

Government of the District of Columbia

Department of Transportation



PRELIMINARY DESIGN AND FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR SHEPHERD BRANCH TRAIL

DECISION DOCUMENT

September 22, 2020

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) has completed the preliminary design and feasibility study for the Shepherd Branch Trail. This study identifies critical issues for DDOT's consideration in pursuing this trail for pedestrians and bicyclists of all ages and abilities.

The study considered a range of factors including, transportation network connectivity, topography, utility conflicts, right-of-way impacts, stormwater management, and cost. Only one alignment, along the inactive CSX Shepherd Branch railroad right-of-way, was evaluated because of its significant potential to meet Department intent and user needs. Other alignments with comparable benefit are not available.

Based on the study's findings, DDOT has determined that this alignment is technically feasible as long as the land is available, but DDOT must first acquire rights to use this land before proceeding with the trail. The inactive Shepherd Branch railroad spur is owned by CSX and currently has easements for Pepco, WMATA, and private owners. Pepco's easement runs the length of the corridor and is most significant. Costs for DDOT to acquire the land from CSX are potentially \$10 million to \$50 million, and additional negotiation with Pepco would be required.

Based on the land constraints identified in the feasibility study and summarized above, DDOT has determined the following:

- 1) DDOT will place design and construction of this trail on hold indefinitely.
- 2) DDOT will continue to focus on pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure at the neighborhood level and will identify and study connections to the existing Anacostia River Trail. Agreements for crossing railroad right-of-way are expected to be more reasonable than land acquisition. DDOT has begun exploring a crossing at G Street. DC 295 is also a significant obstacle, but the new Douglass Bridge construction will improve access along Howard Road.
- 3) Study documents to be posted to the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative web site (www.anacostiawaterfront.org) for public use are:
 - The Shepherd Branch Trail Feasibility Study and Basis of Design Report
 - Appendix B: Pedestrian Bridge Structures Report
 - Appendix D: 20% Design Plans for Shepherd Branch Trail