

MD 24 (Rocks Road) - Slope Protection Project

Project Update: January 12, 2010

In 2003, the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) completed a study which examined the supporting slope of MD 24 near Deer Creek in Harford County. Seven distinct sections were identified with varying degrees of slope failure. The northern section, Section A, from the Deer Creek Bridge to 1200 feet south of that bridge, and the southern section, Section G, from 900 feet south of Sharon Road to 1700 feet north of Ferncliff Lane, have the most severe erosion and are most in need of repair. As a result, SHA began to work on a design for Sections A and G that would improve safety by remediating the failing slope along Deer Creek, as well as repair the pavement, improve roadway drainage, and address roadside safety concerns.

SHA held two public meetings in December 2009 and has since received several comments from the public regarding the proposed design. We at SHA recognize the importance in listening to feedback from our customers.

As a result of the feedback, SHA and its partner agencies are reevaluating the proposed alternatives and ***postponing the project until at least fall 2010***. The reevaluation will look to revise the proposed roadway width, in order to minimize damage to the rock that borders the west side of MD 24. The reevaluation will also examine additional ways to stabilize the slope along Deer Creek. SHA will post project updates on its website, www.roads.maryland.gov, and will notify area residents of a follow-up public meeting to be held later this year.

SHA has worked closely with several environmental agencies during the design of this project, including: the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Through dialogue with the environmental agencies, various alternatives were evaluated to balance work to be performed in Deer Creek, as the creek is classified as a wild and scenic river. These alternatives currently include three proposed alignments: the existing alignment, an alignment that would shift the roadway centerline 10 feet away from the stream, and an alignment that would shift the roadway centerline 20 feet away from the stream.

During the December 8 and December 17, 2009 public meetings held at North Harford High School, SHA presented the three alignment alternatives, along with other roadway elements such as on-road bicycle compatibility, a catchment area for potential rock falls, and retaining walls for slope stabilization. SHA received several comments regarding these alternatives, such as:

- The proposed roadway width is greater than actually needed
- Additional alternatives to address the slope stabilization should be investigated
- The scenic view and natural features in the area should be preserved
- Concerns about rock blasting
- Concerns about sequencing of construction and maintenance of traffic during construction

Over the next several months, SHA will consider the public comments and present its new range of alternates at a public meeting to be held later this year.

As always, safety along MD 24 remains SHA's top priority. The additional time that SHA will invest to develop suitable alternatives will not affect safety, but will ensure that the concerns of both the public and the government agencies with a stake in this project be heard.