

City of Takoma Park, Maryland

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Talisha Searcy, Mayor

July 25, 2023

Council President Evan Glass
and Members of the Montgomery County Council
Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue, 6th Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear President Glass and Members of the County Council,

On behalf of the City of Takoma Park, I write to support the planning board draft of the Montgomery County Pedestrian Master Plan. As a city, we recognize that pedestrians and other vulnerable roadway users bear a disproportionate impact from roadway policies of the past and present. The thoughtful and comprehensive nature of this Plan will support our efforts as a jurisdiction to prioritize the safety and comfort of our residents and visitors, and the robust focus on policies that address gaps in equity and environmental sustainability align with our City Council priorities.

In Resolution 2019-15, Declaring a Climate Change Emergency, the City of Takoma Park calls on the county, state and federal governments "to take more aggressive action on climate change mitigation, adaptation and resiliency to move rapidly toward net zero GHG emissions, and the city will continue to advocate at all levels of government for adoption of policies to achieve these goals." Additionally, Resolution 2017-28 committed the City Council to pursue racial justice in all levels of city decision-making. The breadth and depth of the recommendations in this Plan represent bold and nuanced action toward creating the conditions that increase the ease and safety of pedestrians, improve equitable outcomes, and reduce the climate impacts of Takoma Park.

On April 7, 2023, the city submitted a letter of support to the Planning Board for the hearing draft of the Pedestrian Master Plan. That letter pointed out a number of features of the Plan that we found to be particularly strong, and we continue to stand by those comments. We are excited to see that the newest draft continues to retain so many forward-looking and data-driven recommendations that holistically approach the issue of pedestrian safety.

We also want to reiterate a few comments from the previous letter that relate to the implementation of a number of recommendations. Each recommendation has the potential to make potent and innovative changes to how we address pedestrian needs. However, as a municipality, we want to emphasize that the county must collaborate with the city during the implementation of the recommendations. Without a coordinated approach, municipalities such

as ours will face challenges due to the unique circumstances in which we must operate to manage city roads. The city's comments include the following:

1. One major challenge for the city is managing the complicated negotiations between State Highway Administration (SHA)-controlled roads and city priorities. The recommendation for the county to assume control of SHA roads for MCDOT management is an exciting proposition that the city wants to explore. In particular, as that strategy is developed, the city wants to be sure that the voices of the county's municipalities are included in the development of protocols for new and existing infrastructure.
2. Many of the proposed roadways and intersections included in an expanded Bicycle and Pedestrian Areas (BiPPA) Program are within Takoma Park. These locations are unsafe for a variety of reasons, and the city is excited to see them included in the Plan. The city supports the proposed BiPPA program. However, we request clarification about municipalities' responsibilities and eligibility before implementation of the program.
3. The city supports the expansion of the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program. Montgomery County Public Schools serves the City of Takoma Park. The city maintains its own local SRTS program. However, we are not able to provide the level of resources necessary to support the six public elementary and middle schools that serve our resident students. Three of these schools are outside of the city and one does not participate in our SRTS program. A more centralized program within the school system might be better equipped for some of that work.
4. The city supports the permanent closure of sections of Sligo Creek Parkway to vehicle traffic. They are areas that served as critical public space during the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to be a treasured community asset. However, it is also important to ensure that approaches are taken to allow for improved vehicular navigation including alternative routes on narrow streets leading to Sligo Creek Parkway during closure. Additionally, the city would encourage continued efforts to improve pedestrian access to trails along Sligo creek.

The City of Takoma Park continues to work toward the creation of safe, comfortable, and accessible roadway conditions for residents on foot, on bike, and on transit. The planning board draft of the Pedestrian Master Plan firmly aligns with that work. Many of these recommendations would directly impact MCDOT practice within our borders, while others create models for us to implement on our own. We lend our voice of support to the draft Plan and look forward to continued work with the county toward its implementation.

Sincerely,



Talisha Searcy
Mayor