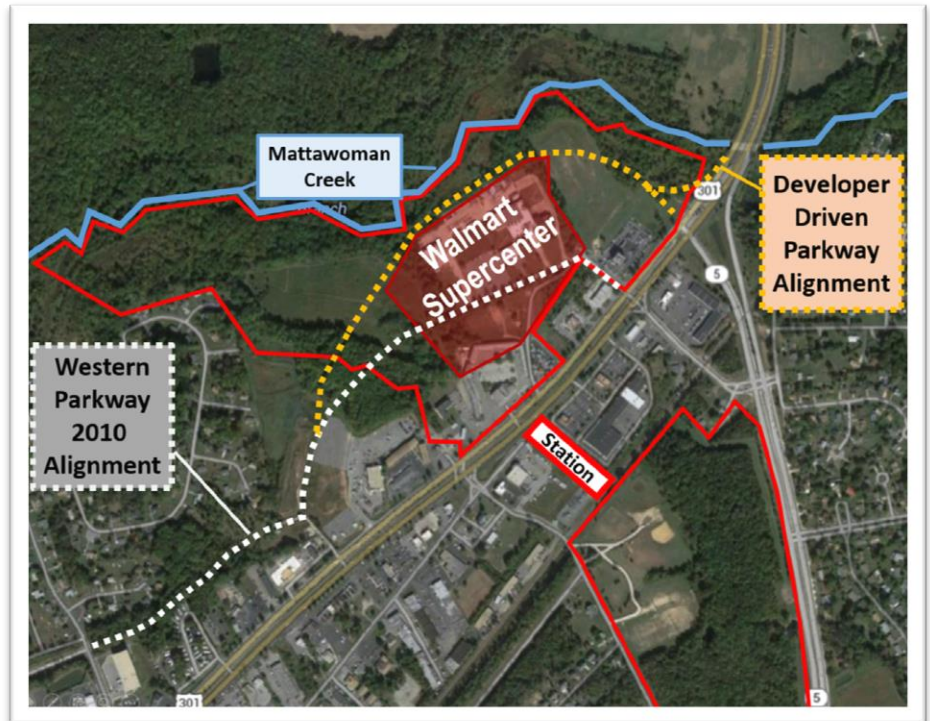


The Western Parkway

During the July 7th preliminary plan review, several Planning Commission members voiced concerns they had with Waldorf Station, including environmental impacts the project would have on its immediate neighbor, Mattawoman Creek. They questioned not only the plan's sprawling Walmart Supercenter but also its proposed alignment of the Western Parkway.



As the parkway stands it is incomplete, running three miles from St Charles Mall until it abruptly ends at Pierce Road. The final section, Phase III, was originally planned to cut through Waldorf Station's west section, connecting with U.S. 301 at Mattawoman Drive.

Sometime in 2010, that alignment changed to run around the west section in a large arc, hugging the northern boundary and skirting north around the Waldorf Supercenter site before connecting with U.S. 301 at the Mattawoman-Beantown intersection. This new alignment comes with environmental, and therefore economic, problems the original alignment did not have.

Specifically, it runs through a Resource Protection Zone (RPZ) for Mattawoman Creek. RPZs are county-designated areas around rivers and streams that are to be left undisturbed by development. These zones are predominately forested valleys, tidal floodplains, and wetlands, all of which act as buffers that protect and clean the water they surround.

According to the county's zoning ordinance, "most forms of development are prohibited, and permitted uses, such as agriculture ... must follow management plans."

So why does the county have one of its own roads going through one of its own protection zones?

The reason came to light at the July 7th review: *the alignment is based on what the developer wants.*

It appears the parkway was moved to maximize the plan and fit a Big Box store where it does not belong, in the middle of Transit Oriented Development.

This want was granted by conditions met in a signed 2007 Memorandum of Understanding between the previous Board of Commissioners and the developer. In this agreement, the county is responsible for building Phase III and the developer responsible for associated permits. However, since the county is the road builder, they are actually a co-applicant on these permits.

There are two issues here. First, a road, whose alignment has been dictated by a developer, will be paid for by us taxpayers. Twice. In the short-term, when Phase III is built and its environmental impacts are addressed and in the long-term, as the need for road maintenance and future environmental restoration arise.

And second, because the county is a co-applicant, they could stop the process now, go back to the developer and work to find a less destructive, less costly alignment.

The present commissioners must be held responsible for a project that has turned out to be a developer's sweetheart deal put in place by a previous board. We taxpayers need a public hearing before our commissioners so that we can ask them why we will be paying for something that is nothing more than a developer's want.