

News Release

Comptroller Lierman issues statements following Wednesday's Board of Public Works Meeting

*She urges state to consider alternatives to highway
expansion and to consider long-term growth of the
Transportation Trust Fund*

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (September 6, 2023) - Today, the Maryland Board of Public Works (BPW) considered 86 items as part of its routine agenda, authorizing more than \$384 million in state expenditures. During the meeting, Comptroller Brooke Lierman provided comments on the following agenda items:

State Highway Administration-Support Services for the American Legion Bridge and I-270 Expansion - The State Highway Administration requested from the BPW two work-order-based contracts to provide planning, engineering, construction management, and program support services for SHA's American Legion Bridge and I-270 Program Offices. Additionally, the SHA requested a modification to the correct term for Contract A, which was approved by the BPW on July 5 to align with the remainder of the series.

The Comptroller commended the Maryland Department of Transportation for its commitment to better manage Maryland's traffic corridors and pursue all federal funds available, including the Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant and a public funding model. The Comptroller also reiterated her long-standing concerns on the efficacy of highway expansion.

"While this is just the first phase of the restart of the American Legion Bridge, I continue to have serious concerns about the efficacy of highway expansion as a means to alleviate traffic, its effect of bringing more cars to the road resulting in more greenhouse gas emissions, and most relevant to my office and this Board – any potential future reliance on a transportation P3," Comptroller Lierman said. "I am glad the Governor is making multimodal options central to this project – not in the

peripheral – including bus rapid transit and transit-oriented development. I strongly believe that as this project moves forward, we must focus on the I-270 challenges, which are central to connecting Marylanders to Maryland jobs and helps move our residents around our state more efficiently. I also look forward to the collaboration between MDOT, the General Assembly, Treasurer Davis, and myself because we all will play a role in the project’s success.”

Motor Vehicle Administration- Vehicle Emission Inspection Program (VEIP) Management and Operations Modification - The Maryland Motor Vehicle

Administration requested from the BPW a contract to modify the scope of work to allow for a new regulatory framework overseeing the management and operations of 18 centralized vehicle emissions inspection stations, and ten vehicle emissions inspection self-service kiosks, to align with new VEIP regulations that went into effect January 23, 2023, that modify initial testing for new vehicles from three to six years.

Comptroller Lierman thanked MVA Administrator Christine Nizer and her team for explaining the need for the contract modification, noting that the current contract, in place since 2008, is outdated in structure and has exceeded the original terms and budget. Comptroller Lierman explained that she would vote for the contract modification. As a Maryland State Delegate, she voted against the regulation because of its negative impact on state revenues and over-burdening of lower-income Marylanders.

“I understand that the state wants to proceed with the changes since newer vehicles are not our biggest air quality concern, and we’re well overdue for a new VEIP testing contract. But I just can’t overlook the inequity and the impact under this regulation,” Comptroller Lierman said. “Drivers of older vehicles, those who often cannot afford new cars, will be bearing the brunt of funding our state’s successful Clean Air Act program. And as the average cost of new vehicles continues to climb, that gap will only widen. And this change, of course, will result in less funding for the Transportation Trust Fund.

“The Maryland General Assembly, the Governor, and our leadership have recently convened a commission to determine how best to fund the TTF over the long term because all have seen the flashing warning lights regarding the TTF. Last week, MDOT released a CTP that notes the TTF is not balanced in out years. The message from the Commission two weeks ago was loud and clear – to stop the bleeding from the Transportation Trust Fund. And unfortunately, this regulation doesn't do that.

“Due to its impact on revenues, in other states where this extension of time for a fuel emission test was created, they enacted such a change in a revenue-neutral way. I encourage the MVA to examine these options and consider updates to this regulation. Creating long-term economic stability for the Transportation Trust Fund is a truly urgent matter.”

More information can be found at <https://bpw.maryland.gov/>

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