

I'm Miriam Schoenbaum. I'm testifying on behalf of Action Committee for Transit.

Action Committee for Transit believes that the purpose of transportation planning should be to get people from here to there, not cars. As a result, for the Corridor Cities Transitway, we strongly support the extension of rail transit north of Shady Grove. We hope that MDOT will immediately begin building a light rail line from the Shady Grove Metro station through the King Farm and proposed Crown Farm town centers to Kentlands Boulevard, on the Kentlands side of Great Seneca Highway – without a detour into the Johns Hopkins University's proposed "Science City" development. For transit north of the Kentlands, MDOT should immediately begin a study of a fast, direct rail connection from Shady Grove to Metropolitan Grove, the Germantown, Clarksburg and Urbana town centers, and downtown Frederick. We need a transportation system that gets people out of their cars by connecting population centers and transporting riders to their destinations by rail, quickly and directly. We do not need a slow, indirect transit system that goes places few would take transit to get to and won't make a dent in the traffic on 270.

For the highway expansion, we oppose the express toll lanes, which will cost taxpayers even more than just plain highway widening, while benefiting, at best, only the taxpayers rich enough to use them. And we strongly support the no-build alternative. MDOT's traffic projections notwithstanding, the relationship between increased highway capacity and increased vehicle travel is well-established. Bigger highways get rid of traffic jams for a few years. But then there are more cars on the highway than before, more traffic jams – and plans for an even bigger highway. Remember the last time lanes were added to 270. Twenty-odd years ago, 270 was so bad that Maryland spent hundreds of millions on highway widening. Did this solve the problem? It did not, as we well know. According to the Washington Post, fewer than ten years later, 270 was again a rolling parking lot, and traffic in some places already exceeded MDOT's projections for a decade or more into the future. Our choice is clear. Either we widen 270 again, knock down hundreds of houses, pave thousands of acres, burn millions of gallons of gas, spend billions of dollars borrowed from our children, and warm up the planet, and then come back here in ten years to comment on another MDOT solution to traffic in the 270 corridor. Or we acknowledge now that widening 270 will never solve the traffic problem, and we work instead on effective mass transit north of Shady Grove.