



October 6, 2022

The Honorable Peter V. R. Franchot
Comptroller of Maryland
80 Calvert Street
Annapolis, MD 21404

Dear Comptroller Franchot,

We wish to thank you for the many years of public service you've provided to the state we love. Throughout your time as a Delegate and Comptroller, you've served Maryland and its taxpayers with honor.

As you come to the end of your tenure, we urge you to reject or defer a decision on Governor Hogan's proposal to widen and add toll lanes to I-495 and 270, including awarding 50-year contracts to Transurban and Tutor Perini Corp, until the new administration takes office in January. Our coalition of more than 30 organizations with members throughout Maryland believes the current proposal is financially risky and fundamentally flawed, exacerbating the negative public health impacts of vehicle pollution and slowing our state's progress to reach net-zero greenhouse gas pollution by 2045.

Moreover, the two private companies being proposed have questionable records of responsible project management. Australia-based Transurban and California-based Tutor Perini Corp both have troubling track records of underestimating costs and profiting at the expense of taxpayers in multiple jurisdictions.

In Queensland Australia, Transurban faced a class action over claims it charges exorbitant administration fees for missed fines while also facing parliamentary inquiries and a state Treasury audit in New South Wales. Moreover, NSW state government had to set aside half a billion dollars over the next two years to subsidize residents and small businesses unable to meet the rising toll costs of using the motorways and Rod Sims, former chair of Australia's Competition and Consumer Commission, criticized the NSW Government for awarding contract after contract to Transurban (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, September 29, 2022).

A contract awarded to Tutor Perini in California resulted in a cost-overrun of \$1.4 billion while a project in Washington state saw major delays and cost-overruns of \$300 million. (Washington Post, September 21, 2022). And as we trust you're aware, Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich voiced concerns with how Tutor Perini has handled similar projects in the past. "They seem to think cost overruns are a perfectly normal part of business," Elrich said. "One of the things you try to do when you make a contract, particularly if the other party is going to be doing the design, is that the other party eats the cost overruns rather than having the state or county eat the cost overrun." (Bethesda Beat, September 21, 2022).

More broadly, we have grave concerns about the enormous financial obligations of this multi-billion dollar project on the toll lane users and taxpayers of Maryland for the next five decades. Surely, Maryland can do better than tethering our state and taxpayers to this project and private contractors for the next fifty years.

And while we support the goal of mitigating traffic congestion on I-495 & 270, the data from several studies is clear that increasing the number of highway traffic lanes results in more traffic delays and increases the greenhouse gas emissions contributing to climate change. After reviewing data from its SHIFT (State Highway Induced Frequency of Travel) calculator developed in partnership with the University of California-Davis, Transportation for America and the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Rocky Mountain Institute concluded, "highway expansions fail to reduce congestion and instead increase traffic and pollution."

<https://rmi.org/more-lanes-do-not-mean-less-traffic/>

Though Maryland has yet to see some of the most devastating effects of climate change such as stronger hurricanes, record heat waves and prolonged droughts, it's only a matter of time if we don't change course. Promoting public policies and investments that prioritize public transportation, transit-oriented development, safe bicycling and walking infrastructure will help keep our state from experiencing the worst impacts of climate change.

When future generations look back at the policy choices made in the current moment, we believe they will ask who was on the right side of history and who was not. Which public officials acted in ways that mitigated and reversed the impact of climate change, and who did not?

At this critical point in Maryland's history, we ask you to consider the state and world our children and grandchildren will inherit...and the legacy each of us will leave to them.

Sincerely,

The Transform Maryland Transportation Coalition

<https://tmtcoalition.org/>

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