

## Montgomery

##  County Council

##### *From the Office of Council Vice President Tom Hucker*  *Oct. 23, 2020*

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**Council’s Transportation and Environment Committee reviews I-270/I-495 Managed Lanes Study Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

Committee will review elements of a joint Council- and County Executive-supported Preferred Alternative to Maryland Department of Transportation and State Highway Administration’s proposal

ROCKVILLE, Md., Oct. 23, 2020 – On Monday, Oct. 26 at 2:30 p.m. the Council’s Transportation and Environment (T&E) Committee will meet to review the I-270/I-495 Managed Lanes Study Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The T&E Committee, which is chaired by Council Vice President Tom Hucker and includes Councilmembers Evan Glass and Hans Riemer, will review deficiencies identified in the DEIS by Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) staff and will discuss key elements of developing a joint Council- and County Executive-supported preferred alternative to present to the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and State Highway Administration (SHA).

The DEIS includes traffic, environmental, engineering and financial analyses of the Build Alternatives and the No Build Alternative. The DEIS process provides an opportunity for residents, interest groups and other agencies to review and provide comments on the proposed federal action and the adverse and beneficial environmental impacts and proposed mitigation for unavoidable impacts.

Council Vice President Tom Hucker said: “The Purple Line is over two years behind schedule and nearly $1 billion over budget. Clearly, taxpayers cannot trust MDOT to manage a far larger and more complicated Beltway widening. And the reduced congestion due to COVID has eliminated the very feeble case for that project. Fortunately, Montgomery County will work with our top transportation planners to put forth a more effective and less costly alternative plan to reduce congestion, and the State should embrace that instead.”

Councilmember Evan Glass said: “The state has shown a lack of transparency since the beginning of this process. I appreciate that the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission has been diligently asking the questions that our constituents want answered. Now the Council will continue the in-depth analysis and request answers about this deeply impactful project.”

Councilmember Hans Riemer said: “From the time this project was announced, I have focused on two things - keeping the project inside the existing right-of-way and providing transit, including a connection between Montgomery County and the Dulles Corridor. Those goals continue to guide me.”

In Aug. and early Sept., MDOT and SHA held several virtual public hearings and two in-person hearings, one of which was in Montgomery County. The testimony received was overwhelmingly in favor of the No Build Alternative. The relatively few comments in support of a build option preferred Alternative 9, which would add two toll lanes in each direction on the Beltway and one lane in each direction, as well as redesignating the existing HOV lanes, as toll lanes on I-270 up to I-370.

Since SHA was not able to share the testimony quickly, the Council and County Executive asked the public who were testifying or corresponding with the State of Maryland about the DEIS to forward a copy of their testimony or correspondence to the County. The County received 87 pieces of testimony and correspondence on the site, largely mirroring the feedback from the hearings.

Some of the deficiencies in the DEIS identified by the staff of the bi-county M-NCPPC include construing the purpose and need of the project too narrowly; inadequate definition of limits of disturbance, especially pertaining to aquatic impacts; insufficient compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act; insufficient evaluation of social equity and environmental justice implications of the alternatives; evaluation of stormwater management that ignores runoff from existing roadways; and inadequate consideration of the financial viability to complete this project, even without a State government subsidy.

The T&E Committee also will review aspects of the County Preferred Alternative, including the No Build Alternative, elements of transportation system management and Alternative 9, which includes the addition of two managed lanes in each direction on the Beltway between Virginia and the I-270 West Spur.

The Council staff report can be viewed [here](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/cm/2020/20201026/20201026_TE1.pdf).

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