

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

Re: Beltway and I-270 Expansion and WSSC water and sewer line relocation

Dear Comptroller Franchot:

The Maryland Department of Transportation had repeatedly promised that the \$11 billion plan to widen I-495 and I-270 for privatized, for-profit tollways would pay for itself without taxpayer risk or subsidies. But recent developments have shown that this it is clear that this is because the costs are being externalized. This is a problem and not in the long-term financial interest of us that living in the Washington metropolitan area.

The Washington Suburban Sanitation Commission (WSSC) recently told Prince George's and Montgomery County officials that it could cost as much as \$2 billion to move water and sewer lines to make way for the proposed private toll lanes on I-495 and I-270.¹ Under current law, this cost would fall on WSSC customers. The company that would build the lanes and collect the tolls won't have to pay a dime. This is not appropriate; costs for moving should not be born by WSSC customers, but solely by road users.

This is particular galling given the fact that 10% of Marylanders and 15% of Marylanders of color don't even own a car.² So WSSC customers in these will have to pay higher water bills for travel lanes that they don't have a vehicle to drive on. And that isn't even considering the countless WSSC customers, such as myself, that bike or takes public transit to work. This is a prime example of privatizing the profits and socializing the costs. Finally, in the aftermath of Covid-19 there will be an expansion of telecommuting it is likely that there will be an even larger population that will have to pay higher water bills and won't use these new lanes.

And this isn't even getting to the other costs that local communities will be stuck with: greater air pollution, stormwater management expenses, loss of park land, an increase in global warming vehicle emissions, more pollution in our streams and rivers. I am particularly considered about the increase in air pollution since the Washington, DC area is not meeting federal air quality standards for ozone and additional traffic lanes will make it more challenging to ensure we have healthy air. There also multiple schools located along the beltway, some of which are also located near to rail lines (e.g., Flora M Singer, James McHenry, and Springhill Lake – all of which are majority minority), that are getting higher levels of air pollution due to exposures from both the beltway and CSX trains, and this will only add to the burdens placed on these communities.

I care about fiscal responsibility, the health of our population, and the future climate and want you your power on the Board of Public Works to protect Maryland and us taxpayers from MDOT's bad deal before it's too late.

The Beltway expansion shouldn't happen because its bad policy, and you need to make sure that these costs (and frankly all of the other economic costs born by the populations living in the wake of the new lanes) are including being born directly by the builders and users of the lanes and not socialized and paid by the rest of us.

Sincerely,



Joseph Jakuta
Mount Rainier, MD

¹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/trafficandcommuting/moving-pipes-to-add-toll-lanes-to-beltway-i-270-will-cost-up-to-2-billion-wssc-says/2020/03/12/0d0f89fe-6406-11ea-acc8-80c22bbee96f_story.html

² https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Car_access/By_race~ethnicity:49791/United_States/Maryland/