

ICC Update for Town Council, August 24, 2007
By Charlie Challstrom

Intercounty Connector (ICC) Update -- Five Town representatives met on September 19 with representatives of the State Highway Administration (SHA) and the design/build contractor for the ICC project. The meeting began with SHA responses to some of the Town's issues as conveyed earlier to SHA; then presentations on the proposed alternate for Loops A and C, associated landscaping (including buffering and reforestation), and latest plans for the Western Maintenance Facility (proposed for Casey 6 property along the railroad, between the ICC and the Roberts Oxygen property).

The Town continues to assert that Federal historic preservation statutes require noise mitigation for any adverse impacts associated with the project. SHA asserts that modeled impacts will not exceed allowable thresholds for noise increase, and that the Town's historic district status therefore does not require mitigation measures. Nevertheless, SHA emphasized that the new proposed alternate for Loops A and C (connecting ICC traffic with the Metro Access Road) would reduce impacts on the Town as Loops A and C would pass underneath the ICC. The modeled reduction in noise impact on the Town would be less than 1 decibel, and therefore must be labeled as a "negligible" reduction. If approved, these loops will be as much as 20 feet below adjacent ground level with reduced visual impacts, less impact on wetlands, less removal of existing trees, and additional space for landscaped buffering and reforestation.

The Town continues to push for evaluation of road surface treatments to reduce traffic noise, e.g. textured or porous asphalt. At the meeting, the ICC contractors and SHA responded that contract specifications preclude evaluation of such surface alternatives, requiring use of standard asphalt or concrete to achieve a minimum 25-year pavement life. Town reps expressed significant frustration with this SHA-imposed limitation on the design/build contract. SHA reported that nearby portions of I-370 (now concrete) would be repaved with asphalt to reduce traffic noise.

Based on the experience with SHA's projection of noise from I-370, the Town has requested that SHA develop a quality assurance program based on real measurements to confirm model accuracy, evaluate cumulative impacts including long term health of replanted trees, particulate emissions, as well as noise levels, and then prompt further mitigation and/or traffic management if standards are not met. The initial response from SHA reps was that 2030 is the design year and therefore model confirmation must await 2030. This response is unacceptable to the Town reps and most likely would embarrass Maryland DOT leadership. The Town will work with neighboring communities and our elected representatives to get this situation corrected and ensure the necessary oversight during this design/build process to protect existing communities all across the ICC project area.