



Montgomery County Government

ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

June 29, 2017

Peter K. Rahn
Secretary, Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Drive, P.O. Box 548
Hanover, MD 21076

Dear Secretary Rahn: *Pete*

Montgomery County is a diverse community with many transportation needs. As always, we appreciate our cooperative relationship with the State of Maryland so that, together, we can meet the needs of our residents and businesses. We would like to thank MDOT for advancing important projects in our county, most notably the Purple Line, the Brookeville Bypass, the I-270 Innovative Congestion Management project, and the full scope of Watkins Mill Interchange.

With respect to the Purple Line, we appreciate your efforts to resolve the litigation that has delayed the project. We commend your commitment to the project and stand ready to support your efforts to secure federal funding and to move the project forward.

We are also appreciative of MDOT's support to WMATA as Metro works to restore its organizational health, operational safety, and customer service. We hope that, with your continued support, WMATA will restore public confidence and return to being a point of pride for the region.

MDOT has also been a critical partner, working with Montgomery County, to improve our pedestrian and bicycle networks. We appreciate your recent grants supporting our Bikeshare network, and your staff's commitment to participating in our Pedestrian Bicycle and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (PBTSAC).

As we look to the future needs of Maryland residents in Montgomery County, we have updated our priorities for state investment in transportation infrastructure. For the FY2018-2023 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP), we have organized our priorities by emphasis area to aid in programming of future state resources toward the transportation needs in Montgomery County. The type of support requested is identified in parentheses after the project name.

Interstate Program

The major Interstates in Montgomery County are subject to long-span, recurring congestion and need significant facility renewal and expansion. Our top priorities for these facilities include:

1. ***I-270 Corridor/I-495 West Side Improvements:*** (Planning) I-270 needs substantial investment to improve its performance. Investment in the Watkins Mill Interchange and the Innovative Congestion Management (ICM) projects represents a major commitment by the state; however more is needed. We request that MDOT complete the I-270/U.S. 15 Multimodal Corridor Study including advancement of the county-recommended reversible high-occupancy/toll lanes between Shady Grove Road and Frederick County, as well as a grade-separated interchange at I-270 and Little Seneca Parkway Extended. Additionally, we request that the state advance the study of capacity and operational strategies from I-270 and along I-495 into Virginia that address freeway performance along with transit, pedestrian, and bicycle connections over the Potomac River, including advancement of the county recommended high-occupancy/toll lanes between the I-270 West Spur and Virginia. The preferred outcome of these studies is a set of complementary short, medium, and long-term measures that provide for reliable travel on these critical corridors.
2. ***I-495 (Capital Beltway)/I-270 East Spur Improvements:*** (Planning) Similarly, Montgomery County requests that the state explore congestion management strategies for the Capital Beltway from I-270 to I-95 and to evaluate whether bottlenecks can be improved either through innovative strategies like ramp metering and peak-period shoulder use, or through other spot improvements that are respectful of our natural resources and communities.

Other State Highways

The following projects represent our highest priorities for improvements to state highways:

1. ***U.S. 29 (Columbia Pike) Shoulder Repairs, Transit Reliability, and Congestion Management:*** (System Preservation and Planning) Montgomery County is investing to implement BRT service on U.S. 29 in 2020. We request that the state repair the shoulders on U.S. 29 to improve the driving surface for transit vehicles. We also request state participation in evaluation of strategies to manage congestion and improve transit travel time reliability between Tech Road and Silver Spring. These improvements will complement programmed investment in transit stations and vehicles for Maryland's first BRT service and should improve non-auto driver mode-share on this corridor.
2. ***MD 355 (Frederick Road) Improvements from MD 27 to Stringtown Road:*** (Planning) The rapidly-developing Clarksburg area of the county is served by limited and congested transportation links. Expanding MD 355 and addressing intersection needs at Brink Road, West Old Baltimore Road, Little Seneca Parkway, Shawnee Boulevard and other intersections between MD 27 and Stringtown Road, consistent with the Clarksburg Master Plan, may be the most cost-effective and least impactful way of improving access to and from this community. In addition to capacity, the improvements need to address pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, access to schools, and transit needs.

3. **U.S. 29 Safety and Capacity Enhancements:** (Planning, Design and Construction) Traffic operations at several locations on U.S. 29 between Stewart Lane and MD 198 in Montgomery County result in recurring congestion and safety concerns. Interchanges have been identified as solutions at a few of these locations, including Fairland/Musgrove Road and Tech Road/Industrial Parkway, but funding for design and construction has not been identified in the current CTP. Additionally, the proposed designs have not achieved community support. We request a more comprehensive assessment of the signalized intersections on the U.S. 29 corridor, taking into consideration community preferences, approved land use plans, BRT operations, pedestrian and bicycle needs, traffic safety and throughput. We expect that advancing concepts to a common level of design and defining a prioritized implementation program for the short and long term that addresses the interactions between the locations will be the best way to address the needs of this corridor while avoiding unintended consequences to our communities and businesses.
4. **MD 97 (Georgia Avenue) Safety and Complete Streets Improvements/Metro Station Pedestrian Access Improvements:** (Design) Georgia Avenue, between the Beltway and 16th Street, carries some of the highest volumes of any arterial in the county. Using county funds, the State Highway Administration is nearly complete with an alternatives assessment and NEPA documentation for improvements that address safety, operational, and access challenges, while also improving bus stops, and providing a dedicated cycle route. The county also conducted a facility planning study for a grade-separated pedestrian connection across Georgia Avenue so that existing residential areas and the Holy Cross Hospital can access the Forest Glen Metro station more safely. We request that MDOT include the pedestrian crossing in its preferred alternative and advance the combined project into design. When completed, this project will improve a major gateway into the Silver Spring Central Business District and improve safety and accessibility within the Montgomery Hills and Forest Glen communities.
5. **MD 28/198 Improvements (Norbeck Road and Spencerville Road):** (Design and Construction) The state recently completed an alternatives analysis for the 11-mile MD 28/198 corridor between MD 97 (Georgia Avenue) and I-95 in Prince George's County. Montgomery County requests that the state advance elements of this corridor into design and construction.

Burtonsville: Concepts for improvements between Old Columbia Pike and U.S. 29 through the Burtonsville business district have been identified. The county requests that the state select and refine a design concept for this portion of the corridor that is supportive of the *Burtonsville Crossroads Neighborhood Plan (2012)* goals of fostering a sense of arrival and providing a multimodal, attractive Main Street character for this community while improving pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and roadway operations. Additionally, pedestrian, traffic safety, and intersection improvements are needed between Old Columbia Pike and New Hampshire Avenue.

MD 97 to MD 200: At the west end of the corridor, we request that the state accelerate its ongoing efforts to improve pedestrian and bicycle facilities along and across MD 28 between MD 97/Georgia Avenue and Wintergate Drive.

6. **MD 97/Georgia Avenue and MD 28/Norbeck Road Interchange:** (Design) The intersection of MD 97 and MD 28 is constrained and congested, particularly due to the proximity of the MD 200 Interchange just to the north and the intersection of MD 28 and MD 115 just to the west. Improvement to this location is important for facilitating access between Olney and Silver Spring and for the connection from Rockville to MD 200. We request that the state reinstate design of an interchange at this location.

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)

The transit services provided by WMATA are essential to Montgomery County and require additional state support and investment.

1. **Metrorail and Metrobus:** (WMATA Funding) High quality and reliable Metrorail and Metrobus services are critical to easing traffic congestion as well as enhancing quality of life, reducing carbon emissions, and supporting Montgomery County's economic future. Less service and higher fares are counterproductive to attracting riders at a time of extended degraded service quality. We request the state to expand its support for Metro, including dedicated funding, in order to address the long-term degradation to the system that has occurred over many years and to provide the resources necessary to restore the system to world-class status without further burdening riders. Funding should be sufficient to allow rollback of the service cuts of June 2017 as soon as is feasible.
2. **Metrobus Priority Corridor Network (PCN) Improvements:** (Construction) Montgomery County seeks state support for Metrobus service improvements and implementation of roadway improvements such as queue jumps, transit signal priority, and other measures to improve travel times and reliability on high priority transit corridors within the county.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

Transit is a key element of the county's Master Plan. BRT on U.S. 29 – the first of its kind in Maryland - is advancing as a county-funded project and our priorities for state investment in BRT include:

1. **Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT):** (Design & Construction) The Corridor Cities Transitway is a foundational element of the Great Seneca Life Sciences Corridor. We appreciate the state's commitment to complete the preliminary design (30% design) and NEPA phase of the project and ask that the state identify a capital contribution sufficient to support an FTA New Starts and/or P3 implementation.
2. **MD 355 Bus Rapid Transit:** (Design) This project will accelerate development in the White Flint, Rockville, Gaithersburg and Germantown portions of the county. BRT on MD 355, which has the highest projected ridership among the BRT corridors in the county's plan, will also provide a much-needed public transit service to the rapidly-developing Clarksburg area. We request state funding to complete preliminary design for this corridor, building upon to the county's planning process currently underway.

3. **MD 586/Veirs Mill Road Transit Enhancements:** (Design, Grants). The state recently completed the planning study for BRT on Veirs Mill Road. The study found that substantial benefits for transit and general traffic can be realized through implementation of BRT elements and queue jump lanes. We request that the state advance these improvements into design. In the short-term, we also request that MDOT provide funding for WMATA to implement the Q9 MetroExtra service on MD 586 between Wheaton and Rockville.
4. **MD 650/New Hampshire Avenue BRT Planning and Service Improvement:** (Planning, Grants). BRT on New Hampshire Avenue is called for in the Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan (CTCFMP) and we request state engagement and planning support for this corridor. Additionally, we request that the state provide funding for the extension of the K-9 MetroExtra service from its current terminus at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to White Oak.

Pedestrian and Bicycle

Pedestrian and bicycle safety, the implementation of Bikeshare as a permanent component of our transportation system, and creating a safe and attractive walking environment in our key growth areas are critical needs for state support.

1. **Pedestrian/Bicycle Safety Implementation on State Highways:** (Design and Construction) We request that the state increase funding to address sidewalk gaps, crosswalk conditions, trail crossings, and other issues in support of the county's Pedestrian Safety Initiative and Vision Zero. Our highest-need locations are on state highways, including MD 118 (Germantown Road), MD 586 (Veirs Mill Road), MD 185 (Connecticut Avenue), MD 28 (Norbeck Road), MD 190 (River Road), MD 97 (Georgia Avenue), MD 182 (Layhill Road), MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue), MD 320 (Piney Branch Road) and MD 355 (Rockville Pike/Wisconsin Avenue/Frederick Road).
2. **Bikeshare Program Support:** (Grants) Federal, state and private grants have been essential for Bikeshare in Montgomery County, a system that has now grown to 70 stations. Bikeshare contributes to achieving non-auto drive mode share (NADMS) goals in focus-areas within the county and provides an excellent complement to local and regional transit systems. Additional state capital and operating support for this system will help secure its long-term future and develop into a network that supports a broader geographic area.
3. **Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Areas (BiPPAs):** (Planning, Design and Construction) The county has identified over 30 BiPPA's and has prioritized five for early actions. To be effective, the county will need state cooperation and financial support to implement improvements to state infrastructure in these priority areas.
4. **Intercounty Connector (ICC) Multiuse Trail:** (Planning). A multiuse trail was constructed concurrent with the ICC for much of its length. We request that the state begin planning for completion of the gaps between Layhill Road and Notley Road and between MD 650/New Hampshire Avenue and Briggs Chaney Road.

Commuter Rail

The MARC system operated by MTA is important for moving commuters to Rockville, Silver Spring and Washington, D.C. and the system could provide even greater benefit though enhancements to the service and increasing the system's accessibility. Priorities for MARC enhancements include:

1. **Boyds Station Expansion:** (Design and Construction) Parking at Boyds is limited and bus service to the station is challenged. If expanded, this station could provide new opportunity for Clarksburg and other Upcounty residents to access MARC, improving ridership from this station.
2. **Midday and Off-Peak Service:** (Planning and Operating) MARC service provides an option for peak period, peak direction commuting. As travel patterns change and reverse commuting becomes more significant, providing more midday and off-peak trains will increase the value MARC service provides to Montgomery County and will increase the attractiveness of employment in Maryland for the growing population in the District of Columbia.
3. **White Flint Station:** (Planning) The plan for White Flint includes a new MARC station to serve this emerging mixed-use community and we request that MTA advance study of the station.

Transportation Alternatives Program

Montgomery County relies on an extensive network of recreational trails through county parks, state lands, and National Parks. In addition to pedestrian and bicycle improvements to the road network in the county, investment in these facilities using Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funds can improve off-road facilities and enhance the transportation and recreational functions they provide.

1. **C&O Canal National Historic Park Improvements:** (Grants) We request state support for the National Park Service’s proposed restoration of deteriorated portions of the C&O Canal Towpath and re-watering of C&O Canal sections to improve the quality of this vital recreational and historic transportation resource.
2. **Montgomery County Off-Road Trails:** (Grants) Montgomery County enjoys an extensive trail network through the county and local parks. Many of these trails provide alternative connections between communities and run parallel to major state highways. State support for improvements to these trails will help them remain a vital component of our network.
3. **C&O Canal Byway.** (Planning) The C&O Canal is a significant draw for visitors in Washington, Frederick, and Montgomery Counties. A Byway Management Plan would help identify important resources and attractions on this corridor, define management strategies for the routes and resources that make up the Byway, and define federal, state and local priorities for management, maintenance, and investment in these resources to deliver a high-quality visitor experience and provide economic benefits to the state and communities along the route.

We thank you again for your continued partnership in meeting the needs of Maryland residents and businesses in Montgomery County. If you have questions about our priorities, please contact us.

Sincerely,



Isiah Leggett
County Executive



Roger Berliner
County Council President

cc: The Honorable Lawrence Hogan, Governor
The Honorable Nancy King, Montgomery County Senate Delegation Chair
The Honorable Shane Robinson, Montgomery County House Delegation Chair
Casey Anderson, Montgomery County Planning Board Chair