

BRIEFING: MARTIN STREET SHARED USE PATH

Description

The Martin Street Shared Use Path will be constructed in existing unimproved right-of-way between Henderson Avenue and Arcola Avenue. At Arcola Avenue, it will connect to the future Amherst Avenue Separated Bike Lanes. Together, these facilities will allow people walking and biking to travel north-south through the Wheaton area without using Georgia Avenue.

Completed: 1/6/2025

MCPB



2425 Reddie Drive

Item No. 10

Floor 14

1/16/2025

Wheaton, MD 20902

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Summary

- Montgomery County Department of Transportation has developed a design concept for a 10' shared use path in the Martin Street unimproved right-of-way.
- Planning Staff recommends strongly supporting this project and transmitting additional comments to MCDOT for further design refinement.

LOCATION

Martin Street between Henderson Avenue and Arcola Avenue

MASTER PLAN

2018 Bicycle Master Plan, 2022 Wheaton Regional Park Master Plan, 2023 Pedestrian Master Plan

APPLICANT

Montgomery County Department of Transportation

ACCEPTANCE DATE

N/A

REVIEW BASIS

N/A

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SECTION 1 – RECOMMENDATIONS

Planning Staff recommends strongly supporting this project and the transmittal of the following comments to Montgomery County Council's Transportation and Environment Committee and the Montgomery County Department of Transportation:

Comments

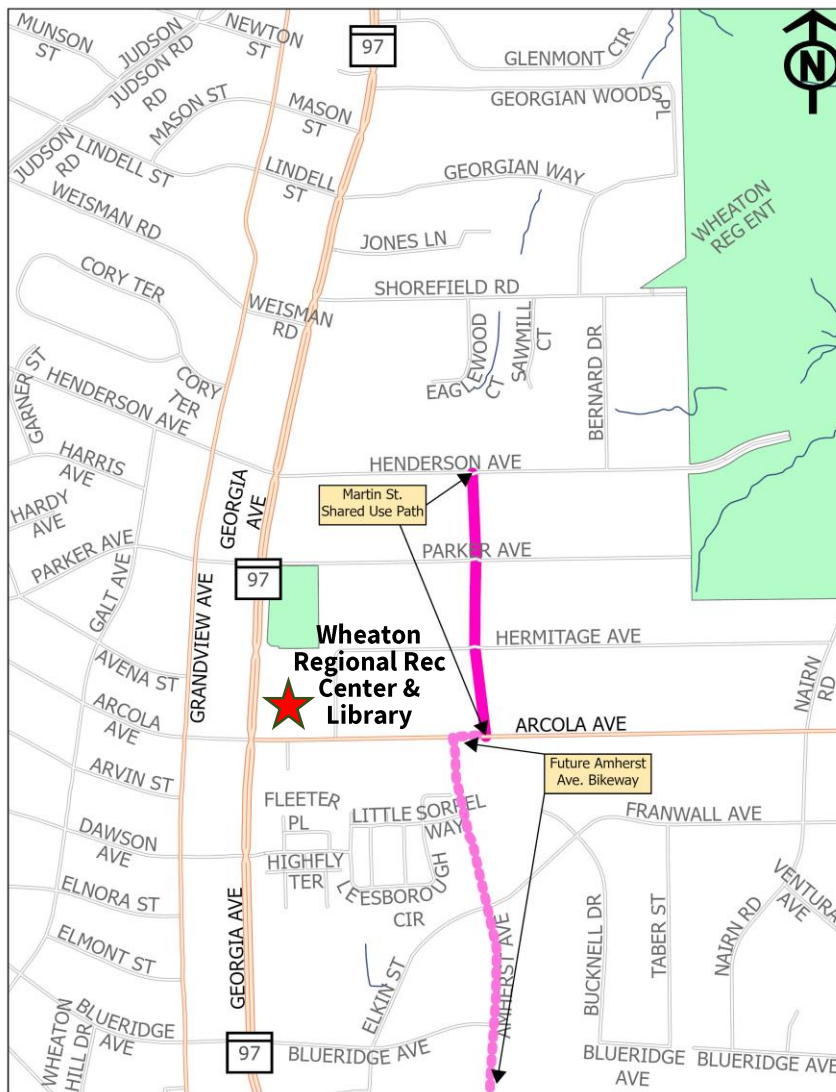
- 1. Consider constructing raised crosswalks where the shared use path intersects Parker Avenue and Hermitage Avenue.**
- 2. Consider adding a fence or other vertical element at the southern path terminus to prevent users from unintentionally entering Arcola Avenue.**

SECTION 2 – PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Background

The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) has developed a design concept for a 10' shared use path in the Martin Street unimproved right-of-way between Henderson Avenue and Arcola Avenue in Wheaton, shown as the dark purple line in Figure 1. The project is funded through 35% design under the Facility Planning – Pedestrian Facilities and Bikeways CIP (NO. P502312). It is not currently funded for final design or construction.

Figure 1: Project Area Map



Project Description

Martin Street is an unimproved public right-of-way first platted in 1909 and widened in 1956 to a 40' standard width. The right-of-way abuts single family residences on both sides, and over time, some adjacent property owners have used the public space for vehicular storage and site access. The right-of-way is a very popular desire line for pedestrians in the area who use it to travel between Downtown Wheaton, residential neighborhoods, the Wheaton Recreation Center and Library, and Wheaton Regional Park. Consistent use has created a dirt path as shown in Figure 2. Residents have requested the informal pedestrian connection be upgraded to a paved pathway to improve accessibility.

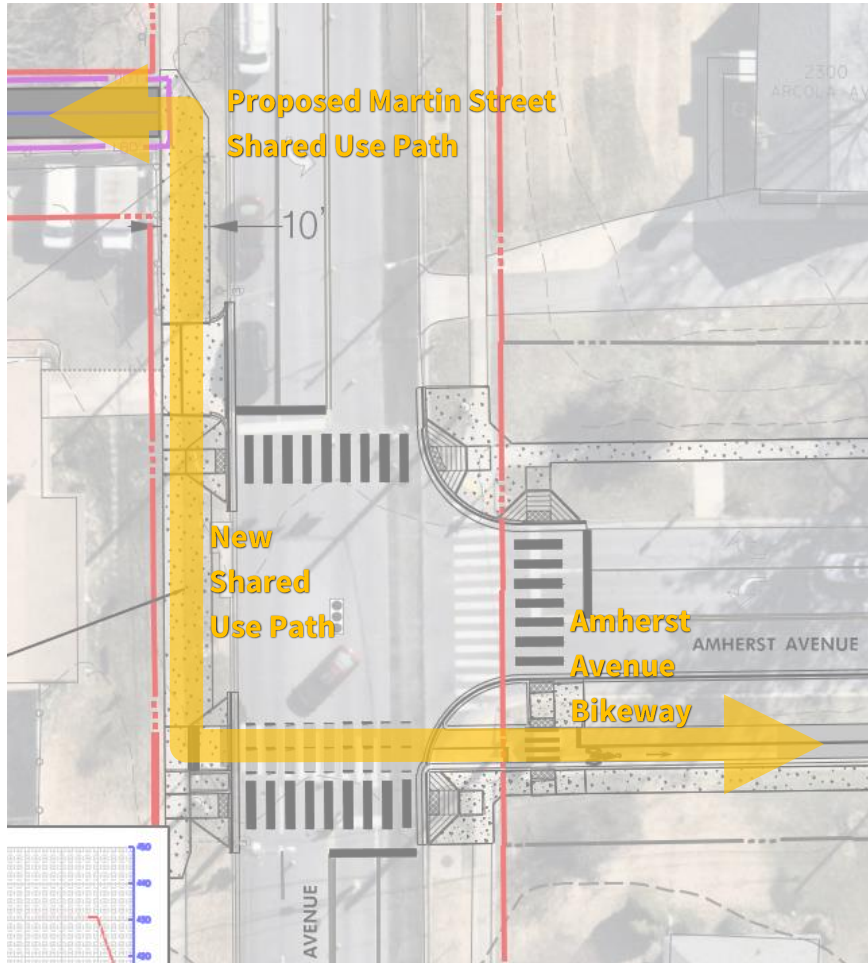
Figure 2: Martin Street Desire Line



The Planning Board discussed the Martin Street Shared Use Path as an important component in building out a Wheaton bicycle network during its review of the Amherst Avenue Separated Bike Lanes Alternatives in 2020. The design concept makes a high-quality connection to the Amherst Avenue bikeway by providing a 10' shared use path along the north side of Arcola Avenue to connect the

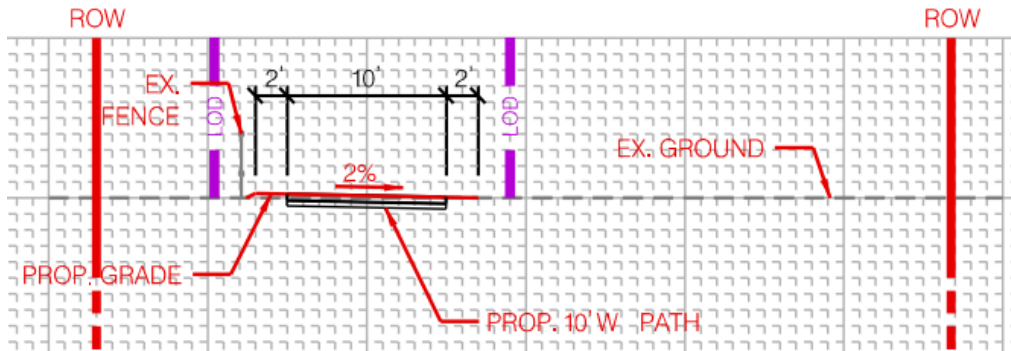
Martin Street Shared Use Path to the Amherst Avenue bikeway at the Arcola Avenue/Amherst Avenue intersection, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Connection to Amherst Avenue Bikeway



The design concept maintains a consistent 10' shared use path that does not require impacts to private property. *Attachment A* is a plan-view of the design concept that shows the shared use path meandering through the right-of-way to minimize environmental disturbance and stormwater management issues. A typical cross-section is shown in Figure 4. In certain segments of the shared use path, the project team intends to consider the use of pervious pavement to minimize environmental impacts.

Figure 4: Typical cross-section



In addition to the 10' shared use path, the design concept provides mid-block crossing treatments at Parker Avenue and Hermitage Avenue to allow path users to safely cross these streets. The project team also anticipates providing lighting adjacent to the shared use path so people can safely and comfortably walk and roll in the dark.

POTENTIAL COSTS

Below is a summary of the estimated design and construction costs.

Table 1: Estimated Project Costs

Planning, Design and Supervision	\$150,000
Land	\$50,000
Site Improvements and Utilities	\$200,000
Construction	\$500,000
Total	\$900,000

SECTION 3 – ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Master Plan Consistency

BICYCLE MASTER PLAN

The 2018 *Bicycle Master Plan* prioritizes bikeway recommendations through a tiered system. Tier 1 represents the highest priority bikeways for construction over the life of the plan and are largely located in major downtowns. Tier 4 represents the lowest priority bikeways. Over half of all bikeways are not prioritized for construction during the life of the plan and are only included in the plan if unforeseen opportunities arise to implement them.

The *Bicycle Master Plan* identifies the Martin Street Shared Use Path as a Tier 3 priority. The plan recommends a shared use path along Martin Street, and the design concept provides the appropriate facility. The plan indicates that trails and sidepaths will be a minimum of ten feet wide, although eight feet is acceptable in areas with an environmental or historic constraint. The proposed shared use path is ten feet wide.

PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLAN

The *Pedestrian Master Plan* identifies Martin Street as a master-planned pedestrian shortcut – a current informal pedestrian connection that should be improved through public capital projects and private development.

WHEATON REGIONAL PARK MASTER PLAN

The *Wheaton Regional Park Master Plan* identifies Martin Street between Henderson Avenue and Arcola Avenue as the location of a future trail to connect Downtown Wheaton to Wheaton Regional Park by way of Henderson Avenue, Parker Avenue, and Hermitage Road.

Comments

1. Consider constructing raised crosswalks where the shared use path intersects Parker Avenue and Hermitage Avenue.

Both Parker and Hermitage Avenues do not have sidewalks, so people walk and roll in the street. Pedestrians along these streets need to be able to easily access the Martin Street Shared Use Path. At the same time, the proposed path's mid-block location presents visibility challenges for both path users and people driving motor vehicles along the street where the two intersect. To make the location of the shared use path apparent and accessible, the project team should consider constructing raised crosswalks as shown in Figure 5. The design should allow pedestrians walking in the roadway to access the shared use path, while allowing shared use path users to cross the street without traveling down and back from street level. Raised crosswalks would have additional benefits:

- Discouraging vehicles along Hermitage Avenue and Parker Avenue from blocking access to the Martin Street Shared Use Path.
- Providing traffic calming along Hermitage Avenue and Parker Avenue – slowing vehicles to improve visibility and reduce the likelihood of collisions.

Figure 5: Raised Crosswalk Example from Pedestrian Master Plan



2. Consider adding a fence or other vertical element at the southern path terminus to prevent users from unintentionally entering Arcola Avenue.

As currently designed, the southern terminus of the Martin Street Shared Use Path connects to a ten-foot shared use path along Arcola Avenue to allow users to transition to and from the Amherst Avenue Separated Bike Lanes, as indicated by the yellow arrow in Figure 6. Due to existing topography, southbound shared use path users will be traveling downhill as they approach Arcola Avenue and may pick up speed. To reduce the likelihood that users (particularly bicyclists) unintentionally continue straight into Arcola Avenue (red arrow in Figure 6) due to ineffective braking, inattentiveness, etc., the project should include some sort of vertical barrier between the proposed ten-foot Arcola Avenue shared use path and the Arcola Avenue roadway. This barrier would prevent this potentially unsafe situation from occurring. A similar treatment can be seen at the intersection of the Matthew Henson Trail and Georgia Avenue in Aspen Hill (Figure 7), though a more attractive installation would be preferred.

Figure 6: Southern Shared Use Path Terminus

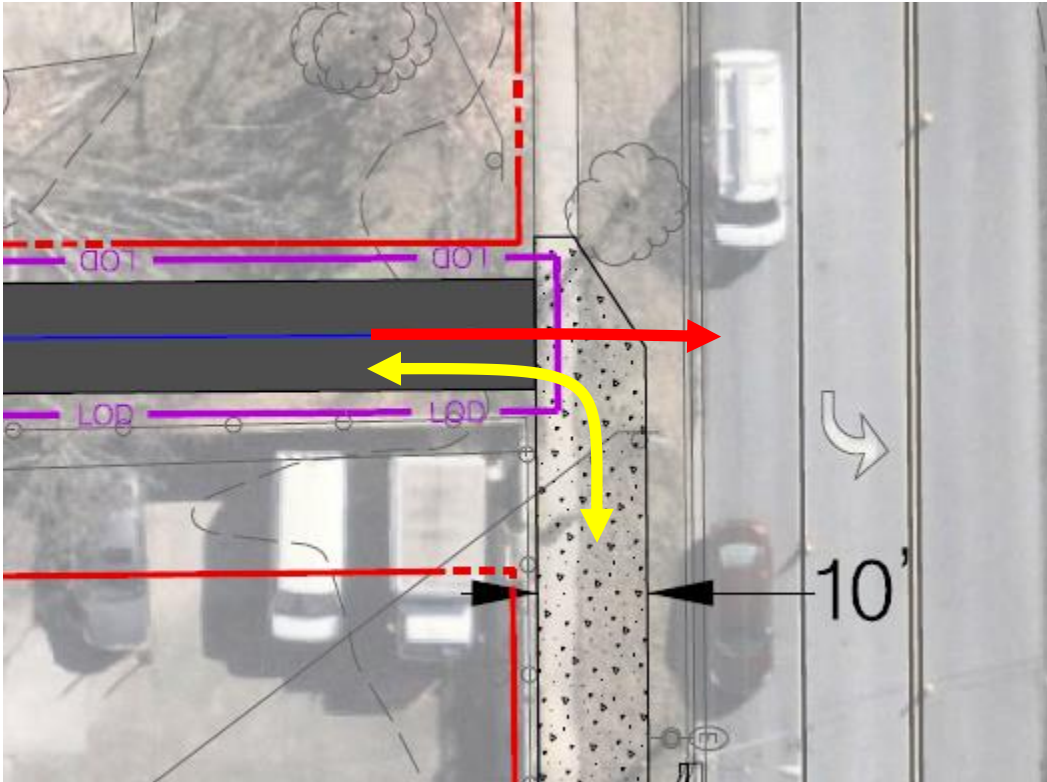


Figure 7: Matthew Henson Trail at Georgia Avenue



SECTION 4 – COMMUNITY OUTREACH

MCDOT held one public meeting about this project on September 10, 2024. Community members were invited to participate in-person or virtually. The MCDOT team presented the design and answered questions from attendees. Feedback was generally supportive of the project, though there were some attendees who questioned the need and thought maintaining the existing unimproved pathway better would be a sufficient improvement.

SECTION 5 – ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Plan View Design Concept