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**DATE:** April 22, 2014

**TO:** MarieFrance Guiteau,  
Project Manager  
Highway Design Division, SHA

**FROM:** Heidi Van Luven  
A. Morton Thomas and Associates

**SUBJECT:** US 29 / Rivers Edge Road Study

**RE:** US 29, Rivers Edge Road Intersection, Community Focus Group Meeting  
April 10, 2014

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**ATTENDEES:** (See attached list)

**PURPOSE OF MEETING:**

To meet with community representatives to discuss 4 conceptual alternatives for a grade separation, for access between Rivers Edge Road and Northbound US 29.

**ITEMS DISCUSSED:**

***BACKGROUND AND STUDY SCHEDULE***

Ms. Guiteau stated that the US 29 Widening project has been divided into 2 phases. Phase 1 will begin construction in the summer of 2014 with an estimated completion date in the fall of 2016. Phase 2 will involve improvements to the Rivers Edge Road & US 29 intersection, and are the subject of this meeting.

Ms. Guiteau distributed the tentative study schedule for the Phase 2 – Rivers Edge Road Study (See attached schedule). Ms. Stephanie Cates-Harman expressed concern that the schedule seemed too compressed, which would make it difficult to coordinate with other members of the community. Ms. Guiteau stated that the study process cannot be significantly delayed without risking the loss of allocated funding for the project’s design and construction phases, and that funding is the critical path for the project.

***CONCEPT ALTERNATIVES***

The 4 conceptual alternatives displayed at the meeting (see attached maps) are summarized as follows:

Alternative 1A: This alternative includes a Rivers Edge Road underpass of US 29 to connect to Old Columbia Road. Access between Rivers Edge Road and Southbound US 29 would be provided with ramps set back approximately 100 feet into the neighborhood to accommodate grading between US 29 and the ramps. Access to Northbound US 29 would be provided with new ramps approximately 800 feet to the south on Old Columbia Road.

Alternative 1B: This alternative is similar to Alternative 1A, although the ramps between Rivers Edge Road and Southbound US 29 would be immediately adjacent to the southbound lanes, with retaining walls between the ramps and US 29 to accommodate the grade differential.

Alternative 2: This alternative retains the existing access between Southbound US 29 and Rivers Edge Road at the current location, although ramp improvements may be included in order to meet AASHTO standards. Access to and from Northbound US 29 would be provided approximately 800 feet to the south via a new overpass over US 29 which would connect to Rivers Edge Road approximately midway between its intersection with US 29 and Longview Road. This alternative would not connect directly to Old Columbia Road, but would provide exclusive ramps along the Northbound lanes of US 29.

Alternative 3: This alternative also retains the existing access between Southbound US 29 and Rivers Edge Road at the current location, although ramp improvements may be included in order to meet AASHTO standards. Access to Northbound US 29 would be provided with an overpass over US 29 approximately 2,000 feet to the north of Rivers Edge Road, which would connect Vista Drive to Old Columbia Road. Ramps connecting to and from Northbound US 29 would be provided anywhere between 1,000 and 3,000 feet south of the overpass location on Old Columbia Road.

***FONSI (FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS) STUDY (1987)***

Mr. Arthur Ray asked whether the FONSI Study completed in 1987 is still valid, given the changing regulations and additional development within the project limits since 1987.

MarieFrance Guiteau stated that the original FONSI will be used as a starting point, and the selected alternative will be weighed against that FONSI. Additional studies such as noise and air quality studies may be needed.

***DISCUSSION OF ALTERNATIVES*****General Comments**

Mr. Marty Welsh asked if there were other alternatives to consider besides the 4 alternatives prepared for this meeting. SHA/AMT responded that the purpose of this meeting is to discuss alternatives and get community feedback, not to “lock in” any options. Other alternatives may be considered during discussions, subject to feasibility and community feedback.

Mr. Richard Weldin stated that a direct connection (via overpass or underpass) to Old Columbia Road would be a positive feature of any alternative, as this would decrease travel time between the neighborhood and commercial/shopping sites to the north along Old Columbia Road.

Mr. David Desportes asked if a Rivers Edge Road overpass of US 29 is feasible to connect to Old Columbia Road. Kathy Walsh replied that due to Old Columbia Road being at a significantly lower elevation than US 29, this would require Old Columbia Road to be realigned and shifted further east into the parkland to provide a more gradual vertical tie-in between the overpass and Old Columbia Road. Ms. Guiteau stated that disturbing the parkland to this extent may have been the reason why this option was previously ruled out.

Mr. Patrick Winters and Mr. Ed Scheick mentioned that there is an empty lot on Newberry Drive, adjacent to MD 32, and asked whether a connection could be made there between the neighborhood and MD 32. Ms. Walsh stated that this option was evaluated, but safety concerns eliminated this option since the connection would intersect MD 32 within the deceleration lane for the ramp onto Southbound US 29, which would create a hazardous weaving condition.

Residents expressed concern that the existing deceleration lane (right turn lane) from Southbound US 29 onto Rivers Edge Road, and the existing acceleration lane from Rivers Edge Road onto Southbound US 29, are too short to operate safely. AMT stated that these conditions would be evaluated with any alternative selected, and that improvements appear to be feasible.

Mr. Desportes mentioned that all alternatives discussed involved possible impacts to residents on the east side of US 29 as well as those in the new cul de sac extension of Longview Road on the west side of US 29. He encouraged the design team to consider engaging these other residents in planning discussions. The design team and Ms. Cates-Harman also stated the value of members of this community task force contacting these residents.

Residents asked if any of the alternatives included leaving the traffic signal at the intersection of Rivers Edge Road and US 29. Ms. Guiteau replied that leaving the signal in operation was no longer being considered as an option due to a history of safety issues with the existing signal. Ms. Guiteau further explained that a signalized intersection is no longer an option because in May, 2010, 472 residents of Riverside Estates, Holiday Hills, and River Glen who are served by Rivers Edge Road, signed a petition against SHA’s proposed at-grade intersection options and

requested that SHA build a grade-separated interchange to provide access to US 29 and eliminate the traffic signal, or leave the present intersection configuration unchanged.

### **Alternative 1A**

Residents considered this alternative possible, but expressed concern that the location of the ramps as shown would require taking of property in the area of the entrance to the neighborhood. Mr. Larry Klein, property owner of one of the lots most impacted by this alternative, expressed concern as well.

### **Alternative 1B**

Mr. Welsh stated that he viewed this alternative as the most favorable out of the 4 options presented. He asked if it was feasible to include a roundabout at the intersection of Rivers Edge Road (extended) with Old Columbia Road. Ms. Walsh stated that a roundabout may be considered if feasible at this location.

### **Alternative 2**

Residents expressed concern with the location of the overpass connection tie-in to Rivers Edge Road. Residents stated that in existing conditions, vehicles on Rivers Edge Road queue the entire length between Longview Drive and US 29, and adding another intersection within the limits of the queuing would only exacerbate the problem.

### **Alternative 3**

Residents stated that the proposed overpass location at the intersection/connection of Longview Road and Vista Road was the original entrance to the neighborhood, so that aspect of the alternative may be feasible. This alternative would also only create a minimal impact to traffic on US 29, which would be positive. However, several residents expressed concern with the potential for the proposed Old Columbia Road ramp onto Northbound US 29 to create a hazardous weaving condition conflicting with the Northbound US 29 ramp onto Eastbound MD 32. It was discussed that the ramp connections between Old Columbia Road and Northbound US 29 could be moved further south similar to the configurations shown in Alternatives 1A & 1B, although this would lengthen the travel time necessary for residents to access Northbound US 29.

### ***IMPORTANT FACTORS FOR RESIDENTS***

Heidi Van Luven asked residents to provide feedback on some of the important criteria that they consider in reviewing the different alternatives presented (e.g. losing homes vs. ease of access, etc.). Mr. Desportes stated that some of the most important factors are: convenience (access), safety, and impact to homeowners both during and after construction. Mr. Ray stated that traffic patterns are important factors. Ms. Cates-Harman added that aesthetics are also important, and questioned whether noise walls were being proposed along US 29 in the vicinity of the

neighborhood. Ms. Guiteau confirmed that there will be noise walls throughout the limits of the project and adjacent to the neighborhood, regardless of the alternative selected.

***CONCLUSION***

Residents generally stated that this was a constructive meeting, and appreciated SHA acknowledging their previous input. The residents stated that it is too early for them to choose a preferred alternative, but that they would coordinate independently with the larger neighborhood group to discuss options and provide additional feedback. AMT will provide SHA with conceptual displays, meeting minutes, a brief summary of the project status and path forward for transmittal to the neighborhood representatives for use in their community discussions.

## US 29 at Rivers Edge Road Study Tentative Schedule

