

December 7, 2008

Re: Charles Street Project

The Honorable Martin O'Malley
Governor
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1925

Dear Governor O'Malley:

In these challenging economic times of decreasing revenues and budgetary constraints, the Lutherville Community Association recommends that your Administration review the State Highway Administration project associated with the replacement of the Charles Street Bridge over I-695, adjacent to our community. While we support the replacement of the Charles Street Bridge, we strongly believe that the related improvements to nearby roads are counterproductive and excessively expensive.

Currently, a roundabout exists at the end of Charles Street, where it intersects with Bellona Avenue. We believe that the current roundabout functions reasonably well and there is no imperative to replace it. Yet the SHA plans to substitute the roundabout with not one, but two traffic signals. In a corollary measure, the SHA plans to construct a separate service road, parallel to Bellona Avenue. We do not believe that the traffic counts merit the need for this service road that will require the removal of a number of mature trees and change the face of one gateway into our historic community, to the significant detriment of our neighborhood.

Additionally, while the SHA seeks to facilitate the flow of traffic through this intersection of Charles and Bellona, it plans on making only minimal improvements beyond the intersection. In our opinion this limited scope will require that Baltimore County improve its portion of Bellona traveling north to Seminary Avenue to handle the increased volume and speed of traffic. All of these expensive changes would be unnecessary if the State adopted the prudent approach described above.

The Lutherville Community Association has communicated our concerns and recommendations to the SHA, but it appears that the agency is too invested in the project to take a fresh approach. We believe that the current economic climate calls for a more cost effective analysis, and not a plan encumbered by pre-cast assumptions. I look forward to your response and appreciate your office's involvement. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely.

Jeffrey Dier, President
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