Stream impacts would occur to the Mill Branch and Green Branch stream systems, both of which drain into the Patuxent River. However, none of the build alternatives would effect the 100-year floodplain.

Available data and site reconnaissance revealed that wetlands are present within the project study area. All wetland areas are non-tidal and are either associated with unnamed tributaries of Mill Branch and Green Branch or are associated with existing stormwater management activities. Wetland impacts are expected to be minimal for any of the build alternatives.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service as well as the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Forest, Wildlife and Heritage Division indicated through previous correspondence that there are no Federally or state listed or rare, threatened, or endangered species occurring within the study area.

An initial site assessment was performed to determine the location and extent of any potentially hazardous materials within the project study area. Several potential sites were identified in the study area. Further evaluation of these sites will be conducted as this project moves forward.

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Informational Workshop for the US 301 / MD 197 Corridor Study

PROJECT NEWSLETTER No. 1

Maryland Department of Transportation
State Highway Administration
Office of Planning and Preliminary Engineering
P.O. Box 717, Mail Stop C-301
Baltimore, Maryland 21203-0717

Informational Workshop for the US 301 / MD 197 Corridor Study

North of Mount Oak Road to US 50 PROJECT NEWSLETTER No. 1

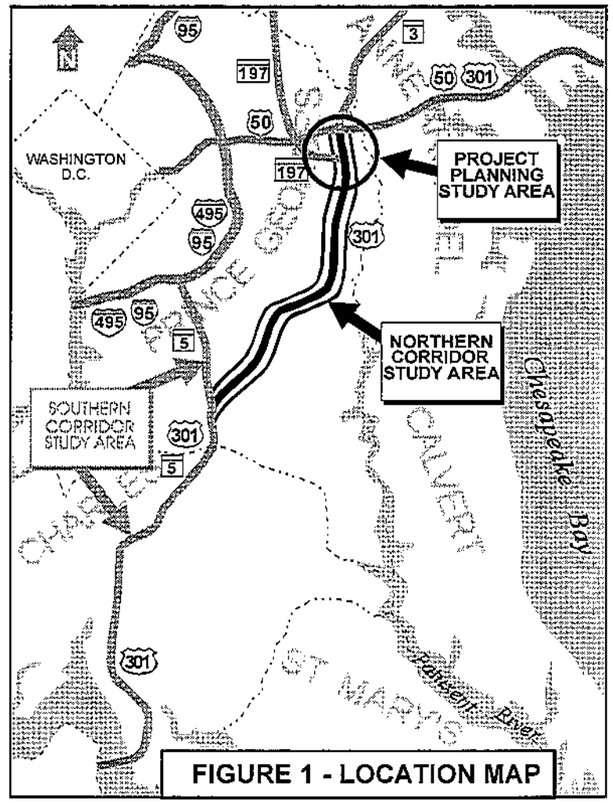

FIGURE 1 - LOCATION MAP

Welcome

We encourage you to review this newsletter to enhance your understanding of the proposed transportation improvements being presented at the US 301/MD 197 Informational Workshop on Wednesday, November 29th, 2000 at the Bowie City Hall, 2614 Kenhill Drive. Displays will be available from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. We hope you can join us!

The purpose of this Informational Workshop for the US 301 / MD 197 Corridor Study is to:

- Familiarize interested citizens with the project planning study
- Provide the public with an opportunity to participate in the overall planning process
- Publicly present the preliminary improvement concepts for the MD 197 Study
- Receive public comments on the preliminary alternatives

Overview

Ongoing study activities are being pursued in the US 301 Corridor in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The study area includes the US 301 Corridor from the Governor Nice Bridge to US 50. Based on travel patterns in the corridor, the US 301 Corridor was divided into two study portions. The Northern Corridor extends from the US 301/MD 5 interchange at T.B. north along US 301 to US 50. The Southern Corridor includes US 301 from the Governor Nice Bridge to the US 301/MD 5 Interchange at T.B. and MD 5 from MD 5/US 301 Interchange at T.B. to I-495. This newsletter focuses on efforts in the Northern Corridor. **(See Figure 1).**

The Northern Corridor study has been underway since 1996 and is near completion. A Draft Environmental Impact Statement was completed for the Northern Corridor and a Public Hearing was held in 1998. Pending approval of the Final Environmental Impact Statement, smaller, more specific breakout projects will be defined.

The first US 301 "breakout" project planning study for the Northern Corridor is the study area along US 301 from North of Mount Oak Road to US 50, in Bowie.

The US 301/MD 197 project planning study is a detailed engineering and environmental assessment that includes the development and evaluation of specific alternatives for the improvements in the study area.

Project Location / Existing Conditions

The study area is comprised of the northernmost 1.5 miles of US 301, including MD 197 west to Mitchellville Road. The study area is located in Prince George's County, just east of the corporate limits of Bowie **(See Figure 2)**. Generally, the study area limits are the US 301/US 50 ramps on the north, north of Mount Oak Road to the south, Mitchellville Road to the west and Prince George's Stadium on the east.

US 301 currently consists of four travel lanes, two northbound and two southbound. The two roadway portions are separated by a variable width median. There are auxiliary and turn lanes at several locations.

There are four signalized intersections within the study limits:

- Governor Bridge Road,
- Heritage Boulevard
- MD 197 (Collington Road), and
- Mill Branch Road/ Excalibur Road

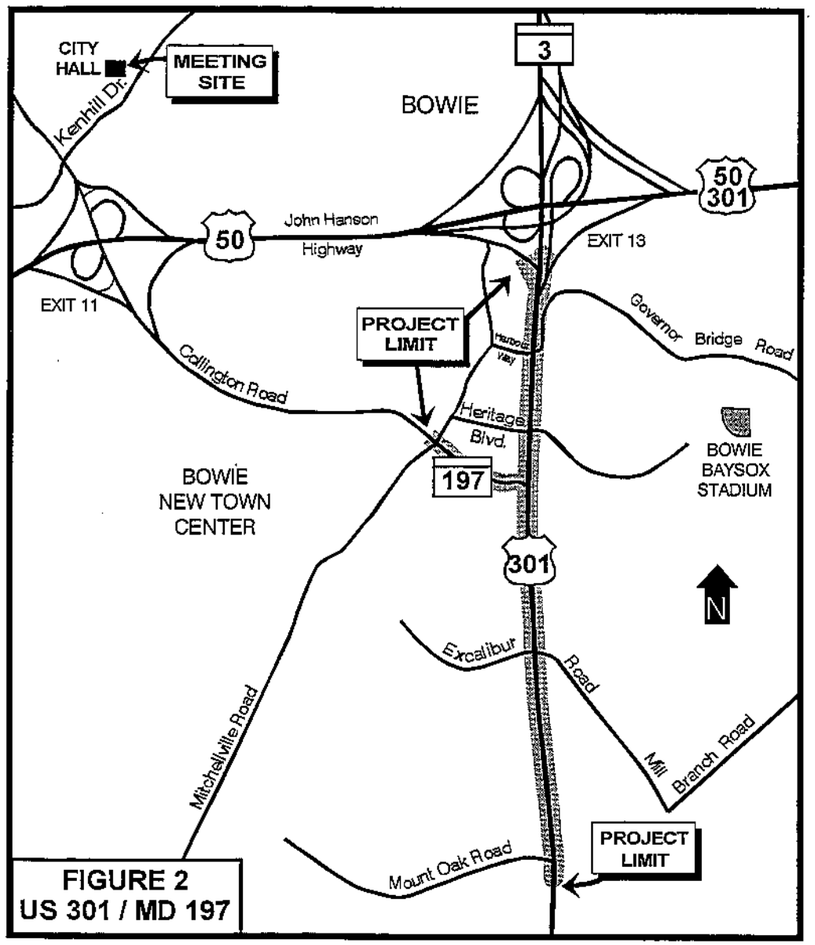

FIGURE 2
US 301 / MD 197

MD 197 is a major connecting roadway (four lane divided) on the west side of US 301. MD 197 is a critical link in the regional transportation network serving the City of Bowie and areas north and west of US 301, including Laurel and Greenbelt.

Project Need

Over the last five years there has been a large amount of development adjacent to US 301 and in the surrounding area. Extensive growth in the next 10 to 15 years will dramatically increase the traffic on this section of US 301. Traffic increases will be comprised of local and commercial related trips and through trips from region to region.

The existing Average Daily Traffic (ADT) volumes indicate an average of 49,200 vehicles per day (VPD) along US 301 in the vicinity of MD 197. Traffic volumes are expected to continually grow to an average of 83,900 VPD by 2020 in this location.

The occurrence of rear end accidents on this segment of US 301 is above the statewide average for similarly designed roadways. Accident rates have doubled over the last three years, with 60% of the accidents occurring at intersections. This is a significant indication of rapidly increasing congestion and reduced levels of service. The large amount of development along this segment of US 301 indicates a need for access controls.

Public Involvement

A Focus Group was formed in February of this year consisting of local business and property owners, and various community leaders. This group has been meeting monthly, with the SHA study team to help develop transportation alternatives for this section of the US 301 corridor.

This group deserves special recognition, and is applauded for its continuing efforts with the project. The entire project planning team staff thanks you!

Alternatives Considered

Several conceptual alternatives were developed for the US 301/MD 197 project, with the assistance of the Prince George's County Department of Public Works & Transportation, the City of Bowie and the Focus Group. The criteria used to develop these concepts included: minimizing business relocations, maintaining access to businesses, minimizing environmental impacts and improving the overall level of traffic service, both for the existing and future conditions.

Alternative 1 *No Build Alternative* – With the No-Build Alternative, no substantial improvements would be made to transportation facilities beyond those improvements currently planned for the area. Minor improvements would occur as part of normal maintenance and safety operations. These improvements would not measurably affect congestion or reduce the accident rate. Possible improvements could include resurfacing, re-striping, signing and lighting.

Alternative 2 *Urban Diamond Interchange* - With this Alternative US 301 remains on its existing alignment. There is a grade separation at Excalibur Road to provide access to the west side of US 301. A service road is provided on the west side of US 301, as well. Alternative 2 is a variation of an urban diamond configuration with an extended service road on the west side of US 301. It was first developed by the Prince George's County's Department of Public Works and Transportation and then revised to incorporate a continuous service road on the west side of US 301, connecting the Bowie Gateway Center with the Collington Plaza development. Alternative 2 provides an acceptable level of traffic service.

Alternative 3 *Urban Diamond Interchange* - With this Alternative the US 301 mainline is shifted to the east. Similar to Alternative 2, there is a grade separation at Excalibur Road to provide access to the west side of US 301 and existing US 301 Southbound becomes a two-way service road on the west side. Alternative 3 offers an extension of Excalibur Road into an eastside service road with US 301 over Excalibur Road/Mill Branch Road thus providing a half diamond interchange. Alternative 3 provides an acceptable level of traffic service and a service road on the west side.

Alternative 4 *Interchange with the addition of a Loop Ramp from Eastbound MD 197 to Northbound US 301* – Like Alternative 3, US 301 mainline is shifted to the east. Similar to Alternative 2 and 3, there is a grade separation at Excalibur Road to provide access to the west side of US 301 and existing US 301 Southbound becomes a two-way service road on the west side. Alternative 4 provides an acceptable level of traffic service with moderate environmental impacts.

Environmental Evaluation

A preliminary environmental assessment of the study area was conducted to identify socio-economic, historic, and natural environmental resources. Environmental features identified have been a factor in the design of alignments that will address the purpose and need for the MD 197 project and minimize impacts to the environmental resources. The following is a summary of resources identified within the project study area to date.

A mixture of commercial, residential, agricultural and two recreational land uses characterize the project area. One recreational area is a privately owned park that is open to the public for a fee established by the proprietor. The other recreational area is the Prince George's Stadium, a 10,000 seat AA Minor League baseball stadium. Current alternatives may impact some portions of the stadium access road and the private park. There are no schools, or community centers that will be impacted by any of the alternatives.

Recent correspondence with the Maryland Historical Trust revealed that none of the standing structures identified within the study area were eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.