



Post-Pandemic Traffic Counts Policy Update



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Description

On March 14, 2020, the Montgomery County Planning Department initiated an interim policy to not accept transportation impact studies using traffic counts taken during the COVID-19 pandemic. The [policy was updated](#) on May 7, 2020 to reflect changing conditions and to allow the use of existing counts taken prior to the pandemic, with potential modifications.

On September 24, 2020, the Planning Board was briefed on an [updated version](#) of this interim policy designed to reflect the absence of in-person learning in the county’s public schools and resultant absence of traffic associated with travel to and from public schools.

Adverse conditions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic continue to abate as evidenced by the county’s recent advancement to Phase 3 of the COVID-19 recovery plan in recognition of increasing vaccinations of area residents. Recently observed daily travel volumes on interstate roadways have nearly returned to pre-pandemic levels while local roadways continue to exhibit volumes somewhat lower than pre-pandemic levels.¹ Relative to pre-COVID traffic volumes, other data demonstrate that the distribution of traffic is generally flatter during peak travel hours.

With the opening of public schools later this summer, Planning staff believes travel volumes and patterns will represent a “new normal” and that as pandemic conditions continue to subside, it will take quite a while for traffic volumes on all roadways to return fully to pre-pandemic levels. With this in mind, the Department is planning to end the interim policy and return to the standard policy for the collection of new traffic counts as described in the *LATR Guidelines*. This includes generally not accepting counts more than one year old.

The Planning Board will be briefed on Planning Department plans to move forward with the collection of new traffic counts in support of transportation impact studies, without the application of an adjustment

¹ Schere, Dan. “Montgomery County Traffic Returning to Pre-pandemic Levels on Major Roads.” *Bethesda Magazine*, 21 June 2021, bethesdamagazine.com/bethesda-beat/traffic/montgomery-county-traffic-returning-to-pre-pandemic-levels-on-major-roads/. Accessed 23 June 2021.

factor, concurrent with the re-opening of county public schools on August 30. Until that time, the Department will continue to operate under the current interim policy, as presented to the Planning Board on September 24, 2020, with one notable exception. New traffic counts taken during the summer months before schools open will not be accepted, as per usual. Historical counts up to three years old will continue to be accepted until August 30.

EG/JS/aj