

M-NCPPC Planning Board, Montgomery County, MD
Public Hearing for Master Plan of Highways and Transitways

Testimony by: Wallace Garthright, Ph.D., Gaithersburg, MD
January 9, 2025

Subject: Midcounty Highway Extended/M83 Highway Removal from Master Plan of Highways and Transitways

Members of the Planning Board, I think I know why M83 Highway has remained in the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways even though for more than 30 years it has been clear that the Montgomery County Council correctly refuses to build it. When I began my career building mathematical models, experienced colleagues advised me: don't fall in love with your models. They said that models cannot give the final answers. Modelling prepares for engineering studies, and studies often show a different best alternative. I think M-83 has stayed in the Master Plan because some former staff fell in love with their transportation model. The Council will not build M-83 because of impacts, benefits, alternatives, and cost. But, is there any harm in just leaving M83 in the plan? Yes, and the harm is serious.

I think the greatest harm of having M-83 in the plan might be why you are considering removing it. Having M-83 in the plan is misleading home buyers. Resident testimony reveals that sales people have painted unrealistic pictures of easy commutes.

Home buyers don't know that County Council decisions for the past 32 years show that M-83 will not be built. The bridge where Watkins Mill Rd crosses the M-83 right-of-way could have been built to fit into M-83, but the Council rejected that design and chose an incompatible design in 1992. The Council never promised the road, and in 2017, the Council passed a Resolution saying that County plans could not rely on M-83 being built. Both the current County Executive and the previous one have opposed that highway. Thus, keeping M-83 in the Master Plan misleads our home buyers.

In conclusion, thank you for considering removal of M83 Highway. If you remove it, you will correct an over-reliance on a model and you will protect our future home buyers.