



Commission on People with Disabilities

June 10th, 2020

****MEETING WAS HELD VIA ZOOM ****

Welcome and Approval of May 2020 Meeting Summary Minutes:

Trish Gallalee, Vice-Chair, convened the meeting. A motion was made to approve the May 2020 Meeting Summary Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the May 2020 Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved as written. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cpwd.

Proposed Street Design - Steve Aldrich, Transportation Master Planner, Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and Andrew Bossi, Senior Planning Specialist, Montgomery County Department of Transportation's Director's Office

Press Release: Montgomery Planning to Present Complete Streets Design Guide to Planning Board on June 11: <https://montgomeryplanning.org/montgomery-planning-to-present-complete-street-design-guide-to-planning-board-on-june-11/>

Montgomery County Complete Streets – May 2020 – Version 1.0: <https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Montgomery-County-CSDG-Public-Draft-May-2020.pdf>

Steve Aldrich, Transportation Master Planner, Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), reported a briefing of the full proposed Complete Street Design Guide will be presented to the Montgomery Planning Board tomorrow June 11th at 4pm. A public information meeting will also be held on Wednesday June 17th at 7pm. Steve invited Commissioners to watch both presentations as they will be streamed live online. The Montgomery Planning Board will also be hosting a public hearing for the guide on July 23rd. The Montgomery Planning Board will hold work sessions in September and October where they will review the guide chapter by chapter and address public comments. The guide will then be transmitted to the County Council for their review and to finalize.

The Complete Streets Design Guide is a collaborative effort between the Montgomery County Planning Department and the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) and with support from the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services, the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service and the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection. Steve said this is the first time Montgomery Planning Board and MCDOT have worked together on a project from the beginning.

Complete Streets are roadways that are designed and operated with the goal of safe, accessible, and healthy travel for all users of our roadway system, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists. On a Complete Street, it is intuitive and safe to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycling. The approach to Complete Streets will vary in different parts of Montgomery County. Complete Streets in rural Boyds, suburban Olney, and downtown Wheaton will all look different depending on the adjacent land uses. Some areas may have dedicated bus only lanes on certain streets, and some streets may vary in what degree of bike facilities they have or whether they require any bike facilities at all. Complete Streets function as a system, ensuring that the transportation network as a whole provides safe and efficient access for all roadway users and only provides designated spaces for each mode when needed.

One motivation for the Complete Streets Design Guide is the County's Vision Zero Action Plan which has a goal to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries by 2030. In 2016, Montgomery County adopted a Vision Zero resolution and subsequently developed a two-year action plan. The County is now working on a ten-year action plan with an approach to road safety that uses design, education and enforcement to eliminate serious injuries and traffic fatalities. Safety is the number one goal of Vision Zero. The Guide will help create or improve places along our roadways that are equally shared among diverse communities based on the guiding principles of safety, sustainability, and vitality. Montgomery Planning and MCDOT have been reviewing best practices across the country to develop a safe, complete street project.

Andrew Bossi, Senior Planning Specialist, MCDOT Director's Office, reported the County is expecting a larger number of pedestrian crossings going into the future. The guide defines minimum and maximum spacing between protected crossings. The intent is to install more protected crossings so pedestrians do not have to travel far distances in order to use a signal to cross the street. The guide also reflects this with decreasing speed limits. Another focal point of Vision Zero is pedestrian clear zones and maintaining a five- to six-foot free and clear sidewalk. This includes restricting grates and objects that could be in that path of travel. Andrew noted that in downtown and town center areas sidewalks are wider than those guidelines. He also reported that in recent years MCDOT has been aligning pedestrian ramps. There are many ramps throughout the County that end in the middle of the street. The County is working to align those ramps so if a pedestrian goes down a ramp and off a detectable warning surface and continues going straight they will be met with another ramp and detectable warning surface. Standards for those detectable warning surfaces are not changing. MCDOT will continue to install accessible pedestrian signals. The guide includes design guidance for parking spaces alongside bike lanes. At a broad level, there has been some discussion about accessible parking spaces, but the guide does not go into detail. Generally, accessible parking spaces are located in garages or at off-street facilities. Andrew acknowledged that in the future on-street accessible parking space standards should be developed.

Andrew also recognized concerns regarding floating bus stops. While there is a broad level design on page 80 of the guide, it does not go into depth of the design. MCDOT continues to work on the floating bus stop design. The floating bus stop located in Silver Spring along Second Avenue and Colesville Road is being constantly updated and refined. That floating bus stop could become the design standard going forward. Andrew said the standard is evolving and may be eventually amended into the Complete Streets Design Guide.

The guide will provide better tools to address and respond to the Vision Zero action plan. There were tools developed through County code that allowed MCDOT to provide safer and slower streets in urban areas such as Silver Spring, Bethesda, and Wheaton, but there were many other places throughout the County where crashes were occurring where people needed to cross the street. This guide will help the County address issues in inner and outer suburbs and small towns such as Damascus and Olney.

The floor was opened to questions.

Trish addressed parking spaces alongside bike lanes. There are general concerns from people with and without disabilities being able to safely exit a vehicle with the narrower lanes and oncoming traffic. Trish said this design contradicts the County's safety goals. She also said the assumption that persons with disabilities do not need street parking is wrong. There should be parking for persons with disabilities on the street and in different places along the street. For example, near her office at White Flint there are many high-rise apartment building and residents park on the street. If Trish were to visit someone in one of those apartment buildings, there is no accessible street parking and she would not be able to safely exit her vehicle. It is a misconception that persons with disabilities exit their vehicles on the right-hand side of the vehicle. Trish exits her vehicle on the driver side with her wheelchair and her service dog. She offered to provide additional information.

Betsy Luecking, Staff, asked if school safety at elementary schools is included in the guide. She also did not see speed targets or flashing lights in front of schools during school hours addressed in the guide. These are not consistent throughout the County. She has concerns about neighborhoods that do not have sidewalks leading to elementary schools. Betsy asked if Vision Zero addresses safety for children and access to school buses. She

added that persons with physical disabilities and persons who are blind have challenges with these new street designs. Eric Cole, Commissioner, said when he has raised concerns about pedestrian safety for students with disabilities he was told it could be addressed through the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) transportation plan. He said students with disabilities will grow and age out of MCPS. They are expected to obtain employment within inclusive settings and will need to get to and from those jobs. Sidewalks are important not just for the safety of school children, but for all of us at any age and there needs to be safe options in our community.

Steve said the guide does not specifically address schools. The guide does address minimum and preferred widths and buffers between pedestrian facility, sidewalk or side path and the road. The design provides an adequate roadway cross section that provides for all three users – pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists. Steve said school zones have many of the same needs, but also some additional special needs. This guide in conjunction with MCDOT and MCPS's Safe Routes to School will work together to improve pedestrian paths and crosswalks, including higher visibility crosswalk markings. The guide is not specifically focused on schools and is a general level view of all streets.

Simone Geness, MCPS, said she will share this feedback with her colleagues and make them aware of these concerns. She also said it is important that MCPS and DOT hear these concerns directly from families in the community. Simone said MCPS provides travel training to students with disabilities to ensure students can navigate the community independently. The more sidewalks and more access they have the better. Eric agreed and said Todd Watkins, Director, MCPS Transportation, has done an outstanding job. Eric has a son that receives travel training through MCPS and this guide is a great opportunity to ensure he is safe for the duration of his life. Steve reported this past year MCPS invited MCDOT, State Highway Administration (SHA) and Montgomery Planning to coordinate with them so all of their actions compliment each other and they can work together on the same problems.

Shawn Brennan, Mobility Manager, Aging & Disability Services (ADS), reported she facilitates a group called "Getting All Around the County" that works to advise, advocate, and problem solve issues related to transportation and mobility of persons living in Montgomery County. Steve and Andrew will be participating in their meeting this Friday, June 19th at 4pm. Shawn invited Commissioners to attend and will send the Zoom invite to Betsy. The goal of the meeting is to discuss issues you wouldn't necessarily be able to envision as being difficult unless you have lived with a particular disability. Shawn also said as a caregiver she has found it very difficult to find places to drop loved ones off (Pike & 7 Rose) so they can walk a short distance to a restaurant. There are many situations to think about as we are creating the environment.

Trish said there are many standards for persons with disabilities and especially for persons who are blind that have been developed and implemented into the overall infrastructure across the country so no matter what city a person is in they can essentially get around. The County has installed bicycle lanes without thinking about the overall impact they have on that infrastructure. If there are going to be bicycle lanes there needs to be a mitigation strategy that allows for a MetroAccess user to be dropped off at the curb or for an individual to be dropped off at a ramp. She does not know how realistic the guide is because it does not address how we live every day right now. She has seen the way cities across Europe have installed bicycle lanes that do not impede on others daily lives.

Steve suggested Commissioners review page 80 of the guide to address the concerns about bicycle lanes and bus stops. It has a picture of the current design being used in Silver Spring at Second Avenue and Colesville Road. It is designed to give pedestrians the priority in that area. Trish has driven there and found it very confusing as she was not accustomed to the different signage. She also has concerns that in order to make a right turn from Second Avenue onto Georgia Avenue the motorist has to cross a bicycle lane.

David Rice, Commissioner, said individuals who are Deaf cannot hear if there are cars behind them without sidewalks or hear if scooters are behind them.

Trish asked if MCDOT shared the concerns and letters they received from this Commission. Steve said he has seen e-mails, but as they are preparing to make their presentations to the Planning Board they have not started to

digest the comments. They will begin to do so over the next month and a half. Trish asked Betsy to share those letters with Steve. Betsy asked Commissioners to review the guide draft and provide her with comments. She will send the letters along with the comments to County Executive Marc Elrich, the County Council, and Casey Anderson, Chair, Montgomery Planning Board.

Steve said he appreciates this Commission's involvement and offered to speak at the next Commission meeting. Trish said the Commission typically does not meet in July or August, but we will be holding a meeting on Wednesday, July 8th to further discuss these issues. Steve said the timing works well as the public hearing is scheduled for July 23rd.

Montgomery County COVID-19 Recovery Planning Framework, Roles and Responsibilities – Odile Brunetto, Chief, Aging and Disability Services, Montgomery County Health & Human Services

Handout: [Montgomery County COVID-19 Recovery Planning Framework](#)

Handout: [COVID-19 Recovery Information Coordination Flow Chart](#)

Odile Brunetto, Chief, ADS, thanked the Commission for their recent letter regarding e-scooter legislation that was introduced by the County Council ([Bill 8-20, Bicycles and E-Scooters—Operating Requirements and Registration](#)).

County Executive Marc Elrich and the County Council have asked several groups to work together on a safe and measured incremental recovery plan. All groups have been asked to make recommendations that align with four guiding principles for recovery efforts: racial equity, inclusion, innovation and sustainability. There are five recovery mission areas: government operations and services; economic revitalization; health and human services (HHS); housing; and education. County Executive Elrich has convened a new advisory COVID 19 recovery group comprised of Chairs from several selected Commissions including the Commission on People with Disabilities and the Commission on Aging. This advisory group is chaired by Dale Tibbetts, Special Assistant to County Executive Elrich.

The HHS recovery group is led by HHS Director Dr. Raymond Crowel. HHS has six areas to plan for an incremental recovery: early childcare and education; behavioral health and domestic violence; public health; housing and homelessness; older adults and persons with developmental disabilities; and service access equity. HHS has convened a steering committee workgroup comprised of eight providers from the developmental disability community and the senior services community to focus on the needs of people with disabilities and older adults. The workgroup also includes two analysts from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Kim Mayo, Administrator, Community Support Network, and Kimberly Johnson, Home Care Supervisor, ADS. The workgroup had their first meeting last week and they will continue meeting weekly until the end of October. Their task is to determine what is needed to recover in a planned, safe way 30 days at a time. They will also be determining what will need to be done if there is a second wave of the virus.

Odile is co-chair of the workgroup addressing older adults and persons with disabilities along with co-chair Kim Mayo, Administrator, Community Support Network. The workgroup has a Steering Committee comprised of 13 providers from the developmental disability community and the senior services community to focus on the needs of people with disabilities and older adults. The workgroup also includes two analysts from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and four ADS staff that includes Odile, Kim, and Kimberly Johnson, Home Care Supervisor, ADS. The workgroup has had two meetings. They will continue meeting weekly until the end of October and will be providing Dr. Crowel updates on a weekly basis. Their task is to determine what is needed to recover in a planned, safe way 30 days at a time. They will also be determining what will need to be done if there is a second wave of the virus.

At the first meeting, they highlighted all the needs aware of in the community and workgroups will be focusing on the following four priority areas for the first 30 days.

1. **Testing, PPE (personal protective equipment), contact tracing, and safe quarantine:** Many providers who serve older adults and persons with disabilities are still in the middle of the COVID-19 crisis. There is a huge need for testing for their staff and clients, a need for protective equipment, a need for contact tracing to follow those who have been diagnosed as positive, and a need for a special quarantine facility for those who have tested positive and cannot self-quarantine at home for a number of reasons.
2. **Provider sustainability:** A number of providers have not been able to provide regular services and have had reduced revenues and reduce reimbursement. There is a lot of anxiety about their ability to sustain their business considering that the Federal Payroll Protection Program is set to end this month. Some providers have said they will have to layoff employees. Odile has been meeting weekly with medical adult day service providers. Home care agencies have had difficult maintaining staff that are able and willing to provide personal care services in the home. Costs for such services have increased tremendously from \$28 per hour to \$43 per hour. Many families cannot afford this increase.
3. **Access to services and social equity:** This includes telemedicine, social isolation and volunteerism. While there are many opportunities available online, not everyone has the equipment needed to participate or access to internet from their home. There are also language and accessibility barriers. HHS has partnered with the Information Technology department to apply for a Federal grant that would provide funding for additional equipment and assist individuals with qualifying for internet. There are also concerns about social isolation. Odile announced Serving Together's (ST) new initiative to provide fresh vegetables to Veterans. This is one way to connect person-to-person and to talk to Veterans about other services they need. Face-to-face volunteerism is at a strict minimum currently and this workgroup will be discussing how to shift from face-to-face to online volunteerism.
4. **Communication:** There will need to be communication with clients, family members, personnel, non-profit agencies and stakeholders regarding the phases of recovery. The workgroup wants to receive feedback. There is concern about the term "reopening" as many providers never closed and have been providing services in group homes or at individual residences. There will be more focus on "recovery". The workgroup has asked Odile to work closely with the Commissions under ADS – the Commission on People with Disabilities, the Commission on Aging, the Commission on Veterans Affairs, and the Board of Public Guardianship – and to share information and feedback with the workgroup.

There are other areas the workgroup will be focusing on including employment, access to benefits, transportation, food access, mental health, suicide prevention, and safety of staff.

Odile offered to attend future Commission meetings including throughout the summer to continue discussions and provide updates.

The floor was opened to questions.

Avner Shapiro, Commissioner, asked for more information about testing. He noted there are certain populations that are particularly vulnerable to the virus, including individuals with disabilities living in group homes. Odile said Dr. Travis Gayles, County Health Officer and Chief of Public Health Services, will be giving a briefing tomorrow at 9:30am before the County Council HHS Committee and she will have more information after the briefing. The County has been able to get a contract with a firm in Rockville who is producing a less invasive oral, self-administered form of the test. The test is currently in the trial phase. The County will have to prioritize those who receive the first tests. Typically, it would be police, fire and public safety personnel first followed by hospital workers.

Beth Shuman, Senior Legislative Aide, Office of Councilmember Gabe Albornoz, said the Council is very concerned about group homes serving people with developmental disabilities as they are not a health care facility and those individuals cannot go to a site to be tested. It will be critical for direct service providers to receive testing. There were Federal and state rapid response teams that were providing testing, but those have stopped. The Council HHS Committee has called for a special meeting tomorrow with HHS. Councilmember Gabe Albornoz, Chair, HHS Committee, sent a letter to County Executive Elrich expressing his concern that group homes need a unique response. The County has been working with certain providers to test zip codes that have a

very high concentration of individuals who are testing positive. There has not been a centralized or coordinated plan to test group homes, but the County is committed to working on developing a plan. David said the entire population of persons with disabilities needs a unique response.

John Whittle, Commissioner, said he is deeply involved in the developmental disability provider community. Many providers are dealing with private pharmacies, private doctors and private labs. John said it is not just the amount of testing but the timeliness causing staffing issues. Direct service providers who work in group homes have to wait to get tested and then wait for the test results. Meanwhile, the exposure to the workforce is hard to manage because you don't know who is positive and who is not and staff are often laid off. A larger issue now is fit testing of the masks to ensure they are sufficient. Training is available at hospitals for doctors and nurses, but it has not been made available to the provider community. Without the fit test masks could be worn, but not be effective causing outbreaks. John noted that while the County and state have provided some PPE, providers still have to purchase their own on the open market or make cloth masks. Odile said those two issues have been at the forefront of discussions with the weekly meeting with the developmental disability providers. She will follow-up with the Commission about these concerns. Beth and Dr. Michael Greenberg, Commissioner, also attend those meetings. He also suggested that Odile connect with Inter ACC/DD, a coalition of Montgomery County providers serving individuals with developmental disabilities. The coalition has been developing reopening guidelines. Many day programs have been closed and some are starting to reopen. Odile said she is working closely with Inter ACC/DD and the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA). The workgroup includes five developmental disability providers.

John reported the DDA is also convening a regional committee in each region to have providers get together and discuss reopening guidelines. DDA is not issues providers directions whether to reopen or not. That decision is left up to the discretion of the providers based on tools, factors, workshops, orientation, and training that DDA will provide. Each provider will decide on their own reopening style, process and staging at different levels. Day services can be provided remotely now and providers can still be paid for services not provided in-person. It is not known how long that exception will be allowed. Some providers have developed robust virtual day programs and some providers are starting to provide in-person services.

Trish suggested that the recovery and reopening planning include a plan for mass vaccinations, when they become available. Odile agreed that it will be critical to include that in the plan and she will convey that suggestion to her public health colleagues.

Chair and Vice-Chair Report:

Trish reported that the Commission will continue to have virtual meetings during July.. Attendance will not be counted during these meetings.

Commissioners were asked to review the new Disability Services site: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/disability/. Feedback and edits can be sent to Betsy. Betsy asked Tom Liniak, Commissioner, to review the employment section. Due to the high unemployment, this Commission will need to work together on what will happen with Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), DDA, and workforce development and ensure there is adequate funding and resources for people to obtain employment.

Ex-Officio Member Reports:

Ex-Officios were asked to send their updates to Betsy to be included in the minutes.

Charlie Butler, Department of Recreation (DR), announced DR will be partnering with Montgomery Parks (MP) to have a 30-year celebration of the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). DR will be sponsoring a virtual event on June 30th and MP will be sponsoring a virtual event on July 26th. Charlie will send out the information soon.

Announcements:

Abilities Expo will be hosting a free virtual experience June 19th through June 21st:
<https://www.abilities.com/virtual/>.

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

**Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities
July 2020 Meeting and Events Calendar**

**Wednesday, July 15th
Commission Meeting**

6pm to 7pm

Held via Zoom – link to be announced

