

To: Montgomery County Department of Transportation:

We are writing to express concern regarding Holton Arm's application for modification to existing special exception CBA-1174-E ("Holton Expansion Proposal").

1) As residents of Al Marah, a community right across the street from Holton Arms that would be significantly affected by the Holton Expansion Proposal, we did not receive any notice or information about the application directly from Holton Arms (despite requesting to be on their distribution list for such notifications).

2) When we did learn about the Holton Expansion Proposal from a neighbor, we were concerned to learn that Holton Arms is proposing a 30% increase in their enrollment (some 200 additional students) during the academic year and an even larger increase in enrollment (approximately 300 additional campers) during their summer programs. These large increases in the number of people attending Holton Arms presumably would result in nearly equal increases in the number of vehicles, thus causing more traffic congestion and making it even more difficult for us to get out of or into our neighborhood during peak traffic periods. Already there are significant traffic backups on River Road during the morning and late afternoon hours as Holton Arms students are dropped off or picked up from school, and the amount of increased traffic from the Holton Expansion Proposal would exacerbate those problems in several ways. We should note:

a) Holton Arm's peak traffic periods coincide with peak traffic periods for the Primary Day School (located in our community directly across the street from Holton Arms) and with times that many of our residents need to commute to and from work. There is also traffic associated with nearby St. Bartholomew's School at the Nevis Road intersection on River Road approximately 1000 feet from Holton Arms entrance that will be affected.

b) The only way to enter or leave our community is to use the stretch of River Road directly affected by Holton Arms traffic. When coupled with Primary Day traffic, there are already significant delays for Al Marah residents.

c) Our neighborhood already has a significant problem with Holton Arms traffic (as well as commercial vehicles) entering our neighborhood via Burdette Road and exiting via Royal Dominion Road to cross over River Road to Holton Arms as they try to avoid the long wait times to turn left into Holton Arms when driving eastbound on River Road. It is not uncommon for our community residents to miss several green lights before we can exit our community. Given that the Holton Expansion Proposal would undoubtedly cause longer wait lines of traffic from River into Holton, this problem would be expected to be exacerbated.

d) There already are significant traffic backups on River Road during the morning and late afternoon hours as Holton Arms students are dropped off or picked up from school. The traffic is particularly bad during the late afternoon hours when many Federal Government workers are commuting home at approximately the same time that Holton Arms students are being picked up from school.

e) The Holton Expansion Proposal would cause longer backups on eastbound lanes on River Road waiting to turn left into Holton that would present greater traffic hazards as vehicles stack up, assuredly overflowing the dedicated left turn lane. We expect that the effect would be the same as effectively closing off one of the two regular lanes.

f) Public transportation, especially eastbound on River Road, would be adversely affected from such left turn lane overflows. There are bus stops immediately outside the Holton entrance, on both the same side and opposite side of the road, and accompanying pedestrian traffic. It is our understanding that the County seeks to increase the usage and efficiency of such transportation rather than create hurdles to its usage.

g) Traffic from the Holton Expansion Proposal making right hand turns upon exiting Holton would be adversely affected by the short distance between the River Road lights at Holton's entrance and Burdette Road, by way of stacking vehicles in this stretch possibly blocking traffic seeking to exit Holton and blocking traffic all along River Road heading westbound. It may result in prolonging traffic light sequences at Burdette Road, thus preventing vehicles from turning onto River from Burdette and interfering with Burdette commuter traffic in both directions (that is, traffic exiting from the Al Marah neighborhood and from the Burning Tree neighborhood), and potentially interfering with Fox Hill traffic and commercial traffic for American Plant Food. It also may further affect backup traffic exiting the Beltway at what is already a very busy intersection.

3) In our view the traffic study submitted by Holton's consultants in support of the Proposal has several deficiencies, and we believe that if the County is considering the Holton Expansion Proposal, the County should do it's own traffic study (one not influenced by Holton Arms) over the course of a full year. Specifically, we note:

a) The vehicle volume counts in the traffic study commissioned by Holton Arms are based solely on two days' observation during the entire school year. We submit that such a limited data input is inherently prone to error. Moreover, we note the steady increase in housing capacity (*e.g.*, Quarry Springs) just west of the Beltway is likely to increase the River Road traffic burden. Perhaps most importantly, we should note that the information included in the traffic study commissioned by Holton Arms is not consistent with our day to day experience regarding vehicle counts, backups on River Road, and average vehicle speed on River Road.

b) The traffic study commissioned by Holton Arm does not consider the effect of Holton traffic transiting through the Al Marah neighborhood (entering on Burdette and exiting on Royal Dominion). This traffic not only makes it more difficult for Al Marah residents to get into and out of our community, but it causes safety issues since Holton drivers often speed through our community. If this Holton traffic

through our neighborhood were prevented (something that we significantly doubt could be enforced) that would mean the Holton traffic study understates congestion on eastbound River Road.

c) The Holton traffic study's only proposed solution for increased westbound River Road is "adjustments to signal timings." While the exact timing changes are not stated, we expect this means affecting both the Burdette and Royal Dominion intersection lights, and in any event this can only mean imposing additional delays on Al Marah neighborhood traffic for the sole benefit of Holton.

4) We are concerned that the above traffic considerations associated with the Holton Expansion Proposal would not only make our lives more difficult on a daily basis, but that they would potentially cause problems with emergency vehicles reaching our community when necessary, and would decrease the value of our properties, since few people would want to be subject to such bad traffic at critical times of day.

As stated above, the entire Al Marah community has only two access points – the intersection of River Road with Burdette and the intersection of River Road with Royal Dominion (both directly affected by Holton Arms traffic). If the Holton Expansion Proposal were to be approved, this would result in a permanent reduction of access to Al Marah and a reduction of community safety that could not reasonably be reversed should the impact create significant problems (which we believe would be likely). We request that the County proceed cautiously in assessing the Holton Expansion Proposal, and believe that you should recommend AGAINST the Holton Expansion Proposal.

Thank you for your consideration in recommending AGAINST the Holton Arms application for modification to existing special exception CBA-1174-E ("Holton Expansion Proposal").