

Hillandale Citizens Association, Inc.
Silver Spring, Maryland

January 17, 2017

Comments on the “Pro-Rata” WOSG LATR Improvement Program

The Executive Committee of the Hillandale Citizens Association entreats County Council to consider three very specific aspects to the long-awaited and recently-released Local Area Transportation Review Improvements as proposed for Hillandale. Given that this program will directly impact the quality of life in Hillandale for the coming decades, we ask for review of these priority issues and the opportunity to work with Council and MoCo DOT to achieve our desired outcomes.

Request: Reconcile MoCo DOT’s Intersection Plan with the 2013 HCM Intersection Analysis

The New Hampshire Avenue-Powder Mill Road intersection is at the heart of our community and is the intersection used multiple times per day by residents, workers and shoppers. This intersection must be well designed for vehicles, transit, bicyclists and pedestrians to deliver on the promised Hillandale “village center” envisioned by the WOSG Master Plan.

Remarkably, with this 2040 full-build-out LATR Improvement Plan, MoCo DOT is advancing the proposition that the significant increase in development/travel demand in the area will require the addition of ONE right-turn lane along northbound New Hampshire onto Powder Mill Road. During the protracted WOSG master plan studies, Park and Planning’s and MoCo DOT’s consultant on this study, Sabre Wang, produced a detailed HCM analysis graphic of this intersection showing several more turn lanes would be needed, and with that, not all the traffic would be accommodated within the urban standards. Neither the old or new intersection layouts gives clarity as to the right-of-way implications with the future single-lane reversible New Hampshire BRT. This was the expectation when Council approved moving forward with the “pro-rata” approach in April 2015.

Be advised that MoCo DOT has also indicated that additional changes to the intersection will be required by the yet-to-be-defined process of “Local Access Analysis” with improvements to be done by individual development projects. Obviously, this leads us to ask whether the level of detail in this LATR Improvement Program is sufficient, and whether it meets the goal of the pro-rata share/pay-and -go concept.

We ask that this intersection, along with the proposed traffic projections for the area, be critically reviewed with clear expectations for this key intersection provided. Following this review additional community comments must be entertained by Council.

Request: Add the Powder Mill-Riggs Road (MD 212) Intersection Improvement

Although previously, and informally, agreed, MoCo DOT has now rejected including the improvement to this intersection based on it “being in Prince George’s County.” The Powder Mill/Riggs intersection is divided by the county line and is very important to making the

transportation network function for the Hillandale community. Without the modest lane improvement recommended in the 2013 Sabre Wang HCM analysis, pressure will mount on several Hillandale Forest roadways (particularly Elton/Wooded and Forest Dale) to accommodate cut-thru traffic eager to avoid bottlenecks at this location.

Please add the Powder Mill/MD 212 intersection improvement to the “pro-rata” project list.

Request: Solve the Elton Road Commercial/Residential Transition and Cut-Thru Problems

Elton Road, which connects to Wooded Way and then Riggs Road (MD212), has become a work-around for vehicles wanting to avoid the traffic back-ups at the New Hampshire-Powder Mill and Powder Mill-Riggs intersections. With additional development, this cut-thru will be greatly exacerbated. Having an engineered solution to this problem is necessary.

Elton Road is both a commercial and a residential roadway in Montgomery County, and a tertiary residential roadway in Prince George’s County. The classification error in the WOSG Master Plan designating the residential portion as a primary is slated to be corrected in the pending Master Plan of Highways. With that change, the undesirable widening of the short Montgomery residential portion of the road will be rendered unnecessary.

We ask that the funding estimate for the widening of Elton be used to plan and execute a transition between the commercial and residential portions within Montgomery County. This will require community consultation. Limiting the traffic impact on the established Hillandale Forest community is a LATR issue and a solution is critical for the residents of Hillandale Forest.

Thank you for giving our issues your consideration as the White Oak Science Gateway development begins to take shape for the Hillandale community.

Attachments: NH/PM 2017/2013; PM/Riggs 2013; NH-Riggs Cut-Thru Path