Draft

INTERCOUNTY CONNECTOR (ICC)
PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENT

Project Purpose

The proposed Intercounty Connector (ICC) project is intended to link existing and proposed development areas between the I-270 and I-95/US 1 corridors within central and eastern Montgomery County and northwestern Prince George's County with a state-of-the-art, multi-modal, east-west highway that limits access and accommodates passenger and goods movement. This transportation project is intended to increase community mobility and safety; to facilitate the movement of goods and people to and from economic centers; to provide cost-effective transportation infrastructure to serve existing and future development patterns reflecting local land use planning objectives; to help restore the natural, human and cultural environments from past development impacts in the project area; and to advance homeland security.

Project Needs

Community Mobility and Safety

Mobility in the developed portions of Montgomery and northwestern Prince George's Counties is severely limited, in part because there is no continuous high capacity transportation facility. This lack of mobility limits job opportunities, interaction between communities, access to government and community services, and contributes to a decrease in the quality of life. The Study Area has developed without a regional east-west highway, as planned. The lack of such a highway severely limits mobility but also creates safety hazards in and among the developed portions of Montgomery and northwestern Prince George's Counties. The development that has occurred in the region has resulted in significant east-west travel, but absent an ICC, the local road system must accommodate extremely high volumes of traffic. This overloads local roads resulting in clogged intersections, longer travel times, and limited access for local residents from their driveways and smaller side streets. There are numerous accidents of all types and severity due to local, longer-distance and service vehicles mixing with bicycles and pedestrians. The number of potential conflicts due to the numerous driveways, side streets and other access points contributes to the unsafe condition on the local road network.

Movement of Goods and People To and From Economic Centers

An east-west highway north of the Capital Beltway is needed to support the continued attraction and retention of businesses and employment opportunities in the region. The extensive economic development areas include the I-270 High Technology Corridor, the Baltimore-Washington International (BWI) Airport development area, and the I-95/US 1 corridor. New highway capacity that is efficient and reliable is necessary to accommodate passenger and freight travel, moving people, goods and services throughout the region. Growing congestion in the area today increases costs of doing business, in part because of longer travel times and unreliability to the detriment of the health of the economy.

Local Land Use

Montgomery County and northwestern Prince George's County have developed as planned with intense development in jobs and households along the I-270, I-95/US 1 and I-495 corridors. An east-west regional highway facility has long been a part of local land use planning in order to support the region's

orderly growth and development patterns. The foundation for Montgomery and Prince George's Counties' general plans (and updates) for the last forty years has been the "On Wedges and Corridors" land use concept, which channels growth into development corridors radiating from or ringing the District of Columbia while preserving wedges of open space, farmland, and lower density residential areas. This overall planning concept is periodically updated in a public process that gives due consideration to sustainability, land preservation, development density and environmental sensitivity. Local officials have carefully executed these progressive land use concepts. Many land use and environmental stewardship principles of Maryland's more recent "smart growth" policies are based on the concepts of the "On Wedges and Corridors" plan.

The population of Montgomery County has grown from approximately 370,000 in 1962 to 910,000 in 2002. In Prince George's County, the population has grown from 418,000 to 833,000 over the same period. Nearly 80 percent of the planned development in the project area has been built. The 103-mile Metro line, the Montgomery County "Ride On" and the Prince George's County "The Bus" transit systems were built and created as planned. Furthermore, other alternative transportation projects and strategies have been completed or are currently underway. The existing roadways are primarily oriented in a radial fashion, with limited options for east-west travel between these major radial corridors.

Environmental Stewardship

The planned development that has occurred has created certain stresses on the Study Area's environments, including the rich natural resources associated with the north-south oriented stream valleys and their parks. Alternatives for the new east-west highway will be developed in an environmentally sensitive manner using state of the art measures to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts. Further, the alternatives will include appropriate environmental restoration and enhancements. The land use plans in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties highly value environmental stewardship and resource protection. These plans allocate certain areas to private and public development and to preservation and open space. The ICC is a major public works project in an already highly developed area, and as such, it needs to be located and designed with full consideration of the current and future condition of important environmental resources in the Study Area. The alternatives will incorporate restoration and enhancement features to help bring about improvements to natural, cultural and human environmental conditions, including but not limited to those that exist today because of past development in the area.

Homeland Security

A new east-west highway will provide much-needed system capacity for military access, population evacuation, and emergency vehicle access in and around the National Capital. With regular congestion on the Capital Beltway, made worse by accidents or other incidents, the region needs a reliable alternate east-west route for emergency response situations. Additional east-west multimodal highway capacity north of the Capital Beltway would provide a grid of high capacity transportation needed in the event of an emergency or sudden need for access. The Washington metropolitan area is home to many government, military and community installations with unique Homeland Security concerns and responsibilities. These agencies depend on a clear and expeditious access and evacuation route being always available. On September 11, 2001, it became clear that this region does not contain sufficient highway capacity to accommodate citywide and metro area evacuation, and subsequent emergency planning has underscored the need for an ICC between the interstate corridors north of the Beltway.