



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



February 25, 2020

Dear County Executive Ball:

The Oakland Mills Community Association continues to support the inclusion of the construction of the Downtown Columbia Transitway as a high priority in the Howard County Transportation Priority Letter to the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT)'s FY FY2021 Howard County Priority Letter to MDOT.

We have long supported connecting east and west Columbia by mean of a pedestrian, bicycle, and transitway with the bridge across US 29 between Downtown Columbia and the Village of Oakland Mills as a linchpin. We applaud the improvements that have been made to the pathway and the attractive upgrades to the bridge, but there is still much work to be done in the area of transit.

We envision an efficient and attractive 21<sup>st</sup> Century active-transit corridor right through the heart of Columbia. It would encourage users by connecting key activity centers between Columbia Gateway and Howard County General Hospital, including Downtown Columbia, Howard Community College, Blandair Park, and several village centers. This proposed transit corridor could take advantage of rights-of-way planned by Columbia's developers a half century ago for such a transit system. This existing infrastructure could form the basis for a truly unique and cost-effective opportunity for development of an effective and efficient transitway through the heart of Columbia.

This project would meet many needs, including:

- Relieving traffic congestion and the need for parking in Downtown Columbia by providing alternate means of transportation for workers, shoppers, and people attending events.
- Connecting workers with Gateway Center jobs. The County's plans to make the corporate park into an economic driver with new businesses should be accompanied by a plan to efficiently and quickly transport people to the job center.
- Helping to relieve congestion on Routes 29 and 175.
- Making other major destinations, such as several village centers with relatively high density along the transitway, accessible to those without cars and those who choose not to use their cars to get around town.
- Helping to attract investment in older village centers such as Oakland Mills and Long Reach.
- Improving safety and security on the US 29 pedestrian and bicycle bridge if the transit shares a bridge with other users or is in close proximity to the pedestrian/bicycle bridge.

- Reducing energy consumption and greenhouse gases by increasing the number of residents using alternate modes of transportation.

We believe the proposed transitway should be assessed for more than just its economic benefits. American tastes are changing. Millennials, Baby Boomers and others want communities that are less car-dependent and offer mixed-use, compact, amenity-rich, and transit-accessible neighborhoods and walkable places. Accordingly, the feasibility of the new transitway cannot be evaluated solely on the basis of economic impact, nor can it be evaluated on guesses about future transit ridership. Policy makers must also consider how it would promote livability and connectedness, taking into account economic, transportation, public safety, environmental, community development, and other benefits that promote and enhance the quality of life in Columbia.

This is truly an exciting project. Howard County has stated that creating a more transit-friendly community is a priority. This is an opportunity to make that stated priority a reality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jon. L. Edelson", is placed on a light-colored rectangular background.

Jonathan L. Edelson, Chair  
Oakland Mills Board of Directors