



**NEW MARK COMMONS
HOMES ASSOCIATION, INC.**

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Maryland Department of Transportation
State Highway Administration
707 North Calvert Street
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cc. The Honorable Larry Hogan, Governor of Maryland
The Honorable Peter Franchot, Comptroller
of Maryland
The Honorable Nancy Kopp, Treasurer of
Maryland Board of Public Works
80 Calvert St
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Honorable Board Members:

The Board of Directors of the New Mark Commons (NMC) Homes Association wishes to express our support for the No Build option and its opposition to the other proposed alternative highway options in the draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to expand I-270 and I-495 currently under consideration by the State of Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT).

NMC is a 53-year-old community of 384 homes (detached and townhouses) located in Rockville, just off of Exit 5 (Falls Road exit on I-270). In 2017, the community earned the distinction of being placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

While we welcome the State's interest in relieving automotive congestion on these thoroughfares, we are deeply concerned about the specific impact on our community. The interactive map posted by the State Highway Administration (SHA) clearly shows that the already high noise levels in our area will increase significantly. Furthermore, the construction plans show substantial encroachment on adjacent property, including Julius West Middle School and park land adjacent to our community.

Like almost every other state, Maryland has seen a dramatic reduction in traffic due to COVID-19 and it is widely assumed that significant and perhaps dramatic increases in the number of people working from home will continue into the future. Maryland is struggling to revise and reduce its current budget to reflect a major loss of income due to the ongoing pandemic. Given that reality, it is foolhardy to move forward with a multi-billion dollar highway expansion project at this time that may not be necessary to accommodate future traffic flows on I-270.

If the State wishes to reduce traffic congestion, we believe attention must first be paid to widening I-270 to the north-- above Gaithersburg-- where the highway drops from 12 lanes near Exit 5 to a mere four lanes. Congestion is severe in both directions to the north of Gaithersburg during rush hours, and increasingly on weekends.

Even MDOT recognizes this problem, yet it appears determined to proceed to make the project financially attractive for a private bidder who can generate significant revenues through the proposed toll lanes if I-270 is widened below Gaithersburg.

The failure of the Purple Line project to be completed in a timely and cost-effective manner reveals the vulnerability of this public-private partnership. Moreover, the DEIS does not acknowledge the required expenditure of \$1-2 billion dollars for the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) to move and reconstruct water and sewage lines because of the construction of the toll road alternatives.

Significantly, the combination of the Purple line financial failure as a public private partnership and the lack of fully accounting for and acknowledging the toll alternatives' financial impact on WSSC in the DEIS, raises serious questions about the criteria MDOT used to remove all public transit alternatives to this proposed project.

At the December 2018 Board of Public Works meeting, Comptroller Franchot outlined three criteria he would use in evaluating whether or not to support the project: 1) it should be environmentally responsible; 2) fiscally prudent; and 3) effective in resolving traffic congestion problems.

In our judgment, the current plan fails to meet any of these critical objectives. As such, we respectfully urge the Board of Public Works to disapprove the current P3 proposal.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kathleen Moran, President, The Board of the New Mark Commons Homes Association; Alex Belida, Vice President; Karin Boychyn, Treasurer; Zoe Wood, Secretary; Ron Tipton; Deborah Mesmer; Samuel Shieb