

July 20, 2021

Montgomery County Council  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville MD 20850

Dear Montgomery County Council Members:

I am writing to you today to follow-up on some supporting details related to the American Legion Bridge I-270 to I-70 Relief Plan and the path for moving this project forward. This letter reaffirms the Maryland Department of Transportation's (MDOT) commitment to advancing this project in collaboration with Montgomery County, ensuring the solutions are multi-modal and advancing transit systems as part of it that help achieve the regional land use goals.

In developing the overall I-495 and I-270 Public-Private Partnership (P3) Program over the past four years, MDOT has had to consider and balance the perspectives of dozens of agency partners, multiple stakeholders, and the general public with the need to provide improved travel in the National Capital Region on I-495 and I-270. Montgomery County has been a prime partner and stakeholder, and MDOT has incorporated requests from Montgomery County when possible while still addressing the long-term projected traffic and congestion along these regional interstate travel corridors, which remains a key responsibility of our agency.

Prior to and at the June 5, 2019 Board of Public Works Meeting, Montgomery County officials presented Montgomery County's Regional Transportation Improvement Plan. This plan prioritized the Virginia to Frederick corridor starting at the American Legion Bridge and continuing the managed lanes in Virginia over the bridge and up the Western portion of I-495 and up I-270 all the way to Frederick. Funding from toll revenue would also be invested to support transit, similar to the approach taken in Virginia for many of its most recent managed lanes projects. To be responsive to Montgomery County, MDOT updated the limits of Phase 1 in January 2020 to prioritize the American Legion Bridge and I-270 corridor to Frederick and included future transit commitments.

The MDOT also completed a detailed review of reversible lanes on I-270, South of I-370. The analyses indicated reversible lanes on this stretch of I-270 would not be able to accommodate future growth in the region. In future years as the region grows, the modeling illustrated significant traffic backups in the off-peak direction, an increase in travel time by more than 50 percent. When considering impacts, constructing two high-occupancy toll (HOT) lanes in each direction compared to the reversible lanes only differed by 1.3 percent. For reversible lanes, the roadway would need to be reconfigured to provide barrier separation, as traffic would be traveling in the opposite direction and must be separated by a wide space or protected by a crash-worthy barrier to ensure the safety of the traveling public. The construction duration would be nearly the same for either option, and all modeling included construction of all planned transit solutions in place.

In January 2021, the MDOT State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) announced the Recommended Preferred Alternative of the Managed Lanes Study as Alternative 9 – 2 HOT lanes in each direction within the 48-mile Managed Lanes Study, including the topside and Eastside of I-495. Even though we committed to phasing the delivery and permitting approach with a focus on Phase 1 South, Montgomery County requested that the Recommended Preferred Alternative match the limits of Phase 1 South. After months of collaboration with the Federal Highway Administration, MDOT SHA modified the Recommended Preferred Alternative to Alternative 9 – Phase 1 South: American Legion Bridge I-270 to I-370 in May 2021. If the new Recommended Preferred Alternative is selected at the conclusion of the Managed Lanes Study, improvements to remaining parts of the interstate system would now be required to advance separately, subject to additional environmental studies, analysis, and collaboration with the public, stakeholders, and agency partners. This will allow a new conversation to be held on the remaining parts of the interstate system.

As part of the development of the program, MDOT convened a transit work group in 2019 that included representatives from Montgomery, Prince George's, and Frederick counties and transit service providers in the region to develop opportunities for enhanced transit services and to help advance an interconnected transit/highway system in the National Capital Region. This group identified both new transit that can serve suburban to suburban markets including connecting Germantown, Gaithersburg, Bethesda, and Tysons and additional infrastructure to support transit connections. The MDOT SHA is committed to providing infrastructure for new bus bays at the Shady Grove Metro station and expanding parking at the Westfield Montgomery Mall transit center as part of Phase 1 South. We will also provide connections between the HOT lanes and roads South of I-370 near important transit and local activity centers such as I-370, Wootton Parkway, and Westlake Terrace. Additionally, we are committed to collaborating on transit improvements suggested by Montgomery County North of I-370, such as improvements at the Metropolitan Grove Station for parking and for a new bus operations and maintenance facility, additional transit, and carpool parking in Germantown and Clarksburg, as well as evaluating locations for transit connectivity to transit centers and park and rides.

As part of the Phase P3 Agreement, the Phase Developer has committed to an estimated \$300 million for transit during the operating term of Phase 1 South along with additional commitments for Vision Zero enhancements, community grant programs, and additional water quality efforts in Montgomery County. These enhancements are in addition to the minimum upfront payment of \$145 million to the State for Phase 1 South. The exact upfront payment and values of other enhancements will be determined as part of the predevelopment work and included in the Phase 1 South Section P3 Agreement to be developed collaboratively over the next year.

To further reaffirm our commitment to a multi-modal effort as part of this program, we will continue to work collaboratively with Montgomery County to progress work on a selected transit project that could work in conjunction with the American Legion Bridge I-270 to I-70 Relief Plan, such as the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) or the MD 355 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project, that supports your local land use goals and the Statewide Transit Plan. The MDOT will utilize funding received from an upfront payment on Phase 1 South to fund design efforts upon financial close to advance work on the selected project. Concurrent with the design and predevelopment work for Phase 1, we will also collaborate with you on a plan for the final delivery, construction, and operations of the project in conjunction with the managed lane development and financing.

We look forward to partnering with Montgomery County to advance new travel options and opportunities for our citizens. If you have any additional questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Jeffrey T. Folden, P.E., DBIA, MDOT SHA I-495 and I-270 P3 Office Deputy Director, at 410-637-3321 or [jfolden1@mdot.maryland.gov](mailto:jfolden1@mdot.maryland.gov). Mr. Folden will be happy to assist you. Of course, you may always contact me directly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'G. Slater', written in a cursive style.

Gregory Slater  
Secretary

cc: The Honorable Marc Elrich, Montgomery County Executive  
Ms. Holly Arnold, Acting Administrator, MDOT MTA  
Jeffrey T. Folden, P.E., DBIA, Deputy Director, I-495 and I-270 P3 Office, MDOT SHA  
Tim Smith, P.E., Administrator, MDOT SHA