



Commission on People with Disabilities

Tonya Gilchrist, Chair

Montgomery County Council Public Hearing – February 9, 2026

Written Testimony: FY27 Capital Budget and FY27-32 Capital Improvements Program (CIP)

The Commission on People with Disabilities was specifically noted in the FY27 Capital Budget and FY27-32 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) Highlights Report as being consulted on (with various other departments) the following projects in the document -- ADA Compliance: Transportation (page 5); Cherry Hill Road Bike Facility (page 36); Facility Planning - Pedestrian Facilities and Bikeways (page 42); Norwood Road Shared Use Path (page 68); Sidewalk Program Minor Projects (page 81); and US 29 Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements (page 92). Many of the recommendations made by the Commission have not been included in this summary nor have they been implemented. The safety of people with disabilities has been the impetus for our two most important recommendations: to eliminate designated bike lanes and all “floating bus stops” (also called Floating Bus Islands) from bus routes throughout the County.

Designated Bicycle Lanes: The Commission recommends that the County eliminate existing bike lanes and cease the installation of bicycle lanes as they create safety hazards for much of the population and especially for low vision/blind, hearing impaired and mobility limited individuals. According to Velo Outside Online, several cities in the U.S. are actively making efforts to remove designated bike lanes, often citing congestion, political pressure, or backlash from drivers and include cities like Houston, San Mateo, New Orleans and New York. In Washington D.C federal agencies have been analyzing impacts with an eye toward removing key bike lanes in the capital. On Connecticut Ave. local campaigns and political pressure have pushed for canceling or removing protected lanes on major corridors, citing traffic, business impact and emergency response concerns. The Commission recommends that the funds for bike lanes be used to repair and install much needed sidewalks, instead of bicycle lanes. Sidewalks would greatly benefit people of all ages and at all stages of life whereas only the bike lobby benefits from bike lanes. In particular, the State has installed very poorly designed bicycle lanes on Old Georgetown Road, among other roads, and we recommend they be taken out. The primary petition to remove these bike lanes is titled “Remove the Catastrophically Dangerous Bike Lanes on Old Georgetown Road in Bethesda, MD.” Launched by Change.org in December 2022, it has received thousands of signatures citing increased congestion and safety concerns. Eliminating them could also make street parking more available. The bike lanes have reduced driving capacity by 39% and the concerns primarily center on traffic congestion, emergency vehicle access and low cyclist volume. However, the safety concerns of people with disabilities should be of great concern in the design and use of our sidewalks and streets.

The County could and should do more to prioritize safety for people with disabilities as the Americans with Disabilities (ADA), which is a federal civil rights law, prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in everyday activities. The ADA mandates accessibility in employment, public services, and transportation for people with disabilities. People with disabilities are covered as a protected class, whereas cyclists are not a protected group. With the plague of bikeways clogging up County roads, we are sending the wrong message to our community because people with disabilities and many drivers don't feel safe navigating the sidewalks and streets because of designated bike lanes. The Commission has been voicing our concerns over the hazards designated bike lanes pose for people with disabilities for years now, but for reasons beyond our comprehension, the County refuses to heed our concerns or take any tangible steps to minimize the impact designated bikeways have on our vulnerable residents and prohibits us from navigating the community in a safe manner comparable to our non-disabled peers. This could be considered a violation of the ADA.

Floating Bus Stops: Floating island bus stops vary considerably in configuration from one location to another in the county, state and nation and are now needed because the designated bicycle lanes block access to bus stops on the sidewalk. The disabled and especially the blind or physically disabled who have used Metrobuses and Ride-On buses for many years consider these relatively new floating islands bus stops to be so dangerous that they have stopped riding buses altogether. If you ask people with disabilities who have attempted to use the floating bus stops, you will find that, universally, their experience has been that most cyclists do not yield to pedestrians or to stop lights for that matter. It is nearly impossible to hear a bicycle coming and bicyclists seldom willingly stop for pedestrians when on a designated bike lane. Lights have been installed in some locations, to alert bicyclists of an upcoming pedestrian crossing, but the lights may be very hard to see during daylight hours, and, even when there are lights installed to alert bicyclists of a pedestrian crossing area ahead, not all bicyclists will stop to yield to crossing pedestrians. Compounding this problem, where bidirectional bike lanes have been constructed next to one another, pedestrians must cross twice the distance (8 feet) to access a floating bus stop. Even a visually impaired person familiar with other island configurations likely will not realize the potential danger of approaching bicycles from both directions and the widened distance from curb to bus island. Floating bus stops are difficult to locate and inaccessible for people who are blind or have low vision, and they cannot safely use the transit systems.

We unequivocally recommend and request that the County eliminate designated bike lanes and floating bus stops because of the risks they pose to pedestrians and drivers and reinstitute the practice of requiring buses to stop at the sidewalk curb to pick up or discharge riders.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this critical safety issue for pedestrians and drivers with and without disabilities