

THE GREAT SENECA PLAN: CONNECTING LIFE AND SCIENCE
WORK SESSION #2: LIFE SCIENCES CENTER TRANSPORTATION



The Great Seneca Plan

CONNECTING LIFE AND SCIENCE

Description

Staff will discuss with the Planning Board the transportation recommendations for the Life Sciences Center in the Public Hearing Draft of the Great Seneca Plan: Connecting Life and Science. Staff will review (1) the vision for the Life Sciences Center, (2) policy guidance related to safety and multimodal travel options, and (3) the existing transportation conditions that inform the Plan recommendations. Staff will present the transportation recommendations for the Life Sciences Center and discuss the multimodal transportation analysis completed in support of the Plan.

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SUMMARY

- As part of a comprehensive amendment to the 2010 *Great Seneca Science Corridor Master Plan*, the Great Seneca Plan: Connecting Life and Science envisions the Life Sciences Center remaining a thriving economic hub and becoming a complete community with a range of land uses, jobs, housing options, services, and amenities, as well as safe, accessible, and reliable transportation infrastructure. The Plan envisions transforming roadways from barriers to vital elements of the public realm and strengthening the area’s economic competitiveness as an epicenter of innovation, accessible for all who live, work, and visit in the area.
- *Thrive Montgomery 2050*, state and local Complete Streets policies, and Vision Zero emphasize safety and travel choice. Existing transportation conditions have led to traffic fatalities and serious injuries and have limited options for people walking, rolling, biking, taking transit, and driving. These policies and conditions guide Plan recommendations seeking to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries and provide transportation options for all users and travel modes.
- Required transportation adequacy analysis of the proposed Plan in year 2045 estimates increased auto and transit access to jobs, decreased vehicle miles traveled per person, and decreased drive-alone mode share relative to the adopted plan, indicating adequacy for these metrics is met. Analysis estimates increased auto and transit trip durations by one minute, respectively, indicating adequacy for this metric is not met. Required bicycle accessibility adequacy analysis is currently under evaluation. Additional year 2045 vehicular traffic analysis estimates most Life Sciences Center locations will be uncongested throughout the day, while about 3% of locations may approach capacity during the AM or PM peak hour.

GREAT SENECA PLAN: CONNECTING LIFE AND SCIENCE

Draft

Public Hearing Draft

Date

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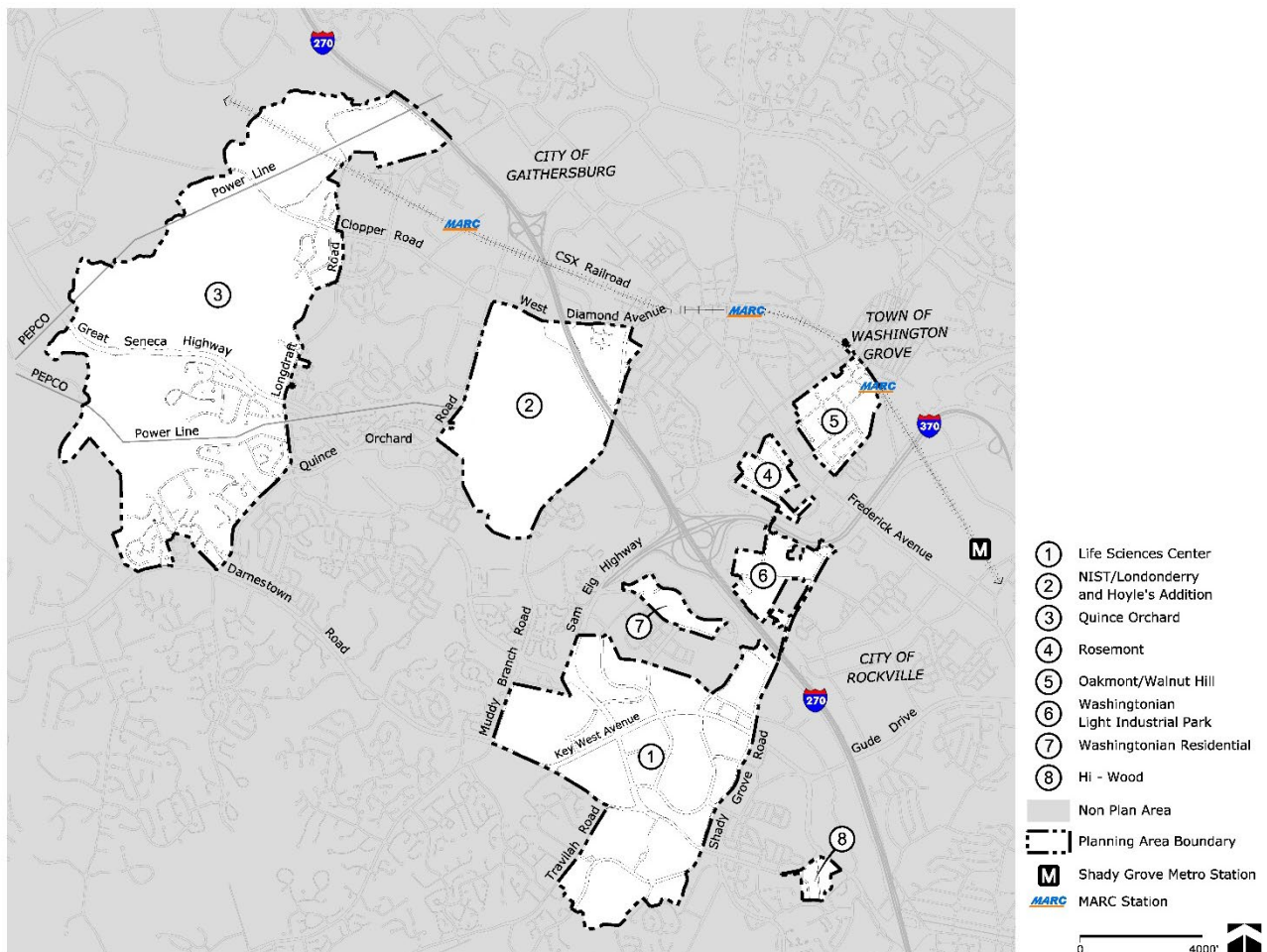
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Planning Board Information

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THE GREAT SENECA PLAN: CONNECTING LIFE AND SCIENCE

WORK SESSION #2: LIFE SCIENCES CENTER TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

[The Great Seneca Plan: Connecting Life and Science](#) is an update to the [2010 Great Seneca Science Corridor Master Plan](#) (2010 Plan) and follows the [2021 Great Seneca Science Corridor Minor Master Plan Amendment](#) (2021 Amendment). The first work session for the Great Seneca Plan, held on March 21, 2024, focused on the recommendations for the Life Sciences Center in the Public Hearing Draft and testimony received for the built environment (except transportation recommendations), social environment, and natural environment. Work session #2 will focus on the recommendations and relevant testimony received for transportation in the Life Sciences Center (LSC). Street connections related to specific properties or opportunity sites will be discussed during a subsequent work session.

LIFE SCIENCES CENTER VISION

The Great Seneca Plan envisions the Life Sciences Center as a complete community, with a range of land uses, jobs, diverse housing options, services, and amenities to meet the needs of a variety of people within a 15-minute walk, bike ride, roll, or other trip through safe, accessible, and reliable transportation infrastructure. The Plan envisions transforming roadways from barriers to vital elements of the public realm that knit neighborhoods together, providing valuable links and social spaces. The recommendations endeavor to strengthen the economic competitiveness of the Life Sciences Center as an epicenter of life sciences and biotech innovation, accessible to all who live, work, and visit the area.

POLICY GUIDANCE

The key policy guidance informing the Great Seneca Plan recommendations emphasizes safety and travel options.

THRIVE MONTGOMERY 2050

Thrive Montgomery 2050 contains transportation-related policies and practices that improve safety for all travel modes and provide multiple travel options. Selected policies and practices include:¹

[Develop a safe, comfortable and appealing network for walking, biking, and rolling.](#)

- Expand the street grid in downtowns, town centers, transit corridors, and suburban centers of activity to create shorter blocks.

¹ [Thrive Montgomery 2050](#), pp. 112-114.

- Convert existing traffic lanes and on-street parking to create space for walkways, bikeways, and street buffers with landscaping and street trees, in a manner consistent with other county policies.
- Prioritize the provision of safe, comfortable, and attractive sidewalks, bikeways, roadway crossings, micromobility infrastructure and services, and other improvements to support walking, bicycling, micromobility, and transit usage in capital budgets, development approvals and mandatory referrals.
- Transform the road network by incorporating Complete Streets design principles with the goal of eliminating all transportation-related roadway fatalities and severe injuries and supporting the emergence of more livable communities.

Build a frequent, fast, convenient, reliable, safe, and accessible transit system.

- Build a network of rail, bus rapid transit, and local bus infrastructure and services—including demand-responsive transit service—that make transit the fastest, most convenient and most reliable way to travel to centers of economic, social and educational activity and opportunity, both within and beyond Montgomery County.
- Convert existing general purpose traffic lanes to dedicated transit lanes, in a manner consistent with other county policies.
- Connect historically disadvantaged people and parts of the county to jobs, amenities, and services by prioritizing investments in increasing access to frequent and reliable morning to late night transit service.
- Ensure safe and comfortable access to transit stations via walking, rolling, and bicycling.

Adapt policies to reflect the economic and environmental costs of driving alone, recognizing car-dependent residents and industries will remain.

- Stop proposing new 4+ lane roads in master plans.
- Give a lower priority to construction of new 4+ lane roads, grade-separated interchanges, or major road widenings.

MDOT SHA COMPLETE STREETS POLICY

The Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration’s (MDOT SHA) Complete Streets Policy endeavors to “create a comprehensive multi-modal network by ensuring connectivity for vehicles, bicycling, walking, transit and freight trips throughout Maryland’s transportation system” and “requires that all SHA staff and partners consider and incorporate complete streets criteria for all modes and types of transportation when developing or redeveloping our transportation system.”

MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMPLETE STREETS POLICY

Montgomery County’s Complete Streets Policy and Standards require that “each transportation facility in the County must be planned and designed to . . . maximize the choice, safety, convenience, and mobility of all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation...”

COMPLETE STREETS DESIGN GUIDE

The Montgomery County Complete Streets Design Guide, developed as a collaboration between the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) and Montgomery Planning, supports the design and operation of roadways to provide safe, accessible, and healthy travel for all users of the roadway system, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists. The document provides guidance on land use contexts and appropriate corresponding street types. For each street type, the document provides further guidance on street design parameters, such as target speeds, maximum spacing for protected crossings, and ranges of dimensions and priorities for elements of the street cross section.

The Plan envisions the land use context of the Life Sciences Center as a combination of Downtown and Town Center area types, as defined by the Complete Streets Design Guide and shown in Figure 18 on page 43 of the Public Hearing Draft. “Downtowns are envisioned as Montgomery County’s highest intensity areas including central business districts and urban centers. They are envisioned to have dense, transit-oriented development and a walkable street grid (existing or planned).” “Town Centers are similar to Downtowns but generally feature less intense development and cover a smaller geographic area” and are “commonly envisioned as high-to-moderate intensity residential development.” (Complete Streets Design Guide, pages 18-19)

VISION ZERO

Vision Zero, adopted by Montgomery County in 2017, is an international effort to achieve zero deaths and serious injuries on roadways due to traffic crashes. Vision Zero holds that traffic deaths are preventable and seeks to prevent severe and fatal crashes through a systemic approach that integrates and expects human failure. Interventions that decrease the frequency and severity of crashes, such as reduced vehicular travel speeds, designated space for different users, reduced exposure to high kinetic energy, and more predictability in user interactions are key components for achieving Vision Zero. While Vision Zero’s sole focus is on safety, this safety also expands travel options by transforming some travel choices—like walking, bicycling, and accessing transit—from unpleasant and dangerous experiences to safe and viable transportation modes.

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

The Montgomery County Climate Action Plan, adopted in June 2021, identifies short-, mid-, and long-range actions to combat and adapt to climate change, including transportation actions that seek to move people and connect places safely, affordably, and sustainably.² These actions include:

- Transitioning to 100% zero emissions transportation and expand supporting infrastructure.
- Provide clean, efficient, frequent, and reliable public transit.
- Reduce use of personal automobiles and increase use of transit and active transportation options.

LIFE SCIENCES CENTER TRANSPORTATION EXISTING CONDITIONS

EXISTING ROADWAYS

The Life Sciences Center is located in close proximity to I-270, with four ramp connections in or nearby the Plan area. Travel through and within the LSC is characterized by wide, six-lane roadways including Darnestown Road, Key West Avenue, and Shady Grove Road, which are difficult to navigate on foot, by bike, and even by car. Though it comprises only two travel lanes per direction, the right-of-way for Great Seneca Highway between Darnestown Road and Key West Avenue is 150 feet wide, presenting another barrier to east-west connectivity within the LSC. Limited local street grid connectivity requires circuitous driving routes for travelers accessing destinations within the LSC and funnels traffic onto a few main roads.

CRASH DATA

From 2015 – 2022, motor vehicle crashes resulted in 27 severe injuries and two fatalities in the Life Sciences Center. These fatalities disproportionately affected vulnerable road users: although people walking and bicycling represent less than an estimated 5% of person trips, they account for 28% of fatal and severe injury crashes.

PEDESTRIAN CONDITIONS

Pedestrian facilities along the LSC's largest roadways are generally characterized by high adjacent vehicular travel speeds, narrow sidewalks, sidewalks not in good condition, and/or little to no landscape buffer between the sidewalk and adjacent vehicle travel lanes, resulting in pedestrian facilities categorized as "Undesirable" or "Uncomfortable" under the Pedestrian Level of Comfort framework.³ Away from these larger roadways, sidewalks become more comfortable, but pedestrian

² Montgomery County Climate Action Plan, p. 145

³ Additional information and methodology available at <https://mcatlas.org/pedplan/>.

crossings remain “Undesirable” or “Uncomfortable.” Over half of pedestrian crossings are completely unmarked and many marked crossings present other challenges, including long crossing distances across multiple vehicular travel lanes, crossing high-speed roadways, lack of high-visibility markings, and lack of pedestrian median refuge islands.

Protected Crossings⁴ are limited. Although the Complete Streets Design Guide recommends a maximum distance between Protected Crossings of 400’ for Downtown Streets, Downtown Boulevards, and Town Center Streets, Protected Crossing spacings in the LSC routinely exceed 1,000’, with multiple locations ranging from 2,000’ to 3,700’ between protected crossings. The 275-acre area bounded by Great Seneca Highway, Key West Avenue, Shady Grove Road, and Darnestown Road—an area comparable in scale to Downtown Silver Spring—contains only one protected crossing. Combined with this lack of protected crossing opportunities, the limited local street grid connectivity again requires circuitous travel, making otherwise short walking trips long enough that walking is not an attractive option.

BICYCLING CONDITIONS

Bicycle facilities along the LSC’s largest roadways are generally categorized as “Low” stress on at least one side of the street where a sidepath is present, based on the Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress framework.⁵ However, people riding bicycles face the same crossing challenges faced by people walking: wide, multilane, high-speed roadways. Bicycle facilities also lack protected intersections that would make bicycle crossings safer and more comfortable. Away from the larger roadways, people riding bicycles face higher-stress conditions due to a lack of dedicated bicycle facilities and streets with multiple lanes and moderately high speeds. Limited local street grid connectivity once again requires circuitous travel and makes trips by bicycle less appealing.

TRANSIT ACCESS

Although MCDOT operates multiple Ride On bus routes within the Life Sciences Center, frequencies and service spans are limited and there are no existing dedicated transit lanes in the LSC.

MCDOT is currently advancing the initial phase of the Great Seneca Transit Network (Phase 1A) through planning, design, and construction, with a target service commencement in summer 2024. This phase, shown in Figure 1, includes opening the service with new bus stops at all the recommended station locations, dedicated bus lanes on the Pink and Lime Lines, and Transit Signal Priority (TSP) upgrades for traffic signals on the Pink Line. Montgomery County has funded Phase 1A of the project through design and construction. Phase 1A (Pink and Lime lines) will connect the Shady Grove Metrorail Station to the Trville Transit Center at the Universities of Shady Grove.

⁴ For purposes of this discussion, protected crossings are defined as traffic signals, pedestrian signals, “HAWKS,” all-way stop control, or grade-separated crossings.

⁵ Additional information and methodology available at <https://mcatlas.org/bikestress/>.

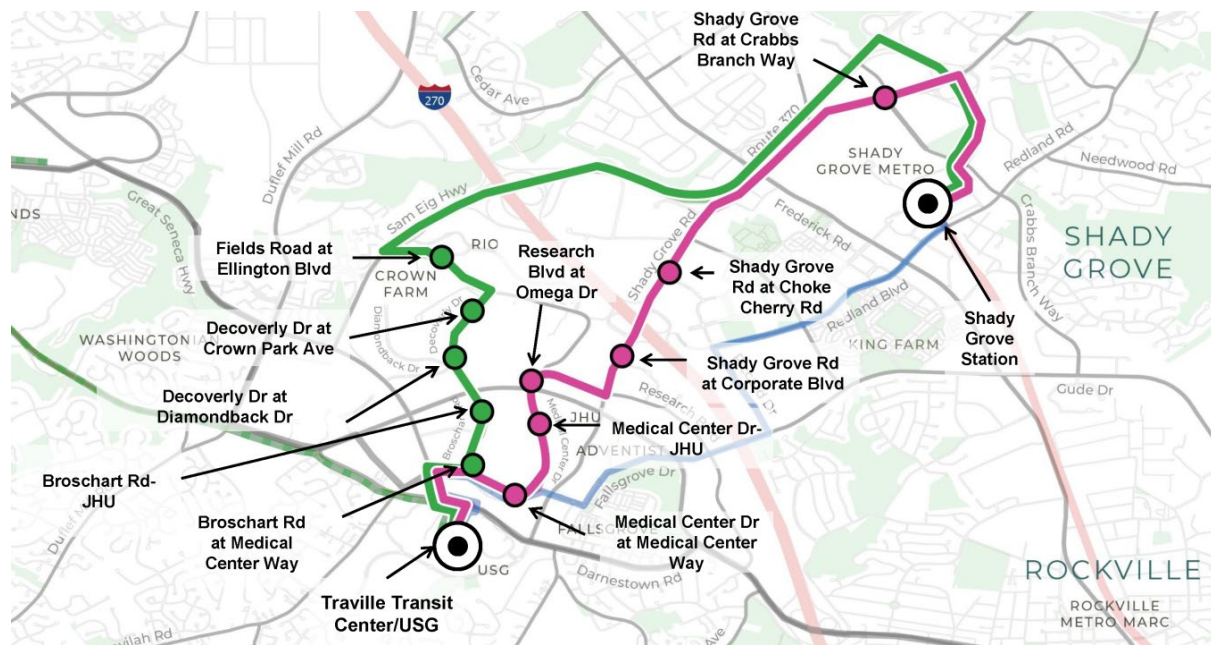


Figure 1: The Great Seneca Transit Network (Phase 1A)

LIFE SCIENCES CENTER TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

The transportation recommendations for the Life Sciences Center focus on improving transportation safety and providing travel options while supporting the Plan’s vision for the Life Sciences Center.

The recommendations support the LSC vision by transforming roadways from barriers to vital elements of the public realm that knit neighborhoods together, providing valuable links and social spaces and helping the LSC become a more complete community by providing safe, accessible, and reliable transportation infrastructure that connects diverse destinations. The recommendations improve safety for people walking, rolling, biking, taking transit, and driving by reducing exposure to high kinetic energy⁶—providing dedicated space for vulnerable people walking and biking, reducing the distances they must travel across motorized vehicular traffic, and reducing the speed (and hence danger) of that traffic. The recommendations provide new multimodal travel options—transforming walking, biking, rolling and accessing transit into safe, comfortable, and convenient options and providing additional, more direct and safer routes for people driving within the LSC.

The transportation recommendations for the LSC are presented on pages 38 through 62 of the [Public Hearing Draft](#). Key transportation recommendations for the LSC include:

- Create a recognizable and finer grain street grid network to promote walkability and connectivity.

⁶ E.g., heavy, fast-moving vehicles.

- Right-size roadways and intersections to create a safer and more comfortable environment for people who are walking, rolling, bicycling, riding transit, and driving.
- Implement a complete network of comfortable walkways and bikeways, connected by safe, protected crossings.

Advance dedicated transit lanes, including the Great Seneca Transit Network and the Corridor Connectors, as shown in Figure 2.

- Repurpose two travel lanes on Key West Avenue to establish a tree-lined promenade for people who are walking, biking, and rolling.
- Repurpose a portion of the Great Seneca Highway right-of-way as a greenway and space for development. This open space could provide more than 4.5 acres of new development and publicly accessible open space for active recreation, social gathering, and contemplative experiences.

The combination of these recommendations, including an expanded street grid to promote walkability and connectivity, as well as repurposing roadways to accommodate dedicated transit lanes and active transportation facilities results in:

- A 58% increase in linear miles of roadways primarily due to the expanded street grid;
- 4.2 linear miles (8.4 lane miles) of new dedicated transit lanes; and
- 17.9 new linear miles of streets with bike facilities on both sides. With the Plan recommendations, 90% of streets in the LSC would have bike facilities on both sides compared to 3% of existing streets.

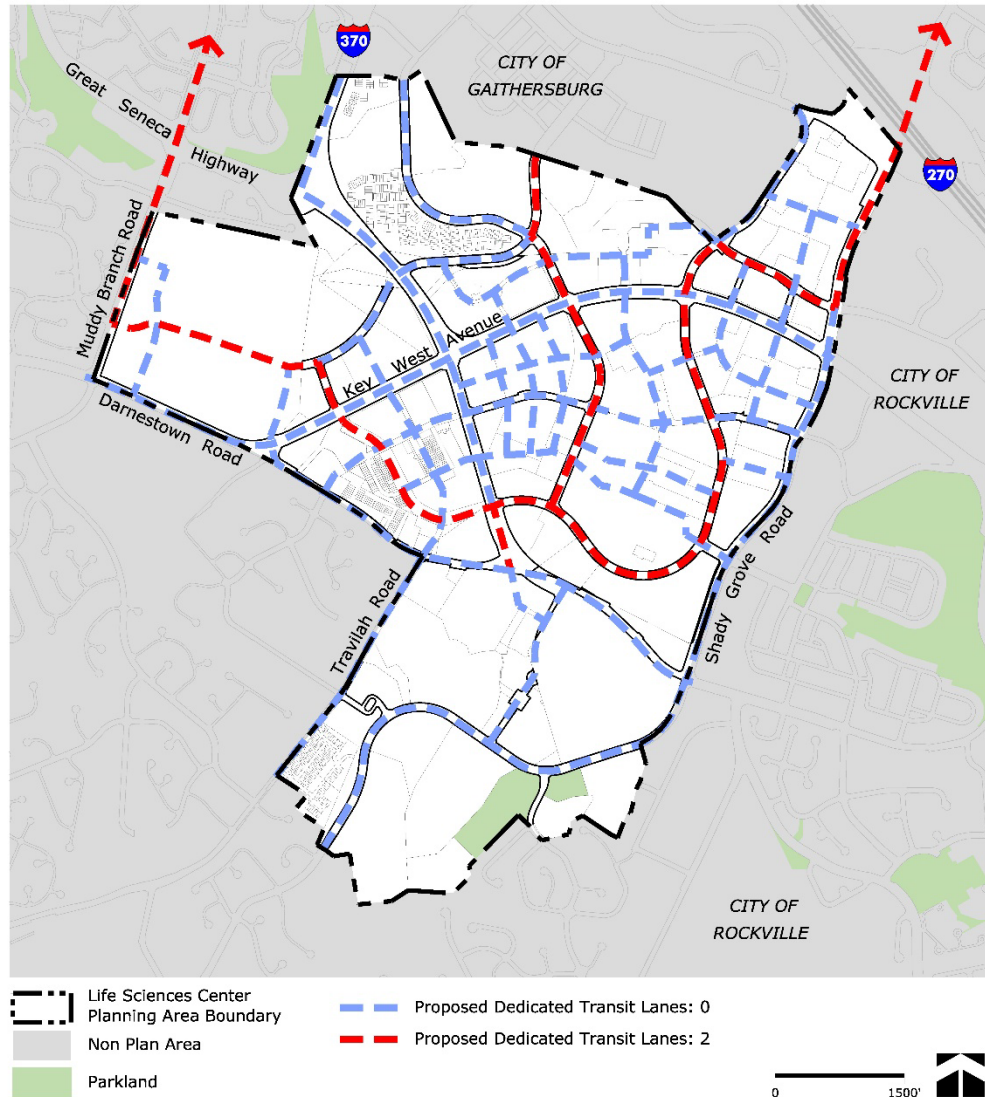


Figure 2: Life Sciences Center Proposed Dedicated Bus Lanes

GREAT SENECA PLAN TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS

Planning staff and transportation consultants prepared two broad types of transportation analysis to evaluate the transportation outcomes of the Plan recommendations: (1) transportation adequacy metrics, which are required by the County Council to assess transportation adequacy, and (2) additional traffic analysis, which has been conducted to supplement understanding of the vehicular traffic implications of the Plan recommendations. Staff notes that the additional vehicular traffic analysis is not required to evaluate master plan transportation adequacy. However, staff determined that additional analysis was beneficial in the Great Seneca Plan due to the relative novelty of the transportation adequacy metrics, established in December 2020, and the Plan’s recommendations to right-size roadways and intersections. A brief summary and results of the transportation analysis is

presented below. Additional detail of the transportation analysis methodology and specifications as well as discussion of the results is provided in the Plan’s [Transportation Appendix](#).

TRANSPORTATION ADEQUACY METRICS

The County Council requires five transportation adequacy metrics to assess the adequacy of the transportation system to support anticipated development under the Plan recommendations. These metrics and how they are derived and interpreted are briefly described below. Four of the five adequacy metrics achieve transportation adequacy at Plan build-out; the auto and transit travel time metric reflects an estimated increase of 1 minute per trip for both auto and transit trips, a 6% increase for auto trips and 2% increase for transit trips, and therefore does not meet the adequacy threshold. However, the modest increase in auto and transit travel time metric is an appropriate tradeoff when weighed against the safety, travel choice, and other benefits of the Plan recommendations as well as the substantially increased costs (financial, environmental, and human) of expanding the motorized vehicle-focused infrastructure that would be required to address these travel time increases. Expanded motorized vehicle-focused infrastructure would be inconsistent with the policies of *Thrive Montgomery 2050*. Furthermore, even with infrastructure expansion, travel times may not decrease, as travelers adjust their behavior to take more or longer vehicle trips (a concept known as “induced demand”) in response to expanded infrastructure.

Accessibility – Adequacy Met

Accessibility is defined as the number of jobs that can be reached in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region within 45 minutes by auto and by transit at the time of buildout. Adequacy is achieved if the master plan improves average accessibility for the plan area relative to the currently adopted master plan. The projected auto job and transit job accessibility for the year 2045 proposed Plan scenario exceed the corresponding values for the year 2045 adopted plan scenario by 1% and 9%, respectively, indicating that the Plan achieves transportation adequacy for these metrics at buildout.

Travel Time – Adequacy Not Met

Travel time is defined as the average per-trip time by auto and by transit, considering all trip purposes during all times on a weekday at time of buildout. Adequacy is achieved if the master plan improves average travel time for the plan area relative to the currently adopted master plan. The projected travel time by auto and by transit are each approximately one minute longer under the year 2045 proposed Plan scenario than under the year 2045 adopted plan scenario, indicating that the Plan does not achieve transportation adequacy for these metrics at buildout. These changes reflect an increase of approximately 6% in the duration of the average modeled vehicle trip from approximately 23 minutes to approximately 24 minutes and an increase of approximately 2% in the duration of the average modeled transit trip from 52 minutes to 53 minutes. These travel times do not reflect the same origin-destination trip patterns in each scenario; rather, they reflect the modeled trip-making patterns for each scenario. Furthermore, the year 2045 adopted plan scenario—against which the year

2045 proposed Plan scenario is compared to establish adequacy—including recommendations for four additional grade-separated interchanges of surface roadways, one additional freeway interchange, and widened roadways, including Key West Avenue (widened from six lanes to eight lanes), Great Seneca Highway (widened from four lanes to six lanes), and Darnestown Road (widened from three or four lanes to six lanes); these recommendations are inconsistent with the subsequently-adopted *Thrive Montgomery 2050*, which includes explicit guidance to “give a lower priority to construction of new 4+ lane roads, grade-separated interchanges, or major road widenings.”

Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) per Capita – Adequacy Met

Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita is defined as the sum of the weekday VMT from trips that both start and end within the plan area and half the weekday VMT from trips that either start or end within the plan area. Adequacy is achieved if the plan improves (i.e., reduces) average VMT per capita (including residents and workers) for the plan area relative to the currently adopted plan. The projected VMT per capita under the year 2045 proposed Plan scenario is approximately 3% lower than the projected VMT per capita under the year 2045 adopted plan scenario, indicating that the Plan achieves transportation adequacy for this metric at buildout.

Non-Auto-Driver Mode Share – Adequacy Met

Non-auto-driver mode share (NADMS) is defined as the non-auto-driver mode share for the journey to work in the plan area. This is the meaning of the measure in current master plans, the 2020-2024 Growth and Infrastructure Policy, and the goals used by the county regulating transportation demand management. Adequacy is achieved if the plan confirms the relevant pre-established journey-to-work NADMS goal for the plan area. The projected NADMS for journey to work trips for the Plan area under the year 2045 proposed Plan scenario is approximately 29%, which exceeds the highest NADMS goal for the Great Seneca Science Corridor Master Plan Area of 28% established in the 2020-2024 Growth and Infrastructure Policy. This result indicates that the Plan achieves transportation adequacy for this metric at buildout.

Low-Stress Bicycle Accessibility – Adequacy Under Evaluation

Low-stress bicycle accessibility is defined as the percentage of potential bicycle trips that can be accommodated on a low-stress (LTS-2) bikeway network. Adequacy is achieved if the plan meets or improves the average for the percentage for the county at the time of buildout. The low-stress bicycle accessibility analysis is in progress at the time of writing so results are not currently available; however, because the Plan proposes additional low-stress bicycle facilities and continues to plan land development near existing and planned low-stress bicycle facilities, low-stress bicycle accessibility should improve, indicating that the Plan would likely achieve transportation adequacy for this metric at buildout.

ADDITIONAL TRAFFIC ANALYSIS

Additional analysis of vehicular traffic is not required; however, an evaluation of the number of vehicles estimated to travel on selected roadway segments (“link-level vehicle volumes”) was conducted to assess the potential vehicular traffic implications of the Plan recommendations. Volumes on selected roadways in the Life Sciences Center were estimated based on existing peak hour traffic counts and peak period results from the Planning Department’s Travel/4 regional travel demand model. The analysis indicates that approximately 3% of the network in the Life Sciences Center may approach congested conditions during the AM or PM peak hour at Plan buildout. Conversely, 97% of the network remains uncongested throughout the day; the 3% of locations that may become congested during peak hour(s) also remain uncongested during the majority of the day, reflecting underutilized capacity.

The analysis may overestimate locations that may approach congested conditions at Plan buildout in a number of aspects. While the analysis uses a threshold of 800 vehicles per hour per lane to indicate locations that may approach congested conditions, existing locations in Montgomery County exceed 1,100 (or even 1,500) vehicles per hour per lane. The analysis did not manually reassign traffic to reflect travelers taking advantage of uncongested routes within and through the Life Sciences Center, such as Omega Drive, Diamondback Drive, and Darnestown Road. Travelers may “peak spread,” adjusting their departure or arrival times to avoid recurring congestion. Additional considerations for interpretation are discussed in the Plan’s [Transportation Appendix](#).

TESTIMONY RELATED TO LIFE SCIENCES CENTER TRANSPORTATION

During the second work session, staff will discuss testimony received related to transportation in the Life Sciences Center. Testimony received from the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) is included as Attachment A. Key topics related to transportation in the LSC are summarized below. Staff anticipates addressing testimony from property owners and their representatives on site-specific street connection considerations in a subsequent work session focused on opportunity sites.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) provided a letter summarizing significant testimony as well as a table of detailed technical comments, included as Attachment A. Staff appreciate MCDOT’s detailed review of the Plan and will make minor technical and formatting revisions based on MCDOT’s written testimony. This section summarizes responses to the issues highlighted in MCDOT’s letter.

1. Transportation Analysis

MCDOT testimony:

MCDOT notes that “the plan does not meet the Travel Time metric directed by Council, with estimated travel times for both auto and transit increasing by 1 minute at plan buildout” and recommends “additional transit infrastructure or pairing auto travel times with other estimates of improvements to non-automobile modes.” MCDOT also notes the ongoing development of new master plan metrics as part of the Growth and Infrastructure Policy Update.

Staff Response:

- Staff acknowledges that the Plan does not meet the travel time metric by auto and by transit, as each are approximately **one minute** longer under the year 2045 proposed Plan scenario than under the year 2045 adopted plan scenario. The adequacy metrics compare Plan recommendations at year 2045 plan buildout against the year 2045 adopted plan environment (i.e., the *2010 Great Seneca Science Corridor Master Plan* plus subsequently adopted plans), which included recommendations for substantial expansions of vehicular infrastructure, including five interchanges and multiple roadways widened to six or eight lanes; these recommendations are inconsistent with *Thrive Montgomery 2050*, which includes explicit guidance to “give a lower priority to construction of new 4+ lane roads, grade-separated interchanges, or major road widenings.”
- The Plan does recommend additional dedicated transit infrastructure beyond what is included in the adopted plan environment. Notably, the Plan recommends supporting MCDOT’s in-progress Great Seneca Transit Network (GSTN)⁷ by extending dedicated transit lanes beyond the extent included in the GSTN to continue along Omega Drive, Research Boulevard, and Shady Grove Road. The Plan also expands on recommendations from the *2022 Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan*⁸ by extending dedicated transit lanes to connect the Londonderry area to the Life Sciences Center. Londonderry contains a concentration of naturally occurring and income-restricted affordable housing and the Plan recommends substantial housing growth not anticipated at the time of *Corridor Forward*, so connecting these residents to opportunities in the LSC is a key recommendation to improve equitable transit access.
- Staff appreciates MCDOT’s ongoing collaboration on this effort to develop metrics for the evaluation of future master plans.

⁷ For additional information on the GSTN, see: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot-dte/projects/GST/index.html>

⁸ <https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/transportation/transit-planning/corridor-forward-the-i-270-transit-plan/>

2. Key West, Great Seneca

MCDOT Testimony:

MCDOT supports “reducing the prominence of auto travel through the area, including the development of a denser grid network of streets, eliminating the unbuilt interchanges, and the multitude of improvements for transit, bicycle, and pedestrian travel.”

However, MCDOT asserts that “the road diets along Key West Avenue and Great Seneca Highway appear to have high costs while not appearing to provide substantive mobility benefit.” Staff respectfully disagrees.

Staff Response:

- While the recommendations for Key West will require financial investment, their cost is less than one third of the cost of the recommendations for Key West Avenue in the adopted *2010 Great Seneca Science Corridor Master Plan*.
- The recommendations for a Key West promenade and Great Seneca greenway improve safety for people walking, rolling, biking, accessing transit, and driving; provide additional travel options by making walking, biking, and accessing transit safer, more comfortable, and more convenient; and maintain the option of driving within and through the Plan area with only a modest (6%) increase in overall auto travel times.

COST

MCDOT Testimony:

MCDOT asserts that reconstructing Key West and Great Seneca “will be very expensive and is not expected to yield any transportation benefit.” Staff respectfully disagrees.

Staff Response:

- This assessment overlooks the benefits of improving transportation safety and providing travel options for people walking, rolling, biking, and accessing transit where those options are not safe, comfortable, and convenient today. The Plan analysis indicates that vehicular traffic will continue to circulate through the Plan area on Key West Avenue and Great Seneca Highway, an important outcome that recognizes that “car-dependent residents and industries will remain” in and around the Plan area, consistent with *Thrive Montgomery 2050*. However, the Plan recommendations for these streets intentionally do not prioritize the high-speed movement of motorized vehicles; instead, the recommendations prioritize safety and options for all travelers, as described above. Furthermore, while transportation benefits are central to the recommendations for Key West Avenue and Great Seneca Highway, the recommendations also provide benefits that contribute to the overall vision for the Life Sciences Center, incorporating active and

passive uses as well as retail kiosks to create active, social, and leisure opportunities for people to linger, instead of simply passing through.

- The cost of reconstructing the roadways, as estimated by MCDOT, would be substantially less than the cost of implementing the recommendations of the adopted *2010 Great Seneca Science Corridor Master Plan* (“2010 Plan”). MCDOT tentatively estimates “a cost of over \$142 million for reconstruction of Key West Avenue between Darnestown Road and Shady Grove Road, and over \$34 million for reconstruction of Great Seneca Highway between Key West Avenue and Darnestown Road.” The SHA Highway Needs Inventory estimates a cost of nearly \$270 million to reconstruct the 1.3 miles of Key West Avenue between Darnestown Road and Shady Grove Road,⁹ as recommended by the 2010 Plan, equivalent to approximately \$465 million in early 2023 dollars.¹⁰ This estimate does not include the cost of other vehicular infrastructure in the 2010 Plan, such as the widening of Great Seneca Highway, the widening of Darnestown Road, or the construction of four additional interchanges:
 - Great Seneca Highway / Quince Orchard Road
 - Great Seneca Highway / Muddy Branch Road
 - Great Seneca Highway / Sam Eig Highway
 - Gude Drive / I-270

The Watkins Mill Road / I-270 interchange included in the 2010 Plan was completed in 2020 at a cost of \$124 million¹¹ (more than \$180 million in early 2023 dollars).¹²

AUTO MOBILITY

MCDOT Testimony:

MCDOT notes that “Key West Avenue (Maryland 28) in particular is a very significant route for long distance travel within Montgomery County” and that residents in portions of the county “have few options other than to travel by automobile.”

Staff Response:

- Staff reiterates that both local and long-distance travel by automobile along Key West Avenue (MD 28) will remain a viable option with the Plan recommendations.

⁹ Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration [Highway Needs Inventory](#) (“HNI”, p. 9; Map Ref. 3).

¹⁰ Assuming the HNI cost estimate (Revised 2018) is in 2018 dollars. Adjusted using the [Seasonally Adjusted National Highway Construction Cost Index](#) (NHCCI) value for 2018 Q1 of 1.694 and the Seasonally Adjusted NHCCI value for 2023 Q1 of 2.919: $(2.919 / 1.694) * \$269,900,000 = \$465,075,619.83$.

¹¹ <https://roads.maryland.gov/mdotsha/pages/pressreleasedetails.aspx?newsId=3627&PageId=818>

¹² Adjusted using the Seasonally Adjusted NHCCI value for 2020 Q1 of 1.999 and the Seasonally Adjusted NHCCI value for 2023 Q1 of 2.919: $(2.919 / 1.999) * 124,000,000 = \$181,068,534.27$. To the extent that funds were expended during the construction period of 2017 to 2020, this estimate is conservative.

- MD 28 stretches approximately 27 miles from Point of Rocks to MD 182, near Norwood. Nearly 70% of its length consists of two travel lanes and more than 20% of its length consists of four travel lanes. Less than 10% of MD 28's length (approximately 3.5 miles) consists of six travel lanes; from west to east, this unique six-lane section begins about 1,000' west of the Plan area at Dufief Mill Road and continues to I-270. MD 28 then has four lanes across I-270 and narrows to two lanes between I-270 and S Adams Street in Downtown Rockville, where it returns to a four-lane section. MD 28 serves long-distance travel by automobile through much of Montgomery County, including connecting I-270 to Downtown Rockville, without exceeding 4 lanes; only in the Life Sciences Center and immediately to the east does MD 28 reach six lanes.
- Staff recommends that the Planning Board consider a recommendation for a study of MD 28 in collaboration with MCDOT, SHA, the City of Rockville, and the City of Gaithersburg that considers the existing and desired function of MD 28 within and beyond the Plan area as well as the broader network of alternative routes for travel within and through the Plan area.

MCDOT Testimony:

MCDOT also suggests that “increasing the density of the grid of intersecting streets is likely to require more width on the principal roads as the shorter block lengths would provide less space for motor vehicle queues” and that “determining the balance of grid density and road width will require much more detailed traffic analyses to affirm viability.”

Staff Response:

- Staff encourages MCDOT to consider implementation approaches that (1) distribute traffic to the expanded street grid recommended by the Plan rather than funneling traffic to Key West Avenue and (2) are consistent with the narrower motorized vehicle cross section proposed for Key West Avenue in the Plan.

NON-AUTO MOBILITY

MCDOT Testimony:

MCDOT expresses multiple non-auto mobility concerns:

- “The concepts presented for these roads appear to hamper connectivity in this area rather than improve it.”
- “This large expense does not provide any additional facilities for transit vehicles.”

Staff Response:

- The concepts for Key West Avenue and Great Seneca Highway create the narrowest possible vehicular roadway cross section and provide a safer and more comfortable

environment that improves connectivity for people walking, rolling, biking and accessing transit who do not have these safe and comfortable options today.

- Staff contemplated options to narrow the Key West Avenue right-of-way. Unfortunately, a 50' natural gas pipeline easement along the south side of Key West Avenue precludes development moving any farther north; the Plan does recommend bringing new buildings to the edge of the easement and developing pedestrian and bicycle facilities, a frontage zone, and buffers on the easement. On the north side of Key West Avenue, three relatively new multifamily residential buildings, unlikely to redevelop during the life of the Plan, establish a building line; from an urban and streetscape design perspective, it is desirable to continue a consistent line of building frontages along Key West Avenue. With these constraints in mind, rather than a large expanse of pavement, the Plan seeks to provide an activated area that is comfortable for people walking, rolling, biking, and accessing transit to traverse and enjoy.
- Key West Avenue is not identified in the *Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan* (adopted 2013), *Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan* (adopted 2022), or in the planning efforts for the Great Seneca Transit Network (GSTN).¹³ The Great Seneca Transit Network would serve land uses along Key West Avenue with stops on Broschart Road and Research Boulevard/Omega Drive. The Plan further supports this transit service by extending dedicated transit lanes beyond the extent included in the GSTN to continue along Omega Drive, Research Boulevard, and Shady Grove Road.
- The segment of Great Seneca Highway between Darnestown Road and Key West Avenue is not identified in the 2013 *Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan*. *Corridor Forward* contemplated two possible alignments for the Great Seneca Connector: one “through the Public Safety Training Academy (PSTA) and Belward Farm properties and then along Muddy Branch Road” and another option “along Great Seneca Highway,” with the alignment to “be determined through subsequent planning processes.”¹⁴ Considering the orientation of the under-construction The Elms at PSTA development away from Great Seneca Highway, the development potential of the Belward Farm site, and the lack of existing and potential development fronting Great Seneca Highway to the north of Key West Avenue, the Plan recommended the alignment through the PSTA and Belward sites, not the Great Seneca alignment. MCDOT plans for the Great Seneca Transit Network Pink and Lime routes to travel the portion of Great Seneca Highway between Medical Center Drive and Darnestown Road in mixed traffic. The Plan further supports this transit service by providing dedicated transit lanes along this segment of Great Seneca Highway within the Great Seneca Greenway.

¹³ The Pink route alignment shown on the Great Seneca Transit Network [Interactive Story Map](#) was realigned to travel Medical Center Drive, Omega Drive, and Research Boulevard rather than Broschart Road and Key West Avenue, as shown on the [project webpage](#).

¹⁴ *Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan*, p. 36.

- Ride On service can continue to use Key West Avenue and Great Seneca Highway in mixed traffic as it does today. Although envisioned cross sections for Key West and Great Seneca retain flexibility for design at the implementation stage and do not specify transit uses, enhanced transit stations could be appropriate within the ample space.

MCDOT Testimony:

“The promenade and greenway would introduce difficulties also for pedestrians, who would have to weave to and from the roadway at each intersection or to access bus stops. Bicyclists would also likely be faced with significant volumes of pedestrians taking the shortest path by walking in the separated bike lanes.”

Staff Response:

- The cross section for the promenade and greenway spaces is conceptual; much of the promenade and greenway are shown as open space to allow flexibility in design, including pedestrian pathways, at the time of implementation.
- Staff intends pedestrians to cross intersecting streets as close as possible to the 15’ sidewalk along the building frontage, to be determined during project implementation.
- The separated bike lanes, adjacent to the street buffer and vehicular travel lanes, do not seem to be the shortest path for pedestrian travel; for example, the most attractive destinations for pedestrians are likely to be the buildings along the wide sidewalk and frontage zone, the promenade or greenway itself, pedestrian crossings of Key West Avenue, and transit stops along Key West Avenue. The promenade and greenway can incorporate pedestrian pathways that provide convenient and comfortable connections for pedestrians.

OPEN SPACES

MCDOT Testimony:

MCDOT “recognize[s] the goal to create additional open spaces, but the area already has substantial open spaces.”

Staff Response:

- The primary objective of the Key West Promenade and Great Seneca Greenway recommendations is to narrow crossing distances across motorized vehicle travel lanes to improve safety and re-connect the Life Sciences Center across these large expanses of roadway.
- In addition to this primary objective, the Great Seneca Plan seeks to establish a well-connected network of parks and privately-owned public spaces that serve multiple functions including social gathering, active recreation, and environmental stewardship.

The Key West Promenade and Great Seneca Greenway are important contributors to achieving this connected network.

MCDOT Testimony:

MCDOT further notes that “[t]hese same open spaces contribute to what, today, feels like an excessively open landscape that feels time-consuming to traverse despite being comparable in area to Downtown Bethesda and Silver Spring. With the large rights-of-way remaining in place, the proposed promenade and greenway would not change this sense of scale.”

Staff Response:

- Staff agrees that the existing roadway “feels like an excessively open landscape that feels time-consuming to traverse.” As noted in the Non-Auto Mobility response above, staff would prefer to narrow the right-of-way, but face constraints of a new existing building line to the north and a 50’ gas pipeline easement to the south. The best option was to transform these constraints and the wide right-of-way into an asset for the community by creating the narrowest possible roadway cross section and providing a safer and more comfortable environment, activated by passive and active recreation spaces, retail kiosks, and programming by the recommended place management organization.
- Rather than crossing 9 vehicular travel lanes and nearly 120’ of pavement in the existing condition (with two additional lanes proposed under the 2010 *Great Seneca Science Corridor Master Plan*), people walking, biking, and even driving would cross only 58’ of pavement allocated to vehicular travel under the Plan-recommended configuration. After crossing the vehicular travel lanes, people walking would still need to travel approximately 86’ to reach the sidewalk and frontage of existing buildings on the north side of Key West, but rather than crossing an open expanse of pavement and grass, people would pass through a shaded recreation space with active, social, and leisure opportunities, retail kiosks, and event programming; this space may even be the destination of the trip itself.

RECOMMENDATION – LIMITED CHANGE

MCDOT Testimony:

MCDOT recommends that investments “balance cost and benefits” and notes that “the most beneficial elements of the plan’s recommendations are the dense street grid and establishment of a more urban form in the plan area.”

Staff Response:

- Staff appreciates MCDOT’s acknowledgement of the benefits of a dense street grid and establishment of a more urban form for the Life Sciences Center. Staff also notes that the

other Plan recommendations, including the Key West Promenade and Great Seneca Greenway, deliver transportation safety benefits, new travel options, and support for the overall Life Sciences Center vision that outweigh their costs.

MCDOT Testimony:

MCDOT also identifies less costly roadway modifications to “reduce their impact on the environmental quality and multimodal travel,” including the new traffic signals installed on Great Seneca Highway and a new multiuse trail under construction, and identify potential future “interventions such as better-defining the median, further reducing lane widths and increasing the quality of streetscape...”

Staff Response:

- While staff appreciates the contributions of the new signals and under-construction multiuse trail, staff respectfully disagrees that they have “dramatically calmed traffic” on the wide cross section.
- More interventions are needed to meet the *Thrive Montgomery 2050* policy to “Develop a safe, comfortable and appealing network for walking, biking, and rolling.”¹⁵ Staff supports—and Plan recommendations include— “further reducing lane widths and increasing the quality of streetscape” as MCDOT suggests. However, rather than “better-defining” the 48’ median, the Plan recommends removing it. Reinforcing the median maintains the existing 98’ pedestrian crossing of Great Seneca Highway, while the Plan recommends reducing that crossing distance to 31’, improving safety, comfort, and appeal. As described above, Key West Avenue presents an even greater barrier for people walking, biking, and rolling, hence the Plan recommendation for substantially reducing crossing distances from nearly 120’ to 58’.

RECOMMENDATION – DARNESTOWN ROAD

MCDOT Testimony:

MCDOT suggests that “[a]n alternative focal point for modifying arterial roads might be Darnestown Road, which has been intended to become a more locally oriented roadway since the completion of Key West Avenue Development is also closer to this road and its configuration is a major barrier to walking and biking. The corridor also exhibits speeds and noise impacts that are in conflict with the surrounding uses.”

¹⁵ [Thrive Montgomery 2050](#), p. 112.

Staff Response:

- Staff agrees that Darnestown Road needs improvement, but respectfully disagrees that Darnestown Road should be modified as an alternative to Key West Avenue. The Plan seeks to improve both Key West Avenue and Darnestown Road.

MCDOT Testimony:

MCDOT further proposes that Darnestown Road “would pose fewer challenges toward reducing the number of lanes, and developing this into a Main Street corridor might help knit two important but separated areas of the plan,” noting the importance of connecting existing and potential development at the Adventist Shady Grove Medical Center and the PSTA site to the north with development at Traville and the Universities at Shady Grove to the south.

Staff Response:

- Staff agrees with the need to improve connections across Darnestown Road to better knit the Life Sciences Center together; Plan recommendations endeavor to make those connections to the maximum extent possible, while acknowledging the presence of the Piney Branch Special Protection Area, stream valley, and existing Forest Conservation Easement. These recommendations include:
 - New street connections to the PSTA site across Darnestown Road at Yearling Drive and Travilah Road provide protected crossings.
 - Continuous, high-quality bicycle and pedestrian facilities along both sides of Darnestown Road provide new travel options.
 - A consistent 4-lane cross section along Darnestown Road through the Life Sciences Center.
 - A trail connection to improve connectivity between the Universities at Shady Grove and the life sciences jobs and Adventist Shady Grove Medical Center for people walking, rolling, and biking.
- Staff recommends that the Plan prioritize addressing the barrier created by Key West Avenue to connect the core of the Life Sciences Center to existing and future housing to the north, as well as to regional retail at Downtown Crown and the Rio Lakefront. Opportunity sites along Key West Avenue present the potential for transformation into an environment where new development fronts a safer and more comfortable street. Regular street connections, with protected crossings approaching the 400’ spacing recommended in the *Complete Streets Design* Guide, are also recommended.

MCDOT Testimony:

MCDOT notes that “[reducing] the capacity of Darnestown Road will likely redirect traffic flow to Medical Center Drive, now under construction through the former PTSA site, and to Key West Avenue (Maryland 28), which is the intended to be the major traffic conduit in this area.”

Staff Response:

- Staff respectfully disagrees with the approach of reducing Darnestown Road to a two-lane road. The Plan recommendations would result in both Key West Avenue and Darnestown Road having four lanes so that both can accommodate moderate levels of vehicular traffic and neither road is a major barrier to walking and biking.

3. Densities

MCDOT Testimony:

MCDOT states: the “densities within the Downtown area (per p. 43, Figure 18) feel unambitious for what is expected of a Downtown / Red [Policy] area. These areas are preferred to have FARs in the vicinity of 2.0 or 3.0 rather than the 1.0 and 1.5 assigned to most of the area. We note that the Universities at Shady Grove (USG) site has some of the highest densities of the plan area despite being located outside of the Downtown / Red area. Higher densities in the area would also extract greater benefit from investments in dedicated transitways & accompanying bus services. Consider whether the Downtown / Red area should have larger FARs, and whether the USG site should be included in the Downtown / Red area.”

Staff Response:

- Staff acknowledges that the floor area ratio (FAR) recommended in the Life Sciences Center are lower than the FAR traditionally recommended in Red Transportation Policy Areas. However, it is important to acknowledge that many of the properties in the Life Sciences Center, particularly those zoned LSC, are significant in size, an average of 6 acres in the central portion of the Life Sciences Center. While the FAR appears modest, significant square footages of development are possible with the modest FAR given both the parcel sizes and permitted heights of 150 feet.
- In addition, staff recommends an overlay zone for the Life Sciences Center (a portion of which is recommended for the Red Transportation Policy Area) that increases the overall development potential through a density bonus that allows increases in the mapped FAR and maximum heights with the provision of select public benefits. Staff anticipates discussing the overlay zone in greater detail in a subsequent work session.

4. Roadway ROWs

MCDOT Testimony:

MCDOT notes “Road T is 14’ short of being capable of achieving all proposed infrastructure at their minimum widths.”

Staff Response:

- Staff appreciates MCDOT’s detailed review. The inclusion of separated bike lanes on this facility is an error. The intended cross section for Road T is a 2-lane, 50’ section as illustrated on Figure 22 of the Public Hearing Draft. We recommend the Board consider revising Table 4 to indicate “None” for both bike facilities for this segment.

MCDOT Testimony:

MCDOT notes that “Clopper Road between Longdraft Road and Great Seneca Creek may also have limited right-of-way, though these limitations may be surmountable with more detailed design.”

Staff Response:

- The intended cross section for Clopper Road between Longdraft Road and Great Seneca Creek is a 60’ right-of-way, as shown in Table 6 of the Public Hearing Draft, consisting of two 11’ sidepaths, two 8’ street buffers, and two 11’ travel lanes. The intent is to accommodate the above facilities within a compact right-of-way, and accommodate stormwater needs within the 60’ right-of-way, either with curb and gutter where those are present or through more detailed design as the segment passes through State parkland. The Board considered this clarification note in work session 1.

5. Biotech Exemptions

MCDOT Testimony:

MCDOT suggests that the “Implementation section [of the Plan] should note that biotech is not presently requested to follow Local Area Transportation Review (LATR) nor pay impact taxes” and acknowledges that given “the substantial amount of existing and expected biotech, this could have a substantive effect on plan implementation.”

Staff Response:

- The 2020-2024 Growth and Infrastructure Policy temporarily suspended the Local Area Transportation Review (LATR) requirements for developments in which the primary use is bioscience facilities¹⁶ and also exempted bioscience uses from paying impact taxes. The 2024-2028 Growth and Infrastructure Policy update is currently underway, and Montgomery Planning staff have recommended extending both the temporary LATR requirement suspension and impact tax exemption through January 1, 2029.
- While staff acknowledges that the temporary LATR requirement suspension and impact tax exemptions, as they currently exist, may have an effect on Plan implementation, staff recommends that the Planning Board consider an alternative Plan recommendation that

¹⁶ [2020-2024 Growth and Infrastructure Policy](#) (p. 14)

explores the full range of funding mechanisms to implement Plan recommendations. Staff anticipates discussing this recommendation, as well as the Plan's Implementation section, in a subsequent work session.

6. Railway ROW

MCDOT Testimony:

MCDOT recommends that the Plan "Add the CSX / WMATA Railway into the right-of-way tables. This should require adequate rights-of-way necessary to provide a third track for the CSX / Amtrak / MARC corridor as well as bidirectional track for the Red Line Extension proposed by the I-270 Corridor Forward Plan."

Staff Response:

- Staff appreciates this recommendation. Rather than include this right-of-way in the tables, staff recommends that the Board consider adding a text recommendation: "Support recommendations in *Corridor Forward: the I-270 Transit Plan* to obtain, reserve and/or require right-of-way, for the long-term potential of the MTA MARC Rail Brunswick Line and the future Red Line Extension to Germantown Town Center, acknowledging the need for more detailed study and coordination with the City of Gaithersburg." The Board considered and accepted this text recommendation in work session 1.

7. LSC Loop Trail

MCDOT Testimony:

MCDOT recommends that the Plan "Ensure that the 'LSC Loop Trail' is defined. Between this plan and other previous plans, it is unclear whether the LSC Loop Trail consists of separated bike lanes or sidepath."

Staff Response:

- Staff appreciates this recommendation to clarify the LSC Loop Trail. Staff recommends the Board consider adding a text recommendation to specify the cross section of the LSC Loop Trail: "Reaffirm the dimensions for the Buffer, Shared Use Trail, and Tree Panel portions of the Cross Section Types specified in the 'Montgomery County Life Sciences Center Loop Trail Design Guidelines (Draft 07/10/15),' p. 10. Remove the 'Potential Separated Bike Lane (Per ongoing Bicycle Master Plan)' shown more faintly on the Cross Section Types."¹⁷

¹⁷ Montgomery County Life Sciences Center Loop Trail Design Guidelines (Draft 07/10/15): https://www.montgomeryplanning.org/community/lsc_loop/documents/LSCLoopTrailDesignGuidelinesDRAFT071015.pdf

8. Unnamed Roads Map

MCDOT Testimony:

MCDOT recommends that the Plan “Add a map labelling the unnamed roads.”

Staff Response:

- Staff agrees and will present a map for the Board to consider including in the Plan.

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION STATE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

Joseph Moges, Maryland State Highway Administration Senior Safety Officer and former SHA District 3 Assistant District Engineer for Traffic in Montgomery County testified at the Public Hearing to his collaboration with Montgomery Planning Staff, the Plan’s consideration and incorporation of features in MDOT’s Complete Streets Policy and SHA’s Context Driven guidelines, and SHA’s support for the Plan.

RENAMING GREAT SENECA HIGHWAY

Testimony provided at the Public Hearing expressed concern with the idea of renaming Great Seneca Highway. Staff would like to clarify that the intent of the recommendation is to rename the suffix (e.g., “Highway”) to reflect the re-envisioned character of the street, not to remove “Seneca” from the street name. Replacing the “Highway” suffix on the segment of Great Seneca Highway between Key West Avenue and Darnestown Road provides an additional cue to travelers, particularly people driving, to expect a lower-speed, and more multimodal environment than “Highway” would suggest. While the Plan recommendation does not specify the recommended suffix, a suffix of “street” would be consistent with the proposed classification for Great Seneca Highway between Key West Avenue and Darnestown Road.

STREET CONNECTION CONCERNS

Representatives of multiple owners of property within the Life Sciences Center expressed concerns about recommended street connections in or adjacent to their properties. These street connections are important for creating more direct and convenient travel options for people walking, rolling, biking, accessing transit, and driving and for helping to distribute vehicular traffic as opposed to concentrating it on few wide roadways, which results in long traffic signal cycles and barriers to travel. Staff anticipates addressing site-specific street connection considerations in a subsequent work session focused on opportunity sites.

DEDICATED TRANSIT LANES THROUGH BELWARD CAMPUS

A representative of Trammell Crow, the ground lessee of approximately 66.5 acres of land on the northern portion of the Johns Hopkins University Belward Research Campus requested that the Plan clarify that additional dedications of right-of-way are not needed to accommodate the alignment of the Great Seneca Connector recommended in the 2022 *Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan* and confirmed by the Plan recommendations. While staff will discuss comments received on specific properties / opportunity sites during a subsequent work session, it is important to note that the Plan recommendations do not change existing site plan approvals.

EXISTING ROAD NOISE AND SPEEDING

The Planning Board received testimony following the Public Hearing, included as Attachment B, that expressed concern with existing road noise and speeding along roads including Key West Avenue, Shady Grove Road, and Great Seneca Highway, and the threat that speeding vehicles pose to safety. While enforcement of the noise ordinance and speeding are issues that are important to quality of life, they are challenging to address exclusively through master plan recommendations. However, the Great Seneca Plan's recommendations seek to improve safety for people walking, rolling, biking, taking transit, and driving by reducing exposure to high-speed vehicles, providing dedicated space for vulnerable people walking and biking, reducing the distances they must travel across motorized vehicular traffic, and reducing the speed (and hence danger) of that traffic.

CONCLUSION

Planning staff will discuss the transportation recommendations for the Life Sciences Center in the Public Hearing Draft of the Great Seneca Plan: Connecting Life and Science with the Planning Board during the second work session on April 4, 2024. Staff will review (1) the vision for the Life Sciences Center, (2) policy guidance related to safety and multimodal travel options, and (3) the existing transportation conditions that inform the Plan recommendations. Staff will present the transportation recommendations for the Life Sciences Center and discuss the multimodal transportation analysis completed in support of the Plan. Staff will also request feedback from the Planning Board on potential revisions to Plan text and recommendations in response to testimony received.

Staff anticipates returning to the Planning Board on April 11, 2024, for the third work session and discussing the recommended overlay zone, opportunity sites, and implementation section, unless otherwise directed by the Planning Board.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Montgomery County Department of Transportation Comments

Attachment B: Additional Testimony Received

ATTACHMENT A



Marc Elrich
County Executive


Christopher R. Conklin
Director

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

M E M O R A N D U M

February 29, 2024

TO: Greg Ossont, Deputy Director
Department of General Services

FROM: Haley Peckett, Deputy Director for Transportation Policy 
Department of Transportation

SUBJECT: Great Seneca Plan: Connecting Life and Science
Public Hearing Draft – Executive Branch Comments

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Winter 2024 Public Hearing Draft of the Great Seneca Plan. In addition to the attached detailed technical comments, we would like to highlight several more significant issues. In the items below, footnotes identify the associated comment number in the attached detailed technical comments.

- 1) **TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS:**⁷⁷ The plan does not meet the Travel Time metric directed by Council in December 2020, with estimated travel times for both auto and transit increasing by 1 minute at plan-buildout. This reflects a +6% increase for auto trips and +2% increase for transit trips. Degradation in auto travel times should be paired with multimodal benefits, but the Great Seneca Plan demonstrates no benefit for transit travel time.

We recommend that Planning and Council consider additional transit infrastructure or pairing auto travel times with other estimates of improvements to non-automobile modes. We also note that we have been working with Planning on the development of new master plan metrics which may better identify issues, needs, and actionable recommendations to resolve these sorts of issues for future plans.

Office of the Director

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2) **KEY WEST, GREAT SENECA:** We support reducing the prominence of auto travel through the area, including the development of a denser grid network of streets, eliminating the unbuilt interchanges, and the multitude of improvements for transit, bicycle, and pedestrian travel. However, the road diets along Key West Avenue and Great Seneca Highway appear to have high costs while not appearing to provide substantive mobility benefit.

- **COST:** Reconstructing these roadways will be very expensive and is not expected to yield any transportation benefit. It is also unclear whether the right-of-way will be retained if it is not used for a transportation purpose.³⁷ We tentatively estimate a cost of over \$142 million for reconstruction of Key West Avenue between Darnestown Road and Shady Grove Road, and over \$34 million for reconstruction of Great Seneca Highway between Key West Avenue and Darnestown Road.⁵³
- **AUTO MOBILITY:**⁵³ Key West Avenue (Maryland 28) in particular is a very significant route for long distance travel within Montgomery County. The route is the main link from the central portion of the County to portions of Gaithersburg, South Germantown, Darnestown, Seneca, Travilah, Poolesville, Dickerson and other towns in the rural portion of the County. Residents in these areas have few options other than to travel by automobile and many have limited services within their local community.

Although it is not intuitive at first glance, increasing the density of the grid of intersecting streets is likely to require more width on the principal roads as the shorter block lengths would provide less space for motor vehicle queues. Determining the balance of grid density and road width will require much more detailed traffic analyses to affirm viability, and particularly along Key West Avenue. The intersection-level impacts are likely to be so substantial as to render this recommendation infeasible to safely implement.

- **NON-AUTO MOBILITY:**⁵⁴ The concepts presented for these roads appear to hamper connectivity in this area rather than improve it. This large expense does not provide any additional facilities for transit vehicles. The promenade and greenway would introduce difficulties also for pedestrians, who would have to weave to and from the roadway at each intersection or to access bus stops. Bicyclists would also likely be faced with significant volumes of pedestrians taking the shortest path by walking in the separated bike lanes.
- **OPEN SPACES:**⁵⁴ Looking at potential benefits, we recognize the goal to create additional open spaces, but the area already has substantial open spaces. These same open spaces contribute to what, today, feels like an excessively open landscape that feels time-consuming to traverse despite being comparable in area to Downtown Bethesda and Silver Spring. With the large rights-of-way remaining in place, the proposed promenade and greenway would not change this sense of scale. If more public space is needed, DOT recommends that this space be conceived as a gathering space more central to the development nodes, rather than long strips of space along the major roads.

- **RECOMMENDATION – LIMITED CHANGE:**⁵³ We recommend that changes in block size and investment in new street capacity be targeted to balance cost and benefits. The most beneficial elements of the plan’s recommendations are the dense street grid and establishment of a more urban form in the plan area.

Modifications to these roads to reduce their impact on the environmental quality and multimodal travel are possible. On Great Seneca Highway, through recent work conditioned by the Planning Board for the redevelopment of the former Public Safety Training Academy (PSTA), two new traffic signals were installed on Great Seneca Highway and a new multiuse trail is under construction. These new interventions in the road have dramatically calmed traffic on this stretch of the road. Further interventions such as better-defining the median, further reducing lane widths and increasing the quality of streetscape, at a fraction of the cost of the promenade concept, may more effectively help achieve walkability and placemaking for the area.

- **RECOMMENDATION – DARNESTOWN RD:** An alternative focal point for modifying arterial roads might be Darnestown Road, which has been intended to become a more locally-oriented roadway since the completion of Key West Avenue. This corridor is not uniform in design, reflective of decades of modifications to portions as developments have occurred. Development is also closer to this road and its configuration is a major barrier to walking and biking. The corridor also exhibits speeds and noise impacts that are in conflict with the surrounding uses.

This corridor would pose fewer challenges toward reducing the number of lanes, and developing this into a Main Street corridor might help knit two important but separated areas of the plan. The Medical Center and PSTA areas are to the north, and the Universities at Shady Grove campus has a strong potential for supporting growth to the south. Furthermore, Traville Gateway is the site of a major transit hub, and there has been substantial recent development immediately west of Traville Gateway.⁵³ Changing the capacity of Darnestown Road will likely redirect traffic flow to Medical Center Drive, now under construction through the former PTSA site, and to Key West Avenue (Maryland 28), which is the intended to be the major traffic conduit in this area.

- 3) **DENSITIES:**¹¹ The densities within the Downtown area (per p. 43, Figure 18) feel unambitious for what is expected of a Downtown / Red area. These areas are preferred to have FARs in the vicinity of 2.0 or 3.0 rather than the 1.0 and 1.5 assigned to most of the area. We note that the Universities at Shady Grove (USG) site has some of the highest densities of the plan area despite being located outside of the Downtown / Red area.²⁹ Higher densities in the area would also extract greater benefit from investments in dedicated transitways & accompanying bus services. Consider whether the Downtown / Red area should have larger FARs, and whether the USG site should be included in the Downtown / Red area.
- 4) **ROADWAY ROWS:** Two streets may be short on available rights-of-way to provide the proposed infrastructure. Road T is 14’ short of being capable of achieving all proposed

infrastructure at their minimum widths. Clopper Road between Longdraft Road and Great Seneca Creek may also have limited right-of-way, though these limitations may be surmountable with more detailed design.⁴⁵

There are a multitude of streets which would require narrowing various street elements below their default Complete Streets widths, but they would still meet Complete Streets requirements. Our comments detail which street elements would be affected. These do not necessarily require action, provided Planning and Council are comfortable with the narrowed widths.^{43, 44, 46, 47, 74, 75}

There are also numerous streets which may not have adequate rights-of-way to treat stormwater within the right-of-way. Again, these do not necessarily require action, provided Planning and Council are comfortable with these segments potentially being unable to treat stormwater in-situ. More detailed evaluation and design may resolve some of these issues.³⁸

- 5) **BIOTECH EXEMPTIONS:**⁵⁹ The Implementation section should note that Biotech is not presently required to do follow Local Area Transportation Review (LATR) nor pay impact taxes. Given the substantial amount of existing and expected Biotech, this could have a substantive effect on plan implementation.
- 6) **RAILWAY ROW:**⁷¹ Add the CSX / WMATA Railway into the right-of-way tables. This should require adequate rights-of-way necessary to provide a third track for the CSX / Amtrak / MARC corridor as well as bidirectional track for the Red Line Extension proposed by the I-270 Corridor Forward Plan.
- 7) **LSC LOOP TRAIL:**³⁹ Ensure that the "LSC Loop Trail" is defined. Between this plan and other previous plans, it is unclear whether the LSC Loop Trail consists of separated bike lanes or sidepath.
- 8) **UNNAMED ROADS MAP:**⁴¹ Add a map labelling the unnamed roads.

Notwithstanding the volume of our comments for such a complex plan, many of the potentially more substantial issues were resolved earlier in the process by the excellent efforts led by Planning staff. We greatly appreciate the degree of partnership that went into developing the Public Hearing Draft.

Attachments: Detailed Comments

cc: Andrew Bossi, MCDOT
Chris Van Alstyne, MCDOT
Kara Olsen-Salazar, MCDGS
Claire Iseli, CEX
Meredith Wellington, CEX

0	☒	Team	Commenter	Document	Page	Summary	Comment	Priority	Response	Response Detail
1		Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	General	Graphics Legibility	Many of the graphics are very small & use low-resolution imagery, making it difficult to zoom in and view details. Graphics need to be enlarged & use higher-resolution imagery.			
2	*	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	General	Colorblind Accessibility	Consider reviewing graphics for colorblind accessibility. Some graphics (such as Figures 41 and 42; the only two I tested) appear to post some colorblind accessibility challenges.	3		
3	****	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	4, 23, 31, 73	Complete Communities Metrics	A "Complete Community" still have no measurable metrics to determine what they are, how to pursue them, & whether they are being achieved. We understand that these metrics are still in development. I have previously suggested the following metrics: (1) What target land uses are expected to be reachable, (2) within what defined timeframes (3) of traveling by what mode? For example: a plan might establish that high-frequency destinations like rec centers, grocery stores, or elementary schools should be within a 15 min walk/roll. And intermediate-frequency destinations like medical clinics perhaps 15 min by bike, or 30 min by walk/roll. And rarer or high-consolidation destinations perhaps 30 min by bike.			
4		Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	6	Formatting	Crop the bottom of the graph & scale it to be larger.	3		
5		Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	7	Formatting	Consider splitting Figures 2 and 3 into onto two separate pages, side-by-side on a two page spread. This will allow them to be larger. Alternately, if kept on the same page: move the legend above or beneath them to afford both maps to be larger.	3		
6		Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	14	Guiding Plans & Policies	Consider including the 2018 Bicycle Master Plan and the 2023 Pedestrian Master Plan.	3		
7		Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	16-18	Formatting	Consider aligning the maps across each of these three pages (Figures 4, 5, 6), as well as moving the legend further right & enlarging each map.	3		
8		Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	20-21	Formatting	Consider aligning the maps across each of these two pages (Figures 7,8), as well as moving the legend further right & enlarging each map.	3		
9		Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	27	Formatting	The footnote area appears to have a lot of extra whitespace. Removing this whitespace should allow the text to fit in one column & the graphic to be larger. Move Figure 10's legend beneath it to give more space for the graphic to enlarge.	3		
10		Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	33-35	Formatting	Consider putting each map on its own individual page, enlarging it, and aligning them across each of these pages (Figures 12, 13, 14, 15).	3		
11	*	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	35	Densities	The densities within the Downtown area (per p43, Figure 18) feels unambitious for what is expected of a Downtown / Red area, which is preferred to have FARs more in the vicinity of 2.0 or 3.0 rather than the 1.0 and 1.5 assigned to most of the area. Higher densities would also extract greater benefit from investments in dedicated transitways & accompanying bus services. Consider whether the Downtown / Red area should have larger FARs. If Planning or Council agree with evaluating greater densities: the Plan must ensure that transportation infrastructure (particularly transit access) remains capable of supporting these additional densities, or if additional infrastructure would be needed.	1		
12	****	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	35	Zoning for Public Properties	Consider allowing higher heights and more intensive FARs for all public properties. The maximum the plan is comfortable providing will better enable redevelopment of these sites, achieving the envisioned goals for these sites, and on a more rapid implementation timeline.			
13		Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	35	Divided Property	The area labelled with (5) and bounded by Shady Grove Rd, Research Blvd, Omega Dr, and I-270 is split between a Downtown and Town Center area (per p43, Figure 18), and subsequently also between a Red and Orange policy area (per p39, #6). Consider whether the zoning should be split into two different types, or if the site should be entirely a Downtown/Red or entirely a Town Center/Orange area.			
14		Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	36	Formatting	The table runs over the footer information. Consider doing the following: - Shrink the width of the Map Number column - Increase the width of the two Zoning columns - Shift the table slightly upward - Shrink font as needed (though the previous suggestions should be enough to resolve the issue)	3		
15		Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	37	Formatting	The footnote area appears to have a lot of extra whitespace. Removing this whitespace should allow the text to fit on one page.	3		
16	*****	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	38-40	Parking Lot District	A recommendation should be included regarding the existing Parking Lot District for the area. Options include: - Retain the PLD as-is, generally focused on existing parking meters within the PLD. - Expand the PLD or its mission for the area. This might utilize existing public properties or private properties to construct new garage facilities. These facilities could help other developments proceed with less parking of their own. These facilities might also be situated as to convert motorists along Boulevards into pedestrians/bicyclists within the area, reducing traffic load on the internal Streets. NOTE: A map of the PLD is available at https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DOT-Parking/Resources/Files/PLDGSSC.pdf			

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17	Policy	ADB, CVA	Public Hearing Draft	39	Impossible Infill Road Connections	<p>The sub-bullet for #1 reads as follows:</p> <p>>>> Where development occurs within master-planned blocks that are more than twice as large as the sizes recommended in the Complete Streets Design Guide, proposed developments must provide additional non-master planned street connections to reduce block size. If providing a complete street connection is not possible, developments must dedicate right-of-way to advance the eventual construction of the non-master planned street connection. <<<</p> <p>It is not clear what circumstances would render such a connection impossible to build. The second sentence may either need removal, elaboration, or may need to give a different path forward.</p> <p>Elaboration might clarify what is considered not possible to build, and what is expected of an applicant to assert that the facility is not possible to build. One potential case might be a facility requires ROW beyond an applicant's control, which would be a reasonable limitation where ROW dedication would be helpful.</p> <p>However, if it is considered "not possible" due to technical limitations such as grade, terrain, environmental features, etc: the applicant should demonstrate why it is impossible" to navigate these difficulties. And it is not clear how dedicating ROW for future construction would change those circumstances.</p> <p>In such situations we might perhaps enter negotiations with the applicant to identify alternative options that meet the spirit of the master plan. This might, for example, replace a street connection with a ped/bike connection along the same path.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>* - Note also that using the word "possible" in lieu of "feasible" will hold applicants to an exceedingly high standard, as "possible" is fiscally unconstrained. It is unlikely that there will be any situations at all which are truly "not possible" to achieve.</p>			
18	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	39	Channelized Rights	<p>#2, 3rd Sub-Bullet:</p> <p>Change...</p> <p>>>> Remove channelized right-turn lanes from all intersections. <<<</p> <p>...to:</p> <p>>>> Remove channelized right-turn lanes from all intersections where roadway geometry allows. <<<</p> <p>This is to allow for circumstances where roads may intersect with a high skew, and channelized rights may be preferable for pedestrian comfort than navigating very large intersection radii (as per the 5th sub-bullet). Additional information is available in Complete Streets, Section 6.7 (p204)</p>			
19	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	39	Alleys	<p>#8 reads:</p> <p>>>> Build out a network of alleys in the downtown and town center area types to support loading and site access. <<<</p> <p>This recommendation may be fine as-is, but staff should consider how this will be implemented with new developments, and whether this item may need any additional elaboration to ease the development review process. Considerations may include how to situate alleys & onto what streets they access, types of loading onto alleys, whether they serve primary motor vehicle access, whether alleys would be public or private, etc</p> <p>Consider the following phrasing:</p> <p>>>> Build out a network of alleys in the downtown and town center area types to support loading and primary site access. <<<</p>			
20	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	40	Crosswalks Graphic	<p>Consider including the graphic from the Pedestrian Master Plan that shows different types of crosswalks and their names.</p>	3		
21	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	40	Crosswalk Type	<p>#9, 1st Sub-Bullet:</p> <p>Change...</p> <p>>>> Upgrade all intersections with high-visibility continental crosswalk markings for all pedestrian approaches. <<<</p> <p>...to:</p> <p>>>> Upgrade all intersections with high-visibility continental or ladder crosswalk markings for all pedestrian approaches. <<<</p> <p>This is to allow for either option, as standards may change. While Continental is our current standard we are starting to shift toward Ladder per the Pedestrian Master Plan.</p>			
22	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	40	Formatting	<p>#10, 2nd Sub-Bullet:</p> <p>Change "side paths" to "sidepaths" to reflect the formal naming in the County Code.</p>	3		

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23		Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	40	Bike Parking Stations	<p>#10, 4th Sub-Bullet:</p> <p>Confirm that Bicycle Parking Stations are intended for "transit stations; trails, parks, and public open spaces; and large employment or retail centers."</p> <p>The FIS will reflect these are structured parking for bicycles. If something less intensive is intended by this recommendation then the phrasing should be altered. Perhaps to "covered bike parking" or something along those lines.</p>			
24		Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	41	Interparcel Ped Connectivity	<p>#16 - Consider an additional sub-bullet reading something along the lines of:</p> <p>"Promote interparcel pedestrian and bicycle connectivity through accessible sidewalk and sidepath connections between sites."</p>			
25	*	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	41	Curbless & Shared Streets	<p>#16, 3rd Sub-Bullet:</p> <p>Change "shared streets" to "Curbless and Shared Streets" to reflect the parlance of this ongoing Planning-MCDOT effort.</p>	3		
26		Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	41-44	Formatting	<p>Consider putting each map on its own individual page, enlarging it, and aligning them across each of these pages (Figures 16, 17, 18, 19, 20).</p>	3		
27	*	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	41-44, 83-84	Curbless & Shared Streets	<p>Figures 16, 17, 18, and 19:</p> <p>Consider changing "Shared Street" (Fig.16,19) and "Commercial Shared Street" (Fig.17,18) both to "Curbless or Shared Street", unless the plan deliberately intends to specify otherwise.</p> <p>While "Commercial Shared Street" does reflect the parlance currently in the County Code, using "Curbless or Shared Street" would reflect the parlance of the ongoing Planning-MCDOT effort.</p> <p>Portions of these streets may be more likely to be Curbless Streets rather than Shared, depending on the amount of vehicle loading expected to use these streets. Vehicle loading may be due to garage access associated with adjacent developments (particularly where they may be unable to fit access points onto other fronting streets), and the more vehicles: the less comfort & efficacy a Shared Street will have.</p>			
28		Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	42-44	Sharp Turns	<p>The maps show several sharp turns in roads, such as along Research Blvd Extended. These may be OK as shown, but must be done so with the awareness that implementation may not necessarily reflect such sharp turns.</p> <p>Sharp turns may be acceptable if they occur at distinct intersections (such as with other streets not shown on these maps, or with driveways).</p> <p>The plan might include narrative to this effect, or simply an acknowledgment during Planning Board / Council worksessions that this is acknowledged.</p>			
29		Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	43	USG Area Type	<p>The USG site has some of the densest zoning of the entire plan but is located outside of the Downtown area. Consider including it in the Downtown / Red area.</p>			
30	*	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	44	Bike Parking Stations	<p>Figure 19 - Show Bike Parking Station locations.</p>	3		
31	*	Policy, Devel Rvw	ADB, RT	Public Hearing Draft	44	External Bikeways	<p>Figure 19 - Consider showing bikeways outside the plan area so that it better illustrates how things will fit together as a network. This should include whatever is planned by Gaithersburg & Rockville in their respective areas.</p>			
32	*	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	44	Travilah - Shady Grove Connector	<p>Figure 19 - Consider whether there should be a ped/bike connection shown between Travilah Rd and Shady Grove Rd, around the point where Shady Grove has the 90° turn. (perhaps as an extension of Nolan Dr)</p> <p>While it's traversable today through private property, it may be good to ensure such a connection is retained into the future. Especially if this area has any zoning changes or is otherwise expected to further develop.</p> <p>(depending on zoning around the Human Genome & USG areas, consider also whether this might be a road to help form a superblock grid & relieve traffic off of Darnestown & Traville Gateway)</p>			
33	****	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	44	Great Seneca Corridor Connector	<p>Figure 20 - The I-270 Corridor Forward Plan (p5 / PDF p16) retains the CCT's dedicated lanes / Corridor Connector along Great Seneca Hwy west of Muddy Branch. Presuming this is intended to remain, Figure 20 should be updated to show an arrow continuing from Muddy Branch westward along Great Seneca.</p> <p>https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Corridor-Forward-final_web.pdf#page=16</p>	3		
34	****	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	44	Great Seneca Extension Transit Lanes	<p>Figure 20 - Consider transit lanes along the extension of Great Seneca Hwy beyond Darnestown Rd, to Traville Gateway Dr. This connector would approach what is currently envisioned to be a substantial transit center.</p>			
35	*	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	44	BRT Stations	<p>Figure 20 - Consider identifying GSTN and BRT station locations.</p>			
36	****	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	44,51	Great Seneca Extension	<p>I do not see the extension of Great Seneca Hwy beyond Darnestown Rd (to Traville Gateway Dr) in Table 2. Based on its being a Town Center Street, I would expect to find it on p51.</p>			

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37	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	45-53, 59-61, 67	ROW Abandonment	<p>The narrative on p67 suggests that the ROW repurposed in to the Promenade / Greenway be abandoned and returned to their respective owners. Doing so would place the Sidewalk outside of public authority and would subsequently require Public Improvement Easements (PIEs).</p> <p>However, note that legal concerns have been raised by the County Attorney's Office regarding the efficacy & legality of PIEs.</p> <p>And along State highways, ensure that such an action has buy-in from the State as something that is legally permissible.</p> <p>It is also not clear how these proposed abandonments fit within the master planned rights-of-way given in Table 2 (p45-53)</p>			
38	* Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	46-51, 111	SWM in ROW	<p>The following streets, with the ROWs proposed, may have difficulties providing adequate stormwater management within the ROW. This does not necessarily require action to change anything in the plan, but inaction should be done with the awareness that SWM might not be fully addressed within the ROW.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - p46 - Broschart Rd between Medical Center Dr & Key West Ave - p46 - Diamondback Dr between Key West Ave & Decoverly Dr - p46 - Great Seneca Hwy (MD 119) between Darnestown Rd & Medical Center Dr - p46 - Medical Center Dr between Great Seneca Hwy & Broschart Rd - p46 - Medical Center Dr between Broschart Rd & Medical Center Way - p46 - Medical Center Dr between Medical Center Way & Key West Ave - p47 - Omega Dr between Key West Ave & Research Blvd - p47 - Research Blvd between Omega Dr & Rockville City Limits - p49 - Muddy Branch Rd between West Deer Park Rd & West Diamond Ave (MD 117) - p49, p111 - Shady Grove Rd between Research Blvd & I-270 Offramp - p49, p111 - Shady Grove Rd between I-270 Offramp & 1200' west of Frederick Rd - p50 - Decoverly Dr between Diamondback Dr & Skyhill Way - p51 - Johns Hopkins Dr between Key West Ave & Belward Campus Dr - p51 - Medical Center Dr Extended between Key West Ave & Great Seneca Hwy - p51 - Muddy Branch Rd between Belward Campus Dr Extended & Midsummer Dr 			
39	* Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	46-51, 118	LSC Loop Trail	<p>Ensure that the "LSC Loop Trail" is defined at some point: whether it's some form of separated bike lanes, Sidepath, or something else.</p> <p>For reference, currently the Bike Master Plan shows it mostly as Separated Bike Lanes on each side of the street. But in the cross-sections the LSC Loop Trail takes on the visuals of a Sidepath.</p>			
40	* Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	46-53	Medians	<p>Consider denoting whether streets are Divided or Undivided. In the past, the standard way to do this has been to label Divided roadways via the Traffic Lanes information, such as 4D or 6D.</p>	3		
41	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	47-48, 52-53	Identifying Roads	<p>Add a map labelling the unnamed roads, including Roads B, C, E, F, G, I, J, L, M, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, Y.</p> <p>Road E and Road M: Consider changing "Commercial Shared Street" and "Shared Street" both to "Curbless or Shared Street", unless the plan deliberately intends to specify otherwise.</p> <p>While "Commercial Shared Street" does reflect the parlance currently in the County Code, using "Curbless or Shared Street" would reflect the parlance of the ongoing Planning-MCDOT effort.</p> <p>Portions of these streets may be more likely to be Curbless Streets rather than Shared, depending on the amount of vehicle loading expected to use these streets. Vehicle loading may be due to garage access associated with adjacent developments (particularly where they may be unable to fit access points onto other fronting streets), and the more vehicles: the less comfort & efficacy a Shared Street will have.</p> <p>40' will be very narrow for the type these types of streets if motor vehicles are expected to substantially use these streets for access. I'd suggest 50' ROW if we expect these to be Curbless Streets (providing vehicle access to buildings) or 44' ROW if we expect these to be Shared Streets (minimal vehicle access).</p>			
42	* Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	48	Curbless & Shared Streets	<p>The following streets propose infrastructure that exceeds the ROW available if everything is at its CSDG Default, but can fit if elements are reduced toward their minimums. These streets are only called out to advise that they will have features beneath CSDG Default; none of these necessarily require action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - p50 - Corporate Blvd Extended between Omega Dr & Shady Grove Rd - 75' Proposed ROW, 80' Default ROW, 109' all default widths, 64' all minimum widths - <i>Will result in elimination of Frontage Zones & reduced width Ped/Bike Buffers or Bike Lanes</i> 			
43	* Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	50	ROWS Below Defaults	<p>The following streets propose infrastructure that exceeds the ROW available if everything is at its CSDG Default, but can fit if elements are reduced toward their minimums. These streets are only called out to advise that they will have features beneath CSDG Default; none of these necessarily require action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - p51 - Molecular Dr between Travilah Rd & Shady Grove Rd - 75' Proposed ROW, 80' Default ROW, 109' all default widths, 64' all minimum widths - <i>Will result in elimination of Frontage Zones & reduced width Ped/Bike Buffers or Bike Lanes</i> 			
44	* Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	51	ROWS Below Defaults	<p>The following streets propose infrastructure that exceeds the ROW available if everything is at its CSDG Default, but can fit if elements are reduced toward their minimums. These streets are only called out to advise that they will have features beneath CSDG Default; none of these necessarily require action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - p51 - Molecular Dr between Travilah Rd & Shady Grove Rd - 75' Proposed ROW, 80' Default ROW, 109' all default widths, 64' all minimum widths - <i>Will result in elimination of Frontage Zones & reduced width Ped/Bike Buffers or Bike Lanes</i> 			

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45	*	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	52, 93	ROWS Below Minimums Required	<p>The following streets propose infrastructure that exceeds the ROW available even if everything is reduce to their CSDG minimums. As written the proposed infrastructure is not attainable within the ROW provided. The plan needs to either call for additional ROW or reduce proposed infrastructure.</p> <p>- p52 - Road T between 150' west of Road S & W Diamond Ave - 50' Proposed ROW, 80' Default ROW, 109' all default widths, 64' all minimum widths, short by 14' to achieve all-minimum width design elements.</p> <p>- p93 - Clopper Rd between Longdraft Rd & Great Seneca Creek - 60' Proposed ROW, 108' all default widths, 68' all minimum widths, presuming 15' Street Buffers for an Open Section Road. Short by 8' to achieve all-minimum width design elements, which might be achievable by narrowing the Street Buffers to 11' each, but this would only be agreeable upon completion of accompanying SWM/Drainage analyses.</p>	1	
46	*	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	52, 85	ROWS Below Defaults	<p>The following streets propose infrastructure that exceeds the ROW available if everything is at its CSDG Default, but can fit if elements are reduced toward their minimums. These streets are only called out to advise that they will have features beneath CSDG Default; none of these necessarily require action:</p> <p>- p52 - Road B between Muddy Branch Rd & Darnestown Rd - 75' Proposed ROW, 80' Default ROW, 109' all default widths, 64' all minimum widths - Will result in elimination of Frontage Zones & reduced width Ped/Bike Buffers or Bike Lanes</p> <p>- p52 - Road C between Belward Campus Dr Extended & Key West Ave - 75' Proposed ROW, 80' Default ROW, 109' all default widths, 64' all minimum widths - Will result in elimination of Frontage Zones & reduced width Ped/Bike Buffers or Bike Lanes</p> <p>- p52,85 - Road S between Muddy Branch Rd & W Diamond Ave - 75' Proposed ROW, 80' Default ROW, 109' all default widths, 64' all minimum widths - Will result in elimination of Frontage Zones & reduced width Ped/Bike Buffers or Bike Lanes</p> <p>- p52,85 - Road U between Road S & Road Y - 75' Proposed ROW, 80' Default ROW, 109' all default widths, 64' all minimum widths - Will result in elimination of Frontage Zones & reduced width Ped/Bike Buffers or Bike Lanes</p> <p>- p52,85 - Road V between 150' west of Road S & Muddy Branch Rd - 75' Proposed ROW, 80' Default ROW, 109' all default widths, 64' all minimum widths - Will result in elimination of Frontage Zones & reduced width Ped/Bike Buffers or Bike Lanes</p> <p>- p52,85 - Road W between 150' west of Road S & Muddy Branch Rd - 50' Proposed ROW, 80' Default ROW, 84' all default widths, 50' all minimum widths - Will result in elimination of Frontage Zones & Sidewalk, Street Buffer, and Travel Lanes all at their minimum widths</p>		
47	*	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	53, 85	ROWS Below Defaults	<p>The following streets propose infrastructure that exceeds the ROW available if everything is at its CSDG Default, but can fit if elements are reduced toward their minimums. These streets are only called out to advise that they will have features beneath CSDG Default; none of these necessarily require action:</p> <p>- p53,85 - Road Y between 150' west of Road S & Muddy Branch Rd - 75' Proposed ROW, 80' Default ROW, 109' all default widths, 64' all minimum widths - Will result in elimination of Frontage Zones & reduced width Ped/Bike Buffers or Bike Lanes</p> <p>- p53 - Travilah Rd Extended between Darnestown Rd & Key West Ave - 75' Proposed ROW, 80' Default ROW, 109' all default widths, 64' all minimum widths - Will result in elimination of Frontage Zones & reduced width Ped/Bike Buffers or Bike Lanes</p> <p>- p53 - Travilah Rd Extended between Key West Ave & Belward Campus Dr - 75' Proposed ROW, 80' Default ROW, 109' all default widths, 64' all minimum widths - Will result in elimination of Frontage Zones & reduced width Ped/Bike Buffers or Bike Lanes</p>		
48	*	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	53, 85	Curbless & Shared Streets	<p>Road X: Consider changing "Residential Shared Street" and "Shared Street" both to "Curbless or Shared Street", unless the plan deliberately intends to specify otherwise.</p> <p>While "Residential Shared Street" does reflect the parlance currently in the County Code, using "Curbless or Shared Street" would reflect the parlance of the ongoing Planning-MCDOT effort.</p> <p>I'm unsure where Road X is, but in general I'd suggest 50' ROW if we expect these to Curbless Streets (providing vehicle access to buildings) or 44' ROW if we expect these to be Shared Streets (minimal vehicle access).</p>		

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49	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	54, 57-61	Frontage Zones	<p>To start with two FYI's regarding Frontage Zones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the Code the Frontage Zones has generally been envisioned as part of the Public ROW. - In CSDG the Frontage Zone along Downtown Streets can be reduced to 0'. <p>The cross-section here shows Frontage Zones outside the public ROW. This may result in Frontage Zones being frequently omitted by developments.</p> <p>What's shown is fine if that is considered acceptable by Planning & Council & no action is required.</p> <p>However, if Planning/Council intend to see more Frontage Zones: either additional ROW may be necessary, or narrative toward the provision of Public Improvement Easements (PIEs) may be necessary. (Note that legal concerns have been raised by the County Attorney's Office regarding the efficacy & legality of PIEs.)</p>			
50	* Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	54-62	Cross-Sections Note	<p>Add a note to each cross-section reading:</p> <p>"Cross-section is diagrammatic only for purposes of showing an approximate envisioned layout within planned rights-of-way. Actual design may vary depending on safety & operational needs as well as site constraints."</p>			
51	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	55-56, 62	Sidewalk Width	<p>The CSDG Default Sidewalk Width along Downtown Streets, Town Center Boulevards, & Town Center Streets is 10'.</p> <p>The 8' width shown is acceptable (it is the Minimum Width in CSDG), so this is fine if these sidewalk widths are considered acceptable by Planning & Council.</p> <p>However, if Planning/Council intend for Sidewalks to be their Default width: ROWs of at least 54' (p55) or 79' (p56) will be necessary.</p>			
52	* VZ	WH	Public Hearing Draft	58, 60, 61	2-Way SBLs vs 1-Way SBLs w/ Passing Lanes	<p>Where options provide for two-way cycletracks on both sides of the roadway, consider instead having one-way cycletracks going with the direction of traffic and the 2nd bike lane as a passing lane.</p> <p>This creates a wide buffer with space for faster cyclists to safely pass in the bike lane and avoids having bike traffic coming the opposite direction of car traffic.</p>			
53	DOT	CC	Public Hearing Draft	58, 60, 61	Road Diets	<p>The road diets and associated greenways / promenades appears to be proposing to spend large amounts of resources to substantially reconstruct these roads, to little substantive benefit. The area already has large open spaces & they themselves contribute to the large sense of scale that already makes this area feel unwalkable.</p> <p>And the very short blocks alongside the loss of capacity will pose substantial operational challenges with the short blocks being unable to store queues from each intersection. The transportation analysis is insufficient to support these recommendations, and a more detailed analysis would likely find this recommendation to be infeasible to safely implement.</p> <p>Consider a more limited approach to Key West and Great Seneca (particularly the former) that can achieve clear goals and benefits with less cost to the public.</p> <p>Consider also whether a reconstruction of Darnestown Rd might be able to achieve similar intentions. Darnestown Rd has been envisioned to become more local-serving, carries less traffic, and could knit together the growing areas south of Darnestown Rd which have long been rather separated from the areas to the north.</p>	1		
54	* DTE, Policy	MCI, CVA	Public Hearing Draft	58, 60, 61	Ped Operations	<p>The very wide distance between the roadway and Sidewalk also present several operational challenges:</p> <p>1) (MCJ) At cross-streets, having the Sidewalk offset by nearly 70' feet (at least 4 car-lengths) from the roadway, it will make intersection design very challenging and will result in the either the Sidewalk having to shift back toward the roadway at every crossing (in which case pedestrians may be likely to walk in the Bikeway), or having unsafe crossings at what will effectively be a separate midblock crossing with no control for vehicles due to the proximity to the existing intersection.</p> <p>2) (MCJ) If transit service is present: there is a large distance between any transit stops and where people are expected to walk. This may result in pedestrians walking in the Bikeway.</p> <p>3) (CVA) The wide rights-of-way in the plan area today contribute to the poor pedestrian environment, particularly in making destinations feel more distant than they actually are. There is a risk of retaining these issues with these wide corridors.</p>	1		<p>Thanks for noting this; we share your concerns and would appreciate your ideas for addressing them.</p> <p>1. I should have noted that everything between the ped/bike buffer and the general purpose travel lanes in the Promenade is open for more detailed design. We'd appreciate your input on designing bike and pedestrian facilities within the open space that balance providing access to the buildings on the north side of the ROW, access to the curb, and safe crossings. One precedent example is Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn, NY; our case would be a bit simpler since we are not recommending a service road. We're also hoping to activate the promenade area with kiosks, pavilions, paths, and other features. Could pedestrian and bike signals at the crossings of perpendicular north/south streets be coordinated with the signals on Key West?</p> <p>2. There is existing transit service on Key West Ave and, although we are not currently proposing dedicated transit lanes on Key West, we imagine transit service would continue to be provided. We would envision pedestrian pathways through the promenade area to connect transit stops to adjacent buildings. This would be an improvement over the existing condition where transit</p>

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55	*	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	59-61	Fire Access	<p>A building frontage can be a maximum of 50' from a Fire Access. A Fire Access requires a 12' travelway designed to support heavy vehicles, plus an additional 8' flush area for outriggers.</p> <p>The cross-sections on pages 59-61 will require that the Sidewalk & a portion of adjacent areas be designed as a Fire Access route.</p> <p>This does not necessarily require action to resolve, provided Planning & Council are comfortable with Sidewalks being designed to function as Fire Access, and that some amount of additional space will be required for the outrigger areas. This space might come from either the Future Recreation areas, or by requiring at least some amount of Frontage Zone. Fixed objects would be limited within the areas required for outriggers.</p>			Thanks for bringing this to our attention.
56		Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	64	Phrasing	<p>#1 Belward, 1st new bullet on p64:</p> <p>This currently reads: >>> Step new buildings down to 60 to 80 feet depending on whether they are adjacent to the Belward Farm, to be decided at site plan review.<<<</p>	3		
57	*	Policy	GE	Public Hearing Draft	71, 86-87, 112	Surface Lot Microgrids	<p>Is this meant to read "Step new buildings down to 60 or 80 feet" ?</p> <p>(GE) All parking areas above a certain size should consider including a microgrid (or possibly be required to have a microgrid).</p> <p>(SLB) Though consider also that implementing microgrids atop surface lots may discourage or delay their future redevelopment.</p>			
58	****	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	72	Forest Conservation Areas	<p>#5 includes the following:</p> <p>>>> Protect existing forests to provide carbon sequestration, heat island mitigation, air and water filtration, watershed protection, support of biological diversity, and proven physical and mental health benefits. <<<</p> <p>While this is a good goal, generally, in what is intended to be a Downtown area this may pose unintended consequences. There are existing Forest Conservation Areas that block potential infrastructure needs (such as extending Traville Gateway Dr northward to Medical Center Dr). Existing Forest Conservation Areas also create voidspaces which hamper the pedestrian experience by reducing "interesting-ness" of an area & making a segment *feel* very long to traverse.</p> <p>The Plan should provide narrative toward Forest Conservation Areas. This section should identify any such areas (perhaps include a map?) and consider whether they should be modified to achieve other plan recommendations.</p> <p>Consider whether the Promenades & Greenways may provide commensurate tree coverage for any impacted Forest Conservation Areas, &/or consider creating new Forest Conservation Areas in areas less impactful on infrastructure needs, or in areas internal to sites.</p>	1		
59	****	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	74	Biotech Exemptions	<p>The Implementation section should note that Biotech is not presently required to do follow Local Area Transportation Review (LATR) nor pay impact taxes.</p> <p>Given the substantial amount of biotech existing and expected: this could have a substantive effect on plan implementation.</p>	1		
60	*	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	75-76	CIP Projects	<p>Need to ensure CIP list reflects all recommendations. I've spotted the following in my read-through which appear to be missing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New Street Grid roadways (p39, 41) - Enumerate all changing street sections (p42 & upgraded sidepath widths (p40) - Protected Crossings (p41) - Bike Parking Stations at transit stations, trails, parks, public open spaces, large employment / retail centers (p40) - Implement Bike Parking Stations at Bike Plan areas: Belward, Adventist, PSTA (p40,64) 			
61		VZ	WH	Public Hearing Draft	75-76	Lead agencies	<p>SHA and MCDOT should be co-leading agencies for right-size intersections; signalize, restrict or close median breaks; consolidate, remove or relocate driveways; and walkways and bikeways network since each agency is responsible for its ROW and they need to collaborate when they intersect.</p>	3		
62		Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	75-76, 88, 95, 100, 106, 113, 120, 123	CIP Page Numbers	<p>Consider adding a column that includes page references to where the project is substantially referenced.</p>			
63		Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	80	Formatting	<p>Consider putting each map on its own individual page, enlarging it, and aligning them across each of these pages (Figures 34,35).</p>	3		


0	Team	Commenter	Document	Page	Summary	Comment	Priority	Response	Response Detail
64	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	83	PEPCO Trail Breezeway	The PEPCO Power Line trail along the north side of the Quince Orchard area is currently designated by the Bike Master Plan as a Breezeway. Given that the Breezeway is named on p91 and p95, I presume this is simply an oversight & this just needs the accompanying line weight to indicate a Breezeway. Just in case: If the Plan is proposing to remove the Breezeway status from the PEPCO Power Line trail, then we strongly urge hesitation & that this be discussed during worksessions. This connection would provide an excellent east-west connection knitting the Upcounty area together & its removal would result in a lower quality product.			
65	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	83-84	Formatting	Consider aligning the maps across each of these three pages (Figures 36, 37). Consider also whether to crop these graphics to focus on the NIST / Londonderry / Hoyle's Addition area.	3		
66	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	84	Formatting	Figure 37 - The legend is missing. D, Natural Environment:	3		
67	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	86	Noise Study / Wall	#1 says to conduct a noise study, and #2 says to construct a noise wall & vegetative barrier. Is #2's recommendation a predetermined result of #1? Or is #2 already affirmed to be necessary, and #1 would be to identify additional needs in addition to the wall/barrier?			
68	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	92	Formatting	Consider putting each map on its own individual page, enlarging it, and aligning them across each of these pages (Figures 39, 40).	3		
69	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	92-93	New Figures	A reader may not think to find the transportation figures for Quince Orchard located in the NIST / Londonderry / Hoyle's Addition section (p83-84). Consider copying these graphics and adding them between pages 92 and 93. (note also my formatting comments on p83-84)			
70	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	104	Formatting	Consider putting each map on its own individual page, enlarging it, and aligning them across each of these pages (Figures 44, 45).	3		
71	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	107	Railway ROW	Add the CSX / WMATA Railway as a row to Table 10. This should provide the ROW needs necessary to provide a 3rd track for CSX / Amtrak / MARC, and also to provide bidirectional track for the Red Line Extension proposed by the I-270 Corridor Forward Plan.	1		
72	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	109	Formatting	Consider substantially enlarging Figure 46.	3		
73	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	110	Formatting	Figure 47 and 48 are the same graphic albeit with different legends. Consider some way to make this clearer, or at least enlarge these Figures to make them more legible.	3		
74	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	111	ROWS Below Defaults	The following streets propose infrastructure that exceeds the ROW available if everything is at its CSDG Default, but can fit if elements are reduced toward their minimums. These streets are only called out to advise that they will have features beneath CSDG Default; none of these necessarily require action: - p111 - Gaither Rd between City of Gaithersburg & Shady Grove Rd - 90' Proposed ROW, 100' Default ROW, 104' all default widths, 70' all minimum widths - Will result in reducing the 12' total Frontage Zone area to 7' total (averaging 3.5' on each side). - p111 - Industrial Dr between Gaither Rd & Gaithersburg City Limit - 70' Proposed ROW, 80' Default ROW, 82' all default widths, 48' all minimum widths - May result in either the narrowing of Frontage Zones on one or both sides, or the elimination of parking along one side of Industrial Dr.			
75	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	118	ROWS Below Defaults	The following street proposes infrastructure that exceeds the ROW available if everything is at its CSDG Default, but can fit if elements are reduced toward their minimums. These streets are only called out to advise that they will have features beneath CSDG Default; none of these necessarily require action: - p118 - Decoverly Dr Extended between Fields Rd & 675' West of Washingtonian Blvd - 75' Proposed ROW, 80' Default ROW, 119' all default widths, 70' all minimum widths - Will result in elimination of Frontage Zones & reduced width Ped/Bike Buffers or Bike Lanes			
76	Policy	ADB	Public Hearing Draft	122	Formatting	Built Environment, #2: Change "side path" to "sidepath" to reflect the formal naming in the County Code.	3		
77	Policy	ADB	Transportation Appendix	14	Transpo Analyses	The plan does not meet the Travel Time metric directed by Council in December 2020, with estimated travel times for both auto and transit increasing by 1 minute at plan-buildout. This reflects a +6% increase for auto trips and +2% increase for transit trips. We do not necessarily oppose increased auto travel times, particularly noting the spirit of the recently approved Thrive Montgomery 2050 update to the General Plan. However, travelers must have options, and reductions in auto access must be paired with improvements in transit access. That said, a 1 minute / 2% increase for transit trips is not particularly substantial, and we understand from Planning staff that this reflects a nuance of how the metric is calculated rather than any forecast degradation of service. We defer to Planning and Council for consideration of this issue and whether additional transit infrastructure may be necessary. We also note that we have been working with Planning on the development of new master plan metrics which may better identify issues, needs, and actionable recommendations to resolve these sorts of issues.	1		




Email



RE: Great Seneca Plan

Owner

 MCP...**Email**

From  Stephen Grall

To  <MCP-Chair MCP-Chair>;  MCP-Chair #;  MCP-Chair@mncppc-mc.org

Cc  Maren Hill;  maren.hill@montgomeryplanning.org

Bcc

Subject RE: Great Seneca Plan

Date Sent**Date Received**

3/17/2024 3:04 PM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

To whom it may concern:

I am responding to the public inquiry regarding the Great Seneca Plan.

I live in Bell Shady Grove, one of the existing apartment complexes next to MD-28, Key West Ave. As a 36 year old single college-educated technology engineer, I have lived in various areas of Montgomery County since 2014, and have seen a decline in the quality of life in the county no matter which area of the County I have moved to.

While I saw references to noise abatement from I-270 in the Plan, one issue that I did not see discussed in the Plan is existing road noise and speeding along MD-28 and associated corridors such as Shady Grove Road and Great Seneca Highway. Specifically, I am referring to illegally modified exhaust systems on motor vehicles, including automobiles, motorcycles, and "dirt bikes" of various kinds, and these vehicles excessively speeding on these roads. These vehicles pose both a nuisance and a threat to safety, particularly given the school that is planned along Omega Drive. These children will have their safety in jeopardy if this speeding is continued to be allowed within this corridor once the school is built, and one or more of these vehicles were to lose control and crash. I did see reference in the Plan to converting two travel lanes on MD-28 Key West Ave for "walking, biking, and rolling". If this were to occur, those individuals will be at risk as well. I do not think that decreasing lanes in and of itself will deter those already breaking the law from continuing to do so. Greater law enforcement is needed.

I have lived in this apartment building for over two years, and have suffered with the noise from these vehicles and their speeding on a near daily basis. At times, the noise is so great that even the best earplugs I have found cannot block it. This is not the responsibility of the apartment building, but of the County. When I contacted the County legislature last year, I was told that the Montgomery County Police do not have the funding or are otherwise not equipped to enforce exhaust noise violations, as for such cases to hold up in court, the entire police force would need to be provided with noise meters. Ideas like adding trees along MD-28 were discussed (and are in the Plan, thank you!), but trees take time to plant and grow, and ultimately, trees do not solve the root problem: people flagrantly breaking the law without adequate law enforcement and consequences for their actions.

I work very hard during the day from home, and I want reasonable peace and serenity in my home both while working and after work (evenings and weekends). Unfortunately, I never know when droves of noisy illegally modified vehicles are going to speed by at any hour, disturbing my peace. Lately, these vehicles seem to congregate with multiple at a time speeding by. While I am aware I can call the Montgomery County Police non-emergency number, there is little purpose in doing so, as the vehicles are long gone by the time I can pick up my phone (they are speeding after all). Without regular structured enforcement of some kind, nothing is going to change. If the County is not in a position to enforce based on noise, why isn't it enforcing based on speed? Can speed cameras be considered as part of the Great Seneca Plan? Could other traffic calming controls be considered, beyond just the conversion of two travel lanes?

Despite my rather high income, I am not currently in a position to move again, due to old debt I'm paying down combined with the increased costs of living that are affecting the entirety of the United States. However, in two years, once I have paid off my debt and can afford to make another dramatic change in my life, my current plan is to leave Maryland entirely, and move to a suburban or rural area of Pennsylvania, where costs, noise, and traffic are less. I'm sure I'm not the only one in this position. Montgomery County and Maryland as a whole stands to lose a large amount of tax and sales revenue if people like myself choose to leave the county and/or state because our quality of life has decreased.


Whether I personally am able to benefit from it or not within the next two years, I implore those involved in the Great Seneca Plan to work with others in Montgomery County legislature, Maryland State legislature, and with the Montgomery County and Maryland State Police to solve this illegal exhaust noise and speeding problem by any means necessary. I know it affects more than just the area of the County I'm in.

While I am unable to attend any public hearings or community meetings, if you would like to discuss the matter with me, feel free to call and leave a message for me to return, or reply to this email.

Thank you,

Stephen Grall

Attachments

File Name	File Size (Bytes)	
		
There are no Attachments to show in this view. To get started, create one or more Attachments.		
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