

**To:** Kate Stewart, President, all members of the Montgomery County Council

**Testimony from:** Marion Edey, [REDACTED] Menlo Avenue, Silver Spring MD 20910 representing Sierra Club.

**Testimony Re:** Master Plan of Highways and Transitways, 2025 Technical Update,

**Date:** July 8, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today. I am speaking on behalf of myself and the Montgomery County Sierra Club. I urge you please to remove the proposed Midcounty Highway extended/M83 from the Master Plan of highways and Transitways (MPOHT), as recommended by the Planning Board.

If the County is sincere in upholding its previous climate and transportation policies, you cannot justify keeping I-83 in your master plan.

Montgomery County's 2021 Climate Action Plan recommends that we expand public transit, limit major road construction, and retain and increase our tree canopy. The County's 2024 draft Hazard Mitigation plan says we "need to prioritize development which de-emphasizes a car-centric lifestyle". We are gradually moving away from this lifestyle. Young people don't drive nearly as much as their parents did. The proposed highway 1-83 is a relic of our car addicted past, and will perpetuate our dependence on fossil fuels.

Instead we need to make major investments in rapid bus and rail transit along route 355 and the I-270 corridor. We should extend the Red Line Metrorail to Germantown, expand service on the (MARC) Brunswick Line, bring back more bus stops for the people in Clarksburg, create places where people can "park and ride", and increase affordable housing in areas served by rapid transit.

The proposed I-83 highway would destroy or degrade forests, streams and wetlands in Germantown, Gaithersburg and Montgomery Village. It will fragment wildlife habitat. It will damage five popular public parks, and impact 100 acres of bio-diverse interior forest, some of the best we have in Maryland.

This highway would bisect three upcounty communities which have diverse, lower income populations who depend a lot on public transit. They will suffer

disproportionately from the noise of I-83 construction and the toxic air pollution from diesel and gasoline exhaust. They will suffer too from the loss of tree cover we so badly need in the time of climate change, and the loss of parks and green space they need for space and walks in nature.

The damage to stream valleys and riparian areas would likely be even greater than estimated, given Maryland's insane mitigation policies, which allow companies to "mitigate" the damage done in one watershed by tearing apart another stream valley somewhere else. The other stream thus targeted may not be as degraded and not in need of such an intervention. But in this way, the damage done by any new highway is compounded.

For all these reasons, we ask you to permanently remove M-83 from the master Plan.

Marion Edey, for Sierra Club

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