



Mayor and Council of Rockville
SB 229 - Toll Roads, Highways, and Bridges - County Government Consent
Requirement - Expansion
Senate Finance Committee - January 29, 2020
SUPPORT

Good afternoon, Senator Kelley and members of the Committee. I'm Mark Pierzchala, and I serve as a Rockville Councilmember. The Rockville Mayor and Council strongly support SB 229 – Toll Roads, Highways, and Bridges – County Government Consent Requirement - Expansion, and thank Senator Lee for her leadership. The opportunity to approve or disapprove a toll road, highway, or toll bridge is already given to 9 Eastern Shore Counties. SB 229 will expand the scope of this authority to the entire State. Rockville sees this legislation as a way to give all Maryland counties, and their municipalities, greater say in how this kind of infrastructure is designed and constructed.

Rockville will be the most impacted municipality of the current plans to widen I-270. The project will abut 9 neighborhoods and traverse the heart of our great city. Two Rockville bridges over I-270, that have no current access to I-270, will be used to provide ramps to the toll lanes. This will increase traffic in Rockville and disrupt existing traffic patterns. Rockville will have to deal with the financial impact of mitigating the impacts and residents with the greater congestion, noise, and pollution.

We are very concerned that our views have not been properly taken into account. Rockville should have been included as a participating or cooperating agency, given that it straddles I-270.

It is imperative that our views be taken seriously and included in the decision-making, as the City of Rockville owns 2 of the 4 bridges spanning I-270 in Rockville – Wootton Parkway and Gude Drive. Pedestrians, bicyclists, and automobile traffic from east and west flow over these bridges making their way across the City. The several-year reconstruction of these bridges will cripple the traffic on our already congested roadways, in addition to permanent impacts. We strongly reiterate our request for MDOT SHA to study the impact of the additional lanes and the closing and reconstruction of the bridges, with Rockville as a partner. SB 229 will give Rockville and Montgomery County a more formal role in the planning, a role that has been lacking so far.

For almost 40 years, nine Maryland counties have had a voice when it comes to the construction of toll roads, highways, or toll bridges in their communities. The City of Rockville simply asks for parity for the rest of Maryland. SB 229 will provide local governments with an essential tool to protect our communities and partner with the State to move critical projects forward. We respectfully and strongly urge the Committee to quickly provide SB 229 with a favorable report.