

Intercounty Connector

Limited Functional Master Plan Amendment

PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT

June 2008



Prepared by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760

Intercounty Connector Limited Functional Master Plan Amendment

Public Hearing Draft

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

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The Commission is charged with preparing, adopting, and amending or extending *On Wedges and Corridors*, the general plan for the physical development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District.

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County Executive

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The Plan Process

The STAFF DRAFT PLAN is prepared for presentation to the Montgomery County Planning Board, which reviews it and makes preliminary changes as appropriate, and approves it for public hearing. After the Planning Board's changes are made, the document becomes the Public Hearing Draft Plan.

The **PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT PLAN** is the formal proposal to amend adopted master plans. Its recommendations are not necessarily those of the Planning Board; it is prepared for the purpose of receiving public testimony. The Planning Board holds a public hearing and receives testimony, after which they hold public worksessions to review the testimony and revise the Public Hearing Draft Plan as appropriate. When the Planning Board's changes are made, the document becomes the Planning Board Draft Plan.

The PLANNING BOARD DRAFT PLAN is the Board's recommended Plan and reflects their revisions to the Public Hearing Draft Plan. The Regional District Act requires the Planning Board to transmit a sector plan to the County Council with copies to the County Executive who must, within sixty days, prepare and transmit a fiscal impact analysis of the Planning Board Draft Plan to the County Council. The County Executive may also forward to the County Council other comments and recommendations.

After receiving the Executive's fiscal impact analysis and comments, the County Council holds a public hearing to receive additional public testimony. After the hearing record is closed, the Council's Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee holds public worksessions to review the testimony and makes recommendations to the County Council. The Council holds its own worksessions, and then adopts a resolution approving the Planning Board Draft Plan, as revised.

After Council approval the plan is forwarded to the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission for adoption. Once adopted by the Commission, the plan officially amends the master plans, functional plans, and sector plans cited in the Commission's adoption resolution.

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Background

In May 2006, the Federal Highway Administration approved the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Intercounty Connector (ICC), which established the specific highway alignment and interchange locations, and identified impacts as well as the measures to mitigate those impacts. The ROD also recommended a number of related master planned elements that would be implemented with the highway project, including parks, bikeways and sidewalks, and including seven miles of the master planned ICC shared use path (SP-40 in the *Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan*) being built with the ICC highway project. Certain alignment and implementation decisions included in the ROD are inconsistent with prior master plan guidance.

This ICC limited functional master plan amendment (ICCLFMPA), is intended primarily to amend County master plans to reflect the ROD highway alignment. It also evaluates alternative alignments for the master planned shared use path along the ICC (SP-40), essentially using as a starting point for discussion county agencies' majority viewpoints to affirm prior Planning Board recommendations to remove the path from sensitive environmental areas. The amendment analyzes in substantial detail the State's alternative routes along parallel roads and recommends changes to master plans needed to upgrade or enhance the routes to meet the needs of all potential pathway users.

Why a limited plan amendment?

The ICCLFMPA is needed to reconcile the highway, bicycle, pedestrian, and pathway facilities in the Selected Alternative described in the 2006 ICC ROD with the related elements in the County's master plans. This report describes the history, vision, and prior master plan guidance for the highway and parallel shared-use path, including past decisions by the Planning Board, the County Council, and the Maryland Department of Transportation that were all incorporated within the ROD.

The ICCLFMPA will modify two functional master plans:

- *The Master Plan of Highways within Montgomery County*
- *Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan (CBFMP)*

The ICCLFMPA will also amend the Planning Board's *Countywide Park Trails Plan (CPTP)* and has been coordinated closely with the ongoing *Upper Rock Creek Trail Corridor Plan* and the Northwest Branch Park Master Plan update.

This plan amendment addresses two relatively narrow issues and one larger, broader issue. The narrow issues involve amending the Master Plan of Highways to 1) modify the ICC alignment to reflect the ROD; and 2) establish interchange locations at Briggs Chaney Road and Midcounty Highway. The broader issue involves evaluating cross-county bicycle and trail connectivity along the ICC corridor, to provide connections to logical destinations and fill in critical gaps in response to portions of the path being built with the highway project.

The interchange at Briggs Chaney Road is more procedural than technical. The ICC ROD identified this location for an interchange and this plan amendment will simply affirm and reflect prior decisions. The interchange at Midcounty Highway must be studied further because the alignment selected for the ICC utilized portions of the right-of-way (ROW) intended for Midcounty Highway, and thus shifted the location of a future interchange further north and west.

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Purposes

The purposes of the ICCLFMPA are to: **1)** determine appropriate uses for master planned ROW not used by the approved highway project, with a particular focus on use of ROW that passes through parkland for a future bikeway or trail in conjunction with the approved ROD highway alignment; **2)** propose new alignment(s) for the master planned bicycle and pedestrian facilities along the ICC Corridor; and **3)** reconcile approved highway design elements with master plan guidance regarding certain interchange locations.

The ICCLFMPA examines key issues and challenges related to the CBFMP and the CPTP to clarify the County's vision for bicycle and pedestrian mobility and access along the corridor, which is consistent with our commitment to the Planning Board when we presented the ICC Bikeways Implementation Strategy in early January 2007. For an overview of the areas that are described in detail as part of this amendment, refer to **Figure 1**.

Key Plan Objectives

- **Highway Design and Alignment**
 - Modify the Master Plan of Highways to identify the ROD selected alternative as the highway's official master plan alignment.
 - Examine and provide guidance for the design of the future interchange at Midcounty Highway and the ICC (See **Figure 2**) and the related connection to Shady Grove Road.
 - Affirm prior Planning Board decisions (no paved pathway/trail due to environmental sensitivity) for master planned ROW segments passing through parkland that are no longer needed for the ICC.
 - Rock Creek Option A (**Figures 3 and 4**)
 - Northwest Branch Option B (**Figures 5 and 6**)
 - Consider removing from County master plans a bikeway/trail alignment through Paint Branch Stream Valley Park. (**Figure 7**)
 - Identify Briggs Chaney Road and the ICC as an interchange. (**Figure 7**)
 - Establish the new master planned alignment of SP-40. (**Figure 8**)
- **Bicycle and Pedestrian Access and Mobility**
 - Identify and recommend the required changes to policy guidance to enable the successful implementation of the State Highway Administration's (SHA) Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, henceforth referred to as **SHA Bike Plan** (refer to **Figure 1**), to safely accommodate both novice/family bicyclists, pedestrians and other users along the route's full length.
 - Identify and recommend policy changes needed to implement the full-length master planned shared-use path in the highway ROW, SP-40 in the CBFMP, henceforth referred to as the **County Bike Path (CBP)** (refer to **Figures 1 and 8**), or an equivalent and suitable alternative route along new paths or wide sidewalks of parallel highways, arterials and neighborhood streets, in order to avoid environmentally sensitive areas particularly in stream valley parks.
 - Modify the CBFMP and the CPTP to ensure safe and efficient bicycle and pedestrian access to and from the SHA Bike Plan.

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Other issues studied include:

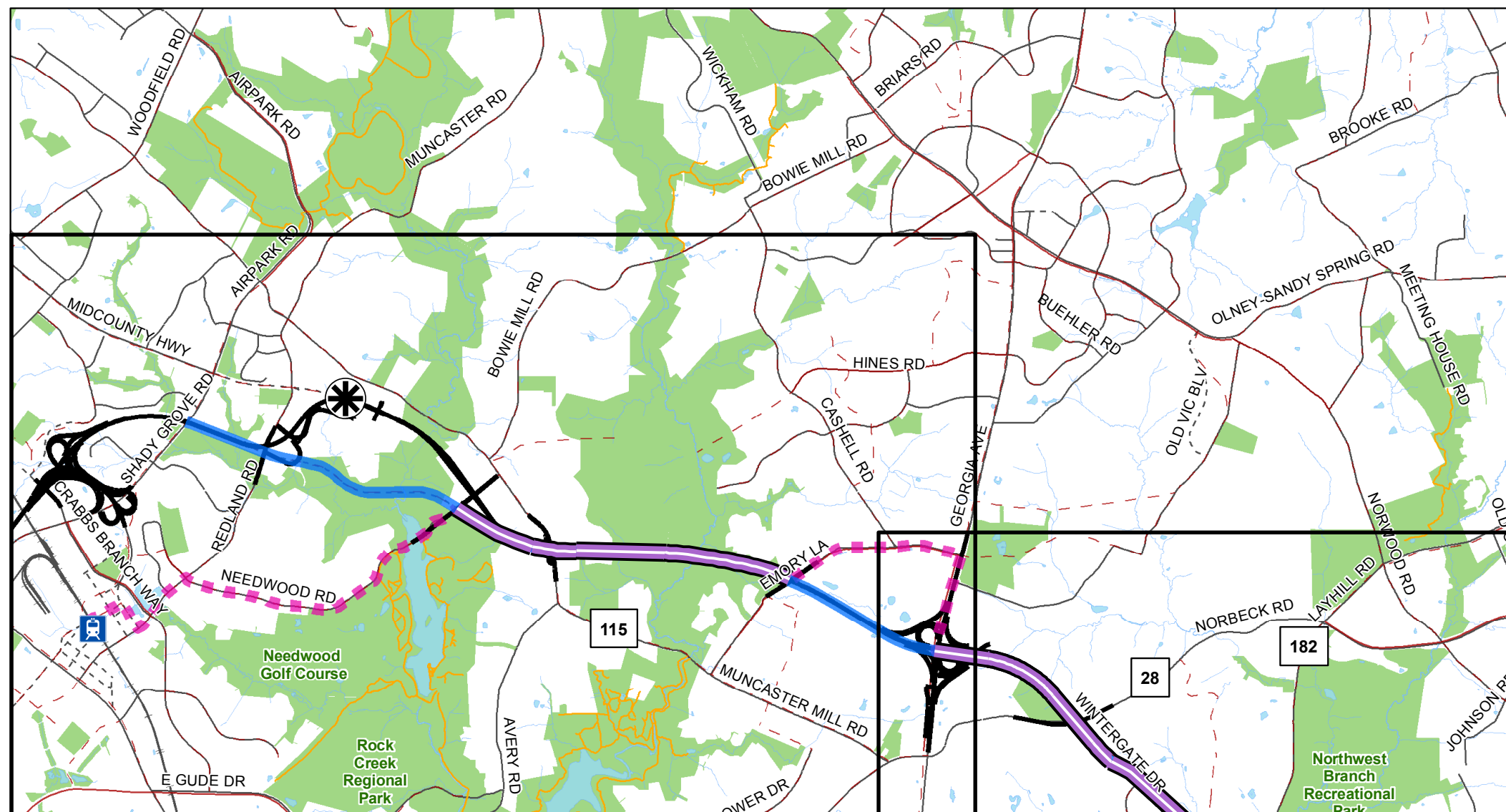
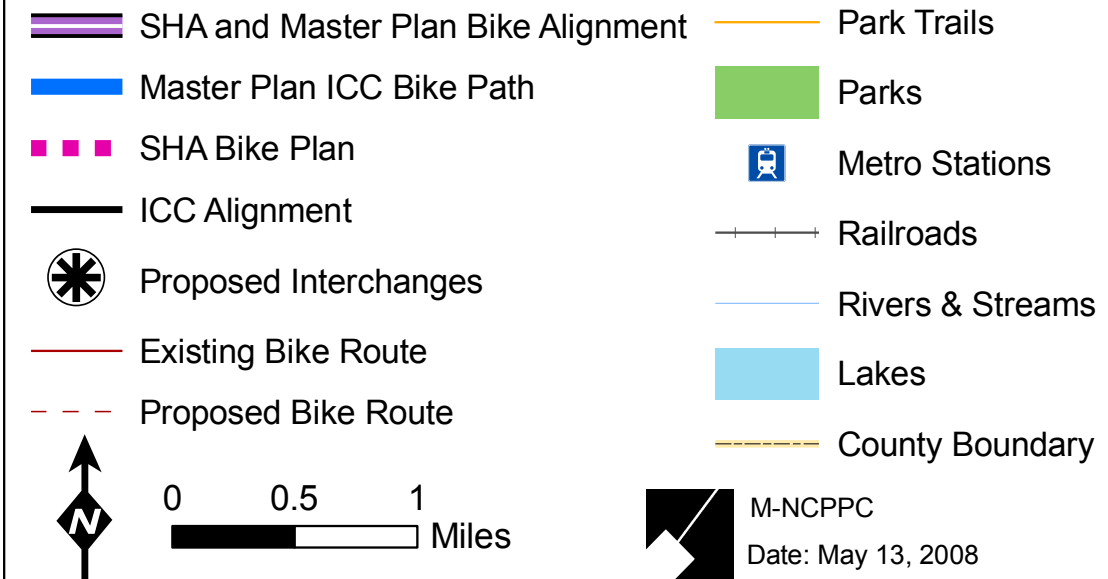
- Identify a funding mechanism that would permit potential participation by the private sector, through the Local Area Transportation Review, to help construct or fund portions of the SHA Bike Plan or CBP.
- Determine feasibility of interim use by mountain bikers (and equestrians) of segments adjacent to the highway ROW where the master planned CBP would eventually be built in the future.

Refined objectives

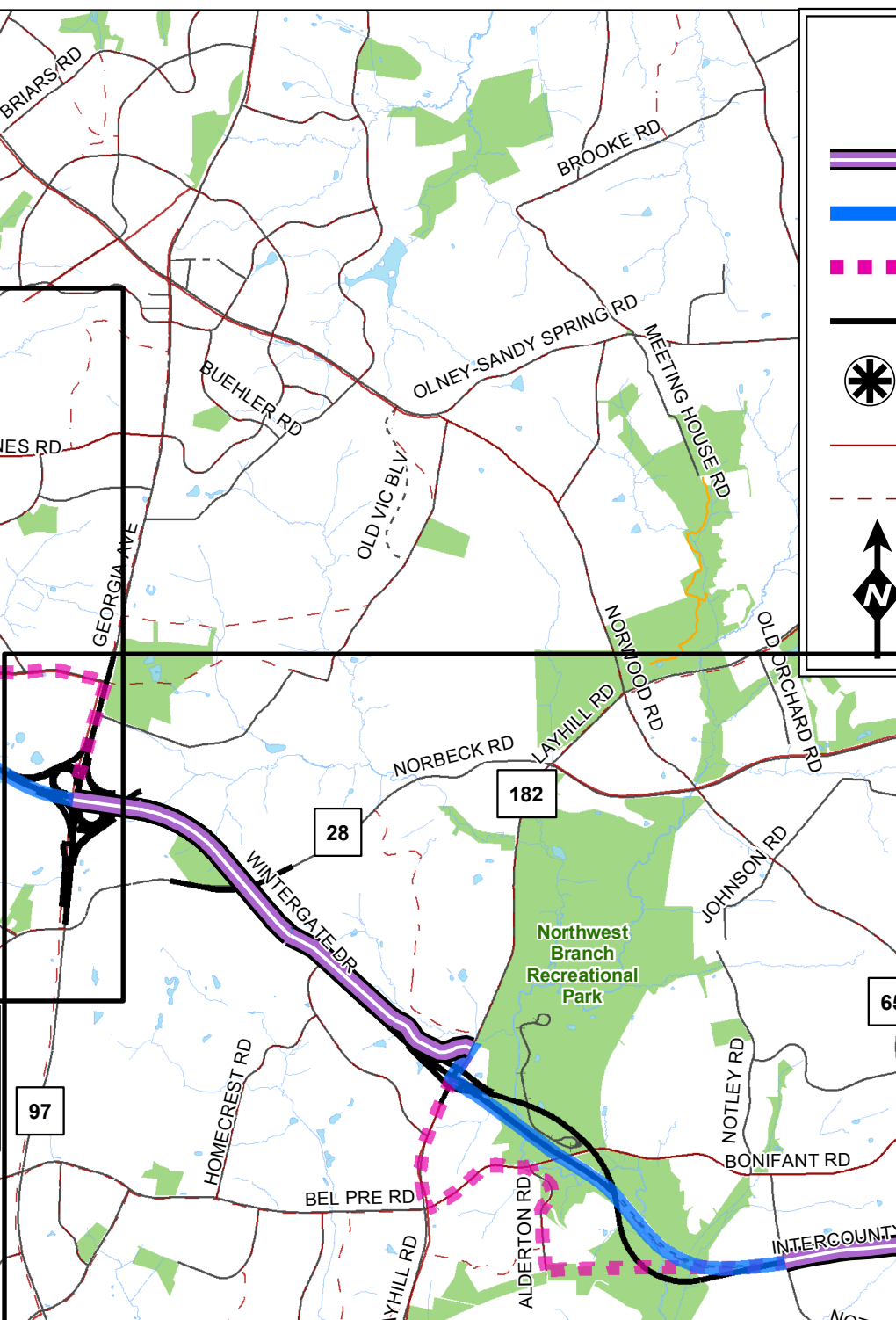
The above plan objectives were starting points for discussions. As the planning process progressed during fall 2007, four key questions emerged which we posed to both agency staff as well as the public during the public meetings in March/April 2008.

1. Does the County agree with the State's recommendations for routing the CBP along existing bikeways, sidewalks and paths (SHA Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan)?
2. What improvements are needed along these roads to improve bicycle and pedestrian accommodation and address the needs of all potential user groups?
3. Should the County remove from master plans CBP sections through environmentally sensitive park resources?
4. What related master plan amendments are required to achieve any recommendations resulting from solutions intended to address the above?

Figure 1 ICC Corridor Study Area



Figures 3 and 4 Needwood Road and Vicinity



Figures 5 and 6 Northwest Branch and Vicinity

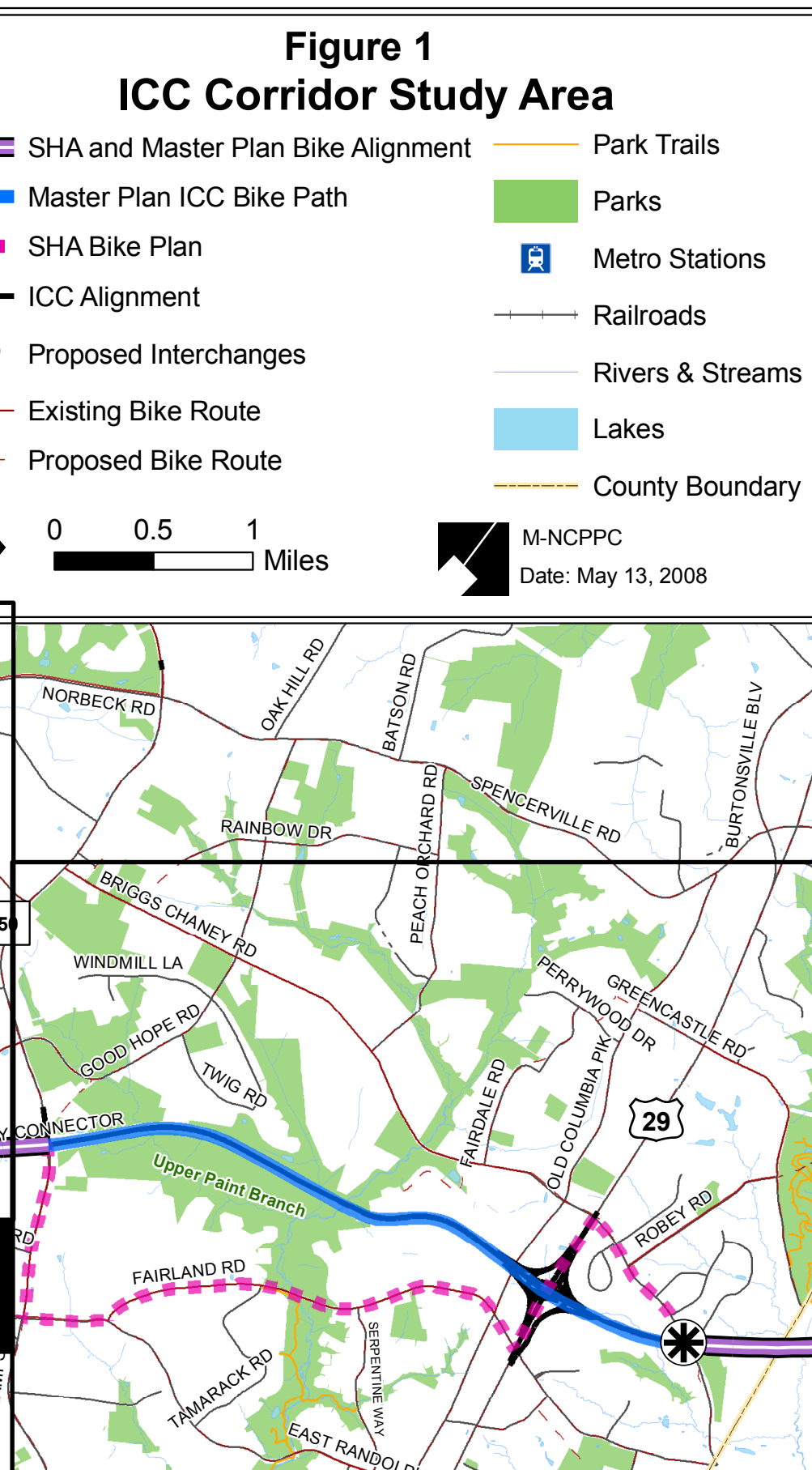
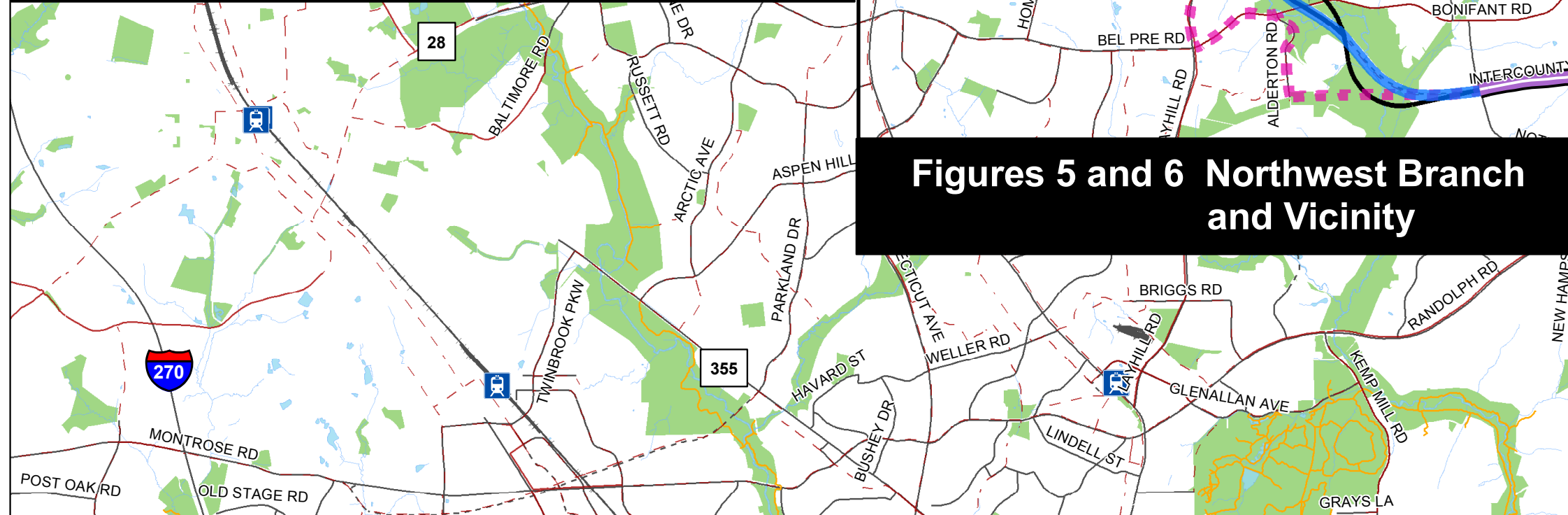


Figure 7 Paint Branch and Vicinity



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Crosscutting themes and issues

Several broad, cross-cutting themes or issues emerged during the planning process, which impacted the analysis and staff recommendations throughout the ICC corridor. Decision makers and the public must be cognizant of these conflicts and challenges as they evaluate various alternatives and options considered in this plan.

- ***Short-term solutions (“quick fixes”) versus long-term vision.*** The planning process must not merely react to the approved highway design to develop short-term quick fixes, but must offer long-term vision, looking 20-30 years in the future to anticipate future needs in reaction to emerging local, regional and global environmental and societal challenges.
- ***Environmental protection versus mobility and access.*** Bikeways, like any land development -- including ballfields and playgrounds -- cause environmental harm at some level. Land development frequently causes loss of trees, disruption to natural drainage patterns, adverse impacts to natural habitat, damage to water quality from increased runoff, and other effects. Unlike some land development, bikeways and trails also offer significant environmental (and health) benefits as well, which are difficult to quantify. A transportation cyclist using a pathway or bikeway frequently equates to one less car on county roads, which in turn means less air and water pollution in the long run (when compared to what otherwise would be a single occupant vehicle). This conflict was, and remains, at the heart of the debate for and against a full-length CBP as well as debates about numerous other bikeways and trails throughout the County. Bicycle facilities offer environmental and health benefits which are difficult to quantify in the short term, but when absent, contribute to long-term consequences such as obesity and air pollution.
- ***Transportation function versus a recreational, aesthetic experience.*** Transportation cyclists most often prefer the shortest and most direct connection from their origins to their destinations. Recreational cyclists and other pathway users frequently want an aesthetic, park-like experience for which a meandering pathway is appropriate and often highly desirable. Ironically, these frequently conflicting desires merge in this master plan amendment because the most direct connection between future ICC Bike Path segments would pass through parkland, offering the best of both worlds. However, these direct connections also frequently travel through very sensitive environmental resources. The reaction is to move the trail to parallel roadways where the transportation function may be high, but the aesthetic, park-like experience is low or non-existent. *This master plan amendment offers a choice between enhancing transportation function while reducing recreational value or selecting a pathway alignment that enhances recreational and transportation value while affecting environmental resources.* In reality, both affect environmental resources; the former is indirect and diluted while the latter is direct and visible.
- ***Different routes for different users.*** A goal from the beginning of this master plan process was to identify one route to accommodate all pathway user groups: bicyclists of all levels, hikers, walkers, equestrians, and others. It became apparent during public meetings that one route would not satisfy all user groups. Some wanted a hard surface trail, some did not want any facilities along roadways, and some wanted a natural surface trail (only hard surface was evaluated during the ICC Final Environmental Impact Statement [FEIS]). Some bicyclist place a high value on the most direct route to destinations for bicycle transportation, while others place a higher value on a park-like experience (recreation).

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- ***Choice trails versus sanctioned trails.*** Choice trails result where connections are needed and sanctioned trails are not planned. As a result, choice trails – typically created by residents – can inadvertently damage sensitive natural resources. To prevent this, many user groups (particularly users of natural surface trails) are asking the County to designate (or “sanction”) specific trail routes along the ICC corridor, which would allow unsanctioned trails to revert back to a nature state.
- ***Bicycle use on limited access highway.*** Many transportation cyclists are asking the County and state to allow bicycles to travel along the ICC shoulders. Current State law prohibits bicycle use on highways with speed limits 50 MPH or higher, particularly those managed by the Maryland Transportation Authority (MdTA). Legislation passed by the General Assembly in 2008 and likely to be signed into law by the Governor on April 24, 2008, however, grants the Chair of the Transportation Authority the ability to approve bicycle and pedestrian use of MdTA facilities on a case-by-case basis. By the time this plan amendment is approved and adopted by the County Council (October 2008), this law will take effect and should be considered and reflected in any recommendations. However, the ICC is a co-sponsored facility with the MdTA and SHA and it is presumed the facility will be signed to prohibit access by cyclists on all approaches to the highway to minimize potential confusion with where cycling is permitted on the pathway within the highway ROW.
- ***Use of highway construction access roads for recreation.*** Numerous trail user groups have asked agency staff to consider converting ICC construction roads to pathways after SHA contractors are done using them. Staff has studied this option, but it cannot be done for two reasons. First, most of the highway will be built within the highway footprint, and not require access roads. Secondly, where access roads are being built, they must be environmentally restored per commitments in the ROD.
- ***Critical connections for eastern County residents.*** There was strong sentiment in public meetings that critical connections be preserved so that the large segment of County residents living east of New Hampshire Avenue can continue to enjoy park trails. Of particular concern is that by eliminating hard surface trails through parkland (and during the ICC), such as through Paint Branch and Northwest Branch stream valley parks, eastern County communities will be unable to safely and enjoyably link with the rest of the County trail system. Families are unlikely to use the alternative routes along parallel roads proposed in this plan for recreation, particularly to reach the major park trails further west.

The recommendations in this Plan reflect staff judgment regarding these themes and issues. The draft remains fairly true to the Planning Board's position in 2005, at which time the Board did not support a paved trail along the ICC within the Mill Creek, Rock Creek, or Upper Paint Branch stream valley parks due to concerns associated with the natural environment. Our staff proposal recognizes that different routes are needed for different users. In areas where the clearing and grading impacts associated with a paved trail are highest and there are few community connections, the formal east-west transportation link for bicyclists should be diverted to adjacent roads. In some locations, however, the park access function served by the master plan trail can be maintained by retention of a natural surface trail system in the Countywide Park Trails Plan to provide access for hikers, equestrians, and mountain bikers.

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ISSUES, ANALYSIS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Highway Elements

This master plan amendment adopts the three roadway options to the master plan alternative that were analyzed in the DEIS and included in the ROD:

- Rock Creek Option C
- Northwest Branch Option A
- Briggs Chaney Road interchange

The Planning Board supported all three of these options during their review of the DEIS in February 2005. Each recommended change is briefly described below.

Rock Creek Option C

The DEIS compared two alignments within Rock Creek Stream Valley Park. Option A is the master planned alignment following the Mill Creek tributary to Rock Creek. Option C, part of the selected alternative, follows an alignment several hundred feet north and utilizes a portion of the highway ROW reserved for the future Midcounty Highway (M-83) connection to the ICC. Option C was selected to minimize impacts to environmentally sensitive areas along the Option A alignment.

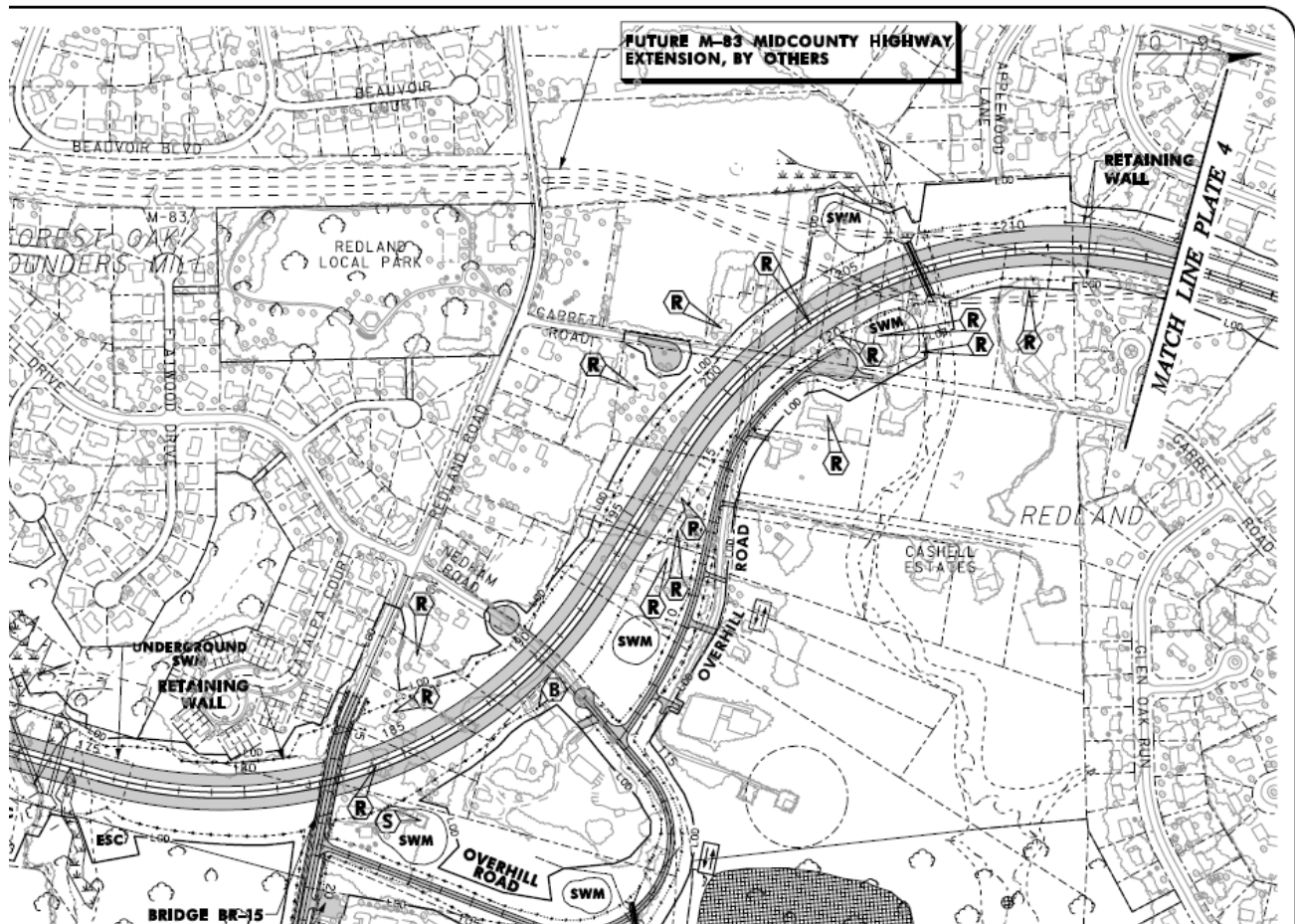
The proposed southerly extension of M-83 provides a direct connection between existing Midcounty Highway at Shady Grove Road and points to the east along the ICC. The 1985 and 2004 Upper Rock Creek Area master plans both identified two alignments for the portion of M-83 between Redland Road and the ICC. The selection of the Rock Creek Option C alignment for the ICC reduces the length of the unbuilt portion of M-83 extended.

This plan preserves ROW options for future M-83 ramp connections to the ICC. Figure 2 is an excerpt from the ICC Contract A Request for Proposals identifying a conceptual extension of M-83 to the ICC and identifies the residential property displacements associated with Rock Creek Option C. These properties are now owned by the State of Maryland. The alignment of the eastbound M-83 ramp shown in Figure 2 would likely require three additional residential property displacements on Garrett Court in the Winters Run community. This plan recommends that an alternative ramp alignment be developed that avoids additional property displacements and that all properties owned by the State be considered part of the M-83 alignment ROW and subject to property reservation policies pending completion of the alternative ramp design upon which ROW decisions can be made.

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Figure 2 Midcounty Highway Interchange



Northwest Branch Option A

The ICC DEIS compared two alternative alignments within Northwest Branch Stream Valley Park. Northwest Branch Option B (the shorter, straighter alignment of the two) is the master planned alignment. Northwest Branch Option A is a more curvilinear alignment that was developed to minimize impacts on environmental resources, despite the fact that it is longer and requires more designated parkland.

Briggs Chaney Road Interchange

The ROD includes a partial interchange at Briggs Chaney Road, which is not included in the Fairland Master Plan. This interchange includes ramps to and from the east along the ICC. A Briggs Chaney Road interchange is needed to provide local business access to and from the east on the ICC because close interchange spacing precludes these connections from occurring via US 29.

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Bikeways Elements

The **CBP** is defined as the shared-use off-road bicycle facility in the highway ROW as recommended in the CBFMP, the CPTP, and area master plans. The ICC's *SHA Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan* is defined as existing or proposed bicycle facilities – both off-road and on-road – that are recommended by SHA as its alternative to the CBP to avoid environmentally sensitive areas and parkland impacts. Recognizing that the alternative does not implement the master planned facility in the highway ROW, the State has committed to work with the local governments to accelerate construction those portions of the SHA Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan that are part of County master plans. Revisions to the SHA Plan as part of this amendment are expected to provide a continuous shared use path to ensure that the SHA Plan meets the needs of novice and experienced bicyclists and pedestrians.

For bikeway issues, the ICCLFMPA subdivided the study area into five subareas with their own issues and recommendations:

- A. Needwood Road and Vicinity
- B. Emory Lane/Georgia Avenue and Vicinity
- C. Northwest Branch Park and Vicinity
- D. Paint Branch Stream Valley Park and Vicinity
- E. US 29 Corridor

Study Area A: Needwood Road and Vicinity (Figures 3 and 4)

Problems/Issues

- Connecting the ICC pathway west-terminus at Needwood Road with Midcounty Highway
 - Along the current master plan route via the old ICC ROW through the park; or
 - Via new shared use paths along Needwood, Muncaster Mill and Shady Grove Roads, and perhaps using Applewood Lane, a neighborhood street, to connect Muncaster Mill Road with the future ICC/Midcounty Highway interchange.
- Deciding whether to eliminate the master planned alignment through the park (to run parallel to the master planned highway alignment not selected in the ROD).

Discussion

The CBP through this study area provides a critical trail/pathway connection between the I-270 Corridor and the Georgia Avenue communities. The selected alternative highway alignment for this area – Rock Creek Option C – avoids sensitive natural resources but does not accommodate the trail connection, primarily because the highway was designed with a small footprint to avoid additional impacts to the Mill Creek communities. A trail/bikeway connection across the Rock Creek Main Stem is needed to link the up-County and down-County bikeway/pathway systems, connecting Clarksburg, East Germantown, and East Gaithersburg with the Rock Creek Trail network and parks to the east. An independent hard surface trail or pathway within the old master plan alignment should not be built due to the same environmental problems the highway would have caused, in addition to the cost.

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Implementing a shared use path along the selected highway alternative alignment, Rock Creek Option C with Olde Mill Run Grade Separation, is also not feasible. The ICC follows the master planned right-of-way for Midcounty Highway through the Winters Run community, including depression below grade into a 600-foot long deckover structure. Insufficient space exists to accommodate bicyclists in this structure and no alternative path through the community is available. As a result, the County must now find an alternative route to connect the ICC pathway terminus at Needwood Road (Circle B on Figure 3) with the future shared use path along Midcounty Highway terminating at Shady Grove Road (Circle A on Figure 3). Several alternative alignments were studied, including the options shown on Figure 4 and described below:

Option 1 is a newly planned shared use path along the east side of Needwood Road between the ICC and Muncaster Mill Road and along the south side of Muncaster Mill Road between Needwood Road and Shady Grove and Airpark Roads (Applewood Lane to Shady Grove Road currently exists). This option provides access to Montgomery Village via the shared use path SP-55 along Airpark Road that terminates at Muncaster Mill Road. **Option 1 is recommended as the new alignment for SP-40.**

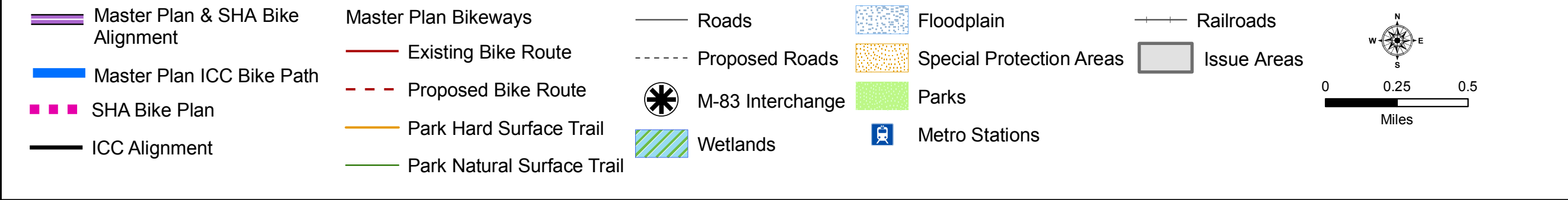
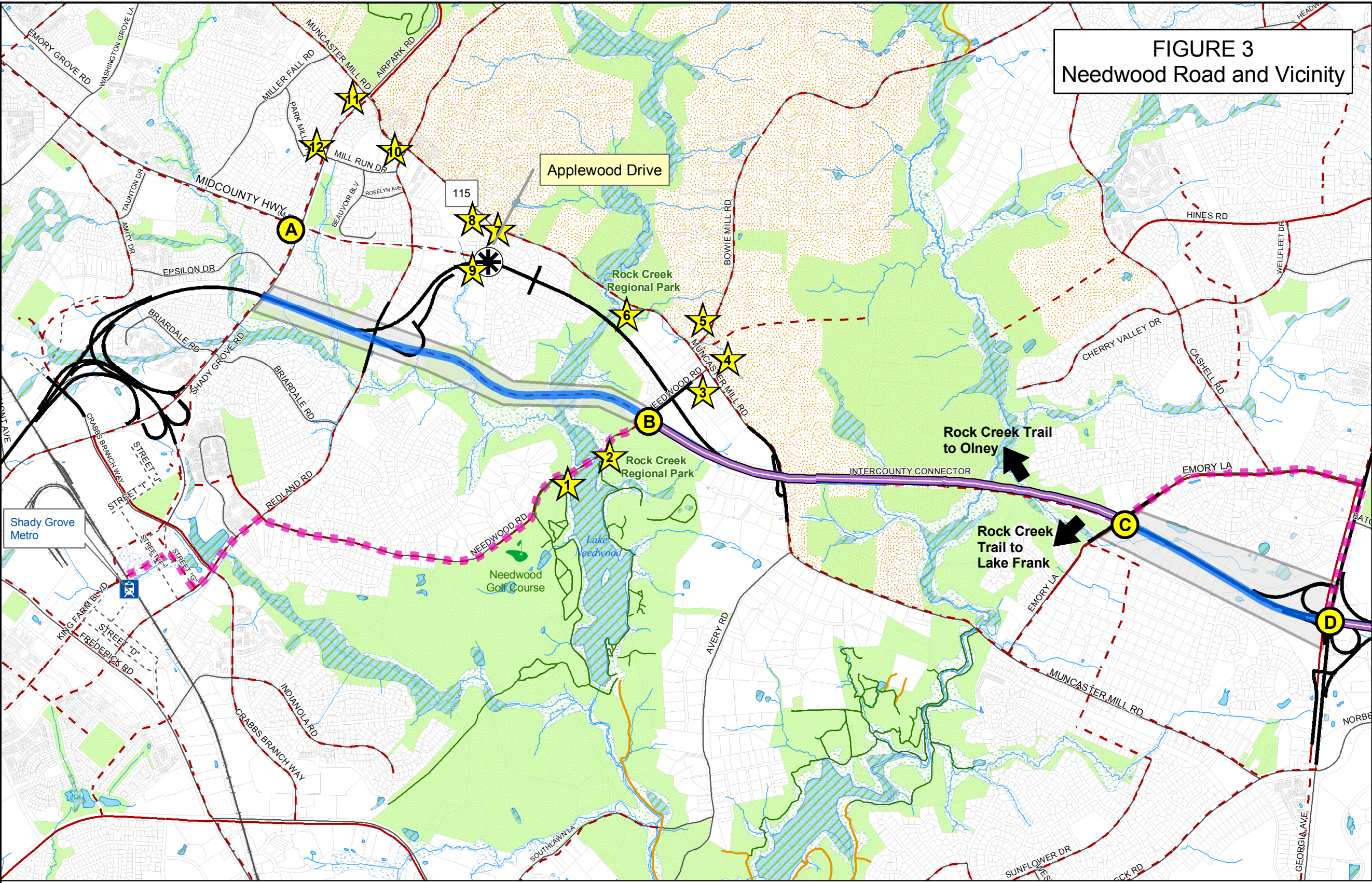
Option 2 is a newly planned shared use path along Muncaster Mill Road (following the Option 1 alignment briefly), but connects to Midcounty Highway via an on-road bike route along Applewood Lane, leading down to the future location of the ICC/Midcounty Highway Interchange, then along the future Midcounty Highway alignment (designated as CBFMP path SP-70) to Shady Grove Road. This option provides access to Montgomery Village and points north via the shared use path SP-70 along Midcounty Highway. **The Option 2 connection along Applewood Lane is recommended as a new designation SP-40A.**

Option 3 is a newly planned shared use path along the new ICC ROW between Needwood Road and the eastern Rock Creek Regional park boundary that connects through the park (and through wetland or along steep slopes) to Muncaster Mill Road and following Options #1 or #2 above. This option would offer trail users a more park-like experience by briefly following the new highway alignment to and through Rock Creek Park.

Option 1 offers the most immediate connection since available ROW exists along most of these roads to make this connection possible. Option 2 is desirable, but requires coordination with the location, design, and timing of the future Midcounty Highway extension from Shady Grove Road to the ICC. Option 3 affords too few benefits at the expense of environmental resources and capital costs.

The SHA Plan includes an important shared-use path connection from the ICC to the Shady Grove Metrorail station via planned CBFMP shared-use paths along Needwood Road (DB-14) and Redland Road (SP-54).

FIGURE 3
Needwood Road and Vicinity

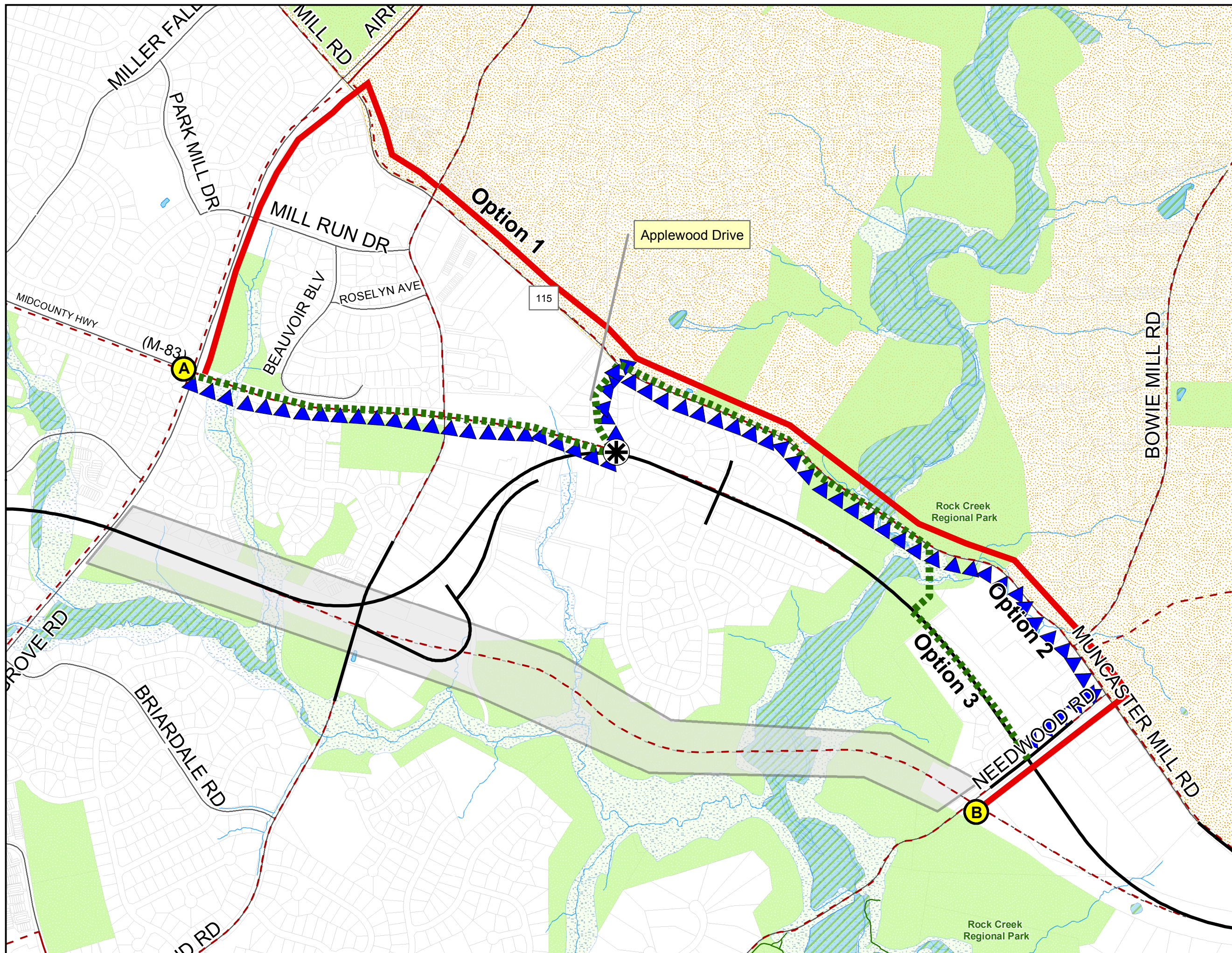


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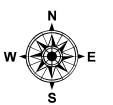
Photographs of Needwood Road and Vicinity *(Accompanies Figure 3)*



FIGURE 4
Needwood Road
Options



- Option 1
- Option 2
- Option 3
- ICC Alignment
- Master Plan Bikeways
- Existing Bike Route
- Proposed Bike Route
- Park Hard Surface Trail
- Park Natural Surface Trail
- Roads
- Proposed Roads
- M-83 Interchange
- Wetlands
- Floodplain
- Special Protection Areas
- Parks
- Metro Stations
- Railroads
- Issue Areas



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Miles

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Prior Decisions

Both the Planning Board and the County Council, during DEIS review, recommended that the CBP terminate at Needwood Road and to route the pathway along Needwood, Muncaster Mill, and Shady Grove Roads to connect to the master planned Midcounty Highway path, as well as pursue enhancements along Needwood Road to connect the CBP terminus at Needwood Road with the Shady Grove Metrorail Station.

Recommendations

- Remove from master plans the old CBP along the old ICC ROW, between Needwood Road and Shady Grove Road.
- Pursue Option 1 above to connect the CBP with the upcounty trail system, as well as the prior decision to connect to the Shady Grove Metro Station via Needwood Road. See related roadway analysis and recommendations below.

Roadway Analysis

Needwood Road (ICC to Muncaster Mill Road)

Existing Conditions: Residential Primary, 70' ROW, 2 lanes. Shared use path and/or sidewalk exist in short segments along south side from Redland Road to Needwood Mansion.

Master Plan Guidance: Upper Rock Creek Master Plan (URCMP) (2004) calls for a shared use path and on-road bikeway. The CBFMP recommends a dual bikeway, with both bike lanes and a shared use path (DB-14).

Discussion: This segment of Needwood Road serves two important purposes. It connects the CBP with Magruder High School and the future community of Bowie Mill Estates. And because the CBP is no longer planned to continue west through the park, it now also must be part of the bike route that links with the Midcounty Highway path, leading to up-County communities east of I-270. Contract A of the ICC highway project will construct the path along the road within the highway ROW only.

Recommendation: Identify the segment between the ICC and Muncaster Mill Road for inclusion in the County's Annual Bikeway Program, and request matching funding from the State for the short connector. Ensure the crossing of Muncaster Mill Road to the high school meets AASHTO standards for a shared use path.

Muncaster Mill Road (Needwood Road to Shady Grove Road)

Existing Conditions: Arterial (A-93), 80'-100' ROW, 2-4 lanes. Shared use path and/or sidewalk exists in short segments along both sides, but SHA most recently constructed a shared use path along the south side in the vicinity of Redland Middle School and in the vicinity of the Redland Road intersection.

Master Plan Guidance: URCMP (2004) calls for an on-road bikeway. The CBFMP recommends bike lanes (BL-35) for this segment of Muncaster Mill Road.

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Discussion: This segment of Muncaster Mill Road connects the Needwood Road path with a future path along Shady Grove Road leading to Midcounty Highway, which is master planned to have a shared use path along its south side. In 2005, SHA reconstructed sections of the road, some with a shared use path and some without, including where the road passes through the park. Therefore, constructing a path through the park will need to be a separate project. The road was a major discussion point during the County Council debates on the CBFMP, and ultimately the Council voted for only bike lanes and not the shared use path recommended in the URCMP. Therefore, receiving County funding for the path may prove difficult without a master plan amendment.

Recommendations: Amend the CBFMP to identify the road as a dual bikeway with both bike lanes and a shared use path along the south side, between Needwood Road and Shady Grove Road.

- *Short-term:* Pursue the shared use path between Needwood Road and Applewood Lane as a new facility planning study in a future Capital Improvement Program (CIP).
- *Long-term:* Link to the future Midcounty Highway path via a signed shared roadway connector along Applewood Lane, immediately after the interchange is built. Ensure the interchange design and the related Midcounty Highway extension to Shady Grove Road includes a shared use path.

Shady Grove Road (Muncaster Mill Road to Midcounty Highway)

Existing Conditions: Major highway (M-42), 120-150' ROW, 6 lanes divided. Existing 5-6' sidewalk south side entire length, and existing bike lanes.

Master Plan Guidance: URCMP (2004) does not recommend any changes to this configuration. The Shady Grove Sector Plan (2006), URCMP and the CBFMP recommend bike lanes (BL-30)

Discussion: To meet the needs of all potential trail users, this roadway segment needs a shared use path. However, due to ROW constraints for the section of the road nearest to Muncaster Mill Road (only 120') implementing the path without impacting the bike lanes will be extremely difficult. Implementing the shared use path as part of the future Midcounty Highway connection to the ICC interchange (SP-70) is more likely, connecting via Applewood Lane to the future path and bike lanes along Muncaster Mill Road.

Recommendation: Do not amend the master plans to add a shared use path along the road. Instead, pursue the path connection along Midcounty Highway and through the interchange to Applewood Lane.

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Study Area B: Emory Lane/Georgia Avenue and Vicinity (Figure 3)

Problems/Issues

- Providing a connection between CBP terminus at Emory Lane with Lake Frank and the Rock Creek Trail system down-county, including a new shared use path along Emory Lane between the ICC and Muncaster Mill Road, as well as along Muncaster Mill Road between Emory Lane and Meadowside Lane.
- Deciding whether to retain the master planned CBP segment along the ICC ROW between Emory Lane and Georgia Avenue. (Circles C and D on Figure 3)

Discussion

The connector between the CBP and Lake Frank is technically part of the master planned Rock Creek North Branch Trail. The portion south of Muncaster Mill Road and also north of the ICC in the park is being studied during the Department of Parks' Upper Rock Creek Trail Corridor Master Plan (commenced in 2006). A portion of the park trail north of the ICC will be built by the developer of Bowie Mill Estates.

The segments along Emory Lane and Muncaster Mill Road were studied as part of this planning effort. A shared use path is master planned along Emory Lane, and the path has been constructed between Georgia Avenue and Holly Ridge Lane. Implementing the remaining segment between Holly Ridge Road and Muncaster Mill Road is currently unplanned. Bike lanes are master planned for Muncaster Mill Road in this area, so the trail connector along this road between Emory Lane and Meadowside Lane would be a new master plan recommendation, which is assumed to be part of the planned Rock Creek Trail. See roadway recommendations below.

The CBP within the ICC ROW between Emory Lane and Georgia Avenue was not included in the ICC ROD, but this plan amendment will recommend retaining this bikeway in County master plans. Because the highway was not designed with the pathway in this area, the ICC/Georgia Avenue interchange is not designed to provide a grade-separated crossing of Georgia Avenue to connect to the ICC trail on the east side of Georgia Avenue. A controlled crossing is available at Emory Lane in the short-term. A new crossing should be the subject of the facility planning study for the future implementation of the CBP between Emory Lane and Georgia Avenue. Even without the grade-separated crossing of Georgia Avenue, the path offers independent utility to connect the future shared use path (SP-29) along the Georgia Avenue busway with the Rock Creek Trail system and the CBP heading west (and the current shared use path and shared roadway – along MD 655 – on the west side of Georgia Avenue, which will be preserved and enhanced as part of ICC Contract A).

Prior Decisions

Both the Planning Board and the County Council recommended constructing the CBP with the highway between Emory Lane and Georgia Avenue. The implementation of the Rock Creek North Branch Trail between Lake Frank and the ICC Trail is part of the Upper Rock Creek Trail Corridor Master Plan.

Recommendations

- Retain in County master plans the CBP between Emory Lane and Georgia Avenue, recognizing it may be built within or outside the highway ROW. Study the grade-separated crossing (tunnel or bridge) of Georgia Avenue when this segment of the CBP is the subject of a facility planning study.

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- Study the Rock Creek Trail segments north of the ICC and south of Muncaster Mill Road as part of a the Upper Rock Creek Trail Corridor Master Plan.
- Include in a future CIP a new facility planning study – to be led by DPWT – for the park trail connector along Emory Lane and Muncaster Mill Road. Consider coordinating this effort with the park trail connector study identified above. This is a highly desirable connection now, independent of the ICC. Examine connections to the Meadows Lane and the WSSC access road along the east side of the stream south of Muncaster Mill. Minimize impacts to the historic mill site adjacent to the stream and south of Muncaster Mill Road.

Study Area C: Northwest Branch Stream Valley Park and Vicinity (Figures 5 and 6)

Problems/Issues

- Connecting at Notley Road (Circle B on Figure 5) with the Matthew Henson Trail (“MHT”; Circle C) through the park, as well as with Layhill Road (Circle A) through the park or along parallel roads.
- Deciding whether to pursue or remove from County master plans a new trail/bikeway (since it was not built with the highway) parallel to the highway between Notley Road and Alderton Road.
- Deciding whether to remove from County master plans the CBP parallel to the highway – adjoining Bonifant Woods community – between future Matthew Henson Trail connector and Bonifant Road (blue line on Figure 5).
- Studying a new park trail connector – that would double as the modified alignment for SP-40 – between Bonifant and Layhill roads to and/or through the Trolley Museum site and the future developed park area surrounding it.
- Deciding whether to accept the State’s Plan that would route the path along parallel roads in conjunction with determining improvements to these roads to accommodate all user groups and ability levels.

Discussion

The ROD did not include the master planned CBP along the ICC ROW between Notley Road and Layhill Road. SHA’s Bike Plan instead recommended an on-road route via existing bikeways along Alderton, Bonifant, and Layhill roads to connect the MHT with the ICC trail terminus at Layhill Road. It also recommended a future trail connection between Notley Road and Alderton Road (and thus the MHT heading west) as an area for which the County could partner with the State to study and implement, separate from the highway project.

The bicycle and pedestrian accommodations along the roads that serve as alternative routes are largely adequate for experienced cyclists, but offer an incomplete, discontinuous, or inadequate route for all potential pathway users and ability levels, most notably the family cyclist. Therefore, this plan evaluates bicycle and pedestrian

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accommodation along these roads and recommends master plan amendments to facilitate the enhancements. These recommendations are below.

This plan recommends a new alignment for SP-40 through the Northwest Branch Park between Layhill Road and Bonifant Road, and connecting to/through the Trolley Museum site. This alignment will be studied in more detail during the Northwest Branch Park Master Plan Update (commenced Fall 2007). Our primary concern regarding shared use path construction in the Northwest Branch and Vicinity, however, regards the sensitive environmental resources south of Bonifant Road, particularly between MHT and Notley Road. Through this area we propose that any pathway or trail avoid bisecting the biodiversity area and contiguous forest.

Figure 6 provides a summary of connection options in the Northwest Branch area. The primary objective for the ICC LFMPA is how to connect points A and B along the ICC. A secondary, yet important concern is how to connect point C; the eastern terminus of the built portion of the Matthew Henson Trail, to the ICC shared-use path at point B.

Staff considered two options for connecting points A and B that do not go through point C:

Option 1. From point A, construct a new shared-use path connecting Layhill Local Park to the relocated Trolley Museum in Northwest Branch Recreational Park via a new trail bridge across the Northwest Branch. Use the Trolley Museum driveway to access Bonifant Road, and then construct a new shared-use path on the south side of Bonifant Road between the Trolley Museum Driveway and Notley Road and a new shared-use path on the west side of Notley Road between Bonifant Road and the ICC path at point B. **Option 1 is recommended as the new alignment for SP-40.**

Option 2. From point A, construct a new shared-use path along Layhill Road southward to Bonifant Road and a new shared-use path along Bonifant Road between Layhill Road to the Trolley Museum. Staff considered three options for connecting points B and C, some of which could also be part of a connection between points A and B, listed below from northernmost to southernmost.

Option 3. From point A, construct a new shared-use path northward along the east side of Alderton Road to Alderton Lane and utilize the existing shared use path along Alderton Road between Alderton Lane and Bonifant Road. From this point, the remainder of Option 3 is the same as the portion of Option 2 east of Alderton Road.

The portion of Option 3 west of the Trolley Museum driveway is recommended as a new designated path SP-40B to most directly connect Matthew Henson Trail to the ICC path SP-40.

Option 4. From points C to B, construct a new shared-use path along the edge of the park property, including a new trail bridge crossing of Northwest Branch south of the proposed ICC crossing. While this alignment is essentially what is proposed in the 2005 CBFMP, the topographic and natural resource constraints in the park make this shared-use path construction challenging. However, SHA is building the ICC between the park boundary and Notley Road to reserve space that will accommodate a future trail and this option remains possible as long as the

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trail alignment is retained in master plans. Implementing the trail then becomes a matter of funding, timing, and minimizing impacts to sensitive resources.

Option 5. From points C to B, utilize existing, low-volume residential roadways, Alderton Drive, Atwood Road, and Foggy Glen Court to connect to the Poplar Run development's proposed shared-use path system which includes a new bridge crossing of Northwest Branch to connect to the Rachel Carson Greenway (RCG) trail. Utilize the existing, low-volume, residential roadway Vierling Drive to access Notley Road in the vicinity of the ICC. As currently designed, however, the RCG trail connector and bridge across the Northwest Branch are not suitable for road bikes. And because the RCG prohibits bicycles, this routing causes a likely conflict: preventing bicycles from accessing the RCG but still offering them a connection to Notley Road through the park and along local streets through the Drumeldra Hills neighborhood on the east side.

Connections between points A and C are the least important of the three pairs of connections in this vicinity, and can be made either via Layhill Road and the Matthew Henson Trail or by a combination of Option 2 (west of the Bonifant Road/Alderton Road intersection) and Option 3 (south of the Bonifant Road/Alderton Road intersection).

In late 2007, the Department of Parks initiated a master plan amendment for Northwest Branch Park north of Bonifant Road. Preliminary recommendations would create a moderately developed regional park with ball fields, a mountain bike challenge course, and an adventure playground (all of which would complement the Trolley Museum site), with a hard surface trail system connecting these areas. Due to the intensity of the proposed development and the desire to link them, the Department will study a CBP connection – between Layhill Road and Bonifant Road – parallel to the ICC which could simultaneously partially implement the regional CBP (SP-40) through this area. Then, the remaining east-west gap would be along Bonifant Road and Notley Road, consistent with Option #3.

Prior Decisions

The Planning Board supported the detour along Alderton Road, Bonifant Road, and Layhill Road during its review of the highway's FEIS, but stopped short of recommending that the segment of SP-40 passing through the park be removed from County master plans. The County Council recommended the CBP parallel to the highway, but did not address how to accomplish this alignment if the trail was not included in the highway ROW.

Recommendations

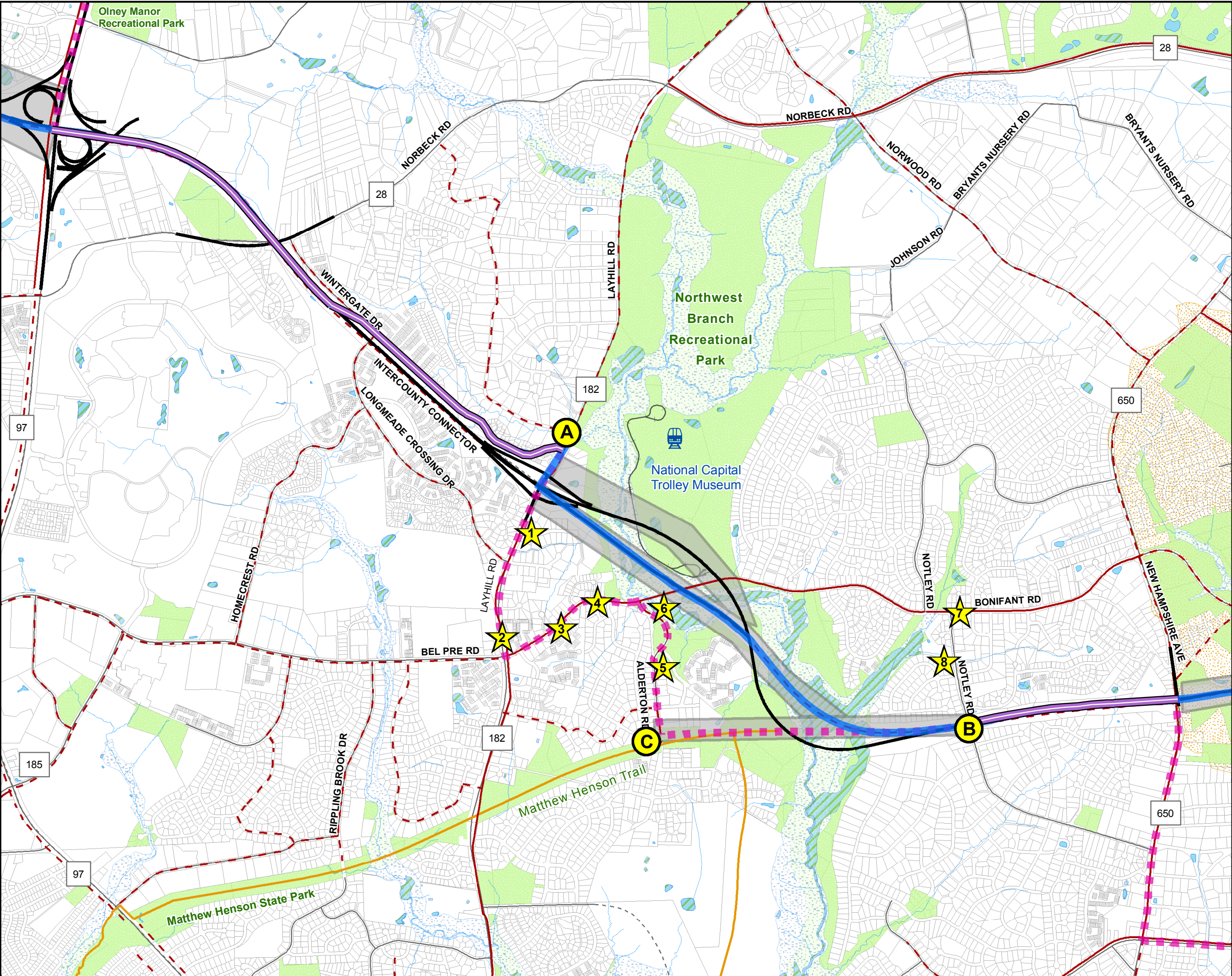
- Include in a future CIP a new facility planning study to be led by the Department of Parks for the bikeway/park trail connector between Notley Road and Alderton Road. Request State funding assistance for this study; SHA committed to helping implement this important connector in the ROD. Areas requiring detailed environmental study include:
 - Routing a hard surface trail along the current master planned route, a direct connection between Alderton and Notley Roads through the park.
 - Routing a new shared use path along both Alderton Road and Bonifant Road and then along Notley Road by widening the existing sidewalk along west side where applicable and building a new shared use path to connect the sidewalk with CBP (Option 3 above, and identified as "SP-40B" on Figure 8).

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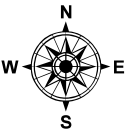
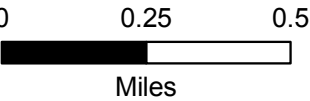
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- Routing the trail south through Indian Spring/Poplar Run, then over the stream and through the Drumeldra Hills neighborhood as described in Option 5 above.
- Study and make recommendations for the bikeway and trail connector between Layhill and Bonifant Roads as part of the Northwest Park Master Plan (commenced in November 2007). This new bikeway/trail functions as part of the revised alignment for SP-40 between Layhill and Notley Road (Option 1).
- Do not study further any park trails directly along either the old of the selected ICC master plan highway alignments.
- See roadway related recommendations and proposed master plan amendments below.

FIGURE 5
Northwest Branch
and Vicinity



- Master Plan & SHA Bike Alignment
- Master Plan ICC Bike Path
- SHA Bike Plan
- ICC Alignment
- Master Plan Bikeways
 - Existing Bike Route
 - Proposed Bike Route
- Park Master Plan Trails
- Roads
 - Proposed Roads
- Wetlands
- Floodplain
- Lakes
- Parks
- Special Protection Areas
- Issue Areas



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Photographs of Northwest Branch Park and Vicinity (Accompanies Figure 5)

Layhill Rd. looking north from
Norvale Rd.



Layhill Rd. looking north from
Bonifant Rd.



Bonifant Rd. looking west near
Layhill Valley Ct.



Bonifant Rd. looking east near Morton
Hall Rd.



Alderton Rd./Woodwell Rd. South View



Alderton Rd. Southwest View



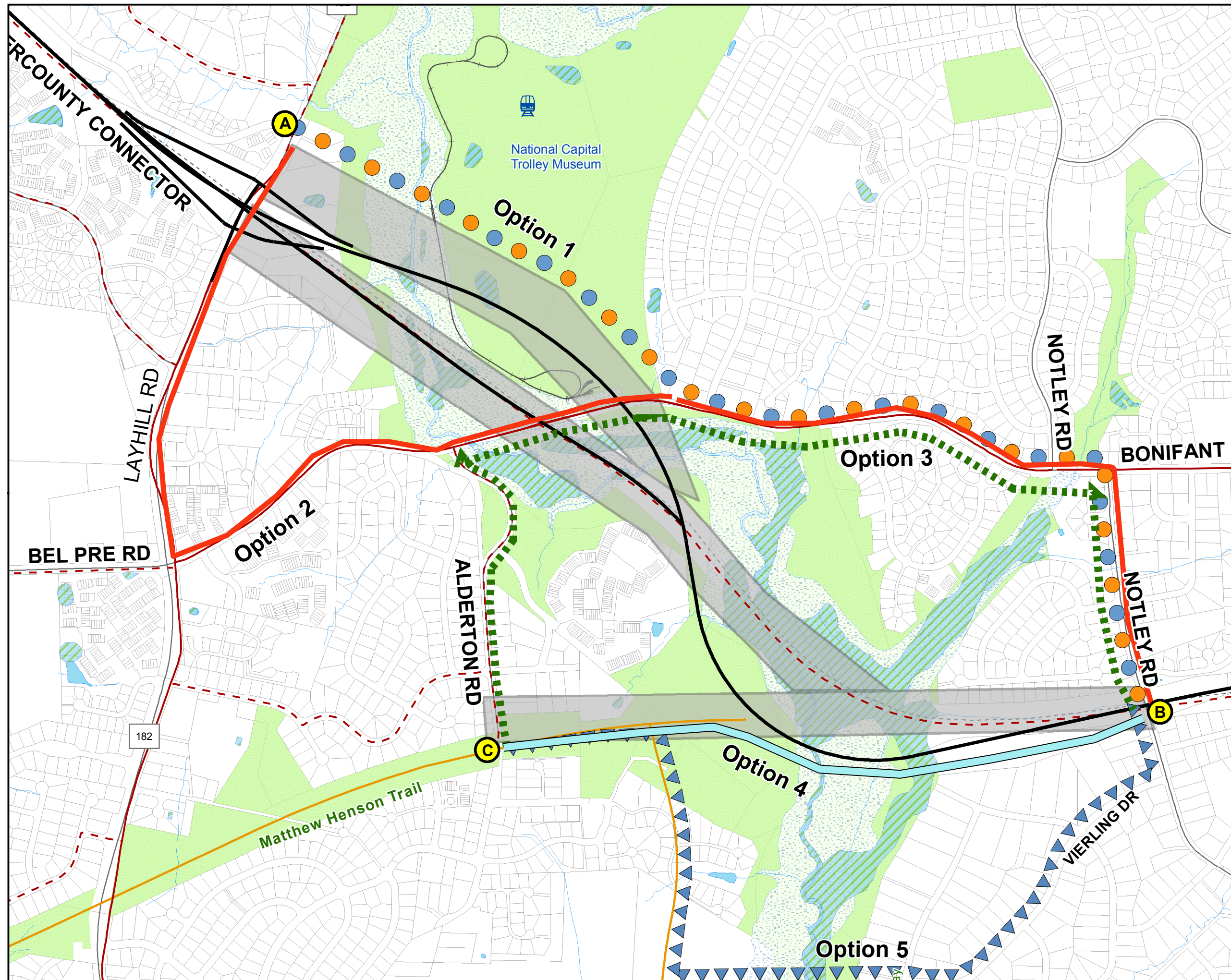
Bonifant Rd. looking west from Notley Rd.



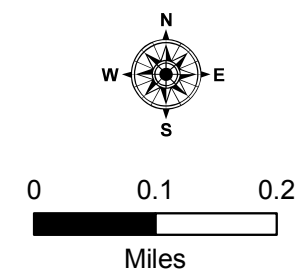
Notley Rd. looking north from
Northwyn Dr.



FIGURE 6
Northwest Branch
Options



- ● Option 1
- Option 2
- ⋯ Option 3
- Option 4
- ▲ ▲ ▲ Option 5
- ICC Alignment
- Master Plan Bikeways
- Existing Bike Route
- - - Proposed Bike Route
- Park Master Plan Trails
- Roads
- - - Proposed Roads
- Wetlands
- Floodplain
- Lakes
- Parks
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Alderton Road (Bonifant Road to Matthew Henson Trail)

Existing Conditions: Residential Primary (P-15), 2 lanes, 70' ROW, 4' sidewalk and 10' buffer with street trees along east side from Bonifant to 250' south of Alderton Court.

Master Plan Guidance: Aspen Hill Master Plan (1994) recommends no changes to current configuration, and also recommends the road as a signed shared roadway for bicycle accommodation.

Discussion: The roadway features a 4-foot sidewalk on the east side from Bonifant Road to about 250 feet south of Alderton Court. The roadway and sidewalk can currently accommodate light bicycle and pedestrian travel, but if and when the park trail connector is built through the park between the current MHT terminus and Notley Road (and CBP connect to New Hampshire Avenue), bicycle and pedestrian traffic are likely to increase and a wider sidewalk or shared use path will be needed particularly for child, novice, and intermediate cyclists traveling uphill from Bonifant to the MHT. Ample space exists north of Alderton Court to widen the existing sidewalk without causing excessive impact. However, extending a wider sidewalk or path to the south will have to minimize impacts to street trees.

Recommendations: Amend master plans to include a shared use path along the east side between Bonifant Road and the MHT. This path functions as part of SP-40B, between MHT and Notley (C to B on Figure 6). Include the project in a future CIP as a new facility planning study concurrently with the construction of the park trail connector through the park between Notley Road and the MHT.

Bonifant Road (Alderton Road to Layhill Road)

Existing Conditions: Arterial (A-40) 2 lanes, 80' ROW. Open section roadway, except curb and gutter with sidewalk and landscape buffer between Catoctin Drive and Layhill Road. Short sidewalk segments (asphalt or concrete) intermittently exist along both sides; conditions are poor except near Layhill Road. 6-8' shoulder both sides which function as the master planned bike lanes.

Master Plan Guidance: Aspen Hill Master Plan (1994) recommends no changes to current configuration. CBFMP recommend bike lanes (BL-17), but not a shared use path.

Discussion: The bike lanes accommodate experienced cyclists traveling from Layhill Road to Alderton, however there is no consistent sidewalk or shared use path along either side to accommodate less-experienced cyclists or pedestrians. The road has an 80' ROW through a developed area and is open-section (featuring wide drainage swales); implementing a shared use path on the property side of the swales is problematic. Implementing it on the road side of the swales would be difficult without impacting the shoulder and possibly eliminating the existing master planned bike lanes. This amendment could recommend a shared use path along the south side, but its implementation would be highly unlikely unless the road is reconstructed with a closed section. Removing the drainage swales would permit space for the shared use path. And reconstructing the road with closed section is unlikely since the County's new road code recommends reducing the need for SWM structures.

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Recommendations: Designate the roadway as a dual bikeway to include a shared use path along the south side between Layhill and Notley roads. Implement the path between Layhill Road and Alderton Road only when the County reconstructs the roadway to include curb and gutter (and remove the drainage swales), otherwise, constructing the path without impacting the bike lanes/shoulders will be extremely problematic. Include the segment between Alderton Road and Notley Road as a future facility planning study.

Layhill Road (Bonifant to ICC)

Existing conditions: Major highway (M-16) 4-lanes divided Bonifant Road to Longmead Crossing Drive; and 2 lanes as approaching the ICC. 150' ROW master planned, but only 120' exists in short segments. Closed section roadway, except open section near approach to ICC north of Longmead Crossing. 4-5' sidewalks exist along both sides, condition good. Bike lanes exist from Bonifant Road to just north of Longmead Crossing Drive.

Master Plan Guidance: Aspen Hill Master Plan (1994) recommends Layhill Road as 4-lanes divided from MD 28 to southern plan boundary (south of Bonifant Road). Both the Aspen Hill Master Plan and CBFMP recommend bike lanes.

Discussion: The bike lanes accommodate experienced cyclists and sidewalks accommodate pedestrians. However, while the sidewalks accommodate pedestrians, they do not accommodate child or intermediate bicycle skill levels. With a 150' ROW, widening a sidewalk to shared use path standards would be relatively easy. The east side has fewer obstructions and offers the added benefit of improving bicycle and pedestrian access to Layhill Local Park. In addition, SHA will be constructing 2,000 linear feet of shared use path along the east side near Park Vista Drive north to the entrance of Layhill Local Park as an ICC highway community stewardship project (see figure 5).

Recommendation: Designate the roadway as a dual bikeway to include a shared use path along the east side. Add the shared use path (widened sidewalk) as a facility planning study in a future CIP to connect Bonifant Road with the community stewardship project.

Study Area D: Upper Paint Branch Stream Valley Park and Vicinity (Figure 7)

Problems/Issues

- Deciding whether to remove from County master plans the CBP – SP-40 in the CBFMP – through the park between Old Columbia Pike and New Hampshire Avenue.
- Deciding whether to accept the State's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan to route the trail along parallel roads.
- Studying and recommending improvements to these roads to accommodate all potential trail user groups and ability levels.
- Recommending master plan amendments to facilitate these improvements.

Discussion

The ROD did not include the master planned trail (SP-40) along this highway segment. SHA's Plan instead routes the trail along parallel roads to bypass the park's environmentally sensitive resources. Efforts to reduce the

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highway's footprint through this area make it highly unlikely the CBP could be built within the highway ROW in the future. Therefore, the path would need to be constructed parallel to the highway through parkland to maintain the off-road connection. And the Department of Parks does not support putting the CBP through the park due to environmental concerns, including impervious cover impacts in the Upper Paint Branch Special Protection Area.

Prior decisions

The Planning Board supported the SHA route during its review of the highway's FEIS and suggested removing SP-40 through the park from County master plans. The County Council did not support the SHA route and recommended the parallel trail (SP-40) along the highway (but within the ROW). The Council did not comment on routing the trail through the park and parallel to the highway.

Recommendations

- Remove the CBP (SP-40) through the park from county master plans.
- Retain an east-west natural surface trail connection through the park when the Planning Board updates the CPTP.
- Identify Fairland Road, Randolph Road, and New Hampshire Avenue as the bikeway/trail connector between US 29 Corridor and the ICC trail heading west. See below for related bikeway/sidewalk/roadway recommendations for Fairland Road, Randolph Road and New Hampshire Avenue.

Fairland Road (US 29 to E. Randolph Road)

Existing Conditions: 2 lane arterial (A-75), 8-foot shoulder both sides, which function as bike lanes. Master planned ROW is 80', existing ROW varies. Sidewalk along south side largely exists between East Randolph Road and just west of US 29. Sidewalk/path condition is fair to poor. Pavement is mostly 4' asphalt, and at times as narrow as 3' but changes to 5' concrete about 900 feet west of Old Columbia Pike. Pathway merges with shoulder briefly where road crosses Paint Branch, and then disappears heading west; pedestrians can use the Paint Branch Trail extension along the road, but the two facilities do not currently connect.

Master Plan Guidance: CBFMP identifies existing bike lanes (BL-13), 1997 Fairland Master Plan identifies existing sidewalk along segment as well as existing bike lanes (EB-6).

Discussion: Should the existing sidewalk be widened to shared use path standard, making the road a dual bikeway (both on-road and off-road)? Only one major destination exists along the road: Paint Branch Trail, which heads south toward E. Randolph Road. Otherwise, there are few destinations and therefore widening the path would be difficult to justify given the low anticipated demand for recreation. Even with 80-foot ROW, it would be possible to construct a four-lane road with bike lanes and an eight-foot path on one side (and no sidewalk on the other). The ROW becomes constrained if a sidewalk is considered for the other side or if a center turn lane or median is considered.

Recommendations: Modify master plans to widen existing south side sidewalk to shared use path standards, thus making the road a dual bikeway. If road is widened or reconstructed, add shared use path to

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design of roadway as well as bridge over Paint Branch. If road is not widened, add this project to the CIP as a facility planning study to widen the sidewalk to shared use path standards. Fairland Road then becomes the primary bikeway/trail connector between eastern county communities and points west, including the park trail system, since the CBP through Paint Branch Stream Valley Park is removed from master plans.

E. Randolph Road (Fairland Road to New Hampshire Avenue)

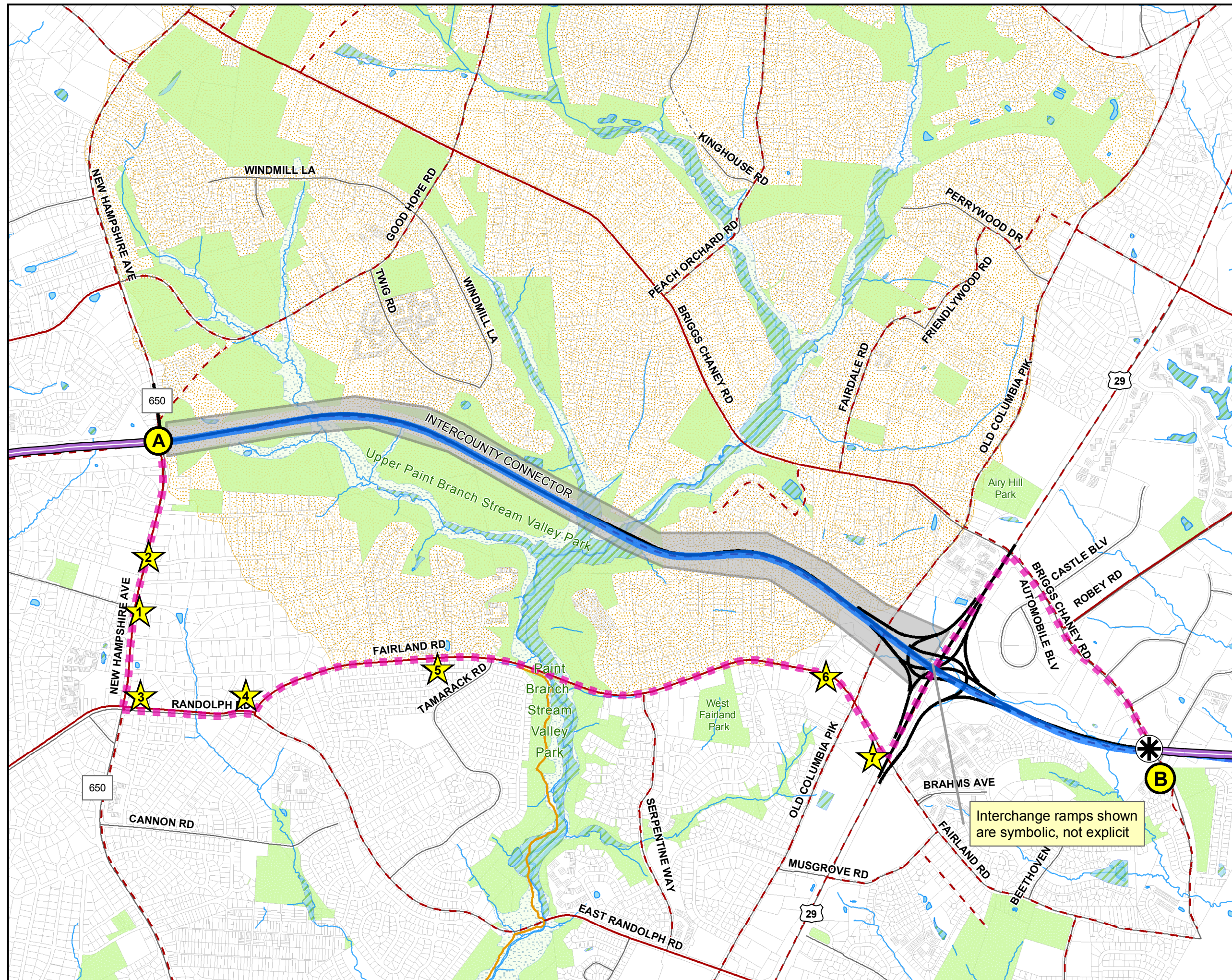
Existing conditions: Major highway (M-75). 6-lanes divided. Existing shared use path (eight-foot concrete) north side, narrowed in places due to overgrowth. Condition generally fair to good, aside from vegetation. Four-foot landscape buffer between the McDonald's property and Fairland Road. No buffer from the McDonalds property to New Hampshire Avenue.

Master Plan Guidance: White Oak Master Plan (1997) calls for a Class I bikeway (EB-5). The CBFMP recommends a shared use path (SP-17).

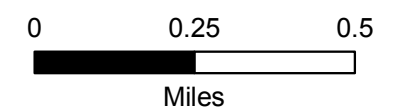
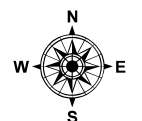
Discussion: Generally, this segment meets all user groups. However, several small changes would greatly enhance safety, aesthetics, and mobility. A landscape buffer is recommended between the McDonald's property and New Hampshire Avenue.

Recommendation: Implement any improvements when the New Hampshire Avenue/East Randolph Road intersection is reconstructed. Relocate path closer to property lines and install a landscape buffer with street trees between the trail and roadway, where appropriate.

FIGURE 7 Paint Branch and Vicinity



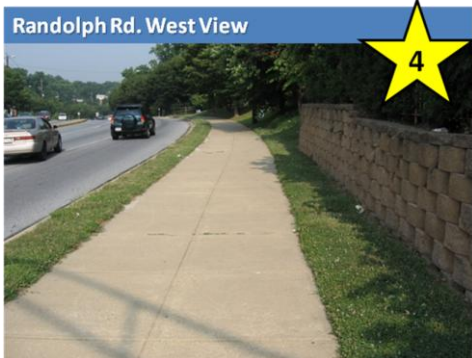
- Master Plan & SHA Bike Alignment
- Master Plan ICC Bike Path
- SHA Bike Plan
- ICC Alignment
- Master Plan Bikeways
 - Existing Bike Route
 - Proposed Bike Route
 - Park Hard Surface Trails
- Future Briggs Chaney Interchange
- Roads
- Proposed Roads
- Wetlands
- Floodplain
- Lakes
- Parks
- Special Protection Areas
- Issue Areas



Interchange ramps shown are symbolic, not explicit

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Photographs of Paint Branch Stream Valley Park/US 29 and Vicinity (Accompanies Figure 7)



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New Hampshire Avenue (Randolph Road to ICC)

Existing Conditions: Major highway (M-12) 6-lanes divided, 120' ROW. Existing sidewalk both sides, condition generally fair to good, no landscape buffer, sidewalk adjacent to curb. Bike lanes exist north of Midland Road.

Master Plan Guidance: White Oak Master Plan (1997) calls for a class II bikeway (PB-23). CBFMP recommends bike lanes (BL-11).

Discussion: Except for the bike lane gap between Midland Road and Randolph Road, generally this road segment meets all user groups. It's not ideal, however. The sidewalks along both sides are narrow, feature obstructions (signs and utility poles) and no landscape panel between them and the curb. A shared use path or wider sidewalk along one side or the other would be desirable to better accommodate novice cyclists. But the ROW is very constrained in this segment and a wider sidewalk is unlikely unless the median is narrowed, the roadway shifted, or additional ROW is acquired. Many buildings are located close to the current ROW line, making land acquisition for additional ROW difficult.

Recommendations: When the New Hampshire Avenue/Randolph Road intersection is reconstructed, ensure two improvements occur: 1) the bike lanes along both sides of MD 650 up to Midland Road; and 2) the northern MD 650 crosswalk improved with bicycle travel (eight-foot ramps at both the northwest and northeast corners of the intersection).

Also, designate the west side of the road as a shared use path to widen the sidewalk to eight feet, recognizing that additional ROW would be required and that the improvement is a low priority and may take a decade or longer to realize. Maintain existing sidewalk along east side.

Study Area E: US 29 & Vicinity (Figure 7)

Issues/Problems

- Whether to retain in County master plans the CBP through the US 29 interchange
- Whether to retain in County master plans to segment of CBP between US 29 and Briggs Chaney Road

Discussion

The highway Record of Decision (ROD) did not include the CBP through either area. SHA's Plan instead routes the path along US 29 (part of the US 29 commuter bikeway) and then along a shared use path on Briggs Chaney Road heading east into Prince George's County. Weaving the trail east-west through the US 29 interchange (going over US 29) was cost prohibitive, while the segment between US 29 and Briggs Chaney Road was a simple cost saving measure since the path along Briggs Chaney Road exists.

Agency staff generally agrees with the State's decision not to pursue the path through the interchange. Because the segment of CBP through Paint Branch Stream Valley Park is unlikely to happen (particularly if removed from master plans, as recommended in this document), weaving a grade-separated trail-bridge through the interchange cannot be economically justified. Likewise, the segment of master planned path between Briggs Chaney Road and

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US 29 would be redundant to the path along Briggs Chaney Road and offer few benefits that justifies its cost. However, there is no reason at this time to remove it from County master plans. While there's no urgent need for the path, the County should not preclude options for bicycle and pedestrian connectivity in this area of the county, including a possible connection to or along the ICC ROW through the Tanglewood community and the new parkland adjoining Tanglewood Park acquired by the County as part of the ICC highway project.

We also feel SHA's design for the path along the east side of US 29 is adequate and the shared use path along Briggs Chaney Road is a suitable connection to the Prince George's County bikeways and trails network. The only question is ensuring a safe connection from a future path along Fairland Road and the US 29 pathway on the east side. This should be studied in detail when SHA designs the Fairland Road/US 29 interchange project.

Prior decisions

The Planning Board supported the SHA Bike Plan during its review of the highway's Final Environmental Impact Statement but stopped short of recommending its removal from County master plans. The County Council did not support the SHA Bike Plan and recommended the parallel trail (SP-40) along the highway (and within the ROW) and through the US 29 interchange to the Prince George's County line.

Recommendations

- Remove the CBP (SP-40) through the interchange from County master plans.
- Retain in County master plans the segment of SP-40 between Briggs Chaney Road and US 29.
- As part of the proposed Fairland/US 29 interchange study, examine the connection between the future shared use path along the south side of Fairland Road with the path along the east side of US 29 leading up to Briggs Chaney Road.

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County Bike Path (SP-40) Before and After

This master plan amendment can best be summarized by describing what happens to the CBP (SP-40) as a result of the various recommendations. All prior master plans, including the CBFMP, envisioned a pathway or trail within the highway ROW for the highway's length, from Shady Grove Road to the Prince George's County Line. This plan amendment recommends retaining the previously master planned alignment in two areas, and routing it along major roads in others, generally consistent with the SHA's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. The table below describes how SP-40 would function end to end under this amendment, west to east. Refer to Figure 8.

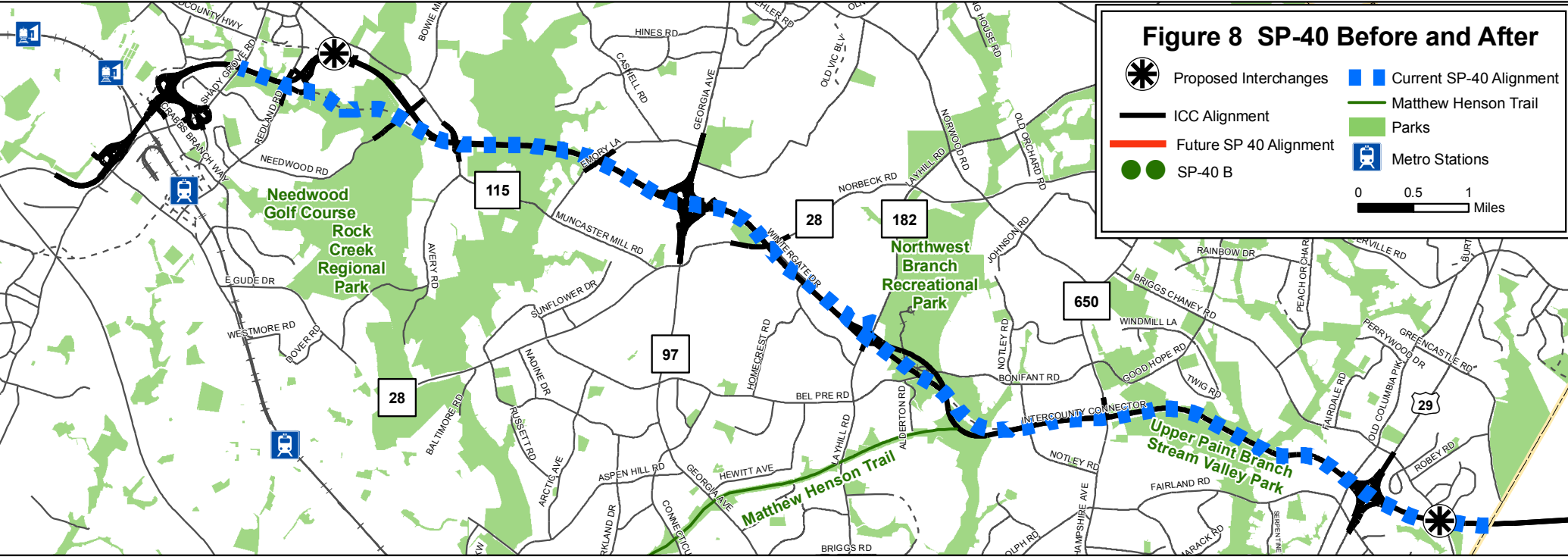
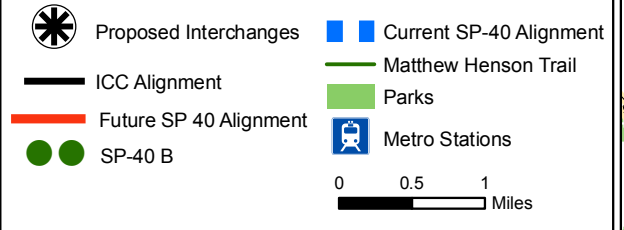
Segment	ICCLFMPA recommendation
Midcounty Highway terminus at Shady Grove Road to CBP trail terminus at Needwood Road	<p>SP-40</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existing shared use path along south side of Muncaster Mill Road from Shady Grove Road to Applewood Lane. - New shared use path along south side of Muncaster Mill Road between Applewood Lane and Needwood Road - New shared use path along east side of Needwood Road to ICC <p>SP-40 A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shared roadway connection along Applewood Lane from Muncaster Mill Road (SP-40) to future Midcounty Highway shared use path (SP-70) <p><i>Plan amendment needed to add shared use path to Muncaster Mill Road, and bike route along Applewood Lane.</i></p>
Emory Lane to Georgia Avenue	Retain existing master plan alignment along ICC ROW
Layhill Road to Notley Road	<p>SP-40</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New shared use path through Northwest Branch Park, connecting Layhill Local Park with National Capital Trolley Museum Site - New shared use paths along south side of Bonifant Road east of Trolley Museum and west side of Notley Road

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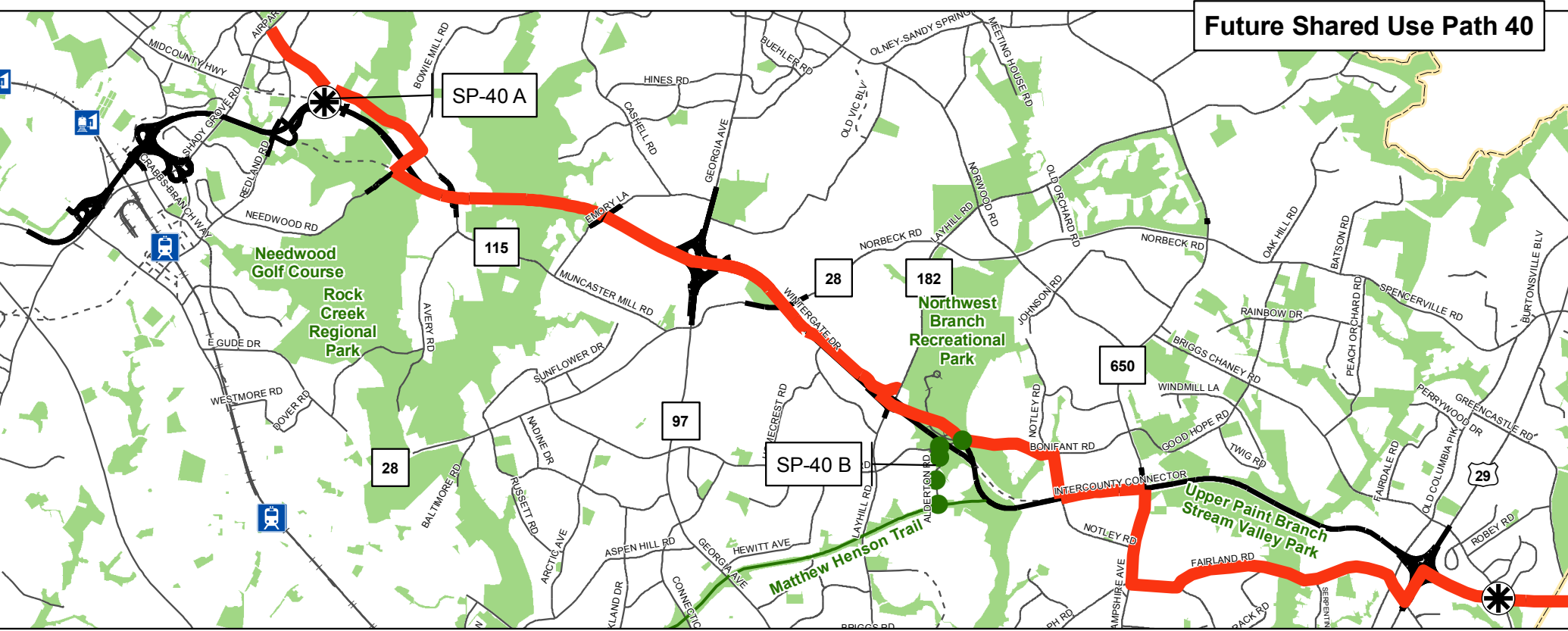
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Segment	ICCLFMPA recommendation
Layhill Road to Notley Road	<p>SP-40 B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New shared use paths along east side of Alderton Road between MHT and Bonifant Road and along Bonifant Road between Alderton Road and the Trolley Museum driveway. <p><i>Plan amendment needed to add shared use path to Bonifant Road and Notley Road, as well as along Alderton Road to provide side-connection to MHT (SP-40B) as well as SP-40 through Northwest Branch Park north of Bonifant Road.</i></p>
New Hampshire Avenue to US 29	<p><u>HARD SURFACE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existing bike lanes and a new shared use path along west side of New Hampshire Avenue, from ICC to East Randolph Road - Existing shared use path along north side of East Randolph Road, from New Hampshire Avenue to Fairland Road. - Existing bike lanes and a new shared use path along south side of Fairland Road from E. Randolph Road to US 29. <p><u>NATURAL SURFACE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New sanctioned east-west park trail between park boundaries, along the highway ROW <p><i>Plan amendments needed to add shared use paths to New Hampshire Avenue and Fairland Road.</i></p>
US 29 to Briggs Chaney Road	<p>Retain current master plan recommendation for CBP within or along the ICC ROW; if along ICC ROW, possible through Tanglewood community and Tanglewood Park.</p>

Figure 8 SP-40 Before and After



Future Shared Use Path 40



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Park Trails Before and After

This plan amendment affects a number of park trail alignments, and thus also the CPTP, which has specific connections with the trail along the highway.

Matthew Henson Trail. Refer to Figure 5. The County Bike Path was intended to intersect with the MHT within Northwest Branch Stream Valley Park south of Bonifant Road, where the MHT-reserved land intersects with the ICC ROW. When the State decided not to include the trail through the park along the highway, the location of the trail-intersection changed significantly. With SP-40 no longer passing through the park south of Bonifant Road (blue line), the connection between MHT and Alderton Road now must be implemented as a park trail, not a transportation bikeway. Therefore the connection between Alderton Road (Circle “C”) and Notley Road (Circle “B”) becomes a park trail connector, an extension of the Matthew Henson Trail, to be evaluated by the Department of Parks as a future facility planning study (looking at options for both natural surface and hard surface trail users). This connection will be the subject of a future facility planning study led by the Department of Parks, with SHA funding assistance requested.

Upper Paint Branch Stream Valley Park. Refer to Figure 7. SP-40 is proposed to be removed from where it passes through the park due to environmental impacts, with hard surface trail users expected to follow the SHA Bike/Pedestrian Plan (Fairland Road, E. Randolph Road, and New Hampshire Avenue). Natural surface trail users will be accommodated by an east-west trail parallel to the highway, but within parkland. This trail should be located on the north side of the ICC and provide access to Charles Drew Elementary School, the Spring Oak Estates community via the park maintenance access point on Cavendish Drive, and the Stonecrest community via the western end of Countryside Drive. The trail can utilize the Lower Oak Springs stormwater management pond access road, portions of which will be relocated as part of ICC construction. Access to the trail to and from the east will likely need to be via the Stonecrest community as the ICC roadway alignment utilizes the entire master planned right-of-way, including retaining wall construction, between the Stonecrest and Fairland communities, and no park property exists in this segment for a park trail.

Planning Process and Public Participation

The outreach strategy engaged key stakeholders in this master plan amendment, which included bicycle transportation advocates, pedestrian/walking advocates, park and trail (recreation) advocates, and environmental advocates. Due to the limited scope of the issues to be studied, we established an informal stakeholders working group consisting primarily of the interest groups with the most interests in the outcomes of this planning process:

- Bicycle transportation advocates
- Pedestrian advocates
- Park and recreation advocates
- Environmental advocates

In addition, we developed an interagency technical working group of representatives from the County Executive branch, including the Department of Public Works and Transportation, and the Maryland Department of Transportation, including the State Highway Administration. To engage residents of the corridor and the general public we held two public information meetings to obtain comments and reactions to preliminary recommendations.

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These meetings were held on March 19th and April 2nd, 2008. This general planning process approach was consistent with how we conducted the master plan process for the CBFMP in 2004-2005.

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Appendix A – Acronyms and Definitions

CBFMP	Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan
CBP	County Bike Path
CPTP	Countywide Park Trails Plan
CIP	Capital Improvement Program
CTP	Consolidated Transportation Program
County Bike Path	Master planned route for the County Bike Path (SP-40 in CBFMP)
DEIS	Draft Environmental Impact Statement
DPWT	Department of Public Works and Transportation
FEIS	Final Environmental Impact Statement
FY	Fiscal Year per M-NCPPC calendar
HOA	Home Owners Association
ICC	Intercounty Connector
ICCLFMPA	Intercounty Connector Limited Functional Master Plan Amendment
M-83	Midcounty Highway (M-83 is the Master Plan identification)
M-NCPPC	Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
MHT	Matthew Henson Trail
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
RCG	Rachel Carson Greenway
ROD	Federal Record of Decision
ROW	Right of Way
SHA Plan	SHA's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan approved as part of the ICC Record of Decision, which functions as the State's alternative to the master planned County Bike Path (SP-40)
SHA	State Highway Administration
SP	Shared-use Path
SWM	Storm Water Management
WSSC	Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission

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Appendix B – Master Plan Amendment Schedule

- October 2007 – Planning Board reviews and approves the Purpose and Outreach Strategy Report
- November-January 2007 – An intergovernmental technical committee is established and members for an informal advisory committee are identified. Staff conducted research, collected and analyzed data, and developed initial recommendations in conjunction with the technical committee. The technical committee obtains feedback on the initial recommendations from the advisory committee.
- March 2008 – Preliminary recommendations are drafted for comment at two public meetings
- March-April 2008 – Two public meetings, March 19th in Spencerville and April 2nd in Derwood
- May 2008 – Present Staff Draft Plan Amendment to Planning Board
- June 2008 – Hold Planning Board public hearing
- July 2008 – Transmit Planning Board Draft Master Plan Amendment to the County Council

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Rollin Stanley, Director
Montgomery County Planning Department

Mary Bradford, Director
Montgomery County Department of Parks

Gwen Wright, Chief
Countywide Planning Division

Daniel K. Hardy, Acting Chief
Transportation Planning

Jorge Valladares, Chief
Environmental Planning

Project staff

Charles S. Kines, Project Planner, Transportation Planning
Katherine Holt, Transportation Planning
Ronald Vaughn, Transportation Planning
Tina Schneider, Environmental Planning
Khalid Afzal, Community-Based Planning
Bill Barron, Community-Based Planning
Lyn Coleman, Department of Parks
Tanya Schmieler, Department of Parks
Carole Bergmann, Department of Parks
Rob Gibbs, Department of Parks
Doug Redmond, Department of Parks
Norma Kaweck, Department of Parks

Contributing Staff

Larry Cole, Transportation Planning
Candy Bunnag, Environmental Planning
Andrea Stone, Environmental Planning

Interagency Coordination

Bob Simpson, Department of Public Works and Transportation
Gail Tait-Nouri, Department of Public Works and Transportation
Stephanie Yanovitz, Maryland State Highway Administration