




**Briefing: Brookeville Bypass**

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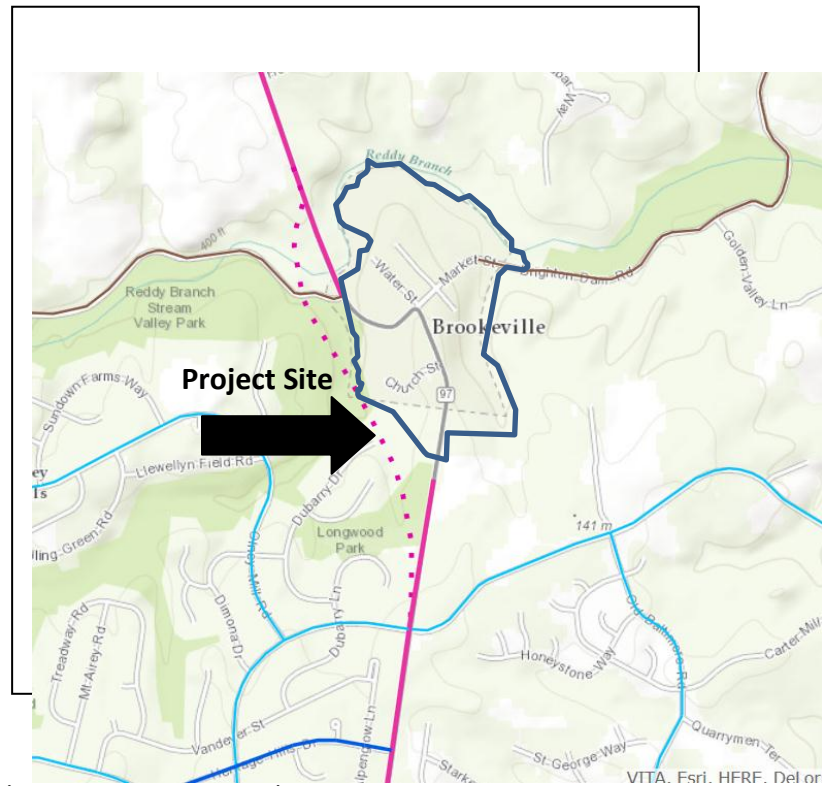
**Completed: 04/23/15**

**Description**

This briefing is intended to bring the Planning Board up to date on the restart of the Brookeville Bypass project, which has been dormant since the concept was approved by the Planning Board and County Council in 2002. It is also intended to be an introductory discussion to the Mandatory Referral of the project that is anticipated later this year.

The general concept of the project as a western bypass of the Town of Brookeville is still valid, but its design elements must be reconsidered given the recent identification of more detailed and more significant parkland and environmental impacts.

It now appears that a bridge over both Reddy Branch and Brookeville Road, as studied as part of an earlier alternative, may be the best way to avoid these negative impacts and should be reconsidered.



The project is located within the Agriculture & Rural Open Space Master Plan area. See Vicinity Map above, which shows the border outline of the County-designated Brookeville Historic District.

**Summary**

We recommend that the Board forward the following comments to the Maryland State Highway Administration:

1. Consider replacing the proposed northern roundabout at Brookeville Road with a bridge spanning both Brookeville Road and Reddy Branch; the higher crossing would elevate the proposed roadway profile and reduce stream, forest and parkland impacts; the proposed roundabout could be relocated to the northern tie-in with Georgia Avenue, similar to what was previously included in Alternative 8B. If Brookeville Bypass crosses Reddy Branch at SHA's

currently proposed location, the bridge length should be sufficient to cross both the stream and wetland D.

2. The proposed southern intersection of Georgia Avenue and the Brookeville Bypass will become the defacto gateway into the Brookeville Historic District and should reflect the highest level of design to ensure its attractiveness.
3. Please provide the most up-to-date set of comments from the Maryland Historical Trust and all environmental agencies with jurisdiction over this project as part of the Mandatory Referral submission. A comprehensive stormwater management plan should also be included in the submission so that staff will be able to accurately determine, report to the Planning Board on, and ensure adequate mitigation for impacts.
4. The road and all associated impacts should be constructed to avoid impacting the five-acre polygon Parks has provided to SHA
5. The impacts to Wetland E should be avoided or minimized by either a) expanding the span of the bridge over Meadow Branch to include the wetland or b) implementing retaining walls along the wetland.
6. We approve the use of the Reddy Branch SVU 1 site to meet Clean Water Act Section 404 compensatory mitigation requirements.
7. SHA should work with Parks staff to develop a mitigation package for the replacement of parkland that is of equal or greater natural, cultural and/or recreation value to that impacted due to construction of the road. SHA should work with Parks to develop a mitigation package for replacement of parkland that is of equal or greater natural, cultural and/or recreation value to that impacted due to construction of the road.

**Previous Board action**

The Board endorsed one of the western alignments of the Brookeville Bypass - Alternative 7 Modified (Alternative 7A) - on September 19, 2002 (see Attachments 1 and 2), which was reflected in the Olney Master Plan that was subsequently approved and adopted in 2005 (see Attachment 3).

**Site Context**

The project would be constructed on currently undeveloped land, most of which is parkland and a biodiversity area. Some of that parkland is within the limits of the Town of Brookeville and the Brookeville Historic District, which is on the National Register of Historic Places. (The County-designated historic district excludes the affected parkland.) While the town includes numerous historic buildings, only the westernmost portion of the town that is undeveloped parkland would be directly impacted.

The west side of the proposed project is bordered by parkland and by single family homes, none of which would be directly impacted.

Current Average Daily Traffic on Georgia Avenue (MD97) through the Town of Brookeville is approximately 10,000 vehicles per day.

**Project History**

In the 1960's, studies began to search for an alternate routing of Georgia Avenue (MD97) to bypass the Town of Brookeville. In 1990, thirteen alternatives were included in a feasibility study and in 1995 a

formal planning study began. In 1996, regulatory agency concurrence was reached on the Purpose and Need Statement and six preliminary alternatives were presented, after which it was decided that a no-build plus three build alternatives would be carried forward for detailed study. In 1997, the State Highway Administration (SHA) received regulatory agency review concurrence and a Draft Environmental Impact Study (DEIS) began. In 1998, concerns about consistency with Smart Growth and the Neighborhood Conservation Act caused the project to be placed on hold.

The project was reinitiated in 2000; in 2002, the Planning Board and County Council reviewed five alternatives - three western, one eastern, and one no-build alternative – and voted to support Alternative 7 Modified. In 2003, a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) was developed and in 2004, a Record of Decision was approved and Location Approval was granted by the Federal Highway Administration. Due to funding issues, the project was again placed on hold. Because of the length of time it has been on hold, a re-evaluation of the project is required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The Brookeville Bypass project was reinitiated last year and is currently funded for construction with a total project cost of \$36.8M, including \$10M of funding from Montgomery County. M-NCPPC staff was first invited back into the project planning process in October 2014

#### **Master Plan Consistency**

This project straddles two master plan areas, both the Olney Master Plan (2005) and the Town of Brookeville's Comprehensive Plan (2010). The Olney Master Plan's recommendations in regard to the Brookeville Bypass are shown on pages 13-15 of Attachment 3; the Town's recommendations are shown on pages 13-15 of their Comprehensive Plan (see Attachment 4). The proposed alignment for the bypass is consistent with the recommendations of both plans for a two-lane roadway.

In regard to bicycle and pedestrian accommodation however, the Town's plan recommends an *"integrated bikeway and pedestrian ways"*, whereas the Olney Master Plan recommends only bike lanes. During the current design process, SHA asked whether they should include a shared use path in the proposed typical section, the staff consensus was that the proposed roadway shoulders should be sufficient as the Master Plan-recommended bike lanes and that the additional environmental and park impacts that would be caused by the addition of a shared use path or sidewalk should be avoided. In addition, the Town of Brookeville is the major destination in this area and will likely remain the focus of pedestrian and bicycle activity, particularly with the anticipated reduction in vehicular volumes resulting from the construction of the bypass. In addition, SHA is working with the Town to construct sidewalks on a portion of the segment of Georgia Avenue that would be bypassed.

Brookeville Road was first designated a Rustic Road in the Rustic Roads Master Plan (1996) (see Attachment 5). While the goal of the Rustic Roads program is to preserve these roads as of the date they were designated, the text in Brookeville Road's designation includes the following notes in regard to the area around the Brookeville Bypass: *"The designation of this road as a rustic road is not to be used to affect in any way the Brookeville Bypass when that road is constructed. The Olney Master Plan includes a potential relocation of Brookeville Road slightly north of its current intersection with Georgia Avenue. That relocated road will not be a rustic road."*

#### **Smart Growth**

This project is partly inside and partly outside of the Priority Funding Area (PFA) that was established in response to the Maryland Smart Growth and Neighborhood Conservation Act of 1997. That law restricts

state funding on transportation projects outside PFAs in order to discourage sprawl. This project was required to get a waiver from these requirements, which was granted with the conditions outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding that was signed by representatives of the Maryland State Highway Administration and the Montgomery County Executive (see page 27 of Attachment 6) Page 2, Condition I.B.3 requires that a roundabout be constructed at the northern end of the project. This topic is discussed in greater detail below.

#### **Alignment**

When the Board reviewed the project in 2002, one eastern bypass alternative and three western bypass alternatives were considered. Staff recommended against the eastern alternative because of several reasons, including a lack of consistency with the master plan. It also was the residents' least favored option.

Of the three western alternatives, staff found that both Alternative 7A and Alternative 8B met the intent of the master plan and would serve local connectivity needs. (See Attachment 7, "Current SHA Alignment and Alternatives 7A and 8B." In regard to its impact on Brookeville Road, a Rustic Road at the northern end of the project, staff found that neither of these alternatives offered a clear advantage, saying that the roundabout construction would have a greater impact on the historic nature of the existing road alignment, but that the overpass would have a greater impact on the roadway viewshed. The overpass though would better protect the Newlin/Downs Mill archaeological site and Oakley Cabin Trail.

The intent of this project has been to pursue the Alternative 7A alignment, but the middle part of the alignment has shifted farther west to avoid some very large high-quality trees; this would require up to forty feet of vertical cut with a total area of impact almost 300 feet wide. And at the northern end of the project, while the Alternative 7A alignment bypassed Wetland #12 to the east, the current alignment goes through it.

In 2002, Planning staff believed that the choice between Alternatives 7A and 8B was fairly even. While the former was chosen to move forward to design, the proposed alignment has changed in response to new information such that the basis for that recommendation and decision is no longer true.

In the 2002 Planning Board memo (Attachment 2), M-NCPPC staff recommended Alternative 7 stating that it had the shortest alignment with the smallest footprint, as well as the least impact to parklands and interior forest cover. The more detailed plans that been provided for our current review show topographic contours as well as the proposed cut and fill extents that are being proposed. With this new information Park and Planning staff has determined that Alternate 7 is no longer the least impactful of the westerly alignments due in large part to the significant amount of cut required. Using the recent shift west of the road SHA has proposed and combining it with the northern segment of Alternate 8B - which bridges Brookeville Road and Reddy Branch and places the northern roundabout instead on Georgia Avenue - would result in multiple positive outcomes including;

- significantly minimizing the impacts to the Western Reddy Branch Biodiversity area,
- eliminating impacts to the Newlin Mill race and Oakley Cabin trail, and
- reducing the impact to the rural/rustic nature of Brookeville Road

We believe that the long and high bridge over Brookeville Road and the Reddy Branch stream valley, as previously included in Alternative 8B, may prove to be the best way to avoid the forty-foot-tall cut slopes that are currently proposed and should be reconsidered. (See Attachment 8, "Current SHA Alignment and M-NCPPC Staff-Recommended Alignment."

Because of the multiple design elements that would be involved in this change and the soil conditions that are still unknown, i.e. whether there is bedrock that could significantly increase the cost of the current alignment, the impact on the cost of the project still needs to be determined.

#### **Roundabouts**

The project includes roundabouts at both the northern and southern ends of the project where it ties back into existing Georgia Avenue. Only the northern roundabout is included however as a condition of the Smart Growth MOU that was signed in 2012.

The proposed roundabouts have a larger footprint than a typical intersection and create some concern since there are sensitive areas at each of the potential roundabout locations:

- The proposed southern roundabout would impact a wetland. While it wouldn't directly impact the Brookeville Historic District, the roundabout would become the defacto gateway into the town and would need to be attractively designed.
- The proposed northern roundabout at Brookeville Road would require more impact to parkland, the floodplain and archaeological resources than a typical intersection, although SHA has made changes recently to reduce those impacts.
- The relocated northern roundabout, as recommended above by staff, would likely require more forest impacts than a typical intersection, but would be out of parkland and the stream valley and would be away from sensitive archaeological and historical resources.

#### **Maryland Historical Trust**

The Brookeville Historic District is on the National Register of Historic Places, as well as being a County-designated historic district. There are additional historic resources immediately north of the project and on parkland.

SHA previously had a Memorandum of Agreement with the Maryland Historical Trust, but that agreement has expired and there has been no recent contact.

#### **Parks and Environmental Impacts**

These impacts are addressed in a separate Parks memo.

#### **Outreach**

No public meetings have been held recently on this project, which is just restarting. SHA maintains a project webpage that is not well-populated at this point:

<http://apps.roads.maryland.gov/WebProjectLifeCycle/ProjectInformation.aspx?projectno=MO7462115>

The Town of Brookeville maintains a webpage that gives the history of the project and reflects our understanding of a high level of support in the town:

<http://townofbrookevillemd.org/about/brookeville-bypass/>

#### **Conclusion**

Reanalysis of including a long and high bridge over Brookeville Road and the Reddy Branch stream valley is needed to ensure that we can construct this project with the least amount of parkland and environmental impacts.