

# Council Opposes Closing MARC Stations

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The Montgomery County Council approved a resolution yesterday opposing the elimination of two MARC train stations in the towns of Boyds and Dickerson.

In a unanimous vote, council members said closing the stations could increase traffic in Montgomery's northern tier at a time when the population is increasing. If the two stations are closed, riders would have to board the train at the nearby Barnesville and Germantown stops.

"I have to say, I find it breathtaking that anyone could suggest

options for transit use in Montgomery County should be decreased," said council member Nancy Floreen (D-At Large), who co-sponsored the resolution along with council member Michael Knapp (D-Upcounty).

The Maryland Transit Administration has also proposed closing a station in Howard County and one in Baltimore County because of low ridership. Combined, the Boyds and Dickerson stations on the Brunswick line in Montgomery, the Jessup stop on the Camden Line in Howard and St. Denis on the Camden Line in Baltimore had an average total daily ridership of 31 in November, said Holly Ellison,

a spokeswoman for the MTA.

The MTA spends \$31,600 a year to run all four stations and an additional \$1.4 million annually on equipment and maintenance, Ellison said. "We're trying to make the best use of taxpayers' dollars," she said.

Knapp and Floreen attributed the low ridership to poor advertising of the stations as well as infrequent stops by trains. "We need more options, not fewer," Floreen said. "We need them to increase trains and hours to get people out of their cars."

Knapp and Floreen also said they were disappointed that the MTA did not first consult with the

council. "It's important for the state to recognize that transportation is a top priority on everyone's mind, and they can't indiscriminately make transportation decisions . . . without consulting everyone in the process," Knapp said.

Ellison pointed out that the MTA will hold public hearings on the proposal, tonight in Dorsey and tomorrow in Barnesville. "That's the opportunity for the County Council, the community, the riders, everyone to come out and voice their opinions, whether in favor of or against the proposal," she said. "Certainly the MTA will take everything into consideration."