery County Parks Department, which concludes, ***“The Master Plan alignments have unacceptable impacts to natural and recreational resources.”*** (pages 8 and 12 of the 2013 Parks Dept. memo referenced on prior page)

The Seneca Creek Greenway Trail is directly in the path of the alignment of the proposed M83 highway.



Focus Area #6 North Germantown Greenway Stream Valley Park and Dayspring Silent Retreat Center



Nearly 500 acres of contiguous woodlands in Germantown, Maryland, shown above, contain sensitive resources, high quality environments and diverse habitats---all in the path of the proposed M83 highway. Montgomery County, Maryland has identified this area as a Priority Natural Area that has forest interior habitat, high biodiversity, and is one of the County's "Best Natural Areas" as described in the County's 2022 *Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan*, defined as:

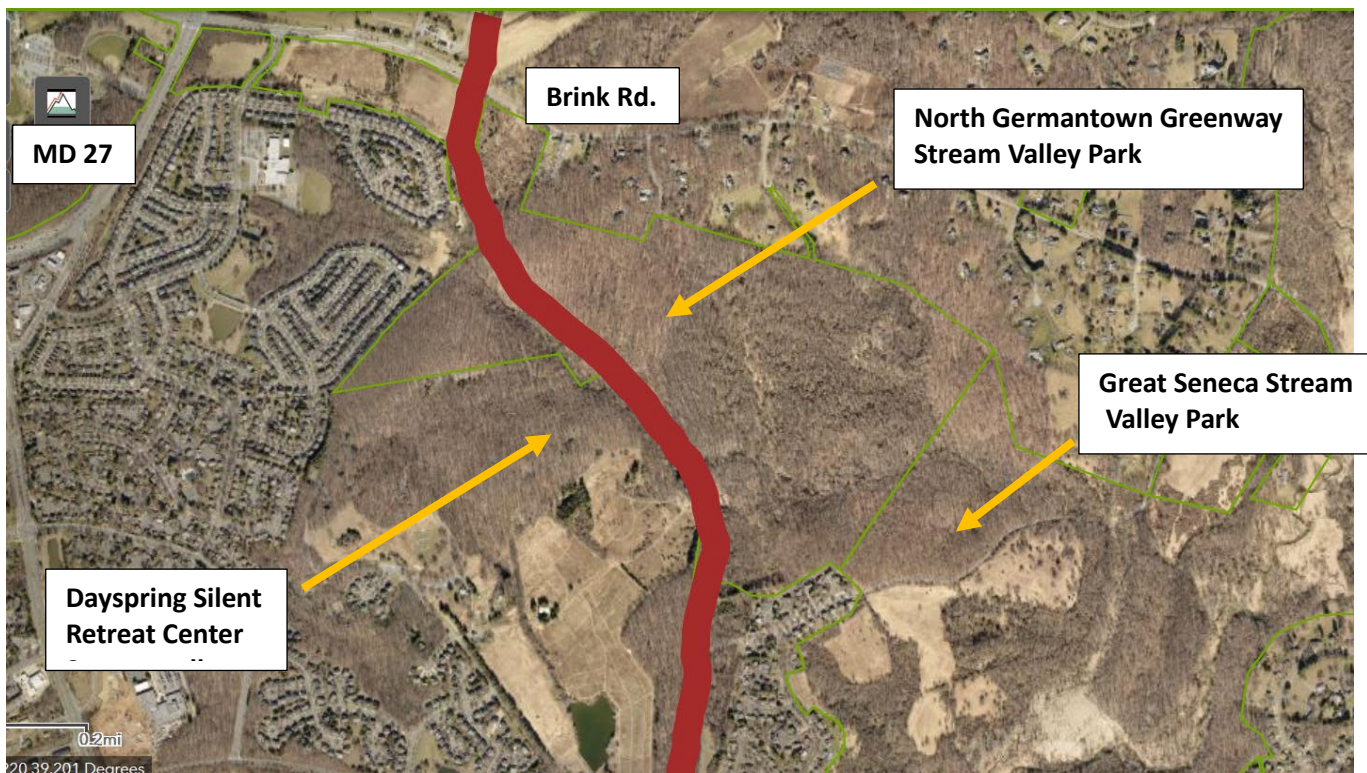
"the best of-the-best; demonstrative of unique, high quality natural areas demonstrating specific qualities (e.g., RTE/GCN species [rare, threatened, endangered/greatest conservation need], large contiguous forest interior, meadow, or wetland habitat) necessary of sound conservation and biodiversity sustainability."

<https://montgomeryparks.org/projects/directory/powerd-by-parks-2022-park-recreation-and-open-space-plan/>

The video link below tracks the proposed M83 highway's path of destruction through the North Germantown Greenway Stream Valley Park and the Dayspring Silent Retreat Center. Image to the right from the film, ***"The Proposed M83 Highway's Path of Destruction in Germantown, Maryland."***



Focus Area #6 *Continued*



The proposed M83 highway—shown here in red—would bisect public parkland, fragment this large forest complex, and degrade these high quality environments, contrary to Montgomery County’s stated Natural Area Conservation objectives to: 1) Expand and connect forests and farmland and other natural lands as a network of contiguous green infrastructure; 2) Protect critical terrestrial and aquatic habitats, biological communities and populations; and 3) Manage watersheds in ways that protect, conserve and restore stream corridors, riparian forest buffers, wetlands, floodplains and aquifer recharge areas and their associated hydrologic and water quality functions.

<https://montgomeryparks.org/projects/directory/powered-by-parks-2022-park-recreation-and-open-space-plan/>

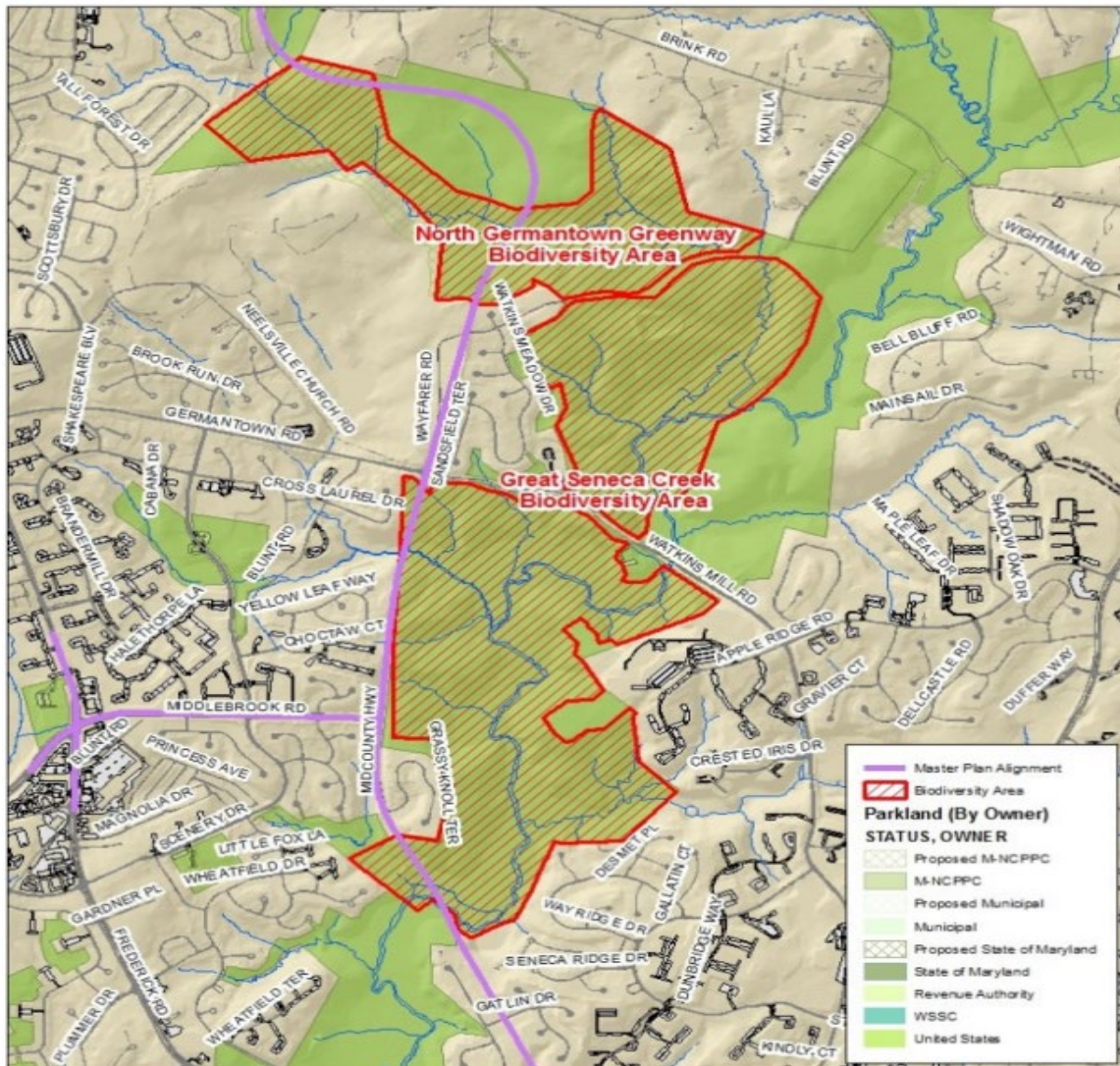


The dense and lush forest environment of the North Germantown Greenway Stream Valley Park.

Focus Area #6 Continued

Montgomery County Parks - Park Planning and Stewardship Division

Figure 1: Biodiversity Areas Impacted by the Master Plan Alignments



Note proposed M83 alignment in purple

The Montgomery County Parks Department's 2013 memo to the County Planning Department on M83's impacts to public parkland states:

<http://tamecoalition.org/videos-studies/>

"The North Germantown biodiversity area contains unique aquatic and terrestrial features rarely seen in Montgomery County. It is dominated by steep slopes, rock outcrops, mature high quality mixed oak and oak-hickory forest, and large quantities of springs, seeps and wetlands providing clean, cold, highly oxygenated water to the bedrock stream running through it. The large interior forest also provides prime habitat for a wide variety of forest interior birds (e.g., scarlet tanager, oven bird, worm eating warbler, Louisiana waterthrush)."

"There are eleven plant species listed as rare, and 45 listed as uncommon to this region. Some of the uncommon species found throughout this biodiversity area include: fringe-tree, red choke berry, black ash, royal fern, false hellebore, white turtlehead, primrose leaved violet, wood anemone, dwarf ginseng, turk's cap lily, and rattlesnake plantain orchid." (page 11)

Focus Area #6 *Continued*



Dayspring Creek has a unique bedrock outcropping with a large wetland complex that contains springs, seeps, amphibians, and rare plants. All of these resources are threatened by the proposed M83 highway.

The Montgomery County Parks Department 2013 memo on M83's impact to public parkland further states,

“Although bedrock outcrops do exist in piedmont stream valleys where the overlying rocky material has eroded, The contiguous, stable, and un-incised stretch of the bedrock stream within the North Germantown Greenway Stream Valley Park is a rarity in the piedmont and the only stretch this long in M-NCPPC parkland. This characteristic provides habitat for unique flora and fauna found nowhere else in the County.” (page 11)

“The Master Plan alignment (8 and 9) with an approximate 180-ft. wide limit of disturbance would have a potentially calamitous impact to resources described above. These alignments bisect three of the largest biodiversity areas in the County.” (page 11)

“Accordingly, the Department of Parks support the Planning Department’s recommendation to further consider and evaluate a transit alternative that incorporates elements of Alternative 2 and 5 and that the Master Plan alignments be removed from further consideration.” (page 12)

Alternatives 2 and 5 from the County’s 2017 *Midcounty Corridor Supplemental Report* are: Sixteen intersection improvements to reduce delays (Alt. 2); Roadway widenings and turning lane enhancements along MD 355 and other State roads in the Midcounty Corridor to reduce traffic congestion (Alt. 5).

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/corridor/PublicOutreach.html#Update>

Focus Area #6 Continued



Montgomery County must: Ensure the continued health of this forest; Steward the North Germantown Greenway Stream Valley Park and the Great Seneca Stream Valley Park for future generations; Protect ecological processes; and Preserve the existence value of these natural landscapes. **In order to protect these parks, Montgomery County must remove M83 highway from all master plans and implement sound transit and realistic transportation alternatives to the destructive M83 highway.**

Note the oak seedlings regenerating the forest on this slope above Dayspring Creek, which is threatened by the proposed M83 highway. The conditions in this photograph are indicative of a healthy, well-managed—and protected—forest.

Learn more about Dayspring Silent Retreat Center and the harm the proposed M83 would cause.



Forestlands in the sensitive riparian environment along Dayspring Creek, with adjacent topographical gradient.

Focus Area #6 *Continued*



Dayspring Silent Retreat Center and its 200 acres of forests and fields, adjacent to the North Germantown Greenway Stream Valley Park, is in the path of the proposed M83 highway. Note the 70-year old Dayspring Silent Retreat Lodge in the center, nestled within Dayspring's woodlands. This expansive forest provides a unique setting for contemplation, introspection, and mental refreshment, which would be degraded and forever altered by construction of the proposed M83 highway.

Dayspring Silent Retreat Center

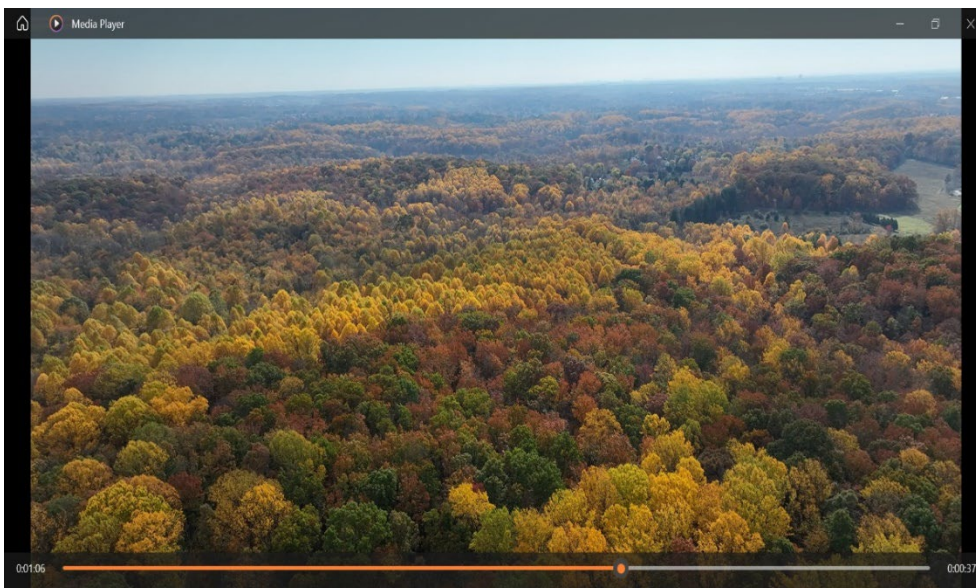
The Dayspring Silent Retreat Center, a ministry of Dayspring Church, is a sanctuary for silence--in the midst of a loud world---among the enchantment of oaks and poplars, hawks and bluebirds, dragonflies and foxes, milkweed and fern. Since its beginning in 1953, the core value and benefit of silent retreat at the Dayspring Silent Retreat Center is dependent upon the protection of nature's beauty, bounty, and biodiversity in Germantown, Maryland. The Dayspring Silent Retreat Center contains contemplative landscapes of forest, meadows, and creeks to experience the wonderment of nature and connections to self, planet, and spirit.

The Dayspring Silent Retreat welcomes people from all walks of life--spiritual and secular--to experience a beautiful and calming place for resting, nature immersion, and engagement in quiet centeredness. In a time when silence is itself endangered, the need for quiet and solitude in nature has never been greater.

Focus Area #6 *Continued*



A community hike in the Dayspring Creek Stream Valley with At-Large Montgomery County Council member Laurie-Anne Sayles, August 2023



Learn more about the harmful ecological effects of forest and habitat fragmentation and 'edge effects' from the proposed M83 highway in the video link below. ***"Ecosystems, Biodiversity & Climate Resilience at risk from Proposed M83 Highway in Montgomery County, Maryland"***



An image of the vast forestlands in the North Germantown Greenway Stream Valley Park, the Great Seneca Stream Valley Park, and the Dayspring Silent Retreat Center threatened by the proposed M83 highway in Montgomery County, Maryland.

"Construction of M83 would bisect these parks, permanently destroying portions of each park, while severing Dayspring Silent Retreat's ecological lifeline to natural habitats."

--John Parrish, Field Ecologist & Botanist and RG Steinman, Ph.D.

Focus Area #6 *Continued*

High Biodiversity at Risk from Proposed M83 Highway

The report by botanists John Parrish and RG Steinman, [“Select Environmental Inventory and Impact Analysis for Amphibians, Forest Birds, Rare Flora, and Significant Habitats in North Germantown Greenway and Great Seneca Park in the Vicinity of the Proposed M83 Highway Alignment Middlebrook Road to Brink Road, Montgomery County, Maryland,”](#) concludes:

“M83 would clear-cut public forests across both parklands to provide a corridor for the highway. Inevitably, this new corridor would lead to the dispersal of non-native flora and fauna into the remaining forest and would alter forest structure and species composition well inside the newly-created forest edge. The resulting alteration of forest interior habitats, adjacent to the new road, would mean a significant loss of habitat for forest dwelling flora and fauna, particularly amphibians, birds, and forest fauna. This massive forest clearing and ‘edge effect’ would make the remaining forest cover less suitable for sustaining forest dwelling species. The smaller parcels of remaining forest would no longer provide enough habitat area to support viable populations of many of these species, especially forest interior dwelling species, and could lead to the extirpation of these species.”

Below are just a few of the species documented in this inventory of amphibians, birds, and flora in the North Germantown Greenway Stream Valley Park and Great Seneca Stream Valley Park, within and adjacent to the alignment of the proposed M83 highway. Read the Parrish/Steinman study and see the list of all surveyed species at www.TameCoalition.org/videos-studies/



Bashful Bulrush



Northern Dusky Salamander



Redback Salamander



Great Crested Flycatcher



Pickerel Frog



Northern Flicker



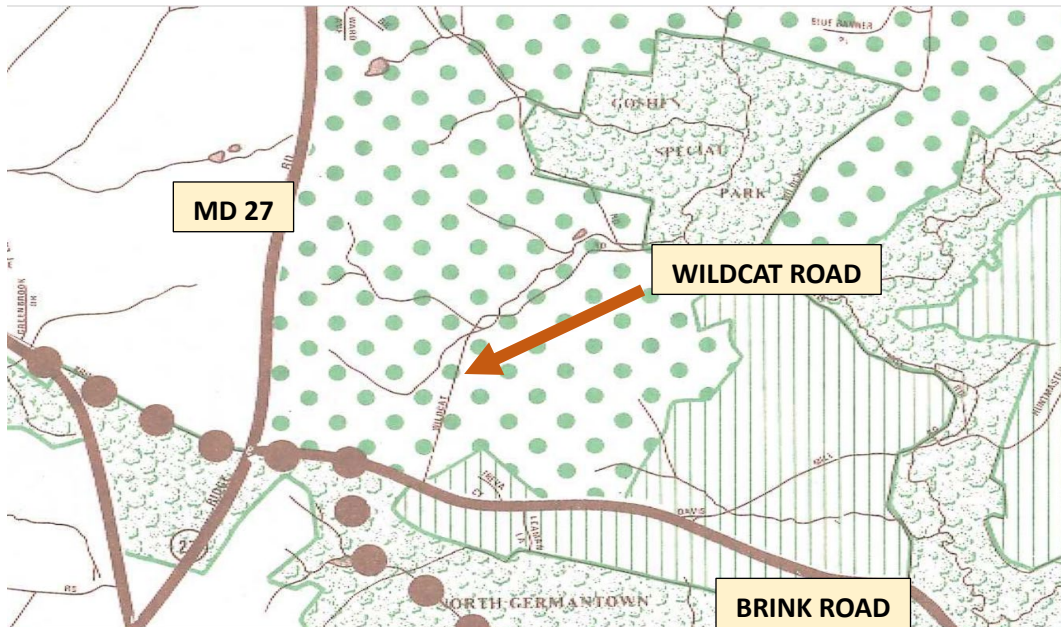
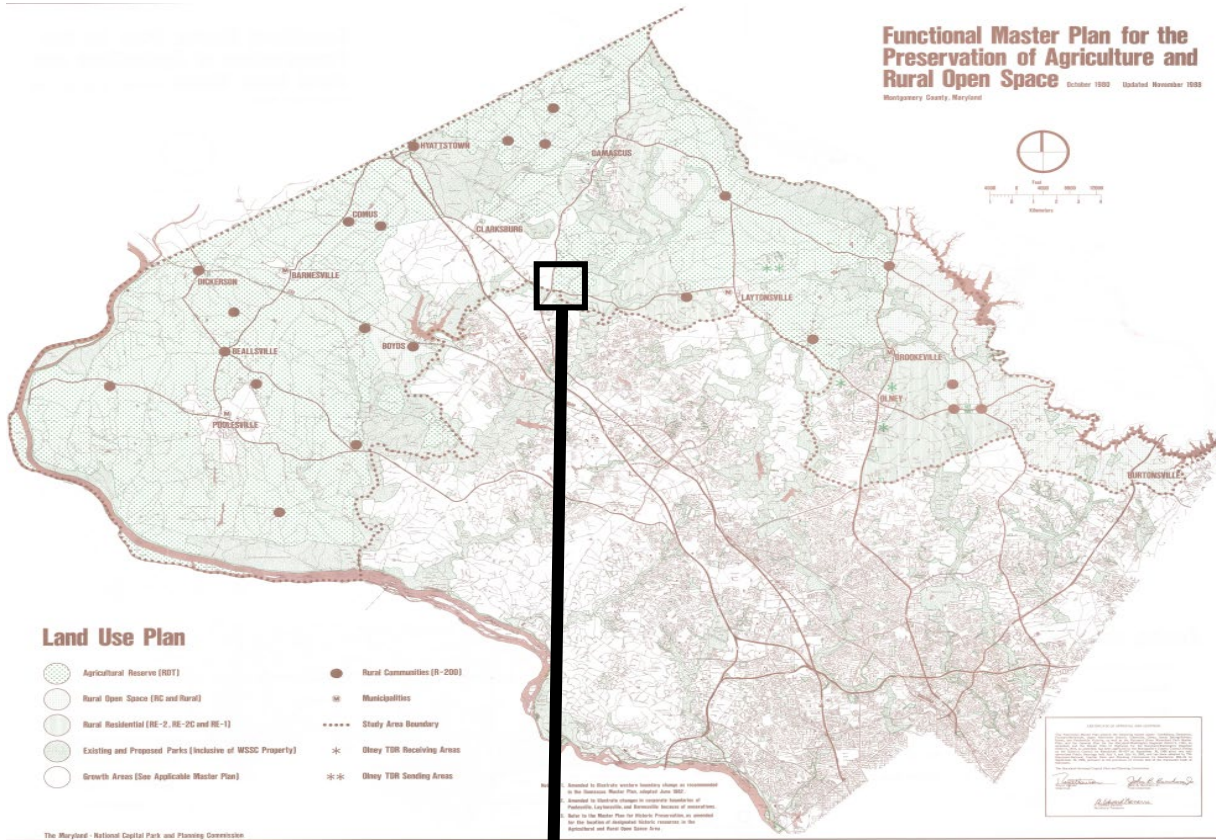
Butternut

Focus Area #7 Agricultural Reserve, Wildcat Road & Special Protection Area

Montgomery County's Agricultural Reserve

Functional Master Plan for Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space in Montgomery County, 1980

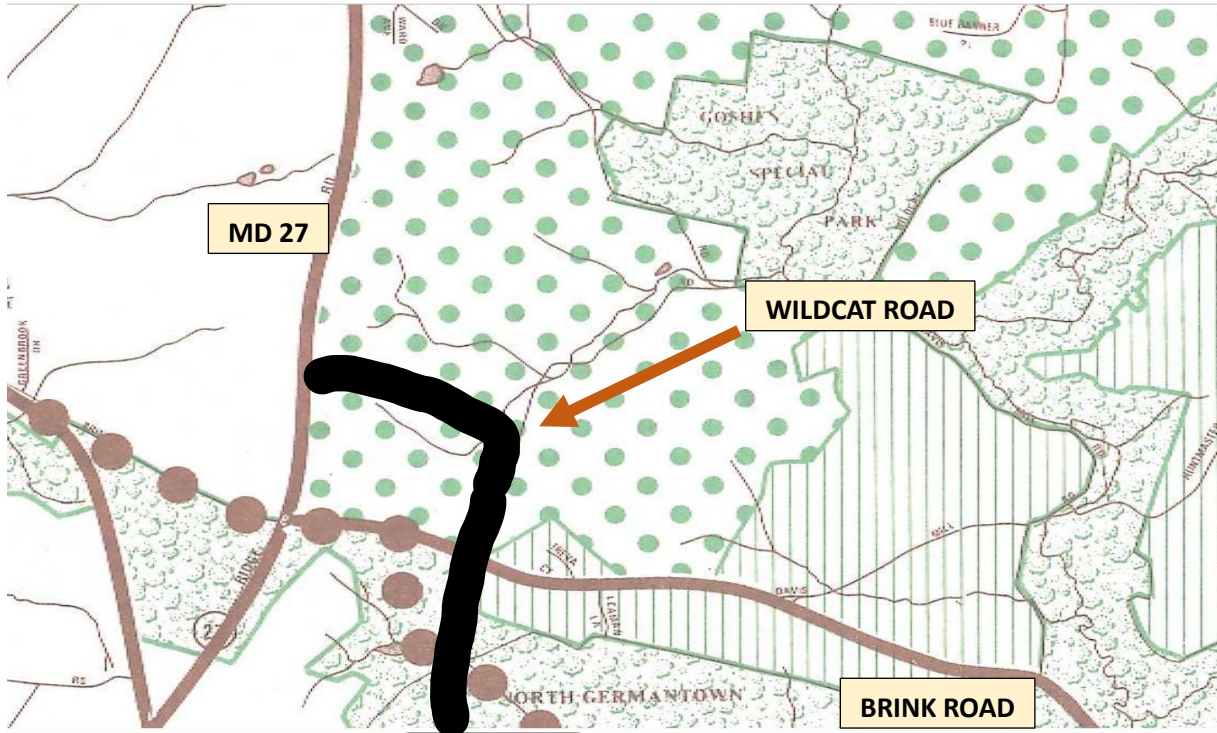
<https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/communities/upcounty/agricultural-rural-open-space/>



Focus Area #7 *Continued*

Montgomery County's Agricultural Reserve

Functional Master Plan for Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space in Montgomery County, 1980
<https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/communities/upcounty/agricultural-rural-open-space/>



The black line shows M83's intrusion into the Agricultural Reserve and extending south of Brink Road through the Seneca Crossing Local Park, and bisecting the North Germantown Greenway Stream Valley Park and the Dayspring Silent Retreat Center. The M83 highway would diminish the size and degrade the integrity and function of the County's world-famous Agricultural Reserve.

Land Use Plan



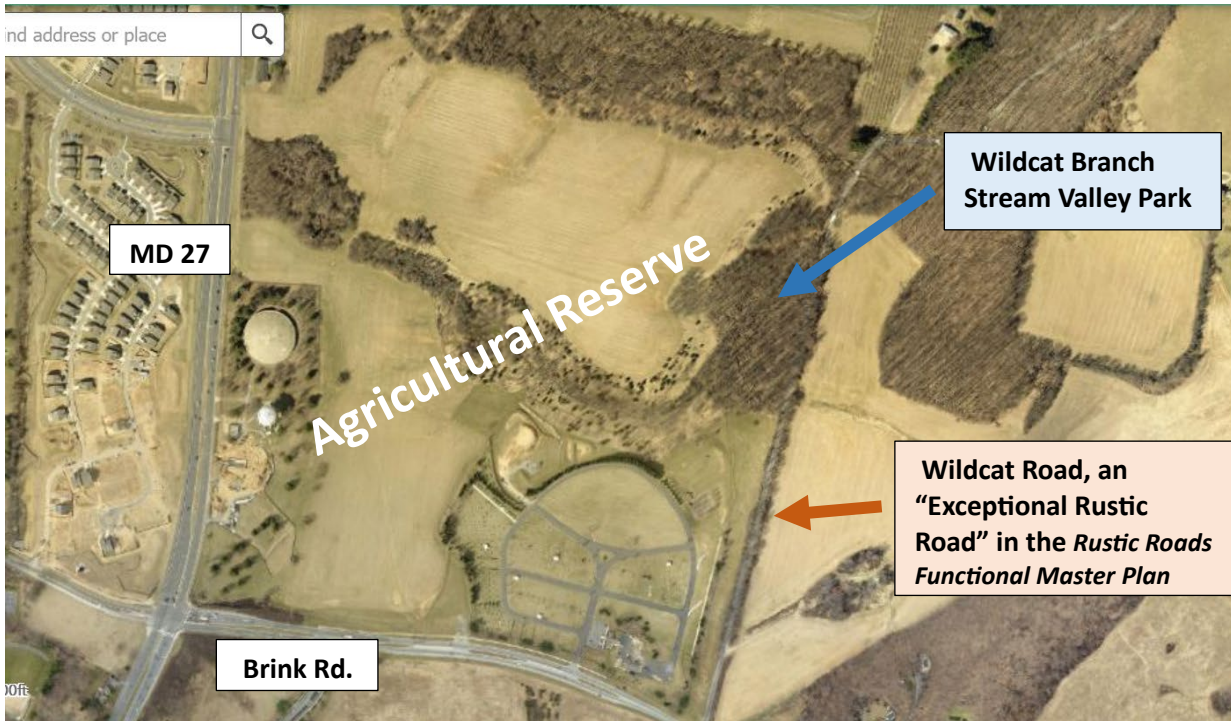
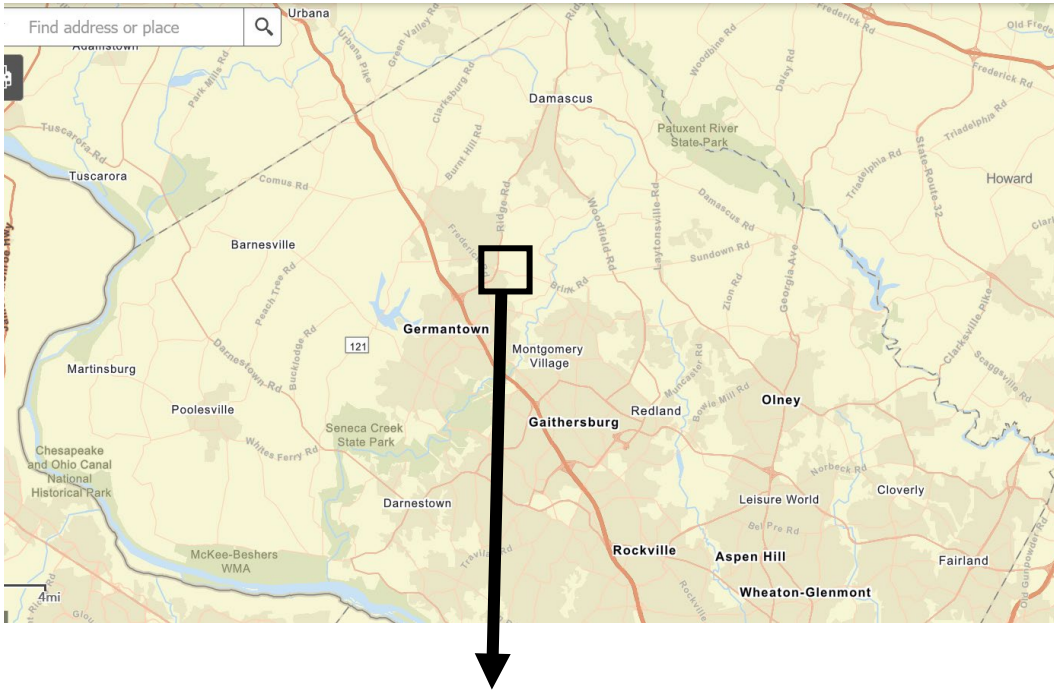
Agricultural Reserve (RDT)



Study Area Boundary

Functional Master Plan for Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space in Montgomery County, 1980

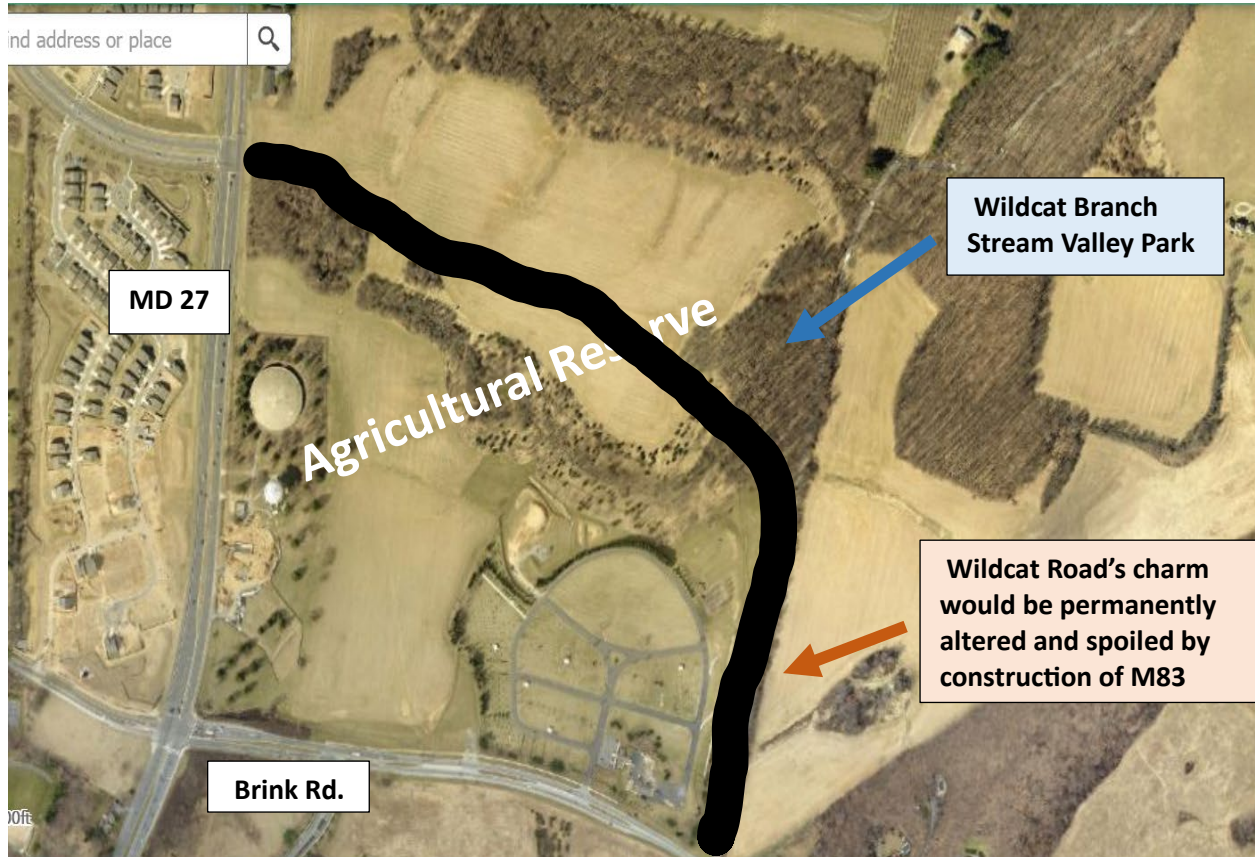
Focus Area #7 Continued



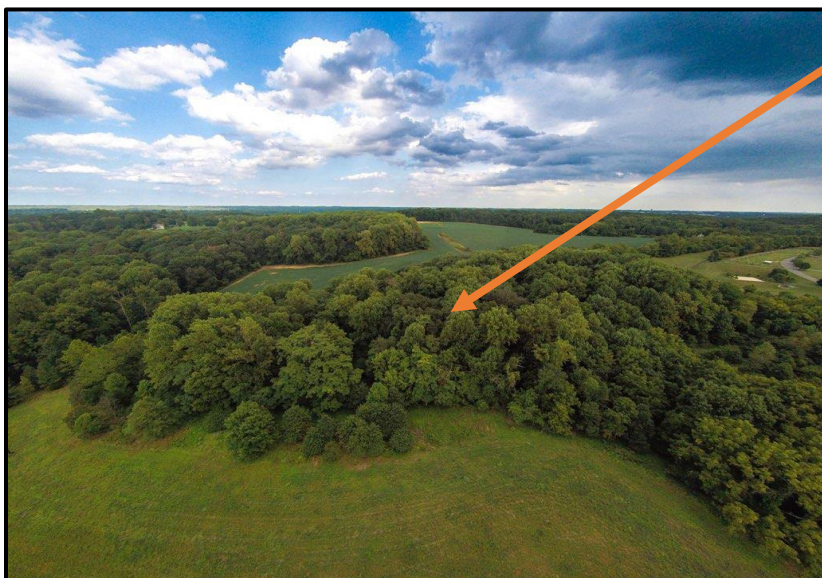
Montgomery County’s internationally-recognized, award-winning Agricultural Reserve is home to rural environments and over 500 preserved farms that support the agricultural economy & culture in a highly-developed county of nearly 1.1 million people.



Focus Area #7 Continued



Proposed M83 highway—shown in black—is a threat to the Agricultural Reserve that would fragment, degrade, and remove productive farmland from the last remaining portion of the Agricultural Reserve south of Clarksburg.



Wildcat Road, located here, is an Exceptional Rustic Road cocooned in mature forest.

Watch the 2 minute video below that highlights the degradation to the Ag. Reserve from the proposed M83 highway. ***"The Proposed M83 Highway will Degrade Montgomery County's Agricultural Reserve."***

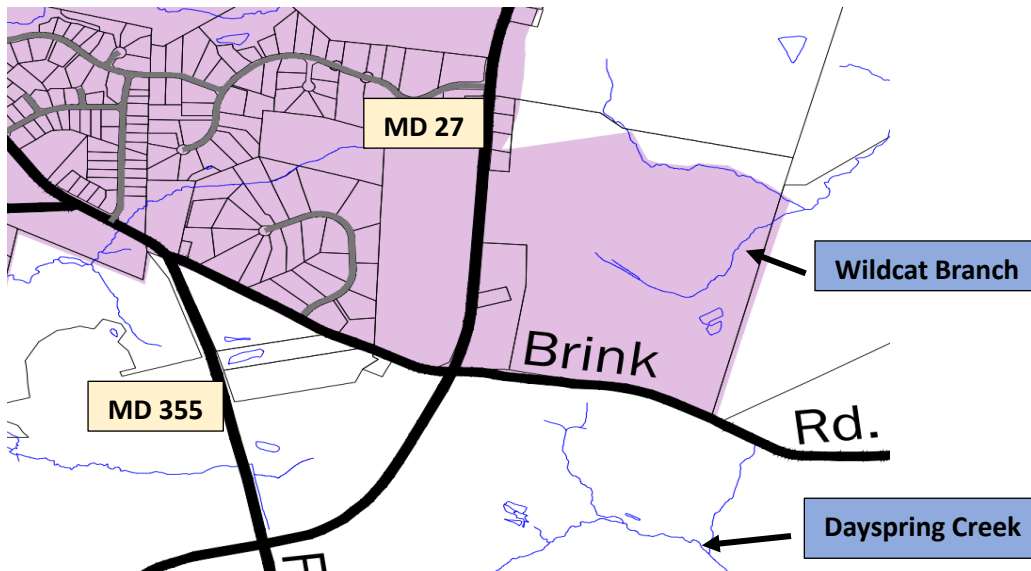


Forest and fields within the County's Wildcat Branch Stream Valley Park and Agricultural Reserve are in the path of the proposed M83 highway.

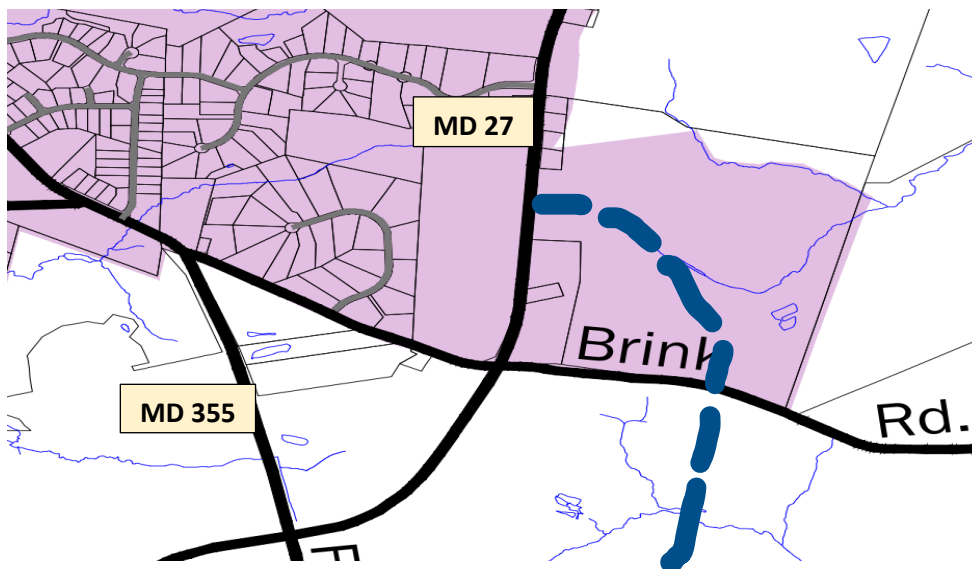
Focus Area #7 Continued

Clarksburg Special Protection Area

<https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/environment/water-and-wetlands/special-protection-areas/>



Sections of proposed M83 alignment are located within the Clarksburg Special Protection Area, shown in purple. Higher levels of environmental protection in Special Protection Areas are required due to the presence of high quality streams, wetlands, and natural landscape features [Montgomery County Code, Section 19-61(h)].



The blue dash shows the alignment of the proposed M83 highway in the Clarksburg Special Protection Area and extending south of Brink Road into the Seneca Crossing Local Park, and bisecting the North Germantown Greenway Stream Valley Park and the Dayspring Silent Retreat Center. In this area, the proposed M83 highway threatens the water quality, stream health, and habitat of Wildcat Branch and Dayspring Creek, tributaries of Great Seneca Creek that flow into the Potomac River, the source of public drinking water for the Washington, DC area, including most of Montgomery County, Maryland.

Focus Area #7 *Continued*



Wildcat Road's setting would be degraded and lose its surrounding mature trees and graceful canopy that flank its peaceful route if the proposed M83 highway was constructed.



A portion of the proposed M83 highway alignment is Wildcat Road, an Exceptional Rustic Road In Montgomery County's *Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan*.

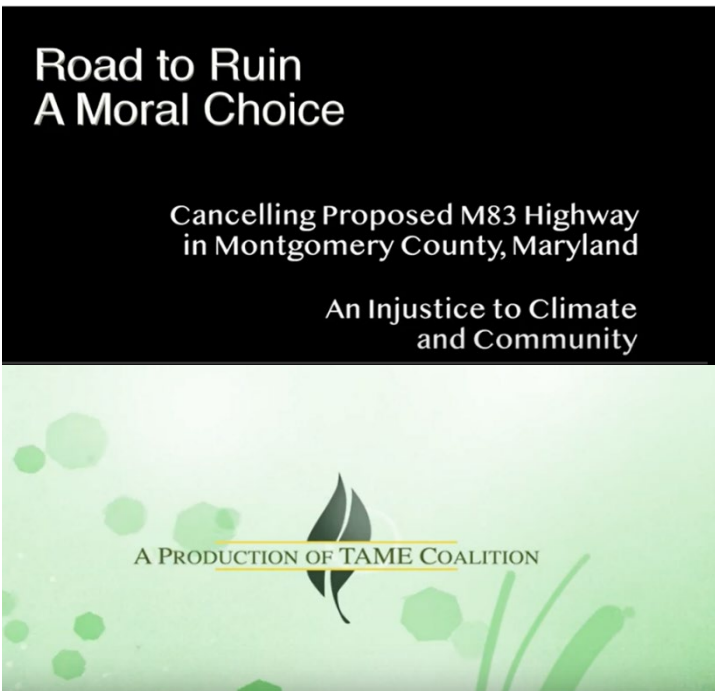


The scenic appeal and beauty of Wildcat Road can be ensured forever when Montgomery County removes M83 highway from its master plans.





TAME Coalition leaders receive the Livable Communities Award from the Coalition for Smarter Growth, [2017] for their service in educating and informing residents of the Upcounty and public decisionmakers about transit alternatives and other transportation options, and the need to cancel proposed M83 highway in order to protect the forests and streams that make Montgomery Village, Gaithersburg, and Germantown desirable places to live and work.



Watch the 37-minute film that documents the natural resources and highlights the communities that are threatened by the proposed M83 highway.





WWW.TAMECOALITION.ORG

TameCoalition@gmail.com

Write to the County Council NOW:

county.council@montgomerycountymd.gov
cc: tamecoalition@gmail.com

TELL THEM:

- Remove Proposed M83 Highway from the Master Plans**
- Expand Upcounty Transit**

Welcome to the TAME Coalition!



The **TAME Coalition** is affiliated with Montgomery County, Maryland residents and organizations, from the Upcounty and beyond,
with elected county and state officials,
and with state and regional organizations.

We are dedicated to promoting Transit Alternatives to Midcounty Highway Extended.

We are protecting our communities' safe walkable and bikeable streets, and maintaining the Climate Resilience Forest of the Upcounty, by eliminating proposed M83 Highway.

We are about protecting the health, safety, and quality of life for all residents of Montgomery Village, Gaithersburg, Germantown and Clarksburg by supporting:

- Ride On Bus Service,
- Bus Rapid Transit on Route 355,
- All-day, two-way MARC Train service,
- Safe streets for walkers and cyclists, and
- Telework.

**We advocate for a transit system that will meet the needs of all
our communities.**

TAME Coalition's Vision for Our County

TAME Coalition envisions this future for our Montgomery County – let's work together to make this reality:

1) Montgomery County shifts to a people-centric transportation system from a car-centric system.



- Local elected and appointed officials, working with residents, social and climate justice advocates and the TAME Coalition, cancel the proposed M83 Highway (sometimes referred to as Snowden Farm Parkway Extended) and remove it from the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways, and from the other master plans that list it.
- When this proposed highway project is canceled, state and county taxes are NOT poured into removing forests, culverting creeks, eliminating wetlands, cutting through backyards, and bisecting neighborhoods. The \$1.3 billion saved from this proposed project are instead devoted to transit projects, telework, pedestrian, and bicycle projects, for urban areas as well as for the Upcounty communities of Clarksburg, Germantown, Gaithersburg, and Montgomery Village.
- Planning is guided by Montgomery County Council's [commitments to racial equity and social justice \(Bill # 27-19 which became law in 2020\)](#). As laid out in this law, County officials “fully support residents who choose to not own cars, or cannot afford cars, enabling them to travel to work, school, shopping, and park destinations via upgraded and extensive transit networks, and safe walkable and bikeable streets.”

TAME Coalition's Vision for Our County *(continued)*

2) Montgomery County's shift to people-centric transportation in the Upcounty protects public health, and enables progress towards climate and social justice.

- The Climate Resilience Forest of Great Seneca Creek and its tributaries will be permanently preserved. The forest will continue to absorb summertime heat, provide clean air and water, and offer nature-based outdoor recreation to residents of Montgomery Village, Gaithersburg, Germantown and Clarksburg. As a result of these actions, Upcounty families are healthier, the air and water are cleaner, and neighborhood social connections are stronger.

The Climate Resilience Forest of the Upcounty includes North Germantown Greenway Stream Valley Park, Great Seneca Stream Valley Park, Dayspring Silent Retreat Center, Gaithersburg's Blohm Park, and Whetstone Run stream valley.

- All communities have had a voice in deciding on transportation alternatives to new roads. Transit-based access to jobs is more reliable.
- Housing policies, being linked to transportation and health policies, give top priority to the lowest-income residents, with new County housing investments in producing and maintaining mixed-income apartment buildings and townhome communities that are safely walkable; well-served by transit; and located next to public forests and other community-accessible natural areas.
- This shift to people-centric transportation in the Upcounty enables progress towards climate justice, including permanent preservation of the Climate Resilience Forest of Great Seneca Creek and its tributaries. This Climate Resilience Forest continues to absorb summertime heat, and to provide clean air and water, and nature-based outdoor recreation, to residents of Montgomery Village, Gaithersburg, Germantown and Clarksburg.
- **As a result of these actions, Upcounty families are healthier, transit-based access to jobs is more reliable, the air and water are cleaner, and neighborhood social connections are stronger.**

Brief History of the TAME Coalition:

Advocacy for Upcounty Transit and 'No M83'

Organizing since 1975, we are approaching 50 years of advocacy to eliminate proposed Mid-County Highway Extended (M83)

- In 2009, TAME Coalition marshaled the forces of separate grassroots efforts from those residents of Montgomery Village, Gaithersburg, and Germantown neighborhoods, including the Dayspring Silent Retreat Center, who came together to advocate for transit alternatives to the Mid-County Highway Extended (M83).
- TAME has grown to include state and local elected officials, civic organizations, homeowners' groups, faith-based communities, environmental and climate activists, transit justice groups, urbanists, rural groups and coalitions.



Community hikes of the proposed M83 alignment in Montgomery Village with Councilmember Natali Fani-Gonzalez (left) and Dawn Luedtke (below), 2023



TAME Coalition Accomplishments



Bus Rapid Transit on Route 355 in the Upcountry is found by MCDOT to be the highest-benefit transportation approach.



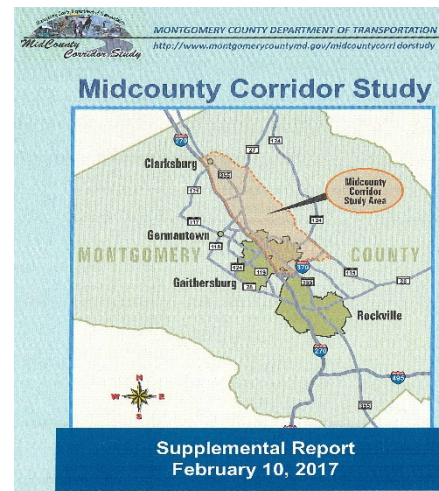
- TAME Coalition’s advocacy led to the issuance in 2017 by Montgomery County Department of Transportation of a [Midcounty Corridor Study Supplemental Report](#) that for the first time, included a transit alternative to the proposed Midcounty Highway Extended (M83).

BEST TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS FOR MIDCOUNTRY CORRIDOR AREA



www.tamecoalition.org/

<https://tinyurl.com/MCDOT2017MidCntyCorr>



**SCENARIO 1:
MCDOT Supplemental Report Overview**

- 1. Lowest VMT**
(vehicle miles traveled)
- 2. Highest percentage of people in transit vehicles**
- 3. Shortest travel**
AM and PM peak hour travel time on MD 355
- 4. Fewest number of intersection delays during AM and PM peak hrs**

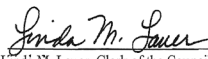
	No build	Scenario 1: BRT & Intersection Projects (Alt 2 & 5)	Scenario 2: BRT & 2-lane on M-83 for Alt 9A	Scenario 3: (No BRT) 4-lane on M-83 for Alt 9A
VMT (million vehicle-miles)	118	115	143	149
% in transit vehicles	9.9%	22%	18.8%	8.6%
AM peak hour minutes per mile on 355	3.3	2.3	3.1	3.3
PM peak hour minutes per mile on 355	3.8	2.7	3.8	4.2
AM peak hour number of intersections with delay of >80 seconds per vehicle	8	5	8	6
PM peak hour number of intersections with delay of >80 seconds/ vehicle	7	3	15	5

- According to MCDOT’s 2017 study of the Midcounty Corridor, Bus Rapid Transit on Route 355, plus local intersection and roadway improvements, is the approach with the lowest vehicle miles traveled. This translates to the lowest carbon emissions – a crucial climate goal.

Montgomery County Council passes Resolution 18-957 prohibiting use of M83 Highway in future master plans. The Resolution is a victory for transit alternatives to the proposed Midcounty Highway Extended (M83). This Resolution, *Transportation Solutions for Northwest Montgomery County*, prohibits decision-makers from using the proposed M83 Highway in future master plans for transportation planning.

- The Council 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, including but not limited to the upcoming Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan. This step ensures that any new development allowed under these plans does not rely on the northern extension of Midcounty Highway, while retaining the right-of-way for this extension in these plans.

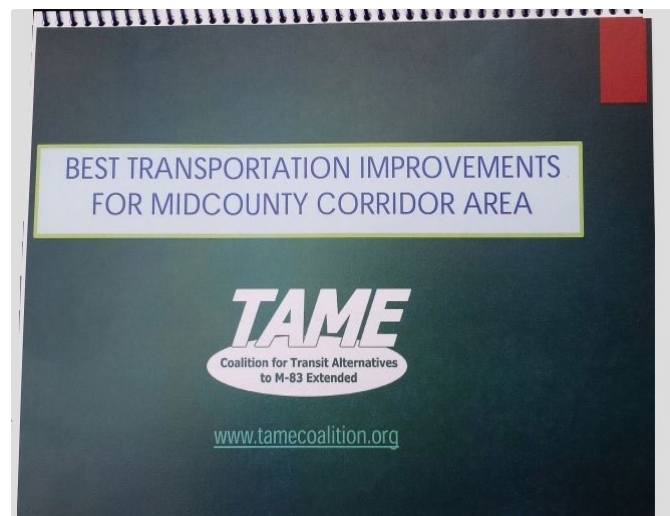
	Resolution No.: 18-957 Introduced: September 19, 2017 Adopted: October 31, 2017
COUNTY COUNCIL, FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND	
Lead Sponsor: Council Vice President Riemer Co-Sponsors: Council President Berliner and Councilmembers Elrich, Navarro, and Leventhal	
SUBJECT: Transportation Solutions for Northwest Montgomery County	
Background	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mobility for Upcounty residents is limited due to congestion and a lack of public transportation alternatives to I-270, MD 355, and other roads serving Clarksburg, Germantown, Montgomery Village, Gaithersburg and surrounding areas. 2. Four major infrastructure projects serving this area are envisioned in county master plans, including expanded capacity on I-270, the Corridor Cities Transitway, Bus Rapid Transit on or near MD 355, and the extension of Midcounty Highway (M-83) north of Montgomery Village Avenue. 3. For many years, there has been no clear consensus to extend Midcounty Highway to the north, yet master plans have assumed the availability of such an extension to put these plans in balance between land use and transportation. 4. Montgomery County is committed to protecting our environment and doing our part to stem the carbon emissions that are driving global climate change, as demonstrated in the following actions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Resolution 18-846, adopted on June 20, 2017, reaffirmed the Council's commitment to meet the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement. b. The Montgomery County Department of Transportation has adopted a Sustainability Policy that commits that the County will "Plan and implement a transportation system that broadly considers ecosystem and climate impacts, reduces and prevents waste and pollution, uses renewable resources, uses sustainable sources of energy and reduces energy consumption." c. The Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan, approved by the Council in 2013, states that "Expanding transit infrastructure through more efficient use of public rights-of-way is essential if current and future congestion is 	

Page 2	Resolution No.: 18-957
to be mitigated. In addition to reducing Countywide travel time for drivers, an expanded transit network is necessary to support the County's land use, environmental, and economic development goals and make transit a reliable alternative to driving in the County's developed core."	
Action	
The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following resolution:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Council supports expanded capacity on I-270, the Corridor Cities Transitway, Bus Rapid Transit on or near MD 355, and improvements on MD 355. These improvements will provide significant, immediate relief for Upcounty residents. These improvements align with our economic development strategies, providing the broadest and most diverse benefits, and minimize impervious surface, stormwater runoff, carbon emissions, and other environmental impacts. 2. The Council 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, including but not limited to the upcoming Gaithersburg East Master Plan and the Germantown Plan for Town Sector Zone. This step ensures that any new development allowed under these plans does not rely on the northern extension of Midcounty Highway, while retaining the right-of-way for this extension in these plans. 	
This is a correct copy of Council action.	
 Linda M. Lauer, Clerk of the Council	

TAME Reports document the case for **Transit Alternatives to the proposed M83 Highway**. The reports' authors include the TAME core founders, who come from lifelong careers as biologists, physicists, mathematicians, economists, graphic designers, environmentalists, and entrepreneurs. They applied their deep expertise to produce the reports. The reports highlight the role of transit in providing effective transportation to the Upcounty.

- **Best Transportation Improvements for Midcounty Corridor Area** - 21 pages

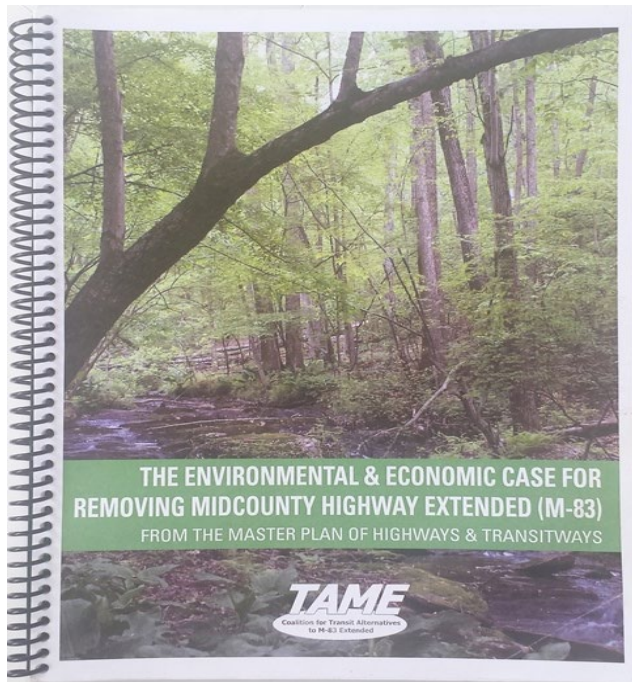
- Research found multiple existing road projects around the Midcounty Corridor area, that collectively provide significant traffic improvements, without needing M83 highway.
- EPA's concerns about the environmental injustices of the proposed M83 highway were confirmed by TAME's analysis.



- **The Environmental and Economic Case for Removing the Midcounty Highway Extended (M83) From the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways**

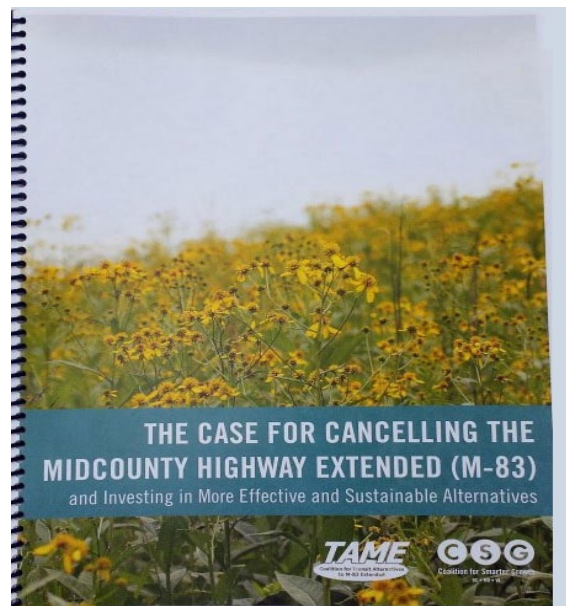
8 reports; 80 pages

- Testimony by Georgetown Law Institute for Public Representation on flawed assumptions used to promote M83 Highway.
- Montgomery Parks staff analysis that recommended against M83 Highway.
- Analyses of M83 Highway impacts on: wetlands, streams, and floodplains, and increased pollution of Great Seneca Creek.
- The Math of Highways, showing how small increases in transit use significantly reduce traffic congestion.



- **The Case for Cancelling the Midcounty Highway Extended (M83) and Investing in More Effective and Sustainable Alternatives** – 41 pages

- Coauthored by the Coalition for Smarter Growth and TAME Coalition.
- This report shows how transit-based alternatives meet MCDOT's goals for the Midcounty, including reducing congestion, improving safety, and enhancing connectivity.
- Maps show that transit-based alternatives will better serve all residents, including lower-income families, than the M83 highway.



**M83/Midcounty Highway Extended Canceled from Federal Funding List -
"Vision 2045" - of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board**

**2022 Update to VISUALIZE 2045 AIR QUALITY CONFORMITY NETWORK
INPUTS**

1/13/2022

PIT Project ID	Con ID	Project ID	Improvement	Facility	From	To	Facility		Lanes		Completion Date
							Fr	To	Fr	To	

Montgomery County												
Secondary												
236	3498	208	NRS	Construct	Burtonsville Access Road	MD 198 Spencerville Road	School Access Road in Burtonsville	0	4	0	2	2025
237	5944	597	NRS	Construct	Century Boulevard	Current terminus south of Oxbridge Tract	Intersection with future Dorsey Mill Road	0	3	0	4	2020 2013 Completed
238	CE1577	199	MC43	Construct	Dorsey Mill Road Bridge over I-270	Century Blvd.	Milestone Center Dr.	0	3	0	4	2020 2030
239	3049	112	MC7A	Widen	Goshen Road South	South of Girard Street	1000 feet north of Warfield Road	3	3	2	4	2025-2030
240				Widen	Little Seneca Parkway	MD355	Observation Drive	3	3	2	4	2035
241	CE1245	172	MC11A	Construct	M 83 MidCounty Highway Extended	MD 27 Ridge Road	Middlebrook Road	0	2	0	4-6	2025-2045

NOTE: Shaded areas represent changes from the 2020 Amendment to Visualize 2045.

Appendix C: Air Quality Conformity Analysis | 45

PIT Project ID	Con ID	Project ID	Improvement	Facility	From	To	Facility		Lanes		Completion Date	
							Fr	To	Fr	To		
242	CE1245	204	MC11D	Construct	M 83 MidCounty Highway Extended	Middlebrook Road	Montgomery Village Avenue	0	2	0	4-6	2025-2045
243		113	MC12F	Widen	MD 118 Germantown Road	MD 355	M 83 at Watkins Mill Road	2	2	3	4	2020

RESOLUTION ON INCLUSION OF PROJECT SUBMISSIONS IN THE AIR QUALITY CONFORMITY ANALYSIS FOR THE CONSTRAINED ELEMENT OF THE UPDATE TO VISUALIZE 2045 AND THE FY 2023-2026 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) - TPB R19-2021 June 15, 2021

M83/Midcounty Highway Extended is Among the National U.S. Highway Boondoggles

The screenshot shows the U.S. PIRG Education Fund website. The main navigation bar includes 'The Latest', 'Events', 'Resources', 'Media center', 'About', and 'Careers'. Below the navigation, there are social media icons and a search bar. The main content area features a report titled 'Highway Boondoggles' with a sub-header 'HIGHWAYS & INFRASTRUCTURE' and a date 'REPORT SEPTEMBER 7, 2022'. To the right, there is a map of Maryland with a callout box for 'Montgomery County M-83 Midcounty Highway Extended, Maryland' with a proposed cost of \$1.3 billion and a status of 'Study and review'. A legend on the map indicates project statuses: Cancelled (red X), On hold (orange circle), Study and review (yellow circle), Under construction (grey circle), and Completed (blue circle).

Project	State	Status	Report year	Project cost	Sort by cost
Montgomery County M-83 Midcounty Highway Extended	Maryland	Study and review	2022	\$1.3 billion	█
New Jersey Turnpike & Garden State Parkway widening projects	New Jersey	Study and review	2022	\$16 billion +	██████████
Brent Spence Bridge	Ohio and Kentucky	Study and review	2022	\$2.8 billion	█
Erie Bayfront Parkway	Pennsylvania	Study and review	2022	\$66 million to \$100 million	
I-35 reconstruction, Duluth	Minnesota	Under construction	2022	\$510 million +	█
Martinsville Southern Connector	Virginia	Study and review	2022	\$750 million	█
I-205 widening	Oregon	Under construction	2022	\$900 million +	█
"Connecting Miami" Widening	Florida	Under construction	2019	\$802 million	█

Since 2014, the U.S. Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) has documented 65 wasteful or unnecessary highway projects. Proposed M83 Highway is on the 2022 list.

<https://pirg.org/resources/montgomery-county-m-83-midcounty-highway-extended-maryland/>



“M83 Highway would be devastating, life-quality changing, a disaster. Let us look at a third way: Transit Alternatives.”

Quote from **Maurice Miles**, a life-long resident of Gaithersburg, Maryland, shown above sitting in the Whetstone Run floodplain forest---the actual alignment of the proposed M83 highway. Maurice is a former member of the Montgomery County Democratic Central Committee and former District 39 candidate for Maryland State Senate.

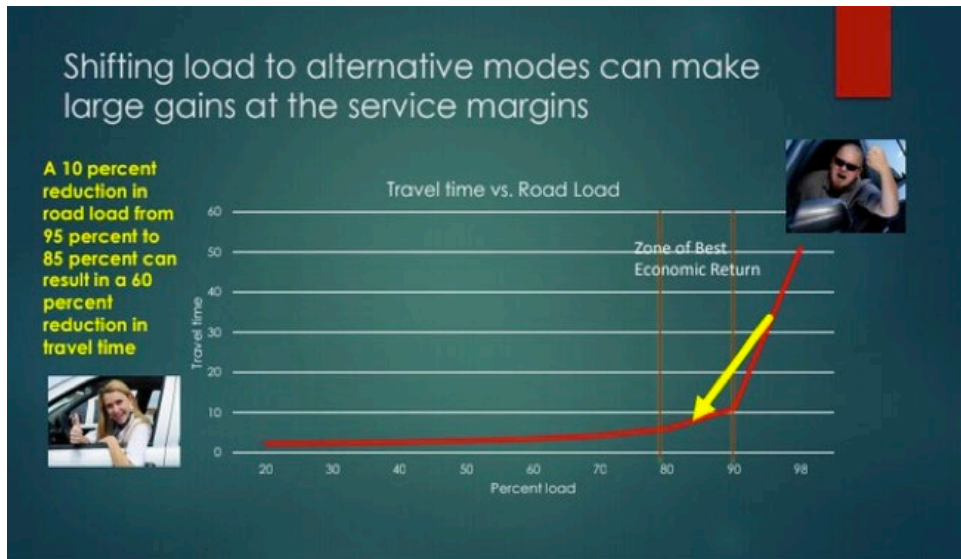
TAME



Transit Alternatives to Mid-County Highway Extended

Three Transit Alternatives Bring Congestion Relief

Good transit strategies only have to shift part of the road load to give great economic return, minimizing cost and maximizing benefits across the transportation infrastructure.



TAME Coalition’s goal is to offer more transit alternatives to every commuter and traveler within Montgomery County, without building new roads, to reduce road congestion and travel times for all.

1. Bus Rapid Transit on Rt 355 North into Clarksburg



MCDOT’s Midcounty Corridor Supplemental Study Report states that “During the past several decades, Montgomery County has been working to employ smart growth principles including reducing the reliance on automobiles for travel and providing transit alternatives throughout the County.” Bus Rapid Transit on Route 355 in the Upcounty is **found by MCDOT to be the highest-benefit transportation approach.**

2. Supporting the Ride-On Bus System



TAME Coalition is a signatory of the [Montgomery County Better Buses Campaign Platform](#) of Coalition for Smarter Growth.

3. Expanded MARC Train Service to the Upcounty

TAME Coalition supports improved MARC train service improvements, including all-day, two-way MARC Train Service.

MARC Service Area



Additional Facts

What is Mid-County Highway Extended/M83?

Mid-County Highway, known as **M83**, is an old and outdated road plan which needs to be removed from Montgomery County's Master Plan of Highways and Transitways.

Planners first drew a line on the master plan for this proposed highway in 1957, connecting Clarksburg to Gaithersburg, east of Route 355—six lanes and 120 feet wide.

Mid-County Highway Extended/M83 is the five-mile, unbuilt portion of the existing Mid-County Highway; *part of the unbuilt road is in your neighborhood or backyard.*

Why oppose Mid-County Highway Extended/M83?

1. M83 Highway ***fails to address the transportation needs*** of current and future residents and employers:

- Public transportation routes and ridership must be expanded. As Montgomery County grows and attracts a huge labor force, it will require more flexible, comprehensive services for getting to work and school.
- National companies relocating their headquarters to Montgomery County are settling near transit stations, moving away from car travel to public transportation modes, benefiting their employees.
- There has been a permanent rise in teleworking and flexible working hours following COVID pandemic, reducing the need for new roads.

2. M83 Highway ***promises to result in irreversible environmental destruction.***

- The Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compels Permitting Agencies to find the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative (LEDPA) as the choice for a given project and to avoid non-tidal wetlands. The law also says, federal actions must address environmental justice in minority and low-income populations."
- Six miles of forests, 14 wetlands, 6 streams and natural flood-plains, and 63 acres of Montgomery County's eastern Agricultural Reserve would be permanently eliminated.

3. M83 highway would cost **over \$1 billion to build.**

What are the Alternatives to Mid-County Highway Extended/M83?

1. *Cancel proposed M83 Highway Extended* and remove it from the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways. Funds saved by this action would then be available to finance the bus projects below; to scale-up pedestrian, and bicycle projects; and to address the transportation needs of the Upcounty communities of Clarksburg, Germantown, Gaithersburg, and Montgomery Village.
2. Expand Ride-On Bus Services
55 Bus & 59 Bus are the most heavily used routes.
3. Build-out Bus Rapid Transit on MD 355 to Clarksburg.
4. Make more affordable improvements to existing roads, and incentivize the public to choose transportation alternatives. More people are teleworking from home, carpooling, walking and bicycling to work.

How Do These Alternatives Help Me?

Transit Alternatives to Mid-County Highway Extended/M83 would help in these ways:

1. The well-established neighborhoods of Montgomery Village, East Gaithersburg and East Germantown stay intact; community space with forested tree canopy remains and cools wildlife and people.
2. Communities are protected from disruption to public schools and private property along the proposed route.
3. Forests, wetlands and floodplains are preserved to absorb larger storms and sequester carbon, serving to slow rising temperatures. Urban heat island effects would not interrupt neighborhoods and cause health risks.
4. Residents enjoy more transportation options for all purposes. County officials fully support residents who choose to not own cars, or cannot afford cars, enabling them to travel to work, school, shopping, and park destinations via upgraded and extensive transit networks, and safe walkable and bikeable streets.

tamecoalition.org

tamecoalition@gmail.com



