

February 14, 2022

The Honorable Tom Hucker, President and
Members of the Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Re: Lantian Development/Testimony on the *Corridor Forward – I-270 Transit Plan*

Dear President Hucker and Members of the County Council:

I am writing this letter as the CEO of Lantian Development to provide the County Council with comments on the Planning Board-approved draft of the *Corridor Forward – I-270 Transit Plan* (the “Planning Board Draft” or “Plan”) in anticipation of the February 15, 2022 Public Hearing. Lantian views the *Corridor Forward – I-270 Transit Plan* as a critical opportunity to improve the County’s transit network, advance mobility Up-County, and increase accessibility to existing and planned employment centers along the I-270 Corridor.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Lantian is a real estate investment and development company that focuses on advancing medium to large-scale development in Montgomery County. Lantian currently owns approximately 230 acres of land in Montgomery County, including most significantly, the Clarksburg Comsat Property along the I-270 Technology Corridor (the “Property”).

The Property is a centrally located site for the potential redevelopment of Life Sciences as well as a broad mix of uses that will promote significant economic development within the County. The Property is highly visible along I-270 and recently has generated much interest for desirable, economic redevelopment opportunities. A Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) stop is presently planned to be located on the Property at Comsat Drive. Irrespective of the transit mode (*i.e.* light rail or more likely, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)) it is critically important that the future alignment of CCT and/or proposed alignment of the Corridor Connectors continue to be located on the Property. The Planning Board Draft “re-envision[s] the master planned [Corridor City Transitway] as the Corridor Connectors, a network of more buildable dedicated bus lanes, which connect I-270 corridor communities to the county’s existing and planned rapid transit network.” (*See* page 6). The Corridor Connectors include six different components that collectively provide service to Germantown, Clarksburg, Great Seneca, Lakeforest, and Montgomery Village. The Property would be served by the “Milestone / Comsat East Clarksburg Connector,” which features a designated stop on the Property and provides service between Clarksburg and other master planned CCT communities and employment centers along the MD 355 BRT Line.

We support the Planning Board Draft’s objective to implement the purpose of the CCT by bringing transit options to Up-County in the near-term in a manner that overcomes certain barriers.

However, we want to ensure that the Plan does not unnecessarily impede future connectivity to the Property and surrounding I-270 Corridor-adjacent properties in Clarksburg.

As presently drafted, the Milestone / Comsat East Clarksburg Connector is listed as the Planning Board Draft's sixth priority "Near-Term Dedicated Bus Lane." Lantian is concerned about the prioritization of the connectors in the Plan. We certainly support the extension of the re-envisioned CCT (either in the form of light rail or BRT), with a stop, as envisioned, on the Property. But, given the County's desire to catalyze economic development along the I-270 Corridor and the potential for significant development of Life Science and related uses on the Property, we would strongly encourage the Council to consider advancing the Milestone / Comsat East Clarksburg Connector as a priority, or drop the negative connotation referenced in the plan as the "6th priority" or "lowest priority." That is not helpful.

At a minimum, we recommend the Council make certain that *Corridor Forward* explicitly provides the flexibility to adjust the order of implementation should a significant development opportunity for the County warrant such treatment. The Planning Board Draft does not feature this flexibility, as the Planning Board has instead opted to wait for anticipated master plan updates in the *Corridor Forward* Plan Area to address transit servicing near-term, future development. Specifically as it relates to the Property, the Planning Board draft of the anticipated Clarksburg Master Plan Amendment is currently slated for completion in May 2024 – two years after the Council's expected adoption of *Corridor Forward* in June 2022. The Council's review and ultimate adoption of the future Clarksburg Master Plan Update may extend past 2024 and into 2025, resulting in a three year period of unresponsive transit planning at the Property. Accordingly, we encourage the Council to incorporate flexibility for Corridor Connector implementation and prioritization in order to effectively accommodate and respond to significant development opportunities that may arise in the interim. It would be unfortunate if the Transit Plan had the unintended consequence of holding back important development opportunities – particularly at one of the few remaining large-scale opportunities in the County along the I-270 corridor.

We will be monitoring the County Council's Public Hearing and may have additional comments to offer the County Council or the PHED Committee. Thank you for your consideration of our interests in your review of the *Corridor Forward I-270 Transit Plan*.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bob Elliott", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Bob Elliott
Chief Executive Officer
Lantian Development, LLC

cc: Steven A. Robins, Esq