



April 4, 2003

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

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

FROM: Alex Hekimian, 301-495-4525, for the Park and Planning Department *AH*

SUBJECT: Worksession for Master Plan of Highways (Transportation) Amendment

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the Planning Board endorse and transmit to the County Council a proposed amendment to the Master Plan of Highways (Transportation) to include: (1) high-occupancy vehicle lanes on the Capital Beltway (I-495) between the American Legion Bridge and the I-270 West Spur, and (2) a grade-separated interchange where Randolph Road and Veirs Mill Road intersect. Based upon recent public testimony, staff recommends revising the text of the proposed amendments in the Public Hearing Draft. The entire revised set of amendments is shown in Exhibit A.

BRIEF BACKGROUND

The Planning Board held a public hearing on February 20, 2003 regarding the report, "Public Hearing Draft – An Amendment to the Master Plan of Highways (Transportation) within Montgomery County." Exhibit B provides a summary of the testimony from people who spoke at the hearing as well as from those who subsequently sent letters until the public hearing record closed on March 14. Exhibit C is a compilation of the actual written testimony. Copies of the Public Hearing Draft and Exhibit C are in the Planning Board members' packets only.

Having reviewed the testimony, staff has provided a response for each major issue raised, as shown in Exhibit B. Based on that testimony, staff has concluded that some additional recommendations, beyond what was initially recommended for the area master plans, are warranted. Those additional recommendations are shown in Exhibit B.

Subsequent to the Board's upcoming worksession, the next step would be to transmit the Board's recommendations to the County Council for approval.

AH:kcw
Attachments

memo to PB on MPH worksession.doc

CAPITAL BELTWAY HOV

Changes to Affected Master Plans

The following changes are proposed using the legislative format, with deleted text indicated in brackets and new text underlined.

Potomac Subregion Master Plan, 2002

On page 29, after the fourth paragraph under the heading “Noise,” add the following paragraph:

The Capital Beltway HOV project provides an opportunity to evaluate and resolve noise impacts on adjacent communities. Since noise is a significant environmental issue, the most appropriate ways to mitigate them will need to be confirmed during the design process.

On page 30, at the end of the “Noise Recommendations,” add the following paragraph:

- **Both SHA and DPWT have established procedures for evaluating the need for and feasibility of noise barriers along the Capital Beltway. If those procedures show that noise walls or other mitigation techniques are warranted, SHA will need to program them in conjunction with the recommended Capital Beltway HOV project.**

On page 109, Table 4 (Street and Highway Classifications) add to the text under “Freeways” to read as follows:

Roadway	F-8 Capital Beltway (I-495)
Limits	I-270 Spur to Potomac River
Minimum ROW Width (feet)	300
Number of Travel Lanes	8, <u>plus 2 HOV</u> , divided

On page 114, after the third paragraph under the heading “Roadway Functional Classification Changes, Recommended Rights-of-Way, and Alignment Changes,” add the following paragraph:

With regard to the recommended Capital Beltway HOV project, SHA should minimize right-of-way impacts on nearby homes, as well as on the historic First Agape AME Zion Church (formerly the Gibson Grove AME Zion Church). The church is designated on Montgomery County’s Master Plan for Historic Preservation. When the project enters its design phase, consultation with the Maryland Historical Trust and with Montgomery County’s preservation staff must be initiated under the Section 106 process.

On page 114, at the end of “Recommendations,” add the following paragraph:

- **During the design process and Section 106 process for the Capital Beltway HOV project, SHA will need to make extensive efforts to avoid adverse effects on nearby homes and the historic First Agape AME Zion Church (formerly the Gibson Grove AME Zion Church).**

Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan, 1990

On page 112, second column, insert a new sub-heading after the main heading “Major Highway Needs,” as follows:

Capital Beltway

This Plan recommends adding high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes on the portion of the Capital Beltway (I-495), between the American Legion Bridge and the West Spur I-270. Some segments of the Capital Beltway between the American Legion Bridge and the West Spur I-270 are experiencing congestion conditions (level of service F) during the morning rush hour of 8:00-9:00 AM. In the evening, conditions are worse, with congested conditions over the three-hour period of 4:00 – 7:00 PM. The proposed HOV lanes have the potential to make vehicular use of the Beltway more efficient and to mitigate some of the congestion that would otherwise occur. This proposed project would connect the existing HOV lanes on I-270 with the proposed HOV lanes on the Virginia segments of the Capital Beltway. The project would consist of one HOV lane in each direction, adjacent to the median, with direct connections to the HOV lanes to the north and south.

On page 113, Table 13, insert a new entry under “Major Highway Needs,” as follows:

Name (Route #)	Limit	Recommendations	Current LOS	Conditions, Guidelines, Recommendations	Possible Long- term Changes
<u>Capital Beltway</u>	<u>Between the American Legion Bridge and the West Spur I-270</u>	<u>Add HOV Lanes</u>	<u>F</u>		

On page 126, Table 14, add to the text under “Freeway” to read as follows:

Master Plan Designation	Name	Limits	Minimum Right-of-Way Width	Ultimate Pavement Width or Number of Lanes (for consideration beyond Master Plan)
F-8	<u>Capital Beltway (I-495)</u>	<u>American Legion Bridge to I-270 West Spur</u>	<u>300'</u>	<u>8 lanes, plus 2 HOV, divided</u>
F-8	Capital Beltway (I-495)	<u>I-270 West Spur to Rock Creek Park</u>	Varies	6 to 8 lanes

On page 141, after the first paragraph under the heading “5.22 Noise and Air,” add a paragraph, as follows:

The Capital Beltway HOV project provides an opportunity to evaluate and resolve noise impacts on adjacent communities. Since noise is a significant environmental issue, the most appropriate ways to mitigate them will need to be confirmed during the design process. Both the SHA and DPW&T have established procedures for evaluating the need for and feasibility of noise barriers along the Capital Beltway. If those procedures show that noise walls or other mitigation techniques are warranted, SHA will need to program them in conjunction with the recommended Capital Beltway HOV project.

RANDOLPH ROAD/VEIRS MILL ROAD INTERCHANGE

Changes to Affected Master Plans

The following changes are proposed using the legislative format, with deleted text indicated in brackets and new text underlined.

Master Plan for the Communities of Kensington-Wheaton, 1989

On page 99, first column, insert a new sub-heading after the Kenton Drive paragraph, as follows:

Randolph Road/Veirs Mill Road Intersection is recommended for further study as a grade-separated interchange. The precise characteristics of a proposed interchange will be determined in a future engineering study, which will take into account the potential access to affected properties, environmental impacts, visual quality, impacts on the adjoining communities, pedestrian circulation, and appropriate road designs, among other factors.

MASTER PLAN OF HIGHWAYS PUBLIC HEARING: FEBRUARY 20, 2003

Comments	Staff Response	Recommendation
<p><u>CAPITAL BELTWAY HOV PROJECT</u></p>		
<p>Acknowledge and address the issue of high capacity mass transit projects, currently under consideration, that would eventually link Montgomery County with Virginia. Bob Simpson, on behalf of Montgomery County Executive*; Thomas Durek, on behalf of Riverhill Homeowners Association; Polly Sherard; Peter Hass and Gail Ross</p>	<p>This project would be part of an interstate HOV network that serves express buses as well as carpools and vanpools. Any other major transit-related projects that connect Maryland and Virginia and that may be approved in the future would supplement and be compatible with the HOV network.</p>	
<p>Insert two graphic figures that show: 1) where more right-of-way is needed, and 2) what a typical cross-section would look like. Bob Simpson, on behalf of Montgomery County Executive*</p>	<p>SHA feels that it is premature to provide such information because preliminary designs have yet to be performed. Frequently, at the master plan stage, projects are conceptual in nature and such detailed information is not available.</p>	
<p>Montgomery County needs the addition of at least one more bridge across the Potomac River to handle the traffic growth. Jerry Garson, on behalf of Citizens for Better Potomac Roads*; Thomas Durek, on behalf of Riverhill Homeowners Association</p>	<p>After the County Council reviewed the Potomac Subregion Master Plan, it rejected proposals for additional bridges across the Potomac River. After the Council reviewed the Transportation Policy Report, it did not include such bridges in its request to the Planning Board to consider Master Plan of Highways amendments.</p>	
<p>We do not have an official position on this project, but we tentatively support the HOV lanes on this segment of the Capital Beltway as long as Virginia also provides them on its side of the Potomac River. Dan Wilhelm, on behalf of Montgomery County Civic Federation*</p>	<p>This project is intended to connect with planned HOV lanes on Virginia's portion of the Beltway; however, if Virginia encounters delays in implementing its HOV lanes, there would still be value in proceeding with the extension of the I-270 HOV lanes to the Maryland portion of the Beltway, and if necessary, tapering off Maryland's HOV lanes at the George Washington Parkway.</p>	

Comments	Staff Response	Recommendation
<p>We have concerns that the HOV lanes may cause widening of the Capital Beltway and associated impacts on the Gibson Grove AME Zion Church, a historic site. Reverend Edgar Bankhead, Judith Bankhead, and Dr. Rita Colbert, on behalf of the First Agape African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church at Gibson Grove*; Burton Gray, on behalf of Cabin John Citizens Association*</p>	<p>The Gibson Grove AME Zion Church (now known as the First Agape AME Zion Church) is an historic site, designated on Montgomery County's <i>Master Plan for Historic Preservation</i>. Extensive efforts should be made to avoid adverse effects to the historic property. When the project enters its design phase, consultation with the Maryland Historical Trust and with Montgomery County's preservation staff must be initiated under the Section 106 process.</p>	<p>Amend the text of the Potomac Subregion Master Plan to recommend extensive efforts during the design process and during the Section 106 process of the HOV project to avoid adverse effects to this historic church property.</p>
<p>We support the need for the HOV lanes, but request 1) any widening to occur toward the south side of the Beltway, 2) building a retainer wall on the church side of the Beltway to mitigate noise and a pathway adjacent to the church to provide access to the Moses Hall burial site, and 3) providing a traffic light, speed bumps, or other remedies on Seven Lock Roads to reduce the speed of traffic. Reverend Edgar Bankhead, Judith Bankhead, and Dr. Rita Colbert, on behalf of the First Agape African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church at Gibson Grove*</p>	<p>The design process and the Section 106 process will be the appropriate time to address how and where any widening of the Beltway should be accomplished and how noise issues will be mitigated. The requested pathway to the Moses Hall burial site and the traffic light or speed bumps on Seven Locks Road are not directly related to the HOV lane project. The Potomac Community Based Planning Team will explore these issues.</p>	
<p>Acknowledge and take action to remedy the long-standing, unresolved noise problems experienced by residents in the areas adjacent to the Capital Beltway. Burton Gray, on behalf of Cabin John Citizens Association*; Jan Evans, on behalf of community of Carderock Springs South - inner loop*; Malcolm Stevenson, on behalf of Carderock Springs Citizens' Association*; Martin and Karen Scheinberg; Leslie and Cindy Miller; Jeff Kurtz; Madhav Kadambi; Gladys Richter, on behalf of Persimmon Tree Community Homeowners Association; George and Maria Khatchadourian; Steven Futterman; Paul Ullman; Stephen Loewinger; Dr. Stephen Wandner and Marleigh Dover; Brand and Ann Fowler; Bob Giannasi and Mary Griffin; Marcy Harrison and Chip Wright; Maxine Cohoes</p>	<p>The SHA and DPWT are actively studying this long-standing noise issue, and some findings and recommendations are due in Spring 2003.</p>	

Comments	Staff Response	Recommendation
<p>If the amendment goes forward, add a requirement for appropriate sound barrier mitigation either before or concurrent with the construction of HOV lanes. Burton Gray, on behalf of Cabin John Citizens Association*; Jan Evans, on behalf of community of Carderock Springs South - inner loop*; Malcolm Stevenson, on behalf of Carderock Springs Citizens' Association*; George and Maria Khatchadourian; Gladys Richter, on behalf of Persimmon Tree Community Homeowners Association; Jeff Kurtz; Steven Futterman; Nina Weissberg; Martin and Karen Scheinberg; Leslie and Cindy Miller; Paul Ullman; Samir Shah; Burch Family; Stephen Loewinger; Dr. Stephen Wandner and Marleigh Dover; Marcy Harrison and Chip Wright; Maxine Cohoes; Normand and Tara Vantoai; Sheryl and Peter Block</p>	<p>Noise is a significant environmental issue for the adjacent communities and should be resolved as part of this project. Noise impacts and the most appropriate ways to mitigate them will be confirmed during the design process.</p>	<p>Amend the text of the Potomac Subregion Master Plan and Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan to state that both SHA and DPWT have established procedures for evaluating the need for and feasibility of noise barriers. If those procedures show that noise walls are warranted, SHA will need to program them in conjunction with the Beltway HOV project.</p>
<p>Acknowledge that the HOV project would require widening of the American Legion Bridge. Burton Gray, on behalf of Cabin John Citizens Association*; Daryll Walter; Thomas Durek, on behalf of Riverhill Homeowners Association</p>	<p>Space for the HOV lanes would be needed on the American Legion Bridge. SHA will likely study various options for creating an HOV lane in each direction: widening the bridge, converting an existing general-purpose lane to an HOV lane, and re-stripping the pavement (narrower lanes, no shoulders).</p>	
<p>Include plantings of evergreen trees along the right-of-way. Gladys Richter, on behalf of Persimmon Tree Community Homeowners Association; Burch Family</p>	<p>SHA has a policy of planting a mix of appropriate coniferous and deciduous species of trees in the right-of-way of its projects when space is available. This should be considered at the design stage.</p>	
<p>HOV lanes, alone, are not the answer. Before acting on this amendment, have Ken Orski brief the Planning Board and staff on the value of combining HOT lanes with HOV lanes. We support HOT lanes only if the excess revenue generated from collecting tolls is used to provide a transit alternative. James Clarke, on behalf of Action Committee for Transit*</p>	<p>SHA may consider the policy of using HOV lanes as HOT lanes during the Beltway HOV project planning study.</p>	

Comments	Staff Response	Recommendation
<p>We oppose widening the Beltway HOV lanes because it may mean encroaching on nearby properties. Darryl Walter; Madhav Kadambi; Nancy Pinto-Orton; Annemarie Chretien; The Residents of Thornley Court (52 signatures); Thomas Durek, on behalf of Riverhill Homeowners Association; Bob Giannasi and Mary Griffin; Polly Sherard; Peter Haas and Gail Ross</p>	<p>At the current conceptual stage of this project, there is insufficient information about the locations and amounts of right-of-way that would be needed. In general, it appears that there is enough existing right-of-way along the alignment to include HOV lanes; however, some additional right-of-way, primarily at the north and south ends of the project, may be needed. The design stage is the appropriate time to make that determination.</p>	
<p><u>RANDOLPH ROAD/VEIRS MILL ROAD INTERCHANGE PROJECT</u></p>		
<p>Determine if the recommendation is to implement it or, as the text now says, to study it further. Bob Simpson, on behalf of Montgomery County Executive*</p>	<p>The intent of the amendment is to include this project in the Master Plan of Highways and area master plan, from a transportation network and policy perspective. Further studies and funding priorities would determine if the project proceeds to construction.</p>	
<p>Acknowledge DPWT's transit studies that are underway in the area and ensure that the interchange would not preclude the transit concepts being developed. Bob Simpson, on behalf of Montgomery County Executive*</p>	<p>Further studies of this project should not preclude implementation of ongoing recommendations on transit improvements for Randolph Road and Veirs Mill Road.</p>	
<p>We support the interchange project. Dan Wilhelm, on behalf of Montgomery County Civic Federation*</p>		
<p>We oppose the interchange project. To relieve traffic on Randolph Rd., resurrect the Rockville Facility. Royal Buyer, on behalf of Intercountry Connector Master Plan Advocates*</p>	<p>The western portion of the right-of-way for the previously proposed Rockville Facility is now proposed as the Montrose Parkway, but extending it to use the portion east of Veirs Mill Road is inconsistent with the right-of-way designation as Matthew Henson State Park.</p>	

GENERAL

<p>Identify impacts on land use and zoning, community facilities and needs, environmental resources, historic resources and preservation, and fiscal considerations and implementation. Bob Simpson, on behalf of Montgomery County Executive*</p>	<p>These projects are not expected to change the zoning or affect the land use/transportation balance. Impacts on the environment, historic sites, and community facilities, and on fiscal issues will be determined at the project planning and design stage.</p>	
<p>A full revision to the 1953 Master Plan of Highways is needed, rather than just the proposed amendments, in order for the County to be in compliance with the County's General Plan documents. Jerry Garson, on behalf of Citizens for Better Potomac Roads*</p>	<p>A comprehensive review of the County's short- and long-range transportation needs was recently performed in the Transportation Policy Report. The Master Plan of Highways is a compilation of priority projects from such efforts and from adopted area master plans.</p>	