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**LABQUEST Community  
Association**  
716 Edelblut Drive  
Silver Spring, MD 20901

**Tamarack Triangle Civic  
Association**  
13107 Limetree Road  
Silver Spring, MD 20904

February 25, 2024

Montgomery County Council  
Attn: President Andrew Friedson  
100 Maryland Ave  
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: CIP Randolph Rd BRT and East Country BRT Integration

Dear Council President Friedson:

This is a joint memo from three active citizen groups in Eastern Montgomery County: The Greater Colesville Citizens Association (GCCA), LABQUEST Community Association and Tamarack Triangle Civic Association. We urge the council to add a project to the CIP to study alternatives for providing Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)/Flash along Randolph Rd from MD355 to US29, using the concept contained in the Transit Master Plan. Randolph Rd is key to providing the only cross county BRT connectivity between US29, New Hampshire Ave. MD355 and Veirs Mill corridors. We also urge the scope of the study be expanded to provide BRT east of US29 to the Life Science Activity Center as envisioned in the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan. Furthermore, the study needs to address providing BRT along Old Columbia Pike from Briggs Chaney Rd to Tech Rd in support of the activity centers identified in the recently adopted Fairland/Briggs Chaney Master Plan. Lastly, the study needs to address connecting the Randolph Road BRT corridor to the New Hampshire Ave BRT corridor at the White Oak Transit Center. The details of the proposed network are defined below.

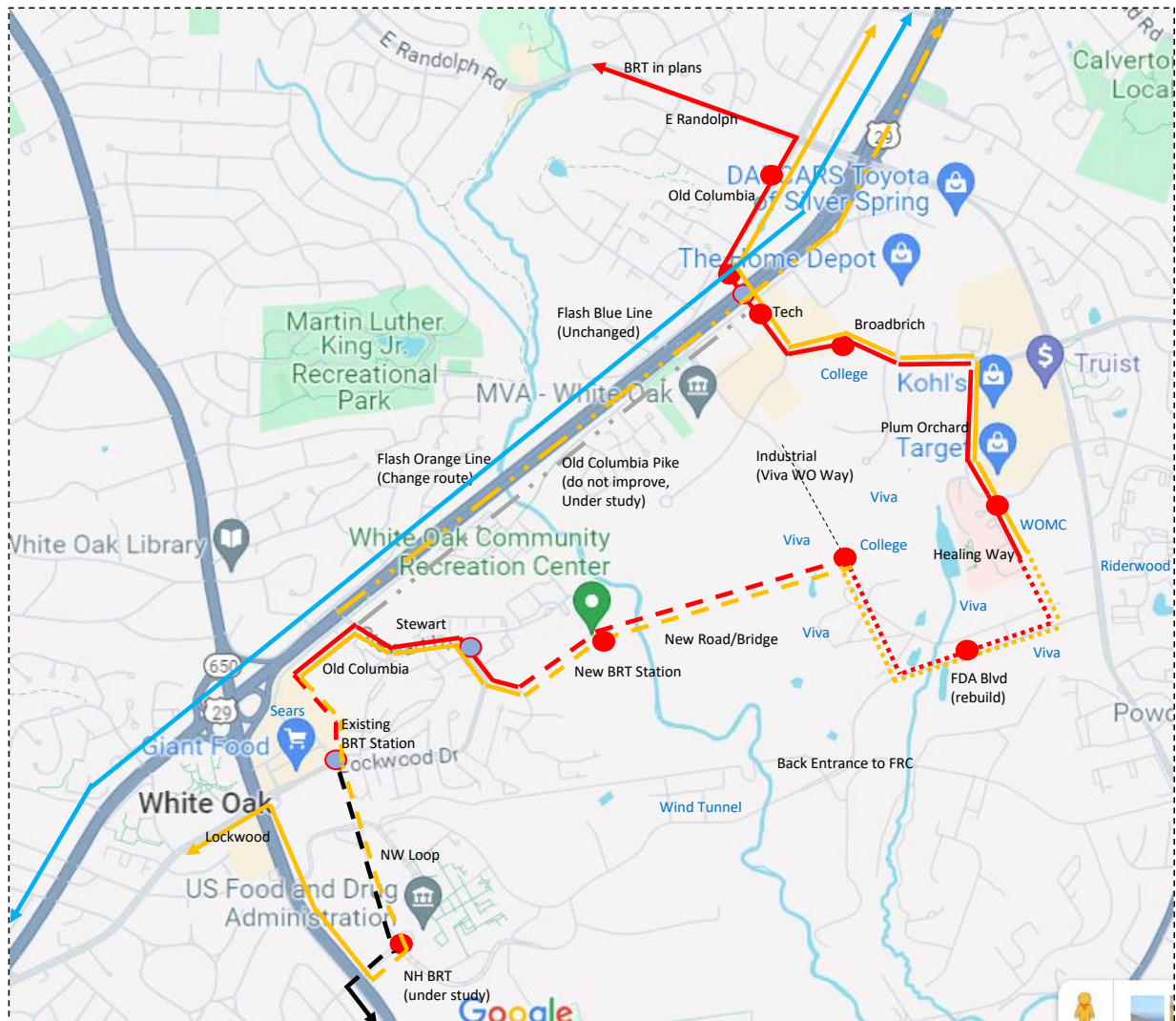
The improvements are needed to achieve the non-auto driver mode share requirement found in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan. The east county integrated approach will surely reduce the need for parking and go a long way to address racial equity and social justice needs for the large number of low-income residents who live in the Briggs Chaney and White Oak Activity Centers. The transit services are needed near-term (three-four years) to support Viva White Oak and Montgomery College as they start building and occupying their developments. The Viva White Oak developer is working toward building the three master planned roads in 2025 and ideally a decision concerning the proposed Paint Branch crossing should be decided before that to avoid waiting funds on later changes. The White Oak Medical Center (WOMC) also has had a parking shortage and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had a parking shortage before the pandemic (and that will surely return at some point before long). We expect a significant mode shift away from driving which will help lessen the degree on congestion in the area and address county climate goals.

This proposed CIP project needs to be funded this spring so that DOT has time to complete the study and implement it by the time it is needed by Viva White Oak and Montgomery College

### **Concept**

The envisioned routing of the four BRT corridors (Randolph, New Hampshire, US29 Blue and US29 Orange) is illustrated in the following diagram for the area east of Old Columbia Pike/US29 within the

three Activity Centers. Thrive Montgomery 2050 has Viva White Oak as a Large Activity Center but the WOSG Master Plan includes that area as part of the Life Science Activity Center. We use the “Life Science Center” designation since it covers a larger area.



There are six major locations where there will be a huge transit demand: White Oak Medical Center/Orchard Center, Viva White Oak, Montgomery College East County Campus and Education Center, White Oak Shopping Center (Sears replacement), and FDA. We also expect a large demand at the other proposed transit stations. The proposed routing provides excellent (one seat) transit service between these locations. It also provides transit service to/from locations outside these stations in all directions along major roads (both directions along US29, Randolph Rd, south on New Hampshire Ave), except east into PG County.

Riderwood is the largest continuing care facility in the US with some 3000 residents (2500 independent living) and some 1400 employees. There is a demand for transit service to that site. The proposal is that Riderwood would use its buses to access the WOMC station, which is where those individuals could access the proposed BRT transit service.

This proposal addresses BRT. Ride On and Metrobus would supplement and be integrated with BRT to take individuals to BRT stations from where they live, work or other activity locations, if they are not already at a BRT station.

## **Randolph Road BRT Extension**

The diagram shows the Randolph Rd BRT corridor being extended as follows:

- From the west, Randolph Road BRT turns south at Old Columbia Pike to reach Tech Road with a station at Adventist World HQ and the proposed mixed-use development across the road.
- It extends across US29 to Broadbirch Dr., with stops at the US29 BRT station to allow transfers – where passengers can go north to Burtonsville and Howard County or south to Silver Spring Metrorail station and other BRT stations along the way. The diagram shows two BRT stations on Tech Rd – one on either side of US 29. The reason for two stations is to limit people walking across US 29. The study needs to address whether two stations or one station is appropriate.
- From Tech Rd, it goes along Broadbirch Dr. to Plum Orchard Dr. with a station at the Montgomery College Education Center, the 387-unit White Oak Apartments and other nearby businesses.
- From Broadbirch Dr., it goes to FDA Blvd along Plum Orchard Rd and Healing Way with a stop at the White Oak Medical Center and the planned Medical Office Building 3. This stop would also provide an easy walk to the Orchard Shopping Center.
- From Healing Way, it proceeds south to Viva White Oak Way (aka Industrial Pkwy extended) with a station within Viva White Oak. That station needs to be integrated with the development that will occur and thus we suggest DOT and MCB Real Estate jointly make the location decision.
- From FDA Pkwy, it proceeds to a new road that would be used by transit, walkers, and bikers to cross the Paint Branch to reach the White Oak Rec Center and Stewart Ln. Montgomery College has commenced studying the opportunity to locate their new east county campus in Viva White Oak. Independent of their location decision, a BRT station needs to be provided to support the location selected. DOT and the college need to work together to integrate the station into the plans for the campus. If the location is on Viva, then MCB Real Estate also needs to be part of developing the integration, since the station would also support the Viva project.
- The new road crossing the Paint Branch would have a station at the existing Recreation Center so residents who move to Viva White Oak will have easy access to a Rec Center. A stop at the Rec Center would also provide good public transit service for the remainder of the White Oak Activity Center and Hillandale Activity Center.
- Once on Stewart Lane, the route would turn toward US29 to access the existing station at April Ln. The route would continue to Old Columbia Pike and turn south to reach the White Oak Shopping Center and the long-closed Sears store, which will be redeveloped at some point, hopefully before this BRT corridor could be implemented. Our vision is that the existing BRT station on Lockwood Dr. would be moved into the shopping center at a point in time when the shopping center is reconfigured. The Randolph Rd. BRT would stop at the White Oak Transit Center and connect there with the New Hampshire Ave. BRT corridor. The exact location of the relocated station should be jointly decided by DOT, BF Saul, and possibly the firm who occupies the current Sears location.

## **New Hampshire Ave BRT Modification**

The New Hampshire Ave. BRT is currently being studied by DOT. Our proposed changes only affect the end from FDA north to Randolph Rd. Rather than extending BRT north on New Hampshire to Randolph Rd., that segment could be served with enhanced local bus (Metrobus and Ride On). Thus the New Hampshire BRT corridor would stop at the White Oak Transit Center.

The question that still needs to be addressed is the segment between FDA and White Oak Transit Center. The FDA station needs to be located close to FDA buildings, not on New Hampshire Ave., which

is too far away for many people. There are two options. Starting at the White Oak Transit Center, the preferred routing is to proceed across Lockwood Dr. between the Public Storage buildings and Garden Apartments to the Federal Research Center (FRC) and FDA. It would connect to the existing NW Loop Road on the FRC. DOT is currently studying this possible connection to determine whether the BRT can operate satisfactorily on a one-lane road for the short distance. If they can, the next step is to work with GSA and FDA since it would likely require moving the security station. GSA is moving forward with relocating the truck screening station next to New Hampshire Ave. The new connection would not affect the screening station location. The GSA Master Plan calls for a transit building along the NW Loop. That would be an ideal place for the BRT station. From that station, the BRT would then proceed to New Hampshire Ave. and points south (including the Purple Line and Metrorail station in DC).

The other New Hampshire Ave. BRT Route option from the White Oak Transit Center would be to use Lockwood Dr., New Hampshire Ave. and Mahan Rd (enter)/Michelson Rd. (exit) to access the FRC/FDA transit station.

### **US29 Modification**

The existing US29 BRT has two different routes, which we suggest be viewed as two corridors: Blue and Orange. The Blue Line would remain unchanged. It goes from Burtonsville to the Silver Spring Metro Station. Based upon past DOT studies and actions by the Council Transportation & Environmental Committee, DOT is currently designing the reconfiguration of the route south of Tech Road to eliminate mixed traffic mode in congested areas.

The Orange corridor starts at the Briggs Chaney Park & Ride Lot and then is routed to the Castle Blvd BRT station before proceeding south on US29. It then exits onto Stewart Ln. and the existing BRT station at April Lane and White Oak Transit Station on Lockwood Dr. From there it proceeds south on Lockwood and reconnects with US29 and then proceeds to the Silver Spring Metrorail station.

The proposal is to modify the part of the Orange corridor between Castle Blvd and White Oak Transit station. Rather, it would use Old Columbia Pike from Briggs Chaney Road and then follow the above Randolph Route from Randolph Rd. to the White Oak Transit Station (relocated or not). This route will connect to possible BRT stations at the Verizon Building, the intersection with Old Columbia Pike/Briggs Chaney (walking distance to Paint Branch HS) and Briggs Chaney/Castle Blvd (easy walk to shopping center and auto park). Also, Old Columbia Pike needs to be used since the BRT vehicle needs to stop at the US29/Tech Rd station to allow transfers and then proceed east on Tech Rd. Continued use of US 29 would require an immediate left-turn in the southbound direction from the right-hand lane – which is not possible.

### **Road Design and Cost Allocation.**

The BRT routes on the roads east of Old Columbia Pike/US 29 should all operate in mixed traffic, based upon prior decisions that the mixed traffic mode is used where there is little or no congestion. The possible exception is FDA Blvd. and Viva White Oak Way, which will be determined by MCB and DOT. Also, Randolph Rd. east of Kennedy HS (maybe Georgia Ave) should likewise operate in mixed use mode. That design reduces the cost of the study.

The diagram shows dashed lines where roads do not already exist. The FDA Blvd, Viva White Oak Way and Healing Way within Viva would be funded by the MCB and county using the \$40M appropriated several years ago. Improvements to Tech Rd would use LATIP funds. It is our understanding that MCB will make improvements to both Tech Rd and Industrial Pkwy and request credits against the required LATIP fee.

Those improvements will include road, walking and bikeways, so the cost should be reduced since all three efforts will be undertaken together.

The diagram indicates that the County DOT is currently studying Old Columbia Pike, including the replacement of the decades long-closed bridge over the Paint Branch. We recommend that Old Columbia Pike not be widened nor the bridge replaced. That segment of Old Columbia Pike effectively operates as a frontage road since it is so close to US29 and accordingly would function poorly as an alternative to US29 as envisioned by the Council in 2014. Also, many citizens who live along that road are opposed to rebuilding the bridge. Rather the funds that would have been used for those improvements should instead be used for the new crossing from Viva to the White Oak Rec Center and Stewart Ln. That new route is a much better fit with the 2014 council vision and Thrive Montgomery 2050 vision. Based upon prior LATIP council decisions, \$12M would use LATIP funds and the remainder would come from another source.

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely

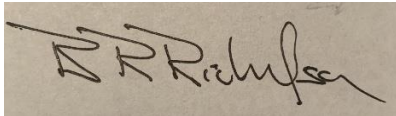
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CC:

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Montgomery College: Jerome Williams, Sherwin Collette, Michelle Campbell

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