



Committee: Directly to Council
Staff: Glenn Orlin, Senior Analyst
Purpose: To receive testimony – no vote expected
Keywords: #StateTransportationPriorities

AGENDA ITEM #5
January 24, 2023
Public Hearing

SUBJECT

Public Hearing on Joint Council/Executive Letter on State Transportation Priorities

BACKGROUND

Periodically the County Council and Executive transmit a joint letter to the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) conveying the County's funding priorities for MDOT's Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP), its six-year capital budget. The last comprehensive letter was sent on May 14, 2020, with a minor update on June 8, 2022 (attached). With the change in the composition of the Council, it is appropriate now for the County to update the letter to reflect the Executive's and new Council's State transportation capital priorities. The letter would follow the format of the last comprehensive letter, which ranks priorities within several categories; the categories themselves are not ranked.

The Planning Board developed its recommendations at its January 19 meeting. The Executive has prepared his recommended letter, which was also transmitted on January 19. Both are attached.

The Transportation & Environment (TE) Committee is scheduled to review this matter on January 30, at which time Council staff will summarize the hearing testimony and present its recommendations. The TE Committee's recommendations are anticipated to go before the Council for action on February 7.

This report contains:

May 14, 2020 joint letter, preceded by June 8, 2022 update	©1-9
Planning Board's January 19, 2023 transmittal and recommended letter	©10-20
Executive's January 19, 2023 transmittal and recommended letter	©21-30

Alternative format requests for people with disabilities. If you need assistance accessing this report you may [submit alternative format requests](#) to the ADA Compliance Manager. The ADA Compliance Manager can also be reached at 240-777-6197 (TTY 240-777-6196) or at adacompliance@montgomerycountymd.gov



ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

June 8, 2022

James Ports, Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Drive, P.O. Box 548
Hanover, MD 21076

Dear Secretary Ports:

Montgomery County conducts a comprehensive update of our State Transportation Priorities Letter when there is a major change in the status of our priorities or when there is a change in our elected leadership. We anticipate our next comprehensive update in 2023 when a new County Council is seated, and the next County Executive term is underway. Our comprehensive update follows an extensive outreach process including consultation with Executive agencies, the County Council, our State Delegation, and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) Montgomery County Planning Board, municipalities, and the public. Until this new letter is transmitted, our letter dated May 14, 2020, represents our priorities with the following amplifications. If you have questions about our priorities, please contact us.

Locally Operated Transit Support (LOTS)

At the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, Locally Operated Transit Support (LOTS) grants to Montgomery County were reduced given the significant transit-specific pandemic aid provided by the federal government and the strain on State transportation trust fund revenues. It is important that the State Aid provided through this program is increased above pre-pandemic levels now that the federal operating assistance is no longer being provided, transit operations remain under financial strain, and State revenues have been strong enough to restore this support.

Interstate Program

The Opportunity Lanes project status remains unclear as legal challenges to the State's procurement of a P3 partner continue through mid-2022 and opinions about this project remain sharply divided in Montgomery County. Notwithstanding these issues, little to no progress has been made by MDOT in advancing the State's transit commitments to the County associated with the project. These commitments are required by multiple actions of the Board of Public Works, are included in the project's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) record, are enshrined in the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board's (TPB) actions on Visualize 2045 (the federally mandated long range transportation plan), with MDOT voting in favor of these requirements and are reiterated in several letters between the MDOT Secretary and County officials.

It appears that work on the specific transit projects including the bus maintenance facility at Metropolitan Grove, Shady Grove Station enhancements, and Westfield Montgomery transit center enhancements has been suspended by the MDOT technical team. Further, MDOT officials have not advanced work with the County on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for not less than \$360 million of financial support to high priority transit projects required of the Opportunity Lanes Phase 1 South project, despite numerous efforts to restart this work by the County. We ask that you move expeditiously to advance the specific projects and to finalize the MOU.

FY23 State Budget Actions

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the significant contributions provided in the FY23 State Budget based on recommendations of the Governor and the Legislature. This financial support provides substantial funding to some of our priority projects, like North Bethesda/White Flint area infrastructure and bus rapid transit, among numerous other transportation projects that received support through the State budget actions outside MDOT's Consolidated Transportation Plan (CTP).

Sincerely,



Marc Elrich
County Executive



Gabriel Albornoz
County Council President



Montgomery County Government

ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

May 14, 2020

Gregory Slater, Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Drive, P.O. Box 548
Hanover, MD 21076

Dear Secretary Slater,

Montgomery County is a diverse community with many transportation needs. As always, we appreciate our cooperative relationship with the State of Maryland so that, together, we can meet the needs of our residents and businesses. The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) has continued to make significant contributions to the transportation network in Montgomery County, including providing needed funding for WMATA, completing the interchange of Randolph Road and Georgia Avenue, initiating the I-270 Innovative Congestion Management project, constructing the Watkins Mill interchange, and advancing construction of the Purple Line.

Notwithstanding these accomplishments, our County continues to need expanded investment in its transportation system. For the FY2021-2026 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP), we have organized our priorities by emphasis area to aid in programming of future State resources toward the transportation needs in Montgomery County.

Vision Zero Implementation

Vision Zero is not a stand-alone activity, rather it is a culture shift to a systematic safety approach. In past decades, the road network in Montgomery County was developed under policies designed to increase speed, minimize delay and maximize throughput for motor vehicle traffic. While motor vehicle travel is an important piece of our transportation system, emphasis on walking, biking, and transit access are, appropriately, higher priorities for investment in the road network today. In addition to education, enforcement, and advocacy, implementation of Vision Zero through engineering needs to inform every change made to the design and operation of the road network.

Montgomery County is in the third year of its Vision Zero action plan. The first two years brought improved collaboration with MDOT in the identification of high-hazard locations and implementation of safety countermeasures on both State and County roads. An example of the progress that has been made is MDOT/State Highway Administration's (SHA) *Context Driven Access and Mobility for All Users* guide.

While progress has been made, we continue to see significant numbers of severe and fatal crashes on our road network, particularly for pedestrians. To achieve our Vision Zero goals, in addition to continuing work on improving guidelines and standards, we need MDOT to increase the allocation of resources to implement pedestrian safety, accessibility projects, and speed reduction strategies. We request that MDOT initiate a new statewide program with significant funding to expedite implementation of pedestrian and bicycle safety engineering improvements with a particular emphasis on urban and suburban communities and transit access. In addition, MDOT/SHA should continue to evaluate every project it is undertaking to make sure the projects are informed by Vision Zero and will result in improved safety outcomes.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Implementation

Bus Rapid Transit is a key element of the County's Master Plan. FLASH on U.S. 29 – the first of its kind in Maryland – is advancing as a Federally and County-funded project and is expected to open in 2020. Montgomery County will need MDOT assistance and cooperation to continue advancement of our BRT system that is critical to expanding the economy of Maryland in Montgomery County.

We thank the State for completing repairs to the shoulders on US 29 and ask that the shoulder condition remain a high maintenance priority on this roadway. We request State participation in the implementation of strategies to manage congestion and improve transit travel time reliability between Tech Road and Silver Spring to be determined through the ongoing County-led US 29 Mobility and Reliability Study.

Building upon prior MDOT planning activities, the County has initiated design of BRT on MD 355 between Clarksburg and Bethesda and on MD 586 (Veirs Mill Road) between Rockville and Wheaton. These two projects will unlock the redevelopment potential of White Flint and will improve transit service to the thousands of daily transit riders who depend on services connecting Wheaton and Rockville. As both corridors are State Highways, MDOT's engagement during design and construction and financial participation in these projects will be important.

Park-and-ride capacity is of limited supply and heavily used in Montgomery County. Key locations in need of park-and-ride facility expansions include Burtonsville, to accommodate BRT passengers from Howard County, and along the MD 355 corridor in Clarksburg, Germantown and Gaithersburg to accommodate local commuters and those from Frederick, Carroll and Washington Counties.

The Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT), a long-standing State project, needs to be restored as a project in the CTP. This project is a key ingredient to the success of the biotechnology industry in the Great Seneca Science Corridor and State engagement in its implementation is important to the economic strength of Maryland.

In the next few years, planning will be initiated for the MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue) corridor and the North Bethesda Transitway. BRT on New Hampshire Avenue is a candidate

State-led project as it is located in both Montgomery and Prince George's Counties and connects into the District of Columbia at 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, it should be led by MDOT. The North Bethesda Transitway will also provide a substantial economic opportunity by linking the Rock Spring area to White Flint.

Locally Operated Transit Support (LOTS)

We thank MDOT for its capital and operating support of the Montgomery County Transit System, including Ride On, Ride On Extra, the Flex and, starting in 2020, the Flash. Sustained financial support from MDOT is critical to providing quality transit service in Montgomery County. Priorities for Locally Operated Transit Support include:

1. ***Electric bus infrastructure.*** The County is moving toward deployment of electric buses as a regular component of its transit fleet. To enable this transition from traditional fuels, we request State technical and financial assistance with the installation of electric charging infrastructure at the three County transit depots.
2. ***Ride On ExtRa.*** Services like the Ride On ExtRa, operating on MD 355 between Lake Forest and Medical Center, have proven to be an effective model for improving the performance of transit and attracting additional customers. Montgomery County requests increased assistance through the LOTS program to extend Ride On ExtRa to Germantown and Bethesda and to operate the service all day instead of its current peak period configuration.

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Investment

MDOT should be commended for providing major capital and operating support to WMATA. Priorities for WMATA include:

1. ***White Flint North Metro Entrance.*** The County has identified that providing a second entrance at the White Flint Station is a high priority improvement. We ask for MDOT's advocacy to include this project in the WMATA Capital Program.
2. ***Metrobus priority treatments.*** We also ask for State support of implementation of bus priority treatments as called for in the WMATA Bus Transformation Study Strategic Plan, inclusive of Metro Extra service on Veirs Mill Road and MD 355 between Wheaton and Montgomery College.

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 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. ***Boyds Station Expansion*** (Design and Construction). Recently, the County acquired the property adjacent to the Station with the expectation of MDOT making additional facility improvements beyond the parking and bus loop included in the County Capital Improvements Program.
2. ***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.
3. ***Shady Grove Station*** (Planning). The Shady Grove Sector Plan calls for construction of a commuter rail station with direct connections to the WMATA station and the numerous bus services that operate from Shady Grove. This location has the promise to increase its significance as a multimodal hub if commuter rail connections could be made here. We ask that MDOT initiate a planning study for adding a commuter rail station at this location.
4. ***White Flint Station*** (Planning). The White Flint Sector Plan calls for construction of a new MARC Station and we request that MDOT advance study of the station.

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.
2. ***Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Areas (BiPPAs)*** (Planning, Design and Construction). The County has identified over 30 BiPPA's 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.
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 80 stations. Bikeshare contributes to achieving 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 multiuse trail was constructed concurrent with the ICC for much of its length. We request that the State begin planning

for 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. ***MD 97 (Georgia Avenue) Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Improvements*** (Design and Construction). We strongly encourage MDOT to advance the recommendations of its planning and NEPA study into design and construction. When completed, this project will improve a major gateway into the Silver Spring Central Business District and improve safety and accessibility within the Montgomery Hills and Forest Glen communities.
2. ***MD 117 (Clopper Road) Improvements*** (Design and Construction). After construction of the Watkins Mill Interchange is completed, traffic patterns of MD 117 will change 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 submitted a Chapter 30 funding application for this project in 2018 and 2019. With the opening of the Watkins Mill Interchange, implementation of these improvements between I-270 and Longdraft Road will be important to accommodate the changes in Interstate access.
3. ***MD 355 (Frederick Road) Improvements from MD 27 to Stringtown Road*** (Planning). Expanding MD 355, consistent with the Clarksburg Master Plan, may be the most cost-effective and least impactful way of improving access to and from this community. In addition to capacity, the improvements need to address pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, access to schools, and transit needs. We look forward to reviewing the results of the initial planning that MDOT is now advancing and to defining a project that addresses the needs on this corridor.
4. ***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. 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.
5. ***U.S. 29 Comprehensive Plan*** (Planning, Design and Construction). Traffic operations at several locations on U.S. 29 between Stewart Lane and MD 198 in Montgomery County result in recurring congestion and safety concerns. We request a comprehensive assessment of the signalized intersections on the U.S. 29 corridor, taking into consideration community preferences, approved land use plans, BRT operations, pedestrian and bicycle needs, traffic safety and throughput.
6. ***MD 198 (Spencerville Road) Improvements*** (Design and Construction). Concepts for improvements between Old Columbia Pike and U.S. 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 MD198 to better match reduced traffic demands and to reduce the barrier formed by this roadway.

7. **MD 97 (Georgia Avenue) and MD 28(Norbeck Road) Intersection** (Planning). The intersection of MD 97 and MD 28 is constrained and congested, particularly due to the proximity of the MD 200 Interchange just to the north and the intersection of MD 28 and MD 115 just to the west. Improvement to this location is important for facilitating access between Olney and Silver Spring and for the connection from Rockville to MD 200. We request that the State initiate a new evaluation of solutions to address this long-standing transportation bottleneck.
8. **MD 28 (Norbeck Road)** (Design and Construction). We request that the State fill remaining gaps to complete the pedestrian and bicycle network along and across MD 28 between MD 97 (Georgia Avenue) and Wintergate Drive.
9. **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.

Interstate Program

The County has been an active participant in the MDOT/SHA process for projects on I-270 and I-495. We agree with the need to improve the performance of these corridors, including expanded transit options. Montgomery County remains seriously concerned with the implementation of four additional toll lanes on I-495 between the west spur of I-270 and I-95 and requests that the State restore as an alternative congestion management strategies like ramp metering and peak-period shoulder use, or other spot improvements that are respectful of our natural resources and communities. To meet the travel needs between I-270 and I-95, we also believe MDOT should revisit its decision to eliminate the MD 200 alternative.

We acknowledge the recent announcement of a coordinated approach between Maryland and Virginia to address the American Legion Bridge and to connect the proposed Capital Beltway modifications in Maryland to those planned by Virginia. However, we remain concerned about encroachment of highway facilities beyond existing right-of-way and into buffer space within the right-of-way. All modifications to these corridors need to reflect input from local communities and all efforts must be taken to mitigate environmental and community impacts of both the current highway and its expansion.

As approved in 2019 by the Board of Public Works, the American Legion Bridge and I-270 projects should be implemented at the same time as the first phase of the Traffic Relief Plan Public-Private Partnership (P3) if the project proceeds. We also encourage MDOT to include the Dorsey Mill Road bridge in Germantown and a new interchange and Little Seneca Parkway in Clarksburg into the I-270 project, for which we believe reversible lanes will be most effective. In all cases, the modification of the Interstate system needs to consider the performance of the local road network, include expanded transit services, and include bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure on the crossings of the freeway facilities. We look forward to reaching agreement with MDOT for


local transit funding as required by the Board of Public Works P3 approval.

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
County Executive



Sidney Katz, President
County Council

cc: The Honorable Larry Hogan, Governor, State of Maryland
Montgomery County House Delegation
Montgomery County Senate Delegation

January 19, 2023

The Honorable Evan Glass
President, Montgomery County Council
Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue, 5th Floor
Rockville, Maryland 20850

SUBJECT: Joint Transportation Priority Letter

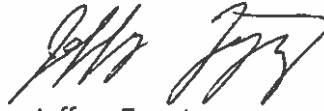
Dear President Glass:

At our regularly scheduled meeting on January 19, 2023, the Planning Board reviewed the draft Joint Transportation Priority Letter prepared by Montgomery County Department of Transportation, County Council and Montgomery County Planning Department staff. The Planning Board's specific recommendations/modifications to the draft are as follows:

- **BRT Implementation**
 - Prioritize the US 29 Phase 2 BRT above the MD 355 North and South BRT given the county's emphasis through Thrive Montgomery 2050 on investing in the east county.
 - Decouple the MD 355 North and South BRT and prioritize the MD 355 North BRT over MD 355 South BRT given the lack of high-quality transit to Clarksburg.
 - Swap the New Hampshire Avenue BRT with the North Bethesda Transitway given the multi-jurisdictional impact of the New Hampshire Avenue BRT and its potential to strengthen the east county economy and connectivity.
 - Emphasize the importance of the I-270 Transit Corridor Connectors and the years of commitments made to the communities served by the Connectors and the county's emphasis on the life sciences industry.
- **Commuter Rail Expansion**
 - Emphasize the need to expand MARC capacity.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have questions, please contact Stephen Aldrich at 301 495 4528 or Stephen.Aldrich@montgomeryplanning.org.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey Zyontz
Chair

Attachment:

Draft Joint Transportation Priorities Letter with Recommended Planning Board Revisions

JZ:SA:aj

cc: Glenn Orlin, Senior Analyst, Montgomery County Council
Christopher Conklin, Director, MCDOT
Tim Cupples, Acting Deputy Director of Transportation Policy, MCDOT
Tanya Stern, Acting Director, Planning Department
Robert Kronenberg, Deputy Director, Planning Department
Jason Sartori, Chief, Countywide Planning and Policy Division, Planning Department
Elza Hisel-McCoy, Chief, Downcounty Planning Division, Planning Department
Carrie Sanders, Chief, Midcounty Planning Division, Planning Department
Patrick Butler, Chief, Upcounty Planning Division, Planning Department

February 7, 2023

TBD, Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Drive, P.O. Box 548
Hanover, MD 21076

Dear Secretary TBD,

Montgomery County is a diverse community with many transportation needs. As always, we appreciate our cooperative relationship with the State of Maryland so that, together, we can meet the needs of our residents and businesses. The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) has continued to make significant contributions to the transportation network in Montgomery County, including providing needed funding for WMATA, nearing completion of the I-270 Innovative Congestion Management project, programming funds for the construction of the Georgia Avenue improvements through Montgomery Hills, and advancing construction of the Purple Line.

Notwithstanding these accomplishments, our county continues to need expanded investment in its transportation system. For the FY2024-2029 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP), we have organized our priorities by emphasis area to aid in programming of future state resources toward the transportation needs in Montgomery County.

Vision Zero Implementation

Vision Zero is not a stand-alone activity, rather it is a culture shift to a systematic safety approach. In past decades, the road network in Montgomery County was developed under policies designed to increase speed, minimize delay and maximize throughput for motor vehicle traffic. While motor vehicle travel is an important piece of our transportation system, emphasis on walking, biking, and transit access are, appropriately, higher priorities for investment in the road network today. In addition to education, enforcement, and advocacy, implementation of Vision Zero through engineering needs to inform every change made to the design and operation of the road network.

Montgomery County is in the sixth year of its Vision Zero action plan. The first five years of the County's program brought improved collaboration with MDOT in the identification of high-hazard locations and implementation of safety countermeasures on both state and county roads. An example of the progress that has been made is MDOT/State Highway Administration's (SHA) *Context Driven Access and Mobility for All Users* guide, and MDOT SHA's involvement in the development of the Montgomery County Complete Streets Design Guide.

While progress has been made, we continue to see significant numbers of severe and fatal crashes on our road network, particularly for pedestrians. To achieve our Vision Zero goals, in addition to continuing work on improving guidelines and standards, we need MDOT to increase

the allocation of resources to implement pedestrian and bicycle safety, accessibility projects, and speed reduction strategies. We request that MDOT initiate a new statewide program with significant funding to expedite implementation of pedestrian and bicycle safety engineering improvements with a particular emphasis on urban and suburban communities and transit access. In addition, MDOT/SHA should continue to evaluate every project it is undertaking to make sure the projects are informed by Vision Zero and will result in improved safety outcomes.

Finally, we urge MDOT to review its access permit policies to look for opportunities to expedite Vision Zero projects that are implemented by local jurisdictions within the state right-of-way. Often MDOT and MCDOT collaborate on strategies to implement a needed Vision Zero improvement, only to have the project experience substantial delay in obtaining the necessary approvals from the various technical branches within MDOT.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Implementation

Bus Rapid Transit is a key element of the County's Master Plan. The top priorities for the County within the next few years include in priority order: 1) MD 355 Central BRT, 2) Veirs Mill Road BRT, 3) Continued advancement of the Median Lane BRT concept on US 29, 4) MD 355 North BRT, 5) MD 355 South BRT, , 6) New Hampshire Avenue BRT, 7) Park and ride expansions, 8) North Bethesda Transitway, and 9) I-270 Corridor Connectors.

Building upon prior MDOT planning activities, the County has initiated design of BRT on MD 355 between Clarksburg and Bethesda and on MD 586 (Veirs Mill Road) between Rockville and Wheaton. These two projects will unlock the redevelopment potential of North Bethesda and will improve transit service to the thousands of daily transit riders who depend on services connecting Wheaton and Rockville.

1. ***MD 355 Central BRT.*** We have programmed the promised funding from the Opportunities Lane project to comprise most of the local match for anticipated federal funds to build the center section of the MD 355 BRT between Montgomery College-Rockville and Montgomery College-Germantown.
2. ***Veirs Mill Road BRT.*** The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has recently authorized us to enter project development for the Veirs Mill Road BRT from Montgomery College-Rockville to Wheaton. As both corridors are state highways, MDOT's engagement during design and construction and financial participation in these projects will be important.
3. ***US 29 Phase 2 BRT.*** FLASH on US 29 – the first of its kind in Maryland – opened in 2020. Montgomery County will need MDOT assistance and cooperation to continue advancement of our BRT system that is critical to expanding the economy of Maryland in Montgomery County. Additionally, we thank the State for completing repairs to the shoulders on US 29 and ask that the shoulder condition remain a high maintenance priority on this roadway. 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 request that the State participate in the local match to federal aid we will be soliciting for this project.

4. ***MD 355 North BRT.*** This segment would connect to the MD 355 Central BRT service with a northern extension between Montgomery College-Germantown and Clarksburg. This BRT service is needed, given the lack of high quality transit to Clarksburg. We will be applying for federal assistance for this BRT extension
5. ***MD 355 South BRT.*** This segment would connect to the MD 355 Central BRT service with a southern extension between Montgomery College-Rockville and Bethesda. We will be applying for federal assistance for this BRT extension.
6. ***New Hampshire Avenue BRT.*** Planning is underway for the MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue) corridor and the North Bethesda Transitway. BRT on New Hampshire Avenue is a candidate state-led project for construction as it is located in both Montgomery and Prince George's Counties and connects into the District of Columbia at 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 FY24.
7. ***Park-and-Ride Expansions.*** Park-and-ride capacity is of limited supply and heavily used in Montgomery County. Key locations in need of park-and-ride facility expansions include Burtonsville, and along the I-270/MD 355 corridor in Clarksburg, Germantown and Gaithersburg to accommodate local commuters and those from Frederick, Carroll and Washington counties.
8. ***North Bethesda Transitway.*** The North Bethesda Transitway will provide a vital link between the Metrorail Red Line and Northern Virginia via Phase I South of the Opportunity Lanes project, and it will also provide a substantial economic opportunity by linking the Rock Spring area to the Red Line. Its planning will be completed later this fiscal year and we will be looking to MDOT to help fund construction starting in the next couple of years.
9. ***I-270 Transit Corridor Connectors.*** The Council recently adopted Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan. This plan identified the MD 355 and MD 586 BRT projects as the most crucial first steps in improving transit accessibility along the I-270 corridor. The Plan also replaced the Corridor Cities Transitway concept with a series Corridor Connectors, dedicated bus lanes that link key activity and employment centers to the County's primary north-south rapid transit lines, as well as Metrorail and the MARC Rail Brunswick line. These projects are key ingredients to the success of the biotechnology industry in the Great Seneca Science Corridor and state engagement in

their implementation is important to the economic strength of Maryland. We wish to emphasize the importance of the I-270 Transit Corridor Connectors and the years of commitments made to the communities that will be served by the Corridor Connectors and the county's emphasis on the life sciences industry. We request that the State change the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) Project Information Form (PIF) in the CTP to reference "I-270 Transit Corridor Connectors" in the CTP and provide funding for additional buses to operate the Great Seneca Science Corridors project embedded in this plan.

Locally Operated Transit Systems (LOTS) Support

We thank MDOT for its capital and operating support of the Montgomery County Transit System, including Ride On, Ride On Extra, the Flex and, starting in 2020, the Flash. Sustained financial support from MDOT is critical to providing quality transit service in Montgomery County. Priorities for Locally Operated Transit Support include:

1. ***Zero emission bus infrastructure.*** The County is transitioning to an entirely zero-emission bus fleet. As part of our strategy, we will invest in zero emission buses as a regular component of its transit fleet. To enable this transition from traditional fuels, we request state technical and financial assistance with the installation of electric charging infrastructure at the three county transit depots.
2. ***Ride On ExtRa.*** Services like the Ride On ExtRa, operating on MD 355 between Lake Forest and Medical Center, have proven to be an effective model for improving the performance of transit and attracting additional customers. Montgomery County requests increased assistance through the LOTS program to extend Ride On ExtRa to Germantown and Bethesda and to operate the service all day instead of its current peak period configuration.
3. ***Locally Operated Transit Systems Support grants.*** At the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, Locally Operated Transit Systems (LOTS) support grants to Montgomery County were reduced given the significant transit-specific pandemic aid provided by the federal government and the strain on state transportation trust fund revenues. It is important that the state aid provided through this program is increased above pre-pandemic levels now that the federal operating assistance is no longer being provided, transit operations remain under financial strain, and state revenues have been strong enough to restore this support.

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Investment

MDOT should be commended for providing major capital and operating support to WMATA. Priorities for WMATA include:

1. ***North Bethesda North Metro Entrance.*** The County has identified a second entrance at the North Bethesda Station as a high priority improvement. We ask for MDOT's advocacy to include this project in the WMATA Capital Program.
2. ***Metrobus priority treatments.*** We ask for state financial support to implement bus priority treatments that will be recommended in the ongoing WMATA Better Bus Network and the Ride On Reimagined Study.

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 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. Expanding MARC capacity remains a high priority for the County. Priorities for MARC enhancements include:

1. ***Boyd's Station Expansion*** (Design and Construction). Improvements to the rail station facilities and restoration of the Hoyle's Mill Building to compliment the improvements funded by the County at Boyd's Station.
2. ***North Bethesda Station*** (Planning). The White Flint Sector Plan and Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan calls for the construction of a new MARC Station in the area that was formerly referred to as White Flint, and we request that MDOT advance study of the station.
3. ***Shady Grove Station*** (Planning). The Shady Grove Sector Plan and Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan call for construction of a new MARC Station with direct connections to the WMATA Red Line station and the numerous bus services that operate from Shady Grove. This location has the promise to increase its significance as a multimodal hub if commuter rail connections could be made here. We ask that MDOT initiate a planning study for adding a commuter rail station at this location.
4. ***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. We ask that MDOT initiate a planning study for adding midday and off-peak service.

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, frequent protected crossings, need for reduced speeds, 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 BiPPA's 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 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.
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 100 stations. Bikeshare contributes to help 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 multiuse trail was constructed concurrent with the ICC for much of its length. We request that the State begin planning for 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. ***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

submitted a Chapter 30 funding application for this project in 2018 and 2019. With the opening of the Watkins Mill Interchange, implementation of these improvements between I-270 and Longdraft Road are important to accommodate the changes in Interstate access.

2. ***MD 198 (Old Columbia Pike) 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.
3. ***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. In addition to traffic capacity, the improvements need to address pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, access to schools, and transit needs. We look forward to reviewing the results of the initial planning that MDOT is now advancing and to defining a project that addresses the needs on this corridor.
4. ***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. 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.
5. ***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 Montgomery 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.
6. ***MD 97 Diverging Diamond Interchange at the Capital Beltway (Planning)***. The Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan evaluated and recommended this innovative interchange improvement on MD 97 at the Capital Beltway. This concept was shown to provide significant traffic operations benefits to MD 97 through this area.
7. ***MD 97 (Georgia Avenue) and MD 28 (Norbeck Road) Interchange*** (Planning). The intersection of MD 97 and MD 28 is constrained and congested, particularly due to the proximity of the MD 200 Interchange just to the north and the intersection of MD 28 and

MD 115 just to the west. Improvement to this location is important for facilitating access between Olney and Silver Spring and for the connection from Rockville to MD 200. We request that the State initiate a new evaluation of solutions to address this long-standing transportation bottleneck. The design should prioritize pedestrian and bicycle safety by exploring innovative interchange concepts.

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.

Interstate Program

The County has been an active participant in the MDOT/SHA process for projects on I-270 and I-495. We agree with the need to improve the performance of these corridors, including expanded transit options. Montgomery County remains seriously concerned with the implementation of four additional toll lanes on I-495 between the west spur of I-270 and I-95 and requests that the State restore as an alternative congestion management strategies like ramp metering and peak-period shoulder use, or other spot improvements that are respectful of our natural resources and communities. To meet the travel needs between I-270 and I-95, we also believe MDOT should revisit its decision to eliminate the MD 200 alternative.

We acknowledge the recent announcement of a coordinated approach between Maryland and Virginia to address the American Legion Bridge and to connect the proposed Capital Beltway modifications in Maryland to those planned by Virginia. However, we remain concerned about encroachment of highway facilities beyond existing right-of-way and into buffer space within the right-of-way. All modifications to these corridors need to reflect input from local communities and all efforts must be taken to mitigate environmental and community impacts of both the current highway and its expansion.

As approved in 2019 by the Board of Public Works, the American Legion Bridge and I-270 projects should be implemented at the same time as the first phase of the Traffic Relief Plan Public-Private Partnership (P3) if the project proceeds. We also encourage MDOT to include the Dorsey Mill Road bridge in Germantown and a new interchange and Little Seneca Parkway in Clarksburg into the I-270 project, for which we believe reversible lanes will be most effective. In all cases, the modification of the Interstate system needs to consider the performance of the local road network, include expanded transit services, and include bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure on the crossings of the freeway facilities. We look forward to reaching agreement with MDOT for local transit funding as required by the Board of Public Works P3 approval.

The Opportunity Lanes project status remains unclear as legal challenges to the State's procurement of a P3 partner continue through mid-2022 and opinions about this project remain sharply divided in Montgomery County. Notwithstanding these issues, little to no progress has been made by MDOT in advancing the State's transit commitments to the County associated with

the project. These commitments are required by multiple actions of the Board of Public Works, are included in the project's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) record, are enshrined in the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board's (TPB) actions on Visualize 2045 (the federally mandated long range transportation plan), with MDOT voting in favor of these requirements and are reiterated in several letters between the MDOT Secretary and county officials.

In addition, we feel that with the approval of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, there may be funding opportunities for the American Legion Bridge (ALB) and the I-495 bridge over the Northwest Branch. For the ALB, improvements should include vehicular capacity improvements (e.g., HOT lanes) as well as future heavy rail, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities. It appears that work on the specific transit projects including the bus maintenance facility at Metropolitan Grove, Shady Grove Station enhancements, and Westfield Montgomery transit center enhancements has been suspended by the MDOT technical team. Further, MDOT officials have not advanced work with the County on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for not less than \$360 million of financial support to high priority transit projects required of the Opportunity Lanes Phase 1 South project, despite numerous efforts to restart this work by the County. We ask that you move expeditiously to advance the specific projects and to finalize the MOU.

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
County Executive

Evan Glass, President
County Council

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



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

MEMORANDUM

January 13, 2023

TO: Evan Glass, President
Montgomery County Council

FROM: Marc Elrich, County Executive

SUBJECT: Joint Transportation Priorities Letter

I am pleased to transmit to you my proposed draft Joint Transportation Priorities Letter. These priorities reflect the critical investments necessary to ensure that our streets are safe, our transportation network achieves our mobility and climate goals, and our region realizes its economic potential. They outline areas where state investment and improved cooperation with Montgomery County will result in significant progress toward achieving these goals. As we have done in prior years, our priorities are organized by emphasis area as follows:

- Bus Rapid Transit
- Vision Zero
- Locally Operated Transit Support
- WMATA Investment
- Commuter Rail Expansion
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities
- State Highways
- Interstate Program

The current environment presents new opportunities to make real progress in transportation. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law has generated new federal funding that can be leveraged with state and local investments. We have an opportunity to work with the new Governor and Transportation Secretary to secure these investments and identify new, more effective approaches to our transportation challenges. I look forward to working with you on this matter.

Attachment: Draft Joint Transportation Priority Letter



Montgomery County Government

ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

February 07, 2023

TBD, Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Drive, P.O. Box 548
Hanover, MD 21076

Dear Secretary TBD,

Montgomery County is a diverse community with many transportation needs. As always, we appreciate our cooperative relationship with the State of Maryland so that, together, we can meet the needs of our residents and businesses. The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) has continued to make significant contributions to the transportation network in Montgomery County, including providing needed funding for WMATA, nearing completion of the I-270 Innovative Congestion Management project, programming funds for the construction of the Georgia Avenue improvements through Montgomery Hills, and advancing construction of the Purple Line.

Notwithstanding these accomplishments, our County continues to need expanded investment in its transportation system. For the FY2024-2029 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP), we have organized our priorities by emphasis area to aid in programming of future State resources toward the transportation needs in Montgomery County.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Implementation

Bus Rapid Transit is a key element of the County's Master Plan. It is critical both our transportation network and expanding the economy of Maryland in Montgomery County. Our success depends on implementing a comprehensive BRT network throughout the County.

Building upon prior MDOT planning activities, the County has initiated design of BRT on MD 355 between Clarksburg and Bethesda and on MD 586 (Veirs Mill Road) between Rockville and Wheaton. These two projects will unlock the redevelopment potential of North Bethesda and will improve transit service to the thousands of daily transit riders who depend on services connecting Wheaton and Rockville.

Creating this network demands that we advance many of our BRT projects simultaneously. Based on the current status of each project (planning, design, construction, etc.) and funding needs, our top priorities for the County within the next few years include in

priority order: 1) MD 355 BRT, 2) Veirs Mill Road BRT, 3) continued advancement of the Median Lane BRT concept on US 29, 4) Park-and-Ride expansions, 5) Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan implementation, 6) New Hampshire Avenue BRT, and 7) North Bethesda BRT.

1. **MD 355 BRT.** We have programmed the promised funding from the Opportunities Lane project to comprise most of the local match for anticipated Federal funds to build the center section of the MD 355 BRT between Montgomery College-Rockville and Montgomery College-Germantown. Additionally, we will be applying for Federal assistance for the MD 355 BRT from Montgomery College-Germantown to Clarksburg and from Montgomery College-Rockville to Bethesda.
2. **Veirs Mill Road BRT.** The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has recently authorized us to enter project development for the Veirs Mill Road BRT from Montgomery College -Rockville to Wheaton. We hope to secure FTA Small Starts funding for this project in the coming year. As both this and the MD 355 corridors are State Highways, MDOT's engagement during design and construction and financial participation in these projects will be important.
3. **US 29 BRT.** FLASH on US 29 – the first of its kind in Maryland – opened in 2020. Montgomery County will need MDOT continued assistance and cooperation to continue advancement of our BRT system on this corridor. Extending and improving this BRT line is important to the region beyond Montgomery County. The recently passed federal Omnibus Budget includes funding to extend Flash operations to Howard County. We appreciate the State's \$5 million contribution to next phase of this project, the design of the Median Lane BRT concept, which will improve transit travel time reliability between Tech Road and Downtown Silver Spring. Preliminary design is scheduled for completion by FY25 and we request that the State participate in the local match to Federal aid we will be soliciting for this project. Additionally, we thank the State for completing repairs to the shoulders on US 29 and ask that the shoulder condition remain a high maintenance priority on this roadway.
4. **Park-and-Rides.** Park-and-ride capacity is of limited supply and heavily used in Montgomery County. Key locations in need of park-and-ride facility expansions include Burtonsville, and along the I-270/MD 355 corridor in Clarksburg, Germantown and Gaithersburg to accommodate local commuters and those from Howard, Frederick, Carroll and Washington counties.
5. **I-270 Transit Corridor Connectors.** The Council recently adopted Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan. This plan identified the MD 355 and MD 586 BRT projects as the most crucial first steps in improving transit accessibility along the I-270 corridor. The Plan also replaced the Corridor Cities Transitway concept with a series Corridor Connectors, dedicated bus lanes that link key activity and employment centers County's primary north-south rapid transit lines, as well as Metrorail and the MARC Rail Brunswick line. These projects are key ingredients to the success of the biotechnology industry in the Great Seneca Science Corridor and State engagement in

their implementation is important to the economic strength of Maryland. We request that the State change the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) Project Information Form (PIF) in the CTP to reference “I-270 Transit Corridor Connectors” in the CTP and provide funding for additional buses to operate the Great Seneca Science Corridors project embedded in this plan.

6. ***New Hampshire Ave BRT.*** Planning is underway for the MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue) corridor and the North Bethesda Transitway. BRT on New Hampshire Avenue is a candidate State-led project for construction as it is located in both Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties and connects into the District of Columbia at 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 FY24.
7. ***North Bethesda Transitway.*** The North Bethesda Transitway will provide a vital link between the Metrorail Red Line and Northern Virginia via Phase I South of the Opportunity Lanes project, and it will also provide a substantial economic opportunity by linking the Rock Spring area to the Red Line. Its planning will be completed later this fiscal year and we will be looking to MDOT to help fund construction starting in the next couple of years.

Vision Zero Implementation

Vision Zero is not a stand-alone activity, rather it is a culture shift to a systematic safety approach. In past decades, the road network in Montgomery County was developed under policies designed to increase speed, minimize delay and maximize throughput for motor vehicle traffic. While motor vehicle travel is an important piece of our transportation system, emphasis on walking, biking, and transit access are, appropriately, higher priorities for investment in the road network today. In addition to education, enforcement, and advocacy, implementation of Vision Zero through engineering needs to inform every change made to the design and operation of the road network.

Montgomery County is in the sixth year of its Vision Zero action plan. The first five years of the County’s program brought improved collaboration with MDOT in the identification of high-hazard locations and implementation of safety countermeasures on both State and County roads. An example of the progress that has been made is MDOT/State Highway Administration’s (SHA) *Context Driven Access and Mobility for All Users* guide, and MDOT SHA’s involvement in the development of the Montgomery County Complete Streets Design Guide.

While progress has been made, we continue to see significant numbers of severe and fatal crashes on our road network, particularly for pedestrians. To achieve our Vision Zero goals, in addition to continuing work on improving guidelines and standards, we need MDOT to increase the allocation of resources to implement pedestrian and bicycle safety, accessibility projects, and speed reduction strategies. We request that MDOT initiate a new statewide program with

significant funding to expedite implementation of pedestrian and bicycle safety engineering improvements with a particular emphasis on urban and suburban communities and transit access. In addition, MDOT/SHA should continue to evaluate every project it is undertaking to make sure the projects are informed by Vision Zero and will result in improved safety outcomes. Finally, we urge MDOT to review its access permit policies to look for opportunities to expedite Vision Zero projects that are implemented by local jurisdictions within the State right-of-way. Often MDOT and MCDOT collaborate on strategies to implement a needed Vision Zero improvement, only to have the project experience substantial delay in obtaining the necessary approvals from the various technical branches within MDOT.

Locally Operated Transit Support (LOTS)

We thank MDOT for its capital and operating support of the Montgomery County Transit System, including Ride On, Ride On Extra, the Flex and, starting in 2020, the Flash. Sustained financial support from MDOT is critical to providing quality transit service in Montgomery County. Priorities for Locally Operated Transit Support include:

1. ***Zero emission bus infrastructure.*** The County is transitioning to an entirely zero-emission bus fleet. As part of our strategy, we will invest in zero emission buses as a regular component of its transit fleet. To enable this transition from traditional fuels, we request State technical and financial assistance with the installation of electric charging infrastructure at the three County transit depots, including funding to support the replacement of our Nicholson Court Depot, which is currently leased and cannot accommodate zero-emission buses.
2. ***Ride On ExtRa.*** Services like the Ride On ExtRa, operating on MD 355 between Lake Forest and Medical Center, have proven to be an effective model for improving the performance of transit and attracting additional customers. Montgomery County requests increased assistance through the LOTS program to extend RideOn ExtRa to Germantown and Bethesda and to operate the service all day instead of its current peak period configuration.
3. ***LOTS Grants.*** Inflation, increased fuel costs, and competition for a shrinking pool of CDL drivers are driving up the cost to deliver Transit services in the aftermath of the COVID 19 Pandemic. We request that LOTS grants be increased annually based on the prior year's Consumer Price Index CPI-U.

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Investment

MDOT should be commended for providing major capital and operating support to WMATA. Priorities for WMATA include:

1. ***North Bethesda North Metro Entrance.*** The County has identified a second entrance at the North Bethesda Station as a high priority improvement. We ask for MDOT's advocacy to include this project in the WMATA Capital Program.
2. ***Metrobus priority treatments.*** We ask for State financial support to implement bus priority treatments that will be recommended in the ongoing WMATA Better Bus Network and the Ride On Reimagined Study.

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 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 MDOT initiate a planning study for adding midday and off-peak service.
2. ***Boyd's Station Expansion*** (Design and Construction). Improvements to the rail station facilities and restoration of the Hoyle's Mill Building to compliment the improvements funded by the County at Boyd's Station.
3. ***North Bethesda Station*** (Planning). The White Flint Sector Plan and Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan calls for the construction of a new MARC Station in the area that was formerly referred to as White Flint, and we request that MDOT advance study of the station.
4. ***Shady Grove Station*** (Planning). The Shady Grove Sector Plan and Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan call for construction of a new MARC Station with direct connections to the WMATA Red Line station and the numerous bus services that operate from Shady Grove. This location has the promise to increase its significance as a multimodal hub if commuter rail connections could be made here. We ask that MDOT initiate a planning study for adding a commuter rail station at this location.

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 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.
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 100 stations. Bikeshare contributes to help 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.

State Highways

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

1. ***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 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.

2. ***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 submitted a Chapter 30 funding application for this project in 2018 and 2019. With the opening of the Watkins Mill Interchange, implementation of these improvements between I-270 and Longdraft Road are important to accommodate the changes in Interstate access.
3. ***MD 198 (Spencerville 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.
4. ***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. In addition to traffic capacity, the improvements need to address pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, access to schools, and transit needs. We look forward to reviewing the results of the initial planning that MDOT is now advancing and to defining a project that addresses the needs on this corridor.
5. ***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.
6. ***MD 97 Diverging Diamond Interchange at the Capital Beltway*** (Planning). The Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan evaluated and recommended this innovative interchange improvement on MD 97 at the Capital Beltway. This concept was shown to provide significant traffic operations benefits to MD 97 through this area. We request that MDOT/SHA initiate a study to further evaluate the feasibility and benefits of a diverging diamond interchange at this location.
7. ***MD 97 (Georgia Avenue) and MD 28 (Norbeck Road) Interchange*** (Planning). The intersection of MD 97 and MD 28 is constrained and congested, particularly due to the proximity of the MD 200 Interchange just to the north and the intersection of MD 28 and MD 115 just to the west. Improvement to this location is important for facilitating access between Olney and Silver Spring and for the connection from Rockville to MD 200. We

request that the State initiate a new evaluation of solutions to address this long-standing transportation bottleneck. The design should prioritize pedestrian and bicycle safety by exploring innovative interchange concepts.

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.

Interstate Program

Now is the time to take a pause and reassess the best way to solve the problems with the American Legion Bridge (ALB) and the I-270 corridor, including the section of I-495 that links the two. Although the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is already building an extension of the I-495 Express Lanes up to the George Washington Memorial Parkway (495Next), the replacement of the ALB, changes to the highways further north, and advancement of the transit commitments are stalled. The State's procurements and the NEPA approvals are in litigation, the financial viability and appropriateness of the P3 approach is unclear at best, and questions are unanswered about whether tolling is needed and is being thought of equitably. All of this reflects a profound lack of consensus that the current project is the best path forward, although nearly all agree that something needs to be done.

We need to solve these problems, and the County hopes to actively collaborate with the Governor and new leadership at MDOT to revisit the work completed and frame workable solutions that can advance with broader support. Basic concepts that could be part of a consensus solution include maximizing Federal aid, committing to addressing the needs of all of I-270 so that we do not just move the bottleneck from Virginia and one part of Montgomery County to another part, rethinking the purpose of tolling and the reasonableness of the proposed tolls, considering environmental stewardship instead of environmental mitigation, and ensuring the implementation of major transit improvements concurrent with the highway improvements, like BRT on Maryland 355, Veirs Mill Road, Old Georgetown Road, and in the Great Seneca Corridor as called for in County plans and being advanced through planning and design by the County. Additionally, only solutions "within the walls" of I-270 should be considered.

We have an opportunity to reset the dialog around the transportation needs in the I-270/495 corridor. The past work provides a great deal of baseline information, and we view the project commitments made so far as important but likely insufficient to provide the best outcome. We hope that you agree that freshly considering the needs through a more expansive lens, with openness to new approaches and possibilities, can lead to a much better outcome and more consensus on how we should collectively move forward.

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
County Executive

Evan Glass, President
County Council

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