



## Request for Public Comment

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

*MD 51 Over Town Creek Bridge 0104700, Allegany County*

#### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration is proposing the replacement of Structure 0104700 along MD 51 over Town Creek in Allegany County, Maryland. This project would impact the Green Ridge State Forest owned and managed by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and protected under Section 4(f) of the US Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (Section 4(f)).

#### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE PROJECT

The purpose of this project is to provide a safe and reliable crossing of Town Creek along MD 51 that adequately accommodates both vehicular and truck traffic and maintains mobility through the study area. Replacement of this bridge is necessary due to several safety and mobility-related needs. These include addressing the poor condition of the existing bridge deck; addressing the risk of bridge failure posed by the presence of fracture critical members; and addressing the low overhead clearance which makes the bridge susceptible to being struck by over-height vehicles.

The proposed work includes removing the existing steel through truss bridge and replacing it with a new bridge. The new bridge would be a two-span, steel-beam bridge with a length of 220 feet. The new bridge would be 32 feet wide and would accommodate two 11-foot travel lanes and two 5-foot shoulders. The new bridge would be constructed to the northeast of the existing bridge. The approach roadways along MD 51 would be realigned beginning approximately 650 feet west of Bridge No. 0104700 and tying back into the existing alignment approximately 650 feet east of the bridge. To maintain a single lane of traffic throughout construction, the new bridge would be constructed in stages. The first segment of the new bridge would be constructed completely offset from existing alignment of MD 51 with the outside edges ranging approximately 23.5-feet to 27.5-feet northeast of existing bridge. This segment would accommodate a single lane of traffic and temporary signals would be installed along the approach roadways at each end of the new bridge and at Rod and Gun Club Road to regulate two-way traffic.

Approximately 200 feet southeast of the existing bridge, the elevation of MD 51 as proposed under this project would be higher than the existing grade of the intersection at Rod and Gun Club Road. To mitigate the grade differential between the proposed realigned MD 51 and the existing alignment of Rod and Gun Club Road, approximately 100 linear feet of Rod and Gun Club Road would need to be reconstructed and overlaid. Traffic would be maintained along Rod and Gun Club Road throughout construction.

A bioswale would be constructed along the westbound side of MD 51 west of Town Creek. Landscaping would also be completed and would include stream/floodplain plantings to mitigate impacts to natural resources, re-planting of trees within the Green Ridge State Forest property, and possible tree planting on adjacent private property.

### **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 would 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, including any proposed mitigation, does not "adversely affect the activities, features and attributes" of the Section 4(f) resource. When this is the case, public notice and opportunity for public review and comment on the finding is required. In addition, the finding of FHWA requires written concurrence from the officials with jurisdiction over the resource. Before concurring, the officials with jurisdiction must consider any public comments received.

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

The proposed work would impact approximately 0.26 acre of land within the Green Ridge State Forest to allow for the realignment of MD 51 and the reconstruction and overlay of a portion of Rod and Gun Club Road. Green Ridge State Forest is approximately 49,000 acres in size and provides various recreational opportunities including hiking, biking, horseback riding, camping, paddling, fishing, hunting, and trapping. The impacted portion of Green Ridge State Forest is currently forested but contains no formally designated recreational facilities associated with the above listed activities. The impacted land is anticipated to be permanently acquired by MDOT SHA and the existing trees and vegetation would be cleared. All forest impacts would be mitigated in accordance with Maryland Reforestation Law. The location of the mitigation plantings would be determined through future coordination between MDOT SHA and MDNR. The overall impacts to this property would be minor and are, therefore, not expected to adversely affect the activities, features and attributes of Green Ridge State Forest.

MDOT SHA, through this notice, is notifying the public that it will request that FHWA make a *de minimis* (or minor) impact finding, in accordance with Section 4(f). MDNR is being informed of MDOT SHA's intent to seek a Section 4(f) *de minimis* impact finding. With this notice, the public is afforded the opportunity to provide comments on this finding.

### **How do I comment?**

Please contact Mr. Dana Morse, MDOT SHA Project Manager at (410) 545-8072 or [dmorse@mdot.maryland.gov](mailto:dmorse@mdot.maryland.gov), or Mr. Bob Maimone, MDOT SHA Environmental Manager at (410) 545-8561 or [bmaimone@mdot.maryland.gov](mailto:bmaimone@mdot.maryland.gov); or visit us at [www.roads.maryland.gov](http://www.roads.maryland.gov).