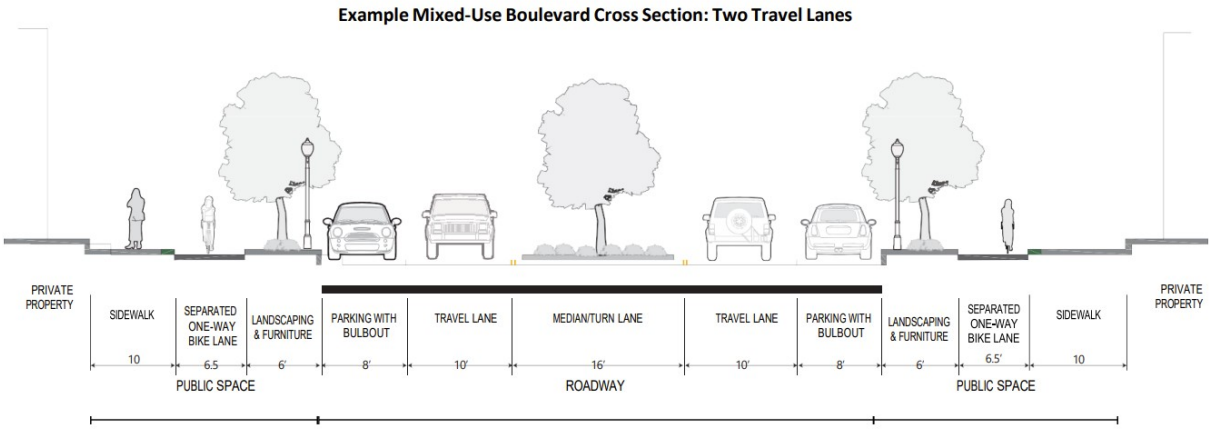
Walkable Urban Streets Act Factsheet

Council Bill 69, and Council Resolutions 67 and 68

The Walkable Urban Streets Act (CB 69) and resolutions (CR 67 and CR 68) update Prince George's County's people-friendly Urban Streets Design Standards and require they be used when the county undertakes road projects in designated centers. The updated standards establish safer streets for people walking and bicycling near Regional Transit Districts (e.g. Metro stations) and Local Centers, as identified in Plan Prince George's 2035, the county's land use plan. This legislation requires the use of walkable street designs which help spur economic growth and boost the vibrancy, safety, and appeal of Prince George's County mixed-use centers.

NACTO example of a redesign downtown thoroughfare - before and after. Source: NACTO Urban Street Design Guide



Source: 2017 Urban Street Design Standards, Prince George's Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T)

From speeding vehicles to walk-friendly streets

Prior to 2017, Prince George's County only used high-speed suburban road standards. The county's rules did not allow for streets to be designed for a speed of less than 30 mph, even in residential neighborhoods.

To fill the gap, the County Council instructed DPW&T to create standards for transit districts and local centers. Collaborating with other agencies, including the Department of Permitting and Inspections (DPIE), DPW&T developed Urban Street Design standards.

2017 Standards for Urban Street Designs

Principles	Standards for Regional Transit Districts and Local Centers
• Slower speeds • Shorter crossing distances • Reduced curb radii • Wider sidewalks • More bicycle facilities • Pedestrian amenities	• 25 mph design speed maximum • 2-4 travel lanes total roadway maximum • 10' travel lane widths (11' for bus routes) • 15' minimum (square) corner turning radius • Buffered walk and bike facilities • On-street vehicle parking with bulbouts

Source: DPW&T, 2017 Urban Street Design Standards. View proposed amended version in CR 68, Exhibit A and attached.

The Urban Street Design standards gave county agencies new templates to design streets that better fulfill the economic development agenda of creating multimodal places around Metro stations where walking, bicycling, and riding the bus could be safe and inviting modes of travel.

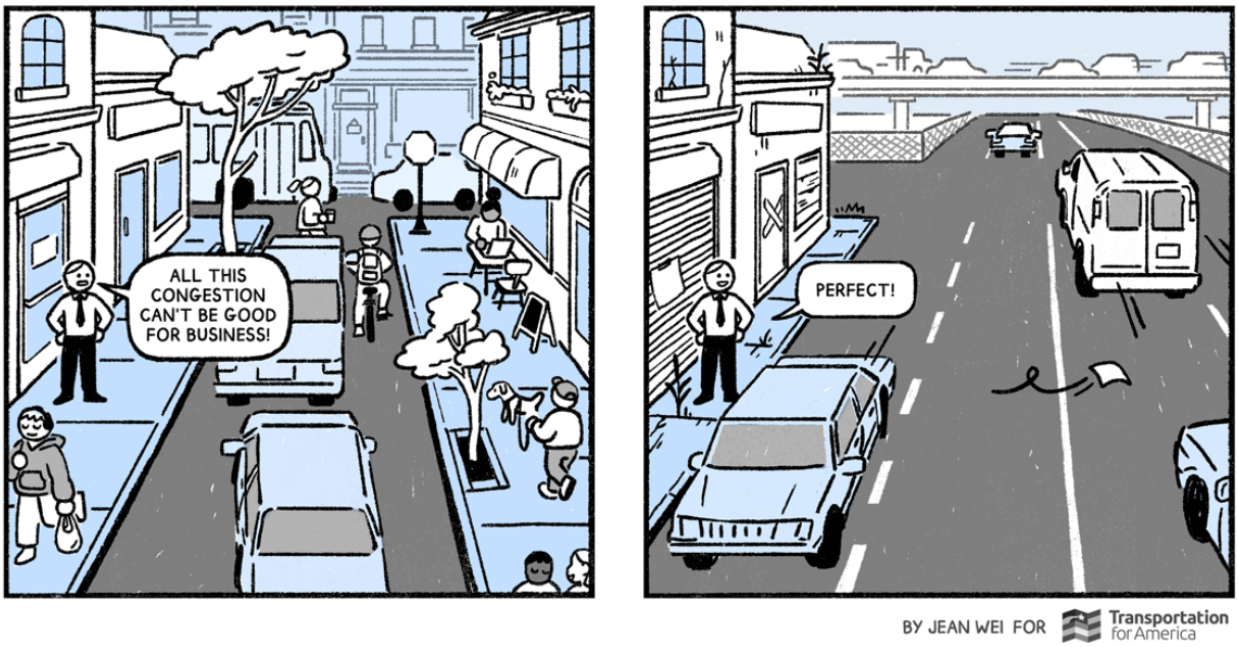
Why we need this legislation

County staff have only partially and inconsistently implemented their 2017 Urban Street Design Standards. Street designs in urban places are falling short of the county's goal of safer, slower-speed streets around designated centers. As a result, streets in and near transit centers have remained overly-wide, fueling high speed traffic. This makes the road dangerous for all users – people walking, bicycling, riding transit, and driving. The county agencies have not taken advantage of opportunities to create the kinds of safer, vibrant, walkable, transit-oriented streets and places envisioned in Plan Prince George's 2035. For specific examples, see our companion fact sheet: Examples of urban street projects falling short of the 2017 standards.

County staff continue to build overly-wide roads with the aim of reducing delay for vehicles, and eliminating traffic congestion during a peak period, or for future projected traffic. These wide roads are left open most of the time, generating higher driving speeds, and more risks for all

road users. The county's traffic models often overpredict future traffic volumes, and do not adequately account for transit-oriented communities, and increased walking, biking, and transit use. Designing only for projected vehicle travel becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. The wider and faster the road, the less inviting it is for people walking, biking or taking the bus, and the more driving it attracts.

This approach gives priority to speed over safety. It also devalues the economic development that occurs in a place where people want to be. Some congestion is an indicator of a successful local economy. Plan 2035 recognizes this and the county's transportation review standards are set for an urban level of traffic volumes for streets around mixed use transit centers that focus on improving multimodal access.



Improvements proposed in CB 69 for walkable urban streets

1. Incorporates urban street design standards into the county's Specifications and Standards for Roadways and Bridges of the Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T), which is the essential guidance that the two county agencies -- DPW&T and DPIE -- rely on for street design decisions.
2. *Requires* use of the urban street design standards inside Regional Transit Districts and Local Centers, and *allows* them to be used elsewhere.
3. Uses current traffic volumes to determine the appropriate number of travel lanes, rather than unrealistic future projections. For Urban Boulevards, which are the urban street type for arterials or collectors around Metro stations and other centers, the bill sets a standard for determining if the street should be 2, 3 or 4 lanes, based on published traffic volumes to achieve the appropriate traffic flow set for these urban centers.
4. Clarifies that Urban Boulevard street types are to be applied to arterial and collector roads.
5. Converts the desired corner turning radius from a *minimum* to *maximum* of 15 feet. A tight turning radius slows down turning vehicles and shortens crossing distances for pedestrians. Fifteen feet and smaller are the national best practice for urban streets.
6. Prohibits slip lanes (high speed right turn lanes) and multiple left turn lanes.
7. Changes the minimum travel lane width of 10 feet to a maximum, or to 11 feet maximum in the case of a bus route. These travel lane widths are appropriate in urban areas and have a positive impact on a street's safety without impacting traffic operations.
8. Adds a Transit Priority Mixed Use Boulevard 4-Lane cross-section to prepare for future bus lanes, to be refined by DPW&T, relying on guidance from leading urban street design guides.
9. Includes reporting requirements for implementation of the urban design standards, and requirements for public posting of proposed street project designs.
10. Requires DPW&T to develop a 10-year plan to bring the streets in the county's designated Regional Transit Districts and Local Centers into compliance with the 2023 Urban Street Design Standards, and report annually on progress to the County Council on the comprehensive efforts to bring all these streets into compliance.

One more important change is needed

Under current law, DPW&T and DPIE have essentially unlimited authority to depart from the urban street design standards, with no explanation. The new bill should be amended to carefully review and limit the situations in which the agencies can deviate from the updated standards.

Timeline

Bill sponsors introduced CB 69, CR 67, and CR 68 to the Prince George's County Council on July 5, 2023. The council bill and resolutions have been assigned to the Transportation, Infrastructure, Environment, and Energy Committee (TIEE), which is set to start discussions in September.

For more information contact:

Cheryl Cort, Coalition for Smarter Growth: cheryl@smartergrowth.net
Seth Grimes, Washington Area Bicyclist Association: seth.grimes@waba.org

Summary of Existing Standards and Urban Street Standards

The following table summarizes the key design elements and street dimensions for the county's current roadway types and compares them to the [~~proposed~~] street typologies described above and corresponding urban street standards. The additional urban street type standards shall be used in Regional Transit Districts and Local Centers, they may be used in the rest of the county. Current street type standards are prohibited in Regional Transit Districts and Local Centers.

Current Street Type	Right of Way	Design Speed	Total # of Travel Lanes	Minimum Lane Widths	Median	Buffer	Minimum Turning Radius****	On Street Parking	Sidewalk	Bike Facility
Urban Arterial Road	120' (130')	50 mph	6	11'-12'	24' (26')	6' (5')	50'	none	5'	none /(5' bike lane)
Urban Major Collector Road	100'	40 mph	4	11'-12'	20 (16')	8' (6')	45'	none	5'	none /(5' bike lane)
Urban 4-Lane Collector Road	80'	40 mph	4	11'-12'	none	11' (5')	45'	none	5'	none /(5' bike lane)
Urban 5-Lane Collector Road	80' (90')	40 mph	5	11'	none	5'	45'	none	5'	none /(5' bike lane)
Urban Commercial and Industrial Road	70'	35 mph	4 (2)	11' (12')	none	6'	50'	(11')	5'	none
Urban Primary Residential Road	60' (70')	35 mph	2 (3)	11' (12')	none	7'	37'	7' (8')	5'	none /(5' bike lane)
Urban Secondary Residential Road	50'	30 mph	2 (1)	11' (12')	none	7'	37'	(7')	5'	none
Additional Urban Street Type*	**[~~Minimum~~] Right of Way*** **	**Design Speed****	**Total # of Travel Lanes**	**[~~Minimum~~] Maximum Lane Widths**	**Median Width*****	**Minimum Buffer**	**[~~Minimum~~] Maximum 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
Mixed Use Boulevard (A) -4 Travel Lanes	119' (109')	25 mph	4	10' (11' if bus route)	16' (6')	6'	15'	8'	8'	6.5' separated bike lane
Mixed Use Boulevard (B) - 4 Travel Lanes	116' (106')	25 mph	4	10' (11' if bus route)	16 (6')	6'	15'	8'	8'	5' bike lane with 2' painted buffer
Mixed Use Boulevard – Transit Priority – 4 Lanes*****	119' (109')	25 mph	2-4	10' (11' if bus lane)	16'(6')	6'	15'	8'	8'	6.5' separated bike lane
Mixed Use Boulevard (A) – Center Turn Lane	93'	25 mph	2	10' (11' if bus route)	none	6'	15'	8'	8'	6.5' separated bike lane
Mixed Use Boulevard (B) – Center Turn Lane	86'	25 mph	2	10' (11' if bus route)	none	6'	15'	8'	8'	5' bike lane
Neighborhood Connector (A)	83' (75')	20-25 mph	2	10'	none	6'	15'	8'	8'	6.5' separated bike lane
Neighborhood Connector (B)	66' (58')	20-25 mph	2	10'	none	6'	15'	8'	8'	Option to add 5' bike lane
Neighborhood Residential	60' (53')	20 mph	2	10'	none	6'	15'	7'	6'	Option to add 5' bike lane
Industrial Street	48' (57')	20 mph	2	11'	none	6'	15'	(9')	6'	none
Shared Street	50'	10 mph	2	10'	none	6'	15'	none	8'	none
Alley	20'	10 mph	1	10'	none	none	15'	none	none	none

* Streets in Regional Transit Districts and Local Centers
** For additional horizontal and vertical design constraints relevant to these designs speeds, refer to AASHTO: A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets
*** Figures in parenthesis indicate alternative configurations related to reduction in median width or optional on-street parking shown in the standard details.
**** Slip lanes and multiple left turn lanes prohibited. ***** Transit Priority cross-section to be determined by DPW&T, and NACTO sources

Source: CR 067-2023 Exhibit A, page 14