

**American Chestnut Land Trust * AMP Creeks Council * Chapman Forest Foundation
Citizens for the Preservation of Middletown Valley * Clean Water Action
Coalition for Smarter Growth * Friends of Frederick County * Maryland Conservation Council
Maryland Native Plant Society * Maryland Ornithological Society
Mattawoman Watershed Society * Nanjemoy-Potomac Environmental Coalition
Potomac Conservancy * Preservation Maryland * Safe Skies Maryland
Southern Maryland Audubon Society * 350 MoCo**

**HB 292 Toll Roads, Highways, and Bridges
County Government Consent Requirement – Expansion**

**Environment and Transportation
February 13, 2020**

Position: SUPPORT

There is currently a prohibition on State agencies constructing a toll road, toll highway, or toll bridge without the consent of a majority of the affected counties that applies to **only Maryland's nine Eastern Shore counties**. HB 292 expands the consent requirement to include the City of Baltimore and the remaining fourteen Maryland counties.

Where and how a jurisdiction grows – and does not grow – is decided locally through a comprehensive planning process. Public involvement is a critical part of that process, with comprehensive plans reflecting the vision and goals for the community's future expressed by residents. Local elected officials adopt these plans and implement them through a variety of means including zoning.

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 pressure outside of areas planned for growth. Notably, in Maryland a change in the community – like a new highway or bridge – is considered a legitimate, defensible reason to change zoning to allow for more intensive land uses.

Additionally, a new toll road, toll highway, or toll bridge could negatively impact local environmental, cultural, and historic resources and diminish the quality of life enjoyed by residents – all of which local comprehensive plans typically prioritize protecting. Local elected 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 and will avoid negative impacts.

The consent requirement for State toll roads, toll highways, and toll bridges should exist for all Maryland counties and the City of Baltimore. We respectfully request your support for HB 292.

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