

Rockville Mayor and Council Community Forum

April 12, 2021

I'm Janet Gallant with DontWiden270.org. I want to tell you about recent comments from Comptroller Peter Franchot that raise alarms for the City of Rockville.

In a March podcast interview, Mr. Franchot made these startling statements about the P3 toll-lane project:

- First, he said the project is now reduced to “just the American Legion Bridge and I-270 up to the ICC.” Per Mr. Franchot, the rest of the project is off the table. If that’s true, the I-270 northern bottleneck will likely be even worse than it was pre-pandemic. That’s especially true because two of the current free lanes will be lost.
- Second, he said that in place of Beltway expansion, “traffic coming south from Baltimore on I-95 could take the ICC over to 270 and go down on a toll lane basis and pay an extra \$20 to get much more quickly over the American Legion Bridge.” That means significant amounts of additional traffic will be funneled onto lower I-270. And drivers will crowd the reduced number of free lanes to avoid paying a \$40 a day bridge toll.
- Finally, in talking about toll-lanes on I-270, he said, “We'll be able to see whether there's any relief of traffic congestion and any real uproar over the tolls...we'll see how it goes.” In other words, the massive I-270 project through Rockville will be a sort of P3 experiment.
- Particularly alarming is that Mr. Franchot said nothing about the impacts on Rockville or any attempts to mitigate them.

As you know, Mr. Franchot has the deciding vote on this issue on the Board of Public Works. Next month, MDOT will ask the Board to approve the first toll-lane contract, called the Predevelopment Agreement. That contract gives Transurban exclusive, sole-source rights to build and operate the toll-lanes on I-270 for the next 50 years.

Elected officials and others are calling on Mr. Franchot and the Board to delay voting on the contract until **after** the environmental review process is completed this fall. That process must address the many deficiencies identified in the nearly 3,000 new public comments about the DEIS, including those from the Mayor and Council. Based on the last three comment periods, many if not the majority of those 3,000 new comments likely came from Rockville residents and organizations.

We urge you to tell Mr. Franchot that this toll-lane project does not work for Rockville. Ask that he and the Board of Public Works delay voting on the Predevelopment Contract until after the environmental review is complete.

Thank you.