

# Friends of White Flint

Promoting a Sustainable, Walkable, and Engaging Community

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For Immediate Release

10/6/2009 6:28 PM

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## **Friends of White Flint Says Analysis of White Flint Sector Plan “Too Automobile-Centered” and “White Flint: Drop Dead.”**

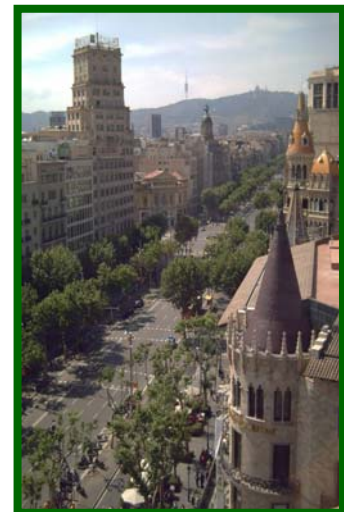
On October 5, 2009, Montgomery County Executive, Isiah Leggett, sent the Council an analysis of the White Flint Sector Plan which concluded: “The White Flint Sector Plan provides the right direction for future development with its focus on existing infrastructure and use of existing impervious areas. Its vision is ambitious.” The letter can be found here: [County Executive Letter](#).

Unfortunately, the remainder of the Executive’s comments, and the analyses provided by several County departments, were too automobile-centered. For example, the Montgomery County Department of Transportation’s way to reduce carbon emissions is to have cars drive faster. Technical Comments, P. 16. In addition, the MCDOT views Rockville Pike as only a means to move people through White Flint as swiftly as possible.

Similarly, the MCDOT rejects the Plan’s attempt to encourage people to drive less by having them live closer to work, stores, and transit is that a 39% “mode share” (or, having 39% of persons in the area use transit) is that this goal is too “ambitious.” Technical Comments, P. 6-7. MCDOT did not look at the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission next to the White Flint Metro, where almost 50% of employees already use transit, or the similar “mode share” commitments already agreed to by the LCOR-developed North Bethesda Center project, also next to the White Flint Metro, or Arlington County’s congestion decreases through increased transit ridership.

MCDOT pays lip service to walkability by saying, for example, that a “wider pike will be harder for pedestrians to cross.” Technical Comments, P. 12. Yet the test for walkability is not the width of Rockville Pike, but how it is constructed; in Barcelona, Spain, a twelve-lane street is eminently crossable because it includes pedestrian-friendly intersections and green medians. It appears, in fact, that the entire MCDOT analysis missed the “Transitway Option” and numerous other proposals in the White Flint Plan to reduce traffic congestion while increasing transit use and pedestrian safety.

The MCDOT was only concerned about “congestion” in the new White Flint. Unfortunately, the MCDOT did not consider the impact of the new street network on congestion. The proposed



“robust” street network will replace the existing “sparse” street grid. In this case, “robust” means more available lanes for traffic to flow through. The proposed street grid has ten additional lanes for traffic to flow east and west, and six additional lanes for traffic to flow north and south. The net effect would be to add one new thoroughfare the width of the Pike north-south, and two of that size east-west:



Sparse existing road network



10 Additional Lanes East/West  
6 Additional Lanes North/South

Source: Glattig Jackson, et al

But these specific points do not get to the overall problem with the Executive’s analysis. The choice is not between the White Flint Plan and the Executive’s Plan. The Executive has not proposed an alternative. The choice is between the carefully-crafted, balanced, and innovative White Flint Sector Plan, and the existing, car-oriented 1992 North Bethesda Master Plan.

All of the congestion which concerns the MCDOT and the Executive will likely occur under the 1992 Master Plan if we do nothing. There is no plan for handling that additional congestion absent the White Flint Sector Plan. “So,” said Friends of White Flint Co-Chair Barnaby Zall, “instead of making a walkable, transit-oriented community, they want more traffic on the Pike and more sprawl in the County. This is saying: White Flint – Drop Dead!”

The Council is faced with two alternatives: the existing sparse road grid, and the robust White Flint Sector Plan street network. Friends of White Flint believes the Council’s choice is clear: adopt the White Flint Sector Plan approach. If problems crop up in the future, they will likely be easier to address with an extra sixteen lanes for traffic.

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*Friends of White Flint is a nonprofit organization dedicated to a walkable, sustainable and engaging White Flint. [www.whiteflint.org](http://www.whiteflint.org). Friends of White Flint supports the White Flint Sector Plan.*