PUBLIC NOTICE

In compliance with Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (49 USC 303), hereinafter referred to as "Section 4(f)," and its implementing regulations codified at 23 CFR Part 774, the Montgomery County Department of Transportation is notifying the public through this notice that it will request the Federal Highway Administration make a de minimis (or minor) impact finding in accordance with Section 4(f) regarding the permanent effects of the proposed Piney Meetinghouse Road bridge replacement on a portion of Watts Branch Stream Valley Park, and to provide the opportunity for public review and comment of this proposed determination.

Section 6009(a) of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) allows the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to determine that certain transportation uses of Section 4(f) land will have no adverse effect on protected resources. With respect to publicly owned parks and recreation areas, and finding of *de minimis* impact may occur if a transportation project does not "adversely affect the activities, features and attributes" of the Section 4(f)resource. When this is the case, the finding FHWA requires written concurrence from the official(s) with jurisdiction over the resource. Public notice and opportunity for public review and comment on the finding is required.

The purpose of this project is to improve safety and to extend the service life of the bridge. The 2013 Biennial Bridge Inspection Report stated the current bridge beams are in poor condition and previous studies have already substantiated the need for a full bridge replacement. There have also been several instances of the stream eroding the side slope of the approach sufficiently to require side slope and roadway repairs. The replacement structure will consist of two 11-foot travel lanes, 5-foot shoulders, and bridge railings. The proposed shoulders are five feet wide to accommodate bicycle traffic. To reduce future meandering of the stream, correcting the stream planform upstream of the structure will provide scour relief and protection of the roadway embankment. Stream bank stone toe protection armoring will also be constructed.

Replacement of the bridge will involve permanent right-of-way impacts to the Watts Branch Stream Valley Park, managed by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC). Although the right-of-way to be transferred from the recreation area is considered a "use" as defined by Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act (1966), there will be no negative impact on the activities, features, and attributes that qualify the recreation area for protection under Section 4(f).

M-NCPPC, as officials with jurisdiction, concurred with the *de minimis* finding on May 22, 2015. The public is requested to provide comments on this finding. Comments regarding the proposed Section 4(f) *de minimis* impact findings may be submitted to FHWA and MCDOT in writing or through the MCDOT website during the 15-day comment period; the comment deadline is June 22, 2015. Written comments may be provided to:

Montgomery County Department of Transportation
100 Edison Park Drive, 4th Floor
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20878
ATTN: Piney Meetinghouse Road