



City of Rockville  
111 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, Maryland  
20850-2364  
www.rockvillemd.gov

240-314-5000  
TTY 240-314-8137

March 21, 2022

Jeffery T. Folden, Director  
I-495 & I-270 P3 Office  
Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration  
707 North Calvert Street, Mail Stop P-601  
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Dear Mr. Folden:

Thank you for your letter dated February 17, 2022, to Tim Chesnutt, Rockville Director of Recreation and Parks, requesting the City of Rockville's written concurrence that the proposed I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes Study (the "**Proposed I-495 / I-270 Project**") would have *de minimis* Section 4(f) impacts on three (3) parks owned and managed by the City of Rockville: (i) Rockmead Park, (ii) Woottons Mill Park, and (iii) Rockville Senior Center and Park. The authority to provide written concurrence rests with the Mayor and Council of Rockville. At this time, the Mayor and Council lacks sufficient information to concur under 23 C.F.R. § 774.5(b)(2)(ii), particularly surrounding the "mitigation" referenced in the letter. We welcome further discussions between the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration, the United States Federal Highway Administration and the Rockville City Manager and his staff regarding this subject, and more broadly addressing the Proposed I-495 / I-270 Project's disparate and significant impacts on the City of Rockville.

As previously communicated, including in our NEPA comments, the Mayor and Council of Rockville has extreme concern with the Proposed I-495 / I-270 Project and its associated environmental analysis to date. The Proposed I-495 / I-270 Project poses direct and indirect impacts on the homes, businesses and infrastructure of the nine City of Rockville neighborhoods that abut I-270. Specifically with respect to parkland, the latest SDEIS (including Table 5-1) identifies an increase in acres of City of Rockville parkland impacted since the original DEIS, now encompassing 7.7 acres of mostly permanent impacts. We understand that recent FHWA and SHA conversations with City staff indicate that this may have been reduced to 5.4 acres, but that acreage is still substantial and any such reduction is not yet formally documented. Additionally, the City of Rockville would experience by far the largest proportion of the Proposed I-495 / I-270 Project-related property impacts of any community, with approximately 44 acres impacted, including 40.1 acres permanently, as well as disproportionate impacts to environmental resources. We will not repeat our prior comments here. But we incorporate them in larger context of, at a minimum, ensuring impacts to the City of Rockville are fully recognized, analyzed, and mitigated.

The City has repeatedly expressed concerns about parks' impacts and that all scarce City parkland is valuable, not just the portions containing structures or amenities. The letter sent by the Mayor and Council in response to the SDEIS, dated November 8, 2021, stated: "... it is essential that MDOT and FHWA understand that

MAYOR  
Bridget Donnell Newton

COUNCIL  
Monique Ashton  
Beryl L. Feinberg  
David Myles  
Mark Pierzchala

CITY MANAGER  
Robert DiSpirito

CITY CLERK/DIRECTOR OF  
COUNCIL OPERATIONS  
Sara Taylor-Ferrell

CORPORATE COUNSEL  
Robert E. Dawson

taking a portion of a yard, playground, park, or other amenity would damage our community.” At this time, we need additional detail regarding the Proposed I-495 / I-270 Project’s anticipated impacts to the parks addressed in your letter. For example, the City of Rockville is planning a new entrance for the Rockville Senior Center at the intersection of W. Gude Dr. and Piccard Dr. per the city’s Comprehensive Plan and must ensure the Project will not impact the construction of this entrance, nor the limited open space that is currently used at the site. In addition, the Woodley Gardens Community, including the Rockville Senior Center, is eligible for National Historic District designation according to the Maryland Historic Trust. Please let us know how your intended use of this property, and how the Project in general, will impact the historic nature of this land and what mitigation measures, if any, you propose.

To date, the mitigation proposed in our community for the Proposed I-495 / I-270 Project’s impacts is severely lacking. These concerns extend to the City of Rockville’s affected parkland addressed in your letter, as well as to the City of Rockville’s Bullards Park and Rose Hill Stream Valley Park, which you concede will experience more than *de minimis* Section 4(f) impacts. Your letter rightly references the obligation, at a minimum, to provide replacement land for City parkland that the Proposed I-495 / I-270 Project would take, however it is unclear what and where such replacement land would be, and how such replacement lands relate to replacement of other City property to be appropriated for the Proposed I-495/ I-270 Project. These topics require further discussion.

The letter also is silent regarding other warranted mitigation, including opportunities discussed in the SDEIS in conjunction with Section 4(f) impacts (at 5-37 to 5-44). For example, the SDEIS refers to “stream restoration, trail and path improvement, additional park amenities, improvements to playground equipment, and decorative landscaping” at Rockmead Park. For Woottons Mill Park, the SDEIS identifies “trail and path improvements, improvements to basketball and/or tennis courts, improvement to the bridge over Watts Branch, improvements to the Veirs Drive parking area, and shade tree planting.” And at Rockville Senior Center and Park, which would lose nearly 10% of its acreage due to the Proposed I-495 / I-270 Project, the SDEIS outlines “trail / path improvements, addition of park amenities such as benches along or near the path, and addition of decorative landscaping along or near the path.”

To allow the City of Rockville to concur in a *de minimis* finding for these parks, and as part of the City of Rockville’s overall participation in the process for the Proposed I-495 / I-270 Project, the City of Rockville needs more specifics on and final commitment to corresponding mitigation measures. Your letter and the SDEIS simply mention possibilities.

The City stands ready to continue discussions in an effort to resolve these important issues for the City, its residents, and users of its wonderful parks.

Sincerely,

  
Bridget Donnell Newton, Mayor

  
Monique Ashton, Councilmember

  
Beryl L. Feinberg, Councilmember

  
David Myles, Councilmember

  
Mark Pierzchala, Councilmember

Mayor and Council, City of Rockville

- cc: Rob DiSpirito, Rockville City Manager  
Robert E. Dawson, Rockville Corporate Counsel  
Tim Chesnutt, Rockville Director of Recreation and Parks  
Craig Simoneau, Rockville Director of Public Works  
Jeanette Mar, Environmental Manager, FHWA  
Jitesh Parikh, P3/MLS Director, FHWA  
Keilyn Perez, Senior Area Engineer, FHWA  
Caryn Brookman, Environmental Program Manager, I-495 & I-270 P3  
Office, MDOT SHA