



JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR.
County Executive



April 29, 2020

Honorable Gregory Slater, Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Center Drive
P.O. Box 548
Hanover, Maryland 21076

RE: MDOT FY 2021 – FY 2026 Consolidated Transportation Program
Baltimore County Requests

Dear Secretary Slater:

On behalf of the residents of Baltimore County, I wish to acknowledge the leadership and staff from the Maryland Department of Transportation for their continued consideration of our transportation priorities.

We in Baltimore County want to thank you for your support of multiple initiatives and projects that were included in last year's CTP request letter. First, we recognize you for allowing us to submit the \$1.65M Circulator Bus and Bus Facilities grant and for your letter of support. We also thank you for funding multiple bicycle and pedestrian projects through SHA grant programs located within the county. We appreciate your consideration of Baltimore County when deciding to choose TradePoint Atlantic as a site for piloting connected autonomous vehicles (CAVs). We thank you and your staff for repairing bridges that improved access to corridors for the Sparrows Point complex. Finally, we appreciate your commitment of funds to conduct an impact study related to creation of mobility hubs in Baltimore County. These mobility hubs will potentially provide centralized locations for buses, provide additional information to riders, and enhance amenities for operators, including restrooms.

As you know, Baltimore County is the third most populated jurisdiction within the State of Maryland. The Baltimore metropolitan region is now the 9th most congested in the United States.¹ This congestion is already having a detrimental effect on the growth of our local economy, and without

¹ Source: <https://inrix.com/scorecard/>

additional investment and innovation, the traffic congestion and its negative impacts on our economy will only worsen over time. We are in dire need of a comprehensive regional transit system, bolstered by an increased investment in our Locally Operated Transit System that matches the levels of similar sized counties within our State². These investments should account for all modes as well as future capital and programmatic transportation innovation that will strengthen our local and regional economy by accommodating well-planned, sustainable future growth in a safe and reliable manner.

Our Administration is actively committed to implementing multi modal transportation initiatives, and we have made transportation planning and investments a top priority. We have appointed a Deputy Director for Transportation position within our Department of Public Works (DPW). We have a lead transportation planner and support staff for multi-modal planning initiatives which will incubate a high-functioning transportation planning unit. We have begun the July 1, 2020 transition of CountyRide, the County's longstanding but limited local transit system from the Baltimore County Department of Aging to DPW. With the support and guidance of our office, this unit is also actively engaging with state and regional entities as we embark on the mission of propagating a regional approach to transportation.

We have grown our local transit (LOTS) system by creating a Towson Circulator line as well as initiating partnerships for the potential of other future microtransit lines; supporting connectivity between the East, West and Central portions of the County and developing a transit oriented toolbox which fosters "last mile" connectivity at existing and future planned employment and commuter hubs. We also have included significant funding in our CIP for pedestrian and bike project initiatives. Finally, as noted in greater detail below, one of our top priorities is a new Interchange at I-795 and Dolfield Boulevard. This has been a longstanding request by the County, and I look forward to working with you to move this forward.

To meet these and other transportation goals, I am requesting the following transportation priorities be considered as part of Maryland's FY 2021 – FY 2026 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP).

Transit Initiatives

- **Commuter Mass Transit Alternatives (Baltimore Region) - Comprehensive Plan** We request that the MDOT fund the completion of a comprehensive plan for the Greater Baltimore region. We envision a plan that connects Baltimore County across jurisdictional lines, and that cuts commute times while providing safe, reliable and efficient transportation facilities for our region's over 2,000,000 residents. Such a plan can connect resident to their jobs and their families in the world class manner we all agree they deserve. The targeted focus should be on the bus routes and rail services with a heightened emphasis on both capital, policy, and programmatic initiatives. This should include the study of potential corridors which provide connectivity for the 360,000 residents that commute within the County as well as the corridors which neighboring counties utilize to access job locations within our community.

² In a comparison of 2019 LOTS funding, Baltimore County received zero operating dollars and half as much capital funding as Anne Arundel County, a smaller jurisdiction.

- **Circulators & Microtransit** - We request that the MDOT provide supplemental capital and operational funding for the growth of our LOTS system, including but not limited to, expansion of services into fixed route lines within the Towson area of Baltimore County. The County has included funding in our budget for transit initiatives. We will support applications for funding to add transit to Baltimore County and continue to partner with MDOT to apply for additional capital funding from FTA and other entities.
- **LOTS Facilities** - We request that the MDOT provide supplemental capital funds and land for a bus operations facility and bus equipment for the expansion of Baltimore County's transit operations to accommodate fixed route service and to expand our human services capabilities. This would allow us to optimize the hours and days when this service is available for communities with limited mobility. We ask that you consider the transfer of sale of the SHA property on Falls Road for a possible hub for transportation and public safety uses.
- **Area Transit Circulator Studies** - We request that the MDOT provide planning funds for the assessment of the feasibility and transit service route alternatives for Catonsville, White Marsh, Middle River, Owings Mills, and Sparrows Point Circulator fixed route, CAV and Microtransit lines.
- **Central Maryland Regional Transit Plan** – We encourage continued work to advance detailed and specific corridor studies on the early priority corridors identified in the final RTP when it is published. We look forward to future regular engagement with County staff to implement the RTP and the strategic actions identified in the plan.

Multimodal Planning Initiatives

- **Creation of Multi-Modal Hubs, Mobility On Demand Kiosks, & Applications** - We appreciate a funding commitment by the State to study the potential for mobility hubs in our County and request that the MDOT provide capital funds for the implementation of mobility hubs throughout Baltimore County at transit hubs and transit oriented developments (TOD) with linkages to applications for transit, bicycle, EV-charging, shared ride, e-bikes/scooters, and other multi-modal elements.
- **Bicycle & Pedestrian Initiatives** - We request State support of the County's bicycle and pedestrian project initiatives. Baltimore County committed \$1.8 million dollars for bicycle and pedestrian projects in our multi-year CIP. We have committed matching funds in our applications for the following MDOT Bikeways grants: Bloomsbury Ave Crossing (Catonsville); Northeast Trail (Perry Hall); and Osler Drive (Towson) as well as a Safe Routes to School grant in the Sparrows Point area for the elementary, middle and high schools. The County has committed resources for design of all four projects by the Fall of 2020 and will pursue additional capital funding for projects that were not funded during last year's grant cycle.

Economic Development Related Improvements

- **(Owings Mills) Northwest Expressway (I-795) at Dolfield Boulevard Interchange** Since 2007, the County has supported State funding for improvements to the Northwest Expressway and it remains a top County priority due to the continuous growth and economic development in the area. We again request funding of the long-planned interchange on Northwest Expressway (I-795) at Dolfield Boulevard, as it will alleviate traffic congestion due to increased economic development in the area associated with the Metro Center transit-oriented development (TOD) and Foundry Row (Wegmans) retail and office center. Baltimore County previously has demonstrated its support by providing \$1.5M in planning and property acquisition money to the State for the interchange, as well as completion of the \$6M Dolfield Boulevard improvements. This priority has the support of the Owings Mills Corporate Roundtable, comprised of the region's major employers, including CareFirst and T. Rowe Price, as well as the developers of major job producing projects situated on Red Run Boulevard and Dolfield Boulevard. I appreciate our recent communication regarding this project and look forward to working with Acting SHA Administrator Tim Smith on options.
- **(Sparrows Point) Full interchange at I-695 and Exit 44 (Broening Highway)** - Baltimore County is excited that its vision for the future of Sparrows Point is being embraced by Trade Point Atlantic. The plan incorporates the highest and best use of this unique asset: 3,100 acres of industrial zoned land, with access to deep water port channels, two interstate highways and two rail lines. We once again urge the State to invest in certain infrastructure improvements to facilitate implementation of the plan. The construction of a full interchange at I-695 and Exit 44 (Broening Highway) would maximize the potential redevelopment activities at Trade Point Atlantic, would allow for truck avoidance of the toll plaza, and would reduce truck traffic impacting residential communities on Dundalk Avenue and Holabird Avenue. Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC) has completed a point-to-point study for this project location.
- **TOD at MARC Train Station/Martin State Airport** - We request that the State approve the area surrounded by Martin State Airport and the Middle River MARC Train Station as a transit-oriented development designation. This would stimulate the economy in this growing area of the County, creating retail, residential and transportation opportunities.. Since last fall, the County has submitted a requested letter clarifying zoning issues that were raised at the 2019 Tour meeting. We await department action on this request, which would create a second TOD in our jurisdiction. Currently, Owings Mills Town Centre is the County's sole transit-oriented development. We also request funds for the assessment and implementation of pedestrian friendly connectivity with associated improvements for Martin State Airport and the surrounding area.
- **(Catonsville) Wilkens Ave MD-372 and Kenwood Ave at I-695 Interchange Exit 12 (inner Loop)** - We request intersection improvements at MD-372 and Kenwood Avenue and along Kenwood Avenue to the NB Beltway on-ramp. These improvements would improve safety and road capacity, and would have a significant impact on traffic in the vicinity. The area has seen a significant increase in background traffic over the past 5 years from UMBC and business

growth and development/redevelopment activities in the area. These road improvements would spur ongoing growth in the area and provide positive economic impact.

- **(White Marsh/Middle River) Philadelphia Road (MD-7) Improvements and MD-7 at MD-43 Interchange ramp addition** - We request funding for roadway improvements on Philadelphia Road (MD-7) including, widening and raising of the road from Mohrs Lane to Campbell Boulevard and an on-ramp from Philadelphia Road (MD-7) to eastbound White Marsh Boulevard (MD-43). This roadway improvement will increase traffic capacity and roadway safety for the future Campbell Boulevard extension. This future connection would not only provide another important link between MD-43 corridor and White Marsh Town Center in the White Marsh Growth area, but it would also enhance Pulaski Highway as a location for new employment-related development. Currently, there is no east- west access from Pulaski Highway between Middle River Road and MD-43

Road/ Pedestrian Safety and Traffic Capacity Improvements

- **(Randallstown) Liberty Road MD-26 Corridor improvements** - Liberty Road is a critical artery serving the west side of the County. The County has a renewed interest in promoting economic development and investment in this corridor, and our Department of Planning led a series of engagement sessions in conjunction with county and state partners earlier this year to prioritize projects based on community feedback. Among the top 10 concerns raised by the community, traffic congestion ranked second, with improvements to signal timing to improve rush hour traffic flow, as the top project to pursue. We appreciate that SHA has already acknowledged the importance of the Liberty Road corridor by agreeing to provide signal upgrades from Kelox Road to Offutt Road. We are requesting additional coordination to develop a traffic impact study and/or roadway congestion index (RCI) and other improvements at transit stops and along sidewalks to enhance safety and amenities.. These activities will be outlined in the action plan for the Liberty Road Corridor which involves assistance from MDOT.
- **(Hunt Valley) Realignment of MD-145 Ashland/Paper Mill Road** - With increased redevelopment activity in the area and longstanding peak hour traffic delays, the State should consider realigning Ashland Road from its current intersection with York Road to be across from Shawan Road to reduce peak hour delays and improve safety.
- **(Hunt Valley) MD-45 York Road realignment- Shawan to Phoenix** - There have been long standing safety concerns with the two lane curved section of York road between Shawan road and Phoenix road. The State should consider a feasibility study of the realignment and widening of road in this area for increased capacity and safety, and evaluate possible developer participation in the study.
- **(Overlea) Kenwood Avenue (MD -588) roadway improvements (Lillian Holt to Hazelwood)** - The County portion of Kenwood Avenue has been completed for many years. The State's portion of Kenwood Avenue has not been completed. Completion of Kenwood

Avenue improvements, including sidewalks, would enhance pedestrian safety for Overlea High School.

- **(Pikesville) Reisterstown Road (MD-140) roadway improvements (Old Court Road to Sudbrook)** - The State portion of Reisterstown Road requires additional study and re-design. Baltimore County completed a planning study of the area but a corridor segment analysis and redesign of this road segment is required. Community and business groups have advocated to the County for many years to improve this roadway segment and invested private funds into developing potential solutions.

Community Development/ Streetscape Improvements

- Finally, we understand that the State is no longer funding local road streetscape projects. In Baltimore County, there are several potential main street projects on State roads that merit investment including Eastern Avenue (MD-150) in Essex, Reisterstown Road (MD-140) in Reisterstown, (MD-144) Frederick Road in Catonsville. These investments could inject new opportunities for older business communities should the State decide to refund this type of project. We ask for a chance to partner and identify suitable projects.

In conclusion thank you for this opportunity to present Baltimore County's transportation priorities in the FY 2021 – FY 2026 CTP. We look forward to increased opportunities for partnership and collaboration as we work together to solve our collective transportation challenges.

Sincerely,



John A. Olszewski, Jr.
Baltimore County Executive

JAO:SAW

cc: Honorable Lawrence J. Hogan, Governor
Honorable Bill Ferguson, President of the Senate
Honorable Adrienne Jones, Speaker of the House
Honorable Chairs and Members of the Baltimore County Senate and House Delegations
Honorable Chair and Members of the Baltimore County Council
Stacy L. Rodgers, Administrative Officer
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