

Climate Coalition Montgomery County  
Testimony before the Montgomery County Council  
September 30, 2025

Good afternoon, my name is Karl Held and I am testifying today on behalf of the Climate Coalition of Montgomery County. We are a coalition of 19 member organizations who support the special appropriation for a comprehensive study of travel needs and transportation capacity along the Clarksburg to Montgomery Village corridor.

The Climate Coalition thanks the Council for their decision last July to remove the M83 highway northern section from the master plan. This action provides clarity for the Upcounty Transportation Study, helping us to focus on transit service options.

The Coalition requests that the Upcounty Transportation Study promote transit service and walkability/bikeability (also termed “people-centric transportation”), giving top priority to maintaining and expanding transit options, along with support for increased safe walking and cycling.

As you know, the transportation sector chapter of the Montgomery County Climate Action Plan (CAP) spells out several climate actions to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and address the climate emergency that we are facing. These include:

- Expanding transit service to double the amount of passenger trips taken from 2018 levels, so that nearly 100% of residents are able to connect within a reasonable time and distance with a high-frequency transit stop,
- Decreasing the amount of private passenger miles traveled, thereby reducing traffic, and
- Transitioning to electric vehicles from fossil-fueled powered vehicles.

The shifting of our transportation investments away from fossil-fuel based highways, and towards transit and walkability also provides local air quality and Safety/Vision Zero improvements.

To accomplish the expansion of Upcounty transit service envisioned, we recommend that the County fully fund and expand the available transit systems that already serve the Upcounty. This includes Ride On Bus routes; the Red Line metro station at Shady Grove; and the MARC train Brunswick line stations at Germantown and Boyds.

I want to take a second to thank Councilmembers for making Ride On Fare-Free for all, which encourages increased ridership throughout the county

Several additional steps need to be taken, including:

- Implement the County's Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) plan for the route 355 BRT North section.
- Restructure the local route network to support the BRT corridor, and
- Immediately provide increased Ride On Bus service to the Upcounty, particularly by increasing the frequency of the most-popular bus routes that serve the communities along the Route 355 corridor.
- The recent MCDOT report, "Ride On Reimagined" is planning a host of changes along these lines; we urge you to fully fund these bus service improvements.

The County should also increase transit access by (i) adding more BRT stops and directly connecting them to pedestrian and bicycle networks and (ii) ensuring that low-density areas are better connected through demand response services and/or neighborhood circulators.

In summary, climate-sane transportation focuses on improved and expanded transit service, with walkable and bikeable communities, to reduce traffic congestion -- and is the best transportation approach that supports all residents' basic daily needs for mobility.

Thank you for your efforts to advance transportation solutions for the Clarksburg to Germantown/Montgomery Village corridor.