Date: November 17, 2021

Date of Meeting: November 3, 2021

Work Order Number: 32189-005
Project: Howard County Complete Streets

Meeting Description: Complete Streets Implementation Team Meeting #26 (Part 1)

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Introduction, roll call, agenda review

Bryan Townsend welcomed all attendees and reviewed the agenda, and then led the group through the materials attached to these minutes. Agenda items include a summary of public comments and a review of Design Manual edits made to address Complete Streets Implementation Team (CSIT) and public comments. Bruce Gartner noted that additional edits will be made before the Friday, November 5 CSIT meeting, and acknowledged CSIT members will need time to review and endorse the revised text.

Review of Public Comments

Leah Kacanda presented an overview of the Public Comment Log. She noted that 149 comments were received during the public comment period. Of those comments, 94 were also provided via the CSIT comment process, and responses to those will be provided within the CSIT Comment Log. Of the remaining 55 comments:

- 8 relate to policy decisions that are not handled within the Design Manual
- 8 relate to raised crosswalks
- 5 are editorial comments
- 5 are general comments on the entire document
- 5 relate to bicycle facilities
- 4 are positive feedback
- 4 relate to target speed/design speed
- 3 relate to prioritization
- 3 relate to parking
- 2 relate to the growth rate
- 2 relate to pedestrian infrastructure
- 2 relate to Volume IV
- 1 relates to the exceptions process
- 1 relates to street trees
- 1 relates to street types
- 1 relates to traffic studies

Bryan clarified that some comments were broken up to fit into the Public Comment Log format. For example, a 3 page document on the benefits of raised crosswalks was received, which was broken into 8 more discrete comments. All comments are included in their entirety in the meeting materials. The team will be working to provide a response to each comment received and make edits to the Design Manual as appropriate.

Review of Manual Edits

Leah noted that 110 comments have been received from the CSIT since October 1. Of those comments, 27 are resolved, 17 are ready for review and will be discussed today, 21 are in process and will be discussed at the Friday CSIT meeting, and 4 are parked. Forty-one comments were reviewed by staff and it was determined that no changes to the draft Design Manual were necessary.

Bryan noted that changes have been made to chapters 1, 2, and 5 in response to the comments received from CSIT members. Outstanding issues will be ready for review by the CSIT on Friday.

Chapter 1

Bryan shared that a comment was received requesting that street type descriptions be specifically revised to address median refuge islands. This refuge can be used in conjunction with a curb extension to enhance safety. Figure 1-3 for the Town Center Connector will be updated to show a pedestrian refuge island. The text describing the Town Center Connector street type has already been amended accordingly. Similar text has been added to the Neighborhood Connector section.
Bryan noted that the intent of the Neighborhood Connector street type is to connect neighborhoods, as indicated by the absence of driveways fronting on the street in Figure 1-6. Additional language has been added to note that this type of roadway would have consolidated or infrequent motor vehicle access points. In retrofits, this does not require an effort to eliminate driveways. Due to the infrequent crossing opportunities, shared use paths are provided on both sides of the street since there will be less frequent intersections to feature pedestrian crossings. The target speed for this street type is 35mph.

A comment was received asking whether centerline markings are necessary on all roads. The MdMUTCD provides guidance on when centerlines are necessary based on roadway volumes. Currently, Neighborhood Yield Streets are shown without centerlines. Neighborhood Street 2 shows a centerline currently, but if volumes are low in conjunction with a parking restriction, a centerline marking may not be necessary. Chris asked whether the language could read that centerline markings are optional. Larry Schoen noted that the nature of the comment was to limit centerline markings wherever possible. Leah clarified the intent of the revised language was to limit the number of locations where centerlines are provided, since there is documentation that not marking centerlines can have a traffic calming effect.

Larry asked whether it is possible to discourage the use of centerlines. Kris Jagarapu replied that the County does not install centerlines on residential roads. Bryan noted Neighborhood Street 2 has a carrying capacity of up to 12,000 vehicles per day, and the threshold for centerline markings is 6,000 vehicles per day per the MdMUTCD. Kris replied that the carrying capacity seems high. Bryan replied that the carrying capacity is up to 12,000, although the actual daily volumes could be much less. Larry proposed including language that clarifies centerline markings are not necessary unless the MdMUTCD warrants them.

Bryan noted that comments were received on the intent of the scenic roadway section and acknowledged that there could be a need to provide a spot improvement to improve the safety for all street users and maintain the scenic quality of the road. Larry took issue with the language “do not alter,” noting that the scenic quality of many roads could be improved by a bicycle facility. Bryan replied that a spot improvement could include a climbing lane, depending on the length of the improvement. He offered to review the scenic roadway ordinance to see how much flexibility there is. Larry replied that it may be better to reference the ordinance. Bryan clarified that the “do not alter” clause was written about maintenance activities not capital projects, but the intent is that improvements must maintain the scenic quality of the roadway.

Bryan noted a slight revision to a bullet regarding the provision of low-stress bicycle connectivity. The current language uses the phrase “parallel route,” however, there could be an “alternate route” that is not parallel that may be more convenient. The change is intended to acknowledge that providing similar access is the goal.

Chapter 2

Bryan then reviewed revisions to Chapter 2.

Bryan noted multiple comments were received asking whether ten feet is a sufficient width for a shared use path that accommodates existing and anticipated walking and bicycling activity. Larry noted Ted Cochran provided comments on this issue. He noted that if the path is not wide enough, bike commuters may be driven onto the roadway. Larry pointed out that some guidance documents identify 12 feet as a minimum pathway width. Chris replied that most path guidance recommends 10 feet as the default width and provides provisions for a wider path in certain circumstances. Larry and Chris agreed to discuss the issue after the meeting.

Bryan noted there was also a request to provide centerline markings on shared use paths. The MdMUTCD provides guidance on markings, and the new language emphasizes that centerline markings are preferred on paths.
Bryan noted that there were several comments on the speed management section, and that some revisions have been made but some comments are still outstanding. A sentence has been added that states managing motor vehicle speeds is the best way to provide safety, comfort, and convenience. Language has also been added to each traffic calming measure that each speed management device must provide an intuitive route for all types of users to navigate around the device. Larry asked whether the word “around” may suggest a motor vehicle operator would navigate around a speed hump. Bryan agreed the language should be modified.

Bryan noted the curb extension detail has been edited to show a 1’6” offset from the edge of the parking lane. The text in Chapter 2 has been modified for consistency.

Bryan noted multiple comments were received on the midblock street narrowing section. Part of the confusion is that there is both one-lane and two-lane street narrowing. A one-lane treatment is like what was used on Brandon’s Way, a low-volume neighborhood yield street. This type of narrowing simulates the presence of on-street parking. Midblock street narrowing applied to a higher classification street would not reduce the number of lanes, and instead would function like a midblock curb extension like those provided on Martin Road. More nuance will be added to this section.

Bryan explained a few comments were received on the minimum edge distance to any roadside appurtenance section. Although the section is intended to apply to objects like signs and trees, text was added to clarify that vertical elements may be used to create separated bike lanes.

Bryan shared that a note was added to Table 2-20 on minimum curb radii that clarifies the table is to be used in conjunction with technical analysis, and that designers should refer to the below text. Larry asked whether the technical guidance could result in a larger radius. Bryan replied it could result in a larger radius, but it could also result in the use of a curb extension that improves visibility for pedestrians. The goal is to make sure that each situation is looked at within its context. Chris noted that there is text that states designers should not go any larger than necessary; radii should be large enough to accommodate the required vehicles and no larger. Bryan observed that there could be different strategies used to minimize turning radius, and the language added clarifies the intent.

Carl Gutschick noted that he had thought the values in Table 2-20 were intended to be default values. If the intent is that the Designer analyzes every situation, the table is not reflective of minimum values but of typical values. He expressed concerns that if the Designer submits a value that differs from the table it will require an exception or waiver, especially if analysis results in a value smaller than the table values. Bryan replied that depending on the angle of the roadways, there could be some situations where a smaller radius could work. The text explicitly states that the table is for a 90 degree turning angle, and values shown were the result of extensive analysis with a design vehicle template. There are a lot of possible permutations. The intent is not to require a Designer to go through an exceptions process. Carl asked Chad if this table is creating a bunch of exceptions. Chad replied that every plan must stand on its own. The County works to get every intersection close to 90 degrees, but that may vary. Going over the minimum values will require justification, but not a waiver. Bryan acknowledged that a lot of intersections of Neighborhood Yield Streets will follow a single template, but intersections with higher volume roadways require additional analysis.

Bryan noted the bus stop section was also revised since typically bus stops in Howard County are not associated with a turnout lane but are often in the travel lane or along the normal curb line. The section was edited to put less emphasis on the provision of a turnout lane and provide guidance on what layout might look like. Larry noted that the County does not have a lot of situations where there is conflict between a bus and a bike lane but asked whether it should be mentioned in this section. Chris replied the lane configuration would be like if there were a parking lane. Bruce mentioned the bus stop being considered on North Ridge Road as an example. Bryan noted a bus layover area is an example provided in the text currently.

Bryan asked if there were any questions on the changes to Chapter 2. Chris emphasized that there are additional changes under consideration that will be presented to the CSIT on Friday.
Chapter 5

Bryan then reviewed revisions to Chapter 5, which are minimal. The most recent version of Chapter 5 struck the text “when a midblock crossing is part of a shared use path or trail, minimum thresholds do not apply.” Several CSIT members were concerned that this sentence was removed. Bryan explained that the reason this text was removed was that it was redundant with the previous sentence. The intent of this section is to cover instances where older shared use (community) paths were laid out without a crossing in mind, and as a result the crossing might be at a dangerous location with limited sight distance.

Larry replied that the nature of the comments was that if a shared use path meets a roadway, and there are paths on both sides of the road, people are going to be crossing in that location, so the default should be marked crosswalks. This is a common situation in the Columbia Association path network. If there are reasons a crossing in that location is not appropriate, the path should be reoriented or addressed with signage and other traffic control devices. One example is on Great Star Drive south of MD 32.

Jessica Bellah replied that the problem with using the word “always,” is that Columbia Association paths pop out everywhere, and it is not always a good crossing location. Sometimes you must travel along a sidewalk before you can even see where the path continues on the other side of the street. She agreed that it is desirable to have marked crosswalks, but they should not be provided in every circumstance. The Design Manual should reflect the nuance of these situations. The Columbia Association has had conversations with the Office of Transportation (OOT) and Department of Public Works (DPW) on this issue.

Chris noted that the current language is confusing. He noted the sentence that begins with “careful consideration” could mean that minimum use thresholds are not as critical as physical characteristics that would enable the provision of a safe crossing, which he agreed with. The provision of a safe crossing should be less about the number of people crossing at a location and more about providing a safe crossing within a reasonable distance of a path intersecting a roadway.

Kris replied that the path crossings are like sidewalk extensions where there are unmarked crosswalks. A lot of paths were installed without proper input from the County and cross at unsafe crossing locations where there is a horizontal curve or sight distance concern. DPW has installed a pedestrian refuge island and marked crosswalks along Great Star Drive because people cross there. The County does not control where the paths are, and not every location would get a crosswalk. Chris noted that sight distance is often the key in determining an appropriate crossing location. Kris replied that there may also be a proximate crosswalk.

Kris noted that in locations where there is a mountable curb, Columbia association installs asphalt wedges so that maintenance vehicles can access the pathway, however, those appear as an extension of the path. In locations where there is no sidewalk, the path may need to be realigned. Columbia Association realigned a pathway off Shaker Drive to enable a better crossing location. There are ongoing efforts to evaluate and make improvements at other locations.

Chris noted that physical characteristics such as sight lines and proximity to existing crossings seem to be of greater concern than minimum thresholds. Larry asked that the Design Manual state that for path users, there must be an obvious way to safely cross the street. He suggested language that would accommodate a crosswalk that is ten feet away but not a crosswalk that is 400 feet away. If the goal is to create a walkable County, it should be obvious how to cross the street safely when a path meets a roadway. If a crosswalk is not provided in these instances, it should be an exception.

Bryan noted that if a project is a new design, all these elements must be considered, and the crossing need must be met. This language only applies to retrofit situations. Larry replied that he is thinking about the resurfacing of Great Star Drive.
Jessica commented that the issue is complicated since Columbia was built over such a long period of time with different design priorities. A lot of paths were not designed with the idea that people would be crossing the road. Instead, they were designed to direct path users into the major path network. Now people regularly use them to cross the road and for transportation purposes.

Chris observed that the path volume should not be the indicator, and not all pathways are being used in a way that creates a dangerous situation. Certain paths in certain locations would benefit from a crossing that was not originally planned. When a crossing is needed as long as sight lines are sufficient, it should be accommodated. Bryan offered to propose new language.

Larry agreed that the path system is used as transportation. Jessica agreed, but reiterated that the original layout and design were not intended to serve that purpose. Bruce noted that Columbia Association is a unique entity that could bring independent resources to bear through the State or grant funding. Although the County may be a partner in making improvements, the paths are the responsibility of the Columbia Association. Bryan concluded that the goal is the Design Manual provides enough information to support an analysis that results in the implementation of an appropriate design solution.

Chris suggested the following language using the meeting chat tool:

At locations where a shared use pathway intersects a road, a marked crossing should be provided within a reasonable and visible distance of the pathway. Minimum pedestrian volume thresholds do not apply in this case. If the pathway intersects the road at a location with insufficient sight line for a safe crossing, the marked crossing may need to shift to a location with sufficient sight line that is still visible from where the pathway intersects the road so that pathway users are aware of the crossing location.

Bryan shared a slight change was made to the section on pedestrian overpasses and underpasses that clarifies that in addition to crossing roadways, these facilities could be used to cross freeways or other barriers like rivers. The language was amended accordingly, and a cross reference added to Chapter 3.

Bryan noted that another area that is being revised is the auxiliary lane section. There is not enough nuance around the different types of auxiliary lanes. Additional structure is being added to ensure that auxiliary lanes are only used when necessary. The CSIT will have an opportunity to review the new language as soon as it is ready.

Larry noted that excessively long right turn lanes encourage motor vehicle traffic to move through the lane at a high rate of speed. He asked why it is necessary to accommodate so much queuing. Bryan noted that if a roadway has a low target speed there may not be a significant amount of turning traffic at unsignalized locations and a right turn lane may not be necessary. At signalized intersections right turn lanes have a variety of advantages for all modes. They provide queuing which creates an opportunity for pedestrians to cross. They can also reduce the overall cycle length, which provides more frequent signalized crossing opportunities. Larry noted that if the right turn lane is longer than necessary it creates an uncomfortable situation for bicyclists.

Bryan then walked through the “in process” comments in the comment log. He noted the on-street parking table would be updated.

Chris asked Kris and Jenn Biddle whether signals are timed so bicyclists have sufficient time to clear the intersection with the minimum green, as there was a suggestion to add language to the Design Manual. Kris replied that the current default minimum green time does not necessarily accommodate bicyclists but noted DPW could include that factor when evaluating signal timing. Leah shared that 7.5 mph is an appropriate speed to use at flat intersections based on research on current best practice.

Larry noted that the crossing time of Little Patuxent Road at Vantage Point Road is too short. Chris noted that bicyclists can use the pedestrian button at that location, and therefore have the pedestrian crossing time. Larry mentioned the Windstream Drive crossing of Governor Warfield Parkway has a grade and no accessible push button. Kris replied that he was aware of using 7-9 mph as a clearance interval for bicyclists. Some municipalities include yellow for part of the overall time needed to cross. Most intersections are based on old calculations but would meet the
requirement. DPW has looked at locations with frequent bicycle use to ensure that the minimum greens are long enough to accommodate a bicycle crossing. He noted DPW could look at other signals, clarifying DPW may not have looked at the Windstream Drive intersection. Chris replied that some additional language should be provided in the Design Manual. The question is whether to reference a specific speed. Jenn Biddle replied that level of detail may not be necessary.

**Schedule review**

Bryan reviewed the schedule, noting that the team is working to incorporate as many changes as possible by Friday. The Public Works Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 9. The draft Design Manual will be introduced at that time. The Board will also be provided with an overview of the public comments received as well as how they have been addressed. The Board will not vote on the revised Design Manual until Tuesday, December 14. It would be beneficial to have another CSIT meeting following the meeting to discuss feedback from the Board and CSIT member feedback on the latest draft of the CSIT that will be distributed on Friday, November 5. There were no objections to scheduling an additional CSIT meeting for Wednesday, November 10.

Leah noted that from this point forward, the draft Design Manual will be shared in track changes to reflect the changes made after the document was posted publicly in responses to CSIT and public comment. Bryan asked the CSIT members to review the minutes and the comment logs before Friday’s meeting, as the vote to approve the minutes will be held on Friday.

Bryan noted that after the Public Works Board approves the draft Design Manual, materials will be assembled for County Council’s consideration. Jennifer White asked whether the CSIT will have additional opportunity to comment on the draft Design Manual after it is presented to the Public Works Board.

Bruce clarified that the Public Works Board will not vote on the Design Manual until December 14. The November meeting will be a preview of the adjustments made since the document was posted publicly. He noted that the Public Works Board meeting will be held in person at the George Howard Building.

**Next Steps**

The next CSIT meeting is scheduled for Friday, November 5 at 1:00 pm. An additional CSIT meeting has been scheduled for Wednesday, November 10 at 3:30 pm, to review feedback from the Public Works Board Meeting.

Action items from this meeting include:

- CSIT members to review minutes from the October 6 and October 8 meeting in preparation for the Friday, November 5 meeting
- CSIT members to review responses to their comments in preparation for the Friday, November 5 meeting

[Signature]

Leah Kacanda, AICP