

December 15,2020

To: Montgomery County Department of Transportation

Re: Notice of Public Hearing/abandonment of Portions of Westbard Avenue and Ridgefield Road in Bethesda. AB773

My name is Patricia Johnson. I live at 5301 Oakland Road in the Kenwood neighborhood.

Thank you to the Department of Transportation for allowing my testimony today.

My thanks to Chairman Anderson, Planning Commissioners and Staff for specifically addressing the safety issue of serious cut thru traffic in the Kenwood neighborhood in the Westbard Sector Plan adopted in 2016.

Under the heading **Neighborhood Protection (page 119)** the Sector Plan states: “ The Department of Transportation and the State Highway Administration should work with the Kenwood Community to develop a design and operations plan for the River Road/ Brookside Drive intersection that better protects Kenwood from cut thru traffic.”

The Kenwood Community appreciates the Planning Board’s acknowledgement of a solution to this problem and is looking forward to working with SHA and DOT when they begin to redesign the intersection of River Road and Ridgefield Road.

We request that the current restrictive signs, at the specified high volume hours, concerning entry to Kenwood be retained. These restrictive signs are at Ridgefield Road at the approach to River Road. They have been in place for many years and conform to similar restrictions in the surrounding communities. We want all the signs to stay in place including the electronic arrow sign that is timed with the lights at Ridgefield and River Roads.

The restrictive signs have helped keep pedestrians and bicyclists safe because there are no sidewalks. We want the current signs and signal to be included in the realignment plans for Westbard Avenue. We also want the current signs to remain up and operable during the construction of that realignment.

The Westbard Sector Plan specifically mentions neighborhood protection for the Kenwood community. We are in a vulnerable sieve-like position for cut thru traffic which is always looking for a quicker way to get to Bethesda and points north. New density that will be developed at the Westwood II Shopping Center and Kensington of Bethesda will increase

cut thru traffic from that Center as well as other traffic seeking to get around it. It has been noted that with the closing of Little Falls Parkway to vehicles this past spring and summer, Kenwood has experienced a surge of commuter traffic and trucks that speed through residential streets even in this time of pandemic. Again we appreciate the opportunity to work with SHA and DOT to come up with solutions that will protect the safety of Kenwood at this high volume intersection.

When construction of the alignment is underway, we request that commercial and workmen's vehicles be given an area on site to park and parking of such vehicles not be allowed on neighborhood streets in the vicinity or across River Road.

Another point about safety is the need for a light at the realigned Westbard Avenue where it curves at the end of both the new (to be developed) townhomes on the old Manor Care site, on the right, and the new Kensington Bethesda building on the left. A light is there now and is used so people can cross safely. It is critical to retain that light for safety crossing purposes for pedestrians that are trying to get to and from the new Westwood residential and commercial center.

Another critical point is to consider the commercial traffic which will be increased incrementally with the new commercial and residential density planned. Trucks will line up on River Road and the newly realigned Westbard Ave to turn at the light. Because of the closure at the entry of River and the Springfield Community at the old Westbard extension there will be increased back up. Is there a solution to prevent backup there? Are the turning lanes from both directions on River Road long enough to handle the back up volume? Also how will trucks turn into the new senior living building off Westbard. Will a left hand turn into the delivery area off Westbard be allowed? How will trucks get in and out without causing more backups? There is a time restriction at that site now. These are logistics that need to be thought out carefully.

One more point, no taxpayer's monies should be used for this realignment of the road. This is a great amenity for the developer, Regency Centers. It is a gateway to their new communities of commercial and residential buildings. Thank you. Patricia Johnson,  
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