



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

MCPB Item: 12

Date: March 30, 2023

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

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SUBJECT: Recommendation for Permanent Two-Lane Configuration of Little Falls Parkway
Between Arlington Road and Dorset Avenue

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE the long-term configuration of two opposing drive lanes along Little Falls Parkway between Arlington Road and Dorset Avenue.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND TIMELINE

Little Falls Parkway (Parkway) is a Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (Parks) owned roadway originally constructed in the 1960's to provide access to Little Falls Stream Valley Park and connectivity between MD 190 (River Road), MD 191 (Bradley Boulevard), MD 396 (Massachusetts Avenue), and residential communities in the area.

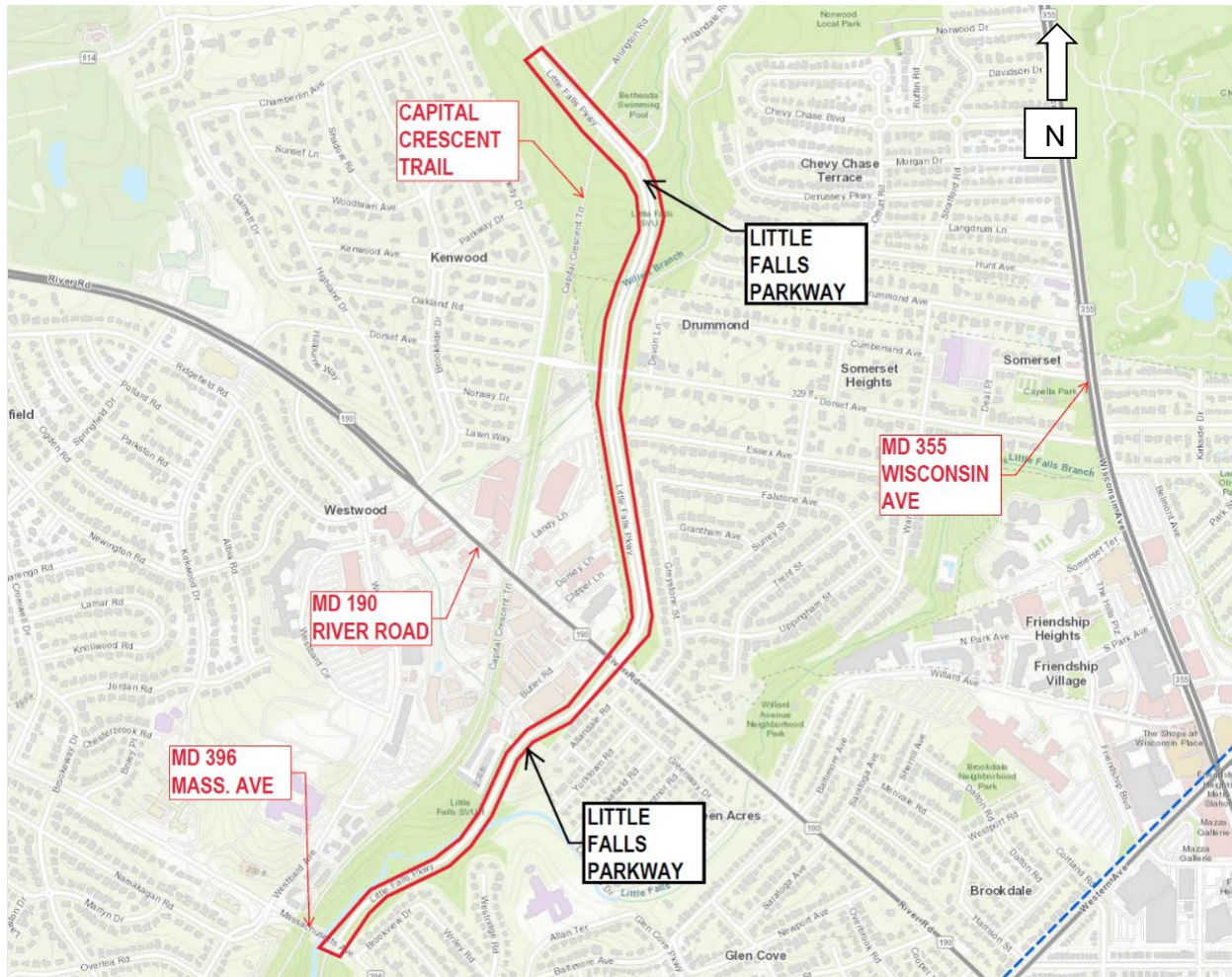


Figure 1: Location Map

The Parkway was originally built with a two-lane cross section (opposing drive lanes) at its northern terminus at Fairfax Road and between MD 190 and MD 396, with a four-lane cross section (two drive lanes northbound, two drive lanes southbound, with a grass median separation) between Arlington Road and MD 190.

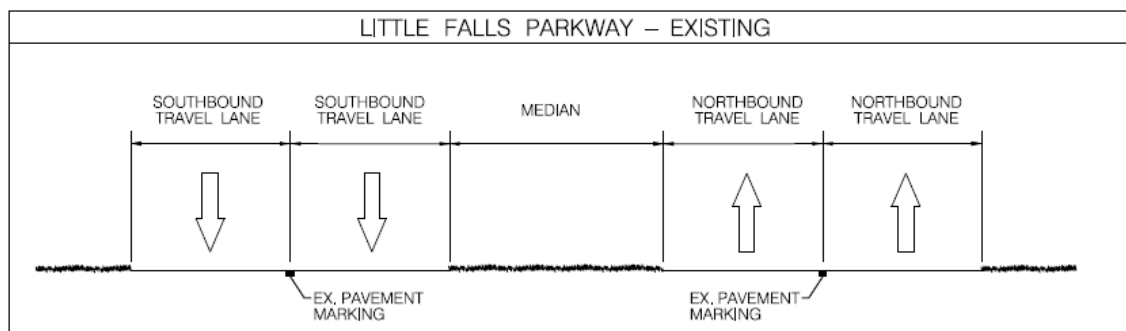


Figure 2: Existing Road Section in 2016 between Arlington Rd and MD 190

Between Arlington Road and Hillandale Road, the Capital Crescent Trail (CCT) crosses the Parkway. The Capital Crescent Trail was built in the 1990's and is an 11-mile hard surface shared use trail, using the abandoned B&O Railroad corridor, extending from Silver Spring to Georgetown in the District of Columbia.

The Capital Crescent Trail crossing at Little Falls Parkway has historically been the site of frequent conflicts between trail users and motorists. Prior to 2017, the four-lane cross-section on Little Falls Parkway allowed for the multiple-lane threat scenario – a recognized traffic safety problem occurring along road sections that are more than two lanes wide and have an uncontrolled crossing (no traffic signal or stop sign). A multiple-lane threat crash involves a driver stopping in one lane on a multilane road to permit pedestrians/cyclists to cross, and an adjacent oncoming vehicle (in the same direction) striking the pedestrian/cyclist who is crossing in front of the stopped vehicle. This crash occurs because the first stopped vehicle obscures the view of the second advancing vehicle who subsequently fails to yield.

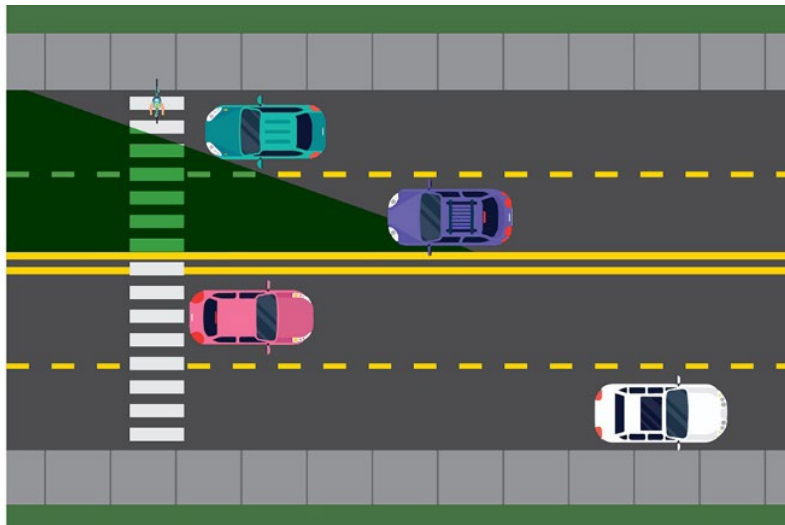


Figure 3: Multiple Lane Threat Scenario

Following a bicyclist fatality¹ at the crossing in October 2016, Montgomery Parks in coordination with Park Police and the Montgomery County Department of Transportation, implemented Vision Zero-based safety improvements along Little Falls Parkway between Arlington and Hillandale Roads. Montgomery County is the first suburban county in the United States to commit to [Vision Zero](#): a national initiative to eliminate pedestrian and bicyclist traffic fatalities and conflicts, while increasing safe, healthy, and equitable mobility for all pedestrians. **A key principle of Vision Zero is “human life takes priority over mobility and other objectives of the road system.”**

The safety improvements included an interim road diet that reduced the cross-section of Little Falls Parkway from four lanes to two lanes at the trail crossing, by closing the outside travel lane in each direction. The travel lanes were closed off with chains and flexible posts, and the speed limit was reduced from 35 mph to 25 mph. The grass median dividing the northbound and southbound travel lanes remained. Subsequent traffic study from 2017 through 2019 showed a decrease in reported crashes of over 50% at the crossing and along this Parkway segment.

¹ Hensley, S (2016, Oct 17). 81-year-Old Bicyclist Struck by vehicle in Bethesda Dies. *WTOP*.
<https://wtop.com/montgomery-county/2016/10/81-year-old-bicyclist-struck-by-vehicle-in-bethesda-dies/>

With the success of the road diet at the CCT crossing in improving trail user safety, Parks presented a Facility Plan recommendation to the Montgomery County Planning Board in June 2019 to build upon the interim road diet with a permanent two-lane Parkway cross-section from Arlington Road to Hillandale Road. The May 2019 County Planning Board memorandum, *Facility Plan Recommendation for Capital Crescent Trail Crossing at Little Falls Parkway Safety Improvements Project*, contains additional information and concept plans. The Planning Board asked Parks to study re-alignment of the CCT trail crossing to the intersection with Arlington Road, with an improved pedestrian signal. The requested re-alignment had been studied during development of the facility plan but was ultimately not recommended by Parks staff due to **increased** travel delays² for vehicles as well as trail users.

Soon after, in July 2019, the County Council's Transportation and Environment (T&E) Committee submitted a letter to the Planning Board expressing concern that removing the road diet would be a setback for Vision Zero and put pedestrians and bicyclists at risk. The letter is included in the appendix.

In September 2019, the Planning Board voted to delay the project to realign the CCT crossing beyond the 6-year Parks Capital Improvements Program (CIP) and maintain the existing interim road diet. The Board also asked Parks to further improve safety at the CCT crossing by installing a raised crosswalk, similar to the ones installed along Sligo Creek Parkway. The raised crosswalk was subsequently installed in summer 2020.

In May of 2020, the County Council voted to remove the project to realign the CCT crossing to Arlington Road from the Parks FY21-26 CIP. The following language was added to the PDF, attached to this memo in the appendix: THIS PROJECT WAS NOT APPROVED FOR THE FY21-26 CIP.

Observation of the CCT crossing and implemented safety improvements since has shown further significant decrease in reported crashes, achieving the Vision Zero goal.

Open Parkways Program Background

In 2020, Montgomery Parks initiated the Open Parkways Program, which closed portions of Sligo Creek Parkway, Beach Drive, and Little Falls Parkway to vehicles during the weekends, to provide additional outdoor recreational space during the COVID-19 pandemic. This program expanded on the intended recreational use of the parkways and proved very popular. When closed to vehicles, the parkways are a welcoming venue to walkers, joggers, cyclists, rollerbladers, and people safely participating in various other forms of recreation.

In June 2021, the Montgomery County Council passed a resolution in support of enhancing Open Streets and the Open Parkways programs.

The Little Falls Open Parkway Program was originally implemented from Massachusetts Avenue to Fairfax Road and operated from Friday morning through Sunday evening each weekend. This portion of the Open Parkways Program was suspended during the winter of 2020 due to operational challenges but was reinstated in March 2021 with the installation of traffic control gates, which eased the operational burden of closing the parkway to vehicles on the weekends. When the Open Parkway was reinstated, its limits were reduced to River Road to Fairfax Road and the operational hours were reduced to Saturdays and Sundays. The program

² Per the 2019 Facility Plan, re-aligning the trail to the Arlington Road signal requires a dedicated pedestrian crossing only phase that increases delays and travel times for all users

proved to be popular, averaging over 3,000 users on a given weekend, but the closure of Little Falls Parkway led to cut-through traffic in adjacent neighborhoods as drivers found new routes to reach their destination during the closures.

Pilot Project: Phase I

To maintain a segment of the Parkway open to safe recreational use while mitigating cut-through traffic on adjacent residential roadways, Parks coordinated with the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) to implement a “pilot project” to revise the alignment of the Parkway between Arlington Road and Dorset Avenue. The pilot program was conducted in phases to ensure 24/7 vehicular usage along the Parkway and allow traffic counts to be taken to confirm results.

The Phase I alignment was implemented in May 2022 and consisted of extending the existing road diet between Arlington Road and Hillandale Road by adding flexible posts that close off one drive lane in each direction, while still always allowing for full vehicle access in the remaining drive lane. This effectively extended the interim road diet that had been in place at the CCT crossing since 2017.

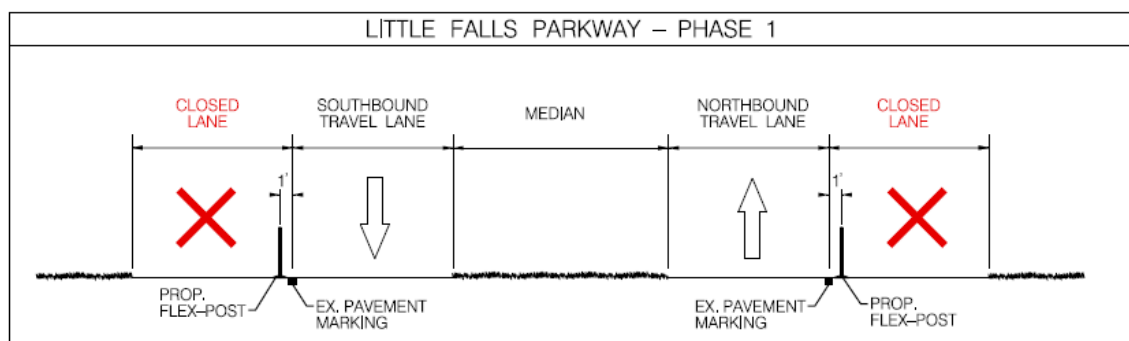


Figure 4: Pilot Project Phase 1

With two lanes now open to vehicles 24/7, traffic studies conducted in July 2022 and September 2022 showed a substantial decrease in weekend traffic volumes on Kennedy Drive and Brookside Drive (in the Kenwood community) with no significant difference in traffic volumes on the Parkway or other adjacent roadways. The Parkway was processing similar vehicle volumes in a two-lane section as the previous four-lane section, confirming the Parkway with a two-lane section has sufficient capacity to accommodate all traffic demand.

Pilot Project: Phase II (Current Conditions)

In November 2022, Parks built upon the demonstrated functionality of the Phase I two-lane cross section by implementing Phase II, which is the current condition encountered on the Parkway between Arlington Road and Dorset Avenue.

The Phase II re-alignment maintained two travel lanes but shifted all vehicles to the previous two northbound travel lanes, providing a single lane of travel in each direction with no median separation. Associated modifications to intersection traffic signals and signage were also performed by MCDOT to support this effort. **This roadway section matches Little Falls Parkway between River Road (MD 190) and Massachusetts Avenue (MD 396) and is the same as other Park roads including Beach Drive and Sligo Creek Parkway, as well as numerous two-lane roads and highways in Montgomery County.** Speed limits for the entire

segment of the Parkway between Arlington Rd and MD 190 were lowered to 25 mph, matching the maximum speed limit of other Park roads.

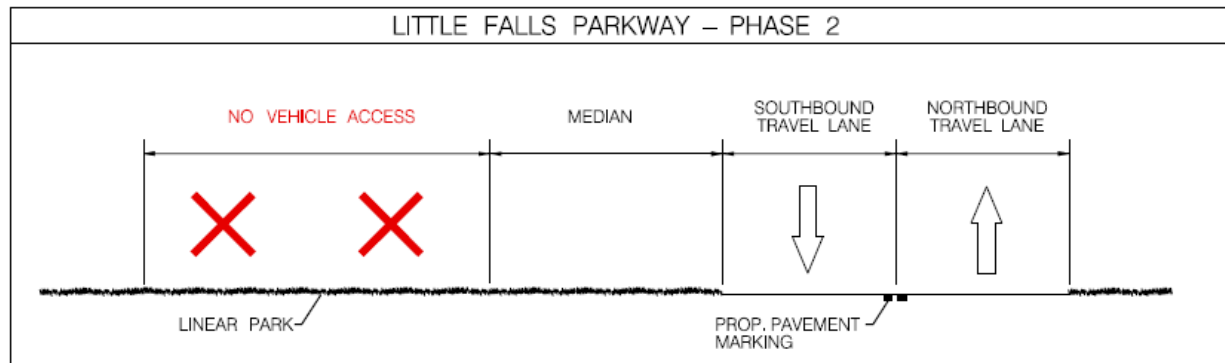


Figure 5: Pilot Project Phase 2

The remaining two southbound lanes of the Parkway no longer convey vehicle traffic and effectively provide the Open Parkway recreational experience 24 hours 7 days a week, without negatively affecting the functionality of the Parkway.

Parks conducted additional traffic studies throughout 2022, which show the Parkway continues to serve as much traffic with two traffic lanes as it did with four lanes, but with added benefits consistent with Vision Zero safety, public recreation, and environmental goals.

Parks staff recommends Board approval of the long-term configuration of two opposing drive lanes along Little Falls Parkway between Arlington Road and Dorset Avenue, with future study of repurposing removed travel lanes.

MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Montgomery County Vision Zero 2030 Action Plan (FY22-23 Work Plan), Approved and Adopted November 2017

Montgomery County is one of the first counties in the United States to adopt Vision Zero policy, which originated in Sweden in 1997 and is credited with significant reductions in fatal and severe collisions there. Starting in the 2000's, numerous jurisdictions in the United States adopted Vision Zero policies, including the District of Columbia in 2015. The long-term goal is to eliminate fatalities and severe injuries by 2030 by reducing crash frequency as well as severity.

Vision Zero policy consists of several common principles:

1. *Transportation-related deaths and severe injuries are preventable and unacceptable.*
2. *Human life takes priority over mobility and other objectives of the road system. The road system should be safe for all users, for all modes of transportation, in all communities, and for people of all ages and abilities.*
3. *Human error is inevitable; the transportation system should be designed to anticipate error so the consequences are not severe injury or death. Advancements in vehicle design and technology, roadway engineering, personal electronic devices, etc., are necessary components for avoiding the impacts of human errors.*
4. *People are inherently vulnerable, and speed is a fundamental predictor of crash survival. The transportation system should be designed for speeds that protect human life.*

5. *Safe human behaviors, education, and enforcement are essential contributors to a safe system.*
6. *Policies and practices at all levels of government need to align, making safety the highest priority for roadways.*

The Vision Zero Action Plan commits to using non-traditional, evidence-based “*safe system approaches*” to improve safety. Examples include raised crosswalks, narrowing travel lanes, reducing vehicle travel speeds, additional educational outreach, and enforcement. Structural changes to the roadway to calm traffic are encouraged to slow vehicle speeds. A key principle of Vision Zero is “human life takes priority over mobility and other objectives of the road system.”

Reducing vehicle speeds to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety in areas of conflict is a fundamental tenet of Vision Zero:

- Slower vehicle speeds allow for a larger driver “cone of vision” and reaction time

Driver cone of vision at different speeds

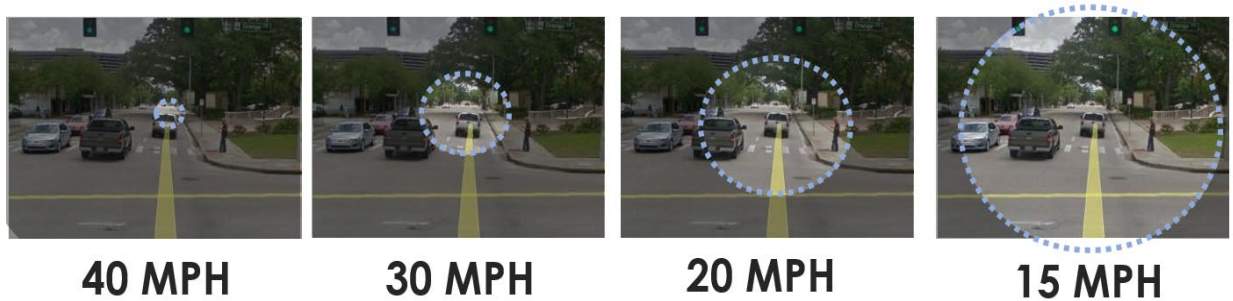
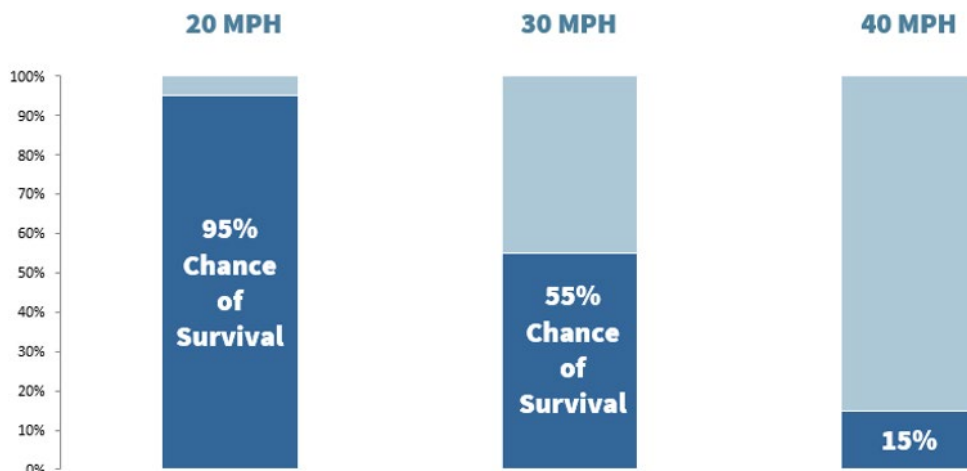


Figure 6: Driver Vision at Different Speeds

- Slower vehicle speeds reduce injury and fatalities if a collision does occur;



Pedestrian survival rates when involved in crashes with vehicles at different speeds

Figure 7: Pedestrian Survival at Different Speeds

Thrive Montgomery 2050, Approved and Adopted October 2022

Thrive Montgomery 2050 (Thrive) is an update to the County's general plan and establishes a framework for future planning. A Transportation chapter is included in Thrive 2050 that acknowledges the automobile-centric development of transportation corridors in the past, but encourages higher priority in *"transit, walking, rolling, and bicycling infrastructure."* Thrive establishes a commitment to improving connectivity and safety through alternate means of transportation, including conversion of *"existing traffic lanes and on-street parking to create space for walkways, bikeways, and street buffers with landscaping and street trees."* Thrive also prioritizes *"the provision of safe, comfortable, and attractive sidewalks, bikeways, roadway crossings, and other improvements to support walking, bicycling, and transit usage."*

Westbard Sector Plan, Approved and Adopted July 2016

Westbard is a community in the southwestern part of Montgomery County, approximately two miles from the Bethesda and Friendship Heights commercial areas. The Capital Crescent Trail runs the length of Westbard. The Westbard Shopping Center is planned for mixed-use redevelopment in the future, which will include new commercial space, residential homes, and other amenities. The planned Westbard redevelopment spurred approval of an updated Westbard Sector Plan in July 2016.

The Westbard Sector Plan considers the Capital Crescent Trail to be a major amenity as follows and encourages improving local connectivity:

A tremendous asset in the community is the Capital Crescent Trail (CCT) on the old B&O Railroad right-of-way. This pedestrian and bicycle trail is a major regional connection that also provides limited local service in the Westbard area. Increasing local connectivity to and from the CCT will allow it to be more integrated into the community.

Regarding transportation improvements in the area, the Sector Plan states: *"While the automobile still needs to be accommodated, data trends, at least in this area, indicate a shift in mode choice or commuting patterns away from the automobile. This shift provides the opportunity to use the existing and proposed rights-of-way for needed transportation facilities, other than just road capacity."*

The Sector Plan visualizes the framework for future transportation network development in the area, and includes recommendations for redevelopment of River Road, Westbard Avenue, and other roadways in the area. Consideration for additional bikeways, pedestrian paths, and public transportation networks is included. The Sector Plan includes results from traffic modeling of future traffic growth in the area:

In the 2012 SSP year 2040 TPAR analysis, the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Policy Area is shown to be adequate for the roadway test. Given that the Westbard Sector Plan area is a small subset of a much larger policy area and the planned growth in Westbard is anticipated to be relatively minor compared to what is zoned but not built, the transportation network is considered to be in balance with the land use and densities proposed by the Westbard Sector Plan.

Little Falls Parkway is classified as a *"limited access park road that runs along the eastern boundary of the Sector Plan area with truck restrictions"*. The Sector Plan endorses Little Falls Parkway with a target 35 mph speed limit and two total lanes of traffic.

Montgomery County Bicycle Master Plan, Approved and Adopted November 2018

The Bicycle Master Plan is a comprehensive update and amendment to all existing County bike plans, including the 1978 Master Plan of Bikeways, the 2005 Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan, and bikeway recommendations in past functional plans, master plans, and sector plans. The Bicycle Master Plan is a “*key element in Montgomery County’s Vision Zero Two-Year Action Plan to eliminate traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries*”.

The Bicycle Master Plan contains recommendations for a low stress network of bikeways and bicycle infrastructure throughout Montgomery County, including creation of a *Breezeway Network*, a high-capacity system of arterial bikeways between major activity centers. Regarding mid-block trail crossings, such as the Capital Crescent Trail crossing at Little Falls Parkway, the Plan recommends “*Traffic calming that removes traffic lanes and/or reduces the design speed of the road*” as a viable solution to improve safety, in addition to trail re-alignment and grade separation.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Pre-2022 Configuration

Little Falls Parkway is located within Little Falls Stream Valley Unit (SVU) parkland, with a northern terminus near Fairfax Road (north of Arlington Road) and southern terminus at MD 396 (Massachusetts Ave). The Little Falls SVU is located within the Willett Branch watershed and contains established diverse forest stands consisting of tulip poplars, white oaks, and other species. The pilot project is focused on the segment of the Parkway just north of Arlington Road to Dorset Avenue.



Figure 8: Existing Conditions at Arlington Road

Existing features near the signalized intersection of Little Falls Parkway and Arlington Road include Little Falls Park with a parking lot for users of Little Falls Park, the Capital Crescent Trail, and the Bethesda Pool. Crosswalks with pedestrian signals are present for users crossing the Parkway or Arlington Road.

Between Arlington and Hillandale Road, the Capital Crescent Trail (CCT) crosses the Parkway. Trail counts for the Capital Crescent Trail range from 2,000 to 5,000 users a day with peaks of over 400 users an hour, and it is the most popular trail in the County. Other features in the area include the Bethesda Pool.



Figure 9: Existing Conditions at Capital Crescent Trail

The CCT crossing at the Parkway has historically been the site of frequent conflicts between trail users and motorists. The four-lane cross-section on Little Falls Parkway allowed for the multiple-lane threat scenario – a recognized traffic safety problem occurring along road sections that are more than two lanes wide and have an uncontrolled crossing (no traffic signal or stop sign). A multiple-lane threat crash involves a driver stopping in one lane on a multilane road to permit pedestrians/cyclists to cross, and an adjacent oncoming vehicle (in the same direction) striking the pedestrian who is crossing in front of the stopped vehicle. This crash is due to the initial stopped vehicle occluding the view of the second advancing driver who subsequently fails to yield. In addition, the 35-mph speed limit and resulting higher vehicle travel speeds allows less reaction and stopping time for trail users and motorists.

In the two-year period from 2014 to 2016, the crossing experienced twelve conflicts, with a conflict defined as an incident that generated a police report. Among these twelve conflicts was a bicyclist killed when a motorist struck him in the crosswalk.

In response to this fatal crash, Montgomery Parks implemented a Vision Zero-based interim road diet in January of 2017 along Little Falls Parkway to increase safety for trail users crossing the roadway. The interim road diet reduced the cross-section of Little Falls Parkway from four lanes to two lanes between Arlington Road and Hillandale Road, by closing the outside travel lane in each direction approaching the trail crossing. The travel lanes were closed off with chains and flexible bollards. The speed limit was also reduced to 25 mph. The grass median dividing the northbound and southbound travel lanes remained.

Parks presented a facility plan recommendation to the Montgomery County Planning Board in June 2019 to build upon the interim road diet with a permanent two-lane Parkway cross section from Arlington Road to Hillandale Road. The May 2019 County Planning Board memorandum, *Facility Plan Recommendation for Capital Crescent Trail Crossing at Little Falls Parkway Safety Improvements Project*, is included in the Appendices and contains additional information and concept plans. The Planning Board voted to ask Parks to study re-alignment of the CCT trail crossing to the intersection of the Parkway and Arlington Road, with a pedestrian signal.

In September 2019, the Planning Board voted to delay the study of re-alignment of the CCT crossing and maintain the existing interim trail crossing with road diet.



Figure 10: Raised Crosswalk and Road Diet at CCT Crossing

The Board also asked Parks to install a raised crosswalk at the CCT crossing, which was subsequently installed in summer 2020.



Figure 11: Existing Conditions Hillandale to Dorset

Between Hillandale Road and Dorset Avenue, the Parkway parallels a segment of the Little Falls Trail, with surrounding residential communities and undeveloped parkland. From Hillandale Road to MD 190, the Parkway is four lanes, with two lanes southbound and two lanes northbound separated by a grass median. At the intersection of the Parkway and Dorset Avenue, dedicated left turn lanes are present in both directions.

Current Conditions (Pilot Project Phase II)

The Phase II pilot project re-alignment was completed in November 2022 and shifted all vehicles to the previous two northbound travel lanes, providing a single lane of travel in each direction with no median separation between Arlington Road and Dorset Avenue. Additionally, speed limits were reduced from 35 mph to 25 mph. Full sized, at-scale exhibits are available in the Appendices.

At the northern terminus of Little Falls Parkway, traffic barriers and flexible posts directed vehicles into the single southbound drive lane into northbound drive lanes near the entrance to the parking lot:

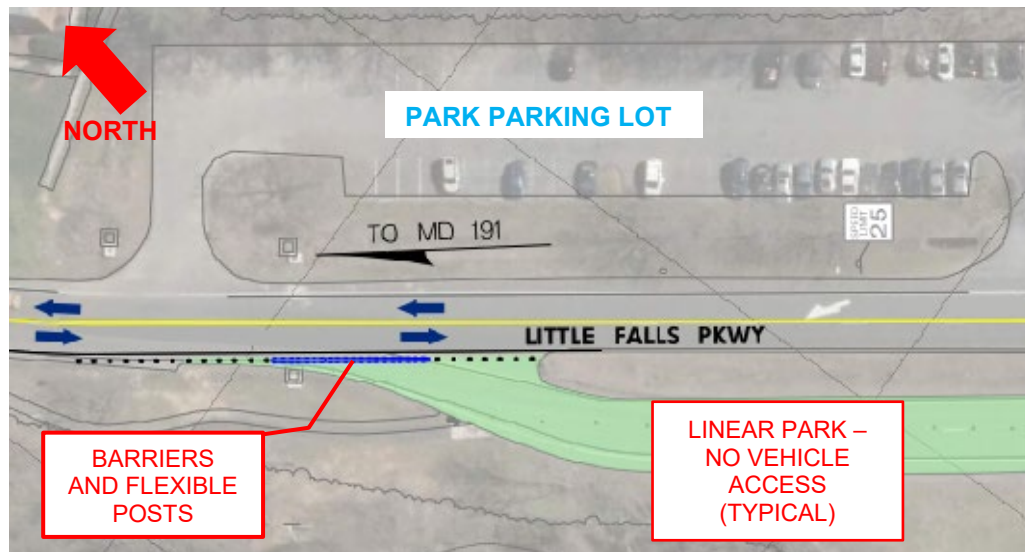


Figure 12: Pilot Project Phase II Northern Terminus

The lane reassignment extends the existing opposing single lane drive section originating at Fairfax Road to Dorset Avenue:

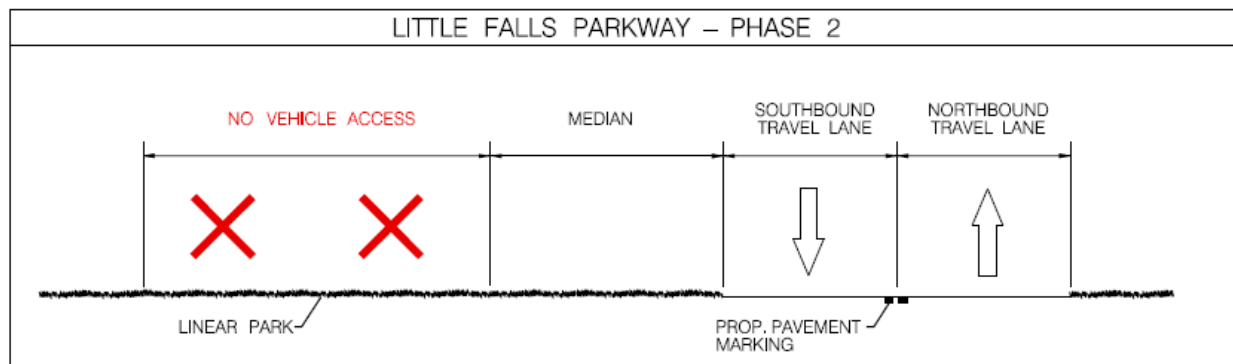


Figure 13: Pilot Project Phase II Typical Section

At the intersection of the Parkway and Arlington Road, traffic barriers and signage closed off access to the previous southbound lanes of the Parkway. Vehicles traveling southbound on Arlington utilize the existing left or right turn lanes to access the Parkway. The traffic signals and mast arms at the intersection were re-located by MCDOT to support the new lane configuration. The northbound right turn only lane along the Parkway to Arlington Road became a straight thru or right turn lane. The flexible posts between Arlington and Hillandale were removed, as all vehicle traffic is now traveling in the previous two northbound lanes. The CCT crossing remains the same, with the raised crosswalk in place, but a left turn restriction was added from the Parkway into the secondary entrance of the Bethesda Pool parking lot in order to prevent vehicles from backing onto the crosswalk or the Arlington intersection during busy Pool events.

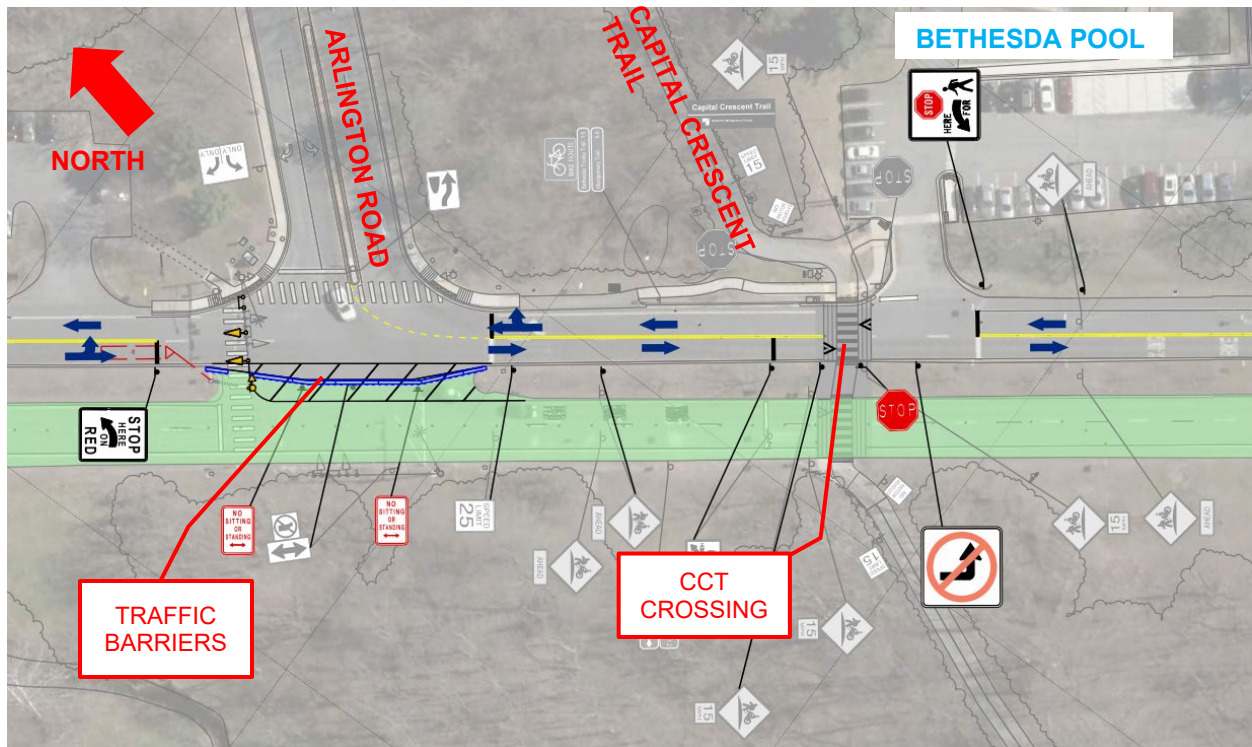


Figure 14: Pilot Project Phase II Arlington Road

The intersection of the Parkway and Hillandale Road also uses traffic barriers to close off access to the former southbound drive lanes. Additional asphalt pavement was installed along the southbound lane and northbound right turn lanes of the Parkway to facilitate the respective turning movements.

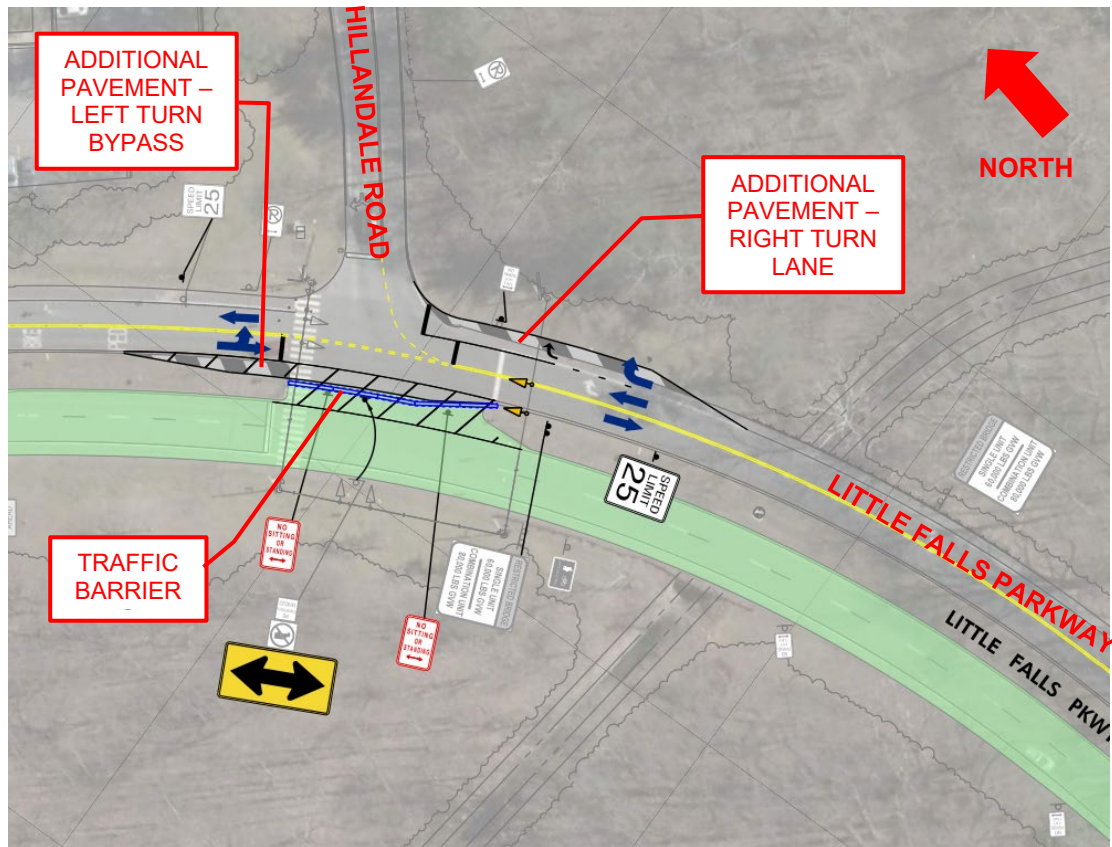


Figure 15: Pilot Project Phase II Hillandale Road

The two opposing lane road section is maintained from Hillandale Road approaching Dorset Avenue. Just north of Dorset Avenue, southbound traffic is re-directed across the grass median to the previous southbound lanes of the Parkway via a new asphalt “crossover”.

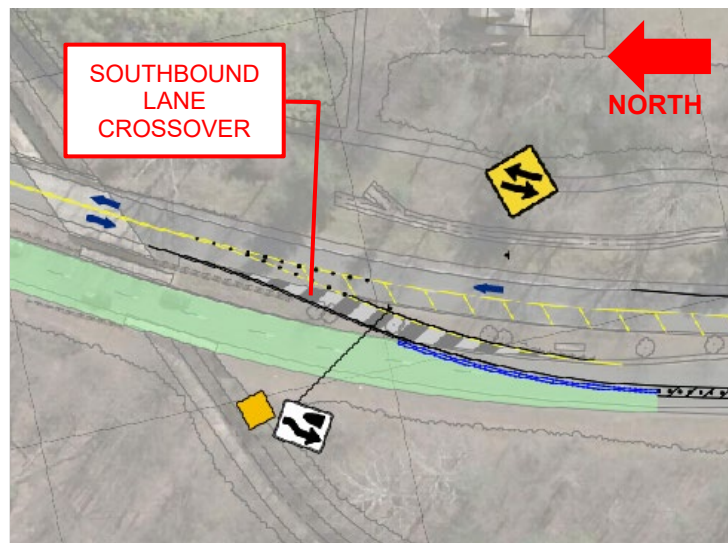


Figure 16: Pilot Project Phase II Southbound Crossover

The intersection of Little Falls Parkway and Dorset Avenue was modified to support the revised road section to the north. One of the previous southbound drive lanes of the Parkway was

converted to a shared use shoulder to maintain a connection to Dorset Avenue, resulting in a single thru or right turn lane and a left turn only lane for southbound traffic.

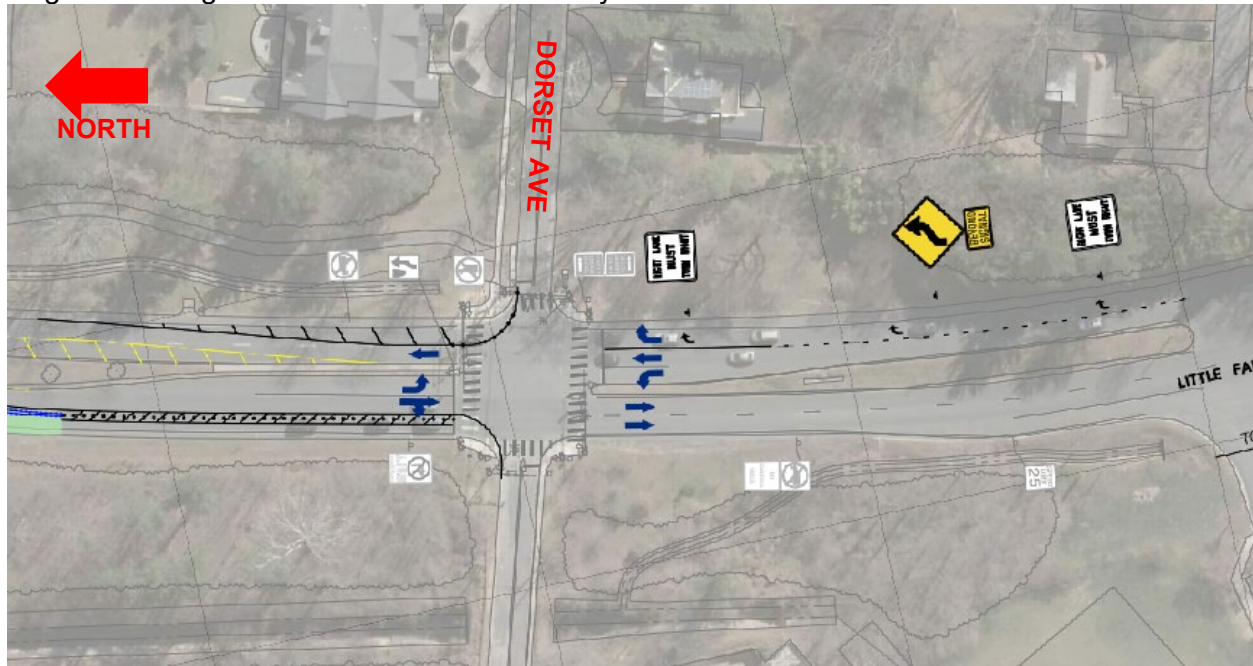


Figure 17: Pilot Project Phase II Dorset Ave

The northbound left turn lane from the Parkway is maintained, in addition to a through lane. The right lane was converted to a right turn to eastbound Dorset Avenue only.

The segment of the Parkway south of the intersection with Dorset Avenue to MD 190 River Road was not modified as part of the pilot project.

TRAFFIC DATA

Growth and Traffic Volume Trends

The population of the Bethesda and Chevy Chase area in 2000 was 64,658 people. Per the 2020 census, the population had increased to 74,893, an increase of 15%. The population of Montgomery County increased from 877,478 to 1.05 million, and the population of Washington D.C. increased from 572,046 to 712,816 in the same period.

Despite the growth in the overall area, traffic volumes on Little Falls Parkway and surrounding State highways (per public Maryland State Highway Administration counts) have been decreasing steadily since 2001. On Little Falls Parkway, daily traffic has decreased from 15,800 vehicles/day in 2016 to 10,300 vehicles/day in December 2022.

Table 1: Comparison of Traffic Volumes on Little Falls Parkway, MD 190 (River Road), MD 355 (Wisconsin Avenue)

Little Falls Pkwy			River Rd			Wisconsin Ave	
Date	Traffic		Date	Traffic		Date	Traffic
2016	15,800		2001	27,940		2003	48,070
2017	14,100		2004	26,710		2006	41,470
2019	13,000		2007	26,180		2009	39,201
2020	4,600		2010	24,050		2012	42,000
2022 (May)	10,700		2013	22,570		2015	39,800
2022 (July)	9,690		2016	22,570		2018	39,490
2022 (Sept)	10,160		2019	22,610		-	-
2022 (Dec)	10,342		-	-		-	-

On MD 190 River Road, between Little Falls Parkway and the Washington D.C. boundary, traffic has decreased from 27,940 vehicles/day in 2001 to 22,610 vehicles/day in 2019 (the last year SHA published traffic counts) and on MD 355 Wisconsin Avenue near Bradley Boulevard, traffic decreased from 48,070 vehicles/day in 2003 to 39,490 in 2018 (the last year SHA published traffic counts).

There are many potential reasons for the long-term trend of declining traffic in the area, including multi-modal infrastructure improvements, increased public transit use, compact, mixed-use development patterns, increased teleworking or alternate work arrangements, as well as the regional dispersal of job and commercial centers away from the downtown D.C. core.

Long term traffic data on the Parkway and adjacent state highways demonstrates that area wide growth in urban areas has not translated to an increase in vehicle traffic.

Comparison with Other Parkways

M-NCPPC park roads are classified as “limited access” with “truck restrictions”. Other than Little Falls Parkway, there are two major parkways in Montgomery County: Sligo Creek Parkway in Silver Spring and Takoma Park, and Beach Drive in Kensington and North Bethesda.

Both Sligo Creek and Beach Drive are two lane roads (with opposing traffic) with 25 mph speed limits and process similar traffic volumes as Little Falls Parkway:

Table 2: Comparison with other Parkways

Average Annual Weekday Traffic				
Sligo Creek Pkwy (W of US 29)			Beach Dr (N of Knowles Ave)	
Date	Traffic		Date	Traffic
2012	9,571		2012	10,891
2013	9,592		2013	10,912
2014	9,210		2014	11,250
2015	9,451		2015	11,541
2016	9,632		2016	11,762
2017	10,130		2017	11,900
2018	10,041		2018	11,801

Little Falls Parkway has an average annual weekday traffic of 10,043 per the latest count conducted in December 2022.

Beach Drive extends south into the District of Columbia along Rock Creek Park (National Park Service), eventually becoming Rock Creek Parkway south of Calvert St NW in Washington, D.C. In late 2022, the National Park Service (NPS), in collaboration with the D.C. Department of Transportation, made the pandemic closure of the upper portion of Beach Drive permanent, allowing year-round recreational use of the former roadway. A factor in their decision was to provide safer year-round park experiences for walkers, cyclists, and drivers, as well as users with disabilities. The segment of Beach Drive permanently closed to vehicles was a two lane, 25 mph road with 5,500 – 8,000 vehicles per weekday.

Traffic Volume Observation

Seven-day, hourly traffic counts were conducted at nine locations along and around the Parkway in May, July, September, and December of 2022.

Table 3: Summary of Traffic Count Conditions

Count Date	Phase	Configuration	Median Separation	School in Session	Open Parkway Days
5/2022	Open Parkways	Two Lanes in Each Direction	Yes	Yes	Saturday – Sunday
7/2022	Pilot - Phase I	One Lane in Each Direction	Yes	No	Suspended
9/2022	Pilot - Phase I	One Lane in Each Direction	Yes	Yes	Suspended
12/2022	Pilot - Phase II	One Lane in Each Direction	No	Yes	24/7

The May 2022 counts occurred before implementation of Phase I of the Pilot Project. The July 2022 counts occurred after implementation of Phase I, with schools out of session and Ridgefield Road closed for Westbard reconstruction (Ridgefield Road closed in June 2022 and is expected to re-open in Fall 2023). The September 2022 counts occurred during Phase I, while schools were in session. The December 2022 counts were collected after implementation of Phase II of the Pilot Project and while schools were in session before the end of year holidays.

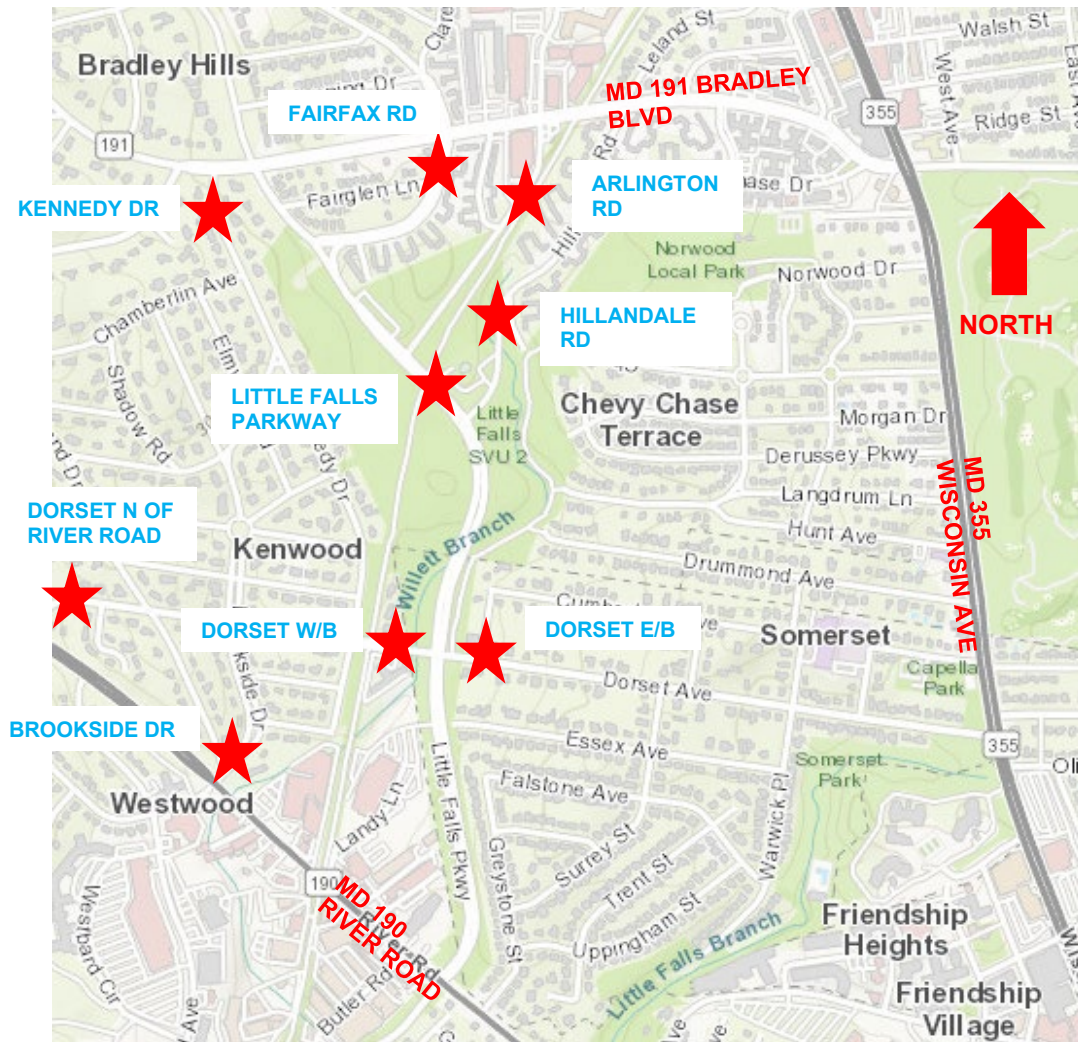


Figure 18: Traffic Count Locations

Traffic volumes can often vary up to 10% in a day-to-day period, so counts were conducted over the course of seven days. The results below summarize the counts into average weekday (Tues-Thurs) and weekend (Sat-Sun), comparing traffic before the pilot project (May 2022) with post pilot project implementation averages from July, September, and December 2022. Full counts and data are available in the Appendices.

Little Falls Parkway

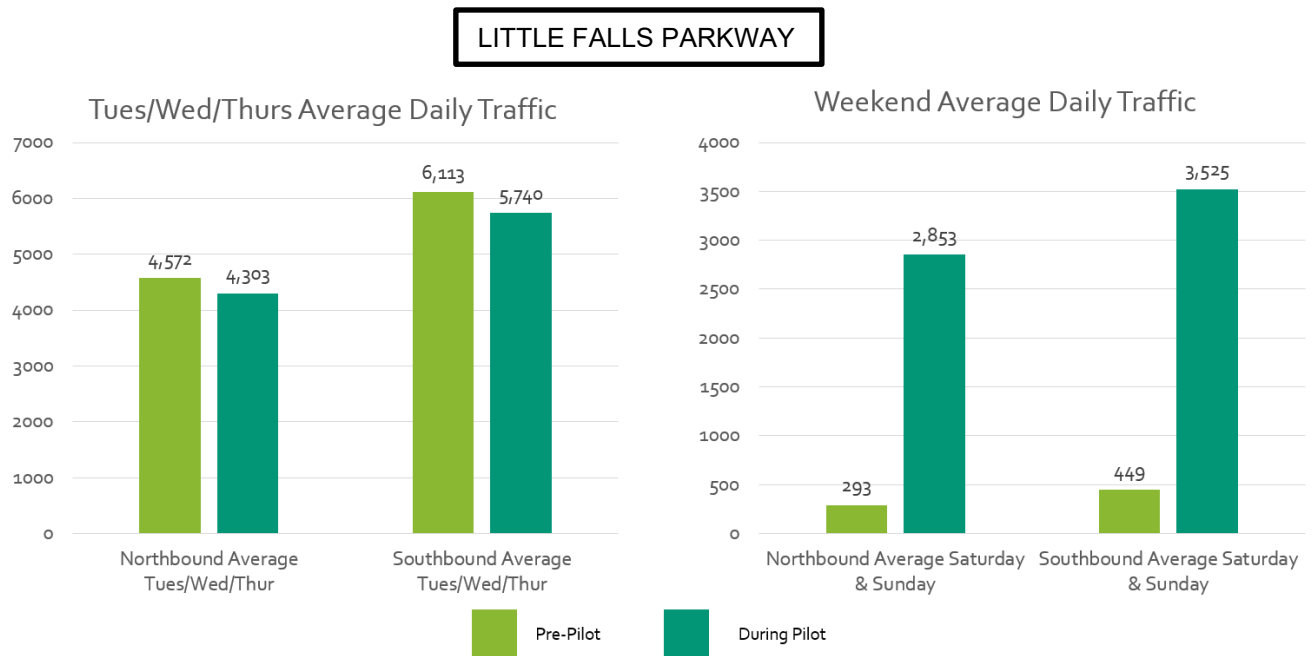


Figure 19: Little Falls Parkway Counts

Overall, Little Falls Parkway is processing approximately the same volume of traffic in the two lane pilot project (“During Pilot”) configuration as the four lane configuration (“Pre-Pilot”). Weekend volumes are higher under current conditions because the Parkway is no longer closed to vehicles on the weekends.

Kennedy Drive

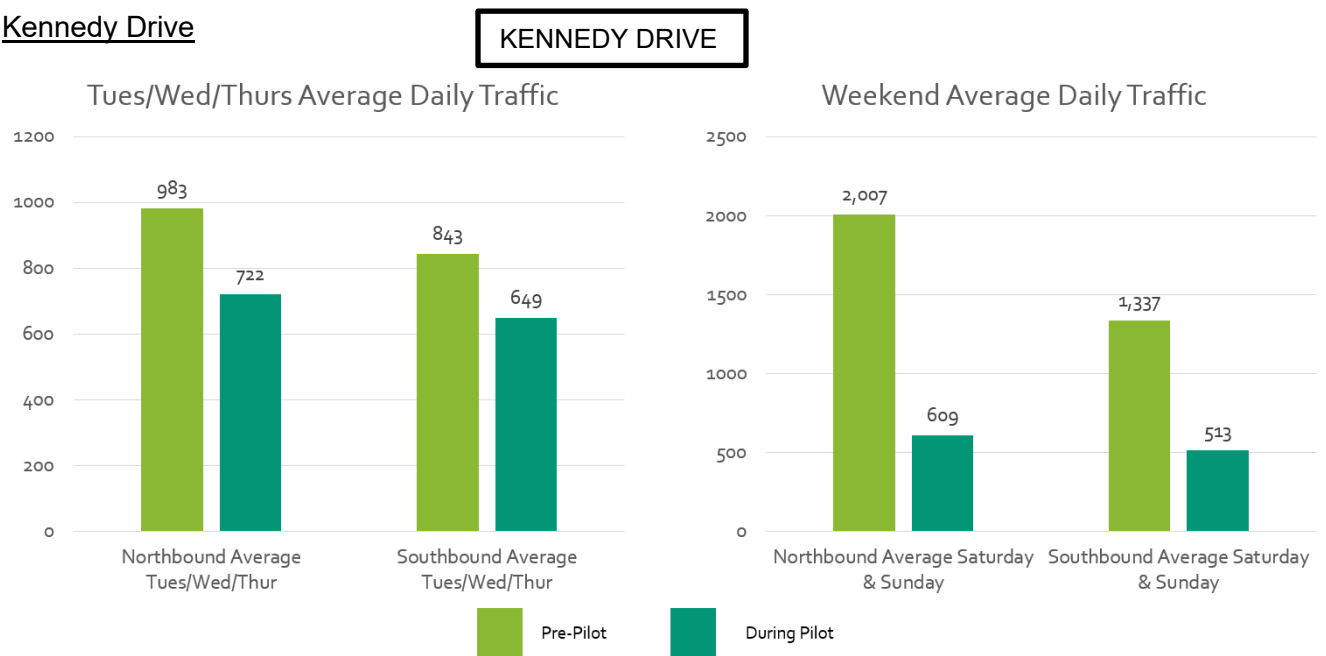


Figure 20: Kennedy Drive Counts

The pilot project has significantly reduced volumes on Kennedy Drive in the Kenwood community, particularly weekend traffic.

Hillandale Road

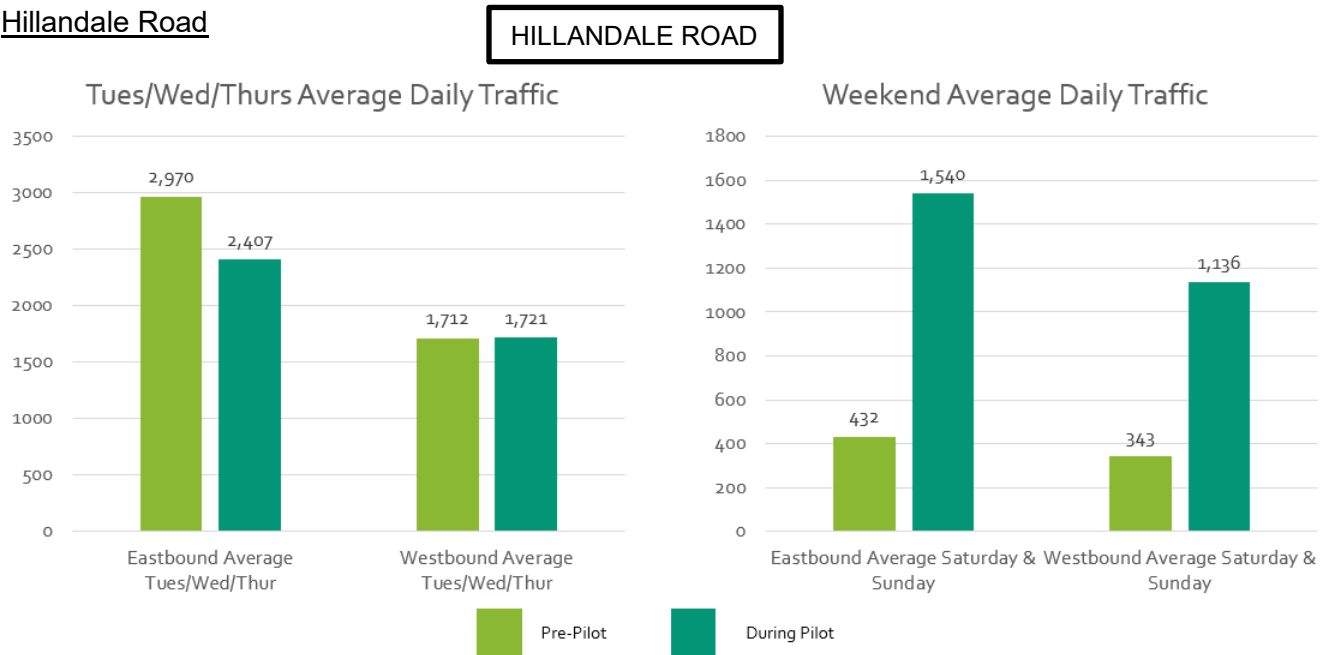


Figure 21: Hillandale Road Counts

Weekday eastbound volumes on Hillandale decreased, while westbound volumes remained the same. Weekend volumes increased because Little Falls Parkway is no longer closed to vehicles on the weekends.

Fairfax Road

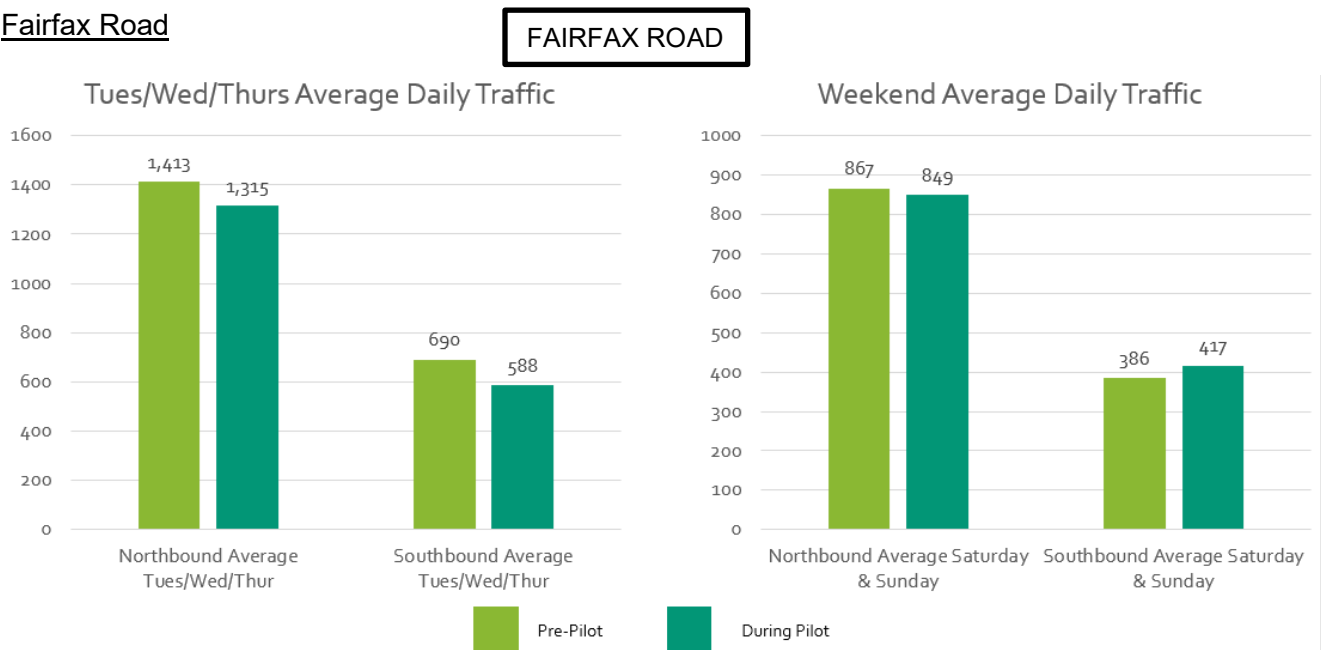


Figure 22: Fairfax Road

There is a slight decrease in weekday traffic volumes and negligible weekend changes on Fairfax Road.

Dorset Avenue (West of Little Falls Parkway)

DORSET AVE W/ OF LFP

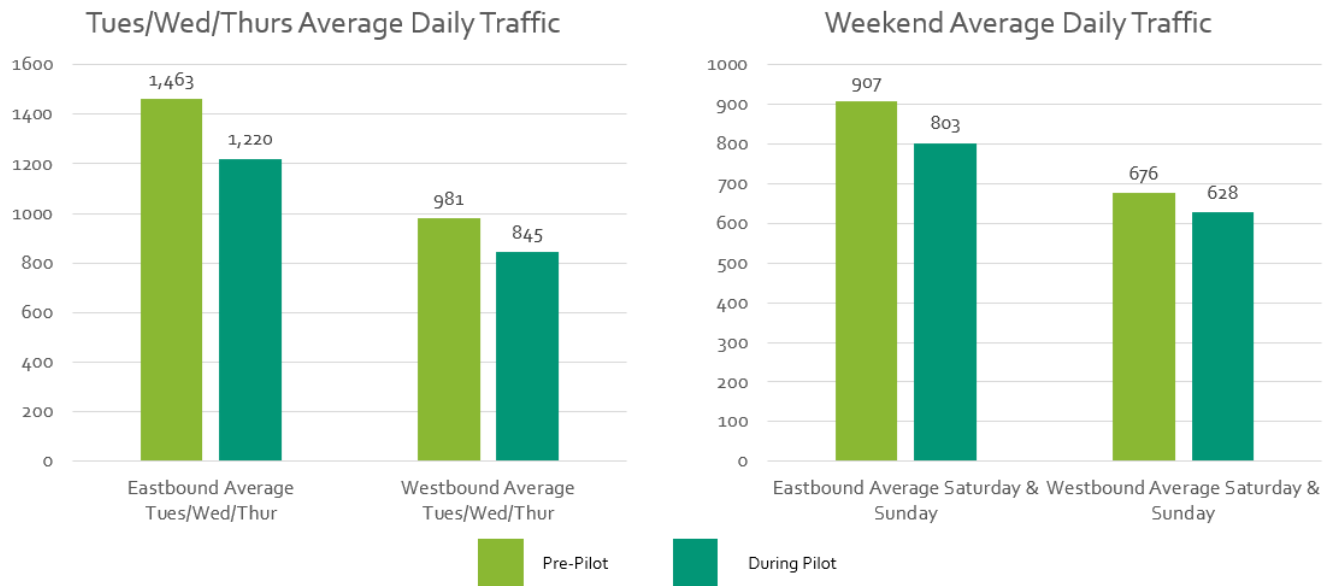


Figure 23: Dorset West of LFP

Along Dorset Avenue just west of Little Falls Parkway, traffic volumes have decreased during the weekday and weekend periods.

Dorset Avenue (East of Little Falls Parkway)

DORSET AVE E/ OF LFP

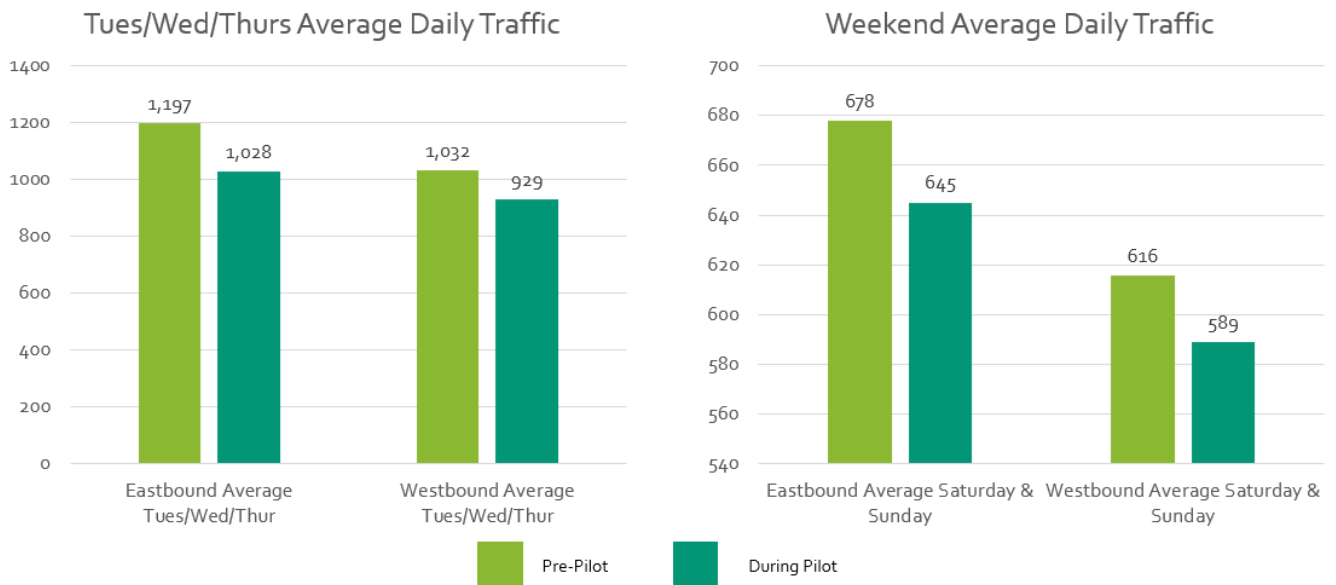


Figure 24: Dorset East of LFP

Along Dorset Avenue east of Little Falls Parkway, traffic volumes have decreased during the weekday and weekend periods.

Dorset Avenue (North of MD 190 River Road)

DORSET AVE N/ OF MD 190

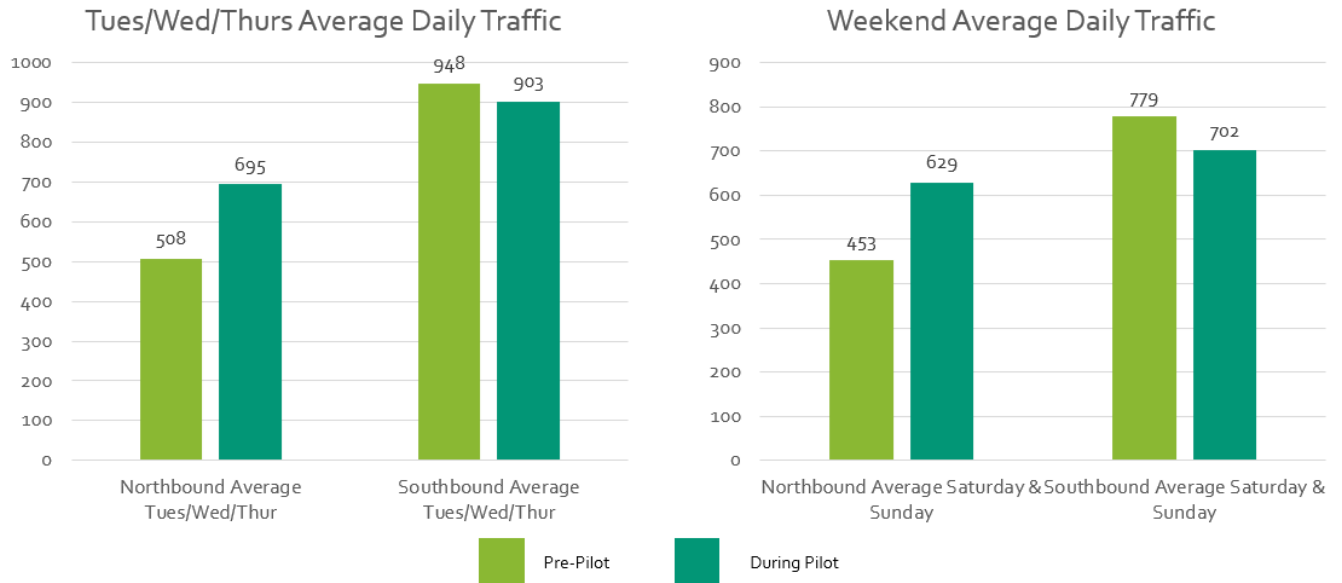


Figure 25: Dorset North of MD 190

At Dorset Avenue near MD 190 River Road, northbound traffic volumes have increased during the weekday and weekend periods, with a slight drop in volumes southbound.

Brookside Drive

BROOKSIDE DR

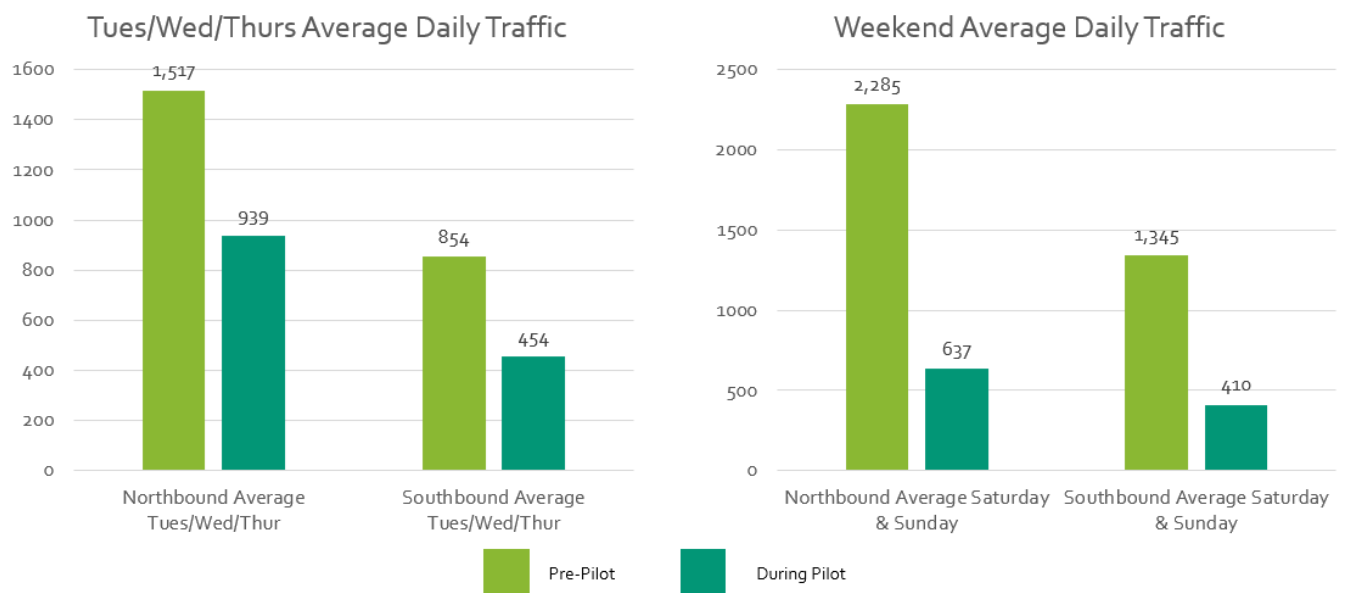


Figure 26: Brookside Dr

Traffic volumes on Brookside Drive in the Kenwood community have significantly decreased, particularly weekend traffic.

Arlington Road

ARLINGTON RD

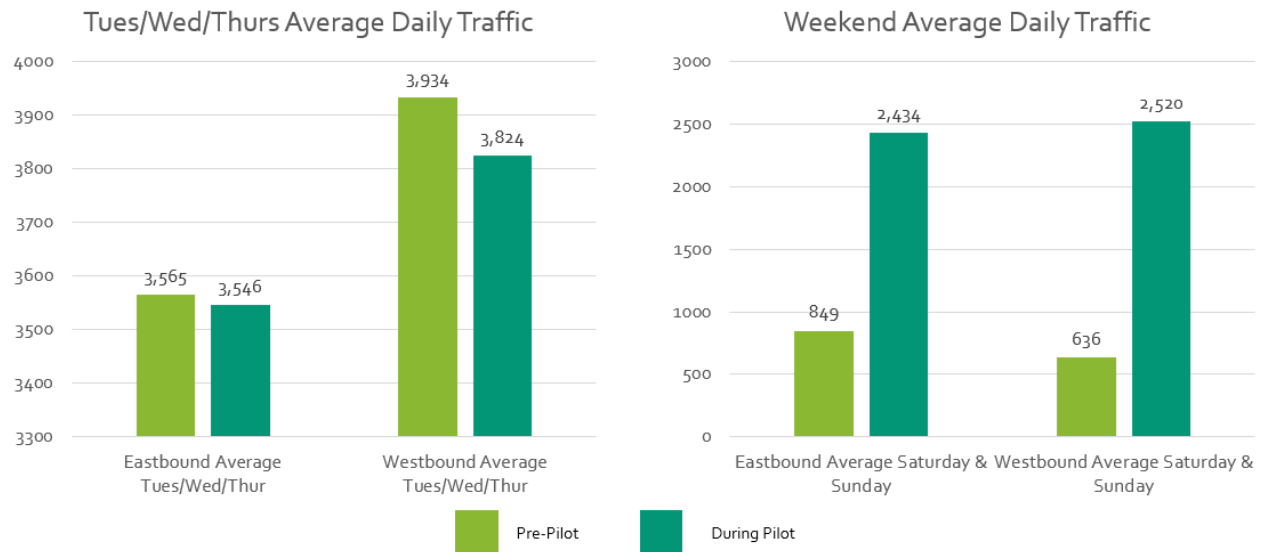


Figure 27: Arlington Road

Weekday volumes on Arlington Road have decreased, with the increase in weekend volumes due to Parkway being open on weekends after implementation of the pilot project.

Travel Times

Travel time runs were conducted in January 2023 along Little Falls Parkway, by vehicle, during morning and evening peak commuting hours, when traffic along the roadway is the heaviest. Five runs were conducted during each timeframe in both the southbound and northbound directions from MD 190 River Road to Fairfax Road, a distance of 5,100 feet (~1 mile). This route traversed three traffic signals and the midblock crossing of the CCT. The travel times are tabulated below:

Table 4: AM Peak hour Northbound MD 190 River Road to Fairfax Road

Run #	Travel time
1	0:02:23
2	0:03:01
3	0:03:14
4	0:03:33
5	0:03:39
Average	0:03:10

Table 5: AM Peak hour Southbound Fairfax Road to MD 190 River Road

Run #	Travel time
1	0:03:38
2	0:03:14
3	0:04:36
4	0:03:54
5	0:02:49
Average	0:03:38

Table 6: PM Peak hour Northbound MD 190 River Road to Fairfax Road

Run #	Travel time
1	0:04:38
2	0:03:03
3	0:03:57
4	0:02:42
5	0:02:29
Average	0:03:22

Table 7: PM Peak hour Southbound Fairfax Road to MD 190 River Road

Run #	Travel time
1	0:03:30
2	0:03:28
3	0:03:11
4	0:02:48
5	0:03:10
Average	0:03:13

The average travel times were converted to an average travel speed using the overall distance traveled of 5,100 feet. This allows for a comparison to a typical signalized arterial roadway with a base free flow speed of 25 mph (the speed limit of the Parkway), and an estimation of the Parkway's level of service (LOS), based on criteria given in the Transportation Research Board's *Highway Capacity Manual*. The level of service describes traffic flow on a scale of "A" to "F". In urban areas, a LOS of "A" typically only occurs during off-peak hours.

Table 8

Travel Time Summary Table: LFP from River Road to Fairfax Road						
Direction	Travel Time (min:sec)		Speed (mph)		Arterial LOS*	
	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM
SB	03:38	03:13	16	18	C	B
NB	03:10	03:22	18	17	B	B

*Highway Capacity Manual 7th edition; 25 mph arterial.

The peak hour travel times, which represent the highest traffic volumes throughout the day, have levels of service of B (reasonable and stable free flow) and C (slightly restricted but stable) during all peak periods and travel directions. The travel times encompass time spent at the signalized intersections as well as yielding to trail traffic at the CCT crossing.

Intersection Data

In December 2022 Turn Movement Count (TMC) data was collected at three locations from 6:00 AM to 7:00 PM in 15-minute increments. The intersections were:

- Little Falls Parkway and Dorset Avenue;
- Little Falls Parkway and Hillandale Road;
- Little Falls Parkway and Arlington Road

Collecting counts for 13 consecutive hours in 15-minute increments allows for the determination of the peak demand on an intersection, typically coinciding with the morning and evening peak commuting periods. The two peak hours are from 7:45 to 8:45 AM and from 4:45 to 5:45 PM. During the morning peak hour, there are approximately 580 southbound vehicles per hour and 350 northbound vehicles per hour in between Arlington Road and Hillandale Road. During the evening peak hour, there are about 560 southbound vehicles per hour and 450 northbound vehicles per hour between Arlington Road and Hillandale Road. Most (63%) of the southbound traffic on Little Falls Parkway originates from Arlington Road. Green phases at the Arlington and Hillandale traffic signals are timed and offset to account for this traffic pattern. Most of the northbound traffic (82%) approaching Arlington Road turns right, with remaining traffic staying on the Parkway toward Bradley Boulevard.

Peak traffic along the Pilot Project segment of the Parkway has steadily declined since 2018, as shown in the table below:

Table 9: Peak Hourly Traffic Volumes at CCT Crossing

Date	AM Peak Hour Traffic at CCT		PM Peak Hour Traffic at CCT	
	Northbound (v/hr)	Southbound (v/hr)	Northbound (v/hr)	Southbound (v/hr)
2018	440	640	500	690
2019	410	680	510	630
2022	350	580	450	560

Safety

Staff have continually monitored the road diet and raised crosswalk improvements implemented in early 2017 at the CCT crossing between Arlington Road and Hillandale Road. The improvements eliminated the multiple-lane threat condition, while simultaneously slowing vehicle speeds along that segment of Little Falls Parkway. The data below was obtained from County crash reports:

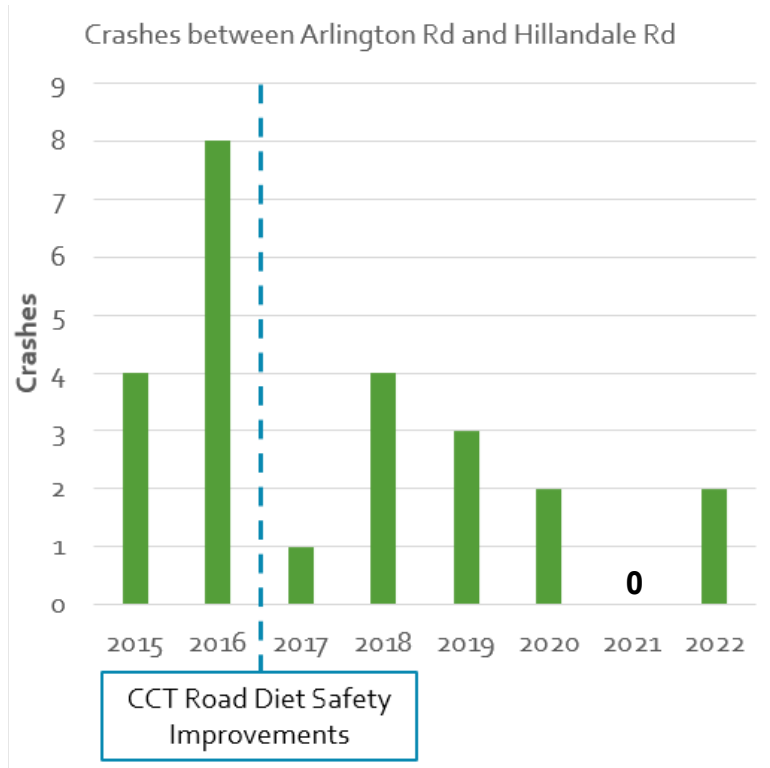


Figure 28: Crashes Between Arlington and Hillandale 2015

The road diet resulted in a substantial reduction in overall crashes between Arlington Road and Hillandale road.

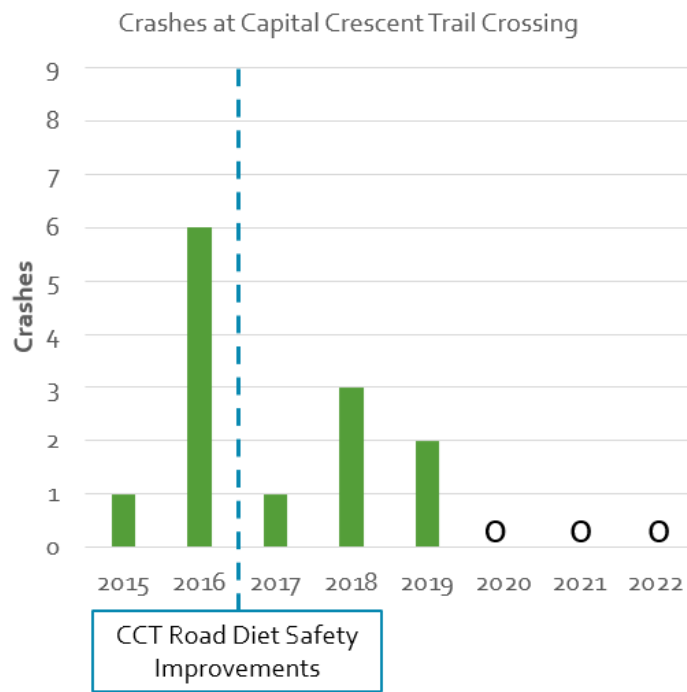


Figure 29: Crashes Between Arlington and Hillandale Since 2015

The Vizion Zero safety improvements resulted in significant overall crash reduction at the CCT crossing, with none reported since the raised crosswalk was installed in 2020 (compared to six in 2016 alone). Multiple observations of interactions between motorists and trail users at the modified trail crossing of Little Falls Parkway showed extremely high levels of drivers yielding to trail users in the crosswalk. Corresponding pedestrian/cyclist delay (or waiting time to cross) was effectively zero seconds.

Future Traffic Growth Considerations

Proposed development in Montgomery County is subject to Planning Board administrative oversight to ensure adequate infrastructure to accommodate growth. Proposed development undergoes a Local Area Transportation Review (LATR), coordinated by all transportation agencies including the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MC DOT) and Maryland State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA). The LATR includes estimating net new peak hour trips from a development, and a series of multi-modal tests to assess if adequate public facilities are available.

The Westwood Properties Traffic Impact Statement was submitted for the mixed use Westbard redevelopment in 2018. The full build out is expected to generate 26 new southbound and 35 new northbound peak hour Parkway trips in the morning, an increase of 3.3% and 6.6% from existing volumes, respectively. For the afternoon peak hour, it is expected to add 51 southbound and 36 northbound peak hour trips, an increase of 8% and 5%. The Parkway under pilot project conditions with two drive lanes, as well as existing nearby intersections, contain more than adequate capacity for this anticipated increase.

In addition, the Westbard plan approval (Plan No. 120170170) included conditions to address traffic considerations for the overall area, including realignment of Westbard Avenue at Ridgefield Road and coordination of on-site and off-site public transit, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities.

The Planning Board approved an updated Westbard Sector Plan in July 2016, which included consideration of future development in the area west of Little Falls Parkway and south of Dorsett Avenue, including the Westbard Shopping Center.

The Sector Plan includes results from traffic modeling of future traffic growth in the area as follows:

In the 2012 SSP year 2040 TPAR analysis, the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Policy Area is shown to be adequate for the roadway test. Given that the Westbard Sector Plan area is a small subset of a much larger policy area and the planned growth in Westbard is anticipated to be relatively minor compared to what is zoned but not built, the transportation network is considered to be in balance with the land use and densities proposed by the Westbard Sector Plan.

Little Falls Parkway is classified as a “*limited access park road that runs along the eastern boundary of the Sector Plan area with truck restrictions*”. **The Westbard Sector Plan endorses Little Falls Parkway with two total lanes of traffic.**

Public Input and Feedback

Parks has received input, questions, and correspondence from the community since the beginning of the Open Parkways program and during implementation of the pilot project.

Parks held a virtual public meeting in February 2023 to present an overview of the pilot project and traffic study results. The meeting was attended by approximately 200 people. A question-and-answer session was held during the meeting, though due to time constraints, not every individual question submitted could be answered.

Below is a summary of major issues and concerns raised by residents throughout the Open Parkways program and pilot project:

Open Parkway User Counts

The accuracy of the Open Parkways user counts, or the number of people using the segment of Little Falls Parkway that were closed to traffic during the Open Parkways program, has been repeatedly questioned. Several attendees at the February meeting raised concerns over counting techniques and asserted that the presented user counts were higher than anecdotal observation and may be picking up users along the Capital Crescent Trail or the Bethesda Pool.

Montgomery Parks installed two trail counters along Little Falls Parkway near Massachusetts Ave and just south of Hillandale Road when the Open Parkways Program was first launched. These trail counters counted the number of times that a user passed the trail counter and were summarized by total day counts in the presentation. Much like vehicular counters, the trail counters do not filter out unique visitors but simply count the total number of times that a user has passed a certain point. In this sense, a user walking from Hillandale Road to Dorset Avenue and back would be counted twice - just as a car making this same trip would. Since the trail counters were located south of Hillandale Road, they would not pick up users on the Capital Crescent Trail or those entering the Bethesda Pool.

The data presented during the presentation highlighted total counts along Little Falls Parkway when the Open Parkways Program was active. Since the program's start, the Little Falls Parkway Open Parkway averaged approximately 3,000 users per weekend with the highest use days occurring in the first year of the program.

Traffic Counts

The accuracy of the traffic counts conducted throughout 2022 that are summarized in this report has also been repeatedly questioned. There were also questions about traffic counts on other area roadways, such as Bradley Boulevard and Goldsboro Road.

The traffic data presented in this report was collected in the field by certified and licensed traffic engineers or their authorized representatives at the dates and times indicated. The appendices include additional data. The historical traffic data for River Road and Wisconsin Avenue, as well as Beach Drive and Sligo Creek Parkway, are from publicly available Maryland State Highway Administration counts.

Future Traffic Growth

Some residents have expressed concern about the impact of future development and growth in the area, including from the Westbard redevelopment, federal employees returning to the office, the ongoing closure of Ridgefield Road, and potential impacts to residential streets from cut-through traffic.

The 2018 Westwood Properties Traffic Impact Study (TIS) for the Westbard redevelopment indicated that the full build out is expected to generate 26 new southbound and 35 new northbound peak hour Parkway trips in the morning, an increase of 3.3% and 6.6% from existing volumes, respectively. For the afternoon peak hour, it is expected to add 51 southbound and 36 northbound peak hour trips, an increase of 8% and 5%. The Parkway under pilot project conditions with two drive lanes, as well as existing nearby intersections, contains more than adequate capacity for this anticipated increase.

With the drop in traffic volumes along the Parkway since 2016, the peak hour increases from the full Westbard buildout would still be below 2016 Little Falls Parkway traffic volumes. In addition, the Westbard plan approval (Plan No. 120170170) included conditions to address traffic considerations for the overall area, including realignment of Westbard Avenue at Ridgefield Road and coordination of on-site and off-site public transit, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities. The Ridgefield Road realignment is currently underway.

The approved 2016 Westbard Sector Plan contains the results of future traffic modeling for the Bethesda Chevy Chase Policy Area through 2040. The Sector Plan model assumes complete buildout of all known infrastructure and development projects and deems the transportation network “in balance with the land use and densities proposed by the Westbard Sector Plan.” The Sector Plan also endorses Little Falls Parkway as having two total lanes of traffic, as it currently does from River Road to Massachusetts Avenue.

As detailed in this report, long term traffic trends along the Parkway, River Road and Wisconsin Avenue are decreasing despite continued population growth. The pilot project was shown to have substantially reduced traffic volumes on adjacent residential streets. **While the impacts of additional federal employees potentially returning to the office is uncertain, the Parkway has more than sufficient additional capacity to accommodate potential traffic growth.**

Cut-Through Traffic

Some residents have expressed concerns about the possibility of increased cut-through traffic on adjacent neighboring roadways.

Many neighboring residential streets already have cut-through and traffic calming controls. An origin-destination camera study was performed in Fall 2018 to quantify cut-through traffic through the Kenwood neighborhood. Using time-stamped video, traffic entering Kenwood at Kennedy Drive from the Bradley Boulevard intersection was counted simultaneously with traffic exiting Kenwood at Dorset Avenue/Little Falls Parkway and at Brookside Drive/River Road. Traffic that entered the Kenwood neighborhood at Kennedy Drive and then exited at one of the other two exit points within 10 minutes was considered a cut-through trip. The results of the study showed that on average only 5 vehicles during the morning peak hour and 3 vehicles during the evening peak hour satisfied the criteria for cut-through traffic.

The set of traffic counts conducted throughout 2022, before and after implementation of the pilot project and the reduction of the Parkway from four lanes to two, generally show a similar or slightly decreased amount of traffic on the Parkway and neighboring roads, and a substantial reduction in weekend traffic on nearby residential streets. **The data shows approximately the same number of drivers using the Parkway before and after the Pilot Project, and not “avoiding” the Parkway to use other roads.**

Roadway Configuration

There have been several questions related to the roadway configuration and how it is allocated between bicyclists, pedestrians, and vehicles. These questions focus on the potential use of the

center median by bicyclists, transition plans for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure at the project limits, the use of flexible posts (flex-posts) to close off lanes to vehicles, why the lanes switch sides near Dorset Avenue, and the prospect of using roundabouts.

The current pilot configuration allows for vehicular traffic on one side of the median and bicyclists and pedestrians to use the other side of the parkway without conflicts with vehicles. The use of the current grass median for bicyclists would sandwich them between two lanes of moving traffic and would subject bicyclists to unsafe turn movements. Flex-posts and other aspects of this project were installed as a pilot project condition and could be replaced with permanent traffic devices if the road configuration is retained. This would include maintaining the Arlington Road sidewalk if a northbound right turn lane onto Arlington Road were installed, replacing flex-posts with more permanent installations, and improving bicycle connectivity at the project limits.

There has been a request to assess replacement of the existing signalized intersections along the Parkway with roundabouts. However, there are disadvantages to roundabouts at these locations including a greater cost and impervious area impact (and thus environmental impacts to adjacent Willett Branch stream buffer). In addition, the existing signals are timed to provide increased “green” time for traffic along the Parkway; roundabouts could decrease travel times during off-peak hours but result in substantially increased travel delays during peak hours.

Capital Crescent Trail Crossing

Questions were raised about diverting the Trail crossing to the signal at Arlington Road or installing a pedestrian bridge over Little Falls Parkway. These options were studied in 2019, and the May 2019 County Planning Board memorandum, *Facility Plan Recommendation for Capital Crescent Trail Crossing at Little Falls Parkway Safety Improvements Project*, is attached and contains additional information.

Ultimately, Parks did not recommend either option to the Board. Diverting the crossing to the signal required a pedestrian crossing phase, which would have increased vehicle and trail user travel times compared to simply keeping the interim road diet. A bridge (over two lanes only) was also considered but would be the costliest option and require substantial impacts to the adjacent stream valley buffer. In the years since these options were first considered, the interim road diet at the crossing has been demonstrably successful in reducing crashes and increasing safety while still maintaining traffic flow along the Parkway.

Some community members have also questioned whether a median refuge can be installed at the CCT crossing. The existing Parkway median between the northbound and southbound lanes functioned as a refuge for trail users prior to the pilot project, and during Phase I of the pilot project. A median refuge could be assessed as a future improvement at the crossing and would not impact the viability of activating the closed off southbound lanes for park use.

Bicyclists

Some residents have raised concerns about bicyclist behavior on the Capital Crescent Trail and on the Parkway. Others have raised concerns about unsafe driver behavior along Little Falls Parkway, including speeding. Enforcement of traffic regulations is under the purview of Park Police.

A critical tenet of Vision Zero is acknowledgement of the reality of driver, pedestrian, and bicycle behavior and to design safety improvements that reduce the possibility of a severe injury even if one or more parties makes a mistake. A two-lane configuration encourages lower speeds and has been demonstrably safer than a four-lane condition.

Emergency Vehicle Response and School Bus Travel Times

Some community members have expressed concerns with emergency vehicle response and school bus delays associated with removal of two drive lanes.

Parks met with Montgomery County Fire Rescue (FRS) in January 2023 to ask about the impact of the road diet on their operations and response times. **FRS staff had no concerns about emergency response times under Pilot Project conditions.** Montgomery County Public Schools have not raised any concerns about school bus delays, likely because school buses navigate two-lane roads throughout the county and Little Falls Parkway continues to operate smoothly in its current configuration.

A February 2023 article³ in the *Washington Post* about the Pilot Project included an interview with Charles Bailey, the operations division chief for FRS, who said: “If there were some demonstrable impact to safety then I would be throwing up red flags in the background, and I just don’t see them.”

In the same article, Jessica Baxter with Montgomery County Public Schools said “the district’s transportation department has not documented any delays associated with school bus pickup and drop-off for Somerset Elementary, which is near the now-two-lane parkway.”

Linear Park

Some residents have raised concerns about a potential linear park in the section of roadway now closed off to traffic, including about how people will access the park, the safety of the park next to moving traffic, the types of amenities, the nature and frequency of any special events, food truck access, bathroom access, and the demand for such a park given the proximity of other parks.

A linear park is only one potential way to make use of the additional park space that would result from the lane reduction and is being explored because of the success of the Open Parkways program and the desire to maintain recreational use along the closed off roadway. If the pilot project moves forward, a planning process, including public outreach, will determine future use and the exact nature of any amenities.

Though there are other parks near the pilot project, this project would help to meet the overall demand for more parks identified in the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan. There are significant numbers of residents in Bethesda who live in multifamily buildings and would benefit from additional outdoor recreational space. According to the U.S. Census, 40 percent of housing units in Bethesda are multi-unit buildings. In addition, the creation of a permanent park at this location would create space for activities like skating, teaching kids to ride bikes, and other similar uses - taking pressure off the Capital Crescent Trail.

Parking & Park Access

Many people inquired about how the expected linear park users would access the park by vehicle or by other means with many noting how full the Bethesda Pool parking lot gets in the summer. Others noted that pedestrian and bicyclist connectivity to the pilot project could be improved along Dorset Avenue or with signage and additional crosswalks.

³ Sheperd, K (2023, Feb 17). Montgomery turned a road into a park. Residents want the street back. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2023/02/17/pandemic-park-montgomery-county-lawsuit/>

There are currently two parking lots adjacent to the Little Falls Parkway Pilot Project. One is at the Bethesda Pool and another north of Arlington Road. Parks received minimal complaints about parking to access the Little Falls Parkway Open Parkway when the road was completely shut down, so we do not believe this will be an issue if the road diet is kept and a linear park is activated. As part of the public engagement for any future park in this area, Parks will evaluate parking demand and look to improve pedestrian and bicyclist access.

Decision Making Authority

Questions have been asked about who has the decision-making authority over Little Falls Parkway and whether the Capper-Crampton Act is applicable to the project.

Little Falls Parkway is owned and under the decision-making authority of Montgomery Parks and the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC). Since the land surrounding Little Falls Parkway was acquired with Capper-Crampton Act funds, the project is subject to review by the National Capital Planning Commission for any development or management plan to ensure the protection and preservation of the region's valuable watersheds and parkland. Montgomery Parks has coordinated with the National Capital Planning Commission, and NCPC staff have expressed initial support of the project. Montgomery Parks will continue to coordinate with NCPC as the project progresses.

Funding

Some residents have asked about costs and funding of the pilot project and any future linear park.

The implementation of the Pilot Project cost approximately \$130,000, funded through a combination of operating and capital budget sources.

The cost of a potential linear park or other improvements will be determined through the planning and design process and will be funded through the Parks CIP.

Public Outreach

The Parks Department received a lot of public input on Little Falls Parkway for the Open Parkways Program and the pilot project. The Open Parkways Program was very popular after it launched, and there was significant pushback from park users when it was suspended during the first winter. Additional public input regarding neighborhood cut-through traffic was received after the program was reinstated in the Spring of 2021.

In response to the increased cut-through traffic, Parks implemented this pilot project to study reopening the roadway to vehicles while maintaining space for recreation and other park uses. Traffic counts were conducted to monitor the traffic impacts of the Open Parkways Program and the project's Pilot Phases.

After initial implementation of Phase 1, Parks responded to additional feedback, removing old pavement markings and installing more traffic control devices to distinguish the separate travel lanes.

To minimize disruption and keep residents informed during the pilot project, Parks used a number of outreach tools, including:

- Variable message signs
- Social media notifications
- Press releases
- Dedicated webpage with project details, including a timeline and traffic counts
- Neighborhood/Homeowner's association meetings
- Site Visits
- Dedicated project email address for comments

A public meeting was also held on February 15, 2023, to present the traffic data and the analysis of Parks staff. All traffic counts, a meeting recording, and other documents have been posted to the project website for the public to review.

RECOMMENDATION

Full sized exhibits are available in the Appendices.

With Little Falls Parkway re-aligned between Arlington Road and Dorset Avenue for the pilot project:

- Traffic counts conducted throughout 2022 show the same or slightly lower traffic volumes on Little Falls Parkway and adjacent roads, with significant reductions in weekend cut-through traffic in the Kenwood residential community.
- Travel time runs show a continued acceptable level of service during peak hours in all travel directions along the Parkway.
- Intersection movement counts show a decline in overall traffic volumes since 2018 and no concerns with the capability of the existing intersections to process traffic.
- There has been a significant reduction in crashes along LFP and at the CCT crossing since the interim road diet was implemented in 2017 (and zero accidents since the raised crosswalk was installed in 2020), showing significantly improved safety consistent with Vision Zero policy.

Staff recommends making the pilot project permanent, with a few modifications to further improve traffic efficiency and safety:

Signal Timing and Intersection Improvements

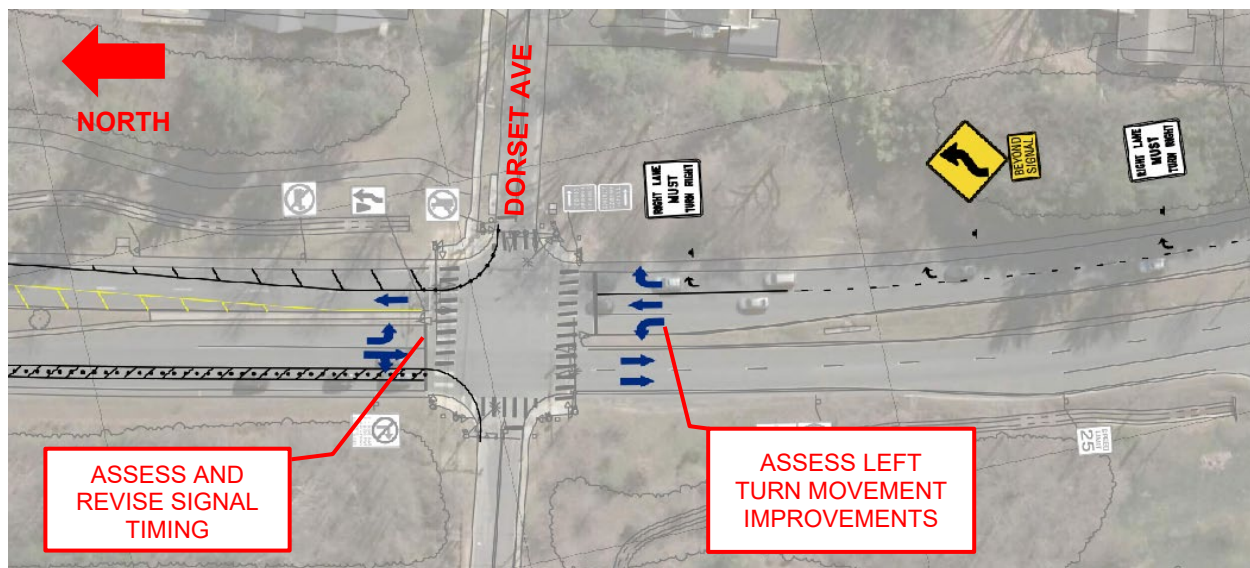


Figure 30: Intersection Signal Timing at Dorset Ave

The traffic signals at Little Falls Parkway and Dorset Avenue have a 30 seconds / 30 seconds (for the Parkway and Dorset Avenue, respectively) split, though effective green timing for the Parkway is often closer to 40 seconds / 20 seconds because traffic from Dorset is typically much lower than the Parkway resulting in earlier termination of the green signal for Dorset. Re-timing the signal to allow for a longer green for the Parkway may reduce travel times. Parks has received concerns regarding the difficulty in making the northbound left turn from the Parkway to Dorset Avenue during peak traffic, and improvements to that turn movement will also be assessed to improve efficiency and safety.

New Turn Lane

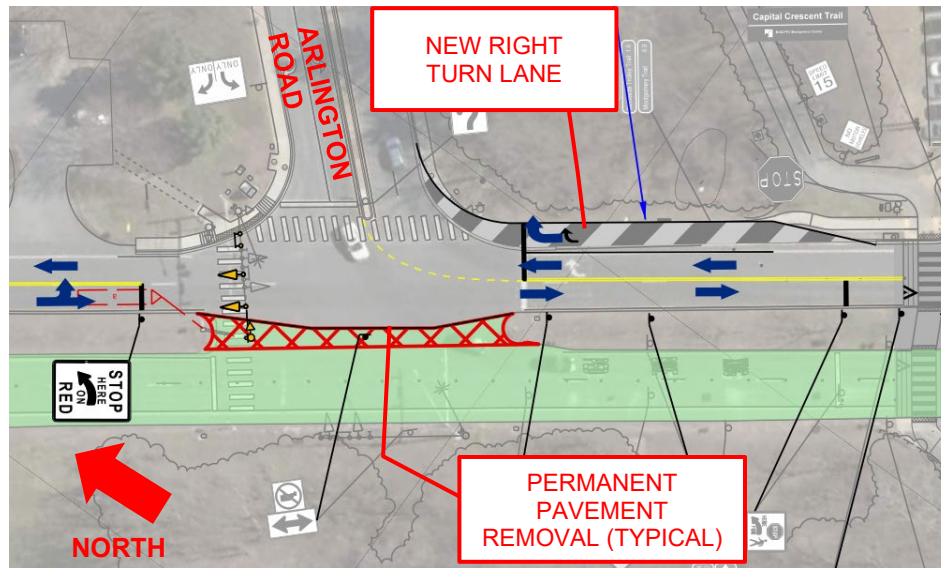


Figure 31: New Turn Lane LFP at Arlington Rd

A new right-turn only lane from northbound Little Falls Parkway to Arlington Road would reduce travel times, as that is the dominant turn movement at that intersection. A small segment of the existing sidewalk along the Parkway would have to be shifted to accommodate the new turn lane. In addition, the existing right turn lane from northbound Little Falls Parkway to Hillandale Road could be extended.

Pavement Removal

Making the current roadway configuration permanent would allow for removal of asphalt at various locations, precluding the need for temporary traffic barriers and reducing visual clutter. The asphalt removal has the secondary beneficial effect of reducing polluted runoff into the Little Falls watershed as well as reducing Parks operational and maintenance costs.

Additional Safety Improvements at CCT Crossing

Parks has continually monitored the Capital Crescent Trail crossing of Little Falls Parkway to ensure continued safety for all users. A two-lane configuration, with a 25-mph speed limit and raised crosswalk is demonstrably successful in reducing crashes and conflicts. Parks will continue to monitor the safety of the crossing and will assess and implement any additional safety improvements as warranted, such as a median refuge. Any future safety improvements would not affect the viability of activating the closed-off southbound lanes for park use.

Re-purposing of Drive Lanes

The previous southbound drive lanes along the Parkway, no longer carrying vehicle traffic, can be re-purposed to provide open park space or other benefit to County residents. The appendix includes a “Linear Park” exhibit, which could include recreational amenities and a designated shared use path in the southbound drive lane area. The ultimate use of the previous drive lanes would be subject to a public input and planning process.

Project Funding

The recommendation would be funded through the Parks Capital Improvements Program (CIP).

Attachments:


- Appendix A: Current Condition Exhibits
 - a. Existing Conditions (22x50)
 - b. 2022 Pilot Project Phase I (22x50)
 - c. 2022 Pilot Project Phase II (Current Conditions, 22x50)
- Appendix B: Recommended Site Plan (22x50)
- Appendix C: Traffic Engineering Study Data
- Appendix D: Linear Park Concept Exhibit
- Appendix E: Correspondence Log (As of March 22, 2023)
- Appendix F: 2019 Facility Plan *Recommendation for Capital Crescent Trail Crossing at Little Falls Parkway Safety Improvements Project*
- Appendix G: County Council Historical Correspondence
 - a. July 2019 County Council Transportation & Environment (T&E) Committee Letter to Montgomery County Planning Board
 - b. County Council Approved MNCPPC FY21-26 CIP Budget Removing Capital Crescent Trail at Little Falls Parkway Project from CIP (P872103)
 - c. June 2021 County Council *Support for Continuing Open Streets* Resolution (19-892)

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MCPB Agenda - Little Falls Parkway PB Report March 2023

Final Audit Report














2023-03-24

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