



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

April 12, 2011

The Honorable Isiah Leggett, Montgomery County Executive
Mr. Neil Pederson, Maryland State Highway Administration
Mr. Richard Sarles, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Dear Sirs:

Thank you for your strong leadership on transit policy and the continuing work of your Departments to provide excellent service. As members of the Montgomery County Council, we believe strongly that our existing systems such as Metro and Ride On are tremendous assets that we must maximize, and they should be the first investment priority as we look to expand our transportation capacity.

On March 14, Carolyn Biggins, DOT's Director of Transit Services, testified to the County Council's Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy and Environment Committee about best practices with Ride On. Montgomery County is clearly at the forefront of many innovative practices; for example, this summer Ride On will start providing riders with real-time, real-world schedule information by text message or phone (311). Our residents truly appreciate your efforts.

One issue does concern us, however, and that is the pace of deployment of efficiency improvements, particularly signal prioritization and queue jumping. At the hearing, for example, Ms. Biggins indicated that these changes would likely "have to wait" for the deployment of a future transit system, such as a comprehensive Bus Rapid Transit network currently being planned.

There is no need to wait. We can and should begin immediately on providing higher priority to buses on our roads.

Therefore, we are writing to request that the Montgomery County DOT, Maryland SHA, and WMATA work together on a comprehensive list of intersections in Montgomery County, both for Ride On and WMATA, where signal prioritization and queue jumping would improve ridership and provide for a higher quality ridership experience. Given the current budget situation, we expect this would begin with intersections where queue jumping can be implemented using existing turn lanes, without substantial capital expenditure.

Based on discussions that we have had with DOT officials, we know that there are trade-offs involved. We believe that it is necessary to provide clarity and transparency to these decisions. We therefore also ask the MC DOT to provide an evaluation for these intersection that can be reviewed by residents. We are not necessarily asking that DOT endorse each intersection change, but rather provide

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information about each of them so that the Council and our residents can deliberate on them and form judgments on a case-by-case basis.

We also request that MC DOT provide separately a "rough draft" for a policy on passenger throughput so that county leaders can make these decisions in the future based on an agreed framework.

We know that we can move more quickly to implement signal prioritization, queue jumping, and other efficiencies for our Ride On and Metrobus systems and we look forward to working with you on this effort.

Please provide a response to this letter at your earliest convenience. Additionally, we would like the report back from this effort by the end of September, 2011, so that we may address the recommendations in time for the Executive's Recommended FY13-18 Capital Improvements Program.

Sincerely,



Hans Riemer
Member, Transportation, Energy, Infrastructure & Environment Committee



Valerie Ervin
Council President



Roger Berliner
Chair, Transportation, Energy, Infrastructure & Environment Committee



Nancy Floreen
Member, Transportation, Energy, Infrastructure & Environment Committee

CC: Beverly Swaim-Staley, Secretary, Maryland Department of Transportation
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Thomas Street, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer
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