

M E M O R A N D U M

March 16, 2021

TO: Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee

FROM: Glenn Orlin, Senior Analyst

SUBJECT: Shady Grove Sector Plan Minor Master Plan Amendment—transportation elements and fiscal impact statement¹

PURPOSE: Develop Committee recommendations

Councilmembers: Please bring your copy of the Final Draft Plan to this worksession.

This staff report primarily addresses the Final Draft Plan's transportation elements in *Chapter 10: Mobility* and the *Transportation Appendix*.² Some technical corrections will be made to the final document, but they are not identified in this staff report. The purpose of this worksession is for the Committee to make recommendations about these matters.

Those commenting on the Final Draft, including Council staff, support most of the transportation recommendations in this Plan. In the interest of time, this staff report addresses recommendations that differ from the Final Draft from the Department of Transportation (DOT, see ©1-6), the City of Rockville (©7-11), public hearing testimony and correspondence, and Council staff.

Those anticipated to attend include:

Casey Anderson, Chair, Planning Board
Gwen Wright, Director, Planning Department
Carrie Sanders, Chief, Midcounty Planning Division, Planning Department
Jessica McVary, Master Plan Supervisor, Midcounty Planning Division
Nkosi Yearwood, Planner Coordinator, Midcounty Planning Division
Patrick Reed, Transportation Planner Coordinator, Midcounty Planning Division
Eric Graye, Planning Supervisor, Countywide Planning & Policy Division
Christopher Conklin, Director, DOT
Hannah Henn, Deputy Director for Transportation Policy, DOT
Andrew Bossi, Director's Office, DOT

¹ Key words: #ShadyGroveSectorPlan, plus search terms sector plan, road, intersection, transit, bikeway, sidewalk.

² The Transportation Appendix can be found here: <https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Planning-Board-Draft-Plan-Appendix-Transportation-V1.pdf>

1. Land use/transportation balance. This past December 9 the Committee reviewed and accepted a revised version of the Planning Board’s recommendations as to how to measure land use/transportation balance in future master plans. The five metrics the Committee accepted are, in sum:

- *Accessibility*, defined as the number of jobs that can be reached within 45 minutes by auto and by transit, at the time of buildout. Adequacy would be achieved if the proposed plan met or bettered the average accessibility for the county as a whole, which Planning staff has projected to be 1,159,950 jobs within 45 minutes by auto and 134,160 jobs within 45 minutes by transit.
- *Travel times*, defined as the average time by auto and by transit, considering all trip purposes during all times on a weekday. Adequacy would be achieved if the proposed plan met or bettered the countywide average travel time at the time of buildout, which Planning staff has projected to be 18.8 minutes for autos and 51.7 minutes for transit.
- *Vehicle miles of travel (VMT) per capita*, defined as the sum of the weekday VMT from trips that both start and end within the county and half the weekday VMT from trips that either start or end within the county, divided by the total number of residents and employees in the county (the “service population”). Adequacy would be achieved if the proposed plan met or bettered the average for the county as a whole at the time of buildout, which Planning staff has projected to be 12.4 VMT/capita.
(For small area sector plan, these first three metrics would be evaluated for the larger “parent” policy area as a whole.)
- *Non-auto-driver mode share*, defined as the NADMS for journey-to/from-work trips. The measure of adequacy for a master plan area would be whether the new plan achieves the pre-established NADMS goal for that area.
- *Low-stress bicycle accessibility*, defined as the percentage of potential bicycle trips that can be accommodated on a low-stress bikeway network. Adequacy would be achieved if the proposed plan met or bettered the average for the percentage for the county as a whole at the time of buildout, which Planning staff has projected in the Bicycle Master Plan to be 80%.

However, these metrics were not used in developing this plan—or in the Ashton Village Center Sector Plan—since the substantive work on both plans were completed before December 9. Therefore, the pre-existing measure of balance—whether or not the intersections in the plan area will meet the Local Area Transportation Review (LATR) standards at buildout—will be used in this analysis.

The Sector Plan area consists of the Shady Grove Metro Station Policy Area (MSPA) and portions of the Rockville City and Derwood Policy Areas.³ As per the 2020-2024 Growth and Infrastructure Policy (GIP) approved last November, the Shady Grove MSPA no longer has a congestion standard: henceforth congestion is unlimited at its intersections. (The prior standard had been an average delay of 120 seconds/vehicle (s/v) to proceed through any given intersection.) The GIP LATR standard in the Rockville City PA (that is, the portion of it not entirely within the City’s boundary) is 63 s/v, while the standard in the Derwood PA is 59 s/v. Two intersections in the Sector Plan Area, both located within the MSPA, would have failed the pre-existing 120 s/v standard if it had not changed:

³ The shape of the Sector Plan area looks like the State of Louisiana having had one over the limit during Mardi Gras (see any of the maps on pp. 6-11.)

- Shady Grove Road and Crabbs Branch Way, which would reach a delay of 161.8 s/v in the evening peak: 35% worse than the prior standard. However, with the NADMS goals recommended in Item #3 of this report, the level of service would achieve the 120 s/v level.
- Shady Grove Road and MD 355, which would reach a delay of 150.5 s/v in the evening peak: 25% worse than the standard. However, with the NADMS goals recommended in Item #3 of this report, Planning staff notes that the delay could be fully mitigated to 120 s/v by removing the split signal phasing, converting eastbound Shady Grove Road's lane configuration to two exclusive left-turn lanes, two through lanes, and two exclusive right turn lanes, and converting westbound Shady Grove Road's lane configuration to two exclusive left-turn lanes, four through lanes, and one exclusive right turn lane.

During its deliberations on the GIP, the Council deemed traffic operational changes like these were acceptable in addressing congestion, since they do not involve road widening. **Council staff mentioning these operational changes at Shady Grove Road/MD 355 in the Sector Plan as possible future actions to mitigate congestion.**

2. Gude Drive interchange. The only intersection that would fail any of the GIP standards in Year 2040 (the proxy year for buildout) is the intersection of MD 355 and Gude Drive. The 2006 Sector Plan called for a grade-separated interchange there. That Plan also had the following condition that needed to be met before the Planning Board could allow development in the second stage of that three-stage plan to proceed:

- Fund the MD 355/Gude Drive interchange for completion within the first four years of the Consolidated Transportation Program, the Capital Improvements Program, or other transit or transportation improvements that would make the intersection function at an acceptable level. 'Acceptable' is defined as the applicable intersection congestion standard in the Growth Policy.

The 2040 traffic forecasts for the Final Draft Plan show that this intersection would fail its LATR standard (if there were to be no improvements) by a wide margin. The projection is that delay would be 132 s/v in the morning peak - more than double the 63 s/v standard, and 117 s/v in the evening peak - 85% worse than the standard.

The Planning staff studied six alternative improvements at this location, three which widened the current intersection, and three that introduced a form of grade separation. The only alternative that would meet the standard is a grade separation that would carry two Gude Drive through lanes (one in each direction) over MD 355, with all other traffic passing through an intersection below the overpass. It is diagrammed on ©12 and would cost an estimated \$27 million.

The Planning Board recommends deleting the interchange from the Plan, averring that an interchange is counter to promoting transit and Vision Zero goals, and that the funds needed for an interchange would be better spent on pedestrian, bicycle, and transit improvements. Instead it advocates loosening the congestion standard that this intersection from 63 s/v to 100 s/v (a 59% increase in acceptable delay), allowing for free right turns both eastbound and westbound from Gude Drive onto MD 355, as well as designating the existing southbound right turn lane as a combination right/through lane. However, the Board notes that even the free right-turns might not be allowed if there is an impact

on pedestrian safety (p, 137). A corollary recommendation is that a grade-separated interchange at this location should no longer be a staging requirement in the Shady Grove Plan (p. 143).

DOT notes that, “While it is not our preference that an interchange necessarily be built at MD 355 and Gude Drive, for this plan to propose removing the interchange without adequate analysis or identified alternatives is premature” (©2). In particular, such an analysis should account for the Preferred Alternative for Managed Lanes project, which proposes a new interchange between I-270 and Gude Drive for buses and toll-payers, thus likely significantly increasing traffic volume along Gude Drive. DOT also recommends against removing the interchange as a staging element (©4).

The Rockville Planning Commission’s draft update to the City’s 2002 Comprehensive Plan notes that “The city continues to support capacity improvements at Gude Drive and MD-355, perhaps the intersection that delays the most drivers on a daily basis.” The draft recommends the City “Advocate for MDOT SHA to improve capacity at the intersection of Gude Drive and MD-355, which may include grade separation.”⁴ The Rockville Mayor and Council’s testimony on the Final Draft recommends improvements at this intersection, but recommends no longer having the master-planned interchange be a staging requirement (©8).

Council staff recommends retaining the MD 355/Gude Drive interchange in the Plan and show the Gude Drive overpass option on ©12 be the preferred concept. The concept has several advantages:

- Delay at the intersection in 2040 would be reduced from 132 s/v in the morning peak and 117 s/v in the evening peak to 33 s/v and 26 s/v, respectively, well below the 63 s/v standard. These delays do not average in the Gude Drive through movements that would experience no delay.
- Vehicle travel time between Shady Grove Road and College Parkway would be improved in the southbound direction by 30% in the morning and by 10% in the evening, and in the northbound direction by 6% in the morning.
- Peak-hour emissions would be reduced, according to an analysis by the Planning staff’s consultant:

Emission Particulates (in grams)	No Build		Gude Drive Overpass	
	AM Peak Hour	PM Peak Hour	AM Peak Hour	PM Peak Hour
Hydrocarbons (HC)	140	178	100	108
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	4,932	5,654	4,265	4,715
Nitrogen Oxides (NOX)	412	542	338	373

- The planned MD 355 Bus Rapid Transit line would benefit from the interchange. The BRT line is currently planned as a single-lane reversible lane operating southbound in the morning peak and northbound in the evening peak. Eliminating the Gude Drive east-west traffic from intersection means that the MD 355 through lanes—including the BRT lane—would receive more “green time.” In the off-peak direction—where the BRT would run in mixed traffic—there would be a modest reduction in travel time for BRT (6% in the morning, 10% in the evening) compared to the No Build.

⁴ Rockville Planning Commission, Comprehensive Plan for the City of Rockville, p. 65.

The disadvantage of this concept is that while the northbound delay in the evening peak is much reduced, the result would also mean that backups would be shifted to the MD 355 intersections further north, at the intersections at Indianola Drive/Watkins Pond Road and at Redland Road. Overall vehicle travel time in the evening peak on MD 355 from College Parkway to Shady Grove Road would increase by 38%. However, since a major goal of the Plan is to encourage the walkability and bike-ability in the vicinity of the Metro Station, part of that is accomplished by having no limit on traffic congestion so that motor vehicles do not flow freely there. Commensurately, the Plan also recommends setting the target speed on MD 355 in the Metro Neighborhoods at only 25 mph.

Alternatively, the Sector Plan recommends no changes to the existing to auto-centric land uses or zoning in the vicinity of the Gude Drive intersection. Sitting more than a mile away from the Metro Station, it is not within a reasonable walkshed for Metrorail patrons. The Transportation Appendix to the Plan reports only 38 pedestrian crossings of MD 355 at Gude Drive in a pedestrian count taken over an 8-hour weekday period (6:30-9:30am, 11am-1pm, and 4-7 pm), compared to the multiple thousands of drivers passing through the intersection at these times. On the other hand, ped crossings of MD 355 in the Metro Neighborhoods area of the Plan were significantly higher—135 at Redland Road and 328 at King Farm Boulevard (©13)—and the frequency of these crossings should grow much higher with the added density of development proposed in that area.

Furthermore, while Gude Drive carries less traffic than MD 355, it is more important to the regional transportation network that it be improved. For north-south travel in the corridor, there is Metrorail, the future MD 355 BRT (which will be unimpeded in the peak direction and, as noted above, and marginally better in the off-peak direction due to the interchange), and I-270, which will carry more of the longer north-south trips with the State Highway Administration's soon-to-be-completed Innovative Congestion Management project and the additional capacity afforded by its Managed Lanes Project. On the other hand, Gude Drive is one of only a handful of routes carrying commuters and others east-west across I-270, and eventually to I-270 itself and toll-paying drivers, especially those from Aspen Hill and the east side of Rockville.

The \$27 million cost should be borne by the State and be SHA's responsibility to design and build, since it is a "State" intersection. In the past it has been among the Executive's and Council's (and Rockville's) State transportation priorities. Secondly, \$27 million is relatively small for a project of this importance.⁵ The reason why it would be less costly is because Gude Drive just east of MD 355 is already at high elevation due to its bridge over Metrorail/CSX, and the intersection design concept calls for minimal right-of-way: three minor strip takings and no full property takings.

Council staff recommends not loosening the congestion standard at the Gude Drive/MD 355 intersection from 63 s/v to 100 s/v. The 63 s/v standard was confirmed by the Council just four months ago in the GIP. The Gude Drive interchange described above meets the existing standard. The Rockville Mayor and Council also recommends against loosening the standard (©8).

However, Council staff does concur with the Final Draft and the City of Rockville that this master-planned interchange should no longer be a staging requirement in the Shady Grove Sector

⁵ For comparison, a small SHA project in Montgomery County currently under construction is the Brookeville Bypass. Its cost is about \$44 million.

Plan. As noted above, the interchange is much more important to improve east-west transportation on Gude Drive than for north-south transportation on MD 355 through the heart of the Plan's Metro Neighborhoods, which is where the bulk of the additional density is proposed.

3. *Non-auto-driver mode share (NADMS).* An important part of every master and sector plan is to set goals regarding the share of commuters who should ultimately travel to work by means other than driving, whether it by transit, walking, biking, riding in a carpool or vanpool, or working at home. The Final Draft notes that the current NADMS for the Sector Plan area is estimated to be 34.2%.

The 2006 sector plan set the NADMS thusly: 35% by transit for residents living in the Shady Grove MSPA, 25% for residents elsewhere in the Sector Plan area, and 12.5% by transit for employees working in the Sector Plan area. The Final Draft recommends a 50% for residents in the MSPA, 35% for residents living within the Sector Plan area but not within the MSPA, and 15% for employees commuting into the Sector Plan area from elsewhere (p. 132).

DOT supports the increasing the NADMS, but believes the Plan needs to either make additional recommendations for programs or services toward achieving the goals or consider lowering the NADMS goals to less ambitious targets (©2). The Rockville Mayor and Council also support higher NADMS goals, but they believe the initiatives required of new development "be supported by verifiable data and appropriate traffic mitigation, where necessary, and we suggest that the plan include this implementation guidance" (©8).

Last November in the GIP, when the Council set policy area NADMS goals for those areas that did not have goals, it made sure that there were either separate goals for residents and employees, or a blended goal combining both residents and employees. When re-setting existing goals in master and sector plans, it would wise to follow the same model. As the County evolves to a largely countywide transportation demand management regime, having consistent definitions are important.

Council staff recommends:

- **Concurring with Final Draft's 50% NADMS journey-to-work goal for residents of the Shady Grove MSPA.** The existing goal of 35% only counts transit riders, but counting bikers, walkers, carpool and vanpool riders, and those working at home should bring the total NADMS for residents closer to 50%. The increased mixed-use land use in the MSPA should boost the biking and walking commute as well. If Metrorail, the MD 355 BRT, the Corridor Cities Transitway, added bus and car-sharing services, and a more robust bikeway and sidewalk network is not enough to reach the 50% goal, the County can take operational steps, such as more monetary incentives for ridesharing (such as the Fare Share Program) or disincentives for long-term parking. Operating programs do not need to be enumerated in master or sector plans.
- **Setting the NADMS journey-to-work goal for all employees in the MSPA at 20%, taking into account employees living either within or outside the MSPA.** NADMS goals in other MSPAs have not distinguished between employees living inside versus outside them.
- **Re-confirming the Derwood Policy Area blended NADMS goal of 39% for residents and employees taken together.** The area outside the MSPA is but a part of the much larger Derwood Policy Area, for which the Council set a blended NADMS of 39% last November as part of the GIP.

There is not the need to add text to the Sector Plan saying that initiatives required of new development in Shady Grove be supported by verifiable data and appropriate traffic mitigation. This is part and parcel of the procedures undertaken by DOT and Planning staff throughout the County, not merely in Shady Grove.

4. Target speeds. As the Plan notes, “The target speed of a roadway refers to the intended or desired speed of roadway users. Target speeds should inform roadway design, and ideally, the posted speed of the roadway” (p. 119, footnote 3). Some engineering methods used to reduce target speeds are to narrow lane widths, design tighter curb radii (i.e., sharper turns) at intersections, reduce or eliminate channelized right turn lanes, install a curb or other vertical separation between the outside lane and bike lanes, and replace center turn lanes with raised medians. Section 49-32(j) of the County Code states that “unless otherwise specified in a master plan or the approved capital improvements program, the maximum target speed for a road in an urban area is 25 mph.”

The Shady Grove Urban Road Code Area is mapped on p. 116; it extends on MD 355 from Shady Grove to Indianola Drive, on Shady Grove Road from I-270 to I-370, on Crabbs Branch Way from Shady Grove Road to Indianola Drive, and on Redland Road from MD 355 to just northeast of Crabbs Branch Way. This Urban Road Code Area is where most of the Plan’s proposed added density would occur, and where walking and biking will become more prevalent. Although the Code would allow the Council to set any target speed it desires for this area as part of the Sector Plan, the Code’s default target speed of 25 mph with Urban Road Code Areas would appear to be appropriate here.

Beyond the Urban Road Code boundary, the Planning Board recommends setting the target speed on these roads and others at 30 mph (p. 118-119). This is well below the current posted speeds: east of Crabbs Branch Way the limit on Shady Grove Road is 45 mph and on Redland Road is 35 mph; the limit on MD 355 south of Indianola Drive is 35 mph; and on Gude Drive the limit is 40 mph. DOT believes that it would be difficult to implement a 30 mph target speed due to the width, minimal curvature, and infrequent driveways and intersections on these roads. DOT suggests a 35 mph goal would be more realistic and achievable (©2).

Context is critical. No land use or zoning changes are proposed along these roads outside the Urban Road Code boundary, so there will not be a significant difference in pedestrian activity there. Along these roads the Plan’s recommendation is to set the sidewalks back 6’ from the roadway or provide vertical separation where 6’ isn’t possible. Planned bikeways are similarly protected. Speed studies along portions of Shady Grove Road and Crabbs Branch Way outside the boundary show about as many driving below the speed limit as above it.

The primary problem, however, is that about 20% of drivers on these segments are exceeding the speed limit by more than 5 mph (see Appendix pp. 40 and 44). The Plan appropriately calls for certain revisions to the design to lower the speeds; implementing them will likely have the effect of significantly reducing excessive speed.

Council staff recommends:

- **Concurring with the Final Draft that the target speeds for the segments of these roads and others within the Urban Road Code Area should be set at 25 mph.**

- **For the segments outside the Urban Road Code Area, setting the target speed for both MD 355 and Crabbs Branch Way at 35 mph southeast of Indianola Drive, for Gude Drive at 40 mph, for Redland Road northeast of Needwood Road at 35 mph, and on Shady Grove Road northeast of I-370 at 45 mph – the currently posted speed limits for these roads.** The proposed traffic calming measures hopefully will work to bring top speeds to just 5 mph over these limits.

5. Midcounty Highway. Existing Midcounty Highway and its currently planned extension east to the Intercounty Connector (ICC) comprise the northern boundary of the Sector Plan area. The Plan’s discussion of Midcounty Highway is on p. 115.

The third paragraph on p. 115 refers to Council Resolution 18-957 which directed the Planning Board not to assume any northern extension of Midcounty Highway in calculating land use transportation balance (©14-15). But this master-planned extension (from Montgomery Village Avenue to Ridge Road in Clarksburg) would begin more than 3 miles away, and so it has no relevance to this Sector Plan.

The fourth paragraph speaks to the problems associated with the eastern extension to the ICC—disturbing forest and streams, and possible property takings from single-family lots. But it does not acknowledge the reasons why extension is in the master plan in the first place: to provide more direct access for residents of Montgomery Village, Gaithersburg, and Derwood to the ICC and points east, and to reduce traffic on Shady Grove Road.

Finally, the last paragraph goes on to say that the Sector Plan neither endorses the removal of the extension from the master plan. It notes that because the eastern extension “impacts mobility beyond the Plan area, this Sector Plan is not the appropriate place for a decision on this segment as an appropriate forum beyond the Sector Plan Area was not established during this planning effort.”

Council staff recommends removing the text on p. 115. The text is an unbalanced depiction of the pros and cons of the extension, and much of it is irrelevant to the Sector Plan. There is a recommendation for a trail in the extension’s right-of-way between Shady Grove and Redland Roads, but that recommendation also appears in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Network on p. 129 and in Table 3 on p. 131.

Council staff also recommends, in the roadway classification table (Table 2) on p. 118, changing the eastern limit of Midcounty Highway from Shady Grove Road to Redland Road. Since the Sector Plan would not delete the eastern extension, its presence should be noted in the table.

6. Alignment of proposed streets near the Metro Station. DOT points out that the mapped alignment of proposed street B-7 (Columbus Avenue Extended) as shown in Map 51 (p.123) does not intersect with Redland Road directly across from where Yellowstone Drive intersects Redland. Good street planning practice would have B-7 and Yellowstone Drive aligned. DOT also notes that two public/private linear open space alignments near the Metro Station are too close to parallel public streets, and that they should be more evenly spaced on the superblock. **Council staff concurs with DOT.**

7. Parking at the Metro station. DOT states that its most important interest in the Plan is to make sure that the number of existing all-day parking spaces (5,745) at the Shady Grove Metro Station be at least retained, if not expanded upon. DOT points out that, as the end-of-the-line station, it will

continue to be the primary means of accessing Metrorail for commuters from the much of the Upcounty, Frederick County, and points beyond (©1, 4).

While it is true that the MD 355 BRT, the Corridor Cities Transitway, and enhanced local bus routes should relieve the existing parking demand to some degree, it is also true that further growth north of Shady Grove will increase the cumulative demand for accessing the Red Line at Shady Grove, especially now that the turnbacks have been eliminated and all trains depart from the station.

The Final Draft does not suggest that the number of park-and-ride spaces would be reduced, but the text in the Plan (the third bullet on p. 104) could be made stronger. **Council staff recommends the following revised text:**

- **Permit additional long-term Metro parking on the east side of the station, which creates more flexibility for redevelopment opportunities on the west side of the station. Furthermore, the County, MDOT, and WMATA should explore means to expand the number of long-term spaces at the station, as demand warrants.**

8. MARC improvements. The Final Draft confirms the 2006 Plan's recommendation for a MARC Station adjacent to the Shady Grove Metro Station. It also calls for properties redeveloping along the northeast side of the tracks to dedicate a strip at least 25' feet in width to allow for a potential CSX third track. A similar recommendation was included in the recently approved MARC Communities Plan.

The Mayor and Council of Rockville support a Shady Grove MARC Station and the ability to add MARC service beyond the current weekday unidirectional trains, which run only inbound in the morning peak and outbound in the evening peak (©7). DOT is more circumspect: it notes that "a new station may compete with Metropolitan Grove – which is master planned to function much like a terminal station in relation to I-270 – and is likely to bring into question the viability of existing stations with strong community support including Washington Grove, Garrett Park, and Boyds, in addition to the proposed MARC station in White Flint" (©5). It is true that MDOT's long-time position is that if a station is added another station must be discontinued. DOT also believes that the Plan's \$8-10 million cost estimate is likely too low. The Town of Washington Grove's Historic Preservation Commission and Town resident Ms. Gail Littlefield oppose dedicating the right-of-way for the third track (©16-17).

Council staff recommends retaining the proposed MARC station and the proposed 25' dedication for now, but both should be scrutinized more carefully before proceeding with design. MTA staff have noted that a Shady Grove MARC station would be quite expensive, given the need to provide ADA accessibility, among other factors. DOT's comments are spot on. In addition, while adding a station at Shady Grove would provide easier access to MARC, it would also mean lengthening every rail commuter's trip between Gaithersburg, Germantown, and points north to Silver Spring and Union Station by about 4 minutes due to the time lost decelerating, dwelling in the station, and re-accelerating.

Including these issues as an add-on to the scope of the I-270 Corridor Forward Plan would allow the Planning Board and Council to view the matter more holistically and provide a much wider opportunities for public input. As for the dedication, since Washington Grove has independent planning and zoning authority, it is under no requirement to dedicate the right-of-way within the Town unless it wants to do so.

9. *Montgomery College Metro Station.* The Final Draft confirms a recommendation in the 2006 Sector Plan to explore the feasibility of a new Metro station on the east side of MD 355 across from Montgomery College, midway between the Shady Grove and Rockville Metro Stations (P. 104). The Mayor and Council of Rockville support this exploration (©8). It is curious that this recommendation found its way into the 2006 Plan and the Final Draft since the new station would be a ½-mile to a mile south of the Plan's southernmost boundary.

Council staff concurs with exploring this option, as long as the study is a low priority and that the project not assumed as a given, even in the long term. The cost of an infill station will run into the hundreds of millions of dollars: for example, the cost of the infill Potomac Yard Metro Station on the Blue and Yellow Lines in Alexandria is about \$320 million. Regardless of the cost, a station there is likely infeasible given the tight space between MD 355 to the west of the tracks and the Washington Gas fields to the east. The bus transfer and kiss-and-ride areas would certainly have to be located west of MD 355, probably beyond the northeast portion of the campus between North Campus Drive and College Parkway. A new station certainly would have Metrorail take away some riders that would otherwise use the MD 355 BRT. It would also lengthen the trip between the Shady Grove and Rockville Stations (and points south), although not as much as a new Shady Grove MARC station would slow MARC trips, since Metrorail trains decelerate and accelerate more quickly.

10. *Pedestrian grade separation at MD 355.* The Rockville Mayor and Council note (on ©9):

As one of our highest priorities, we urge that the adopted Plan Amendment include a provision calling for a grade-separated pedestrian and bike crossing for the signalized intersection of MD 355 with King Farm Boulevard. Additional development in the Shady Grove area will only add to the demand for crossing that very busy road. Residents in Rockville's King Farm neighborhood have communicated to us how important such an improvement would be for safety, and we will be incorporating that same provision into our updated Comprehensive Plan.

The Final Draft Plan does not include this recommendation. In fact, it recommends that all pedestrian walkways be at grade (p. 126).

With the exception of bridges over Interstate highways and transit lines powered by a third rail, ped/bike grade separations are typically underutilized if a biker—and especially a pedestrian—has to both climb to and descend from a high elevation. Such overpasses are also quite long, due to the need to adhere to an ADA-acceptable grade. Furthermore, the main reason why the Plan recommends whatever traffic calming measures are needed to achieve a target speed on Frederick Avenue is to allow for a safe means to walk both along and across it.

Council staff recommends not including this element in the Plan. If the Council feels it to be necessary, however, it could include language encouraging that a grade-separation be studied.

11. *Crabbs Branch Way/Amity Drive connector.* Ms. Barbara Raimondo and Mr. Dennis Kirschbaum of Washington Grove believe the master-planned connection between Crabbs Branch Way and Amity Drive is unnecessary. They claim the connection would bring more pollution while adding to traffic congestion. They also suggest that traffic will return not return to pre-COVID levels, obviating the need for the connection (©18-21, especially ©21).

The connection is proposed as a primary residential street. As such it is not meant to be used by regional traffic, and the County has a cut-through traffic regulation that would allow restrictions on its use should significant cut-through traffic materialize. The link would provide for better connectivity to the Grove Shopping Center for the Amity Drive neighborhood, and it would have no discernible negative impact on Washington Grove residents. **Council staff concurs with the Final Draft.**

12. Sidewalk and bike connections from Washington Grove. The southernmost segment of Oakmont Avenue from Shady Grove has sidewalks on both sides. Further north, however, there is either a sidewalk on the east or west side, but not both. And, in the segment continuing north to Railroad Street (the northern limit within the Sector Plan area), there are no sidewalks. The Plan calls for a continuous sidewalk and the removal of existing obstructions on at least one side of Oakmont Avenue (p. 129). However, the Pedestrian Network (Map 52 on p. 127) shows neither existing nor proposed sidewalks on Oakmont Avenue. **Council staff recommends showing the existing and proposed sidewalk segments on Oakmont Avenue on Map 52.**

Mayor Compton and some residents of the Town of Washington Grove have raised concerns about the Sector Plan's depiction of a planned shared use path connection between the Town and the master-planned connection of Crabbs Branch Way/Amity Drive. Current master plans (most recently, the 2018 Bicycle Master Plan) called for this path to connect to southern end of Brown Street. DOT is currently studying four different options for making this connection, one that does connect to Brown Street, but also three others that are nearby but do not use Brown Street (©22-26). Under the Bikeway Program – Minor Projects project in the Capital Improvements Program, the Council has prospectively set aside \$675,000 to design and construct the option ultimately selected; design is programmed for FY23 and construction in FY24. Mayor Compton (©27) and the residents have pointed out that it is premature for the Sector Plan to identify Brown Street as the location for this path.

The path is shown in the Existing and Proposed Bikeway Network (Map 53, p. 130) as a dashed green arrow, extending generically from the Crabbs Branch/Amity connector to the Town. Table 3 on p. 131 refers to this path as the Piedmont Crossing Local Park Trail connecting the Town to Crabbs Branch/Amity. In both places, Brown Street is not mentioned.

The consternation stems from Table 4, also on p. 131, which identifies how the Sector Plan would amend the 2018 Bicycle Master Plan. One of the lines in that table shows a sidepath along the east side of Oakmont Avenue from Shady Grove Road to Central Avenue (the “humpback” bridge) and has the note “Focus on Safer Parallel Connection at Brown Street.”

However, a closer inspection of the title of Table 4 reveals the following statement: “This Sector Plan recommends *the removal* of the following bikeways from the 2018 Bicycle Master Plan” (*emphasis mine*). Therefore, Table 4 is acknowledging that the references to an Oakmont Avenue path and to a focus on Brown Street would be replaced by the Piedmont Crossing Local Park Trail in Table 3. **Council staff concurs with Map 52 and Tables 3 and 4 in the Final Draft.**

13. Updates to bikeway recommendations. Planning staff notes the following corrections to the bikeway recommendations in the Final Draft. **Council staff concurs with these corrections:**

- Bikeable shoulders are not recommended on Redland Road due to right-of-way constraints and very limited potential for implementation of both currently recommended bike facilities along the segment. The safer of the two Bicycle Master Plan recommendations, a sidepath facility, is retained. Within the “Intercounty Connector Trail Breezeway,” Redland Road row, Table 3 should read “sidepath” rather than “bikeable shoulders” in the bikeway type column. No changes are required for Map 53. Table 4 removes bicycle facilities from the recommended network. In this table, the Redland Road row should read “From – Needwood Road (northern access); To – Muncaster Mill Road; Bikeway Type – Bikeable Shoulders.”
- Table 3 accurately states that there is an existing sidepath on Crabbs Branch Way between Shady Grove Road and Redland Road; however, Map 53 does not show the sidepath between the bridge on Crabbs Branch Way and Redland Road. This concrete path is substandard; however, it has already been accepted as a component of the Department’s existing bicycle network.
- Table 4 accurately notes that the Needwood Road facility is proposed for removal between Redland Road and Blueberry Hill Park. This is because there is not enough space to implement the facility, and no realistic mechanism for right-of-way expansion; however, Map 53 needs to be updated to remove the facility.

14. Fiscal impact analysis. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), working with DOT, has forwarded information from its fiscal impact analysis regarding the transportation elements in the Final Draft. DOT estimates the cost of transportation capital improvements in the Final Draft to be \$638.5 million, about half of which associated with the Montgomery College Metro Station which, as noted above, will likely not occur for a very long time, if ever. Of the balance, \$125.2 million is for transit projects (mostly the portion of the MD 355 BRT within the Sector Plan area), \$54.3 million for new streets for local circulation within the area, \$51.5 million for narrowing major roadways to slow speed and provide bikeway breezeways (so this is partially a bikeway cost), \$19.4 for traffic operational and traffic calming modifications at intersections, \$67.7 million for sidewalks and bikeways, and \$400,000 to develop an Urban Mobility Program (UMP) for Shady Grove.

The analysis makes certain assumptions about the share of costs between the County, State, and developers. For example, it presumes that the BRT cost would be split evenly between the State and County, even though the current State administration has made clear to date that it is not participating financially in BRT. Truthfully, for the larger projects called for this Plan there is no way to predict what will be a State/Federal cost and what would be a County cost.

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Marc Elrich
County Executive


Christopher R. Conklin
Director

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

M E M O R A N D U M

March 3, 2021

TO: Tom Hucker
President, Montgomery County Council

FROM: Christopher Conklin, Director
Department of Transportation 

SUBJECT: Shady Grove Minor Master Plan Amendment
MCDOT Comments on the Planning Board Draft

Based on discussions with Council Staff it was suggested that our department should provide more specific recommendations based on our comments on the December 2020 Planning Board Draft of the Shady Grove Minor Master Plan Amendment. We offer the following suggestions:

- 1) **Parking:** Our most important interest for the plan area is seeing that Park & Ride access is at kept at least at equal levels to today, or ideally that the supply of Park & Ride parking be expanded upon. The plan does not currently make it clear what the existing supply of parking is and what the plan's vision is for the future supply. The plan needs to provide information on how new development at and near the Shady Grove Metro Station will be conditioned to provide public parking that is designed toward Park & Ride use.

Previous planning for major economic initiatives has focused on adding parking capacity at this location. The plan area's Park & Ride capacity directly affects transit utilization by residents in the suburban and rural areas of Montgomery County and beyond and is also an important tool for meeting mode share goals in downstream policy areas. The State's Managed Lanes projects may also increase the demand for these Park & Ride spaces. Additionally, commuter parking at this location is an important strategy for reducing traffic and single-occupant commuting elsewhere in the County.

Office of the Director

101 Monroe Street, 10th Floor, Rockville, MD 20850 · 240-777-7170 · 240-777-7178 Fax
www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcdot



montgomerycountymd.gov/311 301-251-4850 TTY

- 2) **Gude Interchange:** While it is not our preference that an interchange necessarily be built at MD 355 and Gude Drive, for this plan to propose removing the interchange without adequate analysis or identified alternatives is premature. The plan should include strategies to address the operational failures of this intersection. Such analyses should account for the Recommended Preferred Alternative by the State for the Managed Lanes Project, which proposes a new interchange between I-270 and Gude Drive and is likely to significantly increase traffic volumes along Gude Drive. The plan should identify the strategy for addressing the unreasonable existing and projected congestion at this location before removing the interchange from the staging considerations.
- 3) **NADMS:** We support the vision of increasing the Non-Auto Driver Mode Share (NADMS) for the policy area. However, it appears that at full build-out: the plan area would not achieve the NADMS goals. The plan needs to either make additional recommendations for programs or services toward achieving the NADMS goals or consider lowering the NADMS goals to less ambitious targets. Some potential options toward achieving the NADMS goals may include additional transit service or tying the maximum amount of parking permissible for new development to the NADMS goals.
- 4) **Target Speeds:** While we recognize the desirability of lower target speeds, it may be difficult to effectively implement the ambitious target speeds recommended by the plan. This is most likely to be an issue along streets such as Shady Grove Road and Redland Road east of Crabbs Branch Way, where their width, and minimal curvature, and infrequent driveways and intersections can limit opportunities for achieving the proposed 30 MPH target speeds. It is likely that under the draft Complete Streets Design Guide: The Major Highway and Arterial portions of these streets may be classified as Boulevards, which have a default target speed of 35 MPH. This may be a more realistic target for these segments.

Should you have any questions regarding our comments on the plan, please feel free to contact me or Mr. Andrew Bossi, Senior Engineer, at andrew.bossi@montgomerycountymd.gov.


CC:HH:AB

cc: Hannah Henn, MCDOT
Gary Erenrich, MCDOT
Andrew Bossi, MCDOT
Clair Iseli, CEX
Meredith Wellington, CEX
Kara Olsen Salazar, DGS
Glenn Orlin, Council

MEMORANDUM

February 22, 2021

TO: Greg Ossont, Deputy Director
Department of General Services

FROM: Hannah Henn, Deputy Director for Transportation Policy 
Department of Transportation

SUBJECT: Shady Grove Minor Master Plan Amendment
MCDOT Planning Board Draft Comments

Thank you for the opportunity to review the December 2020 Planning Board Draft of the Shady Grove Minor Master Plan Amendment. Our most important points excerpted from our attached detailed comments are included below, with superscript numbers used to reference the comment numbers in the attachment. All of this input was provided from the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) to the Planning Board in May 2020, in advance of this draft plan, and we have not received responses from the Planning Department on our earlier comments. The plan transmitted to Council does not address these comments to our satisfaction.

- 1) **Traffic Adequacy:** The section on transportation standards states that even after increasing the congestion thresholds, the plan will still not meet these metrics. By not achieving the standards we set for ourselves, this approach disrupts the consistency and transparency of our policies, potentially confusing the public and complicating the development process. The plan needs to identify treatments needed to achieve the 2016 Subdivision Staging Policy that it is being developed under. These treatments might not be a high priority compared to non-auto projects, but we must nonetheless meet the policies we have set for ourselves or find an alternative solution and adjust our policies to reflect that.⁹⁸

We have suggested some potential analyses that might be used in addition to standard spot intersection analyses – such as evaluating corridor travel times – which may be useful in justifying the recommendations of the plan, but these analyses have not been performed nor elaborated upon in the narrative to build a case supporting the plan’s recommendations.¹³⁴

The plan proposes “to mitigate for failing intersections, [development] applicants shall provide multimodal improvements, including contributions towards transitways and Vision Zero improvements.” If it is decided to disregard our growth policies, it becomes extremely important to carefully detail how these contributions will be estimated and assessed.¹⁰⁰

- 2) **Managed Lanes Project:** The transportation analyses do not account for the Managed Lanes Project. We understand the difficulty with having limited information from the State over the timeline of this plan, but the State has now affirmed a Recommended Preferred Alternative which includes a new interchange along I-270 at Gude Drive. While it is not our preference that an interchange necessarily be built at MD 355 and Gude Drive, for this plan to propose removing the interchange without adequate analysis is premature.¹¹⁵ The assumptions stated in the plan’s narrative regarding this project also appear to imply incorrect interpretations of the Managed Lanes Project’s impacts to Gude Drive.¹⁰¹
- 3) **Park & Ride Facilities:** The plan needs to provide greater narrative toward the role of Shady Grove as a terminal station, and a comparison of Existing versus Proposed Park & Ride capabilities at the site.^{17,20} More information is needed on whether Park & Ride capacity is proposed to be reduced, kept the same, or expanded; or how new development by the Metro Station will be conditioned to provide public parking.⁴²

The elimination of large volumes of parking capacity could have a significant effect on transit utilization by residents located in Upcounty, Frederick County, and further areas. The parking capacity at Shady Grove Station is also an important tool for meeting mode share goals in other policy areas like Rockville, Twinbrook, White Flint, Grosvenor, Bethesda and Friendship Heights. We do not support reductions in Metro Station parking and believe the plan should more deliberately explore future expansion of parking at this location.

Traffic analyses also need to more deliberately consider the operations of the Shady Grove Metro Station, particularly with consideration of bus volumes and periodic surge outflows from the parking garages in the PM peak. Buses must have priority pathing and movements in accessing the Metro Station. Garages must be capable of clearing without stacking of outflow traffic.¹¹⁶

- 4) **Cross-Sections:** Many of the cross-sections and items in Table 2 have substantial issues in that they do not reflect master planned bicycle facilities, do not reflect other master plans, propose infrastructure requiring more right-of-way than is assigned by the plan, do not reflect existing design standards nor what is included in the proposed Complete Streets Design Guide, or information on the facilities is missing completely. When referencing modified cross-section standards: the plan needs to include narrative toward how these cross-sections are to be modified.^{49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 63, 64, 66, 67, 68, 69, 75, 76, 77, 79, 83, 85}

- 5) **Street Alignments:** Several street alignments need to be more deliberately considered from an operational standpoint, including aligning B-7 with the opposite street (Yellowstone Way),⁷⁸ and the alignment of the two brown-colored streets shown on Map 51 in relation to other nearby intersections.^{80, 81}

- 6) **NADMS:** Assuming full plan implementation: what baseline Non-Auto Driver Mode Share (NADMS) is expected to be achieved? What new facilities and services are needed to achieve the target NADMS? How will transit operate effectively with increased congestion tolerances?

These new services should be identified as future capital needs. It may be necessary to consider refining or even reducing the NADMS goals if the plan cannot identify any means of achieving them, which will affect the Transportation Analysis.⁹³

- 7) **UMP:** Discussion on a Unified Mobility Program (UMP) is notably absent. Transportation projects identified by the plan should be included within the UMP, including those needed to achieve NADMS goals. Not enacting the UMP at this time will delay its implementation by several years.¹⁴⁰

- 8) **Existing Transit; Needs:** More narrative is needed on existing Transit services in the plan area, including what services are present, average frequencies & speeds, coverage areas, and operating spans. This information can provide a snapshot of existing conditions, and where improvements may need to be targeted.⁴¹

- 9) **MARC Station Analysis:** No transportation analysis is included supporting a new MARC station. A new MARC station may compete with Metropolitan Grove – which is master planned to function much like a terminal station in relation to I-270 – and is likely to bring into question the viability of existing stations with strong community support including Washington Grove, Garrett Park, and Boyds, in addition to the proposed MARC station in White Flint. If additional stations are being proposed: analysis would need to consider impacts to Brunswick Line travel times and ridership resulting from additional stops.¹³

- 10) **Missing Bikeways:** The Bicycle Master Plan includes an off-street trail extending from Needwood Road to the Jeremiah Park site,⁹⁰ and also separated bike lanes along the extension of King Farm Blvd to the Metro Station.⁹¹ However, Map 53 (p130) does not show these connections, and Table 4 (p131) does not reference them as being removed. Clarification is needed on these bikeways.
- 11) **Air Quality:**^{31, 32} Page 86 states that an estimate of the carbon footprint is required but there does not appear to be any information on the results of this evaluation.³¹ The plan appears to imply that air quality goals may not be met, but there does not appear to be any information on how the plan would achieve these goals, nor any justification of why the goals should not need to be met.³²
- 12) **CIP List:** The CIP list is missing most of the projects identified by the plan, including the items listed below. MCDOT will be unable to provide the required Fiscal Impact Statement without a corrected list.¹⁰⁸
- New & reconstructed streets
 - New & reconstructed bikeways
 - New & reconstructed sidewalks
 - New & expanded transit services & facilities
 - New WMATA station at Montgomery College
 - A line item for Bikeshare
 - Areawide or corridor traffic calming
 - Items within the Prioritized List of Vision Zero Improvements
 - Intersection treatments
 - Development of streetscape standards

Should you have any questions regarding our comments on the plan, please feel free to contact me or Mr. Andrew Bossi, Senior Engineer, at andrew.bossi@montgomerycountymd.gov.

HH:AB

Attachment: Detailed Comments Spreadsheet

cc: Chris Conklin, MCDOT
Gary Erenrich, MCDOT
Andrew Bossi, MCDOT
Kara Olsen Salazar, DGS
Darren Bean, SHA



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February 24, 2021

The Honorable Tom Hucker, Council President
Montgomery County Council
Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue, 4th Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Council President Hucker,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Shady Grove Sector Plan Minor Master Plan Amendment (Draft Amendment). We would especially like to thank Mr. Nkosi Yearwood of the Montgomery County Planning Department for his outreach and for providing a very informative presentation on the Draft Amendment at our February 8, 2021 meeting, as well as to Rockville's Planning Commission on May 13, 2020.

Rockville's Mayor and Council would like to provide the following testimony on the Draft Amendment, for your consideration. Rockville's Planning Commission also provided a letter in May 2020 to the Montgomery County Planning Board on an earlier draft.

First, we would like to commend the Draft Amendment's overall vision and various strategies for transit, environmental sustainability, economic development, opportunities for the creation of new jobs and housing, including affordable housing, in the area near the Shady Grove Metro Station. We also strongly support the Draft Amendment's recommendation for a new recreation center, new public parks, and new trails in the Plan area.

In particular, we would like to note our strong support for the Draft Amendment's goals to provide a range of housing types, including workforce housing. We commend the Draft Amendment's recommendation to require 15 percent moderately priced dwelling units (MPDUs) as the highest priority public benefit for all new residential development. We request that the Draft Amendment recommend that publicly owned properties, including those owned by WMATA, provide 25 percent MPDUs or more.

Additionally, we support the following transit-related improvements:

- The future bus rapid transit (BRT) along Frederick Road (MD 355) and the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT).
- An additional MARC station at the Shady Grove Metro Station and the recommendation for the expansion of MARC services for off-peak, evening and weekend hours.

MAYOR
Bridget Donnell Newton

COUNCIL
Monique Ashton
Beryl L. Feinberg
David Myles
Mark Pierzchala

CITY MANAGER
Robert DiSpirito

CITY CLERK/DIRECTOR OF
COUNCIL OPERATIONS
Sara Taylor-Ferrell

ACTING CITY ATTORNEY
Cynthia Walters

- Exploring the feasibility of an infill Metro Station in proximity to the Montgomery College Rockville campus.
- Providing significant multimodal improvements, including improvements that support transitways and safe connections to transit, implementing new public streets on both sides of the WMATA property to improve circulation and access for new development and transit riders, and additional parking for WMATA riders.

It will be important for Montgomery County to focus on funding the infrastructure to support the alternate modes of transportation that this Draft Amendment envisions, especially because of the reduced emphasis on roads. Otherwise, the growth will take place without the infrastructure to support it.

The Mayor and Council is concerned with the potential negative impacts on Rockville (and the rest of the surrounding area) with respect to traffic, schools, the environment and other infrastructure and facilities; and requests that there be reconsideration of certain components of the plan, including when the plan is implemented.

With respect to transportation, the Mayor and Council wish to express the following concerns:

- Rockville agrees with removing the previously planned grade-separated interchange, as a staging requirement. We strongly believe the Plan Amendment that is ultimately adopted should call for improvements to the intersection to manage both the congestion and the impending use of that intersection for the Bus Rapid Transit. We recognize and applaud the focus on increasing the use of transit in this area, which should offer some congestion mitigation over time; but we believe that the intersection in question is still very likely to get worse before any of the long-term investments are made.
- We request that the Montgomery County not recommend new traffic assessment standards that will permit more congestion than the City's approved standards for signalized intersections, including those along MD 355. The new standards will inevitably bring more congestion to an already-congested area. We are also concerned that this change will place Rockville projects at a disadvantage due to Rockville's stricter standards.
- While we support the aspiration of achieving higher Non-Auto Driver Mode Share (NADMS) goals for the plan area, we are aware of how difficult "stretch" goals of this nature have been to achieve in other plan areas. We therefore request that the County be very careful in how the NADMS goals are applied. The Draft Amendment not only aspires to a higher NADMS, it proposes that these goals should be incorporated into how development projects are reviewed by permitting a greater level of trip-reduction credit than is currently the case. It is important that projects be supported by verifiable data and appropriate traffic mitigation, where necessary, and we suggest that the plan include this implementation guidance.

- As one of our highest priorities, we urge that the adopted Plan Amendment include a provision calling for a grade-separated pedestrian and bike crossing for the signalized intersection of MD 355 with King Farm Boulevard. Additional development in the Shady Grove area will only add to the demand for crossing that very busy road. Residents in Rockville's King Farm neighborhood have communicated to us how important such an improvement would be for safety, and we will be incorporating that same provision into our updated Comprehensive Plan.
- We request that the bikeway recommendations in the amendment should be consistent with the 2017 City of Rockville's Bikeway Master Plan, by providing buffered bicycle lanes for MD 355.

With respect to the treatment of school facilities in the Draft Amendment:

- We express strong opposition to the provision that new development in the Shady Grove Sector, which is mostly in the Gaithersburg Cluster, would potentially be supported by a new elementary school site in Rockville in the Richard Montgomery Cluster, which is already suffering from over-crowded conditions. Instead, Montgomery County should work with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) to ensure that the preferred school site within the Shady Grove Sector is provided. If the preferred site is not available, the plan should identify an alternative site within the Shady Grove Sector area where development is occurring, rather than on sites in King Farm.
- Any new location of the MCPS Bus Depot must not be in close proximity to residential areas in Rockville due to the negative impacts of traffic, noise, and fumes, including at very early hours in the morning.

We recommend the following additional considerations:



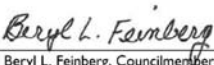

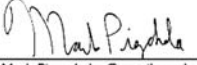
- While we applaud the inclusion of parks, trails, and open spaces, we request that there be policy language added to ensure that any such trails seek, where possible, to connect with trails in Rockville, Gaithersburg, and Washington Grove. Our community members, as we all know, do not limit their movements by jurisdictional boundaries. We also encourage the County Council to enforce the delivery of the parks, trails and open spaces as development takes place.
- While we commend the Draft Amendment's recommendation to identify the need for Fire and Rescue services in the plan area, we encourage you to reconsider placing a fire station on such a prominent opportunity site, at the key intersection of MD 355 and Shady Grove Road. We recommend identifying an alternative site. Rockville envisions a future where both sides of MD 355, south of Shady Grove Road, form a welcoming "gateway" of attractive development.

Testimony to County Council on Shady Grove Sector Plan
February 24, 2021

- Although we support the sustainability goals of tree canopy of 40% for the plan area, we would like to challenge the County to aim for reaching a 50% goal for the plan area, which is approximately Rockville's current tree canopy.
- We encourage you to take into consideration how trends may change as a result of COVID-19, including how it may affect mixed-use development. We recommend that the plan include a call to evaluate post-pandemic market trends to ensure that the assumptions built into the plan will remain as before. We will be doing the same in Rockville's plans.
- We believe it would be useful to consider the value of coordinated planning among Montgomery County, the City of Gaithersburg, and the City of Rockville for the Shady Grove Road corridor, including the intersection of MD 355 and Shady Grove Road. Each of the three jurisdictions, plus the State of Maryland, have an interest in the transportation performance and land use of this area. A formal interjurisdictional study of the Shady Grove corridor may even be warranted at some time in the near future.

Thank you again for the opportunity to review the Draft Amendment and provide feedback. We look forward to seeking ways to coordinate our planning and implementation efforts in the future.

Sincerely,

 Bridget Donnell Newton, Mayor	
 Monique Ashton, Councilmember	 Beryl L. Feinberg, Councilmember
 David Myles, Councilmember	 Mark Pierzchala, Councilmember

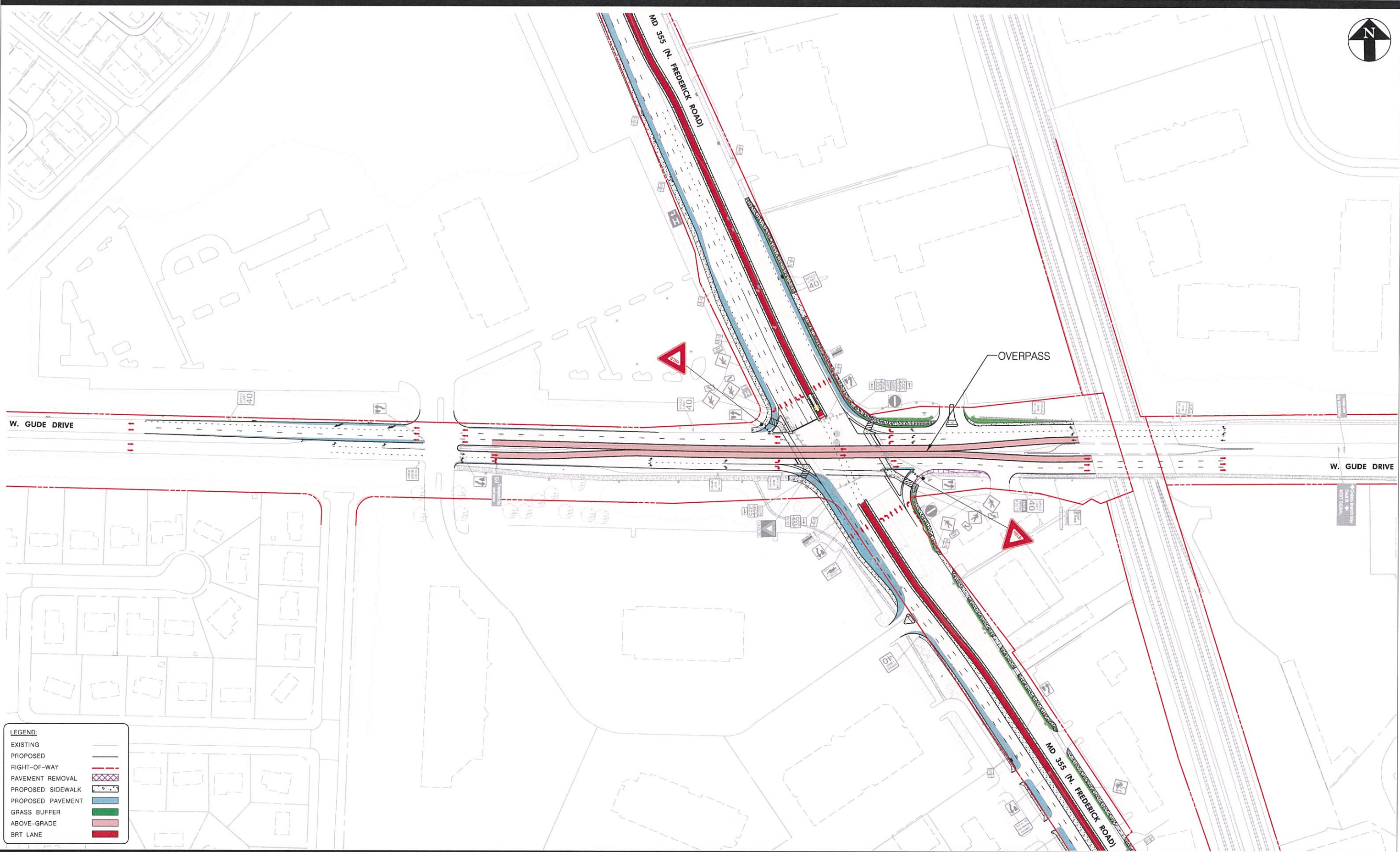
Rockville Mayor and Council

cc: Montgomery County Council
Pamela Dunn, Montgomery County Council Staff
Nkosi Yearwood, Montgomery County Planning Department
Rockville Planning Commission
Rob DiSpirito, City Manager
Tim Chesnutt, Acting Deputy City Manager
Ricky Barker, Director of Planning and Development Services

Testimony to County Council on Shady Grove Sector Plan
February 24, 2021

Craig Simoneau, Director of Public Works
Christine Henry, Acting Director of Recreation and Parks
David B. Levy, Assistant Director, PDS
Manisha Tewari, Principal Planner
Asmara Habte, Director of Housing and Community Development
Emad Elshafei, Chief of Traffic and Transportation, Public Works
James Wasilak, Chief of Zoning, PDS
Andrea Gilles, Chief of Long-Range Planning, PDS
Faramarz Mokhtari, Senior Transportation Planner, Public Works

OPERATOR:ckeller - PLOTTED: Tuesday, August 20, 2019 AT 01:23 PM
FILE NAME: \\2015\\43 MNCPPC Mont On-Call Planning Prime\\Task 18 Shady Grove Vision Zero_Intersection\\dwg\\MD355andGudeDrive.dgn



MD 355 (N. Frederick Road) at W. Gude Drive
Proposed Improvements: Above-Grade Option 4 - Overpass



Table 3 – Pedestrian Counts and Delay

Pedestrian Crossing Counts and Delay Summary (counts taken between 6:30am-9:30am, 11:00am-1:00pm, and 4:00pm-7:00pm w/ some mild variation at lunch period)				
Intersection	Approach	Total Pedestrian Crossings per Approach	Pedestrian Delay AM (seconds)	Pedestrian Delay PM (seconds)
Indianola at Crabbs Branch	Crabbs Branch Crossing at Indianola (north side)	13	12.2	12.2
	Crabbs Branch Crossing at Indianola (south side)	7	12.2	12.2
	Indianola Crossing at Crabbs Branch (east side)	20	31.9	31.9
	Indianola Crossing at Crabbs Branch (west side)	15	31.9	31.9
E. Gude at Crabbs Branch	Crabbs Branch Crossing at E. Gude (north side)	8	44.1	44.1
	Cecil Crossing at W. Gude (south side)	20	31.4	31.4
	E. Gude Crossing at Crabbs Branch (east side)	11	64.4	64.4
	E. Gude Crossing at Crabbs Branch (west side)	19	64.4	64.4
Indianola/ Watkins Pond at 355	355 Crossing at Indianola (north side)	45	63.5	61.7
	355 Crossing at Indianola (south side)	2	N/A	N/A
	Indianola Crossing at 355 (east side)	37	28.2	30.7
	Watkins Pond Crossing at 355 (west side)	30	28.2	30.7
King Farm at 355	355 Crossing at King Farm (north side)	211	63.9	63.9
	355 Crossing at King Farm (south side)	117	63.9	63.9
	King Farm Crossing at 355 (east side)	30	20.3	20.3
	King Farm Crossing at 355 (west side)	24	20.3	20.3
Redland at 355	355 Crossing at Redland (north side)	71	63.9	63.9
	355 Crossing at Redland (south side)	64	63.9	63.9
	Redland Crossing at 355 (east side)	41	32.7	32.7
	Redland Crossing at 355 (west side)	41	32.7	32.7
Ridgemont at 355	355 Crossing at Ridgemont (north side)	0	N/A	N/A
	355 Crossing at Ridgemont (south side)	8	64.4	64.4
	Ridgemont Crossing at 355 (east side)	16	15	15
	Ridgemont Crossing at 355 (west side)	5	15	15
Gude at 355	355 Crossing at Gude (north)	3	N/A	N/A
	355 Crossing at Gude (south)	35	71.1	63.5
	E. Gude Crossing at 355 (east side)	18	34.7	38.9
	W. Gude Crossing at 355 (west side)	27	48	44.1
King Farm at Gaither Road	Gaither Crossing at King Farm (north side)	27	32.2	32.2
	Gaither Crossing at King Farm (south side)	64	32.2	32.2
	King Farm at Gaither (east side)	23	32.2	32.2
	King Farm at Gaither (west side)	35	32.2	32.2

Resolution No.:	<u>18-957</u>
Introduced:	<u>September 19, 2017</u>
Adopted:	<u>October 31, 2017</u>

**COUNTY COUNCIL
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

Lead Sponsor: Council Vice President Riemer
Co-Sponsors: Council President Berliner and Councilmembers Elrich, Navarro, and Leventhal

SUBJECT: Transportation Solutions for Northwest Montgomery County

Background

1. Mobility for Upcounty residents is limited due to congestion and a lack of public transportation alternatives to I-270, MD 355, and other roads serving Clarksburg, Germantown, Montgomery Village, Gaithersburg and surrounding areas.
2. Four major infrastructure projects serving this area are envisioned in county master plans, including expanded capacity on I-270, the Corridor Cities Transitway, Bus Rapid Transit on or near MD 355, and the extension of Midcounty Highway (M-83) north of Montgomery Village Avenue.
3. For many years, there has been no clear consensus to extend Midcounty Highway to the north, yet master plans have assumed the availability of such an extension to put these plans in balance between land use and transportation.
4. Montgomery County is committed to protecting our environment and doing our part to stem the carbon emissions that are driving global climate change, as demonstrated in the following actions:
 - a. Resolution 18-846, adopted on June 20, 2017, reaffirmed the Council's commitment to meet the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement.
 - b. The Montgomery County Department of Transportation has adopted a Sustainability Policy that commits that the County will “Plan and implement a transportation system that broadly considers ecosystem and climate impacts, reduces and prevents waste and pollution, uses renewable resources, uses sustainable sources of energy and reduces energy consumption.”
 - c. The Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan, approved by the Council in 2013, states that “Expanding transit infrastructure through more efficient use of public rights-of-way is essential if current and future congestion is

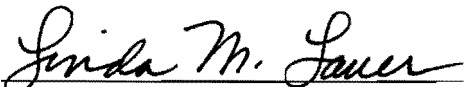
to be mitigated. In addition to reducing Countywide travel time for drivers, an expanded transit network is necessary to support the County's land use, environmental, and economic development goals and make transit a reliable alternative to driving in the County's developed core."

Action

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following resolution:

1. The Council supports expanded capacity on I-270, the Corridor Cities Transitway, Bus Rapid Transit on or near MD 355, and improvements on MD 355. These improvements will provide significant, immediate relief for Upcounty residents. These improvements align with our economic development strategies, providing the broadest and most diverse benefits, and minimize impervious surface, stormwater runoff, carbon emissions, and other environmental impacts.
2. The Council directs the Montgomery County Planning Board not to assume additional road capacity from the northern extension of Midcounty Highway when calculating the land use - transportation balance in future master plans, including but not limited to the upcoming Gaithersburg East Master Plan and the Germantown Plan for Town Sector Zone. This step ensures that any new development allowed under these plans does not rely on the northern extension of Midcounty Highway, while retaining the right-of-way for this extension in these plans.

This is a correct copy of Council action.


Linda M. Lauer, Clerk of the Council

February 16, 2021

To County Council President Katz and County Council Members

Gentlefolk:

The Washington Grove Historic Preservation Commission objects to the provision in the Planning Board Draft at page 104 (110 of 152) which appears to endorse the MTA's MARC Capstone plan for adding a third main line rail on the northeast side of the Brunswick Line tracks. (See attached.)

Specifically, Shady Grove Sector Plan staff are encouraging, without further study or stakeholder input, property owners in the Sector Plan area adjacent to the northeast side of the existing MARC rail to dedicate ("if feasible") a width of 25' (i.e., an easement) for future implementation of the MTA plan.

The MTA Brunswick Line triple track plan extends from Union Station, through Washington Grove (the first MARC stop after Shady Grove) and all the way north through the County. Implementation would have adverse effects on Washington Grove's National Register Historic District and community. A 25-foot extension of the NE side right-of-way would put it in the middle of Railroad Street, i.e., within the Town and National Register boundaries. The register-eligible Washington Grove Humpback Bridge would be demolished. MARC car parking would be lost, endangering our qualification to have a MARC stop.

This Master Plan draft provision is premature and requires further study and stakeholder input before any land encumbrance proceeds.

--how will the Rt. 270 hotlanes project, changing commuting practices, potential monorail, etc., impact the need for this project?

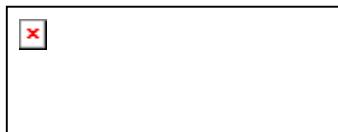
--what is the impact on the many other historic resources along the Brunswick Line, e.g., the historic Gaithersburg and Silver Spring stations? The Brunswick Line itself is a National Register Historic District.

--is the project cost estimate, \$1.342 BILLION, in the realm of possibility?

--what is the advantage to Sector Plan property owners to go to the trouble and cost of giving the State an easement for a questionable project? Why is the staff making this recommendation at this time?

The Washington Grove HPC will need to be included in any planning decisions relative to the MTA plan referenced above. Also please note that the boundaries of the Washington Grove Historic District have recently been modified to include more of its historic setting.

Thanks for your consideration,



Robert Booher
Chair, Washington Grove HPC

February 22, 2021

Councilmembers:

I object to the recommendation in the draft plan that prematurely endorses the unfunded, concept-only Maryland Transportation Administration MARC Cornerstone Plan. (see links below) This plan would involve taking 25' on the northeast side of the CSX/MARC tracks throughout Montgomery County for a new MARC third main line. Washington Grove would not be a stop on the new MTA third rail service.

For Washington Grove, the third rail would likely cause the demolition of our historic Humpback Bridge, loss of our MARC parking spaces and thereby our eligibility for a MARC stop, and incursion into Railroad St., the Town, and the Historic District. It would also adversely impact all our neighboring small businesses on the narrow strip of land between E. Diamond and the tracks in Gaithersburg. The adverse impacts to historic properties would not be limited to Washington Grove—there are historic stations and districts all up and down the CSX/MARC NE tracks, e.g., the Gaithersburg Station and freight house museum, Silver Spring, Brunswick, and Point of Rocks stations.

The Planning Board's Draft Plan urges the immediate dedication of property within the Shady Grove Sector for the third rail— "properties adjacent to the existing MARC rail should dedicate no less than 25', where feasible."

This action is premature and should be preceded by a feasibility/needs study and widespread stakeholder input on a fleshed-out plan, to include participation by Washington Grove. What is the likelihood of raising the estimated \$1.34 billion for the project? With evolving commuting habits and the implementation of the Rt. 270 hot lanes project for traffic congestion, will there be a need for this project?

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Littlefield

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Washington Grove 20880

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March 1, 2021

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Division of Transportation Engineering
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Dear Kyle Lukacs, Tim Cupples, Sogand Seirafi, Daniel Sheridan, Marcelo Cortez, and Eric Willis:

Thank you for your recent presentation to share information on (1) possible routes for the shared use path linking Washington Grove with Crabbs Branch Way and (2) the proposed Amity Drive extension. It was informative and helpful. It will be very beneficial for Washington Grove residents to have a shorter route to the Shady Grove Shopping Center, Metro, Rock Creek Regional Park, and other points. However, the Amity Drive extension should be a shared use path, not a road.

(1) Shared Use Path between Washington Grove and Crabbs Branch Way

We have been waiting for this connection for years and are thrilled to see the plan moving forward. The path will be used by walkers, runners, bicyclists, moms and dads with baby carriages, children playing, and other recreators.

This letter addresses the four routes under consideration:

- Starting at the end of Brown Street
- Along the industrial zone
- Across the Washington Grove Conservation Meadow
- From Ridge Road to Picea View Court.

The Brown Street Option is the best choice.

It is the safest. This section of Brown Street is a tree-lined, quiet residential area rimmed by large homes with generous lawns. The street is open and comfortably wide. It has only eight houses on it. Each house has a double driveway, with a capacity of two full-size cars, plus a two-car garage, giving each house room for six full-size cars to park off-street. If all cars were parked off-street, pedestrians and bicyclists would have a full double lane route. However, even assuming some cars will be parked on the street, there is still ample room for pedestrians, bicyclists, and others to easily pass by. The slope of the street is similar to that of other streets in Washington Grove, and less than that on other streets and paths in Montgomery County. Brown Street is similar to countless streets in the County that are used for walking and biking.

There are no competing land-use claims. Washington Grove has jurisdiction over Brown Street, and the County has jurisdiction over the land beyond. Only a small right of way needs to be acquired to make this connection. Further, this section of Brown Street was annexed to Washington Grove in 1994. As outlined in the annexation documents, as a condition of annexation the end of Brown Street is to be used for a bike path.¹

Washington Grove has officially been on record supporting a connection between the Town and Metro since at least 2009, where it is cited in the Town's Master Plan.²

It is the most cost-effective. As Montgomery County tax-payers we want our dollars to be spent responsibly. This is the shortest route, thus saving construction and maintenance costs. This option was evaluated by the County to be the lowest cost, most direct option.

The Industrial Zone Option should be rejected.

This option is dangerous. In this proposal, the path would start on Railroad Street, a heavily travelled road outside of Washington Grove. Railroad Street is traversed by many industrial vehicles, including trucks that regularly enter and leave Roberts Oxygen, as well as tractor trailers and the Route 61 Ride-On bus. When these large vehicles make the hairpin turn here, they typically take up both lanes.

Ridge Road in Washington Grove is a major entrance to the Town. Drivers coming into the Grove often are not familiar with the 15 miles per hour speed limit or the fact that Grove residents use streets as they would use sidewalks. Grove residents walk and often stop to chat with neighbors in the middle of our roads. Drivers coming into the Grove from Railroad Street cannot see into the Grove because of the seven-foot high fence on the edge of Roberts Oxygen.

¹ Resolution No. 94-04 – Resolution Authorizing the Annexation to the Town of Washington Grove of Approximately 2.88 Acres of Land Located at the Intersection of Brown Street and Ridge Road.

² Town of Washington Grove 2009 Master Plan, p. 24 https://washingtongrovermd.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/2009_MasterPlan.pdf.

Drivers often drive too fast coming into Town. If the path was placed here, Grovers going to and from the path would be at risk of being hit by a vehicle.

This option is ugly. Currently a high fence runs along the length of the industrial zone. Inside the industrial zone are trucks, gas tanks, and other types of mechanical equipment. On the Grove side of the path would be the fences along the backyards of houses on Brown Street. When people are outside recreating, they don't want to look at fences. They want to enjoy the beautiful outdoors. There is nothing inviting about a path that would be fenced in on both sides.

Railroad Street is located outside of the Town. Railroad Street is not even part of Washington Grove, so it would not be a connection between Washington Grove and Crabbs Branch Way.

Obtaining the necessary land would be difficult and/or costly. Neither Washington Grove nor the County own the land on which this route is suggested. Obtaining the land will require the County to pay whatever price the private seller wants or initiate the time consuming and expensive process of condemnation.

This option has nothing whatsoever to recommend it.

The Washington Grove Conservation Meadow Option would cause grave harm.

This route would parallel Brown Street, running behind the houses on Brown Street, rather than in front of them. It is not clear why this route has been suggested. Brown Street is already a built road, whereas a path across the Conservation Meadow would have to be dug and paved. This would kill trees and other plant life, destroy animal habitat, and diminish the amount of pervious surface in Washington Grove. It would be disruptive to the animals and humans who live in the Grove, with heavy machinery coming in, making noise, blocking roads, and bringing the unpleasant smell of asphalt. It is a more costly alternative than Brown Street, but would offer nothing to enhance recreational activities, safety, attractiveness, or any other feature. It is not an acceptable choice.

The Picea View option is irrelevant for the purpose of linking Washington Grove with Crabbs Branch Way.

This route does not fulfill the goal of linking Washington Grove with Crabbs Branch Way, so it should not be considered for that purpose. This route would offer an extremely roundabout way of getting to the Grove Shopping Center, Metro, and nearby locations. It would involve travelling through Shady Grove Crossing, to Amity Drive, to Epsilon Drive, then to Shady Grove Road, then finally to Crabbs Branch Way. This location would not serve as a reasonable connector for the purposes of this project.

There is nothing objectionable about this link per se, but it is not a substitute for a safe, efficient route from Washington Grove to Crabbs Branch Way.

(2) Linking of Crabbs Branch Way with Amity Drive

A road between Crabbs Branch Way and Amity Drive is unnecessary. Traffic already moves smoothly on Shady Grove Road and surrounding environs. This road would bring more air, noise, and light pollution while adding to traffic congestion.

Further, we are living in a unique time in the County. We really don't know how much our roads will be used once the pandemic is over. It is likely that many will continue to work from home and many offices will decide not to open. Road planning should be modified to take into account the new ways of working.

A better alternative is to build a shared use path. This will allow residents more opportunities to get outside, also to walk and bike to nearby amenities.

Closing

In summary, for the link between Washington Grove and Crabbs Branch Way, it is clear that the Brown Street Option is the best. Safety and attractiveness, the annexation agreement, and cost factors all support this choice. There are no known objective data weighing against it.

Linking of Crabbs Branch Way and Amity Drive should be done through a shared use path, not a road.

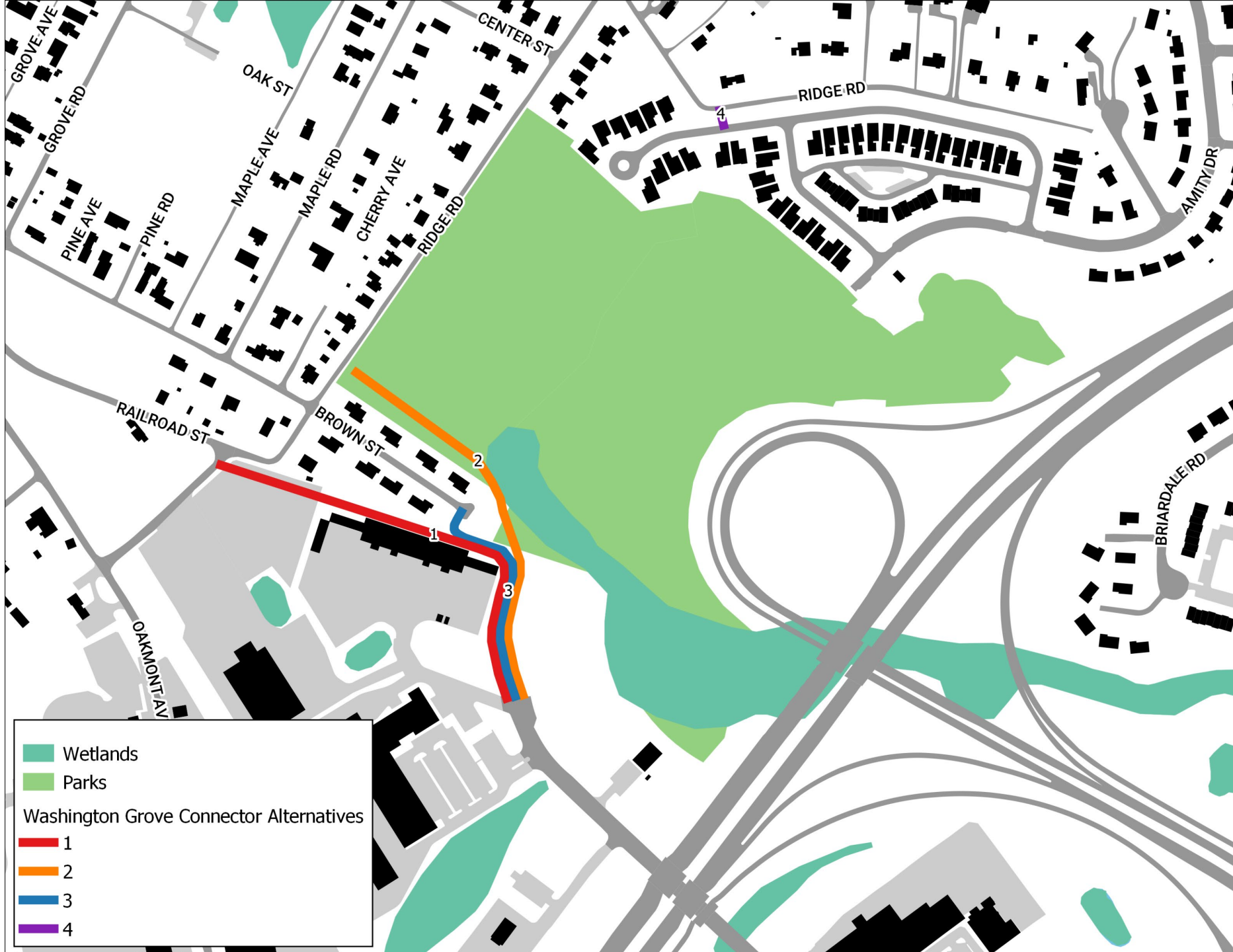
We would also like to add a point about the width of the path that will be built. A 12-foot wide path is the better choice. Many people on shared use paths are not familiar with the rule "stay to the right unless you are passing," and wander over towards the wrong side. When trail users are being passed, sometimes they don't hear or understand the purpose of the audible warning, so it is important to make sure the person passing can allow for a wide berth. And the path will be used by families with young children, who are often unpredictable on a path. Their safety must be protected.

Thank you for your work on this project and your consideration.

Very truly yours,

Barbara Raimondo
Dennis Kirschbaum

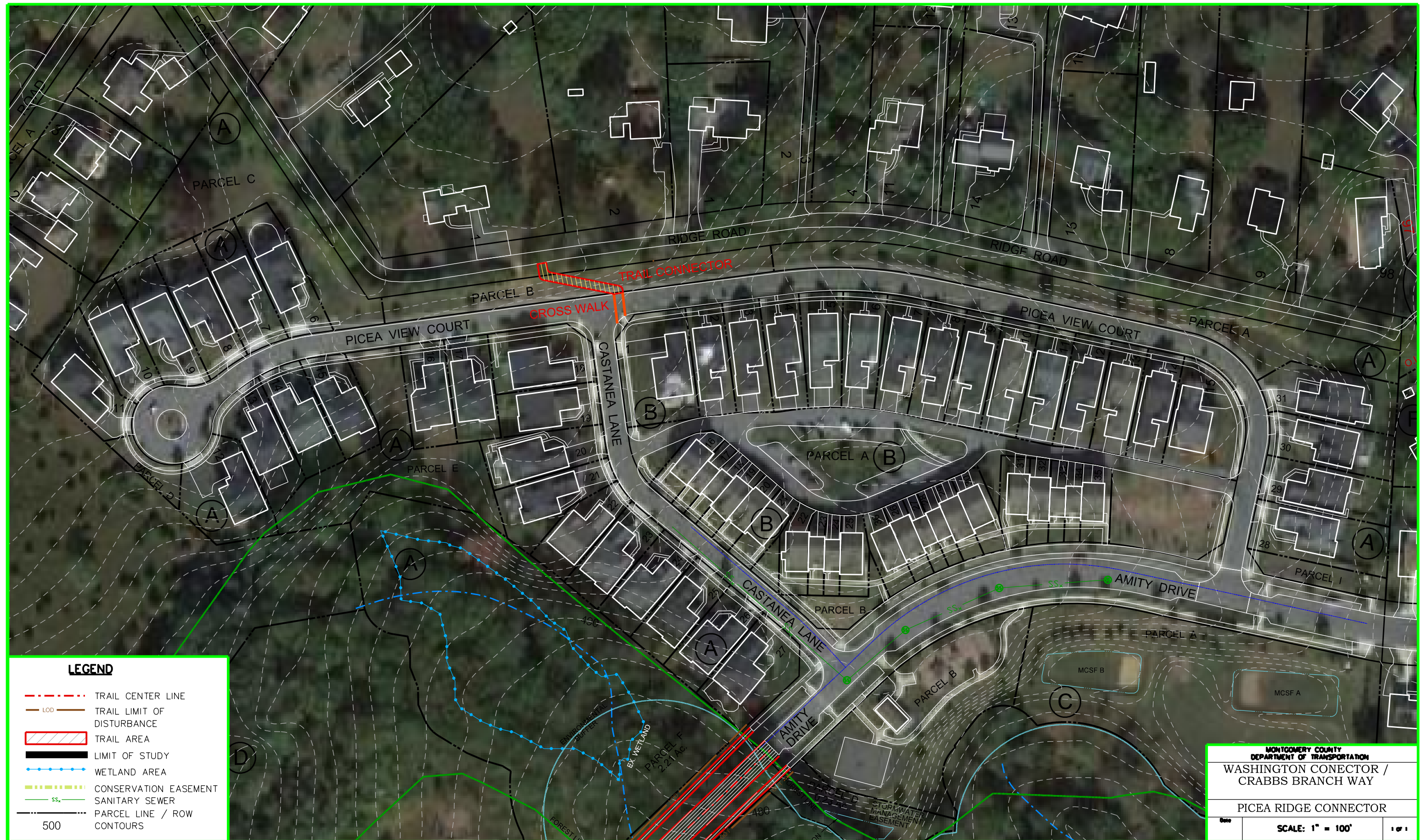
Trail Alternatives













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February 21, 2021

Additional Testimony before the County Council on the Shady Grove Minor Master Plan Amendment

John Compton, Mayor of Washington Grove

As an original participant in the creation of the 2006 Shady Grove Master Plan, and since then a member of the Shady Grove Master Plan Advisory Committee, I'm writing to urge the Board to consider the following modification to this Amendment to the Shady Grove Master Plan. Master Plans carry weight in planning and decision making, and this recommendation, though minor, better reflects the intentions of the Plan:

Bikeway Connection to Washington Grove

Recommended change/clarification:

- In Table 4 (p130) Amendments to the 2018 Bicycle Master Plan
For the Project "Oakmont Street", modify the Status description to read, "Focus on Safer Parallel Connection **at ~~Brown Street~~ to Washington Grove**".

The creation of a safe and direct bikeway/multiuser pathway connection to the Shady Grove Metro will realize a significant goal of the Washington Grove Master Plan. Montgomery County has funded facilities planning and constructing thsuch a pathway, and currently the MCDOT "Washington Grove Connector – Crabbs Branch Extension" study is in progress. They are evaluating a number of roughly parallel alternative routes from Crabbs Branch, any of which achieve the desired connection to Washington Grove. *A specific route for construction will not be chosen until this study is completed and the Town of Washington Grove and County agree on how to proceed.*

In previous plans we viewed naming "Brown Street" as shorthand for Washington Grove. This Amendment should recognize the current study goals of MCDOT study and accurately describe the connection as being to Washington Grove rather than identifying Brown Street specifically.

Thank you for making this change in the context of Washington Grove and a viable Metro-centered residential community.

John G. Compton
Mayor, Washington Grove
240-432-5700 and johncompton@me.com