



February 13, 2020

House Bill 292

**Toll Roads, Highways, and Bridges – County Government Consent Requirement –
Expansion**

House Environment & Transportation Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on House Bill 292. This important legislation expands the list of counties to include Anne Arundel County that would have a say in the construction of a State toll road, toll highway, or toll bridge that passes through our County. Under current law, nine Eastern Shore counties have a voice in these decisions. Anne Arundel has as much interest as those counties and should have the same voice.

For example, the state has narrowed down construction options for a new bridge over the Chesapeake Bay, and all three proposed locations are in Anne Arundel County. All three span proposals would have a major local impact on traffic and the environment. Our county should be on equal footing with the eastern shore and have a voice for comments or concerns on the project along with the other affected counties.

A new State toll road, toll highway, or toll bridge has tremendous potential to undermine local control of growth and negate public input by creating development pressures outside of areas planned for growth. It could also negatively impact local environmental, cultural, and historic resources, and diminish the quality of life enjoyed by residents – all of which local comprehensive plans typically protect. Local officials are best poised to determine if a State toll road, toll highway, or toll bridge is consistent with their community's vision for its future.

For those reasons, we urge a FAVORABLE report on HB 292.

Steuart Pittman
County Executive