



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

MCPB
ITEM # 17A-2
September 16, 2010

DATE: September 8, 2010

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Dan Hardy, Chief *DKH*
Move/Transportation Planning Division

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

DISCUSSION: BRAC roundtable: Chevy Chase Valley/Spring Valley Study Report
Platt Ridge Drive Extension through North Chevy Chase Local Park

The roundtable discussion of the traffic study performed by the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) for the Chevy Chase Valley neighborhood was originally scheduled for July 29, 2010. This memo is intended to update the Board on any changes that have occurred since July 21, 2010, the date of our original memo, which is shown as Attachment 1. The report itself is shown as Appendix C-9 on our BRAC website.

Planning and Parks Department staff will be meeting with MCDOT on September 13, 2010 at North Chevy Chase Local Park to discuss the new road recommended by MCDOT's study. The September 16, 2010 roundtable will provide the forum for MCDOT to brief the Board on the study and discuss the next steps.

Mandatory Referral of the Connecticut Avenue (MD185)/Jones Bridge Road/Kensington Parkway intersection

The Board reviewed and disapproved SHA's Mandatory Referral of the intersection project on July 22, 2010. The follow-up letter on that Board action is shown as Attachment 2. One reason for the Board's disapproval of that project was that the Chevy Chase Valley community expressed concerns that the potential adverse impacts of the intersection project had not been addressed. The potential extension of Platt Ridge Drive through North Chevy Chase Local Park is recommended by MCDOT as one of the measures to address Chevy Chase Valley neighborhood access and circulation concerns. This road extension is not recommended in a Master Plan and has not yet been reviewed by the Board.

Platt Ridge Drive Extension

MCDOT has endorsed the consultant's recommendation to install a temporary traffic signal on Jones Bridge Road at Spring Valley Road. Their proposed permanent solution to Chevy Chase

Valley's access problem would be to extend Platt Ridge Drive through North Chevy Chase Local Park. The Maryland SHA staff have also expressed support for this Platt Ridge Drive extension concept from a traffic safety perspective. Two optional alignments are proposed in the consultant study; one connecting to Woodlawn Road and the other to Montrose Driveway. Attachment 3 shows the proposed connection options (the recommended alternative is called Alternative 3 in the consultant's study) and the full study is available at the Planning Board's BRAC Mandatory Referral Supporting Documents Appendix C-9:

http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/transportation/brac/supporting_documents.shtml

All agencies recognize that community, environmental, and park impacts of the Platt Ridge Drive extension concept have not yet been addressed.

Subsequent to the Board's July 22 disapproval of the MD 185/Jones Bridge Road/Kensington Parkway intersection project, Councilmember Roger Berliner's wrote a letter to Maryland State Highway Administrator Neil Pedersen asking that funds be set aside for a possible Platt Ridge Drive extension (see Attachment 4). Mr. Pedersen responded that SHA was willing to begin preliminary engineering on the extension, conditioned on the Board's approval of the road and MCDOT's acceptance of the maintenance responsibility for the road, and indicated that available funds would be set aside for this project (see Attachment 5).

SHA and MCDOT have initiated discussions regarding lead agency roles, funding, process, and schedule for continued design work on the Platt Ridge Drive extension concept. The design studies would be expected to begin toward the end of calendar year 2010 and would take several months to complete. M-NCPPC involvement would be integral to the continued study regardless of whether MCDOT or SHA leads the next stage of study.



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE: July 21, 2010

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Dan Hardy, Chief *DKH*
Move/Transportation Planning Division

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

DISCUSSION: BRAC roundtable: Chevy Chase Valley Study Report

The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) recently released its report on the traffic study they performed at the request of residents of the Chevy Chase Valley neighborhood (The report is shown as Appendix C-9 on our BRAC website). These residents are concerned that access to their neighborhood is already very difficult from both Jones Bridge Road and Connecticut Avenue (MD185), and that it will be made more so by SHA's proposed intersection improvements.

Purpose of today's discussion

We are briefing the Board on the study to provide you an opportunity to express any concerns or opinions you may have in advance of a more detailed discussion with MCDOT and to discuss Planning Department and Parks Department staff recommendations that is will occur this fall.

Spring Valley Road

As part of the work to relocate the access to the Inner Loop for northbound traffic from Kensington Parkway to MD185, the Master Plan recommended that special attention be paid to the intersection of Jones Bridge Road and Spring Valley Road to improve access to the Chevy Chase Valley neighborhood in the northwest quadrant of the MD185/ Jones Bridge Road intersection.

SHA's proposed intersection improvements at MD185/Jones Bridge Road include construction of a continuous southbound right-turn lane on MD185, as discussed by the Board on July 22, 2010. The community fears that a continuous flow of traffic using this lane will make it more difficult for them to get in and out of their community. SHA proposes to allow right-turns-on-red from the right-turn lane, so while drivers are legally required to stop at a red signal before proceeding, there likely will not be significant breaks in the stream of traffic at many hours of the day.

The community originally requested a traffic signal on Jones Bridge Road at Spring Valley Road, but were told that the short distance between this signal and the one at MD185 would adversely affect the latter signal. They then suggested that a new roadway connection be constructed between the western terminus of Montrose Driveway and Jones Bridge Road opposite Platt Ridge Drive.

In response, MCDOT offered to conduct a neighborhood traffic study to look at four options for alleviating this problem. The alternatives, developed with input from the community and our staff, were:

1. Installation of a new traffic signal at MD185/Montrose Driveway, as noted above.
2. Installation of a new traffic signal at Jones Bridge Road/Spring Valley Road.
3. Construction of a new road extending through North Chevy Chase Local Park from the western terminus of Montrose Driveway or Woodlawn Road to Jones Bridge Road at Platt Ridge Drive, a signalized intersection.
4. Construction of a new road from the western terminus of Montrose Driveway (as noted above) or Woodlawn Road to the existing park road in North Chevy Chase Local Park.

MCDOT's consultant's concludes that the Alternative 3 is the best permanent solution – a new road through North Chevy Chase Local Park tying into Platt Ridge Drive. However, the Planning Department and Planning Board need to develop a formal staff recommendation on the consultant report, particularly since the recommended alternative requires parkland. Since SHA's goal is to get the BRAC intersection projects constructed as near as possible to the September 15, 2011 BRAC opening date, there is not sufficient time to develop interagency consensus on recommendations, design and construct any new road in advance of SHA's project. Therefore, the consultant also recommended that Alternative 2 – a traffic signal at Jones Bridge Road/Spring Valley Road – be built as an interim solution.

MCDOT has endorsed the consultant's findings and indicated that they will be installing the signal prior to SHA's construction. They would like to meet with our staff and the Planning Board to discuss the proposed new road on parkland sometime this fall.



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN

August 18, 2010

Neil Pedersen
State Highway Administration Transportation
Office of the Administrator
707 North Calvert Street
C-400
Baltimore, MD 21202

RE: Connecticut Avenue (MD185)/Jones Bridge Road/Kensington Parkway Intersection
SHA Contract No. MO5935570

Mandatory Referral No. MR2010808

Dear Mr. Pedersen:

The Planning Board reviewed the Mandatory Referral of this project at our regularly scheduled meeting on July 22, 2010 and disapproved the project because of the reasons listed below.

As with the other intersection projects being pursued in response to the BRAC move of Walter Reed Hospital to the National Naval Medical center campus, we appreciate the State Highway Administration's efforts to mitigate the transportation impacts to this area of the county. We believe, though, that in addition to the concerns raised by our staff in their memo to us (see Enclosure 1), we did not have sufficient information to be able to approve this project. Our concerns are:

1. Our staff received a revised Mandatory Referral submission on July 7th, only one week prior to the due date for a public posting of their memo to us. We believe that the truncated review time was not sufficient for a full review.
2. Phase 3 was deleted from the project under review, but since the intent is to build it as part of the same overall BRAC program, it should have been submitted with Phases 1 and 2.
3. The ultimate SHA proposal requires the Board's approval of a forest conservation easement revision as well as additional park impacts that were not submitted for Mandatory Referral review.
4. The combined SHA and MCDOT agency proposals to address access concerns to the Chevy Chase Valley community that could be adversely affected by the proposed project seem to

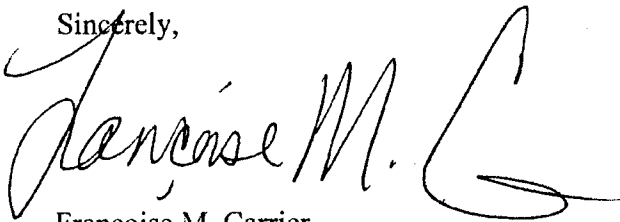
prematurely presume M-NCPPC concurrence on a new roadway crossing North Chevy Chase Local Park.

5. The eastern end of the Jones Bridge Road Shared Use Path project proposed by MCDOT is affected by your project as submitted and also by the Phase 3 project. In our approval of MCDOT's project on July 15, 2010, we recommended that the eastern 350 feet be constructed as part of your intersection project, but also that an alignment of the path along the south side of Jones Bridge Road be considered (see Enclosure 2).
6. Providing a good level of landscaping as part of these projects is important in achieving the residents' vision for their community, the fulfillment of the Master Plan's vision for the Green Corridors Policy, and the General Plan's vision for the county (See Enclosure 3, a memo from our Urban Design Division). This is true on Connecticut Avenue as well as the other state highways covered by these projects.
7. While the BRAC coordination process demonstrated extensive community coordination, the public testimony we received revealed that the affected communities and individual property owners at this location do not yet have either an understanding or consensus on how their long-standing access and safety concerns are being addressed. The community's concerns, and ours, are exacerbated by the many moving parts itemized above.

We request a response in 60 days to the issues raised above, including the status of the Section 4(f) evaluation (avoidance, minimization, and mitigation strategies), and how improvements at this intersection will be pursued.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions or comments concerning our review, please do not hesitate to call me at 301-495-4605, or you may call Larry Cole at 301-495-4528.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Françoise M. Carrier". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the typed name.

Françoise M. Carrier
Chair

Enclosures (3)

Study Alternative 3

Construction of a new road through North Chevy Chase Local Park from the western terminus of Montrose Driveway or Woodlawn Road to the existing traffic signal at Jones Bridge Road and Platt Ridge Drive.





MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

ROGER BERLINER
COUNCILMEMBER
DISTRICT 1

July 27, 2010

Mr. Neil Pedersen
Administrator
Maryland State Highway Administration
PO Box 717
Baltimore, MD 21203-0717

Dear Administrator Pedersen:

Thank you for the many hours you and your staff have worked to make the improvements around the revamped National Navy Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland a hoped for success. I realize this has been a very difficult challenge given the federal, state and local competing and over lapping jurisdictions and the lack of certainty for funding for these improvements.

There have been many many hours of public and private meetings, numerous phone calls and much cooperation prior to the consideration of the proposed intersection improvements before the Montgomery County Planning Board last week. Much of the deliberations before the Board last week centered upon the Connecticut Avenue and Jones Bridge Road intersection. Earlier this year, members of the Chevy Chase Valley community asked for help with ingress and egress for their community with the proposed improvements to Connecticut Avenue in mind.

As a result, the County funded the Spring Valley Traffic Study that was completed in June 2010. The study's recommendations call for a traffic signal at Jones Bridge Road and Spring Valley Road as an interim measure anticipating the BRAC improvements designed by your agency. Further, the study describes as the operationally best option to be the construction of an extended Platt Ridge Drive. Other options were considered as a part of this study.

During last weeks' considerations, our staffs conferred on the possibility that BRAC designated monies could be used in the event that the Platt Ridge Road option becomes viable. We are early in this review process and need more consideration of community views as well as a concurrence from the Montgomery County Department of Parks as their land would be impacted for this possible solution.

Given the timing of the BRAC intersection improvement construction schedule, my understanding is that when monies are available they will be allocated for these projects. I was gratified that your staff indicated a willingness to include the possible Platt Ridge Road project for funding under BRAC. I am hoping you will set aside \$2 million when funds become available so that this project can proceed with funding if and

when the solution is embraced. I understand this set side would not be forever but, at this time, it would be appropriate for the community to understand that their concerns are being addressed on equal footing with all intersection impacts.

Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roger Berliner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Roger" and last name "Berliner" clearly distinguishable.

Roger Berliner
Councilmember
District 1



Martin O'Malley, *Governor*
Anthony G. Brown, *Lt. Governor*

Beverley K. Swaim-Staley, *Secretary*
Neil J. Pedersen, *Administrator*

August 18, 2010

The Honorable Roger Berliner
Montgomery County Council
6th Floor
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville MD 20850

Dear Councilmember Berliner:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Intersection Improvement Project at MD 185 (Connecticut Avenue) and Jones Bridge Road/Kensington Parkway. The State Highway Administration (SHA) understands the importance of this project, not only for the BRAC implementation in Bethesda, but also for the residents of the surrounding area. In particular, your letter urges SHA to set aside \$2 million.

Mitigating for BRAC and providing improvements that benefit all stakeholders have been, and continue to be, challenging endeavors. My staff and I will continue to work to seek resolution to the concerns of the Chevy Chase Valley Community. Communication and coordination with that community has been ongoing, and I am confident we will be able to reach consensus.

The SHA has reviewed and evaluated the Spring Valley traffic study provided by the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT). The SHA concurs with the county's findings that the Platt Ridge Road Extension will provide the best solution to address the community access concerns, while minimizing the impacts to the surrounding roadway network. The extension of Platt Ridge Road will have impacts to the North Chevy Chase Local Park, owned by the Maryland-National Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC). The SHA also supports the construction of a temporary traffic signal at Jones Bridge Road and Spring Valley Road. We also agree that the Spring Valley Road signal is a reasonable way to address the access concerns in the interim, while the ultimate solution is sought.

My telephone number/toll-free number is 410-545-0400 or 1-800-206-0770
Maryland Relay Service for Impaired Hearing or Speech 1.800.735.2258 Statewide Toll Free

Street Address: 707 North Calvert Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21202 • Phone 410.545.0300 • www.roads.maryland.com

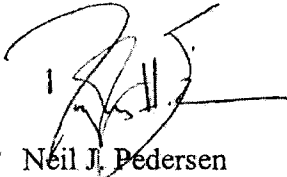
The Honorable Roger Berliner

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The BRAC intersection project at MD 185 and Jones Bridge Road/Kensington Parkway has been separated into three phases. At this point, only Phase 1 and Phase 2 will be moving forward, given funding and timing constraints. When funds become available, SHA agrees to begin the preliminary engineering phase for the Platt Ridge Road Extension, provided that MCDOT accepts the ownership and maintenance responsibilities of the new roadway and the Montgomery County Planning Board and M-NCPPC support the park impacts of the new roadway. The SHA will not exhaust funding and move forward with the Platt Ridge Road Extension without full support from MCDOT, M-NCPPC, and the Planning Board.

Thank you again for your letter. If we may be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me or Ms. Barbara L. Solberg, Assistant Division Chief, Highway Design Division, SHA at 410-545-8830, toll-free 1-888-228-5003 or via email at bsolberg@sha.state.md.us.

Sincerely,



Neil J. Pedersen
Administrator

cc: Mr. Arthur Holmes, Director, Montgomery County Department of Transportation
Ms. Barbara L. Solberg, Assistant Chief, Highway Design Division, SHA
Mr. Brian W. Young, District Engineer, SHA