

April 16, 2024

Robert Ludwig

Testimony on the HCPSS Capital Budget

Good evening, my name is Robert Ludwig, and my daughter Elizabeth is in the first grade at Northfield Elementary School and will be attending Dunloggin in just 5 short years.

I'm a community advocate, career civil servant, and lifelong Howard County resident. I testified in front of you several times last year as an advocate for replacing this school, and my fellow advocates and I laid out a data-driven presentation using the county's own data to show that not only was DMS due for a replacement, but that school was at the very top of your list.

Last spring, I was ecstatic to find out that our work had paid off, and the Board not only voted to replace the school, but an occupancy date of 2027 was included in your Capital Improvement Plan. Or so we thought. Over the summer, "construction costs" increased approximately 40%, and not only did the Board change their minds and move to renovate, but you pushed the renovation back 6 years. What an embarrassing "180". The up front "savings" that are shown on paper for a renovation does look good, but that's absolutely a budget game, and as soon as the first hammer hits, your costs will be much greater than building a new school – No one knows what lies beneath. It's short sighted, and frequently only ends up hurting more in the long run. I know from substantial experience.

Last year this board ignored County and State data and decided to cherry pick another school over DMS because we didn't have black goo shooting out of the HVAC system yet. It shouldn't have to get that bad for this board to take action, especially when the State deems 5 of our schools as "uncomfortable and unreliable".

So why am I testifying today? Because it shouldn't be a huge ask to have my child learn in a schoolhouse where her health and safety is protected. I'm testifying because the community needs to hold this board accountable for decisions they make. I'm testifying in the hopes that this board will see the distress in our community, stop the endless games, and be an advocate for my daughter and the 57,000 students in your county. You claim this is the "Best Education System in the Country"... Let's start acting like it.

Is money the problem? Let us help you get it -- Engage your community advocates as a resource. Let us partner with you to find the money, let us advocate on the State and Federal levels to get the funding you need. This is the Board of Education, so educate us on how we can help you, and help our community get the resources it so desperately needs. Great things happen when we partner together, all that we ask in return is that you're accountable, fair, and true to your word. Replace DMS NOW. Thank you for your time.



Bicycling Advocates of Howard County

Testimony to County Council Public Budget Hearing for Fiscal Year 2025 Capital Budget
April 16, 2024

Bike HoCo (founded in 2008 as Bicycling Advocates of Howard County) is a 501(c)3 non-profit representing over 1000 cyclists and cycling clubs/groups. There are two major Bike HoCo objectives that have remained consistent: to increase cycling safety through infrastructure improvements and greater awareness and to be proponents that bicycling should be a part of an energy efficient, environmentally sustainable transportation system for Howard County and the region. Bike HoCo has functioned as a subject matter expert and provided advise to the County Government and the County Executive on bicycling issues in Howard County. We have been consistent, persistent, and patient in achieving our goal of building a forward-looking bicycle infrastructure system that meets the needs and desires of all between the ages of 8 to 80+ for safer alternative transportation options. Bike HoCo is uniquely positioned to help identify, analyze, comment, prioritize and advise on the impact of this year's budget on the *Bike Howard* Master Plan having been involved in its development, funding, and execution to date.

We are grateful for the funding County Capital Budgets have committed to *Bike Howard Express* (K5066) over the past 4 years that added over 40 miles of bicycling infrastructure, and for the projected \$14.7 Million in funding for additional bicycle and pedestrian projects that are proposed for the FY25 Capital Budget. This is the fifth increase in active transportation funding. A significant portion of the projected funding for *Bike Howard* is based of State or Federal grants that require the County to first fund design and other preparation, and many of the grants come with an expectation of 80/20 match funding.

What Bike HoCo recommends:

1. The near-term bicycle infrastructure projects in Bike Howard Express are now not expected to be completed until at least FY26 – approximately 4 years later than initially projected in 2017 when the project was initiated. Commit to funding levels promised for the next 2 years for K5066 to ensure *Bike Howard Express* is completed in as timely a manner as physically and fiscally possible.
2. Since the County received a \$4 Million Transportation Alternatives Grant for the Dobbin Road Pathway provide matching funding (K5070) required. In addition, fully fund new capital projects that will provide bicycle and pedestrian access to Columbia Gateway (K5071) and Troy Park (K5072).
3. Since the basic development of *Bike Howard* was based on data and resident input collected in the 2014 timeframe it is necessary to update priorities based on growth and changes in community support for alternative transportation (bicycling and

walking), which have occurred in the past 9 years. There is a ‘missing middle’ of connections to existing and projected bicycle infrastructure that is needed to develop a true network of bicycling infrastructure. Although *Bike Howard Express* provides a strong foundation a next phase of bicycle infrastructure improvements is needed to be identified to identify priorities for future bicycle capital funding.

4. Bike HoCo participated in the *HoCo By Design* process and met with DPZ to address some of our lingering concerns with some of transportation recommendations prior to Amendment submission and final approval by Council. A rewrite of *Land Use Regulations* was supposed to be started in the last year but was delayed until General Plan approval. This documentation is essential to maintain our momentum in bicycle and pedestrian access by ensuring that new development will be built in accordance with our Complete Streets Policy.
5. We also want to express our support for additional funding to DPW/Highways. Many bike lane projects that have been delayed are linked to funding shortfalls for paving projects – roads are typically realigned/repainted after being repaved. These are low cost, ‘low-hanging fruit’, projects that have a significant impact on increasing miles of bicycle network quickly. DPW has for the past several years battled increasing costs of material and contracting for road maintenance infrastructure projects. Without required/ funded maintenance many of the roads that are used by cyclists will become increasingly less safe. The County needs to find a way to ensure funding needed is provided to the Bureau of Highways.

Bike HoCo recognizes that planning for and implementing bicycle infrastructure upgrades and Complete Streets will require additional funding, staffing and internal systems in DPW, DPZ and OoT. We fully support actions that may be needed to secure the necessary resources to do so. Continuing the momentum that the County has achieved over the past four fiscal years is critical in achieving Bike HoCo’s long-term vision of bicycling as part of an energy efficient transportation system to help achieve a sustainable and equitable future for Howard County and the region.

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Howard County Housing Affordability Coalition

County Council FY 2025 Capital Budget Hearing Testimony

April 16, 2024

Council Chair Jung and Council members, I am testifying on behalf of the Housing Affordability Coalition's 700 individual and organizational members and allies.

In 2017, with the signing of the Downtown Columbia Plan's Developer's Rights and Responsibilities Agreement (DRRA), Howard Hughes Corporation and the County committed to build 900 affordable housing units, 417 in conjunction with County facilities and sites. Today—seven years later—Howard Hughes has met its DRRA obligation creating 52 affordable units among the 1600 units developed at Juniper Apartments and Marlow. Today—seven years later—the County has produced ZERO affordable units of its DRRA obligation. It is past time for the County to step up, put Downtown's affordable housing commitment on the front burner, and as quickly as possible begin to produce units.

County Administration held a series of meetings to "gather community feedback about how a new, future Howard County Library System (HCLS) Central branch can best benefit Downtown Columbia and all of Howard County." The announcement stated that there are now "five potential sites being presented to the public as options: a site in the Merriweather District, two different sites in the Lakefront District, a site at The Mall in Columbia and the existing Central branch site." At the public meetings, only two of the five site displays—the existing Central branch site and a new Merriweather area site—noted that affordable housing would be required in conjunction with the library development. The Coalition is concerned that this process will continue to delay forward movement on the 150 units of housing associated with the two Library sites.

According to our review the proposed FY 2025 Capital budget provides no date for siting or construction of the Library—just planning and design through FY 26. The New Cultural Center shows construction starting in FY 2024, but is that a reasonable expectation? There also is no date for completion. The proposed budget has the North Columbia Fire station completion delayed yet another year to FY 28. A new Banneker Station—on a new site—isn't shown as operational until FY 31. There is no mention of the 100 senior housing units or whether Banneker will move temporarily to North Columbia.

We respectfully request that the Council help ensure that the FY 2025 Capital budget includes the funds necessary to facilitate final siting and other decisions that will keep the project completion timelines approved in the FY 2024 capital budget in place for the new Central Library (FY 29), the New Cultural Center (27), the North Columbia Fire Station (FY 27) and Banneker Fire Station (FY 31).

The County should not allow and cannot afford to let the development of County-required affordable housing be delayed any longer.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss the Coalition's testimony and concerns. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Jacqueline Eng

Jacqueline Eng, Coordinator

Howard County Housing Affordability Coalition

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From: [Kerry Darragh](#)
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Good afternoon,

Please see attached for testimony for tonight's capital budget hearing on behalf of the Horizon Foundation.

Thank you!

Kerry Darragh

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County Council Budget Hearing – April 16, 2024

FY 2025 Capital Budget: Funding for complete streets

POSITION: Support

The Horizon Foundation is the largest independent health philanthropy in Maryland. We are committed to a Howard County free from systemic inequities, where all people can live abundant and healthy lives.

The Foundation strongly supports the County Executive’s budget request of \$14.6 million for bike and pedestrian infrastructure projects in the FY 2025 budget, helping to further implement complete streets across our community.

Howard County has done outstanding work in recent years to fund bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure projects at historic, record-breaking levels. Thanks to commitment of the County Council and partnership with the administration and community advocates, Howard County is a nationally recognized model for how to bring the vision of complete streets to life. These projects are having a direct effect on the lives of residents across our community, making it easier and safer for people to walk, bike, use their wheelchair and use public transportation. We urge you to continue this progress by protecting another year of record funding to build a safer and more connected Howard County. We strongly support investments in historically underinvested, Equity Emphasis Areas, especially along Route 1 in Elkridge, Laurel, Jessup and parts of Columbia. Additionally, we support working with the Howard County Public School System to ensure children can safely and easily walk and bike to school, while also receiving proper bike and pedestrian safety education, by pursuing Safe Routes to School funding from the State of Maryland and other available funding sources.

Everyone in Howard County – no matter who they are or where they live – should be able to safely, easily and comfortably bike, walk, roll or take public transportation anywhere they need to go. Sustained investments in public health will help all our residents live healthy and abundant 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.