



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

MCPB
ITEM NO. 8
7-15-10

July 7, 2010

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Dan Hardy, Chief *EH for DH*
Move/Transportation Planning Division

Nkosi Yearwood *NY*
Vision/Community-Based Planning

FROM: Larry Cole: 301-495-4528, for Transportation Planning *LC*

PROJECT: Jones Bridge Road Shared Use Path
From Wisconsin Avenue (MD355) to Connecticut Avenue (MD185)
CIP No. 501300

REVIEW TYPE: Mandatory Referral No. MR2010809

APPLICANT: Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT)

APPLYING FOR: Plan Approval

COMMUNITY-BASED PLANNING TEAM AREA: South Central Transit Corridor

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff recommends that the Board approve the proposed project (see Attachment 1: Vicinity Map) with the following comments:

1. Widen the proposed segments of five-foot-wide shared use path to eight feet minimum. Where the proposed path is adjacent to the curb, it should be ten feet wide.
2. Locate the proposed path behind handicap ramps wherever possible.

3. Provide handicap ramps at all bus stops and at all intersections within the project limits where safe pedestrian crossings of Jones Bridge Road can be accommodated. Where a safe intersection crossing cannot be provided, signs should be posted to prohibit the crossing and direct pedestrians to the nearest safe crossing.
4. Widen the proposed landscape panel to greater than five feet where possible. Provide a five- to eight-foot-wide landscape panel along park property, while minimizing impacts to large trees.
5. Provide shade trees between the path and curb wherever possible. Where the landscape panel width is insufficient to support shade trees, provide trees behind the path and provide other plant materials between the path and curb.
6. At the western project limit, extend the proposed path about 60 feet and realign the first 300 feet of the proposed path to be behind the utility pole to provide a greater offset from the road.
7. Provide a ten-foot-wide path in front of the home and driveway at 4003 Jones Mill Road.
8. Provide an eight-foot-wide path with a two-foot-wide landscaped buffer or a ten-foot-wide path in front of the home and driveway at 4117 Jones Bridge Road.
9. Delete the easternmost 350 feet of proposed path from the project if SHA agrees to construct it as part of their MD185/Jones Bridge Road intersection project.
10. Continue to coordinate with SHA on their work within your project limits.

PREVIOUS BOARD ACTION: None

SITE DESCRIPTION: The project length is about 1.1 miles. The westernmost 4,050 feet is bordered on the north side by the National Naval Medical Center. The remainder of the north side is bordered by the Hawkins Lane Historic District, North Chevy Chase Local Park, and the Chevy Chase Valley Community in the northwest quadrant of the MD185 intersection.

On the south side, the westernmost 2,600 feet is bordered by the West Chevy Chase Heights community, the next 1,800 feet by the Columbia Country Club, and most of the remainder by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project would replace the existing five-foot-wide sidewalk on the north side of Jones Bridge Road between MD355 and MD185 with an eight- to ten-foot-wide shared use path.

RELATED PROJECTS: This is one of several transportation projects proposed in response to the BRAC move of Walter Reed Army Medical Center to the National Naval Medical Center.

The Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) has proposed improvement projects at four intersections, two of which would abut the subject project: MD355/Jones Bridge Road and Connecticut Avenue (MD185)/Jones Bridge Road/Kensington Parkway. The Mandatory Referrals of these intersection projects are currently scheduled to be reviewed by the Planning Board on July 22, 2010

FINDINGS

Master Plan

Jones Bridge Road is classified as an Arterial road in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan, which recommends that between MD355 and MD185, it have a right-of-way width of 80 feet and a pavement width of 48 feet. The 2005 Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan recommends that bike accommodation on Jones Bridge Road be via bike lanes. This project proposes to create a shared use path on the north side, different from the recommended accommodation.

Road Code and Associated Executive Regulations

The proposed typical section does not conform to an approved County Standard. The landscape buffer between the curb and shared use path is less than the recommended 6.5-8-foot width and in some cases, no buffer would exist.

In four locations, the eight-foot minimum width of the path would not be met.

American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO)

The proposed path does not meet the AASHTO recommendation to be two feet wider where immediately adjacent to the roadway curb to provide a greater measure of pedestrian safety and comfort.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The new shared use path would meet ADA requirements for access along the north side of Jones Bridge Road, but ADA accessibility for crossings of Jones Bridge Road is not comprehensively addressed by the proposal. There are eight public street intersections on the south side of Jones Bridge Road within the project limits that require a corresponding ramp connection to the path on the north side, however the proposed path would be handicapped accessible at only two of the intersections: Glenbrook Parkway and Platt Ridge Road. The other six intersections would be inconsistent with ADA requirements since they lack those connections.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Bicyclist Accommodation

The proposed shared use path is not consistent with the Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan (CBFMP) recommendation for bike lanes between MD355 and MD185, but we believe that the shared use path would provide good bike accommodation and create a more coherent bike network. The recommendation to provide a shared-use path along the north side of Jones Bridge Road was the result of extensive stakeholder coordination regarding the impacts of the BRAC actions at NNMC. Both County and State projects have been coordinated to provide a substantial expansion of the shared-use path network in the vicinity of the NNMC campus to facilitate community access for pedestrians and bicyclists alike. The project is also consistent with the more general language in the Master Plan recommendation for the “expansion of pedestrian paths and bikeways to form a network linking residential neighborhood with public facilities” (p.102).

While on-road bike lanes could also be provided along Jones Bridge Road in the future, it appears that the only way to do so, and still meet the recommendation to maintain a 48-foot-wide pavement width, would be to eliminate the two-way center turn lane. This is unlikely. So the bike accommodation built under this project will be the bike accommodation along this portion of Jones Bridge Road for some time to come. The consideration of the master plan recommendation for bike lanes and pavement width can be re-evaluated as part of the Chevy Chase Lake Sector Plan.

The Bethesda-Chevy Chase Plan also recommends improved pedestrian accommodation along major highways and arterials, such as Jones Bridge Road (p.103). The proposed shared use path would increase pedestrian and bike access to the Medical Center Metro Station as well as improve safety.

Proposed Path Alignment

The proposed path would be constructed along the north side of Jones Bridge Road between MD355 and MD185. The north side location would tie directly into three gates on the NNMC campus; the BRAC expansion of this campus is the impetus for the project.

In the 1.1-mile project length, there are two street intersections on the north side, three entrances to NNMC, an entrance to North Chevy Chase Local Park, and thirteen residential driveways. The number of potential conflict points are relatively few, given the length of the project, and are concentrated at the eastern end of the project (more on this topic below); thus making this project a good candidate for a shared use path to accommodate most users.

On the south side of Jones Bridge Road, there are a similar number of intersections and residential driveways, but most of the potential conflicts are at the western end. Constructing the path on the south side was considered, as was constructing the western half on the north side, crossing at the existing traffic signal at Grier Road, and constructing the eastern half on the south side. The major problem with both options is the additional impact on the Forest Conservation

Easement at HHMI beyond what is already proposed by SHA as part of their MD185/Jones Bridge intersection project.

Connectivity

At MD355, a better connection is needed between the proposed Jones Bridge Road path and the NIH path along the west side of MD 355, particularly given that there is currently no crosswalk on the north leg of MD355 at this intersection. An improved crossing at MD 355 will be addressed in the Mandatory Referral review of the intersection.

East of Connecticut Avenue (MD185), the CBFMP also recommends bike lanes (but no shared use-path) for the segment of Jones Bridge Road from MD185 to Jones Mill Road. The path proposed by the subject project may have value if continued eastward from MD 185 toward the extension of the Capital Crescent Trail to be built as part of the Purple Line (see Attachment 2). It appears that the best way to join these two facilities would be via a shared use path on the south side of Jones Bridge Road between MD185 and Manor Road. From that point, it could either connect to the planned path in the Coquelin Run right-of-way (see Attachment 3) or continue down Jones Bridge Road to Jones Mill Road. These connections will be considered further as part of the Chevy Chase Lake Sector Plan work, but will also be discussed as part of the Mandatory Referral of the MD185/Jones Bridge Road intersection.

Substandard Shared Use Path Width Locations

Four locations are proposed to have path widths of only five feet, for a total length of about 325 feet, to minimize a variety of property impacts. The minimum width of a shared use path is eight feet (to facilitate bicyclists and pedestrians passing in opposite directions), so the proposed path along Jones Bridge Road would essentially be discontinuous. We believe that this would create very undesirable conditions and that the design should be modified to provide the eight foot minimum width as described below.

The westernmost location at 4117 Jones Bridge Road is discussed in the section on Historic issues below.

The project also proposes to construct only a five-foot-wide sidewalk at the curb, rather than a path with a buffer, in front of the home at 4003 Jones Mill Road, which was built in 1990. Modular block retaining walls in front of the property were built eight to nine feet into the public right-of-way, limiting the area easily available for this project. No building permit for these walls has been found. The walls should be relocated so that the path can be built at an acceptable width and offset. We note that the driveway for this home is on an easement in the adjacent North Chevy Chase Local Park, so there has already been a considerable public concession to accommodate this lot (see Attachment 4). We recommend that a ten-foot-wide path be built across this frontage.

The remaining two locations with substandard widths are near Connecticut Avenue and should be coordinated with SHA as described below.

Coordination with SHA

The easternmost 1,000 feet of this project overlaps with SHA's proposed intersection improvements at Connecticut Avenue (MD185)/Jones Bridge Road. MCDOT would construct the path on the north side of Jones Bridge Road and SHA would construct the roadway widening and sidewalk on the south side. MCDOT anticipates that their project will be constructed first.

This scenario would work well for two-thirds of the 1,000-foot long overlap, but not for the third that is closest to MD185. SHA proposes to remove the free-right-turn lane in the northwest quadrant of the intersection, moving the curb line south and providing more room for adequate path and landscape panel widths where MCDOT proposes two additional segments of substandard path width.

- A five-foot-wide sidewalk with a six-foot-wide buffer would be built at the adjacent driveways to 3905 Jones Bridge Road (built 1948) and 8800 Connecticut Avenue (built 2003).
- At the eastern end of the project, the proposed trail width is reduced to five feet for the last few feet of the project that ties into the handicap ramp, which is where an even greater width is desirable since it is where bicyclists queue while waiting for the traffic signal to change.

Rather than create a compromised facility, it would be better to delete this segment from this project and have SHA construct the path when the curb is relocated and the room is available to construct a shared use path that meets at least the minimum requirements.

Pedestrian Accommodation

Pedestrians would be accommodated in the permanent condition on the existing south side sidewalk and the proposed north side shared use path. Better coordination is needed between pedestrian facilities and bus stops to ensure that bus stops are accessible to all patrons.

As noted above, the proposed path would be ADA-accessible from only two of the eight public street intersections on the south side of Jones Bridge Road within the project limits: Glenbrook Parkway and Platt Ridge Road. Of the remaining six tee intersections, two of them have bus stops. In addition, there is a pair of bus stops at the University Road gate (NNMC's westernmost gate on Jones Bridge Road) and a stop at Hawkins Lane, a private road on the north side of Jones Bridge Road that is not ADA-accessible from the south side sidewalk.

We recently worked with MCDOT, SHA, and WMATA staff to address ADA access for the four BRAC intersection projects that are scheduled to be reviewed by the Board on 7/22/10. The good, safe accommodations developed as part of that effort – ensuring that bus stops are located near intersections with safe, ADA-accessible crossings - can serve as a model for the similar accommodations needed along Jones Bridge Road.

At other intersections where there is not a bus stop, legal crosswalks still exist per State law and must be made handicapped-accessible. If safe, ADA-accessible crossings cannot be accommodated, the intersections should be posted to prohibit the crossing.

Making these crossings handicapped-accessible is problematic where the path is adjacent to the curb. The necessary ramps would either require narrowing the level area of the proposed path or introducing inconvenient and undesirable grade changes in the trail. These locations should be minimized by providing adequate landscape buffers wherever possible.

Lighting

Continuous lighting would be provided for the proposed path.

Landscaping

The proposed project includes only minimal landscaping. As recommended above, we believe that landscaped buffers should be provided between the curb and sidewalk/shared use path wherever possible. Shade trees should be provided in those buffers to provide a better environment for path users and to improve the look of Jones Bridge Road.

Park Impacts

The proposed path would require about 0.45 acre of temporary impacts to North Chevy Chase Local Park (see Attachment 5). MCDOT has proposed to construct the path at the curb to minimize impacts to the park, but we believe that it is more important that we get a good facility along Jones Bridge Road. We recommend that a five- to eight-foot-wide landscape panel should be provided along park property.

Historic

There are three historic properties and one historic district that would be impacted by the proposed project.

The Bethesda Naval Hospital Tower (#35/8) site on the National Naval Medical Center campus would be impacted, although no work is proposed inside the current fence line. The historic setting for this site extends into the existing roadway.

The Hawkins Lane Historic District (#35/54) includes properties fronting Jones Bridge Road that would have temporary impacts. One of the segments of the proposed path that is substandard in width (five feet vs. eight feet minimum) is at the driveway to 4117 Jones Bridge Road. We believe that this creates a potential safety problem with users trying to negotiate a substandard width path, a downward slope, the driveway cross slope, and a curb in the horizontal alignment at the same time. The first flight of steps is proposed to be reconstructed. We recommend that the path be built to eight feet wide minimum at this constrained location, offset from the road by a minimum two-foot-wide landscape panel, which would add impacts to the landing at the top of

the steps noted above. A ten-foot-wide path should be provided elsewhere, offset from the roadway by a five-foot-wide minimum landscape panel wherever possible.

Two individually listed historic sites at 4023 and 4025 Jones Bridge Road (#35/56 and 35/57) would also be temporarily impacted by the proposed construction, A ten-foot-wide path is proposed at the curb, but a landscape panel between the curb and path should be provided: two-foot wide minimum, five feet where possible.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Environmental Guidelines

The project area contains environmental buffers, streams, other sensitive features including forested areas. The property is within the Lower Rock Creek watershed, a USE I-P designation. The Countywide Stream Protection Strategy (CSPS) rates this watershed as fair to poor condition.

The project proposes the removal of 0.13 acres of forest and 0.45 acres of Stream Valley Buffer (SVB). The SVB impacts are necessary and unavoidable to achieve the design standards of creating the new pathway, and those impacts have been minimized to the greatest extent possible.

Forest Conservation

The project is exempt from submission of a forest conservation plan. A forest conservation exemption (#42010170E) was granted under the provisions of Section 22A-5(e) as “a state or county highway project”. Staff approved the exemption on June 18, 2010. While the project is exempt, the applicant is still required to minimized forest cutting, clearing and loss of specimen trees under section 22A-9 of the County code. The applicant has minimized the limits of disturbance to limit the amount of forest clearing and impacts to large and specimen trees.

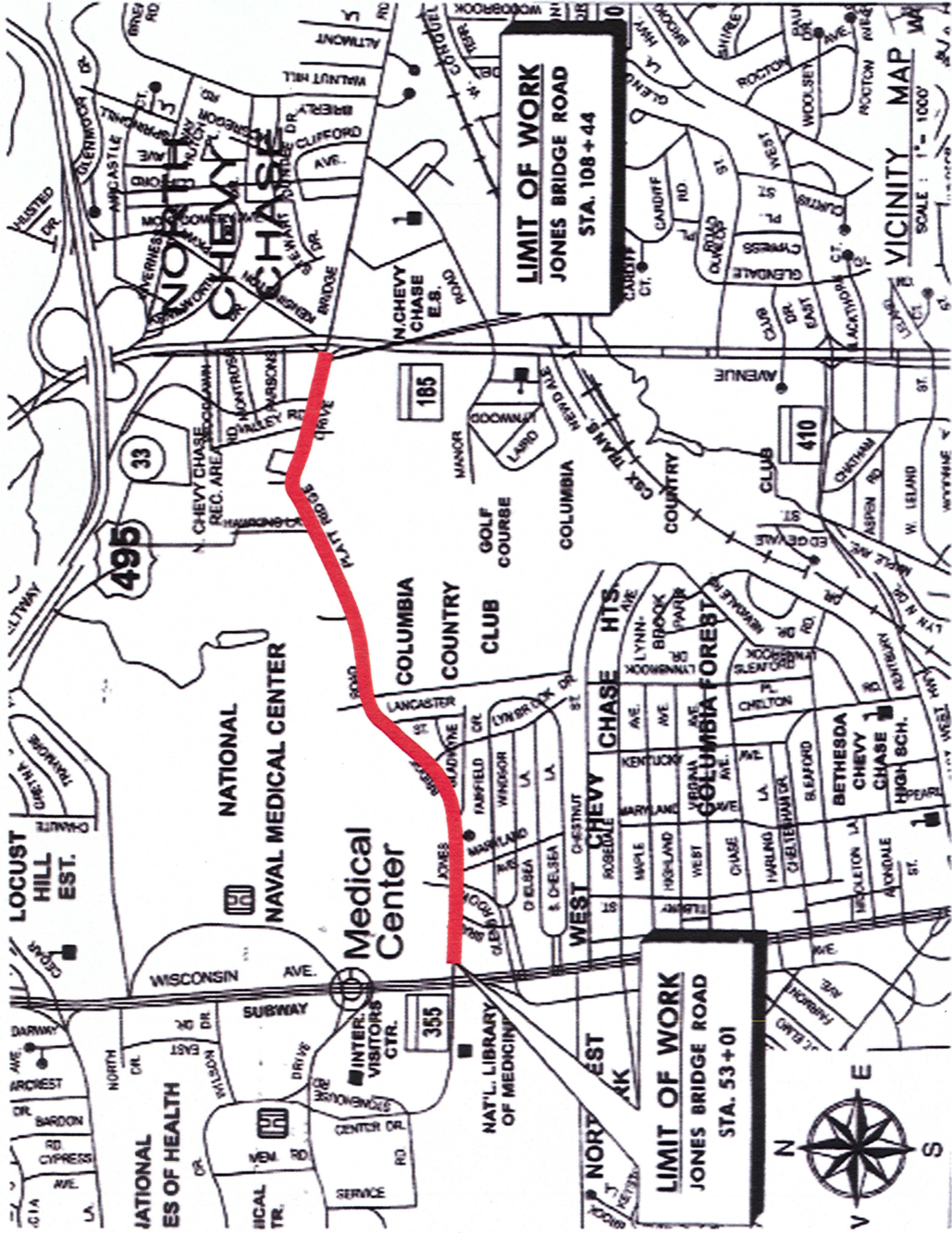
The applicant has submitted a tree save plan (TSP) in conjunction with the Mandatory Referral process to show how the impacts have been minimized and what stress reduction methods are being used to further minimize impacts on trees.

Tree Save

Seventy-three (73) significant and specimen trees are impacted by this project, thirty-five (35) of which are specimen size. The proposed tree save plan does not propose the removal of any significant or specimen trees, however four trees have 50% or greater Critical Root Zone (CRZ) impacts. Tree 226 a 32” Tulip poplar has 50% CRZ impact, Tree 284 a 26” Tulip poplar has 52% CRZ impact, Tree 422 a 24” Elm has 76% CRZ impact, and Tree 468 a 30” Red Oak has 51% CRZ impact. These four trees, based on the proposed impacts may not survive construction even though they are proposed to be retained by the applicant.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

A public meeting for this project was held on March 24, 2010.



Planned sidewalk
/path connection
B-CC Master Plan

Proposed Jones Bridge Road Shared Use Path

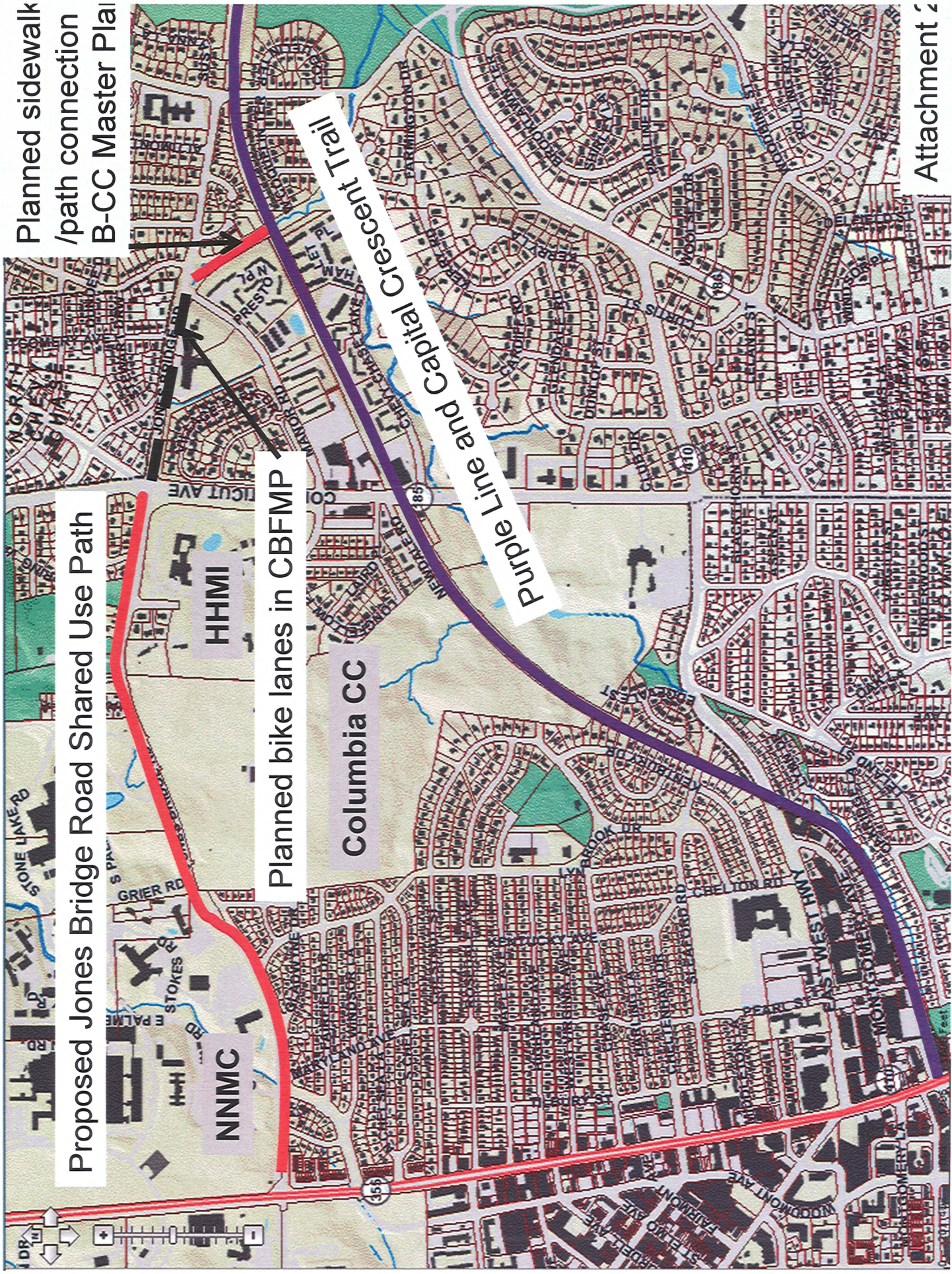
NNMC

HHMI

Planned bike lanes in CBFMP

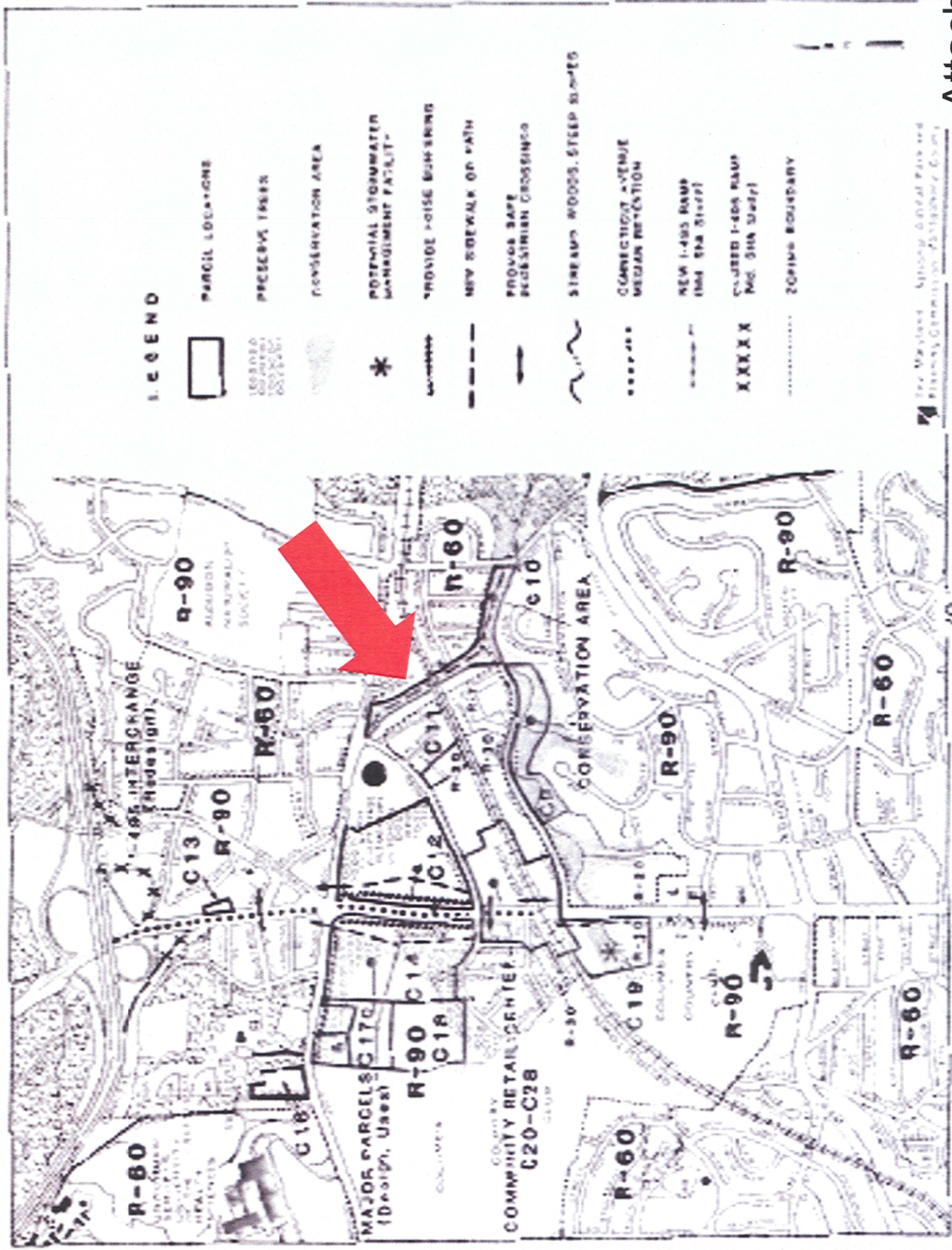
Columbia CC

Purple Line and Capital Crescent Trail



CHEVY CHASE LAKE RECOMMENDATIONS

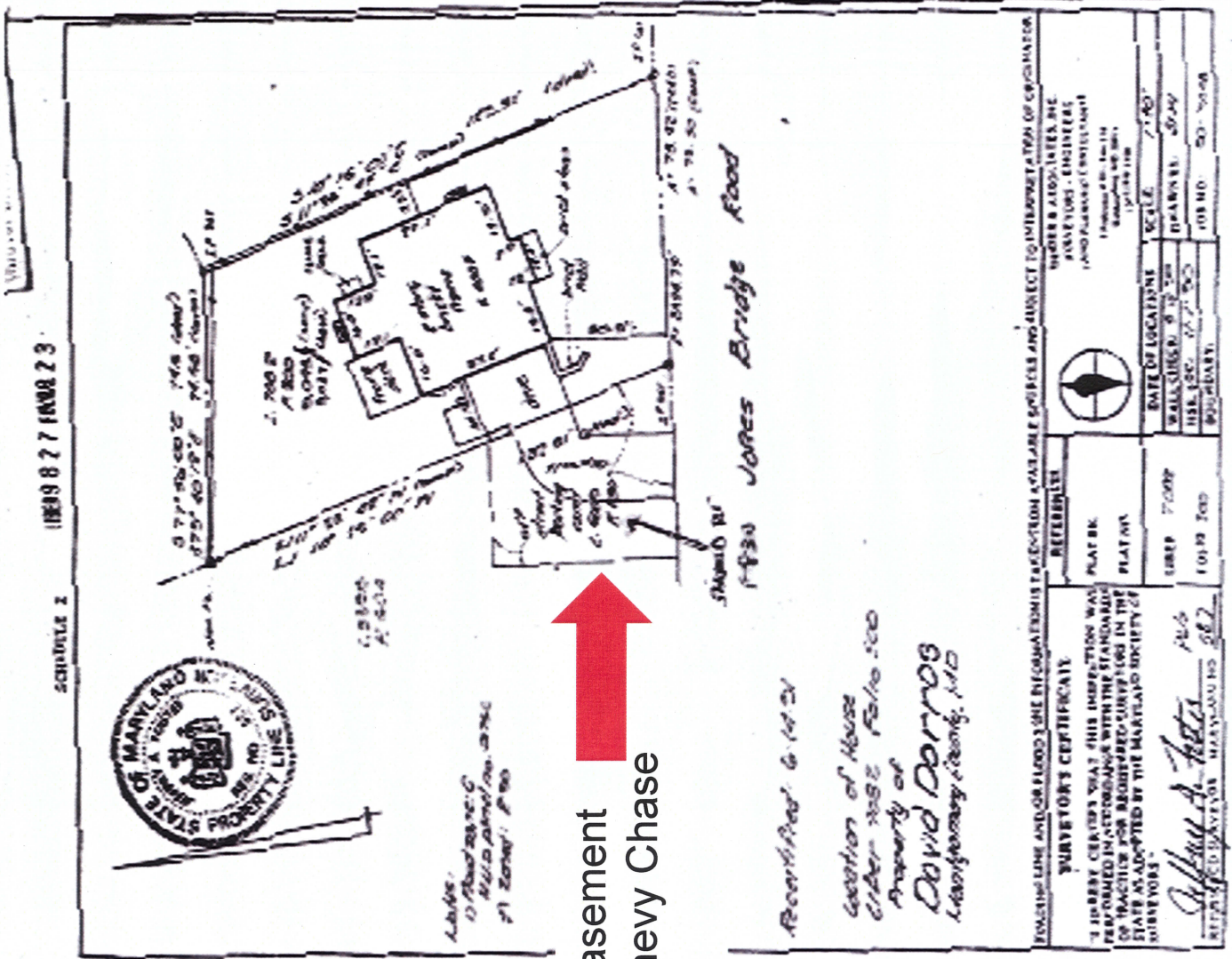
Figure 7



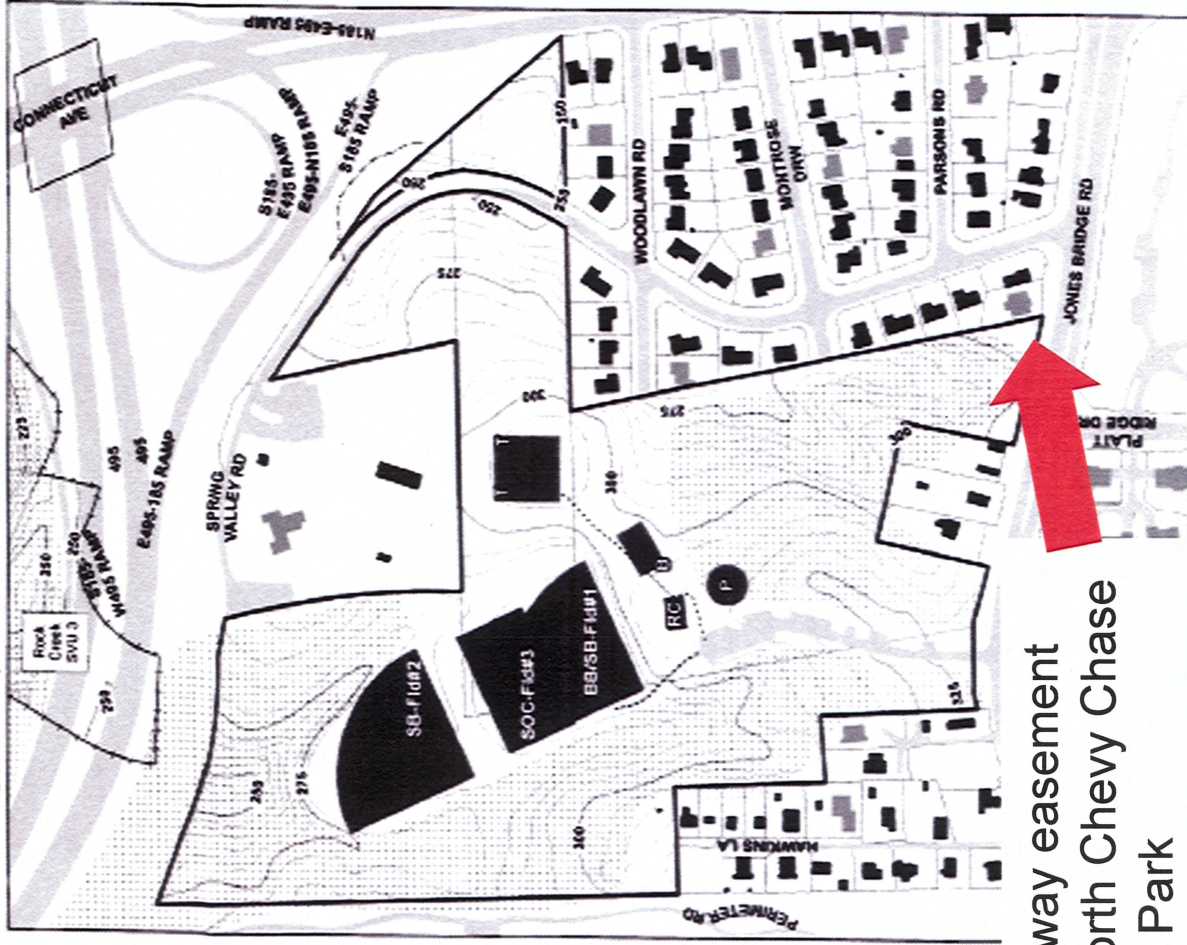
LEGEND

- Parcel Locations
- Preserve Trees
- Conservation Area
- Potential Stormwater Management Facility
- Provide Noise Buffering
- New Sidewalk or Path
- Provide Safe Pedestrian Crossings
- Stream Woods Steep Slopes
- Connecticut Avenue Median Retention
- New 1-495 Ramp (M&A STA Street)
- Existing 1-495 Ramp (M&A STA Street)
- Zoning Boundary

For More Information, Contact the Planning Commission



North Chevy Chase LP
4105 Jones Bridge Road, Chevy Chase, MD 20815



**Driveway easement
on North Chevy Chase
Local Park**