

Dear Members of the Montgomery County Council:

My name is Michael Larkin and I am a resident of Silver Spring near Acorn Park. Thank you for this opportunity to express my support for the prioritization of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and dedicated bus lanes in Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan. The plan's goals of reducing driving and better serving equity focus areas are within reach if BRT is fully implemented with dedicated bus lanes and pedestrian safety improvements in accordance with The Bus Rapid Transit Standard from the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP, www.itdp.org/library/standards-and-guides/the-bus-rapid-transit-standard). A reliable and true BRT system will serve the needs of community members that have no option other than public transit and choice riders. A BRT system will also help Montgomery County achieve the goals of the Climate Action Plan and Vision Zero.

Long wait times and buses sitting in traffic are a deterrent for choice riders. Unreliable service also adds to the daily challenges of anyone without a car. This past Saturday I went to Gaithersburg from Bethesda by using the Metro and the Ride On bus. My trip was in and around MD 355, a priority route for BRT in Corridor Forward. Since I caught the bus earlier than expected at the Shady Grove Metro stop, I decided to get off the bus before my destination and go for a walk. After approximately thirty minutes, I noticed the same people waiting for buses from when I first started walking. This is the transit experience that poorly serves equity focus areas and it keeps choice riders in their cars, adding to the traffic and pollution that fuels climate change. Moreover, bus riders endure unsafe pedestrian conditions to reach a bus stop. A driver honked at me while I was in the crosswalk when he wanted to turn right on red.

The BRT Standard makes clear that dedicated lanes are most useful where traffic is the heaviest because the lanes keep buses out of traffic and on time. This level of reliability is crucial for equity purposes and choice riders. People without a car should be able to avail themselves of the employment and educational opportunities our region offers. People with cars should not be left without a viable alternative on a daily basis. Greenhouse gas emissions from vehicle miles traveled in a private car can be reduced when people are given the option of using a high quality BRT system. The development of the BRT will also require new traffic signals, upgraded crosswalks, and curb extensions that will improve pedestrian safety throughout the transit experience.

The I-270 corridor contains employment centers, educational opportunities such as Montgomery College and the Universities at Shady Grove, and various other amenities. Montgomery County can and should make these common areas of life more accessible for all. We must serve residents equitably, do our part at the local level to combat the global climate crisis, and prioritize moving the most people safely. That is indeed a more humane Montgomery County. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael Larkin