

Action Committee for Transit

www.actfortransit.org

P.O. Box 7074, Silver Spring, MD 20907

July 12, 2009

Mr. Phil Andrews
President, Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Ave.
Rockville, MD 20850

Subject: I-270 Corridor Study

Dear Mr. Andrews:

It is time to choose transportation spending priorities that reflect the realities that we have come to understand. We can't pave our way out of traffic congestion. Livable communities have to be designed for people, not for cars. We must cut back on automobile use for the sake of the environment of our county and our world.

We urge you to reject the misguided transportation priorities recommended by the Planning Board. Under the Planning Board recommendations, taxpayers would spend \$4 billion on widening I-270.¹ The inevitable result would be more cars on the highways and more traffic jams.

At the same time, the Planning Board recommended saving \$300 million by building a \$450 million busway instead of a \$750 million light rail line north of Shady Grove. The Planning Board also says transportation budgets don't have \$70 million to rebuild Rockville Pike near White Flint. This project would turn the highway into a pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly boulevard with bus lanes in the center.

ACT urges the Council to oppose the waste of \$4 billion on the I-270 widening. We believe transportation dollars in the I-270 corridor should be invested instead in:

- 1) A light rail line from Shady Grove to Kentlands (without route changes that have been proposed as an excuse for additional sprawl development).
- 2) A fast, direct rail connection from Shady Grove to Germantown and Clarksburg.
- 3) All-day two-way MARC service to Frederick and Harper's Ferry – already in the state's plans, but not funded.
- 4) Rebuilding Route 355 as a walkable urban boulevard, beginning in the White Flint

¹The tolls that will be collected on the new lanes will not pay the cost of construction – they may not even pay the cost of toll collection. The function of the tolls is to exclude middle- and low-income drivers so that upper-income drivers can bypass the traffic jams that everyone else must live with.

area and near downtown Rockville and Gaithersburg. Plans for these three areas have already been developed, and in the future the rest of Route 355 can be rebuilt in the same style.

It's time for the County to speak out for the fundamental change in transportation priorities that is so badly needed. Interstate 270 should not be widened; our scarce dollars should be spent on transit and walkable streets.

Sincerely,

/signed/

Ben Ross
President