



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

OFFICE OF THE CHAIR

May 23, 2016

Mr. Al Roshdieh, Director
Montgomery County Department of Transportation
Executive Office Building
101 Monroe Street, 10th Floor
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Re: Mandatory Referral for the Metropolitan Branch Trail Phase 1 and 2

Dear Mr. Roshdieh,

At its May 19, 2016 meeting the Montgomery County Planning Board approved the Mandatory Referral for the Metropolitan Branch Trail Phase 1 and 2 with comments.

As you know, the Metropolitan Branch Trail is an important project for Downtown Silver Spring. We appreciate the Department's efforts to come to a compromise with Montgomery Preservation, Inc. on the alignment of the trail around the Silver Spring B&O Station. While the proposed alignment is not preferred, we believe it is functional and recommend that MCDOT focus on improving the alignment by reducing vehicle traffic crossing the trail and most importantly limiting vehicles backing up across the trail.

In addition, the Board made the following comments:

Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station

1. Improve the proposed alignment around the B&O Station by:
 - a. Providing a raised trail crossing if vehicles are permitted to cross the trail. Warning signs and pavement markings, such as green thermoplastic, should also be provided.
 - b. Creating a formal entranceway to the B&O Station parking lot to make motorists aware that the trail bifurcates two parking lots that serve the station.
 - c. Eliminating the short tangent section between the back-to-back curves in the horizontal alignment at Station 113+03.
 - d. Straightening out the "s" curve at Station 115+00 to provide a smoother transition.
 - e. Adding transverse pavement markings/warning signs to prepare bicyclists for the turns.

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- f. Providing adequate lighting to ensure that trail users and motorists can negotiate the curves and trail crossing.
2. Continue working toward a memorandum of agreement with appropriate mitigation, easement approval, and issuance of a Historic Area Work Permit for the alignment under consideration in Mandatory Referral No. MR2016021.

Trail Width

3. Widen the trail from 10 feet to a minimum of 11 feet with 1 to 2-foot-wide shoulders:
 - a. Along the CSX tracks between Ripley Street and the B&O Station (Station 105+08 to Station 112+79).
 - b. Along the CSX tracks between the Burlington Ave underpass and King Street (Station 126+00 to 128+70).

Trail Crossings

4. Consider using colored concrete or green thermoplastic at the driveway crossings on Fenton Street and King Street to convey that trail users have the right-of-way over motorists entering and exiting the parking garage.
5. Install signs at exits to the parking garage that warn motorists to watch for bicyclists on the trail.

Trail Lighting

6. Provide continuous lighting along the Metropolitan Branch Trail – including the proposed Georgia Avenue bridge – that is consistent with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) standards.

Security

7. Coordinate with the Department of Permitting Services Office of the Fire Marshal to determine how emergency responders can best locate trail users who call 911 (Marie LaBaw, 240-773-8917).
8. Coordinate with the Montgomery County Department of Parks and the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) Active Transportation Branch (Jim Sebastian, 202-671-2331) to understand the challenges that the District of Columbia has encountered with regard to trail security.

Data Collection

9. Install bicycle counters in at least two places on the Metropolitan Branch Trail, including a location northwest of Georgia Ave where trail use is likely to be the highest due to the proximity to transit and Downtown Silver Spring.

Coordination with the District of Columbia

10. Coordinate with the District of Columbia to identify and install mile markers and include a trail wayfinding plan along the entire trail in Montgomery County (including existing segments) that utilizes the same signing precedent that the DDOT has implemented on the portions of the trail in the District of Columbia.

Pavement Material

11. Confirm that the portions of the trail that are proposed to be concrete will be saw cut rather than tooled, to provide a smoother ride.

Fenton Street

12. Consider converting the striped-out area in the roadway to a landscaped buffer to provide greater separation from traffic for trail users, less impervious surface, and more space to accommodate street trees.
13. Reduce the parking row from 9 feet to 8 feet wide and widen the buffer between the trail and on-street parking by 1 foot.
14. Provide curb ramps and crosswalks across Fenton Street at the intersections with King Street and Islington Street to facilitate pedestrian travel.
15. At the intersection of King Street and Fenton Street, improve the opposite/ corresponding curb ramps to tie-in to the new project.
16. Provide a smooth transition between the trail on the south side of King Street and the crosswalk across King Street at Fenton Street.

Burlington Avenue Underpass

17. Consider adding curb and gutter on the west side of the Burlington Avenue underpass to further reduce potential icing in the underpass.

Burlington Avenue

18. In addition to repaving the bridge over Burlington Avenue, reconstruct the deteriorating sidewalks on the bridge and evaluate whether this project can facilitate implementation of the Silver Spring separated bike lane network on Burlington Avenue.

Selim Road

19. Convert the long-term parking spaces on the west side of Selim Road to short-term parking spaces as soon as possible to support the auto repair businesses and as a replacement for the short term parking spaces that will be removed as part of the Metropolitan Branch Trail Phase 2.
20. At the proposed midblock crossing on Selim Road, consider locating the crosswalk in the middle of the parking space and converting the parking space to a curb extension to prevent motorists from parking in the crosswalk. In addition, flare the ramp to the trail for easier access.
21. Install a traffic-worthy barrier at the top of the retaining wall along Selim Road where the trail drops below grade. In addition, if the fence between the tracks and the trail is less than 2 feet from the trail, the fence should be a smooth surface in the event that bicyclists strike it.
22. Consider changing the typical section on Selim Road to a 17-foot-wide traffic lane and an 8-foot-wide parking lane to encourage motorists to park close to the curb.
23. Consider depressing the sidewalk and aprons between Station 507+00 and 509+00 to reduce the effort needed by disabled persons to traverse the sidewalk. If the sidewalk is depressed for a long length, bollards should be added to deter vehicles from parking on the sidewalk.
24. Consider providing a sidewalk connection to the path at Station 117+60.

B&O Station area

25. Provide tree protection measures to save the 28" tree on Georgia Avenue at the B&O Station.

General Comments

26. Corresponding sidewalk ramps should be shown on the opposite side of the street and upgraded, as needed, to achieve ADA compliance. Several ramps currently do not have detectable warning surfaces.

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Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions or comments concerning our review, please contact David Anspacher at 301-495-2191.

Sincerely,



Casey Anderson
Chair

CA:DA:aj

cc: Bruce Johnston, MCDOT
Sogand Seirafi, MCDOT
Ken Kendall, MCDOT
Gwen Wright
Pam Dunn
Tom Autrey
Scott Whipple
David Anspacher