



**Office of the County Executive
STEUART PITTMAN**

June 12, 2024

Mr. Paul J. Wiedefeld, Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Drive
Hanover, MD 21076

Dear Secretary Wiedefeld:

On behalf of Anne Arundel County, I wish to share my concerns regarding the direction of the MdTA NEPA Tier II Chesapeake Bay Bridge Crossing Study. At a meeting held for impacted agencies and jurisdictions on May 22, 2024, MdTA staff and consultants indicated the intent to alter the NEPA study, including the study area's limits and the elimination of some alternatives to be considered. I appreciate the opportunity as a participating jurisdiction to weigh in on the scope of the study as the project continues to progress. As the public meetings for this process are held, I encourage the MDTA to explain more fully the rationale behind the decision to limit the scope of the study area. While I share concerns regarding the cost of the study, it is important for the public and for partner agencies to have a full understanding of the data, costs, and operational impacts behind decisions to limit the scope of the project.

During the presentation, it was revealed that the study limits would be reduced to an alignment east of the Severn River bridge to routes 301/50 in Queen Anne's County. This reduction of the study limits negates the impact of bridge traffic along Route 50, Route 2, and Interstate 97. Evaluating the impact of the bridge project reduces the overall impact of the project benefits, especially for the adjacent local community.

The presentation also indicated the elimination of the tunnel option, tunnel-bridge option, and double-stacked bridge option. While operationally, it is clear that these options might present challenges, without a strong analytical justification or inclusion of fiscal cost-benefit data, it is hard to understand the rationale for eliminating these options at this time. These alterations included completely eliminating several alternative transportation options by eliminating the ferry, train, and bus rapid transit options. The alternatives analysis section is the heart of the environmental impact statement. Based on the information and analysis presented in the

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sections on the Affected Environment and the Environmental Consequences, it should present the environmental impacts of the proposal and the alternatives in comparative form, thus defining the issues and providing a clear basis for choice among options by the decision-maker and the public.

The last segment of the presentation provided three different bridge options as the only alternatives, with placement and lane widths as the only variations for alternatives. They presented bridge alternatives, which included a phased approach with two bridges being constructed several years apart while the older structures would stay in place with assumed demolition once the next structure was built. This would mean if a bridge were constructed, the next bridge may not be constructed for several years therefore, the alleviation of congestion would remain due to the bottleneck still being in place. NEPA requires that the potential environmental impacts of each alternative be identified and used in determining which alternatives should be advanced through the NEPA analysis and selection process (as long as they also meet the project purpose and need). The selection of reasonable alternatives should be based on: 1) consideration of alternatives that avoid impacts, 2) consideration of the alternatives that minimize impacts; and 3) consideration of the potential mitigation of impacts of each alternative, all while meeting the project purpose and need.

Just last week, the Anne Arundel County Transportation Commission presented to me the results of a George Mason University study evaluating an Eastern Bay Area Rapid Transit system that would include a 58' diameter tunnel to accommodate six lanes of traffic and two group rapid transit lanes for vehicles that would traverse a raised roadway that would follow the center of Route 50 from Washington, D.C. to Ocean City. I was intrigued by the presentation of this regional solution, and I'd hate to think that a decision by the group working on the NEPA study would effectively foreclose consideration of forward-looking plans like this one.

I look forward to continuing to work with you and your team on the future replacement of the Bay Bridge spans while addressing congestion issues in the Annapolis area and ensuring fiscally responsible decisions are made. By ensuring that sufficient information is shared with the public and partner agencies during future meetings, we can all work together successfully on this important project.

Sincerely,



Steuart Pittman
County Executive

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