



January 2, 2004

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Jeffrey Zyontz, Chief
Countywide Planning Division

Richard C. Hawthorne, Chief *RC*
Transportation Planning

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

SUBJECT: Public Hearing on Master Plan of Highways Amendment – Interchange at
Intersection of Randolph Road and Veirs Mill Road

The Planning Board will be holding a public hearing on January 8, 2004, on adding a future interchange at the intersection of Randolph Road and Veirs Mill Road to the Master Plan of Highways and 1989 Kensington-Wheaton Master Plan. This is a supplementary hearing that responds to the County Council's request, that property owners in the vicinity of the road improvement be better informed about the project and be given another opportunity to comment. The work session on the amendment is planned for January 22, 2004.

Supplementary Community Outreach Process

This amendment is in response to the County Council's previous direction to the Planning Board, to consider adding this project to the county's Master Plan of Highways and related master plans. The original Planning Board Draft of the proposed amendment, dated April 2003, is attached (only in the Planning Board's packet) as a reference document. On September 30, when the County Council discussed the Planning Board's recommendation, the Council felt that a decision on the amendment should be deferred until a supplementary community outreach process was completed. We have responded by:

- scheduling a community meeting on the interchange proposal, a Planning Board public hearing, and a Planning Board work session,
- sending information about the proposal and a notice about the community meeting and public hearing, via direct mail, to all residential and commercial property owners in the vicinity of the intersection,
- sending similar information, via direct mail, to community and business organizations in the general vicinity of the proposed project, and
- hand-delivering informational materials to tenants of the commercial buildings in the vicinity of the intersection.

In advance of the Planning Board's upcoming public hearing, staff held a community meeting at the Mid-County Regional Services Center on December 10, 2003, to give interested people an opportunity to understand the concept of the project and to provide us their comments. Five citizens attended that meeting. Four of them represented commercial properties, and one was a resident, from the vicinity of the intersection. They were primarily interested in knowing how the project might affect the use of their properties, and what the possible timeline might be for the entire planning and implementation process.

The upcoming public hearing was advertised in a legal newspaper notice, an M-NCPPC news release, in the Notice Box of the Planning Board agendas, and on the M-NCPPC website.

Description of the Proposed Amendment

Randolph Road is a major east-west road in Montgomery County that has been a focus of attention in recent years. The County and the State have recognized that traffic conditions are worsening at key intersections, including the Randolph Road/Veirs Mill Road intersection. This intersection currently has congested conditions (level of service F) in the morning peak hour and is expected to get even more congested in the future.

In the near-term, the State of Maryland is preparing to make some minor improvements at the intersection. However, planners anticipate that these improvements will not be sufficient and that an interchange will eventually be needed at this intersection. A grade-separated interchange, with one road going over the other, and ramps to separate turns, would ease the flow of general traffic through the corridor and also expedite the movement of planned express bus service on both Randolph Road and Veirs Mill Road. No construction is planned or funded at this time. Including this project in the County's master plans would facilitate future studies, public involvement, and funding of a potential interchange, if deemed feasible.

At this stage, staff cannot predict what type of interchange will be designed and exactly how much additional right-of-way would be needed. Those details would be determined in future planning, engineering, and design studies. Given the high density of land uses around the intersection, every effort should be made to make the interchange as compact as possible. Designating a 150-foot-wide right-of-way within a length of 600 feet along each leg of the intersection is a rough approximation of the space that would be needed for a compact interchange.

This more exact designation is a change from what the Board adopted earlier, and is in response to a request from the County Executive that the amendment define the additional right-of-way to be protected. The Council's Transportation and Environment Committee added this language at its work session before the full Council again referred it to the Board.

Recommended Amendment to Master Plans

The following text replaces the text of the recommended master plan amendments for the Randolph Road/Veirs Mill Road interchange that had previously been in the attached Planning Board Draft, dated April 2003.

This revised amendment would add a graphic symbol of a future interchange at Randolph Road and Veirs Mill Road to the Master Plan of Highways map. It would also add some new text to the Master Plan for the Communities of Kensington-Wheaton, 1989, as follows.

On page 99 of the Kensington-Wheaton master plan, first column, a new sub-heading would be inserted, after the Kenton Drive paragraph, as follows:

Randolph Road/Veirs Mill Road Intersection is recommended as a potential 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 constraints, and appropriate road designs, among other factors.

This interchange will expedite bus transit on both Randolph Road and Veirs Mill Road, as part of the respective bus rapid transit lines currently under study. The interchange should also be designed to accommodate continuous bikeways on both Veirs Mill and Randolph Roads.

For each leg of the intersection, the right-of-way width shall be a minimum of 150 feet within a 600-foot distance from the center of the intersection.

AH:RCH:JZ:gw
Attachment