



North Section Rehabilitation Environmental Assessment

Dear Friends:

The National Park Service (NPS) invites you to join us for an Informational Open House on June 15, 2016. The Informational Open House is a great way to learn about the NPS re-initiating a planning process for rehabilitation of the North Section of the George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP). NPS and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) staff will be on hand with the goal of sharing information on the project, obtaining public comments, and gaining your participation in the scoping process. Public scoping is an early part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process that allows the public to review the NPS proposal and provide your ideas and concerns. Your input will aid the project team in development of alternatives and the associated environmental effects to be presented in the future Environmental Assessment (EA). Please feel free to stop by any time at the GWMP Park Headquarters between 5:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. to discuss the project with us.

Sincerely,
Alexcy Romero, Park Superintendent

About the Project

The NPS, in cooperation with FHWA Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division, is re-initiating a planning process for the rehabilitation of the North Section of the George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP) from Spout Run to the Capital Beltway (Interstate 495). Pursuant to the NEPA and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the NPS is preparing

an EA to provide the decision-making framework that 1) analyzes a reasonable range of alternatives to meet project objectives, 2) evaluates issues and impacts on park resources and values, and 3) identifies mitigation measures to lessen the degree or extent of these impacts. Currently, the project is not funded.



Significance of the Parkway

The GWMP was developed as a carefully designed scenic roadway and memorial to the first president of the United States, George Washington, and designated a National Park Unit in 1933. The first section, called the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, was completed from Washington, DC, to Mount Vernon in 1932 to commemorate the bicentennial of George Washington's birth. Today, the GWMP extends from the Capital Beltway at the American Legion Bridge on the northern end to Mount Vernon in Fairfax County, Virginia, on the southern end. In Maryland, the GWMP, now known as the Clara Barton Parkway, extends from Carderock in Montgomery County to the Chain Bridge in Washington, DC.

The GWMP is a major transportation artery in Northern Virginia providing access to Washington, DC, Arlington County, Fairfax County, and the City of Alexandria. As a result, many local residents consider the GWMP a commuter route; however, the GWMP offers travelers much more than convenience. The GWMP is a scenic, historic, and recreational setting away from the nearby urban pressures of metropolitan Washington, DC. The original section of the GWMP, the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, was listed in the National Register in 1981 under criterion B for its commemoration of George Washington and under criterion C for landscape architecture. The northern extensions of the GWMP were added and listed in the National Register in 1995 under the same criteria.

Project History

A proposal for parkway improvements was previously analyzed in an EA released in 2008. This 2008 EA previously analyzed a no action and a preferred alternative with different options for the reconfiguration of the Route 123/GWMP interchange and roadside barriers that meet FHWA safety requirements. The NEPA and Section 106 processes were not completed as the NPS and FHWA found it necessary (after reviewing public and agency comments) to gather more data on safety, cultural landscapes, and scenic viewsheds prior to making any further decisions regarding the project. Since 2008, the NPS and FHWA have worked together to complete a number of studies including safety risk analysis, Visual Resource Inventory and Assessment, and Cultural Landscape Inventory. Some of the proposed project elements presented in the 2008 EA remain similar; however, the NPS and FHWA are seeking to find a context sensitive solution to repair and/or replace the historic stone masonry guardwalls with crashworthy roadside barriers where needed based on the potential safety risk, significance of the viewsheds, and historic character of the walls as a contributing feature to the Parkway. Another change is the Parkway requires full pavement reconstruction instead of mill and overlay. Due to changes in regulations and



Photograph of a designed view of the Key Bridge and Potomac River Gorge taken in 1959.



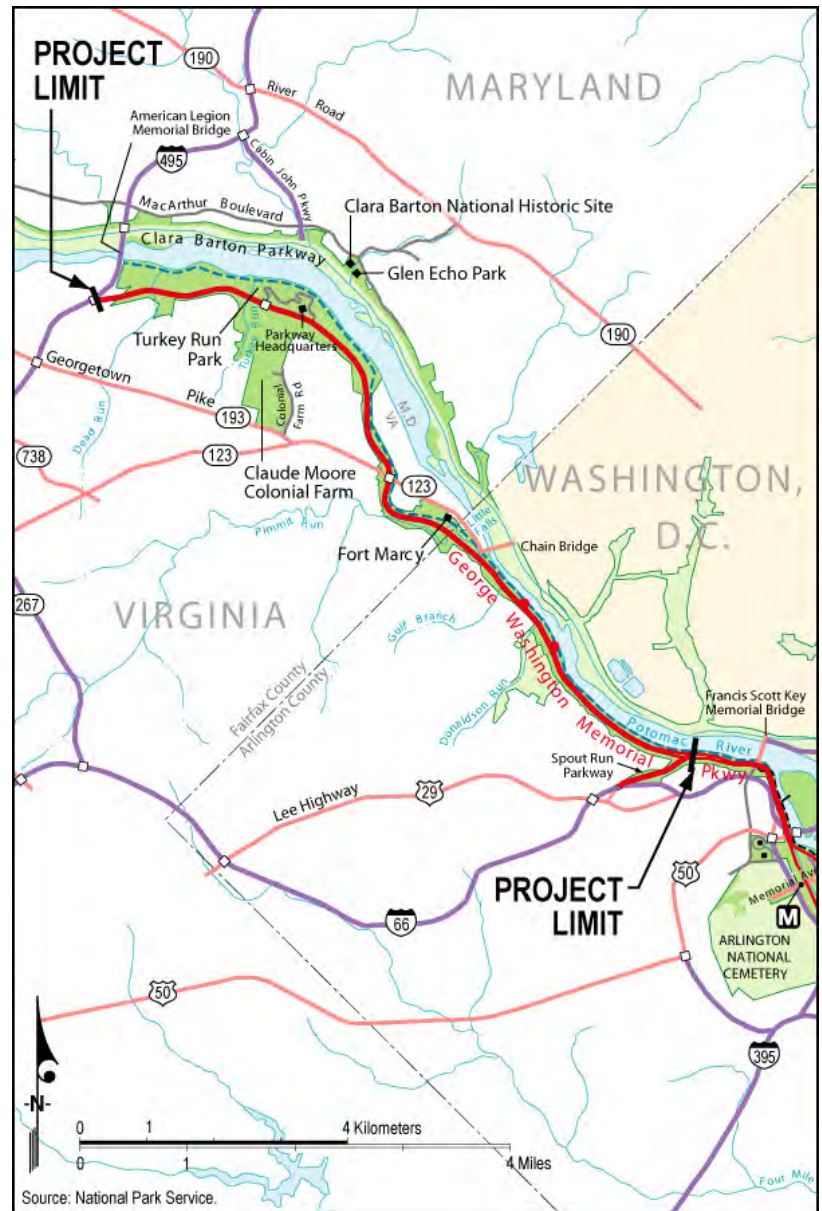
The GWMP is a scenic, historic, and recreational setting away from the nearby urban pressures of metropolitan Washington, DC.

stormwater management considerations, the NPS will also consider installation of best management practices for stormwater management.

Project Purpose and Need

The purpose of this proposal is (1) to systematically rehabilitate and repair the roadway and related transportation assets along the 8 miles of the parkway between Spout Run and the Capital Beltway (see map) and (2) improve existing roadway geometry and safety features at the Route 123 Interchange, CIA Interchange and GWMP Headquarters/US Park Police entrance. This rehabilitation project does not increase the parkway capacity. The rehabilitation of the north section of the GWMP is needed to help preserve the historic parkway for future generations, improve the visitor experience, enhance maintenance/enforcement operations, correct erosion and safety concerns at outfalls, and facilitate safe driving conditions. The project need stems from the age and heavy use of GWMP infrastructure resulting in deteriorated conditions of the roadway and drainage system. The following conditions contribute to the need for a comprehensive rehabilitation:

- The pavement within the project area contains potholes, cracks, and settlement. The curb along the Parkway has deteriorated.
- Existing soil shoulders have been damaged as a result of improper drainage, plowing, and frequent pull off by cars.
- The existing drainage system cannot drain the road surface effectively to prevent stormwater from spreading further into the travel lane. Some of the existing drop inlets are deteriorating. Ponding on the road surface causes hazardous driving conditions during storm events.
- Acceleration and deceleration lanes in certain areas of the parkway are inadequate. These conditions make entering and exiting these areas more difficult during peak travel periods.
- Erosion is occurring at the drainage outfalls and is most likely exacerbated by uncontrolled drainage. This erosion has caused deep gulleys along steep slopes, which present a safety concern and have resource impacts.
- The existing configuration of the Route 123/GWMP interchange, presents a safety concern. The clover-leaf



exit ramp from the Parkway to Route 123 has a very tight geometry, and the deceleration lane length is inadequate.

- Other needs include turnarounds for emergency vehicles and U.S. Park Police to better respond to incidents on the north end of the GWMP and installation of a fiber optic backbone (conduit) to accommodate future Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) infrastructure.



Example of the project need (left photo – drop inlet in roadway, middle photo – collapsed drainage pipe, right photo – stone wall in need of repair).

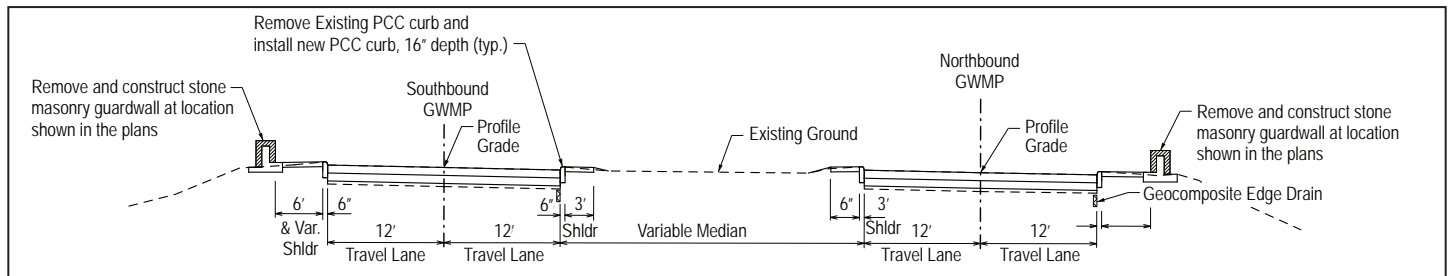
Project Elements

Elements of the proposed action include: (1) reconstructing the asphalt pavement and constructing new concrete curbs; (2) replacing drainage inlets and culverts; (3) stabilizing erosion at drainage outfalls; (4) improving safety with options including crash-worthy roadside barriers; (5) various options to reconfigure the interchange at Route 123/GWMP; and (6) other smaller project elements such as creation of emergency turnarounds, extension of acceleration and deceleration lanes, and installation of stormwater management practices. The proposed action is the initial NPS proposal to address the project purpose and need for taking action. In addition to the proposed action, the NPS will consider the no-action alternative and a reasonable range of other alternatives and options.

Roadway Repairs and Reconstruction

The following cross section displays key elements of the roadway reconstruction, shoulder stabilization, and replacement of the curb and inlets. The NPS proposed action includes:

- Pavement – Full Pavement Reconstruction
- Shoulders – Reconstruct existing unpaved shoulders (6 to 10 feet on outside and 6 to 8 feet on median side) – In sensitive areas width would be reduced to 3 feet
- Curb/Inlets – Replace curb and inlets as well as add additional inlets and curb cuts. There is a potential option to replace inlets offset out of travel lane which would include not extending the continuous gutter pan.



Cross Section

Roadside Barriers

The potential for a combination of approaches are being considered.

Option 1 – Combination approach using 27" and 22" high stone faced concrete core walls reconstruction (see photo to right), and rehabilitation of existing historic stone walls that have a low safety risk.

Option 2 – New Roadside Barriers Option – steel-backed timber guardrail in front of stone walls (see rendering to right) and rehabilitation of the existing historic stone walls.

Option 3 – Full Reconstruction – 27" high walls, stone faced with concrete core wall with combination barrier using steel backed timber guardrail where there are significant views and safety issues (see rendering to right)

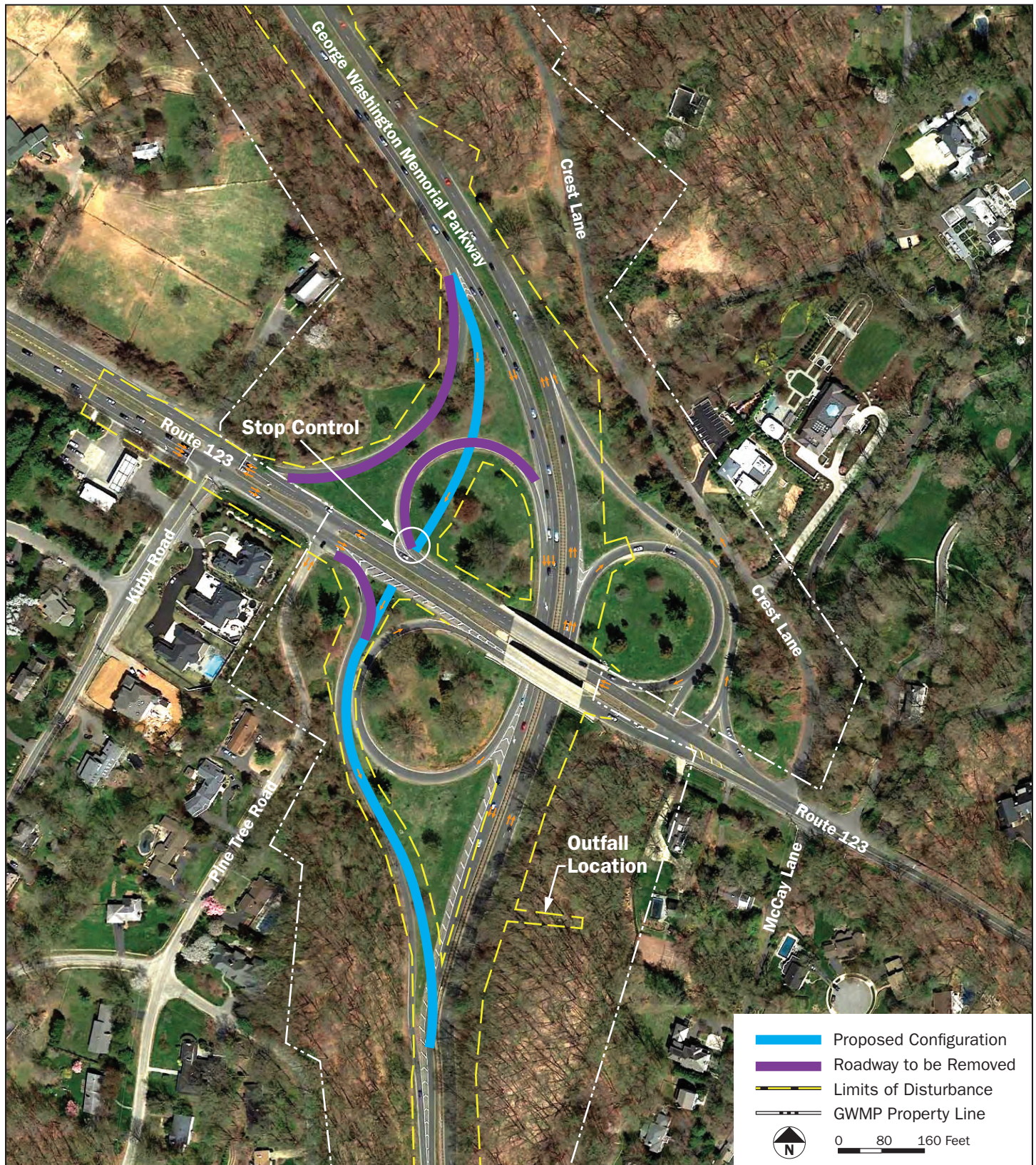
For construction of crash-worthy barriers the wall/barrier ends would be flared or extended to prevent snagging. In addition, the existing W beam guardrail would be replaced with steel-backed timber guardrail, and the temporary concrete Jersey barriers would be replaced with crash-worthy stone masonry guardwalls.



Route 123/GWMP Interchange Configuration

The proposed action includes implementing a series of improvements at the Route 123/GWMP interchange. Work would include the reconfiguration of the ramps on the west side of the interchange to facilitate improved safety and flow along southbound GWMP. In addition, acceleration/deceleration lanes would be extended to allow smoother

merging and diverging. Other improvements would address drainage, signing, pavement markings, curbs and gutters, and rehabilitating or resurfacing existing ramps on the east side of the interchange and Route 123. One potential options is shown in the figure below.



Acceleration/Deceleration Lanes Extension

Similar to the alternatives presented in the 2008 EA, the proposed action includes extension of the acceleration/deceleration lanes at the US Park Police/GWMP Headquarter, improvements to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)/GWMP interchange, repair to the walls and pavement reconstruction at the existing overlooks, and turn-around access for emergency vehicles would be provided on the north end.

Outfall Structure Repairs

The outfall structures throughout the GWMP are in poor condition, and many of these structures would be rehabilitated as part of the proposed action. Possible measures to repair the outfalls would include reconstruction using riprap, gabion baskets, or other products. Some outfall locations would be consolidated, use existing or new pipes, or would be abandoned altogether. Each outfall structure would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and access for repairs would consider the ways to minimize impacts to natural and cultural resources.



Example of erosion at outfall structure in need of repair and stabilization.

Schedule

The schedule to complete the project planning and NEPA process is presented in the project schedule (see right). Currently, the project is not fully funded for construction and subsequently, will be constructed in phases. Phasing will be presented in the EA and will be accomplished in such a manner to address the most pressing repair needs, minimize traffic delays, and maximize construction value.

Project Schedule

Milestone	Schedule
EA Scoping Period Ends	July 8, 2016
Public Meeting /Open House	June 15, 2016
Develop Alternatives/Conduct Analysis	Late Summer/Fall
Release EA for Public Review	Winter 2016
EA Public Meeting	Winter 2016
FONSI Preparation and Review (if applicable)	Spring 2017

Public Comment Period

The park encourages public and agency participation throughout the planning process. There will be at least two opportunities to comment formally on the project – once during initial project scoping and again following release of the EA. The NPS will initiate the scoping phase of the proposed project on June 3, 2016 and invites you to submit written suggestions, comments, and concerns regarding the development of the EA online at the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment website located at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/gwmp> or by mail to the address below no later than July 8, 2016.

You may submit comments on the proposal electronically at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/gwmp>. Written comments may be mailed to: Superintendent, George Washington Memorial Parkway
c/o Turkey Run Park
McLean, VA 22101.

Please be aware that your comment including personal identifying information, such as an address, phone number and email, may be made publicly available at any time and as required by the Freedom of Information Act. Although you can request in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, the NPS cannot guarantee that it will be able to do so.