

ATTACHMENT 2



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

OFFICE OF THE CHAIR

November 28, 2018

Mr. Gregory I. Slater, Administrator
Maryland Department of Transportation – State Highway Administration
707 North Calvert Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

SUBJECT: Veirs Mill Road Pedestrian Safety Improvements

Dear Mr. Slater: ^{Gres}

The Montgomery County Planning Board is currently reviewing the Veirs Mill Corridor Master Plan, the first master plan to commence following Montgomery County's adoption of Vision Zero. Montgomery County's Vision Zero Two-Year Action Plan identifies Veirs Mill Road as a high-risk roadway and a priority for engineering improvements. In accordance with the action plan and in furtherance of the Maryland Department of Transportation's Toward Zero Deaths program, the Veirs Mill Corridor Master Plan identifies existing challenges and recommends a comprehensive, corridor-wide view of solutions to improve the safety of Veirs Mill Road.

The Veirs Mill Corridor Master Plan, developed in collaboration with the Montgomery County Department of Transportation, identifies both short-term improvements and a long-term vision for the transformation of Veirs Mill Road to a multimodal complete street with the introduction of bus rapid transit. The Plan includes recommendations for short-term improvements because there is an urgent need to provide safety improvements. **Between 2015 and 2017, there were five fatal and seven severe injury crashes on Veirs Mill Road.** Although travel by motor vehicle represents most person trips along the corridor, pedestrians and bicyclists accounted for 66 percent of these crashes, including four fatalities and four severe injuries.

The Planning Board urges the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) to take the following immediate actions:

- Install protected crossings along the corridor, including, but not limited to locations such as Veirs Mill Road at Norris Drive and Veirs Mill Road at Andrew Street.
- Designate a "school zone," pursuant to Maryland State Code 21-803.1, on Veirs Mill Road from Galt Avenue to Connecticut Avenue. Reduce the speed limit to 35 miles per hour and apply all school zone measures outlined in the State Code for this segment of the roadway.

- Improve compliance with the existing bus- and right-turn only lanes, including strategies such as enhanced signage, striping, colored and / or textured pavement and enforcement.
- Provide sidewalks on Veirs Mill Road.

Veirs Mill Road currently lacks dedicated space for pedestrians and bicyclists, has infrequent traffic signals or other safe crossing opportunities and is characterized by high-volume, high-speed traffic. Significant stretches of Veirs Mill Road do not have sidewalks and pedestrians are required to either walk within the road or create their own path along the road. Where sidewalks are present, there is no buffer between the sidewalk and high-speed traffic. There is also a significant distance between existing traffic signals – nearly three-quarters ($\frac{3}{4}$) of a mile or a 15-minute walk – in some locations. The lengthy distance between the traffic signals results in pedestrians crossing at unsafe locations to access their destination, as illustrated in this brief [video](#), which is also available on the plan website www.montgomeryplanning.org/veirsmill.

In addition to pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure along Veirs Mill Road, the Veirs Mill Corridor Master Plan also recommends additional traffic control devices, such as a full traffic signal, a hybrid pedestrian beacon or a similar device at strategic locations along Veirs Mill Road. While these locations, including Veirs Mill Road at Norris Drive as well as Veirs Mill Road at Andrew Street do not meet the signal warrants required by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), these locations provide direct connections to schools and transit. They are locations with vulnerable road users crossing lanes of traffic with infrequent gaps in traffic volume and are justified based on behavioral observations and sound judgement.

The Planning Board strongly encourages MDOT SHA to consider a more qualitative approach to providing additional safe crossing opportunities along Veirs Mill Road. The MUTCD criteria for pedestrian-activated signals and beacons is not as robust as the criteria for a full-color traffic signal, as it is predominantly focused on the traffic control needs of motorists. However, along highly developed transit corridors such as Veirs Mill Road, the needs of other users, such as pedestrians and bicyclists must be considered to ensure safety. For example, a pedestrian traffic control assessment may consider vehicular volume, speed, number of lanes, crash history, proximity to pedestrian generators such as schools, bus stops and commercial centers, as well as population density in evaluating the need for additional safe crossing opportunities.

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As Veirs Mill Road continues to evolve from a suburban, auto-dominated corridor to an urban transit corridor, it is essential to adapt to the changing character with infrastructure and improvements to safely accommodate all road users and the community. The Planning Board appreciates the willingness of MDOT SHA to consider the implementation of these immediate needs and looks forward to collaborating with your agency on advancing Vision Zero in Montgomery County.

Sincerely,



Casey Anderson
Chair

CA:jm:ha

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