BIKE HOWARD

Howard County Bicycle Master Plan

Executive Summary
The Vision of BikeHoward

“Howard County, Maryland seeks to be a bicycle-friendly County where residents and visitors, schoolchildren and seniors, men and women feel comfortable and safe bicycling on our roads and paths as a means of daily transportation and healthy recreation.”

Purpose

BikeHoward is the Howard County Bicycle Master Plan. The primary purpose of BikeHoward is to provide a framework to guide the county’s future actions to improve conditions for bicyclists and promote bicycling as a safe and convenient travel option. In other words:

Making it easy for people of all ages and abilities to get around by bike in Howard County.

BikeHoward provides recommendations and guidance in the following general categories:

- Policy updates
- Programs providing education, encouragement and enforcement
- Infrastructure improvements to create a connected bike network

It is important to note that details on committed funding sources for the infrastructure improvements are not identified or confirmed. The network is aspirational and provides a vision to work towards over time. Funding will require creativity in acquiring grants, coordinating with the County resurfacing schedule, working with developers and exploring various funding sources at the local, state and federal level. Providing the details of the desired bike network will be valuable for maximizing these funding opportunities, however, BikeHoward does not commit Howard County to funding all of the structured projects.

Goals

Create a Safe and Seamless Network: For bicycling to grow, cyclists must have a safe, intuitive, easy and seamless network of bikeways that connects them to where they want to go: schools, shops, parks and work, with facilities that will serve cyclists of all skill and comfort levels.

Increase Participation and Safety through bicycle educational programs for school-aged children and youth, and awareness campaigns for motor vehicle users, to make bicycling normal, popular and accepted transportation option.

Update County Policies to ensure that the County’s infrastructure and land development policies fully accommodate and encourage bicycling.

Coordinate with Maryland state legislators and agency officials to accommodate bicycle travel through:

- state highways and public transit services
- regulation of utility rights-of-way
- administration of storm water treatment and water quality regulations

Promote Active Living by including bicycling as an active component of a livable community that is physically healthy, economically sound and environmentally sustainable.
Recommendations for Policy

BikeHoward provides several recommendations for updating County policy that would significantly improve bicycle accommodation. Most significantly:

- Develop a county wide “complete streets” policy. This would ensure that all streets are designed, built, operated and maintained to enable safe access for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit users of all ages and abilities.

- Update Howard County roadway and bikeway design guidelines. A proposal for these updates is provided in Appendix A.

- Update development policies and regulations that govern private development and site plan review to include measures that accommodate people on bikes.

Recommendations for Programs

A comprehensive approach to becoming a bike friendly community includes programming efforts to provide education, encouragement and enforcement. These efforts need to be ongoing and far reaching. They are generally low cost and can be incorporated into existing programs and organizations.

- Education is critical to ensure that all road users understand their rights and responsibilities on the road and to provide the necessary skills and awareness for people to coexist, whether they are riding a bicycle, walking, or driving a motor vehicle.

- Encouragement is important to boost participation and help more people enjoy the benefits of getting around by bike. In particular, the large “interested but concerned” category includes many people that would like to ride more, but may need the assistance of a group ride, a mentor, a goal or a challenge to make the change and integrate biking into their lives. The “interested but concerned” group is estimated to include 60% of the general population.

- Enforcement is an important element to safety on the roads for everyone, including the most vulnerable road users, i.e. cyclists and pedestrians. This can be done through coordination with County Police to improve compliance with existing laws. Especially important is the bicycle mounted police program and park ranger program. Maintaining or expanding these programs provides increased knowledge, understanding and enforcement of laws and behaviors that affect the safety of people on bikes.
Recommendations for Infrastructure Improvements

A connected network is critical to accommodating bike trips in Howard County. To ensure the network is easy to use for people of all ages and abilities, the focus is on high quality, separated facilities such as off-street pathways and protected bike lanes. These facilities need to be continuous rather than disjointed, and need to connect places that people want to go to.

The proposed BikeHoward network was developed with extensive community input, consultant expertise and staff guidance from many departments. It is organized into short-term (10 years), mid-term (10 to 20 years) and long-term (20 to 30 years) improvements.

**Recommended Network Improvements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bikeway Facility Type</th>
<th>Network (Miles)</th>
<th>Total (Miles or Locations)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>On-Road Bikeway Improvements</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>394 mi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor Upgrades to Existing Facilities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for New Facilities</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New and Upgraded Pathways and Protected Bike Lanes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>160 mi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrade Existing Pathways</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construct New Shared Use Paths &amp; Protected Bike Lanes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spot Improvements</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>191 Locations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trail Access and Bike Linkage Improvements</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge and Tunnel Improvements (new and upgrades)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intersection Improvements</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Protected Bike Lane*
The network builds on the existing facilities with a phased approach over time. The core of the existing facilities is located in Columbia, with its extensive system of shared use pathways. The BikeHoward network outlines how to effectively grow this network of biking facilities by filling in missing connections and branching out to new areas. Over time, the resulting biking network will look something like this: