

MEMORANDUM

March 24, 2011

TO: Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee

FROM: Marlene Michaelson, ^{MM} Senior Legislative Analyst

SUBJECT: Briefing on Rockville Pike Corridor Neighborhood Plan

City of Rockville staff will be briefing the Committee on their draft master plan “Rockville’s Pike: Envision a Great Place, An Update to the 1989 Rockville Pike Corridor Neighborhood Plan”. The Plan focuses on transportation and land use for a 2.2 mile-long portion of Rockville Pike bounded on the north by Richard Montgomery Drive and on the south by Bou Avenue. The Executive Summary and assorted diagrams from the Plan are attached at © 1 to 15. The full Plan can be viewed at:

<http://www.rockvillemd.gov/rockvillespike/2010DraftPlan/index.html>

The Rockville Planning Commission held a public hearing on March 9, 2011 and will continue to accept comments until May 27. The Commission will hold worksessions on the Plan through the spring and summer and possibly into the fall.

The Montgomery County Planning Board reviewed the Plan on March 3. The Planning Department staff memorandum for their meeting is attached at © 16 to 21 and the Planning Board’s comments are attached at © 22 to 23. Planning Department Staff will also attend the briefing in case the Committee has any questions you wish to direct to them. In summary, the Planning Board supported many of the Draft Plan’s policy and planning recommendations; however, the Board expressed concern that the Draft Plan proposes bus lanes on service roads, “which may limit the potential for integration into a more comprehensive BRT [bus rapid transit] system along Rockville Pike.” The Planning Board recommends that the Commission, Mayor, and Council incorporate language similar to the White Flint Sector Plan, which indicated that the Montgomery County Department of Transportation BRT study should be used to make a final determination on the MD 355 right-of-way and location of priority transit treatment.

Rockville's Pike

ENVISION A GREAT PLACE

AN UPDATE TO THE 1989 ROCKVILLE PIKE CORRIDOR NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN



PREPARED BY
ACP Visioning+Planning

WITH ASSISTANCE FROM
AECOM
Kim Littleton, AICP

Draft for Planning Commission Public Hearing

Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2007, the City of Rockville retained the services of ACP Visioning+ Planning (ACP), AECOM (formerly Glattig Jackson Kercher Anglin and Economics Research Associates), and Kim Littleton, AICP, to conduct an extensive public involvement program and develop *Rockville's Pike: Envision a Great Place*.

Rockville's Pike is an update to the Rockville Pike Corridor Neighborhood Plan that was adopted by the City as part of the Master Plan in 1989. The primary goal of the plan update is to establish a vision for the future of Rockville Pike and to recommend policies and implementation steps to turn that vision into reality. The vision in *Rockville's Pike* represents a major shift in the perception of transportation and land use in the study area, proposing a balanced use of travel modes, which will result in a more efficient transportation network and attractive community space.

1. The Study Area

The study area contains approximately 410 acres surrounding a 2.2 mile-long portion of Rockville Pike (Route 355). The study area is bounded on the north by Richard Montgomery Drive and on the south by Bou Avenue. To the north, the western boundary of the study area falls at the rear of the properties facing Rockville Pike; in the middle, it intersects the Woodmont Country Club property; and, to the south, it follows the eastern edge of Jefferson Street. The eastern boundary of the study area is located on the western edge of the Metrorail right-of-way.



2. The Process

From November 2007 to July 2008, the consultant team carefully orchestrated a public involvement process that incorporated several components: public workshops to receive community input; presentations to the community to report findings of the technical analysis; and a five-day charrette to integrate the input from citizens, stakeholders, and community leaders with the technical findings. The team also conducted interviews with stakeholders, special interest groups, the Mayor and Council, property owners, and the public. The plan created through this process will undergo further public review and is scheduled for adoption in 2011.

3. Why a Plan and Why Now?

The updated plan for the Pike is very timely, and not simply because the previous plan is 20 years old. Planning for the Pike is important for a variety of reasons:

- Traffic congestion is likely to get worse as the current roadway system is close to saturation at certain times of the day.
- City traffic standards for development review are likely to inhibit the continued redevelopment of the Pike.
- Rockville Pike remains an important retail destination located in a strong regional economic market with significant long-term growth potential.
- The undistinguished appearance of the Pike will make it less economically competitive with large-scale growth and development that is expected nearby, such as the White Flint area. Places along the Pike are aging, are designed primarily to accommodate cars, and are unfriendly to the pedestrian.

The combination of these four factors—the need to address traffic congestion, policy constraints on large redevelopment, the strength of the Pike’s potential, and the opportunity to turn the Pike into a signature address for Rockville and the region—make *Rockville’s Pike: Envision a Great Place* such a timely and vital undertaking. The Pike will redevelop gradually over time. This plan is intended to give community direction to property owners who want to redevelop.

More information on findings can be found in Appendix B: Research Summary. Please note that the data contained in this chapter was gathered in the fall of 2007 and in the spring and summer of 2008. Market conditions have changed since the beginning of the study. While these changes affect short-term considerations, they do not affect the long-term economic outlook for the Rockville Pike study area, which remains strong.

A. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The *Rockville’s Pike* planning process incorporated detailed technical analysis about the transportation, land use, and economic conditions on the Pike. This section highlights several of the key findings that arose from the analysis:

1. Transportation

- Rockville Pike serves a dual transportation role in terms of mobility and access. It is both a regional corridor through Montgomery County, as well as an access road for local traffic trying to reach commercial land uses.

- Neighborhoods in the study area have few connections to the Pike itself. On the eastern side of the road, access is limited due to the Metrorail tracks. Woodmont Country Club obstructs the western side.
- Traffic congestion on the Pike is the worst when the demand for travel to retail establishments is highest.
- Rockville Pike is approaching its vehicle-moving capacity. It carries about 54,000 cars per day and, in peak travel directions, approximately 3,000 cars per hour.
- Local bus transit service provides coverage to most of the Pike study area, but it is largely compromised by a lack of a connected street network.
- Rockville Pike is paralleled by Metrorail's Red Line service, which includes one station, Twinbrook, in the Pike planning area and another, Rockville, immediately north of the planning area but within city limits. The Red Line services provide high-capacity transit connections to other parts of the metropolitan Washington region and, coupled with existing local bus services, offer outstanding potential as a means of mobility for people traveling to and from the Pike corridor.
- Safety is a concern for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists alike. The overall crash rate on the Pike is significantly higher than the statewide average. Pedestrians and cyclists face barriers to movement due to heavy traffic volumes, high design speeds, limited pedestrian crossings, and insufficient signal timings.

2. Land Use

- The predominant land use pattern in the Rockville Pike corridor is in the form of individual parcels containing a single use (primarily retail), and surrounded by extensive surface parking. This development pattern uses a tremendous amount of land and forces multiple vehicle trips for anyone attempting to complete even the simplest errands. The commercial nature of the Rockville Pike corridor and an emphasis on movement by car has resulted in a place that lacks any type of open public spaces for gathering, such as parks, plazas, or squares.
- Impervious surfaces cover approximately 60 percent of the study area, with pavement covering more than 70 percent of the impervious surface area.
- The Pike has extremely long blocks that create a barrier between the east and west sides of the Pike and limit development opportunities.
- The Pike lacks a sense of place; it has the undistinguished look of generic suburban strip developments characterized by one to two story buildings. The undistinguished appearance of the study area is likely to affect the corridor's economic competitiveness in the region.
- The widely separated buildings along the Pike fail to create an attractive or walkable place and make walking (and the use of public transportation) challenging, unsafe, and unpleasant.

- Low density development along the Pike fails to take advantage of the proximity to the Twinbrook Metro Station. Low densities combined with poor walking conditions hinder the ability of Metro to become a viable alternative to the private automobile.

3. Economic Analysis

- Rockville Pike is a destination retail center for the surrounding region. It is located in a strong regional economic market with high average household incomes and good long-term growth potential. An analysis of market demand indicates that retail will continue to serve as the economic base for the corridor.
- Residential use is emerging along the Pike. The Twinbrook Station development is providing an important market test for development potential along Rockville Pike and will further adapt the market to a higher density product type.
- Office demand is limited along the Pike, and office uses will likely serve as a secondary component to development in areas that are not immediately adjacent to the Metro station. The I-270 corridor will continue to be the primary Class A office draw in the region.

4. Critical Lane Volume Analysis

The Critical Lane Volume Analysis conducted in the fall of 2010 revealed that the combination of the City's traffic standards and the existing and projected traffic (based on approved development projects) will not readily allow development consistent with the recommendations of this plan. Five of the key intersections in the corridor are already "failing", using the City's current approach, thereby effectively preventing development along the corridor.

5. School Capacity

Similarly, the City's Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) establishes that no child-generating development can take place if the new residences will be within the boundaries of a school that has enrollment of 110% or more of the school's program capacity. At this time, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) data show that all four elementary schools and the middle school in the Richard Montgomery cluster, which serves the majority of the Pike, either exceed 110% or are projected to exceed 110% within the next five years.

B. DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

The *Rockville's Pike* public process led to the identification of ten principles that have consistently guided the formulation of this plan. They are:

1. Quality architecture and urban design will create a visually appealing environment along the Pike.

2. Roadway and intersection improvements on the Pike will allow for smooth, safe vehicular flow.
3. The Pike will feature a safe and pleasant environment for walking and biking.
4. Additional open space, landscaping, and environmentally friendly development will contribute to a “greener” Pike.
5. The Pike will feature vibrant, walkable mixed-use developments.
6. New public spaces on the Pike will provide a pleasant environment for community gathering and outdoor activity.
7. The economic success of Rockville Pike will be maintained by supporting both local and national retail and encouraging property redevelopment.
8. Rockville’s Pike will be well connected with surrounding areas, providing choices for cars and pedestrians to access and move between properties along the Pike.
9. The Pike will feature efficient and reliable public transportation options.
10. Appropriate signage, lighting, and wayfinding tools will make the Pike an inviting and easily navigable environment.

References to the ten development principles are presented throughout this chapter as sidebars which link them to various components of Rockville Pike corridor plan.

C. A PLAN FOR THE ROCKVILLE PIKE CORRIDOR

Rockville’s Pike represents a fundamental shift in thinking about transportation and land use in the study area. It is aimed at balancing travel modes (automobile, transit, bicycling, and walking) along Rockville Pike and at creating an attractive place that is able to support this balance. Key recommendations and considerations included in the plan are listed below.

1. The Core Recommendation: Redesign and Reconstruct Rockville Pike as a Multi-Way Boulevard

The proposed redesign and reconstruction of Rockville Pike as a multi-way boulevard meets the transportation, quality-of-place, and economic goals of the Plan. The multi-way boulevard will expand the palette of transportation options for visitors and residents traversing the corridor (i.e., the modal split). It will create a vibrant, attractive, and pedestrian-friendly place: a signature place for the community. Additionally, it will position the corridor to continue as a premier retail center in the region. The mechanics of the functionality of the boulevard are described below.

2. Principal Transportation Elements of the Multi-Way Boulevard

The multi-way boulevard is a time-tested way to address the transportation and land use conditions found in the corridor today. From a transportation standpoint, the multi-way boulevard will:

Development Principle #2: Roadway and intersection improvements on the Pike will allow for smooth, safe vehicular flow.

- Maintain the same 84' curb-to-curb section that accommodates the current six travel lanes as the primary roadway to move through traffic.
- Expand the current roadway to include a two-lane access road in each direction, parallel to and separated from the primary roadway, with one lane devoted to buses and bicycles and the other used as a general vehicle lane to accommodate local traffic movements.
- Enable traffic to move smoothly at intersections and between access lanes and the primary roadway.
- Protect bicycle and pedestrian movements.
- Relocate bus stops within 200' of intersections to facilitate access to pedestrian crossings.
- Realign both the Rockville Pike and Twinbrook Parkway intersection and the Edmonston Drive and Rockville Pike intersection to facilitate traffic flow and ease congestion.

3. The Benefits of the Boulevard Approach

The boulevard design benefits the study area in several ways. It will:

- Separate local and regional trips.
- Make the Pike safer for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Reinforce the role of the corridor as a significant retail center in the region.
- Integrate the Twinbrook Metro Station into the corridor and make public transit a more attractive option.
- Bring transit, walking, and bicycle user closer to the land uses of the Pike.
- Facilitate the transformation of the corridor into an attractive place.
- Create a healthier community in terms of a reduced carbon footprint, better air quality, and the promotion of more active lifestyles.
- Create the conditions for a shift in the transportation modal split along the Pike, from a high degree of reliance on the private automobile to more diverse transportation choices.

*Development Principle #8:
Rockville's Pike will be well
connected with surrounding areas,
providing choices for cars and
pedestrians to access and move
between properties along the Pike.*

*Development Principle #10:
Appropriate signage, lighting, and
wayfinding tools will make the Pike
an inviting and easily navigable
environment.*

4. Study Area Transportation Elements

Beyond the creation of the multi-way boulevard, the Plan addresses additional transportation needs in the study area as a whole. It proposes to:

- Expand the street network to create a regular pattern of developable urban blocks.
- Space intersections to enable a greater number of safe pedestrian crossings.
- Establish a street functional hierarchy to support development standards and to determine how buildings relate to the street network. (The street hierarchy is the foundation of the form code proposed for the corridor.)

- Reduce parking requirements to enable residents and shoppers to park once and walk to their desired destinations.
- Facilitate movement through a coordinated and hierarchical signage system to guide vehicles approaching at different speeds, as well as bicycles and pedestrians.

5. Principal Land Use Elements

The Rockville Pike corridor plan integrates the transportation elements with a set of rigorous land use elements to guide the transformation of the corridor from an undistinguished suburban strip to a place that meets the excellence in design desired by the City. The proposed land use elements will:

- Make the Pike walkable and provide safety and shelter to pedestrians in a vibrant and aesthetically pleasing environment. This will be accomplished by:
 - Moving buildings forward and providing a continuous yet varied enclosure at the sidewalk level;
 - Establishing height standards for different parts of the study area to respond to the characteristics of the street frontage in which buildings are located;
 - Creating a continuous sidewalk on both sides of the Pike, extending to all side streets;
 - Reducing the size of existing blocks as part of the redevelopment process; and
 - Changing the treatment of building frontages at special intersections.
- Mix uses, vertically whenever possible, in a single building and within individual blocks with ground floors reserved for retail uses and upper floors dedicated to living or working spaces.
- Make the Pike green through tree planting and landscaping that will turn the multi-way boulevard into the primary public green space in the study area.
- Expand green areas beyond the Pike through the creation of plazas, parks, and squares accessible to residents living in and near the study area.
- Make the Pike environmentally friendly through location-efficient land uses and development incentives tied to LEED certification, or equivalent.

Development Principle #3: The Pike will feature a safe and pleasant environment for walking and biking.

Development Principle #6: New public spaces on the Pike will provide a pleasant environment for community gathering and outdoors activity.

Development Principle #5: The Pike will feature vibrant, walkable mixed-use developments.

Development Principle #4: Additional open space, landscaping, and environmentally friendly development will contribute to a "greener" Pike.

6. Redevelopment and Congestion Management Elements

The *Rockville's Pike* plan presents a transformative set of design elements intended to offset the demand for vehicle trips by favoring land development patterns that make the area more walkable and better able to capitalize on the potential for transit use. Redevelopment of the corridor is crucial to making this happen. At present, the City's system of growth management and the development review process may hinder the transformation envisioned by the plan. The Rockville Pike corridor plan

addresses these fundamental issues by introducing: a. mechanisms to affect development capacity and b. mechanisms to address congestion management.

a. Mechanisms to Affect Development Capacity

These include:

- Implementing engineering-based changes that increase traffic capacity as a result of the physical redesign of roadways and intersections.
- Increasing the Critical Lane Volume standard together with adopting a more flexible system of capacity allocation to reduce the number of intersections along the Pike that exceed the Comprehensive Transportation Review threshold, thereby permitting more development.
- Developing a broader set of transportation review measures that are focused more on the corridor and the study area as a whole than on specific intersections.

b. Mechanisms to Address Congestion Management

These include:

- Managing demand through the creation of a Transportation Management Association, an organization of businesses and employers created to foster travel options beyond single occupancy vehicles.
- Adopting and enhancing the existing City Transportation Demand Management program to reduce the use of single occupancy vehicles and encourage new alternative modes of transportation.
- Improving transit service in the corridor through such means as better placement of transit stops and measures to improve service and enhance riders' safety.

Development Principle #9: The Pike will feature efficient and reliable public transportation options.

7. Funding Mechanisms

Recommended funding mechanisms to pay for the public improvements include:

- Ensuring that the multi-way boulevard is a funding priority for Montgomery County and the State of Maryland.
- Creating Tax Increment Financing districts to provide the City with substantial bonding capacity to provide needed public enhancements and improvements in the redevelopment, such as streetscape, public amenities, and other development components.
- Expanding the City's use of in-lieu contributions to allow the construction of improvements at once and not merely rely on property development to generate small portions of this infrastructure.

8. Economic Strategies

Recommended mechanisms to maintain the viability of the Pike through the redevelopment process include creating Public-Private Partnerships and addressing retail and small business, office, and housing strategies.

D. THE ROCKVILLE PIKE DISTRICT FORM CODE

The Rockville Pike District Form Code presents the development regulations that govern building form and land use within the study area. The District Form Code is intended to be adopted into the Zoning Code of the City of Rockville (adopted December 15, 2008). Several of the recommendations related to the land use elements of the plan—including the height of buildings, their position on the site, their relationship to the sidewalks, and the design characteristics of the public realm—will be regulated and implemented through the District Form Code.

Development Principle #1: Quality architecture and urban design will create a visually appealing environment along the Pike.

E. IMPLEMENTATION

Rockville's Pike includes an extensive set of recommendations to facilitate the complex undertaking of plan implementation. Implementing this plan will require strong collaboration and cooperation among the City, Montgomery County, the State of Maryland, the private sector, and other organizations. It will also require a careful evaluation of appropriate funding mechanisms and options.

Overarching recommendations needed to implement the plan are organized as follows:

- General policy recommendations that set the stage for the implementation of the plan itself, including: adopting *Rockville's Pike: Envision a Great Place*; adopting the Rockville Pike District Form Code; and establishing strong regional partnerships to coordinate planning for areas outside of the boundaries of the Rockville Pike corridor.
- Recommendations on how to implement the transportation elements of the multi-way boulevard, including: partnering with Montgomery County to present the concept to the Maryland Department of Transportation and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments; developing a fully engineered street plan for the reconstruction of Rockville Pike; acquiring rights-of-way; and phasing construction.
- Recommendations on implementing the study area transportation elements, including: developing a fully engineered plan of street expansion and realignment and developing a wayfinding plan.
- Recommendations that facilitate the implementation of the land use elements of the plan, including: streamlining the development approval process, establishing the position of Town Architect, developing a streetscape plan, reviewing relevant regulations and policies for conformity with the plan, assessing other study area needs.
- Recommendations to enable redevelopment and address congestion management, including: acting upon the recommendations of the critical lane volume analysis report, forming and administering a transportation management association, adopting and enhancing city Transportation Demand Management (TDM) activities, and optimizing transit service through the corridor.

Development Principle #7: The economic success of Rockville's Pike will be maintained by supporting both local and national retail and encouraging property redevelopment.

- Recommendations to adopt funding strategies to implement the plan, including: securing State and Federal funds to create the multi-way boulevard, creating a tax increment financing district, and expanding the use of in-lieu contributions.
- Recommendations to sustain economic diversity, including: establishing public private partnerships, enhancing retail & small business opportunities, assisting small businesses to relocate in the study area, and continuing the inclusion of moderately priced units along the corridor.

F. CONCLUSION

The bold vision for the Rockville Pike corridor articulated by community residents and presented in this plan is a complex undertaking. It is likely to have a transformative impact on the physical ambiance of the corridor, on the flow of local and regional traffic, and on the economic vitality of the area.

Through physical and land use improvements and a new approach to regulation, the Rockville Pike corridor has the potential to become a signature place for the City and a great place for residents and visitors to enjoy. Through a great number of roadway design and congestion management improvements and the addition of some new streets, the Pike and streets throughout the study area have the potential for improved traffic flow, increased safety, and a better balance of transportation choices for private vehicles, transit and bicycle users, and pedestrians.

This close integration and mutually beneficial relationship of land use and transportation improvements gives strength and boldness to the community vision. It is the key to transforming the Rockville Pike into the thriving and vital place the community wants and the prosperous economic engine the community needs.

Street Master Plan

Transform Rockville Pike into a Multi-Way Boulevard.

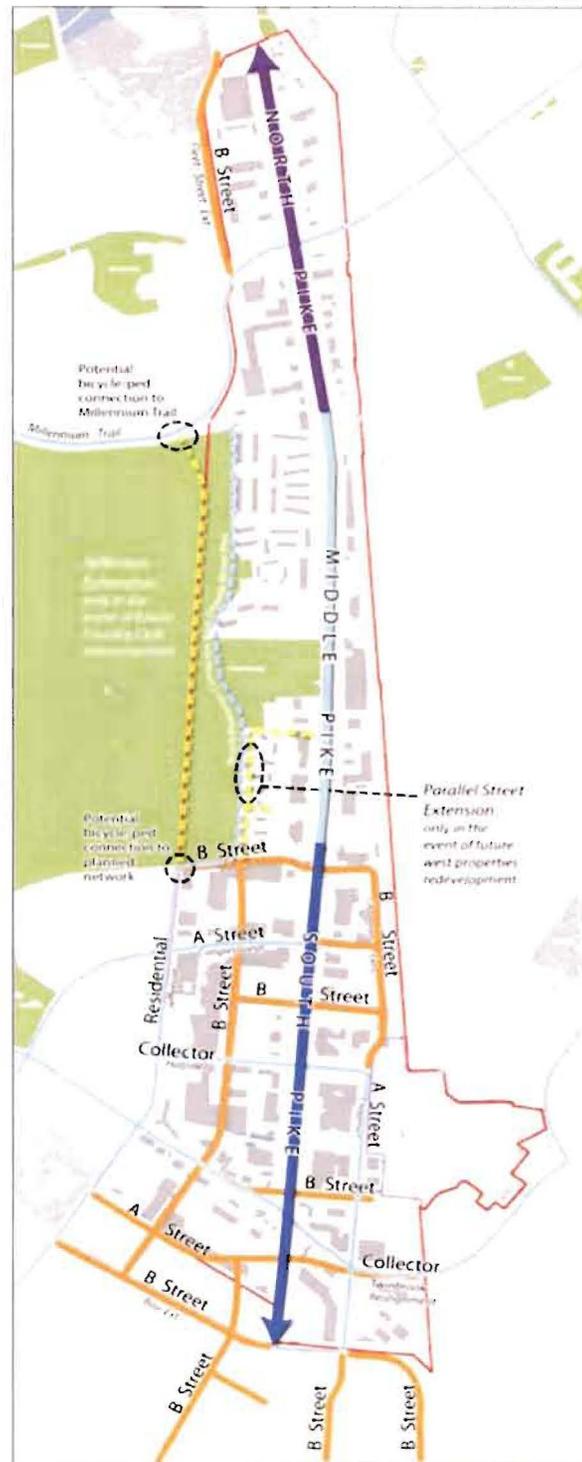
Expand the street network to create a regular pattern of developable urban blocks.

Space intersections to enable a greater number of safe pedestrian crossings.

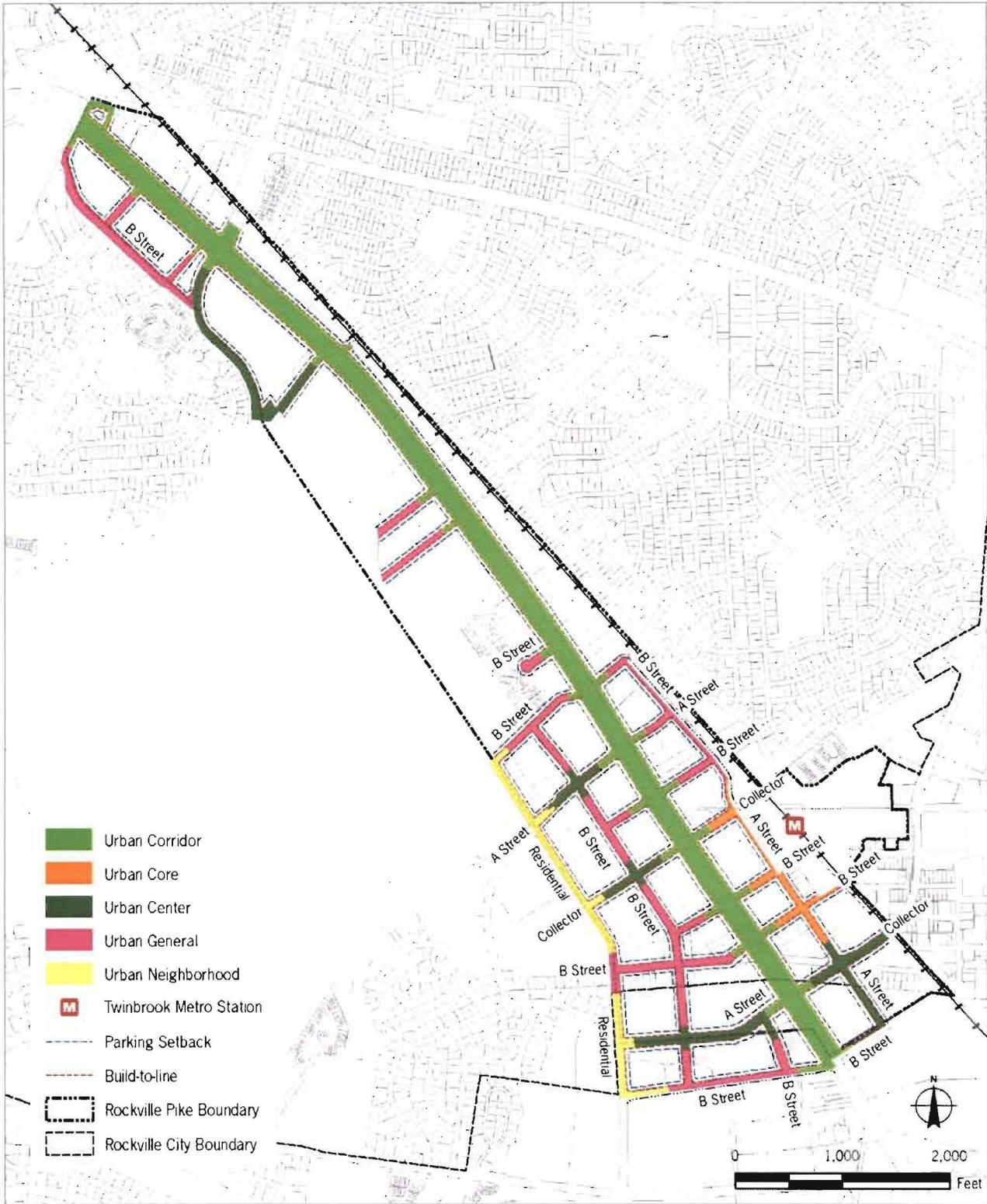
Establish a street functional hierarchy to support development standards and to determine how buildings relate to the street network. (The street hierarchy is the foundation of the form code proposed for the corridor.)

Reduce parking requirements to enable residents and shoppers to park once and walk to their desired destinations.

Facilitate movement through a coordinated and hierarchical signage system to guide vehicles approaching at different speeds, as well as bicycles and pedestrians.



The Regulating Plan



The Form Code regulates development by street frontage types



Street Frontage Types

The Rockville Pike District Form Code



Urban Corridor Street Frontage: This type corresponds to the properties fronting Rockville Pike and supports a very active pedestrian environment made possible by a grand boulevard accommodating multiple transportation modes (e.g. pedestrian, vehicular, bus, bicycle, etc). The building form standards applicable to this area are intended to enhance the character of Rockville Pike and its role as a major arterial.



Urban Core Street Frontage: This type is the only type located in the South Pike segment of the corridor adjacent to the Twinbrook Metro Station. As the street frontage type with the most anticipated development intensity within the Form District, it serves as a transition area between the Twinbrook Metro Commons development and the development along the Corridor.



Urban Center Street Frontage: This type of street frontage, like the Core street frontage, is along new and existing streets that supports an active pedestrian environment and incorporate a mix of uses with retail on the ground floor. The Urban Center area includes a similar but less intense development character than the frontage along Rockville Pike (Urban Corridor) or the Urban Core street frontage.



Urban General Street Frontage: This type of street frontage does not include retail uses on the ground floor and is not intended to function as an active pedestrian environment but to access and serve development sites. This frontage type is along both existing and new roadways.



Urban Neighborhood Street Frontage: This type of street frontage is intended to serve primarily residential uses at varying scales and densities with a minor inclusion of business services (e.g. live work units).

Standards are also presented for roads, open space, parking, green building incentives, building types, and frontage types.



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

MCPB
Item #
3/03/11

February 17, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Glenn Kreger, Acting Chief, Area 2 *GJK*
Shahriar Etemadi, Supervisor, I-270 Corridor Section
Area 2 Division
Dan Hardy, Chief, Functional Planning and Policy Division *DKH*

FROM: ~~WJ~~ N'kosi Yearwood, Senior Planner, I-270 Corridor Section (301) 495-1332
Area 2 Division

SUBJECT: City of Rockville Draft MD 355 Corridor Neighborhood Plan

PURPOSE

This briefing will provide the Planning Board with an overview of the City of Rockville Draft Rockville Pike (MD 355) Corridor Neighborhood Plan. Staff plans to transmit the following comments to the City prior to their March 9 public meeting:

- We support the general Plan vision to transform Rockville's Pike into a more walkable and transit-supportive urban community.
- The Plan's vision for how buses should be accommodated on MD 355 should continue to be coordinated with the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) Countywide Bus Rapid Transit study. The suitability of the proposed typical section details should be reviewed after the BRT study has been completed.
- We will continue to coordinate comments on BRT accommodation as both the MCDOT study and the City's master plan move through their respective review processes.
- We support the Plan's recommendation to reconsider greater levels of congestion in the vicinity of the Twinbrook Metrorail Station as potentially appropriate to support planned growth, and the investigation of innovative financing mechanisms to implement changes along MD 355.
- We support transportation policy recommendations, including reduced parking standards near Metro Stations and enhancing transportation demand management requirements.

BACKGROUND

The City of Rockville, in December 2007, began the public engagement process that included workshops, stakeholder interviews, and design charrettes culminating in the Draft Plan. ACP Visioning + Planning and AECOM, formerly Glatting Jackson Kercher Anglin, and Economics Research Associates, were the lead consultants for the Draft Plan.

The Draft Plan area consists of approximately 410 acres or approximately 2.2 miles along Rockville Pike. The area is bounded by Bou Avenue to the south, Richard Montgomery Drive to the north, Metrorail right-of-way to the east, and properties adjacent to Woodmont Country Club to the west.

The Approved and Adopted (2010) White Flint Sector Plan recommends the transformation of Rockville Pike, within the Plan area, into an urban boulevard with a minimum right-of-way between 150 feet to 162 feet. The area to the immediate north of the White Flint Sector Plan area is within the North Bethesda-Garrett Park (1992) Master Plan area. The Planning Department will comprehensively examine this area when White Flint Phase II is initiated. Coordinating this segment with the City's final cross-section for Rockville Pike is important to the overall function of the Pike.

DRAFT PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The Draft Rockville Pike Corridor Neighborhood Plan establishes a new vision for this segment of the Pike with new public spaces, an improved walking and biking environment, and a multi-way boulevard for the roadway. Development principles in the Plan promote mixed-use development with mid-rise and high-rise buildings, reduced block sizes, and improved transportation choices. The Draft Plan amends the City's 1989 Rockville Corridor Neighborhood Plan.

Land Use

A Form Code guides development implementation in the Plan. As proposed, the Form Code will regulate the built environment, including block standards, building types, architectural standards and streetscape. It does not increase the overall density in the Corridor when compared to the existing plan, and does not specify development densities. The Code focuses its regulations on street frontages that define the public realm.

Multi-Way Boulevard

The transformation of Rockville Pike into a multi-way boulevard (Attachment 1) is a key recommendation in the Draft Plan. A multi-way boulevard, the Plan notes, "effectively addresses the dual nature of the Pike as a regional corridor and as an access road to commercial land uses. It provides the framework for the creation of distinctive public places. The medians that separate through traffic from local traffic (Attachment 2) can be planted with trees" (p.5.2). This concept introduces a series of new traffic operations and procedures for all users of the roadway. Therefore, effective coordination between the City and Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) is needed to ensure safe travel.

The Draft Plan recognizes that there are challenges with segments of the boulevard since it provides alternative concepts for right turns, bicycle and bus movement, as well as movements from the main lines of Rockville Pike to the service road (termed access lanes in the Plan), which would be separated from the main line by planted medians. The existing 84-foot curb-to-curb section that accommodates three travel lanes (in both northbound and southbound directions) and left turn lanes will be retained. Figures 5.3 and 5.4 of the Plan, included as Attachments 1 and 2 in this memorandum, show the proposed typical section.

For decades, the City has established a significant setback along the Pike. The 1989 Corridor Plan established a minimum right-of-way of 120 feet and a build-to-line of 135 feet from the centerline of the Pike, which means that the building to building setback is 270 feet. Within the 135 feet from the centerline of the Pike, the 1989 Plan reserved 25 feet for a service roadway (carrying both northbound and southbound traffic) and the City has received easements for these service roads. The multi-way boulevard will take advantage of the easement areas to re-orient bus service, parking, and landscaping. Further, the proposed cross-section moves development closer to Rockville Pike.

Street Network

A new network of streets is recommended in the three sub-districts, North Pike, Middle Pike and South Pike, of the Plan. These new streets provide greater pedestrian, bike and vehicular access in the corridor. The proposed street typology is similar to the County's Commercial Business streets that provide on-street parking, augmented streetscape, and widened sidewalks. The recommended extension of East Jefferson Street as a continuous street parallel to MD 355 is an important element to provide capacity and redundancy; the Plan notes this would only be constructed across the Woodmont Country Club property should this portion of the country club redevelop. The Plan also recommends the realignment of Rockville Pike and Twinbrook Parkway and a modification to Edmonston Drive and the Pike. Staff supports the general concept of the more finely-grained street network and the hierarchy of streets that improves overall access and creates the framework for Form Code. The feasibility and desirability of each specific realignment segment will require subsequent study.

Transit

The Draft Plan recommends the use of access lanes in the multi-way boulevard as exclusive lanes for buses and bicycles. It did not envision bus priority or Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in the Corridor. The White Flint Sector Plan provides the opportunity for bus priority either at the curb or in the median of Rockville Pike. The Montgomery County Department of Transportation has initiated a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) study for major corridors in the County, including the Pike. As the study progresses, it is important that the City's concept be coordinated with the County's BRT study.

The incorporation of BRT in the City's Plan is proceeding along a similar track as was the case in the White Flint Sector Plan:

- Both master plans provide sufficient setbacks between buildings to accommodate a wide variety of BRT treatments.
- It is important that the transit system function of bus priority treatments in the typical sections (i.e., whether geared more toward local bus services or more toward a line-haul BRT service with 1/3 to 1/2 mile station spacing) be coordinated.
- The actual design of the typical sections in the two plans, however, need not match precisely as the Montrose Parkway interchange serves as a hinge point between the two different sections of the Pike. (Decisions regarding the appropriate typical section for the City's plan would inform the development of the White Flint II Sector Plan north of Montrose Parkway.)
- This functional coordination and facility design will need to be determined after review of the MCDOT countywide bus rapid transit study to be completed this spring. The White Flint Sector Plan has explicit language indicating that the MCDOT BRT study will be used to make a final determination on the MD 355 right-of-way and location of transit priority treatment. Staff recommends that the City's Rockville Pike plan move forward through the review and approval process with the same intent.

Policy

Several new policy initiatives are recommended in the Plan, including modifying the City's Critical Lane Volume (CLV) standards for evaluating congestion, creating a transportation management association, and modifying the existing transportation demand management activities, such as creating an employer trip-reduction program. These are modifications that could increase the efficiency of the existing transportation system to accommodate future growth without considering major widening or roadway improvements in the area.

Parking standards modification is another significant policy recommendation. Modifications include waiving parking requirements for buildings that are smaller than 3,000 square feet; reducing parking spaces within proximity to Twinbrook Metro Station; and increased shared parking. These policy recommendations are important in setting the stage for future redevelopment. The City can look to successful examples, including transportation management districts in Bethesda and Silver Spring for guidance. Staff supports these measures as the growth along the MD 355 corridor transforms this area into a more urbanized area. The City should consider a higher level of congestion at Metro Station areas specifically, and for the rest of the corridor generally, since the proposed changes in the corridor calls for better mixed-use development, better pedestrian and bike network is envisioned.

Funding

Securing County and State funding, creation of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district, and modifying the City's Comprehensive Transportation Review (CTR) system are recommended as tools to fund the Plan's implementation.

SUMMARY

The City of Rockville Draft Rockville Pike Corridor Neighborhood Plan is another important step to transforming a segment of Rockville Pike (MD 355) into a sustainable corridor in the County. Staff supports the Draft Plan's recommendation for a new street network that promotes better pedestrian, bicyclist, and vehicle movement as well as new public spaces and mixed-use development. At the same time, staff recommends additional evaluation of the access lanes, use of bus priority treatments in them, and turning traffic provisions from the service road and main line on MD 355 be conducted to ensure consistency with design of other parts of the Rockville Pike and maximum operational safety and efficiency. Proposed transportation policy recommendations, such as reduced parking standards near Metro Stations and modifying acceptable levels of congestion, are important measures to consider.

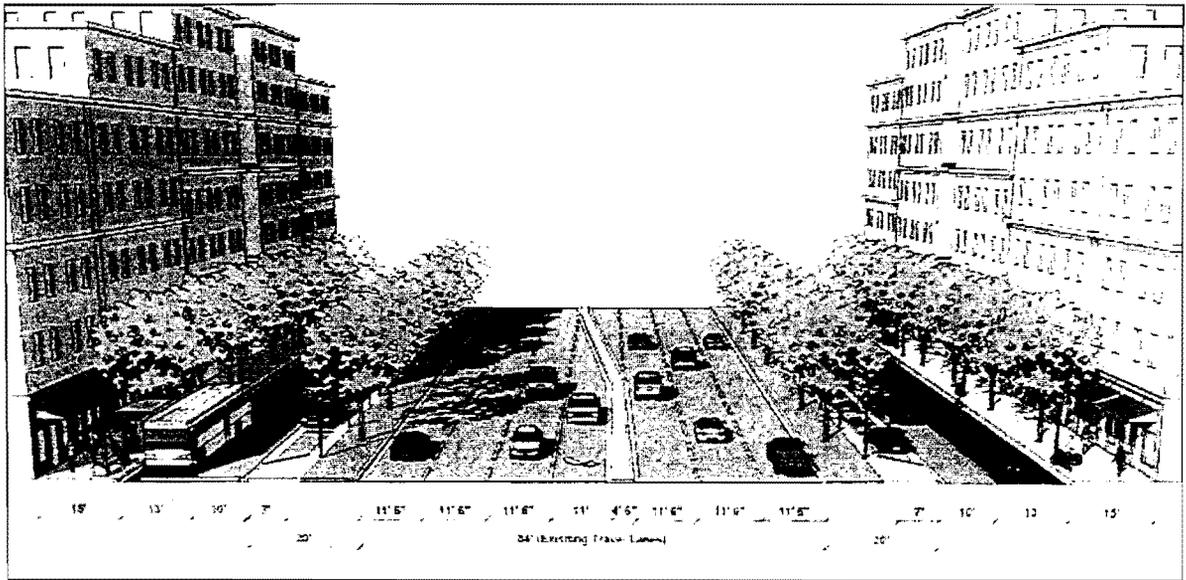
Transforming the Pike into a multi-way boulevard will require careful coordination between the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA), Montgomery County's Department of Transportation (MCDOT), and the City. The Draft Plan should include alternatives that provide for bus priority opportunities in the Corridor. Planning staff will continue to collaborate with City of Rockville staff as the Draft Plan moves through the City's approval process.

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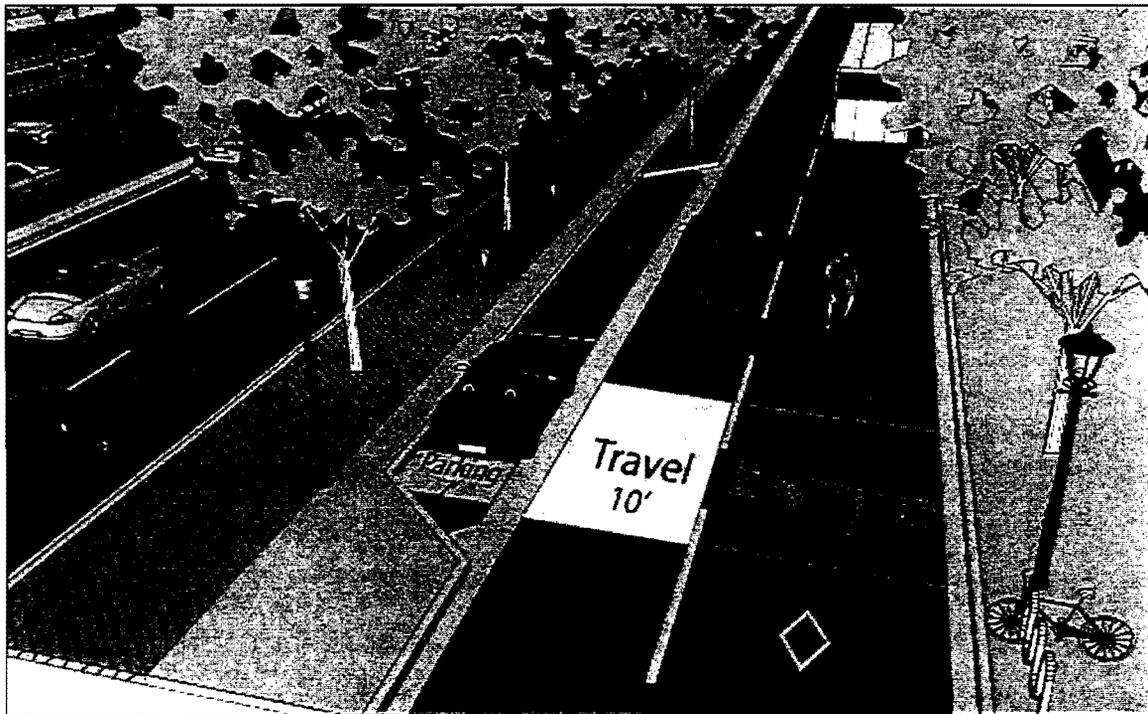
Attachments

1. Proposed Multi-Way Boulevard
2. Proposed Access Lanes
3. City of Rockville Draft Rockville Pike Corridor Neighborhood Plan

ATTACHMENT 1



ATTACHMENT 2



Proposed Access Lanes



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN

March 22, 2011

Mr. John Tyner, Chair
City of Rockville Planning Commission
Rockville City Hall
111 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

SUBJECT: City of Rockville Draft MD 355 Corridor Neighborhood Plan

Dear Mr. Tyner:

At the regular meeting of the Montgomery County Planning Board on March 3, 2011, we reviewed the City of Rockville Draft MD 355 Corridor Neighborhood Plan. Participants in our discussion included David Levy, Rockville's Chief of Long-Range Planning and Redevelopment; Peter Campanides of the City of Rockville's Department of Public Works; and Reena Matthews and Eric Beckett of the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA). The Planning Board would like to transmit these comments for your public hearing record and upcoming worksessions.

The Planning Board is supportive of the City's efforts to enhance Rockville Pike into a mixed-use destination with new public spaces, an improved walking and biking environment, and a new local street network. Rockville Pike will be transformed into an urban boulevard. In addition, the proposed Form Code and policy recommendations in the Draft Plan would advance development implementation for the City.

The Planning Board is concerned, however, about the relationship between the City's Draft Plan and its relationship to the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Study. The Draft Plan for Rockville Pike proposes bus lanes on service roadways, which may limit the potential for integration into a more comprehensive BRT system along Rockville Pike.

Implementing priority bus treatments along Rockville Pike (MD 355) and other major corridors is an important countywide objective. The functional coordination and facility design along Rockville Pike will need to be determined after review of the MCDOT Countywide BRT study to be completed this spring. The White Flint Sector Plan has explicit language indicating that the MCDOT BRT study will be used to make a final determination on the MD 355 right-of-way and location of priority transit treatment. We urge the Planning Commission and Mayor and Council to incorporate similar language in your draft plan documents, and to revisit the issue after public discussion of the County's BRT study has been completed.

Mr. John Tyner
March 22, 2011
Page Two

We provide the following additional comments on the Draft Plan:

- We support the general Plan vision to transform *Rockville's Pike* into a more walkable and transit-supportive urban community.
- We will continue to coordinate comments on BRT accommodation as both the MCDOT study and the City's master plan move through their respective review processes.
- We support the Plan's recommendation to reconsider greater levels of congestion in the vicinity of the Twinbrook Metrorail Station as potentially appropriate to support planned growth, and the investigation of innovative financing mechanisms to implement changes along MD 355.
- We support transportation policy recommendations, including reduced parking standards near Metro stations and enhancing transportation demand management requirements.

Thank you for providing the necessary information to make our review of the City's Draft Plan possible. We will look forward to working with your staff on a working group that the SHA plans to gather to help make county-wide BRT a success. Please feel free to contact my office if we can provide you with any pertinent information.

Sincerely,



Françoise M. Carrier
Chair

FMC:ny:ha

cc: David Levy
Susan Swift