

Martin O'Malley, Governor  
Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor



James T. Smith, Jr., Secretary  
Melinda B. Peters, Administrator

March 17, 2014

Mr. Michael F. Riley  
Deputy Director  
Maryland National Capital Park & Planning Commission  
Montgomery County Department of Parks  
9500 Brunett Avenue  
Silver Spring MD 20901

Dear Mr. Riley:

Thank you for your letter regarding the State Highway Administration's (SHA) intersection improvement at MD 185 (Connecticut Avenue) and Jones Bridge Road/Kensington Parkway Phase 3 project. SHA appreciates your interest and concern regarding this Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) project and your request for further clarification.

As part of the BRAC expansion in Bethesda, the MD 185 intersection with Jones Bridge Road has been identified for improvements. Intersection operations were failing prior to the BRAC expansion in Bethesda and are projected to substantially worsen due to increased traffic volumes from BRAC activities and related developments. SHA improvements along both MD185 and Jones Bridge Road will maintain, or improve, future traffic operations at this intersection, while minimizing the impact to the neighboring communities. In addition to the roadway improvements, the project will also provide safe pedestrian and bicycle accommodations.

In order to complete the improvements for Phase 3, fee simple right-of-way and temporary construction easements will be required from the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC)'s North Chevy Chase Recreation Area, as stated in SHA's March 28, 2012, letter to M-NCPPC. The M-NCPPC agreed with the Section 4(f) *de minimis* impact and temporary occupancy criteria for permanent and temporary impacts to the North Chevy Chase Recreation Area on May 10, 2012. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) also concurred on the Section 4(f) findings on August 10, 2012. The Platt Ridge Drive Extension project, led by Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), was not considered in the Section 4(f) coordination, as it is not part of the SHA project and not required for the SHA project to be effective. Phase 3 of the MD 185 at Jones Bridge Road project will have an independent benefit to the area, regardless of whether the Platt Ridge Drive Extension project is ever constructed, and will not restrict any alternatives studied or other reasonably foreseeable transportation projects in the area.

My telephone number/toll-free number is 410-545-0400 or 1-800-206-0770.  
Maryland Relay Service for Impaired Hearing or Speech 1.800.735.2258 Statewide Toll Free

Street Address: 707 North Calvert Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21202 • Phone 410.545.0300 • [www.roads.maryland.gov](http://www.roads.maryland.gov)

Mr. Michael F. Riley  
Page Two

It is our understanding that County elected officials included funding for the Platt Ridge Extended project as part of the deliberations of the Executive's BRAC Implementation Committee, to improve the safety of access to the community due to the increase in traffic associated with BRAC. Again, this action was totally independent of the improvements at the intersection of MD 185 and Jones Bridge Road being carried out by the State.

In response to your letter requesting clarification of whether the SHA project requires closing the median at Spring Valley Road, it does not. The SHA project will provide the expected benefit whether the median is open or closed. The SHA project focuses on the operations of the MD185 intersection and ensuring that access continues to the community to avoid land locking a large number of homes and businesses. Because we are aware of the County's Platt Ridge Drive Extension project, SHA has developed two alternative designs for the MD 185 Phase 3 project; one with the median closed at Spring Valley Road, and the other with the median still open at Spring Valley Road. Both alternatives eliminate the need for the temporary traffic signal at Spring Valley Road. However, our Traffic Engineering Delay and Queuing Analysis shows that during evening peak traffic hours the backups on eastbound Jones Bridge Road will extend beyond the intersection with Spring Valley, but short of the proposed location of the Platt Ridge Drive Extension, making ingress and egress to and from the community more difficult for left turns.

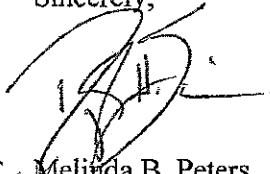
SHA agrees that the Platt Ridge Drive Extension project being funded by the County would provide a safer and more convenient ingress and egress to the Chevy Chase Valley community and businesses that now rely on Spring Valley Road. MCDOT installed a temporary traffic signal at Spring Valley Road, which will operate until the Platt Ridge Drive Extension project is completed by MCDOT. The median at Spring Valley Road is proposed to be closed by SHA's Phase 3 project at the request of MCDOT, but not until the Platt Ridge Drive Extension project is completed. It is our understanding that the MCDOT request was based on earlier coordination meetings with the community about the signal at Spring Valley Road being temporary; the leadership of the community acknowledged this understanding and reiterated their support in writing for the Platt Ridge Drive Extension project. The project, as envisioned, has the support of elected officials who included the project in the County's Capital Improvements Program.

The letter from former SHA Administrator, Mr. Neil Pedersen, emphasized that SHA would not commit to any funding for the Platt Ridge Drive Extension project without full support from MCDOT, M-NCPPC, and the planning board. There was no intent to imply the SHA intersection project is contingent with the extension of Platt Ridge Drive, or vice versa.

Mr. Michael F. Riley  
Page Three

Thank you, again for your letter. If you have any additional questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Yuqiong Bai, Project Manager, Highway Design Division, SHA at 410-545-8816, toll-free 1-888-228-5003 or via email at [ybai@sha.state.md.us](mailto:ybai@sha.state.md.us); or Ms. Caryn G. Brookman, Environmental Manager, Environmental Planning Division, SHA at 410-545-8698 or via email at [cbrookman@sha.state.md.us](mailto:cbrookman@sha.state.md.us). Both Ms. Bai and Ms. Brookman will be happy to assist you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Melinda B. Peters', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

✍ Melinda B. Peters  
Administrator

cc: Ms. Yuqiong Bai, Project Engineer, Highway Design Division, SHA  
Ms. Caryn G. Brookman, Environmental Manager, Environmental Planning Division,  
SHA  
Ms. Jeanette Mar, Environmental Program Manager, FHWA  
Mr. Brian Young, District Engineer, SHA