



Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce  
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October 30, 2015

Mark Winston  
Tom Street  
Transit Task Force  
100 Executive Office Building  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Mr. Winston and Mr. Street,

The Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce (MCCC) was honored to serve on the County Executive's Transit Task Force under your chairmanship this summer. We are proud of the approach taken by the group and appreciate the opportunity to participate in these important discussions.

MCCC believes that a robust transportation network, including Bus Rapid Transit/Rapid Transit System, is fundamental to a thriving regional economy.

MCCC also understands the tremendous capital costs associated with building new projects in a timely fashion.

The Task Force addressed many issues raised by various parties, including caps on levels of taxation.

Even with the improvements to the proposal, the inherent tension between establishing enough independence to secure bonding capacity while maintaining the appropriate amount of accountability to the public makes neither a guarantee, thereby calling into question the fundamental rationale for an independent authority.

The Transit Task Force concluded in its final report that an Independent Transit Authority (ITA) is the only way to protect the County's credit while expediting the construction and operation of the full Rapid Transit System. It recommends seeking enabling legislation and adopting local implementing legislation "to create and empower the transit authority."

*To Lead, Advocate and Connect as the Voice of Business*



As indicated in earlier testimony, MCCC believes that a staged approach that does not require the creation of a separate quasi governmental entity would be the more prudent course considering the additional tax burdens already being explored in the form of suggested property tax increases in FY 2017.

The MCCC also appreciates the work and input of other task force members who took additional time and effort to submit further ideas and recommendations to accompany the final report. There are aspects of the Minority Report with which we agree, namely, the ITA is not the only way to proceed.

According to our state legislators, the county has the existing authority to raise capital for transportation projects outside of the charter limit. The County Government should explore this route or reallocate existing resources to support important and necessary projects such as the Corridor Cities Transitway with the commitment to bring this project to fruition as soon as possible.

Operating costs could be covered by existing funds, such as a portion of the almost \$80 million collected from the 100% increase of the Fuel Energy Tax imposed on residential and commercial entities.

As an organization with a long record of supporting transportation projects, MCCC believes that the vitality and viability of our local economy is dependent on a robust transportation network. We support the construction of the Rapid Transit System, in particular the CCT. We understand the challenges in funding another major capital project but encourage the County to work within existing laws and resources to identify the necessary funding to make this long planned corridor a reality.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you again for inviting us on behalf of our members to be a part of this important process.

Sincerely,



Georgette "Gigi" Godwin  
President and CEO