

Good Afternoon. I'm Bridget Donnell Newton, Mayor of the City of Rockville Maryland.

And as an 11 year member of the Transportation Planning Board (as well as a former Chair of said Board) - I am a strong advocate of **congestion relief for ALL**.

Thank you for the opportunity to once again – share the unanimous agreement of the Rockville City Council and our Staff that this hearing is an example of a government burying its head in the sand – refusing to turn away from 20 year old ideas - and a complete denial of climate change and social justice.

In 2015 – Governor Hogan said that “today's committee hearing only served to once again demonstrate the huge disconnect between the politicians in Annapolis and the rest of Maryland.”

Well - members of the Maryland Transportation Authority – those words could have been spoken today. And tho you are not politicians in Annapolis – you are being lead down a path that will only result in a debacle for the taxpaying residents of this great State, ala the LBJ Expressway in Dallas, the 460 in Virginia and the I-69 in Indiana – just to name a few.

As now Governor Hogan said in that speech in 2015 – “tolls are regressive tax hikes in disguise” and tho the State of Pennsylvania has used their State controlled and tolled I-76 to build a better and safer road – Maryland’s proposed Phase 1 South American Legion Bridge I-270 to I-370 will bring NOTHING back to the taxpayers of Maryland as the tolls will be going to a private, international corporation.

In 50 years – when this proposed contract is up – (or sooner if it fails as history portends) the

State of Maryland Transportation Fund will have nothing – zero- zilch, nada with which to repair or improve this critical artery between Frederick (and points west) - and the Nation's Capital.

I've long believed that government is there to provide that which an individual alone cannot do. Well – members of MDTA – why are you all not providing safe and equitable transportation services for the public in Montgomery County? Why should we be forced to accept a toll road when the governor stated that tolls in other parts of Maryland were regressive?

This “congestion relief plan” is NOT congestion relief **at all**. The proposal REMOVES a lane that is free 21 hours a day on weekdays and free weekends and holidays - and turns it into a HOT lane which is a minimum of 3 people and tolled 24/7. **3 people 24/7 or you pay the toll.**

This “congestion relief plan” – brought to you by the former Secretary of Transportation as a panacea for an agency long deficient in forward thinking solutions – ignores the real bottleneck on I-270 which is where the current 6 lanes **reduce** to 2 going North and **increases** from 2 lanes to 6 going South. Have you ever tried to pour water from a gallon jug into a water bottle? Same effect.

Fix what’s broken **first**.

And oh by the way – the title of the project was originally named the “I-270 and I-495 Traffic Relief Plan P3” and the plan was “to consider TRANSFORMATIVE solutions” for users “including improvements to highways and transit”. They’ve excised the transit and improvements for users only include tolling which is hardly webster’s definition of Transformative.

As has been publicly disclosed – MD/SHA has also changed the title and scope of this project to include the northern portion of I-270 – and they did it to garner support for the TPB vote on June 16<sup>th</sup> for “inclusion in, and the scope of work for the Air Quality Conformity Analysis for the 2022 Update to Visualize 2045 and the FY 2023-2026 TIP. That meeting resulted in a protracted discussion and a final vote (which - at the request of the Maryland deputy secretary of Transportation - was a weighted vote) and failed 9.2 to 5.7.

On a personal note – I will say that the thousands of emails that have been directed to those of us with the courage to seek a forward-looking solution to the region’s traffic congestion – have not once mentioned that they support paying a toll. IN FACT – not one – from Waldorf, or Lorton or Frederick – all saying that “They are my constituents by the

way – (I never realized that the great City of Rockville Maryland reached to the southern part of Maryland or even into Virginia – but we might look to expand our MEL's into Frederick 😊 lol) even mentioned that the state's solution on 270 was a toll road. Apparently those sending out the requests for mass emails failed to adequately or even honestly tell their list-serves what the project was.)

I'm honestly not sure why you're holding these Hearings today - as since there was a no vote at TPB - there is no process for moving forward at this time. Please call off the emails and get to work finding an equitable solution that addresses climate change, social justice and transformative traffic relief for ALL.