

### Public Outreach Activities

On March 13, 2012, the project team held a Purpose and Need Open House at Woodlin Elementary School in Silver Spring to introduce the study and solicit public comments. Seventy-five people attended.

On June 25, 2013, an Alternatives Public Workshop was held at Woodlin Elementary School to present the results of the preliminary planning study. SHA provided the following information for each of the seven alternatives and two options presented at the workshop: estimated cost, right-of-way requirements, displacements, number of properties impacted, and estimated natural environmental impacts. The 118 people who attended the workshop included local residents and business owners, community leaders, and county representatives.

Martin O'Malley, Governor | James T. Smith, Jr., Secretary  
Anthony G. Brown, Lieutenant Governor | Melinda B. Peters, Administrator

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### Next Steps

Complete Environmental Studies.....Winter 2014/2015  
Hold Location/Design Public Hearing.....Spring 2015  
Identify SHA Preferred Alternative.....Summer 2015  
Receive Location and Design Approvals.....Winter 2016

This project is currently funded for project planning only. It is not funded for design, right-of-way acquisition, or construction.



### PROJECT NEWSLETTER • FALL 2014

#### MD 97 Montgomery Hills Project Planning Study Moves Forward

Work on the MD 97 Montgomery Hills Project Planning Study is advancing, with several alternatives and options under consideration. The four alternatives and two options that have been retained for detailed study are undergoing preliminary engineering and environmental analyses. The Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) will present the findings of those analyses at the Location/Design Public Hearing tentatively scheduled for spring 2015. Three of the alternatives that were presented at the June 25, 2013 Alternatives Public Workshop have not been retained for detailed study (See alternatives information inside for details).

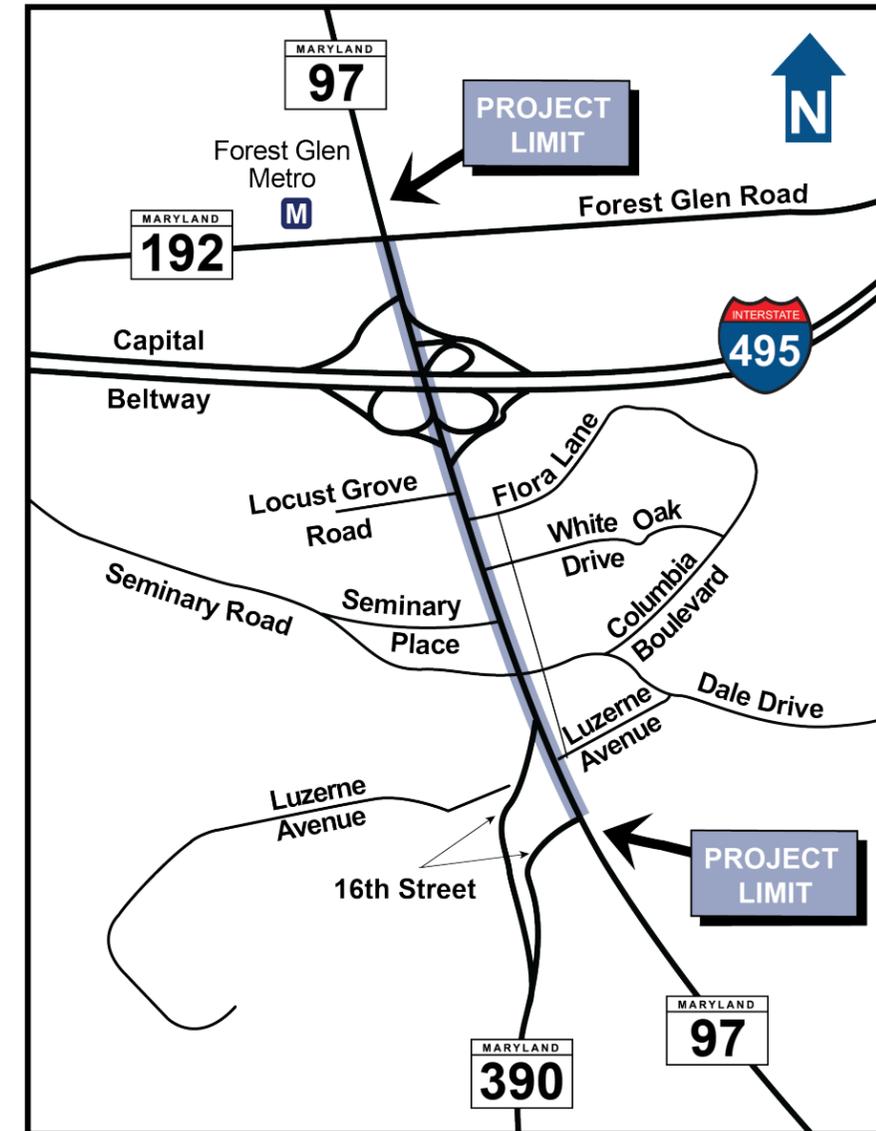
#### Purpose and Need for the Project

The purpose of the MD 97 Montgomery Hills Project Planning Study is to establish a balanced approach to transportation within the MD 97 (Georgia Avenue) corridor by evaluating the mobility and safety of motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists, while accommodating proposed transit enhancements and establishing the unique qualities and characteristics that will create a sense of place within the Montgomery Hills community.

The mix of local and regional (commuter) traffic, in conjunction with study-area roadway and sidewalk conditions, creates an automobile-dominated environment not always supportive of other modes of transportation. As a result, pedestrian accessibility, bicycle connectivity, access to local businesses, and transit use have become major challenges within the project area.

#### Existing Conditions

Between 16th Street and the Capital Beltway (I-495), the Georgia Avenue corridor has three travel lanes in each direction and a reversible center lane that provides a fourth lane southbound in the morning and northbound in the evening to accommodate commuters during peak periods. During non-peak travel periods, this reversible lane operates as a two-way center left-turn lane. No physical median exists along this portion of the corridor. Left turns from Georgia Avenue onto side streets are restricted during peak travel periods. Between I-495 and Forest Glen Road (MD 192), Georgia Avenue consists of four travel lanes in each direction, separated by a median.



### Measures of Effectiveness and Alternatives Retained for Detailed Study (ARDS)

Measures of Effectiveness are an assessment tool used to evaluate and compare proposed roadway improvements, including vehicular, transit, pedestrian, and bicycle accessibility; safety; and quality-of-life improvements. The project team considered this additional information in determining which alternatives to dismiss and which to retain for detailed study. **The following alternatives and options have been retained:**

**ALTERNATIVE 1 – No-Build** - No major improvements would be added under the No-Build Alternative. Minor short-term improvements would occur as part of routine maintenance and safety operations. **Alternative 1 is being carried forward because it serves as a baseline for comparing the impacts and benefits associated with the Build Alternatives.**

**ALTERNATIVE 2 – Transportation Systems Management/Transportation Demand Management (TSM/TDM)** - Alternative 2 would include TSM improvements such as Transit Signal Priority (TSP), queue jumps, and access consolidation. **TSP** is an operational strategy that allows approaching buses to call the transmitter at a signalized intersection to modify the signal timing and allow the bus to pass through the intersection without stopping. **Queue jumps** are short auxiliary lanes that can be combined with right-turn lanes to allow approaching buses at signalized intersections to move to the front of through traffic on a green light. **Access consolidation** increases safety and improves the flow of vehicular traffic by minimizing disruptions caused by turning vehicles. **TDM**, or actions that result in the reduction of peak-period and/or overall travel demand, would be accomplished with the implementation of these improvements. The center reversible lane would be maintained. **Alternative 2 is being carried forward because it is a lower-cost Build Alternative that provides minor improvements to bicycle and transit access throughout the corridor, while minimizing impacts and displacements.**

**ALTERNATIVE 3 - Master Plan** - The Master Plan Alternative is consistent with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission's (MNCPPC) *North and West Silver Spring Master Plan* (adopted in 2000). This alternative consists of four southbound travel lanes and a 16-foot-wide grass median that would replace the center turn lane. The northbound direction would maintain three travel lanes from 16th Street to Seminary Place and a fourth travel lane from Seminary Place through Forest Glen Road. This alternative would also include a 13.5-foot-wide

sidewalk on both sides of Georgia Avenue. **Alternative 3 is being carried forward because it is consistent with the County-approved Master Plan. It would maintain seven travel lanes on Georgia Avenue, provide opportunities for left turns, provide a median for safety and aesthetic improvements, and include Americans with Disabilities Act-compatible sidewalks for increased pedestrian safety and comfort.**

**ALTERNATIVE 5 – Four Lanes Southbound and Three Lanes Northbound** - Alternative 5 would provide four southbound lanes, three northbound lanes, and a 17-foot-wide grass median. The centerline (the point at which a roadway is divided in half) would be shifted slightly in an effort to minimize impacts on neighboring businesses. As in Alternative 4, this alternative would include wider outside lanes for bicycle use, five-foot-wide sidewalks with buffers, and the same shift in the 16th Street ramp. **Alternative 5 is being carried forward because it would provide improvements similar to those provided by Alternative 3 but with fewer impacts and would include on-road bicycle lanes for increased bicyclist safety and comfort.**

**OPTION A – Queue Jumps/Transit Signal Priority (TSP)** - Option A would include queue jumps on Georgia Avenue near the Forest Glen Road and Seminary Place intersections, coupled with TSP to improve transit access and overall travel times of transit vehicles. **Option A is being carried forward because it provides a generally low-cost option to help improve transit vehicle travel times throughout the area and may provide an incentive for increased transit-system use.**

**OPTION B – Signal Relocation/Modification** - Option B would remove the traffic signal at Seminary Place and replace it with a right-in/right-out connection with Georgia Avenue. Vehicles attempting to turn left to travel north on Georgia Avenue would be shifted onto Seminary Road. A traffic signal would be added at Flora Lane to provide improved pedestrian and bicyclist access across Georgia Avenue. Eliminating the Seminary Place signal would increase the spacing between signalized intersections and help lessen queuing on Georgia Avenue but could also result in longer back-ups along Seminary Road during peak periods. **Option B is being carried forward because it would help balance the spacing between signalized intersections, reduce queuing on Georgia Avenue, and improve pedestrian and bicyclist access across Georgia Avenue.**

### Alternatives Dismissed from Consideration

**ALTERNATIVE 4 – Three Lanes Northbound and Southbound** - Alternative 4 has three travel lanes in each direction, with a 17-foot-wide grass median. The outer travel lane in each direction would be 14 to 16 feet wide to accommodate on-road bicycles. A five-foot-wide sidewalk with a five-foot-wide buffer would be located on either side of Georgia Avenue. Left-turn lanes would be provided on Georgia Avenue at the intersections with Forest Glen Road, Seminary Place, and Seminary Road. The ramp to 16th Street southbound would be relocated to the signalized intersection at the northbound roadway to create a more traditional three-way intersection. **Although it would have fewer impacts than some of the other Build Alternatives, Alternative 4 was dismissed because it would reduce capacity on Georgia Avenue from seven lanes to six lanes and worsen traffic within the corridor and possibly on I-495.**

**ALTERNATIVE 6 – Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)** - Alternative 6 consists of a two-lane/two way BRT median busway along Georgia Avenue, with three general-use travel lanes in each direction on either side of the busway. Left-turn movements would be prohibited. A 14- to 16-foot-wide outer lane for on-road bicycle accommodations and a five-foot-wide sidewalk with a five-foot-wide buffer for pedestrians would also be provided. **Alternative 6 was dismissed because the median busway would reduce capacity on Georgia Avenue from seven lanes to six lanes and worsen traffic flow and congestion. The absence of left-turn lanes would limit access to surrounding businesses and neighborhoods. By proposing transit queue jumps and Transit Signal Priority, Alternative 2 and Option A are compatible with BRT in a mixed traffic corridor along Georgia Avenue through Montgomery Hills. Alternative 2 and Option A are also consistent with MNCPPC's December 2013 Approved and Adopted Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan.**

**ALTERNATIVE 7 – Georgia Avenue Tunnel** - Alternative 7, developed in response to stakeholder input, consists of a four-lane tunnel from south of the I-495 Interchange to just south of 16th Street, with three surface travel lanes in each direction. This alternative would also provide five-foot-wide sidewalks with five-foot-wide buffers and a 16-foot-wide outside travel lane to accommodate bicyclists. The surface level would include a 25-foot-wide grass median. Only vehicles traveling along Georgia Avenue and turning westbound from I-495 to southbound Georgia Avenue would be accommodated by the tunnel. Eastbound Beltway traffic to southbound Georgia Avenue, northbound Georgia Avenue traffic to the Beltway, southbound traffic wishing to access

16th Street, and local traffic would remain on the surface travel lanes. The tunnel cannot be designed to allow all movements to/from the Beltway because it would require the tunnel entrance to be placed farther south and would result in additional impacts on adjacent businesses. Widening the roadway to accommodate tunnel ramps and surface-level travel lanes would require shifting the tunnel entrance farther south and could impact existing and proposed intersections at Flora Lane and Seminary Place, causing major problems in traffic circulation. **Some of the factors leading to the dismissal of Alternative 7 included anticipated difficulty and timeframe of construction, increased property impacts and displacements, and long-term tunnel-maintenance costs. These factors ultimately outweighed traffic or aesthetic benefits derived from removing surface traffic from Georgia Avenue. In addition, other proposed improvements provide better multimodal access and aesthetic enhancements to the corridor for a fraction of the cost and with fewer physical impacts on the adjacent community. The tunnel's ability to accommodate a small percentage of vehicles because of the close proximity of major traffic generators like I-495 and 16th Street presented an additional concern.**

### We Want to Hear from You!

SHA is committed to maintaining public involvement throughout the project planning process and welcomes your project-related questions and comments. SHA representatives are available to meet with community groups, business associations, and other organizations. To request a meeting, receive project information, submit a comment, or add your name to the MD 97 Montgomery Hills Project Planning Study mailing list, please contact:

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**The Maryland Relay Service can assist teletype users at 7-1-1.**



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 Project Page

For more information about this project, visit our website at [www.roads.maryland.gov](http://www.roads.maryland.gov) and click on **Projects and Studies, SHA Projects Page, Montgomery County, and MD 97, Georgia Avenue, 16th Street to Forest Glen Road** or use the QR code.