

M-NCPPC



MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARK AND PLANNING

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760

MCPB
ITEM # 17
1/24/02

January 17, 2002

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Jeff Zyontz, Chief
County-wide Planning Division

John E. Hench, PhD, Supervisor
Park Planning and Resource Analysis

FROM: Lyn Coleman, Trail Planning Supervisor
County-wide Planning Division
(301) 650-4391

SUBJECT: **Public Hearing Draft Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park Trail Plan
Worksession**

The concept plan for the Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park Trail Plan is shown as Figure 1. Staff will present an overview of the Plan at the start of the worksession.

This worksession addresses the following topics:

- Topic A: Overview of Staff Recommendations – Page 5
- Topic B: Hard Surface Trail Planning and Implementation Process – Page 8
- Topic C: Hard Surface Trail Proposal: Balancing A Variety of Policy Objectives – Page 13
- Topic D: Natural Surface Trail Proposal – Page 25
- Topic E: Summary of Public Hearing Testimony – Page 28

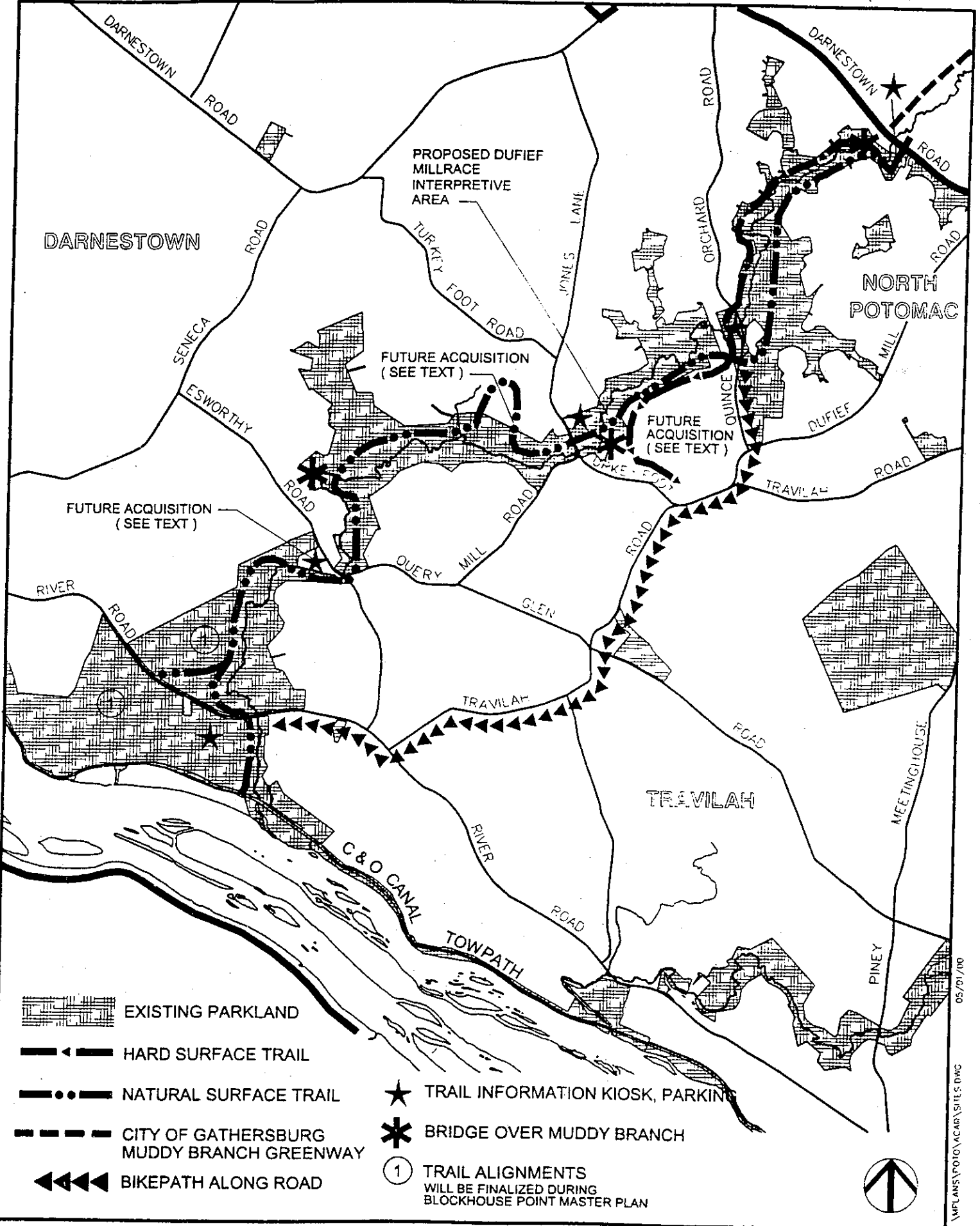
This packet contains an analysis and discussion of issues pertaining to each topic. A summary of the Planning Board public hearing testimony is included as Topic E. The Planning Board has been provided with copies of written testimony. Due to the volume of the testimony, copies are not attached with this packet. A binder with all the testimony is available for public review at the Information Counter at MRO, 8787 Georgia Avenue, during regular working hours and will be available in the Auditorium during the work session.

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT IN PLAN PROCESS

In response to citizen concerns about the public participation process associated with the Muddy Branch Plan, the Planning Board asked staff to review how the public was involved and how they were notified of meetings. An annotated chronology of the Plan process is shown below.

MUDDY BRANCH TRAIL CONCEPT PLAN

FIGURE 1



05/01/00
R:\PLANS\010\ACAD\SITE5.DWG

As noted in the Public Hearing testimony, a change in leadership occurred in the North Potomac Citizens Association in May 2001. Prior to this date, elected leaders supported the trail concept (see number 3 below). The newly elected Board does not support the trail. The change in officers and viewpoint occurred after the public meeting on the trail plan.

1. December 14, 1999. Trail planning concepts presented to the Potomac Master Plan Advisory Committee on December 14, 1999. A written follow-up memo was distributed to the MPAC on December 28, 1999. Staff offered to attend civic group meetings to discuss concepts.
2. February 8, 2001: Presentation of Staff Draft Park Trail Plan to Planning Board in conjunction with presentation by staff and MPAG on Staff Draft Potomac Master Plan. Announcement made and flyers distributed regarding March 21 public meeting.
3. February 14, 2001: Executive Board of North Potomac Citizens Association unanimously supports a hard surface trail as a connector between Gaithersburg and the C&O Canal and supports a non-asphalt surface.
4. Public Meeting on Staff Draft Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park Trail Plan held Wednesday, March 21, 2001. Notices sent to adjoining homeowner associations and press releases appear in local papers. Approximately 35 people attend.
5. Public Hearing on the Potomac Master Plan held in March and April 2001. Public Hearing Draft included recommendations of Staff Draft Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park Trail Plan. Testimony on trail provided by numerous individuals and groups, including:
 - a. Dufief Homes Association
 - b. Glen Preservation Foundation
 - c. Potomac Bridle and Hiking Trails Assoc.
 - d. Potomac Master Plan Advisory Group
 - e. Western Montgomery County Citizens Advisory Board
 - f. City of Gaithersburg Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee
 - g. Countywide Recreation Advisory Board

Testimony related to Muddy Branch forwarded to trail planning staff for inclusion in Trail Plan record.

6. Public Hearing scheduled on Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park Trail Plan on July 30 so that Planning Board worksession could occur in same time frame as Potomac Master Plan worksession on parks and trails. Press release issued announcing the Public Hearing on July 10. Individual notices of public hearing sent to mailing list.
7. In response to community requests requesting another Public Hearing date to allow more time to prepare testimony, the Board schedules a second Public Hearing on September 6. In order to allow more time for written comments, the Public Hearing record remains open until October 5, 2001.
8. Staff arranges a walk of the trail with interested community members on October 15. Due to rain, the walk rescheduled for Monday, October 29. Staff clears a walking path and flags route so citizens may explore route on their own.

9. Park Director Cochran and trail planning staff meet with representatives from North Potomac to discuss trail issues.
10. Staff responds to Public Information Request by Denise Hammond initiated in December, 2001. To date, over 450 pages have been copied and provided by staff.

TOPIC A: Overview of Staff Recommendations

Recommendations Related to the Countywide Park Trails Plan:

Based upon the recommendations of the Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park Trail Plan, **AMEND** the Countywide Park Trails Plan as follows:

1. **Remove** a hard surface trail proposal from the lower 2/3 portion of the Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park. (See Figure A-1)
2. **Rely** on natural surface trails in Cabin John; Watts Branch and Muddy Branch SVP as the primary trail access to the C&O Canal towpath.
3. **Retain** a proposal for a hard surface trail in the upper portion of the Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park:
 - To provide a safe, attractive trail connection northward to the Gaithersburg Muddy Branch Greenway trail system;
 - To provide a connection to the I-270 Corridor Bikeway;
 - To provide access to the C&O Canal towpath bikepath in concert with a proposed bikepath along Travilah Road.
3. **Recommend** that a final decision as to whether or not to construct the hard surface trail should await completion of a Facility Plan to address the issues and concerns identified in the Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park Trail Plan.

Recommendations Related to the Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park Trail Plan

1. **Rename** the Plan a Trail Corridor Plan to address confusion about the trail planning process, particularly the difference between trail corridor planning and facility planning.
2. **Recommend** that a final decision whether or not to construct a hard surface trail should await completion of a Facility Plan to address the following issues:
 - Location of rare threatened, endangered and watch-list species of plants.
 - Location by staff certified arborist and forest ecologist of all high quality trees.
 - Location and delineation of wetlands.
 - Investigate potential archaeological and historical sites.
 - Location and specifications for all bridges.
 - Identification of preferred alignment for public review and comment.
 - Preparation of stormwater management concept and preliminary forest conservation plan.
 - Preliminary review by all regulatory agencies responsible for issuing permits.
 - Identification of how preferred alignment relates to accessibility goals and objectives.

- Identification of trails head parking and community access.
 - Preliminary cost estimates of preferred alignment.
 - Summary and evaluation of impacts and opportunities associated with trail.
 - Identify how the trail would connect to the City of Gaithersburg Muddy Branch Greenway trail system.
 - Review and evaluation of trail surface types that could provide a firm and stable surface for casual walkers and casual cyclists and meet park accessibility standards for disabled individuals.
3. **Clarify** that “hard surface trail” refers to any trail surface that can accommodate a casual walker and a casual cyclist and can meet park accessibility guidelines for disabled individuals.
 4. **Emphasize** the importance of constructing a bike path along Travilah Road to achieve connectivity to the C&O Towpath.
 5. **Include** a trail alignment option for the natural surface trail in Segment 3 in response to Public Hearing testimony.

Recommendations Related to the Potomac Master Plan

Affirm the recommendations in the Planning Board Draft Potomac Master to remove Class I bike path designations from Watts Branch, Cabin John and Muddy Branch.

Include by reference the recommendations for trails included in the shown in the Countywide Park Trails Plan and the Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park Trail Plan.

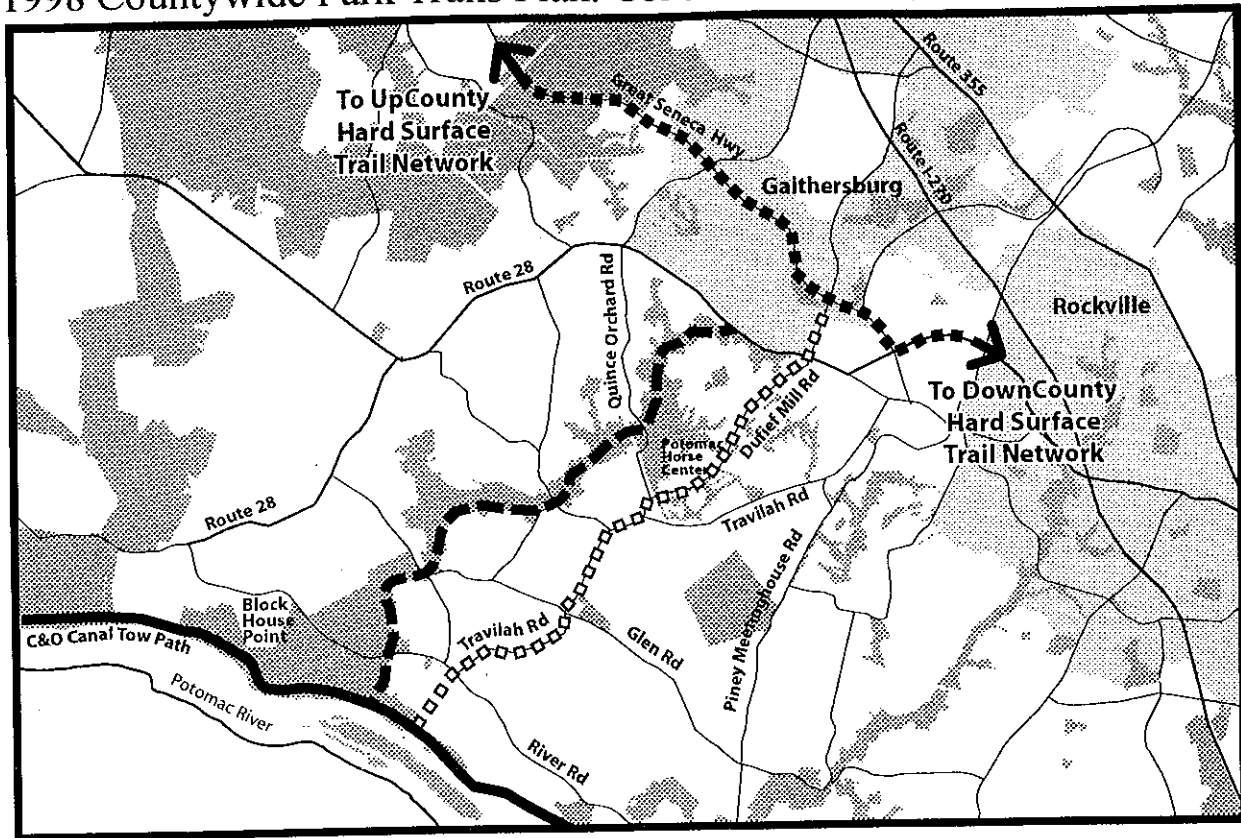
Recommendations Related to the Trail Planning and Implementation Process

Clarify the planning and implementation process, the role of citizen review and comment, public notification and the types of studies done at different levels in the process.

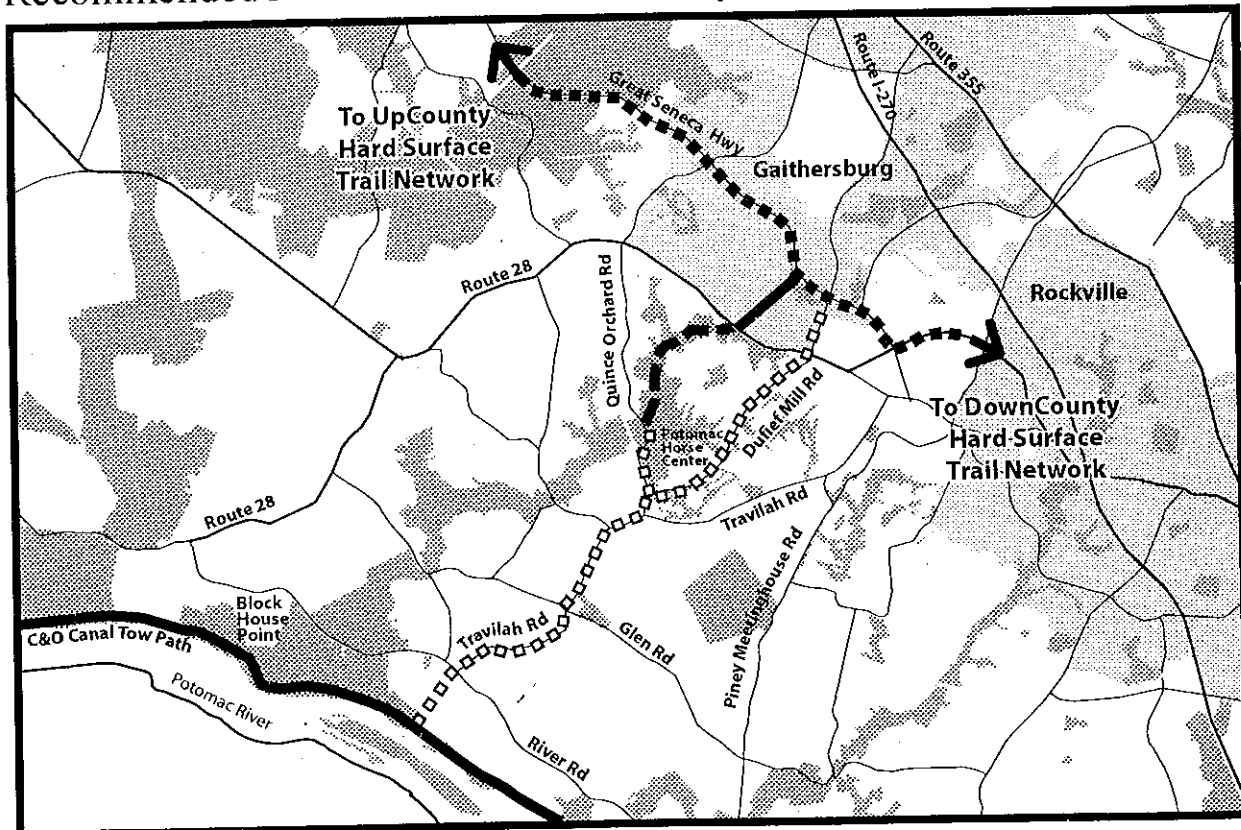
HARD SURFACE TRAIL RECOMMENDATIONS







Figure A-1

1998 Countywide Park Trails Plan: C&O Canal Corridor



Recommended Amendments to the Countywide Park Trails Plan



- | | |
|---|---|
|  Parkland |  Municipalities |
|  Existing Hard Surface Trail |  Proposed Hard Surface Trail |
|  Existing Bike Path |  Proposed Bike Path |

TOPIC B: Hard Surface Trail Planning and Implementation Process

STAFF RECOMMENDED BOARD ACTIONS:

AMEND the Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park Trail Plan as follows:

- Clarify that the Muddy Branch Trail Plan identifies a generalized trail location for a hard surface trail but a decision to construct the trail must await completion of more detailed studies done at time of facility planning.
- Include an explanation of the hard surface trail planning, design and construction process in the Appendix.
- Restructure the Plan to more clearly differentiate between planning recommendations and issues, which need further study at time of facility planning.

A more simplified process is used for natural surface trails; that process is explained in Topic D: Natural Surface Trail Proposal.

PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT RECOMMENDATION:

The Public Hearing Draft does not adequately explain the trail planning and implementation process.

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

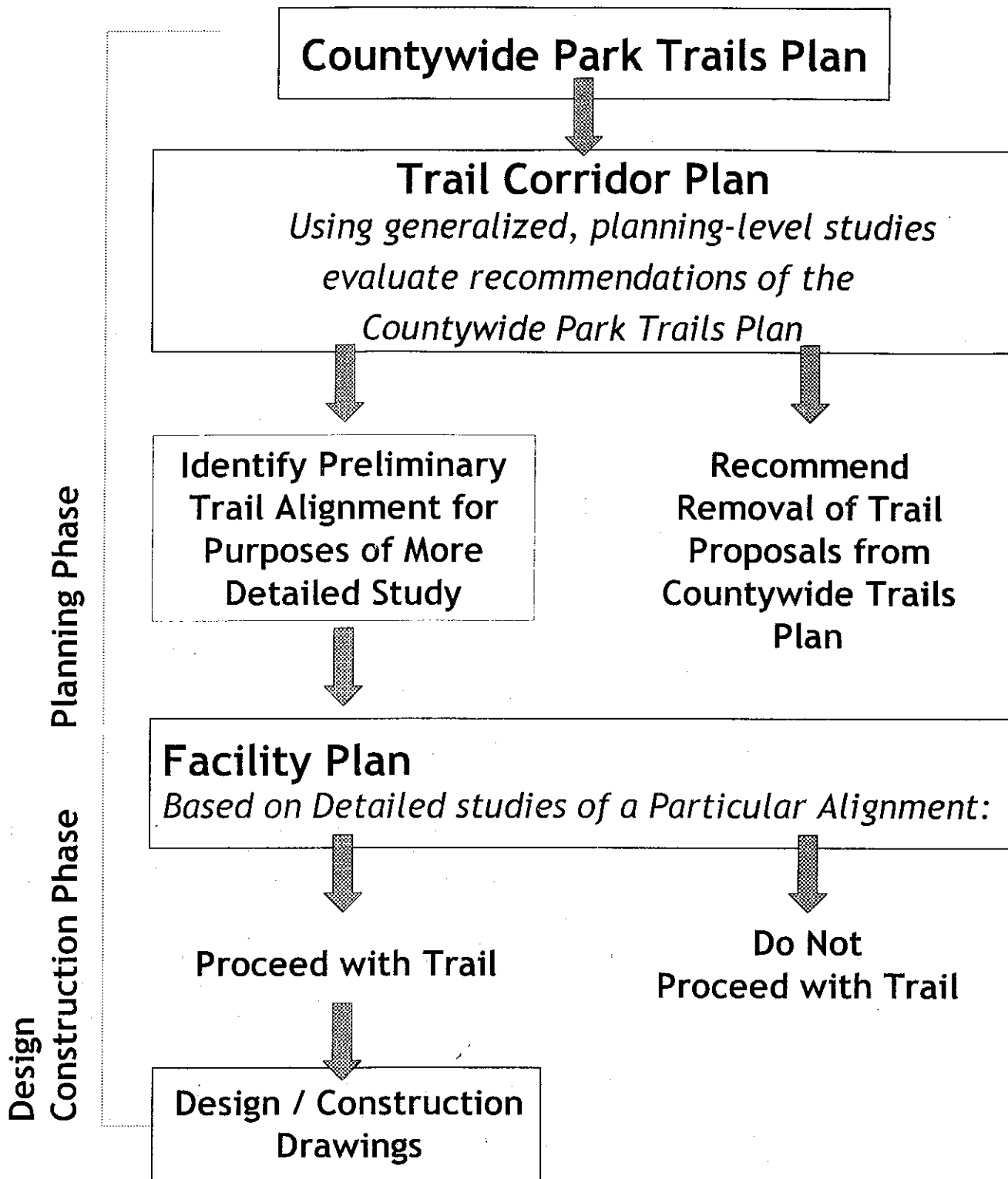
There is confusion as represented in the testimony and by staff conversations with members of the community as to how hard surface trails proceed from planning to construction and what level of analysis is associated with each phase. This is understandable since the Public Hearing Draft Plan does not adequately explain the hard surface trail planning, design and construction process. Many people erroneously assume that approval of the Muddy Branch Trail Plan would be the "last step" in the planning process prior to construction of a hard surface trail in Segment 1. The following discussion is presented to help clarify the trail planning, design and construction process for hard surface trails.

DISCUSSION:

1. The Process of Planning, Designing and Building Hard Surface Trails

This discussion is keyed to Figure B-1.

The Process For Planning, Designing & Building Hard Surface Trails



The **Countywide Park Trails Plan** is the overall guide to trail development within the Montgomery County park system. The Plan proposes a network of hard surface and natural surface trails based upon the following planning principles:

- i. Maintain Countywide perspective
- ii. Emphasize connectivity
- iii. Provide variety
- iv. Establish guidelines to aid decisions at the local planning level
- v. Seek balance among recreation, transportation, and environmental concerns
- v. Establish priority of key components of the Countywide network
- vi. Designate a network which is responsive to population centers, both existing and planned
- vii. Recommend implementation strategies

The Countywide Trails Plan is a long range, countywide vision that will take decades to implement. The Plan recognizes that more detailed planning and design work would be necessary at the sub-regional or "corridor" level to better evaluate environmental, community, recreational and cost aspects of a particular trail proposal.

A **Trail Corridor Plan** looks more carefully at a particular trail connection proposed in the Countywide Park Trails Plan. Unlike park master plans, where trails are but one component of an overall scheme, a Trail Corridor Plan focuses on trails and related amenities (i.e., interpretation opportunities, areas for public access, potential community connections).

The Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park Trail Plan is a Trail Corridor Plan. The Clarksburg Greenway Study is another example of a trail corridor plan. A Trail Corridor Plan includes maps and text pertaining to existing conditions, public policy context, analysis of opportunities and constraints, statement of goals and objectives and a trail concept plan of sufficient detail to enter the facility planning process or guide construction as part of private development activity. A recommended phasing plan is included.

When the Trail Corridor Plan involves a stream valley park, the first step is to determine if a trail can be located outside the stream valley buffer and associated areas of significant environmental features. This process is outlined in the Public Hearing Muddy Branch Trail Plan.

Opportunities and Constraints are evaluated during the Trail Corridor Plan process based upon the following information:

- a. Mapping of sensitive areas as defined by the Environmental Guidelines (wetlands, seeps, springs, streams, highly erodible soils, all 25% slopes and slopes 15-25% if on erodible soils, 100 year floodplain), forest cover and identified locations of rare, threatened, and endangered watchlist species.
- b. Identification of cultural, historic and archeological features and settings.
- c. Potential for connection to adjacent communities and other trail systems
- d. Identification of disturbed areas within corridor
- e. Identification of generalized areas where bridge crossings are needed.

Based upon these studies and numerous field walks, a Trail Corridor Plan addresses the balance between recreational and environmental objectives and makes a recommendation as to whether the trail should go forward to the next phase of the planning process: facility planning. If the Trail Corridor Plan recommends a generalized trail alignment for facility planning purposes, issues needing special attention at time of facility planning are identified.

Once the Planning Board approves a Trail Corridor Plan, the Countywide Park Trails Plan is amended to reflect the Board's actions.

A **Facility Plan** is the last step in the trail planning process and is the basis for deciding whether or not a project should be implemented. If the Board determines the project achieves a reasonable balance of environmental, cultural, recreational and fiscal objectives, then the trail project proceeds to final design and construction. If the Planning Board determines that the trail is not feasible, not worth the negative impacts, or too costly, then the project is abandoned at the end of the facility planning stage.

The Facility Plan includes a more rigorous analysis of environmental impacts and cultural resource impacts (Natural Resource Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation, preliminary Forest Conservation Plan, detailed wetland delineation, minimization and mitigation strategies), recommends the type of hard surface trail surface (boardwalk, asphalt, etc.), analyzes community connection opportunities (feasibility of grade-separated road crossings, tying into shared use bike paths), analyzes engineering feasibility, includes a stormwater management concept and provides cost estimates (these costs are for purposes of allocating construction funds in the Capital Improvement Program) and estimating future maintenance and policing needs.

The **Design and Construction** phase of a trail project occurs once the Planning Board approves a Facility Plan. During this phase, all details of the trail, including materials, design specifications, final trail configuration, final alignment and construction specifications are determined. The final forest conservation plan, sediment and erosion control plan, and stormwater management plan are prepared. The design also includes any related amenities, such as signs, kiosks or trailheads, or trail connectors that are to be built at the same time as the trail. Any adjustments to the design standards or alignment that result from detailed design work, such as soil borings, are made during this stage. This stage also includes permitting, mitigation techniques and specifications for minimization of environmental impacts during construction.

2. Determining Trail Costs

Testimony was presented stating that the cost of hard surface trail construction, maintenance and stream rehabilitation will be excessive.

Hard surface trails are expensive but they are also one of our most popular park features. Trail costs vary and depend upon alignment, topography, natural resources, engineering (bridges, boardwalk, retaining wall, etc.), trail width, and other construction factors (access, staging sites) for a specific trail project. The Trail Corridor Plan identifies a generalized trail alignment while the main purpose of the Facility Planning is to provide cost estimating for specific trail projects, based on a particular alignment and preliminary engineering design.

The average rough cost estimates presented in 1999 to the County Council on the Countywide Trails Plan were only for the purpose of assessing the overall cost for the build-out of the trail program as adopted in the plan. The cost of a particular trail or trail segment will depend on many factors. As mentioned above, the cost is significantly affected by the specific design (width of the trail whether for the standard, hard surface width of 10 feet or narrower 8 feet, in addition to the number and size of bridges, length of boardwalk, and other design, construction, and construction access elements) involved. The cost of natural surface trails also varies depending on what combination of Park labor, volunteers, Conservation Corps, or outside contractors are used in the construction, as well as number of bridges and length of boardwalk.

Decisions to plan for and fund hard surface trails throughout the County are made based on need and the expected recreational and transportation use made of the facility by the community served. The cost is neither excessive nor insignificant, but simply what is required in providing these facilities to the community.

As with any such facility, maintenance is required, both for trail construction and for policing and oversight of trail usage. By using design and construction techniques that minimize negative impacts on streams and by including a water quality management plan for the trail at time of facility planning, long-term maintenance costs for silt or stream restoration are minimized. Park Police are active participants in the planning of trails to assure trail monitoring can be done in an effective manner.

SUMMARY

A better explanation of the trail planning, design and construction process needs to be part of the Plan. The fact that the Plan is a Trail Corridor Plan should be emphasized. The recommendations of the Plan giving direction to the Facility Planning process should be listed separately.

TOPIC C: Hard Surface Trail Proposal: Balancing a Variety of Policy Objectives

This topic addresses two issues raised in the Public Hearing testimony:

1. In general, how environmental and recreational concerns are balanced in the hard surface trail planning process.
2. Specifically, how different public policies and concerns are addressed in the Muddy Branch Trail Plan.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Clarify that "hard surface trail" refers to any trail surface that can accommodate a casual walker and a casual cyclist and can meet park accessibility standards for disabled individuals.

Retain a hard surface trail in the upper portion of the Muddy Branch SVP for purposes of Facility Planning. Once the Facility Planning study is complete, the Planning Board will be able to make a more informed judgment in terms of environmental, recreational and fiscal aspects of the trail prior to authorizing construction. The Facility Planning process would include the following elements:

- Location of rare threatened, endangered and watch-list species of plants.
- Location by staff certified arborist and forest ecologist of all high quality trees.
- Location and delineation of wetlands.
- Investigate potential archaeological and historical sites.
- Location and specifications for all bridges.
- Identification of preferred alignment for public review and comment.
- Preparation of stormwater management concept and preliminary forest conservation plan.
- Preliminary review by all regulatory agencies responsible for issuing permits.
- Identification of how preferred alignment relates to accessibility goals and objectives.
- Identification of trails head parking and community access.
- Preliminary cost estimates of preferred alignment.
- Summary and evaluation of impacts and opportunities associated with trail.
- Identify how the trail would connect to the City of Gaithersburg Muddy Branch Greenway trail system.

- Review and evaluation of trail surface types that could provide a firm and stable surface for casual walkers and casual cyclists and meet park accessibility standards for disabled individuals.

Emphasize the importance of constructing a bike path along Travilah Road to achieve connectivity to the C&O Canal towpath.

Amend Plan text to include better discussion of how Plan trail recommendations balance different policy objectives.

PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT RECOMMENDATION:

- Recommend a hard surface park trail between MD 28 and Quince Orchard Road.
- Provide trailhead access and parking at several locations.
- Propose community trail connection to enhance access from the existing development
- Connect the natural and hard surface trails to the Gaithersburg greenway network via an underpass of MD Route 28
 - Locate trails in a way that protects the environmental character of the Muddy Branch Stream Valley.
 - Design a trail system to serve the community's recreational and transportation needs.
 - Explore ways to improve trail connectivity to Gaithersburg greenway.
 - Designate trail connections to surrounding communities and destinations

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

There is both support and opposition to the hard surface trail. Petitions containing hundreds of signatures support a hard surface trail and petitions containing hundreds of signatures oppose a hard surface trail.

Testimony **supporting** the hard surface trail includes following points: will provide safe, recreational cycling and walking opportunities for children, families and seniors; Trail Plan takes out hard surface trail from two stream valleys, should keep it the entire length of Muddy Branch SVP environmental benefits related to reduced reliance on the automobile; health benefits; will help provide connectivity to other trails; has been a feature of Potomac Master Plan for decades;; environmental impacts can be mitigated.

Testimony **opposing** the hard surface trail includes following points: opening forest canopy will lead to fragmentation of wildlife habitat and invasion of non-native species; threatens delicate ecosystem; need to protect functioning wetlands; compacting soils will affect plants; not the healthiest stream, should not make it worse; stream run-off a concern; should not put trails in stream valley parks; Potomac Plan is rich in bike paths, should use those instead.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The testimony includes detailed references to environmental planning objectives contained in park planning documents and raises questions how a hard surface trail in a stream valley park could be considered consistent with environmental protection goals. Other testimony points out how trails benefit air quality by providing an alternative to automobiles and notes that trails support human health and safety and meet recreation demand.

1. Policy Framework for Trail Planning

Balancing the protection and preservation of natural and cultural resources while concurrently providing the appropriate mix of recreational activities for park users is perhaps the greatest challenge we face in stewarding our County park system.

How environmental concerns, policies and objectives are balanced with recreational and mobility concerns, policies and objectives in the trail planning process merits discussion since it is an issue that continually is raised regardless of the trail project.

Every five years, M-NCPPC prepares the Park Recreation and Open Space Master Plan (i.e., the PROS Plan). This important functional plan, which was last up-dated in 1998, provides broad policy guidance for the acquisition, planning, development, and management of the County park system. The basic purpose of the PROS Plan is to answer two questions:

- 1) What is the demand for recreation facilities and programs? and
- 2) What important natural and cultural resources need to be preserved?

As reported in the 1997 Park, Recreation, and Open Space Survey for Montgomery County, slightly over 75% of the survey respondents reported visiting a County park within the last year (i.e., 1996) to enjoy nature or the outdoors. However, nearly 60% of the respondents also visited a park to use a playground, 55% used parks for picnicking, and 41% used parks for playing field sports such as baseball and soccer. The 1996 survey also showed that the activities most often participated in by adults for recreation in Montgomery County were walking and bicycle riding, respectively. The survey clearly revealed to staff the importance of County parks for both stewardship of natural and cultural resources and recreation, especially recreational activities associated with trails.

Trails are one of Montgomery County's most popular recreational facilities and can be enjoyed by all age groups as well as persons with disabilities. Trails are used for transportation as well as recreation and can form an important network to connect parks with nearby residential communities. Trails also provide important access to natural areas and conservation areas, thereby fostering public appreciation for the beauty, serenity, and intrinsic value of undeveloped parkland.

Several questions in the 1996 survey were specifically designed to learn more about trail use in County parks. The responses were as follows (see Figure C.1):

Well over half of those surveyed (67%) had used paved park trails in the last year (1996); 74% for observing nature, 52% for walking, 41% for bicycling, 33% for running or jogging, 12.8% for roller-skating, and less than 10% to go to school or work.

Fifty-eight percent of the respondents indicated that they had used unpaved trails in the last year (1996); 90% for walking, 85% for observing nature, 28% for running or jogging, 17% for mountain biking, 5% for horse-back riding, and 4% to go to school or work.

Across the County, responses were evenly divided between those persons who preferred paved trails (35.1%) and those who preferred unpaved trails (34.2%). Potomac area residents showed a higher use and preference for unpaved trails, while I-270 corridor and Silver Spring residents indicated a somewhat higher preference for paved trails. From these specific survey results, staff inferred that

in general, areas of higher population density are better served by paved rather than unpaved trails.

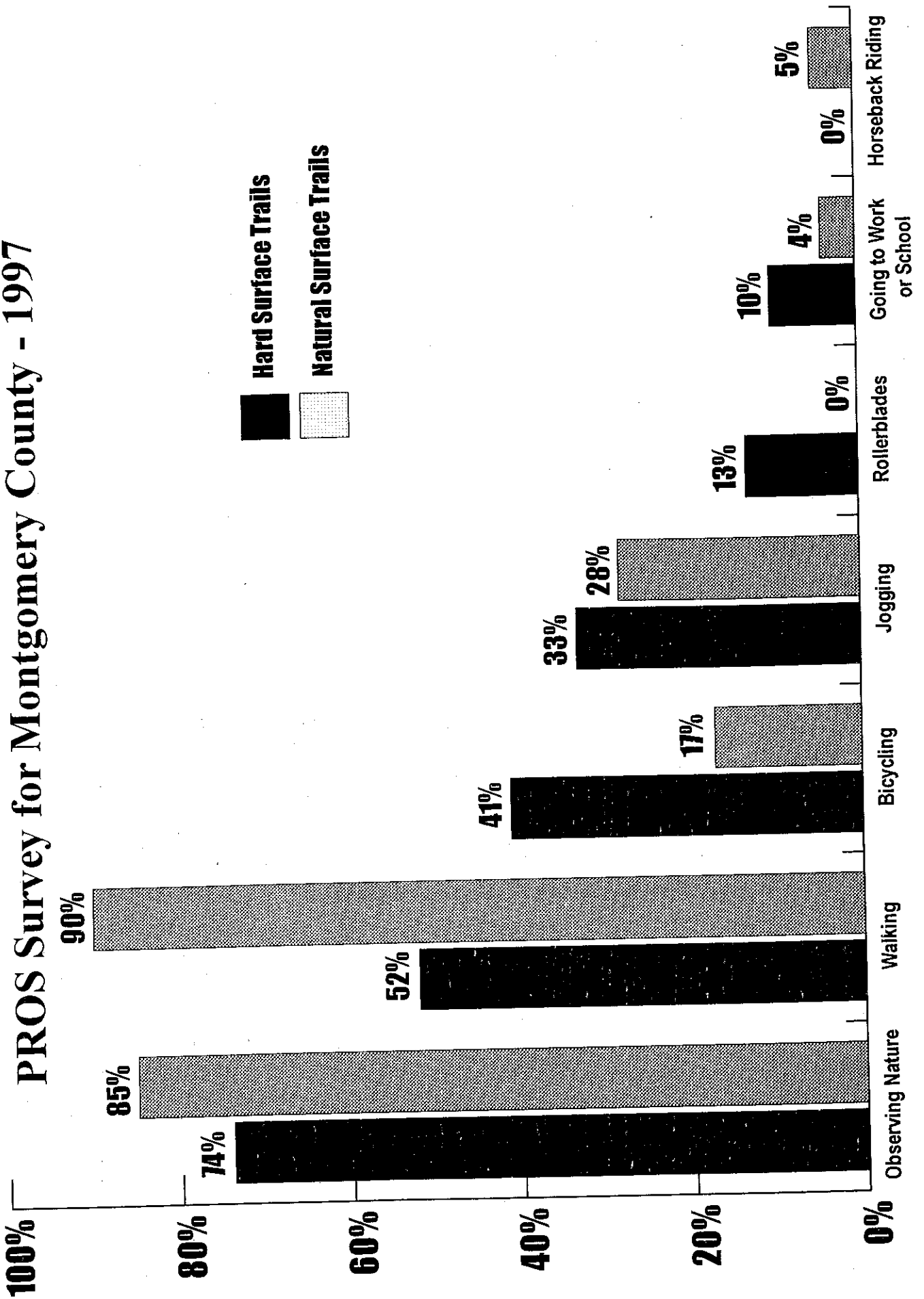
In order to balance the protection and preservation of natural and cultural resources with recreation in County parks, staff have assembled and mapped an extensive amount of information on natural and cultural resources over the past decade. All of our trail planning efforts are preceded by a sensitive areas analysis that relies in large part upon this information. With the aide of our computer-based GIS system, staff examine streams and their buffers; 100-year floodplains; steep slopes; highly erodible soils; hydric soils; wetlands and their buffers; habitats of rare, threatened, endangered, and watchlist species; archaeological sites; and historical resources. Mapped data are verified in the field. In addition, staff continue to collect and compile information on the location of rare, threatened, and endangered species of plants and animals, the relative size and health of their populations, and threats to their continued existence. Monitoring efforts allow staff to update information on natural and cultural resources on a somewhat regular basis. Not surprisingly, staff have found these important resources in a variety of Countywide and Community-use parks throughout the County park system. Accordingly, the balance we strive for between stewardship and recreation is done on a case-by-case basis looking at each issue from both a local and countywide perspective.

Staff shares the public's concerns regarding the negative impacts of trails on natural and cultural resources. Forest fragmentation; edge-effect; the spread of exotic, invasive plant species; cow-bird parasitism of song-bird nests; heightened mammalian predation rates; soil compaction; trampling of vegetation; plant collection; localized increases in stormwater runoff; and artifact hunting are some of the common shared concerns. However given the policy requirement to provide for both stewardship and recreation in County parks (see the General Plan Refinement, Goals and Objectives; the PROS Plan; the Countywide Trails Plan; as well as approved park master plans), staff must continually strive to protect and preserve sensitive natural and cultural resources while concurrently making available to the public, a variety of high-quality recreational experiences and opportunities. This difficult challenge is best accomplished by: 1) understanding the resource – both within and among parks; 2) accurately predicting the need for recreation – both within and among planning areas; 3) thoroughly evaluating the potential impacts of recreation on the resource; 4) planning, implementing, maintaining, and policing projects in a manner that avoids, minimizes, and mitigates for negative impacts to high quality resources; 5) monitoring the long-term success of our efforts to balance stewardship and recreation and finally 6) interpreting the results of our efforts to the public.

This is no easy task. The sensitive areas analysis and subsequent field work provides the basis for setting stewardship goals as well as evaluating potential impacts of future recreation on the resource. The assessment of recreational needs put forth in the PROS Plan, the Countywide Trails Plan, and other related policy documents establishes the rationale for proposed projects within and among planning areas. Then comes the truly challenging part – predicting and evaluating potential negative impacts of these projects on the resource and subsequently looking for practicable ways to avoid, minimize, and mitigate predicted impacts. It is also important that staff maintain a commitment to long-term monitoring while concurrently working on new projects or other resource management issues. Staff believes that projects like the Little Bennett Golf Center in Clarksburg, Soccerplex in Germantown, and the Capital Crescent Trail in Bethesda demonstrate that this approach to achieving balance does work. However, our long-term success remains contingent on the use of important tools such as M-NCPPC's Environmental Guidelines, important

PARK TRAIL USE

PROS Survey for Montgomery County - 1997



PROS policies such as the *Policy for Parks* (i.e., the 2/3rds – 1/3rd development policy for regional parks), as well as new, trend-setting programs such as Legacy Open Space.

With regard to a trail projects, staff looks for opportunities to avoid sensitive areas. Consideration is also given to locating trails within existing utility rights-of-way or other open and/or disturbed areas. Boardwalk is used over wetlands or in areas of hydric soils. Stormwater management practices, e.g., bioretention areas, vernal pools, and infiltration devices, are used to treat run-off from pavement and compacted soils. Habitat enhancements, e.g., reforestation projects, managed wildflower meadows, exotic invasive species management protocols, and nest boxes for wildlife, are proposed and implemented in trail corridors. Monitoring of sensitive plant species, vegetation, aquatic invertebrates, fish, wildlife, terrestrial and aquatic habitats, and archaeological and historical artifacts provides an on-going measure of the success of our efforts to provide for both trail-based recreation and stewardship of natural and cultural resources. Interpretation, both on the trail and in nature centers, can help explain staff's balancing efforts to the public and helps build public support for our stewardship efforts.

This approach was used in the Muddy Branch SVP Trail Corridor Study. The result is a trail proposal that achieves a balance between stewardship and recreation. How this balance was achieved is described in more detail below.

2. Rationale for Hard Surface Trail Recommendations

The Public Hearing Draft Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park Trail recommends that a hard surface trail recommendation shown on the Countywide Park Trails Plan be REMOVED from the lower 2/3 of the park (Segments 2, 3 and 4). A hard surface trail is being recommended for further study in the upper 1/3 of the park (Segment 1). How this planning proposal balances different policy objectives is discussed below. The discussion is keyed to Figure C-2 where the opportunities and constraints associated with the upper and lower portions of the stream valley are identified.

Proposal to Remove a Hard Surface Trail Planning Proposal from Segments 2, 3 and 4

A hard surface trail proposal is removed from the lower 2/3 of the stream valley for the reasons stated on page 11 of the Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park Trail Plan:

In general, the lower portion of the stream valley is narrow, with steep slopes and rolling upland topography. A hard surface trail could destroy high quality forest habitat and result in a steeply pitched trail that would promote erosion from surface runoff...

To achieve connectivity with the C&O Canal towpath, the Plan relies instead on a future bike path along Travilah Road, proposed in the Potomac Master Plan, which roughly parallels the Muddy Branch SVP.

Proponents of extending the hard surface trail the entire length of Muddy Branch SVP point out that a bike path along a road with numerous driveways and many intersections is not as attractive or as safe as a park trail. Staff agrees but environmental features, including topography, in the southern portion of the SVP pose enough concern to rely on a bike path along a nearby road for access to the C&O Canal towpath. As shown in Figure C-2, the population density in the southern area is also considerably lower than the upper portion. From a cultural resource perspective, the lower portion of the Muddy Branch SVP includes the Blockhouse Point Conservation Park. This is an area rich in archeological and cultural artifacts relating to the Civil War. Interpreting

Figure C - 2. IDENTIFICATION OF OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS IN MUDDY BRANCH STREAM VALLEY PARK

Environmental Features	Archaeological Cultural Features	Existing Areas of Disturbance	Population Housing	Trail Connectivity	Accessibility
<p>Northern portion of Stream Valley (Segment 1)</p> <p>Flat floodplain supporting a mixture of weedy, wooded areas, weedy old-fields/regenerating forests, and wetlands, some large blocks of high quality mature upland forest, two woody watchlist plants. Highest quality natural areas are in ravines and on uplands.</p>	<p>None known. Additional inventory work will be done during facility planning.</p>	<p>Open areas where farming once occurred.</p> <p>Sewer rights of way.</p> <p>Old dirt road beds associated with former agricultural use.</p>	<p>Highest population density in Potomac Planning Area (3,361 people per square mile)</p> <p>Housing surrounds stream valley on all sides.</p>	<p>Underpass being built as part of MD 28 improvements will connect to Gaithersburg greenway hard surface and natural surface trails, future aquatic center, and future middle school.</p>	<p>Gentle grades afford opportunity to meet park accessibility policies related to disabled individuals.</p>
<p>Southern Portion of Stream Valley (Segment 2, 3, and 4)</p> <p>Wide flat wooded floodplain, wetlands, wooded ravines, steep rock outcrops, high quality upland forest. One state endangered fern. 4 other watch-list plants. High quality natural area throughout.</p>	<p>DuFief Mill Race, flume and dam in Segment 2.</p> <p>Blockhouse Point Conservation Park and associated archaeological & historical sites in Segment 4.</p>	<p>Sewer rights-of way</p> <p>Gas-line easement</p> <p>Old dirt road beds associated with agricultural use</p> <p>Old River Road; paving removed.</p>	<p>Low density population and residences (ranging from (272 to 421 population per square mile) Large lot residential pattern.</p>	<p>Would provide park trail connection to C&O Towpath.</p> <p>Class I bikeway proposed on Travilah Road, which parallels Muddy Branch SVP.</p>	<p>Steepness of stream valley will require switchbacks and extensive grading to achieve accessibility policies.</p>

these features in an appropriate setting argues against a hard surface recreational bike trail system.

Proposal to Retain a Hard Surface Trail Planning Proposal in Segment 1

Analysis of Opportunities and Constraints.

In the northern portion of the stream valley park, the Plan proposes a hard surface trail remain a feature of the Countywide Park Trails Plan. This conclusion is based on an analysis of opportunities and constraints shown in Figure C.2.

In terms of **environmental features**, the stream valley park includes a biodiversity area (see C-3) and an expansive sensitive areas buffer (see C-4). These are important trail planning concerns and preference is always to avoid these features entirely. However, as discussed in the Muddy Branch SVP Trail Plan on page 12, there are no opportunities to acquire additional parkland to avoid the sensitive buffer area.

Existing disturbed areas within the park offer opportunities to locate the trail in less sensitive portions of the stream valley. Open areas, formerly farmed, are characterized by non-native invasive plant species. A sewer line right-of-way traverses the park in a north-south alignment.

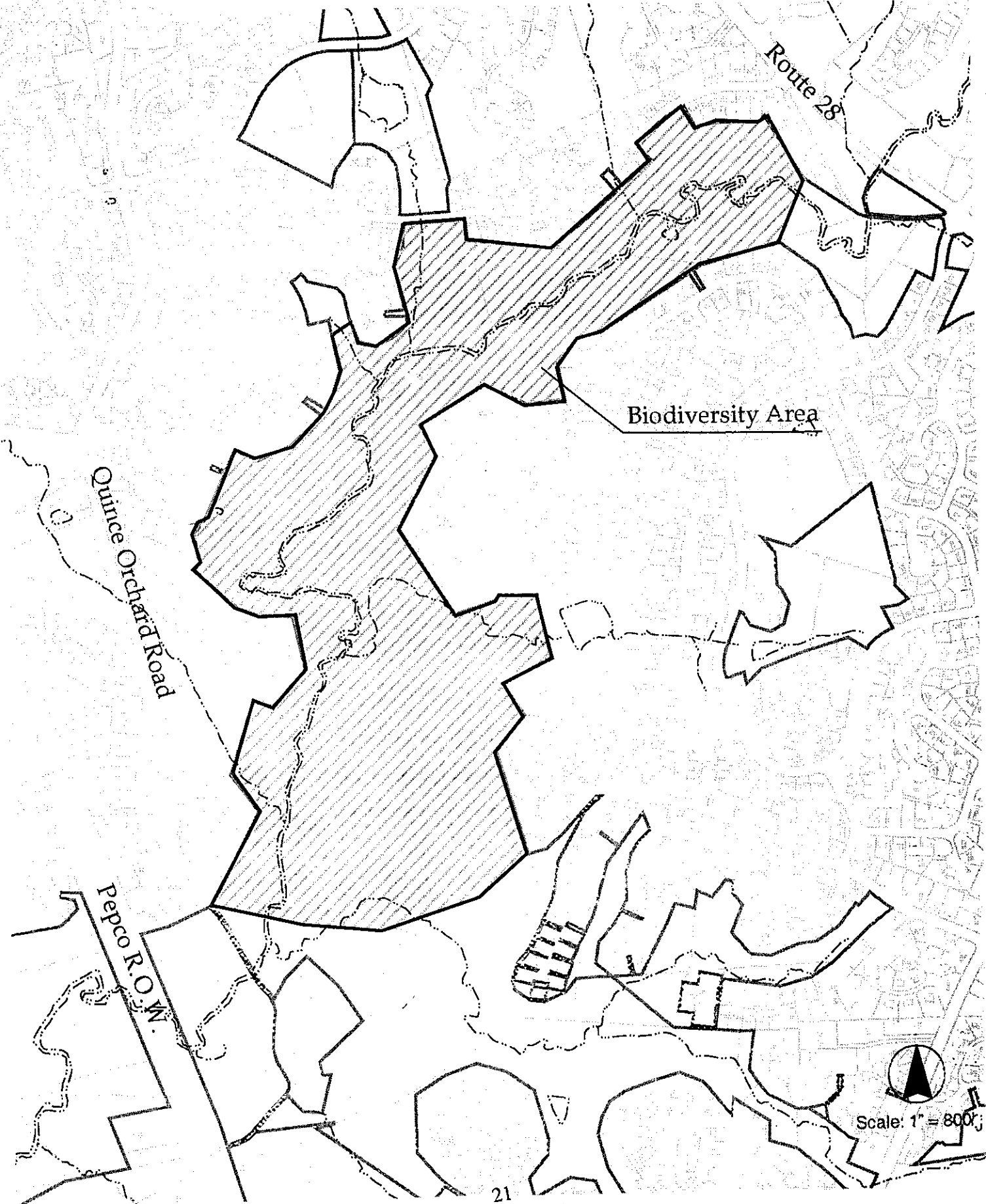
The **population density** surrounding the upper portion of the stream valley is described in the Potomac Master Plan as being the highest in the planning area.

In terms of **trail connectivity**, the opportunity exists to:

- Connect to the City of Gaithersburg's Muddy Branch hard surface greenway trail system via an underpass of Maryland Route 28. (see Figure C-6). The City is planning an indoor aquatic center along the trail system just north of MD 28; pedestrians and cyclists could access the aquatic center from the Muddy Branch SVP trail without crossing any roads at-grade. Non-motorized access would also be enhanced from the residential areas of North Potomac to employment centers in Gaithersburg planned as part of the Lakeland's development.
- Connect via the Gaithersburg greenway trail system to the bikeway along Great Seneca Highway. The bike path system along Great Seneca Highway is a critical element in the "I-270 Corridor Bikeway" which links trail systems in the northern and southern portions of the County (see Figure xx).

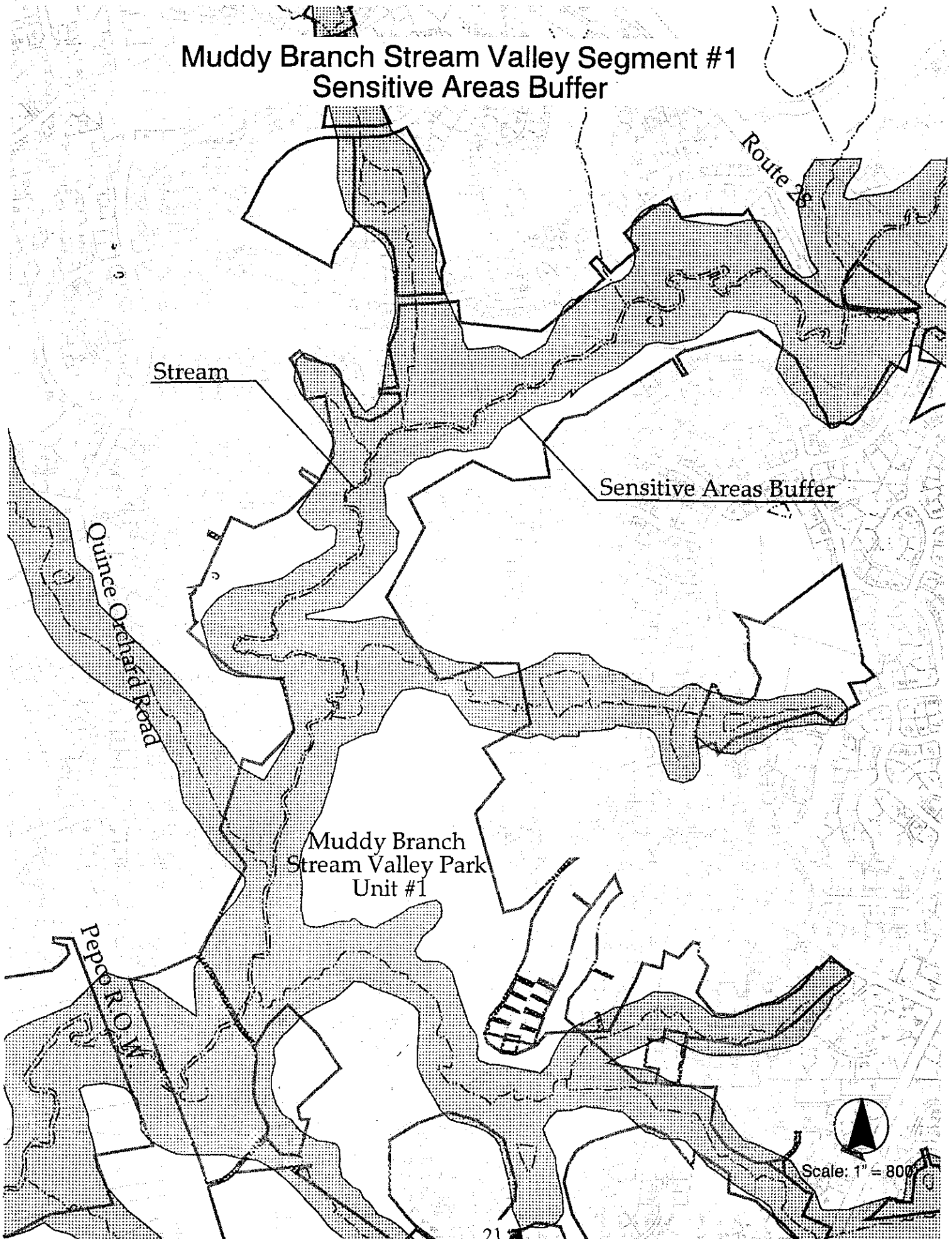
In terms of **accessibility**, the upper portion of Muddy Branch SVP (unlike the lower portion) has fairly level grades. A hard surface trail in the area would provide an opportunity for people who cannot negotiate natural surface trails to enjoy a "walk in the woods" in the most densely populated portion of Potomac. The number one use of hard surface trails in the county according to park survey from 1997(?) is to enjoy nature. Although informal and formal natural surface trails in Watts Branch, Cabin John Parks offer hiking opportunities, there are no opportunities for people who need a more stable surface to enjoy a walk in the woods. The upper portion of the Muddy Branch SVP has an added advantage of being fairly level for even greater accessibility.

Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park Segment #1 Biodiversity Area

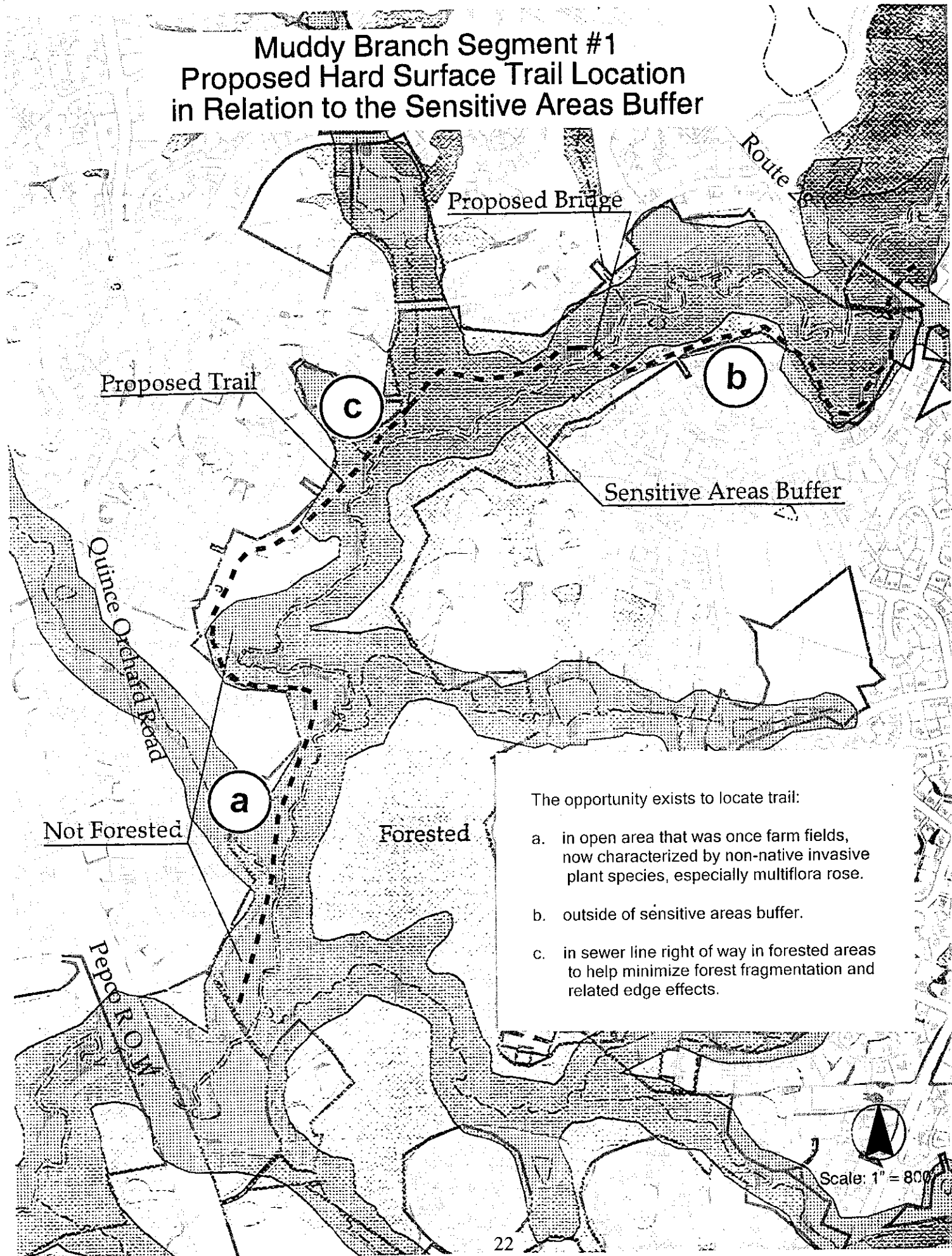


Scale: 1" = 800'

Muddy Branch Stream Valley Segment #1 Sensitive Areas Buffer

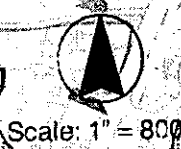


Muddy Branch Segment #1 Proposed Hard Surface Trail Location in Relation to the Sensitive Areas Buffer



The opportunity exists to locate trail:

- a. in open area that was once farm fields, now characterized by non-native invasive plant species, especially multiflora rose.
- b. outside of sensitive areas buffer.
- c. in sewer line right of way in forested areas to help minimize forest fragmentation and related edge effects.



Trail Corridor Plan Response to Analysis of Opportunities and Constraints.

As shown in Figure C –1, a trail in Segment 1 offers many opportunities related to trail connectivity and accessibility. At the same time, the trail is located in a stream valley park where there are environmental features of concern. Fortunately, there are many opportunities within the stream valley park to locate the trail in existing areas of disturbance (see Figure C-5).

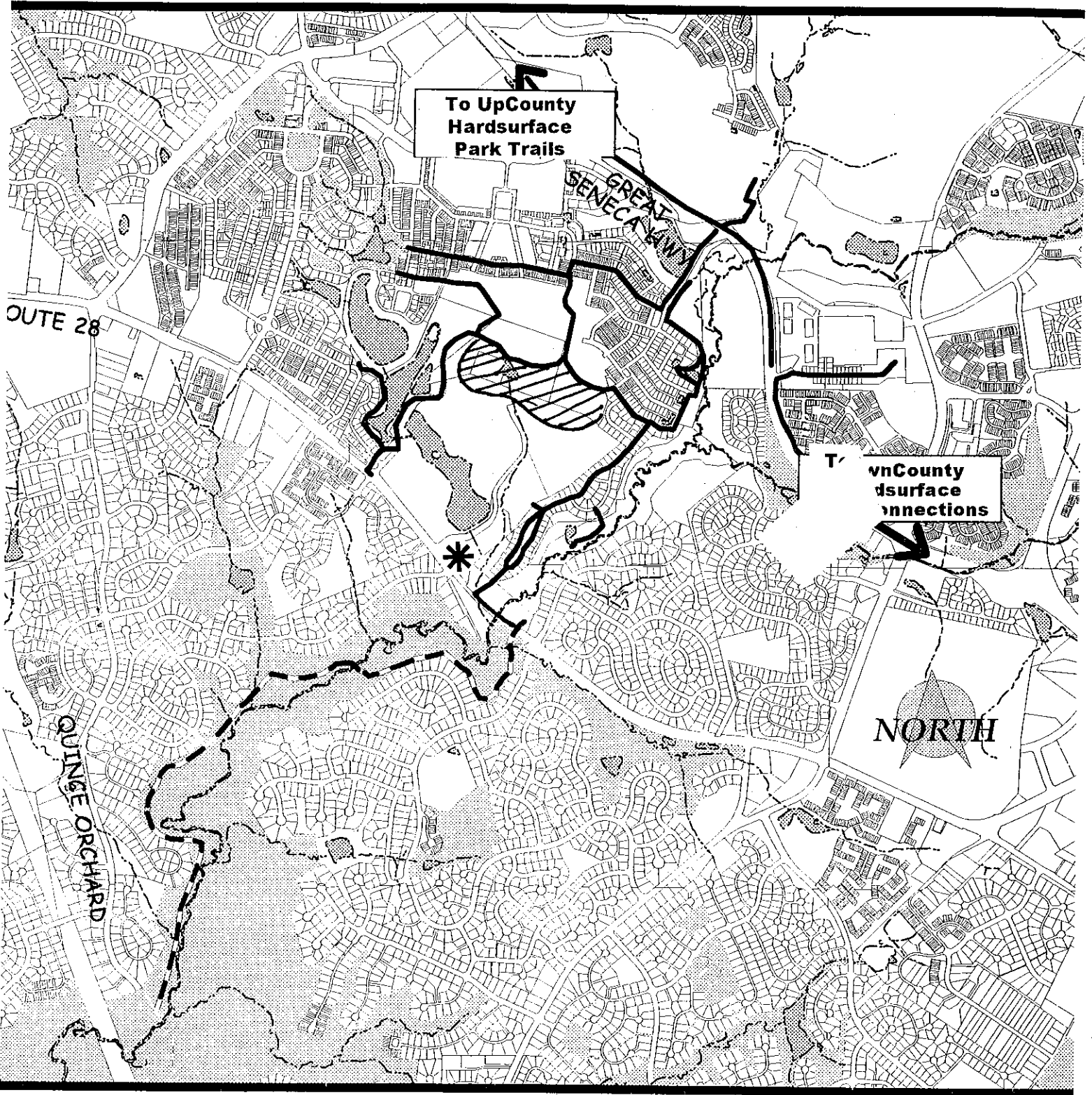
After evaluating the opportunities and constraints identified in Figure C-2 , staff recommends retaining a hard surface trail proposal for further study in Segment One based upon the following findings:






- a. The opportunity exists to locate trail in cleared area (over half of generalized trail alignment is in open area that was once farm fields, now characterized by non-native invasive plant species, especially multiflora rose).
- b. Opportunities exist to locate trail outside of sensitive areas buffer (over ¼ of generalized trail alignment located outside buffer)
- c. Opportunity exists to follow sewer line right of way in forested areas, which would help minimize forest fragmentation and related edge effects.
- d. The trail would connect to the underpass of MD 28 now being constructed thereby providing safe non-vehicular access to the Gaithersburg Greenway Trail system, the I-270 Corridor bikeway, the aquatic center and elementary school planned north of MD 28 as well as access to jobs in the General Electric Technology Center.
- e. Opportunity exists to provide trail that will comply with accessibility guidelines for disabled park users, i.e., trail grade will be less than 7%.
- f. The trail would serve the most densely populated and developed neighborhoods of the Potomac Master Plan area.

THE SPECIFIC IMPACTS OF A HARD SURFACE TRAIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES WILL HAVE TO BE EVALUATED AT THE TIME OF FACILITY PLANNING. The Facility Planning phase will actually propose a preferred alignment based upon more detailed environmental and engineering analysis and estimate construction costs. The components of a Facility Plan are identified in the "Staff Recommendation" portion of this Topic.

In summary, staff recommends that a hard surface trail in the lower portion of the Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park be removed from the Countywide Park Trails Plan and that a hard surface trail in the upper portion of the SVP remain as a feature of the Countywide Park Trails Plan. A final decision as to whether or not to implement the hard surface trail should await the facility planning process.

Trail Connections with the City of Gaithersburg



-  Muddy Branch Seg.1 - Hard Surface Trail
-  Lakeland Bike Path
-  Parklands
-  Planned Aquatic Center, scheduled for completion in late FY '03
-  Lakelands Park: future Middle School, ball fields, 8' pathway system will meet all American with Disabilities Act

TOPIC D: Natural Surface Trail Proposal

PUBLIC HEARING PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Designate a formal, primarily natural surface trail that extends from Maryland Route 28 to the C&O Canal.
- Recommend the natural surface be built to equestrian standards.
- Identify remnants of the Dufief Mill as an interpretative site along the trail.
- Connect the natural surface trail to the Gaithersburg greenway network via an underpass of MD Route 28.
- Rely on the Blockhouse Point Conservation Park Master Plan to finalize trail locations south of River Road.

STAFF RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO PLAN:

- Amend natural surface trail alignment in Segment 3 as shown in Figure D-1 of packet.
- Replace specific locations of neighborhood connectors with arrows
- Clarify that Blockhouse Point Conservation Park Master Plan should finalize trail location and trail uses south of Esworthy Road.

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY:

There is general support for a natural surface trail in Muddy Branch SVP. One or two comments were made that no trails should be provided. The Mid-Atlantic Off-Road Enthusiasts (MORE) supports opportunities for off-road cycling. The Sierra Club is concerned about environmental effects of allowing equestrians and off-road cycling.

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY:

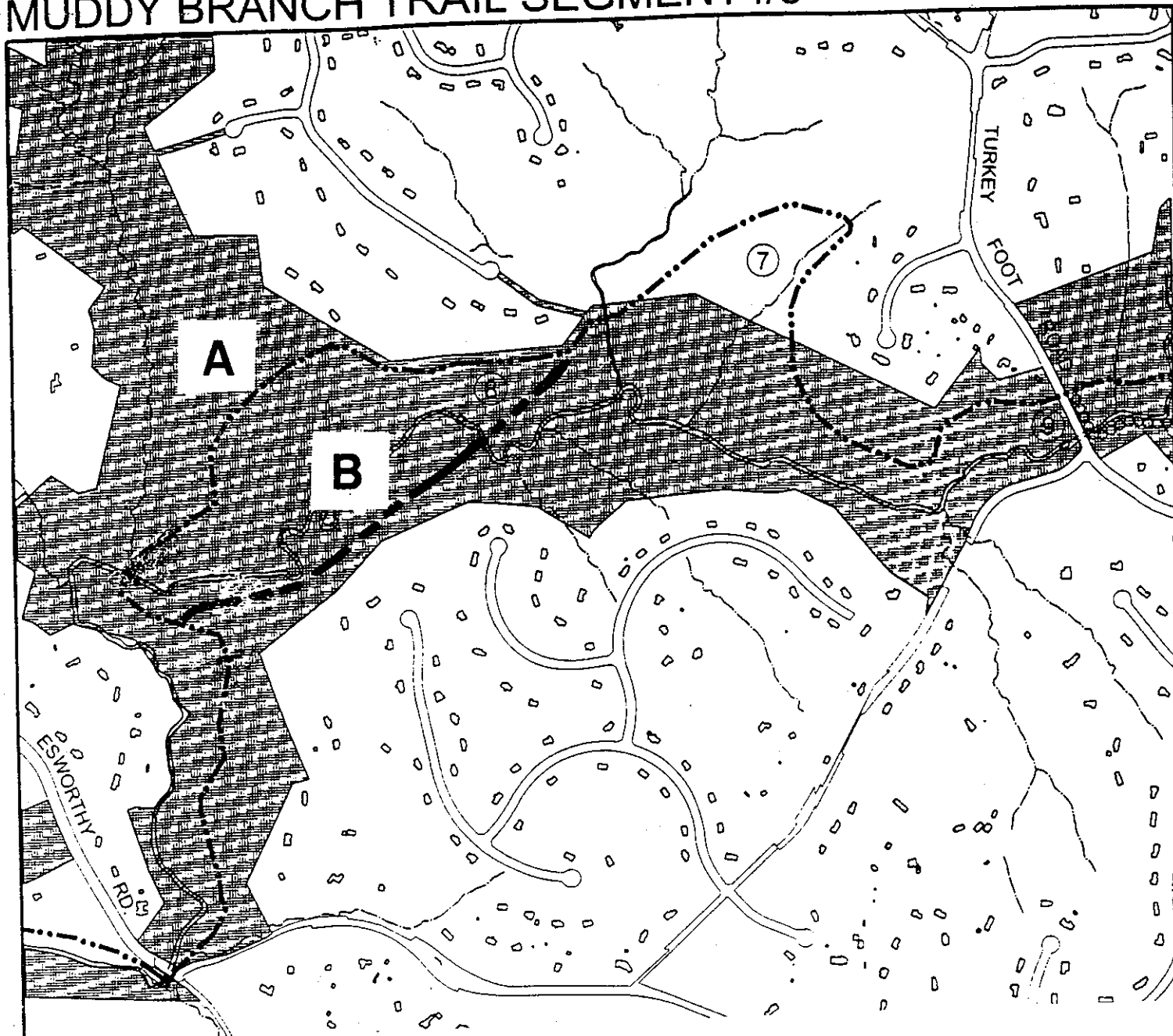
The actual alignment of the natural surface trail will be done in the field with staff from many environmental backgrounds, including ecologists, arborists, water resource specialists and plant specialists. The natural surface trail will be located to accommodate equestrians while protecting sensitive natural features. At the present time, informal "people's choice" trails criss-cross the stream valley and many are located too near fragile features such as streambanks.

Trail use for other than equestrians and hikers (off-road cyclists) will be addressed in the upcoming Blockhouse Point Master Plan for the lower portion of the stream valley park. In the upper portion, the recommendation for a hard surface trail will accommodate cyclists.

The Natural Surface Trail Planning and implementation process is shown as Figure D-2.

MUDDY BRANCH TRAIL SEGMENT #3

Figure D-1



A RECOMMENDED ALIGNMENT AS SHOWN ON TRAIL PLAN

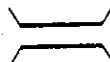
B RECOMMENDED ALTERNATIVE NEEDS FINAL STUDY FOR BRIDGE CROSSING LOCATION

— · — · — · — · — NATURAL SURFACE TRAIL

○○○○○○○ HIKER TRAIL



TRAILHEAD PARKING

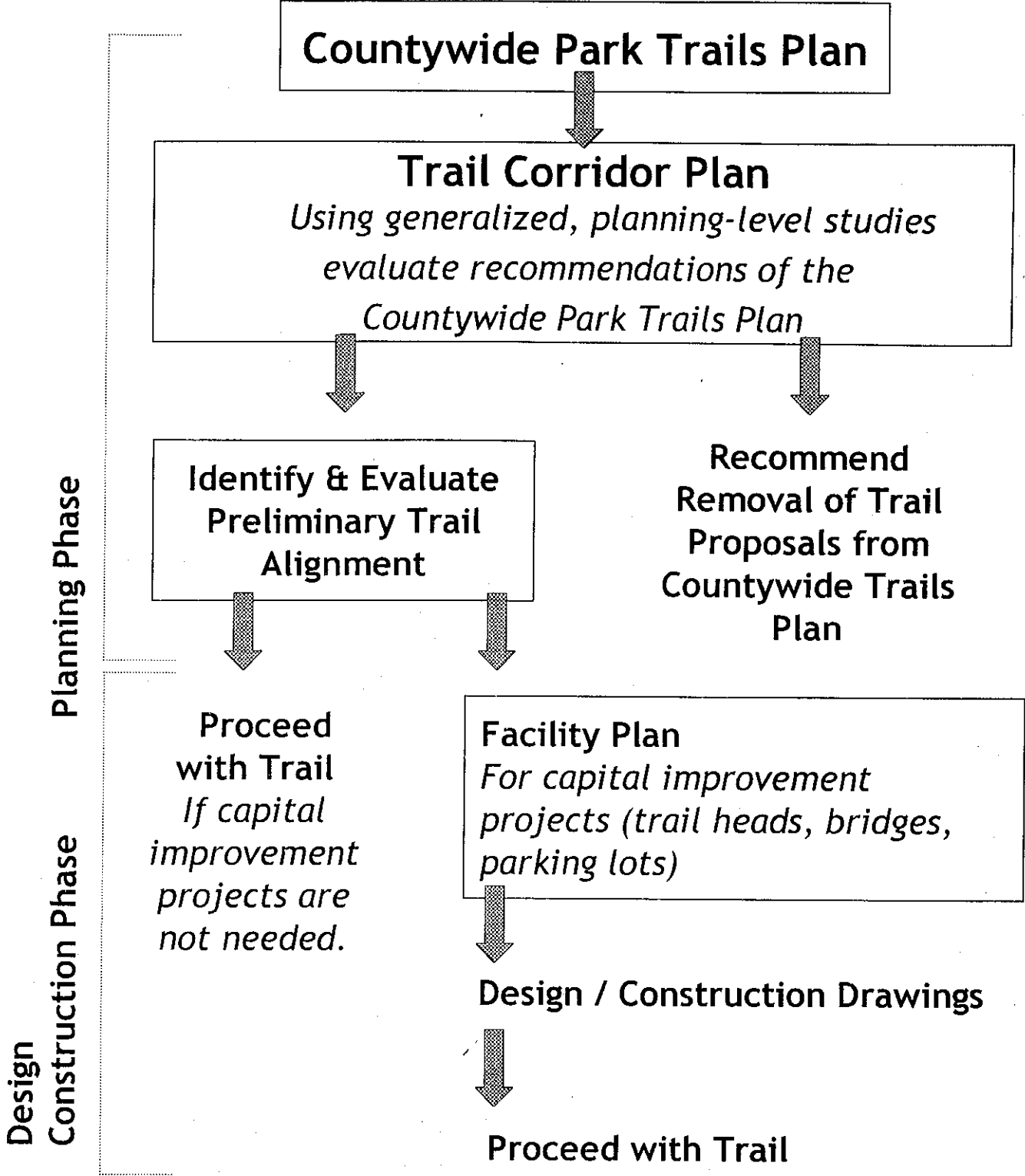


BRIDGE



10/28/00
R:\MPLANS\0101\ACAD\SECT.DWG

The Process For Planning, Designing & Building Natural Surface Trails



Topic E. Summary of Public Hearing Testimony

Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park Trail Plan

Worksession #1

SUPPORT HARD SURFACE TRAIL	
Westleigh Citizens Association.	This project will be significant asset and we support it but are concerned over potential environmental impacts of paved access paths and parking areas at or near wetlands. Support compliance with environmental laws and regulations.
WABA	Support trail entire length. Safety of cyclists on Travilah Road compromised by occurrence of driveways and intersections, the most likely locations for bicycle crashes.
Betsy Thompson, Recreation Program Development Coordinator, City of Rockville.	Support trail.
Olde Potomac Park Community Assn.	Support paved bike trail, which has been on Master Plan for decades. Provides access from adjoining neighborhoods without requiring cars. We'll help introduce people to cycling as alternative to automobile. Locating trail in already disturbed areas will reduce environmental impact. Paved trail more useful than natural surface for bicycles, skates, strollers, wheelchairs. Connectivity to city to Gaithersburg important. One of biggest positive effects for the environment is conversion of automobile trips to foot or bike.
Petition with 169 signatures.	"We support a hard surface bike trail in Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park connecting the C&O Canal with the City of Gaithersburg. This trail would be a great asset for the area and would be a great plus for the environment by encouraging nonpolluting recreation and transportation."
Migdall	Studies show that bike trails have positive effects on property values, do not cause increased crime, provide health benefits, improve connectivity and encourage nonpolluting transportation.
Heflin, Wetz, Ford, Dunkin, Berman, Huntley, Richter, Morris, Kavcsak, Gillaspy, Levine, Daubon, Cobean, Carrier, Everett, Nicewarner, Whiting, Adkins, Avery, Awrich, Berning, Bodnar, Pugin-Bullock, Daniel, Donnelly, Gross, Heins, Heisler, Iwaki, Johnson, Jolly, Kaplan, Langer, Larson, Lee, Lett, Loughrey, McGovern, Menzies, McGrattan, Migdall, Mille, Parker, Price, Raesly, Scherzler, Smith, Ting, Turner.	Support a more continuous in-park hard surface bike trail connecting Gaithersburg to the C&O Canal.
Reader	Definite lack of safe, off-road trails suitable for bike riding.
Hutman	Increased opportunity for people to keep active and healthy.

SUPPORT HARD SURFACE TRAIL	
Tew	Future of our county depends on vigorous pursuit of connectivity between destinations and communities, the expansion of viable alternatives to automobiles and an egalitarian approach to recreation in our public lands. Positive experience with hard surface trails in Boulder County. If properly engineered, trails can be placed along creek beds with no adverse environmental impact.
Jodrauch	Biking is a family activity for us something we can do with our two young children. Keep the needs of young families in mind.
Beckner	Bikes don't stand a chance against cars—wife had accident—support hard surface trail.
Rosenbusch, Fauerby	Support trail—hard surface trail being planned alongside Travilah not a good solution due to fact it will cross numerous driveways and intersections. Hard surface trail is no more a disturbance to wildlife than a natural surface trail.
Dauler	There is a feeling of well-being coming from a healthful pursuit of a non-polluting activity.
Dildane	Support it for walking. Important to make our natural places more accessible to all responsible users. When people buy houses adjacent to a public park, it gives them no right to exclude others from enjoying it too.
McMullan	I use trail along Great Seneca highway to commute to work and the only thing that would make it better is more trails.
Huntley	Hard surface trails erode more slowly than natural surface trails, especially when horses use trails. Connectivity crucial.
Vigener	Include a contiguous network of bike trails in your traffic planning strategies.
Rosasco	Paved surface important to enable use by younger members of my family, e.g. my grandchildren and nieces and nephews.
Walden	Montgomery Co. provides little assistance to cyclists away from Rockville—in the western county the only dedicated bike trail is provided by the C&O Canal towpath. Proposes to have bikers riding on Travilah Road sure to result in deaths and injuries.
Pressler	Bicycling merit badge now option for Eagle rank; Girl Scouts have bicycling Interest Patch. Youth of this area will benefit greatly from paved path.
Hutman	Cannot think of a better way to enhance the health and well being of citizens than by providing a safe and lovely trail for family usage away from the dangers of traffic.
Berfield	This would be a wonderful asset for us senior cyclists.
Ross	I am a 57 year old cyclist in favor of hard surface trail.

SUPPORT HARD SURFACE TRAIL	
Gelband	Constantly being warned about poor health to lack of exercise and obesity—recreation trails are safe convenient way to help people get outside in a safe and beautiful environment, where they can get some much-needed exercise.
Goldie	Had very positive experience with Rivertrail in Michigan; families able to use hard surface trails because surface accommodates many different people with many different interests.
Woods at Muddy Branch Homeowners	City of Gaithersburg doing its part by planning and constructing an extensive bikeway system connecting to the Muddy Branch trail....maximum possible use if connectivity were provided by an in-park route. My family of five will not use a path along Travilah for safety reasons.

OPPOSE HARD SURFACE TRAIL	
Sierra Club	<p>Impacts of hard surface trail cannot be avoided. Opening forest canopy will lead to fragmentation of wildlife habitat, the invasion of non-native species, erosion problems, the intrusion of motorized vehicles the destruction of vernal pools, the compaction of soil on tree roots, increased run-off and flooding, and additional thermal pollution. Concern over hard-surface trail terminus in Blockhouse Point.</p> <p>Environmental impacts of a paved trail in the upper section would violate the Chesapeake Bay Agreement principles for the preservation of riparian buffers. Consider extending bike path along roads in upper section, perhaps Dufief Mill Road.</p>
Audubon Society	<p>Pleased of commitment by MNCPPC that nothing will be done in Blockhouse Point in terms of trails until Master Plan is done.</p> <p>Need to protect functioning wetlands. Should not put faith in mitigation. Reconsider trails that go through wetlands.</p> <p>Impossible task here of trying to balance the environment with public use.</p>
Petition: 560 signatures.	We strongly oppose any man-made formal trail system in Muddy Branch SVP. Our stream valleys play critical role in clear water supply, clean air, and home to diverse, rare and threatened plants, bird and wildlife. Any man-made intrusion threatens this delicate ecosystem. The Master Plan includes a rich network of roadside bikeways connecting to the C&O Canal, and the County already has paved trail systems in other nearby parks. We urge preservation of natural character and beauty of the Park as designed by Mother Nature."
Willows and Neighbors Citizens Association	<p>Hard surface trail will have a negative impact and essentially threaten the fundamental function of the stream. Stream valley one of critical natural assets of Potomac connectors along roadways provide bike paths. Should not use stream valley environmental buffer for transportation. Should address handicap access to hard surface trails at regional level.</p> <p>Support natural surface trail.</p>
North Potomac Citizens Association	New board members and new philosophy after May 31 elections. Muddy Branch crown jewel of North Potomac. One of few remaining environmental enclaves in our community. In tough economic times, should not use tax payer dollars. Build bikeway on Quince Orchard Road as alternative.
West Montgomery County Citizens Association	Any hard surface trails in stream valley parks or conservation parks violate the environmental principles which the Potomac Master Plan is based. Staff told MPAG hard surface could mean any number of surfaces but glossary of Plan (p 30) describes hard surface as including pavement and concrete. Did not suspect two trails being proposed or potential for trail beyond Segment 1. Pay special attention to Block House Point.

OPPOSE HARD SURFACE TRAIL	
Thomas	Put natural surface path in first and then see how it does. Concern about impact of canopy openings an fragmentation of interior woods on nesting birds.
Darnestown Civic Association	Earlier compromise (position hard surface trail in Segment 1 only) based on support from North Potoma Citizens in November 3, 2000 correspondence with Park and Planning. Now that North Potomac Citizen Association has change their view, Darnestown Civic Association return to initial position of opposition because hard surface are incompatible with Potomac Master Plan environmental principles.
Denise Hammond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental damage and monetary costs associated with Trail are unacceptable and unjustified. • The Trail Plan proposes the development of an extensive trail system, including a hard surface trail, in the stream valley buffer, flood plain and wetlands. • Stream valley parks hold the key to watershed protection and furnish safe habitat for rare and endangered wildlife species. • Applicable law and policy increasingly and uniformly limit development in the stream valley, whether public or private, and mandate conservation of the stream valley • The trail system proposed in the Trail Plan will cause far-reaching environmental damage and i inconsistent with applicable laws and policies designed to protect the stream valley. • The Trail Plan does not demonstrate impact avoidance or give proper consideration to environmental impact. • There is no legitimate need to be served by the Trail Plan. • As an alternative to the Trail Plan, staff should work with all interested members of the community to develop a plan to improve and maintain the existing informal trails in an environmental sensitive fashion in order to preserve and protect the natural beauty and character of the Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park.
MAGIC	<p>Parks and Planning should be addressing the needs of wildlife in all plans for trails and connecting corridors: studies indicate composition and abundance of bird populations are altered adjacent to trails. Support concept of bicycle trails to get people out of cars and into less polluting modes of transportation do not agree with where Park & Planning is trying to put these trails: means more environmental degradation of streams, plants, and wildlife.</p> <p>New draft shows improvement over previous plans, including use of bike path on Travilah Two trails being proposed instead of one in Segment 1 too destructive. Equestrian trail running length o stream valley a terrible idea—trying to protect streams, not fill them with horse manure.</p> <p>Blockhouse Point CP not a proper place to provide trail connections.</p> <p>Trails should not be a priority issue of Park and Planning.</p> <p>Citizens of Mont. Co. have expressed their overwhelming desire for improved streams and protection of wildlife and forests with polls showing margins of 75% vs. 3% asking for more park trails, PRTOS Surve May 1997 p 21 Appendix B.</p>

OPPOSE HARD SURFACE TRAIL

Mosher, Cleary	Planned hard surface trails violate Potomac Master Plan guidelines on amount of impervious surfaces that can be added to each area of Potomac Sub region. Any extension of biking or hiking trails should follow existing transportation routes, power lines, or gas line routes where natural ground cover vegetation already destroyed.
Mosher	Majority of constituents in Mont. CO. are against plan to build trails in Muddy Branch Park.
Petition from neighbors on Brandy Hall Lane, Broughan Way, Damson Terrace and others	Oppose Muddy Branch SVP Trail Plan: do not need to transform one of last remaining wildlife sanctuaries into a major transportation route as Master Plan designates roadside trail connectors for bikers. Not properly informed. Establish a moratorium policy on development in valley streams and preserve them.
Kirkland	Paved path will require considerable clearing and stabilization all of which will degrade the sensitive areas. Increased quantity and quality of runoff due to the paving and general damage from increased traffic in the area will severely affect the ecology of the stream. This is not the healthiest stream to begin with due to its urban location, lets not make it worse.
Morrison	Oppose trails because they tend to molest nature with noise, and litter and so I am opposed to a man made trail of any type.
Taylor	Maybe a little trail development is in order but 8 ft pavement seems unjustified. Rarely see anybody hiking the park why such a proposal when there seems to be limited interest in this park.
Giebel	Trail is environmentally destructive, dangerous, and pointless waste of tax money.
Miller	Segment 1 fails to connect important community centers, such as Quince Orchard High School, the Library, and Travillah Elementary. Neighboring communities do not support trail.
Medina	Terrible waste of taxpayers' money to put paved trail in stream valley.
Roman	Stream valley very rugged.
Foster, Tuel	Bicycles from traffic and traffic belongs on roads. 8' path horrifying prospect.
Wurglitz	Oppose hard surface trails because would 1. cause environmental degradation to a pristine stream valley; should be avoided for same reasons found to be unacceptable in Piney Branch and Watts Branch Stream Valleys; 2. create no meaningful benefit to casual users that a natural surface trail does not—C&O Canal towpath used by strollers, casual walkers and bicycle riders, 3. spend substantial sums of money to solve non-existent problem – no analysis of difference in construction/maintenance costs of hard surface vs. natural surface trails 4. diminish the natural beauty of the stream park environment- nearby residential communities have had a remarkable natural experience enhanced by the near absence of human improvements. In terms of using sewer right of way, present disturbance is transitory. Paved trail will be permanent intrusion
Zimmerman	Preference is that NOTHING be done to stream valley – no upgrade of the trail, no signs, nothing; value is the quiet solitude that it offers.
Berne	Mont. Co. has more than enough paved bike trails in its parks, especially in its parks, especially in its stream valley parks. Paving and buffer area have tremendous adverse effect on natural areas, run-off into streams. Speeding cyclists, roller bladders, runners, and others destroy the ambience of parks.
Giebel	Constructing trails not the only way to restore damage done by WSSC.
Kashiwagi	Oppose Plan; do not need to transform one of our last remaining wildlife sanctuaries into a major route, as th

OPPOSE HARD SURFACE TRAIL	
	Potomac Master Plan designates roadside trail connectors for bikers.
Fitzpatrick	I am biker requesting Plan not put hard surface trail through Muddy Branch; protect our natural environments
Sherman	Oppose proposal for maintained natural and paved paths—MBSVP last remaining area in North Potomac, which has been left in its natural state. Needed refuge for wildlife and fragile tributary, which feeds the Potomac River. At very least, Plan should be deferred until study by MDE completes study on possible sources of pollution in the Potomac River.
Liu	This is highway system run amuck. Expanding urban sprawl rather than keeping green wedge. Bikes should stay on roadside.

TRAIL ACCESS/SAFETY	
Kirkland	Proposed parking lots could become commuter lot during day and party spot at night. These so called amenities will provide increased access to our back yards and houses, which could increase vandalism (testimony based on experience).
Chai, Marshall	Trail may provide easy access through backyard to homes for the criminal elements. Trail not in open area and will not be easily watched.
DuFief Homes Assn	Concern over Plan map showing trail easement/access from 11553 Brandy Hall Lane; please do not show accessibility from one of our neighborhood roads to public; prefer path be "step down" from main trails so as not to attract passers-by.
Foster, Tuel	WSSC easement effectively trail head near our house.

PROCESS	
Giebel	Adjoining property owners never notified of Plan process. Special interest groups involved early; have seen letters from biker group referring to Feb 8 worksession.

NATURAL SURFACE TRAIL	
Sierra Club	Concerned over equestrian trails and potential ecological damage and erosion in sensitive stream valley areas
More IMBA	Support shared-use trail system in Muddy Branch SVP, especially proposal fro natural surface trail from Esworthy to C& O towpath. Support narrow, winding trails that don't erode, have scenic views and given users serious exercise by climbing and descending, following natural contours of terrain. Schaeffer Farms Trails good example.
Giebel	In Segment 3, wetlands and vernal pools will have to be protected by expensive boardwalk; 4 tributary bridges will be needed; very isolated; animals and taxes will be gone if trail is built; do not mess with Mother Nature in Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park.

OTHER	
Sierra Club	Concern over terminal end of the along-road bike path that occurs on River Road at Blockhouse Points. What is definition of a conservation park?

