



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

3430 Courthouse Drive ■ Ellicott City, Maryland 21043 ■ 410-313-2013 Voice/Relay

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April 1, 2024

The Honorable Paul Wiedefeld
Office of the Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Center Drive
Hanover, MD 21076

Re: FY 2025-2030 Howard County Priority Letter

Dear Secretary Wiedefeld,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide Howard County's Transportation Priority Letter for FY2025 – 2030. We commend your leadership of the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) through a challenging time, and we look forward to continuing our strong history of collaboration and partnership. Please accept the following Priority Letter from Howard County. This letter provides a brief overview of the transportation projects Howard County is recommending the Department of Transportation fund in the FY 2025-2030 Consolidated Transportation Program.

The letter reflects the direction of Howard County's general plan, HoCo By Design, our regional collaboration efforts as members of the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB), and Howard County's central position in the region. Howard County's priorities are the result of review and input by County staff, elected and appointed officials, public feedback, and our initiatives to implement the Howard County Strategic Roadway Safety Plan, address congestion, and respond to changing work and travel patterns. We are very invested in cost-effective, systematic, and regionally integrated approaches to addressing congestion, mobility, safety, and multimodal transportation in the greater Baltimore-Washington Region.

We request MDOT focus on Howard County's highest transportation priorities: safety and public transit on US 1 and US 29. The projects listed below are the county's top priority projects and reflect Howard County's planning, design, and construction investments in the corridor(s). Before we list our highest priorities, we want to focus MDOT's attention on the following regional corridors, policy approaches and future challenges to managing our local and regional transportation system:



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The safety of all users of our transportation systems continues to be one of Howard County's highest priorities, especially the safety of our most vulnerable users: pedestrians and cyclists of all ages and abilities. We are especially encouraged by MDOT's efforts to implement Complete Streets statewide through the Model Complete Streets Initiative. We hope this effort complements Howard County's Complete Streets policy, recognized by Smart Growth America as one of the nation's best policies- an award MDOT should pursue as well.

However, the Model Complete Streets Initiative will only be successful when MDOT invests in programs that support both state and county-initiated projects on the State system. As a member of the BRTB, we also support cross-border projects, such as the Patapsco Regional Greenway, in addition to ensuring bicycle facilities on regional and state roads are incorporated into the planning and implementation of operations and maintenance projects, to enhance safety and provide expanded multi-modal options. This approach supports County efforts to reduce the number and severity of crashes in Howard County as articulated in the Howard County Strategic Roadway Safety Plan and enabled through the County's complete streets policy.

As a member of the BRTB, we support funding and implementing the regional transit corridors in the State's Regional Transit Plan and request MDOT advance planning, design, and operational funding, in coordination with our local and regional transit systems, to meet the goals and priorities in the Regional Transit Plan. MDOT should ensure public transit can provide equitable and high-quality service to all public transit riders, particularly our transit-dependent community members, regardless of whether they are served by the State or local system or need to travel between two systems for essential services. We are especially interested in the inter-jurisdictional east-west corridor No. 16, from Ellicott City to the Baltimore Convention Center, and No. 17, from West Baltimore to Hopkins Bayview, and north-south corridor No. 1, from Morgan State University to South Baltimore, and No. 6, from Towson to UM Transit Center.

We also want to express our concerns about MDOT's ongoing challenges in operating and maintaining the transportation system in the county and the region. In January 2024, the Howard County Office of Transportation testified before the House of Delegates Appropriations Committee about how proposed changes to the Fiscal Year 2025 CTP would have impacted the county. While many of the proposed cuts were rolled back with a one-time general fund infusion, the funding uncertainty for FY2026 and beyond remains a challenge, especially regarding:

- Highway User Revenues allocated to the county to support road resurfacing; while our Department of Public Works does an admirable job in maintaining our roads, we face an ongoing and increasingly challenging task of maintaining aging infrastructure while dealing with the impacts of climate change.



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- MTA's Commuter Bus operations continue to face a significant cut this year; while commuter bus services in Maryland were impacted by COVID-19 pandemic, congestion and traffic along major corridors has returned. These services offer viable and effective options to reduce congestion and emissions.
- MDOT's support for the RTA, our local public transit service; MDOT initially proposed to reduce assistance to Locally Operated Transit Systems by 40% across the state. While this funding is being restored in FY25, funding uncertainty could negatively impact important RTA service improvements in our counties.
- Support for safety and operations projects, such as the TSMO project on I70/US29 and our collaborative efforts in US1, which are experiencing delays and uncertainty on when they will be delivered.

As you, and your team, work on addressing funding and project delivery, we strongly urge MDOT to work to develop, expand, and advance the ideas and solutions identified during the Transportation Revenue and Infrastructure Needs (TRAIN) commission process so MDOT, Howard County, and other counties do not face the level of uncertainty we faced this past year.

We encourage that MDOT fund these requests to ensure completion and deliver safety and mobility for all users in these critical corridors.

1. **US 1 Corridor**

- The safety of all users of our transportation system is one of Howard County's highest priorities, especially the safety of our most vulnerable users in the US 1 Corridor. Howard County was awarded a Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant, and we are deeply appreciative of MDOT's support during the application process. While we were not awarded our full request, we are looking forward to working with MDOT on this phase of the project and expanding on the project with a larger grant request. We continue to urge MDOT to expand efforts to fund and deliver projects that support pedestrian and traffic safety initiatives and measures identified in county planning efforts. This includes the US 1 Safety Evaluation projects, Bike Howard, Walk Howard, HoCo by Design, and Howard County CIP projects in development that benefit the state system, including an intersection project at US 1 and Guilford Road. We are also encouraged by MDOT's support to implement a full traffic signal at Dr. Patel Drive and US 1.
- Public Transit: Advance planning and implementation of regional transit corridors, removing at-grade crossings on the MARC Camden Line, and continuing investment in the Camden Line to increase frequency, reliability, and amenities should continue.
- TSMO: Fund and implement SHA TSMO System areas in the US 1 Corridor.



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2. US 29 Corridor

- In coordination with Howard County and the private sector, continue to fund and support the construction of the North-South connector/Jug Handle, a major collector planned to connect the US 29/Broken Land Parkway interchange to Little Patuxent Parkway, including a spur of the existing northbound US 29 off-ramp under the Downtown Columbia Plan. This request is also coupled with a coordination, design, and funding request to advance capacity, bicycle, and pedestrian improvements at MD 175 and US 29.
- Fund the capital, design, and operations cost to advance our regional cooperative efforts with Montgomery County to integrate with the Flash service. Our request reflects longer-term regional planning and implementation of the central Maryland regional transit corridor No. 27 for regional BRT. Our request is also tied to Montgomery County's request in this year's priority letter to support the design and construction of the Median Lane BRT concept to improve transit travel time reliability between Tech Road and Downtown Silver Spring. Howard County strongly supports this request as it aligns with our county's goals while also supporting SHA goals for the corridor.
- Focus on the bicycle and pedestrian connection between the Rivers Edge Community, Clarksville Hunt Community, and the Johns Hopkins Library project. This project was started but has stalled with little progress. We urge MDOT to continue the design and engineering for corridor improvements to US 29 near Rivers Edge Road, including safe and convenient access for other modes to the River's Edge Community from both North- and Southbound US 29.

3. I-70 Corridor

- Continue to fund and implement SHA TSMO System areas in the I-70/US 29 (System I) Corridor to leverage technology investments and minimize impacts from new highway lanes, including providing information on how the different components of the project will be delivered.
- Design and implement I-70/US 29 interchange capacity enhancements.

The following requests related to Design & Engineering and Construction projects reflect Howard County's priorities within the six-year time horizon of the Consolidated Transportation Plan.



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Design & Engineering Projects

1. Pedestrian, ADA access, and safety improvements: design and construct pedestrian safety and sidewalk improvements in Howard County's pedestrian master and corridor plans along with the results of our recent collaborative efforts with your district engineers to identify and coordinate the delivery of sidewalk projects, including projects at MD 108 and the west leg of Red Branch Road, MD 99 from St. Johns Lane to Maple Rock Road, US 40 from North Chatham Road to St. Johns Lane, projects identified in the MD 99 Investigation along with supporting the state-county workgroup focused on connections across grade separated interchanges.
2. MD 175: Planning and design of existing access points to enhance access for all transportation modes into Columbia Gateway Drive area. This area is a focus of HoCo By Design, Howard County's general plan, and includes a third multimodal access point at MD 108/MD 175 as well as direct access to Columbia Gateway Drive from I-95.
3. MD 175: US 1 to Snowden River Parkway; continued comprehensive traffic modeling leading to design alternatives, including the US 1/MD 175 and US 1/I-95 interchanges.
4. MD 108: Guilford Road to Trotter Road, and eventually to Centennial Lane; design and construct pedestrian, bicycle, automobile, and streetscape improvements.
5. MD 175: US 1 to Dorsey Run Road; widening and reconstruction, including final design and construction of the US 1/MD 175 interchange.
6. Noise Walls: Design and construct noise walls at Dumhart Road at the southwest corner of I-95 and the MD 216 interchange, and along MD 32 from MD 108 to I-95, including providing cost estimates to construct the projects.



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Capital & Construction Projects

1. Fund the purchase of buses to ensure the RTA transit fleet remains in a state of good repair and leverage recent county and state investments to replace vehicles that have exhausted their useful life. This funding request should also be coupled with the Howard County Transit Development Plan's recommendations to expand and enhance service and transition to zero emission transit vehicles.
2. Bike Howard implementation: Funding, support, and cooperation to implement priority projects from Howard County's Bicycle Master Plan, a comprehensive strategy to improve bicycle infrastructure. Significant projects include new shared-use pathways providing bicycle access into Downtown Columbia, Columbia Gateway, historic Savage, Elkridge, and along Dobbin Road, as well as a countywide wayfinding system.
3. MD 108: Construct intersection improvements along MD 108 at Ten Mills Road.
4. MD 100 and MD 103: Replacement of the existing interchange.



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Requests for Technical Assistance and Support

- Technical assistance and MDOT regulatory support for rights of way for sidewalk construction along US 1 southbound in the median between North Laurel Road and the Prince George's County line, at the CSX bridge over US 1 in Elkridge, and along other state roadways.
- Technical assistance, and support for Howard County's efforts to secure grant funding, to advance the widening of the Marriottsville Road Bridge over I-70 to enable future widening of Marriottsville Road north to MD 99 and south to US 40.
- Technical assistance to designate Downtown Columbia as a Maryland Designated Transit-Oriented Development (TOD).
- Providing technical assistance and support for Howard County's project to reconstruct US 1 from MD 175 to just north of Montevideo Road with pedestrian, transit, and streetscape improvements.
- Advancing work to designate the Laurel Park/City of Laurel MARC station areas as a Maryland Designated TOD.
- Continued technical assistance to advance the MD 103/US 1 and US 1/ Montevideo Road intersection projects.

In closing, please accept our thanks and appreciation for prior and ongoing funding and continuing technical assistance for:

- Technical assistance, and support for Howard County's efforts to secure grant funding, to advance the implementation of road capacity improvements at Broken Land Parkway/Snowden River Parkway and MD 32, including bicycle and pedestrian access improvements to the Park and Ride lots.
- Supporting, with funding and assistance, the purchase of 20 buses for the RTA fleet during 2023, along with ongoing support for Howard County's efforts to secure grant funding to fund the construction of the BRT bus stations.
- Implementing the MD 32 Alternate Bike Route projects 1 to 5.



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Thank you for considering Howard County's transportation needs. We look forward to continuing our partnership and strong collaboration with MDOT as we address the transportation priorities for all who live and work in Howard County.

Sincerely,

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive

Thank you for your positive endorsement of Howard County's state transportation projects and priorities.

Deb Jung
Chair, Howard County Council

Senator Clarence Lam
Senate Chair, Howard County Delegation

Delegate Jessica Feldmark
House Chair, Howard County Delegation



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Howard County Council Members

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Lynda Eisenberg, Director, Howard County Department of Planning and Zoning

Yosef Kebede, Director, Howard County Department of Public Works

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