

WALDORF, MD - Congressman Steny Hoyer joined Maryland Transportation Secretary Robert Flanagan and MTA Administrator Robert Smith early this morning to greet commuters and announce \$4.5 million in federal funds which will be used for the planning, design, and construction of the Southern Maryland Commuter Bus Initiative.

“The Southern Maryland region has experienced unparalleled growth over the last few decades, spurring economic development, new housing, and job growth,” said Congressman Hoyer. “As expected, such growth and expansion are making ever more demands on our transportation infrastructure.

“As more and more families seek the beauty and safety of life in Charles, Calvert, and St. Mary’s counties, we are finding that traffic is becoming more congested and commuting times have increased as these breadwinners travel to and from their jobs.

“It should come as no surprise that the most heavily utilized and growing commuter bus routes are those serving Southern Maryland. As you can tell by this filled commuter parking lot, the Maryland Transit Administration has done an excellent job serving commuters here and throughout the state. But Southern Maryland’s commuters find that there is a price to pay for living in such an economically vibrant and fast growing region.

“This filled commuter parking lot also happens to be an indication that commuters need additional spaces to park, additional coaches to accommodate them, and better traffic management. We need to do much more to ensure that you have every available option for a timely and efficient commute to and from work.

“It gives me great pride to announce the next step in making sure that commuters in Southern Maryland have access to commuting -- \$4.5 million for the Southern Maryland Commuter Bus Initiative in the fiscal year 2004 Omnibus Appropriations bill that passed in January.

“This money will be used to construct six new commuter parking lots, two each in Charles, St. Mary’s, and Calvert counties; improve several intersections at key locations along MD-5 from Waldorf to the Branch Avenue Metrorail Station; and purchase additional long distance over-the-road buses,” added Congressman Hoyer.

“Southern Maryland bus ridership has doubled in the last three years as Charles, Calvert and St. Mary's counties have experienced record growth,” said Maryland Transportation Secretary Robert L. Flanagan. “Congressman Hoyer has been there every step of the way fighting for additional funding for transit. It's great to have a federal partner who shares Governor Ehrlich's goal of reducing congestion and making our roads safer.”

“This funding is recognition by the Congress, by the state, and by the transit administration that we have unique transportation challenges here in Southern Maryland and that we must begin addressing those needs by first listening to the concerns of our commuters,” added Rep. Hoyer.

“This is a continuation of our efforts to make needed improvements to the transportation infrastructure in the region. In the Transportation Reauthorization bill that passed on April 2, I worked with the committee to provide \$30 million for various projects to help ease the traffic burden on those who live in Southern Maryland.

“We secured \$10 million for the Hughesville bypass project; \$10 million for construction of an interchange connecting MD 5, MD 373, and Brandywine Road; and \$10 million for widening a portion Chancellor's Run Road (MD 237).

“I am committed to making Southern Maryland, not only a great place to live and work, but also a place where congestion and gridlock will not interfere with its growth and vitality,” Rep. Hoyer concluded.

MTA Commuter Buses from Southern Maryland carried nearly 5,000 riders from Southern Maryland each weekday in December 2003, an increase of five percent from the same time last year. From 2000 to 2003, Commuter Bus ridership from Southern Maryland nearly doubled - the average weekday ridership for Southern Maryland Commuter Buses went from 2,574 riders per day in 1999 to 4,816 riders per day in 2002.

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