PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY

HISTORIC SITE SUMMARY SHEET

Survey #: PG 70-80 Building Date: pre-1861

Building Name: MD 450/Defense Highway

Location: Annapolis Road, from Lanham (MD 564) to Bowie (MD 3)

Description

MD 450/Defense Highway extends, in its entirety, from Bladensburg to Annapolis, Maryland. The resource, within the project area, is a modern roadway that stretches from Whitfield Chapel Road to Seabrook Road in Lanham and from Enterprise Road (MD 193) to MD 3 near Bowie, a total distance of approximately 6.5 miles. A majority of MD 450 can be characterized by a mix of residential development with adjacent nodes of commercial and retail businesses. In these areas, the highway consists of four to five lanes of asphalt highway with turning ramps, concrete curbing, and modern mercury/sodium street lights. Some sections of the highway have been divided with a center grass or concrete median. The remaining sections of MD 450 can be characterized by two lanes of asphalt roadway with 3 foot gravel shoulders surrounded by young wooded and agricultural areas. The only bridge structure greater than 50 years of age identified in the Collington Bridge over the Conrail Railroad.

Significance

MD 450/Defense Highway has characteristics of both a cultural route and an engineered route. It is a cultural route in that it grew out of vernacular need for a route between Bladensburg and points east, especially the capital at Annapolis. However, during the twentieth century the route has been “engineered” to meet the demands of automobile travel and increased development in the vicinity. Engineered elements include the design of the current softened route and the current materials and workmanship of the physical components of the road.

While the property is associated with the theme of nineteenth century transportation developments in Prince George’s County, it lacks sufficient integrity to illustrate this association. In addition, the resource illustrates the use of modern highway design, materials, and workmanship, and it no longer retains sufficient integrity to illustrate any historically significant design elements. The resource is not recommended as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.
Maryland Historical Trust

State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. **Name**
   (indicate preferred name)
   
   historic: Bladensburg-Annapolis Road
   
   and/or common: MD 450/Defense Highway (pref.)

2. **Location**
   
   street and number: Annapolis Road, from Lanham (MD 564) to Bowie (MD 3)
   
   city, town: Lanham, Bowie
   
   state: Maryland
   
   congressional district: 17
   
   county: Prince George’s
   
   not for publication

3. **Classification**

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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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4. **Owner of Property**
   (give names and mailing addresses of ALL owners)
   
   name: Maryland State Highway Administration
   
   street/number: 707 North Calvert Street
   
   city, town: Baltimore
   
   telephone no.: (410) 545-8559
   
   state and zip code: Maryland, 21202

5. **Location of Legal Description**
   
   courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.: Prince George’s
   
   Liber: 
   
   Folio: 
   
   city, town: Upper Marlboro
   
   state: Maryland

6. **Representation in Existing Historical Surveys**
   
   title: 
   
   date: 
   
   survey scope: 
   
   depository for survey records: 
   
   city, town: 
   
   state: 

   63
7. Description

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Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

MD 450/Defense Highway extends, in its entirety, from Bladensburg to Annapolis, Maryland. The resource, within the project area, is a modern roadway that stretches from Whitfield Chapel Road to Seabrook Road in Lanham and from Enterprise Road (MD 193) to MD 3 near Bowie, a total distance of approximately 6.5 miles. The current MD 450 highway, for the most part, follows the route of the highway established by at least 1861 (Martinet 1861). The area in this section of MD 450 is characterized by flat to rolling terrain with an intermix of commercial areas, retail areas, suburban residential developments, small groupings of young wooded areas, non-developed open areas, and agricultural areas.

A majority of MD 450 can be characterized by a mix of residential development with adjacent nodes of commercial and retail businesses. In these areas the highway consists of four to five lands of asphalt highway with turning ramps, concrete curbing, and modern mercury/sodium street light (See photos, negative #HP99-078:15, 16, and 17). Some sections of the highway have been divided with a center grass or concrete median (See photos, negative #HP99-078:20, 21, and 22).

The remaining sections of MD 450 can be characterized by two lanes of asphalt roadway with 3 foot gravel shoulders (See photos, negative #HP99-078: 14 and 19) surrounded by young wooded and agricultural areas. The only bridge structure greater than 50 years of age identified is the Collington Bridge (See photos, negative #HP99-045:2 and 5) over the Conrail Railroad. It is located in a two lane section of MD 450 between Laurel-Bowie Road and Church Road and will be bypassed by the proposed improvements to MD 450.
8. Significance

Period
☐ prehistoric
☐ 1400-1499
☐ 1500-1599
☐ 1600-1699
☐ 1700-1799
☒ 1800-1899
☐ 1900-

Areas of Significance
☐ archeology-prehistoric
☐ archeology-historic
☐ agriculture
☐ architecture
☐ art
☐ commerce
☐ communications
☐ community planning
☐ conservation
☐ economics
☐ education
☐ engineering
☒ exploration/settlement
☐ industry
☐ invention
☐ landscape architecture
☐ law
☐ literature
☐ military
☐ music
☐ philosophy
☐ politics/government
☐ religion
☐ science
☐ sculpture
☐ social/humanitarian
☐ theater
☒ transportation
☐ other (specify)

Specific dates
pre-1861
Builder/Architect
Unknown

check: ☑ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D

Applicable Criteria:

and/or

Applicable Exception:
☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance:

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The colony of Maryland began to develop roads, in addition to its waterways, as transportation routes in the eighteenth century. The post road to Philadelphia (now US 1), roads leading to county courthouses, and "rolling" roads (used to roll tobacco hogsheads to a dock) were among the earliest public roads in the county (Watson 1982: 33).

"Other roads developed to connect various points in the county. An early and important road illustrated in a 1794 map connects Bladensburg and "Governor's Bridge" (Griffith 1794). At this time, Bladensburg was one of the most developed towns in the county and "Governor's Bridge" was a preferred crossing of the Patuxent River, particularly if one were heading to the state capital at Annapolis. This road is similar to the present route of Defense Highway (MD 450) east of what is known today as Buena Vista (labeled "Baldwin's" tavern on the 1794 map). West of Buena Vista, however, the historic road diverges to the southeast to follow a line closer to the present day John Hanson Highway (US 50).

In 1828, a survey of roads was conducted for the Maryland General Assembly. Susan Pearl has examined these records and reported on them in the historic context paper entitled, "Early Roads in Prince George's County, 1696-1900" (Pearl 1991: 21-28). She did not discuss the Bladensburg-Governor's Bridge Road in her analysis of the records.

The earliest available map illustrating Prince George's County is the 1861 map by Simon J. Martenet (Pearl 1991: 21; Martenet 1861). By 1861, the route of present-day Defense Highway (MD 450) is clearly visible. Also established are Post Offices at Collington and Buena Vista. Finally, the Holy Trinity Church (labeled "P. Ep. Ch.") and Sacred Heart Church (labeled "Cath. Ch.") are identified. It is also interesting that the bridge over the Patuxent River near the Sacred Heart Church is labeled "Priest's Bridge." This map further indicates that a network of roadways had developed in the county by 1861. Roadways radiate like spokes of a wheel around developed towns like Bladensburg and Upper Marlborough, the county seat. In more rural areas, like the project area, there are fewer roads illustrated, but they connect to the towns from which another route can be taken.

The most detailed maps available of the project area during the nineteenth century are those included in the 1878 atlas by G.M. Hopkins (Hopkins 1878). The project area is illustrated on three maps: the 14th District, the Kent (13th) District, and the Queen Anne (7th) District. These maps illustrate that the route of the Bladensburg-Annapolis Road is much the same as the route of Defense Highway (MD 450) today. (Continued)

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

Eligibility recommended ☑

Criteria: A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D

Consideration: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G ☑ None

Comments:

☐Reviewed, Office of Preservation Services
☐Reviewed, NR Program

Date

Date

65
8. Significance (continued)  

The most marked difference is at the present-day intersection of Enterprise Road (MD 193). The 1878 maps illustrate this intersection as T-shaped, while the current intersection has been softened. Another historic-period map, namely the Maryland Geological Survey Map of 1914, illustrates this intersection in the same way. However, by 1927, the intersection was softened through the construction of a bypass. This new route and the remnant of the old route are illustrated on the Maryland Geological Survey maps of 1927 and 1936. By 1965, the remnant of the old route had been abandoned and was not depicted on the JSGS 7.5’ Quadrangle Map of that year.

It was also during the early part of the twentieth century that the workmanship and materials of the old road were likely updated. The State Roads Commission, predecessor to the State Highway Administration, was formed in 1908. Its agenda included compiling a system of arterial highways, modernizing old highways to serve automobiles and trucks, and building new highways to accommodate motorized vehicular traffic. "The State had spent $157,993,420 for roads alone up to September 30, 1938" (Writers Program 1940: 89). At this time it was also said that "no farm of Maryland is more than two miles from a hard-surfaced road, except in several swampy areas of the Eastern Shore and in some parts of Allegany and Garrett Counties" (Writers Program 1940: 89). Despite these improvements, it was further noted that "narrow-curving, dangerous main highways, still following horse-and-buggy trails, were inadequate for the tremendous flow of modern traffic" (Writers Program 1940: 90).

In 1940, the Writers Program prepared a tour of the Annapolis-Bladensburg road, then known as US 50. The route was described as follows: "Winding two-lane [sic] asphalt-or concrete-paved roadway. Accommodations limited. East of Bladensburg this road was built in 1928 to replace an older and much longer one, and because it links the U.S. Naval Academy with the National Capital, it was called the Defense Highway. It passes through a milling wooded country with here and there a patch of level ground on which tobacco or vegetables are grown, but for the most part pine-covered clay bluffs and some swampy ground dominate the scene east of Bowie. Sycamores, pines, dogwood, sumac, and honeysuckle flourish in this region" (Writers Program 1940: 469).

After the construction of the John Hanson Highway in 1955 (Callcott 1985: 67), the new road took the designation of US 50, and Defense Highway because MD 450.

Paul Daniel Marriott has identified three categories of old roads: aesthetic routes, engineered routes, and cultural routes. In addition to this three discreet categories, he notes that some roads may have characteristics of more than one of the categories (Marriott 1998). The Defense Highway (MD 4500) has characteristics of both a cultural route and an engineered route. It is a cultural route in that it grew out of a vernacular need for a route between Bladensburg and points east, especially the capital at Annapolis. However, during the twentieth century the route has been "engineered" to meet the demands of automobile travel and increased development in the vicinity. Engineered elements include the design of the current softened route (see especially the discussion of the intersection with Enterprise Road above) and the current materials and workmanship of the physical components of the road.

NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY EVALUATION

While the property is associated with the theme of nineteenth century transportation developments in Prince George's County, it lacks sufficient integrity to illustrate this association (Criterion A). The property is not known to be associated with the lives of persons significant in the local, state, or national past (Criterion B). The property does not embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; represent the work of a master; or possess high artistic values. The resource illustrates the use of modern highway design, materials, and workmanship. Therefore it no longer retains sufficient integrity to illustrate any historically significant design elements (Criterion C). Finally, the property no longer retains sufficient integrity to meet the Criteria for Evaluation (A, B, C, and/or D), the resource is not recommended as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.
10. Geographical Data

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Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

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11. Form Prepared By

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<tr>
<th>name/title</th>
<th>Katy Harris</th>
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<td>date</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>street/number</td>
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<tr>
<td>telephone</td>
<td>412-269-4600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>city or townr</td>
<td>Coracopolis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state</td>
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The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature was to found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, ARticle 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: DHCP/DHCD
Maryland Historical Trust
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
9. Major Bibliographical References (continued)

Callcott, George H.

Griffith, Dennis

Hopkins, Griffith Morgan

Marriott, Paul Daniel

Martenet, Simon J.

Maryland Geological Survey
1914 *Map of Prince George's County and District of Columbia Showing the Topography and Election Districts.* Maryland Geological Survey, Baltimore, Maryland. On file at the Maryland Room, McKeldin Library, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland.

1927 *Map of Prince George's County and District of Columbia Showing the Topography and Election Districts.* Maryland Geological Survey, Baltimore, Maryland. On file at the Maryland Room, McKeldin Library, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland.

1936 *Map of Prince George's County and District of Columbia Showing the Topography and Election Districts.* Maryland Geological Survey, Baltimore, Maryland. On file at the Maryland Room, McKeldin Library, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland.

Pearl, Susan G.

U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)
1957 *Bowie, Md. 7.5' Quadrangle Map.* Revised 1993.

1965 *Lanham, Md. 7.5' Quadrangle Map.* Revised 1993.

Watson, James Douglas
1982 *Prince George's County Past and Present.* Federal Lithograph Co., Washington, D.C.

Writer's Program
1 of 1
PG 79-150
MD 450, "South Shore Way"
Mr. George Smith
J. Over
11/8/1999
Michael Baker Jr. Inc.
-facing-Southeast, N; 400 and 500 E
MD 450/Defense Highway
Prince George's Co, MD

E. 05/1999
E. 02/2019

Michael Baker Jr.

Facing southwest, 0.2 mi west of MD 450 - MD 3 Intersection

Ref. 4
**M.D.** to Police Station

Brion George St., M.D.

C.Owen F. Z. 1977

Michael Baker: One line:

*Taking note, M.D. 4500 and Face *Mack*.*

*Cooperative Assembly of Ann*

4 of 11
C. Owen
Michael Barker & Co., Inc.
Furniture Dept., Rm. 4255, 1000 15th St., N.W.
W. H. Top Plaza
5 of 11
PG 70-83

MV-540, 48th Ave. to 4th Ave.

Fremont, 5th Ave.

C.3.

11/8/1999

Michael F.

109th West, MD 450 and 5th Ave. Dr.

View of Superior Blvd. and the Market Place.

and Freestate Shopping Center

4 of 10
ND 450/Defence Highway
P.O. Box 1150
Cowane
11/8/1999
Michael Baker Jr.'s
Facing east, intersection of ND 450 and Collington Rd.
PG 70-20
MD 450/Defense, Contractor
Prince Georges Co., MD
C 08/97
1/8/99

Michael Briaurek, Inc.
Facing west, view of MD 450 & Church Rd.
Will accommodate development

8 of 11
MD 450/Defense Highway
Prince George's Co., MD
C. Durlin
Michael Baker Jr. Inc.
Facing west, view of MD 450 & Greenville Rd.
wl modern development
9 of 11
DG 70 - 80
M. #1060/90 17,000 RH 10
Prince George's Co., MD

C. Owen
11/5/2009

Michael Baker Jr., Inc
Facing East, view of MD-130 & Church Rd
W/ modern development

10 of 11
Do not go high above
Flaxen Bridge 50.7
C. Owen
11/8/1999
Michael and KP Groen
Facing South, View of Shopping Plaza on
South Side of ND 450 near Church Rd.
II of II