

IN THE MATTER OF:

HILLANDALE LATIP TREATMENTS

BEFORE: Jose Thommana, Public Hearing Officer, Department of Transportation

PUBLIC HEARING OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION

I. Background

As a part of several redevelopment projects in the area, the Duffie Companies has proposed a change to the Local Area Transportation Improvement Program (LATIP), a program administered by the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT). The background of the LATIP and the applicant's proposal is included in the attached MCDOT Technical Report. A description of the project was shared during the Public Hearing by Christopher Conklin, Deputy Director of MCDOT.

In advance of the Public Hearing, MCDOT participated in five public meetings between May and November 2018, including an Open House on November 8th, 2018. A Public Hearing was held at the White Oak Recreation Center on November 15th, 2018, beginning at 7:00 PM. The public record was held open for additional comments until 7:30 AM on November 26th, 2018.

Public notice of the hearing was published in the *Washington Post* on October 31st and November 7th, 2018 and advertised on the MCDOT website. Information was also promulgated through community associations, groups, and organizations with the assistance of Peter Fosselman, Planning Coordinator for the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan in the Office County Executive's Office, and Jewru Bandeh, Director of the East County Regional Services Center.

II. Summary of Testimony

Oral and/or written comments were received from a total of 75 unique individuals. 10 responses were identified as being residents of the area of Hillandale that would be most affected by a slip-ramp. 28 responses were identified as individuals working within the area that would be most affected by a slip-ramp. 25 responses were identified as corresponding to areas located in the general vicinity, but not within the area that would be most affected by a slip-ramp. 4 responses were received from elected officials. 1 response was received from the Housing Opportunities Commission. 7 respondents' affiliations could not be positively identified.

The proposed modifications to the east and west legs of Powder Mill Road received 54 and 51 responses in support, respectively. They respectively received 2 and 3 responses in opposition.

The proposed modification to the southbound bus stop at Elton Road received 35 responses in support and 1 response in opposition. The higher proportion of responses with no position on this item is likely a result of how much of the discussion at Elton tending to focus on the slip-ramp; not on the bus stop's proposed modifications.

The proposed slip-ramp connecting Elton Road to the Outer Loop received 51 responses in support and 19 responses against. However, responses on this had a significant difference depending on the respondent's affiliation. Businesses along the area that would be most affected by the slip-ramp were 100% in support, whereas residents in the same affected area were 100% against. The neighborhood's civic association, State Senator, and three State Delegates all submitted testimony in opposition to the slip-ramp.

III. Concerns – Cut-Through Traffic

Opposition toward the slip-ramp consistently focused on concern about the safety impacts of cut-through traffic. The attached MCDOT Technical Report details efforts to address cut-through traffic concerns, including traffic calming treatments proposed by the Duffie Companies as well as the potential for additional mitigation options beyond these calming treatments.

There was no public testimony explicitly opposing the traffic calming proposed by the applicant, though sentiment from residents is that it would still be inadequate toward addressing the core cut-through concerns.

Among the 10 resident responses from the area that would be most affected, the additional traffic mitigation measures received 1 response in support and 4 responses in opposition. As also highlighted in the MCDOT Technical Report, the concerns with the additional mitigation measures were that they impeded the neighborhood's own access, and that without addressing other issues causing cut-through traffic the potential would remain the cut-through traffic could shift to other routes through the neighborhood.

IV. Concerns – Non-Auto; Induced Demand

Several respondents called attention to the impacts to non-auto users, the aesthetic environment, and that the analysis consider the effects of induced demand.

Induced demand is a condition whereby providing additional capacity can cause users who would have otherwise been discouraged from using that facility to now take advantage of it. This often relates to a condition where additional vehicle trips may be generated by people who were otherwise traveling at off-peak times, using different routes, traveling by non-auto modes, or some other alternative.

The 2040 models used in the LATIP analysis account for induced demand. With this in mind it may be better to approach this concern in the inverse: how not building the necessary infrastructure would result in additional congestion, and to what degree this additional congestion would be accepted. Such acceptances are already accounted for in the congestion thresholds established by the Subdivision Staging Policy.

V. Concerns – Miscellaneous

Other common concerns focused on intersection safety, the impacts of stopped buses on other traffic, the need for a larger and more detailed analysis, and the impacts of other major projects such as Bus Rapid Transit or the I-270/495 Traffic Relief Plan. These are responded to in detail in the MCDOT Technical Report.

Many respondents highlighted a need to evaluate signal timing through the corridor, particularly with a focus on clearing traffic on New Hampshire Avenue between Powder Mill Road and Elton Road so that traffic entering this block is able to do so.

VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the public testimony and technical considerations I believe the following courses of action to be recommended at this time:

Approve widening of the west leg of Powder Mill Road at New Hampshire Avenue. Eligible for LATIP credit.

As this is functionally the site access to the Hillandale Gateway project, this work is particularly important to accommodating the traffic to and from the site. Of 75 responses, 51 were in favor and 3 were against. Opposition was not clarified in 1 response, was part of a universal opposition to all proposed treatments in another response, and the third response was concerned about impacts on non-auto users.

While I do not dispute that a wider crossing is inherently less conducive toward non-auto users, the widening is considered necessary for moving toward the 80 second congestion threshold established for the area. This threshold was intended to allow for the maximum amount of congestion currently permitted in areas unserved by Metrorail stations, and was established with awareness of impacts to non-auto users.

Approve extending the westbound right-turn lane on Powder Mill Road at New Hampshire Avenue. Eligible for LATIP credit.

This extension would help right-turning traffic bypass queued thru/left traffic. Of 75 responses, 54 were in favor and 2 were against. One response was universally opposed to all proposed treatments, and the other response cited concerns with impacts to non-auto users and aesthetics.

The extension of the turn lane could result in right-turning traffic more quickly approaching the intersection with New Hampshire Avenue, potentially increasing the potential that they more aggressively enter into the crosswalk to turn right on red (where pedestrians might be in the east leg crosswalk), or that they more quickly perform a right-turn on green (where pedestrians might be in the north leg crosswalk).

Accordingly I advise that in their coordination with SHA for final design and construction of this treatment: the intersection be designed as to provide improved visibility between motorists and pedestrians, and that motorists' speeds on approach to and around the turn be moderated. This may include tightening the curb radii to the maximum extent feasible, cross-hatching the crosswalks, and other treatments as identified in detailed design. I note that this intersection is located in a designated Urban Area as well as a County-designated (albeit not State-designated) Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Area.

Another commonly highlighted concern inquired about right-of-way impacts to the adjacent church. It appears that all land that would be necessary for this extension is located within the public right-of-way.

Defer consideration of the slip-ramp at this time. MCDOT to perform a more comprehensive evaluation of alternatives. MCDOT to cooperate with SHA / PG-DPWT on addressing congestion and traffic calming.

I concur with the input of elected officials, the Hillandale Citizens Association, and residents in the community that the full scale of impacts to the community have not been adequately evaluated, including attention toward how existing congestion along Maryland Route 212 induces cut-through traffic.

Should a slip-ramp be considered again in the future I believe that two issues must first be resolved:

- (1) MCDOT conduct a more detailed and comprehensive analysis of alternative treatments in the Hillandale area in comparison to the present Elton proposal.

Without the slip-ramp the intersection of New Hampshire Avenue and Powder Mill Road is forecast to fail by the year 2040. It is expected that the next LATIP reevaluation (as part of its recurring 6-year cycle) would be unlikely to evaluate the area in as detailed a manner as is likely necessary. MCDOT should perform a more focused analysis as a complement to the regular LATIP analyses.

- (2) Further measures be taken to address cut-through traffic through the neighborhood.

Measures toward addressing cut-through traffic will likely be led predominantly by either the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) or the Prince George's Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT). Such measures may entail additional efforts to reduce traffic turning into the neighborhoods, addressing congestion at the Powder Mill Road / Riggs Road intersection, and/or some other alternative developed in coordination with the local community.

Based on public testimony I do not feel that traffic calming options in Montgomery County could alone fully address the concerns, but MCDOT could partnering on traffic calming treatments in Montgomery County as a complement to efforts led by SHA or DPWT.

Approve traffic calming along Elton Road. Ensure adequate truck turning radii into applicable properties. Preserve overnight parking restrictions. Not eligible for LATIP credit.

I believe the proposed traffic calming along Elton Road would be beneficial to cut-through concerns as well as improving the aesthetics of the Montgomery County portion of Elton Road. There was overall support for this traffic calming including from among both affected residents and businesses, with 55 responses explicitly in support and 1 against. The 1 comment in opposition was universally against all potential treatments.

I recognize several concerns raised in public testimony in support of preserving overnight parking restrictions as well as ensuring adequate truck turning radii into applicable properties.

This work, however, would no longer be eligible for LATIP credit. With the deferment of consideration of a slip-ramp there is no longer a legal nexus tying traffic calming to the LATIP. I therefore recognize that the Duffie Companies may choose not to construct this work as there is no longer a financial incentive for them to do so.

Approve bus queue jump along southbound New Hampshire Avenue if SHA approves queue jump signals. Support further evaluation of bus stops along New Hampshire Avenue. Not eligible for LATIP credit, but may be eligible for Impact Tax credit.

I believe this proposed treatment would partly address concerns identified in public testimony relating to bus blockages, provided that SHA approves queue jump bus signals. There were 35 responses in support and 1 response against the queue jump, with that latter respondent universally opposed to all proposed treatments. 8 respondents specifically highlighted bus blockages as an issue, making it one of the most commonly raised issues.


However, with the deferment of the slip-ramp this project would no longer be a part of any LATIP-eligible projects. As this facility is not included in the LATIP it would not itself be eligible for LATIP credit. However, it may still be eligible for Impact Tax credit. While approved, I recognize that the Duffie Companies may choose not to construct this work as there is reduced financial incentive for them to do so.

I support further evaluation and potential consolidation of bus stops along New Hampshire Avenue, as recommended by a number of respondents. These evaluations will be made by MCDOT Transit Services staff in coordination with WMATA as a part of MCDOT's regular program.

MCDOT to evaluate signal timing along New Hampshire Avenue at and in the vicinity of Powder Mill Road and Elton Road

A multitude of respondents shared concerns with signal timing along New Hampshire Avenue at and between Powder Mill Road and Elton Road. MCDOT Traffic Engineering and Operations staff will evaluate the signal timing in this corridor and implement and changes as necessary.

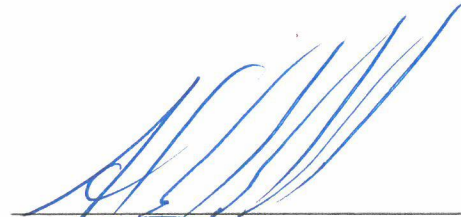
Respectfully submitted,



Jose Thommana, Public Hearing Officer

The Public Hearing Officer's Report and Recommendations have been reviewed and the project is hereby authorized to proceed as noted in the recommendations.

Date: 1-3-19



Al R. Roshdieh, Director
Department of Transportation