

BRIEFING MEMO

TO: WILLIAM PINES, ADMINISTRATOR, MARYLAND STATE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

FROM: ANGIE RODGERS, DEPUTY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER (DCAO), OFFICE OF THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY EXECUTIVE

RE: PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COMMENTS TO THE SHA MEDICAL CENTER DRIVE INTERCHANGE PROJECT

On March 20, 2023, the State Highway Administration briefed staff from the Prince George's County Executive Office, the Department of Public Works and Transportation and the Prince George's County Planning Department on the Preferred Alternative for the Medical Center Drive Interchange, which is currently advancing through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. The County does wish to express its sincere gratitude for quickly advancing a top County priority into design.

SHA has noted that Alternative Three (3) modified has been selected as the Preferred Alternative to be carried forward for further study. As a follow up to the request made at the meeting for comments within a roughly two-week span, we do want to respond in kind and share some of our comments and concerns.

Alternative 3 modified is a diverging diamond interchange with a 12' shared use path that had been previously fully funded for design and construction. This had not yet been advertised, however, and the construction funding was pulled from the most recent CTP. The County does appreciate the State continuing work on the design, and we view this as an opportunity to work closely with the State to insure that this project, which serves as a bridge (both physically and metaphorically) critical to connecting the University of Maryland Medical Campus, the proposed Carillon project, and the whole of Downtown Largo to the remainder of the County's flagship project, the "Blue Line Corridor." Therefore, it is imperative to get this right.

The County understands and appreciates that a Preferred Alternative has been selected and is in the NEPA process, however, in order to advance a bridge design that is truly connective and multimodal, while meeting the needs established as conditions for new development in the area, the County would like to propose some recommended amendments to the proposed Diverging Diamond concept as currently presented as Alternative 3 modified. As the County understands that Alternative 3 modified has added changes to make it safer for bicycle and pedestrian movements, and is the Preferred Alternative, however, we would be remiss if we did not raise concern over the challenges of a diverging diamond to true multi-modal access and mobility.

The County strongly views the necessity of building a bridge that not only moves vehicles, but serves as an attractive, multi-modal flagship project that provides seamless connectivity and multi-modality. And while the current preferred alternative provides optimal movement of traffic, the County does wish to express concerns with the safety, efficacy and completeness of the bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Understanding that SHA's preferred alternative is the diverging diamond design, our feedback is limited to that, though we would note that the traditional diamond offers more opportunity to promote bicycle and pedestrian access. As such, our comments on the diverging diamond design are focused on changes needed to make the

design more bicycle and pedestrian friendly, and consistent with Prince George's County's vision to transform the area into an engaging, amenity rich destination with a stadium district active year-round, linked to the \$2B Carillon development, the Downtown Largo Metro, and the downtown civic node.

The investment in this improvement is a once-in-a generation investment, so it should be designed and built to align with the long-term vision for this area, and multi-modal access to everything within roughly one (1) mile of the Downtown Largo metro station is the centerpiece of that vision, and the key to building up a dense, amenity-rich, walkable, bikeable downtown for the County. All of the other public incentives and investments – County, State and Federal – in both vertical and horizontal development being made in this area point toward this vision, so the investment in the Medical Center Drive/495 exchange improvement should be aligned.

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY RECOMMENDATIONS

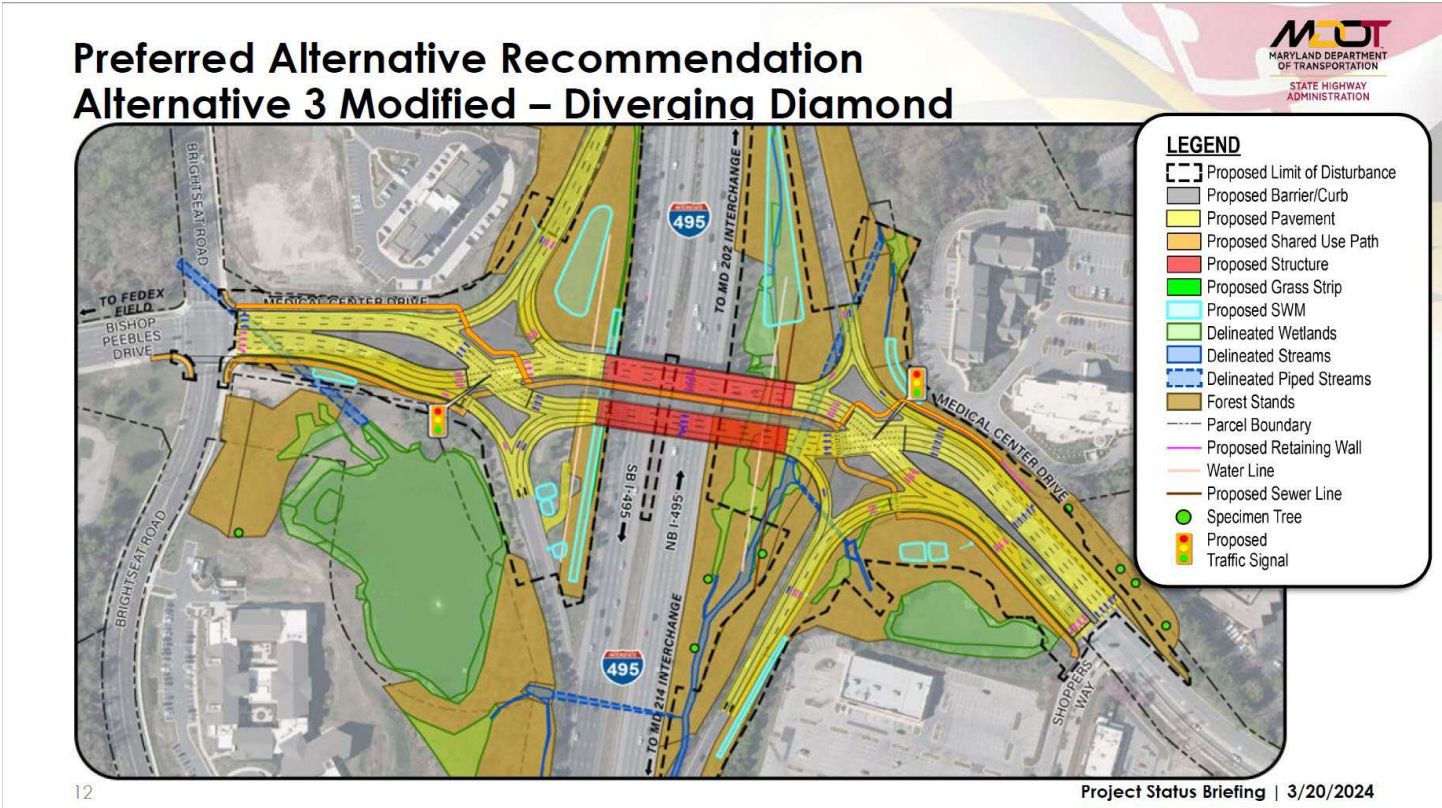
We strongly support and appreciate the changes already offered to ensure all bicycle and pedestrian crossing points are signalized, well signed, and assert these treatments are critical for any crossings regardless of the design moving forward. However, we feel that this Alternative could be improved within the basic framework of the Preferred Alternative. To address these concerns within what we understand to be the principal constraints, we would like to offer the following two options:

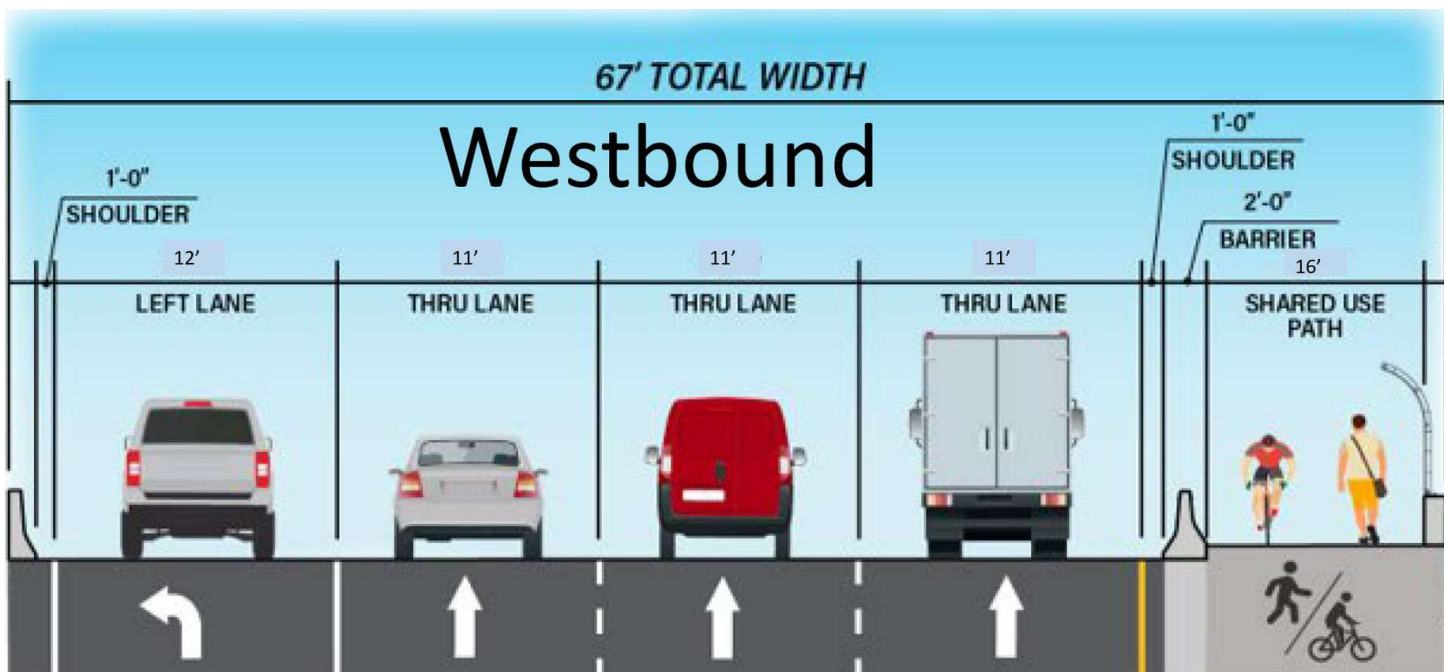
OPTION 1: Ideally, our first option (assuming that the diverging diamond interchange is being carried forward) would be a diverging diamond design that features shared use paths on both sides of the diamond. For instance, please find the example from Florida that offers a diverging diamond similar to Alternative Three (3) modified, but with sidewalk connections to both sides. Please find an example below:

- [New Diverging Diamond Interchange in Viera Offers Glimpse at Future I-4 | I-4 Beyond \(i4beyond.com\)](http://i4beyond.com)



OPTION 2: If Option 1 is not feasible, our second preference would be for a shared use path as is currently proposed, however, widening it from 12' to 16' and providing signalized sidewalks connections to the north sides of the bridge as is currently provided on the south side of the bridge. This would be similar to the Viera Blvd. example above, with connections to the sidewalk on both sides, but with the single shared use path as is the case in Alternative 3 modified, and would not alter either structure. This can be accomplished by shaving one foot from each lane (the 3 travel and one turning lane) to 11' on the West bound (existing) bridge for travel lanes and 12' for the turning lane. This option would maintain the same or a similar footprint, capacity, environmental impact and cost as the current Alternative 3 modified. Please see a rendering showing the added crossings to a north side sidewalk. These would of course need to be signed and signalized as those currently in Alternative 3 modified. We have also provided a mock-up of the typical section with the proposed travel lane widths.





We look forward to working with you in achieving a bridge design that can be carried forward that does not slow down the process, keeps costs contained, meets the capacity needs in order to accommodate the Carillon development and the other projects slated for this vital corridor, but with the imperative to do so in a manner that maximizes multi-modal safety and movement, and creates a seamless urban community that will serve as a national example of what can be done to make the Blue Line Corridor, particularly the connectivity between Downtown Largo and the Garrett Morgan/Stadium Community, a synergistic interconnected flagship for Prince George's County, the State of Maryland and the entire Washington Region. Please contact with me at arodgers@co.pg.md.us any questions, concerns and how we can work together in advancing an exemplary project.

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