

April 16, 2020

Montgomery County Council Office Building
100 Maryland Ave
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: Council/Executive Joint State Transportation Priorities Letter

Dear Council President Katz and Councilmembers:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the update to the joint state transportation priorities letter. We concur with many of the recommendations from staff, and urge you to prioritize sustainable transit and Vision Zero in your considerations. Our following recommendations are written with the current public health crisis and economic situation in mind.

In particular, we believe that the county and state should focus first on fix-it-first investments and transit. This means replacement of aging infrastructure instead of building new highways; making roads safer for pedestrians, transit-users, and cyclists; and operational funding for transit, followed by key transit investments. In a fiscally constrained world, county and state focus must be on sustainable, economically vibrant, inclusive communities.

- **WMATA:** We support the staff recommendation to focus on the White Flint northern entrance since the Forest Glen passageway is fully funded in the CIP. It is important that Montgomery County continues to push the state to give WMATA the support it needs, especially as WMATA feels the ridership effects of COVID-19.
- **Bus rapid transit:** We strongly concur with the importance of BRT and adding the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) back into the Consolidated Transportation Plan (CTP), if the alignment is reevaluated to provide the best route for accessibility, ridership, and walkable development. Political and financial support from the state could be critical for securing the federal grants that are a cornerstone of the current BRT network financing plan. Those projects with potential federal funding requiring a state match should be prioritized.
- **Commuter rail:** We support the staff recommendation to delete the Boyds Transit Center, given that it remains fully funded in the CIP. Moving forward on a third track for MARC to enable midday and off-peak service is vitally important, and will not happen without a significant push from Montgomery County's leaders.
- **Interstate Highway Program:** We strongly oppose the I-495 and I-270 widening project due to its harmful environmental and community impacts and fiscal risks, but if it is to go forward despite the current economic environment and negative consequences, then transit funding must be a guaranteed up-front component. It is important for the county to remain firm in its critique of the

proposed highway expansion, to continue to express concern about the environmental, financial, and traffic implications, and to offer a transit and transit-oriented development alternative.

- **Other state highways:** Given the current economy and climate crises, state highway spending must be focused on “fix it first” projects and then to those that further goals of pedestrian and bicycle safety and improving public transit. Our Vision Zero goals will not be reached without collaboration from the state to implement road diets, slower speeds, and other traffic calming measures.

A strong push for these priorities requires coordination between county elected officials, state legislators, advocacy organizations, and residents. We look forward to working with you to advocate for investments that will help build a more sustainable, safe, and efficient transit system.

Sincerely,

Jane Lyons
Maryland Advocacy Manager
Coalition for Smarter Growth

CC: County Executive Elrich