



## COUNTY COUNCIL OF TALBOT COUNTY

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December 17, 2019

Melissa Williams, Director of Planning and Program Development  
Maryland Transportation Authority  
2310 Broening Highway  
Baltimore, Maryland 21224

**Re: Chesapeake Bay Crossing Study - Corridor 8 Alternative – Items of Consideration Justifying Denial as “Preferred Corridor Alternative”**

Dear Ms. Williams:

The Talbot County Council is on record with your office against the Corridor 8 proposal moving into the Tier 2 study and as such has several additional items to submit justifying that position. Specifically, the County’s recently updated Comprehensive Plan and related land use documents raise numerous areas of concern that should preclude Corridor 8 Alternative from becoming the “Preferred Corridor Alternative”.

The County has adopted a Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Plan which affects all waterfront areas of the County 1,000 feet landward from the shoreline or the inland edge of tidal wetlands. This action to implement the State’s Critical Area program effectively converted 57,498 waterfront acres to a very low density of one dwelling unit per 20 acres. These areas are characterized by natural environments such as floodplains and wetlands, agriculture, forestry and fisheries, and critical habitat. It is the County’s intent to retain these areas in such uses, in support of the State’s efforts regarding the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area.

The upland portions contiguous to the Critical Area are equally important because of the high concentration of sensitive natural areas in close proximity to the tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay. Like the Critical Area, this area also features a mix of agriculture, low-density residential and natural resource areas.

In addition, these narrow land areas have few routes to inland parts of the County. Flooding, traffic and other road obstructions have demonstrated legitimate cause for concern, should development overcome the capacity for safe transit through these areas.

Conserving the agriculture, forestry, recreational and resource conservation uses that form the character of these areas is a high priority. Detailed zoning regulations have been adopted which direct, manage, control and minimize the adverse impacts of growth of these sensitive areas. The Chesapeake Bay Crossing Study Option 8 alignment would bisect and directly impact the County's most environmentally sensitive areas. The County has adopted detailed zoning regulations to direct, manage, control and minimize the adverse impacts of growth on these areas, including regulations in the Rural Conservation (RC) and Western Rural Conservation (WRC) zoning district.

Specific policy statements of the Comprehensive Plan follow as noted:

- The County is committed to protecting these sensitive environmental areas and future development in the sensitive areas should be primarily characterized by open space, agriculture, forestry, and low-density single-family detached homes (Policy 2.27). New development is restricted in sensitive areas and the protection and enhancement of environmental resources should be ensured (Policy 6.27).
- Agriculture and forest cover should remain the dominant land uses (Policy 2.28).
- Development within the 100-year floodplain associated with the Critical Area is also limited to minimize disturbance and protect life and property (Policy 6.23).
- The County also recognizes the importance of stream corridors as water quality buffers and wildlife habitat and encourages their protection in an undisturbed state (Policy 6.24).
- A County objective is to coordinate with federal and state agencies to preserve existing wetlands where possible and goal of "no net loss" of wetlands (Policy 6.30).
- Maintaining natural topography, drainage ways and tree cover should be a priority when determining the location of roads, placement of structures and site improvements (Policy 6.34).
- Forests and vegetation should be preserved in stream corridors to preserve the integrity of associated waterways (Policy 6.29).
- The County directs intense growth and development away from threatened and endangered species habitat and maintain low density conservation zoning in areas where such habitats are identified (Policy 6.35).

In addition to the County Comprehensive Plan, the County's Green Infrastructure Plan identifies multiple focus areas throughout the County. The Green Infrastructure Plan is an inventory of land and water areas that correspond with conservation priorities based on defined attributes. Two areas in particular would be impacted by Option 8; the Claiborne/Eastern Bay Shores and Miles/Wye East River Peninsula focus areas. Through the Plan, the County has identified these focus areas to enable County leaders to make the most educated conservation and land use decisions and to protect the County's valuable ecological, agricultural and aquatic resources.

Greenway hubs are significant areas that provide for wildlife habitat and biodiversity. They also often have scenic qualities, emphasize cultural and historic resources and include places or trails with historic and cultural values providing educational, scenic, recreational or economic benefits to the community.

**Ms. Melissa Williams**  
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Corridor 8 would also impact four of the County's historic villages: Claiborne, Copperville, Tunis Mills and Unionville. These villages are notable among the County's residential areas; they are low density historic residential communities that are an important component of the County's rural character and recognized for their significant heritage and pattern of development. The County is committed to safeguarding these attributes and maintaining their sense of place.

It is for the above outlined reasons that the Talbot County Council is against having Corridor 8 selected as the "Preferred Corridor Alternative". The Council stands ready to discuss this matter with any party necessary to further the case against moving forward with Corridor 8.

Sincerely,

COUNTY COUNCIL OF TALBOT COUNTY

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CWP', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Corey W. Pack, President

CWP/jkm