

DRAFT: Howard County Complete Streets Policy, October 2016

1. Vision

“To ensure that Howard County is a place for individuals of all backgrounds to live and travel freely, safely, and comfortably, public and private roadways in Howard County shall be safe and convenient for residents of all ages and abilities who travel by foot, bicycle, public transportation or automobile, ensuring sustainable communities Countywide.” - Allan H. Kittleman, Howard County Executive, Council Resolution 35-2016.

2. Scope

The County shall approach every transportation improvement and project phase as an opportunity to create safer, more accessible streets for all users of all ages and abilities, including people who walk, bike, take the bus, and drive cars and trucks. These phases include, but are not limited to: planning, programming, design, right-of-way acquisition, subdivision and land development, new construction, construction engineering, reconstruction, operation, repair, and maintenance. This applies to both new and retrofit projects.

Other changes to transportation facilities on streets and rights-of-way, including capital improvements, lane re-configurations and major maintenance, must also be included. Capital projects in the early stages of design will also be included if possible.

3. Alternative Compliance

Alternative compliance to this policy, including for private projects, must be reviewed and approved by both the Director of Public Works and the Administrator of the Office of Transportation. Approval by both representatives is required for alternative compliance to be granted. Alternative compliance may be considered for approval when the project involves:

- i. An accommodation that is not necessary on corridors where specific user groups are prohibited;
- ii. Cost of accommodation is excessively disproportionate to the need or probable use;
- iii. A documented absence of current and future need exists;
- iv. Transit accommodations that are not required where there is no existing or planned transit service;
- v. Routine maintenance of the transportation network that does not change the roadway geometry or operations, such as mowing, sweeping, and spot repair; or
- vi. A reasonable and equivalent project exists or is already programmed to provide connectivity for all users.

4. Conflicting or Competing Needs

When there is conflicting needs among users and/or modes, safety shall be the highest priority, particularly, safety for the most vulnerable street users (pedestrians, bicyclists, children and seniors). Performance measures choices and weighting will support this.

Motor vehicle speed, flow and driver convenience shall not be prioritized over safety for vulnerable street users. Reducing motor vehicle speed on streets where vulnerable users are likely (local, collector, minor arterials) will be considered a net benefit to the community.

When space is a limiting factor and where vulnerable users are likely (local, collector, minor arterials), allocating space to a mode that is not currently accommodated will be prioritized over providing additional space to a mode that is already accommodated.

5. Creating a Network

To connect people to the places they want to go, the entire trip should be safe and comfortable. This requires a seamless, connected street network, regardless of mode. Even a small interruption in the connection or one hazardous section can make a trip challenging.

Every street does not necessarily need to provide separate accommodations for every mode, but a network should be in place so that likely trips can be made by driving, walking, biking or public transit. The street network is also complemented by pathway connections in many locations.

The County shall work actively with the State of Maryland, neighboring communities and counties, and businesses and educational institutions to develop facilities and accommodations that further the County's complete streets policy and continue such infrastructure beyond the County's borders.

6. Coordination and Engagement

Many organizations, agencies and entities have a role to play in implementing complete streets. Coordination and commitment from all agencies involved is critical to success. Some of the organizations involved include:

- Howard County Government
- Howard County Public School System
- Columbia Association
- State Highway Administration
- Developers
- Property Owners
- Engineering companies
- Construction contractors
- Advocacy groups

Community engagement is also essential to the success of Complete Streets, particularly in the planning and design phases.

7. Design Guidelines

Howard County Complete Streets Policy shall provide the policy context, themes and tone for Howard County Design Manual Volume III, Complete Streets and Bridges. Design of Complete Streets in Howard County will also draw on established national state of the art street design guidelines from The Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO).

8. Context-Sensitivity

Context sensitivity allows for flexible evaluation of the community's needs with respect to the existing streets and planned land use. The level of improvements should take into consideration the classification of the existing roadway as defined in the Design Manual, adjacent land use, type of community, and plans and

guidelines. Improvements should consider the scale of the community and strive for connectivity between communities based on the expected transportation needs.

9. Performance Measures

Performance measures shall be used to evaluate designs and as an overall tracking of Complete Streets implementation progress. Categories will be safety, mode shift and accommodation, with safety carrying the highest weight. The goals supported by the performance measures include reduction in crashes, injuries and fatalities, shifting mode choice towards a more balanced transportation system and safe and convenient accommodation of all modes.

10. Implementation

Update of Regulations, Standards and Plans: The County shall establish a routine process for project delivery that reflects the Complete Streets policy. The Department of Public Works, Office of Transportation, Department of Planning and Zoning and all other relevant County departments and agencies will review and amend current design standards, including the Design Manual and the subdivision regulations that apply to roadway and bridge construction or reconstruction, to ensure that they reflect the best available standards and effectively implement this Complete Streets Policy. The County shall incorporate Complete Streets principles into all county-developed land use and transportation plans.

Establishing Priority Projects: The County will implement priority projects that would eliminate gaps in the pedestrian and bikeway network and that would correct intersections and street segments that present safety and access challenges for those who walk, bicycle, and drive. Priorities for improving transit operations and access will also be established. Relevant guidance for these efforts should come from the Howard County Bicycle Master Plan, Pedestrian Master Plan and Transit Development Plan.

Education and Training: The County will encourage staff professional development and training on non-motorized transportation issues through attending conferences, classes, seminars and workshops, as appropriate. The County will provide training to citizens serving on the county's relevant boards and commissions on the content of the Complete Streets Policy and best practices for implementing the policy. Education for the public on Complete Street concepts, policy and implementation process will also be ongoing. Demonstration projects can be used as educational opportunities, to build familiarity with new street designs.

Tracking and Reporting: Tracking progress with Complete Streets project implementation will facilitate coordination and transparency. The Office of Transportation shall track and document progress made in implementing this policy in report form, including the results of performance measures. The report shall include complete streets related education or training undertaken by staff and citizen board members/commissioners as well as a list of alternative compliance.

Funding sources: Funding is expected to come from a variety of areas including county capital budget, developer projects, state, federal and other grants.