

Amone E.

Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., *Governor*  
Michael S. Steele, *Lt. Governor*



Robert L. Flanagan, *Secretary*  
Neil J. Pedersen, *Administrator*

Maryland Department of Transportation

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Mr. Ken Briggs, Chief  
Highway Design Division

**FROM:** Bruce M. Grey  
Deputy Director  
Office of Planning and  
Preliminary Engineering

**DATE:** June 9, 2005

**RE:** Project No. PG413B21  
MD 5 Metro Access Study  
I-95/I-495 (Phase I)  
Prince George's County  
Final Review Reevaluation

The following information verifies that the current design plan, when compared to that for which a Categorical Exclusion (CE) was approved by the Federal Highway Administration, will not result in significantly different environmental impacts.

- A. **Date CE/LA was approved by FHWA:** CE: July 6, 1999 LA: October 5, 2000
- B. **Are the proposed improvements different than those approved for the CE?**  
 X  Yes   No. Explain

Since PI, the project has been split into two phases and is divided by Auth Road. This reevaluation addresses changes to Phase I since Preliminary Investigation (PI). Phase II will be presented once highway design work proceeds on that Phase. Phase I consists of the MD 5 and I-95/I-495 interchange modifications located in Prince George's County, Maryland. The project limits along MD 5 (Branch Avenue) are from Auth Way to south of I-95/I-495. The project proposes improvements along 1.7 miles of MD 5 and I-95/I-495, and 2.3 miles of interchange ramps. The Final Review (FR) for Phase I was held on August 27, 2004. The FR plans reflect minor changes made since generally within the overall project footprint for which Location Approval was granted.

My telephone number/toll-free number is \_\_\_\_\_  
Maryland Relay Service for Impaired Hearing or Speech 1.800.735.2258 Statewide Toll Free

Street Address: 707 North Calvert Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21202 • Phone 410.545.0300 • www.marylandroads.com

Design modifications to Phase I made since PI include resurfacing of the Capital Beltway and several ramps, and various safety improvements (i.e. signage and guardrail upgrades, marking improvements, and ramp lighting). These safety and resurfacing improvements were originally a separate District 3 project which was reviewed under NEPA and was approved as a Statewide Programmatic Categorical Exclusion on June 20, 2003 (attached). The addition of this work extends the original project footprint along I-95 for 1,570 feet on the Inner Loop and for 3,775 feet on the Outer Loop. The safety and resurfacing improvements will be located at the following locations (see attached plan sheet):

- The I-95/I-495 Capital Beltway interchange within existing right-of-way limits of the MD 5 interchange ramps;
- The existing cloverleaf ramps from the Capital Beltway Outer Loop to MD 5 northbound (Ramp 3), and from MD 5 southbound to the Capital Beltway Outer Loop (Ramp 5); and,
- The existing directional ramps from MD 5 northbound to the Capital Beltway Inner Loop (Ramp 8) and from MD 5 northbound to the Capital Beltway Outer Loop (Ramp 4).

In addition to the resurfacing cited above, pedestrian crossings (across one lane of Auth Road to a pork chop island, another across MD 5, and a final across the new Ramp 8) and corresponding pedestrian signals will be placed at the Auth Rd/MD 5 intersection for increased pedestrian safety. Sidewalks will also be placed along Auth Road from Auth Place to the Auth Rd/MD 5 intersection for about 700 feet to meet with the pedestrian crossings. A lane will be removed from westbound Auth Road due to lane reconfigurations (i.e. the current through lane is no longer needed because access to existing Ramp 8 will be terminated when existing Ramp 8 is removed). This section of roadway will receive new striping and signage to reflect the change, as well as median improvements, and the excess lane will be converted into the Auth Road sidewalk. Once pedestrians cross MD 5 (the signals are long enough for pedestrians to cross both northbound and southbound lanes), they will use sidewalks along MD 5, then cross the new Ramp 8 to another sidewalk that runs along the new Ramp 8 to the Woodlane community's entrance. The sidewalks along MD 5 and Ramp 8 will create 250 feet of new sidewalk. However, the crosswalk across MD 5 will be replaced in Phase 2 by a pedestrian bridge. Due to the above resurfacing and safety improvements of the Capital Beltway and ramps, the mileage for the MD 5 Metro Access project increased, as reflected in the "Comparison of Impacts" table.

The Interstate Access Point Approval (IAPA) package, submitted after FR, required slight changes to the FR plans, but actually reduced pavement on MD 5 northbound to Capital Beltway southbound (Ramp 1) shoulder (approximately 2 feet). The only other design changes required by the IAPA are resigning and restriping for Ramp 1.

Lastly, the right-of-way requirements for Phase II of the project are currently underway and will displace one residence on a parcel of land (the Woods property) located adjacent to Sheehy Ford. Once access has been gained, an archeological survey will be completed. Under the worst case scenario for Phase II, two additional residences may be displaced, however, the total number of displacements for the MD 5 Metro Access project has been reduced due to design modifications, and the possibility that abandoned houses were included in the original estimate.

C. Are the environmental impacts different?  Yes  No. Explain.

There are approximately 15.7 acres impacts to woodlands. Mitigation for these impacts will occur in Phases I and II (11 acres), as well as off-site (4.7 acres). The off-site mitigation will be advertised under a separate contract.

There are 1,725 linear feet and 18,366 square feet of stream impacts, and 471 square feet of wetland impacts under Phase I. Stream impacts will be mitigated by rehabilitating the stream located south of Ramp 6. The upstream section of the stream will be marginally relocated, graded, and stabilized, and yield 532 linear feet. The downstream section will be entirely relocated and replaced with a newly created channel south of the stream's current location, and will yield 925 linear feet. Lastly, the toe of slope just above the normal baseflow level of the adjusted channel will be replanted. No wetland mitigation is required as the project is impacting less than 5,000 square feet of permanent wetlands (471 sq. ft.). All mitigation for aquatic resources will occur on-site. Phase II will result in an additional 257 square feet of wetland impacts, but since there are fewer than 5,000 square feet of impacts, no mitigation is required. No additional stream or floodplain impacts, or mitigation are anticipated under Phase II.

The completed Initial Site Assessment identified no hazardous waste sites, although there is the potential for contamination at various locations in Phases I and II. Remediation efforts, if required, would be completed in accordance with Maryland Department of the Environment regulations during construction per special provisions included in the contract.

The Maryland Historical Trust concurred with SHA in a no properties affected determination regarding historic standing structures on May 27, 2005 (see attached). Additionally, a commitment to complete a Phase I archeological survey for the Woods property, located and impacted within Phase II, will be addressed prior to construction of Phase II, based on access being granted to that property.

**Comparison of Impacts Table**

Resource	2000 CE / Selected Alternate	2003 Preliminary Investigation— Entire Project	2004 Final Review—Phase I Only
Length (Miles)	2.7	3.1	1.7 roadway 2.3 ramps
Right-of-Way Impacts (Acres)	12.5	15.2	14.9
Displacements (No.)	5 residential 0 other	5 residential 0 other	1 residential 0 business
Historic/Archeological Resources	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect
Parkland	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect
Stream Impacts (Linear Feet)	N/A	1,725	1,725
Wetlands (Square Feet)	N/A	1200	471
Floodplains	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect
Woodlands (Acres)	N/A	15.7	15.7
Air Quality	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect
Noise	Criteria exceeded - Mitigation not feasible	Criteria exceeded - Mitigation not feasible	Criteria exceeded - Mitigation not feasible
Rare, Threatened & Endangered Species	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect
Hazardous Waste Sites	N/A	Under Study	None
Cost	\$62,122,256	\$77,726,834	\$35,463,900

D. Are there changes in the project surroundings (new development, etc.)?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Yes  X  No. Explain: Since location approval in 2000, no additional unplanned development has occurred within the project area. The Branch Avenue Metro Station completed construction in late 2000, and opened in January 2001, but this was an anticipated development. The character of the surrounding area remains consistent with Prince George's County Master Plans for the area.

Mr. Ken Briggs  
MD 5 Metro Access Study  
Page Five

- E. Is the CE classification still valid?  Yes  No. If no, what additional or supplemental documentation is required?
- F. Are the commitments shown on the plans?  Yes  No. Identify commitments including those related to engineering.

- Hazardous Waste: under review, no identified commitments.
- Pedestrian Crossing and Signal: shown on FR plans.
- Reforestation: shown on FR plans.
- Stormwater Management: shown on FR plans.
- Wetlands and Streams: shown on FR plans and the permit application.

We have determined that the current design plans, in comparison with the CE selected alternative, will not result in any additional significant socioeconomic or natural environmental impacts. This reevaluation has been prepared in accordance with 23 CFR 771.129. Should you have any questions or comments, please feel free to call Joseph Kresslein at 410-545-8550.

by: Anne Elrays for  
Joseph R. Kresslein  
Assistant Division Chief  
Project Planning Division

Attachment

cc: Ms. Anne Elrays, SHA-PPD  
Ms. Caryn Brookman, FHWA  
Mr. Gary Gray, SHA-OFIT  
Mr. Joseph Kresslein, SHA-PPD  
Mr. Eric Marabello, SHA-OHD  
Mr. Ken Polcak, SHA-OED  
Ms. Allison Townshend, SHA-EPD  
Ms. Megan Wanzer, SHA-PPD

Anne



Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., Governor  
Michael S. Steele, Lt. Governor

Robert L. Flanagan, Secretary  
Neil J. Pederson, Administrator

Maryland Department of Transportation

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Mr. Ken Briggs, Chief  
Highway Design Division

**FROM:** Bruce M. Grey  
Deputy Director  
Office of Planning and  
Preliminary Engineering

**DATE:** May 24, 2005

*Was revised on 6/9*

**RE:** Project No. PG413B21  
MD 5 Metro Access Study  
I-95/495 (Phase I)  
Prince George's County  
Final Review Reevaluation

The following information verifies that the current design plan, when compared to that for which a Categorical Exclusion (CE) was approved by the Federal Highway Administration, will not result in significantly different environmental impacts.

A. **Date CE/LA was approved by FHWA:** CE: July 6, 1999 LA: October 5, 2000

B. **Are the proposed improvements different than those approved for the CE?**  
 X  Yes   No. Explain

Since PI, the project has been split into two phases and is divided by Auth Road. This reevaluation addresses changes to Phase I since Preliminary Investigation (PI). Phase II will be presented once highway design work proceeds on that Phase. Phase I consists of the MD 5 and I-95/I-495 interchange modifications located in Prince George's County, Maryland. The project limits along MD 5 (Branch Avenue) are from Auth Road to Manchester Drive. The project proposes improvements along 1.7 miles of MD 5 and I-95/I-495, and 2.3 miles of interchange ramps. The Final Review (FR) for Phase I was held on August 27, 2004. The FR plans reflect minor changes made since generally within the overall project footprint for which Location Approval was granted.

My telephone number/toll-free number is \_\_\_\_\_  
Maryland Relay Service for Impaired Hearing or Speech 1.800.735.2258 Statewide Toll Free

Street Address: 707 North Calvert Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21202 • Phone 410.545.0300 • www.marylandroads.com

C. Are the environmental impacts different?  X  Yes   No. Explain.

There are approximately 15.7 acres impacts to woodlands. Mitigation for these impacts will occur in Phases I and II (11 acres), as well as off-site (4.7 acres). The off-site mitigation will be advertised under a separate contract.

There are 1,725 linear feet and 18,366 square feet of stream impacts, and 471 square feet of wetland impacts under Phase I. Stream impacts will be mitigated by rehabilitating the stream located south of Ramp 6. The upstream section of the stream will be marginally relocated, graded, and stabilized, and yield 532 linear feet. The downstream section will be entirely relocated and replaced with a newly created channel south of the stream's current location, and will yield 925 linear feet. Lastly, the toe of slope just above the normal baseflow level of the adjusted channel will be replanted. No wetland mitigation is required as the project is impacting less than 5,000 square feet of permanent wetlands (471 sq. ft.). All mitigation for aquatic resources will occur on-site. Phase II will result in an additional 257 square feet of wetland impacts, but since there are fewer than 5,000 square feet of impacts, no mitigation is required. No additional stream or floodplain impacts, or mitigation are anticipated under Phase II.

The completed Initial Site Assessment identified no hazardous waste sites, although there is the potential for contamination at various locations in Phases I and II. Remediation efforts, if required, would be completed in accordance with Maryland Department of the Environment regulations during construction per special provisions included in the contract.

Concurrence in a no properties affected determination regarding historic standing structures has been requested from the Maryland Historical Trust, and will be issued on or before June 1, 2005 (see attached). Additionally, a commitment to complete Phase I archeological survey for the Woods property, located and impacted within Phase II, will be addressed prior to construction of Phase II, based on access being granted to that property.

**Comparison of Impacts Table**

Resource	2000 CE / Selected Alternate	2003 Preliminary Investigation— Entire Project	2004 Final Review—Phase I Only
Length (Miles)	2.7	3.1	1.7 roadway 2.3 ramps
Right-of-Way Impacts (Acres)	12.5	15.2	14.9
Displacements (No.)	5 residential 0 other	5 residential 0 other	1 residential 0 business
Historic/Archeological Resources	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect
Parkland	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect
Stream Impacts (Linear Feet)	N/A	1,725	1,725
Wetlands (Square Feet)	N/A	1200	471
Floodplains	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect
Woodlands (Acres)	N/A	15.7	15.7
Air Quality	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect
Noise	Criteria exceeded - Mitigation not feasible	Criteria exceeded - Mitigation not feasible	Criteria exceeded -- Mitigation not feasible
Rare, Threatened & Endangered Species	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect
Hazardous Waste Sites	N/A	Under Study	None
Cost	\$62,122,256	\$77,726,834	\$35,463,900

**D. Are there changes in the project surroundings (new development, etc.)?**

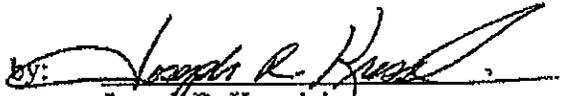
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes  X  No. Explain: Since location approval in 2000, no additional unplanned development has occurred within the project area. The Branch Avenue Metro Station completed construction in late 2000, and opened in January 2001, but this was an anticipated development. The character of the surrounding area remains consistent with Prince George's County Master Plans for the area.

Mr. Ken Briggs  
MD 5 Metro Access Study  
Page Five

- E. Is the CE classification still valid?  Yes  No. If no, what additional or supplemental documentation is required?
- F. Are the commitments shown on the plans?  Yes  No. Identify commitments including those related to engineering.

- Hazardous Waste: under review, no identified commitments.
- Pedestrian Crossing and Signal: shown on FR plans.
- Reforestation: shown on FR plans.
- Stormwater Management: shown on FR plans.
- Wetlands and Streams: shown on FR plans and the permit application.

We have determined that the current design plans, in comparison with the CE selected alternative, will not result in any additional significant socioeconomic or natural environmental impacts. This reevaluation has been prepared in accordance with 23 CFR 771.129. Should you have any questions or comments, please feel free to call Joseph Kresslein at 410-545-8550.

by:   
Joseph R. Kresslein  
Assistant Division Chief  
Project Planning Division

**Attachment**

cc: Ms. Anne Elrays, SHA-PPD  
Ms. Caryn Brookman, FHWA  
Mr. Gary Gray, SHA-OFIT  
Mr. Joseph Kresslein, SHA-PPD  
Mr. Eric Marabello, SHA-OHD  
Mr. Ken Polcak, SHA-OED  
Ms. Allison Townshend, SHA-EPD  
Ms. Megan Wanzer, SHA-PPD



**Maryland Department of Transportation  
State Highway Administration**

Parris N. Glencening  
Governor  
John D. Porcari  
Secretary  
Parker F. Williams  
Administrator

RE: Project No. PG215A11  
MD 5: Branch Avenue Metro Station Access  
Prince George's County  
Request for Environmental Classification

Mr. Nelson J. Castellanos  
Division Administrator  
Federal Highway Administration  
The Rotunda - Suite 220  
711 West 40th Street  
Baltimore MD 21211

Attn: Ms. Kelly Hutchinson

Dear Mr. Castellanos:

In accordance with CEQ Regulations and 23 CFR 771, the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) is recommending that the proposed improvements to facilitate access to the Branch Avenue Metro Station in Prince George's County be classified as an Categorical Exclusion (CE).

The primary need for the project is to improve the existing roadway network in order to safely and efficiently accommodate the travel demand to and from the new Branch Avenue Metro Station. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) is constructing a planned extension of the Metro Greenline (F) Route service to the proposed terminus in the vicinity of MD 5 (Branch Avenue) and the Capital Beltway. The Metro Greenline extension will open for service in the year 2001 and will include construction of a new Metrorail station (Branch Avenue Station). Efficient vehicular and pedestrian access to transit stations is necessary to maximize transit ridership. The Branch Avenue Station will be a regionally significant multi-modal terminal facility that provides a rail transit alternative to residents of southern Prince George's and Charles counties. The proposed 3200 parking spaces are expected to be filled before 9:00 am during weekdays. MD 5, via Auth Road and Auth Way provides existing access to the proposed Metro Station. MD 5 at Auth Road currently has four through lanes in the northbound direction and three lanes in the southbound direction. Auth Road and Auth Way are four-lane undivided roadways without shoulders. Auth Road narrows to two lanes in the vicinity of the station.

My telephone number is 888-204-4828

Maryland Relay Service for Impaired Hearing or Speech  
1-800-735-2258 Statewide Toll Free

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 717 • Baltimore, MD 21203-0717

intersection for the year 2001 operates at LOS B in the morning taking into consideration the currently programmed improvements to MD 5 and deteriorates to LOS F in the design year 2020.

Accident rates have been developed for study area roadways for the years 1991 to 1995 and are compared to the statewide averages (SWA) on the table below:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Accident Rates</u>	<u>Statewide Avg.</u>	<u>Type of Accident*</u>
MD 5, from the Capital Beltway to Beech Road.	402/100mvm	156/100mvm	rear end, fixed object, side swipes, parked vehicle
Auth Road from MD 5 to Capital Gateway	889/100mvm	202/100mvm	angle, left turns, side swipes
Auth Road from Capital Gateway Drive to MD 337	280/100mvm	202/100mvm	angle, fixed object, parked vehicle, pedestrian
Auth Way from MD 5 to Auth Place	334/100mvm	202/100mvm	angle, parked vehicle

\* These accident rates were all statistically significantly higher than the SWA for that type at each location.

SHA has presented the project to the environmental review agencies and community focus groups through on-going meetings since 1997. The agencies concurred in December, 1997 that the project would not be required to proceed through the NEPA/404 process because the Alternates Retained For Detailed Study were likely to result in only minor environmental impacts. SHA conducted an Alternates Public Workshop on December 10, 1998 at Princeton Elementary School in Prince George's County. A brochure from that workshop is attached. The No-Build Alternate and Build Alternates 1 through 5 were presented at the Public Workshop. Subsequent to the Public Workshop, Alternates 1, 2, and 4 were dropped due to the greater number of displacements and magnitude of environmental impacts anticipated. Only the No-Build Alternate and Build Alternates 3 and 5 will be retained for detailed study. It is anticipated that a Public Hearing will be held this Fall.

The No-Build Alternate would not provide any major improvements aside from those Transportation System Management (TSM) measures which are necessary to sustain the serviceability of the existing facility and are currently under construction. These measures include the widening of Auth Road between MD 5 and Auth Place into a five-lane section as well as

widening the Capital Beltway's westbound ramp onto Auth Road to a three-lane section. However, these improvements would offer only temporary congestion relief, traffic operation, and capacity improvement. Minor improvements that would occur as part of normal maintenance and safety activities would not address the need for this project. The Statewide Commuter Assistance Study has determined that congestion problems along this corridor between US 301/MD 5 junction and the future Branch Avenue Metro Station, will require comprehensive transit, rail, and transportation infrastructure improvements. In conjunction with our study, the Maryland Mass Transit Administration will be evaluating options for light-rail service from the US 301 corridor into the Branch Avenue Station, and the Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation will be evaluating local bus service from the surrounding community into the station.

Both build alternates currently under consideration include a directional ramp from I-95/I-495 westbound to MD 5 southbound. This ramp will replace the current loop ramp serving this traffic and serve to minimize backups and weaving on I-95/I-495 between the westbound on and off ramps to and from MD 5. Location Approval for the directional ramp was received from FHWA in 1988 as part of the MD 5 improvements from north of I-495 (Capital Beltway) to south of US 301.

Alternate 3 proposes a four-lane closed section from Auth Place to a new bridge over MD 5 northbound. This bridge is located in the median of MD 5 and provides a two-lane movement from MD 5 southbound to access Auth Place at a traffic light. A double left turn lane is proposed for westbound Auth Place traffic onto southbound MD 5. Auth Place, as well as both Auth Road and Auth Way from Auth Place to Capital Gateway Drive, are proposed to be upgraded to five-lane undivided roadways with continuous center turn lanes. The existing ramp from MD 5 northbound onto I-95/I-495 westbound would be realigned and designed to also allow traffic from the Auth Place/Auth Road intersection to directly access the westbound movement of the Capital Beltway. The Auth Road/MD 5 intersection provides right-in and right-out movements to and from MD 5 northbound only; therefore, left-turns into and out of Auth Road and left-turns from MD 5 northbound to I-95/I-495 westbound ramp would be eliminated. The existing traffic signal at the Auth Road/MD 5 intersection is eliminated under this scenario.

Alternate 5 proposes a grade separated signalized intersection structure at the MD 5/Auth Road intersection to eliminate the existing signal and to provide uninterrupted traffic flow to and from MD 5 and Auth Road. Westbound traffic along Auth Road will utilize the structure to access both directions on MD 5 as well as to continue westbound on the Capital Beltway. Southbound traffic along MD 5 will also be utilizing the structure to access eastbound Auth Road. The existing loop ramp in the northwest quadrant of the Capital Beltway/MD 5 interchange would be eliminated. Auth Place, as well as both Auth Road and Auth Way from Auth Place to Capital Gateway Drive, are proposed to be upgraded to a five-lane undivided roadways with continuous center turn lanes.

The proposed improvements to MD 5 do not meet the criteria for a Major Investment Study. Although MD 5 is located within the jurisdictional boundaries of a Metropolitan Planning Organization and is a major arterial, this is a localized, safety, and operational improvement project.

An assessment of archeological potential indicates that although there are no previously recorded sites, the undisturbed portions of the project area are likely to contain resources. Coordination with the Maryland Historical Trust confirms that the Marescalco House is the only significant historic standing structure identified within the project area that is either listed on or is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. None of the alternates considered would require property from this resource. Coordination with the Maryland Historical Trust will continue throughout the study to determine the effect of the project alternatives on significant cultural resources.

The proposed action is consistent with the 1981 Prince George's County Subregion VII Master Plan. The project is consistent with Smart Growth legislation as it is located within a Priority Funding Area.

Depending upon the alternate selected, between 7 to 14 acres of additional right-of-way and up to five residences may be required. Henson Creek Park is the only publicly owned public park located in the project area. It is not anticipated that any property from schools, publicly owned public parks or recreational facilities would be required by this project. Streams in the project area are Class 1 waters (suitable for recreation, habitat for warm and cold water fish and other wildlife). No impacts to streams, 100-year floodplains, wetlands, or woodlands are anticipated.

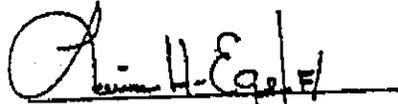
Sediment and erosion control, grading plans, and stormwater management practices, approved by the Maryland Department of the Environment, would be strictly enforced during construction. There are no known listed threatened or endangered species within the project area. Air quality and noise analyses will be conducted on the Alternates Retained for Detailed Study.

In sum, we do not believe that this project will involve significant environmental impacts. Therefore, we request your concurrence that this project is appropriately classified as a Categorical Exclusion. If you agree with this determination, please indicate your concurrence on the signature line below.

Sincerely,

Parker F. Williams  
Administrator

by:

  
Neil J. Pedersen, Director  
Office of Planning and  
Preliminary Engineering

Concurrence:

  
Federal Highway Administration

7-6-99  
Date

Enclosure

- cc: Mr. Louis H. Ege, Jr.
- Ms. Anne Elrays
- Mr. Joseph Kresslein
- Mr. Monty Rahman
- Ms. Cynthia D. Simpson
- Mr. Charles Watkins
- Mr. James Wynn



**Maryland Department of Transportation  
State Highway Administration**

Parris N. Glendening  
Governor  
John D. Porcari  
Secretary  
Parker F. Williams  
Administrator

August 30, 2000

RE: Project No. PG215A11  
MD 5: Branch Avenue Metro Station Access  
Prince George's County  
Request for Location Approval

Mr. Nelson J. Castellanos  
Division Administrator  
Federal Highway Administration  
The Rotunda-Suite 220  
711 West 40th Street  
Baltimore MD 21211

Attn: Mr. Peter Kleskovic

Dear Mr. Castellanos:

In accordance with CEQ Regulations and 23 CFR 771, the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) is requesting location approval for the proposed improvements, which facilitate access to the Branch Avenue Metro Station in Prince George's County. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) concurred in a Categorical Exclusion (CE) classification for the MD 5 Branch Avenue project on July 6, 1999. An Alternates Public Workshop was held on December 10, 1998 and a Location/Design Public Hearing was held on December 16, 1999. A copy of the Public Hearing transcript, including the summary of testimony, and associated comments, was sent to your office on February 7, 2000.

The purpose of the MD 5 Branch Metro Access project is to provide transportation network improvements for safe access to the new Metro Station for buses, vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians. It is anticipated that these improvements will increase transit ridership at the station. There will be heavy growth in vehicular trips in this area resulting from the new Metro Station, as well as continued growth in through traffic. The Statewide Commuter Assistance Study has determined that congestion problems along this corridor between US 301/MD 5 junction and the future Branch Avenue Metro Station, will require comprehensive transit, rail, and transportation infrastructure improvements. The Maryland Mass Transit Administration will be evaluating options for light-rail service from the US 301 corridor into the Branch Avenue Station, and the Prince George's County Public Works and Transportation Department is evaluating local feeder bus service from the surrounding community into the station.

My telephone number is \_\_\_\_\_

Maryland Relay Service for Impaired Hearing or Speech  
1-800-735-2258 Statewide Toll Free

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 717 • Baltimore, MD 21203-0717

In addition to the No-Build Alternate, Build Alternates 3 and 3A were presented at the Public Hearing. Alternate 3 proposes a new connector road, consisting of a 4-lane closed section from Auth Place to a bridge over MD 5 northbound. The bridge is located in the median of MD 5 and provides a 2-lane movement from MD 5 southbound to access Auth Place at a traffic light. A double left turn lane is proposed for westbound Auth Place traffic onto southbound MD 5. Left turn movement from MD 5 southbound to Auth Way is prohibited during the morning peak hours. Auth Place, as well as both Auth Road and Auth Way from Auth Place to Capital Gateway Drive, are proposed to be upgraded to 5-lane undivided roadways with continuous center turn lanes. The existing ramp from MD 5 northbound onto I-95/I-495 westbound would be realigned and designed to also allow traffic from the Auth Place/Auth Road intersection to directly access westbound travel on the Capital Beltway. Alternate 3A is identical to Alternate 3 but includes a depressed median, in which the northbound MD 5 roadway would bridge over the proposed connection from Auth Place to a depressed platform in the median of MD 5.

Subsequent to the Public hearing, Alternate 3B, the SHA Selected Alternate, was developed to provide the same traffic movement and footprint as Alternates 3 and 3A, while addressing constructability and driver expectancy issues associated with the other two build alternates. (See attached Administrator's Review meeting minutes and the Director's concurrence memorandum.) By depressing northbound MD 5 instead of the MD 5 median, traffic can be detoured onto the newly constructed median and the northbound MD 5 section can then be constructed away from traffic. This should result in a decreased construction duration and reduced driver impacts. Alternate 3B also removes the tunneling perception that may be felt by drivers under Alternate 3A, enhances traffic operations and safety, and helps with maintenance operations related to snow removal during winter storms. Alternate 3B proposes that the existing MD 5 northbound roadway be lowered in the area beginning just south of Auth Road to a point where it will pass under a new connection with a "T" configuration from the median of MD 5 to the Metro Station and rise back to grade by the Auth Way intersection. This new connection will be made in the median between MD 5 northbound and MD 5 southbound and will consist of a separated 2-lane double left turning movement from MD 5 southbound to the new connector road. The connector roadway will be a 4-lane closed section roadway and will provide a return double left turn movement into the MD 5 southbound median. The new connector roadway will intersect Auth Place (at-grade) and will continue easterly toward the new Metro parking Lots and tie into Old Soper Road. The MD 5 northbound traffic will have three lanes plus a deceleration lane into the loop ramp going toward I-495 westbound and it will also provide a contra-flow lane from the median of MD 5 to access the connector road. This additional MD 5 lane needs to be located on the MD 5 northbound roadway because of the structure width limitations along the MD 5 southbound roadway under the existing I-495 structure.

The SHA Selected Alternate also includes a directional ramp from I-95/I-495 westbound to MD 5 southbound. This ramp will replace the current loop ramp serving this traffic and minimize backups and weaving on I-95/I-495 between the westbound on and off ramps to and from MD 5. Location Approval for the directional ramp was received from FHWA in 1988 as part of the MD 5 improvements from north of I-495 (Capital Beltway) to south of US 301.

All three build alternates, Alternate 3, Alternate 3A, and Alternate 3B, have the same traffic operational capacity. However, comments received at the Public Hearing indicated that Alternate 3 was not supported by the public because it was not considered aesthetically pleasing. Alternate 3A was dropped due to the potential for a tunneling effect caused by the proposed depressed median and due to constructability issues. The planning team held an Informational Community Meeting on Wednesday May 24 (see attached brochure) to present Alternate 3B, which differed slightly from the two build alternates that were shown at the Hearing. The citizens attending the meeting expressed support for Alternate 3B. In response to comments received at the community meeting, a pedestrian bridge will be included in the project to facilitate free flow travel along MD 5 and to provide safe pedestrian access across MD 5/Auth Way from Simpson Drive to the Metro Station. Currently pedestrian movement across MD 5 is minimal. However, it is anticipated that upon the station's opening, a greater number of pedestrians and bicyclists will be crossing MD 5 to commute on the Metro.

The proposed improvements to MD 5 do not meet the criteria for a Major Investment Study. Although MD 5 is located within the jurisdictional boundaries of a Metropolitan Planning Organization and is a major arterial, this is a localized, safety, and operational improvement project.

There are no significant environmental impacts associated with the construction of SHA Selected Alternate 3B. There will be no impacts to the 100-year floodplains of Henson Creek, designated as Class I Waters by Maryland Department of Natural Resources, (suitable for recreation and aquatic life). No wetland, stream, or woodland impact will occur with SHA Selected Alternate 3B.

Sediment and erosion control measures, grading plans, and stormwater management practices, approved by the Maryland Department of the Environment, will be strictly enforced during construction. Coordination with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and Fish and Wildlife Service indicates that there are no known state or federal-listed threatened or endangered species within the project area.

Air quality indicates that the State and National Ambient Air Quality Standards will not be exceeded with the selected alternate. A noise analysis was completed for a total of 64 sites

Mr. Nelson J. Castellanos  
MD 5: Branch Avenue Metro Station Access  
Page 4

*close gap*  
within four noise sensitive areas (NSA's). While MD 5 and I-495 are dominant sources of highway noise within NSA's 1, 2, and 3, Auth Road is a predominant noise source affecting NSA 4. The projected 2020 design year build noise levels indicate that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Noise Abatement Criteria (67 dBA) is approached (66 dBA) or exceeded at NSA's 1, 2, and 3 associated with SHA Selected Alternate 3B. Mitigation is not considered feasible or reasonable for any of these NSA's.

The only significant historic structure, the Marescalco House located within the project area is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Due to prior disturbance, the project is unlikely to affect archeological resources and further work was not recommended. The Maryland Historical Trust has concurred that there will be no effect on significant cultural resources including archeological resources and historic standing structures for both Alternates 3 and 3A (see attached coordination). SHA Selected Alternate 3B occurs within the same footprint (area of potential effect) as these previous alternates.

Alternate 3B will require approximately 12.5 acres of right-of-way, and five residential displacements. Two of these five displacements (40%) affect minorities. As the racial composition of the study area is 37% Caucasian and 59% African-American, this does not represent a high or adverse effect to minority or low-income populations. The proposed action is consistent with the 1981 Prince George's County Subregion VII Master Plan and is located entirely within a Priority Funding Area. Henson Creek Park is the only publicly owned park located within the affected project area. There will be no impacts to Henson Creek Park or any schools, or recreational facilities as a result of this project.

Residential/commercial areas surround MD 5, from MD 337 to Auth Way. The land use along Auth Road is mostly residential. As Auth Road approaches MD 5, the land use becomes a mixture of commercial/residential and office buildings. A proposed industrial/office development known as the Capital Gateway was approved in 1990. It includes the area surrounding the proposed Metro Station. The construction of SHA Selected Alternate 3B will improve existing access to this development, however, it is not expected to induce any additional unanticipated development, as no other potential development sites exist in the study area. Therefore, with respect to the minimal direct impacts associated with the project, and the lack of any reasonably foreseeable secondary development, the contribution of this project to cumulative effects on study area resources is expected to be minimal.

Mr. Nelson J. Castellanos  
MD 5: Branch Avenue Metro Station Access  
Page 5

In sum, we do not believe that this project will involve significant environmental impacts. Therefore, we believe that this project remains appropriately classified as a Categorical Exclusion, and request Location Approval. If you agree with this determination, please signify your concurrence on the signature line below.

Sincerely,

Parker F. Williams  
Administrator

by:

Cynthia D. Simpson for  
Neil J. Pedersen  
Deputy Administrator for  
Planning and Engineering

CONCURRENCE:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Federal Highway Administration

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Enclosures

cc: Ms. Anne Elrays  
Mr. Joseph Kresslein  
Mr. Monty Rahman  
Ms. Cynthia D. Simpson  
Mr. Charles Watkins  
Mr. James Wynn