Date: June 8, 2020

Date of Meeting: June 3, 2020	**Work Order Number:** 32089-005
Meeting Location: Video conference	**Project:** Howard County Complete Streets

Meeting Description: Complete Streets Implementation Team Meeting #6

Participants:

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Introduction

The purpose of the meeting was to provide members of the Complete Streets Implementation Team (CSIT) an update on the draft Community Engagement Plan (CEP), provide an overview of a policy for new sidewalks in county right of way, and provide brief updates on the Design Manual and project prioritization. This meeting was held using video conferencing software due to restrictions on in-person meetings due to COVID-19.

Chris Eatough and Jeff Riegner welcomed all attendees.

Leah Kacanda, Bruce Gartner, Jeff, and Chris led the group through the presentation attached to these minutes.

Community Engagement Plan

Leah provided an overview of progress on the Community Engagement Plan, which was made thanks to help from the Horizon Foundation. She shared the vision for the Community Engagement Plan which was finalized during the May CSIT meeting. Progress is being made on the goals, objectives, and measures which will be shared with the CSIT before they are finalized.

Leah noted during the May CSIT meeting attendees agreed to flow chart different project types. Current project types identified include capital projects, developer projects, and operational changes. She asked representatives of the Department of Public Works (DPW) if there are any different project types that have a significantly different process that should be noted.

Christiana Rigby asked how this process will apply to location-specific projects identified in the capital budget as opposed to program-type projects. Chris responded that the Office of Transportation (OOT) currently follows the same process for both projects. Kris Jagarapu said that larger tasks under programs are addressed like capital projects, but smaller tasks may not be.

Larry Schoen asked what constitute operational changes. Leah responded small efforts that are more like maintenance projects.

Tom Auyeung shared that public meetings are only required for certain types of projects, but they often conduct a public hearing depending on size or impact. Kris added that the size of some projects only warrants reaching out to adjoining neighbors.

Chris asked that the group provide some examples for each category. He shared that he considered operational projects things that would change the operations of the roadway, such as modification of a signal, a pedestrian crossing, or a bike lane added to a shoulder area; essentially projects that do not involve much construction.

Kris noted that adding more meetings, especially for all projects, creates resource concerns. Christiana agreed, and asked if we could note that additional staff may be necessary to manage the public engagement process. It is important to note that County staff cannot do more with less.

Larry noted that the Community Engagement Plan is intended to make sure that outreach is in proportion to the scale of the project, and in some instances a web communication could suffice. Jeff agreed, but noted that the intent of the conversation was to determine what type of project may require outreach as opposed to a more in depth process.

Kris asked whether a crosswalk change would require public outreach. He noted that if maintenance work has an impact on the community, DPW issues a press release.

Chris asked what level of outreach a traffic circle would require. Kris responded that a traffic circle would be considered a capital project and went on to describe the public engagement process required by code. He added that staff will also come out to village meetings by request to address a specific project. Kris noted that currently public meetings are not held for new traffic control devices although they do issue a public notice. Changes are further communicated to the public via an on-site sign board which remains up for three months and communications to the local village board.

Larry stated that some traffic signal changes may benefit from community engagement. Kris responded that the formal engagement process isn't the only way DPW communicates with the community, citing regular phone calls and email conversations with the public. He also described a construction checklist that project managers use that is given to the public information officer in order to generate a press release.

Jeff noted that there are two different issues: 1. How do we decide which types of project goes into which process, and 2. What is the appropriate process for each category of project. He noted that projects that require a significant curb change including adding a lane, widening, or a roundabout seems to be considered the largest type of project (J-type capital projects), and smaller projects include traffic control changes, signage, crosswalks, and other pavement markings. Those smaller projects may only require outreach or one engagement opportunity since they are delivered more quickly.

Kris said that it would be a good idea to have all projects under construction on one page of the County website, and Christiana agreed with that approach. Bruce noted it would also be helpful to identify all projects before the construction phase.

Leah then reviewed the capital project flowchart with the CSIT, highlighting the major change to the current process which is adding a new step before the budget process where a concept design and scope is developed. Kris noted that stage could be problematic, because currently public engagement is paid for by project funding, and funding would not be available until the project is funded. Bruce said that planning dollars that are already budgeted can be utilized for this preliminary level of input.

Kris noted that the outreach required may not be one size fits all, and that managing public expectations around project delivery will be critical.

Jeff shared that the State of Delaware conducts a very small conceptual design process using undesignated planning dollars in order to develop a conceptual design and planning level estimate, which costs approximately $20-$30k for a typical project. He noted this approach has been useful in ensuring any big issues from the community are addressed and incorporated in the scope of the project. The main goal of this phase is to listen to the community.

Larry suggested that transportation related DPW projects also be included, for example piping projects that provide a clear opportunity for a sidewalk or pathway. He noted that this coordination may not have to be a public process but could simply be OOT working with DPW. Tom Butler stated that utility funds could not be used for this since they are funded by water rate payers. Bruce agreed that transportation funds would need to be appropriated.

Kris added that some coordination occurs now because it is in DPW's best interest to do all work within a given area at once. Project managers meet and discuss projects, and sometimes resurfacing projects are deferred until a water line is installed.

Christiana asked whether putting bike lanes on repaving projects is a good example of this coordination. Kris responded in the affirmative, sharing that Chris goes out to communities to talk about bike projects in advance of a repaving. Chris noted that that public engagement is required by the bike master plan but clarified that the community is not granted voting privileges. They are seeking input that will improve the design of the project, for example parking challenges by pools and schools.

Tom Butler noted that water and sewer project managers are focused on water and sewer issues rather than transportation issues.

Bruce noted that an annual review process could determine where multiple needs overlap and Christiana agreed.

Larry requested a step beyond identifying transportation projects with bicycle and pedestrian opportunities that focuses on identifying other types of DPW projects that may have an add-on or transportation component. Tom Butler responded that conversely, this would mean that everything OOT does would require evaluation to see if there were water and sewer needs. He noted that this level of coordination would slow the delivery of projects.

Tom Butler cited a State Highway Administration (SHA) project where Howard County budgeted $1M to relocate a water line and then SHA delayed the project to illustrate the challenges of coordination. Kris responded that coordination conversations happen all the time. He noted that during the capital budget process they look at other Bureaus' projects and identify opportunities for collaboration.

Bruce noted that another way to approach this issue is to consider an annualized process that would look at multiple master plans to identify areas of overlap for the next few years. This approach would not leave things up to the project manager. He noted OOT could help with that process with DPW's assistance on an annual basis. Christiana agreed that would be a much more global and comprehensive process, although she also acknowledged that water and sewer repairs can be very time sensitive. Bruce noted that even if coordination is already occurring, there is value in giving the public assurances that it is happening.

WRA

Leah then described the flow chart for the developer project process. She noted that after the public pre-submission meeting, the developer could be required to appear before the Multimodal Transportation Board (MTB) if the project was adjacent to a *WalkHoward* or *BikeHoward* identified project and/or off-site improvements are required in the public right of way.

Carl Gutschick expressed concern that the APFO analysis, which identifies the need for off-site improvements, isn't done until Step 3. Leah noted that the timing of the meeting could be adjusted to better coincide with APFO. Carl noted that the MTB would need to have criteria for how they can evaluate projects, similar to what the Planning Board does now. Carl noted that APFO grants certain boards authority, and the MTB is not currently one of those boards.

Larry asked whether there could be a project that doesn't trigger anything through APFO but is in *WalkHoward* or *BikeHoward*. Therefore, moving the timing of the meeting to after APFO may not capture projects identified in the master plan. Jeff noted that staff review would indicate whether a project is covered by the master plan, and APFO is not the only part of the review. He clarified that what is being suggested is that even if no off-site improvements are required, the presence of the site in *WalkHoward* or *BikeHoward* would still require it to go to the MTB.

Carl noted that if a developer is making an improvement in the public realm as opposed to on site, the developer may end up with an appearance at the MTB, and Jeff affirmed that was correct. Jeff stated it seems like a reasonable level of engagement, as the public is provided with one opportunity to address offsite transportation improvements and then the project can move forward.

Kris asked how these requirements are different from what is in place currently. Bruce responded that OOT already takes significant developer projects to the MTB, and that it is an input process rather than a formal approval process. Larry expressed concern that *WalkHoward* and *BikeHoward* may not be updated frequently enough to capture on-the-ground opportunities.

Policy for new sidewalks in county right of way

Bruce presented the proposed sidewalk policy, which designates whether notification or approval is required depending on the scenario. He noted that sidewalks in critical areas including areas detailed in the pedestrian master plan, school walk zones, an extension as part of a development project, or area identified by OOT can advance through the notification process rather than requiring approval. The only segment that would require approval is if it does not qualify under the other four scenarios.

Kris said that Baltimore County requires significant approval from property owners. He shared when a sidewalk is initiated by citizen petition it requires that 2/3 of property owners sign the petition and 20% of funding must come from residents. He stated that when a project is included in a master plan, 100% of residents must agree, which conflicts with information received from other Baltimore County staff that was shared at the last CSIT meeting. This information came from the Highway Design Chief who is responsible for installing all sidewalks in Baltimore County.

Larry stated that regardless of what Baltimore County does, it is important to rely on *WalkHoward* instead of allowing individual residents to block sidewalk projects. He noted these improvements are necessary for connecting our communities and creating a multimodal system. He asked whether the County is going to start requiring citizen approval and funding for roadway improvements. Kris clarified that in Baltimore County citizens help pay for citizen originated projects, but if the project is master plan driven the county funds 100% of construction costs. Chris noted that community requested projects fit with Scenario 5 in the sidewalk policy proposal.

Christiana said that commercial properties sometimes contribute to roadway improvements. Larry clarified that he is interested in equity between the various modes of transportation.

Kris emphasized that he has no money for sidewalk repairs, and that his delay is currently four years.

Christiana shared that during budget hearings when she mentioned the importance of sidewalk repairs in terms of accessibility for people with disabilities, she was met with derision by some Council members. She observed that there are a lot of considerations when implementing sidewalks as young families with children often want sidewalks, but seniors are often concerned with sidewalk maintenance.

Chris noted that the County capital budget has several million dollars of carry over funding that has not been spent due to slow implementation of sidewalk projects due to obstacles such as the current sidewalk policy. Funding for new projects has been removed due to carry over funding. Bruce noted not spending funds would be OK if policy makers would allow for a fund balance.

Larry noted that getting around on foot is critical for practical transportation issues but also public health. Bruce agreed, and asked if there were any concerns with the proposed policy. Christiana agreed with the language and asked if there is anything that can be done to advance the policy faster.

Chad noted that tying public notification to construction timing could reduce contractor flexibility and recommended tying it to construction document approval instead. Tom Butler noted that liability needs to be added to maintenance responsibility. Bruce stated that the policy could just say owner's responsibility which would include both maintenance and liability.

No further concerns were expressed regarding the policy.

Brief Updates

Jeff provided a brief update on the Design Manual and project prioritization. The "core team" met to discuss the Design Manual to agree on format. It was agreed that there will be a full rewrite of Chapter 1 which will include information on Complete Streets principles and the project delivery process. The road design section will be updated with typology details. There will likely be less significant updates to the bridge and traffic chapters. APFO will not be updated under this effort. The core team will see suggested edits at their next meeting and the CSIT will start seeing content at the next meeting.

Jeff noted that project prioritization is one of two items the Complete Streets policy requires to be complete before October 7 (along with the Community Engagement Plan). He noted the consultant team will meet with County staff to review existing processes and prepare a draft for the core team. A refined draft will be available for CSIT review at the August meeting which will allow another month for revisions before it is due to council.

David Ramsay shared that for the next year the School District has a dozen schools where they have done a review of walk areas and they are leveraging current sidewalks, pathways, redistricting and new crosswalks and signalization. He will share more information via email, but they have seen good momentum moving forward. He specified Centennial High will have over one hundred new walkers, and Clarksville Middle School will also have a significant increase.

Next Steps

Members of the CSIT were provided a copy of the draft minutes from the May 6 meeting in advance. Larry made a motion to approve the minutes and Chris seconded the motion. The group unanimously approved the minutes, although Christiana abstained.

Jeff noted two action items from this meeting:

- WRA will make updates to the Community Engagement Plan based on comments received and distribute to the CSIT
- The County will continue work on the project prioritization process and Design Manual updates

The next CSIT meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 1 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