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June 30, 2020

Maryland Department of Transportation  
Lisa B. Choplin, DBIA  
707 North Calvert Street, Mail Stop P-601  
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Dear Ms. Choplin,

In response to the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) recent public release that four private-sector teams submitted statements of qualifications for the I-495/I-270 project alternatives, Rockville's Mayor and Council continue to be very concerned about this project, especially in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the many uncertainties we are facing in the present and the future.

The City of Rockville is requesting MDOT to put a pause on the project and process. It is not responsible to continue spending taxpayers' money on preliminary design, environmental studies, and hiring a developer while the country is facing significant economic changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also predicted that teleworking will be more acceptable and widely implemented in the future, which will likely lower traffic volumes on I-495 and I-270. Therefore, it only makes sense to hold off on next steps for this project until a new purpose and need is defined. If MDOT continues to proceed with this project, the City of Rockville would like to continue voicing its major concerns as follows:

- The Mayor and Council are vigorously advocating with MDOT and the Governor to protect the homes, businesses and infrastructure of the nine Rockville neighborhoods that abut I-270 from being affected. Many residents are anxious about the uncertainty surrounding their homes, neighborhood and community.
- The City remains strongly opposed to any alternative that will take residences, businesses or infrastructure, or include multi-parcel takings, or any potential loss of City property in order to add lanes or widen I-270 in either direction through Rockville. It is essential that the State understands that leaving a home untouched, while potentially taking a portion of a yard, playground, park, or other amenity would damage our community.
- The recommended alternatives retained for detailed study do not include public mass transit. It is critical that MDOT reinstate transit as a key project element. Suggestions to improve Park & Ride lots and enhance current transit lines will not be acceptable, since the benefit of these transit improvements is expected to be negligible.
- The City requests that MDOT include a noise analysis in the study and commit to construct all sound walls necessary along the full section of I-270 within the City limits, including the West End Park Noise Barrier and barriers necessary to protect the Rockville neighborhoods of Rockshire, Saddlebrook, Fallswood, Rose Hill Falls, Woodley Gardens, and Regents Square.

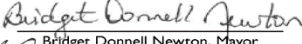

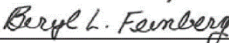


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- MDOT should provide a 90-day comment period for the public to have adequate time to review the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), expected for release in July 2020. The 90-day period will be essential to allow the review of a large document, especially since open public meetings and workshops might not be feasible during this summer season.
- The City of Rockville would like to be involved in the request for proposals prepared by MDOT this summer to ensure that all concerns voiced by Rockville are included in the document, and that the developer will include their approach to addressing these concerns through their proposal.

MDOT should consider the rigorously-documented studies which have been produced concluding that adding lane capacity generates increased traffic and higher emissions, which directly conflict with congestion relief and environmental goals. Additionally, we believe it is crucial for MDOT to reinstate better solutions for traffic congestion relief, including transit options.

The City of Rockville requests that MDOT work with the City, and all impacted jurisdictions, to identify the best solution that would achieve our mutual goals of reducing traffic congestion and protecting our residents' quality of life. The Mayor and Council will continue to stay actively engaged in the public input process to ensure that our residents and businesses are protected from negative impacts. We ask that you give every possible consideration to our comments and concerns.

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: Rockville City Manager  
District 17 Delegation