



MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS
MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK & PLANNING COMMISSION

12/12/2019

Item #

MEMORANDUM

November 7, 2019

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Michael F. Riley, Director of Parks *MFR*
Miti Figueredo, Deputy Director for Administration *Miti*
Jai Cole, Chief, Park Planning and Stewardship Division (PPSD) *Jai Cole*

FROM: Darren Flusche, Trail Program Supervisor, Trails Section, PPSD *DF*

SUBJECT: **Planning Board Roundtable:** A one-year extension of the Park Directive allowing e-bike and e-scooter pilot program on certain hard-surface hiker-biker trails on Montgomery County parkland.

Background

Due to the increasing interest in and affordability of private e-bikes and e-scooters and the emergence of dockless e-bike-share and e-scooter-share companies, Montgomery County Parks issued a Park Directive on May 9, 2019, to establish a six-month pilot program allowing e-bikes and e-scooters on certain hard-surface hiker-biker trails in Montgomery County parks. The pilot program went into effect on June 1, 2019 and is scheduled to run until December 1, 2019. The Montgomery County Parks pilot program was initiated in coordination with the Montgomery County Department of Transportation's (MCDOT) pilot program of a similar nature in certain areas of the County.

The May 9th Park Directive and Planning Board memo are included as attachments. They include the definitions of e-vehicles allowed as part of the pilot and a map of the trails included in the pilot program. The hard surface hiker-biker trails included in the pilot program are: Rock Creek Trail, Sligo Creek Trail, Matthew Henson Trail, Long Branch Trail, and the Northwest Branch Trail. For the trails located in multiple jurisdictions, only the portions of the trails that are located in Montgomery County were included in this pilot program. See Figure 1.

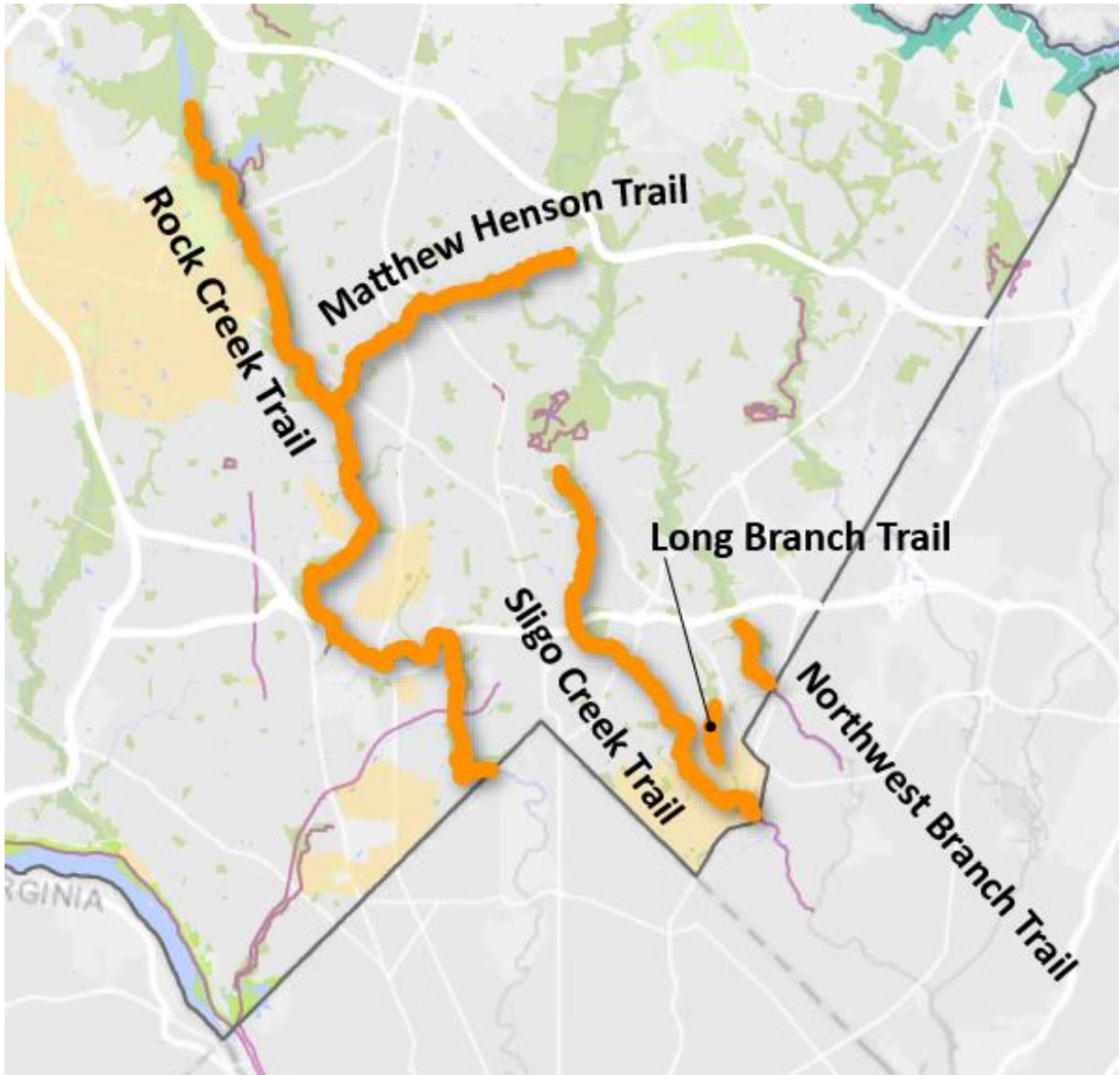


Figure 1: Hiker-Biker Trails included in the Montgomery County Parks' E-bikes and E-scooters pilot program.

Pilot Status

The pilot program allowing e-bikes and e-scooters on Montgomery County park trails has so far been without reports of major incidents. However, due to delays in signing memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with dockless e-vehicle companies and a slower-than-expected deployment of e-bikes and e-scooters by those companies, Parks staff believe that our ability to assess the impacts of e-vehicles on park trails during the six-month time period is incomplete.

Status of MOUs and E-vehicle Deployment

Montgomery County Parks has been negotiating MOUs with three e-vehicle vendors: Lime, Lyft, and Bird. An MOU was entered into with Lime on 9/17/2019. Lyft Bikes and Scooters signed an MOU on October 17, 2019. Negotiations are still underway with Bird.

Despite incomplete MOUs with Parks, these companies have been operating in Montgomery County under MOUs signed with MCDOT and therefore e-bikes and e-scooters have been appearing on Parks trails. The MCDOT MOUs require a minimum of 200 e-scooters deployed and a maximum of 500 e-scooters. Lime has a minimum of 50 e-bikes.

None of the minimum deployments have yet been met by any of the companies. As of mid-September, Bird had deployed approximately 100 e-scooters in the western part of the County. However, their e-bike does not meet MCDOT requirements and has not been deployed. Lime has not met the minimum on a regular basis. Lyft has deployed 50-100 e-scooters. These volumes are for the whole of the pilot area (on County ROW and park trails) but the day-to-day availability of e-bikes and e-scooters varies for all companies as vehicles are removed, repaired, recharged, and replaced in the field.

Status of Other Jurisdictions' Policies and Pilots

Several new policies and pilots of neighboring jurisdictions affect Montgomery County e-vehicle use. For example, on November 1, 2019, a Prince George's County directive went into effect allowing e-bikes and e-scooters on certain of their Anacostia Tributaries Trails. See Figure 2. This pilot will be in effect until August 31, 2020. In addition, on August 28, 2019 the University of Maryland Department of Transportation Services (DOTS), Town of University Park, and City of College Park partnered with the company VeoRide to pilot a year-long e-scooter-share program (along with traditional pedal bicycles).

As of August 3, 2019, the National Park Service decided to allow e-bikes where traditional bicycles were already allowed, which includes the portion of the Rock Creek Trail located in the District of Columbia. Their policy does not address e-scooters.

Finally, on October 1, 2019, legislation amending the State Motor Vehicle Code went into effect that classifies an e-scooter as a bicycle. E-bikes were already classified as bicycles under the State Motor Vehicle Code. E-scooter classification as a "bicycle" means all laws that apply to bicycles in the State Code now also apply to e-scooters. Whereas before this law became effective e-scooters were "invisible" under State law, the law now allows local jurisdictions to regulate e-scooters (since they are permitted to regulate bicycles), and both State and local laws and regulations can be enforced by Montgomery County Police and Park Police.

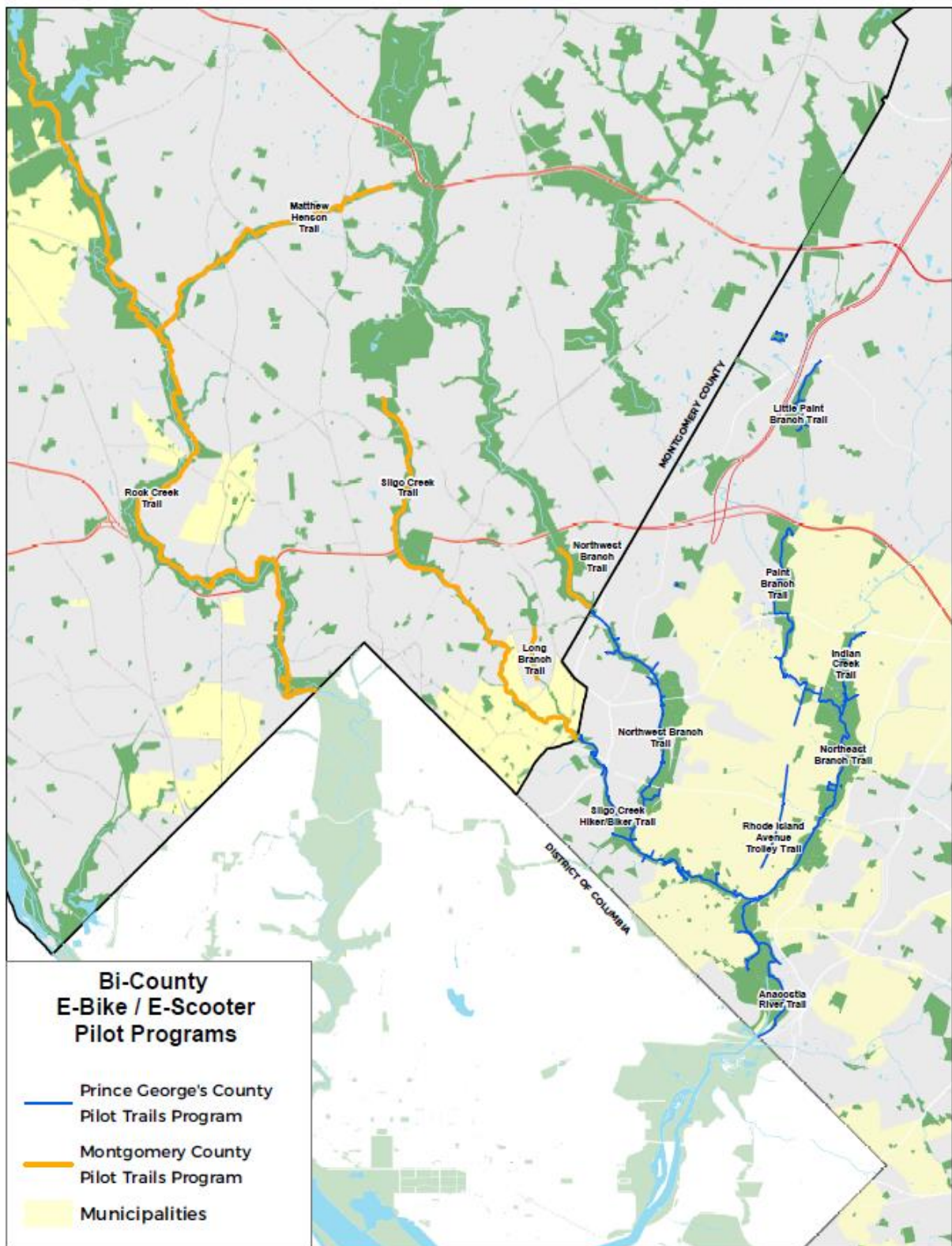


Figure 2: Hiker-Biker Trails included in the Montgomery County and Prince George's County E-bikes and E-scooters pilot programs.

Data Collection

Before making a policy recommendation regarding e-bikes and e-scooters on park trails on an ongoing or permanent basis, Parks is collecting data on trail user experience and safety. Parks staff have been conducting trail intercept surveys about users' experience sharing paved trails with other users. Four two-hour surveying sessions have yielded 177 surveys. The purpose of these surveys is to document user experiences prior to full e-vehicle deployment by the vendors. Staff plan on comparing these data with the same surveys taken after full deployment. To date, the intercept surveys have not revealed significant concerns about sharing the trails with e-bikes and e-scooters.

In addition to the intercept surveys, Parks staff are collecting data from MCDOT, the vendors, and Park police incident reports and we have received 152 statements from the public on our Open Town Hall website feedback portal as of November 1, 2019. Results of the town hall yielded roughly an equal amount of support and concerns expressed and Park Police have not received reports of significant incidents to date.

Conclusion

As a result of the lower-than-anticipated volume of e-scooters and e-bikes on Montgomery County trails during the six month pilot period, the recently initiated pilot program in Prince George's County, and the absence of a large number of reported incidents on our trails to date, Montgomery County Parks is extending the e-bike and e-scooter pilot program by one year to December 1, 2020. If, during this pilot extension, circumstances such as an expansion of the County's pilot area suggest we should consider an expansion of the trails included in Parks' pilot, we will return to the Board for an update. After the pilot, Montgomery County Parks and Prince George's County Parks will report our findings and recommendations to the full commission for discussion.

ATTACHMENT 1: E-bike and E-scooter Pilot Program Park Directive

ATTACHMENT 2: MCPB Staff memo E-bikes and E-scooter Pilot 4.29.2019