

Citizen Comment on Montgomery County's response to the climate crisis connected to our General Plan/Thrive Montgomery 2050

Joe Libertelli, – July 9, 2021

"The Answer" to the climate crisis will not be found in blanketing nearly three square miles of farmland with solar to make it convenient for solar industrialists to make lots of money which, in my opinion, is what is driving this PV in the Ag reserve thing.

We need to think about strategies which, if successful, can be scaled up – if Ag reserve solar is successful, would we WANT to scale it up? How many more square miles of farmland should be covered?

We need to get to the root of the problem. For example, we need to talk about avoiding energy hogs like 5G. (See <https://davidmytton.blog/how-much-energy-will-5g-consume>, <https://www.datacenter-forum.com/datacenter-forum/5g-will-prompt-energy-consumption-to-grow-by-staggering-160-in-10-years>, <https://ehtrust.org/report-5g-to-increase-energy-consumption-by-61-times>, <https://www.fiercewireless.com/tech/5g-base-stations-use-a-lot-more-energy-than-4g-base-stations-says-mtn>, etc.).

We need to push to develop walkable and bikeable economies - not continue expanding roads.

We need to subsidize weatherization and energy efficient lighting - including in low-income housing of all sorts.

One way to supercharge such efforts is to institute a huge, stepped, multi-year increase in the **Fuel Energy Tax** - to signal to everyone that they need to get serious about this stuff or will soon be paying through the nose for electricity, natural gas and home heating oil. Part of the proceeds should go to subsidize lower income people (and, yeah, their landlords) to make the sensible changes.

And we should do this regionally - with DC and PG at a minimum - and see if Northern Virginia can be freed of the antiquated law that prevents them from doing local taxes - a state-level decision that may now be possible. Hell, we might even get the entire states of VA and MD and DC to do this.

Some of the money should go to holding harmless lower income people - who may not have control over their apartments, or who can't afford to upgrade their homes while still incentivizing them to conserve.

And, with regard to PV, I would rather see Montgomery County and the State of Maryland subsidize people to put up solar arrays on their lawns (as well as their homes.) That would

serve two purposes at once - cutting down on lawns and all their attendant evils AND providing decentralized solar power.

We should be requiring all new parking lots to have solar awnings (and/or tree cover and runoff catchment) and subsidizing older parking lots in this direction.

And why on Earth don't we have PV on every public school and office building?

These are the rational steps to take. When we've done them, perhaps we can have a conversation about the truly radical thought of taking potentially productive local farmland out of production for decades in the face of a mounting global food crisis.