

Bicycle Master Plan Public Hearing Draft Worksession #5

 DA David Anspacher, Supervisor, david.anspacher@montgomeryplanning.org, 301-495-2191

 ST Stephen Tu, Associate Planner, stephen.tu@montgomeryplanning.org, 301-495-4639

 SPR Jon Ryder, Associate Planner, jon.ryder@montgomeryplanning.org, 301-495-4596

 PD Pamela Dunn, Chief, pamela.dunn@montgomeryplanning.org, 301-650-5649

Completed: 03/08/2018

DESCRIPTION

The public comment period for the Bicycle Master Plan Public Hearing Draft was from December 21, 2017 to February 1, 2018. On January 25, 2018, the Planning Board conducted a public hearing on the draft plan. Worksessions #1 – 3 reviewed public comments on the non-bikeway recommendations. The March 8, 2018 worksession addressed bikeway-specific recommendations. The March 15, 2018 worksession is anticipated to include any issues not completed at the March 8, 2018 worksession and then to cover the following issues, which were first discussed with the Planning Board on February 15, 2018:

- Issue 1: School Siting Policies
- Issue 2: Use of Developer Contributions
- Issue 3: Flexibility in Bikeway Prioritization
- Issue 4: Loading Zones
- Issue 5: Traffic Calming for School Access
- Issue 6: Payments In Lieu of Constructing Sidewalks and Bikeways

Planning Board Commissioners are asked to bring their copy of the Bicycle Master Plan Public Hearing Draft and Appendix, which was included with the January 25, 2018 staff report. They are also asked to bring Attachment A to the staff report from the February 15, 2018 worksession, which includes all written comments on the Bicycle Master Plan.

Attachment B contains testimony from Charlie Challstrom of the Town of Washington Grove. Mr. Challstrom's testimony was inadvertently omitted from previous staff reports. His testimony has been added to Attachment A and because of the omission, is singled out in Attachment B. Mr. Challstrom supports a path connecting the Town of Washington Grove to Crabbs Branch Way. On February 15, 2018, the Planning Board reviewed this bikeway and recommended to increase its priority for implementation from Tier 3 to Tier 1.

Issue 1: School Siting Policies

Joe Allen commented that policies are needed to better consider walking and bicycling in the school site selection process. Furthermore, when a new school is constructed, the County should improve walking and bicycling connectivity to it. School zone boundaries should consider accessibility for bicycling and walking (Attachment B, Comment #74).

Previous Planning Board Discussion: On February 15, 2018, the Planning Board considered adding the following policy proposed by Planning staff to pages 104 – 114 of the plan.

"School Site Selection

Montgomery County Public Schools should update their school site selection criteria to consider the appropriateness of existing walking and bicycling infrastructure for children. Where good walking and bicycling does not already exist, MCPS should work with MCDOT to construct child-appropriate walking and bicycling infrastructure in the immediate vicinity of the school."

At the worksession, the Planning Board requested stronger language indicating that providing a safe and comfortable walking environment is a core objective for Montgomery County.

Revised Staff Recommendation: Add a new policy to pages 104 – 114:

"School Site Selection

When Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) selects a new school site, their criteria should strongly consider the appropriateness of existing walking and bicycling infrastructure for children. Where safe and comfortable walking and bicycling infrastructure does not already exist, MCPS should work with MCDOT to construct child-appropriate walking and bicycling infrastructure in the immediate vicinity of the school.

Justification: Providing a safe and comfortable walking environment to public schools is a core objective for Montgomery County.

Lead Agency: Montgomery County Public Schools

Supporting Agency: Montgomery County Department of Transportation, Planning Department"

Issue 2: Use of Developer Contributions

Pages 135 – 138 of the Bicycle Master Plan discuss implementation of bikeways through development approvals and indicate what developers will be required to construct when there is a master-planned bikeway within a proposed private development or along a development's frontage on a public right-of-way. Page 136 of the plan discusses when the development project will be required to make a financial contribution to pay for some of the cost of implementing the bikeway. It states:

"Lay the groundwork for future implementation (see sidebar below) of separated bike lanes along the project's right-of-way frontage where there are not logical end points for the bikeway,

as determined by the Montgomery County Planning Board. In this case, the developer must make a financial contribution to make up for the difference in cost between laying the groundwork for future implementation of the bikeway and full implementation of the bikeway. This financial contribution will be used by the Montgomery County Department of Transportation to implement bikeway projects within the vicinity of the right-of-way frontage of the development project."

MCDOT requests that the last sentence be deleted. They state that they cannot guarantee that the contribution will be used in the immediate vicinity of the ROW frontage. (Attachment B, Comment #105)

Previous Planning Board Discussion: Staff strongly recommends that developer financial contributions be used on bikeway improvements as close as possible to the development site. On February 15, 2018, the Planning Board considered the following revised language on page 136 proposed by Planning staff.

"Lay the groundwork for future implementation (see sidebar below) of separated bike lanes along the project's right-of-way frontage where there are not logical end points for the bikeway, as determined by the Montgomery County Planning Board. In this case, the developer must make a financial contribution to make up for the difference in cost between laying the groundwork for future implementation of the bikeway and full implementation of the bikeway. This financial contribution will be used by the Montgomery County Department of Transportation to implement bikeway projects ~~as close as possible to~~~~within the vicinity of the right-of-way frontage~~ of the development project."

At the worksession, the Planning Board requested that Planning staff provide language that is less prescriptive of where MCDOT should use the bikeway financial contribution.

Revised Staff Recommendation: Rather than state that MCDOT should use financial contributions "as close as possible to the development project" the Planning Board could consider stating that MCDOT should use financial contributions "for improvements to the local bikeway network." Staff therefore recommends the following change to the last bullet on page 136:

"Lay the groundwork for future implementation (see sidebar below) of separated bike lanes along the project's right-of-way frontage where there are not logical end points for the bikeway, as determined by the Montgomery County Planning Board. In this case, the developer must also contribute ~~make a financial contribution to make up for~~ the difference in cost between laying the groundwork for future implementation of the bikeway and full implementation of the bikeway to ~~This financial contribution will be used by~~ the Montgomery County Department of Transportation for improvements to the local bikeway network ~~to implement bikeway projects within the vicinity of the right-of-way frontage of the development project~~."

Issue 3: Flexibility in Bikeway Prioritization

Previous Planning Board Discussion: At the December 7, 2017 discussion of the Bicycle Master Plan Working Draft and again at the February 15, 2018 worksession of the Bicycle Master Plan Public Hearing

Draft, the Planning Board requested additional flexibility in setting bikeway implementation priorities (Attachment B, Comment #74).

Revised Staff Recommendation: Planning Staff recommends revising the text on page 144 as follows:

"The network of bikeways and bicycle parking stations recommended in the Bicycle Master Plan is extensive and it is likely to be only partially completed during the 25-year life of this plan. Such a large network is proposed so that opportunities to implement the preferred bicycling network are not lost when unforeseen circumstances arise. However, it is important to identify bikeway network priorities because funding for implementation is limited.

The approach to prioritizing the bicycling network is based on reaching the targets established for each metric in the Goals, Objectives, Metrics and Targets section of this plan (see pages 19 to 33). The priorities focus on increasing bicycling in the county as quickly as possible, by focusing initial efforts on constructing networks of bikeways in places that the Montgomery County Council has designated as Bicycle Pedestrian Priority Areas (BPPA) and completing connections between major activity centers. Also prioritized are missing gaps in the existing low-stress bicycling network and low-cost bikeways, such as neighborhood greenways, which will funnel bicyclists to the BPPAs. ~~This prioritization should be reassessed every few years based on available resources and lessons learned during the implementation process.~~

The bikeway and bicycle parking station prioritization in this plan are guidelines based on the best available information at the time the plan was approved by the Montgomery County Council. This prioritization should be reassessed every few years based on available resources, lessons learned and to ensure consistency with the goals of the plan. In addition, the implementation of bikeways and bicycle parking stations that are identified as lower priorities in this plan can be accelerated as opportunities to implement them arise, such as redevelopment projects and state and local capital projects.

A summary of the process used to develop the bikeway recommendations is included in Appendix E."

Issue 4: Loading Zones

The Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) recommends adding guidance in the Bicycle Facility Design Toolkit (Appendix B) related to loading zones in the toolkit (Attachment B, Comment #137).

Previous Planning Board Discussion: On February 15, 2018, Planning staff recommended adding a loading zone policy to pages 104 – 114, in lieu of adding discussion in Appendix B:

"Loading Zones:

Develop a policy on loading zones that encourages loadings zones to be located on-site and that consolidates loading zones and driveways immediately adjacent to one another.

Justification: Loading zones present potential conflicts between motorists and non-motorists. On-site loading zones are desirable especially in urban areas, because they provide a designated space for trucks outside the bikeway and sidewalk. Consolidating loading zones and driveways for the same building limits exposure for pedestrians and bicyclists along a roadway.

Lead Agency: Planning Department"

The Planning Board requested changes to the loading zone policy to address performance characteristics that the plan wants to achieve and to then identify ways to achieve those performance characteristics.

Revised Staff Recommendation: Planning staff recommends adding the revised loading zone policy to pages 104 – 114:

"Loading Zones:

Develop a policy on loading zones that minimizes conflicts and increases safety for pedestrians and bicyclists, including steps that encourage loadings zones to be located on-site and that consolidate loading zones and driveways immediately adjacent to one another.

Justification: Loading zones present potential conflicts between motorists and non-motorists. On-site loading zones are desirable especially in urban areas, because they provide a designated space for trucks outside the bikeway and sidewalk. Consolidating loading zones and driveways for the same building limits exposure for pedestrians and bicyclists along a roadway.

Lead Agency: Planning Department"

Issue 5: Traffic Calming for School Access

Previous Planning Board Discussion: On February 15, 2018, the Planning Board discussed bicycle access to schools and directed staff to: 1) assume that residential streets with sidewalks are bikeable for children, and 2) retain all sidepaths recommendations on residential streets. The Planning Board acknowledged that it may be difficult to implement sidepaths on many residential streets and therefore recommended that the Bicycle Master Plan call for traffic calming where implementing the sidepath recommendation is infeasible.

Staff Recommendation: Add a note to page 65:

"Where it is impractical or infeasible to implement a master-planned bikeway on a primary residential street, traffic calming should be implemented to improve the comfort of bicycling in the street, including speed limit reductions, raise crosswalks, curb extensions, traffic diversions, etc."

Issue 6: Payments In Lieu of Constructing Sidewalks and Bikeways

Previous Planning Board Discussion: At the December 7, 2017 discussion of the Bicycle Master Plan Working Draft, the Planning Board requested that the Bicycle Master Plan clarify that when the Planning

Board decides not to require a bikeway or sidewalk as a condition of a development approval, that there is a payment in lieu. The Planning Board also asked whether changes to the subdivision regulations are needed to clarify this.

Staff Response: The “Implementation through Development Approvals” section of the plan on pages 135 to 138 discusses the process that developers will undertake when implementing master-planned bikeways. While it is strongly encouraged that development projects implement all bikeways internal to their project and along their frontage per the approach outlined on pages 135 to 138, there will be instances when the Planning Board determines that construction of a master plan-recommended bikeway should not occur concurrent with the development. Staff therefore recommends adding the following section just before the blue box on page 137:

“Payments In Lieu of Constructing Bikeway Implementation

While the Bicycle Master Plan strongly recommends using the development approval approach discussed in the “Implementation through Development Approvals” section of the plan when determining what bikeways developers are required to construct as part of their projects, there will be instances, as described in blue box below, where the Planning Board determines that a development project, on a case-by-case basis, may not be required to follow this process. In those instances, the developer is required to make a financial contribution in lieu of constructing the sidewalk and / or bikeway to support the Planning Board’s finding of safe, adequate and efficient site access and circulation.”

Planning staff does not believe additional changes are needed to the subdivision regulations.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Public Testimony

Attachment B – Testimony from Charlie Challstrom