

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRESS RELEASE

**STATE TRANSPORTATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS OUTLINE BENEFITS
AND FUNDING PLAN FOR INTERCOUNTY CONNECTOR**

(November 3, 2004) – Committed to protecting the environment and the Chesapeake Bay, Transportation Secretary Robert L. Flanagan and Department of the Environment Secretary Kendl P. Philbrick today announced a comprehensive series of measures that will be designed into the Intercounty Connector. This investment in the environment and the Bay will total \$270 million.

“This has been an incredible process as we have worked aggressively with federal, state and local agencies to develop a plan designed to improve the environment while addressing our transportation needs,” said Secretary Flanagan. “By including a comprehensive list of environmental elements into the design of the ICC, we have developed a way to harmonize Governor Ehrlich’s objectives on the key issues of transportation and the environment.”

Secretary Flanagan outlined the preliminary cost estimates and the proposed funding plan for the ICC. Based on an updated, detailed analysis and engineering, project costs range from \$1.8 billion to \$2.1 billion (in 2004 dollars). This projection includes a series of environmental features including:

- Longer bridges that will reduce the ground level impacts and protect streams, forested areas, wetlands and flood plains;
- A series of stream restoration projects that will improve water quality and reduce sedimentation along streams that have been impacted by development;
- Animal crossings that reduce the impact on wildlife; and
- Advanced stormwater management techniques including a water infiltration system to cool rain water along Corridor #1 before it enters the stream system and a valve system for Corridor #2 that would allow storm water management ponds to be isolated in the event of spill.

“During the last legislative session, Governor Ehrlich won approval of his landmark Bay Restoration Fund initiative to improve the condition of the Chesapeake Bay,” said Secretary Philbrick. “Today, we announced an extension of this policy by including literally hundreds of millions of dollars in the ICC budget to protect and enhance the quality of the water that flows to the Bay.”

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Secretary Flanagan also outlined other benefits of the ICC stating it will have significant benefits that go far beyond simply providing additional highway capacity. According to an independent economic study by the University of Maryland, the ICC would have a \$5 to \$7 billion impact on the state's economy and generate 14,000 and 17,000 jobs in Montgomery and Prince George's counties. It also would provide a more reliable commute, improve the efficiency of freight movement, and enhance the region's ability to attract and retain businesses. The ICC is intended to link existing and proposed development areas between I-270 and the I-95/US 1 corridors in Montgomery County and Prince George's counties with a state-of-the-art, multi-modal east-west highway.

Secretary Flanagan also indicated the ICC would help slow the growth of congestion on area roads, improve traffic flow at nearly 40 key intersections, and improve the safety of local roadways in the study area by reducing crashes by an estimated 350 to 425 per year.

Later this month, transportation officials will release the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), a federally required document that examines natural, cultural and socioeconomic impacts of the proposed highway. The study also examines the No-Action or No-Build alternative.

"We are proposing innovative and customized stormwater management strategies, and longer bridges to span sensitive streams, wetlands and other environmentally sensitive areas," said State Highway Administrator Neil J. Pedersen "This ICC is our best effort to develop a project that meets the needs of federal and state environmental agencies, county planning agencies, and local communities."

The ICC financing plan was developed to include project costs as well as the cost of inflation. Sources that will be used include: Maryland Transportation Authority revenue bonds; bonds to be repaid with future federal highway funds, referred to as Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicle, or GARVEE bonds; funding from the Maryland Transportation Trust Fund; and special federal funds earmarked for the project by Congress. This funding structure will allow the state to "continue to deliver much needed transportation projects throughout Maryland," Secretary Flanagan said.

An ICC would be owned and managed by the Maryland Transportation Authority (MdTA) as part of the Authority's overall toll facility system. Tolls will be used to both generate revenue and to manage traffic demand and congestion. State-of-the-art tolling technology, including 100 percent electronic collection and variable tolling will be used.

The DEIS will be available in November, and public hearings for the project are expected to be held in January 2005. The latest information on the ICC Study can be found on the project's web site at www.iccstudy.org.

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