



City of Rockville
111 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland
20850-2364
www.rockvillemd.gov

240-314-5000
TTY 240-314-8137

April 29, 2022

Hon. Pamela Sebesky
Chair, Transportation Planning Board
777 North Capitol Street, NE
Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002-4239

Re: TPB Climate and Transportation Plans

Dear Chair Sebesky, Vice Chair Collins, Vice Chair Henderson, and members of the TPB,

The Rockville Mayor and Council hereby submits comments in response to the TPB request for comment released on April 1, 2022 ([DRAFT-FINAL 2022-Update-to-Visualize-2045 LRTP.pdf \(visualize2045.org\)](#)). We continue to see this as a plan from the 1980's with no regard for today's values of equity, inclusion, and protection of our environment. Buried in the over 1,400 pages released, item T6432 on page 95 of Appendix B includes text stating that the Op Lanes Maryland Program Development *will* move forward along the entirety of I-495 from the American Legion Bridge to the Woodrow Wilson Bridge (text below).

"Planning, preliminary design, and full delivery stream restoration activities in support of the Op Lanes Maryland program, which will implement high-occupancy toll (HOT) lanes along I-270, between I-495 and I-70, and I-495, between the American Legion and Woodrow Wilson bridges."

This text contradicts the TPB vote of July 21, 2021, that identifies most of this area only for **study** ([Resolution R2-2022 - Add MDOT TRP and transit commitments3.pdf](#)).

The 'clarification' offered on the TPB web page ([Clarification-in-Response-to-Sierra-Club-Press-Release .pdf \(visualize2045.org\)](#)) gives little comfort since it validates the main thrust of the Sierra Club communique. From the penultimate bullet of the 'clarification':

"The funding amount listed is for the planning, preliminary engineering, and design of the southern segment that has been approved for construction and funding for studying the eastern segment that has NOT been approved for construction."

The clarification says that the TPB will "work with MDOT to clarify the description".

MAYOR
Bridget Donnell Newton

COUNCIL
Monique Ashton
Beryl L. Feinberg
David Myles
Mark Pierzchala

CITY MANAGER
Robert DiSpirito

CITY CLERK/DIRECTOR OF
COUNCIL OPERATIONS
Sara Taylor-Ferrell

CORPORATE COUNSEL
Robert E. Dawson

Rockville is unconvinced that the original wording was accidental. It seems to us that the continual shifting of the title and scope of the project is intended to ensure public confusion and therefore completion of the entire project as originally proposed. The omission of this area from construction was an important reason that several jurisdictions reversed their positions from the June 16, 2021, TPB vote. This is important to the City of Rockville because the June 16, 2021, TPB vote deleted the entire Op Lanes Maryland project, including the I-270 portion.

The Op Lanes Maryland project will not address congestion where it truly occurs (north of Clarksburg) where 6 lanes change to 4 and then 2. The Op Lanes Maryland Project threatens nine (9) abutting neighborhoods of the City of Rockville, 5 parks and open space where animals and fowl have found respite from previous habitat destruction. The Op Lanes Maryland project will further contribute to climate change through increase of traffic, due in turn, to further development sprawl. The climate change impacts include greenhouse gas emissions which will be in conflict with the goals as stated by TPB.

Recent international events, including the pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, remind us that the international supply of oil is volatile and that consumers in the U.S. and throughout the world remain vulnerable to large swings in fuel prices. The Op Lanes Maryland project will exacerbate this situation by increasing demand for fossil fuels.

The City of Rockville encourages the TPB to reconsider this entire proposal with its roots in a pre-pandemic era, to review the environmental costs associated with adding more pavement, air and noise pollution, and destruction of natural habitats. We ask that you consider the changes in workplace arrangements with more flexibility for work from home and tele-med visits. The environmental and social injustices that we are finally acknowledging and working towards remediating will be negated by a pay to drive system on one of our Regions most important corridors.

The Op Lanes Maryland Program, like its counterpart in Virginia, works for those who can and want to afford the toll lanes, and by design, keeps those who cannot or will not, in continual and planned-for congestion. That's why it doesn't work in Virginia and it why it won't work in Maryland. Please reconsider and support a plan that includes alternatives that addresses our mutual goals of

Equity, Inclusion and Protection of our Climate.

Sincerely,


Bridget Donnell Newton, Mayor


Monique Ashton, Councilmember


Beryl L. Feinberg, Councilmember


David Myles, Councilmember


Mark Pierzchala, Councilmember

Mayor and Council, City of Rockville

cc: Chuck Bean, Executive Director of Metropolitan Council of Governments
Kanti Srikanth, TPB Staff Director; COG Deputy Executive Director for
Metropolitan Planning