

Action Committee for Transit

www.actfortransit.org

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

May 4, 2009

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

Subject: White Flint Master Plan

Dear Mr. Hanson:

As strong supporters of the redevelopment of the White Flint area as a vibrant transit-oriented urban center, the Action Committee for Transit wishes to express its views about two issues that have come up in the Planning Board's work on the Master Plan. These are the design of Rockville Pike and the new MARC station.

Rockville Pike - We share the view of other citizens and business groups that Glattig Jackson's design for Rockville Pike is superior to the recommendation of the Planning Board staff. The White Flint area would benefit immensely from a pedestrian-friendly "great street" in the heart of the new urban district. For this purpose, we must exercise our creativity and move away from the suburban street designs of the past.

Despite the successes we have had in Bethesda and Silver Spring, the pedestrian ambiance of these downtowns remains limited by the arterial-style highways that run through them. As Bethesda has developed, the focus of activity has moved away from Wisconsin Avenue, which the Master Plan envisioned as the spine of the downtown, to the more pedestrian-friendly Woodmont Avenue. The east side of Wisconsin, despite relatively intense office and residential development, is cut off from the center and has never developed the all-day activity that is found on the west side. More time is needed to judge what will happen in Silver Spring, but one can already see that Colesville Road, Georgia Avenue, and East-West Highway divide residential areas from retail and hamper the growth of organic connections between newer parts of the downtown and the older areas. We need to learn from these experiences and create a better and more humane White Flint.

MARC station - We support the Planning Board's goal of a 24-hour transit-oriented community at White Flint. Under the right circumstances, a new MARC station would contribute to this goal. However, the current one-way rush-hour service on the Brunswick Line cannot support intense transit-oriented development. MTA does have plans for frequent, all-day, two-way service on the Brunswick Line by 2035. However, funding is uncertain, and the plans are, in any case, for the long term.

The Red Line Metro station at White Flint provides enough transit right now to support the development of a walkable, transit-oriented community. We therefore support moving ahead with the White Flint Master Plan. The White Flint Master Plan should set aside space for a future MARC station but not include that station in its transportation planning. The White Flint MARC station should wait until there is all-day, two-way service on the Brunswick Line. Since MTA plans also call for more limited-stop and express trains by that point, there is no reason why MARC could not then maintain service at Garrett Park as well.

We look forward to supporting an exciting plan to create a living White Flint community.

Sincerely,

/signed/

Ben Ross
President