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Comments on the Cheltenham Dr. Bikeway Feasibility Study

On behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association and its 6,500 members in the Washington area, I offer comments on the feasibility study of a Cheltenham Dr. Bikeway. This small segment will make an important piece of the Bethesda bike network, now under construction. As you move forward with the study and design, please consider the following comments.

Bikeway facility type (Wisconsin to Traffic Circle)

- We prefer Option 2 (one-way separated bike lanes)
- MD 355, driveway entrances, and people driving cars are the biggest threats to bicyclist safety in the project area. Mitigating those threats while still providing a high quality, low-stress, and convenient bicycling experience must be the top priority. A one-way, curbside bike lane design is the best option for moving people on bikes across 355 and managing turn conflicts in a predictable, visible, and safe manner. The separated bike lane design is necessary to lower the stress of riding on this street, create more predictable interactions at the driveway entrances and eliminate conflicts from parking turnover.
- Two-way lanes create a confusing transition at each end where people on bikes must move back to ride in the direction of car traffic. It is not worth the hassle and risk for such a short segment, especially near a traffic circle, where drivers are already juggling multiple tasks.
- Four on-street car parking spaces should not take priority over bicyclists access, safety, and comfort or the master-planned bicycle facility type on a block with multiple off-street lots and a public garage, regardless of what development may be coming to the area.
- Curiously outside the scope of this study, the Norfolk/Woodmont intersection design is extremely relevant to which facility is chosen here. A 2-way separated bike lane on Cheltenham Dr. makes a straightforward connection to the 2-way Woodmont lanes, but makes other connections quite a lot more problematic compared to a one-way design, especially with the many competing visions for the Norfolk shared street. We encourage MCDOT to consider the best design for this intersection before finalizing this facility selection.

Network Alignment

- We prefer Alternative A (Tilbury and Sleaford)
- This route is still quite direct and just as easy to communicate directions via signs or other markings. The contraflow lane does not require removing any parking, and Sleaford already has some of the traffic calming and diversion strategies used in neighborhood greenways.
- While connecting to Pearl Street is the primary goal, it is also important that this neighborhood greenway conveniently connect to Bethesda Chevy Chase High School and the planned stair entrance to the Capital Crescent Trail at Sleaford Rd to make the low-stress bicycle network in East Bethesda as porous, intuitive and useful as possible. Most bicyclists will probably still prefer the CCT's ramp access at Pearl (and less so at East West Highway), but this northern east-west should still be planned as a continuous greenway.
- Additional tools from the greenway toolbox should be considered to further slow or frustrate unnecessary driving on this route
- As part of the southbound contraflow lane from the traffic circle, the sidewalk will need either new ramps or a channel to allow an easy bike movement from the circle into a contraflow lane without moving into the path of cars entering the circle from Tilbury.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments,

Garrett Hennigan
Organizing Manager

Submitted Electronically