

March 20, 2004

Urgent !

Contact Your representatives now and urge them not to fund any study for this massive interchange that will support the concept of a huge tech corridor near the University of MD and negatively impact the traffic, noise and pollution in the surrounding communities and streams, and well as the tax base for the State and county.

Attached: Letter from the Conservation Chair for the Prince George's County Group of Sierra Club sent to Legislators regarding the proposed new I-95 / I-495 interchange servicing the University of Maryland at College Park (Terrapin Expressway).

You may want to use parts of this letter use when you write/email or call State Delegates. In fact, just the first paragraph would be enough when calling to get the message across. Or create your own.

Thanks,

Carol Hurwitch
Jon Robinson

[A similar version of this was distributed at the Cool Spring Terrace Civic Association today.]

1--Please contact *now* the Prince George's County Delegation for District 47.

Rosetta C. Parker	email: rosetta_parker@house.state.md.us
Dolye L. Niemann	email: doyle_niemann@house.state.md.us
Victor R. Ramirez	email: victor_ramirez@house.state.md.us

Call: 410-841-3326; 301-858-3326; or 1-800-492-7122, ext. 3326; fax: 301-858-3403

Or write:

203 Lowe Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

2--Also important to contact: Peter Franchot: 301-858-3460
Chair of the House Committee reviewing this Expressway request, even though he is from Montgomery County.

At the same time contact: Melony Griffith 301-390-0662
State Delegate from Prince George's County on this Committee.

Dear ____:

_____ encourage the state to refrain from spending any further funds on a new I-95 / I-495 interchange servicing the University of Maryland at College Park. All of the potential routes we are aware of would seriously impact environmentally sensitive areas, while also increasing car use and traffic on campus and in the surrounding communities. The project would squander scarce resources on a project that has at least as many drawbacks as benefits, while more worthwhile transportation projects, such as the Purple Line and Route 1 improvements languish. These projects, along with initiatives the University has already laid out to reduce car use are smarter options for addressing the area's transportation issues.

All of the proposed routes we are aware of would require adding significant amounts of impermeable surface and runoff in the Paint Branch Watershed, which feeds into the Anacostia watershed. Local governments and the University of Maryland have entered into a partnership to protect and enhance this watershed. Given these efforts, it seems counterproductive to pursue a project that would instead degrade the watershed. Paint Branch stream is notable for its exceptional water quality. Trout have been observed in the stream up to the area where abuts the University of Maryland campus. The Beltsville Agricultural Research Center grounds provide an important buffer that protects the stream, and that buffer should be maintained.

While this project has been proposed as a way to reduce traffic in the area, experience has tells us that traffic will expand to fill available road surface, and adding roads will ultimately mean adding traffic. The addition of the interchange will encourage more students to drive to and around campus, which will mean increased traffic on an already over-congested I-95 / I-495 corridor. It would also mean additional traffic on Metzert Rd, Adelphi Rd, University Blvd, and surrounding streets, as they are used as access routes onto the highway.

There are real traffic issues in the College Park area, and a number of solutions have already been proposed to address those issues. The University of Maryland's facilities master plan calls for increasing transit options for nearby students, while increasing the number of students living on campus, and thus not needing to make a daily commute. The master plan also includes two on-campus stops for the proposed Purple line, which would parallel the Beltway, giving students in nearby Beltway suburbs a viable alternative to driving to campus to attend classes. These options would result in real reductions in car trips to and from campus, and would therefore have a positive, rather

than a negative, impact on the I-95 / I-495 corridor as well as local roads, and thus deserve higher priority for funding than new road construction.

The Route 1 sector plan has been developed to slow traffic and improve conditions along the road, and it seems a much more deserving project to invest scarce transportation dollars in. An underpass connecting Cherry Hill Rd and Edgewood Rd, thus eliminating the most dangerous intersection in College Park, was dropped from that plan at least in part due to cost. If enough additional funding exists to build this new interchange, it would seem wise to invest it there instead.

In College Park and throughout our region, our quality of life is suffering due to short-sighted transportation planning, as our roads become ever more congested, our air and water become more and more polluted, and our communities deteriorate into parking lots. Pouring money into more roads to accommodate more cars will only make our problems worse. In College Park, we have the benefit of pre-existing efforts into developing proactive solutions to traffic problems. These solutions, which reduce car trips and protect our environment, are where our limited transportation dollars should be spent.

Sincerely,