

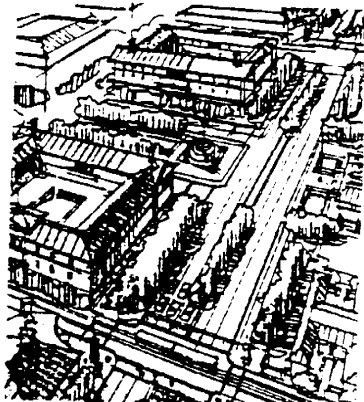
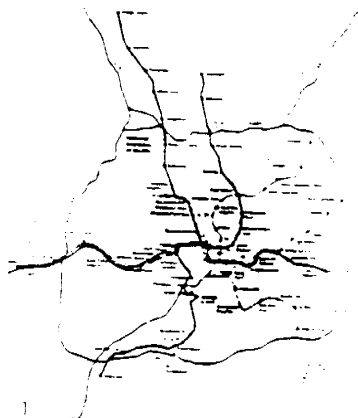
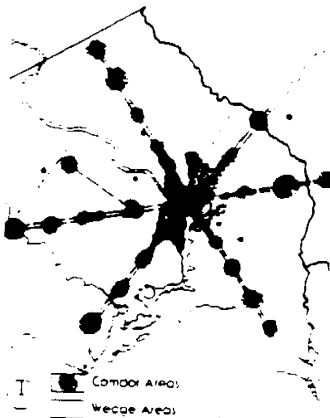
ATTACHMENT # 2

TITLE: *TRANSPORTATION POLICY REPORT II*-Staff Report,
14 December 2001. Pages circle 1 to circle 7.

TRANSPORTATION POLICY REPORT II

STAFF REPORT

December 14, 2001



The Maryland – National Capital Park and Planning Commission

As disadvantages, the ICC would:

- Increase vehicle miles traveled (VMT) countywide and increase average trip distance
- Increase total congested VMT countywide
- Negatively affect the environment in a number of irreparable ways by splitting interior forests, impinging on wetlands in a high quality watershed, reducing parkland, and potentially decreasing air quality (see increased VMT)
- Absorb fiscal resources that might otherwise be spent on transit
- Adversely affect local neighborhoods.
- The full Master Plan alignment is problematic under current environmental regulations
- Many intersections would still be over desirable congestion levels .
- The ICC may have a sprawl-inducing impact on land use.

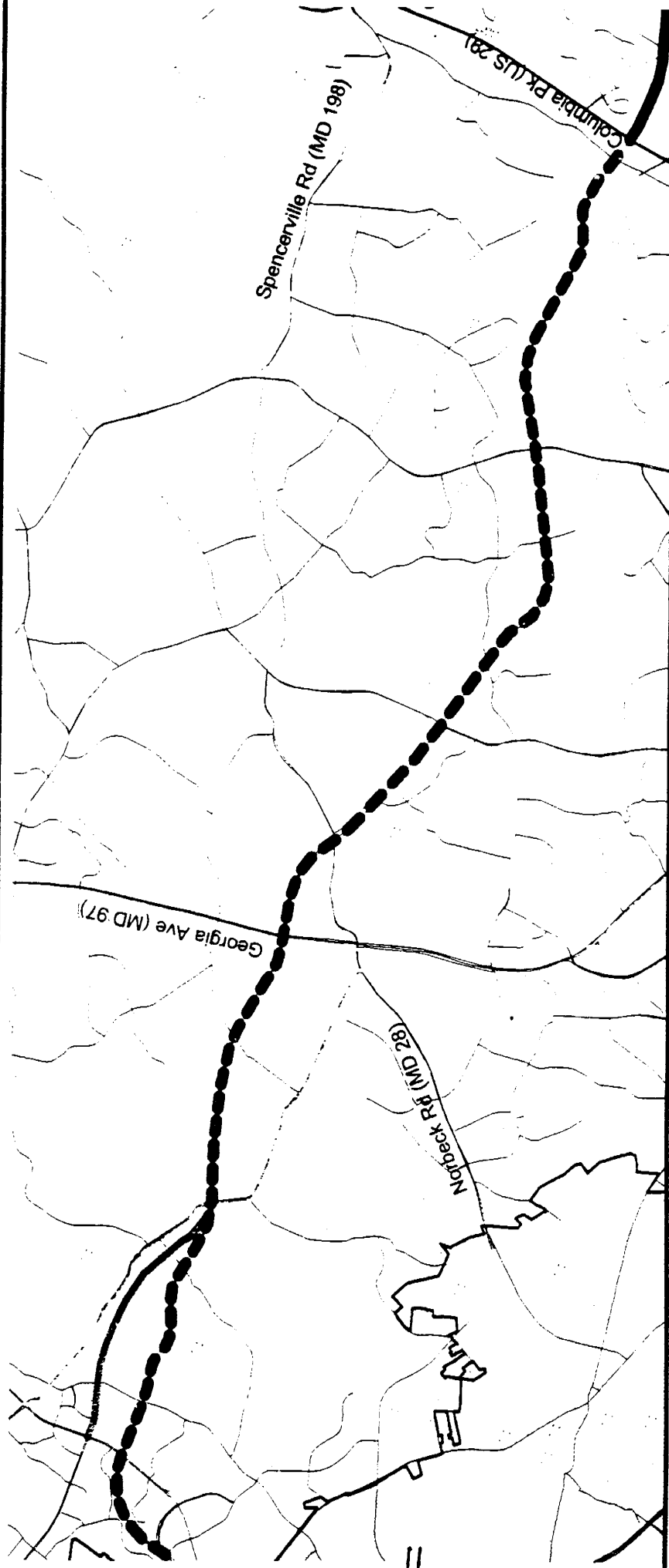
Staff Recommendations on the ICC

The following recommendations are based on a number of findings about the roadway network in the corridor between Shady Grove Road and U.S. 29.








Staff have reviewed the extensive forecasting done for the TPR II, and part of the Upper Rock Creek Master Plan analysis that examined in detail many of the roadway alternatives in the western part of the ICC corridor.

From this analysis, staff recommends that the Planning Board and County Council:

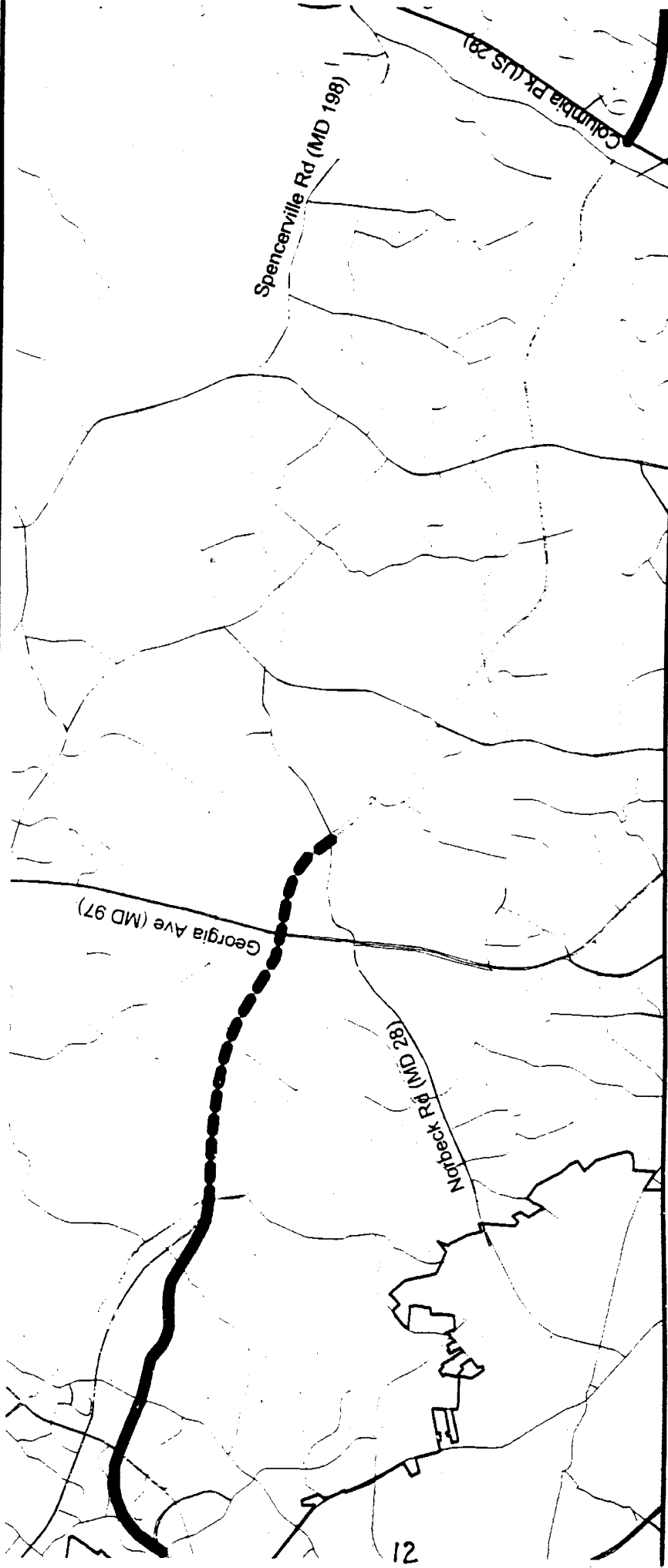
- Make a decision about the ICC in the section between MD 28 and U.S. 29. Staff recommends completing an EIS for the Master Plan ICC alignment, to determine if a roadway configuration and environmental mitigation that will allow for a four-lane freeway with two additional bus/HOV (six lanes total) lanes can be constructed between I-370 and U.S. 29. After completion of the EIS and the accompanying documentation, consider a public referendum on the project. If the EIS and the referendum support building the ICC, then begin project planning and programming.
- Irrespective of any ICC decisions, construct the Eastern Connector in the ICC right-of-way from the master plan ICC interchange with U.S. 29 to U.S. 1. The Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) soon will begin detailed planning for the Eastern Connector to determine how intersections are to be handled and what the cross section should be.
- If it is determined that the full ICC cannot be built, build the Western Connector, a four-lane major arterial highway between the I-370 and MD 28, with at-grade intersections. This would provide the critical link between housing in the Georgia Avenue corridor and the jobs and other activities in the I-270 corridor. Four lanes are consistent with the number of lanes that will be on MD 28/MD-198 from MD 97 to US 29 and the at-grade intersections will create a link in balance with the remaining sections to the east.








Staff ICC Recommendations

-  Eastern Connector (US 29 to US 1) -- Build Regardless of Decision on Full ICC
-  Muncaster Mill Rd (MD 115) Widening -- Not Recommended
-  ICC Master Plan Alignment -- Complete EIS, Consider Public Referendum
-  Midcounty Highway (Shady Grove Rd to ICC) -- Build With Full ICC
-  Master Planned Highways
-  Selected Roads
-  Municipalities

What about the other lines?
ASB/BLR



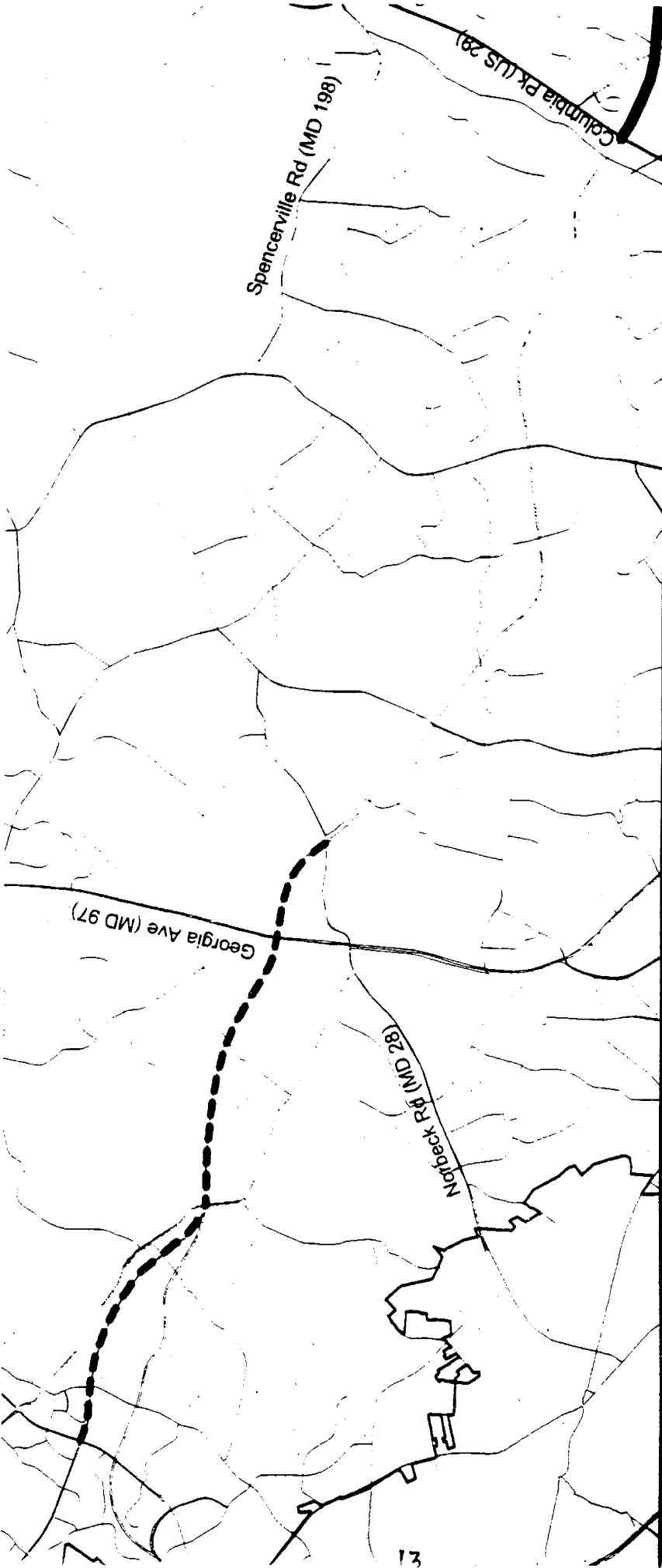
Staff ICC Recommendations

-  Eastern Connector (US 29 to US 1) -- Build Regardless of Decision on Full ICC
-  Muncaster Mill Rd (MD 115) Widening -- Not Recommended
-  Western Connector (I-370 to MD 28) -- Build If ICC Not Feasible
-  Master Planned Highways
-  Selected Roads
-  Municipalities

4

Transportation Policy Report II
Staff ICC Recommendations
Option 3

12/11/2001



- Staff ICC Recommendations
- Eastern Connector (US 29 to US 1) -- Build Regardless of Decision on Full ICC
- Muncaster Mill Rd (MD 115) Widening -- Not Recommended
- Midcounty Highway Extension (Shady Grove Rd to ICC Master Plan Alignment, Continue Via ICC Master Plan Alignment, Right of Way to MD 28) -- Build if Full ICC and Western Connector Not Feasible
- Master Planned Highways
- Selected Roads
- Municipalities

5

- If the full ICC is built, then also build the Midcounty Highway extension from the current intersection of Midcounty Highway and Shady Grove Road to the ICC, as shown in the master plan. This four-lane major highway would provide a needed network connection to areas east of I-270. This is one instance where the staff is recommending a facility that did not get a majority of Task Force votes.³
- If the decision is made not to construct either the full ICC or the Western Connector, then construct the Midcounty Highway extension from the Shady Grove Road to the point where the Master Plan alignment for Midcounty Highway intersects the ICC MPA right-of-way, then continue along the ICC MPA to reach MD 28. This alternative is preferable to widening Muncaster Mill Road (MD 115).

Table 1. Rock Creek Screenline

Scenario	Number of Lanes	Capacity (veh/hr)	Pk Hour Volume	Avg Vol/Cap	Avg Speed
1998 Base. Existing Network	6	7,980	6,465	0.81	15.8
2025 CLRP. Existing Network	6	7,980	7,375	0.92	10.8
2050 Base. Existing Network	6	7,980	7,665	0.96	8.4
2050 MP. Extension of M-83*	10	13,300	11,430	0.86	15.1
2050 Transit. Widen MD 115*	8	10,640	9,735	0.91	11.2
2050 Staff. Full ICC	12	21,180	17,175	0.81	24.7

* Note: M-83 is Midcounty Highway Extended; MD 115 is Muncaster Mill Road.

Table 1 presents travel forecast data for the ICC corridor, specifically those roadways crossing Rock Creek, including MD 28, Muncaster Mill Road, and the ICC alternatives. Six scenarios are shown: the 1998 Base, 2025 CLRP and 2050 Base all have the existing network assumptions crossing the screenline; the 2050 Master Plan network, which assumes a four-lane extension of Midcounty Highway; the 2050 Transit-Emphasis network, which assumes a widened four-lane Muncaster Mill Road; and the 2050 Staff network, which includes the full six-lane ICC (with HOV lanes). The capacity of the roadways crossing the screenline are presented along with the forecasted peak hour traffic volumes in both directions. The average volume-to-capacity ratio gives an indication of the amount of capacity that would be used and the congestion levels that would result. Average speed is a clear indicator of the performance of the roadways crossing the screenline.

The data show the following:

- Without any roadway improvements to the screenline, congestion levels would increase and the average speed would continue to drop from roughly 16 miles per hour in 1998 to 11 mph in 2025. If no improvements were made by 2050, the average speed would

³ The section of Midcounty Highway from Shady Grove Road to the ICC ROW received 16 affirmative votes from the Task Force, one vote short of the 17 required to keep a project "in play."

approach 8 mph. This would result in long delays and lost accessibility to jobs and households for central areas of the county. Some additional capacity is essential.

- The Intercounty Connector would provide significantly more capacity at much higher speeds than any of the alternatives. The peak hour capacity with the ICC is roughly double the screenline capacity if only Muncaster Mill Road is widened. The screenline speed for the 2050 staff network with the ICC is about 25 miles per hour, significantly higher than any other alternative and an improvement over existing conditions.
- Staff found that widening MD 115 did little to increase movement between Shady Grove Road and MD 28 and did not significantly improve speeds in the corridor. Average speed for the Rock Creek screenline would be about 11 mph in 2050 with the widening. In tests conducted for the Upper Rock Creek Master Plan, it was found that, even if Muncaster Mill Road were widened to four lanes, traffic would seek other routes because of the circuitous nature of this road in relation to the jobs and housing that it connects to in the Georgia Avenue and I-270 area. This widening also would be very disruptive in terms of impacts on environmental resources and households along it.
- An extension of the Midcounty Highway as a four-lane major highway would increase the screenline capacity by 66 percent and result in an average screenline speed of more than 15 mph, which is close to the existing speed.

The ICC is the most significant project in the proposed network in terms of increasing average speeds in the county, a key measure of system performance. The ICC would increase the average speed of all county travel by seven percent, even with increased VMT overall. Increasing VMT can be seen as a benefit in term of allowing more travel or a negative because of the effects on air quality.

Many significant benefits would be found at the District level,⁴ especially in the Eastern County and Georgia Avenue. In particular, improvements would include 19-percent increases in district-level average speed, reductions in the percent of congested lane miles and increased accessibility to jobs and households by auto and transit (due to bus services on the ICC HOV lanes). Access to jobs from homes in the Georgia Avenue district increased 10 percent, indicating how this area is becoming cut off from adjacent areas in the absence of roadway improvements.

The impacts of the full ICC on Montgomery County environmental resources are profound. Building the ICC is a choice in favor of accessibility and against the environment.

The ICC was included in the transportation network when all the current County Master Plans were adopted. Removing any major portion of the ICC, or all of it, would require a re-examination of zoning and development patterns and the transportation network throughout much of the County and particularly the middle and eastern portions. The effects on the Shady Grove area would be to cut it off from many county households.

⁴ For TPR II analysis below the countywide level, the county is divided into smaller areas called Districts. There are five (5) Districts: I-270 Corridor, Georgia Avenue, Eastern County, Inside the Beltway, & Rural.