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## **Advocates urge Prince George's County and state to target funds to transportation projects supporting smart growth**

Prince George's County and regional smart growth advocates sent a letter today to Prince George's County Executive Rushern Baker urging him to rethink transportation priorities to fulfill the County's efforts to foster transit-oriented economic development.

This letter was sent in anticipation of Prince George's County renewing its request for state funding for priority transportation projects in early 2014. Signers included the Coalition for Smarter Growth.

"Last year's transportation funding bill passed in large part because Marylanders and Prince George's residents want to see sustainable transportation solutions like the Purple Line that give alternatives to being stuck in traffic and clean up our air quality," said Cheryl Cort, Policy Director at Coalition for Smarter Growth. "Now we're concerned about how much of the money will go to projects that undermine those efforts."

Last summer, Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley announced new funding for transportation projects resulting from raising the gas tax last year. Advocacy groups working in Prince George's have applauded state transportation funding pledged for transit, bicycling, and pedestrian infrastructure, but expressed concern over costly new highway capacity projects.

The concerns stem from the long list of costly highway capacity expansion projects identified by Prince George's County as high priorities, and a state selection process that is done behind closed doors. Last summer, those fears were confirmed when Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley announced his list of projects for Prince George's that included two major new road capacity projects for \$250 million.

"\$150 million for an interchange at MD 4 and the Suitland Parkway is a massive public investment to support sprawling development," said Karren Pope-Onwukwe, co-chair of Prince George's Advocates for Community-based Transit. "This new interchange will draw resources away from Metro stations and inside the Beltway communities, where we should be focusing development."

Advocates list their top priorities for the suburban Washington region as fully funding Maryland's share for WMATA's reinvestment plan, Momentum; building the Purple Line; and implementing the MARC Growth and Investment Plan. They also urged the state to expand investment in local road improvements to create new options for drivers,

bicyclists, and pedestrians, such as the multimodal road redesign of US 1 in College Park.

Given that the Prince George's County Executive Rushern Baker has made transit-oriented development a top priority, as has the state, advocates hope transportation investments will further that goal. "We want to see Prince George's County and the Governor ensure that all state-funded transportation projects support the excellent smart growth, climate protection, and clean water goals these administrations have set," said Andrew Fellows, Clean Water Action.

Joining Coalition for Smarter Growth, Prince George's Advocates for Community-based Transit, and Clean Water Action, were Washington Area Bicyclists Association, and Bike Maryland in sending the letter to County Executive Baker.

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