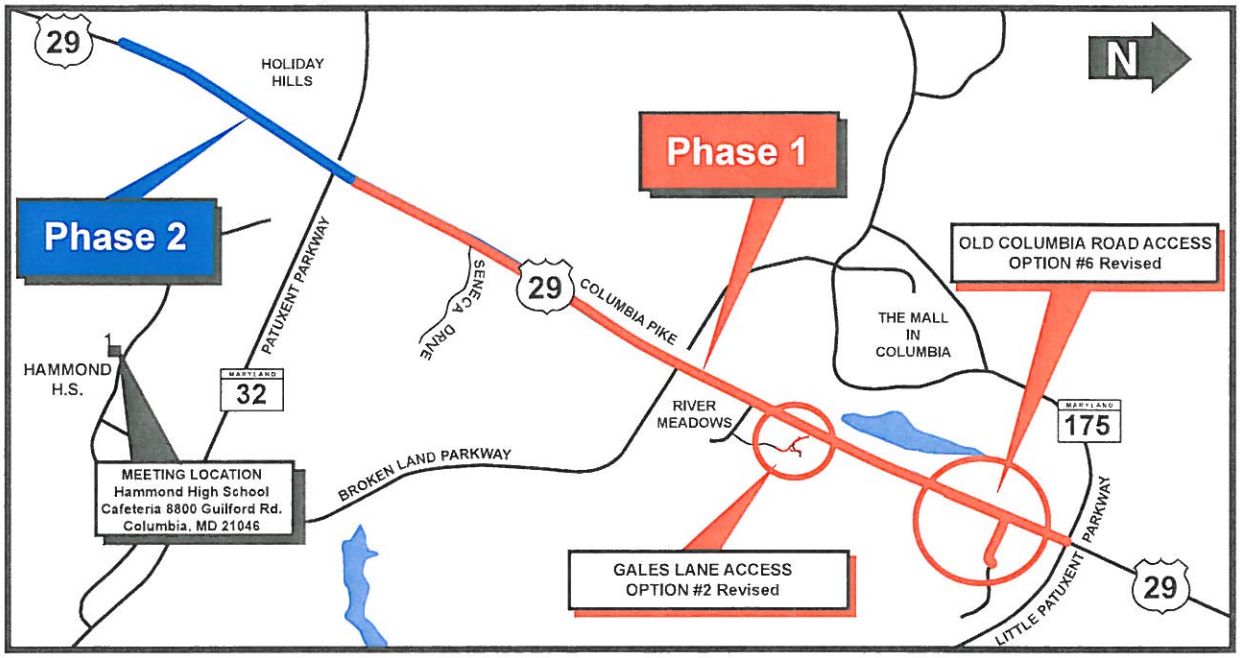
US 29 Improvements Project

PROJECT NEWSLETTER • SUMMER 2011

SHA Identifies Preferred Options, Public Meetings Planned for September

The State Highway Administration (SHA) is making progress with the US 29 Improvements Project. The project includes the addition of a third through lane northbound on US 29 from the Middle Patuxent River to just south of MD 175, plus access management improvements at three locations. The project will be designed and constructed in two phases. Phase 1 extends from south of Seneca Drive to south of MD 175; and Phase 2 extends from the Middle Patuxent River to south of Seneca Drive.



SHA has evaluated the feedback received during last year's series of public meetings and taken a fresh look at the numerous options that were presented. As a result, access options have been identified for Old Columbia Road and Gales Lane. An option has not been identified for Rivers Edge Road. Phase 2, which includes the Rivers Edge Road improvements, has been placed on hold due to lack of funding. At this time, SHA will proceed with the design of Phase 1 only.

Public Outreach Events

The project team plans to conduct two community meetings in September 2011, to discuss Phase 1 of the project, where additional details will be presented. Below are the meeting details:

WHO:	**Residents of Old Columbia Road and Oakland Mills Village**	**Residents of Gales Lane and Oakland Mills Village**
WHEN:	**Thursday, September 22, 2011 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM**	**Monday, September 26, 2011 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM**
WHERE:	**Hammond High School 8800 Guilford Road Columbia, MD 21044**	**Hammond High School 8800 Guilford Road Columbia, MD 21044**
WHAT	**This meeting will focus on the Alternate for Old Columbia Road**	**This meeting will focus on the Alternate for Gales Lane**

Displays of the option for Gales Lane and Old Columbia Road will be available for viewing, and SHA representatives will be available to discuss the revisions and modifications to the preferred options and answer questions in an open house format. There will be no formal presentation.

continued on next page

continued from front

Project Background and History

US 29, from Howard County line to MD 99, is a vital part of the transportation network serving Howard County. Over the years, it has undergone numerous improvements in many locations in order to provide additional capacity and to upgrade the facility to an access-control freeway.

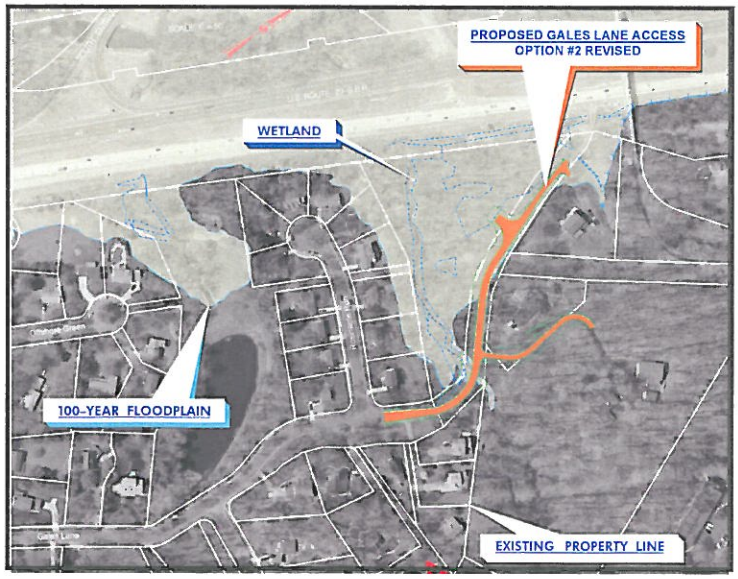
In the 1950s, a new two-lane roadway and bridge over the Patuxent River was constructed to replace Old Columbia Pike. In the 1960s, the connection north of St. John's Lane to I-70 was added. In the 1970s, US 29 was reconstructed as a divided highway, and 1987 a project planning study was completed to upgrade the facility to a six-lane freeway with grade-separated interchanges. Construction began on the MD 175 interchange soon after the study was complete; the interchanges at MD 32 and Broken Land Parkway followed soon after. Most recently, the Johns Hopkins Road interchange was completed in 2003. The long-term objective is to ultimately convert US 29 to a controlled-access freeway; and Howard County has long supported this approach to improve safety and mobility along the US 29 corridor.

This current project is part of the overall, master-planned US 29 corridor improvements. It consists of widening the northbound section of US 29 from the Middle Patuxent River to just south of MD 175, a distance of four miles, from two to three through lanes. It will upgrade the northbound section to match the southbound section, as well as upstream and downstream of the northbound section, which are already three through lanes. It will improve safety and reduce congestion, which the existing study area is currently experiencing during evening peak traffic hours. The project will include access controls and provide noise abatement measures. The project is listed in the 2012-2017 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP); and is partially funded for Preliminary Engineering (PE) only. Only the first phase is funded for Preliminary Engineering.

US 29 Improvements - Access Management Plan

If you would like to view the displays for each of the options listed below, they can be found on SHA's website: (www.roads.maryland.gov) in the "Maps" section of the "Project Information" webpage for this project. The following is the URL address: http://apps.roads.maryland.gov/WebProjectLifeCycle/ProjectMaps.aspx?projectno=HO3172113

The following options were presented at the community and public meetings. Option #1 is the "No-Build" option, or no improvements along US 29 northbound.



Gales Lane:

- Option #2 - Connects the two presently separate sections of Gales Lane just north of Rosinante Run and closes the entrance along US 29 northbound.
- Option #3 - Aquires the three homes on Gales Lane and closes the entrance along US 29 northbound.
- Option #4 - Maintains right-in, right-out access along US 29 northbound; and provides an acceleration deceleration lane.

Based on feedback from the communities and Howard County, Option #2, shown above is considered to be the preferred option. Although Option #2 impacts more environmental features than the other options, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, because it addresses the project's purpose and need, and it addresses the most crucial criterion, safety. The SHA has revised this option to address feedback.

Old Columbia Road:

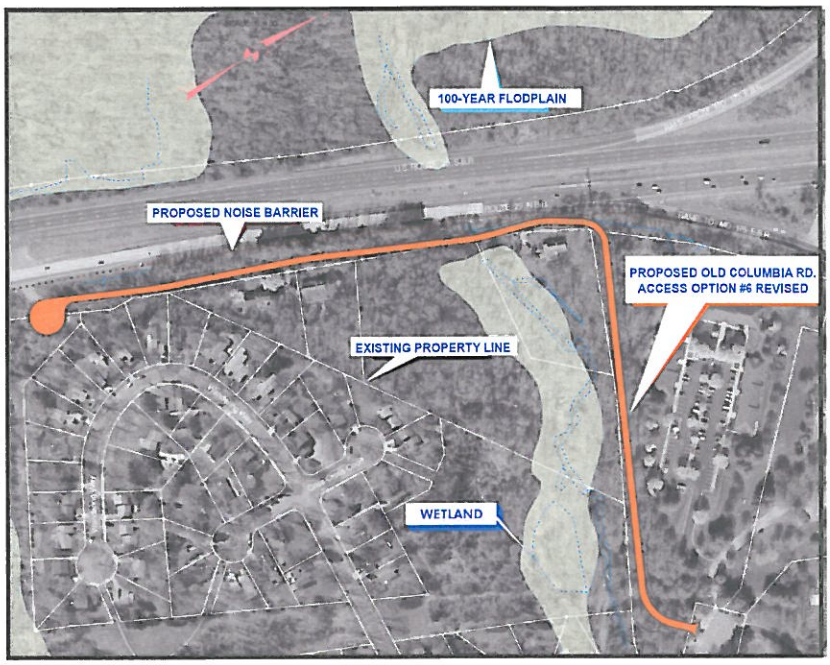
- Option #2 - Connects Old Columbia Road to Twin Knolls Road; this alignment crosses through the stream and floodplain and closes the entrance along US 29 northbound.

- Option #3 - Aquires the three homes on Old Columbia Road and closes the entrance along US 29 northbound.

- Option #4 - Connects Old Columbia Road to Wandering Way and closes the entrance along US 29 northbound. This alignment traverses through existing open space and connects just east of 9474 Wandering Way.

- Option #5 - Connects Old Columbia Road to Wandering Way; aquiring the 9536 Wandering Way property and closes the entrance along US 29 northbound.

- Option #6 - Connects Old Columbia Road to Twin Knolls Road and closes the entrance along US 29 northbound. This alignment extends Old Columbia Road north and runs through a 50-foot, reserved right-of-way.



- Option #7 - Maintains access along US 29 northbound at Old Columbia Road; closes the access to southbound US 29; provides right-in, right-out movements only.

Based on feedback from the communities and Howard County, Option #6, shown above is considered to be the preferred option. It avoids major environmental impacts, addresses the Oakland Mills Village community concerns; and addresses the project purpose and need and safety concerns. The SHA has revised this option to avoid the aquisition of a historic property.

Rivers Edge Road

After considering the community comments and feedback, SHA will re-evaluate the underpass option, which was the preferred alternative in the 1987 US 29 corridor planning study to update geometric and cost elements. Due to lack of funding, Phase 2 of this project which includes the improvements at Rivers Edge Road has been placed on hold. SHA will proceed with the design of Phase 1 only and will fully explore *all options* for Rivers Edge Road access when future funds are identified.

Summary of Public and Community Comments

The SHA held three community meetings and one public meeting during the spring and summer of 2010 for the communities located within the US 29 project limits. The objective of the meetings was to present the proposed design of the US 29 northbound widening, to discuss the access control measures at Rivers Edge Road, Gales Lane and Old Columbia Road, and to gather feedback from the communities.

Two meetings were held for the Oakland Mills Village Community. The first meeting was held on April 26, 2010 at the Columbia Association Headquarters, and the second meeting was held on May 18, 2010 at the Other Barn. Altogether, 168 people attended both meetings; SHA received 18 comment cards and two petitions.

continued on back

continued from previous page

For Old Columbia Access Road - Option #6 was preferred by most attendees. Many attendees support Option #6, because it will avoid major impacts to open spaces, the existing community, and other environmental features. For Gales Access Road - The residents on Gales Lane preferred Option #4; however, the public supported Option #2 because of safety concerns along US 29.

One meeting was held for the three communities served by Rivers Edge Road. A total of 356 people attended the May 24, 2010 meeting at Atholton High School. The SHA received 61 comment cards and one petition. The petition was signed by 472 individuals in favor of a grade-separated intersection option. Although an interchange option was not presented at the meeting, the community requested SHA investigate an interchange option. The community also stated an interchange offers the best operational benefit and the most direct access to MD 32 to and from the community, therefore an interchange should be considered part of any solution for Rivers Edge Road.

A public meeting for the overall project was held on June 2, 2010 at Hammond High School. The meeting was attended by 126 people. During the meeting, the US 29 corridor improvement project was reintroduced to the public by providing an update on issues and studies such as the access measures at Rivers Edge Road, Gales Lane and Old Columbia, as well as noise abatement measures.

Thank You

The SHA and the project team thank everyone who participated in the community and public meetings and for their continuing support of the US 29 capacity and safety improvements project. Please direct all questions and comments to:

Ms. MarieFrance Guiteau
Project Manager
Toll Free: 1-888-228-5003
Email: mguiteau@sha.state.md.us

printed on recycled paper

MD Relay Service for teletype users can be reached at 7-1-1.
For more information on this and other SHA projects, visit our project website at www.roads.maryland.gov ,
click on Projects & Studies/SHA Projects Page, and select the appropriate county.

Martin O'Malley, Governor
Anthony Brown, Lieutenant Governor
Beverley K. Swaim-Staley, Secretary
Darrell B. Mobley, Acting Administrator

Maryland Department of Transportation
State Highway Administration
Office of Highway Development
Mail Stop C-102
707 North Calvert Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

PRSRT FIRST CLASS
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BALTIMORE, MD
PERMIT NO. 4315