

PRESS RELEASE

Central Maryland Transportation Alliance | Chesapeake Climate Action Network | Citizens Against Beltway Expansion | Coalition for Smarter Growth | DontWiden270.org | League of Women Voters of Maryland | NAACP Maryland State Conference | National Parks Conservation Association | Sierra Club Maryland Chapter

For Immediate Release:
August 21, 2023

Contacts:
Barbara Coufal, Chair, Citizens Against Beltway Expansion
495cabe@gmail.com and 240-731-2490

Stewart Schwartz, Executive Director, Coalition for Smarter Growth
stewart@smartergrowth.net and 703-599-6437

Advocates Call for Alternatives to Governor's Toll Lane Plan

Today the Moore Administration [announced](#) it will seek a federal grant to advance former Gov. Hogan's defective plan for toll lanes on I-495 across the American Legion Bridge to the I-270 spur, and the I-270 west spur.

Instead of taking a fresh look at transportation needs and smart alternatives in the I-495/I-270 corridor, the Administration is relying on the flawed Record of Decision from the previous Administration's Managed Lanes Study. That study received thousands of public comments revealing its shortcomings and is the subject of ongoing lawsuits. It is extremely disappointing that Governor Moore, a champion of equity and sustainability, is embracing it.

The [Record of Decision](#) approves "two high-occupancy toll (HOT) managed lanes in each direction along I-495..." Moreover, a recent report (attached) from the Maryland Department of Transportation to the Maryland General Assembly indicates in a footnote that the project will include toll lanes.

Our partners and policy makers have proposed a range of toll-lane alternatives that can provide congestion relief alone or in combination. These include bus rapid transit networks on parallel roads; incentives for telework and flexible work hours; converting a lane on I-495 for bus, vanpools and HOV; reversible lanes during rush hour; metered ramps and other features included in the successful Innovation Congestion Management Program on I-270; addressing the East-West economic, racial and commuting divide through transit-oriented development; quickly completing the Purple Line and planning for Metrorail or light rail over the American Legion and Woodrow Wilson Bridges.

Instead, the Moore Administration is pursuing a flawed project that:

- Privileges the few who can afford high tolls while consigning the vast majority to continuing or worsening congestion.
- Prioritizes safety for the express lanes and makes general lanes less safe by removing inside shoulders, crowding trucks and passenger vehicles together, and more.
- Calls for destructive highway widening in long-established, densely populated areas.
- Disproportionately harms low and moderate wage earners and environmental justice communities.
- Increases air and water pollution, cuts down essential forest cover, harms national parks, and increases greenhouse gas emissions.

The Governor says he wants equitable transportation that leaves no one behind. "It is senseless to spend billions and raise hopes on a project doomed to fail. The state's own environmental review shows the toll lanes would not reduce congestion, they would only move bottlenecks," said Barbara Coufal, Chair of Citizens Against Beltway Expansion.

The Governor says he wants Maryland to be a global leader in climate action. "We are facing a climate emergency that will lead to massive sea level rise, increased flooding, extreme heat, and more air pollution from fires, harming all Marylanders," said Stewart Schwartz, Executive Director of the Coalition for Smarter Growth. "That's why we urge Governor Moore to reject the destructive toll lanes in favor of a comprehensive smart growth approach."

"Governor Moore should be investing in public transportation, not furthering our dependence on cars," said Jamie Demarco, Maryland Director, Chesapeake Climate Action Network.

"The National Parks Conservation Association opposed the Hogan highway toll plan because it would harm National Park sites," said Pamela Goddard, NPCA Mid-Atlantic Region Senior Program Director. "We invite Governor Moore to leave the Hogan plan behind and chart a new transportation strategy for Maryland that keeps our national parks safe."

"It is unfortunate and disappointing that the Moore Administration is moving ahead with plans to widen the Beltway and I-270 with toll lanes. The toll lanes expansion will disproportionately harm residents living in redlined communities near highways with increased air pollution, asthma, and other health conditions. Instead of putting forth a plan that would deepen racial and economic disparities, we hoped the Governor would follow through on his commitment to "leave no one behind" to invest in building sustainable transportation options that improve our health, protect our climate, and make it easier for all residents to access jobs, food, education, and healthcare without relying on cars," said Staci Hartwell, Chair of the Environmental and Climate Justice Committee of the NAACP Maryland State Conference.

The Governor says he wants transparency and openness. "The Moore Administration must take a step back and engage the public and local officials in finding effective, equitable, forward-

looking alternatives to the failed Hogan-era toll lane plan," said Janet Gallant, Co-Coordinator of DontWiden270.org.

"When our leaders finally prioritize building infrastructure that makes it safer and more convenient to walk, bike or take transit, instead of prioritizing widening roads and highways, we will see benefits to our health, environment and quality of life. As we face the climate crisis and racial inequities, that day cannot come soon enough. Sadly, today is not that day," said Brian O'Malley, President & CEO, Central Maryland Transportation Alliance.

"The League of Women Voters of Maryland has long stood for transparency for any project so that the public is involved in the process. With current lawsuits yet to be decided, we believe the entire project needs to have fresh eyes on it," said Linda Kohn, President of LWVMD.

"The design of this highway expansion project is fundamentally flawed and would severely harm our health and environment. We urge Governor Moore to take a fresh look at this critical issue instead of building on the faulty foundation of his predecessor," said Josh Tulkin, Director for the Sierra Club Maryland Chapter.

We urge Governor Moore to reject this failed proposal from the last administration and develop real solutions to Maryland's transportation needs. We would happily support the Governor and his staff in creating effective, equitable options that benefit all commuters and protect our citizens and environment.