

Vision Zero Update and Work Program Discussion

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OVERVIEW

The purpose of this briefing is to receive a update on the County Executive’s draft Vision Zero 2030 Action Plan and FY 22-23 Work Plan (herein referred to as the Vision Zero 2030 Plan; Attachment A) and to approve comments to transmit to the project team.

INTRODUCTION

The Vision Zero 2030 Plan provides a roadmap for Montgomery County to reach Vision Zero by 2030, and it includes a detailed work plan for the next two years. Specifically, the Vision Zero 2030 Plan includes 45 action items focused around three themes: complete streets, multimodal future, and culture of safety. Every even fiscal year (FY22, FY24, etc.) the detailed, short-term work plan for the next two fiscal years will be updated so that it can inform the county’s capital improvements program.

BACKGROUND

Vision Zero is a proven approach to preventing roadway-related deaths and severe injuries. It represents a fundamental change in how we plan and design our roads, shifting from a focus on maximizing motor vehicle efficiency to ensuring that our roads are safe regardless of whether travel is by car, bus, bicycle or foot. Vision Zero recognizes that people will sometimes make mistakes and that our roads should be designed to ensure those inevitable mistakes do not result in severe injuries or fatalities.

Through its 2016 County Council resolution, Montgomery County committed to eliminating traffic fatalities and severe injuries by 2030. In 2017, the County Executive released an initial two-year action plan of activities to advance the county toward Vision Zero and substantial progress has been made toward most of these items. In 2020, a One-Year 2020 Action Plan and January – June 2021 Workplan were released by the county to bridge activities between the current Two-Year Action Plan and the Vision Zero 2030 Plan.

2030 VISION ZERO PLAN

The County Executive’s Office is leading the development of a 2030 Vision Zero Plan to guide the county towards achieving Vision Zero by 2030. In addition, the plan includes a detailed work plan for the next two years (FY22 and FY23).

The plan was developed through three interagency working groups:

- **Complete Streets** is addressing street design and engineering, as well as speed management
- **Multimodal Future** is addressing improved mobility options, land use planning, and vehicle design and technology

- **Culture of Safety** is addressing education, enforcement and regulation, and post-crash emergency response

Nine Planning Department and Parks Department staff participated in the working groups, and each working group included at least one staff member from either the Planning Department or Parks Department.

The 2030 Vision Zero Plan includes 45 action items categorized by the three working group themes. Ten action items are highlighted as “priority actions,” as they are expected to have the highest impact on reducing severe injuries and fatalities and support safe travel for all modes. The plan notes that “as budgeting and implementation decisions are made, priority should be given to these actions”:

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|---|---|
| 1. S-1 High Injury Network | 6. S-7: Separated, Low-Stress Bicycle Facilities |
| 2. M-1: Examine Speed Limit on all Projects | 7. S-13: Sidewalk Construction and Upgrades |
| 3. S-3: Frequent, Protected Crossings | 8. T-2: Transit Stop Safety |
| 4. T-1: Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure Along New Transportation Projects | 9. S-10: Provide Safety Upgrades during Routine Maintenance |
| 5. S-4: Signal Timing and Phasing | 10. P-4: End Impaired Driving Deaths |

The draft 2030 Vision Zero Plan was released to the public on April 15, 2021.

Community Engagement

Over the summer and fall of 2020, the Vision Zero program within the Office of the County Executive sponsored a series of surveys, interviews, meetings, letters to community organizations, and listening sessions (focus groups). The goal was to hear from a diverse array of resident perspectives on the current state of road safety and what they would like to see happen over the next decade to make the county’s roads safer. In total, there were 1,577 survey respondents, 208 residents were interviewed or participated in a community listening session, and 12 community organizations returned priority letters. The community feedback was summarized and provided to the workgroups developing the Plan

Following release of the draft plan, the County Executive’s Office facilitated five listening sessions in April and May 2021 to receive community feedback on the plan. In addition, community members could provide feedback via an online survey.

ANALYSIS

The 2030 Vision Zero Plan presents a holistic approach to Vision Zero, and the included action items address the county’s most pressing safety challenges. However, if the funding levels associated with the next two years are maintained for the remaining eight years of the plan horizon, the funded safety improvements are likely insufficient to reach zero severe injuries and fatalities by 2030.

The plan notes metrics for tracking progress within each category (included in a table on the following page). While these measures include some important indicators, they fall short of comprehensively tracking the county’s progress towards Vision Zero. The metrics should measure not just what is built, but where it is built and how it improves safety.

For example, instead of – or in addition to – measuring the feet of sidewalks built, the plan could measure the percent of pedestrian trips that can be made on a comfortable pedestrian network. While more is better, investments should be made in the places where they are most needed and will have the greatest safety benefit. Shifting to a focus on safe and comfortable pedestrian connectivity, rather than

sidewalk construction in general, incentivizes sidewalk improvements on roadways currently uncomfortable and unsafe for pedestrians due to vehicle speeds or other factors. Similarly, a focus on bicycle level of traffic stress emphasizes the need for improvements on corridors currently unsafe and uncomfortable for bicycling.

Category	Progress Measure
Complete Streets	Number of serious and fatal injury crashes along the High Injury Network
	Percentage of High Injury Network Streets with new traffic safety treatments
	Number of total intersections with new traffic safety treatments
	Linear feet of sidewalk built
	Miles of separated bicycle facilities built
Multimodal Future	Annual vehicle miles traveled
	Travel mode split
	Percent of transit stops along multi-lane roads located at or near a protected crossing
Culture of Safety	Community rating for ease of travel by bike, car, public transportation, and walking
	Percent of drivers in Montgomery County wearing seatbelt
	Percent of crashes with “big five” violations – speeding, impairment, distraction, occupant protection, and failure to yield right-of-way
	Reduction in collisions involving county-owned vehicles
	Percent of county employees given safety awareness training
	Response times for traffic collisions with injuries

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Elevate “S-11: Improved Lighting” to a priority action item.** Addressing lighting deficiencies is critical to improve pedestrian safety, as two thirds of pedestrian fatalities occurred in the dark. In addition, lighting-related crashes present an equity issue. While Equity Emphasis Areas only comprise seven percent of the county’s land area, nearly half of on-street pedestrian crashes at intersections in dark conditions occurred in Equity Emphasis Areas. Prioritizing lighting focuses resources in communities most impacted by traffic violence.
- **Include measures that tie in the goals and objectives of recent and ongoing planning efforts.** The Bicycle Master Plan, the forthcoming Pedestrian Master Plan, and the draft Complete Streets Design Guide provide guidance on what constitutes a safe and comfortable transportation network. The 2030 Vision Zero Plan metrics should build on this guidance. Recommended indicators include:
 - **Pedestrian Connectivity:** Percent of potential pedestrian trips that are able to be accomplished on a comfortable pedestrian network (in total, to schools, to transit, and to other points of interest).
 - **Bicycle Connectivity:** Percent of potential bicycle trips that are able to be accomplished on a comfortable bicycle network (in total, to schools, to transit, and to other points of interest).
 - **Protected Crossings:** Percent of streets meeting the protected crossing spacing thresholds included in the Complete Streets Design Guide for selected street types.
 - **Posted Speeds:** Percent of streets with posted speeds that match the street’s target speed, per the Complete Streets Design Guide.

The Planning Department will be developing these metrics and will make them available to the County Executive’s Office.

- **Incorporate equity into the plan’s metrics.** To understand and mitigate existing disparities for communities of different racial and socioeconomic makeup, these disparities must be measured.

Tracking metrics through an equity lens ensures that the county is not just building safer streets, but also doing so in the communities most in need of these improvements. It's recommended not that separate equity measures are developed, but that the planned metrics be disaggregated either based on the locations they serve (e.g. Equity Emphasis Areas vs. Non-Equity Emphasis Areas) or based on the people impacted (e.g. People of Color vs. white residents) as was done in the Bicycle Master Plan and will be included in the forthcoming Pedestrian Master Plan.

- **Calculate and publish the plan's metrics as part of each two-year work plan.** Acknowledging the need to balance between long-term planning, making immediate improvements, and adjusting as new opportunities and challenges arise, the 2030 Vision Zero Plan has multiple checkpoints to evaluate what is working, integrate new evidence and technologies, and adapt to changing budget and external factors. Every even fiscal year (FY22, FY24, etc.) the detailed, short-term work plan for the next two fiscal years will be updated so that it can inform the county's capital improvements program. This update should track progress not only on the actions included in the plan, but also on the established metrics. This quantitative review of progress can allow the county to amend its approach to implementation, as needed.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Vision Zero 2030 Action Plan and FY 22-23 Work Plan