



SILVER SPRING CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD

October 30, 2019

Marc Elrich, County Executive
Montgomery County

[delivered via e-mail]

Advice from the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board re:

MD97 (Montgomery Hills Improvements): Priority #1 and Cost Sharing

Dear County Executive Elrich:

The Silver Spring Citizen's Advisory Board has heard from key agency officials, concerned residents and local business on the status of myriad transportation projects within our jurisdiction. In consideration of these presentations we urge you to consider the following advice:

- **Prioritize the MD 97 Montgomery Hills Improvements as the County's #1 priority in the Montgomery County Transportation Priorities letter being prepared for submission to the State for the November 4th MDOT Roadshow.**
- **Publicly confirm to MDOT the County's commitment to cost-share for construction costs for the MD 97 improvements before the November 4th Roadshow to remove any lingering barriers on the part of the State for construction funding for FY 2021.**

BACKGROUND

On Monday, September 9th the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) presented to the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board (SSCAB) the County's transportation priorities within the Silver Spring Regional District. The presentation was thorough and informative, and we appreciate that MC DOT brought their entire leadership team to answer questions and discuss the details of important transportation projects within our area.

In addition, we recently received the Montgomery Planning's Transportation Project Priorities for the FY2021-FY2026 CIP which provides funding recommendations.

Key among the list of transportation projects, from both MCDOT and Montgomery Planning, is the long-planned and highly supported SHA improvements to MD 97 Georgia Ave from 16th Street to the Beltway. Aside from the Purple Line construction, which is well underway and fully funded, there is simply not another transportation project more important to the Silver Spring Regional District.

Consequently, in consideration of the MCDOT presentation and our understanding of priorities from agency recommendations, local business and citizen input, we urge you to support the MD 97 project as the County's #1 road improvement project at the November 4th Maryland Department of Transportation Roadshow, and announce the County's commitment to cost-share part of the road construction funding.

MD97 (Montgomery Hills Improvements): Priority #1 and Cost Sharing

Georgia Avenue in Montgomery Hills remains dangerous for all users. Within this three-quarters of a mile corridor, twenty-five people were injured in the first 8 months of 2019 (according to?). Drivers are at risk as crashes continue at a higher than average crash rate for all types of accidents. Pedestrians are in danger from the narrow sidewalks that are in disrepair, not ADA-compliant, and have utility poles blocking their use. The current road configuration does not move traffic effectively as the reversible center-lane and outdated I-495 interchanges creates standstill congestion during rush hour. The road design negatively impacts residents, local businesses, and the greater Silver Spring the community. In fact, the resulting problem of cut-through traffic in the residential neighborhoods as a result of the poor road design issues with Georgia Avenue is pushes the problem onto MCDOT costing them time and money to try to resolve traffic problems that might be alleviated if the State would just fix Georgia Avenue.

We remain concerned that the impaired condition of this corridor, which serves as the gateway to downtown Silver Spring, also negatively impacts the Silver Spring CBD. In addition, the corridor connects the surrounding residents to two Purple Line Stations, Woodside and Lyttonsville. Funding for the MD 97 road improvements can leverage millions of dollars of County and State Purple Line investments amplifying the benefits the County will accrue from these projects, but only if the Georgia Avenue improvements are funded to correspond with the opening of these Purple Line Stations.

COUNTY FUNDING COST-SHARING

Funding remains the sole barrier to implementation of Georgia Avenue road improvements. Maryland State Highway Administration Administrator Greg Slater promised the project would proceed faster if there is County funding to help pay for the road improvements. We appreciate your past commitment to see this project funded, and hope that you will continue to work to bring down the remaining barriers to implementation.

It is hard to imagine a more cost-effective project than this one. Over 80,000 vehicles a day, and far more vehicle occupants, would benefit from an improved road design. Equally as important, the road will be redesigned to be safer for pedestrians and bikes, and more conducive for local businesses to thrive. The investment in road redesign will pay dividends back to the County if more small businesses can locate in Montgomery Hills and prosper.

Thank you for consideration of our recommendations.

Sincerely, on behalf of the SSCAB,

Matt Losak*
Chair

Michelle Desidero*
Vice-Chair

Mark Mendez*
Secretary

Lysette House*
Parliamentarian

(*Signatures on file)

CC:

Montgomery County Council Members
Reemberto Rodriguez, Silver Spring Regional Area Director
Members of the SSCAB