

Action Committee for Transit
P.O. Box 7074
Silver Spring, MD 20907

November 17, 2002

Mr. Steve Silverman
President, Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Ave.
Rockville, MD 20850

Subject: Corridor Cities Transitway

Dear Mr. Silverman:

The Action Committee for Transit has long advocated extension of rail transit north of Shady Grove. We are writing to express concern about the specific route that the state has chosen to proceed with. Over a period of several years we have repeatedly asked for consideration of additional alternatives. At our meeting last month we came to the conclusion that the presently favored alignment does not provide the access to the Metrorail system that upcounty residents want and need. Significant modification is required. The principal problem is that the Corridor Cities Transitway, as now envisioned, will not take people from Germantown and Clarksburg to the Red Line. Residents of these areas will still have to take the bus to Shady Grove after the light rail is built. The rail line will be too slow because the route detours far to the west and the trains will stop at many red lights. This has been confirmed in correspondence from Henry Kay of the Maryland Transit Administration. A second problem is the current plan to build a station across Great Seneca Highway from Kentlands and Lakelands. The design of these communities gives them the potential to generate heavy transit ridership. Requiring riders to cross Great Seneca Highway on foot will discourage use and create a safety hazard. These problems can be remedied while still providing planned transit service to development along the Corridor Cities right of way. There are several possible solutions: A "three-track" light rail with one reversible express track from Metropolitan Grove to Shady Grove along the CSX railroad. A U-shaped light rail line that follows the reserved right of way from Clarksburg to Metropolitan Grove, then runs along the CSX or I-270 to Shady Grove, and then follows the reserved right of way to Kentlands. Extending the Red Line to connect with light rail at Metropolitan Grove. Some of our members have suggested additional alternatives.

We note that the concerns that motivate our position are shared by the City of Gaithersburg. In a July 16, 1998, letter to Michelle Hoffman of MDOT, Gaithersburg Senior Planner Glenn Mlaker noted the city's concern about the poor connection with Kentlands and Lakelands. He stated that the Gaithersburg Master Plan reserves a transit right of way along the CSX, and "We do not wish to eliminate any possibility of heavy rail extending from Shady Grove, or a light-rail/busway along the CSX alignment." It is our understanding that this position has recently been reaffirmed by the city. The route of rail north of Shady Grove must be rethought before any commitment is made to a specific alignment. Residents of Germantown, Kentlands, etc. who are going to the Red Line are an essential source of ridership for transit in this corridor. A rail line that does not serve them could become a white elephant that discredits future investment in transit. (The same is true, to an even greater degree, of a busway.) We

hope the Council will insist on a transit line that serves the upcounty commuters who are clamoring for better access to Metro.

Sincerely,

Ben Ross President