

## APPENDIX 2 – STAKEHOLDER AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

On May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014, the study team sat down with community stakeholders and members of the public to discuss the benefits of bike share, provide an overview of the planning efforts underway, and solicit feedback on the feasibility of bike share in Howard County. The day began with four stakeholder meetings targeted at the following groups:

- Public-sector partners
- Local non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- Representatives from Howard County's economic development and tourism offices
- Howard County Community College

Following these meetings, an open house was held in the evening with the general public. The meeting provided an overview of the plan underway and concluded with an open discussion session.

Throughout the day a number of common themes emerged that helped frame the discussion of the feasibility of bike share in Howard County. Participants voiced what they saw as the opportunities and challenges faced by bike share in the county. The discussion also brought up a number of goals participants felt bike share should strive to achieve. Finally the discussion touched on how a bike share system in Howard County would integrate with existing and planned systems in the region.

### Opportunities for Bike Share

Howard County is an active community, with many people cycling already for recreational purposes. The county, especially in Columbia, has an extensive trail network that connects to recreational facilities, village centers, and parks. Participants saw bike share as a means to further promote active living, allowing residents to explore local parks, lakes and trails.

Bike share also could serve a mobility need in Howard County. Bike share could provide a last-mile connection to transit, connecting commuters from the MARC train to their homes and places of work, including the National Security Agency (NSA) in Ann Arundel County. Columbia features a number of large employers, the Mall in Columbia, and Howard County Community College, all within biking distance to

residential areas. Residents could use bike share for non-work trips as well. Stations could provide improved access to the county's extensive library system, local recreation centers, and retail destinations.

Finally, participants saw economic benefits to bike share. Howard County's economy depends on attracting a well-educated, mobile, and highly-competitive workforce. Bike share provides an additional amenity that sets the community apart from its peers. The county attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors a year to its festivals and concerts; bike share would encourage people to explore the county more when they visit. Although Howard County is one of the wealthiest counties in the nation, not all residents are so well-off. Bike share could provide additional mobility options for low-income households without car-access and connect residents to jobs, services, and retail they otherwise could not reach.

Participants suggested a number of locations for bike share in the county. Generally the discussion focused on Columbia. Stakeholders and the public saw opportunities for bike share along the corridor that includes downtown Columbia, Howard County Community College, and Howard County General Hospital. These areas are experiencing a great deal of development, and especially at the community college, there are parking constraints.

Columbia's lakes were another potential location for bike share. Providing bicycles at places like Lake Elkhorn and Centennial Lake could facilitate "lake-to-lake" trips. Outside Columbia, participants saw opportunities for bike share along the Route 1 corridor, in Maple Lawn, and between MARC stations and the NSA.

### Challenges to Bike Share

In many ways Howard County is an untested market for bike sharing in the United States. Some participants questioned how bike share could function in such a low-density, suburban area. How would bike share function in Columbia's villages, where residents are dispersed across a large area? One participant pointed out that bike share stations in the suburban areas of Montgomery County, MD are attracting little ridership. As driving is the most convenient way to get around in Howard

County, there is less incentive to adopt bike share as a means of travel than in places like Washington DC.

Cycling infrastructure is another challenge. Howard County has few bike lanes or other on-street cycling facilities. The wide streets encourage fast driving and are a hostile environment for biking. While Columbia has an extensive trail system, the lack of wayfinding makes it hard to navigate even for longtime residents. The county's hilly topography is another barrier to biking. Some participants questioned whether bike share bikes without electronic assistance would be practical.

Finally, bike share faces regulatory hurdles to implementation in Howard County. The county's zoning code would prohibit selling ad space on bike share stations, a potential source of operating revenue. In Columbia, strict sign regulation governed by each of the community's village covenants, would make it impossible to create one unified station design that conforms to each village's sign restrictions. Changing the sign regulations would be a time-consuming process as it would require separate special exemptions for each village.

### **Goals for Bike Share**

Participants identified the following goals for bike share:

- Improve public health by encouraging physical activity
- Reduce parking demands in places like the Howard County Community College and downtown Columbia
- Promote a cycling culture in the county
- Ensure a system that is fiscally sustainable
- Provide a transportation alternative to driving
- Enhance the mobility of residents and visitors
- Encourage visitors to explore the county more, especially tourists attending local concerts or fairs
- Provide a last-mile connection to transit
- Make Howard County more economically competitive

### **Integration with Other Systems**

As an equal share of residents work in Baltimore and Washington DC, participants generally did not show a preference for integrating with the system in one city over the other. One participant stated that integration with Capital Bikeshare should be a priority, simply because

the system is so extensive. Participants recognized that bike share may take a different form in Howard County and that integration concerns should not limit the options considered during this study.

### **Private-Sector Funding Opportunities**

An important component of determining bike share feasibility is identifying funding sources for capital and operations. Participants felt that there were a number of potential funding partners in the community that could help support bike share. Major institutions like Howard County Community College and the General Hospital would make excellent partners as they have existing transportation needs that bike share could support. The county has a strong employer base that might be interested in sponsoring in bike share. Developers may be interested in funding bike share as a way to reduce parking requirements. Finally, there are existing non-profits and foundations that are active in investing in Howard County.

## **STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS**

### **PUBLIC SECTOR GROUP**

#### **Participants**

- David Cookson, Howard County Department of Planning
- Scott Templin, Columbia Association
- Allison Calkins, Office of Transportation
- Bob Frances, Department of Licensing and Permits
- John Byrd, Department of Parks and Recreation

#### **Facilitators**

- Mauricio Hernandez, Toole Design Group
- Andrew Zalewski, Foursquare Integrated Transportation Planning

### **Summary**

The purpose of this meeting was to brief public sector stakeholders on the bike share feasibility study underway, discuss the potential for bike share within the county, and better understand the challenges to implementing bike share. The meeting began with a discussion of how bike share works. Participants were interested in how much memberships typically cost, how large the stations are, and who would operate a system. Stakeholders provided valuable information on the

regulatory challenges bike share faces in the community and discussed their goals for a potential system.

### **Background**

Howard County features world class public amenities, including an extensive trail system and park network. The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) is already studying the feasibility of increasing private sector involvement in funding parks and recreation facilities. DPR sees potential in private firms sponsoring public facilities.

Financially, operating funds in the county are likely to be more challenging to identify than capital funding. The stakeholders felt that bike share could receive a public funding commitment from the county if strong public support is demonstrated. None of the government agencies present had the financial resources available to fund bike share in their current budgets.

### **Challenges to Bike Share**

There are existing advertising and signage restrictions that pose potential barriers to implementing bike share. The county has a ban on off-premise advertising which would forbid the selling of advertising space on bike share stations.

Existing signage regulations, notably in Columbia, are another regulatory barrier to implementing bike share. The covenants of each village in Columbia separately govern the appearance of signage. These regulations are some of the most restrictive in the country and, as stands, would make it impossible to design a bike share stations that conforms to each village's signage code. While there have been multiple attempts at reforming the code since the 1970's, signage regulations remain largely unchanged. Any change to the code would have to be enacted by each village council.

### **Opportunities for Bike Share**

The group saw a number of opportunities for bike share in the county. There are a number of organizations that could be key partners in supporting bike share, including the Horizon Foundation and the county's major employers, such as Applied Physics Laboratory (APL) and the National Security Agency (NSA).

From a health and recreation standpoint, bike share would provide residents new opportunities for physical activity. Users could ride bike share to county parks, reducing the pressure on parking, or access community resources such as recreation centers and libraries. Participants saw bike share as benefiting a diverse population in the county, including the county's growing senior population.

Finally, bike share could improve mobility for county residents. Stakeholders saw opportunity for bike share to provide last-mile connections to transit. Bike share could make communities like Columbia and Maple Lawn less car dependent. Bike share would fit within existing transportation demand management (TDM) policies aimed at reducing single-occupancy auto use. Finally bike share could expand transportation options for low-income residents, most notably along the Route 1 corridor.

### **Goals for Bike Share**

Participants identified the following goals for bike share:

- Fiscal sustainability
- Promote environmental sustainability
- Support active living and improve public health
- Reduce driving to county parks
- Provide a last mile connection to transit
- Facilitate short trips by means other than driving
- Expand mobility options for low income residents

### **NON-PROFIT STAKEHOLDERS**

#### **Participants**

- Jane Dembner, Columbia Association
- Sean Harbaugh, Columbia Association
- Alex Obrecht, Bike Maryland
- Chris Tsien, Bicycling Advocates of Howard County
- Larry Schoen, Transportation Advocates

#### **Facilitators**

- David Cookson, Howard County Department of Planning
- Alison Cohen, Toole Design Group
- Mauricio Hernandez, Toole Design Group
- Andrew Zalewski, Foursquare Integrated Transportation Planning

## Summary

This session brought together stakeholders from non-governmental organizations, including Columbia Association, Transportation Advocates, Bike Maryland, and Bicycling Advocates of Howard County. Participants all were familiar with bike share and most had used bike share in other cities, most notably Capital Bikeshare in Washington DC. A number of stakeholders had questions about bike share, including about technology, ways feasibility is determined, and whether being unbanked is a barrier to bike share use. The group helped define a number of opportunities and challenges bike share faces in the County.

## Challenges to Bike Share

The group was concerned whether Howard County's suburban land uses and auto-oriented road network provide conditions conducive to making bike share successful. Participants saw bike share as supporting strategic objectives like improving cycling infrastructure but were not sure if bike sharing could succeed without more bike-friendly streets. Stakeholders wondered how bike share can serve low-density residential neighborhoods, such as Columbia's villages. One participant stated: "When I think of Columbia and who lives here, I wonder how bike share can work". Major employment centers near Columbia such as Gateway are challenging to reach by bike.

There are other barriers to bike share usage. The group saw Columbia's restrictive signage covenants as a challenge for bike share. As each of Columbia's villages has separate covenants in place, creating a uniform exemption for bike share would be a complicated effort.

Columbia's extensive trail network is an asset, but the lack of wayfinding across the network makes it hard to navigate the trails. Bike share is expected to draw in inexperienced riders who would not be familiar with the trail network.

## Opportunities for Bike Share

Overall the group felt that bike share could benefit Howard County. Howard County is already a very active community. Columbia features an extensive trail network that bike share could build off from. One participant saw an opportunity to create a "lake to lake" bike share system that connects Columbia's multiple lakes and parks such as Centennial Park, Lake Kittamaqundi, and Lake Elkhorn.

Downtown Columbia, Howard County General Hospital and the Howard County Community College were mentioned as promising locations for bikes share. The college features a large student body and too little parking to accommodate demand. The completion of the trail between the Community College, the hospital and downtown will establish a corridor of destinations that bike share could serve. Bike share could connect users to Columbia's recreation facilities and libraries as well. The community features one of the most extensive library systems in the country. Recreation centers operated by Columbia Association see hundreds of thousands of visits each year.

Howard County has existing mobility needs that bike share could help address. The system would improve connection to the MARC stations, especially along the Route 1 corridor. The NSA, located just across the county line in Ann Arundel County, is Howard County's largest employer. Bike share could provide an alternate mode for county residents commuting to jobs at the NSA.

## Integration with Neighboring Communities

When asked whether integration with Baltimore's future bike share system or Capital Bikeshare is more important, participants saw integration with Capital Bikeshare as more appealing as it has a large existing network of stations. Since an equal number of residents work in Baltimore and Washington DC, integration with one system over another does not yield greater benefits to county commuters. One participant voiced concern that striving to integrate bike share with a system like Capital Bikeshare may "price us out of the market".

## Goals for Bike Share

Participants identified the following goals for bike share:

- Promote public health and physical activity
- Get more people to ride bicycles
- Improve local mobility
- Increase the visibility of alternative modes such as biking
- Shift trips away from automobiles
- Promote complete streets and cycling-friendly policies

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STAKEHOLDERS**

### **Participants**

- Rachelina Bonacci, Howard County Tourism
- Terry Owens, Howard County Economic Development Agency
- Scott Templin, Columbia Association

### **Facilitators**

- David Cookson, Howard County Department of Planning
- Alison Cohen, Toole Design Group
- Mauricio Hernandez, Toole Design Group
- Andrew Zalewski, Foursquare Integrated Transportation Planning

### **Summary**

The study team met with representatives from Howard County Tourism and Howard County Economic Development Agency (EDA) to learn more about Howard County and the potential of bike share to support economic development and tourism locally. While neither representative was a regular bike share user, they were familiar with the concept of bike share and its impact in other communities, notably Capital Bikeshare in Washington DC.

### **County Economy**

Howard County features a dynamic local economy supported by one of the most highly educated work-forces in the country. The county ranks as the third wealthiest per capita in the United States, with a median household income of over \$100,000. About an even proportion of residents work in the Washington DC region, Baltimore region, and in Howard County. The county's economy features a high concentration of knowledge industry jobs, with employment focused around technology, defense, and professional services. The local economy depends on attracting a highly educated workforce. Howard County sees itself as competing with other major suburban communities nationwide that provide a similar high quality of life such as Cherry Hill, NJ and Reston, VA.

### **Tourism**

Howard County's tourism strategy is focused around both attracting visitors to the county and retaining tourism dollars from local residents. The county's most popular tourist attraction is Merriweather Post Pavilion, an outdoor concert venue in Columbia that attracts a number

of major music festivals. Approximately 350,000 people attend concerts at the venue every year, many of them from out of county.

Other major attractions include:

- Historic downtown Ellicott City, a major draw for residents in the region
- Agri-tourism, including the county's 23 farmers markets
- Local festivals, including Maryland's largest wine festival
- Outdoor recreation opportunities; Howard County has over 100 miles of trails and is a major mountain-biking destination
- Adventure destination along Route 1 such as a BMX park and laser tag

In addition to leisure visitors, the county is competitive at attracting business travelers and benefits from its position between Washington DC and Baltimore that provides "two cities for the price of one".

The county competes with other exurban local markets such as Loudon County, VA in attracting visitors. One of the greatest challenges is to encourage visitors coming to Howard County for events to spend more time in the area.

### **Opportunities for Bike Share**

The group felt very positive about bike share in Howard County. From an economic-development perspective it will provide an additional amenity to attract the educated and highly mobile workforce its economy depends on. Howard County's major employers could be attracted to sponsoring the program. While the type of industries based in Howard County (defense and professional services) may not be particularly interested in sponsorships as a means to build brand awareness, they have a history of actively investing in the community.

For tourism, bicycling is also increasingly important. The Sheraton hotel in Columbia already has bicycles available for guests. Proximity to bike share has become a selling point for businesses and hotels in Washington DC. Bike share could be a means to help tourists explore the county, especially drawing visitors from Merriweather Post Pavilion to downtown Columbia.

Parts of Howard County, such as downtown Columbia, are increasingly becoming more dense and developed. Bike share could help serve this growing area. Other opportunities for bike share include at the community college and at the trails to Catonsville and BWI airport.

The group was not discouraged by the limited examples of bike share in a suburban setting. Howard County has a history of "firsts" and they saw an opportunity for the county to be a pioneer in bringing bike share to a new setting.

### **Goals for Bike Share**

The group saw bike share as supporting the following goals:

- Public health
- Providing an alternative to driving and reduce the impact of future development on traffic congestion and parking
- Tourist amenity; brand Howard County as a bicycle destination
- Economic development tool

## **MAJOR INSTITUTIONS GROUP**

### **Participants**

- Bob Marietta, Howard County Community College
- Scott Templin, Columbia Association

### **Facilitators**

- Alison Cohen, Toole Design Group
- David Cookson, Howard County Department of Planning
- Mauricio Hernandez, Toole Design Group
- Andrew Zalewski, Foursquare Integrated Transportation Planning

### **Summary**

This meeting was conceived as an opportunity to talk with major employers about bike share in Howard County. Only Howard County Community College was able to attend but the Community College was interested in the plan and will likely be a key stakeholder if bike share moves forward.

### **Overview of Community College**

The Howard County Community College is a major anchor institution in Howard County, with over 30,000 enrolled students (13,000 full-time

equivalents) and approximately 2,000 employees. The majority of students attend classes at the main campus in Columbia, however satellite campuses are located in Laurel, Mount Airy, and Gateway.

The Community College continues to expand and a new master plan is currently under development. The northern end of campus, home today to the campus's core, is nearly entirely built-out and future development will likely occur to the south.

The growth of the campus has placed strains on the existing parking supply. The main campus features only 3,000 parking spaces on its main campus, with additional parking available off-site. There is nearly not enough parking to allow every student and employee to drive to campus. Many students are dropped off at campus, walk, or take transit. The majority of the students live within five miles of campus. A trail is currently under construction that will provide direct access from the Community College to downtown Columbia.

As classes are spread across the 120 acre campus, some students drive from one location on campus to another, farther exasperated parking constraints and auto-congestion on campus. As the campus continues to grow to the south, the need to encourage non-motorized circulation through campus will grow.

### **Opportunities for Bike share**

Howard County Community College seems very interested in bike share, both as a means to connect students and employees to campus, but also as a way to provide improved campus mobility. The construction of the trail link to campus will make cycling to campus much more appealing. The link will also provide an alternative for students traveling to shops and food in downtown Columbia.

The Community College is interested in helping support a bike share system in Howard County. It sees a lot of potential in bike share and may explore implementing a system even if no countywide system is established. The college does not see itself as operating the system but would be willing to discuss helping financially support the system in some way.

### **Goals for Bike Share:**

Participants identified the following goals for bike share:

- Provide an alternative to driving and reduce the demand on parking
- Promote sustainability on campus
- Promote improved health and wellness of faculty and students

## **PUBLIC MEETING**

### **Overview**

The following are highlights of the feedback provided at the public meeting on May 1<sup>st</sup>:

- “I live in Oakland Mills and the thought of picking up a bicycle in the village center and biking to the mall is appealing. I hate going to the mall because of parking”
- Bike share has very low ridership at many suburban Capital Bikeshare stations, including stations in Rockville, Maryland. How can bike share succeed in Howard County when it is poorly utilized in nearby peer communities?
- Columbia has very different conditions from cities where bike share is successful. The lack and cost of parking make bike share appealing for short trips in Washington DC. In Columbia there are few barriers to driving so residents have little incentive to use bike share.
- The steep grades in Howard County can be a barrier to bicycle usage. Some participants voiced interest in E-bikes. One person present expressed that E-bikes present an infrastructure challenge as most bike share stations are solar powered and existing solar systems do not provide the kind of power necessary to charge bicycles.
- Wayfinding for cyclists is a challenge in Howard County. While Columbia has an extensive path network, the lack of signage makes it hard to navigate around.
- Bike share may have to serve a different market here than it does in urban areas. Howard County was designed for the

automobile. Parking is plentiful and easy to find. A bike share system may serve more of a recreation purpose than it would in Downtown DC or Baltimore.