
February 25, 2026

The Honorable Marc Korman
Environment and Transportation Committee
250 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Letter of Information – House Bill 779 – Natural Resources – Riverine Siting and Design Criteria - Requirements

Dear Chair Korman and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on House Bill 779 and offers the following information for the Committee's consideration.

HB 779 would require State and local capital projects – including highway facilities – to comply with riverine siting and design criteria addressing 500-year flood impacts beginning July 1, 2028.

The State Highway Administration (SHA) recognizes the importance of improving infrastructure resilience in the face of increasing flood risks. As drafted, the bill's requirements that all covered highway facilities be designed to withstand and not be inundated by a 500-year flood event greatly expand the existing Coastal Smart requirements for transportation capital projects.

HB 779 introduces requirements that go far beyond current design standards and regulations. Under existing practice, SHA complies with Coastal Smart requirements and typically performs hydrologic analyses for 2, 10, 25, 50, and 100-year storm events. The 500-year storm event is only modeled for bridge scour evaluations, foundation design, or when a structure is located within a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)-regulated 500-year floodplain.

Designing and constructing replacement structures to accommodate the 500-year event impacts the cost and design of a structure. This requirement would significantly increase structure sizes and could lead to unintended consequences at associated sites, including adverse impacts to downstream properties withing the 100-year floodplain impacts on downstream properties - an outcome prohibited under Title 44, § 60.3 of the Code of Federal Regulations. Additionally, raising roadway approaches to meet these requirements relative to the 500-year storm event would result in greater disturbance to adjacent properties and surrounding environmental resources and bigger, more costly roadway structures. While the bill attempts to mitigate the overall financial impact by limiting applicability to projects with more than 50 percent state funding and providing a waiver option, designing for such an extreme event for most structures is neither practical nor likely to achieve the intended benefit.

The SHA has a shared goal of building more resilient transportation infrastructure that protects communities and taxpayers from the increasing costs of flood damage. The SHA is committed to working constructively with the Coast Smart Council, the Department of Natural Resources, and the

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Department of the Environment to develop criteria that are technically sound, fiscally responsible, and achievable.

The Maryland Department of Transportation will continue to work with the Sponsor and Committee to identify amendments to address these issues. The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee to consider this information during its deliberation of House Bill 779.

Respectfully submitted,

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