

Good afternoon County Council members,

My name is Lorena Wu and I am a sophomore at Poolesville High School. I serve as the Co-President of Eco MoCo, the largest student-led environmental nonprofit in Montgomery County and an international organization that engages students through environmental advocacy, education, and stewardship. Along with other Eco MoCo members, I witnessed your vote on July 29 that removed the proposed M83 highway from the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways. Thank you for protecting our forests and streams, and enabling a shift to focus on transit.

Today, I am here to testify in support of the proposed comprehensive study of Upcounty travel needs and master-planned transportation capacity.

We need improved transportation choices for all residents, including youth and those who do not drive. This study must focus on improving existing transit networks, including Ride On bus routes on *existing* roads—and avoiding new highways and highway expansions.

For this study, as for all of your transportation decisions, you must put transit *first*, because of the negative implications that the construction of new highways has, including the promotion of increased car travel and greenhouse gas emissions, which further burden the environment for all county residents.

As a student who lives in Germantown, yet goes to school in Poolesville, I have a half hour commute each way to school every day. Many of my friends and classmates have even longer commutes, sometimes upwards of an hour. Despite many of Poolesville's students taking the school buses to and from school, there are also many who utilize public transit. Those who have an extra period at the end of the day, which ends at around 3:15, yet do not want to take the school-provided 4:30 bus after their study hall, are able to take the Ride On bus which arrives at 3:45 next to the school. This study must consider that many

youth in Montgomery County depend on **both** Ride On buses and MCPS buses to travel between school and home.

Whether it's to the library, to an Eco MoCo meeting, to an extracurricular activity, or to hang out with friends at a local cafe, public transportation has been a vital factor for my success.

Your decision earlier this year to make Ride On buses fare-free is incredibly helpful for students, so I would like to commend you for this positive change for transit riders. However, more work must be done for the reform of our transit system through this transportation study.

A specific need that we ask this transportation study to examine is more bus shelters to protect residents from heat waves and intense rains, caused by climate disruption. Currently, only fourteen percent of Ride On bus stops in Montgomery County are sheltered or have plans to be sheltered. We ask for this study to consider what it would take to double this and provide shelter for around **one-third** of Ride On bus stops.

Please consider my words when advocating for the proposed comprehensive study of Upcounty travel needs.

Thank you.