

MEMORANDUM

To: Fellow Commissioners and Colleagues: Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities

From: Charles Crawford: Vice Chair.

Date: September 7, 2012

Re: Pedestrian safety information shared at County Committee meeting on Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Traffic Safety.

As you will recall, I attended a meeting last evening of the County Committee on Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Traffic Safety with the theme last evening of what relevant issues should be considered from the perspective of People with Disabilities? The following information contains the areas I have shared fully in writing with the Chair of the Committee and substantially through verbal communications with the Committee members and advocates from the county.

Please feel free to write me with any questions you may have at CCrawford@RCN.com.

Charles Crawford: September 6, 2012

In my capacity as Vice Chair of the Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities, I am providing the following written remarks which will be covered in my comments this evening during the course of the meeting of the Pedestrian, bicycle and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee at 101 Monroe Street from 7:00 until 9:30 PM. The theme of the meeting will be Pedestrian, Bicycle, and traffic safety and the disability community.

1. Accessible pedestrian signals need continued installations especially where walk/don't walk signalization is present. These APS's should be consistent, have locator tones that definitely can be heard as close as 6 feet from the unit and up to twelve feet if possible, must have a verbal message stating what street is to be crossed at what intersection and announcing the wait status of the signal, announce the walk sign is on to cross which street once the cycle is in the pedestrian's favor and switch to a rapid set of beeps to let the pedestrian know it is the walk phase. These signals should be placed just to the left of the beginning of the descent of the wheel chair ramp and pointed in the direction in which the pedestrian will cross. These signal boxes with the push button on them can also be placed at the right hand top of the ramp if they cannot physically be placed on the left. These APS's must speak the information described above if the push button is held for 3 or more seconds. References to the criteria for Accessible Pedestrian Signals can be found in the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices, (MUTCD.)

2. APS's must be maintained in good working order and should be inspected by the county traffic engineers or their designates periodically to insure they are fully functioning. It is especially important to insure that the locator tones can be heard within the parameters specified above. This dynamic and the orientation to the direction of crossing intersections are critical to the successful implementation of APS within a community.

3. Detectable warning strips consisting of raised domes that can easily be detected underfoot by a blind pedestrian while not being obstructive to wheel chair users in traversing ramps and streets need to be installed wherever a crossing is to occur where traffic may be flowing or present in front of the pedestrian. This is particularly important where the intersection of a walkway and the street are perfectly flat.

4. Sidewalks and all walkways using pavers or like materials must use the so called Bethesda pavers because of their construction not creating any cracks or other differences in the flatness of the way. This allows for canes not to become stuck in a hole such as cobblestones create, or wheelchairs to have significant difficulty in rolling over.

5. Crosswalks should be maintained and be clearly visible to drivers and pedestrians alike. blind pedestrians should be able to rely upon the directionality of the APS to help them orient as to where to cross. It might also help blind cane users to have a vertical and detectable ridge along the length of the crosswalk in order for them to know if they are veering off course.

6. Street furniture such as planters, mailboxes, vending machines, utility poles, and fire plugs should be placed out of the path of travel and sufficiently away from the crossing area to allow for ease of crossing. To the extent possible, only the wheel chair ramp and the APS should be at the crossing. Where differences in the environmental configuration must vary from this standard, then those differences should enhance directionality of travel versus creating obstacles to be maneuvered. An example of a proper installation would be a corner in which there would be a grass line until a foot or so from the corner. This would afford the pedestrian with a path to follow rather than a series of differing surfaces which might well become the source of their confusion.

7. Bus stops Need to be located far enough from a corner to not impede pedestrian crossings and should have a noticeable change in surface texture to alert the pedestrian that they have reached a bus stop. To the extent possible, the bus stop should have a bus shelter with a protective covering with a bench and room for wheel chairs. The bus schedules should be posted in alternative media and a next bus facility should be put in and be useable to all. Stopping buses should announce their numbers and destinations and have functioning stop announcements that are done consistently and reliably and able to be heard at all times.

All verbal information should also be provided in sign.

8. All buses should be equipped to accept and deboard passengers using Wheel chairs and-or other mobility devices. Automated stop announcements should also be done in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and drivers should further announce an upcoming stop when a passenger requests that it be done.

In addition, bus stops should always be at a place where the passenger can exit the bus on to concrete and walk without encumbrance of bushes and other natural barriers to walking.

This situation has actually occurred at the Colesville and Second avenue inbound stop where the passengers were let off at a place where they had to traverse a patch of rocks before reaching the sidewalk. This was because other vehicles were parked at the bus stop and the bus could not let passengers off at the normal stop.

9. the Montgomery County Police must enforce traffic laws aimed at facilitating pedestrian safety. These include not allowing vehicles to park at bus stops other than buses. Enforcing laws against running red lights or stop signs or driving to endanger.

10. All parking facilities need to insure they are in compliance with applicable disability parking laws and regulations to insure adequate opportunity for persons with disabilities to travel and reach all the places they need and desire to visit. This not only means parking spaces, but adequate space to go to their destination and return in safety and ease.

- 11.** All places where construction is being undertaken must insure the paths of travel are maintained properly and easily located for pedestrians to utilize.
- 12.** Montgomery County 311 needs to be trained and kept updated on all transportation and traffic changes to provide citizens calling with concerns with the appropriate information with which they can then continue on their journeys.
- 13.** Sufficient attention must be paid to all Montgomery County facilities and property to insure that elevators and clearly defined paths of accessible travel are present. Pedestrian travel is not just sidewalks and outdoor places; maintaining accessible building and facility infrastructure is equally important to persons with Disabilities moving around our county indoor and outdoor environments.
- 14.** Parking lots and Mall or Office complexes with a walkway or walkways through an open area in which both pedestrians and vehicles are moving need to have clearly defined areas for pedestrians to use when walking. It is my understanding that the White flint Mall has a walkway that runs straight through the parking lot and to the entrance of the Mall, which runs directly from the street sidewalk which allows pedestrians to go straight into the Mall from the street. Here, the use of detectable warnings would be useful if necessary and a running ridge on both sides of the crosswalk would be very helpful to mobility cane users. Signage alerting drivers to the potential for pedestrians to be walking nearby would also be of assistance.
- 15.** The use of well lit, easily walked, and safe underground or elevated pedestrian walkways aimed at allowing pedestrians to cross areas with high volume traffic such as Rockville Pike at White Flint, or Georgia Avenue at Forest Glen are to be encouraged in that they are good alternatives to attempting to cross very dangerous intersections. It is critical that pedestrians with disabilities be able to know about them, to locate them, and to use them with accessibility and safety.
- 17.** There are many People with disabilities who must use the services of paratransit known in this area as MetroAccess. The County must exercise whatever influences it can to ensure that the transit provider properly and consistently performs its duty to transport passengers in a reliable, timely, and safe way.