

Testimony of Barkha Bishnoi  
Montgomery County Council  
Hearing on the proposed Upcounty Transportation Study  
for the Clarksburg to Montgomery Village Corridor  
Tuesday, September 30, 2025

Good afternoon,

My name is Barkha Bishnoi, and I attend Richard Montgomery High School. As president of my school's Climate Club, I've worked for green school buildings and greener transportation, which I hope to continue through a future in environmental policy. Today, I am in favor of the proposed transportation study for the Clarksburg to Montgomery Village corridor. I support the TAME Coalition's emphasis on maintaining and expanding transit systems in the Upcounty.

For many students, public transportation is essential. Every day, I see classmates boarding Ride On buses to get to and from school, and after-school jobs and extracurriculars. **For the many students who don't have a parent available to drive them during the workday and cannot drive themselves, transit is what makes education and after-school opportunities accessible to all.**

As a student in the International Baccalaureate program at RM, where students come from all across the county, public transportation is crucial. School bus routes don't reach everywhere, with students often still requiring additional transportation to get to school. For myself, the closest school bus stop is over 2 miles away from my home, while the nearest Ride On Bus stop at Shady Grove is easily walkable.

As a former Clarksburg resident, I've noticed the disparity in transit use in Clarksburg compared to Rockville. When Clarksburg and other places upcounty have improved connectivity, more people will choose transit. Ride On bus service must be expanded to meet this Upcounty need.

With school buses overcapacity and taking long, winding routes, Ride On buses offer students a faster and more direct option. While Ride On routes serve parts of the Upcounty, no single bus route runs directly from Bethesda to Clarksburg. One of the biggest gaps is along Route 355.

Extending the Ride On Extra Route 101, on Route 355 all the way to Clarksburg, would make taking the bus more convenient for students and other residents. This improvement can be done quickly. This would strengthen transit access without the high costs of Bus Rapid Transit.

But I also want to recognize the progress we've already made: Ride On buses are now fare-free, ridership is increasing, and the county has chosen to move beyond outdated highway expansion with the removal of M-83 northern section from the master plan. These are steps in the right direction- toward a future where public transit advances equity, opportunity, and sustainability for students and all residents in Montgomery County.

Thank you for your time.