



TRI-COUNTY COUNCIL FOR SOUTHERN MARYLAND
P.O. BOX 745 HUGHESVILLE, MARYLAND 20637

(301) 274-1922
(301) 870-2520
FAX (301) 274-1924

March 14, 2024

The Honorable Paul J. Wiedefeld
Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Drive
P.O. Box 548, Mail Stop 200
Hanover, Maryland 21076

Re: FY25 Southern Maryland Regional Transportation Priorities

Secretary Wiedefeld:

The Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland is pleased to submit our Regional Transportation Priorities for inclusion in the FY 2025-2030 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP). The projects listed below were incorporated into this priority letter based on consensus reached by the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland's Regional Infrastructure Advisory Committee (RIAC). Subsequently, this consensus was presented to the Executive Board of the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland and ultimately adopted by members of Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland's Full Council. The priorities are an inclusive representation of the various transportation issues facing the three counties and are a result of significant collaboration amongst them.

The passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) apportions a significant amount of funding towards the State of Maryland over the course of five years starting in FY22, and we feel compelled to highlight our urgent regional needs given its historical nature. IIJA includes a disbursement to Maryland of approximately \$340 million in FY22, and more than \$7 billion total over five years. This funding can significantly contribute to Southern Maryland's top two priorities:

- **Southern Maryland Rapid Transit**
- **The Governor Thomas Johnson Bridge**

We would like to thank MDOT for having funded projects in recent years throughout the region including: the new Nice-Middleton Bridge, the planned extension of Three Notch Trail in St Mary's County which will encourage more non-motorized connectivity resulting in fewer greenhouse gases as supported in the Maryland Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Act, and MD2/4 widening in Prince Frederick.

It is vitally important that we build on current progress with funding of the planning, engineering, and right-of-way acquisition for our long-standing regional priorities in the coming fiscal year. We continue

to be confident that the Maryland Department of Transportation, working with the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland and our local government partners, will do everything possible to ensure that essential steps are included in the FY 2025-2030 CTP to continue making progress on these priorities toward future implementation. The full list of regional transportation priorities is attached. We thank you for your support, consideration, and affirmative action with respect to these important Southern Maryland Regional Projects.

Respectfully,



Delegate Edith Patterson, Chairperson
Regional Infrastructure Advisory Committee



Commissioner Earl F. "Buddy" Hance, Chairperson
Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland

ROADWAY PRIORITIES

(1a) Top priority – Thomas Johnson Bridge: Calvert County, St. Mary's County and the Tri-County Council have made this project a top priority for decades. This project has been included in the CTP since FY 2007 and improvements will relieve commuter congestion, assist safety/emergency evacuation, and better aid major employers in the area such as Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant, and Cove Point LNG. It currently carries over 31,000 vehicles per day, and that is projected to significantly increase over the years. While it is currently two lanes, it is planned to be a four-lane bridge with shoulders and an elevation between 70 and 140 feet. Additionally, a planned shared use path on the bridge will allow pedestrians and bicycle travelers to cross the bridge. Within the fiscal year 2022 omnibus funding legislation, \$1 million was received, but it is estimated that to replace the bridge will ultimately cost upwards of \$500 million.

NOTE:

This project was St Mary's County and Calvert County's #1 overall priority from 2002 to 2021. However, submitting the bridge continually as their #1 priority seems unrealistic. They understand a new study has been funded; however, they also see no progress toward construction and that MDOT budget zeroed the project out for future years funding. We ask that the next phase of this project, full design, continue to move forward.

(1b) Extension of northbound merge lane from intersection of MD4 & MD235 to north end of South Patuxent Beach Rd: This project would happen concurrently with the bridge replacement project and is planned to alleviate congestion at the MD4/MD235 intersection. The north end of South Patuxent Beach Rd would be turned into a cul-de-sac to prevent traffic entering MD4 from that side road. The objective is to facilitate the continuous flow of traffic from the MD235/MD4 intersection to the bridge as part of this project.

(2) MD5 from MD246 (Great Mills Rd) to MD249 (Piney Point Rd): This segment of roadway has historically been susceptible to flooding due to its proximity to the St. Mary's River. Traffic during the AM and PM peak hours is also highly congested due to military base commuting. Furthermore, some of the driveway entrances adjoining this roadway are skewed. MDOT SHA is currently finalizing a design for the facility to become a four-lane roadway with a new bridge across St. Mary's River with a pedestrian walkway across the bridge. For FY 2019, it was proposed to take two additional years to design the project (through 2022). While project design and right-of-way is being finished, we request that this happens such that construction can begin no later than FY 2024. Ideally, we would like construction to begin as soon as property is acquired, and utility agreements are established. We are extremely grateful to MDOT for the funding.

(3) MD2/4 widening between the south end of MD765 northwards to Auto Dr:

MD2/4 through Prince Frederick in Calvert County is very congested during the AM and PM peak hours. Widening from the Holiday Inn area to Fox Run Blvd has been completed. The Tri-County Council and Calvert County appreciates the previous widening progress performed on MD 2/4 in Prince Frederick. We are seeking MDOT's continued partnership and diligence to advance into the next phase of the project,

by performing the preliminary engineering and acquiring needed rights-of-way in anticipation of continuing phases 3A and 3B, north of Fox Run Boulevard. Widening of these segments will further reduce congestion during the peak hours and help move traffic through the town center. This project will significantly improve traffic flow as this roadway currently carries more than 45,000 vehicles per day.

(4) MD236 Shoulders and Sight Distance Improvements: MD236 is a major connector between MD5 and MD234 with poor vertical and horizontal geometry and no paved shoulders and thus dangerous for bikes, pedestrians, and horse drawn buggies. It is an important farm to market connection for the agricultural, Amish, and Mennonite communities in the northern part of St. Mary's County and access to the Maryland International Raceway at the intersection of MD236 and MD234. To support all these needs, Tri-County Council requests the installation of paved shoulders or a side path to allow for safe travel of buggies, bicycles, and pedestrians. A lower cost alternative of a pull-off shoulder area at strategic locations could be an interim step to mitigate sections with poor sight distance.

(5) US301 Corridor Improvements in Waldorf: This project is to provide corridor improvements along US301 in the Waldorf area. As congestion in the region continues to increase, the MD5 (Branch Avenue) and US301 corridors continue to carry the largest volume of vehicles in Southern Maryland. Furthermore, the alignment of Southern Maryland Rapid Transit will not serve all areas of Waldorf. This corridor also experiences significant increases in truck traffic as an alternate route to I-95 further contributing to congestion. This project would also include design improvements at Mattawoman-Beantown Road as well as at MD228 (Berry Road), as previously funded in the FY 2019-2024 CTP. However, these two areas have been put on hold in the CTP since then.

(6) MD 231 Corridor Assessment study and Improvements:

(a) As a major inter-county connector, Tri-County Council would like funding for a MD 231 Corridor Assessment Study from MD2/4 in Prince Frederick to MD5 in Hughesville. MD231 is a major roadway linking Calvert County to Charles County. This corridor facilitates both economic and educational purposes with businesses along the corridor as well as access to the College of Southern Maryland. However, this two-lane corridor has both traffic delays and accidents caused by left-turning vehicles into neighborhoods. Also, if someone wants to bicycle from Charles to Calvert, they must use Benedict Bridge which has no shoulders. Therefore, we highly recommend a holistic corridor study that studies congestion, mobility, access, and safety throughout the corridor.

(b) As stated in the Charles County's FY24 TPL; As the traffic continues to grow in the MD 231 corridor, they seek an analysis of Travel Demand Management (TDM) enhancements to ease congestion and reduce conflict points. The need for this project is identified in the SHA Highway Needs Inventory and as a recommended State highway project in the County's 2016 Comprehensive Plan (Page 8-22)

TRANSIT PRIORITIES

(1) Top Priority - Southern Maryland Rapid Transit (SMRT): This project is an 18.8-mile, fixed-route, high-capacity transit service that follows the MD Route 5/US 301 corridor from the Branch Avenue Metro Station to White Plains in Charles County. SMRT project is estimated to reduce single occupancy vehicle trips on MD 5 (Branch Avenue) by 24,000 to 28,000 vehicles each day. In addition, the project

will support jobs and economic investment throughout the corridor. Thanks to the generous support of Senator Cardin, Senator VanHollen, and Congressman Hoyer, the SMRT project has received two Congressionally Designated Spending appropriations (earmarks) for FY22 and FY24 of \$5 Million, respectively. This investment, coupled with the legislation created by the Charles County Delegation and supported by the Maryland General Assembly (2021 Session), requires the MDOT to match these federal contributions in the CTP.

As stated in the Charles County FY25 TPL: We look forward to completing the design, engineering, and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) processes to secure a Record of Decision for the SMRT project. With the project's inclusion in the Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) for the Project Planning Phase, it has now been included in the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' Constrained Long Range Plan (CLRP) and the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) for the region. Thanks to the support of our Congressional Delegation, we have secured the federal investment of \$10 Million of Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) funds to initiate the matching funds from the Maryland Department of Transportation under Section 7-713 of the State Transportation Article. Likewise, we are continuing to pursue additional federal funds in Fiscal Year 2025 to advance the project.

(2a) Transit Transfer station in Calvert County: In FY23, Calvert County received funding for a feasibility study and needs assessment for a proposed stand-alone Transit Transfer Station. In this year's budget, funding is needed for the next phase of the project: site development.

(2b) Bus stop improvements in St. Mary's County: We would like funding for bus stop signs, pads, and shelters along Great Mills Rd. This would make passengers flagging buses unnecessary thus improving safety. Another location would be along MD235 from Hollywood Rd to Hermanville Rd. We would also like to relocate the Tulagi PI terminal - one or two alternative locations had been identified and communications are ongoing with property owners.

(2c) Funding for expansion of both general and specialized transit in Charles County: Funding is also needed for increased VanGo operations in urban areas during peak hours, for specialized transportation compliant with the Americans With Disabilities Act, for construction of a local transit operations and maintenance facility, for a new park & ride facility in the Downtown Waldorf area, and for an additional park & ride lot for overflow at Accokeek Park & Ride Lot on MD210.

(3) Foster Ln extension / College of Southern Maryland Hughesville Campus Transportation Hub: This project could be done concurrently with the MD231 corridor study. Tri-County Council highly recommends the creation of a transit hub at the College of Southern Maryland Hughesville campus. Currently, access to CSM is very circuitous and done via Foster Lane after exiting MD5. For this reason, Calvert and St. Mary's counties are not providing bus service to this location. To solve this problem, we would like Foster Ln to be extended southward until it intersects with MD231, and create a transit hub request at CSM, which would be moved from its current location in Charlotte Hall, MD. This would provide not only access to CSM, but also greater interconnectivity between transit in the three counties of Southern Maryland.

(4) Passenger Ferry:

The project would establish a high-speed and long-range electric ferry (shuttle ship) between numerous ports along the Chesapeake Bay. Potential port locations include sites located in Calvert and St. Mary's Counties. It would promote tourism and multi-modal connections by allowing visitors to reach multiple destinations by boat without the need for a car, while also demonstrating the benefits of an electrified waterfront. A collaboration effort between several counties and municipalities has occurred to prepare a feasibility study to evaluate the vessel parameters, terminal sites, operational and maintenance needs, tourism and economic strategies and system partnerships.

(5) (Regional) Keep MDOT/MTA Commuter Bus Trips:

It is imperative that MDOT/MTA retain all trips which MDOT has proposed to alter or remove due to budget cuts. While ridership has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels, these proposed cuts will create a severe hardship on our local commuters, following decades of growth in the service allowing our citizens to reduce single-occupancy vehicles on State roadways. Removing or reducing services will only make it more difficult to restore ridership. The Tri-County Council is further concerned over the proposed discontinuance of service of Routes 810 & 850. These routes are examples of services that our citizens have become dependent on to get to work and reduce regional congestion.

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN TOP PRIORITIES

(1) Controlled crosswalk at US 301 and Smallwood Drive (Charles):

To improve pedestrian safety and connectivity, and to complement investments in transit service, we are requesting to install ADA-compliant curb ramps, crosswalks, and bike/pedestrian signal phases at US 301 at Smallwood Drive. These intersections serve as significant barriers for pedestrians wishing to access nearby commercial, residential, and institutional land uses, and the lack of pedestrian accommodations at these intersections significantly degrades pedestrian safety.

(2) Three Notch Trail (Phases VII construction; Phase VIII and IX design and additional connections of trail to Wildewood, Pegg Road and the NAS PAX Gate 2 (St Mary's):

Continued support of the Three Notch Trail including funding Phase VII construction and design of Phases VIII and IX. Additional connections are requested for design at the following locations:

- From the southern terminus of the Wildewood Community (along FDR Boulevard between Route 235 and Route 4).
- Extend the trail to Pegg Road, near Gate 1 of the Naval Air Station, Patuxent River (NAS PAX) along the additional trail along the recent FDR Boulevard construction. Funding is requested to connect to the existing crosswalk at the Pegg Road and MD 235 intersection would be helpful to connect to the FDR Blvd connection.
- Construction of a sidewalk along the public frontage of NAS PAX is underway extending access to NAS PAX Gate 2 at MD 246 and the Lexington Park public transportation hub at Tulagi Place.

(3) MD 2/4 (Solomons Island Rd) Widening Phase 3A and 3B – Preliminary engineering and right-of-way acquisitions (Calvert):

The continuation of the major project to upgrade and widen MD 2/4 through Phases 3A and 3B. Specifically, in this year's capital budget, Calvert County is requesting funding for the preliminary engineering and right-of-way acquisitions for the corridor just north of Fox Run to Auto Drive. The proposed widening in Phases 3A and

3B will allow future growth and development in and around the Town Center, which will facilitate expanded, safer, and upgraded transportation options such as bikeways and pedestrian accommodations.

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN TOP PRIORITIES

Recommendations

(Calvert) MD 765 Sidewalk Extension – Between Old Field Road and Calvert Towne Road-:

The Prince Frederick Town Center Master Plan update supports walkable communities. Proposal to obtain funds to conduct a planning study to connect nearby neighborhoods to civic and downtown Prince Frederick core.

(St Mary's) MD Route 6 Overpass of Three Notch Trail:

To improve traffic through the southern end of Charlotte Hall at the MD Route 5 and 6 intersection, St. Mary's County would like to create an overpass for the Three Notch Trail over MD Route 6. The Overpass would remove a dangerous crossing for bikes/pedestrians for a State Highway currently posted at 50 mph. Initial funding will provide design and construction estimates. Once approved, additional funding will be requested for construction.

(Charles) Design of Indian Head Trail-Three Notch Trail Connection:

Extension of the Indian Head Trail to connect to the Three Notch Trail in the Hughesville area. Following construction, this extension would comprise roughly 13 miles of a 30+ mile connected trail network. This network would connect communities, traverse environmental assets, and provide links to commercial, institutional, and environmental destinations.