



**Request for Information (RFI)**

**September 21, 2017**

**I-495/I-95 (Capital Beltway)  
Congestion Relief Improvements  
from the American Legion Bridge to the  
Woodrow Wilson Bridge**

**I-270 Congestion Relief Improvements  
from I-495 to I-70**

**Response to this RFI is not a requirement for any resulting Request for  
Qualifications or Request for Proposals.**

## I. Introduction

Congestion is significant impediment to economic opportunities and the quality of life within Maryland's Baltimore-Washington corridors. Two of the most congested routes are I-495/I-95 (Capital Beltway) in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties and I-270 in Frederick and Montgomery Counties. Long term congestion relief solutions have previously been evaluated for each corridor and the evaluation of new concepts is underway. The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) is seeking comments on potential innovative solutions for addressing the congestion and innovative methods to finance the congestion relief solutions.

MDOT is seeking input from individuals, firms, teams, or organizations that have experience in developing and/or financing large transportation infrastructure projects and that may be interested in designing, building, financing, operating and/or maintaining improvements for congestion relief along I-495/I-95 or I-270.

The purpose of this Request for Information (RFI) is to solicit comments on potential Public-Private Partnership (P3) opportunities on I-495/I-95 (Capital Beltway) from the American Legion Bridge to the Woodrow Wilson Bridge and I-270 from I-495 to I-70. This RFI is intended solely to obtain information to assist MDOT to evaluate the potential for private partnership opportunities for corridor congestion relief. This RFI:

- provides general background information;
- communicates to potential private sector partners MDOT's objectives;
- solicits information, input or interest regarding potential innovative concepts, project proposal(s) and scope(s), and financing, procurement and project delivery concepts.

**This RFI is an inquiry only. No contract or agreement will be entered into as a result of this RFI process, nor does this RFI initiate a formal solicitation or represent a commitment to issue a Request for Qualifications or Request for Proposals in the future.** Response to this RFI is not a requirement for any resulting Request for Qualifications (RFQ) or Request for Proposals (RFP). Those choosing to respond to this RFI will not, merely by virtue of submitting such response, be deemed to be "offerors" for project concepts or proposals nor have any preference, special designation, advantage or disadvantage in any subsequent activities or projects which may arise out of this RFI. Responses to this RFI are exempt from certain prohibitions set out in MD Code, State Finance and Procurement, § 13-212.1. In accordance with subsection (b) of this provision, this is a part of a preproposal process and is "solicitation of comments from two or more persons as part of a RFI." The information contained in the responses to this RFI, however, is intended to assist MDOT in refining the approach to project development, including the scope and structure of potential P3 agreement(s).

## **II. Objectives**

MDOT is seeking input on the potential to provide significant congestion relief by expanding freeway capacity in Maryland's Baltimore-Washington corridors through a system of managed lanes on I-495 and I-270 that would connect the Intercounty Connector (MD 200) Express Toll Lanes, Virginia's system of Express Lanes, and the fast-growing and highly congested Baltimore-Washington corridors commuter areas in Maryland. While the specific limits of the system of managed lanes has not been determined at this time, locations under consideration include I-495 from the American Legion Bridge to the Woodrow Wilson Bridge and I-270 from I-495 to I-70.

Due to the scope and size of the improvements anticipated to be required to address the congestion and long term operational issues prevalent in these corridors, MDOT is evaluating potential opportunities to leverage private sector involvement, innovation, and expertise. The opportunity to transfer functions normally undertaken by MDOT (financing, design development, construction, operations, and maintenance) to the private sector is being considered to generate innovative design and financing concepts along with accelerated project delivery and minimization of impacts to right-of-way.

In lieu of an availability payment structure, MDOT is considering offering a toll concession to developers for added capacity the developers provide to I-495 or I-270. Under a toll concession for additional capacity, current capacity on I-495 and on I-270 shall remain free. Only users of the additional capacity would pay user fees. The desire of MDOT would be that any private agreement not require a financial contribution directly from the Maryland Transportation Trust Fund and that the agreement would provide a concession payment to MDOT upon financial close. Assistance through federal funding resources and programs such as the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) would be supported and pursued. While these are MDOT's objectives, any feedback on the feasibility of these objectives or alternative solutions would be welcomed as part of any response to this RFI.

## **III. Background**

Maryland has the second longest commuting times in the nation, and Maryland's Baltimore-Washington corridors are the most congested in the nation based on annual delay and congestion per auto-commuter. I-495/I-95 (Capital Beltway) and I-270 in Maryland are the two most heavily traveled freeways in the region, each carrying more than 200,000 daily trips. I-495 is the only circumferential route in the region that provides interregional connections to many radial routes to and from Maryland's Baltimore-Washington corridors, such as I-270, US 29, I-95, MD 295, US 50, MD 4, MD 5, MD 210, and I-295 in Maryland. I-270 is the only freeway link between I-495 and the fast-growing northwest suburbs and the City of Frederick. In addition to heavy commuter traffic demand, I-270 is also the predominant route for freight and long-distance travel between Maryland's metropolitan Washington corridors and

points west. These corridors are critical to supporting continued job growth and quality of life in the region. The following summarizes background and the status of project development for each corridor.

### **I-495/I-95 (Capital Beltway)**

I-495/I-95 (Capital Beltway), located within Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, is the most congested and most unreliable freeway in Maryland. The 42-mile Maryland portion of the Capital Beltway serves over 200,000 interstate, regional and local travelers on a daily basis, including over 240,000 in certain segments. Traffic conditions include regular occurrences of very congested or gridlock conditions for approximately 10 hours per day. This condition will continue to worsen as traffic volumes increase due to the growing number of households and jobs in the region.

The federal government approved construction of the I-495 in 1955. The first section, from MD 355 to MD 185, opened to traffic in 1962 and the last section was opened in 1964. I-495 has been widened in segments over time to its current configuration as a six to eight lane freeway with auxiliary lanes in some locations. Within Montgomery County, I-495 has a predominantly narrow median, varying to a maximum of 36 feet. Residential and commercial development is located close to the right-of-way line. In Prince George's County, the median of I-495 is generally wider than in Montgomery County, varying to a maximum of 54 feet. Noise barriers are located along a substantial portion of the I-495 in Montgomery County and in several locations in Prince George's County. The eastern half of the Capital Beltway is designated I-95 and constitutes a link in the Maine to Florida interstate system.

MDOT initiated a Capital Beltway Study in the early 1990s to evaluate potential strategies to improve regional mobility, provide enhanced safety, maximize travel operational efficiencies, provide cost-effective transportation infrastructure, and address travel demand on Maryland's portion of the Capital Beltway, while supporting the area's economic growth and the environment. In 2002, MDOT determined that both highway and transit solutions were needed to fully address the transportation needs in the corridor. The highway and transit portions of the study were separated into two independent studies: the Capital Beltway Study and the Purple Line Study. MDOT held 15 public meetings between 1995 and 2004 for the Capital Beltway study. In 2004, after studying a full range of highway alternatives, MDOT identified two Build Alternates:

- Six General Purpose and four Express Toll Lanes; and
- Eight General Purpose and two Express Toll Lanes.

Both Build Alternates included four direct access points and various improvements at other interchanges. Further information about the Capital Beltway Study is available at:

<http://apps.roads.maryland.gov/WebProjectLifeCycle/ProjectInformation.aspx?projectno=AW5181115>.

MDOT is currently pursuing a strategic plan for the Capital Beltway that will update and build on the Capital Beltway Study. This study is being conducted in accordance with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Planning and Environmental Linkage (PEL) guidance. PEL allows planning activities to inform environmental approvals and to streamline the NEPA process. The strategic plan will establish an actionable purpose and need, and identify appropriate alternatives for detailed NEPA study.

### **I-270**

The I-270 corridor, located in Frederick and Montgomery Counties, is one of the most congested in Maryland with average daily traffic of up to 260,000 in certain segments. Over saturated conditions and extended peak periods greatly impact travel time reliability. Recurring congestion is a daily occurrence.

I-270, which begins at the I-495 (Capital Beltway) and ends at I-70 in Frederick, is a vital component of the surface transportation system in Maryland's metropolitan Washington corridor network. It is one of the two interstate highway connections between the nation's capital and points west (the other connection is I-66 in Virginia) and north. I-270 is fully access-controlled facility with a variable number of lanes ranging from four to twelve.

The I-270/US 15 Multi-Modal Corridor Study was a project planning study undertaken by MDOT. The study area included 31 miles of proposed highway improvements along the I-270 and US 15 corridor between I-370 in Montgomery County and Biggs Ford Road in Frederick County, and the 14-mile Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT), a proposed rapid transit corridor within Montgomery County. The purpose of the I-270/US 15 Multi-Modal Corridor Study was to investigate options to address congestion and improve safety conditions along the I-270/US 15 Corridor. In 2009, MDOT issued a supplemental Alternatives Analysis/Environmental Assessment to the 2002 Draft Environmental Impact Statement that evaluated one- and two-lane Express Toll Lane systems. A preferred alternative for roadway improvements was not selected at that time. Additional information about the I-270 Multimodal Corridor Study is available at: <http://apps.roads.maryland.gov/WebProjectLifeCycle/ProjectInformation.aspx?projectno=FR1921110>.

The portion of I-270 south of I-370, was included in the West Side Mobility Study, a joint study conducted by MDOT and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). The study evaluated improvements that could increase capacity, improve traffic operations, and provide a managed lanes network to connect the adjacent facilities that are currently under construction. The study recommended as the long-term solution, widening the existing roadway and providing a managed lane system. The managed lane system would consist of one or two managed lanes in each direction and would connect the VDOT toll lanes with the Express Toll (ETL) lanes planned as part of the I-270 Multi-Modal Corridor Study and the Intercountry Connector (MD 200). The interchanges within the project limits would be modified to accommodate the widened and reconfigured mainline, and in some locations, provide access to the managed lanes. Further information about the West Side Mobility Study

is available at:

<http://apps.roads.maryland.gov/WebProjectLifeCycle/ProjectDocuments.aspx?projectno=AW5181115>.

MDOT is currently implementing a progressive design-build contract along the I-270 corridor, known as the I-270 Innovative Congestion Management (ICM) contract. The projects that make up this contract will provide significant short-term congestion relief and will be complete by the end of 2019. Improvements to the corridor include the addition of general purpose lanes, the addition or extension of auxiliary lanes, corridor wide, adaptive ramp metering, and active traffic management solutions such as dynamic message signs and dynamic speed limit signs. The additional lanes are being added through the narrowing of lanes and shoulders along with minimal widening where needed. All improvements are being implemented within the existing roadway right-of-way. While the I-270 ICM contract will improve travel conditions in the corridor today, long-term congestion relief improvements are still needed. Further information about the I-270 ICM contract is available at:

<http://apps.roads.maryland.gov/WebProjectLifeCycle/ProjectInformation.aspx?projectno=MO0695115>.

In addition to the I-270 ICM contract, MDOT is constructing a new interchange at Watkins Mill Road which will be completed by Summer 2020 and reconstructing the MD 85 interchange with I-270 which will be completed the end of 2020. Additional information about the Watkins Mill Road project is available at:

<http://apps.roads.maryland.gov/WebProjectLifeCycle/ProjectInformation.aspx?projectno=MO3515115>. Additional information about the MD 85 interchange project is

available at:

<http://apps.roads.maryland.gov/WebProjectLifeCycle/ProjectSchedule.aspx?projectno=FR3882110>.

#### **IV. Information Requested**

Any and all feedback is welcomed by MDOT; however, the below questions outline the general information being sought from this RFI. Please answer any or all questions that you or your organization deem relevant.

##### **a. General**

1. Please describe your firm, its experience in relation to P3 projects, and its potential interest in relation to these potential congestion relief improvements.
2. What would be the benefits and risks to MDOT entering a P3 agreement for congestion relief improvements? What risks do you believe would best be retained by MDOT and what risks would be best transferred to the private sector? Please explain your reasoning.
3. What, if any, advantages will MDOT potentially gain by entering an agreement in which operations and maintenance and lifecycle responsibility

and/or traffic and revenue risk are transferred to the private section? How do you assess the likely magnitude of such advantages? What are the potential offsetting disadvantages?

4. Would it be advantageous for MDOT to transfer the operations and maintenance and lifecycle responsibility for the entire freeway or just the added congestion relief improvements? What would be the advantages and disadvantages of transferring the operations and maintenance and lifecycle responsibility for the entire freeway?
  5. Would it be feasible to have a single solicitation for both corridors? If not, would you recommend any specific phasing for the solicitations including the corridor(s) and limits and why? What would your recommendation be for staggering multiple solicitations and why?
- b. Project Development
1. Do you believe your firm would be interested in submitting a detailed proposal for the development of any of the congestion relief improvements? Are there any particular concerns that may prevent your firm from getting engaged in the project development? How might these concerns be resolved?
  2. At what stage of the NEPA and project development process would it be most beneficial to issue a RFQ: after establishment of the purpose and need, after determination of alternatives retained for detailed study, after selection of an MDOT preferred alternative, or after approval of the environmental document? At what stage would it be most beneficial to issue a RFP? Please discuss your reasoning.
  3. What are the critical path items for the solicitation for these improvements and why?
  4. What is the minimum amount of time that your firm would require to develop and submit a response after the issuance of a potential RFQ?
  5. What is the minimum amount of time that your firm would require to develop and submit a detailed proposal after the issuance of a potential RFP?
  6. What information would your firm need in order to prepare a response to a potential RFP? What information should MDOT, the offeror, or others provide?
  7. What would you consider a reasonable stipend payment for unsuccessful proposers responding to a potential RFP? Please discuss how the stage of project development (purpose and need, alternatives retained for detailed study, preferred alternative, final environmental document, etc.) completed prior to RFP issuance would impact the stipend payment amount.

8. Would it be more beneficial for right-of-way acquisition activities to be transferred to the developer or should MDOT retain that risk? Please discuss your reasoning.

c. Technical Challenges

1. Based on your experience in the development of similar projects and characteristics of the I-495/I-95 and I-270 corridors, please explain the technical challenges, including minimization of right-of-way impacts, to providing congestion relief improvements. Please provide any recommendations for mitigating or overcoming those challenges that you would be willing to share.
2. Are there recommendations that you may be willing to share concerning the project scope or development strategies to reduce the upfront capital costs and/or the lifecycle costs of potential corridor congestion relief improvements?
3. Please explain any technical solutions that you may be willing to share that may enhance the development of the potential congestion relief improvements. Identify risks associated with the solutions and, if possible, discuss estimated cost of the solutions.

d. Contract Structure

1. What is your recommended approach for financing the capital cost of potential congestion relief improvements?
2. Should MDOT set a concession term or allow proposers to establish a concession term as part of the response to a potential RFP? If MDOT were to set the concession term, what is a reasonable concession term and why?
3. Are there any contract terms you would recommend, such as Alternative Technical Concepts, Alternative Financial Concepts, contract balancing, pre-development agreements or progressive agreements, etc. to minimize risk to proposers, maximize opportunities for innovation, maximize a concession payment to MDOT, or are key to obtaining competition? Please discuss the benefit and risks of the recommended contract terms.

e. Miscellaneous

1. Are there any particular concerns with the information provided in this RFI? Please explain any concerns and provide any proposed solutions or mitigation to address those concerns.
2. Please provide any suggestion or comments on how MDOT can encourage participation by Minority Business Enterprise/Disadvantaged Business



Enterprise firms and local workforce in the development of the congestion relief improvements.

3. What opportunities would you like to see for industry outreach related to these potential P3 opportunities?
4. Please provide any additional comments or questions you may have related to the information in this RFI.

## **V. Instructions to Responders**

Responses related to this RFI should be submitted in writing in letter format via email. No verbal comments or personal visits will be accepted. All written contacts should be addressed to and sent to following:

Jeffrey T. Folden, P.E., DBIA  
Chief, Innovative Contracting  
MDOT State Highway Administration  
email address: I495\_I270\_P3@sha.state.md.us

Responses are requested by December 20, 2017 by 4:00 pm; however, responses will be accepted after this date. Responses must include the name and address of the respondent in the written response. MDOT welcomes feedback and understands that a variety of individuals, firms, teams, and organizations may respond to this RFI. Please include any comment or question that you or your organization deems relevant. Thank you in advance for your participation.

MDOT has also established a Yammer site to allow for questions to be asked and to provide responses prior to submission of any response to this RFI. To request access to this Yammer site, send an email to the above email address.

## **VI. Industry Outreach**

While this RFI is an inquiry only at this time, MDOT will be providing additional opportunities for industry outreach in the future, including an Industry Forum. Details will be provided in the future once an Industry Forum has been scheduled.

## **VII. Public Information Act Notice**

All responses to this RFI will be handled in accordance with the Public Information Act. Respondents should give specific attention to the identification of those portions of their responses that they deem to be confidential, proprietary information or trade secrets and provide any justification why such materials, upon request, should not be disclosed by the State under the Maryland Public Information Act.