

# DRAFT

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## Criteria for nominating roads for new Rustic and Rural Roads Program

Frederick County has been considered a “rural” county for over 200 years. As Maryland has grown and developed, urban/suburban patterns of life have expanded westward. Transportation within and through the County has necessarily developed as well. However, the “back roads” that still exist contain treasures that need to be preserved and protected. Those back roads developed naturally over the years for the purpose of local movement at a slower pace than needed for today’s commuters. In keeping with the rural tradition, these roads are usually narrow two-lane roads without shoulders. They have not been engineered to improve sight distance or capacity, but rather hug the natural terrain. The rustic quality of the road network reinforces and contributes to the rural character of the landscape.

The 2019 Livable Frederick Master Plan envisions the County not only as a vibrant community, but as a “place to enjoy the revitalizing qualities of our forests, rivers, mountains, and countryside, and to be in harmony with the systems that surround, support, and underlie our ability to live happy, healthy, long, and prosperous lives.” The following criteria for selecting roads to include in the FC’s Rustic Roads Program will help maintain that quality of life and support our responsibility of stewardship toward all parts of the County.

The asset identified by Frederick County as its rustic roads are unique and distinct and can be considered in the following broad categories:

**SCENIC/NATURAL**

**CULTURAL/ HISTORIC**

**RURAL LEGACY**

We identify two types of criteria, one applied generally to all roads in the Rural and Rustic Roads Program and the second, applied more specifically to three broad categories, Scenic/Natural, Cultural/Historic and Legacy.

Roads in the Frederick County's Rural and Rustic Roads Program should exhibit the following criteria to be nominated for inclusion in Frederick County Rural and Rustic Road Program. There will be exceptions, always accompanied by explanation and justification.

#### **I. LOW-TRAFFIC VOLUME and LOW SPEED:**

A rustic road should be lightly traveled, with trip purposes consistent only to serve the local, fronting properties or to serve auto, biking, or hiking needs to enjoy its rustic or recreational features. Preferably, it should be a local access road but certainly not exclusively. The posted speed limit in most cases should not exceed 30 miles per hour but again with exceptions which will most likely be to tie roads into connecting networks or loops or to take to the user to a specific feature.

Roads in the Frederick County's Rustic and Rural Roads Program should exhibit the following criteria to be nominated for inclusion in Frederick County Rural and Rustic Road Program. There will be exceptions, always accompanied by explanation and justification.

#### **Criteria for nominating (applied to all roads in the program):**

- **Low traffic volume:**
  - lightly traveled with trip purposes to serve
    - mostly local traffic
    - auto, biking, walking, horseback riding to enjoy its rustic or recreational features
    - traffic serving rural businesses, wineries, craft studios, horse farms, etc.

**[Question: How do we handle changes to a road's base-line criteria rating which may over time, ie. what should be the program response if traffic volume were to dramatically increase? Example: a road closes and there is no choice but to rerout traffic to a road in the RRR program. Raise this issue with the Policy Guidelines Subcommittee]**

- **Low speed:**
  - in most cases speed limit on these roads should be 30 miles per hour or less
  - however, exceptions to this as an upper speed limit will be considered on a case-by-case basis

## II. LOW-DENSITY ZONES/ECOLOGICALLY SENSITIVE:

Most roads should be located in an area designated Agricultural/Rural or Resource Conservation (**need help here- what other zoning designations are appropriate – Dave can you take this on, please.**) on the County's Comprehensive Plan. Roads should provide frontage to farmland, woodland, wetlands, streams, historical sites, or environmentally sensitive area. Where the road is adjacent to sensitive areas such as waterways, critical tree canopy, native plant species, or other environmental features that may be degraded by changes to the roadway or adjacent landscape those factors should be considered for inclusion and protection.

Roads in the Frederick County's Rustic and Rural Roads Program should exhibit the following criteria to be nominated for inclusion in Frederick County Rural and Rustic Road Program. There will be exceptions, always accompanied by explanation and justification.

### **Criteria for nominating (applied to all roads in the program):**

- **Low-Density Zone:**
  - roads in areas designated Agricultural; Rural; Resource Conservation, (???)
  - roads provide frontage to
    - farmlands
    - woodlands
    - wetlands
    - streams
  - roads preferably with no high-density development along it
  - the development as exists at the time the road is designated shall be compatible with the surroundings and shall not detract from the rustic, natural, unspoiled character, and visual impact of the road area

### III. SCENIC/ NATURAL:

A rustic road should have outstanding natural features along its borders, such as rugged natural terrain, native wildlife and native vegetation, streams, or provide outstanding vistas of agricultural or mountain scenery. Road corridors may have features such as steep embankments, hedgerows, mature trees or forest, stone walls, native wildflowers, etc.

Roads in the Frederick County's Rustic and Rural Roads Program should exhibit some of the following more specific criteria within the road corridor to be nominated for inclusion in program.

#### **Criteria for nominating:**

- **Scenic:** Road highlights and elements within the road corridor, visible from the road and provide pleasure or inspire awe:
  - natural and built features that are visually beautiful or interesting
  - pastures and fields
  - buildings and structures
  - water – streams, creeks, bogs, wetlands
  - agricultural crops
  - vistas
- **Natural:** Road features within the road corridor:
  - landscapes of outstanding natural features
  - ecological systems exist in the road corridor such as
    - shorelines
    - wetlands
    - meadows
    - native plants and wildflowers
    - natural habitats for birds and animals, etc.

#### IV. CULTURAL AND HISTORIC:

The rural roads of Frederick County are an essential element in its historical and cultural heritage and resources. They tell the distinct story of its past, from water mills and one-room schoolhouses to native American rock shelters and rustic cabins, to sacred landscapes and archeological sites, these cultural and historic elements are unique, non-renewable resources. Roads provide access to historic and cultural sites, follow historic road alignments, or highlight historic landscapes and events. Buildings or property may be historically and culturally significant.

Roads in the Frederick County's Rustic and Rural Roads Program should exhibit some of the following more specific criteria within the road corridor to be nominated for inclusion in program.

##### **Criteria for nominating:**

- **Cultural:** Road corridor has distinctive expressions of local community life. Such expressions can include traditionally recognized cultural qualities such as:
  - monuments
  - museums
  - public art
  - annual festivals
  - craft networks.

Others may be less obvious, such as particular:

- industry
- resource
- or event responsible for the growth and identity of the community
- culturally significant transportation routes
- communities that don't have physical evidence of some history but have oral stories of places and events
- farm lanes that go no where became roads and home to African Americans

**[We want to refer the concept of the "story of the landscape" to the Education, Promotion, & Tourism subcommittee where cultural history rooted to a place within the rural landscape is significant to tell and often connected to the roads of travel.]**

- **Historic:** Road features within the road corridor:
  - the site of a significant local, county, state, or national event
  - and has sites/buildings/structures, such as
    - mill or site where mill once was
    - millrace or remnants of
    - sites where moonshine still once was
    - native American rock shelter
    - old bridge abutments
    - railway grades
    - property that may be historically significant
  - physical evidence of past human settlement, including
    - sites
    - buildings
    - structures
    - bridges
    - fencerows
    - burial sites, family cemeteries, graveyards
  - remnants of past human society, their unique customs, traditions, folklore, or rituals
    - artifacts
    - buildings - some may embody distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style valuable for the study of a period, type, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials
    - ruins
    - landscapes
    - abandoned trail
  - and less tangible features such as
    - land in agricultural use
    - historic transportation systems
    - development patterns
    - Property within the road corridor may be identified with the work of a master builder, designer, architect, or landscape architect whose work has influenced the development of the area

## V. Rural Legacy

Roads designated as “Rural Legacy” retain the characteristics of the Frederick County road system that would have been familiar to anyone travelling those roads when Frederick County was overwhelmingly a rural economy. These roads would have provided access to all those aspects of the county’s rural economy from the slopes of its mountains to the shores of its rivers. They would have passed one room school houses, water driven grist mills and post offices in the local corner stores, to name but a few of those once ubiquitous landmarks. These roads would have provided access into fields. They would have been the roads on which logs were pulled down to sawmills or coal transported up from the C&O Canal or charcoal transport down Catoctin Mountain by horse drawn wagon to Catoctin Furnace. This was an era in Frederick County when the economy was based upon equine labor. The speed travelled upon these roads was the pace of a horse or that of person. Today, few roads in the county retain this characteristic of Frederick County’s past. Those that do are a legacy passed on to us. Whether that was done intentionally or not, these roads are recognized for their fragile qualities that have been lost on most county roads. The few that still exist in Frederick County are a continual reminder of our rich rural legacy.

Roads in the Frederick County’s Rustic and Rural Roads Program should exhibit some of the following more specific criteria within the road corridor to be nominated for inclusion in program.

### **Criteria for nominating:**

**Another tread in our discussion was in thinking about the historic value of the rural roads, so often it is more about the romanticized history of another time when life was slower, less crowded, and less complicated rather than taking a deep dive into traditional historic preservation aspect of things (however important in its own right).**