

From: Karen Metchis, Executive Committee Member, Montgomery County Sierra Club
To: Mr. Artie Harris, Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board
Re: Master Plan of Highways and Transitways - Testimony
Date: September 12, 2024

Hearing Date: September 12, 2024

I am Karen Metchis, speaking on behalf of the Montgomery County Sierra Club. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

We ask you to remove the proposed Midcounty Highway Extended/M83 in the technical update to the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways.

In 2017, the County Council passed Resolution 18-957-Transportation Solutions for Northwest Montgomery County.

The Resolution directed the Planning Department not to assume any additional road capacity for the northern extension of M83 when calculating the land use / transportation balance in future master plans.

As such, the existence of M83 in the MPOHT is a relic of the past, and therefore *technically* this should be included in this technical update. This can be achieved efficiently now.

As long as M83 remains part of this master plan, future Councils could revive it.

Should this highway ever be built, it would destroy or degrade forests, streams and wetlands in Germantown, Gaithersburg and Montgomery Village. It would cause severe fragmentation of valuable wildlife habitat; and damage five popular public parks, 100 acres of bio-diverse interior forest, and the Seneca Creek Greenway Trail.

If we are serious about prioritizing efforts to curb climate change, then we must make every effort - including updating our plans and policies to reflect the reality of climate change.

- We must reduce vehicle miles traveled, not build more highways - especially since the transportation sector is the single largest contributor of greenhouse gases.
- We must retain our forests rather than removing them - as would happen with the construction of M83, resulting in loss of their many ecosystem services including carbon sequestration, cooling the planet, filtering our water, and many other social and environmental benefits.

Now is the time to do this simple fix. Remove M83 in the Master Plan of Highways and Transportation and let's get serious about controlling climate change.

Thank you on behalf of the Sierra Club, our members, and supporters.