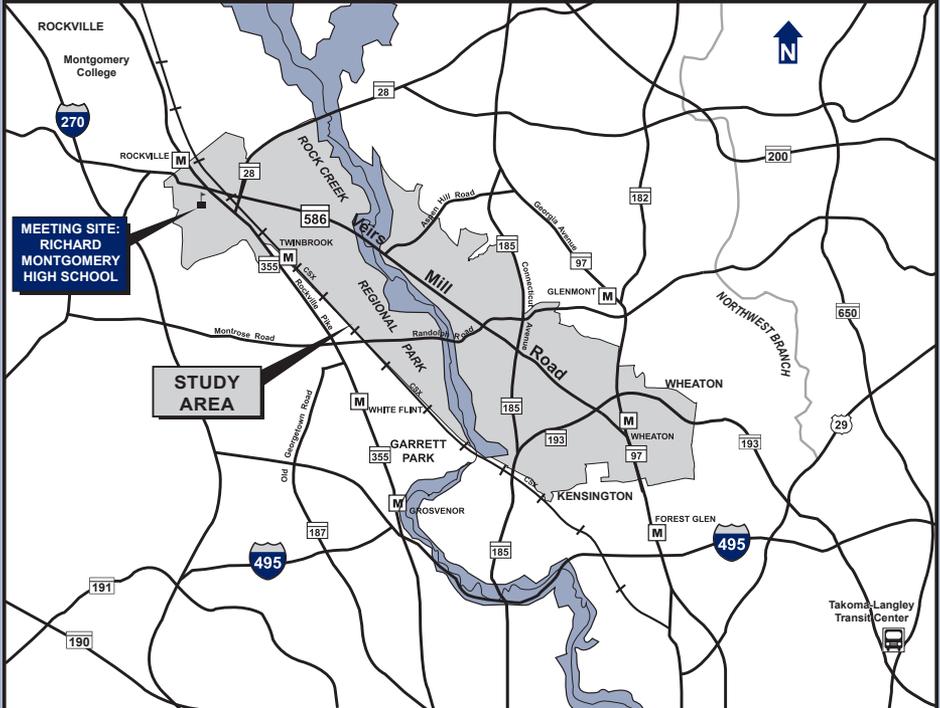


MD 586 – Veirs Mill Road Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Study from Rockville Metrorail Station to Wheaton Metrorail Station

ALTERNATIVES PUBLIC WORKSHOP



Project No. MO 244 M11

Thursday, November 21, 2013
7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Richard Montgomery
High School - Cafeteria
205 Richard Montgomery Drive
Rockville, MD 20852

***Snow Date: December 3, 2013**

**Meeting will be held on snow date if
county public schools are closed or if the
county's snow emergency plan is in effect.*



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Introduction

The Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) and the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), in cooperation with the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), are completing a study to evaluate **alternatives*** to provide a new **Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)** service along MD 586 (Veirs Mill Road) between the Rockville Metrorail Station and the Wheaton Metrorail Station. The project may seek funding from the Federal Transit Administration once a locally preferred alternative is selected.

Purpose of the Workshop

The purpose of the Alternatives Public Workshop is to familiarize interested persons with the project planning process and present the preliminary BRT alternatives. Individuals and members of associations, citizens groups, and government agencies will have an opportunity to offer spoken or written comments about the study. They may also recommend the preliminary alternatives they would like the team to study in greater detail and the alternatives they would like the team to dismiss.

The workshop is being conducted in an interactive open house format to enable attendees to conduct self-paced reviews of project information at any time during workshop hours. Maps and other exhibits depicting preliminary alternatives under consideration will be on display, and team members will be available to answer project-related questions and receive comments. **There will be no formal presentation.**

How to Comment on the Project

SHA encourages your participation in the workshop and during the project planning process. Please use the enclosed postage-paid mailer to submit your comments. Additional copies of the mailer will be available at the reception desk during the workshop and may be found on the project website at www.roads.maryland.gov. You may also provide spoken and written comments to project representatives during the workshop or contact Ms. Jamaica Arnold, SHA Project Manager, using the contact information on the inside front cover of the brochure. **The project team will evaluate your comments and consider them as the project moves forward.**

Project Mailing List

You may add your name to the project mailing list by completing the enclosed mailer or by submitting your information at the workshop. If you have received this brochure in the mail, you are already on the project mailing list.

All terms that appear in **bold italics are defined in the glossary at the back of this brochure.*

Purpose and Need for the Project

The purpose of the MD 586 – Veirs Mill Road BRT Study is to provide new high-efficiency bus service along Veirs Mill Road between the Rockville Metrorail Station and the Wheaton Metrorail Station. The project team has identified four specific needs for the project:

- *System connectivity* – A high-quality, east-west transit connection is not available between the Rockville Metrorail Station and the Wheaton Metrorail Station.
- *Mobility* – Traffic congestion currently impedes bus mobility and results in unpredictable bus service, longer travel times, and delayed schedules.
- *Transit demand/attractiveness* – Transit demand and ridership in the Veirs Mill Road corridor continue to grow. A high-quality transit service is also needed to maintain current transit riders and attract new transit riders.
- *Livability* – Transit improvements are needed throughout the Veirs Mill Road corridor to create a transportation network that enhances choices for transportation users and promotes positive effects on the surrounding communities.

Existing Conditions

MD 586 (Veirs Mill Road), which is classified as a **Principal Arterial**, carries approximately 24,000 to 47,000 vehicles per day within the study corridor and regularly experiences congestion. It is one of the most heavily used transportation and transit corridors in Montgomery County that lacks rail transit.

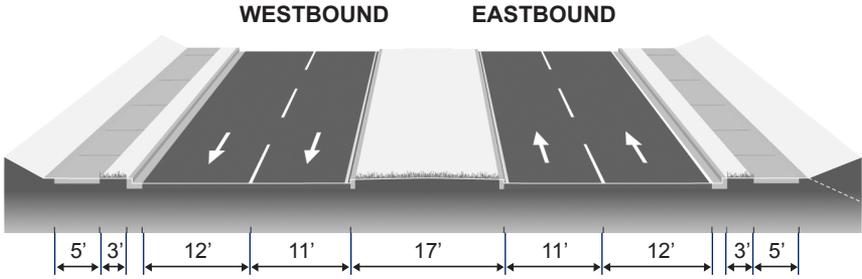
Local bus service along the Veirs Mill Road corridor is currently provided by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's (WMATA) Metrobus and by Montgomery County's Ride On. Eleven bus routes operate within the Veirs Mill Road study corridor; six are operated by WMATA, and five by Montgomery County. WMATA's Q lines travel the entire length of Veirs Mill Road between the Rockville and Wheaton Metrorail stations.

Veirs Mill Road serves as an important link between two branches of WMATA's Metrorail Red Line. Other rail connections within the study corridor include the MARC Brunswick Line and Amtrak's Capitol Limited Line, both of which are accessible at the Rockville Metrorail Station.

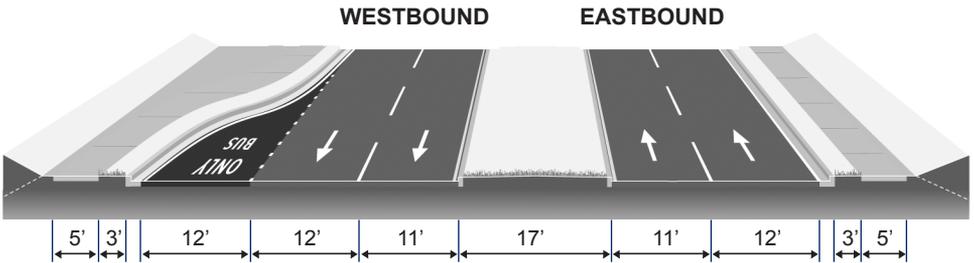
Alternatives and Options Currently Under Consideration

Design concepts will be developed to consider safety, aesthetics, pedestrian and bicycle circulation, traffic circulation, and effects on response times of emergency services providers. The project team has identified six conceptual alternatives for consideration.

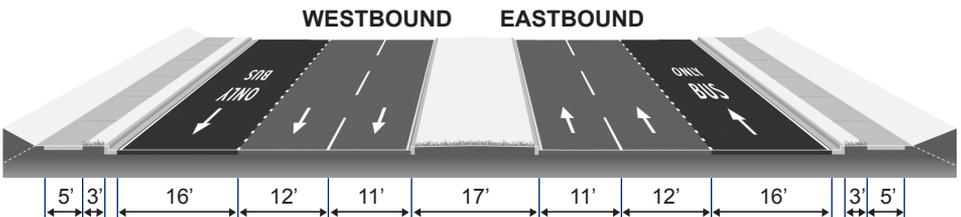
- **Alternative 1, No-Build:** Would include only planned and programmed transit and roadway improvements as currently listed in the **Constrained Long-Range Plan**.



- **Alternative 2, Transportation Systems Management (TSM):** Would include upgrades to WMATA and Ride On bus service, operational improvements, and minor physical improvements such as **queue jumps** for existing transit services. Would include enhanced bus service with limited stops, similar to WMATA's proposed Q9 service, which runs between the Shady Grove and Wheaton Metrorail stations.

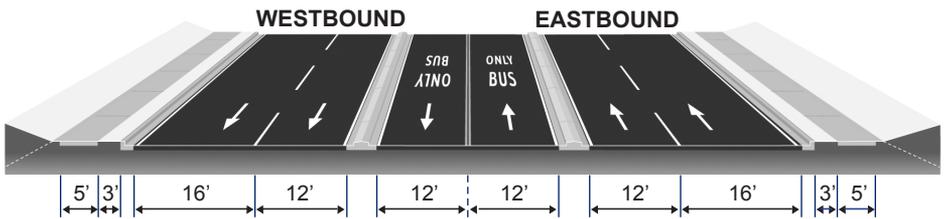


- **Alternative 3, Enhanced Bus Service:** Would move existing bus service to dedicated lanes, where feasible, and would include enhanced bus service with limited stops, similar to WMATA's proposed Q9 service. The dedicated lanes would be located in the curb lane and would be developed by **repurposing** existing travel lanes and shoulders or by roadway widening. Buses would continue to operate in mixed traffic where dedicated lanes are not feasible. Enhanced bus service would use the same bus stops that are used by the existing service but would stop at fewer locations to decrease travel time.

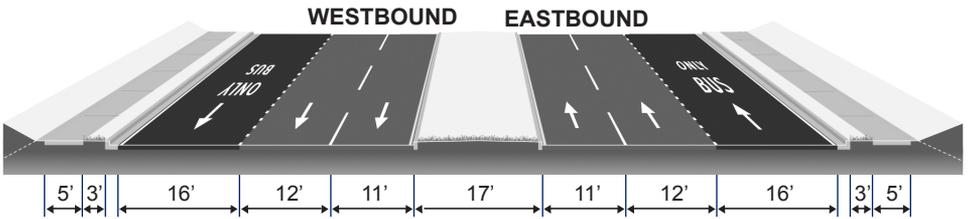


- **Alternative 4, New BRT in Dedicated Lanes:** Would provide new BRT service in addition to the existing local bus service. BRT would operate exclusively in dedicated lanes located either in the *median* or curb lanes. The dedicated lanes would be created by repurposing existing travel lanes, repurposing shoulders, or widening the roadway. Buses would stop at new BRT stations, which would be similar to rail stations. Alternative 4 would take one of four configurations:

- **Alternative 4A, Dedicated Median Lane (Repurposed Lanes and/or Shoulders)**
- **Alternative 4B, Dedicated Curb Lanes (Repurposed Lanes and/or Shoulders)**
- **Alternative 4C, Dedicated Median Lane (Roadway Widening)**

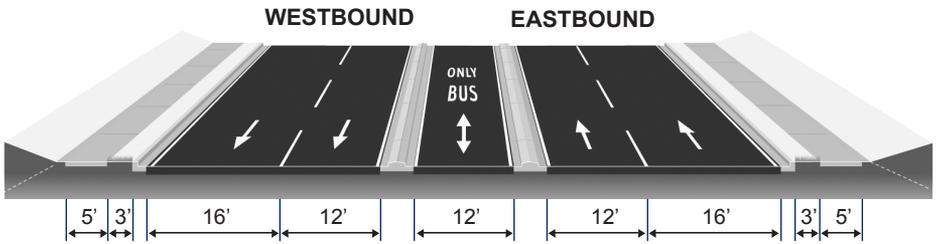


- **Alternative 4D, Dedicated Curb Lanes (Roadway Widening)**



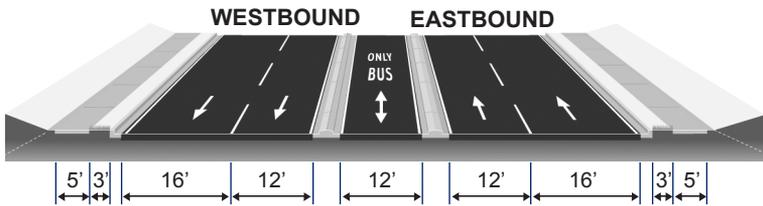
- **Alternative 5, New BRT in Reversible or Bi-directional Dedicated Lanes:** Would provide new BRT service in addition to the existing local bus service. Buses in the reversible or bi-directional lanes would stop at new BRT stations, while buses in mixed traffic would use existing bus stops. Alternative 5 would take one of two configurations:

- **Alternative 5A**, One-Way, Reversible, Dedicated Median Lane: Peak-direction BRT in dedicated lane and off-peak-direction BRT in mixed traffic

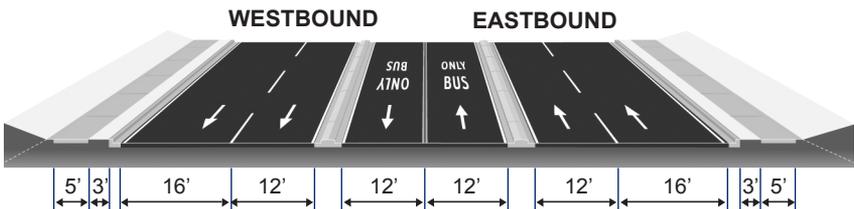


- **Alternative 5B**, Two-Way and Bi-directional Dedicated Median Lanes: Two-lane median section where feasible, and one-lane bi-directional median section elsewhere

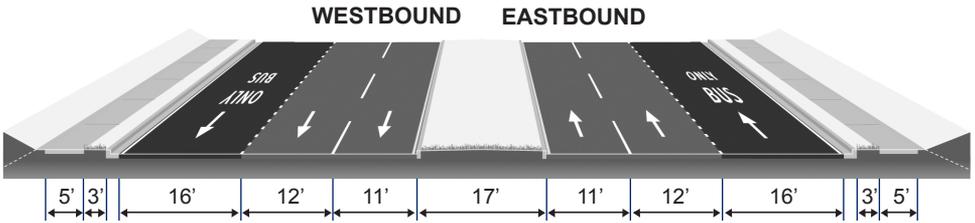
A. East and West of Study Limits



B. Center of Study Limits



- **Alternative 6: New BRT in Dedicated Lanes and Mixed Traffic:** Would provide new BRT service in addition to the existing local bus service. BRT would operate in dedicated curb lanes created by lane and shoulder repurposing or roadway widening. BRT would operate in mixed traffic where dedicated lanes are not feasible. Buses would stop at new BRT stations instead of at existing bus stops.



Alternatives 3 through 6 include construction of bicycle-compatible curb lanes in both directions along the entire length of the project on Veirs Mill Road where widening would occur. At 16 feet wide, these bicycle-compatible lanes would be four feet wider than a standard traffic lane. **Alternatives 1 and 2** would provide no bicycle-compatible lanes because the travel lanes would not be modified under those alternatives.

Transit Service Analysis

We are currently analyzing new BRT service along the corridor in coordination with the existing bus services. As part of the transit analysis, we are evaluating various options that include:

1. Implementing WMATA's proposed Q9 bus service.
2. Enhanced bus service in dedicated lanes.
3. Extending BRT service to the Takoma-Langley Transit Center in the east and Montgomery College in the west. Under this option, service outside the project limits would operate within existing traffic patterns.
4. Optimizing signal timing.
5. Queue jump lanes where feasible.

Environmental Summary

SHA has conducted research and field reviews to identify the following conditions and resources within the study area.

Land Use

The project corridor is addressed in numerous **master plans**, including the *Rockville Comprehensive Plan (2002)*, the *Town Center Master Plan (2001)*, the *Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan (2009)*, and the *Wheaton Central Business District Plan (2011)*. In accordance with these plans, future land use within the Veirs Mill Road corridor includes **enhanced transit** throughout the area to accommodate

high-density ***mixed-use development*** in the vicinity of the Rockville and Wheaton Metrorail stations.

In 2011, ***Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission*** (M-NCPPC) began developing a *Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan*. The purpose of the plan is to develop a BRT network throughout the county, recommend ***rights-of-way*** for individual transit corridors to accommodate bus lanes, add queue jumps to assist bus operations at intersections, determine station locations for the proposed transit network, and construct additional turn lanes at intersections (as necessary). One of the corridors under study for inclusion in this master plan is Veirs Mill Road from the Rockville Metrorail Station to the Wheaton Metrorail Station.

The *Smart Growth Priority Funding Areas Act of 1997* was enacted to limit sprawl and direct state funding for growth-related projects toward county-designated Priority Funding Areas (PFAs). Priority Funding Areas are geographic growth areas defined by state law and designated by local jurisdictions as targets for economic development. The Veirs Mill Road study area is located entirely within a designated PFA, and the project is consistent with Maryland's ***Smart Growth Initiatives***.

Socioeconomic Resources

SHA owns approximately 80 – 200 feet of right-of-way along the Veirs Mill Road corridor within the study limits. Additional right-of-way (parcels and buildings) along the corridor will be required to accommodate proposed additional roadway reconfigurations to address the project's purpose and need.

In compliance with Executive Order 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-income Populations*, SHA will avoid disproportionately high and/or adverse effects on minority and low-income populations throughout the study area. A preliminary review of census data reveals the presence of minority and low-income populations within the project study area. Further outreach and additional research of study area demographic and economic characteristics will be completed as the study progresses.

Cultural Resources

The following properties in the study area are listed on or are eligible for the ***National Register of Historic Places*** (NRHP):

- Rockville Park Historic District
- ***The Third Addition to Rockville, including Old St. Mary's Church/Cemetery***
- The B & O Railroad Station
- Hammond Wood Historic District
- Metropolitan Branch B & O Railroad

Further archeological investigations will be required within undisturbed portions of the project area. As design plans for the area are further developed, additional coordination with the **Maryland Historical Trust** will occur to determine what impacts the alternatives may have on significant historic or archeological sites, as required under **36 CFR 800.4**. In accordance with the **Section 106 procedures of the National Historic Preservation Act**, this workshop provides the opportunity for public comment regarding impacts on historic properties.

Natural Environmental Features

Natural areas, including publicly owned public parks and recreation areas abutting the Veirs Mill Road corridor, are concentrated primarily within the M-NCPPC-managed Rock Creek Regional Park, the Matthew Henson State Park, and two local parks: Aspen Hill and Parklawn. Coordination with the City of Rockville reveals the presence of one local park, Twinbrook, located within the roadway corridor. A **Section 4(f)** Evaluation will be required to address any proposed impacts and must include a description of avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Wildlife and Heritage Service have indicated that no state or federal rare, threatened, or endangered species are known to exist within the project area. A field investigation to supplement coordination with DNR indicates the presence of **wetlands**, **Class I streams**, and **100-year floodplains** associated with Rock Creek and Turkey Branch. **Use I streams** are subject to an in-stream construction closure period from March 1 to June 15. Any in-stream construction will require construction permits from the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and the US Army Corps of Engineers. Woodland impacts will be documented. Adverse impacts on water quality will be minimized through strict adherence to state sediment and erosion procedures in accordance with MDE stormwater criteria.

Due to anticipated increases in traffic volumes within the project area, the potential exists for increased traffic noise and vehicle emissions. SHA will complete detailed traffic noise- and air-quality analyses during the detailed engineering phase.

A hazardous site inventory identified 29 properties with underground storage tanks, five dry cleaning facilities, and six automobile service facilities. These types of facilities and businesses typically generate, handle, or store hazardous materials or petroleum products. Coordination with MDE would occur, if required, during construction to minimize the potential for adverse effects as a result of treatment, storage, cleanup, or disposal of hazardous waste.

Project Schedule

- Conduct Alternatives Public Workshop.....*Fall 2013*
- Develop Detailed Alternatives.....*Winter/Spring 2014*
- Perform Alternatives Analysis.....*Spring 2014*
- Prepare Draft Environmental Document.....*Spring/Summer 2014*

- Conduct Public Hearing.....Fall 2014
- Select Locally Preferred Alternative.....Fall 2014
- Prepare Final Environmental Document.....Spring 2015
- Receive **NEPA** Approval.....Summer 2015

Related Transportation Projects

Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan: This plan identifies a BRT network throughout the County, recommends rights-of-way for individual transit corridors and station locations for the proposed transit network, and makes other roadway recommendations to support the network. One of the corridors included in the Master Plan is Veirs Mill Road from the Rockville Metrorail Station to the Wheaton Metrorail Station. M-NCPPC approved the draft plan on July 11, 2013. The County Council public hearing occurred September 24, 2013. The County Council will be voting on the Master Plan in Fall 2013.

Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT): The CCT is a 15-mile-long BRT project in Montgomery County, from the **COMSAT facility** near Clarksburg to the Shady Grove Metrorail Station. The portion of the project from Metropolitan Grove to Shady Grove is proceeding with engineering and environmental analysis and is funded for formal environmental documentation, final design, and right-of-way acquisition. This work is expected to be completed in Fall 2015. The remaining portion of the project would be developed as land use matures and additional transportation funding becomes available.

MD 97 (Georgia Avenue) Bus Rapid Transit Study: This study is evaluating BRT service along MD 97 from Montgomery General Hospital in Olney to the Wheaton Metrorail Station. The southern portion of this study is located adjacent to the MD 586 BRT study area and both studies are being coordinated. The MD 97 BRT Study is currently funded for project planning only.

MD 97 Montgomery Hills Project Planning Study: This study is evaluating improvements to the MD 97 (Georgia Avenue) corridor between MD 192 (Forest Glen Road) and MD 390 (16th Street). The purpose of the study is to establish a balanced approach to transportation within the MD 97 corridor by evaluating existing vehicular, pedestrian, and bicyclist mobility and safety, while accommodating proposed transit enhancements and establishing a **sense of place** within the Montgomery Hills community. This project is funded for project planning only.

Purple Line Study: This 16-mile-long light rail transit line from Bethesda in Montgomery County to New Carrollton in Prince George's County is presently funded through design and right-of-way acquisition. The public review period for the final environmental document recently concluded. Construction is expected to begin in 2015.

Montrose Parkway Extension: This MCDOT project would provide a new four-lane parkway that would intersect Veirs Mill Road at Gaynor Avenue.

Non-Discrimination in Federally Assisted and State-Aid Programs

For information concerning non-discrimination, please contact:

Ms. Doreen Winey, Director
Office of Equal Opportunity
Maryland State Highway Administration
707 North Calvert Street
Baltimore, MD 21202
Telephone: (410) 545-0327
Toll-free within Maryland: (888) 545-0098
Email: dwiney@sha.state.md.us

Right-Of-Way and Relocation Assistance

The proposed project may require the acquisition of additional right-of-way. Residential and commercial relocations may also be required. For information regarding right-of-way and relocation assistance, please contact:

Mr. Paul Lednak
District 3, Office of Real Estate
Maryland State Highway Administration
9300 Kenilworth Avenue
Greenbelt, MD 20770
Phone: (301) 513-7466
Toll Free: (800) 749-0737
Email: plednak@sha.state.md.us

Public Involvement

SHA, Montgomery County, and MTA will maintain public involvement throughout the MD 586 – Veirs Mill Road BRT Project Planning Study. Agency and county representatives are available to meet with community groups, civic associations, and other organizations. To request a meeting, please contact Ms. Jamaica Arnold (SHA), using the information provided inside the front cover of the brochure.

SHA will provide a telephonic interpreter for those who need assistance with the English language. A Spanish-language interpreter will be available during the Public Workshop. **For a Spanish-language copy of this brochure, please contact Ms. Arnold at (410) 545-8512/toll-free 1-800-548-5026, use the QR Code on page 13 to access the translated brochure online, or go to www.roads.maryland.gov and click on Projects and Studies, SHA Projects Page, Montgomery County, MD 586 Veirs Mill Road.**

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Projects and Studies, SHA Projects Page, Montgomery County, MD 586, Veirs Mill Road.

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

Media Used for Meeting Notification

An advertisement appeared in the following newspapers to announce this Alternatives Public Workshop:

<u>PUBLICATION</u>	<u>DATE</u>
Gazette-Montgomery	November 6, 2013
Washington Post	November 7, 2013
El Tiempo Latino	November 8, 2013
Afro-American	November 8, 2013

Your Opinion Matters

This workshop offers members of the public the opportunity to discuss their thoughts and concerns about the project and to provide spoken and written comments. We will carefully review and consider project concerns and preferences expressed at the workshop. To assist you in providing comments, we have included in this brochure a postage-paid mailer and the contact information for members of the project team.

Questions or comments following the workshop may be addressed to any of the project team members listed inside the front cover of the brochure.

Thank You

Thank you for participating in the Alternatives Public Workshop for the MD 586 – Veirs Mill Road Bus Rapid Transit Study. Your comments are appreciated. Please direct your questions or concerns to project team members by mail, telephone, or email.

For more information about this project and others, visit our internet site at: www.roads.maryland.gov. Click on **Projects and Studies, SHA Projects Page, Montgomery County, MD 586, Veirs Mill Road**, or use the QR Code provided on this page.



Glossary

Aesthetics: Beauty or attractiveness and people's responses to it.

Alternatives: Potential solutions that are evaluated to determine whether they will address the project's purpose and need.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT): A high-performance bus service that combines bus lanes with high-quality bus stations, transit vehicles, and other enhancements to achieve the performance and quality of a light rail or metro system, with the flexibility, cost, and simplicity of a bus system.

36 CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) 800.4: PROTECTION OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES—requires federal agencies to take into account the effects of their actions on historic properties.

Class I Streams: Streams forming the source of another and larger stream or river that may provide seasonal warm-water habitat but that are often dry for long periods of time, with no aquatic animal species present.

COMSAT facility: COMSAT is short for Communications Satellite Corporation, the company that was created in 1962 with the passage of the Communications Satellite Act. The COMSAT facility, located just north of West Old Baltimore Road at I-270, is mostly vacant. Future commercial, retail, and residential development is planned around a Corridor Cities Transitway stop proposed for this site. Observation Drive is being designed to extend north through this area to Clarksburg.

Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP): The CLRP identifies all regionally significant transportation projects and programs that are planned in the Washington metropolitan area between 2013 and 2040. Over 750 projects are included, ranging from simple highway landscaping to billion-dollar highway and transit projects. The CLRP is updated annually.

Enhanced transit: Transit service that sometimes includes custom vehicles, roadway improvements for transit vehicles, limited stops at upgraded stations, and other elements to minimize transit delays.

Maryland Historical Trust (MHT): An agency of the Maryland Department of Planning that assists with research, conservation, and education about Maryland's historical and cultural heritage.

Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC): A bi-county agency, formed in 1927 by the Maryland General Assembly, which administers parks and planning in Montgomery and Prince George's counties. The Commission also offers recreation classes and provides services and educational programs relating to conservation and nature, local history, and the arts.

Master plan: A document that includes goals and policies to inform long-range land-use decision-making.

Median: The area that divides traffic moving in opposite directions on a single roadway.

Glossary

Mixed-use development: Any building, complex of buildings, or district of a town or city that blends a combination of residential, commercial, cultural, institutional, or industrial uses, where those functions are physically and functionally integrated, and that provides pedestrian connections.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1966: NEPA mandates that federal agencies consider the environment in all major federal actions. The NEPA process involves the detailed study of alternatives and the evaluation of environmental impacts and mitigation measures.

National Register of Historic Places (NRHP): The official list of the nation's historic places that are worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act, the NRHP is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources.

Peak direction: The flow of the greatest volume of traffic, usually during the morning and evening rush periods, when commuters travel to and from work.

Principal Arterial: Arterial roadways are classified as principal or minor. Both classes carry longer-distance traffic between important centers of activity. Arterials are laid out as the backbone of a traffic network and should be designed to provide the highest level of service possible.

Queue jump: A short additional lane for transit vehicles, which may be combined with a right-turn lane at an approach to an intersection. The queue-jump lane receives a green light that allows transit vehicles to proceed through the intersection while traffic in the through lanes waits at a red light.

Repurposing: Reserving some existing traffic lanes exclusively for the use of buses. Repurposing lanes in this manner usually decreases the movement of automobiles but increases the movement (throughput) of people.

Rights of way: Land or property (often in a strip) required for transportation purposes, such as roadway widening and improvements.

Section 106 procedures: Derived from Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, these procedures govern the identification, evaluation, and protection of historical and archeological resources affected by state and federal transportation projects.

Section 4(f): Enacted as a portion of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, Section 4(f) requires that the proposed use of land from a publicly owned public park, recreation area, wildlife and/or waterfowl refuge, or any significant historic site, as part of a federally funded or approved transportation project, is permissible only if there is no feasible and prudent alternative to that use.

Sense of place: The qualities of a community that create its unique character.

Smart Growth Initiatives: First implemented in Maryland in 1997 with the passage of the Smart Growth and Neighborhood Conservation Initiative. Smart growth concentrates new development and redevelopment in areas that have existing or planned infrastructure in order to avoid sprawl. Its purpose is to conserve valuable natural resources through the efficient use of land, water, and air; to create a sense of community and place; to expand transportation, employment, and housing choices; and to promote public health.

The Third Addition to Rockville and Old St. Mary's Church: A historic area located in Rockville that combines 19th century residential-scale buildings with a tree-lined narrow street, country church, headstones, Victorian Gothic railroad station, and a brick/cast-iron commercial structure that evokes the era when the station served as the gateway to Rockville. The Old St. Mary's Church Cemetery, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978, is the final resting place of F. Scott Fitzgerald and his wife Zelda.

Use I Streams (See Waters of the U.S., below): The Department of Natural Resources defines Use I streams as Water Contact Recreation and Protection of Nontidal Warmwater Aquatic Life.

Waters of the U.S., including Wetlands: All Waters of the U.S., including wetlands, are regulated in accordance with Section 401 and 404 of the Clean Water Act and under the State of Maryland Nontidal Wetlands Protection Act. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Maryland Department of the Environment administer this act for all Waters of the U.S., including wetlands that may be impacted by a project.

Wetlands: Areas that are regularly wet or flooded, with vegetation adapted for life under those soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, bogs, marshes, and similar areas.

100-year floodplains: The 100-year floodplain refers to the areas along or adjacent to a stream or body of water that are capable of storing or conveying floodwaters during a 100-year-frequency storm. U.S. Department of Transportation Order 5650.2, "Floodplain Management and Protection," prescribes policies and procedures for ensuring that proper consideration is given to the avoidance and mitigation of floodplain impacts.



Maryland Department of Transportation
STATE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
Office of Planning and Preliminary Engineering
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Mail Stop C-301
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