

Maryland Advocates for Sustainable Transportation (MAST) Coalition Principles Statement

We, the undersigned, are moved to action by the harmful environmental, economic, and social impacts of Maryland's highway expansion plans, starting with the plan to expand I-495 and I-270. We advocate for sustainable, accessible, affordable, inclusive, and equitable transportation solutions that more effectively address the climate crisis and our transportation problems, rather than exacerbate them.

Transportation is Maryland's number one source of carbon emissions. Maryland's future relies on sustainable transportation solutions, including transit, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure; transportation demand management; transit-oriented land use with affordable housing; and the maintenance of road and bridge infrastructure. Sustainable transportation solutions also spur more economic development and increase opportunities for socioeconomic mobility.

Additional highway capacity inevitably leads to more driving and traffic over time. It will incentivize and increase sprawl, vehicle trips, vehicle miles traveled, and toxic emissions and will result in increased regional traffic congestion in a few years. Further, expansion will result in the loss of and harm to the natural environment.

We are also concerned by highway expansion projects financed with toll revenue projections that have not been independently verified because of the financial risk. The public-private partnership (P3) model for highway projects elsewhere has often resulted in tax-payers providing regular subsidies through concessionaire contracts and shouldering the bill when tolls cannot cover the costs of the project as planned or paying penalties for permission to undertake transportation projects deemed competitive. We support the use of and improvement to existing due diligence reviews, as well as an independent fiscal and environmental analysis, to act as a check on the P3 process.

Our Beliefs:

A. We oppose highway expansion, especially in urban and suburban areas or near threatened natural areas.

B. In order to solve Maryland's transportation challenges, the State and local jurisdictions should work together to develop detailed, wide-ranging plans, including:

a. Transit projects, such as future light rail extensions; bus rapid transit; MARC service expansion; improved and expanded bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure; and inter-jurisdictional transit connections.

b. Demand management policies and programs, such as reduced transit fares, free transfers, and increased and improved Park & Ride locations, as well as working with employers to offer transit benefits, allow more teleworking and flextime, and offer a parking cash-out.

c. Land use policies that create home and business opportunities around passenger rail, light rail, and bus rapid transit stations, as well as around other major transit corridors.

d. Affordable housing investments and programs targeted at areas closer to jobs, transit, and other amenities.

C. Any action to improve, rebuild, or modify the state bridges should include options for efficient transit and bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure.

D. Maryland's 2018 "complete streets" laws, enacted July 1, 2018, should be fully implemented.

E. Any major transportation project by the State should be done in coordination with the government of the local jurisdiction.

F. Any action to alter a state highway should improve upon existing stormwater management to meet modern standards, in accordance with regulations.

G. Any action to alter a state highway should not impact parkland and should seek to invest in materials that reduce pavement's heat reflection and imperviousness.

H. Any proposal to reduce traffic congestion must fully evaluate current and proposed transit projects, as well as other alternatives to expanding highways.

Organizations signed as of 1.2.2020:

350 Montgomery County
Audubon Naturalist Society
Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition
Bike Maryland
Central Maryland Transportation Alliance
Coalition for Smarter Growth
Corazón Latino
Friends of Sligo Creek
Greater Farmland Civic Association
Greater Greater Washington
Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVA)
League of Women Voters of Maryland
Maryland Sierra Club
National Parks Conservation Association
Neighbors of the Northwest Branch
Rails to Trails Conservancy
Smart Growth Maryland
Washington Area Bicyclist Association