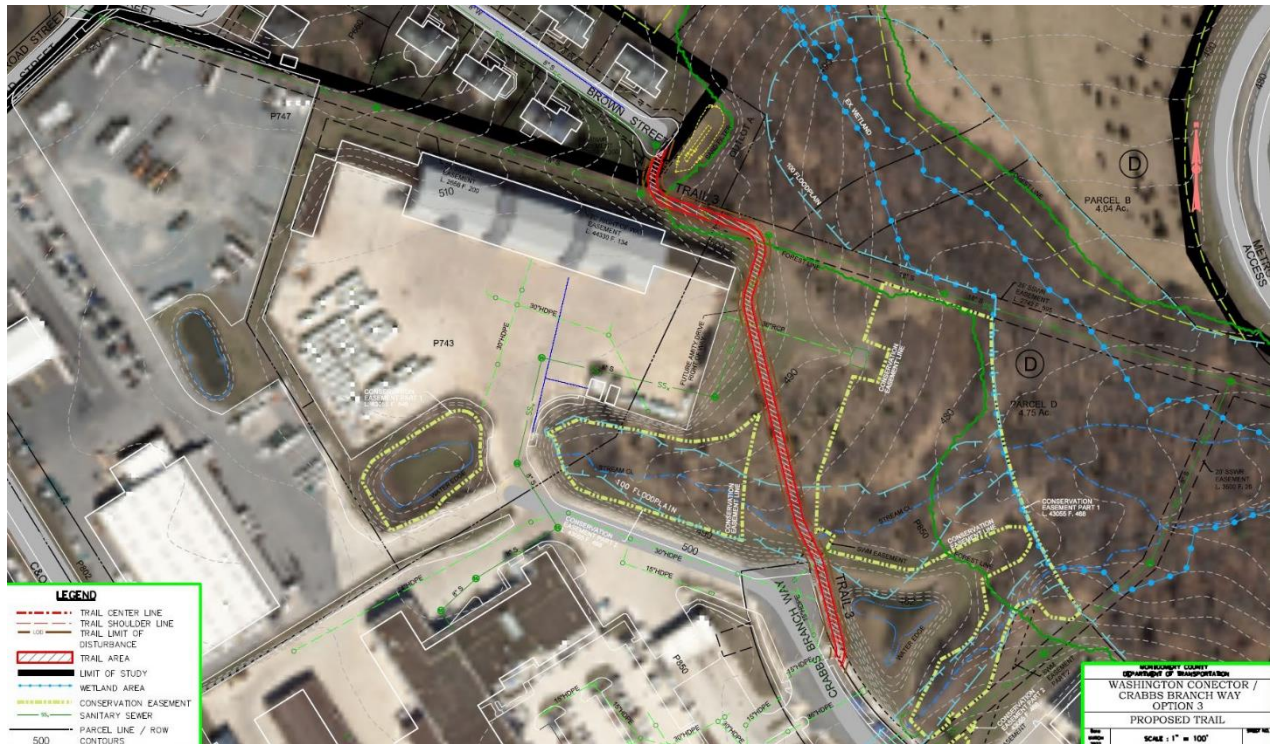


WASHINGTON GROVE CONNECTOR TRAIL

MANDATORY REFERRAL NO. MR2025009

FOREST CONSERVATION PLAN NO. F20250740



Description

This is a Mandatory Referral and Forest Conservation Plan Amendment for the Montgomery County Department of Transportation proposal to construct a shared use path and a sidewalk in Derwood. The shared use path is proposed to be constructed between Brown Street, in the Town of Washington Grove, and Crabbs Branch Way. The sidewalk is proposed to be constructed between Ridge Road and Picea View Court.

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LOCATION

Derwood

MASTER PLAN

2018 *Bicycle Master Plan*

2021 *Shady Grove Minor Master Plan Amendment*

COMPLETE STREETS AREA TYPE

Suburban

APPLICANT

Montgomery County Department of
Transportation

ACCEPTANCE DATE

Mandatory Referral - January 2, 2025

Forest Conservation Plan – July 17, 2025

REVIEW BASIS

Md. Land Use Article, Section 20-301, et seq.
Chapter 22A

Summary:

- Staff recommends approval of the Mandatory Referral and transmittal of comments to the Montgomery County Department of Transportation.
- Staff recommends approval with conditions of the Forest Conservation Plan No. F20250740.
- The Planning Board review of a Mandatory Referral is pursuant to the Land Use Article of the Maryland Annotated Code, Sections 20-301 et seq.

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SECTION 1 – COMMENTS AND CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

Mandatory Referral: MR2025009

Staff recommends approval of the Mandatory Referral and transmittal of the following comments to the Montgomery County Department of Transportation:

1. Widen the shared use path to 11 feet.
2. Reduce the shared use path slope immediately north of the Crabbs Branch Way terminus to a maximum of 5%.
3. Ensure the new sidewalk connecting Ridge Road to the existing Picea View Court sidewalk is six feet wide.
4. Provide a bike ramp from the Picea View Court sidewalk to the Picea View Court roadway.

Final Forest Conservation Plan Amendment: F20250740

Staff recommends approval of the Amended Forest Conservation Plan with the following conditions:

1. The Applicant must schedule the required site inspections by M-NCPPC Forest Conservation Inspection Staff per Section 22A.00.01.10 of the Code of Montgomery County Regulations (“COMCOR”), Forest Conservation Regulations.
2. The Applicant must comply with all tree protection and tree save measures shown on the approved Amended Final Forest Conservation Plan. Tree save measures not specified on the Amended Final Forest Conservation Plan may be required by the M-NCPPC Forest Conservation Inspection Staff.
3. The Limits of Disturbance (“LOD”) shown on the Final Sediment and Erosion Control Plan must be consistent with the LOD shown on the approved Amended Final Forest Conservation Plan.
4. Within the first planting season following the release of the first Sediment and Erosion Control Permit from the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services for the Subject Property, or as directed by the M-NCPPC Forest Conservation Inspection Staff, the Applicant must install the afforestation/reforestation plantings for reforestation mitigation (outside of the limits of disturbance (“LOD”)) as shown on the approved FCP.
5. Within the first planting season following the stabilization of the applicable disturbed area inside of the LOD, or as directed by the M-NCPPC Forest Conservation Inspection Staff, the Applicant must install the Afforestation/Reforestation plantings for reforestation mitigation (inside the LOD), as shown on the approved FCP.
6. Prior to Certified Final Forest Conservation Plan, the Applicant will remove the second worksheet, add the acreage of forest removal, and show areas of replanting, at a minimum of a 1:1 ratio of removal to replacement.

SECTION 2 – INTRODUCTION

The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) is proposing to construct a shared use path and a sidewalk connection in the Derwood area. The shared use path would connect the terminus of Brown Street in Washington Grove to the terminus of Crabbs Branch Way. The sidewalk would be a short connection between Ridge Road and Picea View Court. The locations of both facilities are shown in Figure 1.

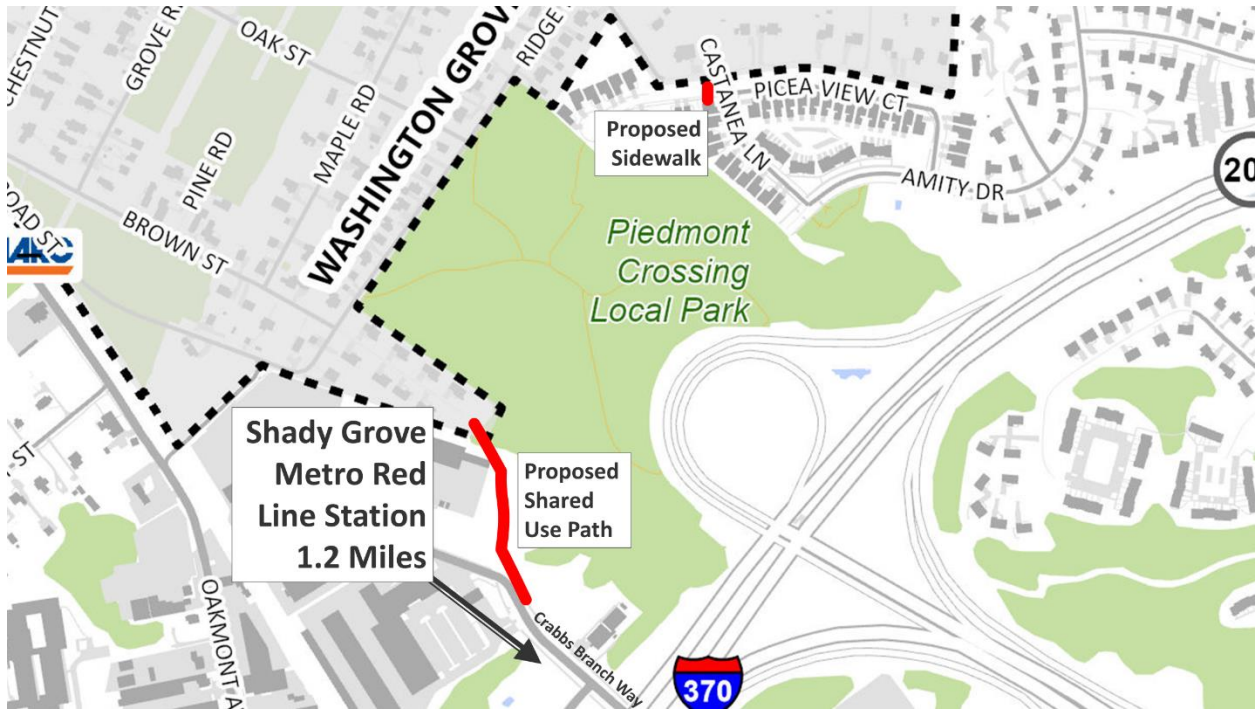


Figure 1: Project Area Map

SECTION 3 – PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project Description

The proposed shared use path is 10 feet wide with 2-foot grass shoulders (Figure 2) between Crabbs Branch Way and Brown Street. The path will be lit for its entire length. The horizontal and vertical alignments of that path are designed to minimize impacts to environmentally sensitive areas, trees, and parkland and will be constructed on county property to the extent possible. A portion of the shared use path will be on a raised boardwalk to reduce impacts to environmental resources as well as to avoid a significant grade change for people walking and bicycling on the path.

The proposed sidewalk is shown to be four feet wide, connecting Ridge Road to an existing sidewalk along Picea View Court just west of Castanea Lane.

Project design and construction are funded through the Montgomery County Capital Improvement Program: Bikeway Program Minor Projects.

Corridor-long engineering drawings and associated cross-sections are found in Attachment A.

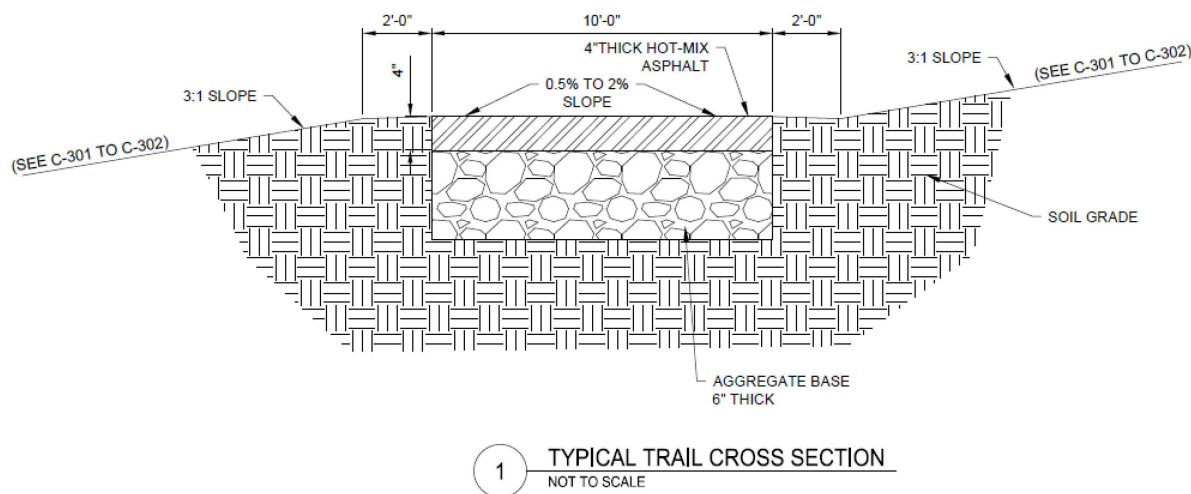


Figure 2: Typical Shared Use Path Cross Section

Background

The shared use path connection from Brown Street to Crabbs Branch Way was identified in the 2006 *Shady Grove Sector Plan* and the 2021 *Shady Grove Sector Plan Minor Amendment* as part of the recommendation to extend Crabbs Branch Way to Amity Drive. MCDOT performed a planning study for this roadway connection as well as the associated shared use path to Brown Street. The findings of this study were presented to the Montgomery County Planning Board in April 2021 and July 2023. In its July 2023 letter, the Planning Board wrote, “[the] Montgomery County Department of Transportation

(MCDOT) should prioritize construction of the Brown Street Connector portion of the Washington Grove Connector Project, as this segment of the overall project has substantial public support, including from the Town of Washington Grove, is far along in the design process, and has relatively low cost.” Staff reports for these briefings are found in Attachments B and C. Planning Board transmittal letters from the April 2021 and July 2023 briefings are found in Attachments D and E.

Surrounding Areas

From north to south, the proposed shared use path will begin at the Brown Street terminus in the Town of Washington Grove, pass by the M-NCPPC Piedmont Crossing Local Park, and then connect to an existing sidewalk at the northern terminus of Crabbs Branch Way, about 700 feet north of Interstate 370. The Montgomery County Equipment Maintenance and Operations Center and a Maryland Transportation Authority facility are in the vicinity of the shared use path at this location. Immediately south of Interstate 370 is another county operations facility, as well as a shopping center with a grocery store and other retail uses. Ultimately, Crabbs Branch Way connects to the Shady Grove Red Line Metro Station, 1.2 miles away from the proposed shared use path terminus.

The short sidewalk segment between Ridge Road and Picea View Court connects a residential cul-de-sac directly to a residential subdivision.

SECTION 4 – MANDATORY REFERRAL CONSIDERATIONS

Mandatory Referral review is guided by Montgomery Planning’s Uniform Standards for Mandatory Referral Review (December 2022), and the authority granted to the Planning Board in Section 20-301 of the Land Use Article of the Maryland Code. In order to ensure a comprehensive review of public projects, the Planning Board has jurisdiction over applications filed by the State, Federal, and County governments, including MCPS, as well as municipalities located within the Montgomery County portion of the Regional District. This includes the following activities: (i) acquiring or selling land; (ii) locating, constructing or authorizing a road, park, public way or ground, public building or structure, or publicly owned or privately owned public utility; or (iii) changing the use of or widening, narrowing, extending, relocating, vacating or abandoning any of the previously mentioned facilities. The Planning Board, or its Staff, must review such projects, pursuant to the Uniform Standards and transmit comments to the applicant within the prescribed timeframe.

As described in the Uniform Standards, the Planning Board, or its Staff, considers all relevant land use and planning aspects of the proposal, including, but not limited to, the following:

- 1. whether the proposal is consistent with the County’s General Plan, functional plans such as the master plan of highways, environmental guidelines, the approved and adopted area master plan or sector plan, and other public plans, guidance documents, or programs for the area;***
- 2. whether the proposal is consistent with the intent and the requirements of the zone in which it is located;***
- 3. whether the nature of the proposed site and development, including but not limited to its size, shape, scale, height, arrangement, design of structure(s), massing, setback(s), site layout, and location(s) of parking is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood and properties;***
- 4. whether the locations of buildings and structures, open spaces, landscaping, recreation facilities, and pedestrian and vehicular circulation systems are adequate, safe, and efficient;***
- 5. whether the proposal has an approved NRI/FSD and a preliminary SWM Concept Plan, and meets the requirements of the Forest Conservation Law (Chapter 22A of the County Code). Forest Conservation Plan, if applicable, must be approved by the Planning Board, either before or at the time of the Board’s mandatory referral review and action on the project. Unlike the mandatory referral review by the Board, the conditions of the Forest Conservation Plan are binding on all county projects and require a Resolution of Approval.***
- 6. whether a Preliminary or a Final Water Quality Plan has been reviewed by the Planning Board if the project is located in a Special Protection Area. In addition, for a Water Quality Plan for a project on public property, the Board must determine if the plan meets any additional applicable standards for Special Protection areas, including the standards of***

***Article V. WATER QUALITY REVIEW IN SPECIAL PROTECTION AREAS, of the County Code
(pursuant to Section 19-65(d)(4));***

- 7. whether or not the site would be needed for park use if the proposal is for disposition of a surplus school or other publicly-owned property.***
- 8. whether alternatives or mitigation measures have been considered for the project if the proposal is inconsistent with the General Plan or other plans and policies for the area, or has discernible negative impacts on the surrounding neighborhood, the transportation network, the environment, historic resources (including burial sites) or other resources.***

SECTION 5 – MANDATORY REFERRAL ANALYSIS

Master Plan Consistency

As described in the Uniform Standards outlined in Section 4 of this staff report, the Planning Board considers whether the proposal is consistent with the County’s General Plan, functional plans, area master plans, and any associated design guidelines.

The proposed shared use path between Brown Street and Crabbs Branch Way is recommended in the 2006 *Shady Grove Sector Plan*, the 2018 *Bicycle Master Plan*, the 2021 *Shady Grove Minor Master Plan Amendment*, and is consistent with transportation and connectivity objectives in *Thrive Montgomery 2050*, notably the policy to develop a safe, comfortable and appealing network for walking, biking, and rolling (page 112).

The extension of Crabbs Branch Way from its current terminus to Amity Drive as a Neighborhood Connector roadway is also recommended in the 2006 *Shady Grove Sector Plan*, the 2021 *Shady Grove Minor Master Plan Amendment*, and the 2025 *Master Plan of Highways and Transitways*. Earlier phases of the planning and design process identified the benefits and costs of designing and constructing this roadway alongside a version of the shared use path being considered in the current Mandatory Referral. As described in the Background section and, in line with Planning Board guidance found in Attachment E, the Brown Street Connector portion of the project is being prioritized for construction. However, the alignment of the proposed shared use path crosses the right-of-way reserved for the future Crabbs Branch Way roadway extension. While this alignment does not preclude future roadway extension, it may make such extension more costly.

Transportation Comments

Recommendation: Widen the shared use path to 11 feet.

Montgomery County’s Accessible Design Guide ([page 41](#)) indicates that shared use paths should be a minimum of 11 feet wide to allow pedestrians and bicyclists to safely pass each other. The proposed path is 10 feet wide.

Recommendation: Reduce shared use path slope immediately north of the Crabbs Branch Way terminus to a maximum of 5%.

As the shared use path travels north from the Crabbs Branch Way terminus, it descends at a slope of 6.27%, shown in Figure 3. This exceeds the 5% allowable slope for pedestrian access routes identified in the Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG) and emphasized in the county’s Accessible Design Guide ([Grade, Table 4, Page 19](#)). As design advances, the project team should work to bring this slope below the maximum identified in PROWAG.

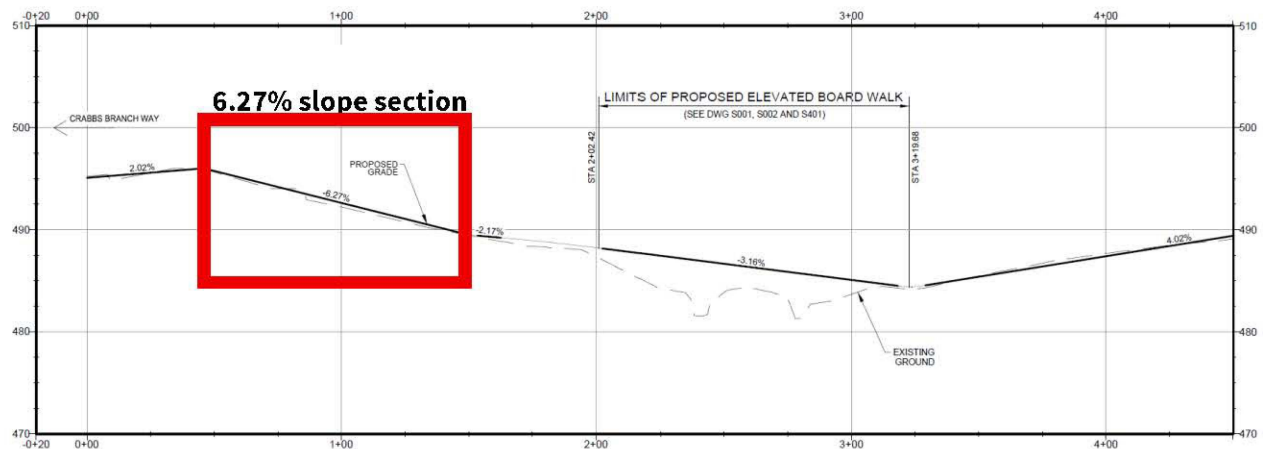


Figure 3: Shared Use Path Slope

Recommendation: Ensure the new sidewalk connecting Ridge Road to the existing Picea View Court sidewalk is six feet wide.

The short sidewalk connection between Ridge Road and Picea View Court is currently shown as four feet wide (Figure 4). This should be widened to 6 feet to meet the minimum sidewalk width requirement for Neighborhood Streets identified in the Complete Streets Design Guide.

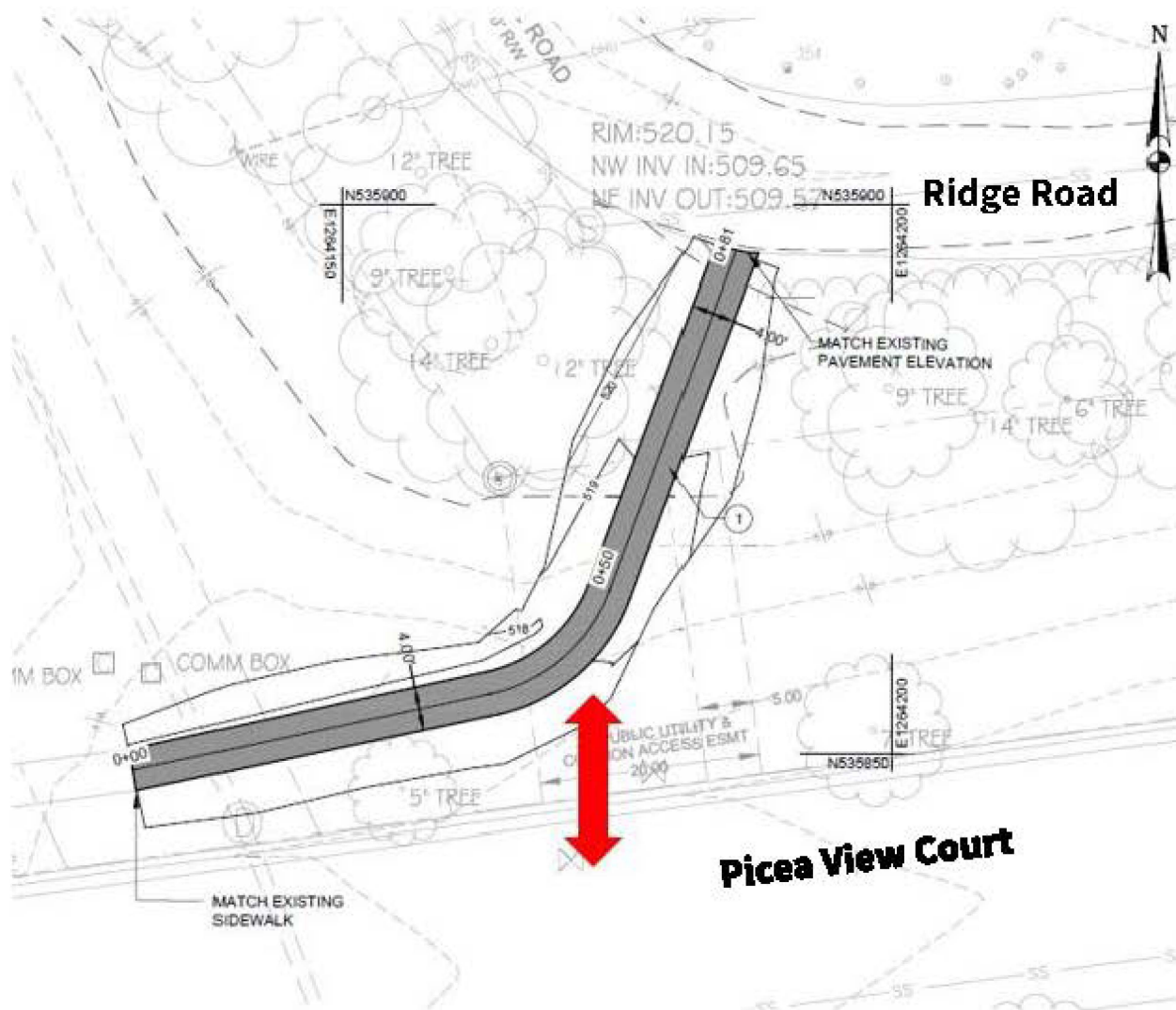


Figure 4: Ridge Road to Picea View Court Sidewalk

Recommendation: Provide a bike ramp from the Picea Ridge Court sidewalk to the Picea Ridge Court roadway.

As currently designed, people riding bicycles on the proposed sidewalk cannot directly connect to Picea View Court, as shown by the red arrow in the Figure 4 plan sheet and Figure 5 image. A bicycle-only ramp should be included in the project to allow people biking to travel directly between the Ridge Road roadway and the Picea View Court roadway.



Figure 5: Streetview of Potential Sidewalk

Environment and Sustainability

The Application allows for the creation of the pedestrian and bicycle connection while respecting the recorded Category I Forest Conservation Easements, with minimized disturbance. All areas of forest being removed will be mitigated for on-site.

The Application increases sustainability by increasing pedestrian and bicycle connectivity within the County, allowing for increased non-vehicle dependent movement. This development supports reducing carbon emissions and reducing vehicle trips.

Historic Preservation

No applicable comments.

Parks Department

No applicable comments.

SECTION 6 – FOREST CONSERVATION PLAN ANALYSIS

The Property is subject to Chapter 22A – Forest Conservation Law and an amended Final Forest Conservation Plan, has been submitted with MR2025009 (Attachment F). A Forest Conservation Plan was approved by the Planning Board with MR2010709 for the Equipment Maintenance and Operation Center (EMOC) on June 21, 2010, by resolution MCPB No. 10-72. (Attachment G).

FCP No. MR2010709 covered 42.44 acres and established areas of forest retention and planting, as well as areas of planting for wetland/waterway mitigation. Areas of large landscape planting were given credit for meeting Forest Conservation requirements but not placed under easement. All areas of forest planting and retention used to meet Forest Conservation requirements were protected by a Category I Forest Conservation Easement (Figure 6).

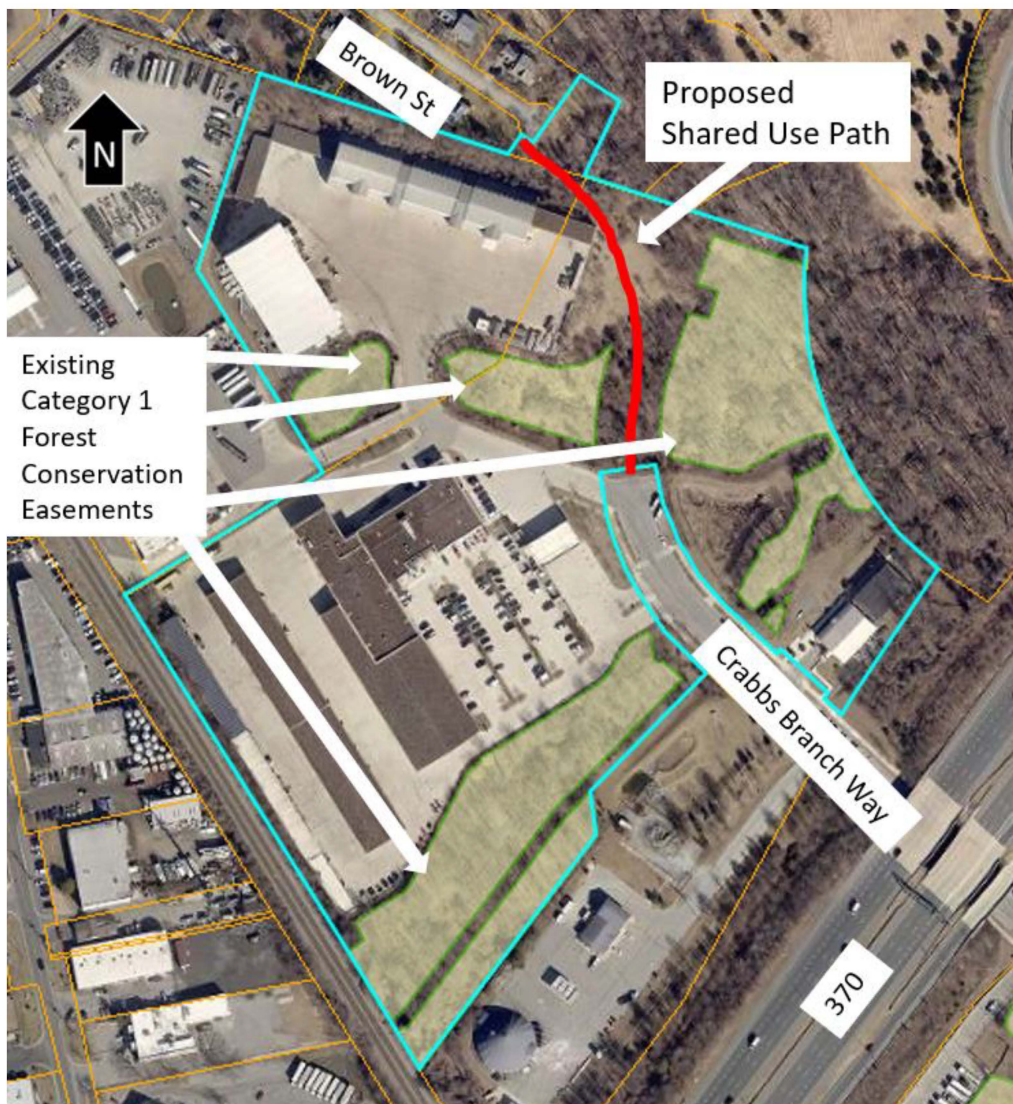


Figure 6: Existing Easements with Areas of Landscape Planting

On September 6, 2011, an amendment to FCP No. MR2010709 was approved by the Planning Director to remove Limits of Disturbance (LOD) and modify tree protection measures.

FCP No. F20250740 was submitted in conjunction with MR2025009, amending FCP No. MR20100709, to accommodate the construction of a shared use path. FCP No. F20250740 shows the removal of 0.21 acres of wetland mitigation and landscape planting, located outside of the existing Category I Forest Conservation Easements. The Applicant is proposing to plant 0.56 acres of forest primarily around the shared use path to mitigate for the removal of the 0.21 acres of forest, to be shown on the Certified Final Forest Conservation Plans.

A minor area of disturbance is shown on FCP No. 820060120 but the area is within the approved LOD so the disturbance is in compliance with the approved FCP.

SECTION 7 – COMMUNITY OUTREACH

MCDOT has conducted multiple outreach events for this project. A public workshop was held February 13, 2020, a public virtual meeting was held on February 17, 2021, and a hybrid public meeting was held on April 13, 2023. There has been ongoing, consistent coordination with the Town of Washington Grove, and future public meetings and a public hearing will be conducted as the design progresses.

The Town of Washington Grove supports this project and has provided feedback on various aspects of the proposed design (Attachment H).

SECTION 8 – CONCLUSION

Staff recommends approval of the Mandatory Referral and transmittal of comments to the Montgomery County Department of Transportation.

Staff recommends approval of the Forest Conservation Plan with conditions detailed in Section 1.

SECTION 9 – ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Project Engineering Drawings

Attachment B: 2021 Briefing Staff Report

Attachment C: 2023 Briefing Staff Report

Attachment D: 2021 Briefing Transmittal Letter

Attachment E: 2023 Briefing Transmittal Letter

Attachment F: Amended Forest Conservation Plan

Attachment G: Original Forest Conservation Plan

Attachment H: Town of Washington Grove Letter