

Testimony Submitted by DontWiden270.org in Favor of HB292
Regarding Toll Roads, Highways, and Bridges
County Government Consent Requirement – Expansion
Before the House of Delegates Environment and Transportation Committee
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SUPPORT

Janet Gallant
664 Azalea Drive
Rockville, MD 20850

DontWiden270.org is a Rockville-based organization with over 1,000 members. We strongly support HB292. The bill will lead to fair, effective multimodal transportation and congestion relief.

Our group is active all along the I-270 corridor, knocking on doors, leafletting outside MDOT workshops, speaking to elected officials. This is what people tell us: the Governor's \$11 billion toll road plan is a failure of government to meet – or even consider – constituents' real needs.

One man in Clarksburg said, "I'm angry. I can hardly drive out of my subdivision in the morning. Now they're going to charge me to get on their new road. That won't help."

Over the past two years, the Governor has been able to dismiss the concerns, requirements, expertise, and recommendations of local officials, involved organizations, and thousands of constituents.

The Governor and MDOT can do that because nothing compels the State to work with local officials in a substantive way. The counties that are not on the Eastern Shore have no leverage. It takes only two people on the Board of Public Works to decide for every one of us that it's OK to trade the well-being of communities, the State's fiscal health, and the environment for a toll road that meets the Governors' needs, but not the counties'.

We need HB 292 passed this year because it's fair and because it's the best – maybe the only— way to significantly influence the \$11 billion toll project quickly advancing behind closed doors. We can't wait for next year's session. By then this toll road will be approved and not subject to the bill.

Legislators ask to be judged by the results they achieve. If you pass HB292, you will give all Marylanders, through their county governments, a voice in critical transportation decisions. You will give Montgomery, Prince George's, and Frederick Counties leverage to insist on seeing MDOT's key inputs, assumptions, projections, and estimated tolls.

Not passing this bill will hasten a nightmare scenario: that we endure years of construction misery only to find that taxpayers are bailing out the builder, tolls are out of reach, congestion is still there, and an international for-profit company is in charge of it all.

Last year this bill did not pass out of the committee. Regardless of the reasons, the result was to deny delegates a say on the bill. That's the same issue at the heart of HB292: whether to give constituents, through their county governments, a say on toll facilities. This year, let this bill come to a vote. Give Marylanders, through their delegates, a voice and a real opportunity to influence the outcome.