ST. MARY'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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July 21, 2009

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SECRETARY'S OFFICE
DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION

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

RE: Transportation Program Priorities

Dear Acting Secretary Swaim-Staley:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit St. Mary's County's priorities for your use in preparing the FY 2010 Consolidated Transportation Program. We appreciate efforts in finding an equitable alternative in generating revenue enhancements in lieu of raising the gas tax during this time of increased transportation costs. An increase in gas taxes would have a significant negative impact on our economy and other rural communities where the use of automobiles is necessitated by the lack of public transportation. We are concerned with the decrease in motor vehicle fuel tax receipts and the impact of the diversion of the funding away from Maryland Counties. This may cause the need for another round of revenue enhancements, which we will be sure to follow.

We appreciate the construction funding for the MD Route 246 Streetscape Project and the partial planning funding for the MD Route 4 corridor/Thomas Johnson Bridge and the MD Route 5 from MD Route 245 to MD Route 243 expansion projects. We trust that the balance of the planning funding can be allocated during 2010 through 2011, as shown in the adopted CTP. As we have discussed, multi-modal transportation will remain a regional high priority for Southern Maryland. Priority local projects that we would like to discuss with you at our annual tour meeting include the following:

Highway Projects

MD Route 5 – Point Lookout Road: The upgrade of the Point Lookout portion of this roadway to include shoulders and bicycle accommodations will greatly improve safety, accommodate visitors to the County's most prominent park, and provide roadside enhancements along this primary evacuation route for the southernmost portion of the County. With this project currently in the Secondary Development and Evaluation Program, the Board previously selected the $3.8M breakout project (south of Camp Brown Road to Ranger Station) described by Mr. Pedersen as our priority interim

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improvement for this corridor, which includes the necessary widening of the Scotland Beach intersection. We request the remainder of engineering planned for 2010 and 2011 remain within this year's CTP, with right-of-way and construction following in the near term.

Point Lookout Road, from MD Route 243 to MD Route 245: Thank you for placing this project within the Secondary Development Program for widening and multi-lane reconstruction. The planning study should continue to be fully funded for completion in FY 2010, with engineering beginning upon completion of planning. As requested, short-term measures should be considered to eliminate the safety issues along the MD Route 5 corridor, particularly at the Moakley Street intersection. According to our data, this section of the highway has a significant accident rate. Increasing traffic volume projections will continue to compound the problem.

MD Route 5, from MD Route 246 to MD Route 249: Included in the recently adopted Transportation Plan is the identified need to address this section of roadway, which experiences peak hour delays at this time. After review of the conceptual drawings provided to us, it would appear that the section between MD Route 246 and MD Route 249 is a high priority due to current levels of congestion experienced in this corridor. At our request, a conceptual plan has been developed by SHA staff for this project. Since our Pegg Road project has been funded for project planning, any additional consideration of this portion of MD Route 5 will be made upon completion of the Pegg Road study during FY 2010.

Thomas Johnson Bridge/ MD Route 4: As you are aware, a project of this magnitude can take 20 years or more from planning inception to completion. Since our County-wide Transportation Plan predicts severe congestion in this vital County gateway by that time, it is imperative that the remainder of planning funding remain in the 2010 and 2011 program. With the proposed expansion of Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant, this primary evacuation route becomes even more important to the region. We also recommend that alternates such as ferry service be explored as part of the planning process. The MD Route 4 – MD Route 235 corridor remains one of the high profile and primary entryways to the Naval Air Station and visitor gate.

MD Route 234 – MD Route 242: On June 23, 2005, our staff met with the SHA's representatives and discussed the failing level of service at this intersection and the evening delays. Initially, additional approach lanes were recommended, but more recently SHA staff has recommended a roundabout project. Since the Chaptico roundabout operates well and has reduced accidents, we agree that this option should be pursued and request this project to be added as a safety/spot project to the minor project list.

Trails and Bikeways: As the bicycling community continues to grow within St. Mary's County, we have received an increasing number of requests for bicycle accommodations along our roadways. Our adopted County-wide Transportation Plan analyzed all available bicycle plans to arrive at a County-wide plan. We are including paved shoulders in our overlay program and are requiring developers to provide facilities along their frontage. We are requesting that MDOT participate in this effort through their development review process as well as the CTP. Improved shoulders should be included in the System Preservation program and special projects. Some of the higher priority State roadways with shoulders in need of improvement include MD Route 6 from MD Route 5 to All Faith Church Road, MD Route 245 from MD Route 5 to Baldridge Street, MD Route 5 from MD Route 243 to MD Route 245, MD Routes 236, 243, 272, and 244. We are requesting that staff discuss priorities with SHA staff during their quarterly meetings. Your continued support of the Three Notch Trail within the Transportation Enhancement Program is also requested.

MD Route 712: Although traffic volumes have not reached the point of moving the project from the Needs Inventory into Preliminary Planning, we have received preliminary agreement with the Patuxent River Naval Air Station in identifying a future 120-foot right-of-way corridor which will minimize the impact to the residential properties to the south of existing MD Route 712. We appreciate your staff's efforts in preparation of a right-of-way plat that will affect the needed property transfer(s) in the near future and request that this effort be pursued at this time.

Pegg Road: Thank you for your Department's willingness to assist in improving the SHA approaches to Pegg Road. This participation, along with State Aid funding, as well as County and developer funding, will be vital in the County's ability to provide this improvement to regional and emergency travel for the Lexington Park to Leonardtown corridor in a cost effective manner.

Resurfacing and Rehabilitation

MD Route 236 from MD Route 234 to MD Route 235: We recommend that this overlay project be overlaid as soon as possible due to the extent of the pavement failure and potential safety issues.

MD Route 234 in the Clements area: Investigate the need to overlay MD Route 234 as part of the bridge deck replacement project which has begun construction.

MD Route 470 between each MD 242 intersection: We concur with this overlay project due to the level of pavement distress of this roadway.

Community Safety and Enhancements

MD Route 5 in Leonardtown: We look forward to completion of this project in the near future.

MD Route 246 in Lexington Park: Thank you again for programming construction funding for this project for FY 2009. We are pleased to see that the project is proceeding to construction.

MD Route 5 near St. Mary's City: Please conclude the Viewshed Protection project to preserve the rural gateway to St. Mary's City.

Transit Projects

Bus Service: We are requesting reconsideration of funding for the long-awaited Western Route to serve our growing rural population as well as the Mobility Manager grant position which was approved in FY 09 to coordinate transportation services between multiple providers. We are also supportive of additional commuter bus service as needed.

Charlotte Hall Park and Ride Lot: As stated in a June 17, 2008, letter to the MDOT's Office of Planning, the Board of County Commissioners appreciates the hard work and dedication of your staff to establish permanent Park and Ride facilities for commuters in St. Mary's County. Although the New Market Site at the intersection of MD 5 /MD 6 is not being pursued at this time, we are supportive of the Charlotte Hall Park and Ride location on Golden Beach Road and recognize the future need for another lot in the Mechanicsville New / New Market area.

Sidewalk Retrofit Program

MD Route 5 – Mohawk Drive: We will be submitting a 2010 request in the near future to provide a project similar to the Golden Beach Rod project at the MD Route 5 – Mohawk Drive intersection to provide pedestrian access from the community to the Three Notch Trail, which is nearing completion.

MD Route 4, from MD Route 235 to Wildewood Parkway: We are considering a retrofit project to assist Wildewood residents and residents of the Walden Sierra Facility in accessing shopping areas along MD Route 235. We will be seeking your staff's input on the feasibility of this project, especially with regard to the possible effects of the future widening of MD Route 4. Similarly, along with the Town of Leonardtown, we could request a sidewalk connection from the College of Southern Maryland to the Governmental Center on the south side of MD Route 245.

General Aviation Grants

St. Mary's County Regional Airport: We thank you for the Grant Award utilized to complete the Environmental Assessment associated with the approved Airport Master Plan and the Grant Award for the required Wetland Mitigation construction project, which is currently under final design. Future project funding for property acquisition and the relocation of roadways/obstructions will improve our ability to provide enhanced regional transportation infrastructure, which include the business and corporate communities that will benefit from the runway extension project.

In light of the funding issues facing the State, we look forward to receiving the Consolidated Transportation Plan (CTP) in the near future. Also, we understand that streetscaping in the MD Route 5 median in Charlotte Hall will require a sponsor for maintenance, and we will continue to attempt to assist the District Engineer in identifying such a partner. We look forward to discussing the continued progression on these local and regional projects in the near future. Please extend our gratitude to Governor O'Malley for all his support, especially on transportation issues and energy management and conservation initiatives.

Sincerely,
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
ST. MARY'S COUNTY, MARYLAND

Francis Jack Russell, President

Kenneth R. Dement, Commissioner

Lawrence D. Jarboe, Commissioner

Thomas A. Mattingly, Sr., Commissioner

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T:ADMIN/ALL/Consent/6100
cc: Senator Roy P. Dyson
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Delegate John F. Wood, Jr.
J. Harry Norris, Leonardtown Mayor
Wayne E. Clark, Executive Director, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland
John Savich, County Administrator
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George A. Erichsen, P.E., Director, Department of Public Works & Transportation
Derick Berlage, Director, Land Use & Growth Management
Jackie Fournier, Transportation Manager

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