

ATTENTION AREA RESIDENTS, COMMUTERS, EMPLOYERS, AND BUSINESS PEOPLE!!

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) invites you to join us at the second public meeting for the...
Baltimore-Washington Parkway Widening Feasibility Study

November 17, 2011

6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Greenbelt Community Center
15 Crescent Road
Greenbelt, MD 20770

For more information:

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FHWA – Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division
703.404.6289

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FHWA - Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division
21400 Ridgetop Circle
Sterling, VA 20166



Photo by: Adam Elmquist

This study will examine the feasibility of adding a third northbound and a third southbound lane to the Baltimore-Washington Parkway between its interchange with I-695 in Anne Arundel County, MD and New York Avenue in the District of Columbia. During this meeting the project team will provide an update from the first public meeting, present the existing conditions summary, traffic analysis summary, and alternatives development.



Baltimore - Washington

Parkway Chronicle

Issue No. 2 | November 2011

The Circuitous Route to Building the Baltimore-Washington Parkway

In the 1920's, as automobile ownership became more affordable and suburbanization of cities began to occur, there was an increasing interest for new types of roadways that emphasized recreational and natural values. As a result of this growing demand, the National Park Service (NPS) issued the *Regulations and Procedures to Govern the Acquisition of Rights-of-way for Parkways* on February 8, 1935 by the Secretary of the Interior¹. This was the first document to define a *parkway* characterized by the type of roadway as one that limits access only to non-commercial and recreational traffic. Other guidelines included the following general facility characteristics:

- Avoids unsightly roadside developments.
- Provides a buffer from abutting property through wider-than average right-of-way.
- Denies frontage or access rights.
- Eliminates major grade crossings.
- Encourages preservation of and access to natural scenery.
- Prefers construction on new sites to avoid already congested and built-up areas.
- Limits entrance and exit points to reduce traffic interruptions and increase safety.

It was during this timeframe that the concept of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway was first proposed as an element of a planned regional system of parkways providing access to the core of the national capital region. Unfortunately, shortly thereafter, the lagging economy dramatically tempered interest in recreational roadways, and the focus shifted to the improvement of roadways that provided greater speed, safety, and efficiency for general public and commercial users. Consequently, a roadway between Baltimore, MD and Washington, DC, based solely on its recreational value was deemed unrealistic. While the Baltimore-Washington Parkway project was stalled by several obstacles, travel on US Route 1 between Baltimore, MD and Washington, DC, grew dramatically resulting in a very crowded, unsafe, and undesirable travel

¹United States Department of Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, Section E - Statement of Historic Context, p2
²Historic American Engineering Record, Baltimore-Washington Parkway, HAER No. MD-129, p 50
⁴United States Department of Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, Section E - Statement of Historic Context, p17

experience. Pressures to relieve the traffic conditions on US Route 1 pushed the Maryland State Road Commission to release an initial plan in 1941 for a toll road between Baltimore, MD and Washington, DC, which conflicted with the proposed *parkway* plans². The plans for a State toll road lost support with time, mainly due to Federal restrictions on tolling roads that go through federally owned lands, but the renewed interest in the Baltimore-Washington Parkway stressed the importance of planning to accommodate functionality as well as aesthetic and recreational value.

The 1940's brought an emphasis on roadway projects important to national defense, leading to the Federal Defense Highway Act of 1941, which provided funds for infrastructures that addressed primarily national defense needs. The Department of Commerce's Federal Works Agency (the agency that oversaw the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR), which would later become the Federal Highway Administration [FHWA]) restricted approval to road projects that were certified by Federal defense agencies as essential to national defense. Under these circumstances, the characteristics described by a *typical parkway* provided for a more functional defense roadway system connecting to Fort George G. Meade, one of the largest military bases in the United States, than the typical freeway or highway for the following reasons³:

1. It would be impermeable to air attack:
 - The parkway was designed to hug the natural contours of the landscape, which provided areas that would allow vehicles to detour and scatter to avoid possible air strikes.
 - The parkway provided greater landscape and plantings, which provided camouflage for vehicles seeking concealment.
2. The limited access designated on a *parkway*, also permitted easy closure to non-military traffic in times of emergency.



IMPORTANT UPDATES

2nd Public Meeting is Coming Up! Get Involved! (Details on the last page)

November 17, 2011

6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

The Circuitous Route to Building the Baltimore-Washington Parkway (Cont'd)

This focus on national defense led to a plan for the Baltimore-Washington Parkway that merged the functionality of modern freeways with the scenic parkway characteristics that addressed the aesthetic value and national defense needs. In 1945, the plans were finalized, which significantly differed from the initial plans. The northern section of the corridor, basically between Fort Meade and the City of Baltimore, was designated under the jurisdiction of the State of Maryland, and the typical public highway design standards of the time were applied. Additionally, as a State-owned roadway, it was built to accommodate commercial vehicles. The southern portion of the planned parkway remained under federal jurisdiction as much of the land was owned by Fort Meade and other federal agencies. A decision was made to abide by the parkway standards of the National Park Service which was granted ownership and operational/maintenance responsibilities for this portion of the corridor as well as the prohibition on commercial vehicles. The northern section of the corridor between Baltimore City and MD 175, a 12-mile section, began construction in 1946 and was opened in 1952. The construction of the southern section (18.8 miles between MD 175 and US 50) began in 1950 and was opened in 1954.

To ensure that the parkway maintained its primary purpose, Congressional legislation was approved in 1950 for the Baltimore-Washington Parkway⁴. The legislation states that it "... shall be regarded as an extension of the park system of the District of Columbia and its environs..." and "... that it shall be constructed, developed, administered, and maintained by the Secretary of the Interior, through the National Park Service..." in accordance with the National Park Service 1916 mission which protects natural and nationally significant historic resources by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations. Further, it states that "[T]he Parkway shall be constructed, developed, operated and administered as a limited access road primarily to provide a protected, safe, and suitable approach for passenger-vehicle traffic to the National Capital and for an additional means of access between the several Federal establishments adjacent thereto and the seat of government in the District of Columbia." As one of the National Capital Parks, the Baltimore-Washington Parkway is also subject to additional legislation that gives direction to preserving the forests and natural scenery in and about Washington.

To avoid impairment of the above purposes of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, the legislation specifically states that the Secretary of the Interior, in concurrence with the Secretary of Commerce, shall control the location, limit the number of access points, and regulate the use of said parkway by various classes or types of vehicles or traffic.

Finally, the Baltimore-Washington Parkway was entered onto the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in May, 1991, in the category of Transportation and noted for its landscape architecture.

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS STUDY?

Nearly 60 years after the opening of the roadway, the Baltimore-Washington Parkway has become one of the most heavily traveled corridors in the Baltimore and Washington Metropolitan areas. Present day traffic volumes range between 80,000 and more than 100,000 vehicles per day. Along this corridor, Fort Meade is expected to expand as part of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process. The expansion of Fort Meade is anticipated to result in an increase of approximately 5,400 military, Department of Defense (DoD) civilians and contractor employees, as well as approximately 4,900 family members, all to be located on the Fort Meade campus. In addition, the Fort Meade expansion and the BRAC process is projected to add approximately 5,800 civilian jobs, over 4,000 jobs due to ongoing National Security Agency (NSA) expansion, and 1,000 jobs from other Army and DoD decisions, as well as over 10,000 jobs from proposed commercial development near the Fort Meade area which will incur related growth through and beyond the BRAC process (2011). The unanticipated expansion, timing, funding, and the unpredictable growth within the base parameter have been cited by the Maryland Department of Transportation as the main transportation challenges generated by BRAC.

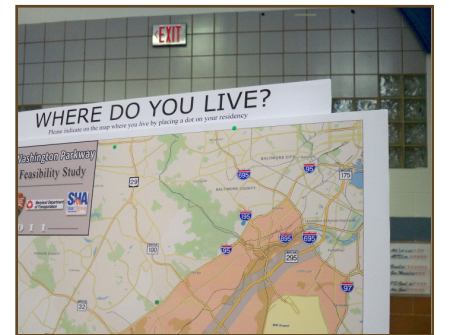
In anticipation of the expected increase in travel demand that would be associated with these BRAC related actions in addition to other anticipated residential, commercial and industrial growth and development in the corridor, the United States Congress has requested the conduct of an initial feasibility study to examine the effects of adding a third travel lane in each direction along the Baltimore-Washington Parkway between US Route 50 at the District of Columbia line on the south and the Baltimore Beltway (I-695) on the north. As an initial feasibility study, this effort is seeking to assess the feasibility of this action from several perspectives. These include: potential changes in traffic volume, travel time and congestion levels with and without the proposed improvements; the capital and operating costs associated with a widened Baltimore-Washington Parkway; the potential impacts of any such action on adjacent communities and natural environmental areas; and institutional considerations on facility ownership and administration. This study was initiated in the spring of 2011 and is scheduled for completion within about one year.

One concern of this study is that adding additional lanes is contrary to the above parkway purposes and could destroy the characteristics that NPS values for the Baltimore-Washington Parkway as well as the justification for placement on the NRHP. Also, it raises questions of the appropriateness of the parkway remaining under NPS stewardship.

Recap: First Public Meeting

The first Public Meeting for the Baltimore-Washington Parkway Widening Feasibility Study took place on July 20, 2011, at the Meade Middle School in Fort Meade, MD. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the study to the general public and other stakeholders, and obtain their input and feedback regarding the existing conditions and study goals. Approximately 40 people attended this first Public Meeting providing valuable feedback for the study. The comments received have been summarized into the following major themes:

- Preserve the aesthetic, historic, and natural values of the Parkway
- Determine community and environmental impacts of a potential widening
- Allow direct connectivity between Washington and Baltimore
- Reduce traffic congestion
- Maintain the existing two-lanes in each direction to preserve the Parkway character; widening will not resolve congestion in the corridor
- Consider lack of alternative mobility options along the corridor (transit, bicycle, and pedestrian)
- Remove the barrier that the Parkway creates to the environment and community connectivity along the corridor



Since the First Public Meeting

After gathering and reviewing the feedback received at the first Public Meeting, the study team has:

- Evaluated existing and future year travel demand conditions in the corridor, including an assessment of traffic congestion (levels of service and operational conditions)
- Identified four potential widening options for the parkway
- Performed a preliminary engineering assessment of the four options
- Conducted additional outreach to local community and business stakeholders



The four widening options under consideration are:

- Inside widening based on the National Park Service park roads and parkway design standards and guidelines.
- Outside widening based on the National Park Service standards and guidelines.
- Outside widening based on the highway design standards and guidelines developed by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials and the Maryland State Highway Administration (AASHTO/SHA).
- Inside widening based on the AASHTO/SHA standards and guidelines.

The study team presented an initial description of the major findings from this analysis to the members of the study's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) in mid-October for their consideration for their review and comment. A summary of these preliminary findings will be presented at the second public meeting on November 17, 2011.

⁴ Public Law 643 – 81st Congress, Chapter 525 – 2D Session, H.R. 5990