

# Action Committee for Transit

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P.O. Box 7074, Silver Spring, MD 20907

March 12, 2011

The Honorable Muriel Bowser, Chair  
National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board  
777 North Capital Street NE, Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20002-4239

Dear Chair Bowser:

Action Committee for Transit offers the following comments for consideration regarding the draft 2011 CLRP.

The I-270 Corridor highway expansion in Maryland is listed as costing \$3.4 billion. Spending more than three billion dollars on widening I-270 is a not a good idea:

- It's a poor use of money, because widening I-270 will not reduce congestion. Case in point: when I-270 was widened south of Shady Grove, the new lanes quickly filled up and the road was soon just as congested as it was before – except with many more cars.
- It erroneously assumes that transportation cannot be improved without highway widening. However, MDOT has never analyzed an **all-transit** alternative for this corridor, although it was instructed to do so by the TPB 13 years ago.
- It uses money that would be better used for transit. For example, just \$0.5 billion of the proposed \$3.4 billion for highway widening could fund the entire expansion and improvement of the MARC Brunswick line, which travels in the I-270 corridor. The MTA's [MARC Growth and Investment Plan](#) is not currently funded in the CLRP.
- Finally, the I-270 highway construction would preclude extension of the Metro Red Line to Germantown by removing the existing right of way along I-270 in which the extension could be built most cost-effectively. With METRO as the backbone of transit in the metropolitan area, we must not close off future transit options.

A plan drawn up four years ago by Maryland transportation planners, called the [MARC Growth and Investment Plan](#), would vastly improve service on the commuter train line from Washington to Frederick and Brunswick. Trains would run all day in both directions, and in rush hour trains would run every 15 minutes from Union Station through Rockville and Germantown to Point of Rocks. Rush-hour trains would go to Frederick and Brunswick every half hour. Trains would also run mid-day, evenings, and weekends, but less frequently.

While the current spike in gas prices might be temporary, over the long haul an upward price trend is inevitable. Spiraling gas prices will destabilize current patterns that make reliance on private automobiles the ubiquitous mode that it is today. Citizens will expect their governments to have forecast these trends and to have made plans for transportation alternatives to the personal automobile.

The Action Committee for Transit asks that the [MARC Growth and Investment Plan](#) be included in the CLRP.

Sincerely,

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