

Montgomery County Complete Streets Design Guidelines Work Session #5

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RECOMMENDATION

Staff is seeking Planning Board comments on the Public Draft of the Montgomery County Complete Streets Design Guidelines version 1.0. Planning staff and Andrew Bossi, from the Montgomery County Department of Transportation, will summarize and review the guidelines as well as public testimony received as part of the Public Hearing held on July 23, 2020. Work Session #5 will focus on maintenance, equity and updated language for the prioritization section based on the last work session. At the end of this work session and at the Planning Board's direction, staff will consolidate Planning Board comments into a letter to the County Executive and the County Council. Staff will also draft applicable revisions to the guidelines document, which will be forwarded to the County Executive and the County Council along with the letter for further review and consideration.

INTRODUCTION

A public draft of the Montgomery County Complete Streets Design Guidelines (CSDG) version 1.0 has been prepared jointly by Montgomery Planning and the Montgomery County Department of Transportation. This document was provided to the Planning Board for the June 23 Public Hearing. We recommend that Planning Commissioners bring this document to this work session.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Public testimony received as part of the July 23, 2020 Public Hearing was provided in the September 10, 2020 staff report on Work Session #1.

Work Session #5 – Summary of Speed Management, Implementation, Equity and Update on Prioritization Elements

Work Session #5 will focus on a summary presentation of the speed management, implementation, equity and prioritization portions of the guide. There are 55 comments in these categories, which are provided in Attachment A, along with a staff response for each comment. Staff is requesting Planning Board review of these comments and feedback on the corresponding responses.

Summary of Comments Received and Proposed Responses

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Comment #	Who made the comment?	Page Number	Section	Comment	Subject Area	Draft Response
1	Darnestown			Country Road Speeds seem too High	Speed Management	We propose to change the Target Speed for Country Roads to a range of target speeds that would be decided based on the road geometry AND the prevalent land use. If the Country Road is effectively a residential street, then it might use the Neighborhood Street value (20 MPH).
6	Rustic Roads Advisory Committee			Chapter 9 on Speed Management addresses target speeds, and the Committee would welcome a review of whether lower target speeds in some areas on some rustic roads could help reduce crashes and crash severity. We support the use of "Neckdowns" as tools for narrowing the travelway to a single lane, encouraging motorists to yield to oncoming traffic before proceeding, and this tool is used to provide for safe and slow passage over our one-lane bridges on rustic roads.	Speed Management	The CSDG has not addressed target speeds on Rustic or Exceptional Rustic roads. For Rustic roads, you would expect a slower target speed than non-rustic roads. The Rustic Road Functional Master Plan should address these issues.
12	Kristy Daphnis, Chair PBTSAC			We ask that you consider further delineating the "roles of streets" section 1.2 of the document, breaking "Travel" into "Recreation" and "Transportation." This would be useful in helping to apply an equity lens to decisions, because it would help planners and others further contextualize the need for prioritization of certain streets and corridors that are often used for transportation to access necessities of daily living (commuting to work, going to school, accessing the grocery store and other necessary amenities in areas where residents aren't likely to own cars). "Recreation" uses would best be paired with "Social Engagement," versus "Travel."	Vision, Equity	Further discussion will be added to Section 1.2 of the document.
18	Kristy Daphnis, Chair PBTSAC			we are encouraged to see the principle of "20 is Plenty" carried into several of the street types, including neighborhood streets. In general, we support the lowering of speed limits (and designing streets for lower speed), as lower speeds are shown to improve safety outcomes - particularly in pedestrian and bicycle crashes.	Speed Management	No change needed.

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32	Melvin Tull			Before you call for raised crosswalks/speedtables at downtown street intersections I ask you to look outside your office building at the broken, heaved, unmaintained 1980s brick sidewalk and consider again whether the proposed infrastructure can survive an absence of the required maintenance, repair and replacement. That sidewalk is the basic pedestrian environment. When the sidewalk provides such an uneven and unsafe example of unreliable maintenance can Complete Streets move forward without including a mechanism for the county to do the maintenance?	Implementation	The CSDG is intended to be used as part of a wide range of roadway projects, including typical roadway maintenance. Hopefully, existing deficiencies inconsistent with the CSDG can be corrected when this document is county policy.
37	Melvin Tull			As you and I continue to contemplate the complexities of Complete Streets lets work together to figure out where to pile snow	Implementation	The bikeway buffer & street buffer are both intended to provide for snow storage. We could perhaps add a sentence or two to highlight this.
43	Jane Lyons, Center for Smart Growth	88		We urge the county to update its policy for snow events. Especially in downtowns and town centers, the county – not the building owners – should be responsible for clearing snow on sidewalks, sidewalk ramps, and sidewalk-level bicycle facilities.	Implementation	Such a policy is beyond the scope of Complete Streets. Doing so would require additional funding for maintenance activities, defining areas, & potentially establishing agreements (such as with WMATA, Urban Districts, BIDs, etc).
47	David Helms			The term “Speed Management” and “Target Speed” should be removed and replaced with “Safe Speed” to emphasize prioritization of all road users based on health outcomes.	Speed Management	Target speed is an effective tool in helping to lower travel speeds to safer levels across the county, and this practice has been in used in Master Plans for many years. This term is already established and in common use.
56	David Helms	203		Sections 3.2 Street Design Parameters (p.54) and Speed Management (p.203) should be re-written to incorporate NATCO “Safe Speed Approach”.	Speed Management	The speed design and speed management practices do include the safe systems approach, which is also a critical element in the Vision Zero Action Plan. A future version might more deliberately include more aspects of City Limits.
57	David Helms	203		Setting default speed limits on many streets at once (such as 25 mph on all major streets and 20 mph on all minor streets),	Speed Management	The CSDG does in fact identify target speeds that may not be implementable given the current state statutory speed limit. The CSDG notes this fact. Ongoing legislative efforts occur annually with Montgomery County representatives to reduce this statutory speed limit or to provide more flexibility for more urban counties.
58	David Helms	203		Designating slow zones in sensitive areas, and	Speed Management	This is already the intent with Downtown, Town Center, and Neighborhood areas. As noted elsewhere there is opportunity for a School Overlay.
59	David Helms	203		Setting corridor speed limits on high priority major streets, using a safe speed study, which uses conflict density and activity level to set context-appropriate speed limits.	Speed Management	We can look to address the safe speed issue in more detail in future updates to the CSDG.

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60	David Helms			The CSDG should not adopt current Maryland Transportation statute minimum speed limits by street type if that speed does not provide adequate protection for the likely road users. The CSDG should state what the Safe Speed should be using best available science, and if the Safe Speed is in variance with state law, footnote that.	Speed Management	The CSDG document did not adopt current Maryland Transportation minimum speed limits. We clearly noted that some of the target speeds were in direct conflict with the Maryland Transportation statute minimum speed limits.
61	David Helms			Amend the State Transportation Statute	Speed Management	No change needed in CSDG document. The County Government, local state legislators, and the M-NCPPC annually advocate for changes in speed limit laws in Annapolis and will continue to do so until successful.
63	David Helms			Neighborhood Yield Streets Safe Speed (Target Speed) should be a range, 15 mph to 20 mph, based on level of pedestrian demand, traffic, and sightline/obstruction visibility.	Speed Management	We feel that the target speeds identified in the CSDG are reasonable and in many cases represent a significant change from current practice.
65	Peter Gray, WABA	120		We especially urge that the Guide and the aforementioned Master Plans be applied to every street that undergoes repaving.	Implementation	Resurfacing projects inherently will not be able to implement *everything* as they are not funded nor scoped for that. They should be implementing what they can, which our phrasing on p120 currently encourages.
66	Peter Gray, WABA	203		We encourage the authors to review the most recent publication from the National Association of City Transportation Officials called City Limits which provides invaluable guidance on the topic. This guide should be consistent with that guidance for target speeds in urban areas.	Speed Management	At this point, NACTO's City Limits has not yet been reviewed for how it would be applied to the County. City Limits applies to urban roads, and not really suburban and rural streets. A future version might more deliberately include more aspects of City Limits.
85	Dan Wilhelm, GCCA President		9.2	Design Speed too low in Section 9.2. We recommend that the design speed for residential streets be split so the target speed for primary residential streets is 25mph, and 20 mph for secondary streets.	Speed Management	No change needed.
96	Seth Morgan, Chair, Patricia Gallalee - Vice Chair - Commissions on People With Disabilities	232-236		We recommend that the County slow down and carefully evaluate transportation projects that do not have direct, immediate and significant safety value for residents of all ages and abilities.	Implementation	Project implementation and timing is not determined by the CSDG. That is more of a CIP issue.

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97	Seth Morgan, Chair, Patricia Gallalee - Vice Chair - Commissions on People With Disabilities	232		We recommend that all transportation plans be vetted ahead of time and be signed off on by agency American with Disabilities Act Compliance Managers and the Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities. There is a saying “Nothing for us, without us”. And surely not after it is done, but in the pre-planning stages. This will save both lives and resources.	Implementation	CIP projects do include public outreach as part of facility planning and design efforts. This comment should be considered as part of the overall outreach on CIP projects.
98	Scott Plumer, Darnestown Civic Association Roads Task Force	232- 236		Longer term we hope to see all government entities, including MCPS doing more direct joint collaborative work products building on the current more distant method of coordination, inter-agency technical task forces, boards, committees, and commissions.	Implementation	We agree that more collaboration leads to better products. However, this does not prompt any changes in CSDG.
104	Scott Plumer, Darnestown Civic Association Roads Task Force	57	Figure 3-3	“Figure 3-3. Priorities in constrained rights of way” for Country Roads and Country Connectors does not reflect our experience or understanding of the risk profile of these road types. We suggest revisiting the grid.	Speed Management	This concern is rooted in whether some streets might be Country Roads or Neighborhood Streets. We propose to change the Target Speed for Country Roads to a range of target speeds that would be decided based on the road geometry AND the prevalent land use. If the Country Road is effectively a residential street, then it might use the Neighborhood Street value (20 MPH). This concern could also be addressed as street typologies are assigned between classifications such as Country Road vs Neighborhood Street.
105	Scott Plumer, Darnestown Civic Association Roads Task Force	206- 225		Speed Gradients and Design Changes along a single road - Numerous roads throughout the county see their character and associated Street Type change as the road traverses radically different land uses and other contextual changes. The criteria for a Street Type change is not yet detailed enough and the speed gradient changes are left open to broad interpretation.	Speed Management	Standard traffic engineering practices do call for stepped-down speed zones with transitions.

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106	Scott Plumer, Darnestown Civic Association Roads Task Force	220-225	9	The examples at the end of Chapter 9 discuss the challenges of a road whose street type changes along the road's route. We would like to see much more specificity around criteria for stepping down speeds including contextual changes such as bicycle usage, driveways, institutions, capacity for delivery vehicle stops, transit stops, and susceptibility to corridor overflow. These criteria have broad applicability and are more informed than a primary dependency on density and land use changes. These contextual criteria can apply for all situations requiring speed gradients and other calming measures. A few grids around Street Type transition criteria and priorities would be useful.	Speed Management	<p>For this version, we should add a Section 3.5 on p58 that has two paragraphs:</p> <p>1st Paragraph: establish here that a slower-class roadway is expected to extend beyond its natural area by some variable distance</p> <p>2nd Paragraph: that speed reductions should be mindful of the degree of reduction and the manner in which the reductions occur.</p> <p>This might be reiterated and referenced in the examples on p220-225.</p> <p>Include footnote references to: - NCHRP Report 737 "Design Guidance for High-Speed to Low-Speed Transition Zones for Rural Highways" - FHWA ePrimer on Speed Management for Rural Transition Zones in Town Centers: https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/speedmgt/ref_mats/ePrimer_modules/module4.cfm</p> <p>This opens the door. A future version might get into more detail on transitions.</p>
109	Scott Plumer, Darnestown Civic Association Roads Task Force	218-225	9.4	Section 9.4 talks about Retrofit but only in the context of arterials. We believe retrofitting requires greatly expanded coverage in the CSDG. Much of the work to achieve the proposed designs will be retrofit work.	Speed Management	<p>On p218, might we add a paragraph at the end that reads something like:</p> <p>"Many of the speed management techniques in this section might also be applicable to non-arterial roadways experiencing similar speed transitions."</p>
110	Scott Plumer, Darnestown Civic Association Roads Task Force	218	9.4	Section 9.4 also touches on one of our highest priority items: corridor overflow. The problem for us is people bail out from lower throughput roads and overrun roads designed for lower capacities and single mode use. Lower speeds and flow control devices like roundabouts are some of the very few defenses we have against increased risk due to overflow volumes.	Speed Management	<p>While we realize that many roads in the Agricultural Reserve do experience heavy cut-through traffic (mostly from Frederick County), the CSDG does not deal with corridor management. This topic is best handled in either a Master Plan or a corridor study</p>
111	Scott Plumer, Darnestown Civic Association Roads Task Force	209	Figure 9-3	Roundabouts can offer lifecycle cost efficiencies particularly if accident reduction is considered. They are an effective speed management measure and we believe they should be included in "Figure 9-3: Appropriate speed management measures by street type". We believe roundabouts have broad applicability on Country Roads and Country Connectors.	Speed Management	<p>We concur. We will add the same row/info as from Figure 6-15 on p131 into Figure 9-3 on p209 as an additional Horizontal Measure. These would need to consider the use by agricultural vehicles as part of the feasibility of any intersection improvement in rural areas of the county.</p>

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112	Scott Plumer, Darnestown Civic Association Roads Task Force	236		We suggest street design is complete when it includes a build specification, an implementation path to materialize the design, and a maintenance regime to keep it complete. We believe maintenance deserves to have its own section in the Implementation chapter and be more than a few paragraphs in section "10.3 Project Development Process".	Implementation	In the Construction & Maintenance section: the 2nd paragraph ties both these topics together. We can expand this with another paragraph between the 2nd and 3rd paragraphs that reinforces the importance of ensuring adequate capability to maintain infrastructure.
115	Scott Plumer, Darnestown Civic Association Roads Task Force			Speedy is Greedy - 20 is plenty for neighborhoods -35 to survive and thrive everywhere else (except highways)	Speed Management	We propose to change the Target Speed for Country Roads to a range of target speeds that would be decided based on the road geometry AND the prevalent land use. If the Country Road is effectively a residential street, then it might use the Neighborhood Street value (20 MPH).
121	Gil Chlewicki	54-55	3.2	Target Speed - It is appropriate and desirable to have higher target speeds in suburban and rural environments. Treatments for pedestrians and bicycles must be thought of differently in these contexts that account for higher speeds. Speed is not the main cause of pedestrian and bicycle fatalities. The lack of access and well-designed crossing opportunities is the primary reason.	Speed Management	We are looking at traffic safety from both a speed and access perspective. We do not agree that speed is not the main cause or one of the main causes of pedestrian and bicycle fatalities. If all crashes occurred at lower speeds, research has shown that the crash survival rate increases dramatically as speed decreases. Access also contributes to crash causation. The focus on target speeds and protected crossing spacings identified in the CSDG clearly show a differentiation in treatment for the Street Types.
156	Gil Chlewicki	204-207	9	Chapter 9 - This chapter might be the most problematic of the document. There needs to be a balance between safety and operations and that balance changes based on the context. There also needs to be an understanding of how much safety is improved for each user including people in vehicles. And speeds need to match the context, not the other way around, since we have seen in a lot of research that drivers will base their speed on context much more than a posted speed. There is definitely evidence of that on roads in the County that have reduced their posted speeds over the past decade-plus.	Speed Management	This guide is aware that we cannot simply change speed limit signs to achieve safety goals; more deliberate effort is required to bring operational speeds more in line with target speeds. The entirety of Chapter 9 is focused on engineering measures to do exactly as the comment suggests.

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157	Gil Chlewicki	206-207	9.2	Section 9.2 - All the information here is good until getting to target speed. Target speed needs to be based on the context of the road, not the street type. There also needs to be a recognition that there is a major difference between "streets", "roads", and "highways". "Streets" are generally urban and/or slow-speed contexts. "Highways", whether a minor 2-lane highway of a major interstate are high speed contexts that are extremely important to our economy and environment. "Roads" (or "boulevards", "connectors" are going to be somewhere in between based again on context. When there are attempts to change context based on target speed, it always fails. Therefore, these target speeds must be increased outside of urban and residential streets.	Speed Management	The street types are context-specific, which is at the core of what Complete Streets is accomplishing.
158	Gil Chlewicki	208-209	9.3	Section 9.3 - Speed management needs to prioritize the context of the street and surroundings. There are ways to provide safe, comfortable, and reasonable access for non-motorized users in higher speed situations.	Speed Management	Figure 9-3 on p209 provides info on speed management tools based on differing contexts.
159	Gil Chlewicki	210-211	9.3	Road diets - Center turn lanes can be effective when there are two or more thru lanes in each direction based on the context and shouldn't be a blanket anti-recommendation	Speed Management	We are generally moving away from Center Turn Lanes due to the conflicts and safety risks that they can create. However, they are still retained in the guide for limited circumstances such as roads with one lane in each direction, relatively low volumes, and a high number of low-volume access points.
161	Gil Chlewicki	211	9.3	Lane Diets - The reference to narrower lanes reducing crash rates is very misleading. That document references another study, which when read carefully does not show that lane diets actually reduce crashes. All other studies, including those in the Highway Safety Manual, show that lane reductions increase crashes, with double digit percentage increases once a lane is narrowed below 11 ft on roadways with posted speeds above 25 mph.	Speed Management	We will add to the end of the Lane Diets section: Any decision to implement a lane diet should be determined using current traffic safety research including the Highway Safety Manual (HSM).
162	Gil Chlewicki	215	9.3	Roadway Curvature - Applying AASHTO Green Book for Low-Speed Urban Streets on contexts other than urban streets is very dangerous. There is a very specific reason that the Green Book is recommending for an urban context only. It has only been proven through research to be safe in that context.	Speed Management	We will reference both Low-Speed Urban Streets *and* the conventional horizontal curvature section in the Green Book.

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163	Gil Chlewicki			What is being recommended for suburban contexts is essential to convert the roadway to an urban roadway that is out of context. This violates the Green Book and will end up hurting safety, operations, air quality, and the economy.	Speed Management	Per comment to #162 -- adjusting the reference to the Green Book addresses this comment.
164	Gil Chlewicki	217	9.3	Enforcement - Complete streets are not self-enforcing streets. The objective of complete streets is simply to provide the proper operations and safety for all users for the roadway.	Speed Management	We do not agree. Design should be the first means of regulating speeds. This is a valid objective. Otherwise roadways may be built to encourage speeding. Enforcement should only for those more deliberately choosing to operate a vehicle unsafely, or as an interim measure until such time as design can be modified to address the issues.
165	Gil Chlewicki	220	9.4	Section 9.4 - Applying urban solutions to suburban contexts will hurt safety for all users, particularly in Example A. Horizontal curves significantly increase the risk of crashes for vehicles and cyclists. Crosswalks near horizontal curves only increase the risk of crashes, especially when providing landscaping that further reduces sight distance. These examples should only apply to an already urban or town center environment.	Speed Management	These examples are explicitly for Downtowns and Town Centers, therefore the referenced Example A does not apply as the comment suggests. However, the elements described in Section 9.3 do apply to suburban contexts. We agree that introducing out-of-context curves is not preferable if a motorist is not expecting them. The purpose of these curves is to gradually shift a motorist's expectancy and lower speeds, in a context-sensitive manner. The curvature recommendations follow the same logic behind the design of roundabouts: they force a motorist to remain attentive and engaged. Straight segments induce boredom, complacency, & inattention.
170	Miriam Schoenbaum			No road in Montgomery County, including major highways, should have a target speed higher than 35 mph - except 270, the Beltway, and the ICC.	Speed Management	On page 207, all roads except for Country Connectors and Major Highways would have target speeds of 35 MPH or lower. We recognize this does not fully address the comment, but this guide was developed as a manner of consensus between multiple stakeholders, recognizing that there are a variety of needs and interests with regard to the role of mobility in the County.
173	Miriam Schoenbaum			No 85%th percentile speed.	Speed Management	While 85th Percentile speed is mentioned in the guide, the CSDG does not use this metric. This guide focuses on target speeds. The NACTO "City Limits" guidelines provide guidance for urban areas as well as suburban and rural areas. A future version might more deliberately include more aspects of City Limits.

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245	Project Team	228-231		<p>Consider adding a new section in Chapter 10... perhaps between 10.1 and 10.2, or between 10.2 and 10.3.</p> <p>This section would reference some things that should be used in prioritizing implementation of retrofits and reconstructions within the Capital Improvement Program.</p> <p>It would call out Equity Emphasis Areas, School Zones, Bicycle Pedestrian Priority Areas, and priorities identified by Master Plans as being examples of areas that should be given greater weight in allocating funding and resources.</p>	Implementation, Equity	We will make this edit.
246	Project Team	217	9.3	<p>Add some text to Enforcement to add...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design is the favored means inducing motorists to abide by traffic laws, reducing the need for enforcement. - Where enforcement remains necessary: automated enforcement is the preferred means of enforcement as to reduce interactions with officers and improve equitable (equal?) application of law. - However, attention must still be given toward the implementation of automated enforcement programs to ensure that the siting of these devices is not itself inequitable. - Auto-Enforcement must be tied to Vision Zero metrics and be supported by demonstrated traffic need, and awareness of greater concerns regarding auto-enforcement and equity impacts of fixed-value fines. 	Speed Management, Equity	We will make this edit.
247	Reemberto Rodriguez, Silver Spring Regional Service Center	230-231	10.2	Add mention of Urban Districts to graphic showing maint responsibilities (maybe a footnote/asterisk?), and review mentions of streetscaping for needed references to Urban Districts.	Implementation	This will be added to Chapter 10
263	MDOT SHA			The CSDG specifies when implementation would occur: when designing new or reconstruction projects; during capital improvement projects; or during resurfacing work.	Implementation	No changes needed.

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290	MDOT SHA - OOTS	209	8.2	It is not recommended to have Curb Extensions/Bulb Outs and Neckdowns/Chokers on Major Highways. Perhaps this could be changed to Not Permitted.	Speed Management	They're given as "Optional (Context-Sensitive)", which allows flexibility. If there are reasons they might be applicable: they should be considered. An example might be a Major Highway that has shoulders. At an intersection we might bump-out into that shoulder.
291	MDOT SHA - OOTS	221	9.4	Under the Proposed section, it should state "Signal timing allows continued..." instead of continues.	Speed Management	We will make this edit.
292	MDOT SHA - OOTS	230	10.2	Should it state MDOT SHA and MDOT MTA?	Implementation	We will make this edit.
293	MDOT SHA - OOTS	235	10.3	Should it state MDOT SHA?	Implementation	We will make this edit.
294	MDOT SHA - OOTS	236	10.3	In the first paragraph under Construction and Maintenance, it should reference Bicyclists needing temporary traffic control direction as well.	Implementation	We will make this edit.
312	Project Team			Add a note for Town Center Boulevards that in Urban Areas: they already have 25 MPH target speeds. These target speeds would remain in effect.	Speed Management	We will make this edit.
313	Project Team			Add language toward "20 is Plenty"	Speed Management	We will make this edit.