

October 19, 2001

**MEMORANDUM**

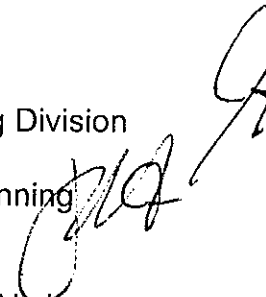
TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Jeff Zyontz, Chief  
County-wide Planning Division

Jorge A. Valladares, P.E. Chief  
Environmental Planning/County-wide Planning Division

FROM: Joe Anderson for Department of Park and Planning  
(301) 650-4373

SUBJECT: Mandatory Referral No. 01004-SHA-1—State Highway  
Administration (SHA) Congestion Relief Study—Intersection  
Improvements—New Hampshire Avenue (MD 650) from Powder  
Mill Road to Colesville Road (US 29)



---

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Planning Board approve the project with the following comments:

1. Prepare final landscape plans in coordination with staff, with particular attention to these specific concerns:
  - a. Compatibility with the golf course design.
  - b. Incorporate improvement to landscaping on the west side of New Hampshire Avenue.
  - c. Landscape medians which are six feet in width or greater.
  - d. Provide landscape panels with street trees between proposed sidewalks and the roadway wherever possible.
2. Prepare final plans in coordination with the golf course design process, including final determination of its access road location.
3. Coordinate transit stop locations, crosswalks, and curb ramp locations in final design with the county to assure they are ADA-compliant, provide adequate median refuge areas, and that there are sufficient pedestrian crossings.

4. In the commercial areas along New Hampshire Avenue, sidewalks should have a 3-foot offset from the curb or be a minimum of 8'-3" wide. To the north of the White Oak Shopping Center entrance, where more right-of-way exists, the proposed sidewalk should be offset from the curb by eight to fourteen feet.
5. Provide sufficient lighting to meet the recommendations of the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America.
6. All intersections, including "T" intersections, should be made ADA compliant.

## **DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT**

The State Highway Administration (SHA) is proposing to improve New Hampshire Avenue (MD 650) at Powder Mill Road and from Chalmers Road to north of US 29. The project will add an additional northbound lane to New Hampshire Avenue as well as reconfiguring or improving some of the intervening intersections. The project is at the semi-final design stage and the construction is scheduled to begin in the summer of 2003.

The location and extent of the project is depicted on the attached aerial photograph. The following summarizes the features of the proposed improvements:

### **New Hampshire Avenue at Powder Mill Road**

- Add a third left turn lane from Powder Mill Road to MD 650 southbound.
- Add 5-foot bike lane on Powder Mill eastbound from MD 650 to the shopping center entrance.
- Lengthen the left turn lane and right turn acceleration lane on New Hampshire Avenue.

### **New Hampshire Avenue near Chalmers Road**

- Begin new 4<sup>th</sup> lane northbound on New Hampshire Avenue (16' wide, bicycle compatible curb lane).
- Begin new northbound sidewalk from end of existing sidewalk .
- At golf course, widen sidewalk to provide 8-foot wide bike path, with 5-foot setback from curb.
- Lengthen left turn lane from New Hampshire into Ruppert Road.

### **New Hampshire Avenue at Mahan Road**

- Provide triple left turn from Mahan to New Hampshire Avenue southbound.
- Add right turn lane from New Hampshire Avenue into site.
- Continue new 4<sup>th</sup> lane and bike path on northbound side of New Hampshire Avenue.
- Provide double left turn lanes from New Hampshire into site.

### **New Hampshire Avenue at Michelson Road**

- Relocate intersection to the south, opposite Northwest Drive.
- Continue new 4<sup>th</sup> lane and bike path on northbound side of New Hampshire Avenue (bike path ends at Lockwood Drive).
- Provide double left turn into site from New Hampshire Avenue.
- Provide double right and double left out from Michelson Road
- Prohibit traffic crossing straight through between Michelson Road and Northwest Drive.

### **New Hampshire Avenue at Lockwood Drive**

- Add a third left turn lane from Lockwood Drive to New Hampshire Avenue southbound.
- Provide a single right turn lane from Lockwood Drive to New Hampshire Avenue southbound.
- Continue new 4<sup>th</sup> lane northbound on New Hampshire Avenue through intersection and onto US 29 northbound ramp.
- Add new right turn lane from New Hampshire Avenue southbound to Lockwood Drive.
- Add a new left turn access from New Hampshire Avenue southbound into the White Oak Shopping Center.

### **New Hampshire Avenue at Colesville Road (US 29)**

- Provide double left turn lane from northbound New Hampshire to US 29 southbound ramp.

- Add a new 3<sup>rd</sup> lane in each direction on New Hampshire Avenue through the US 29 interchange.

## **BACKGROUND**

The proposed project has been developed by SHA under their Congestion Relief Study program. The improvements are intended to accommodate the development of the Federal Research Center at White Oak by the Food and Drug Administration. As part of the project development process, SHA worked with county and M-NCPPC staff to develop and review design proposals. These proposals were also presented at several public meetings.

Staff also convened a special public meeting in the community to focus on the transportation improvement proposals. Area residents and civic groups were invited to review the proposals and exchange questions and comments with SHA and county representatives. The meeting was held on September 10, a copy of the meeting invitation is attached. The meeting was well attended by area residents and there were many insightful local comments and concerns.

The following briefly summarizes the various types of design-related comments expressed at the public meeting:

1. Consideration should be given to developing new, direct access between US 29 and the FDA site.
2. Need to accommodate area transit operations into the design considerations.
3. Current plans do not adequately protect the neighborhood west of New Hampshire Avenue from cut through traffic and parking infringement.
4. Not enough is being done to “protect” Lockwood Drive from increasing area traffic volumes ... proposed improvements will make it worse by encouraging more traffic on Lockwood Drive.
5. Pedestrian crossing issues need to be carefully evaluated, especially at Powder Mill Road, Lockwood Drive, and at bus stops in between. A sidewalk is needed on New Hampshire Avenue southbound, through the US 29 interchange, and on sections of Lockwood Drive.
6. Landscaping plans should be coordinated with the golf course and should include improvements to plantings on the southbound side of New Hampshire Avenue.

Other concerns expressed at the meeting related to operational aspects on existing roads such as speeding and circulation patterns.

## **STAFF EVALUATION**

The proposed transportation improvements are in conformance with the *White Oak Master Plan* recommendations for roadway and intersection improvements for New Hampshire Avenue.

The SHA design process has been underway for almost two years and many design changes have been made in response to various concerns. More changes are currently under investigation. SHA has been very responsive in addressing issues and modifying designs where appropriate. There are only a few areas of remaining concern or on-going coordination. The following summarizes the few important areas that require continuing attention through to final design.

### **Golf Course**

There has been ongoing coordination between the SHA project planning process and the MNCPPC-managed redesign of the golf course. Included are ongoing discussions about: modification to the stormwater management pond south of Mahan Road in response to golf course design issues; the limits of disturbance for the planned widening of the road as they affect the course; plantings and plant selection along the right-of-way; and alternative access points to the golf course off New Hampshire Avenue. This coordination process will continue until the golf course planning and design work is completed and approved.

### **Pedestrian and Bicycle Accommodation**

The project includes new segments of sidewalk and implements the master planned off-road bike path along the east side of New Hampshire Avenue. The new northbound curb lane of New Hampshire will also be 16 feet wide to accommodate bicyclists who prefer to use the roadway. Some minor adjustments would be desirable to curb ramp locations, to clarify crossing locations, and to sidewalk alignments or widths.

Sidewalk alignment and width is a particular issue at the Lockwood Drive and Powder Mill Road intersections where space is tight due to adjacent commercial uses. Five-foot sidewalks directly behind the curb on a major roadway in commercial areas are not sufficient to safely or comfortably accommodate pedestrians. The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) recommends that sidewalks be offset from the roadway. Where they cannot be offset, they recommend that sidewalks directly behind the curb be built to an 8'-3" minimum width. This would likely require higher retaining walls and/or a greater loss of shopping center parking.

There are several "T" and other non-signalized intersections along New Hampshire Avenue through the project limits which require modification to make them ADA-compatible. Whether or not SHA intends to stripe these intersections, they should have handicap ramps, and in some cases median refuges, to ensure

that pedestrians can easily use the legal (implied) crosswalks at every intersection. Given the incidence of pedestrian fatalities at non-intersection locations, the legal crossings need to be made as attractive as possible. In particular, it would be desirable to install handicap ramps on the north legs of the Chalmers Road, Cresthaven Drive and Ruppert Road "T" intersections and provide crosswalks to the proposed sidewalk/trail on the east side of New Hampshire Avenue. Pedestrian refuges should be constructed in the median wherever possible. Consideration should also be given to providing safe, well-marked crossings of New Hampshire Avenue and the service road at Schindler Drive and at Northwest Drive/Relocated Michelson Road. If no crossing of New Hampshire Avenue is to be allowed at McCeney Avenue, appropriate signs should be provided directing pedestrians to adjacent intersections.

Part of improving the safety at all intersections, signalized or not, is ensuring they have a sufficient level of lighting to permit drivers to see pedestrians in the roadway. Staff recommends that SHA evaluate the proposed lighting on this project and augment it as necessary to provide the lighting levels recommended by the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IESNA).

### **Community Concerns**

Many of the issues expressed by the local community have been addressed in the course of the design process. Much of this was discussed during the community meeting. The following summarizes the nature of responses by state and county staff to community concerns listed above.

1. Alternative access to the FDA site from US 29 would have to be identified in the master plan before a project is considered for development.
2. Area transit stops and routings will be carefully evaluated and coordinated with the county.
3. Cut through traffic will be minimized by the "no entry" restriction between Northwest Drive and Michelson Drive. Parking at the FDA should be adequate and convenient, minimizing potential local parking infringement issues. If traffic or parking problems develop, the county has a process in place to work with the community in addressing such issues.
4. The New Hampshire project has been designed to encourage traffic to use the US 29 interchange in lieu of Lockwood Drive. The interchange's northbound to southbound ramps are improved and the single left turn lane at Lockwood has been maintained to discourage additional turns at that location.
5. Pedestrian crossing times and crosswalk and ramp locations will be carefully evaluated in the course of preparing final designs. SHA is evaluating the addition of a sidewalk on the west side of New Hampshire Avenue through the US 29 interchange and the county is considering sidewalk improvements along Lockwood Drive.

6. Landscaping plans will be coordinated with the golf course design plan work which is underway. SHA has agreed to review landscape improvements on the southbound side of New Hampshire Avenue.

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

In consideration of the evaluation of the project and related concerns, staff recommends that the Planning Board approve the project with the following comments:

1. Prepare final landscape plans in coordination with staff, with particular attention to these specific concerns:
  - a. Compatibility with the golf course design
  - b. Incorporate improvement to landscaping on the west side of New Hampshire Avenue.
  - c. Landscape medians which are six feet in width or greater.
  - d. Provide landscape panels with street trees between proposed sidewalks and roadway wherever possible.
2. Prepare final plans in coordination with the golf course design process, including final determination of its access road location.
3. Coordinate transit stop locations, crosswalks, and curb ramp locations in final design with the county to assure they are ADA-compliant, provide adequate median refuge areas, and that there are sufficient pedestrian crossings.
4. In the commercial areas along New Hampshire Avenue, sidewalks should have a 3-foot offset from the curb or be a minimum of 8'-3" wide. To the north of the White Oak Shopping Center entrance, where more right-of-way exists, the proposed sidewalk should be offset from the curb by eight to fourteen feet.
5. Provide sufficient lighting to meet the recommendations of the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America.
6. All intersections, including "T" intersections, should be made ADA compliant.

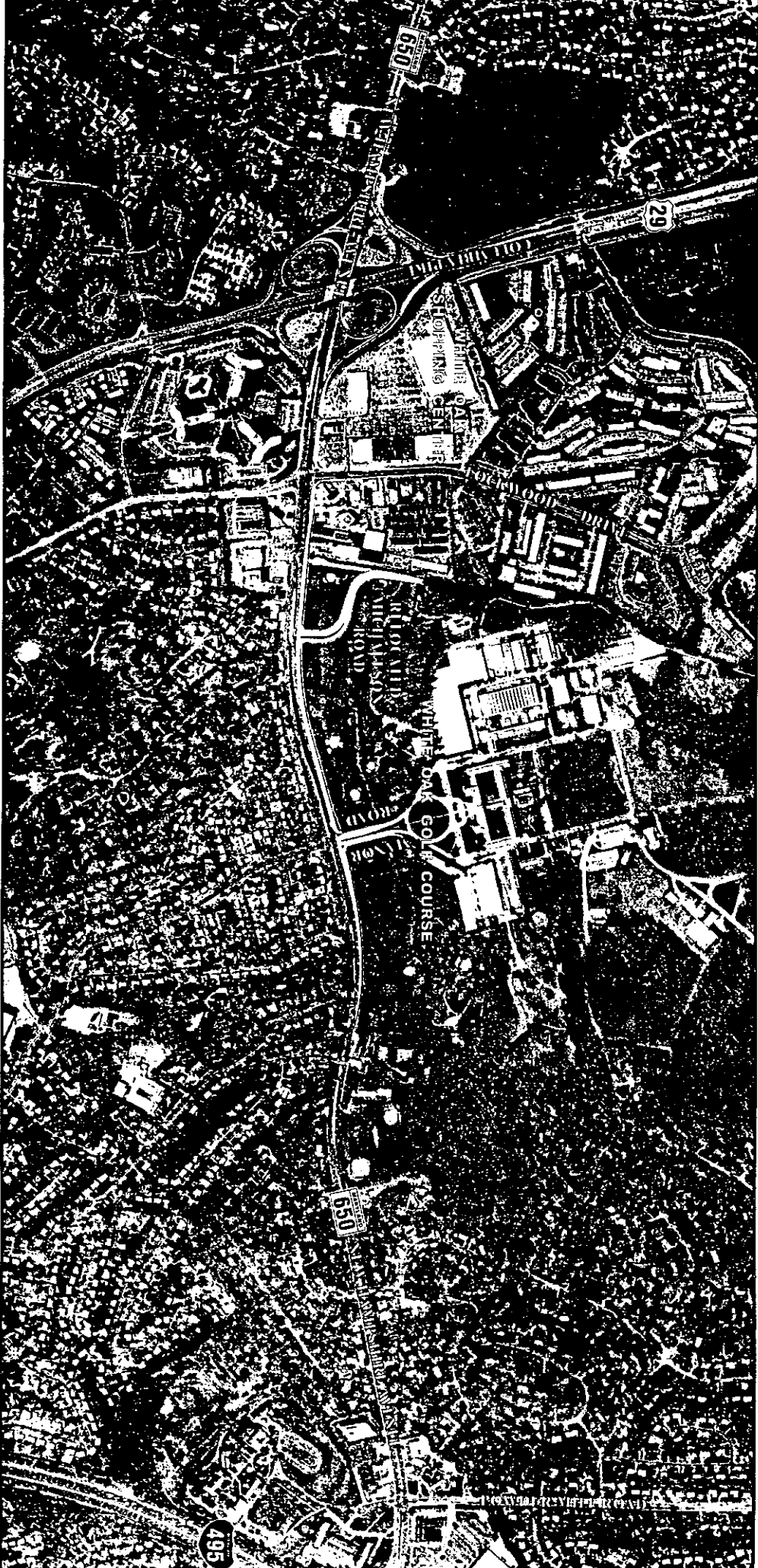
cc: Marion Clark  
Calvin Nelson  
Larry Cole  
Bob Simpson, DPWT  
Ken Briggs, SHA

### **Attachments**

JA:ss\D:\PlanningBoardMemos\SHA-0100x-joe.doc



1110000 (ONGW) HADAPP SHUC (AVC) THHPPOV...  
North of US 29 to South of Powder Mill Road





M-NCPPC



MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARK & PLANNING

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL  
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

8787 Georgia Avenue  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760

August 17, 2001

Re: Improvements for MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue) from  
Power Mill Road to north of US 29 (Colesville Road)

Dear Civic Group Leader and Property Owner:

The State Highway Administration (SHA) is planning a project to improve MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue) at Powder Mill Road and from Chalmers Road to north of US 29. The project will add an additional north bound lane to New Hampshire Avenue and reconfigure some of the intersections. These improvements are intended to accommodate the development of the Federal Research Center at White Oak by the Food and Drug Administration. The SHA would like comments on the proposed improvements.

You are invited to a public open house to view the design concepts for the improvements. The meeting will be held on **Monday, September 10, 2001, 7-9 pm** at CHI Centers, 10501 New Hampshire Avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland 20903

The session will be informal and designed to show attendees the proposal and to take comments. Staff from SHA and the Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT), along with M-NCPPC will be on hand.

Also, for your information, the Planning Board is tentatively scheduled to review the design proposals during its regular meeting on Thursday, October 25, 2001. The public may direct comments on the project to the Planning Board. If you are interested in attending or testifying, as always, please double check on the Board's date and time prior to attending, at 301-495-4600, during the week preceding their meeting. Submit any formal comments on the project to Arthur Holmes, Jr., Chairman of the Montgomery County Planning Board, 8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3760. Also, please send me a copy at the same address.

If you wish to see the detailed plans, please call me or Larry Cole (301)495-4528 to make arrangements to see them in our office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Joe Anderson'.

Joe Anderson, Planner  
County-wide Planning Division  
Telephone: 301-650-4373

JA:ss\wp-G:\JOE\ja634-3.wpd

CC: Ken Briggs, SHA; Bob Simpson, DPWT; Bill Barron, M-NCPPC; Larry Cole, M-NCPPC