



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

Marc Elrich
County Executive

July 11, 2019

The Honorable Martin Nohe, Chair
National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002-4201

RE: Visualize 2045 Conformity Analysis - Alternative Project Definition for I-270/495 Traffic Relief Plan

Dear Chairman Nohe:

Montgomery County requests evaluation of a revised project definition for the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) I-270/495 Traffic Relief Plan in the Visualize 2045 Amendment air quality conformity analysis. Montgomery County believes a different configuration for this project is needed to minimize community disruption, to support multimodal transportation, and to leverage transportation demand management. The revised project definition has been developed after extensive review of the current MDOT plan and through discussions with officials representing jurisdictions along I-270 and I-495. We believe that including the revised configuration for the Traffic Relief Plan will demonstrate that a project with fewer negative impacts can meet the travel needs of the region.

The revised project includes a managed lanes network extending from the Virginia Department of Transportation "I-495 NEXT" project along the west side of the Capital Beltway and along I-270 to I-370 in Gaithersburg. North of I-370, the revised project includes two reversible managed lanes to I-70 in Frederick County, with the reversible lanes reflecting the higher peak directionality of this portion of the corridor.

The revised project extends the MDOT-proposed managed lanes on I-95 from their current terminus one mile north of the Capital Beltway to the interchange with Maryland 200, the Intercounty Connector. By continuing these facilities further north, within the existing median of I-95, the lanes can connect to an existing variably-priced facility that provides an east-west connection between I-95 and I-270 with capacity to carry additional traffic. This connection provides a managed-lane network for the entire north side of the Capital Beltway without requiring expansion of I-495 between I-270 and I-95. Connections at Maryland 212 will also improve access to the major activity center in White Oak that is comprised of an expanded Food

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and Drug Administration Headquarters, a new hospital, and millions of square feet of related development.

The revised project includes implementation of traffic management techniques and spot improvements on I-495 between I-270 and I-95. These improvements would be consistent with MDOT's current program being implemented on I-270, including active traffic management through variable speed limits and ramp metering, shoulder hardening for traffic use, connection of merge and diverge lanes, and other innovative techniques to improve the function of the highway.

The revised project includes expansion of park & ride facilities at key locations like Urbana, Clarksburg, Germantown, Metropolitan Grove, Rock Spring, Forest Glen, and West Laurel to intercept long-distance commuters. Improved commuter bus, as currently under study by MDOT's work group, and improved commuter rail operations can effectively serve several of these locations. Shuttle operations can also be instituted to serve nearby business districts like Wheaton, White Flint, White Oak, Silver Spring and Bethesda.

Finally, this revised project is supported by transit projects already incorporated in Visualize 2045. Transit corridors on parallel routes to I-270 and I-495 are already planned and can help mitigate the additional traffic that will need to use the local road network to reach activity centers, all of which are located some distance from the expanded highways. Examples of these projects include the Maryland 355 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), the Corridor Cities Transitway, the North Bethesda Transitway, the Veirs Mill Road BRT, and the New Hampshire Avenue BRT. Dedicating a portion of toll revenues from the managed lanes to these projects may be the most effective way to accelerate the implementation of these transit programs.

We share the desire to improve travel conditions to, through and within Montgomery County and thank MDOT for taking initiative to propose a project to address congestion on these highways. We believe our recommendations above represent a more complete and environmentally sensitive approach to meeting our region's transportation needs. Attached please find a map that illustrates the elements of the revised project. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Regional Transportation Improvement Plan

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

-  New Managed Lanes
-  New Reversible Managed Lanes
-  Existing Variable-Priced Lanes
-  Local-Serving Transit
-  Active Traffic Mgt & Spot Imp.
-  MARC Improvements
-  Park & Ride Improvements
-  Added Activity Center Connections
-  VDOT I 495 Existing Express Toll Lanes
-  VDOT I 495 Untolled Lanes

TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT

PARK & RIDE IMPROVEMENTS

- Frederick
- Urbana
- Clarksburg
- Germantown
- Boys MARC
- Germantown MARC
- Metro. Grove MARC
- Rockville Metro
- Westfield
- Rock Spring
- Forest Glen
- White Oak
- Burtonsville
- Briggs Chaney
- Tech Road
- I-95 Terminus
- Konterra

LOCAL-SERVING TRANSIT*

- US 29 Flash
 - MD 355 BRT
 - Corridor Cities Transitway
 - Veirs Mill BRT
 - North Bethesda Transitway
 - New Hampshire Ave BRT
 - University Blvd BRT
 - Randolph Road BRT
 - National Harbor Metro Connection
- *example projects

