



**Commission on People with Disabilities
Meeting Summary Minutes
January 10, 2024**

**** MEETING WAS HELD VIA ZOOM ****

Welcome and Approval of December 2023 Meeting Minutes

Karen Morgret, Acting Chair, convened the meeting. A motion was made to approve the December 2023 Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the December 2023 Meeting Minutes were unanimously approved as written. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cpwd.

Designated Bike Lanes and Effective Communication – Sue Crawford, Co-Chair of the Pedestrian Access Committee, American Council of the Blind

Sue discussed the issue of how a person with a vision disability knows it is safe to cross a bike lane, especially areas with lanes that go both ways, in order to reach a bus stop on a floating island. Protections need to be in place for the pedestrian as well as the cyclist. The County has installed a number of rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFB). It was asked if these will be installed at crosswalks from the sidewalk to the bus island and if so, will there be an evaluation done on their efficacy.

Matt Johnson, Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), reported a RRFB will be installed. The signal work bidding is handled by a different division. Matt will follow up on this with the signal team. The signal will be installed at one of four bus boarding islands, but the exact location has yet to be determined. RRFBs may install at other locations pending evaluation. Matt noted that part of the issue is when a person who is blind encounters a detectable warning system, they stop to assess the situation and the cyclist may assume the person isn't crossing and this could potentially lead to issues. Regarding the evaluation, a bicyclist and pedestrian count will be taken before installation to determine how many times bicyclists do not wait for pedestrians, and then a second count will be taken after beacon installation. The evaluation will also be completed during warmer weather when more bicyclists are on the road.

Sam Korper, Commissioner, asked about accessibility of older sidewalks that do not meet current standards or have obstacles. He also asked if wheelchair users are legally allowed to use a bike lane if the sidewalk was inaccessible. Matt does not know about the legal implications and asked for specifics locations of inaccessible sidewalks. The County does have funding each year to improve the accessibility of sidewalks. The projects under the Annual Sidewalk Program are derived from resident requests: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot-dte/sidewalk/. There are rural parts of the county where roads are specifically protected that do not have sidewalks and unlikely to have them in the future.

M-NCPPC and MCDOT to Develop a Curbless and Shared Street Design Guide - Dan Goodman, AICP, LEED AP, Mid-Atlantic Planning Director, Toole Design; Andrew Bossi, Senior Engineer, State Highway Program Coordinator, MCDOT; and Darcy Buckley, Multimodal Transportation Planner III, Montgomery Planning

PowerPoint: <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CPWD/CPWDTouleDesignCurblessSharedStreetsJan2024.pdf>

Dan reviewed the PowerPoint presentation. For clarification on page 10, on a shared street the center of the street is a Shared Zone where users of all modes can expect to encounter one another, and the design of the space communicates pedestrian priority. For people not comfortable sharing space there should also be a

Comfort Zone. This is a pedestrian only space delineated closest to the buildings for pedestrians who prefer not to mix with other modes. The Comfort Zone offers a continuous, clearly defined, obstacle-free area that is at least 6 feet wide and provides connections to all important destinations along the street.

The floor was opened to comments and questions.

Like the Complete Streets Design Guide, the Curbless Streets Design Guide will go before the Planning Board for official public comment. Once it goes into effect, the next stage will be code updates. Accessibility and emergency access will be reflected in the code. While guidelines at the Planning Board are voluntary, developers will most likely reflect them prior to the code going into effect.

Current examples of curbless street design Chevy Chase Lake off of Connecticut Avenue, Bethesda Row, Fellsworth in Silver Spring, and an area behind Chevy Chase Collection.

Tonya Gilchrist, Commissioner, has specific questions and suggestions regarding accessible parking and access aisles that she will email MCDOT directly. Andrew noted that the recently published Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG) includes new design guidance for accessible parking spaces and county streets will have to follow those guidelines.

It was asked how this Commission can provide feedback and if a walkthrough could be scheduled for Commissioners to visit a curbless street.

Chair and Vice-Chair Report

The Department of Justice on Monday filed a statement of interest stating that gender dysphoria falls within the [Americans with Disabilities Act's definition of "disability"](#) and that correctional institutions cannot deny medically appropriate care for people with this condition.

The National Council on Disability released in October 2023 a progress report on the impact of income and asset limits on people with disabilities: <https://ncd.gov/progressreport/2023/2023-progress-report-toward-economic-security>.

The Maryland Legislative Session begins today and ends April 8, 2024. Currently 565 bills have already been pre-filed. Information on bills that may impact persons with disabilities will be released in the coming weeks.

The Commission has not received applications yet from the County Executive's Office. Current Commissioners whose terms expired in September 2023 are asked to stay on until new Commissioners have been appointed. Karen will appoint a selection committee to interview applicants. After new Commissioners are appointed and confirmed by the County Council, the Commission will move forward with an election for Chair and Vice-Chair.

The Commission will hold a Steering Committee Meeting next Wednesday January 17. The next full Commission Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday February 14.

Update – Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Commission (IDDC) – John Whittle, Commissioner and Liaison to IDDC

IDDC will have its next meeting on January 18. John's report was tabled until next month as he had to leave the meeting early.

Ex-Officio Member Updates

Denise Isreal, MCDOT, reported Metro has eliminated the \$2.00 SmarTrip® Card fee for customers aged 65 and older effective January 16, 2024. MCDOT has announced the beginning of Phase 1A of the Great Seneca Transit Network, which will provide frequent transit options to the Adventist HealthCare Shady Grove Medical Center and the Universities at Shady Grove, improving mobility and access to crucial jobs in the healthcare, biotech, and education sectors. Phase 1A (Pink and Lime lines) will connect the Shady Grove Metrorail station

to the Traville Transit Center at the Universities of Shady Grove. MCDOT will be hosting pedestrian and driver safety outreach sessions on Saturdays in January at the Gaithersburg and White Oak MVAs. View MCDOT calendar for more information: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot/calendar.html. In addition, MCDOT will be making 23 Ride On bus route adjustments to improve efficiency and on time performance. These adjustments will be effective January 14, 2024. Print schedules can be requested by calling 311. More details: www2.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcgportalapps/Press_Detail.aspx?Item_ID=44510&Dept=50.

Jennene Blakely, Montgomery Parks (MP), reported Bob Green is retiring in March and she has been appointed to represent MP moving forward. MP continues to review site plans for the proposed Fairview Urban Park project. The Program Access Office in conjunction with Black Hill Regional Park submitted a grant application to the Christopher and Dana Reeves Foundation for funding to install another accessible kayak launch at the Black Hill Regional Park boating facility area. Funding was received and that project should be completed over the next year. MP is working on providing more adaptive kayaking programs in the spring.

Angelisa Hawes, Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL), reported MoComCon, which celebrates all things comics, graphic novels and fandoms, will be held January 20 from 10am to 5pm at the Germantown Library. The Germantown Library will also be hosting a sensory-friendly story time on February 4. Registration is required. MCPL's Winter Reading Challenge is also underway in partnership with the Washington Wizards. More info: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/library/programs/winter-reading-challenge.html.

Amanda DeFilippo, Montgomery County Recreation, reported the Silver Spring Recreation and Aquatic Center is scheduled to open February 24. This project includes approximately 120,000 gross square feet of public recreation space within HOC's larger housing project. The facility will include typical recreation and leisure activities. Pools will be designed for general swimming, low level diving, exercise, aquatic play, training and teaching. A gymnasium, exercise and weight room spaces, movement and dance studios, multipurpose activity rooms, public use space, and social space with a culinary arts kitchen will also be included. Amanda also reported RecFit passes will be free for Montgomery County residents again in 2024. The [Free Rec Fit Pass](#) provides access to fully equipped fitness rooms, open gym (drop-in) activities and game rooms at any community recreation center during regularly scheduled hours. The Winter Guide will be released next week.

Matt Barkley, ADA Compliance, Department of General Services (DGS), reported the ADA Compliance Team has been conducting quarterly trainings in person again. He has been working on the accessibility issues relating to the courts. A survey was completed that identified 13 to 14 court rooms that are inaccessible. It will cost approximately \$2 million to \$3 million per court room to make them accessible. DGS is working with the Office of Management and Budget to determine how to finance the cost of the renovations. The Department of Justice has issued guidelines for electric vehicle charging stations which focuses more on universal design and does not require the installation of an accessible parking spot, although all must have an access aisle that is reachable from a seated position. Matt asked the Commission for feedback regarding communicating with people who have disabilities and the use of people first language.

Commissioner Updates

Jeneva Stone, Commissioner, asked about ticketing drivers who park in the access aisle at shopping centers and public parking areas. Betsy said if the space has proper signage than a police officer can write a ticket.

Public Comments

None.

Meeting Adjourned – 7:28pm

Attendees

Commissioners Present: Myra Coffield; Kaylee Davis; Tonya Gilchrist; Karen Goss; Sammi Hampton; Samuel Korper; Cindy LaBon; Ricardo Lopez; Karen Morgret, Acting Chair; Coni Nepomuceno; Lisa Quinn; Avner Shapiro; Richard Shermanski; Jeneva Stone; Teresa Villani; John Whittle; Melissa Wyman

Commissioners Absent: Karen Herson

Non-Voting Ex-Officio Members Present: Matthew Barkley, ADA Title II Compliance Officer, Department of General Services; Jennene Blakely, Montgomery Parks; Rebecca Grayson, Housing Opportunities Commission; Angelisa Hawes, Montgomery County Public Libraries; Amanda DeFilippo, Department of Recreation; Denise Isreal, Department of Transportation (DOT)

Non-Voting Ex-Officio Members Absent: Patricia Cochrane, Montgomery County Public Schools; Candace Groudine, Human Rights Commission; Karen Hochberg, Office of Human Resources

County Staff Present: Matt Johnson, DOT; Dan Goodman, Consultant, Toole Design; Patrice McGhee, Chief, Aging & Disability Services (A&D), Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS); Darcy Buckley, Montgomery Planning; Andrew Bossi, DOT; Kimberly Johnson, A&D, DHHS

Commission Staff Present: Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison; Carly Clem, Program Specialist II

Public: Sue Crawford; Wendy (Sign Language Interpreter); Tracy Grant; Seth Morgan; Pat Sheehan

**Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities
February 2024 Meeting and Events Calendar**

Full Commission Meeting – Wednesday February 14
6pm to 7:30pm to be held via Zoom – link to be announced

Steering Committee Meeting – Wednesday February 21
5:30pm to 6:30pm to be held via Zoom – link to be announced

Submitted by: Carly Clem, Program Specialist II
Betsy Tolbert Luecking, Community Outreach Manager