

**STATEMENT OF ED RICH, PRESIDENT  
GREATER FARMLAND CIVIC ASSOCIATION  
Environment and Transportation Committee  
March 4, 2020**

I am the president of the Greater Farmland Civic Association, which represents over 3000 residents in the Old Farm, Tilden Woods, Hickory Woods, and Walnut Woods neighborhoods, directly abutting the twelve lane highway that is Interstate 270. We **strongly support** the enactment of **House Bill 1424 *Public-Private Partnerships—Process and Oversight***.

HB 1424, by **requiring certain proposed public-private partnership agreements to be submitted to the Legislative Policy Committee**, establishes a Public-Private Partnership oversight review board necessary to address and correct current vulnerabilities in the P3 process. The proposed P3 project to expand I270 and I495 involves both financial risks to taxpayers and potentially wide-ranging and long-term impacts to the environmental, social, and economic health of our region. The current approval process increases risk by enabling fast-tracking without full consideration of alternatives, such as public transit or smart growth, or an environmental impact statement. While we support the intention to address our significant traffic congestion, we join with other organizations in requiring legislative oversight of the P3 approval process for projects like this one with a value exceeding \$500 million. The review board provisioned in HB 1424 will protect taxpayers by ascertaining a private contractor's relevant financial information through an independent rating assessment and by insuring that an environmental impact statement is considered before any presolicitation report is acted on. The legislative review board will bring in pertinent, needed expertise and represent the broader interests of Marylanders concerned with relieving traffic congestion in a future-oriented manner that promotes fair access, sustainability, and a healthy environment.

In addition to ensuring effective legislative oversight for these costly and consequential projects, HB 1424 also **prohibits non-compete clauses in P3 agreements that would “inhibit the planning, construction, or implementation of State-funded transit . . .”** This provision protects State residents by preventing toll road builders and operators from essentially vetoing or blocking any future mass transit or road projects that give commuters a real choice and that support the State's goals for reducing our carbon footprint. The best way forward is to include transit in the current plans. Since the MDOT has recommended retaining only those alternatives that would add two or more toll lanes to I270 and I495, however, it is absolutely essential that the ability to retrofit the existing roadbed or lanes with transit be retained within the 50-year contract span.

We thank you for your consideration and urge you to do right by the people of our community, the many other communities along I-270 and I-495, and all Maryland residents.