

## MONTGOMERY COUNTY CLIMATE PROTECTION PLAN – TRANSPORTATION

What impact do transportation policies in Montgomery County have on our environment? In 2009, Montgomery County developed a Climate Protection Plan that contains recommendations for services and infrastructure to encourage better environmental practices. In the spring of 2015 the LWVMC Natural Resources Committee presented information on environmental practices in our governmental buildings. This update focuses exclusively on Montgomery County's environmental transportation policies.

The 2009 Climate Protection Plan makes twelve transportation recommendations to reduce greenhouse gases. To better understand what Montgomery County is doing environmentally as of December 2015, the committee studied these twelve recommendations; T-1 through T-12. As we researched, we learned some interesting environmental information about transportation that was not part of the original 2009 plan.

***T-1: Conduct parking supply and pricing study to ensure parking policies and zoning requirements are consistent with transportation demand management goals.***

The county conducts a parking study every two years and some practices change as new information is learned. By limiting parking, the county achieves greater multi-modal use.

Examples of changes: A new bus route was established from Clarksburg to Germantown to help relieve parking problems at the Germantown MARC station. Some "congestion pricing" of parking is now being used, so the parking garages closest to the Bethesda Metro and businesses now charge more than those lots located at a greater distance. Rockville has instituted a policy of cooperating with non-profits for use of parking lots to maximize use of a lot.

On-street parking is transitioning to solar operated meters that accept credit cards, coins, or the use of a parking app by phone. Using credit cards or phone apps is more efficient and cheaper than processing coins and enforcement can be done remotely.

Parking garages are increasingly being equipped with electronically monitored parking space availability systems. These electronic boards register how many spaces are available on each garage level and the information will soon be available on the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) website. If drivers know where space is available, less gas is wasted and emissions are curbed in searching for a vacant spot.

The Parking Authority now works more closely with the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC) in planning for specific land use. Surface lots that are targets for redevelopment are sometimes consolidated with their surroundings to create a better land use project.

ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS ARE INVITED TO DUPLICATE THIS FACT SHEET WITH ATTRIBUTION GIVEN TO LWVMC. BEFORE REPRODUCING, PLEASE CONTACT THE LEAGUE OFFICE AT 301-984-9585 OR [LWVMC@EROLS.COM](mailto:LWVMC@EROLS.COM) FOR CORRECTIONS OR UPDATED INFORMATION, OR CHECK OUR WEBSITE, [LWVMOCOMD.ORG](http://LWVMOCOMD.ORG), FOR THE MOST UP-TO-DATE VERSION.

Ten electric vehicle (EV) charging station parking spaces are administered by the Parking Authority and there will soon be twelve. Each spot has a four-hour limit at a charging station. Private lots and garages also have EV charging stations. Some stations are installed as part of a “trip mitigation” agreement with developers.

***T-2 Establish a car sharing program in Parking Lot District facilities.***

In 2012, MCDOT originally contracted with two private car share services. In 2015 efforts were made to expand this program. After soliciting for additional car sharing companies to come into Montgomery County, MCDOT’s efforts yielded a total of one company desiring to locate in the county. Thus, Zip Car is currently the only car share service company. Metro has a different car share vendor and Rockville has still another one.

***T-3 Support the Ridership Growth Initiative by 2020 by Implementing bus rapid transit on Veirs Mill Road and Georgia Avenue, and study and implement where appropriate light rail transit and bus rapid transit systems in other corridors.***

The county has continued its study of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) along three separate corridors; Veirs Mill Road, Route 355 (Wisconsin Ave/Rockville Pike) and US Route 29 (Colesville Rd/Columbia Pike). Corridor Advisory Committees composed of citizens have been established for these three corridors. The Veirs Mill Road BRT study continues and progress has been made towards implementation by coordinating with Metrobus. A locally preferred alternative is expected by the end of 2016. A BRT on Route 355 and Route 29 is expected to have alternatives developed by the state in the summer of 2016. The Georgia Avenue BRT corridor study has been put on hold. New Hampshire Ave has also been suggested as a corridor that should be developed for BRT, in conjunction with the other three corridors, but no plans have been formed. An interagency workgroup involving WMATA, MTA, SHA, DOT and COG is working on the Montgomery County Transit Lanes Repurposing Study.

The Corridor Cities Transitway BRT has been divided into two sections. The study of Phase 1 in the lower section is almost complete, but funding has not yet been allocated for any construction. It is expected that “New Starts” Federal funding will be applied for. Currently, teams are investigating ways to reduce costs by up to 30%.

Construction of the Purple Line light rail system has been approved by the state and is currently awaiting the choice of a construction company from the four bidders as well as the allocation of federal funds. Construction is tentatively slated to begin in late 2016.

Transit Centers and transit parking help meet riders' needs and will play a role in future BRT. The new Silver Spring Transit Center has opened, and the Lakeforest Transit Center is being modernized. Milestone Park & Ride, Germantown Park & Ride and Boyd's MARC parking are being expanded.

RideOn has incorporated a number of ecologically friendly modifications. It continues to increase its fleet of alternatively fueled buses. With a Federal grant, Takoma Park may soon have electric buses on a route. RideOn too is an important component in implementing BRT.

***T-4 Conduct transportation planning studies during 2009 in order to better target transportation-related Green House Gas reduction programs.***

Transportation planning in the Washington region is heavily influenced by air quality planning. Air quality conformity is a federal requirement. Once the Constrained Long Range Plan is drafted, it is

tested to ensure that the projects in the plan, contribute to the air quality improvement goals embodied in the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990. A series of tests are performed with computer models that predict how much air pollution will be generated over the next 25 years by facilities in the plan, and how much the air will be improved by cleaner gasoline standards and many other factors.

Since 2009, \$6.5 million have been used for audits and engineering design construction and \$1.2 million for education and enforcement activities. Traffic calming projects and intersection modifications continue to be completed.

In 2014 four separate planning studies assessing the need for improved transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities along county and state roads were conducted. New models for Green House Gas assessments have been investigated, but as of this date none have been adopted.

***T-5 Identify pedestrian improvements to maximize walking and bicycling to recreation centers, libraries, shopping centers and schools.***

Transit availability affects sidewalk improvements, crosswalks, pedestrian crossings, signals and bus stop modifications. Master plans often dictate specific pedestrian improvements for walking/biking.

Close to a million of the new trips forecast by 2040 are anticipated to be on foot or by bicycle, almost as many as will be made by single drivers. That represents growth of nearly 50% of trips on foot or bike over the next 25 years, more than for any other travel mode in the region.

To create safer walking pathways to activity centers, MCDOT conducted a series of Pedestrian Roadway Safety Audits to target areas needing safety improvements and improved pedestrian and bicycle facilities. As of December 2014, 23 audits were completed. The audits recommended engineering improvements for areas with high numbers of pedestrian-auto collisions. Based on these recommendations, signing, pavement-marking, lighting improvements, median barriers, refuge islands, curb extensions at crosswalks, count-down pedestrian signals, additional pedestrian crossings and improved sidewalk extensions have been implemented.

Since 2009, a total of 29 traffic calming and intersection modification projects with enhanced crosswalks have been completed to reduce speeds, lower pedestrian collisions and improve walking environments. Recently, an extensive traffic calming project was completed along three fourths of a mile of Plyer's Mill Road from Georgia Avenue to the Kensington city line. The project included new crosswalks, bump outs and refuge islands to slow down traffic and protect pedestrians. Pedestrian count-down devices have been added to signalized intersections on Wisconsin Avenue to extend the length of time for crossing an intersection to accommodate disabled and elderly pedestrians.

In Fiscal Year 2014, the Division of Highways reconstructed more than 130,000 feet of sidewalks as well as ramps to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) at the cost of more than \$2.5 million that benefits all pedestrians. As of 2015, a total of 3,071 bus stops have been improved after assessing a need for 5,348. Improvements include sidewalk connections to neighborhoods, wide landing pads at the stops, and knee walls that provide seats at the stop. Recently, the bus stop improvement program has added more new linear feet of sidewalk per year than the county sidewalk program.

***T-6 Plan, design, and construct bicycle paths, lanes and shared signed roadways, as well as facilities supporting bicycling, to encourage increased use of bicycling for commuting and other transportation needs.***

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for the National Capital Region was adopted at the January 2015 meeting of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board. This plan is an update to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan which was adopted in October 2010.

Roads are now routinely evaluated before resurfacing to see if they can be restriped to accommodate bike lanes. An example of this is Woodglen Rd in Bethesda. Two 6-foot-wide and one-way buffered bike lanes on both sides of Nebel Street are in place between Marinelli and Randolph roads for .3 miles.

M-NCPPC is currently updating the Bicycle Master Plan. As of September, 2015 there are 47 miles of marked bike-paths on roads. The master plans call for 166 miles. Paved path/trails include 177 miles, but 401 miles are on master plans. Sharrows (Shared Roadway Markings) are increasingly being used, for example on 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave in Silver Spring. In 2014, bicycles were parked most frequently, in rank order, at: 1) Twinbrook, 2) Grovesnor, 3) Silver Spring, 4) Bethesda and 5) Rockville METRO stations.

Launched in 2013, Capital Bikeshare now has 51 stations and it continues to expand. Half of the bikeshare trips are less than 10 minutes and 3 of 5 trips start and end in the county. To encourage use, low income residents receive benefits to make ridership more affordable.

Bicycle-Pedestrian Priority areas have been designated in Bethesda, Glenmont, Grovesnor, Silver Spring, Veirs Mill/Randolph Rd, and Wheaton. Bicycle collisions occur 80% during daylight hours, 5% at dusk and dawn and 15% after dark.

***T-7 Explore ways to reduce vehicle travel to schools by expanding walking, bicycling and use of buses.***

In 2012, MCDOT assessed all 202 county schools for ease of walking and biking access. Through education and enforcement, there was an 80% reduction in pedestrian collisions within a quarter mile of schools. In 2014, 28 (21 elementary, 4 middle, and 3 high schools) of 38 schools had engineering work implemented for safety.

The county funds and operates a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program which is supplemented by grant funds from the Maryland Highway Safety Office. The program's goal is to encourage more students to walk and bike to school by providing pedestrian education to parents and students, as well as improving traffic engineering and enforcement near schools to provide safer routes. MCDOT also held meetings with school administrators and parents and distributed educational materials at selected schools and events. Educational programs at 41 schools are being developed to increase pedestrian activity and safety among drivers near schools.

The Kids Ride Free RideOn bus program allows students to use RideOn and Metro Buses free after school until 8 pm. For travel at other hours, monthly bus passes are available to students for \$11. Transit has been improved to several schools; in 2013, RideOn extended a new bus route to Charles E. Smith Day School to allow High School students the opportunity to use public transportation.

Montgomery County Public Schools joined the County Pedestrian, Bicycle and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee to better coordinate with, and support, initiatives that would make the county a more walker and bike friendly place.

Montgomery College provides a variety of transportation options through its transportation management programs and supports, with a portion of its tuition fees, free access to RideOn for all students. Transit Services participates in the College Bicycle Task Force to find ways to promote bicycling. Expanding similar programs to the Universities at Shady Grove is currently under consideration.

***T-8 Develop a policy that requires the consideration of roundabouts whenever traffic signalization is being pursued.***

Each intersection is evaluated when a new signal is implemented to determine if it is suitable for a roundabout. An example is MacArthur Blvd and Clara Barton Pkwy which was considered for a roundabout, but the topography was unsuitable. A new roundabout was implemented at Snowden Farm Parkway and Little Seneca Highway in Clarksburg where new construction made it easier to implement. Roundabouts tend to be less pedestrian-friendly and have limited applicability to many situations.

***T-9 Develop comprehensive idling policies supporting Maryland's vehicle anti-idling law with an emphasis on both education/outreach as well as effective enforcement of the law.***

Maryland Transportation Article 22-401 is an anti-idling law that has been in effect since 1971. It states that there is a 5 minute limit for bus idling. MCDOT policy has the 5 minute idling limit unless temperatures are below 32° or above 72°. Buses have stickers on the fare box to reflect this policy. Some MCDOT buses have a feature that automatically shuts off buses after 5 minutes of idling. Washington DC has a maximum idling time limit of 3 minutes and Virginia's is 10 minutes.

According to operations management in Montgomery County, idling awareness alone cuts idling. There is 15% less idling in the last three years with a goal of 20% less idling. MCPS school buses have reduced violations dramatically in the past 24 months by monitoring and enforcing a driver disciplinary code offense. Idling reduction strategies are possible for engine modification and the county is pursuing methods so heat, air conditioning and electronic devices may be used with this modified engine.

Phone calls to Maryland and Montgomery County Police, indicated that there are no current initiatives to enforce idling of private vehicles. There was an effort in 2013, as a car theft preventative measure, to give \$70 tickets to drivers locking and leaving their cars idling outside stores.

***T-10 Increase the County government employee commuter benefit to be consistent with the US government agencies.***

Because of fiscal constraints, the county has not increased the direct transit benefit. County employees do have free RideOn passes. Recently, the federal commuter transit benefits were increased to \$255 per month for 2016 which match the parking benefit.

***T-11 Create an effective transportation education and outreach campaign to modify resident and business transportation behavior to reduce Green House Gas emissions.***

The County maintains two storefront locations for transit information, one in Friendship Heights at 17 Wisconsin Circle, and the other on the second floor of the Silver Spring Transit Center on Colesville

Road. These facilities are called TRiPS (for transportation resources, information & places to see) and provide:

- Transit Information Assistance/Trip Planning
- RideOn and Youth Cruiser Passes
- Metrorail Fare Cards, SmarTrip@Cards
- Add value and 7-Day Bus Passes to SmarTrip@Cards
- Regional Transit System Maps and Schedules
- Rideshare (Carpool/Vanpool) and Carsharing Assistance
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Information
- Transit-Related Merchandise

In addition, the website [montgomerycountymd.gov](http://montgomerycountymd.gov) has a direct link to RideOn bus information tracking 343 buses, giving a real time guide, route and schedule information and trip planning tools. New electronic signs have been installed at nine bus shelters that let riders track their bus on a map and show when the next bus will arrive. Transit Services also utilizes social media such as Facebook and Twitter to display information about parking garages, how to store your bicycle on a RideOn bus, etc.

Much of the outreach has been directed to businesses in one of the traffic management districts (TMDs). The six TMDs are: Bethesda Central Business District (CBD), Friendship Heights, North Bethesda, Silver Spring CBD, White Oak and Greater Shady Grove. By county ordinance an annual commuter survey is to be distributed to businesses in a TMD having 25 or more employees. The employees then complete it and the information aids in planning to accommodate commuter driving and transit patterns in the county and region. Response to the survey has not been high even though the survey form can be made available to employees online and a variety of incentives have been suggested to encourage participation. This survey form has been adopted by the Council of Governments (COG) and is used regionally. The survey is currently sent annually to all businesses having more than 250 employees and on a rotating basis to smaller businesses with a goal of receiving responses from 80% of employees surveyed.

Montgomery County Commuter Services works with employers in the county to promote and implement alternative commuting programs and services. They offer workshops to businesses that inform employees of options such as public transit, carpooling, vanpooling, bicycling and walking. Commuter Services also assists employers with setting up a customized commuter benefits program. Federal and state tax credits help make these programs affordable. A number of informational brochures are distributed and a monthly e-newsletter provides updates on transportation issues to businesses, employees and other interested recipients.

The Green Business Certification program is another avenue that Montgomery County uses to incorporate transportation activities to promote reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. While Green Businesses may be certified by a variety of organizations specific to the business type, the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) utilizes an easy-to-use checklist covering the full spectrum of sustainability practices for office-based businesses and landscaping businesses. For example, landscaping businesses must establish no-idling procedures that require fleet and personal vehicles to be turned off when loading, unloading or waiting in order to be certified. Office-based businesses must regularly distribute and provide a display for information on transit, car/van pooling, and other commuting alternatives, including the Guaranteed Ride Home and Regional

Ride-Sharing programs. In addition, office-based businesses must choose 44% of other travel/transit options ranging from offering telecommuting opportunities and/or flexible schedules, job sharing and compressed work weeks to providing bicycle racks or offering secure bicycle storage for staff.

The Climate Protection Plan also recommended creating a campaign to provide personalized information on true travel costs such as the Arlington Car Free Diet web tool provides. A driver education program on car maintenance, driving habits and factors to be considered in purchasing an auto was recommended. Progress on implementing all these measures apparently has not been made by the county.

The educational outreach includes MCPS. The schools have been active in raising student awareness of climate change and have incorporated into the curriculum elements of conservation, resource management and sustainability at all school levels. Elementary students look at jobs in the community and how these workers impact the environment and/or use and conserve natural resources. Teachers have led discussions on bus drivers helping the environment because they drive a large number of people in the community, thus reducing air pollution and conserving natural resources. At the middle school level, students will obtain information on the causes of air pollution, collect data on air quality, and construct an explanation of negative effects on the environment caused by air pollution. In high school biology, students are taught to reflect on their CO<sub>2</sub> offset data from their home to school and to determine the environmental impact of various modes of travel and also to consider the effectiveness of urban gardens in helping reduce carbon build-up in their community.

***T-12 Coordinate with other regional, state and federal governments and organizations on activities that will result in reduced emissions from the transportation sector as a result of a more efficient transportation system and the use of more efficient modes of transportation.***

MCDOT participates with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. The Constrained Long Range Plan (CLRP) identifies all of the regionally significant capital improvements to the region's highway and transit systems that area transportation agencies expect to make and to be able to afford over the next 20 plus years. It also outlines all anticipated spending on operations and maintenance of the current and future transportation system over the same timeframe. The CLRP is updated annually.

A Transportation Planning Board Vision (adopted by the TPB in 1998) provides a comprehensive set of policy goals, objectives and strategies to help guide transportation planning and investment decisions in the region. The Vision is the official policy element of the CLRP.

**The Vision**

- 1) Provide reasonable access at reasonable cost to everyone.
- 2) Promote a strong regional economy, including a healthy core and dynamic activity centers.
- 3) Prioritize management, performance, maintenance and safety of all modes and facilities.
- 4) Use the best available technology to maximize system effectiveness.
- 5) Enhance and protect the region's natural environmental quality, cultural and historic resources and communities.
- 6) Achieve better interjurisdictional coordination of transportation and land use planning.
- 7) Achieve one or more enhanced funding mechanisms to support regional transportation priorities.
- 8) Support options for international and inter-regional travel and commerce.

[www.mwcog.org/TPBvision](http://www.mwcog.org/TPBvision)

Three main criteria and six goals of the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan will be used as guidelines for Constrained Long Range Plan project submissions.

### **Main Criteria**

- 1) Meet Our Existing Obligations – Funding for maintenance and state-of-good-repair needs should continue to be prioritized over system expansion.
- 2) Strengthen Public Confidence & Ensure Fairness – Efforts to increase accountability and address the needs of transportation-disadvantaged individuals should be considered in all stages of project planning, design, and implementation.
- 3) Move More People & Goods More Efficiently – Projects should seek to alleviate congestion and crowding and accommodate future growth as efficiently as possible, with a focus on multimodal approaches and concentrating future growth in mixed-use activity centers.

### **Goals**

- 1) Reduce congestion on the roadway and/or transit system.
- 2) Improve the operational efficiency of the existing roadway and/or transit system.
- 3) Provide high-quality transportation options between and/or within activity centers.
- 4) Reduce vehicle-miles traveled (VMT) per capita.
- 5) Reduce emissions of criteria pollutants and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.
- 6) Increase use of travel modes other than driving alone.

Environmental progress has been made in Montgomery County since the 2009 Climate Protection Plan was written. Some goals have been reached and some new goals have been established. Currently, Montgomery County Department of Transportation sustainability goals are:

- 1) Provide alternative transportation options.
- 2) Use sustainable sources of energy and reduce energy consumption.
- 3) Protect and enhance the natural environment.
- 4) Prevent air, water, noise and waste pollution.
- 5) Comply with all environmental laws and regulations.

Of importance is the behavior of individuals within the county and the consequences for the collective environmental impact.

The LWVMC Transportation Committee is grateful for the generous assistance and time of: Eric Coffman and Bill Griffiths - MC Department of General Services; Gary Erenrich, Ligia Moss, Jose Thommana, Carolyn Biggins, Fred Lees, Sande Brecher, Michelle Golden – MC Department of Transportation; Doug Weisburger – Department of Environmental Protection; and Jamie Jenkins – MC Public Schools

This Fact Sheet was prepared by the LWVMC Transportation Committee: Dave Anderson, Linda Anderson, Marcia Bond, Margaret Chasson, Judy Cochran, Barbara Ditzler, Emma Sue Gaines-Gerson, Kathy Krause, Brigitta Mullican, Barbara Sanders, Linda Silversmith, Tina Slater and Nancy Soreng