

- Study the Rock Creek Trail segments north of the ICC and south of Muncaster Mill Road in the Department of Parks CIP.
- Include the park trail connector along Emory Lane and Muncaster Mill Road in a CIP facility planning study to be led by DPWT. Consider coordinating this effort with the park trail connector study identified above. Examine connections to the Meadows Lane and the WSSC access road along the east side of the stream, south of Muncaster Mill. Minimize impacts to the historic mill site adjacent to the stream and south of Muncaster Mill Road.

Study Area C: Northwest Branch Stream Valley Park and Vicinity (Figures 5 and 6)

ISSUES

- Connecting the CBP terminus at Notley Road (B on figure 5) with the Matthew Henson Trail through the park, as well as with the CBP terminus at Layhill Road (A on figure 5) through the park or along parallel roads.
- Deciding whether to remove a new trail/bikeway (since it was not built with the highway) parallel to the highway between Notley Road and Alderton Road from County master plans.
- Deciding whether to remove the CBP parallel to the highway—adjoining the Bonifant Woods community—between the future Matthew Henson Trail connector and Bonifant Road (figure 5) from County master plans .
- Studying a new park trail connector that would double as the modified alignment for SP-40 between Bonifant and Layhill roads to and/or through the Trolley Museum site and the future developed park area surrounding it.
- Deciding whether to accept the State’s plan to route the path along parallel roads in conjunction with improvements to these roads that accommodate all user groups.

DISCUSSION

The ROD did not include the master planned CBP along the ICC right-of-way between Notley Road and Layhill Road. SHA’s Bike Plan instead recommended an on-road route via existing bikeways along Alderton, Bonifant, and Layhill roads to connect the Matthew Henson Trail with the ICC trail terminus at Layhill Road. It also recommended a future trail connection between Notley Road and Alderton Road (and thus the Matthew Henson Trail heading west) as an area for which the County could partner with the State to study and implement, separate from the highway project.

The bicycle and pedestrian routes along the roadway alternatives are adequate for experienced cyclists, but offer an incomplete, discontinuous, or inadequate route for users of other ability levels, most notably the family cyclist. Therefore, this plan evaluates bicycle and pedestrian accommodation along these roads and recommends master plan amendments.

A new alignment for SP-40 through the Northwest Branch Park between Layhill Road and Bonifant Road, connecting to and through the Trolley Museum site will be studied in more detail during the Northwest Branch Park Master Plan Update. The primary concern about a shared use path in the Northwest Branch and Vicinity are the sensitive environmental resources south of Bonifant Road, particularly between the Matthew Henson Trail and Notley Road. A path through this area should avoid bisecting the biodiversity area and contiguous forest.

Figure 6 summarizes connection options. The primary objective for the ICCLFMPA is how to connect points A and B along the ICC. A secondary concern is how to connect point C; the eastern terminus of the built portion of the Matthew Henson Trail, to the ICC shared-use path at point B.

Staff considered two options for connecting points A and B that do not go through point C.

OPTION 1 From point A, construct a new shared-use path connecting Layhill Local Park to the relocated Trolley Museum via a new trail bridge across the Northwest Branch. Use the Trolley Museum driveway to access Bonifant Road, and then construct a new shared-use path on the south side of Bonifant Road between the Trolley Museum Driveway and Notley Road and a new shared use path on the west side of Notley Road between Bonifant Road and the ICC path at point B.

- Option 1 is recommended as the new alignment for SP-40.

OPTION 2 From point A, construct a new shared-use path along Layhill Road south to Bonifant Road and a new shared-use path along Bonifant Road between Layhill Road to the Trolley Museum.

Staff considered three more options for connecting points B and C, some of which could also be part of a connection between points A and B:

OPTION 3 From point A, construct a new shared-use path northward along the east side of Alderton Road to Alderton Lane and use the existing shared use path along Alderton Road between Alderton Lane and Bonifant Road. From this point, the remainder of Option 3 is the same as the portion of Option 2 east of Alderton Road.

- The portion of Option 3 west of the Trolley Museum driveway is recommended as a new path—SP 40B—to connect Matthew Henson Trail to SP-40.

OPTION 4 Between points C and B, construct a new shared-use path along the edge of the park property, including a new trail crossing of Northwest Branch south of the proposed ICC crossing. While this alignment is essentially the same as proposed in the 2005 CBFMP, the park's topographic and natural resource constraints make construction challenging. However, SHA is building the ICC between the park boundary and Notley Road to reserve space that will accommodate a future trail and this option remains possible as long as the trail alignment is retained in master plans. Implementing the trail then becomes a matter of funding, timing, and minimizing impacts to sensitive resources.

OPTION 5 Between points C and B use existing, low-volume residential roadways—Alderton Drive, Atwood Road, and Foggy Glen Court—to connect to the Poplar Run development's proposed shared-use path system that includes a new crossing of Northwest Branch to the Rachel Carson Greenway (RCG) trail. Use Vierling Drive, another low-volume, residential road, to access Notley Road near the ICC. As currently designed, neither of these routes

is suitable for road bikes. And because the RCG prohibits bicycles, this routing would offer Riders a connection to Notley Road through the park and along local streets through the Drumeldra Hills neighborhood on the east side, but prohibit them from accessing the RCG. It is unlikely that the Department of Park scan effectively enforce this prohibition, and so this route is not preferred because.

Connections between points A and C are the least important in this area, and can be made either via Layhill Road and the Matthew Henson Trail or by a combination of Option 2 (west of the Bonifant Road/Alderton Road intersection) and Option 3 (south of the Bonifant Road/Alderton Road intersection).

In late 2007, the Department of Parks initiated a master plan amendment for Northwest Branch Park north of Bonifant Road. Preliminary recommendations would create a regional park with ballfields, a mountain bike challenge course, and an adventure playground that would complement the Trolley Museum site, connected by a hard surface trail. The Department will study a CBP connection—between Layhill Road and Bonifant Road—parallel to the ICC that could help implement the CBP through this area. The remaining east-west gap would be along Bonifant Road and Notley Road, consistent with Option 3.

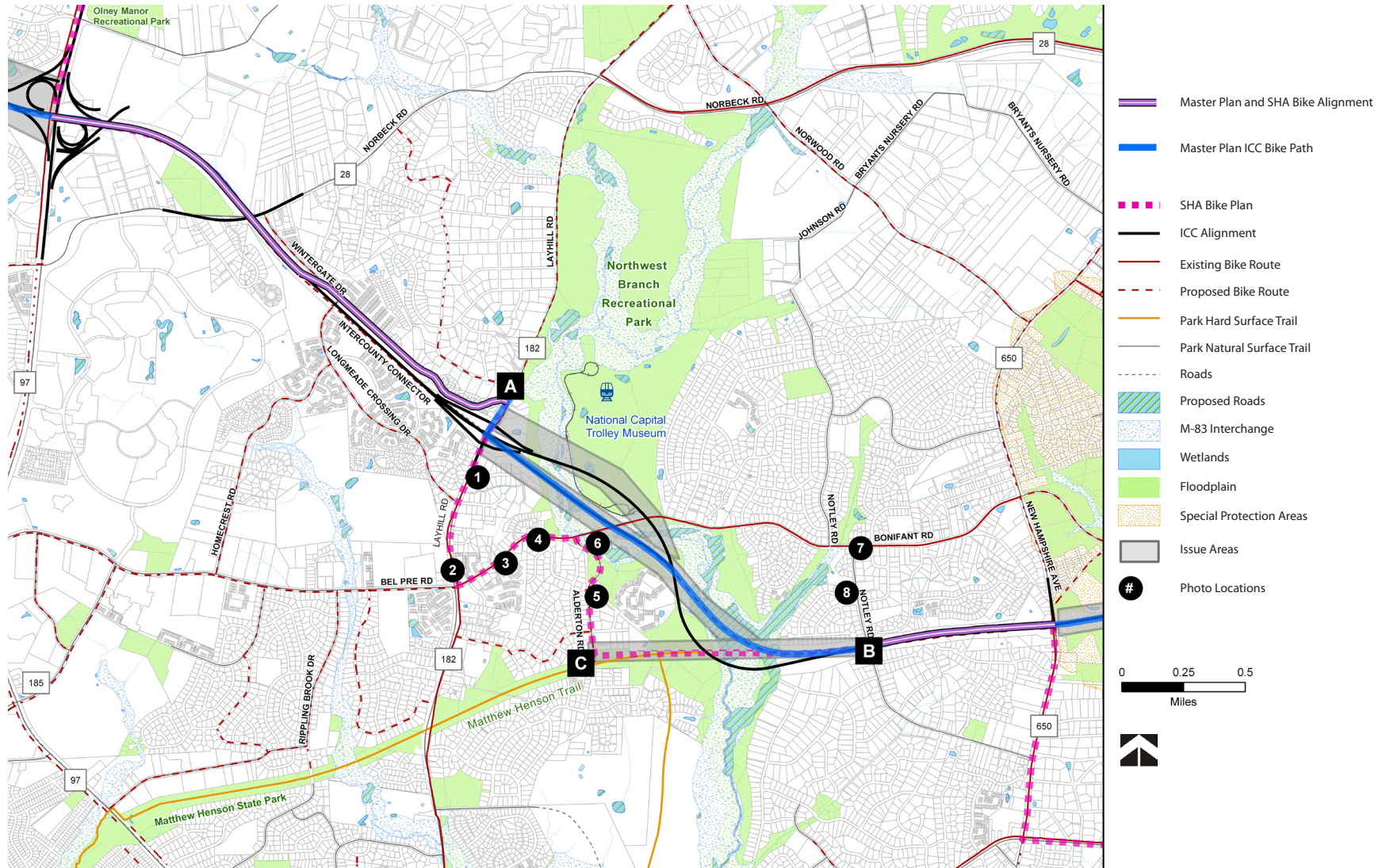
PRIOR DECISIONS

The Planning Board supported the detour along Alderton Road, Bonifant Road, and Layhill Road during its review of the highway's FEIS, but stopped short of recommending that the segment of the CBP passing through the park be removed from County master plans. The County Council recommended the CBP parallel to the highway, but did not address how to accomplish this alignment if the trail was not included in the highway right-of-way.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Include the connector between Notley Road and Alderton Road in a CIP to be led by the Department of Parks. Request State funding assistance for this study since SHA committed to helping implement this connector in the ROD. Areas requiring detailed environmental study include:
 - Routing a hard surface trail along the current master planned route making a direct connection between Alderton and Notley Roads through the park.
 - Routing a new shared use path by widening the existing sidewalk along both Alderton Road and Bonifant Road and then along Notley Road and by building a new shared use path to connect the sidewalk with CBP (Option 3 above and SP-40B on figure 4).
 - Routing the trail south through Indian Spring/Poplar Run, then over the stream and through the Drumeldra Hills neighborhood as described in Option 5 above.
- Make recommendations for the bikeway and trail connector between Layhill and Bonifant Roads as part of the Northwest Park Master Plan. This new route is part of the CBP's revised alignment between Layhill and Notley Road (Option 1).
- Do not further study any park trails directly along the old or selected ICC master plan highway alignments.

Figure 5 Northwest Branch Stream Valley Park and Vicinity



Photographs of Northwest Branch Stream Valley Park and Vicinity

Layhill Road looking north from Norvale Road



Layhill Road looking north from Bonifant Road



Bonifant Road looking west near Layhill Valley Court



Bonifant Road looking east near Morton Hall Road



Alderton Road/Woodwell Road south view



Alderton Road south view



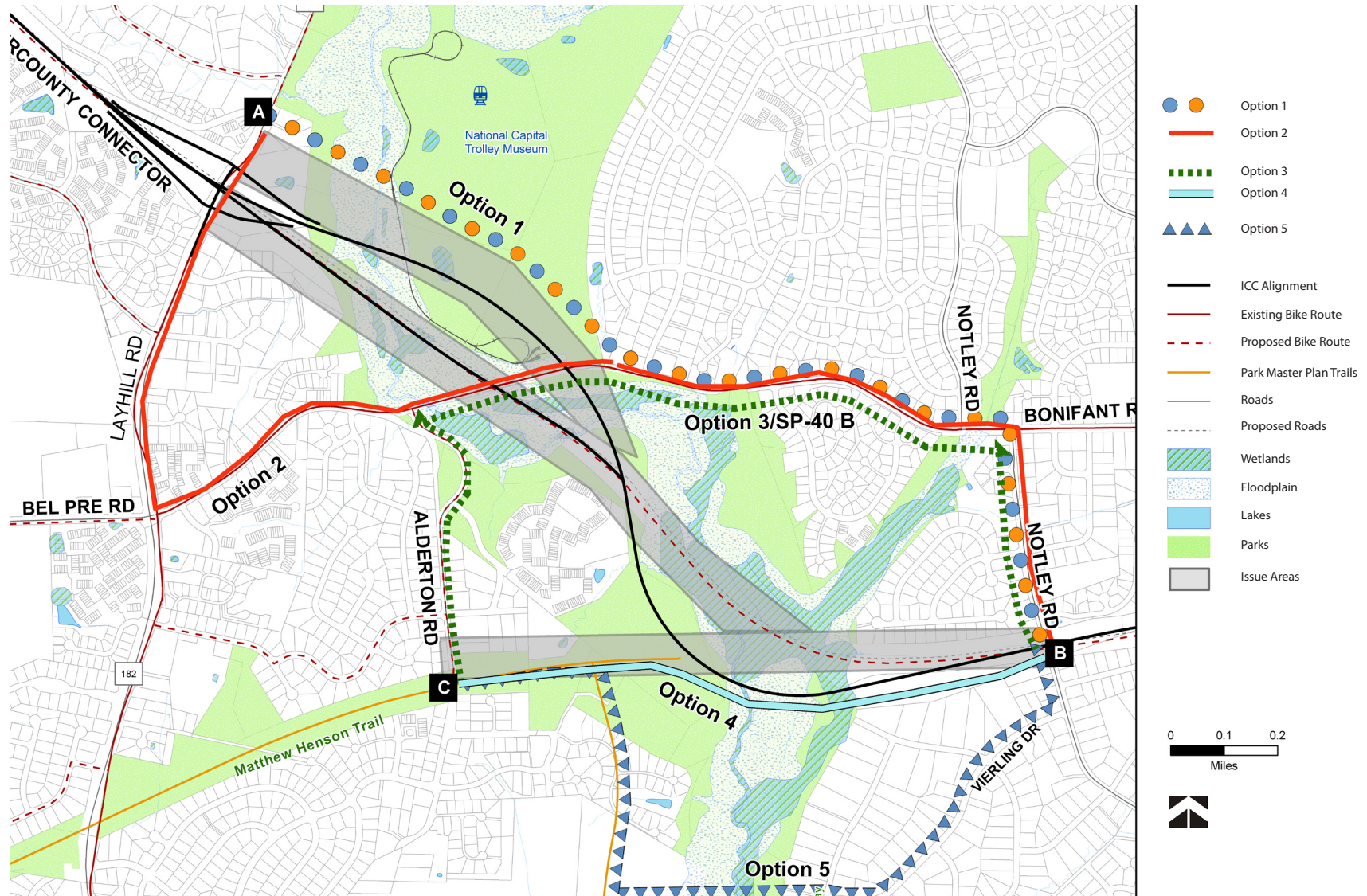
Bonifant Road looking west from Notley Road



Notley Road looking north from Northwyn Drive



Figure 6 Northwest Branch Stream Valley Park Options



MASTER PLAN GUIDANCE: The 1994 Aspen Hill Master Plan recommends no changes to the current configuration and recommends the road be signed as a shared roadway.

DISCUSSION: The roadway features a four-foot sidewalk on the east side from Bonifant Road to about 250 feet south of Alderton Court that can accommodate light bicycle and pedestrian travel, but if and when the park trail connector is built through the park between the current MHT terminus and Notley Road, bicycle and pedestrian traffic will increase and a wider sidewalk or shared use path will be needed particularly for child, novice, and intermediate cyclists. Ample space exists north of Alderton Court to widen the existing sidewalk without causing excessive impact. However, extending a wider sidewalk or path to the south will have to minimize impacts to street trees.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Amend master plans to include a shared use path along the east side between Bonifant Road and the MHT that will function as part of SP-40B, between MHT and Notley (C to B on Figure 6).
- Include the project as a CIP facility planning study concurrently with the construction of the park trail connector through the park between Notley Road and the MHT.

BONIFANT ROAD (ALDERTON ROAD TO LAYHILL ROAD)

EXISTING CONDITIONS: Arterial (A-40) 2 lanes, 80-foot right-of-way. Open section roadway, except curb and gutter with sidewalk and landscape buffer between Catoctin Drive and Layhill Road. Short sidewalk segments (asphalt or concrete) intermittently along both sides, conditions are poor except near Layhill Road. A six to eight-foot shoulder on both sides functions as the master planned bike lanes.

MASTER PLAN GUIDANCE: The 1994 Aspen Hill Master Plan recommends no changes to the current configuration. CBFMP recommend bike lanes (BL-17), but not a shared use path.

DISCUSSION: The bike lanes accommodate experienced cyclists traveling from Layhill Road to Alderton, however there is no consistent sidewalk or shared use path along either side to accommodate less experienced cyclists or pedestrians. Implementing a shared use path on the property side of the roadway swales is problematic. The road's 80-foot open section right-of-way has wide drainage swales. Implementing the path on either side of the swales would impact the property owners or possibly eliminating the existing master planned bike lanes. A shared-use path along the south side would be unlikely unless the road is reconstructed with a closed section. Removing the drainage swales would permit space for the shared use path, but reconstructing the road with closed section is unlikely since the County's new road code recommends reducing the need for stormwater management structures.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Designate the roadway as a dual bikeway that includes a shared use path along the south side between Layhill and Notley roads.
- Implement the path between Layhill Road and Alderton Road only when the County reconstructs the roadway with curb and gutter, eliminating the drainage swales.
- Include the segment between Alderton Road and Notley Road as a future CIP facility planning study.

LAYHILL ROAD (BONIFANT TO ICC)

EXISTING CONDITIONS: Major highway (M-16), four-lanes divided from Bonifant Road to Longmead Crossing Drive, two lanes approaching the ICC. 150-foot right-of-way master planned, but only 120' exists in short segments. Closed section roadway with open section approaching the ICC north of Longmead Crossing. The four to five-foot sidewalks along both sides are in good condition. Bike lanes from Bonifant Road to just north of Longmead Crossing Drive.

MASTER PLAN GUIDANCE: The 1994 Aspen Hill Master Plan recommends Layhill Road as four-lanes divided from MD 28 to southern plan boundary (south of Bonifant Road). Both the Aspen Hill Master Plan and CBFMP recommend bike lanes.

DISCUSSION: The existing bike lanes accommodate experienced cyclists and the sidewalks accommodate pedestrians, but they don't accommodate child or intermediate bicyclists. Within the planned 150-foot right-of-way, widening the sidewalk to shared use path standards would be relatively easy. The east side has fewer obstructions and would improve bicycle and pedestrian access to Layhill Local Park. In addition, SHA will be constructing 2,000 linear feet of shared use path along the east side near Park Vista Drive north to the entrance of Layhill Local Park as an ICC highway community stewardship project.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Designate the roadway as a dual bikeway to include a shared use path along the east side.
- Add the shared use path (widened sidewalk) as a CIP facility planning study to connect Bonifant Road with the community stewardship project.

Study Area D: Upper Paint Branch Stream Valley Park and Vicinity (Figure 7)

ISSUES

- Deciding whether to remove from County master plans the CBP through the park between Old Columbia Pike and New Hampshire Avenue.
- Deciding whether to accept the State Bike Plan recommendation to route the trail along parallel roads.
- Recommending road improvements that accommodate all potential trail user groups and ability levels.

DISCUSSION

The ROD didn't include the master planned trail along this highway segment. SHA's Plan instead routes the trail along parallel roads to bypass the park's environmentally sensitive resources. Likewise, the Department of Parks doesn't support putting the CBP through the park due to environmental concerns, including impervious cover impacts in the Upper Paint Branch Special Protection Area. Efforts to reduce the highway's footprint make it unlikely the CBP could be built within the highway right-of-way. Therefore, the path would need to be constructed parallel to the highway through parkland to maintain the off-road connection.

In their first worksession, the Board decided—after considerable testimony in favor—that the hard surface park trail through Paint Branch SVP recommended in the Countywide Park Trails Plan could serve as a suitable alternative to the current master planned CBP. Staff proposed a possible alignment for this park trail during the worksession (the green dotted line on figure 7) that connects Cape May Road and Countryside Lane/Park, and to the existing