Date:

To: Bill Austin, Executive Director, Morgantown Monongalia Metropolitan Planning Organization

From: Frank Gmeindl, Chairman, Morgantown Municipal Bicycle Board

Subject: WVDOH proposed TWLTL on Mon Blvd. between Boyers Av. and Patteson Dr.

The Morgantown Municipal Bicycle Board is disappointed that the WVDOH apparently did not consider bicyclists in their proposed Mon Blvd. TWLTL and recommends that the MPO encourage the WVDOH amend their proposal to include (in accordance with the 2009 MUTCD and the 2011 AASHTO Guidelines for the Development of Bicycle Facilities)

* a minimum 8-foot wide bicycle-climbing lane on the uphill side of Mon Blvd. between Boyers Av. and Patteson Dr. and
* R4-11 Bicycles May Use Full Lane signs every 250 feet on the downhill side
* an 8-foot wide smooth paved shoulder on the downhill side.

The WVDOH proposed Mon Blvd. TWLTL contradicts the Greater Morgantown Bicycle Plan that the WVDOH helped to create.

WVDOH proposes to narrow the shoulders to 4-feet. Narrowing the uphill shoulder to 4-feet will preclude making it a bicycle-climbing lane. The Greater Morgantown Bicycle Plan Engineering Action #17 is to install a bicycle-climbing lane on Monongahela Boulevard between Boyers Avenue and Patteson Drive. AASHTO recommends a minimum 5-foot width for bike lanes or wider when the bicycle lane is adjacent to high speed motor traffic.

The proposed TWLTL will likely increase actual motor vehicle speed. Narrowing the uphill side shoulder and increasing the actual speed in the travel lanes will increase risk to bicyclists and pedestrians who still choose to use the shoulders.

When does increasing speed ever make a road safer? As on any road, the best way to make it safer for everyone is to reduce the speed.

The proposed TWLTL will increase safety for Type A cyclists if motor vehicle speed remains the same or decreases. The proposed TWLTL will increase Type A cyclist safety and convenience for the same reasons that the TWLTL would increase safety for motorists.

Unfortunately, most Morgantown area cyclists are Type B cyclists that use the shoulders rather than the travel lanes or Type C cyclists whose parents do not allow them to ride on most of our roads. Narrowing the shoulders on either side of Mon Blvd. can be expected to discourage the few Type B cyclists that use them now.

Knowing that they have the same right to the travel lanes as motorists, Type A cyclists ride in the rightmost travel lane that serves their destination. However, even among Type A cyclists, few will ride the travel lane up the hill on Mon Blvd. because motor vehicles going much faster than a bicycle is capable of scares them. Even Type A cyclists can be expected to prefer a bicycle-climbing lane on the uphill side of Mon Blvd.

More Type A cyclists and perhaps even some Type B cyclists could be expected to use the downhill travel lanes if R4-11 Bicycles May Use Full Lane signs were erected in the corridor but most Type B cyclists would still prefer a wide smooth paved shoulder despite the increased risks of right hook, left cross and drive out crashes at crossings. Therefore, the Bicycle Board recommends that the downhill side of Mon Blvd. be smoothly paved to a width of 8-feet but NOT marked as a bike lane and that R4-11 signs be erected every 250-feet along the downhill side of Mon Blvd.

Last year, the wide uphill shoulder was smoothly paved. All that remains is to stripe the shoulder as a bike lane.

A bicycle-climbing lane on the uphill shoulder:

* would provide an attractive bicycle route from Star City to Evansdale, a destination for many Morgantown area students and cyclists;
* would provide an important connection from the Mon River Trail to Evansdale;
* could be part of an important bicycle corridor connecting the 800-bed Domain student apartment complex to Morgantown so some of those 800 students could ride their bikes instead of driving their cars;
* would be an essential part of a bicycle corridor from the University Town Centre to Mileground when Bicycle Plan Action Engineering #18 bicycle lane on both sides of WV 705 from Willowdale Road to Mileground Road so some of the tens of thousands of cars that travel that corridor most days could be left at home when their users choose to bike.

Bicycle lanes are appropriate on roadways with speeds in excess of 25 mph and with few driveways and intersections. Bicyclists traveling in the travel lanes are more visible to motorists merging onto the roadway from businesses such as the Texas Roadhouse and from intersections including Canfield Av. and Saratoga Av. however since Type B and C cyclists will not use the roadway, the bicycle-climbing lane must maximize cyclist’s visibility. Current sightlines are excellent however at a minimum, signage should be placed at these crossings to alert merging motorists that they’re crossing a bike lane and to watch for cyclists.

In addition to contradicting the Greater Morgantown Bicycle Plan, the WVDOH proposed Mon Blvd. TWLTL contradicts the 2040 LRTP that WVDOH also helped to create. Tier 1 project #40 Regional Bikeway Plan Implementation Program includes projects from the Greater Morgantown Bicycle plan including the bicycle-climbing lane on Mon Blvd. from Boyers Av. to Patteson Dr.

The WVDOH proposed Mon Blvd. TWLTL violates the Monongalia County and Morgantown Complete Streets Policies. The proposed TWLTL will make Mon Blvd. more dangerous to pedestrians and Type B cyclists.

In summary, Monongalia County and the City of Morgantown are striving to achieve a modern multi-modal transportation system. The proposed TWLTL project fails to consider the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians. The Bicycle Board requests you to encourage the WVDOH amend their proposal to include (in accordance with the 2009 MUTCD and the 2011 AASHTO Guidelines for the Development of Bicycle Facilities)

* a minimum 8-foot wide bicycle-climbing lane on the uphill side of Mon Blvd. between Boyers Av. and Patteson Dr. and
* R4-11 Bicycles May Use Full Lane signs every 250 feet on the downhill side
* an 8-foot wide smooth paved shoulder on the downhill side.

If the WVDOH will not make these amendments to their proposal, the Bicycle Board requests that the MPO deny the WVDOH proposal to amend the TIP to add the proposed TWLTL project.

Frank Gmeindl

Chairman, Morgantown Municipal Bicycle Board

*‘Cyclists fare best when they act and are treated as vehicles’*