



HB705

On behalf of the Suburban Maryland Transportation Alliance (SMTA) we wish to voice strong opposition to HB 705 "I-270 and I-495 Prohibition on Toll Lanes." If legislators chose to enact this bill, all work on the pending I-495/I-270 P3 program would be forced to halt. Your constituents support this infrastructure project which includes the spectacular rebuilding of the American Legion Bridge, a long-standing bottleneck that plagues commuters. As traffic counts return to pre-COVID-19 norms, residents in our region have begun to endure traffic delays that aim to be solved by the construction of the P3. The P3 is a source of funding that cannot be replaced-there is no other money to fund like improvements.

Of particular importance during this time is the fact that both the national and local economy must try to begin its recovery post-COVID-19, as vaccines become more available and businesses seek to adjust to the new norms. The region must be able to set the groundwork for growth in employment and business investment, however it is difficult for the region and employers to attract either talent or 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. As legislators you cannot ignore the cost and the impact on commuters on a daily basis.

The myriad of bills that seek to obstruct the construction of the ameliorated I-495/I-270 plus the much-heralded reconstruction of the American Legion Bridge as incorporated in the P3 program are irresponsible and short-sighted. As a responsible legislator, don't fall into the political trap of supporting bills that are encouraged by a small band of adjacent property owners. As a law maker you have the obligation to rise above poor information, petty nuances and political . The project's recently completed DEIS and the selection of a preferred alternative is the path to follow to alleviate pressing congestion that plagues our region. SMTA has long supported attention to both roads and transit as the correct and reasonable regional solution--opposition to this bill strikes at the heart of that goal. Vote to oppose this bill.

Emmet Tydings, Chair

Jennifer Russel, Vice Chair