



As Vice Chair of the Suburban Maryland Transportation Alliance (SMTA), I am submitting testimony in opposition to HB 703 – “I-270 and I-495 Prohibition on Adding New Lanes”. This bill will put a complete stop on the P3 Program which seeks to alleviate the oppressive congestion along I-495 and I-270 that Montgomery county commuters must deal with on a daily basis. In simple words this piece of legislation prohibits the State Highway Administration from permitting the addition of toll lanes to the project, which is presently in its procurement phase, after the recent selection of a preferred alternative.

This proposal flies in the face of documented evidence that 61% of Washington area residents have voiced support for the addition of toll lanes. On average, severe congestion lasts 7 hours per day on I-270 and 10 hours per day on I-495. The average commuter can lose 87 hours and over \$2,000 annually to the perils of congestion. The P3 Program includes the miracle of a compact to rebuild the aging American Legion Bridge, a regional bottleneck where traffic delays have increased 40 percent between 2010 and 2017.

Efforts such as this piece of legislation and various other bills which are aimed at stopping or delaying the P3 are irresponsible in terms of the cost of delaying such a mammoth and much-needed infrastructure project. Each year of delay on a project of this type is estimated to increase the project’s construction costs by approximately \$300 million per year. Delays also increase the risk that private investors who are eager to participate in the program at present, may lose interest. It is important to remember that there is no alternative financing for the \$9-\$11 billion in improvements in the interstate system that private investment is poised to make via the P3. The State does not have the bonding capacity or the funds to complete this project through traditional approaches.

As we emerge from crisis in the fragile post-pandemic economic environment the post-pandemic economic environment, it is imperative to leap forward with a project of this nature which will improve our quality of life, provide jobs and economic incentives for companies who seek locations where transportation is readily available. Vote to oppose this obstructionist bill.

Jennifer Russel, Vice-Chair

SMTA