

# Montgomery Planning

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION





**MCPB**

Item No. 6

Date: 11-05-20

## 2020 Urban Loading and Delivery Management Study

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Completed: October 29, 2020

### Description:

Brief the Planning Board on the Scope of Work for the Urban Loading and Delivery Management Study

### Staff Summary and Recommendation

The purpose of this Study is to identify regional, national and international best practices and policy options to better balance loading and delivery functions with through-movements of people and goods in urbanizing areas of the County, using Downtown Bethesda as a case study.

The County's urbanizing areas are thriving centers with numerous commercial and residential buildings, restaurants, shops, public open spaces, art galleries, and entertainment venues. However, these desirable land uses, and centers of activity, along with the associated expansion of high-quality pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, present challenges in accommodating efficient and safe loading and delivery functions for all users. With increasing frequency, commercial and private loading and delivery vehicles are making use of public roads and sidewalks in ways that disrupt orderly vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic and undermine safety. Loading and delivery activities are a critical part of a vibrant downtown. The timing and manner of those deliveries are equally a critical part of providing a safe and efficient multimodal transportation network.

**Staff requests feedback from the Planning Board on the proposed scope of work.**

# Urban Loading and Delivery Management Study



DownCounty Planning

Montgomery County Planning Department

October 2020

## INTRODUCTION

This document defines the scope of work for the Urban Loading and Delivery Management Study (Study).

The purpose of Study is to identify regional, national and international best practices and policy options to better balance loading and delivery functions with the through-movement of people and goods within the more densely developed urbanizing portions of the County, particularly in a post-COVID-19 condition. While the best practices and policies may apply to many urbanizing areas of the County, to provide a specific local context the Study will use Downtown Bethesda as a case study. Finally, consistent with the goals of the Planning Department and the County's Racial Equity Bill the Study will also analyze the racial equity and social justice impacts of current conditions as well as potential alternative best practices and policies.

## BACKGROUND AND ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

The County's urbanizing areas are thriving centers with numerous office and apartment buildings, restaurants, shops, public open spaces, art galleries, and entertainment venues. However, these desirable land uses, densities, and centers of activity, along with the associated expansion of high-quality pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, present challenges in accommodating loading and delivery functions. With increasing frequency, commercial and private loading and delivery vehicles are making use of public roads in ways that disrupt orderly vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic.

Loading and delivery activities are a critical part of a vibrant downtown. The timing and manner of those deliveries is an equally critical part of providing a safe and efficient multimodal transportation network. Some examples of existing conditions include the use of lay-bys for commercial deliveries, lack of access to curb lanes due to separated bicycle facilities, inadequate loading dock depth, and loading vehicles using the street rather than an internal loading dock. Images depicting several of these situations in Downtown Bethesda are provided below:

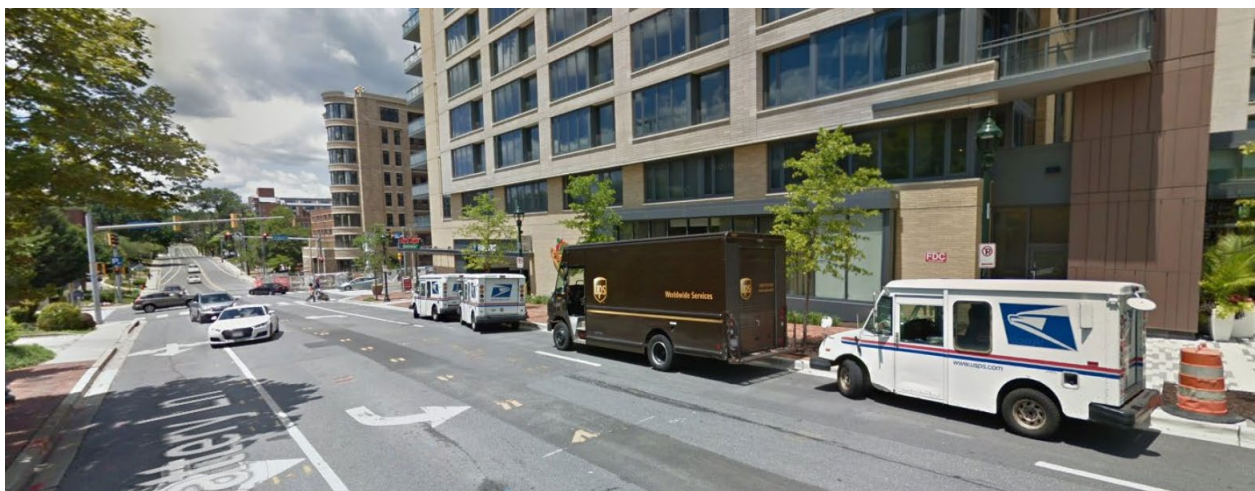


Figure 1: Delivery Vehicles Utilizing Curb Lane  
(Battery Lane, between Wisconsin Avenue and Woodmont Avenue, looking West)





Figure 2: Delivery Vehicles Utilizing Single Travel Lane  
(St. Elmo Avenue, between Norfolk Avenue and Old Georgetown Road, looking Southwest)



Figure 3: Commercial Vehicles Utilizing Curb Lane  
(Woodmont Avenue, between Rugby Avenue and Battery Lane, looking North)

## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Urbanizing areas have many stakeholders involved in and impacted by both providing and receiving deliveries of goods and services: business owners, residents, tenants, customers, visitors, as well as the numerous government agencies that address distinct parts of this whole. To reach this very diverse group, our stakeholder engagement strategy, outlined below, will include public agencies, service providers, property owners and managers, commercial and retail tenants, residents, and others. As needed, the team may adjust the strategy to better engage stakeholders. This Study will include particular coordination with Andrew Bossi, Senior Engineer in the Montgomery County Department of Transportation Director's Office, and Jeff Burton, Executive Director of the Bethesda Urban Partnership.

Over the course of the Study, we will engage with:

i. Public Agencies

- Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT)
- Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services (MCDPS)
- Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MD SHA)
- Bethesda Transportation Management District
- Bethesda Urban Partnership (BUP)
- Montgomery County Bethesda Chevy Chase Regional Services
- Bethesda Implementation Advisory Committee (IAC)
- Commission on People with Disabilities (CPWD - HHS)
- Commission on Aging (CoA - HHS)

ii. Service Providers/ Commercial Delivery Companies

- Parcel Delivery
  - Fedex
  - UPS
  - Amazon
  - United States Postal Service (USPS)
- Freight Delivery
  - Grocery
  - Restaurant
  - Automobile
- Moving companies
- Construction site deliveries

iii. Community

- Commercial
  - Property owners
  - Property managers
  - Restaurant and retail tenants
- Residential
  - Condo associations
  - Property managers
  - Neighborhood and renter associations

We envision the stakeholder engagement effort to be implemented in three phases over the course of developing the Study:

- **Phase I: Listening**  
The first phase of stakeholder engagement will be concurrent with initial research on best practices and will focus on listening sessions. The team will reach out to stakeholders to let them know the project is beginning and to find out the best way to reach out to them. We hope to identify the diverse concerns of the stakeholders regarding existing challenges as we are collecting and analyzing our existing conditions data. We will engage individuals through virtual meeting platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom, through the project website, email and social media communications and small in-person group meetings and site tours where we will be observing social distancing protocols in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The team hopes to clearly identify challenges and known issues from stakeholders who live, work, and own property/businesses in Downtown Bethesda, as well as service providers and other stakeholders located across the county and region, as we work towards gathering existing conditions data.
- **Phase II: Testing and Refining**  
This phase will be concurrent with staff's formation of preliminary findings from researching best practices and case studies. We will bring these to the project stakeholders to hear their feedback. During this time, stakeholders will have the opportunity to review preliminary findings and provide feedback to the team.
- **Phase III: Sharing**  
The last phase will include sharing and presenting the final draft Urban Loading and Delivery Management Study findings and recommendations. We will explain what is being recommended and how those recommendations will benefit the community. In this phase the team will meet with stakeholders to present the Study findings and explain any policy recommendations to balance loading and delivery functions and multimodal transportation demand within the County's urbanizing areas. The team will seek input from stakeholders on the final draft of the Study before presenting it to the Planning Board. The final phase will be the presentation of the staff recommendations.

## EQUITY

In 2019, Montgomery County passed a Racial Equity Bill cementing the County's commitment to racial equity and social justice. The Bill requires the Planning Board to consider racial equity and social justice impacts when preparing a master or sector plan. The Planning Department continues to build on previous efforts that focused on racial equity. This is reflected in the mission statement of the General Plan. Equity is about giving all people the resources they need to have an equal chance at success. This does not mean that all people need the same resources; it is about meeting people where they are and removing barriers so that success is possible.

In coordination with the Planning Department's Equity in Planning workgroup (part of Thrive 2050), the Urban Loading and Delivery Management Study team will strive to implement and promote an equitable process that assesses the racial equity and social justice impacts of current conditions as well as potential alternative best practices and policies.

## SCHEDULE

The Urban Loading and Delivery Management Study will be divided into five tasks.

### Task 0: Outreach and Engagement (Ongoing)

- The intent of the outreach and engagement effort is to make it as easy as possible for the public to help shape the development of the Study and communicate with Planning Department Staff through traditional meeting formats, the project website and social media.
- Develop a communications and engagement plan to engage various stakeholders within the County's urbanizing areas.
- Inform stakeholders of the proposed Study, its purpose and goals and establish a feedback loop.
- Staff will conduct meetings with our interagency partners to discuss and refine the existing conditions, analysis and potential plan recommendations.
- Advisory Groups: Staff will meet with the Bethesda Downtown Implementation Advisory Group, the Bethesda Transportation Management District and Bethesda Urban Partnership and the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center that meets monthly to provide input on all aspects of the Study.
- Community Meetings: Upon request, staff will meet with neighborhood groups and others to discuss the Urban Loading and Delivery Management Study.
- Project Website: A website will be maintained for the project. The website will include meeting materials and opportunities to engage with the plan analyses and recommendations as they are developed.
- Email Newsletter: Staff will provide periodic updates to the public on the development of the plan through an email newsletter.
- Phone/Online Survey. Staff will develop and facilitate a statistically valid survey about urban loading conditions, perceptions, and activity within the Study area.
- Social Media: Staff will develop social media posts for dissemination through Department accounts and those of county agencies and elected officials to promote the Study elements and events.
- Draft Findings and Recommendations Meetings: Staff will conduct a series of stakeholder meetings to review the draft Urban Loading and Delivery Management Study recommendations and solicit feedback about proposed recommendations.

### Task 1: Planning Board Scope of Work (November 2020)

- Planning staff will brief the Planning Board on the proposed Scope of Work and seek feedback.

### Task 2: Identify Best Practices and Analyze Existing Conditions in Case Study Area (October 2020 – February 2021)

- Staff will broadly review loading and delivery management studies, best practices, and case studies for urban and urbanizing areas comparable in scale and context from around the country as well as internationally.
- Staff will select for more detailed review best practices and policies that might more readily be applied in Montgomery County, identifying the key components of implementation and potential roadblocks.



- Staff will analyze existing loading and delivery function conditions in the Downtown Bethesda area, identifying opportunities and constraints. The existing conditions analysis will include fieldwork and interagency coordination.
- Staff will identify potential Racial Equity and Social Justice impacts and opportunities from both the detailed best practices and policy and existing conditions analyses.

### Task 3: Draft Preliminary Findings and Best Practices Report (March 2021 – May 2021)

- Staff will review and summarize in a draft report the research findings, best practices and policies from comparable case studies.
- Based on the findings from the existing conditions and best practices research, and the input received from county agencies and other project stakeholders, staff will prepare a set of recommendations that may be used in addressing urban loading and delivery functions in Downtown Bethesda and how they could be applied to other similar situations and areas of the County.
- The report will be shared with stakeholders to receive feedback to refine potential best practices, policies and recommendations to be recommended in the final report.

### Task 4: Final Study Report (June 2021 - July 2021)

- Staff will present the final report of the Urban Loading and Delivery Management Study to the Planning Board for their review and comment.