



Internal Memorandum

Subject: Testimony in Support of County Council Resolution to Adopt BikeHoward, the Howard County Bicycle Master Plan

Date: February 23, 2016

To: Lonnie R. Robbins
Chief Administrative Officer

Through: Clive Graham
Administrator, Office of Transportation

Handwritten signature of Clive Graham in blue ink.

From: Chris Eatough
Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator, Office of Transportation

Handwritten signature of Chris Eatough in blue ink.

Summary:

The General Plan for Howard County (PlanHoward 2030) calls for the development of a Bicycle Master Plan and recognizes the importance of improving conditions and connections for bicycling as part of a multimodal transportation system.

The benefits to the county from quality accommodations for bicycling are significant, including improved public health, cleaner air, a stronger economy, reduced congestion and enriched quality of life. The Bicycle Master Plan (also known as BikeHoward) creates the vision and path forward for Howard County to become a bicycle-friendly community.

The plan was developed with extensive public input and with oversight from the Howard County Office of Transportation, a multi-disciplinary Technical Advisory Group, and a consultant with extensive experience drafting similar plans around the country (Toole Design Group). With these inputs, BikeHoward draws from the experiences and best practices from around the country, and applies them effectively to Howard County's local context.

The Plan overall has received an overwhelmingly positive response at all stages of development and review, making it evident that people appreciate the many benefits and importance of improved bicycling accommodations in Howard County. Concerns have been raised regarding some specific proposed projects; these will be addressed with a public process throughout the detailed planning, design and implementation phases.

BikeHoward will be a useful and effective guiding document for county and state agencies, developers, grant administrators and the public. It will enable enhanced coordination between these groups, providing the guidance to keep projects, policies and programs moving in the same direction. Ongoing communication and engagement will occur through the Office of Transportation's BikeHoward webpage and through annual open house workshops.

BikeHoward's goal is to make it easy for people of all ages and abilities to get around Howard County by bicycle. To do this, the plan provides guidance and recommendations in three general areas:

1. Policy updates
 2. Programs for education, encouragement/promotion, and traffic law enforcement
 3. Infrastructure improvements to create a connected bike network
1. Recommended policy updates include the development of a "Complete Streets" policy to ensure Howard County streets are designed, built and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders.
 2. Programs for education, encouragement and enforcement are important to help foster a community culture where bicycling is a safe, popular, and everyday choice.
 3. Infrastructure improvements are critical to providing a network so that people can reach their destinations by bicycle safely and conveniently. This includes on-street elements, such as bike lanes and intersections, and off-street elements, such as shared-use-pathways. The Bicycle Master Plan categorizes recommended infrastructure improvements as short-term (within 10 years), mid-term (within 20 years) and long-term (within 30 years).

Fiscal Impact:

Funding for the recommended infrastructure improvements is expected to come from a combination of grants, developer contributions and county capital projects.

The total estimated cost of all the short-term projects is approximately \$32 million. This is a planning level cost estimate that does not take into account savings from coordination with other projects and improvements. In practice, costs can often be lower through coordination and timing, for example, striping on-street bike lanes in conjunction with ongoing road resurfacing which has been shown to reduce costs by 90%.

The short-term projects would provide 95 miles of new bicycle facilities (combined on-street and off-street), 15 miles of upgrades to existing bicycle facilities (combined on-street and off-street) and 46 spot improvements (mostly at intersections).

The County established a capital budget project (K5066) for bicycle infrastructure improvements in fiscal year 2014. Combined allocation of county funds into K5066 for fiscal years 2014, 2015 and 2016 was \$1.2 million. The Bicycle Master Plan recommends that this budget maintain a fund balance of at least \$750,000 per year.