

County Selects Geodesic Spiral Tube Design for Pedestrian Bridge Crossing Over Route 29 from Oakland Mills to Downtown



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ELLCOTT CITY, MD - Howard County Executive Allan H. Kittleman today announced work will begin this fall to improve the pedestrian bridge that crosses Route 29 in Columbia. The improvements will include the installation of a spiraling geodesic tube around the bridge, upgraded lighting and additional safety enhancements.

"We know this bridge has long needed repairs," said Kittleman. "With Columbia turning 50 this year, we are moving to ensure our infrastructure is meeting the demands of our community. These much needed short-term improvements will help to transform the bridge into another iconic landmark of Columbia."

A feasibility study on bridge upgrades began in 2014 and was completed in 2015. Numerous community input meetings and opportunities were held in Fall 2016 and a design study was completed in December 2016. The spiraling geodesic tube was the clear community choice among four options for the bridge.

In addition to enhanced lighting, the County will also install fiber to provide police with clearer images from security cameras on the bridge. The project is estimated to cost more than \$1 million and should be complete in Spring 2018.

"We are excited County Executive Kittleman is moving forward and committing the funds to improve this vital link between Oakland Mills and Downtown Columbia which is essential to reinventing our community," said Ginny Thomas, Co-Chair of the Oakland Mills Village Board. "We sincerely appreciate the collaborative approach he took with the community in making this project a reality."

Kittleman pledged to continue working with state officials, the community, and Friends of Bridge Columbia to evaluate longer-term options to improve connections between Downtown Columbia and Oakland Mills.

"Congratulations to Executive Kittleman for taking the first step in this important project," said Fred Gottemoeller, of Friends of Bridge Columbia. "The Geodesic Tube will make crossing between Downtown and Oakland Mills a fun experience for bikers and pedestrians. We now look forward to seeing transit added to the mix."

The Howard Hughes Corporation has already improved the pathway that crosses the bridge and has committed \$500,000 for bridge improvements.

"While the bridge is functional, it would be hard to describe it as appealing or inviting, but with this design it will be" said Greg Fitchett with The Howard Hughes Corporation. "With this project we're going to be transforming the bridge into an icon for Columbia."

The pedestrian bridge opened more than three decades ago and it has been an important connection between Columbia's Town Center and residential communities to the east, including Oakland Mills and Long Reach. However, the chain-link fence barrier around the bridge proved aesthetically unappealing and poor lighting contributed to the community's concerns about safety and security.

"This is an exciting day. Now we have a dynamic, innovative and inviting new look for this bridge," said Ian Kennedy, Executive Director of the Downtown Columbia Arts and Culture Commission. "This is the signature landmark that Columbia has long deserved."

Milton Matthews, President and CEO of Columbia Association agreed. "I believe the planned improvements to the pedestrian bridge will be a significant step toward making the bridge a major connector for bicyclists and pedestrians between East and West Columbia."

A video of the announcement, including renderings of the new bridge design, can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/RoX42MuEhrQ>.