

October 22, 2021

Jeffrey Folden
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Jeanette Mar
Environmental Program Manager
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Dear Mr. Folden and Ms. Mar:

As representatives of the vast majority of the Washington, D.C. area's employers, workers, and commuters, we are writing to urge you to not extend the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) public comment period beyond the current forty-five days.

Our community has waited long enough for traffic relief. Any further delay for this major regional transportation improvement is unacceptable to residents who are stuck in soul-crushing traffic day-in and day-out on the American Legion Bridge and I-270, and risks serious schedule delays that could potentially derail the entire project.

The American Legion Bridge is in desperate need of repair and improvement. Just a few weeks ago, it was widely reported that pieces of the bridge were crumbling and in need of repair. This project will not only ensure the safety of people traveling throughout our region today, but also expand the capacity of the bridge to accommodate future economic growth and travel demand that we know is coming.

In addition, there has already been extensive public comment on the impacts of this project over the last 3+ years of this NEPA process. Indeed, in the fall of 2020, MDOT nearly tripled the public comment period for this project resulting in thousands of comments received over 120 days. All told, there have already been over 275 days of formal public comment period in this NEPA study, plus many other informal opportunities to review and comment on the findings.

In addition to all these opportunities for public comment on the current study, this is not the first time we have been through all of this. There have already been at least three previous NEPA studies already conducted in these corridors in a NEPA study process that, combined, has now extended over roughly 30-years. There is no plausible need for any further delay.

Now that a preferred alternative has been selected – two high occupancy toll (HOT) Lanes in each direction, allowing for more transit, bike, and pedestrian travel in this corridor – this SDEIS presents a less impactful version of what the public has already seen and commented on before in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. There are no new impacts in the SDEIS that would justify any extension beyond the already planned 45-day period.

The details put forward in the SDEIS are by no means a new or unexpected outcome. In fact, the SDEIS now reflects many of the public comments received on the DEIS and closely resembles the proposal put forward by Montgomery County elected officials in July of 2019. That's because this SDEIS is the direct result of active public engagement over

the last three years from the community, public and elected officials. The public has been consulted, has weighed in with comments, and has been heard.

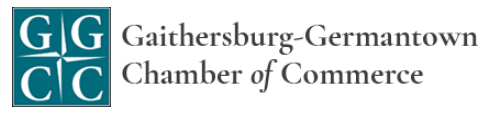
Finally, further delaying this project will result in millions of dollars in higher costs and more uncertainty that could jeopardize many of the community benefits that we have all worked so hard to ensure are included in this project. If we want improvements to the American Legion Bridge and I-270 to be truly multimodal and provide extensive community benefits beyond just the substantial traffic relief and new travel opportunities, it is important to avoid unnecessary delays and costly increases while we are still in the early planning stages. The current proposal includes more than \$360 million in transit improvements, and tens of millions more in community, bike and pedestrian grants, all of which will likely have to be scaled back or eliminated to cover the cost of more delay. This is an unacceptable risk.

For these reasons and more, we urge you to keep the forty-five-day public comment period on the SDEIS in place so that we can stay on track to build this monumental improvement to our region's transportation infrastructure. Time is money and enough time has already been wasted.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,







Democratic Business Council of Maryland
GROWING MARYLAND IS OUR BUSINESS



CC: The Hon. Greg Slater, Maryland Secretary of Transportation