Date: September 15, 2020

Date of Meeting: September 2, 2020
Meeting Location: Video conference

Work Order Number: 32189-005
Project: Howard County Complete Streets

Meeting Description: Complete Streets Implementation Team Meeting #9

Participants (list continues on second page):

Name	Company	Phone	Email
Tom Auyeung	Howard County DPW, Trans. & Special Projects	410.313.6142	tauyeung@howardcountymd.gov
Tom Butler	Howard County DPW	410.313.6140	tbutler@howardcountymd.gov
Angela Cabellon	Howard County Office of the County Executive	410.313.2029	acabellon@howardcountymd.gov
Jeff Dube	Mahan Rykiel Associates	410.235.6001	jdube@mahanrykiel.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
Felix Facchine	County Council	410.313.2001	ffacchine@howardcounty.gov
Mayra Filippone	Mahan Rykiel Associates	410.235.6001	mfilippone@mahanrykiel.com
Bruce Gartner	Howard County Office of Transportation	410.313.0702	bgartner@howardcountymd.gov
Carl Gutschick	Gutschick, Little and Weber, P.A.	410.880.1820	cgutschick@glwpa.com
Kris Jagarapu	Howard County DPW, Highways	410.313.7470	kjagarapu@howardcountymd.gov
Tom Meunier	Howard County DPW	410.313.4401	tmeunier@howardcountymd.gov
David Nitkin	Howard County General Hospital	410.740.7740	dnitkin1@jhmi.edu
David Ramsay	Howard County Public School System	410.313.6726	david.ramsay@hcpss.org
Christiana Rigby	County Council	410.313.3108	crigby@howardcountymd.gov
Kristin Russell	Columbia Association	410.715.3107	kristin.russell@columbiaassociation.org
Larry Schoen	Multimodal Transportation Board	410.730.9797	larryschoen@gmail.com
Sam Sidh	Howard County Office of the County Executive	410.313.0809	ssidh@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

Introduction

The purpose of the meeting was to provide members of the Complete Streets Implementation Team (CSIT) details on the project prioritization process and an updated Community Engagement Plan (CEP).

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 August 5 meeting in advance. Chris Eatough made a motion to approve the minutes and Sam Sidh seconded the motion. The CSIT members unanimously approved the minutes.

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

Project Prioritization

Jeff provided an overview of the prioritization process. He noted there has been a lot of progress in past month, and thanked County staff for providing extensive feedback. The goal of the prioritization process is to advance the Complete Streets policy while acknowledging the availability of data. All measures included in the policy will be used for annual tracking, but some are also appropriate as criteria for the prioritization process. The first year will function as a trial of the prioritization process, and there will likely be changes as the County goes through the budget process. The CSIT will be involved with adjustments and refinements as they are necessary.

Jeff gave a summary of the prioritization process, which is a simple scoring system with 50 total points:

- Multimodal safety and access: 20 possible points
- Equity: 10 possible points
- Crash history: 10 possible points
- System preservation/maintenance: 10 possible points
- Cost sharing: up to 4 bonus points can be provided if non-County funds are used for implementation

He noted that the scoring system is not absolute, but will be used to break projects into high, medium, and low priority tiers, and high priority projects will generally be advanced first.

Jeff provided details on points available within each category. Multimodal safety and access provide up to four points each for pedestrian access, bicycle access, transit access, addressing traffic congestion, and access to community facilities. Equity points are based on the Vulnerable Population Index (VPI), with projects in the highest VPI areas scoring 10, those in moderate VPI areas scoring 5, and those in lower VPI areas scoring 0. Evaluation of safety is being done by looking at crash history. Projects that have a documented crash history score 10 points, projects where safety is expected to be improved, but crash history has not been documented score 5 points, and projects that don't address transportation safety score 0 points.

Jeff shared that system preservation/maintenance required a lot of discussion with staff. Projects focused on maintaining existing infrastructure and/or are expected to create no or minimal additional maintenance needs score the highest with 10 points, projects that are principally focused on maintenance and/or expected to create modest additional maintenance needs score 5, and new infrastructure projects and/or projects that create additional maintenance needs will score 0. Cost sharing allows up to 4 bonus points, based on the percentage of non-county funds leveraged. Non-county funds could be Federal, State, or private dollars.

Tom Butler commented that some cost sharing is reimbursable only after the County expends funds but agreed with the concept of giving a bonus to projects that have outside funding.

Carl asked whether the phrase “private funds” means projects with a developer contribution. Jeff confirmed that and asked whether the timing or phasing of a County capital project with private funding impacts the timing or phasing of a private development project. Carl noted that paying the developer contribution and entering into a written agreement with the County allows for private development to move forward independent of the timing of the County capital project, which Tom B. affirmed.

Carl observed that most of the scoring is based on data so it should supply an objective comparison between different possible projects. He noted if all other factors are equal, the VPI scoring can determine which project moves forward. He asked whether the philosophy is whether a project that serves vulnerable populations is more deserving. Jeff responded that the focus is to make sure that there is sufficient investment in areas where underinvestment has occurred in the past. The goal is not for VPI to be the deciding factor, but for it to impact the rating. He noted that if this process led to there being significant investment in one part of the county, that might not be equitable to other areas in the County. Conversely, there is a sometimes a benefit to having multiple projects in one geographic area to allow for economies of scale. Repaving projects are an example of this. Bruce responded that the Complete Streets policy requires that equity be a strong consideration, which is why there would effectively be an equity bonus for similarly scored projects. He noted that the scoring attempts to balance equity with other factors, but also that projects will be grouped by high, medium, and low tiers, not evaluated based on point differential.

Larry asked whether other priority sidewalk projects, not just those included in *WalkHoward*, could receive 4 points. He noted that sometimes there are new developments that would make a sidewalk link more desirable even though it was not included in *WalkHoward.* Jeff asked whether there is a process to update *WalkHoward* or *BikeHoward.* Chris responded that they have not yet been updated, and that they likely will not be updated more frequently than once every 10 years or so. He noted that there is the possibility that projects identified during the annual Complete Streets Open House could be accommodated by the prioritization process.

Bruce said it would be best to keep the process as simple as possible so that County staff does not have to worry about too many moving parts. Sam agreed, noting that the current criteria are concrete, and the more caveats are added the more the process transitions from objective to subjective. He added that the process can be modified over time as necessary.

Larry asked whether it is possible to consider crash severity in the crash history scoring system. He noted that as a frequent vulnerable user of the transportation network, a crash involving a vulnerable user may be more important to address than a number of “fender benders.” He asked whether that consideration is inherent in the evaluation being done by DPW or whether it should be made more explicit in the criteria.

Kris Jagarapu responded that the projects being evaluated are all transportation related projects, not just bike and pedestrian projects. He noted that there may be a vehicular safety issue that the County needs to address, but that does not mean it should be deemed less appropriate than another project with similar or lower safety concerns. A safety concern is a safety concern, regardless of user.

Bruce responded that the crash data does differentiate between personal injury and property damage. Chris added that crashes are classified by property damage, personal injury, and fatality, and that more weight is given to fatalities than injuries, and to injuries than property damage. Any safety study would incorporate that weighting.

Tom B. noted that property damage crashes are often a precursor to more serious crashes and urged that the language not be changed. Larry asked whether there would be an objection to adding a sentence noting that personal injury and death shall be prioritized over property damage.

Christiana Rigby responded that she is comfortable with adding language to that effect since it is considered in the analysis that DPW is already conducting. She noted that she also had the same question as Larry when she was reviewing the prioritization criteria.

Jeff noted that the Design Manual has a section about crash studies where there could be a more explicit explanation of how crash studies are done. This would allow the scoring system to be simple, and more thoroughly address this issue elsewhere.

Bruce responded that the tendency is to want very precise language, but a number of the metrics in the prioritization criteria will require the development of specific operating procedures, and the safety criterion is just one example.

Larry stated that he still had concerns that addressing personal injury and death is not being prioritized. Kris responded that the goal as a County is to create safe roads, as indicated by the DPW Highways mission statement. Christiana noted that she has had multiple conversations with Kris and Tom B. that have affirmed that they are concerned with the safety of County roads regardless of mode of travel. She noted that the crash data does not provide external parties with as much information as they may want. The severity of personal injury varies and is not always clear based on the results. She asked whether Kris could send the CSIT an example of what crash history data looks like. Tom B. explained that the crash history starts with the report generated by the responding police officer. He also noted that many areas reported by the public as perceived safety issues aren't borne out by the data.

Jeff asked if there was any other discussion. The CSIT agreed that crash severity will be addressed in the studies section of the Design Manual.

Jennifer asked to see the system preservation and maintenance slide. She noted that the draft notes that bridge projects, road resurfacing projects, and drainage projects would not be scored, but noted that there are many opportunities to address Complete Streets improvements during road resurfacing projects. She asked for an explanation of why those maintenance projects were excluded from the prioritization process. She also asked whether those projects will still be considered for Complete Streets improvements.

Bruce responded that the County has a long history of screening road resurfacing projects for Complete Streets improvements, but that the bigger issue is that the County is not keeping up with the volume of resurfacing projects. He noted that calling this scoring section system preservation could be confusing because there are categories of system preservation projects that will be a part of building a Complete Streets network, but those projects do not lend themselves to being scored as part of this process. Chris added that the Complete Streets policy still applies to road resurfacing projects, but it is important to not delay system preservation projects that keep existing infrastructure in decent shape. Since those projects are critical, they cannot be compared against new projects.

Jennifer agreed with the need for existing facilities to be maintained, but that she could also envision a hypothetical scenario where underinvested communities with a high VPI score are not seeing as much infrastructure spending because there may not have as much infrastructure currently. Bruce noted that the multimodal points available coupled with the points available based on VPI scoring will help balance the need for new projects in those areas, but acknowledged it is a challenge to balance all the different considerations. He offered to show how some example projects score to illustrate how the scoring system works.

Chris walked the CSIT through five scored projects. He noted that these projects are examples only and that the scores are not binding. He also clarified that the scoring system will not be used for projects that are already in the budget, but only for new projects moving forward. The highest scoring project was Stephens Road, which consists of raising a bridge located in the floodplain. The project incorporates a sidewalk, bike access, and improved bus stops, which results in a strong multimodal score. It is also located in a high VPI census tract. Although there is not a formal crash study for the area, it is reasonable to think that it will improve safety in the area, especially with the addition of sidewalks. He noted evaluating the system preservation criterion was a challenge, but since the project is replacing a bridge it will save the County maintenance dollars in the future. He noted that the remainder of the projects are spread around the county, and some are primarily bicycle and pedestrian projects, but some are more road focused.

David Nitkin asked how many bonus points were available for cost sharing, and Chris responded up to 4, and affirmed that the bonus is on top of the 50 points possible. David also asked for clarification on the definition of system preservation. Chris responded that the question is whether this project will create major maintenance costs for the County. New projects generally score 0, whereas a striping project would score 10, and minimal infrastructure

may score in the middle. Chris noted it was unlikely that a project would ever have a perfect score, since scoring high in the multimodal access area would frequently require new infrastructure, resulting in a lower score in system preservation.

Jennifer agreed that it was helpful to see the scoring, and that additional weighting for equity is always a plus, but understood the why the balance approach is important to pursue.

Larry asked if equal weight was being given to four different modes of transportation. Chris responded that the fifth category, access to community facilities, is specific to bicycle and pedestrian access, which gives those modes a scoring edge over motor vehicles. The group looked at the scored examples to better understand how access to community facilities impact project scoring.

Kris J. asked if a shared-use facility would result in a project earning a total of 8 points. Chris responded that the only time a shared-use facility would score 8 full points was if it was a recommendation in both *WalkHoward* and *BikeHoward.*

Larry asked for clarification on the criteria regarding access to community facilities. Jeff showed the access to community facilities criteria noting it specifies access for people who walk or bike.

Larry noted that the scoring system prioritizes maintenance of existing facilities even though some roads are currently overdesigned for vehicles and have almost no facilities for pedestrians or bicyclists. Chris responded that one way the project could benefit from the scoring system is if a project adapts the current roadway for bicycle and pedestrian use without increasing the maintenance burdens. Larry observed that in that instance, the project would still score multimodal points by reallocating road space and additional points for maintaining the existing facilities.

Larry asked whether there could be a project that provides no pedestrian or bicycle facilities. Chris responded that most projects will look at multi-modal facilities, but that there are exceptions like in locations where facilities are not warranted or needed, for example in western Howard County where transit facilities will never be added since transit services don't extend that far.

Larry asked whether transit scoring could address signal prioritization and bus lanes, or any transit improvement that does not involve a transit stop. Jeff asked whether those types of improvements are being considered anywhere in Howard County. Larry noted that possibly at some point in the future. Chris responded that some tweaks to the wording would accommodate this concern. The next draft of the prioritization criteria will incorporate the phrase "improvements to existing bus stops or transit service" and "new bus stops or transit facilities."

In response to Jennifer's question, Jeff clarified that the prioritization process would only be used for new projects, not older projects.

Carl asked whether the prioritization process will occur at the beginning of the decision-making process or whether the prioritization process <u>is</u> the decision-making process. He noted that there may be other factors that could be considered by decision makers, for example would a bridge project also help address a stream erosion problem. He asked whether this process limits the consideration of other project benefits. Jeff replied that the prioritization process will inform the decision making process. Bruce clarified that the prioritization process will inform development of the capital budget but is not the only factor that will be taken into account.

Jeff described the next steps for the prioritization process, which includes incorporating edits based on CSIT input, approval by the core team at the September 16 meeting, approval by the CSIT at their October 7 meeting, and delivery to County Council in October.

Community Engagement Plan

Jeff thanked Jennifer and the Horizon Foundation for their feedback, which has been invaluable in developing the current draft of the CEP. Leah provided a brief update on the status of the CEP, sharing the newly formatted draft document. She noted that most edits to the text of the document based on feedback from members of the CSIT and County staff have been made, and that the graphics are being updated to reflect the new formatting.

Jeff noted that there are two ways to think about engagement. One is thinking about inclusivity during the process, which the plan describes, but that most community engagement happens with project managers who do their best to engage the public. The goal for this plan is to create a process that is simple so that project managers can focus on project delivery.

Leah explained that WRA is still preparing responses to comments that have already been received. The complete draft plan will be posted on the OOT Complete Streets website for public comment on September 16. Planning is underway for two public workshops on September 23 and 24. ***(Subsequent to the CSIT meeting, the two workshops were scheduled for 1 pm and 7 pm on September 23.)*** Public comment on the draft plan will be open until October 2. Feedback received from the public will be discussed with the CSIT on October 7, and there will be a determination of whether any final edits are necessary. The final draft will be shared with County Council in late October.

Leah shared that OOT, the Department of Community Resources and Services, and the Horizon Foundation are also working to create a list of community organizations to invite to review the draft and attend the CEP public workshops. This list will also be used as an appendix to the CSIT that project managers can also use to create a stakeholder list when doing outreach for a specific project.

Christiana asked whether the RTA Rider's Advisory Council is included on the outreach list. Leah confirmed that the organization would be included.

Brief Updates

There were no updates to report.

Next Steps

Jeff noted two action items from this meeting:

- OOT and WRA will make edits to the prioritization process
- OOT will respond to comments received on the Community Engagement Plan; more comments and feedback on the workshop are welcome

The next CSIT meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 7 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