



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

8787 Georgia Avenue • Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760

(301) 495-4605

Montgomery County Planning Board
Office of the Chairman

June 6, 1996

The Honorable Douglas M. Duncan
Montgomery County Executive
Second Floor
101 Monroe Street
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear ~~Mr.~~ Duncan:

The Montgomery County Planning Board appreciated the presentation on the *US 29 Busway Feasibility Study* on May 23 and the opportunity to comment on the recommendations of the *Study*. John Clark and Rob Klein of the Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation are to be commended for their work this study, which addressed many important issues on US 29.

Following the presentation by County staff, concerned citizens commented on the *Busway Study* and its recommendations. The project was unanimously opposed by speakers representing nearly all of the civic interests from Fairland to Silver Spring and by a representative of the Action Committee for Transit. A packet has been prepared containing the written comments provided to the Planning Board. A copy is enclosed for your reference along with a copy of the Staff Report and correspondence received following the preparation of the Staff Report.

The Planning Board discussed the recommendations of the *Busway Study* and their implications following the presentation. As a result of this discussion, the Board concluded that, although there is an undeniable need to provide increased transit service to meet the needs of those projected to travel on US 29, the issues to be addressed in meeting this need should be resolved by Montgomery County and not by an agency of the state government. Therefore, the Board recommends that the *US 29 Busway Feasibility Study* **not** be forwarded to the Maryland Department of Transportation.

The Planning Board found that the proposed Busway would have significant negative impacts on the adjacent communities and individual properties. For example: trips to and from homes and businesses would be lengthened; the safety of pedestrian crossings, particularly in the vicinity of Four Corners and Blair High School, would be reduced; the median south of the Beltway would be replaced. In this portion of US 29, an urban boulevard, with tree-lined sidewalks along both sides of the roadway, would be more appropriate

as it would be an asset to the adjacent communities. The proposed busway converts US 29 into a freeway-like thoroughfare to accommodate trips coming from elsewhere, both in and outside Montgomery County. These improvements are proposed at the expense of the quality of life of the residents from New Hampshire Avenue south to Silver Spring.

The Planning Board strongly recommends that any future study should be a true multi-modal study as envisioned when the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) was passed in 1990. One of the most difficult problems facing Montgomery County is to determine what to do about the traffic in the US 29 and I-95 corridors. Therefore, any future transitway study should include routes other than just US 29.

The Planning Board further recommends that the selection of an appropriate solution should be deferred until two key projects in the Four Corners Area have been completed and the resultant traffic patterns have been established. These two projects are Blair High School and the improvements at University Boulevard.

The selection of the alternative should also be mindful of the proposed American Dream Mall and any other major redevelopment of the Silver Spring CBD. The nature and extent of Montgomery County's transit needs will be affected by these projects. The County cannot afford, in its attempts to make some things better, to take the risk of making other things worse.

In addition, the Planning Board has the following specific considerations for any future study of a transitway:

- * Maintain the existing median between Four Corners and Sligo Creek Parkway.
- * Extend the scope of the future study to provide connections to other Metrorail stations and extend north at least to Columbia because the transportation issues do not begin or end in Montgomery County.
- * Provide for better access from the residents along the route to the proposed transit service.
- * Reduce the number of medians recommended to be closed and keep the median at Lanark Way open so as to provide for a traffic signal at that location to enhance pedestrian safety to and from Blair High School
- * Expand the amount of green space along the route.

The *Busway Study* identifies the need for additional traffic signals and sidewalks to facilitate pedestrian accessibility and safety. The Planning Board recommends that the County Department of Public Works and Transportation work with the State Highway Administration to provide traffic signals at Crestmoor Drive and at Bruce/Hastings Drives as recommended in the *Study* and to develop a program to provide additional sidewalks along US 29.

Again, the Planning Board appreciates the opportunity to comment on the *US 29 Busway Feasibility Study* and the implications of its recommendations for transit service and to the residents along US 29. The Planning Board looks forward to working with you and the County Council to protect and enhance the communities along US 29 while addressing the needs of those who travel on that roadway now and in the future.

Sincerely,



William H. Hussmann
Chairman

WHH:JM:kcw
Encl.

cc: David Winstead, Secretary of Transportation
Montgomery County Council
Montgomery County Planning Board