



August 22, 2023

RE: Maryland Commission on Transportation Revenue and Infrastructure Needs

Frank J. Principe, Jr.
Senior Vice President for Government Affairs & Strategic Partnerships
Office of the President
University of Maryland Global Campus
3501 University Blvd. East,
Adelphi, MD 20783

Dear Mr. Principe,

Thank you for your service to chair the Commission tasked with reviewing, evaluating, and making recommendations concerning the prioritization and funding of transportation projects. I am writing on behalf of the Transform Maryland Transportation Coalition, which is composed of more than thirty organizations with members throughout the state. Our mission is to create a robust, transformational, equitable and sustainable transportation system that helps meet our climate targets and serves all Marylanders. We think the work of your Commission represents a crucial opportunity to make Maryland's massive annual investment in transportation work better for all.

As you embark, we urge you and the members of the Commission to keep the following priorities in mind:

- Public bodies fund what they value; Maryland must value buses, trains, paratransit, cycling and pedestrian infrastructure and the people who use them.
- We urge the Commission to recommend creating a Baltimore Regional Transportation Authority based on the following principles:
 - There must be some local control of the greater Baltimore region's transit system
 - Decisions must be transparent and involve community input
 - A comprehensive regional transit system is essential for the economic and environmental health of the region
- There is more money currently available for transportation projects than at any time in history, thanks to 2021's \$1.2 trillion federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Roughly 80% of all federal transportation money comes to state governments through what is called Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) formula funding. The good news is that, despite the misleading name, this funding can be directed to more than just highways. The Commission should recommend reforms that result in the state taking full advantage of this flexibility.
- Public Private Partnerships (P3s) are not grants, they are financing arrangements that can carry many risks to the taxpayer, including delays and cost overruns as seen from the Purple Line

Project. The Commission should carefully consider costs over time and risks before recommending P3s.

- While public transportation is operated by countywide and regionwide agencies, people traveling on public transportation often cross county lines or travel between regions. Integrating fare payment would make traveling by public transportation easier and encourage more people to use it.
- Consider how streamlining approval processes for transportation projects that would lower greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled could result in cost savings.
- Chapter 30 in the Maryland Code gives MDOT the authority to evaluate proposed transportation projects based on how they will support or detract from Maryland state goals. It needs updating especially with quantitative indicators that consider how projects increase greenhouse gas emissions and Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) , but is a tool, already on the books, that the Commission should review and refer to in its recommendations.
- While the Commission is considering new revenue sources to fund the State's transportation needs, it should also take a hard look at the spending side of the ledger. It is common practice for highway departments to add capacity while doing projects that they categorize as system preservation. For example, while reconstructing a road bed or resurfacing a road, crews often extend a left turn lane, replace an 11' lane with a 12' lane, or widen a shoulder. According to the Federal Highway Administration, resurfacing and reconstruction projects with some amount of widening cost between 29% and 85% more than similar projects without widening. The Commission should recommend that MDOT adopt and publish a definition of system preservation that excludes projects that extend left-turn lanes, widen shoulders, widen lanes, add lanes, or otherwise expand the capacity of transportation facilities for motor vehicles.
- The Commission is also tasked with identifying practices for prioritizing project funding. In this light, the Commission must recommend practices that focus on return on investment and decreases in liabilities. Doing so will show that highway expansions prove to be very poor investments.

We look forward to following the Commission's work and wish you the best.

Thank you for your consideration,

Transform Maryland Transportation Coalition

The Transform Maryland Transportation Coalition (www.tmtcoalition.org, [@tmtcoalition](https://twitter.com/tmtcoalition)) comprises individuals and organizations with members throughout the state. Our mission is to create a robust, transformational, equitable, and sustainable transportation system that helps us meet our climate targets and serves all Marylanders. We work to change our transportation system from one that currently is the leading cause of climate pollution and a leading cause of death and injury for children to one that improves the health, safety, and well-being of community members. We understand that transportation and land use are dynamically connected.

Cc: *Members of the Maryland Commission on Transportation Revenue and Infrastructure Needs
Jacklyn Hartman, MDOT*