

## Legislative Alert for Montgomery County's Civic Community

### Please contact your state legislators to oppose MC 24-15, Authorization for Montgomery County Transit Authority

Proposed new state legislation enabling creation of county independent transit authority funded by raising property taxes fast tracks past MoCo citizens, through our delegation in Annapolis and on to General Assembly. Act now to stop this legislation, return it to the County Executive for review, analysis, and public discussion. State delegation synopsis - [www.montgomerycountydelegation.com/MC24-15.html](http://www.montgomerycountydelegation.com/MC24-15.html)

**Issue Summary:** Fifteen weeks after the deadline for submitting local county bills, Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett sent "late bill" MC 24-15 ([www.montgomerycountydelegation.com/documents/MC24-15stored1-21-15.pdf](http://www.montgomerycountydelegation.com/documents/MC24-15stored1-21-15.pdf)) to Montgomery County's delegation in Annapolis. This bill, which would be effective June 1, would create an Independent Transit Authority (ITA), run by a board of five members appointed by the County Executive.

The five member non-elected ITA would be funded by special taxes on residents through property tax add-ons, excise taxes, assessments and/or fees. However, unlike regular property tax increases, ITA "special" taxes would not be subject to the County Tax Limitation in the Montgomery County Charter, which limits the maximum property tax rate the county may impose and the rate of growth of county tax revenues.

**MCCF Position:** Given the short time frame we have to respond, the MCCF Executive Committee is opposing MC 24-15, asking that it be sent back to the County Executive in order to properly inform and discuss with residents. In June 2012, MCCF passed a resolution that included the request "...that other funding mechanisms than just the Special Taxing District model receive serious consideration by the Executive Branch..." The Executive Branch did engage a consultant to study a transit authority and some funding mechanisms. The consultant issued a 91 page report but the County Executive did not release the report last Thursday ([www.montgomerycountymd.gov/transit-authority/Resources/Files/MCDOT\\_TransitAuthorityReport\\_1-23-2015.pdf](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/transit-authority/Resources/Files/MCDOT_TransitAuthorityReport_1-23-2015.pdf)).

**More information:** The ITA would also have the authority to incur debt, issue revenue bonds, acquire private property, including by condemnation "if the property is needed to implement the Capital Improvement Program of the Transit Authority." The ITA could enter into public-private partnerships and contracts with federal, state, and local governments. The ITA's capital or operating budgets would not be subject to the County's approval, nor would the County Charter limits on property taxes apply. Consequently, the ITA would have no public accountability for its performance, spending, or taxing authority.

By submitting the bill late, MC 24-15 bypassed the usual public hearings held for most county-submitted bills. On Friday, Jan. 23, the Montgomery County House delegation voted 19-4 to accept the bill and begin internal debate. The legislature must pass the bill before the county can create the ITA.

If enacted, the tax increases imposed by the ITA to fund its Capital Improvement Program could be used for bus rapid transit, the Purple Line, bridges, tunnels, the taking of private property, and even parking lot districts. The ITA's debts would be guaranteed by the future taxes that would be imposed on County residents and businesses.

A bill of this scope and magnitude should not be fast-tracked as a result of back-room deal making. Legislators need to hear from their constituents. Please consider attending this hearing. At the very least, please contact members of the Montgomery County House delegation and ask them to reject this bill (MC-24-15) until county residents and taxpayers have had time to study and discuss it with their elected representatives.

#### Suggested Actions:

1. **Sign the petition asking our State delegation** to send MC 24-15 back to Mr. Leggett. Petition: ([www.change.org/p/shane-robinson-stop-the-mc-24-15-tax-and-spend-power-grab-now](http://www.change.org/p/shane-robinson-stop-the-mc-24-15-tax-and-spend-power-grab-now))

**2. Write to the Montgomery County delegates and senators to oppose MC 24-15**, and ask them to return the legislation back to Mr. Leggett for review, analysis and public discussion. See legislator emails at bottom of this page.

**3. Attend the public hearing in Rockville initiated by Montgomery County delegates**, after civic activists complained about lack of transparency around MC 24-15. We need people to testify and to just be present to demonstrate the level of interest in the County. **Sign Up to Testify Friday, January 30 6:00 P.M Rockville, County Council Building, Hearing Room, 100 Maryland Ave.** <http://montgomerycountydelegation.com/MC24-15.html>

**4. Press articles and blogs:**

Bethesda Now Articles:

Council Has Concerns with Leggett's Move for Transit Authority - [www.bethesdanow.com/2015/01/26/council-has-concerns-with-leggetts-move-for-transit-authority/](http://www.bethesdanow.com/2015/01/26/council-has-concerns-with-leggetts-move-for-transit-authority/)

MoCo Moves Toward Its Own Transit Authority To Propel RTS - [www.bethesdanow.com/2015/01/23/moco-moves-toward-its-own-transit-authority-rapid-transit-system/](http://www.bethesdanow.com/2015/01/23/moco-moves-toward-its-own-transit-authority-rapid-transit-system/)

Washington Post:

Leggett seeks to create an independent transit authority - [www.washingtonpost.com/local/md-politics/leggett-seeks-montgomery-transit-authority-for-bus-lanes-other-projects/2015/01/26/e5f19ec6-a591-11e4-a06b-9df2002b86a0\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/md-politics/leggett-seeks-montgomery-transit-authority-for-bus-lanes-other-projects/2015/01/26/e5f19ec6-a591-11e4-a06b-9df2002b86a0_story.html)

Robert Dyer @ Bethesda Row: SHAM OF THE CENTURY: MONTGOMERY COUNTY INDEPENDENT TRANSIT AUTHORITY SET TO BILK TAXPAYERS - <http://robertdyer.blogspot.com/2015/01/sham-of-century-montgomery-county.html>

**5. Share this information with your community members** and encourage them to oppose this bill.

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