

County Council of Howard County, Maryland

2019 Legislative Session

Legislative Day No. 11

Resolution No. 120 -2019

Introduced by: Chairperson at the request of the County Executive
Co-sponsored by: Opel Jones, Deb Jung and Christiana Mercer Rigby

A RESOLUTION adopting the Howard County Complete Streets Policy and requiring the development of a Complete Streets Design Manual.

Introduced and read first time September 3, 2019.

By order *Diane R. A. Jones*
Diane Schwartz Jones, Administrator

Read for a second time at a public hearing on September 16, 2019.

By order *Diane R. A. Jones*
Diane Schwartz Jones, Administrator

This Resolution was read the third time and was Adopted , Adopted with amendments , Failed , Withdrawn , by the County Council on October 7, 2019.

Certified By *Diane R. A. Jones*
Diane Schwartz Jones, Administrator

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

1 **WHEREAS**, on April 4, 2016, the County Council adopted Council Resolution No. 35-
2 2016 (“CR 35”) that approved the Bicycle Master Plan of Howard County and endorsed a
3 Complete Streets policy as the road use approach for Howard County; and
4

5 **WHEREAS**, the County Executive believes that streets should be safe and
6 accommodating for everyone, whether they are driving, walking, biking, riding a motorcycle, or
7 taking public transit; and
8

9 **WHEREAS**, safer, more accessible active transportation networks increase physical
10 activity, which can reduce the risk of chronic diseases like heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes
11 and obesity; and
12

13 **WHEREAS**, equitable transportation via a Complete Streets will greatly improve the
14 health, economic opportunity and overall wellbeing of residents; and
15

16 **WHEREAS**, safer streets and more accessible transportation networks will enable people
17 with disabilities, children and seniors to more easily access grocery stores, schools, medical care,
18 local businesses, economic opportunities and places of worship; and
19

20 **WHEREAS**, better access to safe transportation will enable local businesses to recruit
21 and retain a diverse, 21st century workforce in Howard County and boost economic growth; and
22

23 **WHEREAS**, reducing car use will help reduce our community’s carbon footprint and
24 promote cleaner air; and
25

26 **WHEREAS**, CR 35 directed that a Complete Streets Implementation Team be
27 established to draft a Complete Streets Policy and to develop a Complete Streets Design Manual
28 that implements the Complete Streets Policy; and
29

1 **WHEREAS**, the Complete Streets Implementation Team has prepared the Howard
2 County Complete Streets Policy based on national best practices, substantially in the form
3 attached as Exhibit A; and
4

5 **WHEREAS**, the Complete Streets Policy establishes a data driven project selection
6 process, prioritizes projects in communities with vulnerable populations, requires transparent
7 decision making and reporting and emphasizes that safety is the top priority for our streets; and
8

9 **WHEREAS**, the Complete Streets Policy has been reviewed and endorsed by the
10 Howard County Multimodal Transportation Board, presented at stakeholder meetings, and
11 posted on the Howard County Office of Transportation’s website in the form of Exhibit A since
12 July 5, 2019; and
13

14 **WHEREAS**, the County Executive wishes to adopt the Complete Streets Policy,
15 substantially in the form attached as Exhibit A, and has further directed the Complete Streets
16 Implementation Team to continue its work on the development of a Complete Streets Design
17 Manual, to be submitted to Council within 24 months of County Council’s vote to approve the
18 Complete Streets Policy.
19

20 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the County Council of Howard County,
21 Maryland, this 7th day of October, 2019, that it hereby adopts the
22 Howard County Complete Streets Policy, substantially in the form attached as Exhibit A.
23

24 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Complete Streets Implementation Team
25 shall provide ~~regular updates~~ semiannual reports to the Council on the implementation of the
26 various elements of the policy and develop a Complete Streets Design Manual to be submitted to
27 Council within 24 months of County Council’s vote to approve the Complete Streets Policy.

Howard County - Complete Streets Policy

1. Vision

“To ensure that Howard County is a place for individuals of all backgrounds to live and travel freely, safely, and comfortably, 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, ensuring sustainable communities Countywide.” - Council Resolution 35-2016.

2. Scope

The scope of this policy covers every transportation project, whether new or retrofit, capital improvement, or subdivision and land development. Certain operations, repair, and maintenance activities also create an opportunity for safer, more accessible streets for users of all ages and abilities, who walk, bike, take the bus, and drive cars, motorcycles, and trucks. Project phases within the scope of the policy include: planning, programming, design, land acquisition and rights of way, construction engineering, construction and reconstruction.

Provision of temporary accommodations during periods of facility disturbance must also be considered. Capital projects in the early stages of design will be included if possible. If opportunities arise for Complete Streets improvements to be incorporated into projects that have another primary purpose, the scale of Complete Streets improvements should be appropriate to the scale of the project. The Design Manual will provide guidance on the appropriate scale of improvements. County operations and maintenance procedures must take into account the needs of all street users. Emergency repairs and similar situations that require an immediate response are excluded from this policy.

The continuous, connected network of Complete Streets that will result from this policy will have significant benefits for the residents of Howard County, including improved safety, more travel options, reduced transportation costs, improved access to goods and services, enhanced equity, and even better health.

3. Exceptions

Complete Streets improvements may not be appropriate in some cases due to the context. There are different exception processes for capital projects and developer projects.

For capital projects within the scope of this policy, exceptions to this policy shall be reviewed and approved unanimously by the Director of Public Works, the Director of Planning and Zoning, and the Administrator of the Office of Transportation or their designees. When a Complete Streets exception is being considered for a particular project, public notice, including a description of the project and the reason for the exception, shall be given through the Office of Transportation website. The Multimodal Transportation Board shall be given the opportunity to offer an advisory opinion before an exception is granted.

For development projects, exceptions will be considered using the development review process, which provides opportunities for technical review and public input.

1 Exceptions may be considered for approval when the project (either capital or developer) involves:

- 2
- 3 i. An accommodation that is not necessary on corridors where specific user groups are
- 4 prohibited;
- 5 ii. A justifiable absence of current and future need exists and is not recommended in any existing
- 6 planning documents;
- 7 iii. A project of equivalent scope and schedule exists or is already programmed for funding within
- 8 the next five years to provide connectivity for all users; or
- 9 iv. Cost of accommodation or degree of impact is grossly disproportionate to the need or probable
- 10 use.

11

12 **4. Conflicting or Competing Needs**

13

14 When there are conflicting needs among users and/or modes, safety shall be the highest priority;

15 particularly safety for the most vulnerable street users (pedestrians, bicyclists, children, seniors, and

16 people with additional accessibility needs). Selection and quantitative weighting of performance

17 measures shall also support investment in the most underinvested and underserved communities.

18

19 Motor vehicle speed, flow, and driver convenience shall not be prioritized over safety for vulnerable

20 street users. Reducing excessive motor vehicle speeds on streets where vulnerable users are likely will be

21 considered a net benefit to the community.

22

23 To the extent that current code allows, when space is a limiting factor and where vulnerable users are

24 likely, allocating space to a mode that is not currently accommodated shall be prioritized over providing

25 additional space to a mode that is already accommodated.

26

27 **5. Creating a network**

28

29 To connect people to the places they want to go, the entire trip should be safe and comfortable. This

30 requires a seamless, connected street network, regardless of mode, including safe and convenient

31 pedestrian crossings and access to transit. Even a small interruption in the connection or one hazardous

32 section can make a trip challenging.

33

34 Every street does not necessarily need to provide separate accommodations for every mode, but a

35 network should be in place so that likely trips can be made by walking, biking, and taking public transit, as

36 well as driving. The street network is also complemented by pathway connections in many locations.

37

38 The County shall require developers to implement Complete Streets as per this policy. Furthermore, the

39 County shall work proactively with the State of Maryland, neighboring communities and counties, and

40 businesses and educational institutions to develop plans, facilities, and accommodations that further the

41 County's Complete Streets policy. Such coordination should result in continuing such infrastructure

42 beyond the County's borders to the extent feasible.

1 **6. Coordination and Engagement**

2
3 Many organizations, agencies, and entities have a role to play in implementing Complete Streets.
4 Coordination and commitment from all agencies involved are required for success. Howard County is
5 committed to being a leader in this effort. Some of the groups involved include:

- 6
7 • Howard County Government
8 • Howard County Public School System
9 • Community associations
10 • State Highway Administration
11 • Developers
12 • Property owners
13 • Engineering companies
14 • Construction contractors
15 • Advisory groups such as the Multimodal Transportation Board and Public Works Board
16 • Advocacy groups
17 • Groups working with those with limited English proficiency

18
19 Community engagement is also essential to the success of Complete Streets, particularly in the planning
20 and design phases. Regular engagement should occur prior to the planning and design of specific capital
21 projects. For each capital project within the scope of this policy, input shall be sought from affected
22 stakeholders prior to setting the scope and budget of the project.

23
24 Furthermore, resources should be allocated to proactive efforts to interact with the community to
25 identify and communicate their experience regarding existing transportation facilities and identify areas
26 of need and opportunity. At a minimum, this should be tied to the annual Complete Streets report or
27 preparation of the County’s MDOT priority letter. Local meetings or other opportunities for input should
28 provide easy access for all members of the community.

29
30 Different types of projects benefit from different types of public engagement. Therefore, specific
31 procedures for initiating public engagement, focusing on traditionally disenfranchised and underserved
32 communities, shall be developed and made available to the public on the County website by agencies
33 responsible for implementation of this policy within 12 months of County Council’s vote to approve this
34 policy.

35
36 **7. Design Guidelines**

37
38 This policy shall provide the policy context, themes and tone for Howard County Design Manual Volume
39 III, Complete Streets and Bridges. Design of Complete Streets in Howard County shall draw on established
40 state of the art street design guidelines including but not limited to national guidance from the Federal
41 Highway Administration (FHWA), the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
42 (AASHTO), and the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO). In addition to reliance
43 on established street design guidelines, the design of Complete Streets in Howard County will be flexible
44 and responsive to the evolving nature of transportation needs and innovation in design practice.

1 **8. Context Sensitivity**

2
3 Context sensitivity allows for flexible evaluation of the community’s needs with respect to existing streets
4 and planned land use. The level of improvements should take into consideration the classification of the
5 existing roadway as defined in the Design Manual, adjacent land use, type of community, and plans and
6 guidelines, in particular, The Howard County General Plan. Improvements should consider the scale and
7 character of the community and strive for connectivity between communities based on the expected
8 transportation needs.

9
10 Context sensitivity also reflects the desires of communities affected by implementation of transportation
11 improvements. At the planning phase of a capital project, before scope and budget are finalized, the
12 County will obtain public input to identify transportation needs related to all modes of travel. Input will
13 explicitly be sought from traditionally underrepresented populations in the project area. Unintended
14 consequences to those populations, including potential gentrification and/or involuntary displacement,
15 will be considered and mitigated.

16
17 **9. Performance Measures**

18
19 Performance measures shall be used to track Complete Streets implementation progress, prioritize
20 projects, and evaluate designs. *Evaluating Complete Streets Projects: A Guide for Practitioners* by AARP,
21 Smart Growth America, and the National Complete Streets Coalition provides guidance for municipalities
22 implementing Complete Streets policies. The performance measures listed below fit into several
23 categories as listed in the guide and prioritized by Howard County stakeholders: access, equity/safety
24 (tied), public health, place, and economy. Specific measures for each goal were evaluated by the
25 Complete Streets Implementation Team in consideration of stakeholder feedback, staff feedback, and
26 measurability.

27
28 The Complete Streets Implementation Team, in conjunction with the Office of Transportation, shall
29 maintain a publicly-available list of performance measures on the County website and prepare ~~an annual~~
30 a semiannual report documenting the County’s progress with respect to these performance measures as
31 described in Section 10 of this policy. The following performance measures shall be used:

- 32
33 i. Safety/Public Health: Number and location of fatalities by road type and mode of travel, and by
34 age and gender as data are available
35 ii. Safety/Public Health: Number and location of serious injuries by road type and mode of travel,
36 and by age and gender as data are available
37 iii. Access: Miles of sidewalk, trail, and bicycle infrastructure installed or repaired
38 iv. Access: Number of curb ramps installed or repaired
39 v. Access: Number of crosswalks installed or repaired
40 vi. Access: Number of transit stops with sidewalk access installed or repaired
41 vii. Access: Percentage of transit stops with marked crosswalks within 150 feet
42 viii. Access: Percent of Bike Howard short term network completed
43 ix. Access: Percent of Walk Howard network completed
44 x. Access: Percent of the population with direct access to a low-stress bike network
45 xi. Access/Place: Connections to important destinations, including schools, libraries, parks,
46 community centers, village centers, social service centers, significant health care facilities, and
47 government centers
48 xii. Access/Economy: Connections to employment centers
49 xiii. Equity: Percentage of new roadway projects or roadway repairs in priority communities

1 Equity shall be incorporated into every performance measure listed above to the extent data are
2 available. Equity will be measured using the Vulnerable Population Index method, a system developed by
3 the Baltimore Metropolitan Council which is compliant with the requirements of Title VI of the Civil
4 Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in
5 Minority and Low-Income Populations."

6
7 The Vulnerable Population Index uses U.S. Census Bureau data to measure the percentages of the
8 following population groups in each census tract:

- 9
10 • Poverty
11 • Non-Hispanic, Non-White
12 • Hispanic
13 • Limited English Proficiency (LEP)
14 • Disabled
15 • Elderly
16 • Carless

17
18 When the percent of the seven population groups in each census tract is higher than the County mean,
19 this tract is counted as vulnerable. Tracts with even greater disparity receive additional weight. Data from
20 each group is combined to create a composite score to measure the degree to which each tract is
21 vulnerable.

22
23 Priority shall be given to projects in census tracts that are within the top 20-25 percent of scores on the
24 Howard County Vulnerable Population Index.

25
26 **10. Implementation**

27
28 **Responsibility:** It shall be the responsibility of the Office of Transportation to convene a Complete Streets
29 Implementation Team, consisting of an equal number of internal and external stakeholders, to guide and
30 track implementation of this policy. Initial composition of the Team shall be determined within 60 days of
31 County Council's vote to approve this policy.

32
33 **Update of Regulations, Standards, and Plans:** The County shall incorporate this policy into all county-
34 developed land use and transportation plans and policies.

35
36 The County shall review this policy every five years to ensure the policy is in line with current best
37 practices.

38
39 The County shall establish a routine process for project delivery that reflects the Complete Streets policy.
40 The Department of Public Works, Department of Planning and Zoning, Office of Transportation, and all
41 other relevant County departments and agencies will review, seek and incorporate public input and
42 amend current design standards, including the Design Manual and the portions of the Subdivision and
43 Land Development Regulations that apply to roadway and bridge construction or reconstruction, to
44 ensure that they reflect the best available standards and effectively implement this policy. Updates to the
45 Design Manual shall be finalized by the County Executive and submitted to Council within 24 months of
46 County Council's vote to approve this policy. The County will issue interim updates to design guidance
47 while the Design Manual is being updated.

1 The County shall review Subdivision and Land Development Regulations concurrently with the Design
2 Manual updates. The County shall make recommended updates to the Regulations, including public
3 engagement procedures, as soon as possible but not more than 9 months after the Design Manual is
4 updated.

5
6 **Establishing Priority Projects:** Projects shall be prioritized quantitatively on an annual basis using the
7 project performance measures listed in this policy. The County shall establish a detailed project
8 prioritization process within 12 months of the County Council’s vote to approve this policy.

9
10 **Education and Training:** The County shall provide training to all staff in all County departments who are
11 responsible for site and road improvements on the content of this policy and the County’s new standards
12 for using the policy for project development and review. Training shall also be provided for staff who are
13 responsible for street maintenance and operations to offer an understanding of how maintenance and
14 operations activities affect the experience of all street users. The County shall also encourage staff
15 professional development and training on non-motorized transportation issues through attending
16 conferences, classes, seminars and workshops, as appropriate.

17
18 The County shall provide training to citizens serving on relevant boards and commissions on the content
19 of this policy and best practices for implementing the policy. Education for the public on Complete
20 Streets concepts, the policy, and the implementation process shall also be provided. Demonstration
21 projects can be used as educational opportunities to build familiarity with new street designs.

22
23 The County shall provide educational opportunities to developers, civil engineering firms, land use
24 attorneys, and similar parties to understand the policy and subsequent changes to regulations, standards,
25 and plans.

26
27 **Tracking and Reporting:** Tracking progress with Complete Streets project implementation will facilitate
28 coordination and transparency. The Office of Transportation – with the support of the Complete Streets
29 Implementation Team, the Department of Public Works, and the Department of Planning and Zoning –
30 shall track and document progress made in implementing this policy in the form of an annual report. The
31 annual report shall include:

- 32
- 33 • Progress made on each performance measure during the previous year;
 - 34 • Public engagement undertaken;
 - 35 • A description of the Complete Streets related education or training undertaken by the County;
 - 36 • Exceptions granted to incorporating Complete Streets into transportation projects, citing specific
37 reasons; and
 - 38 • The measures listed below:
 - 39 ○ Journey to work by mode
 - 40 ○ Percentage of urban/suburban roadway mileage with sidewalks on one or both sides
 - 41 ○ Transit ridership
 - 42 ○ Number (or percentage) of students within the recognized Howard County Public School
43 walk zones (safe walk or bike route to school within the minimum distance set by HCPSS)
 - 44
 - 45
 - 46
 - 47

1 **Communication:** Project plans and objectives shall be clearly communicated to stakeholders and the
2 public at large. As more fully described in Section 6 of this policy, the public shall be given ample
3 opportunity to provide input to the annual tracking and reporting process for the policy as a whole, as
4 well as to capital projects before scopes and budgets are set. The Department of Public Works, the
5 Department of Planning and Zoning, and the Office of Transportation shall develop department-specific
6 outreach procedures and present them at a monthly meeting of County Council within 12 months of
7 County Council’s vote to approve this policy.

8
9 **Maintenance:** Transportation facilities shall be maintained until they are decommissioned or replaced.
10 All forms of transportation shall be equitably maintained, including during times of repair, upkeep or
11 construction. “Maintenance of traffic” shall be applied to all modes. To the extent possible, maintenance
12 of facilities for one mode should not disadvantage another.

13
14 The County shall update or establish maintenance procedures as follows:

- 15 • Roads and streets shall be kept clear of debris through regular sweeping.
- 16 • Spot repair shall keep surfaces smooth and manholes or access covers flush with the pavement.
- 17 • Snow plowing should, to the extent that conditions allow, keep sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and
18 bus stops clear of snow.
- 19 • Property owner responsibilities to keep sidewalks passable should be enforced.

20
21
22 **Funding sources:** Funding for construction, operations, and maintenance is expected to come from a
23 variety of areas including County budgets, developer projects, state, federal and other grants.

24
25 **11. Conclusion**

26
27 A Complete Streets approach will make the street network safer and more convenient for those who
28 drive, bicycle, walk, or take the bus – improving quality of life and making Howard County a better and
29 more equitable place to live, work, and play.

30
31
32

33 Endorsed by Howard County Multimodal Transportation Board: June 25, 2019

34
35 Submitted to County Council by Howard County Executive Calvin Ball: August 23, 2019