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January 13, 2018

Chair Charles Allen  
Transportation Planning Board  
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments  
777 N. Capitol Street, Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20002

Re: Draft Visualize 2045 Long Range Plan

Dear Chair Allen and members of the Transportation Planning Board:

As a past member of the TPB's Citizens Advisory Committee, and a current member of Purple Line NOW!, Action Committee for Transit, and Montgomery County Sierra Club, I pay attention to transportation issues and especially want to see our region develop more transit, better land use, and fewer highways. I have listed below some items that I see as supporting/incorporating core findings of the TPB's Long Range Plan Task Force, while other items (also mentioned below) do not. Visualize 2045 should emphasize Balanced Land Use, Transportation Demand Management, Bus Rapid Transit, and Metro Core Capacity. The TPB should push the jurisdictional transportation planners to address climate change, the east-west economic divide, and access for all in their submissions.

In that regard, the number of highway and arterial road expansion projects across suburban Maryland (and Virginia) in this draft Visualize 2045 plan cause concern. Certainly a number are necessary but over the long term, if we don't change the pattern and design of development and achieve the TPB goals of focusing more growth in activity centers in a pedestrian and bicycle friendly, and transit-accessible environment, then we will not achieve a sustainable and effective transportation system. Smart growth advocates have long argued that the Long Range Plan should be focused on investing in TOD packages of local streets, bike/pedestrian and transit, along with rail and BRT connections between centers.

Here are some comments I hope you will consider:

- 1) Transit project dates should be moved up to as early an implementation year as possible.
- 2) Strongly support all bicycle infrastructure projects.
- 3) Support all bus rapid transit projects that meet at least Gold Standard BRT for the maximum extent of their routes (i.e. minimal time in mixed-traffic, and maximum incorporation of features such as level-boarding, all-door boarding, off-board fare collection, real time information, dedicated lanes, and traffic signal priority.
- 4) It is imperative that our region support Metrorail and bus investments.

5) The MARC investment plan is good; dates for implementation of MARC projects should be moved up. This, plus implementation of BRT on Rt. 355 in Montgomery County could go a long ways towards relieving current traffic congestion on I-270.

6) The Long Bridge, American Legion Bridge, and Rosslyn Metro tunnel should be the next top big-investment projects. Extending Virginia HOT lanes across the American Legion Bridge to the I270 spur will address the most significant need, provided that significant investment is made in express bus service including connecting Red Line and Silver Line job centers.

7) Please do not support the 76-mile Maryland Express Toll Lanes proposal for the 495/Beltway, I-270 and the conversion of Baltimore-Washington Parkway to an expanded tolled interstate style highway. Unlike the Virginia HOT lanes, the Maryland proposal doesn't guarantee that HOV users will travel free, and doesn't use the revenues to fund express bus service or build park and ride lots for carpoolers and transit users. The 495 proposal has an extremely tight ROW, would involve taking of many homes, massive tree loss and simply ignores the fact that a big cause of outer loop traffic in the a.m. and inner loop traffic in the p.m. is due to the east-west jobs imbalance. To address this, Maryland should incentivize investments in TOD in eastern Montgomery and Prince George's. This, combined with mobility relief provided by the upcoming Purple Line (which could be extended to Virginia), would be a more effective long-term solution. Note also that I-270 expansion to Frederick will fuel more sprawling development in the absence of better land use policies. A combination of land use, HOV and bus extension on I-270, MARC investment, and Route 355 BRT would be a more effective approach.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,  
Tina Slater