


MEMORANDUM

February 20, 2020

TO: Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Committee

FROM:  Glenn Orlin, Senior Analyst
Pam Dunn, Senior Legislative Analyst

SUBJECT: Special appropriation to the M-NCPPC FY20 Operating Budget, Planning Department - \$300,000 to expedite funding of consultant services for the I-270 Transit Corridor Plan (source: General Fund reserves)¹

PURPOSE: Worksession

The Planning Board has requested this appropriation to fund consultant services to conduct an analysis of existing and long-term travel demand throughout the I-270 Corridor, including major activity centers along the corridor that are not served by the Red Line. The analysis would be in support of the I-270 Transit Corridor Functional Master Plan, which is included in the Planning Board's draft work program in FY21. Consultant funding would cover transit modeling and planning-level feasibility analyses and provide added assistance with outreach and community engagement efforts.

The transmittal memo from the Planning Board Chair is on ©1, and a draft adoption resolution, which was introduced on January 28, is on ©2-3. Staff anticipated to attend this worksession include:

Casey Anderson, Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board
Gwen Wright, Director, Department of Planning
Chris Conklin, Director, Department of Transportation (DOT)
Carrie Sanders, Chief, Area 2, Department of Planning

At the Council's February 11 public hearing, Christopher Conklin, the Director of the County DOT testified for the County Executive in opposition to the appropriation request (©4). The Executive's argument is that the study would be duplicative of many other ridership studies that have already been completed or are underway. For example:

¹ Key word: #I-270corridorplan

- The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) completed a ridership forecast for Phase I of the master-planned Corridor Cities Transitway (Shady Grove to Metropolitan Grove) in 2015.
- The County DOT completed ridership forecasts for several options for the MD 355 Bus Rapid Transit Line (Bethesda to Clarksburg) in 2019.
- The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) has initiated a feasibility study for an I-270 Corridor monorail; the study will include a ridership forecast.
- MDOT is currently conducting ridership forecasts for transit options on and near I-270 and the western portion of I-495 as part of the Managed Lanes Study.
- The Council has supported passage of HB 390/SB 548 requiring MDOT to study and make recommendations on the feasibility of establishing a point-to-point commuter bus route that serves population centers along the I-270 corridor and provides service to and from job centers in Northern Virginia, and that the study should evaluate the feasibility of direct ramps to/from the high-occupancy toll (HOT) lanes at seven different locations. The study would include a ridership forecast.
- MTA has completed a MARC Cornerstone Plan that identifies the general costs of providing selected third-track sections needed to provide midday service to Montgomery County (\$700M) and improvements needed for through running to Virginia (\$2.1B).

A secondary motivation for this study was to help the County to determine its position on the Managed Lanes Study (MLS) in general, and what transit options should be funded as part of the MLS. The Council has received some correspondence on this point (©5 is an example). However, the most recent schedule is that MDOT will be releasing its Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the first stage of the project—along the Beltway from Virginia to the I-270 West Spur, and on the West Spur and mainline I-270 from the Beltway to I-370—at the end of March, and it will hold its public hearings in May, with a decision on a selected alternative later in the year. Therefore, the \$300,000 study will not be completed in time to provide input for this first stage. It is plausible that it might provide information concurrent with the development of the second stage—on I-270 from I-370 to Frederick—which currently is only in the Purpose and Needs phase.

The Planning staff's draft study goals, scope and schedule are shown on ©6-7. The scope, as noted, covers only the I-270 Corridor and the western portion of the Beltway. However, there may be other potential transit initiatives to be examined in the central and eastern portions of the county, too, such as:

- Adding a dedicated transit lane on US 29 between Stewart Lane in White Oak to Silver Spring. Although the County is funding a study of a median dedicated bus lane—and there is much interest in this at the Council—it is not called for in the master plan: the Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan (2013) currently states there would be no additional transit lanes on this section of US 29.
- There has been some interest in extending the US 29 BRT north into Howard County, but the 2013 Plan has it ending at Burtonsville.
- When the Georgia Avenue North BRT was in the planning stage several years ago, the study was terminated due to substantial negative reaction from businesses and residents in Olney. A new route in Olney or a new southern terminus south of Olney could be evaluated.
- The 2013 Plan calls for a Randolph Road BRT that would not have any additional lanes for bus transit, but this, too, could be re-evaluated.

It is not likely that the \$300,000 study will determine what transit options would be built. Most of the decisions on these major projects will be made by the State, not the County. On prior State mega-projects, particularly the Intercounty Connector and the Purple Line, the master plan was amended after the State had completed its project planning study and determined what would be built; the master plans merely confirmed the State's actions. As for the desire to have a Countywide Transit Plan, it already exists: it is the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways, most recently amended in late 2018, which incorporates the Metrorail Red Line, the Purple Line, the Corridor Cities Transitway, the ten BRT corridors in the 2013 Plan, and a third track in portions of the MARC Brunswick Line.

Thus, should the Council wish to fund the Planning Board's recommendation, Council staff encourages that the scope be broadened to include the central and eastern portions of the County as well, and that the study be part of—or at least concurrent with—the update of the General Plan. Major transportation facilities cannot be effectively studied as part of individual area master or sector plans, since they usually overlap two or more planning areas. The Council's direction regarding the scope of the study will ensure the efficient effort in securing adequate and timely consultant assistance.

Until now the \$300,000 had been included in the Planning Board's FY21 Operating Budget request. The primary reason for requesting the appropriation at this time instead is to support the analysis needed for the Great Seneca Science Corridor Minor Master Plan amendments.




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

OFFICE OF THE CHAIR

January 16, 2020

MEMORANDUM

TO: Sidney Katz, President, Montgomery County Council

FROM: Casey Anderson, Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board 

SUBJECT: Special Appropriation to the FY20 Operating Budget
M-NCPPC
Montgomery County Planning Department
I-270 Corridor Transit Plan Support, \$300,000

I am requesting a Special Appropriation to the FY20 Operating Budget of the Planning Department in the amount of \$300,000 for the I-270 Corridor Transit Plan support.

The County Council requested and approved adding the Great Seneca Science Corridor (GSSC) Minor Master Plan Amendment to the Planning Department's work program. To support the analyses needed for the GSSC plan, the Planning Department must accelerate the schedule for the I-270 Corridor Transit Plan to start in FY20. This acceleration would require a special appropriation of funds in FY20 of \$300,000 that had been planned for in the Department's FY21 budget request.

I-270 Corridor Transit Plan includes studying existing and long-term travel demand throughout the I-270 corridor—from Frederick through Bethesda to Tysons—including major activity centers along the corridor that are not served by Metrorail. This budget request is for consultant services to conduct the necessary transit modeling, planning-level feasibility analysis, including origin/destination, forecasting, travel times and a detailed evaluation of potential solution alternatives. The funding would also cover additional consultant services to assist with outreach and community engagement efforts. See attached staff memo to the Planning Board for more details.

I recommend that the County Council approve this special appropriation in the amount of \$300,000 and specify the source of funds as General Fund reserves.

I appreciate your prompt consideration of this action.

CA:kw

cc: Gwen Wright, Planning Director
Richard S. Madaleno, Jr., Director, Office of Management and Budget (OMB)
Pamela Dunn, Senior Legislative Analyst, County Council

Attachments: Special Appropriation Resolution
Planning Board Staff Report

Resolution No.:

Introduced:

January 28, 2020

Adopted:

**COUNTY COUNCIL
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

Lead Sponsor: County Council

SUBJECT: Special Appropriation to the FY20 Operating Budget,
Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission,
I-270 Corridor Transit Plan, \$300,000 (Source of Funds: General Fund Reserves)

Background

1. Md. Code, Land Use §18-108, provides that the Council may amend the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission's (M-NCPPC) approved budget by resolution. The Council may adopt the amendment after receiving the Executive's recommendation and holding a public hearing.
2. Section 308 of the County Charter provides that a special appropriation is an appropriation that states that it is necessary to meet an unforeseen disaster or other emergency, or to act without delay in the public interest. Each special appropriation shall be approved by not less than six Councilmembers. The Council may approve a special appropriation at any time after public notice by news release. Each special appropriation shall specify the source of funds to finance it.
3. On December 10, 2019, the County Council approved adding the Great Seneca Science Corridor (GSSC) Minor Master Plan Amendment to the Planning Department's work program, recognizing that to support the analyses needed for the GSSC Plan, the Planning Department must accelerate the schedule for the I-270 Corridor Transit Plan.
4. On January 16, 2020, the Montgomery County Planning Board requested a special appropriation to the Planning Department's FY20 Operating Budget in the amount of \$300,000 to expedite funding of consultant services for the I-270 Corridor Transit Plan.

<u>Personnel Services</u>	<u>Operating Expenses</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Source of Funds</u>
\$0	\$300,000	\$300,000	General Fund reserves

5. This appropriation is needed to fund consultant services to conduct an analysis of existing and long-term travel demand throughout the I-270 corridor—from Frederick through Bethesda to Tysons—including major activity centers along the corridor that are not served by Metrorail. Consultant funding will not only cover transit modeling and planning-level feasibility analyses, but will also cover additional assistance with outreach and community engagement efforts.
6. Notice of public hearing was given and a public hearing was held.

Action

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following action:

A special appropriation to the FY20 Operating Budget of the Planning Department of the M-NCPPC is approved as follows:

<u>Personnel Services</u>	<u>Operating Expenses</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Source of Funds</u>
\$0	\$300,000	\$300,000	General Fund reserves

This appropriation is needed to act without delay in the public interest.

This is a correct copy of Council action.

Selena Mendy Singleton, Esq.
Clerk of the Council

Testimony on Behalf of the County Executive

Special Appropriation to MNCPPC, \$300,000, expedite funding of consultant services for the I-270 Transit Corridor Plan

Good afternoon, my name is Chris Conklin and I am speaking on behalf of County Executive Marc Elrich. I am here today to recommend that the County Council not approve the special appropriation to expedite the I-270 Transit Corridor Plan. While the County Executive believes that this plan is well-intentioned, it is duplicative of other ongoing planning and project implementation activities and the expenditure will reduce resources available to implement needed services. Since the concept of this plan was introduced, several significant developments have occurred:

- The MDOT Secretary agreed in a meeting with the County Executive and the T&E Committee Chair to restore the Corridor Cities Transitway as a project in the Consolidated Transportation Plan. This re-establishes a pathway to move this project forward.
- MDOT has initiated a feasibility Study for a monorail system linking Shady Grove Metro Station to Frederick County.
- The Board of Public Works has endorsed revised phasing of the Traffic Relief Plan so that higher speed and more commuter buses on I-270 are a realistic option.
- MDOT has initiated a Managed Lanes Transit Study. This study is looking at regional travel patterns on the I-270 corridor and is identifying origin and destination patterns that could be supported by Express Bus services. Additionally, this study is evaluating the adequacy of existing park and ride facilities along the I-270 corridor.
- MDOT/SHA has initiated a planning study to improve MD355 between MD27 and Clarksburg so that transit service can effectively use this corridor.
- MCDOT received a MWCOG Transportation and Land Use Connections Grant for a short-range transit plan to serve the Corridor Cities Transitway area. Based on this work, completed last year, MCDOT has developed a transit concept to serve the Great Seneca Science Corridor area and is now formalizing this plan, which includes more direct service between Shady Grove Metro and key activity centers on the west side of I-270.
- MCDOT has completed planning for the MD355 Bus Rapid Transit project and is currently advancing design of the project. Fourteen responses to the Request for Information were received, indicating strong interest in working with the County to finance and implement this project. The Science Corridor service concept, combined with the MD355 provides a robust mix of services for the I-270 corridor including access to Clarksburg, Germantown and Gaithersburg.
- The Executive Branch has made substantial progress to develop a funding strategy for transit implementation, which we plan to share in the coming months.

With all of this progress over the last year, I believe that our resources should be focused on implementing the projects that we already have underway rather than revisiting plans being completed by other agencies.

Email Viewer

Message	Details	Attachments	Headers
Source			

HTML

Please approve the \$300,000 needed for the essential Planning Board study of all transportation alternatives for the I-270 corridor.

This study is critical for keeping Transurban, or other for-profit tollway companies, from strangling different transportation options and forcing commuters to jam the roads and drive up future tolls. (Rush hour tolls can top \$48 on I-66.)

Only the planning staff has the capability to evaluate transportation plans in the context of other critical issues --environment, equity, and land use.

The planning board study will complement -- not duplicate -- a county transportation department study focused on moving vehicles.

Please approve this modest \$300,000 item in a budget of billions for the unbiased comparison of transportation alternatives that we desperately need to protect ourselves from the Governor's worst case Luxury Lane scenario.

Thank you.

Carol Nau

2300 Northcliff Drive

Rockville, MD 20854

Close

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I-270 Corridor Transit Plan

January 29, 2020

Scope

Study the existing and long-term travel demand along the I-270 corridor, from Frederick to Tysons, including major activity centers along the corridor that are not served by Metrorail, and identify coordinated transit solutions to address the travel demand. This will include analysis of the following key transportation considerations for the County:

- Transit service along the I-270 corridor, including:
 - express bus;
 - bus rapid transit;
 - light rail;
 - monorail; and
 - associated park and ride need for all options
- Transit service from Bethesda to Tysons, including
 - extension of the Purple Line and bus rapid transit; and
 - Re-examination of currently planned BRT options
- Corridor Cities Transitway Alignment
- MARC third rail, increased frequency, and station locations
- Red Line extension
- Designate Park and Ride locations

Schedule

March 2020 to April 2022

Plan Goals

- **Promote Strategic Mobility Investment:** Prioritize planned and suggested transit options to serve regional activity center pairs between the City of Frederick and Tysons in Fairfax.
- **Support Equitable Mobility Investment:** Improve access throughout the corridor for a wide range of incomes and diverse populations.
- **Support the County's Economic Vision:** Increase the probability that master-planned densities and "activity centers as places" can be realized through the provision of transit.

Modeling Considerations

- Current consideration of two-stage evaluation process to reduce modeling costs
- Isolated Travel-Demand Runs
- Integrated Land Use Feedback Loop Modeling Options

This plan will assess major origin-destination pairs within and beyond the County in order to identify point to point demand locations. The Plan will also “benchmark” a series of transit options, including commuter bus, BRT, and other recently suggested items like Monorail, in order to prioritize how future investment dollars could be used. This benchmarking process will include metrics such as ridership and cost estimates.

Current Activity:

Scope Refinement with initial stakeholder meetings (November 2019-January 2020):

- Montgomery County Department of Transportation
- Frederick County
- The City of Frederick
- Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority (WMATA)
- Washington Council of Governments (WCOG)
- Fairfax County Department of Transportation
- Northern Virginia Transportation Commission
- City of Gaithersburg
- Maryland Transit Administration – MARC Rail
- Maryland State Highway I-270 Pre-NEPA Project Team
- Maryland Department of Planning
- City of Rockville
- Greater Washington Partnership