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CECIL COUNTY, MARYLAND

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April 1, 2022

James F. Ports, Jr., Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Center Drive
Hanover, MD 21076

RE: Cecil County Transportation Priorities

Dear Secretary Ports:

Cecil County Government submits this letter to articulate its transportation priorities for inclusion and funding by the Maryland Department of Transportation's (MDOT) FY2023-2028 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP). We continue to recognize our mutual challenges and opportunities to better determine our transportation future here in the northeast transportation corridor. The needs of the County and its municipalities are reflected in these priority projects.

Because of the important relationships among transportation and air quality, congestion mitigation, and providing more livable and sustainable communities with better linked land use and transportation, we have established five broad transportation improvement categories, as follows:

- I-95 Corridor Access and Mobility Enhancement Improvements
- Toll Coordination and Freight Transportation Improvements.
- Public Transportation Improvements
- US 40 Corridor and Intersection Improvements
- Municipality Improvements

Based upon those categorical priorities, our overall top five individual priority improvements are as follows:

- 1) Bainbridge Park Entrance Improvement.
- 2) Stormwater infrastructure and drainage improvement along Main Street (MD 222) in Port Deposit.
- 3) Interstate 95 and Belvidere Road interchange and corridor improvement construction.
- 4) The establishment of a mid-county multi-modal transportation hub in the North East area.
- 5) Conduct a transportation study of Maryland 272 within the County's Growth Corridor.

Bainbridge Park Entrance Improvements

As the Bainbridge campus matures, it will warrant additional access points to provide both secondary ingress/egress for employees, emergency life safety and also to maintain an acceptable level of service at the intersection of Perrylawn Road (MD-275) and Jacob Tome Highway (MD-276). Improving the existing Diamond Jim Road to Cecil County standard for a two-lane industrial collector road and extending the existing acceleration/deceleration and turning lane improvements along MD-275. The Diamond Jim Road improvements would terminate at the Bainbridge property at Manor Road and provide a second access point to the campus. Additionally, the project proposes an extension of Commodore Boulevard from Phase I to Bainbridge Road (MD-222) to provide access to the campus and public road access to the state-owned 50-acre Tome School for Boys which is currently inaccessible via existing public infrastructure.

The redevelopment and proposed road improvement of the former Bainbridge Navy Base, west of MD 275, south of MD 276, north and east of MD 222 in Port Deposit are identified in the County's Comprehensive Plan. Approximately 400 acres or one-third of the site have been set aside for the first phase of employment uses that began site work in 2021. These capital improvements to the transportation system that will improve access to jobs and tourism and leverage economic growth opportunities. Additionally this will improve the movement of goods within and through Maryland by investing in improvements to reduce freight bottlenecks. The project meets the State's Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan by improving freight transportation and traffic mitigation.

Stormwater infrastructure and drainage improvement along Main Street (MD 222) in Port Deposit

The Town of Port Deposit has long been plagued by inadequate storm drainage infrastructure along Main Street (MD 222). Not only does the poor drainage pose a safety hazard to pedestrians and motorists, but it is also a source of significant inflow into the County's sanitary sewer system in the area. The problem is only getting worse with changing precipitation patterns due to climate change. As you know, State Highway Administration previously awarded a construction contract for storm drain improvements on Main Street but stopped work not long after construction started and ultimately terminated the project. It is our understanding that the project design is under review to see what changes need to be made but, at present, the project remains unfunded. We ask that this project be made a priority and that every effort be made to secure funding for design and construction, including the possible use of federal infrastructure funding which may be available. Once funding is secured, it is imperative that the project be expedited.

Interstate 95 and Belvidere Road interchange and corridor improvement construction

This project proposes to construct a shifted modified partial cloverleaf interchange on to Belvidere Road from Interstate 95, and complete road improvements on Belvidere Road to enhance the corridor between the interstate and Pulaski Highway (US 40) through the Principio Business Park.

This project implements the County's Comprehensive Plan objective of expanding the road network in the County's growth corridor and providing alternate north-south route options between I-95 and US 40. The 2010 plan identified a "potential new I-95 interchange between MD 222 and MD 272" with the implementation of the change tied to "redevelopment of the Mineral Extraction Area." This area is currently being redeveloped into the Principio Business Park. The interchange will improve the secure movement of people and goods, and improve emergency response on one of the County's largest employment centers. Additionally, it will minimize travel delays on Maryland's transportation system by reducing freight traffic in the towns of North East and Perryville and have the added benefit of air quality improvement by reducing idle times in the towns.

Establishment of a Mid-County multi-modal transportation hub in the North East area

Establishment of a Mid County multi-modal transportation hub in the North East area (“Mid-County Transit Hub”) has been a priority of Cecil County since 2017. A Mid-County Transit Hub has been recommended to support the growth of Cecil Transit, enhance transit ridership, reduce stem miles and provide additional office space. The Mid-County Transit Hub will look to contain: a multi-modal public transit center to accommodate transfers and layovers, a kiss-and-ride facility, a covered area for customer waiting, pedestrian/bicycle connectivity and bicycle parking and a stand-alone Transit Administration facility containing Transit offices; with the possibility of an onsite vehicle wash bay or reduced-capacity maintenance facility depending on future cost considerations. . This facility would be servicing linkages between employment and commercial centers as well as more densely developed residential areas. Additionally, the Mid-County Transit Hub will be strategically centered within the County’s growth areas and the County’s municipalities.

The project strategically invests in the expansion and operational improvements to reduce congestion along the multimodal transportation system; facilitates the movement of people to and from employment centers, implements initiatives to reduce fossil fuel consumption, mitigate greenhouse gases, and improve air quality. Implementation of the Mid-County Transit Hub provides transportation services and solutions that maximize value through a local, state, and federal funding partnership and provides efficiency by reducing “dead head” bus mileage as the facility will provide space for onsite maintenance and administration of Cecil Transit. The project meets the State’s Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan by expanding transit service, providing for traffic congestion mitigation, and enhancing fuel quality standards.

Conduct a transportation study of Maryland 272 within the County’s Growth Corridor.

Cecil County has identified the widening of North East Road (MD 272) between the Town of North East and the intersection of Joseph Biggs Memorial Highway (MD 274) as a vital project within the County’s growth corridor. Improvement in recent years such as reconstruction of the bridge over Amtrak, intersection improvements at US RTE 40, creation of and intersection with Gateway Drive have changed how that corridor is utilized. This is an area targeted for further growth with accessibility to and through it becoming more difficult. While the incremental improvements have provided some relief, this corridor needs a more comprehensive review to ascertain current conditions, projected growth, and evaluate alternatives. The results of the study should ascertain a direction for future transportation improvements in the corridor.

Expansion the road network in the growth corridor to increase connectivity and provide alternate route options, especially through and around the towns and north-south between the US 40 and I-95 corridors is an objective in the County’s Comprehensive Plan. This project will provide the initial steps towards a resilient multimodal system by anticipating and planning for changing conditions, and hazards whether natural or man-made. Improve roadway clearance times and facilitate efficient and coordinated responses to emergency and disaster events throughout the transportation system. It is a strategic investment in the operational improvements of the transportation system, with the additional benefit of minimizing delays in the transportation system. The results of the study will assist in mitigating traffic congestion, allows for the movement of freight, and enhance the reduction of vehicle emissions.

Additional Priorities

These priorities do not reflect all the needs within Cecil County but are included to reflect potential funding availability. An appendix of the remaining county and municipality identified priority projects are enclosed with this letter. Each of these project’s support are consistent with the County’s land use plan, and the goals of the Maryland Transportation Plan (MTP), including the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act goals. Summary sheets of these projects are available upon request.

In summation, as our economy continues to grow, we will face growing traffic volumes that will test our efforts to ameliorate air quality, mitigate traffic congestion, and provide more sustainable and viable communities.

Thank you for your consideration of Cecil County's transportation priorities.

Sincerely,

Danielle Hornberger, County Executive

Robert Meffley, President, County Council

Cecil County's State of Maryland Delegation

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Senator Stephen S. Hershey

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