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April 7, 2020

Gregory Slater, 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 Slater:

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. Both the City of Crisfield and the Town of Princess Anne were given the opportunity for input. We would be happy to discuss these with you and your staff in further detail during the Annual Tour, or at any other time 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 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 (Crisfield Highway). The first phase of this project located between Crisfield and Marion is currently under construction with completion anticipated later this year. We would like the second phase of this project located between Marion and Westover to be designed so construction can be scheduled soon after.

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 days gone by.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

This project is identified for development in the County's 2017 Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan. In addition to complying with that Plan's recommendations, 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. Deceleration Lane Needed at MD 413 South at Westover:

Description:

No deceleration lane exists for vehicles travelling south on MD 413 (Crisfield Highway) to make a safe turn onto MD 361 (Fairmount Road). Considering the speed limit on MD 413, a deceleration lane would provide improved safety at this intersection. Additional right-of-way may be needed to construct this lane.

Need:

This deceleration lane would improve safety at the MD 413/MD 361 intersection.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

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

3. Widening of Intersection at MD 388/MD 675:

Description:

Located within the Town of Princess Anne, this intersection has seen a significant increase in truck traffic on MD 388.

Need:

The widening of MD 388 (West Post Office Road) at its intersection with MD 675 (Somerset Avenue) will allow for safer ingress and egress of trucks. This proposal would improve safety at this intersection.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

This project would meet the MTP goal that addresses Safety and Security by improving safety at this intersection.

4. Acceleration Lane Needed at U.S. 13 North/MD 667:

Description:

There is no acceleration lane for vehicles travelling east on MD 667 (Rehobeth Road) to make a safe left turn onto U.S. 13 (Ocean Highway) heading north. Given the speed limit along U.S. 13, an acceleration lane would allow vehicles to merge into the flow of traffic and improve the safety of the intersection. No additional right-of-way will be needed to construct this lane.

Need:

This acceleration lane would improve safety at the U.S. 13/MD 667 intersection.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

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.

5. Improved Vehicular Access at U.S. 13 North/Stewart Neck Road:

Description:

Currently the intersection of U.S. 13 (Ocean Highway) and Stewart Neck Road partially located within the Town of Princess Anne is un-signalized with minimal staging area for large vehicles crossing to/from Stewart Neck Road. Large trucks with trailers often extend into U.S. 13 blocking traffic or are forced to roll through the stop sign causing a traffic violation. A preliminary engineering study would be needed for this project.

Need:

Given the extensive agricultural use in this region, the unique geometry of this intersection and the volume of traffic on U.S. 13, safety improvements are needed.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

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

6. Dualization of MD Route 413:

Description:

MD 413 (Crisfield Highway) is the main access to Crisfield and consists of a single lane north and south-bound for its entire length of approximately 15 miles. For safety reasons and to accommodate future growth, dualization is recommended. A preliminary engineering study would be needed for this project.

Need:

Given the length of this road and because it's a direct connection between Crisfield and U.S. Route 13, traffic is fairly heavy at times. A number of accidents have occurred on this road which would be avoided if dualization were to occur.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

This project would improve safety and over time would also increase capacity as future growth occurs.

SYSTEM PRESERVATION

1. Widening of Roadway along MD 363:

Description:

MD 363 (Deal Island Road) 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 U.S. 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. A preliminary engineering study would be needed for this project.

Need:

Where possible, the widening of MD 363 would improve the safety of travelers.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

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

2. Repair of Shoulder along MD 627:

Description:

MD 627 (Oriole Road) is in need of shoulder repair due to severe drop-offs from the travel portion of the road to virtually a non-existent shoulder.

Need:

Shoulder repairs along MD 627 would improve the safety of both motorists and cyclists.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

This project would meet the MTP goal that addresses Safety and Security by potentially reducing collision and injury rates for vehicle and bicycle users.

3. Signalization of Railroad Crossings Countywide:

Description:

The Delmarva Central Railroad tracks extend along U.S. Route 13 from the County's north end near the Village of Eden to the County's south end near Pocomoke City. Railroad crossings at the state highways are signalized, but need to be at the county roads as well. Somerset County DPW staff met with SHA Office of Traffic Safety staff on September 18, 2017 to conduct a site visit at these crossings. Action items established and improvements were prioritized.

Need:

Improvements including signalization to railroad crossings at county roads are needed.

Relationship to MTP Goals and Local Plans:

This project would meet the MTP goal that addresses Safety and Security by improving safety at numerous railroad crossings.

4. Selective Clearing along U.S. Route 13:

Description:

U.S. Route 13 experienced significant damage from recent winter storms leaving limbs and downed trees within the roadway and shoulders. Selective clearing including trimming limbs and/or removal of dead trees should occur within the median and roadside to reduce detrimental impacts from future storms on this critically important interstate highway. A portion of this project was recently completed within the median along the northbound lanes and it is imperative to complete this entire project.

Need:

Selective clearing along U.S. Route 13 would improve the safety of hundreds of thousands of motorists and cyclists. It may reduce impacts to emergency response, commerce and tourism.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

This project would meet the MTP goal that addresses Safety and Security by reducing accidents related to downed trees or impacts to emergency response. In addition this project would address Community Vitality by supporting businesses throughout Somerset County.

This project would also meet the MTP goal of Economic Prosperity by improving the movement of people and goods that support the Lower Eastern Shore Counties.

MAINTENANCE TRANSFERS

1. Extend State Maintenance of MD 361 to the end of Rumbley Road

Description:

MD 361 (Fairmount Road) is currently maintained by SHA to Clinton Bozman Road. The project would extend state maintenance of this highway to the end of Rumbley Road in the Village of Rumbley. The existing County right-of-way would need to be deeded to the State of Maryland.

Need:

Improved access would be provided to the local fire department (Fairmount VFD), residences, businesses and marina (Goose Creek). This would relieve Somerset County of the responsibility of maintaining a portion of the highway system and allow County efforts to be focused on the local road system.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

This project would meet the Maryland Transportation Plan (MTP) goal that addresses Community Vitality by improving the movement of people and goods that support the Village of Fairmount, the Village of Rumbley and the Village of Frenchtown. This project would also meet the MTP goal of Economic Prosperity by supporting the local watermen and farmers by improving transportation of their products to the markets.

2. Formalize State Maintenance of College Backbone Road on the Campus of UMES

Description:

The portion of College Backbone Road within the campus of UMES is currently maintained by SHA, but owned by Somerset County. The project would formalize state maintenance of this highway up to the Maryland Fire & Rescue Institute driveway. The existing County right-of-way would need to be deeded to the State of Maryland.

Need:

Improved access would be provided to the University of Maryland Eastern Shore campus as well as the Maryland Fire & Rescue Institute. This would relieve Somerset County of the responsibility of maintaining a portion of the highway system and allow County efforts to be focused on the local road system.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

This project would meet the Maryland Transportation Plan (MTP) goal that addresses Community Vitality by improving the movement of people and goods that support the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) and the Maryland Fire & Rescue Institute. This project would also meet the MTP goal of Economic Prosperity by supporting the educational benefits provided by UMES which are essential to a diverse and competitive workforce.

QUALITY OF SERVICE

1. Smith Island Passenger Ferry

Description:

Currently residents and visitors to Smith Island are served by private passenger ferries operated by several independent local boat captains. The "Smith Island Vision Plan" identified a reliable and sustainable transportation system that meets the needs of residents and tourists as one of the Plan's five overall goals. A study funded by the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) was recently performed to determine the most feasible way to develop an effective ferry system while incorporating the existing system. Ridership numbers have been collected, Smith Island United is willing to coordinate this effort and the County Tourism Board has the expertise to promote tourism. There is interest in implementing a pilot program that allows the individual operators to work collaboratively in providing improved ferry service. An implementation plan needs to be established to determine the number of daily trips, arrival/departure times, days/months of operation, standard operating procedures and marketing plan for this ferry service.

Need:

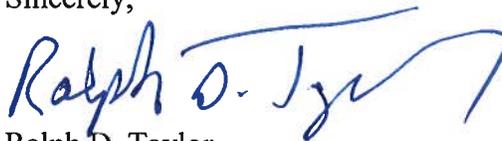
Creation of an implementation plan is needed to establish a pilot program for an effective ferry system for Smith Island.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

This project would meet the MTP goal that addresses Quality of Service by providing an improved passenger ferry system.

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 me at (410) 651-0320. Thank you for your attention, and again, we appreciate any consideration you can give to these projects.

Sincerely,



Ralph D. Taylor
County Administrator

Cc: Jay Meredith, District 1 Engineer, SHA
Stephen Miller, Regional Planner, SHA