



For Immediate Release

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MDOT SHA Recommends HOT Lanes to Provide New Travel Options for National Capital Region

*Recommended Preferred Alternative 9 Includes HOT Lanes, Supports New Transit Opportunities;
MDOT SHA Announces Commitments for Bike/Pedestrian Connections and Environmental Upgrades*

BALTIMORE, MD (January 27, 2020) – To provide Marylanders with new options and opportunities for improved travel in the National Capital Region, the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) has formally recommended Alternative 9, adding two high-occupancy toll (HOT) lanes across the American Legion Bridge to I-270, and north on I-270 to I-370. This alternative also would add a bicycle and pedestrian connection across the new American Legion Bridge. MDOT is committed to delivering the improvements in phases, focusing first on the American Legion Bridge as the primary link between key economic centers in Maryland and Virginia.

Buses and vehicles with three or more people would be able to travel the new HOT lanes free of charge, reducing dependence on single-occupant vehicles and providing opportunities for faster, more-reliable bus transit service, carpooling and vanpooling throughout the region. Under this MDOT Recommended Preferred Alternative (MDOT RPA), existing travel lanes throughout the corridor will be retained, and will remain free for use by all motorists. Drivers of single occupancy vehicles only would pay if they choose to use the managed lanes.

“In addition to delivering significant congestion relief in the existing free lanes, this Recommended Preferred Alternative provides Marylanders with new travel options including free use of the new managed lanes for carpoolers and transit riders, new bike and pedestrian connections in the community and across the Potomac to the C&O Canal, and a consistent reliable transportation network for the entire National Capital Region from Maryland into Virginia,” said MDOT Secretary Gregory Slater. “Addressing the congestion bottleneck at the American Legion Bridge and identifying a strategy to replace this 60-year-old infrastructure element of the regional transportation network is critical to Maryland’s economic recovery and growth. As we take yet another step in addressing these challenges, continued partnership and collaboration are crucial for continued progress.”

The phased delivery of the MDOT RPA for the I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes Study focuses on the most critical area – the American Legion Bridge and I-270 – as Phase 1 South. The agency will not proceed with permitting and implementation of subsequent phases until additional environmental reviews are complete with further collaboration and engagement with agencies and the public.

Based on feedback already received from partner agencies, stakeholders and the public, MDOT today also is announcing new commitments for the community as part of the program including: improved bicycle and pedestrian connections and trail connectivity across the American Legion Bridge; regional transit improvements such as expanded bus capacity at Shady Grove Metro; expanded park-and-ride facilities; and environmental enhancements.

The MDOT RPA for the I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes Study (MLS) proposes adding two HOT managed lanes in each direction of I-495 from south of the George Washington Memorial Parkway in Virginia across the American Legion Bridge to west of MD 5. On I-270 from I-495 to north of I-370, the alternative would add one HOT lane and convert the highway's existing HOV lane into a HOT lane, resulting in a network of two managed HOT lanes in each direction. The result would be significant operational and multimodal network benefits, while retaining existing travel lanes as free lanes. MDOT SHA will not seek permits/authorizations outside of Phase 1 South: American Legion Bridge I-270 to I-370 until additional design details are developed in coordination with applicable agencies and environmental review is completed.

“Announcing our Recommended Preferred Alternative is another important milestone in our collaborative partnership with Virginia as we work together on the economic recovery of the entire National Capital Region,” MDOT SHA Administrator Tim Smith said. “We are excited about the important work ahead with our partners and stakeholders.”

Alternative 9 is one of several alternatives – including a No Build option and six managed lane alternatives – that MDOT SHA and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) included in the MLS Draft Environmental Impact Statement published in July 2020. A public comment period, including a series of virtual and in-person public hearings, was conducted between July 10, 2020, and November 9, 2020. MDOT SHA has determined the MDOT RPA best serves the study's Purpose and Need, which seeks to address existing traffic and long-term traffic growth, enhance trip reliability, provide additional travel options and improve the movement of goods and services.

MDOT SHA and FHWA continue to consider all comments received as part of the DEIS process. Additional analysis is being performed as needed and the agency will respond to substantive comments in the study's Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision, expected to be completed in fall 2021.

The MLS is an environmental study being conducted by MDOT SHA and FHWA in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). MDOT SHA is concurrently conducting a solicitation for the American Legion Bridge I-270 to I-70 Relief Plan. The solicitation will identify a private-sector partner to work collaboratively with all the stakeholders on the Phase 1 Predevelopment Work.

The P3 Program will be designed and developed using a multi-step Progressive P3 model. Selecting a partner for the Predevelopment Work over the next year allows MDOT SHA and the Maryland Transportation Authority to begin working with the Phase Developer and all stakeholders on best ways to advance the preliminary design to further avoid and minimize impacts to environmental resources, communities, properties, utilities, and other features by working with the counties, municipalities, state and federal agencies, property owners, utilities and citizens.

After this significant collaborative effort, and only if a build alternative is identified, MDOT would seek final approval from the Maryland Board of Public Works (BPW) for only the first Section P3 Agreement, which would be focused on the American Legion Bridge and connecting with our partners in Virginia, to advance final design, construction, financing, operations, and maintenance for 50 years.

Predevelopment collaboration through this progressive P3 model will provide more efficient pricing and better schedule certainty for section agreements before MDOT takes them to BPW for final approval only after a Record of Decision is received.

More details about the MDOT RPA's benefits and commitments are in the attached MDOT Recommended Preferred Alternative Fact Sheet for the I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes Study and also available online. The fact sheet outlines specific commitments MDOT and its partners are making to deliver transit, bicycle and pedestrian, and environmental enhancements. For more information about the Managed Lanes Study or the P3 Program visit 495-270-p3.com.

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