

January 13, 2018

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

Re: Joint Sign-On Letter re Draft Constrained Long Range Plan

Dear Chair Allen and members of the Transportation Planning Board:

The undersigned organizations write to express our strong concerns about the draft Constrained Long Range Plan (CLRP) because it does not incorporate at its core the findings of the Transportation Planning Board's (TPB) Long Range Plan Task Force (LRPTF) findings. Specifically, it does not frame the CLRP around Balanced Land Use, Transportation Demand Management, Bus Rapid Transit, and Metro Core Capacity which performed best in the analysis and the voting by the task force (see our comment letter of Nov 30, 2017). We don't mention Express Toll Lanes here because this coalition continues to support transit and transit-oriented development as the framework for regional growth and transportation, offering the best long-term transportation performance, and the best approach for social equity, sustainability and economic competitiveness.

While the TPB has on many occasions developed scenarios that have shown the benefits of land use, demand management and transit solutions, and frequently called on the jurisdictional transportation planners to address climate change, the east-west economic divide, and "access-for-all" in their submissions, the CLRP has never been explicitly structured to incorporate and support these goals.

We have another global concern, and that is the overwhelming number of highway and arterial road expansion projects across suburban Maryland and Virginia in this draft plan. 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. We have long argued that the CLRP should be focused on investing in TOD packages which combine local streets, bike/pedestrian and transit, along with rail and BRT connections between centers.

Time does not permit us to comment on every project or to sign on all of our partners, so please accept the following comments as not being all inclusive:

- 1) We would like to see the dates of all transit projects moved up to as early an implementation year as possible.
- 2) We are strongly supportive of all bicycle infrastructure projects.
- 3) We are strongly supportive of 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) We support Metrorail and bus investments.
- 5) We support deletion of the VRE extension to Haymarket in favor of more rail cars and more frequent service, station platform expansions throughout the system, and a station closer to Godwin Drive to be closer to the Innovation center.
- 6) We support the MARC investment plan and want the dates for implementation of MARC projects moved up.
- 7) We recommend that the Long Bridge, American Legion Bridge, and Rosslyn Metro tunnel be your top big-project investment focus, after the Metro capital rehabilitation. We do support extension of the Virginia HOT lanes across the American Legion Bridge to the I-270 spur to address the most significant need, provided that significant investment is made in express bus service including connecting Red Line and Silver Line job centers.
- 8) We strongly oppose the 76-mile Maryland Express Toll Lanes proposal for the Beltway and I-270 and we oppose conversion of the 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 tight right-of-way on a long stretch of 495 means massive tree loss. The 495 proposal ignores the fact that a big cause of outer loop traffic in the morning and inner loop traffic in the evening is the east-west jobs imbalance. Addressing that imbalance with Maryland incentive investments in TOD in eastern Montgomery and Prince George's, combined with a Purple Line extension to Virginia would be a more effective long-term solution. 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.
- 9) We continue to oppose inclusion of the Manassas Battlefield Bypass and BiCounty Parkway (Route 234 Extended North) in the CLRP. Both have been the source of broad opposition and have been shown not to address area congestion. Rather, they open up rural land to development, harm the historic battlefield, put the Bull Run watershed and Occoquan drinking water supply at risk, and add to traffic. Many of our organizations have offered a range of more

effective alternatives including roundabout near the battlefield, and the investment in I-66 and Route 28, along with VRE, meets most of the needs in the area.

- 10) Proposed expansion of Route 301 from Route 50 to the Henry Nice Bridge. We are concerned that effective alternatives to this expansion from 4 to 6 lanes throughout the corridor have not been studied, including land use, targeted interchange investments, and local parallel road networks that reduce demand in the key bottleneck areas of 301.
- 11) Another project may seem small but is symbolic of the problems we see with local and state transportation planning. This is the Loudoun/VDOT proposal to widen a 3.6 segment of Route 15 north of Leesburg -- a prelude to widening it all the way to the Potomac. However, the agencies never fairly studied a roundabout solution like the one proven successful at Route 50/Route 15 in Loudoun. Roundabouts with a two-lane Route 15 will move traffic better, make the road safer, and save money. Widening from two to four lanes while keeping traffic lights will mean continued traffic delays, and only lead to future proposals for costly interchanges. If this end-to-end expansion were to be built, VDOT will have spent hundreds of millions of dollars, fueled more sprawling development, and compromised another rural landscape. We recommend rejection of this project in the CLRP to allow for a thorough study of a roundabout and traffic calming alternative.

Thank you for consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,



Stewart Schwartz
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Coalition for Smarter Growth

Caroline Taylor
Executive Director
Montgomery Countryside Alliance

John Sutherland
President
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