



**Testimony on HB 299 February 11, 2020**

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in opposition to HB 299. Suburban Maryland Transportation Alliance (SMTA) oppose adoption of this obstructionist piece of legislation. We urge instead that you promote a meaningful effort to add new managed lanes and express bus transit to our much-beleaguered highway system in the form of the Traffic Relief Plan.

The business community needs to pursue a fundable approach that can make an effective impact on traffic congestion. Each year of delay adds \$300 million to the cost of the P3 Traffic Relief Plan through inflation and imposes another \$1.7 billion a year on the region in congestion-related costs. Adoption of this obstacle-creating law HB 299 will only exacerbate gridlock and continue to delay a project that has regional endorsement as exemplified by the much-welcomed Beltway Accord. An act of that significance cannot be ignored. Continued attention to this proposed legislation and similar obstructionist pieces of proposed legislation fly in the face of the much-appreciated regional cooperation just recently put in place.

The prohibition to acquire residential real property as proposed in this bill only further stymies an effort that now is marked by regional cooperation, as well as the support of a majority of people in the Washington area who are harangued daily by massive traffic congestion and the inability to get to work or conduct the normal errands of life. Maryland residents stand to be handicapped by the potential delay inherent in the adoption of this law, while Virginia moves ahead implementing a myriad of transportation improvements that have propelled their business economy down the road to success. Maryland stands watching.

In much the same way, Montgomery County is focused on launching an ambitious economic development platform, but without significant improvements to transportation options, they are fighting a losing battle

You cannot ignore the fact that the P3 Traffic Relief Plan will dramatically reduce travel times. Toll lanes are the answer, all the while remembering that the free lanes will remain free, giving everyone choices. From the American Legion Bridge to I-95, peak-hour trips will be cut from 103 minutes (in the no-build) to just 16 minutes (in the toll lanes) or just 36 minutes in the free lanes. Nothing else can achieve this kind of lasting relief, to 2040 and beyond.

SMTA and C4TR urge you not to ignore the opportunity before you to improve the quality of life in Montgomery County and the region. The P3 has been approved by the Board of Public Works according to a reasonable compromise, with respect to timing, stages, transit inclusion and environmental reviews. We have a much-perfected product before us. Reject this proposed legislation which seeks to ignore the progressive progress that has been made to date. Vote this bill down.

Jennifer Russel, Vice-Chair

SMTA