

**Statement by Citizens Against Beltway Expansion in Support of HB 1249
Regarding I-495 and I-270 Public-Private Partnership
Partnership Agreement - Requirements
Before the Environment and Transportation Committee
March 5, 2020
Barbara Coufal, Co-Chair
P.O. Box 3593, Silver Spring, MD 20918**

Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, members of the Environment and Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity for Citizens Against Beltway Expansion to share its support for House Bill 1249, the Maryland State Department of Transportation Promises Act of 2020. We are joined in these remarks by Don't Widen I-270.

House Bill 1249 would codify commitments that the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) made to the Board of Public Works, local officials and the public with respect to its plan to build private toll lanes on I-270 and I-495. Promises made by MDOT that would be codified include:

- No funding from taxpayers will be used for the project;
- 10% of toll revenue will be transferred to Montgomery County and Prince George's County for transit;
- Bus and other transit vehicles will be able to use the toll lanes without charge;
- No land will be purchased before the Board of Public Works approves a contract with a developer;
- MDOT will share origin and destination data and traffic and revenue modeling data with local officials;
- Bicycle and pedestrian lanes will be added to the American Legion Bridge;
- The developer will negotiate a Community Benefit Agreement providing, among other guarantees, that the project will be built with union labor at union wages; and
- MDOT will complete a Monorail feasibility study.

House Bill 1249 should not be controversial. It merely requires MDOT to meet the commitments it has made to win approval of its plan to add private toll lanes to I-495 and I-270, estimated to be the largest P3 transportation project planned in North America.

But while it should not be controversial, it is essential that this bill be approved because there has been a pattern by the administration of renegeing on promises related to this and another transportation project. For example, Governor Hogan originally promised that no homes would be taken in order to make way for the new toll lanes on I-495 and I-270. But more recently, MDOT has indicated that 34 homes will be taken. In a January Board of Public Works hearing,

Comptroller Franchot confirmed with MDOT that the lanes would be built with union labor at union wages. But in a recent hearing in this Committee, then Secretary-designate Slater walked back that commitment. With respect to the Nice-Middleton Bridge, the administration originally promised that bicycle and pedestrian lanes would be added. But that promise has been broken too.

This unfortunate pattern of renegeing on promises demonstrates the need to hold MDOT accountable for commitments it has made to move forward on the I-495/I-270 project. It is especially necessary that MDOT fulfills its promises because this project is so controversial. Citizens expect differences of opinion, especially on such consequential matters. But they should be able to trust government officials when promises are made. Failure to enact this legislation will break faith with the people of Maryland and other elected officials. Because this project has such significant financial, environmental and other risks, it is imperative that the administration be held accountable for its commitments.

We urge the Committee to report this bill favorably.