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FY 2018 Capital Budget Hearing

Item: Bicycle Plan Project Funding

The Horizon Foundation has joined 1,000 people and 17 other groups representing business, environmental, health and transportation interests to advocate for the Bikeway as the first step in implementing the Bicycle Master Plan, passed unanimously by the County Council last year.

The Bikeway, which includes 10 percent of projects in the Bicycle Master Plan, would make routes accessible to more than half of the county's residents, connecting them to schools, parks and other destinations. The Bikeway would make it significantly easier and safer for residents to take a bicycle to everyday locations and achieve recommended physical activity guidelines.

Building the Bikeway would require \$3 million dollars for three years, based on a cost analysis by the national expert Toole Design Group. Yet despite the broad show of support for this request, the proposed FY 2018 capital budget includes only \$600,000 in county funds for this work. The Bike Master Plan was developed as a 30-year plan – but at this rate we will not be able to build it in the near future.

We understand that the county faces tough budget decisions, but budgets are also a reflection of public priorities. Other communities are making it work. In Salisbury, which has a population that is one-tenth the size of Howard County, the mayor has proposed roughly \$750,000 to implement projects in the city's bike plan for the next fiscal year. Montgomery County's county executive has recommended more than \$20 million for bike routes. Howard County is falling behind.

We are here representing the voices of those who believe that the county can do more to promote bicycling and reap the economic, environmental and health benefits, including: American Heart Association Mid-Atlantic Affiliate, Ascent Bicycle Studio, Bicycling Advocates of Howard County, Columbia Association, Earth Forum of Howard County, GreenStone Ventures, Howard County Chamber of Commerce, Howard County Environmental Sustainability Board, Howard County General Hospital, Howard County Group of the Maryland Sierra Club, Howard Hughes Corporation, Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition, Howard County Public Transportation Board, Princeton Sports, Race Pace Bicycles, The Cycle Mill and Transition Howard County.

We ask you to continue to be supportive of cycling by passing a complete streets policy and design manual this summer, and to support increased funding that will make the Bikeway a reality.

Written testimony from Alan Davis, Princeton Sports

My name is Alan Davis,
2507 Sophia Chase Drive
Marriottsville Md.

I am the President of Princeton Sports on Little Patuxent Parkway. I have been a Columbia resident, homeowner and business owner for over 35 years.

I am here as the owner of a small business that has been in Howard County since 1981

I hope that after this many years, you are familiar with our store and what we sell and do. What you probably don't know is that we currently have over 35 employees and have employed generations through the years.

Bicycling is a large part of our business. My grandparents started selling and renting bicycles in Park Circle in 1936.

We sell all kinds of bicycles -- from balance bikes for little kids just starting to learn, to comfort bikes, to hybrids.

From entry level bikes, to the top of the line performance bikes for both mountain and road, we sell and service them all.

We promote family cycling and most of all, we promote health and fun.

We are deeply involved in Howard County. I am a founding member of the Howard County Police Foundation as well as The Bicycle Advocates of Howard County.

I have served on over a dozen non-profits throughout the years.

As a local business, we are involved in our community. We repair and rehab bikes for the Police to give away. We regularly provide SAG support for bicycling events such as the Columbia Triathlon, Irongirl and the Columbia Bike a bout.

We partner with many schools and community groups to promote bicycle safety and maintenance.

We lead regular Sunday rides that attract, on average, up to 150 riders, many of whom are novices. These rides years ago were on Tuesday nights but we had to change to Sunday mornings because of the aggressive driving in the county

Our business has grown over the past several years as more and more people have discovered the joys of bicycling and generally being active.

We have customers of all ages and physical abilities - from grandchildren to grandparents.

I am here today to comment on the Executives budget and ask that you reconsider the amount for new bike lanes and paths

Our customers tell us that they want better and safer ways to get around by bike for themselves and for their families -- better bike lanes, better trails, and better roads.

It isn't safe to ride on a lot of the roads. There isn't enough room for cyclist and cars. Our customers and friends are scared, they want to ride and want safer friendlier places to ride.

Columbia can do this, we can do this, and there is a plan in place.

They will ride and walk more if we have better on- and off-road facilities, bicycle parking places, and more safety conscious motorists.

I urge you as a resident, a bicycle rider and a small business owner, please shift additional capital funds in the FY 2018 budget to line item K5606 and have the vision to support even greater funding levels in future years to Build the Bikeway in Howard County.