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Project: Howard County Complete Streets

Meeting Description: Complete Streets Implementation Team Meeting #11

Participants:

Name	Company	Phone	Email
Tom Auyeung	Howard County DPW, Trans. & Special Projects	410.313.6142	tauyeung@howardcountymd.gov
Angela Cabellon	Howard County Office of the County Executive	410.313.2029	acabellon@howardcountymd.gov
Chris Eatough	Howard County Office of Transportation	410.313.0567	ceatough@howardcountymd.gov
Chad Edmondson	Howard County Department of Planning & Zoning	410.313.2350	cedmondson@howardcounty.gov
Carl Gutschick	Gutschick, Little and Weber, P.A.	410.880.1820	cgutschick@glwpa.com
David Ramsay	Howard County Public School System	410.313.6726	david.ramsay@hcpss.org
Kristin Russell	Columbia Association	410.715.3107	kristin.russell@columbiaassociation.org
Larry Schoen	Multimodal Transportation Board	410.730.9797	larryschoen@gmail.com
John Seefried	Howard County DPW	410.313.5712	jseefried@howardcountymd.gov
Paul Walsky	Howard County Recreation and Parks	410.313.1695	pwalsky@howardcountymd.gov
Jennifer White	Horizon Foundation	248.345.3030	jwhite@thehorizonfoundation.org
Jeff Riegner	WRA	302.571.9001	jriegner@wrallp.com
Leah Kacanda	WRA	302.571.9001	lkacanda@wrallp.com
Jeff Dube	Mahan Rykiel Associates	410.235.6001	jdube@mahanrykiel.gov
Mayra Filippone	Mahan Rykiel Associates	410.235.6001	mfilippone@mahanrykiel.com

Introduction

The purpose of the meeting was to provide members of the Complete Streets Implementation Team (CSIT) details on Design Manual updates with a focus on Chapter 1.

Chris Eatough and Jeff Riegner welcomed all attendees and reviewed the agenda.

Members of the CSIT were provided a copy of the draft minutes from the October 7 meeting in advance. Jennifer White made a motion to approve the minutes and Chris Eatough seconded the motion. The CSIT members unanimously approved the minutes.

Leah Kacanda and Jeff led the group through the presentation attached to these minutes.

Design Manual Updates

Jeff reviewed the existing and proposed outline of the Design Manual. The existing Design Manual has five chapters. The proposed Design Manual splits Chapter 5, Traffic Studies, in two separate chapters, Traffic Studies and Traffic Design, and reorganizes the chapters to mirror the way a project is developed. New Chapter 2, Traffic Studies, will include all modes of travel not just cars. New chapter numbers will be used from now on.

Jeff then went through the proposed outline for each section of Chapter 1:

- Section 1.1 is primarily new content, including section 1.1.A How to use this manual, 1.1.B How this manual was developed, 1.1.C Benefits of Complete Streets, 1.1.D Complete Streets policy, 1.1.E Vulnerable Population index and Priority Areas, and 1.1.F Authorization.
- Section 1.2 Project Types and Delivery Process will require a significant rewrite of existing content. This section explains what a capital projects and land development projects are and how they proceed through the process.
- Section 1.3 Street Types will also require a significant rewrite of existing content. This section explains how to determine what different types of streets look like based on land use and transportation contexts.
- Sections 1.4-1.10 maintains existing sections of the Design Manual with some minor modifications such as new definitions.

Jeff asked CSIT members to open the draft chapter pdf which was provided before the meeting. Jeff then walked through the new text included as part of Section 1.1. He noted that the Design Manual would be compatible with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) guidelines and Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) guidelines while still allowing for flexibility and innovation. The engineering requirements clarify that the Design Manual applies to both capital projects and developer projects. New text establishes that the Design Manual is to be updated to conform with the Complete Streets policy and will be guided by the Department of Public Works staff and the CSIT. He noted that an overview of the design process may be added at a later date. Jeff pointed out a placeholder where information will be added on how additional stakeholders will be engaged with the Design Manual rewrite process once that is determined by the CSIT.

Chad Edmondson noted that the section on the benefits of Complete Streets includes “adults” and “children” as headings. He asked whether it would be possible to nest those two categories under a “health” heading. He also noted it was unorthodox to include those items as headings in a Design Manual.

Jeff asked if any other CSIT members had feedback on those sections. Larry commented that he would appreciate seeing the entire document in context to understand how it all fits together, and that if Chapter 1 includes more general topics and not design requirements it may make more sense. Jeff responded that Section 1.1 only includes preamble information and does not include any requirements, which are found later in the document.

Chris noted that the section in question is intended to provide a review of the benefits of Complete Streets in general but may not be needed at the level of detail currently provided since that is done elsewhere, including in the Complete Streets policy and on the County’s Complete Streets website.

John Seefried commented that the purpose of the Design Manual is for the design community to accomplish the design, and that the narrative is not necessary since it does not focus on the engineering. Larry agreed that the goal



is keeping requirements clear and separate from the standards, but that if Chapter 1 is intended to focus on the big picture and already includes narrative it may be worth waiting until the entire document is available to review this section in context.

Jeff moved on to Section 1.2 Project Types and Delivery Process. 1.2.A Capital projects and 1.2.B Land development projects are mostly reorganized content with nothing new in regard to Complete Streets. 1.2.C Project prioritization and 1.2.D Community Engagement Plan are new sections. C provides a summary of the Transportation Improvement Prioritization System (TIPS) which was improved by the CSIT during the October meeting. D includes summary of the importance of the Community Engagement Plan (CEP) to project delivery. The CEP was also approved by the CSIT in October. The full TIPS and CEP documents are included as an appendix to Volume III of the Design Manual. 1.2.E Exceptions are specified in the Complete Streets policy. Jeff asked for feedback from the CSIT on how the exceptions process will work. John S. asked whether the appendix would say herein instead of appendix to Volume III.

Jeff noted that part a future meeting will be dedicated to 1.3 Street Types, which will include a discussion of land use contexts and street typologies. He noted that information will be used in order to identify what cross section and design criteria will be used for a particular street type. He observed that principal arterials are subject to MDOT SHA not the County, and that those are also generally freeways where modes other than motor vehicles are prohibited. Jeff noted that the primary difference in this section is that major and minor collectors have been consolidated into "collectors."

Chad asked whether more information on the land use/street typology matrix would be available during a future meeting and Jeff responded in the affirmative. Chad then asked Chris whether a case study would be a good way of approaching this section, and recommended using the development of Maple Lawn Farm, a project on US 1, and a project in the western part of the County as case studies to which the matrix could be applied.

Chris and Jeff agreed with the case study approach. Chris observed that land use context can change along a given roadway even though the roadway classification does not, and case studies would provide an interesting way to understand how that transition could work. Jeff reminded the group that land use context is based on the future land use map not the existing land use map.

Carl Gutschick asked how the land use map is maintained in relation to the general plan. He asked whether it would be appropriate to just refer to the latest general plan. Jeff agreed so long as the land use contexts are similar to those included in the general plan. Carl noted that combining the major and minor collectors may cause issues with the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO). Chad noted that Kris Jagarapu had mentioned the difference between major and minor collectors recently and would want to maintain the distinction between the two since it is especially critical in applying Chapter 4. Jeff responded that the collector classification would be revised to include both major and minor.

Larry noted that the other modes are not mentioned in the existing Design Manual and asked whether they are mentioned in other municipalities' design guidance. Jeff responded that section 1.3.D *BikeHoward* overlay and 1.3.E Scenic road overlay would highlight other modes. He noted that sidewalks will be proposed in all typologies except, in some cases, rural local streets. Larry asked for more information on what a specific typology would include. Jeff responded that conversation will occur during the review of the Street Design chapter. He invited Larry to share examples from other municipalities for consideration.

Jeff briefly mentioned the *BikeHoward* overlay, noting that there would be a starting design for a given typology, for example industrial major collector. This section would provide information on how that design would change if the street was designated as a *BikeHoward* route. He noted the same principle would be applied for the scenic overlay. Larry asked whether the overlay concept would have more requirements. Jeff responded that the street typology would give the designer a general typical section, but if a street is located along a *BikeHoward* route or scenic roadway, the overlay sections would give guidance on how to modify those sections to create low-stress bike routes or address scenic issues. He reminded the group that bicyclists will be accommodated on all street designs in the Design Manual, but they will be accommodated at a higher level on *BikeHoward* routes.

Larry asked how overlays would affect new development which may not be included in *BikeHoward* or contained within an overlay area. Jeff asked Chris whether *BikeHoward* speaks to that situation. Chris that the bike plan does not have information that applies to future streets. Larry responded that is a gap, because many mixed-use developments could create a connection that would be in the bike master plan if the timing of the development had been different. Jeff noted that some states have an official map that notes where connections should be if they do not exist already. Larry responded that if an area is currently undeveloped it would not show up as a valuable connector.

Chris responded that if it is a new road from a developer, they are going to have to follow the road classifications/land use matrix will direct them towards a typical multimodal cross section. Even though that street may not be explicitly identified in the bike master plan, they will still be directed towards a cross section that accommodates bikes.

Larry provided the senior housing development project by the Miller Branch Library as an example of where there were opportunities to provide a connection that did not happen since it was not included in the bike master plan. Paul Walsky noted that site was reviewed for bike connectivity and that there was also significant community opposition regarding those plans that needed to be addressed.

Jeff explained that section 1.3.F Trade-offs will provide information on how to make trade-offs within a limited right of way. This section does not apply to new developer projects but more to retrofitting existing streets.

Jeff noted that 1.4-1.10 are largely the same as their corresponding sections in the current Design Manual. He noted that the Chapter 1 draft will be shared with the CSIT [it was emailed immediately following the meeting] and that comments will be accepted for the next few weeks on things that may need to be modified.

David Ramsay asked if WRA has any experience working with other school districts that have criteria embedded in their policies for students crossing particular roadways. Jeff responded in the negative but noted certain state departments of transportation provide specific guidance in school zones.

Jeff shared that several existing manuals, including ones from Alexandria and Dallas, are being used as references for the structure of the Design Manual. He stressed that Howard County is not writing a new manual but revising an existing one, so references are more useful in drafting specific sections of the Design Manual.

Jennifer asked whether there are examples of other places that have a similar context to Howard County. She asked whether Prince George's County would be appropriate, noting that Dallas, Alexandria, and Boston are significantly more urban than Howard County. Jeff replied that WRA worked on the Prince George's County documents and they have been referenced already. He noted that Dallas has a very large suburban area within City limits, and that the urban core areas are not being referenced. He agreed that every community is different, noting that if Howard County did not have existing design guidance there would be a greater focus on finding similar communities and building off of their design guidance. Since Howard County has robust guidance in place, the existing Design Manual forms the basis of the new Design Manual and the goal is to identify and fill in gaps that exist with regard to Complete Streets.

Jeff then shared the anticipated schedule for Design Manual revisions:

- December: selected new content including midblock crossings, shared-use pathway design, and technical elements that are not addressed in the current Design Manual
- January: Chapter 2 (traffic studies)
- February: Chapter 3 (street design) plus Volume IV typical sections
- March: Chapter 4 (bridge design)
- April: Chapter 5 (traffic design)

Larry asked what traffic design includes. Jeff responded that it includes traffic control devices: signals, signs, and pavement markings. Larry asked whether side-by-side single-use bicycle and pedestrian facilities would be accommodated as well as shared-use pathway design. Chris responded that the need for a separate facility is dictated by volume. He noted that Howard County does not currently have enough volumes of bicyclists and pedestrians mixing, but guidance from AASHTO will be considered. Chris noted there is some concern on older



narrow pathways where there is higher volume, but that Columbia Association has been widening those to ten feet. Jeff replied that AASHTO recommends widening a shared-use path before separating modes, and that Howard County is far from needing separations based on volumes right now.

Larry noted that older pedestrians are often frightened by passing cyclists and are fearful of sharing a pathway. Chris responded that a key consideration is how often three pathway users meet at the same location, since a bike can pass 1-2 pedestrians together, but if another cyclist is approaching it can get challenging. He noted this is a big concern along the Mt. Vernon Trail in Arlington which has not yet been widened.

There were no questions about the upcoming schedule.

Next Steps

Jeff noted three action items from this meeting:

- WRA will distribute the current draft after the meeting for review and comment [complete]
- CSIT members will provide comments on Chapter 1 by Friday, November 13
- WRA will provide additional content for discussion at the next meeting in advance

The next CSIT meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 2 at 3:00 pm. Jeff noted that the same call in phone number and link will be used for all CSIT meetings.



Leah Kacanda, AICP