



City of Bowie

15901 Excalibur Road
Bowie, Maryland 20716

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AUG 13 2021

SECRETARY'S OFFICE
DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION

August 9, 2021

The Honorable Gregory I. Slater
Transportation Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Center Drive
Hanover, Maryland 21076

RE: City of Bowie 2021-2022 Transportation Priorities

Dear Secretary Slater:

The Bowie City Council is pleased to present the City's Transportation Priority List for 2021-2022, which was the subject of a public hearing at City Hall on August 2, 2021. The City's priorities for State transportation facilities are unchanged from last year; however, this year we wish to add some additional justification and updated background for several projects on our list.

Before detailing our priorities, I would like to note the City's disappointment with the continual lack of transportation funding for worthy projects located in Bowie. The recent situation involving the I-270 toll lanes highlighted the critical need to move ahead with funding of pending projects, including longstanding, approved highway improvements such as MD 197, MD 450 and US 301. Further delays in MDOT funding for these projects will result in unacceptable traffic congestion, safety issues, negative economic impacts and lost opportunities to acquire real property needed for the improvements before values escalate. The City Council urges you to program the necessary funds in the next CTP to move these Bowie projects closer to reality.

The City's Transportation Priorities for 2021-2022 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

The State Highway Administration was moving ahead with a re-design of Preliminary Engineering plans for the project, but funding was suspended in the FY 2021-2026 CTP. \$8.0 million in design funding was deferred due to reduced revenues from COVID-19 pandemic. We understand MDOT will continue to re-evaluate all deferrals for opportunities to restore funding as additional information becomes available on revenues and potential federal infrastructure support. This project consists of upgrading and widening 1 existing MD 197 to a multi-lane divided highway from Kenhill Drive to MD 450 Relocated (1.4 miles). Sidewalks will be included where appropriate. Wide curb lanes will accommodate bicycles. In 2020, the average daily traffic was 35,800 vehicles per day, and it is projected to be 42,500 in the Year 2040.

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

The existing, two-lane section is already severely congested in the morning and evening peak periods and at all hours on the weekends. The lack of roadway capacity has resulted in ever-increasing diversion of traffic from MD 197 onto the City's local street system. In addition, there are continuing concerns voiced by residents about pedestrian safety and access from the side streets. In response to numerous safety incidents, a mid-block crossing was installed recently near the Foxhill Park entrance. MD 197 is ready for the State's investment of right-of-way and construction funding in the next CTP. As you may know, City residents have been waiting for relief from this harmful congestion bottleneck for more than three decades. The MD 197 is currently Construction Priority #6 for Prince George's County.

- **MD 450 (Prince George's County CTP, Line 29):**
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. Traffic volume in 2020 was 25,900 average vehicles per day; projected traffic volume for the Year 2040 is 39,500 vehicles per day. 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 roadway.

The City Council appreciates your consideration of a re-examination of the roadway design concept for Bowie Mainstreet, as earlier this year Administrator Tim Smith concurred with our request to reexamine the existing MD 450 design as soon as funding resources have been identified. The City feels the Bowie Mainstreet setting, with its origins as the center of commerce and social activity for the original Levitt-built subdivisions constructed in the 1960s, represents a unique combination of Urban Center, Traditional Town Center and Suburban Activity Center characteristics. This area would greatly benefit from an expert review of the conditions and an evaluation of context driven opportunities for future implementation when the MD 450 project is constructed. Such recommendations may possibly alter (and improve upon) the physical design shown in the current design and engineering plans.

The City Council is also anxious to see SHA acquire the needed land for highway improvements, east of Race Track Road. We believe the changing circumstances of the Jesuit Property ownership present a unique opportunity for acquisition from a willing seller. Expending State funds now would be a prudent, cost-effective way to assemble right-of-way for lane widening and construction of the future interchange at MD 450/MD 3.

For all 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. This project is currently #8 on the Prince George's County Transportation Priority List.

- **US 301/MD 197 Interchange (Prince George's County CTP, Line 22):**
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. 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

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

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. Traffic volume in 2020 was 67,800 average vehicles per day on US 301/20,200 on MD 197; projected traffic volume for the Year 2040 is 74,500 vehicles per day on US 301/24,900 on MD 197. The project is now Construction Priority #9 on the Prince George's County Transportation Priority List.

- **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. 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.

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 22), 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 15):
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 2020, the average daily traffic range was 70,100 – 89,200 vehicles per day, and is projected to grow to 86,100 – 133,500 vehicles per day in the Year 2040. The forecast for 2040 represents about a 50% increase in growth of the traffic volume, and it demonstrates that a need to move ahead with design and engineering now exists.

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. Because Project Planning is completed for the MD 3 project, it is recommended that funding be provided to begin Design and Engineering. The City Council greatly

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

appreciates SHA's recently completed interim safety improvements and signalization along the southbound lanes of MD 3, south of MD 450.

2. Other Immediate Transportation Priorities

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

1. MD 978 (Hall Road) – District 3 completed construction of a sidewalk between Hall Station Drive and the CSX railroad tracks in 2017. We ask that you continue to support improvements to MD 978, as this roadway is part of the City's master planned trail network, known as The Bowie Byway. A concept development plan was completed and is awaiting design funds for the segment between the CSX railroad and MD 214. 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. Just this summer, the City completed a feasibility study, working with District 3, that examined the potential for a grade-separated pedestrian bridge over MD 214 in the vicinity of Hall Road.
2. MD 197 North Landscaping Retrofit – Twenty 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 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. The City Council asks that you provide a current cost estimate for this project so that it might be implemented by SHA District 3 as soon as possible.

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 significance:

- Acquisition of the CSX Railroad tracks from Morgantown on the Potomac River all the way to Bowie – There is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to establish a regional hiker-biker trail amenity in place of the CSX railroad tracks, since the coal fired power plants at Morgantown on the Potomac River and Chalk Point on the Patuxent River will be shutting down operations soon. The railroad corridors could be repurposed to a Rails-to-Trails concept, enhancing multi-modal travel opportunities within Prince George's and Charles Counties. MDOT leadership is essential in this regard, and we implore you to work at the highest levels to ensure that the opportunity for non-vehicular travel is preserved and eventually realized.
- 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 City recommends establishment of a new, regional bus route from Annapolis to Laurel via US 50, with a stop at the Northview Park-and-Ride lot in Bowie, within the next several years to provide transit service that integrates with existing WMATA bus routes and the Central Maryland Regional Transportation Agency (RTA) in Anne Arundel County.
- 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

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

additional interchange on US 50, at some location between MD 197 and MD 704 (County Project Planning Priority #7), 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. This facility will greatly enhance access to the planned, mixed-use Transit Oriented Development community charted for the Bowie State MARC Station area. State leadership is key to realizing this future transportation concept.

As always, the City Council greatly appreciates your dedication to responsible transportation planning and for your impressive commitment to serving the residents of Maryland. Thank you for this opportunity to provide our recommendations.

Sincerely,



Bowie City Council
Timothy J. Adams
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. Tim Smith, SHA Administrator
Ms. Erica Rigby, SHA District Engineer
Mr. Paul J. Wiedefeld, WMATA General Manager/CEO
Mr. Terry Bellamy, Director of Prince George's County DPW&T