



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

MCPB
Item No. 1
10-23-03

October 16, 2003

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Jeffrey Zyontz, Chief *JZ*
Countywide Planning Division

Richard Hawthorne, Chief *RCH*
Transportation Planning

FROM: Charles S. Kines, Planner/Coordinator *CK*
Transportation Planning, 301-495-2184

SUBJECT: Staff Draft of Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan

Recommendation

Approve the staff draft as the public hearing draft and set a public hearing date for December 11, 2003.

Discussion

The plan establishes the bicycle transportation network for the County as called for in the 1993 General Plan Refinement. The plan updates and amends the 1978 Master Plan of Bikeways and amends all approved and adopted community master plans and sector plans. It complements the 1998 Countywide Parks Trails Plan (CPTP) by identifying bikeways to connect to the County's hiker-biker trails. The plan is consistent with current, on-going community master plans (Upper Rock Creek, Olney) and sector plans (Shady Grove) and has been coordinated closely with current, on-going bicycle plan updates by the City of Rockville and the City of Gaithersburg, as well as Prince George's County, the District of Columbia and Loudoun County, Virginia. The plan is also consistent with the Frederick County Bicycle and Trails Plan. Howard County does not have a bicycle plan.

Nearly 500 miles of countywide bikeways are identified in this plan:

- Existing shared use paths = 69 miles
- Proposed shared use paths = 138 miles
- Existing bike lanes = 21 miles
- Proposed bike lanes = 51 miles
- Proposed signed shared roadways = 125 miles
- Dual bikeways (all types, existing or proposed) = 86 miles

- Total Existing = 90 miles
- Total Proposed = 400 miles

The plan focuses on bicycling for transportation or for utilitarian purposes, as opposed to recreational bicycling. Utilitarian bicycling emphasizes trip origins and destinations. The plan maintains a countywide perspective and addresses the major bikeway corridors that provide important connections to the County's activity centers – defined in this plan as municipalities, central business districts, town centers, transit stations, major employment areas and regional parks. As a result most countywide bikeways are along highways and arterials, although some local or neighborhood bikeways are included if a bikeway provides both regional and local benefits. The plan attempts to strike a balance between on-road and off-road bikeways.

While the hiker-biker trails in County parks are considered part of the County's bicycle transportation system, they are not addressed in this plan. This plan does not amend any recommendations in the 1998 CTP and only highlights shared use paths (side paths along roads or paths along independent rights-of-way maintained by DPWT), bike lanes and signed shared roadways.

The Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan (CBFMP) is divided into five chapters:

- 1) Introduction. This chapter discusses the importance of bicycling and provides important background information and data. It outlines the plan's approach as well as the plan's goals and objectives. The Introduction also highlights existing bicycling conditions in the County, including the existing bikeway system, municipal connectivity, regional connectivity and multimodal transportation opportunities.

- 2) Countywide Bikeway Network Concept Plan. This chapter proposes the major bikeways that form the framework of the County's bikeway system. It discusses the plan's relationship to other planning efforts and describes the activity center analysis. Table 2-2 at the end of the chapter lists and provides detailed descriptions of all countywide bikeways. Finally, the chapter includes bikeway facility selection guidelines that are intended to inform decision makers and the public on which types of bikeways are more appropriate for certain types of roads or roadway or traffic conditions.

- 3) *Bikeway Facility Design Guidelines*. This chapter is intended to serve as a general primer on effective and safe bikeway designs along County and State roads. It highlights general design characteristics for shared use paths (class I bikeways), bike lanes (class II) and signed shared roadways (class III).
- 4) *Implementation*. This chapter recommends a two-tiered approach to implementing the countywide bikeway network over the next 20 years. It places all countywide bikeways in a high (within ten years) or moderate (ten years or longer) category and describes the methodology for determining in which category a bikeway is placed.
- 5) *Related Policies and Programs*. This chapter highlights the policies, programs and other operational issues that the County will need to address in order to effectively implement the plan and to develop a comprehensive bicycle program for the County.

Overview of the planning process

The plan reflects comments received from the bicycling community and the general public over the past year. Three public meetings were held in June to provide the public with an overview of the proposed countywide bikeway network and to solicit feedback and comments. The public meetings were well publicized by the Community Relations Office.

Staff also has regularly sought and obtained guidance from bicycle advocacy groups in the County and region, including attending and provided updates at the monthly meetings of the Montgomery County Bicycle Action Group (MCBAG). Presentations were also made to the Metropolitan Washington Regional Council of Government's Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee, the Silver Spring Transportation Management District Advisory Committee and the Prince George's County Bicycle and Trails Advisory Group.

Finally, the plan has been developed in consultation with an informal technical advisory group that included several local bicycle planners, a representative from the Washington Area Bicyclist Association, and several leading nationally recognized bicycle-planning experts and consultants. This group met three times during 2003 to provide guidance to the planning process, input to the plan's content, and comments on the plan drafts. Members of this technical advisory group are listed in Appendix B.

Summary

The plan identifies the framework countywide bikeway network. It places all bikeways in a high (within ten years) or moderate priority (ten years or more) category. Local bikeways – shared roadways along local streets – not specifically identified in this plan can continue to be implemented without regard to this prioritization system. The plan

also recommends creating or augmenting dedicated funding sources for bikeways implementation, for bikeways maintenance and for bicycle parking facilities.

The plan recommends the creation of a Bicycle Education and Safety Advisory Committee consisting of a balanced mix of public and private individuals to provide regular guidance to the County Executive on bicycle policies and programs and to provide guidance to the Montgomery County Planning Board on future community master plans and sector plans. Finally, the plan recommends that bicycle encouragement programs be expanded in order to increase the number of people who use a bicycle for transportation to, from and within Montgomery County.

The plan marks a fundamental shift in the way bikeways are planned in the County. The 1978 Master Plan of Bikeways was developed when bicycle planning was in its infancy not only in this County but also throughout the country. The plan attempted to identify a fully comprehensive network for bicycle transportation that provided connections to both regional and local destinations. By contrast, this plan serves as the countywide bikeway network plan and focuses on major regional connections to the County's activity centers and transit hubs.

At the same time, the plan recognizes that bicycling is inherently a local activity for most people. Therefore, the plan identifies some bikeways that provide both regional and local benefits and recommends that comprehensive local bikeway networks – that provide connections to community destinations such as schools, libraries, community centers and local parks – continue to be identified and addressed in community master plans and sector plans. Appendix C provides community planners with guidance on how to effectively plan local bikeway networks.

CK:kcw
Attachment

mno to mcpb CWB FMP staff draft packet.doc