

LOCAL AREA TRANSPORTATION REVIEW (LATR) (PHASE 2 UPDATE)



Description

Planning staff will review the proposed updates to the LATR Guidelines. The document has been updated to provide modifications to the scoping process, updates to Appendix 1 trip generation factors, the addition of new appendices, and clarification language throughout the document. During this session, the Planning Board will review and consider approving the updated LATR Guidelines.

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Summary:

- Planning Staff will review the proposed updates to the LATR Guidelines. The document has been updated to provide modifications to the scoping process, updates to Appendix 1 trip generation factors, the addition of new appendices, and clarification language throughout the document.
- **Staff Recommendation:** Approve the updated LATR Guidelines.

INFORMATION

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Background

Chapter 50 of the County Code states that the Planning Board can only approve a development application if public facilities will adequately support it. To administer the Adequate Public Facilities (APF) regulation, the County Council uses its Growth and Infrastructure Policy (GIP). This policy sets measurable service levels and parameters for mitigation to enable development to proceed.

The Planning Board makes transportation adequacy findings through the Local Area Transportation Review (LATR) process. This process evaluates the area surrounding a proposed development and forecasts the development’s impact on transportation facilities. It then determines whether and how the development applicant will mitigate inadequate transportation infrastructure. Development applicants must either show that the surrounding facilities are adequate, provide needed facilities, or pay for mitigation.

The LATR Guidelines detail the specific documentation and analysis required to demonstrate transportation adequacy for proposed developments that require an APF finding. The LATR Guidelines serve as a key reference for transportation engineers, planners, public agency reviewers, and community members involved in the development review process. Applicants use this document when preparing development applications and transportation analyses for submission to the Montgomery County Planning Board. Similarly, Public Agency Staff use these guidelines during the review of such applications and analyses.

The Planning Board approved an interim (Phase 1) update to the LATR Guidelines in January 2025. The Phase 1 update incorporated the 2024-2028 GIP, improved the document organization, and provided a new proportionality guide. The intent was to publish the updated LATR Guidelines as soon as possible after the new GIP came into effect on January 1, 2024. It was anticipated that a second update (Phase 2) would occur in the future to provide additional guidance and address policy issues that required further stakeholder coordination.

LATR Guidelines Phase 2 Update Overview

Many of the updates to the LATR Guidelines are minor and are focused on providing additional clarity to the guidance. However, several of the updates result in more substantive changes.

The revised draft LATR Guidelines (Attachment 1) includes the following key changes:

Clarification language added to the Exemptions from LATR section for Daycare Use Thresholds

Development projects must complete an LATR study if the proposed development generates 30 net new peak-hour weekday motor vehicle trips. However, per the 2024-2028 GIP, daycare uses have a higher threshold of 50 or more net new peak-hour weekday motor vehicle trips.

The approved LATR Guidelines reflected this threshold difference. Yet, it was unclear what threshold should be used when a daycare use was part of a mixed-use development. Clarifying language has been added to the LATR Guidelines to address this issue. The following language was added to the document:

“For daycares that are part of a mixed-use development, the trips generated by a daycare will not be included in the overall trip generation calculation or the Proportionality Guide if the daycare use generates fewer than 50 net new peak-hour weekday motor vehicle trips.”

This addition clarifies that all daycare uses, including those in mixed use developments, use the 50 net new peak-hour weekday motor vehicle trip threshold.

Modifications to the Transportation Adequacy Process section related to review of Transportation Adequacy Forms

Planning staff have continued to hear concerns from the development community about the review of Transportation Adequacy Forms, specifically those that trigger LATR and thus need to scope an LATR Study. These can often take more time than expected.

Additionally, the current approach of accepting forms and associated scopes (as applicable) on a rolling basis creates issues with efficiently distributing them to other reviewing agencies such as MCDOT and SHA. It also creates challenges for Montgomery Planning and other agencies to anticipate and effectively manage workloads for reviewing staff.

To address these issues, the LATR Guidelines have been updated with the following language:

“Forms are required to be submitted for review by Friday at 12pm on the week of scheduled Development Review Committee (DRC) meetings. While there is no relationship between the form and the DRC meeting, this schedule allows for a consistent review process and schedule for the reviewing agencies. The DRC schedule can be found at <https://montgomeryplanning.org/development/development-review/>

Adequacy forms will be reviewed on a two-week schedule with Montgomery Planning and partner agencies providing feedback within 15 business days of the Friday submission date. Large and/or complex projects may require additional time and/or may warrant a meeting. For zoning and/or conditional use cases, Planning staff may consult with the Hearing Examiner.”

The update does not lead to a longer review timeline. Reviews of Transportation Adequacy Forms remains 15 business days. However, the schedule will allow Planning Staff and other reviewing agencies with a more consistent review timeline and will allow for a more structured response to applicants on study scopes.

Clarification language added to address Daily Trip reductions in calculating trip generation

The current LATR Guidelines allow for trip generation reductions through the consideration of internal capture, pass-by and diverted trips, parking management, and transportation demand management

(TDM). Each of these components may allow an applicant to reduce their expected trip generation which is used to determine if they trigger LATR and if so, what level of analysis is required. While daily trip generation is not used for determining if an LATR Study will be required, it is used to determine the Proportionality Guide amount for projects that trigger LATR. The LATR Proportionality Guide amount serves as a recommended maximum cost of mitigation improvements, encompassing both offsite motor vehicle and non-motor vehicle related improvements.

However, in the current LATR Guidelines, it was not clear if reductions could be applied to daily trips, and if so, how reductions could be applied.

To address this and provide additional guidance, the following language was added:

“Daily Trip Reduction

Trip reductions such as pass-by trips can be applied to daily trip generation in addition to AM and PM peak hour trip generation. However, Planning staff must be consulted and agree to the rationale for reductions to daily trips.”

Unlike peak hour trip generation, there is limited guidance and resources for determining trip reductions at a daily level. Therefore, the language is focused on allowing Transportation Reviewers to work with applicants to develop reasonable reduction assumptions.

Addition of language to define off-site, frontage, and on-site improvements for determining mitigation requirements

A common issue that often comes up during LATR reviews is how mitigations are categorized. LATR applies to off-site mitigations and improvements and not to mitigations and improvements along a subject property’s frontage or within their property. Frontages and on-site improvements are requirements of the zoning ordinance (Chapter 59) and subdivision code (Chapter 50). However, the guidelines did not define what is considered an off-site improvement, frontage improvement, or on-site improvement. Therefore, the following section was added to the guidelines to document these definitions and provide examples.

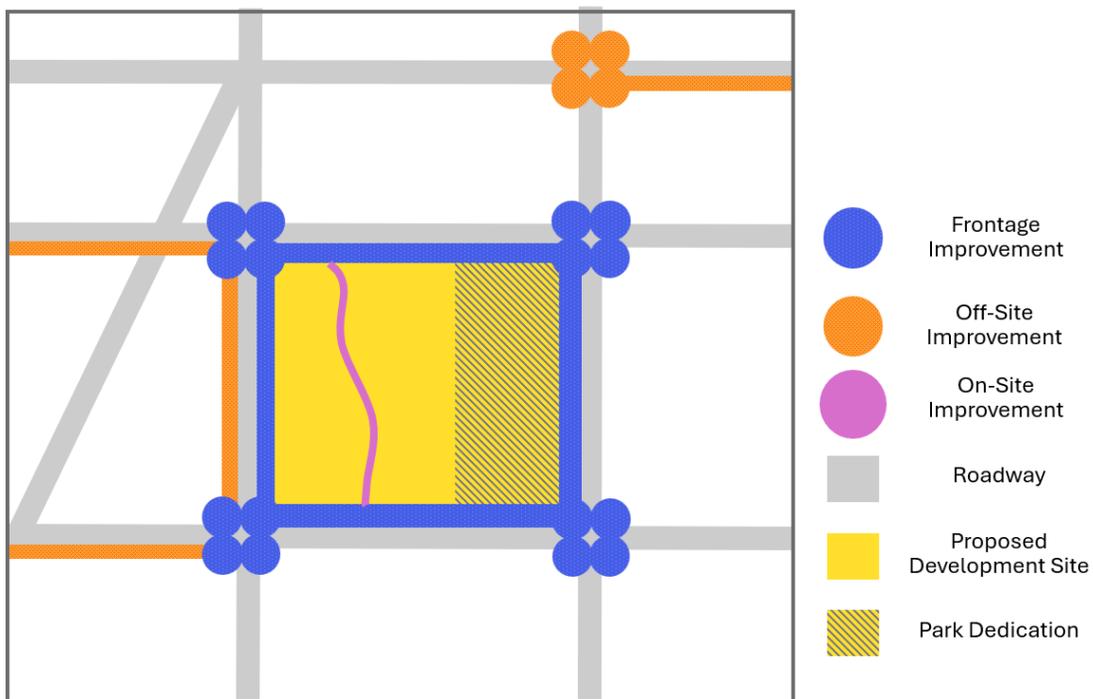
“Transportation improvements and thus mitigations are classified in three ways.

- *Off-site improvements are upgrades to transportation facilities including but not limited to sidewalks, bikeways, and ADA curb ramps not located directly at, or adjacent to, a development site.*
- *Frontage improvements are upgrades to transportation facilities within the right-of-way along the site boundary. They do not include improvements on the other side of the street. These are required as part of development but are not considered an LATR mitigation and cannot be included as a mitigation project or count toward the Proportionality Guide.*

- *Site Access improvements are typically considered a Frontage Improvement except in some cases where an LATR study identifies a site access improvement that addresses a noted off-site deficiency, such as protected crossing.*
- *On-site improvements are upgrades located within a development site itself. On-site improvements are required as part of development but are not considered an LATR mitigation and cannot be included as a mitigation project or count toward the Proportionality Guide.*

Figure 5 provides an example of each type of improvement.

Figure 5: Improvement Types Example



While the determination of what constitutes an off-site improvement versus a frontage or on-site improvement may require further discussion with Planning Staff, the following general guidance should be used.

- *If one ADA curb ramp at an intersection is being (re)constructed on the corner of a development property (a frontage improvement), then the corresponding ramp on the other side of the street is also considered a frontage improvement as ADA compliance requires both ramps to meet applicable standards.*
- *If a project is dedicating property as part of a development application, the frontage along this dedicated area is still considered the subject property frontage.”*

This clarifying language should allow applicants and reviewers to mutually understand what is included in each category.

Updates to Appendix 1: Trip Adjustment Factors

Appendix 1 is a key component in developing the trip generation for every project assessed as part of the development review process. After calculating the AM and PM weekday peak-hour and daily total trips, applicants apply a policy area-specific Trip Adjustment Factor to adjust the raw Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) trip generation. The factors are meant to reflect the prevalent travel behavior and land use characteristics of the policy area, accounting for things like land use mix, density, availability of high-capacity transit, and etc.

However, the appendix has not been updated since 2017 and is built primarily from 2010 data which underpins the Travel Demand Model used for its development. Following feedback from the development community during the 2024-2028 GIP and previous Phase 1 LATR update about the need to update these key assumptions, Planning Staff developed an updated methodology to modify the Trip Adjustment Factors.

Ultimately, staff determined that the use of Replica data would be the best approach. While the output is still based on a model, the Replica model is informed by hundreds of thousands of observed datapoints in the county that could be cost effectively pulled from Replica and processed. Replica is a company and data platform that uses dozens of input data sources to develop calibrated and validated outputs used for transportation analysis and has been used across the country and by many public agencies to inform transportation planning efforts including Caltrans, TexasDOT, Illinois DOT, and the MTA.

The Policy Area Trip Generation Adjustment Factors in Appendix 1 were updated using this data and are provided in Attachment 2.

The addition of Appendix 6: SimTraffic/Synchro Parameters

Planning Staff received feedback from the development community that setting up the parameters for microsimulation tools (SimTraffic/Synchro) used in assessing motor vehicle adequacy can be a time-consuming process requiring coordination with multiple agencies. Additionally, some felt that they have received conflicting comments from reviewing agencies about these parameters. To address these concerns, Planning Staff coordinated with MCDOT and SHA to develop Appendix 6, which provides baseline parameters that can be used in setting up microsimulation analysis files. This will help applicant teams set up files more quickly with a mutual understanding of what is expected in the files. Additionally, it may also help to reduce comments by reviewing agencies as studies are reviewed, allowing for more efficient reviews.

The addition of and Appendix 7: Streetlighting and Illuminance Instructions.

At the time that the LATR interim Phase 1 update was being developed, MCDOT was still finalizing the *Streetlighting Design Requirements, Installation Procedures, and Specifications* document used for the

Illuminance adequacy standards in the LATR Guidelines. Shortly after the interim update was completed, Planning Staff developed a supplemental document to provide guidance for preparing and reviewing photometric plans and assessments and hosted this resource on the Transportation Development Review website. Appendix 7 is this document, which allows this guidance to be incorporated into the LATR Guidelines document.

Additional minor clarifying language throughout the document

Minor clarification language was added throughout the document to improve the clarity of the document or fully incorporate the changes previously discussed.

SECTION 2 – STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Planning Staff recommends approving the updated LATR Guidelines.

SECTION 3 – NEXT STEPS

There are no anticipated next steps until the next GIP Update anticipated to be completed in the fall or 2028.

SECTION 4 – ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1. Draft LATR Guidelines with Track Changes

Attachment 2. Appendix 1: Trip Adjustment Factors

Attachment 3. Appendix 6: SimTraffic/Synchro Parameters

Attachment 4. Appendix 7: Streetlighting and Illuminance Instructions

Attachment 5. Draft LATR Guidelines without Track Changes