



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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

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April 1, 2025

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

Re: FY 2026-2031 Howard County Priority Letter

Dear Secretary Wiedefeld:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide Howard County's Transportation Priority Letter for Fiscal Years 2026 to 2031.

This letter provides an overview of the transportation projects that Howard County is requesting the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) fund in the FY 2026-2031 Consolidated Transportation Program. The letter reflects the direction of Howard County's General Plan, HoCo By Design, our functional plans, and 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 County's multiple transportation initiatives, address congestion, shifting work and travel patterns, and trends locally and regionally. Our regional priorities continue to support these principles. We are committed to cost-effective, systematic, and regionally integrated approaches to address congestion, mobility, safety, and multimodal transportation in the greater Baltimore-Washington Region.

We request MDOT focus on Howard County's highest transportation priorities: safety, congestion, and improved public transit on the US 1 and US 29 corridors, along with a new approach to advance bike and pedestrian projects on state roads. The projects listed later in this letter are the County's priority projects and reflect Howard County's planning, design, and construction investments along 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.

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 encouraged by MDOT's continued work on the Model Complete Streets Initiative and Pedestrian Safety Action Plan (PSAP) projects.



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As a member of the BRTB, we also support cross-border projects, such as the Patapsco Regional Greenway, that ensure 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, and we particularly look forward to the implementation of the North Laurel PSAP project.

We support funding and implementing the regional transit corridors in the State's Regional Transit Plan for Central Maryland and request that 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 fairly provide high quality service to all public transit riders, particularly our transit dependent community members, regardless of whether they are served by State or local systems or need to travel between multiple systems for essential services. We are especially interested in the interjurisdictional east-west corridor No. 16, from Ellicott City to the Baltimore Convention Center, No. 17, from West Baltimore to Hopkins Bayview, north-south corridor No. 1, from Morgan State University to South Baltimore, and No. 6, from Towson to UM Transit Center.

In September 2024, MDOT visited Howard County to present the Draft Consolidated Transportation Program. While we were heartened to learn that many of the potential program cuts were scaled back, we want to reiterate our concerns about MDOT's ongoing challenges to operating and maintaining the transportation system in Howard County and the region. This concern, coupled with shifting federal priorities, makes it imperative that MDOT:

- Advance regional public transit by supporting MARC and Commuter Bus services. With federal return-to-office orders in place, hundreds of Howard County residents are resuming regular commutes to the Washington, D.C. region, increasing congestion and placing heavy strain on existing commuter bus services. The availability of this service is vital to our workforce;
- Sustain and expand funding for locally operated transportation services (LOTs), such as the Regional Transportation Agency of Central Maryland (RTA). RTA offers key routes between Howard County and our neighbors in Central Maryland, and ridership is continuing to rebound strongly, placing greater demands on service;
- Actively support opportunities to fund road resurfacing projects;
- Support operations projects, such as the TSMO project on I-70/US 29 and US 1; and
- Continue to advance state-led safety projects, including our collaborative efforts on US 1, MD 99, MD 108 and other state roads to provide pedestrian and cyclist capacity infrastructure and to provide safe and cost-effective mobility for all users.



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To support this request to MDOT and to reflect MDOT's updates to the Chapter 30 prioritization process as guided by the complete streets policy and legislation, we have also prepared a package of bike and pedestrian projects planned for state roads by MDOT and local projects that support state projects and connections. This package is comprised of state-led projects that have advanced through design, but whose construction was deferred due to state funding challenges. However, these are critical projects that will close key gaps in the transportation system, and we believe will score well under the new Chapter 30 system. Some of these projects are referenced in our letter, while others are referenced in our functional plans.

We encourage MDOT to fund these requests to ensure the completion and delivery of safety and mobility for all users in these critical corridors and for all modes. Thank you for your consideration of these transportation priorities and funding requests. The remainder of this letter details our specific project priorities for the FY2026-2031 CTP.



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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 along the US 1 Corridor. MDOT's commitment to construct the full traffic signal and pedestrian safety improvements at the US 1 intersections of Dr. Patel Drive and Rowanberry Drive is welcome and appreciated. However, the need is still critical, and 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 and state planning efforts, including the implementation of the Safe Streets and Roads For All and PSAP projects, along with other projects articulated in Bike Howard, Walk Howard, HoCo By Design, and the Howard County Capital Improvement Program.
- Public Transit: We request that MDOT advance the planning and implementation of regional transit corridors; additionally, removing at-grade crossings on the MARC Camden Line and continuing investment in the Camden Line to increase frequency, reliability, and amenities should continue as outlined in the MARC Growth and Transformation Plan.
- TSMO: We request funding to implement SHA TSMO System areas in the US 1 Corridor.

2. **US 29 Corridor**

- 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 Rivers Edge Community from both North- and Southbound US 29. This effort should also continue to focus on developing the bicycle and pedestrian connection between the Rivers Edge Community, Clarksville Hunt Community, and the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory.
- In coordination with Howard County and the private sector, we request MDOT continue to fund and support the construction of the North-South connector/Jug Handle project, a major collector planned to connect the US 29/Broken Land Parkway interchange to Little Patuxent Parkway, as outlined 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.
- Howard County continues to advance our regional cooperative efforts with Montgomery County to integrate with the Flash Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service. We request MDOT support the capital, design, and operations of this important service, reflecting longer-term regional planning and implementation of the



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Regional Transit Plan's corridor No. 27 for regional BRT. Our request complements Montgomery County'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, as it aligns with Howard County's goals while also supporting SHA goals for the corridor.

3. I-70 Corridor

- We request that MDOT 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.
- We request support from MDOT to 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, projects identified in the MD 99 Investigation, along with supporting the state-county workgroup focused on connections across grade separated interchanges.
2. Noise Walls: Evaluate, plan, and design the future construction of noise walls at Dumhart Road at the southwest corner of I-95, MD 216 interchange, and on MD 32 from MD 108 to I-95 to address ongoing resident concerns.
3. MD 108: Guilford Road to Trotter Road, and eventually to Centennial Lane; design and construct pedestrian, bicycle, automobile, and streetscape improvements, as guided by the Clarksville-River Hill Streetscape plan.
4. MD 175: Planning and design of existing access points to enhance access for all transportation modes into the Columbia Gateway Drive area, including a multimodal access point at MD 108/MD 175 as well as direct access to Columbia Gateway Drive from I-95. This area is a focus of HoCo By Design, Howard County's General Plan, and the forthcoming Gateway Master Plan.



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5. 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.
6. MD 175: US 1 to Dorsey Run Road; widening and reconstruction, including final design and construction of the US 1/MD 175 interchange.

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 and MDOT regulatory support for right-of-way for sidewalk construction along US 1 southbound in the median between North Laurel Road and the Prince George's County line (PSAP project), at the CSX bridge over US 1 in ElkrIDGE, and projects developed by the US Safe Streets for All Project.
- 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 State 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 State Designated Transit Oriented Development.



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- Continued technical assistance to advance the MD 103/US 1 and US 1/Montevideo Road intersection projects.

Finally, we want to extend our deep appreciation for MDOT's prior and ongoing funding and technical assistance for a variety of important projects in Howard County. This support includes a Statewide Transit Innovation Grant (STIG), which is funding the purchase of vehicles and operating support for the new US 1 Microtransit service, HoCo RapidRide. Additionally, MDOT has been instrumental in supporting the implementation of the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) grant and Pedestrian Safety Action Plan (PSAP) projects to improve safety at multiple intersections and corridors in the county.

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

Sincerely,

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive

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

Councilmember Opel Jones
Vice Chair, Howard County Council

Senator Clarence Lam
Senate Chair, Howard County Delegation

Delegate Chao Wu
House Chair, Howard County Delegation



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