



Takoma Park City Council Meeting – January 10, 2018 Agenda Item 6

Work Session

Discussion of Legislative Priorities

Recommended Council Action

Finalize legislative priorities to be included in a resolution scheduled for adoption on January 17.

Context with Key Issues

Each year the Council adopts priorities in preparation for the legislative session of the General Assembly. Priorities identified to date for 2018:

- Additional funding (capital funds or bond bill funding) for the expansion and renovation of the Takoma Park Maryland Library
- Support for State Highway improvements to New Hampshire Avenue (MD 650)
- SHA cooperation with the City of Takoma Park on reconfiguring Takoma Junction (MD 410 and MD 195)
- Restoration of Highway User Revenue (HUR) to level from before the Recession
- Assistance with impacts from Purple Line construction
- School construction funding.

Council Priority

Livable Community for All; Fiscally Sustainable Government; Advance Economic Development Efforts

Environmental Impact of Action

The Library renovation will include green features and increase energy efficiency. Improvements to Takoma Junction and New Hampshire Avenue will help make Takoma Park a more pedestrian and bike friendly community.

Fiscal Impact of Action

Legislation resulting from the priorities listed would increase revenue or support economic development efforts in the City.

Racial Equity Impact Statement

The legislative priorities are not expected to disproportionately impact any particular group. However, improvements to the Takoma Park Maryland Library and area schools will benefit a large number of people of color and the increased economic health brought by the other priorities may allow the City to focus on Council priorities such as Race Equity.

Attachments and Links

Testimony Presented by Mayor Stewart at the Joint Priorities Hearing of the Montgomery County Delegation on November 13, 2017



**CITY OF TAKOMA PARK TESTIMONY
MAYOR KATE STEWART
JOINT PRIORITIES HEARING
MONTGOMERY COUNTY DELEGATION
NOVEMBER 13, 2017**

Good evening, Senator King, Delegate Robinson and Members of the Montgomery County Delegation.

I am Kate Stewart, Mayor of the City of Takoma Park. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak with you today.

Takoma Park has just had our City elections and three new members will be sworn in this Wednesday. The new Council and I look forward to working with you this Session on a number of items of importance to the City of Takoma Park and Montgomery County.

The two most important items for Takoma Park are:

- **additional bond bill funding for the expansion and renovation of our Takoma Park Library**
- **support for State Highway improvements to New Hampshire Avenue (MD 650)**

Expansion and renovation of the Takoma Park Library

The City of Takoma Park was pleased to be the recipient of \$150,000 in bond bill funding for our Library. Thank you, Senator Will Smith and Delegate Sheila Hixson for your assistance!

This year we are asking for an additional bond bill in at least the same amount to help us provide all that is needed in this critical educational facility. The City has issued a seven million dollar bond to pay the bulk of the costs of construction.

Although small, the Takoma Park Library is really quite important in our area of Montgomery County. The number of patrons is remarkable and the services are different than those offered in Long Branch or downtown Silver Spring. We have frequent programs featuring award-winning authors – particularly of children and young adult books – in conjunction with Politics and Prose; we have highly popular toddler programs in English, Spanish, French and sometimes in Amharic; and we have computers and computer assistance which primarily serve seniors, new immigrants and students from the three MCPS schools located within two blocks of the library.

What we don't have enough of is space, ADA accessibility, or energy efficiency. We do have a good design and a commitment to seeing this project built quickly so we can continue to serve those who heavily use this library. Please help us get this project underway!

New Hampshire Avenue (MD 650) Improvements

Purple Line construction has finally begun and the City is working to take advantage of the economic and transportation benefits to come, while prioritizing and protecting affordable housing and the small businesses in our community. Part of the infrastructure work that needs to be done, however, is reconstruction of New Hampshire Avenue into the boulevard envisioned by the Sector Plans and New Hampshire Avenue Concept Plan.

A [report](#) on the potential impacts of these plans on the tax base of Takoma Park, Montgomery County, Prince George's County and the State of Maryland was prepared by the State's Commerce and Planning Departments last year and the financial benefits of the improvements to the right of way are significant. (Information on the plans, studies and financial benefits can be found at www.takomaparkmd.gov/initiatives/new-hampshire-avenue-initiative.)

The potential increases in annual real property tax from road, transit, bike and pedestrian improvements are:

- **State of Maryland - \$2.7 million**
- **County (most of this for Montgomery County) - \$21 million**
- **Takoma Park - \$6.1 million**

The State of Maryland study notes that this is up to a 771% increase in tax revenue from the current condition. We all need the revenue. Plus, we can get new jobs, new affordable housing, and improved north-south transit connections to the Purple Line stop at the Takoma-Langley Crossroads Station.

But, why isn't there greater attention to improving New Hampshire Avenue? Unfortunately, the roadway switches back and forth between Prince George's County and Montgomery County several times between the Washington, D.C. line and the Beltway. Because it's on the edge of two counties, we have come to call it an "orphan project." But, given that New Hampshire Avenue at Eastern Avenue is a major entrance to Maryland – and the Takoma-Langley Crossroads is a central business district and important transit hub – the improvement of New Hampshire Avenue needs to be on, high up on, the State's priority list.

The City of Takoma Park asks the Montgomery County Delegation's Land Use, Transportation, and Public Safety Committee to work with the Prince George's County Delegation's Bi-County Committee to push for a special category in the State's Consolidated Transportation Plan that accommodates a State Highway that is not easily identified with one county. Then, we all need to work to get funding for the improvements to New Hampshire Avenue approved.

Other Priorities

Besides these two major priorities for the City of Takoma Park, we have several others we would like the Montgomery Delegation to support:

- 1) State Highway cooperation with the City of Takoma Park on reconfiguring Takoma Junction, the intersection of MD 410 and MD 195 in Takoma Park. The City is in the middle of a redevelopment project at that intersection, one that needs road improvements to ensure its success. Both the developer and the City are undertaking traffic studies that will build on a study SHA did on options to improve the traffic flow and safety of the area. This is a critical project for Takoma Park and it could make a tremendous difference in traffic flow on MD 410, better known as East-West Highway.

- 2) A restoration of Highway User Revenue to that from before the Recession. This is an issue that affects all of Maryland's municipalities. In FY 2009, the City of Takoma Park received \$509,000 in HUR funds. In FY 2011, it was down to \$43,000. In recent years we receive about \$350,000, which is a combination of small formula amount (about \$95,000) plus a "one-time grant" in the Governor's budget. Our City's road maintenance costs easily exceed \$700,000 every year. If we depended on just the formula amount, we'd only be able to do 1/7th of the maintenance needed on our roads. Even if we depended on the formula amount plus the "one-time grant" amount, we would only be able to do half of the work. Imagine if we only maintained one side of each road! Our taxpayers must pay extra to keep Maryland's roads passable. It's really time to fix this once and for all.

- 3) Assistance with impacts of Purple Line construction. We are excited that the Purple Line is moving forward as it is critical to our long-term economic health. But, of course, the temporary pains of construction can be difficult for residents and small businesses, particularly if adequate communication measures are not in place. We ask that special attention be provided by State agencies to help ameliorate traffic blockages and small business access issues as construction continues.

- 4) School construction funding. The number of children in schools in and near Takoma Park has been increasing rapidly, although there have not been many new housing units built. MCPS is trying to catch up with the need for a new elementary school and additional classrooms in our area, but there is little land available for this. That is likely to mean that the cost of land and construction will be higher than in other locations. We ask that you continue your strong efforts in obtaining adequate school funding so that our critical lack of school classroom space be addressed.

Thank you again for allowing me to share the priorities of the City of Takoma Park for the upcoming Legislative Session. We look forward to working with you.