



May 20, 2020

Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance Traffic Counts During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Alternative Methods of Analysis to Project Traffic Volume

On March 16, 2020, Maryland Public Schools were closed by the Governor. Following their closure, on March 30, 2020, Governor Larry Hogan issued a Stay at Home Order. This order states that, "No Maryland resident should leave their home unless it is for an essential job or for an essential reason, such as obtaining food or medicine, seeking urgent medical attention, or for other necessary purposes." These orders impact the level of traffic on the State and local county roads. This impact has substantially reduced the total number of vehicles on the roadway system in Howard County. At this time of reduced traffic, accurate traffic counts cannot be obtained. However, Howard County, like many local jurisdictions in central Maryland, does not want to prohibit the submission of development plans that require traffic counts, and recommend the following alternative method of analysis to project the ultimate volume of vehicular traffic for the build out year in accordance with Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO).

This alternative requires the use of the most current traffic count prior to the public school closure on March 16, 2020. Traffic counts up to 3 years old may be used as the base or existing conditions. Traffic counts older than one year at the time of submission will then be brought to date by using the method specified in Design Manual Volume III; Section 4.3.C.3. which provides for a compounded growth rate of 3% per year. The applicant may propose, or the Department may require, different background traffic growth rates if validated field counts from MDSHA and other traffic data about the intersection support a different rate. Once base conditions are brought to date, all other APF requirements found in the Design Manual Chapters 4 and 5 will apply.

Under this policy, no counts will be submitted for APFO review that were collected on or after March 16, 2020, until further notice. This policy shall be effective until the Department of Planning and Zoning has determined that traffic counts have normalized and public schools are back in session.