County Council of Howard County, Maryland

2026 Legislative Session | Legislative Day No. 11

Resolution No. 160-2026

Introduced by: Chairperson at the request of the County Executive

Short Title: Approving BikeHoward 2026 and indicating support for bicycle-friendly community designation.

Title: A RESOLUTION approving BikeHoward 2026, the Howard County Bicycle Master Plan Update and indicating support for the County's application to be designated a bicycle-friendly community by the League of American Bicyclists.

Introduced and read first time Sep 8, 2026.

By order Michelle Harrod
Michelle Harrod, Administrator

Read for a second time at a public hearing on Sep 22+23, 2026.

By order Michelle Harrod
Michelle Harrod, Administrator

This Resolution was read the third time and was Adopted ✓, Adopted with amendments___, Failed___, Withdrawn___, by the County Council on Oct 5, 2026.

Certified By Michelle Harrod
Michelle Harrod, Administrator

Approved by the County Executive October 15, 2026

Calvin Ball, County Executive

NOTE: [[text in brackets]] indicates deletions from existing law; TEXT IN SMALL CAPITALS indicates additions to existing law; ~~Strike-out~~ indicates material deleted by amendment; Underlining indicates material added by amendment

WHEREAS, in 2016, by passage of Council Resolution No. 35-2016, the County approved the Howard County Bicycle Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, as that plan is now 10 years old, the County has prepared BikeHoward 2026, Howard County Bicycle Master Plan Update, substantially in the form attached as Exhibit A, to further enhance the County's status as a bicycle friendly community by continuing the County's progress on expanding safe cycling options for every age and ability; and

WHEREAS, BikeHoward 2026 was developed with extensive public input in the form of in-person workshops, surveys and online comment maps, all under the oversight of the Office of Transportation, a multi-disciplinary Technical Advisory group, and a consultant with extensive experience in drafting similar plans around the country; and

WHEREAS, the BikeHoward 2026 continues to provide guidance and recommendations in the categories of policy updates, programs for education, encouragement, and enforcement, as well as suggested infrastructure improvements to further enhance the County's connected bike network; and

WHEREAS, the League of American Bicyclists is a 501(c)(3) organization that works to create a Bicycle Friendly America through education programs, creating better biking environments, and promoting bicycling as a transportation option of choice; and

WHEREAS, a bicycle-friendly community designation from the League of American Bicyclists is a highly coveted award that identifies the community as one that is improving public health, reducing traffic congestion, improving air quality, and improving the quality of life; and

WHEREAS, a bicycle-friendly community designation marks the community as a vibrant destination for residents and visitors, which holds positive economic benefits for the entire community; and

WHEREAS, Columbia earned a bronze designation by the League of American Bicyclists in 2016, and the County seeks to earn another designation for Howard County; and

WHEREAS, the approval of this Resolution will greatly aid the County in its pursuit of receiving a bicycle-friendly community designation from the League of American Bicyclists.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the County Council of Howard County, Maryland, this 5 day of October, 2026, that it hereby approves BikeHoward 2026, the Howard County Bicycle Master Plan Update, substantially in the form attached as Exhibit A.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the County Council of Howard County, Maryland, that the Council is approving BikeHoward 2026 with the understanding that specific routes identified in the Plan are suggested at a planning level, and may be altered following additional detailed design planning and public comment.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Office of Transportation may correct obvious errors, capitalization, spelling, grammar, headings and similar matters and may publish BikeHoward 2026 by adding or amending title pages, a table of contents, photos and graphics to improve readability

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the County Executive has signed this Resolution, thus indicating support and approval of the County's application for a bicycle-friendly community designation from the League of American Bicyclists.

Howard County
MARYLAND

Internal Memorandum

Subject: Testimony in Support of County Council Resolution to Adopt BikeHoward 2026, the updated Howard County Bicycle Master Plan

Date: August 26, 2026

To: Brandee Ganz
Chief Administrative Officer

Thru: Clarence Dickerson
Administrator, Office of Transportation

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

Summary:

This update to the Howard County Bicycle Master Plan (BikeHoward 2026) builds on the original plan that was adopted by the Howard County Council in 2016. The plan is updated to reflect the Howard County Complete Streets Policy, the Howard County Complete Streets Design Manual and the Howard County General Plan (Hoco By Design) and incorporate new evaluation tools such as Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress analysis.

The Howard County Complete Streets Policy, adopted in 2019 establishes that public and private roadways in Howard County shall be safe and convenient for residents of all ages and abilities who travel by foot, bicycle, public transportation or automobile. The benefits of quality accommodations for bicycling are significant, including improved public health, cleaner air, a stronger economy, reduced congestion and enriched quality of life. BikeHoward 2026 further develops the vision and path forward for Howard County to become a leading bicycle-friendly community where people of all ages and abilities can safely bike for transportation and recreation.

The plan was developed with extensive public input and with oversight from the Howard County Office of Transportation, Department of Public Works, Bicycle Advisory Group, and a consultant with extensive experience drafting similar plans around the country (RK&K). The plan incorporates national best practices and applies them effectively to Howard County's local context.

BikeHoward 2026 will be a useful and effective guidance 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 webpages, through public meetings for specific projects and through the annual Transportation Open House.

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 high-priority projects is approximately $54 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 has been shown to reduce costs by 90%.

The County established a capital budget project (K5066) for bicycle infrastructure improvements in fiscal year 2014. In recent years, the allocation of county funds into K5066 has been one million dollars per year. The forecasted outyear allocation for county funds into K5066 is also one million per year. There are other capital budget areas that contribute funding to specific bicycle infrastructure projects, such as K5070, K5071, K5072, T7107, T7108. County funding contributions towards bicycle infrastructure in the capital budget are expected to stay at similar levels to support the updated BikeHoward plan.

Grant funding is also an important funding opportunity for larger bicycle infrastructure projects, and Howard County has a strong record in this area with over ten million dollars of grant funding received over the last five years.

Development projects are also expected to provide segments of the network over time. These are supported by the recently updated Howard County Complete Streets Design Manual, which provides new guidance for development projects regarding the integration of bicycle accommodations into their development sites and frontage roads.

County staffing to implement the BikeHoward plan is already established and is not expected to change in upcoming years. In addition, this plan provides no economic impact on the County budget.