

Proposed Amendment to the Baltimore Region Transportation Improvement Program FY 2011-2014 -- I-695: I-95 (SW) to MD 122

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Project Description

❖ *Is this ramp necessary?*

At the request of the State District 12 Delegation several years ago, SHA conducted a concept study for a potential project to provide direct access from US 1 (Southwestern Boulevard) to northbound I-695 (Beltway Inner Loop) that could be done in conjunction with any future projects to widen or improve I-695 in southwestern Baltimore County. The preferred option from the study is to eliminate the existing ramp connection from Leeds Avenue and provide a new ramp and bridge from US 1 over Leeds Avenue to northbound I-695.

❖ *Traffic from the local MARC station is already heavy - won't this ramp increase the traffic problems in our community?*

The new ramp connection from US 1 to I-695 will reduce traffic and promote safety on Leeds Avenue as travelers will have a direct access to I-695 instead of going through the neighborhood.

❖ *Are there other alternatives being considered?*

SHA always considers a range of alternatives before proceeding with a particular alternative. Additionally, suggestions already received from the community will be considered.

❖ *We fought this project before - I thought it was not going to proceed. Why is it being considered again?*

SHA is aware of previous public meetings regarding this project. However, this project will aid in the overall operations of the beltway as well as in alleviating cut-through traffic on the local road system. Additionally, Baltimore County continues to list this project as one of their top priorities.

Regional Actions

❖ *What is this project about?*

The State Highway Administration (SHA) has submitted a request to the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB) to add \$1 million in Interstate Maintenance funds for the design phase of a breakout project for I-695. These funds will be used to design a new ramp connection to provide access to the Inner Loop of I-695 near Leeds Avenue and US 1 in Arbutus.

❖ *What kinds of notifications were made?*

The public was notified about this comment period in the following ways:

- Web site – information and a flyer was added to the BMC web site, with links on the home page, New on Site, etc.
- E-Newsletters
- B'more Involved – Announcement included in e-mail sent to 1494 subscribers
- Twitter/Facebook – Multiple posts were made to the B'more Involved Twitter (808 followers) and Facebook pages (125 followers)
- Press releases
 - ◆ Media Contacts – Press Release sent to 93 media contacts including Catonsville/Arbutus Times, The Baltimore Sun (several reporters), local TV and radio stations, SHA Public Affairs office, and Public Information Officers in Baltimore County.
 - ◆ Interested Parties (Constant Contact mailing list) – Press Release sent to 537 contacts
- Citizens Advisory Committee notified of comment period at their May 4th meeting. E-mail notifications also sent.
- Personalized e-mails sent to local civic organizations
 - ◆ Violetville Community Association
 - ◆ Lansdowne Improvement Association
 - ◆ Lansdowne Business & Professional Assoc
 - ◆ Halethorpe Improvement assoc
 - ◆ Arbutus VFD
 - ◆ Arbutus Business and Professional Association
- Public meeting held on Monday, May 16, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Arbutus Library (855 Sulphur Spring Road, Arbutus, MD 21227)

❖ *How will the public be notified for the next phases?*

The State Highway Administration will use many of the same strategies that the Baltimore Metropolitan Council used and that is listed above.

- ❖ *How can the public be involved in the process if this project continues to move forward?*

SHA will look into having an open house, once the conceptual level design is further developed. When the design nears completion and the project has been funded for construction, SHA will reach out to the public to disseminate information to via letters, mailings, press releases, or website postings, as appropriate.

If and when the public has questions, they should contact either the project manager or submit a concern to the SHA's customer service website. Here is the link:
http://marylandsha.force.com/customer-care/request_for_service.

- ❖ *Are any community meetings planned?*

Currently, there is no community meetings planned. Once funding is approved for the design phase of a breakout project for I-695, SHA will first reach out to State District 12 Delegation, the Fire Department and the directly impacted property owners.

- ❖ *Is there a mailing list I can get on to be notified about future steps in this process?*

There is no current mailing list; however SHA has an extensive public outreach program that allows for notification of activities concerning the general public. Additionally, if there is enough interest from the public, it is possible that SHA could establish a web site that would provide project information and updates.

The Arbutus Animal Hospital

- ❖ *Will the Arbutus Animal Hospital have to close?*

No, the Arbutus Animal Hospital does not have to close. Once SHA completes the ramp design and confirms that the ramp location impacts the Arbutus Animal Hospital facility, then it may have to be relocated from its current location.

- ❖ *Is the Arbutus Animal Hospital property being taken via eminent domain?*

SHA makes all efforts with the citizen to resolve the property acquisition through amicable negotiations before utilizing eminent domain. The goal is to ensure that the citizen receives just compensation for their property

- ❖ *Will SHA assist the Arbutus Animal Hospital to relocate if needed?*

As stated in the link below, should the Arbutus Animal Hospital be within the area to be acquired, they may be eligible for benefits under Maryland's Relocation Assistance Program, which may include moving costs, replacement payments, or certain re-establishment costs.

- ❖ *Has the Arbutus Animal Hospital been notified of this project? I was told he found out only a day or two before the end of the comment period.*

SHA contacted the owner of the veterinary practice in 2007 during the concept phase about the potential for relocation. Once the design phase for this project is initiated SHA will work with the owner on relocation assistance options, including those within the neighborhood.

The Office of Real Estate at SHA has prepared a booklet as a guide to the right-of-way process. It is available online: http://www.sha.maryland.gov/ORE/highway_brochure.pdf

I-695 study to upgrade to an 8-lane freeway

- ❖ *Will any of the 8 lanes be designated as HOV?*

Final lane configuration has not been determined at this time. However, if managed lanes were to be included, they would likely be express toll lanes and not High Occupancy Vehicle lanes.

- ❖ *How will increasing I-695 from 6 to 8 lanes affect the communities air quality and home value?*

SHA does not anticipate the value of homes to depreciate as a result of widening the beltway. SHA currently owns the majority of the right of way necessary to construct the widening and therefore, the majority of the properties bordering I-695 will not lose any land as a result. While the number of lanes may increase, the amount of traffic will not increase as a direct result of the widening. Traffic will move more expeditiously and as a result, air quality will not be compromised.

Leeds Avenue

- ❖ *What is being done to improve pedestrian and traffic safety, reduce speeding, etc and along Leeds Ave?*

Baltimore County has initiated a Leeds Avenue Reconstruction Project. The project will include replacement of existing curbs and gutters, resurface and/or reconstruct the existing asphalt roadway, improve storm water run-off, five (5) foot sidewalks in most places, and handicapped accessible street corners with painted cross walks.

Also, the new ramp connection from US 1 to I-695 will reduce traffic and promote safety on Leeds Avenue as travelers will have a direct access to I-695 instead of going through the neighborhood.

Design and permitting issues will be complete in time to allow the work to proceed during the construction season in 2012.