



Oakland Mills Community Association
The Other Barn • 5851 Robert Oliver Place
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April 6, 2021

Mr. Kris Jagarapu, PE, Chief
Howard County Public Works Department of Highways
7125 Riverwood Drive - Suite B
Columbia, MD 21045-2355

Dear Mr. Jagarapu,

It's been a while since we've been in touch and hope that this email finds you doing well. The Oakland Mills Community Association has had an active year all while meeting virtually and with staff working remotely. One constant is that our concern over issues of safety and roadways remain and have even grown with more residents at home and walking and biking more rather than driving.

A continuing issue that has been repeatedly brought to our attention is the safety of the entire stretch of Stevens Forest Road. The new roundabout makes the intersection of Farewell Road and Stevens Forest Road safer; however, we continue to have outstanding concerns with the northern portion of the road.

This letter addresses **Stevens Forest Road** from the intersection of **Santiago Road/Camelback Road and Stevens Forest** through the intersection of **Whiteacre Road at Stevens Forest Road**. In particular is the **four way stop at Santiago** and the two heavily used **pedestrian crosswalks, one at Robert Oliver Place, across from Forest Ridge Apartments, and one at Whiteacre and Stevens Forest across from the path leading to the new pedestrian bridge**. The history of a streetscape project for this stretch of Stevens Forest Road goes back to 2014, when the County first presented streetscape options to the community. We have continued to advocate for a streetscape project for Stevens Forest each year thereafter as part of our Board's budget testimony to the County Executive.

Listed below are the specific safety concerns that we see as a short-term priority while the entire stretch is being looked at.

Pedestrian Crossing – Stevens Forest Road at Whiteacre Road, across from the Pedestrian Bridge that crosses Route 29:

This crossing has seen significant changes in the past three years with the new pedestrian bridge crossing Route 29 becoming part of the multi-use path connecting the growing downtown area to the opening of multiple phases of Blandair Park. Shortly, a new and substantially larger Talbott Springs Elementary School will open directly on this route.

The intersection is currently striped with much of the painted striping faded or completely worn off. There is no clear indication from any direction that pedestrians have the right of way from all directions. The only vehicle traffic measure is one stop sign on Whiteacre Road at Stevens Forest Road.

- This crossing is the junction for paths from the greater Oakland Mills neighborhoods and Oakland Mills Village Center to the only pedestrian crossing leading to and from Downtown Columbia. The route is heavily traveled with a great increase in pedestrian and bicycle traffic over the past three years and increasing yearly.
- The Oakland Mills Public Space Committee, composed of local residents, have studied the current intersection and videotaped active crossings by pedestrians and bicyclists. The safety concerns that all agree on are:
 - Lack of confidence several bicyclists and pedestrians expressed in trying to cross Stevens Forest Road at Whitacre because of the width of Stevens Forest and the high rate of vehicular speeds.
 - Lack of visibility due to the “dip” in the roadway, pedestrians are surprised when a car appears at the crosswalk from the south, and for vehicles they crosswalk is not noticeable until the driver approaches the crosswalk.
 - The benches adjacent to the path make it a popular gathering spot which creates more pedestrian traffic to and from the path and village center.
 - Lack of any traffic control mechanism

We request that the county treat this pedestrian crossing as a priority safety issue for short-term immediate improvements with the goal of a long-term permanent solution.

Pedestrian Crossing – Stevens Forest Road at Robert Oliver Place across from Forest Ridge Apartment Complex:

At least six (6) years ago painted pedestrian crossing lines and yellow center road lines were painted to make the crosswalk more defined for pedestrians and create a turn lane from Stevens Forest Road into Robert Oliver Place. The lines are now faded, and this short-term fix is no longer providing a safe pedestrian crossing. We request that the county treat this pedestrian crossing as a priority safety issue for short-term immediate improvements with the goal of a long-term permanent solution.

Santiago Road/Camelback Road at Stevens Forest Road:

On a recent Saturday, our Public Space Committee studied and videotaped this intersection. Based on on-site observations at least 90% of the vehicles came to rolling stops only. This has been the site of several accidents. While it is a four-way stop, the stop signs are not clearly noticeable. While we are not traffic engineers, we would like the County to consider flashing lights for this intersection as a short-term remedy as the road is studied as part of a longer term streetscape project.

Short-Term Request:

For each intersection and pedestrian crossing detailed in this letter, we are requesting that the County take the appropriate steps necessary for short term safety measures. It is clear that some form of traffic control at each location is not only necessary but should be a top priority. While we could provide suggestions, we rely on the County for expertise to design the best type of traffic control for these intersections and pedestrian crossing. Additionally, we would like to invite you to attend an upcoming Oakland Mills board meeting to discuss the issues addressed in this letter.

Thank you in advance and as always, we look forward to working with you to address the safety concerns of our residents and greater community.

Sincerely,



Jonathan L. Edelson, Chairman
Oakland Mills Board of Directors

Attachment A: 2014 Streetscape Plan for Stevens Forest as presented to Oakland Mills

Attachment B: Video of Stevens Forest Road/Whiteacre Road intersection and Santiago/Camelback/Stevens Forest Road intersection taken March 20, 2021

cc: Councilman Opel Jones, District 2