

I'm Miriam Schoenbaum, I'm usually a proud graduate of the Johns Hopkins University, and I'm here on behalf of Action Committee for Transit.

Action Committee for Transit supports transit-oriented development.

The Gaithersburg West Master Plan is not transit-oriented development.

First, there is no requirement for building permanent transit. Under the staging requirements, all of the planned residential development, and 80% of the planned non-residential development, could take place with only a shuttle bus traveling on the shoulder of Sam Eig Highway during rush hour.

Second, the street network is designed for cars, not people. Walkable street networks have at least 150 intersections per square mile. The Belward, West, and Central subareas have fewer than half of that. And how many walkable, transit-oriented places include ten-lane highways with ramps and overpasses?

Third, the planners apparently never asked the basic question: how many people will drive to work in Gaithersburg West? Instead, they just declared that Gaithersburg West would be transit-oriented, and went on from there. For example, in the local intersection congestion analysis, the number of cars leaving a given building is the same as at White Flint. But White Flint is within walking distance of Metro. It has shorter travel times by transit for most county residents. And it is connected by transit to other bioscience institutions, such as NIH. Is car usage at Gaithersburg West really going to be the same as at White Flint, just because the Master Plan says so? Similarly, the policy area mobility review declares that 30% of people will get to work without driving. But the Council of Governments transportation model predicts that only 8% will use transit. How to make up the difference? Declare that almost one in four commuters will carpool. The real current carpool rate in Gaithersburg is one in twenty. The Master Plan traffic models assume that people will carpool and take transit. But real people will decide to drive.

This Master Plan would put 40,000 new jobs on the outer edge of the metropolitan transit network. We're for new jobs in transit-oriented development. And that's exactly why we hope the County Council will say no to this plan. Planned expansion in the biosciences should go where the transit is, where the population density is, and where the bioscience research is – not where the Johns Hopkins University just happens to have some land.

(For a more complete explanation of the position of the Action Committee for Transit on the Gaithersburg West Master Plan, see the attached ACT testimony at the Planning Board hearing on March 26, 2009.)