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HB1022 State Highway Administration - Route 5 Reconstruction at GM Testimony

Good afternoon Madam Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee, For the record Vice Chair Brian Crosby here to present HB1022 State Highway Administration - Route 5 Reconstruction at Great Mills Road.

Route 5 and Great Mills Road is the most important intersection in my district. It is the choke point of Pax River Naval Air Station, Webster Field, Great Mills High School and multiple five elementary schools. An average of 19,000 vehicles pass through this intersection daily. When it's raining during rush hour, to go less than a mile it takes more than an hour and a half to get through the intersection. State Highway Administration (SHA) estimates that each year, commuters spend a total of 23,280 hours in traffic at this intersection alone. Currently, it is poorly maintained, burdened with traffic, and deadly. It is the number one infrastructure issue for St. Mary's County.

Around 4pm every day, the intersection is locked in traffic. The base ends its work day. Webster field employees are going home. Parents are picking their kids up from school. Parents are trying to make their way from the South end of the County up to the North end to get their kids to sports practices. This intersection has been an issue for almost two decades, and it is only expected to get worse as St. Mary's County's population grows. Traffic is expected to increase 27% by 2040. This is the #1 issue for Base Realignment and Closure for Pax River NAS, even more so than the Thomas Johnson Bridge..

This issue was first raised back in 2006, and there was no movement at all on the project until 2019 when I worked on a plan with State Highway to make improvements to the intersection. Representatives of the administration assured me that funding would be there in the 2020 budget for the intersection. What they did not tell me, is that this funding was contingent on a federal grant that they did not receive. \$5.1 million was allocated for the 2020 budget for planning, but the remaining \$25.9 million went unfunded. We were not notified that the grant was denied until February of 2020. SHA put in another grant request later that year, which was denied. It seems silly to me that the administration believes the only way to fund the intersection of two state roads is to pay for it with federal funds.

SHA has been pushing this down the road for almost two decades. In a year where we have a \$2.5 billion surplus, this project is a must for St. Mary's County. It is the #1 issue in the district.

Del. Korman has been down to see how disastrous this intersection is. The Speaker has seen it first hand and knows how important this is. I urge the committee for a favorable report.