

CITY OF BALTIMORE

BRANDON M. SCOTT, Mayor



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

100 Holliday Street, Rm 250
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

July 21, 2021

The Honorable Gregory Slater
Office of the Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Center Drive
Hanover, MD 21076

Dear Secretary Slater:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit the City of Baltimore's transportation priorities for inclusion in the Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) on April 28, 2021. We are resolved to partnering with the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to meet my Administration's commitment to: increase access to public transportation; advance the implementation of our innovative, comprehensive complete streets ordinance; and connect City residents with major employers across the region.

As an accompaniment to the second priority of "Fund and Prioritize Complete, Accessible, and Safe Streets Improvements" in our 2021 priority letter, Baltimore City is seeking the state transit-oriented development (TOD) designation for the Westport redevelopment project.

Westport transit-oriented development (TOD) designation

The Westport TOD's purpose is to bring \$250 million in private development and investment to an opportunity zone, creating a mixed-use center of jobs, housing, and new public parkland on a currently-vacant waterfront property, adjacent to the Maryland Transit Authority's (MTA) Westport station. This development will increase ridership and transportation options in its vicinity through station access improvements, road safety upgrades, and the building of a half-mile of the Greenway Trail Network mentioned in my April 28th priority letter. Please see the attached exhibit A for a map of the project location.

The project meets the goals of the Maryland Transportation Plan and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan by addressing the existing road conditions first. Kloman Street, the public access road, does not have sidewalks or curbs for the protection of Baltimore's most vulnerable users looking to access the light rail. This project would add them moving towards a safe, secure, and resilient transportation system. Additionally, three of the Kloman Street intersections that cross CSX and MTA lines will be improved to prioritize safety and the efficient transport of goods and people by adding automatic gates. The road widths will be widened to accommodate proper emergency access and to meet the potential transit needs of the future as a cohesive, multimodal transportation hub. The Baltimore City Department of Transportation (BCDOT) is ready to support the state in attaining this.

As I mentioned before, the Greenway Trail Network transects this TOD project, making it truly an opportunity to be a modernized, multimodal transportation system carrying commuters, recreational cyclists, park users, and tourists. The Greenway Trail is planned as a world-renown opportunity for outdoor education and eco-tourism, providing a unique experience to encounter the urban habitat's natural edge, that is rare in Baltimore and most U.S. cities, but much sought-after. This ecological draw will leverage economic growth by being connected to downtown by the light rail system.

The Westport light rail station does not currently have visible light rail signage or Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) access on the east side of the station. Incorporating these elements will assist in the quality and efficiency of the transportation system to enhance the customer experience. Proper signage and ramping will increase station visibility and the ease of use for passengers bringing bikes, stroller, or walking aids. Other multimodal enhancements being considered are directional signs with distances, bicycle parking, and a bike repair station to encourage transportation choice and options. Residents and visitors will have the choice of biking, using the train or bus, and riding in a single-occupancy vehicle more sparingly, reducing the congestion and the consumption of fossil fuels given the transportation choice and level of connection options at this site.

The construction of 140,000 square feet of commercial and 1,500 homes worth of private investment will generate \$550 million of new tax-base – and with it, transit-use generation. This project will make the Westport station more efficient, which is a sustainable use of existing infrastructure the state already owns and operates. Instead of proposing an infrastructure extension, the Westport TOD is minimizing impacts to the natural, historical, and cultural environment. This is extremely crucial given the proximity to the Chesapeake Bay. As a waterfront property on the Middle Branch of the Patapsco River, the entire project is within the Chesapeake Bay critical area program. The approach for the development is to eliminate as much impervious area as possible and replace it with green space for natural infiltration. Through a balance of public and private partnership, 14 acres of Middle Branch master plan park land will be constructed and maintained in perpetuity through a community association and board, demonstrating fiscal responsibility.

In terms of Baltimore City's transportation priorities, four of the 2021 project requests manifest within the Westport TOD project: The Greenway Trail Network, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Infrastructure, Transit Flow and Access Improvements, and Vision Zero Safety Infrastructure. The site is compatible with the underlying land use zoning of TOD-4 which encourages mixed land uses, increased density around transit stations, integrated open space, and the improved quality of walking and biking as transportation options. The Planning Department in conjunction with other city agencies consider TOD projects to have economic efficacy and growth, transportation choices, efficient land use, and neighborhood benefit. The Westport project meets these guiding objectives.

My Administration is confident in the developer's current pursuit of economic and community development that strengthen the connection to transit and integrates with the surrounding neighborhoods in line with the TOD purpose. A TOD designation would allow the project to qualify for additional sources of funding. BCDOT stands ready to work with MDOT to achieve this designation. Thank you for your favorable consideration of these requests. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Department of Transportation Director Steve Sharkey at (410) 396-6802 or s.sharkey@baltimorecity.gov. Working together, we can provide the safe, reliable transportation network that the people of Baltimore continue to deserve.

In Service,



Brandon M. Scott
Mayor