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# Intercounty Connector Limited Functional Master Plan Amendment

## BIKEWAYS AND INTERCHANGES

### PLANNING BOARD DRAFT





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An Amendment to the Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan and the Master Plan of Highways

Prepared by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission  
8787 Georgia Avenue  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760

Approved by the Montgomery County Council  
Date

Adopted by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission  
Date

# PLANNING BOARD DRAFT OF THE INTERCOUNTY CONNECTOR LIMITED FUNCTIONAL MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT

## BIKEWAYS AND INTERCHANGES

An Amendment to the Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan and the Master Plan of Highways

### ABSTRACT

The text and maps of this amendment are intended to make agreed upon solutions consistent with the County's relevant master plans. It is a comprehensive amendment to the approved and adopted Master Plan of Highways within Montgomery County, and the approved and adopted 2005 Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan. It also amends the approved and adopted 1998 Countywide Park Trails Plan, as well as On Wedges and Corridors, the General Plan for the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, as amended.

This Plan Amendment recommends select changes to the shared-use path identified as SP-40 in the Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan (CBFMP) by recommending changes to the ICC roadway alignment and interchanges to reflect the selected highway alternative now under construction. The proposed amendments to the CBFMP delete certain sections of SP-40 through the most environmentally sensitive portions of stream valley parks and the US 29 interchange. The amendment also proposes changes to the Countywide Park Trails Plan to provide connections that serve recreational and transportation purposes, including hiking and equestrian uses, in the Northwest Branch and Upper Paint Branch Stream Valley Parks. Amendments to the Master Plan of Highways include adding a partial interchange at Briggs Chaney Road, revising limits of Midcounty Highway and its interchange with the ICC, and revising the ICC alignment to reflect Rock Creek Option C (with Olde Mill Run Grade Separation) and to reflect Northwest Branch Option A.

### SOURCE OF COPIES

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission  
8787 Georgia Avenue  
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3760

### THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission is a bi-county agency created by the General Assembly of Maryland in 1927. The Commission's geographic authority extends to the great majority of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties; the Maryland-Washington Regional District (M-NCPPC planning jurisdiction) comprises 1,001 square miles, while the Metropolitan District (parks) comprises 919 square miles, in the two counties.

The Commission is charged with preparing, adopting, and amending or extending On Wedges and Corridors, the general plan for the physical development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District.

The Commission operates in each county through Planning Boards appointed by the county government. The Boards are responsible for all local plans, zoning amendments, subdivision regulations, and administration of parks.

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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL AND ADOPTION

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A plan provides comprehensive recommendations for the use of publicly and privately owned land. Each plan reflects a vision of the future that responds to the unique character of the local community within the context of a countywide perspective.

Together with relevant policies, plans should be referred to by public officials and private individuals when making land use decisions.

## THE PLAN PROCESS

The PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT PLAN is the formal proposal to amend an adopted master plan or sector plan. Its recommendations are not necessarily those of the Planning Board; it is prepared for the purpose of receiving public testimony. The Planning Board holds a public hearing and receives testimony, after which they hold public worksessions to review the testimony and revise the Public Hearing Draft Plan as appropriate. When the Planning Board's changes are made, the document becomes the Planning Board Draft Plan.

The PLANNING BOARD DRAFT PLAN is the Board's recommended Plan and reflects their revisions to the Public Hearing Draft Plan. The Regional District Act requires the Planning Board to transmit a sector plan to the County Council with copies to the County Executive who must, within sixty days, prepare and transmit a fiscal impact analysis of the Planning Board Draft Plan to the County Council. The County Executive may also forward to the County Council other comments and recommendations.

After receiving the Executive's fiscal impact analysis and comments, the County Council holds a public hearing to receive public testimony. After the hearing record is closed, the Council's Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee holds public worksessions to review the testimony and makes recommendations to the County Council. The Council holds its own worksessions, then adopts a resolution approving the Planning Board Draft Plan, as revised.

After Council approval the plan is forwarded to the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission for adoption. Once adopted by the Commission, the plan officially amends the master plans, functional plans, and sector plans cited in the Commission's adoption resolution.

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## BACKGROUND

In May 2006, the Federal Highway Administration approved the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Intercounty Connector (ICC), which established the highway's alignment and interchange locations, and identified impacts and mitigation measures. The ROD also recommended related master plan elements that would be implemented along with the highway project, including parks, bikeways and sidewalks, particularly the seven miles of master planned ICC shared use path (SP-40 in the Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan).

However, certain alignment and implementation decisions in the ROD are inconsistent with master plan guidance. This ICC Limited Functional Master Plan Amendment (ICCLFMPA) amends County master plans to reflect the ROD decisions. It also evaluates alternative alignments for the County bike path (CBP) along the ICC, in the context of County agencies' affirmation of Planning Board recommendations to remove the path from sensitive environmental areas. The amendment analyzes the State's alternative path routes along parallel roads and recommends changes to master plans needed to upgrade or enhance the routes to meet the needs of all users.

### **Why A Limited Plan Amendment?**

The ICCLFMPA will reconcile the ROD's highway, bicycle, pedestrian, and pathway facilities with the related elements in the County's master plans. This report describes the history, vision, and prior master plan guidance for the highway and path, including past decisions by the Planning Board, the County Council, and the Maryland Department of Transportation that were incorporated in the ROD.

This amendment updates the Master Plan of Highways to modify the ICC alignment to reflect the ROD and to establish interchange locations at Briggs Chaney Road and Midcounty Highway. It also evaluates cross-County bicycle and trails in the ICC corridor to connect to destinations and fill in gaps, timing portions of the path to be built with the highway project.

The interchange at Briggs Chaney Road is procedural. The ROD identified the interchange location and this amendment affirms prior decisions. The interchange at Midcounty Highway must be studied further because the selected ICC alignment used portions of the right-of-way intended for Midcounty Highway, and thus shifted the location of a future interchange further north and west.

### **Purposes**

#### THIS AMENDMENT:

- determines appropriate uses for master planned right-of-way not used by the highway project, with a particular focus on evaluating parkland for future bikeways or trails
- proposes new alignment(s) for the master planned bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the ICC Corridor
- reconciles approved highway design elements with master plan guidance for interchange locations.

The ICCLFMPA examines the Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan (CBFMP) and the Countywide Park Trails Plan (CPTP) to clarify the County's vision for bicycle and pedestrian mobility and access in the corridor, consistent with the Planning Board request when planning staff presented the ICC Bikeways Implementation Strategy in January 2007.

### **Key Plan Objectives**

#### HIGHWAY DESIGN AND ALIGNMENT

- Modify the Master Plan of Highways to identify the ROD's selected alternative as the highway's official master plan alignment.
- Guide the design of the Midcounty Highway interchange (see figure 2) and the related connection to Shady Grove Road.
- Affirm the Planning Board's decision for no paved trails in sensitive environmental areas in parkland, particularly
  - Rock Creek Option A (see figures 3 and 4)
  - Northwest Branch Option B (see figures 5 and 6).
- Consider removing bikeway/trail alignment through Paint Branch Stream Valley Park from the master plan (see figure 7).
- Identify Briggs Chaney Road as an ICC interchange (see figure 7).
- Establish the new master planned alignment of the CBP (see figure 8).

#### BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ACCESS AND MOBILITY

- Recommend policy changes to implement the State Highway Administration's (SHA) Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (SHA Bike Plan) (see figure 1), to accommodate novice and family bicyclists, pedestrians, and other users along the route's full length.
- Recommend policy changes to implement the CBP (SP-40) as a full-length, master planned shared-use path in the highway right-of-way (see figures 1 and 8), or an equivalent alternative route of new paths or wide sidewalks along parallel highways, arterials, and neighborhood streets that avoid environmentally sensitive areas, particularly in stream valley parks.
- Modify the CBFMP and the CPTP to ensure safe and efficient bicycle and pedestrian access to the SHA Bike Plan routes.

#### OTHER ISSUES

- Identify a funding mechanism through the Local Area Transportation Review that would permit private sector participation in funding trail and path routes.
- Determine the feasibility of interim use by mountain bikers and equestrians of route segments adjacent to highway right-of-way where the CBP will eventually be built.

### **Refined Objectives**

The specific objectives above were shaped by four questions that emerged through community discussion during public meetings in March and April 2008.

- Does the County agree with the State's recommendations for routing the CBP along existing bikeways, sidewalks, and paths as recommended in the SHA Bike Plan?
- What improvements are needed along these roads to accommodate cyclists and pedestrians, and address the needs of all potential user groups?
- Should trail routes through environmentally sensitive areas in parkland be removed from master plans?
- What related master plan amendments are required to achieve recommendations that result from the above questions?

Figure 1 ICC Corridor Study Area

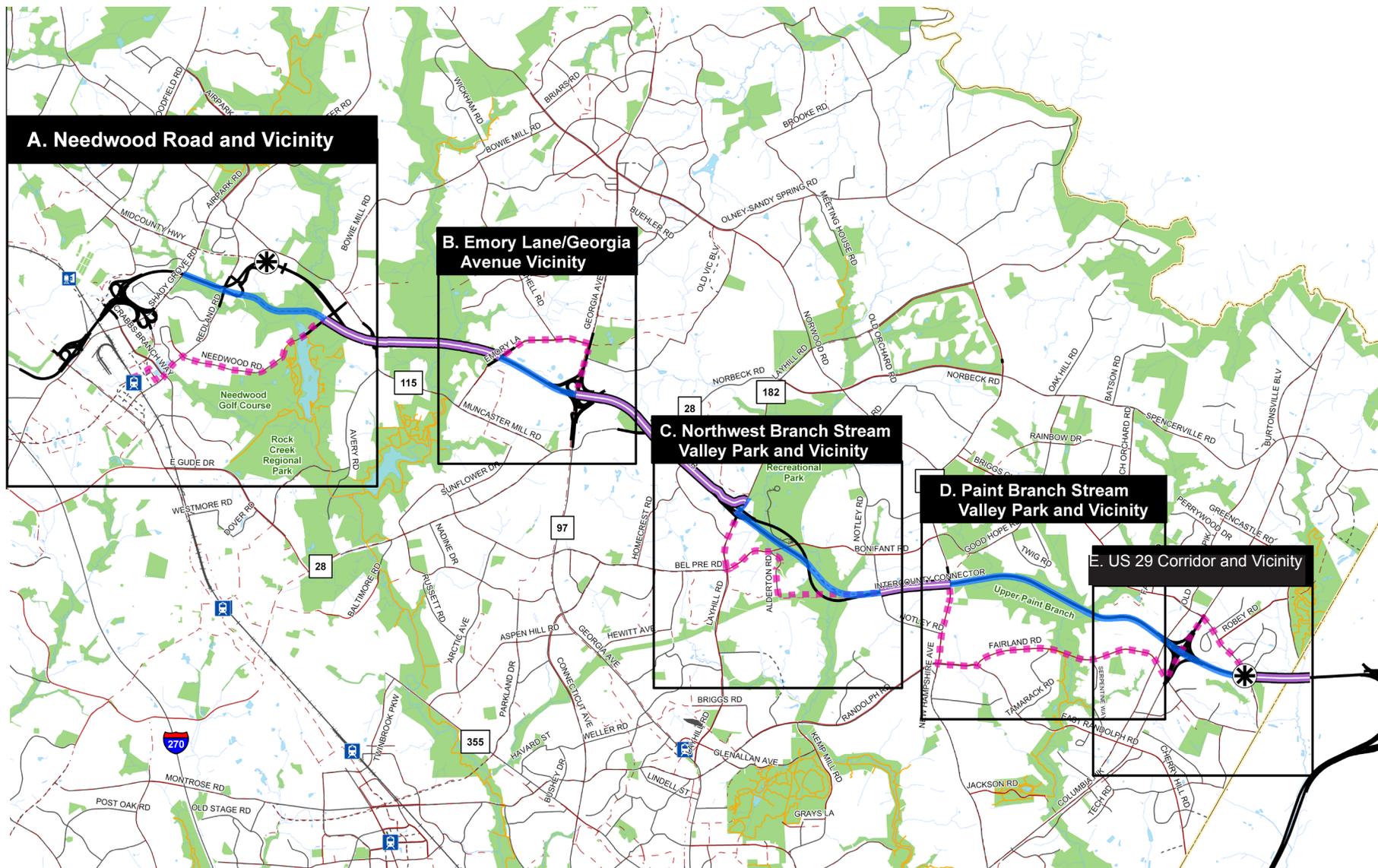
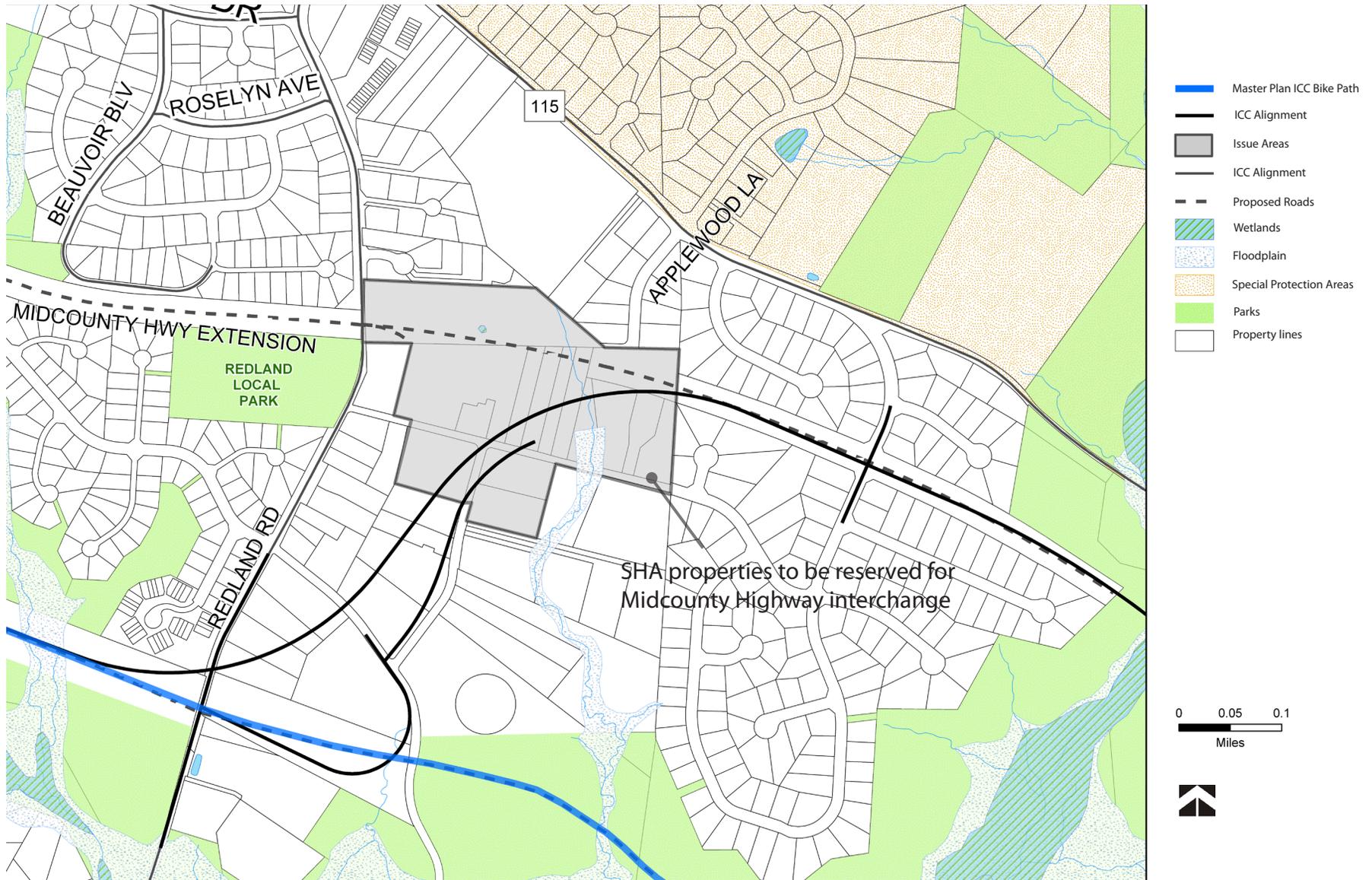


Figure 2 Midcounty Highway Interchange



## ISSUES, ANALYSIS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Highway Elements

This amendment adopts the three roadway options to the master plan alternative that were analyzed in the DEIS and included in the ROD:

- Rock Creek Option C
- Northwest Branch Option A
- Briggs Chaney Road interchange

The Planning Board supported these options in their review of the DEIS in February 2005, as described below.

#### ROCK CREEK OPTION C

The DEIS compared two alignments within Rock Creek Stream Valley Park. One alignment followed the Mill Creek tributary to Rock Creek. The second, called Option C, followed a route several hundred feet to the north and uses a portion of the highway right-of-way reserved for the future Midcounty Highway (M-83) connection to the ICC. Option C was selected to minimize impacts to the sensitive environmental areas.

The proposed southern extension of M-83 provides a direct connection between existing Midcounty Highway at Shady Grove Road and points east along the ICC. In 1985 and 2004, the Upper Rock Creek Area master plan identified two alignments for the portion of M-83 between Redland Road and the ICC. Rock Creek Option C also reduces the length of the unbuilt portion of M-83 extended.

This amendment preserves right-of-way options for future M-83 ramp connections to the ICC. Figure 2, excerpted from the ICC Contract A Request for Proposals identifies a conceptual extension of M-83 to the ICC and identifies the residential property displacements associated with Rock Creek Option C. These properties are now owned by the State of Maryland. The alignment of the eastbound M-83 ramp shown in figure 2 would likely require three additional residential property displacements on Garrett Court in the Olde Mill Run community.

This plan recommends:

- developing an alternative ramp alignment that avoids additional property displacements.
- that all properties owned by the State be considered part of the M-83 alignment right-of-way and subject to property reservation policies pending completion of the alternative ramp design.

#### NORTHWEST BRANCH OPTION A

The ICC DEIS compared two alignments within Northwest Branch Stream Valley Park. Even though Option B (the master planned alignment) is shorter and straighter, Option A, which is more curvilinear and requires more designated parkland, was chosen to minimize impacts on environmental resources.

## BRIGGS CHANEY ROAD INTERCHANGE

The ROD includes a partial interchange at Briggs Chaney Road, which is not included in the Fairland Master Plan. This interchange includes ramps to and from the east along the ICC. A Briggs Chaney Road interchange is needed to provide local business access to and from the east on the ICC because close interchange spacing precludes these connections from occurring via US 29.

### **Bikeway Elements**

In master plans, the Countywide Bike Path is defined as a shared-use, off-road bicycle facility in the highway right-of-way. The SHA Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan defines existing or proposed bicycle facilities—both off-road and on road—that are recommended as alternatives to the Countywide Bike Path to avoid environmentally sensitive areas and parkland impacts. Recognizing that the alternative doesn't implement the master planned facility in the highway right-of-way, the State has committed to work with the local governments to accelerate construction portions of the SHA Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan in County master plans. This amendment's revisions to the SHA Plan are expected to provide a continuous shared-use path that meets the needs of novice and experienced bicyclists and pedestrians.

For bikeway issues, the ICCLFMPA subdivided the study area into five subareas:

- A. Needwood Road and Vicinity
- B. Emory Lane/Georgia Avenue and Vicinity
- C. Northwest Branch Stream Valley Park and Vicinity
- D. Upper Paint Branch Stream Valley Park and Vicinity
- E. US 29 and Vicinity

### **Study Area A: Needwood Road and Vicinity (Figures 3 and 4)**

#### ISSUES

- Connecting the ICC pathway west-terminus at Needwood Road with Midcounty Highway:
  - o along the current master plan route via the old ICC right-of-way through the park; or
  - o via new, shared-use paths along Needwood, Muncaster Mill and Shady Grove Roads, perhaps using Applewood Lane to connect Muncaster Mill Road with the future ICC/Midcounty Highway interchange.
- Deciding whether to eliminate the master planned alignment through the park in favor of a parallel route to the master planned highway alignment not selected in the ROD.

#### DISCUSSION

This CBP segment provides a critical pathway connection between the I-270 Corridor and Georgia Avenue communities. The selected alternative highway alignment for this area—Rock Creek Option C—avoids sensitive natural resources but does not accommodate the trail connection, primarily because the highway was designed with