

Questions from Council President Andrews about Gaithersburg West Master Plan

- 1) Where are commuters to Life Science Center jobs expected to come from? An origin-destination table of commuting trips is needed. Since the Growth Policy aims to “reduce our footprint” what is the estimated vehicles miles traveled at buildout, and how does that compare to the current number, as well as to what would be allowed under the 1990 Master Plan, and to the Residents for Reasonable Development Plan?
- 2) What is the breakout for the assumed 30% non-auto share of trips among the Corridor Cities Transitway, other transit, carpooling, bicycling, walking? What are the current mode shares for each of these modes of travel?
- 3) The current Growth Policy report recommends raising the standard to 1600 CLV for “policy areas with the highest transit level of service” which is defined as Transit LOS (level of service) B or better, but the R and D policy area has a current transit LOS of D, which according to the draft Growth Policy requires a road LOS of C. After completion of the Corridor Cities Transitway to Clarksburg, which is not required under the proposed staging plan until Stage 4 when most development would have occurred, the transit LOS in the Life Sciences Center (LSC) would be a low C. Wouldn't this require a road LOS of at least D in the LSC -- around the current standard of 1450 CLV rather than the proposed 1600 CLV?
- 4) The Draft Gaithersburg West Master Plan contains extraordinary assumptions about acceptable traffic levels and infrastructure additions – recommending 1,600 CLV in the Life Sciences Center, seven new grade-separated interchanges (five within or on the border of the LSC), and a 30% non-single occupancy vehicle share of trips heavily reliant on construction of the Corridor Cities Transitway. Even so, the Plan barely passes the County's traffic standards and would leave the area much more heavily congested than now. Since County tests do not sufficiently factor in the impact of regional traffic, it is reasonable to assume that traffic congestion would worsen even more than projected. The proposed Staging Plan would allow much development to occur before the CCT and before the Sam Eig interchanges are under construction. Given all this, why is the Planning Board comfortable recommending this transportation plan? (Before responding please see question #11 and read the excerpt from the Sept. 15 letter from the State Transportation Planners that asserts that the huge imbalance of jobs and housing proposed in the Draft Plan will lead to substantial auto commuting from out of the area.)
- 5) The current 1990 approved Master Plan allows up to 38,000 jobs, more than 16,000 more than the current actual number. The draft plan would allow up to 60,000 jobs. What number of jobs would be supportable if the five grade-separated interchanges proposed to be added in or bordering the Life Sciences Center were eliminated? If four? If three? If two? If one? What would be supportable with different combinations of two, three or four interchanges? At what level of development would the proposed interchange at Great Seneca Highway and Quince Orchard Road no longer be needed?

- 6) The County Executive proposes eliminating the interchange at Great Seneca Highway and Muddy Branch Road by reducing the density from 20 million square feet to 18 million and extending Sam Eig Highway into Belward Farm. Would this 2 million square feet reduction in density be sufficient to eliminate the need for a grade-separated interchange at Great Seneca Highway and Muddy Branch Road?
- 7) The jobs housing balance in the surrounding area within a two-mile radius is 2.8 to 1. A balance of jobs to housing would be 1.6 to 1. The proposed Gaithersburg West Master Plan would add up to 22,000 jobs and up to 5,200 housing units. For the additional jobs to balance the additional housing (irrespective of the baseline approved now of jobs and housing, which is not in balance), the number of jobs added would need to be reduced to approximately 8,300, nearly 14,000 less than proposed, but still an increase of about 8,000 above the 1990 Master Plan level of 38,000. Those 14,000 workers would need about 9,000 homes to live in (average of 1.6 jobs per home). How would adding so many more jobs than houses as proposed by the Planning Board not a) increase housing costs (a concern expressed by the Housing Opportunities Commission in a letter sent to the Council) and b) not result in longer, more auto-dependent commutes (a concern expressed by the State Department of Transportation in their September 15 letter to the Council) than if the number of additional jobs and the number of additional housing units proposed to be allowed were in balance? How can the Life Sciences Center envisioned in the Draft Plan be credibly described as a live/work community if the great majority of people who would work there couldn't possibly live there because of the imbalance of jobs and housing?
- 8) Car trips per 1,000 square feet would be higher within the LSC than, say, at White Flint? In addition, the zone proposed for the LSC would allow up to 50% office uses, yet the transportation analysis appears to assume only a third of the space would be office uses, which has the greatest intensity of employees (and thus car trips) of the assumed uses. If so, why?
- 9) What growth scenarios have been modeled? In each case, what is the growth assumed – the 2030 Round 7.1 forecast, the 2030 Round 7.2 forecast or buildout? For each of the growth scenarios modeled, were mode shares modeled as output, rather than as input, to assure both relevancy and apples-to-apples comparisons. Again, show the non-auto mode share broken out among CCT, other transit, carpooling, bicycling and walking.
- 10) How does the plan recommended by Residents for Reasonable Development compare to the Final Draft Plan with regard to additional auto trips, congestion levels, percentage of new development within a quarter mile of transit, and the number of interchanges required?
- 11) What is your response to the red flags raised by the State Transportation Planners in their letter to the Council of September 15: "We took careful note of the discrepancy between the number of households and the number of jobs in the area. In the scenario of high households and high jobs, this discrepancy becomes over 47,000 more jobs than households. With the M-NCPPC staff recommendations for the medium number of households and

the high number of jobs, this discrepancy becomes more severe. As a result of this imbalance, our concern is that employees have little choice than to commute in from areas throughout the Washington region. Toward this end, the SHA conducted a regional analysis to determine the effects of the new trips on the larger regional system. The results indicated that there will be a significant number of new trips along I-270 between north of Muddy Branch Road to MD 28, along Sam Eig Highway and the interchange at I-270 at MD 28. To mitigate these new trips, a new lane in each direction along I-270, an additional lane in each direction on Sam Eig Highway from I-270 to Great Seneca Highway, and ramp modifications to MD 28 at i-270 would be needed on top of current planned highway efforts. Without these improvements, the over 21,000 new daily trips will be forced onto the local road network resulting in severe congestion. We suggest that his impact can be reduced if the gap between households and jobs were more in balance with one another.”

- 12) Traffic congestion around the Life Sciences Center is substantial. With regard to the Gaithersburg West Master Plan, is it the position of the Planning Board that existing communities and pass-through commuters must accept much worse congestion than would otherwise occur to allow for 22,000 more jobs above the 38,000 already allowed (16,000 of which have not yet been created) in the Life Sciences Center? If so, why does the Planning Board think that the far worse congestion that would occur is an acceptable tradeoff for the many thousands of current and future residents of existing communities in and around the Life Sciences Center, and the many thousands of pass-through commuters who travel near and through the Life Sciences Center?
- 13) Testimony by David Hauck, Chair of the Sierra Club’s Montgomery County Group, at the public hearing noted the most recent Council of Government forecasts that project that adding the very large numbers of jobs proposed for Gaithersburg West would reduce the number of jobs that would be added at Metro Stations, in the East County and in the urban ring inside the Beltway. This result that would undermine the County’s goal of encouraging the most development where there is the greatest capacity to support it. How would that be consistent with Smart Growth?
- 14) How close in feet to the Belward Farm homestead could there be 100 to 150 foot buildings under the Draft Plan? Other than directly in front of the homestead entrance on Darnestown Road, at buildout would any existing communities have a line of sight to the historic homestead?