



WASHINGTON AREA BICYCLIST ASSOCIATION

2599 ONTARIO RD NW | WASHINGTON, DC 20009 | (202) 518-0524 | WABA.ORG

February 11, 2015

Members, Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Ave
Rockville MD 20850

RE: Amendments to the FY15-20 Capital Improvements Program (CIP)

Dear Councilmember:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our comments on the proposed amendments to the County's FY15-20 Capital Improvement Program (CIP). We submit these comments on behalf of over a thousand WABA members and over ten-thousand engaged WABA supporters in the County who share our vision of a county that embraces and enables bicycling for transportation, health, and recreation.

We are deeply frustrated with this CIP proposal, as it significantly reduces and delays funding for the important bikeways projects. While we understand the County's current fiscal constraints, now is the time to invest in the completion of these relatively low-cost projects that enhance mobility, public health, and regional competitiveness.

Our top concern is the delay of the Metropolitan Branch Trail project in downtown Silver Spring. Trail planning for the County began over a decade ago. In the 2010 CIP deliberations, the completion of Met Branch Trail was deferred until FY14. Under the proposed amendments to the CIP, the trail will not be complete until FY20. County residents cannot be asked to wait more than a decade for the completion of this important local and regionally significant trail. The District of Columbia is moving forward with design and construction of their portion of the trail with an anticipated completion in 2018 despite a much more logistically complicated alignment involving land use issues with WMATA, National Park Service, and others. There is no technical justification for the County's portion to be pushed farther into the future, and any effort to push completion beyond 2018 simply implies a lack of commitment to the project.

In addition, we would like to highlight the following CIP items that have been reduced in funding or delayed past the FY20 timeframe.

- Metropolitan Branch Trail (P501110) – Construction funding is delayed by three years. The total delay for trail completion will be 10 years.
- Bicycle-Pedestrian Priority Area Improvements (P501532) – The program, which is designed to address areas with high rates of bicycling and walking injuries or fatalities, has no funding allocated beyond FY15 for additional design, land acquisition or construction.
- Falls Road East Side Hiker/ Biker Path (P500905) – No construction funds programmed in the FY15-20 CIP. The Falls Road Bike Path was once scheduled for FY11, then postponed

to FY15. Now it's indefinitely postponed. No construction funds are programmed in the FY15-20 CIP.

- MacArthur Blvd Bikeway Improvements (P500718) – Project planning for MacArthur Blvd began in earnest in 2008. The County is finishing construction of improvements from I-495 to Oberlin Ave. Construction of the final phase is not programmed in the FY15-20 CIP. If funding is not restored, it will take more than 12 years to complete full corridor of this very busy bicycle route.

To the extent government's priorities are found in their budgets, Montgomery County's commitment to safe streets is largely evaluable by looking at the CIP. Looking at this CIP, quite frankly, we see little that demonstrates a commitment to bicyclist safety or to the priority projects we have worked with the County to plan over the course of several years.

Thus, we ask that this Council restore the funding for prompt design and construction of the Metropolitan Branch Trail. We also request that this CIP takes seriously the County's responsibility for and commitment to a safe, useable, connected bicycle transportation network by restoring funding in the other CIP bikeway projects.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shane Farthing". The signature is stylized with loops and a long tail.

Shane Farthing
Executive Director

CC: Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett
Montgomery County Planning Board Chair Casey Anderson

Transmitted Electronically