

Comprehensive Amendment to
Bethesda – Chevy Chase
Master Plan

Approved & Adopted
April 1990

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**COMPREHENSIVE AMENDMENT TO THE
BETHESDA-CHEVY CHASE MASTER PLAN**

Approved and Adopted Master Plan for Bethesda-Chevy Chase, Planning Area 35, 1970, as amended; the Sector Plan for the Central Business District of Friendship Heights, 1974, as amended; the Sector Plan for the Bethesda Central Business District, 1976 as amended; the Approved and Adopted Westbard Sector Plan, 1982, as amended; the Master Plan for Historic Preservation, 1979, as amended; the Approved and Adopted Functional Master Plan for Conservation and Management in the Rock Creek Basin, 1980; being also an amendment to the General Plan for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District, as amended; and the Master Plan of Highways within Montgomery County, as amended.

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April 1990

5. Endorse completing an expanded system of pedestrian paths and bikeways to link residential areas with public facilities, commercial areas, and transit services.

The Master Plan amends the existing classification of highways in B-CC. The arterial classification is assigned to parts of Bradley Boulevard and Goldsboro Road, as well as all of MacArthur Boulevard.

The recommendation of this Plan is that a moderate level of highway improvements be endorsed for implementation during the life of the Plan. Such a program may allow for continued highway congestion in some locations, but such congestion may also lead to higher use of transit and other mobility services. **Moderate highway system recommendations include:**

1. Complete programmed highway improvements.
2. Endorse projects needed to ensure the safety of highway users and pedestrians.
3. Endorse redesign of intersections operating at high levels of congestion.
4. Require new development to participate in construction of improvements needed to reduce congestion levels on local area highways and intersections.
5. **Endorse reduction of through traffic on secondary residential streets and, where possible, on primary streets.**

The recommended development level should result in an acceptable average Level of Service on area highways. The standard of acceptable congestion for the Planning Area is to continue at the average Level of Service D/E standard. The analysis indicates the following patterns of localized congestion:

1. The eastern and northern parts of the Planning Area may be more congested than the western or southern portions of the area.
2. The north-to-south radial highways may be more congested than the east-to-west highways.

Environmental Resources

A goal of this Plan is to protect the natural resources and environmental qualities which are important to the quality of life for Bethesda-Chevy Chase. Steeply sloped and heavily wooded areas are distinctive features of the Palisades area and portions of the Chevy Chase area. Throughout B-CC, residential areas are heavily wooded. Environmental concerns within the area include loss of mature woodlands, stream quality, and highway noise.

Recommendations to protect the natural resources of B-CC include:

1. Preserve wetlands, steeply-sloping areas and, where possible, extensively wooded areas.
2. Reduce flooding problems with upgrading of storm drainage and culvert sizes and provide regional stormwater management facilities.
3. Re-establish a stream quality monitoring program and continue monitoring of old sewer lines.
4. Improve stream channels that are subject to severe erosion problems.
5. Provide noise mitigation measures for residences abutting I-495 and new residential projects along major highways.
6. Locate higher-density development near transit stations and use ridesharing programs to aid in lowering automobile-related air pollutants.
7. Design any new sewer or water lines to fully protect parkland areas.

Community Facilities and Needs

The Master Plan supports measures to help create a sense of community and to reinforce community cohesion. The Commission on the Future (1988) defined a sense of commu-

The Transportation Plan assumes that increasing use of transit services and somewhat limiting the construction of new highways are necessary to maintain the quality of life in the Planning Area. In recent years, daily highway volumes have increased from 2 to 5 percent a year in Bethesda-Chevy Chase. While increases in daily volumes may well continue, growth in peak hour volumes are expected to remain more moderate. Growth in daily volumes is due to both regional growth in through traffic and local traffic growth associated with the moderate level of development endorsed by this Plan. In a developed area such as Bethesda-Chevy Chase, traffic growth cannot be easily served by highway expansion without causing serious impacts on adjacent residential properties.

Additional transportation service in B-CC should be based primarily on an expanded and vigorous program of transit and other mobility services. Use of such services is necessary because of the difficulty of expanding the capacity of many B-CC highways and due to the need to accommodate increased through traffic and the recommended level of development in B-CC. Improved transit and mobility services should include:

1. Increased level of feeder bus services, particularly in the eastern half of B-CC.
2. Provision of park-and-ride lots for about 750 vehicles. These facilities could intercept auto traffic destined to employment centers in Bethesda-Chevy Chase.
3. Provision of comprehensive rideshare programs, serving both employment and residential centers.
4. Requirement of new development to participate in traffic reduction programs.
5. Expansion of the system of pedestrian paths and bikeways to link residential areas with public facilities, commercial areas, and transit services.

The Master Plan endorses a number of changes to the classification of highways in B-CC.

The changes more closely match the classification to the function and use of each street and highway. New arterial highways include portions of Bradley Boulevard, Goldsboro Road, and MacArthur Boulevard. Other new classifications include some primary streets, principal secondary streets, and secondary streets.

The recommendation of this Plan is that a moderate level of highway improvements be implemented during the life of the Plan. Such a program may allow for continued highway congestion in some locations, but such congestion may also lead to higher use of transit and other mobility services. The combined transit/highway program has benefits such as: better use of transit facilities, service of a moderate level of development, and prevention of loss of property due to major highway construction. A moderate highway system includes:

1. completion of currently programmed projects (see Section 4.22, "Planned Highway Projects");
2. endorsement of safety and sight distance improvements;
3. provision of intersection capacity improvements at locations which currently operate at mid-point of Level of Service E, or are likely to over the next ten years. (See Figure 11.) Improvements may include added turn lanes, lane widenings, and signal changes;
4. possible endorsement of improvements to intersections to facilitate smoother traffic flow; even if they do not always achieve a fully acceptable local Level of Service, such improvements will improve both peak and off peak operating conditions;
5. possibly requiring new development to participate in construction of improvements identified in the Plan; and
6. **endorsement of reductions in through traffic on secondary residential streets and, where possible, on primary streets and major highways.**

Table 10 presents an overview which identifies Master Plan strategies for improved transportation in B-CC. These strategies are among those summarized above and discussed in more detail below in the narrative of the Plan. This overview

high that improvements will not fully achieve an acceptable Level of Service but should be made to provide some additional capacity. In other cases, roadway links are at or nearing high congestion levels.

The Master Plan identifies one location where a grade separated interchange could be built, if approved in a subsequent Master Plan. While an interchange may eliminate an unacceptable local Level of Service condition, it may lead to excess downstream traffic on already congested roadways. It is recognized that severe community impacts could result from intersection construction.

3. New development should be required to participate in transportation projects needed to reduce congestion levels on local area highways and intersections.

At the time of preliminary subdivision plan, new development must be reviewed under the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance, including a local area review. Where intersections are projected to operate above the midpoint of Level of Service E, new development cannot be approved unless intersection improvements or traffic alleviation measures are provided to offset the effect of the additional traffic volume.

In some cases the Master Plan recommends against major intersection improvements which would cause unacceptable disruption to property in the area. In such cases, the land use and development level policies of this Master Plan should still be followed. As stated above, such new development will still be required to alleviate the effect of increased local traffic volumes caused by that development.

4. Endorse reduction of through traffic on secondary residential streets and, where possible, on primary streets, particularly during peak traffic periods.

It is the policy of the Montgomery County Department of Transportation to reduce or eliminate cut-through traffic on secondary residential streets unless such condition would increase congestion at already congested locations. Such a pol-

icy is intended to protect residential communities from increasing through traffic and traffic associated with major employment centers.

Secondary streets should function so as to serve residential areas and are not intended for use by through traffic. Protection from non-local, cut-through traffic may be achieved by communities initiating requests to the Montgomery County Department of Transportation. Local municipalities also have some jurisdiction over street operations. Protection may be in the form of speed limit enforcement, traffic circles, one-way streets, and stop signs, as well as turning and access restrictions. During non-peak periods, turning and access restrictions are less desirable as they reduce options for nearby residents to use all of the public streets. Unbuilt rights-of-way may also discourage cut-through traffic. Decisions to abandon or dispose of such rights-of-way must be weighed against needs for local access and safety.

Primary streets should function so as to collect and distribute traffic between secondary streets and the arterial and major highway system. As a result, they carry local and some non-local traffic through residential communities. Often there is no good alternative route for such traffic. To better protect residential communities, this Master Plan endorses measures aimed at controlling speeds and increasing pedestrian safety on those primary streets which are determined to carry excessive traffic during peak periods. Such measures may include a review of speed restrictions, addition of sidewalks, and various types of traffic signs, among others.

5. Lessen the rate of increase in through trips on major highways by providing alternate means of travel

Major highways should function so as to carry large volumes of traffic to destinations and from origins within B-CC. They should also provide a through route to other employment centers. Growth in traffic on major highways passing through B-CC, traffic from residential growth to the north and west, and traffic going to and from employment growth in the District of Columbia is expected to continue. The transportation

(3) Arterials and Business District Streets, (4) Primary Residential Streets, and (5) Secondary and Tertiary Residential Streets.

Freeways provide total traffic service and no land service. Access, number of lanes, and right-of-way width frequently vary in accordance with local conditions and long-term needs. The Capital Beltway (I-495) is classified as a freeway.

Major highways provide high level of traffic service and a low level of land service. The major highways in the Planning Area should function so as to carry large volumes of traffic to destinations and from origins within B-CC, but also provide a through route to other employment centers.

Arterials and business district streets provide a lower level of traffic service and a higher level of land service than major highways. They carry traffic between major highways and provide a high degree of access to local development.

Primary residential streets provide a lower level of traffic service and higher level of land service than arterials and business district streets. Primary streets are the local traffic collectors for vehicles traveling between higher level roads (arterials and major highways) and residential areas. As a result, they frequently carry non-local traffic through residential communities. Often there is not a good alternative primary street to serve as the preferred through route. Some of the primary streets are already part of the existing highway classification system whereas others are proposed to be added to that system. In most cases, these newly designated primary streets have already been constructed to a width of 36 feet. Where the streets are not 36 feet wide, traffic control techniques will be considered as alternatives to widening.

This Plan adds the classification of the **principal secondary street**, a classification that was used in the *Potomac Subregion Master Plan*. It is used for existing streets with substandard grades whose vertical realignment to primary standards would severely impact access to abutting properties if the acquisition of additional right-of-way was necessary.

Secondary and tertiary residential streets provide limited traffic service and high level of land service. They are not intended for use by traffic that is passing through the residential community.

Street and Highway Classifications

The proposed Street and Highway Plan for the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Planning Area is based on the 1970 Master Plan with specific changes as given below. (See Figure 13.) The highway classifications are listed on Table 14. The table shows the classification, the right-of-way width, and the number of lanes or pavement width. These changes more closely match the classification to the function and use of each street or highway. Individual sector plans must be referred to for recommendations regarding roads and streets in the Bethesda CBD, Friendship Heights CBD, and Westbard.

The streets newly designated as primaries on the proposed highway classification plan include:

Manor Rd	Connecticut Ave to Jones Bridge Rd
Whittier Blvd	River Rd to Wilson La

The proposed highway plan also recommends the following changes to the classification of some other roads and streets.

Bradley Blvd	major highway to arterial road between I-495 and Goldsboro Rd
Goldsboro Rd	major highway to arterial road between MacArthur Blvd and Massachusetts Ave
MacArthur Blvd	undesignated road to arterial road between I-495 and Sangamore Rd
Fernwood Rd	arterial road to primary residential street between I-495 and Bradley Blvd
Burdette Rd	primary residential street to principal secondary street between River Rd and Bradley Blvd

One is the annually updated Capital Improvements Program (CIP), which funds construction of all public buildings, roads, and other facilities planned by the County. The other is the Comprehensive Six-Year Public Services Program (PSP) and the Operating Budget, which funds County programs and coordinates them with capital expenditures.

Projects that are programmed in the FY's 90-95 CIP for the B-CC Planning Area are listed in on Table 17. The CIP assures that the projects necessary to fulfill the needs of the community and to provide for orderly growth and development are built at the appropriate time and in the proper location. Each project's status is reviewed annually, at which time projects can be deleted, modified, or added. This procedure allows the flexibility needed to balance available resources and public priorities.

Total County general obligation bond requirements for projects in the FY 90-95 CIP for the B-CC area amount to approximately \$50 million. County bonds are issued over several years and repayment, with interest, occurs over a 20-year time span. However, if the entire \$50 million bond requirement were issued today, in 1989, at 6.7 percent interest rate over 20 years, the annual debt service would be approximately \$3.4 million.

8.32 Capital Improvements Recommended, but Not Yet Programmed

In the text, the Master Plan identifies a number of projects and programs to be implemented by government. In some cases, the Plan endorses continuation or modification of existing programs. The Plan also endorses new projects or programs. In each case, the Plan identifies the likely agency to implement the program. Cost estimates for these program changes are not included. This Master Plan provides guidance on the land use patterns and siting of public facilities in the B-CC area at the time of its ultimate build-out. This Plan defers to the County Council to determine the timing for con-

struction of needed CIP projects based on recommendations from the County Executive. Each CIP project will be submitted

The Master Plan identifies a number of projects and programs to be implemented by government. In some cases, the Plan endorses continuation or modification of existing programs.

to the Planning Board through the mandatory referral process. The Board will comment on its consistency with this Master Plan and with other County policies. During annual review of the CIP, the Executive and Council shall determine the level of fiscal commitment to a particular project for that year. Funding decisions necessarily will take place within the context of competing demand for finite resources.

Land Use

1. From Section 3.22: Provide new pathway connections near Chevy Chase Lake at two locations: along the Coquelin Parkway right-of-way and along Jones Mill Road. (Montgomery County Department of Transportation and the Parks Department.)
2. From Section 3.22: Complete studies to relocate the access to I-495 from Kensington Parkway to Connecticut Avenue and to expand turn lane capacity at Jones Bridge Road. (Maryland State Highway Administration.)
3. Section 3.32: Reduce the number of curb cuts and encourage the consolidation of driveways along Old Georgetown Road. (State Highway Administration and Montgomery County Planning Department.)

4. Section 3.41: Develop a scenic overlook on Parcel P 11 to highlight vistas of the Potomac River.
(Montgomery County Planning and Parks Departments and National Park Service.)
5. Section 3.41: Repair and maintain hiker-biker path which parallels MacArthur Boulevard.
(Montgomery County Department of Transportation.)

Development Levels

6. From Section 3.61: Complete the bikeway system on Federal campuses as shown in the Master Plan of Bikeways.
(National Institutes of Health, Naval Medical Command, Montgomery County Department of Transportation.)

Transportation

7. From Section 4.11: Increase feeder bus service to Metro stations, including increases in service frequency.
(Montgomery County Department of Transportation and Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.)
8. From Section 4.12: Provide up to 750 park-and-ride spaces near the boundary of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Planning Area.
(Montgomery County Department of Transportation.)
9. From Section 4.13: Conduct a vigorous program to implement the Master Plan of Bikeways within the Planning Area.
(Montgomery County Department of Transportation.)
10. From Section 4.13: Implement pedestrian safety improvements on major highways and arterials at selected locations.
(Montgomery County Department of Transportation and Maryland State Highway Administration.)
11. From Section 4.2: Complete programmed highway improvements listed in the text.
(Montgomery County Department of Transportation and

State of Maryland, State Highway Administration.)

12. From Section 4.2: Endorse projects needed to ensure the safety of highway users and pedestrians.
(Maryland State Highway Administration and Montgomery County Department of Transportation.)
13. Section 4.2: Endorse the redesign and improvement of intersections currently operating at high levels of congestion, as well as future congested locations.
(Maryland State Highway Administration and Montgomery County Department of Transportation.)

14. Section 4.2: Implement measures to reduce through traffic on secondary residential streets, as well as on selected primary streets during peak traffic periods.
(Montgomery County Department of Transportation and the municipalities.)

Environmental Resources

15. From Section 5.21: Continue monitoring of old sewer lines to identify and correct leaking sewer lines.
(Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission.)
16. From Section 5.21: Fund more programs to provide rip-rapping or other stream improvement measures for stream sections with existing severe channel erosion problems.
(Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection and Montgomery County Parks Department.)
17. From Section 5.22: Implement noise mitigation projects for residences abutting I-495, where practical.
(Maryland State Highway Administration.)
18. From Section 5.3: Complete alternatives studies and, if needed, construct a new 60-inch water line to interconnect the Dalecarlia Filtration Plant with an existing water main in the Planning Area.
(Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission.)