

Testimony on the County Executive's Recommended FY25-30 Capital Improvements Program

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Thank you, Council President Friedson, Council Vice President Stewart, and Councilmembers, for allowing me time to comment on the transportation portion of the County Executive's Recommended FY25-30 CIP.

While overall funding in the proposed CIP would increase by 2.3%, its investment in transportation projects would decrease by 4%. Furthermore, many projects that have been in the CIP have once again been proposed for delay, so while much of the funding remains, this lesser investment is pushed out into later years of the CIP. Here is a list of project delays, organized by Councilmember District:

DISTRICT 1:

- Bradley Boulevard Improvements, which are a new bikeway and a sidewalk, already delayed one year from its inception, would have a further 7-year delay, at least.
- Capital Crescent Trail tunnel would be delayed 7 years delay, at least.
- Goldsboro Road Bikeway and Sidewalk, already delayed 4 years, would have a further 5-year delay, at least.
- Seven Locks Bikeway and Safety Improvements, already delayed 8 years, would have a further 2-year delay, at least.
- Tuckerman Lane Sidewalk, most of which would be delayed 2 years, at least.

DISTRICT 2:

- Boyd's Transit Center would be delayed 2 years.
- Dorsey Mill Road Bridge, already delayed 5 years, would have a further 3-year delay, at least.
- MD 355-Clarksburg Shared Use Path would be delayed 2 years.
- Observation Drive Extended, already delayed 3 years, would have a further 4-year delay, at least.

DISTRICT 3:

- Life Science Loop Trail would be delayed 3 years.

DISTRICT 4:

- Forest Glen Passageway, already delayed 3 years, would have a further 2-year delay.
- The Metropolitan Branch Trail, already delayed 8 years, would have a further 2-year delay.
- North Bethesda Metro Station North Entrance, already delayed 2 years, would have a further one-year delay.
- Summit Avenue Extension would have a 4-year delay, at least.
- White Flint District East: Transportation and White Flint District West: Transportation, already delayed 12 years, would have a further 2-year delay, at least.

DISTRICT 5:

- Burtonsville Park and Ride Improvements would have a 3-year delay.
- Cherry Hill Road Bikeway would have a one-year delay.

- Good Hope Road Shared Use Path would have a one-year delay.
- Norwood Road Shared Use Path would have a 2-year delay.

DISTRICT 6:

- Fenton Street Cycletrack would have a one-year delay.

DISTRICT 7:

No delays identified. Of course, there are very few projects in this district to begin with.

The CIP is the Council's document. You are the ultimate decision makers, and the CIP is your promise to the community that all the projects contained with it will be built as close as possible to the schedules that are shown. Of course, on some projects there are production delays: DOT for whatever reason is unable to stick to the approved funding schedule. A few of the projects listed above are likely production delays; I urge the T&E Committee to explore with DOT ways to expedite their completion.

Most of these delays, though, are for projects that have hardly started or not started at all, and the Executive has decided they are of a low enough priority that they can be delayed for multiple years. This is not new: it has happened again and again with the last two County Executives. Note this happens very rarely with MCPS, Montgomery College, M-NCPPC, and even other County Government projects – only transportation projects are routinely singled out for this treatment. While all these projects are master-planned and are advocated by their respective communities, it should come as no surprise to you that most of them were initiated by past Councils, not the Executive.

Remember, this is YOUR CIP. Therefore, I urge you to honor the commitments of past Councils by putting all these projects except one back on their Approved CIP schedules and then determine which projects can be kept at or close to those schedules during CIP Reconciliation in May. The one exception is the Capital Crescent Trail tunnel. At a price now exceeding \$82 million, and without Federal or State aid in sight, it is simply unaffordable now. There is a good alternative in the master-planned at-grade bike trail, which is already completed along Bethesda Avenue and Willow Street; the balance of it will be completed prior to the reopening of the Capital Crescent Trail. ***I recommend retaining the PDF in the CIP as the Executive has shown it: as a placeholder should future Federal or State aid becomes available.*** In the meantime, let us see how the at-grade trail satisfies the need once the full trail is open in 2027.

Finally, a few words about funding for the level-of-effort transportation projects. The Executive has proposed a mild funding increase in some of these projects to address inflation. Nevertheless, as will be pointed out in the Infrastructure Maintenance Task Force Report that will be published shortly, these funding levels are still far below where they should be to keep our current assets in tolerable shape. This applies not just to resurfacing projects, but to the Roof Replacement, PLAR, and HVAC projects in all the County agencies. ***This type of investment should be the highest funding priority in the CIP, so any amount you can add to enhance the Executive's recommendation would be worthwhile.*** In case you need an additional reason to do this, recognize that these projects have a positive impact on far more constituents than any other type of CIP project.

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A technical comment:

A striking fact is that the proposed funding in the Recommended CIP for Pedestrian Facilities and Bikeways is nearly 12 times the proposed funding for Roads: \$274.1 million versus \$23.4 million. The proposed investment in sidewalks and bikeways is even greater than that though. A table on Page 19-2 lists 14 Road and Bridge projects that include sidewalks and/or bikeways are part of their scope. However, the list does not include four other projects that include sidewalks and/or bikeways:

Brighton Dam Road Bridge

North High Street Extended

Summit Avenue Extended

White Flint District East: Transportation

These four projects should be added to the table on Page 19-2.