



## TECHNICAL STAFF REPORT

December 24, 2015

### Planning Board Meeting of January 7, 2015 County Council Hearing to be scheduled

**Case No./Petitioner:** Valdis Lazdins, Director, Department of Planning and Zoning

**Staff Report Prepared by:** Chris Eatough, Office of Transportation  
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**Request:** Adoption through resolution of BikeHoward as the comprehensive Bicycle Master Plan for Howard County, Maryland.

**Department of Planning and Zoning recommendation:**

**Approval**

## I. BACKGROUND

The General Plan for Howard County (PlanHoward 2030) calls for the development of a Bicycle Master Plan and recognizes the importance of improving conditions and connections for bicycling as part of a multimodal transportation system. The benefits to the County are significant, including improved public health, cleaner air, a stronger economy, reduced congestion, and enriched quality of life. The Bicycle Master Plan (also known as BikeHoward) creates the vision and path forward for Howard County to become a bicycle friendly community.

The plan was developed with extensive public input and with oversight from the Howard County Office of Transportation, a multi-disciplinary Technical Advisory Group, and a consultant with extensive experience drafting similar plans around the country (Toole Design Group). With these inputs, the Bicycle Master Plan is able to draw from the experiences and best practices from around the country and apply them effectively with local context to Howard County. The plan has received an overwhelmingly positive response at all stages of development and drafting, making it evident that people appreciate the many benefits and importance of improved bicycling accommodations in Howard County.

The Bicycle Master Plan is a useful and effective guiding document for county and state agencies, developers, grant administrators and the public. It will enable enhanced coordination between these groups, providing the guidance that keeps projects, policies, and programs moving in the same direction. Ongoing communication and engagement will be included through the BikeHoward website and through annual open house workshops.

## II. DESCRIPTION

The purpose of the Bicycle Master Plan is to make it easy for people of all ages and abilities to get around by bicycle in Howard County. To do this, the plan provides guidance and recommendations in three general categories:

- Policy updates
- Programs for education, encouragement, and enforcement
- Infrastructure improvements to create a connected bike network

Recommended policy updates include the development of a complete streets policy to ensure Howard County streets are designed, built, and operated to enable safe access for all users; including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders. The plan also recommends updates to the Howard County Design Manual and developer site plan policy to ensure that appropriate bicycle accommodations are included in both County and developer projects.

Programs for education, encouragement, and enforcement are important to help foster a community culture where bicycling is a safe, popular, and everyday choice. Howard County schools and libraries are identified as useful venues for distributing materials and information on bicycling. The Howard County Police Department has consistently shown a commitment to bicyclist and pedestrian safety, including a recent increase in their pathway patrol division.

Infrastructure improvements are critical to providing a safe, convenient network that people can use to reach their destinations by bicycle. This includes on-street elements, such as bike lanes and intersections, and off-street elements, such as shared-use-pathways. The Bicycle Master Plan categorizes recommended infrastructure improvements as short-term (within 10 years), mid-term (within 20 years), and long-term (within 30 years). The most detail is provided for the short-term recommendations; including 70 miles of new on-street facilities, 10 miles of new off-street facilities, and 33 intersection improvements. The short-term recommended projects are displayed in the plan as 49 structured projects.

Funding for the recommended infrastructure improvements is expected to come from a combination of grants, developer contributions, and county capital projects. The total estimated cost of the short-term projects is \$32,346,561. It's important to note that these are planning level cost estimates that do not take into account coordination with other projects and improvements. In practice, actual costs can often be lower through coordination and timing; for example, striping on-street bike lanes in conjunction with ongoing road resurfacing. There is already a capital budget project area (K5066) for bike improvements. The Bicycle Master Plan recommends that this budget maintains a fund balance of at least \$750,000 per year.

## III. RECOMMENDATION

The Department of Planning and Zoning recommends approval and adoption of the Bicycle Master Plan.

  
Valdis Lazdins, Director      12/22/15  
Date

The Howard County Bicycle Master Plan is available for viewing at the DPZ Public Service Counter Monday-Friday between 8:00am and 5:00pm, or online at [www.bikehoward.com](http://www.bikehoward.com).