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May 23, 2023

The Honorable W. Sheppard Miller III
Secretary of Transportation
Commonwealth of Virginia
Patrick Henry Building, Third Floor
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Reference: Fairfax County Comments on the Commonwealth Transportation Board's Draft FY
2024-2029 Six-Year Improvement Program

Dear Secretary Miller:

On behalf of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, I am writing to provide you and the members of the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) comments regarding the Draft FY 2024-2029 Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP). These comments were approved by the Board on May 23, 2023.

First, the Board would like to thank the CTB for recommending funding for various projects in the County. The Board appreciates the \$26.4 million in operating assistance included in the Draft SYIP for the Fairfax Connector, the \$970,000 for the for the second year of Transit Ridership Incentive Program (TRIP) funding for the County's Reduce Fare Program, and the \$5 million for I-66 Commuter Transit Service Operations from the I-66 Outside the Beltway Toll Revenues. We thank the CTB for the \$37.7 million for buses, integrated fair equipment, support vehicles, shop equipment, bus stop amenities, and customer facility rehabilitation/renovation. Transit is especially important to ensure that our residents, workers, and visitors have a multimodal transportation system on which to rely, and this funding is vital to ensuring continued operations of the Fairfax Connector and other transit systems throughout the Commonwealth. As such, we also thank you for including funding provided for both the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) and Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) as well.

The Board also appreciates the \$549,923 for the County's Commuter Services Program and \$123,193 for the County's Employer Services Program. These funds will ensure that vital services continue for businesses and workers in Fairfax County, especially to address mobility and congestion mitigation as more people return to work.

Lastly, the Board would like to thank the Commonwealth for partnering with the County to improve mobility and accessibility in the Richmond Highway Corridor. The County is working with the

Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to widen Richmond Highway between Mount Vernon Memorial Highway (south) and Sherwood Hall Lane (including both pedestrian and bicycle facilities), and with both VDOT and the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) on the implementation of the Richmond Highway's Bus Rapid Transit project, known as "The One." These projects will enhance the value of current and future investments and result in a multimodal future for the Richmond Highway Corridor where residents, workers, and visitors can walk, bike, drive, and take transit to the places they want to go.

While the Board is appreciative of the funding provided for the projects listed above, the County is significantly concerned about the fact that none of the projects we submitted for SMART SCALE were recommended for funding. This appears to be largely related to the cost of our projects. When ranked by Project Benefit Score, three of Fairfax County's projects were ranked in the top 15 of all projects submitted across the Commonwealth. However, when cost was factored in, none of our projects were recommended for funding.

The high land acquisition, utility relocation, contingency, and other costs, especially in Northern Virginia and other urban areas, are creating significantly inflated total project estimates for most of our projects. Most of these factors are beyond our control. Given the disparity in project costs by District, project costs should be normalized (up or down) so that they are more comparable statewide. Further, the SMART SCALE process continues to benefit smaller projects. We believe that the process needs to be reviewed so that larger projects can be more competitive. Fairfax County's travel needs require large projects. The County is securing significant funding from other sources, but the Commonwealth must also be a partner in the efforts to fund these projects.

Further, not one project in Northern Virginia was recommended to receive statewide High Priority Projects funding. It is concerning that Northern Virginia, where two million people reside and millions more travel through, did not have one project recommended for these statewide funds. The County believes that the process needs to be reviewed to see how this occurred.

We understand that the Commonwealth is currently reviewing the Revenue Sharing and Transportation Alternatives Programs and considering alterations to various policies. We recommend that no significant modifications be made to the Revenue Sharing program. There have been numerous changes to this program over the past several years, and additional changes would only make the funding process more complex. Because this program significantly leverages state transportation funds by encouraging local governments to spend their own money on transportation projects, this program has been very successful in helping to fund some of the County's major road and transit projects.

Regarding the Transportation Alternatives program, the County is supportive of limiting the number of applications and retaining the current biennial application process. We; however, have concerns about the proposals to establish a maximum lifetime award of \$2.5 million per project. The County applies to this program for vital projects that improve pedestrian and bicycle access to Metrorail in the County and provide a safe route to some of our elementary schools. However, as was noted with our Smart Scale projects, our projects can have high costs due to various factors beyond our control,

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and many of our smaller bicycle/pedestrian safety and access projects can have costs larger than the proposed maximum award amount. Limiting the amount of transportation alternatives funds that can be allocated to these projects makes it more difficult for them to be undertaken.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Draft SYIP. Please include this letter as a part of the public comment record. If you need any clarification or further information, please call me at (703) 324-2321 or Noelle Dominguez at (703) 877-5665.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey C. McKay

Chairman

cc: Members, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

Ms. Mary H. Hynes, Northern Virginia District Member, CTB

Mr. E. Scott Kasproicz, At-Large Urban Member, CTB

Members, Fairfax County Delegation to the General Assembly

Stephen Brich, Commonwealth Transportation Commissioner

Jennifer Mitchell, Director, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation

Bryan J. Hill, County Executive

Rachel Flynn, Deputy County Executive

Gregg Steverson, Acting Director, Department of Transportation