

Mayor
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Town Administrator
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Perryville

Grounded in history. Focused on the future.

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March 8, 2018

Pete K. Rahn, Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Center Drive
P.O. Box 548
Hanover, MD 21076



Re: Transportation Priorities – Perryville, MD

Dear Secretary Rahn:

The Town of Perryville would like to take this opportunity to convey our transportation priorities to your department for FY2019. As fiscal challenges continue and State policies and regulations increase for Smart Growth principles and sustainable futures, transportation becomes a top priority for all of us.

To recognize the important relationship between transportation and air quality, congestion mitigation, and providing more livable and sustainable communities with better linked land use and transportation, the Town's overall top priorities are as follows:

1. Continue to investigate options to deal with the high toll rates and the diversion that results from the high toll rates on the Tydings Bridge
2. Redesign and construct a new MD 222/I-95 interchange, to include an upgraded bridge over I-95.
3. Install sidewalks on MD222 from Clayton Street to the intersection with St. Marks Church Road (the entrance to the Perryville High School).
4. Increase MARC Penn Line service to include mid-day and weekend service for the entire line (D.C. to Perryville) and special event trains.
5. Replace the bridge over the Amtrak line on MD327, but ensure maintenance of traffic during construction.
6. Evaluate the need for a signal on MD222 at Cedar Corner Road.

A complete description of these priorities follows:

Continue to investigate options to deal with the high toll rates and the diversion that results from the high toll rates on the Tydings Bridge

Headed north-east from Baltimore, there are two ways to enter Perryville, via the Hatem Bridge and via the Tydings Bridge, both of which require tolls. The toll creates an economic barrier, effectively separating Perryville and all of Cecil County from the rest

of the State, thus impeding the economic vitality of the region. The economic impact is inordinately large to Perryville as the first town that drivers enter after the toll. This is evidenced by higher unemployment rates in Perryville relative to the rest of Cecil County as well as relative to the State of Maryland as a whole. Additionally, according to a study done by Sage Policy Group, Inc. that was prepared for Cecil County in May of 2015¹, the presence of the toll results in “diseconomies of scale and higher transaction costs continue to manifest themselves in various ways, including the ongoing economic underperformance of Perryville and Port Deposit.” Further, the funds collected at the Tydings Bridge (I-95) toll are used to maintain I-95 from Baltimore to the Delaware Line as well as other Maryland Transportation Authority highways. Therefore, Perryville suffers from the largest impact of the toll, but most of those funds do not flow back into the community.

In addition to an economic burden, the toll creates a traffic congestion problem for both Havre de Grace and Perryville due to toll diversion. Commuters avoid the I-95 toll in favor of using the Hatem EZ Pass plan causing traffic to stack up on Ohio Street in Havre de Grace and on MD222 northbound in Perryville during rush hour. This situation creates unnecessary traffic backups in both communities, which likely has some measurable effect on air pollution as well. By creating a commuter-friendly toll structure on I-95 at the Tydings Bridge, diversion will be reduced, if not eliminated and the traffic congestion and resulting air pollution would be alleviated.

Perryville is poised to grow, smartly and sustainably, which would only benefit the State of Maryland. By removing the barriers to growth (i.e. inordinately expensive tolls), we would expect an increase in both residential and business development resulting in the creation of new jobs and increased revenues to the State.

I-95 Interchange Improvements

The existing I-95 interchange in Perryville was constructed in 1963 and the interchange combines toll collections and truck weigh stations with the continued increase of traffic, by both vehicles and trucks. MD222 crosses the highway and is the only 2-lane bridge that hasn't been upgraded in the State. The area is the location of the first State casino and a prime location for economic development that could include a range of retail stores, business offices, hotel and conference facilities, thereby adding needed jobs for a range of skills and talents.

Numerous studies have been conducted by various agencies to evaluate traffic conditions in the surrounding area. Project development for both commercial and residential is limited due to the failing grade of traffic movement by both vehicles and trucks. Though some of the restrictions have been lifted by the State Highway Administration, which is much appreciated by the Town of Perryville, the bridge is still in need of replacement.

¹ Sage Policy Group, Inc. *The Ongoing Economic Impact of Highway Tolls in Cecil County*. March 2015 pg. 2.

Upgrading the bridge at this key interchange is crucial to our Town to develop projects such as the proposed commercial entertainment mixed use development where Hollywood Casino Perryville is located. In addition, it is essential for Cecil County to be able to encourage and continue planning of area economic developments such as the Bainbridge project.

Sidewalks on MD222 from Clayton Street to St. Marks Church Road to Perryville High School

Sidewalks in this vicinity would provide a safe walkable access to the local High School. It is a goal of the Town to provide connecting sidewalks to local schools when development occurs. It is a goal of the State of Maryland to provide a safe route to school. This project is important to meet both Perryville's and Maryland's goals and we respectfully request full funding for the project.

Extend the MARC commuter rail service

Perryville's Train Station was built in 1905 and is still used on a daily basis. Ridership continues to increase as many realize the benefit of regional transportation. Riders come from all over the local area, not only from Maryland, but Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, as evidenced throughout public parking areas in our Town. The Train Station is a unique characteristic of our Town that we want to enhance for our future growth and development. Businesses make site selection decisions with a high value placed on access to regional transportation, thereby putting Perryville at that strategic location to utilize these transportation options.

There is a big push to extend MARC service to Delaware, which is a worthy goal. However, the service already extends to Perryville, and should be utilized to the fullest extent possible. Increased MARC service to include mid-day, weekend and special event trains for the entire line provides alternative transportation that is critical for access to jobs, increased educational, work opportunities, and tourism-related activities in our region. We would like MDOT to work with the Town for parking to accommodate increased ridership.

Replace the bridge over the Amtrak line on MD327 and ensure maintenance of traffic during construction

Preserving transportation system investments is an overarching goal of the State CTP. Replacing the bridge over Amtrak on MD327 fits well with this goal. The bridge, constructed in 1968 is heavily used and in need of replacement. It provides access to a 1.7 million square foot Ikea East Coast Distribution facility, the Perryville Wastewater Plant, the Perryville Community Park and truck access to the VA Medical Center campus at Perry Point. Further, we understand and anticipate when the Susquehanna River Rail Bridge Project is constructed that Amtrak's truck access to the Perryville Maintenance-

of-Way base will be re-routed to MD327 instead of Broad Street. This is an initiative that Amtrak is considering as it is important to Perryville to get truck traffic off of the downtown streets and to move it to a more appropriate industrial area. Since MD327 is the only access for Ikea, the wastewater plant and park, the only truck access to Perry Point and future truck access for Amtrak to the MOW Base, it is therefore vital that traffic access is maintained when the bridge is replaced.

Evaluate the need for a signal on MD222 at Cedar Corner Road

We believe that a signal is needed at the intersection of MD222 and Cedar Corner Road. We respectfully request that you further investigate this and conduct a signal warrant analysis. We believe that a signal at this location could alleviate traffic flow problems and make the intersection safer. It could also allow for safe pedestrian crossing at that location.

Perryville recognizes and supports Sustainability, and that support follows through in our Comprehensive Plan, Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Plan, Greenway Plan and annual budget. Our priority to offer as many opportunities to alternative transportation options and achieve less gas consumption, while recognizing the importance of maintenance of the existing system supports State goals of preserving transportation system investments, enhancing transportation services and expanding transportation opportunities. We hope our plans for a more sustainable and viable community in the future will continue with support from the State.

Thank you for your consideration of these items and your interest in our Town's transportation priorities.

Sincerely,


James L. Eberhardt
Mayor

CC: Dr. Alan McCarthy, County Executive, Cecil County
County Council of Cecil County
David Glenn, Council Member, City of Havre De Grace
Ben Martorana, Director of Planning, City of Havre De Grace
Dianne Klair, Planner, City of Havre De Grace