

Bicycle Master Plan Working Draft



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DESCRIPTION

Staff will provide the Planning Board with an overview of the preliminary recommendations for the Bicycle Master Plan.

Staff Recommendation: Discussion and provide guidance. If no substantive changes are warranted, approve the Working Draft of the Bicycle Master Plan as the Public Hearing Draft and set the public hearing date for January 18, 2018.

SUMMARY

The Bicycle Master Plan, initiated by the Planning Department in July 2015, aims to create a world-class bicycling community in Montgomery County. It sets the stage for a cultural shift, encouraging people of all ages and bicycling abilities to meet their daily needs by bicycle – in a safe, comfortable and accessible manner throughout the County.

The Bicycle Master Plan is a comprehensive overhaul of the 1978 Master Plan of Bikeways, 2005 Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan and all bikeway recommendations in past master and sector plans. The goals of the plan include:

1. Increasing bicycling rates in Montgomery County;
2. Creating a highly-connected, convenient and low-stress bicycling network;
3. Providing equal access to low-stress bicycling for all members of the community; and,
4. Improving the safety of bicycling.

One barrier to bicycling is what is known as “traffic stress.” People who tolerate a high level of traffic stress are comfortable bicycling on most streets, including highways. These so-called “strong and fearless” bicyclists account for about 7 percent of the population. Those who tolerate a moderate level of traffic stress are comfortable bicycling on highways and arterial roads that include bike lanes. These “enthused and confident” bicyclists account for about 5 percent of the population. And, cyclists who tolerate a low level of traffic stress are comfortable riding on residential streets, trails and roads with

bikeways separated from traffic. These “interested but concerned” bicyclists account for about 51 percent of the population and include children.

Appropriate bikeways are recommended in response to the amount of stress that traffic creates on each road. On busy roads, bicyclists will have dedicated space separated from traffic. On residential streets, they will be able to comfortably share the road with automobiles.

In addition to the level of traffic stress analysis, the Bicycle Master Plan proposes a new bikeway facility classification system for Montgomery County. This system organizes bikeways into five facility types based on their level of separation from traffic.

Trails are the bikeways most separated from traffic. Trails include off-street trails, stream valley park trails and neighborhood connectors. They are located outside of the road right-of-way and provide two-way travel for bicycling and walking. Separated bikeways include sidepaths and separated bike lanes. They also provide physical separation from traffic and are generally considered for roads with 3 or more lanes, posted speed limits of 30 mph or faster, or commercial areas. Striped bikeways include buffered bike lanes, bike lanes, advisory bike lanes and contra-flow bike lanes. They are distinguished from traffic lanes by striping and pavement markings. Bikeable shoulders are another facility type. They are at least four feet in width, and can improve comfort on some roadways for some bicyclists. They are most appropriate in rural locations, often where posted speed limits are 40 mph and faster. And last, shared roads which include shared streets, priority shared lane markings and neighborhood greenways. Space on these bikeways is shared by bicyclists, cars and other vehicles.

Since the Bicycle Master Plan was launched in 2015, the planning team has held numerous community meetings, community bike rides and other events to engage the public. In addition, innovative outreach efforts were developed to engage more people throughout the county. They include a photo contest that invited residents to submit bicycling images that are part of the plan. A stress-reducing coloring book was created to illustrate the key concepts of the master plan. Digital feedback maps, including the Cycling Concerns Map, allowed stakeholders to comment about safety, connectivity and any other concerns related to bicycling. The award-winning Bicycle Stress Map was launched in April 2016 to document the stress levels encountered by cyclists on county roads and intersections, and allow cyclists to better understand road conditions in the county.

Since introducing the Bicycle Stress Map, planners determined that about 75 percent of county road miles are suitable for most adult bike riders. Currently only 17 percent of actual trips can be completed on a low-stress network, due to the inability to reach key destinations, such as jobs, stores, schools or transit hubs, without extensive detours or the need to travel on higher-stress roads. The Bicycle Master Plan aims to increase this to 65 percent by 2043.

On September 10, 2015, the Planning Board approved the Scope of Work for the Bicycle Master Plan, followed by five kick-off meetings held around the County. Over the next two years, staff evaluated every roadway in the County formulating recommendations for bicycle facilities countywide. In June and

July 2017, staff held five more community meetings to discuss the preliminary recommendations of this Working Draft.

On December 7, 2017, staff will present preliminary recommendation for the Bicycle Master Plan to the Planning Board. If no substantive changes are warranted, staff asks that the Planning Board approve the Working Draft of the Bicycle Master Plan as the Public Hearing Draft and set the public hearing date for January 18, 2018.

ATTACHMENTS

Working Draft Bicycle Master Plan

Working Draft Bicycle Master Plan Appendix