

July 10, 2025

Dear Honorable Members of the Montgomery County Council,

I urge you to remove the northern section of the Midcounty Highway Extended (“M83”) from the 2025 Technical Update to the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways (MPOHT) this year, in 2025.

The proposed M83 highway is an out-moded, 60+ year old relic that harms people & property, destroys public parkland & natural resources, and fails to address modern-day mobility and travel patterns.

The County’s professional planning staff (in their February 6, 2025 Staff Report for Planning Board MPOHT Worksession #1), the County’s Department of Transportation (letter dated July 1, 2025 to Council President Stewart), and the Montgomery County Planning Board (in their votes on February 13, 2025 and April 10, 2025)---**all recommended the removal of M83 highway from the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways.**

Mobility

- Proposed M83 highway will not be an ‘expressway’ or ‘speedway’ from Clarksburg to Montgomery Village, as it will have five major intersections (Ridge Road, Brink Road, Middlebrook Road, Watkins Mill Road, and Montgomery Village Avenue) along its 5-mile route.
- The County’s *Midcounty Corridor Study, Supplemental Report*, dated February 10, 2017, concluded that M83 highway will result in a reduction in travel time between Clarksburg and Montgomery Village of less than 10 minutes (Page 5-2, Figure 5-1: *2040 Travel Time Analysis Summary*)---a miniscule time savings, grossly out of proportion to M83’s environmental damage, human injury, and extraordinary cost.
- Utilizing existing transportation infrastructure and systems is the sound & sensible approach to transportation planning in the 21st century—in lieu of M83 highway.
- Following is a listing of viable and realistic mobility improvements and transportation system expansions—as alternatives to proposed M83 highway—that will enhance traffic flow, increase capacity, accommodate higher regional traffic volumes, as well as reduce congestion and lower vehicle emissions in the Clarksburg, Germantown and Gaithersburg region (expanded narratives on these M83 alternatives are included at the end of this email)
 - Expanding Ride-On Transit service in the Upcounty, including Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) to Clarksburg
 - Enhancement of the MARC Brunswick Line to an all-day, two-way transit system
 - Brink Road/Wightman Road Corridor {turning lanes}

- Brink Road/Wightman Road Intersection {enhancement}
- Snouffer School Road, MD 115 {upgrade northern section}
- Goshen Road {accelerate CIP funding}
- Frederick Road, MD 355 {expand travel lanes}
- Woodfield Road, MD 124 {widen through lanes}
- Observation Drive/Little Seneca Parkway {continuation & connection}

Natural Resources

- Proposed M83 highway bisects six (6) public parks (Wildcat Branch Stream Valley Park, Seneca Crossing Local Park, North Germantown Greenway Stream Valley Park, Seneca Creek Stream Valley Park, Blohm Park {Gaithersburg}, South Valley Park {Montgomery Village Open Space}. If retained in the MPOHT, the M83's probable and eventual construction will result in a profoundly detrimental impact to our public forestlands, streams, wetlands, floodplains, and unique topographical gradients.
- Parkland acreage shrinkage, habitat degradation, diminished user experiences, and obliteration of a portion of the Seneca Creek Greenway Trail will result if M83 remains in the MPOHT and constructed. This is not stewardship of our treasured, public, natural assets. 'Mitigation' cannot replace the resources, natural systems, and biodiversity that are now present---and thriving---in the alignment of proposed M83 highway.
- The Montgomery County Department of Parks, in a memo to the County Planning Department dated November 14, 2013 and entitled, M83 Midcounty Highway Park Impacts, writes on Page 11: *"The Master Plan alignments (8 and 9) with an approximate 180 ft. wide limit of disturbance would have a potentially calamitous impact to resources described above. These alignments bisect three of the largest biodiversity areas in the County (figure 1)."* And on Page 12: *"The proposed M83 Master Plan alignment will bisect the trail, reducing the longest uninterrupted section by a mile. It is also important to note that while the Master Plan alignment crosses the trail only once, the new highway will be within sight and hearing of half of the northern section of the trail, severely compromising the trail users' experience."*

Communities

- The alignment of proposed M83 highway is currently a wooded oasis. These climate-resilience forests provide cooling shade, purify the air, and contribute positively to quality of life---especially in the high-density neighborhoods along the alignment.

- Proposed M83 highway is a threat to thousands of people who live in the 500 residential dwellings that directly abut M83's alignment.
- Proposed M83 highway will, if retained and constructed, imperil public health by increasing air pollution, noise pollution, and thermal pollution for thousands of county residents.
- The alignment of proposed M83 highway traverses areas with higher concentrations of socio-economic disadvantaged communities, compared to the county as a whole, as described by the County's new Community Equity Index
<https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/equity-agenda-for-planning/community-equity-index-analysis/>

Finally, the County's 2017 resolution No. 18-957, Transportation Solutions for Northwest Montgomery County, nullified M83 highway's utility and prohibits use of M83 highway in land use plans, land development projects, and for addressing future roadway capacity needs and regional traffic movement.

The Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments' Transportation Planning Board approved *Visualize 2045: A Long-Range Transportation Plan for the National Capital Region*, which removed M83 highway due to excessive pollution and air quality violations that would result if M83 was constructed.

I urge you to advance sound transportation policies, protect County residents, and preserve our public parkland and natural resources by voting to remove the northern section of M83 highway from the 2025 Technical Update to the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways in 2025. This proposed highway has already been extensively studied; there is no rationale to delay its removal from the MPOHT until a new transportation study is completed.

Sincerely,

Tim Goodfellow

[REDACTED]
 Gaithersburg, Maryland 20879

[REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]

- Expanding Ride-On Transit Service in the Upcounty, including Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) to Clarksburg.

The provision of convenient, frequent, and quick bus service is a realistic choice and viable option to substitute for full reliance on the private automobile.

- Enhancement of the MARC Brunswick Line as an all-day, two-way transit system
- Brink Road/Wightman Road Corridor [Turning lanes]

The Brink/Wightman/Snuffer School Road corridor runs in a parallel direction as the proposed M83 highway alignment. The reduction in the number of planned through lanes on Wightman Road from 4 to 2, approved in the 2016 Montgomery Village Master Plan, does not foreclose opportunities to improve regional traffic flow and create more efficient---unimpeded—movement on Wightman Road, as well as on Brink Road. The addition of turn lanes or acceleration/deceleration lanes at select entrances to residential subdivisions and other roadway intersections along Wightman Road and Brink Road will improve the operation, safety, and through-movement travel on these roads.

- Brink Road/Wightman Road intersection [Enhancement]

This notoriously inefficient 3-way intersection results in traffic bottlenecks, excessive queuing, and travel delays. The Brink Road Bridge project (CIP# 502104) over Great Seneca Creek includes planned improvements to the Wightman Road intersection with Brink Road. In addition to providing better protection for the Great Seneca Creek riparian area, a reconfigured intersection, such as a roundabout, that improves traffic flow, reduces delays for peak hour trips in the Midcounty Corridor should be a priority for this current CIP project.

- Snuffer School Road (MD 115) [Upgrade Northern Section]

This Boulevard (as shown in the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways Functional Classification list) runs 2.5 miles from Goshen Road to MD 124, Woodfield Road, and is part of the parallel route to the M83 alignment, described above. The County has, through CIP project 501109 (Snuffer School Road), greatly increased traffic capacity on this roadway by adding 2 through lanes in each direction with a continuous center turn lane from Centerway Road to Sweet Autumn Drive (the MD State Highway Administration continued this improvement from Sweet Autumn Drive to MD 124, Woodfield Road). CIP project 501119 (Snuffer School Road North – Webb Tract) added traffic lights, turn lanes, and select roadway widening from Centerway Road to Alliston Hollow Way.

The remaining 1.1-mile northern section of Snuffer School Road (from approximately 450 feet north of Turkey Thicket Drive to Goshen Road) is just 2 lanes, with significant traffic delays and back-ups at the operationally-deficient intersection of Chesley Knoll Drive/ Lewisberry Drive with Snuffer School Road and at the Welbeck Way/Snuffer School Road intersection. This remaining 1.1 miles of northern Snuffer School Road is in need of widening to 4 lanes (2 through lanes in each direction, with turning movement enhancements) to increase capacity and accommodate higher volumes of traffic, as an alternative to constructing the proposed M83 highway. The upgrade of the existing northern section of Snuffer School Road will complete the entire Snuffer School Road network improvement and provide greater enhancements to regional connectivity.

- Goshen Road [Accelerate CIP funding]

This roadway has a Boulevard classification and is another north/south alternate route to the proposed M83 highway corridor. Goshen Road is in the County's CIP as project# 501107 for upgrade from its current 2-lane configuration to a 4-lane divided highway for 3.5 miles from Girard Street to just north of Warfield Road. The project will "address safety issues and reduce existing and future congestion and address geometric deficiencies which contribute to crashes, thereby improving vehicular and pedestrian safety." Many intersections along this road are already at or will reach failure (Level of Service 'F') by 2040 per the CIP project description. The final design and construction for this enhancement is currently beyond the 6-year time frame.

The final design, land acquisition, and construction of the Goshen Road project needs to be accelerated in the County CIP budget process to realize the increased capacity, safety enhancements, intersection operation improvements, and the reduction in traffic congestion delays in the Midcounty Corridor.

- Frederick Road (MD 355) [Expand travel lanes]

MD 355 (dual classifications of Controlled Major Highway and Boulevard in the Functional Classification Listing) is a significant corridor in the County that connects the Upcounty (Clarksburg area) to Bethesda and Washington, DC and provides access to residential, commercial and employment areas along its entire length. MD 355 is a 4—9 lane road, but narrows to 2 lanes near the northern exit from the Ridge Road Recreational Park at Milestone Manor Road.

Even with recent intersection improvements and signalizations along MD 355, including the West Old Baltimore Road and Brink Road intersections, MD 355 remains a Major Highway with just 2 through-travel lanes serving a community in Clarksburg of approximately 27,000 residents. Delays and queuing do occur at the signalized and unsignalized intersections along MD 355 due to traffic volumes that clog insufficient turn lanes and single through lanes. Multiple internal subdivision streets, boulevards, and neighborhood connectors link to MD 355 to provide access to a major County and regional thoroughfare, as well as redundancy in the local Clarksburg transportation network. Roadway capacity increases along this Major Highway should be a priority of the County and State, with roadway widening to accommodate a higher volume of traffic and reduce congestion delays as an alternative to constructing the proposed M83 highway

- Woodfield Road (MD 124) [Widen through lanes]

Woodfield Road, between Emory Grove Road and Warfield Road is classified as a Boulevard. The section of Woodfield Road between Snouffer School Road and Emory Grove Road (approximately 4,240 feet) is primarily a 2-lane roadway with select turning lanes and acceleration/deceleration lanes at intersections. To increase capacity and reduce travel delays on this existing link, the 2 existing southbound travel lanes near the Snouffer School Road/Muncaster Mill Road intersection should be extended to meet the 2 existing southbound travel lanes approximately 350 feet north of the Emory Grove Road/Woodfield Road intersection. The 2 existing northbound through-travel lanes on Woodfield Road should be continued (with added turn lanes) for an additional 1,740 feet to meet the 2 through lanes at the Snouffer School Road/Muncaster Mill Road intersection. I realize that this Woodfield Road project has been removed from the State's Development and Evaluation Program and identified as 'in need of reevaluation' in MDOT's FY2024—2029 CTP but, in my opinion, this improvement is regionally important as an alternative to the M83 highway

- Observation Drive/Little Seneca Parkway [Continuation & Connection]

These roadways are currently under review and analysis with the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan, including a recommendation for a realignment of planned Observation Drive that avoids a sensitive stream valley. The continuation and construction of these two roadways have fewer damaging environmental and community impacts—by an order of magnitude—than M83 highway. Additionally, Observation Drive and Little Seneca Parkway are existing, centrally-located, integral routes within the highly-dense Clarksburg community. The continuation of these roadways will provide an additional north/south movement option to access Milestone, Seneca Meadows, Montgomery College, Holy Cross Hospital and---importantly---I-270. North/south movement is the primary travel and commuting pattern for Clarksburg residents; it is NOT M83's long indirect, eastward-arc, south to Montgomery Village through forested slopes, public parkland and low-density residential communities.