

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

JAMES T. SMITH JR.  
*County Executive*

September 17, 2007

Mr. John Porcari, Secretary  
Maryland Department of Transportation  
7201 Corporate Center Drive  
P.O. Box 548  
Hanover, MD 21076

Dear Secretary Porcari:

In response to your recent request the following projects are submitted as Baltimore County's transportation funding priorities. The first four projects represent our most pressing needs.

**Dolfield Boulevard/I-795 Interchange and the Owing Mills New Town Development**

The Dolfield Boulevard/I-795 interchange remains my number one local priority. A preliminary feasibility study partially funded by the County has been completed. The study documented the need for the interchange and associated improvements. 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.

I have several minor concerns that the analysis conducted so far may underestimate the consequences of the no-build option on the local 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 hopeful that Project Planning will identify opportunities for staged construction permitting the interchange to be constructed prior to much of the associated mainline widening of I-795. The latter is also needed but adds considerable cost to the overall project, possibly delaying the advancement of the overall project to the Construction program.

I hope that the previous administration's intent to seek assistance from the private sector will be curtailed. Although there are several million square feet of development opportunity left in the Owings Mills area including approximately three million at the Department's TOD site, Owings Mills is about seventy-five percent developed.

We have an enviable mix of businesses that contribute tax dollars to the State. Some of our major employers in Owings Mills include the following: CareFirst, BlueCross, Blue Shield; T. Rowe Price Associates; Solo Cup; Toyota Financial Services; Global Payments; Legg Mason; ADP; Inovant; and Shire Pharmaceuticals. These firms have been in business in Owings Mills for several years. I do not believe we can in good faith expect existing Owings Mills businesses to pay for this much needed infrastructure.

While I understand that the cost of this interchange improvement will be several times more than the historical estimate of \$30 million, delays in moving the interchange forward may result in even greater construction costs. Meanwhile severe congestion on I-795 and the adjacent road network continue to increase. Building this project in a timely fashion will require an innovative financing and staging solution. With this in mind, I am hopeful that your Department will keep this project moving forward as planned.

#### **US40/MD7 Corridor Improvements**

Over and above the recommended streetscape improvements referenced later in this correspondence there is a real need to assess potential improvements at major intersections in the Pulaski Highway corridor as a result of expected BRAC development and redevelopment activities. There should also be an assessment as to whether additional through capacity is needed. In the southern portion of this corridor where Campbell Boulevard crosses US40 (current Mohrs Lane Bridge) and MD7 we strongly feel that the State should address any potential intersection improvements that may be needed.

Also several businesses in the vicinity of the White Marsh Boulevard and Philadelphia Road interchange have indicated that they are having difficulty accessing the regional highway network through the existing partial interchange. Due to the nearby reconstruction that will be occurring as a result of the I-95 project, we feel it would be appropriate for the State to conduct a study of movements through this interchange to determine what improvements might be feasible and warranted.

#### **Continued Beltway Improvements**

Because it is located almost entirely in Baltimore County, I consider the Beltway as Baltimore County's main street. But clearly, the Beltway is also the State Highway Administration's main street in Baltimore County. And like a main street anywhere, if it does not function properly, it will have a huge negative impact upon the area it is serving. It is vital that the current Beltway construction projects are kept on track and possibly accelerated so that \$800 million more in needed, but not yet funded projects, can filter into the program to ensure that the Beltway provides adequate support for the region's

mobility needs and economic growth. As the Department gets closer to completing all of the beltway bridge widening projects, we get ever closer to the time to start the mainline widening projects.

### **I-83 Corridor**

I would like the Department to conduct a feasibility study of potential improvements to I-83 from the beltway to Shawan Road. In addition to examining the need for improvements along I-83 and at the Padonia and Timonium Road interchanges, the study should extend to nearby intersections.

The Padonia Road and Beaver Dam/Greenspring Roads intersections as well as intersections along Timonium Road between I-83 and York Road need to be studied, especially given traffic congestion on the ramps serving I-83. I look forward to examining any partnering opportunities that may exist for this study.

Over the years there has been absolutely explosive growth in Southern Pennsylvania along the I-83 corridor. Many of the people who live in these Pennsylvania towns tend to be former Maryland residents who commute to Baltimore County and the Baltimore Region. As congestion and delays increase along I-83 many commuters are starting to use rural County roads as commute alternatives. We believe it is time for the State to begin an investigation of options and improvements that would relieve our rural roads from these commuter burdens. We recently became aware of York County's consideration of express commuter bus service to Hunt Valley and Light Rail connections. There appears to be significant interest in this proposal, and we urge MDOT (MTA) to facilitate and support this effort.

### **Reisterstown Road/Painters Mill Road**

Your Department should expedite the intersection improvements along Reisterstown Road that have been identified in the Development and Evaluation program. The pace of development in Owings Mills and the new development slated for the Metro Center site require that the upgrades to Reisterstown Road occur sooner rather than later. We are pleased to see that design and right-of-way have been initiated on this project. While we are aware of the issues we would nonetheless prefer to see this project move faster.

### **Streetscapes**

Our most urgent Streetscape request is for Pulaski Highway from the Harford County Line to the Baltimore City Line. The State Highway Administration (SHA) has funded a U.S. 40 Streetscape Enhancement Project in Joppatowne, from the Harford County line to Joppa Road. It includes removal of the concrete barrier, road resurfacing, construction of a planted and tree-lined median, and safe pedestrian crosswalks.

These Streetscape enhancements should be continued in the US40 corridor through Baltimore County. Along with the County's commercial revitalization efforts this will make the US40 corridor even more appealing to BRAC-related contractors, and should be designed to alleviate current documented congestion issues as well as forecasted traffic flows. This Streetscape project will be an essential element of the branding for the Chesapeake Science and Security Corridor. We urge that this enhancement effort proceed with the consideration of the necessary capacity improvements mentioned earlier in this correspondence.

Additionally, 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.

### **Leeds Avenue Ramp Connector**

The success of the Halethorpe MARC station has had the unintended consequences of adding significant traffic to the Arbutus community. This is particularly true during evening peak rush hours as commuters leaving the rail station utilize Oregon Avenue, East Drive, and other 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.

### **Martin MARC TOD**

The redevelopment of the GSA Depot and the redeployment of BRAC facilities presents an unparalleled opportunity to incorporate a new and expanded Middle River MARC station as a component of the east side redevelopment activities. This project will obviously be complimented by the enhanced MARC service necessary to support BRAC additions to Harford County. As you are probably aware, the GSA Depot recently sold for \$37.5 million bringing redevelopment to the site one step closer.

### **Paper Mill Road Relocated**

MD145, Paper Mill Road Relocated, is key to the continued economic development of Hunt Valley and solving the access issues of the area. Baltimore County is ready to assist MDOT and local representatives in working toward a solution to this transportation problem while addressing the core community issues. Any further delay will cause increased congestion and may harm the development and redevelopment activities that are occurring in Hunt Valley.

### **Loveton Area**

There is a need to conduct a Loveton Access study due to increasing economic activity within the Loveton area. This analysis will require an approach that is sensitive to the northern section of York Road and the valley areas west of I-83. It should be noted that Delegate Kach recently met with SHA to discuss some of these issues and has been involved for some time with various North County communities.

### **Construct New Transit Lines**

The County continues to be a strong supporter of the Baltimore Region Transit Plan and the planning process. I believe that all of the studies should be completed in a comprehensive yet expeditious manner that will allow the region to identify and implement the next generation of mass transit service. It remains imperative that the study produces a viable candidate line to ensure that the Baltimore Region does not fall further behind our Washington counterpart.

The imbalance is glaring when comparing rail transit services in the two regions of our State. A comprehensive and integrated transit system is equally important to the region as having appropriate highway capacity. As the completion of the environmental documents for the Red Line approaches, I look forward to beginning an analysis of the Green Line's potential. As I am sure you are aware, the County recently requested that the Green Line study assess the potential of relocating a terminal station from the vicinity of Northeast Baltimore City to the vicinity of Northeast Baltimore County.

### **Towson Improvements**

During the next decade Sheppard Pratt, St. Joseph Medical Center, Greater Baltimore Medical Center, and Towson University are planning to implement a number of substantial capital improvements over what is basically a shared campus. We believe it would be appropriate for the State to assist in providing the appropriate infrastructure to support the major improvements that the Towson 4 plan to implement. The required infrastructure would involve roadway reconstruction, intersection improvements, and pedestrian amenities including a pedestrian underpass. The required improvements would occur both on roadways within the joint campuses and on roads on the boundary of the joint campuses.

A Neighborhood Shuttle Study was completed in Towson several years ago. Various communities and businesses were very involved in this process and are looking forward to seeing their hard work implemented as increased and better transit service in Towson. The recent Towson UDAT and Charrette also identified this service as a key element for improving circulation in Towson. I understand that the Towson Shuttle Study is in the process of being updated by MTA and look forward to reviewing the updated study once it is available.

**I-695/MD144: The Promenade At Spring Grove**

We understand the challenges in providing access for the significant amount of traffic expected to be generated by the proposed Promenade development. The Spring Grove site and adjacent parcels offer a unique opportunity for the Catonsville community. We urge the State Highway Administration to carefully consider the access proposal suggested by the developer to solve both existing traffic problems, and accommodate the future needs of the proposed development, and support the vision for the adjacent community including the recommendation of the Spring Grove Task Force.

**Continue To Improve Bus Transit Service**

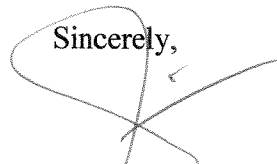
Public comments suggest that the Phase II GBBI improvements were remarkably better received than the Phase I improvements. Also, the extended time frame for implementation has allowed the public to be in a better position to prepare for the changes. However, the substance of some of the changes and the manner of public involvement in the initial GBBI recommendations still leaves much to be desired. We are pleased to hear that the MTA will be revisiting some of the Phase I recommendations.

**Regional Priority Project**

The County has been involved over the last several years in the regional Management and Operations effort managed by the BRTB. A recent correspondence from the prior administration indicated that the appropriate way for the Department to consider a regional recommendation was for it to be included in the jurisdictions' priority letters. Per that suggestion, we have included this section in our priority letter. We support the highest ranked regional priority, which is the conversion of LED signals and the installation of battery back-up power at critical local and State intersections such as those along evacuation routes. We understand that the State has developed a multi-year schedule for this work, and we request that the State allocate funds to complete this work in the Baltimore region as soon as possible.

As the largest jurisdiction in the Baltimore metropolitan area, and as one of the larger jurisdictions in the State, Baltimore County understandably has a number of infrastructure improvements that need to be made to support our continued economic growth and development, and to improve the mobility of our citizens. I am most appreciative of your assistance and counsel from the moment you took the reins of MDOT and look forward to achieving these much needed transportation goals both on behalf of Baltimore County and the entire State of Maryland.

Sincerely,



James T. Smith, Jr.  
County Executive

Mr. John D. Porcari  
September 17, 2007  
Page 7

c: Governor Martin O'Malley  
Maryland Department of Transportation Deputy Secretary Beverley K. Swaim-  
Staley  
Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration  
Administrator Neil Pederson  
Senate Baltimore County Delegation members  
House Baltimore County Delegation members  
Honorable S.G. Samuel Moxley  
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