



Isiah Leggett, Montgomery County Executive

THE PLAN AHEAD

Arthur Holmes, Jr., Director, Department of Public Works & Transportation

Invitation to Attend the Midcounty Corridor Study Public Workshop-October 25, 2007

OCTOBER 2007

Department of Public Works & Transportation's
Division of
Capital Development

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For alternative formats of this newsletter, please contact the Division of Capital Development (DCD) at 240-777-7223.

The Plan Ahead is a project newsletter published by the Department of Public Works & Transportation (DPWT).

The Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) is inviting you to attend the Midcounty Corridor Study (MCS) Public Workshop scheduled for:

Thursday, October 25, 2007
7:00–9:00 pm
Neelsville Middle School, Cafeteria
11700 Neelsville Church Road
Germantown, Maryland 20876

The purpose of the Midcounty Corridor Study (MCS) Public Workshop is to:

1. Disseminate project information in an all-inclusive manner;
2. Present the alternatives being evaluated;
3. Gather feedback from the public before the alternatives are reduced and selected for Alternatives Retained for Detailed Study (ARDS);
4. Develop working relationships and establish meaningful lines of communication between the Study Team and the public and;
5. Maximize the opportunity for public comment and dialogue.

This process allows the Study Team to develop an comprehensive awareness and understanding of the public's concerns. For more information on the upcoming Public Workshop please contact Greg Hwang, Project Manager, at 240-777-7279.

BACKGROUND PROJECT INFORMATION

The Midcounty Highway (M-83) has been an element of the transportation master plan for Montgomery County since the 1960's and is

listed in the 1989 Germantown Master Plan and the 1985 Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan as a critical transportation link between Clarksburg and Gaithersburg and for local access.

To date, a portion of the Midcounty Highway from Shady Grove Road to Montgomery Village Avenue has been built and opened to traffic. Over the years, the extension north to Clarksburg has undergone planning studies.

In 2004, the Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) initiated a planning study to evaluate providing congestion relief and improving mobility east of I-270 between Montgomery Village Avenue and MD 27 (Ridge Road). The public workshop held in November 2004 presented the proposed purpose and need and environmental site assessment for the master plan alignment for the Midcounty Highway (M-83) project.



The Midcounty Corridor Study (MCS) Area map.

(Continued on page 2)

For more information, please contact
Greg Hwang, Project Manager Phone: 240-777-7279
E-mail: greg.hwang@montgomerycountymd.gov

(Continued from page 1)

Following the public workshop, concerns were raised from the state and federal environmental resource agencies that the purpose and need for the Midcounty Highway Study needed to be further evaluated and effort be undertaken to offer other solutions, apart from the master plan alignment.

PROJECT UPDATE

Since the November 2004 public workshop, DPWT has invested additional resources to provide greater analysis and the result of the new direction is the broader *Midcounty Corridor Study (MCS)* which will undergo the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. The NEPA process is an extensive, lengthy analysis required for projects using federal funds (MCS is not seeking federal funding) or seeking approval and permits from a federal agency, particularly when the resulting impacts on the existing natural/cultural/economic/and social resources can be extensive.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The first step in the NEPA process is to identify the Purpose and Need for the project. In January 2007 the Midcounty Corridor Study’s Purpose and Need was approved.

The purpose of the Midcounty Corridor Study is to: (1)relieve projected congestion on roadways between Gaithersburg and Clarksburg; (2) improve mobility east of I-270; (3)improve safety and efficiency; (4) improve vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle access to destinations within the study area and; (5) to develop these improvements in an environmental sensitive manner.

The identified needs for the study are based on current and

projected traffic, congestion, and accident history. The needs for the Midcounty Corridor Study (MCS) project are to: (1) reduce existing and future congestion; (2) improve vehicular safety; (3) enhance the efficiency of the roadway network and improve the connections between economic centers; (4) accommodate planned and use and future growth; (5) provide bicycle and pedestrian connections; (6) enhance homeland security and; (7) improve the quality of life.

FINDING THE SOLUTIONS

The second step in the NEPA process involves conducting an environmental inventory of existing conditions and identifying a range of preliminary alternatives. The Midcounty Corridor Study Team identified preliminary alternatives, including the master plan alignment to address the challenges of this corridor. The preliminary alternatives will be displayed at the October 25, 2007 Public Workshop. The public is encouraged to attend and learn more about these alternatives.

The preliminary alternatives were evaluated based on their ability to meet the Midcounty Corridor Study’s (MCS) purpose and need, impacts to the transportation network, and direct impact to natural and socioeconomic resources, including wetlands and streams, historic resources, community facilities, and neighborhoods. Aspects of these options were combined into strategies that would improve the corridor and meet current and future travel demand while minimizing impacts to the surrounding resources.

The DPWT encourages the public to attend the October 25, 2007 Midcounty Corridor Study (MCS) Public Workshop, as your understanding of the alternatives and your feedback will be critical step before the alternatives are selected for the ARDS.

PUBLIC INPUT IS THE KEY TO AN EFFECTIVE PLANNING PROCESS. LET US HEAR FROM YOU!



The DPWT Wants Your Feedback

DPWT encourages you to provide your concerns on the postage-paid *Public Comments Form* that is included with this newsletter. If you have access to the internet, you may:

1. Directly e-mail your comments to the project manager:
greg.hwang@montgomerycountymd.gov
2. Access the Midcounty Corridor Study (MCS) website and provide comments:
www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dpwt/midcountycorridorstudy

Public input is the key to an effective planning process. It allows decision makers and elected officials to understand the concerns of the community. Once they are received, your comments become part of public records. Additionally, your comments may be included and/or summarized in the Midcounty Corridor Study (MCS) Project Prospectus and other project documents. Due to the high volume of comments we receive, we regret that we are unable to respond to each inquiry. The DPWT thanks you in advance for taking the time to provide your written comments and/or e-mail and assures you that all comments will be read and evaluated.



Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why is it important for me to attend this meeting? DPWT believes that public input is the key to an effective planning process because it allows the Midcounty Corridor Study Team, and decision makers to understand the needs of their community. DPWT always encourages the public to attend any of our public information meetings and public workshops. The public workshop will allow a forum in which you can learn more about the project and provide an opportunity to voice your concerns.

Q: What should I expect at the public workshop? At the public workshop you will get an opportunity to meet the Midcounty Corridor Study Team and representatives from different agencies who are involved with the study. Displays and tables will be set up to allow the public to view the alternatives, and an opportunity for you to address any immediate comments or concerns you may have to the Study Team.

Q: What if I can not attend the meeting? Is there any other way that I can be certain that you will receive my input? We certainly understand that your schedule may not permit you to attend the public workshop. Thus, you may share your comments in the following means with the Project Manager, Mr. Greg Hwang:

PHONE: 240-777-7279

FAX: 240-777-7277

E-MAIL:

greg.hwang@montgomerycountymd.gov

MAIL:

Greg Hwang, Project Manager

DPWT-Division of Capital Development

101 Monroe Street, 9th Floor

Rockville, Maryland 20850

Q: How come the alternatives were not included in this newsletter for me to examine? Due to the limitations on graphics and space, a newsletter is not the best format to adequately communicate such information. Displays and handouts will be provided at the October 25, 2007 Public Workshop to allow the public to closely examine the alternatives and provide a forum for open dialogue. Furthermore, after the public workshop, the alternatives will be uploaded on the Midcounty Corridor Study (MCS) web site:

www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dpwt/midcountycorridorstudy

Q: At what study stage is Midcounty Corridor Study (MCS)? The Midcounty Corridor Study (MCS) is in Facility Planning, Phase I, which is the very beginning of the analysis. Phase I for the Midcounty Corridor Study (MCS) will involve:

1. Collecting background data, reviewing the Master Plan and identifying pending developments within the project limits;
2. Developing Alternatives;
3. Obtaining public input;
4. Selecting Alternatives Retained for Detailed Study (ARDS);
5. Examining the ARDS in detail.
6. Obtain public input through a formal public hearing.
7. Selecting a preferred alternative.

Q: What happens after the Public Workshop? Your input from the public workshop and any written comments submitted to the DPWT by **November 30, 2007** will be taken into consideration before the Midcounty Corridor Study Team makes its selection on the Alternatives Retained for Detailed Study (ARDS). A newsletter will be mailed to community informing of the ARDS.

Q: When is the Midcounty Corridor Study Phase I expected to be completed? The Midcounty Corridor Study Team will be preparing and producing environmental documentation as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The NEPA process requires that all Federal agencies make information available to public officials and citizens about the social and environmental impacts of any Federally funded transportation related action before decisions are made and actions are taken. While the Midcounty Corridor Study (MCS) is NOT receiving Federal funding, it will however require permit approval from federal agencies. The NEPA process is very lengthy and thus, it is estimated that the Phase I Midcounty Corridor Study will not be completed until 2010.

Q: Who receives this newsletter? The newsletter is mailed to Homeowner Associations representing the subject study area and property owners whose names appear on the County's Geographical Information System's (GIS) database who are adjacent to the preliminary alternatives.

If you would like to receive future newsletters

Midcounty Corridor Study Team

Sponsoring Agency:

Montgomery County
Department of Public Works
and Transportation (DPWT)

Lead Concurring Agency:

US Army Corps. of Engineers

Concurring Agencies:

- US Environmental Protection Agency
- Maryland Department of the Environment

Reviewing Agencies:

- US Fish & Wildlife Service
- Maryland Historical Trust
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources
- Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission
- Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services
- Maryland State Highway Administration
- City of Gaithersburg



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Midcounty Corridor Study (MCS) Public Workshop-October 25, 2007

(Continued from page 3)

on the Midcounty Corridor Study (MCS), the DPWT will be pleased to have your name added to the project's mailing list. Please contact Mr. Greg Hwang at 240-777-7279 or e-mail him at: greg.hwang@montgomerycountymd.gov

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