



ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

May 23, 2025

The Honorable Paul Wiedefeld, Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Drive, Post Office Box 548
Hanover, Maryland 21076

Dear Secretary Wiedefeld,

Montgomery County appreciates our cooperative relationship with the State of Maryland to collaboratively meet the transportation needs of our diverse residents and businesses. The previous year saw how the State and County can work together to achieve our shared goals. Efforts like the Georgia Avenue Bus Lane pilot demonstrated how we can come together and quickly respond to challenges on the transportation network, using the opportunity to test new transportation solutions and collaborate to implement successful long-term solutions. We are also proud of our progress on shared roles for the county's Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) projects on state highways, as we have begun to document ways that we can efficiently partner for streamlined project delivery.

The release of the 2025-2030 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) demonstrated the continuing fiscal challenges facing the State. We were pleased to see the State restore a portion of the funding to allow some projects not to be deferred as part of the Final CTP. Montgomery County relies on the State's ability to make the necessary improvements to its facilities and programs to address safety, mobility, climate considerations, and accessibility for our residents, businesses, and visitors.

While some funding was restored, it is apparent that Maryland's present funding model is not sufficient to provide the infrastructure investment needed to maintain economic competitiveness, safety, and a high quality of life for Maryland residents. Maryland continues to over-rely on a gas tax despite Maryland and its jurisdictions making strong commitments to electrification and alternative transportation investments. Montgomery County must compete with neighboring states and DC for jobs and residents, and our neighbors have shown firsthand how greater flexibility to raise and leverage transportation funding can result in transformative investments.

We urge the State to think creatively to find ways to fund our surface transportation needs. Failure to secure new funding sources or investment paths could lead Maryland to more congestion and less safe roadways and threaten economic viability as residents and businesses choose to locate in areas with better infrastructure. For the FY2026-2031 CTP, we have organized our priorities by emphasis area to aid in programming future State resources toward the transportation needs in

Montgomery County.

Vision Zero Implementation

In 2024, there were 540 fatal crashes resulting in 549 fatalities in the State of Maryland. Within Montgomery County alone, there were 48 fatalities, including 20 pedestrians. Vision Zero was adopted by the State and many of its subdivisions - including Montgomery County - to address this life and death matter. While resources and focus have been dedicated to reaching zero deaths on our roadways, the past few years have seen the trend moving in the wrong direction. This is not acceptable, and we need to work together to refocus our efforts so that everyone who travels through Montgomery County and across the State reaches their destinations safely. We continue to urge MDOT to increase the allocation of resources to implement pedestrian and bicycle safety, accessibility projects, and speed reduction strategies, to evaluate all their projects for improved safety outcomes, and to expedite the review of access permit policies to prioritize Vision Zero projects that are implemented by local jurisdictions within the State right-of-way.

We applaud the State's recent Complete Streets policy and look forward to seeing the details emerge regarding implementation. We encourage Complete Streets implementation strategies across modal administrations that allow for quick investments in areas with known safety risks. Efforts like the State's recent *Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan* lay this foundation. We also appreciate the State not deferring the funding for critical safety projects such as the implementation of the MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue) Pedestrian Safety Action Plan. However, we remain concerned that the lack of CTP dollars may result in slower responses to safety needs.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Implementation

Montgomery County's BRT program is working to implement over 100 miles of BRT along eight of the County's major corridors. BRT will expand transportation choices for residents, businesses, and visitors of Montgomery County. It will also support the County's suburban corridors and major activity centers as they redevelop into more walkable, compact, transit-oriented destinations. The economic potential unlocked through the implementation of BRT in terms of access to job opportunities, support of retail growth, and expanded development will benefit both the County and State.

Many of the County's BRT corridors are on State roadways, and we have enjoyed our most recent coordination with the Maryland Department of Transportation's State Highway Administration (SHA) to advance a MOU that will streamline the approvals process and best support the County in advancing BRT. We urge MDOT to prioritize continued commitment to this forthcoming MOU and the partnership that will lead to efficient BRT implementation. The County also appreciates the State grants awarded to support BRT. All our projects are benefiting from this funding, especially the Veirs Mill Road and MD 355 projects. State grants are and will continue to be critical for local match funds and to achieve the multimodal safety benefits. We request continued support for this program, which has the potential to greatly increase our roadway capacity at a fraction of the cost of rail or additional travel lanes.

1. ***Veirs Mill Road BRT.*** The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has recently completed their review of our ratings package for the Veirs Mill Road BRT from Montgomery College-Rockville to Wheaton to be considered for Capital Investment Grant (CIG) funding. The County is nearing the end of design for the Veirs Mill Road BRT and has been working with our Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) contractor and the utility companies to advance items around property acquisition, station fabrication, and utility relocation. With the recent approval of our National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Categorical Exclusion, we look forward to receiving approval from FTA to begin advancing the project into construction in 2025 as we prepare for a full funding grant agreement recommendation. We appreciate previous State grant funding that has provided a significant portion of the local match on this project.
2. ***MD 355 BRT.*** Preliminary design has been completed on the MD 355 BRT project, and the County has been working on design refinements while procuring a contractor to deliver the project as a progressive design-build. We anticipate the selection of a contractor this spring and the advancement of design to follow. This fall, FTA granted entry for the MD-355 BRT corridor into Project Development, which determines initial eligibility for New Starts CIG funding. We continue to advance our NEPA documentation and prepare for a project rating to receive grant funding. We anticipate only seeking funds to construct the MD 355 BRT from Rockville to Germantown at this time, meaning there will still be a sizeable funding gap to complete the full vision of BRT from Bethesda to Clarksburg. The County programmed the promised funding from the Opportunities Lane project to comprise most of the local match for anticipated federal funds but has concerns regarding those funding commitments following the termination of the P3 agreement.
3. ***US 29 Phase 2 BRT.*** We appreciate the State's \$5 million contribution to the design of the Median Lane BRT concept to improve transit travel time reliability between Tech Road and Downtown Silver Spring. Preliminary design is scheduled for completion by FY25, and we look forward to working with the State regarding reviews of the concept and consideration for future funding to complete design and construction.
4. ***New Hampshire Avenue BRT.*** Planning is underway for BRT in the MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue) corridor. This is a candidate State-led project for construction as it is in both Montgomery and Prince George's counties and connects through the District of Columbia to reach the Fort Totten Metro Station. In addition, this corridor provides vital links to the Food and Drug Administration's White Oak Headquarters, a key economic engine for the East County. Given the multijurisdictional nature of this project, its implementation should be led by MDOT once the planning is completed in FY25.
5. ***North Bethesda Transitway.*** The North Bethesda Transitway will connect two evolving and intensifying activity centers in North Bethesda and Rock Spring. This

BRT corridor also has the potential to provide a vital link transit link between the Metrorail Red Line and Northern Virginia. This connection would be enhanced through efforts to address congestion on I-270/I-495 and the American Legion Bridge. Its planning will be completed later this fiscal year.

Locally Operated Transit

Locally Operated Transit Support (LOTS) grants to Montgomery County are imperative to ensuring continued transit operations in the County. We applaud the State for the passage of HB 950, which set a minimum amount of Transportation Trust Funds to be budgeted for the LOTS program, and for not reducing the LOTS funding as part of the FY2025-2030 CTP. We request the State consider having LOTS funding be increased annually based on the prior year's Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). This will allow the purchasing power of those vital state funds not to be diluted as costs increase over time.

LOTS funds help advance the County's overall vision for transit. We recently completed our two-year effort to examine the structure of transit delivery in Montgomery County, Ride On Reimagined. This plan provides a roadmap for how the service can evolve over the next five years to respond to changing travel patterns and a desire to serve more of the County's trips via transit.

We enjoyed having representatives from the State participate in the opening of the first two routes of the Great Seneca Transit Network. This network was conceived as a lower-cost solution to provide high-quality transit service to the Life Sciences Center, Universities at Shady Grove, and other key destinations where future development was restricted due to development triggers tied to transit investments. The first two routes demonstrate how the County can implement priority bus networks on an accelerated schedule, and we hope they will provide a model for how other priority bus improvements can be implemented along both County and State roadways. We ask for State financial support to implement other similar bus priority treatments that will be recommended in the ongoing WMATA Bus Network Redesign and the Ride On Reimagined Study.

TOD, Mode Shift, and Climate Action

The transportation sector is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the state. This means MDOT has a prominent role in helping the State achieve its goal of reducing GHG emissions by 60 percent from 2006 levels by 2031. Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) are trending up towards pre-pandemic levels, and we want to see the State continue to focus on areas such as transit-oriented development (TOD), mode shift, and other travel demand management strategies. The State's efforts to prioritize TOD to address affordable housing and leverage infrastructure investments in transit should be lauded. We look forward to opportunities to include the County's BRT station areas in the TOD Designation Program in the future. The State should focus efforts on policies, projects, and funding to prioritize non-single-occupant vehicle travel.

Montgomery County is proud to lead the State in electric vehicle adoption, both in private ownership and in the County's commitment to a zero-emissions bus fleet. In 2024, Montgomery County received the American Public Transit Association's Innovation Award for the Brookville Smart Energy Solar Charging Depot, a solar-powered facility supporting the County's transition to a zero-emission bus fleet by 2035. The County is also utilizing a recent Low- or No-Emission Grant from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to implement the first hydrogen fuel cell production and fueling facility on the East Coast.

As you are aware, vehicle purchases continue to be a challenge for all operators, especially those committed to a zero-emissions transition. The County encourages the State to continue investing in zero-emission vehicle technologies and making grants available for jurisdictions across Maryland to reduce their fleet emissions, including non-transit vehicles to accommodate our County's growing population and climate goals. This includes buses as well as charging infrastructure.

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Investment

WMATA is critical to the success of the metro DC region. We commend MDOT for continuing to provide significant capital and operating support to WMATA. We also appreciate the State's work and support in revising the funding formulas to make them more transparent and better represent the funding allocation of transit resources across the region.

We are all aware of the future fiscal challenges facing WMATA and are watching with anticipation the DMV Moves recommendations, not just for funding but also for how regional transit is delivered. We ask that the State work with us to ensure the recommendations are realistic and feasible for implementation and support the efforts that the jurisdictions have made to develop and manage transit at the local level. We all benefit from a plan that stabilizes the long-term funding for WMATA.

We also ask the State for its support with the following priority project:

1. **North Bethesda North Metro Entrance.** The County is committed to working with WMATA to deliver joint redevelopment at the North Bethesda Station, which includes a second Metro station entrance. The County recently learned that we were successful in receiving an FY 2025 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant from USDOT. We appreciate MDOT's support as we worked on the grant submission and ask that you continue to advocate as it relates to funding at the state and regional levels. We will also require your support in advancing this complex project.

Commuter Rail Expansion

The MARC system operated by MTA is important for moving commuters to Rockville, Silver Spring and Washington, D.C., and the system could provide even greater benefit through enhancements to the service and increasing the system's accessibility. The potential of the MARC

system is even more significant with a direct connection to the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) system to provide seamless links between key activity centers in Northern Virginia and those in Montgomery County. Priorities for MARC enhancements include:

1. ***Midday and Off-Peak Service*** (Planning and Operating). MARC service provides an option for peak period, peak direction commuting. As travel patterns change and reverse commuting becomes more significant, providing more midday and off-peak trains will increase the value MARC service provides to Montgomery County and will increase the attractiveness of employment in Maryland for the growing population in the District of Columbia and Northern Virginia. Changes in commuting patterns in the wake of the pandemic presents an opportunity to modify service to better serve commuters throughout the day. Other commuter rail providers, such as the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, have taken advantage of this opportunity and seen impressive results in terms of ridership. We ask that MTA add midday hours and service in the off-peak direction between Union Station and Germantown.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

Improving pedestrian and bicycle safety, as highlighted in our Vision Zero Program, creating a safe and attractive walking environment in our key growth areas, and the implementation of bikeshare as a permanent component of our transportation system are critical needs for State support. Priorities for pedestrian and bicycle facilities enhancements include:

1. ***Pedestrian/Bicycle Safety Implementation on State Highways*** (Design and Construction). We request that the State increase funding to address sidewalk gaps, crosswalk conditions, trail crossings, and other issues in support of the County's Vision Zero Action Plan. Many of our highest-need locations are on State highways. Sidewalk gaps should include adequate buffers between the new or improved sidewalk and the curb to improve pedestrian level of comfort.
2. ***Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Areas (BiPPAs)*** (Planning, Design and Construction). The County has identified over 30 BiPPAs and has prioritized five for early actions. To be effective, the County will need State cooperation and financial support to implement improvements to State infrastructure in these priority areas. A high-priority activity within this program is to make improvements on access routes to the Purple Line, and State funding for these improvements will help accelerate their construction. Specifically, the County requests continued funding for the design and construction of the master-planned two-way separated bike lanes on the east side of 16th Street between Montgomery Hills and Spring Street. Other areas of focus should be the County's BRT corridors. Safety and access improvements to facilitate walking and biking to BRT stations will be critical for the success of BRT.
3. ***Bikeshare Program Support*** (Grants). Federal, State, and private grants have been essential for bikeshare in Montgomery County, a system that has now grown to nearly 80 stations. Bikeshare contributes to helping achieve non-auto-driver mode share

(NADMS) goals in focus areas within the County and provides an excellent complement to local and regional transit systems. State operating support for this system will help secure its long-term future.

4. ***Intercounty Connector (ICC) Multiuse Trail*** (Planning). A multi-use trail was constructed concurrently with the ICC for much of its length. We request that the State begin planning for the completion of the gaps between MD 182 (Layhill Road) and Notley Road and between MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue) and Briggs Chaney Road.

State Highways

The following projects represent our highest priorities for improvements to non-Interstate State Highways:

1. ***MD97 Montgomery Hills Project*** (Design and Construction). This project was previously a top priority that the State funded through construction. We appreciate the State continuing to fund the completion of engineering, right-of-way acquisition, and utility relocations necessary to construct the project. We hope that during the next three fiscal years, the State can find a way to fund the construction of what is anticipated to be transformative to the Forest Glen and Montgomery Hills neighborhoods by improving safety and access.
2. ***Accelerated Traffic Signal Modernization*** (Design and Construction). The State traffic signal system contains many locations with structural impairment, inefficient incandescent fixtures, underperforming detection, and pedestrian crossing configurations that do not meet today's needs. In addition, the recent small plane crash in Gaithersburg resulted in the loss of power to many State traffic signals, highlighting the need for uninterruptable power supplies to ensure continued operation during power failures. MDOT/SHA and Montgomery County would benefit from prioritization and acceleration of traffic signal modernization in the County, including deployment of additional adaptive traffic signal controls on key corridors within the County.
3. ***MD 117 (Clopper Road) Improvements*** (Design and Construction). Now that the Watkins Mill Interchange is completed, traffic patterns on MD 117 have changed substantially. MDOT completed planning activities for improvements to MD 117 between the Seneca Creek State Park entrance and the I-270 southbound on-ramp. Montgomery County has submitted a Chapter 30 funding application for this project since 2018. Implementation of these improvements between I-270 and Longdraft Road is important to accommodate the changes in Interstate access.
4. ***MD 28 (Norbeck Road) MD 198 (Spencerville Road/Sandy Spring Road) Improvements*** (Design and Construction). Concepts for improvements between Old Columbia Pike and US 29 through the Burtonsville business district have been identified. The County requests that the State select and refine a design concept for

this portion of the corridor that is supportive of the *Burtonsville Crossroads Neighborhood Plan (2012)* goals. In Burtonsville, the project should also identify ways to reduce the width of Old Columbia Pike north of MD 198 to better match reduced traffic demands and to reduce the barrier formed by this roadway. Many have also noted a desire to improve Maryland Route 28 between MD 97 and Norwood Road, where pedestrian facilities are incomplete, the roadway is two lanes, and there are numerous hills and sharp curves.

5. ***MD 355 (Frederick Road) Improvements from MD 27 to Stringtown Road*** (Planning). Expanding MD 355, consistent with the Clarksburg Master Plan is critical to improving access to Clarksburg. We appreciate MDOT sharing the results of the initial planning study that examined capacity needs and identified solutions between Little Seneca Parkway and Milestone Manor Lane. We were disappointed to see no alternatives that focused on improving transit performance and capacity, given the County's focus on BRT in the corridor. Given the continued growth in this part of the County, we ask MDOT to work with us to identify multimodal solutions to the corridor that address the needs while supporting our goals as outlined in *Thrive 2050* and our climate action plan.
6. ***MD 190/River Road*** (Planning). In alignment with the County and State's commitment to Vision Zero, the County requests a safety-oriented re-evaluation of River Road between the Capital Beltway and Little Falls Parkway for potential bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements. The County has identified River Road as part of the High Injury Network in the County's Vision Zero Action Plan. The County's recently adopted *Thrive 2050 Comprehensive Plan* identifies River Road as a Growth Corridor, and yet it lacks critical bicycle and pedestrian facilities such as buffered sidewalks, separated bike lanes, and protected crossings.
7. ***MD 97 from I-495 to the north edge of the Wheaton Central Business District*** (Planning). The Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan evaluated and recommended an innovative interchange concept on MD 97 at the Capital Beltway that we encourage MDOT/SHA to study, which appears to provide significant traffic safety and operations benefits to MD 97 through this area. This priority also includes planning for the reconstruction of MD 97 from the Beltway to and including the Wheaton CBD, with a focus on bicycle, pedestrian, traffic safety elements, and bus lanes. We were happy to work with MDOT on the Reconnecting Communities grant the previous two years and disappointed to learn it was not selected for the award. We ask MDOT to continue to work to identify other opportunities to find funding to advance this effort.
8. ***MD 108/Laytonsville Bypass*** (Planning). The Town of Laytonsville has planned a bypass route for MD 108 around the west side of the town. This bypass, now partially constructed, will alleviate congestion at the intersection of MD 108 and Brink Road/Sundown Road, improving the character of the historic center of town.

9. ***State of Good Repair.*** Proper maintenance is necessary to keep our transportation assets operating optimally and safely and providing value to the traveling public. We are concerned that the current fiscal environment will result in deferral of state of good repair projects, eventually resulting in greater costs long-term. These costs may not be borne directly by the agency but by the traveling public or broader region.

The State's Transportation Asset Management Plan was adopted in 2019. We urge the State to keep focus on the state of good repair as they address other challenges such as resiliency and adapting to climate change. If done well, both can be accomplished. Additionally, we ask the State to consider the state of good repair and resiliency considerations whenever a capital project or facility upgrade is being advanced. We welcome opportunities to collaborate as the State advances its Complete Streets initiative and as the County moves Flash BRT and other multimodal projects forward along State facilities. This will allow us to find ways to improve the condition of State assets while advancing safety and multimodal goals.

Interstate Program

The County has been an active participant in the MDOT/SHA process for projects on I-270 and I-495 since the inception of the project in the last decade. We agree with the need to improve the performance of these corridors by looking at options that include expanding transit. We recognize that the plan to fund and advance any improvement is unclear. It does not negate the need to find a viable plan to address the need to improve mobility for this key connection between Maryland and Virginia.

Montgomery County recognizes the regional collaboration that went into including ALB in the Transportation Planning Board's Visualize 2050 air quality conformity modeling in the past year. Continued collaboration will be needed to ensure that the path forward includes transit commitments and minimizes impacts to County residents. Virginia has implemented a bus connection between Tysons and Bethesda. Ensuring these cross-state transit investments are successful require investments that provide priority to transit.

As solutions to the transportation problems are explored, careful and transparent analysis is needed to evaluate funding and delivery options now that the previous public-private partnership is off the table. This exploration should include a careful assessment of the need for toll financing, generally, and the specific toll structure proposed to ensure equity and protection of Maryland residents from excessive tolls.

With Virginia now constructing the I-495NEXT project to extend the express toll lanes to the George Washington Memorial Parkway, a novel approach is essential to avoid the American Legion Bridge and Maryland's side of I-495 from becoming an even worse bottleneck for travelers. Recognizing that a long-term fix may be a number of years away, we urge the State to consider exploring transportation systems management (TSM) options as interim solutions. Options such as the conversion of shoulders to peak period travel lanes and the conversion of a lane of I-495 to HOV 3+ should be thoroughly evaluated. Designating lanes in Maryland as HOV3+, particularly

The Honorable Paul Wiedefeld, Secretary

May 23, 2025

Page 10 of 10

on the Inner Loop, would provide travel time and reliability benefits for transit and carpoolers without widening the roadway. Providing an HOV3+ lane on the Inner Loop may better balance lane utilization on the bridge and on I-495 heading toward I-270 and will allow a true transit and HOV benefit to be provided. Similar measures were implemented by VDOT on I-495 before I-495NEXT project construction started. Additionally, this is already done in select stretches of I-270 in the peak direction.

Once a long-term solution is identified, we urge the State to maximize federal funding for the project. We also remain steadfast that the project should be multimodal, and we are committed to working with MDOT to develop a viable framework that accomplishes this goal as we both have pledged to the members of the Metropolitan Washington Transportation Planning Board.

We thank you again for your continued partnership in meeting the needs of Maryland residents and businesses in Montgomery County. If you have questions about our priorities, please contact us.

Sincerely,



Marc Elrich, Executive
Montgomery County



Kate Stewart, Council President
Montgomery County

cc: The Honorable Wes Moore, Governor, State of Maryland
Montgomery County House Delegation
Montgomery County Senate Delegation