

Statement from DontWiden270.org
Submitted for the March 9, 2020,
Montgomery County MDOT Transportation Priorities Meeting

DontWiden270.org is a boots-on-the-ground organization with over 1,000 members. We strongly advocate for congestion relief all along the I-270 corridor. We are in favor of fair, effective, multi-modal transportation, supported by evidence that it will actually work. That latter part, “**supported by evidence that it will actually work**” is critical to our organization.

The leaders of our group met with Comptroller Peter Franchot in Rockville Mayor Bridget Newton’s office just a month before the Board of Public Works meeting in January of this year. We urged the Comptroller not to greenlight the Governor’s I-270/I-495 toll lane plan without first seeing proof that the project would work and that taxpayers would not be at financial risk.

We wanted the Comptroller to demand and analyze the same data repeatedly sought – without success – by State Treasurer Nancy Kopp, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, state legislators, and others.

The data were never disclosed; the Governor’s project received the go-ahead anyway. At this moment, the Governor’s project is advancing behind closed doors. The key financials, including the all-important data on projected tolls, remain hidden away.

Throughout 2019, our organization conducted in-person outreach in key communities along the upper I-270 corridor, from Germantown to Frederick. What we heard again and again was frustration and anger that the promised “congestion relief” consisted of unaffordable tolls and continuing congestion in non-tolled lanes.

The people we spoke to believed that one way or another, we were all going to pay for the Governor’s \$11 billion plan: through tolls, through deals negotiated outside of taxpayers’ view, through bailing out the builder. The State’s continuing lack of transparency and responsiveness only reinforces that conclusion.

We ask that Montgomery County **not take a position** on the Governor’s toll lane proposal until MDOT releases for public and expert analysis its key inputs, assumptions and projections, and proof that the project will actually work as they claim.