




## **Pedestrian Master Plan Kickoff Meeting Recap and Advisory Group Approval**

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**Completed: 12/12/2019**

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### **DESCRIPTION**

Staff will provide an update to the Planning Board on the Pedestrian Master Plan (PMP), including a summary of outreach efforts to date and a discussion of the plan's Advisory Group membership.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Approve the members of the Pedestrian Master Plan Advisory Group.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Since the Planning Board approved the plan's Scope of Work on September 5, 2019, staff has conducted several outreach activities across the county. This staff report describes the kickoff meetings and additional ongoing outreach efforts, before sharing general feedback about pedestrian issues/concerns received to date.

Following discussion of outreach efforts, the report identifies the recommended members of the plan's Advisory Group for Planning Board review and approval.

### **PLAN KICKOFF MEETINGS**

PMP staff conducted six kickoff meetings throughout Montgomery County in October and November 2019. The meeting locations and dates are:

1. Olney Library – October 10, 2019
2. East County Recreation Center – October 14, 2019
3. Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center – October 16, 2019
4. Montgomery Planning Department Auditorium – October 21, 2019
5. Upcounty Regional Services Center – November 6, 2019
6. Wheaton Library – November 13, 2019

Each meeting followed the same format. Staff started the meetings with a presentation explaining what the Pedestrian Master Plan is, its importance, what tasks are currently underway and what tasks are on the horizon. After discussing the plan timeline and ways for attendees to be involved, staff opened the floor to questions. Once questions concluded, the meeting transitioned into an open house. Around the meeting room, there were several stations designed both to provide and collect information. Stations included poster boards explaining the plan purpose and timeline, Vision Zero and meeting location-specific crash statistics, and Census data pertaining to walking and vehicle ownership. Staff also demonstrated the Pedestrian Level of Comfort map (see below).



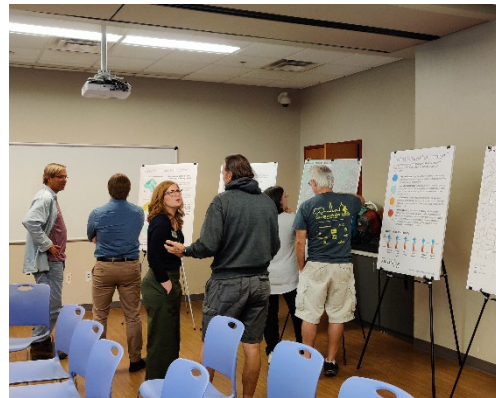
Staff presents at the Wheaton Library

Other open house stations invited attendees to share topics or locations important to pedestrian comfort with staff and to view a slideshow of text, photos, and video Montgomery County residents had posted on Twitter as part of the #WalkingHere campaign. At kickoff meetings, staff received written comments from 70 people. Staff has received more than 20 additional comments via the form on the project website and directly via email.

### PEDESTRIAN LEVEL OF COMFORT MAP

A major ongoing staff effort is the Pedestrian Level of Comfort data collection and analysis process. Similar to the Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress map, the Pedestrian Level of Comfort map is a tool that scores walking comfort from Unacceptable to Very Comfortable using factors from the built environment like width of sidewalk, traffic speed and presence of on-street parking. Once completed countywide, it will allow staff to analyze comfortable pedestrian connectivity to schools, parks, transit stations, grocery stores, and other important destinations.

Staff has been collecting the data required for the analysis for some time now and focused these efforts around the six kickoff meeting locations in preparation for engaging with the community. Staff published an interactive map ([mcatlas.org/pedplan](http://mcatlas.org/pedplan)) of the current status of the Pedestrian Level of Comfort analysis concurrent with the series of kickoff meetings. At the kickoff meetings, staff explained the different factors that generate the comfort score. To date, the interactive map has been viewed over 2,600 times by over 2,100 unique users.



Olney residents discuss project boards with staff



A Bethesda resident shares pedestrian concerns

As the approach used to determine walking comfort levels is still in draft form, the map provides community members the ability to review a series of videos at locations throughout the county and to vote on how comfortable they appear. Map users click an icon at the location where the video was taken, view the video, and then complete a survey about the video. The survey asks users to score the situation in the video from Unacceptable to Very Comfortable and then asks users to share additional thoughts about walking at that location or in their community generally. In this way, staff was able to collect feedback about how locations were scored that allowed staff to change the countywide scoring formula to make it more in-line with perceptions of Montgomery County residents. The map has generated about 140 responses to date.

Staff will demonstrate the map to the Planning Board on December 19, 2019.



Staff discusses the Pedestrian Level of Comfort with a meeting attendee

#### **ADDITIONAL PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES**

Since the scope of work has been adopted, staff has participated in many events to share information about the Pedestrian Master Plan and to gather ideas for how the pedestrian environment can be improved. Staff has presented at:

1. Commission on People with Disabilities – September 11, 2019
2. Cabin John Citizens Association – September 25, 2019
3. Commission on Aging – September 26, 2019
4. Y Walks – October 5, 2019
5. Arrive Alive: A Forum for Safe Routes to School – October 19, 2019
6. Montgomery County Civic Federation – November 11, 2019
7. Silver Spring Rotary Club – November 15, 2019
8. Capitol View Park Civic Association – November 21, 2019
9. Getting All Around The County Stakeholders – December 4, 2019

In addition to in-person engagement, staff has had a significant amount of social media engagement, even without a formal promotional campaign. Over 430 tweets have used the #WalkingHere hashtag to discuss pedestrian conditions in Montgomery County. Once the promotional campaign begins, engagement through social media channels will grow.

As of December 6, the Pedestrian Master Plan e-letter mailing list stands at 539 people. Several e-letters were published over the past few months to share information about the scope of work, kickoff meetings, and the plan's advisory group application.



Staff speaking with the Capitol View Park Civic Association

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Regardless of location within the county, common themes emerged at outreach meetings.

**State Highways:** Meeting attendees are generally aware that there are jurisdictional issues pertaining to the roads in the county and have made the connection between state highways and unsafe pedestrian conditions. Many people asked how the PMP will handle these state roads and what can be done about them.

**Utility Obstructions:** The role of utility companies in creating and maintaining obstructions in sidewalks came up frequently, as did businesses – particularly café seating – encroaching into pedestrian spaces.

**Funding:** Funding for sidewalks and other pedestrian infrastructure was identified as a major issue. Attendees were very supportive of the plan and its ambitions but were concerned that there would not be sufficient funding provided to make progress.

**Maintenance:** Maintenance of existing pedestrian infrastructure and missing pedestrian infrastructure were both decried. Snow and vegetation removal were seen as problematic. In many places, with the responsibility for maintenance incumbent on adjacent property owners, pedestrian ways are maintained in a piecemeal fashion or not at all, while roads are maintained and cleared by the county and state.

**Sidewalk Gaps:** There were also several comments in meetings and through correspondence about missing pedestrian facilities generally and how gaps in the pedestrian network limit access to schools, parks, and other amenities.

**Traffic Laws:** Several meeting attendees expressed confusion about the rules of the road, specifically related to when people driving are supposed to yield to people using crosswalks. Others, aware of the rules, advised that roadway signage doesn't improve drivers yielding to pedestrians.

**Engineering:** Others focused on the role traffic signals and intersection design play in pedestrian safety and comfort. Some recommended the plan look at how there often is not enough time allocated for people to safely cross the street. Attendees were concerned about intersections designed to minimize driver inconvenience at the expense of pedestrian travel time and safety – particularly those locations where crossing a street actually means crossing three streets due to missing curb ramps, pedestrian signals and crosswalks. People recommended more pedestrian scramble intersections, grade-separated pedestrian crossings, prohibiting Right Turns on Red, adding Leading Pedestrian Intervals at busy intersections and addressing pedestrian/left-turning vehicle conflicts. There was skepticism about the efficacy of flashing yellow lights for pedestrian crossings and concerns about construction closing sidewalks.

**Lighting:** Meeting attendees considered the lack of pedestrian-scale and intersection lighting to be both a personal safety issue and a traffic safety one.

**Electric Scooters:** Electric scooters were discussed at nearly every meeting. Concerns abounded about sharing pedestrian spaces with silent, fast-moving vehicles not yet governed by well-respected norms for courteous use and public storage.

**Transit Access:** Pedestrian transit access was front of mind for many people, particularly ensuring that pedestrian infrastructure exists to allow people to safely access Purple Line stations before it begins service. Other people called out bus stops that were either so small that people waiting for the bus blocked the sidewalk or bus stops that had been relocated to midblock locations to improve vehicle throughput at the expense of pedestrian safety and convenience.

**Accessible Design:** Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and creating an accessible public realm were issues regularly raised by meeting attendees.

**Education/Enforcement:** Education and enforcement were also frequently mentioned. Specifically, public safety announcements about stopping for pedestrians in the crosswalk was mentioned. Speeding enforcement and pedestrian education were also seen as important, as was trucks and other vehicles blocking sidewalks and crossings.

**Shade:** Both at meetings and through written feedback, attendees voiced concerns about lack of tree canopy along sidewalks in the face of more frequent extreme heat events.

## **ADVISORY GROUP**

The PMP Advisory Group (PedAG) is a community group that will provide input to staff on all aspects of plan development. The PedAG will meet regularly over the course of the plan and will provide important perspectives on Montgomery County's pedestrian challenges and opportunities. PedAG members will provide feedback on recommendations as they are developed by staff and will help disseminate plan

information to their respective organizations and communities. The PedAG is comprised of two main groups: members appointed from stakeholder groups and members chosen through an online application process.

Staff identified twenty stakeholder groups that represent the County's geographic regions, ethnic groups, development community, and pedestrian interest groups, and asked them to appoint members to the PedAG. The following list includes the identified stakeholder groups with the requested number of appointees for each group in parenthesis.

- Pedestrian, Bicycle, Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (1)
- Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce (1)
- Montgomery County Civic Federation (1)
- Action Committee for Transit (1)
- CASA de Maryland (1)
- African American Advisory Group (1)
- African Affairs Advisory Group (1)
- Asian Pacific Advisory Group (1)
- Caribbean American Advisory Group (1)
- Latin American Advisory Group (1)
- Middle Eastern American Advisory Group (1)
- Western Montgomery Citizens Advisory Board (1)
- Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board (1)
- Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board (1)
- East County Citizens Advisory Board (1)
- Upcounty Citizens Advisory Board (1)
- Maryland Building Industry Association (1)
- Montgomery County Regional Student Government Association (2)
- Montgomery County Council of Parent Teacher Associations (1)
- Commission on People with Disabilities (1)

In addition to appointed membership, the PedAG has 11 members who applied online to participate. Staff received 78 applications over the application period from November 14 to December 8, 2019. Selected members come from all over the county and bring with them diverse perspectives on pedestrian issues and opportunities. While some members bring technical transportation planning and engineering knowledge, all are passionate about making Montgomery County a better place for pedestrians. The below list includes the selected membership and the neighborhoods they are from:

- Javier Gamboa – Wheaton
- Helene Rosenheim – Olney
- Sherlene Lucas – Aspen Hill
- Chris Bruch – Chevy Chase
- Bernie Karns – Calverton
- Marybeth Cleveland – Shady Grove
- Cynthia Buddington – Gaithersburg

- Andrew Campbell – Woodmoor
- Deborah Brown – North Bethesda
- Anna Priddy – Forest Glen
- Anne Tulkin – Long Branch

## **NEXT STEPS**

Staff continues to collect existing conditions information on which to base future plan recommendations. In the months ahead, staff will continue to expand the Pedestrian Level of Comfort analysis to more parts of the county. When the data collection for this analysis is complete, staff will conduct network analyses to understand the quality of comfortable pedestrian access to local and regional destinations across the county.

Staff is also pursuing requests for proposals to survey community members about pedestrian perceptions and to understand national best practices for pedestrian policy and design.

Staff will begin meeting with the Advisory Group in the new year, and will also begin facilitated discussions with county agencies to gather their perspectives on pedestrian safety and comfort.