

January 2, 2008

Mr. Royce Hanson, Chair
Montgomery County Planning Board
8787 Georgia Ave.
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Subject: Selection of new Chief of Transportation Planning

Dear Mr. Hanson:

Montgomery County urgently needs new departures in transportation planning. The design of our transportation infrastructure has followed a traffic-engineering paradigm which emphasizes moving vehicles at the expense of efficient transportation and livable communities. By making automobile travel the primary means of mobility, we have generated ever-worsening traffic jams while creating a built environment that much too often is ugly and pedestrian-hostile. Our auto-oriented communities and policy of expanding roads to meet their needs will make it difficult for the County to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. We must change direction and make our streets friendly to all users including those not using automobiles. To make our new growth centers work, we must look for opportunities to retrofit the existing pattern of congestion-generating superblocks with livable, walkable, bikeable urban streets, and encourage smarter transportation pricing and management.

The new chief of transportation planning at the Planning Board can play a central role taking the county in the new directions that are required. This position must be filled by someone with broad experience in urban transportation and an understanding of the need to prioritize transit and pedestrians, rather than a narrowly focused traffic engineer. We urge you to conduct a national search to find a leader who can fill this position with distinction.

Sincerely,

Ben Ross
Action Committee for Transit

Mike Harold
Audubon Naturalist Society

Cheryl Cort
Campaign for Smarter Growth

Michael Replogle
Environmental Defense

David Hauck
Sierra Club, Montgomery County Group

cc: Mike Knapp, County Council President
reply to: PO Box 7074, Silver Spring, MD 20907