

Testimony on the University Boulevard Corridor (UBC) Plan

I would like to point out several things about the University Boulevard Corridor (UBC) Plan. As you may have seen, a petition against this plan has already gathered about 1000 signatures. I will explain below my own concerns with this plan.

I am a professor at the University of Maryland in College Park, and I've lived in Kemp Mill since 1992. My daughter also attended Northwood High School. So I've been travelling back and forth on University Blvd almost daily for over 30 years, and I'm quite familiar with what works and what doesn't work.

First of all, in terms of what works, I can say that the project a few years ago to tame traffic on Arcola Ave to make it safer for pedestrians **has** worked. Similarly, the speed cameras on University Blvd between Caddington/Gabel and Eisner have also worked to cut down on speeding and unsafe driving, which used to be much more common.

However, a comprehensive plan for traffic and transit along University Blvd requires careful coordination with the State, with MWATA, and with PG County. Montgomery County cannot do this alone.

Take public transit for example. Yes, this is essential, and getting more people onto transit instead of their cars is a good idea. But it's simply not working, for a number of reasons.

It used to be fairly easy to commute from Wheaton/Kemp Mill to College Park by the C2 bus on University Blvd. But WMATA just retired this route and replaced it with the M12, which follows the old route as far as Langley Park and then veers south to Hyattsville Crossing. In addition, University Blvd from a bit before the intersection of Piney Branch all the way to College Park looks largely like a minefield. What was supposed to be a 2-year project of Purple Line construction has stretched into 10 years with no end in sight, and what used to be a lively commercial district along this stretch of University Blvd has been turned into a depressing wasteland. (Drive this stretch of the road yourself and you'll see what I mean.) If the Purple Line is ever finished, then maybe rapid transit along University Blvd will stand a chance, but not at the moment.

Furthermore, before we create more dedicated bus lanes, we should do a serious study of the existing ones to see if they are working. The current bus/right turn lanes along University Blvd are almost free of buses and bikes; most of those people driving in them are drivers who simply are ignoring the lane markings. So without enforcement, a bus lane doesn't

do anything.

Finally, the #1 traffic issue in the area is the Four Corners intersection of routes 193 and 29. During rush hour, I often find I need to wait about 7-10 light cycles to get through this intersection (in either direction along University Blvd). Part of the problem, but by no means all of it, is that during morning rush hour there is a huge backup along southbound 29 waiting to turn right onto the 495 outer loop toward Bethesda/Rockville. This backup often backs up to the point where it partially blocks eastbound University Blvd. The county along with the state highway department has to figure out a way for this to work more smoothly. But taking a lane away from University Blvd is I'm sure not the solution.