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 review of Design Manual edits made to address Complete Streets Implementation Team (CSIT) and public comments. The October 6 and 8 CSIT meeting minutes were deferred to the Wednesday, November 10 meeting to give members more time for review.
Bruce Gartner noted that the most recent round of documents which will be reviewed today were distributed before the meeting via Dropbox. It has been a challenge to formulate responses to all the comments received. Staff has gotten further clarification from individual commentors as necessary. Multiple CSIT members have asked questions about what Public Works Board approval means. Bruce shared that the intent of the November 9 Public Works Board meeting is the give members a sense of the changes that have been made in response to public feedback. A complete revised Design Manual must be distributed in time for review before their December 14 meeting. Several issues were raised during the most recent round of comments that will remain outstanding, such as Chapter 4 and the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO). County staff would prefer to meet the Council deadline and move forward with adoption the updated Design Manual, addressing the outstanding issues in the coming year. During the Public Works Board meeting, the team will highlight the changes that have been completed in response to public comments received. There will be another conversation about the draft Design Manual that will be provided for County Council at the Wednesday, November 10 CSIT meeting.

Leah Kacanda showed CSIT members that the distributed comment logs are sortable based on comment type, commentor, and Chapter.

**Review of Manual Edits**

Bryan pulled up the list of outstanding comments to review. He noted that minor revisions to Volume IV are still underway. For example, the current details reference 4-foot minimum sidewalk widths, which needs to be updated to 5 feet. Some adjustments will also be made to align the cul-de-sac details with text in the manual, as well as align the temporary tee turnaround detail with the permanent tee.

Bryan provided a high level overview of items that have been addressed since the Wednesday CSIT meeting, including adjustments to the speed management section, more detail on raised crosswalks in the intersection section, and additional detail in the auxiliary lane section. Outstanding issues raised on Wednesday were also addressed, including new language in the Chapter 5 shared use path section as well as in Chapter 2 around midblock crossings. Additional language around bicycle signalization has been provided based on Wednesday’s conversations. A new residential parking table is also ready for review.

Bruce thanked Department of Public Works staff for their time and effort on this last round of revisions.

**Chapter 1**

Bryan noted that a review of Chapters 1 and 2 revealed a few locations where the term “traffic” is used when intended to refer to motor vehicle traffic. “Motor vehicle” has been added as a modifier where appropriate. Language in the scenic road section was changed from “spot” improvements to “localized” improvements per input from Larry, which are allowable so long as the improvements maintain the scenic character of the road. The scenic road section in Chapter 2 was revised to reflect the new language.

**Chapter 2**

Bryan noted that advisory bike lanes were removed as an appropriate treatment during previous edits since they are an experimental treatment. For consistency, the reference to advisory lanes below the preferred bikeway chart was also removed. Larry Schoen disagreed, noting the County should not be more restrictive than the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) (the preferred bikeway chart is from the FHWA Protected Bikeway Planning and Design Guide). The County should be able to use all tools available at the federal level. Bruce noted that this language does not preclude the County from using experimental treatments, it just won’t be specified in the Design Manual. Bryan added that the County can always try an experimental treatment if it is identified as an appropriate option. Kris Jagarpap confirmed that the County can use an experimental treatment, but there is an established process through FHWA that must be followed. Larry replied that the Design Manual does not explain how the treatment should be applied, and the removal of the reference is a step backwards. Kris replied that advisory bike lanes are not the only available option.
Bryan noted that the language regarding navigating traffic calming measures was amended to remove the word "around" based on Wednesday’s conversation. Features should be placed such that they are intuitive to navigate for all road users. There was also concern around the placement of speed management devices on sharper curves. Language was added that placement must be considered relative to horizontal and vertical curvature. Reference to motor vehicle traffic volumes throughout the speed management section were clarified. There was also a request to note that the spacing of traffic calming measures resets if there is a stop condition. The two-way chicane detail was updated so that it does not show traffic directed towards a driveway apron.

Bryan shared there was concern that speed humps could be overused in new construction projects since speed humps are the most affordable traffic calming measure. Language has been added to clarify that, speed humps are not preferred in new construction, but they can be used in retrofit situations. New text was also added to clarify that speed humps do not enter the gutter pan. Kris Jagarapu mentioned Jessica Bellah’s previous concern about bicyclists traveling over speed humps. He noted the Department of Public Works (DPW) is still working on a way to transition the speed hump at the edge of the roadway so they bicyclist is not traveling over a cross slope.

Bryan explained that the County’s speed hump policy was included with the publicly posted draft of the Design Manual as an appendix, but it will be removed as an appendix since it created confusion. He clarified that DPW reserves the right to install other speed management measures even if citizen support is not received for a speed hump and that clarifying language has been added to the section.

Larry thanked Bryan for the changes, agreeing it makes sense that speed humps would not be used in new construction because the new street types are designed to manage speeds. Chris Eatough agreed that the new street types have measures built in, including narrower lanes, tighter turning radii, and bicycle facilities that are all intended to control speeds. Larry asked whether the County would support a slot in a speed hump for a bicycle wheel. Kris replied that the installation of a slot may create other problems, such as a vehicle swerving to put two wheels through the slot. The dimensions of the speed hump do not create too many issues for bicyclists if they cross it before it tapers to the curb. It only presents an issue if the bicyclist must traverse the cross slope, which might be improved if the transition is flatter. Jessica Bellah noted that there could also be some discretion and flexibility based on site conditions. Kris agreed that Designers should have flexibility, but it is important to provide guidance in the Design Manual.

Bryan noted that the speed management charts (Figures 2-12 and 2-13) now have separate rows for one-lane and two-lane midblock street narrowing, since they are applicable for different street types and functional classifications. One-lane narrowing is only appropriate on low-volume neighborhood streets while two-lane narrowing has broader applicability.

Bryan shared that the auxiliary lane section has been significantly revised and requested that CSIT members review the new text before the Wednesday CSIT meeting. Various types of auxiliary lane have been defined. Auxiliary lanes are appropriate when the safety of all road users is improved by their use. When they are provided, they should not interrupt the provision of a bicycle facility through the intersection. Jessica noted that the term “storage,” used in the new language may be misconstrued to mean parking. Larry recommended using the word queuing. Bryan noted that technical personnel who will use the manual understand the meaning of the word storage, as it is one that is used normally within the profession.

Bryan went on to explain that the new text provides guidance on left turn lanes, right turn lanes, and right turn lanes on free flow approaches which are discouraged. The section on acceleration lanes emphasizes that they require DPW approval and a traffic study.
Larry asked about how the language on right turn lanes would be interpreted on northbound Great Star Drive at the ramp to 32. Bryan noted that because Great Star Drive intersects with a state highway, SHA decision making would prevail. Kris confirmed that SHA often controls the right of way at intersections with state highways. Larry commented that he hopes the State will take the Complete Streets policy seriously in these instances. Bruce noted that the State is paying attention to the Complete Streets revisions to the Design Manual at the district level and attended the Technical Session on October 21st.

Bryan noted that the word "required" was replaced with "considered," emphasizing the need to balance the safety needs of all users when auxiliary lanes are evaluated. Language referring to a bus auxiliary lane was removed since those are not used in Howard County. In response to concerns about the length of auxiliary lanes, guidance from the latest (2018) Green Book has been provided that has shorter lengths for deceleration distances approaching intersections. This table would not be appropriate to use when designing highway interchanges. A subsection was also added to include the text on turn lane storage length which was included in the last draft. A few other sentences were moved to the beginning of the section, although the marked up version of the draft makes it look like they were deleted. No one had questions on the auxiliary lane section.

Bryan shared that several revisions were added to the pedestrian facilities section, including more guidance regarding design of midblock crosswalks across multilane roadways. Additional strategies were added to address visibility concerns, including the location of the stop bar and appropriate signage. A cross reference to Chapter 5 and FHWA compliant signalization was also added.

Bryan noted a new paragraph was added to the section addressing geometric design treatments for pedestrians that provides guidance for a raised crosswalk across a low-volume leg of an intersection. If using the sidewalk, it would appear like a continuous path when crossing the street instead of traveling along a curb ramp to the roadway grade and back up via a curb ramp to the sidewalk grade. For a driver, this would function like a speed hump and would slow motor vehicle traffic.

Larry noted that Wilde Lake Village Center has raised crosswalks that are so subtle it is hard to tell they are there, but they are effective at causing cars to slow down. Larry asked if a detail would be provided. Bryan replied that the design of an at-grade crossing would be very specific to the site conditions. The intent of this section is to provide the Designer with another potential tool. A cross reference was also added to the shared use path section of the document, since raised crosswalks may also be appropriate to use for shared use path crossings.

Bryan shared that all design features that are under Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) interim approval are clearly noted so that the Designer knows there is a formal process and can prepare accordingly. This includes features like green paint, bike boxes, and two-way turn queue boxes. Jenn Biddle replied that for every instance of one of these devices requires an application process. Form letters are sent through the state. The state approves or denies the application depending on the supporting materials. If approved, the interim approval is requested via the FHWA. In the state of Maryland this is required of all jurisdictions. Bruce noted that some jurisdictions install interim approved measures without approval from the FHWA. Kris added that some states submit an application to FHWA on behalf of all jurisdictions, and FHWA may allow some states to issue independent approval. The state stays involved so they can keep track of where devices are deployed. If an interim approval is overturned, the state then knows where things need to be changed. Bryan noted there are instances where interim approvals have been rescinded. The last national MUTCD guidance was published in 2009. All the interim approvals were done after that year. Kris noted that there were some discussions with MUTCD subcommittees regarding what interim approvals will be included in the next MUTCD revisions. A new revision should be released soon.

Larry noted the FHWA website states that any jurisdiction can request a blanket approval for a specific measure. Kris clarified that blanket approval can be requested through the state, but the state may still ask a jurisdiction to apply to them to keep track of installations. Although it may be a formality, the State Highway Administration (SHA) must be notified.
Bryan noted that additional signal considerations for bicycle travel were added including the timing of the green phase. Additional guidance on bicycle detection and pavement markings is also provided in compliance with the MdMUTCD. He noted that bicycle signal faces also have interim approval.

Leah noted that the on-street parking table was updated to correlate with the Neighborhood Yield Street Types in consultation with DPW and the Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ).

Bryan showed new language that clarifies bus turn outs shall not interrupt bicycle accommodation and that crossing guidance near bus stops has been updated.

Bryan noted the scenic roads section received minor updates. Larry suggested “spot improvements” is changed to “localized improvements.” Bryan made the change which is consistent with revisions in Chapter 1.

Chapter 5

Bryan noted the language in Chapter 5 regarding the provision of midblock crosswalks for existing shared use paths was updated in response to feedback received at the Wednesday CSIT meeting. Larry noted he was not comfortable with the revised language “should be considered,” noting that demand cannot necessarily be measured. Bryan replied that the area of concern was framed around existing conditions. These situations are evaluated under a capital project with substantial DPW input to the design. DPW shares the goal of providing pedestrians with safe crossings. Kris noted the challenge is to forecast pedestrian demand. DPW often receives community requests to install crosswalks. The goal of the language is to acknowledge that anticipated demand may exist. Larry noted that other locations in the Design Manual clarify that count information may need to be supplemented. Kris observed that the remainder of this section speaks to analyzing anticipated demand based on proximate origins and destinations.

Chris observed that “should be considered” is not a mandate, which is appropriate given that some of the locations in question are not appropriate crossing locations. The last sentence notes that a crossing should be located within a reasonable and visible distance away. Great Star Drive is a good example where pedestrian demand is relatively low but DPW still deemed it appropriate to provide a mid-block crossing. There is a process in place for analyzing these locations. This language provides more nuance.

Schedule review

Bruce asked if any CSIT members had questions on the process or if there are any outstanding issues that should be discussed.

Jessica asked when final comments need to be submitted. Bruce replied that the Public Works Board Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 9, and staff must provide them with feedback received. It would be best to provide them with a summary of responses from the CSIT and the public. He noted that there are still issues that CSIT members are not fully on board with, which is understood. The goal for Wednesday’s CSIT meeting is to review everyone’s top two or three concerns which will inform the final submission and supporting documentation. Council Member Rigby still has some concerns that are shared by other members of the CSIT. After the document is approved by the Public Works Board in December it will be submitted to Council for consideration and a vote. Bruce noted that while there has been some disagreement on issues like the background growth rate and how to deal with related regulations, the goal throughout has been to make the Design Manual as good as possible. He thanked WRA and the DPW team for meeting the deadlines thus far.

Jennifer asked how much additional time the CSIT will have to review the updated chapters. She agreed that both the Horizon Foundation and County share the same goals, although they may disagree on how to get there. She noted that she will provide additional observations at the Wednesday CSIT meeting. The Design Manual should drive every other process following this, whether the subdivision regulations or Adequate Public Facility Test Ordinance (APFO). The Design Manual should be the north star. Bruce replied that the Design Manual does drive the process in a lot of ways.
Larry noted that it would be helpful to have a conversation around the public request that the County move towards a Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) approach to growth as opposed to a Level of Service (LOS) approach which is currently used. He noted that he did not understand the implications of the comment. Chris replied that a jurisdiction could change their goals from measure LOS, or the efficiency of an intersection, to measuring the number of vehicle miles traveled, with a goal of lowering the overall levels of driving across a jurisdiction. This type of change would not necessarily be included in a design manual. This would be a broad policy change that would impact multiple documents. Bruce replied that the County would have to model different scenarios and test them on some previous development applications. A lot more data would be necessary to analyze this suggestion, and there is not sufficient time to do so right now.

Chris noted that the CSIT effort for the past year and a half has considered the Complete Streets policy as the north star. When you look at where we started and the revised draft of the Design Manual, it is clear the team has done a good job with the goal of implementing the policy. Updating the subdivision regulations and APFO are the next steps.

**Next Steps**

The next CSIT meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 10, and will be used to review feedback from the Public Works Board and any outstanding comments from CSIT members.

Action items from this meeting include:

- CSIT members should review revisions and come prepared to discuss outstanding issues

Leah Kacanda, AICP