# Friends of Cabin John Creek - Public Statement on Beltway Expansion

## Position Statement from FoCJC

The Friends of Cabin John Creek (FOCJC) works to protect the Cabin John Creek watershed. FOCJC strongly advocates for mitigating impacts of any 495/270 expansion on the watershed. Many of the alternatives have the potential to have both short-term and long-term negative impacts on the watershed. It is our position that the chosen alternative must avoid or mitigate all short- and long-term impacts to the health of the watershed. We strongly support the retrofitting of the existing highway system with current best management practices for stormwater management, close adherence to current stormwater management regulations for new public construction, as well as minimizing the destruction of parkland for highway expansion.

## Background

* The Beltway was constructed between 1961-1964 and I-270 between 1962-1975, a time when there were no stormwater regulations.
* The state of Maryland is initiating a I-495 & I-270 Public-Private Partnership (P3) Program that will likely include actions along all of the 70+ miles of interstate in Maryland including the portions of I-495 and I-270 in the Cabin John Creek watershed.
* Roughly 10 miles of this highway falls within our watershed and all of the work falls within someone’s watershed.
* The I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes Study Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is currently underway. It will include a review of the current conditions and the potential impacts of each of the alternatives. However, the state is not required to choose the alternative with the lowest impacts.
* Even though the EIS is not yet complete, the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration is seeking proposals from private companies to enter into a Public-Private Partnership (P3). A P3 is when a private company invests most of the funds and proposes a way to recoup those funds over time by operating the roadway. This is typically through tolls.
* There are 15 preliminary alternatives including rail, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), reversible lanes, etc.

## Issues

* Destruction of park land. In our watershed there are private yards, private homes, and park land within or adjacent to the project area.
* Increased runoff from increased impervious surfaces. In many alternatives there would be a dramatic increase in the width of the roadway. Adding one foot of roadway along the 70 miles of the project adds up to 8.5 acres of asphalt.

## FOCJC Position

* Opposed to the taking of public open space that protects creeks
* We want the state to retrofit the existing roadway with stormwater management facilities to slow the water down, settle out the sediment, and increase the amount of water that goes into the ground rather than rushing into the stream so that the existing construction conforms to current stormwater standards.
* Any new construction must adhere to the most current stormwater regulations and be continuously monitored and updated in order to minimize impact to the surrounding natural landscape.
* We want to know how the 495/270 proposal relates to the state’s commitments under the EPA’s MS4 permit and the Chesapeake Bay cleanup plan. We’d like to see less stormwater runoff and less roadway pollution going into the streams in our watershed; this project has the potential to increase stormwater runoff and road pollution.
* We are especially concerned about the threat to three parts of our watershed. Two sections of the watershed have been identified as “priority catchments” by the county and border I-270 and the I-495 spur. The streams here are already in need of restoration. One section of the watershed has been identified as a “priority conservation catchment” by the county and it is adjacent to I-495 in Cabin John. This area contains critically significant, extremely significant, and highly significant conservation areas.

## Take Action

* Get informed on the public site (https://495-270-p3.com/)
* Make a comment. Although the comment period for the environmental document closed on May 1, 2018, additional comments will be considered and included as part of the Study Record. https://495-270-p3.com/contact/
* Sign up for alerts. https://495-270-p3.com/contact/

## Next Steps

* In February 2019 the SHA recommended seven alternatives to consider further
* Public workshops are scheduled in April 2019 to present the traffic, environmental, and financial analyses for the recommended alternatives along with the recommendations for the alternatives to be retained for detailed study in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. http://495-270-p3.com/your-participation/upcoming-events/.
* In late 2019 the Draft EIS should be released.
* 2020 is likely the year when the final alternative is chosen, the contractor is hired, and construction begins.

This statement was approved by the Friends of Cabin John Creek Board of Directors on February 19, 2019.