



7338 Baltimore Avenue
Suite 102
College Park, MD

June 1, 2020

Mayor Bridget Donnell Newton
Rockville City Council
111 Maryland Ave.
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: I-495 and I-270 Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Mayor Newton and the Rockville City Council,

The Maryland Sierra Club writes to encourage the City of Rockville to submit comments on the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the I-495 and I-270 plan as soon as it is released for publication.

In spring 2019, MDOT SHA [released preliminary impacts of the screened alternatives](#) they are considering as options for expanding I-495 and I-270 for toll lanes. The options for consideration would impact a number of parks and recreational facilities, historic sites, flood plains, forest canopy, wetlands, and private properties. The Sierra Club is also concerned that this project could increase air pollution, including PM 2.5 pollution that [scientists warn can exacerbate respiratory diseases](#) like COVID-19. We encourage you to examine these impacts from the project proposals and highlight any concerns in the draft EIS.

We also ask that you make a request to the Federal Highway Administration and MDOT SHA to extend the public comment period of the Draft EIS should the comment period only last for 45 days. We also ask you to consider reaching out to members of Congress to help make this request. A comment period of at least 90 days is necessary for the public and officials to have the time to provide input. Given the large scope of the draft EIS and the difficulties of the public to comment in such a short amount of time in the midst of a global pandemic, we believe that this extension is warranted and consistent with the calls in other states to accommodate the public in this unprecedented time.

Best regards,

Lindsey Mendelson
Transportation Representative
Maryland Sierra Club

Shruti Bhatnagar, Chair
Tina Slater, Transportation Lead
Montgomery County Sierra Club

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has approximately 800,000 members.