

# Safe Routes To Schools FAQs

## **How are SRTS projects generated? Why did you pick my street?**

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a nationwide program that aims to significantly improve safety for students who walk and bike to school. The Division of Traffic Engineering and Operations Division (DTEO) manages and administers the County's Safe Routes to Schools program for MCDOT. Installing or improving sidewalks, crosswalks, curb extensions and traffic signs in the vicinity of schools is the major goal of the County's Safe Routes to School Program.

DTEO staff conduct Safe Routes to Schools walk audits that identify missing sidewalk connections throughout public school walksheds.

## **Is installation of a sidewalk contingent upon approval of the adjacent property owners?**

**No.** The decision is made based on public use and need.

## **Are residents responsible for snow and ice removal in inclement weather?**

**Yes**, residents are responsible for removing snow and ice on any sidewalk, other walkway on or adjacent to property that the person owns, leases, or manages, including any walkway in the public right-of-way, to provide a pathway wide enough for safe pedestrian and wheelchair use within 24 hours *after* the end of the precipitation that caused the condition. Residents may choose to wait to remove the snow and ice until after the road has been plowed so as not to duplicate efforts. See Montgomery County Code Section 49-17 Accumulation of snow and ice on property prohibited.

## **What if I am elderly or disabled and cannot clear snow and salt ice in inclement weather?**

All local middle and high school students have Student Service Learning (SSL) hours to complete as a requirement of graduation. You may contact your local schools to arrange for a student to clear your walks to earn their SSL hours for free. You need only sign their Student Service-Learning hours form. You may also wish to contact your local Regional Service Center to see what programs or assistance they may offer. Alternatively, many communities with a homeowner's or civic association, begin a "Village Program," where able-bodied residents volunteer to assist their neighbors who are less able to clear the snow and ice in inclement weather.

## **Is there any additional cost or property tax assessment with the installation of a new sidewalk?**

**No.** There are no assessments or costs to the property owner when a new sidewalk is installed. Further, sidewalks are statistically proven to raise property values due to the safety and connectivity the sidewalks add to your community. The augmented value is benefit to you alone.

## **Will the replacement trees be planted in my community or elsewhere in the County?**

The County's Arborist tries to fit as many trees as possible back into the County's public right of way from which the previous trees were removed. Overflow trees will be planted in available spaces throughout the County, benefiting the environment.

If the sidewalks are approved and constructed following the public hearing, residents will have the option to submit a request for the species of replacement tree(s) they would like to have planted. During construction of the sidewalks, please contact Nima Upadhyay Capital Projects Manager, Safe Routes to School Program, via email at [SidewalkSRTS-LeleckES@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:SidewalkSRTS-LeleckES@montgomerycountymd.gov). to learn how to submit your tree replacement request. The County's Standard Tree lists, from which you may select your preferred species, can be found at <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot-highway/tree/TreePlant.html>. If there are power lines above the right of way, replacement trees must be selected from the Minor tree list. If there are no power lines above the right of way, replacement trees must be selected from the Major list.

**With Climate Change a priority, how can you justify removing mature trees? Have any environmental studies been performed in relation to rainwater drainage?**

Sidewalk installation is an integral part of the County's Climate Action Plan, setting up the infrastructure to promote walking to local attractions such as school, daycare centers, shopping centers, and public transportation amenities.

Mature trees are beautifully majestic, each one providing shade and removing 48 pounds of carbon dioxide (CO2) per year, according to the EPA. The average car, however, creates 4.6 metric tons or 10,141.26 pounds of CO2 per year. According to CarbonPirates.com, an international climate activist group, a baby tree or sapling absorbs 5900 grams, or 13 pounds, of CO2 per year. Thus, three saplings absorb approximately 39 pounds of CO2 annually. The replacement trees are not saplings, however, but instead are 2-inches in diameter and roughly 5 or 6-feet tall, absorbing far more CO2 than a mere sapling. As you can see, therefore, the three trees replacing each tree removed will absorb basically the same amount of, if not more, CO2 as the one mature tree that was removed.

Sidewalks provide a clear and separated safe path for pedestrians promoting walking instead of driving to local destinations such as schools, daycare centers, shopping centers, parks, playgrounds, and other pedestrian attractions and public transportation facilities. The three replacement trees planted for every one tree removed will grow, providing triple the CO2 absorption, shade, rainwater drinking roots, homes and nourishment for animals, birds and insects as well as beauty. While the County sincerely empathizes and completely understand that the loss of your tree(s) feels devastating, it is a small, temporary sacrifice to make for our environment, setting up the infrastructure that promotes healthy living and walking while reducing pollution. The sidewalks will reduce harmful emissions by promoting walking and public transportation use while the three replacement trees for every one tree removed will triple the absorption of harmful emissions in addition to tripling the shade, rainwater absorbing roots, creature homes and beauty in your community.

**How will the sidewalk be constructed in relation to rainwater drainage issues?**

Sidewalks are typically constructed in one of two ways:

- 1) The sidewalk will be constructed between the swale and road at a 2% pitch so that the rainwater will flow into the swale; or
- 2) The culvert pipe at the driveway apron may be replaced if damaged. A drainage pipe may be placed in the swale and backfilled, if needed. The sidewalk will be constructed over the backfilled area at a 2% pitch to direct the rainwater away from private property.

In some cases, the swale may need to be realigned or adjusted. **If you have a concern regarding standing water or existing drainage issues along the proposed area, please inform the Sidewalk Program so that reparations can be coordinated if the sidewalk is approved and constructed.**

**Have any traffic studies been performed on the proposed roadways? What about speed bump installation instead of sidewalks?**

A traffic study or speed bump installation will have no influence on the decision whether or not to install sidewalks. Traffic studies and any subsequent installations such as speed bumps slow traffic. Sidewalks, however, are a proactive measure which provides pedestrians a safe, separated place to walk without risk of being hit by a car.

**Have any pedestrian count studies been performed in our community?**

Many residents who have requested sidewalk installation report that they do not walk within their community because of the lack of sidewalks. As such, a pedestrian count on a roadway without sidewalks will not provide meaningful data toward a decision to install sidewalks.

**Why does the sidewalk have to be 5-ft-wide?**

The State of Maryland has adopted the width of 5 feet for all new sidewalks based on the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) recommendations and guidelines. Montgomery County follows the State of Maryland design standards.

**What will happen to my mailbox?**

All mailboxes are removed and reinstalled the same day as the sidewalk is constructed. In some locations, field conditions do not allow enough space for the mailbox to be installed with the mailbox’s door facing the road. In this instance, the mailbox will be installed parallel to the roadway, with the door to the mailbox facing your driveway.

**Does SRTS repair and maintain sidewalks once installed?**

**No**, repairs and maintenance of sidewalks are the responsibility of the Division of Highway Services.

**How do I request repairs to a cracked or crumbling sidewalk?**

If you would like to request sidewalk repair, please contact Montgomery County’s 311 and request that a service ticket be opened with the Division of Highway Services for sidewalk repair. You can reach Montgomery County’s 311 by dialing 311 from any phone in the County or, outside of the County, by dialing 240-777-0311. There are also many services that can be requested online via 311’s website:

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mc311/top-services.html> .

**Does SRTS install curbs and gutters?**

The installation of curb and gutter must be requested and is typically installed to resolve drainage issues. You may request curb and gutter via Montgomery County’s 311. 311 can be reached by dialing 311 or 240-777-0311. Please also feel free to peruse our [Drainage Assistance website](#).

If adjustments to the existing curb and gutter are to be made with the potential sidewalk installation, such adjustments will be described in the Construction Impacts sent with the sidewalk proposal.

**Please feel free to email Nima Upadhyay, with any additional questions you may have.**

Nima Upadhyay, Capital Project Manager · 240-777-2190 · [SidewalkSRTS-LeleckES@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:SidewalkSRTS-LeleckES@montgomerycountymd.gov).

**Thank You!**