

September 9, 2025

Montgomery County Council

Re: UBC MNPPC Wheaton Plan Statement

My name is Malcolm Wilson. I have lived at three different Wheaton addresses over 63 years. The current residence, where my family has been for 29 years, is right in the bullseye of this proposal, which I feel is a misguided and unnecessary project. The last public hearing on this, July 16th, at Odessa Shannon Middle school, made it clear to our local representative that this project is not welcomed by the majority of the community.

We were misled on the “Pilot Program” portion of this plan as well. As usual, an 18 month plan, scheduled to expire in August of this year, was actually moved to permanent status in May without notification to the community. Ms. Fani-Gonzalas was asked about this “status” at the Odessa Shannon meeting, as the attendees were under the impression this was still in “pilot” status, and, not surprisingly, she did not inform the hearing that this was now permanent.

I have been opposed to this since the initial “pilot plan” for bus and bike lanes, and in spite of the community overwhelmingly opposing that first plan, you have bought it back on steroids. I have followed this since its inception and have attended the hearings. I have talked to my neighbors, and encouraged them, for or against, to provide their opinions. My concerns are listed below and follow the order of your plan as shown on the website. For clarity, I am only making my statement on the Amherst to Dennis portion of the plan, because that is where I see the section that would most impact me, and where I see the lack of need for this.

1. Economic Impact of this plan. Where will the money come from? With Federal and State funding seeing drastic cuts, who and how will you pay for this? Not only the infrastructure for the roads and utilities, but the necessary expansion of the schools in the cluster. The required upkeep, seeing as how this is currently minimal at best? What about a plan for an expanded police and fire department presence as your plan looks to explode, and thus dwarf, the already strained resources?

Overcrowding impact. Many of the schools within the boundaries are already utilizing portable class rooms. The impact on learning, especially at a school with a large ESOL population, will be affected by overcrowded class rooms.

“Establish an overlay zone to define neighborhood residential building types, prioritize development standards that further compact growth and transportation safety, and explore

modifications, as necessary, to achieve transitions from larger to smaller buildings. The overlay zone will apply to properties recommended for rezoning in the plan.”

“Locate higher building densities and mixed uses at locations near BRT stations with existing commercial properties, including the WTOP property, the Kemp Mill Shopping Center, and Four Corners, and ensure new development transitions from larger to smaller buildings to adjacent residential properties.”

2. *A plan that calls for buildings between 3-4 stories high along University Boulevard between Eascrest and Nicholas Drive is going to drive the current residents in single family homes out. Rezoning to allow for the McMansioning of the neighborhood will do little for affordability. Houses in this neighborhood now are selling for an average of \$650,000. Creating density does nothing to improve quality of life.*

Have you also considered the impact that endless construction to both the corridor to create these lanes and new buildings will have? Creating more delays in traffic does not increase the quality of life for those of us here, who have to drive. The specter of another major infrastructure project coming on the heels of a yet completed Purple Line does not thrill me.

Sure, it's easy for the MNCPPC to say “Nothing's mandatory. Nobody has to change anything.” Well, if I came in and overdeveloped your neighborhood, I'll bet you would make a change. I have no desire to live in a “Pike and Rose” type of environment and I am confident that many of my neighbors feel the same way. So, yes, by approving and moving forward with this, I believe you will force folks to make a change that aligns with the same reason that they originally moved to this area.

“Implement a connected network of streets, comfortable walkways, and low-stress bicycle facilities, and right-size roadways and intersections to create a safer and more comfortable environment for people who are walking, rolling, bicycling, riding transit, and driving.”

3 Again, speaking for the Amherst to Arcola area, there is already newly paved walking, bike, rolling path in the park that connects these two roads through the park, and provides access to Sligo Creek Parkway. What could be more low stress than the park, not to mention the cost effectiveness. And, it appears from you plans that you intend to connect University Boulevard to Arcola by cutting through the park by extending Inwood Avenue and/or adding a connecting street on the planned WTOP Tower site? How would that impact, on the side north of University Blvd, the folks in that neighborhood?

The “bike-only lane” usage has been minimal. I use this route every day, twice a day at a minimum, and bike traffic has not been noticeable. For the past two years, I have implored whomever was responsible to find a way to edge the existing sidewalks to return them to their original width, to no avail, and to have

overgrowth that was blocking traffic control signs and crosswalk signal boxes to be trimmed back; which was accomplished after more than a year of, for lack of a better word, complaining. This includes the Inwood House area, where the intersection of University/Inwood was so overgrown that folks could not access one of the corners. If you can't maintain what is in place now, what is the strategy for a more complex route? A decent snow could render University Boulevard into a single lane road.

“Provide dedicated transit lanes along University Boulevard and Colesville Road.”

4. Again, this proposal, under the guise of a “pilot program” has already failed once, yet you decided that maybe, if you painted the lanes, (at an estimated cost of around \$250,000.00), it would make them more acceptable. The majority of the folks polled the first time around overwhelmingly rejected this. It has, despite what your statements, created longer waits in traffic. I believe that the quoted time is “15 seconds”, but I am guessing that is a “middle of the day” survey, and not an evening or morning rush hour. This time matters to folks shuffling kids back and forth to schools, events, practices, etc. and should not be minimized to suit your needs. And, the lack of enforcement for the “bus only” lanes has created what is essentially a passing lane for those with no regard for the restrictions. As much as I oppose these lanes, I still respect the law. Anyone who lives in this corridor, and I am aware that none of the planners do, will tell you, the pinch point for traffic is from Dennis Avenue to Colesville Road. Dedicated lanes are not necessary on University Boulevard between Amherst and Dennis. This is not the problem you allege it to be.

“Make University Boulevard more resilient to climate change by incorporating tree canopy, shaded bus stops, improved stormwater management, and landscaped buffers.”

5. The lack of available funding to maintain these bus stops and landscaped buffers will render them “eyesores” within a year. Snowplows bend the reflector poles, storms blow debris around them and no one, except for the exceptional neighbors, ever cleans them up. I’ve seen this on Plyers Mill Road and Arcola Avenue, and this will be no different. Again, I go back to the point of limited funding for maintenance and ask, how will this be different?

I appreciate the opportunity to present my questions and concerns, and to steadfastly state my opposition. It is my hope that the parties involved (MNPPC and the County Council) will listen to the majority on this and not ignore us in this dubious pursuit of “progress”.

Malcolm Wilson
----- Easecrest Drive
Wheaton, MD 20902
