

West Laurel Civic Association
P.O. Box 387
Laurel, MD 20725
1 March 2011

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The Honorable Rushern L. Baker III
County Executive
Prince Georges County
14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive
Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772-3050

Dear Mr. Baker:

I am writing on behalf of the West Laurel Civic Association (WLCA) with regard to the limited pedestrian and bike infrastructure on County roads.

Prince Georges leads the greater Washington area in pedestrian and bike fatalities – and has so for every year this past decade (source: MWCOG). While this is unintentional, it *is* the direct result of planning and transportation design that is based solely on moving cars from point A to Point B, despite the fact that thousands of Prince Georgians commute by foot or bike each day. This lack of planning for bikes and pedestrians leads to a lack of infrastructure built to accommodate them. The result: pedestrians and bicyclists end up utilizing County right-of-way that is explicitly designed to speed cars through as efficiently as possible. Predictably, this has had many deadly consequences for our Residents.

The WLCA has long been a supporter of the integration of bicycle paths with our inputs into the Northern Region Master Plan. Accommodating pedestrians and bicyclists provides an excellent return on the infrastructure investment, including a fitter population (our County leads the area in obesity rates, according to the CDC); construction of fewer and narrower roads; more social interaction – which is a proven crime deterrent; and less overall traffic congestion. These benefits are amplified in the close-in areas of the County, in and around the Beltway, where increased density lets small infrastructure improvements benefit a far greater number of residents.

Constant price inflation has made developing pedestrian and biking infrastructure even more important than ever. Asphalt prices are up 400% this decade, so building and maintaining an ever-expanding roadway network will be an enormous financial headwind for the County, as maintenance costs increase year after year. Sidewalk and bike trails have a far, far longer life span. In addition, gas prices have tripled this decade; and as gas prices increase, so will the demand for more alternative transportation options - including choosing where one lives. You have indicated that mixed-use TOD is a high priority in your admission, and we wholeheartedly agree! The County's reputation, desirability, and economic

sustainability depend on its ability to re-develop its Metro Stations into quality mixed-use TOD. These developments attract the concentrated business and retail that make an area sustainable and represent the locations where the County's population growth should be directed this decade. Other area jurisdictions have found the combination of density, quality development, and walkability to be very beneficial in attracting and retaining residents and businesses.

The County is finally in a position to compete with the big boys – I urge you to look around the area and see what transportation infrastructure is place in other jurisdictions. You will see that, in the most desirable areas, a great deal of attention was paid to accommodate pedestrians – please keep this mind as you lead your Staff and as you guide developers and into creating necessary mixed-use TOD that the County needs and deserves.

Based on the old saying that *things that get measured get done*, WLCA asks you to set hard goals to ensure that pedestrian and bike facilities improve and expand:

1. Insure that every neighborhood within 3 miles of a Metro Station has a safe and convenient way to Bike to transit;
2. Insure that all neighborhoods within one mile of Metro Stations have a safe and well-lit pedestrian connection to transit.
3. Install 100 miles of bike lanes by the end of your first term;
4. Adopt a Complete Streets Ordinance to ensure that safe pedestrian and bike facilities are included in every new project
5. Dedicate at least one DPWT staff member to be the County's bike/pedestrian coordinator, with the goal of implementing Complete Streets and ensuring that existing neighborhoods get the retrofitted pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure that they need.

We believe these attainable goals will pay large dividends for County residents both in the short term and for future generations.

Sincerely,

Melissa Daston,
President
West Laurel Civic Association

CC: Councilwoman Ingrid Turner, President, County Council
Councilwoman Mary Lehman, County Council District 1