

**Friendship Heights
Transportation Management District
Advisory Committee
October 8, 2013**

Voting Members

Aurelio Baca-Asher	The JBG Companies
Barbara Condos	Town of Somerset
Tiffany Gee (Chair)	Chevy Chase Land Company
Campbell Graeub	Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights
Cobey R. Kuff	WP Project Developer, LLC
Allison Lazare (Vice Chair)	United Educators Insurance
John Mertens	Friendship Heights Village

Non-voting Members

Sandra L. Brecher	MCDOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
-Representing DOT Director Chief John Fitzgerald	Chevy Chase Village Police

TMD Staff

Nakengi Byrd	MCDOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
Jim Carlson	MCDOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
Sheila Wilson	MCDOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services

Absent

James Calderwood	Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers
Joe Dixon	GEICO
Capt. David Falcinelli	Montgomery County Police
Matthew Folden	M-NCPPC
Kenneth Hartman	B-CC Services Center
Rachael Schacherer	Friendship Heights Village

Guests

Jeff Dunckel	MCDOT Pedestrian Safety Coordinator
Bob Joiner	The Agenda News
Tom Quinn	ANC 3E

Abbreviations

BRT = Bus Rapid Transit
HIA = High Incident Area
SHA = Maryland State Highway Administration
MWCOG = Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

Item 1, 2, 3- Introductions/Minutes/ Chair's Comments: Chair Tiffany Gee called the meeting to order. Members and guests introduced themselves.

Jim Carlson reported on his attendance at a County Council Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) public hearing. He said there was some strong opposition to the project from neighborhoods likely to be affected by the BRT system. There was also a pronounced generational divide, with younger residents tending to be in support of

BRT, and older residents opposed. The debate is the preliminary stages as Council is considering right of way issues; the project has no funding yet which will provide plenty of time for future public comment.

VOTE: The Committee approved September's meeting minutes.

Chief John Fitzgerald, Chevy Chase Village Police, was welcomed as a new non-voting member to the Committee.

Item 4 – Pedestrian Safety Update: **Ms. Gee** introduced **Jeff Duncel**, Pedestrian Safety Coordinator for Montgomery County. **Mr. Duncel** said the County's pedestrian safety program is currently focused on distracted driving and walking. In 2012 there were about 400 pedestrian crashes, resulting in six deaths. This is down from the 18 crashes when the program started in 2008; however, there have been 12 deaths during January to August of this year so far. And, unfortunately, the months October through December are the most dangerous for pedestrian accidents.

Mr. Duncel reported that he was part of the 2000 blue ribbon report started by **Bill Bronrott** and **Doug Duncan** which listed 54 recommendations to reduce pedestrian accidents. The report recommendations were not implemented until County Executive **Ike Leggett** established seven strategies to reduce collisions and make communities more walkable. The program, which was fully funded in 2009, is implemented in a targeted approach.

Mr. Duncel explained that "level 4 and 5" collisions have been the main foci of the program, with level 4 meaning incapacitated and 5 being a fatal crash. The current results show a slight increase in 4 and 5 crashes, which were the result of accidents occurring on surface parking lots. There has been an 18 percent increase in level 4 crashes involving older pedestrians.

Mr. Duncel believes the reason for the increase in pedestrian crashes during the month of October-December is due to shorter daylight hours causing visibility problems for drivers. He said there is a surge of accidents occurring in the afternoon hours starting at 3 pm. The initial analysis revealed that pedestrians were at fault 44 percent of the time, and drivers 41 percent. However, after conducting sting operations and issuing jaywalking citations as a means of enforcement, pedestrians were found to be at fault less often than drivers.

Committee members discussed other causes for crashes, such as pedestrians and motorists distracted by texting and wearing ear buds. Also, pedestrians looking for breaks in traffic tend to get a false sense of security as another contributing factor, since vehicles are frequently traveling faster than people judge them to be.

Mr. Duncel stated that targeting High Incident Areas (HIAs) is the primary strategy used to decrease pedestrian collisions. These 10 areas have the highest concentration of collisions: 11 percent of pedestrian collisions occur on 1 percent of the roadways. Since these crashes tend to occur on State roads, the County is working with the Maryland State Highway Administration (MSHA) to install more pedestrian friendly infrastructure. Montgomery County's success with its pedestrian safety program has inspired MSHA to implement the County's recommendations in their audits. Since the implementation of the pedestrian safety audit recommendations, collisions have declined 43 percent in the HIAs.

Mr. Duncel believes that by reducing speed overall, severe collisions have been reduced by 21 percent; and improved traffic calming infrastructure has reduced all collisions by 50 percent. The 3E Campaign (Engineering, Education and Enforcement), targeted in conjunction with Safe Routes to Schools, has resulted in a 79 percent reduction of collisions within a ¼ mile of school zones.

He said the 3E's program works in combination to reduce pedestrian crashes:

- Engineering modifications are used to improve walkability and prevent crashes – widening sidewalks, creating refuge islands, signage improvements, reconstructing intersection signals, count-down signals, improved lighting and rapid flash beacons. Engineering enhancements are used at Old Georgetown Road and on Wisconsin Avenue from Leland to Montgomery Avenue.
- Education efforts include curb markers, volunteer 'ambassadors' promoting safety, event outreach at bus stops and shopping centers. Education funding available only for HIAs.
 - Safety Brigade – Blair High School work group
 - Train the Trainer – high school training elementary students in pedestrian safety
 - Blair High School “Best Eyes” contest and campaign – importance of establishing eye contact with drivers
 - Street Smart campaign funded by Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG)
- Enforcement measures used to change behavior, such as citations issued to drivers and pedestrians that violate traffic laws.
- Police posing as pedestrians executing crosswalk sting operations conducted at the Trader Joe's on Wisconsin Avenue and Walter Johnson High School in North Bethesda.

High Incident Areas are categorized into two different groups using similar crash statistics:

- Group 1 – Pedestrians are at fault, midblock crossing issues.
- Group 2 – Drivers at fault, intersection collisions occurring in urban districts

Mr. Dunkel discussed other issues affecting pedestrian safety:

- Providing median refuge treatments for pedestrians and safe alternatives to channel traffic
- Lack of signal adherence by pedestrians
- Lighting and visibility improvements – dark colored clothing
- New technological advances in vehicles, such as rear view cameras

Other topics discussed:

- Traffic violation fees: \$50 for jaywalking; \$80 fine for failure to stop for a pedestrian in a crosswalk.
- Extending safety laws to cyclists and media leverage to help with enforcement.
- Maintenance of midblock pedestrian crosswalks – they are being maintained but are slow to fix, taking six months to a year in some cases.
- Working with MSHA to implement a traffic calming program. Initially the program received some pushback from MSHA, but was successful in reducing speeds closer to speed limit. Enhancements at crosswalks appear as a narrowing of the road to drivers, encouraging slower speeds.
- Sidewalks improvement program improving walkability and providing biking infrastructure
- Crossing signal times in Friendship Heights need to be increased. MCDOT signal improvements program delayed due to inter-jurisdictional coordination with DC signal timing and county budget cuts – expected five year completion date.
- **Tom Quinn** from ANC 3E discussed his concern that Montgomery County tends to have vehicle bias; pedestrians are subjected to unnecessary wait times at signals which encourages jaywalking – MCDOT is working on improving conditions.
- Traffic light at River Road and Western Ave (DC side) favors River Road traffic, causing queuing on Western Avenue and adding to bus travel times.
- Montgomery County's attitude toward auto favored transportation is changing to more pedestrian friendly traffic treatments, such as those in the White Flint Sector Plan.
- Due to the decrease in road carrying capacity in the District, Montgomery County is implementing road calming measures to narrow down traffic as it approaches the District border.

- Pedestrian-favored intervals at signals allow pedestrians to establish themselves in road before traffic starts.

Item 5-Commuter Services Updates:

- Annual Commuter Survey to be distributed soon to selected companies [*postponed until Spring 2014*]
- Bikeshare handout – map showing current and future station sites
- JARC bikesharing program: Free membership, safety classes and helmet for qualified low income Montgomery County residents. Program was extended to all MC, not only Shady Grove and Rockville area.

Adjourn

Next meeting date: November 12, 2013