

# Montgomery County Historic Preservation

## Staff Report

<p><b>ADDRESS:</b> 10700 Columbia Pike, Silver Spring</p> <p><b>RESOURCE:</b> Rober B. Morse Complex (Master Plan Site #33/22)</p> <p><b>APPLICANT:</b> Jamie Henson (Sarah Michailof, Architect) and Montgomery County DOT</p> <p><b>REVIEW:</b> HAWP</p> <p><b>CASE NO.:</b> 1155334</p> <p><b>PROPOSAL:</b> Right-of-way Hardscape Alterations</p>	<p><b>MEETING DATE:</b> 5/13/2026</p> <p><b>REPORT DATE:</b> 5/6/2026</p> <p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE:</b> 4/29/2026</p> <p><b>TAX CREDIT ELIGIBLE:</b> No</p> <p><b>STAFF:</b> Dan Bruechert</p>
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### Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends the HPC approve with the HAWP application.

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### Architectural Description

**Significance:** Individually Listed Master Plan Site: *Robert B. Morse Water Filtration Plant (#33-22)*

**Date:** 1930-36

**Style:** Georgian Revival

From *Places from the Past*:

“The Robert B. Morse Water Filtration Plant is important in the early history of the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) and the overall suburban development of Montgomery County. The Burnt Mills filtration plant, designed to function as the “water supply workhorse” of Montgomery and Prince George’s counties, was the region’s principal source of reliable clean water until the 1950s. At the height of its operations, this ambitious water supply project supplied the region with 10 million gallons of water a day and created the foundation of a water supply infrastructure that significantly influenced the direction and nature of residential development in the 20th century.

This WSSC plant also has architectural importance as an example of Georgian Revival style architecture and as a period and type of public works design and construction. Although the Morse filtration apparatus has been removed from the site, the distinctive pump houses and dam structure still stand.”

Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) documentation was completed for the complex in 2008 and is available from the Library of Congress.<sup>1</sup>



Figure 1: The Robert B. Morse Complex Master Plan Site includes several structures and crosses Columbia Pike/US 29.

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## Proposal

The applicant proposes alter the sidewalk and street median to accommodate the construction of the Bus Rapid Transit route along US 29.

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## Applicable Guidelines

When reviewing alterations and new construction within the environmental setting of individually listed Master Plan Sites several documents are to be utilized as guidelines to assist the Commission in developing their decision. These documents include the Approved and Adopted Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation in Montgomery County Maryland creating the site (*Amendment*),

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<sup>1</sup> Digitized HAER documentation is available here: <https://www.loc.gov/item/md1796/>.

Montgomery County Code Chapter 24A-8 (Chapter 24A-8), and the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation (Standards). The pertinent information in these documents is outlined below.

### **Montgomery County Code Chapter 24A-8**

- (a) The commission shall instruct the director to deny a permit if it finds, based on the evidence and information presented to or before the commission that the alteration for which the permit is sought would be inappropriate, inconsistent with or detrimental to the preservation, enhancement or ultimate protection of the historic site or historic resource within an historic district, and to the purposes of this chapter.
- (b) The commission shall instruct the director to issue a permit, or issue a permit subject to such conditions as are found to be necessary to ensure conformity with the purposes and requirements of this chapter, if it finds that:
  - 1) The proposal will not substantially alter the exterior features of an historic site or historic resource within an historic district; or
  - 2) The proposal is compatible in character and nature with the historical, archeological, architectural or cultural features of the historic site or the historic district in which an historic resource is located and would not be detrimental thereto or to the achievement of the purposes of this chapter; or
  - 6) The proposal is necessary in order that unsafe conditions or health hazards be remedied;

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### **Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation**

- 2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, space and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
- 9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportions, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
- 10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

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### **Staff Discussion**

The subject property is a multi-building complex that served as the principal source of county water until the 1950s. The most prominent buildings are the paired two-story Georgian Revival buildings that front Columbia Pike, the High Lift Pumping Station on the north side of the street, and the Low-Lift Pumping Station on the south. Other resources include the concrete dam, the outline of the sedimentation basin,

original lampposts, and a flood containment wall. The Master Plan amendment created a site that crosses Columbia Pike/US 29 above grade and includes the sidewalks and road surface.

As part of the development of a Bus Rapid Transit route, the County Department of Transportation, proposes to remove and replace the existing sidewalk on the south side of Columbia Pike and regrade a portion of the site. No work is proposed on the north side of the street.

The Planning Board held a Mandatory Referral hearing and provided comments and recommended project approval at the April 23, 2026 Planning Board meeting.<sup>2</sup>

The existing sidewalk is approximately 3' (three feet) wide and is constructed to the edge of the road. The applicant proposes to remove the existing sidewalk, re-grade this area to better tie into the road level, and install a new sidewalk, separated from the road by a 3' (three foot) wide grass buffer.

Staff finds the overall impact of the proposed work to be relatively minor on the historic resources. The existing sidewalk is not a historic feature, as Columbia Pike has been widened several times resulting in its current appearance. Staff additionally finds that the proposed regrading will have a minimal impact on the character of the historic resources and will improve access by providing a level transition from the road into the parking lot. Finally, Staff finds the replacement sidewalk and grass buffer will not substantially alter the character of the sites, as this configuration is common a suburban setting. Therefore, Staff finds the proposed work will only have a minimal impact on the historic character of the site and will not impact any historic fabric. Staff recommends the HPC approve the HAWP under 24A-8(b)(1) and (2) and *Standards #2, #9, and #10*.

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## Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Commission approve the HAWP application under the Criteria for Issuance in Chapter 24A-8(b)(1) and (2); and therefore will not substantially alter the exterior features of the historic resource and is compatible in character with the Master Plan Site and the purposes of Chapter 24A;

and with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation #2, #9, and #10*;

and with the general condition that the applicant shall present an electronic set of drawings, if applicable, to Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) staff for review and stamping prior to submission for the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services (DPS) building permits;

and with the general condition that final project design details, not specifically delineated by the Commission, shall be approved by HPC staff or brought back to the Commission as a revised HAWP application at staff's discretion;

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<sup>2</sup> The Mandatory Referral review is a requirement for The Staff Report for the Mandatory Referral is available here: <https://montgomeryplanningboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/US-29-BRT-Staff-Report-20260326.pdf>. The recording of the Planning Board hearing is available here: [https://mncppc.granicus.com/player/clip/3334?view\\_id=7&redirect=true](https://mncppc.granicus.com/player/clip/3334?view_id=7&redirect=true).

and with the general condition that the applicant shall notify the Historic Preservation Staff if they propose to make any alterations to the approved plans. Once the work is completed the applicant will contact the staff person assigned to this application at 301-563-3400 or [dan.bruechert@montgomeryplanning.org](mailto:dan.bruechert@montgomeryplanning.org) to schedule a follow-up site visit.

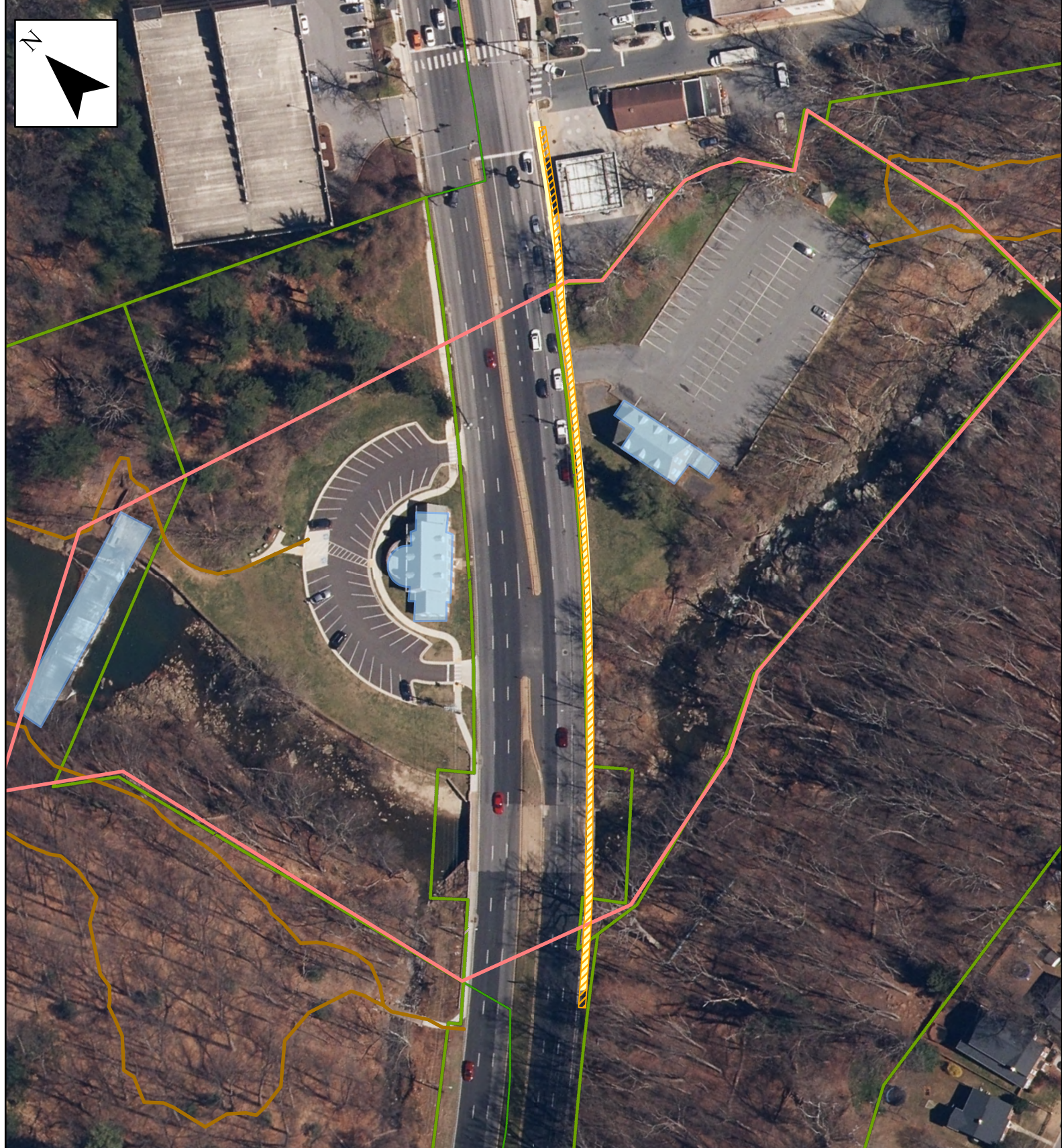
**Description of Property:** Please describe the building and surrounding environment. Include information on significant structures, landscape features, or other significant features of the property:

**Description of Work Proposed:** Please give an overview of the work to be undertaken:

Work Item 1: _____	
Description of Current Condition:	Proposed Work:

Work Item 2: _____	
Description of Current Condition:	Proposed Work:

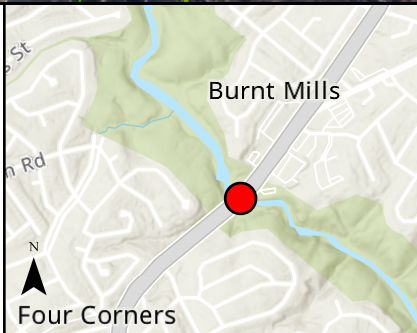
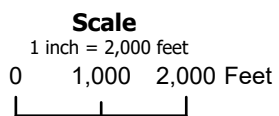
Work Item 3: _____	
Description of Current Condition:	Proposed Work:



**Legend**

- Historic Site
- Robert B. Morse Complex - MP Historic Site
- Burnt Mills East and West Special Parks
- Park Trails

- Existing**
- Existing Sidewalk
- Proposed**
- Proposed Sidewalk



**Figure 1: Robert B. Morse Complex**



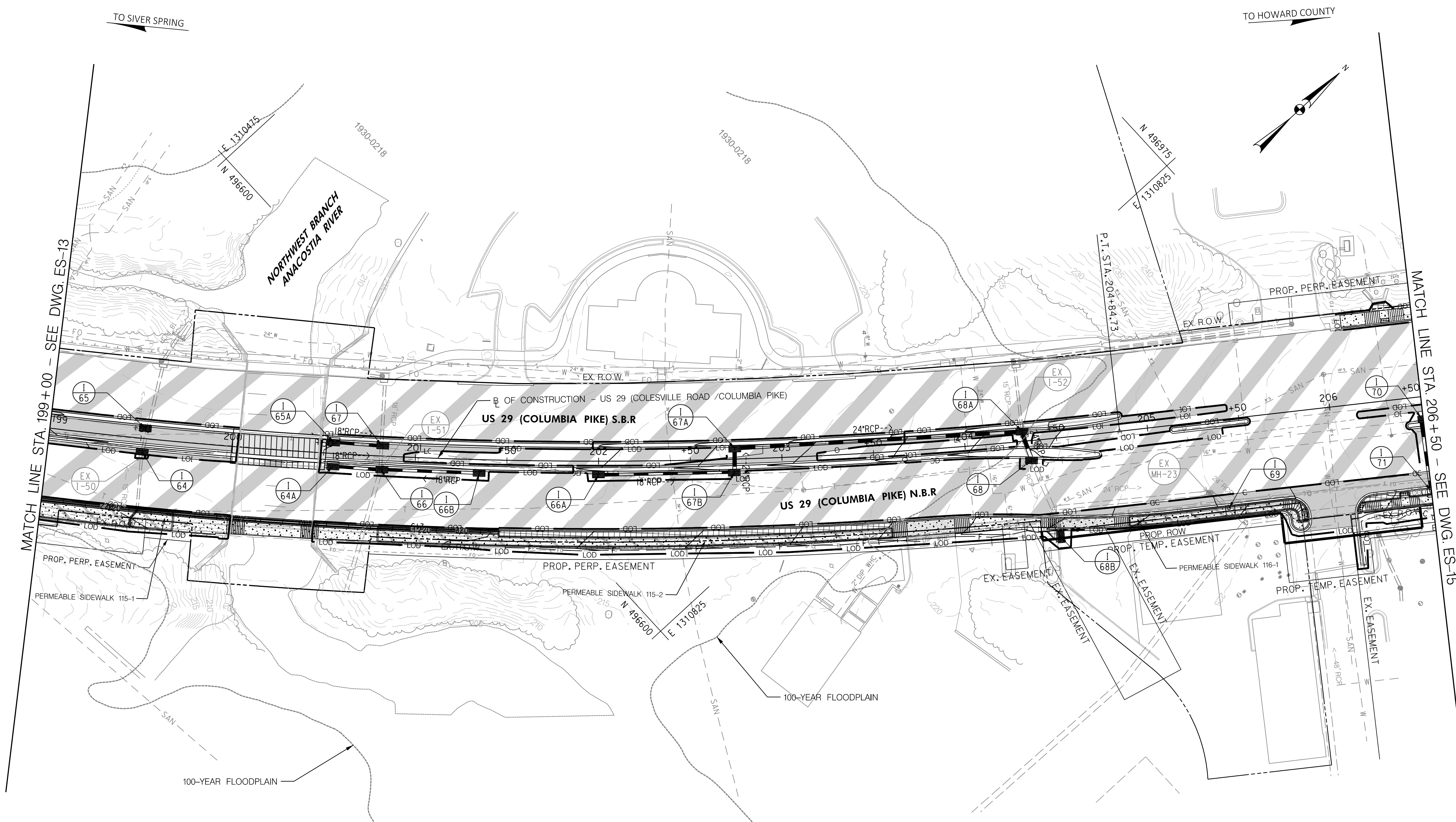
HAWP Application, Robert B Morse Water Filtration Plant/Burnt Mills East Park  
Montgomery County Department of Transportation  
US 29 BRT Project



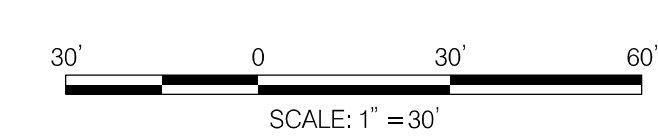
View southwest of former high lift pumping station within Burnt Mills East Park, showing extent of limits of grading within area of yellow dashed line.



View southwest, south of former high lift pumping station within Burnt Mills East Park, showing extent of limits of grading within area of yellow dashed line.



**QUANTITIES UNDER CONSTRUCTION**



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
 DIVISION OF TRANSPORTATION ENGINEERING  
 MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

**EROSION & SEDIMENT CONTROL PLAN**  
 US 29 FLASH BUS RAPID TRANSIT (BRT) – PHASE 2  
 FROM SLIGO CREEK PARKWAY  
 TO TECH ROAD

SCALE: 1" = 30' DATE: NOVEMBER 2025 PROJECT NO. 0502201/1130883  
 DRAWING NO. **ES-14** OF **33** SHEET NO. **74** OF **197**

NO.	REVISION	BY	APP'D	DATE
<b>NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION</b> <b>35% SUBMITTAL</b> <b>NOVEMBER 2025</b>				

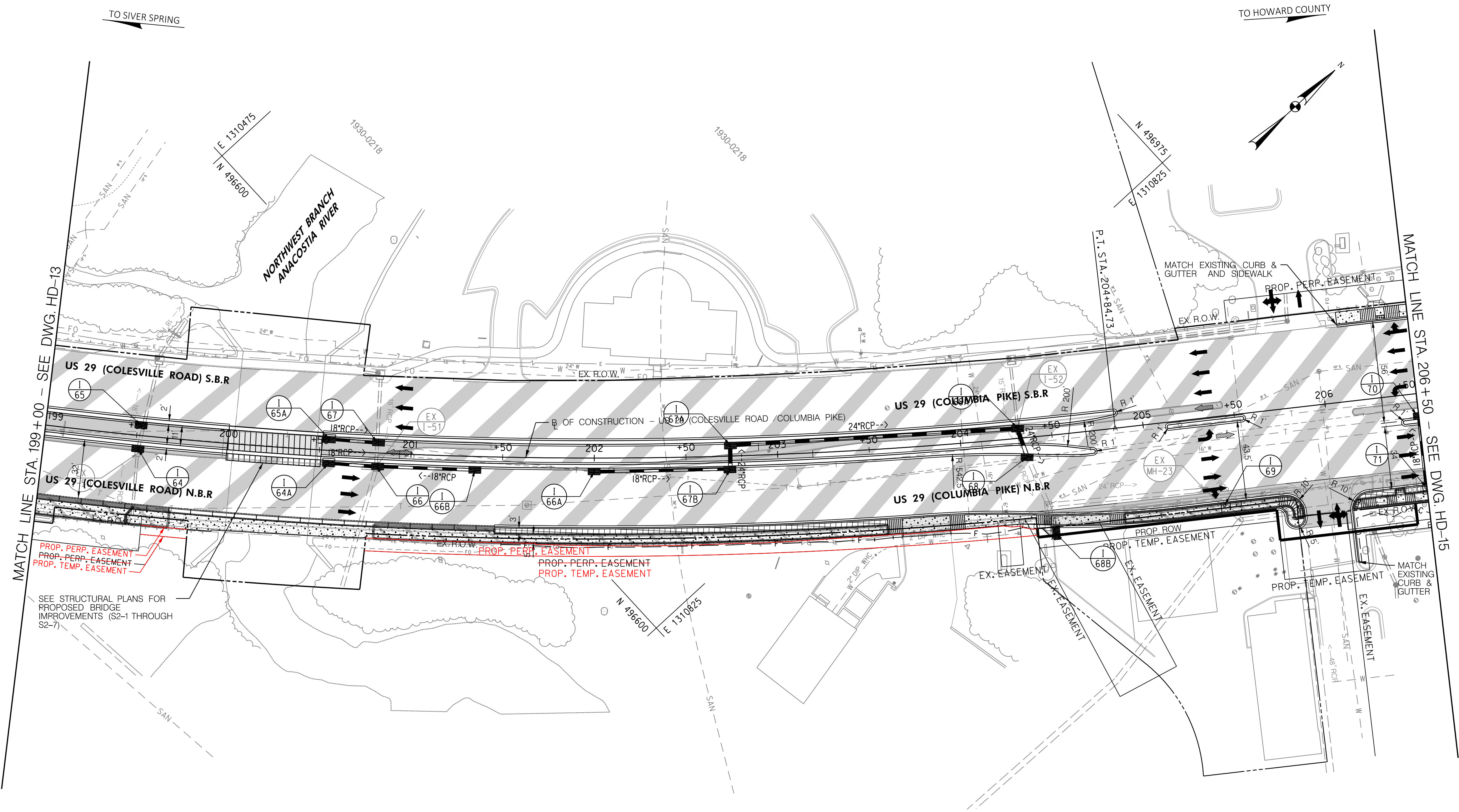
RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL:  
 \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
 CHIEF, TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND DESIGN SECTION  
 APPROVED:  
 \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
 CHIEF, DIVISION OF TRANSPORTATION ENGINEERING  
 DESIGNED BY:    A.K.    DRAWN BY:    A.K.    CHECKED BY:    L.R.   

LEGEND	
	FULL DEPTH PAVEMENT
	MILLING & RESURFACING
	CONCRETE SIDEWALK
	CONCRETE DRIVEWAY ENTRANCE
	PERMEABLE SIDEWALK
	PAVEMENT/SIDEWALK REMOVAL
	BRIDGE DECK REPLACEMENT
	RETAINING WALL
	SWM FACILITY FOOTPRINT
	FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION:  
 I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THESE DOCUMENTS WERE PREPARED OR APPROVED BY ME, AND THAT I AM A DULY LICENSED PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER UNDER THE LAWS OF THE STATE OF MARYLAND.  
 LICENSE NO. 18780  
 EXPIRATION DATE: 07/27/2026

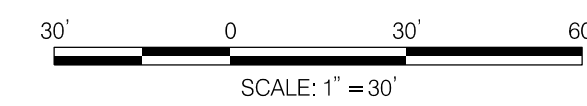


BY: abhishek.sutar



QUANTITIES UNDER CONSTRUCTION

NOTE: MARKUPS REFLECT REVISIONS TO THE PROPOSED EASEMENTS ANTICIPATED TO BE INCORPORATED DURING FINAL DESIGN BASED ON COORDINATION WITH MNCPPC'S MONTGOMERY PARKS



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
 DIVISION OF TRANSPORTATION ENGINEERING  
 MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

**ROADWAY PLAN**  
 US 29 FLASH BUS RAPID TRANSIT (BRT) – PHASE 2  
 FROM SLIGO CREEK PARKWAY  
 TO TECH ROAD

SCALE 1" = 30' DATE NOVEMBER 2025 PROJECT NO. 0502201/1130883  
 DRAWING NO. **HD-14A** OF **33** SHEET NO. **31A** OF **197**



PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION:  
 I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THESE DOCUMENTS WERE PREPARED OR APPROVED BY ME, AND THAT I AM A DULY LICENSED PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER UNDER THE LAWS OF THE STATE OF MARYLAND.  
 LICENSE NO. 33962  
 EXPIRATION DATE: 01/14/2027

ROADWAY LEGEND			
	FULL DEPTH PAVEMENT		PERMEABLE SIDEWALK
	MILLING & RESURFACING		PAVEMENT/SIDEWALK REMOVAL
	CONCRETE SIDEWALK		BRIDGE DECK REPLACEMENT
	CONCRETE DRIVEWAY ENTRANCE		RETAINING WALL
	SWM FACILITY FOOTPRINT		FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

NO.	REVISION	BY	APP'D	DATE
<b>NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION</b>				
<b>35% SUBMITTAL</b>				
<b>NOVEMBER 2025</b>				

RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL:	
CHIEF, TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND DESIGN SECTION	DATE
APPROVED:	
CHIEF, DIVISION OF TRANSPORTATION ENGINEERING	DATE
DESIGNED BY C.A.H.	DRAWN BY C.A.H.
CHECKED BY J.N.S.	

BY: Smith, J.N.