



Committee: T&E
Staff: Glenn Orlin, Senior Analyst
Purpose: Final action – vote expected
Keywords: #StateTransportationPriorities

AGENDA ITEM #11
February 7, 2023
Action

SUBJECT

Joint Council/Executive Letter on State Transportation Priorities

BACKGROUND

Periodically, the County Council and Executive transmit a joint letter to the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) conveying the County's funding priorities for MDOT's Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP), its six-year capital budget. The last comprehensive letter was sent on May 14, 2020, with a minor update on June 8, 2022. With the change in the composition of the Council, it is appropriate now for the County to update the letter to reflect the Executive's and new Council's State transportation capital priorities. The letter would follow the format of the last comprehensive letter, which ranks priorities within several categories; the categories themselves are not ranked.

The Planning Board developed its recommendations at its January 19 meeting. The Executive has prepared his recommended letter, which was also transmitted on January 19. The Council held a hearing on January 24 to obtain public input. The Transportation & Environment (TE) Committee reviewed this matter on January 30. The Executive and County DOT are reviewing the Committee's draft, and it is anticipated that their proposed revisions will be presented in time for this worksession. It is in the interest of all to come to agreement so that there will be one joint letter transmitted from both the Council and Executive.

This report contains:

Council staff memorandum, followed by:

May 14, 2020 joint letter, preceded by June 8, 2022 update	©1-9
Planning Board's January 19, 2023 transmittal and recommended letter	©10-20
Executive's January 19, 2023 transmittal and recommended letter	©21-30
January 24, 2023 hearing testimony and correspondence	©31-46
Memorandum from Councilmember Fani-Gonzalez	©47-49
T&E Committee draft letter	©50-58

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MEMORANDUM

February 2, 2023

TO: County Council

FROM: Glenn Orlin, Senior Analyst

SUBJECT: State Transportation Priorities Letter¹

PURPOSE: Develop recommendations for the full Council

EXPECTED ATTENDEES

- Christopher Conklin, Director, Department of Transportation (DOT)
- Tim Cupples, Deputy Director for Transportation Policy, DOT
- Andrew Bossi, Senior Planning Specialist, DOT
- Jason Sartori, Chief, Countywide Planning & Policy, Planning Department
- David Anspacher, Transportation Supervisor, Countywide Planning & Policy, Planning Department
- Stephen Aldrich, Planner IV, Countywide Planning & Policy, Planning Department

The T&E Committee's recommended letter is on ©50-58. Its recommendations are highlighted in **bold print**, below. Council staff's recommendations are highlighted in *unbolded italics*. As noted below, this should ultimately be a joint letter from the Council and Executive. The expectation is that the Council will receive any mark-ups of the T&E draft prior to the worksession, and that any differences can be worked out during this worksession.

BACKGROUND

Periodically the County Council and Executive transmit a joint letter to the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) conveying the County's funding priorities for MDOT's Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP), its six-year capital budget. The last comprehensive letter was sent on May 14, 2020, with a minor update on June 8, 2022 (©1-9). With the change in the composition of the Council, it is appropriate now for the County to update the letter to reflect the Executive's and new Council's State transportation capital priorities. The letter would follow the format of the last comprehensive letter, which ranks priorities within several categories; the categories themselves are not ranked.

The Planning Board developed its recommendations at its January 19 meeting (©10-20). The Executive has prepared his recommended letter, which was also transmitted on January 19

¹ Key word: #transportation.

(©21-30). The format of the letter is unchanged from previous years, ranking projects within each of several categories. The categories themselves are not ranked. The draft letters proposed by the Planning Board and the Executive have the same eight categories that appeared in the 2020 letter.

The revisions to the 2020 letter reflect the fact that some projects have progressed over the past three years. For example, the 2020 letter listed the Georgia Avenue improvement through Montgomery Hills as its top State highway priority for funding, but since then State has fully funded it, so it no longer appears in the ranking. The top local transit project in 2020 was the Boyds MARC Station improvements; by now most of these improvements have been funded by the County, and so the ask is for some yet unfunded ancillary improvements there.

Some other proposed revisions reflect changes in master plans. A primary example is to replace the Corridor Cities Transitway with the series of I-270 Transit Connectors identified in the I-270 Corridor Forward Plan adopted last year. Another is identification in the Montgomery Hills/Forest Glen Plan of a reconfigured Beltway/Georgia Avenue interchange which would improve traffic safety and operations. Finally, some changes are merely technical, such as recognizing the renaming of the White Flint Metro Station as the North Bethesda Metro Station.

PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY AND CORRESPONDENCE

The Council held a public hearing on January 24 to solicit public input. The testimony and correspondence are briefly summarized below:

- The City of Rockville supports the Executive's recommendation to comments regarding the Opportunity Lanes project. The City also recommends that lighting along State highways extend beyond intersections (©31).
- The Town of Laytonsville supports advancing the MD 108 Bypass (©32-33).
- The Maryland Transit Opportunities Coalition opposes the Opportunity Lanes public-private partnership (P3) and any widening of I-270 and I-495 (including the American Legion Bridge), supports construction funding of a third track on the MARC Brunswick Line, creating bus rapid transit lanes by taking away general traffic lanes rather than road widening, and removing the Georgia Avenue/I-495 reconfiguration from the letter (©34-36).²
- The Washington Biologists' Field Club opposes the Opportunity Lanes project, especially widening the American Legion Bridge (©37). The Citizens Against Beltway Expansion opposes the Opportunity Lanes (©38-39) as does DontWiden270.org (©40) and Ms. Jane Lyons-Raeder (©41).
- Ms. Bee Ditzler supports increased investment in bus rapid transit and Vision Zero, and to expand study of alternatives to the Opportunity Lanes (©42-43).
- Ms. Tina Slater supports alternatives to the Opportunity Lanes project (©44).

² The Coalition decries the deletion from the letter of the Georgia Avenue improvement through Montgomery Hills, which had been the County's #1 State highway priority. However, it should be deleted because it is now funded.

- The TAME Coalition opposes extending Midcounty Highway to the north and supports transit alternatives in the corridor (45-46).

Also, Leisure World residents Steve Kline, Ken Muir, and Larry Cohen support improvements to Norbeck Road, including advancing the Georgia Avenue interchange in the ranking as well as widening and straightening Norbeck Road between Georgia Avenue and Layhill Road. Ms. Diane Cameron recommends deleting all road projects from the State and County capital programs.

ANALYSIS AND COUNCIL STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis below centers on areas where there is some disagreement among the Planning Board, Executive, hearing testimony, and Council staff. Recall, however, that ultimately the letter should strive for word-for-word consensus between the Council and Executive, so that there can be a jointly signed letter. The County has the best chance of securing added State funding if there is such a consensus.

Introductory paragraphs. The first two paragraphs are virtually the same, thanking the State for progress on projects recently completed or already fully funded. **T&E Committee** (*and Council staff*) **concur.**

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Implementation. While the categories themselves are not ranked, the Executive has chosen to place BRT first rather than Vision Zero, perhaps because it is the largest “ask” in terms of funding. The table below shows the relative ranking of the BRT projects in the 2020 letter, the Planning Board’s recommendation, the Executive’s recommendation, and Council staff’s recommendation:

<u>Planning Board (©13-15)</u>	<u>Executive (©22-24)</u>	<u>Council Staff (see below)</u>
1. MD 355 Central	1. MD 355 (all)	1. MD 355 Central
2. Veirs Mill Road	2. Veirs Mill Road	2. Veirs Mill Road
3. US 29 Phase 2	3. US 29 Phase 2	3. US 29 Phase 2
4. MD 355 North	4. Park & Ride Expansion	4. MD 355 North
5. MD 355 South	5. I-270 Corridor Connectors	5. North Bethesda Transitway
6. New Hampshire Avenue	6. New Hampshire Avenue	6. New Hampshire Avenue
7. Park & Ride Expansion	7. North Bethesda Transitway	7. Park & Ride Expansion
8. North Bethesda Transitway		8. MD 355 South
9. I-270 Corridor Connectors		9. I-270 Corridor Connectors

Council staff’s recommended rankings largely (but not entirely) follows how the Council has effectively prioritized them in the Approved CIP:

1. MD 355 Central: Montgomery College-Rockville to Montgomery College-Germantown. Funded for construction and assuming Federal and State aid plus toll revenue from Opportunity Lanes.

2. Veirs Mill Road BRT: Wheaton to Montgomery College-Rockville. Serves almost entirely Equity Emphasis Areas. Funded for construction assuming Federal and State aid. The project includes extensive bike/ped improvements.
3. US 29 Phase 2: median busway between Burtonsville and Silver Spring. The feasibility planning (Phase I facility planning stage) is complete, and preliminary engineering (Phase II facility planning) is funded and will be underway shortly.
4. MD 355 North: Funded for design to be completed in FY24. Once MD 355 Central is complete, this extension would provide transitway service to Clarksburg.
5. North Bethesda Transitway: The Red Line from North Bethesda Metro to Rock Spring Park, with BRT service continuing to Virginia (Tyson's Corner, Springfield, Dulles Airport and Corridor, etc.) via the I-270/I-495 Opportunity Lanes. Phase I facility planning will be finished this fiscal year, and Phase II, if funded, could start this summer. It could be under construction concurrently with Phase I South of the Opportunity Lanes project. The State aid request would be relatively small, since the only new construction would be in the protected easement between Old Georgetown Road and the Westlake Drive overpass of I-270, where a direct ramp to the Opportunity Lanes will be built by MDOT's concessionaire.
6. New Hampshire Avenue BRT: Colesville to Fort Totten Metro. Phase I facility planning is underway, with completion expected at the end of FY24, a year after the North Bethesda Transitway. Because it would pass through Prince George's County and the District of Columbia as well, it would be best for MDOT to take the lead in the next phases of implementation.
7. Park and ride expansions: Not as high a priority as most new lines, but more likely to be achieved sooner because of the more limited cost and complication.
8. MD 355 South: Rockville Metro to Bethesda Metro. Funded for design to be completed in FY24. However, this segment entirely overlaps with Metrorail's Red Line, and it is supplemented with premium Ride On ExtRa service south to Medical Center Metro. Under the Local Operated Transit Systems (LOTS) category, each letter asks for funding to extend Ride On ExtRa to Bethesda and for the entire route to run midday and at night, not just on weekends.
9. I-270 Corridor Connections: Other than the routes already funded by the County, there is no planning underway or programmed to advance these connectors. In that respect they are no different than other unprogrammed master-planned BRT routes: Georgia Avenue North and South, University Boulevard, and Randolph Road.

The T&E Committee recommends Council staff's priority ordering of BRT projects, except that the New Hampshire Avenue BRT would rise to #5 and the North Bethesda Transitway would drop to #6.

Vision Zero. The two drafts are virtually identical. Both encourage more resources be devoted to bicycle, pedestrian, and traffic safety improvements along State highways and for the State Highway Administration to review its access permit policies to expedite such improvements. **The T&E Committee recommends placing this category before the BRT category and to reference the number of crashes and fatalities that occurred in 2022.**

Locally Operated Transit Systems (LOTS) Support. The two drafts are nearly the same. The top priority is for zero-emission vehicles and infrastructure at the three Ride On depots. The second priority is for resources to expand Ride On ExtRa service on MD 355 (south from Medical Center Metro to Bethesda Metro, north from Lakeforest Mall to Germantown, and to expand the hours from peak period to all day) and on other routes. The third priority is for expanded LOTS operating grants. The Executive’s draft further requests that the LOTS grants be adjusted annually for inflation. **The T&E Committee (and Council staff) concur with the Executive’s draft.**

WMATA. The two drafts are identical. The top priority is funding for the yet-unprogrammed 75% cost of construction of a new north entrance at North Bethesda Metro, at the southeast corner of Rockville Pike and Old Georgetown Road.³ The second priority is for more Metrobus priority treatments to be recommended in the ongoing WMATA Better Bus Network and the Ride On Reimagined Study. **The T&E Committee (and Council staff) concur, with additional text explaining the economic development importance of the North Entrance project.**

Commuter Rail Expansion. The two drafts have the same four items, but in a different order:

Planning Board (©16)	Executive (©26)
1. Remaining Boyds Station improvements (design and construction)	1. Midday and off-peak service (planning)
2. North Bethesda MARC Station (planning)	2. Remaining Boyds Station improvements (design and construction)
3. Shady Grove MARC Station (planning)	3. North Bethesda MARC Station (planning)
4. Midday and off-peak service (planning)	4. Shady Grove MARC Station (planning)

Council staff concurs with the Planning Board. Midday and off-peak service is not possible without the addition of significant sections of third track, which will be extremely costly and impactive. A planning study would be helpful in identifying the cost and benefit of a third track, but a better use of limited State funds in the short term would be to complete the Boyds Station and to plan for new stops at the growth hubs of North Bethesda (a few blocks east of the North Bethesda Metro) and at Shady Grove (adjacent to Shady Grove Metro). **The T&E Committee concurs with the Executive.**

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities. Here, again, the two drafts are nearly the same. The each have the same top three priorities: #1 – increasing the number of bikeways and sidewalks along State highways; #2 – funding for more projects within the County’s Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Areas (BiPPAs); and #3 – support for the County’s bikesharing program. The Planning Board’s draft includes a fourth priority: to conduct a planning study to finish the missing segments

³ The lack of these funds is perhaps one of the rationales as to why the Executive is proposing as a CIP amendment deferring construction by one year, with completion in 2028.

of the Intercounty Connector Multi-Use Trail, which was also the fourth priority in the 2020 letter. **The T&E Committee (and Council staff) concur with the Planning Board.**

State Highways (non-Interstates). Each draft has the same eight projects. The only difference is that while the Planning Board would have a program to modernize the traffic signal system as the fourth priority—roughly where it was in the 2020 letter—the Executive would move it to the top of this category.

Planning Board (©17-19)	Executive (©27-29)
1. Clopper Road (design & construction)	1. Accelerated traffic signal modernization
2. MD 198 in Burtonsville (design & construction)	2. Clopper Road (design & construction)
3. Frederick Road in Clarksburg (design & construction)	3. MD 198 in Burtonsville (design & construction)
4. Accelerated traffic signal modernization	4. Frederick Road in Clarksburg (design & construction)
5. River Road in Bethesda (planning)	5. River Road in Bethesda (planning)
6. Georgia Avenue/I-495 interchange reconfiguration (planning)	6. Georgia Avenue/I-495 interchange reconfiguration (planning)
7. Georgia Avenue/Norbeck Road interchange (planning)	7. Georgia Avenue/Norbeck Road interchange (planning)
8. MD 108 Laytonsville bypass (planning)	8. MD 108 Laytonsville bypass (planning)

Councilmember Fani-Gonzalez recommends a planning study for Georgia Avenue north of the Beltway that would include the same type of bike/ped/traffic safety treatments as in the project MDOT recently funded on Georgia Avenue south of the Beltway through Montgomery Hills. She proposes that the study extend from the Beltway to at least the north end of the Wheaton CBD, and perhaps even further north to Glenmont or Aspen Hill (©47-49)

T&E Committee (and Council staff) concurs with the Executive, except to include in Priority #6 the planning study for Georgia Avenue from the Beltway to the northern boundary of the Wheaton CBD. Having a top-flight signal system is key for traffic safety and operations countywide. However, Council staff’s concern is that this program potentially could consume considerable State resources, so only the most serious of the modernization needs should have priority over the other projects on the list.

Interstate Program. This portion of both letters addresses the County’s concerns about the Opportunity Lanes project. Both decry the division of Phase I into two segments—Virginia to I-370 and I-370 to Frederick—raising the concern about potential backups if both segments don’t occur simultaneously. Both note that the State has not yet fulfilled its commitment to enter into a memorandum of understanding to dedicate toll revenue to major transit in the I-270 Corridor, which the County has already relied upon in programmed the MD 355 Central BRT. Both reference the lawsuit filed by a losing bidder that has led to delays.

Council staff generally prefers the Planning Board's version, in that it identifies specific aspects of Phase I that the County has supported:

- Construction of the master-planned Dorsey Mill Road bridge in Germantown and Little Seneca Parkway interchange in Clarksburg, with direct ramps to and from the Opportunity Lanes.
- The commitment to add park-and-ride capacity at the Montgomery Mall Transit Center, bus stop capacity at the Shady Grove Metro, and a new bus depot at Metropolitan Grove.
- The County's support for congestion management strategies for the Beltway between I-270 and I-95, like ramp metering, peak-period shoulder use, or other spot improvements as alternatives to adding costly and impactful through travel lanes in that segment.

The Committee agreed that there should be continued engagement with the Governor and MDOT about the Opportunity Lanes project. The T&E draft letter on ©57-58 includes text drafted by Councilmember Glass reflecting this perspective.



ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

June 8, 2022

James Ports, Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Drive, P.O. Box 548
Hanover, MD 21076

Dear Secretary Ports:

Montgomery County conducts a comprehensive update of our State Transportation Priorities Letter when there is a major change in the status of our priorities or when there is a change in our elected leadership. We anticipate our next comprehensive update in 2023 when a new County Council is seated, and the next County Executive term is underway. Our comprehensive update follows an extensive outreach process including consultation with Executive agencies, the County Council, our State Delegation, and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) Montgomery County Planning Board, municipalities, and the public. Until this new letter is transmitted, our letter dated May 14, 2020, represents our priorities with the following amplifications. If you have questions about our priorities, please contact us.

Locally Operated Transit Support (LOTS)

At the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, Locally Operated Transit Support (LOTS) grants to Montgomery County were reduced given the significant transit-specific pandemic aid provided by the federal government and the strain on State transportation trust fund revenues. It is important that the State Aid provided through this program is increased above pre-pandemic levels now that the federal operating assistance is no longer being provided, transit operations remain under financial strain, and State revenues have been strong enough to restore this support.

Interstate Program

The Opportunity Lanes project status remains unclear as legal challenges to the State's procurement of a P3 partner continue through mid-2022 and opinions about this project remain sharply divided in Montgomery County. Notwithstanding these issues, little to no progress has been made by MDOT in advancing the State's transit commitments to the County associated with the project. These commitments are required by multiple actions of the Board of Public Works, are included in the project's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) record, are enshrined in the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board's (TPB) actions on Visualize 2045 (the federally mandated long range transportation plan), with MDOT voting in favor of these requirements and are reiterated in several letters between the MDOT Secretary and County officials.

It appears that work on the specific transit projects including the bus maintenance facility at Metropolitan Grove, Shady Grove Station enhancements, and Westfield Montgomery transit center enhancements has been suspended by the MDOT technical team. Further, MDOT officials have not advanced work with the County on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for not less than \$360 million of financial support to high priority transit projects required of the Opportunity Lanes Phase 1 South project, despite numerous efforts to restart this work by the County. We ask that you move expeditiously to advance the specific projects and to finalize the MOU.

FY23 State Budget Actions

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the significant contributions provided in the FY23 State Budget based on recommendations of the Governor and the Legislature. This financial support provides substantial funding to some of our priority projects, like North Bethesda/White Flint area infrastructure and bus rapid transit, among numerous other transportation projects that received support through the State budget actions outside MDOT's Consolidated Transportation Plan (CTP).

Sincerely,



Marc Elrich
County Executive



Gabriel Albornoz
County Council President



Montgomery County Government

ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

May 14, 2020

Gregory Slater, Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Drive, P.O. Box 548
Hanover, MD 21076

Dear Secretary Slater,

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. The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) has continued to make significant contributions to the transportation network in Montgomery County, including providing needed funding for WMATA, completing the interchange of Randolph Road and Georgia Avenue, initiating the I-270 Innovative Congestion Management project, constructing the Watkins Mill interchange, and advancing construction of the Purple Line.

Notwithstanding these accomplishments, our County continues to need expanded investment in its transportation system. For the FY2021-2026 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.

Vision Zero Implementation

Vision Zero is not a stand-alone activity, rather it is a culture shift to a systematic safety approach. In past decades, the road network in Montgomery County was developed under policies designed to increase speed, minimize delay and maximize throughput for motor vehicle traffic. While motor vehicle travel is an important piece of our transportation system, emphasis on walking, biking, and transit access are, appropriately, higher priorities for investment in the road network today. In addition to education, enforcement, and advocacy, implementation of Vision Zero through engineering needs to inform every change made to the design and operation of the road network.

Montgomery County is in the third year of its Vision Zero action plan. The first two years brought improved collaboration with MDOT in the identification of high-hazard locations and implementation of safety countermeasures on both State and County roads. An example of the progress that has been made is MDOT/State Highway Administration's (SHA) *Context Driven Access and Mobility for All Users* guide.

While progress has been made, we continue to see significant numbers of severe and fatal crashes on our road network, particularly for pedestrians. To achieve our Vision Zero goals, in addition to continuing work on improving guidelines and standards, we need MDOT to increase the allocation of resources to implement pedestrian safety, accessibility projects, and speed reduction strategies. We request that MDOT initiate a new statewide program with significant funding to expedite implementation of pedestrian and bicycle safety engineering improvements with a particular emphasis on urban and suburban communities and transit access. In addition, MDOT/SHA should continue to evaluate every project it is undertaking to make sure the projects are informed by Vision Zero and will result in improved safety outcomes.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Implementation

Bus Rapid Transit is a key element of the County's Master Plan. FLASH on U.S. 29 – the first of its kind in Maryland – is advancing as a Federally and County-funded project and is expected to open in 2020. Montgomery County will need MDOT assistance and cooperation to continue advancement of our BRT system that is critical to expanding the economy of Maryland in Montgomery County.

We thank the State for completing repairs to the shoulders on US 29 and ask that the shoulder condition remain a high maintenance priority on this roadway. We request State participation in the implementation of strategies to manage congestion and improve transit travel time reliability between Tech Road and Silver Spring to be determined through the ongoing County-led US 29 Mobility and Reliability Study.

Building upon prior MDOT planning activities, the County has initiated design of BRT on MD 355 between Clarksburg and Bethesda and on MD 586 (Veirs Mill Road) between Rockville and Wheaton. These two projects will unlock the redevelopment potential of White Flint and will improve transit service to the thousands of daily transit riders who depend on services connecting Wheaton and Rockville. As both corridors are State Highways, MDOT's engagement during design and construction and financial participation in these projects will be important.

Park-and-ride capacity is of limited supply and heavily used in Montgomery County. Key locations in need of park-and-ride facility expansions include Burtonsville, to accommodate BRT passengers from Howard County, and along the MD 355 corridor in Clarksburg, Germantown and Gaithersburg to accommodate local commuters and those from Frederick, Carroll and Washington Counties.

The Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT), a long-standing State project, needs to be restored as a project in the CTP. This project is a key ingredient to the success of the biotechnology industry in the Great Seneca Science Corridor and State engagement in its implementation is important to the economic strength of Maryland.

In the next few years, planning will be initiated for the MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue) corridor and the North Bethesda Transitway. BRT on New Hampshire Avenue is a candidate

State-led project as it is located in both Montgomery and Prince George's Counties and connects into the District of Columbia at the Fort Totten Metro Station. In addition, this corridor provides vital links to the Food and Drug Administration's White Oak Headquarters, a key economic engine for the East County. Given the multijurisdictional nature of this project, it should be led by MDOT. The North Bethesda Transitway will also provide a substantial economic opportunity by linking the Rock Spring area to White Flint.

Locally Operated Transit Support (LOTS)

We thank MDOT for its capital and operating support of the Montgomery County Transit System, including Ride On, Ride On Extra, the Flex and, starting in 2020, the Flash. Sustained financial support from MDOT is critical to providing quality transit service in Montgomery County. Priorities for Locally Operated Transit Support include:

1. ***Electric bus infrastructure.*** The County is moving toward deployment of electric buses as a regular component of its transit fleet. To enable this transition from traditional fuels, we request State technical and financial assistance with the installation of electric charging infrastructure at the three County transit depots.
2. ***Ride On ExtRa.*** Services like the Ride On ExtRa, operating on MD 355 between Lake Forest and Medical Center, have proven to be an effective model for improving the performance of transit and attracting additional customers. Montgomery County requests increased assistance through the LOTS program to extend Ride On ExtRa to Germantown and Bethesda and to operate the service all day instead of its current peak period configuration.

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Investment

MDOT should be commended for providing major capital and operating support to WMATA. Priorities for WMATA include:

1. ***White Flint North Metro Entrance.*** The County has identified that providing a second entrance at the White Flint Station is a high priority improvement. We ask for MDOT's advocacy to include this project in the WMATA Capital Program.
2. ***Metrobus priority treatments.*** We also ask for State support of implementation of bus priority treatments as called for in the WMATA Bus Transformation Study Strategic Plan, inclusive of Metro Extra service on Veirs Mill Road and MD 355 between Wheaton and Montgomery College.

Commuter Rail Expansion

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 through enhancements to the service and increasing the system's accessibility. The potential of the MARC system is even more significant with direct connection to the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) system to provide seamless links between key activity centers in Northern Virginia and those in

Montgomery County. Priorities for MARC enhancements include:

1. ***Boyds Station Expansion*** (Design and Construction). Recently, the County acquired the property adjacent to the Station with the expectation of MDOT making additional facility improvements beyond the parking and bus loop included in the County Capital Improvements Program.
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 and Northern Virginia.
3. ***Shady Grove Station*** (Planning). The Shady Grove Sector Plan calls for construction of a commuter rail station with direct connections to the WMATA station and the numerous bus services that operate from Shady Grove. This location has the promise to increase its significance as a multimodal hub if commuter rail connections could be made here. We ask that MDOT initiate a planning study for adding a commuter rail station at this location.
4. ***White Flint Station*** (Planning). The White Flint Sector Plan calls for construction of a new MARC Station and we request that MDOT advance study of the station.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

Improving pedestrian and bicycle safety as highlighted in our Vision Zero Program, creating a safe and attractive walking environment in our key growth areas, and the implementation of Bikeshare as a permanent component of our transportation system are critical needs for State support. Priorities for pedestrian and bicycle facilities enhancements include:

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 Vision Zero Action Plan. Many of our highest-need locations are on State highways.
2. ***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. A high priority activity within this program is to make improvements on access routes to the Purple Line and State funding for these improvements will help accelerate their construction.
3. ***Bikeshare Program Support*** (Grants). Federal, State and private grants have been essential for Bikeshare in Montgomery County, a system that has now grown to 80 stations. Bikeshare contributes to achieving non-auto-driver mode share (NADMS) goals in focus areas within the County and provides an excellent complement to local and regional transit systems. State operating support for this system will help secure its long-term future.
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 MD 182 (Layhill Road) and Notley Road and between MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue) and Briggs Chaney Road.

State Highways

The following projects represent our highest priorities for improvements to non-Interstate State Highways:

1. ***MD 97 (Georgia Avenue) Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Improvements*** (Design and Construction). We strongly encourage MDOT to advance the recommendations of its planning and NEPA study into design and construction. 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.
2. ***MD 117 (Clopper Road) Improvements*** (Design and Construction). After construction of the Watkins Mill Interchange is completed, traffic patterns of MD 117 will change substantially. MDOT completed planning activities for improvements to MD 117 between the Seneca Creek State Park entrance and the I-270 southbound on-ramp. Montgomery County submitted a Chapter 30 funding application for this project in 2018 and 2019. With the opening of the Watkins Mill Interchange, implementation of these improvements between I-270 and Longdraft Road will be important to accommodate the changes in Interstate access.
3. ***MD 355 (Frederick Road) Improvements from MD 27 to Stringtown Road*** (Planning). Expanding MD 355, 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. We look forward to reviewing the results of the initial planning that MDOT is now advancing and to defining a project that addresses the needs on this corridor.
4. ***Accelerated Traffic Signal Modernization*** (Design and Construction). The State traffic signal system contains many locations with structural impairment, inefficient incandescent fixtures, underperforming detection, and pedestrian crossing configurations that do not meet today's needs. MDOT/SHA and Montgomery County would benefit from prioritization and acceleration of traffic signal modernization in the County, including deployment of additional adaptive traffic signal controls on key corridors within the County.
5. ***U.S. 29 Comprehensive Plan*** (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. We request a 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.
6. ***MD 198 (Spencerville Road) Improvements*** (Design and Construction). 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. In Burtonsville, the project should also identify ways to reduce the width of Old Columbia Pike north of MD198 to better match reduced traffic demands and to reduce the barrier formed by this roadway.

7. **MD 97 (Georgia Avenue) and MD 28(Norbeck Road) Intersection** (Planning). 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 initiate a new evaluation of solutions to address this long-standing transportation bottleneck.
8. **MD 28 (Norbeck Road)** (Design and Construction). We request that the State fill remaining gaps to complete the pedestrian and bicycle network along and across MD 28 between MD 97 (Georgia Avenue) and Wintergate Drive.
9. **MD 108/Laytonsville Bypass** (Planning). The Town of Laytonsville has planned a bypass route for MD 108 around the west side of the town. This bypass, now partially constructed, will alleviate congestion at the intersection of MD 108 and Brink Road/Sundown Road, improving the character of the historic center of town.

Interstate Program

The County has been an active participant in the MDOT/SHA process for projects on I-270 and I-495. We agree with the need to improve the performance of these corridors, including expanded transit options. Montgomery County remains seriously concerned with the implementation of four additional toll lanes on I-495 between the west spur of I-270 and I-95 and requests that the State restore as an alternative congestion management strategies like ramp metering and peak-period shoulder use, or other spot improvements that are respectful of our natural resources and communities. To meet the travel needs between I-270 and I-95, we also believe MDOT should revisit its decision to eliminate the MD 200 alternative.

We acknowledge the recent announcement of a coordinated approach between Maryland and Virginia to address the American Legion Bridge and to connect the proposed Capital Beltway modifications in Maryland to those planned by Virginia. However, we remain concerned about encroachment of highway facilities beyond existing right-of-way and into buffer space within the right-of-way. All modifications to these corridors need to reflect input from local communities and all efforts must be taken to mitigate environmental and community impacts of both the current highway and its expansion.

As approved in 2019 by the Board of Public Works, the American Legion Bridge and I-270 projects should be implemented at the same time as the first phase of the Traffic Relief Plan Public-Private Partnership (P3) if the project proceeds. We also encourage MDOT to include the Dorsey Mill Road bridge in Germantown and a new interchange and Little Seneca Parkway in Clarksburg into the I-270 project, for which we believe reversible lanes will be most effective. In all cases, the modification of the Interstate system needs to consider the performance of the local road network, include expanded transit services, and include bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure on the crossings of the freeway facilities. We look forward to reaching agreement with MDOT for

local transit funding as required by the Board of Public Works P3 approval.

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,



Marc Elrich
County Executive



Sidney Katz, President
County Council

cc: The Honorable Larry Hogan, Governor, State of Maryland
Montgomery County House Delegation
Montgomery County Senate Delegation

January 19, 2023

The Honorable Evan Glass
President, Montgomery County Council
Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue, 5th Floor
Rockville, Maryland 20850

SUBJECT: Joint Transportation Priority Letter

Dear President Glass:

At our regularly scheduled meeting on January 19, 2023, the Planning Board reviewed the draft Joint Transportation Priority Letter prepared by Montgomery County Department of Transportation, County Council and Montgomery County Planning Department staff. The Planning Board's specific recommendations/modifications to the draft are as follows:

- **BRT Implementation**
 - Prioritize the US 29 Phase 2 BRT above the MD 355 North and South BRT given the county's emphasis through Thrive Montgomery 2050 on investing in the east county.
 - Decouple the MD 355 North and South BRT and prioritize the MD 355 North BRT over MD 355 South BRT given the lack of high-quality transit to Clarksburg.
 - Swap the New Hampshire Avenue BRT with the North Bethesda Transitway given the multi-jurisdictional impact of the New Hampshire Avenue BRT and its potential to strengthen the east county economy and connectivity.
 - Emphasize the importance of the I-270 Transit Corridor Connectors and the years of commitments made to the communities served by the Connectors and the county's emphasis on the life sciences industry.
- **Commuter Rail Expansion**
 - Emphasize the need to expand MARC capacity.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have questions, please contact Stephen Aldrich at 301 495 4528 or Stephen.Aldrich@montgomeryplanning.org.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey Zyontz
Chair

Attachment:

Draft Joint Transportation Priorities Letter with Recommended Planning Board Revisions

JZ:SA:aj

cc: Glenn Orlin, Senior Analyst, Montgomery County Council
Christopher Conklin, Director, MCDOT
Tim Cupples, Acting Deputy Director of Transportation Policy, MCDOT
Tanya Stern, Acting Director, Planning Department
Robert Kronenberg, Deputy Director, Planning Department
Jason Sartori, Chief, Countywide Planning and Policy Division, Planning Department
Elza Hisel-McCoy, Chief, Downcounty Planning Division, Planning Department
Carrie Sanders, Chief, Midcounty Planning Division, Planning Department
Patrick Butler, Chief, Upcounty Planning Division, Planning Department

February 7, 2023

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

Dear Secretary TBD,

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. The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) has continued to make significant contributions to the transportation network in Montgomery County, including providing needed funding for WMATA, nearing completion of the I-270 Innovative Congestion Management project, programming funds for the construction of the Georgia Avenue improvements through Montgomery Hills, and advancing construction of the Purple Line.

Notwithstanding these accomplishments, our county continues to need expanded investment in its transportation system. For the FY2024-2029 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.

Vision Zero Implementation

Vision Zero is not a stand-alone activity, rather it is a culture shift to a systematic safety approach. In past decades, the road network in Montgomery County was developed under policies designed to increase speed, minimize delay and maximize throughput for motor vehicle traffic. While motor vehicle travel is an important piece of our transportation system, emphasis on walking, biking, and transit access are, appropriately, higher priorities for investment in the road network today. In addition to education, enforcement, and advocacy, implementation of Vision Zero through engineering needs to inform every change made to the design and operation of the road network.

Montgomery County is in the sixth year of its Vision Zero action plan. The first five years of the County's program brought improved collaboration with MDOT in the identification of high-hazard locations and implementation of safety countermeasures on both state and county roads. An example of the progress that has been made is MDOT/State Highway Administration's (SHA) *Context Driven Access and Mobility for All Users* guide, and MDOT SHA's involvement in the development of the Montgomery County Complete Streets Design Guide.

While progress has been made, we continue to see significant numbers of severe and fatal crashes on our road network, particularly for pedestrians. To achieve our Vision Zero goals, in addition to continuing work on improving guidelines and standards, we need MDOT to increase

the allocation of resources to implement pedestrian and bicycle safety, accessibility projects, and speed reduction strategies. We request that MDOT initiate a new statewide program with significant funding to expedite implementation of pedestrian and bicycle safety engineering improvements with a particular emphasis on urban and suburban communities and transit access. In addition, MDOT/SHA should continue to evaluate every project it is undertaking to make sure the projects are informed by Vision Zero and will result in improved safety outcomes.

Finally, we urge MDOT to review its access permit policies to look for opportunities to expedite Vision Zero projects that are implemented by local jurisdictions within the state right-of-way. Often MDOT and MCDOT collaborate on strategies to implement a needed Vision Zero improvement, only to have the project experience substantial delay in obtaining the necessary approvals from the various technical branches within MDOT.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Implementation

Bus Rapid Transit is a key element of the County's Master Plan. The top priorities for the County within the next few years include in priority order: 1) MD 355 Central BRT, 2) Veirs Mill Road BRT, 3) [Continued advancement of the Median Lane BRT concept on US 29](#), 4) MD 355 North ~~and South~~ BRT, 5) [MD 355 South BRT](#), 4) ~~Continued advancement of the Median Lane BRT concept on US 29~~, 6) [New Hampshire Avenue BRT North Bethesda Transitway](#), 7) Park and ride expansions, 8) ~~New Hampshire Avenue BRT North Bethesda Transitway~~, and 9) I-270 Corridor Connectors.

Building upon prior MDOT planning activities, the County has initiated design of BRT on MD 355 between Clarksburg and Bethesda and on MD 586 (Veirs Mill Road) between Rockville and Wheaton. These two projects will unlock the redevelopment potential of North Bethesda and will improve transit service to the thousands of daily transit riders who depend on services connecting Wheaton and Rockville.

1. **MD 355 Central BRT.** We have programmed the promised funding from the Opportunities Lane project to comprise most of the local match for anticipated federal funds to build the center section of the MD 355 BRT between Montgomery College-Rockville and Montgomery College-Germantown.
2. **Veirs Mill Road BRT.** The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has recently authorized us to enter project development for the Veirs Mill Road BRT from Montgomery College-Rockville to Wheaton. As both corridors are state highways, MDOT's engagement during design and construction and financial participation in these projects will be important.
3. **US 29 Phase 2 BRT.** FLASH on US 29 – the first of its kind in Maryland – opened in 2020. Montgomery County will need MDOT assistance and cooperation to continue advancement of our BRT system that is critical to expanding the economy of Maryland in Montgomery County. Additionally, we thank the State for completing repairs to the

shoulders on US 29 and ask that the shoulder condition remain a high maintenance priority on this roadway. We appreciate the State's \$5 million contribution to the design of the Median Lane BRT concept to improve transit travel time reliability between Tech Road and Downtown Silver Spring. Preliminary design is scheduled for completion by FY25 and we request that the State participate in the local match to federal aid we will be soliciting for this project.

~~3.4.~~ ***MD 355 North and South BRT.*** ~~This~~ ~~se~~ ~~two~~ segments would connect to the MD 355 Central BRT service with a northern extension between Montgomery College-Germantown ~~to~~ and Clarksburg ~~and a southern extension between Montgomery College-Rockville to Bethesda.~~ This BRT service is needed, given the lack of high quality transit to Clarksburg. We will be applying for federal assistance for ~~this~~ ~~se~~ BRT extensions.

~~5.~~ ***MD 355 South BRT.*** This segment would connect to the MD 355 Central BRT service with a southern extension between Montgomery College-Rockville and Bethesda. We will be applying for federal assistance for this BRT extension.

~~4.6.~~ ***New Hampshire Avenue BRT.*** Planning is underway for the MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue) corridor and the North Bethesda Transitway. BRT on New Hampshire Avenue is a candidate state-led project for construction as it is located in both Montgomery and Prince George's Counties and connects into the District of Columbia at the Fort Totten Metro Station. In addition, this corridor provides vital links to the Food and Drug Administration's White Oak Headquarters, a key economic engine for the East County. Given the multijurisdictional nature of this project, its implementation should be led by MDOT once the planning is completed in FY24.

~~5.7.~~ ***Park-and-Ride Expansions.*** Park-and-ride capacity is of limited supply and heavily used in Montgomery County. Key locations in need of park-and-ride facility expansions include Burtonsville, and along the I-270/MD 355 corridor in Clarksburg, Germantown and Gaithersburg to accommodate local commuters and those from Frederick, Carroll and Washington counties.

~~6.8.~~ ***North Bethesda Transitway.*** The North Bethesda Transitway will provide a vital link between the Metrorail Red Line and Northern Virginia via Phase I South of the Opportunity Lanes project, and it will also provide a substantial economic opportunity by linking the Rock Spring area to the Red Line. Its planning will be completed later this fiscal year and we will be looking to MDOT to help fund construction starting in the next couple of years.

~~7.9.~~ ***I-270 Transit Corridor Connectors.*** The Council recently adopted Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan. This plan identified the MD 355 and MD 586 BRT projects as the most crucial first steps in improving transit accessibility along the I-270 corridor. The Plan also replaced the Corridor Cities Transitway concept with a series Corridor

Connectors, dedicated bus lanes that link key activity and employment centers to the County's primary north-south rapid transit lines, as well as Metrorail and the MARC Rail Brunswick line. These projects are key ingredients to the success of the biotechnology industry in the Great Seneca Science Corridor and state engagement in their implementation is important to the economic strength of Maryland. [We wish to emphasize the importance of the I-270 Transit Corridor Connectors and the years of commitments made to the communities that will be served by the Corridor Connectors and the county's emphasis on the life sciences industry.](#) We request that the State change the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) Project Information Form (PIF) in the CTP to reference "I-270 Transit Corridor Connectors" in the CTP and provide funding for additional buses to operate the Great Seneca Science Corridors project embedded in this plan.

Locally Operated Transit Systems (LOTS) Support

We thank MDOT for its capital and operating support of the Montgomery County Transit System, including Ride On, Ride On Extra, the Flex and, starting in 2020, the Flash. Sustained financial support from MDOT is critical to providing quality transit service in Montgomery County. Priorities for Locally Operated Transit Support include:

1. ***Zero emission bus infrastructure.*** The County is transitioning to an entirely zero-emission bus fleet. As part of our strategy, we will invest in zero emission buses as a regular component of its transit fleet. To enable this transition from traditional fuels, we request state technical and financial assistance with the installation of electric charging infrastructure at the three county transit depots.
2. ***Ride On ExtRa.*** Services like the Ride On ExtRa, operating on MD 355 between Lake Forest and Medical Center, have proven to be an effective model for improving the performance of transit and attracting additional customers. Montgomery County requests increased assistance through the LOTS program to extend Ride On ExtRa to Germantown and Bethesda and to operate the service all day instead of its current peak period configuration.
3. ***Locally Operated Transit Systems Support grants.*** At the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, Locally Operated Transit Systems (LOTS) support grants to Montgomery County were reduced given the significant transit-specific pandemic aid provided by the federal government and the strain on state transportation trust fund revenues. It is important that the state aid provided through this program is increased above pre-pandemic levels now that the federal operating assistance is no longer being provided, transit operations remain under financial strain, and state revenues have been strong enough to restore this support.

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Investment

MDOT should be commended for providing major capital and operating support to WMATA. Priorities for WMATA include:

1. ***North Bethesda North Metro Entrance.*** The County has identified a second entrance at the North Bethesda Station as a high priority improvement. We ask for MDOT's advocacy to include this project in the WMATA Capital Program.
2. ***Metrobus priority treatments.*** We ask for state financial support to implement bus priority treatments that will be recommended in the ongoing WMATA Better Bus Network and the Ride On Reimagined Study.

Commuter Rail Expansion

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 through enhancements to the service and increasing the system's accessibility. The potential of the MARC system is even more significant with direct connection to the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) system to provide seamless links between key activity centers in Northern Virginia and those in Montgomery County. [Expanding MARC capacity remains a high priority for the County.](#) Priorities for MARC enhancements include:

1. ***Boyd's Station Expansion*** (Design and Construction). Improvements to the rail station facilities and restoration of the Hoyle's Mill Building to compliment the improvements funded by the County at Boyd's Station.
2. ***North Bethesda Station*** (Planning). The White Flint Sector Plan and Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan calls for the construction of a new MARC Station in the area that was formerly referred to as White Flint, and we request that MDOT advance study of the station.
3. ***Shady Grove Station*** (Planning). The Shady Grove Sector Plan and Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan call for construction of a new MARC Station with direct connections to the WMATA Red Line station and the numerous bus services that operate from Shady Grove. This location has the promise to increase its significance as a multimodal hub if commuter rail connections could be made here. We ask that MDOT initiate a planning study for adding a commuter rail station at this location.
4. ***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 and Northern Virginia. We ask that MDOT initiate a planning study for adding midday and off-peak service.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

Improving pedestrian and bicycle safety as highlighted in our Vision Zero Program, creating a safe and attractive walking environment in our key growth areas, and the implementation of bikeshare as a permanent component of our transportation system are critical needs for state support. Priorities for pedestrian and bicycle facilities enhancements include:

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, frequent protected crossings, need for reduced speeds, and other issues in support of the County's Vision Zero Action Plan. Many of our highest-need locations are on state highways. Sidewalk gaps should include adequate buffers between the new or improved sidewalk and the curb to improve pedestrian level of comfort.
2. ***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. A high priority activity within this program is to make improvements on access routes to the Purple Line and state funding for these improvements will help accelerate their construction. Specifically, the County requests continued funding for design and construction of the master-planned two-way separated bike lanes on the east side of 16th Street between Montgomery Hills and Spring Street.
3. ***Bikeshare Program Support*** (Grants). Federal, state and private grants have been essential for bikeshare in Montgomery County, a system that has now grown to nearly 100 stations. Bikeshare contributes to help achieve non-auto-driver mode share (NADMS) goals in focus areas within the County and provides an excellent complement to local and regional transit systems. State operating support for this system will help secure its long-term future.
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 MD 182 (Layhill Road) and Notley Road and between MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue) and Briggs Chaney Road.

State Highways

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

1. ***MD 117 (Clopper Road) Improvements*** (Design and Construction). Now that the Watkins Mill Interchange is completed, traffic patterns on MD 117 have changed substantially. MDOT completed planning activities for improvements to MD 117 between the Seneca Creek State Park entrance and the I-270 southbound on-ramp. Montgomery County submitted a Chapter 30 funding application for this project in 2018 and 2019. With the opening of the Watkins Mill Interchange, implementation of these improvements between I-270 and Longdraft Road are important to accommodate the changes in Interstate access.
2. ***MD 198 (Old Columbia Pike) Improvements*** (Design and Construction). Concepts for improvements between Old Columbia Pike and US 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. In Burtonsville, the project should also identify ways to reduce the width of Old Columbia Pike north of MD 198 to better match reduced traffic demands and to reduce the barrier formed by this roadway.
3. ***MD 355 (Frederick Road) Improvements from MD 27 to Stringtown Road*** (Planning). Expanding MD 355, consistent with the Clarksburg Master Plan is critical to improving access to Clarksburg. In addition to traffic capacity, the improvements need to address pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, access to schools, and transit needs. We look forward to reviewing the results of the initial planning that MDOT is now advancing and to defining a project that addresses the needs on this corridor.
4. ***Accelerated Traffic Signal Modernization*** (Design and Construction). The state traffic signal system contains many locations with structural impairment, inefficient incandescent fixtures, underperforming detection, and pedestrian crossing configurations that do not meet today's needs. MDOT/SHA and Montgomery County would benefit from prioritization and acceleration of traffic signal modernization in the County, including deployment of additional adaptive traffic signal controls on key corridors within the County.
5. ***MD 190/River Road*** (Planning). In alignment with the County and State's commitment to Vision Zero, the County requests a safety-oriented re-evaluation of River Road between the Capital Beltway and Little Falls Parkway for potential bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements. The County has identified River Road as part of the High Injury Network in the County's Vision Zero Action Plan. The County's recently adopted Thrive Montgomery 2050 Comprehensive Plan identifies River Road as a Growth Corridor, and yet it lacks critical bicycle and pedestrian facilities such as buffered sidewalks, separated bike lanes and protected crossings.
6. ***MD 97 Diverging Diamond Interchange at the Capital Beltway (Planning)***. The Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan evaluated and recommended this innovative interchange improvement on MD 97 at the Capital Beltway. This concept was shown to provide significant traffic operations benefits to MD 97 through this area.

7. ***MD 97 (Georgia Avenue) and MD 28 (Norbeck Road) Interchange*** (Planning). 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 initiate a new evaluation of solutions to address this long-standing transportation bottleneck. The design should prioritize pedestrian and bicycle safety by exploring innovative interchange concepts.
8. ***MD 108/Laytonsville Bypass*** (Planning). The Town of Laytonsville has planned a bypass route for MD 108 around the west side of the town. This bypass, now partially constructed, will alleviate congestion at the intersection of MD 108 and Brink Road/Sundown Road, improving the character of the historic center of town.

Interstate Program

The County has been an active participant in the MDOT/SHA process for projects on I-270 and I-495. We agree with the need to improve the performance of these corridors, including expanded transit options. Montgomery County remains seriously concerned with the implementation of four additional toll lanes on I-495 between the west spur of I-270 and I-95 and requests that the State restore as an alternative congestion management strategies like ramp metering and peak-period shoulder use, or other spot improvements that are respectful of our natural resources and communities. To meet the travel needs between I-270 and I-95, we also believe MDOT should revisit its decision to eliminate the MD 200 alternative.

We acknowledge the recent announcement of a coordinated approach between Maryland and Virginia to address the American Legion Bridge and to connect the proposed Capital Beltway modifications in Maryland to those planned by Virginia. However, we remain concerned about encroachment of highway facilities beyond existing right-of-way and into buffer space within the right-of-way. All modifications to these corridors need to reflect input from local communities and all efforts must be taken to mitigate environmental and community impacts of both the current highway and its expansion.

As approved in 2019 by the Board of Public Works, the American Legion Bridge and I-270 projects should be implemented at the same time as the first phase of the Traffic Relief Plan Public-Private Partnership (P3) if the project proceeds. We also encourage MDOT to include the Dorsey Mill Road bridge in Germantown and a new interchange and Little Seneca Parkway in Clarksburg into the I-270 project, for which we believe reversible lanes will be most effective. In all cases, the modification of the Interstate system needs to consider the performance of the local road network, include expanded transit services, and include bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure on the crossings of the freeway facilities. We look forward to reaching agreement with MDOT for local transit funding as required by the Board of Public Works P3 approval.

The Opportunity Lanes project status remains unclear as legal challenges to the State's procurement of a P3 partner continue through mid-2022 and opinions about this project remain sharply divided in Montgomery County. Notwithstanding these issues, little to no progress has been made by MDOT in advancing the State's transit commitments to the County associated with the project. These commitments are required by multiple actions of the Board of Public Works, are included in the project's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) record, are enshrined in the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board's (TPB) actions on Visualize 2045 (the federally mandated long range transportation plan), with MDOT voting in favor of these requirements and are reiterated in several letters between the MDOT Secretary and county officials.

In addition, we feel that with the approval of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, there may be funding opportunities for the American Legion Bridge (ALB) and the I-495 bridge over the Northwest Branch. For the ALB, improvements should include vehicular capacity improvements (e.g., HOT lanes) as well as future heavy rail, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities. It appears that work on the specific transit projects including the bus maintenance facility at Metropolitan Grove, Shady Grove Station enhancements, and Westfield Montgomery transit center enhancements has been suspended by the MDOT technical team. Further, MDOT officials have not advanced work with the County on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for not less than \$360 million of financial support to high priority transit projects required of the Opportunity Lanes Phase 1 South project, despite numerous efforts to restart this work by the County. We ask that you move expeditiously to advance the specific projects and to finalize the MOU.

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,

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Evan Glass, President
County Council

cc: The Honorable Wes Moore, Governor, State of Maryland
Montgomery County House Delegation
Montgomery County Senate Delegation



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

MEMORANDUM

January 13, 2023

TO: Evan Glass, President
Montgomery County Council

FROM: Marc Elrich, County Executive

SUBJECT: Joint Transportation Priorities Letter

I am pleased to transmit to you my proposed draft Joint Transportation Priorities Letter. These priorities reflect the critical investments necessary to ensure that our streets are safe, our transportation network achieves our mobility and climate goals, and our region realizes its economic potential. They outline areas where state investment and improved cooperation with Montgomery County will result in significant progress toward achieving these goals. As we have done in prior years, our priorities are organized by emphasis area as follows:

- Bus Rapid Transit
- Vision Zero
- Locally Operated Transit Support
- WMATA Investment
- Commuter Rail Expansion
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities
- State Highways
- Interstate Program

The current environment presents new opportunities to make real progress in transportation. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law has generated new federal funding that can be leveraged with state and local investments. We have an opportunity to work with the new Governor and Transportation Secretary to secure these investments and identify new, more effective approaches to our transportation challenges. I look forward to working with you on this matter.

Attachment: Draft Joint Transportation Priority Letter



Montgomery County Government

ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

February 07, 2023

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

Dear Secretary **TBD**,

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. The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) has continued to make significant contributions to the transportation network in Montgomery County, including providing needed funding for WMATA, nearing completion of the I-270 Innovative Congestion Management project, programming funds for the construction of the Georgia Avenue improvements through Montgomery Hills, and advancing construction of the Purple Line.

Notwithstanding these accomplishments, our County continues to need expanded investment in its transportation system. For the FY2024-2029 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.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Implementation

Bus Rapid Transit is a key element of the County's Master Plan. It is critical both our transportation network and expanding the economy of Maryland in Montgomery County. Our success depends on implementing a comprehensive BRT network throughout the County.

Building upon prior MDOT planning activities, the County has initiated design of BRT on MD 355 between Clarksburg and Bethesda and on MD 586 (Veirs Mill Road) between Rockville and Wheaton. These two projects will unlock the redevelopment potential of North Bethesda and will improve transit service to the thousands of daily transit riders who depend on services connecting Wheaton and Rockville.

Creating this network demands that we advance many of our BRT projects simultaneously. Based on the current status of each project (planning, design, construction, etc.) and funding needs, our top priorities for the County within the next few years include in

priority order: 1) MD 355 BRT, 2) Veirs Mill Road BRT, 3) continued advancement of the Median Lane BRT concept on US 29, 4) Park-and-Ride expansions, 5) Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan implementation, 6) New Hampshire Avenue BRT, and 7) North Bethesda BRT.

1. **MD 355 BRT.** We have programmed the promised funding from the Opportunities Lane project to comprise most of the local match for anticipated Federal funds to build the center section of the MD 355 BRT between Montgomery College-Rockville and Montgomery College-Germantown. Additionally, we will be applying for Federal assistance for the MD 355 BRT from Montgomery College-Germantown to Clarksburg and from Montgomery College-Rockville to Bethesda.
2. **Veirs Mill Road BRT.** The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has recently authorized us to enter project development for the Veirs Mill Road BRT from Montgomery College -Rockville to Wheaton. We hope to secure FTA Small Starts funding for this project in the coming year. As both this and the MD 355 corridors are State Highways, MDOT's engagement during design and construction and financial participation in these projects will be important.
3. **US 29 BRT.** FLASH on US 29 – the first of its kind in Maryland – opened in 2020. Montgomery County will need MDOT continued assistance and cooperation to continue advancement of our BRT system on this corridor. Extending and improving this BRT line is important to the region beyond Montgomery County. The recently passed federal Omnibus Budget includes funding to extend Flash operations to Howard County. We appreciate the State's \$5 million contribution to next phase of this project, the design of the Median Lane BRT concept, which will improve transit travel time reliability between Tech Road and Downtown Silver Spring. Preliminary design is scheduled for completion by FY25 and we request that the State participate in the local match to Federal aid we will be soliciting for this project. Additionally, we thank the State for completing repairs to the shoulders on US 29 and ask that the shoulder condition remain a high maintenance priority on this roadway.
4. **Park-and-Rides.** Park-and-ride capacity is of limited supply and heavily used in Montgomery County. Key locations in need of park-and-ride facility expansions include Burtonsville, and along the I-270/MD 355 corridor in Clarksburg, Germantown and Gaithersburg to accommodate local commuters and those from Howard, Frederick, Carroll and Washington counties.
5. **I-270 Transit Corridor Connectors.** The Council recently adopted Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan. This plan identified the MD 355 and MD 586 BRT projects as the most crucial first steps in improving transit accessibility along the I-270 corridor. The Plan also replaced the Corridor Cities Transitway concept with a series Corridor Connectors, dedicated bus lanes that link key activity and employment centers County's primary north-south rapid transit lines, as well as Metrorail and the MARC Rail Brunswick line. These projects are key ingredients to the success of the biotechnology industry in the Great Seneca Science Corridor and State engagement in

- their implementation is important to the economic strength of Maryland. We request that the State change the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) Project Information Form (PIF) in the CTP to reference “I-270 Transit Corridor Connectors” in the CTP and provide funding for additional buses to operate the Great Seneca Science Corridors project embedded in this plan.
6. ***New Hampshire Ave BRT.*** Planning is underway for the MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue) corridor and the North Bethesda Transitway. BRT on New Hampshire Avenue is a candidate State-led project for construction as it is located in both Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties and connects into the District of Columbia at the Fort Totten Metro Station. In addition, this corridor provides vital links to the Food and Drug Administration’s White Oak Headquarters, a key economic engine for the East County. Given the multijurisdictional nature of this project, its implementation should be led by MDOT once the planning is completed in FY24.
 7. ***North Bethesda Transitway.*** The North Bethesda Transitway will provide a vital link between the Metrorail Red Line and Northern Virginia via Phase I South of the Opportunity Lanes project, and it will also provide a substantial economic opportunity by linking the Rock Spring area to the Red Line. Its planning will be completed later this fiscal year and we will be looking to MDOT to help fund construction starting in the next couple of years.

Vision Zero Implementation

Vision Zero is not a stand-alone activity, rather it is a culture shift to a systematic safety approach. In past decades, the road network in Montgomery County was developed under policies designed to increase speed, minimize delay and maximize throughput for motor vehicle traffic. While motor vehicle travel is an important piece of our transportation system, emphasis on walking, biking, and transit access are, appropriately, higher priorities for investment in the road network today. In addition to education, enforcement, and advocacy, implementation of Vision Zero through engineering needs to inform every change made to the design and operation of the road network.

Montgomery County is in the sixth year of its Vision Zero action plan. The first five years of the County’s program brought improved collaboration with MDOT in the identification of high-hazard locations and implementation of safety countermeasures on both State and County roads. An example of the progress that has been made is MDOT/State Highway Administration’s (SHA) *Context Driven Access and Mobility for All Users* guide, and MDOT SHA’s involvement in the development of the Montgomery County Complete Streets Design Guide.

While progress has been made, we continue to see significant numbers of severe and fatal crashes on our road network, particularly for pedestrians. To achieve our Vision Zero goals, in addition to continuing work on improving guidelines and standards, we need MDOT to increase the allocation of resources to implement pedestrian and bicycle safety, accessibility projects, and speed reduction strategies. We request that MDOT initiate a new statewide program with

significant funding to expedite implementation of pedestrian and bicycle safety engineering improvements with a particular emphasis on urban and suburban communities and transit access. In addition, MDOT/SHA should continue to evaluate every project it is undertaking to make sure the projects are informed by Vision Zero and will result in improved safety outcomes. Finally, we urge MDOT to review its access permit policies to look for opportunities to expedite Vision Zero projects that are implemented by local jurisdictions within the State right-of-way. Often MDOT and MCDOT collaborate on strategies to implement a needed Vision Zero improvement, only to have the project experience substantial delay in obtaining the necessary approvals from the various technical branches within MDOT.

Locally Operated Transit Support (LOTS)

We thank MDOT for its capital and operating support of the Montgomery County Transit System, including Ride On, Ride On Extra, the Flex and, starting in 2020, the Flash. Sustained financial support from MDOT is critical to providing quality transit service in Montgomery County. Priorities for Locally Operated Transit Support include:

1. ***Zero emission bus infrastructure.*** The County is transitioning to an entirely zero-emission bus fleet. As part of our strategy, we will invest in zero emission buses as a regular component of its transit fleet. To enable this transition from traditional fuels, we request State technical and financial assistance with the installation of electric charging infrastructure at the three County transit depots, including funding to support the replacement of our Nicholson Court Depot, which is currently leased and cannot accommodate zero-emission buses.
2. ***Ride On ExtRa.*** Services like the Ride On ExtRa, operating on MD 355 between Lake Forest and Medical Center, have proven to be an effective model for improving the performance of transit and attracting additional customers. Montgomery County requests increased assistance through the LOTS program to extend RideOn ExtRa to Germantown and Bethesda and to operate the service all day instead of its current peak period configuration.
3. ***LOTS Grants.*** Inflation, increased fuel costs, and competition for a shrinking pool of CDL drivers are driving up the cost to deliver Transit services in the aftermath of the COVID 19 Pandemic. We request that LOTS grants be increased annually based on the prior year's Consumer Price Index CPI-U.

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Investment

MDOT should be commended for providing major capital and operating support to WMATA. Priorities for WMATA include:

1. ***North Bethesda North Metro Entrance.*** The County has identified a second entrance at the North Bethesda Station as a high priority improvement. We ask for MDOT's advocacy to include this project in the WMATA Capital Program.
2. ***Metrobus priority treatments.*** We ask for State financial support to implement bus priority treatments that will be recommended in the ongoing WMATA Better Bus Network and the Ride On Reimagined Study.

Commuter Rail Expansion

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 through enhancements to the service and increasing the system's accessibility. The potential of the MARC system is even more significant with direct connection to the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) system to provide seamless links between key activity centers in Northern Virginia and those in Montgomery County. Priorities for MARC enhancements include:

1. ***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 and Northern Virginia. Changes in commuting patterns in the wake of the pandemic presents an opportunity to modify service to better serve commuters throughout the day. Other commuter rail providers, such as the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, have taken advantage of this opportunity and seen impressive results in terms of ridership. We ask that MDOT initiate a planning study for adding midday and off-peak service.
2. ***Boyd's Station Expansion*** (Design and Construction). Improvements to the rail station facilities and restoration of the Hoyle's Mill Building to compliment the improvements funded by the County at Boyd's Station.
3. ***North Bethesda Station*** (Planning). The White Flint Sector Plan and Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan calls for the construction of a new MARC Station in the area that was formerly referred to as White Flint, and we request that MDOT advance study of the station.
4. ***Shady Grove Station*** (Planning). The Shady Grove Sector Plan and Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan call for construction of a new MARC Station with direct connections to the WMATA Red Line station and the numerous bus services that operate from Shady Grove. This location has the promise to increase its significance as a multimodal hub if commuter rail connections could be made here. We ask that MDOT initiate a planning study for adding a commuter rail station at this location.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

Improving pedestrian and bicycle safety as highlighted in our Vision Zero Program, creating a safe and attractive walking environment in our key growth areas, and the implementation of bikeshare as a permanent component of our transportation system are critical needs for State support. Priorities for pedestrian and bicycle facilities enhancements include:

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 Vision Zero Action Plan. Many of our highest-need locations are on State highways. Sidewalk gaps should include adequate buffers between the new or improved sidewalk and the curb to improve pedestrian level of comfort.
2. ***Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Areas (BiPPAs)*** (Planning, Design and Construction). The County has identified over 30 BiPPAs 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. A high priority activity within this program is to make improvements on access routes to the Purple Line and State funding for these improvements will help accelerate their construction. Specifically, the County requests continued funding for design and construction of the master-planned two-way separated bike lanes on the east side of 16th Street between Montgomery Hills and Spring Street.
3. ***Bikeshare Program Support*** (Grants). Federal, State and private grants have been essential for bikeshare in Montgomery County, a system that has now grown to nearly 100 stations. Bikeshare contributes to help achieve non-auto-driver mode share (NADMS) goals in focus areas within the County and provides an excellent complement to local and regional transit systems. State operating support for this system will help secure its long-term future.

State Highways

The following projects represent our highest priorities for improvements to non-Interstate State Highways:

1. ***Accelerated Traffic Signal Modernization*** (Design and Construction). The State traffic signal system contains many locations with structural impairment, inefficient incandescent fixtures, underperforming detection, and pedestrian crossing configurations that do not meet today's needs. In addition, the recent small plane crash in Gaithersburg resulted in loss of power to many State traffic signals, highlighting the need for uninterruptable power supplies to ensure continued operation during power failures. MDOT/SHA and Montgomery County would benefit from prioritization and acceleration of traffic signal modernization in the County, including deployment of additional adaptive traffic signal controls on key corridors within the County.

2. ***MD 117 (Clopper Road) Improvements*** (Design and Construction). Now that the Watkins Mill Interchange is completed, traffic patterns on MD 117 have changed substantially. MDOT completed planning activities for improvements to MD 117 between the Seneca Creek State Park entrance and the I-270 southbound on-ramp. Montgomery County submitted a Chapter 30 funding application for this project in 2018 and 2019. With the opening of the Watkins Mill Interchange, implementation of these improvements between I-270 and Longdraft Road are important to accommodate the changes in Interstate access.
3. ***MD 198 (Spencerville Road) Improvements*** (Design and Construction). Concepts for improvements between Old Columbia Pike and US 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. In Burtonsville, the project should also identify ways to reduce the width of Old Columbia Pike north of MD 198 to better match reduced traffic demands and to reduce the barrier formed by this roadway.
4. ***MD 355 (Frederick Road) Improvements from MD 27 to Stringtown Road*** (Planning). Expanding MD 355, consistent with the Clarksburg Master Plan is critical to improving access to Clarksburg. In addition to traffic capacity, the improvements need to address pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, access to schools, and transit needs. We look forward to reviewing the results of the initial planning that MDOT is now advancing and to defining a project that addresses the needs on this corridor.
5. ***MD 190/River Road*** (Planning). In alignment with the County and State's commitment to Vision Zero, the County requests a safety-oriented re-evaluation of River Road between the Capital Beltway and Little Falls Parkway for potential bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements. The County has identified River Road as part of the High Injury Network in the County's Vision Zero Action Plan. The County's recently adopted Thrive 2050 Comprehensive Plan identifies River Road as a Growth Corridor, and yet it lacks critical bicycle and pedestrian facilities such as buffered sidewalks, separated bike lanes and protected crossings.
6. ***MD 97 Diverging Diamond Interchange at the Capital Beltway*** (Planning). The Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan evaluated and recommended this innovative interchange improvement on MD 97 at the Capital Beltway. This concept was shown to provide significant traffic operations benefits to MD 97 through this area. We request that MDOT/SHA initiate a study to further evaluate the feasibility and benefits of a diverging diamond interchange at this location.
7. ***MD 97 (Georgia Avenue) and MD 28 (Norbeck Road) Interchange*** (Planning). 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 initiate a new evaluation of solutions to address this long-standing transportation bottleneck. The design should prioritize pedestrian and bicycle safety by exploring innovative interchange concepts.

8. ***MD 108/Laytonsville Bypass*** (Planning). The Town of Laytonsville has planned a bypass route for MD 108 around the west side of the town. This bypass, now partially constructed, will alleviate congestion at the intersection of MD 108 and Brink Road/Sundown Road, improving the character of the historic center of town.

Interstate Program

Now is the time to take a pause and reassess the best way to solve the problems with the American Legion Bridge (ALB) and the I-270 corridor, including the section of I-495 that links the two. Although the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is already building an extension of the I-495 Express Lanes up to the George Washington Memorial Parkway (495Next), the replacement of the ALB, changes to the highways further north, and advancement of the transit commitments are stalled. The State's procurements and the NEPA approvals are in litigation, the financial viability and appropriateness of the P3 approach is unclear at best, and questions are unanswered about whether tolling is needed and is being thought of equitably. All of this reflects a profound lack of consensus that the current project is the best path forward, although nearly all agree that something needs to be done.

We need to solve these problems, and the County hopes to actively collaborate with the Governor and new leadership at MDOT to revisit the work completed and frame workable solutions that can advance with broader support. Basic concepts that could be part of a consensus solution include maximizing Federal aid, committing to addressing the needs of all of I-270 so that we do not just move the bottleneck from Virginia and one part of Montgomery County to another part, rethinking the purpose of tolling and the reasonableness of the proposed tolls, considering environmental stewardship instead of environmental mitigation, and ensuring the implementation of major transit improvements concurrent with the highway improvements, like BRT on Maryland 355, Veirs Mill Road, Old Georgetown Road, and in the Great Seneca Corridor as called for in County plans and being advanced through planning and design by the County. Additionally, only solutions "within the walls" of I-270 should be considered.

We have an opportunity to reset the dialog around the transportation needs in the I-270/495 corridor. The past work provides a great deal of baseline information, and we view the project commitments made so far as important but likely insufficient to provide the best outcome. We hope that you agree that freshly considering the needs through a more expansive lens, with openness to new approaches and possibilities, can lead to a much better outcome and more consensus on how we should collectively move forward.

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,

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Evan Glass, President
County Council

cc: The Honorable Wes Moore, Governor, State of Maryland
Montgomery County House Delegation
Montgomery County Senate Delegation



Testimony of the Rockville Mayor and Council
Joint County Council and County Executive Letter on the
State of Maryland Consolidated Transportation Program

January 24, 2023

Good afternoon, President Glass, I'm Councilmember Mark Pierzchala, and I am speaking on behalf of my Mayor and Council colleagues.

Rockville's Mayor and Council want to thank the County Council for the opportunity to testify on the County's draft State Transportation Priority Letter. These comments concern the section titled "Interstate Program".

We strongly endorse the overall approach taken in the County's draft with respect to I-270. As you are aware, the City of Rockville would be most impacted by the proposed P3 project put forward by the Hogan administration. We have shared our concerns that their proposals and processes were severely lacking. Now that we are in the Moore/Miller administration, and with a new State Legislature, we agree that the State DOT/SHA must re-evaluate the cost benefit as it relates to equity, environmental justice and solving the congestion that currently exists mostly between Clarksville and Frederick.

This section of the draft letter focuses primarily on transit and transportation, but a third major thrust of the letter should be focused on the use of the Information Highway (the Internet) as a way to reduce the traffic on our roadways. We learned during the pandemic that much work and many daily tasks can be conducted from homes. Therefore, reducing trips should be part of the County's letter and the State and Federal approaches.

Rockville suggests that the County letter advocate for federal funding of the American Legion Bridge (ALB) rebuild through the Federal Infrastructure Bill (Public Law No. 117-58), given the strategic importance of the ALB to the economic opportunities and benefits, as well as the critical safety and strategic concerns of the DMV and the Nation's Capital.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the County and the State should reassess the traffic travel times on the southern portion of I-270 given the successful implementation of Innovative Congestion Management Project that has already provided additional lanes in Gaithersburg/Rockville and points south. We must ensure that the reality is consistent with the plan.

In support of Vision Zero, we request that MDOT enhance lighting along state roads that go beyond intersections to improve safety, starting with locations that have had the most serious fatalities. In addition, we request that MDOT SHA add and improve sidewalks along state roads in municipalities.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony. As always, we are ready and willing to work with you and your staff to ensure that solving congestion issues on state highways that bisect our communities actually work.



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January 19, 2023

The Honorable Marc Elrich
Montgomery County Executive
Executive Office Building
101 Monroe Street
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear County Executive Elrich,

I am very pleased that you were reelected as County Executive for our county. We are fortunate that you have the experience to move us forward into the future.

I understand the process for the next update of the State Transportation Priorities Letter is starting with a public hearing before the full Council on January 24. I am asking that this letter be accepted for the record in support of the MD 108/Laytonsville Bypass around Laytonsville. The greater Laytonsville community is urging support for retaining the Laytonsville bypass in the State Transportation Priorities letter.

It has been a few years since I last spoke with you about Laytonsville. At that time, you helped reestablish the MD 108/Laytonsville Bypass in the County Priority letter for the Consolidated Transportation Program to the State. The Town continues to be thankful for your efforts and we are hopeful that the bypass can be planned and designed in the near future.

The existing Maryland Route 108 goes through the center of the town of Laytonsville. In the hope of reducing excessive traffic, for over twenty years the Town has included the construction of the MD 108/Laytonsville Bypass in its Comprehensive Plan. In the recent past the bypass has received support from the District 14 Delegation and the Secretary of the Maryland Department of Transportation. The first portion of the bypass was constructed by the State when the development known as Laytonsville Preserve was built on the west side of Town. The remainder of the bypass is to be constructed in the future. Each morning and evening, many thousands of commuter and construction vehicles travel through Laytonsville. The current Olney Master Plan indicates MD Route 108 will become a four-lane divided roadway up to the Laytonsville's southern boundary. In fact, several miles of this road have already been completed. The Greater Olney Civic Association has given its support for the construction of the MD 108/Laytonsville

www.laytonsville.md.us

Post Office Box 5158 • Laytonsville, Maryland 20882 • Office 301-869-0042 • Fax 301-869-7222
Town Hall • 21607 Laytonsville Road • Laytonsville, Maryland

Bypass. Also supporting the bypass is the Montgomery Chapter of the Maryland Municipal League which is comprised of thirty-two municipalities in Montgomery County.

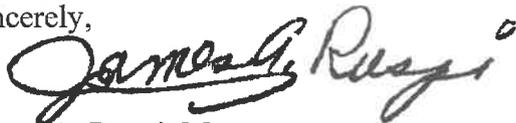
When the State adopted the Priority Funding Area Program, the entire town of Laytonsville was designated as a Priority Funding Area (PFA). When the Town annexed the Rolling Ridge Subdivision in 1998, the boundary for the Primary Funding Area was inadvertently left unchanged. According to County and State officials, to receive State design and construction funds, Laytonsville must receive an exemption for the bypass from the State.

In previous years, the Town has held several meetings with County and State officials regarding the MD 108/Laytonsville Bypass. They recommended the first step in the exemption process was to have the bypass reinstated into the current County's Priority Letter for the Consolidated Transportation Program to the State. With your help this was done a few years ago.

At this time, the town of Laytonsville is requesting the MD 108/Laytonsville Bypass be considered for planning and design in anticipation of funds that may become available in the near future. Advancing this project forward is essential to Laytonsville and adjacent communities, such as Gaithersburg, Olney, and Damascus. Several years ago, a count of the traffic on Route 108 was determined to be more than 17,000 vehicles per day. Many of these vehicles are heavy construction trucks. Because of additional growth in the area, we believe traffic has increased substantially since then. Route 108 divides Laytonsville into east and west sections, separating the Town into halves.

We will be glad to meet with you and the County staff to discuss the MD 108/Laytonsville Bypass in greater detail. Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,



James A. Ruspi, Mayor
Town of Laytonsville

cc: Honorable Pam Queen, Maryland State Delegate
Honorable Bernice Mireku-North, Maryland State Delegate
Honorable Anne Kaiser, Maryland State Delegate
Honorable Craig Zucker, Maryland State Senator
Honorable James F. Ports, Jr., Maryland Secretary of Transportation
Honorable Evan Glass, Montgomery County Council President
Honorable Dawn Luedtke, Montgomery County Council Member
Honorable Will Jawando, Montgomery County Council Member
Honorable Laurie-Anne Sayles, Montgomery County Council Member
Honorable Gabe Albornoz, Montgomery County Council Member
Mr. Christopher Conklin, Director, MCDOT
Mr. Eric Wenger, Laytonsville Planning Commission Chair



Testimony on Transportation Priorities Letter

January 24, 2023

It is necessary and important to update the county's Transportation Priorities Letter. Our letter needs to be updated in light of experiences of the last three years and take advantage of the openings for progress created by the change of administration.

Unfortunately, neither of the drafts in the packet fully accomplish these goals. The mix of specific spending requests – in practice, the core of the letter – is heavily weighted toward automobile travel. Most of the money would increase highway motor vehicle capacity. This directly undercuts the county's climate, land use, and economic development policies, all of which are based on transit-oriented development and a shift of travel away from automobiles.

Montgomery County needs a balanced transportation system. It does not have one. We have only begun to correct the imbalances created by decades of spending that pursued the overriding goals of moving more automobiles and moving them faster at the expense of safety, efficiency, and livability. The only way to achieve balance is to now prioritize transit and access to transit over highway capacity.

Our specific comments follow.

MARC trains

All-day two-way MARC service should be the county's highest priority for new transportation capacity. Together with the Purple Line, it would create a rapid passenger rail network spanning the county, an economic development asset that no other suburban county in the United States could match.

The two drafts ask merely that MDOT "initiate a planning study" for more MARC service. Another state planning study would be a waste of time. We already know a third track is needed. CSX owns the existing tracks and the right-of-way. The state needs to sit down with CSX, decide together where the first section of added track will go, based on rail operations and ease of construction, negotiate how many more trains MARC will get to run in exchange for the state's investment, and build the track.

We believe the likely site for the first section of third track is the Barnesville Hill, requiring an investment (including new train equipment) in the ballpark of \$100 million. Discussions with CSX are required to confirm this.

MARC expansion has been studied for more than 15 years. It is time for action.

Toll lanes

The case for privatized toll lanes on I-270 and I-495, always weak, is now collapsing. Promises of “traffic relief” turn out to be based on traffic models that lack any credibility. The Hogan administration admitted last year that large government subsidies will be required. The only real purpose of this project is to extract money from the pockets of Maryland drivers and taxpayers.

The language in the Executive’s draft letter is far superior to the language in the Planning Board draft. However, we recommend some clarification. The current P3 agreement is structured to build what yields the maximum toll revenue, regardless of whether it reduces traffic congestion, is equitable, or is environmentally sound. It is thus inconsistent with what the county wants. The letter should explicitly recommend against proceeding with a P3.

Also, the statement in the first paragraph that “nearly all agree that something needs to be done” is subject to misinterpretation. Toll lane proponents in and out of government have falsely suggested that the American Legion Bridge needs to be replaced even if it is not widened. In fact, the bridge is structurally sound and can remain in use for decades to come. It needs repainting in the next few years and in another ten years or so it will need a redecking. We and many other stakeholders believe that improved transit options on the existing bridge would be the best path forward. To avoid misunderstanding, the words “to provide better access to destinations in the corridor” should be inserted at the end of the paragraph.

Bus rapid transit

The BRT section of the letter needs to make clear that bus lanes should be created by repurposing existing pavement, rather than widening highways. The state highways designated for future BRT are already too wide for safe and convenient access to buses. Further widening them would increase the difficulty and danger of reaching the stop, undercutting the rationale for BRT.

The letter also does not fully reflect the knowledge gained from the performance of the US 29 Flash BRT line. Ridership on Flash has been disappointing, even taking account of the drop in bus ridership due to Covid. We have identified two reasons for this.

(1) The bus runs in regular travel lanes where the traffic is most congested. The center-running lane plan for Flash approved last year addresses this. This item should get a higher priority among the BRT projects.

(2) Flash runs in the same corridor with a Metrobus that makes more stops. The buses have different payment systems. If you paid for Flash at the machine at the stop, and then the Metrobus comes next, you would have to pay a second fare when you get on the bus. To avoid the resulting confusion, and also to give Flash the image of being different and better than a regular bus, Flash and Metrobus stop at different stops.

Most US 29 bus riders want to take whichever bus comes first. Given the relatively long intervals between buses, especially outside rush hour, a shorter wait saves time compared to a faster bus. But the separate stops and payment systems force them to choose one or the other in advance. Bus trips now can take more time than before Flash.

Many of the planned BRT lines share this defect. These plans should be paused for revision. Wherever BRT and local buses share the same corridor, local buses should stop at the BRT stops, and both buses should use the same payment system.

Highway expansions

The highway section of the drafts is a major shift away from the 2020 letter. It would represent a return to the anti-transit and anti-pedestrian policies that created the existing transportation mess, policies that the county says it has rejected. It lists six construction projects aimed at easing automobile movement, often at the expense of transit riders and pedestrians, and only one project to improve non-automobile movement (River Road inside the Beltway).

Most egregiously, the highest-priority highway project in the 2020 letter, the transformation of Georgia Avenue in Montgomery Hills and Forest Glen, has been removed entirely. In its place, the draft letters ask MDOT to build a “diverging diamond” interchange for Georgia Avenue and the Beltway.¹ Diverging diamonds do not belong anywhere in Montgomery County, and especially not in an area we are trying to make more walkable.



A diverging diamond interchange

The diverging diamond item should be removed from the letter. The 2020 language about Georgia Avenue transformation should be restored, remaining our highest highway priority. Also, the item about the junction of MD 28 and MD 97 should be clarified by replacing the word “interchange” with “intersection” and changing “prioritize pedestrian and bicycle safety” to “prioritize pedestrian and bicycle safety and ease of movement.”

¹The draft letters incorrectly state that the diverging diamond is recommended by the recently adopted master plan. What the master plan actually recommends for action now is the transformation requested by the 2020 letter. It recommends only that a diverging diamond should be “evaluated” some time in the future, and suggests that better traffic engineering alternatives will exist by the time that evaluation occurs.

Testimony on behalf of the Washington Biologists' Field Club, to the Montgomery Co. MD Transportation Committee hearing 24 January 2023

Plummers Island, C & O Canal National Historical Park, Montgomery Co., Maryland, is an ecologically sensitive nature reserve, and Washington Biologists' Field Club Research Station for 122 years. The Island would be directly threatened by the expansion of the American Legion Bridge onto the Island. The WBFC has been a consulting party with the MDOT and Federal Section 106 process for 2 years. As part of that process Plummers Island and the WBFC were determined to be eligible for registration with the National Trust for Historic Places.

The current Accelerate-Maryland MDOT plan (as illustrated in the WAPO article of December 30, 2022) envisions a new bridge of 17 lanes and 4 shoulders, plus a bike and pedestrian lane, and a gap between north and south-bound bridges. This would be the widest bridge in America. It would overhang a significant area, shade much more, and extend toxic runoff, noise, and air pollution onto Plummers Island. WBFC is opposed to this plan.

There are several rare plant species within the Limits of Disturbance on the Island. WBFC has a long-term research plot within the Limits of Disturbance that would be destroyed, and another long-term plot, and rare plant communities within and just beyond the LOD that would be affected by the extended bridge shadow. About 2 dozen trees would be cut down, and a line of three piers of 10 ft diameter would be placed on the island. The flow of Plummers Channel (AKA Rock-Run Culvert in DEIS and SDEIS, or oxbow in FEIS) would be significantly altered and affect flooding regimes on the Island.

In short, this plan would be disastrous to the continuity of long-term ecological and biodiversity research on Plummers Island, a primary reason for which the Club was founded in 1901.

As for the P3 plan, we believe it should be rejected that on grounds that:

- 1) The luxury tolling lanes will not speed traffic for most Marylanders'. This is social injustice.
- 2) Once the P3 bridge expansion with luxury tolling lanes plan is put into place there would be no turning back on extending the expansion and tolling around the beltway for the simple reason that the widened bridge would create a huge bottleneck where it connected with narrower portions of 495.
- 3) Handing the highway expansion project over to foreign corporate interests is a bad idea. Smaller tolls paid to Maryland and Federal Agencies by all crossing the bridge could pay for public investment in any improvements to the bridge.

We have a general concern regarding the negative impact of Single Occupancy Vehicles fueling climate change. Mass transit options are preferred.

Robert Soreng PhD
President of the Washington Biologists' Field Club (<http://WBFC.science>)
&
Resident of Montgomery Co.
5506 Uppingham St.
Chevy Chase, MD 20815

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY CITIZENS AGAINST BELTWAY EXPANSION
FOR HEARING ON TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES LETTER
JANUARY 24, 2023

Barbara Coufal, Co-Chair

Citizens Against Beltway Expansion is a voluntary community organization made up of Maryland residents and civic associations. We appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony.

The transportation priorities letter initiated by the Montgomery County Planning Board draws on a previous letter sent to then-MDOT Secretary Slater in 2020. The letter assumes that MDOT's plan to add private toll lanes to I-495 and I-270 will proceed.

The Elrich administration has appropriately redrafted the highway section of the letter to reflect ongoing concerns about the project and to urge that MDOT step back and work with the County on a better plan to address congestion on I-495 and I-270. We agree that the County should pursue a better plan.

In a November 2021 letter to MDOT, commenting on the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the project, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission stated that the toll lanes plan would not resolve congestion, only move the bottlenecks. They stated, "The Preferred Alternative does not eliminate congestion in the corridors studied but and [sic] instead shifts it from the vicinity of the ALB (e.g., McLean and Potomac) to other areas in Maryland. While some of these bottleneck shifts were expected, the degree of congestion resulting from the proposed project is severe on I-270 north of I-370, on the Inner Loop on the top side of the Beltway, and on the Inner Loop in Prince George's County." Toll lanes are not the answer.

Moreover, decades of research documents the failure of expanding highways to resolve congestion. The research shows that people change their driving habits and even move further from jobs in response to the expansion of a major road. In 1962, this problem was coined the Law of Peak-Hour Traffic Congestion. A [study](#) published in 2009 by the National Bureau of Economic Research confirmed that the expansion of most major roads is met with a proportional increase in traffic.

Widening highways only reduces congestion for a few years before traffic builds back up. Widening the American Legion Bridge, the western side of I-495 and I-270 would only be a short-term fix at considerable cost to the environment and our communities.

Widening these highways would increase vehicle miles traveled and the greenhouse gas emissions that pollute our air and worsen global warming. The expansion would damage Plummers Island and could displace burials at the historic Morningstar Moses Cemetery in Cabin John. It would also degrade water quality in Montgomery County. It is interesting to note that MDOT's mitigation plan for the toll lanes project relies heavily on the purchase of credits for the restoration of streams in Frederick

County, providing no benefit to streams that would be degraded by the toll lanes. It seems likely that a similar mitigation plan would be implemented for any plan to widen these highways.

Rather than widening the American Legion Bridge, I-495 and I-270, we urge the Council to press MDOT to explore more sustainable alternatives. In particular, the State should look at incentives to employers to encourage more telework. During the pandemic, the Maryland Transportation Institute found that just a 5% reduction in vehicles could reduce congestion by 32% to 58% on local freeways. A 15% reduction eliminated nearly all bottlenecks. Telework should be a key component of a congestion relief plan. Other alternatives include:

- Implement planned Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) on MD Route 355 (which runs parallel to I-270) and on MD Route 586 (Veirs Mill Road - which facilitates east-west trips).
- Expand service on the MARC Brunswick Line (which runs parallel to I-270).
- Implement/increase the number of commuter buses that run on I-270 and I-495, ideally on dedicated lanes.
- Increase the frequency and reliability of all bus services in the I-495 and I-270 corridors, ideally on dedicated lanes.
- Implement more protected bike lanes and trails along roadways in the I-495 and I-270 corridors.
- Use appropriate elements of the I-270 Innovative Congestion Management program on I-495; implement Transportation Systems Management and Operations as is being used on the Baltimore Beltway, adopt more Transportation Demand Management including telework, car and van pools and subsidized transit passes.
- Plan for more rail cars on the Purple Line and increased frequency.
- Extend the Purple Line across the American Legion Bridge to Tysons, VA.
- Mandate that employers above a certain size participate in sustainable commuter services programs such as Montgomery County's Fair Share for Employers Program or the Maryland Commuter Choice Program. Such mandates exist in Washington, DC, Washington State and New Jersey.
- Study the use of reversible lanes on I-270 and I-495 to manage rush hour traffic.

Widening I-495 and I-270 with toll lanes or general-purpose lanes will not solve congestion. We urge that the priorities letter press MDOT to pursue more sustainable solutions.

Testimony on Transportation Priorities Letter January 24, 2023

Hello, my name is Sally Stolz and I am Co-Coordinator of DontWiden270.org, a grassroots organization which five years ago began investigating the proposal to build a toll road down the middle of I-270.

Our research, which benefitted from collaboration with many other organizations and experts in transportation and traffic modeling, has revealed that this Public-Private Partnership, or “P3” project is most definitely not in the public interest.

We urge that the priorities letter reject the use of a public-private partnership. MDOT has yet to provide a comparison between P3 and regular procurement to show whether a P3 is financially advantageous for the State and for residents. The State Treasurer noted concerns about the uncertain financial risk of the P3 agreement. Unfortunately, Gov. Hogan refused her request for funding to engage the State’s bond attorney and financial advisor to review the P3 agreement with Transurban.

Private toll lanes are not designed to relieve congestion. They are designed to monetize it. According to the Final Environmental Impact Statement, those traveling in general purpose lanes during the evening rush hour from the George Washington Memorial Parkway to I-370 would experience a longer commute if toll lanes are built, compared with the “no build” alternative. In fact it would take 8 minutes and 54 seconds longer to travel this stretch of the general purpose lanes during the evening peak period.

Yes, drivers could choose to pay the toll. In November, 2021, the Maryland Transportation Authority approved the Maximum Toll Rate Ranges which vary for many vehicle types. The least expensive is regular passenger vehicles. The rate for them in 2021 was \$3.76 per mile.

But they also approved an annual escalation clause. Every year the rates go up by a fixed 2.1% plus the annual change in the Washington Metro Consumer Price Index from January to January. Using that formula, the maximum toll rate for a passenger vehicle in 2022 would be around \$4.05 per mile. And every single year it would automatically leap up.

Most Montgomery County residents cannot afford to pay these tolls. Governor Moore’s motto is “Leave No One Behind”. But this P3 Toll Road would leave MOST Marylanders behind. It is costly and risky for Maryland taxpayers and will create congestion. Please remove it completely from the Transportation Priorities Letter.

January 18, 2023

FY24-29 CTP

TO: Montgomery County Council
Montgomery County Executive
FROM: Jane Lyons-Raeder
ISSUE: Letter on FY2024-2029 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP)

My name is Jane Lyons-Raeder and I'm a renter in downtown Silver Spring. I am writing in regard to Montgomery County's letter on the FY2024-2029 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP). Thank you for the draft letter's focus on Vision Zero, bus rapid transit, supporting Ride On, WMATA, and other investments that will improve the safety and accessibility of walking, biking, and using transit. These projects will make Montgomery County a better place for everyone to travel and move through.

I would like to strongly encourage the Council to reverse its current supportive stance on the addition of express toll lanes on I-270 and the western side of I-495. Although the draft letter is largely skeptical of the current status of the project, it is not the rebuke that is warranted. Even without an expansion of the right-of-way, additional highway capacity will be harmful to our built and natural environment, and will only address congestion for those who are willing to pay a often hefty toll. The business model of express toll lanes relies on general purpose lanes remaining congested so that paying the toll will be an attractive option.

This is in addition to the reality of induced demand – which is the proven and long-standing principle that increased capacity incentivises higher use and new sprawl development further out along the highway corridor – leading to the road filling back up again and congestion remaining unchanged. As a side effect of this process, our greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution will only continue to increase. There are extremely few justifiable highway capacity expansions amidst a climate emergency, and it has been disappointing to see elected leaders who otherwise support addressing climate change forget their commitment when it comes to making it easier for people to drive.

I also encourage you to question whether the American Legion Bridge actually needs capacity expansion. This is an adage that has often been repeated by politicians, without supporting data.

Thank you.

January 22, 2023

Re: Transportation Priorities comments

I am writing comments as an individual although as chair of League of Women Voters Montgomery County (LWVMC) transportation and land use committee and the lead for the League's state (LWVMD) transportation program these are issues that are followed closely. And of course, all transportation areas will depend on how the new administration will act with transportation, the new Secretary of Transportation, and their effects on MDOT.

Bus Rapid Transit – The county has made strides with its own funding and funding from the federal government and it's beyond time for the state to also help fund BRT projects. The various BRT lines are literally a backbone for economic development and the state should be part of its implementation.

Vision Zero – The state and county have not made the progress that should occur. We have not seen a decline in deaths or injuries that should have happened as people were driving less. A point that should be emphasized is that [Hoboken New Jersey](#) has had zero deaths for FOUR years. As we build more amenable places for bikes and pedestrians, this is increasingly important.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities – As we change master and sector plans to accommodate bikes and peds, the state should encourage and not discourage changes to roads and paths.

Locally Oriented Transit Support – As part of the Better Buses coalition, I see buses as an important option for all people and not just people who can't afford to own a car. On a recent ride (which was actually on a METRO bus) it was packed! Often times people see buses go by that are nearly empty which give the impression that buses aren't used as much as they should be. Developing a frequent and reliable system is key to encouraging more people to ride. Electrifying the fleet is important to our climate goals and the sooner that can happen with better cooperation with the state, we can see improvement. Where is the red paint for bus only lanes? Other jurisdictions are implementing this low cost improvement.

Commuter Rail Expansion – We often bemoan the poor transit options to our upcounty residents. Here is an area that is so ripe for investment and change. The state passed a bill last year to enable rail expansion both within the state and extensions to other jurisdictions. Rail and bus travel is not just during what used to be commuting for job hours. We need to recognize that all forms of transit need to run all day, every day, and in all directions to accommodate the county population and our growing land use patterns of development.

State Highways – Shall we say that the scariest roads in the county come under SHA's jurisdiction? It is difficult to make safety changes like paint, patterns, signal changes, construction, etc. along any road that is controlled by SHA. Better communication, then action between local jurisdictions and the state are essential to making roads safer.

Interstate Programs – PLEASE change this document so it reflects local input for the proposed expansion of I-495 and I-270. Now is the time to include so many alternatives that were automatically excluded in the evaluation of these roads. Transit, including the expansion of MARC, our [Great Seneca Plan](#), our [Corridor Forward Plan](#) were all excluded from any proposal. The fact that these proposals weren't even considered among alternatives shows short-sight. The P3 agreement with Transurban was never

transparent. Just because Virginia has used Transurban (an Australian company that is privately held so stockholders benefit) is no reason for Maryland taxpayers to be monetarily funding them. As the state and county have environmental standards and goals that must be reached, let's incorporate those standards into this project. What are some alternatives to the proposal? [Maryland Advocates for Sustainable Transportation](#) (MAST) recently came out with a list of some possibilities. Please look at alternatives that don't include expansion and induced demand.

Just as each county bill has a review and vetting system to accommodate the county's diversity of economics and races, energy and building standards, our environment and numerous other lenses that each bill must be viewed within, let's do the same for this document.

Bee (Barbara) Ditzler



Don & Tina Slater

[REDACTED]
January 23, 2023

To: President Glass and County Councilmembers

From: Tina Slater slater.tina@gmail.com

Subject: State Transportation Priorities Letter Hearing

Dear President Glass and County Councilmembers:

The State Transportation Priorities letter has many good projects listed. My testimony is focused on just one project --- the "Interstate Program" (Toll Road Expansion of I-270 and I-495).

This project is very controversial, there is pending litigation, and now we have a new Governor. Thus, this may be the opportune time to revisit the project. Not only can there be major difficulties and cost surprises with P3 projects (witness the Purple Line project, which I do support), but the "Interstate Program" claims to be funded with high-priced tolls.

With a new Governor, we have an opportunity to pause and reconsider other more equitable and sustainable approaches. Here are some examples:

- Consider Federal aid for refurbishing the American Legion Bridge
- Study expansion of MARC Brunswick line service from Shady Grove and north, to get more people to switch from cars on I-270 to MARC and Metro.
- Implement MD Route 355 BRT (it runs parallel to I-270)
- Turn one or possibly two one-way lanes on I-270 into reversible lanes to handle rush hour traffic. Look at this possibility for I-495.
- When the Purple Line opens (it runs parallel to I-495), consider adding more rail cars and increase frequency
- Mandate that employers above a certain size participate in sustainable commuter services programs (e.g., MC's Fair Share for Employers Program, or the MD Commuter Choice Program). Note that such mandates exist in Washington DC, Washington State and New Jersey.

To follow Governor Moore's axiom: "Leave No One Behind", let's promote alternatives that benefit the many, rather than just the few who are rich enough to pay the high tolls.

From: Tame Coalition <tamecoalition@gmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, January 24, 2023 9:03 AM

To: County Council <County.Council@montgomerycountymd.gov>; Albornoz's Office, Councilmember <Councilmember.Albornoz@montgomerycountymd.gov>; Glass's Office, Councilmember <Councilmember.Glass@montgomerycountymd.gov>; Jawando's Office, Councilmember <Councilmember.Jawando@montgomerycountymd.gov>; Friedson's Office, Councilmember <Councilmember.Friedson@montgomerycountymd.gov>; Balcombe's Office, Councilmember <Councilmember.Balcombe@montgomerycountymd.gov>; Fani-Gonzalez's Office, Councilmember <Councilmember.Fani-Gonzalez@montgomerycountymd.gov>; Katz's Office, Councilmember <Councilmember.Katz@montgomerycountymd.gov>; Luedtke's Office, Councilmember <Councilmember.Luedtke@montgomerycountymd.gov>; Mink's Office, Councilmember <Councilmember.Mink@montgomerycountymd.gov>; Sayles's Office, Councilmember <Councilmember.Sayles@montgomerycountymd.gov>; Stewart's Office, Councilmember <Councilmember.Stewart@montgomerycountymd.gov>

Cc: Marc Elrich <Marc.Elrich@montgomerycountymd.gov>

Subject: Public Hearing - Transportation Priorities Letter 2023

[EXTERNAL EMAIL]

Good Afternoon Council,

My name is Margaret Schoap, Organizer of the TAME Coalition. We are a single-issue advocacy group dedicated to promoting Transit Alternatives to Mid-County Highway Extended, known at the M-83 Highway.

The Purpose of the Tame Coalition is to protect the communities, streams, and forests of Montgomery Village, Gaithersburg, Germantown and Clarksburg from being damaged and destroyed by the proposed M-83 Highway. The TAME Coalition advocates cancelling the proposed M83 Highway and promoting People-Centric Transportation Alternatives.

As you work on updating the Transportation Priorities Letter to our state legislators, the TAME Coalition requests the Council keep BRT on State Route 355 North into Clarksburg as the highest priority rather than detouring it onto secondary roads, which eliminates BRT from being Rapid; and secondly, to actively work to expand MARC Train service. We request improving existing roadways for relieving traffic congestion. We request that the Federal Infrastructure Assistance which our County will receive be prioritized for People-Centric transportation alternatives.

This shift to people-centric transportation in the Upcounty enables progress towards climate justice, including permanent preservation of the Climate Resilience Forest of Great Seneca Creek and its tributaries. This Climate Resilience Forest continues to absorb summertime heat, and to provide clean air and water, and nature-based outdoor recreation, to residents of Montgomery Village, Gaithersburg, Germantown and Clarksburg.

[MCDOT's Midcounty Corridor Supplemental Study Report](#) found that when it excluded the proposed M-83 Highway from its analysis, and focused instead on Bus Rapid Transit on Route 355, with improvements to existing intersections and roads, congestion relief was best.

As you are aware, last year the Council of Governments/Transportation Planning Board COG/TPB removed Midcounty Highway Extended from its Vision 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plans.

We at TAME Coalition schedule informative hikes throughout the year along the M83 Highway Right-of-Way for elected officials to see what destruction would occur to established neighborhoods and to our valuable interior forest ecosystems if they were destroyed. We thank Marilyn Balcombe for attending one of our hikes last November; and will continue to invite Council members to join us.

Margaret Schoap, Organizer

240-581-0518 cell

Diane Cameron, Volunteer

301-655-6049 cell

<http://www.tamecoalition.org/>



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

MEMORANDUM

To: T&E Committee
From: Councilmember Natali Fani-González
Date: January 27, 2023
Re: Creating a boulevard on Georgia Avenue

As you consider the latest iteration of the County's Transportation Priorities Letter to the State, I respectfully request that you include language that supports the idea of making Georgia Avenue a boulevard from Forest Glen to Aspen Hill. Transforming Georgia Avenue into a safe and visually appealing boulevard to walk, bike, roll and drive will support placemaking, redevelopment, and economic development through the corridor.

This transformation is long overdue and we must drastically improve safety in the corridor, particularly for pedestrians and bicyclists. In fact, the 2012 Wheaton Central Business District and Vicinity Sector Plan explicitly calls for redesigning Georgia Avenue as an urban boulevard "with enhanced medians and crosswalks, street trees, and street-oriented retail where appropriate" that is "intended to accommodate the expected development of a network of express bus routes in designated lanes."

Realizing this vision is tremendously urgent. Our community is dying on Georgia Ave. By most metrics, Georgia Avenue is among the deadliest, if not the most deadliest, road in the County. From 2015-2019 it had the most serious/deadly collisions at 28, and the second highest rate per mile per year at 2.9 (slightly behind New Hampshire Avenue). We must use every single tool available to protect our residents.

PRIORITY CORRIDORS FOR COUNTY AND STATE MAINTAINED ROADWAYS

Roadway	Serious and Fatal Collisions	Segment Length (Miles)	Serious and Fatal Collisions per Mile Per Year
County-maintained Roadways			
A East Gude Dr from Crabbs Branch Way to Southlawn Ln	11	1.1	2.0
B Snouffer School Rd from Cherry Laurel Ln to Woodfield Rd	4	0.4	2.0
C Lost Knife Rd from Montgomery Village Ave to Odenhal Ave	4	0.5	1.6
D Shady Grove Rd from Frederick Rd to Midcounty Hwy	14	2.0	1.4
E Randolph Rd from Connecticut Ave to Georgia Ave	9	1.3	1.4
F Middlebrook Rd from Germantown Rd to I-270	8	1.3	1.2
G Randolph Rd from Kemp Mill Rd to New Hampshire Ave	7	1.7	0.8
H Crystal Rock Dr from Father Hurley Blvd to Germantown Rd	4	1.0	0.8
I Bel Pre Rd From Georgia Ave to Layhill Rd	6	1.9	0.6
J Montgomery Village Ave from Snouffer School Rd to Midcounty Hwy	5	2.4	0.4
State-maintained Roadways			
1 New Hampshire Ave from I-495 to Northampton Dr	14	0.9	3.1
2 Georgia Ave from University Blvd W to Forest Glen Rd	28	1.9	2.9
3 Germantown Rd from Middlebrook Rd to I-270	8	0.6	2.7
4 University Blvd W from Georgia Ave to Arcola Ave	17	1.5	2.3
5 Georgia Ave from Aspen Hill Rd to Layhill Rd	22	2.2	2.0
6 Rockville Pike from Talbott St to Montrose Rd	11	1.2	1.8
7 Old Georgetown Rd from I-270 Spur to I-495	10	1.1	1.8
8 Norbeck Rd from Baltimore Rd to Georgia Ave	17	2.2	1.5
9 Frederick Rd from Middlebrook Rd to Watkins Mill Rd	15	2.0	1.5
10 Connecticut Ave from Georgia Ave to Weller Rd	12	1.6	1.5

Credit: Montgomery County Government

I am grateful that a similar redesign is fully funded and already underway on the southern portion of Georgia Avenue in Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills. The vision I am advocating for would extend these benefits northward into Downtown Wheaton, Glenmont, and Aspen Hill until at least reaching Route 200, just after the intersection with Norbeck.

I recognize that a project of this size would likely require a sizable investment and phasing. To that end, I would suggest the following segments in order of priority:

1. From Forest Glen Road through the Wheaton CBD
2. From the Wheaton CBD to the Glenmont Metro Station
3. From the Glenmont Metro Station to Aspen Hill

Let's urgently work together for this transformation, and I hope you will agree to include it in the Committee's recommendation.



Montgomery County Government

ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

February 7, 2023

The Honorable Paul Wiedefeld, Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Drive, P.O. Box 548
Hanover, MD 21076

Dear Secretary Wiedefeld,

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. The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) has continued to make significant contributions to the transportation network in Montgomery County, including providing needed funding for WMATA, nearing completion of the I-270 Innovative Congestion Management project, programming funds for the construction of the Georgia Avenue improvements through Montgomery Hills, and advancing construction of the Purple Line.

Notwithstanding these accomplishments, our County continues to need expanded investment in its transportation system. For the FY2024-2029 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.

Vision Zero Implementation

In 2022 there were 514 fatal accidents resulting in 544 fatalities in the State of Maryland. Within Montgomery County alone 574 pedestrians and bicyclists were crash victims, 19 of them fatally. Vision Zero was adopted by the State and many of its subdivisions—including Montgomery County—to address this literally life and death matter. Vision Zero is not a stand-alone activity, rather it is a culture shift to a systematic safety approach. In past decades, the road network in Montgomery County was developed under policies designed to increase speed, minimize delay, and maximize throughput for motor vehicle traffic. While motor vehicle travel is an important piece of our transportation system, emphasis on walking, biking, and transit access are, appropriately, higher priorities for investment in the road network today. In addition to education, enforcement, and advocacy, implementation of Vision Zero through engineering needs to inform every change made to the design and operation of the road network.

Montgomery County is in the sixth year of its Vision Zero action plan. The first five

years of the County's program brought improved collaboration with MDOT in the identification of high-hazard locations and implementation of safety countermeasures on both State and County roads. An example of the progress that has been made is MDOT/State Highway Administration's (SHA) *Context Driven Access and Mobility for All Users* guide, and MDOT SHA's involvement in the development of the Montgomery County Complete Streets Design Guide.

While progress has been made, we continue to see significant numbers of severe and fatal crashes on our road network, particularly for pedestrians. To achieve our Vision Zero goals, in addition to continuing work on improving guidelines and standards, we need MDOT to increase the allocation of resources to implement pedestrian and bicycle safety, accessibility projects, and speed reduction strategies. We request that MDOT initiate a new statewide program with significant funding to expedite implementation of pedestrian and bicycle safety engineering improvements with a particular emphasis on Equity Emphasis Areas and transit access. In addition, MDOT/SHA should continue to evaluate every project it is undertaking to make sure the projects are informed by Vision Zero and will result in improved safety outcomes. Finally, we urge MDOT to review its access permit policies to look for opportunities to expedite Vision Zero projects that are implemented by local jurisdictions within the State right-of-way. Often MDOT and MCDOT collaborate on strategies to implement a needed Vision Zero improvement, only to have the project experience substantial delay in obtaining the necessary approvals from the various technical branches within MDOT.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Implementation

Bus Rapid Transit is a key element of the County's Master Plan. It is critical both our transportation network and expanding the economy of Maryland in Montgomery County. Our success depends on implementing a comprehensive BRT network throughout the County.

Building upon prior MDOT planning activities, the County has initiated design of BRT on MD 355 between Clarksburg and Bethesda and on MD 586 (Veirs Mill Road) between Rockville and Wheaton. These two projects will unlock the redevelopment potential of North Bethesda and will improve transit service to the thousands of daily transit riders who depend on services connecting Wheaton and Rockville.

Creating this network demands that we advance many of our BRT projects simultaneously. Based on current the current status of each project (planning, design, construction, etc.) and funding needs, our top priorities for the County within the next few years include in priority order: 1) MD 355 Central BRT, 2) Veirs Mill Road BRT, 3) continued advancement of the Median Lane BRT concept on US 29, 4) MD 355 North BRT, 5) New Hampshire Avenue BRT, 6) North Bethesda Transitway, 7) Park-and-Ride expansions, 8) MD 355 South BRT, and 9) Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan implementation,

Bus Rapid Transit is a key element of the County's Master Plan. The top priorities for the County within the next few years include in priority order: 1) MD 355 Central BRT, 2) Veirs Mill Road BRT, 3) Continued advancement of the Median Lane BRT concept on US 29, 4) MD 355 North BRT, 5) North Bethesda Transitway, 6) New Hampshire Avenue BRT, 7) Park and ride expansions, 8) MD 355 South BRT, and 9) I-270 Transit Corridor Connectors.

1. ***MD 355 Central BRT.*** We have programmed the promised funding from the Opportunities Lane project to comprise most of the local match for anticipated federal funds to build the center section of the MD 355 BRT between Montgomery College-Rockville and Montgomery College-Germantown.
2. ***Veirs Mill Road BRT.*** The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has recently authorized us to enter project development for the Veirs Mill Road BRT from Montgomery College-Rockville to Wheaton. As both corridors are state highways, MDOT's engagement during design and construction and financial participation in these projects will be important.
3. ***US 29 Phase 2 BRT.*** FLASH on US 29 – the first of its kind in Maryland – opened in 2020. Montgomery County will need MDOT assistance and cooperation to continue advancement of our BRT system that is critical to expanding the economy of Maryland in Montgomery County. Additionally, we thank the State for completing repairs to the shoulders on US 29 and ask that the shoulder condition remain a high maintenance priority on this roadway. We appreciate the State's \$5 million contribution to the design of the Median Lane BRT concept to improve transit travel time reliability between Tech Road and Downtown Silver Spring. Preliminary design is scheduled for completion by FY25, and we request that the State participate in the local match to federal aid we will be soliciting for this project.
4. ***MD 355 North BRT.*** This segment would connect to the MD 355 Central BRT service with a northern extension between Montgomery College-Germantown and Clarksburg. This BRT service is needed, given the lack of high-quality transit to Clarksburg. We will be applying for federal assistance for this BRT extension.
5. ***New Hampshire Avenue BRT.*** Planning is underway for BRT in the MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue) corridor. This is a candidate State-led project for construction as it is in both Montgomery and Prince George's Counties and connects into the District of Columbia at the Fort Totten Metro Station. In addition, this corridor provides vital links to the Food and Drug Administration's White Oak Headquarters, a key economic engine for the East County. Given the multijurisdictional nature of this project, its implementation should be led by MDOT once the planning is completed in FY24.
6. ***North Bethesda Transitway.*** The North Bethesda Transitway will provide a vital link between the Metrorail Red Line and Northern Virginia via Phase I South of the Opportunity Lanes project, and it will also provide a substantial economic

opportunity by linking the Rock Spring area to the Red Line. Its planning will be completed later this fiscal year and we will be looking to MDOT to help fund construction starting in the next couple of years.

7. ***Park-and-Ride Expansions.*** Park-and-ride capacity is of limited supply and heavily used in Montgomery County. Key locations in need of park-and-ride facility expansions include Burtonsville, and along the I-270/MD 355 corridor in Clarksburg, Germantown, and Gaithersburg to accommodate local commuters and those from Frederick, Carroll, and Washington counties.
8. ***MD 355 South BRT.*** This segment would connect to the MD 355 Central BRT service with a southern extension between Montgomery College-Rockville and Bethesda. We will be applying for federal assistance for this BRT extension.
9. ***I-270 Transit Corridor Connectors.*** The Council recently adopted Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan. This plan identified the MD 355 and MD 586 BRT projects as the most crucial first steps in improving transit accessibility along the I-270 corridor. The Plan also replaced the Corridor Cities Transitway concept with a series Corridor Connectors, dedicated bus lanes that link key activity and employment centers to the County's primary north-south rapid transit lines, as well as Metrorail and the MARC Rail Brunswick line. These projects are key ingredients to the success of the biotechnology industry in the Great Seneca Science Corridor and state engagement in their implementation is important to the economic strength of Maryland. We wish to emphasize the importance of the I-270 Transit Corridor Connectors and the years of commitments made to the communities that will be served by the Corridor Connectors and the County's emphasis on the life sciences industry. We request that the State change the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) Project Information Form (PIF) in the CTP to reference "I-270 Transit Corridor Connectors" and provide funding for additional buses to operate the Great Seneca Science Corridors project embedded in this plan.

Locally Operated Transit Support (LOTS)

We thank MDOT for its capital and operating support of the Montgomery County Transit System, including Ride On, Ride On Extra, the Flex and, starting in 2020, the Flash. Sustained financial support from MDOT is critical to providing quality transit service in Montgomery County. Priorities for Locally Operated Transit Support include:

1. ***Zero emission bus infrastructure.*** The County is transitioning to an entirely zero-emission bus fleet. As part of our strategy, we will invest in zero emission buses as a regular component of its transit fleet. To enable this transition from traditional fuels, we request State technical and financial assistance with the installation of electric charging infrastructure at the three County transit depots, including funding to support the replacement of our Nicholson Court Depot, which is currently leased and cannot accommodate zero-emission buses.

2. ***Ride On ExtRa.*** Services like the Ride On ExtRa, operating on MD 355 between Lake Forest and Medical Center, have proven to be an effective model for improving the performance of transit and attracting additional customers. Montgomery County requests increased assistance through the LOTS program to extend Ride On ExtRa to Germantown and Bethesda and to operate the service all day instead of its current peak period configuration.
3. ***LOTS Grants.*** Inflation, increased fuel costs, and competition for a shrinking pool of CDL drivers are driving up the cost to deliver Transit services in the aftermath of the COVID 19 Pandemic. We request that LOTS grants be increased annually based on the prior year's Consumer Price Index (CPI-U).

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Investment

MDOT should be commended for providing major capital and operating support to WMATA. Priorities for WMATA include:

1. ***North Bethesda North Metro Entrance.*** The County has identified a second entrance at the North Bethesda Station as a high priority improvement. The County has fully budgeted its design and 25% of the funds needed to construct it. It is key to improving the economic vitality of North Bethesda in general and for the biotech industry there in particular. We ask for MDOT's advocacy to include the balance of funds needed to build this project in WMATA's Capital Program.
2. ***Metrobus priority treatments.*** We ask for State financial support to implement bus priority treatments that will be recommended in the ongoing WMATA Better Bus Network and the Ride On Reimagined Study.

Commuter Rail Expansion

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 through enhancements to the service and increasing the system's accessibility. The potential of the MARC system is even more significant with direct connection to the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) system to provide seamless links between key activity centers in Northern Virginia and those in Montgomery County. Priorities for MARC enhancements include:

1. ***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 and Northern Virginia. Changes in commuting patterns in the wake of the pandemic presents an opportunity to modify service to better serve commuters throughout the day. Other commuter rail providers, such as the Massachusetts Bay

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Interstate Program

The County has been an active participant in the MDOT/SHA process for projects on I-270 and I-495. We agree with the need to improve the performance of these corridors by looking at options that include expanding transit, but also recognize that stronger communication and

collaboration with the new administration is needed.

As the Virginia Department of Transportation continues to build an extension of the I-495 Express Lanes up to the George Washington Memorial Parkway, questions remain about the replacement of the American Legion Bridge, changes to the highways further north, advancement of transit commitments and ongoing litigation. These remaining questions and the new administration's commitment to partner with local leaders and community stakeholders reinforce the need to work collaboratively to ensure that projects are delivered in ways that move us closer to our transportation, environmental and economic development goals.

We acknowledge the recent announcement of a coordinated approach between Maryland and Virginia to address the American Legion Bridge. Additionally, we urge the state to maximize federal aid to ensure the delivery of major transit improvements like BRT on MD 355, Veirs Mill Road, Old Georgetown Road, and in the Great Seneca Corridor being advanced through planning and design by the County.

We have an opportunity to reset the dialog around the transportation needs in the I-270/I-495 corridor. The previous efforts provide a baseline for future partnership and the county will continue to urge for deeper collaboration and improvements to the project as a whole. Openness to new approaches and possibilities, can lead to a much better outcome and more consensus on how we should collectively move forward as a county and region.

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,

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Evan Glass, President
County Council

cc: The Honorable Wes Moore, Governor, State of Maryland
Montgomery County House Delegation
Montgomery County Senate Delegation



Committee: T&E
Staff: Glenn Orlin, Senior Analyst
Purpose: Final action – vote expected
Keywords: #StateTransportationPriorities

AGENDA ITEM #11
February 7, 2023
ADDENDUM
Action

SUBJECT

Joint Council/Executive Letter on State Transportation Priorities –**ADDENDUM**

BACKGROUND

The Executive has reviewed the T&E Committee’s recommended letter. DOT Director Conklin has forwarded it to the Council for its consideration at the February 7 worksession. The letter shows the Executive’s proposed revisions to the T&E draft in ‘track changes’.

This addendum contains:

Director Conklin’s transmittal email

©59

Executive’s proposed revisions to T&E Committee’s draft

©60-68

Alternative format requests for people with disabilities. If you need assistance accessing this report you may [submit alternative format requests](#) to the ADA Compliance Manager. The ADA Compliance Manager can also be reached at 240-777-6197 (TTY 240-777-6196) or at adacompliance@montgomerycountymd.gov

From: [Conklin, Christopher](#)
To: [Glass, Evan](#); [Orlin, Glenn](#)
Subject: Proposed Executive Edits to the T&E Committee Draft
Date: Monday, February 6, 2023 2:59:35 PM
Attachments: [TE Draft Executive Edits 02062023.docx](#)

Dear Council President and Dr. Orlin,

The attached revisions to the T&E Committee Draft of the 2023 Priorities Letter are for your review and consideration during tomorrow's Council worksession. We have tried to minimize changes as we work toward a consensus letter. The most significant changes are strongly recommending that MD 355 BRT be treated as a single project in this letter as the current geographic elements are driven primarily by financial capacity rather than the desirability or need for elements of the project. While it looks like a major edit, it is also recommended that we move the I-270 Transit Corridor Connectors higher in the list as it is currently being advanced in our program and funding is needed for the next lines that have been planned. The text is moved but not substantially revised. Proposed edits to the section on I-270/I-495 are also provided, but I believe these are in keeping with the spirit of the draft sent to us last week.

Sincerely,

Chris

Christopher Conklin, Director
Montgomery County Department of Transportation
240-777-7198



For more helpful Cybersecurity Resources, visit:
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cybersecurity>



February 7, 2023

The Honorable Paul Wiedefeld, Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Drive, P.O. Box 548
Hanover, MD 21076

Dear Secretary Wiedefeld,

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. The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) has continued to make significant contributions to the transportation network in Montgomery County, including providing needed funding for WMATA, nearing completion of the I-270 Innovative Congestion Management project, programming funds for the construction of the Georgia Avenue improvements through Montgomery Hills, and advancing construction of the Purple Line.

Notwithstanding these accomplishments, our County continues to need expanded investment in its transportation system. For the FY2024-2029 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.

Vision Zero Implementation

In 2022 there were 514 fatal accidents resulting in 544 fatalities in the State of Maryland. Within Montgomery County alone 574 pedestrians and bicyclists were crash victims, 19 of them died on our roads. Vision Zero was adopted by the State and many of its subdivisions—including Montgomery County—to address this literally life and death matter. Vision Zero is not a stand-alone activity, rather it is a culture shift to a systematic safety approach. In past decades, the road network in Montgomery County was developed under policies designed to increase speed, minimize delay, and maximize throughput for motor vehicle traffic. While motor vehicle travel is an important piece of our transportation system, emphasis on walking, biking, and transit access are, appropriately, higher priorities for investment in the road network today. In addition to education, enforcement, and advocacy, implementation of Vision Zero through engineering needs to inform every change made to the design and operation of the road network.

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Montgomery County is in the sixth year of its Vision Zero action plan. The first five years

of the County's program brought improved collaboration with MDOT in the identification of high-hazard locations and implementation of safety countermeasures on both State and County roads. An example of the progress that has been made is MDOT/State Highway Administration's (SHA) *Context Driven Access and Mobility for All Users* guide, and MDOT SHA's involvement in the development of the Montgomery County Complete Streets Design Guide.

While progress has been made, we continue to see significant numbers of severe and fatal crashes on our road network, particularly for pedestrians. To achieve our Vision Zero goals, in addition to continuing work on improving guidelines and standards, we need MDOT to increase the allocation of resources to implement pedestrian and bicycle safety, accessibility projects, and speed reduction strategies. We request that MDOT initiate a new statewide program with significant funding to expedite implementation of pedestrian and bicycle safety engineering improvements with a particular emphasis on Equity Emphasis Areas and transit access. In addition, MDOT/SHA should continue to evaluate every project it is undertaking to make sure the projects are informed by Vision Zero and will result in improved safety outcomes. Finally, we urge MDOT to review its access permit policies to look for opportunities to expedite Vision Zero projects that are implemented by local jurisdictions within the State right-of-way. Often MDOT and MCDOT collaborate on strategies to implement a needed Vision Zero improvement, only to have the project experience substantial delay in obtaining the necessary approvals from the various technical branches within MDOT.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Implementation

Bus Rapid Transit is a key element of the County's Master Plan. It is critical both our transportation network and expanding the economy of Maryland in Montgomery County. Our success depends on implementing a comprehensive BRT network throughout the County.

The County is at the midpoint of design of BRT on MD 355 between Clarksburg and Bethesda and has nearly completed design of MD 586 (Veirs Mill Road) between Rockville and Wheaton. These two projects will unlock the redevelopment potential of North Bethesda and will improve transit service to the thousands of daily transit riders who depend on services connecting Wheaton and Rockville.

Creating this network demands that we advance many of our BRT projects simultaneously. Our top priorities for the County within the next few years are listed below.

1. MD 355 BRT. Due to funding limitations, the MD 355 project is presented as three separate projects in the County Capital Improvement Program. However, it is important that we advance the entire project as quickly as possible to meet the transit access needs of the Upcounty, connect major activity centers between Germantown and Rockville, and support the major development opportunities in North Bethesda. Last year, the County programmed the promised funding from the Opportunities Lane project to comprise most of the local match for anticipated federal funds to build the center section of the MD 355 BRT between Montgomery College-Rockville and Montgomery College-Germantown and design is underway for all segments of the project

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Bus Rapid Transit is a key element of the County's Master Plan. The top priorities for the County within the next few years include in priority order: 1) MD 355 Central BRT, 2) Veirs Mill Road BRT, 3) Continued advancement of the Median Lane BRT concept on US 29, 4) MD 355 North BRT, 5) North Bethesda Transitway, 6) New Hampshire Avenue BRT, 7) Park and ride expansions, 8) MD 355 South BRT, and 9) I-270 Transit Corridor Connectors.

2. **Veirs Mill Road BRT.** The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has recently authorized us to enter project development for the Veirs Mill Road BRT from Montgomery College-Rockville to Wheaton. As both corridors are state highways, MDOT’s engagement during design and construction and financial participation in these projects will be important.

Deleted: ~~<#>MD 355 Central BRT.~~ We have programmed the promised funding from the Opportunities Lane project to comprise most of the local match for anticipated federal funds to build the center section of the MD 355 BRT between Montgomery College-Rockville and Montgomery College-Germantown. ¶

3. **US 29 Phase 2 BRT.** FLASH on US 29 – the first of its kind in Maryland – opened in 2020. Montgomery County will need MDOT assistance and cooperation to continue advancement of our BRT system that is critical to expanding the economy of Maryland in Montgomery County. We appreciate the State’s \$5 million contribution to the design of the Median Lane BRT concept to improve transit travel time reliability between Tech Road and Downtown Silver Spring. Preliminary design is scheduled for completion by FY25, and we request that the State participate in the local match to federal aid we will be soliciting for this project.

Deleted: Additionally, we thank the State for completing repairs to the shoulders on US 29 and ask that the shoulder condition remain a high maintenance priority on this roadway.

4. **New Hampshire Avenue BRT.** Planning is underway for BRT in the MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue) corridor. This is a candidate State-led project for construction as it is in both Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties and connects into the District of Columbia at the Fort Totten Metro Station. In addition, this corridor provides vital links to the Food and Drug Administration’s White Oak Headquarters, a key economic engine for the East County. Given the multijurisdictional nature of this project, its implementation should be led by MDOT once the planning is completed in FY24.

Deleted: ~~<#>MD 355 North BRT.~~ This segment would connect to the MD 355 Central BRT service with a northern extension between Montgomery College-Germantown and Clarksburg. This BRT service is needed, given the lack of high-quality transit to Clarksburg. We will be applying for federal assistance for this BRT extension. ¶

5. **North Bethesda Transitway.** The North Bethesda Transitway will provide a vital link between the Metrorail Red Line and Northern Virginia via Phase I South of the Opportunity Lanes project, and it will also provide a substantial economic opportunity by linking the Rock Spring area to the Red Line. Its planning will be completed later this fiscal year and we will be looking to MDOT to help fund construction starting in the next couple of years.

6. **I-270 Transit Corridor Connectors.** The Council recently adopted Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan. This plan identified the MD 355 and MD 586 BRT projects as the most crucial first steps in improving transit accessibility along the I-270 corridor. The Plan also replaced the Corridor Cities Transitway concept with a series Corridor Connectors, dedicated bus lanes that link key activity and employment centers to the County’s primary north-south rapid transit lines, as well as Metrorail and the MARC Rail Brunswick line. These projects are key ingredients to the success of the biotechnology industry in the Great Seneca Science Corridor and state engagement in their implementation is important to the economic strength of Maryland. We wish to emphasize the importance of the I-270 Transit Corridor Connectors and the years of commitments made to the communities that will be served by the Corridor Connectors and the County’s emphasis on the life sciences industry. We request that the State change the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) Project Information Form (PIF) in the CTP to reference “I-270 Transit Corridor Connectors” and provide funding for

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[additional buses to operate the Great Seneca Science Corridors project embedded in this plan.](#)

7. **Park-and-Ride Expansions.** Park-and-ride capacity is of limited supply and heavily used in Montgomery County. Key locations in need of park-and-ride facility expansions include Burtonsville, and along the I-270/MD 355 corridor in Clarksburg, Germantown, and Gaithersburg to accommodate local commuters and those from Frederick, Carroll, and Washington counties.

Locally Operated Transit Support (LOTS)

We thank MDOT for its capital and operating support of the Montgomery County Transit System, including Ride On, Ride On Extra, the Flex and, starting in 2020, the Flash. Sustained financial support from MDOT is critical to providing quality transit service in Montgomery County. Priorities for Locally Operated Transit Support include:

1. **Zero emission bus infrastructure.** The County is transitioning to an entirely zero-emission bus fleet. As part of our strategy, we will invest in zero emission buses as a regular component of its transit fleet. To enable this transition from traditional fuels, we request State technical and financial assistance with the installation of electric charging infrastructure at the three County transit depots, including funding to support the replacement of our Nicholson Court Depot, which is currently leased and cannot accommodate zero-emission buses.
2. **Ride On ExtRa.** Services like the Ride On ExtRa, operating on MD 355 between Lake Forest and Medical Center, have proven to be an effective model for improving the performance of transit and attracting additional customers. Montgomery County requests increased assistance through the LOTS program to extend Ride On ExtRa to Germantown and Bethesda and to operate the service all day instead of its current peak period configuration.
3. **LOTS Grants.** Inflation, increased fuel costs, and competition for a shrinking pool of CDL drivers are driving up the cost to deliver Transit services in the aftermath of the COVID 19 Pandemic. We request that LOTS grants be increased annually based on the prior year's Consumer Price Index (CPI-U).

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Investment

MDOT should be commended for providing major capital and operating support to WMATA. Priorities for WMATA include:

1. **North Bethesda North Metro Entrance.** The County has identified a second entrance at the North Bethesda Station as a high priority improvement. The County has fully budgeted its design and 25% of the funds needed to construct it. It is key to improving

Moved up [1]: ~~MD 355 South BRT~~ **I-270 Transit Corridor Connectors.**

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8. **MD 108/Laytonsville Bypass** (Planning). The Town of Laytonsville has planned a bypass route for MD 108 around the west side of the town. This bypass, now partially constructed, will alleviate congestion at the intersection of MD 108 and Brink Road/Sundown Road, improving the character of the historic center of town.

Interstate Program

The County has been an active participant in the MDOT/SHA process for projects on I-270 and I-495. We agree with the need to improve the performance of these corridors by looking at options that include expanding transit, but also recognize that effective communication and collaboration with the new administration is needed.

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Questions remain about the replacement of the American Legion Bridge, changes to the highways further north, advancement of transit commitments and ongoing litigation. These remaining questions and the new administration's commitment to partner with local leaders and community stakeholders reinforce the need to work collaboratively to ensure that projects are delivered in ways that move us closer to our transportation, environmental and economic development goals.

Deleted: As the Virginia Department of Transportation continues to build an extension of the I-495 Express Lanes up to the George Washington Memorial Parkway, q

As solutions to the transportation problems are explored, careful and transparent analysis is needed to evaluate the necessity of public-private partnership as a delivery approach, to ensure that federal funding opportunities for the project are maximized, and to ensure that the full interest of the public is served by whatever project delivery approach is determined. This exploration should include a careful assessment of the need for toll financing, generally, and the specific toll structure proposed to ensure equity and protection of Maryland residents from excessive tolls.

With Virginia now constructing the I-495NEXT project to extend the express toll lanes up to the George Washington Memorial Parkway, a coordinated approach is essential to replace the American Legion Bridge. Additionally, we urge the State to maximize federal funding to preserve state funding capacity for the concurrent delivery of major transit improvements along state routes like BRT on MD 355, Veirs Mill Road, Old Georgetown Road, and in the Great Seneca Corridor that are now being advanced through planning and design by the County.

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We have an opportunity to reset the dialog around the transportation needs in the I-270/I-495 corridor. The previous efforts provide a baseline for future partnership and the County will continue to urge for deeper collaboration and improvements in access to destinations in the corridor. Openness to new approaches and possibilities, can lead to a much better outcome and more consensus on how we should collectively move forward as a county and region.

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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,

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Evan Glass, President
County Council

cc: The Honorable Wes Moore, Governor, State of Maryland
Montgomery County House Delegation
Montgomery County Senate Delegation