

[REDACTED]

Dear County Council Members:

Given the waitlist to testify at the July 25th hearing, I am writing instead to express my concerns with Section B-4g of the proposed Montgomery County Master Plan. I am a resident of Byeforde Rock Highlands (BRCH) and have lived in Kensington for 35 years. Like you, I support a safe pedestrian experience in Montgomery County. Unfortunately, part of your proposed plan has been endangering, and will continue to endanger, my safety as well as that of my neighbors. For this reason, my neighborhood association, many of my neighbors, and I have been raising concerns with Montgomery Parks, concerns which have gone largely unaddressed. Please do a better job listening to your constituents and ensuring our safety. Our lives depend on it.

Section B-4g seeks to make current weekend closures of Beach Drive permanent. However, the closure of Beach Drive between Connecticut Avenue and Cedar Lane is misguided and has actually created a major pedestrian safety issue for my neighborhood. This section of Beach Drive serves as a primary means for commuters to travel to and from the Beltway with direct access to Rockville Pike and the Bethesda area, including NIH and Walter Reed – the latter of which each have shifts that operate 7 days a week. When Beach Drive is closed, non-local/cut through drivers are redirected onto residential streets that were neither designed nor equipped to accommodate such excessive volumes of traffic. The closures result in cars forced into a neighborhood that has no sidewalks, narrow streets with cars parked on both sides, several blind spots, and no traffic calming measures of which to speak. It is simply too dangerous to walk, bike or run on the streets.

Traffic counts conducted by Montgomery DOT show that traffic increases in my neighborhood by over 100% each Saturday – a weekend which is supposed to have the lowest traffic volume. Weekend traffic averages show an 82% compared to weekday volumes. By simple math, funneling an additional 13,000 cars per month down a narrow residential street without sidewalks is at odds with the goals of the Pedestrian Master Plan – to create a safe, comfortable and appealing network for pedestrians.

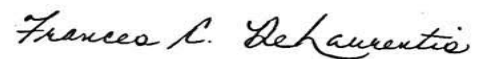
Like you, I enjoy the beauty of Rock Creek Park and walk the trail several times a week. In fact, I walk from my home on Dewmar Court through the neighborhood to Beach Drive, entering the Rock Creek path at Connecticut Avenue and proceed safely along that trail/path for miles. Given that Beach Drive already has a sufficient pedestrian pathway that has been in place since the 1970s and is used by both pedestrians and cyclists, I don't understand the need to close the

Connecticut Avenue-Cedar Lane portion of Beach Drive to traffic and divert thousands of cars into our neighborhood. Montgomery Parks has not provided any data whatsoever demonstrating the need to close Beach Drive. Montgomery Parks also has not conducted any traffic studies to support the closures – neither before its implementation nor as part of the plan to make it permanent. Montgomery Parks does not even have any data showing the volume of pedestrian and bicyclist usage of Beach Drive (for the section between Connecticut Avenue and Cedar Lane) when it is closed.

To date, Montgomery Parks has ignored my neighborhood's concerns, has not considered any reasonable alternatives, and has even referred to the concerned, taxpaying citizens in our neighborhood as "those but the cut through traffic people" in internal communications. These communications demonstrate that the Parks personnel prioritize their personal enjoyment of the closures over the concerns of its citizens and the safety of those living in affected communities. My neighborhood association and neighbors have proposed reasonable alternatives that have been ignored. For example: (i) starting the closure on Beach at Cedar Lane and extending it to Summit Ave.; and/or placing protected bike lanes on Beach Drive between Cedar Lane and Connecticut Ave.

For all these reasons, I strongly urge the County to consider revision of this section of the Pedestrian Master Plan to ensure the safety of Montgomery County residents and to meet the goals of other programs, such as Vision Zero.

Sincerely,



Frances C. DeLaurentis