

Cherrywood Homeowners Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 159

Olney, Maryland 20830

June 24, 2025

Montgomery County Planning Department

2425 Reddie Drive

Wheaton, MD 20902

Re: Master Plan of Highways and Transitways Technical Update

Dear Montgomery Planning and Members of the County Council:

The Cherrywood Homeowners Association is a 606-unit homeowners association located in Olney, Maryland. The purpose of this letter is to render comments as requested on the April 2025 version of the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways (MPOHT) for the public hearing on July 8th.

We have previously submitted comments on the MPOHT on April 12, 2024 and on September 9, 2024 and cannot find where any of our concerns were addressed or any changes made in this greatly flawed plan. Furthermore, no one from Planning has contacted us to have a discussion on our concerns. It is reminiscent of Thrive 2050 and AHSI where planning is only listening to and reporting on people that agree with the proposal from Planning. We are copying our comments this time to the County Council in hope that someone will address our major concerns with the MPOHT.

This latest draft proposes another speed limit cut on 911 roadways in MoCo without good justification. It was only two years ago the County cut speeds limits on many County and State Roads in MoCo. In fact, the yellow "new" signs are still on most of these roads and Montgomery Planning was already recommending more changes before those "new" signs were even a year old.

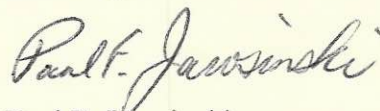
For the purposes of these comments, we will cover just two of the many instances that exemplify the problems throughout this document. Senator Karen Montgomery and the citizens of Brookeville and Olney worked literally decades to get the Brookeville bypass built. The Bypass was designed and constructed by Md DOT and just opened in May of 2023. The roadway was designed and built to support a speed limit of 40 MPH to "bypass" the slower more direct route through the center of Brookeville. There are NO curb cuts of any kind on the Brookeville Bypass. Even before this State roadway was a year old, the County Planner published a proposal to reduce the speed on the Brookeville bypass from 40 MPH to 25 MPH! This speed limit reduction is still in the April 2025 MPOHT draft. No justification is given for the County's recommendation to override the State's engineer's design of this NEW roadway to set the speed limit at 40 MPH. Did the County Planner find that the State engineers were guilty of errors when they built the limited access bypass and set the speed limit at 40 MPH? What is the County's justification for overriding the State on the speed limit of this brand new roadway? Furthermore what is

the purpose of the Brookeville bypass if the speed limit on the bypass is the same or less then if you cut through the town of Brookeville?

Adjacent to Cherrywood in Olney is Hines Road. It was built as a four-lane community collector road with no curbs cut and only intersections with streets that go through the existing neighborhoods. The purpose of a collector road is to attract the traffic from the community and funnel that traffic along the collector road to the main commuter roadway faster then cutting through the neighborhood streets. Currently the speed limit on Hines Road is 35 MPH and the neighborhood streets are 25 MPH. This works well! The MPOHT recommends choking the speed limit on Hines to 25 MPH. This will only make it more efficient for traffic to cut through the neighborhoods at 25+ MPH as most people know there are unlikely to be any speed cameras on neighborhood streets. We believe there are scores if not more than a hundred of these types of errors in the MPOHT proposal. We remain especially opposed to arbitrarily lowering all the speed limits.

We remain extremely disappointed with the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways and are staunchly opposed to the ongoing effort to choke down traffic throughout the County by artificially lowing speed limits and otherwise further compromising automobile travel lanes. We are also concerned that this is the second year in a row that Montgomery Planning has held a hearing on their MPOHT plan during the July vacation period. It gives the appearance that Montgomery Planning wants to escape public review. Also, where are their responses to previous comments? Our more extensive comments previously submitted still stand and are attached to the letter. We are hoping there will be some dialogue with community leaders somewhere in this process before any approval on implementation vote is held. Certainly the public should be notified that the crux of the MPOHT proposal is to cut speed limits on 911 roadways in the County that especially compromise our State roadway commuter routes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul F. Jarosinski".

Paul F. Jarosinski
President

Cherrywood Homeowners Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 159

Olney, Maryland 20830

September 9, 2024

Montgomery County Planning Department
2425 Reddie Drive
Wheaton, MD 20902
Re: Master Plan of Highways and Transitways Technical Update

Dear Mr. Montgomery County Planning Department:

The Cherrywood Homeowners Association is a 606-unit homeowners association located in Olney, Maryland. The purpose of this letter is to render comments as requested on the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways notice for the public hearing for 9-12-24.

We cannot discern where Montgomery Planning has made any significant changes to the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways subsequent to our previous comments submitted on April 12th of this year. It still appears the focus of this effort is to increase commuting times and to inhibit commerce by artificially creating congestion and choking down speed limits throughout the County. Job growth is already way below expectations in the County and this effort to further inhibit movement by roadways in the County is only going to further inhibit job growth and cause greater portions of the population to mail order for their needs rather than shopping at local merchants. This Plan further discourages economic development in the County and will hurt local businesses.

We are especially alarmed at another effort to lower speed limits on Md 97, north-south commuter roadway that completely crosses the State of Maryland. The speed limits on the MoCo portion of this roadway were just lowered and now you are attempting to reduce them again. Is this going to be an annual occurrence until the commuters stop coming?

We remain extremely disappointed with the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways and staunchly opposed to the ongoing effort to choke down traffic throughout the County by artificially lowering speed limits and otherwise further compromising automobile travel lanes. Our more extensive comments previously submitted still stand and are attached to the letter.

Sincerely,



Paul F. Jarosinski
President

Cc: Councilmember Dawn Luedtke

Cherrywood Homeowners Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 159

Olney, Maryland 20830

April 12, 2024

Montgomery Planning
c/o Stephen Aldrich
Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reddie Drive
Wheaton, MD 20902
Re: Master Plan of Highways and Transitways Technical Update

Dear Mr. Aldrich:

The Cherrywood Homeowners Association is a 606-unit homeowners association located in Olney, Maryland. The purpose of this letter is to render comments as requested on the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways based on your presentation to EPIC of MoCo on April 8, 2024 and on the information on your affiliated website. In your presentation you stated that your group is trying to change car based roadways and are interested in getting feedback about your progress in this regard. The Board of Directors of the Cherrywood Homeowners Association (9 members) met on April 11th to comment on your activity and designated me to relay our comments to you ahead of your deadline on April 15th. The purpose of this letter is to provide the requested feedback on what you are doing.

In short, we find the work that you are doing on our roadways to be alarming! The roadways were built to move motorized vehicles to promote commerce in our area and well as commuters to and from businesses in MoCo. We find the work that Montgomery Planning is now doing is focused on compromising these roadways and creating congestion to the detriment of commerce in MoCo. Some examples of your efforts include replacing commuter lanes on major arteries with bicycle lanes, narrowing lane widths to less than the national standard 12 feet (buses and commercial vehicles are 11' wide mirror to mirror), artificially lowering speed limits to less than the roadway design to generate speed ticket revenue, and failing to use SMART signaling technology to more efficiently move traffic in the County saving energy whether you are driving an electric car, gas car, or a hybrid. It is almost as if you are trying to choke commuters off the functional roadways onto our failing transit system (e.g. WMATA has a \$750 million deficit) as transit ridership has been declining for 10 years.

We are not alone in these opinions. Just Friday (4-12-24), people in Chevy Chase overwhelming decided NOT to add bike lanes on Connecticut Avenue. Residents sensibly decided to keep the main arteries open for commerce and commuting and use the collateral streets for bicycle traffic. Less than 1% of commuters use bicycle lanes for commuting so it is illogical to covert arterial lanes built for motorized vehicles to sole use bike lanes. Additionally, what happens to these bikes lanes when it snows, rains, or weather is otherwise inclement (too hot or cold)? Most of the bike commuters reasonably get in the

cars for transportation in bad weather, but alas the County has eliminated a travel lane making congestion even worse during challenging weather.

We do NOT oppose safety measures along our roadways! Many of our roadways were built with walkways adjacent to the vehicle lanes (no buffer) and without proper crosswalks and signaling. Those should be fixed as resources permit without stifling the traffic with artificially low speed limits that promote jaywalking. We do need to share the roadways, but that should mean crossing at crosswalks, using Smart signaling to minimize stop and go traffic (and people running red lights), and using design speeds for commerce except perhaps in the more urban town centers.

Bikeways often don't make things "greener." On 3.3 miles of Bowie Mill Road, the Planning Department is planning to remove an acre and a half of forest without replacing a single tree south of the Damascus Snow Forest! The County recently passed bill 40-23 to expand tree canopy, but apparently this doesn't apply to County destruction of trees or the paving over of porous surface with impervious surface. If trees are eliminated for a project, they should be replaced within 3 miles of a project if indeed you care about being greener, tree canopy, and climate change.

Artificially creating congestion will not force everyone to use mass transit. If people learned anything during the covid crisis, it was that the best place to catch covid or other respiratory diseases was on a crowded, heated mass transit vehicle. These transit systems can't even cover their expenses (e.g. WMATA). We can't also keep plowing unlimited taxpayer funds into outrageously expensive mass transit projects where the advocates and planners are either incompetent or not honest. I support this comment with the fact that in April of 2013, Governor O'Malley speaking about the purple line said "The total cost is projected to be about \$2.15 billion" and would "be completed by 2020" just 7 years later. Maryland Matters just reported in March of this year that the purple line now won't be completed until late 2027 at a total cost of \$10 billion, almost 5 times the original estimate! In this regard, the people of Olney soundly rejected the BRT line to Olney 10 years ago when we uncovered hidden information that the BRT line to Olney would condemn 80% of the current businesses on Georgia Avenue in Olney. Buses to Olney run near empty most of the time. A BRT line to Olney would be another waste of resources. Run an occasional express bus if you can generate enough ridership to fill at least ½ a bus at certain times of the day. Instead concentrate resources in the downCounty urban areas. The majority of people who saved up to move to Olney truly moved here for more green space.

Some other specifics we saw that are alarming are plans to AGAIN reduce the speed limit on Georgia Avenue from Aspen Hill North from 45 to 35. These were just artificially lowered last year from 50 to 45. This portion of MD 97 is a limited access 6-lane highway and these suggestions are absurd. More than likely you'll want add speed camera every mile or so like you did on Norbeck Road (MD 28) last year when you artificially decreased that speed limit to 35 MPH and installed a flipper speed camera near the intersection with Hannans Way. The speed limit on our most direct access to Rockville, Md 28, should be restored to 45 MPH. We also find obnoxious plans to reduce the speed limit to 25 MPH on

Old Baltimore Road, Hines Road, Cashell Road, and Bowie Mill Road. What is the basis for compromising our roadways and bringing all traffic to a crawl?

Obviously our HOA is more disturbed by your plans than anything else. Over the last 39 months (4-1-20 to 7-1-23), Montgomery County has lost 3,591 people whereas Thrive Montgomery's prediction was an almost 22,000 increase in population over the same time period. People are voting with their feet and this is certainly not an endorsement of the current Montgomery Planning efforts. We hope that most of this transit plan ends up in the trashcan. Instead, we hope that you will hire an expert in Smart Signaling technology to make more efficient use of our roadways rather than eliminating or narrowing vehicle lanes while slowing traffic to a energy-wasting crawl with speed limits well under roadway design in order to generate additional speed camera revenue.

We are particularly troubled by your plan to hold hearings during the July vacation period on a revised plan that isn't even written yet. Is this being done to minimize input? We only found out about this project of yours earlier this month. You need to allow time for us to notify the community of your radical congestion plans once they are available for distribution so that a thorough review of all the details can be conducted.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul F. Jarosinski".

Paul F. Jarosinski
President

Cc: Councilmember Dawn Luedtke