

2020 Transportation Town Hall

Questions, Comments and Responses

The following responses are offered to questions submitted via email and the chat room during the Transportation Town hall. Comments are shown but no responses are offered to comments.

Identifying information has been removed from the questions.

1. On US29 I drive at 60 mph and cars pass me going 70 /80 MPH. When the roads were empty, people sped [SIC] and this has not stopped.

Response: We are aware of the speeding concerns on Route 29. As an agency we have been and continue to conduct speed enforcement on Route 29 through our district traffic cars as well as patrol districts. Route 29 is listed through our traffic section as a designated radar road and receives proactive enforcement throughout the year. Route 29 is also a roadway which is utilized by Officers daily since it is a major thoroughfare through the County. When officers are travelling this roadway, they often make traffic stops for violations they observe.

2. Will someone be addressing the motorcycles and hot rods racing back and forth on the north end of Route 29?

Response: We are aware of the speeding concerns on Route 29. As an agency we have been and continue to conduct speed enforcement on Route 29 through our district traffic cars as well as patrol districts. Route 29 is listed through our traffic section as a designated radar road and receives proactive enforcement throughout the year. Route 29 is also a roadway which is utilized by Officers daily since it is a major thoroughfare through the County. When officers are travelling this roadway, they often make traffic stops for violations they observe. If you observe this behavior from a specific group of motorcycles or hotrods we encourage you to contact our non-emergency number at (410) 313-2200 and an officer will be dispatched to the area.

3. Regarding speeding in Maple Lawn and along Maple Lawn Blvd, because traffic calming measures such as speed humps appear to not be feasible, what actions will HoCo police take to enforce adherence to speed limits?

Response: We are aware of the concerns related to Maple Lawn Blvd as expressed by business and community owners. We have speed studies in the process to best evaluate the roadway and next actionable steps. Area checks for enforcement have also been pushed out to patrol units in an effort to slow these motorists.

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4. Could you please increase enforcement? Loud speeding is a nightly and daily phenomenon in the southern part of the county.

Response: When officers are travelling this roadway, they often make traffic stops for violations they observe. If you observe this behavior we encourage you to contact our non-emergency number at (410) 313-2200 and an officer will be dispatched to the area.

5. Speed cameras are thru out Montgomery County. Why has HoCo not expanded its speed cameras beyond schools?

Response: This is a legislative issue and needs to be brought up and passed by the County Council. This is something that the police department has been looking into to assist with combating some of the speeding issues throughout the County. It should however be noted that this would not pertain to state roadways without state legislation.

6. What is the criteria/process for getting radar speed signs on roads where speeding is a problem?

Response: Radar speed signs are rotated throughout the county to 1) survey the speeds 2) slow drivers down. These speed boards are deployed through the District patrol offices. Depending upon which district your concern is located is what district you will need to contact. (410) 313-2200 Northern District / (410) 313-3700 Southern District or you can email hcpd@howardcountymd.gov and it will be assigned to the appropriate commander.

7. Do you (HCPD) offer any programs to students who attend private schools? Also, what about recent licensees who are no longer in high school? thanks.

Response: We offer a Collision Avoidance Training (CAT) to those under the age of 21. Currently due to COVID restrictions we have temporarily suspended the program. Information on this program can be found at our county website <https://www.howardcountymd.gov/Departments/Police/Youth-Programs> This will also provide information as to future classes.

8. There were no new paving projects/contracts in HC this year - just road patching projects. With the annual paving budget falling further behind each year how can we as a County start catching up before road deterioration becomes a major issue for automobiles and bicycles?

Response Pending

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9. As Howard County completes projects that include curb extensions for pedestrian safety and/or traffic calming, will those extensions be designed to also treat and holdback stormwater in order to ensure resiliency against heavier rain events?

Response: Including stormwater management features in the design of curb extensions is considered as part of the overall stormwater management design for a project, and if feasible and effective, they can be including the final design.

10. Will Howard County actively pursue integration of adequate transportation resources into the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance beyond road intersection capacity tests?

Response: County Code Section 16.1100.3.iv states that the general plan guides where and when growth occurs. The adequate public facilities process and standards will manage growth so that facilities can be constructed in a timely manner. This section requires that within one year of the enactment date of the general plan, an Adequate Public Facilities Act Review Committee shall be convened. The Review Committee shall meet, conduct at least two public hearings, and, within one year of its first meeting, submit a report with recommendations on the Adequate Public Facilities Act to the County Executive and the County Council.

The current HoCo By Design process will review the current APFO and provide guidance for future areas of consideration, including mode tests, by the Adequate Public Facilities Act Review Committee.

11. Sidewalks in the County are supposed to be cleared (leaves, snow, debris, ...) by adjacent landowners. On some sidewalks - Centennial Lane, Cedar Lane, and others - this is just not feasible. What can Public Works do to ensure sidewalks are clear for walkers especially those with disabilities. Similar issues exist for maintenance/sweeping of on street bike lanes

Response: Howard County Government does not have the available resources to clear additional sidewalks at this time. Community groups and volunteer groups are welcome to assist with clearing of sidewalks. Other ideas to address this concern are welcome and can be forwarded to transportation@howardcountymd.gov.

12. Although Design Manual/Development Regulation changes are a year away, in light of Complete Streets Policy (and CB57-2020) shouldn't the P&Z Technical Staff Report (to Planning and Zoning Boards) include now impacts (if any) on alternative transportation (bicycling, walking, and future transit needs) for rezoning/new development assessment?

Response: Technical Staff Reports (TSR) are developed and driven by review criteria established in the zoning regulations. To the extent that complete streets policy is directly affected by the review

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criteria, DPZ could include this in the TSR. However, this would not be appropriate in all cases, as approval authorities are not able to consider information that is outside the scope of regulatory criteria.

13. What is happening with Scooter deployment in Columbia.? Has a provider been chosen and will all 3 areas receive scooters?

Response: The Howard County Terms and Conditions stipulates that areas that a permitted scooter company can operate: Downtown Columbia, Oakland Mills, Wilde Lake and Columbia Gateway. The Columbia Association stipulated additional restrictions which excludes the pathway across US29 and therefore Oakland Mills. If we have a successful applicant or applicants (maximum of two) we expect to award permits in late 2020 and operation under a one-year permit will begin in March 2021.

14. What impact, if any, have you seen from ride share services? Good? Bad?

Response: Neighbor Ride has been very active and helpful. People still have concerns with Private Rideshare during the pandemic (equal concerns to riding transit according to surveys). That said, we are considering future partnerships where transit isn't the answer, but a subsidy could be helpful for low income residents.

15. We still have no buffered (protected) bicycle lanes in the County - paint is not infrastructure even on a newly paved road. Patching (chip and seal) may extend the time between repaving and be suitable for automobiles but rough patches and collapsing or non-existent shoulders are not a safe environment for cyclists on 1 inch tires.

Response: Howard County has several shared use pathways that are immediately adjacent to main roads, sometimes referred to as side paths, e.g. along Little Patuxent Parkway and Twin Rivers Road. These are very similar to on-street protected bike lanes since they provide a physical barrier between vehicular traffic and people on bikes. There are several more of these side paths in design, including for Dobbin Road and Robert Fulton Drive. There are some on-street protected bike lanes recommended in BikeHoward and they are being considered for Oakland Mills Road.

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16. Maple Lawn was mentioned earlier by Mr. Jagarapu as a Traditional Neighborhood Development which was supposed to be walkable and bikeable. Only about 0.5 miles of bike paths were ever constructed there. Why? New development offers the opportunity to do things correctly rather than trying to retrofit later.

Response: The roads built as part of new Maple Lawn pedestrian accommodation in the form of connected, ADA compliant sidewalks, crosswalks and curb ramps. The streets are designed to be bikeable by encouraging slow speed driving. Additionally, both the residential and commercial portions of Maple Lawn have funds reserved for Transportation Demand Management efforts. At this time the Maple Lawn Homeowners Association is working with the County to mitigate the impacts of its development. The County is hopeful that the Maple Lawn Commercial District will proceed with similar plans in 2021.

17. Providing public transportation to APL employees is understandable. But including a bus route through Maple Lawn, with increased traffic options for using ML Blvd as a "pass through" road, is not necessary. I will also provide this feedback to the Maple Lawn HOA and Condo Boards, however please note that many Maple Lawn residents do NOT favor public transportation (buses) through the community. As businesses have increased in the community, the volume and speeding of traffic has significantly increased. Non-residents of the community are the worst offenders with respect to speed and failure to adhere to traffic signs. This poses a safety risk to community residents.

Response: None requested

18. Vehicles speeding through the streets of Maple Lawn are a safety concern. Would you consider adding speed bumps in Maple Lawn neighborhood?

Response: Maple Lawn was developed on the principles of a Traditional Neighborhood Design with short block lengths, sidewalks on both sides of the roadway, street trees, buildings and houses closer to the roadway, narrower streets, etc. All of these features help provide visual cues for motorists to obey posted speed limits and to not have additional traffic calming measures.

Howard County does have a traffic calming program mainly to address speeding concerns from "cut through" traffic on residential streets. In order for a roadway to be considered for beginning the traffic calming process, a local neighborhood roadway must meet three minimum criteria; the roadway has to be a local road or a minor collector roadway with at least 50% of homes with direct residential frontage, the roadway also has to be 1200 feet long and shall have a minimum of 1200 vehicles per day, and the operating speeds along the roadway should be 10 miles per hour over the posted speed limit. At this time, the Department of Public Works cannot conduct accurate speed/volume studies due to schools being in virtual session and many employees teleworking. Please contact our Traffic Engineering Division at (410) 313-2430 or traffic@howardcountymd.gov for more in-depth details regarding qualifying criteria and the

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general community process for qualifying roadways. It should be noted that speed humps are inappropriate for a major collector roadway such as Maple Lawn Boulevard.

As speeding is an enforcement issue, residents may also contact the Howard County Police Department at (410) 313-2929 to request officer presence or the temporary deployment of radar speed display sign.

- 19.** As the largest single-site employer in Howard County, why is APL not better connected via bike paths (or even the transit bus) to The New DC (Downtown Columbia) and other hubs (e.g., village centers)? There are no marked routes to the APL campus, and while Old Columbia Road is reasonable for biking (wide-ish, okay shoulders on the climbs) on the east, Sanner Road on the west actually STOPS the shoulder halfway up the hill towards APL, forcing bikers - at their slowest - out into traffic on a blind hill.

Response: The County has an existing capital project (J4230-Sanner Road Improvements) to construct 5' bike lanes between Johns Hopkins Road and Guilford Road on both the east and west sides of the corridor. There was a public meeting held where the following proposed plan was displayed: <https://www.howardcountymd.gov/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=1iP-rt4kNsw%3d&portalid=0> Much of the width for the bike lanes is currently available within the existing pavement section; however, there are areas where grading, road widening and stormwater management will be needed. The plans are currently at the semi-final stage and construction will be dependent on requisite land acquisition and funding availability.

Regarding public transit. One of the RTA line extensions identified in our recent Transit Development Plan would serve APL but funding for expanded operating services is limited. We continue to plan for the long term and keep an eye out for discretionary grant programs and private sector opportunities that may allow us to provide more transit. US 29 is a high priority corridor in the regional long range plan and the County Executive has been pushing staff to think creatively about how we can partner with Montgomery County to extend their new FLASH service

- 20.** How has the decrease in traffic due to COVID WFH changed the plans for roads? E.g., the light at Rivers Edge on Rt. 29 was about to come out (until the 500 residents all complained about an extra minute or three in their day, versus the extra five to seven minutes a day for thousands of commuters), but now traffic on Rt. 29 is so light to practically make the light unnecessary. Another example: biking has become extremely popular for exercise during COVID, meaning more riders on the roads; any attempts to amplify that and/or ensure new bikers know about resources? Any chance this will cause us to revisit how roads are designed, in terms of primary destinations?

Response: The pandemic has been an eye opener about what happens when we have less commuters during the peak periods. As of now, it is too early to gauge the long term impacts on models and forecasts, our main tool to plan future transportation needs, but this is a continuing topic. However, the pandemic has reinforced the need for us to focus on the Active Transportation topics, including the

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detailed information shown in the presentation and the chart of bike and pedestrian projects. [Bike and Pedestrian Projects](#)

With respect to US 29, it is our understanding that the State has put their US 29 plans on hold for financial reasons and due to reduced traffic volume, but they will be re-engaging with the community on the safety concerns associated with that intersection

21. Will Maryland consider a miles tax instead of a gas tax, as a larger percentage of cars become electric? (Not that we should get rid of the gas tax; incentivize fewer fossil-fuel miles.)

Response: That is ultimately a question for the state legislature and governor but a number of states (including some in the I-95 corridor coalition) have been piloting new ways to collect road user charges, in partial recognition of the impact on electric vehicles on the transportation system. Electric vehicles still cause wear and tear on roads and bridges and gas taxes primarily fund ongoing maintenance of the system. Any significant change in state taxes is unlikely in the next two years but that will be a question for Gubernatorial candidates beginning next year since transportation revenues typically are revisited every 6-8 years, in both good and weak economic times.

22. Will all schools - especially elementary, since they are most neighborly and have the youngest population - be built / updated with "Fenton" sidewalks / bike paths to encourage families with small children to teach them that walking and biking is preferable to driving for short trips? (Also need racks prioritized over car parking or maybe even buses, and a culture supporting biking.)

Response: The county, as part of the capital program, is actively pursuing projects and opportunities to enhance walking and biking access to schools in recognition of the environmental, health, and economic benefits. These projects are advanced in strong coordination with Howard County schools, including working with schools, parents and school children to promote walking and biking as a safe and fun transportation choice.

23. Is the Howard co bus service mobility prices changed or are the same. Is the routes schedule the same since the covid pandemic occurred [SIC]. Last does the buses take you out of Howard co. To places like an Arundel Baltimore ect. [SIC]

Response: The Regional Transportation Agency (RTA) is not currently collecting fares due to COVID-19, but will resume fare collection on January 2, 2021. Also, the RTA Mobility fare will be increased to \$5/ride on January 1, 2021 due to a previous timeline for fare increases.

Service was reduced in March due to COVID-19, but was increased to almost pre-pandemic levels in June. Current routes and schedules, including routes into Anne Arundel and Prince George's Counties can be found here: <http://www.transitrt.com/routes/> RTA Mobility service for medical appointments in Baltimore is also available. More information on that service can be found here: http://www.transitrt.com/ada_gpt/

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24. Dr. Ball; you will be shortly submitting the HoCo Budget. Transit is a lifeline service for many. Will your budget for transit continue the same funding or increase it for operations as for the current year?

Response: The RTA is currently operating at 60 percent of our service levels with reduced hours of operation because of the pandemic. Because of the FTA Cares Act funding, we should be able to return to pre-pandemic service levels in July 2021, depending on Governor and County Executive orders.

25. When will there be a complete set of sidewalks and crossing lights running down the length of Snowden River Parkway from Brokenland Pkwy to at least as far as McGaw Rd.? All too often I see people walking to the bus stops or work locations on Snowden and they are forced to walk on grass, in snow, and even in the busy streets to navigate this stretch. Twice I have seen a person walking down a lane of traffic with his luggage shelling behind him because there was no other way to get down Snowden River Pkwy.

Response: The County has an existing capital project (J4222 – Snowden River Pkwy) to improve both vehicle capacity and pedestrian accessibility along the corridor. We are currently working on design for a new pathway between Carved Stone and Lincoln Tech. We anticipate construction of this segment in early 2021. We will continue to look for other opportunities to enhance pedestrian access within the corridor. There are numerous land acquisitions that would be needed for full widening up to McGaw in both directions.

26. What is the status of the roundabout for the intersection at Tamar Drive and Old Montgomery Road (Jeffers Hill, Columbia, 20145)? In June 2019, our neighborhood heard "*construction is anticipated to start in Summer 2020, with completion in 6 to 8 weeks*". The initial start date was to be Fall 2018. It is now November 2020. Look forward to your response about this extremely busy intersection. The current design of this intersection continues to be unnecessarily unsafe.

Response: Design for the roundabout at Tamar Drive and Old Montgomery Road is completed. We are currently in the process of acquiring necessary right-of-way to build the roundabout. Available funding is being used for underground utility relocation, which is currently in design for spring/summer 2021 construction. We do not have sufficient funds for the construction of the roundabout at this time. Additional funding will be needed in FY22.

27. I am inquiring about rehabilitation of a bridge in my neighborhood. Below is a picture of a one lane bridge on Old Columbia Road the crosses the Middle Patuxent River in Howard County. The road is a 2 lane road but the bridge only accommodates 1 car and oncoming traffic must stop to let one car go by at a time. During rush hour you can imagine there is always a back up. Are there

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any plans to expand this bridge to accommodate two vehicles at once. It seems this should not be a hard task. Please respond. Thanks.

Response: The road is classified as a major collector. ADT's (about 3,000 VPD) are on the lower range for this classification. If we widen, we would need to raise the road and bridge profile to get it out of the floodplain per Federal requirements. Order of magnitude cost estimate is about \$2M. Additionally, during the most recent inspection, it was deemed structurally sound even though it is functionally obsolete (i.e. a one lane bridge).

28. There are street corners and path crossings in Oakland Mills that do not have ADA compliant curb cuts. Some of these street corners and path crossings have had sidewalk improvements but no ADA compliant curb cuts. Of particular concern to cyclists in Oakland Mills are curb cuts where the paths cross Bluecoat Lane , Thunder Hill Road, Log Chain Road and Farewell Road. Can you provide us a list of the non-ADA compliant curb cuts and a schedule of when they will be made compliant?

Response Pending