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County Commissioners of Charles County

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June 8, 2009

The Honorable Beverley K. Swaim-Staley
Acting Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Center Drive
P.O. Box 548, Mail Stop 200
Hanover, MD 21076

Dear Acting Secretary Swaim-Staley:

We appreciate the opportunity to present Charles County's transportation priorities for fiscal year 2010, in anticipation of our annual tour meeting with you this fall. During the past year we have been working closely with the Maryland Department of Transportation and your modal administrations, and with our elected colleagues from neighboring jurisdictions through the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland and the Commission to Study Southern Maryland Transportation Needs, to address our significant regional priorities.

In 2007 the Charles County Commissioners conducted a comprehensive review of our transportation needs, resulting in our adoption of the following, which remain the County's highest transportation priorities:

- Construction of a western Bypass of Waldorf, with controlled access, selecting the alignment with the least possible environmental impact on the Mattawoman Creek watershed:



CHARLES COUNTY MARYLAND
Where Eagles Fly

SAY NO TO DRUGS ~ EQUAL OPPORTUNITY COUNTY

- Construction of a Limited Upgrade of U.S. Route 301 to facilitate traffic flow and relieve congestion at the most critical failing intersections, and create a “boulevard” design for Charles County's “main street.” while minimizing the displacement of existing businesses along the highway; and
- Accelerated Mass Transit Improvements in the U.S. 301/MD 5 corridor, progressing from the delineation of a transit corridor alignment and preservation of right-of-way, and enhanced commuter bus service, to implementation of feasible high-capacity transit options such as Bus Rapid Transit (exclusive bus lanes and grade separation) or Light Rail Transit, and culminating in the establishment of a fixed-rail transit system from Waldorf-White Plains to the Branch Avenue Metrorail Station in Prince George's County.

These remain the top priority transportation projects of Charles County, and have been endorsed by the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland and the Commission to Study Southern Maryland Transportation Needs. In addition to our top priorities, we have attached a list of the County's additional priorities for the upcoming year, which are presented in categories that correspond to the divisions of MDOT that oversee these activities. These projects are needed *to* facilitate the ongoing implementation of our long-range comprehensive and sub-area plans. We request your commitment to these transportation system improvements.

The Charles County Commissioners support a comprehensive approach that integrates transportation and land use policy. Through the implementation of the 2006 Comprehensive Plan and the Waldorf Sub-Area Plan, we are working to encourage higher density, transit-oriented, pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use development in the urban core of the Development District that will enable us to focus future growth in Waldorf, and reduce sprawl and suburban development pressures in the County's rural areas. These policies will also support future investment in high capacity public transit. Our planned residential and commercial development densities have been designed to support future rail transit, as well as other alternative modes, including pedestrians and bicycles.

We have undertaken a Waldorf Urban Design Study which will provide us with zoning and implementation tools to accomplish these land use objectives. We believe that only by coordinating our transportation priorities with land use decisions in a comprehensive and integrated strategy can we successfully meet our transportation needs for the next generation.

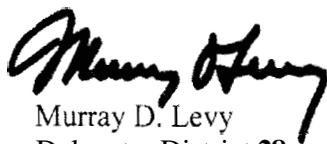
Thank you for your continued cooperation and support. We look forward to working with you and your staff. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Melvin C. (Chuck) Beall, Jr. P.E., Director of the Department of Planning & Growth Management, at 301-645-0324, or by E-Mail at beallc@charlescounty.org

Very Truly,

CHARLES COUNTY DELEGATION
TO THE MARYLAND GENERAL
ASSEMBLY

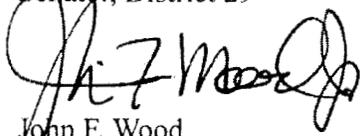

Thomas M. Middleton
Senator, District 28


Sally Jameson
Delegate, District 28


Murray D. Levy
Delegate, District 28

Peter Murphy
Delegate, District 28

Ray P. Dyson
Senator, District 29


John F. Wood
Delegate, District 29A

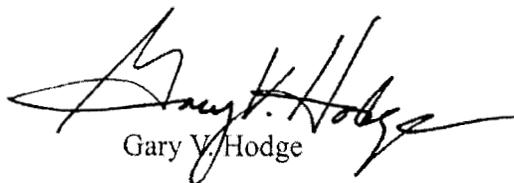
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF CHARLES COUNTY
MARYLAND


Wayne Cooper, President


Edith J. Patterson, Vice President


Reuben B. Collins, II

Samuel N. Graves, Jr.


Gary V. Hodge

Attachment

cc: Mr. Neil Pedersen, SHA
Mr. Paul J. Wiedefeld, MTA
Mr. Glen Smith, MdTA
Mr. Wayne Clark, Tri-County Council
Mr. Paul Comfort, Charles County
Mr. **Chuck** Beall, Charles County

Mayor Roy Hale, Town of La Plata
Mr. Daniel blears, Town of La Plata
Mayor Edward Rice, Town of Indian Head
Mr. Ryan Hicks, Town of Indian Head
Mr. Jeffry Barnett, Charles County
Mr. Jason Groth, Charles County

ATTACHMENT 1

Additional Priority Transportation Improvement Projects

STATE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

Project Planning Priorities

1. Initiate a project planning study for the Maryland Route 6 Connector in the Town of La Plata, now that SHA has completed its feasibility study for this project. This roadway would connect existing MD 6 at Willow Lane to U.S. 301, providing additional congestion relief within the Town of La Plata. This project is identified in the U.S. 301 Transportation Study Task Force's Final Report, supported by the U.S. 301 Policy Oversight Committee and included in the ongoing U.S. 301 South Corridor Study. The Maryland Route 6 Connector project has been placed as the County's top project planning study with the understanding that the U.S. Route 301 Waldorf Transportation Project (Waldorf Upgrade/Bypass), is already funded and included in the CTP program.
2. In coordination with Calvert County, we seek the widening of MD 231 to ease increasing levels of congestion. The need for this project is identified as a recommended State highway project in the County's 2006 Comprehensive Plan (Page 5-18). Also, the MD 231 project is on the regional transportation priority list prepared by the Regional Infrastructure Advisory Committee of the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland. We understand that MD 231 is in the National Highway System. It is the only highway linking Charles County with Calvert County.
3. One of the implementation strategies for the 2001 Bryans Road/Indian Head Sub-Area Plan is the development of a new "Town Common" in the vicinity of MD Route 227 and Matthews Road to serve as the centerpiece of a proposed pedestrian-friendly town center for the Bryans Road community. Additional improvements include streetscape enhancements to MD Route 210 within the proposed Town Center. The County is seeking assistance with planning and implementation for this project, both in terms of technical design assistance and project funding.

SHA District 5 Priorities

4. Complete planning and design for a streetscape on MD 5 Business in Hughesville, inside the limits of the Hughesville Bypass. The County has completed a Revitalization Plan for the Village of Hughesville and the streetscape is a key element of the revitalization strategy. This streetscape will enhance the revitalization of the village and provide roadway and pedestrian enhancements.
5. Traffic congestion along Leonardtown Road (MD Business Route 5) between U.S. Route 301 and Post Office Road continues to inhibit the efficient movement of vehicles through this section of highway. Gridlock conditions occur during peak hours in this area. We request a re-evaluation of the turning movement queues at the U.S. 301 intersection to better coordinate traffic flows onto eastbound (southeast) Leonardtown Road. Eastbound traffic regularly backs up into the U.S. Route 301 intersection. We also ask that you re-evaluate the traffic signal timing synchronization of the traffic signals between Post Office Road and U.S. Route 301 to ensure maximum efficiency of traffic flows through these intersections. We are currently working with Mr. Dennis German and his project team for a Community Enhancement project along the MD 925 corridor. We appreciate SHA's assistance as we revitalize and improve this corridor of Waldorf.

Also, we have worked with Mr. Greg Welker, former District 5 Engineer, to pursue the addition of a turn lane from west-bound MD 5 Business onto northbound MD 925 (Old Washington Road). The property on this corner is currently vacant and would provide a much needed turn lane, further alleviating congestion at Leonardtown Road and Old Washington Road.

6. An additional travel lane is needed, in each direction, to relieve increasing congestion along U.S. 301 from south of Smallwood Drive to south of MD 227. The taper of the 6-lane section of U.S. 301 to 4 lanes south of Smallwood Drive creates increasing back-ups during peak and certain off-peak hours. Evaluation of the synchronization of the four U.S. 301 traffic signals in White Plains may also reduce congestion. These intersections are Billingsley Road, DeMarr Road, Theodore Green Boulevard, and MD 227.

MARYLAND TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (M&TA)

An expansion of the Governor Harry Nice Bridge to 4 lanes, consistent with the southbound and northbound approaches of U.S. 301 to the bridge, is necessary to reduce traffic congestion. This bridge is also a major limiting factor in the path of evacuation from Washington D.C. to points south. Should a natural disaster or an issue of Homeland Security occur, the limited 2-lane capacity of this bridge would cause a major traffic bottleneck. The County's 2006 Comprehensive Plan recommends increasing the capacity of the bridge to address this issue, and improve traffic flow and alleviate congestion. The Maryland Transportation Authority should accelerate construction of a new bridge as a toll facility, expedite selection of a 4-lane alternate, resolve right-of-way issues in cooperation with the State of Virginia, King George County, and the United States Navy, and start the project engineering phase of the project.

MARYLAND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION

8. State funding for local bus (VanGo) operations was sharply cut in October of 2008 requiring reductions in both fixed route and specialized services. We urge the State to restore this funding as soon as economically feasible. The amount of the State funding reduction for Charles County's VanGo operations was \$282,701.
9. We request that funding be provided for VanGo to allow limited operations on Sundays. The County receives requests for this service from employers to enable their employees the opportunity to travel to and from work on Sundays.
10. Provide funding for new service in the Indian Head/Bryans Road area. Additional service frequency and coverage is required to minimize ride durations and make public transit a feasible alternative for individuals trying to obtain and maintain employment.
11. Continue to implement the recommendations of the "MD 5/ US301/ MD228 Corridors Park and Ride Feasibility Study-Site Identification Report," October 2001. This report identifies locations for new park and ride facilities. New facilities located in proximity to proposed transit stations and existing rail lines within Charles County are necessary to meet the growing demand for VanGO and commuter bus services, and support the future implementation of high-capacity transit options. In an effort to secure additional Park and Ride Facilities, Charles County is working with developers to secure additional Park and Ride lots through the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Zone in the northern portion of Waldorf, fronting US 301. A portion of this site may also serve as a future light rail station.

Charles County eagerly anticipates the start of construction of the MD 925(Old Washington Road)/Smallwood Drive Park and Ride facility, which was to have been initiated in the spring of 2009, to alleviate overcrowded conditions at the US 301/Smallwood Drive Park and Ride lot. In addition to this planned new facility, the County continues to seek additional Park and Ride facilities to accommodate our growing number of commuter bus riders, as well as potential future rail station locations. **As** the fastest growing commuter bus system in the State, and realizing the escalating price of fuel, we continue to seek additional **Park** and Ride lots to Facilitate the growth of this vital transit service.

12. As a result of the growth of the MTA Commuter Bus System and the associated issues raised by the riders, the Charles County Commissioners formed a Commuter Bus Advisory Group in early 2007. The Advisory Group conducted a bus rider survey of all bus routes in Southern Maryland to identify and evaluate the needs and concerns of passengers utilizing the service. Based on the overwhelming response to the survey, the predominant concern was the need for more commuter bus services, including more buses, more trips per day, and an expansion of the routes. On October 2nd 2008, the Advisory Group presented the final report to the Charles County Commissioners, including a series of recommended improvements and expansions. The Commissioners forwarded the report to MTA in October 2008, in an effort to work cooperatively with MTA to enhance this rapidly growing service, and promote transit services through our forthcoming land use policies that seek to increase density in the urban core of Waldorf. We request MTA's assistance in implementing the recommendations of the Commuter Bus Advisory Group, and further request that cuts in State funding for commuter bus routes and services in Charles County be restored as soon as economically feasible.
13. Charles County also seeks accelerated implementation of MTA's "Transit Service Staging Plan," the delineation of a transit alignment in the U.S. 301/MD 5 corridor, and the preservation of right-of-way in the defined transit corridor. The Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, the Commission to Study Southern Maryland Transportation Needs, the Prince George's County Council, and the Boards of County Commissioners of the three Southern Maryland counties have all endorsed the accelerated implementation of high-capacity transit services in the U.S. 301/MD 5 corridor, from White Plains to the Branch Avenue Metrorail Station. The Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland has identified this project as a top regional priority. We support light rail transit as a long-standing priority of the County and the region, and look forward to working with MTA to implement transit solutions for Charles County and Southern Maryland.

Our staff is currently working with MTA and their consultants to complete the current Transit Corridor Preservation Study to define an alignment for high-capacity transit service from the Branch Avenue Metro Station (Green Line) to Waldorf and White Plains. We look forward to the completion of the corridor study and working with MTA to implement long term transit solutions for Charles County and the Southern Maryland Region. We further support light rail as a long-standing project of interest for the County and the region.