

Majority Whip

Budget and Taxation Committee

Chairman, Public Safety,
Transportation, and Environment
Subcommittee
Pensions Subcommittee
Capital Budget Subcommittee



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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

LINKING BALTO. & D.C. TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS – BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

Congratulations to Governor Ehrlich and state transportation officials for earmarking \$1 million to study a potential extension of Washington's Metrorail to Laurel, Fort Meade and BWI –Thurgood Marshall Airport. It is the crucial first step in linking the Baltimore and Washington transit systems.

However, I would be very much remiss if I did not give credit where credit is due. It was Sam Heffner and Mitch Weber of H & W, who had the vision and saw the good sense advantage in tying the Baltimore and D. C. transit systems together by using the existing transit system. It was Heffner and Weber, who designed the plan and presented it to me in June 2004. Immediately, we began an effort to sell the plan to the state.

In a series of meetings, from June 2004 to the latest one with Governor Ehrlich on January 25, 2005, I, along with either Sam Heffner or Mitch Weber met state, city and county elected and appointed officials to push for the transit linkage plan. We met with Governor Ehrlich, Aris Melissarotos, Secretary of the Department of Business & Economic Development, Don Fry, Director of the Greater Baltimore Committee, Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr., President of the Maryland Senate, Michael Busch, Speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates, Robert L. Flanagan, Secretary of the Department of Transportation, Lt. Governor Michael Steele, Martin O'Malley, Mayor of Baltimore City, and the 32nd District Delegates, Ted Sophocleus, Mary Ann Love and Terry R. Gilleland, Jr.

There was general agreement that the Heffner and Weber plan was the way to go. Anne Arundel County Executive Janet Owens, referring to the plan, said the debate over a Metro expansion has been moved up by a decade. She called it "an absolute quantum leap forward." Owens added that the \$1 million feasibility study would begin a genuine planning process for managing growth from Laurel to BWI, affecting Prince George's and Anne Arundel counties and potentially, Howard County.

Anticipated large growth at Fort Meade in the next decade, resulting from a military realignment approved last year begs for transportation solutions to relieve the overwhelming congestion sure to come. Thanks to the vision and determination of Sam Heffner and Mitch Weber, we will take the first steps to plan comprehensively for growth in that area.

As always, please feel free to contact my office should you have any comments or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James E. DeGrange Sr." in a cursive script.

James E. DeGrange, Sr.
State Senator District 32