

GLEN ROAD BRIDGE OVER SANDY BRANCH MANDATORY REFERRAL MR2026023



Description

This is a Mandatory Referral for a project submitted by the Montgomery County Department of Transportation, which proposes to construct a replacement bridge on Glen Road over Sandy Branch in Potomac, Maryland. The bridge is located on a Rustic Road.

COMPLETED: 4/30/2026

PLANNING BOARD HEARING DATE: 5/7/2026

MCPB ITEM NO. 6

Planning Staff

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LOCATION

Potomac, Maryland

MASTER PLAN

2002 Potomac Master Plan

2023 Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan

Update

COMPLETE STREETS AREA TYPE

Country

APPLICANT

Montgomery County Department of
Transportation

ACCEPTANCE DATE

March 11, 2026

REVIEW BASIS

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

Chapter 22A

Summary:

- Replacement of two-lane bridge with stream restoration.
- Staff recommends approval of the Mandatory Referral and transmittal of comments to the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT).

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SECTION 1 – RECOMMENDATIONS

Planning Staff recommends approval of the Glen Road Bridge over Sandy Branch Mandatory Referral No. MR2026023 with the following comments:

1. Before conducting any land disturbing activities in an M-NCPPC Easement, MCDOT must identify to M-NCPPC's Forest Conservation Inspector ("Inspector") the Easement it needs to enter and the proposed Limits of Disturbance ("LOD") on an annotated aerial photo; and describe to the Inspector how WSSC proposes to minimize its impact to the Easement, including any necessary tree protection.
2. Upon request by the Inspector, a representative from MCDOT will meet with the Inspector on-site to confirm the LOD as identified on the aerial photo and determine whether the impacts can be further minimized, including changes to the LOD.
3. MCDOT must mitigate for the areas within the LOD in an Easement consistent with M-NCPPC's forest conservation standards. MCDOT, as a public agency, is not required to provide any financial security for Project work subject to this Mandatory Referral.
4. All planting in an affected Easement must occur within the first planting season after MCDOT completes work in the Easement.
5. MCDOT must notify the Inspector when it will perform mitigation planting. The Inspector must formally accept the planting and will require deer protection fencing and invasive species management (where needed).
6. Once the Inspector accepts the plantings, a five-year maintenance period begins. Throughout the five-year maintenance period, MCDOT is responsible for maintaining the trees.
7. At the end of the five-year maintenance period, the Inspector will inspect the plantings and release MCDOT from its maintenance obligations if the plantings meet the following survival requirement: 75% survival for 1-inch trees planted at 200 per acre and 100% for 2-inch trees planted at 100 per acre. If the survival rate is below these requirements, MCDOT must replant the area to meet these survival requirements. The replanting will then satisfy MCDOT's obligations, and MCDOT will be released from its maintenance obligations.
8. Once all maintenance obligations are completed by MCDOT, the Inspector will sign the originally submitted aerial photo and indicate that all work has been completed and MCDOT has satisfied its mitigation and maintenance obligations.

SECTION 2 – SITE DESCRIPTION

The project is located in Potomac, Maryland along Glen Road where it crosses Sandy Branch. Figure 1 shows the approximate site location. This bridge is located on Glen Road approximately 1,100 feet west of its intersection with Three Sisters Road where it crosses over Sandy Branch.

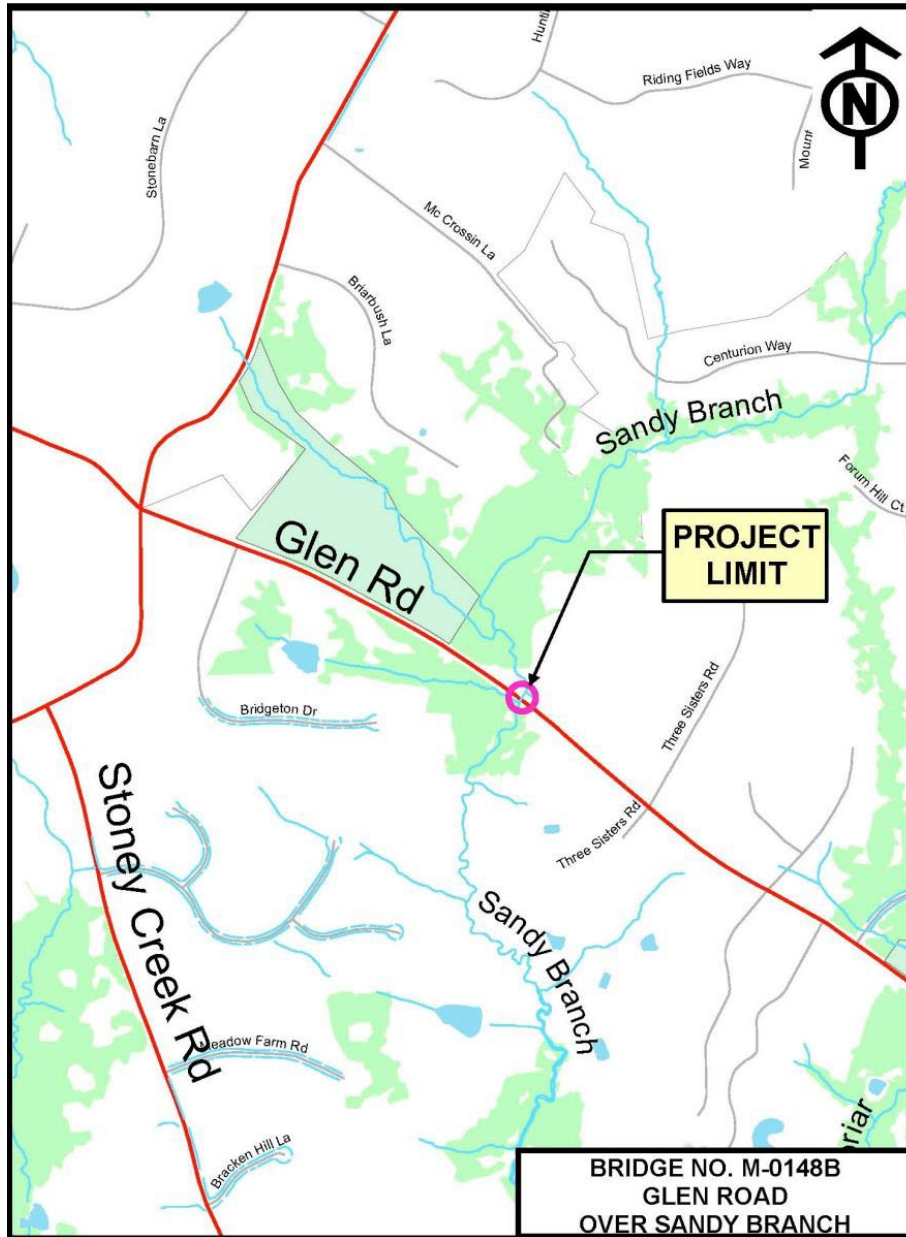


Figure 1: Site Location Map

Figure 2 shows the location of the existing bridge in relation to Greenbriar Local Park and Three Sisters Road.

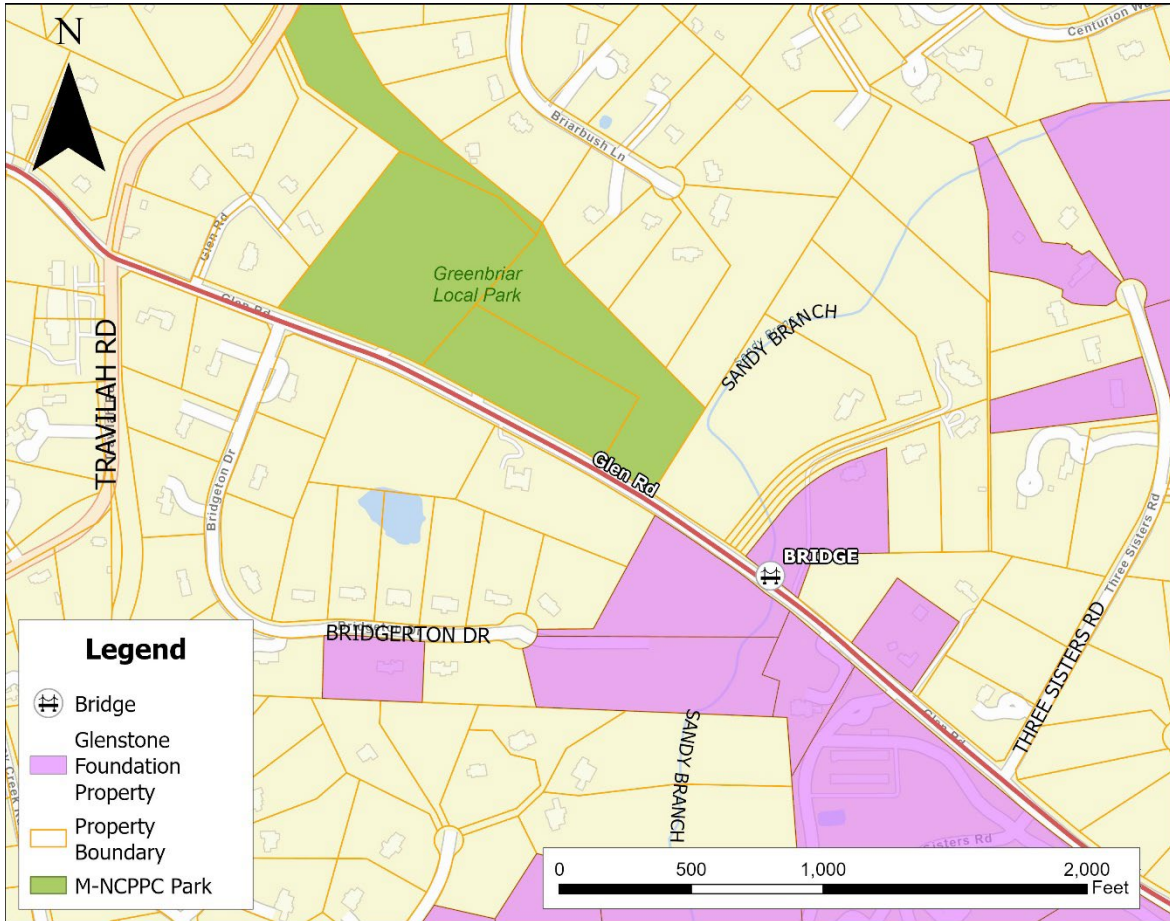


Figure 2: Vicinity Map

A side view photo of the existing bridge in relation to Sandy Branch is shown below in Figure 3.



Figure 3: Existing Bridge Side View

SECTION 3 – PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) is proposing to replace Bridge M-0148X01 on Glen Road over Sandy Branch in Potomac, Maryland. This project is being funded by the County and is listed in the Montgomery County Capital Improvement Program (CIP) as project P502102.

The existing bridge was built in 1930 and repaired in 1992. Due to the deterioration of the existing bridge, MCDOT has decided that replacement is warranted.

Glen Road is a two-lane, undivided, open section roadway with a posted speed limit of 30 MPH. The road has an Average Daily Traffic (ADT) of 5,030 vehicles per day based on 2019 traffic counts. This section of Glen Road between Query Mill Road and Piney Meetinghouse House Road is classified as “rustic”; therefore, the width, alignment, and the roadway character must be in accordance with County Regulation 49-96 for Rustic Roads, dated November 26, 1996. Bridge design plans submitted for the Mandatory Referral are provided as Attachment A.

The Glen Road Bridge Replacement Project involves the removal of the existing bridge infrastructure and installation of a new two-cell (10-foot by 10-foot) box culvert, wingwalls, cast-in-place overlay, and riprap protection. In addition, two yard-inlets and two 14-inch by 23-inch Horizontal Elliptical Reinforced Concrete Pipe (HERCP) pipes will be installed to reduce flooding at the intersection of a private driveway and Glen Road.

This Project will provide stream restoration upstream of the Glen Road bridge and tie in the existing downstream restoration so that the Sandy Branch stream is stable. Additional features are proposed in the channel and floodplain to promote short- and long-term vertical grade control and increase floodplain roughness. The proposed landscaping can also help protect the surface soil from erosion.

The proposed bridge plan view is shown in Figure 4.

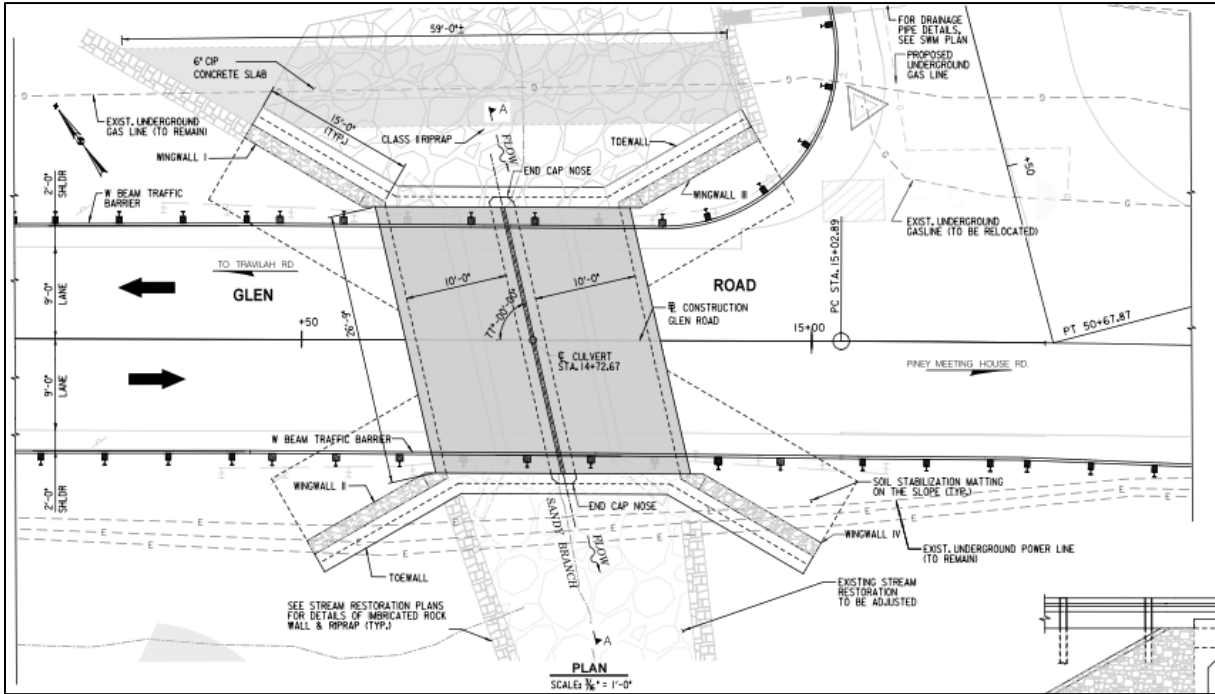


Figure 4: Proposed Bridge Plan View

A plan view drawing of the proposed design is shown in Figure 7 and Figure 8.

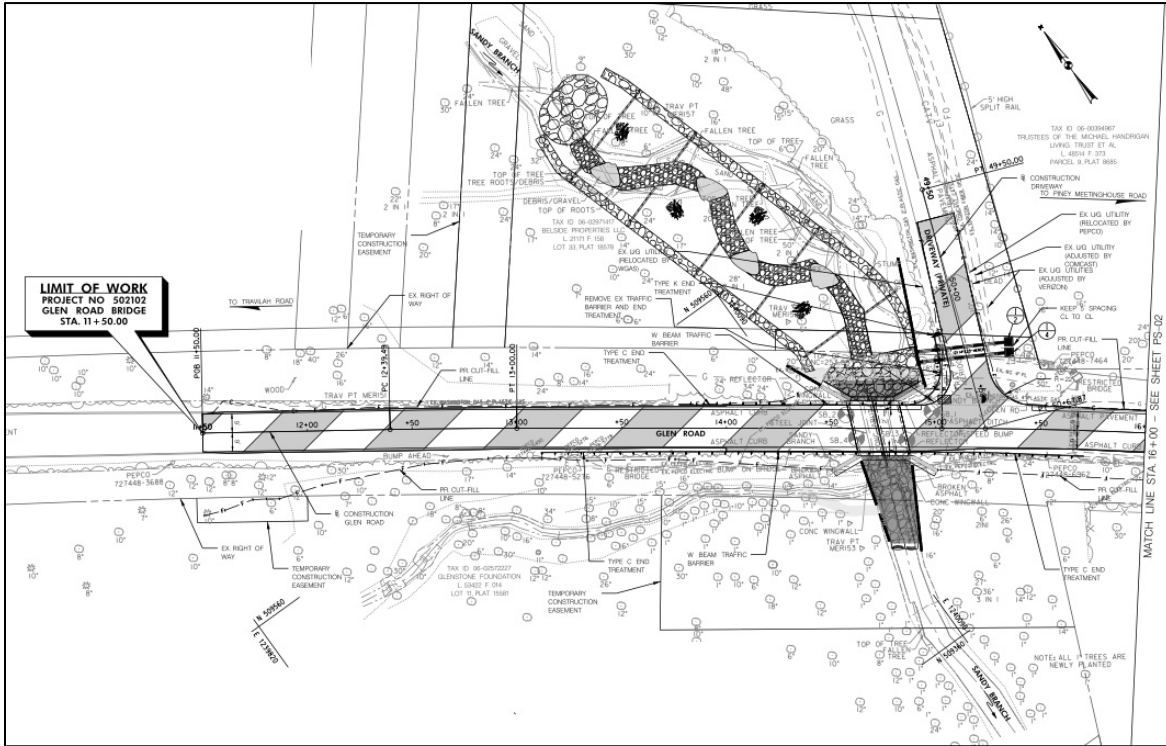


Figure 7: Plan View – North Side

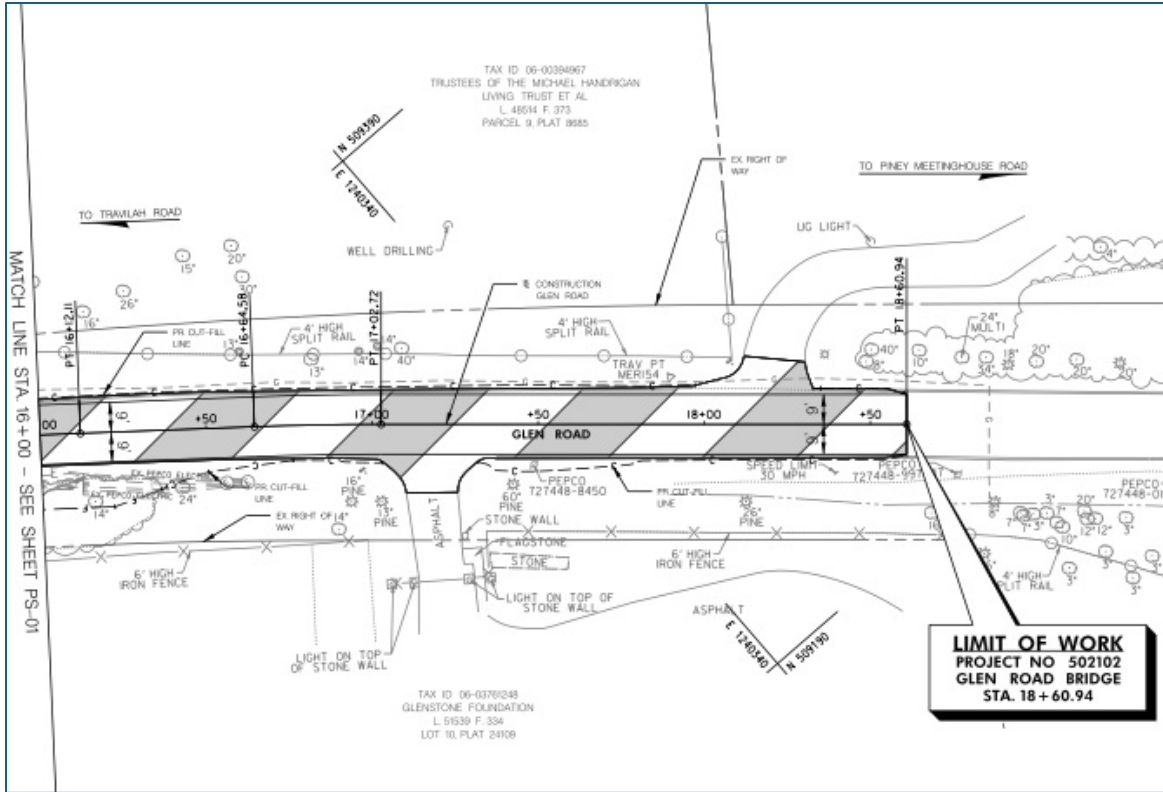


Figure 8: Plan View - South Side

This Project is scoped through the advertisement and bid opening (100% design completion) that provides for the preparation of final plans, specifications, engineer’s cost estimates and permit approvals. The anticipated advertisement date will be spring 2028, with construction in the summer/fall, and completion by December 2028.

During construction, the bridge will be closed for approximately three months (when school is not in session). The proposed detour plan is illustrated in Figure 9 below. This detour is approximately 8 miles in length using Glen Road, Piney Meetinghouse Road, River Road (MD 190), and Travilah Road.

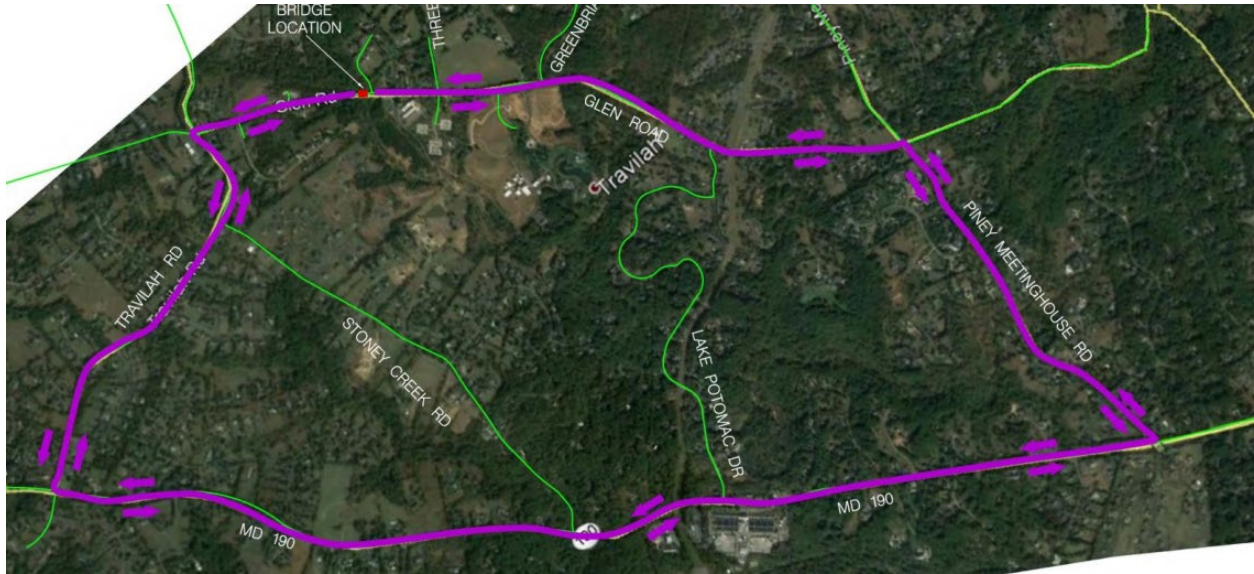


Figure 9: Proposed Detour Plan

SECTION 4 – COMMUNITY OUTREACH

A public meeting was held by MCDOT on March 10, 2021. No comments were received.

The Rustic Road Advisory Committee reviewed this proposed bridge design at multiple committee meetings in 2022 through 2024.

After staff accepted the Mandatory Referral for review, Montgomery Planning notified local civic and homeowners' associations and other interested parties of this proposal. As of the date of this report, no comments have been received.

SECTION 5 – 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 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, which are reviewed in detail in Section 6:

- 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;***

Consistent. See Section 6

- 2. whether the proposal is consistent with the intent and the requirements of the zone in which it is located;***

Not applicable.

- 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;***

Not applicable.

- 4. whether the locations of buildings and structures, open spaces, landscaping, recreation facilities, and pedestrian and vehicular circulation systems are adequate, safe, and efficient;***

Consistent. See Section 6

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.***

The Project is exempt from the requirement to submit a Forest Conservation Plan per Forest Conservation Exemption No. 42024149E While there is disturbance within a conservation easement, the easement is not associated with a Forest Conservation Plan and all disturbed areas will be restored.

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));***

Not applicable.

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.***

Not applicable.

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.***

Not applicable.

Master Plan Consistency

2002 Potomac Subregion Master Plan

This project is located within the 2002 *Potomac Subregion Master Plan* and in the Watts Branch Watershed. The *Potomac Subregion Master Plan* is centered around preserving the green character and environmental qualities in the area. In fact, the plan recommends "... that sustaining the environment be the preeminent policy determinant in a subregion so defined by its natural resources." (pg. 1).

The plan includes the following recommendations and principles that are aligned with the proposed replacement of Bridge No. M-0148X01 Glen Road over Sandy Branch:

- Support efforts to identify and implement stormwater management and stream restoration projects in a timely manner to improve water quality and aquatic habitat in streams exhibiting deteriorating conditions (pg. 14)
- During plan review, consider incorporating design features that will protect water resources..." (pg. 15)
- Encourage an ecologically sensitive and energy-efficient development pattern, with an emphasis on respecting the environment and on conservation (pg. 33)

This project proposes to remove the existing bridge and infrastructure and replace it to maintain the road network with improved and modernized stormwater management facilities. The replacement will also provide stream restoration upstream of the Glen Road bridge that will tie into the existing downstream restoration.

Based on the information provided by the applicant, the proposal substantially conforms to the master plan.

2023 Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan Update

The segment of Glen Road that contains the bridge being replaced is designated a Rustic Road in the 2023 *Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan Update*. The bridge over the Sandy Branch was not designated a significant feature in the master plan. However, the designated significant features could potentially be impacted by the bridge replacement:

- Mature trees, hedgerows, and three-rail fencing frame the road
- View of streams, farms, and horse pastures
- Gently rolling and curving historic alignment

Significant features are those that must be preserved when the road is maintained or improved. The map of the road in the master plan indicates scenic views of the Sandy Branch in both directions as

one passes over the bridge. The proposed landscaping plan, with over 60 trees and shrubs and a mix of meadow plantings and turf grasses, along with the stream restoration, may temporarily alter the view, but will soon mature into a pleasing view from the road. No other significant features are expected to be disturbed as part of the project. The new bridge is similar in scale to the existing bridge and the final roadway will be a similar width between the guardrails.

The Rustic Roads Advisory Committee discussed the project in at least 10 meetings in 2022 through 2024. The committee sent several letters to MCDOT with a list of concerns about, amongst other things, the road width, the use of riprap for the stream restoration, the bridge elevation, and the proposed fencing on the wingwalls. MCDOT responded to the Committee's concerns through these meetings and modifications in design where feasible. The Committee was pleased that the fence on top of the wingwalls was removed from the plans.

The proposed bridge and stream restoration process will not negatively affect the character of the rustic road; the project substantially conforms to the recommendations in the *Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan Update*.

Transportation Best Practices

Complete Streets Design Guide

The Proposed Project is located on a rustic road, so it is a special street type within the Complete Streets Design Guide and is subject to Chapter 49 of the County Code, Article 8 and COMCOR 49.79.01. The cross section is adequate to accommodate vehicles but is rated as undesirable Pedestrian Level of Comfort (PLOC) for pedestrians and high stress Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) for bicyclists due to a lack of separate facilities. Pedestrians will be expected to use the narrow shoulders provided and bicycles can use either the travel lanes or the shoulders. This is considered acceptable for a rustic road.

Historic Preservation

The project will not impact any sites or districts listed on the Montgomery County Master Plan for Historic Preservation or the Locational Atlas & Index of Historic Sites. No further historic preservation review is required.

Stormwater Management

A stormwater concept approval letter was provided by the Department of Permitting Services on April 21, 2020. This letter is included as Attachment B.

Forest Conservation

The Project is exempt from the requirement to submit a Forest Conservation Plan. Forest Conservation Exemption No. 42024149E was confirmed under Section 22A-5(v) as a stream restoration project. The exemption was confirmed on October 2, 2025. See Attachment C.



Figure 10: Existing Conservation Easement Location

The existing conservation easement, as depicted above in Figure 10 is associated with the Deed of Easement from July 1, 1992, book 10473, page 741. The easement was imposed on the Property in accordance with Condition No. 4 of the Planning Board's Opinion approving Preliminary Plan No. 1-85258. There is not a Final Forest Conservation Plan associated with the easement, the easement was created with the Deed of Easement agreement. The requirements for working in the easement are listed in Section 1 and reflect the Planning Board's process for disturbance within protected areas.

The stream restoration associated with this project will stabilize and restore the hydrology of the Sandy Branch stream. The associated planting plan will mitigate for every tree proposed for removal within the scope of the project. The sustainability features of this project support improved ecology and movement, by reducing streambank erosion and improving water quality, strengthening stormwater management capabilities, and improving the bridge to support safe and reliable travel.

SECTION 7 – CONCLUSION

This Project substantially conforms to the recommendations of the 2002 *Potomac Master Plan* and the 2023 *Rustic Road Functional Master Plan Update*. Therefore, Planning Staff recommends approval of Mandatory Referral No. MR2026020 with comments summarized in Section 1 of this staff report.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Bridge Design Plans

Attachment B: Stormwater Concept approval letter April 21, 2020

Attachment C: Forest Conservation Exemption Letter