SRA 26-01
SUBDIVISION OF LAND – CONTINUATION OF ROADS

Description

This SRA would prohibit the Planning Board from approving a subdivision that would connect to an existing Neighborhood Street or Neighborhood Yield Street if located within the boundary of a Local Area Transportation Improvement Program area.

SRA 26-01

Completed: 05-21-26

MCPB

Item No. 9

05-28-26

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ZTA SPONSORS

Sponsors:
Councilmember Mink

INTRODUCTION DATE

April 14, 2026

COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING DATE

June 9, 2026

REVIEW BASIS

Chapter 50

Summary

- Chapter 50 – Subdivision of Land requires the continuation of existing roads if a road or road right of way connection is available to an adjacent property, unless the Board and other appropriate agencies determine otherwise
- This SRA would add an exception to the continuation of existing roads, by not allowing the continuation of existing roads if the property is located within a Local Area Transportation Improvement Program (LATIP) area, and if the roads would be classified as a Neighborhood Street or a Neighborhood Yield Street.
- Planning Staff recommend the Board provide comments against the SRA, as it undermines best transportation planning practices, our master and functional plans, and the Board's authority on the matter.

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SECTION 1 – BACKGROUND

Introduction

Subdivision Regulation Amendment (SRA) 26-01, Subdivision of Land – Continuation of Roads, was introduced on April 14, 2026, by Councilmember Mink (Attachment A). The SRA is scheduled for a District Council Public Hearing on June 9, 2026.

Overview

In Chapter 50 – Subdivision of Land, Section 50-4.3.E Roads requires in subsection 1.b. that subdivision plans provide for the continuation of any existing roads (constructed or recorded) unless otherwise determined by the Board, considering the recommendations of other appropriate agencies. The effect of this provision is that any new subdivision occurring on a tract of land that has a 'stub road' touching the edge of the site from an adjacent site should connect to and continue the stub road(s) into the new subdivision. This SRA adds an additional clause, stating the Board must not continue Neighborhood Streets or Neighborhood Yield Streets if the site is located in a Local Area Transportation Improvement Program (LATIP) area. The only LATIP area in the county is in the White Oak area (Attachment B), implemented by the 2014 White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan.

Rather than having applications within the LATIP perform a typical Local Area Transportation Review (LATR) analysis, pursuant to the Growth and Infrastructure Policy, a flat per-trip fee is instead paid into the LATIP fund. The cost per trip is based on the proposed land use and is updated every six years, last updated in 2023. There are select other policy areas in the county do not follow the standard LATR review process such as North Bethesda/White Flint, but White Oak is the only one designated as a LATIP.

SECTION 2 – SRA 26-01 ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SRA 26-01 As Introduced

50-4.3.E.1.B

The SRA is brief, adding one new sentence to Chapter 50 under Section 50-4.3.E.1.b. Continuation of Roads, shown on lines 21-27 of the SRA. The section of code generally requires an applicant to provide a continuation of any existing roads from adjacent sites onto the applicant's site, unless the Board determines otherwise. The new clause states, however, that if the property is located within a LATIP, and the street is a Neighborhood Street or a Neighborhood Yield Street, the street must not be continued.

Analysis

Planning Staff do not support this SRA and recommend the Planning Board also not support this policy. There are multiple reasons why Planning Staff cannot recommend support, including the SRA going against well-documented transportation best practices and contradicting master and functional plan guidance.

BEST PRACTICES

Street interconnectivity is a well-established principle in planning and transportation practice. Urban planners, transportation engineers, and related fields have extensively studied its effects. Planning Staff have reviewed a range of technical and academic sources when developing master plans and when evaluating the subdivision regulations that support street connectivity. A sample of those sources is summarized below.

- The Congress for New Urbanism has substantial literature about the benefits of street interconnectivity. Including the benefits of connectivity in dispersing traffic and easing walking in their Urbanism Principles. This is furthered in their Sustainable Street Network Principles publication, which finds that:

  > *Well-connected street networks improve mobility by allowing people to travel more directly. This makes destinations more accessible by walking and enlarges the capture area surrounding transit stations. Such highly connected street networks have been shown to reduce vehicle miles traveled, traffic congestion, and vehicle delay. They permit traffic to diffuse across the larger street network when demand becomes excessive on any individual route. They have also been proven to reduce emergency response times*

- The Wasatch Front Regional Council published a 2019 paper titled *Assessment of effects of street connectivity on traffic performance and sustainability within communities and neighborhoods* which found "there are statistically significant lower congestion levels in neighborhoods with better connectivity. This finding is aligned with earlier studies revealing more balanced traffic distribution and greater traffic volume capacity associated with networks with more connectivity. The study also found that "it is noteworthy that at the neighborhood level, more connectivity, if anything, is associated with fewer crashes, even with a greater number of 4-way intersections in the area".

- Paul Stangl published a research paper titled *Block size-based measures of street connectivity: A critical assessment and new approach* in the publication URBAN DESIGN International, focused on flaws associated with commonly used block sizes, and found that "connectivity is related to pedestrian activity levels, as environments with greater connectivity provide more direct routes and therefore shorter distances to destinations".

- Robert Cervero led a team in a meta-analysis of built-environment transportation literature and a key takeaway was "intersection density and street connectivity were strongly associated with reduced vehicle miles traveled, even more than metrics traditionally assumed to be the most important like density".

- Wesley Marshall and Norman Garrick co-authored *Does street network design affect traffic safety* which analyzed California traffic safety data and found street network characteristics correlate with road safety outcomes. "Denser street networks with higher intersection counts per area are associated with fewer crashes across all severity levels".

All this literature points to the design principles Montgomery Planning upholds. Street connectivity leads to better dispersed congestion, more options for travelers, less travel time, and better mobility for all transportation modes, including walking and cycling. These well-researched principles are the foundation of the existing subdivision regulations, and the work Montgomery Planning has done with Council-approved master and functional plans.

MASTER PLAN GUIDANCE

Another major reason Planning Staff does not support this SRA is it is in direct conflict with master plan guidance around transportation. In Thrive Montgomery 2050, the county's General Plan, there are multiple references to the existing deficiencies in our transportation network caused by the absence of more street connections, and recommendations to make these connections a priority. Some of these references are quoted below.

Thrive Montgomery 2050

Transportation and Communications Network

What Is The Problem We Are Trying To Solve?

- *The 1964 hub-and-spoke model of arterial corridors radiating from Washington limited infrastructure to support alternatives to driving, and the absence of street grid connections also make our transportation network less adaptable and resilient.* P. 110.

What Policies Will Solve The Problem?

- ***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.* P. 112

How Will These Policies Further the Key Objectives of Thrive Montgomery 2050?

- ***Land Use and Transportation Strategies That Encourage Walking, Biking and Transit Use Improve Environmental Performance***
    - *A more connected street grid is perhaps the single most important step to make our streets safer and more attractive for walking, biking and rolling, and to reconnect communities divided by highways. An interconnected grid system will increase choice of modes, provide multiple routes for travel, and be better equipped to handle extreme weather and other disruptions. For this reason, the addition of local street connections should be a top priority in both capital budgets and development review.* P. 117.

Appendix C – Glossary

- ***Town centers:*** *Town centers are similar to downtowns but generally feature less intense development and cover a smaller geographic area. They typically have high- to moderate-intensity residential development, including multi-family buildings and townhouses, and retail (existing or planned). Town centers share the following characteristics: a regional or neighborhood-serving retail node with housing and other uses; medium to high levels of pedestrian and bicyclist activity; medium levels of existing or planned transit service;* ***a street grid that ties into the surrounding streets****; continuous building frontage along streets, with some curb cuts; and a mix of structured and underground parking as well as surface parking lots.* P. 187. [emphasis added]

More specifically, the 2014 White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan, which the White Oak LATIP is within, spoke of the existing challenges of the lack of interconnections.

2014 White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan

Opportunities and Challenges

- *Although I-495 and I-95 are nearby, physical constraints limit opportunities to improve local circulation as well as connectivity to other areas. Streets wind through the residential neighborhoods* ***with few through streets to interconnect communities, which forces local traffic onto the major roads.*** p. 23. [emphasis added]

Planning Staff have long been identifying street grids and transportation interconnectivity as barriers throughout the County, including within the 2014 White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan, which also recommended creating the White Oak LATIP. While the SRA as introduced limits impacts of the policy recommendations to the White Oak LATIP, it's probable that other community groups within the county may ask for a similar provision prohibiting the continuation of neighborhood streets if it is adopted in White Oak.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

As part of the review of this SRA, Planning Staff have been engaged in dialogue with Council Staff, and with a representative of the Hillendale community, which is within the White Oak LATIP. The primary concern raised is the prospect that future development projects may be required to connect to and extend neighborhood streets and neighborhood yield streets, resulting in new vehicle trips through the community without the benefit of a Local Area Transportation Review (LATR) study. Planning Staff recognizes the unique situation for developments within the White Oak LATIP, which are not required to prepare a LATR study, but notes that the analysis and results of such studies typically have little to no bearing on whether inter-parcel connections to local streets are required. As discussed in the master plans and the literature reviews above, providing street connectivity generally has a positive impact on transportation systems, and the vehicle portion of LATR studies focuses mostly on intersection capacity.

Recommendations

Planning Staff does not support SRA 26-01 for the reasons outlined earlier in this report. Planning Staff recommends that the Board also not support the SRA and transmit comments to the Council outlining the above concerns. However, if the Board or the Council wanted to pursue amending rather than rejecting the SRA, Planning Staff has a recommendation worth considering.

In the current SRA, the following text is added:

> However, a property located within the boundary of a Local Area Transportation Improvement Program (LATIP) must not be connected by an existing Neighborhood Street or Neighborhood Yield Street, as defined in Chapter 49, that is also within the boundary of a Local Area Transportation Improvement Program (LATIP).

To mitigate some potential concerns about the impacts of connectivity on traffic volumes and distribution, and to promote the connectivity envisioned by Planning Staff and the master plans, the addition of "any new development on" and 'only' could be added, as follows:

> However, any new development on a property located within the boundary of a Local Area Transportation Improvement Program (LATIP) must not only be connected by an existing Neighborhood Street or Neighborhood Yield Street, as defined in Chapter 49, that is also within the boundary of a Local Area Transportation Improvement Program (LATIP).

The effect of this amendment would still allow the Board to consider connectivity to adjacent neighborhood street types, but not as the only access. Adding "any new development on" makes it clear that satisfying this provision would require any and all new development and associated trips to comply with this section, where connections must not only be to neighborhood street types. Providing connections to higher classification streets provides better regional access to a site, and

allowing for potential interconnectivity provides transportation benefits to new and existing residents and to emergency services, whether driving, walking, or rolling.

SECTION 3 – CONCLUSION

Planning Staff recommends the Planning Board not support SRA 26-01 on the basis of being inconsistent with transportation best practices and with our master and functional plans. The SRA would prohibit the Board from allowing inter-parcel connections with the continuation of any neighborhood street or neighborhood yield street if within the White Oak LATIP. If a compromise position is preferred, the Board should recommend clarifying that the provisions apply to "any new development" and that connections must not "only" be made to neighborhood street types.

SECTION 4 – ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Subdivision Regulation Amendment 26-01

Attachment B: Map of White Oak LATIP