

My name is Rich Biedrzycki. I am a resident of downtown Bethesda and a member of Strong Towns DC, a local conversation whose goal is to make our communities more financially resilient and affordable for everyone.

We are commenting in support of Bill 24-25. While we understand the original purpose of the traffic development management (TDM) fee schedule, we find it to be unnecessary to retain such a fee when the corresponding regulations were never implemented.

While a fee of \$0.10 per square foot of development may seem small, the costs will add up and make development more difficult to pencil out. To illustrate, let us look at an example. The recently completed White Oak Town Center consists of 144,000 square feet of development (<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/exec/wosg/index.html>). Any equivalent project would be required to pay \$14,400 in TDM fees as part of the current law. Although it may not seem like much to some, it does not include the labor costs incurred on the developer to go through the process of paying the fees and ensuring compliance. Despite these extra costs on development, we gain no benefit as the regulations they are to pay for do not exist. Even if they did exist, the inspector general's audit report showed that the Department of Transportation was not ensuring proper compliance. Thus, it only makes sense to eliminate these fees and stop charging developers for nothing.

One criticism of repealing this legislation would be the effect on traffic. We would argue that repealing this legislation could actually improve the flow of traffic through incentivizing denser development. Because the fees increase the cost of development, developers may be less likely to build in locations subject to these fees. As the current TDM locations are in denser parts of the county, such as downtown Bethesda, developers may build in other areas to avoid the fees, leading to development in less-transit-accessible areas and an increase in car traffic. Thus, removing the fee would effectively encourage development in areas where transit, walking, and biking are safer and more readily available.

We would like to thank Councilmembers Balcombe, Glass, and Stewart for sponsoring this legislation. We hope to see it enacted so that we can see increased development and lower costs for county residents.