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April 12, 2024

Paul Wiedefeld, Secretary of Transportation
Maryland Department of Transportation
P. O. Box 548
7201 Corporate Center Drive
Hanover, Maryland 21076

Re: Somerset County – Priority Letter for Recommended Transportation Improvements

Dear Secretary Wiedefeld:

As you know, the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) asks counties to submit letters prioritizing transportation projects for possible inclusion in the upcoming Consolidated Transportation Program.

In response to this request, the Somerset County Commissioners are submitting a prioritized list of proposed transportation improvements in the County for your consideration. Both the City of Crisfield and the Town of Princess Anne were given the opportunity for input. We would be happy to discuss these with you and your staff in further detail. They are listed as follows:

ENHANCEMENTS

1. Westover to Crisfield Bike Trail (adjacent to MD 413):

Description:

This project consists of utilizing a 60-foot-wide right-of-way located between the County's regional recreational complex at Westover and extending to the outskirts of Crisfield for a bike trail. This right-of-way was formerly a rail line and is 13.5 miles in length. Once the trail approaches Crisfield, it would transition into a dedicated bike lane along MD 413 (Crisfield Highway). The first phase of this project located between Crisfield and Marion was recently completed. The second phase of this project located between Westover and Kingston is currently being designed with construction planned for 2024. The third phase of this project located between Kingston and Marion is planned immediately afterwards.

Need:

This bike trail will encourage tourism and provide an economic benefit to local businesses, and will supplement the County's recreational opportunities. It can also be utilized as an educational resource by providing signage that details the historic importance of the railway as it was used extensively by the agricultural and seafood industries of the County in days gone by.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

This project is identified for development in the County's 2017 Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan. In addition to complying with that Plan's recommendations, this project would meet a number of Maryland Transportation Plan (MTP) goals – in particular those that address Quality of Service by enhancing users' access to MDOT's transportation services and Environmental Stewardship by developing an initiative that protects a community's natural and historic resources.

2. Crisfield – Somerset County Airport Hangars:

Description:

Somerset County and the City of Crisfield own and operate the Crisfield-Somerset County Airport (W41). In order to promote economic growth in the region as well as use of this critical facility, an airport hangar is needed. The project involves design, construction and project management of a ten-unit hangar as shown on the approved Airport Layout Plan. The project scope includes permitting, site work, utilities, pre-engineered hangar, interior office and restroom. Permitting involves critical areas, floodplain, stormwater management, sediment control, FAA use, grading, electrical, plumbing, and building. Utilities include electric, telephone, cable, water and sewer. This project is also supported by the Mayor/Council of the City of Crisfield, Somerset County Economic Development Commission, the University of Maryland Unmanned Aircraft Systems Test Site, the University of Maryland Eastern Shore and Navmar Applied Science Corporation.

Need:

Quite often, the County and City find businesses interested in relocating to the area which note the importance of air transportation. This involves not only delivery of products but executive personnel as well. There has also been interest in relocating aircraft from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore's Aviation Program to our airport and this project will enable the University of Maryland Unmanned Aircraft Systems Test Site to have a hangar at the test site and to also have a presence in Somerset County. Additionally, having the necessary amenities will strongly encourage businesses to consider relocating to this economically challenged region.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

This project is shown on the Airport Layout Plan as approved by the MAA and FAA. It would meet several MTP goals, such as, Community Vitality and Economic Prosperity by encouraging use of this vital resource.

3. Acceleration Lane Needed at US 13 North/MD 667:

Description:

There is no acceleration lane for vehicles travelling east on MD 667 (Rehobeth Road) to make a safe left turn onto U.S. 13 (Ocean Highway) heading north. Given the speed limit

along U.S. 13, an acceleration lane would allow vehicles to merge into the flow of traffic and improve the safety of the intersection. No additional right-of-way will be needed to construct this lane.

Need:

This acceleration lane would improve safety at the U.S. 13/MD 667 intersection.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

This project would meet the Maryland Transportation Plan (MTP) goal that addresses Safety and Security by potentially reducing collision and injury rates for motorized users.

4. Deceleration Lane Needed at MD 413 South/MD 361:

Description:

No deceleration lane exists for vehicles travelling south on MD 413 (Crisfield Highway) to make a safe turn onto MD 361 (Fairmount Road). Considering the speed limit on MD 413, a deceleration lane would provide improved safety at this intersection. Additional right-of-way may be needed to construct this lane.

Need:

This deceleration lane would improve safety at the MD 413/MD 361 intersection.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

This project would meet the MTP goal that addresses Safety and Security by potentially reducing collision and injury rates for motorized users.

5. Widening of Intersection at MD 388/MD 675:

Description:

Located within the Town of Princess Anne, this intersection has seen a significant increase in truck traffic on MD 388.

Need:

The widening of MD 388 (West Post Office Road) at its intersection with MD 675 (Somerset Avenue) will allow for safer ingress and egress of trucks. This proposal would improve safety at this intersection.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

This project would meet the MTP goal that addresses Safety and Security by improving safety at this intersection.

6. Improved Vehicular Access at US 13 North/Stewart Neck Road:

Description:

Currently the intersection of U.S. 13 (Ocean Highway) and Stewart Neck Road partially located within the Town of Princess Anne is un-signalized with minimal staging area for large vehicles crossing to/from Stewart Neck Road. Large trucks with trailers often extend into U.S. 13 blocking traffic or are forced to roll through the stop sign causing a traffic violation. A preliminary assessment by SHA recommends improvements to the intersection to the south in order to minimize this issue.

Need:

Given the extensive agricultural use in this region, the unique geometry of this intersection and the volume of traffic on US 13, safety improvements are needed.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

This project would meet the MTP goal that addresses Safety and Security by potentially reducing collision and injury rates for motorized users.

7. Dualization of MD 413:

Description:

MD 413 (Crisfield Highway) is the main access to Crisfield and consists of a single lane north and south-bound for its entire length of approximately 15 miles. For safety reasons and to accommodate future growth, dualization is recommended. A preliminary engineering study would be needed for this project.

Need:

Given the length of this road and because it's a direct connection between Crisfield and U.S. 13, traffic is fairly heavy at times. A number of accidents have occurred on this road which would be avoided if dualization were to occur.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

This project would improve safety and over time would also increase capacity as future growth occurs.

SYSTEM PRESERVATION

1. Signalization of Railroad Crossings Countywide:

Description:

The Delmarva Central Railroad tracks extend along U.S. 13 from the County's north end near the Village of Eden to the County's south end near Pocomoke City. Railroad crossings at the state highways are signalized, but need to be at the county roads as well. Somerset County DPW staff met with SHA Office of Traffic Safety staff on September 18, 2017 to conduct a site visit at these crossings. Action items were established and improvements were prioritized.

Need:

Improvements including signalization to railroad crossings at county roads are needed.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

This project would meet the MTP goal that addresses Safety and Security by improving safety at numerous railroad crossings.

2. Sidewalks along MD 529:

Description:

This project involves installation of sidewalks, ramps, crosswalks and signage to allow for a safe route.

Need:

Pedestrians from several apartment complexes located on Loretto Road need a sidewalk to safely reach destinations in Princess Anne. Sidewalks exist on Somerset Avenue, but need to be extended along Loretto Road.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

This project would meet the MTP goal that addresses Safety and Security as well as Community Vitality by allowing pedestrians to safely traverse the highway.

3. Improved Pedestrian/Cyclist Crossing at US 13 and MD 363 Intersection:

Description:

This project involves installation of pedestrian signals, sidewalks, ramps, crosswalks and signage to allow for safe crossing.

Need:

Residents from the westside of Princess Anne often cross US 13 to reach the downtown commercial area. Improvements are needed at this intersection similar to those recently completed at the U.S. 13 and MD 362 Intersection.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

This project would meet the MTP goal that address Safety and Security as well as Community Vitality by allowing pedestrians and cyclists to safely cross the major highway.

4. Woodson Elementary School Safe Routes to School Project:

Description:

The Somerset County Health Department obtained a grant to prepare a SRTS Concept Plan for Woodson Elementary School located in the City of Crisfield. This Plan assessed potential improvements to allow students to safely walk to school. Pedestrian/Cyclist improvements need to be designed and constructed for a safe route to school.

Need:

The existing sidewalk has deteriorated and is not ADA compliant. Students from nearby residential areas of Crisfield could greatly benefit from walking to school.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

This project would meet a couple of the MTP goals that address Safety and Security, as well as Community Vitality by providing a safe route to school.

5. Greenwood Elementary School and Princess Anne Elementary School Safe Routes to School Project:

Description:

The Somerset County Health Department obtained a grant to prepare a SRTS Concept Plan for Greenwood Elementary School located in the Town of Princess Anne. This Plan assessed potential improvements to allow students to safely walk to school. Similar improvements are needed at the nearby Princess Anne Elementary School. Pedestrian/Cyclist improvements need to be designed and constructed for a safe route to school.

Need:

The existing sidewalk has deteriorated and is not ADA compliant. Students from nearby residential areas of Princess Anne could greatly benefit from walking to school.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

This project would meet a couple of the MTP goals that address Safety and Security, as well as Community Vitality by providing a safe route to school.

6. Widening of Roadway along MD 363:

Description:

MD 363 (Deal Island Road) extends from Princess Anne westward to the villages of Deal Island and Wenona located along the Chesapeake Bay. Its length is approximately 20 miles and it serves as a collector route for residents traveling to Princess Anne and to other destinations via U.S. 13. This two-lane road is narrow and although increasing its width in some places may be restricted by environmental factors, there are areas where widening is possible and would improve safety. A preliminary engineering study would be needed for this project.

Need:

Where possible, the widening of MD 363 would improve the safety of travelers.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

This project would meet the MTP goal that addresses Safety and Security by providing transportation assets that maximize personal safety and security in all situations.

7. Repair of Shoulder along MD 627:

Description:

MD 627 (Oriole Road) needs shoulder repair due to severe drop-offs from the travel portion of the road to virtually a non-existent shoulder.

Need:

Shoulder repairs along MD 627 would improve the safety of both motorists and cyclists.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

This project would meet the MTP goal that addresses Safety and Security by potentially reducing collision and injury rates for vehicle and bicycle users.

8. Drainage Improvements along MD 361, MD 362, MD 380, MD 363 and MD 667:

Description:

Drainage improvements to MD 361 (Fairmount Road), MD 362 (Mt. Vernon Road), MD 380 (Main Street), MD 363 (Deal Island Road) and MD 667 (Crisfield Marion Road) near the county's municipalities and rural villages.

Need:

Assessment of the drainage systems is needed to alleviate nuisance flooding in the low-lying areas of the county.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

This project would meet the MTP goals that Enhance Safety and Security by achieving zero traffic related fatalities and serious injuries, as well as Deliver System Quality by creating infrastructure that is sustainable, resilient and in good repair.

MAINTENANCE TRANSFERS

1. Extend State Maintenance of MD 361 to the end of Rumbley Road:

Description:

MD 361 (Fairmount Road) is currently maintained by SHA to Clinton Bozman Road. The project would extend state maintenance of this highway to the end of Rumbley Road in the Village of Rumbley. The existing County right-of-way would need to be deeded to the State of Maryland.

Need:

Improved access would be provided to the local fire department (Fairmount VFD), residences, businesses and marina (Goose Creek). This would relieve Somerset County of the responsibility of maintaining a portion of the highway system and allow County efforts to be focused on the local road system.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

This project would meet the Maryland Transportation Plan (MTP) goal that addresses Community Vitality by improving the movement of people and goods that support the Village of Fairmount, the Village of Rumbley and the Village of Frenchtown. This project would also meet the MTP goal of Economic Prosperity by supporting the local watermen and farmers by improving transportation of their products to the markets.

2. Formalize State Maintenance of College Backbone Road on the Campus of UMES:

Description:

The portion of College Backbone Road within the campus of UMES is currently maintained by SHA, but owned by Somerset County. The project would formalize state maintenance of

this highway up to the Maryland Fire & Rescue Institute driveway. The existing County right-of-way would need to be deeded to the State of Maryland.

Need:

Improved access would be provided to the University of Maryland Eastern Shore campus as well as the Maryland Fire & Rescue Institute. This would relieve Somerset County of the responsibility of maintaining a portion of the highway system and allow County efforts to be focused on the local road system.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

This project would meet the Maryland Transportation Plan (MTP) goal that addresses Community Vitality by improving the movement of people and goods that support the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) and the Maryland Fire & Rescue Institute. This project would also meet the MTP goal of Economic Prosperity by supporting the educational benefits provided by UMES which are essential to a diverse and competitive workforce.

QUALITY OF SERVICE

1. Chesapeake Bay Passenger Ferry:

Description:

The project would establish a high-speed and long-range electric ferry (shuttle ship) between numerous ports along the Chesapeake Bay. It would promote tourism and multi-modal connections by allowing visitors to reach multiple destinations by boat without the need for a car, while also demonstrating the benefits of an electrified waterfront. A collaboration effort between several counties and municipalities has occurred to prepare a feasibility study to evaluate the vessel parameters, terminal sites, operational and maintenance needs, tourism and economic strategies and system partnerships.

Need:

MDOT's support for establishment of a passenger ferry system for the entire Chesapeake Bay region.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

This project would meet the following MTP goals:

1. Environmental Stewardship by minimizing and mitigating the environmental effects of transportation by using a zero emissions vessel on existing public waterways, while also demonstrating the benefits of an electrified waterfront.
2. Serve Communities & Support the Economy by expanding transportation options to allow Maryland's diverse communities to access opportunities and to support the movement of goods.
3. Deliver System Quality by delivering a reliable, high-quality, integrated transportation system.
4. Enhance Safety and Security by protecting the safety and security of all residents, workers, and visitors by developing a multi-modal alternative to the reliance on the road network by creating a port network.

2. Smith Island Passenger Ferry:

Description:

Currently residents and visitors to Smith Island are served by private passenger ferries operated by several independent local boat captains. The "Smith Island Vision Plan" identified a reliable and sustainable transportation system that meets the needs of residents and tourists as one of the Plan's five overall goals. A study funded by the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) was recently performed to determine the most feasible way to develop an effective ferry system while incorporating the existing system. Ridership numbers have been collected, and Smith Island United is willing to coordinate this effort and the County Tourism Board has the expertise to promote tourism. There is interest in implementing a pilot program that allows the individual operators to work collaboratively in providing improved ferry service. An implementation plan needs to be established to determine the number of daily trips, arrival/departure times, days/months of operation, standard operating procedures and marketing plan for this ferry service.

Need:

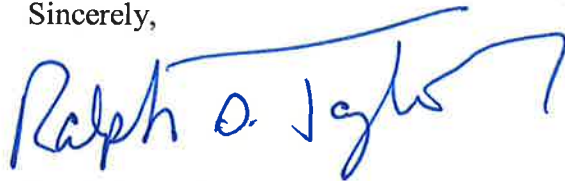
Creation of an implementation plan is needed to establish a pilot program for an effective ferry system for Smith Island.

Relationship to MTP Goals:

This project would meet the MTP goal that addresses Quality of Service by providing an improved passenger ferry system.

Any assistance from the Maryland Department of Transportation towards the accomplishment of these improvements would be greatly appreciated. Should you need any additional information regarding these improvements, please feel free to contact me at (410) 651-0320. Thank you for your attention, and again, we appreciate any consideration you can give to these projects.

Sincerely,



Ralph D. Taylor
County Administrator

Cc: Mark Crampton, District 1 Engineer, SHA
Tyson Byrne, Regional Planner, SHA
City of Crisfield
Town of Princess Anne