

Council President Kate Stewart  
Councilmembers  
Montgomery County Council  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, MD 20815



April 1, 2025

**Testimony on: Additional amendments to the FY25-30 Capital Improvements Program (CIP)**

Dear Council President Stewart and Councilmembers,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the FY25-30 Capital Improvements Program. Zero Waste Montgomery County is a dedicated group of local residents who have been advocating for Zero Waste programs and closing of the incinerator in Montgomery County over many years. It has involved many discussions with the County Executive and their personnel, Montgomery County Councilmembers and the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

We support the new project to create the new Material Recycling and Biological Treatment Facility that will recover recyclable materials that had been thrown in the trash. As the County has explained, this project is needed to fulfill a commitment to close the Resource Recovery Facility.

However, we are concerned about the sequence and the timing of all the new projects and improvements required to close the Resource Recovery Facility. We should not be making the decision on the new Material Recycling and

Biological Treatment Facility investment of \$36M when we still do not have the financial information from DEP about other investments required to close the Resource Recovery Facility.

As another project, the County is working on an extravagant upgrade of the Shady Grove Transfer Station. The County employees have mentioned at the T&E committee work session that they are planning to include AI in waste processing and that their goal is to increase the trash processing capacity three times from 8 tons per hour to around 20 tons per hour. If our goal is to reduce waste, by implementing food scrap composting and Zero Waste programs, why do we need to spend \$27 million dollars on the Transfer Station upgrade to increase the waste processing capacity? Could this upgrade be completed with less taxpayer money? We do not need this capacity for processing the solid waste of our county's population. We should be allocating more funds to waste reduction programs such as recycling and composting.

If Reworld, our County's solid waste processing contractor in the Transfer Station, is interested in increasing the waste processing volume in Shady Grove Transfer Station to increase their revenue, then Reworld should pay for the capital investments, not the taxpayers of Montgomery County.

Additionally, we have not seen any details about the planned Shady Grove Transfer Station upgrade from DEP. May 2021 staff report mentions that "higher throughput will result in additional recycling revenue of approximately \$600,000 per year". However, DEP has not provided more recent planned financial data on the project, or information on what would be the environmental impact of the increased capacity on the surrounding community, for example more trucks with solid waste driving in the neighborhood or more noise or pollution from the transfer station due to higher volume of trash being processed. People of Montgomery County need to understand the full impact of these decisions before they are made by the County employees.

The potential job losses in Montgomery County due to the new administration pose a significant threat to the local economy and the county's financial stability. According to an interview with Council President Kate Stewart on wamu.org on January 24th, with 70,000 Montgomery County residents employed by the federal government (that does not include contractors), any reduction in federal jobs would have far-reaching consequences. As the county

faces budget constraints and increased demand for services, large capital investments and significant increase in operating expenses in Solid Waste disposal services would be challenging to justify.

The County is planning to cover the significant increase in Solid Waste Disposal services operating expenses and the capital investments in Shade Grove Transfer Station by increasing the Solid Waste Surcharge for businesses and households. The T&E Committee has requested at the March 17, 2025 work session the DEP to provide a detailed breakdown of how different projects would impact the rates. This information and answers to many other questions asked by the County Council members from DEP at the briefing on January 28, 2025 must be made publicly available as soon as possible.

Once again, we strongly urge you to wait with the decision regarding the new Material Recycling and Biological Treatment Facility until the public has full financial details about all the new investments needed to close the trash incinerator. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Susan Eisendrath  
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Daniela Ochoa Gonzalez  
Carrie Witkop

Zero Waste Montgomery County

<https://zwmc.org/>

