

FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Jessica Fitzwater
County Executive

Lori L. Depies, CPA
Acting Chief Administrative Officer

March 14, 2023

Mr. Paul J. Wiedefeld, Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Center Drive
Hanover, MD 21076

Re: 2023 Frederick County Transportation Priorities

Dear Secretary Wiedefeld:

On behalf of Frederick County, we are writing to share the County's transportation priorities for consideration in the development of the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) FY 2024-FY 2029 Maryland Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP).

As a thriving community in central Maryland, Frederick County continues to seek investments in our transportation network that meet the rapidly diversifying needs of our residents, municipalities, businesses, and industries. We value our collaborative relationship with MDOT and the Transportation Business Units (TBUs), and we appreciate past and present efforts to invest in meaningful transportation network improvements throughout Frederick County.

We recognize and endorse the importance of a safety-first approach to the transportation network and endorse MDOT's data driven approach to system preservation focusing on increasing the intelligence of the transportation network. With the recent revenue rebound and the funding associated with federal infrastructure package, we have seen the funding and advancement of many transportation projects previously placed on hold.

Frederick County would like to stress a strong desire for Maryland to increase funding for bikeways and trails to help increase multimodal opportunities throughout the state, and specifically at the local level. These routes will become essential to reduce vehicular dependence, promote recreational opportunities, and increase connectivity between communities and points of interest.

For the FY 2024-FY 2029 CTP, we have organized our priorities by emphasis area, including candidate projects suitable for the recently approved federal infrastructure package, and ones that aid in the programming of future State resources toward our local transportation needs.

INTERSTATES AND STATE HIGHWAYS

The County has been an active participant in the MDOT/State Highway Administration (SHA) process for regionally significant projects. We agree with the need to improve the performance of our major interstate corridors, including expanded transit options, and priority freight movement routes. The following projects represent our transportation priorities for planning, design, and construction funding for our local interstates and state highways.

Frederick County would like to voice our sincere appreciation of MDOT's commitment to improving the safety of U.S. 15 by funding the full design in the FY 2022 – FY 2027 CTP and allocating the full construction funding in the Final FY 2023 – FY 2028 CTP. This project has been the longstanding top transportation priority for Frederick County and The City of Frederick, as it will help alleviate safety issues and relieve the only segment within the U.S. 15/I-270 corridor that is over capacity in both directions in both peaks. The design advancement of U.S. 15 (6 lanes) and the regional I-270/I-495 project (6 lanes) makes the short I-70 link (4 lanes), referenced as Phase 4 between the two interstates, a critical bottleneck.

1. **Full Design and Construction Funding – I-70 Phase 4: I-270 to Mt. Phillip Road.** This project is a prime candidate suitable for funding consideration from the federal infrastructure package as it is the fourth and final phase of the I-70 project (limits from Patrick Street to Mt. Phillip Road). This is a priority freight movement project in the Maryland State Freight Plan and Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Freight Priorities List and is a key link, essential to improving our regional supply chain network. It would also increase safety related to the merge of I-270 (including the additional HOT lanes) and I-70 west and address congestion through this segment as it transitions to the future U.S. 15 widening. It is essential I-70 Phase 4 is funded for design and construction concurrently. *MDOT/Visualize 2045 - 2035 completion: Chapter 30 Rank #27 of 42 statewide.*
2. **Project Planning Funding – MD 194: MD 26 to Devilbiss Bridge Road.** This project proposes the widening from a 2-lane to a 4-lane divided urban boulevard, addressing both capacity and safety issues. Right-of-way has been acquired for the majority of the project. The priority first phase for construction is from MD 26 to Walkersville High School. *MDOT/Visualize 2045 - 2035 completion: Chapter 30 Rank #10 of 42 statewide.*
3. **Planning/Design Funding – MD 85 Phase II & III: Ballenger Creek to Guilford Drive.** This project proposes improvements to widen/reconstruct to a 4-6-lane divided roadway, including bicycle and pedestrian improvements, along one of our primary business corridors containing the Francis Scott Key Mall and the Monocacy National Battlefield (approximately 100,000 tourists annually). The South Frederick Corridors Plan includes a focus on multimodal transportation alternatives in the MD 85 corridor. The proposed improvements between Ballenger Creek and Guilford Drive will support corridor redevelopment opportunities and improved motorist safety in this area. Phase I was completed in the Fall of 2022. *MDOT/Visualize 2045 - 2035 completion: Chapter 30 Rank #16 of 42 statewide.*
4. **US 15: MD 464 to U.S. 340.** A menu of options to address safety and operation in the corridor which may include: Widen from a 2-lane to a 4-lane divided expressway south of the U.S. 340/15 split; and/or grade-separated interchanges at MD 464 and Mountville Road, as well as a new ramp from eastbound U.S. 340 to southbound U.S. 15.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

MD 75 Corridor: South of New Market. This planning study would review and assess safety and operational improvements for the MD 75 corridor, specifically regarding the height restricted CSX railroad bridge, as they relate to roadway safety, intersection design, visibility, and pedestrian and bicycle safety. The planning study may provide guidance related to geometric improvements, roadway widening, partial relocations, the existing CSX bridge and cost estimates. This area, south of New Market, has several highly trucking dependent developments and the interest of future development as it is located along the

I-70 corridor, designated as a priority freight movement. ***The County will provide the necessary funding for the planning phase and the potential to support future funding agreement(s) for design/construction improvements directed at mitigating these safety issues.***

TRANSIT – LOCAL BUS

We thank MDOT for its ongoing capital and operating support of Transit Services of Frederick County. Though the federal funding packages made available because of the COVID-19 Pandemic were significant, LOTS grants were reduced as a mitigation of the strain on State transportation trust fund revenues. Transit operations continue to remain under financial strain, and the equivalent local match at increased levels is crucial to effective transit operations at the County level. Sustained financial support from MDOT is critical to providing quality transit service in Frederick County.

Priorities for local transit include:

TransIT Plus. The County requests an increase in annual operating funding and one-time capital funding for the expansion of paratransit service to meet growing demand in Frederick County. As Frederick County experiences rapidly escalating demands to specialized paratransit, additional funding will be critical to adequately meet the demand for this necessary and vital service. To meet these demands, additional operating funding above current expenses is requested: Year 1 requires operating funding for an additional driver and vehicle operating expenses (\$75,000) and a capital expense of \$115,000 for a wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV), and in subsequent years continued operating expenses (\$75,000 annually).

Fixed-route Urban Service. The County requests an increase in annual operating funding, and one-time capital funding, to expand services by providing 30-minute service frequencies from start of service to 6 p.m., expand Saturday service hours, and implement Sunday service. To meet these demands, it would require additional operating funding, above current, of \$2,680,000 annually. The expanded service would also require a one-time capital expense of \$4,200,000 for the purchase of seven (7) buses. This expansion of service would result in the need for one (1) additional dispatcher (\$70,000 annually).

Urban and Rural Shuttle Service. Access to reliable transportation continues to be a challenge for many County residents, including older adults, people with disabilities, and low-income or Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) households. In both the urbanized and rural areas, the need is great for more transportation options. We are seeking to increase annual operating funding to provide rural areas of the County with more robust transit options. The current level of service is inadequate to meet demand. To meet these demands, it would require Year 1 – operating funding for two (2) fixed routes (\$300,000) and two (2) additional drivers and vehicle operating expenses (\$150,000), capital expenses for two (2) wheelchair accessible vehicles (\$115,000 each), and subsequent years continued operating expenses for both routes and drivers (\$450,000 annually).

MDOT MTA – COMMUTER BUS AND MARC TRAIN

The MARC Train system operated by MDOT MTA is a critical link from Frederick to Montgomery County and Washington D.C. The system could provide even greater benefit through strategic service enhancements and increased system accessibility. The County is encouraged by the passage of the Maryland Regional Rail Transformation Act and the possibility of establishing investment programs, enhancing rail lines and services (operated by MARC rail service) and requiring the advancement of projects. In the short-term, we recognize that commuter bus service is best equipped to improve connections

between Frederick and the Washington, D.C. region. Additionally, The City of Frederick and Frederick County are requesting Transit Oriented Development (TOD) designation for two MARC Stations.

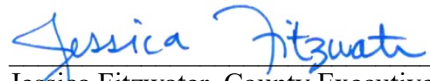
REGIONAL TRANSIT NETWORK

The Opportunity Lanes Maryland project status remains unclear due to legal challenges and divided opinions on the best solution. Notwithstanding these issues, the County supports the effort to improve the I-270 corridor transit options and transportation network. We ask that you move expeditiously to advance the funding for specific local transit projects and the expected local transit benefits.

We thank you again for your continued partnership in meeting the needs of Maryland residents and businesses in Frederick County. If you have questions about our priorities, please contact Mr. Mark Mishler, Division of Planning and Permitting, at 301-600-6742 or mmishler@frederickcountymd.gov.

Sincerely,

FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT
FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND



Jessica Fitzwater, County Executive

MARYLAND STATE DELEGATION OF
FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND



Jesse T. Pippy, Chair

Attachment: Frederick County 2023 Annual Transportation Needs and Priorities Review

cc: Frederick County Delegation
Frederick County Council
The Honorable Michael C. O'Connor, Mayor, The City of Frederick
Lori L. Depies, CPA, Acting Chief Administrative Officer, Office of the County Executive
Chelsea Kadish, Chief of Staff, Office of the County Executive
Steven C. Horn, Director, Frederick County Planning and Permitting Division
Mark Mishler, Transportation Engineering Supervisor, Frederick County Planning and Permitting Division
Jason Stitt, Director, Frederick County Public Works Division
Roman Steichen, Director, Frederick County Transit Services Division