

Good evening members of the Montgomery County Planning Board,

My name is Beth Wolff, and I serve as the president of the Clarksburg Neighbors Alliance, a new grassroots organization committed to advocating for the needs of our community. I am here today to urge you to **wait, and keep M83 in the Transportation Master Plan.**

One of the biggest issues facing Montgomery County, is the availability of affordable housing. Over the past 20 years, Clarksburg has risen to meet this need in a significant way, growing from 3k in 2003 to over 46k.

Unlike older cities and development in Montgomery County, Clarksburg was developed in a way that intentionally integrated socioeconomic levels seamlessly throughout the community, leading to an diverse community. We are 76% minority, 44% first-generation immigrants, and 61% of us speak a language other than English. Our schools are on average 89% minority with 38% FARMS recipients.

This puts our community in a position of particular vulnerability: We need additional support systems, but are still developing the skills to navigate the political system to advocate for itself—especially since many in our community are ineligible to participate in the voting process.

As a result, we face a reoccurring challenge in Clarksburg: **housing developments continue to grow, yet the necessary infrastructure to support them has not kept pace.**

We are continuously told to *WAIT*. Wait on schools. Wait on libraries. Wait on retail. Wait on county services. Wait on amenities. Wait on roads.

In August 2024, our organization conducted a survey of over 550 Clarksburg residents. Transportation emerged as one of the top issues, with even greater concern specifically among residents of Cabin Branch, the recent development near the Clarksburg Outlets that is reaching over 7000 households.

At present, MD 355—a two-lane road in our area—is the only north-south artery through Clarksburg other than 270. It accommodates local traffic. It is the only access point of three schools. And is a regional thoroughfare from Urbana and Frederick to Rockville, Bethesda, and Washington D.C.

Most mornings and afternoons, it is moving at a snails pace. If there's an accident on 270, it slows to a parking lot. If there was an emergency at one of the three schools, it would be near impossible get emergency vehicles to the schools during these critical travel times, let alone allow for panicked parents to retrieve their children.

The construction of M83 would significantly reduce the congestion, safety issues, and environmental impact of the standstill traffic occurring in Clarksburg, specifically along 355.

I understand that there are conceptual plans in place to address congestion on 355 that do not include M83, including a bypass proposed in the Gateway Sector Master Plan. However, the Gateway Sector recommendations won't even be available until Fall of 2025 and the

construction of the proposed bypass might still be years away. **So we are asking you to WAIT, and keep M83 in the Transportation Master Plan — until there is a actual solution in place.**

You've also proposed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) as a solution. As Clarksburg residents, we are not opposed to BRT. We would welcome it coming to Clarksburg — as it currently does not exist. However, there has been no thoughtful and holistic plan to make it work in Clarksburg:

- How would residents access the BRT since most Clarksburg residence are not with in walking distance to bus stops and others lack sidewalk connection?

- If they drive to a BRT stop, where will they park their cars without designated lots or street parking available?

- How many residents would the construction of parking lots displace?

- How many wet lands would need to be filled since Clarksburg's Ten Mile Creek Watershed is the one of the county's most pristine waterways?

- And how much would it all cost?

- And why, if BRT is your solution, are you also recommending that the number of BRT stops in Clarksburg be reduced from 6 to only 2?

My understand is that the current BRT studies were conducted between 2010 and 2013 when Clarksburg's population was only 25% of its current size and before commuting patterns shifted significantly in a post-COVID world.

I am confident that studies would show that we need BOTH BRT and additional roadways. If we are to take the BRT plan seriously, a new study needs to be developed and completed that compares the impacts of the current traffic patterns, a BRT plan, and a BTR plus M83 plan. **So we are asking you to WAIT, and keep M83 in the Transportation Master Plan — until updated studies are completed.**

Finally, we've learned a lot about building roads that truly serve communities since the original design of M83. It's time for a fresh perspective rooted in the **Strong Towns** approach, which prioritizes people, places, and sustainability over outdated highway models.

Rethinking M83 can relieve traffic congestion while creating human-scaled streets that connect neighborhoods safely, incorporate transit options, and preserve the environment. A 4 lane highway version of M83 doesn't have to be an all or nothing proposition.

We are asking you to WAIT and keep M83 in the Transportation Master Plan — so M83 can be redesigned in a way to address concerns while meeting needs.

You have told us time and time again to wait for our infrastructure, now we are asking you to wait.

Wait until we have accurate and updated data.

Wait until conceptual plans become a reality.

Wait until real solutions with realistic costs and timelines can be compared to M83.

Wait, and keep M83 in the Transportation Master Plan.

Thank you for your time and for considering the needs of the Clarksburg community.