



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

Arthur Holmes, Jr.
Director

August 5, 2014

Mr. Henry Kay, Executive Director for Transit Development and Delivery
Maryland Transit Administration
6 Saint Paul Street
Baltimore, Maryland, 21202

Dear Mr. Kay:

In May 2012 the State of Maryland identified the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT). The alternative selected showed the alignment of the CCT on the east side of Muddy Branch Road. The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) supported that location and has been providing that information to our elected officials, the general public and businesses in the area. I am writing to urge you and strongly recommend retaining the original LPA decision for the CCT to be located along the east side of Muddy Branch Road. The LPA decision is in total conformance with the County's Adopted and Approved Master Plan for the area.

In April 2014 MTA published the Alternatives Analysis Report for Commercial Property Owners Coalition (the "Alternatives Report"). This report documented that in addition to the LPA alignment, three other options were analyzed, and stated that Option 1 was preferred. This option would change the LPA along Muddy Branch Road from the approved east side to the median. A median CCT with a four lane roadway section precludes the Master Planned widening of the road to six lanes.

In May 2014 MTA produced another report: The Alternatives Analysis Report for Mission Hills (the "Mission Hills Report"). The Department reviewed the "Alternatives" and "Mission Hills" Reports and on May 19, 2014, we submitted official comments to MTA objecting to the change of the CCT alignment to the median and shared our strong support of the original LPA decision (see attached email). As you will see, you were copied on that email. To date we have not received any responses to our officially expressed concerns. We acknowledge that MTA met with the Mission Hills community later in May 2014 to discuss concerns associated with this alignment and continued to collect community comment since that time. We also understand that you are working to produce 15 percent engineering plans later this summer and would like our concerns to be formally addressed before final decisions, the completion of 15 percent engineering plans and before public distribution of the plans are made.

MCDOT's email points out some major problems with the recommended course of action in the "Alternatives" and "Mission Hills" reports and recommended that the original LPA Mr. Henry decision be maintained. As an alternative, if a median construction option was preferred, then MTA should widen the existing four lanes of Muddy Branch Road to six lanes and locate the CCT in the newly created median (Option 3 of the "Alternatives Report", page 78).

Office of the Director

101 Monroe Street, 10th Floor • Rockville, Maryland 20850 • 240-777-7170 • 240-777-7178 FAX
www.montgomerycountymd.gov

Located one block west of the Rockville Metro Station

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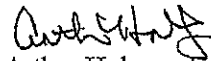
Our email highlighted out the advantages of the original LPA decision to locate in the east in contrast to the location in the current median:

- Shorter travel time when located in the east side
- Lower cost (\$ 2.0 Million)
- Simplicity of construction and minimization of disruption to traffic on Muddy Branch Road
- Consistency with the Adopted County Master Plan
- Could create a nightmare scenario for future widening of Muddy Branch Road (a two lane – four lane distribution of the traffic lanes, due to the location of the CCT in the current median)
- No benefits on impacts to the environment, or the right-of-way needed.

The County's long term traffic forecasts for the adopted 1990 Gaithersburg and Vicinity Master Plan and the adopted 2010 Great Seneca Sciences Corridor Master Plan indicated and approved the need for six lanes on Muddy Branch Road to accommodate the future development traffic. The need for this number of lanes in the segment of Muddy Branch Road between MD 119 and MD 28 remains the most direct way to provide connectivity between the areas of Potomac, North Potomac and Darnestown with I-370, I-270 and the ICC. This need is further supported by the fact that the Johns Hopkins Belward Campus development shows two points of access to their site from Muddy Branch Road. The confluence of regional and locally destined traffic cannot be handled with a four lane road. In fact, the 2040 Transportation Policy Area Report shows the area's failure of the transportation test, when only four lanes are assumed for Muddy Branch Road.

The original LPA location of the CCT along Muddy Branch continues to be our preferred alternative and is consistent with our extensive master planning process. MCDOT cannot support Option 1. We respectfully request that MTA advance the original LPA or select Option 3 that reflects the approved Master Plan and represents a prudent investment of public funds. Please contact me, or Mr. Edgar Gonzalez, Deputy Director for Transportation Policy, at 240-777-7185, if you have any questions on this matter.

Sincerely,


Arthur Holmes, Jr.
Director

cc: Robert L. Smith, MTA Administrator
Rick Kiegel, PE, Project Manager, Corridor Cities Transitway

Attachment

Gonzalez, Edgar

From: Gonzalez, Edgar
Sent: Monday, May 19, 2014 9:39 AM
To: 'rkiegel@mtmaryland.com'; Diane Ratcliff (DRatcliff@mta.maryland.gov)
Cc: Holmes, Arthur; Henry Kay - MTA; Erenrich, Gary; Wolanin, Emil; Johnston, Bruce; Compton, Keith; Roshdieh, Al
Subject: CCT on Muddy Branch Road
Importance: High

Rick:

This is to reiterate the main points for our technical opposition to the proposal to build the CCT on the median of Muddy Branch Road, and our strong support for the original idea to build the CCT on the Belward Campus parallel and to the south (east) and outside of the County owned right of way for Muddy Branch Road.

1. The construction of Muddy Branch Road was done with the anticipation of the future widening of the road to six lanes, within the median. All curbs, gutters, sidewalks and utilities were built with that anticipation, and right of way was acquired from the start with the idea that we would never have to acquire any additional right of way. Construction of the CCT in the median will preclude the master plan idea from happening as originally envisioned.
2. The Belward plan calls for one or two entrances into the site from Muddy Branch Road. That was never anticipated in the original master plan when Muddy Branch Road was built. Those entrances will create additional traffic demand on the segment of Muddy Branch Road between Darnestown Road and Great Seneca Highway. Therefore, the need to widen Muddy Branch to six lanes will be accelerated by the Belward plan. A cost we have not anticipated, as all along the CCT plan has shown construction of the facility in the Belward site, thus allowing the County to widen M.B. Road in the future or requiring the adjacent developer to widen the road, within the median. Remember that M. B. Road is the main road that provides access to the area of Potomac and north Potomac providing access to the ICC, via Great Seneca, Sam Eig and I-370.
3. The draft report shows that travel time in the CCT will increase and cost will be higher if the CCT is built in the median, as opposed to the Belward site. So, why do it? Aren't we looking for cost reductions and improvements in travel time? The draft report recommendations are contrary to that goal.
4. The report mentions that there are "environmental impacts" associated with the construction on the Belward Site (this is the only apparent justification for the decision). If that is the case, then those same environmental impacts will have to be faced by the County when we program and implement the widening of Muddy Branch to the master planned six lanes. In other words, MTA will pass on the impacts to the County and the County will have to fund and deal with the regulatory agencies in the future. But the environmental impacts will be the same, whether now or in the future. Since MTA would be the cause for the impacts, we believe it is only fair, that you deal with the impacts from the beginning, and not pass on those problems to the County in the future.
5. Operations of the Intersection of Muddy Branch and Great Seneca Highway show a very poor LOS today. It will be even worse in the future, until an interchange is built. But that is nowhere in our CIP or our priorities to the state. Whereas the ideas in the report appear to address the immediate issues favorably for the Mission Hills residents (all 52 homes), the report does not deal with the traffic impacts to the Washingtonian Woods Community and their more than 800 homes. Neither it addresses the impacts on the intersection with Great Seneca and the segment of M.B. between G. Seneca and Mission Hills/ MidSummer. So, any decision on the matter should have been coordinated with the residents of Washingtonian woods (800+ homes) and not only with 52 home owners in Mission Hills. The same should be said of changes to the county right of way. The County should be consulted and have a say before decisions are made.
6. I understand that in your conversation with Gary Erenrich you mentioned that the future widening of Muddy Branch Road in the Belward site would cost an additional \$3 Million. That appears to be cost shifted to the County in the future. It appears that if we all agree six lanes will be needed in the future, and if MTA still

believes that the best idea is to build the CCT in the median, then you should widen Muddy Branch Road to the original anticipated six lanes, including the two new lanes on the Belward site and **then build the CCT in the new median**. Building the CCT in the current median will create a future problem for the standard six lane construction of Muddy Branch. The County will have two lanes southbound on M.B., then the CCT, and then four lanes in the northbound side. Not a very good and balanced configuration, and something that needs to be analyzed before the final decision is made. So, if the idea is to build the CCT in the median, **it should be built in the future median, not in the existing median** to have a balanced network.

These are just my preliminary thoughts, as we were given the report last week and I could only review it over the weekend. The report has not been reviewed by our technical divisions, so I am sure that we will have more formal comments on the idea.

At this point in time my major concern is that you go to a meeting with the Mission Hills community tomorrow and assert that a decision has been made, when at a very quick glance, from the County's perspective is quite the wrong decision that will

- shift major problems from MTA to the County,
- will not result in any environmental impacts – just a shift them from MTA to the County
- will cost more to the State and reduce travel speeds and consequently increased travel time on the CCT
- will create a future widening that will make absolutely no sense because we will not be able to build a six lane facility with a 3-3 lane configuration
- may solve concerns of the 52 homes on Mission Hills without an analysis of coordination with the 800+ homeowners in Washingtonian Woods that will be negatively affected by the change in the alignment.

So, if the meeting goes on tomorrow with Mission Hills then at least mention that your findings are **preliminary in nature** and that the County's views are being pursued before a final decision is made. But at first sight, the technical staff in the Department will recommend strongly against the idea of building the CCT in the median, for some of the reasons above, and more that we will elaborate on when we have had the benefit of the analysis by our Divisions.

Thanks.

Edgar Gonzalez, PE
Deputy Director for Transportation Policy
MCDOT