



MEMORANDUM

TO: Transportation Planning Board
FROM: Lyn Erickson, Plan Development and Coordination Program Director
SUBJECT: Public Comment for the October 2021 TPB Meeting
DATE: October 20, 2021

The Transportation Planning Board accepts public comment on a rolling basis. Comments can be submitted via email (tpbcomment@mwkog.org), online (mwkog.org/tpbcomment), and phone. Comments are collected until noon on the Tuesday before the TPB meeting. These comments are compiled and shared with the board at the meeting the following day.

Between the September 2021 TPB meeting and noon on Tuesday, October 19, 2021, the TPB received 3 comments. All three comments were submitted by the same person via email.

The comments are summarized below. All full comments are attached to this memo.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Arlene Montemarano – Email – September 22, September 26, and October 15, 2021
Montemarano, resident of Silver Spring, sent three emails.

The first, from September 22, included a comment that was skeptical of the I-495/I-270 project and its rebranding as OP Lanes. The second, from September 26, included a link to a Washington Post article about highway widening in Utah with a comment that instead of building new infrastructure it is important to make better use of existing infrastructure. The third email, from October 15, was a link to an article with data that suggested that most public private partnerships end up being more expensive than initially estimated.

TPB Comment

From: Arlene <mikarlgm@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 22, 2021 9:39 PM
Subject: Op Lanes Maryland

Categories: Blue category

Such exciting news! They changed the scam's name! I'm sure that must mean that there will not, after all, be hell to pay for the environment, broken and diminished communities, and a perpetual suck by Transurban of our financial resources far into the future.

Especially enjoy their hilarious use of language...*"with no action on I-495 east of the I-270 east spur at this time."*

Relax, citizens of Maryland. All is peachy-keen in Hogan-Land.

On 9/22/2021 3:41 PM, MDOT Op Lanes P3 Program wrote:



Options & Opportunities for All

Greetings,

I am emailing today to let you know that our public-private-partnership (P3) program will now be known as Op Lanes Maryland.

The P3 Program has evolved from when we began four years ago, and our new name, Op Lanes Maryland, reflects this evolution as we continue to collaborate with Montgomery, Frederick and Prince George's counties, community organizations, residents, businesses, agencies, regional partners and other stakeholders.

The New American Legion Bridge I-270 Traffic Relief Plan falls under the Op Lanes Maryland umbrella, replacing the 60-year-old American Legion Bridge and breaking one of the nation's worst bottlenecks.



Through Op Lanes Maryland, we will continue working on exciting new transformative transportation options and opportunities to provide a balanced transportation network that meets the multimodal travel needs of our residents and businesses as the National Capital Region continues to grow in the decades ahead.

The Phase 1: New American Legion Bridge I-270 to I-70 Traffic Relief Plan is the first major project under Op Lanes Maryland. Upon Maryland Board of Public Works approval in August 2021, we executed a Phase P3 Agreement and have begun robust predevelopment work with Accelerate Maryland Partners, LLC (AMP Partners) to collaborate with stakeholders on further reducing and avoiding potential impacts to advance Phase 1 South: American Legion Bridge I-270 to I-370 as the first section of the project.

This predevelopment work also will support completion of our ongoing Managed Lanes Study under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). If selected at the conclusion of the study, the Phase 1 South preferred alternative will deliver a new wider American Legion Bridge and two dynamically priced high-occupancy toll (HOT) lanes in each direction from the vicinity of the George Washington Memorial Parkway across the bridge to I-270, and north on I-270 to I-370 with no action on I-495 east of the I-270 east spur at this time.

Buses and high occupancy vehicles (HOV3+) will be able to use the new HOT lanes free of charge while drivers with less than three occupants in their vehicles may choose to pay a dynamically priced toll for a more reliable trip when they need it. Meanwhile, the existing general-purpose lanes will remain free as they are today for all motorists.

Thank you for your continued interest as we move forward under Op Lanes Maryland. We look forward to continuing to share more information and collaborate with you in the years ahead. As always, if you have questions or comments, you may call [833-858-5960](tel:833-858-5960) or email oplanesmd@mdot.maryland.gov. For more information, visit our new website oplanesmd.com/, and follow us on our social media platforms at OpLanesMD.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey T. Folden, PE, DBIA
Deputy Director, I-495 & I-270 P3 Program



MDOT Op Lanes P3 Program | 707 North Calvert Street, Mail Stop P-601, Baltimore, MD 21

[Unsubscribe mikarl@starpower.net](#)

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Sent by oplanesmd@mdot.maryland.gov in collaboration with



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Arlene Montemarano, 240-360-8691, Lawndale Drive

Please add your name to this petition indicating opposition to Hogan's private toll highway expansion plan:

<https://sign.moveon.org/petitions/stop-toll-lanes-highway-widening-proposal-in-maryland>

The State's plan to add 4 private toll lanes to 495 and 270 would impact six national park sites, threaten dozens of local and regional parks, and endanger 30 miles of streams, 50 acres of wetlands, and 1,500 acres of forest canopy.

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Member of Citizens Against Beltway Expansion, cabe495.com

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TPB Comment

From: arlene Montemarano <mikarlgm@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, September 26, 2021 10:21 PM
Subject: Rethinking transportation

Categories: Blue category

“We need an approach to growth that is not dependent on us building new transportation infrastructure, but instead makes better use of the transportation infrastructure we’ve already built,”

Ya think??

(Bolding is mine.)

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https://news.google.com/articles/CAIiEGTz_82ZDWT6xphxI2pZeHcqGAgEKg8IACoHCAowjtSUCjC30XQwzqe5AQ?hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US%3Aen

How a quality-of-life award for a 12-lane Utah highway sums up the debate over the future of transportation
Sep. 24th, 2021

For years, drivers heading through the booming Utah city of Lehi would run into a bottleneck as Interstate 15 narrowed from six lanes in each direction to four. But last year a project to widen the busy freeway — a top priority of local leaders — was completed.

When a **national group representing state highway officials** presented the project with an award for community development and quality of life, citing its inclusion of pedestrian and bike paths, it looked like validation for a job well done.

“It’s about as multimodal as you can get,” said John Gleason, a spokesman for the state transportation department. “When you’re recognized for an award like this, it’s confirmation that we are doing things the right way.”

But when the award was announced with a photo online showing a tangle of concrete and asphalt seemingly devoid of life, the criticism arrived swiftly. “I think I’m gonna need a definition of ‘life’ and ‘quality’ from you,” wrote one Twitter user.

The announcement of an award by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) might seem an unlikely moment for an Internet pile-on, but the post highlighted a core dispute about what role cars and highways should play in the future of transportation. The debate has taken on significance as Congress

debates a \$1 trillion infrastructure proposal and the Biden administration tries to craft environmental and racial justice policies in a nation where driving is a necessity in most places.

Supporters tout the Lehi project's successes. Business leaders backed the widening, the state says it has cut evening commute times in half and it has been praised by the industry: **Roads & Bridges magazine** called it the top road of 2020, praising its "ingenuity and good old-fashioned smart design."

To advocates for a less car-dominated society, handing out an award for "quality of life" to a 12-lane highway flanked by frontage roads on each side seemed farcical.

"When a prize roadway project in the 'Quality of Life/Community Development' category shows signs of neither — not even a single person on foot, bike or transit — it deserves our scorn, not our praise," wrote Janette Sadik-Khan, a former New York City transportation commissioner. "By these Orwellian standards, there is no such thing as traffic failure."

The AASHTO said the award category is designed to recognize projects that "have significantly benefited the community in which they exist, especially in the form of economic growth and well-being of citizens. These projects better connect people to businesses, jobs, health-care facilities, and recreational activities while also encouraging a mix of transportation modes."

Tony Dorsey, a spokesman for the organization, said **award judges were anonymous and not available for an interview about why** they awarded the Utah project. He said the organization could have chosen a better photo to illustrate the features the award recognized.

Lehi is split by Interstate 15 and sits between Salt Lake City and Provo — its population surging from 47,400 in 2010 to 75,900 in 2020, placing it among the nation's fastest-growing cities. Software firm Adobe opened an office in 2012 and the area gained the nickname "Silicon Slopes."

"We've seen tremendous growth in the community in the last 10 years," said Cameron Boyle, the assistant city administrator.

But unlike other segments of Interstate 15, a **four-mile section running through the city** hadn't been widened. Local leaders worried congestion threatened to hamper growth. A group of businesses launched a website, flippintraffic.com, as part of a campaign to get the state to move up its construction schedule.

The \$415 million project began in 2018 and was finished last October. It involved construction on 17 bridges and building frontage roads to improve local traffic flow, along with access to a transit hub and a system of trails and pedestrian crossings.

Those trails connect to a network that stretches to Salt Lake City and nearly down to Provo.

"I understand that there may be this notion that DOTs are focused on simply moving cars," Gleason said. "I just don't think that's the reality anymore, nor can it be."

But critics of projects like the one in Utah question how committed states are to changing decades-old practices. Zabe Bent, design director at the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), said in the face of climate change, racial injustice and soaring road deaths, planners must look beyond marginal improvements, adding that **the transportation system needs to be rethought.**

“It’s not enough to champion a highway project that incorporates a bike lane,” she said.

Bent’s group, which is chaired by Sadik-Khan, is **AASHTO’s upstart younger sibling, challenging the dominance of state officials and highway building in the nation’s infrastructure system.** While success has typically been measured by how many and how quickly cars can move, advocates and planners are increasingly talking in terms of how projects guarantee access to economic, social and educational opportunities.

At least a half-dozen former city leaders with ties to NACTO now hold key positions in the Biden administration, including Deputy Transportation Secretary Polly Trottenberg. Ideas advanced by the group and other advocacy organizations have gained traction with House Democrats, who crafted a transportation bill that would have set new environmental standards, limit the construction of new roads and made major investments in transit.

Beth Osborne, director of advocacy organization Transportation for America and who served in the Obama administration, said she thinks the Utah award was misjudged, but that AASHTO seeking to champion quality of life is a sign that criticism she and others have leveled at the nation’s approach to transportation is starting to “sting.”

“They have gotten 70 years of this strategy and **it hasn’t worked yet,**” she said. “They’re on precarious ground.”

Yet states continue to expand their highways, trying to accommodate growth and keep traffic flowing. The House bill Osborne and her allies embraced has been pushed aside in favor of the bipartisan package brokered in the Senate that retains a greater focus on road spending, leaving many transit advocates and environmentalists feeling shortchanged. Over five years, the bill would provide about \$350 billion for highways, about \$107 billion for transit and \$66 billion for rail.

“The compromise bill is basically a highway bill with a veneer of handouts for everyone else to make the medicine go down easier,” he said.

Marohn, founder and president of advocacy group Strong Towns, said it’s hard to know what designing a more sustainable U.S. transportation system would look like in practice for much of the country, where driving has shaped communities for decades. He said lessons from Europe’s dense cities, where leaders have increasingly promoted cycling and have put limits on driving, might work along parts of the East Coast, but not as well elsewhere.

“We need an approach to growth that is not dependent on us building new transportation infrastructure, but instead makes better use of the transportation infrastructure we’ve already built,” he said.

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Arlene Montemarano, 240-360-8691, Lawndale Drive

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TPB Comment

From: Arlene <mikarlgm@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, October 15, 2021 10:30 AM
Subject: How Canada learned a hard lesson on how to waste money
Categories: Blue category

About P3's...the one takeaway from this article for all of us to realize?

...."74 out of 75 projects ended up being more expensive than their initial value for money analyses had estimated—a total of \$8 billion more expensive."

P3's cost more.

(Bolding is mine.)

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<https://www.inthepublicinterest.org/guess-who-slipped-a-pro-corporate-america-provision-in-the-bipartisan-infrastructure-bill/>

www.inthepublicinterest.orginthepublicinterest.org

Guess who slipped a pro-corporate America provision in the bipartisan infrastructure bill
Oct. 14th, 2021

Odds are, the \$1.2 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act—which is still up for debate but is expected to be passed by Congress later this month—will incentivize privatization in some form or fashion.

As it stands, the bill would allow for more use of private activity bond financing. Private activity bonds, or PABs, are a key financing tool for so-called “public-private partnerships,” or P3s.

P3s are essentially expensive loans that hand some level of control over roads, water systems, school buildings, and other public infrastructure to corporations and private investors. Meaning, despite the warm and fuzzy name, they’re definitely a form of privatization.

Particularly worrying, the bill would also require the use of a problematic procurement tool—called a “value for money” analysis—that’s been causing issues for state and local governments for years.

When a state, locality, or school district wants to explore using a P3 instead of using tried-and-true traditional public financing, they often perform one of these analyses. Sparing you the wonky details, **value for money analyses are often biased towards the private sector and chocked full of unfounded assumptions. In other words, they don’t provide an accurate comparison between private and public financing.**

Ontario, Canada, learned that the hard way. After going on a P3 frenzy starting in 2001, they decided to

take stock of their decision-making. A 2014 audit found that **74 out of 75 projects ended up being more expensive than their initial value for money analyses had estimated—a total of \$8 billion more expensive.**

Why would our federal government want to incentivize these types of deals? You tell me.

Senators Rob Portman (R-OH) and Joe Manchin (D-WV) slipped the requirement for value for money analyses on federally supported transportation loans into the bill in August. Maybe the fact that Manchin has received more campaign contributions from financial firms than any other industry—including from CBRE, a real estate firm actively pushing P3s—has something to do with it.

Regardless of why, we should prepare ourselves. That's why we just put out some guidance on value for money analyses—why they're often problematic and how to do them better.

It's wonky stuff—so don't be surprised if your eyes glaze over. The point is to get it into the hands of decisionmakers in your town, city, council, school district, and state.

Email this to your representatives and let them know what's coming with the infrastructure bill. As always, if you need help understanding or explaining things, get in touch.

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