

MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

BRADLEY J. WANTZ
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CLERK

Chairman Guy Guzzone
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

Chairman Kumar Barve
House Environmental and Transportation Committee

Subject: HB 1394/SB 982 – Highway User Revenues – Revenue and Distribution

Dear Mr. Chairman:

We are writing in support of HB 1394/SB 982, which would:

- Remove the funding sunset currently set to go into effect after FY 2024 when municipal highway user revenues (HURs) would drop back to recession level lows;
- Increase municipal funding starting in FY 2025 to the approximate levels that existed prior to the state diversion in FY 2010;
- Apply the same lock box protections afforded to the rest of the transportation trust fund to the HUR account; and
- Tie HUR to the consumer price index so that HURs rise with inflation.

An important aspect of this bill is that it allows over four years before any funding increase occurs, providing the State time to adjust its project funding allocations. However, two items that can be addressed immediately are removing the sunset and lock boxing the HUR account; these provisions of the bill would provide critical certainty to municipal governments that the funding is long term and protected.

The legislation passed by the General Assembly in 2018 provided for the current funding level for municipal HUR, which is the highest it has been in over a decade, for a duration of five fiscal years which has been greatly helpful in maintaining local infrastructure; however with the sunset looming after FY 2024 it is difficult to engage in any long term transportation project plans.

In FY 2018, thanks to the increased level of funding, the City of Taneytown was able to complete paving projects on badly worn portions of two City streets. A milling and overlay project of 36,600 square feet, incorporating removal and replacement of 3,660 square feet of base course was completed on Baumgardner Avenue. Another 47,690 square feet of mill and overlay along with 4,769 square feet of base course paving was completed on Roth Avenue. Geotextile fabric was incorporated in the entire mill and overlay area to slow deterioration of the newly paved areas.

In FY 2019, the City was able to utilize HUR to complete a repair to West Baltimore Street (MD Route 140). While this is a State Road, a water main break required excavation within the paved surface of the road, requiring milling and overlay per the MD State Highway Administration's standards. The specific area that was paved is not available for this project as it was an emergency project and a contract was awarded on a total sum basis.



February 26, 2020

COUNCIL MEMBERS

JOSEPH A. VIGLIOTTI

JUDITH K. FULLER

DANIEL M. HAINES

DARRYL G. HALE

Currently in FY 2020, construction is ongoing on a storm water management retrofit project that is incorporating bridge abutments into the weir wall for a bridge that will connect two disparate segments of the City's Obrien Avenue. This gap in the street causes emergency services as well as traffic in general to utilize a somewhat roundabout and longer route to travel from one portion of the street to the other. Construction of the new bridge, for which a contract has been awarded, will allow a more direct route from the Taneytown Volunteer Fire Company's facility to properties on Obrien Avenue and nearby streets. By incorporating a portion of the required bridge infrastructure with the storm water management retrofit project (as required by our NPDES permit) which is a joint effort of the City and Carroll County, the City will save a substantial sum, but has nonetheless budgeted \$470,053 for the bridge though it will exceed this year's projected HUR amount by over \$100,000. Without HUR projects like these would likely be either substantially scaled back, or deferred, likely resulting in higher costs associated with the run to failure approach the City might have to employ should HUR sunset without legislation enacted to preserve this significant funding source in perpetuity.

We sincerely hope that HB 1394/SB 982 receives a favorable report. 2020 is the year to reengage the discussion of fully and permanently restoring highway user revenues to local governments.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bradley J. Wantz". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Bradley J. Wantz, Mayor