

## Montgomery

##  County Council

##### *From the Office of Council Vice President Tom Hucker*  *July 20, 2020*

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**Transportation and Environment Committee calls on**
**the Federal Highway Administration to extend public**
**comment period for I-495 and I-270 Managed Lanes**
**Study Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

ROCKVILLE, Md., July 20, 2020—Following a briefing ([video here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TklC7WzlRTo)) from the Maryland Department of Transportation today, the County Council’s Transportation and Environment (T&E) Committee requested that the Federal Highway Administration extend the public comment period by at least 30 days for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on the proposed Managed Lanes I-495 and I-270 Public-Private Partnership (P3) Program (Project). The Committee joins a [coalition of 44 community and environmental organizations](https://www.sierraclub.org/maryland/blog/2020/07/press-release-44-organizations-join-call-for-more-time-for-public-comment), [Montgomery County Executive Elrich](https://www2.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcgportalapps/Press_Detail.aspx?Item_ID=25591), and [US Senators Cardin & Van Hollen, and U.S. Reps. Raskin and Brown](https://raskin.house.gov/sites/raskin.house.gov/files/MD%20DEIS%20Comment%20Period%20Letter_.pdf) in requesting an extension.

T&E Committee Chair and Council Vice President Tom Hucker said, “It is unacceptable to give County residents only 90 days to read and comment on a document that is over 18,000 pages—15 times the length of War and Peace. The Federal Highway Administration must give our constituents more time to understand the environmental, transportation and financial implications of this project. MDOT should do everything in its power to support this request.”

Councilmember Hans Riemer, who chairs the Council’s Planning, Housing and Economic Development Committee, said, “With a project of this significance we need the state to give us enough time to comment. M-NCPPC has already experienced unacceptable delays in receiving information for their comments. Let’s make sure that doesn’t happen with the County.”

“Given the current P3 management problems associated with the construction of the Purple Line, I remain concerned about the state’s approach to entering into a long-term contract for the expansion of the Beltway and 270. Requiring the public to digest nearly 18,000 pages in 90 days does not provide the level of oversight that our constituents demand,” said Councilmember Evan Glass, who serves on the T&E Committee.

The T&E Committee was [briefed on July 20](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TklC7WzlRTo) [(video)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TklC7WzlRTo) on the I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes Study’s Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The DEIS includes traffic, environmental, engineering and financial analyses of the Build Alternatives and the No Build Alternative. This DEIS provides an opportunity for the public, interest groups and other agencies to review and provide comment on the proposed federal action and the adverse and beneficial environmental impacts and proposed mitigation for unavoidable impacts. T&E Committee Chair Hucker requested that Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) staff present an overview of the DEIS prior to the state’s public hearings, which are currently scheduled to be held in August and early September.

Participants in today’s T&E Committee meeting included the following officials from MDOT: Lisa Choplin, director, I-495 and I-270 P3 Office, MDOT; Jeff Folden, deputy director, I-495 and I-270 P3 Office, MDOT; and Caryn Brookman, environmental manager for the I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes Study. The T&E Committee includes Council Vice President Tom Hucker and Councilmembers Evan Glass and Hans Riemer.

The Montgomery County Planning Board received a briefing from Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) on the Administrative Draft of the DEIS at a July 15 meeting and expressed concerns related to the project’s financial projections and that the impact statement failed to correctly analyze impacts on communities with low incomes.  They also [expressed concerns](https://mncppc.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=7&clip_id=2245) about the loss of parks and cultural sites and stormwater runoff.

At this time, residents must provide comments on the Managed Lanes Study’s Draft Environmental Impact Statement by October 8, 2020. Four virtual hearings are planned in August and two in-person hearings are planned in September. More information and to sign up for the hearings can be found [here](https://495-270-p3.com/your-participation/upcoming-events/).

Video of the Committee briefing can be found [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TklC7WzlRTo). The Council staff report can be viewed [here](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/cm/2020/20200720/20200720_TE1.pdf).

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