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January 20, 2015

Dear Olney Community:

In light of the recent termination of the Georgia Avenue BRT Study, many in the community are asking for GOCA's reaction and next steps to address our ongoing traffic congestion issues.

First, we want to thank the County Executive and his staff for listening to our concerns. Based on all of the interactions I have had with Olney residents in my capacity as GOCA's President, I feel very comfortable stating that the Olney Community was overwhelmingly opposed to what we perceived to be a conceptually flawed plan. We appreciate having our concerns heard and acted upon.

That being said, we do agree with the Executive's closing statement that transportation along the Georgia Avenue Corridor needs to be improved. For that reason, GOCA's Transportation Committee is already working with the State Highway Administration (SHA) and the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) on congestion-relief initiatives ranging from simple lane re-striping to signal synchronization and major intersection reconfigurations. We are also working with our District 14 and District 19 Delegations to identify funding for implementing grade separation at the 97/28 interchange. We recognize that a good portion of our congestion is from pass-through traffic originating primarily from points north and east, and we will be working with SHA to reduce the impact of that traffic on our congestion. Finally, GOCA will advocate for lowering tolls on the ICC to expand its utilization and reduce congestion on surface roads.

Improving the capacity and flow of existing roads is important, but only one part of the equation. We also need to find creative ways to reduce the number of cars on the road in an auto-centric environment. For example, we are studying the concept of running an express bus from distributed park-and-ride lots in Olney over the ICC to Shady Grove Metro. We need to understand the potential ridership and congestion-relief impact of such a service. We also believe expanded use of telecommuting holds huge potential for reducing road congestion, so we are studying employer and worker attitudes toward telecommuting to see what types of incentives the County and State could put in place to motivate broader adoption. And we believe building a mixed-use trail network connecting Olney to Laytonsville, Ashton, Brookeville, the Norbeck area, and Shady Grove Metro will reduce congestion while improving bicycle and pedestrian safety and access to Olney Town Center.

GOCA is committed to identifying and implementing congestion-relief initiatives

as a key element of improving quality of life in the Olney Master Plan Area. We welcome the active assistance, support, and partnership of appropriate County and State officials as we continue on this path.

Sincerely,

John Webster
President