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

Low Vision Urban Navigation Study Briefing & Discussion – Matt Johnson, AICP, BiPPA, Capital Project Manager, Division of Transportation Engineering, Montgomery County Department of Transportation, and Jim Elliott, Consultant, Toole Design Group

Website: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DOT/Projects/TLCVision/

Draft Designing Streets for People with Vision Disabilities Toolkit (6/3/2021):
www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DOT/Resources/Files/DesigningStreetsforPVD_Toolbox_20210603_Clean_ADA.pdf

Vision Disabilities Study: 5/26 Stakeholder Meeting and Virtual Tour:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7_4zSRfAOg

Pilot Area Detailed Design Description:
https://montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CPWD/PilotAreaDetailedDesign.pdf

The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) received a Transportation-Land Use Connections (TLC) grant from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) to study how to make it safer for persons with a vision disability to get around in urban areas, especially with a focus on getting to transit stops. The 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 grant will also fund initial design work in a pilot area in downtown Silver Spring which could eventually lead to installation of innovative treatments in this area. MWCOG would like the toolkit to be a guide for other agencies to use and to be applied throughout the region when designing streets that are accessible to persons who are blind or who have low vision. Matt noted that other disability types have been included in the design but are not the main effort of the grant.

MCDOT has selected a portion of Fenton Street in downtown Silver Spring for the pilot area design. This was a section that MCDOT has received a lot of complaints from people who have vision disabilities. The pilot area will run along both sides of Fenton Street from Ellsworth Drive to Thayer Avenue. Matt noted that the pilot design will be incorporated into a larger project on Fenton Street. The pilot project began in November 2020 and must be completed by June 30, 2021 under the grant terms. Over the past several months, MCDOT has been working with various stakeholders including several members of this Commission. MCDOT has held several public engagement meetings as well as met with this Commission in January 2021. They have conduct two surveys and held stakeholder interviews in person with several individuals in downtown Silver Spring as well as virtually.
There will be a Fenton Street Bikeway Design meeting on June 22. View information on the project: https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot-dte/projects/fentonvillage/index.html


The Vision Disability Toolbox includes:
- Facts about people with vision disabilities that are important for planners and designers to consider when designing streets and outdoor public spaces.
- An overview of approaches taken and lessons learned in other communities and countries.
- Principles of accessible design within public rights-of-way for people with vision disabilities.
- A discussion of processes and design tools that may be helpful in developing streets that are more accessible to people with vision disabilities.
- A discussion of how these tools can be coordinated for specific street designs.
- Guidance for process tools, design tools, and street designs, including considerations related to people with other types of disabilities, legal constraints, cost, privacy, and other issues. Includes recommendations:
  - Engaging persons with vision disabilities in the planning and design process as well as education and outreach.
  - Regular training for County staff on accessibility issues and accessible design.
  - Establishing a design testing and training facility in Montgomery County where individuals with vision disabilities can test new designs and technologies prior to implementation.
  - Incorporating design tools such as tactile cues, detectable warning surfaces, high visibility crosswalks, audible pedestrian signals, signage, and mobile technologies.
- Appendices, including a table listing key national-level documents for accessible design, design examples, guidance on maintaining accessibility in the case of temporary changes, and background material and documentation from the stakeholder engagement process.

The concept for the intersection of Fenton Street and Ellsworth Drive in downtown Silver Spring was informed by feedback from surveys as well as onsite interviews conducted with six individuals with vision disabilities and one individual who uses a wheelchair. Key issues identified included:
- Difficulty finding APS pushbuttons, particularly on Veterans Plaza corner due to background noises including musicians/buskers, corner radius, and lack of detectable edges
- Difficulty maintaining the correct heading in crosswalk due to faded crosswalk marks.
- Intersection is a T so no sounds of parallel traffic to help with navigation.
- Concerns about floating bus stops.
- Determining when it is safe to cross and concerns about bicyclist yielding.

Key issues will be addressed as follows:

**Difficulty finding APS pushbuttons**
- Detectable guidance strips and raised curbs coordinated with APS locations.
- Curbed areas at corner locations to discourage buskers near APS.
- Designated location for buskers away from intersection.

**Difficulty of maintaining the correct heading in the crosswalk**
- Shorter crossings – if design is adopted the crossing will be cut from 45 feet to 20 feet.
- Directional curb ramps with raised curbs aligned with crosswalk.
- High-visibility ladder-style crosswalk markings.
- Tactile delineator strips on either side of the crosswalk.

**Determining when it is safe to cross and concerns about bicyclist yielding**
• Bus stop integrated with signalized crosswalk.
  o Drivers, bicyclists and other vehicle users will have a red light indicating they need to stop and that a pedestrian with a vision disability is waiting at the cross walk. The APS will signal that it is the pedestrian’s turn to cross.
• Bicycle traffic calming measures.
  o Speed hump integrated with a mid-block crossing so bicyclists have to slow down.
  o Installing stop bars and other measures to encourage bicyclists to yield.
• Bicyclist education and enforcement campaign.

Finding the floating bus stop and determining what buses it serves
• Guidance strips direct pedestrians to floating bus stop crossing.
• Speech message announcing presence of floating bus stop integrated into APS.
• Distinctive bus stop signage with tactile panels installed on the sidewalk.

MCDOT continues to receive feedback on the design toolbox. A final document should be ready by the end of June and will be published to their website in July. Matt noted that this guidance will continue to be modified over time as more input is received or if there are new federal guidance or regulations that are created.

The floor was opened to questions.

Seth acknowledged that MCDOT has made an effort to involve persons with vision disabilities during the design process but said in general persons with disabilities need to be involved in all MCDOT design projects early in the process prior to the design planning phase and include them through implementation. In the toolbox, it is recommended that “An accessibility audit should be performed in conjunction with any significant street construction, reconstruction, or alteration project upon development of a 15% design and again upon development of a 65% design.” Seth asked about the auditor for this particular project. Matt said an audit has not been conducted yet as those typically happen when the design process is approximately 30% and this current pilot project is not at that point in the process. Once the public engagement part is over and more community feedback has been received, then MCDOT will move forward with the audit process. MCDOT has a few ideas on independent people who could audit the design. Matt said this is a new process for MCDOT. He added that the toolbox is a list of recommendations and MCDOT may not always be able to conduct an audit, but they will try to complete audits in areas that are of particular concern to persons with vision disabilities.

Seth asked about education and outreach to bicyclists, drivers and other vehicle users such as scooters. MCDOT has different methods. In this particular area given the density of pedestrians and slow traffic, staff may be present to hand out leaflets. It may also be helpful to have law enforcement campaigns. MCDOT will most likely create public service announcements that can run on County Cable and on YouTube. Matt said it will be a learning experience. He noted that the larger Fenton Street project will not be built until 2023 or 2024 at the earliest. That project still has two years of permitting design and construction which will allow MCDOT time to develop an education and outreach plan. Matt asked Commissioners for suggestions.

Seth noted a recent Washington Post article that showed the high pedestrian fatality and injury rates at unregulated intersections where pedestrians have to cross busy highways. He asked what MCDOT will be doing to install signals at those intersections. Matt said higher speed is directly correlated with higher injury and fatalities. While he does not specifically work on signalization, he may be able to recommend signals be installed for a project. MCDOT’s Traffic Engineering and Operations division manages traffic signals. Georgia Avenue is a state highway and while MCDOT can encourage and ask the state to install a traffic signal, they cannot force the work to be completed. Matt noted that a traffic signal installation has been funded for Georgia Avenue and Price Avenue in downtown Wheaton, but he does not know the schedule for installation.

Trish Gallalee, Vice-Chair, asked about incorporating new design features at existing floating bus stops. Matt said this Commission has stressed the importance of standardization as much as possible at floating bus stops. MCDOT agrees although there will be some variations based on local conditions. Existing floating bus stops will
be retrofitted with these new features as much as possible. Matt would like to present to the Commission this fall to discuss those upgrades.

Pat Sheehan, Public, asked about the consideration of merging two bike lanes into one bike lane at floating bus stops to encourage bicyclists to slow down. He also asked if the existing floating bus stops would be upgraded prior to the installation of new ones. Matt said two bike lanes would not be merged into one due to the risk of a head on collision. Bicycles also need a certain width to operate safely. Bike lanes at some floating bus stops may be narrowed to provide a calming impact. One issue for bicyclists is not realizing that a pedestrian at a crosswalk is trying to cross. Under Maryland law, pedestrians do not have the right of way until they put their foot into the crosswalk. This is standard across the United States but is not the law in other countries. Matt added that MCDOT will be presenting to the Commission revised plans to upgrade the four existing floating bus stops to bring them up to the new design standards. MCDOT has already presented to the Commission on the floating bus stop on Montgomery Lane which incorporates many features discussed tonight. The project is already in the pipeline and scheduled for construction this summer.

Pat asked if there will be a road treatment to indicate to a person who is blind or who has vision impairments that a bicyclist is coming. Matt said MCDOT has not found a rumble strip for a bicycle that would be particularly audible. There is potential to install an induction loop in the pavement upstream from the crosswalk that would act like a metal detector and whenever a bicyclist passes over it, the induction loop would tell a speaker to play a sound. This may be technically difficult to do as it requires a power source and if the bike is not made of metal it will not trigger the induction loop. MCDOT continues to explore other options.

Cindy LeBon, Public, has concerns that bus stops throughout the various regions in Maryland and DC and entire country are different. Persons who are blind or have low vision will not know how to access these bus stops. She suggested that they all be the same. She also said that incorporating color into crosswalks will not help individuals who use service animals that cannot detect color. Her service animal has been trained to walk across at a crosswalk. Mobility instructors will have to retrain individuals on how to use public transportation and possibly require training at each individual bus stop. She noted that it can take a lot of training for a person with an intellectual disability to learn how to safely use these bus stops prior to doing it on their own. Cindy also asked about accessibility for individuals who are hard of hearing and who will not be able to hear a bike approaching. Matt said MCDOT is striving to make all floating bus stops as standard as possible. One of the recommendations in the toolbox is a standardized six-sided bus stop pole that would be easily recognizable and uniform in design. The pole would be a bright blue with potential for a bus silhouette on top. If every single bus stop in the region had these poles installed it would be eye catching for those who can see and a distinctive shape and feel for those who cannot. Matt said MCDOT is trying to be on the cutting edge to make the world an easier and safer place to navigate. They may have made some missteps in the past but they are trying to do their best with the feedback received and move forward.

Cindy asked about share bus stops versus floating bus stops. Matt said there will be a mixture of shared platforms and floating bus stops throughout the County as they serve different purposes and are better in different locations based on conditions. Every street is different. Even if the bus stop is a little different, the way the user finds the bus stop should always be standardized.

Trish suggested that Matt connect with the City of Rockville which is just starting to discuss installing floating bus stops and has their own perspective.

Commissioners can contact Matt with further comments and concerns at matt.johnson@montgomerycountymd.gov.

County Reopening – Boards, Committees, and Commissions – Timeline & Discussion of Hybrid Meetings

The Executive staff that work with all Boards, Committees and Commissions (BCCS) have told staff that Commissions can decide how to hold meetings going forward. Betsy Luecking, Staff, asked for feedback from Commissioners. Some Commissioners do not feel comfortable meeting in person at this time. Most Commissioners prefer virtual meetings and feel they can be conducted effectively. Virtual meetings also lessen the commute time as well as transportation issues and allow for stakeholders from outside of Montgomery County.
to easily attend the meetings. Commissioners also agreed that an in-person meeting would be beneficial at some point, perhaps as an annual retreat or goal setting meeting. It was suggested that a hybrid of virtual and in-person be offered. Betsy suggested revisiting this conversation in September.

**ADA Updates – Matt Barkley, ADA Compliance Manager, Department of General Services, Montgomery County Government**

Matt has been working on a collaborative effort with the Office of the County Executive and the Office of the County Attorney to send a memo to all County employees on reasonable accommodations that must be offered for all public County meetings and events. The memo will focus on effective communication and reasonable accommodations along with general knowledge for persons who do not interact with persons with disabilities on a regular basis or who are not as familiar with the ADA. It will stress the importance of ensuring communication is shared equally to persons with disabilities and providing accommodations upon request such as assistive listening devices, alternate formats including Braille and large print, and sign language interpretation. It will also explain that it is not up to the staff person to determine whether the individual qualifies as a person with a disability under the ADA or whether the reasonable accommodation would be an undue burden or financial hardship. The memo would also include links to resources and advise County employees to contact the ADA Compliance Team with questions and concerns. Once approved, Matt will share the memo with Betsy. Betsy said this memo will be extremely useful in teaching County employees and contractors what accommodation language should be included on event notices and meeting agendas as well as how County employees can arrange for accommodations such as sign language interpreters.

**Chair and Vice-Chair Report**

The Commission will tentatively hold a Steering Committee meeting on July 21, 2021. Agenda and zoom link to be announced.

**Ex-Officio Member Reports**

Tabled due to time.

**Announcements**

Tabled due to time.

**Meeting adjourned – 7:35pm**

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

**Full Commission Meeting – Wednesday, September 8th**
6pm to 7:30pm to be held via Zoom – [https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81298037108](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81298037108)

**Developmental Disability Advisory Committee – Monday, September 13th**
4pm to 5:30pm to be held via Zoom – link to be announced

**Steering Committee Meeting – Wednesday, September 15th**
5pm to 6pm to be held via Zoom – link to be announced

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

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CPWD 6/9/2021
### Attendance Policy

A Voting Member may miss up to 3 meetings within a one year rolling period. Voting Members who miss more than 3 meetings in that period or who miss 3 consecutive meetings will be automatically removed. Waivers may be requested for absences caused by extenuating circumstances.

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**Non-Voting Ex-Officio Members**

1. Barkley, Matthew – DGS – ADA Title II Compliance Officer / Alternate – Anil Saini
2. Buckley, Maria – Maryland Dept. of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)
3. Butler, Charles – Department of Recreation
4. Dugan, Marybeth – M-NCPPC, Montgomery Parks
5. Geness, Simone – Montgomery County Public Schools
6. Hawes, Angelisa – Department of Public Libraries – Special Needs Library
8. Isreal, Denise – Department of Transportation
10. Moy, Christopher – ADA Compliance Officer, Montgomery College
11. Smith, Christopher – ADA Compliance Officer, Montgomery College
12. Smith, Susan – HOC – Coordinator of Services for Residents with Disabilities
13. VACANT – Health and Human Services
14. VACANT – Health and Human Services - Children and Youth, School Health

*Volunteer Form on File with Risk Management*