

From: Press Release - Montgomery County Council [mailto:MCCouncil-LIO@public.govdelivery.com]

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To: hpfohl.biz@gmail.com

Subject: Transportation and Environment Committee applauds Planning Board for reversing decision on Little Falls Parkway (corrected copy)

Transportation and Environment Committee applauds Planning Board for reversing decision on Little Falls Parkway

*Board had initially recommended dangerous plan
to reroute Capital Crescent Trail in Bethesda*

ROCKVILLE, Md., September 13, 2019—The Montgomery County Council's Transportation and Environment Committee today praised the Montgomery County Planning Board for reversing its recommendation for realigning the Capital Crescent Trail's crossing with Little Falls Parkway in Bethesda.

Following the death of a bicyclist on the popular hiker-biker trail in a car crash in 2016, Little Falls Parkway was narrowed from four lanes to two, and the speed limit was reduced. Together, these measures helped cut the number of collisions there in half.

But the Planning Board voted, 4-1, in June to make two changes: to reroute the popular hiker-biker trail so that it would cross the parkway at nearby Arlington Road, and also to restore Little Falls Parkway from two lanes back to four lanes. Bicyclists, pedestrians and Councilmembers decried this plan as unsafe, and in July, the Transportation and Environment Committee wrote to the board, urging it to reconsider its decision.

Today, the Planning Board voted, 4-1, to follow the Department of Parks' recommendation and delay funding the \$2.5 million project for at least five years and instead stick with the current, two-lane configuration.

"The changes made to the crossing after a bicyclist was killed there in 2016 made the crossing safer," committee Chairman Tom Hucker said. "The Planning Board's new plan would have actually posed a greater risk to the thousands of cyclists, runners, pedestrians and others who use that trail every day to commute or just get some exercise and enjoy nature. I thank the board for reversing course today."

Those initial changes — reducing the number of lanes and lowering the speed limit to 25 mph — were effective, with average vehicular speed actually reduced to 17 mph. The changes were lauded in the county's Vision Zero Two-Year Action Plan as an excellent way to make dangerous crossings safer.

Since those changes were made, the number of collisions between vehicles and trail-users has been cut in half, with no fatalities.

The plan that the board approved in June would have required trail-users to cross four lanes of traffic at Arlington Road, rather than two lanes, and entailed longer red lights for Little Falls drivers at that intersection.

"I applaud the Planning Board's decision to prioritize safety at this crossing of the Capital Crescent Trail," said Councilmember Hans Riemer, a member of the Transportation and Environment Committee. "Under the road diet, speeds are down, crashes have been cut in half and there have been no fatalities. While we cannot eliminate all mistakes in judgement by motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists, we can design our roadways, particularly in high-risk areas, to slow everyone down so that those mistakes do not result in serious injury or

particularly in high-risk areas, to both stay safe and ensure that these measures do not result in serious injury or death. This is Vision Zero at work.”

“More than 300 pedestrians and bicyclists have been injured or killed in Montgomery County during the first nine months of 2019,” said Councilmember Evan Glass, also a member of the Transportation and Environment Committee. “The planning board’s decision is one step toward making our community safer for all of our residents.”

The committee’s July 31 letter to the Planning Board is here: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1SNR-vOJRhZf5L6rg-bl3IxcB8KSJIC-9>

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