

July 13, 2009

The Honorable Isiah Leggett  
Montgomery County Executive  
101 Monroe Street  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Mr. Leggett:

The Western Montgomery County Citizen Advisory Board held its Capital Budget Forum on June 15, 2009 for the purpose of receiving input for the FY11-16 capital improvement program (CIP). The Forum was well attended by residents and representatives of various county agencies. We also solicited and received public comments via mail and e-mail. Based on the information we have gathered, we submit the following recommendations for your consideration.

**I. Public Education**

Montgomery County Public Schools. Excellent public schools are a hallmark of our county and our public schools' national reputation continues to be a primary motivating factor for young families and businesses moving into our community. In that context, we urge you to support the modernization of our public school facilities by committing to fully fund the modernization and capacity enhancement projects requested by the Board of Education. The current moratoriums that are in place and those projected to go into effect highlight the extreme situation our county is in due to insufficient school construction. The CAB believes this situation is not due solely to residential growth, but to mis-specifications in the forecasting models and variables taken into consideration by MCPS. The problem will not be solved by curbing development.

Regardless of the root causes, which we will address in another letter, the CAB recommends approaching this problem in two stages. First, fund a comprehensive study, through the CIP, to determine the extent of the problem and ascertain more accurate estimates for school enrollments over the next five to ten years. The CAB has heard from a number of citizens and organizations that there is a significant lack of public confidence in the projections being produced by MCPS. This public sentiment cannot be dismissed as invalid. Each school cluster represented by this CAB (Bethesda-Chevy Chase, Downcounty Consortium, Richard Montgomery, Rockville, Thomas S. Wootton, Walt Whitman, Walter Johnson, and Winston Churchill) is having significant capacity

problems at one or more level of education. The problem is most pronounced at the elementary school level, where many students wait in long lines for lunch and are left with little time to eat. The issue can and should not be redefined so it will go away by increasing the threshold at which a moratorium goes into effect. This situation is most critical for the Bethesda-Chevy Chase cluster where almost every school struggles with overcrowding. We encourage a study to be funded to uncover the extent of the problem, direct appropriate expenditure of school construction funds, and to ensure no other surges in enrollment are "missed" by MCPS.

Second, rather than list a handful of schools in need of additions or construction, the CAB recommends a comprehensive school construction campaign that goes beyond any current waiting list or queue. With the analysis in hand from the study, planners should be provided with appropriate funding in the CIP to begin addressing each project, in order of need. Montgomery County remains a growth engine for the state and region in no small part because of the public education system we have built. The CAB feels it is time to rededicate ourselves to the notion that education comes first in this county, because there is no greater single area of need as we develop this CIP.

On a related note, we strongly support the continued dedication of CIP resources to modernize and expand the County's public libraries, which augment the facilities provided by our schools and also serve as a valuable resource for our post-graduate and preschool community.

## **II. Public Safety**

Fire/Rescue. We laud your commitment to the needed renovations of both the Cabin John Fire Station #30 (CIP No. 450500) and the Glen Echo Volunteer Fire Department Station #11 (CIP No. 450702). In connection with our support for the Cabin John and Glen Echo modernizations, we suggest that anytime a fire station is renovated that consideration should be given to doing small build outs so that police officers can treat the stations as quasi-satellite facilities. In other words, they can complete their reports, etc., in their beats, which keeps them in the communities they serve rather than forcing them to go to the district station. We believe that both MCFRS and MCPD would support this. It is also consistent with the county's improving disaster preparedness through integrating resources.

Department of Police. We support your efforts to secure new locations or rapid renovations for both the First District and Second District (CIP No. 470702) Police Stations which currently require extensive physical improvements in order to ensure the Department of Police is able to adequately meet the public safety needs in our region.

## **III. Recreational Opportunities.**

Neighborhood Recreation Centers. We support the construction of a new Scotland Neighborhood Recreation Center (CIP No. 720916). We also encourage the

County to devote funds to the design and construction of the North Bethesda Community Recreation Center (CIP No. 720100).

Skate Plaza. We urge the county to fully fund the design and construction of a skate plaza easily accessible through public transportation in Western Montgomery County. Many young people and their families are hoping the construction of a skate plaza would provide a safe place to congregate and play.

Glen Echo Park. We also urge you to fund the completion of the Glen Echo Park (CIP No. 500004) renovations.

#### **IV. Transportation Infrastructure**

Roads. We realize the combination of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center with the National Naval Medical Center to create the Walter Reed Military Medical Center (CIP No. 501000) will have a substantial transportation impact on Western Montgomery County. Responding to this impact is our highest road-related priority. We appreciate your efforts to date, and encourage you to continue to be proactive in anticipating the infrastructure improvements that will be necessary and the challenges that will be associated with funding them.

Rockville Pike Corridor As noted in our earlier letter to you, the CAB urges that there be a unified, multi-jurisdictional approach towards the planning, design and redevelopment of this crucial artery from Jones Bridge Road to Shady Grove Road. We believe that the construction phase must be implemented as a single project, albeit in several successive parts, rather than in a piecemeal and interrupted fashion.

Pedestrian Facilities/Bikeways/Trails. Pedestrian safety should be among the forefront of issues considered when new developments and infrastructure projects are discussed, and the County should work with developers to ensure that appropriate pedestrian safety measures are implemented. We, therefore, encourage the County to fully fund the Bethesda CBD Streetscape (CIP No. 500102), including the installation of streetlights and underground conduits for upper Wisconsin Avenue.

We commend your commitment to the Falls Road East Side Hiker/Biker Path (CIP No. 500905), and we support the continued funding and scheduling of the Greentree Road Sidewalk (CIP No. 500506), the MacArthur Boulevard Bikeway Improvements (CIP No. 500718), and the Montrose Trail (CIP No. 038707).

Based on substantial citizen input, we have made multiple requests in prior CIP cycles for a number of pedestrian improvements. We renew our request for the construction of a sidewalk on Bradley Boulevard within the existing State right-of-way, along the east side of Bradley Boulevard from Seven Locks Road to Bethesda. We renew our request for the construction of a sidewalk/bikeway along Goldsboro Road between River Road and MacArthur Boulevard. We also renew our requests to implement

July 21, 2009

Page 4

sidewalk/bikeway improvements along Seven Locks Road, to construct a sidewalk/bikeway along Beech Avenue, and to construct a sidewalk/bikeway along Tuckerman Lane between Gainsborough Road and Seven Locks Road.

Transit Investments. We urge construction of the Bethesda Metro Station South Entrance (CIP No. 500929) and Bus Stop Improvements (CIP No. 507658), specifically on the east and west side of Wisconsin Avenue between Bradley Boulevard and Dorset Avenue which should improve pedestrian and vehicular traffic safety.

## **V. Environmental Preservation and Protection**

Watershed Restoration Projects and Storm Water Management. Restoration of urban streams is a high priority. We support the watershed restoration projects under design and/or being planned by the Department of Environmental Protection, as well as the storm water management projects currently under design in Western Montgomery County.

Thank you for the participation of your departmental representatives in our Forum, and for the opportunity to share our thoughts at this early stage.

Sincerely



Stephen E. Baldwin  
Chair

cc: Joseph F. Beach, Director, Office of Management and Budget  
Arthur Holmes, Jr., Director, Department of Public Works and Transportation  
Gabriel I. Albornoz, Director, Department of Recreation  
J. Thomas Manger, Chief of Police, Montgomery County Police Department  
Richard R. Bowers, Chief, Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Service  
Bob Hoyt, Director, Department of Environmental Protection  
Mary Bradford, Director, Department of Parks, Maryland-National Capital Park  
and Planning Commission  
Jerry D. Weast, Superintendent, Montgomery County Public Schools