

Maryland Sierra Club Comments on the MWCOG Long Range Transportation Plan

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG), as well as its jurisdictions, have all adopted climate goals. The Transportation Planning Board (TPB) has created a directive that TPB member agencies “**prioritize** investments on projects, programs, and policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, prioritize the aspirational strategies, and achieve COG’s land use and equity goals.” Climate must be a key criterion for whether a project is included in the LRTP.

We recommend that projects that threaten progress on our climate goals be removed from the plan. Specifically, we urge you to remove the “I-270 TOLL LANES” and “I-95/495 Toll Lanes” that are part of the MDOT Managed Lanes project.

Today the *Baltimore Sun* Editorial Board wrote:

Last week, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency [released a report](#) that points out that climate change is getting worse than previously believed, and the evidence can be found across the United States. ... Expanding highways and building bridges are 20th century solutions that we are loathe to abandon. Reducing dependence on motor vehicles is a 21st century idea that would clearly reduce greenhouse gas emissions (even electric cars aren’t as environmentally friendly as most rail and transit options), but it requires hard choices. Under Gov. Larry Hogan, MDOT has shown too much interest in roads and not enough in climate change solutions.

In addition to the significant increase in greenhouse gas emissions that would come from this project, the I-495/I-270 toll lane expansion increases our vulnerability to climate change and extreme weather events. Consider the scale of flood risk from removing hundreds of acres of tree canopy while adding hundreds of new acres of highway impervious surface. Sierra Club and partners wrote 200 pages of comments (<http://bit.ly/495270DEIS>) on the I-495/I-270 DEIS documenting these and many other major risks the project poses to our region.

To include the I-495/I-270 private toll lane expansion project, even reduced in scope, in the region’s long-term plans would be in conflict with the values and goals the TPB has adopted. We ask you to remove the “I-270 TOLL LANES” and “I-95/495 Toll Lanes” from the LRTP and instead push for a 21st century multimodal plan that takes account of climate and this century’s current and emerging challenges.

Thank you.