

The Honorable Lawrence Hogan
Governor of Maryland
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

April 20, 2015
Dear Governor Hogan,

Congratulations on your election to governor of the wonderful state of Maryland.

The undersigned communities of Montgomery County write today seeking fairness and resolution to the unwelcome and avoidable consequences of a flawed state transit project that has enraged thousands of residents in Gaithersburg, North Potomac, Rockville, Darnestown and beyond.

The project is the Cities Corridor Transitway (CCT).

After years of civic action, public meeting attendance, committee volunteering, and numerous FOIA requests and meetings with politicians (in our homes, their offices, at coffee shops), no measures have been taken to reduce the negative impacts posed to homes, health and the environment.

In brief, the CCT project will bisect the suburban/rural upper Montgomery County landscape with an urban two-lane dedicated BRT system that is:

- A.) Aligned aggressively close to residential properties and neighborhood egresses,
- B.) Redundant with existing Ride On routes (See Attachment A), which currently operate well below capacity.

To whom have we spoken? Former Governor O'Malley and Anthony Brown, former Transportation Secretary Smith, Henry Kay and Rick Kiegel at the Maryland Transit Authority (MTA), Congressman Delaney, the Mayors of Gaithersburg and Rockville, Gaithersburg City Councilmembers, District 15 and 17 Maryland State Delegates, the State Highway Administration (SHA), Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission, the Montgomery County Planning Board, Maryland's Secretary of Transportation (Pete Rahn and Don Halligan), Montgomery County Department of Transportation (both past and present Directors), and the Montgomery County Executive's Office and County Council.

THE ISSUES:

1. Decisions about the CCT are made regardless of its effects on the community. The alignment, for example, goes out of its way to accommodate a future build-out of Belward Farm by Johns Hopkins. (See Attachment B.) Yet, Hopkins has produced no concrete plans/specifics for that property.
2. The CCT is not cost-effective. With its heavy up-front investment and subsequent maintenance costs, the proposed CCT is not the most cost-effective way to deal with increased road traffic. A gradual expansion and upgrading of the existing Ride-On bus service, as the need arises, is a smarter use of taxpayer resources.
3. The CCT route is longer in distance and time than current Ride On service. (See Attachment C.)
4. The debt service is projected to be an astronomical \$20M a year, based on the following assumptions:
 - Costs will not exceed the current budget of \$550M.
 - JHU contributes \$100M.
 - Financing terms resemble those of Virginia's Silver Line. This includes a 35-year loan amortization and obtaining a loan under the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA).

- A \$20M-per-year debt service puts the total cost at \$700M. To meet this, the CCT needs 2M riders per year, at \$10 per trip.* That's 5,479 riders per day (including Saturdays and Sundays) just to service the debt. This DOES NOT include operation and maintenance costs. (See Attachment D.)
 - Current Ride On fare: \$1.75 (one way), no matter how far you go.

5. Neighborhoods along the CCT alignment will be greatly and adversely affected:

- The CCT Line of Disturbance (LOD) goes five feet into backyards on Upshire Circle. When construction is complete, buses will run 10-20 feet from homes Upshire Circle homes and Vistas condos every three minutes. This puts 50MPH buses dangerously close to where children play.
- The CCT alignment, by law, necessitates noise mitigation between Great Seneca Highway and homes in Washingtonian Woods, but there is insufficient space to build a noise wall or berm.
- 1-2 homes will be lost in Mission Hills when Muddy Branch Road is widened by the County; this, because the CCT will occupy the median that the County previously tagged for road widening.
- The CCT will obstruct primary egresses to Washingtonian Woods and Mission Hills. These suburban subdivisions were built as a series of cul-de-sacs with car travel in mind. Note: There are no CCT station stops servicing these neighborhoods.
- Hundreds of mature trees will be lost along Great Seneca Highway.
- Muddy Branch and Washingtonian Woods Park — where children play, fishers fish, and walkers hike — will be harmed by runoff and airborne particulate matter.
- The alignment will result in massive back-ups on Muddy Branch Road due to the addition of two traffic lights — for a total of four traffic signals in a .55-mile span. This signal spacing ignores Federal Transportation Administration safety guidelines.
- The CCT divides King Farm in half, closing cross streets and impeding cross-community access.

6. Impacts to emergency vehicle access — police and fire/rescue — into Washingtonian Woods and Mission Hills have not been factored/presented.

7. Homeowners are not being compensated for loss in property values.

QUESTIONS UNANSWERED:

1. In addition to “Build” and “No Build” scenarios, why hasn’t a “Ride On Revamp” model been studied? Ride On is less than half-full along this segment, is scalable, and requires no build-out or collateral damage.
2. Can the projected 36,000 daily trips (in 2035) be backed-up in a way everyone understands? Volume at key “loading stations” is not well proven. (Attachment E.)
3. The CCT is planned for the median of Muddy Branch Road, yet the median of Great Seneca Highway, we are told, is “off the table” due to the storm water management that currently occupies the median. Storm water management expert Nimish Desai tells us that this SWM is “out-of-date” and “has a high rate of failure.” Why not simultaneously upgrade it and accommodate the CCT?
4. How will the debt service be funded?
5. How will Shady Grove Metro be built-out to accept the purported new mass of riders?
6. Where are pedestrian and bicyclist accommodations and amenities in the CCT blueprint?
7. Where will compensatory trees be planted to replace what is lost?
8. Explain where corridors are left for wildlife to move up and down the stream under Great Seneca? Specific species of concern are snapping turtles, beaver, and deer.
9. It can be shown that areas like Belward Farm provide waters that heal the injury of the impervious surfaces of the city. How will this loss to the ecosystem be solved?

10. What mitigation measures will protect the Muddy Branch, Washingtonian Woods Park, and replace the wetlands at Muddy Branch Road and Great Seneca Highway during and after the construction?
11. With the increased impervious surfaces, how will impacts on a watershed already impaired for chlorides be minimized?
12. The CCT doesn't accommodate for future construction of proposed grade-separated interchanges at Muddy Branch Road and Great Seneca Highway, and Sam Eig Highway at Great Seneca Highway? This is a huge oversight. How will this affect the cost of the interchanges when they are built?
13. What are Hopkins' plans for Belward Farm — short-term and long-term?
14. Who pays for necessary grading, SWM and incremental sewer lines on Belward (and beyond) prior to construction of the CCT? Who pays for the construction of the road across Belward?

SENSIBLE SOLUTIONS:

1. Plan for a less costly, gradual upgrading and selective re-routing of the Montgomery County Ride-On Bus service as the need for increased ridership emerges. Poll the public. Will they ride this bus to work? The MTA used a computer-generated software model to forecast 2035 ridership. Logic dictates that if employees along this corridor don't presently take the Ride On bus, they will not take the CCT.

If this is not done:

2. Realign the CCT to the median of Great Seneca Highway and utilize Option 4 (from the Mission Hills Study). (See Attachment F.) This moves the CCT out of Washingtonian Woods yards, and away from Washingtonian Woods Park and the Muddy Branch. It also takes the CCT off Muddy Branch Road entirely, solving most concerns above. Plus, Option 4 shaves one minute off the trip between Shady Grove Metro and Metropolitan Grove MARC.
3. Incorporate new pedestrian pathways (including an overpass at Muddy Branch Road and Great Seneca Highway) and bikeways to further the objective of getting cars off the road. One of the unintended consequences of the CCT is that it will put those trapped in their neighborhood into cars to go distances currently walked or biked.
4. Finally, developer money should not be accepted to kick-start or float this project in any way. It is self-serving and fraught with ethically errant.

“Common sense is as rare as genius.”
— Henry David Thoreau

Projects for “the public good” fail when its governing bodies fail to acknowledge its taxpayers. We residents have the practical knowledge to complement the engineering expertise of the MTA.

We'd like a seat at the transportation table, for more sensible public transit.

Kind Regards,

Washingtonian Woods HOA President, Russ Dalin

Mission Hills HOA President, Jeff Jex

The Vistas Condo Assoc. President, Alyson Meiselman

The Oaks Condo Assoc. President, Marty Deutsch

Sensible CCT & MTA Area 2 Citizens Advisory Committee Member, Lisa Cline

Scale-It-Back.com Coordinator, The Gaithersburg–North Potomac–Rockville Coalition,
Donna Baron

North Potomac Citizens Association (NPCA) President, Susan Fitzpatrick
NPCA, Naomi Yount, Stu Callison, Mary Ellen Hughes

GSSC Implementation Advisory Committee Co-Chair, Phil Usatine
GSSC Implementation Advisory Comm. Member/Belward Farm Steward, Tim Newell

Darnestown Civic Association President, Lisa Patterson
Darnestown Civic Association Chairman, Art Slesinger

Montgomery Countryside Alliance Executive Director, Caroline Taylor
Montgomery Countryside Alliance Past President, Diana Conway

The Muddy Branch Alliance Director and Environmental Engineer, Paul Hlavinka

King Farm Citizens Assembly President, Gail Sherman
King Farm Citizens Assembly Board Chair, MTA Area 3 Citizens Advisory Committee
Member & City of Rockville Traffic and Transportation Commissioner, Mel Willis

Lakelands HOA former board member, Muddy Branch Alliance VP, former
transportation planner and current consultant, Cynthia Pansing

Area 2 Citizens Advisory Committee Member and Woods Resident, John Dunlop

North Potomac Resident, Lisa Sontheimer