

203 Brewster Ave
Silver Spring, MD 20901
March 4, 2020

Delegate Kumar Barve, Chair
House Environment and Transportation Committee

The following organizations are opposed to Beltway widening.

The Greater Silver Spring Democratic Club
Montgomery County Young Democratic Club
The North Hills of Sligo Civic Association
The Wyngate Civic Association

All of us are concerned with the impact on homes in our neighborhood, the impact on air pollution that affects our residents who are all near the Beltway, and the negative effects on climate change.

We note that Governor Hogan originally stated that no homes would be taken and now we understand that quite a few homes will be taken, and many others will lose significant portions of their properties. Furthermore, several major parks will lose considerable property. In addition, for those next to the Beltway, our secondary roads through our neighborhoods that will be used as a bypass for commuters during construction cannot handle the traffic. They are already in poor shape. The Counties will need funds to improve all of the roads surrounding and feeding into the Beltway widening project which they simply don't have.

While our groups have not studied the various specific legislative proposals, we support the general direction of those bills that address this issue.

I personally support the following bills and for the reasons expressed below.

I'm writing to urge you to support the following three bills that are a response to Governor Hogan's controversial public-private partnership (P3) proposal to add private toll lanes to I-495 and I-270.

Holding MDOT to its Promises

House Bill 1249, introduced by Delegate Marc Korman, would codify promises that the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) made to the Board of Public Works and to local officials in order to win approval of the expansion of I-495 and I-270. The promises include the transfer of 10% of toll revenue to Montgomery County and Prince George's County for transit; that no taxpayer funds will be used for this project; that MDOT will study transit alternatives along I-270; that MDOT will wait for a final

environmental impact statement before asking the Board of Public Works to approve final contracts; and that the project will be built with union labor.

Already, MDOT has walked back its promise to use union labor to build these lanes. And this is not the only promise broken by the Hogan administration. For example, the Governor originally promised that no homes would be taken to make way for the new lanes. But after the election, MDOT acknowledged that 34 homes would be taken. House Bill 1249 does nothing more than hold MDOT to the commitments it has made to advance this project.

Reforming the P3 Process

House Bill 1424, introduced by Delegate Jared Solomon, would provide the General Assembly an oversight role over public-private partnership (P3) projects. It would require disclosure of financial and environmental information on all P3 projects and provide enhanced oversight for P3 projects that have a value exceeding \$500 million. House Bill 1424 would allow the General Assembly to nullify the P3 designation of future projects and would prevent toll companies from effectively vetoing future mass transit or road projects funded by local governments.

This bill would not impact the Governor's proposal to widen I-495 and I-270. But the experience with the Governor's proposal demonstrates why HB 1424 must be enacted. It is unacceptable that a 50-year, \$11 billion project could proceed without the involvement of the General Assembly. Widening these highways will worsen global warming, diminish our parks and likely require taxpayer funding. Yet it will fail to provide a real solution to traffic congestion. These substantial problems demonstrate why the General Assembly needs a more assertive role in approving P3 projects.

County Consent for Toll Roads

Senate Bill 229, introduced by Sen. Susan Lee, would extend from the Eastern Shore to the entire State, an existing law that requires the consent of a majority of affected counties before toll roads or toll bridges can be built. It is unfair to deny other counties in Maryland authority over toll roads that nine Eastern Shore counties have enjoyed for 40 years. This bill would ensure that Montgomery County will have a seat at the table when the State is considering toll roads or bridges.

Tony Hausner

Thausner@gmail.com

301-641-0497

Cc:

Barbara Coufal, CAFE

Eric Cathcart, North Hills of Sligo Civic Association

Jim Laursen, Wyngate Citizens Association

Derrick Nabors, Greater Silver Spring Democratic Club

Michael DeLong, Montgomery County Young Democrats