



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Transportation Planning Board  
**FROM:** Lyn Erickson, Plan Development and Coordination Program Director  
**SUBJECT:** Public Comment for the October 2025 TPB Meeting  
**DATE:** October 15, 2025

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The Transportation Planning Board accepts public comment on a rolling basis. Comments can be submitted via email ([tpbcomment@mwcog.org](mailto:tpbcomment@mwcog.org)), online ([mwcog.org/tpbcomment](http://mwcog.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, July 15, and noon Tuesday, October 14, the TPB received ten letters and 444 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

14 people signed up to speak during the Item 1 Public Comment item:

- Troy Barrington Lilly, Mayor, Forest Heights
- Janet Gallant, Co-coordinator, Don't Widen 270
- James Lawson
- Barbara Coufal, Citizens Against Beltway Expansion
- Bill Pugh, Coalition for Smarter Growth
- Nanci Wilkinson, Environmental Justice Ministry of the Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church
- Katrina Moody
- Patricia Monroe, Chair, South County Environmental Justice Coalition
- Brian Ditzler
- Kamita Gray
- Louise Spangle
- Bonnie Bick, Friends of Oxon Hill
- Jason Stanford, Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance
- Richard Parsons, Suburban Maryland Transportation Alliance

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

### **Senator C. Anthony Muse, Maryland State Senate-District 26, Comments via Letter- September 23, 2025**

Senator Muse provides a copy of the letter he sent to Acting Secretary of Transportation Samantha J. Biddle expressing his strong opposition to the Southside Express Lanes project, stating that it raises serious equity, environmental and transit planning concerns that would disproportionately impact residents of southern Prince Georges County. He also writes that there has been a lack of community engagement, the opportunity for input has been insufficient and the project undermines commitments to extend Metrorail. He writes that the study excludes transit-first alternatives and doesn't encompass a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). He urges the TPB to be guided by principles of equity, sustainability and safety.

### **Terrence Fitzgerald, MD, Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility, Comments via Letter- September 29, 2025**

Dr. Fitzgerald writes on behalf of the Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility in opposition to the Southside Express Lanes project. He writes that the effect of the project will be worsening of traffic on local roads, causing an increase in pollution and increased heart and lung disease. He writes about the link between induced demand, increasing greenhouse gases, and the tie to an increase in natural hazards. He asks that the TPB consider seeking ways to move people, noting increased transit options are fundamental, which is why there is room for Metrorail on the bridge in the first place.

### **Maryland District 26: Senator C. Anthony Muse, Delegate Veronica Turner, Delegate Jamila Woods, and Delegate Kris Valderrama, Comments via Letter- October 6, 2025**

The elected representatives from District 26 write to express their strong opposition to the Southside Express Lanes, writing that the proposal raises serious equity, environmental, and transit planning concerns that would disproportionately impact the residents of southern Prince Georges County. They write their residents already shoulder the burden of transportation disparities and this project would add congestion and bottlenecks to an area that experiences severe safety challenges currently. They write there has been a lack of meaningful public engagement; undermining longstanding regional commitments to extend Metrorail across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, stating the 2000 Record of Decision explicitly preserved lanes for future transit use; and an insufficient study that predetermines an outcome. They call on the TPB to preserve the right-of-way for transit; conduct a full traffic impact study on Maryland corridors; and release all memoranda of understanding related to the project.

### **Prince Georges County House Delegation, Comments via Letter, October 8, 2025**

The delegation's letter formally opposes implementation of toll lanes on the Woodrow Wilson Bridge because of its direct impacts on communities in Maryland, placing an undue burden on their residents. They state they have heard from their constituents and their message has been very clear that they are opposed to the project, raising key concerns of affordability, lack of public transit, environmental impacts, and lack of transparency. They urge VDOT to pause on the project and work with MDOT on a more collaborative approach.

**Northern Virginia Transportation Authority, Comments via Letter, October 10, 2025**

Phyllis Randall, Chair, NFTA, writes to urge the TPB to defer the decision to include the Southside Express Lanes project in the long-range plan until April 1, 2026. She notes the project is consistent with NFTA's regional priorities as adopted in the TransAction, the BRT Action plan and TPB's aspirational initiatives. She states that the Authority is aware of concerns raised and advises that deferral of a decision on inclusion of the project will allow for further analysis while fostering consensus.

**Staci Hartwell, NAACP Diamond Member, and Dyotha Sweat, NAACP MD State Conference Chair Emerita, President, NAACP Charles County Branch and Environmental and Climate Justice Committee NAACP Maryland State Conference Southern Maryland Quadrant Leader, Comment via Letter- October 13, 2025**

Staci Hartwell and Dyotha Sweat write to express their opposition to the proposed I-495 Southside Express Lane project with four reasons: The proposed toll lanes do not relieve traffic congestion as promised. Expansion of the highway will promote higher emissions and air pollution in communities living near the roadways. Dynamic toll pricing will disproportionately affect lower income workers. Vehicles will overburden local roads such as Routes 5, 4, and 210, which can potentially degrade traffic safety. Public transit options, such as Metrorail, would be more cost-effective, equitable, and environmentally sustainable than toll lanes.

**Deborah Cohn and Walter Cohn, Comments via Two Letters- October 13, 2025**

Commenters write in opposition to the widening of the south side of the beltway, and addition of toll lanes. Commenters state that the project will only move traffic congestion from Virginia to Maryland and will result in induced demand. Commenters urge TPB to invest in other transportation options and to analyze critical information on environmental impacts before voting on funding.

**The Maryland Coalition for Responsible Transit, (MCRT) Comments via Letter, October 13, 2025**

MCRT urges the TPB to exclude the Southside Express Lanes from Visualize 2050, stating it would be irresponsible to allow VDOT to use space on the bridge reserved for rail. They state they are not confident VDOT would allow conversion to rail in the future, since they have the power to veto to preserve the toll lanes.

**The Brandywine TB Southern Region Neighborhood Coalition, Comments via Letter, October 14, 2025**

Kamita Gray writes on behalf of the coalition to state that they are aligned with the TPB's priorities regarding reducing VMT, cutting greenhouse gas emissions and advancing equity and multi modal solutions. They are opposed to inclusion of the Southside Expressway project because it does not advance these goals.

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

Mr. Pugh writes to request that the TPB finalize Visualize 2050 without the I-495 express lanes. He writes that the preferred alternative is flawed and that TPB has failed to address concerns and answer questions raised in the TPB June 2024 resolution. Mr. Pugh states that the purpose and need statement is biased, the study to date is has ignored transit alternatives, key information on impacts to local traffic is not included, and there is no information on the feasibility of removing the HOT lanes in favor of transit in the future. He states the region needs to explore options for the corridor and urges the TPB not to put the project in Visualize 2050.

## General Comment Form Submissions

Four comments were received via the general comment form.

- Janet Oterson writes to describe her daily commute using public transportation. It is 3 hours per day round trip and costs about \$16 a day. If she drives it is about 45 minutes to an hour and the cost to park is \$20 plus gas. Driving costs her another \$8 a day but saves her 90 minutes.
- Deborah A. Cohn writes to express her opposition to the Southside Express Lanes project, stating that it will simply move congestion from Virginia to Maryland 210, and that adding express toll lanes does not solve congestion. She states there are sensible strategies available, such as rebalancing funding to maintenance and transit, but the project would undermine those efforts.
- Walter Cohn writes to express his opposition to the Southside Express Lanes project urging the Maryland representatives on the TPB to not support the project and stand by MDOT's approach of traffic diversion strategies, adding that TPB members lack critical information to make an informed vote.
- Martha Zaslow writes in opposition to the Southside Express Lanes project urging the TPB to vote against it, noting that MDOT has been rebalancing funds to transit alternatives which this project would undermine.

## Thomas Moore, Comments via Email- August 27, 2025

Mr. Moore writes that the new long-range transportation plan increased congestion compared to the plan approved three years ago. He writes that this will mean that roadway lane miles across the region will only increase by 3% over the next 25 years while the total population increases by 21%. When compared to the region's current transportation plan – Visualize 2045 – DC area residents will see a 22% increase in total hours of delay and a 13% increase in delays per trip. A resulting 70% increase in regional delays is unacceptable. He recommends the Board plan to add more multi-modal transportation improvements that reduce congestion, promote job growth and allow residents to spend more time with their families instead of being stuck on the road.

## Emails regarding the Southside Express Lanes (not part of an email campaign)

The TPB received 58 emails from Tuesday, July 15 until noon Tuesday that included content urging the TPB Board to *reject* the currently proposed I-495 Express Lane project (56 emails), and content urging the TPB to *include* the proposed project (2 emails). Unlike previous months, the email campaigns were not all forms and produced some unique comments. Unique email comments (56) urge the board to vote to remove the I-495 Southside Express toll lanes project from Visualize 2050. Emails state that road expansion just moves congestion elsewhere, creates more inequity and pollution, and increases traffic. They state that the project will increase traffic on local roads, further burdening Maryland with pollution and congestion. They urge detailed evaluation of other alternatives and raise concerns that the future right-of-way for Metrorail can't truly be preserved if the project is approved. Additional comments included the following:

- **Troy Barrington Lilly, Mayor, Town of Forest Heights, Comments via Email- October 8, 2025.**  
**Mayor Barrington Lilly writes with three key concerns:** Transit Access Disparity- the project corridor in Virginia is served by *four* Metro stations. The impacted area in Maryland has *only one*—and it's located beyond the project's end point. Limited Local Benefit- The express lanes are designed for long-distance commuters and may offer little to no advantage for local residents, who still face long commutes, but now with increased traffic and environmental burden. Equity & Regional Imbalance- residents in Forest Heights already endure some of the

longest commutes in the region. This project prioritizes moving vehicles *through* communities rather than improving transportation options *for* them.

- **Nanci Wilkinson, Environmental Justice Ministry Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Comments via Email- October 10.** Nanci Wilkinson writes to express her concerns about the equity, demand, and conservation aspects of the project. Ms. Wilkinson states that the addition of toll lanes will be part of a fiscally irresponsible plan that will only add to the existing transportation budget issue in Maryland. In addition, the toll lanes will increase demand, and both create bottlenecks within Prince Georges County and divert focus from other transportation alternatives such as mass transit. Wilkinson also states that a project that does not center itself around the well-being of all Earth inhabitants should not be considered.
- **Nicole Jackson, Comments via Email- October 8.** Nicole Jackson writes to express the health ramifications of the “Southside Project.” As an individual with environmentally triggered asthma, Jackson expresses her concerns with health issues that will result from increased pollutants emitted from vehicle traffic.
- **Brian Ditzler, Maryland Advocates for Sustainable Transportation, Comment via Email- October 14.** Brian Ditzler writes to express that the Southside Express Lanes project should not be included in the Visualize 2050 Plan. Ditzler states that the project has numerous shortcomings, in addition to public support, such as the failure to address: traffic impacts to various arterial roads, providing information on less polluting transit alternatives, and providing information on VDOT’s commitment to removing toll lanes if requested. Mr. Ditzler also notes that a combination of transit-oriented development in addition to travel demand management should be considered.
- **Herbert Jones, President - Tantallon North Area Civic Association and Member of the South County Environmental Justice Coalition, Comment via Email- October 13.** Herbert Jones writes to support the consideration of other modes of transportation. Mr. Jones asks that mass transit options such as the Metrorail, express buses, or light rail be made a priority.
- **Karl Held, On behalf of The Climate Mobilization, Comment via Email- October 13.** Karl Held writes to state that the Climate Mobilization, Montgomery County is against funding the Beltway Southside project. Mr. Held states that the project will steer Maryland away from both state and regional climate goals, induce demand and shift bottlenecks from the Wilson Bridge to Prince Georges County, endanger the future Metrorail expansion over the Woodrow Wilson bridge, and inundate local roads. Mr. Held encourages the TPB to instead support transit-oriented development and maintain road/transit infrastructure.

#### Email Campaigns- Comments via Email- July 15 to October 14, 2025

The TPB received 372 emails from Tuesday, July 15 until noon Tuesday from email campaigns that included content urging the TPB Board to *reject* the currently proposed I-495 Express Lane project. The 3 campaigns included “***Do not Advance the Expansion of the Southern Beltway with Toll Lanes, Please Vote to Block the Southside Toll Lanes, and Please reject I-495 Southside beltway expansion, demand better alternatives.***” The form letters state that highway expansion projects demonstrate that expansion fails to relieve congestion, and local projects keep most travelers stuck in congestion. They also state that there would be an increase in pollution and result in increased traffic on local roads, and they question if the right-of-way for Metrorail can truly be preserved. They state that alternatives such as Metrorail expansion should be explored, especially in light of increased costs. They mention that expanding access to transit, walking, and biking can also help reduce racial and economic disparities in access to jobs, education, and healthcare. Later form

letters stated that last year, Prince George's officials agreed to a delay of this vote at the request of VDOT, with the understanding that VDOT would address the County's concerns, but VDOT has failed to respond to the County's concerns.

The TPB received an additional 2 emails from community members urging **support for roadway expansion in general**, under campaign "70% More Delay Is Unacceptable." Writers shared their support for the plan to add roadway capacity. Writers stated that the DC region was recently recognized as having the worst traffic in the entire country, the DC area is planning to add 1.2 million people over the next 25 years, and upgraded roadways are needed to accommodate the growth.