

January 19, 2016

The Honorable Larry Hogan, Governor
State of Maryland
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1925

Mr. Pete Rahn, Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Drive, P.O. Box 548
Hanover, Maryland 21076

Dear Governor Hogan and Secretary Rahn:

Last week we were dismayed to learn that the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) has delayed indefinitely the notice to proceed to construct the planned I-270/Watkins Mill Road interchange, and that MDOT is seriously considering proceeding without ramps from Watkins Mill Road to I-270, and perhaps without either on- or off-ramps. We insist that plans for anything less than the full interchange be dismissed and that MDOT proceed with the project as designed immediately.

This interchange was identified as a need more than two decades ago, at which point it was part of MDOT's upper I-270 project planning study. Recognizing its need in the shorter term, MDOT established the interchange as a stand-alone project in the FY1999-2004 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP): *17 years ago*. It has remained one of our highest State transportation priorities over the last decade. During the Transportation Trust Fund's lean times we provided \$4.9 million in County funds to allow MDOT to continue progress in designing the full interchange. The City of Gaithersburg has dedicated about 23 acres of land for the full interchange. In 2013 the State fully funded this interchange in exchange for our support of the gasoline tax increase that year. With its programing in the CTP, we have dropped it from our priorities letter, knowing that it was a "given." The news of a potential delay and down-scoping of this interchange has already caused much distress in the business community and among our Upcounty residents.

Nothing short of a full interchange is acceptable. With an interchange, traffic at the MD 124/MD 355 intersection—now operating at more than 25 percent over capacity—and at the regularly congested MD 117/MD 124 intersection would finally get some relief. All these are State highways upon which our residents and businesses depend. The full interchange will also provide direct access to—and egress from—MDOT's Metropolitan Grove MARC station for commuters from Frederick County and upper Montgomery County. The full interchange will also provide access to and egress from the northern terminus of the first phase of the Corridor Cities Transitway.

Furthermore, much economic development is predicated on a full interchange. Phase 2 of the Spectrum development, which is dependent on I-270 access and egress, will consist of 360,000sf of office, 14,400sf of mixed use (bank/service), 80,600sf of mixed use (retail, restaurant), and a 184-room hotel with 10,000sf of retail. There are several other projects that are approved and in the pipeline that are contingent on a full interchange:

- FedEx has received entitlements to locate a distribution center on the old IBM Campus which would bring 300 new jobs.
- The Humane Society is now considering making their Gaithersburg location their National Headquarters.
- Lockheed Martin (700 North Frederick Avenue), through a 2015 acquisition of another company, is considering the addition of employment at its existing facility. Preliminary discussions with the company focused on the already challenging road access and traffic

volume at the company's entrance and the ability of the new, full interchange to offer relief.

The area adjacent to the I-270/Watkins Mill interchange has attracted significant employers and institutional investors, who made investment decisions that assumed construction of a full interchange based upon public commitments by the State of Maryland. Because of the announced highway improvements, properties on the east and west sides of I-270 at this location have become hub for biotechnology companies and professional services. Recent activity has included:

- Emergent Biosolutions, Inc. (relocation of headquarters; acquisition in 2013 of 130,000sf at 400 Professional Drive; value of \$17 million)
- Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics (expansion and relocation to 50 West Watkins Mill Road; space under construction; 30,000sf; occupancy 2016)
- MRI Global Research Institute (relocation, expansion and acquisition of 65 West Watkins Mill Road in 2015; 45,000sf; value of \$8 million)
- Sale of 25, 35, 45 West Watkins Mill in 2013 and again in 2015 (three biotechnology buildings totaling 140,000sf, accommodating expansion of MedImmune and Amplimmune; value of \$31 million)
- Hampton Inn (newly constructed hotel at 960 N. Frederick Avenue; access via Watkins Mill Road; value of \$15 million)

Currently, the Maryland Department of Commerce has a commitment letter with a biotechnology prospect for a location that would also be served by the new, full interchange. Capital investment for that project is estimated as high as \$150 million. These are only a few examples of how important the full interchange not only benefits Gaithersburg and Montgomery County but the whole region.

Therefore, in the strongest terms we urge you to reinstate the schedule for the full interchange so that it will go under construction this spring and be completed in FY2019, as shown in the Draft FY2016-2021 CTP.

Sincerely,

Nancy Floreen, President Montgomery County Council	Roger Berliner, Vice President Montgomery County Council	Marc Elrich Montgomery County Council
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Tom Hucker Montgomery County Council	Sidney Katz Montgomery County Council	George Leventhal Montgomery County Council
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Nancy Navarro Montgomery County Council	Craig Rice Montgomery County Council	Hans Riemer Montgomery County Council
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cc: The Honorable Isiah Leggett, Montgomery County Executive
 The Honorable Jud Ashman, Mayor, City of Gaithersburg
 The Honorable Nancy King, Chair, Montgomery County Senate Delegation
 The Honorable Shane Robinson, Chair, Montgomery County House Delegation
 Mr. Casey Anderson, Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board
 Mr. Al Roshdieh, Acting Director, Montgomery County Department of Transportation