

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY
PEDESTRIAN, BICYCLE, AND TRAFFIC SAFETY ADVISORY
COMMITTEE**

**Erwin Mack, Chair
Colleen Mitchell, Vice-Chair**

Annual Report 2012

I. Introduction to the Pedestrian, Bicycle and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee Origin and Purpose

In response to record numbers of pedestrian fatalities in Montgomery County in the late 1990s, the County Executive at that time, Douglas Duncan, appointed the *Blue Ribbon Panel on Pedestrian and Traffic Safety* in the summer of 2000. The panel developed a plan to improve pedestrian and traffic safety in the county through education, enforcement, engineering, and legislation. One key recommendation called for establishing a formal committee appointed by the County Executive. The *Montgomery County Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee* was established by Council Resolution 14-1281 on May 23, 2002. (amended 10/11/05).

Pedestrian safety continues to be a top priority for the County. In December 2007, County Executive Isiah Leggett issued a seven-point strategic plan for reducing pedestrian-related collisions and making our communities safer, more walkable and more livable.

The purpose of the Pedestrian, Bicycle and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (PBTSAC) is to:

- advise the County Executive and County Council on the status of the implementation of the Pedestrian Safety Initiative.
- provide advice to elected officials on the priorities and needs for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- identify issues relevant to pedestrian and bicycle safety that need to be addressed.

Membership

There are 17 members of the PBTSAC appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council to serve three-year terms. Eight members of the PBTSAC include representatives from the organizations/agencies listed below (the 2012 representatives are shown in parentheses):

- Montgomery County Police Department (Ct. Thomas Didone)
- Montgomery County Department of Transportation (Arthur Holmes, Jr.)
- Montgomery County Public Schools (Angel Garcia-Ablanque)
- Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (David Anspacher)
- Regional service centers (Reemberto Rodriguez)
- Montgomery Chapter of the MD Municipal League (John Hall)
- Montgomery County Council (Valerie Ervin represented by Richard Romer)
- Maryland State Highway Administration (Anyesha Mookherjee)

The remaining nine seats are the Public-at-Large, representing various communities and viewpoints, including one bicycle advocate and an advocate for persons with special needs. The nine at-large members in 2012 included:

- Erwin Mack, Chair
- Colleen Mitchell, Co-Chair
- Ramin Assa
- Darrel Drobnich
- Steven Friedman (bicycle advocate)
- Alan Migdall
- Alyce Ortuzar
- David Sharp (advocate for persons with special needs)
- Jack Strausman

A staff person from the Montgomery County Department of Transportation's Office of the Director is assigned to facilitate and coordinate the PBTSAC. Jeff Dunckel, Pedestrian Safety Coordinator, has served in this role since June 2008.

Pedestrian Safety Initiative

The Pedestrian Safety Initiative issued by County Executive Isiah Leggett establishes goals to:

- Reduce pedestrian-related crashes, injuries, fatalities and their associated social and economic costs
- Ensure that all areas of the County provide safe and convenient travel options for pedestrians (www.mcgov.org/Apps/Council/PressRelease/PR_details.asp?PrID=4119).

The Pedestrian Initiative details seven strategies (outlined below) to meet these goals, and establishes timeframes and budgets to achieve each strategy.

Pedestrian Safety Initiative Strategies

Strategy 1: Target pedestrian safety improvements in High Incidence Areas.

Strategy 2: Assess and improve pedestrian network and connectivity needs.

Strategy 3: Increase emphasis on pedestrians and bicyclists during the planning process.

Strategy 4: Identify and implement corridor and intersection modifications and traffic calming treatments.

Strategy 5: Upgrade pedestrian signals.

Strategy 6: Assess and enhance street lighting.

Strategy 7: Modify pedestrian and driver behavior through enhanced enforcement and educational efforts.

The Pedestrian Safety Program prioritizes funding for specific projects identified in the Initiative, and is supported by input from CountyStat and the PBTSAC. Implementation of the full initiative was estimated to cost approximately \$4.8 million in recurring annual costs. Continuing budget constraints have slowed implementation and increased the importance of prioritizing projects that will best serve the County's residents.

Pedestrian safety has continued to be a priority in the county. The Montgomery County Department of Transportation launched a new website in the fall of 2012 to provide more complete and easily accessed information to residents on programs, resources, facilities and news related to pedestrian safety. The site can be found at:

II. Year in Review

Meetings and procedures in 2012

As a general rule, the Pedestrian, Bicycle and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee meets on the first Thursday of every other month of the month at 7:00 PM for two and a half hours. Additional meetings are added if needed. The PBTSAC met seven times in 2012 on the following dates:

- January 5
- March 1
- May 3
- July 5
- September 6
- November 1
- December 6

Special Topics and Motions

- January 5. Motion Passed: The PBTSAC supports Bill 37-11 to authorize the installation of school bus safety cameras and that the program should include a strong education component and citizen involvement through a citizens' advisory committee, similar to the advisory committee used for implementing the County's speed camera program.
- September 6. Special Topic: Issues Affecting Community Members with Disabilities. The purpose of the meeting was to understand the pedestrian experience of people with special needs and determine whether there is anything the PBTSAC can do to improve conditions. David Sharp is the Committee's representative for persons with special needs, and he invited persons from the Commission on People with Disabilities to attend the meeting and offer comment.

Critical issues identified at September Meeting:

- The locator tone is hard to hear for visually impaired persons.
- The timing of crosswalk signals isn't long enough (and crossings too long)
- Utility poles impede sidewalks.
- Ruts in the roadway/crosswalks impede persons in wheelchairs or other disabilities as they attempt to cross the street.
- Requests for signals to be on pedestrian recall, so they don't have to push the pedestrian signal button.
- Need for more pedestrian refuge islands.
- November 1. Motion passed: PBTSAC recommends to the County Executive that funding be increased for pedestrian education and bicycle safety programs without negatively impacting other pedestrian safety programs

Subcommittees:

Subcommittees are formed as needed to focus on specific topical areas. The subcommittees allow more technical topics to be researched that cannot be adequately addressed in the time allotted for meetings. Subcommittees report back to the full committee. In 2012, the following subcommittees conducted research and completed tasks as described below.

- **Sidewalks. Chair, Ramin Assa**

The Sidewalks Subcommittee is focused on studying the condition of sidewalks in Montgomery County as well as identifying and recommending projects and technologies that will improve walkability and safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and people with mobility limitations.

Sidewalks-Pedestrian Network Assessment: Jeff Dunckel and Ramin Assa met with the East Silver Spring Citizens' Association Board to discuss the proposed Pedestrian Network Assessment Pilot Study. The Board unanimously supported a sidewalk survey of the neighborhood - - which has yet to be conducted.

- **Bicycle Access and Safety. Chair, Steve Friedman**

The Bicycle Access and Safety (BAS) Subcommittee was formed to address issues pertinent to the bicycling community to enable greater access and safer passage on county roads where bicycles are permitted.

In 2012 the BAS was involved in the following activities:

- BAS Chair testified (not on behalf of the PBTSAC but as a concerned individual) in front of the Environmental Matters Committee of the Maryland General Assembly in March 2012 in support of the proposed sidewalk clarification bill.
- BAS Chair provided statement to the County Executive in support of hiring for the vacated Bicycle Coordinator position.
- BAS Chair worked with Montgomery County Police and CountyStat staff to improve data collection and analysis related to the involvement of bicyclists in a crash/incident.
- BAS Chair provided statement during the kick-off event for the Fall 2012 Street Smart campaign in November 2012.
- BAS Chair attended and provided support during meetings with MCDOT and MC Council leadership on bikeshare implementation.

III. Looking Forward

In the coming year, the PBTSAC will continue to assist and advise the County in the implementation of the County's pedestrian safety efforts as defined in the County Executive's Pedestrian Safety Initiative. The PBTSAC plans to address many of the concerns raised by the disabilities community to insure county facilities meet the needs of all users. Each meeting in 2013 will be focused on a particular topic to better guide discussion and participants.