

**STATEMENT OF ED RICH, PRESIDENT
GREATER FARMLAND CIVIC ASSOCIATION
MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
I-270 & I-495 MANAGED LANE STUDY
August 26, 2018**

This statement is presented on behalf of the Greater Farmland Civic Association, which represents the 981 homes in the Old Farm, Tilden Woods, Hickory Woods, and Walnut Woods neighborhoods located just south of Montrose Road and just east of Interstate 270. We are writing to express our vehement opposition to any proposal by Governor Hogan and the Maryland government to further widen Interstate 270 and further degrade our quality of life.

We, the residents who live adjacent to Interstate 270 and contribute substantially to the tax coffers of the state, have seen the roadway go from four lanes at its inception to 12 lanes today. Each time the road has been expanded, it was sold as a solution to traffic congestion. This has not happened. Instead, the adding of lanes has resulted in the adage expressed in the movie Field of Dreams coming to pass: "If you built it, they will come." The construction of additional lanes at the cost of billions of dollars has simply provided for more single occupancy cars and more traffic congestion, leading to increased environmental degradation of our neighborhood. The highway has sent more and more carbon and noise pollution into our neighborhood. We cannot accept the expenditure of any more funds to further degrade our neighborhood so that persons are able to potentially shave several seconds off of their daily commutes. Have you even thought about the fact that higher speeds lead to more accidents and more severe accidents, which shut down traffic entirely and defeat the purpose of additional lanes?

More and more, state transportation officials have come to realize it is foolish to spend billions of dollars to add traffic lanes in an effort to cure congestion. That was the message recently delivered by Roger Millar, the director of the Washington Department of Transportation

at a gathering of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials in July. Mr. Millar stated that the underlying cause of traffic congestion is not insufficient road infrastructure but the lack of “affordable housing and transportation solutions” that would encourage persons to live closer to their jobs. He further stated that, even if the state could afford to build additional roadways sufficient to adequately move more single occupancy vehicles, the effect would be to dump uncontrollable traffic on local streets. The solution: more emphasis on telecommuting, off-peak commuting and alternatives to the single occupancy vehicle for getting around.

Another report recently issued by the Active Transportation Alliance, looking at traffic congestion in the Chicago area and plans by Chicago officials to fund substantial roadway widening projects, found that adding new highway lanes simply encourages more people to drive instead of taking the train or other means of getting around, thus creating more congestion. The report concluded that roadway expansion had spurred an explosion in driving since 1980, worsening area traffic and leading to more crashes and pollution. Ron Burke, the Executive Director of the Alliance, said that widening roads and making driving easier and faster leads some people to take more car trips than they otherwise would, and to live farther from work and other destinations, while some companies will choose to locate farther afield and away from transit. Burke concluded: “We have to rethink this decades long strategy of relying on cars to take us everywhere on wider and wider roads to bigger and bigger parking lots.”

Brian Woods, a transportation planner with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, in an article that recently appeared in Greater-Greater Washington, offered common-sense solutions to traffic congestion that should be the focus of any study:

“1. Improve transit, walking, and bicycling infrastructure: If every major road had wide sidewalks, marked crosswalks with enough time to cross the street, separated bicycle lanes, accessible transit stops, and bus-only lanes, it would be significantly more convenient to take transit, walk, or bicycle, especially for shorter trips. People are less likely to drive if high quality and convenient alternatives exist.

“2. Build more mixed-use, transit-oriented, and high-density development: Mixed-use, transit-oriented, and high density developments generate all the activity that increases residents' quality of life, while generating fewer vehicle trips. This solution doesn't change the transportation between A and B, but rather brings A and B together, erasing the need for a transportation solution. Denser development also helps foster business because they require areas that draw lots of customers.

“3. Prioritize people, not vehicles: Lastly, jurisdictions can change automobile-related requirements in their zoning ordinances and review practices so that all trips — not just automobile trips — are considered. For example, they can remove parking minimums for apartment buildings and prohibit drive-throughs, which encourage driving and penalize those who don't. They can also lower the threshold where a developer would be required to build a road improvement.”

The focus of this study, simply on figuring out ways to move traffic faster, is flawed. Instead, the state should be looking at a comprehensive approach on how to manage future growth in a way that allows for continued economic growth without the need for major new road infrastructure. Instead of continuing to assume that the car is king, the state should be figuring

out ways to improve public transportation options that make other modes of transportation more accessible, more affordable and more reliable and viable alternatives to the single occupancy vehicle. Expansion of the METRO and MARC systems, additional light rail options, bus-rapid transit and neighborhood public transportation options, such as regularly scheduled jitneys should be explored. True “smart growth” around areas with strong public transportation infrastructure that (1) provides opportunities for people to live, work and play in a single area, (2) provides housing for persons of all income levels and (3) requires modal splits that significantly reduce single occupancy vehicle traffic need to be prioritized and incentivized. In an age of cell phones, tablets and computers and in which a significant number of white collar jobs do not require the regular presence in an office, the state should be encouraging private employers to provide more telecommuting opportunities for their employees. The state, along with county and local governments, could have a significant impact on traffic congestion by providing for alternative work schedules and staggered workday hours.

As Brian Woods so eloquently stated: “By accommodating people before cars and reducing the number of road projects, driving doesn’t become the default option. That leads to fewer cars on the road. These options work best together: reducing reliance on automobiles by changing the built environment while simultaneously making transit, walking, and bicycling more convenient and affordable.” We cannot and will not stand for the piecemeal approach that is inherent in your study. This study should be scrapped before too many more precious tax dollars are spent on an approach that is doomed to failure and that will have a significantly negative effect on the quality of life in our neighborhood, our county and our state.
