



The Suburban Maryland Transportation Alliance (SMTA) wishes to go on record in opposition to **HB485** "Public Private Partnerships Process and Oversight." This proposed piece of legislation, which is a reincarnation of last year's equally obstructionist bill has no place to go forward. Once again, we are faced with a piece of legislation that seeks to erroneously delay the much-needed P3 program which seeks to relieve the Washington region, and most particularly Montgomery County from the iron grasp of congestion that plagues the American Legion Bridge an average of 10 hours per day. The reconstruction of the ALB and the widening of I-270 to release upper Montgomery County from the grips of snarled and endless traffic is a much-needed project. SMTA has long promoted infrastructure improvement for BOTH transit and road because transit carries less than 10% of all trips and 90% of the trips are carried on our roads. Northern sections of I-270 have not been widened since the highway was built in the 1960's. What are legislators thinking as they ignore the needs and human outcry of UpCounty residents who spend hours in their cars?

A great deal of time was spent at the State level to develop the P3 process to create a P3 Statue which is meant to attract needed private investment by streamlining the process and making in attractive in a time of extremely low interest rates. The addition of mayhem and extra bureaucratic oversight creates havoc and uncertainty in a process that is already underway. Phase I of the project could begin construction in 2022 if left to proceed as is. Additional EIS requirements could add as much as 2 years to the process and add additional, unneeded cost This would be an irresponsible approach and clearly not mindful of the fact that a majority of citizens polled on this project expect and want it to go forward,

Of particular concern is that the effort to delay congestion improvement would have a deleterious impact on our economy. A \$9-11B investment of this sort is likely to create roughly 13,000 jobs a year for the next decade or more, just from construction and related jobs. Multiplier effects from this level of stimulus are far greater than the \$2.3B the entire state of MD received in the COVID relief plan. As we emerge from the pandemic, our focus should be on righting the economic ship which has been adrift for a while. It is clear that congestion which has long plagued Montgomery County has been an obstacle in encouraging major employers to locate in the County. COVID has shifted travel patterns in the short term, but also drastically directed people away from mass transit. When the economy rebounds, traffic congestion will only get worse, and we will need more than telework and transit to accommodate shipping and freight, interstate travel and all the other uses of our highway system.

It is clear that the P-3 is the only way to responsibly fund large infrastructure projects such as the 270 widening and the American Legion Bridge improvement. The State does not have the funds to implement this much-needed improvement. This is a funding process that is proving incredibly useful across the country. We must join the ranks of forward moving and thinking jurisdictions that have recognized this tool as invaluable. Vote to oppose this bill which refuses to recognize the value of the P3 and ignores the voters and their needs.

Emmett Tydings, Chair

Jennifer Russel, Vice-Chair