

For Immediate Release

Terry Owens, MDOT SHA P3 Office – (410)-903-7454

**MDOT SHA, Federal Highway Administration Publish I-495 & I-270
Managed Lanes Study’s Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

Series of Virtual and In-Person Public Hearings Scheduled as Part of Review Process

BALTIMORE, MD (July 10, 2020) – The Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) today published the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for the I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes Study, which considers ways to relieve congestion and improve trip reliability, mobility and connectivity for modes of travel, including transit, in the National Capital Region. MDOT SHA and its partners also announced a series of virtual and in-person public hearings that will be held on the DEIS, with an emphasis on health, safety, and access as Maryland continues its COVID-19 recovery.

“Our number one priority during COVID-19 is the health and safety of the public and our team,” said Transportation Secretary Greg Slater. “We are taking every precaution and following the guidance of public health officials to ensure the public has ample opportunity to review the DEIS and safely provide their valuable feedback.”

The DEIS includes traffic, environmental, engineering and financial analyses of a No Build Alternative and six Build Alternatives involving high-occupancy toll (HOT) lanes or express toll lanes (ETL), sometimes in combination with existing high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes on I-270. As part of the review, MDOT SHA, FHWA and the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) will conduct four virtual and two in-person joint public hearings to provide opportunities for public comment.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) will participate in one of the hearings, as comments also will be accepted on the Joint Federal/State Application (JPA) for Alteration of Any Floodplain, Waterway, Tidal or Nontidal Wetland in Maryland. USACE is responsible for reviewing the JPA per the Clean Water Act (Section 404(b)(1)) and MDE is responsible for reviewing the application per Environment Article §5-503 and §5-906, Annotated Code of Maryland.

As part of the commitment to protect the public and team members during COVID-19 restrictions, the public is encouraged to testify at one of four virtual hearings scheduled from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. August 18, August 20, August 25 and September 3. To testify, visit 495-270-p3.com/DEIS and register in advance. The public may call 1-855-432-1483 anytime during the hearings to listen to the public testimony or leave testimony by voicemail.

In-person hearings are scheduled noon to 9 p.m. September 1 at Homewood Suites by Hilton, 9103 Basil Court, Largo, in Prince George’s County and noon to 9 p.m. September 10 at Hilton Executive Meeting Center, 1750 Rockville Pike, Rockville, in Montgomery County. To promote social distancing, testimony at these hearings will be by **APPOINTMENT ONLY**. Participants will be placed into time slots, and also may listen to other testimony and speak to the limited staff that will be available on-site to answer questions. To register, call 1-833-858-5960.

At the in-person hearings, social distancing protocols will be strictly enforced, including a requirement for face coverings. Hand sanitizing stations will be in place and there will be limited capacity in the hearing rooms. The public also may call 1-855-432-1483 on in-person hearing dates to listen live and/or leave testimony by voicemail from noon to 9 p.m. Press * to hear options.

Those testifying either virtually or in person will be given three minutes. Maryland Relay Service can assist teletype users at 7-1-1. Individuals requiring assistance to participate, such as an interpreter for hearing/speech difficulties or assistance with the English language, can call the program's toll-free number, 833-858-5960, by August 3. MDOT SHA and FHWA will continue to monitor the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 and follow the guidance of public health officials to determine any changes to the planned hearings as conditions evolve.

Release of the DEIS comes after two years of study in compliance with the NEPA. The DEIS review is the first of multiple environmental processes planned as part of the larger I-495 & I-270 Public-Private Partnership (P3) Program. The study has involved extensive outreach including four scoping open houses in April 2018; four public workshops presenting the Preliminary Range of Alternatives and Screening in July 2018; eight public workshops in spring 2019 on the Alternatives Retained for Detailed Study; and more than 180 meetings and events with communities, property owners, stakeholders and elected officials.

The DEIS, supporting technical reports and JPA are available online at 495-270-p3.com/DEIS. Hard copies of the DEIS and electronic copies of technical reports and the JPA also are available for review at multiple locations in Montgomery and Prince George's counties, as well as one in Fairfax, Virginia and one in Washington, D.C. For a list of these locations, go to the website above.

Hearing materials will be on the program website as of July 31. After the hearings, transcripts will be available on the website at a later date.

In addition to oral testimony during the virtual and in-person public hearings, the public may provide comments through an online comment form at 495-270-p3.com/DEIS. Written comments also may be emailed to MLS-NEPA-P3@mdot.maryland.gov or mailed to:

Lisa B. Choplin, DBIA
Director, I-495 & I-270 P3 Office
Maryland Department of Transportation
State Highway Administration
707 North Calvert Street, Mail Stop P-601
Baltimore, MD 21202

Similarly, while oral testimony and written comments on the JPA may be given at the public hearings, comments also may be emailed or mailed to the addresses below and must reference application NAB-2018-02152:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Baltimore District
Attention: Mr. Jack Dinne

2 Hopkins Plaza
Baltimore, MD 21201
john.j.dinne@usace.army.mil

Maryland Department of the Environment
Wetlands and Waterways Program
Attention: Mr. Steve Hurt
1800 Washington Blvd. Suite 4300
Baltimore, MD 21230
MDE.SHAprojects@maryland.gov

Public and agency comments on the DEIS and JPA will be accepted from July 10 through 11:59 p.m. October 8, 2020. **All comments received, regardless of method of submission, will be given equal consideration.** All substantive comments received or postmarked by the end of the comment period will be responded to in preparation of the Final EIS. Comments received or postmarked after the close of the comment period will be reviewed and considered to the extent practicable.

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