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October 24, 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 Proposed Changes to the SMART SCALE  
Prioritization Process

Dear Secretary Miller:

On behalf of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors (Board), I am writing to provide you and the members of the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) with comments regarding the proposed changes to the SMART SCALE program. These comments were approved by the Board on October 24, 2023.

First, the Board would like to thank the CTB for providing this opportunity to provide comments on the process. As you are aware, Fairfax County, like other localities throughout Virginia, is invested in this program, which is used to allocate vital state transportation revenues to some of our biggest priorities. As such, we offer the following comments on the proposed changes:

- **Project Size and Cost**

The Board of Supervisors has been significantly concerned about the impact of project size and cost on project selection for funding, as Fairfax County's travel needs require large projects. In previous rounds of SMART SCALE, many of Fairfax County's projects had high Project Benefit Scores and were ranked towards the top of all projects submitted across Virginia. However, when cost was factored in, our projects were rarely recommended for funding. High land acquisition, utility relocation, contingency, and other costs, especially in Northern Virginia and other urban areas, have created significantly inflated total project estimates for most of our projects. Most of these factors are beyond our control.

The Board supports efforts to address this situation. Specifically, we support the efforts to refine the definition of projects eligible for High Priority Project funding, though we request that Bus Rapid Transit be eligible, regardless of whether it is in a fixed guideway. The Board is also comfortable with removing "Step 2" of the funding process, which has allowed smaller projects submitted by regional agencies to be funded before other higher-scoring projects.

- **Application Limits / Process**

The Board is concerned about the proposal to reduce the limit on applications that can be submitted by localities. With a population of over 1.1 million people and a land area of 400 square miles, the County's needs are vast and complex. We have historically submitted between six and ten applications per round, each project crucial to addressing the diverse needs of Fairfax County. Reducing the number of applications will make it more difficult to ensure we have a multimodal transportation system that aims to equitably support our residents, visitors, and workers, and businesses.

Further, while the SMART SCALE process uses objective criteria, it remains complex for applicants and the Commonwealth. This complexity also makes scoring more difficult for the public to understand. The County believes this process should be reviewed for opportunities for streamlining.

- **Congestion Mitigation**

Mitigating congestion and improving multimodal mobility is extremely important to Fairfax County and those who use our transportation system. The Board believes that the congestion mitigation factor should consider both existing and future benefits of transportation projects when calculating this factor.

- **Economic Development**

Fairfax County contains several major activity centers that generate public benefit for the County and the Commonwealth. While the Board understands the recommendation to focus on sites included in the database of economic development properties, we also believe that the Commonwealth should consider ways to incorporate development sites that may not necessarily be included in this state database, as are both intrinsically tied to sustained economic development and our ability to compete in a global economy.

- **Safety**

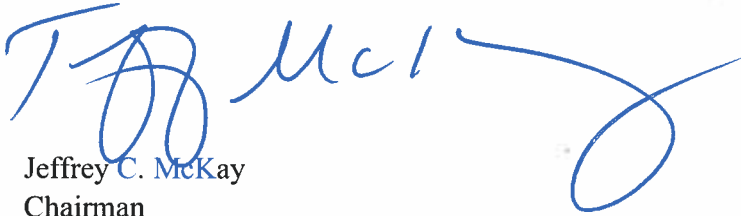
Due to Fairfax County's variety of multimodal transportation options and continued concentrated growth, improvements to multimodal safety, as well as access to transit facilities within transit-oriented development areas and residential neighborhoods outside of those growth areas, are critical to reducing avoidable, serious accidents involving pedestrians and bicyclists. The Board believes this can be achieved through better traffic safety laws, improved coordination with the Commonwealth, and infrastructure investments, and thus thanks the CTB for providing funding for critical safety projects through SMART SCALE and other programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Smart Scale process. As you are aware, Fairfax County, along with localities throughout the state, continues to provide hundreds of millions in local funds for transportation each year, and the County and the Commonwealth must continue to work together to ensure that infrastructure needs are met.

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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 Kasprovicz, At-Large Urban Member, CTB  
Members, Fairfax County Delegation to the General Assembly  
Stephen Brich, Commonwealth Transportation Commissioner  
Jennifer DeBruhl, Director, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation  
Bryan J. Hill, County Executive  
Rachel Flynn, Deputy County Executive  
Gregg Steverson, Acting Director, Fairfax County Department of Transportation