



Item #  
May 22, 2008

**Staff Report: Staff Draft of the Intercounty Connector Limited Functional Master Plan Amendment**

Send date: May 15, 2008

From: Chuck Kines, Planner/Coordinator, Transportation Planning, 301-495-4525

Via: Dan Hardy, Acting Chief, Transportation Planning

Gwen Wright, Chief, Countywide Planning

DKH

**RECOMMENDATION:** Approve Staff Draft of the Intercounty Connector (ICC) Limited Functional Master Plan Amendment and schedule public hearing date for June 26, 2008.

**Summary of Proposed Plan Recommendations**

The ICC Limited Functional Master Plan Amendment (LFMPA) recommends selected changes to the shared-use path identified as the ICC bike path (SP-40) in the Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan. The ICC LFMPA also amends ICC roadway alignment and interchange recommendations to reflect the selected highway alternative now under construction.

**Table of Contents**

This memorandum includes:

- Study context for the development of the ICC LFMPA
- An itemization of the changes recommended in the Staff Draft plan.
- Background materials requested by the Planning Board

**Study Context**

Since fall 2003, county agency staffs have been working with the State to implement the 18-mile long master planned hard surface trail along the Intercounty Connector (SP-40 in the Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan). During Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) review of the Intercounty Connector (ICC) highway study, the State identified seven miles of the trail that would be built with the highway project. The remaining 11 miles, however, would need to be constructed in the future by the County – in places with State assistance – separate from the highway project. In fall 2005, the Planning Board informed the bicycling community that the County would study these remaining 11 miles in further detail after the Record of Decision (ROD) was issued by the federal government, which established the final alignment and design for the highway and related elements such as the parallel hard surface trail.

The County Council, in July 2007, added this limited functional master plan amendment to the Planning Department's work program, to reconcile the final approved highway design with master plan guidance, and to develop new master plan guidance for the trail and for select highway design issues. In cooperation with other County agencies and the State Highway Administration (SHA), we developed the Purpose and Outreach Strategy Report (P&OSR) for this plan amendment, which the Planning Board approved on October 18, 2007.

We created an interagency coordination team immediately following that worksession, consisting of staff from the Department of Planning, the Department of Parks, the Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) and SHA. We also conducted extensive roadway fieldwork between June and August 2007, as well as parkland field work between November 2007 and April 2008 which included representatives from various interest groups.

The interagency team developed initial plan recommendations in early March, and scheduled two public meetings on March 19 and April 2 to obtain public input and reactions. We incorporated many public comments into the preliminary staff draft plan and we briefed the Planning Board on these final recommendations during the Planning Board's review of ICC Status Report #14 on May 1.

### **Summary Recommendations in the Staff Draft Plan**

The proposed amendments to Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan delete certain sections of SP-40 through the most environmentally sensitive portions of stream valley parks and the US 29 interchange. The amendment also proposes changes to the Countywide Park Trails Plan (CPTP) to provide trail connections to serve recreational purposes, including hiking and equestrian uses, in the Northwest Branch and Upper Paint Branch Stream Valley Parks. These trails would likely be developed as natural surface trails to minimize environmental impacts.

#### *Deletions (SP-40)*

- Through Rock Creek Park, Shady Grove Road to Needwood Road
- Through Northwest Branch Park, Bonifant Road to Notley Road
- New Hampshire Avenue to Old Columbia Pike, including through Paint Branch Stream Valley Park
- Old Columbia Pike to US 29, including through interchange

#### *Additions (designated as SP-40 unless otherwise noted)*

- On-road bikeway along Applewood Lane, M-83 right-of-way to Muncaster Mill Road (SP-40A)
- Shared use path south side of Muncaster Mill Road (BL-35) Shady Grove Road to Needwood Road
- Shared use path east side of Alderton Road, Matthew Henson Trail to Bonifant Road (part of SP-40B)
- Shared use path south side of Bonifant Road, Alderton Road to Trolley Museum entrance (part of SP-40B)
- Shared use path south side of Bonifant Road, Trolley Museum entrance to Notley Road
- Shared use path west side of Notley Road, Bonifant Road to ICC

- Shared use path east side of New Hampshire Avenue, ICC to E. Randolph Road
- Shared use path north side of E. Randolph Road, New Hampshire Avenue to Fairland Road
- Shared use path south side of Fairland Road, E. Randolph Road to US 29

*Refined alignment*

- Realign SP-40 between Layhill Road and Bonifant Road from the 1972 ICC master plan alignment to a new alignment several hundred feet north connecting Layhill Local Park to the relocated Trolley Museum site, through Northwest Branch Park and including use of the Trolley Museum driveway access to Bonifant Road.

*Amendments to Master Plan of Highways*

- Add partial interchange at Briggs Chaney Road
- Revise limits of Midcounty Highway and its interchange with ICC
- Revise ICC alignment to reflect Rock Creek Option C with Olde Mill Run Grade Separation and Northwest Branch Option A

*Amendments to Countywide Park Trails Plan*

- Extend limits of Matthew Henson Trail from Alderton Road to Notley Road
- Add natural surface trail along north side of ICC within limits of Paint Branch Stream Valley Park

*Issues to be studied by other planning efforts*

- The Northwest Branch Park Master Plan Update will study the proposed alignment for a hard surface trail between Layhill Road and Bonifant Road, passing through both the Layhill Local Park as well as the National Capital Trolley Museum site.

*Issues for future study, more detailed environmental impact analysis*

- Extension of Matthew Henson Trail from Alderton Road to Notley Road (to be led by Department of Parks with assistance from MDOT)

**Background Materials Requested by the Planning Board**

At the ICC Status Report #14 on May 1<sup>st</sup>, the Planning Board asked staff to be prepared to discuss several issues at both this worksession, as well as future worksessions following the public hearing.

***1. Proposed SP-40 now and in the future***

The Planning Board requested a summary of how SP-40 was intended to function versus how it would function under this plan amendment. Figure 8 on of the plan depicts maps of SP-40 before and after this plan amendment and is included as Attachment A to this memorandum. In summary, the proposed amendment retains east-west connectivity between Shady Grove Road and the Prince George's County line.

***2. Planned access points to ICC Trail/"County Bike Path"***

The Planning Board asked staff to better describe the access points for the trail, where trail users

would be able to get on and off the trail. Attachment B lists the primary master plan bikeways and park trails that intersect with the revised alignment of SP-40 under this plan amendment. While the east-west continuity of SP-40 is important, the fact that SP-40 intersects nearly two dozen north-south bikeways and trails demonstrates the integration of the ICC bike path into the countywide trail network.

### ***3. Bike Path history and chronology***

The Planning Board asked for a chronology of ICC bike trail decisions. It has been studied as part of the highway for nearly five years. Below is a summary.

#### County Decisions

- December 1, 2003 ~ Councilmember Subin of the County Council sent a letter to SHA offering thirteen comments on the Alternatives Retained for Detailed Study based on the progress to date of the ICC. Comment # 10 said to include the master-planned hiker-biker trail in the ICC ROW as part of both Corridors # 1 and # 2.
- February 9, 2004 ~ Chairman Berlage of the Planning Board sent a letter to SHA reinforcing the comments made by the Council on December 1, 2003. In the letter, the Chairman describes the desired provision of a continuous hiker-biker trail parallel to the ICC as an integral part of our master plans, intended to serve both transportation and recreation purposes.
- January 6, 2005 ~ Councilmember Steven Silverman of the County Council sent a letter to SHA informing SHA of how troubled the Council was about the proposed deletion of the entire parallel bike trail from the ICC master plan. The Council learned at a briefing in December that SHA did not include the construction of the ICC bike trail in its proposed construction of the ICC road. "The Council believes that a parallel pedestrian/bike path would encourage alternative modes of transportation, while additional cost of the bike path is well worth the investment given its benefits of creating an east-west route for cyclists where there are currently none."
- February 2005 ~ The Planning Board recommended to the County Council that the recommended ICC alignment not pursue a bike path directly parallel to the ICC in three sections; west of Needwood Road, through the Northwest Branch Park, and through the Upper Paint Branch park and the US 29 interchange.
- March 3, 2005 ~ The County Council recommended to SHA that the recommended ICC alignment not pursue a bike path directly parallel to the ICC in two sections; west of Needwood Road and through the Northwest Branch Park (along highway).
- July 13, 2006 ~ *Intercounty Connector Mandatory Referral #MR 06809-SHA-1*  
This document includes portions of the ICC mainline, interchanges, and bike path only in Montgomery County. The referral is designed to provide comments to be transmitted to SHA. In the document, the Planning Board endorsed the planning staff recommendation to participate in the master planning and implementation process for both the portions of the State's bike plan along parallel roadways and the remaining portions of SP-40.

- January 4, 2007 ~ *Bikeways Implementation Strategy for Intercounty Connector*  
In this strategy, staff from M-NCPPC informed the Planning Board of the concerns and possible funding opportunities to implement the remaining 11 miles of ICC bike path as it related to the FY08-13 CIP.

#### State Documents/Decisions

- December 15, 2004 ~ The State dropped plans to include a bike trail as part of the ICC due to increase project cost and environmental impacts. Douglas Simmons, deputy administrator for SHA, stated the state would retain some of the ROW for the path to be built later, but would drop the environmentally sensitive sections. Therefore, the trail would not be a continuous path.
- March 31, 2005 ~ The Maryland Senate voted to add a bicycle path along seven miles of the proposed ICC. In the 1997 Draft Environmental Impact Statement, the ICC contained the full 18 miles of bicycle and pedestrian path, but was changed in the 2005 due to costs, environmental impacts, and Section 4(f) concerns.
- January 3, 2006 ~ *Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)*  
The bicycle and pedestrian trail alignment for the ICC was studied in more detail in the FEIS compared to the DEIS to make sure that the trail has logical connections and logical termini. The trail alignment was modified to maintain full connectivity in areas where the path diverges from the ICC ROW to existing or proposed bike routes along roadways. The FEIS includes a bicycle and pedestrian route plan as part of Corridor # 1 including the construction of seven miles of path in the ROW, but does not include construction of the complete path in the ROW. The DEIS did not include the construction of the trails, but included provisions to accommodate the trail segments.
- May 30, 2006 ~ *Federal Record of Decision (ROD)*  
The ROD states that “ICC construction will include approximately 11.4 miles of new bicycle/pedestrian trail as part of the 20.7 mile planned east-west route as identified in the Record of Decision. The ICC selected alternative bicycle/pedestrian trail will include ROW, paving, earthwork and SWM facilities needed to accommodate a ten-foot wide path in areas where the route coincides with the ICC alignment. The Lead Agencies will coordinate with the Counties to accelerate the construction of the portions of the trail plan currently in local plans. Updates to FHWA will be provided.”

The ROD includes an entire section entitled “Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan”. The Selected Alternative includes construction (11.4 miles) and reconstruction (3 miles) of new bicycle and pedestrian facilities, with newly constructed facilities coordinated with the County design standards and a lighting option for the County governments. The facilities provide access to three transit stations, trails, and improved access to bus transit. There is a commitment in the ROD for new bicycle racks will be provided at existing and proposed park and ride facilities adjacent to the ICC. An important community element expressed by the public is to accommodate and connect existing

hiker-biker trails parallel to the ICC, as well as supporting bicycle and pedestrian-friendly projects.

Attachment C is an excerpt from the ROD describing how a continuous east-west trip could be made and the status of each segment with the commitments made by SHA.

*Cost estimates.* The State estimated during DEIS review of the ICC highway project that the full-length, 18-mile shared use path along the ICC would cost \$100M. The State estimates the value of the seven miles of path that will be constructed with the highway at about \$25 million, which includes design/engineering, grading, stormwater management, pavement and amenities. Staff is preparing a cost estimate of this plan amendment to be available for the first worksession following the proposed June 26 public hearing.

#### ***4. Practical considerations in the development of recommendations***

The SHA analysis of the ICC County Bike Path (SP-40 in CBFMP) in the environmental impact process addressed several procedural considerations that will need to be addressed during the completion of any additional path or trail segments.

The primary variation among these concerns relates to:

- The primary purpose of the path (for transportation or recreation)
- The proposed owner/operator of the shared use path or recreational trail, whether hard surface or natural surface
- The funding source for path or trail construction

These considerations were integral to the staff draft recommendation to remove the Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan shared-use path designation (SP-40) from two key ICC links:

- The section of Northwest Branch Stream Valley Park between the Matthew Henson Trail and the vicinity of Notley Road, and
- The section of Paint Branch Stream Valley Park between New Hampshire Avenue and the vicinity of Old Columbia Pike.

We believe that in that section of Paint Branch SVP, the primary value of an east-west trail connection through the most environmentally sensitive areas of parkland would be more for recreation value than for transportation value, and thus a natural surface trail connection is needed. Whereas, because the connection between MHT and Notley Road is equally of value to both transportation and recreation, a hiker-biker park trail is needed. Because these connections pass primarily through parkland, we believe the future pursuit of these connections would be best served if led by the Department of Parks rather than by transportation planners or engineers. This is primarily because the Department has complete control over trail design, construction, operations, and maintenance.

#### Section 4(f) concerns

Requirements to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts to parklands apply to any agency that would pursue construction of a future shared use path segment if the primary purpose of those segments is for transportation, as opposed to recreation. If, for instance, the County intended for the state or County to construct a future shared-use path adjacent to the ICC, it would be practical for us to immediately decommission sufficient park property adjacent to the roadway for that purpose (much as segments of the ICC right-of-way were designated for transportation purposes). However, staff does not recommend such an action.

#### Wetland permits

Requirements to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts to wetlands and waterways of the United States apply to any agency that would pursue construction of future bike path segments.

#### Americans With Disabilities (ADA) Act

ADA considerations apply to all levels of sanctioned recreational trails as well as to shared-use paths designed as transportation facilities, but the accessibility guidelines are different for natural surface trails. A shared-use path designed to meet transportation accessibility guidelines may have significantly greater environmental impacts than those associated with a natural surface trail, particularly associated with grading in areas of rolling topography.

#### Construction costs and responsibility

To the extent that a given section of future shared-use path has a fixed design, staff does not believe there is a decided advantage among state or local agency project management. In any case, path construction projects will need to compete for scarce funding dollars and the most successful projects will be those with a strong project champion in the community. One means of advancing path and/or trail projects, therefore, is to develop concepts that are both most affordable and most favored by local communities.




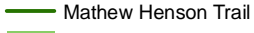
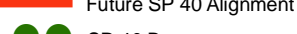
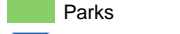


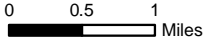
#### Maintenance costs and responsibility

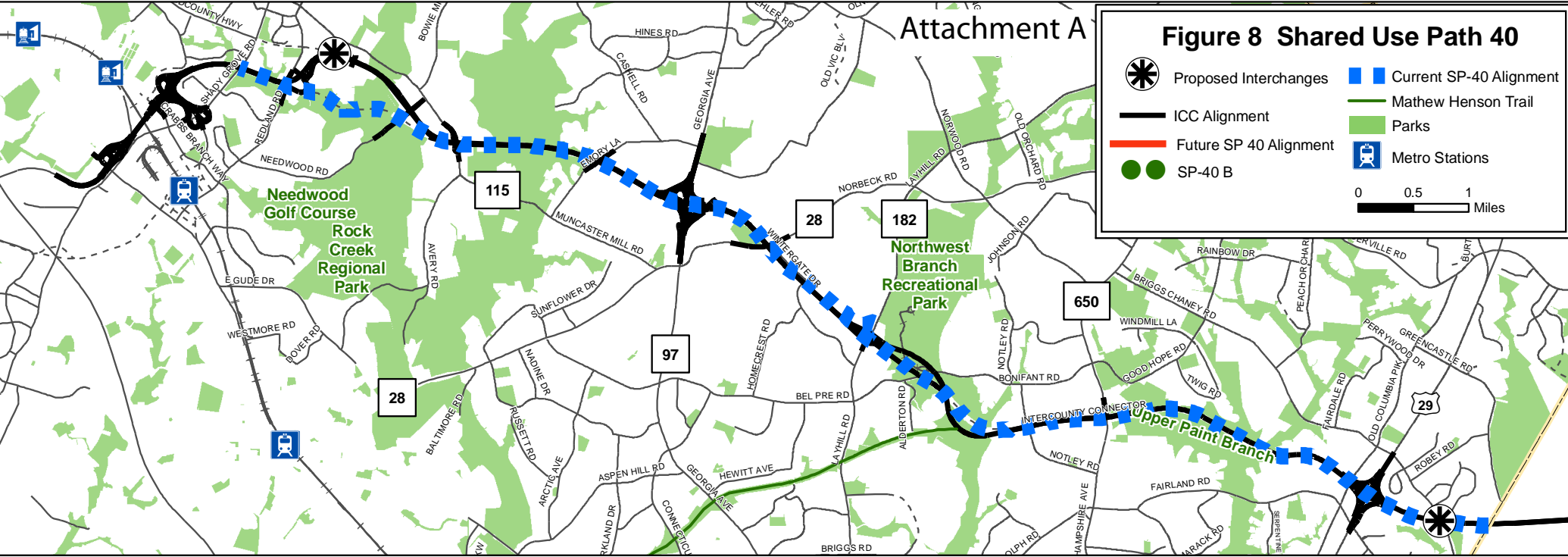
The DPWT has the responsibility for maintaining sidewalks and shared use paths in public right-of-way, regardless of whether the roadway facility is operated by the State or the county. DPWT will presumably be responsible for maintaining the portions of the ICC bike path being constructed by SHA. However, since the Maryland Transportation Authority will be the ICC owner/operator and this is the first MdTA facility in Montgomery County, the maintenance agreements are not yet finalized. M-NCPPC has responsibility for maintenance of park trails.

#### ***5. Hard surface trail pavement types***

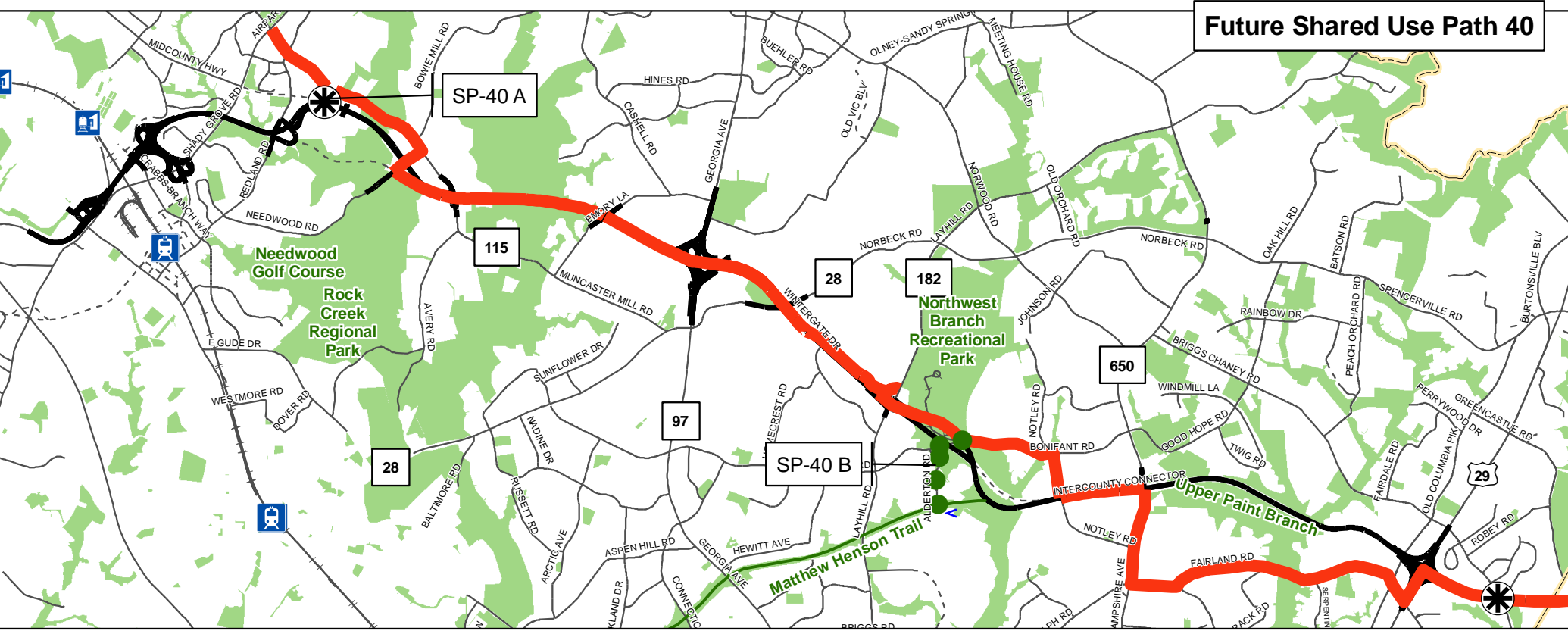
During public meetings, many residents and bicycle advocates protested removing segments of the path from passing through parkland due to environmental concerns and asked the County to investigate more environmentally friendly trail surface types, including pervious pavers and boardwalk. We will provide a summary report of trail surface types for the Planning Board first worksession on this plan amendment following the June 26 public hearing.

Figure 8 Shared Use Path 40

 Proposed Interchanges  
 Current SP-40 Alignment  
 ICC Alignment  
 Mathew Henson Trail  
 Future SP 40 Alignment  
 Parks  
 Metro Stations  
 SP-40 B  
 0 0.5 1 Miles



Future Shared Use Path 40





**Key Existing and Planned Access Points to Proposed County Bike Path (SP-40)**

<b>Route Name</b>	<b>Master Plan Proposal</b>	<b>Road Name</b>
<b>SP-55</b>	Existing Shared Use Path	Airpark Road
<b>BL-30</b>	Proposed Bike Lanes	Shady Grove Road
<b>SP-70</b>	Proposed Shared Use Path	Midcounty Highway
<b>BL-29</b>	Proposed Bike Lanes	Redland Road
<b>BL-20</b>	Proposed Bike Lanes	Bowie Mill Road
<b>DB-14</b>	Proposed Dual Bikeway	Needwood Road
<b>BL-35</b>	Proposed Bike Lanes	Muncaster Mill Road
	Countywide Park Trail	North Branch Trail
<b>SP-32</b>	Shared Use Path	Emory Lane
<b>SP-29</b>	Shared Use Path	Georgia Avenue
<b>B-14</b>	Proposed Shared Use Path	Gandel Property Connector
<b>DB-12</b>	Proposed Dual Bikeway	Norbeck Road
<b>BL-18</b>	Proposed Bike Lanes	Layhill Road
<b>BL-17</b>	Existing Bike Lanes	Bonifant Road
<b>PB-17</b>	Proposed Shared Roadway	Alderton Road
	Countywide Park Trail	Matthew Henson Trail
<b>BL-11</b>	Proposed Bike Lanes	New Hampshire Avenue
<b>PB-35</b>	Proposed Bike Lanes	Cape May Road
	Countywide Park Trail	Paint Branch Trail
<b>BL-13</b>	Existing Bike Lanes	Fairland Road
<b>BL-12</b>	Existing Bike Lanes	Old Columbia Pike
<b>DB-9</b>	Proposed Dual Bikeway	US 29
<b>SP-19</b>	Proposed Shared Use Path	Briggs Chaney Road
<b>Note: Other non-master planned bikeway and sidewalk connections provide additional local access opportunities.</b>		

### 3. Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan

Although the Study Area has a number of existing and planned bicycle facilities, there is no convenient, continuous east-west route across the Area. The Selected Alternative includes the construction of a total of approximately 11.4 miles of new bicycle/pedestrian trails and another 3.0 miles of reconstructed bicycle and pedestrian trails across the Study Area. These new and reconstructed ICC trails will link several existing and planned trails and bike lanes to provide a new, continuous bicycle route across the Study Area. See *Figure 2* in this ROD. Construction of the new trails will be coordinated with County design standards and include lighting at the option of the County governments. Once completed, the ICC bicycle/pedestrian route will accommodate a cyclist's travel from the Shady Grove Metrorail station to the Muirkirk Commuter Rail Station, the entire breadth of the Study Area. There are some segments of the Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan which are still being developed by the counties. The Lead Agencies will continue to coordinate with local governments to advance these segments. However, a continuous east west trip could be made as follows:

Segment	Status of Segment	Selected Alternative Commitment
Begin - Shady Grove Metrorail Station north on Redland Road to Needwood Road	Existing trail	No change proposed
Northeast on Needwood Road to ICC alignment	Existing bicycle usage along Needwood Road. Future bicycle upgrades for Needwood Roads are included in the Upper Rock Creek Area Master Plan (July 2003) and in Montgomery County's Bicycle Master Plan (October 2003)	Lead Agencies are working closely with Montgomery County to accelerate the upgrades to these County planned bicycle routes
East along ICC alignment to Emory Lane	New Trail	New trail to be constructed as part of the Selected Alternative
East along Emory Lane to MD 97 (Georgia Avenue)	Existing trail	No change proposed
South along MD 97 and east along ICC to Layhill Road (MD 182)	New Trail	New trail to be constructed as part of the Selected Alternative
South on Layhill Road to Bel Pre/Bonifant Road	Existing Trail	No change proposed

East on Bonifant Road to New Hampshire Avenue (MD 650)	Existing Trail	Lead Agencies will coordinate with County to tie into the planned Mathew Henson Trail, which is a more direct route than the existing trail
South on MD 650 to Randolph/Fairland Road	Existing Trail	No change proposed
East on Randolph/Fairland Road to US 29	Existing Trail	No change proposed
North on US 29 to Briggs Chaney Road	New Trail	New trail to be constructed as part of the Selected Alternative
East on Briggs Chaney Road to ICC alignment	Existing Trail	No change proposed
East along ICC alignment to Old Gunpowder Road	New Trail	New trail to be constructed as part of the Selected Alternative
South along Old Gunpowder Road to Virginia Manor Road	Existing Trail from ICC alignment to Denim Road. Planned trail in Prince George's County Plans (1990 Subregion I) to Virginia Manor Road	Lead Agencies are working closely with County to accelerate the upgrades to these County planned bicycle routes
East and north along Virginia Manor Road to Muirkirk Road	Existing bicycle usage along Virginia Manor Road. Future planned trail improvements (1990 Subregion 1)	Lead Agencies will coordinate on connections to planned trails
East along Muirkirk Road across US 1 and rail to Muirkirk MARC Station - <b>End</b>	Existing bicycle usage along Virginia Manor Road. Future planned trail improvements (1990 Subregion 1)	Lead Agencies will coordinate on connections to planned trails

Other important features of the ICC bicycle/pedestrian plan are connections for bicyclists and pedestrians to three transit stations; connections to other non-motorized trail systems; and improved access to bus transit in the Study Area. See *Figure 3* in this ROD. The Shady Grove Metrorail Station on the west end of the project and the Glenmont Metrorail Station in the middle are equipped with bike racks and bike lockers. The bicycle/pedestrian component of the Selected Alternative will provide many people with a new travel mode option for accessing these subway stations by connecting to existing and planned trails leading to the Metro Stations. Similarly, the Selected Alternative will provide improved non-motorized access to the Muirkirk Commuter Rail Station for many people living in the eastern end of the Study Area. The Selected Alternative will also link the ICC bicycle/pedestrian route to twelve existing trails and