



Committee: Budget and Taxation
Testimony on: SB 843 – MDOT Promises Act
Organization: Greenbelt Climate Action Network
Person Submitting: Lore Rosenthal, Program Coordinator
Address: 15 Crescent Road, Greenbelt, MD 20770
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 24, 2021

Chairman Guzzone and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to express Greenbelt Climate Action Network's (GCAN) support for the MDOT Promises Act (SB 843), legislation that would require the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to fulfill the commitments it has made to public officials regarding its plan to add private toll lanes to I-495 and I-270.

While SB 843 identifies more than ten commitments made to public officials, our testimony focuses on one key promise that the agency must fulfill.

Secretary Greg Slater of MDOT promised, during a House hearing last year, that the agency would not submit any contract for the project to the Board of Public Works until the environmental review process was completed. And of course, this promise makes sense. It would be irresponsible to proceed with the largest P3 project in the country before policy makers and the public fully understand its environmental, fiscal and social impacts.

However, MDOT has announced that it will submit the first contract (the predevelopment agreement) to the Board of Public Works for approval in April or May. Yet, the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) will not be completed and made available until the fall. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) had many, many deficiencies which must be addressed in the FEIS. To protect the environment, our communities and state funds, no contract should be approved until the deficiencies are addressed.

Many, including members of the Maryland General Assembly, criticized the DEIS for failing to examine transit options to address congestion. MDOT's response in the FEIS should be available before the BPW considers a contract for the highway widening project. Adding toll lanes will lead to an increase in single-occupancy fuel burning vehicles that will worsen global warming. We should know whether transit and other transportation improvements will address congestion.

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, as well as Montgomery County and Prince George's County, criticized the DEIS for failing to adequately address storm water runoff for the 550 new acres of impervious surfaces. It is critical that we know how the project will affect the health of streams, the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay and know the cost of storm water management that will be imposed on the State and local governments.

There are many more deficiencies in the DEIS which must be addressed by the FEIS. It is critical that we fully understand what's at stake if this project moves forward. We urge the Committee to give a favorable recommendation to SB 843.

Sincerely,
Lore Rosenthal, Program Coordinator
Greenbelt Climate Action Network