



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT**  
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

**MCPB**  
**Item # 7**  
**April 24, 2008**

**To:** Montgomery County Planning Board  
**From:** ICC Internal Review Team (301-495-4530) *DKH for*  
**Date:** April 18, 2008  
**Subject:** Intercounty Connector Mandatory Referral  
Status Report #14

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This status report is divided into four sections. On April 24 staff will make brief presentations on the first two sections and summarize the remaining materials in this report.

- 1) A preview of the staff draft of the ICC Limited Functional Master Plan Amendment
- 2) A review of the SHA/M-NCPPC proposal for the Lake Frank Trail Community Stewardship project
- 3) An update on other park-related activities
- 4) An update on the overall ICC project status and schedule and future status reports

### **Section 1. ICC Limited Functional Master Plan Amendment**

The purposes of the ICC Limited Functional Master Plan Amendment (LFMPA) are to

- determine appropriate uses for master planned right-of-way (ROW) not used by the approved highway project, with a particular focus on ROW that passes through parkland;
- propose new alignments for master planned bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the ICC Corridor; and
- reconcile approved highway design elements with master plan guidance relating to the Upper Rock Creek Option C alignment, the Northwest Branch Option A alignment, and the Briggs Chaney Road interchange.

We have completed the staff analysis and community outreach efforts for the master plan amendment process and have tentatively scheduled the release of the staff draft of the ICC LFMPA for May 15. This status report provides an opportunity for the Board to preview the issues and preliminary staff recommendations.

The focus of the master plan analysis is on the accommodation of bicyclists in the east-west ICC corridor between Shady Grove Road and the Prince George's County line. The 2005 Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan includes a shared-use path (labeled SP-40)

adjacent to the ICC throughout this segment. This continuous path is also referenced in the Planning Board's 1998 Countywide Park Trails Plan. As a result of the ICC Environmental Impact Statement process, the state is building portions of the bike path along the roadway and has proposed an alternate route along existing roadways in those areas where the cost, environmental impacts, or Section 4(f) parkland impacts were considered too great to warrant bike path construction at this time. The purpose of the ICC LFMPA is to determine which remaining segments of SP-40 may warrant construction at some future date and which should be removed from the Master Plan by County Council action.

Figures 1 through 4 are copies of boards used at the two public meetings held during the past six weeks. Figure 1 compares the current master plan alignment for SP-40 with the ROD proposal (labeled SHA Bike Plan) for an alternate east-west path. The primary areas where there are differences between the two alignments are in parkland containing significant natural environmental resources, in the:

- Mill Creek and Rock Creek stream valley parks,
- Northwest Branch stream valley and recreational park system, and
- Upper Paint Branch stream valley park.

Figures 2 through 4 provide greater detail for each of the three study subareas.

The Planning Board and County Council deliberations on the master plan amendment will revisit the same issues and concerns faced during the roadway planning process in 2005; the degree to which a continuous bike facility along the roadway warrants the incremental environmental impacts.

Our staff proposal remains fairly true to the Planning Board's position in 2005, at which time the Board did not support a paved trail along the ICC within the Mill Creek, Rock Creek, or Upper Paint Branch stream valley parks due to concerns associated with the natural environment. We believe our staff proposal provides some level of compromise by recognizing that different routes are needed for different users. In areas where the clearing and grading impacts associated with a paved, ADA-compatible trail are greatest and the community connections afforded next to the ICC are lowest, the formal, east-west connection for bicyclists should be diverted to adjacent roads. In some locations, however, the park access function served by the master plan trail could be continued by retention of a natural surface trail system in the Countywide Park Trails Plan to provide access to hikers, equestrians, and mountain bikers.

## **Section 2. Lake Frank Trail Community Stewardship Project**

We have briefly described the Lake Frank Trail community stewardship in Status Reports #12 and #13 in relationship to the SPA reforestation maintenance period. We have been working with SHA for more than a year on the potential for amending the scope of the ICC community stewardship project entitled Rock Creek Park Trail Improvements (Site 33). We are now ready to recommend a change to the Record of Decision to the Interagency Working Group and the Federal Highway Administration. This amendment does not require formal Planning Board

action as no park property boundaries are affected but we do appreciate your review of our proposal.

The ICC Record of Decision (ROD) includes a project related to the trail system at Rock Creek Regional Park. The scope of work for this project, shown in Figure 5, entails removing abandoned paved roads and parking lots on the east side of Lake Frank. The pavement removal would narrow the roadway width to trail width, retaining approximately 5,500 linear feet of pavement for provision of a 10-foot wide trail. Areas where pavement was removed would be restored with vegetation.

Since the ROD, Department of Park staff has initiated the Upper Rock Creek Trail Corridor Plan which affects this area. As part of that plan process, staff have prepared and presented to the community an alternate community stewardship project. The staff proposal would link the Rock Creek hiker-biker trail to the trail system at Lake Frank with an ADA-accessible connection. Two concepts for this proposal are shown in Figure 6. A connection between the two trail systems is already proposed in the approved and adopted Rock Creek Regional Park Master Plan (labeled as option A in Figure 6). A less costly and less steep option for the trail connection is shown as Option B. Option B was suggested by a community member and has subsequently been reviewed and endorsed by Department of Park staff.

### Background

Lake Frank is a major feature of the Rock Creek Regional Park. The current ROD project involves the removal of excess impervious surface of the roadways and parking lots on the east side of Lake Frank that were abandoned by M-NCPPC in 1981, leaving a 10-foot wide hard surface hiker biker trail in the existing footprint. Removing the parking lots will benefit site aesthetics and reduce impervious area in the North Branch watershed. However, the environmental gain of removing impervious area has limited benefit to the adjacent environment because the entire area drains to a flood control structure and none drains directly to a stream or tributary. The project is located south (and downstream) of the Upper Rock Creek Special Protection Area.

More importantly, trail and site improvements on the east side of Lake Frank are not currently accessible from the Rock Creek hiker biker trail because the two trail systems are not connected. Such a linkage is highly desirable and is recommended in the Rock Creek Park Master Plan. The Rock Creek hiker-biker trail is heavily used and averages 47 users per hour on the weekend. Access to Lake Frank should be possible from the Rock Creek hiker-biker trail.

Amending the ROD agreement to replace the proposed parking lot and roadway pavement removal with construction of the trail connection shown as Option B is preferable as it would greatly enhance trail use. We believe this change would increase the value of this project as a community stewardship project.

The next step in the process is for the Interagency Working Group (IAWG) to consider this proposed change in comparison to the backup stewardship sites in the ROD to determine if our staff proposal has interagency support. M-NCPPC staff will coordinate through the ICC IAWG

with Federal, State and County agencies to set the appropriate priorities and provide an update in the next status report to the Board.

### **Section 3. Other Park Related Activities**

We are currently coordinating with SHA and other stakeholders on the following activities:

#### Trolley Museum Relocation

The Trolley Museum relocation project is generally moving according to plan. The SWM/SC permit for Phase II has been issued. A contract has been signed with Gardiner & Gardiner, and the contractor is awaiting the issuance of a building Permit for the second phase. The Museum is working with a contractor to plan the move of most of the streetcars to the Kane building within the next 6-8 weeks. They are also developing plans to move other parts of the streetcar parts collections during the summer.

Budget limitations require that the Museum re-use in the new railway some of the track that is planned for abandonment. This means that they must close the Museum sometime in the late fall in order to move the rails. That date will be determined later this summer.

The three-party agreement among the Commission, the Museum, and SHA requires the Museum to have vacated their premises within the ICC right-of-way by December 2008. The Museum is concerned that the new Visitors Center might not be completed by this date. Rather than move the archival collections in the present building to interim storage, the Museum hopes that they can reach agreement with SHA to maintain access and electric service to the present station building for storage purposes only.

#### Llwellyn Property Park Development

As described with the Board during the CIP process last October and in Status Report #11, we continue to coordinate with SHA regarding park development details. We wish to pursue a park concept plan presented to the public in June 2007 and this plan contains a mix of playing fields that are different from that in the Record of Decision and includes some ancillary elements that are not in the Record of Decision. We are determining an appropriate division of responsibility for park funding and construction based on both ROD commitments and estimated capital costs. The current concept would include SHA construction of four fields in Phase 1 (that functionally replace the fields displaced by the ICC) and subsequent M-NCPPC construction of a fifth field in Phase 2.

M-NCPPC received a comprehensive facility plan and Phase 1 concept plan from SHA on March 24, 2008 for review. The plans are revised to address items discussed in a December 21, 2007 meeting with SHA. The staff review team and an SHA representative met on April 8, 2008 to present the plan and go over the general concepts. Comments are due from the staff team on April 21, 2008 and a review meeting is scheduled on May 1 to finalize the comments and send them to SHA. At that time, we anticipate establishing a date for the project to be presented to the Planning Board.

Non-Native Invasive Species Task Force

The mission of the Non-Native Invasive (NNI) Species Task Force is to research and recommend an appropriate use of state and county resources to address the anticipated NNI effects associated with the introduction of a new forest edge by the ICC roadway. The task force held a kickoff meeting April 15 and we anticipate a final report in fall 2008. The task force report will yield information useful for other NNI control initiatives at both state and county levels. The following agencies were represented at the initial task force meeting or were identified at the initial meeting as potentially interested agencies and will be invited to future task force meetings:

- M-NCPPC (Park and Planning Departments)
- SHA
- University of Maryland
- Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (future invitee)
- Montgomery County Council staff (invited)
- Maryland Department of the Environment (future invitee)
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources (invited)
- Maryland Department of Agriculture (future invitee)
- US Fish and Wildlife Service (invited)
- US Department of Agriculture (invited)

Park Property Transfers

We have completed the transfer of park properties needed for SHA to construct the ICC. The schedule for transfer of replacement park properties from SHA to M-NCPPC depends on SHA property acquisition and needed restoration or completion of mitigation projects before we would accept the properties. Table 1 shows the anticipated actions and schedule; the uncertainty associated with later dates presumes that SHA completes needed restoration activities prior to our assumption of property ownership and the liabilities associated with ownership.

**Table 1. Anticipated Schedule for Replacement Parkland Property Transfer**

<b>Property (acreage)</b>	<b>SHA acquisition</b>	<b>Restoration</b>	<b>Anticipated transfer date</b>
Southern Asia Adventist (23)	Complete	None	Late 2008
McNeill (36)	Complete	Building removal	Late 2008
Casey at Hoyles Mill (459)	Completed	Building removal, reforestation	~ 2010
Peach Orchard Allnutt (118)	In progress	SWM removal, regrading, reforestation, wetland creation, stream stabilization	~2011
Unused transportation areas adjacent to the ICC (+/- 30)	Complete	None	In phases according to ICC project completion

#### **Section 4. ICC Project Schedule and Future Status Reports**

The ICC has several discrete components, including:

- The five design-build contracts A through E
- The ~90 Environmental Stewardship and Mitigation projects
- The Western Maintenance Facility, and
- The transit planning study

Figure 8 shows the current construction sequencing plan for the ICC including the five design-build contracts A through E and the anticipated completion date for the Environmental Stewardship and Mitigation projects. Contracts A and C have been awarded and are currently in the design-build process. Contract B proposals are due to SHA in May 2008.

SHA has bundled the roughly 90 Environmental Stewardship and Mitigation projects into about 50 contracts for bidding purposes. We will continue to pursue further aggregation of similar projects into combined mandatory referral reviews as appropriate. Nevertheless, we anticipate an ICC-related Planning Board review on nearly a monthly basis. We will seek to schedule future status reports to the Board concurrent with other Board actions to the extent practical.

The state has committed to complete the Western Maintenance Facility on the Casey 6 property as described in recent status reports. Figure 9 shows the landscaping concept plan from the bid set. The Maryland Transportation Authority (MdTA) is continuing coordination with the Maryland Historical Trust and the Town of Washington Grove concerning noise and sight impacts associated with the maintenance facility.

The Maryland Transit Administration (MdTA) has begun project development for the ICC transit planning study described in the ROD. This study will include both capital and operating elements associated with express bus service, building upon the six express routes contemplated in the environmental impact studies and evaluating the feasibility of potential park-and-ride lots described in the DEIS. We look forward to further review of this study as it should provide a level of synergy with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) initiative to develop a regional Priority Corridor Network for rapid bus service and the County Council and Executive interest in promoting those bus-rapid transit (BRT) elements included in our recent priority list to the state delegation.