

Greater Colesville Citizens Association (GCCA)

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LABQUEST Community Association

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Silver Spring, MD 20904

October 1, 2025

Montgomery County Council
Attn: Kate Stewart, President
100 Maryland Ave
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: Viva White Oak TIF

Dear Council President Stewart:

The three organizations strongly support the development of the Viva White Oak (VWO) and support the use of the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to help finance the needed infrastructure.

Approach
(TIF Phases, Funding Sources and Project Evaluation)

Phases: The approach to developing VWO and approving TIF financing needs to be done in phases. Phase I must focus on infrastructure within VWO and a few related exterior projects so that early development of housing and commercial development can be built and occupied. Subsequent phases need to provide infrastructure that is needed to support such a major development as it is built out, including more transportation, schools, and fire service. Phase 1 TIF projects and funding needs to be approved now while the evaluation proceeds for future phases.

Funding Sources: As you know, the amount of TIF funding must always be limited to the increase in tax revenue so that the bonds can be paid off. In addition to TIF funding, other funding sources, such as CIP and LATIP funds, will be needed.

In 2017, when the council developed the Local Area Transportation Improvement Program (LATIP), they made two key decisions:

1. Identify projects where funding would come from a fee that developers would pay. Those fees would be used to fund projects identified in the LATIP list. The county would use those funds to build the identified projects or the developer could build

one or more of them and a receive a credit, up to the specified limit. Note that for county constructed projects, other funds could also be used. That list covered the entire White Oak Science Gateway (WOSG) Master Plan (MP) area and thus only some of them would benefit VWO. Some limits were also placed on the type of bikeways to reduce cost.

2. Funds needed for the remaining projects would be provided via the normal CIP process. Those projects fell into three categories: (1) outside the WOSG MP boundaries, (2) benefited a much broader area (like BRT), or (3) would have been too costly to be included in the LATIP. Without some of these projects, especially BRT, the area would become severely congested as the VWO development occurs. Also, since the TIP is effectively using tax funds, not LATIP funds, they could be used to pay for some of these projects. The county can also use other tax funds to pay for these projects

Re-evaluation: The Planning Staff in the development of their report on adequate public facilities felt limited to those projects listed in the 2017 LATIP. While the projects that the Planning staff/board provided are needed, it is not complete as noted above. The LATIP was set up as a replacement for the LATR. In evaluating Adequate Public Facilities from a regulatory point of view, a development must be approved as long as the LATIP fee is paid or the developer builds one or more of the listed projects and receives a credit.

The Planning Staff and Board felt that the LATIP projects and design details are almost a decade old and need to be re-evaluated, especially in light of the large number of new or changed policies over that time. Furthermore, the first the public saw of what became the LATIP list in 2017 was before a Council Committee work session. In response to comments on changes that the public felt should be made, the council indicated those considerations would be addressed later when they are being designed. Thus, for these reasons, the three organizations agree and support that request to review and update the LATIP list. That review should also include projects that would be paid for with CIP funds. After the needed projects and scope are clearly determined, the funding source can be determined. A comprehensive plan of improvements to accommodate VWO is urgently required. Without it, development will occur but the needed infrastructure will be lacking, resulting in major gridlock.

The area covered by the evaluation also needs to include more than the White Oak Science Gateway (WOSG) Master Plan (MP). The area should be just slightly outside of the extensive commercial and high-density housing centered on VWO. In addition to the WOSG MP and its two relevant activity centers, it would include as a minimum the Fairland/Briggs Chaney Master Plan and its multiple activity centers that have recently been added with the approval of that MP.

The two major types of facilities the evaluation should focus on are intersection improvements and transit, especially BRT. While the intersection projects included in Phase 1 account for most of the road improvements, the few remaining intersection/road improvements need to be evaluated. The evaluation needs to largely focus on transit projects, which is the only mode available to provide the needed capacity to support VWO. We think that focus must be on BRT

since it provides premium service (much more capacity, faster, and frequent service) than local bus (Ride-On and Metrobus). After deciding on BRT, adjustments to local bus routes should be addressed.

Phase I Projects.

Earlier in September, MCB Real Estate briefed LABQUEST and the East County Citizens Advisory Board (ECCAB) on VWO, and the TIF concept. That presentation identified two phases and the financing needed for Phase 1. They did not address Phase 2. Three charts from that presentation are attached to identify development phases and minimum TIF Phase 1 funding. The three organizations support the phasing and the Phase 1 projects identified in the MCB presentation. Those projects are also included in the staff/board recommendation in Section 2, recommendations 1, 5, and 7.

The three organizations suggest that three other projects be included in Phase 1, which may not add to the total TIF Phase 1 cost.

1. Add turn lanes at the intersection of Cherry Hill Rd. and Broadbirch Dr./Calverton Blvd., largely as proposed in the LATIP. This is needed to reduce current congestion on Cherry Hill Rd. at this choke point. This improvement should be done concurrently with the Cherry Hill Bikeway to minimize cost and disruption from construction activities. We suggest the funding for this first use existing LATIP funds and only use TIP funding if needed. Since DOT is building the bike, they should also build this improvement.
2. MCB is proposing to design and build intersection improvements on US29 at Tech Rd and Old Columbia Pike. We support that effort but suggest it be clear that it also includes Old Columbia Pike at Tech Road and Industrial Pkwy. US29 and Old Columbia Pike are so close to each other that they need to be considered as one intersection, not two. Note that the LATIP has this as three projects. Note also that part of this intersection improvement is on the west side of US29 and technically outside the WOSG MP and LATIP. The design must consider both sides of US29.
3. The section of Industrial Pkwy between Old Columbia Pike and Tech Rd should have the bikeway added and “no parking” signs added to produce two thru lanes in each direction to match the road design within VWO. We understand that MCB may include that work as part of the three intersections they are designing and constructing, but that is not clear. Note that this is a separate LATIP project.

We also believe that the cost of intersections at US29 may be overstated. (The design we developed requires less change than the LATIP design). If that turns out to be the situation, the TIF Phase 1 cost ceiling may not need to be increased.

Phase 2 Projects

1. **BRT.** To provide the capacity needed to move the large number of people and provide a viable alternative to driving, we propose BRT service be concentrated in the highly developed area east of US29/Old Columbia Pike, south of Briggs Chaney Road and north of New Hampshire Ave., as illustrated in the diagram below. It uses four BRT corridors: (1) the

existing US29 blue corridor (unchanged), (2) existing but modified orange corridor, (3) planned Randolph Rd corridor, and (4) planned New Hampshire corridor. Together they provide connectivity in the north, south and west directions. Two of the BRT corridors (orange and Randolph) would be routed through the Life Science Activity Center and White Oak Activity Center, which includes VWO. Key stations would be added, including VWO (housing, conference center and commercial), White Oak Medical Center, FDA, multiple high-density housing locations, and Montgomery College.

This configuration matches closely the BRT corridors in Transit MP and WOSG MP but parts of the routing within the Life Sci Activity Center are different. In addition, the LATIP had four Ride On projects that should be eliminated and replaced with this BRT configuration. Some of the recently refined Ride On and Metrobus routes will surely need to be adjusted, but a net expansion of service hours would likely not change or be minimal. Excluding the improvements to Old Columbia Pike, this BRT configuration will be only slightly more costly than the four Ride On projects, and provide much better coverage, connectivity, and reduced travel times. Note that the Planning Board/Staff Report included the Ride On LATIP projects (Recommendation 10).

This BRT configuration could be built in phases, starting with the orange route changes and using US 29 temporarily to Stewart Road, rather than Old Columbia Pike south of Industrial Pkwy. Using established criteria, the modified orange segment would operate in mixed traffic since it doesn't operate on any main congested roads (other than temporarily on US29).

The proposed configuration would allow the Master Plan non-auto-driver mode share goals to be achieved and likely exceeded.

2. BRT road between Lockwood Drive (White Oak Transit Center) and FDA campus needs to be built to reduce travel time and improve transit ridership by federal employees/contractors who work at that site. This would need to be coordinated with the Federal Research Center (FRC) manager at GSA. Ideally, GSA should build the transit center on the FRC per their master plan. This should be done concurrently with the orange line changes if possible.
3. Although included in the above proposed BRT configuration, the Randolph Road BRT should be designed and built after the orange line changes.
4. Rebuild the bridge over the Paint Branch and improve Old Columbia Pike per the DOT Study Alternative 3, which the Planning Board has endorsed. That segment would be used by the above BRT concept and reduces demand on US29 as envisioned in the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan. The staff report only recommends the segment on Prosperity Dr north of Tech Rd. The entire road from Cherry Hill Rd to

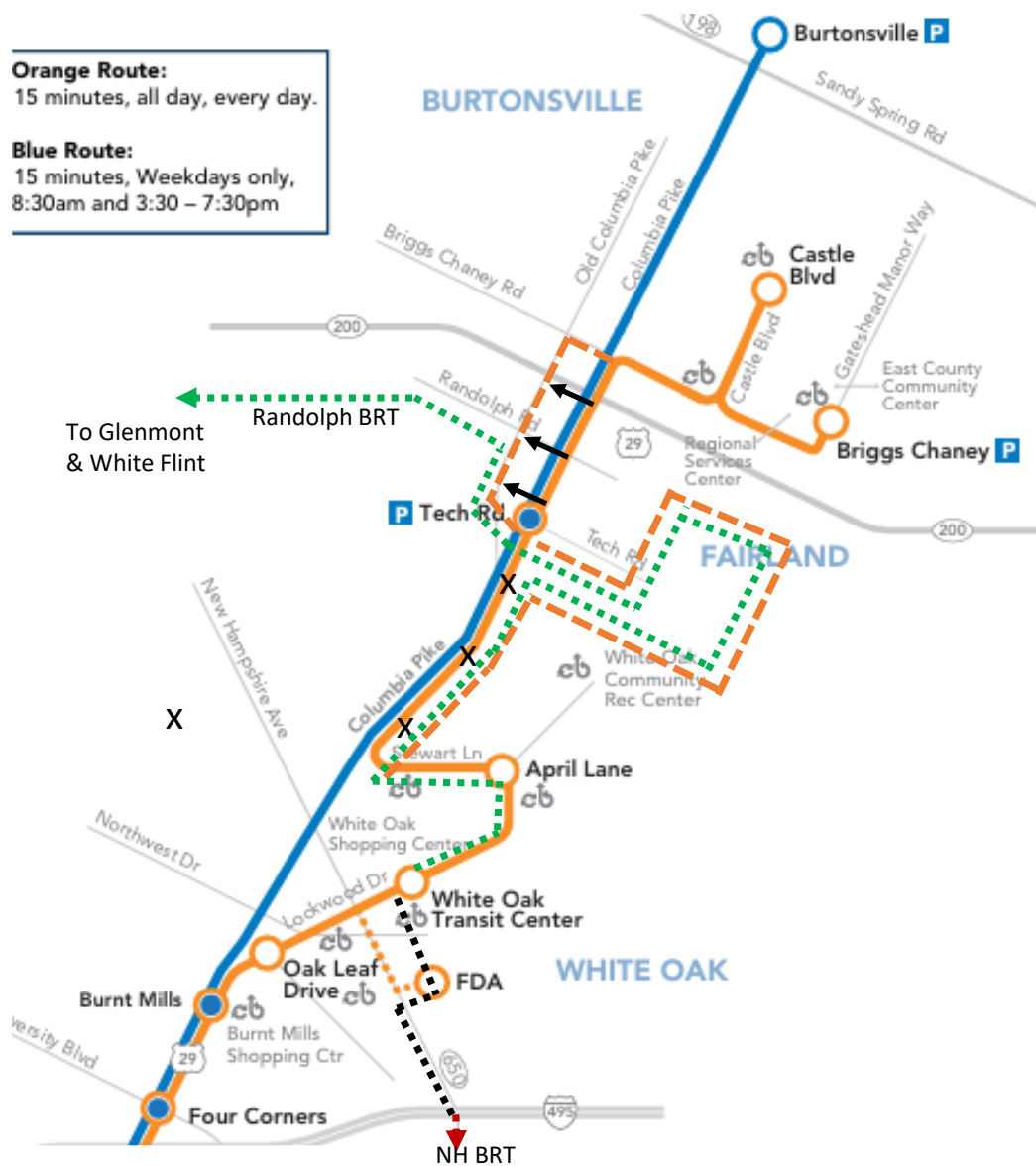
Stewart Lane needs to be improved. Note the bridge is included in the LATIP but the road is not. The DOT design includes the two bikeways listed in the LATIP. With this implementation, bikeways on US29 from Cherry Hill Rd to New Hampshire Ave would not be needed since this improvement provides that capability. This should be built after the Randolph Rd corridor east of Glenmont; the west segment can come later.

5. US29 BRT Phase 2 needs to be funded and built to reduce traffic congestion on US29 and improve BRT service. DOT will finish the 35% design later this year.
6. Intersection at Broadbirch Dr and Tech Rd per the LATIP design with minor modifications and include the Bikeway between it and Industrial Pkwy (another LATIP project)
7. Park development per the staff report (Staff Recommendation 4)
8. New fire station if study decides it is needed per the staff report (Staff Recommendation 6).
9. Elementary School per the staff report. MCPS should undertake a boundary study to address very outdated boundaries and decide where students from the Life Sci activity center should attend (Staff recommendation 3).
10. Although included in the above proposed BRT configuration, the New Hampshire Ave Road BRT should be designed and built after the Randolph Rd addition

The above projects would also support the following developments and likely avoid infrastructure costs otherwise needed:

1. The White Oak Medical Center (WOMC) needs to expand to accommodate VWO and to address their existing shortage of 70 beds. This need is being considered by the state. Such an expansion would add to the justification for the proposed BRT configuration and station at that location.
2. Chances are high that Montgomery College will select a location within VWO or elsewhere in the LifeSci Activity Center for its new campus. They have informed the Council EC Committee that they will make that decision in February 2026.
3. While already built, residents at Riderwood Village desire access to transit. Shuttle buses currently take residents to the Orchard Shopping Center and WOMC. A BRT station at WOMC would provide that connection. Riderwood is the largest continuing care facility in the entire country with some 2200 units.

The four BRT corridors will provide critically needed transportation to low-income residents who cannot afford any car or can afford only one car. These residents need much improved access to the many county services available in the area. They need access to jobs, more shopping choices, education, food pantries, traditional grocery stores (from the Briggs Chaney area), and access to the three east county recreation centers (one directly in front, one short walk, and the third with transfer to Ride On).



Proposed Re-evaluation Approach

We propose a hybrid Alternatives Study be undertaken in calendar year 2026 that:

1. Evaluates the above proposed BRT concept and intersection improvements. This should not take long.
2. Undertakes the typical BRT alternatives study. This should include orange Corridor changes and the Randolph Rd Corridor (at least to Glenmont, if not to MD 355)

The three organizations recommend that this study be led by DOT with major participation by the Planning Staff, MCB and those community members who have testified on the TIF. That group will act as a technical advisory group or CAC. In addition, there should be a minimum of one public meeting for item 1 and at least one public meeting for that station study. The result

would go through the mandatory review process, T&E Committee and because of the financing considerations we suggest the entire council. The study needs to be expedited since the phase 2 transit capacity needs to start being operational in 2029 to match the MCB build out schedule. About two years are needed to build the BRT stations and purchase additional vehicles.

Thank you for considering our recommendations. The three organizations are confident that the proposed additions to those recommended by staff will adequately address the need to move large numbers of people into and out of VWO. They will also satisfy other many existing transportation needs, thus minimizing cost. We urge quick approval of TIF Phase 1 while evaluation of Phase 2 is undertaken. Some of the Phase 2 projects will surely need to be funded via the CIP.

Sincerely

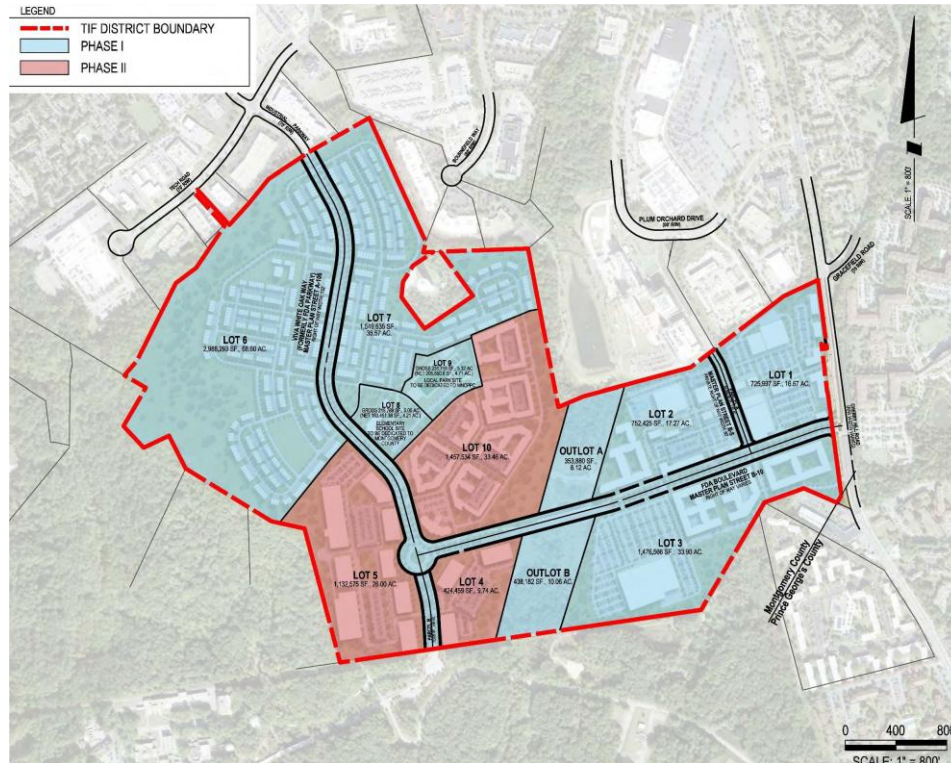
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Cc: All Other Council Members
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Ken Hartman, Assistant CAO
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Jewru Bandeh, East County Regional Director
Cisco Salles, White Oak Planning Manager
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Carlos Bonner, MCB
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VVO Construction Phases



VIVA White Oak Phase Contents

	Phase I	Phase II
Description	Spine infrastructure, offsite improvements, town center with retail and apartments and for-sale housing	Life science development (Lots 4 and 5); additional mixed-use multifamily (Lot 10)
Commercial SF	758,200	1,8880,000
Residential Units	2,228	2,480
Construction Start	June 2026	April 2029
First Open	October 2028	May 2031
Full Built-Out	2033	2043
Total Assessed Value	\$1,253,296,109	\$1,561,476,441
Total Annual Tax Revenues AFTER Bond Service	\$33,124,619	\$61,821,202

VWO Phase 1 Uses of Funds	
Mass Grading	\$41,148,473
Environmental Remediation	\$671,586
FDA Boulevard	\$39,943,966
VWO Way (Industrial Pkwy Extension)	\$39,889,943
Healing Way (to WOMC)	\$5,933,943
Utility Infrastructure	\$9,080,803
Paint Branch Sewer	\$10,473,145
Industrial Blvd Water Main	\$4,472,444
Tech Road and Industrial Parkway Intersection	\$3,888,757
US 29 and Industrial Parkway Intersection	\$6,110,904
US 29 and Tech Road Intersection	\$5,955,032
Subtotal Spine Infrastructure Uses	\$167,568,995
Additional Public Roads and Utilities	\$54,209,925
Town Center Parking	\$50,129,104
Subtotal Phase 1 Public Infrastructure Uses	\$271,908,024
Private Investment	\$172,212,964
TOTAL PHASE 1 SOURCES	\$444,120,988

VWO Phase 1 Funding Sources	
County Share of Road Cost – per Agreement	\$40,000,000
WSSC Credits for Mains	\$14,945,589
Private Investment (tied to LATIP costs for three intersections)	\$15,954,693
TIF Series A	\$96,668,713
Subtotal Spine Infrastructure Sources	\$167,568,995
TIF Series A (balance)	\$12,071,949
TIF Series B (tied to Town Center parking)	\$50,129,104
State Capital Grant	\$6,000,000
Private Investment	\$36,137,976
Subtotal Phase 1 Public Infrastructure Sources	\$271,908,024
Private Infrastructure	\$172,212,964
TOTAL PHASE 1 Uses	\$444,120,988