

May 2, 2022

Hon. Calvin Hawkins
Chair, Prince George's County Council
Wayne K. Curry Administration Building
1301 McCormick Drive, Largo, MD 20774

RE: FY23 Budget: On right track for affordable housing; DPW&T needs to put safety & community goals first in road designs

Please accept these comments on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the leading non-profit organization in the D.C. region advocating for walkable, bikeable, inclusive, transit-oriented communities as the most sustainable and equitable way for the DC region to grow and provide opportunities for all.

We are also supporters of [RISE Prince George's](#), a group of county residents and allies advocating for policies and practices that build shared, sustainable prosperity in Prince George's County by creating safe, walkable, inclusive and transit-oriented communities. Together, we have developed these recommendations to support the implementation of this vision, which is also supportive of the County Executive's goals and vision.

Housing

We are excited to comment on the major new funding commitments that the county is making to affordable housing. We strongly support the \$10 million for the Housing Investment Trust Fund, and look forward to the Council's continued support for expanded affordable housing funding to ultimately ensure that every Prince George's family has a decent home to live in.

Transportation

We wish to comment on the DPWT CIP budget. We commend these items:

- \$20 million for infrastructure along the Blue Line Corridor including for complete streets
- \$5 million preauthorized for next year for the Central Avenue Connector Trail
- Pedestrian safety improvements -- giving priority to the fixing areas with a high incidence of pedestrian related crashes.
- Green street improvements - for environmental facilities, pedestrian and bicyclist safety improvements, landscaping, and street lights.

However, we have grave concerns regarding the Addison Road widening project (from 2 to 4 lanes), and the many others like it that claim to be addressing traffic safety. These road widening projects make people less safe, and put moving vehicles faster their overarching priority. Other goals are secondary, like safety and supporting economic development. DPWT's long list of road widening projects will not make the road network safer. It will perpetuate the county's already worst in the region record for traffic and pedestrian fatalities. Prince George's roads kill twice as many pedestrians as its peers Fairfax County and Montgomery County (see Attachment 1). Not

only are Prince George's roads more dangerous than its neighbors', but these roads are also impeding the county's economic development and transit-oriented development goals.

While we commend the funding for pedestrian safety project, we urge the county to prevent the construction of these dangerous, high speed, overly wide roads in the first place. It is the wide crossing distances and high speeds that are killing people walking and biking. We urge the Council to tell DPWT to redesign the Addison Road project with the goals of increasing safety and access, rather than reducing the seconds of delay for motor vehicles as the supreme performance metric (see Attachment 2). You can prevent a more dangerous road from being built *before* spending the tens of millions of dollars to speed up traffic and create more risk, and cause more traffic crash injuries and deaths.

These excessive road designs are also killing economic development which thrives in walkable places where it's easy and safe to cross the street. To build the vibrant downtowns and transit centers envisioned for the Blue Line corridor, and throughout the county, the county needs to adopt best practices that right-size roads and put safety first. If we want vibrant, walkable places around Metro stations and towns, we should be designing roads for 25 MPH. [Higher vehicle speeds](#) are a fundamental threat to people walking and biking, and also undercut economic vitality.

The consequences of Prince George's disproportionate share of pedestrian deaths isn't just each tragedy of a life lost, it's also economic. The County Executive has put forward an inspiring vision of building great places around transit. But that vision depends on streets that are safe and inviting for walking and biking. To fulfill the vision, the County must build different kinds of streets to serve these places, making them truly walkable.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Cort
Policy Director

Attachments

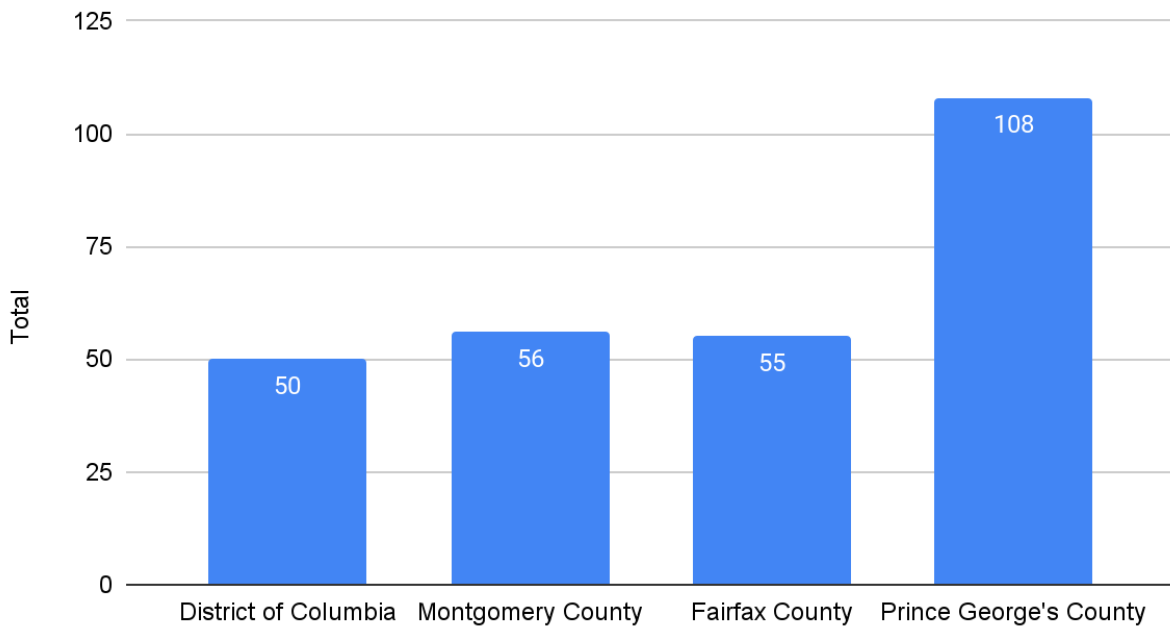
Attachment 1: Regional Pedestrian Fatalities: Prince George's has twice the pedestrian deaths of peers

Attachment 2: Alternative design for Addison Road project

Attachment 1: Regional Pedestrian Fatalities

Prince George's has twice the pedestrian deaths of peers

Total Pedestrian Fatalities



Source: [MWCOG](#) (2013-2017)

Attachment 2: Alternative design concept for Addison Road project

Addison Road I 4.66.0024 (DPWT [CIP 2023-2028](#))

From Walker Mill Road to MD 214, District Heights Suitland, District Heights & Vicinity Seven Rehabilitation \$23,667,000 TBD [located at the Addison Road-Seat Pleasant Metro station]

Description: This project consists of reconstructing Addison Road from Walker Mill Road to MD 214. First, four travel lanes with a median will be constructed. Improvements will include roadway widening, construction of crosswalks, sidewalks, landscaping, street lighting and a roadway median to improve the safety, function, capacity and appearance of the roadway.

Justification: The existing roadway and related infrastructure have deteriorated and require modification to meet current needs. The roadway's overall aesthetics and pedestrian access areas in the corridor warrant rehabilitation. This project will improve traffic flows, increase traffic safety in the area and provide better access to the Addison Road Metro Station.

CSG comments: The project justification is contradictory – widening the road to both “improve” (increase) traffic flows *and* increase traffic safety, and provide better access to the Addison Road Metro station. What the project does is increase the capacity of the roadway, increasing vehicle speeds, and making it less safe for people walking and bicycling. It adds pedestrian facilities onto a road design that is fundamentally more hazardous for pedestrians and bicyclists. All legs of the intersection of Addison Road and Central Avenue also provide an overly-wide cross section which increases the risk for people walking and bicycling.

The proposed change from 2 to 4 travel lanes plus a median will add crossing distance and number of lanes for pedestrians to cross and increase motor vehicle speeds. While adding missing sidewalks, crossings and a median can improve pedestrian safety, widening the crossing distance and increasing motor vehicle speeds, which are generated from multiple travel lanes, are likely to degrade rather than improve pedestrian safety and access. [Increased vehicle speeds](#) contribute to more serious pedestrian injury crashes and deaths.

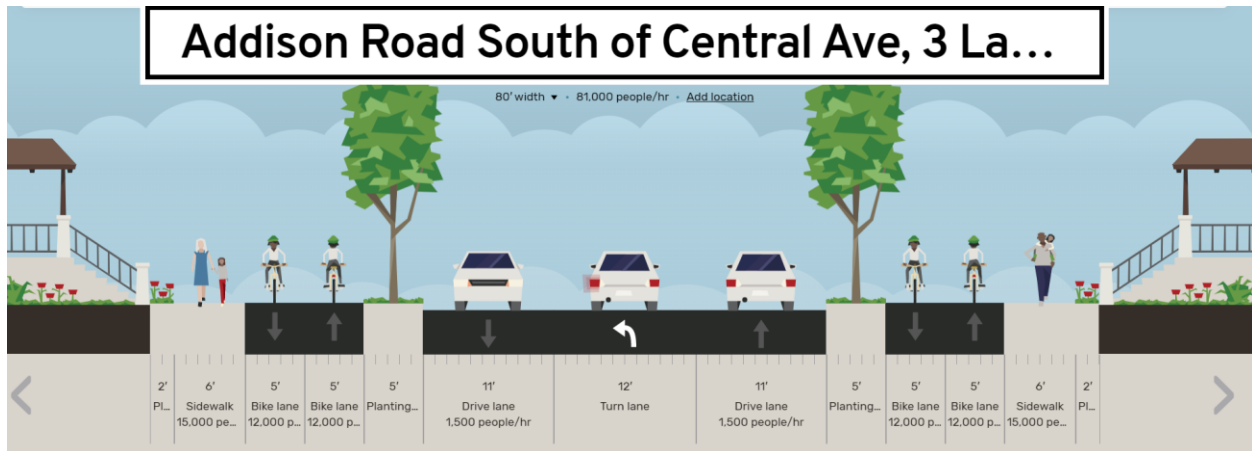
At best, it is of questionable benefit when compared with a cross section intentionally designed to improve pedestrian safety and access, and manage motor vehicle conflicts. We recommend an alternative design, building off of the [2017 Urban Street Design Standards](#) as a baseline, but revised to narrow the cross section. The Mixed Use Boulevard (A) - Center Turn Lane - 2 x 11' lanes, separated bike lanes, 25 MPH design speed, street type can be a beginning model. This idealized cross section, is much wider than the current right-of-way but likely similar to what is planned for the 4 lanes plus median right-of-way width.

The Center Turn Lane in this configuration, is not needed for the length of this roadway, but can be provided at intersections. The Center Turn Lane can also be designed as a median to support pedestrian crossings where needed.

From the DPWT Urban Street Design Standards (2017)

Additional Urban Street Type*	Minimum Right of Way***	Design Speed**	Total # of Travel Lanes	Minimum Lane Width	Median Width ***	Minimum Buffer	Minimum Turning Radius	On Street Parking	Minimum Sidewalk	Bike Facility
Mixed Use Boulevard (A) - 2 Travel Lanes	99' (89') (83')	25 mph	2	10' (11' if bus route)	16' (6') (0')	6'	15'	8'	8'	6.5' separated bike lane
Mixed Use Boulevard (B) - 2 Travel Lanes	92' (82') (76')	25 mph	2	10' (11' if bus route)	16' (6') (0')	6'	15'	8'	8'	5' bike lane

CSG proposed alternative modified 80' cross section for Addison Road



Our concept street type addresses pedestrian safety by retaining 2 travel lanes but adds a center turn lane that can also be used as a median to support crossings. Crossings should be supported by striped crosswalks and traffic signals designed to help pedestrians safely cross busy streets such as a Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon. Safe bicycling (and scooting) can be accommodated with a 2-way path on the same level with the sidewalk on one or both sides of the roadway. A bike path on the same level with the sidewalk minimizes maintenance concerns about a protected bike lane.

Two travel lanes – one in each direction -- reduces vehicle speeds since the pace is set by the slowest vehicle, rather than the fastest, which would be the case in a multilane roadway. The Center Turn Lane addresses concerns about smoothing traffic flow by reducing conflicts with turning vehicles. This configuration also enhances access to the Metro station by reducing friction from turning vehicles and better accommodating people walking and biking.

Vehicle trip projections from residential uses in the area should be re-assessed based on this more supportive walk/bike right-of-way design. Vehicle trips can be converted to walk, bike and scooter trips with a safer and more accessible design. Further reduction in vehicle trips can be achieved with Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures that incentivize non-driving trips.

Exceptions for Level of Service (LOS) standards should be permitted for the purpose of addressing Vision Zero goals and providing safer walk and bicycle travel, especially near transit and stores/services. If LOS is allowed to continue to determine street designs, with safety as a secondary or tertiary consideration, the county will never reach its Vision Zero goals.