



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

ROGER BERLINER
COUNCILMEMBER
DISTRICT 1

July 13, 2009

Governor Martin O'Malley
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401-1925

Dear Governor O'Malley:

I am writing to ask you, Acting Secretary Swaim-Staley, and our legislative leadership to explore new legislation or regulations that would enhance coordination between state and local governments, harmonize land use and transportation objectives, and provide priority funding for "Sustainable Transportation Corridors."

Modeled after a similar policy in Oregon¹, the goal of this program would be to ensure that future investments in state highway segments that (1) are of extraordinary economic significance to the state; (2) are experiencing unacceptable levels of congestion; and (3) straddle urban smart growth areas, are considered in the context of our larger public policy objectives of reducing vehicle miles traveled and supporting livable communities.

Regrettably, our current approach to significant state roads that bisect our increasingly urban county too often focuses on isolated intersection improvements in one area totally divorced from the larger context. The result can be short term "improvements" that are actually counterproductive in the long run. As the County Council representative of the communities that surround the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, I have witnessed this possibility first hand. Indeed, it is this experience that led me to explore other models that might serve our state and community better.

To the credit of your people in the State Highway Administration, who recently testified before our Council, they are trying hard to come up with a plan that would provide immediate short term relief to a looming traffic nightmare. As you appreciate, under the Base Closure and Realignment Act (BRAC) the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda is expanding and will reopen in 2011 as the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. This expanded facility will treat twice as many patients, add 2500 new jobs, and increase traffic on a roadway that is already subject to unacceptable levels of congestion.

¹ 1999 Oregon Highway Plan, Policy 1B, Land Use & Transportation,
<http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TP/docs/orhwyplan/hwyplan/PolicyElement.pdf>, see pp. 49-51.

At the same time, just to the north of the expanded Medical Center, the Montgomery County Planning Department is currently drafting a new "White Flint Sector Plan," which calls for compact mixed-use redevelopment. The Plan envisions the transformation of a section of the Rockville Pike into a multi-modal urban "boulevard" with a landscaped median, street parking, wider sidewalks, bike lanes, a grid of streets to take pressure off Rockville Pike, and much needed mass transit improvements, including the possibility of bus rapid transit.

Yet, to date, we have not stepped back collectively and assessed the needs of the entire Rockville Pike/Wisconsin Avenue corridor, without question one of the most important transportation corridors in the entire state. It is increasingly clear that pavement alone is not going to get the job done and would be counterproductive to our long term energy and environmental objectives, which can be met only if we significantly reduce vehicle miles traveled, expand transit options, and encourage more biking and walking.

The aim of legislation creating Sustainable Transportation Corridors would be to establish that broader context, to bring the best of urban planning and progressive transportation policies together to support sustainable and vibrant communities, and to give priority to such areas of state-wide significance.

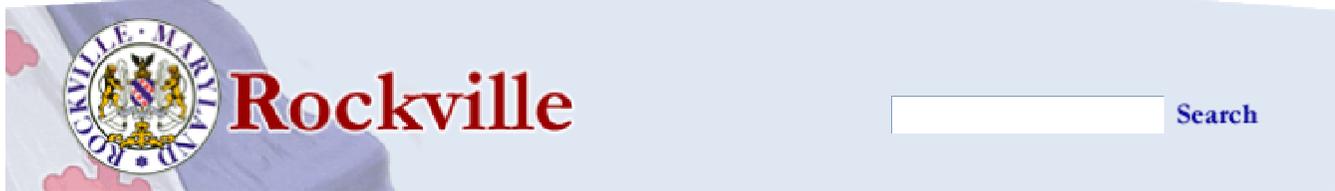
Governor, I know that you and our legislative leaders are firmly committed to sustainability. The legislation that you and our state legislature have championed puts Maryland at the environmental forefront. In my view, legislation creating Sustainable Transportation Corridors is consistent with and builds upon this commitment. I commend it to you and our legislative leaders for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Roger Berliner".

Roger Berliner

cc: Secretary Beverly K. Swaim-Staley
The Honorable Mike Miller
The Honorable Michael Busch
The Honorable Rich Madaleno
The Honorable Brian Frosh
The Honorable Bill Bronrott
The Honorable Susan Lee
The Honorable Ana Sol Gutierrez
The Honorable Al Carr
The Honorable Jeff Waldstreicher
The Honorable Bill Frick
The Honorable Brian Feldman



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News Release

CONTACT:

Marylou Berg, Communication Officer, 240-314-8105

Mayor and Council Request State Support for Rockville Pike Project

Sustainable Transportation Corridors Initiative Encouraged

Rockville, Md., July 28, 2009 - Rockville's Mayor and Council approved at their meeting Monday night a letter of support for a statewide Sustainable Transportation Corridors Initiative that would include a two-mile section of Rockville Pike within the City limits. The letter is addressed to Governor Martin O'Malley and encourages the state to facilitate inter-jurisdictional coordination on the redevelopment of Rockville Pike.

In 2007 the City began a process to envision how the Rockville Pike corridor could function better for those who work, shop and live there. Redesigning the section of Rockville Pike south of town center is an emerging core concept of the plan, in order to improve the environment for pedestrians, transit-users, drivers, and cyclists. The redesign will require cooperation between the State Highway Administration, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, Montgomery County and the City to implement.

The Sustainable Transportation Corridors program, proposed by Montgomery County Councilman Roger Berliner and detailed in a letter to Governor O'Malley dated July 13, would "explore new legislation or regulations that would enhance coordination between state and local governments, harmonize land use and transportation objectives, and provide priority funding for Sustainable Transportation Corridors." Were the State to initiate this program, designating Rockville Pike a Sustainable Transportation Corridor would prioritize the project for state funding, coordination and other support.

For more information about the Rockville Pike planning process visit www.rockvillemd.gov/rockvillespike or contact David Levy, chief of long range planning and redevelopment at 240-314-8272 or dlevy@rockvillemd.gov.

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Rockville City Government

Rockville City Hall 111 Maryland Avenue Rockville, MD 20850
240-314-5000

Please e-mail questions or comments to the [Web Administrator](#).

August 14, 2009

Governor Martin O'Malley
State of Maryland
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor O'Malley:

We are writing to you as representatives of business, smart growth advocates, neighborhood activists, and environmental organizations in support of a program that would designate certain critical and congested state road segments "Sustainable Transportation Corridors."

On July 13, 2009, Montgomery County Councilmember Roger Berliner wrote to you requesting exploration of "new legislation or regulations that would enhance coordination between state and local governments, harmonize land use and transportation objectives, and provide priority funding for Sustainable Transportation Corridors."

We have seen first-hand the need for a unified, comprehensive approach to planning, design and funding for state roads that bisect urban smart growth areas like Rockville and Bethesda. The Rockville Pike (MD 355), one of the most important economic corridors in our state, acts primarily as an urban boulevard as it passes through Bethesda, yet changes character as it approaches NIH, Navy Med, the White Flint area, and Rockville, becoming more akin to a typical highway connecting a series of strip malls with large surface parking lots. The City of Rockville and the Montgomery County Planning Department are both planning for future smart growth development by redesigning the Pike as a tree-lined boulevard with bus and bike lanes, sidewalks, medians, and shorter, more walkable blocks. This vision has broad support throughout our community.

However, SHA's plans for dealing with increased traffic due to the expansion of the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center have focused on intersection "improvements" that have a significant impact on neighborhoods—"improvements" that do not reduce congestion in the long term. As you are aware, the only way to achieve real and lasting congestion relief is to reduce dependency on single-occupancy vehicles by designing multi-modal streets that accommodate transit, bicyclists and pedestrians.

Rockville Pike should be a model of sustainable transportation planning. By designating it a "Sustainable Transportation Corridor," you will be promoting important environmental and economic goals by enabling a real and effective partnership between State and local governments that can be replicated all over Maryland.

We hope that you will support this idea as we do, and help local governments implement plans that will ultimately transform traffic-choked roads into the "main streets" of livable, prosperous, green communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



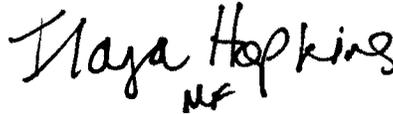
Ginanne Italiano, President
The Greater Bethesda-Chevy Chase
Chamber of Commerce



David Hauck, Chair
Sierra Club, Montgomery County



Barnaby Zall, Co-Chair
Friends of White Flint, Inc.



Ilaya Hopkins, Chair
Coalition of Military Medical Center
Neighbors



Cheryl Cort, Policy Director
Coalition for Smarter Growth

cc: Secretary Beverly K. Swaim-Staley
The Honorable Mike Miller
The Honorable Michael Busch
The Honorable Rich Madaleno
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The Honorable Bill Frick
The Honorable Brian Feldman



Maryland Department of Transportation
The Secretary's Office

Martin O'Malley
Governor

Anthony G. Brown
Lt. Governor

Beverley K. Swaim-Staley
Acting Secretary

August 19, 2009

The Honorable Roger Berliner
Councilman
Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue, 6th Floor
Rockville MD 20850

Dear Councilman Berliner:

Thank you for your letter to Governor Martin O'Malley regarding proposed new legislation or regulations to enhance coordination between state and local governments on land use and transportation policies and programs. The Governor was pleased to receive your letter and has asked me to respond to you on his behalf.

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) certainly shares the concerns and interests expressed in your letter. As you well know, Maryland is a growing state and the ensuing debate over if, how, and when to use our land has been intense and ongoing. Please know that MDOT welcomes a sincere and ongoing discussion of the issues that surround your letter. We appreciate your apparent willingness to move this discussion forward and will look forward to continued conversation on these issues with you and our partners in the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) and the Maryland Municipal League (MML).

I believe you may also know that as a key partner in Governor O'Malley's Smart, Green and Growing initiative, MDOT has been actively pursuing innovative approaches to promote sustainability and transportation choice. Our programs and planning initiatives to promote transit, rideshare, and hiking/biking trails, and to improve local communities through multi-modal streetscape and transit-oriented development projects, reflect a deep and long-standing commitment to the principles of Smart Growth, sustainability and environmental stewardship. As you mentioned, the State Highway Administration has also taken great steps forward to responsibly address congestion and access management. As a rule, we support project development practices that are multi-modal and context-sensitive.

Despite these accomplishments, we certainly recognize that we must increase our efforts to achieve the safe, sustainable and efficient transportation network that Maryland deserves. Today's economic, environmental and energy issues present us with new challenges that may require new models for assessing long-term strategic needs. In response to new mandates emerging from the Maryland Commission on Climate Change and the Maryland Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Act of 2009, MDOT has been actively investigating strategies and practices to promote sustainable transportation and reduce mobile source green house gas emissions. Our work with these initiatives, as well as with the Task Force for Future Growth and Development, includes exploring a "carbon pricing" program, review and expansion of existing Smart Growth initiatives, and an aggressive transit expansion and transit-oriented development strategy. We would welcome your active participation in the planning and policy work required to evaluate and implement these and other strategies to meet these recently legislated mandates.

My telephone number is 410-865-1000
Toll Free Number 1-888-713-1414 TTY Users Call Via MD Relay
7201 Corporate Center Drive, Hanover, Maryland 21076

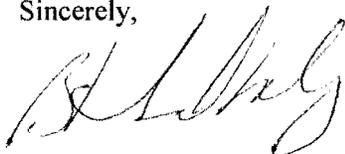
The Honorable Roger Berliner
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In this regard, we were particularly interested to learn of your interest in the corridor-level planning efforts underway in Oregon and its potential applicability to the Rockville Pike/Wisconsin Avenue corridor. The approach resonates on several levels with work we have been pursuing in connection with our response to the Climate Action Plan. In consultation with several partners, MDOT has begun to articulate a process for a unique corridor study that assesses land use and transportation strategies, tentatively called "green corridors." We envision an intensive corridor-level study that includes modeling to assess trade-offs associated with a range of coordinated land use and infrastructure investment strategies. Because of the strong local partnership such a study (and ultimately an implementation program) would require, your letter reaffirms our initial assessment that the Rockville Pike/Wisconsin Avenue corridor could be a strong candidate for review as part of this effort. Current budgetary constraints, however, are limiting our ability to move forward with such a program at this point. We are currently seeking support for this effort from our Congressional delegation. We will, however, be doing everything within our means to ensure that existing efforts are consistent and well-coordinated towards realizing the coherent long term vision for the corridor.

Finally, I would like to thank you for your favorable remarks regarding our efforts to address the transportation challenges associated with the Base Realignment and Closure Act (BRAC) activities in Bethesda. As you note, SHA has been working diligently to address anticipated impacts of the proposed expansions at the National Naval Medical Center. This effort has recently resulted in the creation of an interagency group including representatives from the Montgomery County Planning and Transportation Departments, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, the National Institutes of Health and the U.S. Navy along with other stakeholders, to coordinate improvements in the Bethesda area. For the Rockville Pike/Wisconsin Avenue corridor, our modal administrations have been coordinating closely with many of these same agencies, as well as the White Flint Partnership and City of Rockville, to address needs and potential options for the corridor.

We are hopeful that changes at the federal level that are foreseen as part of the transportation reauthorization process will help establish a clearer mandate and process by which to analyze and prioritize sustainable transportation outcomes. We encourage your participation in shaping this legislation, and look forward to your partnership and support in helping achieve Governor O'Malley's vision of a Smart, Green, and Growing State of Maryland. If you should have any question or comments please feel free to contact me or Mr. Don Halligan, Director of Planning and Capital Programming at 410-865-1275 or dhalligan@mdot.state.md.us.

Sincerely,



Beverley K. Swaim-Staley
Acting Secretary