

## **Little Falls Parkway Improvements Proposal Frequently Asked Questions & Answers**

### **What is the Little Falls Parkway Project proposal?**

The current roadway design proposal was reviewed and approved by the Montgomery County Council in January 2024. The project would reconfigure 0.4 miles of the existing Little Falls Parkway (between just north of Arlington Road and Dorset Avenue) in Bethesda, Maryland from a four-lane, median-divided configuration into a two-lane, median-divided road (with northbound and southbound general traffic lanes). Other proposed changes would include a new buffered bike lane, intersection safety improvements, lane markings, signal timing changes, new lane separators, new turn lanes, and new signage. Per the Montgomery County Council approved design, the project will remove unused asphalt pavement between Arlington Road and Hillandale Road, while retaining asphalt pavement between Hillandale Road and Dorset Avenue.

### **What agency is the project sponsor?**

The project sponsor is the Montgomery County Parks Department ([montgomeryparks.org/](https://montgomeryparks.org/)), which is part of the bi-county Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC). The Montgomery County Planning Board ([montgomeryplanningboard.org/](https://montgomeryplanningboard.org/)) provides oversight of the Montgomery County Parks Department. Planning Board members are appointed and overseen by the Montgomery County Council ([montgomerycountymd.gov/council/](https://montgomerycountymd.gov/council/)).

### **Why is the National Capital Planning Commission reviewing the project?**

The Little Falls Parkway, and its adjacent parkland, are owned by the State of Maryland with oversight and management by the M-NCPPC. Maryland used federal funding to purchase the park property under the 1930 Capper-Cramton Act ([www.ncpc.gov/about/authorities/](https://www.ncpc.gov/about/authorities/)) and a 1931 agreement between the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) and M-NCPPC, known as the Basic Agreement. Based on the act and the agreement, NCPC has approval authority over proposed development plans. The Basic Agreement also expressly prohibits the conveyance, sale, lease, exchange, or use of acquired lands for other than park purposes.

### **What criteria does NCPC use to review proposals on Capper-Cramton lands?**

NCPC has consistently interpreted “park purposes” to mean projects that provide public benefits such as improving the water quality of streams, along with improving park accessibility and park resources. Examples of acceptable public purposes include restoring wetlands and meadow areas in a stream valley park, stormwater management, improvements to park access and the trail network, and additions or improvements to more active recreational uses such as playgrounds. NCPC’s review also looks to guidance from the Comprehensive Plan’s Federal Park & Open Space Element, which includes several policies related to projects on Capper-Cramton land.

### **What is NCPC’s review process for Capper-Cramton related projects?**

NCPC’s review process for projects on Capper-Cramton land is not unlike its review for other building, site, and park projects as detailed in NCPC’s Submission Guidelines ([www.ncpc.gov/review/guidelines/](https://www.ncpc.gov/review/guidelines/)).

### **When will NCPC review the project?**

The application was officially submitted on February 13, 2024. NCPC anticipates reviewing the project in late spring. Information about the project and upcoming NCPC meetings is posted online at [www.ncpc.gov/review/agenda/](http://www.ncpc.gov/review/agenda/). People may also register to receive Commission meeting agendas via email at [www.ncpc.gov/subscribe/tai/](http://www.ncpc.gov/subscribe/tai/).

### **Are there review considerations in addition to the Capper-Cramton Act?**

With NCPC's approval authority, the Commission must assess the project under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). NCPC's review process will include both mandated assessments (NEPA and NHPA) through an integrated analysis process with multiple phases. For additional information, consult NCPC's resource guide page at [www.ncpc.gov/review/guides/](http://www.ncpc.gov/review/guides/)

### **Will there be opportunities for public input?**

During NCPC's review process, people will have three separate opportunities to comment.

- The first comment opportunity will be during the project's 30-day scoping period, which is scheduled from February 29-March 29, 2024. The purpose of scoping is to identify topics and areas of analysis for the Environmental Assessment (EA).
- The second comment opportunity will occur during a 30-day public review period (anticipated in mid-April to mid-May) related to the draft Environmental Assessment.
- Finally, members of the public will have an opportunity to submit written comments to the Commission and/or testify before the Commission during its formal review of the project which is expected sometime in late spring.

### **Will there be a public scoping meeting?**

The public scoping meeting will take place online on Tuesday, March 12 from 7:00–9:00 pm. Registrants will be able to submit written questions during the online meeting that NCPC staff will answer live. There will be a video recording available for those unable to attend that will be posted on the project website (link below). Information about the meeting, including how to register, is available online at <https://www.ncpc.gov/event/465/>. Scoping comments must be submitted through the online project page or sent by mail during the 30-day public scoping period to be considered.

### **Have other agencies reviewed and approved this project?**

The Montgomery County Planning Board approved a permanent two-lane configuration for Little Falls Parkway in November 2023. The current Little Falls Roadway design proposal (under consideration by NCPC) was approved by the Montgomery County Council on January 23, 2024. Please consult the County's project page for additional information at [montgomeryparks.org/projects/directory/little-falls-pilotproject/](http://montgomeryparks.org/projects/directory/little-falls-pilotproject/)

### **Where can I find more information?**

Visit the Little Falls Parkway Improvements webpage on NCPC's website:  
<https://www.ncpc.gov/projects/MP046/>