



## HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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April 3, 2023

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

Re: FY 2024-2028 Howard County Priority Letter

Dear Secretary Wiedefeld:

Congratulations on your appointment to lead the Department of Transportation. We look forward to continuing our strong history of collaboration and partnership as you embark in your new role. Please accept the following "Priority Letter" from Howard County. This letter provides a brief overview of the transportation projects Howard County is recommending be included and funded by the Maryland Department of Transportation's (MDOT) FY 2024-2029 Consolidated Transportation Program.

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 travel patterns in the region and nation. Our priorities reflect the priorities and direction of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, our membership on the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board as well as Howard County's central position in the greater Baltimore - Washington Region. We are very invested in cost-effective, systematic, and regionally-integrated approaches to addressing multimodal congestion, mobility, and safety in the greater Baltimore - Washington Region.

Therefore, we want to continue to focus your attention 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 do want to focus MDOT's attention on the following regional corridors and policy approaches to managing our local and regional transportation system:

- 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 want to congratulate MDOT staff's efforts on the meaningful implementation of Maryland's Vulnerable Road User law, and efforts to work with the county on Howard County's infrastructure review legalization. Therefore, we are requesting MDOT continue to invest in programs that support implementing safety-focused projects on the State system, as well as supporting county-initiated projects on the State system.

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 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.

As a member of the BRTB, we strongly support funding and implementing bike and pedestrian projects, particularly 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.

The maintenance of the transportation system in Howard County has local and regional impacts and implications and we appreciate MDOT's continued investment in the preservation of state roads and bridges to maintain the long-term viability of critical infrastructure to support access, safety, and mobility for all.

While we appreciate MDOT's recent efforts to update the Locally Operated Transit Service funding formula, MDOT's support of public transit capital and operating costs in the Baltimore region is not balanced compared to other regions. In partnership with surrounding jurisdictions, we have improved transit connectivity between Howard County and Baltimore, Anne Arundel, Prince George's and Montgomery Counties over the past few years. Additional resources from both our partners, the State and Federal Government, are vital to those efforts. We put significant local resources into our transit system because we are not supported by fixed route service by MDOT-MTA or WMATA. It is our hope that future revisions to State and federal formula funds support the significant transit needs in our region and county.

MDOT should fund these requests over the next two years 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 submitted a Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant Program application this past fall and we are deeply appreciative of MDOT's support. While our effort was not successful this time, we look forward to a meaningful partnership with MDOT on future grant opportunities in the short and long term. We strongly 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, Bike Howard, Walk Howard, outcomes from HoCo by Design, and Howard County CIP projects in development that benefit the state system, as well as District 7's recent initiative to address gaps at Deep Run and Elkridge.

- Public Transit: We appreciate MDOT's award of the Statewide Transit Innovation Grant for a pilot micro mobility transit service; however, as referenced in our introduction, advancing 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.

## **2. US 29 Corridor**

- In coordination with Howard County and the private sector, fund the final design and 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 and 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.
- MDOT's actions to advance a study to develop a bicycle and pedestrian connection between the Rivers Edge Community, Clarksville Hunt Community, and the Johns Hopkins Library is welcomed by the county. However, 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, should continue.

## **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.
- Upgrade/reconstruct the I-70/Marriottsville Road interchange to align with county and private sector projects.
- 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.

### **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, and other projects identified in the MD 99 Investigation.
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.

### **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.

## Requests for Technical Assistance and Support

- Technical assistance on the implementation of road capacity improvements at Broken Land Parkway/Snowden River Parkway and MD 32, including bicycle and pedestrian access improvements to Park and Ride lots.
- Improve access to BWI Airport via the MD 32/Broken Land Parkway Park and Ride lot and Downtown Columbia when MTA solicits new contracts for Route 201.
- Technical assistance to designate Downtown Columbia as a TOD.
- Technical assistance on 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.
- Supporting sidewalk construction along US 1 southbound in the median between North Laurel Road and the Prince George's County line.
- 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:

- Initiating funding of TSMO System project number 1 for the I-70/US 29/Rt.40 corridor.
- Supporting, with funding and assistance, the purchase of 14 buses for the RTA fleet.
- Supporting the construction of a traffic signal at the entrance of Guilford Park High School on US 1.
- Funding a study to develop a bicycle and pedestrian connection between the Rivers Edge Community, Clarksville Hunt Community, and the Johns Hopkins Library.
- Implementing the MD 32 Alternate Bike Route projects 1 to 5.
- Awarding a Statewide Transit Innovation Grant (STIG) for a pilot micro mobility transit service on US 1.

Thank you for considering Howard County's priority transportation needs.

Sincerely,



Calvin Ball, County Executive

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

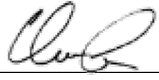
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Chair, Courtney Watson



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