Testimony on ZTA 26-01 Data Center Commercial Uses - Data Center

February 26, 2026

Jeremy Stanton
Gaithersburg, MD

With the AI hype-cycle cresting over its peak, wise observers are compelled to ask: what might the over-investment in data centers be used for once the AI bubble inevitably bursts? Unlike the over-investment in fiber-optic networks during the dotcom boom, the chips used in data center servers have a 2-3 year lifespan. By the time the post-bubble economy gets moving again, the data centers will be near worthless: blights on the landscape serving only to remind Montgomery County residents of the heedless embrace by Council of the latest short-term promises made by Silicon Alley billionaires.

 Even if it were true that "this time really is different", the data center build-out ignores the fact that the US grid and energy supply just isn't ready to support an additional 60 - 90 GW of power consumption from planned data center projects. Where would this power come from? From whom would it be diverted? Where might the resources to support the energy, infrastructure, and computing hardware necessary for these data centers come from? The AI data center build-out is directly driving consumption of critical materials such as copper, silver, DRAM, and diesel, leading directly to rising prices, foreign conflicts, and puts our country in a weaker negotiating position with our strategic rivals.

 As of 2024, U.S. data centers consumed 183 terawatt-hours (TWh) of electricity, with projections suggesting this could rise to between 325-580 TWh by 2028, driven by AI. 325 TWh is nearly 4 times the 83 TWh of wind and solar energy produced in the US. By charging headlong into the data-center build-out, we'd be throwing away all of our gains on climate and green energy on yet another false techno-utopian promise. Yet this is not just the usual promise of an economic free lunch. No, AI and its data-center build-out is a promise that comes hand-in-hand with serious consequences--job losses from AI, health and environmental impacts of data centers, higher energy costs, mental health and cognitive impacts from AI-dependence, and the potential threat of runaway AGI--which will all land squarely at the feet of our political leaders.

 Perhaps it's time to slow down and approach this wisely. Things are far too uncertain on data centers right now. Most residents in MoCo and across the country have turned against data centers. The State is just beginning a study of data centers. The affordability crisis is directly

tied to data center capacity, our electric bills are already too high and the People's Counsel has said the proliferation of data centers is to blame. What is the rush to jump in and allow large scale data centers here?

 There is every reason to wait, particularly with a project with unknown impacts speeding toward approval with no regulations. Slow down - get this right. Some of the lack of transparency from the industry is by design. We rely on our leaders to not accept NDAs and "proprietary information" and get the facts before allowing a new land use here. Please include my comments in the hearing record.

Thank You,

Jeremy Stanton