

60 Growing public anger over the intrusion of traffic into once tranquil suburban communities could very well be the impetus to sweeping public-private initiatives and reforms.

—Robert Cervero

## SCOPE

The Transportation Goal of the General Plan Refinement places renewed emphasis on quality of life considerations, sustained mobility, and appropriate access for Montgomery County's residents and workers. Emphasis is placed on the relationship of Transportation to other goals of the Refinement, especially in the areas of land use, housing, environment, and economic activity. This goal also addresses the need to operate more efficiently in moving people and goods from, to, through, and within Montgomery County. The Refinement focuses not only on transportation infrastructure — its type, scale, location, and extent — but also on the public policies needed to meet mobility, access, and quality of life considerations.

## KEY CONCEPTS

While some increases in traffic congestion may be a fact of life for the future, maintaining mobility is essential. Making better use of the transportation system already in place, getting more people into trains, cars, and buses in future rights-of-way, and creating an environment conducive to walking and biking are all necessary elements to achieve an affordable balance between the demand for, and supply of, transportation. Even with a more efficient use of the existing transportation system, additions to the network will be necessary to support this Refinement's Land Use Goal. Public safety is a primary concern in the design of transportation facilities.

# TRANSPORTATION

## CHANGES FROM THE 1969 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

The 1969 Circulation Goal was to “provide a balanced circulation system which most efficiently serves the economic, social, and environmental structures of the area.” The General Plan Refinement renames the goal to the Transportation Goal. One important conceptual change in this goal is the movement away from accommodating travel demand and towards managing travel demand and encouraging the availability of alternatives to the single-occupant vehicle. The Refinement effort thus abandons phrases such as “carry the required volume” and “accommodate travel demand” because the demand for single-occupant vehicle travel will usually outstrip the County’s ability to meet it.

The concept of transit has broadened to include provisions for high occupancy vehicles. Largely because of increased affluence and changes in commuting patterns, the rate of drive-alone commuting is higher today than at the time of the 1969 General Plan Update. An important challenge for the future will be making transit more price- and time-competitive with drive-alone travel. As was recognized in the 1969 General Plan Update, it is vitally important that the emerging multi-modal transportation network be well-connected and that transferring among the component parts be as convenient as possible.

The General Plan Refinement supports walking and biking as legitimate means of travel beyond the health, recreation, and aesthetic dimensions ascribed to them by the 1969 General Plan Update. Expanding the current network of sidewalks and bike paths and bringing related land uses within walking distance of

each other are steps in the right direction.

The General Plan Refinement also acknowledges the importance of strategic transportation pricing in managing future transportation demand. Subsidies, user fees, and taxes all can be used to balance some of the cost differentials that have traditionally been found among the different modes of transportation.

## INTERRELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER GOALS

### Land Use

Realizing Montgomery County’s potential for economic growth, while preserving its natural resources and making efficient use of its fiscal resources, means supporting the compact development of mature, developing, and future centers. Concentrations of mixed-use centers are well suited to the transitways that are planned for the County’s future. According to surveys, per capita work trips have decreased and non-work trips have increased. Developing land use planning strategies that co-locate uses typically requiring multiple trips will reduce the length of, and demand for, non-work trips.

### Housing

The Housing Goal supports many of the concepts in the Transportation Goal. Encouraging the development of housing near transit stops and ensuring that housing in mixed-use zones is developed in a timely manner will reduce travel demand for single-occupant vehicles and will provide greater opportunities for transit. One Housing strategy proposes to “encourage housing plans that foster transit serviceability.” The concern for development of affordable housing near transit and near employment opportunities will provide County residents with the “choices in the modes and routes of travel” stated in a Transportation objective and will provide greater accessibility to jobs, recreation, and shopping for all County residents.

# TION

## **Economic Activity**

A well-functioning transportation system is a necessity to keep businesses viable and to attract new firms and residents to the County. Several challenges lie ahead. One is to decide how transportation use should be paid for. Should transportation be treated more as a utility, in which users of the system pay for the goods they consume, or should public funds provide more support to recognize the general benefits of moving people and goods? Another challenge is how to retain and attract employers while asking them to take increased responsibility for managing transportation demands.

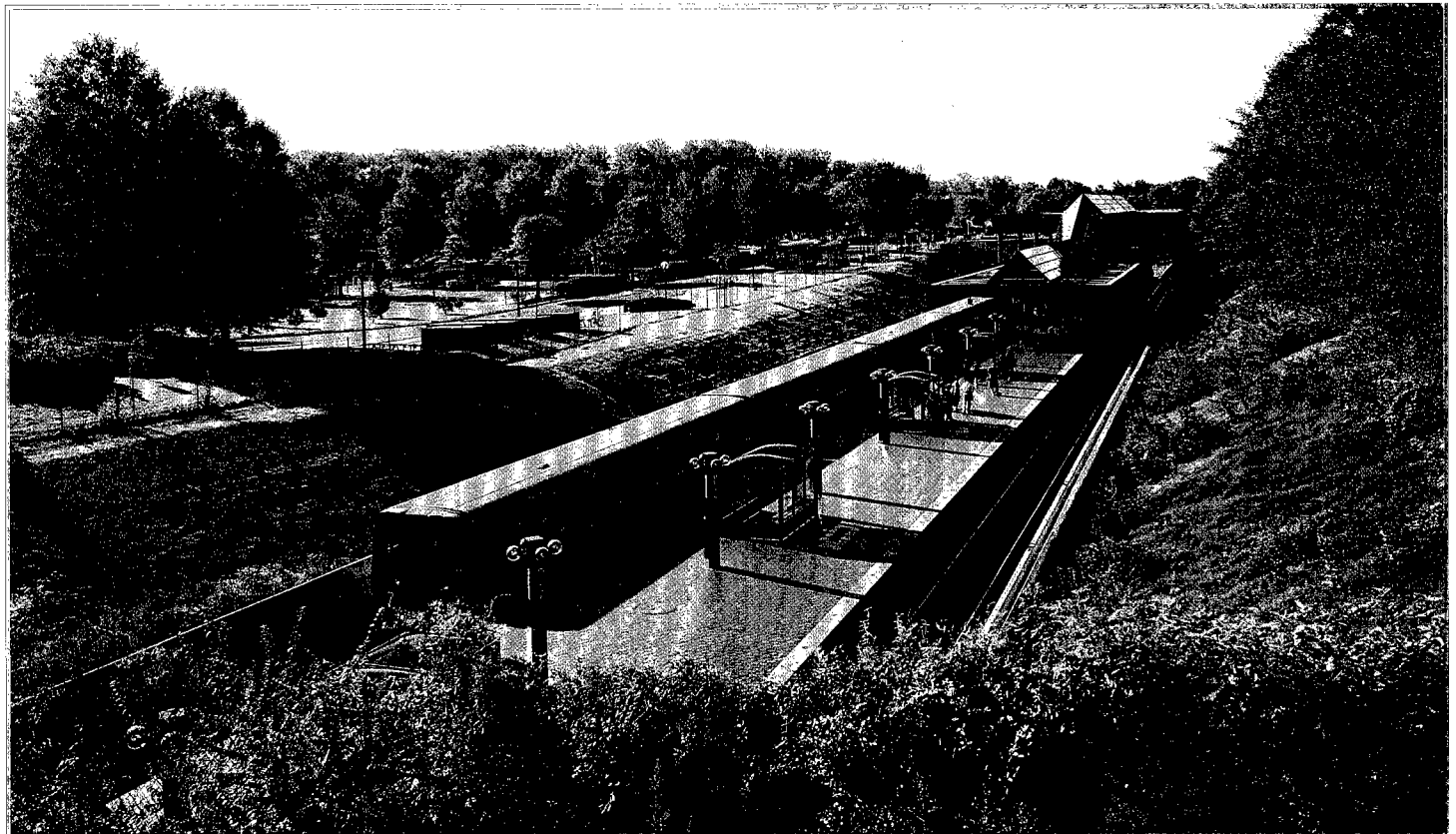
## **Environment**

The original Circulation Goal was conceived before the first clean air legislation was enacted in 1970. Subse-

quent transportation, health, and environmental legislation provide strong incentives and sanctions to attain and maintain prescribed limits on vehicle emissions, provide flexibility on how transportation money is spent, and modify regional institutional arrangements for meeting these concerns.

The potential for conflict among Refinement goals is probably greatest between Transportation and Environment. The construction and use of transportation systems often have environmental costs. A major challenge will be to create transportation options that harmonize with the environment yet match the demands placed on the transportation network by the planned land use. One such example, supported by the General Plan Refinement, is a concept that has emerged from the increased environmental sensitivities of the 1980s and 1990s known as greenways. Greenways are linear corridors of open space, such as the County's stream valley parks, that protect the natural environment. Walking and biking trails, often a fea-

Grosvenor Metro Station.



ture of greenways, provide opportunities to forge connections that are alternatives to motorized travel between highly developed and less developed areas of the County.

## **Community Identity and Design**

The Transportation Goal also looks at communities, understanding that they are often adversely affected by transportation improvements, through traffic, excessive speeds on local streets, and noise. Neighborhood streets are part of a larger network that depends upon a high degree of interconnectedness to function properly. The General Plan Refinement acknowledges the importance of the detailed, small-scale network of sidewalks that connects residents to each other's homes and to nearby shopping centers, schools, and other community facilities. Creating communities conducive to walking and biking will help improve the sense of community within the County's neighborhoods.

## **Regionalism**

The Transportation and Regionalism Goals are closely interrelated. The existence of interstate highways, state roads, and regional transit networks within the County ensures that Montgomery County must coordinate with other jurisdictions in the region on transportation issues. Open dialogue and coordinated planning regionwide is the prelude to laying down pavement and rails, or establishing transport policies. Clean air and transportation legislation provide strong incentives for regional planning. Seeking and advancing shared interests must overcome divisive trends, such as complaints of "external" traffic clogging County roads, that have provided natural incentives for acrimonious finger pointing across borders.

## **Compliance with Maryland Planning Act of 1992**

The Transportation Goal seeks to conserve resources (Vision 5) by encouraging public and private efforts to reduce peak travel demand (Strategy 3A), devise land use patterns to encourage shorter trips (Strategy 3B), and to manage the supply of parking (Strategy 3E). The require-

ment to provide funding mechanisms to achieve other Planning Act visions (Vision 7) is addressed by Strategies 1E and 1F. Objective 7, preventing degradation to the overall quality of air, land, and water, addresses stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay (Vision 4).

# **GOALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES**

**Enhance mobility by providing a safe and efficient transportation system offering a wide range of alternatives that serve the environmental, economic, social, and land use needs of the County and provide a framework for development.**

## **OBJECTIVE 1**

**Develop an interconnected transportation system that provides choices in the modes and routes of travel.**

### **Strategies**

- A. Identify and protect rights-of-way for the future transportation system.
- B. Give priority to improving east-west travel.
- C. Encourage regional, State, and federal agencies to implement transportation system improvements, including accessibility to other jurisdictions in a manner which is consistent with County goals.
- D. Ensure that transportation system designs recognize the mobility needs of people with disabilities and other special populations.
- E. Continue to require the private sector to share in the cost of improving the transportation system.
- F. Embrace cost effective technologies, policies, and techniques that promote efficiency and safety in the transportation system.

## OBJECTIVE 2

Provide appropriate access to, around, and within communities by using a full range of travelways.

### Strategies

- A. Assure that access is provided to each parcel of property in the County.
- B. Establish network plans for all modes of transportation.
- C. Match land uses and intensities to appropriate travelways.

## OBJECTIVE 3

Improve the efficiency of the existing and planned transportation system by managing its supply and demand.

### Strategies

- A. Encourage public and private efforts to reduce the peak demand for travel through means such as flexible work schedules, off-site work arrangements, pricing, and telecommuting.
- B. Devise mixed land use strategies that encourage shorter trips.
- C. Increase the occupancy of automobiles and transit through such means as pricing, high occupancy vehicle lanes, and other priority treatments.
- D. Establish transportation management districts and other programs that reduce the number of vehicle trips.
- E. Manage the supply and price of parking to encourage transit use, car-pooling, walking, and biking.

## OBJECTIVE 4

Provide a transit system in appropriate areas of the County that is a viable alternative to single-occupant vehicle travel.

### Strategies

- A. Scale the extent and frequency of transit service in proportion to its potential benefit.
- B. Give priority to establishing exclusive travelways for transit and high occupancy vehicles serving the Urban Ring and Corridor.
- C. Establish development patterns that support public transportation.
- D. Locate buildings, roads, bikeways, and walkways, and manage automobile traffic to provide convenient access to transit services.
- E. Provide for station locations that minimize the number and/or duration of transfers.
- F. Provide transit users with shelters, paved waiting areas, lighting, schedule information, and safe pedestrian crossings at significant transit locations.
- G. Make transit use more price- and time-competitive with auto use.

FIGURE 14 Corridor Cities Transitway (Future)



## OBJECTIVE 5

Reduce traffic delays on the road system without eroding the quality of life in surrounding communities, unless alternatives to the single-occupant vehicle are available.

### Strategies

- A. Provide a sufficient number of major highways, arterial roads, and primary streets to attract through traffic away from local streets.
- B. Allow designated rustic County roads in the Agricultural Wedge to remain in their present condition, except for maintenance and safety projects.
- C. Facilitate the efficient flow of vehicles and minimize delay through means such as the use of a County-wide signal system and advanced traffic management technology to minimize the need for more road rights-of-way.
- D. Give preference to underpasses rather than overpasses in developed areas where the construction of a grade-separated interchange is deemed necessary.

## OBJECTIVE 6

Provide pedestrians and bicyclists safe, direct, and convenient means of travel for transportation and recreation.

### Strategies

- A. Consider safe bikeways and walkways as integral parts of all land development and transportation projects.
- B. Provide a bikeway network that serves a variety of needs for a variety of users.
- C. Increase pedestrian and bicyclist access to and within neighborhoods, commercial centers, school grounds, and other public places.
- D. Encourage reduced building setbacks that result in convenient walking distances between the public rights-of-way and buildings.
- E. Provide secure bicycle storage at all major transit stations, retail areas, employment centers, and other activity centers.

- F. Encourage pedestrian circulation by managing through traffic in centers and safe crosswalks.

## OBJECTIVE 7

Prevent degradation to the overall quality of the air, land, and water in the provision and use of the transportation system.

### Strategies

- A. Avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts on wetlands, watersheds, forests, and other natural resources.
- B. Give priority to transportation projects and policies that promote efficient use of energy and attain clean air standards.
- C. Support land use decisions by encouraging alternatives to the internal combustion engine and the use of fossil fuels.
- D. Protect neighborhoods from excessive road noise.
- E. Support land use decisions by reducing negative impacts on water quality from water and chemical road runoff and from pollutants emitted by the internal combustion engine.

## OBJECTIVE 8

Maximize safety in the use of the transportation system.

### Strategies

- A. Design roads to allow drivers to react safely and to allow safe travel through neighboring communities.
- B. Provide improved travelways and transfer points that enhance visibility, personal security, and safety, particularly for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- C. Enable automobiles, pedestrians, and bicyclists to coexist safely on roads and streets in residential and commercial areas.
- D. Provide safe, well-lit, and clearly marked pedestrian crossings where needed.
- E. Eliminate at-grade railroad crossings on major roadways.