



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

MCPB
ITEM NO. 4
3-7-02

March 1, 2002

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Richard C. Hawthorne, Chief *RCH*
Transportation Planning

John Carter, Chief *JAC*
Community-Based Planning Division

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

PROJECT: MD355 (Rockville Pike) at MD547 (Strathmore Avenue)
Contract No. MO6055187

REVIEW TYPE: Mandatory Referral No. 02801-SHA-1

APPLICANT: Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA)

APPLYING FOR: Plan Approval

COMMUNITY-BASED PLANNING TEAM AREA: Bethesda/North Bethesda-Garrett
Park

RECOMMENDATION: TRANSMIT COMMENTS TO SHA

The following comments are recommended on the proposed project (see Attachment 1: Location Map):

1. Coordinate bikeway accommodation along Strathmore Avenue from Rockville Pike to Beach Drive and provide any desired on-road bike accommodation within the limits of this project.
2. Defer the construction of the proposed short segment of sidewalk along the north side of Strathmore Avenue until it can be extended to Jolly Way.

3. Move the crosswalk at the northbound free-right-turn lane about fifty feet back from the intersection to improve sight distance and sight angle for pedestrians and make the crosswalk perpendicular to the curb shorten the crossing distance.
4. Provide adequate signal time for pedestrians to cross both Strathmore Avenue and Rockville Pike.
5. Add the Rockville Pike (MD355)/Grosvenor Lane/Beach Drive intersection to the Rockville Pike Corridor study.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project would extend the existing southbound left-turn lane on Rockville Pike by approximately 350 feet (see Attachment 2). The northern curblines of Strathmore Avenue would be moved from four to seven feet and the pavement re-striped to create a second westbound left-turn lane (see Attachment 3). A short section of sidewalk would be constructed adjacent to the new curb for most of its length. The curb on the traffic island in the southeast quadrant would be moved back two to three feet, slightly increasing the length of the pedestrian crossing on Strathmore Avenue. (Note: Attachment 3 shows the curb on the northeast island being moved back, but this was recently changed to the southeast island by SHA. SHA will have the latest drawings for review at the Board's meeting.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Traffic

This project was initiated as a minor traffic improvement project to relieve congestion at the intersection. The intersection was studied as part of the Strathmore Hall and Grosvenor Garage projects. The initial study in December 1998 found that the Critical Lane Volume (CLV) for this intersection (1869 vehicles per hour) would exceed the standard for the Grosvenor Policy Area (1800). The final study, which was referenced in the packet for the Mandatory Referral on December 2, 1999, found that the CLV would be 1620, lower than the 1800 threshold for the Grosvenor Policy Area, but slightly over the 1600 threshold for the North Bethesda Policy Area that abuts this intersection.

CLV calculations do not look at operational issues such as queue lengths, but assume that all the traffic that wants to reach the intersection will get there. Improvements at adjacent intersections do not affect the CLV calculations, but the timing of adjacent traffic signals may need to be adjusted to optimize traffic flow. The proposed intersection improvements are in conformance with the general practice of making spot improvements where problems are evident, rather than analyzing every proposed change on a system-wide basis. ***The letters attached to this memo from***

citizens both for and against this project acknowledge that there is a congestion problem at this intersection and that the queue lengths on Strathmore Avenue are quite long. This project would alleviate this problem.

Much of the community's comments on this project are based on a concern that improving this intersection will induce more traffic to use Strathmore Avenue. Staff disagrees that this will occur. Strathmore Avenue will continue to see high traffic levels because of the lack of options for east-west travel in this area, not because it is a fast route or will be made more attractive to commuters by the proposed improvements.

Strathmore Avenue provides one of the few crossings of Rock Creek in this area (see Attachment 4). Its importance for east-west travel was increased several years ago by three actions: one, by the Planning Board and Council to remove the recommendation for a new bridge over Rock Creek from Weymouth Street to Beach Drive; two, by the Town of Garrett Park to close Weymouth Street to through traffic; and three, by SHA to reconfigure the intersection of Rockville Pike, Grosvenor Lane and Beach Drive so that southbound lefts and eastbound through movements to Beach Drive would no longer be allowed. The first decision was made primarily for environmental reasons, the second for community reasons and the third for traffic reasons.

While any of the above decisions could be revisited as a means of relieving the traffic on Strathmore Avenue, ***staff recommends that SHA study ways to allow traffic from southbound Rockville Pike and eastbound Grosvenor Lane to access Beach Drive directly.*** The elimination of the above-mentioned traffic movements was not an objective of the earlier project; it was only a consequence of the complicated geometry at this intersection. While making these changes at the Rockville Pike/Grosvenor Lane/Beach Drive intersection would not affect staff's recommendations on the subject project since the proposed construction is fairly minimal, it would provide more options for drivers and could reduce future traffic levels on Strathmore Avenue. ***This study could be done as an extension of SHA's Rockville Pike Corridor Study,*** whose current limits are from the Capital Beltway to West Cedar Lane. The purpose of the larger study is to improve access to and from Rockville Pike.

Related Projects

SHA currently has two other projects in development on Strathmore Avenue, one to construct curb and sidewalk and landscape improvements within the Town of Garrett Park, which has been in development for a couple of years, and the other to construct a sidewalk between the Town line and Rockville Pike, the limit of the subject project. Staff anticipates that the first project (in the Town) will be submitted as a Mandatory Referral in the next couple of months, and will be advertised for construction late this year. The second project (outside the Town) will likely not be advertised for a couple of years, after the details have been worked out with area residents.

Bicycle Accommodation

The North Bethesda-Garrett Park Master Plan calls for on-road bike lanes on Strathmore Avenue and an off-road trail connection between Rockville Pike and Holy Cross Academy on the south side of Strathmore Avenue.

As part of the separate project in the Town of Garrett Park, SHA intends to accommodate bicyclists on a street parallel to Strathmore Avenue, rather than on Strathmore itself, which is what is recommended in the Master Plan. SHA needs to create a coordinated plan for bicycle accommodation for all three projects on Strathmore Avenue. If bikes are to be accommodated on-road from MD 355 to the Town line, then the subject project must include on-road bike lanes. If bikes are to be accommodated off-road, then an off-road bike path must be constructed as part of either the subject project or the project between the intersection and the Town line. With either choice, an off-road connection should be provided between Rockville Pike and the existing Holy Cross Academy path.

Staff recommends that SHA coordinate bikeway accommodation along Strathmore Avenue from Rockville Pike to Beach Drive and provide any desired on-road bike accommodation within the limits of this project.

Pedestrian Accommodation

A five-foot sidewalk is proposed along the north side of Strathmore Avenue directly behind the curb, ending just opposite the end of the traffic island. There are two problems with the proposed design. One is that having pedestrians directly adjacent to the travel lanes, particularly with the narrow lanes proposed, puts them in an uncomfortable and less safe location. The second is that the sidewalk would end at a non-intersection, non-destination point location, leaving pedestrians to walk in the street or on a steep landscaped slope to reach destinations on the north side of the road. Staff believes that the proposed sidewalk should be offset from the curb by two feet minimum, six feet preferred, and that it be extended to Jolly Way. Since this extension would require slope and landscaping impacts to the adjacent Strathmore Place townhouse community and since insufficient time exists to properly design and coordinate this, ***staff recommends that the sidewalk construction be deferred and that it be done as part of SHA's Strathmore Avenue sidewalk project immediately to the east of this project to ensure that the projects are properly coordinated.***

The curb on the traffic island in the southeast quadrant of the intersection would be moved back two to three feet, slightly increasing the pedestrian crossing of Strathmore Avenue. This would add only one-half to one second walking time, which can be easily accommodated in the signal timing. The free-right-turn lane, however, is where the pedestrian crossing needs improvement. The design of the free-right-turn lane promotes higher speeds for turning traffic and, because of the proximity of the sidewalk to the travel lanes on Rockville Pike, provides little warning to pedestrians as

to whether a vehicle is going to turn or not. A pedestrian walking north also has to turn his head almost 180 degrees to see oncoming turning traffic. **Staff recommends that the crosswalk at the free-right-turn lane be moved about fifty feet back from the intersection to improve sight distance and sight angle for pedestrians and that the crosswalk be made perpendicular to shorten the crossing distance (see Attachment 3).**

CITIZEN COMMENT

The Board has received written comments for your consideration in the review of this project (see Attachment 5). Staff offers the following comments on the concerns raised.

The **Garrett Park-White Flint Park Citizens Association** has submitted comments to the Board on the subject project. Staff offers the following responses to their concerns.

1. **Comment:** *The intersection improvement is not included in the North Bethesda/Garrett Park Master Plan. Rockville Pike is chaotic and congested enough without deviating from the Master Plan for one specific intersection.*

Response: Intersection improvements are generally not included in Master Plans because their physical configuration depends in part on traffic signal phasing and timing, which is an operations issue, the responsibility of SHA and DPWT. Some intersection improvements are recommended in the North Bethesda-Garrett Park Master Plan, but this list was not intended to exclude any other improvements from being made.

2. **Comment:** *The proposed modification increases the intersection capacity, which in turn will provide a more favorable level of service (LOS). This is an artificial improvement at the intersection only, doing nothing to alleviate traffic on Strathmore Avenue. The "improvement", however, could be used when considering approval of additional development in the Grosvenor Metro Area.*

Response: The association is correct in saying that the proposed improvement is intended to alleviate intersection congestion, not congestion on Strathmore Avenue. This does not negate the value of the project since traffic operations on Rockville Pike would also be improved at this location. Since delays at this intersection would be reduced this improvement would be considered in development applications in the Grosvenor Metro area. The separate traffic-calming project within the Town of Garrett Park, which was initiated at the request of citizens, would actually somewhat reduce the capacity of Strathmore Avenue.

- 3. Comment:** *The Planning Board, in the Transportation Policy Report, dated January 15, 2002, recommends creating a Long-Term Vision for Arterials such as Rockville Pike (MD 355). Adding more cars to Rockville Pike at Strathmore Ave. is based on a short-term vision of intersection backups and does not consider the long-term effect on the Pike.*

Response: The proposed improvement would not add cars to Rockville Pike, but would allow more green time on the traffic signal to be allocated to Rockville Pike because the Strathmore Avenue traffic could get through the signal quicker.

- 4. Comment:** *Members of our community cross Strathmore Avenue several blocks east of Rockville Pike in order to access the Grosvenor Metro and the public path to the Metro. Citizens in the community have been concerned about the safety of the current crossing, and are looking at this issue via the Strathmore Streetscape Project. There is serious question as to whether or not this intersection change will increase traffic on Strathmore, and/or traffic speed on Strathmore, making a dangerous crossing more dangerous.*

Response: Given the current constrictions on Strathmore Avenue and the planned project noted above, this project is not expected to increase traffic volumes or speeds on this road. The length of the pedestrian crossing is proposed to be increased by only two to three feet under the proposed project but the pedestrian walk time on the signal will likely be increased by more than enough to compensate for the extra one-half to one second walking time. If SHA decides to implement the Master Plan recommendation to add bike lanes on Strathmore Avenue, it would likely require eight to ten additional feet of pavement and about three seconds more crossing time on Strathmore Avenue, however the additional "WALK" time on the pedestrian signal should compensate for this. **Staff recommends that the timing of the pedestrian crossings of both Strathmore Avenue and Rockville Pike be checked for adequacy.**

- 5. Comment:** *If intersection improvements are to be made, they should consider the entire intersection and should involve community input. This includes the northbound free-flow lane on Rockville Pike turning onto Strathmore, which involves a difficult and dangerous merge on Strathmore Avenue, and the pedestrian access across Rockville Pike currently coming from an island in the middle of the intersection.*

Response: Staff agrees that the design of the pedestrian crossing at the free-right-turn lane in the southeast quadrant of Rockville Pike/Strathmore Avenue needs to be improved. See previous discussion in Pedestrian Accommodation.

6. **Comment:** *The project proposes to build a sidewalk to no-where immediately adjacent to the new free-flow right-turn lane. Lack of a green buffer space between the traffic lane and the sidewalk raises a safety issue which should be investigated.*

Response: Staff agrees that the design of the proposed sidewalk on Strathmore Avenue needs to be improved. See previous discussion in Pedestrian Accommodation.

The **Mayor of the Town of Garrett Park, Nancy Floreen**, has requested that the Board defer consideration of the project. However, the project is scheduled to be advertised for construction on 3/26/02. Staff believes that her concern about coordination of this project with the sidewalk project immediately to the east has been addressed by the comments in Pedestrian Accommodation above.

Mr. Edward Lijewski, Mr. David Thomas, Mr. Joel Miller and Mrs. Judith Miller, residents of the area, sent letters in support of the project.

Mrs. Natalie Goldberg, a resident of the area, sent a letter against the project.

SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

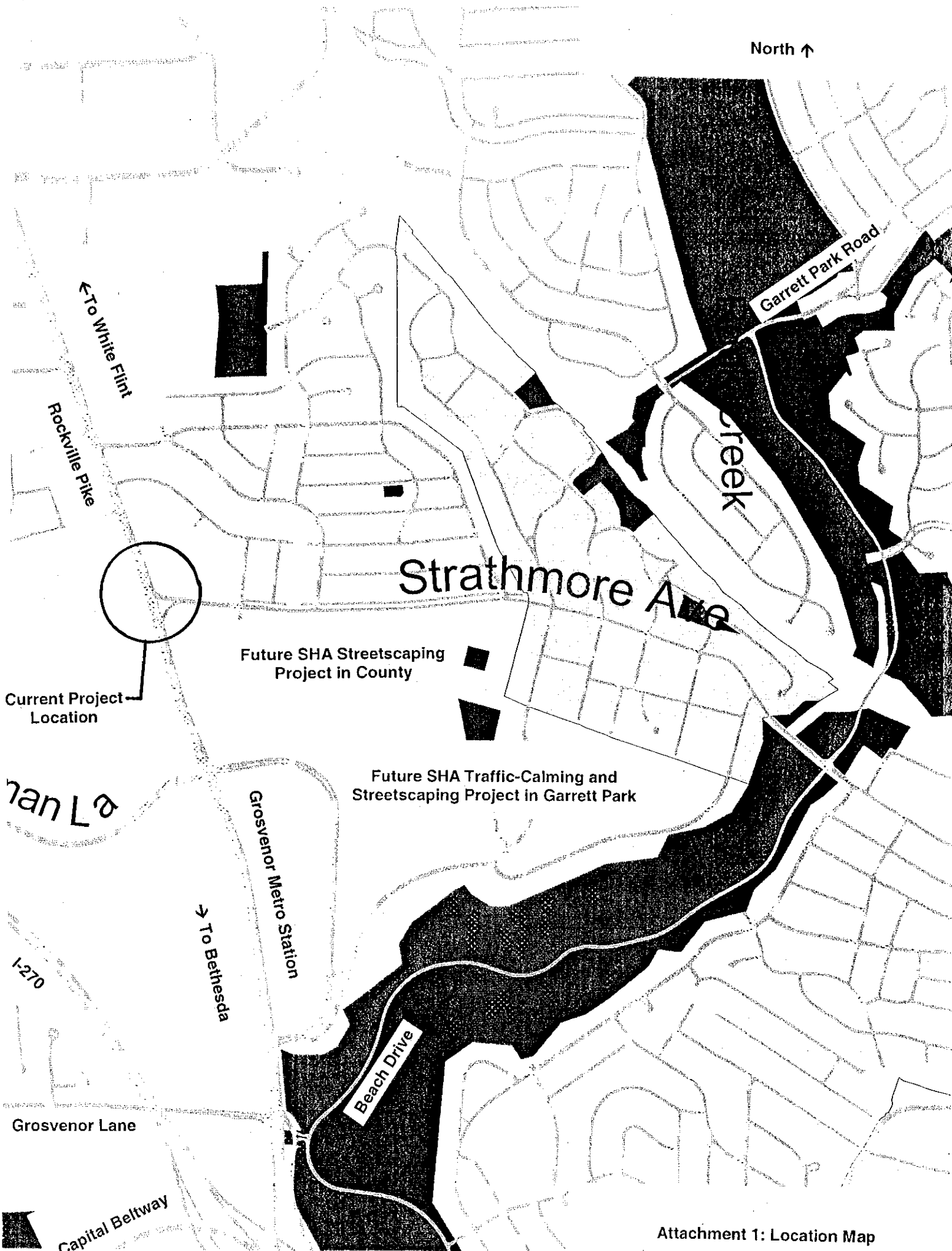
Staff believes that this is a worthwhile project to relieve traffic congestion in this area and one that will not adversely affect pedestrian safety or accessibility. While some coordination is needed, it would not affect the other two SHA projects on Strathmore Avenue and staff will continue to participate in the study teams for these projects. Staff anticipates that the Mandatory Referral of the plans for the project in the Town of Garrett Park will be submitted for Planning Board review in the next couple of months. The Mandatory Referral of the sidewalk project between the Town line and Rockville Pike is probably about two years in the future.

LC:kcw

cc: Nancy Floreen
Suzanne Hudson
Edward Lijewski
Natalie Goldberg

mno to mcpcb re MR MD 355 Strathmore.doc

North ↑



← To White Flint

Rockville Pike

Garrett Park Road

Creek

Strathmore Ave

Current Project Location

Future SHA Streetscaping Project in County

Future SHA Traffic-Calming and Streetscaping Project in Garrett Park

Grosvenor Lane

Grosvenor Metro Station

→ To Bethesda

I-270

Beach Drive

Grosvenor Lane

Capital Beltway

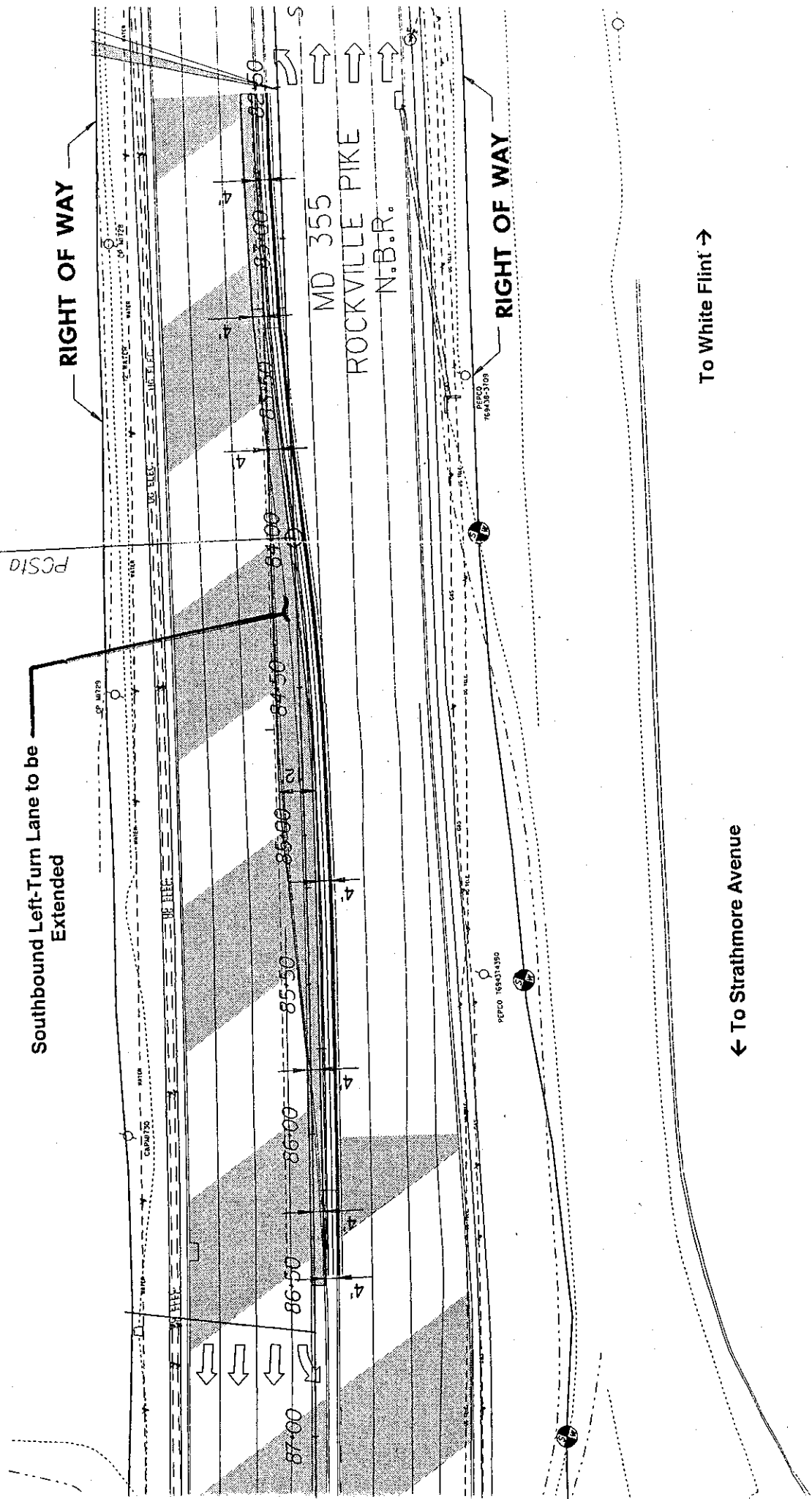
Attachment 1: Location Map

North →

PCSta 83+99.55

Southbound Left-Turn Lane to be Extended

RIGHT OF WAY

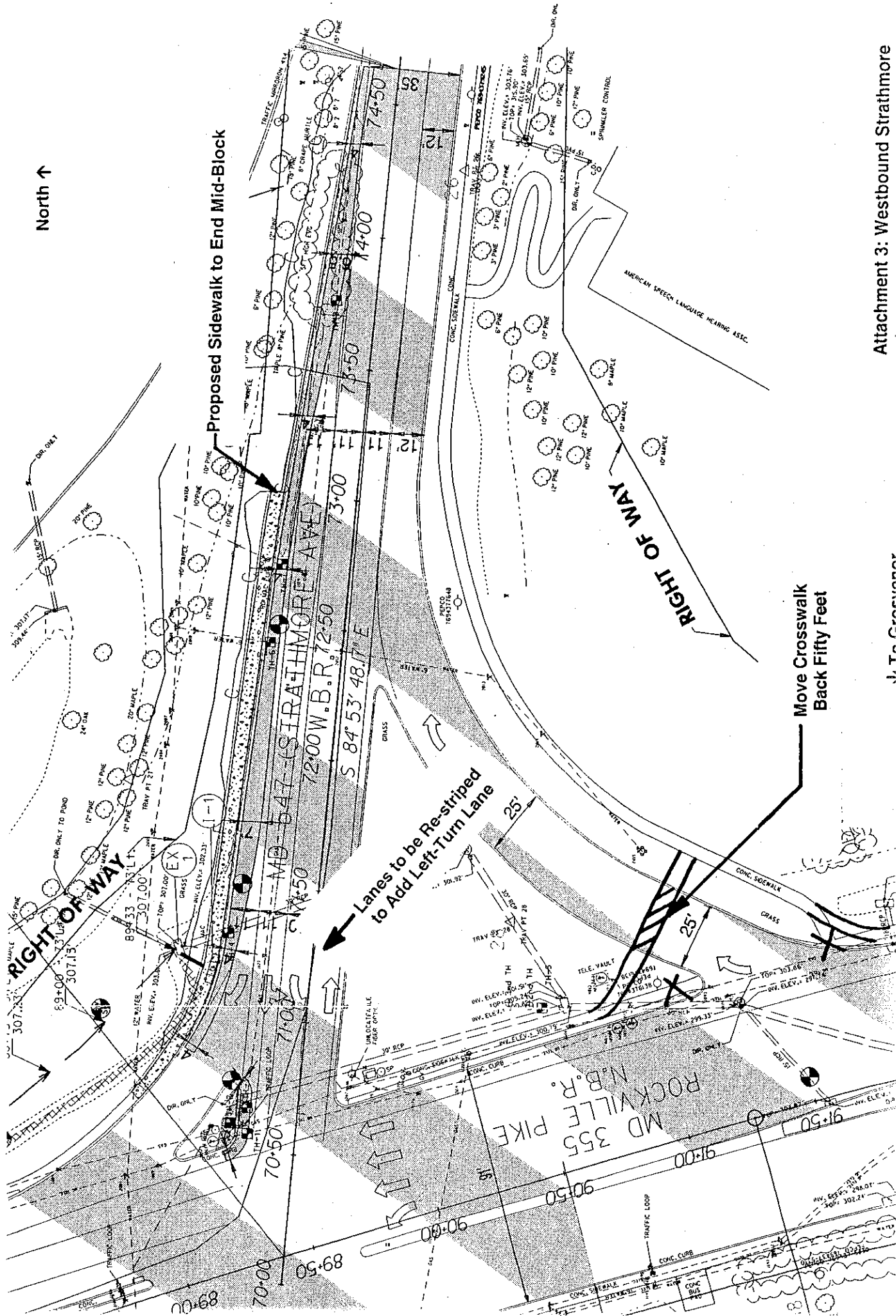


To White Flint →

← To Strathmore Avenue

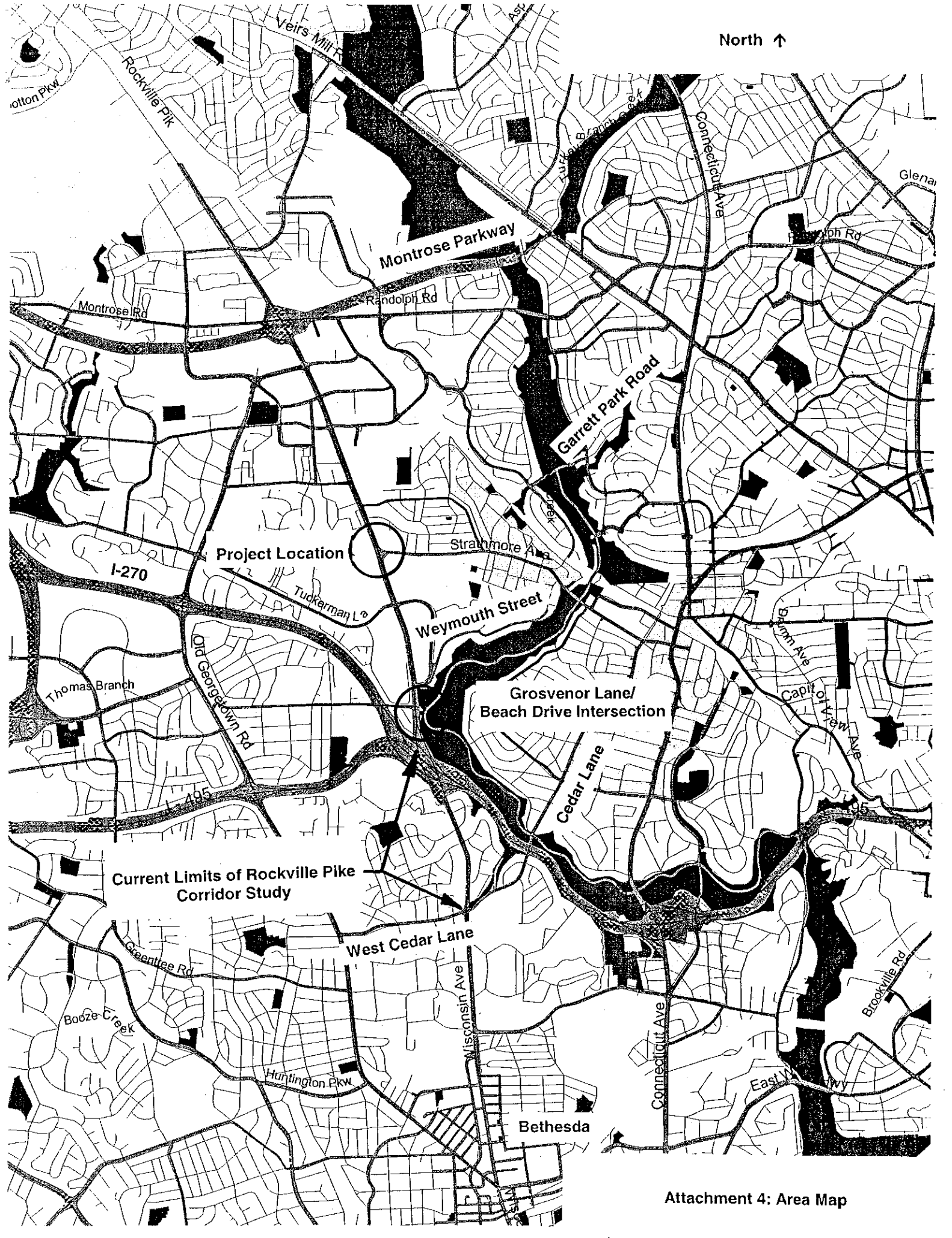
↑ To White Flint

North ↑



J. T. Crowley

Attachment 3: Westbound Strathmore



North ↑

Attachment 4: Area Map

Garrett Park Estates-White Flint Park Citizens Association

11111 Waycross Way, North Bethesda, Maryland 20895

January 29, 2002

Mr. Arthur Holmes, Chairman
Montgomery County Planning Board
8787 Georgia Ave.
Silver Spring, Md. 20910

Re: MD 355 @ MD 547 Intersection Improvement Project

Dear Mr. Holmes:

The Garrett Park Estates/ White Flint Park Citizens Association voices opposition to the portion of the MD 355 / MD 547 Intersection Improvement Project which reconfigures the intersection of Rockville Pike and Strathmore Avenue and which would add an additional left turn lane from Strathmore Avenue to Rockville Pike. We object to implementing this project for the following reasons:

1. The intersection improvement is not included in the North Bethesda / Garrett Park Master Plan. Rockville Pike is chaotic and congested enough without deviating from the Master Plan for one specific intersection.
2. The proposed modification increases the intersection capacity, which in turn will provide a more favorable level of service (LOS). This is an artificial improvement at the intersection only, doing nothing to alleviate traffic on Strathmore Avenue; The "improvement", however, could be used when considering approval of additional development in the Grosvenor Metro Area.
3. The Planning Board, in the Transportation Policy Report, dated January 15, 2002 recommends creating a Long-Term Vision for Arterials such as Rockville Pike (MD 355). Adding more cars to Rockville Pike at Strathmore Ave. is based on a short term vision of intersection backups and does not consider the long-term effect on the Pike.
4. Members of our community cross Strathmore Avenue several blocks east of Rockville Pike in order to access the Grosvenor Metro and the public path to the Metro. Citizens in the community have been concerned about the safety of the current crossing, and are looking at this issue via the Strathmore Streetscape Project. There is serious question as to whether or not this intersection change will increase traffic on Strathmore, and/or traffic speed on Strathmore, making a dangerous crossing more dangerous.
5. If intersection improvements are to be made, they should consider the entire intersection and should involve community input. This includes the northbound free

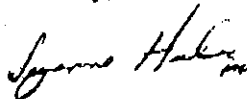
flow lane on Rockville Pike turning onto Strathmore which involves a difficult and dangerous merge on Strathmore Avenue, and the pedestrian access across Rockville Pike currently coming from an island in the middle of the intersection.

6. The project proposes to build a sidewalk to no-where immediately adjacent to the new free flow right turn lane. Lack of a green buffer space between the traffic lane and the sidewalk raises a safety issue which should be investigated.

In summary, the Garrett Park Estates/ White Flint Park Citizens Association believes the issues involved are complex and could have a negative impact on the quality of life in our neighborhood. We believe that the portion of the project extending the left turn storage lane from southbound Rockville Pike to eastbound Strathmore Ave should be recommended for approval. We believe the Planning Board should recommend canceling the rest of the project.

The Citizens Association asks that these comments be included as part of the Mandatory Referral process if there is a Mandatory Referral. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Suzanne Hudson, President

cc: Mr. Larry Cole




Town of Garrett Park

Incorporated 1898

February 13, 2002

The Honorable Arthur Holmes
Chairman
Montgomery County Planning Board
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring MD 20910

Re: Mandatory referral No 02801-SHA-1: Rockville Pike at
Strathmore Avenue


Dear Mr. Holmes:


The Town of Garrett Park respectfully requests that you defer consideration of the above referenced intersection improvement and consider it, instead, in conjunction with SHA's plan for the length of Strathmore Avenue from Kenilworth Avenue to Route 355.

Over the past several years the Town has been actively engaged with SHA in working to design a pedestrian friendly, traffic-calming roadway improvement of the portion of Strathmore Avenue that passes through our municipal limits. More recently, SHA is to be applauded for embarking upon a similar review of the county portion of Strathmore from the limits of the Town project to the very intersection scheduled for mandatory referral consideration in March. In our view, your consideration of the mandatory referral project is premature at this time, given the fact that such Strathmore project is in its initial stages, as we understand it.

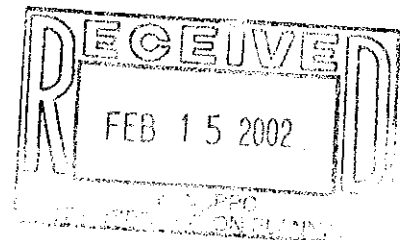
Any changes to the intersection should be consistent with the ongoing work. This involves making pedestrian safety a paramount planning objective. Review should focus on roadway designs that ensure this attention to the needs of the pedestrian, including elements that control, not hasten vehicular speed, and continuation of sidewalks without interruption along Strathmore Avenue.

Thank you for consideration of our request that your review of these projects be coordinated, with pedestrian safety as the overriding goal.

Very truly yours,


Nancy M. Floreen
Mayor

Cc: Larry Cole ✓
Dennis German
Patrick Schmitt
Suzanne Hudson



RECEIVED
020178
FEB 07 2002

February 6, 2002

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN
THE MARYLAND NATIONAL CAPITAL
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

Mr. Arthur Holmes
Chairman
Montgomery County Planning Board
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring Maryland 20910

In Reference To: Changes to Rockville Pike/Strathmore Intersection

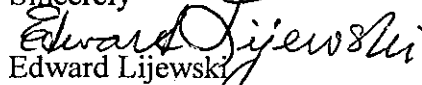
I am a resident of Garret Park Estates who would be directly affected by the proposed changes. I support the proposed changes unequivocally.

Enclosed is a copy of my e-mail to the Garrett Park Estates/White Flint Park Citizens Association on this matter. I disagree with the apparent opposition to the proposed changes expressed by the executive committee of the Association.

I would like these comments to be considered as part of mandatory referral.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely


Edward Lijewski
5200 Bangor Drive
Kensington, MD 20895-1148

Cc: Mr. Larry Cole

Lijewski, Edward

From: Lijewski, Edward
Sent: Wednesday, February 06, 2002 11:28 AM
To: 'suzhudson@erols.com'; 'ngold@erols.com'; 'eleanorwhelan@aol.com'
Subject: GPE/WFP--Topics/Issues

Comments/reaction to two items in the latest Newsletter:

--Construction and Parking Headaches—"Sticker Parking May Help

The Newsletter reports "At no charge, residents obtain permits and visitor parking passes." This misinformation needs to be corrected.

One Block of Jolly Way and one of Strathmore just across from ASLHA have been under residential parking for about five years. There is/is a fee for each resident parking permit—I believe t's \$15.00, although I can't recall if it's an annual or biennial permit. Although this matter directly affects me (my property is on the corner of Jolly Way and Bangor Drive) I do not participate in it as I voted against it when the matter was put to the residents' vote (I would also vote against it if a new poll were required to continue the policy).

Spring to Bring Changes to Rockville Pike/Strathmore Avenue Intersection

The Newsletter advises "The executive of the Citizens Association approved a letter opposing the lane modification on Strathmore Avenue."

It is unclear whether the objection is to each/EACH and all/ALL lane modifications or to one or two. Regardless, this opposition is misguided for these reasons:

- adding an additional left turn lane westbound Strathmore to southbound Rockville Pike will immediately alleviate the regular morning, evening and weekends as well problems of traffic stacking up behind the signal at Rockville Pike to as far back as Holy Cross Church—and occasionally further east beyond that. These stacks of cars make leaving and entering Jolly Way at Strathmore extremely hazardous and frequently impossible. The same situation occurs often at Stillwater and Strathmore, and to the entrance to Holy Cross School. The GPE/WFP executive committee position appears blithely unaware of this, or chooses to ignore it and instead weight the unfounded belief of some that this lane addition change would create greater traffic problems.
- Widening the existing right turn lane westbound to northbound Rockville Pike will also contribute to alleviating the problem described above. These two changes are complementary in design and in intended effect: they would allow traffic which now two to three times each week day and Saturday as well stacks up to Holy Cross Church and beyond to bleed off to either north or southbound Rockville Pike—which is where 98% of that traffic intends to go.

The combined alleviative effect of these two measures will/WILL be substantial in decreasing the traffic backups from the light at Strathmore and Rockville Pike.

- Extending the existing left turn storage lane southbound Rockville Pike to eastbound Strathmore would not/NOT bring more traffic onto Strathmore—traffic flow will still be regulated by the timing of the green arrow—but will/WILL allow more left-turning traffic to safely be "stored" in the extended storage lane. Currently many, many times each day—Sundays included—much left turning traffic backs up in the eastward lane of southbound Rockville Pike to Golf Lane and occasionally beyond. This is/IS an extremely unsafe situation.

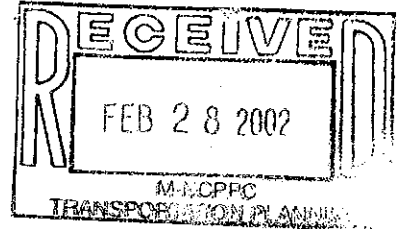
For many residents in GPE/WFP a left-turn at Flanders from southbound Rockville Pike is the obvious, safest, and fastest way to return to their homes. That is not the case for those of us living on upper Bangor Drive and Jolly Way and Strathmore Ave, etc.

I wish to note that I am not in favor of helter/skelter changes to our roadways and open spaces. The proposed changes are clearly improvements over existing situations, and therefore they should be supported by GPE/WFP.

I would be pleased to explain in further detail my position on these matters. I can be reached during the day at 202-712-1088.

February 26, 2002
11102 Stillwater Avenue
Kensington, MD 20895

Mr. Arthur Holmes, Chairman
Montgomery County Planning Board
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910



Dear Mr. Holmes:

We understand the Maryland State Highway Administration is scheduled to begin an "Intersection Improvement Project" at Rockville Pike and Strathmore Avenue in the early spring.

As two families directly affected by the traffic associated with the intersection, we are very much in favor of the project. When traffic backs-up from Rockville Pike on Strathmore Avenue, drivers who want to turn right on Rockville Pike elect to drive on our street, Stillwater Avenue, to Flanders Avenue, then to Rockville Pike. Some of the drivers speed down Stillwater Avenue, creating a safety problem for the many families living on Stillwater Avenue – especially the children in those households. Improving the intersection will assist in the traffic flow from Strathmore Avenue onto Rockville Pike, and help to reduce the traffic off of Strathmore Avenue.

We hope our comments will be considered as part of the mandatory referral for this project.

Sincerely,

David C. Thomas

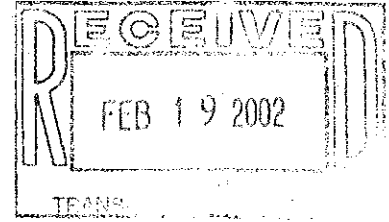
Joel C. Miller

Judith A. Miller

cc: Mr. Larry Cole

11111 Jolly Way
Kensington, Md. 20895
February 15, 2002

Mr. Arthur Holmes, Chairman
Montgomery County Planning Board
8787 Georgia Ave.
Silver Spring, Md. 20910



Re: Mandatory Referral - Intersection Improvements at
MD 355 (Rockville Pike) and MD 547 (Strathmore Avenue)

Dear Chairman Holmes:

I am writing as an individual citizen affected by the proposed intersection improvements on MD 355(Rockville Pike) and MD 547 (Strathmore Avenue). I live in the community just north of Strathmore Avenue and I am opposed to the proposed State plans to add a second westbound left turn lane on Strathmore at Rockville Pike. I will be out of town at the time of mandatory referral and therefore express my opposition in writing. The primary issue is one of safety, both vehicular and pedestrian.

Note, that I have no objection to plans to extend the southbound left turn storage lane on Rockville Pike. There do not appear to be any community impacts from doing this.

Adding an additional left turn lane at the west end of Strathmore Avenue gives the impression of creating additional capacity, even though Strathmore Avenue will be no more capable of handling the heavy east-west traffic attempting to use it, than it is now. Strathmore Ave. is a victim of the lack of adequate east-west connectors in the County. It is classified as a two-lane arterial roadway and has an especially narrow crossing over Rock Creek. The proposed additional left turn lane will encourage additional traffic on this road, and encourage current users to increase their speed as they approach the intersection.

There is a public pedestrian/bicycle path between Strathmore Ave. and the Grosvenor Metro Station, approximately two-tenths (.2) of a mile east of the intersection with 355. Residents of the community north of Strathmore must cross Strathmore Avenue in order to get to this path and access Metro. This crossing, not at an intersection, is already dangerous. Additional traffic and/or speed on Strathmore Ave. will only exacerbate the already dangerous situation.

Additionally, the proposed modifications to Strathmore take away an existing shoulder in order to relocate the current free flow right turn lane. Placing a five foot sidewalk immediately adjacent to the right turn lane would be dangerous if it were to be used, and unnecessary since the proposed sidewalk abruptly ends when it approaches shrubbery.

Vehicular traffic in the Garrett Park Estates/ White Flint Park community has few choices for entering or leaving the community; it is only Rockville Pike and Strathmore Avenue. Entering Strathmore Avenue at Flanders Ave, Stillwater Avenue, or Bangor Drive is already difficult and I believe the increased traffic and speed will make this more difficult and dangerous.

The effect on Rockville Pike of increasing the southbound traffic, either by letting more cars from Strathmore turn at a given signal change, or by signal adjustment to let more cars on Rockville Pike flow southward is unknown.

The intersection of Rockville Pike and Tuckerman Lane is especially vulnerable. There is intensive development in the Grosvenor Metro Policy Area including tripling the parking capacity at the Grosvenor Metro, construction of both the Strathmore Hall Performing Arts Center and Grosvenor Village, and the possible rezoning of Georgetown Prep for additional development. The Draft Transportation Operations Plan for Strathmore Hall and the Grosvenor Metro Station Garage, prepared for DPWT, show this intersection operating at LOS "F" during the PM commuter hours – at 6 cars below the 1800 LOS standard for the Grosvenor Metro Policy Area, when the Concert Hall is open. This excludes the impact of Grosvenor Village.

The TPR Task Force and the Planning Board Transportation Policy Report recommended a long-term vision for Rockville Pike, looking at this corridor from the broader viewpoint than a specific spot improvement. Given that the Strathmore Ave intersection change is not in the North Bethesda/Garrett Park Master Plan, it would seem especially prudent to recommend against the addition of a second left turn lane at this time.

The State has formed a MD 547 (Strathmore Avenue) Streetscape Concept Project under the State Highway Administrations Neighborhood Conservation Program. The project limits are from MD 355 to Kenilworth Ave. It would make much more sense for the State to consider the Strathmore Ave. intersection with Rockville Pike as part of the concept project, using a community Task Force for input, rather than to pursue this misguided modification on their own.

I urge you to recommend against the Strathmore Avenue modifications proposed in this mandatory referral.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Natalie Goldberg

cc: Mr. Larry Cole