



MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARK & PLANNING

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

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Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760

STAFF MEMORANDUM

TO: Glenn Orlin, Montgomery County Council Staff
FROM: Judy Daniel and Dan Hardy, M-NCPPC Staff
DATE: March 8, 2006
SUBJECT: Damascus Through Traffic Analysis

The Planning Board Draft of the Damascus Master Plan finds that neither a bypass nor a comprehensive roadway widening is needed to support the land use and through traffic growth envisioned during the twenty-year life of the Plan. In response to community concerns, however, the Plan recommends continued study of means to address through traffic concerns, primarily by the development of an Alternate Route Study that would begin after Woodfield Road Extension has been open to traffic.

The Staff understands the PHED Committee member concerns that the Plan sends mixed signals in this regard. This is a problem common to coordinating land use and transportation plans countywide. On face value, the Damascus Bypass seems unrelated to the portion of the Purple Line east of Silver Spring. The two conceptual facilities, however, share several characteristics related to master planning:

- Neither facility is recommended in a current master plan because neither is needed to solve a transportation problem as defined by County policies or practices
- Both facilities have a level of support at the conceptual level from some stakeholders, including community members and government officials, that warrants master plan mention
- Implementation of either facility would require a substantial amount of localized disruption, a fact reflected by local constituent opposition to specific routes.
- Neither facility yet enjoys consensus regarding the "form and function" details required to identify (and preserve) a specific right-of-way.

The Silver Spring CBD, East Silver Spring, Takoma Park Master Plans, all approved and adopted in 2000, describe the ongoing Purple Line studies and identify certain master plan amendments that might be required depending upon the preferred alignment identified through further study. Staff finds that this position, satisfactory for a facility already in the County Council's Ten Year Transportation Plan, should also suffice for a concept whose value is far less certain.

This memorandum describes the development of the staff recommendation for Damascus, with greater detail on historical context of the through traffic discussion, the types of solutions that would be evaluated in the Plan's recommended Alternate Route Study, and the reasons why the Damascus Master Plan should be adopted prior to completion of such future studies.

BACKGROUND

The concept of a Damascus Bypass has been a topic of substantial community discussion for more than thirty years. A substantial level of community support exists for the concept of a bypass, although no single alignment has a similar level of consensus.

The most recent formal process to evaluate Damascus Bypass feasibility began in 1986 and culminated in the 1993 Damascus Master Plan amendment, which did not recommend a new alignment. The level of community support for further bypass studies was evident in the initial Master Plan outreach meetings.

WHAT WOULD THE ALTERNATE ROUTE STUDY ENCOMPASS?

The term "Damascus Bypass" has been in the lexicon long enough to be a shorthand for any means of diverting longer distance traffic from the town center. A piece of the 1969 Plan's "bypass" is currently being built – as Valley Park Road; and a segment of a bypass alternative in the 1982 Plan is currently being built – as Woodfield Road Extended. But the recommendation in the current Plan for an Alternate Route Study would include much more than reviewing the prior Damascus Bypass alignments.

Certainly, we expect that Alternatives B, C and F described in the 1993 Plan could be on the table. Given the concern that times have changed (for instance, the specific route of Alternative C as defined in 1993 would require demolition of the Damascus Recreation Center and there are now subdivisions along much of the route of Alternative F) it is likely that a new study could also revisit Alternatives A, D, and E. But it must be accepted as a given that any bypass route would have a significant impact on environmental resources (due to the topography of Damascus) and farmland.

Other concepts that should be in the regionally based study include:

- Widening of existing state highways, including MD 75, MD 27, and MD 124
- Geometric improvements to county roads, including Clarksburg Road, Penn Shop Road, Long Corner Road, and Bethesda Church Road
- Limited new local roadway connections, such as a connection between Bethesda Church Road and Ridge Road or Ridge Road to Moxley Road to Clarksburg Road on the northwest side of Damascus
- Transit and travel demand management
- Land use changes

The study would also need to address the effects of latent demand. As the state-of-the-practice has evolved, the travel demand forecasting tools used by both M-NCPPC and MWCOG are more sensitive to latent demand than were the tools used for prior studies. These tools employ a speed-feedback mechanism; meaning that travelers base not just the daily decision of what route to take, but even broader decisions of where to live and where to work, on available transportation infrastructure and services. The cliché "if you build it, they will come" is oversimplified, but contains an element of truth. Therefore, adding substantial new capacity through Damascus in the form of either wholesale widening of state roads or development of a bypass will increase total vehicular travel in the corridor even as it reduces congestion. The policy question is whether or not more vehicular travel in this corridor is desirable. Staff finds that one County objective is to not encourage vehicular travel through the agricultural preserve and its communities. To the extent that new roads are studied, two key study elements regarding implementation must be incorporated:

First, what function would a bypass serve? If the primary objective is diverting through truck traffic from the Town Center, the new road would need to be planned, designed, built, and maintained to State Highway Administration standards. The primary roadway whose function is replaced (MD 27 or MD 124) would then probably become a County responsibility. If the state were to build the road, consideration would need to be given to the state's smart growth legislation, which would weight the conclusion toward widening existing roads or building only those new roads within the Damascus Priority Funding Area. Conversely, alternate routes (with tighter alignments and perhaps weight-limited bridges) could perhaps more readily be implemented by the County or private sector if the objective were a more robust network across which to distribute auto traffic.

Second, how will the roadway be permitted? Any new roadway alignment would almost certainly require a Section 404 permit from the US Army Corps of Engineers and wetland and waterway permits from the Maryland Department of the Environment. Interagency coordination regarding roadway alignment decisions from a permitting perspective is a very complex, and time-consuming effort. We have recently been responding to requests from interagency members of the County's Wetlands Coordinating Committee to coordinate new master planned alignments for even local roads (like the half-mile extension of Old Vic Boulevard in Olney). The facility planning studies for M-83 and Observation Drive have both been delayed by more than a year due to similar coordination concerns. Staff believes that any proposal to preserve an alignment without some form of location and design concurrence from state and federal officials is tantamount to not reserving an alignment at all.

WHY IS DEFERRAL OF THE ALTERNATE ROUTE STUDY RECOMMENDED?

The Plan recommends that the Alternate Route Study be deferred at this time for several reasons. Most of these reasons relate to schedules. The most recent study effort took seven years (from 1986 to 1993) to reach a "no-action" conclusion. Staff finds there are no reasons to expect that this timeframe could be substantially reduced; there are several reasons why it might, in fact, be extended. These include:

Local jurisdictional coordination: A key tenet of the proposed multi-jurisdictional study is that we could change current assumptions regarding land use and transportation

plans in adjacent counties. This needed coordination will necessarily increase study complexity and time, particularly if master plan or zoning changes are considered concurrently in multiple jurisdictions.

Damascus land use changes: Any substantial capacity improvement, whether widening existing roads or building new ones, will change the character of the adjacent community. One element of change will be increased accessibility to nearby properties, raising the question of whether or not planned new roadway capacity should be accompanied by zoning changes. Even if the Council directs the staff to consider a study that does not require land use changes, staff would expect property owners to request the study be amended to incorporate increased development potential.

Imminent completion of Woodfield Road and Valley Park Drive. Staff is confident that our forecasting tools and skills are state-of-the-practice, yet cognizant that no forecast is as good as ground truth observation. An initial element of any transportation study is data collection. If a study were begun with traffic observations (volumes, speeds, vehicle crash data, etc.) conducted before these two roads, key to the discussion, opened to traffic, it almost certainly would be delayed by a need to return to the data collection phase after the roads had been open long enough to collect observed data.

Both staff and the Planning Board found that the Damascus Master Plan contains too many valuable time sensitive recommendations regarding elements such as the Town Center development, Legacy Open Space boundaries, and other traffic issues to be deferred for the many years it would take to do a meaningful, inter-jurisdictional study of through traffic concerns.

HISTORY OF THROUGH TRAFFIC EVALUATION IN DAMASCUS

This need was evaluated thoroughly in the 1982 Master Plan and the 1993 Amendment, but the physical setting of Damascus plays an important part in understanding the transportation issue. The business area lies near the highest point in Montgomery County and the boundary of three watersheds: Great Seneca (including Magruder Branch and Little Seneca Creek), Monocacy (Bennett Creek and Little Bennett Creek), and Patuxent. The ridges that separate the watersheds (and subwatersheds) historically served as logical travel routes, and the business area of Damascus developed at the intersection of the north-south and east-west ridge routes.

Ridge Road south of the Town Center separates the Monocacy watershed from the Great Seneca watershed in Montgomery County. This route also provides an alternative to the I-270 corridor for residential development in eastern Frederick, western Howard, and southern Carroll counties. The east-west route, MD 108/MD 650, connects Damascus with Olney and other areas of eastern Montgomery County, traveling generally along the ridge that divides the Patuxent and Great Seneca watersheds. The third major artery, Woodfield Road, travels along the ridge that divides the Magruder Branch subwatershed from the main Great Seneca watershed. They join near the southern edge of the planning area.

Commuter and other traffic using Ridge Road increased dramatically as the I-270 corridor grew into a major regional employment center and as people became willing to trade longer travel

times for more affordable housing option in the counties to the north. This traffic creates "choke-points" at the north-south/east-west intersections in downtown Damascus and a number of traffic "back-up" points along the corridors because of many left-turn delays for roads and driveways.

The ridge routes remain the primary means of travel in this portion of upper Montgomery County because of the inherent difficulties of building roads that traverse the rolling topography, steep stream valleys, and wetlands beyond the ridges. Sensitive headwaters areas, wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, and erodible soils are prevalent away from the ridge lines. Because of these realities, any new road constructed off the ridges will require many of stream crossings, which will diminish water quality downstream. And the amount of cut and fill and/or bridges will incur higher construction costs. Also, any new road built off the ridge will pass through the farmland that surrounds Damascus. The impact of such a road could be significant to the extent that its route would bisect cultivated land. There are three circulation problems of concern.

1. The locally generated congestion in the Damascus business area (Town Center).
2. The need to get commuters around and through Damascus to jobs located in other parts of the region.
3. Directing as much regional traffic as possible to the I-270 corridor and multi-modal transportation options.

1982 Master Plan

The amount of and impact of through traffic on the Damascus community have been the primary transportation issues in this area for almost 40 years. A bypass was first recommended in 1966, with a route far to the east recommended. But in 1982, when the Master Plan was completed, extensive growth in this part of the region had not yet occurred and state highway planners had not included the bypass in their inventory of needed roads, recommending instead that Ridge Road (MD 27) be widened to a 4-6 lane major highway with a 120 foot right-of-way. The 1980 State Highway 20-year Need Inventory did not include the bypass on its list of needed improvements, which means the state did not recognize a NEED for the bypass at that time. The alternative by-pass routes evaluated are noted in the Table below.

Reasons for not recommending a bypass route in the 1982 Master Plan included: lack of funds, the state did not recommend a bypass, environmental impacts, problems with reserving right-of-way until construction or acquisition funds are available. The 1982 Plan reaffirms the need for the northern extension of Woodfield Road to meet MD 27 near Faith Lane (A-12) which will divert traffic from Main Street, albeit on a smaller scale than a bypass.

The State did recommend reconstruction of MD 27 in the Planning Area from a two-lane highway to a four-lane divided highway as a needed project without a timeframe. The 1982 Master Plan did not recommend this reconstruction until the traffic load "indicates that improvements are needed". And when that threshold was reached, the Plan indicated that alternatives to widening MD 27 between Cedar Grove to the south and Claggettville to the north should be considered. The 1982 Plan eliminated the bypass in favor of selected widenings of main roads, adding new roads, and improvements to roads in the business area.

The 1982 Plan recommends modifications to the streets in the central business area (page 44) to relieve traffic congestion to a certain extent which have been implemented. Regarding the extension of Woodfield Road (A-12) the Plan states: "To accommodate the additional traffic that is expected along Woodfield Road in future years, particularly when the Shady Grove Metro station opens, Woodfield Road should be extended north of MD 108 to Ridge Road. This link, coupled with improvements to the Ridge Road - MD 108 intersection, would distribute through traffic over several roads and would greatly reduce rush-hour congestion." The Shady Grove Metro Station opened in 1984 yet Woodfield Extended is only now nearing construction.

1982 Alternative Bypass Potential Routes Evaluated

	Alternative 1 Western	Alternative 2 Through Town	Alternative 3 East/West	Alternative 4 East/West
Route	<p>2 lane new road essentially following Kings Valley Road from Ridge Road at Kings Valley Road to Bethesda Church Road</p> <p>2 lane new road from Bethesda Church Road to Ridge Road at Claggettville</p> <p>Also endorses Woodfield Extension from MD 108 to near Faith Lane</p>	<p>MD 27 widened to be a 4-lane divided highway through Damascus, including the business area from Kings Valley Road to Claggettville</p>	<p>Build MD 27 as 4 lane divided highway from Kings Valley Road to a new 2-lane "Magruder Crossover" Road</p> <p>Widen MD 124 (Woodfield Road) to 4 lanes from Crossover Road to MD 108</p> <p>Build 2 lane Woodfield Extension Road from MD 108 to MD 27</p> <p>Widen MD 27 to 4 undivided lanes from Faith Lane to county border</p>	<p>Build MD 27 as 4 lane divided highway from Kings Valley Road to a new 2-lane "Magruder Crossover" Road</p> <p>Widen MD 124 (Woodfield) to 4 lanes from Crossover Road to MD 108</p> <p>Build 2 lane Woodfield Extension Road from MD 108 to MD 27</p> <p>Widen MD 27 to create a 4 lane divided highway from Faith Lane to county border</p>
Cost (1982 dollars)	\$7.6 million	\$8.6 million	\$5.6 million	\$7.1 million
Notes	<p>Not endorsed because of environmental impacts (stream valleys and steep slopes traversed), land use concerns as route would cross land designated for farm preservation, and because limited traffic reduction for MD 124.</p>	<p>Would require major ROW acquisition in congested areas. Most expensive alternative</p> <p>Building MD 27 as a 4-lane undivided highway was not evaluated</p>	<p>Distributes through traffic over two routes to reduce congestion</p> <p>One leg - the Woodfield Extension - survived as road A-12, currently in final planning for construction</p>	<p>Similar to Alternative 3 but reflects MDSHA concept of MD 27 as a 4 lane divided highway north of Faith Lane, precisely where "A-12", Woodfield Extended is planned to meet MD 27</p> <p>One leg - the Woodfield Extension - survived as road A-12, currently in final planning for construction</p>

Recognizing the congestion issues, the 1982 Master Plan did recommend several road improvements and new roads. To date only some of those have been implemented, as noted on the Table below:

	Name	Plan Recommendation	Status	Notes
A-25	Valley Park Drive 2 lanes	Alternate to building A-11-A across Magruder Branch	Final segment to be completed this year	
A-11-A	A-11-A on 1966 Plan by-pass route	Build this or A-25	Unbuilt	A-25 chosen and near completion
A-12	Woodfield Extended 2 lanes	Connect Woodfield at MD 108 to Ridge Road to the north	Final planning, construction in 2007	Plan indicates road to be built by SHA and private developers. <i>Instead, being built by Montgomery County</i>
P-3	Kings Valley Road	2-3 lanes of pavement	2 lanes pavement	Partial Country Road
M-27	MD 27 Ridge Road South of Town Center	4-6 lane divided highway	Not implemented	Would be SHA project

The Plan also leaves open the potential for a future study of through traffic, stating on page 41:

If at some future date funding constraints are lifted and proposed interim improvements are not adequate to handle traffic needs, this Plan should be re-examined to consider other by-pass alternatives. Any re-examination of a by-pass should address the following concerns:

- *land use impacts, particularly on existing residential development and farmland;*
- *impact on economic vitality of the business area*
- *cost;*
- *ability of the County and/or State to reserve the necessary right-of-way;*
- *impact on the environment*
- *ability of a by-pass to divert significant traffic volumes from the business area*

This recommendation led to the 1993 Master Plan Amendment.

1993 Master Plan Amendment

In 1987 the MD SHA began a Damascus Bypass Feasibility Study at the request of Montgomery County elected officials. SHA also studied alternatives for the future of MD 27 and MD 124 to consider how they would handle expected traffic increases through 2010. That study (completed in 1988) concluded that by 2010 expected increases in traffic would burden the existing and programmed roadway network beyond its ability to maintain acceptable levels of service. The study developed and evaluated four potential alignments to the east and west of the business area. A county evaluation of those alternatives was a primary purpose of the amendment process that resulted in the 1993 Master Plan Amendment.

The M-NCPPC began a Bypass Study in 1990, representing the first detailed look at alternate alignments since 1982. A consulting firm evaluated the SHA study, examined environmental issues, and developed grade and alignment studies. Their analysis was largely based on an evaluation of potential for compliance with federal and State environmental regulations and probability that alignments could receive permits for construction in sensitive areas. They also considered the impact of the alternatives on farmland given the county's adopted Master Plan for the Preservation of Agricultural and Rural Open Space.

They evaluated six alignments including A-D as recommended by the SHA, and two new alternatives E and F. The Master Plan process included meetings with a Citizen Advisory Committee and two public workshops in the community. The Planning Board then selected three alignments for further study: B,C,F; with exploration of modifications to B and C. The consultant ultimately concluded that alternative "C" would have the least overall impact.

The 1993 Amendment notes that the 1990 community evaluation process for the Master Plan Bypass alternatives carefully considered the questions and viewpoints of local residents and led to an enhanced understanding of Damascus' character. As articulated by the residents, that character lies in the houses lining Ridge Road, in the surrounding farmland, and in the communities on the slopes leading to Magruder Branch and underlies the community support for these "linear residential neighborhoods". *Ultimately the 1993 Amendment rejected all bypass alternatives for the reasons noted below:*

Alternate A – Close To Town Alternative (Semi-Bypass)

Route: Followed the current Woodfield Extended route to Valley Park Drive and terminated at Ridge Road. Valley Park Drive is currently being completed to Ridge Road as a two-lane road.

Benefits: Low environmental impact by crossing Magruder Valley at an existing crossing

Concerns:

Environmental impact to steep slopes in Magruder Valley

Impact to residential communities along Woodfield Road between MD 108 and Valley Park Drive, and on Ridge Road south of Valley Park.

Impact to residential communities along Valley Park Drive as it would be widened to provide the four-lane road impacting driveways and intersections near the eastern intersection with Woodfield Road – also impacting travel time.

Impact to a proposed HOC development at the intersection with Ridge Road as the bypass would cause a loss of units, bisect the community, and cause safety hazards. However, the HOC never built the community and sold the property to developers who built a townhouse community of much lower density completed in 2005.

Decision: Rejected by Planning Board on initial review in 1991 due to potential impact to HOC property and residential communities along Valley Park Drive.

Alternate B – Western Bypass

Route: Goes west of and parallel to Ridge Road from MD 80 to Bethesda Church Road, then follow or parallel existing Kings Valley Road from Ridge Road to Bethesda Church Road. Beyond the Master Plan area "B" merges with Ridge Road south of Kings Valley in the Cedar Grove community area, and "B Modified" cuts further south through Ovid Hazen Wells Park to merge with Ridge Road near Skylark Road.

Benefits: Since the Kings Valley Road alignment already exists, the route would not introduce an entirely new set of impacts to agriculture, streams, wetlands and woodlands.

Concerns: Environmental impacts of the reconstruction and widening of Kings Valley Road, which would increase the overall severity of impacts. Mitigation would be required to keep the alignment out of Little Bennett stream, and it would traverse the headwaters area.

Decision: The alternative was chosen for further study in 1991, which included a modification at the southern end. Route "B" is essentially the same route as the Alternative 1 considered and rejected in the 1982 Bypass Study, but as a 4 lane road in 1991 vs. a 2 lane road in 1982. Ultimately route "B Modified" was rejected in the 1993 Amendment citing the "severe-perhaps insurmountable – problems with regulation and permitting processes as it traverses Ovid Hazen Wells Park."

The report does not discuss why the original Alternate B was rejected, but staff understands it to be due to impacts to Cedar Grove, a historic community. The Alternate "B" studied was a 4-lane road that would merge back into Ridge Road at a point where it would be 6-lanes, and the engineering required for this intersection would have dramatically changed the character of this community. Concerns were primarily the impact to farmland and environmental resources. Both versions traverse stream valleys and headwater areas of Bennett Creek and Little Bennett Creek, impacting farmland in the Agricultural Reserve.

If the original alignment "B" were to be reconsidered, it would need to address those impacts. Also, the report does not discuss why a six-lane rather than a four-lane MD 27 was considered or why a two-lane Alternate "B" was not considered. Any subsequent study should evaluate a two-lane Alternate "B" (evaluated in the 1982 Master Plan study) and a four-lane undivided Ridge Road from Alternate "B" to where Ridge becomes four-lane in the Clarksburg planning area.

Alternate C – Western Bypass (partial)

Route: Follows the same route as "B" from Ridge Road north to Bethesda Church Road, but then the route goes more directly from Bethesda Church Road to a tie-in near Oak Drive (and the now soon to be opened Valley Park Drive).

Benefits:

The alternate, being shorter than "B", would have fewer impacts to wetlands and streams and no impacts to floodplains or parklands.

The route minimizes construction off ridges, and included widening MD 27 south of the business area. They estimated a cost of \$130 million for this route (1990 dollars).

Concerns:

The same environmental and farmland preservation concerns as route "B" that it parallels from Ridge Road (north) to Bethesda Church Road.

The route bisects the new Damascus Recreation Center

The route traverses a headwater tributary of Little Bennett Creek

Decision: This route was chosen for further consideration. Ultimately the 1993 Master Plan Amendment rejected the alignment stating that because it passes through farmland (in the northern segment) and replaces much of existing MD 27 (from Oak Drive to Hawkes Road) with a six-lane highway which would substantially alter the character of that Ridge Road "linear neighborhood" that is so much a part of its community character. Although shorter, it would impact many existing homes.

Alternate D - Close to Town Alternative

Route: Loops to the east along what will be Woodfield Road Extended, behind Mt. Vernon Drive, then across the Valley Park Drive alignment and across Ridge Road, and back to Ridge Road.

Benefits: Fewer environmental impacts

Concerns: Would have had 13 intersections that would have compromised its purpose as a bypass, and substantial stream impacts between Ridge Road and Kings Valley Road.

Decision: This route had considerable opposition and the Planning Board rejected the Alignment on initial review in 1991.

Alternate E - Western Bypass

Route: Follows the same alignment as "B" and "C" to the intersection with Kingstead Road, but then veers southwest to meet Stringtown Road and continue to I-270 in the area of the Clarksburg Town Center. Alternate E is similar to Alternate #1 considered and rejected in the 1982 Master Plan Study. The alignment would push through traffic further west than a Ridge Road access.

Benefits: Would take through traffic to merge with MD 355 close to I-70 in the Clarksburg Town Center area.

Concerns: It would cross headwaters of Little Bennett and due to its length, would affect 3-4 miles of Little Bennett Creek, ultimately crossing 12 streams. Also very expensive.

Decision: The Planning Board rejected this alternate on initial review in 1991 due to cost and environmental concerns.

Alternate F – Eastern Bypass

Route: Follows the southern part of Alternate A and D parallel and to the east of Woodfield Road to a point south of where Valley Park Drive meets Woodfield Road. Near Woodfield School Road it would cross Woodfield Road, turn southwest and cross through the Magruder Valley to Ridge Road near Brink Road; providing a bypass of Woodfield Road as well as Ridge Road.

Benefits: Would provide a true bypass of the entire Damascus area, accommodated the predominant traffic patterns, and join Ridge Road near MD 355 and Father Hurley Boulevard. It was chosen for further study.

Concerns:
Due to its 10-mile length, it would have extensive environmental impacts, and be very expensive.

Required a new road through the Agricultural Reserve in the Goshen-Woodfield-Cedar Grove area, opening those areas to potential development despite their low-density zoning.

Decision: The 1982 Master Plan and 1993 Amendment considered and ultimately rejected this Alternate.

Ultimately the 1993 Amendment concluded that the answers to the traffic congestion in this part of the County must be part of a regional approach with State participation. It states: "Such a cooperative effort reflects evolving state policy, which is stressing efforts to monitor and manage the location and pace of regional growth rather than the more reactive response of continuing to build new highways". Some of the improvements recommended in the 1982 Plan have been completed.

The Ridge-Lewis Connector, which created a second way for vehicles to traverse central Damascus was built, and lanes have been added to MD 27 in the Town Center to smooth traffic flow. These projects improved peak hour LOS in the business area to LOS A or B at most intersections. Currently, intersections in the Town Center operate at LOS A through LOS D. By 2020, if no improvements were made, some intersections would operate at LOS F.

With the Plan recommendations to add selected turn lanes in addition to the nearly-complete Woodfield Road and Valley Park Drive extensions, Town Center intersections are forecasted to operate at LOS A through D. In other words, planned improvements will accommodate traffic growth generated by both local development and through traffic.

For the proposed 2006 Damascus Master Plan the community, the staff, and the Planning Board concluded that road improvements (new turning lanes and extended left turn bays at traffic lights) and new roads long planned (Valley Park Drive and Woodfield Extended) have the potential to significantly improve through traffic during rush periods. But the long term implications of traffic congestion cannot be ignored, which is why the additional regional study is recommended; despite the environmental, community, and fiscal concerns that all potential bypass routes generate.

Summary of Potential Bypass Alternatives

The following table summarizes the impacts, pro and con, of the various alternative bypass routes and other options for accommodating through traffic that have previously been considered by the Planning Board and County Council.

Staff Summary of How Previously Studied Through Traffic Options Support County Objectives

Strategy	In Plans since 1966?	Congestion	Through traffic volumes	Linear development pattern	Established residential communities	Smart Growth	Agricultural Preservation	Patuxent Watershed Plan	Natural environmental Impact
Do nothing		Strongly supports objective	Strongly supports objective	Strongly supports objective	Strongly supports objective	Moderately supports objective	Strongly supports objective	Strongly supports objective	Strongly supports objective
Localized improvements (Woodfield, Valley Park, turn lanes)	1982, 1993, 2006	Moderately supports objective	Moderately supports objective	Strongly supports objective	Strongly supports objective	Strongly supports objective	Strongly supports objective	Strongly supports objective	Strongly supports objective
Widen MD 27	1982, potential in 2006	Strongly supports objective	Moderately supports objective	Strongly supports objective	Moderately supports objective	Moderately supports objective	Moderately supports objective	Moderately supports objective	Moderately supports objective
Widen MD 124	1982, 1993	Moderately supports objective	Moderately supports objective	Strongly supports objective	Moderately supports objective	Moderately supports objective	Moderately supports objective	Moderately supports objective	Moderately supports objective
Western Bypass Routes (Alt. B, Alt. C)		Strongly supports objective	Strongly supports objective	Strongly supports objective	Strongly supports objective	Strongly supports objective	Strongly supports objective	Strongly supports objective	Strongly supports objective
Eastern Bypass Routes (Alt F)		Strongly supports objective	Strongly supports objective	Strongly supports objective	Strongly supports objective	Strongly supports objective	Strongly supports objective	Strongly supports objective	Strongly supports objective

Key:  Strongly supports objective  Strongly violates objective
 Moderately supports objective  Moderately violates objective

Note: Bypass Routes (Alts. B, C, and F) each include some widening of MD 27