

STATEMENT OF GREATER FARMLAND CIVIC ASSOCIATION
SENATE BILL 229
TOLL ROADS, HIGHWAYS AND BRIDGES
COUNTY GOVERNMENT CONSENT REQUIREMENT EXPANSION
JANUARY 29, 2020

I am Ed Rich, the President of the Greater Farmland Civic Association, which represents over 3,000 residents in the Old Farm, Tilden Woods, Hickory Woods, and Walnut Woods neighborhoods that directly abut the 12 existing lanes of I-270 as well as the 850 elementary school students who spend their days in the neighborhood at Farmland Elementary School.

We have seen I-270 go from four lanes to twelve lanes in our area, which has resulted in gridlock on 12 lanes instead of the original four. Now, the Governor is pushing a multi billion dollar project for up to an additional four lanes of traffic, including two toll lanes, with no significant community input or buy-in, no consideration of the environmental impact, including our quality of life, no real study of whether the proposed project will reduce congestion and no proposal to study transportation alternatives or changes in the way development is encouraged in order to reduce congestion. It's a 1950's answer to a 21st century problem. It's being rammed down our throats whether we like it or not and whether we have better ideas on how to address the problem. It's like the elixir offered by the traveling salesman to cure whatever ails you, without any evidence that it cures anything. Well, before we buy the elixir being offered here, we need to see that it will, in fact, cure the ailment we are being told it will cure.

For that reason, we strongly support **Senate Bill 229, Toll Roads, Highways, and Bridges—County Government Consent Requirement—Expansion**. Currently, there is a prohibition on State agencies constructing toll roads, toll highways, or a toll bridge within the nine Eastern Shore counties without the consent of “a majority of the affected counties.” We see no reason why Montgomery and Prince George's Counties should not be extended the same rights as our neighbors to the east. All counties deserve the ability to secure the well-being of their residents by protecting their interests and quality of life in the case of toll lane or highway construction.

The proposed P3 project on I-270 and I-495 assumes that the addition of lanes, including toll lanes, is the one and only solution to traffic congestion. The project approved by the Board of Public Works sets aside 10% of toll revenue for some future amorphous transit related needs. Without any indication of how many people would actually pony up for the demand based pricing of toll lanes, there is no indication of what, if any, revenue would be generated for transit projects. This is simply a feel good alternative offered to make the project seem more palatable. There is a real need for a holistic approach to the issue and a comprehensive study of what would actually work to reduce traffic congestion. To date, that has not happened. SB 229 gives county residents the voice they demand in ensuring that traffic solutions are real, that our environment is not further harmed, that climate change is acknowledged and mitigated and that our tax dollars are wisely allocated.

We thank you for your consideration and urge you to do right by the people of our community and the many other communities along I-270 and I-495.
