



Date: October 12, 2020

Date of Meeting: October 7, 2020

Meeting Location: Video conference

Work Order Number: 32189-005

Project: Howard County Complete Streets

Meeting Description: Complete Streets Implementation Team Meeting #10

Participants:

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|-----------------|---|--------------|--|
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Introduction

The purpose of the meeting was to provide members of the Complete Streets Implementation Team (CSIT) details on the final draft of the Community Engagement Plan (CEP) and Transportation Improvement Prioritization System (TIPS), both due to County Council in October.

Chris Eatough and Jeff Riegner welcomed all attendees and reviewed the agenda, noting that the date of the meeting was the one-year anniversary of the adoption of the Howard County Complete Streets policy.

Members of the CSIT were provided a copy of the draft minutes from the September 2 meeting in advance. Jennifer White made a motion to approve the minutes and David Nitkin seconded the motion. The CSIT members unanimously approved the minutes.

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

Community Engagement Plan

Leah provided an overview of the CEP. She noted that the online public survey was open between September 16 and September 30, and afternoon and evening virtual workshops were held on Wednesday, September 23. Generally, the members of the public are glad that the County is doing this plan and encouraged to see more transparency in the transportation planning process. Some individuals were concerned that the document was too long and cumbersome, but Leah noted the Citizen's Guide section of the document will function as an executive summary of the CEP and should be much more user friendly for the general public. She noted that multiple members of the CSIT have provided feedback on the plan but asked if there were any outstanding issues that CSIT members would like to discuss.

Carl Gutschick noted the private development checklist may lead the public to believe that they can bring Complete Streets issues to the Planning Board at any meeting, even though the Board may not entertain multimodal connectivity issues depending on the zoning and type of project.

- Chris noted that page 7 of the CEP provides a description of the Planning Board and their purview. He asked whether it would make sense to cross reference page 7 for details or whether it should be explained further within the checklist. Chad Edmondson noted the last sentence of the Planning Board description is very broad.
- Carl responded it can be frustrating to members of the public who come to the Planning Board meeting to participate and they are not able to provide commentary that is relevant.
- Jeff asked whether the Planning Board agenda provides sufficient detail to inform the public whether Complete Streets issues can be discussed at that meeting. Carl responded that the staff report provides the appropriate level of detail, and noted that a possible solution is adding a sentence to the checklist to clarify that an interested member of the public should refer to the staff report available to ascertain whether or not Complete Streets will be part of the agenda.
- Chad asked what types of transportation facilities are in question and asked whether frontage improvements would qualify. Leah showed the developer process flow chart, responding that the only projects entering into the review process are major subdivisions and commercial site development plans that interface with recommendations of *WalkHoward* or *BikeHoward*. General frontage improvements governed by the Design Manual would be not under consideration for the purposes of this plan.
- Chris suggested including a note at the top of the Planning Board checklist which notes, "the Planning Board agenda and staff report will indicate when a project has Complete Streets implications, if any, and if none this checklist is skipped." Chad clarified that his group does not attend Planning Board meetings.



Leah shared the draft Citizen's Guide section of the CEP, which includes Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section along with definitions of frequently used transportation terms. She noted that this plan will be finalized, but changes will likely be made based on staff feedback between now and the adoption of the Design Manual updates next October.

Leah explained that the County is still working through website details, with a goal of eventually having one landing page for all Complete Streets projects regardless of which phase they are in. Chris noted that the Department of Planning and Zoning currently has a portal to share relevant information and the Department of Public Works has a page under transportation special projects that includes a project list and an interactive map. The Office of Transportation has a page for *BikeHoward* as well as a Complete Streets website. He noted in the short term, OOT is happy to consolidate links to other department pages that host data, but the long-term the goal is for agencies to combine resources to share information about active projects.

Leah shared that one question that both County staff and the public want the CEP to address is why the design of a project may not reflect public comment. She asked for CSIT members to read the proposed text and respond with any additions.

- Larry Schoen asked whether there is an opportunity for the County to respond directly to comments from the public. Leah responded that the checklists to require the County to respond to comments received, which could be referenced in the Citizen's Guide FAQ. Larry asked if the current requirement to respond to all comments was too burdensome, and asked Chris how OOT responds to comments currently. Chris responded that there is no standard, but generally comments are summarized by staff and a summarized response is posted. That information is passed on to DPW for consideration.
- Larry recommended that the checklists require that staff summarize public comments and provide summary responses. Jeff noted that seems like a good balance between responsiveness and managing resources.
- Jessica Bellah observed that when the public hears that regulations preclude the County responding to their concern they get upset, and that it is important that staff cites the Design Manual but also explains why.

Leah moved on to the next question in the FAQ which dealt with the typical length of time a transportation project takes. She asked staff for feedback on how to respond to this question. Chad responded that for private development projects there is no average amount of time. Sometimes concept plans incubate for a year before advancing. He noted he would like to keep a response very generic and note that questions around timing can be answered on a case-by-case basis.

- Larry asked whether there is an easy way to communicate which types of issues are settled during each step of the process. Chad responded that there is no easy way since everything is specific to the project.
- Tom Auyeung agreed with Chad, noting that capital projects can be very variable, and the County often has little control over timing since land acquisition and utility issues can through a schedule off.
- Kris Jagarapu noted that a sidewalk project can move very quickly once consent from the public is obtained, but a widening project that requires right of way without a willing property owner can last much longer. He noted that generally, the County can provide a timeline for design and a timeline for construction but cannot provide a timeline for the interim steps because so many of them are outside the County's control.
- Leah responded that she will draft a response on timing that the CSIT can review.
- Larry asked for clarification about when public feedback can be received during developer projects. He noted that OOT conducts reviews at certain stages. Jeff responded that there are opportunities for the public to provide input and they are specified on page 30 of the CEP and in the checklists for development projects.

Although Carl had comments on the Planning Board meeting, there are other opportunities to provide feedback, most notably during the Multimodal Transportation Board meetings.

Leah then shared some examples of transportation terms that are defined in the Citizen's Guide, which includes the Design Manual and the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations. Larry asked whether the Route 1 and Route 40 Design Manuals should be included in the definition section. Chris responded that there are many more major and minor studies than are currently mentioned in the definition section. Jeff noted it may be worth including those that include design standards and guidance. Leah reiterated that the goal of this section is to be concise and accessible by the general public and noted that those resources are available online for a member of the public who wants to better understand specific regulations and guidance.

Chris moved to approve the CEP with the following edits:

- CEP as provided in the meeting packet
- Recommended edits as described and provided in the meeting packet
- Addition of a sentence in the private development Planning Board checklist that acknowledges that Complete Streets are sometimes outside of Planning Board purview and omitting the checklist from the process in those instances
- Clarification of how responses to public feedback will be summarized
- Clarification of how feedback is provided to the public when comments cannot be incorporated due to compliance with the Design Manual
- Addition of language explaining why there is no typical project duration

Kris seconded the motion. In response to Larry's question, Jeff noted that the CSIT will receive the updated documents as they are completed. The CSIT approved the motion unanimously with no abstentions.

Project Prioritization

Jeff provided an overview of TIPS, focusing on the changes to the point system. He noted there was an increase in the number of bonus points available for using other funding sources in recognition of the importance of leveraging non-County funds whether they be developer, state, or federal. He clarified that the scoring will be used to establish high, medium, and low priority levels, and point totals will not be used to compare projects. He also reiterated that this is not the only decision making tool that will be used by the County Executive, although it is an important tool that will be used to inform the decisions that produce the capital budget. He clarified the remainder of the scoring system has not changed.

Bruce Gartner noted that this document has been subjected to a few rounds of edits, and each round has made staff more comfortable with the flexibility of the methodology. Staff will now have to live with the process for a little bit to see how it works.

Chris observed that there was room to increase the bonus points to 10 without any project going over the 50 point maximum possible because scoring high in some categories means a lower score in others. Cory Summerson asked whether bonus points were significantly impacting the scoring. Chris noted the bonus points did not have an outsized impact on project prioritization, and that multimodal access at 20 points total is the biggest factor.

Jeff asked for a motion to approve TIPS. Larry made a motion, and Jennifer seconded the motion. The CSIT unanimously approved TIPS with no abstentions.

Brief Updates

Jeff mentioned that now that the CEP and TIPS are complete, work will shift to Design Manual updates beginning with Chapter 1. Updates will be presented to County staff at the core team meeting in two weeks, and the CSIT will see information at its November 4 meeting. The CSIT will have an opportunity review all proposed updates as we work through the process.



Next Steps

Jeff thanked the members of the CSIT for their hard work in meeting the 12-month deadlines for both the CEP and TIPS. He explained that both documents will be sent to County Council at the end of October, and that updates to the CEP will be provided to the CSIT once they are complete.

Jeff noted two action items from this meeting:

- WRA will make edits to the CEP
- OOT will deliver the CEP and TIPS to County Council

The next CSIT meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 4 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

