

I am a pedestrian. As I get older, and I am not young, I become more of a pedestrian. I am also handicapped and that fact contributes to my being a pedestrian.

While I agree with many of the “goals” of the MOCO Master Pedestrian Plan that is the subject of this hearing, I must say that it falls substantially short of being more than just a list of goals with no substance.

1. The pedestrian plan has historically been anti-car, but that is hardly enough to protect pedestrians. The plan says nothing about the dangerous and rude gangs of cyclists that threaten pedestrians by running stop signs, running red lights, failing to yield the right-of-way, and many other infractions. Give them a special lane all to themselves and they still break the law and threaten pedestrians.

Even on private property – publicly and clearly marked as a “Private Road” with no trespassing signs – gangs of cyclists threaten the life and limb of the simple pedestrian who actually has a right to be on that – their very own – property. I was struck by such a rider, who didn’t even bother to stop to see if I was hurt. Just a “... sorry ...” as they sped away, through the stop sign.

The “Master Plan” has nothing on pedestrian safety from cyclists. Yet, MCDOT sponsors lessons on bike riding and scooter riding and do those lessons include even a word about obeying the law and respecting pedestrian’s rights and private property? I dare to guess they do NOT.

Moreover, “Comfortable, Connected, Convenient Pedestrian Network” is not a justification for expropriating private property for public use – MCDOT should not designate pathways across private property without the property owner’s consent.

Please remember Jane Bennett Clark. And please remember Gavin Lee, and find the cyclist who killed him.

2. MCDOT has an inflated view of their planning process and the “Tuckerman Lane Road Diet” plan is a prime example. Tuckerman Lane between Rockville Pike and Old Georgetown Road is five lanes, including a central left turn lane with some safety islands. The Bethesda Trolley Trail (BTT) crosses Tuckerman Lane and MCDOT has installed a HAWK signal at that crossing.

Concerned with continued accidents at the BTT on Tuckerman, MCDOT last winter proposed a road diet – a reduction to three lanes including a central left turn lane along the entire stretch of road with some safety islands. Fortunately, public outcry forced MCDOT to take a much more reasonable approach of adding speed humps before and after crossing points.

MCDOT’s initial proposal was “supported” by video of a jogger who was nearly hit by a car on the BTT crossing, but MCDOT never acknowledged that the possible incident was the jogger’s own fault – he never bothered to stop and use the HAWK signal, or wait for the HAWK signal, he just ran out into traffic. MCDOT cannot engineer away stupidity. MCDOT (and MCPS) needs to spend far more time on educating people about how traffic works and their responsibilities – not just car drivers, but cyclists and pedestrians as well.

If the Tuckerman Lane Road Diet proposal is typical of MCDOT's course, then we need to reduce MCDOT's budget and give the taxpayers a break – such foolishness is a waste of taxpayers' money.

3. Rather than waste time on foolish proposals like the Tuckerman Lane Road Diet, MCDOT needs to focus on providing safer pedestrian transit routes. A prime example is the crossing of Rockville Pike (MD Rt. 355) and I-495 / I-270. There is not continuous sidewalk to permit pedestrians to cross the interstates on Rockville Pike. A pedestrian's only choices are the BTT or Beach Drive – adding at least one-half mile to a pedestrian's travel – assuming they can mount steps. Woe be he or she who uses a wheelchair.

Three years ago, a Grosvenor BiPPA proposed a shared use path that, to my recollection, did not include continuous sidewalks on the bridges between Pooks Hill Road and Grosvenor Lane. My complaint that such a lack of pedestrian access violated the Americans with Disabilities Act may have spurred changes in the Grosvenor BiPPA to include the required crossing. Nonetheless, Grosvenor BiPPA has been delayed and delayed again by permitting issues. Construction is, as of this writing, scheduled for this Fall – no one should believe that will happen. MCDOT has changed the schedule too many times to be credible.

I would note that my complaints to Council Members about this process have never received more than an automatic reply, never a substantive response or hint of concern.

Thank you for your kind attention to these issues.