



Request for Public Comment

Section 4(f) of the US Department of Transportation Act- *de minimis* Finding

MD 543 at MD 136

Intersection Capacity Improvements

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) proposes intersection capacity improvements on MD 543 at MD 136 in Harford County, MD. The project is necessary to improve the capacity of the intersection during both the AM and PM peak hours by reducing queue length along MD 543. MDOT SHA proposes add an additional thru lane on MD 543 in each direction for approximately 1,000 feet. This project will impact Harford County owned Cedar Lane Regional Park.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE PROJECT

Why is this work necessary and what improvements are proposed?

To address the poor level of service for MD 543 traffic at the intersection, the proposed improvements include widening to add an additional thru lane for MD 543 in each direction for approximately 1,000 feet from the intersection. The length of turn lanes on MD 543 will be extended to reduce the amount of turning vehicles in the through traffic queue. Five-foot wide bike lanes along MD 543 will also be included in the proposed improvements. Along MD 136, the existing 12-foot wide travel lanes will be reduced to 11 feet wide where necessary to avoid further impacting the park, while facilitating bicycle compatibility along MD 136.

Why are comments being requested?

23 CFR 774.5(b) of Section 4(f) allows the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to determine that certain transportation uses of Section 4(f) land will have no adverse effect on the protected resource. With respect to publicly owned parks and recreation areas, a finding of *de minimis* impact may occur if a transportation project does not "adversely affect the activities, features and attributes" of the Section 4(f) resource. When this is the case, the finding of FHWA requires written concurrence from the officials with jurisdiction over the resource. In addition, public notice and opportunity for public review and comment on the finding is required.

What are the impacts to protected Section 4(f) resources?

In order to complete the project, fee simple right-of-way would be required from the Harford County owned 112.3-acre Cedar Lane Regional Park. The project would require 2,934-square-feet of fee simple ROW from a grass-covered area southwest of the intersection of MD 543 and MD 136, adjacent to the existing utility line, and 322 square feet of fee simple ROW from a grass-covered area adjacent to MD 543. The total fee-simple area anticipated for the project from Cedar Lane Regional Park is 3,256-square-feet (0.08 acre). Although the purchase of a portion of Cedar Lane Regional Park would constitute a "use" as defined under Section 4(f), we anticipate no negative impact on activities, features, and attributes that qualify the recreation area for protection under Section 4(f). MDOT SHA, through this notice, is advising the public that it will request that FHWA make a *de minimis* (or minor) impact finding, in accordance with Section 4(f). Harford County was informed of MDOT SHA's intent to seek a *de minimis* impact finding on March 8, 2019. With this notice, the public is afforded the opportunity to provide comments on this finding.

How do I comment?

Please contact Mr. Jordan Vogt, MDOT SHA Project Manager at (410) 229-2329 or JVogt@sha.state.md.us, or Ms. Sara Al-Najjar, MDOT SHA Environmental Manager at (410) 545-0095 or Salnajjar@sha.state.md.us; or visit us at www.roads.maryland.gov. Please provide comments between March 11, 2019 and March 26, 2019.