T&E COMMITTEE #2
January 23, 2014

# MEMORANDUM

January 21, 2014

TO: Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy and Environment (T&E) Committee

FROM: Glenn Orlin, Deputy Council Administrator

SUBJECT: State transportation priorities letter

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) anticipates letters from local elected officials regarding their State transportation funding for major capital projects, defined as those projects significant enough to warrant environmental studies. MDOT would like the letter to be updated annually in preparation of their upcoming Draft Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP), its six-year capital improvements program.

Some jurisdictions update their letters annually, while others do not. The Montgomery County Council and Executive have chosen to update their joint letter in those years when either: (1) there has been a change in the composition of the Council or Executive; or (2) if there is a significant increase in State transportation revenue. The last Council/Executive joint letter was transmitted three years ago, on February 15, 2011, soon after two new Councilmembers were installed in office (©1-3). There is a rationale for updating the letter now, however, because of the large increase in transportation revenue approved by the General Assembly last spring. The FY14-19 CTP programmed most of the funds projected from that increase, but not all of it – especially at the back end of the period. Furthermore, the next CTP will extend out to FY20, and the added revenue in that year has not yet been programmed.[1]

***Format.*** Late last year Council staff met with County DOT and M-NCPPC staff to discuss the format of the next letter. The last several of letters, including the February 2011 version, included essentially five sets of priorities:

1. *Broad programs of improvements.* In particular, these included WMATA's multi-year rehabilitation effort and completion of the BRAC improvements.
2. *Projects of regional significance in the CTP's Development & Evaluation (D&E) Program but not in its Construction Program.* These are megaprojects that have significance beyond the borders of Montgomery County.

[1] Note that it is likely that the Council and Executive will update their letter again next winter, since there will be at least two new Councilmembers and, perhaps, a new Executive.

3. *Projects of local significance in the CTP's Development & Evaluation (D&E) Program but not in its Construction Program.* These projects can also be quite expensive (some are in the $150-200 million range) but they are significant mainly to Montgomery County.
4. *Transit projects not in the D&E Program.* Major transit projects for which planning funds are being requested.
5. *Highway and bikeway projects not in the D&E Program.* Major highway and bikeway projects for which planning funds are being requested.

Over the years our staff have heard comments from MDOT that five categories are too many, making it difficult to select priorities among them. Therefore, we suggest that the priorities in the new letter be organized into three categories: #1, a combination of #2 and #3, and a combination of #4 and #5.

Furthermore, the D&E priorities in prior letters have included "the kitchen sink" of potential projects. The concern is that such a list overpromises what MDOT can afford in all but the far distant future. Last spring's revenue increase, as large as it was, provided full State funding for only three projects: the Purple Line, the I-270/Watkins Mill Road Interchange, and the Brookeville Bypass. None of the County's D&E priorities made it into the FY14-19 CTP. Therefore, the staffs recommend identifying fewer D&E priorities.

Finally, the letter before you for review is the cover letter of the transmittal to the State. The State requires certain documentation for each project: a map, a fuller description, and an explanation as to how it conforms to the goals of the Maryland Transportation Plan and local master plans. Once the Executive and Council have agreed on the cover letter, County staff will prepare this further documentation as an attachment. The final transmittal would then be signed by the Executive and Council President, likely later this winter, but in time for MDOT's April 1 deadline.

***Executive's recommendation.*** The Executive's recommended cover letter is on ©4-5. As did the 2011 letter, the second paragraph refers to WMATA's rehabilitation program, the priority for eight-car trains, the elimination of the Red Line turnbacks at Grosvenor and Silver Spring, and capacity and circulation improvements at Metro stations. He recommends adding to this list the funding of improvements to fully implement the Priority Corridor Network for buses, which would include signal prioritization, queue jumpers, and other low-cost, low-impact elements. This incorporates one of the priorities identified by both the Planning Board and the Coalition for Smarter Growth (see below).

The third paragraph reiterates that the Purple Line and Stage 1 of the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) are the two highest priorities. Although all the State funding has been programmed for the Purple Line, the draft letter recognizes that the federal aid has not yet been secured, and that the State should fund the difference should sufficient federal funding not materialize. The text also recognizes that full construction funding for Stage 1 of the CCT has not been programmed but needs to be.

The Executive's proposed prioritization for Construction Program differs significantly from the 2011 letter. The main differences are:

- *Contribution to the cost of the County's Montrose Parkway East project as priority #1.* The segment of Montrose Parkway East between Rockville Pike and Parklawn Drive (over the CSX Metropolitan Branch) is part of the State Highway Administration's Highway Needs Inventory,

its master plan of road improvements. Several years ago the Council decided to proactively program the construction of this portion of Montrose Parkway East along with the "County" segment between Parklawn Drive and Veirs Mill Road as one consolidated project, but the State is designing its segment.

Recently the State prepared new cost estimate showing the cost of its segment increasing by $20-25 million. The Executive's recommendation is that the State fund the difference for this project, which is key to providing access to White Flint from the east. Recall also that this portion of Montrose Parkway East is potentially the western segment of the master-planned Randolph Road Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor.

- *US 29 interchanges in Fairland/White Oak interchanges.* Although the White Oak Science Gateway (WOSG) Master Plan will be reviewed later this winter, it is clear that some additional development there is desired by both the Executive and the Council to promote jobs and a range of ancillary retail currently missing in the East County. To and from the north the main access to this area would be via US 29 and I-95 (by way of the Intercounty Connector). US 29's master-planned interchanges at Tech Road/Industrial Boulevard and at Fairland Road/Musgrove Road would remove the two remaining bottlenecks hindering this access, and so the Executive recommends them as priorities #2 and #3, respectively.

  It should be noted that Fairland/White Oak passes the Transit Adequacy Test of Transportation Policy Area Review (TPAR) but fails the Roadway Adequacy Test, so road improvements are the more pressing need there, especially to and from the north, where density is lower and transit is less viable. Although the master-planned interchange at Stewart Lane would relieve a significant bottleneck to and from the south, the master-planned BRT lines on US 29 and New Hampshire Avenue have potential to provide a major access improvement from the south. Therefore, while the Executive recommends adding the Stewart Lane interchange to the list, he would place it only as the #7 priority.

- *Corridor Cities Transitway, Stage 2.* Although MDOT cut short its project planning study for the CCT at Metropolitan Grove, the northern portion to Germantown and Clarksburg is still critical to providing a high level of transit access to these communities. The Executive places it as #4 among his recommendations.

- *Norbeck Road and Norbeck/Georgia interchange.* Norbeck Road (MD 28) between Georgia Avenue and Layhill Road is a twisting two-lane road that needs to be straightened for safety reasons, and is particularly a concern for senior drivers living at Leisure World. While its volume has declined with the opening of the ICC, it has still increased by 27% over the past decade. Widening this segment is recommended as the #4 priority by the Executive. If the project were also to include additional turning lanes at its intersection with Georgia Avenue, then the priority of the planned interchange can be lowered significantly.

- *Veirs Mill Road BRT and Georgia Avenue Busway.* These two BRT lines are already in project planning, so they are eligible for the Construction priority list. Veirs Mill Road is farther along and has a higher potential ridership, so the Executive recommends listing them as #6 and #13, respectively.

- *Forest Glen Pedestrian Underpass.* County DOT completed a feasibility study for this underpass beneath Georgia Avenue, but it is currently in abeyance without a path towards completion. The Executive recommends it as the #8 Construction Program priority.

- *MD 124 (Woodfield Road).* The segment between Midcounty Highway and Airpark Road has been a high priority in past letters, but over the past few years its traffic volume has remained flat. It is a fairly safe roadway, so that is not a concern. As a result the Executive recommends reducing its priority to #9.

Other, lower priorities recommended by the Executive include intersection improvements along Clopper Road (MD 117) in the Quince Orchard area (#10), the master-planned I-270/Newcut Road interchange in Clarksburg (#11), safety and accessibility improvements along Georgia Avenue in Montgomery Hills (#12), and the master-planned US 29/Greencastle Road interchange in Fairland (#15). Dropped from his recommended list is the widening of Woodfield Road north of Fieldcrest Road and the widening of MD 198 from Norwood Road to US 29.

The Executive's top two recommendations for D&E Program funding are the US 29 and MD 355 BRT corridors. As a result of the revenue increase, MDOT has provided $10 million for BRT studies in Montgomery County, and in his Recommended FY15-20 CIP the Executive proposes using these funds for project planning for these two corridors. But $10 million is not likely to be enough. Recall that the Veirs Mill Road and Georgia Avenue studies are costing $6 million and $5 million, respectively; these two studies comprise about 16 miles of BRT, while the US 29 and MD 355 BRT corridors comprise about twice as much mileage.

The third recommendation is a new project. As part of its West Side Mobility Study, SHA examined rather small-scale—but still expensive—improvements that would improve flow on lower I-270 and the western portion of the Beltway between the I-270 West Spur and Virginia. One of the improvements it identified is the widening of the eastbound Beltway approach to the HOV lane heading north on the West Spur. Currently traffic backs up from the lane divide beyond the point where traffic can freely flow into the northbound HOV lane. This improvement would extend the HOV lane back by three-quarters of mile towards the River Road interchange. Essentially it would be the first stage of the master-planned extension of the HOV lanes to and across the American Legion Bridge to the Virginia HOT lanes. The estimated cost is (only) $35-40 million, but more environmental assessment must be conducted before it is eligible for the Construction Program.

The Executive's next three D&E priorities are carryovers from the 2011 letter. The Shady Grove Sector Plan requires that the MD 355/Gude Drive interchange be programmed before proceeding with Stage 2 of the transit-oriented development there. The extension of Midcounty Highway south and east of Shady Grove Road to the ICC would eliminate the circuitous connection that currently exists. The master-planned interchange on Great Seneca Highway at Sam Eig Highway/Muddy Branch Road—in addition to Stage 1 of the CCT—would support the development in the middle phases of the Great Seneca Science Corridor Master Plan.

The final D&E priority would be the New Hampshire Avenue BRT corridor. It is particularly important that MDOT be the lead on this study, since two segments of it are in Prince George's County, and its logical terminus is at the Fort Totten Metro Station in the District of Columbia.

***Planning Board's recommendations*** (©6-9, see also its staff's packet on ©10-15). The Board's recommendations for the D&E Program are exactly the same as the Executive's except that it would include the recently master-planned HOV ramps on the south side of the Westlake Drive/Fernwood Road interchange. For the Construction Program, its primary difference is to include the portion of the US 29 BRT line south of White Oak as the #2 priority, to place the US 29/Fairland Road/Musgrove Road interchange at #5, and to not include the US 29/Tech Road/Industrial Boulevard interchange on the list. Many of the Board's recommendations were influenced by the testimony from the Coalition for Smarter Growth (©16-19).

The Council will recall that during its deliberations last fall on the US 29 BRT, there were many doubts raised as to the viability of dedicated BRT lanes on US 29 south of White Oak through Four Corners and the Sligo Hills area of Silver Spring. While the Council adopted the plan assuming dedicated lanes, at the same time many noted that this goal was "aspirational," and that it is very possible that a subsequent project planning study could find that dedicated lanes are not feasible. As a practice the Council has not included among its Construction Program priorities any project that is not already in project planning. The Council should be in a better position to understand the feasibility of dedicated lanes on US 29 south of White Oak by the next time it updates the priority letter, and if so, it could shoot right to the top of the Construction Program priorities. But for now, placing this project among the Construction Program priorities is inappropriate. On the other hand, the interchanges at Tech Road/Industrial Boulevard and Fairland Road/Musgrove Road, as noted above, address the road-based failure identified in the Subdivision Staging Policy's Roadway Adequacy Test, a test that was approved by the Council just over a year ago.

The Planning Board also recommends placing bicycle and pedestrian improvements in Bicycle-Pedestrian Priority Areas as among the top Construction priorities. However, the priorities letter refers to specific projects or (as in the case of WMATA's rehabilitation effort) a program of specific projects. Also, these projects will not require an environmental assessment, so they are not major capital projects.

This does not mean that the County should not pursue State funding ultimately for such bicycle and pedestrian improvements. The CTP includes a third program category beyond Construction and Development & Evaluation: the Safety, Congestion Relief, Highway and Bridge Program. Despite its cumbersome title that attempts to list all projects within it, this program also includes pedestrian and bicycle facilities. It is updated annually. County DOT and M-NCPPC often convey ideas for projects to be funded in this program. A recent example is the Shady Grove Metro Access Road Bikepath, to which MDOT contributed $1,255,000 from this program.

***Municipal recommendations.*** Council staff invited the Cities of Rockville and Gaithersburg to provide their recommendations. Rockville staff replied that it had no new priorities, and the staff felt uncomfortable conveying priorities without reviewing the matter with its Mayor and Council. So no letter from Rockville is forthcoming.

Gaithersburg's City Manager has forwarded a letter (©20-21) and asked that it be transmitted to the State with the County's letter. The City appreciates the State having funded the I-270/Watkins Mill Road interchange, which had been the County's #1 priority among the projects of local significance. It supports the Stage 1 of the CCT, the MD 355 BRT, and the Clopper Road intersection improvements. However, it opposes the planned interchanges on Great Seneca Highway at Sam Eig Highway and Muddy Branch Road.

***Council staff recommendations.*** **Council staff concurs with the Executive's recommendations for the Construction Program.** It provides an excellent balance between transit projects where the county's existing and planned densities warrant transit, and highway projects where transit is not as viable. Although there are more highway projects recommended than transit, 57% of the funds requested are for the transit projects, 43% for roads. The percentage for transit would be even higher if more State funds were needed for the Purple Line in the event sufficient federal aid is not forthcoming.

**Council staff concurs with the Planning's Board's recommendations for the D&E Program.** The only difference between the Planning Board's proposal and the Executive's is that the Planning Board includes, as part of priority #3, a study of the ramps from Fernwood Road/Westlake Drive south to the I-270 West Spur HOV lanes. Since these ramps are close by the proposed HOV lane extension, studying them together makes sense, even if their full utility will not be realized until the full HOV improvement to Virginia is implemented.

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ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

February 15, 2011

The Honorable Richard Madaleno, Chair
Montgomery County Senate Delegation
214 James Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Montgomery County House Delegation
223 House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Senator Madaleno and Delegate Feldman:

In light of the Draft FY2011-2016 Consolidated Transportation Program we have updated the State transportation priorities we transmitted to you on July 16, 2008. This letter describes our latest sets of priorities for currently unfunded State transportation projects and studies.

We acknowledge and commend the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) for its ongoing support for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority multi-year capital improvement programs for infrastructure investment to maintain a state of good repair and to implement the National Transportation Safety Board recommendations. Additional capital funding beyond the multiyear funding agreement is needed to operate eight-car trains, eliminate the Red Line turnbacks at Grosvenor and Silver Spring, and to expand the existing station platform and circulation capacity to accommodate existing and projected riders.

Two other points are noteworthy. The Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) transportation improvements near National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda have been funded for design and land acquisition, but construction funds necessary to complete the improvements are not programmed. Also, the County is currently engaged in a feasibility study of county-wide bus rapid transit (BRT) service. Once the study is complete, we intend to incorporate elements of the countywide study in our master plans to then be in position to have MDOT begin project planning for specific routes in addition to those already underway.

The balance of this letter describes our priorities in several categories.

***I. Projects of regional significance that are in the D&E Program but not in the Construction Program.*** Two major transitways, the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) from Shady Grove to Clarksburg, and the Purple Line from Bethesda to Prince George's County are our highest, and co-equal, priorities. The next priority is to complete the BRAC transportation improvements for the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda. Other regionally significant projects with high priority are the widening of I-270 for high-occupancy-toll (HOT) or high-occupancy-vehicle (HOV) lanes north of Shady Grove and the widening of I-495 for HOT or HOV lanes between the I-270 West Spur and Virginia. While there are issues to be worked out on important aspects of some of these priorities, decisions must be made and funding must be identified promptly to move them forward to completion.

***II. Projects of local importance that are in the D&E Program but not in the Construction Program.*** These are priority projects that have been previously identified by the Executive and Council to the State and/or Federal Delegations. We have already taken steps in the last few years of dedicating the extraordinary amount of $286 million of County funds to design, acquire land for, and/or build several projects that are or should be the State's responsibility:

- $14,463,000 to forward fund the MD 355/Montrose grade-separated interchange (being reimbursed by the State).
- $22,375,000 to construct a 1,200-space garage at the Glenmont Metro Station.
- $66,961,000 to design and reconstruct Rockville Pike (MD 355) through White Flint.
- $70,296,000 to design, acquire land, and construct Montrose Parkway from east of Rockville Pike (MD 355) to Parklawn Drive.
- $14,362,000 towards design and land acquisition for the Georgia Avenue (MD 97)/Randolph Road grade-separated interchange.
- $6,447,000 to build several intersection improvements on State highways.
- $10,000,000 to design and acquire land for the Georgia Avenue (MD 97) Bypass around Brookeville.
- $4,900,000 towards the design of the I-270/Watkins Mill Road interchange.
- $6,000,000 for preliminary engineering for the Veirs Mill Road (MD 586) BRT line between Wheaton and Rockville.
- $2,000,000 for preliminary engineering for a pedestrian underpass beneath Georgia Avenue (MD 97) at the Forest Glen Metro Station.
- $5,000,000 for preliminary engineering for the Georgia Avenue (MD 97) Busway from Glenmont to Olney.
- $3,000,000 for preliminary engineering for the reconstruction of Georgia Avenue (MD 97) through Montgomery Hills, from 16th Street (MD 390) to Forest Glen Road (MD 192).

Our priority rankings for projects that will be ready for construction funding during the next six years and are currently in the design or project-planning stages are listed below. The funding that needs to be programmed to complete each project is indicated as well.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1st | I-270/Watkins Mill Road Extended: build bridge over I-270 | $110M |
| 2nd | Woodfield Road: widen to 6 lanes, Midcounty Highway to Snouffer School Road | $47M |
| 3rd | Georgia Avenue: build 2-lane bypass around Brookeville | $22M |
| 4th | Georgia Avenue/Norbeck Road: build grade-separated interchange | $142M |
| 5th | Clopper Road: improve intersections from I-270 to Seneca Creek State Park | $56M |
| 6th | I-270/Watkins Mill Road Extended: complete grade-separated interchange | $55M |
| 7th | Spencerville Road: widen to 4 lanes from Old Columbia Pike to US 29 | $31M |
| 8th | Norbeck Road: widen to 4 lanes from Georgia Avenue to Layhill Road | $135M |
| 9th | I-270/Newcut Road: build grade-separated interchange | $138M |
| 10th | Woodfield Road: widen to 6 lanes from Snouffer School Road to Airpark Road and from Fieldcrest Road to Warfield Road | $54M |
| 11th | US 29/Fairland Road/Musgrove Road: build grade-separated interchange | $148M |
| 12th | MD 28/198: widen to 4 lanes from Layhill Road to Old Columbia Pike | $183M |

The total funding that needs to be programmed to complete these 12 projects is more than $1.1 billion.

***III. Transit projects that are not in the D&E Program.*** As noted above, the County has programmed sufficient funds for MDOT to conduct preliminary engineering studies for the Veirs Mill Road BRT and the Georgia Avenue Busway. MOUs are being finalized and these studies should appear in the D&E Program of the Draft FY12-17 CTP. The County has also programmed funds for a project planning study of a pedestrian underpass beneath Georgia Avenue at the Forest Glen Metro Station.

Our priority in this category is to fund corridors proposed by our Countywide BRT Study and subsequent master plan amendments. These corridors may include, but are not limited to: US 29, MD 355, MD 650, the North Bethesda Transitway, and MD 193. Furthermore, as we move forward on this project, we seek support for interim steps to give higher priority for buses on State roads throughout the County.

***IV. Highway and bikeway projects that are not in the D&E Program.*** Our priority rankings for highway and bikeway projects to be added to the D&E Program are:

1st Frederick Road (MD 355)/Gude Drive: grade-separated interchange
2nd Midcounty Highway Extended: construction from Intercounty Connector to Shady Grove Road
3rd Intercounty Connector Hiker-Biker Trail: Shady Grove to Prince George's County
4th Sam Eig Highway: grade-separated interchanges from I-270 to Great Seneca Highway (MD 119); and grade-separated interchange at Great Seneca Highway and Muddy Branch Road
5th Frederick Road (MD 355): widening from 2000' south of Brink Road to future Frederick Road/Clarksburg Bypass
6th Rockville Pike (MD 355): improvement from Woodmont Avenue to I-495, including a grade separated interchange at Cedar Lane
7th Veirs Mill Road (MD 586)/Randolph Road: grade-separated interchange
8th Veirs Mill Road (MD 586): widening from Twinbrook Parkway to Randolph Road
9th Frederick Road (MD 355): reconstruction north of Old Town Gaithersburg
10th I-270/Gude Drive: grade-separated interchange
11th MD 108 Bypass around Laytonsville

***V. Other comments.*** We appreciate your acceptance of the White Flint Sector Plan area as the State's first Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Area (BPPA). We will work with you to coordinate an implementation plan that will time the State's bicycle and pedestrian facility investments so they are coordinated with White Flint's staging plan.

We also appreciate your having accepted the Wheaton, Twinbrook, and Shady Grove Metro Station areas as transit-oriented development (TOD)-designated areas under Section 7-102 of the Maryland Code. We now nominate the White Flint Metro Station vicinity as a fourth area to be granted TOD status, but with the understanding that capital projects in any of these areas do not supersede the priorities listed above. Maps describing these areas are enclosed.

If you need any clarifications about our recommendations, please contact us.

Sincerely,

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

Valerie Ervin, President
County Council

Enclosures

cc: The Honorable Martin O'Malley, Governor, State of Maryland
Beverley Swaim-Staley, Secretary, Maryland Department of Transportation
Françoise Carrier, Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board

February , 2014

The Honorable Jamie Raskin, Chair
Montgomery County Senate Delegation
James Senate Office Building, Room 122
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser, Chair
Montgomery County House Delegation
House Office Building, Room 151
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Senator Raskin and Delegate Kaiser:

In light of the Draft FY2014-2019 Consolidated Transportation Program we have updated the State transportation priorities we last transmitted to you dated February 15, 2011. This letter describes our latest sets of priorities for currently unfunded or underfunded State transportation projects and studies.

We urge the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to support the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's multi-year capital improvement programs for infrastructure investment to maintain a state of good repair. Additional funding is needed to operate eight-car trains, eliminate the Red Line turnbacks at Grosvenor and Silver Spring, to expand the existing station platform and circulation capacity to accommodate existing and projected riders, and to implement capital improvements to facilitate its Bus Priority Network.

We deeply appreciate the State providing funding for the Purple Line and for Stage 1 of the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) from Shady Grove to Metropolitan Grove. These projects are our highest transportation project priorities. We are optimistic that the Federal Government will authorize and appropriate its share of the cost of the Purple Line, but until in case it does not, a high priority would be for the State to make up the difference. Regarding Stage 1 of the CCT, we also urge that a means for achieving full funding be sought. Additionally, we recognize and appreciate your funding of the I-270 at Watkins Mill Interchange, the Brookeville Bypass, the additional funding for the MD 28 – MD 198 Study, and the design of Interchanges along US 29. Advancing these projects support our economic development and safety of the traveling public.

The balance of this letter describes our State funding priorities for MDOT's Construction Program and the Development and Evaluation (D&E) Program, respectively:

**PRIORITIES FOR THE CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM**

1. Montrose Parkway East: contribution to cost of segment from MD 355 to Parklawn Drive
2. US 29/Tech Road: grade-separated interchange
3. US 29/Fairland Road/Musgrove Road: grade-separated interchange
4. Corridor Cities Transitway Stage 2, Metropolitan Grove to Clarksburg
5. MD 28 (Norbeck Rd.), Georgia Avenue to Layhill Road: widen to 4 lanes, with safety improvements
6. MD 586 (Veirs Mill Road) Bus Rapid Transit line
7. US 29/Stewart Lane: grade-separated interchange
8. Forest Glen Pedestrian Underpass beneath Georgia Avenue
9. MD 124 (Woodfield Road), Midcounty Highway to Airpark Drive: widen to 4 lanes
10. MD 117 (Clopper Road), I-270 to Seneca Creek State Park: improve intersections
11. I-270/Newcut Road: grade-separated interchange
12. MD 97 (Georgia Avenue), Forest Glen Road to 16th Street: safety and accessibility improvements
13. MD 97 (Georgia Avenue) Bus Rapid Transit line, Olney to Wheaton
14. MD 97 (Georgia Avenue)/MD 28 (Norbeck Road): grade-separated interchange
15. US 29/Greencastle Road: grade-separated interchange

Once the project planning studies evaluating the addition of high-occupancy-vehicle (HOV) lanes on I-270 (I-370 to Frederick County) and I-495 (I-270 West Spur to Virginia) are re-initiated, and once a funding strategy is developed for these megaprojects of statewide significance, we will include them among the Construction Program priorities. We urge you to complete details and cost estimates for smaller segments of these corridors that your staff has been analyzing. They could be implemented in a shorter time frame, produce immediate congestion reduction benefits and the much lower costs make them very cost-effective.

**PRIORITIES FOR THE D&E PROGRAM**

1. US 29 Bus Rapid Transit line, Burtonsville to Silver Spring: additional funds to complete project planning
2. MD 355 Bus Rapid Transit line, Germantown to Bethesda: additional funds to complete project planning
3. I-495 (Capital Beltway): extend HOV lane south of I-270 West Spur
4. MD 355 (Frederick Road)/Gude Drive: grade-separated interchange
5. MD 115 (Midcounty Highway) Extended, ICC to Shady Grove Road
6. MD 119 (Great Seneca Highway)/Sam Eig Highway/Muddy Branch Road: grade-separated interchanges
7. MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue) Bus Rapid Transit line, White Oak to Eastern Avenue

Attached is a fuller description of these projects, and how each conforms to local master plans and the goals of the Maryland Transportation Plan. If you need any clarifications about our recommendations, please contact us.

Sincerely,

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

Craig Rice, President
County Council

cc: The Honorable Martin O'Malley, Governor, State of Maryland
Jim Smith, Secretary, Maryland Department of Transportation
Françoise Carrier, Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

OFFICE OF THE CHAIR

January 17, 2014

Mr. Isiah Leggett, County Executive
Executive Office Building (EOB)
101 Monroe Street, 2nd Floor
Rockville, Maryland 20850

and

Mr. Craig Rice, Council President
Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue, 5th Floor
Rockville, Maryland 20850

RE: State Transportation Priorities

Dear Mr. Leggett and Mr. Rice:

At our regularly scheduled meeting on January 9, 2014, the Planning Board discussed the update of the County's State Transportation Priorities letter that is expected to be transmitted to the Montgomery County Delegation next month. (A copy of the staff memo for this discussion is enclosed for your information.) We offer our comments below for your consideration in the preparation of that letter.

**Highest Priorities**

We recommend the following as the County's highest transportation priorities:

- Support for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority multi-year capital improvement programs for infrastructure investment to maintain a state of good repair.
- Additional Metrorail funding to operate eight-car trains to eliminate the Red Line turnbacks at Grosvenor and Silver Spring, and to expand the existing station platform and circulation capacity to accommodate existing and projected riders.
- Construction of the Purple Line.

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- Construction of the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) Stage 1.
- Bicycle and pedestrian improvements in Bicycle-Pedestrian Priority Areas, including those designated in the Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan.

The first three priorities were included in your February 15, 2011 letter to the Delegation. The CCT was also included on that list, but since design work is proceeding only on Stage 1 of the CCT from Shady Grove to Metropolitan Grove, we have included only that segment in the highest priority list. Stage 2 is included in the priorities for the Construction Program, which is shown below along with the priorities for the Development and Evaluation Program.

The last item on this list is new. Bicycle and pedestrian improvements are greatly needed in commercial business districts and Metro station areas. With the County's growth coming increasingly in the form of mixed use development, the growth of transit usage, and the increase in bicycling, including from the County's introduction of bikeshare, a comprehensive program of bicycle and pedestrian improvements is needed in these areas to ensure that benefits of the County's investments in transit can be fully realized.

The White Flint Sector Plan area is the state's first Bicycle-Pedestrian Priority Area. More than two dozen other areas have been designated in the County's master plans, most recently in the Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan, and are awaiting State confirmation of the designation. The major roadways in all of these areas that serve as transit routes are State highways whose safety and accessibility must be improved.

**Other Priorities**

Our recommendations for additions to the Construction and Development & Evaluation programs are also tailored to support the County's economic development goals. Where a transit solution could reasonably be considered to provide the needed transportation capacity in the near-term over roadway improvements, it was given a higher priority.

With the Council's recent unanimous approval of the Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan, it is clear that transit must become a much more significant part of our future transportation system. Where transit can be used to meet our transportation needs, we believe that it moves us closer to a sustainable transportation network that has lesser impacts on existing communities, natural resources, and parkland. We also understand that heavy investment in transit is not the solution to the transportation needs in every area of the County, nor is it the answer to every transportation problem, even in densely populated areas of the County.

We recommend the following as the County's priorities for the Construction and Development & Evaluation programs:

Construction Program

1. Montrose Parkway East: contribution to cost of segment from MD 355 to Parklawn Drive
2. US 29 Bus Rapid Transit line, White Oak to Silver Spring
3. Roadway and other capital improvements to facilitate implementation of WMATA's Priority Corridor Network, which would enhance bus service through improvements such as signal priorities and queue jumpers, better passenger amenities, new buses with low floors and hybrid technology, and new limited stop services.
4. Corridor Cities Transitway Stage 2, Metropolitan Grove to Clarksburg
5. MD 28 (Norbeck Rd.), Georgia Avenue to Layhill Road: widen to 4 lanes, with safety improvements, and intersection improvements to the Georgia Avenue/Norbeck Avenue intersection
6. US 29/Fairland Road/Musgrove Road: grade-separated interchange
7. MD 586 (Veirs Mill Road) Bus Rapid Transit line
8. Forest Glen Pedestrian Underpass beneath Georgia Avenue
9. I-270/Newcut Road: grade-separated interchange
10. MD 97 (Georgia Avenue), Forest Glen Road to 16th Street: safety and accessibility improvements
11. MD 97 (Georgia Avenue) Bus Rapid Transit line, Olney to Wheaton
12. MD 124 (Woodfield Road), Midcounty Highway to Airpark Drive: widen to 4 lanes
13. MD 117 (Clopper Road), I-270 to Seneca Creek State Park: improve intersections
14. MD 97 (Georgia Avenue)/MD 28 (Norbeck Road): grade-separated interchange

Development & Evaluation Program

1. US 29 Bus Rapid Transit line, Burtonsville to White Oak
2. MD 355 Bus Rapid Transit line, Germantown to Bethesda
3. I-495 (Capital Beltway): extend HOV lane south of I-270 West Spur, including HOV ramps on the south side of Westlake Drive/Fernwood Road
4. MD 355 (MD 355)/Gude Drive: grade-separated interchange
5. MD 115 (Midcounty Highway) Extended, ICC to Shady Grove Road

6. MD 119 (Great Seneca Highway)/Sam Eig Highway and Muddy Branch Road: grade-separated interchanges
7. MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue) Bus Rapid Transit line, White Oak to Eastern Avenue

Thank you for the opportunity to review this project and for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions or comments concerning our review, please call Larry Cole at 301-495-4528.

Sincerely,

Françoise M. Carrier
Chair

Enclosure

**MCPB**
Item No. 10
Date: 01-09-14

**State Transportation Priorities**

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**Completed:** 12/23/13

## Summary

Every few years, the County Executive and Council forward a joint letter of recommendations for state transportation projects and studies to the Montgomery County Delegation for their consideration in approving the final FY2014-2019 Consolidated Transportation Program, the Draft of which was released in October 2013: http://www.mdot.maryland.gov/Office_of_Planning_and_Capital_Programming/CTP/CTP_14_19/Index.html. The last letter was sent on February 16, 2011 (see Attachment 1) and the new letter is anticipated to be sent in February 2014.

The joint priority letter serves as advice to the Montgomery County Delegation in their yearly budget negotiations but also serves as a standing guide to MDOT and SHA as to what the County's priorities are, and developments in the planning and design of these priority projects are highlighted in the monthly capital transportation program meetings that are attended by SHA, County staff, and Planning staff.

## Recommendations

We recommend that the Board transmit the following transportation priorities to the County Executive and Council for their consideration in their update of the joint priorities letter. This letter should include a restatement of support for the County's highest transportation priorities, which are:

- Support for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority multi-year capital improvement programs for infrastructure investment to maintain a state of good repair.
- Additional Metrorail funding to operate eight-car trains to eliminate the Red Line turnbacks at Grosvenor and Silver Spring, and to expand the existing station platform and circulation capacity to accommodate existing and projected riders.
- Construction of the Purple Line, and
- Construction of the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) Stage 1

Since design work is proceeding only on Stage 1 of the CCT from Shady Grove to Metropolitan Grove, we have included only that segment in the highest priority list. Stage 2 would still be included in the priorities for the Construction Program, which is shown below along with the priorities for the Development and Evaluation Program.

**PRIORITIES FOR THE CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM**

1. Montrose Parkway East: contribution to cost of segment from MD 355 to Parklawn Drive
2. US 29 Bus Rapid Transit line, White Oak to Silver Spring
3. Corridor Cities Transitway Stage 2, Metropolitan Grove to Clarksburg
4. MD 28 (Norbeck Rd.), Georgia Avenue to Layhill Road: widen to 4 lanes, with safety improvements, and intersection improvements to the Georgia Avenue/Norbeck Avenue intersection
5. US 29/Fairland Road/Musgrove Road: grade-separated interchange
6. MD 586 (Veirs Mill Road) Bus Rapid Transit line
7. Forest Glen Pedestrian Underpass beneath Georgia Avenue
8. I-270/Newcut Road: grade-separated interchange
9. MD 97 (Georgia Avenue), Forest Glen Road to 16th Street: safety and accessibility improvements
10. MD 97 (Georgia Avenue) Bus Rapid Transit line, Olney to Wheaton
11. MD 124 (Woodfield Road), Midcounty Highway to Airpark Drive: widen to 4 lanes
12. MD 117 (Clopper Road), I-270 to Seneca Creek State Park: improve intersections
13. MD 97 (Georgia Avenue)/MD 28 (Norbeck Road): grade-separated interchange

**PRIORITIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT & EVALUATION PROGRAM**

1. US 29 Bus Rapid Transit line, Burtonsville to White Oak
2. MD 355 Bus Rapid Transit line, Germantown to Bethesda
3. I-495 (Capital Beltway): extend HOV lane south of I-270 West Spur, including HOV ramps on the south side of Westlake Drive/Fernwood Road
4. MD 355 (MD 355)/Gude Drive: grade-separated interchange
5. MD 115 (Midcounty Highway) Extended, ICC to Shady Grove Road
6. MD 119 (Great Seneca Highway)/Sam Eig Highway and Muddy Branch Road: grade-separated interchanges
7. MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue) Bus Rapid Transit line, White Oak to Eastern Avenue

With the Council's recent unanimous approval of the Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan, it is clear that transit must become a much more significant part of our future transportation system. Heavy investment in transit is not the solution to the transportation needs in every area of the County nor is it the answer to every transportation problem, even in densely populated areas of the

County. But where roadway widenings to solve perennial traffic congestion would significantly affect existing communities, natural resources and parkland, a more efficient solution is needed.

This update of the joint priorities letter, coming fairly soon after a significant increase in transportation funding, offers the opportunity to reassess what the County's overall priorities should be in creating a sustainable transportation network. The recommended projects put a much higher focus on transit projects than has been true in the past. These transit projects are recommended where feasible and supported by existing policy, and will help to support the County's economic development goals.

Changes to the list from the 2011 letter also reflect changes from the previous list because of project completions; changes in funding that negate the need to continue to include them; and changes in traffic growth.

The following section includes detailed comments on the projects and studied recommended for inclusion in the priorities letter.

**Construction**

Montrose Parkway East (#1): This project was not previously on the list because most of it (east of Parklawn Drive) was a County project. The Montrose Road grade-separation at the CSX tracks is still a separate SHA project but these projects are now being designed to be constructed together. A State contribution is needed to move the combined project forward to support development in the White Flint Sector Plan area.

US29 Bus Rapid Transit from White Oak to Silver Spring (#2) and US29 interchanges, including US29/Fairland Road/Musgrove Road (#5): The US29 interchange projects completed the Project Planning process more than a decade ago and are intended to accommodate forecast traffic volumes in this corridor. (Weekday traffic volumes have increased over 10% in this corridor since 2006.) Following completion of the interchange planning effort, three interchanges were constructed; at Randolph Road/Cherry Hill Road, at Briggs Chaney Road, and at MD198. Additional interchanges that are planned but not yet built would be at Stewart Lane, at Tech Road/Industrial Parkway, at Fairland Road/Musgrove Road, at Greencastle Road, and at Blackburn Road.

The US29/Fairland Road/Musgrove Road interchange was included in the 2011 Construction priorities and the Draft FY14-19 Maryland Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) added $7M in design funding for this project, whose construction cost is estimated to be $128M. (See Attachment 2 for Council staff's Overview of the Draft FY14-19 CTP.)

During our preliminary discussions with Council and MCDOT staff on the new priority list, three additional US29 interchanges were considered for inclusion on the list: at Stewart Lane, at Tech Road/Industrial Parkway, and at Greencastle Road, the estimated construction cost for which would be $344M. They are all Master Plan-recommended facilities but there is a tension between continuing to devote significant transportation funding to moving general traffic in the US29 corridor and funding bus

rapid transit (BRT) in the same corridor. By comparison, the estimated construction cost of dedicated transit lanes from Silver Spring to Burtonsville is nearly the same as these three interchanges - $351M.

We believe that prioritizing the US29 transit corridor improvements is the better choice. The White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan emphasizes place-making in White Oak and BRT is the key piece of infrastructure needed to develop mixed use activity centers in this corridor. BRT also offers great potential in intercepting long distance trips originating in Howard County, freeing up road capacity to serve these activity centers.

Since no new pavement is recommended for US29 BRT south of White Oak and the necessary improvements are mostly operational, we expect that planning for that segment could be completed fairly quickly. We recommend that this segment be expedited ahead of the BRT segment north of White Oak, where additional pavement is required, and be placed directly in the Construction priorities list.

Because the project planning for the US29 interchanges was done so long ago, it needs to be updated to reflect current environmental regulations; it may be a couple of years before these projects are ready to enter the construction program. During that time, planning for the US29 BRT segment north of White Oak should be expedited so that we can better understand the traffic impacts and benefits of all the projects in the US29 corridor more fully.

BRT is an integral element of the soon to be adopted White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan. We know that we need BRT to provide an adequate level of mobility in the US29 corridor and should pursue its implementation as soon as possible. Early BRT implementation on the southern half of the corridor will give us good information on what beneficial impact there will be on traffic demand. The need for additional interchanges on US29 can then be considered in that context.

Corridor Cities Transitway Stage 2 (#3): MTA elected not to include the segment from Metropolitan Grove to Clarksburg in its Environmental Impact Statement for the segment between the Shady Grove Metro Station and Metropolitan Grove. But this important project needs to be pursued as a high priority in order to provide more effective access to transit in the Germantown and Clarksburg areas.

MD 28 (Norbeck Rd.), Georgia Avenue to Layhill Road (#4) and MD 97 (Georgia Avenue)/MD 28 (Norbeck Road) interchange (#13): The traffic volume on this road dropped over the last year with the opening of the ICC, but is still up 27% over the last decade. In addition to roadway widening, the straightening of Norbeck Road is needed for safety reasons. A grade-separated interchange is master planned at the Georgia Avenue/Norbeck Avenue intersection, but intersection improvements should be pursued first to alleviate traffic problems and the interchange moved to a lower priority. The Draft FY14-19 CTP added $3M in preliminary engineering for the length of MD28/MD198 between Georgia Avenue and US29.

MD 586 (Veirs Mill Road) Bus Rapid Transit line (#6): The planning for this project is being done by SHA but is funded by Montgomery County. This existing transit ridership in this corridor is one of the highest in the County. The corridor is planned to eventually provide a key east west connection (when coupled with University Boulevard) linking Rockville with Takoma Langley via Wheaton.

Forest Glen Pedestrian Underpass (#7): The planning for this project was funded and completed by Montgomery County. This project would provide a safer grade-separated pedestrian and bicyclist crossing at the Georgia Avenue/Forest Glen intersection, as well as direct access to the Forest Glen Metro Station.

I-270/Newcut Road interchange (#8): This interchange would serve the growing Clarksburg area and would be partially funded by the Cabin Branch development.

MD 97 (Georgia Avenue), Forest Glen Road to 16th Street (#9): The planning for this project is being done by SHA but is funded by Montgomery County. This segment of Georgia Avenue is the highest volume non-Interstate highway in the State of Maryland (69K average annual weekday traffic).

MD 97 (Georgia Avenue) Bus Rapid Transit line (#10): The planning for this project is being done by SHA but is funded by Montgomery County. The forecasting done for the CTCFMP showed lower ridership than most other corridors in the plan but implementation would likely be easier.

MD 124 (Woodfield Road), Midcounty Highway to Airpark Drive (#11): The traffic volume on this road has been relatively flat over the past decade, but two County widening projects on Snouffer School Road, which intersects MD124 at about the midpoint of the subject project, are intended to accommodate future traffic growth associated with the development of the Multi-Agency Service Park and Public Service Training Academy and with private development. These developments would increase traffic on MD124. The Draft FY14-19 CTP added $1.9M in design funding for this project.

MD 117 (Clopper Road), I-270 to Seneca Creek State Park (#13): This project was put on hold about a decade ago, during which time the traffic volume on this road has dropped about 9%. Rather than a general widening of the roadway, this project is a series of intersection improvements intended to address localized congestion problems.

**Development and Evaluation**

US 29 Bus Rapid Transit line, Burtonsville to White Oak (#1): This segment of the US29 corridor includes additional lanes for BRT but all of the necessary right-of-way exists so the duration of the planning phase should be fairly short.

MD 355 Bus Rapid Transit line, Germantown to Bethesda (#2): This corridor has the highest forecast BRT ridership but there are many different right-of-way constraints that will take some time to resolve during planning.

I-495 (Capital Beltway): extend HOV lane south of I-270 West Spur (#3): This project would address the high levels of congestion on I-270 and the Capital Beltway, including the American Legion Bridge, and facilitate transit service to Tysons Corner.

MD 355 (MD 355)/Gude Drive: grade-separated interchange (#4): There is a high level of congestion at this intersection that would be alleviated by the construction of the master-planned interchange. Dedicated transit lanes on MD355 (Development and Evaluation priority #2) would need to be included in this study.

MD 115 (Midcounty Highway) Extended, ICC to Shady Grove Road (#5): This project would provide a direct connection to the ICC and would likely remove traffic from other area roads. This project was recommended by the Board to be included in the ICC project but SHA declined to do so.

MD 119 (Great Seneca Highway)/Sam Eig Highway and Muddy Branch Road interchanges (#6): These interchanges would address existing congestion and serve future development in the Great Seneca Science Corridor. This area would also be served by the CCT Stage 1 (Construction priority #3)

MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue) Bus Rapid Transit line, White Oak to Eastern Avenue (#7): This corridor has high existing and forecast ridership. Implementation of dedicated lanes would support existing MetroExtra service, which is the precursor to BRT.

**Conclusion**

The recommended list of projects includes some significant roadway projects and studies that would provide additional traffic capacity and relieve congestion at some major intersections in addition to a significant number of transit projects and studies that would enable us to increase the person-throughput – the ability to move more people – on our roads without greatly increasing the footprint of those roads. We recommend that the Board transmit this list of priorities to the County Executive and Council for their consideration in their update of the joint priorities letter.

Coalition for Smarter Growth
DC • MD • VA

January 9, 2014

Francoise Carrier, Chair
Montgomery County Planning Board, M-NCPPC
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

**RE: State Transportation Priorities**

Dear Planning Board:

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the county's Transportation Priority Letter. My name is Cheryl Cort and I am speaking on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the leading non-profit group advocating for transit and walkable communities in the DC region, which counts thousands of supporters in Montgomery County.

We'd like to remind the Board that state law governing the priority letter process "requires MDOT and the local jurisdictions seeking project funding to demonstrate the relationship between prioritized projects and the long-term goals of the Maryland Transportation Plan and local land use plans." The goals of the Maryland Transportation Plan focus on safety for all users, system preservation, and environmental conservation.

**Restatement of the County's highest transportation priorities:** We applaud the high priority placed on the critical transportation investments of WMATA's multi-year capital program and the Purple Line, both of which meet state and county goals. We ask that funding for WMATA not only include the multi-year capital improvements program and Metrorail funding for eight-car trains, but also include Metrobus Priority Corridor Network (PCN) implementation. We also recommend including MARC improvements for the Brunswick Line.

Beyond these highest priorities, we find the priorities for the list of construction, and development and evaluation programs to be a mixed bag of projects. Some will help, and some will hurt the county's ability to provide better and more sustainable transportation choices for its residents. We applaud the many Bus Rapid Transit line projects that occur throughout the lists. These BRT projects should not only build-out the infrastructure for transit vehicles and stations, it should also ensure enhanced pedestrian and bicycle access and safety.

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We are alarmed, however, by the county's continued commitment to a long list of costly road capacity projects despite growing emphasis on creating a sustainable transportation network that increases the role of transit. We suggest that these costly road capacity projects be re-evaluated in light of long term national and local downward trends in driving, current environmental standards, and increased focus on providing quality transit services. We must make wise choices with limited funds to build the right projects to support county and state goals.

The current draft list you are considering today begins to shift this lopsided investment approach, but much more re-evaluation of expensive road capacity projects is needed. The county needs to leverage state funds to support road projects that enhance the safety and access for all users. Investments need to encourage other forms of travel besides driving to fully address our transportation needs.

Past studies, many which were done years ago, conclude a long list of interchanges and widenings are necessary. However, long term demographic trends towards driving less, especially among our largest demographic group – 24-35 year olds, calls into question the validity of the assumptions and projections of these studies. As the County builds more high quality transit and focuses new housing and jobs around transit stations, constructing more unwalkable roadways and interchanges will only undermine these investments.

As the Board considers the draft list of projects, we ask you to prioritize advancement of the BRT projects, and increased investment in road and intersection improvements that enhance safety and accessibility for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Below are our suggestions on the draft priority letter that better supports the county's goals of relieving the burden of traffic congestion, making it easier for residents not to drive, and fight climate change.

**HIGHEST TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES** – as we stated before, we recommend adding:

> **Metrobus Priority Corridor Network (PCN)** implementation with WMATA investments
>
> **MARC Growth and Investment Plan:** MARC ridership is booming, and the Brunswick Line provides a much-needed alternative in the busy I-270 corridor. We urge the County to request funding for the Brunswick Line upgrades for 2020 as outlined in the MARC Growth and Investment Plan.

**CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM** - projects that meet County and State goals

> **US 29 Bus Rapid Transit line, White Oak to Silver Spring**
> **MD 586 (Veirs Mill Road) Bus Rapid Transit line**
> **MD 97 (Georgia Avenue) Bus Rapid Transit line, Olney to Wheaton**
> We ask the Board to advance these projects as high priorities for full funding.

**Corridor Cities Transitway Stage 2:** We urge the Board to lower costs for the Corridor Cities Transitway by following the recommendations of the Kittelson report to eliminate to the extent possible tunnels and grade-separated interchanges, which will only create unsafe pedestrian conditions and drive up costs.

Recommended additions to Construction Program:

**ADA best practices for pedestrians along all BRT routes and around rail stations construction funds:** As the county builds the Purple Line and Bus Rapid Transit, it should ensure that state roadways have sidewalks and pedestrian infrastructure that meet ADA best practices, as specified in the new Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan.

**Bicycle-Pedestrian Areas Capital Funding Program:** Capital funds should be allocated through this program to implement State Bicycle-Pedestrian Areas. These areas will enhance pedestrian/bike access to transit and help alleviate traffic congestion, and reduce pollution.

**DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION PROGRAM**

**US 29 Bus Rapid Transit line, Burtonsville to White Oak**
**MD 355 Bus Rapid Transit line, Germantown to Bethesda**
**MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue) Bus Rapid Transit line, White Oak to Eastern Avenue**
We urge the county to ensure full funding for planning Bus Rapid Transit on US 29, MD 355 and MD 650 to quickly advance these major transit corridors to construction.

Recommended additions to Development and Evaluation Program:

**Additional cycletracks to support and connect new bikeshare network.** To support the County's new bikeshare network, Montgomery should prioritize funding cycletrack connections between stations.

**CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM** - Projects to reconsider and defer

**Montrose Parkway East:** We ask the Board to reconsider the purpose of this project, and its expanding scope and cost. Montrose Parkway East undermines White Flint's walkable future by creating a new, fast moving roadway that will be an unsafe barrier for pedestrians and cyclists. We ask that the County invest instead in the state roads (355 and Old Georgetown Road) needed to create a new street grid for White Flint.

**MD 28 (Norbeck Rd.), Georgia Avenue to Layhill Road:** widen to 4 lanes, intersection improvements to Georgia Avenue/Norbeck Avenue intersection
**MD 97 (Georgia Avenue)/MD 28 (Norbeck Road):** grade-separated interchange
While we appreciate the shifting of the interchange component to the #13 position on the Construction Program list, we still request that the widening and costly interchange proposal be revaluated and deferred in light of other more important investments. These projects are part a wasteful half billion dollar proposed investment in road capacity directly parallel to the $2 billion ICC. With ICC use continuing to fall below original projections, spending money on parallel road capacity will only draw commuters away, cutting needed toll revenue and ensuring that the investment in the ICC will continue to be underutilized. The county should consider SHA's newer plans for a much lower impact, lower cost alternative to improve pedestrian safety and access in the corridor.

**US 29/Fairland Road/Musgrove Road** grade-separated interchange. We urge the board to defer this and other US 29 interchange projects and pursue US 29 BRT improvements for a similar cost. Providing high quality transit will help alleviate the burden of traffic congestion and create a more sustainable transportation system into the future. Furthermore, many of the studies calling for US 29 interchanges were completed several years ago and need to be updated with current data and assumptions.

**MD 124 (Woodfield Road), Midcounty Highway to Airpark Drive: widen to 4 lanes.** The County should consider whether the ICC has made widening unnecessary in this location in order to save capital costs.

**DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION PROGRAM** - projects to reconsider and defer

**MD 355 (Rockville Pike)/ Gude Drive grade-separated interchange.** We urge the Board to reconsider and defer this project. This is another intersection on one of the highest priority BRT corridors, right by Montgomery College which will be a major transit trip generator. Building a grade-separated interchange here is incompatible with the County's investments in bikeshare and coming BRT to this area.

**MD 119 (Great Seneca Highway)/Sam Eig Highway and Muddy Branch Road:** grade-separated interchanges. We ask the Board to defer and re-evaluate this project given that these costly grade-separated interchanges associated with the CCT will only serve to create a more pedestrian unfriendly environment. We ask that the CCT be used to divert traffic to transit trips to alleviate traffic congestion, and avoid interchanges which are automobile-exclusive and high cost facilities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Cort
Policy Director

Gaithersburg
A CHARACTER COUNTS! CITY

January 17, 2014

The Honorable Craig Rice
Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Council President Rice,

Staff would like to take this opportunity to communicate the City of Gaithersburg's transportation funding priorities for the Maryland Department of Transportation's Consolidated Transportation Program. The City respectfully requests that our suggestions be incorporated into the final letters submitted to the Montgomery County Delegation Chairs.

We would like to express our tremendous appreciation for the County and State's effort to fully fund the Watkins Mill Road Interchange. We ask that design begin as expeditiously as possible and look forward to its completion in 2016.

Gaithersburg strongly supports the furthering of efforts on a County-wide BRT system. Of particular importance to the City is the proposed MD 355 Route that will run from Germantown to Bethesda. Once completed, this transit network and MD 355 in particular will provide an effective and sustainable alternative mode of transportation for our burgeoning community. As this route has developed, City staff has worked closely with our colleagues in Montgomery County, and we will continue be cooperative partners as it moves forward.

The City of Gaithersburg has been extremely supportive of the Corridor Cities Transitway and it remains a key transportation priority. We are pleased that design for Stage 1 is proceeding and request that the construction of Stage 1, from Shady Grove to Metropolitan Grove, be designated the County's top transportation priority. All land use approvals in the western portion of Gaithersburg for the last 40 years have been influenced by this planned transit project.

We would also like express our support of the MD 117, I-270 to Seneca Creek State Park, intersection improvements. While traffic has dropped off slightly and the State Project has been on hold for years, improvements are critical in order to address safety and alleviate heavy congestion. The City requests that this project remain a construction priority.

The City is opposed to the inclusion of MD 119 (Great Seneca Highway)/ Muddy Branch Road grade separated interchanges in the development and evaluation program. The City has voiced its

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Michael A. Sesma
Ryan Spiegel

CITY MANAGER
Tony Tomasello

concerns and stated the following in Gaithersburg's adopted 2009 Transportation Element: "The City does not support any grade separated interchanges within the City limits such as the proposed MD 124 and MD 119 interchange that may impede the implementation of the recommendations in the adopted City Master Plan, preclude the Kentlands CCT Realignment, or conflict with any approved development site plans." We respectfully request that the County recommend a more viable, beneficial project in its place.

We appreciate the work that County staff puts into compiling the respective list of priorities and look forward to working closely with you and your colleagues as we continue to advocate for these projects. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Tony Tomasello
City Manager

cc: Mayor and City Council