

REVISED DRAFT

Montgomery County Rustic Roads Advisory Committee

Resource Manual

Montgomery County, Maryland

October 17, 2014

Montgomery County Rustic Roads Advisory Committee Resource Manual

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This document was initiated by Kevin Foster and Robert N. Goldberg, former committee members, and Sarah Navid, the committee's former staff coordinator. The committee thanks both of them as well as the other committee members, staffers, and supporters who have provided invaluable assistance, including RRAC members Fred Lechlinder and Robin Ziek, Staff coordinator, Jay Beatty, Jr., and Interim staff coordinator Laura Bradshaw.

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The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) maintains a website for the Rustic Roads Functional Master Plans, and includes information about RRAC meetings and projects. The Rustic Roads website is:

http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/community/plan_areas/rural_area/rustic_roads.shtm

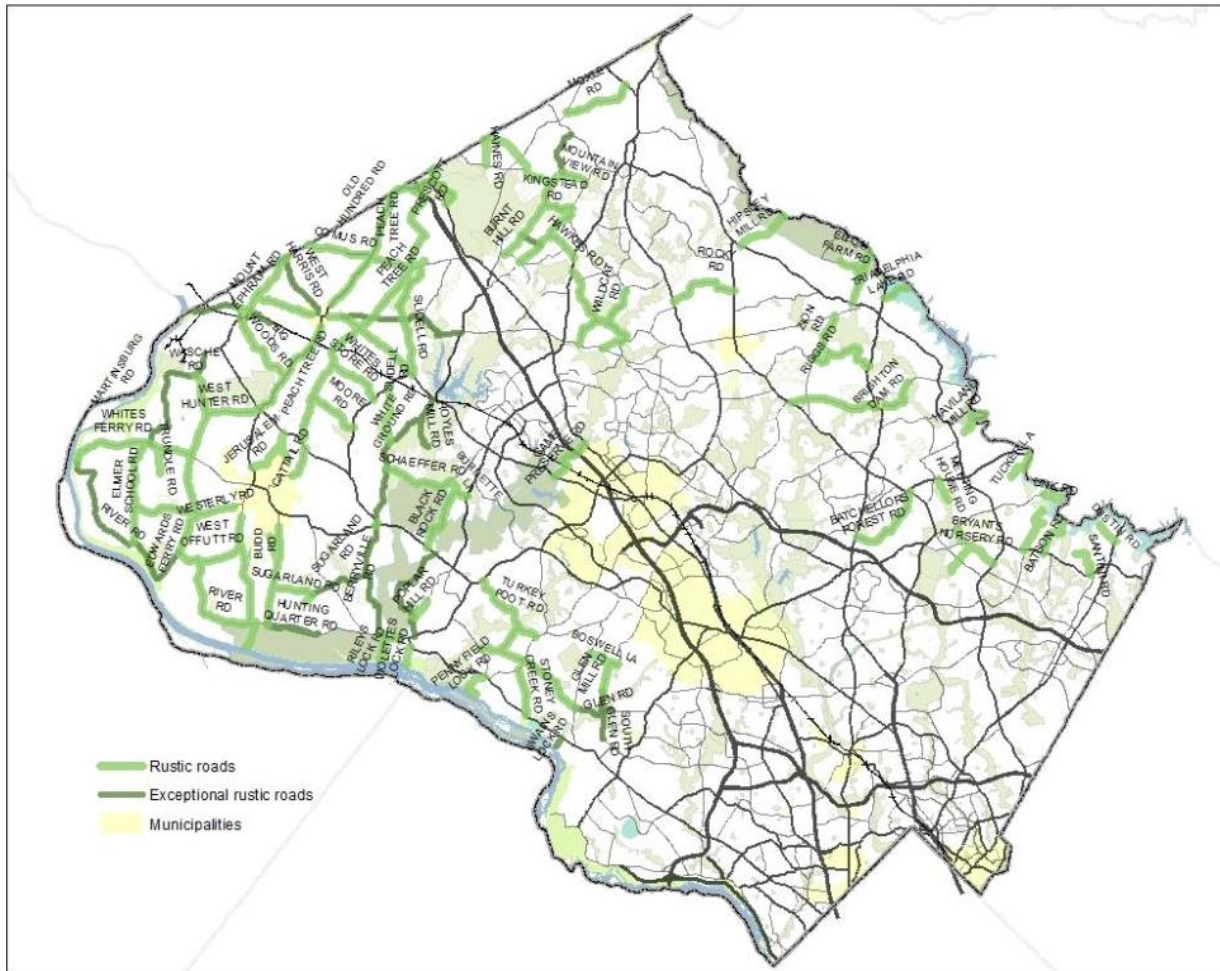
Contents

Purpose of this document.....	4
The Basis of the Rustic Roads Program	5
Criteria	6
Rustic Roads Advisory Committee.....	8
Program Summary	11
RRAC Reviews.....	11
When to use the Resource Manual	13
Approach to Work.....	13
General Principles.....	14
Design Regulations and Recommendations	15
1. The Roadway	15
1.a. Alignments and geometry	15
1.b. Roadway surface.....	16
1.c. Pavement cutting and utility work	16
1.d. Bridges and culverts.....	17
1.e. Grading and drainage	18
1.f. Signs and markings.....	18
1.g. Curbs and gutters	20
1.h. Auxiliary lanes	20
1.i. Shoulders	20
1.j. Maintenance.....	20
2. The Edge	20
2.a. Driveways and intersections	20
2.b. Traffic barriers	21
2.c. Street lights, speed cameras, utility boxes, etc.....	21
2.d. Parking	22
2.e. Roadside trees and foliage	22
3. The Land Beyond.....	24
3.a. Views and vistas.....	24
3.b. Walls, fencing and mailboxes	25
3.c. Entry signs or features.....	25
3.d. Private signs.....	26
3.e. Radio towers, cell towers, windmills, wind turbines, and water towers	26
4. Users of the Roads	26
4.a. Pedestrians and hikers	26

4.b. Bicyclists.....	26
4.c. Equestrian users and equestrian trail crossings.....	27
4.d. Agricultural equipment operators.....	27
Conclusion.....	27
Bibliography.....	28
Appendices.....	30

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY RUSTIC ROADS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
RESOURCE MANUAL**

Montgomery County, Maryland
Prepared by the Rustic Roads Advisory Committee
October 17, 2014



Map of Montgomery County's Rustic Roads (for a larger more detailed map see appendix 1)

Purpose of this document

The Rustic Roads Advisory Committee is charged with promoting public awareness and knowledge of the Montgomery County Rustic Roads Program. As part of that charge, the committee created this Resource Manual.

The purpose of this document is to assist residents, consultants, agency staff, and others involved in projects and activities that impact Montgomery County's rustic roads by providing a description of the program and guidance regarding the implementation of the program. The aim is that project and

operational decisions regarding the County’s rustic roads can be made that will preserve, maintain, and enhance the character of these roads, and conform to the requirements of the applicable County Code and Executive Regulations (attached as appendices). This Resource Manual is to be used in conjunction with these codes and regulations; they do not replace them.

The Basis of the Rustic Roads Program

In 1993, the Montgomery County Council (County Council) established the Montgomery County Rustic Roads Program in order to preserve the rustic character of designated County roads. A rustic road is defined in the *Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan* as:¹

A road within the Agricultural Reserve or adjoining rural areas (areas where the majority of zoning is RDT,² RC, or Rural) in Montgomery County, which enhances the rural character of the area due to its particular configuration, alignment, scenic quality, landscaping, adjacent views, or historic interest, and which exemplifies the rural and agricultural landscape of the County.³



The significant features of Mount Ephraim Road include being a ridge road with expansive views and the alignment leading toward Sugarloaf Mountain, seen here.

¹ References are given in full in the bibliography (see pages 29, 30 & 31). All URLs cited in this document are valid as of the above date shown.

² Abbreviations are summarized on page 29. Here, the RDT and RC zones refer to the Rural Density Transfer and the Rural Cluster zones.

³ The 1996 Master Plan definition (p. 3) was taken from what was originally named a “rural road” in the March 1990 Task Force report, *Proposal for a Rural/Rustic Roads Program* (p. 2).

Montgomery County Code, Chapter 49, Article 8 established the basis for the program and for the Rustic Roads Advisory Committee (RRAC).⁴ Following the enactment of the aforementioned code by the County Council in 1993, *Montgomery County Executive Regulation Number 21-96 – Rustic Roads* was approved by the County Executive in 1996.⁵ This regulation provides guidelines for maintenance and improvements to the County’s rustic roads and is incorporated in the *Code of Montgomery County Regulations (COMCOR) 49.79.01*. Also, in 1996, The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) adopted a *Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan (RRFMP)*, which designated 66 roads in the County as rustic or exceptional rustic roads. Additional rustic roads have been added by area master plans in Clarksburg/Hyattstown, Cloverly, Damascus, Fairland, Great Seneca Science Corridor, Olney, Potomac and Sandy Spring/Ashton. There are now 97 roads that have been designated as either rustic or exceptional rustic roads.



Comus Road is an example of a Rustic Road with “outstanding agricultural and rural vistas,” as they are described in the RRFMP.

Criteria

Montgomery County Code, Chapter 49, Article 8 gives criteria for both rustic and exceptional rustic roads. Specifically, the criteria⁶ for a rustic road are:

- The road is located in an area where natural, agricultural, or historic features are predominant, and where master planned land use goals and zoning are compatible with a rural/rustic character;
- The road is narrow and intended for predominantly local use;

⁴ See Appendix 2.

⁵ See Appendix 3.

⁶ *Montgomery County Code, Sec. 49-78 (b) and (c)*. A brief description of each of the criteria for rustic and exceptional rustic roads is found in the 1996 RRFMP, pp. 37-40.

- The road has a low traffic volume that does not detract significantly from the rustic character of the road;
- The road meets at least one of the following criteria:
 - It has outstanding natural features along its borders, such as native vegetation, stands of trees, and stream valleys;
 - It provides outstanding vistas of farm fields and rural landscapes or buildings; or
 - It provides access to historic resources, follows historic alignments, or highlights historic landscapes.
- The history of vehicle and pedestrian accidents on the road in its current configuration does not suggest unsafe conditions.⁷



Martinsburg Road is an Exceptional Rustic Road. The well-preserved one-mile, one-lane concrete section, called a politicians road, is bordered by historic stone fences, and is designated in the Montgomery County Master Plan for Historic Preservation.

The criteria for an exceptional rustic road are:

- The road is a rustic road;
- It contributes significantly to the natural, agricultural, or historic character of the County;
- It has unusual features found on few other roads in the County;
- It would be more negatively affected by improvements or modifications to the road than would most other roads in the rustic roads program.⁸

⁷ Montgomery County Code, Sec 49-78 (b)

⁸ Montgomery County Code, Sec. 49-78 (c)

When the Council classifies a road as a rustic or exceptional rustic road, it must identify the Significant Features that must be preserved when the road is maintained or improved.⁹ (See Appendix 4 for a list of Significant Features.)

Rustic roads are designated by the County Council by approval of a Master Plan or an amendment to it. Most rustic roads are County maintained and many are located on prescriptive rights of way where the underlying land is owned by adjacent property owners. The County operates and maintains these roads within narrowly defined boundaries in order to allow for roadway drainage, signing, mowing, and tree maintenance. When a property along a rustic road is subdivided, the property owner is required to dedicate their portion of the necessary right-of-way¹⁰ – usually 70 feet minimum width for a rustic road and a minimum of 80 feet for an exceptional rustic road unless otherwise stated in a master plan. These rights of way allow the County to protect a buffer along the roadside edge in addition to the road itself.



Rustic roads can have both scenic and historic vistas, as seen here on West Harris Road coming into the town of Barnesville.

Rustic Roads Advisory Committee

The Rustic Roads Advisory Committee provides oversight for the rustic roads program in an advisory capacity. The RRAC is comprised of seven voting members appointed for three-year terms by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. *Montgomery County Code, Chapter 49, Article 8* charges the RRAC with the following duties:

⁹ Montgomery County Code, Sec. 49-78 (d).

¹⁰ Subdivision Regulations, Chapter 50, Sec. 50-30(c)

- Promote public awareness and knowledge of the County rustic roads program;
- Review and comment on classification of rustic roads and exceptional rustic roads;
- Review and comment on Executive Regulations and other County policies and programs that may affect the rustic roads program;
- Report on June 1 of each even numbered year to the Executive, the Council, and the Planning Board on the status of the rustic roads program.¹¹

Additionally, per *Montgomery County Code, Chapter 49, Article 8* and *Montgomery County Executive Regulation 21-96*, the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) looks to the RRAC for recommendations regarding matters that affect the County's rustic roads.¹² This includes improvements to rustic or exceptional rustic roads that are subject to the Development Approval Process. As noted previously, under County Code and Executive Regulation, the Significant Features of the rustic road must be preserved,¹³ and the proposed plan must be evaluated for compliance with approved and adopted master plans.¹⁴

The RRAC meets at least six times per year to review and comment on proposals and to advise the appropriate agencies or parties on matters affecting rustic roads such as capital improvements, new developments, maintenance, road classification, and government policies or programs. The RRAC website is http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/community/plan_areas/rural_area/rustic_roads.shtm

Three agencies have primary responsibility for implementation of the rustic roads program in Montgomery County:

- The Montgomery County Planning Department of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC). The Planning Department evaluates and recommends classification of rustic roads through Master Plans, reviews and approves development proposals along rustic roads, and maintains reference material, maps and a web-page for the program. The Chair of the Planning Board designates a member of the planning staff as a non-voting member of the RRAC.
- The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT). MCDOT is responsible for roadway maintenance, traffic control and capital improvements such as bridge replacements. MCDOT also develops and recommends regulations, standards, and policies regarding rustic roads.
- The Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services (DPS). DPS reviews and permits work performed by private developers (e.g., driveways and utilities) within the right-of-way on rustic roads and ensures that significant features are preserved. DPS provides staff support to the RRAC and acts as a liaison for the rustic roads program with the above agencies and the public.

¹¹ Montgomery County Code, Sec. 49-80 (e)

¹² Executive Regulation 21-96, Sec. 3. B. 1 establishes the procedure for proposed improvements. Generally, DOT conducts an engineering study which is reviewed by the RRAC which submit comments to the Director of DOT. The project then proceeds through the Capital Improvements Project process, including Mandatory Referral requirements.

¹³ Montgomery County Code Sec. 49-78 (d).

¹⁴ Executive Regulation 21-96 Section 3. B. 2. Compatibility with master plans.



The unpaved section of River Road from Whites Ferry to Edwards Ferry Road is designated as an exceptional rustic road. The open views along the road are a significant feature. The C&O Canal Scenic Byway also follows River Road to Whites Ferry.

Two other agencies have limited areas of responsibility for rustic roads:

- The Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA). Two state roads are currently designated as rustic roads, namely Beallsville Road (MD 109) / Old Hundred Road (MD 109), and Frederick Road (MD 355) north of MD 109. In addition to these roads, the SHA has established a Maryland Scenic Byways Program which designates historic, cultural and scenic routes along state, local and park roads. Two scenic byways in Montgomery County are partially located along 18 rustic roads. These are the Antietam Campaign Byway and the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal Byway.¹⁵ (See map in Appendix 5.)
- The Montgomery County Department of Parks in the M-NCPPC. The Department of Parks is responsible for maintaining several rustic roads located within County parkland.¹⁶

¹⁵ The Maryland Scenic Byways Guide and map is available online: <http://www.sha.maryland.gov/Index.aspx?PageId=97>. The Context Sensitive Solutions for Work on Maryland Byways (<http://www.sha.maryland.gov/OED/CSS-3.pdf>) should also be consulted for work on these Byways. The RRAC works with Scenic Byways staff on projects where the programs coincide.

¹⁶ Montgomery County Code, Sec. 49-79 (b) State and park roads. The Executive must encourage the State Highway Administration and the County Parks Department to maintain and improve rustic roads owned by the State or Park Commission in a manner consistent with this Article.

Program Summary

The Rustic Roads Program preserves the rustic character of certain County roads.¹⁷ *Montgomery County Code, Chapter 49, Article 8* states “Each rustic road and exceptional rustic road must be maintained and improved in a manner that preserves the road’s significant features which the Council identified under subsection 49-78(d), but this requirement does not preclude improvements to promote safety or movement of agricultural equipment.”

As stated above, the RRAC is charged with reviewing and commenting in an advisory capacity on matters that affect the County’s rustic roads. In performing these reviews and making comments on proposed activities, the Committee is mindful of its charge from the County Council, of County Code and the Executive Regulations, and of the Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan.

“Must” and “Should”

In an effort to aid stakeholders and to improve its ability to provide consistency in its reviews and comments, the RRAC prepared this resource manual (see below) that deals with matters pertinent to the County’s rustic roads. It is important to recognize the distinction between the words “must” and “should” in reading this manual. When an item is required by *Chapter 49, Article 8 of the Montgomery County Code* or by *Montgomery County Executive Regulation 21-96* or by the *Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan*, the word “must” is used and the course of action is automatically set. Likewise, the words “will” and “shall” describe required actions or outcomes. In essentially all other cases, the word “should” indicates that some degree of subjectivity is necessarily involved, and the RRAC carries out its task by examining how the proposed action affects the impacted rustic road(s). The experience gained by the RRAC in dealing with many types of proposed actions is summarized in this document.

RRAC Reviews

The RRAC is pleased to work with all who are planning activities that impact Montgomery County’s rustic roads. Depending upon the type of project, the following items may be useful:

- A description of the project or proposal, including how it affects the road
- Plans
- Photos (preferably uncropped or retouched photos, taken at the equivalent to a 50 to 70 mm focal length in a 35 mm format)
- Neighborhood petitions with a criteria checklist (for those wishing to add or remove a rustic road)
- Accident histories
- Balloon tests
- Field staking (for new roads or driveways)
- Sight distance measurements.
- Site visits

¹⁷ RRFMP, p. 3

The RRAC's staff coordinator places projects on the agenda, schedules site visits when needed, and can provide guidance for which items to provide for individual projects. Submittals should be in both paper and digital formats.



Proper maintenance of the historic concrete sections of the politicians' road along Sugarland Road has helped protect this 1930s era pavement.

Montgomery County Rustic Roads Advisory Committee

Resource Manual

When to use the Resource Manual

This document should be consulted by anyone involved in planning, engineering, inspecting, or implementing any work within, adjacent to, or in the vicinity of the right-of-way of Montgomery County's rustic and exceptional roads. The Rustic Roads Advisory Committee must advise the County Department of Transportation regarding the significant features of these roads that must be preserved when the roads are maintained or improved, or when a public utility completes work on or near the roads. (*Montgomery County Code, Chapter 49, Article 8*). This includes work on:

- Proposed improvements¹⁸
- Major maintenance, including roadway resurfacing, bridge deck replacement or major drainage New access points, e.g., streets and driveways
- Bridge and culvert replacements or alterations
- Reconstruction¹⁹
- Guardrail installation
- Lighting
- Tree maintenance
- Utility work
- Regulatory reviews including Pre-preliminary, Preliminary and Site plans, Special Exception and Mandatory Referral filings
- Master plans, including area master plans, park master plans, and amendments to the Master Plan of Highways and the Master Plan of Bikeways
- Pertinent County Code and Executive Regulations, including the "Road Code"

Rustic and exceptional rustic road classification will not exclude roads from regular maintenance. These roads will receive the level of maintenance necessary to allow safe travel by autos, trucks, busses, bicycles and agricultural equipment.²⁰

Approach to Work

Much like the Maryland Scenic Byways program (see Bibliography), the basic approach to work along a rustic or exceptional rustic road is to identify roadway characteristics, significant features and scenic views, and to determine appropriate actions to preserve, maintain and enhance these features.

¹⁸ As noted previously, an engineering study must be conducted, which the RRAC will review at their next scheduled meeting (Executive Regulation 21-96 Sec. 3. B.)

¹⁹ A public notice must be posted on the project site at least 30 days prior to the proposed start of work (Executive Regulation 21-96, Sec. 4. I. D.) The RRAC requests an opportunity to review non-emergency major maintenance projects prior to such posting.

²⁰ Executive Regulation 21-96 Sec. 4. I. A.

General Principles

The rustic roads designation is not intended to keep the roads static. It does not prevent improvements to adjoining land or to the roads and bridges themselves. Maintenance on these roads is not to be neglected. Nor are improvements to promote safety or the movement of agricultural equipment precluded. Rather, reasonable care is to be taken to keep the roads compatible and in character with their agricultural and/or rural community and to protect the significant features that led to their designation.

Preserve significant features and limit modifications

When a road is classified as rustic, the County Council has identified the Significant Features of the road deemed to be outstanding and worthy of note that *must be preserved*.²¹ These significant features include, but are not limited to, stone walls, tree canopy, the view of a historic house, the road alignment, the road surface, hedgerows, etc. Also, particularly interesting and beautiful vistas from the road are identified as scenic views. These may include open views to Sugarloaf Mountain or shorter views to agricultural fields and stream valleys. The significant features for each road are identified in the RRFMP.

Physical modifications to roads are discouraged. However, they may be allowed when needed to provide adequate safety, to reduce maintenance problems, to accommodate agricultural equipment, or to achieve adequate sight distance. Significant physical improvements such as widening, or changing the vertical and horizontal geometry must be tailored to the road to assure that the Significant Features and the character of the road are maintained, and should be brought to the attention of the RRAC by the MCDOT.

Maintain the roadway character

Maintenance of these roads should seek to maintain the roads' rustic character and features. For example, maintenance of the concrete sections along Martinsburg and Sugarland Roads has been tailored to assure the longevity of these roads.

Enhance the roadway character

When a modification along a rustic road is proposed, consideration should be given to actions that can complement or enhance the road's character such as using a gravel driveway instead of a paved driveway on an exceptional rustic road, replacing a galvanized guardrail with a rustic looking guardrail, or removing excess pavement.²²

Share the road

Bicyclists, horseback riders and hikers often share these roads with residents, farmers, tourists, and commuters in cars, trucks and agricultural equipment. These are working roads which should function safely while preserving the rustic character of the roads for the use and enjoyment of all of the users on them.

²¹ Montgomery County Code, Sec. 49-78 (d)

²² Executive Regulation 21-96 Sec. 4. II. B.1 and II.B.6

Design Regulations and Recommendations

The character of each rustic road is as individual as the history of each one and the landscape it travels through. The following manual is broken down in four parts according to location: The Roadway, The Edge, The Land Beyond, and The Users of the Roads.

1. The Roadway

1.a. Alignments and geometry

The natural topographic characteristics of the roadway and how it fits into the landscape should be preserved to the maximum extent practical. Where documented safety problems are of a magnitude to justify changing the vertical or horizontal geometry, design techniques and materials must be compatible with adjacent unaltered portions of the road.²³ Relocated sections must be designed to maintain compatibility with the connecting road segments and in general, should have similar width and surface.



The gravel surface on West Harris Road near the town of Barnesville maintains the character of this historic farm wagon road.

²³ Executive Regulation 21-96 Sec. 4. II. B.1

1.b. Roadway surface

Some exceptional rustic roads have surfaces that are significant features. These include the type of pavement (i.e., gravel), single-lane concrete and, on one road, a water ford. These roadway surfaces must be preserved.²⁴ However, preservation is not intended to mean inaction, but rather that maintenance or restoration techniques must respect the intrinsic nature of the road. Periodic grading and dust suppression techniques are required for unpaved surfaces.

Most rustic roads have been paved with asphalt or chip-seal over the years and require periodic maintenance. Chip-seal treatment provides a more rustic appearance than smooth-seal asphalt, but good installation methods are needed to avoid loose gravel. Chip-seal is a cost effective roadway repair strategy that applied properly per specification will provide several years of service life. It will preserve the pavement structure as well as the natural, agricultural and historic characteristics of the area.

When roadways are resurfaced, care must be taken not to widen the road. If a roadway was inadvertently widened beyond the widths recorded as roadway features in the RRFMP, the excess pavement should be removed so as to maintain the rustic character of the road and to avoid creating drainage problems from additional impervious area.

Where concrete roadways have deteriorated, repairs should be made. Full replacement of the concrete roadway should only be undertaken as a last resort when repairs cannot feasibly be made. As these concrete surfaces are designated as the Significant Features of these roads, protection of these surfaces is required; alterations will require design techniques and materials which are compatible with unaltered portions of the road.²⁵ The concrete portion of Martinsburg Road is designated in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation; any proposed alterations are subject to review and approval by the Historic Preservation Commission. Contact historic preservation staff early in the planning process to discuss project scope of work.

Unpaved road surfaces are listed as Significant Features, so these surfaces must be protected. Avoid widening the surface to avoid creating drainage problems and erosion along the road edges.

1.c. Pavement cutting and utility work

Repair and restoration of a rustic road must be made to all damaged pavement and edges within the public right-of-way. These repairs must be made in accordance with the approved plans and as directed by DPS. Public utilities must make all reasonable efforts to limit irreparable damage to any Significant Feature when working on or near a rustic road or exceptional rustic road.²⁶

²⁴ “Should the width, alignment or road surface of a rustic road be altered, all work shall be done in a manner as to protect the significant features which made the road eligible for its rustic designation...,” Executive Regulation 21-96, Sec. 4, II, B.1.

²⁵ Executive Regulation 21-96 Sec. 3, II, B. 1.

²⁶ Montgomery County Code, Sec. 49-79 (c)

1.d. Bridges and culverts

MCDOT “must make bridge repairs in a manner that preserves the rural characteristics of the roadway and the bridge structure.”²⁷ When possible, rehabilitation of the bridge is preferred over replacement. Railings that have deteriorated should be stabilized or rebuilt with elements of the same appearance. Bridge rehabilitation must maintain or replicate the scale and character of the existing bridge or culvert that is visible from the roadway.²⁸

If a bridge or small structure is considered a significant feature of the rustic road, it must be preserved through maintenance and repair. When a bridge must be replaced, compatibility can be achieved by replacing the structure with a similar design so that the scale and materials are similar to the previous structure. If, however, the existing bridge is of a style that detracts from the road character, or environmental, economic or safety reasons require a different design, a replacement bridge can enhance the rustic road by selecting a design that complements the rural or historic landscape.



This replacement bridge at Mouth of Monocacy Road over the CSX railroad follows the profile of a pony truss, and is sympathetic to its rustic surroundings.

The width of the bridge deck and the approach road geometrics on replacement bridges on rustic roads must accommodate emergency vehicles and agricultural equipment but must be compatible with the existing roadway width. On exceptional rustic roads, the new bridge deck width must be no wider than

²⁷ Executive Regulation 21-96 Sec. 4, I. A. 5.

²⁸ Executive Regulation 21-96 Sec. 4, II. B.5.

the existing deck unless necessary for agricultural equipment. In this case the bridge deck must be compatible in width to the width of the existing approaches and the unaltered roadway.²⁹ Bridge abutments visible from the road or from trails below the road should be designed to be visually compatible with the rock types and soil color of the adjacent stream bank or other embankment.

1.e. Grading and drainage

With few exceptions, rustic roads do not have engineered drainage ditches. Generally, storm water flows across the adjacent land and infiltrates naturally. However, adequate drainage is vital for the maintenance and safety of the road. MCDOT will maintain drainage to prevent damage to the road or adjacent private property. This may include removal of vegetation that has been allowed to grow in old drainage ditches.³⁰

Grading and drainage should be undertaken in a manner that reinforces the existing character of the roadway. Precisely engineered swales or slopes should be avoided on rustic roads. Where improvements are required, drainage swales or slopes should look like they are a part of the natural landscape. In doing this, paving should be avoided. Where curbing is needed to direct roadway drainage for short distances, asphalt rather than concrete should be used.



Subtle, brown signs fit with the character of this section of Martinsburg Road near Wasche Road.

1.f. Signs and markings

Signs and markings must follow the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD). However, a practice of 'the least control is the best control' should be followed so that traffic calming devices such as

²⁹ Executive Regulation 21-96 Sec. 4, II, B. 5.

³⁰ Executive Regulation 21-96 Sec. 4, I, A. 4.

speed humps, rumble strips, circles, etc³¹ and their respective sign clutter does not overwhelm the visual character of the natural landscape. Where the average daily traffic is less than 400 vehicles per day, signs and markings should follow the guidelines in part 5 (“Traffic Control Devices for Low Volume Roads”) of the MUTCD. The minimum sign sizes should be used whenever possible.

Brown signs with white lettering, such as the MCDOT-approved street name signs on rustic roads, and the ‘Adopt A Rustic Road’ signs, fit the character of rustic roads.

Many rustic and exceptional rustic roads have no pavement markings. Due to their narrow pavement widths, centerlines are usually not consistent with the rustic designation. Where safety issues are identified, new edge markings may be considered on a case-by-case basis.³²



A brown trail sign for Browning Run Trail in Little Bennett Park.

³¹ Traffic calming devices are typical of suburban or urban subdivision streets and are not normally acceptable on rural rustic roads.

³² Edge lines are generally limited in use where roads are less than 20 feet wide and the average daily traffic volume is less than 6,000 vehicles per day (MUTCD 3B.07 Warrant). However, MUTCD 3B.06.06 Support states, “Edge line markings have unique value as visual reference to guide road users during adverse weather and visibility conditions.”

1.g. Curbs and gutters

Concrete curbs and gutters are inappropriate on rustic roads. However, where sections of concrete barrier curb are required, such as to protect a sidewalk, the color of the concrete should blend well with the surrounding environment.

1.h. Auxiliary lanes

The land use associated with rustic roads would typically not generate traffic volumes that would justify deceleration, acceleration, or separate turn lanes. These additional lanes should never be provided on exceptional rustic roads. On rustic roads, auxiliary lanes may be considered in unique situations only if justified by a traffic safety study approved by MCDOT or SHA.

1.i. Shoulders

Shoulders should be composed of turf or gravel. Where required for safety or to prevent erosion, minor paving may be considered.

1.j. Maintenance

Rustic and exceptional rustic classifications will not exclude roads from regular maintenance.³³

2. The Edge

2.a. Driveways and intersections

The number of new driveways and intersections should be minimized. They must be sited to avoid disturbance to significant features, trees and mature hedgerows, while achieving required minimum sight distances.³⁴ Driveways should be consolidated where possible. Shared driveways that serve a number of homes are preferred over public streets as they are significantly narrower and create less visual intrusion. Driveway widths should typically be in accordance with MCDOT Standards. For shared driveways where the fire marshal requires a wider width, care must be taken to site and screen driveways in a way so as to meet sight distance safety standards and to have the least visual impact on the road.

Sight distances for new driveways, intersecting roadways and safety improvements must be consistent with AASHTO's minimum guidance. While the minimum sight distance is 150 feet, a greater length may be required based on actual roadway operating speeds. In order to preserve the rustic character of the road, trees and other features altered to provide safe sight distances may need to be restored outside the line of sight.

In general, most driveways will be asphalt. However, gravel driveways are permitted on exceptional rustic roads where existing adjacent or nearby driveways are gravel. Also, special paver driveways may be allowed.

³³ Executive Regulation 21-96. Sec. 4. I. A.

³⁴ Executive Regulation 21-96. Sec. 4.II.B.3 and III.C.2.

2.b. Traffic barriers

Less visually intrusive guardrails, such as those made of rustic-looking material, are required along rustic roads, rather than galvanized metal guardrails.³⁵



Steel-backed timber guardrail used on the Mouth of Monocacy Bridge.

2.c. Street lights, speed cameras, utility boxes, etc.

The visual impact of traffic related devices (e.g., street lights, speed cameras, utility boxes, etc.) or other equipment that are installed on rustic roads or near the intersection of a rustic road should be reduced by specifying dark colors for the equipment.

Continuous street lighting is generally not appropriate along rustic roads. However, site specific lighting may be needed to illuminate major access points/intersections or may be considered at other locations where documented security or traffic safety exist that could be mitigated by lighting.

Street lights on rustic roads should be mounted on existing utility poles where possible. For new subdivision roads intersecting a rustic road, street lights required by county code should be compatible with the rural environment.

³⁵ Regulation 21-96. Sec. 4.II.B.6.

2.d. Parking

Rustic roads are generally too narrow to allow parking but it can be allowed where safe. Small pull-off areas (not parallel) for parking, such as a stabilized, gravel area, may be appropriate at trail heads, scenic views, or historic sites. The RRAC will review requests on a case-by-case basis.



Eastern Red-cedar hedgerows have traditionally grown along many roads (Hughes Road is shown above).

2.e. Roadside trees and foliage

Trees along rustic roads should reflect the rural and agricultural nature of the area. Trees, forest, and hedgerows may be Significant Features of rustic roads which must be preserved.³⁶ On some rustic roads, formal hedgerows have matured into distinctive features of the roads. The most common are rows of Eastern Red-cedars (our native *Juniperus virginiana*).

At the time of subdivision or permitting, planting trees along the road may be required. Formal hedgerows, such those described above, may be provided, or informal clumps of native trees may be planted.³⁷ Lower-growing trees should be planted in the presence of overhead power lines. MCDOT maintains a list of approved street trees, and the RRAC is available for review of plant selection and planting designs.³⁸

Executive Regulation 21-96 guides vegetation and tree maintenance on rustic roads in conjunction with Executive Regulation 25-13, Roadside Trees Protection, which requires that permits be obtained for maintenance or removal of a tree in the right-of-way.

³⁶ Montgomery County Code. Sec. 49-78(d). Significant Features.

³⁷ Montgomery County Road Code limits tree planting to those at least 14 feet from the edge of pavement, not within 30 feet of an intersection.

³⁸ <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DOT-Highway/Tree/index.html>

Priorities. Roads needed for the passage of agricultural equipment should receive maintenance on a priority basis. The RRAC will provide MCDOT with a list of these roads, in coordination with the Agricultural Advisory Committee and the Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board, upon request.



Hedgerows and tree canopy along West Harris Road.



The mature woodlands on Davis Mill Road are a significant feature of the road.

3. The Land Beyond

3.a. Views and vistas

The Purpose clause for the Rustic Roads Program reflects the importance of the scenic quality of the rustic roads: “This Article establishes a program to preserve as rustic roads these historic and scenic roadways that reflect the agricultural character and rural origins of the County.”³⁹

Although there are a variety of views and vistas from the many Rustic Roads, their natural features, viewsheds, farms, historic landmarks, and other important features serve to define the nature of a rustic road. Within the context of specific parameters set by this resource manual, the viewshed should be preserved to the greatest extent possible. Furthermore, any proposals requiring permits, such as residences, commercial buildings, radio towers, and others, should strongly consider the integrity of the historic viewshed, as any disturbance or breakup of such viewsheds significantly impacts the value and significance of the rustic roads that are affected.



The historic wall and the fences and entry features along Martinsburg Road contribute to the character of the road; they are within the recommended 80-foot right-of-way.

³⁹ Montgomery County Code, Sec. 49-76. Purpose.

3.b. Walls, fencing and mailboxes

Walls and fences along rustic roads are typically private and, where a right-of-way has been dedicated, they should, in general, be located outside the right-of-way. New walls and fences should be consistent with the scale and character with those generally found on a rustic road such as rock walls, wooden fencing, etc.

Mailboxes are regulated by the United State Postal Service and by the DPS.⁴⁰ The County Code requires that they be mounted on a support that will bend or break away on impact by a vehicle. Due to both safety and aesthetic considerations, monumental mailboxes are inappropriate on rustic roads.

3.c. Entry signs or features

Subdivision identification signs or similar features are generally not in keeping with the character of rustic roads. If one is needed because a street sign cannot be seen, the RRAC will review the proposed design. There should be no illumination of signs or features. The sign must be located outside of the right-of-way.⁴¹



A wooden sign marks a farm on River Road near Whites Ferry.

⁴⁰ <https://www.usps.com/manage/know-mailbox-guidelines.htm>

⁴¹ Montgomery County Code, Sec. 49-10, Obstruction of rights-of-way

3.d. Private signs

Signage must conform to the County's Sign Ordinance and should be consistent with the character of the roads and not detract from their rustic nature. Signs should not be lighted and must be located outside of the right-of-way. Typical private signs include names of farms and farm stands.

3.e. Radio towers, cell towers, windmills, wind turbines, and water towers

In order to maintain the rural nature of a rustic road, the location of radio towers, cell towers, windmills, wind turbines, and water towers need to be evaluated relative to their location to a rustic road.

The RRAC reviews proposed radio tower, cell tower, windmill, wind turbine, and water tower locations to assess their impact on the rustic character of the road and potential impact on views. (Towers within one mile of a Maryland Scenic Byway should also be reviewed by Byways staff.) Suggested locations include those where these structures cannot be seen from the rustic road or are only partially visible. Additionally, using existing structures such as silos, or using designs that allow these structures to blend into the environment is preferred.

4. Users of the Roads

All users need to recognize and understand how to properly share the road with bicyclists, equestrians, pedestrians, and agricultural equipment operators. It should be noted that these users have rights of way and the same duty to obey traffic signals as motorists.

4.a. Pedestrians and hikers

There are few sidewalks along rustic roads, so pedestrians and hikers should use grass shoulders or the edge of the pavement. These users should walk facing traffic, and drivers should be watchful for their presence.

Adding new paved sidewalks or trails along rustic roads is not consistent with the County's Context Sensitive Road Design Standards; however, there may be locations where natural surface trails along the road would be appropriate.⁴²

4.b. Bicyclists

Due to their low volume of traffic and scenic nature, the rustic roads are very popular for bicyclists, who often ride in groups or in clubs who prefer a long distance network. This is reflected in the Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan which designates several rustic roads as signed shared roadways.⁴³ Bicycle use of the rustic roads should be encouraged and protected as it provides an excellent way to enjoy the beauty of the Agriculture Reserve.

The needs of bicyclists should be considered when making alterations or improvements to rustic roads. Countywide bikeway routes should be signed to guide cyclists and to alert other users to their presence, and warning signs should be placed in areas where conflicts are observed.

⁴² http://www.montgomeryplanningboard.org/agenda/2008/documents/20080918_attachments_road_code.pdf

⁴³ http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/transportation/bikeways/A_A/contents.shtm



Horses, pedestrians, bicyclists, and agricultural equipment all share the rustic roads with automobiles and trucks.

4.c. Equestrian users and equestrian trail crossings

Equestrian trail crossings on rustic roads should be well marked by signage. Signs should be in accordance with section 1.f. (“Signs and markings”). Paved painted markings are not recommended. The road edge and shoulder should be in accordance with the section on “Shoulder” (in section 1.i.).

4.d. Agricultural equipment operators

The majority of Rustic Roads are in the Ag. Reserve where farming is the preferred land use. Drivers and other users should be aware that agricultural equipment may take up more than one lane. Drivers should be cautious and courteous in the presence of agricultural equipment.

Conclusion

This document has been prepared by The Rustic Roads Advisory Committee (RRAC) to help preserve the rustic and exceptional roads in Montgomery County. We believe that with this manual and continued consultation the unique character of these roads in the County will be preserved. The RRAC respectfully requests anyone involved in development planning, engineering, inspecting, or implementing any work within, adjacent to, or in the vicinity of the right-of-way contact us for comment.

Abbreviations

AASHTO	American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
COMCOR	Code of Montgomery County Regulations
DPS	Department of Permitting Services
MCDOT	Montgomery County Department of Transportation
M-NCPPC	The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
MUTCD	Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices
RRAC	Rustic Roads Advisory Committee
RRFMP	Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan
SHA	Maryland State Highway Administration

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Pull out Map (to be finalized)

Appendix 2: Chapter 49, Article 8 of the Montgomery County Code

Appendix 3: Montgomery County Executive Regulation 21-96

Appendix 4: Significant Features list (to be added upon completion of the update of the Master Plan of Highways/Technical Corrections and Updates)