
February 12, 2021

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
Chairman, House Environment and Transportation Committee
251 House Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

Re: *Letter of Opposition – House Bill 705 – I-270 and I-495 – Prohibition on Toll Lanes (Stop Unnecessary Toll Lanes Act of 2021)*

Dear Chairman Barve and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) respectfully opposes House Bill 705, as this legislation would indefinitely delay much-needed congestion relief to the National Capital Region and frustrate the rate of economic progress in the State of Maryland.

House Bill 705 would prohibit the Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA), or a private entity participating in a public-private partnership, from imposing a toll for the use of I-495 or I-270.

Maryland drivers suffer the second-longest commutes in the nation and House Bill 705 would prohibit improved access to job centers, better movement of goods and services, and trip reliability. Over the next 25 years, the National Capital Region's population is expected to grow by 1.3 million more people, which is the equivalent of adding the population of Dallas, Texas. Without future capacity increases on these major interstate highways, travelers will spill onto and overcrowd the local network, ultimately reducing the quality of life in the region.

House Bill 705 would also jeopardize major opportunities for economic development and is inconsistent with local and State priorities. For example, there is regional consensus that policymakers must immediately address the economic and traffic chokepoint at the American Legion Bridge. If enacted, there would be no ability to replace the decades-long need for a new American Legion Bridge. Furthermore, the Federal Highway Administration estimates that for every \$1 billion in highway investments, 13,000 jobs are created; the National Capital Region would not benefit from direct job creation and opportunity provided by investing in local highway infrastructure.

In the past decade, the National Capital Region has continued to build a reliable Express Toll Network to meet its long-range transportation goals. Similar to all existing Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) toll facilities, tolls allow MDTA to provide regular upkeep and maintenance to its roads and bridges. All other State roads are maintained using the Transportation Trust Fund dollars. With the I-495 & I-270 Public-Private Partnership (P3)

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Program, the proposed managed lanes would be free for buses and carpools with three or more people and only be tolled for others who choose to use the managed lanes; the existing general purpose lanes, or free lanes, will always remain non-tolled. By providing additional travel choices while retaining the general purpose lanes, Marylanders will always have the option for a faster, predictable trip when they need it. When drivers choose to leave the general purpose lanes, they free up space for the other drivers around them. As a result, the general purpose lanes can move faster than they would without the proposed lanes.

For these reasons, the Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee issue House Bill 703 an unfavorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

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Maryland Department of Transportation
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