



Memo

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Lesley Riddle, Director of Public Works
Hal Metzler, Deputy Director of Public Works
Taylor Robey, Transportation Manager

Date: February 6, 2025

Re: Roadway Transfer of MD 208 (Hamilton Road)

Attachments: HCC-107-FY22
HCC-171-FY22
MD 208 Road Transfer Agreement – First Draft

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the City Council with an update on the MD 208 (Hamilton Street) Road Transfer agreement between Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration and the City of Hyattsville.

Summary

- State highway MD 208 (Hamilton Street) between Queens Chapel Road and 38th Avenue is an important roadway that is in need of safety enhancements as expressed in the 2018 Transportation Study and the 2017 – 2021 Community Sustainability Plan.
- City Council authorized the City Administrator to begin negotiations for the roadway transfer and the development of conceptual plans to aid this process in the Fall of 2021.
- City staff and SHA staff worked between 2021 and 2023 to determine the scope of the safety improvements and the best approach for the transfer process.
- The roadway transfer was initiated in April of 2023. City staff received a draft roadway transfer agreement in January of 2025.

Background

The subject roadway segment of state highway MD 208, Hamilton Street, is between Queens Chapel Road and 38th Avenue. The street is a major connector between community assets such as the West Hyattsville Metro Station, Queens Chapel Town Center, various city parks such as Hyatt Park and Driskell

Park, and the forthcoming Safety Building at 3505 Hamilton Street. It is currently owned and maintained by the State of Maryland and is located within Ward 5.

This segment has long been identified as needing safety improvements. In 2008, the Hyattsville Bike and Pedestrian Safety Committee developed a Pedestrian and Bicycle Master plan that contained recommendations to make walking and cycling safer and more convenient within the city. It identified many streets where pedestrian and bicycle access should be a priority including Hamilton Street between Queens Chapel Road and 38th Avenue. Specifically, the plan recommended closing existing gaps in the sidewalks and ensuring accessibility for all.

Again, in the 2018 Transportation Study, this segment of Hamilton Street was identified by community members as “difficult for walking or biking, or were barriers to walking or biking.” The Study recommended Hamilton Street be rebuilt as a “Complete Street, with bike lanes, ample and continuous sidewalks, additional pedestrian crossings and narrow motor vehicle lanes and potentially other traffic calming measures.” The study also recommended the City explore the potential for a transfer of ownership. A prioritization exercise also identified the reconstruction of Hamilton Street as the highest scoring recommendation indicating it “addressed the City’s sustainability goals, as well as significant travel issues that residents, workers, and visitors, currently face.”

Previous City Council Action

City Council has reviewed this item on two separate occasions.

On October 4th, 2021, City Council authorized the City Administrator to begin negotiations with the Maryland State Highway Administration for the purpose of transitioning ownership of the segment of MD 208 (Hamilton Street) within the municipal bounds of the City of Hyattsville, from 38th Avenue to Queens Chapel Road (HCC-107-FY22). At the time the City administrator and staff agreed to evaluate existing road conditions and prepare a cost-benefit analysis for improving the roadway segment.

On December 20th, 2021, City Council authorized expenditures pertaining to “the development of preliminary designs, engineering studies, develop of concept plans, and other work as required as part of negotiations for improvements to, and the possible transfer of ownership of, Hamilton Street from the State of Maryland to the City of Hyattsville” (HCC-171-FY22).

Additional Action (2021 – 2025)

In late 2021, City staff began the process of negotiating a transfer of this portion of MD 208. Negotiations primarily involved State Highway Administration’s District 3 Office, including the District Engineer and other relevant staff. Several scenarios were explored including transfer after improvements by SHA, transfer with the potential of utilizing state funding for improvements, and transfer as is.

It was determined by City staff and SHA that understanding the scope of the improvements was critical to determining the best approach for the roadway transfer. As such, City staff contracted with Penonni to develop preliminary design concepts. These conceptual designs were informed by the 2018 Transportation Study’s recommendations, community input, and the redevelopment of 3505 Hamilton Street for the new public safety building.

There were delays in the negotiations process due to significant staff turnover at the District 3 office. City staff had to reintroduce the project to new staff during 2022 and 2023. However, with continuing

communication, City staff and SHA staff were able to begin the transfer process in April of 2023. It was determined at the time to move forward with a transfer as is. Discussion of funding for improvements is ongoing.

A formal request for the transfer of MD 208 between Queens Chapel Road and 38th Avenue was submitted by SHA's District 3 Engineer to Maryland Department of Transportation's Real Estate Office on April 13th, 2023. The estimated processing time of a roadway transfer was 6 months, however, staffing shortages were said to add significant delays to the transfer process. City staff continued to be in regular communication with SHA's District 3 Office and MDOT's Real Estate Office since submission in April of 2023.

In January of 2025, the City received a draft transfer agreement for the subject roadway segment.

Timeline and Next Steps

Upon review by the City Attorney, additional coordination with SHA's District 3 Office may be necessary as they prepare the roadway for transfer. This includes but is not limited to, deed conveying and plating for City review. Upon review and agreement, SHA will execute and record the deed within thirty (30) days of receipt.

Staff is recommending the following motion:

"I move that the Mayor and City Council authorize the City Administrator to execute the roadway transfer agreement of MD 208 (Hamilton Street) between the City of Hyattsville and Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration, pending review by the City Attorney."