

Bay Crossing Study Public Comments November 1, 2018 – November 30, 2018

DATE	MEDIUM	COMMENT (Personally Identifying Information Removed)
11/8/2018	Web	<p>Heather Lowe Project Manager, BayCrossing Study MDTA 2310 Broening Highway Baltimore, Maryland 21224 November 8, 2018</p> <p>Dear Ms. Lowe:</p> <p>I am writing on behalf of American Farmland Trust to urge you to give significant consideration to the potential impacts on Eastern Shore farmland, farming, and farmers in your Chesapeake Bay Crossing study. Below is a summary of issues that we hope you will consider:</p> <p>Farmland is Essential Infrastructure for Maryland’s Economy and Efforts to Combat Climate Change –</p> <p>Farmland grows our food, supports our rural communities, and contributes a trillion dollars a year to the U.S. economy -- over 8.25 billion dollars from Maryland’s agricultural land, and 3 billion dollars of value add. Farming is a critical economic engine for the Shore. Queen Anne’s County alone boasts the most farmland acres and the largest farming economy in the state of Maryland. Kent County has the largest percentage of land devoted to agriculture of all counties in Maryland at 76 percent. Talbot and Caroline counties are similarly reliant on farming and farmland.</p> <p>Well-managed farmland also protects wildlife, controls floods, suppresses fires, and protects our water and wildlife. It provides open space and supports recreation that many American’s cherish.</p> <p>Importantly, farmland is a one-of-a-kind-tool in the fight against climate change and can help Maryland meet its 2020 goal to reduce GHGs by 34.66 million tons. According to the 2017 annual report of the Maryland Commission on Climate Change,</p> <p>“Land conservation and sustainable management offers an important mechanism for mitigating and adapting to climate change. Healthy and vigorous forests and grass lands not only provide direct benefits in</p>

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		<p>GHG reduction but keeping them intact also helps to avoid or diminish additional GHG emissions which would be associated with development. “</p> <p>Closely Analyze the Impacts of Land Use Decisions on Farmland -</p> <p>In May 2018, American Farmland Trust released the most comprehensive assessment ever undertaken on the loss of U.S. farmland, “Farms Under Threat: The State of America’s Farmland.” This national report sounds a stark warning: the loss of farmland is serious and accelerating.</p> <p>Key findings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 1992 and 2012, almost 31 million acres of farmland were lost, 3 acres a minute, 175 acres per hour no longer available to produce food, fuel, and fiber, • Nearly twice the area of farmland was lost than was previously shown, • Development disproportionately occurred on agricultural lands, with 62 percent of all development occurring on farmland, and • Expanding urban areas accounted for 59 percent of the loss. Low-density residential development, or the building of houses on 1-to-20-acre parcels, accounted for 41 percent. <p>A subsequent report will analyze state-level data on past farmland conversion and the effectiveness of state-level farmland protection policies including a state policy score card.</p> <p>Investigate Impacts to the Most Productive, Versatile, and Resilient Farmland -</p> <p>“Farms Under Threat” identified that only 1/3 of the agricultural land in the country is ideally suited for intensive food and crop production or roughly 17 percent of all the land in the continental United States. Maryland’s Eastern Shore is blessed with a high percentage of prime farmland, as high as 77 percent for counties like Kent and 55 percent for Queen Anne’s Counties.</p>

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		<p>Closely Analyze the Impacts of Transportation Choices -</p> <p>While establishing a new bridge corridor or expanding the current one followed by the expansion of necessary highways may be the most obvious approach to addressing traffic congestion, there is growing consensus this approach is ineffective. According to a report released by the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy,</p> <p>“In fact, it can actually have the unintended consequence of exacerbating congestion over the long term by inducing additional traffic and development that would not have occurred otherwise had the facility not been widened or built. This leads to a vicious cycle of roadway expansion, increased travel demand and development, increased traffic congestion, new roadway expansion, and soon.”</p> <p>Alternative solutions to traffic congestion have been proposed and should be considered -- a regional transportation authority and system, managed demand strategies, and land use policies that promote compact growth and walkable communities to name just a few. It is also important to note that these alternatives are in line with the Maryland Commission on Climate Change’s recommendations which emphasize the need to avoid or reduce future growth in vulnerable coastal areas (like the Chesapeake Bay region) and preserve undeveloped lands including those critical in supporting farming to avoid placing people and property at risk.</p> <p>In AFT’s analyses, development has been shown to follow highways and thus is a significant driver of farmland conversion. Careful consideration of these factors should be included in your study given the current trends of farmland loss and the significant acreage and quality soil that could be gobbled up by new highways and resulting development.</p> <p>Development has unintended and often unobserved consequences on farming. It uproots farmers, pushes food production to more marginal lands, and hampers the ability of remaining farmers to do what they do productively. The Eastern Shore is a unique place where all the above are relevant.</p>

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		<p>Farmland TOO is critical infrastructure akin to roads and bridges. Please don't let our farmers down by making it more challenging than it already is to feed and sustain us all.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and consideration of farmland, farming, and farmers in your evaluation of the Chesapeake Bay Crossing.</p> <p>Respectfully, [Name Removed], president and CEO, American Farmland Trust</p>
11/12/2018	Web	When are the "Range of Corridor Alternatives" going to be released?
11/13/2018	Email	<p>Thank you for the opportunity to review this plan.</p> <p>I am delighted to see the plans for installing solar canopies in MVA parking facilities!</p> <p>I encourage MDOT to carefully consider the possibility of not expanding the Bay Bridge crossings, due to the serious limitations of the receiving areas for any more traffic. Bridge crossings are only at a maximum for beach tourist traffic, which carries vehicles to the MD and DE beaches. These areas are already uncomfortably crowded and more inputs are not in any way desirable to the citizens of the Shore.</p> <p>If this is not done, then I support adding lanes to the existing bridge instead of creating a new facility elsewhere, which would entail unavoidable environmental and social impacts on the Eastern Shore.</p> <p>Yours, [Name Removed] [Address Removed]</p>
11/27/2018	Email	<p>Dear Ms. Lowe:</p> <p>I hope you had a wonderful holiday. I would like to comment on the Bay Crossing Study. Kent County is a beautiful place full of historic, cultural and agricultural landscapes. Creating a new corridor to the 'Shore' would be detrimental to the wonderful qualities of life experienced by those of us who live here. One only needs to look at what happened to Kent Island over the years to imagine the result of an additional bay crossing. What was once a quiet area of farms and historic places is would be now full of strip malls, fast food, and asphalt. This is not progress, its sprawl! Many might think this will bring jobs and growth, I believe it will bring crime, pollution, and destruction to a pristine natural environment.</p> <p>I care deeply about preserving Kent County, and I know that a highway cutting through this landscape is not compatible with that goal. I oppose a new bay crossing.</p>

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		<p>Could there be a way to use the existing corridor by enhancing it, updating, and expanding the existing roadways. I was reading that there would need to be updates to the current bridge by 2020. Why not update, enhance and expand with this needed construction. It would seem to me that using the monies to review new corridors could be better spent to helping many people not just a few pockets.</p> <p>Sincerely, [Name Removed] [Address Removed]</p>