Montgomery Planning

CLARKSBURG GATEWAY SECTOR PLAN

PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS BRIEFING

Description

A briefing to the Planning Board on preliminary recommendations for the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan update.

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SUMMARY

- The Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan is an update to a portion of the 1994 *Clarksburg Master Plan & Hyattstown Special Study Area*, which was last amended in part by the 2014 *10 Mile Creek Area Limited Amendment*. The Sector Plan update focuses on an area east of I-270, envisioned as an employment-oriented Transit District Corridor in the 1994 Plan.
- This memo provides an overview of the Preliminary Recommendations prepared by the planning team to date and a discussion of major topics for the Planning Board's consideration. The planning team's full set of Preliminary Recommendations are attached with this memo.
- Following the briefing, the planning team will work to prepare a Working Draft Plan that incorporates the Planning Board's feedback on preliminary plan recommendations, along with a background context, maps, tables, and graphics, and implementation strategies for a complete sector plan. The Planning Board will have the opportunity to review the Working Draft Plan before approving its Public Hearing Draft version for public comment.

MASTER PLAN INFORMATION

Plan Phase
Preliminary Recommendations Briefing

Report Date
05-29-2025

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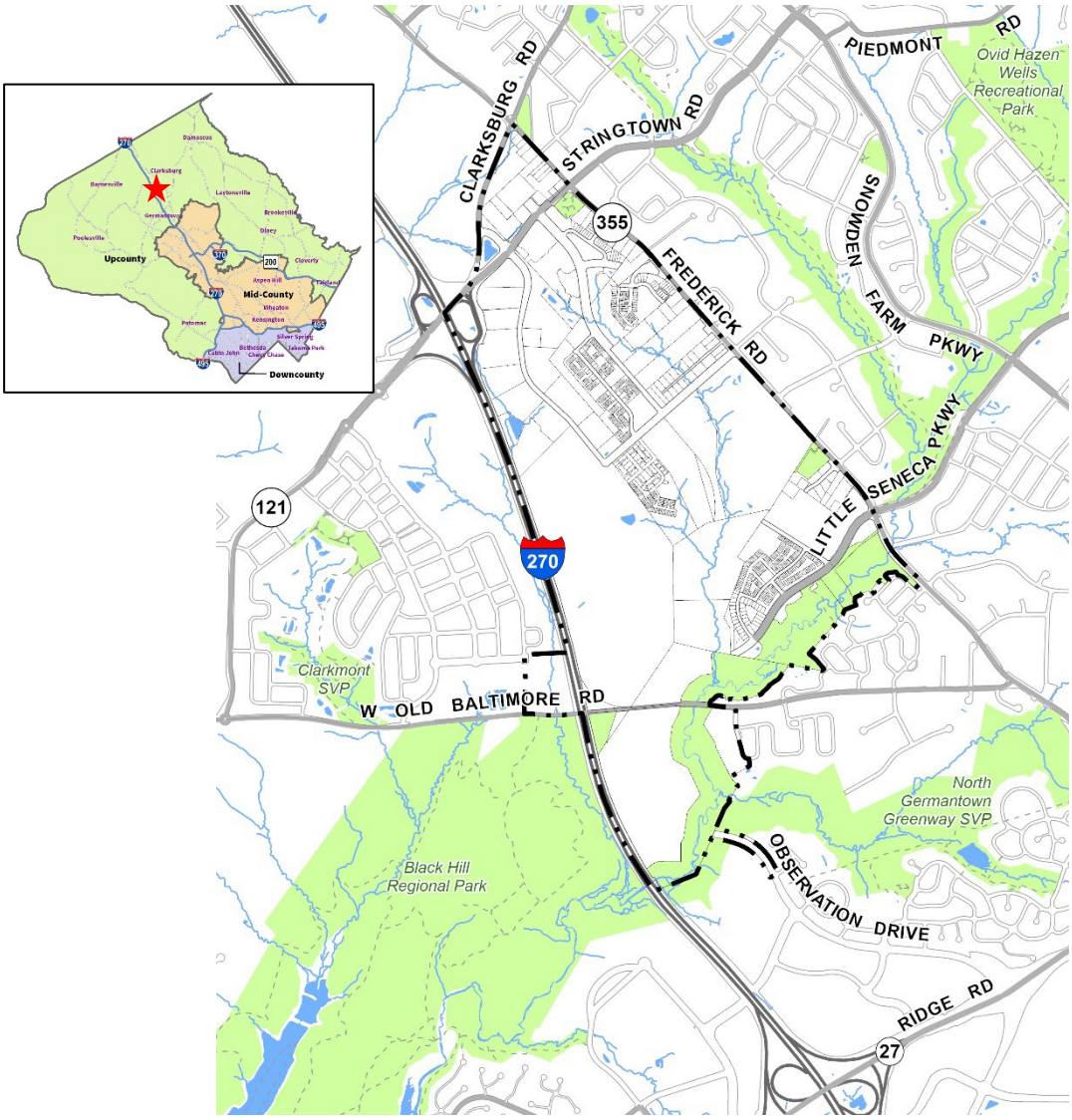

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This memo complements a Preliminary Recommendations briefing to the Planning Board for the ongoing Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan ("Sector Plan") update. Preliminary Recommendations are the first set of complete draft recommendations prepared for the plan to gain community input and Planning Board guidance on the planning team's draft plan recommendations before transitioning to the preparation of a Working Draft Plan. Preliminary recommendations may change prior to the completion of the Working Draft Plan, based on feedback received by the Planning Board, public agency staff, or the Clarksburg community.

The Sector Plan team previously shared an overview of emerging ideas with the Clarksburg community at two meetings in January 2025 and with the Planning Board on March 27, 2025, to seek feedback on emerging plan themes and recommendations. The Planning Board briefing on June 5 will

focus on key Preliminary Recommendations prepared by the planning team to date. A complete set of Preliminary Recommendations is included as Attachment A.

Following key preliminary recommendations, this memo also includes planning team responses to questions and comments expressed by the Planning Board on March 27. Topics include: (1) the planning team's proposed land use strategy; (2) the 'big picture' transportation approach for Clarksburg; (3) a comparison of master-planned roadways (existing and proposed); (4) an overview of transportation analysis conducted by the planning team; and (5) a multi-factor assessment of the prospective new I-270 interchange (Exit 17).

With recommendations to align new roads away from forested stream valleys, support transit-oriented development along a planned enhanced bus transit route between Clarksburg and Germantown (and connected with the planned MD 355 Bus Rapid Transit service), allow residential development at higher densities or where not currently permitted, and expand parkland and environmental protection, the planning team seeks to chart a new course forward for this crossroads of the Clarksburg community that achieves better connections for area neighborhoods, greater housing choice and diversity, and balanced environmental protection with new development in the community.

KEY PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

A selection of key preliminary recommendations is listed below. These recommendations are highlighted by the planning team as having the greatest potential to make a significant impact on the future quality of life of the Clarksburg community. The planning team will review these key recommendations as part of their briefing to the Planning Board on June 5 and Commissioners are invited to seek further clarification and provide feedback on these and others, as needed.

Please Note: A complete set of Preliminary Recommendations is included as Attachment A.

Land Use, Housing, and Zoning

- On select properties in the Sector Plan area, change existing employment-oriented zones to commercial-residential zones (CR and CRT) to add land use and development flexibility for new development projects, with modest increases to maximum allowable development density. (See Figure 1 of Attachment A)
- Maintain a 200-foot setback from the eastern Interstate 270 right-of-way for all building uses to minimize noise and air pollution impacts on residents and workers from the highway.
- New residential developments should provide at least 15% Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDUs).
- For development projects seeking approval under the Optional Method of Development in the Commercial-Residential (CR) and Commercial-Residential Town (CRT) zones, prioritize the following public benefits:
    - For projects with a residential component, provide a greater percentage of Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDUs) that the minimum master plan-recommended level of 15%.

- For projects with a residential component, include units with three-bedrooms or larger.
- Provide mitigation because of full or partial demolition of the former COMSAT Laboratories.
- For any project type, provide neighborhood serving uses, space for community meeting rooms and events, or a major public facility like a library or a recreation center.
- For any project type, incorporate sustainable features into their site design.

Transportation

- Amend the *Master Plan of Highways and Transitways* to re-locate the master planned Observation Drive alignment away from the Coolbrook Tributary stream valley, avoiding disruption or removal of Clarksburg Elementary School and negative impacts to established residential neighborhoods.
- Remove from the *Master Plan of Highways and Transitways* an unbuilt highway interchange on I-270 between existing Exit 16 (Ridge Road) and Exit 18 (Clarksburg Road). Instead, construct a bridge over I-270 at this location to improve multi-modal east-west movement, with the future completion of Little Seneca Parkway.
- Remove from the *Master Plan of Highways and Transitways* and unbuilt connection between Roberts Tavern Drive and Frederick Road (MD 355). Completion of Observation Drive in connection with Gateway Center Drive and Clarksburg Road is planned as an alternative to the currently planned 'Clarksburg bypass'.
- Recommend a new master planned 'main street' through the former COMSAT Laboratories property as part of new development.
- Complete the Clarksburg-Germantown Corridor Connector enhanced bus route, as planned in the *Corridor Forward: I-270 Transit Plan*, to travel through the Sector Plan Area in dedicated bus lanes along the master planned alignment of Observation Drive and Gateway Center Drive.
    - Establish an interim travel lane configuration for Observation Drive (extended) that allows for the full master planned right-of-way to allow the street to be constructed ahead of the future BRT service.
- Complete a comfortable, continuous network of low-stress biking, walking, and rolling opportunities, through the construction of shared use paths along existing and new roadways within the Sector Plan area and protected street crossings, with the goal of connecting existing and new neighborhoods, local shopping and dining destinations, and area parks.

Community Design

- Establish an interconnected hierarchy of streets within new developments and throughout the Sector Plan area, and consolidate service and parking access from secondary, tertiary, or alley streets only.
- Publicly accessible and contiguous open spaces and residential common areas should be designed as a focused, central feature of new commercial and residential developments, framed by active building frontages, public or private streets, with community amenities. These spaces should incorporate passive recreation or relaxation areas where appropriate.

- All public gathering spaces, including publicly accessible plazas, parks, lawns, and seating areas, should provide shaded areas under tree canopy or other durable shade structures where feasible to reduce heat island effect and provide for attractive open spaces.
- New buildings should be placed close to the street, with consolidated parking and services located behind, to the sides of, or lined by buildings and screened when visible from streets and public spaces, to promote a pedestrian-oriented public realm.
- Front-loaded driveways or garages for detached and attached residential developments must be avoided except where site constraints limit rear loading options to create attractive, walkable streets with sidewalks uninterrupted by curb cuts and to provide for ample on-street parking.

Environment

- New development should meet or exceed environmental design and protection techniques as established by the latest adopted Montgomery County Planning Board Environmental Guidelines, especially those standards applicable to the Ten Mile Creek Special Protection Area and Clarksburg Special Protection Area.
- Use of underground or structured parking instead of surface parking lots is strongly encouraged to limit impervious surfaces. Where surface parking is necessary, provide at least 50% tree canopy coverage across the parking lot area.
- Prioritize afforestation and reforestation or other natural habitat restoration where gaps in tree canopy and other natural habitats exist, and where appropriate to the natural setting or natural area management goals
- Preserve land along the stream valleys of Little Seneca Creek tributaries by private conservation easement or by establishing or expanding public parkland in recommended locations.
- New development must provide a minimum of 35% green cover of the total site, excluding existing forest cover on the property.
- Encourage new development and improvements to existing development to exceed the County's minimum energy standards and strive for net-zero, net positive, and/or Living Building standards.

Parks, Open Space, and Recreation

- Investigate opportunities for park renovations at **Clarksburg Neighborhood Park**, including the improvement of ADA access to park facilities and the potential addition of a picnic shelter or community garden.
- Investigate the potential for additional amenities at **Dowden's Ordinary Special Park** that are in keeping with the historic and archaeological significance of the park, possibly including a gathering space like a picnic shelter or shaded seating area.
- Establish parkland along Coolbrook Tributary, generally following the stream valley upstream from **Little Seneca Greenway Stream Valley Park** to Shawnee Lane, as a new stream valley park or an extension to the existing park via dedication or conveyance as appropriate when relevant properties develop or redevelop.

- Improve access to **Black Hill Regional Park** by all modes of transportation, especially walking, biking, and transit.
- Explore creation of **wildlife crossings** to connect existing parkland on both sides of I-270, especially with any future extension of Little Seneca Parkway over I-270 or any I-270 construction or widening.
- To serve the wider Clarksburg community, a new **Clarksburg Gateway Local Park** should be located on the former COMSAT Laboratories property. There are different ways to establish this park, including a contiguous 8- to 10-acre park or integrating several medium-sized parcels (2-3 acre minimum, each) with distinct uses that are visually connected and easy to walk between.
- Support the development of a new **Clarksburg Regional Recreation Center** in or near the Sector Plan area. A future community recreation and/or aquatic center could be co-located with the new local park recommended on the COMSAT site.
- Consider temporary uses for the **Linthicum East Elementary School Reservation Site** that could allow for public use and enjoyment prior to a need to build a school on the site depending on anticipated need and timing for constructing a school.

Historic Preservation

- Designate the **Community of Faith United Methodist Church** as a Historic Site in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*.
- Designate the **Clarksburg Heights subdivision** as a Historic District in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*.
- Do not designate the former **COMSAT Laboratories building** or property as a Historic Site in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*. Instead, require mitigation commensurate to the loss of historic resources that advances public knowledge about the past, promotes the public interest, and enhances the preservation of other resources eligible for or listed in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*.

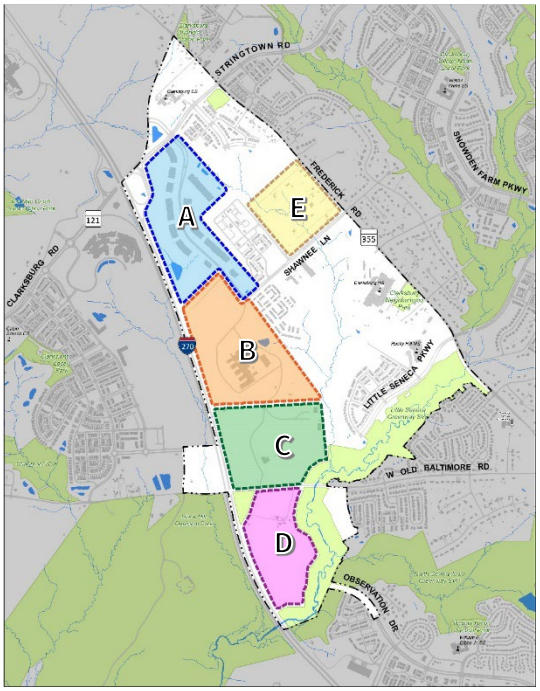
Neighborhoods

The following recommendations pertain to future development and public improvements in one of five neighborhoods delineated because of their uniquely envisioned land use character, building scale and density, or development timescale. The five neighborhoods are: Gateway Center, COMSAT North, COMSAT South, Linthicum Farm, and Upper Coolbrook. (See Figure 10 of Attachment A for a larger map of proposed neighborhoods). See inset image for the location of proposed neighborhoods.

A selection of key preliminary neighborhood recommendations, with their mapped letters, is listed below.

- **(A) Gateway Center:** Future development of residential or commercial uses should be designed for compatibility with existing uses, such as impacts from noise, light, odors, traffic, and parking demands between properties.
- **(A) Gateway Center:** As Observation Drive is completed to the south of Shawnee Lane and the Clarksburg-Germantown Corridor Connector enhanced bus service is established, Gateway Center Drive should be reconfigured between Shawnee Lane and Stringtown Road within the existing outer curbs to accommodate dedicated bus lanes per the master planned cross-section.
- **(B) COMSAT North:** New residential development should establish a mix of housing types and densities throughout the neighborhood.

Proposed Sector Plan Neighborhoods



- **(B) COMSAT North:** Small-scale commercial space(s) should be provided in this neighborhood as part of new development to provide for neighborhood-serving shopping, dining, or personal services that serve existing and future residents.
- **(C/D) COMSAT South/Linthicum Farm:** Property owners and/or developers of the former COMSAT Laboratories property and Linthicum Family property must coordinate with Montgomery Planning at the time of new development design to achieve seamless development blocks and a connected grid of streets, including the primary connections of Observation Drive, Little Seneca Parkway and West Old Baltimore Drive.
- **(C) COMSAT South:** New development is encouraged to support a community-serving activity center, with multiple uses and building densities. New housing, shopping, employment opportunities, entertainment, and cultural opportunities should be included, along with ample open space and recreation amenities.
- **(C) COMSAT South:** As part of new development in this activity center, incorporate the master planned 'main street' as a Curbless Street that is designed for safe and comfortable pedestrian activity and slower vehicle speeds, with activated storefronts, streetscape amenities, and anchors on either end of the street
- **(D) Linthicum Farm:** New residential development should establish a mix of housing types and densities throughout the neighborhood.
- **(D) Linthicum Farm:** Small-scale commercial space(s) should be provided in this neighborhood as part of new development to provide for neighborhood-serving shopping, dining, or personal services that serve existing and future residents.

- **(E) Upper Coolbrook:** New development should be primarily residential in character and may include a range of compact, low- to medium-density residential housing, institutional uses, and/or small-scale commercial uses.
- **(E) Upper Coolbrook:** Implement environmental site design and best management practices to minimize impacts to streams and environmentally sensitive natural resources, watersheds, and wildlife habitats, and avoid and reduce soil erosion and stormwater runoff into the Coolbrook Tributary.

DISCUSSION

PLAN OVERVIEW

The Sector Plan is an amendment to a portion of the 1994 *Clarksburg Master Plan and Hyattstown Special Study Area* ("the 1994 Plan"), which was previously amended by the 2011 *Clarksburg Master Plan and Hyattstown Special Study Area Limited Amendment* ("2011 Amendment") and the 2014 *10 Mile Creek Area Limited Amendment* ("2014 Amendment"). The Sector Plan area represents one of the last remaining districts of the 1994 Plan yet to be fully realized. Many circumstances have changed in the Sector Plan area in the thirty years since the 1994 Plan's adoption and the planning team believes that its vision for the Sector Plan area as a light industrial and employment-oriented district is no longer viable. The potential to contribute to the local community as a new mixed-use, transit-oriented activity center in Clarksburg is a guiding principle of the planning team's approach to the Sector Plan update.

The Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan update considers whether changes to land use, transportation, environmental, historic preservation, or other master plan policies are appropriate for the future of Clarksburg. These changes may apply to land use mix, density, and design standards, master planned street alignments and designs, historic designation guidance, and environmental protection and mitigation measures, and may also amend other countywide functional planning policies, such as the *Master Plan of Highways and Transitways* and the *Bicycle Master Plan*.

The project webpage for the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan is www.montgomeryplanning.org/cgsp/.

Please Note: For an overview of the planning team's approach since approval of the Scope of Work and a summary of community outreach and engagement efforts completed to date, refer to the Planning Board Emerging Ideas briefing report and presentation from March 27, 2025, posted on the Planning Board's website, https://montgomeryplanningboard.org/.

THRIVE MONTGOMERY 2050

Thrive Montgomery 2050 ("Thrive 2050") champions growth along corridors and in defined community centers, recognizing the crucial role of transit, vibrant mixed-use development, and attainable housing in supporting our economic competitiveness, environmental sustainability, and equity initiatives.

Clarksburg is identified as a "Medium Center" by *Thrive 2050*. Medium Centers are locations in the county with the second highest level of planned development intensity and typically include significant clusters of existing or planned residential density and clusters of commercial density, such as large shopping centers and office campuses. Medium Centers are likely to be close to transit. The county's general plan also identifies MD 355 as a Growth Corridor and the Plan area as a Corridor-Focused Growth area. According to *Thrive 2050*, development of new or substantially expanded centers of activity should be focused along the growth corridors to avoid sprawl and achieve the critical mass required for each center to be economically sustainable.

Thrive 2050 specifically calls out the former COMSAT Laboratories site as an opportunity to create a complete community:

> Existing suburban office parks in locations such as Rock Spring or Clarksburg's COMSAT site have large existing buildings that can accommodate employment but lack the integration of uses, services, and amenities necessary to succeed in an increasingly competitive office market. Complete Communities strategies can help reposition these employment centers through infill and redevelopment to incorporate a variety of housing, restaurants, retail, public facilities, and parks and public spaces along with better transit service, making them more attractive to both residents and employers. (Thrive Montgomery 2050, p. 85)

Ultimately, the Sector Plan team seeks to implement the intentions of *Thrive 2050* by achieving a balance in future development with the preservation of natural and historic resources that will contribute to a more complete, connected, and sustainable neighborhood in Clarksburg.

FOLLOW-UP ON PLANNING BOARD EMERGING IDEAS BRIEFING

To support the context of preliminary plan recommendations in this memo, the planning team would like to return to several topics of interest expressed by the Planning Board at their Emerging Ideas briefing on March 27, 2025.

Proposed Land Use Strategy

To expand upon the planning team's land use strategy for the Sector Plan, our overall approach to the plan is to facilitate a more complete, compact, and connected community as new development occurs within the Sector Plan. The draft Concept Framework Plan (see Figure 2 in Attachment A) and combination of zoning, housing, community design, transportation, parks, and other recommendations are intended to work together to increase the community's access to, and ability to realize, new housing opportunities, shopping and dining destinations, improved transportation connections within and beyond the Clarksburg community, heightened public realm experience, and greater recreational amenities and environmental sustainability.

Preliminary zoning recommendations seek to add flexibility for future land uses through development within the Sector Plan area by allowing residential development along the Observation Drive corridor (where it is not currently permitted) and modest increases in residential densities for select properties along Frederick Road (MD 355). While the plan cannot require the type and scale of housing development, preliminary recommendations do seek to encourage and incentivize a mix of future

housing types, densities, affordability levels, and accessible designs. The planning team also seeks to encourage higher-density housing, as well as a mix of complimentary uses, near the planned Corridor Connector enhanced bus stations along the Observation Drive corridor. (See Figure 1 in Attachment A for a map of preliminary zoning recommendations.)

Along with recommended zoning changes, preliminary plan recommendations seek to support the establishment of a new community-oriented, mixed-use activity center along the Observation Drive corridor, centered primarily on the former COMSAT Laboratories property. This activity center is envisioned as a new compact, walkable, and environmentally sustainable neighborhood center within the greater Clarksburg community, supported by frequent public transit, with a range of residential, commercial, and employment uses. Community Design recommendations are proposed to help establish desirable street and block layout, streetscape design, parkland and open space amenities, and environmental site and building design.

As preparation for transportation modeling to inform and analyze potential land use and transportation recommendations (described in more detail in later sections), the planning team developed projections for future population and employment in the Sector Plan Area for the maximum end-state development potential of current zoning districts, versus proposed zoning districts, to the planning horizon year of 2045 (see Table 1, below). These development projections are theoretical in nature and useful primarily for comparison across scenarios.

Table 1: Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan Land Use Projections

Transportation Modeling Scenarios	Households	Population	Jobs
Built Conditions (2015)	821	2,101	2,125
Maximum End-State Development Potential of *Current* Zoning Built-out (by 2045)	1,386	3,473	3,830
Maximum End-State Development Potential of *Proposed* Zoning Build-out (by 2045)	5,038	12,335	6,412
Potential growth from 2015 to 2045 with proposed zoning	***+4,217***	***+10,234***	***+4,287***

A "Big Picture" Transportation Approach for Clarksburg

In response to a question about the 'big picture' of the planned transportation network in Clarksburg at the March 27 Planning Board briefing, the planning team would like to share our approach to the development of preliminary transportation recommendations. In general, we believe that a street network and its characteristics greatly influence local land use, community experience, travel behaviors, and the environment; streets are meant to serve people – not specifically their vehicles – and the places where they need to go. Street design that centers and prioritizes people over cars provides an opportunity for the surrounding land to flourish with the kind of activity that creates lasting economic value and a strong sense of community.

Car-dependent community design is financially and ecologically unsustainable. The county's General Plan, Thrive Montgomery 2050, calls us to prioritize alternatives to driving alone as the only viable transportation choice. We are centering this priority in our recommendations for the location and

character of master planned roadways within the Sector Plan area. The county's "Complete Streets" framework is the guiding design approach for this plan. Our recommendations focus on providing greater freedom of transportation choice by creating safer opportunities for walking-biking-rolling and driving, as well as high quality public transportation.

Zooming out from the Sector Plan area, Clarksburg is situated along two major north-south roadway corridors in Montgomery County, Interstate 270 (I-270) and Frederick Road (MD 355). Other roads that connect with Clarksburg are smaller, "country" roads that travel through rural, agricultural, and forested lands to the east and west of the community.

This context presents limits to establishing high-capacity roadway alternatives for people driving to and from Clarksburg by car. The planned Midcounty Highway (M-83) was at one time thought to be a regional solution to the growing traffic congestion of I-270 and MD 355, yet the completion of this challenging roadway project is increasingly uncertain due to its substantial financial and environmental costs.

The Clarksburg community is served by several Ride On bus routes, some of which are 'express routes' that bring riders quickly to the Shady Grove Metro Station, and bus service in Clarksburg is expected to be updated to better serve the community through Montgomery County Department of Transportation's upcoming RideOn Reimagined effort. The planned MD 355 Flash BRT service and shorter-distance Corridor Connector enhanced bus lines are expected to offer attractive alternatives to driving a personal vehicle for common destinations that are accessible along these high-frequency transit routes.

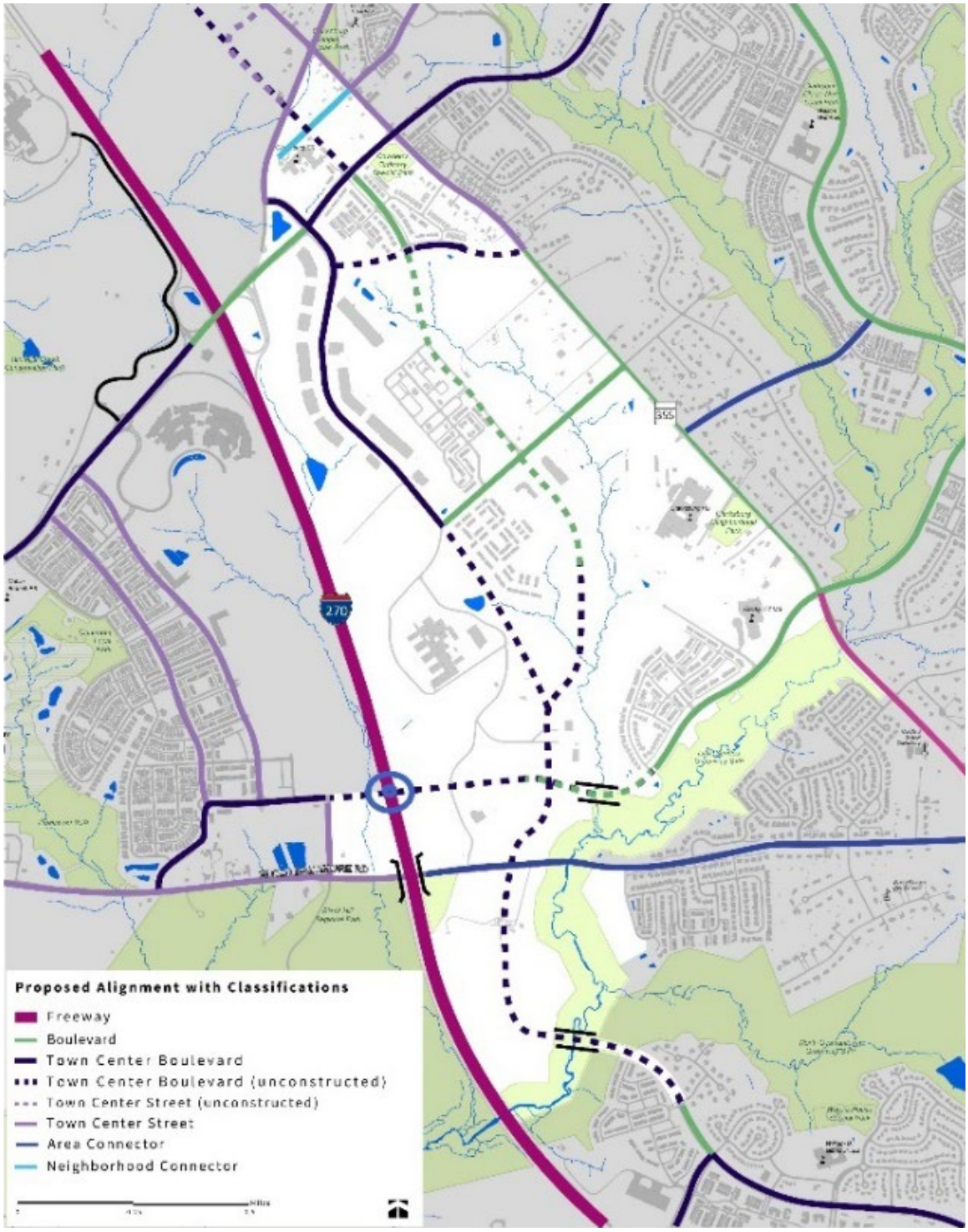
The preliminary transportation recommendations proposed by the planning team seek to improve the access and experience for people driving, walking, biking, and using transit in the vicinity of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan area. The long-term solution to local traffic congestion caused by private vehicle use is to reduce private vehicle trips, mainly through the provision of high-quality mass transit alternatives and safe opportunities to bike and walk to local amenities.

Regionally, there are few viable solutions to reducing traffic congestion for Clarksburg. The I-270 Managed Lanes Study by the Maryland State Highway Administration is one possible long-term option for Clarksburg residents as is the extension of the Metro Red Line Metro service to Germantown and more frequent MARC commuter rail service. Ultimately, a multi-modal approach is needed to best serve the transportation needs and preferences of Clarksburg and Montgomery County overall. We believe the focus must be on establishing efficient mass transit as a viable alternative to driving.

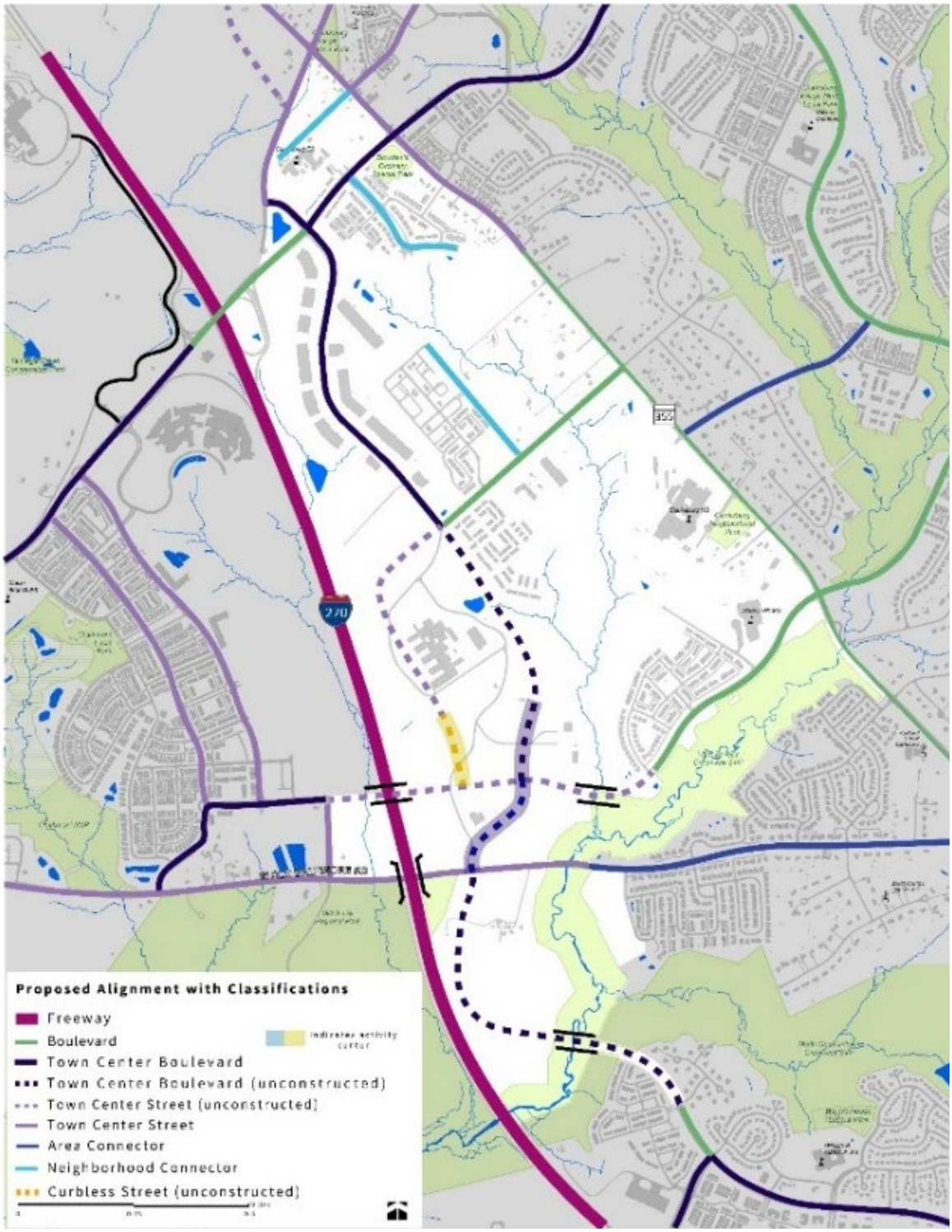
Master Planned Roadway Comparisons

Staff's preliminary street network recommendations retain elements envisioned by the 1994 *Clarksburg Master Plan* and seek to modify or remove others in response to county policy changes and development patterns that have occurred since 1994, as well as to reflect current thinking about how best to move about in Clarksburg.

1994 Clarksburg Master Plan & Corridor Forward Planned Road Network



Draft Staff-Recommended Road Network



The planning team continues to support the 1994 recommendation to complete Observation Drive as a multi-modal corridor, providing a local travel alternative to I-270 and Frederick Road (MD 355), albeit along an adjusted alignment that is more complimentary to future development and less

environmentally destructive. The major transit service envisioned in 1994 along Observation Drive, a light rail train route known as the Corridor Cities Transitway, was re-envisioned in 2022 as a network of enhanced bus routes through the adoption of *Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan*. The planning team's preliminary recommendations update the planned roadway to support vehicle travel and the new transit service – reducing the necessary right-of-way width and pavement which, in turn, reduces costs and impervious surfaces within the Clarksburg Special Protection Area. We recommend re-aligning Observation Drive generally to the west of the 1994 alignment, away from the Coolbook Tributary to Little Seneca Creek and following the high points of the existing topography.

We also recommend removal of certain previously-planned segments of Observation Drive that we believe no longer to be necessary to effective transportation access and movement through the Sector Plan. A portion of the 1994 Plan's Observation Drive alignment, in conjuction with connecting Roberts Tavern Drive with Frederick Road (MD 355) was intended to create a bypass from MD 355 around the Clarksburg Historic District. Our recommendation is to establish an alternate 'bypass' without disrupting sensitive environmental features, established neighborhoods, and the current Clarksburg Elementary School property (and co-located historic Clarksburg School building). Staff's recommended alternate 'bypass' would take a slightly longer, yet less disruptive path, following the recommended Observation Drive (extended) alignment between Waters Discovery Lane and Gateway Center Drive. This alternate route would effectively 'by-pass' a segment of MD 355 between Clarksburg Road, just north of the Clarksburg Historic District, and the intersection of Frederick Road with Ridge Road (MD 27) to the south.

Additionally, staff's preliminary plan recommendations support the completion of Little Seneca Parkway, consistent with the 1994 Plan, with a bridge over I-270 instead of a highway interchange as recommended in 1994. East-west connections are limited in the vicinity of the Sector Plan Area, and I-270 stands as a barrier between Cabin Branch and the rest of Clarksburg east of I-270. Completing Little Seneca Parkway is key opportunity to establish a safe and comfortable connection for people biking and walking, as well as driving, to connect residents to everyday amenities like as grocery stores, schools, and parks. (see below for more discussion of the I-270 interchange).

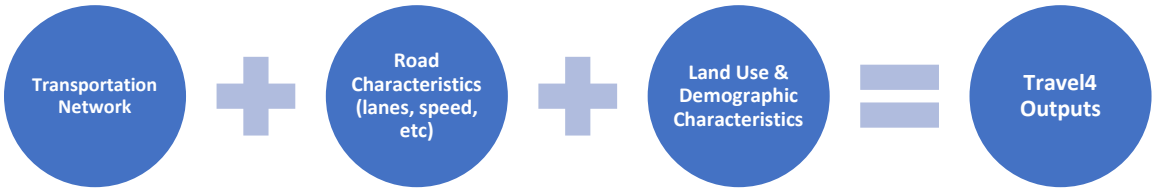
The last major change from the 1994 Plan network recommendations is a Sector Plan recommendation for a new "Main Street" along the center of the former COMSAT Laboratories site, from Shawnee Lane to Little Seneca Parkway. This street would strengthen a connected grid of comfortable, active streets along the developable land. A shared street design character approaching the activity center at Little Seneca Parkway would provide opportunities for street activating retail and public space adjacent to the transit stop and bicycle trail network.

Transportation Analysis

To help inform the planning team's land use and transportation recommendations and understand their implications on future travel behavior and experience in the vicinity of the Plan area, the planning team conducted regional travel modeling analysis using the Travel/4 regional transportation model, developed by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG). The Travel/4 model generalizes travel throughout a transportation network to quantify six performance metrics: (1) jobs accessible within a 45-minute drive from the analysis area, (2) jobs accessible within a 45-minute transit trip from the analysis area, (3) average travel time for non-commute drive trip, (4) average

travel time for a non-commute transit trip, (5) vehicle miles travelled (VMT) per capita, and (6) non-auto drive mode share (NADMS). Trips are allocated between geographical Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZs), generally bounded by major roadways or natural barriers, to simulate how people travel throughout the region. Population and employment values are assigned to every TAZ in the model to serve as the 'origins' and 'destinations' of the region, with changes in these values made within the analysis area for a given model to test how different scenarios perform. The analysis area in this case was the Clarksburg Policy Area, with includes eleven (11) TAZs, and is an area roughly the size of the greater Clarksburg community.

Generalized Formula of the Travel/4 Model



Planning Staff modeled five scenarios to understand how various land use and transportation decisions might change the driving and transit experience in Clarksburg by 2045.

1. **Existing (2015)** – The land use characteristics for population and employment and the roadway and transit network as of 2015. This 'existing conditions' scenario year is the current default for all master planning modeling efforts and relies on data provided by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG).
2. **Baseline (2045)** – The planned transportation network approved in the current *Master Plan of Highways and Transitways* that reflects the recommendations of all current, adopted plans. Land use assumptions are based on a maximum theoretical build-out of all property within the Sector Plan under current zoning limits.
3. **Scenario 1 (2045) [Recommended]** – A potential transportation network in 2045 that connects Observation Drive between Waters Discovery Lane and Gateway Center Drive (with two vehicle travel lanes and two dedicated transit lanes as part of the planned Clarksburg-Germantown Corridor Connector route), connects Little Seneca Parkway as a two-lane road and bridge over I-270, and maintains Frederick Road (MD 355) as a two-lane road north of Ridge Road. The 'Clarksburg Bypass' around the Clarksburg Historic District via Roberts Tavern Drive and Observation Drive extension through Clarksburg Elementary School assumes as removed for the purposes of this scenario. Land use projections assume a maximum end-state development potential of proposed zoning build-out by 2045. Note: This is staff's preferred scenario that is reflected in our preliminary recommendations.
4. **Scenario 2 (2045) [Interchange]** – A potential transportation network in 2045 that connects Observation Drive between Waters Discovery Lane and Gateway Center Drive (with two vehicle travel lanes and two dedicated transit lanes on Observation Drive as part of the planned Clarksburg-Germantown Corridor Connector route), connects Little Seneca Parkway as a two-lane road and interchange with I-270, and expands Frederick Road (MD 355) to a four-lane

road north of Ridge Road. Roberts Tavern Drive was assumed to connect with Frederick Road for the purposes of this scenario. Land use projections assume a maximum end-state development potential of proposed zoning build-out by 2045.

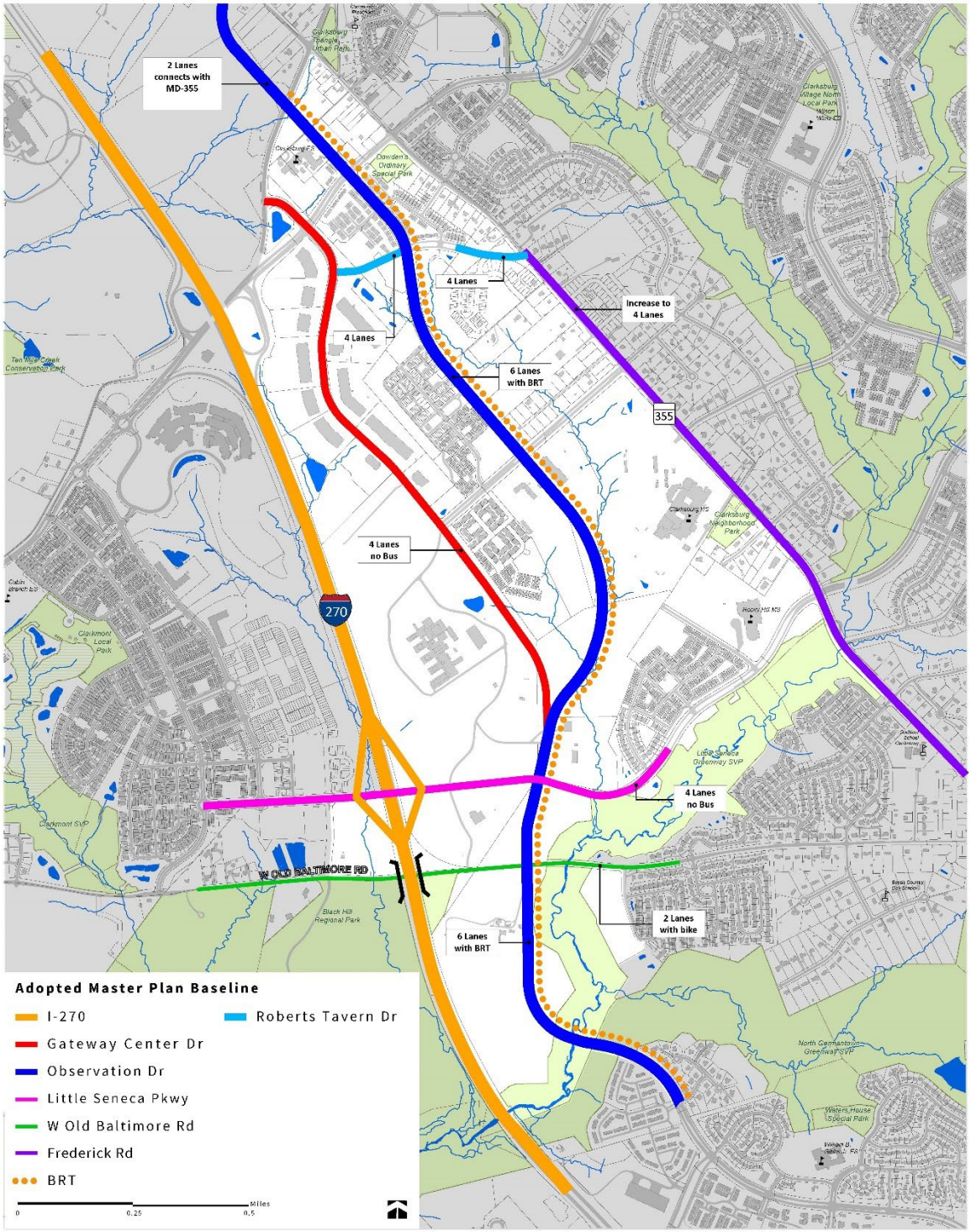
5. **Scenario 3 (2045) [Observation Only]**– A potential transportation network in 2045 that connects Observation Drive between Waters Discovery Lane and Gateway Center Drive (with two vehicle travel lanes and two dedicated transit lanes on Observation Drive as part of the planned Clarksburg-Germantown Corridor Connector route), connects Little Seneca Parkway between Frederick Road and planned Observation Drive as a two-lane road, but does not extend across I-270, and maintains Frederick Road (MD 355) as a two-lane road north of Ridge Road. The 'Clarksburg By-pass' around the Clarksburg Historic District via Roberts Tavern Drive and Observation Drive extension through Clarksburg Elementary School was removed for the purposes of this scenario. Land use projections assume a maximum end-state development potential of proposed zoning build-out by 2045.

Table 2: Travel/4 Modeling Output Metrics – All Scenarios

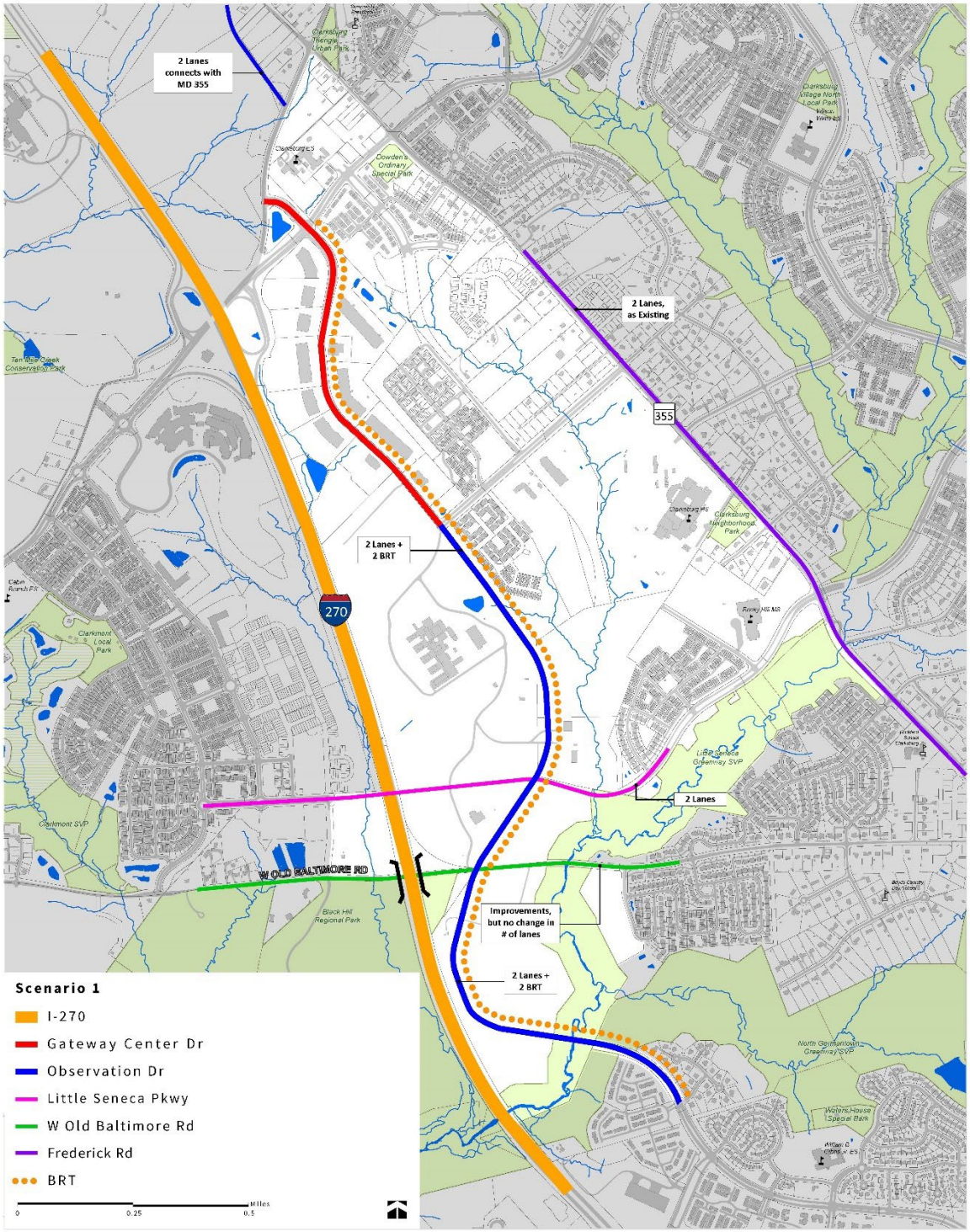
Performance Metric	Built Conditions (2015)	Adopted Master Plan Baseline (2045)	Scenario 1: Recommended (2045)	Scenario 2: Interchange (2045)	Scenario 3: Observation Only (2045)
Auto Job Accessibility	399,000	457,000	420,000	440,000	420,000
Transit Job Accessibility	8,700	51,800	46,000	46,000	46,000
Auto Travel Time (minute)	17 minutes	18 minutes	19 minutes	19 minutes	19 minutes
Transit Travel Time (minute)	61 minutes	63 minutes	67 minutes	66 minutes	67 minutes
VMT Per Capita	14.5 miles	15 miles	15 miles	15 miles	15 miles
NADMS (work trips)	23%	27%	29%	29%	29%

Figures are rounded to a degree of 2-3 significant figures .

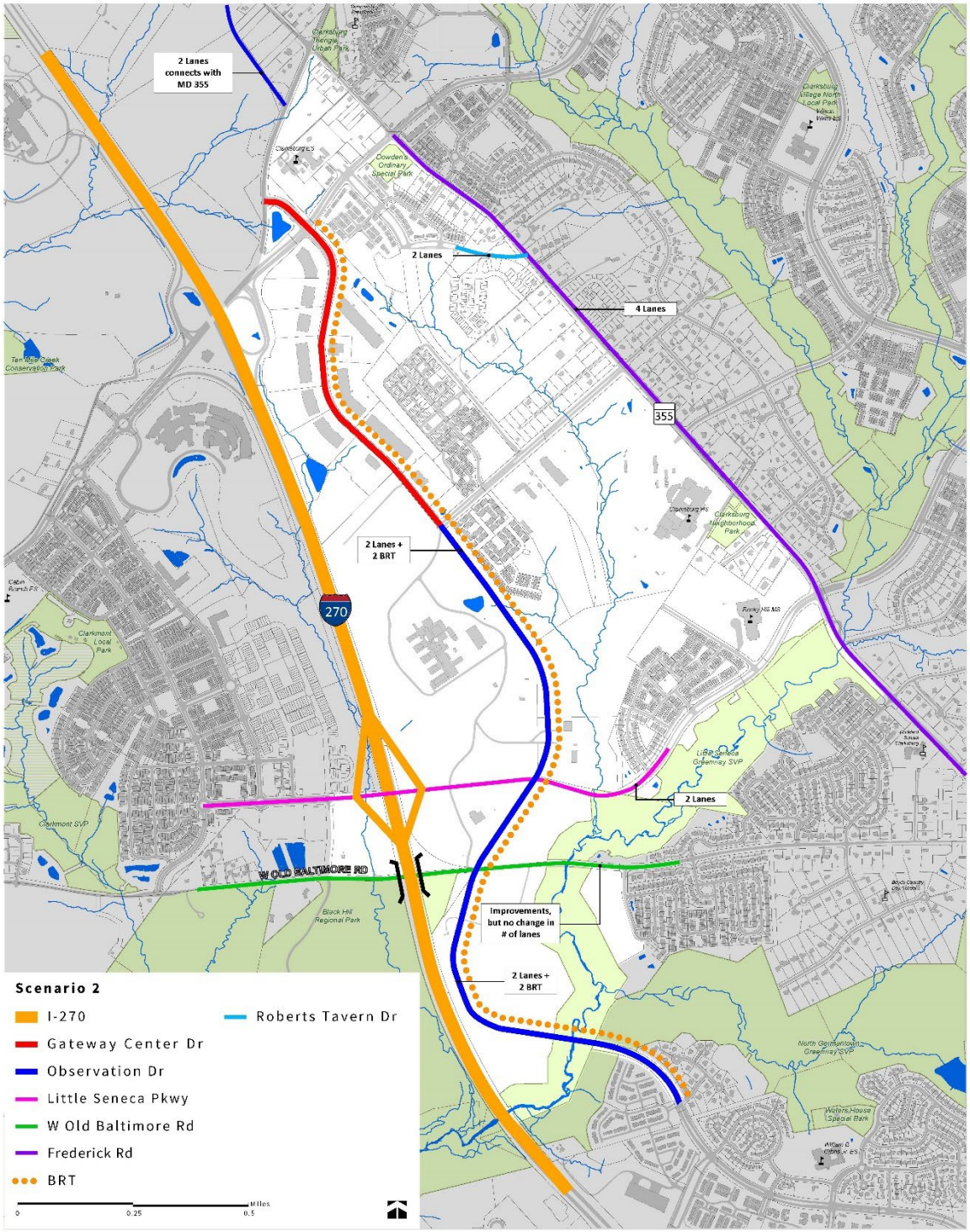
Adopted Master Plan Baseline (Baseline 2045) Transportation Network



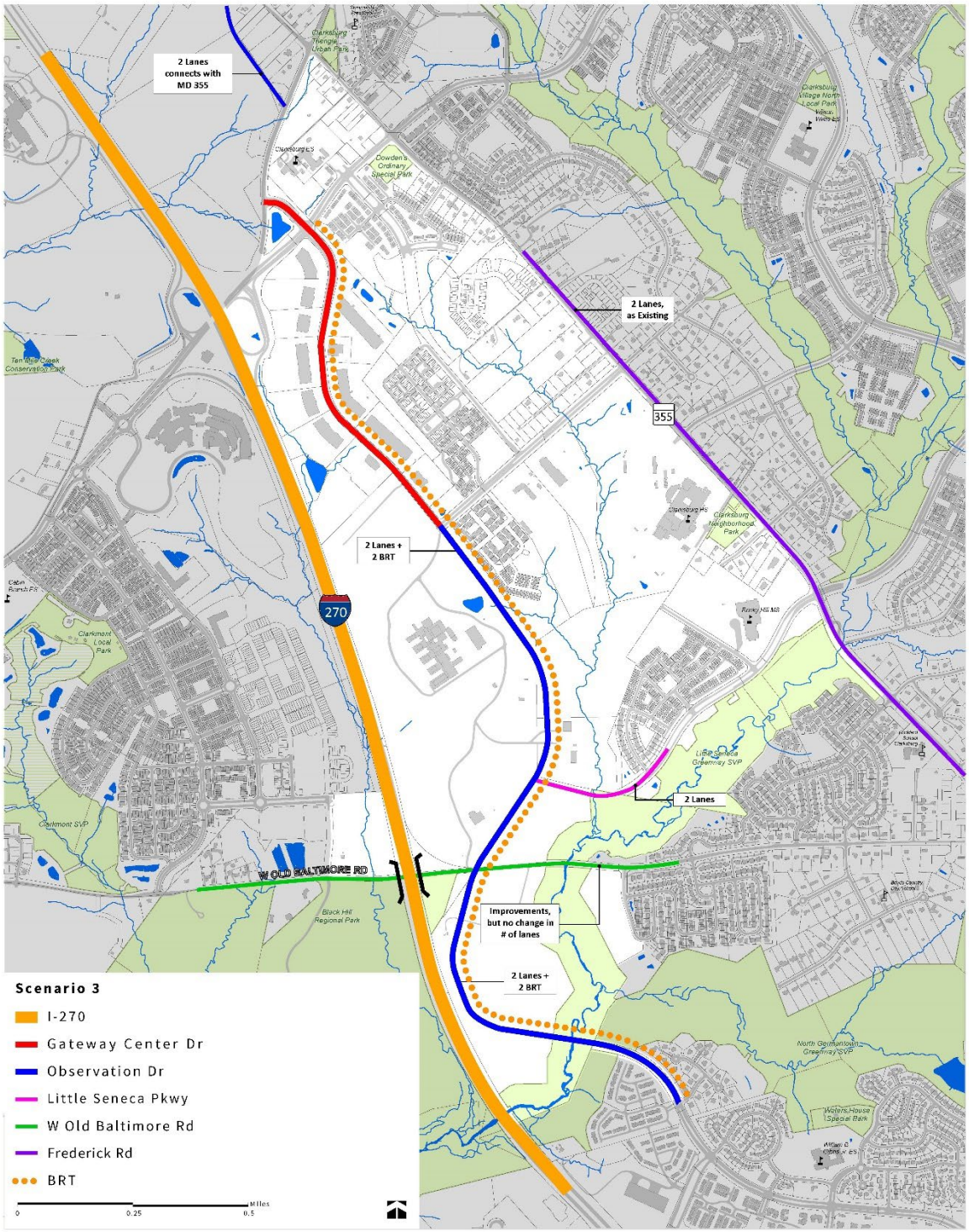
Scenario 1 (2045) [Recommended] Transportation Network



Scenario 2 (2045) [Interchange] Transportation Network



Scenario 3 (2045) [Observation Only] Transportation Network



The tables below include the performance results comparing the built conditions as of 2015, current Adopted Master Plan (Baseline 2045), and Scenario 1 (Recommended) scenarios. The tables are color coded, with orange cells indicating performance metric changes that area not considered an improvement and green cells generally considered improvements.

Table 3: Current Conditions (2015) vs. Adopted 1994 Master Plan (2045) Metrics

Performance Metric	Built Conditions (2015)	Adopted Master Plan Baseline (2045)	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Auto Job Accessibility	399,000	457,000	+59,115	+15%
Transit Job Accessibility	8,700	51,800	+43,030	+492%
Auto Travel Time (minute)	17 minutes	18 minutes	+1 minute	+6%
Transit Travel Time (minute)	61 minutes	63 minutes	+2 minutes	+3%
VMT Per Capita	14.5 miles	15 miles	+0.4 miles	+2%
NADMS (work trips)	23%	27%	+4%	+16%

Table 4: Current Conditions (2015) vs. CGSP Scenario 1 (2045) Metrics

Performance Metric	Built Conditions (2015)	2045 Scenario 1	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Auto Job Accessibility	399,000	420,000	+21,000	+5.5%
Transit Job Accessibility	8,700	45,700	+37,000	+425%
Auto Travel Time (minute)	17 minutes	19 minutes	+2 minutes	+12%
Transit Travel Time (minute)	61 minutes	66 minutes	+5 minutes	+8%
VMT Per Capita	14.5 miles	15 miles	+0.5 miles	+3%
NADMS (work trips)	23%	29%	+6%	+23%

Table 5: Adopted 1994 Master Plan (2045) vs. CGSP Scenario 1 (2045) Metrics

Performance Metric	Adopted Master Plan Baseline (2045)	2045 Scenario 1	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Auto Job Accessibility	457,000	420,000	-37,000	-8%
Transit Job Accessibility	51,800	45,700	-6,100	-12%
Auto Travel Time (minute)	18 minutes	19 minutes	+1 minute	+5.5%
Transit Travel Time (minute)	63 minutes	66 minutes	+3 minutes	+5%
VMT Per Capita	15 miles	15.2 miles	+0.2 miles	+1%
NADMS (work trips)	27%	29%	+2%	+7.5%

I-270 Interchange Assessment

At this time, staff does not see Exit 17 ("the interchange") as a significant regional transportation solution. Its impacts are limited in both geographic scope and transportation performance metrics. Additionally, we question whether the costs in public dollars, environmental impact, and the community character that highway-oriented development encourages justify the limited benefits. Further investment in highway infrastructure encourages more highway use and undermines the county's long-range goal of reducing private vehicle dependence and GHG emissions.

Below are two of the five modeling scenarios tested as part of the Travel/4 regional modeling. Scenario 1 represents the Little Seneca bridge scenario and Scenario 2 represents the Exit 17 scenario. The other notable difference between Scenario 1 and 2 is an expanded MD-355 in Scenario 2 (from 2 lanes to 4 lanes).

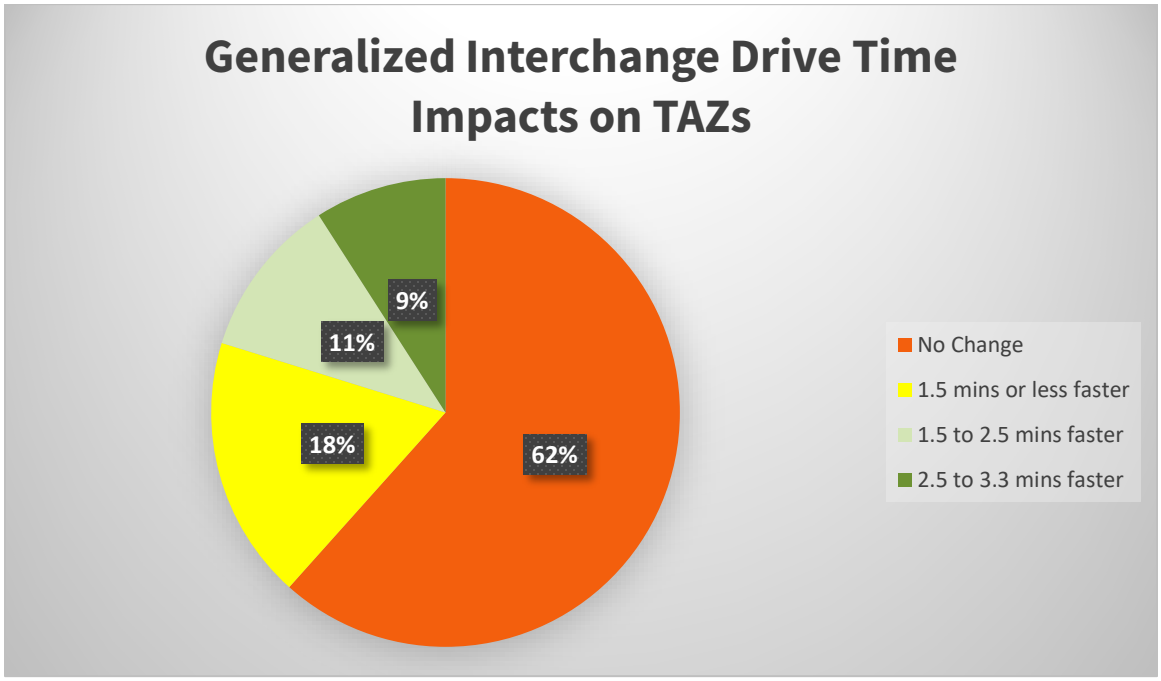
Table 6: CGSP Scenario 1 vs. CGSP Scenario 2 Metrics

Performance Metric	2045 Scenario 1 (without interchange)	2045 Scenario 2 (with interchange)	Calculated Interchange Impact	Interchange Impact % Change from Scenario 1
Auto Job Accessibility	420,000	440,000	+20,000	+5%
Transit Job Accessibility	45,700	45,700	0	0%
Auto Travel Time (minute)	18 minutes	18 minutes	0	0%
Transit Travel Time (minute)	66 minutes	66 minutes	0	0%
VMT Per Capita	15.2 miles	15.3 miles	+0.1	+0.7%
NADMS (work trips)	29%	29%	0%	0%

Staff's assessment of the Travel/4 performance metrics compared above is that the impact of an interchange is very mild within the context of the region. Job accessibility by automobile is improved and approximately 20,000 additional potential job opportunities can be reached from the Clarksburg Policy Area by a 45-minute drive with the addition of an interchange. This is attributed to a 1- to 3-minute reduction in drive time from TAZs adjacent to the interchange reaching additional TAZs to the south with greater job values. The other outputs are essentially unaffected by the addition of an interchange in the model. There is no reduction in the average time of a vehicle trip and there are no impacts to transit travel time or job accessibility by transit since there are no planned transit routes that use this interchange in our tested scenarios.

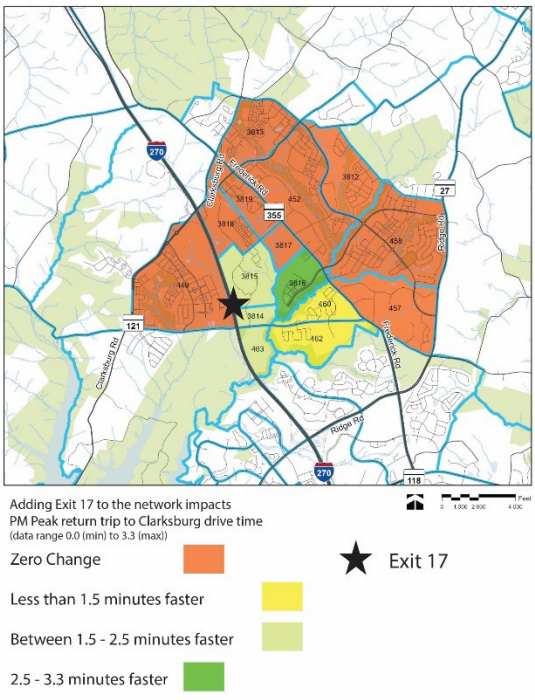
Staff completed an additional drive time analyses (below) that estimated the expected change in travel time between pairs of TAZs to understand the likely impact of the interchange on an individual trip basis. We looked at three commonly referenced areas that Clarksburg residents travel from during a weekday PM peak-hour: Germantown, Shady Grove Metro, and Bethesda (a proxy for general trips to the urban core). These locations are intended to simulate where Clarksburg residents would be returning from, during a typical weekday afternoon.

Based on Staff's drive time analysis, the current population of Clarksburg overall is not expected to see significant improvements (i.e., a reduction) in their weekday afternoon drive time with the addition of an interchange, except for those residents returning home to one of a handful of TAZs immediately next to the new interchange.

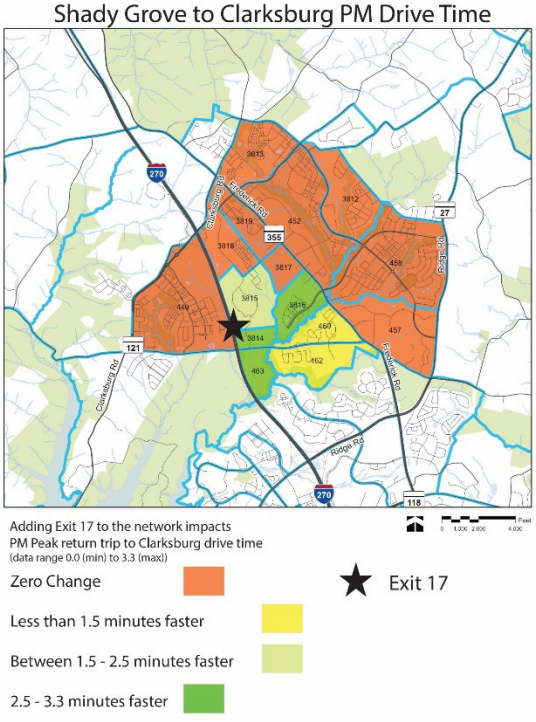


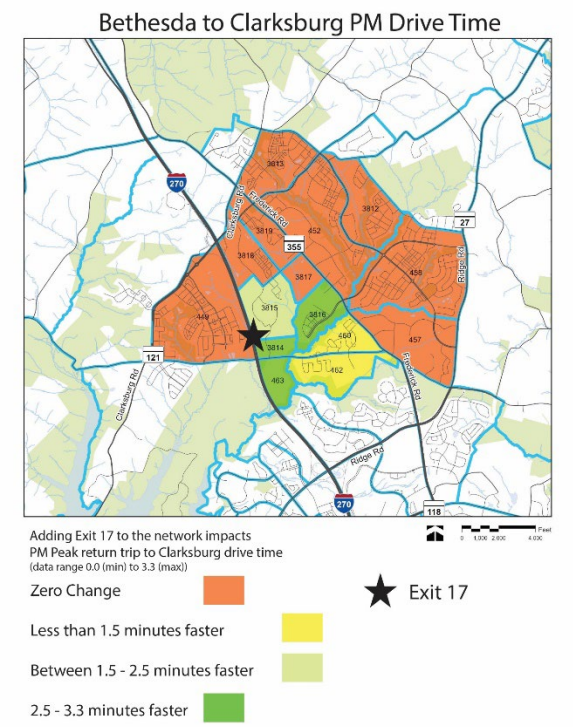
The percentage of TAZs in the Clarksburg study area that experience a reduction in drive time resulting from the addition of a new interchange at Little Seneca Parkway. Shows combined results from all three test origins (Germantown, Shady Grove Metro, Bethesda).

Germantown to Clarksburg PM Drive Time



Shady Grove to Clarksburg PM Drive Time





The results of this analysis support the conclusion that an interchange at this location is not a community-wide, regional approach to reducing time spent driving to destinations outside Clarksburg. As expected, the primary beneficiaries of the interchange in a 2045 build out scenario are the new residents and businesses in the TAZs in the immediate area of the interchange – reiterating the limited impacts of this project from a travel-time perspective. Residents outside of the new development areas (e.g. current residents) are not expected to see long-term reductions in travel times resulting from a new interchange.

Additional factors in the planning team's consideration of whether to recommend an interchange as part of the planned crossing of Little Seneca Parkway over I-270 include: (1) expected negative environmental impacts; (2) challenges establishing a robust and low-stress bicycle and pedestrian crossing of I-270; and (3) construction of an interchange would influence the character, scale, and design of nearby development and encourages auto-oriented development

(1) Our primary environmental concerns are due to the presence of a forested stream valley (including wetlands and a stream tributary draining to the Little Seneca Lake reservoir) and newly constructed homes adjacent to I-270. On the west side of I-270, interchange ramps would be required for access to and from southbound I-270. Low-impact, elevated ramp structures could help reduce impacts to the stream, yet even these would significantly degrade stream conditions during construction, with permanent impacts expected on wildlife habitat and hydrological function. Residential homes built in 2022 at the northwest quadrant of the prospective interchange (Goldeneye Court) limit the viable design alternatives for interchange ramp geometries and bring residential uses, and their sensitivity to air and noise pollution, quite close to any future westside ramps. The loss of tree canopy to accommodate even a small-footprint interchange would impact these homes due to the loss of visual

screening. Environmental impacts on the east side of I-270 are of less concern, yet their additional impervious surface and land disturbance would bring their own set of effects in the Little Seneca Creek watershed.

(2) The completion of Little Seneca Parkway as a bridge is recommended by the planning team in part due to its ability to provide a high-quality, low-stress bicycle and pedestrian facility across I-270. Currently, the only nearby crossing for non-vehicular travel modes is at the Clarksburg Road interchange with I-270, which is inadequate for user comfort or protection. The other potential crossing point is West Old Baltimore Road. However, its passage under I-270 is highly constrained and there is no available room for biking or walking facilities. While a Little Seneca Parkway bridge over I-270 could provide safe, comfortable, and adequate space for people crossing the highway without the use of a car, an interchange would bring multiple conflict points with vehicles traveling to and from I-270 (essentially the same negative experience we've heard from the Clarksburg community about the Clarksburg Road-I-270 interchange). If an interchange must be built at the future Little Seneca Parkway overpass, staff would recommend an additional, separate bike and pedestrian bridge across I-270 connecting to Little Seneca Parkway sidepaths on both sides to avoid the safety hazards from vehicle movements.

(3) Finally, the planning team is concerned that an interchange at Little Seneca Parkway would influence the character, scale, and design of development in a way that is inconsistent with the planning team's plan vision. Development that is dependent on direct interstate access is, by design, auto-oriented development with buildings that are typically not associated with comfortable, walkable streets and require large surface parking lots. As we've indicated to the Planning Board previously, we envision development on the east side of I-270, including the former COMSAT Laboratories property and Linthicum Family property, as a compact, mixed-use community-oriented destination that serves new and existing residents. With the completion of Observation Drive, the Milestone Shopping Center, with its existing mix of large, medium, and small format retail stores is just 2 miles south of the planned activity center at the intersection of Little Seneca Parkway and Observation Drive.

NEXT STEPS

Following this briefing, planning staff will work to prepare the Working (Staff) Draft Plan for review by the Planning Board for their consideration of accepting it as the Public Hearing Draft. Once the Planning Board accepts the Working Draft as the Public Hearing Draft and sets a Public Hearing date, Planning Staff will distribute the Draft Plan for public comment according to the Planning department's notification guidelines.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan Preliminary Recommendations