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July 23, 2013

James T. Smith, Jr., Secretary of Transportation
Maryland Department of Transportation
P. O. Box 548
7201 Corporate Center Drive
Hanover, Maryland 21076

Re: Somerset County – Priority Letter for Recommended Transportation Improvements

Dear Secretary Smith:

Congratulations on your recent appointment as Maryland's Secretary of Transportation. Your background in local government makes you ideally suited to address transportation issues throughout the State, and we look forward to working with you.

Each year, the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) asks counties to submit letters prioritizing transportation projects for possible inclusion in the upcoming Consolidated Transportation Program prepared by MDOT.

In response to this request, the Somerset County Commissioners have met and prepared a list of proposed transportation improvements in the County for your consideration. We would be happy to meet with you and discuss these in further detail at your convenience. They are listed as follows:

ENHANCEMENTS

1. Westover to Crisfield Bike Trail (adjacent to MD 413)

Description:

This project consists of utilizing a 60 foot-wide right-of-way located between the County's regional recreational complex at Westover and extending to the outskirts of Crisfield for a bike trail. This State-owned right-of-way was formerly a rail line and is 13.5 miles in length. Once the trail approaches Crisfield, it would transition into a dedicated bike lane along MD 413.

Need:

This bike trail will encourage tourism and provide an economic benefit to local businesses, and will supplement the County's recreational opportunities. It can also be utilized as an educational resource by providing signage that details the historic importance of the railway as it was used extensively by the agricultural and seafood industries of the County in previous times.

Relationship to MTP Goals and Local Plans:

This project is identified for development in the County's 2012 Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan and therefore would be in accordance with that Plan. This project would meet a number of Maryland Transportation Plan (MTP) goals – in particular those that address Quality of Service by enhancing users' access to MDOT's transportation services and Environmental Stewardship by developing an initiative that protects a community's natural and historic resources.

2. Acceleration Lane Needed at U.S. Rte. 13 North/Jones Road Intersection:

Description:

Several years ago, the U.S. Route 13/Stockyard Road intersection in neighboring Wicomico County to the north was redesigned to restrict certain turning movements in order to improve safety. Part of this redesign caused traffic to be redirected from this intersection in Wicomico County to the U.S. Route 13/Jones Road intersection in Somerset County. As a result, an acceleration lane is needed on the west side of U.S. Route 13 North at Jones Road to accommodate traffic travelling south on U.S. Route 13 and making u-turns and attempting to merge on to U.S. Route 13 North.

Need:

This proposal would improve safety at the U.S. Route 13/Jones Road intersection.

Relationship to MTP Goals and Local Plans:

As noted above, the County's Plan is currently being updated. This project would meet the Maryland Transportation Plan (MTP) goal that addresses Safety and Security by potentially reducing collision and injury rates for motorized users.

3. Deceleration Lane Needed at MD 413 North at Marion:

Description:

There is no deceleration lane for vehicles travelling north on MD 413 to make a safe turn on to Tulls Corner Road. Given the speed limit along MD 413, a deceleration lane would be beneficial for safety reasons. The Commissioners recognize that the right-of-way width along this section of MD 413 is limited, and the SHA District Office made a choice to provide a dedicated left-turn lane at this intersection as opposed to providing the deceleration lane described here, as there was not enough ROW to do both. The Commissioners are not taking issue with this choice, only that perhaps at some future date perhaps the ROW can be increased to accommodate both improvements.

Need:

This proposal would improve safety at the MD 413/Tulls Corner Road intersection.

Relationship to MTP Goals and Local Plans:

This project would meet the Maryland Transportation Plan (MTP) goal that addresses Safety and Security by potentially reducing collision and injury rates for motorized users.

SYSTEM PRESERVATION

1. Repair of Railroad Crossings Countywide:

Description:

The Norfolk Southern railroad tracks extend along U.S. Rte. 13 from the County's north end to Pocomoke City in Worcester County on the southern end. The tracks cross State-maintained roads at several locations and are in need of repair. It is our understanding that Donnie Drewer, District Engineer, has been in contact with Norfolk Southern as it may be the railroad's responsibility to maintain these crossings.

Need:

As noted above, the railroad crossings along U.S. Route 13 are in need of repair.

Relationship to MTP Goals and Local Plans:

This project would meet the Maryland Transportation Plan (MTP) goal that addresses System Preservation and Performance by preserving assets and maximizing the efficient use of resources and infrastructure. Improvement of the crossings would also address the MTP goal of Safety and Security through the provision of transportation assets that maximize personal safety and security in all situations.

2. Widening of Deal Island Road (MD 363):

Description:

Deal Island Road (MD 363) extends from Princess Anne westward to the villages of Deal Island and Wenona located along the Chesapeake Bay. Its length is approximately 20 miles

and it serves as a collector route for residents traveling to Princess Anne and to other destinations via MD Route 13. This two lane road is narrow and although increasing its width in some places may be restricted by environmental factors, there are areas where widening is possible and would improve safety.

Need:

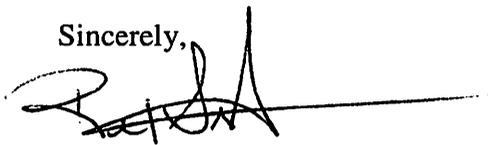
Where possible, the widening of Deal Island Road would improve the safety of travelers.

Relationship to MTP Goals and Local Plans:

This project would meet the Maryland Transportation Plan (MTP) goal that addresses Safety and Security by providing transportation assets that maximize personal safety and security in all situations.

Any assistance from the Maryland Department of Transportation towards the accomplishment of these improvements would be greatly appreciated. Should you need any additional information regarding these improvements, please feel free to contact Doug Taylor, our County Administrator at (410) 651-0320. Thank you for your attention, and again, we appreciate any consideration you can give to these projects.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rex Simpkins', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Rex Simpkins
President