December 7, 2017

The Honorable Aubrey Layne
Secretary of Transportation
Patrick Henry Building, 3rd Floor
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Secretary Layne,

We write to express our deep concern with the tolls on Interstate 66 inside the beltway as implemented during the week of December 4, 2017. In 2015, when the plan was first introduced, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) represented in public hearings that peak round-trip tolls could reach $17. Yet commuters experienced more than double that on a one-way trip on each of the first three days of the rollout. Our confidence in the project, and in VDOT’s estimates of the impact on commuters and the communities that border this corridor, have been significantly undermined. As a result, we call upon the administration to immediately suspend toll operations inside the beltway and return to the same HOV-2 time restrictions and exemptions in place December 1, 2017, until we reach a consensus on how to address the following issues:

- VDOT established the expectation that peak tolls would not exceed $17 roundtrip. Even this price brought significant criticism from the public and members of the General Assembly.
- Federal law provides for a minimum target of 45 mph; however, it is our understanding that 55 mph goal is being used for pricing. The discrepancy is concerning and directly impacts the pricing experienced by commuters.
- The additional eastbound lane between the Dulles Connector and Ballston is not due to open until the spring of 2020, nearly 2.5 years after the establishment of this toll, which forces a higher toll due to insufficient short-term capacity.
- New commuter parking lots have not been constructed, which limits the capacity of new carpool, vanpool, and bus transit options.
- An additional 180 minutes of HOV restriction each day significantly impacts the ability of commuters to get to and from work without the benefit of expanded commuter lots. We are troubled by VDOT’s assertion that single occupant drivers can now pay to use the facility that was not open to them prior, when in fact many single occupant commuters previously traveled this portion of the road, without breaking any rules and at no charge, before the restriction hours changed.
- The hybrid vehicle exemption, upon which many of our constituents have relied for years.

Prior to implementation of tolling inside and outside the Beltway, the following should occur:

- Immediate return to the previous HOV restriction hours of 6:30 a.m. to 9 a.m. eastbound and 4 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. westbound.
- Realign hybrid exemption with federal guidelines.
- New parking lot capacity should be constructed outside the Beltway.
- New lane capacity should be constructed inside the Beltway.
- The entire outside the Beltway project should be completed and operational.
· Additional bus and other transit services should be operational for commuters.
· An audit of engineering estimates that were the basis for toll projections should be conducted and reported to the General Assembly.

We believe that addressing these items is critical to the public trust and to creating true options for commuters in our region. In this case the improvements to I-66 have not been made, yet significant tolls are being charged. This timing is difficult to reconcile to commuters as they witness the highest tolls in the nation without being able to see what infrastructure improvements have been added.

We appreciate your prompt action to address our concerns.

Sincerely,

Senator Jeremy McPike  
Senate of Virginia  
29th District

Delegate John Bell  
House of Delegates  
87th District

Senator Jennifer T. Wexton  
Senate of Virginia  
33rd District

Delegate Jennifer Boysko  
House of Delegates  
86th District

Senator J. Chapman Petersen  
Senate of Virginia  
34th District

Delegate David Bulova  
House of Delegates  
37th District

Delegate-Elect Danica Roem  
House of Delegates  
13th District

Delegate Mark L. Keam  
House of Delegates  
35th District
Delegate-Elect Lee Carter  
House of Delegates  
50th District

Delegate Kathleen Murphy  
House of Delegates  
34th District

Delegate-Elect Hala Ayala  
House of Delegates District  
51st District

Delegate-Elect Kathy Tran  
House of Delegates  
42nd District

Delegate-Elect David A. Reid  
House of Delegates  
32nd District

Delegate-Elect Wendy Gooditis  
House of Delegates  
10th District

Delegate-Elect Elizabeth Guzman  
House of Delegates  
31st District

Delegate-Elect Karrie Delaney  
House of Delegates  
67th District

cc: The Honorable Terrence McAuliffe, Governor of Virginia  
The Honorable Ralph Northam, Governor-Elect of Virginia