



Charles County Commissioners

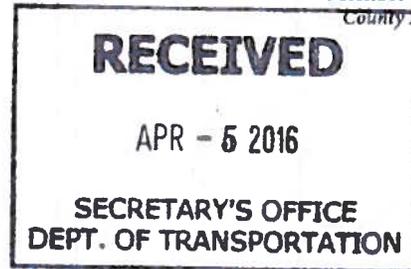
CHARLES COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Peter F. Murphy, President
Debra M. Davis, Esq., Vice President
Ken Robinson
Amanda M. Stewart, M.Ed.
Bobby Rucci

Michael D. Mallinoff
County Administrator

March 22, 2016

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



Dear Secretary Rahn:

Thank you for the opportunity to present Charles County's transportation priorities for fiscal year 2017, in anticipation of our annual tour meeting with you in the fall. Throughout the past year, we have been working closely with the individual modal administrations of the Maryland Department of Transportation, with our elected colleagues in neighboring jurisdictions, and with the Transportation Planning Board of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, to address our significant local and regional priorities.

We wish to express our continued appreciation to staff of the Maryland Transit Administration and the Maryland State Highway Administration for their sustained efforts to assist Charles and Prince George's counties in planning for fixed-route, high-capacity transit (Light Rail) service in the MD 5/U.S. 301 corridor from the Branch Avenue Metrorail Station to Waldorf and White Plains. The County Commissioners also wish to express our appreciation for the Maryland Transportation Authority's previous efforts to secure a "Record of Decision" for the replacement of the Governor Harry W. Nice Memorial Bridge. While budget limitations and other statewide priorities may have taken precedence over engineering and right-of-way acquisition for the new bridge, we request your support and assistance in developing a funding strategy for the completion of the bridge replacement. We encourage the Governors of Maryland and Virginia to work together with the federal government to come up with a joint funding plan for this critical interstate and regional highway infrastructure.

As you may recall from our previous meetings and discussions, Charles County's highest transportation priority is the completion of "project planning" for new Light Rail Transit service from the Branch Avenue Metro Station to Waldorf and White Plains. The current Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) includes \$5 million for completion of the Southern Maryland Rapid Transit (SMRT) study, continuing the progress made during the 2010 Southern Maryland Transit Corridor Preservation Study. The SMRT study is evaluating the merits of alternative transit modes, subjecting the proposed transit alignment and station locations to detailed analysis, updating ridership projections, and estimating the potential economic impact of the project. Recommendations are expected in the late summer or early fall of 2016. Concurrent with MTA's 2010 Transit Corridor Study, Charles County completed the Waldorf Urban Design Study, which resulted in the re-zoning of 300 acres of downtown Waldorf along the future light rail corridor for transit-oriented, mixed-use development. Building on the momentum of both initiatives, the County followed the re-zoning with a "Phase One" development plan and an implementation strategy to launch the Waldorf urban redevelopment effort, and is making a \$30 million investment in water, sewer, stormwater and road infrastructure improvements in the future transit corridor.

P.O. Box 2150 • 200 Baltimore Street • La Plata, Maryland 20646 • 301-645-0553 • 301-870-3000
Fax: 301-648-0544 • E-Mail: Commissioner@CharlesCountyMD.gov

Maryland Relay Service: 711 • Relay Service TDD: 1-800-735-2258 • Equal Opportunity County

Visit us online at www.CharlesCountyMD.gov



Secretary Rahn  
March 22, 2016

The Charles County Commissioners appreciate MDOT's commitment to the commuters of Southern Maryland and the investment of \$5 million in the current CTP for the Southern Maryland Rapid Transit study. We understand, however, that this level of funding will not be sufficient to complete the "Project Planning" phase for the proposed high-capacity, fixed-route transit system. In order to secure a "Record of Decision" and complete 30 percent of the required engineering for the project, our project team estimates that between \$20 and \$25 million in additional State funds will be required. It will be necessary for us to complete "Project Planning" in order to position this project for future consideration in the federal "New Starts" program. Our goal is to complete this formal planning phase within the next five years. In order to accomplish this, it will be necessary to expand the scope of the current project. We need MDOT to include this project in the new CTP and commit additional funding for its completion. Our funding request represents a small fraction of the revenue that the gas tax is expected to generate for projects all over the State of Maryland. We recommend starting the "Project Planning" phase soon after the recommendations of the SMRT study are completed, so the project can move seamlessly into the next phase of work without loss of momentum.

Throughout the transit planning process we have worked closely with Prince George's County's elected and appointed officials, including the Prince George's County Executive and Council, the staff of the Prince George's County Planning Department (the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission), and the Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation. On November 15, 2011, the Prince George's County Council unanimously adopted a resolution urging the Maryland Department of Transportation to include the Southern Maryland high-capacity, fixed-route transit project (preferably light rail) in the CTP and designate it the State's next major transit priority. In this resolution Prince George's County makes a commitment to work in partnership with Charles County, urges State and federal officials to support this initiative, and agrees to promote transit-oriented development around proposed transit stations in the corridor.

As an expression of regional support, the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland has consistently designated this project as the number one regional transit priority for Southern Maryland. The project has also received the support of United States Senator Benjamin Cardin in correspondence with previous MDOT Secretaries and the Federal Transit Administration, strongly supporting the allocation of federal transit planning funds for this greatly needed project. Accommodating future high-capacity transit service in the vitally important MD 5/U.S. 301 corridor from Charles County to Branch Avenue will help preserve highway capacity, manage congestion, enhance local mobility, facilitate shorter commutes, and focus job opportunities, economic development and investment opportunities near transit.

Our second highest priority for consideration in Maryland's CTP is the construction of a controlled access highway option for U.S. 301 through Waldorf and White Plains, which balances the needs of the residential and business communities, while minimizing the impacts to cultural, social, and natural resources. We appreciate MDOT's inclusion of planning for new interchanges at U.S. 301 and MD 228/MD 5 Business, and at the intersection of U.S. 301 and Mattawoman-Beantown Road (MD 5) in the CTP. We look forward to working with the Maryland State Highway Administration staff to help this project quickly progress into the engineering phase.

We believe it is important to maintain the roadway mobility of our inter-state and inter-county highway system. The U.S. 301 and MD 5 corridor through Charles and Prince George's Counties remains one of the most congested in the State. We fully support the efforts of Prince George's County to improve the

Secretary Rahn  
March 22, 2016

segment of MD 5 (Branch Avenue) from Surratt's Road to the junction with U.S. 301, which will help alleviate the severe delays experienced along this corridor. We are also grateful for the Maryland State Highway Administration's commitment to make sure that the recommendations and design plans for highway improvements in the MD 5 corridor will provide for future fixed-route high-capacity transit. It is imperative that the alternative selected for the MD 5 corridor accommodates this transitway, including two-way traffic for the fixed guideway and grade separations where necessary. In the interim, we specifically request that the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) accelerate potential break-out projects to alleviate roadway congestion within this corridor. These projects are listed in "Attachment 1" under SHA Project Planning Project number "1" and District Special Project number "1." We look forward to working with the SHA staff on these projects which are of great importance to our citizens.

The Charles County Commissioners support a comprehensive approach that integrates transportation and land use policy. Through the implementation of the Waldorf Sub-Area Plan and associated Zoning and Design Guidelines, the County has made major strides to create higher density, transit-oriented development in the urban core of the County's Development District which will significantly reduce vehicle trips by providing the necessary mix of land uses in a walkable-bicycle friendly environment. These actions will enable us to focus future growth in Waldorf and White Plains, while reducing sprawl and suburban development pressures in the County's rural areas. These policies will also support future investment in high capacity public transit, help to create a reverse commute, and reduce the peak volumes on state roadways to preserve existing and planned capacity. Our planned residential and commercial development densities have been designed to support future rail transit, alternative modes, pedestrians and bicycles. These densities are consistent with the Federal Transit Administration's *Guidelines and Standards for Transit Supportive Land Uses* and are intended to qualify our transit project for future "New Starts" funds. To ensure the success of the urbanization and redevelopment of Waldorf, the County initiated the roll-out of a Phase One Development Plan in November 2013, and funded \$30 Million in infrastructure improvements to incentivize private investment. 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.

In addition to our top priorities, we have attached a list of the County's additional priorities (*Attachment 1*) 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 Plan and Sub-Area Plans. We request your commitment to these transportation system improvements.

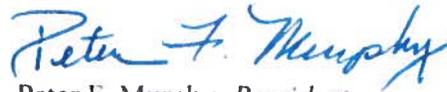
In closing, we would also like to share our continued appreciation for the outstanding final report produced by the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) and their consultants regarding the Southern Maryland Transit Corridor Preservation Study. Our staff has worked closely with MTA and Prince George's County to ensure that we have the tools we need to bring high-capacity rapid transit service to Waldorf and White Plains, and preserve the right-of-way needed within the corridor. To codify this action, we have integrated the Study's preferred alignment into the Charles County Comprehensive Plan as well as the Waldorf Urban Redevelopment Corridor master plan.

Secretary Rahn  
March 22, 2016

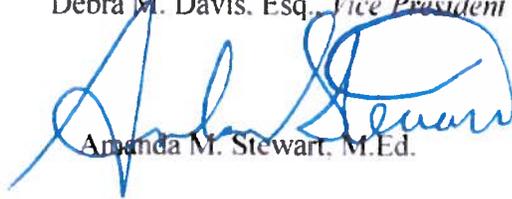
We thank you for your continued cooperation and support, and we look forward to working with you and your staff on these priorities. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Peter Aluotto, Director of the Department of Planning & Growth Management by calling (301) 645-0693, or by E-Mail to [AluottoP@CharlesCountyMD.gov](mailto:AluottoP@CharlesCountyMD.gov).

Very Truly,

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF  
CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND

  
Peter F. Murphy, *President*

  
Debra M. Davis, Esq., *Vice President*

  
Amanda M. Stewart, M.Ed.

  
Ken Robinson

  
Bobby Rucci

Attachment (1)

cc: Mr. Gregory Johnson, SHA  
Mr. Paul Comfort, MTA  
Mr. Glen Smith, MdTA  
Mr. John Hartline, Tri-County Council  
Mr. Michael Mallinoff, Charles County  
Mr. Peter Aluotto, Charles County  
Mr. Jason Groth, Charles County

Mr. Gregory Slater, SHA  
Mayor Roy Hale, Town of La Plata  
Mr. Daniel Mears, Town of La Plata  
Mayor Brandon Paulin, Town of Indian Head  
Mr. Ryan Hicks, Town of Indian Head  
Ms. Eileen Minnick, Charles County  
Mr. Jeffry Barnett, Charles County