



January 29, 2004

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Jeffrey Zyontz, Chief
Countywide Planning Division

Richard Hawthorne, Chief
Transportation Planning *RCH*

FROM: Charles S. Kines, 301-495-2184 for the Park and Planning Department *CK*

SUBJECT: Worksession #1 for Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the Planning Board:

1. Review staff responses to public comments and related staff recommendations, and provide guidance on Chapter 4, *Bikeway Implementation*, for reasons outlined below. (Worksession #1)
2. Review and approve the final structure of the plan, as well as review and comment on the numerous recommended changes to specific sections of the plan as highlighted in Exhibit A. (Worksession #2)
3. Approve the Public Hearing Draft as the Planning Board (Final) Draft Plan and transmit the plan to the County Council and County Executive. (Worksession #2, or if necessary, Worksession #3)

BRIEF BACKGROUND

The Planning Board held a public hearing on the plan on December 11, 2003. Sixteen people testified and 15 people submitted written testimony. Exhibit A is a chart containing a summary of all public and agency comments with staff responses and recommendations. Exhibit B, in the Board packet only, contains all written testimony.

Having reviewed the testimony, staff has provided a response for each significant issue as shown in Exhibit A. Based on that testimony, and subsequent meetings and conversations with County Executive staff, staff concludes that some major structural

changes to the document are warranted, as well as changes to specific sections of the plan. These recommendations are shown in Exhibit A.

SUGGESTED BOARD SEQUENCE OF DISCUSSION FOR WORKSESSION #1

The items below highlight the issues brought up during review of the public hearing draft. Comments on the draft can generally be grouped into three broad categories:

1. Recommended structural and/or organizational changes to the document
2. Suggested minor changes or corrections to specific sections of the document
3. Additional bikeways to consider and/or changes to the recommended bikeway type(s) for certain roads or highways.

1. Recommended structural changes to the document.

The County Executive requested several major changes to the structure or organization of the plan:

- Move the majority of Chapter 3, *Bikeway Facility Design Guidelines*, to an appendix.
- Modify Chapter 4, *Bikeway Implementation*, by removing any references to timing or any language that directs public agencies to complete projects or initiate programs within a certain time frame.
- Move the majority of Chapter 5, *Related Policies and Programs*, to an appendix and make the text more generalized with fewer details on how to accomplish certain tasks, activities or programs.

Chapter 3, Bikeway Facility Design Guidelines. The County Executive requested this chapter be moved to an appendix for informational purposes only and not be included as policy in the body of the plan. Since the public hearing, staff has met with and discussed these changes with Gail Tait-Nouri, the bikeway coordinator for the Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT). Staff generally agrees with County Executive staff that the design guidelines, as part of the body of the document, establish bikeway design standards for the County. Standards in the plan may be in conflict with existing roadway and bikeway facility standards of the County DPWT and the State Highway Administration (SHA).

Establishing new bikeway design standards for these agencies was not the intent of including this information as a chapter in the plan. The design guidelines are intended only to provide residents and public agencies with a basic understanding of safe and effective bikeway design and to guide decision making in the future. They were not intended to recommend global changes to DPWT or SHA design standards for roads and highways.

In response, this chapter will be moved to an appendix, where the design guidelines will still highlight the bikeway design concepts that both the Planning Board and the County Council would like to see implemented in the County. However, as an appendix, the guidelines will not bind County and State agencies

to particular concepts or designs and allow them to use future, yet-unknown innovative bikeway design concepts not covered by this plan.

Chapter 4, Bikeway Implementation. The County Executive requested that references to timing of bikeway implementation be eliminated from the plan and that the priority system not include references to timing.

The prioritization system is essentially a carryover concept from the 1978 Master Plan of Bikeways, which included a three-tier prioritization/staging system for bikeway implementation: 1) Short Range Stage (6 years), 2) Mid-Range Stage (6-10 years), and 3) Long Range Stage (10 years and later). Each category had a detailed set of criteria that had to be met in order for a bikeway to be placed in a particular category, but the table of bikeways in the 1978 plan did not identify the priority level bikeway-by-bikeway.

For the 2003 plan, staff developed a somewhat different approach in order to better facilitate implementation. The plan features a more general two-tier approach: 1) High Priority (within 10 years) and 2) Moderate Priority (10 years or longer). The system is intended to help decision makers and the public understand the difference between bikeways that could be implemented rather easily (and thus included in the CIP) versus the bikeways for which implementation will be more complex.

Staff feels strongly that the plan needs an implementation prioritization strategy or “staging plan.” Staff feels the County needs to make a commitment about the implementation of this plan over time. DPWT does not agree, therefore, staff would appreciate some guidance from the Board on this issue. Should the plan include staging for countywide bikeways as part of the implementation chapter? Should it include measurable implementation goals that would allow the County to track the plan’s progress over time?

Chapter 5, Related Policies and Programs. Master plans in the County typically do not recommend changes to the County’s operations. The County Executive feels that Chapter 5 highlights important issues that will ultimately help develop and shape a comprehensive bicycle program for the County, but that it includes too many detailed recommendations that would have an impact on existing and future County operations and its budget. The County Executive has requested that this Chapter become an appendix for informational purposes only and that details on how to accomplish tasks be removed. **Staff agrees that the public would be equally served if this Chapter were an appendix for informational purposes only, and not as official policy in the body of the document. As an appendix, this information still helps to guide future decision making on bicycle-related programs and policies.**

2. Suggested changes or corrections to specific sections of the document.

Both the County Executive and the public have recommended changes that would help clarify important issues and generally make the document more readable and understandable. Staff has considered and made recommendations on many of these points in Exhibit A and will present revised and incorporated text for these sections to the Planning Board at Worksession #2.

3. **Additional bikeways to consider and/or changes to recommended bikeway types for certain roads or highways**

The County Executive and the public have requested additional routes for consideration in the countywide bikeway network and suggested changes in classification for bikeways proposed in the plan. These proposed bikeways and recommended changes are highlighted in Exhibit A. Staff will review these suggestions and recommended changes and present findings to the Board at Worksession #2.

STAFF RESPONSES TO PLANNING BOARD REQUESTS

At the October 23, 2003 presentation of the plan to the Planning Board, the Board requested additional information on particular issues or topics.

1. **Request:** Provide an executive summary in the front of the plan. **Response:** An executive summary will be provided at Worksession #2.
2. **Request:** Describe the overlap between recreational and commuter paths. **Response:** Recreation-oriented paths as defined in this plan refer to hard surface park trails. With the exception of a few trails like the Capital Crescent Trail, many of these trails were built in the 1970s and 1980s and therefore often do not meet national design standards for a shared-use path intended for bicycle transportation as defined by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). Hard surface park trails often twist and turn, wrap around geographic features like trees or rock outcroppings, which often causes poor sight distances. These trails are fine for slower-paced recreation-oriented bicycling. Shared-use paths along roads, on the other hand, are designed for bicycle transportation. They typically meet national design standards for bicycle transportation facilities as defined by AASHTO and therefore meet the needs of bicyclists who travel at higher commuter speeds.
3. **Request:** Provide a table showing all countywide bikeways by type in numbered sequence. **Response:** This table is included in the Board packet as Exhibit C.
4. **Request:** Describe the relationship between a functional master plan and an area master plan. **Response:** A functional plan highlights a specific topic and covers the entire County. These topics include functional plans of highways (transportation), rustic roads and bikeways. An area master plan, by contrast, includes a detailed investigation of a wide variety of issues for a specific area of the County. A functional master plan, in summary, develops a plan for a specific topic of countywide significance, regardless of community plan or sector plan boundaries, whereas an area master plan covers a wide variety of topics for a small area of the County.
5. **Request:** Provide the number of miles of roadway in the County for comparison purposes. **Response:** The County features 3,261 miles of roadway. This is included on page 18 of the plan.

6. **Request:** Provide recommendations on how the Bicycle Education and Safety Advisory Committee (BESAC) could provide input to all interested parties, including the Planning Board, the County Council and the County Executive. **Response:** Since this section is part of Chapter 5, which is proposed to be moved to an appendix, details on how this body might function will not be included in the plan in order to give the County Executive flexibility on how the committee might function and serve the public.
7. **Request:** Provide samples of comparative bike-time versus drive-time for short trips. **Response:** Staff cited the 1990 National Bicycling and Walking Study for the statement on page 1 that indicates bicycling times for short trips under five miles are often faster than driving, especially in urban areas. Staff is still researching the issue and will present findings at Worksession #2. If staff cannot locate specific case studies or examples to confirm the claim, the sentence will be removed from the plan.

CSK:kcw
Attachments

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