



Montgomery County Green Party
P. O. Box 34243 Bethesda MD 20827-2423
www.mdgreens.org/montgomery

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The Honorable Christopher Van Hollen
51 Monroe Street, Suite 507
Rockville, MD 20850
Fax: (301) 424-5992

1419 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515
Fax: (202) 225-0375

Dear Representative Van Hollen:

RE: The Intercounty Connector (ICC)

Last year, you stated that you were “very pleased” that federal funds would help “determine whether [the ICC] can be built in an environmentally sound manner.”

As you are aware, Governor Ehrlich’s State Highway Administration (SHA) released its Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) over the holidays at the end of 2004, and has since held several hearings –on January 4th, 5th, 8th and 29th.

Now that the data are in, we can confidently state the ICC cannot be built in an environmentally sound manner. To come to any other conclusion would be intellectually dishonest.

According to BOTH the 1997 and 2004 DEIS’s, there will be massive acreage loss of forest land and wetlands, as well as unacceptable impacts on streams and rare species. Further, the ecological damage and loss estimates are greater in the 2004 DEIS.

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Impact	1997 DEIS	2004 DEIS
Forest loss statistics	MPA (Corridor One) – 552 acres lost	MPA – 737 – 794 acres lost
	Corridor Two – 492 acres lost	Corridor Two – 589 – 686 acres lost
Wetlands loss statistics	MPA – 19 acres lost	MPA – 22 – 30 acres plus 37.4 ¹ = 59.3 – 67.4 acres lost
	Corridor Two – 21 acres lost	Corridor Two – 25 – 38 acres (plus 37.1 ¹ = 62.1 – 75.1 acres lost)
Streams	MPA - 29,451 linear ft	MPA = 39,451 – 46,204 linear ft
	Corridor Two – 31,427 linear ft.	Corridor Two – 35,517 – 48,920 linear ft

To get a better understanding of the loss of forest acreage, compare the loss to the size of some of our wonderful parks:

	Acreage	Acreage lost by	
Wheaton Regional Park	535 acres		
Cabin John Regional Park	523 acres	Corridor One	Corridor Two
Rachel Carson Conservation Park	649 acres	737 – 794	589 – 686
Blockhouse Point Conservation Park	629 acres		

In other words, the acreage lost, according to the 2004 DEIS’s worst-case scenario (usually the more reliable number), would be greater than any of the four parks.

Additionally, two species, which the State of Maryland has labeled “Endangered,” two species, which the State has labeled “Threatened,” four species, which the State has labeled “Rare,” eight species which the State has on its “Watch list,” and one species which the State has labeled “uncertain” are all negatively impacted by the ICC.

The above numbers –all of which are from Maryland State agencies— belie any claims to environmental sensitivity that supporters of the ICC may claim. The data show that the ICC is fundamentally unsound for Montgomery’s environment. On the basis of these enormous resource losses alone, the ICC should not be built.

There are other reasons to oppose the ICC. ICC Supporters claim that the cost will be at least \$1.3 billion. What they don’t include is the cost of financing, which will bring the cost –before cost overruns— to \$3 billion. This means that money which should be going to transit systems –where sustainable, good-paying union jobs are created— and other infrastructure needs, will instead be put into the ICC pot.

¹ Previously unregulated wetlands

Proponents of the ICC talk about environmental mitigation. The so-called "stewardship" is an unsuccessful attempt at greenwashing the ICC project. The proposed mitigations are grossly insufficient to balance the enormous ecological damage the ICC would do to our region. In short, a mitigated environmental disaster is still an environmental disaster.

The Ehrlich Administration's DEIS, in violation of the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA), did not cover alternatives to the ICC. Public officials must study transportation solutions to find the one that is least harmful to the environment. A coalition of environmental groups, including Environmental Defense, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and the Sierra Club, released a study in January that examined four transportation and planning alternatives to the ICC. Compared to these alternatives and a no-build option, the ICC came in last in Vehicle Hours of Delay and last in Air Quality. In fact, the ICC was the only option that would **increase** air pollution emissions. The ICC was the worst option in seven out of 10 effectiveness measures studied.

We also note that the environmental impacts of the ICC would harm the Anacostia River, Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay. By destroying forest and wetlands, we reduce the capacity of the land to filter our water. This means more unfiltered runoff will enter our streams, rivers and the Bay. The increase in air pollution will lead to an increase in the amount of pollution that falls in our rains, contaminating our land and water. If we want to protect the Bay, its watermen and the fishing and tourism industries the Bay supports, we must have less environmentally damaging land use and transportation solutions than the ICC.

Since the ICC is environmentally unsound at a fundamental level, we request that you publicly state your opposition to the ICC.

Please let us know where you stand on the ICC at this point in time. Thank you in advance for considering and responding to our letter.

Sincerely,

Diane Cameron
Co-Chair

Dan Kulpinski
Co-Chair

Joseph Horgan
Treasurer