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Hampstead Meets With State Highway Administration

The news of the recent Maintenance of Traffic (MOT) Plan for the Maryland State Highway Administration's Main Street Revitalization Project in Hampstead created many concerns. Due to these concerns, letters were written to the State Highway Administration (SHA) by Senator Justin Ready, Delegates Haven Shoemaker, April Rose and Susan Krebs and Mayor Christopher Nevin.

In a response to the letters regarding the Maintenance of Traffic Plan, Mr. Gregory Johnson, State Highway Administrator and his team met on Wednesday, June 8th with the Town, Senator Ready, Delegates Shoemaker and Rose and Commissioner Dick Weaver to gain a better understanding of the concerns about traffic restrictions throughout the project. During the meeting, Mr. Johnson acknowledged SHA's desire to continue working with the Town on this project and maintaining the quality relationship that has been built over the years.

The meeting provided suggestions for SHA to analyze; some of which are new while others were previously presented. The first suggestion is for SHA to consider the Town's often repeated desire to add an additional phase to the project. The phasing would be as follows: Phase I - Northwoods Trail to Houcksville Road; Phase II – Houcksville Road to Gill Avenue; and Phase III – Gill Avenue to Route 482. Previously, the proposed second and third phases were grouped together. It is our hope that by adding an additional phase, no single area of Town will be impacted for longer than one year. The project includes two additional phases stretching from Route 482 to Farm Woods Lane. These phases require less extensive work, are not as invasive in nature and will not require a one-way traffic pattern according to SHA.

In order to provide for a better flow of traffic in line with normal commuting patterns, a second suggestion is adding reversible traffic patterns which will provide for south bound morning travel followed by north bound evening travel with the switch time to be determined. Finally, extended hours (into the evening and on weekends) and incentives/disincentives for the contractor in completing the work will be considered to aid in completion of the project in the shortest time possible.

It was determined that SHA will pull the current project advertisement and work on providing the Town an analysis of the possible suggestions discussed by the end of this month. Once the Town receives additional information from SHA on any new or updated suggestions, we will provide this information to residents and businesses. The Town and SHA will work together to provide outreach in communicating the revised plan. In order to complete an analysis, revise the MOT plan and provide the needed outreach, the project will be delayed until the Spring of 2017.

Senator Ready expressed his gratitude, stating "We appreciate SHA meeting with us so we could clearly lay out the community's concerns and I am glad they were receptive. While there is no way to avoid disruption during this project, we believe that the proposed adjustments would be a much more manageable solution for the residents and businesses. We will continue to work together to ensure that the entire project goes as smoothly and quickly as possible."

Mayor Nevin stated, "All of those in attendance at the meeting agreed that there is no perfect plan but the suggestions under consideration will better balance the long term benefit with the need to minimize the length and impact of disruption during the project."

In closing, Delegate Shoemaker added, "During this time, all residents and businesses will need to pull together to get through the project. Traffic did not stop us from patronizing local businesses prior to the Bypass and the minor detours needed during this project should not prove to be an obstacle either."