

Montgomery County Council Testimony of Dan DiFonzo
February 9, 2022

Good Afternoon.

My name is Dan DiFonzo and I am a twenty year member of the Montgomery County Road Runners Club which proudly boasts more than three thousand members. As a marathon runner, I've logged thousands of miles in our parks taking advantage of our pristine roads and trails. I'm thankful and appreciative for them every single day.

I am also a soccer referee and member of both the Capital Area Soccer Referee's Association and Metropolitan Washington Soccer Referee's Association. As such, I have spent hundreds of hours refereeing soccer games on nearly every field in the county. And I've noticed the demand for these spaces continuing to grow with games on weekends being played from dawn to dusk.

I speak to you today in opposition to the proposed cuts to the Montgomery Parks Capital Improvements Program that were recommended last month. These cuts simply don't reflect the reality of the needs of our residents who rely on our parks for recreation, fitness and gathering opportunities now more than ever. With usage up and the demand for outdoor recreational facilities continuing to grow, this funding is critical. It just can't wait.

While we applaud the Council's efforts to make the Vision Zero campaign a signature program, there's more that can be done at a time when the parks are seeing higher and higher utilization each and every day. The Open Streets initiative has been wildly popular with runners, walkers and cyclists. It has become something akin to a street festival on weekends. We, as runners, notice and appreciate these efforts.

While this increased utilization is great and exactly what we want, it doesn't come without a price. Overcrowding, wear and tear and services to support this increase in daily use are necessary to provide safe and accessible parks for all to enjoy.

On behalf of the Montgomery County Road Runners Club, I urge you to consider fully funding the projects in the Capital Improvements Program budget.

Thank you for your consideration.