

The Honorable Larry Hogan, Governor of the State of Maryland
Board of Public Works
80 Calvert St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Peter Franchot, Comptroller of Maryland
Board of Public Works
80 Calvert St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Nancy Kopp, Treasurer of the State of Maryland
Board of Public Works
80 Calvert St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

May 29, 2017

Dear Mr. Hogan, Mr. Franchot, and Ms. Kopp:

As a member of the Maryland Board of Public Works, you will soon vote on whether to allow the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to move forward on a plan to expand I-495 and I-270 by adding two to four toll lanes to each of these highways.

I urge you to oppose this proposal as it fails to protect the best interests of Maryland's taxpayers, communities, and the environment.

It is premature to approve this project before an environmental impact statement has been conducted to assess how it would affect our climate, air, water, and the public health. In this letter I will focus on its negative impacts on air pollution and the climate.

There is ample evidence that the primary users of highways are not the people that live near the highways and have to breathe the pollution that is created from highway use. Air pollution leads to premature death, asthma attacks. In fact, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology completed a report several years ago and found that Marylanders have the highest death rate from air pollution in the nation.¹ The Center for Disease Control has also found that Marylanders face above average rates of asthma.² Adding more lanes to 495 and 270 will just make this worst for the communities of Hollywood, Lanham, Ardmore, and Largo among many others.

The case has been made in the media that speeding up travel on the highways will actually decrease pollution because it will decrease congestion. While that might be true in theory if no additional cars are added to system, there is ample evidence that more cars

¹ <http://marylandreporter.com/2013/09/13/maryland-emissions-related-deaths-highest-in-u-s/>

² https://www.cdc.gov/asthma/stateprofiles/asthma_in_md.pdf

will use the road after an expansion and congestion will increase following construction of more lanes. An expansion of the I-405 near Los Angeles that was completed five years ago has now lead to slower times due to the increased congestion.³ In Northern Virginia only those that can afford a nearly \$50 dollar toll on some days aren't stuck in congested traffic after hot lanes were recently implemented.⁴ And lets not forget Maryland's expansion of I-270 that was projected to relieve congestion for 20 years, but after seven years was yet again congested.

Given that in all of these examples of road capacity increases led to the same or worst congestion that means there will be more cars stuck in traffic polluting the residents along those roads, exacerbating their asthma, and adding to the health cost of Marylanders than there are now.

Additionally, there are concerns about the climate impacts of this decision. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently released a report that gives the world until 2030 to cut our carbon dioxide emissions in half.⁵ Maryland is moving the right direction with electricity, but not with transportation. The transportation sector makes up nearly 30% of Maryland's greenhouse gas emissions, making it the second largest emitter.⁶ Given that we would expect level or increased levels of congestion from expansion of I-495 and I-270, this project would send those emissions in the wrong direction. At \$50/ton, Maryland's greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector are already expected to be causing \$1.9 billion in damages, and making that number larger through this project is not fiscally responsible.

In comments to MDOT, the public expressed strong support for transit solutions to relieve congestion. Yet transit is not a part of the consideration. Transit requires less road space per user, and setting up bus only lanes and pre-boarding fare taking, aka bus rapid transit, is an inexpensive option that has been demonstrated to get drivers out of their cars around the world. It also is a cleaner option in terms of air pollution and greenhouse gases.

Furthermore, Transportation Secretary Rahn has cited the need to smooth freight transportation around Washington. Creating alternatives that actually reduce congestion, such as bus rapid transit, will take single occupancy vehicles off of the road easing the way for freight travel get around Washington, DC. Adding lanes will just lead to more driving keeping all of that freight travel stuck with it.

³ <https://la.curbed.com/2019/5/6/18531505/405-widening-traffic-los-angeles-carpool-lane>

⁴ https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/trafficandcommuting/year-old-66-express-lanes-have-caused-shifts-in-commuter-behavior-but-not-necessarily-in-ways-officials-hoped/2018/12/08/6e78d944-e832-11e8-a939-9469f1166f9d_story.html

⁵ <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

⁶ https://climatechange.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2014/11/GGRA_Report_Final_11-2-15.pdf

Maryland has some of the greatest minds in the country and has always been a leader. We need to put that to use and come up with 21st solutions to congestion. At the very least, it is premature to move forward on this proposal to expand I-495 and I-270 until more options are analyzed and the environmental impact statements are complete. I urge you to oppose it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joseph Jakuta". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Joseph Jakuta
Mount Rainier, MD

Cc: Senator Chris Van Hollen
Senator Benjamin Cardin
Representative Anthony Brown
State Senator Malcolm Augustine
Delegate Dianna Fennell
Delegate Julian Ivey
Council Member Calvin S. Hawkins, II,
Council Member Mel Franklin
Council Member Deni Taveras