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County Executive

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

September 29, 2021

Jeremiah Lowery
Advocacy Director
The Washington Area Bicyclist Association
2599 Ontario Road NW
Washington, DC, 20009

Dear Jeremiah Lowery,

Your letter to the County Executive on behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association was assigned to my attention for review and response. We greatly appreciate your informed correspondence, words of encouragement and support for the County's crucial efforts to make our roads safe for everyone. As you noted, the Department of Public Works and Transportation's (DPW&T) leadership transition means reinforcing our commitment to building a culture of safety throughout the County and focusing on all the elements of a safe system approach.

During the COVID-19 period, we have been confronted even more clearly by the limitations and opportunities provided by our built environment. Regrettably, Prince George's County reflects the nationwide trend: While Americans drove less in 2020 due to the pandemic, NHTSA's early estimates show more people died in motor vehicle traffic crashes—the largest projected number of fatalities since 2007. NHTSA's research suggests that throughout the national public health emergency and associated lockdowns, driving patterns and behaviors changed significantly, and that drivers who remained on the roads engaged in more risky behavior, including speeding, failing to wear seat belts, and driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Traffic data indicates that average speeds increased throughout the year, and examples of extreme speeds became more common, while the evidence also shows that fewer people involved in crashes used their seat belts. [<https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/2020-fatality-data-show-increased-traffic-fatalities-during-pandemic>]. We are grappling with understanding how the risks to vulnerable road users might have changed recently and how we can effectively respond while continuing to make improvements.

We agree with the importance of the priorities outlined in your letter as we strive to meet the County's Vision Zero goals. DPW&T is the lead for Vision Zero and implementation relies on tapping into the expertise, resources, responsibilities, and mandates of our many County and State agencies and community partners. These goals are exemplified through the Vision Zero Prince George's strategy, a focus on Transit Oriented Development (TOD), and a transportation strategy that spurs economic growth while promoting sustainability, access, and equity. We also

need to recognize that COVID-19 response has and will likely continue to influence budgets at all levels of local and state government while we build an optimal and resilient transportation system and improve our community outreach efforts.

A strong commitment to Vision Zero's safe system approach. The County is revising the Vision Zero Prince George's website to clearly show progress on the 38 actions we have committed to completing. The actions contribute to the overall goals and indicate responsible entities that encompass education, engineering, enforcement, emergency response, evaluation, and equity.

- Engineering and collaboration are the core approaches to address the critical High Injury Network (HIN). For the corridors that are maintained by State Highway Administration (SHA), we are coordinating with their team to strategically identify the safety needs and implement projects to address those needs. For the County maintained HIN, DPW&T has several projects that are either gearing towards construction or are in pipeline for a Pedestrian Roadway Safety Audit (PRSA) and design. SHA projects are addressing the high crash corridors in Prince George's County as outlined on their online Context Driven Map. The Vision Zero Prince George's Project Map identifies high crash corridors and the corresponding locations of safety improvement projects. More details about these projects can be found on our Capital Improvement Project page.
- In 2020, Prince George's County Department of Public Works & Transportation and the Maryland Department of Transportation's State Highway Administration (SHA) conducted a PRSA along MD 214 in Largo. SHA implemented a signalized pedestrian crossing, sidewalk clearing, restriping, a 'No Turn on Red' evaluation and a lighting evaluation for the corridor. Additional PRSA's along MD 210, MD 410 and MD 414 are planned. The County plans to do PRSA's along Riverdale Road, Adelphi Road, Belcrest Road and others. We engaged community members on these findings and encouraged them to share concerns through the County and State.
- The Transportation Planning Board (TPB) of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOCG), the Metropolitan's Planning Organization (MPO) for Prince George's County and the Greater Washington Region, awarded DPW&T grants to conduct public outreach and planning for pedestrian and bicycle access at two upcoming Purple Line Stations. The grants provide technical assistance for designing the pedestrian and bicycle access enhancements and enhance community outreach efforts. <https://www.mwcog.org/newsroom/2020/04/21/the-tpb-approved-15-projects-to-help-create-more-livable-communities/>
- To improve **bike and pedestrian connectivity**, DPW&T is retrofitting oversized roads, adding new bikeshare stations, and executing pedestrian and bike connections. All projects utilize Urban Street Design Standards during the design process. The Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement (DPIE) is responsible for ensuring developers adhere to the standards.
- We deploy strategic approaches to complement our road safety audits such as **utilizing existing access studies conducted by other agencies**. There are 15 WMATA Metrorail stations in the County. WMATA along with the local jurisdiction have completed bike and pedestrian access audits around many of the stations. The supporting documents allows the County to apply for grant funding for design or implement the

recommendations as a part of the Capital Improvement Projects or to address maintenance related items.

- Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) local area plans and studies afford important reference for **bicycle and pedestrian access issues**. We have received grant funding from MWCOG for the Cool Spring Bike and Pedestrian Access Improvement Project and the Riggs Road Bike Boulevard project to address bicycle and pedestrian gaps around the proposed Purple Line Station.

Embracing off-street trails as critical to transportation in the region and making a strong commitment to stronger partnerships with M-NCPPC and other stakeholders to complete and maintain the Capital Trails Network. The Prince George’s County (the “County”) Projects List and Letter for the Fiscal Years (FY) 2022-2027 State Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) encapsulate the County’s priorities for a comprehensive multimodal transportation network. We are advancing and coordinating various network trails that touch on the County’s roadways: A call for dedicated funding for completion to trails enhancing the County and State trailway network. Additionally, the priorities include trail crossing and signal upgrades along State highways. The County’s legislative and funded mandates require DPW&T to focus on County maintained roadways. We lend our expertise and support to trail projects led by The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission since we all acknowledge that the boundaries between on-road and off-road may be distinct yet must support one another to make a good network.

More inclusive and transparent public engagement. We look forward to exploring new platforms and improving our website to improve our public engagement efforts. The COVID-19 environment has challenged the County to explore different ways to engage people.

- **Our projects are data driven, focused on equity emphasis areas** and we need to explain the context more fully.
- **Strengthening our Vision Zero collaboration** through the Office of Community Relations and Prince George’s County Police Department.
- **Vision Zero Youth Ambassadors for Health and Wellness** program is expanding under the Health Department and the Maryland Center based at Bowie State University.
- **MDOT Motor Vehicle Administration** is partnering to engage people with the Vision Zero Pledge and we hope to use this platform for future project outreach

Commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions through less driving in Prince George’s County. Within Prince George’s County, the transportation sector is the largest source of greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change. DPW&T is committed to reducing the greenhouse gas footprint of our transportation network by replacing diesel buses with new zero-emissions electric buses and by upgrading street lighting fixtures to LED. Additionally, the Department continues to expand public transportation access. In 2020, the County added TheBus service on Saturdays and continues to support programs such as bikeshare and the Prince George’s Link microtransit program, which reduce traffic congestion and provide first and last-mile connection to transit hubs and activity centers. These efforts minimize reliance on single occupancy vehicle use, which can help reduce roadway fatalities and improve the environment. “Get to Zero” can be achieved by

addressing roadway safety for all users, while improving the environment and public health.

- Commuting Sustainably with Prince George's County RideSmart Solutions – we look to achieve measurable reduction in drive-alone trips to improve traffic congestion, air quality, personal and financial wellbeing, and the value of employer-provided commuter programs. Success is achieved through partnerships, programs and incentives, knowledge sharing and support, and by measuring outcomes.
- DPW&T are completing studies for Bus Rapid Transit and an Expansion of Microtransit with grant funding from the Maryland State Innovation program.

We have made tremendous progress in contributing to a robust, equitable transportation network and wish to build on this momentum as we grapple with addressing the noted shortcomings.

Thank you for supporting efforts and actions and our shared goals to contribute to quality of life for everyone who lives, works, and plays in Prince George's County and the Washington DC region.

Sincerely,



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