

# PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLAN

## WORK SESSION #1



### Description

The Planning Board will discuss public testimony on the *Pedestrian Master Plan*, both oral and written, received before the closing of the public record on April 6, 2023.



Eli Glazier, Project Lead, Countywide Planning and Policy Division

[Eli.Glazier@montgomeryplanning.org](mailto:Eli.Glazier@montgomeryplanning.org), 301-495-4548



David Anspacher, Planning Supervisor, Countywide Planning and Policy Division

[David.Anspacher@montgomeryplanning.org](mailto:David.Anspacher@montgomeryplanning.org), 301-495-2191



Jason Sartori, Division Chief, Countywide Planning and Policy Division

[Jason.Sartori@montgomeryplanning.org](mailto:Jason.Sartori@montgomeryplanning.org), 301-495-2172

## MASTER PLAN INFORMATION

### Lead Planner/Staff Contact

Eli Glazier

[Eli.Glazier@montgomeryplanning.org](mailto:Eli.Glazier@montgomeryplanning.org)

301-495-4548

### Planning Division

Countywide Planning and Policy

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### Planning Board Information

MCPB

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## SUMMARY

This document contains the following information:

- A list of topics to be discussed at this and future work sessions
- A description of the topics for this work session and staff responses to comments
- All written public testimony received by the closing of the public record
- A matrix of all received comments summarized with staff responses and recommendations

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## INTRODUCTION

The Pedestrian Master Plan is Montgomery Planning's first comprehensive vision to create safer, more comfortable experiences walking or rolling around the county, and to make getting around more convenient and accessible for every pedestrian.

Pedestrian comfort walking or rolling (with a mobility device) in Montgomery County can vary greatly depending on where you are. Some roads and intersections are safer and more accessible than others. To ensure a less stressful traveling experience, the county recommended the Planning Department put together a master plan to address the issues all pedestrians face in Montgomery County.

Since work began on the Pedestrian Master Plan in fall 2019, Montgomery Planning has held numerous in-person and virtual community engagement events and activities, designed and distributed a survey to 60,000 households, and collected and analyzed commute and crash data to have a deeper understanding of the issues important to pedestrians of all backgrounds, ages, and types of mobility.

The Pedestrian Master Plan provides detailed, actionable recommendations in line with national and international best practices to improve the pedestrian experience, from more and better places to cross the street to a data-driven, equity-focused approach to identifying the county's future pedestrian/bicycle capital investments. The plan vision is supported by four goals:

- Increase walking rates and pedestrian satisfaction
- Create a comfortable, connected, convenient pedestrian network
- Enhance pedestrian safety
- Build an equitable and just pedestrian network

## WORK SESSION SCHEDULE

Comments on the Public Hearing Draft of the Pedestrian Master Plan were received from 93 individuals, organizations, municipalities, and government agencies. All written testimony can be found in Attachment A. All testimony and staff responses can be found in Attachment B.

**There is overwhelming support for the plan.** Of the 93 commenters, 32 expressed overall support for the plan, two expressed opposition to the plan and 59 commented on specific elements of the plan but did not indicate overall support or opposition.

Overall, 199 comments were received on the plan. Planning staff has identified 86 comments to discuss with the Planning Board and have excluded those comments that met one of the following criteria that are not anticipated to be included in work session discussions:

- 1) Expressing overall support or opposition to the Pedestrian Master Plan
- 2) Expressing support for a particular plan recommendation or statement
- 3) Asking a question about a recommendation in the plan
- 4) Support or opposition to a specific issue that is beyond the scope of the Pedestrian Master Plan

The County Executive has not formally submitted comments at the time of staff report posting.

After reviewing public testimony, Planning staff developed the following schedule for the work sessions.

The April 13, 2023 work session is anticipated to include these topics:

- Topic 1: Engagement
- Topic 2: Plan Organization
- Topic 3: Vision, Goals, and Objectives
- Topic 4: Existing Conditions
- Topic 5: Data
- Topic 6: Recommendation Suitability
- Topic 7: Climate
- Topic 8: Disability and Accessibility
- Topic 9: Older Adults
- Topic 10: Sidewalk Construction
- Topic 11: Sidewalk Obstructions

Future work sessions (on April 27 and May 11) will include responses to the County Executive's comments, as well as:

- Topic 1: Prioritization
- Topic 2: New Connections

- Topic 3: Parkland
- Topic 4: Pedestrian Amenities
- Topic 5: State Highways
- Topic 6: Motor Vehicles
- Topic 7: Education
- Topic 8: Enforcement
- Topic 9: Funding
- Topic 10: Intersections
- Topic 11: Lighting
- Topic 12: Design

Planning Board commissioners are asked to:

- Identify any additional topics related to the Pedestrian Master Plan that they would like to discuss during the work sessions.

Throughout this document, Planning staff's recommended modifications to the plan are displayed as follows:

- Underlines represent additions to the text
- Brackets represent deletions from the text

## WORK SESSION #1 TOPICS

### TOPIC 1: ENGAGEMENT

#### COMMENT 1.1

*People within communities of color should have the same pedestrian safety measures as our affluent neighbors.*

**Planning Staff Response:** Agree. Communities across Montgomery County should expect a high quality, safe and direct pedestrian experience. The county should take steps to address inequitable pedestrian conditions that negatively affect safety and connectivity. Planning staff has used an equity lens throughout the Pedestrian Master Plan process, including: 1) broad-based engagement efforts to data collection, 2) analysis that parsed disparities based on Equity Focus Areas, and 3) an approach to prioritizing future investments with a focus on equity. This plan is a serious attempt to ensure an equitable pedestrian future for Montgomery County.

#### COMMENT 1.2

*Representation is extremely important. In a county that is majority people of color, we need to see these people sitting at the table. You don't see it tonight or at these other meetings. Planning and the county must do better.*

**Planning Staff Response:** There is always room for improvement in master plan engagement, especially for a countywide plan.

Engagement with the plan's Community Advisory Group was an integral component of the planning process. Members of this group include residents from across the county, the disability community, and racial and ethnic groups including the county's African Affairs Advisory Group, the African American Advisory Group, the Caribbean American Advisory Group, the Latin American Advisory Group, and the Middle Eastern American Advisory Group.

While public testimony can be very helpful in guiding the plan forward, the plan recommendations are built on a foundation of diverse voices and perspectives from people who may or may not have shared testimony with the Planning Board.

Planning staff understand that addressing inequities will require a sustained effort over many years and are committed to engaging with groups that represent the county's diversity as the plan proceeds toward implementation.

### COMMENT 1.3

*Concern that the Pedestrian Master Plan had insufficient engagement with churches, synagogues, and private schools.*

**Planning Staff Response:** Disagree. In July 2022, Planning staff reached out via mail to 572 houses of worship to share information about the Pedestrian Master Plan, direct interested people to the project website, and encourage these communities to host a meeting about the plan. While no groups requested a meeting, this effort enabled these institutions to inform their membership about the plan.

Staff focused outreach on public schools rather than private schools. This is because public school students are more likely to live within a walkable distance to their school.

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## TOPIC 2: PLAN ORGANIZATION

### COMMENT 2.1

*Reorganize the recommendations section from Build, Maintain, etc. to ensure the entities responsible for making changes can clearly understand what they need to do. All recommendations that would require changes to an agency's standards, policies and practices should be grouped together to make it easier for the agency to see clearly what they need to address. Such a reorganization would also help the public understand where an agency's policies adversely affect pedestrian safety and where to apply pressure to make the right thing happen.*

**Planning Staff Response:** Disagree. Planning staff believes it is helpful to introduce the Design, Policy, and Programming recommendations and key actions thematically, but agrees that to assist in implementation, the recommendations could also be presented in a format that makes it easy for agencies to understand their responsibilities.

**Recommended Action:** Planning staff recommends adding a summary table at the beginning of the Design, Policy, and Programming recommendation section that identifies each recommendation the applicable lead and support agencies, and the Plan goals the recommendation addresses.

### COMMENT 2.2

*Include municipalities as stakeholders in the key actions and as implementation partners.*

**Planning Staff Response:** Agree.

**Recommended Action:** Planning staff recommends adding "Municipalities" to the list of entities on pages 61 and 62 that will be responsible for implementing the key actions. As applicable "Municipalities" will be added.



### COMMENT 2.3

*The methodology for prioritizing projects should be moved from the appendix to the body of the Plan so that it can be put into better context.*

**Planning Staff Response:** Disagree. Methodologies are more appropriately located in an appendix.

## TOPIC 3: VISION, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

### COMMENT 3.1

*Pedestrian Safety should be the top goal, not increased walking. Increased walking follows from walking being safer.*

**Planning Staff Response:** Disagree. The goals are not intended to be prioritized, but rather to reflect that higher walking rates are the result of achieving the other three goals.

**Recommended Action:** Planning staff recommends revising page 10 of the plan to clarify this as follows:

The vision is defined by four goals.

Goal 1: Increasing Walking Rates and Pedestrian Satisfaction

Goal 2: Creating a Comfortable, Connected Convenient Pedestrian Network

Goal 3: Enhance Pedestrian Safety

Goal 4: Build an Equitable and Just Pedestrian Network

These goals are not listed in order of importance. Rather they are intended to show that the ultimate success of this plan will be reflected in higher rates of walking in Montgomery County (Goal 1), which will come about only if we are successful in creating a more comfortable, connected and convenient pedestrian network (Goal 2) that enhances public safety (Goal 3) in a way that is equitable and just (Goal 4).

### COMMENT 3.2

*Include a target year for each of the objectives.*

**Planning Staff Response:** Disagree. This plan explicitly avoids providing a target year as the County Council has previously requested that target years be excluded from metrics in master plans. For example, target years were not included in the metrics in two recently approved countywide plans: Thrive Montgomery 2050 and the Bicycle Master Plan.

### COMMENT 3.3

*To better reflect the different area types in the county, analyses should use the area type recommendations in the Complete Streets Design Guide (Downtown, Town Center, Suburban, Industrial, Country), and subdivide Town Center per the “Centers” typology identified in Thrive Montgomery 2050 (Medium Centers, Small Centers, and Neighborhood / Village Centers).*

**Planning Staff Response:** Agree. Objectives 1.1 and 1.2 on page 11 are tied to urban areas, transit corridors and exurban/rural areas. Planning staff acknowledges that moving forward, it is better to align to the Downtown, Town Center, Suburban, Industrial and Country areas identified in the Complete Streets Design Guide and potentially to subdivide Town Centers based on the Medium, Small and Neighborhood areas identified in Thrive Montgomery 2050. Exceptions to this will be made based on the need to get a statistically valid sample size for data related to pedestrian satisfaction and to tie to the geographic boundaries established in data sources such as the US Census. Planning staff will reconsider the geographic areas of analysis when the initial Pedestrian Master Plan Biennial Monitoring Report is prepared in 2025.

### COMMENT 3.4

*Increase the walking rate targets. How will these targets reduce greenhouse gas emission reductions?*

**Planning Staff Response:** Agree with Modifications. While Planning staff would like to achieve higher walking rates, the rates identified in the plan on pages 11-13 are ambitious given the county’s existing and planned land use pattern. However, as conditions continue to change, the targets can be amended.

**Recommended Action:** Planning staff recommends adding the underlined text to the plan’s Monitoring section, page 273:

MO-1g: Consider revising the targets for each objective as part of the Pedestrian Master Plan Biennial Monitoring Reports.

As the Pedestrian Master Plan is implemented, there may be opportunities to adjust objective targets in response to county policy, changes in existing conditions, and other factors.

Goal: Walking Rates

Lead: Montgomery Planning

### COMMENT 3.5

*Additional Objectives and Performance Measures should be added:*

- *Access to BRT*
- *Percentage of roads with appropriate posted speed limit*
- *Frequency and severity of speeding*
- *Frequency of red light running*
- *Frequency of driver failure to yield to pedestrians*
- *Percentage of roadway lighting up to standards and operational*
- *Percentage of crosswalk markings in good condition*
- *Percentage of stop bars and roadway lane markings that reflect the safest roadway operation for pedestrians*

*There should be additional safety metrics for transportation capital projects to ensure agencies responsible for roadway safety are held accountable. This should include a one-year post-installation evaluation to determine if the project goals when it comes to pedestrian safety/comfort and roadway target speed have been met.*

**Planning Staff Response:** Agree with Modifications. In the experience of Planning staff, objectives are more likely to be measured when they do not require substantial new data collection. As the Pedestrian Master Plan already proposes many new data sources that will need to be measured biennially (countywide pedestrian survey, school travel survey, etc.), Planning staff proposes exploring the feasibility and value of including additional performance measures, such as those listed in the comment, as part of the development of the 2023 - 2024 Pedestrian Master Plan Biennial Monitoring Report.

## TOPIC 4: EXISTING CONDITIONS

### COMMENT 4.1

*We disagree with the assertion on page[s 37-38] that, “Missing sidewalks on local streets are not classified as sidewalk gaps because traffic volumes and speed limits often allow for a comfortable experience for those pedestrians travelling in roadways.” As mobility impaired individuals, low vision/blind pedestrians and or those with low hearing (amongst other disabilities), we know that walking in roadways is never safe or comfortable and must not be the only option for pedestrians of all ages.*

**Planning Staff Response:** Neutral. While a shared roadway experience is not safe or comfortable for many types of pedestrians, the note referenced in the text is specific to Table 11. It is not a general statement intended to downplay the importance of sidewalks. Planning staff will continue to update the sidewalk data to allow the future measurement of sidewalk gaps along local streets.

### COMMENT 4.2

*This section should include:*

- 1. Crashes occurring within federal, state, and local parks*
- 2. Data on speeding citations, illegal right turns, red light running, violations of pedestrian right-of-way*
- 3. A survey of lighting conditions*
- 4. A table showing where current posted speeds exceed statutory and/or target speeds, and a rationale from SHA or MCDOT justifying the higher speed.*

**Planning Staff Response:** Agree. (1) Planning staff used the county’s publicly-available crash data for the plan’s pedestrian crash analysis. All crashes within that dataset were used except for those along limited-access highways such as I-270. (4) Planning staff believes that the upcoming update to the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways is the appropriate opportunity to compare posted speed limits to statutory and target speeds.

**Recommended Action:** (2) Planning staff will request data on speeding citations, illegal right turns, red light running, violations of pedestrian right-of-way and will update the plan with the data to the extent they are available and useful and update the Existing Conditions section accordingly.

(3) Planning staff recommend adding the following key action for a lighting survey:

Key Action B-5d: Conduct a survey of lighting conditions countywide.

In addition to developing lighting standards that will improve the quality of lighting over time (B-5a), it will be helpful to conduct a study to understand where existing lighting conditions are deficient. This study will help guide implementation of the updated lighting standards in a data-driven way.

Goal: Pedestrian Safety

Leads: MCDOT

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## TOPIC 5: DATA

### COMMENT 5.1

*This is not a data-driven plan. A big blind spot is data about the projected uses of some things like bike lanes during inclement weather.*

**Planning Staff Response:** Disagree. In addition to using regional and national information on pedestrian activity in Montgomery County, Planning staff developed several unique data sources to provide the most helpful existing conditions backbone for plan recommendations. These data sources include a statistically-valid countywide survey about pedestrian travel and preferences, a detailed Pedestrian Level of Comfort analysis that examined every single sidewalk, street, and crossing in the county, a student travel tally that incorporated more than 70,000 responses, and an analysis of pedestrian crashes between 2015 and 2020. This extensive data collection effort allowed the project team to understand disparities and inequities in pedestrian safety and access.

Bike lane usage was not considered as bicycling is not a focus of the Pedestrian Master Plan.

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## TOPIC 6: RECOMMENDATION SUITABILITY

### COMMENT 6.1

*Every recommendation won't be suitable for every situation.*

**Planning Staff Response:** Agree. While some recommendations apply countywide, most key actions are written to ensure implementing agencies have discretion to treat different places within the county differently based on the unique context. For instance, many of the recommendations pertaining to signals are focused on the county's Downtowns and Town Centers (Key Action B-2a on page 68, for example), while there is a whole set of recommendations identifying sidepaths (shared pedestrian and bicycle paths) along country roads (pages 259 to 266).

## TOPIC 7: CLIMATE

### COMMENT 7.1

*Implicit references to climate change and the plan's relationship to climate change mitigation and adaptation should be made explicit.*

**Planning Staff Response:** Agree.

**Recommended Action:** Planning staff recommends the following changes to the plan to incorporate additional references to climate change and the relationship between plan recommendations and the climate:

On page 48, add the following as the second-last sentence in the first paragraph of the Tree Canopy section: “Tree canopy cover will only become more important as climate change increases temperatures over time.”

On page 59, add the following in the “A Comfortable, Connected, Convenient Pedestrian Network” section as the last sentence in the final bullet: “All things equal, people traveling along less comfortable sidewalks in EFA communities will experience higher temperatures as a result of climate change than those in other parts of the county.”

On page 74, add the following in the description of Key Action B-4a: “Making it easier to walk to more destinations within the same distance will encourage more people to choose walking over other travel modes, which will reduce vehicle miles traveled and reduce the county’s transportation emissions.”

On page 75, add the following in the description of Key Action B-4c: “Making it more likely future students will walk to school has numerous benefits, including operational savings from reduced busing, reduced transportation emissions, and fewer pedestrian-vehicle conflicts at arrival and dismissal.”

On page 85, add the following in the description of Key Action B-7g: “These investments can provide substantial public benefits, including reduced transportation emissions and economic development, but poor pedestrian and bicycle connectivity in the surrounding area makes it difficult for these projects to reach their full potential ridership.”

On page 88, add the following in the description of Key Action B-8e: “This makes it more difficult for pedestrians to travel through these communities and encourages driving for walkable trips, increasing the county’s transportation emissions and the climate impact of development.”

On page 107, add the following as the last sentence in the description of Key Action P-5d: “Reducing vehicular trips to schools lowers the likelihood of student-involved pedestrian

crashes at arrival and dismissal and minimizes the transportation emissions associated with the public school system.”

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## TOPIC 8: DISABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

### COMMENT 8.1

*Disability groups should evaluate the recommendations in the Pedestrian Master Plan.*

**Planning Staff Response:** Agree. Over the course of the plan, community members with disabilities were regularly consulted, and their input has been invaluable in developing the draft document. The project team had regular conversations with the Commission on People with Disabilities, the National Capital Chapter of the American Council of the Blind of Maryland, and other groups like the Commission on Aging.

### COMMENT 8.2

*Projects should aim to meet ADA Best Practices, rather than just ADA minimums.*

**Planning Staff Response:** Agree. No changes are needed, as Key Action EA-7a recommends going beyond current accessibility requirements to improve access for people with vision, hearing, cognitive, and other types of disabilities. It states: “Modify the County Code and associated regulations to include additional accessibility requirements that address barriers to traveling to and through all commercial, residential, and institutional buildings for people with vision, hearing, cognitive, and other types of disabilities.”

### COMMENT 8.3

*Tactile crosswalks should be installed so a blind person can easily figure out where they are.*

**Planning Staff Response:** Agree. A tactile crosswalk is a crosswalk that has tactile delineator strips down the middle or along both sides of a crosswalk to help people with vision disabilities successfully navigate across the street. This treatment is included in MCDOT's *Planning and Designing Streets to be Safer and More Accessible for People with Vision Disabilities* document and Planning staff will work with MCDOT staff to implement it.



A tactile crosswalk in the center of the painted crosswalk in Japan. Courtesy: Wikimedia

#### COMMENT 8.4

*The county should limit designated bike lane installation because they have a negative impact on pedestrian safety and people who need to drive and park.*

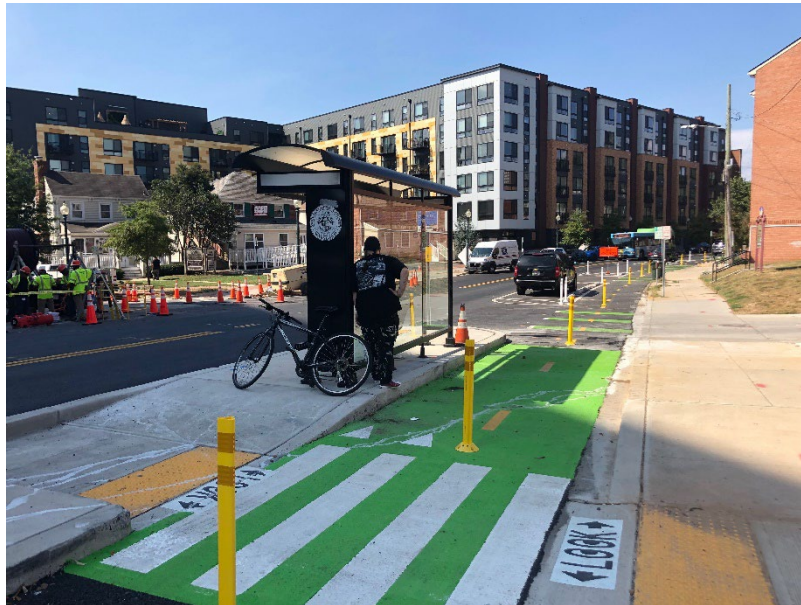
**Planning Staff Response:** Disagree. Where separated bike lanes create new conflict points for pedestrians and motorists, the appropriate response is to mitigate these conflict points as part of individual construction projects, not to limit the construction of bikeways that are needed to improve transportation choice and bicyclist safety. The Montgomery County Department of Transportation is a national leader in mitigating conflicts between different roadway users along separated bike lanes.



#### COMMENT 8.5

*Floating bus stops need to be designed safely.*

**Planning Staff Response:** Agree. A floating bus stop locates bike lanes behind bus stops to avoid conflicts between bicyclists and buses. While this configuration improves safety for bicyclists, it creates additional conflicts for pedestrians, and is especially concerning to people with little or no vision. The Montgomery County Department of Transportation has continued to work closely with members of the disability community to ensure the design of floating bus stops mitigates pedestrian-bicycle conflict.



Floating bus stop along 2nd Avenue in Downtown Silver Spring

#### COMMENT 8.6

*Pavement resurfacing projects should ensure that ADA requirements are met within their project limits and opportunities for increasing pedestrian safety should be pursued. For example, the SE corner of East-West Hwy at 16th Street should be made ADA complaint during the resurfacing process.*

**Planning Staff Response:** Disagree. ADA improvements should not be required to be implemented as part of routine pavement maintenance projects.

#### COMMENT 8.7

*Bikes, scooters and skateboards are dangerous to pedestrians, especially the elderly and disabled, and should not be allowed on sidewalks.*

**Planning Staff Response:** Disagree. In many parts of the county, sidewalks are the only place to safely use bikes, scooters and skateboards. While there may be inconsiderate users of these devices, as there are with all modes of transportation, banning them will not be effective at reducing conflicts. Instead, building out the separated bike lane network envisioned in the Bicycle Master Plan will provide a dedicated space for people who use bicycles, scooters and skateboards to travel.

#### COMMENT 8.8

*A speed limit of 5 mph should be set for scooter users on public sidewalks to ensure pedestrian safety.*

**Planning Staff Response:** Disagree. The GPS technology used by shared scooters is not sensitive enough to differentiate between a sidewalk and the roadway immediately adjacent, so sidewalk-specific speed limits are not practical. Applying a blanket 5mph speed limit for scooters would make them unsafe to use on roadways. Instead of a lower speed limit, building out the separated bike lane network envisioned in the Bicycle Master Plan will provide a dedicated space for people using scooters to travel. All people using sidewalks should be courteous when approaching and passing people traveling more slowly.

#### COMMENT 8.9

*Better bus stop access and accessibility is needed. Either reintroduce/expand the Bus Stop Improvement Program.*

**Planning Staff Response:** Agree.

**Recommended Action:** Planning staff recommends adding the underlined text to Key Action B-7a on page 82:

Key Action B-7a: Increase funding for the Annual Sidewalk Program and other related Capital Improvement Program efforts, including the Bus Stop Improvements capital funding program, to address missing, broken, or substandard sidewalks and other infrastructure.

#### COMMENT 8.10

*Ensure that approved maintenance of traffic plans in regard to pedestrian accommodation during construction are followed but also improved. The MCDOT division chief in charge of design should be required to sign off on all diversions of pedestrians during construction, as well as diversions from ADA Best Practices and diversions from county roadway standards. Detailed reasons should be included with the package submitted for sign-off.*

**Planning Staff Response:** Agree with Modifications. County legislation from 2020 improved the maintenance of pedestrian detour through construction zones. There continue to be concerns with construction blocking pedestrian pathways unnecessarily or without permission. One helpful update to county policy would be the publication of approved pedestrian detour plans in an easily accessible format so members of the public can understand what is permitted and follow up with the appropriate staff if they believe a permit condition is not being adhered to.

**Recommended Action:** Planning staff recommends adding Key Action EA-9b on page 125:

Key Action EA-9b: Publish approved Maintenance of Traffic plans in an easily accessible format.

Maintenance of Traffic plans explain how different travel modes will be handled through construction zones. These plans are developed so travel can continue safely and with minimal detour through these areas. However, the approved plans are not readily available for public review, and it is not straightforward for community members to know who at what agency to contact about a potential violation. Making the plans accessible and providing points of contact will make it easier for pedestrian access to be maintained appropriately.

Goals: Equitable and Just Pedestrian Network

Leads: MCDOT, MCDPS

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## TOPIC 9: OLDER ADULTS

### COMMENT 9.1

*Additional emphasis should be placed on improving areas where older adults are active, not just where schools and playgrounds are.*

**Planning Staff Response:** No change is needed as the Public Hearing Draft currently includes the following recommendations that explicitly improve access for older adults:

- B-4h: Provide public seating, restrooms, and other pedestrian amenities in Downtowns, Town Centers, and along Boulevards.
- EA-2c: Provide additional on-street parking corrals for dockless vehicles in high-use areas and coordinate with operators to provide incentives to encourage their use.
- EA-3a: Lower the pedestrian walking speed standard at signalized intersections frequented by older pedestrians, younger pedestrians, and those with disabilities.

Many other recommendations would benefit older adults, even without specific mention of those benefits, including the sidewalk maintenance actions in MA-1 and MA-2, the crossing improvement

recommendations in P-2, and all of the other recommendations to expand access not described above.

- Planning staff reviewed the draft plan for other opportunities to emphasize improving access for older adults and does not believe additional changes are needed.

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## TOPIC 10: SIDEWALK CONSTRUCTION

### COMMENT 10.1

*Historic district sidewalks should maintain the look of the neighborhood and not kill trees. Brookeville Road's 2.5' permeable sidewalks are a correct approach. Other historic districts should get similar treatment if sidewalks are being considered.*

**Planning Staff Response:** Disagree. Sidewalk construction should make every effort to minimize tree loss, but accessibility for those with disabilities is a primary concern. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) establishes a minimum sidewalk width of 3', with 5' passing spaces provided every 200 feet or less. That said, sidewalks in historic districts require special permits and coordination under County Code Section 24A-6.

### COMMENT 10.2

*The sidewalk program should be revamped to be holistic, cross-departmental -- not focused just on sidewalks but on all ways to maximize neighborhood safety, preserve trees, and enhance the pedestrian experience.*

**Planning Staff Response:** Disagree. The Annual Sidewalk Program should continue to construct sidewalks in residential neighborhoods. MCDOT can continue to coordinate between the different groups responsible for sidewalks, traffic calming, trees, and other streetscape elements to ensure the best, most effective projects are moving forward to construction.

### COMMENT 10.3

*In recommendation B-1a, the proposed shift from a "reactive" sidewalk project to a "proactive" sidewalk project should not remove existing sidewalk requests from the queue and should continue to permit residents to request sidewalks.*

**Planning Staff Response:** Agree with Modifications. The plan envisions the Annual Sidewalk Program proactively building sidewalks based on considerations that would include pedestrian safety (crashes). By moving away from a request-based system, county residents can be more confident that

the sidewalks that are built will improve pedestrian safety and connectivity. However, sidewalk projects that are already in the construction queue should not be removed.

**Recommended Action:** Planning staff recommends adding language to the description of Key Action B-1a on page 64: “Sidewalk requests already in the Annual Sidewalk Program queue should continue to be considered for future construction.”

#### COMMENT 10.4

*We should ensure that sidewalks along roadways classified as arterials and higher have adequate space for pedestrians. The reasons for deviations from the County’s road standards and ADA Best Practices should be made part of the project record and made publicly available. All too often with retrofit projects, there is a tendency to start not even with the appropriate road standard on whose creation and adoption a lot of staff time and legislators’ time has been spent, but to minimize the footprint of the project to reduce impacts on residents’ perceived property line. While a smaller footprint may be more acceptable to the abutting property owner, the pedestrian space is often the loser by means of a much narrower landscape panel separating them from traffic or by that panel’s complete elimination. There may be sufficient reasons for making such a decision, but written documentation is needed to deter such decisions being made just because it’s politically easier in the moment and the decision-makers (Planning Board and County Council) should be aware of the trade-offs being made.*

**Planning Staff Response:** Agree.

**Recommended Action:** Planning staff recommends adding Key Action B-1X between B-1d and B-1e to read:

Key Action B-1X: Document deviations from Complete Streets Design Guide streetscape default widths where applicable.

The Complete Streets Design Guide identifies preferred, default, and minimum widths of different roadway elements from travel lanes to sidewalks and landscape buffers. These widths were agreed upon through a collaborative process between MCDOT, MCDPS, and Montgomery Planning. Where public or private projects are not providing the default widths, staff must document the reasons that prevent achieving the CSDG dimensions as part of regulatory staff reports.

Goal: Comfortable, Connected Pedestrian Network

Lead: Montgomery Planning, MCDPS, MCDOT

#### COMMENT 10.5

*Support for streamlining the sidewalk construction public engagement process and changing the conversation from whether a sidewalk will be built to how the sidewalk will be built in a contextually appropriate way.*

*Opposition to streamlining the sidewalk construction public engagement process in favor of earlier engagement and additional neighborhood by neighborhood engagement about whether sidewalks are wanted.*

**Planning Staff Response:** No change. Key Action B-1b is intended to be implemented in concert with B-1a. The intention is that the county should proactively build sidewalks in residential areas where they provide the largest connectivity and safety benefits. This proactive approach will not be successful if constructing the highest priority connections requires neighborhood approval. Community members are welcome to oppose sidewalk construction, but the feedback MCDOT should be looking for as they construct sidewalks is how to make the necessary sidewalks context-sensitive, not whether the sidewalk should be built at all.

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### TOPIC 11: SIDEWALK OBSTRUCTION

#### COMMENT 11.1

*Sidewalks should be checked every two years to ensure that adjacent landscaping has not encroached on sidewalks and paths. Where encroachments occur, adjacent property owners should be notified that vegetation should be removed within two feet of the sidewalk or path.*

**Planning Staff Response:** Agree with Modifications.

**Recommended Action:** Planning staff recommends updating the description of Key Action MA-2a to add: “MCDOT should develop a plan for how often streets and pathways will be audited.”

## ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A: Public Hearing Draft Plan
- Attachment B: Public Hearing Draft Appendix
- Attachment C: Complete Written Public Testimony
- Attachment D: Summarized Public Testimony Comment Matrix
- Attachment E: All Public Comments