



WHEATON URBAN DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

Luisa Montero-Diaz
Director

December 22, 2016

Kate Sylvester
Assistant Division Chief
Project Management Division
Office of Planning and Preliminary Engineering
State Highway Administration
Maryland Department of Transportation
707 N. Calvert St. MS C-301
Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Ms. Sylvester:

The Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee (WUDAC) is a representative cross-section of the Wheaton Urban District and its immediate surroundings, including homeowners, small businesses, and large businesses. WUDAC is well-positioned to provide comments on the September 2016 MD 586/Viers Mill Rd BRT Study ("BRT Study"). We view integrated urban mobility solutions – including walking, biking, public transit and shared private transit as critical to the future livability and vibrant economy of the County. We think it's important that BRT fit into this vision. WUDAC takes no position on the specific BRT alternatives at this time but we take this opportunity to request clarity on the BRT section from Newport Mill Rd to the BRT's terminus at Wheaton Metro station.

The Wheaton Sector Plan envisions a high-quality BRT on Viers Mill Road to better connect Wheaton with Rockville. At the same time, there are additional street network recommendations made in the Wheaton Sector Plan that we hope BRT will not negatively affect. For example, the Wheaton Sector Plan calls for the redesign of Viers Mill Road "as [an] urban boulevard with enhanced medians and crosswalks, street trees, and street-oriented retail." This includes the provision of "on-street parking on as many streets as possible to serve adjacent land uses, separate pedestrians from traffic, and contribute to slower target speeds." We request BRT planners to provide clarity on how BRT will specifically impact parking in the Wheaton Urban District.

WUDAC notes that the BRT Study assumes that within the Wheaton Urban District, there will be two stops, the terminus at Wheaton Metro and another at University Blvd. WUDAC has made previous requests for the County to take a closer look at bus stops at University Blvd, and we once again request the planners for BRT to take a very close look at the pedestrian safety, traffic, and aesthetic issues with a BRT stop at University Blvd, including the following:

- WUDAC has repeatedly noted that many pedestrians dangerously cross Viers Mill Rd in order to catch both westbound and eastbound buses. This will likely increase with BRT.
- We request planners to ensure that there is adequate sidewalk space to ensure walkability and accommodate a 60-foot station at University Blvd. Even with today's smaller bus stop, it is difficult for pedestrians to maneuver the sidewalk on the east side of Viers Mill near the corner of University Blvd.

BRT planners should take Wheaton redevelopment into account in the BRT Study. Parking Lot 13, just off Viers Mill Rd and Reddie Drive will be undergoing a huge transformation, including a town square, a 204-unit proposed apartment building, and a new office building. WUDAC requests close coordination with traffic planners for the Wheaton redevelopment project to ensure that any rerouting of bus and automobile traffic is congruent with the anticipated traffic impacts of BRT. The planners should also be sure to coordinate with the planned bike share station locations and access.

Finally, we raise the question of whether the BRT design between University Boulevard and the Wheaton Metro Station will create a traffic bottleneck. Some of our concerns include: the difficulty in turning right from Viers Mill northbound onto University Boulevard, and having the eastbound bus merge between several lanes after the intersection of University Boulevard to turn left into the Wheaton Metro Station.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments for the BRT Study.

Sincerely,



Leah Haygood, Chair
Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee

cc: Montgomery County Council President Roger Berliner
Montgomery County Councilmembers
County Executive Isiah Leggett
Joana Conklin, Montgomery County Department of Transportation, Rapid Transit System
Development Manager