



**SUBURBAN MARYLAND
TRANSPORTATION ALLIANCE**

As Vice Chair of Suburban Maryland Transportation Alliance (SMTA), I would like to submit testimony in opposition to SB 843—I-495 and I-270 Public Private Partnership-Partnership Agreement Requirements. This poorly drafted and inaccurate piece of legislation risks cutting off funds, thereby delaying or endangering a project that will offer traffic relief for Montgomery, Frederick and Prince George's county residents. Your constituents in these geographic areas experience severe traffic delays on both I-270 and the beltway with congestion often plaguing the roads for more than 10 hours per day. This is no way to live. As responsible legislators you cannot continue to ignore the needs of the voters who overwhelmingly support infrastructure improvements such as the P3 Traffic Relief Plan. The P3 is a source of funding that cannot be replaced-there is no other money to fund like improvements. This bill imposes limitations on the use of dedicated transit funds and establishes nuisance requirements that will needlessly interfere with the forward-moving procurement process currently underway. The recent selection of a well-respected team to proceed with the pre-development agreement for the next year highlights how close we are to moving forward to solve the region's ever-present bottleneck. With smooth sailing, this project could be under construction by 2022, thereby offering the relief that residents in the region overwhelmingly support and deserve.

The bill's language does not accurately reflect the terms of the P3 Program's Request for Proposal or the P3 agreement. The bill also unnecessarily requires redundant environmental studies that were conducted in conjunction with the NEPA process. As proposed, the tenets of the bill reflect an awkward and unusual amount of control. Regional planning agencies have long studied the question of funding and modes and recognize that a network of both new toll lanes and new transit services are needed to address the needs of the region. This bill toys with cutting off funds if certain requirements are not met.

You cannot ignore the fact that the beltway is highly congested and that I-270 with virtually no widening during its recent history suffers from severe overcapacity given the growth in Montgomery County. Residents in the Upcounty are strangulating, with no end in sight. This type of traffic congestion has and continues to have deleterious impacts on the regional economy by hindering growth in employment and business investment. Such indecision makes it difficult for employers to attract both talent and customers whose decisions regarding both are often negatively impacted by the endless traffic. The cost of congestion is roughly \$2,000 per resident per year. Do you want that on your conscience?

As we quickly return to pre-COVID-19 traffic flows, the value of such a major economic development project to lead us out of the post-pandemic economic crisis is indisputable. As a legislator, is the loss of a project which could not be funded but for the resources produced by a P3 at a time when interest rates are notoriously low a responsibility that you want to assume? This bill injects the element of

uncertainty into the P3 process and could seriously delay or endanger the project's future and the issuance of the P3. This is not the way to go. Vote to oppose this bill.

Jennifer Russel, Vice Chair

Suburban Maryland Transportation Alliance