BIKEWAY BRANDING PROJECT

Description

The Montgomery County Bikeway System is a planned network safe and comfortable bikeways that create an equitable transportation experience. This network connects people to jobs, schools, shopping, dining, and recreation opportunities while elevating the personal and economic health of our residents and communities. The Bikeway Branding Project provides guidance to elevate the narrative of bicycle infrastructure as something that invites all riders, from all backgrounds, to feel secure and welcome.

Jon Ryder, Planner II, Countywide Planning and Policy Division
Jon.Ryder@montgomeryplanning.org, 301-495-4596

David Anspacher, Multimodal Transportation Supervisor, Countywide Planning and Policy Division
David.Anspacher@montgomeryplanning.org, 301-495-2191

Jason Sartori, Division Chief, Countywide Planning and Policy Division
Jason.Sartori@montgomeryplanning.org, 301-495-2172

SUMMARY

The Montgomery County Bicycle Master Plan created a vision for world-class bikeways throughout the county. This bikeway system will be an extensive network of well-planned, safe, and comfortable facilities that create an equitable transportation experience. It will connect people to the places they want to reach while elevating the personal and economic health of residents and communities.

The Bikeway Branding Project develops a cohesive brand identity including logos, fonts, and branding placement and provides recommendations on how to implement a consistent and recognizable look and feel to communicate the extent and benefits of the Montgomery County bikeway system.

The project also includes a wayfinding and signage system that will further create a connective experience for people traveling through the county via the extensive bikeway network.

MASTER PLAN INFORMATION

Draft

Planning Board

Lead Planner

Jon Ryder

Staff Contact

Jon.Ryder@montgomeryplanning.org,
301-495-4596

Date Posted

May 18, 2023

Planning Division

Countywide Planning and Policy

Planning Board Information

MCPB
Item No. 6
May 25, 2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 1 – PROJECT OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The 2018 *Montgomery County Bicycle Master Plan* lays out a vision for an extensive system of bikeways throughout the county. The envisioned network will become an irresistible transportation option, allowing riders to travel in a safe and comfortable manner to the places that they want to reach. For the network to become truly "world-class," residents of Montgomery County must understand that the network is designed for ALL people and be aware of the benefits of using the bikeway system.

Brand Defined

Developing a consistent and recognizable look and feel to communications materials helps the intended audience identify the source and content of the communication. It is a way of distinguishing one's product or service, helping to make a memorable impression. The Montgomery County Bikeway Branding Project develops a unique brand for the county's emerging bicycling network.

However, a brand is more than just a logo. It is a symbolic embodiment of all the information connected to the bikeway network and serves to create associations and expectations around it. This collective perception, planned or incidental, is the result of every interaction a user has with the bikeway network.

The Bikeway Branding Project creates a cohesive brand image that elevates the narrative of bicycle infrastructure as something that invites all riders, from all backgrounds, to feel secure and welcome while traveling throughout their community. The brand will create immediate recognition and understanding of the type of experience a user can expect from the county's bikeways, both within their immediate community or as they travel further out to different destinations. Finally, the brand will further the county's goal of "15-minute living" by encouraging all residents to consider a healthier, sustainable, and budget friendly transportation option for everyday use.

ROUTE CLASSIFICATION

The Montgomery County Bikeways network is a collection of all the bicycle routes, both existing and proposed, that traverse Montgomery County. While routes may vary in facility types and physical surroundings, from a wayfinding and signage perspective they are classified in two ways: Bikeways and Breezeways. The Wayfinding and Sign System utilizes color so that cyclists may quickly and easily distinguish between the route types in any environment.

Most routes in the system are labeled as Bikeways and meet the standard of having significant portions of continuous low stress facilities and riding experience. These bikeways will use the dark green-on-white color palette and "Bikeways" logo (Figure 1, left).

Routes designated by the county as the "highest and best experience" will be labeled Breezeways and will be highlighted using a special cranberry-on-white color palette (Figure 1, right). Breezeways are the arterials of the bikeway network and will be designed using the highest standards. Built with commuters and longer utilitarian trips in mind, they will enable cyclists of all abilities to travel along the same corridor without compromising each other's travel speed, safety, or comfort. The Breezeway network will provide direct and efficient routes between major activity centers across Montgomery County.

Figure 1: Bikeways and Breezeway Logos:

PROJECT TEAM

The project team consisted of the following members:

Core Team

- Montgomery Planning
- Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT)
- Guide Studio (project consultant)

Stakeholder Committee

- Montgomery Planning
- Montgomery Parks
- Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT)
- Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA)
- Cities of Gaithersburg, Rockville, and Takoma Park

Steering Committee

- Washington Area Bicyclists Association (WABA)
- Montgomery County Bicycling Advocacy Group (MCBAG)
- Representatives from the five Regional Services Centers
- Representatives from the three Urban Districts

PROJECT GOALS

The Bikeway Branding Project (BBP) targets five main goals:

1. Develop a brand strategy for the bikeway system that defines target audiences, distinct advantages, and the benefits of using the system.
2. Create a unique brand identity that will be the symbolic representation of the Bikeway system as represented by the Bikeways and Breezeways logos.
3. Create a wayfinding framework by analyzing the project's study areas to determine the types of signage and other placemaking elements that would be appropriate to include in the kit-of-parts for both the Bikeways (Figure 2) and Breezeways (Figure 3).
4. Develop a sign type/element "kit-of-parts" for both the Bikeway and Breezeway facilities.
5. Develop a set of standards and guidelines for use of all the elements of the brand as well as guidance and rules on the purpose, design, and construction of elements of the Kit of Parts.
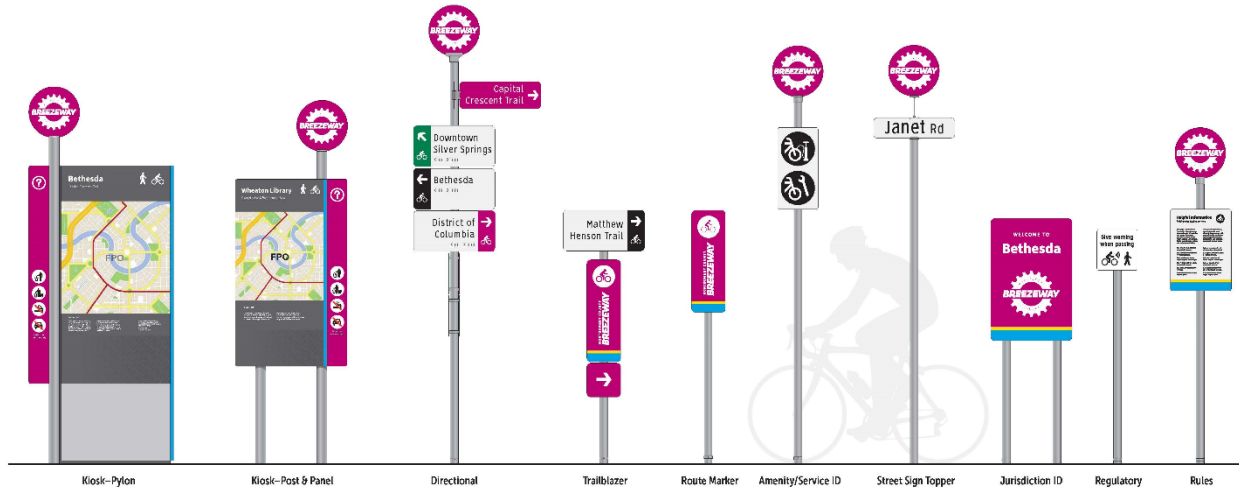
Figure 2: The Breezeways Signage Family consists of informational kiosks, directional signage, and route markers. Signage uses a cranberry on white color palate and includes the Breezeways Logo as a round signpost topper.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

Brand Style Guidelines

The Brand Style Guide (Attachment A) provides detailed documentation of the brand platform to ensure consistency of visual identity and messaging. A brand platform includes the correct and incorrect uses of the brand, its various applications, and styles. The guide includes directions on color palettes, imagery use, typography and tonality guidelines with samples as well as shared-use guidelines between the stakeholder organizations. The Brand-use Guidelines will be one of the most important deliverables because the brand will be used widely by various departments and programs and consistency is critical to success.

Sign Standards Manual

The Sign Standards Manual (Attachment B) includes an explanation of the philosophies behind the signage system. This document includes a sign type hierarchy that provides an overview of sign types within each major category (wayfinding, identification, etc.), their intended function, and any additional information necessary.

WAYFINDING SIGN PROGRAM BEST PRACTICES

The Wayfinding Sign Program Best Practices document (Attachment C) summarizes the provisions found in the MUTCD that relate to bikeway signing and identifies them as required, recommended and optional. It provides a brief discussion of how these standards can be interpreted when implementing bicycle-oriented street signage and offers examples from the proposed Montgomery County bikeway system wayfinding sign family.

Brand Implementation Recommendations

The Brand Implementation Recommendations document provides a list of nine short- and long-term strategies that will help grow the Montgomery County Bikeways brand and sustain momentum for successful long-term growth. These strategies show how to use the brand to market and promote the bikeways system to build a positive brand image. A list of recommendations is provided in the Next Steps section and in Attachment D.

SECTION 2 – NEXT STEPS

BRAND IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

The measure of a successful brand can only take place once it is put to use. The Bicycle Branding Project Brand Implementation Recommendations document provides nine short- and long-term recommendations from the consultant to help reach the overarching goals of the Montgomery County Bikeways brand.

While the Bikeway Branding Project was led by Montgomery Planning, the effort of implementation will be handed over to Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT). A position of "Brand Manager" has been created to oversee the next stages of the project. Montgomery Planning will work with MCDOT to advance the following recommendations:

1. **Create a Montgomery County Bikeways Coalition** – The effort, commitment, and contributions required to launch and maintain this brand is beyond the ownership and responsibility of a single entity. A new organization (county-wide coalition) should be developed to manage the marketing, communications, and activation of the bikeway network.
2. **Develop a Communications Plan** – Brand identity and logos are effective because they stand for something. Messaging is what clarifies that "something." A communications plan is built on this foundation because you need to know what you're going to say — from high level to more targeted messaging.
3. **Establish a Brand Champion Program** – Building awareness around a new brand can be a daunting task. It requires people and financial resources. To be effective, building brand awareness requires clarity, consistency, and to some extent, demonstration of benefits and promises. Creating a Brand Champion/Brand Ambassador Program is a great way to authenticate the brand and get buy-in from the community.
4. **Build a Brand Management Plan and Process** – Paired with the brand style guide, having a system and process for how to organize, house, and manage the brand assets (visual elements of the brand as well as all communication materials/templates) will help control what parts of the brand can be used, how communications materials are created or ordered, who is

responsible for managing the brand, and how to review any new materials for brand compliance.

5. **Create content to tell the bikeway system story** – Information about the Montgomery County bikeway system needs to be readily available and align with the needs and expectations of your audiences. Content goes beyond simple messaging; it provides information on how to use the bikeways and removes unknowns and barriers for people who are less likely to use the system.

6. **Establish a Montgomery County Bikeways Website** – Information about the bikeway system needs to be well organized and easy to find and information buried in the M-NCPPC's or Montgomery County Planning's websites can be tedious to find and use. Creating a digital hub for all the readily needed content for brand champions to share and users to digest is a major step in not just building brand awareness but establishing it.

7. **Social Media Policy & Guidelines** – Develop guidelines that ensure the Montgomery County Bikeways brand has a strong but practical social media presence.

8. **Sign System Pilot Installation** – Identify an area in the county to install a pilot the wayfinding sign program (see below).
    - Learn how to program the sign system.
    - Test out naming conventions and nomenclature.
    - Test out the usability of the system so that improvements can be considered.

9. **Public Art Overview** – Public art will act as an engagement tool, introducing people to the system and making their trips more joyful. It will also engage local communities, artists, citizens, and institutions, making them an integral part of the bikeways system. Installations supporting the routes can tell stories, frame views, and serve practical purposes, all while marketing bicycling in general and the system by encouraging and highlighting social interactions with art pieces.

NORTH BETHESDA WAYFINDING PILOT PROJECT

Following recommendation #8 listed above, an additional task was added to the Bikeway Branding Project effort to develop a wayfinding and signage pilot for the North Bethesda area. This project is a joint effort between Montgomery Planning and the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), with Montgomery Planning managing the consultant and MCDOT having final approval of all deliverables.

Below is a detailed outline of the tasks identified by the project team that are required for the development and implementation of the signage and wayfinding program for the North Bethesda Section of the Montgomery County Bikeways. This project will utilize the brand guidance and wayfinding sign standards found in the Bikeway Branding Project documents (attachments A and B).

1. Sign System, Visual Element and Public Art Programming: identify the sign types (includes visual elements and art) required, location details as well as specific content and messaging

for each type to improve the use and experience of the Breezeway and Bikeways within the project area. Includes the development of an instructional section of the Sign Standards to guide the client on programming future sections of the Montgomery County Bikeways System.

2. Design Development/Bid Document Creation: compile instructional drawings and information necessary to obtain fabrication/installation proposals.
3. Design Updates: based on discovered programming requirements, make design updates to sign types as needed.
4. Revisions/Updates to the Brand Style Guide and Sign Standards: based on discoveries made during the programming of the project area, the consultant will update the Brand Style Guide and/or Sign Standards if necessary.

The pilot project site was selected based on several factors including a wide selection of signage types (Breezeways, Bikeways, and non-signed bike routes) as well multiple bikeway facility types (separated bike lanes, striped bikeways, and shared use paths). The project will be limited to the Breezeways and Bikeways along the roadways highlighted in the following map image:
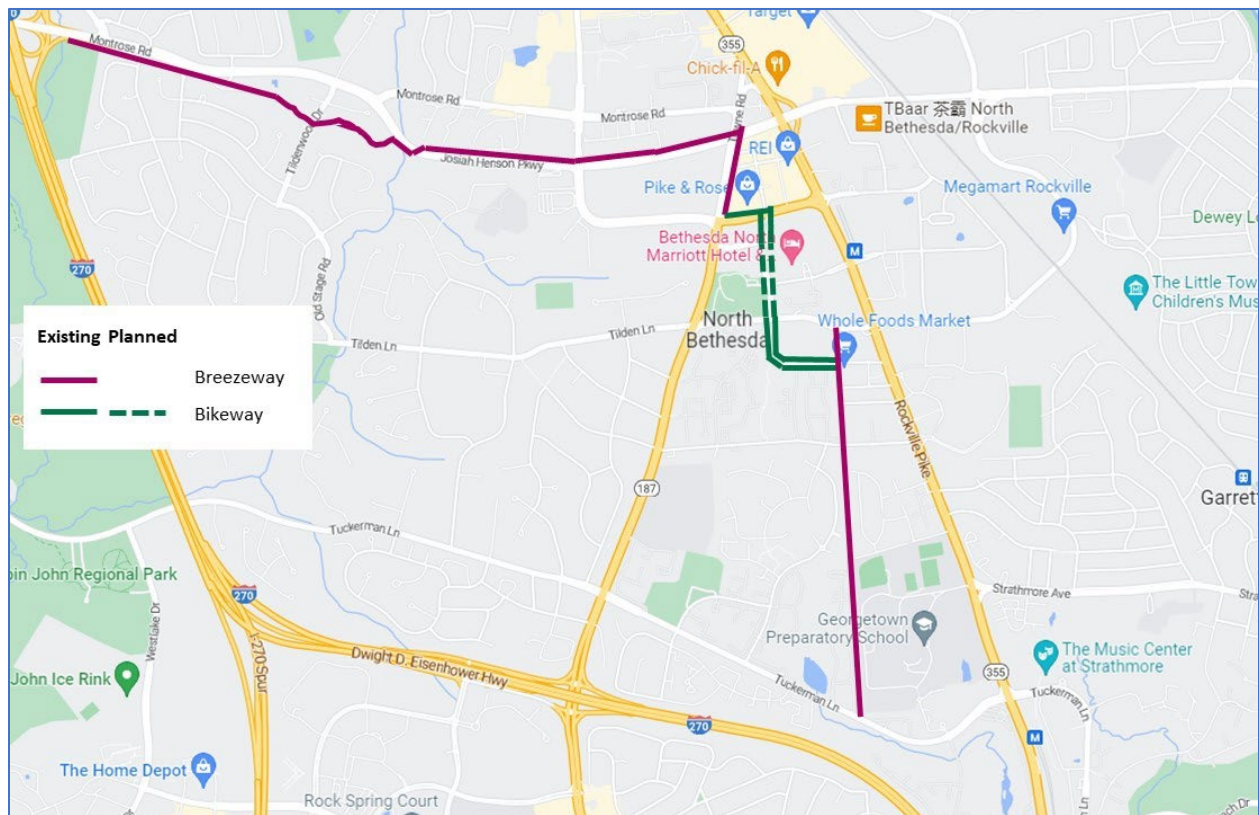

Figure 3: Map of Proposed Wayfinding Pilot Project in North Bethesda

- Josiah Henson Breezeway along Josiah Henson Pkwy/Montrose Rd between N. Farm Ln and Towne Rd
- Old Georgetown Breezeway along the west side of Towne Rd two-way separated bike lanes (SBL) between Josiah Henson Pkwy and Old Georgetown Rd

- Old Georgetown Rd sidepath between Towne Rd and Grand Park Ave
- Grand Park Ave/Executive Blvd sidepath and SBLs between Old Georgetown Rd and Woodglen Dr
- Breezeway along Woodglen Dr/Bethesda Trolley Trail SBLs between Executive Blvd and Tuckerman Ln and bike lanes between Nicholson Ln and Executive Dr

SECTION 3 - ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT A: BRAND STYLE GUIDELINES

ATTACHMENT B: SIGN STANDARDS MANUAL

ATTACHMENT C: WAYFINDING SIGN PROGRAM BEST PRACTICES

ATTACHMENT D: BRAND IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS