

Testimony on SB 843

I-495 and I-270 Public-Private Partnership - Partnership Agreement - Requirements (Maryland Department of Transportation Promises Act of 2021)

Budget & Taxation Committee

Position: Favorable

Arlene Montemarano supports SB 843, the Maryland Department of Transportation Promises Act of 2021. This bill would put into statute the verbal promises that Transportation Secretary Slater made regarding the I-495 and I-270 expansion. Since the Governor announced his plans to expand I-495 and I-270 expansion, a number of promises regarding the project have been made that were later retracted or shown to be incorrect. Some of these promises include that the project would not take any homes or businesses, all reasonable alternatives to building the toll lanes would be fairly evaluated, and no taxpayer dollars will be used on this project.

The bill specifies that the Board of Public Works may not approve a P3 agreement for the I-495 and I-270 project unless the agreement contains the promises that Secretary Slater made on this project.

Some of these provisions include:

- No funding from taxpayers will be used to subsidize the project
- A federally-compliant final environmental impact statement will be available before MDOT asks the Board of Public Works to approve any contract
- Data used to estimate congestion relief, set tolls and inform other matters will be shared with local government planners
- 10% of toll revenue will be made available for transit priorities of Montgomery County and Prince George's County
- Public hearings will be held over toll amounts
- Buses and other transit will be able to use the toll lanes for free
- Bicycle/pedestrian lane(s) will be added to the American Legion Bridge
- MDOT will study the feasibility of Monorail along I-270
- No homes will be purchased before construction contracts are approved
- The project concessionaire will be required to initiate a community benefits agreement

This is the bare minimum that we should be able to expect from our public officials: that they do not lie to us or carelessly make promises that may be useful to them at the time, but are, in reality, meaningless. Without laws to require it, truth is a sometime thing. We need, and are entitled to the truth, and especially in this case: the looming P3 project for highway expansion, because of its scale, and because of its many negative impacts.

I encourage a FAVORABLE report for this important legislation.

Arlene Montemarano
Silver Spring, Maryland