



Welcome

MD 97 (Montgomery Hills) Project Planning Study

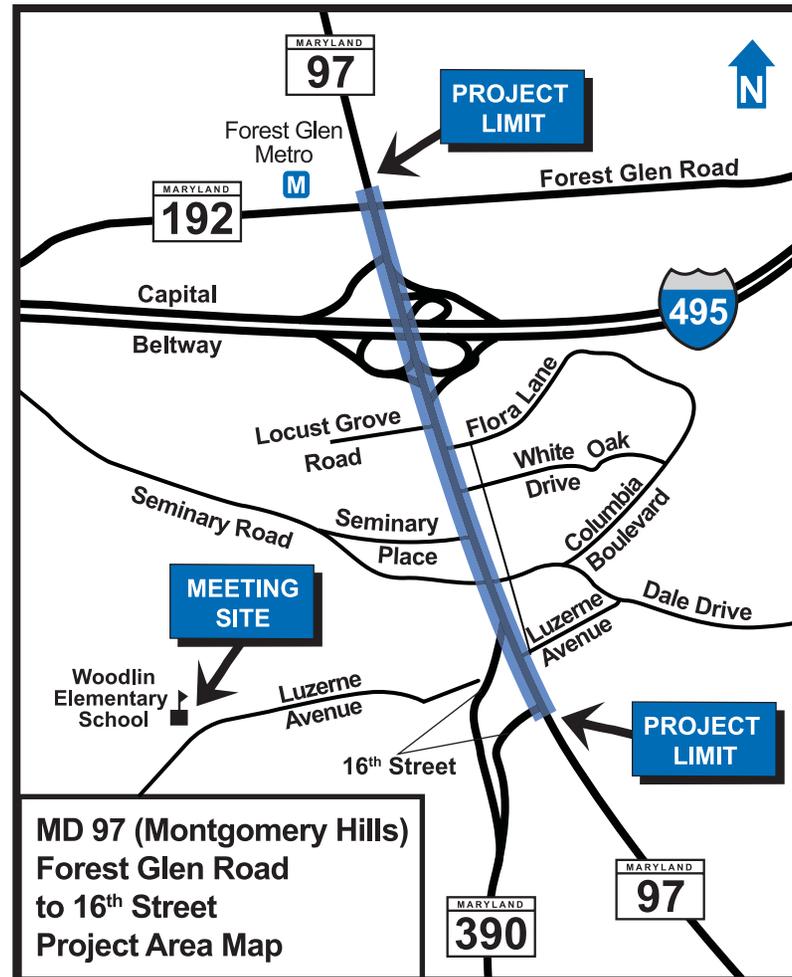
Public Meeting



PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

- **To formally introduce the public to the MD 97 (Montgomery Hills) Project Planning Study topics, goals, and timeline**
- **To provide an opportunity for interested individuals, associations, businesses, citizen groups, and government agencies to offer comments on priorities and challenges within the project area**

PROJECT LOCATION



PROJECT PURPOSE

To establish a balanced approach to transportation within the MD 97 corridor that:

- **Evaluates vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle mobility and safety concerns**
- **Accommodates proposed transit enhancements**
- **Establishes a sense of place within the corridor**

ENVIRONMENTAL



CONSIDERATIONS

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

Requires that we do everything possible to protect and enhance the natural, cultural and human environment. A complete study of all reasonable alternatives (including measures to avoid and minimize impacts) must be prepared, and the results must be made available to public officials and citizens before decisions are made.

Natural Environment

- Geology/Groundwater Resources • Soils • Surface Water
- Floodplains • Wetlands • Aquatic Life • Wildlife

Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, Nontidal Wetlands Protection Act

Regulates dredge and fill of Waters of the United States. Guidelines published by the Environmental Protection Agency for evaluating alternatives require that the Corps of Engineers evaluate the proposed project for environmental impacts (including historic and rare/threatened/endangered species impacts) and select the least environmentally damaging, practicable alternative.

Endangered Species Act

Ensures that actions are not taken to jeopardize the continued existence of endangered or threatened species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of the critical habitat of such species.

Cultural Environment

- Historic Structures • Archaeological Sites

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

Requires that agencies take into account the effects of a project on properties that are included in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.



Socio-Economic Environment

- Demographics • Community Facilities
- Economic Setting and Land Use • Noise • Air

Section 4(f) of the US Department of Transportation Act

Requires that special effort be made to preserve publicly owned public parks and recreation areas, wildlife/waterfowl refuges and historic sites. No project which requires land from these resources may be approved unless 1) there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of the land and 2) the action includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the property resulting from such use.

Clean Air Act and Clean Air Act Amendments

A microscale air quality analysis must be performed to determine if there are violations of the State or National Ambient Air Quality Standards for carbon monoxide. Also, a conformity analysis must be completed by the Metropolitan Planning Organization to make sure the Transportation Improvement Plan conforms to the State Implementation Plan.

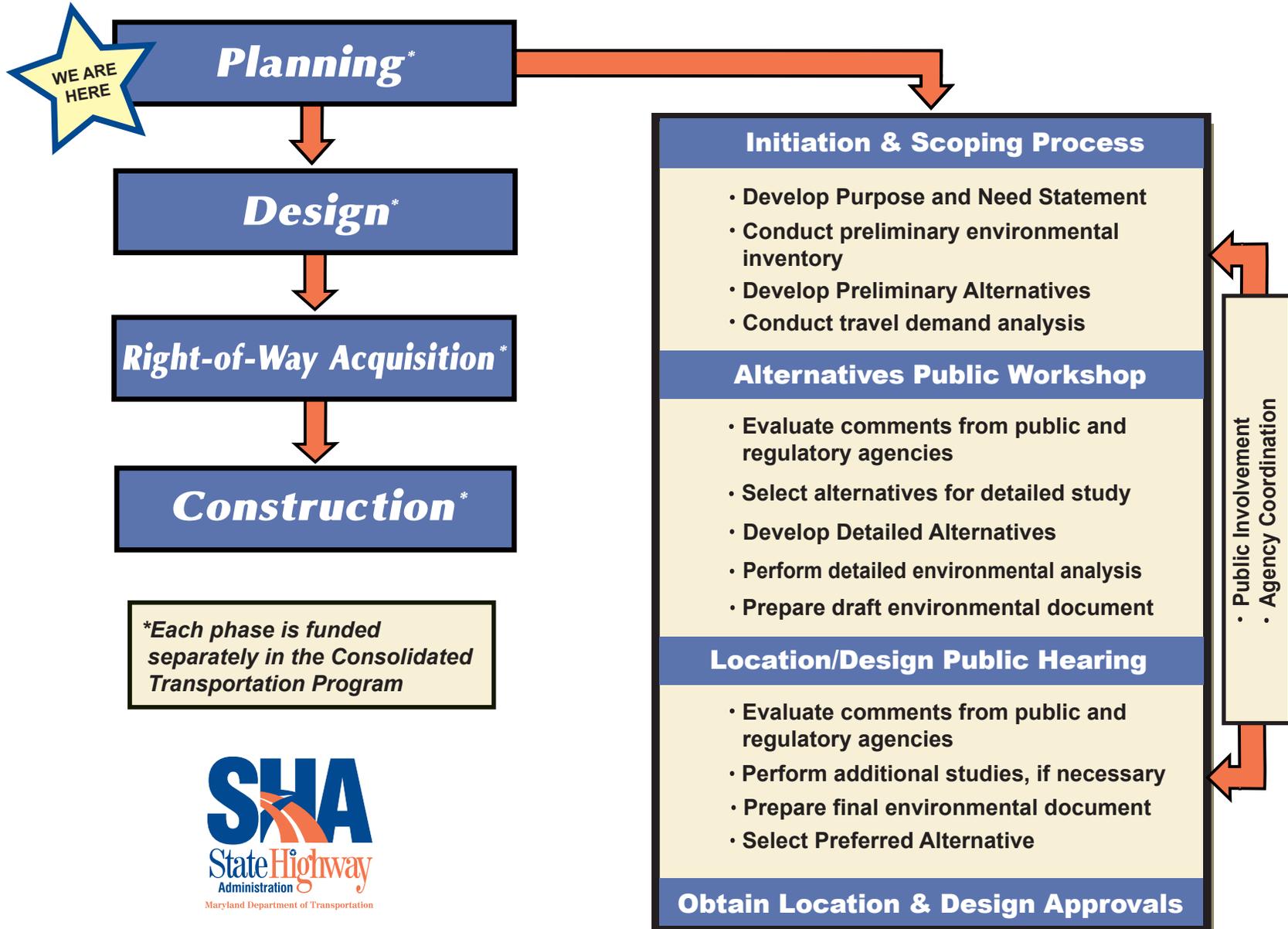
Farmland Protection Policy Act

Requires that federal programs minimize conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses (does not apply to farmland that is zoned or committed (planned) for urban development).

Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice)

Requires that agencies identify and address disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority or low-income populations.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS



EXISTING CONDITIONS

ROADWAY

- 7-lane roadway (3 NB lanes, 3 SB lanes, reversible lane)
- Signalized intersections at:
 - Forest Glen Road
 - I-495 interchange
 - Seminary Place
 - Columbia Boulevard
 - 16th Street
- Numerous commercial access points
- High traffic volumes
- High crash rates
- Poor Level of Service at many intersections

PEDESTRIAN / BICYCLE

- Sidewalks not compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act standards
- Limited crosswalks
- No on-road bicycle accommodations

TRANSIT SERVICES

- Metrobus
- Ride-On Bus
- Metrorail



What is Level of Service (LOS)?



Level of Service is a quantitative measure of traffic operational conditions. Ranges of operation are defined for each type of roadway section (signalized intersections, freeways, ramp junctions and weaving sections) and are related to the amount of traffic demand at a given time as compared to the capacity of that type of roadway section.

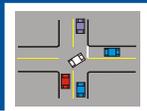
Six levels of service are defined for each type of roadway section and are given letter designations from A to F, with A representing good operating conditions and F representing unsatisfactory operating conditions.

Intersection

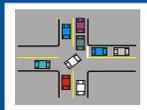
- Highly stable, free-flow condition with little or no congestion
- Delay: <10 seconds/vehicle



- Stable, free-flow condition with little congestion
- Delay: 10 to 20 seconds/vehicle



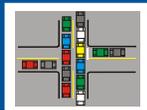
- Free-flow condition with moderate congestion
- Delay: 20 to 35 seconds/vehicle



- Approaching unstable condition with increasing congestion
- Delay: 35 to 55 seconds/vehicle



- Unstable, congested condition
- Delay: 55 to 80 seconds/vehicle



- Stop and go
- Delay: >80 seconds/vehicle



Roadway

LOS A



- Free flowing
- Uninterrupted vehicle

LOS B



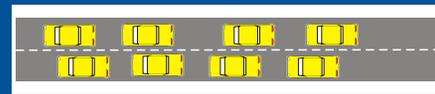
- Stable flow
- Other vehicles are more noticeable

LOS C



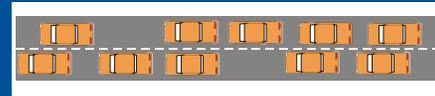
- Stable flow
- Vehicle operations affected by other vehicles

LOS D



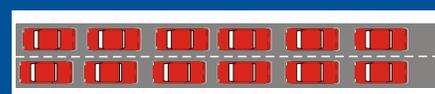
- High density free flow
- Operation of vehicle is affected by other vehicles

LOS E



- High density traffic flow, nearing capacity
- Operating conditions are extremely poor

LOS F

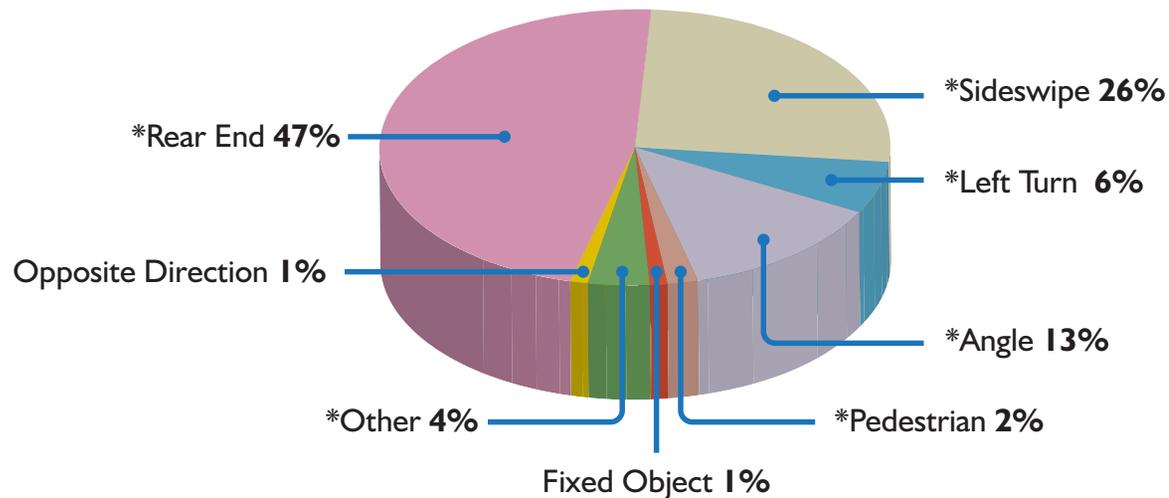


- Forced or breakdown flow
- Amount of traffic exceeds capacity

SAFETY SUMMARY

MD 97 CRASHES 2007-2009

(based on 380 police-reported crashes)



*Crash types significantly higher than statewide average

Notes:

- Truck-related crashes accounted for 6% of the overall total
- No crashes involving parked vehicles occurred during this period

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Numerous businesses along MD 97
- Residential neighborhoods
- Environmental Justice populations
- Community facilities:
 - Churches / cemeteries
 - Montgomery Hills Park
 - Public parking lots
 - Water tower
 - Forest Glen Metro Station
 - Silver Spring Volunteer Fire Department
- One identified historic district and several potentially historic buildings
- Minimal natural environmental features
- Potential hazardous materials sites

PROJECT NEEDS

Improved Vehicular Circulation

- The Montgomery Hills section of MD 97 carries more vehicular traffic than any other non-interstate road in Montgomery County. Access to side streets and local businesses along the corridor is difficult.



Unobstructed Pedestrian Access

- Sidewalks along this corridor are generally non-compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. Signs and utility poles on sidewalks in both directions along MD 97 present numerous obstacles and pinch points for wheelchair accessibility.



PROJECT NEEDS

Designated Bicycle Access

- The lack of dedicated bicycle lanes and road-sharing signage or markings has made it difficult for bicyclists to travel through the area. Conditions created by heavy traffic volumes and the lack of shoulders discourages bicycle use.



Improved Transit Accessibility

- Transit accessibility within the study corridor is impeded by the high levels of traffic congestion along MD 97 and the lack of adequate pedestrian/bicyclist connectivity throughout the study area.



PROJECT NEEDS

Improved Safety

- 380 police-reported crashes occurred from 2007 through 2009. Approximately 150 of those crashes (40 percent) resulted in injuries; none were fatal.



Established Sense of Place

- Existing conditions create a disorienting environment for motorists, especially for those exiting and entering I-495. For motorists unfamiliar with the corridor, the reversible lane, cluttered signage, and unclear lane markings are a source of apprehension.





WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU (STICKER EXERCISE)

For this exercise, please place your stickers under the project needs categories that are most important to you. You can use all of your stickers on one category or distribute them among several choices.

This information will become a major consideration for the project as we move into the alternatives development stage in the process.

Please speak to a team member if you have questions.



PROJECT NEEDS

Improved Vehicular Circulation	Unobstructed Pedestrian Access	Designated Bicycle Access
Improved Transit Accessibility	Improved Safety	Established Sense of Place

If you know of project needs not listed on this board, please write them on the Additional Project Needs board.

PROJECT CHALLENGES

- **Limited Right-of-Way: Multiple access points and varying building offsets will make it difficult to propose alternatives involving significant widening or drainage upgrades.**
- **Multiple Utilities: Overhead power lines are expensive to relocate and will become difficult to avoid with widening or sidewalk modifications.**
- **Stormwater Management: Existing stormwater management accommodations are scarce, and right-of-way constraints will make it difficult to upgrade the project area to current environmental standards.**

PROJECT CHALLENGES

- **Heavy Congestion: High vehicular volumes will make it difficult to propose improvements that will impact the overall Level Of Service, especially as it relates to I-495.**
- **Balancing the Needs of All Modes: Limited right-of-way and heavy congestion in this area will make it difficult to accommodate all modes of travel (driving, walking, cycling, and transit). Striking an appropriate balance with the various modes of travel may result in trade-offs as alternatives are developed.**

AS VEHICLE OPERATORS ON MARYLAND ROADS BICYCLISTS HAVE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

 **It's the law:**
Section 21-1202 Annotated Code of Maryland

"Vehicle" means any device in, on, or by which any individual or property is or might be transported or towed on a highway.

Annotated Code of Maryland

 **It's MDOT Policy:**
Twenty-Year Bicycle and Pedestrian Access Master Plan

 **As part of roadway construction projects, SHA provides on-road features like these:**



**wide outside lane for
bicycle compatibility**



**minimum four-foot-wide
shoulder**



**bicycle lane/pocket
bike lane markings**



**Bicycle Route & Share the
Road signage**

 **And off-road features like:**



shared-use path (hiker/biker trail)



 **Bicycles provide a valuable transportation option for many people and will help Maryland meet our state's long-term transportation needs.**

BICYCLE FAQ

Why are bicyclists allowed on the road?

Bicyclists are vehicle drivers, too. By law, “vehicle” means “any device in, on, or by which any individual or property is or might be transported or towed on a highway.” (Section 11-176, Annotated Code of Maryland) Every person operating a bicycle in a public area has all the rights granted to and is subject to all the duties required of the driver of a vehicle. (Section 21-1202, Annotated Code of Maryland)

Why are bicyclists allowed to ride next to cars that are going fast?

Bicyclists are prohibited on roadways with a posted maximum speed greater than 50 mph unless a continuous paved shoulder or bicycle lane is provided. In addition, a person may not ride a bicycle on an expressway or on any controlled-access highway with signs stating that bicycles are prohibited.

There’s a hiker/biker trail right next to the road. Shouldn’t bicyclists be riding there?:

Maryland law requires SHA to include bicycle accommodations in roadway construction projects whenever appropriate and feasible. That’s because not everyone who rides a bicycle does so for the same purpose. Hiker/biker trails are shared-use paths suitable for joggers, pedestrians, dog-walkers, children, babies in strollers, inexperienced or recreational cyclists, and others who enjoy exercising and spending time outdoors. Individuals who use a bicycle as their primary means of transportation may find that on-road bicycle accommodations better suit their needs. By removing themselves from the “mix” of hiker/biker trail-users, on-road bicyclists can reach their destinations more efficiently and lessen the risk that trail-users will find themselves in the path of bicyclists focused on getting from Point A to Point B as quickly as possible.

Shouldn’t bicyclists ride on sidewalks?

The law allows bicyclists to ride on sidewalks only in Montgomery County. Not permitting bicycles on sidewalks minimizes conflicts between bicyclists and pedestrians.

Isn’t it a law that bicyclists have to wear a helmet?

In Maryland, everyone under age 16 is required to wear a helmet when riding a bicycle on public property. Some local jurisdictions have requirements for helmet use that are tougher than State law. Wearing a helmet is a good safety measure for everyone who rides a bike: 85 percent of head and brain injuries resulting from bicycle crashes could be prevented if riders wore bicycle safety helmets.

Every day as I drive downtown I see bicyclists and motorists behaving in rude and dangerous ways. Whatever happened to common courtesy?

Motorists and bicyclists who share the road—especially in heavily traveled urban and suburban areas—need to look out for one another. Motorists should leave at least three feet between their vehicles and any bicycles they pass, and bicyclists should leave at least three feet between themselves and parked cars. By law, bicycles are vehicles: motorists should treat them as such, and bicyclists should obey all traffic laws, including those that govern left- and right-turns, lights and stop signs, right-of-way, and proper lane position.

I bike—where can I get more information on bicycling in Maryland?

Additional information is available on SHA’s website at www.marylandroads.com, click on Bicycling under EXPLORE MD, or by telephone at 1-888-204-4828.

Handout materials are also available at the bicycling station during today’s meeting.

RELATED PROJECTS

Montgomery County BRT Study

- In July 2011, Montgomery County DOT released its Countywide Bus Rapid Transit Feasibility Study, which outlines a 150-mile bus rapid transit (BRT) network of 16 routes throughout the county. Recommended improvements for various segments include dedicated bus lanes, traffic signal prioritization, bus queue jumps, and premium upgraded bus stations. The MD 97 (Montgomery Hills) area was evaluated as part of the “MD 97/ Georgia Avenue South (4b)” route. The study can be found on Montgomery County’s website at www.montgomerycountymd.gov.

Montgomery County Forest Glen Passageway Feasibility Study

- To improve pedestrian access to the Forest Glen Metro Station, Montgomery County DOT is currently evaluating a number of options to address safety concerns, especially those related to crossing MD 97 and to ADA accessibility. Alternatives under consideration include pedestrian/ bicyclist bridge and tunnel alternatives at the MD 97/MD 192 intersection. The county anticipates holding a workshop to present the alternatives to the public on Tuesday, April 10, 2012.

RELATED PROJECTS

Montgomery County Seminary Road Project

- **Montgomery County DOT is conducting a separate project on Seminary Road at Brookville Road/Linden Lane/Seminary Place/Second Avenue, just west of MD 97. The project involves reducing the number of intersections from six to four and making a number of roadway improvements, including lane reductions, signage modifications, and additional bicycle and parking accommodations. The project is on hold pending funding decisions.**

Montgomery County Georgia Avenue Study

- **The Montgomery County Planning Department completed the Georgia Avenue Study in 2008. This study is an urban design analysis of the Georgia Avenue Corridor throughout Montgomery County and contains a design vision for the corridor intended to guide future master and sector plans and infrastructure improvements. The MD 97 (Montgomery Hills) Project Planning Study will consider these recommendations when developing alternatives.**



NEXT STEPS

Purpose and Need Workshop – March 2012

Develop Preliminary Alternatives – Spring/Summer 2012

Conduct Alternatives Public Workshop – Winter 2012/2013

Conduct Location/Design Public Hearing – Winter 2013/2014

Identify Selected Alternative – Fall 2014

Receive Location/Design Approval – Spring 2015



STAY CONNECTED

For more information and updates on the MD 97 (Montgomery Hills) Project Planning Study, please visit www.roads.maryland.gov under Projects and Studies, SHA Projects Page, Montgomery County.

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