



March 18,2021

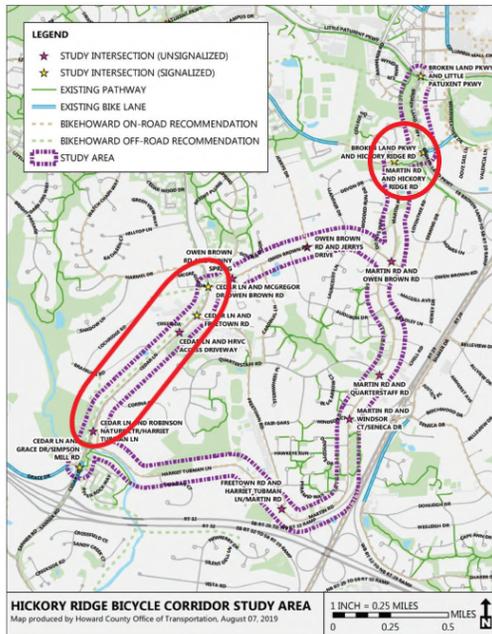
Christopher Eatough
 Howard County Office of Transportation
 3430 Court House Drive
 Ellicott City, MD 21043

Dear Mr. Eatough:

The Hickory Ridge Community Association would like to provide input on the BikeHoward Hickory Ridge Bike Corridor Study. We have specific recommendations on the options presented for the bike infrastructure on two segments of the plan: (1) Hickory Ridge Road between Martin Road and Broken Land Parkway and (2) Cedar Lane. These segments are circled red in the legend map below.

HICKORY RIDGE BIKE CORRIDOR STUDY

The purpose of this project is to identify a preferred route and recommend improvements for continuous bicycle facilities to connect existing bike lanes on Grace Drive (providing access from River Hill and points west) to Hickory Ridge, Downtown Columbia and the rest of the Columbia pathway system and bike network.



Study Area

- Broken Land Parkway**
Little Patuxent Parkway to Hickory Ridge Road
- Hickory Ridge Road**
Broken Land Parkway to Martin Road
- Martin Road**
Hickory Ridge Road to Freetown Road
- Owen Brown Road**
Martin Road to Cedar Lane
- Cedar Lane**
Owen Brown Road to Grace Drive
- Harriet Tubman Lane**
Freetown Road to Cedar Lane

Hickory Ridge Road East of Martin Road

The Board supports Option C (connection to existing pathway) for Hickory Ridge Road east of Martin Road inclusive of the Broken Land Parkway intersection and desires for this improvement to be prioritized for implementation. The intersection of Hickory Ridge Road and Broken Land Parkway is a key connection point for our residents into Downtown Columbia as nearly all cyclists and pedestrians must pass through this intersection. Option C is the lowest cost solution (\$360,000) and would provide immediate benefit to all Hickory Ridge residents by utilizing the existing CA path to provide a safe cycling and pedestrian connection that bypasses Hickory Ridge Road. Additionally, adding a crosswalk across Hickory Ridge Road at Broken Land Parkway and reconfiguring the right turn lane to slow vehicle traffic and promote visibility of crosswalk users will improve pedestrian safety and prevent dangerous “jaywalking” that currently occurs at this site. This option will also improve connectivity for the neighborhoods immediately to the south of this intersection and provide an alternative and potentially shorter route for Hickory Ridge residents to get to the intersection and onwards to Downtown Columbia by utilizing Sebring Drive and the CA Path instead of Martin Road. Accordingly, we recommend that this improvement be implemented as the first implementation of the Hickory Ridge Bike Corridor.

The study also calls for a 10-foot-wide shared-use path on the south side of Hickory Ridge Road west of Martin Road to connect to Howard Community College. At the time this pathway is constructed, the County should consider extending this new path east of Martin Road to connect to the infrastructure that would already exist if Option C is first prioritized. In this way, the residents of Hickory Ridge can have an immediate solution to this important stretch and a longer term solution that adds a wider 10-foot-wide shared-use path on the south side of Hickory Ridge Road, without significant additional cost increases since much of the infrastructure needed is duplicative.

We recommend new signage added to make cyclists and pedestrians aware of the new connections as they are added.

Cedar Lane

More significantly, we do not believe the BikeHoward recommendation for a shared-use path along part of Cedar Lane is feasible in the foreseeable future. We request that the County study the viability of an alternative, achievable solution to make Cedar Lane safe and usable for cyclists and pedestrians.

Cedar Lane is the main artery in Hickory Ridge, the roadway with the highest traffic stress and the street most in need of changes to make it attractive, safe, and usable to cyclists and pedestrians. Cedar Lane is a four-lane roadway with no shoulders. The travel lanes near and at the intersections are narrow. The posted speed limit is 35 mph, but most motorists exceed this limit, particularly at rush hour times of day; because Cedar Lane has long straight areas, motorists commonly drive 45-50 mph. The sidewalks along Cedar Lane are incomplete and, where they exist, are narrow and drop off directly into a lane of high-speed traffic. For these

reasons, fundamental, perhaps structural, changes are necessary to transform Cedar Lane into a safe, usable road for all modes of transportation.

The larger context of the BikeHoward proposal for Cedar Lane should be considered as well. The stretch of Cedar Lane of concern runs from Little Patuxent Parkway (the intersection with Howard County General Hospital) to Grace Drive (near MD 32). The BikeHoward study, with its limited focus, only looked at the approximately one-mile section between Owen Brown Road and Grace Drive. We understand the reasoning behind this decision, but it is important to emphasize that the BikeHoward proposal for Cedar Lane - and the high cost of that proposal - relates to less than half of the length of Cedar Lane in need of change.

So let's look at that proposal. BikeHoward recommends the construction of a shared-use path along one side of Cedar Lane between Grace Drive and Freetown Road, at an estimated cost of \$5.35 million. The \$5.35 million figure - while certainly high - likely understates the actual cost because, as the study acknowledges, it does not include the right-of-way or easement costs - costs that could be significant - to acquire rights to build on or grade adjacent private land needed for the proposed path.

Our view is that the proposed shared-use path, while certainly providing a benefit, is simply not feasible given its high (and still unknown) cost and the relatively small stretch of pathway (less than one mile) that would result. We do not believe that such a project can be or will be funded in the foreseeable future.

For this reason, we request that the County study alternatives that utilize the existing Cedar Lane roadway and sidewalk to accommodate cyclists and pedestrians. Because these alternatives would use the existing roadway, they would be far less expensive to design and implement. These alternatives should include creating a separate, protected two-way bike lane in the existing roadway on either the east or west side of Cedar Lane. Space for such a protected lane could be achieved by, for example, the following roadway changes: (1) removing the center turn lane that currently exists on Cedar Lane; (2) removing a travel lane in one direction and changing the traffic patterns so that two lanes would go south in the morning and two lanes would go north in the afternoon; or (3) transforming Cedar Lane to a "boulevard" type street with one lane in each direction with a planted median.

Thank you for consideration of our requests.

Sincerely,



Fred Johnston
Village Board Chair