



**BALTIMORE COUNTY**  
M A R Y L A N D

JAMES T. SMITH JR.  
*County Executive*

September 20, 2010

Beverley K. Swaim-Staley, Secretary  
Maryland Department of Transportation  
7201 Corporate Center Drive  
P.O. Box 548  
Hanover, MD 21076

Dear Secretary Swaim-Staley:

Once again we wish to thank the Maryland Department of Transportation for its continuing support of Baltimore County's transportation priorities. As the County, Region, and State continue to recover from the economic downturn gripping our nation, we continue to look forward to a day of renewed investment in our public infrastructure.

For the past eight years, our older communities have been in the midst of a renaissance that is bringing new vibrancy to our traditional downtowns. At the same time, our smart growth areas like Owings Mills and White Marsh are flourishing as they attract major national businesses and create new neighborhoods each and every day.

As our older beltway communities thrive and our newer town centers grow ever more prosperous, it is important that we prepare our infrastructure with a long view—one that not only recognizes the requirements of today's Baltimore County, but also anticipates the needs of our communities of tomorrow.

The projects that we have identified as priorities are important to the future of Baltimore County's communities. I am well aware that the State's structural deficit poses a significant challenge to us all, but I am confident that along with the Maryland Department of Transportation we will be able to develop a plan for meeting the needs of Baltimore County's infrastructure in a fiscally responsible manner.

As we mentioned in our letter last year, given the latest budget forecast and realignment we are very pleased that resources remain available to continue the study for the Dolfield Boulevard/I-795 Interchange project. Once again, in light of fiscal realities, we have not added any project to our priority list. We have merely reordered our priorities.

### **1. Dolfield Boulevard/I-795 Interchange - Owing Mills New Town Development**

The Dolfield Boulevard/I-795 interchange remains Baltimore County's number one local transportation priority. A preliminary feasibility study, partially funded by the County, has been completed, and the study documented the need for the interchange and associated improvements not only for the County but also as improvements to the State's existing system. As you know, we recently entered into another partnering agreement with the State Highway Administration to fund up to \$625,000 of a project planning study for this vitally needed improvement.

As I said in recent years, I have several minor concerns that the analysis conducted so far may underestimate the consequences of the no-build option on the local and State road system and that the needed intersection improvements on some of the local roads may be excessive. However, the Project Planning Study will provide an appropriate vehicle to review these minor concerns. I am also hopeful that Project Planning will identify opportunities for staged construction that will permit the interchange to be constructed prior to much of the associated mainline widening of I-795. Although that widening is also needed, it would add considerable cost to the overall project, possibly delaying the advancement of the Construction program.

### **2. MD 7/MD 43 Interchange**

Baltimore County recently granted approval for the construction of the COPT Project in the vicinity of the MD 7 and MD 43 interchange. This Planned Unit Development (PUD) is located to the immediate west of the MD 7/MD 43 intersections just south of MD 43. Upon build-out this \$1 billion development will generate nearly 45,000 average daily trips onto the regional and local highway network. Many of these trips will desire to make movements to and from the eastern portion of the County, which they will be prohibited from doing until a complete interchange is constructed. The County is using two OEA-funded studies to begin the assessment process. Obviously, we will share the results of these studies with the Department when they are completed. During the Baltimore Metropolitan Council's update period this winter the County will officially change its socioeconomic data set to reflect this new development. Once the data set has been changed it is our desire to see this project added to the State's Development and Evaluation Program.

### **3. Martin MARC TOD**

With the renaissance of the Middle River area, the transformation and expansion at Aberdeen Proving Ground that is already under way, and the ongoing development surrounding MD 43, a relocated and expanded MARC Station in Middle River has great potential. Relocation to the east side of MD 43 would allow the station to complement redevelopment of the 2-million-square-foot GSA Depot facility as a mixed-use, transit-oriented development to provide office and residential space related to BRAC. We are very pleased that MDOT has recognized this future promise and undertaken the Martin State MARC Station Relocation Feasibility and TOD study, under the direction of the Office of Planning and Capital Programming. This recently completed consultant study provides a strong factual basis for future TOD planning in Middle River.

The County hopes that the relocation of the Middle River station will be part of the MARC investment plan during its initial ten-year horizon. However, to fully achieve the utility of all our MARC stations will require investment in double-decker coaches and eventually parking structures to provide adequate storage of commuter vehicles.

#### **4. Construct New Rail Transit Lines**

Baltimore County continues to be a strong supporter of the Baltimore Region Transit Plan and the transit planning process. A first class mass transit system is vital to the continued growth of communities throughout the Baltimore region. A comprehensive and integrated transit system is as important to the region's infrastructure as having appropriate highway capacity. It was a momentous occasion last summer when you stood with the Governor to announce 4C as the Locally Preferred Alternative for the Red Line. We intend to do all we can to help keep the process on track for the beginning of construction in three years. For example, in support of the process and FTA application submittal, the County recently completed a Red Line Corridor Technical Report. This report recommends broad-spectrum changes to the Proposed Land Use Map, the Growth Management Areas Map, the URDL, the Zoning Map and Water and Sewer Designations Map that would allow more transit-oriented development to occur in the County's Red Line corridor. We are also working with the MTA to begin the Station Area Advisory Committee process within our four station areas.

#### **5. BRAC Corridor Improvements**

BRAC expansion at APG presents an unprecedented economic development opportunity for Central Maryland. Pulaski Highway, the main street of the Chesapeake Science and Security Corridor (CSSC), should be a logical location to accommodate BRAC-related jobs and residents. It is already clear, however, that improvements may be needed at major intersections along the CSSC and additional through capacity and safety improvements may also be needed. We feel special consideration should be given to improvements along US40 between Ebenezer Road and Middle River Road. We continue to encourage the State to address needs for intersection improvements in the southern portion of this corridor where the future Campbell Boulevard will cross US40 (current Mohrs Lane Bridge) and MD7. To further this dialogue we are currently negotiating with your staff to forward fund the design and our portion of the construction of this project at County expense. This will allow us to begin intersection improvements prior to the State resolving its current financial issues. With the BRAC realignment drawing closer and closer, it is imperative that we have the appropriate infrastructure to accommodate the new residents and jobs that we anticipate adding to this area. The State Highway Administration has already funded a Streetscape Enhancement Project in Harford County that included removal of the concrete barrier, road resurfacing, construction of a planted and tree-lined median, and safe pedestrian crosswalks. We hope that these Streetscape enhancements will be continued in the US40 corridor through Baltimore County. This project will be an essential element of the branding for the CSSC and will be coordinated with a revitalization plan for the US40 Corridor being undertaken by the County as part of its implementation of the BRAC Action Plan. We appreciate the commitment that the State has already made to improve US40 between White

Marsh Boulevard and Middle River Road. Given the new financial realities we would still like this project to move to construction as soon as possible.

#### **6. Reisterstown Road**

The pace of development in Owings Mills and the new transit-oriented development slated for the Metro Center site will require upgrades to Reisterstown Road and its associated intersections sooner than expected. We are pleased to see that design and engineering will continue on this project even though the right-of-way phase has been delayed due to budgetary restrictions.

#### **7. Continue Beltway Improvements**

Located almost entirely in our borders, I-695 has become Baltimore County's main street; however, it also serves as a major component in the infrastructure of the entire Baltimore region. It is vital that the current Beltway construction projects are kept on track to ensure that the Beltway provides adequate support for the region's mobility needs and economic growth. It is important that we keep the current construction projects on schedule so that other necessary repairs, such as the mainline widening projects, can begin.

#### **8. I-83**

Over the years, there has been explosive growth in Southern Pennsylvania along the I-83 corridor. Many of the people who live in these Pennsylvania towns are former Maryland residents who commute to Baltimore County and the Baltimore Region. As this increased traffic causes more congestion and delays along I-83, many commuters are starting to use rural County roads as alternative methods of travel. We believe it is time to begin an investigation of options and improvements that would relieve our rural roads from these commuter burdens. We were pleased to see that an I-83 project was added to the Highway Needs Inventory, as there is significant interest in our northern communities seeking relief from cut through traffic. In January, York County initiated express bus service to Loveton, Hunt Valley and the Central Light Rail. This is an experimental service that will have three years to prove it can be viable. We need to do all we can to assist York County and our private sector employers to market this valuable service.

I would also like to partner with the Department of Transportation to conduct a feasibility study on potential improvements to I-83 south of the Padonia Road interchange, as well as nearby intersections to relieve chronic traffic congestion on the ramps serving I-83.

### **9. I-695/MD144 The Promenade At Spring Grove**

In 2006, the community's Spring Grove Vision 2010 Task Force made a series of recommendations related to the possible redevelopment of Spring Grove, should the State decide to make surplus land at Spring Grove available to Baltimore County. The task force recommended increased recreational facilities and governmental uses like a new Wilkens police precinct, Catonsville fire station, district court, and homeless shelter as the top priorities for such redevelopment. Additional recommendations of the task force included retail and entertainment usage, expansion of UMBC, possible senior housing, and improvement of local traffic patterns. The Spring Grove site and adjacent parcels offer a unique opportunity for the Catonsville community, UMBC and the region. We urge the State Highway Administration to consider access proposals to solve existing traffic problems in support of the Spring Grove 2010 Community Vision 2010 Task Force.

### **10. Streetscapes**

In addition to the BRAC corridor Streetscape, we request a logical extension of the existing Loch Raven Boulevard Streetscape from Taylor Avenue to the Baltimore City Line as well as two eastside enhancement projects. We would like to see a streetscape project initiated on Merritt Boulevard from Peninsula Expressway to German Hill Road and another project on Eastern Boulevard from White Marsh Boulevard to Chase. Finally, we respectfully request construction funding for the Wilson Point Road Streetscape Project. This project began with a community-based planning process in 2000, but was unfortunately sidetracked for many years. Engineering began in early 2007 and will be completed in 2008. The project includes sidewalk improvements on Eastern Boulevard from Martin Boulevard to Wilson Point Road, and roadway, drainage, and streetscape improvements on Wilson Point Road from Eastern Boulevard to Strawberry Point Road. This is an important project for the Wilson Point community, and they are eager to see it brought to its completion. I look forward to working together with the Department of Transportation to find a way to fully fund and finally complete this \$6.15 million project.

### **11. Leeds Avenue Ramp Connector**

The success of the Halethorpe MARC station has had the unintended consequence of adding significant traffic to the Arbutus community. This is particularly true during evening peak rush hours as commuters leaving the rail station utilize local Arbutus streets to reach the Leeds Avenue ramp westbound to I-695. We urge SHA to pursue a project to provide a direct connection from Southwestern Boulevard to the existing Leeds Avenue on-ramp.

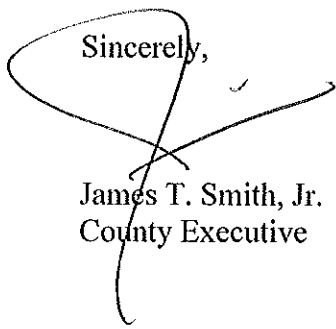
I would like to thank you in advance for your consideration of all our critical projects. Given our continued sluggish economy I am keenly aware of the additional pressures you and your department are currently managing. I look forward to your County visit on September 20<sup>th</sup> and continuing to work with the Department of Transportation to provide Baltimore County and the State of Maryland the critical infrastructure it deserves.

Beverley K. Swain-Staley, Secretary

September 20, 2010

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Sincerely,



James T. Smith, Jr.  
County Executive

- c: Honorable Martin O'Malley, Governor  
Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr.  
Speaker of the House Michael E. Busch  
Chairman Norman Stone & Baltimore County Senate Delegation  
Chairman Eric M. Bromwell and Baltimore County House Delegation  
Fred Homan  
Edward Adams  
Emery Hines