



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

June 2, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Dan Hardy, Chief *DKH*
Move/Transportation Planning Division

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Move/Transportation Planning Division

FROM: Justin Clarke, Planner Coordinator *JC*
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SUBJECT: 2009 Highway Mobility Report

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Planning Board support the following actions regarding the 2009 Highway Mobility Report:

- Transmit the 2009 Highway Mobility Report (HMR) to the County Council, to provide background information for the consideration of recommended modifications to the State's Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) priorities.
- Incorporate the Highway Mobility Report congested corridors into the ranking system for FY 2011-2016 Capital Improvement Program prioritization efforts, as incorporated in the Staff Draft of the 2009-2011 Growth Policy.
- Pursue further development and integration of multimodal measures of effectiveness into the next Highway Mobility Report, scheduled for production in spring 2011 as part of the next biennial Growth Policy and CIP development cycle.

The staff draft of the 2009 HMR is available on the Planning Board's website under the agenda page for June 8 (see Item #2 at the following link):

<http://www.montgomeryplanningboard.org/agenda/2009/agenda20090608e.html>

Key Findings

The Highway Mobility Report contains information and data about patterns of mobility in the County. The current report, confirms many of the findings in the 2008 report; congestion is

generally most severe in down-county areas, the “priority corridors” continue to experience the most significant levels of congestion and should be targeted for congestion relief, and between 15 and 20 percent of the intersections in the County have congestion levels that are worse than their current LATR Growth Policy standards. See Figure 2 for a chart of the CLV/LATR ratio for the intersections in this year’s report. The remaining notable findings in the 2009 HMR report are listed below.

- National and regional trends indicating a decline in travel and congestion since 2006 are less prevalent on the Montgomery County arterial system than they are for national data, due in part to the fact that the County has weathered the economic effects of the recession better than many other parts of the region and the County.
- The overall level of arterial system traffic volumes, travel speeds, and intersection congestion in spring 2009 is essentially unchanged from 2008 (observed reductions of up to one percent per year).
- Priority corridors for mobility improvements include the radial routes MD 355, Connecticut Avenue, Georgia Avenue and US 29 throughout the County. East-west priority routes include Veirs Mill Road and MD 28. Eight of this year’s “top ten” most congested intersections are along these routes. The ICC is expected to provide relief for MD 28.
- The Growth Policy definition of a three-hour peak period remains appropriate.
- While auto travel has decreased slightly during the recession, transit travel has increased, with total Metrorail boardings in Montgomery County 5% higher in 2009 than in 2006. See Figure 4, Metrorail ridership 2006-2009.
- Observed pedestrian activity on the arterial system is concentrated along roadways with high transit ridership, particularly in the Veirs Mill Road and University Boulevard corridors connecting Rockville, Wheaton, and Takoma Park. Nearly every transit rider needs to cross the street at least once in their daily commute.

Background:

The purpose of the Highway Mobility Report (HMR) is to document the Department’s annual analysis of barriers and constraints to mobility within Montgomery County. Constraints to mobility are represented here in the form of historical, current, and future motor vehicle traffic congestion trends and patterns. Current congestion measurements included in this study are Critical Lane Volume (CLV) and arterial travel time for priority intersections and corridors in the County. Figure 1 depicts the locations of the top 10 most congested intersections in the County, ranked by CLV and Figure 3 illustrates the slowest travel time results from 2009 sampling along Priority Corridors. Future congestion data is derived from volume to capacity ratios (V/C) as portrayed by the Department’s TRAVEL/3 model. These transportation indicators are intended for use by the Planning Board and County Council to inform their commentary on this year’s State Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) project priorities. The last version of this report was completed in May of 2008.

Changes from 2008 HMR Report:

Several changes to the 2008 report format were made in 2009. Beyond vehicular mobility covered in previous HMR reports, this document contains analysis of transit data including Montgomery County Ride On bus and Metrorail ridership information (see Figure 4) as well as pedestrian crossing counts. A discussion of national, state and local trends in vehicle miles traveled has also been added. Other enhancements to the 2009 HMR include more extensive travel time analysis with greater number of runs on priority corridors, improving the quality of the data and ensuring that peak travel time is captured, and new traffic counts at roughly 130 key intersections (as identified by MNCPPC staff) which were conducted in support of this report in the late winter and early spring of 2009.

Figure 1: Map of the 10 Most Congested Intersections in 2009

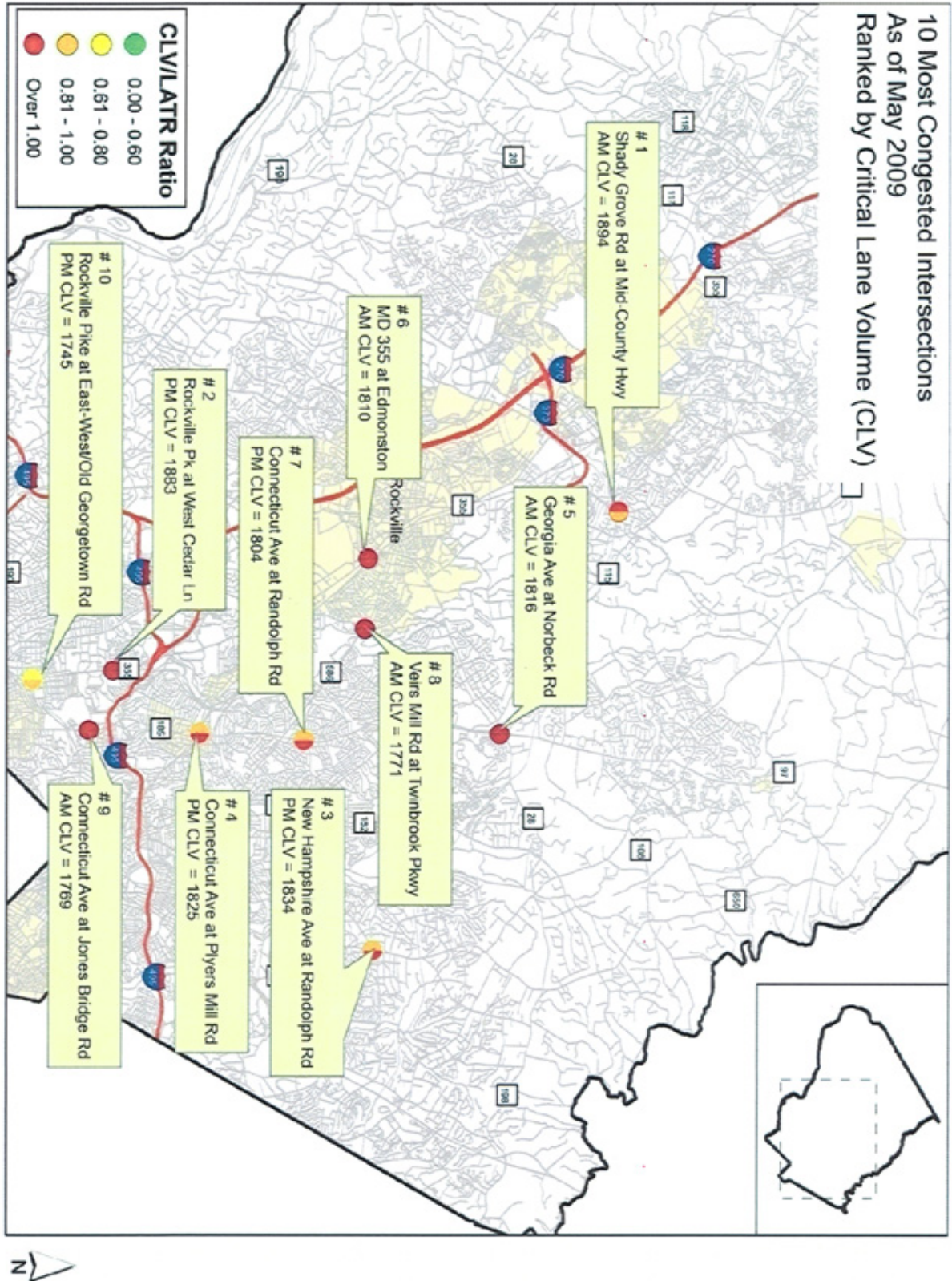


Figure 2: CLV/LATR Ratio Categorization (N=360)

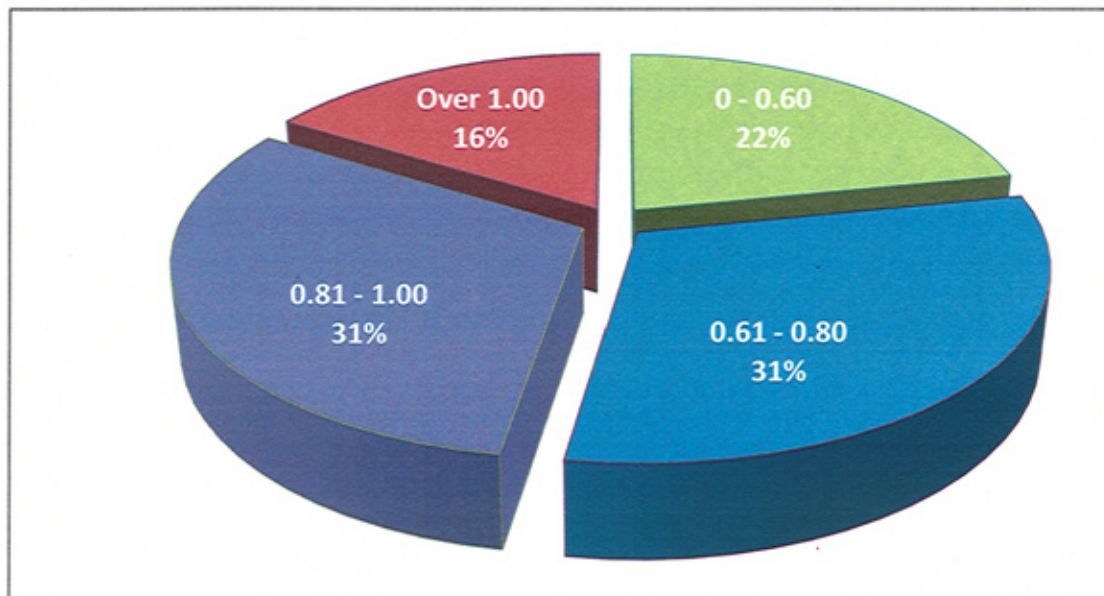


Figure 3: Congestion in Peak Direction (Weekday PM Peak) for 2009 Priority Analysis Corridors

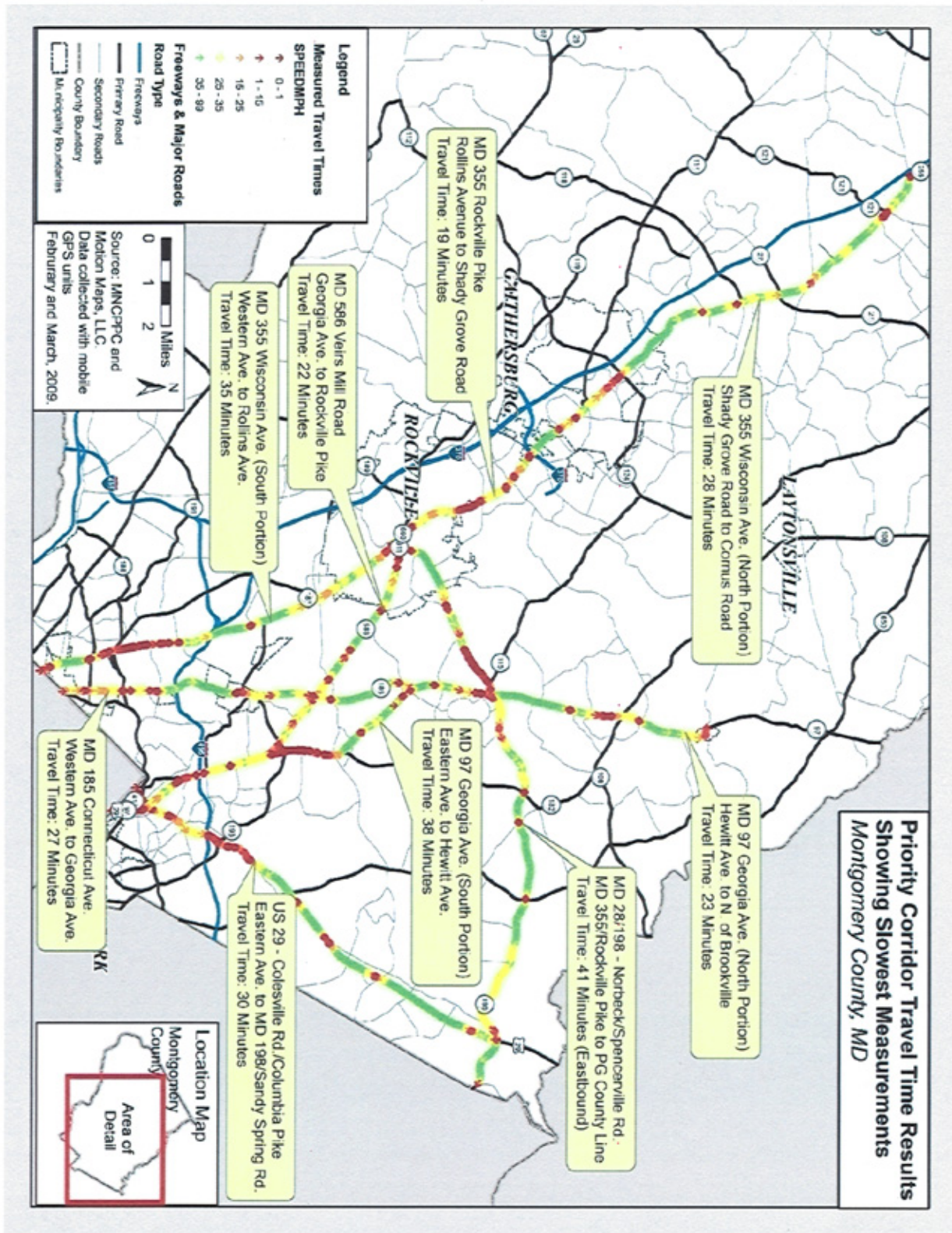


Figure 4: Metrorail Ridership 2006-2009

