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Plans Unveiled For MD 4, Thomas Johnson Bridge

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Posted on June 06, 2008

By Andrea Shiell, County Times

HOLLYWOOD, Md. (June 5, 2008) -- The Maryland State Highway Administration is about to give one of the area's most congested roadways a thorough makeover. Project plans were presented to the St. Mary's Board of County Commissioners on Tuesday addressing MD 4 (Patuxent Beach Road) from Solomons Island Road to MD 235 (Three Notch Road), the main veins for traffic flow in the area, traveled by an average of 40,000 to 50,000 cars a day. Figures showed the three-mile stretch bridging Calvert and St. Mary's county as having a very low level of service (LOS), earning each area an "F" for failing intersections with long light delays and high levels of congestion.

"If this was a report card, we'd all be hanging our heads and sulking," said Michael Perrotta, project manager for DMJM Harris. The existing MD 4 corridor consists of a two-lane roadway with 10-foot wide shoulders from MD 235 to the Thomas Johnson Bridge, which consists of two 12-foot wide lanes with scant two-foot wide shoulders. This area saw a total of 123 crashes between 2003 and 2005, 56 causing injuries, and 66 causing property damage. Figures show that these crashes were significantly greater than the statewide average for similar roadways.

So far, several design alternatives are being considered. Inexpensive improvements include removing the off-ramp leading from northbound MD 4 leading to Solomons Island, closing the northern entrance to South Patuxent Beach Road, providing Tee intersections along the corridor, or converting the existing shoulder to a travel lane between MD 235 and the Thomas Johnson Bridge.

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More aggressive plans include a new bridge that would be built parallel to the existing Thomas Johnson Bridge, consisting of two 12-foot wide travel lanes, a four-foot wide inside shoulder, a 10-foot wide outside shoulder, and a 10-foot wide bicycle/pedestrian path separated by a concrete barrier. A more aggressive alternative would be a four-lane bridge to replace the existing Thomas Johnson Bridge, which would be demolished, or a four lane bridge from the Naval Recreation Center in Calvert County to the terminus of Patuxent Boulevard in Myrtle Point in St. Mary's County.

With any of these alternative designs, MD 4 would be widened to a four-lane divided highway, with the existing roadways converted to carry traffic heading north. Turning lanes would most likely be added to all intersections along the roadway, and options are being included for the addition of a bicycle lane on the south side of the road.

A whole host of options accompany these plans, including moving left turning traffic at the intersection of MD 4 and MD 235 to the left to allow for continuous flow, constructing a single-lane flyover for traffic turning left from southbound MD 4, a partial cloverleaf interchange, or a single point urban interchange, the details of which were discussed briefly at the meeting.

The SHA in conjunction with the Federal Highway Administration will be working to have the planning process completed by 2010, with an expected construction completion date of 2020, budgets permitting. Perrotta explained that the goal for each of these designs was to raise the failing grade of these roadways to a C or better. "A's and B's are really hard to come by," he said when asked about projected improvements in the levels of service, "but by 2030, level C would be pretty good."

Perrotta explained that these were preliminary plans, and that public comment was needed to determine the best course of action. "We want to be as straightforward as possible," he said, adding that public workshops would be held later this month, giving residents a chance to have questions about the project answered, and to give their feedback on the proposed designs.

The public workshop for Calvert County will be held at Dowell Elementary School on June 16th at 5 pm, and St. Mary's County will have their workshop on June 17th at 5 pm at Town Creek Elementary School.

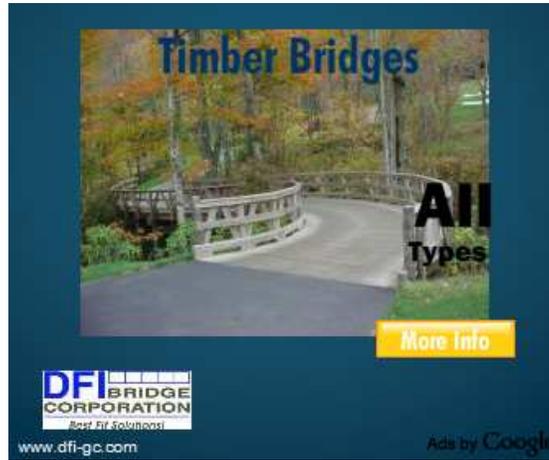
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