

My name is Corinne Happel. As a board-certified pediatrician, I have the duty to help children thrive and to speak out when a policy or action threatens their safety, such as widespread school bus cancellations in Howard County. I am asking that the County Council fund continued bus service for the children losing coverage.

In the United States, the most dangerous part of an average child's school day is going to and from school.

According to the National Center for Health Statistics data from 2021, the leading cause of death in children and adolescents aged 5-19 is accidents:

<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/child-health.htm>. The most common cause of accidents causing death is motor vehicle traffic. This includes death of vehicle occupants (whether drivers or passengers), death of pedestrians, and death of cyclists in motor vehicle collisions.

School buses have been designed to prevent death. Per the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, "School buses are the most regulated vehicles on the road; they're designed to be safer than passenger vehicles in preventing crashes and injuries; and in every state, stop-arm laws protect children from other motorists."

<https://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/school-bus-safety#bus-regs>

Walkers and bicyclists going to and from school are at particular risk of death from motor vehicle traffic.

In the Howard County Police Department's School Zone Speed Camera Report to the County Council in March (2023), the data from 2022 demonstrate that cars routinely speed in school zones throughout Howard County, even when they are monitored by speed camera. AN EXAMPLE: At the recording site on Southbound Centennial Lane @ Centennial Woods Lane, there were more than 11 SPEEDING VIOLATIONS IN A SCHOOL ZONE PER HOUR, 1,395 confirmed violations per 126 hours enforced (this is after they tossed out camera errors, license plate obstructions, and other non-confirmable incidents).

School zones used in this report are areas within a 1/2 mile radius of schools. Driver behavior is likely more unregulated and erratic in non-school zones that stretch beyond that 1/2 mile radius into the 2 plus mile radius used in non-transportation areas now.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration released a Consumer Advisory: Protect Children Traveling to and from School: <https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/consumer-advisory-protect-children-traveling-and-school> (2018).

In regards to walking to school, they state:

"Walking to school . . . Children under 10 years old should be accompanied by an adult or someone who will make sure they walk safely."

So even after children are old enough to legally be left alone for some period of time (in Maryland you need to be at least aged 8 years), they are not old enough to be left alone to navigate to school until at least age 10. Not all children will receive this supervision, and this can lead to child death.

School bus loss will also increase car riders. Many of our Howard County Schools cannot safely accommodate this.

An e-mail from a Howard County middle school describes existing concerns (March 2023):

“We are writing today to communicate our shared concerns about the safety of students and staff as they travel to and from school each day. On Friday, these concerns were uplifted **when a student pedestrian was struck by a driver** on school property. . . . Each morning and afternoon, **over a thousand drivers** use the entrance and exit boulevards to report to campus for the day or to drop off family members. Anyone who has driven to our schools knows how congested things are and we are certain we have each witnessed unsafe driving practices.” [See full text below]

The decisions we make together will affect the safety of children throughout Howard County. Let's save lives together. Let's find a way to pay for continued school bus service for all affected.

Good morning.

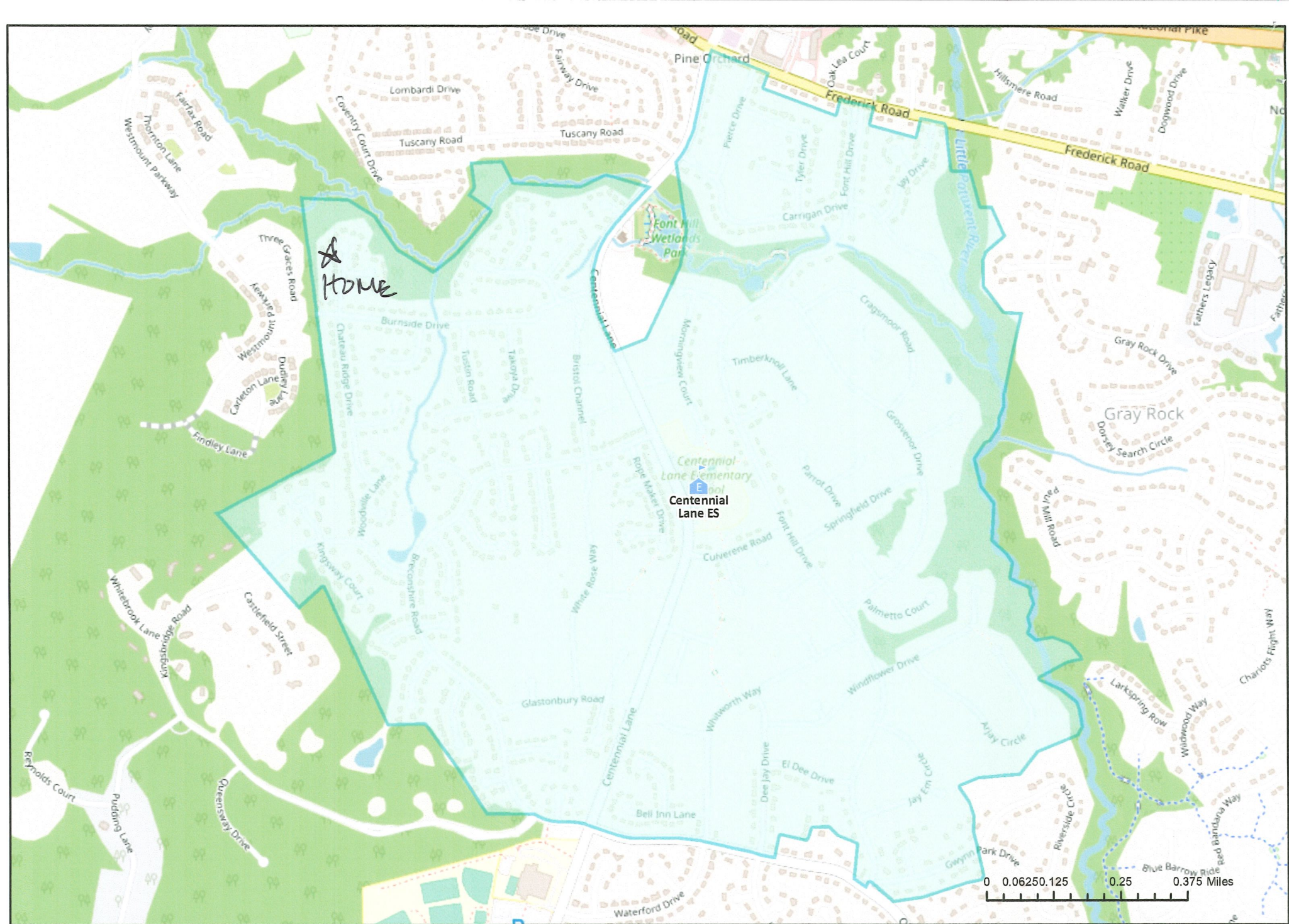
I'm Jem Tacadena, and I'm a parent of a rising 3rd grader and Kindergartener for the 2023-2024 school year at Centennial Lane Elementary School. Changes to the BOE's Transportation Policy 5200 have designated my neighborhood, Chateau Ridgeland, as a walking zone; see the attached map. I'm here to highlight the safety, logistical, environmental, and socioeconomic concerns that stem from this amended policy.

As a bus rider for the 2021-2022 school year, it was beneficial for my son to have normal routines and increase in-person social interactions post-COVID. His well-being was fostered through daily connections with neighbors at the bus stop. His safety was entrusted to bus drivers to consistently bring him to school. Removal of bus service would destabilize children's cultivated relationships and be detrimental to their emotional, mental, and physical health. The hazards of walking would increase since sidewalks don't exist continuously from my home to CLES, and more cars on the road would result in more pedestrian accidents. Navigating steeply graded Burnside Dr. and a blind S-curve on the most direct route to CLES would be too dangerous for my 8-year-old to manage alone if I couldn't walk him and my 5-year-old to school. We'd have to walk about 1 ½ miles to take the safest route, as shown on Map A, and we'd have to leave home earlier, sometimes in the dark. Walking is also disruptive for 2-income households who would have to make drastic changes in their work schedules, which could impact them economically.

I've also driven my son to school, which is also challenging. CLES policy doesn't allow cars to turn left into the one-way parking lot 10 minutes before arrival or dismissal. As shown on Map B, I've had to drive 2 miles to Breconshire Rd. to take a left at the stoplight onto Centennial Ln. instead of waiting a longer time to safely make a left from Glastonbury Rd., given the higher amount of local traffic post-COVID and speeding on Centennial Ln. I'd wait up to 10 minutes in the car line for my son. Meanwhile, dozens of idling cars are polluting the air at CLES and in proximate neighborhoods. Since driving is the most feasible, efficient mode of transportation to school, dozens more cars from the 25 displaced streets deemed walkable to CLES would be in a larger car line with longer wait times, overcrowd the parking lot, create obstacles for more pedestrians, and contribute to poor air quality.

For this school year, due to our work schedules, my husband and I put our kids into before and after care at a daycare that provides shuttles to and from CLES. While we're fortunate to be able to afford this service, we still face some economic hardship as a result. There are other families for which this is not an option, especially in communities with limited resources. The burden on families and socioeconomic injustice that Policy 5200 causes is not worth the reduction in bus routes. If this policy isn't repealed, the quality of life would suffer for all in Howard County. If the Howard County Council allocates operating budget funds to ensure continued bus service to all residents who need it, this gesture would show exemplary leadership in fulfilling Howard County's educational mission of fostering a climate for deliberative change through policy and community.

Thank you.



 Non-Transported Area SY23-24

Centennial Lane ES Elementary Non-Transported Area 2023-24

The information shown on this map is only to be used as a guide for HCPSS non-transported areas. The data is compiled from many sources, and while the HCPSS has made substantial efforts to ensure the accuracy of this information, accuracy cannot be guaranteed. School and transportation assignments can be verified by contacting the Public Information Office at (410)313-6682.



MAP A: WALKING TO CLES



via Chateau Ridge Dr and Breconshire Rd

28 min
1.4 miles

Home

Howard County Roofing

Haridham Hindu Swaminarayan Temple

Font Hill Park

Burnside Dr

Little Brick House Ct

Font Hill Dr

Kettledrum Ct

Tustin Dr

Takoya Dr

Morningview Ct

Timberknoll Ln

Culinary Advisors

Chateau Ridge Dr

Centennial Ln

Font Hill Dr

Breconshire Rd

New Forest Ct

White Rose Way

Outdoor Basketball Court - Centennial Lane

Centennial Lane Elementary School

Woodville Ln

Berkshire Ln

Carol and Iris Photography

Kingsbridge Rd

Silverstone Pl

Culverene Rd

Inkpen Pk

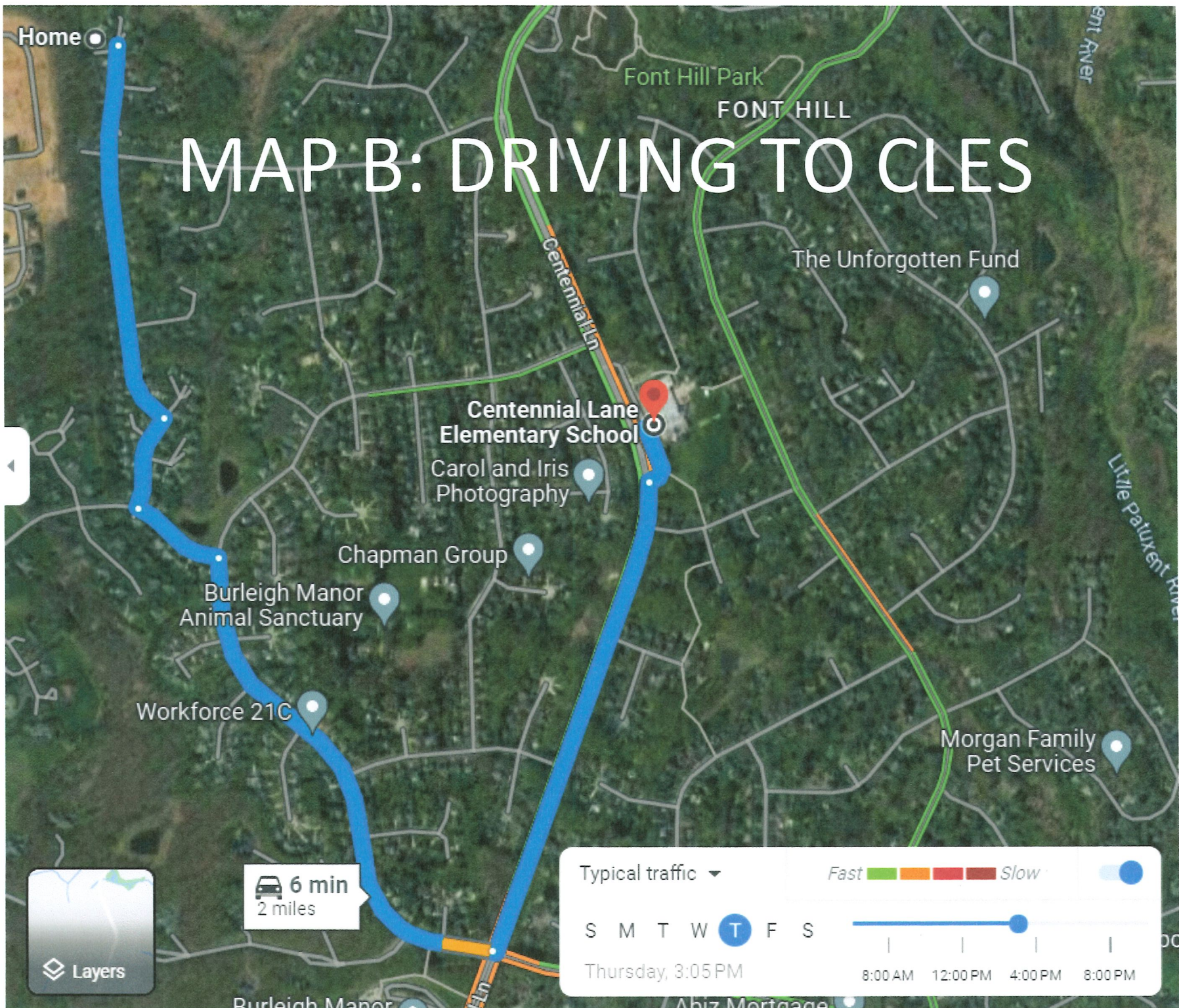
Layers

Typical traffic ▾ Fast Slow

S M T W **T** F S

Thursday, 7:30 AM | 8:00 AM | 12:00 PM | 4:00 PM | 8:00 PM

MAP B: DRIVING TO CLES





Testimony to Howard County Council

Joan Lancos
6110 Covington Road
Columbia, MD 21044
District 4

You have before you a photo I took on my vacation last month. The Sydney Opera House was a vision that changed a community. A quote from the website for the Opera House reads:

The Sydney Opera House is the symbol of modern Australia. A World Heritage-listed masterpiece of "human creative genius," it exists because a few brave people dared to think differently. From conception to completion, the building tested the limits of engineering, construction and design. When the Opera House opened its doors in 1973, changing the image of Australia, a new era of cultural discovery and community engagement began.

Howard County has had its share of visionary people. James Rouse visualized a "city to grow people." The Howard County Commissioners embraced that vision. Later, the County Council approved the plan that cemented the vision of a vibrant, centralized Downtown Columbia.

The plan that has been presented to us for the Lakefront Library is the game-changing, place-making vision that makes communities great. The Lakefront has been the gathering space for Howard County since Columbia began. The dynamic design of the library in the most central location in Howard County will claim the Lakefront as public space for the entire community and revive the beating heart of Columbia.

Years ago, Frank Gehry, a now-famous architect, designed a special and unique building for Downtown Columbia. The Rouse Company headquarters had such importance to Columbia that its preservation was specifically required as part of the approved Downtown Columbia Plan. In 2008, Gehry commented on the Jorn Utzon design of the Sydney Opera House. He said:

Utzon made a building well ahead of its time, far ahead of available technology, and he persevered through extraordinary malicious criticism to a building that changed the image of an entire country.

Construction of the Lakefront Library adjacent to the previously preserved Frank Gehry designed building has the potential to change Columbia and Howard County forever. Its fate is in your hands. I hope you have the vision to make the right decision and include the requested library funding in the FY24 Capital Budget.

Thank you for your consideration of my request.



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County Council Budget Hearing – May 11, 2023

FY 2024 Budget: Funding for maternity care, complete streets, mental health and new Lakefront Library

Position: Support

The Horizon Foundation is Howard County's community health foundation and the largest independent health philanthropy in the state of Maryland. We lead community change so everyone in Howard County can live a longer, better life.

While we have made progress in investing in local public health efforts in recent years, much more work remains. We urge you to prioritize funding in this year's budget to promote the health and well-being of our residents and reduce long-standing health inequities that have prevented many residents – particularly those from communities of color – from achieving good health.

Ensure sustainable funding for the Maternity Partnership Program

We urge you to fulfill the County Executive's request for \$1.7 million in funding for the Maternity Partnership Program that was set up last year. This funding will provide important prenatal and postpartum care for uninsured and underinsured mothers in our community. Without sustainable funding in FY24, clinical services will likely end abruptly, leaving pregnant women, mothers and their babies without the care they need. Funding leveraged with the resources within Howard County Health Department is needed to provide a full continuum of care, allowing Howard County to focus on preconception care, screenings and other interventions to reduce the risks of preterm births and maternal complications. Though the state passed the Healthy Babies Equity Act last year to fund pregnant mothers, regardless of immigration status, throughout their pregnancy up to one year postpartum, there have been delays in implementation.

Together with partners with the Howard County Health Justice Coalition including CASA, Alianza Latina, African American Community Roundtable, Chase Brexton, One World Healthcare, Onyx Medical Society and others, we urge you to help fulfill our collective promise to Howard County's new mothers and their families. This funding is critical to help us get this program fully off the ground.

We further urge you and the Council to make this funding a standing part of Howard County's budget moving forward. The Horizon Foundation stands ready as a committed partner to help make the Maternity Partnership Program a pillar in Howard County for years to come.

Continue historic funding for complete streets

We thank you for your partnership in recent years to increase funding for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure projects to historic levels. With your commitment, the vision of complete streets has come closer to reality, making it easier and safer for residents to walk, bike, use their wheelchair and use public transportation. We urge you to reaffirm the County's commitment to our shared complete streets vision by protecting the new record \$12+ million for bike and pedestrian infrastructure proposed by County Executive Ball in the FY24 capital budget. This funding will further advance projects along Dobbin Road, US Route 1, Elkrige Main Street, Guilford Road and MD 108 and others – key projects of great need that we enthusiastically support.

While continuing to identify new projects, we also urge you to prioritize implementing and completing projects that have been identified and funded in previous budget cycles. Everyone in Howard County – no matter who they are or where they live – should be able to safely, easily and comfortably bike, walk or take public transportation anywhere they need to go.

Support community mental health and ensure expansion of school-based mental health services

We thank you for your support in recent years to expand school-based, enhanced mental health supports, including 1:1 student counseling services, in the Howard County Public School System. Last year, the county committed to expand these enhanced mental health supports to all 77 public schools by the end of next school year. Work remains to ensure this program is implemented effectively across the county.

We urge you to continue to fund mental health providers in the HCPSS budget of 6 social worker FTEs, which will reduce barriers to care so we can ensure all students in Howard County who need help can get it. Everyone in our community should be able to access the mental health services they need – without time or financial barriers or any kind of stigma to prevent them from receiving the support they deserve.

Protect funding for the new Howard County Lakefront Library

The Foundation strongly supports the creation of the recently announced Lakefront Library and we urge you to fully fund this endeavor in the FY 2024 budget. The new library will be a civic hub for residents to learn and for our community organizations to forge new partnerships with one another. In particular, the Foundation is very excited to work with the library as it expands racial equity initiatives. We have been working alongside the Howard County Library System for several years to advance racial equity and support HCLS's racial equity educational

programming. With the Lakefront Library's expanded capacity for this work, we will be able to bring new partners to the table, advance the work of our equity grantees and further enable our community organizations to join in these efforts. By strengthening and embracing our cultural institutions like our library system, Howard County can be a model for equitable and thriving communities.

Thank you for your ongoing support of important public health initiatives. Investing in our public health, advancing racial equity and strengthening community partnerships will help all our residents live long, healthy and vibrant lives. We look forward to our continued work together to build a healthier, safer, more connected and more equitable community. Thank you for your consideration.

Testimony of Judith Todes in support of the new central library

I am Judith Todes. I have lived in Columbia for 30 years. This is only the second time I have felt moved enough to testify before you. But this is an extremely important matter.

A library is a place of learning. But it is much more than that, it is a pillar of our democracy.

It is one of the few places people of all walks of life come together in our community, get to know each other and share ideas. Besides public parks there are no other public places where this happens in Howard County. Places where people congregate are privately owned and controlled like the mall, are privately owned and cost money to participate like restaurants, theatres and gyms or are exclusive for one group like places of worship.

For a democracy to function people must have communication across groups. Without it each of us lives in our own silos, *only communicating with people who share our experiences*, and we develop a limited and distorted view of the needs and concerns of our community.

Health studies have shown that communities where people engage with each other have better health outcomes during crises like power outages, because people know each other and look out for each other. Having a gathering place for the community that serves all sectors of our county and people with all sorts of interests is needed for this community bond to form and strengthen.

Architecture is not merely a structure to enclose and protect from the elements. Architecture is art we live in that inspires and affects us. Just as a beautiful sunny day raises our spirits and inspires us, beautiful architecture does the same. Beautiful architecture can raise our spirits, inspire our thoughts and encourage us to engage with others. People need this.

We can afford this library. What we can not afford is to ignore our social, emotional, and community needs. For all of these reasons, I strongly advocate that you approve this library.

Judith Todes

10738 Symphony Way
Columbia, MD 21044

First of all, I think that 143 million for a new library when we have one that is already 4 stars, well, that is very expensive. The library that I use is everything I could want except for a need for more parking.

Having listened to your discussions on the library from 4/26, I understand that this new library is full of all the latest bells and whistles. At a huge cost. A literacy kitchen? I think we can do without that. Gaming areas? Kids have homes for that. Art education? We have the Columbia Art Center which offers art classes. We don't need to replicate more of that. An enchanted garden was mentioned. More fluff as far as I am concerned. A gong? Come on now.

I can understand the need for more meeting rooms and maybe a small auditorium. Definitely we need more parking. Could we not build a parking garage in the current parking spaces for the current library and top it with several floors of meeting rooms and extras? At a lot less cost?

143 million to keep up with the Joneses in other locations? Or to keep an extra star? I feel that far exceeds our needs. We can build what we need as additions to the library without all the fluff.

Or if that is not possible, then we need to find another place to house the library we need, not the library that is everything everyone might come up with in their wildest dreams.

Then we can use the remaining funds, if any, to improve Howard County schools which are practically all over capacity. Howard County schools are a main selling point for housing sales. We are going downhill as far as our schools are concerned right now. If I had to pick schools or a fancy new library, I'll take schools anytime. If we could just expand an elementary school or two, that would be worth a dozen literacy kitchens or two dozen art classes. I recommend Bryant Woods Elementary for your consideration.

Margaret Goodlin

Wilde Lake, Columbia