

2016 FEB - 4 AM 10: 26
HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL
RECEIVED



Oakland Mills Community Association
The Other Barn • 5851 Robert Oliver Place
Columbia, MD 21045
410-730-4610 • oaklandmills.org

January 29, 2016

Howard County Council Members
George Howard Building
3430 Court House Road
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043

Dear Howard County Council Members,

In the very near future the Council will review the proposed Howard County Bike Master Plan. We urge you to consider the inclusion of the new bicycle/pedestrian/transit bridge over U.S. Route 29 which is also referred to as Bridge Columbia. There is no mention of the bridge in the proposed Bike Master Plan and this is an important and unexplained omission.

We commend the County Executive and County staff for this comprehensive plan and are equally excited that the County supports the development of Complete Streets policy and the County's commitment to seek a Bicycle-Friendly Community Designation. Omitting the proposed bridge is contrary to the goal of a Complete Streets Policy, which will guide road design and make it both safe and convenient to travel by foot, bicycle, public transportation or automobile. Bridge Columbia fulfills the complete street design by safely incorporating pedestrian, bicycle, and public transit on the bridge.

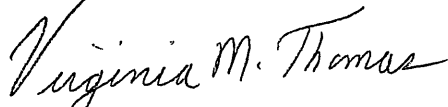
County Executive Kittleman has, on numerous occasions, voiced his support for the Bridge Columbia project, organized a "Bridge Columbia Summit, included it in his capital budget proposal, and added it to the County's Priority List for transportation projects requesting state funding last fall. During the Planning Board testimony there was discussion about the total cost of the proposed bridge. There was the impression that the County would bear the total cost of the new bridge and that the cost of the bridge would push aside the other 49 short-term projected in the Bike Master Plan to build out the bike network. This is not true and 20 percent of the local share for the bridge is a manageable cost in a large urbanized County over a multi-year period. It would be important to include the bridge in the Bike Master Plan when the County pursues intergovernmental assistance. Supporting Option 3B, outlined in the *Downtown Columbia Bridge Feasibility Study*, would be important as we seek to get firm costs estimates and move forward with grant applications.

This bridge is the only dedicated bicycle crossing over Route 29 in Columbia and connects across US 29 the 98 miles of shared use paths in Columbia, paths that serve not just Columbia but other communities such as Allview, Dalton, and Beaverbrook. It is the most convenient crossing over US 29 for regional trails serving Ft. Meade and beyond.

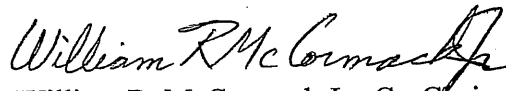
The inclusion of the bridge in the Bike Master Plan is a vital. This will put the bridge on the "map" for all current and future users. It will show that the County is committed to connecting its 98 miles of pathways; it will show that the County is committed to providing a direct connection between Columbia villages and major employers downtown and firmly state that the bridge is the most important link crossing Route 29.

In closing we want to reiterate that we fully support the Proposed Bike Master Plan and the Complete Street Design. We hope that omitting the new pedestrian/bicycle/public transit bridge was an oversight and urge that you include this in the final Bike Master Plan for Howard County. Please let us know how we can assist in this effort and what additional information you may need.

Sincerely,



Virginia M. Thomas, Co-Chair
Oakland Mills Board of Directors



William R. McCormack Jr., Co-Chair
Oakland Mills Board of Directors