National Capital Planning Commission

Clara Barton Parkway Cantilever Replacement

Montgomery County, Maryland

Approval of Preliminary Site Development Plans

United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service

October 9, 2025 | File: 8648

Project Summary

Commission Meeting Date: October 9, 2025

NCPC Review Authority: 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1)

Applicant Request: Approval of Preliminary Site Development Plans

Session: Consent Calendar

NCPC Review Officer: Stephanie Free

NCPC File Number: 8648

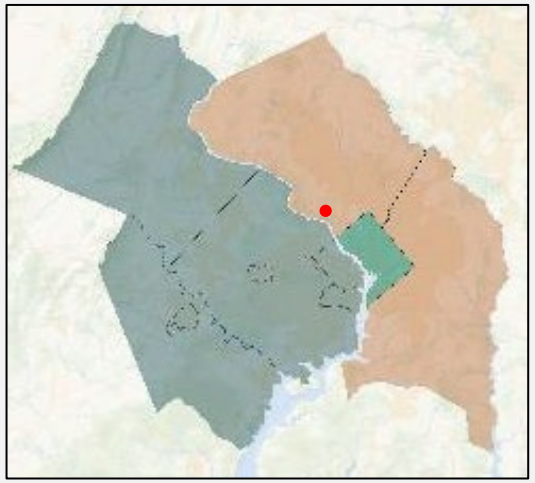
Project Summary:

The National Park Service (NPS) has submitted preliminary site development plans for the replacement of the cantilever structure and adjacent retaining walls on the Clara Barton Parkway between Cabin John Parkway and the Macarthur Boulevard exit ramp. The proposal also includes demolition of the Glen Echo Overpass; however, NCPC does not review demolition projects. The retaining walls and cantilever structure allow the Parkway to fit within the restrictive terrain. West-bound vehicles travel on the upper portion of the cantilevered structure and east-bound vehicle travel on the lower level beneath the cantilever. Approximately 40,000 people use the Clara Barton Parkway daily.

Multiple evaluations, including by the Federal Highway Administration, have concluded that the concrete cantilever structure is at the end of its useful life. If NPS does not act on replacing this structure, weigh restrictions and lane closures will be necessary for public safety. NPS proposes to replace the existing 1,409-foot long cantilever structure by removing the existing cantilevered slab while keeping the existing retaining wall and footing in place to hold back soil. A new retaining wall will be constructed adjacent to the existing wall and anchored in place. A new cantilevered slab with a narrower overhand would be constructed. Drainage, rock fall areas, safety railings, and new roadway signage are also proposed. All new materials are intended to match the texture, color, and appearance of the existing cantilever structure.

The Clara Barton Parkway is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as part of the George Washington Memorial Parkway and the cantilever structure is a contributing feature of the Clara Barton Parkway Cultural Landscape.

Site Location



Location Map

Existing Conditions

Parkway westbound lanes facing west

Parkway eastbound lanes facing east

Parkway from C&O Canal NHP Lock 7 Parking Lot

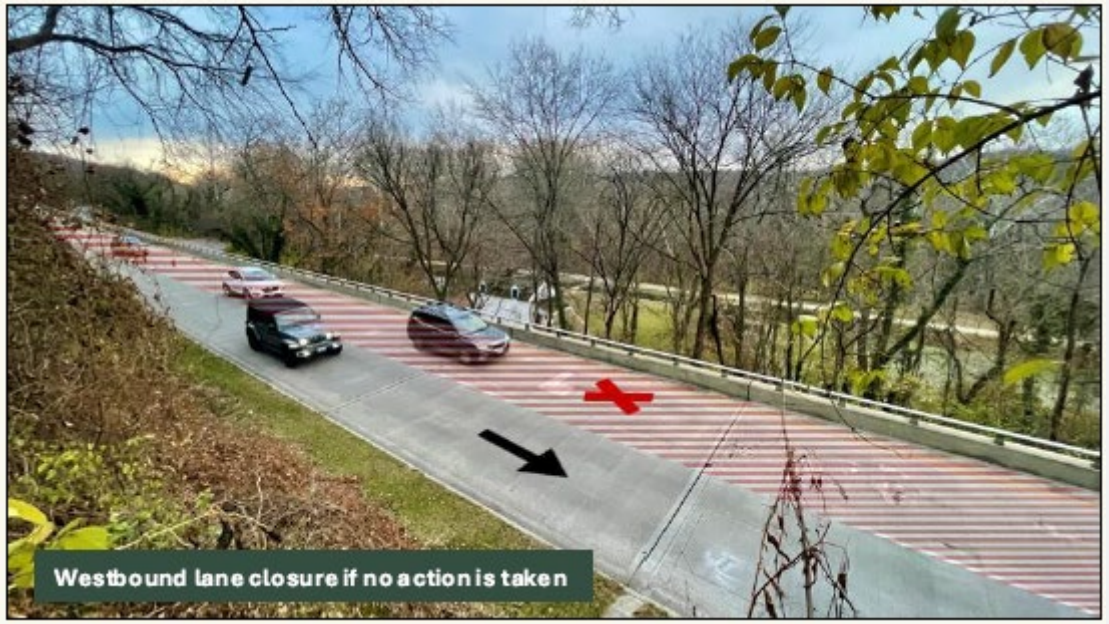
Parkway westbound lanes facing east

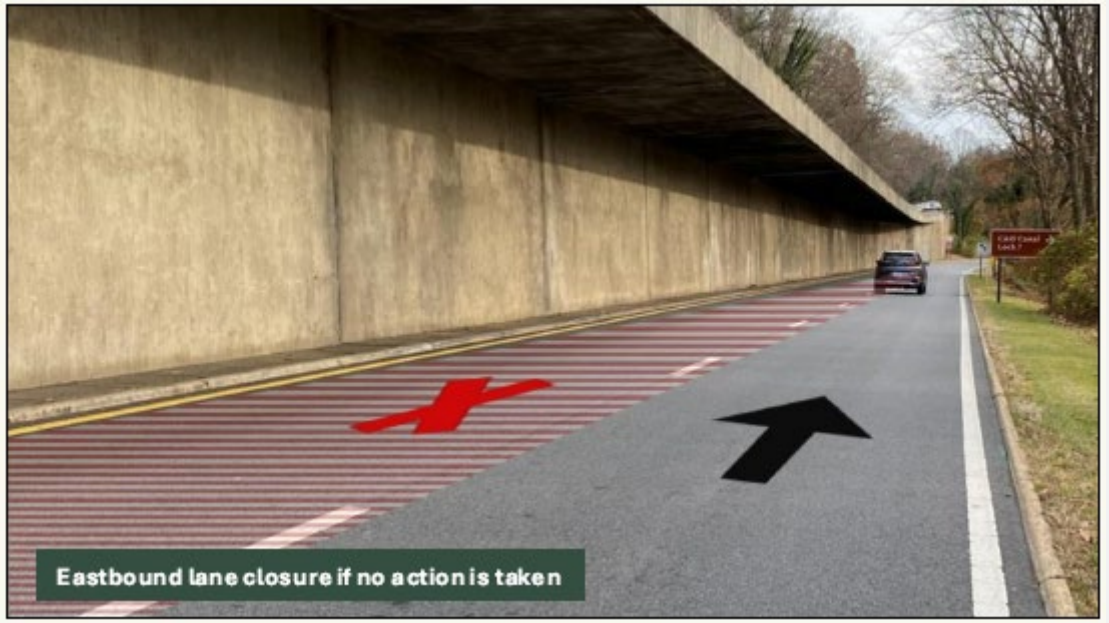
Parkway eastbound lanes facing west

Parkway eastbound lanes facing west

Existing Conditions

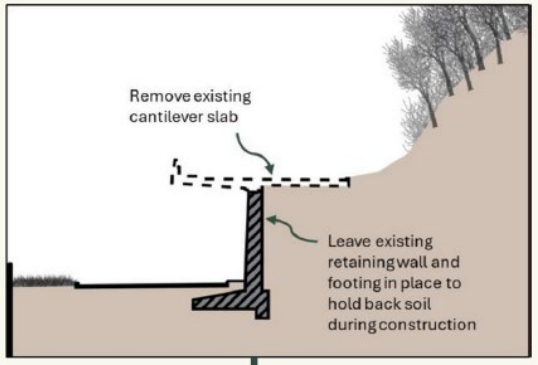
Photos from the 2020 Special Study Inspection of the Cantilever Structure Displaying Widespread Deterioration





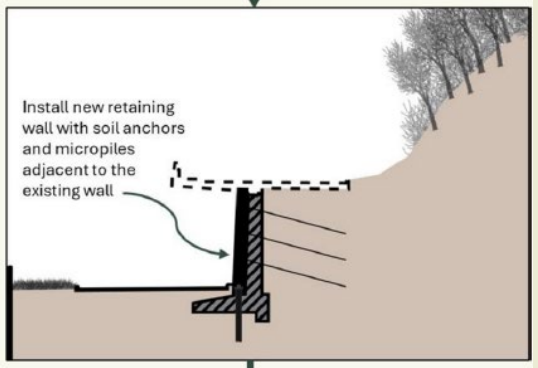
Project Overview - Cantilever

1



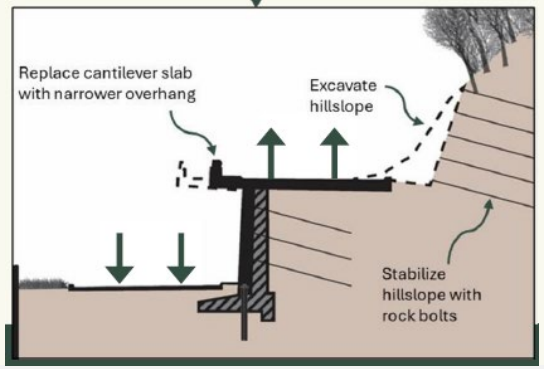
Remove existing cantilevered slab while keeping the existing retaining wall and footing in place to hold back soil.

2



Remove cantilever. Install new concrete retaining wall adjacent to existing structure, secure in place.

3



Excavate and stabilize approximately 12 feet of hillside to construct new, narrower cantilevered slab. Establish drainage ditch and rock fall area.

Project Overview – Retaining Walls

- Replace approximately 2,000 feet of concrete retaining walls along the Clara Barton Parkway.
- Use similar approach to the cantilever structure, with new walls constructed adjacent to existing walls.
- Smooth concrete finish that matches existing wall color texture, color, and appearance.
- New safety railings that meet current safety hardware standards.

Project Overview – Glen Echo Overpass

- Built in 1961 as part of the abandoned plan to expand the Clara Barton Parkway to four travel lanes inbound to Washington, DC.
- Unused since its completion.
- Assessments of the bridge identified issues with safety railing, drainage issues, overgrowth, concrete spalling, loose rock, and erosion near the south abutment and pier columns.
- Demolishing the bridge at the same time as the cantilever structure construction is more cost-effective.
- Minimal site restoration required for demolition.

Additional Considerations

Historic Properties and the Clara Barton Parkway Cultural Landscape

The proposed Project would have an adverse effect on Clara Barton Parkway from replacement of the original cantilever structure and retaining walls, the addition of new retaining walls that would obscure views of the current walls, realignment of the roadway, excavation into the hillside and the associated removal of trees and exposure of bedrock, and removal of the Glen Echo Overpass. No adverse effects would be expected on the other historic properties within the APE. The NPS and MHT have drafted a MOA to resolve the adverse effects, which include preparing Level II HAER documentation for both the cantilever structure and Glen Echo Overpass, vibration and noise monitoring and resource protection, and public interpretation signage.

Water Resources

NPS will prepare Erosion and Sediment Control (ESC) and Stormwater Management (SWM) Plans incorporating silt fencing, stabilized construction entrances, temporary sediment traps, or other best management practices (BMP) to prevent sediment transport offsite and ensure water quality is protected from erosion and stormwater runoff.

Threatened and Endangered Species

According to the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the federally listed endangered northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*), the proposed endangered tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*), and the proposed threatened monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*), potentially occur in the Project area. NPS will conduct informal Section 7 consultation with USFWS as project designs are progressed to identify conservation measures, such as restricting tree clearing during the bat's active season between April 1 and November 15, to reduce any impacts to threatened and endangered species that arise from the Project.

Vegetation

The Project will require tree removal and understory growth primarily from excavation of the hillside along Clara Barton Parkway westbound to accommodate a shift in the road alignment, a drainage ditch, and rockfall area. Most of the trees to be removed include a variety of small to medium diameter deciduous species, many of which have been overtaken by invasive vines. The NPS will conduct a tree survey within the limits of disturbance once detailed design plans have been developed. Trees that cannot be avoided will be replaced in accordance with the NCPC Tree Preservation and Replacement Policy.

Archeological Resources

There are no known archeological resources in the APE. The area of direct effects, where ground-disturbing activities would occur, is within the terrain that saw extensive grading for the construction of Clara Barton Parkway, and therefore the soils are heavily disturbed, and no intact archeological resources are expected to be present. In their response to consultation initiation, Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) recommended that no archeological investigations are necessary and the NPS concurred.

Traffic & Noise

The NPS anticipates substantial traffic impacts on Clara Barton Parkway from lane closures required to complete construction. The Design-Builder will prepare maintenance of traffic (MOT) Plans coordinated with the appropriate agencies and local stakeholders to minimize delays as much as possible. Additionally, construction-related noise may be disruptive to visitors to Glen Echo Park and nearby residents; however, NPS would ensure the Design-Builder adheres to the Montgomery County Noise Control Ordinance and noise monitoring and resource protection program. Traffic and noise are expected to return to pre-construction conditions once the Project has been completed.

Outreach and Coordination

- Section 106 Consultation underway with Maryland Historic Trust (MHT) and the Consulting Parties. NPS and MHT have prepared a Memorandum of Understanding to address adverse effect on Clara Barton Parkway.

- Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) will be released on September 9, 2025 for a 30-day public scoping period.