



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

**OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN**

August 18, 2010

Neil Pedersen  
State Highway Administration Transportation  
Office of the Administrator  
707 North Calvert Street  
C-400  
Baltimore, MD 21202

RE: Old Georgetown Road(MD187)/West Cedar Lane/Oakmont Avenue  
SHA Contract No. MO5935370  
Mandatory Referral No. MR2010805

Rockville Pike (MD355)/Cedar Lane/West Cedar Lane Intersection  
SHA Contract No. MO5935270  
Mandatory Referral No. MR2010806

Rockville Pike (MD355)/Center Drive/ Jones Bridge Road Intersection  
SHA Contract No. MO5935470  
Mandatory Referral No. MR2010807

Dear Mr. Pedersen:

The Planning Board reviewed the Mandatory Referral of these projects at our regularly scheduled meeting on July 22, 2010 and approved the above projects with the comments listed below.

We appreciate the State Highway Administration's efforts to mitigate the transportation impacts of the BRAC move of Walter Reed Hospital to the National Naval Medical Center campus, and also appreciate your staff's willingness to work with us to continue to improve the design of these projects. We believe that improving the pedestrian and bicyclist facilities and providing better landscaping will help create a multimodal transportation system that furthers our long-term goals in a way that enhances the community.

Our detailed comments are as follows:

**General**

1. Make additional area bicycle and pedestrian improvements needed to provide safe and convenient access to the NIH and NNMC campuses within the overall BRAC traffic impact area rather than the limits of the individual intersection projects within that area.

2. Revise the proposed handicap ramp designs to meet ADA Best Practices wherever possible, including locating sidewalks and paths behind handicap ramps at intersections to avoid unnecessary grade changes for handicapped persons.
3. Widen proposed sidewalks and shared use paths by two feet where they are located adjacent to the curb.
4. At intersections where SHA believes that a safe ADA-accessible crossing cannot be provided, we recommend that the intersections be signed to prohibit the crossing and to direct pedestrians to the safest crossing.
5. Provide supporting documentation of any final decision not to provide crosswalks on all legs of signalized intersections.
6. Evaluate the lighting along the roads covered by these projects for their adherence to current AASHTO lighting standards and upgrade and augment these facilities where needed.
7. Continue to coordinate with MCDOT on their Countywide Bus Rapid Transit Study and consider the designation of additional through travel lanes as “diamond lanes” for restricted use by buses and high-occupancy vehicles during peak periods along the State highways covered by these projects.
8. Consider providing a four-foot-wide smooth concrete panel as part of the proposed decorative crosswalks to accommodate persons with disabilities.
9. Where large volumes of pedestrians and bikes are expected, consider making the crosswalks wider than ten feet.
10. Provide shade trees between the curb and sidewalk wherever possible. Major deciduous trees are recommended over flowering trees in the ROW to provide a better sense of scale on these wide roads. Utilize species of trees that can accommodate the pruning needed to accommodate overhead utilities.
11. Impervious surfaces in the median should be avoided wherever possible in favor of landscaping. Four-foot-wide medians should be planted with liriope.
12. Landscaping and streetscaping should be provided that ensures community compatibility; reflects the national importance of the National Institutes of Health, the National Naval Medical Center, and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute; and is compatible with the landscaping plans of those institutions.
13. Work with our staff to achieve mutually acceptable revisions to landscaping plans for all four intersections within 60 days or prior to submission of Phase 3 for the MD185/Jones Bridge Road project.

14. Provide responses to all other comments within 60 days.

**A. Old Georgetown Road (MD 187)/West Cedar Lane/Oakmont Avenue**

1. Complete the North Bethesda Trail by replacing the existing sidewalk along the east side of MD187 with a eight-foot-wide minimum shared use path from Charles Street to Alta Vista Road and by extending the proposed path from Center Drive to Lincoln Street.
2. Provide shade trees on both sides of the North Bethesda Trail extension along NIH's frontage and provide additional planting materials to enhance this facility. Provide shade trees between the curb and sidewalk/path elsewhere on this project.
3. Construct the proposed sidewalk on the west side of MD187 five feet from the curb, except in the immediate vicinity of the northeast corner of the Walter Johnson House.
4. Reconsider providing a six-foot-wide pedestrian refuge on the south leg of MD187 at West Cedar Lane/Oakmont Avenue.
5. Provide a design treatment for the proposed sidewalk at the Walter Johnson House that ensures the structural stability of the house and is attractive.
6. At the proposed MD187 median cut-through for the fire station, use the same gray color for the concrete as the rest of the ashlar slate median treatment.

**B. Rockville Pike (MD355)/Cedar Lane/West Cedar Lane**

1. Permit the PM peak operation of the proposed half-signal at North Wood Road only if there are no significant additional delays to MD 355 traffic.
2. Provide a crosswalk on the south leg of MD355 at Cedar Lane/West Cedar Lane or provide a pedestrian-actuated signal to stop traffic in both directions at the proposed half-signal at North Wood Road. The bus stops on either side of MD355 at North Wood Road should be eliminated if no safe crossing is provided.
3. Offset the proposed shared use path in the northeast and southwest quadrants of the MD355/ Cedar Lane/West Cedar Lane intersection, as well as the sidewalk in the southeast quadrant, so that they are outside the handicap ramp area. Provide a direct sidewalk connection between the sidewalks in the northwest quadrant so that the users do not have to traverse ramps to travel around the corner.
4. Provide a continuous ten-foot-wide shared use path along the west side of MD355 between the West Cedar Lane and Jones Bridge Road intersections.
5. Widen the landscape buffer adjacent to the proposed shared use path to eight to eleven feet along the west side of MD355 between Wilson Drive and the NIH Commercial

Vehicle Inspection Facility. This can be accomplished by using a 4:1 slope between the path and curb without increasing impacts on NIH property.

6. Develop a landscaping plan in conjunction with NIH and NNMC staff that includes provision of shade trees between the shared use path/sidewalk and curb along both sides of MD355 between the West Cedar Lane and Jones Bridge Road intersections.
7. Provide a replacement for the monumental entrance to the Stone Ridge School that is acceptable to the school.
8. Provide mitigation for the impacts to the park property in the northeast quadrant of the MD355/Cedar Lane intersection as follows:
  - a. Design and construct the proposed stormwater facility as a well-landscaped amenity.
  - b. Remove non-native invasive plants from the forested area downstream of the proposed pond site to improve the health and appearance of the streamside forest.
  - c. Relocate the sanitary sewer line as close to the pond site as feasible to minimize the loss of quality forest.
  - d. Reconstruct the shared use path along Cedar Lane from MD355 to Elmhirst Parkway to be offset from the roadway by a five-foot-wide (min.) landscape panel with street trees, outside the immediate area of the culvert under Cedar Lane, where possible while minimizing stream impacts. Where this cannot be accomplished, reconstruct the path to ten feet wide where adjacent to the curb and twelve feet wide where adjacent to both the curb and the culvert parapet.
  - e. Obtain a signed Memorandum of Understanding from the Montgomery County Department of Parks prior to commencement of any construction related activities on parkland.
  - f. Design and construct a hiker-biker trail bridge over Sligo Creek just downstream of Piney Branch Road by June 30, 2012. As a follow-up to our earlier agreement on SHA's Piney Branch Road (MD320) project.

### **C. Rockville Pike (MD355)/ Center Drive/Jones Bridge Road Intersection**

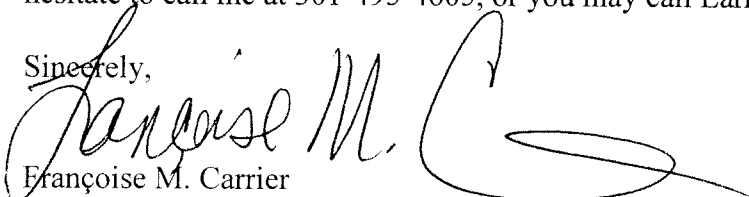
1. Provide a crosswalk on the north leg of MD355 at Jones Bridge Road.
2. Offset the proposed shared use path in the northwest quadrant of the MD355/Center Drive intersection so that it is outside the handicap ramp area.

3. Provide shade trees between the shared use path/sidewalk and curb along both sides of MD355.
4. Continue to coordinate with MCDOT on the MD355 Crossing Study and any resulting project. If large-scale utility relocation is required for a subsequent project, particularly if the NNMC fence is to be moved, we recommend that the undergrounding of utilities be considered. If the utilities are not undergrounded, the poles should be moved back to provide an eight-foot-wide landscape buffer between the curb and sidewalk.
5. Offset the sidewalk on the traffic island at Glenbrook Parkway at MD355 as well as the ramps on either side of the island by about 12-15 feet from the curb to improve pedestrian safety.

The MD355/Cedar Lane project include impacts to parkland, therefore your responses to our comments should document the status of the Section 4(f) evaluation; including avoidance, minimization, and mitigation strategies; with both our staff and FHWA. Section 4(f) mitigation will need to be implemented through a park permit or memorandum of understanding.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and we look forward to continuing to work together on these projects. If you have any questions or comments concerning our review, please do not hesitate to call me at 301-495-4605, or you may call Larry Cole at 301-495-4528.

Sincerely,

  
Françoise M. Carrier  
Chair