

# Request for Public Comment

## Section 4(f) of the US Department of Transportation Act- *de minimis* Finding

### *Mechanics Valley Road Bridge over CSXT*

### Bridge Replacement and Other Improvements

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Cecil County Department of Public Works (DPW) is proposing to use federal funding to remove and replace Bridge No. CE-0042 Mechanics Valley Road over CSX in North East, Maryland. The project was originally proposed and approved in 2018. The scope of work continues to involve 1) the removal of the existing bridge, 2) bridge replacement with a three-span continuous steel superstructure bridge, 3) the realignment of Mechanics Valley Road, and 4) the realignment of Bouchelle Road north and south of the bridge. This notice is to inform the public of changes in the impacts of the project to Johnies Ballfield, which have increased slightly due to the redesign of stormwater management facilities.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE PROJECT

### **Why is this work necessary and what improvements are proposed?**

The purpose of the proposed project is to replace the structurally deficient Mechanics Valley Road Bridge No. CE-0042 and improve vehicular safety. The 2020 Bridge Inspection Report indicates the bridge is in poor condition with a Bridge Sufficiency Rating of 44.3 out of 100. The scope of work includes construction of stormwater management facilities, a retaining wall, and the relocation of utilities. The stormwater management facilities previously proposed have been redesigned and relocated from private properties along Bouchelle Road at the request of the landowners.

### **Why are comments being requested?**

23 CFR 774.5(b) of Section 4(f) allows the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to determine that certain transportation uses of Section 4(f) land will have no adverse effect on the protected resource. With respect to publicly owned parks and recreation areas, a finding of *de minimis* impact may occur if a transportation project does not "adversely affect the activities, features and attributes" of the Section 4(f) resource. When this is the case, the finding of FHWA requires written concurrence from the officials with jurisdiction over the resource. In addition, public notice and opportunity for public review and comment on the finding is required.

### **What are the impacts to protected Section 4(f) resources?**

In order to complete the project, fee simple-right of way would be required from the Cecil County Department of Parks and Recreations owned Johnies Ballfield. The current proposed design would require temporary use of approximately 915 square feet (SF), or 0.02 acre, of Johnies Ballfield for construction and staging activities. This is approximately 15 SF more than the previously proposed design. Additionally, approximately 41,242 SF (0.95 acre) of parkland would be converted for transportation uses due to the roadway shifting to the north of its current location. These permanent impacts to the parcel include 34,222.97 SF (0.79 acre) of fee simple right-of-way acquisition and 7,019 SF (0.16 acre) for a drainage easement, an increase of 14,676 SF (0.19 acre) and 604 SF (0.01 acre) respectively. The increase in permanently impacted areas are outside of the Johnies Ballfield fence line beyond center field and right field and include portions of the existing roadway. These increased impacts will not cause a permanent, adverse change to or use of Johnies Ballfield.

### **How do I comment?**

Written comments can be provided to:

Cecil County Department of Public Works

Attn: Jonathan D. Pohlman, P.E.

200 Chesapeake Blvd, Suite 2400A

Elkton, MD 21921

via email to: [jpohlman@cecilcountymd.gov](mailto:jpohlman@cecilcountymd.gov)