



City of Bowie

15901 Excalibur Road
Bowie, Maryland 20716



August 29, 2019

The Honorable Pete K. Rahn
Transportation Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Center Drive
Hanover, Maryland 21076

RE: City of Bowie 2019-2020 Transportation Priorities

Dear Secretary Rahn:

The Bowie City Council reviewed the City's Transportation Priority List on August 5, 2019. The City's priorities for State transportation facilities are unchanged from last year, and they include:

1. Local Road Improvement Priorities

The City's highest transportation priorities for roadway construction include the following five projects. **MD 197 is the City Council's highest transportation priority.**

- **MD 197 (Prince George's County CTP, Line 26):**
FULLY FUND RIGHT-OF-WAY AND CONSTRUCTION

We understand this project has gone through Practical Design review and 30% concept plans should be available by mid-2020. This project consists of improving the 1.4 mile segment of MD 197, between Kenhill Drive and Relocated MD 450, to a four-lane divided roadway. The existing, two-lane section is already severely congested in the morning and evening peak periods and at all hours on the weekends. In addition, there are continuing concerns voiced by residents about pedestrian safety and access from the side streets. The lack of roadway capacity has resulted in ever-increasing diversion of traffic from MD 197 onto the City's local street system. As the concept development process will conclude in about a year, MD 197 is ready for the State's investment of right-of-way and construction funding in the next CTP. In 2018, the average daily traffic was 35,400 vehicles per day, up from the 2017 volume of 33,000 vehicles per day. Traffic volumes are projected to grow over 20% to 42,500 vehicles per day in the Year 2040. City residents have been waiting for relief from this harmful congestion bottleneck for more than three decades.

- **MD 450 (Prince George's County CTP, Line 30):**
FULLY FUND RIGHT-OF-WAY AND CONSTRUCTION

This project is the last section of a multi-segment improvement of Maryland 450, from the Whitfield Chapel Road near the Capital Beltway to MD 3. Project planning was completed for the entire alignment in 1991. Completion of design, as well as land acquisition and construction is needed, between Stonybrook Drive and west of MD 3. Design is over 90% complete but the project is on hold. The average daily traffic volume on this section of MD 450 is expected to grow by more than 50% by the Year 2040. This project is crucial to the City's economic development since it provides principal access to the Bowie Mainstreet commercial area. Most important, however, is the critical need to create a safer

Letter to Transportation Secretary Rahn
re: City of Bowie Transportation Priorities

roadway. For all of these reasons, the City Council requests that funding be placed into the CTP to fully complete design and engineering, right-of-way acquisition and construction over the next several years.

- **US 301/MD 197 Interchange (Prince George's County CTP, Line 25):
FUND DESIGN AND ENGINEERING**

The City Council worked very closely with SHA staff to identify an acceptable alternative (Alternative 2 with Roundabouts). Project Planning was completed in 2007, and the project is ready to move into design and engineering. The project is listed as Construction Priority #10 on the Prince George's County Transportation Priority List. Development pressures continue to mount in this area, including mixed-use development at the Mill Branch Crossing project and a regional recreational park being planned by The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. This intersection provides access to the majority of Bowie businesses and is at the heart of the City's downtown (designated as the smart growth, mixed use "Bowie Center"). As noted during the Project Planning study, increasing traffic volume will also create a permanent congestion bottleneck in the regional road network and potentially harm the local economy, unless the interchange project moves forward. Unfortunately, this critical project has been lingering on hold since 2007 for lack of funding.

- **US 301, from Excalibur Road to Leeland Road (not currently in the CTP):
FUND PROJECT PLANNING OR INTERIM CAPACITY IMPROVEMENTS
THROUGH DISTRICT 3**

There has been increasing growth in traffic volume on US 301, between Excalibur Road and Leeland Road, in recent years. The amount of traffic congestion and the substantial amount of approved additional development in the corridor accentuates access and safety concerns. It is recommended that the Prince George's County CTP section include funding for Project Planning and/or interim capacity improvements for this location as soon as possible. This evaluation should consider speeding, as well as congestion issues, and make recommendations for specific improvements. Since it is likely that the ultimate, controlled access improvements planned for US 301 will not occur for many years into the future, the existing roadway should be widened to three travel lanes in each direction as soon as possible, in order to keep pace with other road improvement projects slated for construction north and south of this segment. If a separate Project Planning study is not possible, we would respectfully request that a study be funded at the District level.

The City Council observed that developers have added a third through lane to some segments of the southbound lanes of US 301, south of MD 214, but that no projects or funding appear to be available to add a third *northbound* lane. When fully constructed, the South Lake development plan will include 380,000 square feet of retail use, 220,000 square feet of office use, two hotels and 1,360 dwelling units, including 325 multi-family apartment units, 126 multi-family condominium (two-over-two) units, 567 townhouse units and 342 single-family detached units. In addition, a major County sports complex is approved just south of South Lake. Liberty Sports Park will feature multiple fields for a variety of youth sports, including lacrosse, football, soccer, field hockey and rugby. This complex will draw visitors from throughout the country and will have a significant economic impact on Prince George's County and the surrounding area. The tremendous amount of new development in this area deserves a comprehensive approach to improving US 301. The US 301 South Corridor Transportation Study (Prince George's County CTP, Line 23), also on hold, might present a funding opportunity to plan for construction of a third northbound lane.

- **MD 3 (Prince George's County CTP, Line 17):**

Letter to Transportation Secretary Rahn
re: City of Bowie Transportation Priorities

FUND DESIGN AND ENGINEERING

This project will upgrade MD Route 3 from US Route 50 to MD Route 32 (8.89 miles) to address safety and capacity concerns. The project will improve safety and relieve traffic congestion in this heavily traveled corridor. In 2018, the average daily traffic range was 68,700 – 87,900 vehicles per day, and it is projected to grow to 86,100 - 133,500 vehicles per day in the Year 2040. This is more than 50% in growth of the traffic volume. Because Project Planning is completed for the MD 3 project, it is recommended that funding be provided to begin Design and Engineering. The MD 3/Forest Drive intersection is already under improvement for geometric improvements as it is part of the Governor's Investment in Highways and Bridges Initiative. Additional traffic in the corridor will be generated by the mixed-use development at Melford Village, located at the MD 3 interchange with Belair Drive. The approved plan for Melford Village, includes up to 100,000 square feet of retail, up to 260,000 square feet of employment, 126,520 square feet of research space and up to 2,500 dwelling units (including up to 1,000 senior adult multi-family units, 1,000 non-senior multi-family units and 500 townhome units). This site is now under development and moving quickly toward building permits. The new growth is in addition to the 1.4 million square feet of employment use already existing or approved at the same site. To their credit, the developer of Melford, St. John Properties, has contributed significantly by making traffic capacity improvements at the MD 3/MD 450 intersection ahead of schedule.

2. Other Immediate Transportation Priorities

Two remaining local priorities for State transportation facilities are identified below.

1. MD 978 (Hall Road) – This project will address the need for sidewalk connectivity and pedestrian safety on Hall Road. With the cooperation and financial assistance of the City, District 3 completed construction of a sidewalk between Hall Station Drive and the CSX railroad tracks in 2017. It is critical that the State continue to support improvements to MD 978. A concept development plan was completed and is awaiting design funds for the segment between the CSX railroad and Pointer Ridge Drive. Both the City and County are committed to partnering with SHA to complete pedestrian improvements that will ensure safe access to the new South Bowie Library.
2. MD 197 North Landscaping Retrofit – Many years ago, SHA's Office of Environmental Design prepared a concept plan for landscaping of the median areas between Rockledge Elementary School. We would like to see this plan, along with corresponding safety enhancements, implemented. The retrofit design was achieved with broad community consensus, and the City feels the promised work is long overdue and should be initiated as soon as possible. We believe the State would qualify for stormwater credit by reducing impervious surfaces in this part of the MD 197 corridor.

3. Long-Range Transportation Priorities

In addition to the above, the City Council wishes to highlight several other extremely important improvements to the State transportation system. These projects are not currently listed in the State Consolidated Transportation Program but have regional consequences:

- Public Transit Via the US 50 Corridor - The US 50 corridor should be officially designated as a Priority Transit Corridor in the State's future planning. The regional planning process (MOMENTUM) resulted in a strategic plan for WMATA, the Washington Area Metropolitan Transit Authority, which identifies priority transit corridors, including the US 50 corridor between New Carrollton and Annapolis. As our community grows and becomes more attuned to

Letter to Transportation Secretary Rahn
re: City of Bowie Transportation Priorities

sustainable behaviors, the number of people using public transit is increasing. We cannot overemphasize the importance of planning for better transit service for residents and workers in the City. A new, regional transit route should be initiated from Annapolis to Laurel via the Northview Park-and-Ride lot in Bowie within the next several years to provide transit service that integrates with existing WMATA routes.

- A New Interchange on US 50 (I-595) at MD 193 - The City Council is very concerned that traffic levels on MD 197, which are continuing to increase, may even be made worse unless MD 197 is upgraded and a new interchange is constructed on US 50 at MD 193. The current Prince George's County Transportation Priority List recommends a Project Planning study for an additional interchange on US 50, at some location between MD 197 and MD 704 (County Project Planning Priority #10), and the project's stated purpose is to relieve congestion and improve safety on MD 197 and MD 450. Since it is both a City and County priority, the next logical step for this project would be to add it to the Highway Needs Inventory (HNI) at the earliest possible opportunity and consider funding of a Project Planning study in the out years of the CTP.
- A New Roadway Connecting MD 197 near Bowie State University with MD 3 in Anne Arundel County - There is a need to conduct a feasibility study to further examine regional traffic congestion in the MD 450 corridor, east of Race Track Road, and the heavy volume of motorists who are projected to use MD 450, Race Track Road and Jericho Park Road in order to travel between Laurel and Crofton. Please note that this need to evaluate the operational and environmental feasibility of this roadway connection is recommended in both the Approved Prince George's County Master Plan of Transportation and the Approved Bowie State/MARC Station Sector Plan. We ask the State to step in and provide leadership so that this long-standing issue can be studied as soon as possible. If the study indicates that a roadway connection is warranted, we would request that it be added to the Highway Needs Inventory at that time.

The City Council appreciates your interest in improving transportation systems in our State. Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on transportation projects that will improve the quality of life for City residents.

Sincerely,



Bowie City Council
G. Frederick Robinson
Mayor

cc: The Honorable Douglas J.J. Peters, State Senator
The Honorable Marvin E. Holmes, Delegate
The Honorable Geraldine Valentino-Smith, Delegate
The Honorable Ronald L. Watson, Delegate
The Honorable Todd M. Turner, County Council Chair
The Honorable Derrick Leon Davis, County Council Member
The Honorable Angela D. Alsobrooks, County Executive
The Honorable Elizabeth M. Hewlett, Prince George's County Planning Board Chairman
Mr. Gregory Slater, SHA Administrator
Mr. Andre Futrell, SHA District Engineer
Mr. Paul J. Wiedefeld, WMATA General Manager/CEO
Mr. Terry Bellamy, Director of Prince George's County DPW&T