



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

OFFICE OF THE CHAIR

June 17, 2014

Councilmember Roger Berliner
Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue, 5th Floor
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Councilmember ^{Roger}~~Berliner~~:

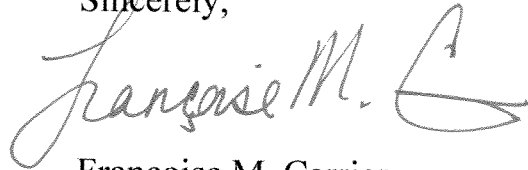
On March 20, 2014, the Montgomery County Planning Board conducted mandatory referrals for the Purple Line, Bethesda Metro Station South Entrance, Capital Crescent Trail, and Silver Spring Green Trail – together referred to below as the greater Purple Line project - and approved them with comments to the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA), and the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT). This review included over 130 comments on the Purple Line project and another 30 comments on the trails and metro station projects. Of this larger group, the staff report for the mandatory referrals identified 10 issues as priorities. In response to your request at the June 4, 2014 meeting of the Purple Line Implementation Advisory Group (PLIAG), I have included an attachment that identifies these priorities, separating them into those that the greater Purple Line project is working to address and those that the project has not yet agreed to address.

The priority recommendations in the mandatory referral vary greatly in cost and complexity. One project that stands out in importance is a proposed direct connection between the Red Line and the Purple Line at the Silver Spring Transit Center. The Planning Board raised this issue with the County Council in its letter dated March 24, 2014, which I have also enclosed.

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Thank you for your assistance in implementing the mandatory referral recommendations. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to call me at 301-495-4605, or you may call David Anspacher of our staff at 301-495-2191.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Françoise M. Carrier". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Françoise M. Carrier
Chair

Enclosures

cc: County Executive Isiah Leggett
Councilmember Craig Rice
Councilmember George Leventhal
Councilmember Phil Andrews
Councilmember Nancy Navarro
Councilmember Cherri Branson
Councilmember Marc Elrich
Councilmember Nancy Floreen
Councilmember Hans Reimer
Tom Street
Gary Erenrich
Jamie Kendrick
Mike Madden
Gwen Wright
Mary Dolan
Mike Riley
John Hench
Mitra Pedoeem

ISSUES THAT THE PURPLE LINE PROJECT IS WORKING TO ADDRESS

The Purple Line project has made progress on addressing issues at the Elm Street Urban Park, a proposed connection between the Red Line and Purple Line at the Silver Spring Transit Center, and the Wayne Avenue Bridge over Sligo Creek. Each issue is described below, followed by its current resolution status.

Elm Street Urban Park

When the Bethesda tunnel is closed for Purple Line construction, Capital Crescent Trail users will be diverted through Elm Street Urban Park. The Planning Board previously made the following comments to MTA regarding an interim condition for the park: **“MTA will provide a “functional interim condition” for Elm Street Park that safely realigns the Capital Crescent Trail, diverting trail traffic through the park to 47th Street. The reconstructed trail shall be designed to be ADA compliant and maintain functional use of the rest of the park, as coordinated with the Department of Parks.”**

Status: While MTA has agreed to this recommendation, assistance is requested to ensure that interim trail through the park is designed and constructed in a manner that meets the needs of not only trail users, but also ensures the safety of park users and the residents who walk through the park to reach downtown Bethesda. There are many projects impacting Elm Street Urban Park in the near future: 1) developer-funded playground improvements (M-NCPPC); 2) the Capital Crescent Trail to be built with the Purple Line (MTA); 3) the Capital Crescent Surface Trail (MCDOT); and 4) the proposed new trail tunnel under Wisconsin Avenue (MCDOT). It is critical that both functional and aesthetic design elements are well-coordinated and do not fall through the cracks as a result of the currently unknown sequencing of these four projects.

Community Design at Town of Chevy Chase

The Town of Chevy Chase continues to have concerns regarding physical impacts to Elm Street Urban Park and adjacent residences, noise impacts, and an access point to the Capital Crescent Trail. The Planning Board asked MTA to **“Continue to work with the Town of Chevy Chase to address design refinements to the Purple Line and the Capital Crescent Trail to provide an additional grade-separated crossing of the trail and to reduce noise impacts and impacts to Elm Street Urban Park and residences adjacent to the park.”**

Status: Coordination between the Town of Chevy Chase and MTA is ongoing. On June 4th MTA presented a new option to the Town’s Purple Line Mitigation Advisory Group regarding access to the Capital Crescent Trail.

Connection between the Red Line and Purple Line in Silver Spring

The Purple Line Functional Plan recommends a direct connection between the planned Purple Line station and the existing Red Line station at the Silver Spring Transit Center. This connection is important because MTA estimates that there will be 3,500 daily transfers between the Red Line and Purple Line by 2040, or almost 30% of Purple Line boardings and alightings at this station. Without this direct connection, passengers transferring between the Purple Line and the Red Line will have to take a circuitous route to continue their trip. The longer walking distance will increase travel time for passengers and create additional pedestrian congestion in the plaza area of the Silver Spring Transit Center and in the elevators and escalators to the Purple Line platform. With a direct connection, passengers would have a shorter and more logical transfer. MTA estimates that the \$28 million cost of constructing the connection with the rest of the Purple Line project would more than double if it is constructed after the Purple Line is complete, due to the difficulty of fitting it between two operating rail lines. Therefore, the Planning Board requested that MTA **“Design and construct a convenient direct connection between the Red Line and the Purple Line at the Silver Spring Transit Center station.”**

Status: MTA is willing to design and construct this connection and has included it in the Purple Line RFP, but funding needs to be identified for the project to be constructed as part of the Purple Line. In a correspondence dated March 24, 2014, the Planning Board recommended that the Council give all due consideration to this project as it considered the capital budget for FY15 to FY21 (attached).

Purple Line Platform

- Elevation: 386 ft

Purple Line Mezzanine

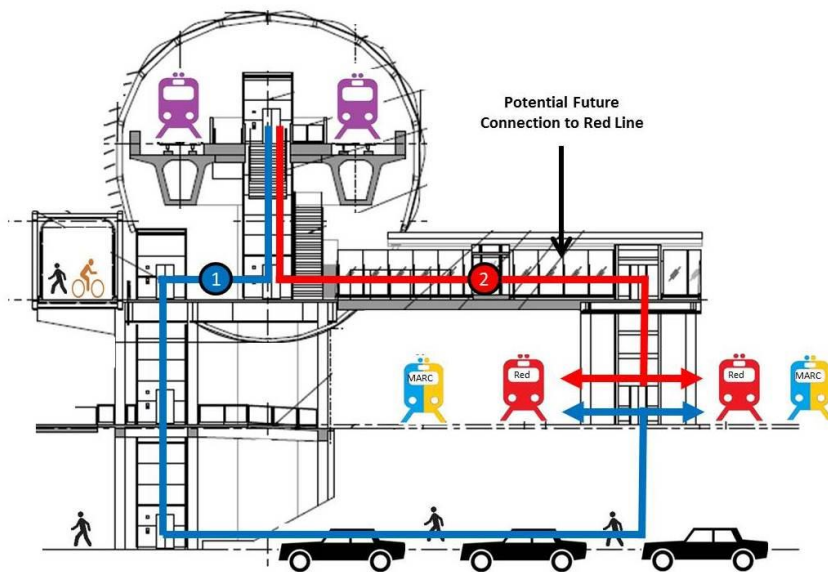
- Elevation: 355 ft
- Capital Crescent Trail
- MARC Bridge
- Red Line access (future)

Transit Center Level 2

- Elevation: 330 ft
- Transit Center Level 2
- Red Line platform & tracks
- MARC platform & tracks

Transit Center Level 1

- Elevation: 305 ft
- Red Line mezzanine



View of the Silver Spring Transit Center Looking South

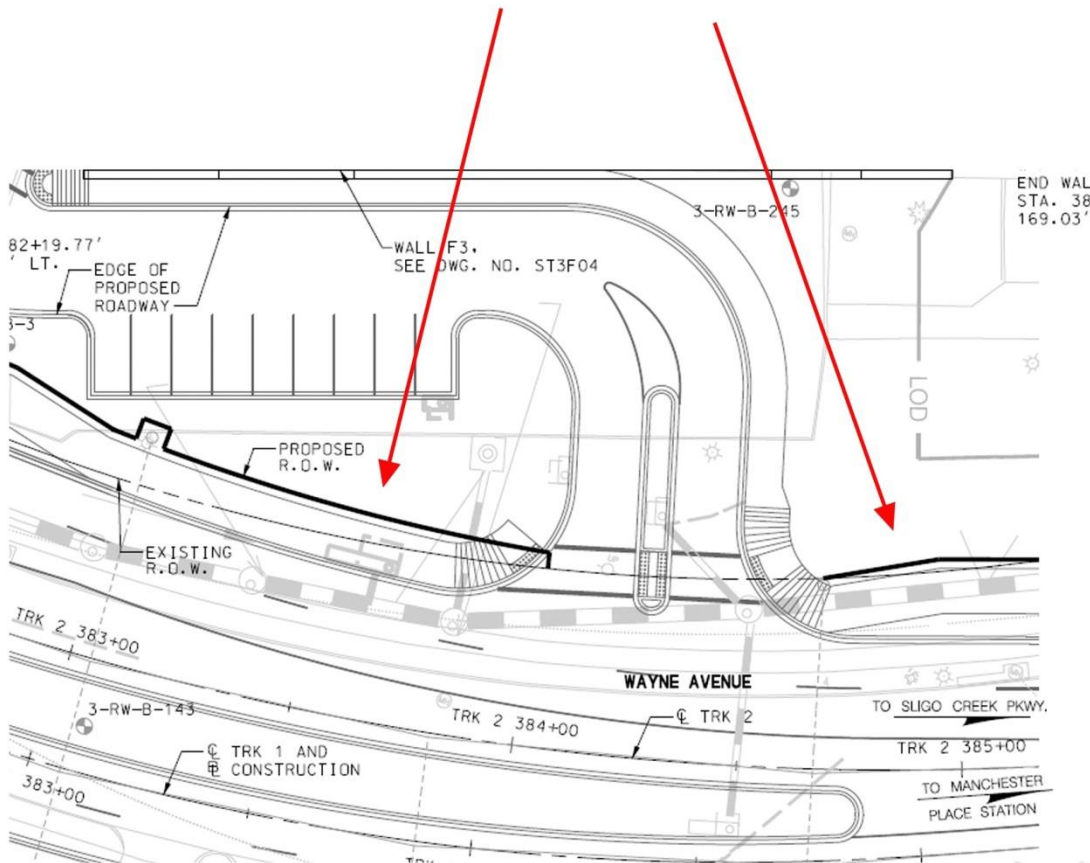
Under existing plans, passengers transferring between the Purple Line and the Red Line will have to descend 80 feet to street level and then ascend about 25 feet to the Red Line tracks (see Path #1 in). This will increase travel time for passengers and create additional pedestrian congestion in the vertical circulation for the Red Line and Purple Line. With the future direct connection passengers will avoid using the vertical circulation column between the Red Line and the Purple Line (see Path #2).

Wayne Avenue Community Compatibility

Due to the grades on Wayne Avenue there are many locations proposed to have retaining walls. To reduce the visual impact of the retaining walls, the Planning Board requested that **“At the school property the retaining wall ranges from 10 feet to 15 feet high. Consider terracing the wall as two 5-foot to 7-foot high walls, where space permits, in order to reduce the visual impact of one large wall adjacent to sidewalk. Also consider using metal, square-tube guardrail instead to lessen the impact of the retaining wall on pedestrians.”**

Status: While MTA’s response initially was that this “will be considered in conjunction with the needs of Montgomery County Public Schools”, it appears that MTA is now considering this recommendation.

Consider using two retaining walls to ameliorate impact of one large (10'+) retaining wall

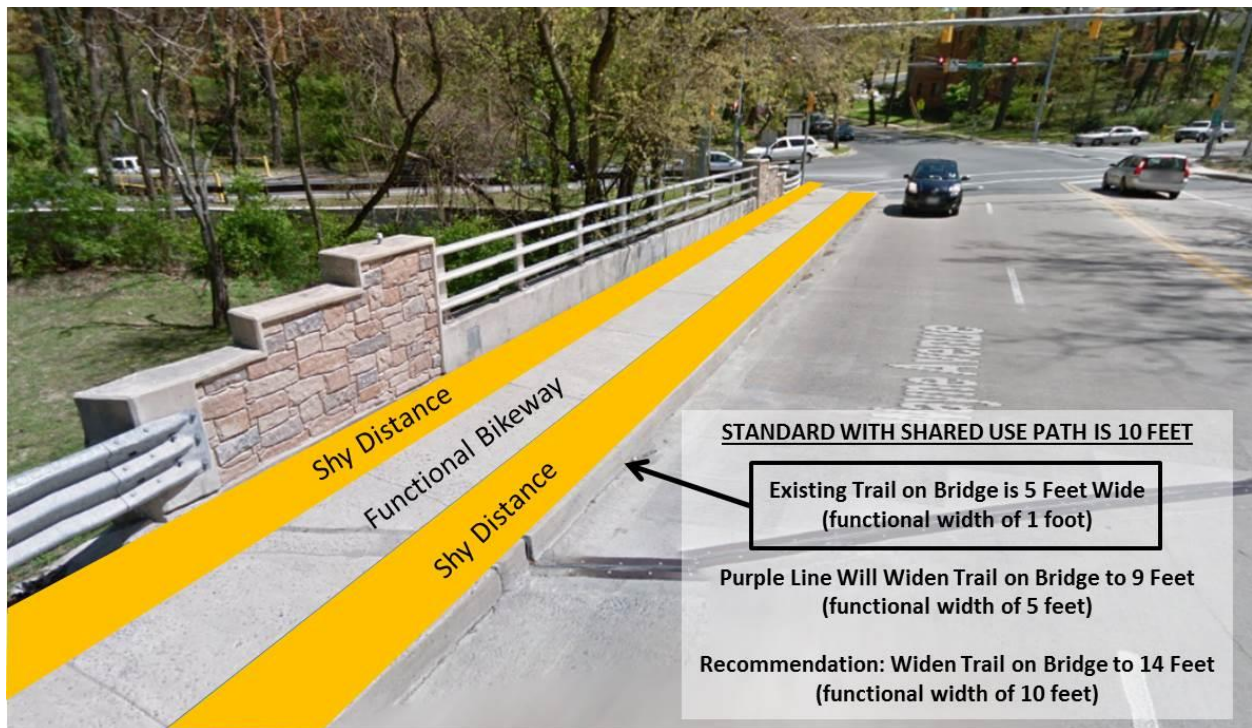


Plan View of Wayne Avenue at the Silver Spring International Middle School

Silver Spring Green Trail over Sligo Creek

The Sligo Creek Trail and the Silver Spring Green Trail will converge between the Sligo Cabin Park playground and Sligo Creek Parkway. This segment of the trail is currently a narrow sidewalk adjacent to the curb. MTA is proposing to widen the trail to 8 feet typically, and to 9 feet on the Wayne Avenue Bridge over Sligo Creek. Trail users tend to shy away from the road and bridge parapets by about 2 feet so the effective width of the trail on the bridge will be only 5 feet. This is substandard for any trail, but especially at a location where two major trails converge. Therefore, the Planning Board stated that **“The Silver Spring Green Trail on the Wayne Avenue Bridge over Sligo Creek should be widened to 14 feet (an effective width of 10 feet) to reflect expected demand. A barrier should be provided between the roadway and the trail on the bridge.”**

Status: MTA and MCDOT responded that the de minimis finding for the Sligo Creek Stream Valley Park includes a commitment to form a working group with M-NCPPC to “consider the effects of widening the bridge to accommodate a wider Green Trail. The design will include signage, safe road crossings, and functional interconnections.” MTA has also stated that if there is an agreement to widen the trail over the bridge, any additional cost would be the responsibility of Montgomery County.



View of the Wayne Avenue Bridge Over Sligo Creek Looking East Toward Sligo Creek Parkway

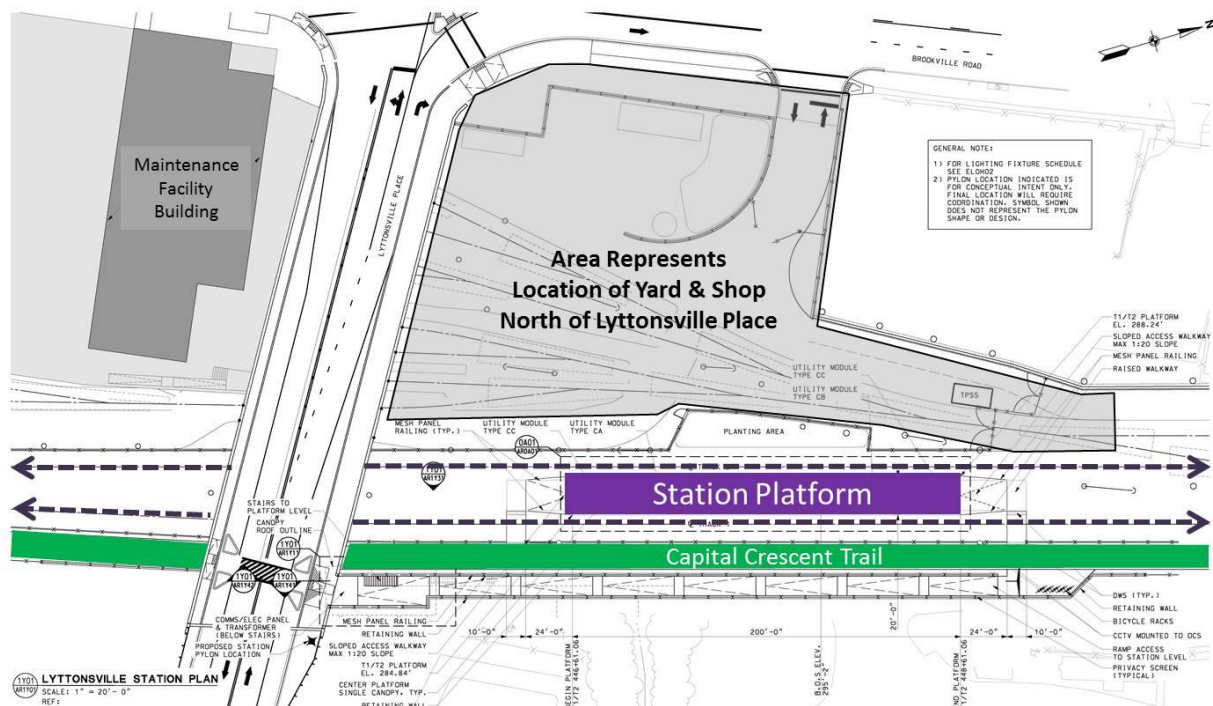
ISSUES THAT THE PURPLE LINE PROJECT HAS NOT YET AGREED TO ADDRESS

There are a number of issues related to economic development, station access, and community compatibility that have not yet been incorporated into the Purple Line project.

Lyttonsville Economic Development

The redesign of the Lyttonsville maintenance yard improves the redevelopment opportunities along Brookville Road. However, two issues remain that continue to limit redevelopment potential. First, there remains a small access driveway and side tracks to the maintenance facility located just north of Lyttonsville Place Bridge, at the corner with Brookville Road. This driveway and tracks are located in perhaps the most likely area for redevelopment due to its proximity to the Lyttonsville Station and because it has the greatest depth of any parcel on the east side of Brookville Road. The Planning Board therefore requested that MTA **“Include criteria in the Purple Line RFP that incentivizes a further reduction in the size of the Lyttonsville maintenance yard and shop, to avoid impacts to the north of the Lyttonsville Place Bridge.”**

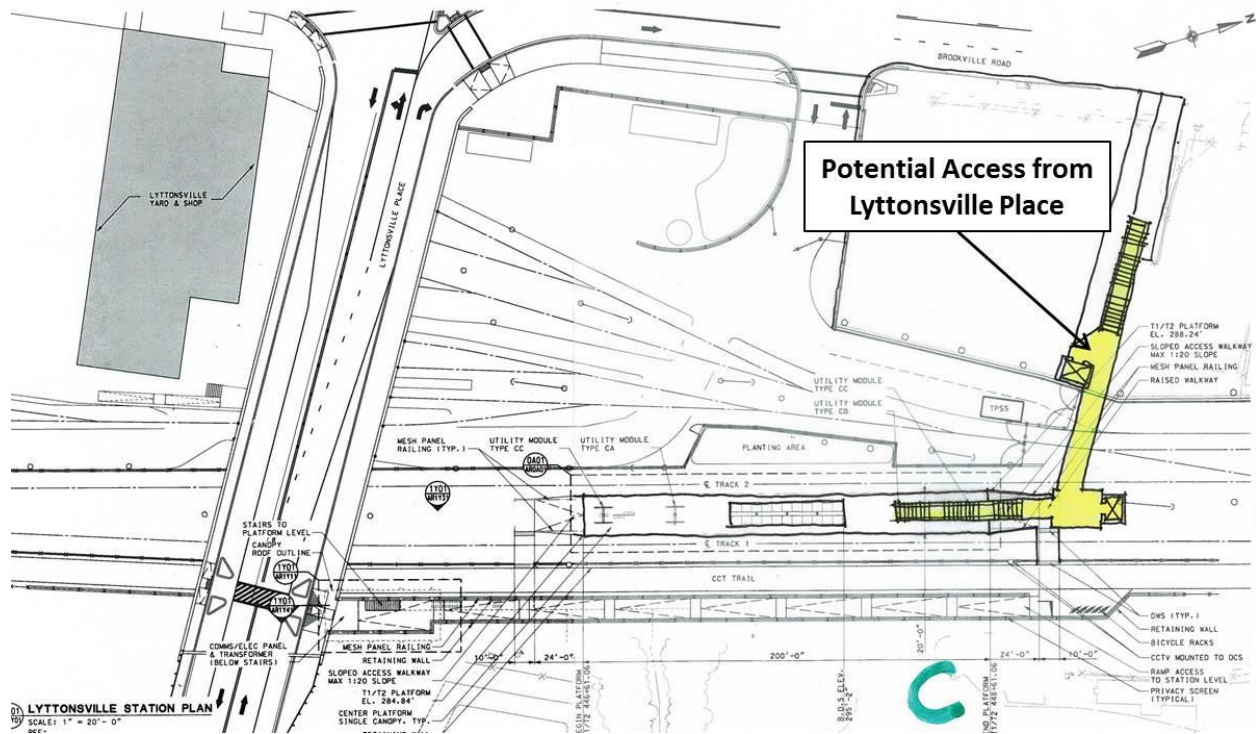
Issue #1 Status: MTA’s response to this recommendation was that they have already “minimized impacts east of the Lyttonsville Place Bridge to the extent feasible. A parking structure and underground stormwater management has been included in the design to reduce impacts. The current design has been coordinated with the surrounding communities and local elected officials.” While it is true that the size of the maintenance yard has been substantially reduced, the purpose of a P3 process is to find innovative solutions to design challenges, and the Planning staff believes this is a good candidate for private sector innovation.



Aerial View of Lyttonsville Station Showing the Location of the Yard & Shop North of the Bridge

Second, current Purple Line plans do not take advantage of the significant workforce at the Forest Glen Annex of Fort Detrick to support economic development on Brookville Road. The Forest Glen Annex is a few blocks from the planned Lyttonsville Station and a sizeable portion of its 2,400 employees can be expected to use the Purple Line for their daily commute once operational. Unfortunately, MTA’s current plans do not include an access point to the station on Brookville Road, and instead envision that employees will use the Capital Crescent Trail to get to the station, completely bypassing Brookville Road. If instead these employees traveled to and from the station along Brookville Road, they would be more likely to support local businesses. At the request of the Planning Department, consultants to MTA developed three concepts for providing pedestrian access to Lyttonsville Station from Brookville Road. Additional effort is needed to advance the design of this access point and to ensure that it can be added at a later date with minimal cost and disruption to the Purple Line. The Planning Board therefore requested that MTA **“Include a requirement in the Purple Line RFP to complete final design for station access from Brookville Road to the Lyttonsville Station platform based on feedback from the Planning Department and the community.”**

Issue #2 Status: MTA’s response was to indicate that one of the concepts was more feasible than another, but did not indicate whether they would complete final design for this access point.

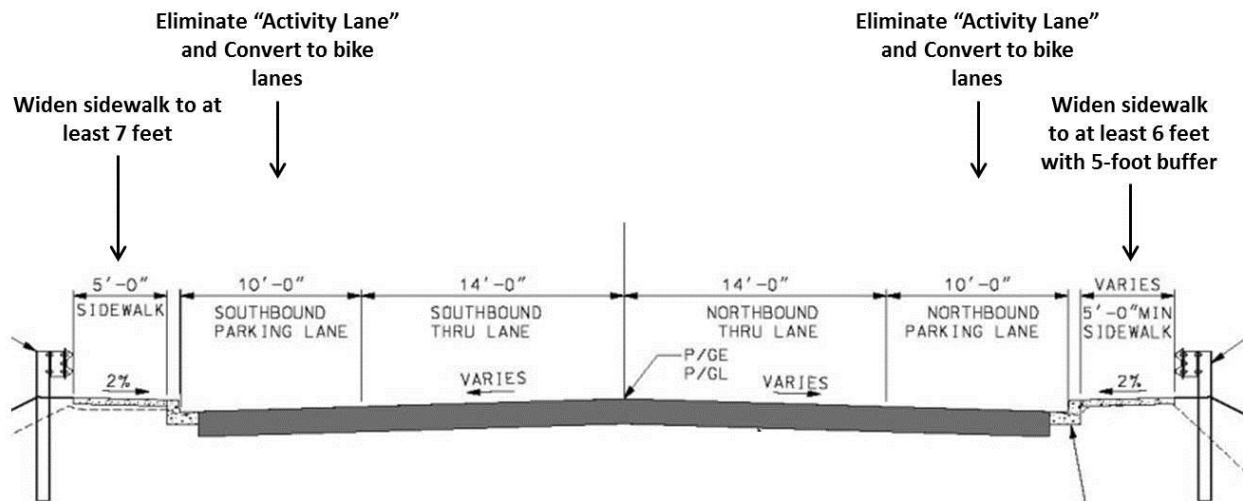


Aerial View of Lyttonsville Station Showing a Concept for an Aerial Crossing between Brookville Road and the Purple Line Station Platform

Lyttonsville Station Access

Lyttonsville Place is proposed to have 5-foot-wide sidewalks with no buffer from the road to the south of the bridge, even though this will be one of two access roads from the community to the station. While MCDOT staff has indicated that only two through lanes are needed on Lyttonsville Place, the current plan precludes wider sidewalks and bike lanes because space is also designated for “activity lanes”. We understand that the intent of the “activity lanes” is to accommodate a bus pull-off area (so traffic is not impacted) and kiss-and-ride. However, it is unclear why vehicular access is prioritized at a station primarily intended for pedestrian and bicycle access, especially when kiss-and-ride and bus pull-offs can also be accommodated on Brookville Road, which has a wider right-of-way. Therefore, the Planning Board requested that MCDOT **“Widen the proposed 5-foot-wide sidewalk on both sides of Lyttonsville Place to at least 7 feet to meet AASHTO recommendations and provide bicycle lanes by removing the ‘activity lane’.”**

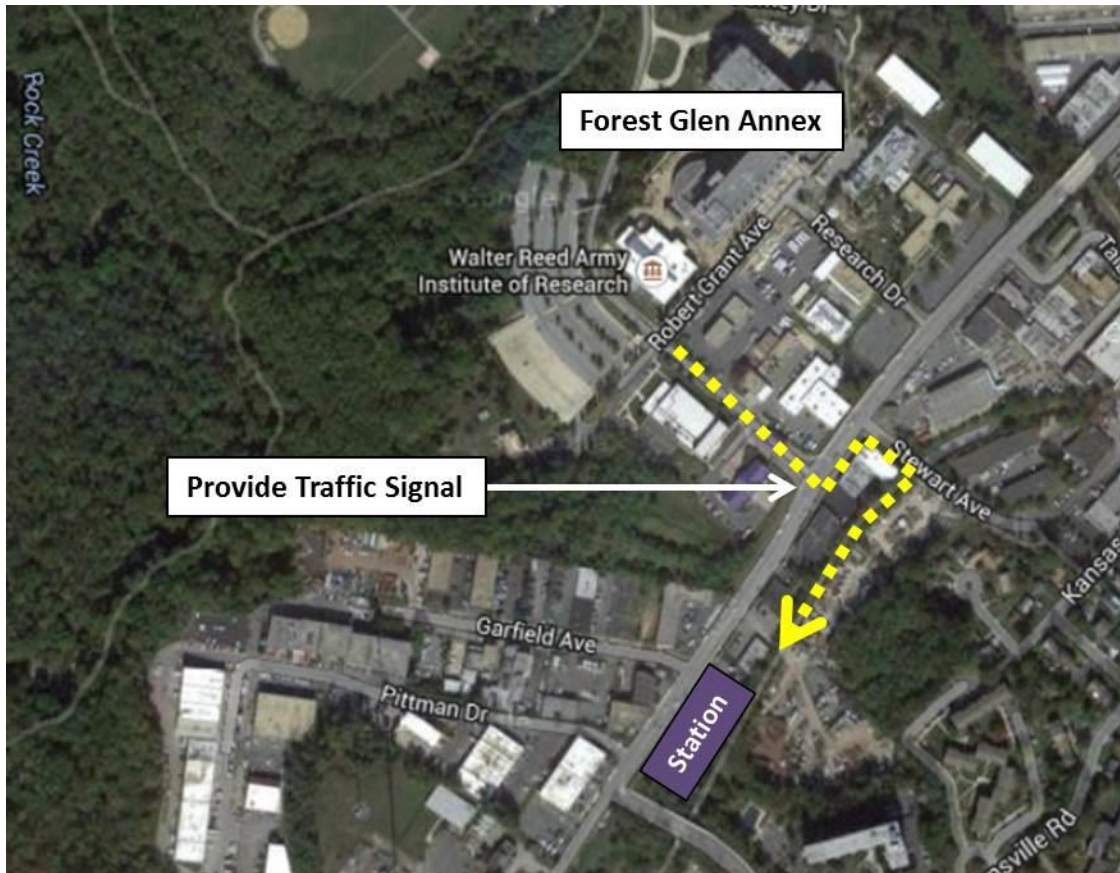
Issue #1 status: MCDOT has confirmed that they intend to implement a 5-foot-wide sidewalk on the curb, despite being inconsistent with AASHTO recommendations and County standards.



A Typical Section for Lyttonsville Place Looking Toward Brookville Road with Recommended Changes by the Planning Board

Employees and visitors to the Forest Glen Annex will need to cross Brookville Road, a wide street with heavy truck volumes, to access the Purple Line station. However, there is no traffic signal to facilitate safe pedestrian crossings at this location. The Planning Board therefore requested that MCDOT **“Provide a traffic signal at the intersection of Brookville Road and Stephen Sitter Avenue.”**

Issue #2 status: MCDOT is willing to consider a traffic signal at this location if it meets a warrant analysis and if it receives private funding.

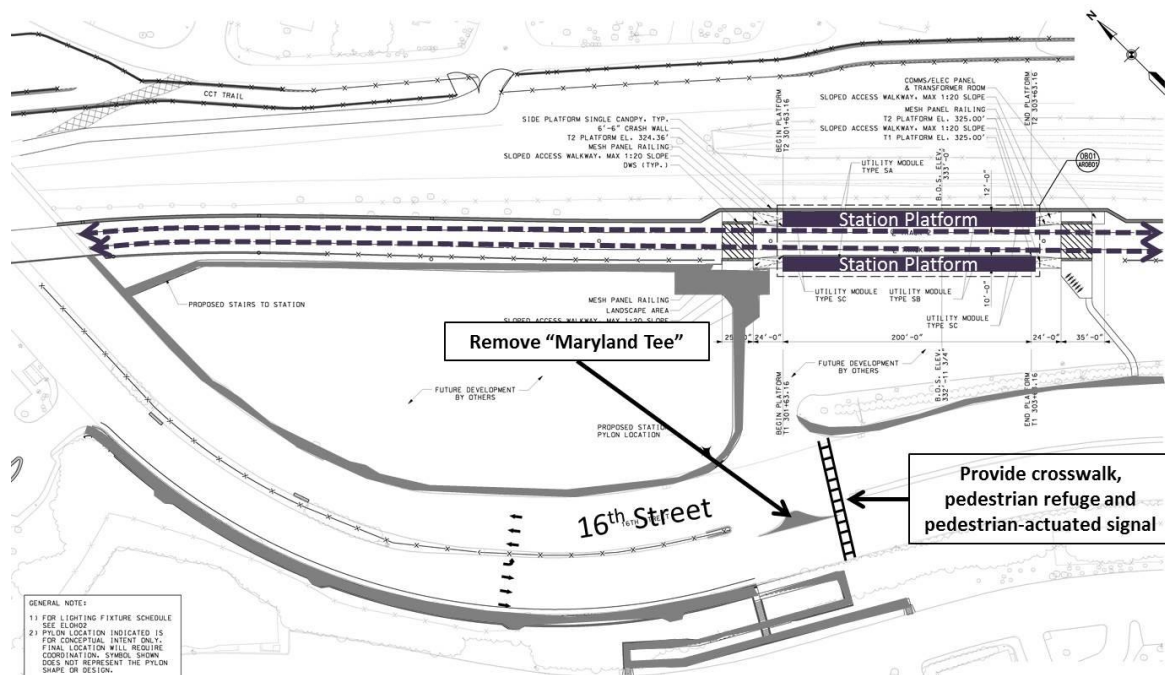


An Aerial View of Lyttonsville Showing the Proposed Walking Route from the Forest Glen Annex to the Lyttonsville Station with a Recommended Traffic Signal

Woodside Station Access

The Woodside Station is located on the east side of 16th Street, just across the street from two multifamily complexes that contain over 1,200 dwelling units. The Purple Line 30% design plans direct residences to cross 16th Street at an unsignalized crosswalk at the existing entrance to the Spring Center, connecting to proposed sidewalks on the west side of 16th Street and a ramp that leads down to the residences. While we support the proposed crossing at this location, an unsignalized crossing is unsafe because the road is six lanes wide, has a posted speed limit of 35 mph, and is used by over 25,000 vehicles on a typical weekday. For those pedestrians who will be uncomfortable crossing 16th Street under these conditions, the nearest signalized crossing of 16th Street is 800 feet to the south at Spring Street. This will require a deviation of as much as 7 minutes, which is substantial given that the average person will walk as much as 10 minutes to a rail station. Few passengers will go out of their way to cross at this signalized intersection. Most will either cross 16th Street at this dangerous location or will be deterred from using the Purple Line altogether. Additionally, the location where pedestrians are directed to cross 16th Street is proposed to have a “Maryland T” intersection, a design that does not accommodate pedestrian access. Therefore, the Planning Board requested SHA to “Ensure safe pedestrian access from the west side of 16th Street to the Woodside Station by: 1) replacing the “Maryland T” intersection at the existing Spring Center with a normal tee intersection that does not have the splitter island in the median; 2) providing a pedestrian refuge on the south leg of the new tee intersection; and 3) providing a pedestrian-actuated traffic signal at the new intersection.”

Status: The response was that “MTA and SHA will assure a safe and accessible crossing is provided on 16th Street to the Woodside Station,” but did not indicate whether a traffic signal would be incorporated into the project.



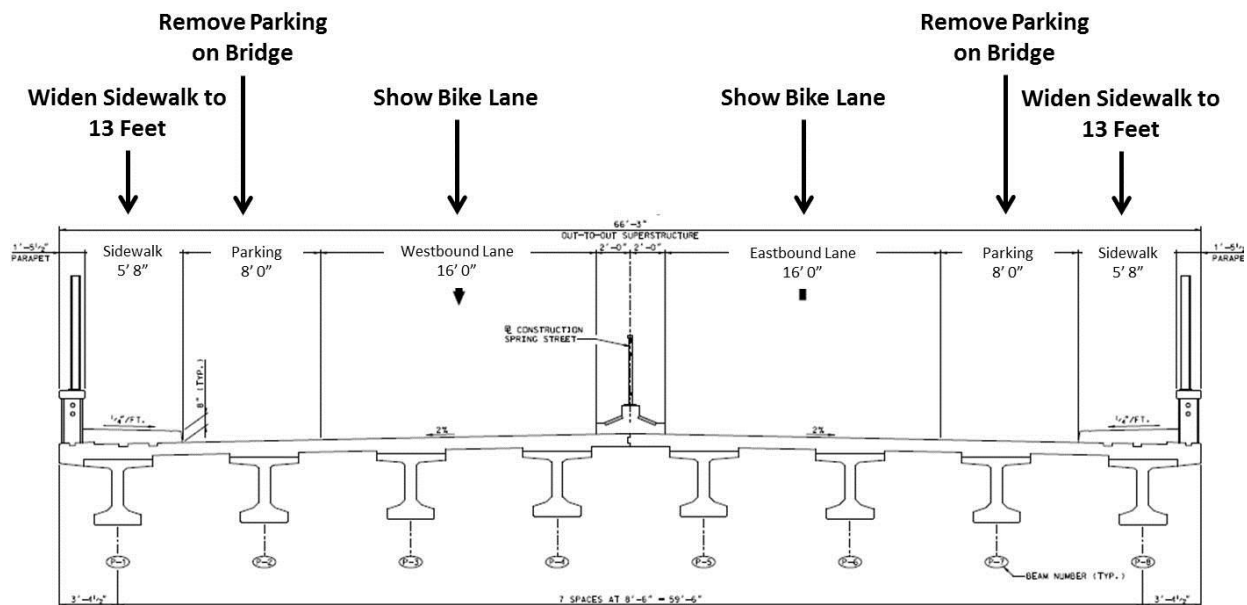
An Aerial View of the Woodside Station Showing an Unsignalized Crossing on 16th Street

Making Spring Street a “Complete Street”

Spring Street is an important gateway to Downtown Silver Spring that will experience far greater pedestrian activity in the coming years due to 1) construction of the Woodside Purple Line Station, 2) redevelopment of the Spring Center shopping center, 3) completion of the Fenwick Place development at the southwest corner of Spring Street and Second Avenue, and 4) proposed redevelopment of the north Falklands parcel. The Purple Line project presents a unique opportunity to transform Spring Street from a more auto-oriented roadway to a “complete street” since it will rebuilding the Spring Street Bridge over the CSX tracks and sections of the road. However, the current design for Spring Street does not adequately accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists.

First, Spring Street should be constructed to include generously sized sidewalks and bicycle facilities. Therefore, the Planning Board asked MCDOT to **“Eliminate both rows of parking on the Spring Street Bridge. Widen the proposed 5-foot-wide sidewalks to 13 feet wide. Separate the 16-foot-wide shared travel lane into 11-foot-wide through lanes and 5-foot-wide bike lanes.”**

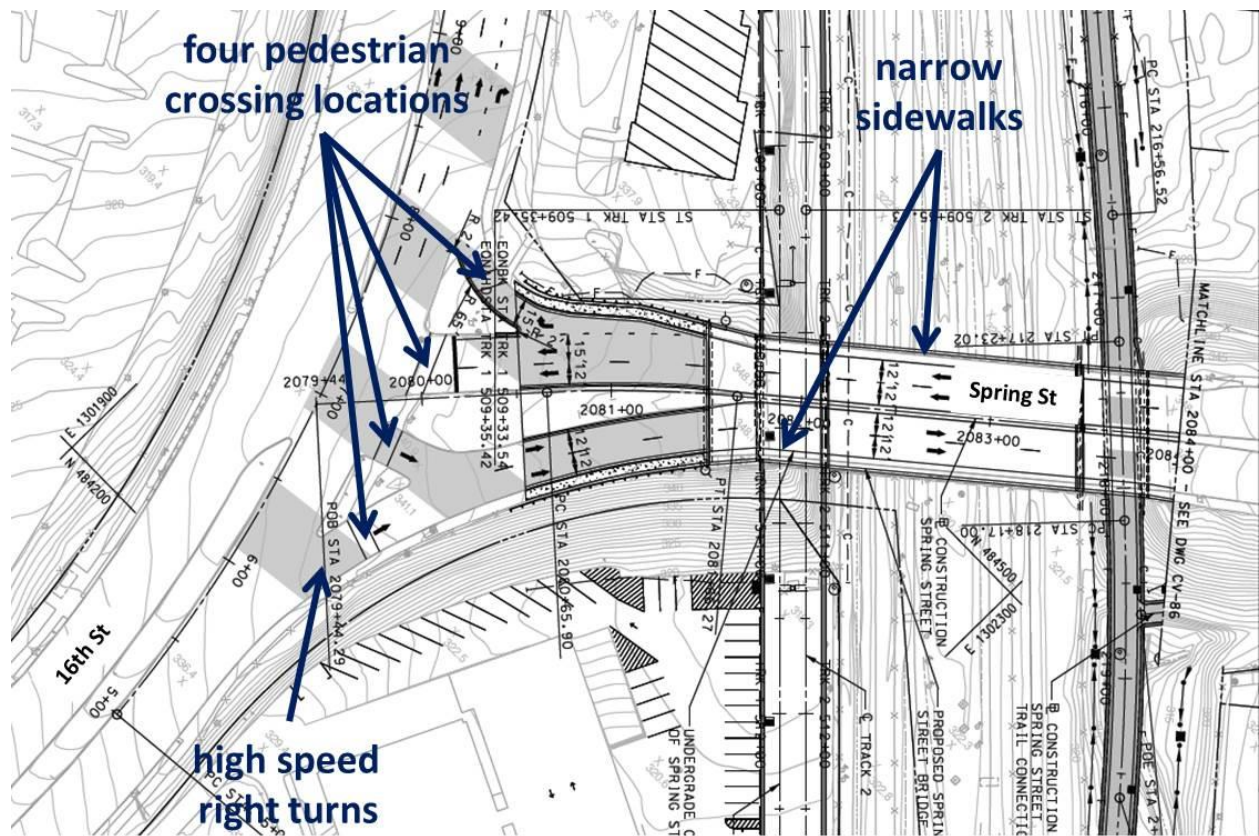
Issue #1 status: MTA and MCDOT’s response is that there will be no parking on the Spring Street Bridge, but does not indicate whether there will be bike lanes or how wide the sidewalks on Spring Street Bridge will be.



A Typical Section for Spring Street with Recommended Changes by the Planning Board

Second, the intersection of 16th Street and Spring Street includes an excessive crossing distance on the east leg, requiring two pedestrian signals and three refuge islands to break up the crossing. The intersection geometry also enables vehicles traveling northbound on 16th Street and turning right onto Spring Street to speed across one of the crosswalks. While this may be an appropriate intersection design in areas with limited pedestrian activity, it is inappropriate in an urban area where pedestrian activity will be substantial. Coordination is required between MCDOT, SHA, and MTA to redesign this intersection to transform it into a complete street. Therefore, the Planning Board requested that MCDOT, SHA, and MTA “1) Eliminate the free right turns and realigning Spring Street and the Spring Street Bridge to form a tee intersection with 16th Street, as part of the reconstruction of the Spring Street Bridge, and 2) Provide a minimum 6-foot-wide median pedestrian refuge on the north leg of the intersection of 16th Street and Spring Street.”

Issue #2 status: While MTA’s response indicated that they are amenable to a design change, MCDOT does not support the recommendation.



An Aerial View of the Intersection of 16th Street and Spring Street Showing Pedestrian Constraints

Wayne Avenue Community Compatibility

Wayne Avenue is a prominent residential street and also an important gateway to Silver Spring. To mitigate the impacts resulting from the Purple Line, MTA and Montgomery County should develop a package of improvements to reduce the visual clutter and soften the streetscape.

First, the overhead visual clutter on Wayne Avenue created by the existing utility poles will be augmented with Purple Line catenary pole spaced approximately 100 feet apart and catenary wires. To reduce the visual clutter, the Planning Board asked MTA to **“Underground existing utilities on Wayne Avenue. Street lights should be affixed to the catenary line overhead. Pedestrian lighting on either side of Wayne Avenue should use Washington Globe street lights required by the Silver Spring Streetscape Standards. This same detail should be used for any other specified pedestrian scale lighting along the Purple Line in Silver Spring, including the bridge over Sligo Creek. All specified fixtures, fastenings, and finishes should be submitted to M-NCPPC for review.”**

Issue #1 status: MTA’s response was that undergrounding utilities is outside the scope of the project and that PEPCO will not allow the Purple Line catenary wires to be co-located with utility poles.

Second, as currently planned there will be no street trees on much of Wayne Avenue. County standards require a 6-foot landscape panel for street trees but the planned landscaped panel is only 5-feet wide. Therefore, the Planning Board asked MCDOT to: **“Grant a design exception to allow street trees to be planted in the 5-foot-wide buffer on the north side of Wayne Avenue between the curb and the Silver Spring Green Trail.”**

Issue #2 status: MCDOT did not respond to this comment.

Piney Branch Road Streetscape

While the Purple Line Functional Plan (page 37) recommends implementing sidewalks that are at least 6 feet wide on Piney Branch Road as part of the Purple Line project and the Long Branch Sector Plan recommends implementing a combined sidewalk and street tree area that is 15 feet wide as part of redevelopment, MTA is proposing to provide only 5-foot sidewalks with no street trees or buffers. MTA is reluctant to widen the sidewalks because this would either require additional property acquisition from private land owners or impacts to parkland, which would have 4(f) impacts that were not part of the Purple Line Record of Decision (ROD).

There are several opportunities for widening the sidewalks in the future without acquiring private property. For example, MTA has agreed to construct a 10-foot-wide culvert over Long Branch as part of the Purple Line, which would facilitate wider sidewalks over a short section of the road as part of a future stand-alone project. Additional opportunities to widen the sidewalks on Piney Branch Road exist along the frontage of the Long Branch Community Center, the Miles Glass property, Long Branch Local Park, and Long Branch Stream Valley Park. Therefore, the Planning Board stated that **“Along the frontage of publicly owned property, construct the sidewalks to be 15 feet wide per the Long Branch Sector Plan Design Guidelines.”**

Status: MTA responded that “In order to minimize impacts to park property and maintain consistent sidewalk widths along Piney Branch Road, five foot sidewalks are being used which meets SHA standards.”

It is standard practice in Montgomery County to implement streetscape recommendations where opportunities exist to do so. This often results in sidewalk widths that are inconsistently applied in the short term. Given that the Planning Board and Parks Department agree that the sidewalks should be widened along park frontage, we are hopeful that this situation can be worked out, perhaps as a separate project that is completed before the Purple Line becomes operational.

Access to Long Branch Local Park

The Purple Line will restrict access (left turns in and out) to the Long Branch community center and pool facilities along MD 320 (Piney Branch Road). MTA has committed to constructing a new driveway for the park to connect to the Barron Street signal, which will allow for left turns out of the park, but left turns in remain a problem. While this is a state highway, the park includes County facilities. We therefore request that MCDOT work with MTA, SHA, and M-NCPPC, Montgomery County Department of Parks to help identify ways to allow left turns into the park directly from Piney Branch Road, particularly during large community events and swim meets at the park; this would eliminate the need to make circuitous detours on County streets through the neighborhood. The Planning Board stated that **“One issue that is going to require interagency cooperation to resolve involves the left turn into the park. While the new driveway entrance into the park permits left turns out of the park, there are no provisions at this time to permit left-turns in. To accommodate left turns in, one of two things will need to happen: 1) MTA and SHA will provide a dedicated left-turn lane from east-bound Piney Branch Road; or 2) MTA and SHA will allow left-turns into the park from the left travel lane. Solution #1 is unlikely due to space constraints along Piney Branch Road; other roadway/pedestrian/park trail improvements will need any new space gained along this road as part of redevelopment. Solution #2 continues to be studied by MTA. It is possible that left-turns into the park could be permitted during specific peak-periods (such as swim meets, community events, etc.)”**

Status: MTA responded that “These design options were studied as part of the MD 320 Corridor Study and dropped from further consideration as a result of capacity constraints. In addition, greater impacts to private property will result.”

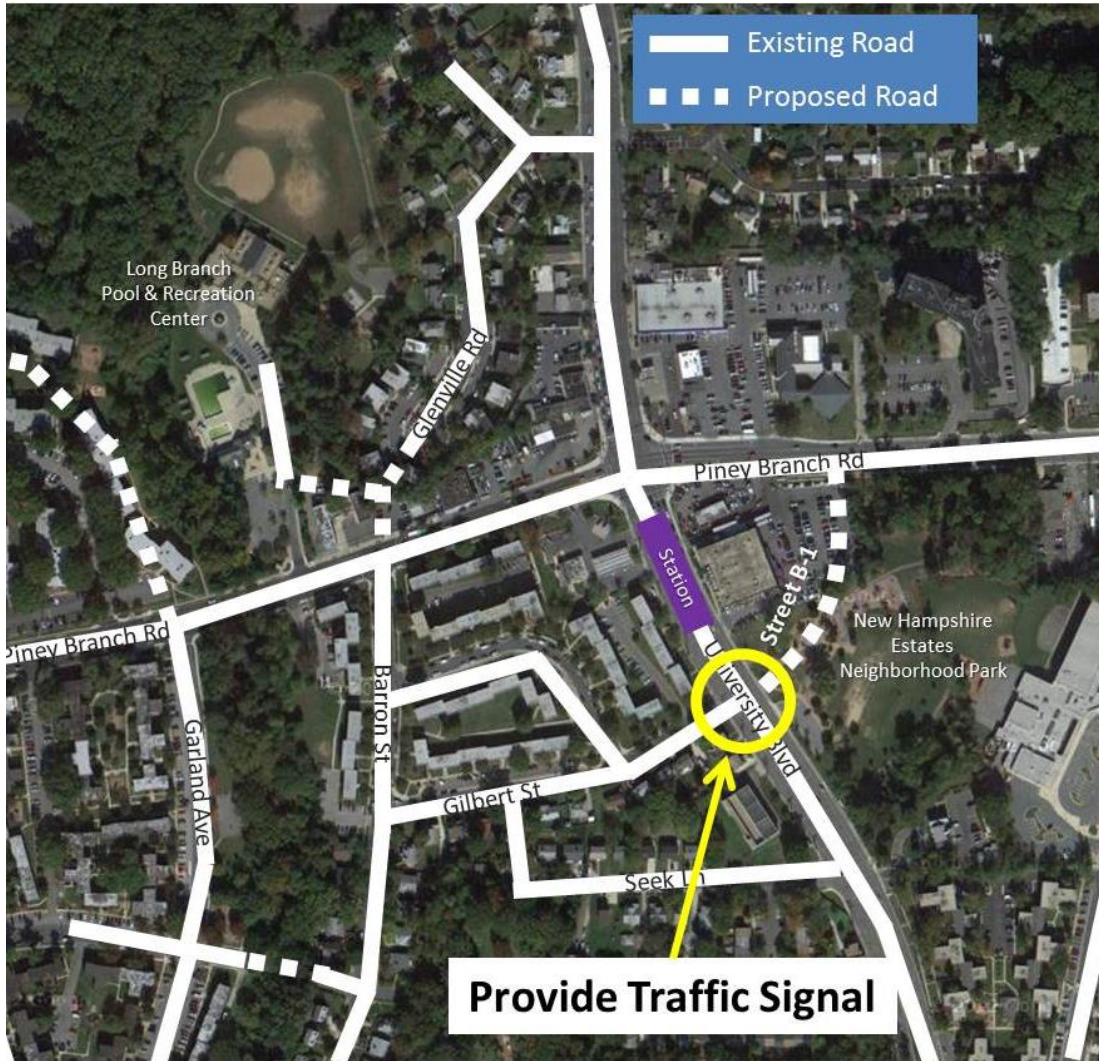
Access to the Piney Branch Road Station

The 30% plans for the Purple Line do not include a direct connection to the south end of the Piney Branch Road station platform, even though this connection is recommended in the Long Branch Sector Plan. Without this access point, passengers will be required to walk about two minutes out of their way to access the platform. Since the average rail passenger will walk 10 minutes to a station, a 2 minute additional walk will decrease the catchment area of the station. According to MTA, the access point is not included in the 30% plans because SHA has not agreed to provide a traffic signal at this location. SHA is concerned that left turning traffic from University Boulevard to Piney Branch Road will back up beyond a signal at Gilbert Street. However, the introduction of a rail station in University Boulevard and the land use changes proposed by the Long Branch Sector Plan will fundamentally change the nature of the area from one largely focused on automobiles to one equally focused on pedestrians. Therefore, the Planning Board requested that SHA **“Provide a traffic signal at the intersection of University Boulevard and Gilbert Street.”**

Issue #1 status: MTA responded that “The installation of a signal at University Blvd and Gilbert Street would create an issue by inhibiting Purple Line operations.”

The Long Branch Sector Plan recommends a new traffic signal, a future shared use path (SP-79) along Gilbert Street and Gilbert Street Extended (Street B-1), and access to the southern end of the Piney Branch Station at the intersection of Gilbert Street and University Boulevard. At this time the State Highway Administration has not agreed to provide a traffic signal at this location, but that should not forestall planning for a future where a traffic signal is permitted. To address this issue the Planning Board requested MTA to **“Include design allowances in the RFP to enable access to the station from Gilbert Street, via a walkway up the middle of University Boulevard, once the intersection is signalized”** and to **“Embed the Purple Line tracks at the intersection of University Boulevard and Gilbert Street.”**

Issue #2 status: MTA and SHA have not agreed to either recommendation.



An Aerial View of Long Branch Showing the Proposed Location of a Traffic Signal to Facilitate Station Access from the South Side of the Piney Branch Road Station Platform

Parkland Replacement at the New Hampshire Estates Neighborhood Park

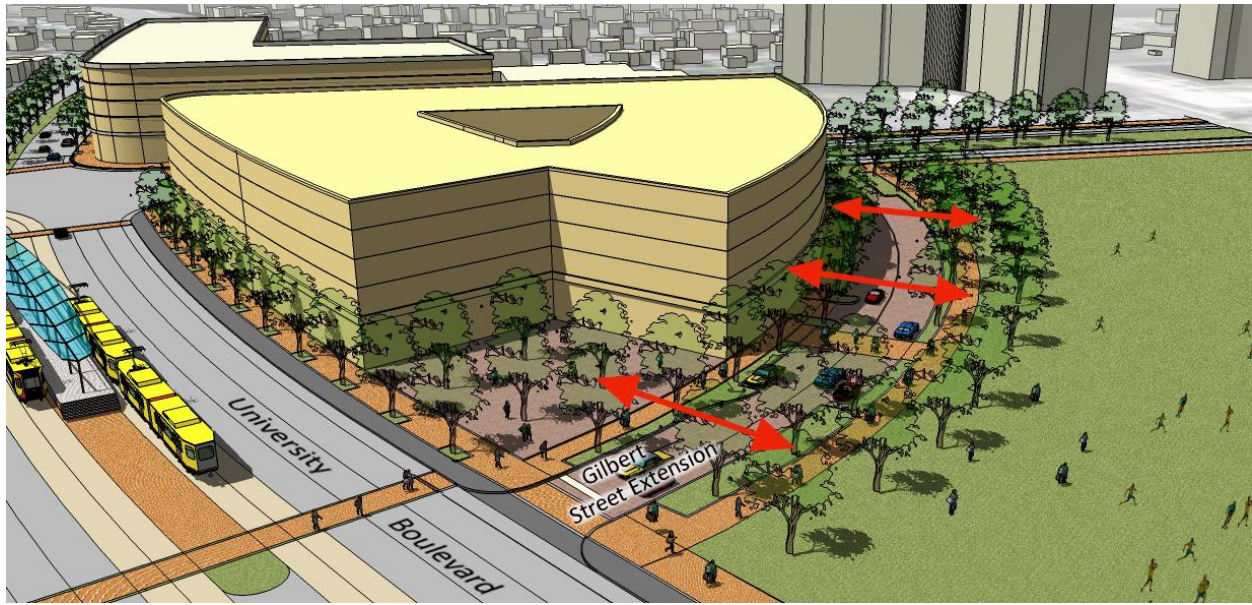
MTA is committed to mitigating parkland needed to accommodate the Purple Line, but presently the details of the overall mitigation strategy are still being worked out by the affected agencies and land owners. The Purple Line will impact six parks in Montgomery County, as well as the Silver Spring Transit Center Plaza Easement. The six parks include: Elm Street Urban Park; Rock Creek Stream Valley Park; Sligo Creek Stream Valley Park; Long Branch Stream Valley Park; Long Branch Local Park; and New Hampshire Estates Neighborhood Park. For three parks, MTA will be permanently using parkland to construct the project. The total amount of parkland that MTA needs is about 0.55 acres:

- 0.24 acres at Sligo Creek Stream Valley Park
- 0.11 acres at Long Branch Stream Valley Park
- 0.20 acres at New Hampshire Estates Neighborhood Park

Note: The other parks are not permanently impacted and the transit center easement is not subject to Section 4(f) because M-NCPPC is not the fee-simple owner of the underlying land; it is owned by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).

Federal law requires mitigation for the permanent use of parkland by federally funded transportation projects. MTA's commitments for parkland replacement, and associated mitigation for impacts to park facilities and natural resources on parkland, are memorialized in the *de minimis* letters for each park (see www.montgomeryplanning.org/purpleline/). The *de minimis* letters define legally-binding commitments between MTA and M-NCPPC regarding parkland mitigation requirements. This action precedes FTA's review and approval of the project.

The Long Branch Sector Plan includes recommendations that will ultimately transform New Hampshire Estates Neighborhood Park. In addition to the impacts caused by the Purple Line, the proposed alignment for the extension of Gilbert Street (Street B-1) bisects the existing park. The figure below from the Long Branch Sector Plan depicts a potential scenario for redevelopment at the southeast corner of Piney Branch Road and University Boulevard. It shows the general conceptual massing proposed for the site adjacent to the park, as well as the alignment and configuration for Gilbert Street extended. Assuming Gilbert Street extended is actually constructed, the proposed parallel parking along both sides of the new road will serve both the park and the new development.



A Rendering Looking North of the Proposed Gilbert Street Extended

The Long Branch Sector Plan also recommends expanding New Hampshire Estates Neighborhood Park (NHENP) by eventually acquiring the county-owned property to the south, currently occupied by a social service provider under contract with the County. The Long Branch Sector Plan recommends that this social service be relocated to another nearby site, and when that happens, M-NCPPC should seek to acquire the land to expand and redevelop the park. This scenario presents an opportunity not only to re-invent the park following the Purple Line (and redevelopment of the adjacent land), but also provide synergy with the adjacent New Hampshire Estates Elementary School, which has a shortage of play space for its students.

During the Planning Board's review of the Purple Line FEIS on October 17, 2013, Parks staff outlined the proposed mitigation strategy to consolidate all parkland replacement at one location adjacent to NHENP. This strategy is mirrored in the *de minimis* letters.

Depicted below is the Sector Plan vision to expand NHENP by acquiring the county-owned property to the south (shown in blue). This figure also illustrates the general alignment for Gilbert Street extended, which would bisect the park.



An Aerial View Showing the County-Owned Property in Blue that the Long Branch Sector Plan Recommends Acquiring for Expansion of the New Hampshire Estates Neighborhood Park

Parks staff believes – and the Planning Board concurs – that mitigation for both the Purple Line and Gilbert Street Extended can best occur through the acquisition of county-owned property south of NHENP. This proposed strategy, which is consistent with both the *de minimis* letters and land use policy found in the 2013 Approved and Adopted Long Branch Sector Plan allows for the consolidation of all transportation related impacts at one location adjacent to an existing park, and in a manner that creates future synergy with the adjacent elementary school.

MTA is legally bound by the *de minimis* letters to consolidate all replacement parkland at a site adjacent to NHENP. Parks staff believes this commitment can best be accomplished in a manner consistent with the Sector Plan vision by requiring MTA to pursue the County-owned property to the south of NHENP as parkland mitigation for Purple Line project. Implementation of Staff's proposed strategy will require a significant amount of interagency cooperation, and the agreement of affected property owners.

We have scheduled a meeting on July 16th with staff from the County, MTA and the Commission to discuss the issue and develop a strategy for moving forward. **We expect that an agreement will ultimately be reached that satisfies all affected parties. But in the event an agreement cannot be reached, assistance from the County Council may be needed.**