



MCPB  
ITEM NO. 5  
12-19-2002

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION  
Office of the Chairman, Montgomery County Planning Board

December 13, 2002

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Montgomery County Planning Board

**VIA:** Jeffrey Zyontz, Chief  
County-wide Planning Division

*JZ/RA*

Richard C. Hawthorne, Chief  
Transportation Planning Unit

*RCH*

Khalid Afzal, Team Leader  
Community-Based Planning Division

*KA*

**FROM:** Larry Cole: 301-495-4528, for the Park and Planning Department *LC*

**PROJECT:** Muncaster Mill Road (MD115) Improvements  
From Redland Road to Norbeck Road (MD28)  
Contract No. MO 910B21

**REVIEW TYPE:** Mandatory Referral No. MR# 02814-SHA-1

**APPLICANT:** Maryland State Highway Administration

**APPLYING FOR:** Plan Approval

**COMMUNITY-BASED PLANNING TEAM AREA:** Upper Rock Creek

---

**RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL WITH COMMENTS TO SHA**

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

1. Construct an eight-foot wide hiker-biker trail along the south side of Muncaster Mill Road from Avery Road to Meadowside Lane. An eight-foot wide landscape panel between the road and trail should be provided where possible.
2. Consider altering the proposed tie-in to Avery Road so that the revised edge of pavement is no closer to the northern edge of pavement of Avery Road than existing, and consider replacing the curb through this area.
3. Provide landscaping at the Avery Road intersection and provide street trees adjacent to the proposed hiker-biker trail between Lisa Drive and Applewood Lane. Please coordinate the design of this landscaping with M-NCPPC staff.
4. Please provide a list of the other potential improvements in the project area that have been identified but are not proposed for construction at this time.

**PREVIOUS BOARD ACTION:** None

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The project would construct safety improvements at four locations within the project limits, described below as Segments A, B, C and D and shown in Attachment 2. The total length of the project is approximately 8,200 feet.

Segment A: Muncaster Mill Road from west of Lisa Drive to Applewood Lane (a distance of approximately 1,850 feet) would be widened to include a center-turn lane and four-foot wide bike-accessible shoulders, and would include the construction of an eight-foot hiker-biker trail on the south side of the road as recommended in the Upper Rock Creek Master Plan.

Segment B: Muncaster Mill Road from Applewood Lane to Redland Middle School (a distance of approximately 2,000 feet) would be resurfaced with a high friction asphalt to increase skid resistance, and would include the construction of a five-foot sidewalk on the north side of the road to the school's western driveway.

Segment C: The horizontal alignment of Muncaster Mill Road at Avery Road would be shifted about fifty-five feet to the north to flatten the curve and improve sight distance. A sharp vertical curve in the road about 1,300 feet east of the Avery Road intersection would be flattened, reducing the elevation by about five-and-a-half feet. About two hundred fifty feet of Avery Road would be reconstructed. Bike-accessible shoulders would be constructed throughout the segment, for a distance of 2,050 feet.

Segment D: A left-turn lane would be constructed for eastbound Muncaster Mill Road traffic at Grist Mill Drive. The segment limits would be from 800 feet east of Grist Mill Drive to 1,500 west of the intersection, at the bridge over the North Branch of Rock Creek. Two vertical curves within the segment limits would also be improved.

## STAFF ANALYSIS

This project would provide safety improvements at several locations within the project limits by means of improving substandard horizontal and vertical curves, thereby improving sight distance, and in conjunction with the addition of turn lanes, reducing the likelihood of rear-end collisions.

Safety would also be improved for bicyclists by the addition of four-foot wide bike-accessible shoulders where the road is proposed to be widened, and by the construction of an eight-foot off-road bike trail between Lisa Drive and Applewood Lane. The off-road hiker-biker trail would be an extension of the existing trail recently built by SHA as part of their Congestion Relief Study (CRS) project on Muncaster Mill Road.

Pedestrian safety would be improved by means of the hiker-biker trail noted above as well as the proposed sidewalk from Applewood Lane to Redland Middle School. The addition of a left-turn lane was considered at the school driveway, but was dropped from consideration after discussions with school officials who were concerned that it would adversely affect the ability of the crossing guard to control traffic.

Within the limits of work, Avery Road would be widened to include four-foot-wide bike-accessible shoulders. This widening would bring the edge of pavement closer to the northern right-of-way line (see Attachment 3). Although the right-of-way of Avery Road is eighty-feet wide, appropriate to its arterial classification, the roadway is not centered in the right-of-way; the edge of the travel lane is only about 8.5 feet from the northern right-of-way line, rather than the normal twenty-eight feet. The proposed design would eliminate the existing curb and would provide a ditch between the edge of pavement and the right-of-way line/fence line. **Staff recommends that SHA consider altering the proposed tie-in to Avery Road so that the revised edge of pavement is no closer to the northern edge of pavement of Avery Road than existing**, replacing the existing curb and leaving room for a future sidewalk.

### Other Needed Improvements

SHA typically constructs sidewalks where adjacent to new roadway construction, and constructs hiker-biker trails where recommended in area Master Plans. On this project however, a sidewalk or trail is included in Segments A and B, but not C or D. Segments C and D are almost contiguous; there is only a 450-foot gap in the 4,800-foot distance between the western limit of Segments C and the eastern limit of Segment D.

**Staff recommends that SHA construct the Master Plan-recommended hiker-biker trail along the south side of Muncaster Road between Avery Road and Meadowside Lane to improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety and accessibility** (see Attachment 4).

Staff does not recommend the extension of the trail to the limit of work at North Branch at this time since planning is needed to determine how best to accommodate it.

The terrain is very steep and the existing bridge cannot accommodate a trail. The bridge would have to be widened or replaced, or a new separate trail bridge would have to be built. All of these alternatives are beyond the scope of this project. Future extension of the trail to the east is desirable however to link up with the Emory Lane hiker-biker trail. That trail begins at Holly Lane (one block off Muncaster Mill Road) and continues to Georgia Avenue, opposite Olney Manor Recreational Park (see Attachment 4).

Other potential improvements were identified in the project area but are not proposed to be constructed at this time because of budget limitations. **Staff recommends that the Board request a list of the potential improvements that have been identified** so that they may be considered when making recommendations on the next Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP).

## **Parks Impacts**

### Temporary Impacts

The construction of the proposed sidewalk from Applewood Lane to Redland Middle School would require construction within Winters Run Park (impacting approximately 0.16 acre) in order to provide a sufficient landscaped buffer between the road and the sidewalk and to minimize grading. The sidewalk would be at the approximate location as an informal path now used by schoolchildren. SHA proposes to construct this sidewalk by letter of agreement with M-NCPPC rather than taking right-of-way.

Two small construction easements are also proposed in North Branch Stream Valley Park, for a total of 0.06 acre, to tie park driveways on either side of Muncaster Mill Road into the proposed improvements.

### Permanent Impacts

Construction of the roadway widening for the left-turn lane into Grist Mill Drive and the four-foot shoulders (see Attachment 2, Segment D) would require permanent acquisition of 0.31 acre of parkland on the north side of MD 115. On the south side of MD 115, a parallel drainage ditch would be added to convey stormwater runoff to a pipe culvert under the roadway. This construction, along with the roadway widening needed for the four-foot shoulder and the grading for the proposed vertical curve improvements, would require permanent acquisition of 0.23 acre of park property. The total proposed right-of-way acquisition from North Branch Stream Valley Park is 0.54 acre.

Muncaster Mill Road is classified in the Upper Rock Creek Master Plan as an arterial road with an eighty-foot right-of-way. Generally only a forty-foot right-of-way exists in the above area, although it varies up to eighty-eight feet. The proposed project would require 0.10 acre of right-of-way from the park outside the Master Plan right-of-way (out of the total 0.54 acre permanent acquisition).

## Mitigation

SHA has agreed to the following measures to minimize harm and mitigate for permanent use of North Branch Stream Valley Park:

- A park permit is required for work on Park property and must be obtained prior to advertising the project for bids.
- No equipment or materials will be stored on park property and all construction debris will be removed from park property. Additionally, sediment and erosion controls will be implemented prior to construction to minimize sediment runoff into park property and any streams within the vicinity and will remain until soils are stabilized.
- Orange construction fence will be placed around specific trees that have been identified by M-NCPPC and SHA for protection, thereby minimizing the impacts of constructing the proposed safety improvements.
- SHA will coordinate with M-NCPPC regarding the replacement of trees that either need to be removed or are damaged during construction.
- All disturbed areas will be topsoiled, seeded, and mulched following construction of the proposed improvements.
- Grading limits within North Branch Stream Valley Park will be minimized. Due to the intensity of programming at the Meadowside Nature Center, roadway and/or driveway closings must be coordinated with Park Management and Nature Center Management sixty (60) days in advance.

***Staff agrees that the park impacts are acceptable to gain the needed safety improvements but recommends that SHA also construct the Master Plan-recommended hiker-biker trail along the south side of Muncaster Road between Avery Road and Meadowside Lane as mitigation for these impacts.*** In addition to providing better accommodation along Muncaster Road for pedestrians and bicyclists, the recommended trail segment would provide a better connection between Rock Creek Regional Park and North Branch Stream Valley Park via Needwood Lake Drive and Avery Road (see Attachment 4).

## **Environmental**

### Forest Conservation

Because this is a state project on state land, jurisdiction for forest conservation law compliance rests with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR). In addition, a portion of the proposed improvements will impact Park property, as noted above. Consequently, additional reviews are required by the DNR Forest Service for compliance with the State of Maryland Forest Conservation Law, and Parks staff to obtain a Park Permit and ensure compliance with revegetation guidelines for tree impacts on Park property. A NRI/FSD was required by M-NCPPC to meet the

requirements for environmental review. A NRI/FSD (#4-03142E) was subsequently submitted and has been approved, and a forest conservation exemption issued.

### Stormwater Management

The site is located within the Lower North Branch B subwatershed within the Upper Rock Creek watershed. The Countywide Stream Protection Strategy (CSPS) indicates Lower North Branch B as having excellent stream conditions, labeling it as a Watershed Preservation Area.

As a state project on state land, jurisdiction for stormwater management and erosion/sediment control requirements rests with the Maryland Department of the Environment.

### **Landscaping**

No landscaping plans have yet been created for this project. Staff believes that two areas in particular should be addressed. First, where Muncaster Mill Road would be shifted to the north at Avery Road, a large area would remain on the south side of the road. Staff believes that this area should be landscaped to enhance the gateway to the communities south of Muncaster Mill Road.

Second, where a hiker-biker trail is proposed along the south side of Muncaster Mill Road between Lisa Drive and Applewood Lane, street trees should be planted to enhance the character of this area and the attractiveness of the trail to users.

## **RELATED PROJECTS**

### Transportation Projects

Intersection improvements were recently constructed as part of SHA's Congestion Relief Study (CRS) project along Muncaster Mill Road at Shady Grove Road/Airpark Road and at Redland Road/Muncaster Road. Improvements along Muncaster Road at the intersection with Muncaster Mill Road were also recently constructed by DPWT.

SHA is currently conducting a study for a potential interchange at Norbeck Road (MD 28)/Georgia Avenue (MD 97), the project limits of which abut the subject project's eastern limits but would not affect not the proposed improvements.

SHA also constructed an eastbound left-turn lane at Emory Lane within the last two years, in advance of this project, to improve safety at this intersection. The improvements also included an area for traffic turning left from Emory Lane to stack on Muncaster Mill Road before merging with eastbound traffic. These changes have improved safety at this intersection. The Greater Olney Civic Association believes that a traffic signal is also needed but SHA has determined that a signal is not warranted at

this time. As conditions change, the warrants can be reviewed again and a traffic signal installed if needed. The need for a traffic signal should be reviewed as part of the planning for the bikeway connector between Muncaster Mill Road and Emory Lane if a traffic signal has not already been installed by the time of the study.

### Parks Projects

M-NCPPC has two future trail projects that cross MD 115. A natural surface extension of Rock Creek Trail is scheduled to be constructed in FY06. No work is proposed by SHA as part of the subject project that would affect this trail project.

An extension of the North Branch Trail, both paved and natural surface, is scheduled to begin facility planning in FY08. While the paved trail south of MD 115 will be in the stream valley, it is likely that at least a portion of the paved trail north of MD 115 will run along Emory Lane to avoid some environmentally sensitive areas. A continuous trail along Emory Lane already exists except for the southernmost block between Holly Lane and Muncaster Mill Road.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

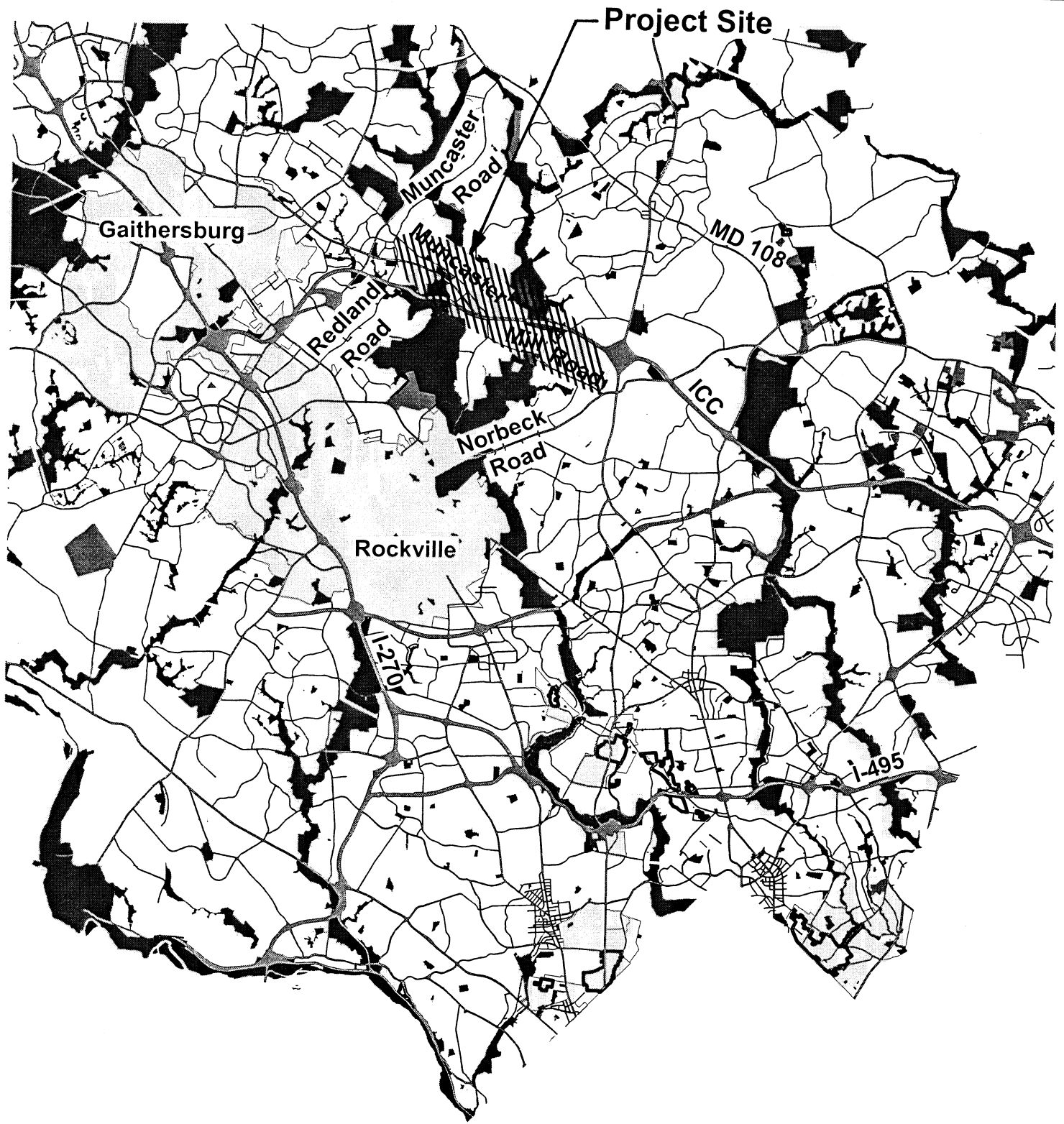
SHA held a public information meeting on this project on June 10th, 2002. There was an informational meeting for elected officials on May 29th, 2002 and another one is anticipated in early January 2003.

### **BACKGROUND**

This project was initiated after a bus crash on Muncaster Mill Road at Grist Mill Drive that occurred in May 2000 in which the bus driver died. The project is unusual in that it was funded prior to any design work being done. A ten million dollar budget was set and SHA proceeded to prioritize the safety problems within the project limits that could be accomplished within that budget. Since the design of this project was initiated, other crashes within the project limits have included another non-fatal bus crash near the site of the May 2000 crash, and an ambulance crash in the vicinity of North Branch. The proposed improvements would improve safety in the area of these crashes.

LC:cmd

MR Muncaster Mill Road Memo to MCPB.doc



Vicinity Map

ATTACHMENT 1

Map Compiled On 12-11-2002 at 03:47 PM  
 Map Scale: 1 inch = 12000 feet or 1:144000

0 12000 Feet



The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission  
 Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning  
 Transportation Planning Unit  
 8787 Georgia Avenue | Silver Spring, Maryland 20910  
 301.495.4525 voice | 301.495.1302 fax | <http://www.mc-mncppc.org>

- Master Plan of Highways Right-of-Way
- Master Plan of Historic Preservation Historic Districts
- All Parts
- Existing
- Proposed
- Municipalities

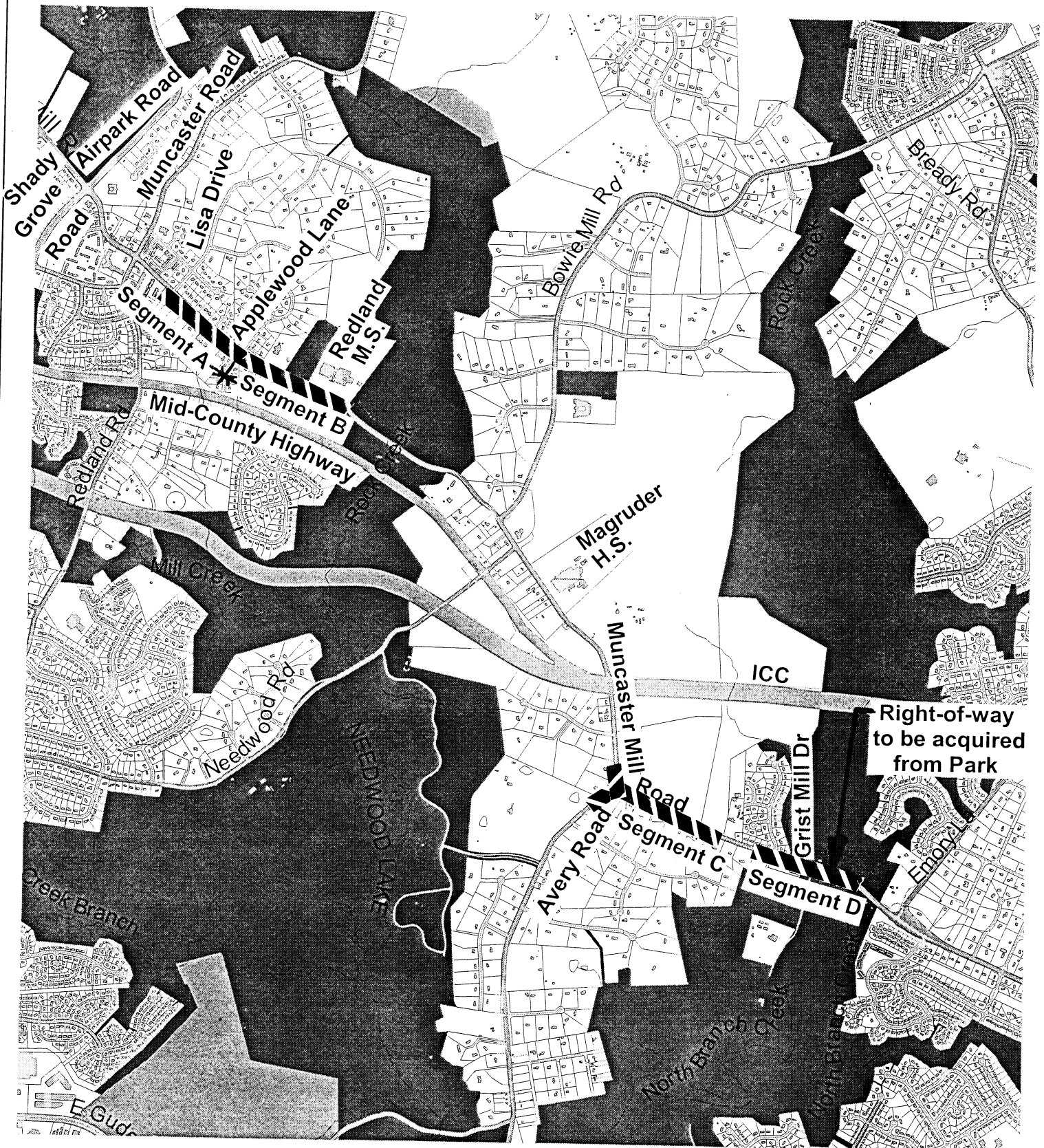
**NOTICE**  
 The planimetric, property, and topographic information shown on this map is based on copyrighted Map Products from the Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and may not be copied or reproduced without written permission from M-NCPPC.

Property lines are compiled by adjusting the property lines to topography created from aerial photography and should not be interpreted as actual field surveys. Planimetric features were compiled from 1:14400 scale aerial photography using stereo photogrammetric methods.

This map is created from a variety of data sources, and may not reflect the most current conditions in any one location and may not be completely accurate or up to date. All map features are approximately within five feet of their true location. This map may not be the same as a map of the same area plotted at an earlier time as the data are continuously updated. Use of this map, other than for general planning purposes, is not recommended. Copyright 2002.







# ATTACHMENT 2

Map Compiled On 12-11-2002 at 03:43 PM  
 Map Scale: 1 inch = 2200 feet or 1:26400



The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission  
 Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning  
 Transportation Planning Unit  
 8787 Georgia Avenue | Silver Spring, Maryland 20910  
 301.495.4525 voice | 301.495.1302 fax | <http://www.mc-mncppc.org>

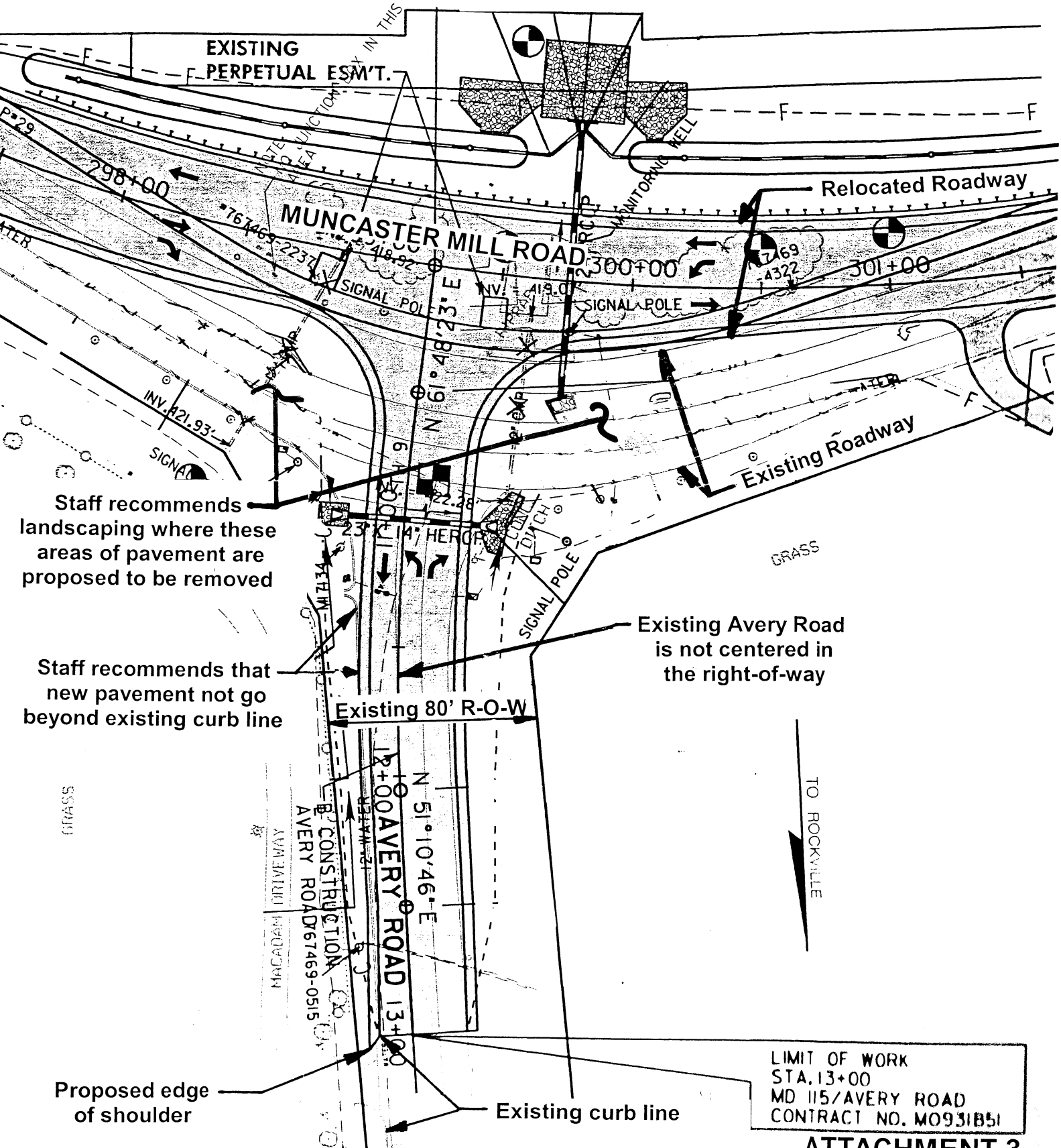
- Text Street and Stream Names
- Street Names
- Street Pavement
- Buildings
- Master Plan of Highways Right-of-Way
- Master Plan of Historic Preservation Historic Districts
- All Parks
- Existing
- Proposed
- Property
- Municipalities

**NOTICE**  
 The planimetric, property, and topographic information shown on this map is based on copyrighted Map Products from the Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and may not be copied or reproduced without written permission from M-NCPPC.

Property lines are compiled by adjusting the property lines to topography created from aerial photography and should not be interpreted as actual field surveys. Planimetric features were compiled from 1:14400 scale aerial photography using stereo photogrammetric methods.

This map is created from a variety of data sources, and may not reflect the most current conditions in any one location, and may not be completely accurate or up to date. All map features are approximately within five feet of their true location. This map may not be the same as a map of the same area plotted at an earlier time as the data are continuously updated. Use of this map, other than for general planning purposes, is not recommended. Copyright 2002.





Staff recommends landscaping where these areas of pavement are proposed to be removed

Staff recommends that new pavement not go beyond existing curb line

Existing Avery Road is not centered in the right-of-way

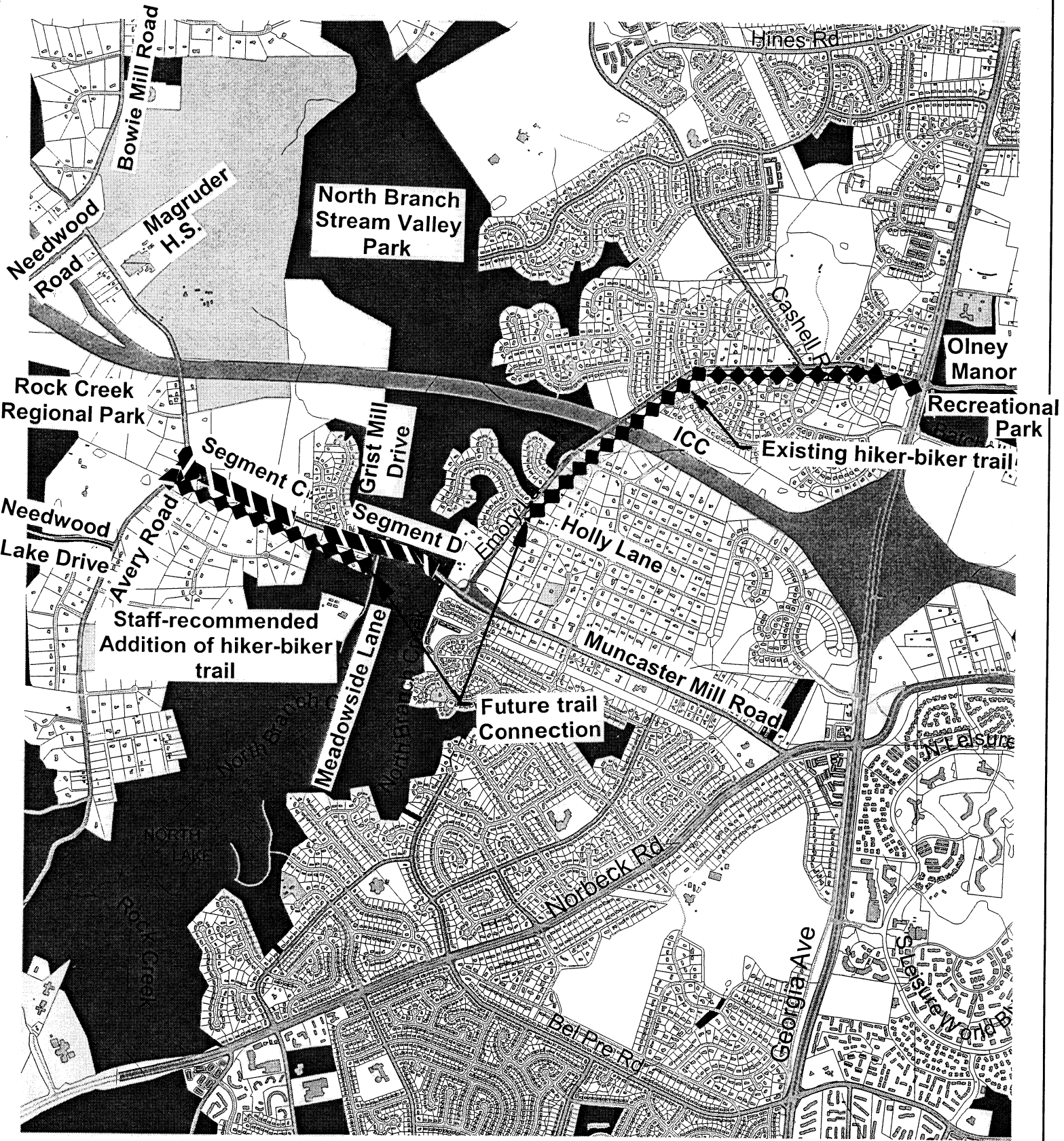
Existing 80' R-O-W

Proposed edge of shoulder

Existing curb line

LIMIT OF WORK  
STA. 13+00  
MD 115/AVERY ROAD  
CONTRACT NO. M0931B51

### ATTACHMENT 3



# ATTACHMENT 4

Map Compiled On 12-11-2002 at 10:45 AM  
 Map Scale: 1 inch = 2200 feet or 1:26400

0 2200 Feet



**Text Street and Stream Names**

- Metro Stations
- MARC Stations
- WMATA Metro Red Line
- MARC Brunswick Line
- Streams
- Street Pavement
- Buildings
- Master Plan of Highways Right-of-Way
- Master Plan of Historic Preservation Historic District
- Master Plan of Historic Preservation Individual Sites
- All Parks**
- Existing
- Proposed
- Property
- Municipalities
- Montgomery County

**NOTICE**

The planimetric, property, and topographic information shown on this map is based on copyrighted Map Products from the Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and may not be copied or reproduced without written permission from M-NCPPC.

Property lines are compiled by adjusting the property lines to topography created from aerial photography and should not be interpreted as actual field surveys. Planimetric features were compiled from 1:14400 scale aerial photography using stereo photogrammetric methods.

This map is created from a variety of data sources, and may not reflect the most current conditions in any one location and may not be completely accurate or up to date. All map features are approximately within five feet of their true location. This map may not be updated. Use of this map, other than for general planning purposes, is not recommended. Copyright 2002.



The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission  
 Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning  
 Transportation Planning Unit  
 8787 Georgia Avenue | Silver Spring, Maryland 20910  
 301.495.4525 voice | 301.495.1302 fax | <http://www.mc-mncppc.org>