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cj@clate.us

SB0213

Favorable

State Highways – Designations – President Barack Obama Highway
Finance Committee – In the Senate - Hearing 2/10 at 1:00 p.m

Honorable Chair, Vice-Chair, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, greetings – I am writing as a citizen who lives and commutes along Route 210 and the Rt. 210 corridor, and who is in full support of Senate Bill 213. There are many reasons to support this Bill, but I'll just expound on two of them.

Sometime after Christopher Columbus commenced his journey to the western world, he landed upon San Salvador—now it is called the Bahamas. It should be noted that San Salvador was not the original name of the island. The Lucayan people called it Guanahani, and Christopher Columbus renamed it San Salvador. What is more, Mr. Columbus later expressed a belief that the land upon which he came ashore was in South Asia, namely India. It is due to that belief, Mr. Columbus referred to the natives as “Indians.”

Today, the word “Indian” has become pejorative to the indigenous people, and it is the principal reason I do not call Route 210 by its given name. In cities and states all throughout this country, they are trying to correct the errors of assigning the many historical notes that we attribute to Christopher Columbus. People make great effort not to use the word, and in some areas of academia, the term has been eradicated from instruction and lecture. Changing the name would be a step to correct an obvious disrespect to a group of people who had no say so in the insensitive reference to their nationality and ethnicity.

The second reason to change the name is that the proposed new name represents a former President of the United States, a President who is admired, idolized, and respected by millions of citizens of this country – and by hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Maryland citizens. To young Black and Brown Marylanders, President Barack Obama represents the belief that they, too, can achieve the American dream, and they, too, could rise to the highest levels of public service. To older Black and Brown Marylanders, President Barack Obama represents a stark contrast from America's dark past to a symbol of America's new era of change and promise.

Plainly put, changing the name of Route 210 would be a change from a negative reference to a people to a positive representation of the best of this country.

Therefore, I urge a favorable vote for Senate Bill 213.

Thank you

Clate “CJ” Jackson
Oxon Hill, Maryland

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Position: INFO



Larry Hogan
Governor
Boyd K. Rutherford
Lt. Governor
Gregory Slater
Secretary

February 10, 2021

The Honorable Delores G. Kelley
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

Re: Letter of Information – Senate Bill 213 – State Highways – Designations – President Barack Obama Highway

Dear Chair Kelley and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on Senate Bill 213 but offers the following information for the Committee’s consideration.

Senate Bill 213 proposes requiring the MDOT State Highway Administration (SHA) to designate MD 210 as the President Barack Obama Highway. MD 210, known as Indian Head Highway, runs 20.86 miles from Potomac Avenue in the town of Indian Head, Maryland to the District of Columbia boundary in Forest Heights, Maryland. The road was named for the town of Indian Head, Maryland and is alternately a four and six lane divided highway along its length.

While Senate Bill 213 does not clarify the exact meaning of “designate,” the potential renaming of a State highway or any public road poses challenges and costs including the following: difficulty in locating an emergency 911 services call based on an older road name, upgrading emergency and other government mapping systems, updating directional and other signage both along the highway and off-site, and confusion and potential costs with legal or real estate documents that reference a road name that may no longer exist. For these reasons, a dedication of a roadway or facility is preferable as it provides the visible honoring of an individual or entity by way of appropriate signage and avoids the previously enumerated concerns of a renaming.

MDOT has previously established policy and procedures by which roadways can be dedicated or named. The Maryland Transportation Commission (MTC) may be petitioned to recommend that a Maryland roadway or state-owned transportation facility be dedicated in honor of an individual or entity. This recommendation is then submitted to the Secretary of Transportation for a decision.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee carefully consider this information when deliberating Senate Bill 213.

Respectfully submitted,

Heather Murphy
Director of Planning and Capital Programming
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-865-1275

Melissa Einhorn
State Legislative Officer
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-841-1102