



May 24, 2022

Attention Honorable Board of Charles County Commissioners:

- Reuben B. Collins, II, Esq. (Commissioner President)
- Bobby Rucci (Commissioner Vice President District 4)
- Gilbert "BJ" O. Bowling, III (District 1)
- Thomasina O. Coates, M.S. (District 2)
- Amanda M. Stewart, M.Ed (District 3)

RE: Amendment to the 2016 Comprehensive Plan: Septic Tier Map

Walton owns and manages approximately 500 acres of land located along Edge Hill Road and Popes Creek Road. On behalf the property owners, we **DO NOT SUPPORT this proposed Tier Map and Comp Plan amendment**, nor do we support the process being used to make these changes. **We ask that the Board of Charles County Commissioners vote to follow the Planning Commission's recommendation on January 10, 2022, to defer any further action until completion of a Newburg sub-area plan**, which is planned to start later this year.

We previously testified at the Planning Commission hearing on 11/16/2021 regarding this matter in-which there were a total of three (3) letters submitted from property owners located within the affected 900 acres (including Walton's letter in opposition). **Any claim of overwhelming support at the Planning Commission from the community in favor of this tier map change is a fabrication of reality.**

We include the following comments for further consideration:

- We do not feel there has been adequate property owner notification of this County Commissioner Hearing. We have yet to receive written notification and can only assume no other affected property owners were contacted.
- We do not feel there has been adequate conversations with Walton regarding this potential comprehensive plan amendment and tier map change. There may have been face-to-face conversations with other property owners, but not with Walton. Verbal testimony of 3-minutes is not enough time for a property owner to defend their property rights.
- We have owned and managed this property for more than 11 years and have not submitted any rezoning applications requesting a change in use. In this time, we have:
 - Invested nearly \$6,000,000 to acquire the property.
 - Maintained the property with active local farming partners at significantly lower than market rates which do not come close to covering our annual taxes.
 - Paid significant amounts of property taxes and transfer fees to Charles County and the State of Maryland.
 - Invested significant time and money in environmental and engineering studies with local Charles County businesses, including studies needed to upgrade and/or replace the existing Clifton Sewer Treatment Plant.
 - Invested time and resources meeting with our various development partners across the country to bring investment, economic opportunities and jobs to Charles County.
 - Remained patient working with Charles County stakeholders until the time was right for the Newburg Sub-Area Plan to be initiated and plan for the appropriate economic opportunities for

this area of the County.

- The proposed Tier Map change should NOT be made in context by itself, but rather in context of the entire southern gateway of Charles County and the State of Maryland.
 - This sentiment is mirrored by Maryland’s Department of Planning letter, which questions the actions of the County without other significant changes to the Comprehensive Plan besides simply changing the Septic Tier Map.
 - Additionally, its disconcerting that a request to change the Tier Map was sent to the Maryland Department of Planning for comment prior to any Affected Property Owner Input or Public Input.
- The current zoning of our property is RC (Rural Conservation), already in a zoning status of conservation which limits its uses. Additionally, there is an existing public process in place through both the Planning Commission and the Board of Charles County Commissioners if a property owner desires to change the zoning. This is not a process that would allow for changes to occur quickly.
- The Approved 2016 Comprehensive Plan planned for a future Sub-Area Plan to be conducted in this area of the county to allow for a **complete and open public process** in planning this Newburg Village area. A sub-area plan would allow for a detailed review of all issues and provide significantly more public input than this current effort to change the Tier Map. This would include:
 - Allow Charles County and the State of Maryland to capitalize on the approximate \$500,000,000 investment in the new Nice-Middleton Bridge and an estimated increase of over 8,000,000 vehicle trips per year driving through this important gateway to Maryland.
 - Supports the initiative and significant investment to bring light-rail to Southern Maryland, which is a **Top Priority for Charles County**, to serve as a catalyst for economic and job growth. Senator Ellis stated during the press conference on May 23, 2022, announcing \$5,000,000 in federal funding, there is unanimous support from the entire Board of Charles County Commissioners for this important project.
 - Why would this Board of Commissioners want to make a haphazard decision to change the Tier Map status of 900 acres without all the facts?
 - Are the State politicians aware of this proposed change that would drastically impact future economic opportunities for the State of Maryland?
 - Allow for a more complete and long-term solution to replace the existing Clifton Wastewater Treatment Plant, which is currently a significant source of pollution to the Potomac River. Any upgrades to the existing Clifton Wastewater Treatment Plant are considered inadequate.
 - Road improvements along US 301 to curtail speeding and safety issues by realigning the intersection of Edge Hill Road and Rock Point Road.
 - Plan for appropriate open space and preservation areas.
 - Plan for local rural based retail and commercial uses which will bring much needed job opportunities to the area without having to cross over the river to Virginia for goods and services.
 - Allow for potential last mile distribution centers to better serve Charles County, Southern Maryland, and Virginia.
 - Plan for redevelopment of Aqualand and the Morgantown Power Plant, which will also need a long-term solution for water and sewer service.
 - Allow for appropriate variety of single-family housing options to support new jobs and retail options.

- Has the County’s Department of Economic Development provided the County Commissioners with input on the Positive or Negative affects of this Tier Map change?
 - Has an Economic Impact Analysis been performed?
 - How many existing Charles County residents are currently driving across the Potomac River to do their shopping in King George, Virginia? What is this current and future loss of tax revenue to Charles County and Maryland Taxpayers?
 - How many existing Charles County residents are currently buying gasoline in King George, Virginia where the County and State is seeing a loss of tax revenue for repair and maintenance of Maryland roads and the future repairs to the new Harry Nice Bridge?
 - We continue to miss out on economic opportunities and much needed jobs in Charles County due to this threat of a Sewer Tier Map change to 900 acres in Newburg.
- There is already over 163,000 acres of land within the existing Agricultural Preservation, by far the largest zoning designation within Charles County, with farming the highest contaminating use for the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.
 - Though farmland only covers about 23 percent of the 64,000 square-mile Chesapeake watershed, it is the source of 58 percent of the sediment pollution that reaches the Bay, 58 percent of the phosphorous, and 42 percent of the nitrogen. Most of the nitrogen and phosphorus comes from the use of manure and chemical fertilizers; some is also due to how animal waste is stored and managed. **Farms are a major source of sediment pollution**, (loose particles of clay, silt, and sand) because any physical process that causes erosion—such as frequent and intensive tilling—increases loads of sediment in waterways during rains storms or when snow melts rapidly. (<https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/88523/how-farms-affect-the-chesapeake-bays-water>)

We ask that the Board of Charles County Commissioners follow the recommendations of the Planning Commission to defer any further action until completion of the Newburg sub-area plan, which is anticipated to start later this year.

If a vote cannot be made to defer action on this Tier Map change until the Sub-Area Plan is complete, we ask for the record to remain open a minimum of 60 to 90 days in-order-to allow all affected property owners to be properly notified and ensure that County Commissioners can have conversations with all affected property owners not in favor of this change.

Respectfully,



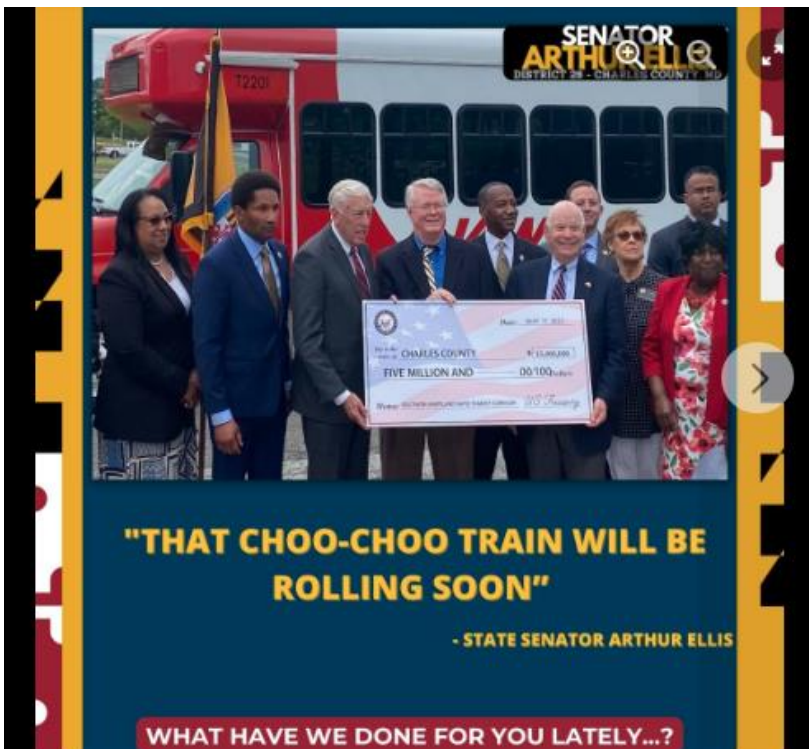
Adam J. Morman
Senior Vice President
Asset Management Mid-Atlantic

Project location: White Plains, MD

Applicant: Charles County

Amount requested: \$5,000,000

Description: Funds will be used for the planning, design, engineering, and environmental review process for the development of a 19-mile fixed-route, high-capacity transit service from the Branch Avenue Metrorail Station in Camp Springs to Waldorf/White Plains. The transit corridor would help alleviate traffic between Washington D.C. and Charles County and serve as a catalyst for economic and job growth. **It is a top priority for Charles County.**



Senator Arthur Ellis

1h · 🌐



✅ That choo choo train will be rolling soon! We've been working on this since our first day in Annapolis. Now that we've secured the funding, light rail will be coming soon to Southern Maryland.

<https://wtop.com/.../light-rail-to-southern-maryland.../>

#lightrail #comingsoon

— in Charles County, Maryland.



Write a comment...



Press Enter to post.



Senator Ben Cardin

3h · 🌐



Expanded public transit is good for our economy and good for the environment.

#TeamMaryland is proud to have secure federal funding to build this light rail system in Charles and Prince George's Counties.



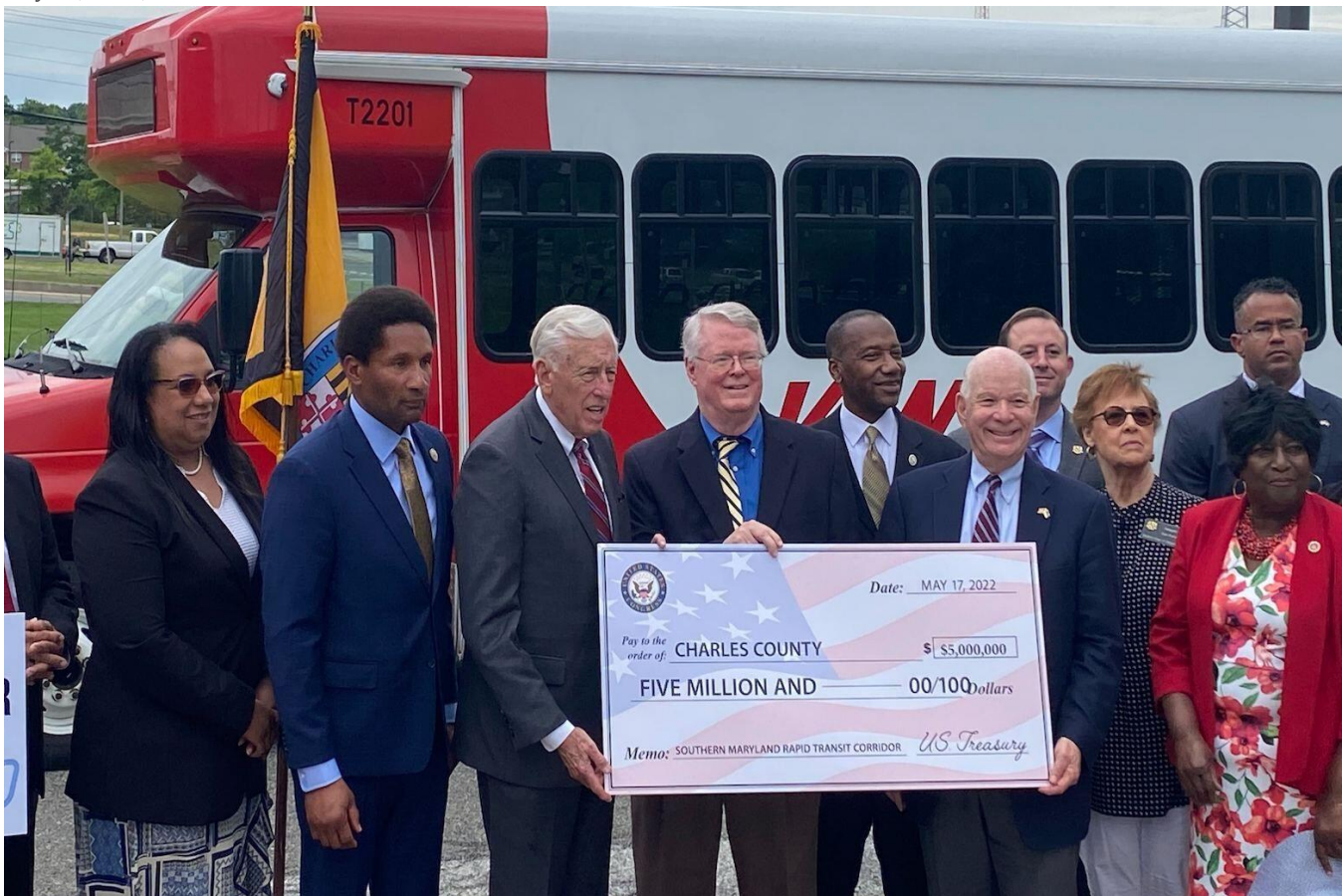
WTOP.COM

Light rail to Southern Maryland? That 'choo-choo train will be rolling soon' | WTOP News

Light rail to Southern Maryland? That ‘choo-choo train will be rolling soon’

[John Domen](#) | jdomen@wtop.com

May 23, 2022, 9:14 PM



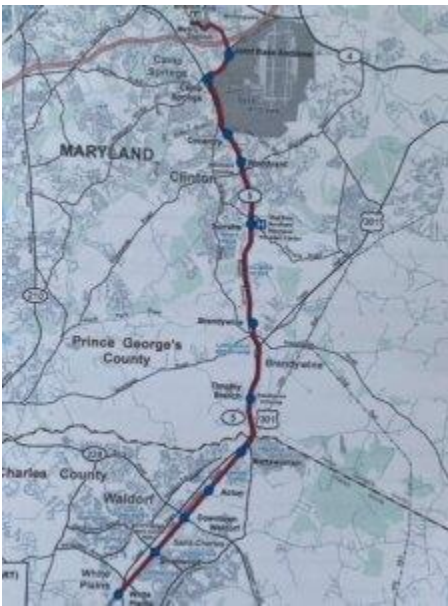
A ceremonial check for \$5 million in federal funding was given to Charles County for the Southern Maryland Rapid Transit Project in La Plata, Maryland. (WTOP/John Domen)

Southern Maryland is no longer the sleepy, sparsely populated region it used to be, and that's why local, state and federal lawmakers gathered in La Plata to tout millions to get the future Southern Maryland Rapid Transit Project on track and moving.

“That choo-choo train will be rolling soon,” said state Sen. Arthur Ellis, who has made the project a priority since arriving in Annapolis in 2019.

The light rail system would run between White Plains and the Branch Avenue Metro, making 13 stops total, five in Charles County, the other eight in Prince George’s County, carrying an estimated 24,000 to 28,000 people every day.

“The intersection at 301 and 5 is the worst,” said House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, a St. Mary’s County resident, who said once he hits Charles County, “bam, we stop.”



A map of the Southern Maryland Rapid Transit Project path. (WTOP/John Domen)

Hoyer and Sen. Ben Cardin were on hand with a ceremonial check for \$5 million in federal funding that will help cover some of the costs to get this light rail project moving.

Lawmakers in Annapolis made sure the state would match every federal dollar in this phase.

“It’s more than a dream,” Ellis said. “It’s not a dream, it’s not talk, it’s happening, baby. It’s happening.”

Ellis said studies conducted by the state have shown for years that a project like this is needed. Money being invested will go toward “engineering the system, designing it, and then get what we call a record of decision,” which determines if construction of the project is eligible for federal funding.

“This is the essential step,” Ellis said. “We’re looking forward to the construction phase happening in a few years.”

He said state transportation leaders have already operated with this project in the back of their minds.

Ellis said the overpasses at the intersection of Routes 5 and 301, “a light rail system was designed into that Route 5 corridor.”

Once the light rail trains start running parallel to Route 301, he said they would run along CSX tracks used by trains carrying coal from West Virginia to a decommissioned power plant.

“They’re good tracks,” Ellis said.

“People aren’t going to waste all their time in congestion,” Cardin said.

“There were mothers and fathers and employees and employers who would spend hours and hours and hours a day sitting in traffic,” Maryland state Senate President Bill Ferguson said.

“Those were minutes that could be spent at kids’ baseball games. Could be spent dreaming up the next tech company. When we talk about the Southern Maryland Rapid Transit Line, we’re not just talking about transportation,” he said. “What we’re talking about is improving human experience, giving people their time back so that they can live the life that they deserve.”

https://wtop.com/charles-county/2022/05/light-rail-to-southern-maryland-that-choo-choo-train-will-be-rolling-soon/?fbclid=IwAR2Ibjt5XD_U6DKK65zhg4GISkf5LH7IRff9RQ_ySC33TNbosNvx0uh4dg