MEMORANDUM

September 14, 2022

TO: Transportation and Environment Committee

FROM: Glenn Orlin, Senior Analyst

SUBJECT: Sidewalk Program¹

PURPOSE: Briefing

Councilmember Glass has requested a review of the programs that construct new sidewalks in Montgomery County. Department of Transportation (DOT) staff will lead the briefing; its PowerPoint is on ©1-20.

Staff anticipated to attend this worksession include:

Tim Cupples, Acting Deputy Director for Transportation Policy, DOT
Bob Gonzales, Manager, Sidewalk Program, DOT
Derek Gunn, Acting District Engineer, District 3, SHA (Mr. Gunn may have a designee attend in his stead)

The main project for funding new sidewalks is Sidewalk Program – Minor Projects, for which the Council has programmed $21,958,000 in the Approved CIP. However, there are a host of other projects that fund sidewalks as part of their scope:

- Bicycle-Pedestrian Priority Area Improvements
- Bicycle-Pedestrian Priority Area Improvements: Purple Line
- Bicycle-Pedestrian Priority Area Improvements: Veirs Mill/Randolph
- Bicycle-Pedestrian Priority Area Improvements: Wheaton CBD
- Franklin Avenue Sidewalk
- Goldsboro Road Sidewalk and Bikeway
- Oak Drive/MD 27 Sidewalk
- Pedestrian Safety Program (including sidewalks built under Safe Routes to Schools)
- Seven Locks Bikeway and Safety Improvements
- Transportation Improvements for Schools
- Tuckerman Lane Sidewalk
- US 29 Pedestrian and Bikeway Improvements

¹ Key word: #sidewalks
There are also shared use paths (a.k.a. sidepaths) which, by definition, are bikeways that double as sidewalks or walkways. CIP projects that fund shared use paths include:

- Bikeway Program – Minor Projects
- Bowie Mill Road Bikeway
- Bradley Boulevard (MD 191) Improvements (which includes a shared use path and a sidewalk)
- Capital Crescent Trail
- Dale Drive Shared Use Path and Safety Improvements
- Falls Road Bikeway and Pedestrian Facility
- Good Hope Road Shared Use Path
- Life Science Center Loop Trail
- MacArthur Boulevard Bikeway Improvements
- MD 355-Clarksburg Shared Use Path
- Metropolitan Branch Trail
- Norwood Road Shared Use Path
- Sandy Spring Bikeway
- Silver Spring Green Trail

Finally, there are road projects which have new sidewalks as part of their scope, including:

- Burtonsville Access Road
- East Gude Drive Roadway Improvements
- Maryland/Dawson Extended
- North High Street Extended
- Observation Drive Extended
- Summit Avenue Extended
- White Flint West Workaround

State Highway Administration (SHA) staff will speak briefly about its program to construct new sidewalks along State highways in the County. The Draft FY23-28 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) includes funds for sidewalks or shared use paths along Forest Glen Road, Scott-Veirs Drive, and North Stonestreet Avenue, as well as contributions to the County’s MD 355-Clarksburg Shared Use Path and Falls Road Bikeway and Pedestrian Facility projects.

**Council staff comments.** DOT has well summarized the current program and processes by which new sidewalk projects are generated and prioritized. The key takeaway is that the demand for neighborhoods sidewalks far outstrips the resources available to fund them. DOT notes that of 337 requests in 2021, only 28 were met. DOT is about to introduce several process improvements to shorten the time from the initial request to the start of construction, which will deliver a funded sidewalk more quickly. But without more funding, DOT will not be able to build more sidewalks than it does now.

There is a concern about the proposed prioritization scheme. Slide 9 (©9) in the presentation states that requests will get a point score depending upon the distance from a major pedestrian generator (e.g., schools, transit stops, other pedestrian facilities) and the location of pedestrian accidents. Some further explication is required. For example, given the information on ©9, it can be interpreted that if a request is from an Equity Emphasis Area, then it would trump any other request, regardless of the distance to the aforementioned pedestrian generators and accidents.

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THE SIDEWALK PROGRAM

Montgomery County Department of Transportation
Division of Transportation Engineering
The County’s Sidewalk Funding includes . . .

- **Sidewalk Program** – Projects initiated by resident requests for sidewalk installation. Program follows process of community involvement with a comment period and public hearing. In addition to the review of area Pedestrian Master Plans, comments and testimony are used to guide decisions but do not constitute a vote. (Budget FY22 3.1M, FY23 4.3M, FY24 2.9M)

- **Safe Routes to Schools Program (SRTS)** - Projects are initiated by SRTS review of school walksheds. Public hearing is informational. Construction is facilitated by the Sidewalk Program. (Budget FY22 400K, FY23 900K, FY24 1.4M)

- **Vision Zero** – Projects are generated by review of high incident locations and missing links in existing networks of sidewalk. Construction is performed by the Sidewalk Program. (Budget FY22 1.4M, FY23 500K, FY24 500K)
THE SIDEWALK PROGRAM

- Provides safer pedestrian access throughout Montgomery County in an expedient and cost-effective manner.

- Established to construct minor sidewalk projects to fill missing gaps in existing sidewalk networks.

- Do not require engineered design plans. Utilize ADA standards.

- Sidewalks are typically installed within 9 to 12 months following the residents’ receipt of a proposal.
THE SIDEWALK PROGRAM Current Process

REQUEST Received

FIELD Investigation

PRIORITY ANALYSIS and PROPOSAL Issued – 4-Week Question & Comment Period, Field Meetings Available

CONSTRUCTION

DECISION

PUBLIC HEARING – Record Held Open for 4-weeks Following
The Sidewalk Program is working hard to innovate and streamline our processes to save time and money and install more sidewalks faster.

Currently . . .

- Sidewalk Requests Received via Email & Regular Mail
- Requests Processed by Manually Retyping Request Information into Database & Creating GIS-Maps from scratch
- Residents Emailed Program to Check Status

Sidewalk Program Request Link: [https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot-dte/forms/sidewalk.html](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot-dte/forms/sidewalk.html)
Coming Soon! Introducing our New GIS-Based Web Request Tool!

- Residents Quickly Search Street & Draw Requested Sidewalk on the Map
- Processing Time Saved! Requestor Contact Information & Request Details are Saved with GIS Map & Sidewalk Coordinates Automatically
- Residents Can Upload Photos
- Going Live this Winter 2022!
Residents Will be able to Click on a Previously Requested Sidewalk to View Status and Support Received or Support an Existing Request.
Previously, all requests were placed in a Queue to await selection for a proposal. Priority Analysis was performed manually. Factors of analysis include:

- Vehicle/Pedestrian Accidents
- Schools, Preschools & Daycare Centers
- Public Transportation
- Pedestrian Generators (Churches, Synagogues, Swimming Pools, Community Centers, Shopping Centers, Restaurants, etc.)
With New GIS Request Application, the Request will be Prioritized Instantly!

Requests are prioritized as follows:

- Racial Equity Emphasis Area +5
- Schools, Pedestrian Facilities, Public Transportation Facilities and Pedestrian Accidents are prioritized by proximity to the requested sidewalk:
  - Within ½ Mile +1
  - Within ¼ Mile +2
  - Within 500-feet +3
FIELD Investigation

• Does the County have Right of Way?

• Can the project be installed without an engineered design?

• Do associated costs fall within Program criteria? How much? Be able to answer about criteria
Map of Existing 1400 Requests in our Database - Black Field Inspection Pending Points are Bottlenecked
Why is There a Bottleneck of Requests Awaiting Field Inspection?

- 8.5 Month Construction Season each Year when Inspectors are Managing Construction

- Inspectors Hand-Write Notes and Type Up Construction Impacts Separately
Coming Soon! New Field Maps Field Inspection App Eliminates Busy-Work & Duplicative Typing, Saving Time & Money!

- Requests Drawn on New GIS-Request App Automatically Appear in Field Maps, Eliminating the time it Previously took to Process the New Request and Create Maps
- Input Information Once and Right of Way Construction Impacts Document is Automatically Created
- Once Field Inspection is Completed & Constructability Determined, Status is Automatically Updated on Request Map
- Huge Savings of Time in Processing and Elimination of Duplicative Busy-Work
The Sidewalk Program receives between 250 and 350 sidewalk installation requests annually yet have the resources and employees to propose 9 projects per year. In 2021, the nine projects satisfied 28 sidewalk installation requests out of 337 sidewalk installation requests received.

- Requests that Pass Field Inspection Await Selection for a Sidewalk Proposal
- With the new GIS Request App, Instant Prioritization & Constructability Rating Will Highlight Most Urgent & Constructable Requests.
Concerns of Residents who oppose sidewalks . . .

- Snow Shoveling Responsibilities & Increased Potential Liability
- Tree removals, Decreased Shade & Higher Air Conditioning Bills
- Less absorption of CO₂ Emissions
- Climate Change
- Addition of Non-porous Surfaces & Exacerbation of Rainwater Drainage Issues
- Loss of Available Parking
- Increased Pollution & Pet Waste
- Loss of the “Rural Feel” of the Community
- Preference for Traffic Calming Installations so Pedestrians & Motorists May Share the Road
- Lack of Need

If one or more residents oppose the proposed sidewalks, a public hearing must be held.
• Complete Review of Hearing Record including All Comments & Testimony

• Degree of Community Support

• Will the New Sidewalks Connect to Existing Sidewalks or a Network of Sidewalks?

• Will the New Sidewalks Provide Safer Access to Public Transportation, Schools and Pedestrian Generators?
Construction Includes:
• Mark Utilities.
• Mark Right of Way
• Post temporary "Sidewalk Construction and ‘No Parking’ Signs.
• Removal Impacted Trees
• Mark sidewalk alignment.
• Excavate and Set Forms
• Pour Concrete
• Apply Sealant

Traditionally, the Sidewalk Program received a budget of 1.2M annually which enabled the installation of approximately 5 miles of sidewalks.

In recent years, the increased budget has enabled the installation of approximately 6 to 7 miles of sidewalk annually.
THE SIDEWALK PROGRAM Prioritization

Before . . .

After . . .
THE SIDEWALK PROGRAM

Questions?

Thank you!