

## **Corridor Forward Council Public Hearing County Executive Verbal Testimony**

**February 15, 2022**

Good evening. My name is Christopher Conklin, and I am the Director of the Montgomery County Department of Transportation. I am testifying tonight on behalf of the County Executive.

First, I want to express my appreciation for Montgomery Planning's willingness to work with us throughout the development of this plan. We appreciate the extensive efforts Planning staff has made in response to suggestions for improvement. While the areas of concern remain, most significantly, around the Metrorail, MARC and Corridor Cities Transitway proposals as noted in written testimony, this collaboration has resulted in strong alignment between plan's recommendations for high priority action, the projects already underway in the Council-approved capital program, and the Executive's recommendations to accelerate work on these projects.

The County Executive strongly supports many priorities and recommendations in this plan and appreciates the effort to form a more coherent and comprehensive vision for transit serving the I-270 corridor. He especially supports the high prioritization of the MD 355 and Veirs Mill Road Bus Rapid Transit ("BRT") projects, as well as the prioritization of other transit, bicycle, and pedestrian improvements.

The County Executive has recommended funding design and construction of the entire Veirs Mill Road BRT project and BRT on MD355 between Montgomery College Rockville and Montgomery College Germantown using the State's Opportunity Lanes financial commitments to the County. In addition, he has recommended funding final design of the remainder of the MD355 corridor to the north and south of the proposed construction area so that those portions can advance quickly once construction funds are identified. These funding recommendations are completely aligned with Corridor Forward's stated vision and represent investment in County transit infrastructure at a historic scale.

Notably, these BRT projects provide investment in equity emphasis areas, resulting in transportation improvements for today's residents who rely upon transit to access all the County has to offer. These projects will provide consistent, high-capacity, highly reliable transit between Germantown and Wheaton, connecting the two legs of the Metrorail Red Line and extending the reach of rapid transit north of Shady Grove.

Together, the Veirs Mill Road and MD 355 BRT projects identified as high priority in Corridor Forward total more than \$400 million of investment, mostly from non-county Federal and State funds. The use of I-270 toll lane funds to advance BRT on MD355 and Veirs Mill Road will result in a transformative and necessary improvement to transit serving the I-270 corridor. Notwithstanding his significant concerns with the State's toll lanes project itself, the County Executive is excited about this opportunity to move the vision of BRT forward with the opening of two new rapid bus lines within the 6-year CIP. We thank the Planning Board for their confirmation of the importance of these projects, and thank the Council for your continued support for transit projects in our county.

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Good evening Councilmembers. My name is Christopher Conklin, and I am the Director of the Montgomery County Department of Transportation. I am testifying on behalf of the County Executive.

First, thank you to Montgomery Planning for addressing many concerns identified by MCDOT during the refinement of the plan. While we continue to question the Metrorail, MARC and Corridor Cities Transitway recommendations as noted in written testimony,<sup>1</sup> there is strong alignment between plan's recommendations for high priority action on the projects already underway in the Council-approved capital program, and the Executive's recommendations to accelerate work on these projects.

The County Executive has recommended design and construction of the Veirs Mill Road BRT project and BRT on MD355 between Montgomery College Rockville and Montgomery College Germantown using the State's Opportunity Lanes financial commitments to the County and Federal Capital Grant funding from the recently passed Infrastructure and Jobs Act. In addition, he has recommended funding final design the entire MD355 corridor so that the whole project can be completed once additional funds are available. These funding recommendations are completely aligned with Corridor Forward's stated vision and represent investment in County transit at a historic scale.

Notably, these BRT projects provide investment in equity emphasis areas, resulting in transportation improvements for today's residents who rely upon transit to access all the County has to offer. These projects will provide consistent, high-capacity, highly reliable transit between Germantown and Wheaton, connecting the two legs of the Metrorail Red Line and extending the reach of rapid transit north of Shady Grove.

The BRT projects total more than \$400 million of investment and will result in a transformative and necessary improvement to transit, providing better options for our residents and encouraging job growth in our activity centers. In response to County advocacy, the State has agreed in writing to provide financial support to transit when implementing the Opportunity Lanes. Notwithstanding his significant concerns with the State's toll lanes project itself, the County Executive believes the County should confirm its intention to use the pledged funds to open two new rapid bus lines as quickly as possible.

We thank the Planning Board for their confirmation of the importance of these projects, and thank the Council for your continued support for transit projects in our county.