

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 9, 2020

Jeanette Mar
Environmental Program Manager
Federal Highway Administration, Maryland Division
George H. Fallon Federal Building
31 Hopkins Plaza, Suite 1520
Baltimore MD 21201

Lisa B. Choplin
Project Director
I-495 and I-270 P-3 Project Office
Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration
707 North Calvert Street, Mail Stop P-601
Baltimore MD 21202

Dear Ms. Mar and Ms. Choplin,

We write with respect to the long-awaited release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on the proposed Managed Lanes I-495 & I-270 Public-Private Partnership (P3) Program (Project). This Project is one of the largest of its type ever proposed and will cost more than \$11 billion dollars. Yet we understand that, once the DEIS is released, the public may receive only 90 days to review and comment on a report that is some 300 pages long and contains associated technical reports and appendices that number over 18,000 pages. Given the current difficult circumstances of the COVID-19 epidemic, we strongly believe that the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration and the Federal Highway Administration (Agencies) should extend the public comment period to a period of at least 120 days in order to ensure genuine public access, broad awareness of the process, and serious public engagement with the issues raised.

Meaningful opportunities for public participation and comment on the DEIS are a critical part of the environmental review process under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The DEIS findings here implicate significant environmental consequences for diverse constituencies in different counties living along a 48-mile corridor. As you know, COVID-19 creates special problems for full participation at this moment. In-person hearings raise health risks for all participants, especially seniors and the immuno-compromised, while virtual hearings create differential access for communities with lesser access to the Internet. Many of our people are facing sickness, stress, and unemployment.

Hence, we believe an extended time period for comment is essential so that the public has a better chance to meaningfully participate in this process during this ongoing state of crisis. This project will cost billions of dollars in taxpayer money and will affect the lives of Maryland residents and their communities, land, and water for generations.

We therefore respectfully request that the Agencies provide at least 120 days for public comment on the Managed Lanes I-495/I-270 P3 DEIS. We look forward to your response and thank you for your serious attention to this matter.

Very truly yours,



Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

/s/ Anthony G. Brown

Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress

/s/ Benjamin L. Cardin

Benjamin L. Cardin
U.S. Senator

/s/ Chris Van Hollen

Chris Van Hollen
U.S. Senator