

# **Robert Nelson's Testimony to the Montgomery County Council at the Public Hearing on Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan February 15, 2022**

I'm Robert Nelson, resident of Goshen. My career has been primarily focused on technology program management, so I seek to "follow the science" and incorporate the best utilization of current and future technologies.

## **Yes to Advanced Traffic Control Systems**

I agree with the Transit Plan's statement that "traffic congestion on our roadway network has—and continues to—intensify."<sup>1</sup> But there are no recommendations for advanced traffic management technology, advanced traffic control systems and intelligent transportation systems to increase traffic flow and avoid the necessity for dedicated bus lanes.

## **Yes to Small-Box Transit Services (e.g. Vanpools)**

Out of 18 different modes of transit identified in the National Transit Database, the most efficient is vanpools having much higher ridership and fare collection while using substantially less energy. "In 2019, vanpools filled 57 percent of their seats (compared with 37 percent for the industry as a whole), their fares covered 79 percent of operating costs (compared with 33 percent for the industry as a whole), and vanpools used only 1,400 BTUs per passenger mile (compared with almost 3,500 for the industry as a whole). Vanpools work because they are small vehicles with flexible rather than fixed routes, which works well in modern decentralized urban areas."<sup>2</sup>

## **No to MD 355 BRT in the Upcounty**

"Instead of attempting to serve modern urban areas with small-box transit services like vanpools, transit agencies in most major urban areas have reaffirmed the nineteenth-century business model by focusing on big-box transit services such as rail transit and bus-rapid transit."<sup>2</sup> "Most transit systems are still operating on a nineteenth-century business model and they expect their users to conform to their model rather than change their model to meet modern transportation needs."<sup>3</sup> The Transit Plan's recommendation for the immediate implementation of MD 355 BRT in the Upcounty should be rejected in favor of flexible, efficient and cost-effective transit solutions.

## **Yes to Commercial Ridesharing and Autonomous Vehicles**

There is no mention in the Transit Plan of the future impact of autonomous vehicles and commercial rideshare services that provide direct on-call connections between residential areas and commercial hubs. Autonomous vehicles will transform the ridesharing industry.

## No to Dedicated Transit Lanes in the Upcounty

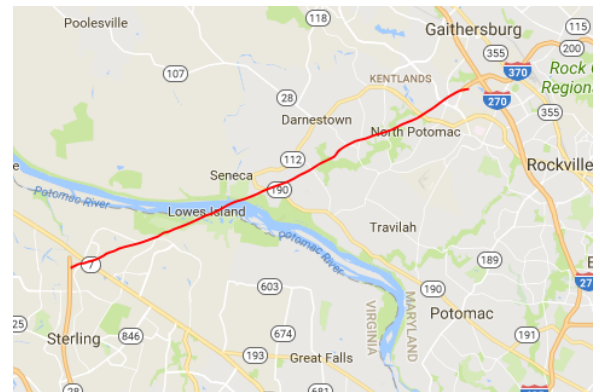
Upcounty residents “see red” when lanes are painted red as has already been done in Germantown. Please reject proposed dedicated bus lanes in the Upcounty that drastically reduce the capacity of current infrastructure already congested as a result of development going forward without the construction of master planned routes (e.g. the completion of the Mid-County Highway, see page 3).

## Yes to Equity

“The main inequity in our transportation system is that 92 percent of households have access to an automobile while 8 percent do not; the best way to reduce that inequity is to increase auto ownership, not subsidize transit regardless of its use.”<sup>2</sup>

## Yes to a New Potomac River Crossing

I know from personal experience having an office in Reston for six years, that the commute over the American Legion Bridge is horrendous. “The Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance recommends constructing a new Potomac River bridge in the 35-mile gap between the American Legion Bridge and the U.S. 15/Point of Rocks Bridge, resolving the region’s single greatest regional transportation deficiency.”<sup>4</sup> The bridge at Point of Rocks is only one lane each way and the ferry at Poolesville is defunct. Isn’t it equity for Montgomery County residents to have access to the great jobs offered in Virginia?



## Yes to Innovation for the I-270 Technology Corridor

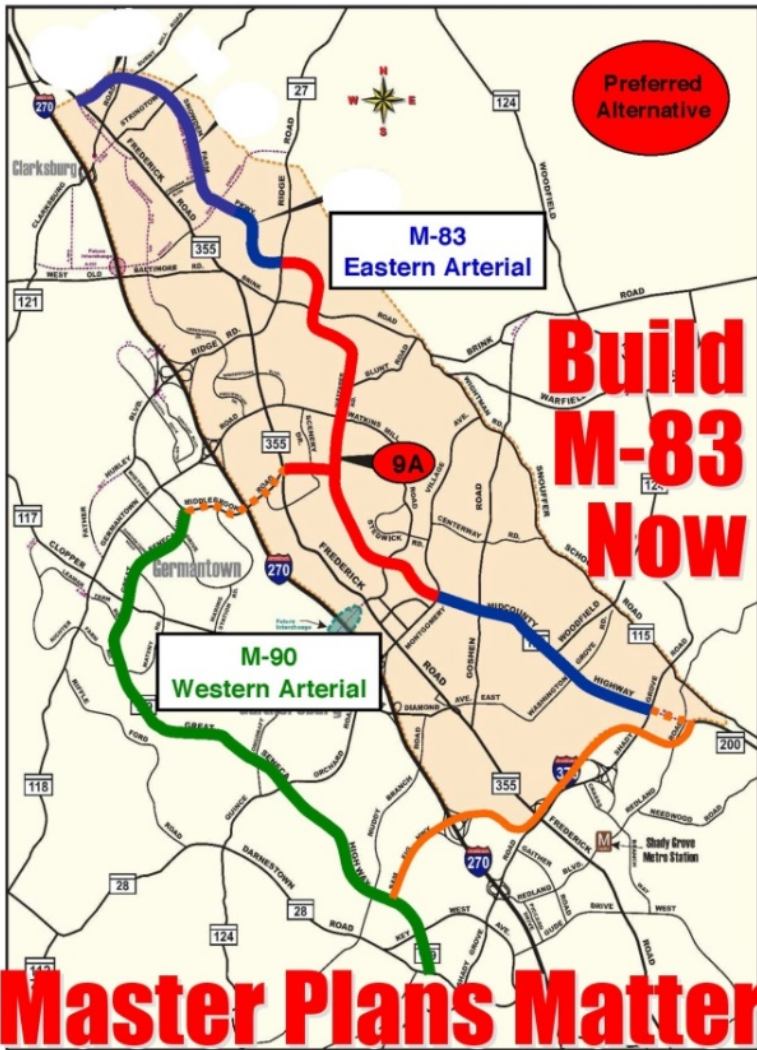
Montgomery County should be one of the most innovative counties in the nation and in the world. Ironically the Transit Plan refers to I-270, which many years ago was named the “I-270 Technology Corridor.” “The North I-270 Technology Corridor maintains its prominence as one of the top tech/biotech clusters in the United States.”<sup>5</sup> Rather than basing the *Corridor Forward: I-270 Transit Plan* on antiquated transit philosophy, let’s develop a plan that embraces new technology.<sup>6</sup>

***We’re Montgomery County; we can plan better!***

### References:

- 1 Corridor Forward: I-270 Transit Plan; Page 14
- 2 Reinventing Transit for a Post-COVID World; <http://ti.org/pdfs/APB109.pdf>
- 3 The Growing Cost of Obsolete Transit; <https://www.cato.org/blog/growing-cost-obsolete-transit>
- 4 New Potomac River Crossing; <https://nvta.org/priority/northwestern-potomac-river-crossing/>
- 5 <https://www.ggchamber.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/270N-Corridor-Tech-Report.pdf>
- 6 Why We’re Stuck in Traffic and What to Do About It; <https://www.cato.org/books/gridlock>

## Build M-83 now on the Master Plan Route!



*Recognizing that transportation is the #1 concern of Montgomery County residents, the Upcounty Citizens Advisory Board and Upcounty residents have been clamoring for the county to invest in north/south corridor transportation improvements. Four to six additional travel lanes could be made available if the Snowden Farm Parkway in Clarksburg were connected to the Mid-County Highway in Gaithersburg. A bus on the completed highway would have a travel time of less than half of the CCT. Current construction cost estimates for building the 5.6-mile gap are about \$350M.*

Completed Sections of Eastern Arterial – Snowden Farm Parkway and Midcounty Highway  
Preferred Alternative to complete Eastern Arterial – Alternative 9A, Master Plan Route  
Western Arterial – Great Seneca Highway  
Connections; East to West, and both highways to the ICC. Solid-completed, Dashed- planned

[BuildM83@gmail.com](mailto:BuildM83@gmail.com)