

Greetings:

As part of the American Legion Bridge I-270 to I-370 improvements, the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) is taking steps to improve travel in the National Capital Region, while taking considerable care to protect the significant historic and environmental resources within the area.

One example of MDOT SHA's commitment to preserving historic sites is the Morningstar Tabernacle No. 88 Moses Hall and Cemetery, as well as the adjacent First Agape African American Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Since the late 19th century, the Morningstar Moses Cemetery has been a final resting place for African Americans in the Cabin John area of Montgomery County. This historical site remains an important and hallowed space for the descendants. The community has published a comprehensive website highlighting the importance of this sacred ground and can be found here:

<https://www.friendsofmoseshall.org/>

In early 2020, MDOT SHA began consultation with leadership from the First Agape African American Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, the Friends of Moses Hall, the Federal Highway Administration, the Maryland Historical Trust along with numerous other consulting parties. Through these conversations, MDOT SHA learned more about the property and how to preserve it. As part of our continued collaboration, MDOT SHA officially documented the Moses Hall Cemetery as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, and the Maryland Historical Trust concurred.

In January of this year, MDOT SHA began removing invasive bamboo at the cemetery to facilitate the documentation of marked graves and the archaeological site of Moses Hall. Once the invasive bamboo was removed, maintenance crews were called upon to stabilize the soil and divert stormwater by planting grass seed, laying appropriate soil matting, and straw bales. This summer, a remote sensing survey will be carried out across the cemetery property and within MDOT SHA right of way in an attempt to locate unmarked graves. All of this work is being closely coordinated with the Friends of Moses Hall.



Dr. Julie Schablitsky, MDOT SHA Chief Archaeologist, points out a marked grave at the Morningstar Moses Hall Cemetery to visitors.

To be responsive to additional comments heard from the Friends of Moses Hall, a metal gate was installed at the entrance to the cemetery on Seven Locks Road to discourage trespassing, and litter was removed from the cemetery. MDOT SHA is also working with a landscape architect, in consultation with the owner, to add native plantings on the cemetery property, where appropriate. Extensive coordination with leadership from the First Agape African American Methodist Episcopal Zion Church is also ongoing to address existing stormwater issues and identify appropriate mitigation for any potential impacts to the property.

Concurrently, MDOT SHA continued to refine the design of the high-occupancy toll (HOT) lane improvements and successfully developed new design options that avoid ground disturbance within the cemetery boundary. The new design will be included as part of the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

We thank you for your continued interest in the P3 Program and look forward to sharing more information like this with you. If you have questions or comments, you may call [833-858-5960](tel:833-858-5960) or email 495-270-P3@mdot.maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey T. Folden, PE, DBIA

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<https://495-270-p3.com/>