

*Action Committee for Transit, Bike Maryland, Clean Water Action, Coalition for Smarter Growth, Prince George's Advocates for Community-based Transit, Montgomery County Sierra Club, Montgomery County Young Democrats, Montgomery Countryside Alliance, Prince George's County Young Democrats, and the Washington Area Bicyclists Association (WABA)*

August 2, 2013

The Honorable Martin O'Malley  
Governor, State of Maryland  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: Establishing a new transportation projects priority list to meet state and local goals**

Dear Governor O'Malley:

We the undersigned smart growth, environmental and transit organizations working in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties urge you to make the most of the new opportunity offered by the Transportation Infrastructure Investment Act of 2013 to invest in a Maryland that is truly smart, green and growing.

In sum we urge you to:

1. Conduct a transparent project selection process.
2. Clearly tie each project to established state smart growth goals.
3. Follow through on the commitment to adequately fund major transit needs over the next six years by: fully funding the Purple Line (\$1.1 billion), MARC Growth Plan (\$1.3 billion), and WMATA Momentum (\$144 million).
4. Defer highway capacity expansion projects that undermine state goals and will drain billions from the Transportation Trust Fund, specifically: MD 4 at Suitland Parkway interchange, 7 interchanges for MD 210, 4 projects that are parallel ICC capacity in Montgomery County: Georgia Ave/Norbeck Road interchange, Spencerville Road widening from Old Columbia Pike to US29, Norbeck Road widening from Georgia Ave. to Layhill Ave., and MD28/198 road widening from Layhill Road to Old Columbia Pike.
5. Expand funding for projects that build complete streets and offer effective alternatives to highway capacity expansion projects, such as US 1 Baltimore Avenue, pedestrian/bicycle improvements and enhanced community revitalization along state roadways, MD 355 reconstruction and redesign, implementation of Bike/Pedestrian Priorities Areas, bicycle infrastructure to support Capital Bikeshare, increased commuter bus services and dedicated transit lanes.

The Transportation Infrastructure Investment Act of 2013 funds should be used to meet the state's most urgent needs, such as infrastructure maintenance and support for smart growth. Long term demographic and lifestyle trends show declining rates of driving and increased use of transit in coming years; fewer young people are choosing to own cars, while an increasing number of seniors are less willing or able to drive. The shift in these long term trends, along with growing challenges from climate change call for a complete rethinking of our way of doing business, a bold move toward smart, sustainable growth supported by better transportation choices. Simply putting more money towards the existing list of state transportation projects will not achieve these goals, nor will we ever have unlimited money to maintain

our existing transportation system and build new facilities to support our community and economic development objectives. With more than half of Maryland's roads not in "good" condition and 8 percent of the bridges structurally deficient, we urge investing in maintenance of existing infrastructure before building costly new capacity that then must be maintained.

As announcements of new funding commitments have begun to roll out since May, we are greatly concerned about how these priorities have been determined without an explanation of the criteria or process that led to these decisions. We also urge a more transparent and public process for project selection, and the Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) in general. We appreciate the public outreach effort to formulate the new Maryland Transportation Plan (MTP), and urge the state to create greater public scrutiny and accountability as we translate broad goals of the MTP to the CTP and the short list of new projects funded through the Transportation Infrastructure Investment Act of 2013.

In the current CTP, a large share of the transportation identified by Prince George's and Montgomery Counties will undermine stated priorities of the state and two jurisdictions to build more sustainable, walkable, bikable, transit-friendly communities. The long lists of highway capacity expansions through road widening, interchanges, and new highway projects will not alleviate eliminate traffic congestion, and will offer only costly, temporary relief for some commuters at best, while inducing increased driving and sprawl development. Each project must be evaluated to ensure they are fulfilling the state's goals to increase transportation choices, community revitalization, affordability, energy savings, greenhouse gas reductions and reduced air and water pollution.

While Maryland is investing in system preservation, transit and new bicycle and pedestrian facilities, the CTP still reflects too many highway capacity projects that undermine the stated goals of doubling transit ridership by 2020, encouraging transit-oriented development, and preservation of the natural environment and rural resource lands. The CTP's long list of highway capacity expansion projects fails to account for the power of induced traffic in a metropolitan area, a phenomenon well-known in transportation planning. A newly widened highway in a metropolitan area can fill up with traffic again in as little as five years. In the short-term people change the timing of their commute returning to the peak period, they change the route of their commute, and they change the mode, leaving carpools and transit to drive alone using the temporarily expanded highway capacity. Longer term, highway and arterial expansion fuels the continuing spread of the more distant suburbs, inducing new areas of auto-dependent development and new traffic, and costing the state billions in infrastructure, as detailed in PlanMaryland. In some cases, greenfield development plans are held back until their proponents are successful in winning state and local support to move their highway capacity projects to the top of the list over other existing communities' priorities.

The Washington Metropolitan region has done an outstanding job in charting a different course, as captured in the Region Forward report and a number of other studies from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, including the What Would It Take Scenario and the land use/transit component of the Aspirations Scenario. These make it clear that a network of transit oriented centers and communities, addressing the east-west jobs/housing imbalance, along with improved transit, offer the most effective long-term approach to our transportation challenge -- providing strong alternatives to driving and creating patterns of land use that provide the greatest reduction in single occupant vehicle trips and vehicle miles traveled.

While official state policy embraces these ideas, current transportation plans and emerging funding priorities fail to follow through. Given this reality, we offer a critique of current transportation funding priorities and an alternative set of priorities.

### Top regional investment priorities

*The following projects should be the top priority to receive funding and offer the best chance we have for providing Maryland residents with alternatives to being stuck in traffic, and meet the goals and criteria set out by the Governor, General Assembly and MDOT:*

<b>Purple Line</b> – In addition to the final design and ROW acquisition funding offered by the Governor at his May 16, 2013 announcement for \$280 million, we urge commitment to the full funding of \$1.1 billion needed. Without this commitment construction will not be completed by 2020 as planned.	<b>\$1.1 billion</b> <i>(of which \$280M was announced for funding on 5/16/2013)</i>
<b>MARC Growth and Investment Plan</b> – MARC ridership is booming, and provides a much-needed alternative to traffic in the busy corridors between Baltimore and Washington, and Frederick and Washington. We ask for full funding for the FY2011-2015 program is \$1.3 billion. Beyond this, we urge the state to provide full funding for the MARC Growth and Investment Plan through 2020 for a total \$3 billion, with the full \$3.9 billion needed for 2035.	<b>\$1.3 billion</b> <i>(of which \$100M was announced for funding on 5/16/2013)</i>
<b>WMATA Momentum</b> – Metro is the essential backbone of mobility for the Washington D.C. region. We urge you to fully fund Maryland’s portion of WMATA’s long range Momentum plan to guarantee increased capacity via 100% 8 car trains, no turn-backs, core station improvements, the build out of the Bus Priority Corridors Network, bus fleet expansion, among other improvements. [estimated from Momentum for FY 2014-2019 assuming 1/3 share for Maryland.]	<b>\$144 million</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2.5 billion</b>

### Projects to be deferred

*The following projects requested in the Montgomery and Prince George’s County priority letters are a poor public investment for Maryland’s Washington area suburbs. These road capacity expansion projects will fail to address CTP priorities and Plan Maryland objectives, while increasing greenhouse gas emissions and associated environmental impacts. Alternatives for these projects should be developed:*

<b>Prince Georges County Projects</b>	
<b>MD 4 at Suitland Parkway Interchange.</b> This project will replace the at-grade intersection at Suitland Parkway with a grade-separated interchange, and widen MD 4 to a 6 lane freeway. It is part of a series of highway capacity expansions to not only accommodate existing traffic but to support the massive 6,000 acre greenfield development known as Westphalia. Providing close to half a billion dollars in public funds to support this contradicts state and county priorities. Fueling the Westphalia project will directly undermine transit-oriented development at the 15 largely underutilized Metro stations and inside the Beltway communities. We recommend deferring the initial \$150M promised to this project, as well as the full cost, and reassessing smaller scale road improvements that do not expand capacity and refocus resources on fostering TOD and revitalization of existing communities.	<b>\$460.7 million</b> <i>(of which \$150M was announced for funding on 7/8/2013)</i>
<b>MD 210, Indian Head Highway – 7 interchanges.</b> We question this highway capacity expansion project as the county’s top priority, especially in light of the amount of public funds already poured into supporting the National Harbor project, a greenfield project, far from existing transit. We ask that MDOT re-evaluate the \$150M promised to the first interchange, as well as the full 7 interchange plan for Indian Head Highway which is another example of never-ending costly widenings that fuel continued sprawl development. More compact development, local street connections, enhanced commuter bus services, and dedicated transit lanes for express bus service would better serve the region over the long term.	<b>\$606 million</b> <i>(of which \$100M was announced for funding on 5/16/2013)</i>

<b>Montgomery County Projects</b>	
<p><b>Georgia Ave/Norbeck Road interchange, Spencerville Road widening from Old Columbia Pike to US29, Norbeck Road widening from Georgia Ave. to Layhill Ave., and MD28/198 road widening from Layhill Road to Old Columbia Pike.</b></p> <p>These four projects on Montgomery’s priority letter provide parallel capacity to the ICC. The projects represent a wasteful half billion dollar investment in road capacity directly parallel to the \$2 billion ICC. With ICC use continuing to fall below original projections, spending money on parallel road capacity will only draw commuters away, cutting needed toll revenue and ensuring that the investment in the ICC will continue to be underutilized.</p>	<b>\$491 million</b>
<p><b>Newcut Road Extended.</b> The 1994 Clarksburg Master Plan laid out a vision for a transit-oriented community, and yet to this day Clarksburg residents have no viable transit option. This additional, costly road project will induce more traffic in this very congested region. We urge MDOT to fund transit alternatives such as BRT on Route 355, or an express commuter bus on I-270 instead.</p>	<b>\$138 million</b>
<p><b>US29/Musgrove Road Interchange.</b> The other costly interchanges along northern US29 in Montgomery County serve to speed commuters toward the permanent bottleneck further south where this busy roadway enters Silver Spring. Because it is impossible to widen the road there due to property impacts and cost, we urge you to reassess other ways to move commuters more efficiently such as BRT on US29, rather than fund a project which will fail to provide real relief.</p>	<b>\$150 million</b>
<p><b>I-270 Widening.</b> The additional 4 lanes proposed in the CLRP will induce additional driving demand from upcounty communities and Frederick County. Commuter buses in this corridor are frequently standing room only, demonstrating the demand for transit. Instead of this huge public investment, we ask MDOT to first enhance commuter bus service and MARC, build the CCT, and launch BRT on MD 355.</p>	<b>\$3.4 billion</b>
<p><b>I-495 Widening.</b> A 2009 study by Maryland and Virginia found that the proposed widening of I-495 between I-270 and Tysons would have little to no impact on relieving congestion, while costing billions and creating major impacts to private property. Instead, we recommend pursuing alternatives such as express bus lanes to provide a Montgomery-Fairfax link.</p>	<b>\$2 billion</b>
<p>Total funding for questionable highway capacity expansion projects that could be reallocated towards transit, complete streets, and maintenance projects that fit Maryland’s smart growth and environmental goals:</p>	<b>\$7.2 billion</b>

## Examples of Alternatives

*The following are projects that should be funded or receive additional funding. They are also examples of the types of investments in complete streets, walkability, bikability, and transit that should be considered as the most effective alternatives to the highway capacity expansion projects above.*

- US 1, Baltimore Avenue (College Avenue to I-95)** (total cost \$135 million, of which \$20 million was announced for funding on 7/8/2013): The reconstruction project includes sidewalks and wide curb lanes to better accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists. This is the only truly multimodal project in the priority list. More projects should reflect this kind of multimodal approach to enhancing transportation choices around a major job center/destination (the University of Maryland), and existing city.
- Construct pedestrian/bicycle safety improvements and enhance community revitalization along state roadways** (\$26 million was announced for Prince George’s County funding on 7/8/2013): In addition to the sidewalk retrofits, bicycle accommodations and other pedestrian/bike improvements, we recommend expanding this investment area to other transit stations in Prince George’s and Montgomery Counties and older communities with the greatest

needs. The state funding should pay for both construction and maintenance costs for these facilities.

- **MD355 Reconstruct and Redesign through White Flint in Montgomery**
- **Implement investments in designated Bike/Pedestrian Priority Areas in Montgomery County** (and for future designated areas)
- **Implement bike infrastructure to support Capital Bikeshare in Montgomery** (and for a future Prince George’s program)
- **Increase commuter bus services and dedicated transit lanes** to provide workers from outer jurisdictions with better transit options and reduce SOV travel. The state should restore routes cut in 2008 and experiment with all day and weekend service on major routes. Online information to commuter services should also be improved, for instance, with a map of the entire commuter system.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to working with your staff to ensure that every dollar invested in our transportation system builds a stronger and more sustainable Maryland future.

Sincerely,

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Coalition for Smarter Growth

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Action Committee for Transit

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