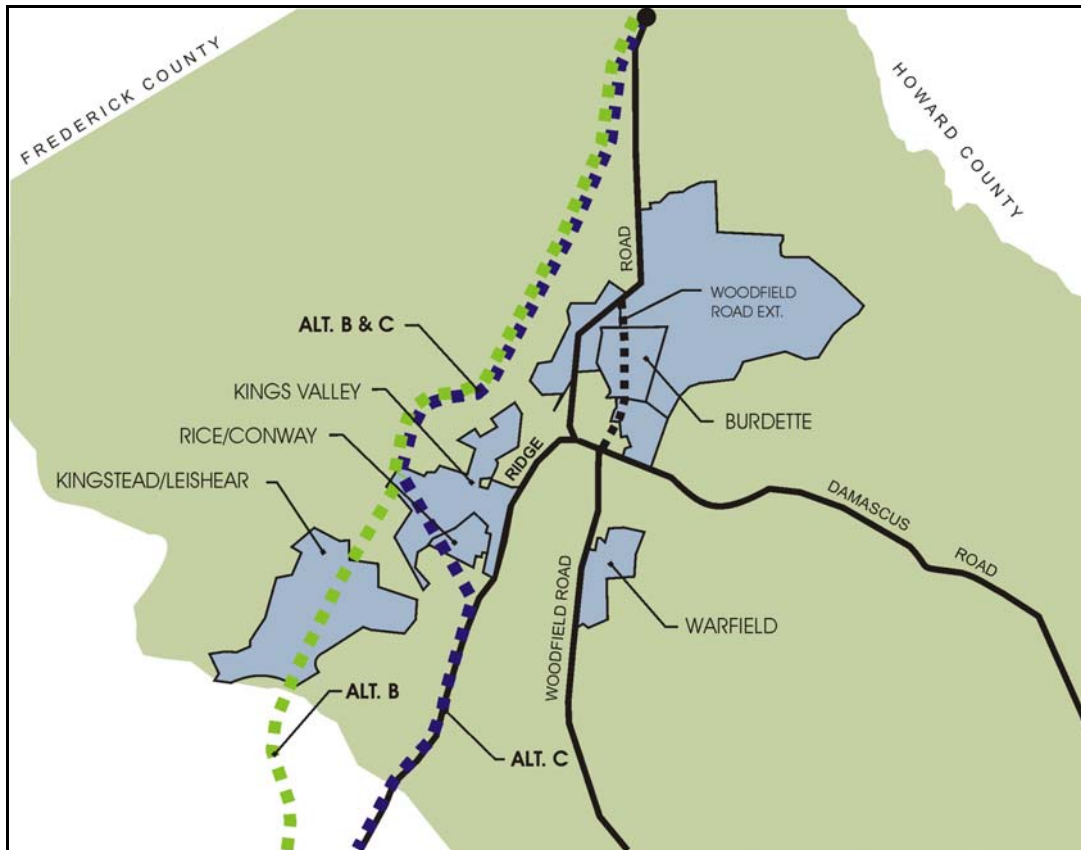


Damascus Bypass Study

The Planning Board is soliciting public opinion about a proposal by the County Council's staff to the Council's Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee to reserve land for a bypass around the west side of Damascus. Such a bypass would not be considered for construction until 15-20 years from now. The concern that has been raised is that although traffic forecasts predict that traffic congestion in Damascus will be tolerable through Year 2025, continuing growth beyond the County boundary could result in unacceptable conditions in Damascus after 2025. The purpose of the bypass would be to divert future through traffic from Carroll, Howard, and Frederick Counties away from the Damascus Town Center and many of the residential neighborhoods along MD 27.

Specifically, the proposal is to reserve land for a two-lane roadway (one lane in each direction) and a bikeway (bike lanes or a separated shared use trail) within generally an 80'-wide right-of-way. The bypass would intersect with existing and potential future public roads, but would not have private driveways connected to it. There are two routes currently under consideration for reservation, based on current review of a 1991 alignment feasibility study:

Potential Bypass Routes for Discussion



Note: Properties identified in the Planning Board Draft Plan as developable are highlighted in purple.

- **Route 'B'**. This route would start near the intersection of MD 27 and MD 80 north of Damascus. It would run SSW, roughly parallel to and west of MD 27, to Bethesda Church Road near its intersection with Kings Valley Road and intersecting specific properties identified in the Damascus Master Plan as developable (indicated in purple). From there the route would run generally alongside Kings Valley Road to a point where it would rejoin MD 27 north of Cedar Grove.
- **Route 'C'**. This route would follow the same path at Alternate 'B' to Bethesda Church Road. This alternate route also could potentially effect specific properties that were identified in the Damascus Planning Board Draft Plan as developable (highlighted in purple). From there it would run in a SSE direction, across the property of the Damascus Recreation Center, rejoining MD 27 near its intersection with Valley Park Drive.

The proposal also calls for the State Highway Administration to conduct a study during the next two years with Montgomery County and other surrounding counties to identify and evaluate transportation options to increase capacity in the MD 124/MD 27/MD 75 corridors between I-70 and I-270, including these two-lane bypass options around Damascus. The current proposed Damascus Master Plan to be adopted by the Council would identify Route 'B' or 'C' or both for reservation.

In addition, the Plan would state that if as a result of the SHA study another option were preferred, right-of-way for that option will be considered consistent with the Damascus Master Plan and can be protected as would any other master-planned right-of-way if it is adopted by a subsequent Council resolution after a public hearing. That preferred option would add to or replace the options reserved in the Plan adopted by the Council this spring.

Furthermore, the Plan would state that a road may not be built in this right-of-way until its need has been confirmed in a future comprehensive amendment to the Plan. The next comprehensive amendment is not anticipated to occur for at least 10 years. If that amendment concurred with the need for a bypass, the time needed to plan, design, and build a bypass would take another 5-10 years, at a minimum.

Public opinion is solicited on whether Route 'B', Route 'C', both routes, or neither route should be preserved until the subsequent study is complete. The following two meetings are planned:

1. An Information meeting, this Tuesday, March 28, 2006 at the Damascus Library at, 9701 Main Street, Damascus, MD 20872.
2. The Planning Board will hold a public hearing meeting on this proposal on Thursday, April 20, 2006 at 8787 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring, MD. (Time TBA). Subsequently the Board will review the testimony and provide a recommendation to the PHED Committee.