

July 2, 2021

County Executive Angela D. Alsobrooks
Council Chair Calvin Hawkins
Councilmember Deni Taveras
Councilmember Danielle M. Glaros

CC:

Director Terry Bellamy
Director Andrea Crooms

Re: Thank you & uphold vote to remove I-495/I-270 from Visualize 2045

Thank you for joining the overwhelming majority of Maryland jurisdictions at the Transportation Planning Board in voting to remove the I-495/I-270 project from the region's long-range transportation plan. We are writing to urge you to stand by your vote in view of the negative impact of the project on Prince George's and the failure to study and invest in alternatives that would better meet the economic needs of Prince George's residents.

From the outset, it has been clear that not only does the project increase climate emissions, and harm communities, including a historic African American cemetery, but it will also exacerbate the east-west economic and racial divide.

We have fought without success to get Governor Hogan and MDOT to evaluate transit-oriented development (TOD), transit and demand management alternatives, which would offer a more sustainable and equitable approach, particularly for the residents of Prince George's County. The State should be investing in TOD in Prince George's to increase access to jobs and shorten commutes for residents, rather than forcing Prince George's residents to either pay high tolls or sit in continued traffic in the general purpose lanes to reach jobs overly concentrated on the west side of the region.

As Congressman Anthony Brown stated at the [Stop I-495 and I-270 Townhall](#) on June 24th attended by over 150 people: "Governor Hogan's commitment to more asphalt and more cars on the road doesn't meet our region's needs. It lacks support from the communities that it will affect most, it lacks meaningful investment in transit, and lacks concrete steps to ensure equity in our communities and to advance climate justice. It is fundamentally out of step with the Biden Administration's efforts as we see in the American Jobs Plan and the American Families Plan and I know that Sec. Buttigieg who shares President Biden's vision has grave concerns about what was presented to him... that's why last week's action by the Washington Council of Governments was so critical."

The opposition to the toll lanes is wide and deep, and reflected in the fact that Montgomery County, Prince George's County, Frederick County, the cities of Greenbelt, Rockville, Takoma Park, College Park, and Laurel, and the Maryland House of Delegates representative all voted to remove the project from the TPB plan (Bowie was absent, Charles County abstained, the MD

Senate seat was vacant, and the Cities of Frederick and Gaithersburg, along with MDOT, voted against removal). The District of Columbia, City of Alexandria, Arlington County, and the City of Fairfax voted in support of removal. Concern about climate change, as well as the lack of transparency, failure to consider alternatives, and frustration with the many failings in MDOT's approach prompted this depth of opposition.

Rather than address the many concerns about the project and the conduct of the study, Governor Hogan is twisting arms and threatening to remove projects from Maryland's transportation plan in order to change the vote by the Transportation Planning Board. This is appalling and completely unacceptable. He also misrepresents the impact. Other than the cost of replacement of the American Legion Bridge (which could be covered by federal grants), the other costs of toll lane expansion do not represent lost state money. Maryland's Transportation Trust Fund is unaffected and can be applied to a series of more sustainable and equitable transportation projects in Prince George's and other jurisdictions.

We ask that if there is a motion to reconsider, you commit to standing by your vote with the other jurisdictions to remove the I-495/I-270 project from the regional transportation plan. Doing so is critical to protecting Marylanders from long term harm and to the development of land use and transportation solutions that fulfill the economic development, equity, and climate goals you have set out for Prince George's County.

Sincerely,

Audubon Naturalist Society
Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition (BTEC)
Bikemore
Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church Environmental Justice Ministry
Central Maryland Transportation Alliance
Citizens Against Beltway Expansion
Climate Law & Policy Project
Coalition for Smarter Growth
Defensores de la Cuenca
DontWiden270.org
DoTheMostGood
Friends of Sligo Creek
Fund for Educational Excellence
Greater Farmland Civic Association
Greater Greater Washington
Greenbelt Climate Action Network
Indivisible Howard County MD
Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVA)
Labor Network for Sustainability
League of Women Voters of Maryland
League of Women Voters of Prince George's County

Maryland Campaign for Environmental Human Rights
Maryland Conservation Council
Maryland Legislative Coalition
Maryland PIRG
Maryland Sierra Club
MLC Climate Justice Wing
Montgomery Countryside Alliance
National Parks Conservation Association
Neighbors of the Northwest Branch
Northern Virginia (NOVA) Citizens Association
Nuclear Information and Resource Service
Our Revolution Prince George's
Policy Foundation of Maryland
RapidShift Network
Small Business Alliance
Strong Future Maryland
Washington Area Bicyclist Association
Waterkeepers Chesapeake

*This letter was updated on July 9, 2021 with additional signatories.