MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

ROGER BERLINER
COUNCILMEMBER
DISTRICT 1

July 13, 2009

Governor Martin O'Malley
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401-1925

Dear Governor O'Malley:

I am writing to ask you, Acting Secretary Swaim-Staley, and our legislative leadership to explore new legislation or regulations that would enhance coordination between state and local governments, harmonize land use and transportation objectives, and provide priority funding for "Sustainable Transportation Corridors."

Modeled after a similar policy in Oregon[1], the goal of this program would be to ensure that future investments in state highway segments that (1) are of extraordinary economic significance to the state; (2) are experiencing unacceptable levels of congestion; and (3) straddle urban smart growth areas, are considered in the context of our larger public policy objectives of reducing vehicle miles traveled and supporting livable communities.

Regrettably, our current approach to significant state roads that bisect our increasingly urban county too often focuses on isolated intersection improvements in one area totally divorced from the larger context. The result can be short term "improvements" that are actually counterproductive in the long run. As the County Council representative of the communities that surround the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, I have witnessed this possibility first hand. Indeed, it is this experience that led me to explore other models that might serve our state and community better.

To the credit of your people in the State Highway Administration, who recently testified before our Council, they are trying hard to come up with a plan that would provide immediate short term relief to a looming traffic nightmare. As you appreciate, under the Base Closure and Realignment Act (BRAC) the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda is expanding and will reopen in 2011 as the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. This expanded facility will treat twice as many patients, add 2500 new jobs, and increase traffic on a roadway that is already subject to unacceptable levels of congestion.

[1] 1999 Oregon Highway Plan, Policy 1B, Land Use & Transportation, http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TP/docs/orhwyplan/hwyplan/PolicyElement.pdf, *see* pp. 49-51.

100 MARYLAND AVENUE, 6TH FLOOR, ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850 • 240/777-7828, TTY 240/777-7914, FAX 240/777-7989
COUNCILMEMBER.BERLINER@MONTGOMERYCOUNTYMD.GOV
WWW.MONTGOMERYCOUNTYMD.GOV/COUNCIL
PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

At the same time, just to the north of the expanded Medical Center, the Montgomery County Planning Department is currently drafting a new "White Flint Sector Plan," which calls for compact mixed-use redevelopment. The Plan envisions the transformation of a section of the Rockville Pike into a multi-modal urban "boulevard" with a landscaped median, street parking, wider sidewalks, bike lanes, a grid of streets to take pressure off Rockville Pike, and much needed mass transit improvements, including the possibility of bus rapid transit.

Yet, to date, we have not stepped back collectively and assessed the needs of the entire Rockville Pike/Wisconsin Avenue corridor, without question one of the most important transportation corridors in the entire state. It is increasingly clear that pavement alone is not going to get the job done and would be counterproductive to our long term energy and environmental objectives, which can be met only if we significantly reduce vehicle miles traveled, expand transit options, and encourage more biking and walking.

The aim of legislation creating Sustainable Transportation Corridors would be to establish that broader context, to bring the best of urban planning and progressive transportation policies together to support sustainable and vibrant communities, and to give priority to such areas of state-wide significance.

Governor, I know that you and our legislative leaders are firmly committed to sustainability. The legislation that you and our state legislature have championed puts Maryland at the environmental forefront. In my view, legislation creating Sustainable Transportation Corridors is consistent with and builds upon this commitment. I commend it to you and our legislative leaders for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Roger Berliner

cc: Secretary Beverly K. Swaim-Staley
The Honorable Mike Miller
The Honorable Michael Busch
The Honorable Rich Madaleno
The Honorable Brian Frosh
The Honorable Bill Bronrott
The Honorable Susan Lee
The Honorable Ana Sol Gutierrez
The Honorable Al Carr
The Honorable Jeff Waldstreicher
The Honorable Bill Frick
The Honorable Brian Feldman