



**MD 121 & I-270 Interchange Improvements, Mandatory Referral No. 2014049**

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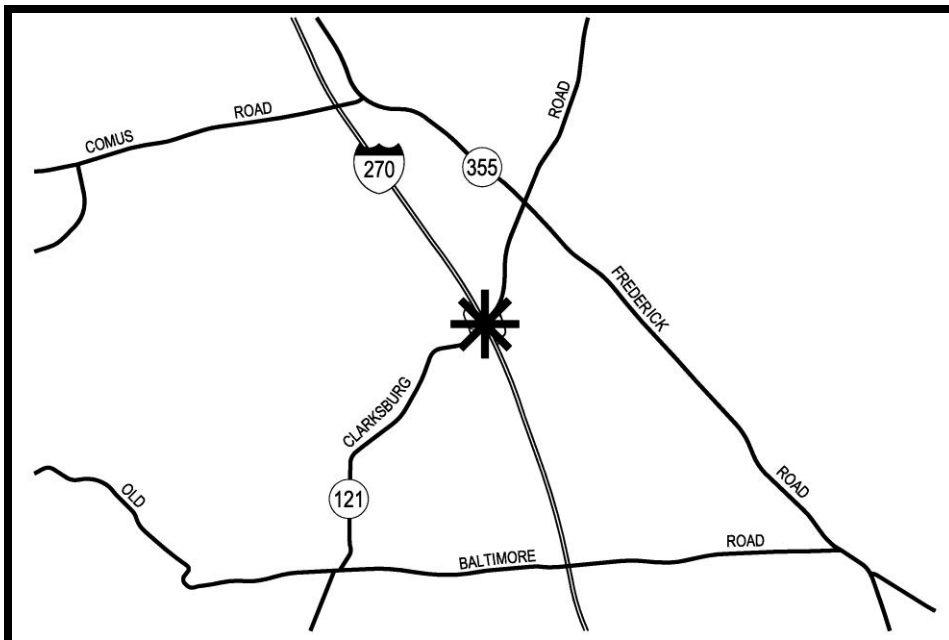
**Completed: 09/23/2014**

**Description**

This project would widen the Clarksburg Road (MD121) bridge over I-270 from four lanes to six lanes; add a second left turn lane to southbound MD121 on the ramp from northbound I-270; add a ramp from northbound MD121 to southbound I-270; and add traffic signals on MD121 at the freeway ramp termini. The project is just under one-half-mile in length along MD121.

Mandatory Referral approval is requested for these improvements, for which approval of a Forest Conservation Plan (FCP) and Amendment are also required, as well as approval of a Water Quality Plan. These items are covered in a separate staff memo and must be approved before the Board can approve the Mandatory Referral.

Cabin Branch Development, LLC (Winchester Homes, Inc.), the developer of Cabin Branch, would construct this project, however the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) is the official applicant of this Mandatory Referral as the agency authorizing the project.



**Summary**

Staff has worked with representatives of Cabin Branch, LLC to improve the safety and accommodation of pedestrians and bicyclists within the limits of the required traffic improvements and we are satisfied with the current design. The aesthetics of this project still need improvement and our comments are directed at those issues. We recommend that the Board approve this project with a request to SHA that the following comments be made conditions of the construction permit:

1. Plant street trees between the curb and sidewalk/trail at fifty feet on center within the limits of this project wherever the landscape panel is five feet in width or greater.
2. Plant street trees between the curb and sidewalk/trail at fifty feet on center in the median wherever it is ten feet in width or greater.
3. Plant shrubs and other plant materials in the islands between the ramps at the subject interchange.
4. Provide a stone formwork treatment on all monolithic concrete medians.
5. Provide a stone formwork treatment on both sides of the bridge parapets.
6. Consider using an alternative to the proposed roll-top chain-link fencing.

**Previous Board actions**

The proposed improvements would satisfy Cabin Branch Management, LLC (“Applicant”) conditions of approval required to implement Preliminary Plan No 120031100 and subsequent Amendments.

The Board’s actions on the overall Cabin Branch development are as follows:

Case No.	Opinion	Type	Status
G-806	9/9/2003	Local Map Amendment	approved
120031100 & 12003110A	6/22/2004	Preliminary Plan & Amendment	approved
12003110B	10/6/2008	Preliminary Plan Amendment	approved
820050150	9/19/2007	Infrastructure Site Plan	approved
82005015A	6/9/2008		
82005015B	3/17/2012		
82005015C	11/27/2012		
82005015D	05/02/2013		
82005015E	06/02/2014		

820060290	10/20/2008	Winchester I Site Plan	approved
82006029A	07/11/2012		
820060240	9/29/2010	Gosnell Site Plan	approved
820070140	04/23/2013	Toll I Site Plan	approved
820100030	04/23/2013	Toll II Site Plan	approved
820110080	07/11/2012	Winchester II Site Plan	approved
820120150	04/04/2013	Winchester III Site Plan	approved
MR08001	4/3/2008	Mandatory Referral	transmittal
16-35	4/1/2009	Subdivision Regulation	approved
17-04	4/1/2011	Subdivision Regulation	

**Site Context**

The existing interchange is bounded by the Cabin Branch development in the southwest quadrant; the Montgomery County Correctional Facility and Moneysworth Farm, which is designated as a historic site in the County's Master Plan of Historic Resources, in the northwest quadrant; and commercial/office space on Gateway Center Drive in the southeast quadrant. With the construction of the Stringtown Road Extended project in the past few years, most eastbound travel from the subject interchange toward MD355 is now via Stringtown Road rather than Clarksburg Road (MD121), which now doglegs into Stringtown Road in the northeast quadrant of the interchange.

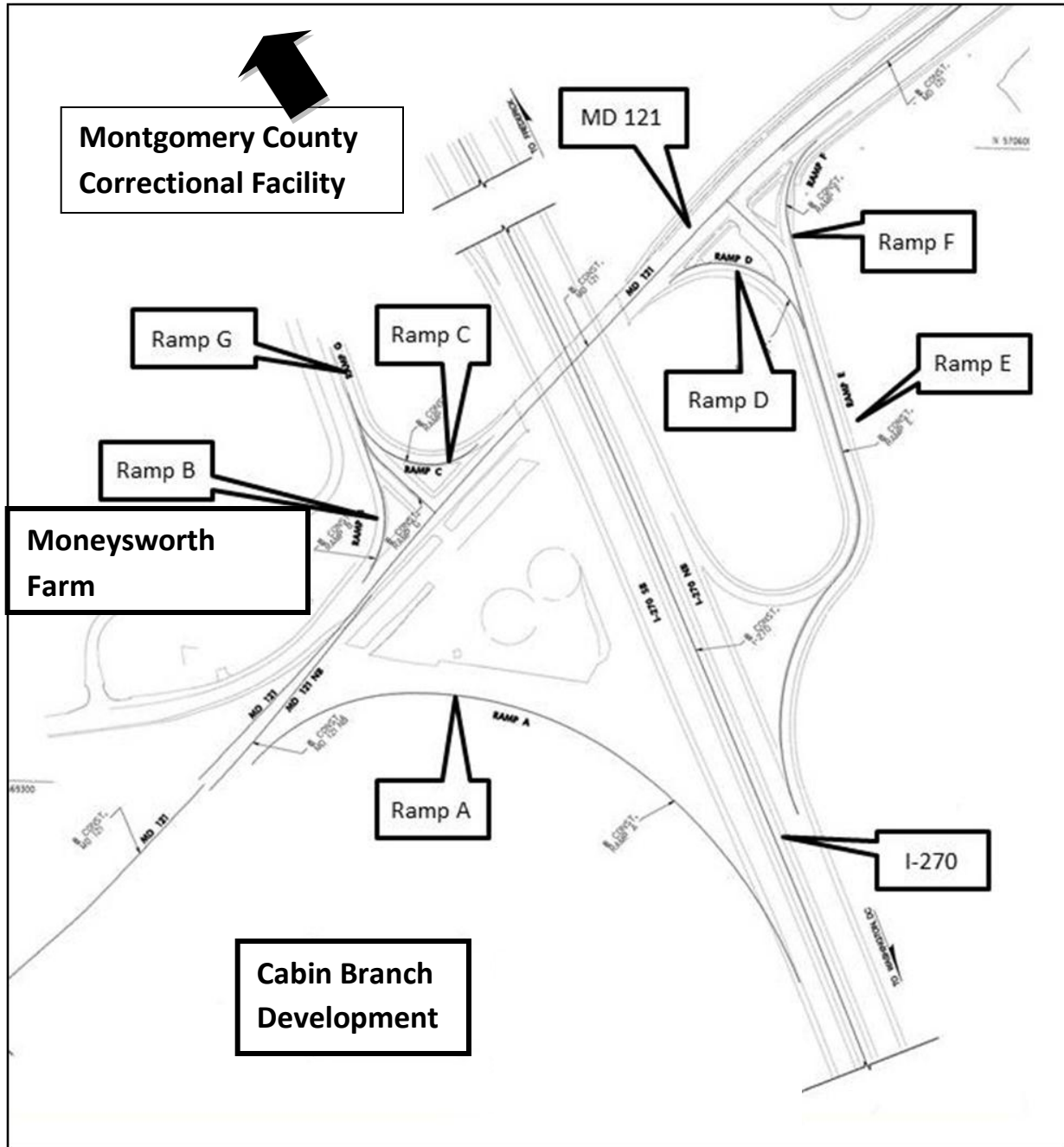
**Project Description**

The project would add two through lanes to the Clarksburg Road (MD121) bridge over I-270, whose four existing lanes function as one through lane in each direction plus turn lanes to access the I-270 ramps. The western end of the roadway widening would tie into Relocated MD121, work that is included in Cabin Branch's approved infrastructure plan.

A second left turn lane to southbound MD121 would be added on the ramp from northbound I-270 (Ramp E) to provide access to Cabin Branch from the south.

A ramp from northbound MD121 to southbound I-270 would be constructed to provide access from Cabin Branch to the south (Ramp A).

Traffic signals would be added on MD121 to provide better control at the freeway ramp termini (Ramps E and G).



**Master Plan Consistency**

The 1994 Clarksburg Master Plan recommends that MD121 be six lanes wide in a 150-foot right-of-way. The proposed project is consistent with that recommendation.

**Additional analysis**

**Bicyclist and Pedestrian Accommodation**

On-road bicyclists would be accommodated along MD121 via 5'-7' wide bike lanes. Off-road bicyclists would be accommodated along MD121 via a shared use path that transitions from the west side of MD121 east of I-270 to the east side of MD121 west of I-270; the crossing point would be at the proposed traffic signal at the Ramp G terminus west of I-270.

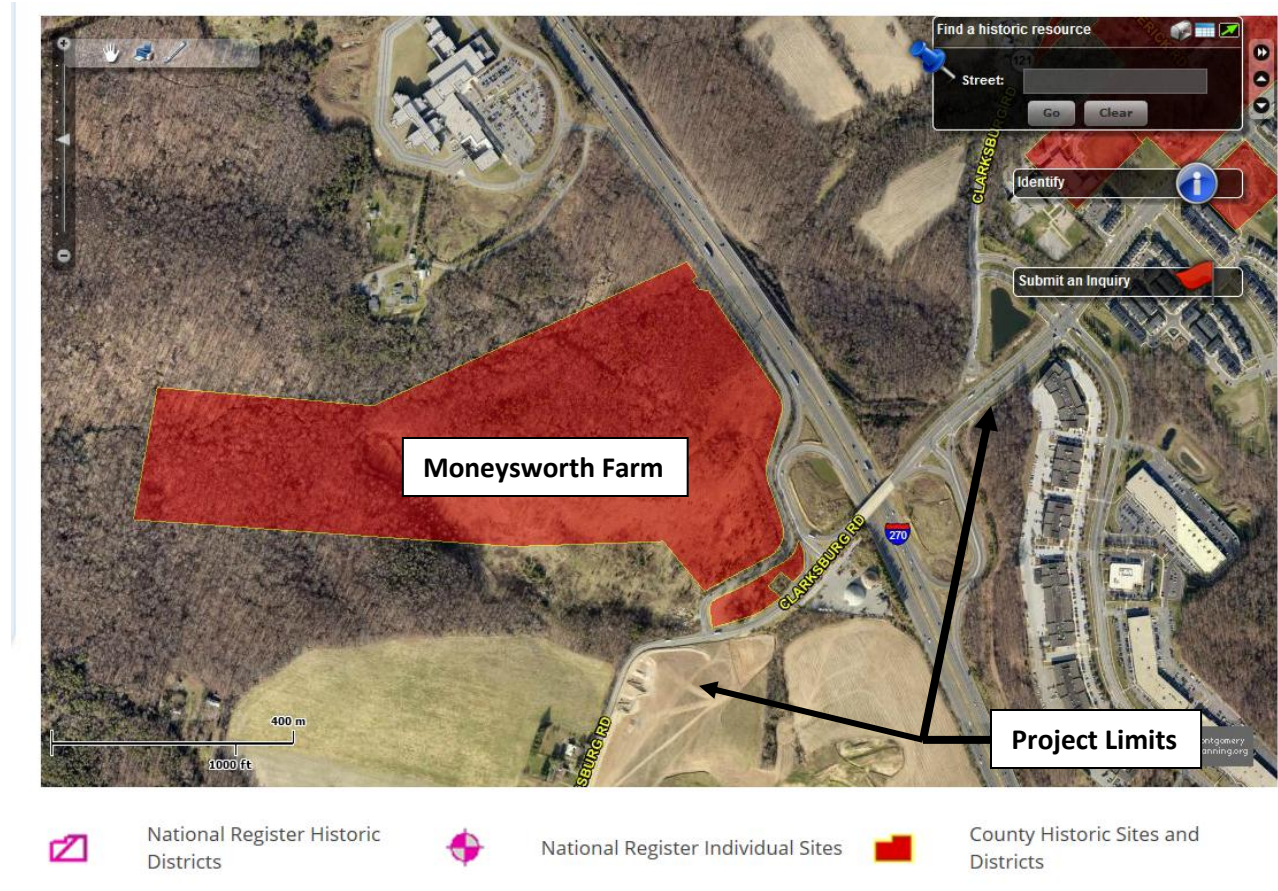
Pedestrians would be accommodated along MD121 via a five-foot-wide sidewalk or the eight-foot-wide shared use path on either side of the roadway.

### Environmental Impacts

The environmental impacts are discussed in a separate memo to the Board.

### Historic

The project abuts, but does not impact Moneysworth Farm, which is designated as a historic site in the County's Master Plan of Historic Resources, as shown below.



### Design

Chain link fence is proposed on top of plain concrete bridge parapets. We recommend that a stone formwork treatment be provided on both sides of the bridge parapets to provide an attractive appearance to users of both roadways. We also recommend that an alternative to the proposed roll-top chain-link fencing be considered.

Monolithic concrete median is proposed along about 900 feet of roadway. In addition to not being particularly attractive on its own, plain concrete medians tend to become the visible repository for grit thrown up from the roadway. We recommend that a stone formwork treatment be provided on all monolithic concrete medians to create an attractive surface that better hides that roadway grit.

Brown polyester-coated guardrail would be used, which will be less obtrusive than galvanized guardrail. Similarly, the proposed light poles would be powder-coated with a brown finish.

### **Landscaping**

Other than at the bio-retention area adjacent to Ramp C, no trees or shrubs are proposed to be planted for this project, even though adequate space for planting exists in several areas, creating a fairly barren appearance. We recommend that the applicant:

- Plant street trees between the curb and sidewalk/trail at fifty feet on center within the limits of this project wherever the landscape panel is five feet in width or greater.
- Plant street trees between the curb and sidewalk/trail at fifty feet on center in the median wherever it is ten feet in width or greater.
- Plant shrubs and other plant materials in the islands between the ramps at the subject interchange.

### **Outreach**

A public notice of this Planning Board meeting was sent by staff to area community associations. The final SHA Location/ Design Public Hearing for the I-270 and 121 Improvements was held on January 30, 2007, followed by the Planning Board's approval of the Cabin Branch Preliminary Plan Amendment B and Infrastructure Site Plan on April 3, 2008. Since that time, updates on the status of this project have been discussed at public meetings held for the site plans that are part of the overall Cabin Branch development.

### **Conclusion**

The project satisfies the offsite transportation requirements of Preliminary Plan No 120031100 and subsequent Amendments and has adequately addressed pedestrian and bicyclist accommodation. We recommend that the Board approve this project with the comments on the need for improved aesthetic design and landscaping.