



## MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

March 17, 2014

Arthur Holmes, Director  
Montgomery County Department of Transportation  
Executive Office Building  
101 Monroe Street, 10th Floor  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Re: Platt Ridge Drive Extended Project

Dear Mr. Holmes:

The mandatory referral for the referenced MCDOT project is tentatively scheduled on the Planning Board's agenda for April 3, 2014. On October 16, 2013, your project team provided a briefing to me and other Department of Parks staff on the purpose and merits of the project. I requested this briefing since the project occurs on parkland under the ownership of the M-NCPPC. At the meeting, your staff provided its rationale as to why the project needs to be implemented, and parks staff provided a briefing on policies regarding disposition of parkland. My staff explained that in reviewing potential parkland disposition that by policy and precedent, it seeks to first identify alternatives that **avoid** park impact, and then if not possible options to **minimize, mitigate, or compensate** for the loss of parkland.

At the conclusion of the meeting, I requested additional information as to why the traffic light at Spring Valley Road could not serve as the permanent solution to provide ingress and egress for the Chevy Chase Valley community. I also asked about how the approximately 2 acre parkland impact could be minimized and what form of mitigation would be proposed if the project is ultimately approved by the Planning Board. On December 2013, Bruce Johnston of your staff sent a letter to the Planning Board Chair Francoise Carrier as a supplement to the mandatory referral submission citing reasons why safety could be compromised if the existing traffic light at Spring Valley Road remains as the permanent and primary source of ingress for the Chevy Chase Valley community. Other than that, I have not received any additional information from MCDOT to justify the disposition of parkland.

A complicating factor in our review of this project has been an assertion that the Maryland State Highway Administration (MSHA) may close the median at the Spring Valley Road and Jones Bridge Road intersection regardless of whether the Platt Ridge Drive project moves forward. My staff sent a letter to MSHA on January 31, 2014 requesting clarification of their position and has yet to receive a formal response. For purpose of my recommendation to the Planning Board, I will assume that MSHA will leave the median open if the Platt Ridge Drive Project is not built, unless they respond otherwise.

I am aware that the local affected community is divided on the need for the project, but at least some of support for the Platt Ridge Drive Extended project may be based on a fear that the median opening on Jones Bridge Road at Spring Valley Road will be closed.

I am also aware that the County Council has already appropriated \$3.7 million for the design and construction of the project, and this may be construed by your staff as removing the need for any

further analysis of options that avoid the park impact. However, my recommendation to the Planning Board must be based on whether any viable alternatives exist to achieve the project objectives that do not require the disposition of parkland.

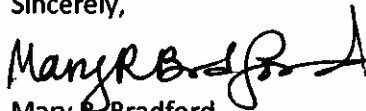
If the Platt Ridge Drive Extended project is found to be needed, its current design appears to be deficient in being able to serve as the primary entrance to the Chevy Chase Valley community, including the Chevy Chase Recreational Association. The project is currently designed to meet only the 100-foot minimum centerline radius of a tertiary road and is proposed to have a very steep 10.75% grade. We believe that the combination of these design values could present a safety hazard unto itself.

Prior to finalizing my recommendation to the Planning Board on the potential disposition of parkland, I ask for responses to the following questions:

- 1) What are the primary reasons that the traffic signal at Spring Valley Road is deemed not adequate to remain in place permanently to provide safe ingress and egress for the Chevy Chase Valley community?
- 2) What funding for parkland mitigation or compensation is included within the approved project budget for Platt Ridge Drive?
- 3) What assumptions were made about parkland mitigation or compensation at the time the budget was submitted to the County Council?
- 4) Is it anticipated that funding for mitigation or compensation would come from another funding source other than the Platt Ridge Drive project? If so, from what source and what amount is estimated?
- 5) As the primary access to both the Chevy Chase Valley community and the Chevy Chase Recreational Association, why was this project not designed to meet the standards of a primary street, other than to reduce park impacts?

Answers to these questions would be extremely helpful in order for me to finalize a recommendation to the Planning Board. I request a reply no later than Tuesday, March 25<sup>th</sup>.

Sincerely,



Mary R. Bradford  
Director of Parks

Cc: Edgar Gonzales  
Bruce Johnston  
Cindy Gibson  
Councilmember Roger Berliner  
Francois Carrier  
Mike Riley  
Larry Cole