

Setting the Record Straight on Transportation Funding

I would like to take this opportunity to provide an explanation of my vote and also a brief discussion of HB 1013. As many of you know I have represented the residents of District 32 for 10 years now, more if you count my time on the County Council, you may rest assured that every vote I cast, I believe is in the best interest of my constituents - neighbors, communities and state.

Recently when testifying before a House Committee, Maryland Transportation Secretary Pete Rahn was asked this simple question: "How does the Department prioritize the projects that are submitted by the counties?" Secretary Rahn replied that the compiling of the Maryland Consolidated Transportation plan was "not done through a computer program." Then he said it is done "through a process that I wouldn't necessarily call art." He continued by explaining, "Putting this together is like watching a football game, and a soccer game, and a lacrosse game, and a basketball game, and they're all on the same field, and they're all playing their game at the same time."

We need a fair and transparent, data driven approach to these decisions. HB 1013 creates specific criteria and an objective process, to judge and score each project and determine its priority based on its anticipated benefits. It is not a partisan process, it takes the politics out of funding decisions, and offers an unprejudiced ranking system. This proposed process is used in four other states including Virginia.

The current criteria include:safety and security,

- system preservation,
- quality of service,
- environmental stewardship,
- community vitality,
- economic prosperity,
- equitable access to transportation, and
- cost effectiveness and return on investment.

HB 1013 adds three additional criteria:

- community vitality,
- economic prosperity,
- equitable access to transportation

The bill was amended to give the Maryland Department of Transportation the authority to develop the weight scale for each of the nine criteria.

Nothing in the bill limits — or prescribes — funding for specific transportation projects. The bill merely asks that projects be scored and ranked so that all Marylanders can see, in the interest of transparency, how effectively the billions of dollars in the transportation budget are being spent. That scoring system and the subsequent evaluations will be done by the Governor's own Department of Transportation. Below is language directly from the bill.

SECTION 4. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That nothing in this Act may be construed to prohibit or prevent the funding of the capital transportation priorities in each jurisdiction.

The final decision on funding of transportation projects remain with the Governor and the Secretary of Transportation. The bill simply requires the Governor to explain to the public a decision to fund a lower scoring project ahead of a higher scoring one

Governor Hogan championed open government a few weeks ago, saying "citizens deserve accountability and transparency from their elected leaders." I agree. Anne Arundel County has suffered from a lack of transportation investment for decades. As elected leaders, we have often been left with more questions than answers about why our projects have not been funded. We can do better.

With a fair and transparent process to evaluate how we spend billions of your tax dollars, I am confident that Anne Arundel County will get its fair share.

The Governors dire warnings over Facebook about local projects being cut are disingenuous at best. The chart illustrating the majority of funding is going to Montgomery County, is in error as the department of Transportation has not rated any of the projects currently under consideration.

Transparency and effective use of tax dollars — doesn't that seem like a win for everyone?

[Click here for HB 1013.](#)