



Commission on People with Disabilities
December 11th, 2019

Welcome and Approval of November 2019 Meeting Summary Minutes:

Seth Morgan, Chair, convened the meeting. A motion was made to approve the November 2019 Meeting Summary Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken, and the November 2019 Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved as written. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cpwd.

Recognition of Outgoing Members

Seth presented certificates of appreciation from County Executive Elrich to the following outgoing Commission: Cindy Buddington, Asha Clark, Susan Hartung, Hilary Kaplan, Ric Kienzle, and Kathy Mann Koepke.

Personal Perspectives on Pedestrian Safety of Floating Bus Stops & Dockless Vehicle Pilot Program – Charlie Crawford and Sue Crawford, and Ancil Torres and Sonia Aslam with Torres Foundation for the Blind International, Inc.

Sue Crawford detailed her personal experiences with pedestrian safety and the installation of bicycle lanes and floating bus stops. Sue stated that she has been legally blind since the age of 25 and has been using public transportation prior to then. She considers herself to be pretty experienced taking public transportation but has recently encountered several obstacles with the removal of her regular bus stop which was located at the bottom of Second Avenue and Colesville Road. The bus stop she has to reach now is located via a floating bus stop.

On the East side of Second Avenue between Colesville and Spring Street, two bike lanes have been installed – one in each direction. Anyone who wants to reach the floating bus stop has to cross these bike lanes. It is difficult finding the floating bus stop as it is not exactly located at an intersection or a corner. The County's transportation engineers have designed it so there are detectable warning strips at the beginning of the crosswalk to cross the bike lane and they end when you walk onto the floating bus stop. Susan noted that there are two entrances for this particular floating bus stop. She added that the engineers may be conflating detectable warning strips as location alerts instead of using them for identifying if someone is crossing into traffic lanes. Detectable warning strips are not used to define a location. For example, detectable warning strips are used at the edge of the Metro platform or are used at the corner of an intersection. Susan counts the number of steps she has to walk from Colesville Road to turn at the right time to encounter the detectable warning strip that identifies she should cross there to access the floating bus stop. Susan also uses a service animal to help her access public transportation, but it is hard to see where to cross as there is no lighting available. Susan asked the Department of Transportation (DOT) to install a post that would help to identify the area where pedestrians should cross. While DOT did install a three-foot high post, they installed it on the left-hand side and the detectable warning strip is on the right-hand side. There is also the issue of crossing the bike lane to reach the floating bus stop. She imagines the County has received numerous phone calls of concerned bus riders about the possibility of being hit by a bicyclist. Susan said one fellow bus rider is very concerned that Susan's service dog is at risk of being hit because he is a black lab. Service dogs

typically walk closely to their owners and a head and shoulder length ahead so she is unsure of how to make him more visible to bicyclists. Also, bicyclists tend to come up pretty quick. Susan's brother, who is very active in the bicycle community and is involved in the advocacy and planning of installing bicycle paths at the University of Maryland reviewed the bicycle lanes in downtown Silver Spring. He suggested installing bicycle lanes in the middle of the road, like they have done on Pennsylvania Avenue in DC. There the intersections have lights to identify the right of way for both pedestrians and bicyclists. Pedestrians can go straight across the crosswalk and bicyclists can go straight or turn left or right. While this method may not work everywhere, it could work between Spring Street and Colesville Road. It would be less of a worry for both bicyclists and pedestrians.

The bicycle lanes are protected with parking stops to keep cars away from the bicyclists. The issue is if someone were to use a transportation provider such as Lyft, MetroAccess or a taxi they run the risk of tripping on these parking stops. Susan thanked DOT for asking for input from the community but asked that they have individuals who are blind first test out any warnings or alerts that are installed.

Charlie Crawford said that the more we look into the issue of pedestrian safety and how the County designs things we realize how difficult it is for the entire community. It can be a challenge getting around the County whether you have a disability or not. Unfortunately, for people with disabilities there is an increased amount of anxiety and level of risk unless certain things are present in the environment. With the introduction of a bicycle lane adjacent to the sidewalk, normal activity patterns of going to stores, receiving deliveries, and being dropped off or picked up are being disturbed. People are accustomed and have adjusted their lives to the normal activity pattern. With the introduction of bicycle lanes, all of that has changed. There is also the issue of tripping over parking stops that section the traffic lane from the bicycle lane. Charlie added that having bicycle lanes located in the center of the street does not cause any sidewalk disruptions and bicyclists have access to the public right of way. He asked if it was truly necessary to install bicycle lanes.

People with disabilities have the same level of rights and consideration as all other citizens. They want a community where everyone is welcome to travel independently and do whatever they need to do without inconvenience. This will take talking with the engineering community, with orientation and mobility instructors, pedestrians, bicyclists, vehicle drivers, and people of all disability types to determine what configuration will work for them and to design an environment that works for everyone. Individuals with disabilities are more vulnerable in some senses than others.

Charlie said that accessible pedestrian signals (APS) were ultimately adopted in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), a document issued by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) of the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) to specify the standards by which traffic signs, road surface markings, and signals are designed, installed, and used. APS was developed as an agreement between the traffic engineering community and the disability community. A solution was made when all parties understood the situation and worked together. Because APS is in the MUTCD it is used and applied in every community across the country. Charlie suggested using this same method regarding floating bus stops and bicycle lanes. The first step is to admit there is a problem. The second step is to identify the key players needed to develop a solution. The third step is to have those key players look at the situation and develop a proposal to meet the needs. The fourth step is to implement the proposal with legislative approval and judge how well it is working.

Ancil Torres and Sonia Aslam have been very involved in issues floating bus stops, bicycle lanes, and scooters. Sonia said she and Ancil live in downtown Silver Spring and they walk to various stores and restaurants within the downtown area. She noted that sidewalks have many obstacles now with outdoor

cafes placing tables, chairs and planters, with e-scooters, and with bicycle paths. She said pedestrians want the same rights and respect as car drivers.

Ancil said that DOT has created an illusion of inclusion. The ADA has been in existence for 27 years and they still cannot figure out how to safely get people who are blind to cross the street. Ancil has discussed the issue of loud buskers aka a person who performs music or other entertainment in the street or another public place for monetary donations at the corner of Ellsworth and Fenton in downtown Silver Spring with the County attorney. The buskers are drowning out the sound of the Audible Pedestrian Signals(APS) and of the traffic. The County attorney has stated that it is an issue of freedom of speech and the buskers cannot be asked to move. The County held a meeting to discuss the issue with various departments but did not include people with disabilities in the discussion. The County decided to turn the volume of the APS louder. Ancil said this does not solve the problem because people who are blind do not just rely on the APS when crossing the street. They also need to listen to oncoming traffic in the event. The louder APS is also drowning out the noise of traffic. Ancil said it can be difficult to locate the APS. Ancil is 100% for having people ride bicycles and e-scooters if it makes the planet cleaner, but not at the expense of his safety as a blind person. He is now nervous and uncomfortable walking the streets of Silver Spring. He also has video documentation of people using scooters on the sidewalks when they are supposed to be riding them in the street. DOT has said that Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) has to enforce the law, but it does not seem MCPD is enforcing it. Seth said that he recently contacted MCPD about enforcement of e-scooters. He was told that there was no law and the program is run by DOT. For something to be enforced by the County Police, it has to be passed as a County law. There is nothing currently available about enforcing the trial pilot program with the various scooter companies. The County is looking at creating a law about scooter use which mostly applies to privately owned scooters.

The floor was opened to questions.

Stanley Fricke, Public Member, said that electric vehicles (scooters, buses, vehicles) are becoming more mainstream with an estimated 8,000,000 riders, which has doubled from the year before. It is estimated that four years from now that number will increase to 130,000,000 riders. Many vehicles are becoming autonomous with the ability to park themselves, charge themselves, and come to the driver. Stanley suggested that the Commission ask for 20% of those vehicles to be reserved for people with disabilities.

It was asked if the presenters had any suggestions or ideas that would work to meet everyone's needs. These same challenges exist throughout the country and perhaps the County could review best practices used and implemented in other jurisdictions. Ancil suggested that the County hire disability consultants that have expertise in disability issues across all types of disabilities. The County should listen to pedestrians as well.

Fairfax County will not be installing bicycle lanes or floating bus stops. For people who are blind and travel across the country, every city has implemented their own system and it can be very difficult for those individuals to navigate areas due to the lack of consistency. Betsy asked if bicycle lanes needed to be installed in urban areas and near Metro stops. She also asked if bicyclists should be required to walk their bikes near Metro stops.

Charlie said in regard to the issue of universal design, it is important to understand that when environments are constructed to accommodate the needs of pedestrians, bicycle users, and drivers the environment should be constructed in a way that allows individuals to come to a common expectation.

For example, everyone knows that if you come to an intersection and there is a red light you are supposed to stop. When looking at the issue of floating bus stops, everyone needs to have a reasonable expectation of being able to utilize that environment successfully. The ADA states that governments have an obligation to make programs and services accessible to and useable by people with disabilities. Charlie also added that MetroAccess can no longer drop clients off at the curb at Easterseals because of the bicycle lanes.

Trish Gallalee, Vice-Chair, said the ADA is a civil rights law to ensure people with disabilities have the right to go to school, go to work, and to be able to fully participate in society. From a driver's perspective she has found the installation of bicycle lanes along Spring Street to be very confusing. Lanes have been removed to accommodate a bike lane and there are green markings in some lanes and white markings in other lanes. She did not know which lane to drive in as they are not marked correctly. To turn right onto Georgia Avenue from Spring Street, vehicles have to cross over the bike lane and it was not clear if that was legal or should be done.

Seth suggested advising the County Council to put a limit on the funds being used to install the bicycle lanes. He encouraged Commissioners to send Councilmembers letter detailing their personal experiences and issues with the designs of the bicycle lanes and issues with e-scooters and bicycles in general. The design and installation of bicycle lanes are not taking into account the lack of safety as it pertains to persons with disabilities.

Kathy Mann Koepke, Commissioner, asked that individuals with cognitive disabilities be included in these discussion as it is a growing population not just in this County but across the country. As adults get older, there is also an increase in cognitive disability. With the changes in design and addition of signs, it becomes less translatable to someone who has a cognitive disability. Seth said as a Commission we are trying hard to be inclusive. Betsy said issues regarding individuals with cognitive disabilities have been discussed by DOT.

Seth noted that Councilmember Andrew Friedson recently introduced [Bill 38-19 - Streets and Roads - Permit to Obstruct Public Rights-of-Way - Amendments](#) that would: (1) require the Executive to adopt certain regulations regarding permits to close curb lanes, sidewalks, or shared use paths in the public rights-of-way; (2) limit the circumstances in which the Department of Permitting Services may grant or extend a permit to close a curb lane, sidewalk, or shared use path; and (3) require the Director of Permitting Services to publish certain information regarding permits to close curb lanes, sidewalks, or shared use paths.

Purple Line Project Update and Plans for Relocation of Silver Spring Transit Center Bus Stops – Maricela Cordova, Purple Line Implementation Manager, Department of Transportation

The Purple Line Project currently has a lot of ongoing work in and around the Silver Spring Transit Center (SSTC). Additional work that will be major and complex will begin in January, 2020. Additional sidewalk closures, pedestrian detours and pedestrian disruptions will be made to the SSTC and the areas surrounding it. Some Metrobus and Ride On bus routes and schedules will be temporarily changed with some of the bus stops relocated to the second floor of the SSTC and some other bus stops moved outside to Colesville Road. Maricela recognizes the huge impact this will have on the community. With input from Betsy, Maricela has reached out to Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind to schedule a walk through with travel trainers and engineers to document the changes so it will be easier and safer for everyone to navigate. As of Wednesday, December 18th, Red Shirt escorts will be available at the SSTC as well as additional Metro staff to help direct people. SSTC will also be starting their internal training and mass distribution of information. Maricela and staff have reached out to Google

for them to update their voice instructions before January to include the detours. Maricela asked the Commission for feedback and suggestions. Seth asked her to reach out to Betsy about coordinating a walk through with Commissioners. Betsy noted that when the SSTC was first built, she and 15 to 30 individuals including Commissioners with disabilities met with Don Scheuerman, Section Chief, Department of General Services, and other DOT staff to conduct a walk through on a Saturday morning. Staff had a different understanding after walking the streets and seeing the challenges, and people with disabilities appreciated having the time to educate them. There are several organizations in Silver Spring that could be included such as the American Association of the Deaf-Blind. Betsy added that many individuals with disabilities do not have a travel trainer.

Sue Crawford asked if there will be a bicycle path installed along the Purple Line from Bethesda to downtown Silver Spring that would be a pedestrian bicycle bridge over 16th Street. Maricela said the pedestrian and bicycle paths that are included in the Purple Line Project are contained within the Capital Crescent Trail that runs along the tracks. No additional pedestrian or bicycle paths will be installed. The Capital Crescent Trail will stop at the Silver Spring Transit Center (SSTC) and will be connected on level one with the Metropolitan Branch Brail. From the SSTC bicyclists can connect to the Green Trail and Sligo Creek.

Commissioners can send comments and questions to Betsy and she will forward to Maricela.

Chair and Vice-Chair Report:

Seth will be attending a meeting held by Councilmember Gabe Albornoz, Chair of the Council Health & Human Services (HHS) Committee, to discuss the issue of early identification, referral and intervention of intellectual and developmental disabilities for infants and toddlers. The County previously approved a pilot program that was developed by Commissioners Avner Shapiro and Larry Bram to be used by pediatricians, child development centers, County clinics and HHS. The pilot also promoted the use of a universal electronic screening tool by pediatricians to help gather data and information to measure where we are with early intervention and our progress. The program will require funding moving forward.

Marybeth Dugan, Montgomery Parks, asked for an update on Councilmember Albornoz's interest in the sensory-friendly city initiative. Montgomery Parks Program Access is very interested in this initiative. Betsy Luecking, Staff, sent him information but has not heard anything back. Seth will ask him tomorrow. Seth will also discuss floating bus stops and bicycle lane issues with Councilmember Albornoz if time permits.

Day Al-Mohamed, Commissioner, has agreed to be the Commission's representative for the Pedestrian Master Plan that is being developed by the Montgomery County Planning Department. She will report to the Commission as that plan evolves.

Seth is setting up meetings with various Councilmembers and encouraged Commissioners to send their own letters as County residents and detail their concerns and personal pedestrian safety stories. Commissioners may indicate that they are on this Commission, but they are not speaking on behalf of the Commission. Betsy added that only official correspondence from this Commission is sent from the Chair. It was asked if there is a difference in sending letters versus e-mails. It makes no difference and both are acceptable options of communication. Trish suggested reviewing previous minutes. Betsy can also review letters.

The Steering Committee will meet next Wednesday, December 18th from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at HHS, 401 Hungerford Drive, 1st Floor Conference Room, Rockville, MD 20850.

Ex-Officio Member Updates:

Charlie Butler, Department of Recreation (DR), announced DR will be hosting a sensory-friendly Santa's Holiday Workshop for families of individuals with disabilities on Saturday, December 14th from noon until 2 p.m. at Holiday Park Senior Center, Silver Spring.

Announcements:

Neal Carter, Commissioner, announced Councilmember Evan Glass will be hosting a Vision Zero Town Hall meeting this Saturday, December 14th at 10 a.m. at the Council Office Building, 100 Maryland Avenue, Rockville. Leaders from the Department of Transportation, the State Highway Administration and other important agencies and organizations will provide updates on their efforts to implement Vision Zero and to hear resident thoughts and concerns.

Submitted by: Carly Clem, Administrative Specialist I
Betsy Tolbert Luecking, Community Outreach Manager

**Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities
January 2020 Meeting and Events Calendar****Monday, January 1st****New Year's Day**

County Observed Holiday - Offices Closed

Wednesday, January 8th**Full Commission Meeting**

6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

EOB – 101 Monroe Street, Lobby Level Auditorium, Rockville

Monday, January 13th**Developmental Disabilities Advisory Committee**

HOB – 401 Hungerford Drive, 1st Floor 1A Conference Room, Rockville

Wednesday, January 15th**Steering Committee Meeting**

5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

HOB – 401 Hungerford Drive, 1st Floor 1A Conference Room, Rockville

Monday, January 20th**Martin Luther King Jr., Day**

County Observed Holiday - Offices Closed

