

Thank you County Council for allowing me the opportunity to share my concerns about removing M-83 from the Master Plan before full due diligence has been completed. My name is Christel Bivens, a current resident of Germantown and life long resident of Montgomery County. I've spent 50% of my life in downcounty the other 50% in Upcounty so I've experienced it all and they are vitally different. Let me paint the picture. Downcounty life is a vibrant urban area situated close to DC. Close knit streets that need not use the highway to get from point to point, tenured homes, high-use public transit, short bus routes, metro, malls, high prices, the ICC, town centers, access to public regulatory buildings & court houses, an employment hub. In contrast Upcounty is open spaces, farm land & ag reserve, breweries, windy roads, forests, rustic rural roads, shopping centers, long bus routes, diverse populations, lower-income, commutes to work, less employment opportunities. They are immensely distinguishable from each other which means they require different solutions. The disconnect is that what works in Downcounty does not necessarily work in Upcounty.

Montgomery county provides many incredible benefits to its residents. The disconnect is that Upcounty does not have the same equitable access to the services that Downcounty has. Due to planning and County approvals for development growth according to the Master Plan, the disconnect is that the infrastructure in place should be sufficient because it has worked in the highly developed Downcounty for the past 60 years. But the truth is that approved growth in Upcounty and the objection to building the planned road infrastructure that connects us to those public features has stagnated Upcounty in the business and job markets, and it has caused Upcounty residents to alter their lifestyles by driving to get fair access to the County's amenities. Public hearings on Upcounty agendas are heard in Wheaton and like on July 8th, 2024, in Rockville during business hours when most of work. There are no easy bus rides from Clarksburg to Rockville/Wheaton, so we need to drive and we need a road system that can EASILY get us where we need to go.

The disconnect is that the County is allowing mass development according to a plan or a model, that is not in line with the planned infrastructure that was estimated to be required to handle the exponential growth for development. According to the US Dept of Energy, (the Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy), carbon emissions from commercial and residential building account for 36% of total US emissions while carbon emissions from transportation account for about 28%. Yet the Botanists and ecologists, in their letters to you, write about the forests that will be destroyed by building M-83, but they say little about the acres of forest land that are being destroyed to build over 80,000 units in Upcounty. We consistently hear that Climate Control is the primary reason for not building M-83, yet accommodations are made for other road systems that are impacting wildlife to be built with little controversy. Contrary to what many environmental groups purport, no one in Upcounty is denying that we want clean environments and that we want to protect our resources, especially knowing that we have one of the most successful Ag Reserves in the country. What we want is opportunity. Opportunity to access, to a healthy environment, and to have designated planned infrastructure.

The disconnect is that the County has made no effort to study the repercussions of their decision to withhold the building of the planned M-83 road in relation to the traffic noise pollution, carbon emissions pollution, and safety issues that have been impressed by new development on tenured

communities and their road systems. Community roads and bridges are now infiltrated with disproportionate traffic that crosses over wetlands, streams, and forests that we want to protect and that the county already knows is damaging to residents' health (please reference the Vehicular Noise Reduction Bill sponsored by Council VP Kate Steward and Councilmember Natali Fani-Gonzalez). What this tells us in Upcounty that need the relief of a direct road system, that Instead of being accountable to the ramifications from these decisions, the County unequivocally is certain that by removing the only road structure from the plan and building BRT over the next 5 years which will only connect South Germantown to Downcounty, will inevitably increase ridership from communities north that have no direct access to BRT without driving, which will further reduce all the carbon emissions currently dispelled from concentrated congestion that have been forced on our community roads while solving all of our congestion? The disconnect is that this is not reality and there are NO plans to enhance the efficiency of the roadway network and improve connections between economic centers BEFORE removing M-83.

One needs to ask the question – why?

Why is it that most of the decision makers that are “for” removing M-83 don't live in Upcounty and have not experienced or fully understand the repercussions of the effects on residents due to thwarting the expansion of the ICC to Clarksburg via M-83. We have over 350K residents in Upcounty and we make up almost one half of the county's landmass, but we have one resident representative? The disconnect is that surrounding communities that have been impacted by the growth in Upcounty have been unfairly allocated a disproportionate level of traffic that is leading to sickness and safety issues of its residents and their environment. So while we should be concerned about wildlife, and birders, and the little critters that may be displaced, it is okay that the people who have experienced the pollution caused from backed up traffic in their communities, the safety hazards of injury to due to accidents from over-crowded roads, we should forget about their well-being? The lack of infrastructure to accommodate the growth has not given Upcounty the fair chance to be an economic powerhouse nor the capacity to give equitable access to the public services and transportation that our brothers and sisters south of us have access to. Why does Downcounty get the \$34Million extra budget for solar powered buses, an ICC that connects them easily to other major artery road systems (that ran through more environmental habitats than M-83) and metro, a purple line, get an unequal weighted amount of representation by local resident councilmembers? Why don't we hear the advocacy of **denying continued development** that is far MORE invasive and destructive than building a road system, until we have a the transportation infrastructure which would improve access to affordable housing and create less carbon emissions due to less congestion in our communities that are needed and promised to Upcounty residents when they made investments in Upcounty? Yet the one road system to complete the ICC that will connect economic centers within Montgomery county is being removed without even the due diligence and acknowledgment of the negative impact it has already had on Upcounty's environment, economy, and safety. Until the county has proven outcomes and alternative solutions (other than BRT) and we understand what will happen to the right of way, it would be premature for the County to remove M-83. The disconnect is that the County is putting the cart before the horse and we all know that just doesn't work. NOW is not the time to remove M-83.

Sincerely and respectfully,

Christel Bivens