

**SUBJECT: Sunnyside Avenue Bridge Replacement Project**

**BACKGROUND:** The Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T) is planning to replace the existing bridge on Sunnyside Avenue between the entrance to the WMATA maintenance yard and the intersection with Edmonston Road. The purpose of the bridge replacement is to replace a deteriorating bridge and to address frequent road and bridge flooding.

Currently, Sunnyside Avenue is a two-lane, open section road. There are turn lanes at both the intersection with Edmonston Road and the WMATA maintenance yard. There is no sidewalk. The bridge is 22 feet in width and 37 feet in length. The bridge is in deteriorating condition.

The proposed project would replace the existing bridge with a 68-foot wide and 382-foot long bridge. The plan would also include road widening from Edmonston Road to the WMATA entrance. This widening would accommodate two travel lanes, a five foot wide bike lane, a paved shoulder of 9 feet and 10 inches in width, and a six foot wide sidewalk. Since the new bridge is much longer than the existing bridge, there will be seven spans to provide additional area for storm water to pass. The Prince George's County Department of Public Works & Transportation describes this project as complying with their complete streets policy.

The current road and bridge sit in the two year flood plain, although flooding occurs with greater frequency. The flooding is the result, in part, of an undersized opening beneath the bridge which does not have the capacity to handle the flush of rainwater generated with a heavy rainfall. The only viable solution to the bridge flooding is to raise the surface of the bridge and to create a larger opening beneath the bridge.

**ANALYSIS:** While the replacement of the bridge appears to be necessary from both a flood mitigation and a bridge condition perspective, the road widening portion of the project has no similar compelling justification. Under the proposed project, the cross-section of Sunnyside Avenue will change from a paved width of ~24 feet, no sidewalks, no curb and gutter, to a paved width of 52 feet with curb, gutter, and sidewalks.

While the proposed project may be consistent with Prince George's County Complete Streets policy, it cannot be considered a sustainable street because it will induce traffic and it has a much larger footprint in the floodplain. The proposal extends far beyond replacement of an aged and flood prone bridge, to

include widening of the road to a width that will accommodate four lanes of traffic. While it may not be the county's intention to widen Sunnyside Avenue to four lanes at this time, this project would create the opportunity for such a future widening without public process. Further, the Board believes that excess widening is wasteful of both money and construction materials.

It is the Board's fear that the widening of Sunnyside Avenue is in preparation for future widening, in which case the elements added for complete streets will be eliminated. Accordingly, the scope of the project should be examined in the context of replacing the bridge, and providing bicycle and pedestrian access using the minimum impervious surface possible. This can be accomplished by eliminating the proposed shoulder and retaining the bike lane. This would accomplish the complete street objectives with minimal increase in the paved width of the roadway. Sidewalks, as proposed, should be retained and extended to the west to connect to existing sidewalks.

The Board believes that sidewalks, even those not immediately needed, are a very important piece of the transportation network, and they should be constructed whenever sidewalks are missing and alternate pedestrian links are not present. Accordingly, the Board supports the construction of the sidewalk as part of this project.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Board recommends that plans for Sunnyside Avenue from the entrance to the WMATA Maintenance Yard and Edmonston Road be modified as follows:

1. Retain two lane traffic, with turn lanes at Edmonston Road and the entrance to the WMATA maintenance yard.
2. Eliminate the paved shoulder.
3. Include a 6-foot bike lane in both travel direction.
4. Construct sidewalks as shown on plans.

With these changes, the Board recommends that the plans for the replacement of the bridge on Sunnyside Avenue, as well as the modifications on the road, be approved.

Respectfully submitted,

George Branyan  
Chair

This report was adopted by a vote of 5-0.