

August 14, 2018

Mr. Parsons,

I would like to offer some comments on the Garrett County Comprehensive Plan. I have been a resident of Garrett County most of my life, and while I feel Garrett County is a good place to live and raise a family, I feel there are some inadequacies that need to be addressed to keep young working families and encourage new business.

Since the purpose of the meeting on 8/13 dealt with transportation and economic development, I will offer some comments and suggestions on both, and will try to keep them brief.

With Transportation, it appears that some of my concerns are already on the radar, and having talked with Commissioner Edwards previously about these, I feel it is important to bring these up again.

1. There is a definite need for intersection and safety improvements in the Deep Creek Lake/McHenry area from Maryland Rt 42, really clear through the town of Oakland on US route 219 (Garrett Highway). Some of my suggestions/areas of concern would be:
 - a. Traffic Lights where appropriate and/or roundabouts
 - b. Improved warning and signage of the crosswalks at Traders Landing and Uno's. The current warning system does not really give a vehicle traveling the speed limit adequate time to stop safely. That said especially the crosswalk at Uno's needs better lighting. Replacing these crosswalks with a pedestrian bridge or tunnel would be ideal but doubtful that either would be practical from a cost perspective.
 - c. More Center Turn Lanes and better pavement markings of current turn lanes
 - d. The bypass in Oakland would help the traffic issues in/around Oakland in my opinion, if however it is not built there needs to be more emphasis on improving traffic flow, and helping with traffic on the back roads around Oakland that people currently utilize as a makeshift bypass. The roads, such as Memorial Drive, Broadford Rd, Dennett Rd, 4th Street, etc. are not designed in my opinion to be used as a bypass.
2. There needs to be an improved north-south road to connect Oakland/Mountain Lake Park to Interstate 68 and also to Corridor H in West Virginia. I'm not saying it needs to be a 4 lane limited access highway, but a road with a constant 55 MPH the entire length would be a dramatic improvement. Neither the current US 219 or the 135/495 options to the Interstate are adequate in my opinion. 219 is a problem because of having to go through the congested Lake area, then through Accident, while 135/495/New Germany is narrow and windy in places.
3. Improve pedestrian safety around Garrett College, possibly with sidewalks and crosswalks along Mosser Road and 219 in the area of Mosser Road.

With economic development, I would like to offer a couple suggestions/comments as well.

1. I feel that Garrett County needs better infrastructure from a telecommunications perspective, things such as faster, better Internet and more cell phone towers and service would be an improvement. The county is currently limited to pretty much Us. Cellular with some areas

that has AT&T and a small area with Verizon coverage. Expand AT&T, Verizon and even Sprint Cell Coverage, and of course the better Internet to more areas.

2. Continue to Invest in expanding Garrett College, Garrett Regional Medical Center and the K-12 school system. I feel that more course offerings at the College will help the local work force, and also encourage growth in enrollment (and hopefully also encourage the college to hire more full-time staff). I feel that investing in the College, the hospital and K-12 will help the local economy in multiple ways. If you look at the economy of Morgantown, WV, it is primarily based on education (mainly WVU), and healthcare with a growing retail base because of the booming health and education sectors. While Garrett County can't replicate that exactly, I feel that we could do it on a miniature level. Also use our proximity to Morgantown as an advantage and a marketing tool.

3. Encourage the state and federal government to expand state and federal jobs to locals via telecommuting and work-at-home options. Perhaps work with leaders at the state/federal levels to change job postings to indicate positions that are eligible for telecommuting, and to encourage some current state positions to be moved from the metro area to our area and other rural areas of Maryland, this could help with congestion and traffic in the metro area and encourage better jobs in our area. This could also be done with larger fortune 500 companies, since we do not have the population or infrastructure to lure these here, we could have locals work from home or from some sort of hub facility that could be located in our county.

I hope these comments were insightful and helpful to the comprehensive plan.

Thank You
Lester Lewis
Mountain Lake Park, MD