

Dear County Councilmembers,

This April, I will have lived in Wheaton for all 20 years of my life. I grew up around the corner from Wheaton Regional Park, and some of my earliest memories took place there. In June 2022, The Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission approved a new master plan for the park, which would significantly improve the amenities the park offers. Planning the specifics of each improvement began later that year, and the construction work was scheduled to take place later this year, FY26, and next year, FY27.

The proposed CIP would reduce the funding to M-NCPPC, right when they need the funding the most. Along with delaying the Wheaton Regional Park improvements, it would delay, or even force reductions in scope, for many other maintenance and improvement projects countywide. The CIP proposes a \$33.2 million decrease, even though the county only expects to lose \$20.6 million in state funding. In addition, this decrease comes as the fiscal burden on M-NCPPC grows, with loss of funding for park road maintenance from the Federal Department of Transportation.

Decreasing the funding to our parks, when their financial burden is already growing, is a recipe for deferred maintenance, and higher costs in the future. The parks are one of the crown jewels of our county and allowing them to fall to age and reduced maintenance would be a mistake and a tragedy. To prevent this, any budget that is passed should include full funding for M-NCPPC or at least bring the funding level in line with the assumed affordability adjustments that can be made.

Sincerely,

Moshe Lederman