

February 26, 2022

Gregory Murrill, Division Administrator
Federal Highway Administration, Maryland Division
George H. Fallon Federal Building
31 Hopkins Plaza, Suite 1520
Baltimore, MD 21201

James F. Ports, Jr., Secretary of Transportation
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Center Drive
Hanover, Maryland 21076

Dear Mr. Murrill and Mr. Ports,

The undersigned Mayors of Prince George's County write you today with concerns about the inadequacy and incompleteness of the previously issued National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents for the I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes Study Public-Private Partnership Project ("Project").

Concerns over the serious environmental harm to communities, parks, and natural resources in Prince George's County was a central issue in comments on the first NEPA document for the Project, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), but proposed phasing was subsequently adapted to omit Prince George's County from Phase 1 of the Project and the subsequent Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS). Nevertheless, it is clear that toll lanes are intended to be extended through Prince George's County (Phase 2) in the not distant future. Due to the clear harm Phase 2 poses to Prince George's County and known deficiencies in the environmental impact analysis for the federally-mandated NEPA process, we join the City of Rockville Mayor and Council,¹ 82 state legislators,² and others³ in asking that the agencies issue revised draft NEPA documents. This is essential so that agencies and the impacted and concerned public can have the necessary information upon which to review and comment.

¹ Rockville Mayor and Council Letter to FHWA and MDOT, 1/26/2022,
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b72c6a8da02bc640472bf8c/t/61fee871b03f6828336629d3/1644095602555/FHA+Letter+FINAL+012622%281%29.pdf>

² Maryland General Assembly Legislator Letter to FHWA and MDOT, 2/22/2022,
https://mcusercontent.com/6cdc39da7c0238a0521e24885/files/932d6527-1fc6-5b38-81ac-cba0cf957ae1/FWHA_Letter.pdf

³ Sierra Club Maryland Chapter Letter to FHWA and MDOT, 1/4/2022,
<https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/sce/maryland-chapter/SC-Letter-495270MLS-SDEIS-FEISReviewPd-2022Jan4.pdf>

Indeed, it appears to be the state and private sector partner's intent to extend toll lanes through Prince George's County starting as soon as within the next five years.⁴ The pressure to extend toll lanes through our area would come from both the Montgomery County side, where I-495 & I-270 toll lanes would create new and worsening bottlenecks, and from the Virginia side, where problems have already surfaced.⁵ Given these pressures, moving forward without further public review is imprudent, notwithstanding valid concerns that the Project will not reduce traffic congestion on the general purpose lanes,⁶ that tolls will be unaffordable⁷ for many residents of Prince George's County, and that the toll lanes themselves will be costly, harmful, and severely underutilized.⁸

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, which represents both Prince George's County and Montgomery County, has stated that the SDEIS failed to adequately address issues pertaining to new traffic bottlenecks, cumulative impacts, environmental justice, equity, historic places, parkland, and stormwater management.⁹ Key impact analyses were deferred by the Maryland Department of Transportation and absent from the SDEIS, and so those missing analyses still require agency and public review.

Therefore, it is imperative that the agencies complete the analyses and provide meaningful opportunities for public review and comment both on a revised SDEIS and on the Final Environmental Impact Statement for this controversial private toll lane project.

Respectfully,

Mayor Sadara Barrow, Town of Colmar Manor

Mayor Celina Benitez, City of Mt. Rainier

Mayor Lenford Carey, Town of University Park

Mayor Amanda Dewey, PhD, Town of Berwyn Heights

⁴ Toll lanes on I-495 east of I-270 were put on hold, but remain in overall plan, *Bethesda Magazine*, 11/1/2021, <https://bethesdamagazine.com/bethesda-beat/opinion/opinion-toll-lanes-on-i-495-east-of-i-270-were-put-on-hold-but-remain-in-overall-plan/>

⁵ Virginia looks to expand toll road network to Prince George's, Md., *Washington Post*, 12/24/2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/transportation/2021/12/24/virginia-express-lanes-wilson-bridge/>

⁶ Maryland toll lanes: Beltway, I-270 lanes wouldn't improve worst evening traffic in regular lanes, study says, *Washington Post*, 10/1/2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/transportation/2021/10/01/maryland-toll-lanes-traffic/>

⁷ TOLLS: Drivers could pay \$50 for a trip around The Beltway, *LocalDVM*, 7/1/2021, <https://www.localdvm.com/news/maryland/tolls-drivers-could-pay-50-for-a-trip-around-the-beltway/>

⁸ Opinion: Use Caution. I-495 Toll Lanes Not as Advertised, *Maryland Matters*, 1/14/2022, <https://www.marylandmatters.org/2022/01/14/opinion-use-caution-i-495-toll-lanes-not-as-advertised/>

⁹ M-NCPPC SDEIS Comment-Letter, 11/30/2021, https://montgomeryplanningboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/SDEIS-MNCPPC-Comment-Cvrltr_11.30.21.pdf.

Mayor Takisha James, Town of Bladensburg

Mayor Emmett Jordan, City of Greenbelt

Mayor Craig Moe, City of Laurel

Mayor Jeffrey Schomisch, Town of Landover Hills

Mayor Alan Thompson, Town of Riverdale Park

Mayor Patrick Wojahn, City of College Park

Cc.

Ms. Stephanie Pollack, Acting Administrator, Federal Highway Administration

Ms. Jeanette Mar, Environmental Program Manager, Federal Highway Administration,
Maryland Division

Mr. Jeffrey Folden, Director, I-495/I-270 Project Office, Maryland Department of
Transportation State Highway Administration