



**Commission on People with Disabilities
Meeting Summary Minutes
March 10th, 2021**

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

Welcome and Approval of February 2021 Meeting Summary Minutes

Seth Morgan, Chair, convened the meeting. A motion was made to approve the February 2021 Meeting Summary Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the February 2021 Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved as written. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cpwd.

The Developmental Disability Supplement – Rick Callahan, Executive Director of Compass Maryland, Co-Chair of Inter ACC/DD

Inter ACC/DD is a coalition of Montgomery County community-based service providers serving individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), supporting 4,000 individuals and 5,000 staff. One goal of the group is to expand services to County residents with I/DD so they can receive quality community living services, employment services, and other individualized support services. Providers work with Montgomery County Public Schools to assist transitioning youth with transitioning successful from the school system to the community support system. Inter ACC/DD also works on increasing professional wages for direct service providers.

The majority of funding comes from the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA). Under the upcoming fiscal year, the combined revenue received from DDA will be approximately \$191 million. About 40 years ago, the Executive Director of Arc Montgomery County approached the County about a developmental disability supplement which has been in place now for many years.

Rick noted that it is expensive for providers to operate in Montgomery County. It has been a very challenging time for providers during the pandemic and for people with disabilities and their direct service providers. Day programs have closed, staff schedules have been modified to mitigate or minimize the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic and supports have been provided virtually and remotely. It was also challenging in the beginning for providers to obtain personal protective equipment (PPE). The County was able to provide PPE and now providers can work together to purchase PPE at better rates. Providers have recently running vaccine clinics to direct support professionals and the individuals they serve can be vaccinated. Some agencies have also been conducting systematic testing. For example, Compass test staff every two weeks.

In addition to the pandemic challenges, DDA is undergoing a major transformation of policies and processes. Providers recently moved clients into a new electronic visit verification system. New waivers and new amendments have been added to the Maryland Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) system and the LTSS rate system will also be undergoing changes within the next year.

The County's developmental disability supplement has an average range of 7% to 11% in relationship to the state funding. Rick reported revenue for developmental disability provider over the last eight years has grown 6.8% and the average developmental disability supplement has been around 10% over that same time period. This year, Inter ACC/DD has submitted a request to Raymond Crowel, Director, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and to County Executive Marc Elrich of \$10.1 million or 10% of \$191 million. Rick asked for the Commission to support this request. People with I/DD and their direct service providers have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. He noted that persons with I/DD are more than three times as likely to die from COVID-19 than the general population and direct service providers are in direct contact with individuals

with I/DD. Many of these individuals do not wear masks and direct service providers must wear full PPE but there is still a chance they may contract the disease given the close contact. There are still concerns as the County begins to reopen and variant cases.

Dr. Michael Greenberg, Commissioner, has a son with a disability who is served by a Montgomery County service provider. Many of the changes from DDA have put significant financial stresses on many service providers and the infrastructure and support providers have in place to keep individuals with I/DD active and functioning. The supplement is essential for County providers to help keep these individuals living rich, full, and productive lives.

Avner Shapiro, Commissioner, asked how this Commission can be most helpful in the request. Rick suggested letting County Executive Elrich know the Commission supports this request. If the supplement is not included in County Executive Elrich's budget to contact the County Council. He noted that Inter ACC/DD has met with County Executive Elrich, who has a foster son with a disability and is connected to developmental disability providers. Betsy Luecking, Staff, said County Executive Elrich will be announcing his proposed operating budget on Monday, March 15th. The Commission presents operating budget testimony to the County Council in April and the Commission could include a statement on the developmental disability supplement.

Tom Liniak, Commissioner, works in employment services at Jewish Social Services Agency (JSSA) and is a parent of a student who is transitioning out of the school system. All developmental disability providers have gone above and beyond to ensure staff retain their employment and individuals get the services they need and they are safe. Tom said the developmental disability supplement helps to provide services and without the supplement people may not be served or be able to attract employees to provide those services. The financial implications from COVID-19 will continue for some time and at least into the next fiscal year.

Dr. Greenberg was acknowledged and honored for his input and volunteer work with the developmental disability community and providers by the County Council during a One-Year Battle Against COVID-19 proclamation presentation this past Monday. He encouraged Commissioners to assist individuals they know who have a developmental disability with registering on the County's website for the vaccine. Montgomery County Public Health is working hard to meet the need and ensuring everyone is registered.

Montgomery Lane/Avenue Two-Way Separated Bike Lanes in Bethesda – Patricia D. Shepherd, A.I.C.P., Bikeways Project Manager, Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT)

PowerPoint: https://montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CPWD/CPWDDOT3_10_21_PDS1_FINALPresentation.pdf

The approved and adopted 2018 Bicycle Master Plan recommends separated bikeways. The Montgomery Lane/Avenue two-way separated bike lanes are part of a large network of bike lanes that have been recommended in downtown Bethesda. The project will be completed in phases. Phase 1 between Montgomery Lane/Avenue from Woodmont Avenue to Pearl Street is the County's portion. Phase 2 which includes the segment between 355 and Pearl is the State's right-of-way. Patricia offered to speak to the Commission at a future meeting about the Phase 2 project.

The existing Woodmont Avenue roadway consists of four lanes one-way heading east towards 355. The curb width is 47 to 48 feet. On the south side are two bus stops – Metro J2 and Ride On 34. Capital Bike Share is located on the north side. Included in this roadway are three signalized intersections. The project proposes reducing the travel lanes from four to three to accommodate a ten-foot wide two-way separated bike lane. A two-foot wide curb will separate the cyclists from motor vehicle traffic. A floating bus stop will be installed at the signalized intersection just west of East Lane. The floating bus stop will have a crosswalk across Montgomery Lane and an area to cross to access the bus platform. Patricia noted the design of this area was very challenging. They were not allowed to relocate the Metro and Ride On bus stops. The floating bus stop was originally going to be installed to the far side of the East Lane intersection but there were drainage issues and Pepco electric grids.

The sidewalk, bike lane crossing and bus island are not level with the roadway. These areas are all raised and are at the same grade. This causes a vertical deflection for bicyclists at the bike lane crossing. Pedestrians trying to access the bus island would start from the sidewalk and cross the bike lane. A red signal will be installed to notify bicyclists that they need to stop. Stop bars have also been included on either end of this pedestrian conflict area. The bike lanes also narrow down to 8- to 8 ½- feet at the crosswalk which will also slow cyclists. A steel lean rail will be installed on the floating bus island to channelize bus riders. The bike lane crossing has detectable warning surfaces on both sides as well as longitudinal directional indicators to direct pedestrians to where they should board the bus. Audible pedestrian signals are installed for pedestrians who want to cross Montgomery Avenue and have to pass through the bus platform.

Patricia asked for feedback from the Commission on this design.

Seth said he is frustrated that MCDOT discusses projects with the Commission after the design phase or after project completion, such as the recently installed bus stop platform in Germantown. He asked how MCDOT has been communicating with people who have vision problems, people who use wheelchairs or canes, and people who have low hearing. The main issue is bicyclists may not yield to pedestrians in the crosswalk. He asked how MCDOT will make the crosswalks safe for all pedestrians and how they will control bicyclists who will not be compliant. Seth said there have been multiple lawsuits worldwide against floating bus stops. Patricia said because Montgomery Avenue is a signalized intersection the bicyclists will have a red light just as the cars will have a red light so they should all stop when pedestrians have a walk sign. A full stop has been designed on either end of the raised speed hump. Patricia has been coordinating this project with the County's consultants at Toole Design Group and with Matt Johnson, BiPPA Project Manager, Division of Transportation Engineering, who has been working with individuals who are visually impaired. MCDOT is currently overseeing a Visually Impaired Urban Transportation Study after receiving a grant from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) to conduct a study and pilot design for users who are blind or have low vision navigating the urban environment especially with relationship with connecting to transit. A number of individuals who are visually impaired as well as individuals who use wheelchairs are a part of that study. MCDOT has held numerous field visits in downtown Silver Spring at the floating bus stop located at Second Avenue and Colesville Road. MCDOT is working to incorporate best practices as well as community comments. The project is still under design and any comments taken tonight can be used to enhance that design. Patricia noted that a number of design features including the directional delimiters, signals and stop bars are design upgrades. This is an opportunity to create a multi-modal transportation system for the County. MCDOT is working to incorporate universal design and safety in public spaces as well as offer choices as more people want to walk and bike.

Matt thanked the Commission for the time and energy in providing feedback on projects throughout the County. He acknowledged that this is the first time the Commission is hearing about the floating bus stop project on Montgomery Avenue. Feedback on previous designs are incorporated into the future design process. For example, the Commission had asked that red signals be installed at floating bus stops so bicyclists would have to stop. Matt noted that the process is continuing to evolve and MCDOT continues to work to make the design more accessible and more pedestrian friendly. The bus stop platform installed in Germantown was an example that was created after meeting with visually impaired advocates Susan Crawford and Patrick Sheehan. There is no universal agreement on how these platforms and bus stops should be designed. Matt added that Betsy Luecking, Staff, sent out an MCDOT visually impaired study survey to Commissioners regarding the Fenton Street bikeway and pedestrian safety project. He encouraged Commissioners to complete the survey.

Patrick Sheehan, American Council for the Blind of Maryland (ACBM), asked how much it costs to construct a floating bus stop. Patricia said she does not have an itemized project design list but will find out. Patrick said understands and agrees with MCDOT working to get bicycles and scooters off the sidewalk. There is no universal design for a floating bus. He has seen half a dozen different floating bus stop designs installed in the County and he does not know which design to expect when he encounters a floating bus stop. An extended curb allows for a bus stop to remain where it is and gives a person who is visually impaired the ability to identify where a bus stop is located. It is much safer, but still needs to be tested for accessibility for persons who use wheelchairs. ACMB has spoken with Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) about the accessibility issues with floating bus

stops. Patrick would personally like the County to institute a moratorium on installing floating bus stops until a more accessible design can be finalized.

Trish Gallalee, Vice-Chair, attended a public meeting for the Tuckerman Lane project where residents expressed they did not want a bike lane installed as it would take away on street parking. She asked if these comments have been taken into account for this project. Patricia said Montgomery Lane does not have on street parking so there is no issue. She said the project manager for the Tuckerman Lane project is reviewing project alternatives with and without parking.

Trish added that projects need to also take children and the older population into consideration when designing projects. There is a certain expectation when one encounters an intersection but if intersections are going to be designed differently pedestrians will not know how to navigate them. Trish added that bicylists have issues with people running in the bicycle lanes. She said pedestrians need to be educated on these changes as they are very confusing. Patricia said MCDOT published an educational brochure titled "[Look Out For Each Other](#)" that explains the new pedestrian and bikeway infrastructures with instructions on how drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists can safely navigate these traffic patterns and road markings. The Visually Impaired Urban Transportation Study grant is also being used to educate the public.

Neal Carter, Commissioner, said the MCDOT brochures are not published in Braille and the "Look Out For Each Other" website does not have an auditory feature and therefore it is not accessible to a person with vision impairments. He is frustrated that the Commission is presented with plans and projects on a consistent basis with no input provided by this Commission or by the disability community.

Matt said he understands the frustration. He said MCDOT had floating bus stop site visits with persons who have visual impairments in 2017 as well as a focus group organized with Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind in 2018. MCDOT held a site visit when the first floating bus stop was installed on Spring Street with people who had low vision and who were blind. Matt also met with Susan Crawford and Charlie Crawford to discuss their issues with the floating bus stop located on Second Avenue. He noted that the Visually Impaired Urban Transportation Study grant will fund the development of a toolkit to help County engineers and planners better design roads and sidewalks to help those with a vision disability get around. The scope of the study includes creating tactile 3D documents that individuals can use to see how the plans will be laid out. Matt spoke before this Commission in December 2020 and January 2021 about the Study. He acknowledged that MCDOT has fallen short in the past but they do not want to continue doing so moving forward. MCDOT wants to involve this Commission in the process. The Montgomery Avenue project is not finalized and there is room for change.

David Rice, Commissioner, said funding has already been allocated for floating bus stop and bikeway projects so moving forward the Commission and MCDOT need to discuss best practices. He suggested that bike lanes have more checks for bicyclists to realize they need to slow down prior to an intersection. It is against the law for a bicyclist to go through a red light regardless if there is a floating bus stop.

Seth said MCDOT is working with good intentions but unless the designers have lived the life of a person with a disability whether it is being blind or loss of hearing or using a wheelchair they will never fully understand. Therefore, it is important that this Commission be included as early as possible in the design phase. Patricia said she understands there needs to be a better process and suggested having a workgroup of a few select Commission members who could provide input early on in the 15% to 30% of the design process. The workgroup could be a part of their extended technical team to provide feedback.

Francie Gilman, Public, suggested MCDOT invite a few Commissioners to a site visit at the new Germantown bus platform so they can experience it in real time. Matt would be happy to meet with Commissioners in the field at any of the installed floating bus stops or bus platforms. He will connect with Betsy to set it up.

Avner asked about alternatives to the floating bus stop. Matt said a floating bus stop has a sidewalk, a bike lane which a pedestrian has to cross, and then the bus platform. A shared platform stop also has a sidewalk and a bike lane, but the bus stops next to the bike lane. Riders have to wait for the bus on the sidewalk and cross the bike

lane when the bus arrives. A shared platform stop has been installed in Germantown. Shared platforms do not work well for a high volume of transit riders or cyclists. Matt said he would be happy to do a site visit with Commissioners as well as a longer discussion with the Commission.

Seth said this Commission has heard from several people who have either almost been hit by a bicyclist or have been yelled at by a bicyclist when trying to cross an intersection. He suggested that both pedestrians and bicyclists need to be educated. Matt understands there are concerns that bicyclists will not stop for pedestrians and that concern is increased for pedestrians who cannot see or hear the bicyclist. He added that pedestrian and cyclist issues are the same whether it's a floating bus stop or a platform stop. MCDOT is working to reduce those issues and make it as safe as possible for all users. Features have been installed at floating bus stops to encourage cyclists to slow down and stop. For example, a horizontal deflection has been installed at the floating bus stop on Second Avenue. The deflection forces the bicyclist to slow down by maneuvering two sharp curves as they approach the bus stop. Rumble strips (speed bumps) have also been installed and the word "SLOW" has been painted on the pavement along with high visibility crosswalk markings. Posts have been installed on the center line to make the bike lane feel narrower. Matt said red signals can also be installed.

Seth invited Patricia and Matt to speak at future meetings.

Chair and Vice-Chair Report

Seth reported the County Council presented a Multiple Sclerosis (MS) proclamation on Monday. YouTube: https://youtu.be/QGLtPdI_y7M?t=426.

The Steering Committee will meet next Wednesday, March 17th from 5pm to 6pm. Betsy will send out an agenda with the Zoom meeting link.

Ex-Officio Member Reports

Marybeth Dugan, Montgomery Parks (MP), reported MP and the Montgomery County Recreation (MCR) will both be releasing their guides for day camps and summer programs on Monday, March 15th. Both agencies will be following state and CDC regulations and safety protocols. Camps and programs will be limited but will also be available virtually. Charlie Butler, MCR, added that Governor Hogan announced yesterday that outdoor social gatherings could be increased from 10 people to 25 people and restrictions could be further lifted between now and June so there may be some flexibility or additional camps added. Marybeth reported that MP in coordination with agencies across the county, is celebrating [Autism Awareness and Acceptance Month](#). Throughout the month of April, county agencies will host engaging programs, activities and mini events as part of the month-long "shining brighter together" celebration. Agencies participating in the celebration include MP, MCR, City of Takoma Park Recreation, City of Rockville Recreation and Parks, City of Gaithersburg Parks, Recreation and Culture, ArtStream, and the Montgomery County Public Library System.

Charlie Butler, MDR, reported staff have been assisting other agencies over the last year. During the last several weeks, staff have been assisting at testing and vaccination sites. They have also been providing wheelchairs and walkers to those who need them.

Announcements

At the last Developmental Disabilities Advisory Committee meeting, Montgomery County Community Support Network (CSN) discussed adding an additional supervisor that would supervise Coordination of Community Services (CCS) caseworkers. CSN's ratio of supervisors to CCSs is 1 to 14. Other Montgomery County agencies have ratios of 1 supervisor to 7 or 8 CCSs. It would cost approximately \$100,000 for CSN to hire another supervisor. This issue will be discussed in further detail at next week's Steering Committee meeting.

Meeting adjourned – 7:30pm

**Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities
April 2021 Meeting and Events Calendar**

Developmental Disability Advisory Committee – Monday, April 12th

****PLEASE NOTE NEW START TIME****

4pm to 5:30pm to be held via Zoom – link to be announced

Full Commission Meeting – Wednesday, April 14th

6pm to 7:30pm to be held via Zoom – link to be announced

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

