



WASHINGTON AREA BICYCLIST ASSOCIATION

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July 10, 2015

Ms. Lisa Choplin
Division Chief, Innovative Contracting Division
Office of Highway Development
State Highway Administration
707 North Calvert Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Dear Ms. Choplin,

On behalf of the Prince George's County Action Committee of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association and the residents of the Suitland, MD area, we are writing to request your support for creating a safe bicycling facility on Suitland Road (MD 218) from the District of Columbia border to the intersection with Silver Hill Road. We were encouraged to learn that SHA is already undertaking a feasibility study in this area for roadway improvements, including a bikeway retrofit and pedestrian accommodations. We feel that this offers a unique, low-risk opportunity for SHA to integrate bicycling transportation design on a state roadways by implementing a fully separated and protected bike lanes along Suitland Road.

Building on the recent publication of SHA's new bikeway guidelines, the Suitland Road project can become a model for demonstrating the positive effects of implementing high-quality bicycle accommodations. A physical barrier between motor vehicle traffic and the adjacent bike lane will provide a safe and comfortable environment for bicyclists of all ages and skill level. The protected bike lane will encourage driver to follow the speeds limit while not compromising travel times or road capacity. If combined with lighting improvements and more visible pedestrian crossings, a protected bike lane will substantially improve safety for all road users, whether driving, bicycling, or walking in the area. This approach would complement the planned bicycle facilities in the District that will connect to Suitland Road and serve the needs of not only the existing residents in the area, but also provide improved access to the Suitland Metro station, the US Federal Center/Census Bureau campus, the commercial properties with numerous small businesses, and the upcoming Suitland Mixed-Use Town Center development.

With declining traffic volumes, the increased public demand for safe biking and walking networks, and the goals of Complete Streets planning, Suitland Road is an ideal location for the SHA to put the new bikeway design guidelines into action, improve walkability, and increase lighting. With existing travel lanes up to 18 feet in width, there is plenty of space in the right of way. Furthermore, there is considerable support in the community for this approach and the improved safety and mobility options it will provide. More choices for non-motorized travel and better lighting puts more eyes on the street, bolstering public safety as well. These changes could be built on Suitland Road for a small investment which would be an incredibly effective use of scarce transportation resources.

For all the reasons outlined above, we urge you to take all the steps necessary to ensure the best possible bicycling infrastructure as the redesign of the roadway moves forward. Please refer to the

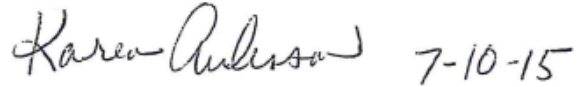
attached representation of the potential roadway configuration for the type of facility we are envisioning; by setting a standard of excellence for this project, the highest benefits will be realized on Suitland Road and become a model for future projects throughout Maryland.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter and for your consideration of our appeal to truly change the paradigm of what is possible -- and necessary -- on our public roads. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with you or anyone else involved in this process.

Sincerely,



Prince George's County Action Committee
Co-Chairs Jeff Lemieux and Philip Koopman
Washington Area Bicyclist Association



Karen Anderson
President
Suitland Civic Association



Elsie Jacobs
Chair
Suitland Action Team



Shirley Lathern
Chair
Dupont Village Neighborhood Watch

Attachment – Suitland Road (MD-218) artist rendering

cc: Luis Gonzalez, Innovative Contracting Division, SHA
Director Mobley, Prince George's County DPW&T
Maryland Senator Joanne Benson
Maryland Delegates Erek Barron
Maryland Delegates Carolyn Howard
Maryland Delegates Michael Vaughn
Prince George's County Councilmember Karen Toles

Letter submitted electronically

Suitland Road Today



Suitland Road with a Protected Bike Lane

