

Transcript - July 2018 Open Houses

Board 1:

Welcome to the Online Alternatives Public Workshop for the I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes Study.

The boards presented in this online meeting are the same boards that were displayed at the four Public Workshops held on July 17th, 18th, 24th, and 25th. At these meetings, project staff members were stationed at each board to answer questions. Since you are reviewing this meeting on-line, we are offering this narrated version of the display boards.

We welcome your comments on the study including the Preliminary Range of Alternatives and the screening criteria to be used to evaluate the alternatives. At the end of this online Alternatives Public Workshop, we will tell you how you can submit your comments. Persons requiring assistance to participate in the online public workshop, such as assistance with the English language, should contact the project toll-free number at 833-858-5960.

Board 2:

Purpose of Today's Public Workshop

This Managed Lanes Study is an Environmental Study which is the main topic of this online Public Workshop. The I-495 and I-270 Managed Lanes Study is being conducted in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (known as NEPA) as well as other applicable federal and state environmental regulations.

The Online Public Workshop will:

- Provide an update on the study status and schedule;
- Provide a summary of the study Purpose and Need;
- Present a Preliminary Range of Alternatives developed from the scoping process; and
- Present the Screening Criteria to evaluate the alternatives.

Future meetings will focus on detailed alternatives and environmental and property information.

Board 3

Traffic Conditions

The top 5 highest volume highway sections in Maryland are within the study area. On average, severe congestion lasts for seven hours each day on I-270 and 10 hours each day on I-495.

The study area includes several of the most unreliable highway sections in Maryland with highly variable travel times day to day. Many sections experience speeds less than 15 miles per hour under existing conditions and traffic is expected to deteriorate. Here, you can see the Average Annual Daily Traffic numbers from the various locations.

Board 4:

I-495 & I-270 P3 Program

The National Capital Region has some of the worst traffic congestion in the nation. Maryland has the second highest average commuting times in the country, with an average work commute time of approximately 32 minutes.

The overall I-495 & I-270 Public-Private Partnership, or P3 Program, includes improvements for more than 70 miles of interstate in Maryland. The limits of the I-495 and I-270 P3 Program include:

- The full length of I-495 (known as the Capital Beltway) from south of the American Legion Bridge to east of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, estimated at 42 miles; and
- I-270, from I-495 to I-70, including the east and west spurs, estimated at 34 miles.

Board 5

Public-Private Partnership (P3)

MDOT SHA will use a competitive process to seek proposals from the private sector to enter into a Public-Private Partnership, or P3, to develop innovative approaches to design, build, finance, operate, and maintain potential improvements developed through the I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes Study.

Why is MDOT SHA considering using a P3? Well, for several reasons.

- **It will allow project risks to be transferred** -- The State and the private partner will share the project risks based on who can best manage the risk to provide the best value to the State.
- **Projects Can be Constructed Faster:** P3 projects can move forward more quickly when the State does not have available funding because the private partner will provide the financing to build it. In exchange, the private partner will collect the future revenues from the highway.
- **Operations and Maintenance:** The State could benefit from having a P3 concessionaire operate the highway and maintain it (for example, performing pavement repairs, grass mowing, or snow removal) at a more economical cost.
- There is **Limited Government Funding:** Projects that are anticipated to generate user fees, such as toll roads, may be constructed with limited or no governmental funding.

Further –

- Using a P3 encourages efficiencies and innovations to provide a better long-term value for the public and the citizens of Maryland.

Board 6:

Elements of the P3 Program

There are 2 elements of the P3 Program. The first element is the I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes Study which includes:

- I-495 from south of the American Legion Bridge to east of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge (approximately 42 miles); and
- I-270 from I-495 to I-370, including the east and west spurs (approximately 14 miles), for a total of 56 miles.

Today's meeting will focus on this study.

The second element of the P3 Program involves a Future Study beginning in 2019, which will examine the northern part of I-270 from I-370 north to I-70.

Board 7:

The NEPA Process

The NEPA process requires federal agencies to evaluate the environmental impacts of proposed actions.

The I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes Study will follow NEPA and will include the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (or an EIS). This report will document the potential impacts to natural, cultural, and socioeconomic resources in the study corridor associated with the study alternatives.

The Federal Highway Administration is the lead federal agency for the EIS, and the Maryland Department of Transportation's State Highway Administration is the local project sponsor. These two agencies jointly lead the I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes Study.

Board 8:

The NEPA process includes the following five broad steps:

- **Scoping**, which includes gathering input from the public and agencies that will be used for identifying the purpose and need, potential alternatives, and environmental considerations. COMPLETE.
- **Preliminary Alternatives and Screening**. This is where we are today. This step is the development of the Preliminary Range of Alternatives and the development of Screening Criteria or metrics that will be used to evaluate whether these alternatives are reasonable.
- **Alternatives Retained for Detailed Study**. This step includes the identification and development of the alternatives that will be carried forward for more detailed study throughout the development of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (or DEIS). The information from this step will support the identification of a Preferred Alternative.
- **Draft Environmental Impact Statement**. The preparation of the DEIS will include the documentation and evaluation of all the potential natural, cultural, and socioeconomic impacts caused by the alternatives. MDOT SHA's Preferred Alternative will also be identified in the DEIS. The public will have an opportunity to comment on the DEIS, the alternatives, and MDOT SHA's Preferred Alternative at the Public Hearing and during a public comment period.
- **Combined Final Environmental Impact Statement and the Record of Decision**. This is the last step in the NEPA process. This document will be a combined version of two documents. It will present the impacts of the Preferred Alternative, and how the impacts would be mitigated. It will also include the responses to the comments received on the DEIS. It will serve as the basis for the final decision on the selected alternative and completes the NEPA process.

Board 9:

Managed Lanes Study Timeline

- The I-495 and I-270 Managed Lanes Study began in early 2018 with the publication of the Notice of Intent to initiate the NEPA study. This early phase is called scoping and includes the public Open Houses and a 45-day comment period on purpose and need for the study, potential alternatives, environmental considerations, and evaluation methods.
- In mid-2018, the team developed a Preliminary Range of Alternatives for the July workshops and will be discussed here. The alternatives will be evaluated to determine which ones are reasonable and which ones should be retained for more detailed study.
- In the second half of 2018 and early 2019, technical environmental analyses will be conducted to support the Environmental Impact Statement and to determine the environmental effects associated with the alternatives retained for detailed study.
- The team will complete the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (or DEIS) winter to fall of 2019, concluding with a public hearing on the Preferred Alternative.
- The combined Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision will be completed

by spring of 2020.

Board 10:

Scoping Update

Scoping is the first step in the NEPA process. It provides opportunities for public and agency input on the purpose and need, potential alternatives, and environmental considerations to be addressed during the study.

The I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes Study scoping occurred from mid-March to early May of 2018, and included:

- Coordination meetings with local, State, and federal agencies;
- Publication of a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register, which occurred on March 16th;
- Launch of a website in March, which provided a study overview, contact information, and the opportunity for the public to submit study-related comments and questions and be added to the study mailing list; and
- A series of four Open Houses designed to share study information and obtain community feedback. 374 citizens attended the Open Houses.

Board 11:

Public Scoping Comments

A total of 620 comments were submitted from March 16th through May 1st during the scoping period.

- 143 written comments were received at the Public Scoping Open Houses;
- 125 comments were received via the P3 study website and email;
- 345 comments were received via the study survey, in which 713 total survey responses were received during the scoping period;
- Six comments were received by phone to the toll-free number; and
- One comment letter was received by mail.

Board 12:

From the 620 Public Scoping comments, there were approximately five major themes:

1. Support for the study, specific recommendations, or fixing congestion;
2. Statements about tolls and partnership with the private sector;
3. Concerns with effects to the environment, noise, air, and properties;
4. Support for the improvement of transit; and
5. Questions about the study timeline and initial outreach.

Board 13

Purpose & Need

The purpose of the I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes Study is to develop a travel demand management, or TDM, solution that addresses congestion, improves trip reliability on I-495 and I-270 within the study limits, and enhances existing and planned multimodal mobility and connectivity.

The study will address the following needs:

- Accommodate existing traffic and long-term traffic growth;
- Enhance trip reliability;

- Provide additional roadway travel choices;
- Accommodate Homeland Security; and
- Improve movement of goods and services.

Additional goals of this study include incorporating funding sources for financial viability and developing the study in an environmentally responsible manner.

Board 14

Transportation Terminology

These are common transportation terms used in the industry.

A **Transportation Systems Management**, or TSM, is used to improve both operation and coordination of transportation services and facilities.

The strategies, techniques, or incentives intended to provide the most efficient and effective use of existing transportation services and facilities is called a **Travel Demand Management**, or TDM.

General Purpose lanes are those lanes on a freeway that all motor vehicles can access.

Managed Lanes are a set of lanes where operational strategies are implemented and managed in response to changing traffic conditions.

Price Managed Lanes combines Congestion Pricing and Lane Management.

Congestion Pricing is used to moderate traffic demand during peak periods where road user charges vary with the level of congestion and/or time of day, providing incentives for motorists to shift some trips to off-peak times, less-congested routes, or alternative modes.

Lane Management provides an alternative to general purpose lanes during peak travel periods. This method restricts access to designated highway lanes based on occupancy or vehicle type. Managed lanes are separate from general purpose lanes by differentiating striping or physical barriers, where entry to these lanes are often limited to designated locations.

A **contraflow lane** is a managed lane separated by pylons or a moveable barrier, operating in the opposite direction of the normal flow of traffic, and designated for peak-direction travel.

A **reversible lane** is a lane where the direction of traffic flow can be changed at different times of the day to match peak direction travel. Reversible lanes are typically inbound in the morning and outbound in the afternoon.

Boards 15 - 18

Preliminary Range of Alternatives

The I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes Study has a Preliminary Range of 15 Alternatives. A brief description and the typical sections of the alternatives are shown here. Some alternatives apply to I-495 while others apply to I-270, and some apply to both.

Alternative 1 is considered the No Build, or existing alternative. This means that no improvements would be made to I-495 or I-270 and these highways would remain exactly as they are today except for any projects included in the Constrained Long-Range Plan, including improvements to I-270's Innovative Congestion Management project.

Alternative 2 is a Transportation Systems Management, or TSM, and Travel Demand Management, or TDM. This alternative includes solutions along I-495 & I-270, like restriping within the existing pavement, peak period shoulder use, ramp metering, and Active Traffic Management, or ATM.

Alternative 3 would add 1 general purpose, or GP lane, in each direction on both I-495 and I-270.

Alternative 4 is a 1-Lane, High-occupancy Vehicle, or HOV, Managed Lane Network. One HOV lane would be added in each direction on I-495 and the existing HOV lanes on I-270 would be retained in each direction.

Alternative 5 is a 1-Lane, Priced Managed Lane Network, which means 2 highway management tools, congestion pricing and lane management, are combined. One priced managed lane would be added in each direction on I-495 and one existing HOV lane in each direction on I-270 would be converted to a priced managed lane.

Alternative 6 would add 2 general purpose lanes in each direction on I-495 and I-270.

Alternative 7 is a 2-Lane, HOV Managed Lane Network. Two HOV lanes would be added in each direction on I-495, and on I-270, the existing HOV lane would be retained, and 1 HOV lane would be added in each direction.

Alternative 8 is a 2-Lane, Priced Managed Lanes Network on I-495, and a 1-Lane Priced and 1-Laned HOV Managed Lane Network on I-270. What this means is that 2 priced managed lanes would be added on I-495 in each direction, and 1 priced managed lane would be added to I-270, while the existing HOV lane in each direction on I-270 would be retained.

Alternative 9 is a 2-Lane, Priced Managed Lane Network. Two priced managed lanes would be added on I-495 in each direction, and on I-270, the existing HOV lane would be converted to a priced managed lane, and 1 priced managed lane would be added in each direction.

Alternative 10 is a 2-Lane, Priced Managed Lane Network and 1-Lane HOV Managed Lane Network on I-270. Two priced managed lanes would be added on I-495 and I-270 in each direction, and the existing HOV lane would be retained on I-270 in each direction.

Alternative 11 would add two Collector/Distributor, or CD lanes in each direction of I-495, similar to the CD lanes on I-270. Traffic on I-495 would be physically separated between C-D lanes and express lanes. No improvements would be made on I-270. I-270 could include improvements from another alternative.

Alternative 12 has 2 parts, 12A and 12B.

- **Alternative 12A** provides a contraflow lane on I-495. A contraflow lane is a managed lane operating in the opposite direction of the normal flow of traffic during rush hour periods to provide additional roadway capacity in the peak direction. In this case, 1 existing general purpose lane would be converted on I-495 to a contraflow lane during peak periods. I-270 could include improvements from another alternative.
- **Alternative 12B** is the same method applied to I-270. The existing HOV lane in the non-peak directions would be converted to a contraflow lane in the peak direction. I-495 could include improvements from another alternative.

Alternative 13 also has 2 parts, 13A and 13B. As with Alternative 12, 'A' applies to I-495 and 'B' applies to I-270.

- **Alternative 13A** is a Priced Managed Reversible Lane Network on I-495. Reversible lanes are physically separated from general purpose lanes and operate in the peak travel direction.

Reversible lanes allow the direction of traffic flow to be changed at different times of the day to match the peak direction of travel. This alternative would add 2 priced managed reversible lanes on I-495. I-270 could include improvements from another alternative.

- **Alternative 13B** is also a Priced Managed, Reversible Lane Network, which would convert the existing HOV lane on I-270 to 2 priced managed reversible lanes. I-495 could include improvements from another alternative.

Alternative 14 has 3 parts, 14A, 14B, and 14C.

- **Alternative 14A (Heavy Rail)** considers heavy rail transit parallel to the I-495 and I-270 corridors, similar to the MARC.
- **Alternative 14B (Light Rail)** considers light rail transit parallel to the I-495 and I-270 corridors, such as the Purple Line currently under construction.
- **Alternative 14C (Fixed Guideway Bus Rapid Transit, Off Alignment)** considers fixed guideway bus rapid transit, or BRT, along a new alignment parallel to the I-495 and I-270 corridors.

Alternative 15 would provide dedicated bus managed lanes along I-495 and I-270.

Board 19

Screening Criteria

The initial screening of alternatives will involve a general, qualitative assessment of each alternative to determine if it is reasonable or unreasonable, or if there is another similar alternative that would better meet the screening criteria. The following criteria related to the study's Purpose and Need will be used to evaluate and screen the Preliminary Range of Alternatives:

Engineering Considerations

- **Existing Traffic and Long-Term Traffic Growth:** Does the alternative accommodate existing traffic and long-term traffic growth?
- **Trip Reliability:** Does the alternative enhance travel time reliability?
- **Additional Travel Choice:** Does the alternative provide an additional travel choice while retaining full-time general purpose lanes?
- **Ease of Usage for Travelers:** Will the alternative include complex operating configurations that could lead to driver confusion?

Homeland Security

- Does the alternative provide additional capacity to assist in accommodating population evacuation?
- Does the alternative extend the ability to quickly coordinate a traffic response by allowing use by emergency responders?

Movement of Goods and Services

- Does the alternative improve the movement of goods via truck freight travel?
- Does the alternative enhance the movement of services by improving access to employment centers?

Financial Viability

- Does the alternative have the potential to be financially self-sufficient?

Multi-Modal Connectivity

- Would the alternative enhance connectivity to and between existing transit facilities near the corridor?
- Could it accommodate new or modified transit service within the alternative?

Environmental

- Would the alternative require additional property?
- Would the alternative impact park properties?
- Would the alternative impact historic properties?
- Would the alternative impact wetlands and waters?

Board 20

How to Stay Connected

MDOT SHA is committed to keeping the public informed about this important study. To learn more about the study, please visit the project website at **495-270-p3.com**.

You can also reach the Study Team and provide comments:

By sending an email to 495-270-P3@sha.state.md.us (mailto:495-270-P3@sha.state.md.us)

By calling our toll-free line at 833-858-5960

Or by mailing your comments to us at:

Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration,
I-495 & I-270 P3 Office
707 North Calvert Street
Mail Stop P-601
Baltimore, MD 21202

CONCLUSION

On this webpage, you'll see links to information regarding the Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes Study will comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act which requires consultation regarding identification, evaluation, and assessment of potential effects to historically significant resources that may be affected by the project. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, related statutes and regulations provide that no person shall on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity that receives federal financial assistance.

Thank you for participating in our Online Alternatives Workshop!

