

**THE PARKWAYS OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY'S
PARK SYSTEM:**

***An Adopted Plan for Traffic Safety and
Speed Management***

***A Special Report Developed by the Maryland-National Capital Park and
Planning Commission in Cooperation with the Montgomery County
Department of Public Works and Transportation
July 2002***

Introduction:

There are three parkways within Montgomery County's park system owned and operated by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC). Each parkway transverses a stream valley park and runs parallel to a stream. Little Falls Parkway, 2.4 miles long within the Cabin John Stream Valley Park, begins at Bradley Boulevard and ends at Massachusetts Avenue. Beach Drive, 5.90 miles long within the Rock Creek Stream Valley Park, begins at Garrett Park Road north of Kensington and travels into the District of Columbia to the National Zoo and Connecticut Avenue. Sligo Creek Parkway, 5.50 miles long within the Sligo Creek Stream Valley Park, starts at University Boulevard and ends at New Hampshire Avenue. The development, management, and maintenance of these parkways are the responsibility of M-NCPPC. M-NCPPC's Park Police Division is responsible for enforcement of all traffic regulations along these parkways.

Park roads are intended primarily to provide access to parks and their facilities. They are designed to maximize the user's exposure to the flora, fauna and scenic beauty that the stream valley possesses while minimizing the developmental impact on the environment. The result is a series of parkways that follows a multitude of curvilinear alignments that parallel the adjacent streams. A speed limit of 25 miles per hour was established to set a leisurely pace for vehicular traffic.

While most of the recommendations contained in this report could be applicable to each of the parkways, the focus will be on Sligo Creek Parkway, which has experienced two traffic fatalities within the past year. The purpose of this report, therefore, is to analyze the current roadway conditions and use patterns of Sligo Creek Parkway and develop an action plan to improve awareness among parkway users with regard to safety and speed.

The general public parkway user should always know the speed limit, and where upcoming roadway hazards (i.e. sharp curves, slippery roadways, etc.) are located. The parkway user also should know where pedestrian crossings are located. The ability for

the general public to see the signs guiding the parkway user and hazard warnings during the day, evening, night, and during inclement weather conditions is equally important.

Staff conducted several field visits along the parkway in order to assess the current conditions of the parkway from the perspectives of all user groups.

The implementation strategies contained in this report were approved by the Montgomery County Planning Board and funded by the Montgomery County Council in May 2002, and reflect those observations and are intended to reduce speeding and improve parkway user safety for all users.

Description of the Study Area:

The Sligo Creek Parkway study area consists of a two-lane roadway approximately five and one-half miles long extending from New Hampshire Avenue on the east to University Boulevard on the west. The general paved parkway width varies from approximately 22 to 25 feet with two eleven-foot lanes, one in each direction. In one area along the parkway, there is also a three-foot bike lane on one side only.

Sligo Creek Parkway, like Montgomery County itself, has changed in character over the past 30 years, by growing from a suburban community, park roadway through Sligo Creek Stream Valley Park into an urban, local commuter route. Average daily traffic (ADT) volumes vary from 3,800 to 8,500 vehicles per day, and vary on different sections, as depicted below:

<u>Location</u>	<u>ADT</u>
University Blvd. To Dennis Ave.	5,100
Dennis Ave. to Forest Glen Rd.	8,000
Forest Glen Rd. to Colesville Rd.	8,100
Colesville Rd. to Wayne Ave.	8,500
Wayne Ave. to Piney Branch Rd.	6,500
Piney Branch Rd. to Carroll Ave.	3,800
Carroll Ave. to New Hampshire Ave.	4,400

The basic character of the parkway has changed even more dramatically over the past decade. Built originally as an access route to the stream valley park and its recreational facilities, the parkway’s function has changed. It now reflects the intensity and diversity of uses and users frequenting the parkway (i.e. automobile commuters, local residents, bikers, hikers, walkers, joggers, children, seniors, dog walkers, etc.).

The two recent tragic fatalities, which occurred on the parkway within the past year, have heightened both the Commission's and the general public's awareness and interest in improving traffic safety and public knowledge about the function and proper use of the parkway. A major component of the use and functional influence on the parkway (past, present, and future) is the posted 25 mile per hour speed limit.

Because both speed and the diversity of parkway users are two key components, M-NCPPC initiated and developed a parkway traffic safety and speed management plan.

Approach

To address the issues of traffic and pedestrian safety and speed management along Sligo Creek Parkway, this report recommends a three-pronged approach, which requires the involvement of the general public, the Park Police and staff of the Department of Park and Planning:

1. Public Awareness:

The public's awareness of the purpose and the function of our parkways is very critical. The opportunity to drive through Sligo Creek Park should be considered a unique experience. The parkway is much more than a local commuter route to get a commuter from point A to point B. The opportunity to enjoy the park's natural environment, i.e. trees, flora & fauna, wildlife and creek are unique elements of the parkway that should continue to receive the highest priority. A public awareness campaign has been launched by M-NCPPC in order to address this important objective and includes: radio public service announcements, a cable TV program, and greater visibility of volunteer traffic monitoring.

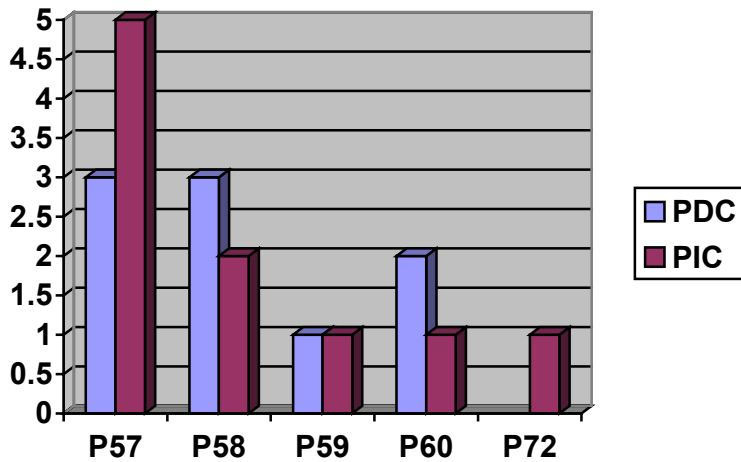
2. Enforcement:

Over the past few years, both our transportation planners and the Park Police have observed the motoring public using the parkway system as a local commuter route that serves as a convenient means of travel to and from downtown and other urban areas. This parkway user pattern is in direct contrast with the parkway's historic use as a means of accessing the park system for recreational pursuits.

This increase in traffic volume has created a conflict between the general motoring public, who views the parkway as a local commuter route, and the public recreational user (i.e. bicyclists, joggers, hikers, general nature lovers, field and playground users). These competing needs produce conflicts. The Park Police recorded a total of 20 vehicular traffic accidents in the year 2000 and 26 in the year 2001. The majority of these accidents occurred in the area between Piney Branch Road and the Prince George's County line. A number of these collisions were the result of vehicles losing control on slippery roadway surfaces due to inclement weather and the failure of the motorist to reduce speed when negotiating the many curves along this section of the parkway.

During the year 2000, the Park Police issued a total of 960 citations along Sligo Creek Parkway. As a result of using radar/laser traffic details or routine traffic stops, 638 citations were issued for excessive speeding. During the year 2001, a total of 1,358 citations were issued, 571 of which were for excessive speed.

**YEAR 2000 PROPERTY DAMAGE COLLISIONS (PDC)
AND PERSONAL INJURY COLLISIONS (PIC)
ON SLIGO CREEK PARKWAY**

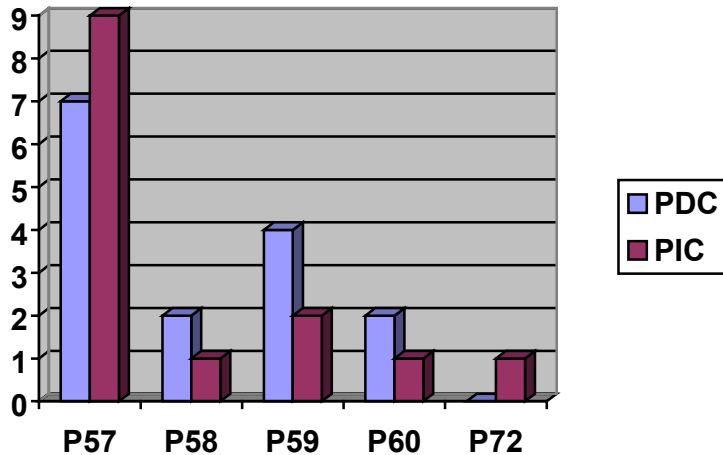


PDC - 9
PIC - 10

- P57** Sligo Creek Parkway (SCP) – Prince George’s County Line to Piney Branch Road
- P58** SCP – Piney Branch to Route 29
- P59** SCP – Route 29 To Forest Glen Road
- P60** SCP – Forest Glen Road to University Boulevard
- P72** SCP – Chaney Drive to Prince George’s County Line

The chart is broken down by location for those collisions for which we have PRA data.

**YEAR 2001 PROPERTY DAMAGE COLLISIONS (PDC)
AND PERSONAL INJURY COLLISIONS (PIC)
ON SLIGO CREEK PARKWAY**



PDC - 15
PIC - 14

- P57** Sligo Creek Parkway (SCP) – Prince George’s County Line to Piney Branch Road
- P58** SCP – Piney Branch To Route 29
- P59** SCP – Route 29 to Forest Glen Road
- P60** SCP – Forest Glen Road to University Boulevard
- P72** SCP – Chaney Drive to Prince George’s County Line

The chart is broken down by location for those collisions for which we have PRA data.

The Park Police’s accident and citation statistics indicate that enforcement activity has received a high priority. However, the accidents resulting from excessive speed and the citations issued suggest that other measures also may be needed to provide a safer parkway user environment.

The Park Police intend to continue to take a proactive enforcement role in terms of maintaining public compliance with all traffic laws along Sligo Creek Parkway. The Park Police will continue to use normal patrol cars, unmarked vehicles, as well as bike and horse patrols to enforce speeding and general parkway traffic laws.

In addition, Park Police have trained citizen volunteers on the use of radar speed detection equipment. Using a Park Police volunteer vehicle, the volunteers will work in two or three person teams, measuring motorists’ speed and recording the license tag number and description of the vehicle. When the information is submitted to the volunteer coordinator, the coordinator will determine which of

the listed vehicle owners will be notified of their speeding violation. A letter from Park Police will be sent to the owner, advising them of the date, time and location of the violation, along with the vehicle's year and make. The letter will state that this is not a citation, that no points or fines will be assessed at this time and request the owner's assistance in improving traffic safety along Sligo Creek Parkway.

3. Physical Improvements

Sligo Creek Parkway will require several new general roadway and signage upgrades in order to create an enhanced pedestrian, biker and vehicle user safety environment.

One of the first areas of public safety improvement is for the parkway user to see the road and understand how the roadway is to be used at all times. These basic factors direct the parkway user to understand how the parkway is to be used by the way the parkway roadway surface is paved, treated, painted, striped and how signage is deployed along the parkway.

The general public parkway user should always know the speed limit, and where upcoming roadway hazards (i.e. sharp curves, slippery conditions, etc.) are located. The parkway user should also know where they are along the parkway at all times, and where pedestrian crossings are located. Several types of warning signs are recommended to advise users of these conditions. The ability for the general public to see these signs during the day, evening, during inclement weather conditions and at night is equally important.

The general public should also be warned of the fact that speed along the parkway is radar enforced and monitored.

It is recommended that a new and upgraded parkway signage system be installed. It is also recommended that new roadway edge, center line, and pedestrian crossing areas be re-striped with reflective paint and that raised reflectors be installed along the double yellow center line in order to enhance roadway safety and allow the parkway user better visibility.

In order to control the speed of traffic along Sligo Creek Parkway it is recommended that the use of speed tables be installed at twelve key locations between Wayne Avenue and University Boulevard.

The speed safety management plan recommends the application of all of the above mentioned roadway improvements as part of the new roadway safety plans.

The Parkway Traffic Safety and Speed Management Action Plan:

A comprehensive plan designed to create a safe traffic environment for all parkway users must combine a self-enforcement component with Park Police traffic enforcement in order to control speed along the parkway. Staff received approval to utilize several effective physical improvements or speed management tools in selected areas of Sligo Creek Parkway in order to provide a better daytime, nighttime, and inclement weather roadway user environment.

A. Overall Parkway Safety and Speed Management Tools:

1. Roadway Lane / Crosswalk Striping:

Repaint all crosswalks and roadway edgelines and centerlines with reflectorized paint or plastic.

2. Raised Reflective Pavement Markers:

Install raised reflective pavement markers along the double yellow centerline at 100 foot intervals. The application of raised reflectors will not only assist the roadway user at night or during inclement weather, but also assist during the daylight hours by creating a warning environment by alerting the driver that the vehicle strayed outside of its lane when its tires rumble over the reflectors.

3. Standard Roadway Signs:



Replace and install the nationally-recognized, 24” x 30” standard speed limit signs. New signs, emphasizing the fact that “the speed limit is radar-enforced,” should supplement existing numerical speed limit signs and be installed at the intersections of all major roads crossing Sligo Creek Parkway.

4. Reflectorized Hazard Warning Signs:



Install reflectorized hazard warning signs at: small bridge retaining walls, culvert crossings, raised man hole covers immediately adjacent to the roadway, trees within 2' -3' from the roadway, guard rails, etc.

5. Speed Tables:



Install speed tables, painted with reflective arrows perpendicular to the direction of traffic flow, and appropriate warning signs at twelve locations between Wayne Avenue and University Boulevard. Install “pedestrian crossing” signs in advance of and at all pedestrian crosswalks where a speed table does not exist.

6. All-Way Stop Sign:



Install a new “all-way stop” control at the intersection of Sligo Creek Parkway and Schuyler Road due to limited sight distance. A school crossing exist at this location.

7. Winding Roadway Signs:



Install chevron/curve warning signs at strategic locations. Install signs warning drivers about slippery roadway conditions during inclement weather.

8. Mobile Radar-Controlled Speed Monitor Trailer:

Use a mobile radar-controlled speed monitor, alerting motorists about the legal speed limit and their actual speed tracked by radar.

9. Park Police Radar/Laser Units:

Deploy new radar/laser units to assigned Park Police Officers and Park Police Volunteers in order to re-enforce the posted 25 mile per hour speed limit along Sligo Creek Parkway.

B. Location-specific Speed Management Plan Improvements:

The following speed management and traffic safety recommendations are divided into roadway segments traveling east to west, from New Hampshire Avenue in Takoma Park to University Boulevard in Silver Spring. These specific roadway segment recommendations are to work in a complimentary fashion with all of the generic roadway and safety speed management tools listed above.

A series of corresponding traffic safety and speed management improvement maps, highlighting these recommendations, is located in the appendix portion of this report.

University Boulevard to Dennis Avenue



Install five speed tables between Dennis Avenue and University Boulevard with appropriate warning signs.

Attach “Radar Enforced” signs to the existing speed limit signs westbound from Dennis Avenue and eastbound from University Boulevard.

Install “Speed Limit 25” signs midway between Dennis Avenue and University Boulevard.

Dennis Avenue to Forest Glen



Install two speed tables between Forest Glen Road and University Boulevard. Attach “Radar Enforced” signs to the existing speed limit signs westbound from Forest Glen Road and eastbound from Dennis Avenue.

Erect pedestrian crosswalk and advance pedestrian crossing warning signs for the existing crosswalk located west of Forest Glen Road.

Erect advance curve warning and chevron signs at the curves east of Dennis Avenue.

Erect a “Share the Road (Bicycles)” sign for eastbound traffic along Sligo Creek Parkway.

Eastbound Forest Glen Road at Sligo Creek Parkway



Change the existing “yield” sign to a “stop” sign for eastbound traffic from Forest Glen Road turning right onto Sligo Creek Parkway.

Forest Glen Road to Colesville Road



Install three speed tables between Colesville road and Forest Glen Road.

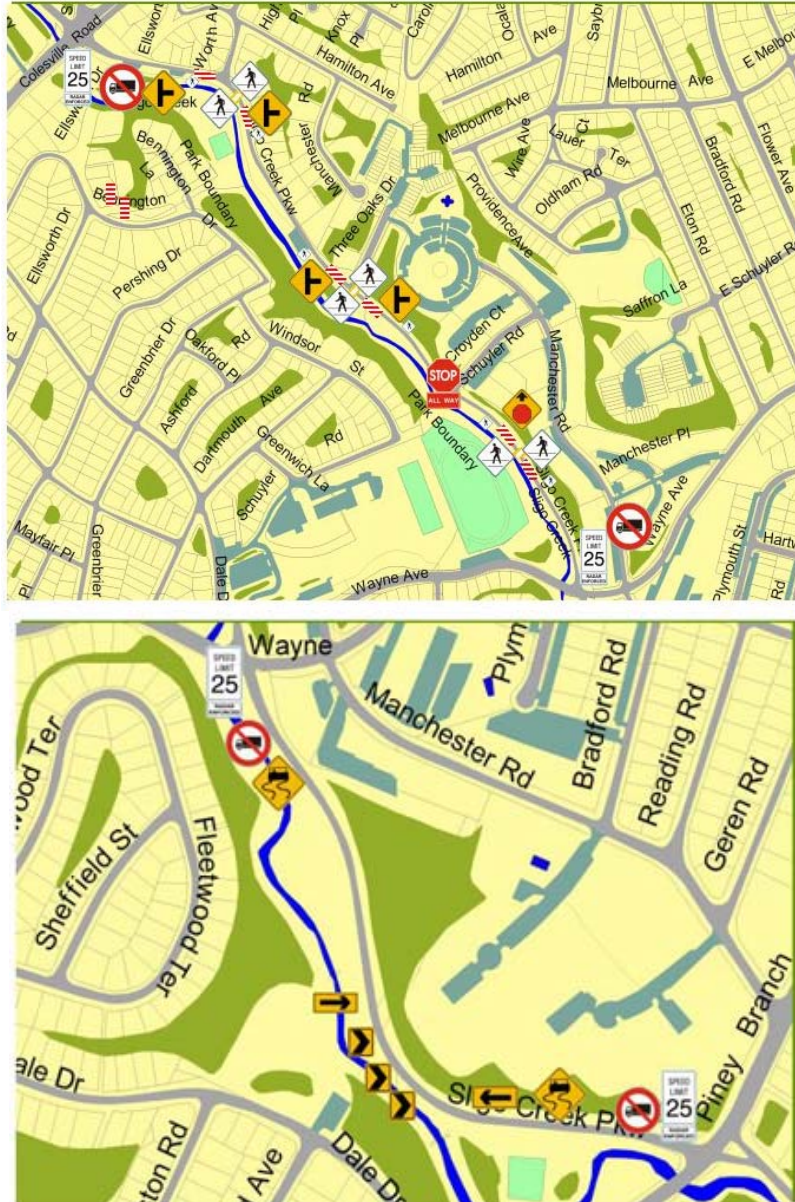
Attach “Radar Enforced” signs to the existing speed limit signs westbound from Colesville Road and eastbound from Forest Glen Road.

Install “Speed Limit 25” signs midway between Colesville Road and Forest Glen Road.

Erect pedestrian crosswalk signs at existing crosswalks located in front of the Sligo Creek Golf Course and at the intersection of Brunett Avenue. Install an asphalt walkway from the golf course parking lot leading to the existing crosswalk.

Erect a “Share the Road (Bicycles)” sign for westbound Sligo Creek Parkway west of Colesville Road.

Colesville Road to Piney Branch Road



Install two speed tables between Colesville Road and Schuyler Road. Attach “Radar Enforced” signs to initial speed limit signs coming from cross streets (westbound from Piney Branch Road, eastbound and westbound from Wayne Avenue, and eastbound from Colesville Road).

Convert the intersection of Sligo Creek Parkway and Schuyler Road to a three-way stop control.

Install metal guard rail along a portion of the paved off-road bike path that becomes a continuous section of asphalt with the roadway just west of Schuyler Road.

Add pedestrian crosswalks at the intersections of Three Oaks Drive and Worth Avenue with appropriate signs. Retain the crosswalk at Schuyler Road as a school crosswalk. Install pedestrian crossing signs at the existing crosswalk west of Wayne Avenue.

Erect a “Share the Road (Bicycles)” sign for eastbound Sligo Creek Parkway east of Colesville Road.

Install “Slippery When Wet” and chevron signs between Wayne Avenue and Piney Branch Road.

Piney Branch Road to Maple Avenue



Add 4-way stop plates to existing stop signs at both intersections of Sligo Creek Parkway and Maple Avenue (east and west of the creek).

Erect chevrons at the curve between Kennebec Avenue and Maple Avenue.

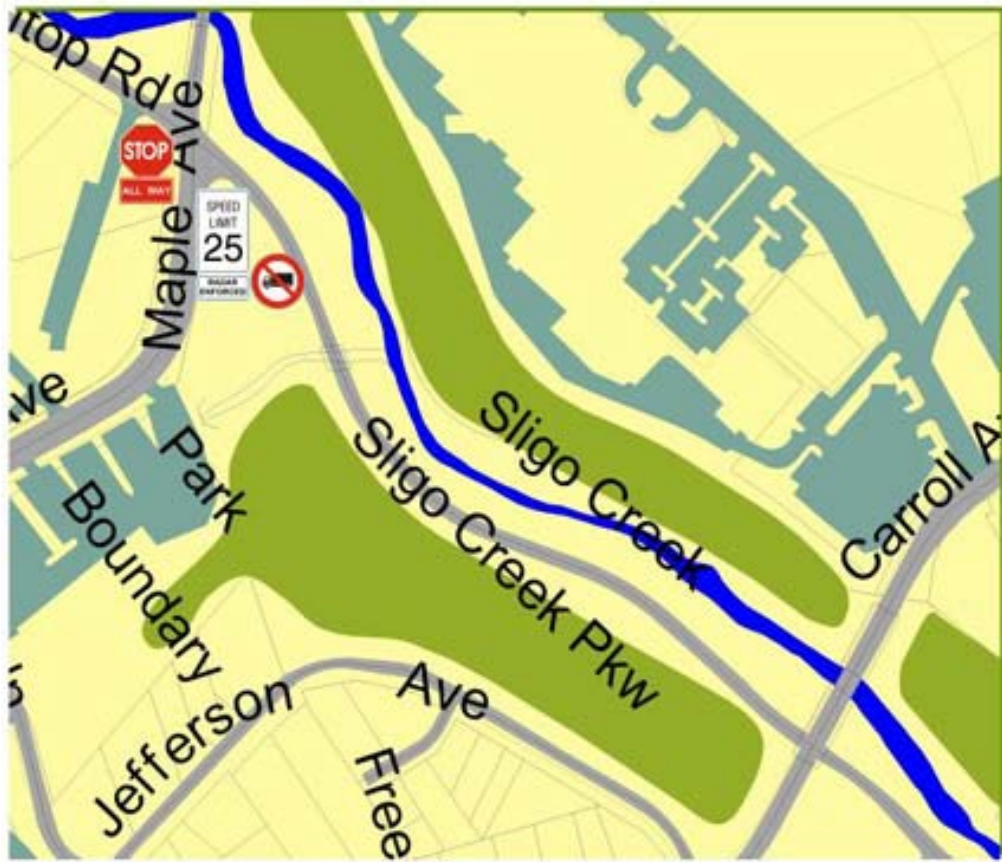
Install a crosswalk and related asphalt walkway leading to the parking lot at the intersection near Kennebec Avenue. Also, erect advance pedestrian crossing and pedestrian crosswalk signs.

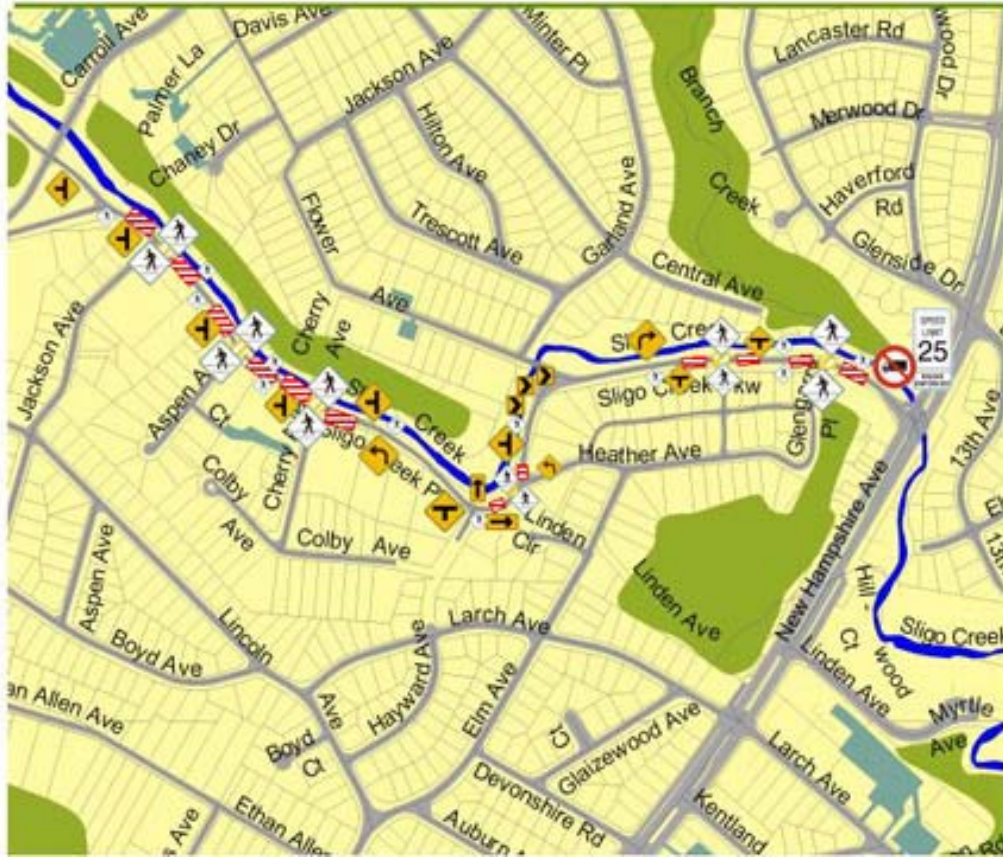
Erect diamond-shaped warning signs in the circle at Park Valley Road. Relocate the “Do Not Enter” sign from same circle to the west side of the road at this intersection. Eliminate two “Keep Right” signs from circle.

Erect curve warning signs in each direction on the approach to Park Valley Road.

Erect winding road warning signs and chevrons at the several curves between Domer Avenue and Park Valley Road.

Maple Avenue to New Hampshire Avenue





Erect pedestrian crosswalk signs at the following intersecting roads with existing crosswalks: Glengary Place, an un-named road west of Glengary Place, Heather Avenue, Aspen Avenue and Jackson Avenue. Eliminate the crosswalk between Aspen Avenue and Jackson Avenue.

Erect curve warning signs westbound approaching the curve at Flower Avenue and eastbound approaching the curve near Heather Avenue.

Erect chevron signs for the curve between Flower Avenue and Heather Avenue. Erect an arrow billboard sign (in each direction) at the curve near Heather Avenue.

Erect a “Share the Road (Bicycles)” sign for westbound Sligo Creek Parkway at New Hampshire Avenue.

C. Parkway Speed Management Implementation

The parkway improvements, approved by the Planning Board and the Montgomery County Council for funding in May 2002, will be implemented in cooperation with County Executive's Pedestrian Safety Program, The Department of Public Works and Transportation, and The Montgomery County Police Department. The safety plan will be implemented in the following manner:

Summer 2002

Pedestrian & Bike Safety-

The objective of all improvements is to obtain immediate results to control the speed by motor vehicles and to enhance both pedestrian and bike user safety along the parkway.

1. The installation of new speed tables, pedestrian signage and striping at all pedestrian crossings along the parkway;
2. The purchase of at least one mobile radar trailer for the Park Police;
3. The implementation of a Park Police Community Speed Watch Program using local community volunteers.

Roadway Hazard Awareness-

The objective of all recommendations is to provide an enhanced level of Parkway user awareness of how to use the parkway safely and the avoidance of roadway hazards.

1. The installation of new traffic and hazard warning signs all along the parkway;
2. The installation of new raised reflectors along the double yellow center line of the parkway;

Overall Parkway Improvements-

The objective of all improvements is to provide for an improved parkway safety environment by improving the roadway surface.

1. The repaving of the entire parkway and the installation of scored paving areas around all major curves along the parkway will be considered as part of the

Commission's future capital improvements (CIP) park roadway improvements program.

Conclusion:

This plan has been developed to share with the public the Commission's plans to enhance and improve public safety and awareness along Sligo Creek Parkway. We hope you share in our vision for an improved and safer parkway user environment and look forward to hearing from you about your ideas and concerns as we move forward.