

December 12, 2005

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On behalf of over ten thousand area cyclists we are writing today to offer our recommendations on the funding priorities for cyclists in Montgomery County. While the county has made great strides in promoting bicycling for transportation and recreation, much work remains if we are to truly make Montgomery County a bicycle friendly community. Our recommendations are focused on how the County can improve upon existing programs and facilities through increased funding, how to link existing and planned bikeways, and on how to encourage cycling through bike and pedestrian safety programs for children and adults. As the county begins the budget negotiation process, we hope that you will consider our recommendations, which are as follows:

- **Increase the Bikeway Program budget to \$1,000,000 a year and Increase Staffing Devoted to Bikeways**

We strongly urge expansion of the DPWT Bikeway Program to \$1,000,000 to make better progress towards creating a bike-friendly county. DPWT has one full time bikeway specialist but two are required to handle the workload. The situation is equally difficult at the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) where one planner spends only 4 to 8 hours per week on bike issues, leaving important tasks unfinished. Therefore we've asked M-NCPPC to fund a full time or near full time bike planning position at M-NCPPC, in addition to park trails staff.

- **Increase the Bikeway Maintenance budget to \$250,000 a year**

The current funding for trail maintenance and repair at both the M-NCPPC Parks Division, which is responsible for trails, and DPWT, responsible for on-road bikeways, is inadequate to maintain existing bike facilities in the county. Maintenance must include trail snow removal and sweeping of bike lanes and shoulder routes each Spring or more often.

- **Fund Bikeways Master Plan Implementation**

This award-winning plan recommends a threefold expansion of the current bikeway system in the next 15 to 20 years. Projects in the Capital Improvement Program need to be funded as do other projects not currently in the CIP but listed in the recently approved *Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan*. We urge that the County set specific annual targets based on the plan's recommendations and funding bikeway development accordingly.

- **Start Key Bikeway Projects**

As a step towards implementing the new *Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan*, we propose that the County fund initial facility planning for any of the following projects identified in the bikeways master plan (all call for bike lanes, bikeable shoulders or other on-road bike improvements):

- **Shady Grove Road** - Extend the existing bike lanes through employment and retail areas
- **Bonifant/Good Hope/Briggs Chaney Road** – Provide bike lanes from Bel Pre Road to US 29
- **Nicholson Lane/Parklawn Drive/Twinbrook Parkway** – Add bike lanes along these roads which serve an important job and housing corridor
- **Jones Mill Road** – Add width to this heavily used road route
- **Woodmont Avenue** – Provide northbound and southbound bike lanes to eliminate the bike-hostile gap between upper and lower Bethesda CBDs

- **Seven Locks Road** – Improve this vital road route north of Montrose Road before Fortune Parc is completed
  - **Needwood Road**– Provide on-road bike space to connect the ICC Trail and Rock Creek Park to Shady Grove Metro
  - **Other good projects** are identified within the bikeways master plan.
- **Repair the Georgetown Branch Trail east of Rock Creek Trestle**  
This particular facility would provide a direct non-motorized connection between Bethesda and Silver Spring, yet the section of trail east of the Rock Creek Trestle has fallen into a state of disrepair due to drainage issues. The repair of this section of the Georgetown Branch Trail, and the maintenance of the trail as a whole, should be a priority with budgeted maintenance expenditures.
  - **Fund Selected Alternative for the Metropolitan Branch Trail in Silver Spring**  
Our organizations support the creation of a bike and pedestrian bridge over Georgia Avenue and a tunnel beneath East-West Highway.
  - **Fund MacArthur Boulevard Improvements**  
MacArthur Boulevard is a heavily used on-road bicycle route that has serious safety problems. The ongoing improvement project will address these problems. Preliminary design for the project is due to be completed in May 2006. We ask that the upcoming budget include funding for the next phase of this important project to avoid unnecessary delays.
  - **Construct the US 29 Commuter Bikeway**  
The US 29 Commuter Bikeway is an opportunity to make bicycling a viable choice in an important transportation corridor. Maryland SHA is in the process of building key sections of the bikeway as part of its US 29 interchange improvements, but it's up to the County to join these sections into a contiguous facility. The County needs to begin funding completion of the missing segments.
  - **Complete the Bethesda Trolley Trail and Its Connections**  
The Bethesda Trolley Trail could be a valuable asset to county cyclists, but gaps along the trail limit its usefulness. The County should construct missing sections of the trail, work with property owners to acquire needed land, and sign existing parts of the trail, as recommended in the Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan. The County should also begin making improvements to roads at the north and south ends of the trail to extend connectivity to key destinations including the Capital Crescent Trail and Rockville.
  - **Fund Efforts to Improve Bike Route Signage**  
If the County goes to the trouble of creating a good bike route, it should be eager to let the public know about it. But many important bike routes have missing or poorly designed signs. This includes major roads, trails, and those convoluted back-street routes that cyclists are often expected to follow. Efforts to improve signage have suffered from lack of funding, so it's time to make signage funding a priority. The value of a good bikeway network is greatly diminished if users can't follow its routes.
  - **Ensure a direct connection between the Metropolitan Branch Trail and Capital Crescent Trail at the Silver Spring Transit Center**  
While this is not a funding issue, the direct connection between the Metropolitan Branch and Capital Crescent Trails at the Silver Spring Transit center is a priority for area cyclists and our organizations. We hope that as plans move forward for the Bi-County Transitway, that the design is guided by the principal of keeping the Capital Crescent Trail within the Georgetown Branch and CSX corridor from Bethesda to Silver Spring.
  - **Fund Bike Safety and Education Programs for Children and Adults**  
In order to take advantage of the growing number of bike facilities in the County, and to further encourage bicycling for transportation and recreation, the County should fund bike safety programs for children and adults. The City of Rockville initially piloted a program that taught bike and

pedestrian safety in Rockville schools. This program has since been cancelled due to lack of funding. New federal transportation dollars, both in 402 safety funds and through the new Safe Routes to School program, can be tapped.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We all look forward to working with you on a bike-friendly Montgomery County. If you have any questions on our recommendation, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



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