

November 2, 2007

Ike Leggett  
Montgomery County Executive  
Executive Office Building  
100 Maryland Ave  
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Executive Leggett:

We are writing today on behalf of the undersigned organizations to offer our comments on the capital and operating budgets for Montgomery County during fiscal years 2009-2014. Together, our organizations represent thousands of Montgomery County cyclists.

We would like to start off by expressing our mutual concern about the progress being made in Montgomery County toward providing safe accommodations and amenities for cyclists. Despite broad support for cycling from County residents, the County Council and the Planning Board, implementation of the 2005 Countywide Functional Bikeways Master Plan proceeds slowly, and key trail projects like the Metropolitan Branch Trail in Silver Spring have stalled. There are still many more gaps in the master-planned bikeway network than there are suitable safe routes. Progress against the master plan is neither measured nor reported, leaving county officials unaware of and unaccountable for the rate of progress. We urge you to require the Department of Public Works and Transportation to report annually on progress it is making toward reaching the goals established by the bikeways master plan.

In addition to providing funds to implement bikeway projects at a faster pace, it's critical that the County authorize more bike-related Facility Planning studies than in previous years, so that more projects can be assessed and placed into the long pipeline for capital projects.

We are concerned over the lack of adequate staffing dedicated to cycling at DPWT and M-NCPPC, leaving these agencies without proper guidance on bike issues and leaving current efforts understaffed. These problems and the ambivalence shown by some in county government towards bicycling relative to other modes have combined to ensure that too little is being done to promote bicycling for transportation. Given the region's rampant congestion, high fuel prices, declining personal health and the effects of global warming, bicycling should be embraced as a viable transportation mode. We strongly urge you to consider the budget requests below as a way to help move the county towards a more bicycle-friendly transportation system.

- Fund and Track Bikeways Master Plan Implementation**

The award-winning *Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan* recommends a threefold expansion of the current bikeway system in the next 20 to 25 years. We urge the county to fund bikeway projects at the higher levels necessary to achieve the plan's goals. To ensure steady progress, we ask you to set specific annual targets and establish a process for measuring and reporting against these targets.
- Increase the Bikeway Program budget to \$1,000,000 a year and Increase Staffing Devoted to Bikeways**

We strongly urge expansion of the DPWT Bikeway Program to \$1,000,000 to make better progress towards creating a bike-friendly county. We've already identified several new cost-effective projects suitable for this program. Moreover, DPWT only has one full time bikeway specialist but two are required to handle the work load. The situation is just as difficult at the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) where one planner spends only 4 to 8 hours per week on bike issues, leaving important tasks unfinished. Please support M-NCPPC's recent request for additional bike planning staff.
- Fund Bikeway Maintenance**

In the FY06 DPWT Operating Budget, the County Council provided an additional \$50,000 for routine bikeway maintenance, including sweeping of key routes several times a year. But it appears that no additional sweeping was performed, nor were expenses tracked adequately to determine if funds were spent on bikeways. Please direct DPWT to improve tracking and establish a bikeway sweeping schedule. Also investigate the purchase of a dedicated trail sweeping machine as the City of Rockville owns. Ensure that trail maintenance includes snow removal, especially on the Capital Crescent Trail.
- Fund Selected Alternative for the Metropolitan Branch Trail in Silver Spring**

Our organizations supported the creation of a bike and pedestrian bridge over Georgia Avenue and a tunnel beneath East-West Highway for the Met Branch Trail in Silver Spring. This recommendation has since been adopted by the county as their preferred alternative. However, since the plan was selected in 2006 all work has ground to a halt. We urge the county to begin phase II of the project using existing facility planning dollars, and to begin to identify additional funding for the construction of the trail.
- Construct the US 29 Commuter Bikeway**

The US 29 Commuter Bikeway is an opportunity to make bicycling a viable choice in an important transportation corridor. Maryland SHA has built key sections of the bikeway as part of its US 29 interchange improvements, but it's up to the County to join these sections into a contiguous facility. The County needs to begin funding completion of the missing segments.
- Fund More Facility Planning Studies**

The county must fund bike-related Facility Planning studies at a quicker pace if we're to make any progress against the Bikeways Master Plan. Lack of studies has limited the county's ability to select good projects for implementation when the time comes. This year MoBike and WABA performed an analysis of key bike corridors and relevant gaps in Montgomery County. We especially looked for long

and useful routes across the county. This exercise enabled us to identify important yet feasible projects and prioritize these projects. In light of that, we recommend that you begin study of improvements to the following ten key corridors and routes:

1. **US 29/Colesville Road Corridor** – In addition to the mostly unfinished US 29 Commuter Bikeway, this corridor is plagued by gaps at Northwest Branch and various Silver Spring locations.
2. **Shady Grove Road** – This linchpin of the planned upcounty bike route network has bike lanes east of I-370 but is all but unbikeable elsewhere; the bike lanes must be extended to MD 28
3. **Woodmont Avenue** – This street's one-way configuration is anathema to cyclists. No good alternate routes are available. Yet Woodmont sits between two CBD centers and two premier bike trails.
4. **Connecticut Ave./Georgia Ave. corridors** – Several small gaps in these corridors make north-south travel difficult for cyclists; these can be addressed by building linking paths in key locations.
5. **MD 355 corridor** – Required fixes include finishing the Bethesda Trolley Trail, making Woodmont Ave. a two-way street, addressing gaps like the one at Twinbrook Metro, and building path segments where planned all the way to Clarksburg.
6. **Seven Locks Road** – The section north Montrose Road must be improved for road cyclists; Seven Locks Road is the primary north-south route for cyclists west of Rock Creek.
7. **Jones Mill Road** – This busy bike route must be made safer for cyclists between Beach Drive to Jones Bridge Road.
8. **Olney/Cloverly connections** –Improve the main east-west route (Bonifant Rd., Good Hope Rd.) by adding continuous bikeable shoulders per the master plan. Improve access to Olney by adding on-road space on Doctor Bird Rd. and Norwood Rd.
9. **Montgomery Village connections** – Montgomery Village remains one of the most bike-unfriendly areas of the county. At a minimum, select two or three arterials for improvement to provide a tolerable grid of bike routes (e.g. Goshen Road, Centerway Drive, Watkins Mill Road, etc.).
10. **Twinbrook Parkway/Parklawn Drive connections** – These roads are obstacles to both north-south and east-west travel by cyclists. A better crossing of the railroad tracks is badly needed, for pedestrians living in new housing as well as for cyclists.

This is an ongoing exercise and we would like to meet with DPWT to determine the cost and feasibility of these and other candidate projects.

- **Fund Bike Safety and Education Programs for Children and Adults (\$80,000)**  
Even if the engineering efforts to design and construct on-road bike facilities and multi-use paths are successful, efforts should be made to educate County residents on how to take advantage of such facilities in a safe and enjoyable manner. Throughout the Washington region, in-school bike and pedestrian safety education programs, and confident city cycling classes for adults, encourage the use of bicycles for transportation and recreation. New federal transportation dollars, both in 402 safety funds and through the new Safe Routes to School program, can be tapped.

If possible, we would like to meet with you in person to discuss these requests some time before the holidays. Thank you for your time and consideration. We all look forward to working with you towards a more bike-friendly Montgomery County. If you have any questions on our recommendations, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Eric Gilliland  
Executive Director  
Washington Area Bicyclist Association

/s/

Peter Gray  
Chair  
Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail



Jack Cochrane  
Chair  
Montgomery Bicycle Advocates

/s/

Catherine Kitchell  
Chair  
Potomac Pedalers Touring Club