

9 February 2026

Dear members of the Montgomery County Council:

I am writing to share information and views regarding the proposed FY27-32 CIP Improvements Program (CIP) budget, and in particular the proposal to spend an additional \$116 million on design, land acquisition, and construction of a **Median lane BRT implementation on US 29** (Colesville Rd) that has **many serious concerns**. This written correspondence supplements the in-person testimony that I gave at the public hearing on February 9, 2026.

I have lived more than 31 years in Montgomery County, including more than 22 years in the South Four Corners neighborhood that includes US 29 and a number of properties that would be directly affected by the proposed BRT implementation. I am a past President of the South Four Corners Citizens Association (SFCCA), and am currently the SFCCA Representative to the Corridor Advisory Committee (CAC) for US 29. I am writing here as an individual resident.

First and foremost, this **funding request is premature**, because the Council has not held a separate hearing on the project, as required by the Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan approved in 2013. The following is from page 8 of adopted Resolution No. 17-952, https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/Resources/Files/res/2013/20131126_17-952.pdf (bolding added):

"A vital facet of facility planning is to receive input and feedback from affected property owners, civic and business groups, and transit riders and road users, including public forums and workshops, electronic newsletters, and other forms of outreach. **No County funding for transit corridor implementation nor additional rights-of-way, as proposed in this Plan or in subsequent studies, will be considered until the Council is satisfied that this fundamental public engagement requirement has been fulfilled and a Council public hearing solely for each corridor or combination of connected corridors is held.**"

The Median lane option has been studied multiple times in the past, most recently in the *US 29 Mobility and Reliability Study*. The median lanes would be 24/7 barrier-separated, BRT-only bus lanes in the middle of US 29, requiring complete reconstruction of parts of the US 29 roadway to create separate lanes for only the Flash buses, which will serve only some of the transit riders on the corridor. For the majority of the US 29 corridor, the Flash buses would still remain in mixed traffic.

A Managed Lane option was also studied in the *US 29 Mobility and Reliability Study*. The **Managed Lane option** involves the creation of dedicated HOV lanes during peak hours, that are shared by the BRT Flash and other buses. There would also be various roadway, intersection, and traffic management improvements implemented. Unlike the significant negative impacts of the dedicated, BRT-only median lanes, the HOV restrictions would only be needed during peak hours, not 24/7.

In 2022, the County Council Staff Analysis and Recommendations found “**the Managed Lane option is clearly superior in nearly every meaningful metric.**” “**The Managed Lane option would provide the most travel time savings to all commuters, not just those who can use BRT to get to their destination.**” See the appended study results for some of the factual evidence for these conclusions, including the fact that the Managed Lane option would be faster even for the BRT buses!

Please also note the following about the preliminary “35% design” completed in 2025 by the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) for the implementation of barrier-separated median lanes for the BRT Flash buses on a portion of US 29:

- The dedicated median lanes would be **for BRT Flash buses only**, and would **not** benefit other vehicles or other types of buses (Metro, RideOn, school, and commuter buses).
- The preliminary design **requires purchasing property and easement areas** in order to **widen US 29 up to 12 feet**, taking away yards, parking spaces, and even one business’s office building (likely closing the business).
- The proposed **reconstruction** of US 29 **would be costly and disruptive**, including relocation of utilities, removal of trees, and purchase of land. The residents and businesses along US 29 do not want disruptions **similar to the Purple Line project**.
- The median lane design includes **removing traffic lanes in each direction on US 29**, with **24/7 impacts** on all other vehicles, likely leading to increased cut-through neighborhood traffic.
- The median lanes would introduce **numerous left-turn prohibitions** requiring **three new traffic signals to access neighborhoods and businesses**.
- For the **majority of the US 29 corridor**, the **Flash buses would still remain in mixed traffic**. There would be **numerous transitions** between mixed traffic, a single median lane, double median lanes, and a single reversible median lane.

There are less expensive, less disruptive, and more effective alternatives. In an apples-to-apples comparison in 2022, as part of the *US 29 Mobility and Reliability Study*, the **Managed Lane option** was **34% less expensive** than the Median lane option. The Managed Lane option would not require purchasing property and easement areas in order to widen US 29, nor relocation of utilities and removal of trees, nor removal of traffic lanes, nor any left-turn prohibitions or new traffic lights.

Regarding effectiveness: A Council Staff Report in November 2025, prepared for the Council’s Transportation & Environment (TE) Committee, noted that with the 24/7 median lanes, “Southbound AM transit travel time decreases 40% compared to no-build.” However, the results of the *US 29 Mobility and Reliability Study* (see below) showed a **51% decrease** with the **Managed Lane** alternative. For Northbound PM transit travel time, the decreases compared to no-build are: 14% for the median lanes, but 31% for the Managed Lane alternative.

Many Montgomery County residents support the general concept of public transit and the BRT. However, they want any implementation to be **financially responsible**, supported by data, and beneficial to all residents and commuters. **The current US 29 BRT Phase 2 is none of these.**

In light of the facts above, and especially given the current fiscal situation in the County and State, I urge you to **abandon the more expensive, more disruptive, less effective median lane alternative** that would be exclusively for the BRT buses on a portion of US 29. This one is easy -- there are less expensive, less disruptive, and more effective alternatives. Also, please **adhere to the public engagement requirement of the approved Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan before considering any more County funding for this BRT implementation on US 29.**

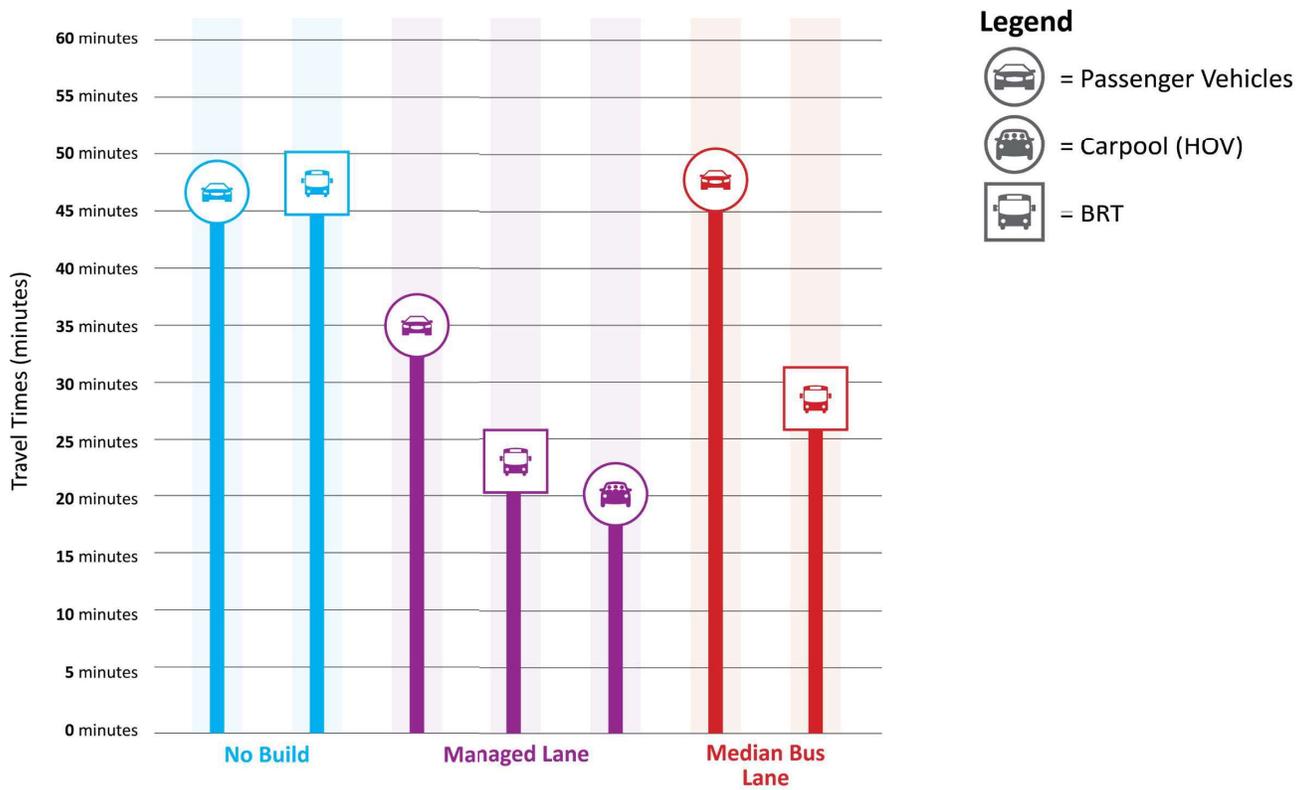
Thank you for your consideration,

John Holden, Ph.D.
Silver Spring, Maryland

US 29 Mobility and Reliability Study – Project Findings

Planning Board
11.10.22

Summary of Results Travel Time - AM Southbound



Summary of Results Travel Time - PM Northbound

