

August 14, 2009

Governor Martin O'Malley
State of Maryland
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor O'Malley:

We are writing to you as representatives of business, smart growth advocates, neighborhood activists, and environmental organizations in support of a program that would designate certain critical and congested state road segments "Sustainable Transportation Corridors."

On July 13, 2009, Montgomery County Councilmember Roger Berliner wrote to you requesting exploration of "new legislation or regulations that would enhance coordination between state and local governments, harmonize land use and transportation objectives, and provide priority funding for Sustainable Transportation Corridors."

We have seen first-hand the need for a unified, comprehensive approach to planning, design and funding for state roads that bisect urban smart growth areas like Rockville and Bethesda. The Rockville Pike (MD 355), one of the most important economic corridors in our state, acts primarily as an urban boulevard as it passes through Bethesda, yet changes character as it approaches NIH, Navy Med, the White Flint area, and Rockville, becoming more akin to a typical highway connecting a series of strip malls with large surface parking lots. The City of Rockville and the Montgomery County Planning Department are both planning for future smart growth development by redesigning the Pike as a tree-lined boulevard with bus and bike lanes, sidewalks, medians, and shorter, more walkable blocks. This vision has broad support throughout our community.

However, SHA's plans for dealing with increased traffic due to the expansion of the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center have focused on intersection "improvements" that have a significant impact on neighborhoods—"improvements" that do not reduce congestion in the long term. As you are aware, the only way to achieve real and lasting congestion relief is to reduce dependency on single-occupancy vehicles by designing multi-modal streets that accommodate transit, bicyclists and pedestrians.

Rockville Pike should be a model of sustainable transportation planning. By designating it a "Sustainable Transportation Corridor," you will be promoting important environmental and economic goals by enabling a real and effective partnership between State and local governments that can be replicated all over Maryland.

We hope that you will support this idea as we do, and help local governments implement plans that will ultimately transform traffic-choked roads into the "main streets" of livable, prosperous, green communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Ginanne Italiano, President
The Greater Bethesda-Chevy Chase
Chamber of Commerce



David Hauck, Chair
Sierra Club, Montgomery County



Barnaby Zall, Co-Chair
Friends of White Flint, Inc.



Ilaya Hopkins, Chair
Coalition of Military Medical Center
Neighbors



Cheryl Cort, Policy Director
Coalition for Smarter Growth

cc: Secretary Beverly K. Swaim-Staley
The Honorable Mike Miller
The Honorable Michael Busch
The Honorable Rich Madaleno
The Honorable Brian Frosh
The Honorable Bill Bronrott
The Honorable Susan Lee
The Honorable Ana Sol Gutierrez
The Honorable Al Carr
The Honorable Jeff Waldstreicher
The Honorable Bill Frick
The Honorable Brian Feldman