



For Immediate Release

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**MDOT SHA, Federal Highway Administration Announce
30-Day Extension for Comments on I-495 & I-270 Managed
Lanes Study Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

Review Period Now 120 Days; Virtual and In-Person Public Hearings Continue

BALTIMORE, MD (August 28, 2020) – The Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) today announced a 30-day extension of the public comment period for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation, which is being developed in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for the I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes Study.

A 90-day comment period was originally provided on the DEIS, twice the minimum time required by FHWA. Based on input from community partners, stakeholders and local and federal officials, MDOT SHA supported extending the comment period to 120 days, and made a formal request to FHWA, which has authority to grant any extension. FHWA approved the request, and the public will now have until November 9, 2020, to submit comments on the DEIS.

As part of the release of the DEIS on July 10, MDOT SHA, FHWA and its partner agencies also announced four virtual and two in-person public hearings, with an emphasis on public health, safety, and access as Maryland continues its COVID-19 recovery.

“Throughout the I-495 and I-270 Managed Lanes Study we’ve been committed to work in collaboration with community members and stakeholders,” Transportation Secretary Greg Slater said. “Extending the comment period to 120 days ensures the public has ample opportunity to review and provide feedback on the DEIS. The extension also supports our number one priority during the COVID-19 emergency: the health and safety of the public and our team.”

The I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes Study considers ways to relieve congestion and improve trip reliability, mobility and connectivity for modes of travel, including transit, in the National Capital Region. 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.

MDOT SHA, FHWA and the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) has conducted three virtual public hearings and will conduct one more virtual and two in-person joint public hearings to provide opportunities for public comment on both the DEIS and the Joint Federal/State Application (JPA) for the Alteration of Any Floodplain, Waterway, Tidal or Nontidal Wetland in Maryland.

The public is encouraged to testify at the remaining virtual public hearing scheduled from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. 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. The virtual hearings will also be live-streamed.

In-person hearings are scheduled from 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, public and one-on-one testimony at these hearings will be by **APPOINTMENT ONLY**. Participants will be placed into time slots, may listen to other testimony and speak to the limited staff who 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, 1-855-432-1483. 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 followed two years of study in compliance with the NEPA. The DEIS review is the first of multiple environmental studies 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 are on the P3 Program website. Videos of the virtual public hearings that have already been held are available on the P3 Program website, and after the hearings, transcripts will be also be available on the P3 Program website.

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@usac.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. on November 9, 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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