



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Transportation Planning Board  
**FROM:** Lyn Erickson, Plan Development and Coordination Program Director  
**SUBJECT:** Public Comment for the July 2025 TPB Meeting  
**DATE:** July 16, 2025

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The Transportation Planning Board accepts public comment on a rolling basis. Comments can be submitted via email ([tpbcomment@mwkog.org](mailto:tpbcomment@mwkog.org)), online ([mwkog.org/tpbcomment](http://mwkog.org/tpbcomment)), mail, and phone. Comments are collected until noon on the day before the TPB meeting. These comments are compiled and shared with the board at the meeting the following day.

Between noon Tuesday, June 17, and noon Tuesday, July 15, the TPB received 7 letters and 423 comments submitted via email. The comments are summarized below. Due to the volume of comments and the size of the file, you can find all of the detailed comments at this [link](#).

## IN-PERSON PUBLIC COMMENT SPEAKERS

16 people have signed up to speak during Item 1 Public Comment:

- Janet Gallant, Co-coordinator, Don't Widen 270
- Katrena Moody
- Linda Nivens
- Barbara Coufal, Citizens Against Beltway Expansion
- Ross B. Capon
- Lindsey Mendelson, Maryland Sierra Club
- Stewart Schwartz, Coalition for Smarter Growth
- Tina Slater
- Patricia Monroe, Chair, South County Environmental Justice Coalition
- Elliott Levine
- Gary Hodge
- Mark Pierzchala
- Sharon B. Lawrence, LWHO
- Jason Stanford, Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance
- Richard Parsons, Suburban Maryland Transportation Alliance
- Miguel Moravec, RMI

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

### **Bill Pugh, Coalition for Smarter Growth, Comments via Letter- July 14, 2025**

Mr. Pugh writes to request that the Visualize 2050 performance results be used to provide alternatives to highway expansion. He states that spending funds on new highway and arterial lanes does not improve regional accessibility and affordability due to induced demand. He states that the region will not meet adopted TPB, COG, and local government climate change targets if the focus is on road expansion instead of sustainable and affordable modes of travel. He states that the 495 Southside widening project contains the following: (1) inherent flaws, (2) lack of regional consensus, (3) significant local opposition, and (4) the inability to be ready for the Visualize 2050 long range plan. He offers additional detailed comments on the 2050 draft performance results.

### **Janet Gallant and Sally Stolz (Co-Coordiators), DontWiden270.org, Comments via Letter- July 15, 2025**

Ms. Gallant and Ms. Stolz write in opposition to the inclusion of the Southside toll lane project in Visualize 2050. They state that members of the TPB are voting without the knowledge of: (1) the cost of enabling the Blue Line, (2) the project's impact on secondary roads, (3) whether toll revenues would be shared with Maryland, (4) the substance of the environmental assessment, or (5) how other, more forward-looking alternatives would have compared. They state that the project will diminish the regional official's ability to make smart choices for decades.

### **Benjamin Ross, Comments via Letter- July 15, 2025**

Mr. Ross writes to express concerns about properly modeling the proposed beltway. He states that the MWCOG traffic model cannot project if new highways reduce traffic congestion. Mr. Ross states that identifying how much congestion relief will result from new highways depends on the added car traffic that will emerge as a consequence of building the highway. He urges that the proposed beltway toll lanes be modeled in a consistent manner with reality. He includes a USDOT report entitled "Improved Travel Demand Modeling."

### **Jack McDougle (President & CEO), Greater Washington Board of Trade, Comments via Letter- June 26, 2025**

Mr. McDougle writes to express strong support for the proposed I-495 Southside Express Lanes project. He states that this project will benefit those along the corridor through: (1) preserving existing free lanes, (2) adding free high-occupancy toll lanes, (3) preserving the right-of-way for future Metrorail expansion across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, and (4) providing immediate funding for express bus service to build ridership while strengthening future demand. He states that this project balances the urgent need for mobility improvements while utilizing long-term environmental and equity considerations, and that the project will unlock billions of dollars in essential transportation infrastructure investments without raising taxes or diverting funds from other regional needs.

### **Terry and Moissette Sweat, Sweatism Consulting LLC, Comments via Letter- July 15, 2025**

Terry and Moissette Sweat write to express concern over Virginia pushing a plan that has not been approved or supported by elected officials in Maryland and strongly oppose the express lanes on I-495. They state that toll/express lanes do not reduce traffic in the area and that the area would benefit from better coordinated public transportation.

### **Tina Slater, Comments via Letter- July 14, 2025**

Ms. Slater writes to express her concern that the 495 Southside project has too many flaws and unknowns. Ms. Slater states that the space on the Wilson Bridge should be reserved for the Metrorail and questions whether VDOT would honor WMATA plans to potentially convert four toll lanes to rail if the Blue Line extension moves forward.

### **David Kosterlitz, Comment via Letter, July 15, 2025**

Mr. Kosterlitz writes urging the TPB to block VDOT's plan to extend the toll lanes on I-495. He states that toll lanes don't reduce congestion, they monetize it; they are inequitable, they harm the environment and increase traffic due to induced demand.

### **General Comment Form Submissions**

Two comments were received via the general comment form.

- Francis Kroll writes in support of through-running services between Virginia Railway Express (VRE) and Maryland Area Regional Commuter (MARC) to enhance regional connectivity.
- Jeanette Cockrell writes in opposition to the VDOT Express Lanes project, stating that VDOT already collects revenue from the same communities entering Virginia, placing an unfair burden on commuters working at military bases and government facilities in Virginia.

### **Comments via Email (not part of an email campaign)**

Eight private citizens commented via email stating that they oppose the I-495 Express Lane Project/Southern Beltway Expansion. The commenters stated that alternatives, like accessible rapid transit service, should be developed and that these toll lanes will only serve the wealthy. Commenters stated that the plan will see more commuters choosing to drive and will cause increased traffic into Prince Georges County, and other areas like MGM National Harbor Hotel & Casino, clogging neighborhoods surrounding the beltway. Extending the Metro would be a cheaper source of transportation that better aligns with climate goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution. One commenter stated that the solution to the mobility crisis is not to add more congestion and gridlock but rather transit service like the Southern Maryland Rapid Transit (SMRT) project, with light rail transit as the preferred option. Two commenters stated that the addition of the southside toll lanes would block future extensions of the Metrorail over the Wilson Bridge. Another commenter noted that the research conducted for this project was held during the pandemic, where car volume and vehicle usage were low; therefore, more current research is needed. Commenters expressed concern over the transparency of funds and future projects.

### **Email Campaigns- Comments via Email- June 17 to July 15, 2025**

The TPB received 415 emails from Tuesday, June 17 until noon Tuesday. Email campaigns included content urging the TPB Board to *reject* the currently proposed I-495 Express Lane project (176 emails), and content urging the TPB to *include* the proposed project (239 emails). The emails were generated from email-writing software, with some capacity to tailor the email contents.

Email forms for removal of the project (176) were similar to other campaigns, urging the board to vote to remove the I-495 Southside Express toll lanes project from Visualize 2050. There were two variations of content: **"Do not advance the expansion of the Southern Beltway with toll lanes,"** and **"Subject: Opposes Express Lanes Into Maryland."** Commenters oppose the Southside Express Lane study adding two toll lanes in each direction and urge TPB to remove the project from Visualize

2050. The commenters state that expansion projects do little to relieve congestion and that TPB should consider alternatives including shoulder and bus lanes, transit-oriented development, future Metrorail expansion, and robust transportation demand management. Commenters express concern that the expansion will increase pollution and traffic on local roads and that it will contribute to economic disparities in access to jobs, education, and healthcare. The letters oppose the proposed Express Lanes across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge into Maryland.

The TPB received an additional 239 emails from community members urging support of the I-495 Express Lane project. There were six variations of content: **“Please Improve the Capital Beltway,” “Southside Beltway Improvements Help Transit and the Environment,” “Traffic on the Beltway is Awful. Please Fix It!,” “The Wilson Bridge is a nightmare. Please fix it!,” “Support Southside Beltway Improvements,”** and **“Southside Beltway Improvements Will Help Our Local Transit Systems.”** All forms were similar in content, with writers sharing their support for the plan to add two express lanes in addition to the same number of free lanes, transit, bicycling and pedestrian upgrades. The writers state that Virginia and Maryland have no money to make other transportation improvements in the corridor and that without this project, nothing will happen for the next 25 years except worsening congestion. The writers state that many transit systems are facing financial situations, causing them to cut service and lose riders. This project would make buses faster and more reliable. The commenters support the investment in the new transit services so people have other options besides driving, stating that more bus options across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge will help reduce traffic and air pollution.