



RUSTIC ROADS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

November 4, 2016

Isiah Leggett, County Executive
Executive Office Building
101 Monroe Street, 2nd Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

RE: Poplar Hill Road, rustic road

Dear Mr. Leggett:

At our October 25, 2016 meeting, our committee heard from MCDOT staff and from Poplar Hill Road residents regarding the drainage and chip seal proposal on the rustic section of Poplar Hill Road. At that time, the drainage portion of the project had been completed without our review, and the gravel had been removed from the road surface. The issues and concerns that were presented to us include the following:

- Maintenance and quality of life (potholes, dust, snow clearing)
- Safety (speeding, access during major snowstorms)
- Accommodating all users (drivers, walkers, bicyclists, horseback riders)
- Water quality (increasing runoff, concentrated flows into Hookers Branch)
- Rustic road character (quiet, rural, forested)

We believe that these issues can be addressed by retaining a gravel driving surface using the materials and procedures recommended by the Penn State Center for Dirt and Gravel Road Studies, including water management, driving surface aggregate and maintenance including routine grading, pothole repair, dust suppression, and snow removal. Their studies find that the dirt and gravel roads are maintained in better condition with lower costs using their recommendations, and that water quality in nearby streams is also improved. From our committee's perspective, retaining the gravel driving surface will best retain the character of the rustic road.

Our recommendation is that Poplar Hill Road be used as a pilot project for applying the Penn State materials and procedures to unpaved Rustic Roads. MCDOT staff will be attending training on November 15-16, 2016.

As noted in our previous correspondence, our committee continues to be very concerned about process involved in this project. Under the Montgomery County Regulations for Rustic Roads, work should not have been started before a review by our committee, a Capital Improvements Project review with the County Council, and a Mandatory Referral with the Planning Board.

MCDOT staff indicated that this was a 'maintenance' project not an 'improvement,' so that process did not apply. We do not consider such a significant change in material to be a 'maintenance' item. As the Purpose section of the County Code for Rustic Roads notes, "This Article establishes a program to preserve as rustic roads those historic and scenic roadways that reflect the agricultural character and

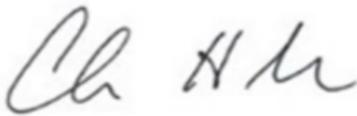
rural origins of the County. Preservation of rustic roads must be achieved by retaining certain physical features of rustic roads and by certain right-of-way maintenance procedures,” (Chapter 49, Article 8, Sec. 49-76). However, if somehow it is determined that this is a maintenance item, please note that the Executive Regulations require that a public notice be posted at the site at least 30 days prior to the start of work.

We would like to thank MCDOT staff and the community for attending our October 25th meeting and discussing these important issues. After deliberating upon what we heard during that meeting and carefully weighing the range of perspectives, the committee strongly recommends that Poplar Hill Road be used as a pilot project for MCDOT’s use of the dirt and gravel road training. As such, the tar and chip work should be stopped until after the training on November 15th and 16th.

If our recommendation is not accepted, then the tar and chip project needs to follow the CIP and mandatory referral process as required by county regulation. Furthermore, we will be requesting a meeting with you in the near future to discuss proper protocol for dealing with future issues on rustic roads.

We appreciate your consideration of our concerns and recommendations. If you have any questions, you can reach the committee through our staff coordinator, Michael Knapp, at 240-777-6335 or Michael.Knapp@montgomerycountymd.gov.

Sincerely,



Christopher H. Marston, Chair
Rustic Roads Advisory Committee

Committee Members: Todd Greenstone, Thomas Hartsock, Sarah Navid, Audrey Patton, Jane Thompson, Robert Tworowski

CC: Al Roshdieh, Director, MCDOT
Council President Nancy Floreen
Councilmember Roger Berliner
Glenn Orlin, Deputy Council Administrator
Leslie Saville, M-NCPPC representative on the RRAC