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March 11, 2026

The Honorable Ben Barnes  
Chair, Appropriations Committee  
120 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

***RE: Letter of Information – House Bill 1125 – State Capital Program – Covered Projects – Public Engagement and Community Outreach Requirements (Community Engagement and Outreach Act of 2026)***

Dear Chair Barnes and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (SHA) takes no position on House Bill 1125 and offers the following letter of information for the Committee’s consideration.

HB 1125 requires units of State government proposing certain capital projects to complete certain community engagement plans and community outreach activities. The government units must submit annual reports that detail outreach activity to the Department of Budget and Management (DBM). It requires DBM to annually submit a compiled report of the community engagement reports (submitted by each State unit) to the General Assembly and the Legislative Policy Committee.

MDOT appreciates the intent of this bill and takes seriously the input of those who live and work around our projects. The agency strives to encourage meaningful public participation, which involves seeking public input not just in the beginning, but at key points during the planning and execution where input has the potential to shape final decisions.

Currently, all MDOT modes have comprehensive outreach and engagement plans that are uniquely tailored to each project, guided by members of the customer engagement staff. Several elements in the legislation may not be appropriate for any given MDOT project dependent on its scope or size. For example, a radius of one mile may not be the most appropriate distance and may not meet industry’s best practices for some projects. Additionally, the requirement for this type of engagement for any project over \$2 million may capture projects such as minor paving improvements or bus shelter installations.

Further, the legislation does not outline what constitutes the beginning of a project– without knowing the exact stage of project delivery, it may be costly or unnecessary to implement the requirements of the legislation for a project phase in which the type of engagement may be premature. The legislation appears to preclude planning and construction in the same fiscal year by requiring completion of a community engagement plan in the prior fiscal year, an interpretation that could significantly constrain project delivery timelines and delay early public planning.

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MDOT is committed to continuing conversations with the sponsor about how best to reach our shared goal of robust community participation. The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information during their deliberations of House Bill 1125.

Respectfully submitted,

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Maryland Department of Transportation  
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