



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

MCPB
ITEM NO. 8
June 10, 2010

June 3, 2010

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Dan Hardy, Chief *DKH*
Transportation Planning Division

Larry Cole, Master Planner *LC*
Transportation Planning Division

FROM: Cherian Eapen, Planner/Coordinator, (301-495-4539) *CE*
Transportation Planning Division

PROJECT: Thompson Road Connection Project
From Rainbow Drive to Thompson Road
CIP Project No. 500912

REVIEW TYPE: Mandatory Referral No. MR2010804

APPLICANT: Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT)

APPLYING FOR: Plan Approval

COMMUNITY-BASED PLANNING TEAM AREA: Cloverly

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff recommends that the Board approve the proposed project.

PREVIOUS PLANNING BOARD ACTION:

None.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project includes:

1. Construction of a 24-foot wide, two-lane roadway of approximately 300 feet in length to connect the existing terminus of Rainbow Drive with Thompson Road, within the existing/proposed roadway right-of-way.
2. Construction of a four-foot wide sidewalk along the south side of Rainbow Drive and the realignment/reconstruction of a four-foot wide sidewalk along the west side of Thompson Road to connect to existing sidewalks in the area.
3. Realignment, removal, and resurfacing of Rainbow Drive and Thompson Road pavement at the intersection to construct a T-intersection.
4. Addition of storm drain structures to the existing storm drain system.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Thompson Road is an L-shaped street that runs between Spencerville Road (MD 198) to the north and Peach Orchard Road to the east. The east-west section of Thompson Road is classified as a primary residential street in the Cloverly Master Plan. Rainbow Drive is also an east-west primary residential street within the Cloverly Master Plan area that extends between the Anselmo property at the western end to 250 feet short of the elbow in Thompson Road at Briggs Chaney Middle School at the eastern end. The Project location is shown in Attachment No. 1.

Rainbow Drive is currently approximately 36 feet wide and has a posted speed limit of 25 mph. The section of the roadway to the east of Good Hope Road has a four-foot wide cement concrete sidewalk along its south side. Thompson Road is approximately 16-24 wide and is an open section roadway. The roadway has a posted speed limit of 25 mph. The section of Thompson Road between the elbow and Kingshouse Road has a four-foot wide cement concrete sidewalk along the south side of the roadway and between Kingshouse Road and Peach Orchard Road along the north side of the roadway. A four-foot wide cement concrete sidewalk exists along the west side of Thompson Road for approximately 440 feet to the north of Rainbow Drive/Thompson Road.

FINDINGS

Consistency with Cloverly Master Plan

The Project is consistent with the 1997 Approved and Adopted Cloverly Master Plan recommendations regarding connecting Rainbow Drive and Thompson Road. The proposed Project will satisfy the master plan recommendations and will minimize the imperviousness created by the Project to meet the SPA requirements, will provide a traffic calming measure

along the roadway, and will discourage cut-through traffic through the immediate residential neighborhood.

The Project will also provide enhanced neighborhood transportation connectivity and provide additional ingress/egress options for area residents, while building transportation network redundancy. The connection will enhance neighborhood traffic circulation and could redistribute local traffic along several of the neighborhood roadways such as Rainbow Drive, Hopfield Road, Briggs Chaney Road, Good Hope Road, Aylesbury Street, Thompson Road, and Peach Orchard Road. While some streets will experience a minimal reduction in traffic, traffic could also increase minimally on certain other streets. The Thompson Road Connection project enhances access to residential subdivisions to the west of Thompson Road for emergency response teams from Burtonsville Volunteer Fire Department as well as for school bus and parent/staff/visitor traffic oriented to/from Briggs Chaney Middle School. Additionally, the Project is expected to provide environmental/cost benefits from reduced vehicles miles traveled (VMT) and reduced emissions as it reduces the length of local trips.

Consistency with Road Code and Associated Executive Regulations

1. The proposed pavement width of 24 feet is slightly less than the 26 feet in the new road standard for a primary closed-section residential street without parking (2003.10). The narrow roadway should help offset imperviousness created by the proposed sidewalk projects and the Rainbow Drive/Thompson Road Connection project, improve roadway safety, and may discourage cut-through traffic by reducing traffic speeds.
2. The proposed four-foot wide sidewalk is not consistent with the minimum five feet recommended for primary residential streets in the new County standard. This reduction in sidewalk width will however help MCDOT meet the SPA requirements by minimizing the imperviousness created by the sidewalk projects. The sidewalk connection, similar to the roadway connection, would improve neighborhood pedestrian connectivity and circulation.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Consistency with Cloverly Master Plan

The Cloverly Master Plan recommends Rainbow Drive and Thompson Road as two-lane primary residential streets (P-8) with a minimum right-of-way width of 70 feet, with an on-road signed shared-roadway bikeway (PB-36, as Class III). The roadway is recommended to connect to Thompson Road and not to Briggs Chaney Road. The master plan also recommends improvements to the western section of Thompson Road near Briggs Chaney Middle School to enhance safety for the drop-off of students and on-street parking. Drop-off and pick-up of students at the school typically occur within the school property.

In approving the Rainbow Drive-Thompson Road connection in the master plan, the Council placed three conditions that must be met before the connection is constructed. The conditions, from the master plan are provided below:

- *That the connection project, whenever it is programmed, be designed and budgeted to include traffic calming devices, such as circle(s) and traffic hump(s).*

This issue was raised at an April 14, 2010, public meeting. MCDOT has indicated that travel speeds would be monitored and evaluated on both Rainbow Drive and Thompson Road within several months after the opening of the roadway connection. If a speeding problem is identified, the funds associated with the traffic calming elements of the connection would be spent. The narrower pavement width will also have a traffic calming effect.

- *That the connection would not occur sooner than when Norbeck Road Extended project is opened to traffic.*

MCDOT completed the Norbeck Road Extended project in May 2004.

- *That the connection would not occur prior to completion of a County-initiated study of cut-through traffic on the primary and secondary residential street system within the areas bounded by Spencerville, Peach Orchard, Briggs Chaney, and Good Hope Roads, including Rainbow Drive and Thompson Road, and implementation of the measures identified to address cut-through traffic.*

This issue was raised at an April 14, 2010, public meeting. MCDOT has completed a Traffic Access Study dated May 2008 for the areas bounded by Spencerville, Peach Orchard, Briggs Chaney, and Good Hope Roads, including Rainbow Drive and Thompson Road and determined that no mitigation measures are currently necessary. MCDOT has also indicated that cut-through would be monitored and evaluated on both Rainbow Drive and Thompson Road within several months after the opening of the roadway connection. The study would follow the same process as described under Regulation 17-94 AM. "Through Traffic Volume Access Restrictions in Residential Areas."

Typical Roadway Section

The Project area lies within the Suburban area of the county, as defined by the Road Code. While the proposed roadway and sidewalk widths are narrower than the standard, we believe that the road's operation would be better than the existing via the proposed traffic calming and addition of the sidewalk, and that the narrower pavement widths are an appropriate response to the project's location in the Upper Paint Branch SPA.

Pedestrian and Bicyclist Accommodation

- **On-Road Bike Accommodation**

The Cloverly Master Plan recommends an on-road signed shared-roadway bikeway for Rainbow Drive/Thompson Road. The reduction in pavement width will not adversely affect on-road bicyclist accommodation since the low volumes of traffic on this residential road

(approximately 370 total vehicles to the east of Good Hope Road during the weekday morning peak-hour) should be traveling at speeds consistent with shared travel.

- Pedestrian Accommodation

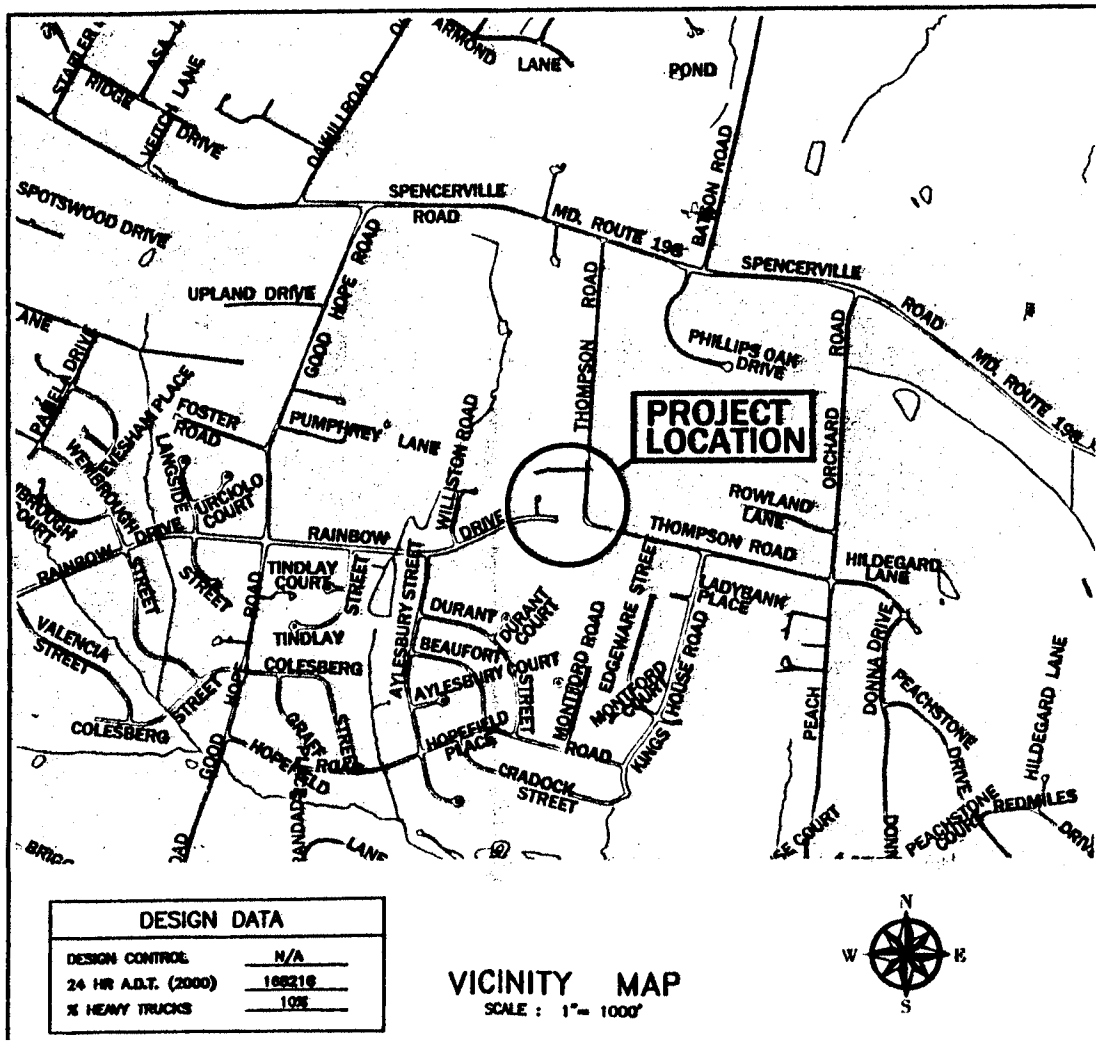
Pedestrians will be accommodated on the existing/proposed four-foot wide sidewalk along the south side of Rainbow Drive and Thompson Road.

ENIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The Environmental Planning Division staff's regulatory review of the Upper Paint Branch SPA Preliminary/Final Water Quality Plan as well as review for exemption from the Forest Conservation Law is addressed in a separate staff packet.

PUBLIC MEETING

A public meeting for the proposed Project was held on April 14, 2010, at the Briggs Chaney Middle School in Silver Spring. The meeting was attended by approximately 27 citizens. Several of the comments/issues raised at the Project public meeting were regarding potential cut-through traffic through the Good Hope Estates neighborhood between Good Hope Road and Spencerville Road (MD 198), existing and future excessive speeding along Rainbow Drive, and pedestrian safety, especially that of children of residents along Rainbow drive between Good Hope Road and Thompson Road.



**Thompson Road Connection Project
From Rainbow Drive to Thompson Road
CIP Project No. 500912**

Mandatory Referral No. MR2010804

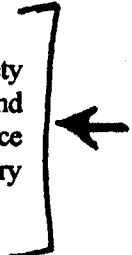
Attachment No. 1

Rainbow Drive

- Retain the recommended connection of Rainbow Drive and Thompson Road from the 1981 Plan. A bikeway and pedestrian connection should be constructed between Rainbow Drive and Thompson Road. See the Thompson Road recommendations for details about school-related safety improvements.
- Remove the recommended connection of Rainbow Drive to Briggs Chaney Road from the 1981 Plan.

Thompson Road

- Improve the western section of Thompson Road, near Briggs Chaney Middle School to enhance safety for the drop-off of students and on-street parking. In addition, a turn-around would improve safety and circulation. A specific design is not recommended by this Plan. Since this improvement would take place on school property or in the right-of-way, the Planning Board will review it as part of a mandatory referral. A sidewalk is under consideration by the DPW&T and is endorsed by this Plan.



INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS

The following intersections have been identified for improvements because of existing or forecasted levels of congestion. Other intersections that are not highlighted here also may require improvements. General types of improvements include the addition of turning lanes, bypass lanes, or changes in signalization and signage. In all cases, modifications to intersections should minimize impacts on the rural character of the area while improving pedestrian safety and convenience. The detailed design of each improvement will occur closer to its actual construction and should be consistent with the roadway character and streetscape recommendations. Improvements to the intersections along Ednor Road should be coordinated with the Rural Entry recommendations of the Sandy Spring/Ashton Plan.

- New Hampshire Avenue/Ednor Road
- Norwood Road/Layhill Road/Ednor Road
- Norwood Road/Attleboro Road
- New Hampshire Avenue/Briggs Chaney Road
- New Hampshire Avenue/Norwood Road
- Spencerville Road/Peach Orchard Road

ROAD INTERCONNECTIONS

There are limited street connections between neighborhoods. This restricts opportunities for local circulation and requires residents to travel longer distances and use major and arterial highways for short, local trips. As development occurs, connections to existing residential streets can be designed to improve local circulation without creating excessive levels of cut-through traffic.

OBJECTIVE: Provide connections between communities.

RECOMMENDATION:

- All new residential developments should include, where feasible, interconnected vehicle and pedestrian networks that permit movement between existing and proposed neighborhoods and public facilities. The design of interconnections can utilize measures that allow local circulation without creating routes that attract an inappropriate level of cut-through traffic.

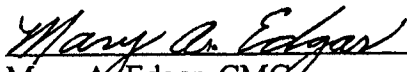
allow the expansion to proceed. The Council understands that it is not possible to grant a waiver or exemption in the Master Plan. The Planning Board and the Department of Permitting Services will make a determination in accord with existing laws and regulations. Nonetheless, the Council urges the Planning Board to be sensitive to the community benefits that could result from an expanded grocery store and to carefully consider this decision at the time of development.

In approving the connection of Rainbow Drive and Thompson Road, the Council placed three conditions that must be met before it is constructed:

- *That the connection project, whenever it is programmed, be designed and budgeted to include traffic calming devices, such as circle(s) and traffic hump(s). The speed would be evaluated on Rainbow Drive and Thompson Road within several months after its opening. If a speeding problem is identified, the funds associated with the traffic calming elements of the connection would be spent.*
- *That the connection would not occur sooner than when Norbeck Road Extended project is opened to traffic.*
- *That the connection would not occur prior to completion of a County-initiated study of cut-through traffic on the primary and secondary residential street system within the areas bounded by Spencerville, Peach Orchard, Briggs Chaney, and Good Hope Roads, including Rainbow Drive and Thompson Road, and implementation of the measures identified to address cut-through traffic. This study would follow the same process as described under Regulation 17-94 AM, "Through Traffic Volume Access Restrictions in Residential Areas."*

In approving the widening of Norwood Road to four lanes, the Council indicated that it should not be constructed until and unless the need for the widening is confirmed in the next update of the Cloverly Master Plan.

This is a correct copy of Council action.


 Mary A. Edgar, CMC
 Acting Secretary of the Council