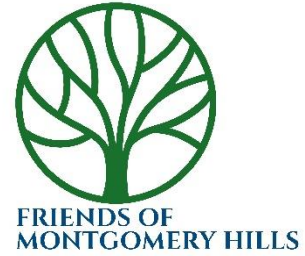


February 8, 2024

Mr. William Pines
Administrator
Maryland State Highway Administration
707 North Calvert Street
Baltimore, MD 21202



Dear Administrator Pines:

The undersigned organizations are writing to express our support for the revised version of SHA's design for improvements to MD Route 97/Georgia Avenue in Montgomery Hills that was presented to our organizations' board presidents January 23, 2024.

Our organizations represent the residents of the neighborhoods on the east and west sides of the Georgia Avenue corridor in Montgomery Hills. As the stakeholders most directly affected by any changes to this section of Georgia Avenue, we have been calling for improvement to this section of road for several decades and have been directly involved with the planning for this project since 2012.

Our vision for how to improve Georgia Avenue has remained consistent over the years:

- Improve walkability, bikeability, transit-access, and safety along the corridor so that Georgia Avenue is less of a physical barrier
- Replace the two-way reversible middle lane with a raised median and dedicated turning lanes
- Implement measures to improve aesthetics and usability, such as wider sidewalks, better signage, and more trees
- Improve the retail environment by improving multi-modal access to local businesses
- Rework the beltway interchange to improve traffic flow and reduce accidents
- Promote a sense of place and community engagement by realigning 16th Street in order to create a neighborhood park

On the whole, we believe that the project design shared by SHA on January 23 achieves these goals, and we support it. We urge the state to provide full funding for the project and for implementation of the improvements to begin as soon as possible.

We appreciate that SHA has worked collaboratively on this project over the years and has been responsive to much of the input provided by local residents. In particular, we are grateful that SHA listened to concerns that by eliminating left turns from southbound Georgia Ave onto Columbia Blvd/Dale Drive, an earlier version of the plan would have resulted in an overwhelming amount of traffic on narrow Flora Lane. The current plan, which provides a dedicated left turn lane at Georgia Ave and Columbia Blvd/Dale Drive, has helped to alleviate those concerns.

While we are supportive of the proposed improvements, we continue to have concerns about the increase in traffic on Seminary Place that will result from the plan to eliminate left (northbound) and right (southbound) turns from Georgia Ave onto Seminary Road. We understand that the intersection at Seminary Road presents significant design challenges and physical limitations, but we are concerned about how the proposed changes at that intersection will affect traffic volume and pedestrian safety on nearby Selway Lane. In addition, we are concerned about increased traffic at the already complicated intersection of Seminary Place, Seminary Road, 2nd Avenue, and Brookville Road immediately to the west. We hope and expect that SHA will work with Montgomery County DOT to find opportunities to address safety issues in that area of the project and impacts to the adjacent county roads.

Thanks for SHA's dedication to improving safety and the existing conditions on Georgia Ave, and we look forward to continuing our collaborative relationship as this project moves forward.

Sincerely,

Michelle Foster
President, Friends of Montgomery Hills

Phil Olivetti
President, Linden Civic Association

Dan Hattis
President, President, Woodside Forest Civic Association

Christopher Lao-Scott
President, Woodside Park Civic Association

Genevieve McDowell Owen
President, North Woodside Citizens Association