
February 20, 2020

The Honorable Kumar Barve
Chairman, House Environment & Transportation Committee
251 House Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

Re: Letter of Opposition – House Bill 258 – Prince George’s County – State Highways – Toll Facilities PG 402-20

Dear Chairman Barve and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) respectfully opposes House Bill 258, as it could impede progress on projects that aim to provide meaningful congestion relief for major metropolitan areas across the state. The bill has the potential to irreparably damage Maryland’s reputation as a national leader in delivering innovative infrastructure projects.

An example of the type of impact this legislation could have on regional projects that will provide meaningful congestion relief is the Traffic Relief Plan, a project designed to free Marylanders from traffic congestion along the I-495 and I-270 corridors through the proposed I-495 & I-270 Public-Private Partnership (P3) Program. This P3 Program provides congestion relief in the National Capital Region (NCR), at no net cost to the state, with the fundamental objective to deliver this project while significantly minimizing impacts outside of the existing right-of-way. Without this solution in the NCR, local roads will continue to be over burdened with more traffic as travelers use apps like Waze to look for options to get to their destinations quicker, making the local roads less safe for pedestrians and bicyclists. Failure to address congestion in our major metropolitan regions in the state will severely hamper transit options as well.

The practical implication of enacting House Bill 258 is that Marylanders in the NCR will continue to be impacted by traffic congestion for the foreseeable future. Maryland simply does not have funding available to provide the kind of meaningful congestion relief without the proposed Traffic Relief Plan. In addition to the forgone project cost of \$9-11 billion financed by the private sector, MDOT will need to invest approximately \$1 billion in maintenance and rehabilitation cost over the next twelve years simply to maintain the existing roadways on I-495 in Prince George’s County alone. Finally, the Traffic Relief Plan would advance several major transportation priorities in Prince George’s County, such as improvements to the I-95/Greenbelt Metro Access and the Arena Drive Interchange – two major infrastructure sites that currently need additional capacity to provide suitable access. It would also provide infrastructure investment for improved access to Transit Oriented Development in New Carrollton, Largo, and Branch Avenue and provide the opportunity for new express bus service from New Carrollton to

Largo (Purple Line Extended) and further to Branch Avenue, to National Harbor and across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge into Virginia. MDOT is committed to working with Prince George's County in the advancement of future phases of the Traffic Relief Plan.

Failure to address the capacity problem facing this region also ignores the direct cost to Marylanders each day in wasted time and fuel as well as the negative impact of air quality on the environment. The current cost of congestion in the NCR is \$1.7 billion annually, a 40% increase from the previous year. The cost of congestion will continue to rise and compound, costing the State's economy and reducing our competitiveness in attracting top businesses. Failure of this project to move forward will also result in significant lost job opportunities for Marylanders and loss of a substantial investment in the minority contracting community.

The State of Virginia is moving forward with the Capital Beltway Accord by modernizing and extending their facilities to the Maryland border. If this legislation were to pass, it would signal to businesses and hard-working Maryland families that the economic, political, and neighborly environment is better across the Potomac. Without the Traffic Relief Plan, due to the lack of State funding, the American Legion Bridge cannot be addressed and Maryland will continue to be a bottleneck along I-495 subjecting residents living in the NCR Region to stifling traffic jams for many years to come. For the project at hand, passage would jeopardize the ability of the State to engage local, national, and international expertise and labor to deliver congestion relief to the greater Washington Metropolitan Area to greatly improve the quality of life for many Marylanders.

House Bill 258 would negatively impact one county's ability to address their transportation needs over an adjoining county's objection of that need. This unnecessarily pits one county against another and could potentially create an unfriendly and unwarranted environment. Passage of this legislation may also prevent regional transportation solutions, leaving growing localized congestion. Counties would be left on their own to deal with transportation issues within their borders if neighboring counties do not agree with proposed solutions.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee grant House Bill 258 an unfavorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

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