



Montgomery County Council

From the Office of Councilmember Roger Berliner

For Immediate Release

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ROAD CODE BILL PROTECTS “CHARACTER OF COMMUNITY” AND STRENGTHENS URBAN CONSTRUCTION PRACTICES

Councilmember Roger Berliner’s amendments to the County’s Road Code preserve community integrity and limit sidewalk and curb lane closures, protecting pedestrians and businesses

Rockville, Md., July 3, 2007 - The overhaul of the County’s Road Code, approved by the County Council today, includes two significant provisions that will serve to protect “the character” of existing neighborhoods and prevent sidewalk and curb lane closures during urban construction. The provisions were amendments offered by Councilmember Berliner during the Council’s consideration of the measure.

As the legislation moved through the Council, concerns were expressed that when roads are redeveloped and resurfaced, the Department of Public Works and Transportation could make changes to the road, such as installing curbs, gutters, and sidewalks in communities that have not had them nor want them. The amendment offered by Councilmember Berliner requires the Department to “respect and maintain the particular character of the community” and to adopt “context sensitive designs.”

The road code revisions also included a major amendment offered by Councilmember Berliner that would bring Montgomery County’s construction practices in urban settings up to date with current practices in other major metropolitan areas, including the District of Columbia, Arlington County, New York City, San Francisco, and Phoenix. Targeted to the County’s urban core, Councilmember Berliner’s amendment limits the issuance of permits for the obstruction of public rights-of-way, including sidewalks, shared use paths, and curb lanes. Under the amendment, the

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Department of Permitting Services must not issue a permit for closure of the public right away for more than fifteen days unless a safe alternate walkway or shared use path is provided on the same side of the street.

Councilmember Berliner had the following comments upon passage of the amendments:

Communities can now have confidence that their unique qualities and character will be honored by the County as road improvements take place. In addition, our urban communities, like Bethesda, will now have greater protection from the disruptions caused by construction. Current practices, which allow our sidewalks and curb lanes to become construction sites for up to 18 months, are simply not acceptable. Our sidewalks and curb lanes belong to our citizens.

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