



Charles County Commissioners

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May 5, 2011

The Honorable Beverley K. Swaim-Staley
Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Center Drive
P.O. Box 548, Mail Stop 200
Hanover, MD 21076

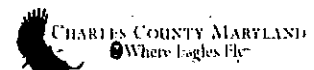
Dear Secretary Swaim-Staley:

We appreciate the opportunity to present Charles County's transportation priorities for fiscal year 2012, in anticipation of our annual tour meeting with you this fall. During the past year we have been working closely with the Maryland Department of Transportation and your modal administrations, and with our elected colleagues from neighboring jurisdictions through the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, to address our significant regional priorities.

Our overall priorities remain the same as in the past years, however, we have re-prioritized these projects based on the current local and regional needs. The Charles County Commissioners conducted a comprehensive review of our transportation needs, resulting in the following transportation priorities:

- Accelerated Mass Transit Improvements in the U.S. 301/MD 5 corridor, progressing from the currently defined transit corridor alignment and preservation of right-of-way, to implementation of feasible high-capacity transit options such as Bus Rapid Transit (exclusive bus lanes and grade separation) or Light Rail Transit, and culminating in the establishment of a fixed-rail transit system from Waldorf-White Plains to the Branch Avenue Metrorail Station in Prince George's County.
- Construction of a controlled access highway option for US 301, which balances the needs of the residential and business communities, while minimizing the impacts to cultural, social, and natural resources.

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The County Commissioners also continue to coordinate our local priority transportation projects with the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland to develop our regional priorities, consistent with the Commission to Study Southern Maryland Transportation Needs.

In addition to our top priorities, Charles County continues to explore and evaluate additional and complimentary transit alternatives to meet our commuter needs. As an example, we are interested in further exploring MARC Train Service along the Conrail (CSX) rail line from Waldorf to Bowie. Based on the benefits outlined in the Southern Maryland Commuter Rail Service Feasibility Study (2009), we would like to investigate this concept further to determine if it meets our local and regional needs.

We believe that high-capacity transit service to the Washington D.C. metropolitan area is essential to preserving highway capacity in the region and bringing our goals of transit oriented development to fruition. It is also essential that we continue to preserve and plan for future highway capacity as transit will not serve all travelers within our County and Southern Maryland who do not have destinations served by fixed route transit.

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 and sub-area plans. We request your commitment to these transportation system improvements.

The Charles County Commissioners support a comprehensive approach that integrates transportation and land use policy. Through the implementation of the 2006 Comprehensive Plan and the Waldorf Sub-Area Plan, the County has made major strides to encourage higher density, transit-oriented, pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use development in the urban core of the Development District that will enable us to focus future growth in Waldorf, and reduce sprawl and suburban development pressures in the County's rural areas. These policies will also support future investment in high capacity public transit. Our planned residential and commercial development densities have been designed to support future rail transit, as well as other alternative modes, including pedestrians and bicycles.

The County has completed the Waldorf Urban Design Study which was brought to fruition through the adoption of high-density, mixed use zoning on April 13, 2010. The adopted zoning and design guidelines provide the implementation tools necessary to accomplish these land use objectives. 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 closing, we would also like to share our continued appreciation for the outstanding study document produced by the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) and their consultants regarding for the Southern Maryland Transit Corridor Preservation Study. Our staff has worked closely with MTA to ensure that we have the tools we need to bring high capacity public transit to Waldorf-White Plains, and preserve the land needed to the corridor. We plan to integrate the Study's preferred alignment corridor into our Comprehensive Plan Update, scheduled for 2012.

Secretary Swaim-Staley
May 5, 2011
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We thank you for your continued cooperation and support, and we look forward to working with you and your staff. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Roy E. Hancock, Acting Director of the Department of Planning & Growth Management, at 301-645-0324, or by E-Mail to hancockr@charlescounty.org.

Very Truly,

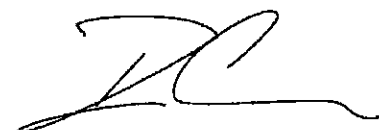
CHARLES COUNTY DELEGATION
TO THE MARYLAND GENERAL
ASSEMBLY

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF CHARLES COUNTY
MARYLAND

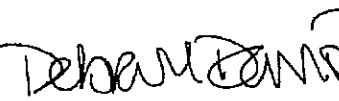
Thomas M. Middleton
Senator, District 28


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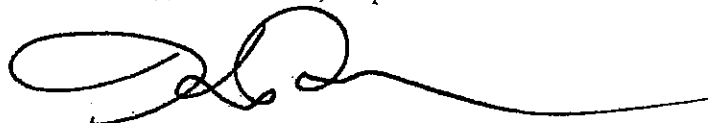
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Attachment

cc: Mr. Neil Pedersen, SHA
Mr. Paul J. Wiedefeld, MTA
Mr. Glen Smith, MdTA
Mr. Wayne Clark, Tri-County Council
Dr. Rebecca Bridgett, Charles County
Mr. Roy Hancock, Charles County

Mayor Roy Hale, Town of La Plata
Mr. Daniel Mears, Town of La Plata
Mayor Edward Rice, Town of Indian Head
Mr. Ryan Hicks, Town of Indian Head
Mr. Jeffrey Barnett, Charles County
Mr. Jason Groth, Charles County

ATTACHMENT 1

Additional Priority Transportation Improvement Projects

The following projects are Charles County's additional transportation priorities listed by state modal administration and project type. These projects are *not* listed in a priority order, and are all considered to have a significant contribution to either our local or regional transportation infrastructure.

STATE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

Project Planning Priorities

1. Initiate a project planning study for the Maryland Route 6 Connector in the Town of La Plata, now that SHA has completed its feasibility study for this project. This roadway would connect existing MD 6 at Willow Lane to U.S. 301, providing additional congestion relief within the Town of La Plata. This project is identified in the U.S. 301 Transportation Study Task Force's Final Report, supported by the U.S. 301 Policy Oversight Committee and included in the ongoing U.S. 301 South Corridor Study. The Maryland Route 6 Connector project has been placed as the County's top project planning study with the understanding that the U.S. Route 301 Waldorf Transportation Project (Waldorf Upgrade/Bypass), is already funded and included in the CTP program.
2. In coordination with Calvert County, we seek the widening of MD 231 to ease increasing levels of congestion. The need for this project is identified as a recommended State highway project in the County's 2006 Comprehensive Plan (Page 5-18). Also, the MD 231 project is on the regional transportation priority list prepared by the Regional Infrastructure Advisory Committee of the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland. We understand that MD 231 is in the National Highway System. It is the only highway linking Charles County with Calvert County.
3. One of the implementation strategies for the 2001 Bryans Road/Indian Head Sub-Area Plan is the development of a new "Town Common" in the vicinity of MD Route 227 and Matthews Road to serve as the centerpiece of a proposed pedestrian-friendly town center for the Bryans Road community. Additional improvements include streetscape enhancements to MD Route 210 within the proposed Town Center. The County is seeking assistance with planning and implementation for this project, both in terms of technical design assistance and project funding.

SHA District 5 Priorities

4. Complete planning and design for a streetscape on MD 5 Business in Hughesville, inside the limits of the Hughesville Bypass. The County has completed a Revitalization Plan for the Village of Hughesville and the streetscape is a key element of the revitalization strategy. This streetscape will enhance the revitalization of the village and provide roadway and pedestrian enhancements. As part of this project, or as a separate project, the County may seek the consideration of a redesign of the intersections of the MD 5 (Hughesville Bypass) with Gallant Green Road and with MD 5 Business.
5. Traffic congestion along Leonardtown Road (MD Business Route 5) between U.S. Route 301 and Post Office Road continues to inhibit the efficient movement of vehicles through this section of highway. Gridlock conditions occur during peak hours and weekends in this area. We are currently working with Mr. Dennis German and his project team for a Community Enhancement project along MD 5 Business between US 301 and the Conrail right-of-way. This project includes the addition of a

turn lane from west-bound MD 5 Business onto northbound Old Washington Road. We understand that SHA is pursuing land acquisition to provide a much needed right turn lane and further alleviate the traffic congestion at this intersection. We appreciate SHA's assistance as we revitalize and improve this corridor of Waldorf.

6. An additional travel lane is needed, in each direction, to relieve increasing congestion along U.S. 301 from south of Smallwood Drive to south of MD 227. The taper of the 6-lane section of U.S. 301 to 4 lanes south of Smallwood Drive creates increasing back-ups during peak and certain off-peak hours. A continued effort to monitor and evaluate the synchronization of the four U.S. 301 traffic signals in White Plains may also reduce congestion and keep traffic flowing. These intersections are Billingsley Road, DeMarr Road, Theodore Green Boulevard, and MD 227.

MARYLAND TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (MdTA)

7. An expansion of the Governor Harry Nice Bridge to 4 lanes, consistent with the southbound and northbound approaches of U.S. 301 to the bridge, is necessary to reduce traffic congestion. This bridge is also a major limiting factor in the path of evacuation from Washington D.C. to points south. Should a natural disaster or an issue of Homeland Security arise, this bridge would create a major bottleneck, with the current two-lane capacity limitation. The County's 2006 Comprehensive Plan recommends increasing the capacity of the bridge to address this issue. Increased traffic capacity of the bridge would improve traffic flow, alleviate congestion, and provide an evacuation route of greater capacity.

We genuinely appreciate all of the coordination efforts by the Maryland Transportation Authority (MdTA) staff through the Project Planning Phase and the NEPA process for the bridge improvements. While we understand that the project is not funded beyond Project Planning at this time, we believe the MdTA should continue to resolve right-of-way issues in cooperation with the State of Virginia, King George County, and the United States Navy, and accelerate the design and construction of the new bridge structure.

MARYLAND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION

8. We request funding to expand VanGO service to earlier morning and later evening hours to improve connectivity to jobs and commuter bus services as our customers have requested.
9. We request funding to expand VanGo service allowing limited operations on Sundays. The County receives requests for this service from employers to enable their employees the opportunity to travel to and from work on Sundays.
10. We request funding to expand VanGO operations to allow establishment of a new route linking Charles County to Brandywine Crossing just into Prince Georges County then linking to the Branch Avenue Metrorail Station. This is a much needed service to provide jobs access to the rapidly developing Brandywine Crossing and reverse commutes into Charles County.
11. Provide funding for new service in the Indian Head/Bryans Road area. Additional service frequency and coverage is required to minimize ride durations and make public transit a feasible alternative for individuals trying to obtain and maintain employment.
12. Continue to implement the recommendations of the "MD 5/ US301/ MD228 Corridors Park and Ride Feasibility Study-Site Identification Report," October 2001. This report identifies locations for new park and ride facilities. New facilities in proximity to proposed transit stations and existing rail lines

within Charles County are necessary to meet the growing demand for VanGO and commuter bus service parking. In an effort to secure additional Park and Ride Facilities, Charles County is working with developers to secure additional Park and Ride lots through the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Zone in the northern portion of Waldorf, fronting US 301. A portion of this site may also serve as a future light rail station.

Charles County eagerly anticipates the construction of the MD 925 (Old Washington Road)/Smallwood Drive Park and Ride facility to alleviate overcrowded conditions at the US 301/Smallwood Drive Park and Ride lot. In addition to this planned new facility, the County continues to seek additional Park and Ride facilities to accommodate our growing number of commuter bus riders, as well as potential future rail station locations. As the fastest growing commuter bus system in the State, and realizing the escalating price of fuel, we continue to seek additional Park and Ride lots to facilitate the growth of this vital transit service.

13. As a result of the growth of the MTA Commuter Bus System and the associated issues raised by the riders, the Charles County Commissioners formed a Commuter Bus Advisory Group in early 2007. The Advisory Group conducted a bus rider survey of all bus routes in Southern Maryland to identify and evaluate the needs and concerns of passengers utilizing the service. Based on the overwhelming response to the survey, the predominant concern was the need for more commuter bus services, including more buses, more trips per day, and an expansion of the routes. On October 2nd 2008, the Advisory Group presented the final report to the Charles County Commissioners, including a series of recommended improvements and expansions. The Commissioners forwarded the report to MTA in October 2008, in an effort to work cooperatively with MTA to enhance this rapidly growing service, and promote transit services through our forthcoming land use policies that seek to increase density in the urban core of Waldorf.
14. Charles County also seeks accelerated implementation of MTA's "Transit Service Staging Plan," the identification of a transit alignment in the U.S. 301/MD 5 corridor, and the preservation of right-of-way in the defined transit corridor. The Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, the Commission to Study Southern Maryland Transportation Needs, the Prince George's County Council, and the Boards of County Commissioners of the three Southern Maryland counties have all endorsed the accelerated implementation of high-capacity transit services in the U.S. 301/MD 5 corridor, from White Plains to the Branch Avenue Metrorail Station. The Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland has identified this project as a top regional priority. We support light rail transit as a long-standing priority of the County and the region, and look forward to working with MTA to implement transit solutions for Charles County and Southern Maryland.

Our staff worked closely with MTA and their consultants to complete the Transit Corridor Preservation Study to identify an alignment corridor for a light rail service from the Branch Avenue Metro Station (Green Line) to Waldorf and White Plains. As a corridor has been recommended in the Study document, we are now seeking the funding to complete Project Planning and the associated NEPA study to formally select an alignment through a Record of Decision. We look forward to working with MTA to implement the long term transit solutions for Charles County and the Southern Maryland Region. We further support light rail as a long-standing project of interest for the County and the region.