

May 17, 2006

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Gwen Wright, Acting Chief *GW*
Countywide Planning Division

Sue Edwards, Team Leader *sue*
I-270 Corridor Team
Community-Based Planning Division

Daniel K. Hardy, Supervisor *DKH*
Transportation Planning
Countywide Planning Division

FROM: Ki H. Kim, Planner/Coordinator (301) 495-4538 *DKH for*
Transportation Planning
Countywide Planning Division

SUBJECT: Snouffer School Road Improvements Phase I Transportation Facility
Planning Study
Project Prospectus Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION: Transmit the following comments to the Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT):

1. The Snouffer School Road Improvements Transportation Facility Planning Study should proceed to Phase II of the Facility Planning process as recommended in the April 2006 Draft Project Prospectus to develop a detailed design for Recommended Alternative.
2. Per the Project Prospectus recommendation, the design for Snouffer School road should be a five-lane facility (four 12-foot-wide travel lanes, one 11-foot-wide continuous vehicle center turn lane and five-foot bike lanes in each

direction) with a concrete sidewalk on both sides of the roadway within a variable right-of-way width (88' – 100'±).

3. The Phase II Facility Planning study for Snouffer School Road should consider the following design details:
 - Pursue the application of Environmentally Sensitive Development (ESD) approaches for stormwater management, including innovative infiltration approaches.
 - Further minimize or eliminate grading into the 100-year floodplain and part of the buffer of wetland S-2 west of Flower Hill Way.
 - Examine design and layout adjustments, where practicable, to save or minimize impact to large trees within the project limits.
 - Submit a Natural Resource Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation (NRI/FSD) to Environmental Planning for approval prior to mandatory referral. If an exemption from Forest Conservation Law is requested, all areas proposed for disturbance (including stormwater management) should be shown. Allow 30 days for review.
 - Develop a more detailed landscaping plan that incorporates opportunities for tree planting beyond the locations identified in the recommended typical section.

PURPOSE OF THIS BRIEFING

The purpose of this briefing is to apprise the Montgomery County Planning Board on the Phase I Facility Planning study completed by DPWT for the Snouffer School Road Improvements project.

This study, commenced in April 2005, produced a Draft Project Prospectus in April 2006 based on a public meeting and the study team's thorough evaluation and consideration of impacts and benefits.

SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT

The Snouffer School Road project area extends from its intersection at MD 124 (Woodfield Road) to Centerway Road, a distance of approximately 1.1 miles. The project area is shown as Exhibit 1 and the recommended alternative typical section for the roadway is presented in Exhibit 2. Snouffer School Road is primarily fronted by residential properties on the south side and industrial and commercial properties on the north side.

At the project's southern end, the Snouffer School Road Improvements project will tie into the Maryland State Highway Administration's (SHA) MD 124 Corridor Project which includes the MD 124/Snouffer School Road intersection. To the north, improvements to Snouffer School Road between Centerway Road and Goshen Road are anticipated to be constructed by private developers.

As shown in Exhibit 2, the typical section of the recommended alternative consists of a 69-foot-wide five-lane roadway (two 12-foot-wide travel lanes in each direction, one 11-foot-wide continuous center turn lane and five-foot-wide bike lanes in each direction) with a concrete sidewalk on each side of the roadway. On the north side of the roadway, there is an eight-foot sidewalk, immediately behind the curb, with varying greenspace of two to eleven feet north of the sidewalk. On the south side of the roadway, there is a five-foot sidewalk with a four-foot separation (greenspace) between the curb and sidewalk. The proposed centerline alignment for the Recommended Alternative differs from that of the existing roadway to conform to the adjacent topographic and property constraints and to balance impacts between each side of the roadway. All improvements proposed by the Recommended Alternative lie within a variable right-of-way ranging from 88' – 100'±.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Accommodations

Throughout the project length, pedestrians will be accommodated on a five-foot-wide sidewalk on the south side of the roadway and a eight-foot-wide sidewalk on the north side of the roadway. The proposed five-foot-wide bike lane on each direction would accommodate bicyclists.

Landscaping

The typical section of the Recommended Alternative shows street trees located behind the proposed sidewalk in an easement along the south side of the roadway. On the north side of the roadway, street trees are not shown in the typical section due to impacts to immediately adjacent commercial businesses. The study reflects DPWT policy that closed-section roadways with speed limits 40 mph or greater cannot be designed with street trees placed in the green panel between the curb and sidewalk for the potential risk they pose to motorists, should motorists swerve off the roadway.

In general, staff continues to urge DPWT to adopt practices and policies on all projects more consistent with those applied by SHA that better integrate street trees into arterial and major highway typical sections. On this project, however, staff concurs with the typical section recommendation, as providing safe bicycle accommodation and minimizing right-of-way impacts to adjacent properties are higher priorities. During Phase II of facility planning staff recommends that DPWT develop a more detailed landscape plan that will identify additional opportunities for landscaping where available space permits.

Environmental Impacts

Right-of-way constraints are most severe at the project's western end between Centerway Road and Flower Hill Way, where the south side of the roadway is closest to the 100-year floodplain for the Cabin Branch tributary and associated wetlands. The recommended alternative includes a relatively narrow typical section of 90' in this area. As currently described, the recommended alternative would still entail some grading within the floodplain and wetland buffer area. Staff recommends that the Phase II study consider localized refinements to the recommended alternative to further minimize wetland and floodplain impacts such as the application of retaining walls.

In this same area, the roadway crosses the pipestem access to Nike Missile Park. During Phase II, the project may be subject to the park permitting process requirements for regeneration/revegetation in accordance with the Guidelines/Requirements for Reforestation/Revegetation of Parkland, for any park impacts.

The project will result in a net increase of approximately 3.4 acres of impervious surface. The Project Prospectus identifies two areas for potential stormwater management, but additional hydrologic and hydraulic details must be developed during Phase II to more fully develop stormwater management concepts. Staff encourages DPWT to pursue Environmentally Sensitive Development (ESD) strategies for stormwater management, including application of innovative infiltration techniques.

The eastern end of the project is located approximately 1,000 feet west of the Upper Rock Creek Special Protection Area (SPA). During Phase II, additional coordination will be required with the Department of Permitting Services (DPS) and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to determine whether a Water Quality Plan is required.

MASTER PLAN CONSISTENCY

The 1985 Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan classifies Snouffer School Road as a four-lane Arterial roadway (A -16) within a minimum right-of-way width of 80 feet. Due to the high level of commercial activity along the north side of the roadway, the roadway is currently constructed with five ten-foot wide lanes (two travel lanes in each direction and a center turn lane). No bikeway facilities are explicitly recommended in the 1985 Plan.

The 2005 Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan recommends the addition of bike lanes to Snouffer School Road between Woodfield Road and Centerway Road to provide a continuation of the bike lane facility (BL-36) planned on Muncaster Mill Road (MD 115). The recommended widening of the roadway travel and turning lanes shown in Exhibit 2 is consistent with the implementation of the bike lanes.

Staff finds that the Recommended Alternative for Snouffer School Road is consistent with the Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan as amended by the Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The DPWT study team held a public meeting for the Snouffer School Road Improvements project on September 27, 2005 and presented the study's purpose and need, the environmental inventory, the accident history and existing and projected traffic volumes with five typical section alternatives. After reviewing comments from the community, the study team developed a new typical section and recommended it be carried forward into conceptual engineering. The new typical section was developed to address public comments.

SUMMARY OF PROJECT PROSPECTUS STUDY FINDINGS

The five-lane alternative recommended in the Project Prospectus is expected to have the following benefits and impacts:

Benefits

- Improves network connectivity per Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan, reducing travel times for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles
- Improves the link in the north-south transportation system, providing improved access to residential and industrial/commercial properties within the immediate project area
- Provides connectivity to Gaithersburg's existing and proposed future facilities and services

Impacts

- Right-of-way impacts on approximately 3.97 acres of fee acquisition and easements among approximately 42 properties (not including stormwater management)
- Approximately 0.6 acre of wetlands
- No hazardous materials of concern, no State or Federal records for rare, threatened or endangered species, and no documented archeological or historical sites located within the project area
- Approximately 0.05 acre to Nike Missile Park

During Phase II of Facility Planning, the Project Prospectus notes that the issues identified by Phase I Facility Planning Process and the remaining elements of the project will be addressed in further detail, including the development of preliminary design plan by the following major activities:

- Developing more accurate base mapping

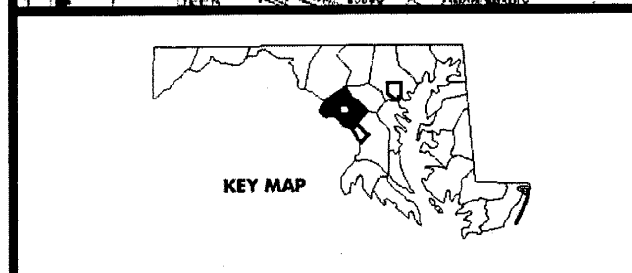
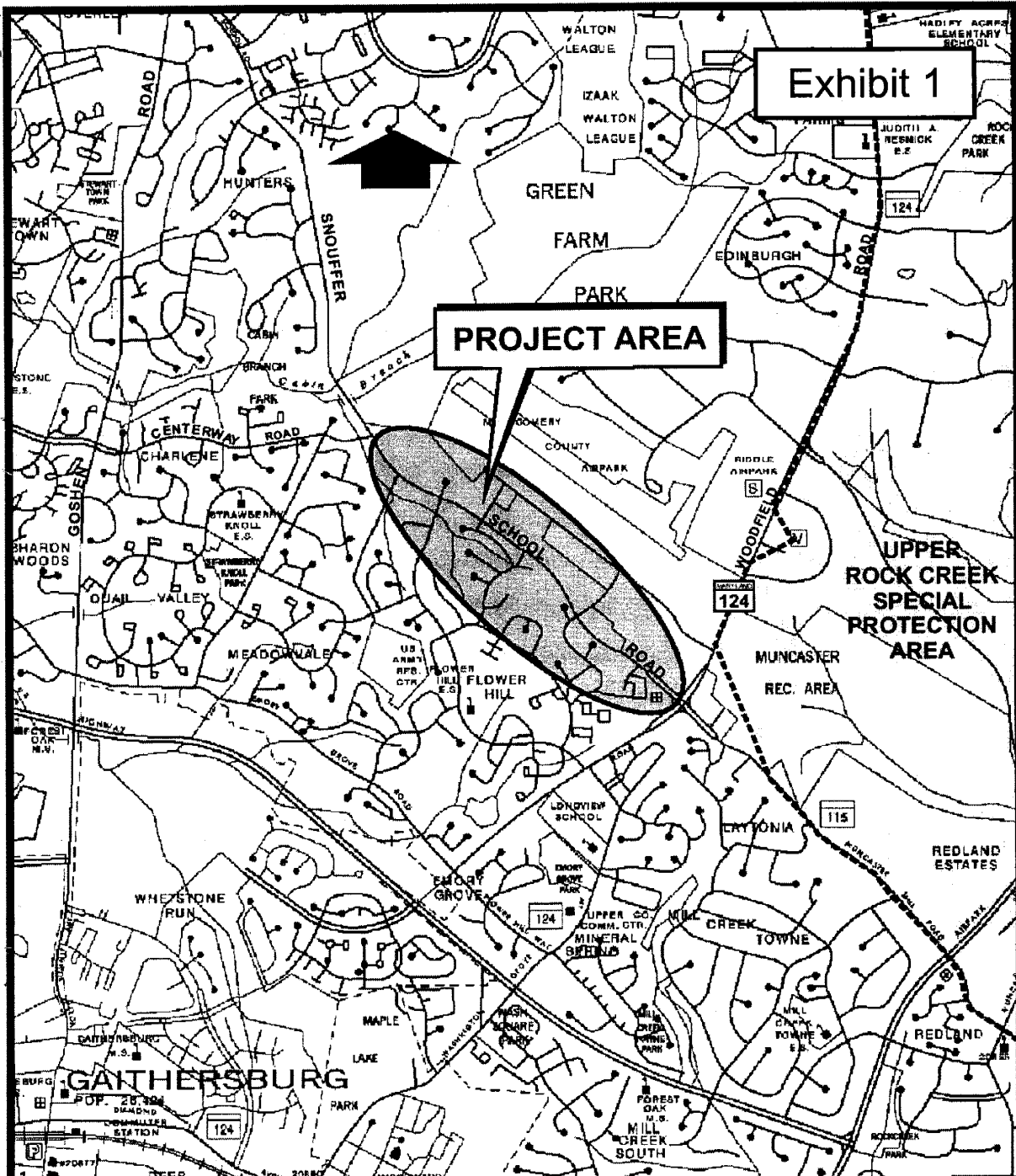
- Conducting a natural resources inventory (NRI) and Forest Stand Delineation (FSD)
- Developing avoidance/minimization measures for impacts to wetlands and Waters of the United States
- Delineating the right-of-way requirements in more detail
- Identifying the precise type, size and location of retaining walls to be used
- Producing a detailed cost estimate

Additional coordination will be required during Phase II to satisfy mandatory referral requirements.

KK:kcw
Attachments

mmo to mcpb re Snouffer School Road.doc

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY
 DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND TRANSPORTATION
 SNOUFFER SCHOOL ROAD IMPROVEMENTS
 WOODFIELD ROAD (MD124) to CENTERWAY ROAD
 PHASE I FACILITY PLANNING STUDY

LOCATION MAP

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|------------|--|------------|
| DATE | 2000 | FIGURE NO. |
| April 2006 | <p style="text-align: center;">SCALE IN FEET</p> | 1 |

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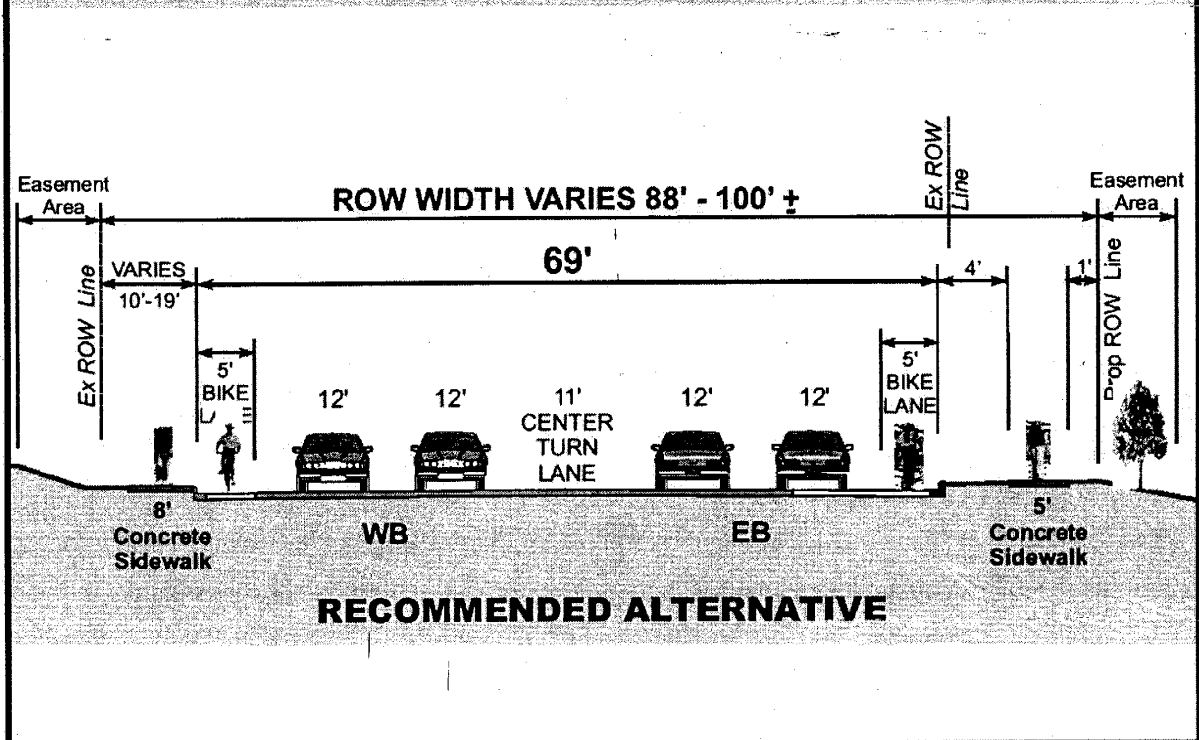
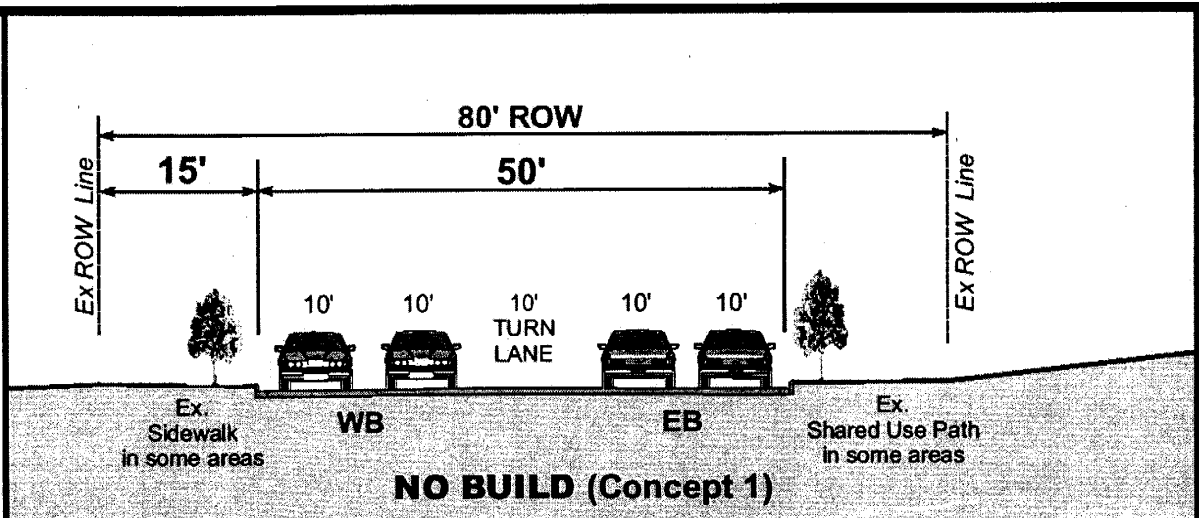


Exhibit 2

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| MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND TRANSPORTATION | |
| SNOUFFER SCHOOL ROAD IMPROVEMENTS WOODFIELD ROAD (MD 124) to CENTERWAY ROAD PHASE I FACILITY PLANNING STUDY | |
| TYPICAL SECTIONS NO-BUILD & RECOMMENDED ALTERNATIVE | |
| DATE April 2006 | SCALE IN FEET |
| FIGURE NO. 5 | |