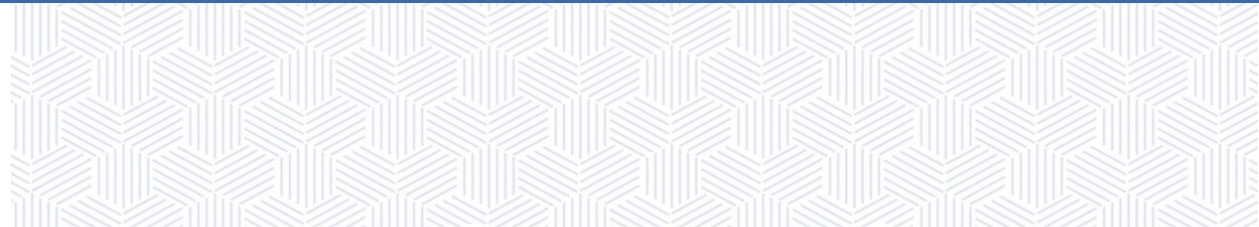


2023 TRAVEL MONITORING REPORT



Description

The Planning Board Draft of the 2020 Growth and Infrastructure Policy (GIP) recommended the biennial Travel Monitoring Report (TMR) serve as “a key travel monitoring element” of the GIP. It states that the TMR’s purpose is to “inform residents and public officials of how the transportation system is changing, evolving, and performing within the county.” As an element of the County Council's review of the 2020 GIP, the Council concurred with the Board’s recommendation to continue to produce the TMR on a biennial schedule.



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MCPB
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SUMMARY

- The TMR is updated biennially to track travel trends and various transportation metrics throughout the county.
- The 2023 TMR is the latest edition in a history of monitoring reports produced by the Countywide Planning and Policy Division dating back to 2004 (previous titles include the Annual Development Approval and Congestion Report, the Highway Mobility Report, and the Mobility Assessment Report).
- Historically, previous versions of the TMR have focused on congestion, however, recent editions of the document have attempted to better align with metrics that drive transportation policy decisions and discussions within the county.
- Although previous editions of the TMR focused on data and less on recommendations, this edition of the TMR includes recommendations to address areas that may need attention based on findings in the report.
- Findings included in the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan chapters (Chapters 4 and 5) have previously been presented to the Planning Board but are included in the 2023 TMR for the sake of the compendium’s comprehensiveness.

PLANNING STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Transmit the 2023 Travel Monitoring Report to the County Council.

OVERVIEW

The 2023 Travel Monitoring Report (TMR, and included as Attachment A) provides residents, developers, and policy makers with insights into various aspects of Montgomery County’s transportation system. As with each edition of the TMR, the report strives to explore and leverage new alternative transportation datasets and analytical tools that help provide a clearer vision of how the county is meeting its transportation goals, objectives, and metrics defined in the General Plan, Thrive Montgomery 2050, and functional master plans. These goals, objectives, and metrics are rapidly evolving as the county strives to create a more balanced, equitable and safer transportation system.

With each subsequent edition of the TMR, it is the aim of staff to better align this report’s contents with metrics that drive policy decisions and discussions within the Planning Department and that have been vetted by the Planning Board and County Council, including those described in Table 1, below. The TMR serves as a compendium for the agency’s transportation-related monitoring activities.

Table 1: Progress Measures as Identified by Various Policy Documents Included in the 2023 TMR

Source	Goal/Metric/Progress Measure	Spatial Resolution
Thrive Montgomery 2050	Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)	Countywide, Growth Corridors
	Non-Auto Driver Mode Share	Countywide, Growth Map Areas
	Average commute time by mode	Countywide
	Transit Coverage	Transportation Policy Areas and Equity Focus Areas
	Job Accessibility via transit	Activity Centers
	Difference between travel time by car and transit	Activity Centers
Complete Street Design Guide (CSDG)	Average Protected Crossing Spacing Compared to CSDG Guidance	Growth Corridor
	Percent Comfortable Walkways	Growth Corridor
	Percent Master-Planned Bikeway	Growth Corridor
	Completeness of Street Grid	CSDG Area Types organized by Growth Corridors
Bicycle Master Plan	Increase Bicycling Rates in Montgomery County (Goal 1)	Countywide, Transportation Management Districts, Metro Rail Stations, & Schools
	Create a Highly Connected, Convenient, and Low-Stress Bicycling Network (Goal 2)	Countywide, Transportation Policy Areas, Transit Stations, Public Schools, and other Public Facilities
	Provide Equal Access to Low-Stress Bicycling for all Members of the Community (Goal 3)	Equity Focus Areas, Title 1/ Focus FARMS Public Schools
	Improve the Safety of Bicycling (Goal 4)	Countywide, Equity Focus Areas
	Facility Construction	Bikeways, Bicycle Parking
	Bicycle Supportive Programs & Legal and Policy Framework	Countywide
Pedestrian Master Plan	Increase Walking Rates and Pedestrian Satisfaction in Montgomery County (Goal 1)	Countywide, Public Schools, Transit Stations, Transportation Management Districts
	Create a Comfortable, Connected, Convenient Pedestrian Network (Goal 2)	Countywide, Public Schools, Transit Stations, and other Public Facilities
	Enhance Pedestrian Safety (Goal 3)	Countywide
	Build an Equitable and Just Pedestrian Network (Goal 4)	Equity Focus Areas, Title 1/ Focus FARMS Public Schools

This briefing will cover the following items:

- Overview of findings not previously presented to the Planning Board
 - Travel Trends
 - Thrive Progress Measures
 - Thrive Corridor Profiles
- Overview of recommendations not previously presented to the Planning Board
 - Protected Crossing Spacing
 - Grid of Streets
 - Pedestrian Network Comfort along Growth Corridors
 - Bicycle Network Completeness along Growth Corridors
- Demonstration of the 2023 TMR Dashboard Series
- Future TMR Recommendations and Discussion

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Travel Monitoring Report provides the opportunity to offer recommendations to address some of the transportation challenges in Montgomery County. While fiscal capacity may limit the county's ability to implement all these recommendations in the next few years, the following recommendations should be considered by the County Council and the Montgomery County Department of Transportation:

Protected Crossing Spacing

Table 7 of the Travel Monitoring Report recommends several locations along Thrive Montgomery 2050 Growth Corridors that should be considered for new protected crossings. These locations have some of the highest ratios between the actual distance between protected crossings and the target distance between protected crossings identified in the Complete Streets Design Guide, and many are Equity Focus Areas (EFAs).

Grid of Streets

To build out a grid of streets in Downtowns, in Town Centers, and along Growth Corridors, with block sizes based on the protected crossing spacing standards in the Complete Streets Design Guide, complete the following tasks:

- Capital Projects: Continue to advance projects in the capital budget to build out the street grid, including North High Street Extended (CIP # 502310) in Olney and Summit Avenue Extension (CIP # 502311) in Kensington.
- Development Projects: Develop tools to reduce the size of blocks through the development approval process.

- Master Plans: Identify opportunities to expand the street grid in Downtowns, in Town Centers, and along Growth Corridors.

Pedestrian Network Comfort

Table 8 of the Travel Monitoring Report shows the percentage of walkways on Growth Corridors that are acceptable for pedestrians. While the overall average is 17%, many corridors have lower rates of acceptable walkways. Therefore, Montgomery County should focus on upgrading the walkway network along all Growth Corridors, with a particular focus on those with below average percentages of acceptable walkways, including:

- Old Georgetown Road
- Veirs Mill Road
- New Hampshire Avenue
- MD 355 North
- University Boulevard
- River Road

Bicycle Network Completeness

Table 9 of the Travel Monitoring Report shows the percentage of master-planned bikeways along Growth Corridors that are existing, under construction, or funded. While the overall average is 15%, most corridors are at or below the average, the exceptions being the Georgia Avenue South and MD 355 North Growth Corridors, both of which are making substantial progress toward implementing master-planned bikeways. Therefore, Montgomery County should continue focusing on upgrading the bikeway network along all Growth Corridors, with a particular focus on:

- Veirs Mill Road
- Randolph Road
- US 29
- MD 355 South
- Georgia Avenue North
- Old Georgetown Road
- New Hampshire Avenue

Pedestrian Recommendations

The Planning Board Draft of the [Pedestrian Master Plan](#) includes recommendations related to pedestrian satisfaction, comfort, safety and equity. Below are recommendations that address the data in this report.

Goal 1: Increase Walking Rates and Walking Satisfaction in Montgomery County.

- Address Issues that Pedestrians with Disabilities Face: Improve the pedestrian experience for residents with disabilities, particularly in transit corridors and exurban/rural areas.
- Improve Pedestrian Satisfaction Along Streets: Address issues with low levels of pedestrian satisfaction throughout the county, with a focus on transit corridors and exurban/rural areas. Elements with countywide satisfaction below 40% include speed of cars alongside sidewalks and paths (21%), snow removal (28%), distance between sidewalks and cars (31%), how often driveways cross sidewalks (35%), and shading by trees or buildings (39%).
- Improve Pedestrian Satisfaction at Crossings: Address issues with low levels of pedestrian satisfaction throughout the county, with a focus on transit corridors and exurban/rural areas. Topics with countywide satisfaction below 40% include the number of vehicles cutting across the crosswalk (22%), places to stop partway while crossing (33%), and drivers stopping when pedestrians cross the street (34%).

Goal 2: Create a Comfortable, Connected, Convenient Pedestrian Network in Montgomery County.

- Fill Sidewalk Gaps: Repair sidewalks that are missing sections, with a focus on major highways, arterials, and primary residential streets in areas of the county where they will improve connectivity comfort to schools, parks, transit stations, and other community destinations.
- Prioritize Buffers on High-Speed Streets: Provide a buffer between the sidewalk and the street, prioritizing roads with speeds greater than 40 miles per hour; 30% of sidewalks on these streets are missing a traffic buffer.
- Provide Pedestrian Refuges: Increase the number of pedestrian refuges to improve crossing comfort, particularly on roads with six or more lanes of traffic. Today, only 19% of crossings with six or more lanes have pedestrian refuges that are ADA-compliant.
- Focus on Crossing Improvements: Prioritize improvements to the comfort and safety of crossings, as crossings are less comfortable than street segments and result in a greater number of pedestrian crashes that involve severe injuries and fatalities.
- Improve Comfortable Access to Elementary Schools: While elementary schools already have the highest connectivity comfort, this connectivity should be enhanced further. Improving comfortable access to elementary schools will increase the number of students walking to school, reduce busing costs, and make it more comfortable for all pedestrians to travel in school areas.
- Prioritize Safer Crossings to Parks: Improve the comfort of crossings to parks, as parks have less comfortable pedestrian access than recreation centers and libraries (35% vs. 66%).

Goal 3: Enhance Pedestrian Safety

- Reduce High-Speed Pedestrian Crashes: Identify strategies to reduce pedestrian crashes on high-speed roads, given the correlation between vehicle speeds and pedestrian crash severity.

- **Address Safety Disparities:** Concentrate safety improvements in EFAs, given the overrepresentation of crashes and severe injuries and fatalities in these communities. EFAs comprise only 14% of the county’s roadway miles, but they experience 41% of the county’s pedestrian crashes and 45% of the county’s pedestrian severe injuries and fatalities.
- **Improve Lighting:** Identify strategies to improve pedestrian visibility in dark conditions (e.g., lighting at intersections and along streets).
- **Communicate Permitted Pedestrian Activity:** Given the lower understanding of permitted pedestrian behavior, relative to driver behavior, improve education and communication about where and how pedestrians are permitted to travel.

Bicycle Master Plan Recommendations

Previously Presented to the Planning Board

- **Bikeways.** Prioritize construction of the bikeway projects (Table 18) to improve connectivity to downtowns, upgrade the county’s temporary neighborhood greenways to permanent neighborhood greenways, and improve access to low-stress bicycling in EFAs. To improve equity, focus on implementing bikeways along the following roads:
 - a. Montgomery Village Avenue, providing synergies with the coming redevelopment of Lakeforest Mall.
 - b. Castle Boulevard, connecting to existing bikeways on Briggs Chaney Road.
 - c. Tech Road/Broadbirch Drive, providing connections to the US 29 FLASH station, Adventist Hospital, and the future VIVA White Oak development.
- **Bicycle Parking at Public Schools.** To improve bicycle parking:
 - a. Over the next two years, prioritize funding to upgrade bicycle parking at the following schools: Dr. Ronald A. McNair ES, Glenallan ES, Bells Mill ES, Poolesville ES, Sligo Creek ES, Olney ES, Thomas W. Pyle MS, Silver Spring International MS, North Bethesda MS, Rosa M. Parks MS, Westland MS, Bethesda-Chevy Chase HS, Quince Orchard HS, Walt Whitman HS, and Walter Johnson HS.
 - b. Over the next six years, prioritize funding to upgrade bicycle parking at the following Title I/Focus schools and schools with high FARM rates: Rolling Terrace ES, Stedwick ES, South Lake ES, Arcola ES, Roberto W. Clemente MS, Forest Oak MS, Eastern MS, White Oak MS, Sligo MS, and Gaithersburg HS.
 - c. Provide Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) with an annual funding program for installing bicycle parking.
 - d. MCPS should develop bike rack standards that correspond with standards identified in Montgomery County’s zoning code.
- **Bicycle Parking Stations.** Fund a bicycle parking station at the Glenmont Metrorail station to expand the reach of transit and develop the organizational capacity to operate bicycle parking stations, including those at the Bethesda Purple Line station and the Silver Spring Transit Center, which are already funded.
- **Design Standards.** Develop comprehensive design standards for bicycle facilities.

- **Travel Survey.** Fund and conduct a biennial travel monitoring survey in support of the *Bicycle Master Plan* and forthcoming *Pedestrian Master Plan* to measure travel behavior and attitudes about walking and bicycling.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: 2023 Travel Monitoring Report