

**Robert Nelson’s Testimony to the Montgomery County Council
at the Public Hearing on the FY24 Capital Budget and supplemental
appropriations to the FY23 Capital Budget and amendments to the FY23-28 CIP
February 7, 2023**

I’m Robert Nelson, resident of Goshen and past chair of the Upcounty Citizens Advisory Board.

Yes to Funding the New Sixth District Police Station

Most people in Montgomery County think that the police have their own stations built for their specific purpose, but that is not true in District 6 where the police use leased facilities. “The current facility is in rented space and lacks several features of a modern police station, including reinforced interview rooms and a dedicated sally port” (P470301). The land on Watkins Mill Road has already been set aside for a permanent police station and I support the funding for the construction of this station.

Yes to Pedestrian Safety and Sidewalks

Goshen Road is a two-lane road serving our Goshen community and historic black communities such as Stewartown. But for most of the length of the road there are no shoulders and no sidewalks. I have seen people with suitcases rolling them along in the travel lanes as the vehicles speed by at 35 mph. The county had plans for expanding this road but these were scrapped several years ago (P501107). I made a request last year for the installation of sidewalks and was rejected. The reason? The length of the sidewalks needed exceeded the county’s sidewalk program requirements (see page 4, email from Lori Jean Main, Planning Specialist, Annual Sidewalk Program, MCDOT). Pedestrian safety is critical and having no sidewalks along busy Goshen Road is a very dangerous situation.

Yes to Replacing Bridges in Poor Condition

When you see potholes developing in a bridge deck, one knows that replacement is needed. That’s exactly the case of the deteriorating Brink Road Bridge over Seneca Creek. “The 2020 bridge inspection report for Bridge No. M-0064 indicates that the bridge steel beams are in poor condition **with areas of 100 percent section loss**. The costs of bridge construction ... for this project are eligible for up to 80 percent Federal Aid,” yet the Brink Road Bridge Replacement keeps being deferred until FY26 (P502104). If we lost this bridge in Goshen, the detour would add five miles to our trips.

Yes to Completing the Mid-County Highway

It’s a new day in Annapolis and Lieutenant Governor Aruna Miller knows well the need for the Mid-County Highway as she worked on this project at MCDOT. It’s not equity if Upcounty residents can’t get to Downcounty jobs because of traffic congestion. Snowden Farm Parkway is completed in Clarksburg and only 5.6 miles are left to complete the long-awaited Eastern Arterial. Now is the time to enlist the support of the State of Maryland along with county resources to fully fund this project. For example, Howard County contributed \$17M and the state paid \$151M for the just completed Route 32 dualization⁷ that has a similar-sized project scope as the Mid-County Highway gap.

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.”²

No to MD 355 BRT in the Upcounty

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). Here are some important considerations from transportation experts:

“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.”² “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.”³

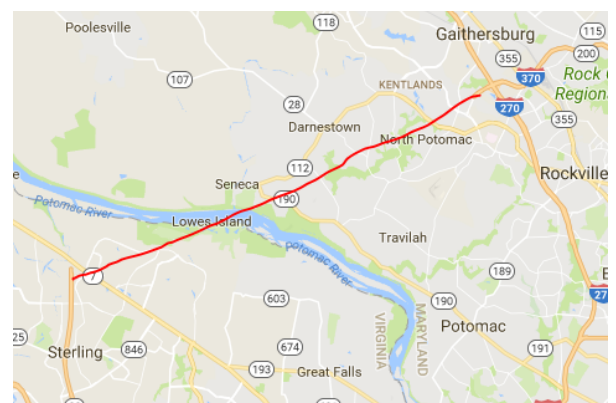
The proposed implementation of MD 355 BRT in the Upcounty should be rejected in favor of flexible, efficient and cost-effective transit solutions.

Yes to Transportation System 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.”²

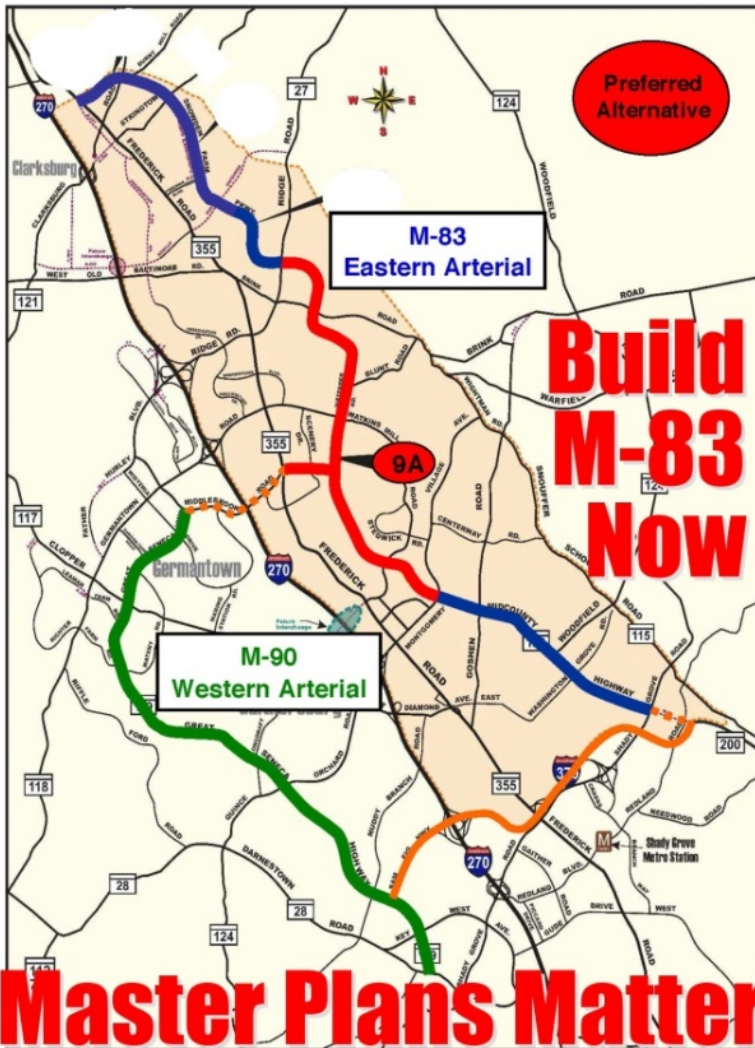
Yes to a New Potomac River Crossing

I know from personal experience having had 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.”⁴ The bridge at Point of Rocks is only one lane each way and the ferry at Poolesville has been out of service for over two years. Isn’t it equity for Montgomery County residents to have access to the great jobs offered in Virginia?



We’re Montgomery County; we can better serve all residents!

Build M-83 now on the Master Plan Route!



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

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.

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>
- 7 <https://www.marylandmatters.org/2022/08/04/hogan-ball-and-kittleman-mark-completion-of-md-32-widening-and-safety-project/>

Sidewalk Installation Request for Goshen Road

Main, Lori J. <Lori.Main@montgomerycountymd.gov>

Fri 4/29/2022 11:59 AM

To: BobNelson@outlook.com <BobNelson@outlook.com>

Cc: Gonzales, Robert <Robert.Gonzales@montgomerycountymd.gov>; Holley, Geary <Geary.Holley@montgomerycountymd.gov>; Berrios, Juan A. <Juan.Berrios@montgomerycountymd.gov>

Hello Mr. Nelson,

Thank you for contacting the Sidewalk Program. The Division of Transportation Engineering manages and administers the County's Sidewalk Program for MCDOT. Providing safer access for the disabled and improving pedestrian access to schools and nearby public transportation or public facilities is the major goal for the Sidewalk Program.

The Sidewalk Program was established to construct minor sidewalk projects to fill missing gaps in existing sidewalk networks. Due to the high volume of sidewalk requests received, the requests are prioritized based on constructability and budget. The requests that are found to have a very low constructability rating due to complications typically fall outside the scope of our program. Complications that result in a low constructability rating include locations that are too long to be completed under our program, those with inadequate right-of-way, landscape grading, drainage or utility issues, large amounts of trees that would need to be removed, and existing structures.

Our Construction Representative, Juan Berrios, has visited Goshen Road to perform a field evaluation to investigate the potential for sidewalk installation. Unfortunately, the limits of your request are too long to be completed under our Program. In addition, I note that some locations within the limits of your request already have sidewalk installed. This constructability challenge places sidewalk installation on Goshen Road outside the scope of the Sidewalk Program. Please submit a new sidewalk installation request for a much smaller section on Goshen Road, no longer than 2,500 linear feet.

Although we are precluded from proposing and constructing your requested sidewalk as part of the Sidewalk program, we will keep the request on our list of potential improvements to possibly include in future MCDOT projects.

Thank you for you shared interest in pedestrian safety.

Best,

Lori

Lori Jean Main

Planning Specialist

Annual Sidewalk Program

Montgomery County Department of Transportation

Division of Transportation Engineering