

My name is Barbara Coufal and I'm Co-chair of Citizens Against Beltway Expansion.

I will start by noting that the Transportation Authority is understating the tolls by using 2021 toll numbers, rather than estimates of what the drivers will actually pay in 2026 when the lanes would open up. MDTA could have provided more truthful toll numbers by adding in the annual automatic increase of 2.1 percent plus an adjustment for inflation. I used the Federal Reserve's inflation forecast. If you add these to the 2021 maximum toll of \$3.76 you'll find that the maximum toll when the lanes open in 2026 would be closer to \$4.61. Instead of a soft cap of \$1.50, the soft cap would be \$1.84.

In 2026, the maximum toll for the drive from George Washington Parkway to I-370 would be fifty dollars in 2021 dollars, but would be over \$61 in 2026. Why not be more forthcoming about toll rates?

And now we learn that Transurban is pushing for a soft cap that is 33 percent higher.

The design of the toll lanes makes it difficult to leave the toll lanes and transition directly to the general lanes. This is unlike Virginia, where you can transition between general and toll lanes at regular points.

But under MDOT's design, if you are on a toll lane when you cross the American Legion Bridge and plan to drive all the way up to I-370, you can transition directly to the general lanes only at the Clara Barton Parkway. For the rest of the trip up to I-370, the only way to exit the toll lanes is to exit the highway altogether and drive on local roads until you get to the next entrance ramp for the general lanes. This kooky design not only creates havoc on local roads, it will lock some people into the toll lanes and force them to give more of their hard-earned dollars to Transurban.

Finally, I want to comment on the inequity of private toll lanes. Privatized tollways are designed to maintain congestion, not reduce it. Without congestion in the general lanes, there is no market for pricey toll lanes. So, congestion in the general lanes will continue. But wealthy drivers will be able to escape it, while low- and middle-income drivers won't. This is fundamentally unfair and discriminatory.

I urge the State to go back to the drawing board and develop an equitable transportation solution that will actually reduce congestion.