Hillandale Citizens Association
Silver Spring, Maryland
Comments Before the Transit Task Force
September 30, 2015

Given the timing of the release and the complexity of the Transit Task Force's ITA Report, the Hillandale Citizens Association is not prepared to make specific comments at this forum, or before the October 6 deadline.   Two or three weeks are insufficient time to have substantive discussions with a community consisting of over 1300 households in Hillandale.

The Hillandale Citizens Association actively participated in the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan and the Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan and has supported transit for our area, including the New Hampshire Avenue corridor. Funding these dreams has always been the challenge, and over the years many promises were made, chief among those were that development would provide the money.

Recently, Council President Leventhal framed the discussion in a holistic manner. Given the County Executive's warning of a large property tax increase in the coming year, the Purple Line funding questions, and the lack of certainty on the design and cost of four of the RTS routes, more thought and more time should be given to this very significant policy proposal.

It is time to hear from the County Executive. Is Mr. Leggett advocating a $2.2B, five-corridor system to be built over the next ten or more years? Does Mr. Leggett believe that this added debt service is affordable for the county, while advocating for greater restraint in the county budget?   Is relying on property taxes to support this huge project fair and equitable? Why has Mr. Leggett's task force declined to thoroughly review alternative funding mechanisms, such as a per-employee fee, or a per-dwelling-unit fee, higher commercial property tax rates and development-specific charges? And what about a broader regional approach?

We are anxious for Mr. Leggett to engage the community on these points.

Thank you.

Eileen Finnegan
Zoning and Planning Chair
Hillandale Citizens Association