



Commission on People with Disabilities
September 11th, 2019

Welcome and Approval of June 2019 Meeting Summary Minutes:

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

Discussion on Montgomery County's Pedestrian Master Plan – Eli Glazier, AICP, Transportation Planner Coordinator, Montgomery Planning Department, Functional Planning and Policy Division

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

The purpose of the Pedestrian Master Plan is to make the pedestrian experience better for Montgomery County where walking or rolling should be the preferred means of travel for all trips that are within a short distance. The plan will focus on people with disabilities and ensuring public space is accessible and equitable. Walking and rolling on a mobility device such as a scooter or wheelchair should be comfortable, convenient, safe and direct. Eli noted that when Montgomery Planning Department (MPD) uses the term “rolling” it is inclusive of all mobility devices including canes.

While various master plans have made recommendations to improve and define pedestrian space, this is the County's first countywide plan to improve all aspects of the pedestrian environment. It will not just be about sidewalks and improving intersections, but about lighting and shade, how pedestrians are treated when there is construction, having smooth and flat surfaces to walk or roll on, and snow removal. It is an opportunity for the County to take the necessary steps to improve pedestrian safety, comfort and access in all of our communities.

The plan will include identifying best practices; existing conditions/perceptions; infrastructure prioritization; pedestrian-forward design; policy recommendations; programming recommendations; and engagement.

MPD will be looking at every sidewalk and every intersection crossing and measuring it in terms of comfort. MPD will also be working with Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) to conduct an ADA-type analysis to understand obstructions, cross-slopes, whether curb ramps are ADA compliant and if there are audible pedestrian signals at intersections.

In 2016, Montgomery County adopted [Vision Zero](#) which is an ambitious program to reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries to zero by 2038. The program takes into account infrastructure, education, and enforcement, works to change the culture around traffic fatalities and crashes in general, and is proactive about making changes to the environment before the crash happens rather than after.

MPD will be putting vulnerable road users at the forefront in terms of who they are designing the environment for and identifying the most dangerous locations in Montgomery County for pedestrians. They will be conducting a countywide statistically valid survey to determine why people are walking, where they are walking, how far, and what would make them walk or roll more in the community. After the survey results are received, MPD will begin to prioritize infrastructure based on those responses and looking at what pedestrian pathways and crossings are the most important to construct or improve. MPD will also be holding a series of public meetings to work with the community to understand what variables or factors are the most important for residents for prioritization.

The goal is to work with MCDOT to determine the most important sidewalks, trails, and crossings and to ultimately have MCDOT install sidewalks before getting requests from residents. Another goal is to develop design recommendations for MCDOT including public seating, raised pedestrian crossings, sidewalks, and materials that are appropriate and accessible. Eli noted that Silver Spring has quite a few sidewalks that are comprised of brick pavers which can be treacherous for pedestrians.

MPD is looking at tactile directional indicators for people with low or no vision and making signal changes such as potentially restricting right turns in certain locations. They are also looking to work with MCDOT to develop a standard to provide more time for people to cross the street. MPD is working with MCDOT to develop policy recommendations and standards to include pedestrian detours during construction, reducing utility access within the sidewalk, snow removal, pedestrian scale lighting and crosswalk lighting.

MPD will be hosting a series of kick off meetings across the County to share the project timeline, talk about existing conditions, gather feedback about the current pedestrian environment, and set the stage for the next steps of the plan. You can sign up for an e-newsletter via their website at www.montgomeryplanning.org to receive important updates, press releases and events. The #WalkingHere social media campaign is used on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for residents to share a video or photos of their pedestrian experience. The campaign is intended to humanize pedestrians and for others to see themselves in those experiences.

A Pedestrian Advisory Group will be formed and the application process will be publicized in October. The group will meet regularly over the course of the plan to provide insight into pedestrian issues, feedback, and guidance as recommendations and the plan are developed. Additional community engagement strategies include developing and promoting "Community Walk Audit-in-a-box" for people to lead their own walks in their communities and giving them the language to advocate for pedestrian safety and the tools needed to work with elected officials.

MPD will continue to meet with interested community groups. They hope to get approval from the Montgomery County Planning Board and present it to the County Council by November 2020. Eli noted that the Bicycle Master Plan was originally a two-year plan that turned into a three-year plan, so the Pedestrian Master Plan projected schedule could take longer as well.

Eli asked Commissioners: what issues should the plan study; what are your concerns about traveling around Montgomery County; if the Pedestrian Master Plan could only achieve one thing, what should it be; and any other questions or thoughts.

The floor was opened for questions and comments.

Seth Morgan, Chair, said pedestrian safety has been an issue this Commission has discussed for a long time. He suggested finding out who isn't walking and why. He also suggested including WMATA in discussions, especially in terms of construction, coordination of detours and pedestrian safety. It is important to include representation from people with disabilities. Seth noted that if lanes are narrowed, there will not be space for people who drive wheelchair accessible vans to extend their ramps and exit their vehicles. Seth asked if there is cross discussion between the Bicycle Master Plan, Pedestrian Master Plan, and other master plans. Eli said David Anspacher, Transportation Manager, MPD, is the Project Manager for the Bicycle Master Plan and supervises Eli. As the Pedestrian Master Plan is developed they will be conscious of how those pieces connect. MPD, County staff and County-elected officials are excited about the Pedestrian Master Plan.

Trish Gallalee, Vice-Chair, said she often encounters restaurants who block sidewalks with outdoor seating or large planters. Eli said MPD has noticed restaurants blocking sidewalks. There will be inter-agency coordination to include MCDOT and Department of Permitting Services (DPS) to share understanding of the implications for the decisions like outdoor seating where it encroaches on pedestrian spaces. Trish noted that the County adopted a [policy regarding the use of brick and other pavements in the public right-of-way](#) in April 2009. The policy states that brick pavements must follow the Bethesda Streetscape Standards which details specific installation instructions. Trish noted the importance of sight lines especially around government buildings such as at the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission which has protective berms in front. She said to review how wide sidewalks are, especially around Metro stops, floating bus stops that are located in the middle of the street, and neighborhoods that do not have any sidewalks which make it difficult for a person who uses a wheelchair, has low vision or is blind to safely travel. Trish suggested looking at the street markers for bicycle lanes to make sure they are a different color from the road.

Larry Bram, Commissioner, said Metro has a Beacon Wayfinding Project to develop an application and website that uses technology to assist patrons with disabilities in finding Metrobus stops, navigating Metrorail stations, and navigating transit centers. He suggested the County look into creating something similar. Larry noted that seniors are a growing population and the census indicates that approximately 20% of individuals have a disability.

Kathy Mann Koepke, Commissioner, said the Commission has recently discussed pedestrians sharing space with other pedestrians. For example, electric scooters are being left on corners or in the middle of sidewalks. She is not sure of regulations regarding electric scooters or if there could be requirements for scooters to be returned to a rack. Eli said the electric scooter program is a pilot project run by MCDOT, but he does not know when the pilot project will be over. Once it is, regulations should be put in place. Eli suggested that scooters have a path of travel in the roadway. Part of the issue is scooters are new and users are not being conscientious on using them and MCDOT should be working on that as well.

Hilary Kaplan, Commissioner, asked how it is determined how long it takes for a traffic light to change. She suggested there be more synchronization of lights to reduce traffic congestion and long wait times. Hilary has also encountered several instances of almost backing into pedestrians because they are not paying attention.

Betsy Luecking, Staff, has concerns about bicycles and scooters especially in the urban areas where congestion is the worst. With the addition of floating bus stops, it is becoming more dangerous for pedestrians, especially for persons who are blind crossing the street. She suggested incorporating shared paths. Betsy asked about pedestrian rules and people crossing the street without waiting for cars to stop. Eli said education is going to be a part of this plan.

Neal Carter, Commissioner, said in some jurisdictions in DC there are trucks that pick up electric scooters in the evening hours. He suggested when residents use the hashtag #WalkingHere they include what street or intersection they are at. He reiterated the need to include people of all types of disabilities in the conversation.

Cindy Buddington, Commissioner, said curb cuts should be wider than 40". If a wheelchair user just missed the curb cut they run into the curb and cannot get onto the street. Cindy does not think the current layout of sidewalk, then bicycle lane, then parking lane, and then traffic lane will work. She drives a wheelchair accessible van and has concerns about unloading from the van into the bicycle lane and traveling into the street to reach a curb cut. Cindy said that while the Bethesda Streetscape Standard helped with some issues with brick pavers, they are still not ideal for wheelchair users, older adults, or kids in strollers. She will send Eli a list of other concerns.

Richard Shermanski, Commissioner, asked if there were any other major projects, like the Purple Line Project, that may coincide with the approval of the Pedestrian Master Plan in November 2020. Other projects may create more chaos than solutions, especially with construction and sidewalk closures.

A member of the public said they have visited a city in Germany that had three different paths with controlled lights each for pedestrians, bicyclists and cars. He suggested looking at what the future pedestrian needs will be such as electric scooters. He also suggested that residents participating in the survey be asked who they are and what are their needs.

Another member of the public asked if MPD had considered using big block crosswalks. Eli said there are yielding issues for big block crosswalks. MPD has learned that painting a crosswalk on the ground is not enough. Blocks in Montgomery County can be very long with some up to 2,000 feet in length, or the equivalent of four blocks long. In a larger context that is not very pedestrian friendly. Another effort currently taking place between MCDOT and MPD is the [Complete Streets Design Guide](#). The goal is to articulate a consistent, countywide vision for street design including sidewalk width, how long a block should potentially be on different types of streets and creating a network of blocks that are shorter. They are looking 20, 30, 40 years into the future as development occurs to create better connections and better permeability for pedestrians and better ease of getting around.

Karen Goss, Commissioner, said it is critical that the disability community across all aspects of disability be included. This may mean that MPD does more outreach to them rather than the community coming to MPD. There are organizations and agencies represented within the Commission that can help with outreach. The ADA Center in California has looked at the issue of electric scooters. There have been very strict rules, regulations and laws put in place. Karen encouraged MPD to review those as a model when deciding how to manage electric scooters.

Karen Morgret, Commissioner, discussed the issue of stop signs and pedestrians not obeying traffic laws. Eli said MPD will be looking at that including the option of raised crosswalks that are flush with the intersections so curb cuts are not necessary. While MPD cannot change traffic signals or install lighting, much of the discussions will be getting agreement from MCDOT and DPS in order to make those changes. His goal is to have all recommendations and policies adopted prior to the approval of the Pedestrian Master Plan so that the County is already making those changes.

Seth ended by asking Eli to please include this Commission as the plan moves forward and develops and inviting him to speak at a future Commission meeting.

Chair and Vice-Chair Report:

Seth welcomed and introduced new members to the Commission: Richard Shermanski, Karen Goss, and James Dean.

The Steering Committee Meeting will be held next Wednesday, September 18th from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at Health & Human Services Building, 401 Hungerford Drive, 1st Floor 1A Conference Room, Rockville.

County Executive Marc Elrich will be attending the Commission's October 16th meeting to talk about employment. MCDOT will be discussing dockless scooters. Please note that the October meeting is being held the third Wednesday of the month.

Trish reported that over the summer the Commission had sent the County Council correspondence regarding concerns about the design of bike lanes in the County. Trish also reported an issue she experienced with Transportation Security Administration (TSA) at an airport where an agent searched her service animal and put him through the metal detector. Fortunately, the agent's supervisor was present to apologize and another supervisor stated that all staff would be retrained on Monday. Trish encouraged those traveling with disabilities, medical conditions, or other special circumstances to contact TSA Cares 72-hours prior to traveling to request assistance during the security screening process. TSA Cares: 1-855-787-2227 (Toll Free), Federal Relay 711, or e-mail TSA-ContactCenter@tsa.dhs.gov.

Legislative Subcommittee Update:

Neal reported on August 7, 2019, the Administration abruptly decided to end consideration of non-military deferred action requests, commonly known as medical deferred action. With no warning, individuals began receiving letters from U.S. Customs and Immigration Services (USCIS) informing them that their pending applications and renewals for deferral had been denied, and they had 33 days to leave the country or risk deportation. Deferred action is necessary for disabled and chronically ill immigrants to receive life-saving and life-sustaining treatment. Commissioners can contact their congressionally-elected officials as individuals to support making medical deferred action permanent. Neal also reported that Marca Bristo, disability rights advocate, passed away on September 8th, 2019. She helped to craft the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990 and founded Access Living in Chicago which brought the independent living movement for people with disabilities to Illinois.

Ex-Officio Member Updates:

Susan Smith, Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC), reported HOC has issued 98 of the 99 housing vouchers that are specifically for non-elderly disabled (NED) ages 18 to 61. HOC has hired a housing locator to assist those individuals in finding housing. HOC has submitted an additional application requesting 300 more NED vouchers. Susan also reported HOC has a new Customer Service Center at 880 Bonifant Street, Silver Spring, MD 20910. She noted that it is in an older building and encouraged individuals to continue dropping off paperwork at the Kensington or Gaithersburg customer service centers. Susan is the liaison to the Mental Health Advisory Committee, which met last week for the new Committee year. MHAC established three Committees to address mental health parity; reducing and preventing suicide in the County; and reviewing the County's Mobile Crisis Team and developing different models.

MaryBeth Dugan, Montgomery Parks, reported [International Active Aging Week](#) will be held October 1st through October 7th, 2019. Brookside Gardens will be hosting a [kick off event on October 2nd](#) from

10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., which also coincides with “Walk Maryland Day” to encourage Maryland Residents to be active.

Denise Isreal, MCDOT, reported changes in the disbursement of the Transportation Services Improvement Fund (TSIF) which is to be disbursed to owners and operators of accessible taxicabs to offset the increased costs of owning and operating accessible vehicles, and to improve or expand transportation options for persons with disabilities, eligible senior citizens, and persons of limited income. [Montgomery County Executive Regulation 11-19](#) amends TSIF to allow owners of accessible taxicabs to receive an initial one-time \$15,000 reimbursement rather than have it be disbursed over a five-year period. Drivers will still receive a ten-cent per mile reimbursement for every mile that vehicle travels while in service. MCDOT will now pay a service rate of \$15.00 per trip completed during the hours of 6:00 a.m. to 11:59 p.m., and \$20.00 per trip completed from 12:01 a.m. to 5:59 a.m. Drivers will be eligible to receive a reimbursement up to \$1,000 per year for insurance for the vehicle. License fees, transfer fees, and renewal fees are eligible for reimbursement. For any Call-n-Ride customers, MCDOT will round up the fare to \$10.00 resulting in a guaranteed fare for the driver. Seth noted that the Commission has been involved in developing the language for TSIF since its inception. He has concerns regarding monitoring of the use of funds for other reasons than the original intention. Denise said the revenue generated from the \$0.25 surcharge imposed on the Transportation Network Companies, like Uber and Lyft, that goes into the TSIF is anticipated to result in \$10.25M per year. In FY19, TSIF had a fund balance of \$1.1M. She suggested having someone from MCDOT speak at a future Commission meeting about this issue. Kathy suggested inviting MCDOT to give an update on the Ride On Flex pilot program.

Benjamin DuGoff, Liaison to the Countywide Recreation Advisory Board, reported they held their first meeting of the new Commission year.

Announcements:

None.

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

Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities October 2019 Meeting and Events Calendar

Wednesday, October 2nd

BCC Chairs Meeting w/ HHS Director

6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Rockville Memorial Library, 21 Maryland Avenue, Rockville
(Morgan)

Thursday, October 10th

HHS County Council Breakfast

8:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

COB – 100 Maryland Avenue, 3rd Floor Hearing Room, Rockville,
(Morgan)

Monday, October 14th

Developmental Disabilities Advisory Committee

4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

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

Wednesday, October 16th

****PLEASE NOTE – Held 3rd Wednesday of the Month****

Full Commission Meeting

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

EOB – 101 Monroe Street, Lobby Level Auditorium, Rockville

No Steering Committee meeting in October

Friday, October 18th

Employment First Webinar – DDA and DORS

10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Register: <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/1873274646030726413>