

# MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (MCDOT) DOCKLESS BIKESHARE EVALUATION SUMMARY



Innovative mobility approaches can help cities curb traffic; connect residents to jobs, destinations, and transit; and promote an active lifestyle. As one example, bikeshare is ideal for short distance, point-to-point trips that expand the reach of existing transportation options.

Dockless vehicle share is a mobility option that lets users access a fleet of bicycles or scooters throughout the community. Dockless vehicle share is a cost-effective travel option that has led to thousands of bicycle trips with virtually unlimited locations for pick-up and drop-off. Due to the minimal costs of starting a program, dockless vehicle share allows communities to implement bikeshare in areas where previously it may not have been possible.

In recent months, the dockless vehicle share industry has evolved to focus primarily on electric-assist bicycles (“e-bikes”) and scooters. These vehicles are growing in popularity and adoption, and scooter operators are interested in serving Montgomery County. Several bikeshare companies have left the regional market, and other neighboring counties have started or are contemplating starting dockless programs. These trends emphasize the need to remain flexible in the rapidly changing shared mobility space.

## PROGRAM EVALUATION

In fall 2017, Montgomery County began a dockless bikeshare pilot program in Silver Spring and Takoma Park. The County began this study to **evaluate the bikeshare pilot program and develop recommendations for future phases**. The project team assessed bicycle condition and parking location, analyzed operator data, and conducted an intercept survey to gauge public opinion.

Key takeaways from the **evaluation and analysis** efforts:

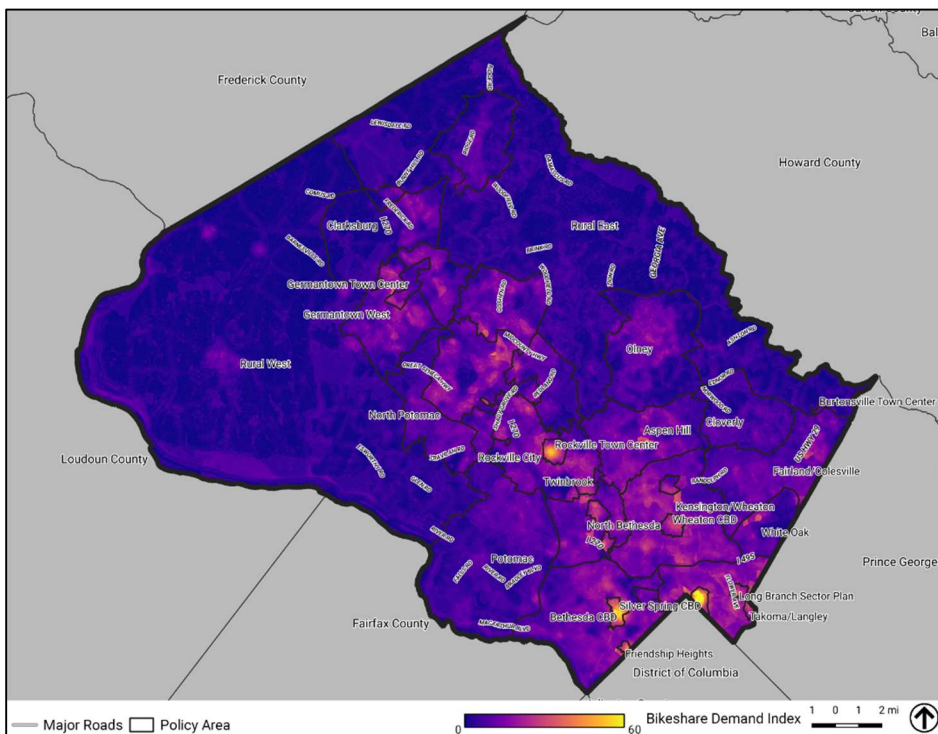
- Users made **over 18,000 trips** during the first six months of the pilot.
- Most trips started and ended within the service area.
- **Most bicycles were parked upright (86%) and were parked in appropriate locations.** The most common parking location was between the sidewalk and the curb—only 7% of the 276 unique bicycles surveyed were obstructing something.



Key takeaways from the **community survey** conducted in Downtown Silver Spring and Takoma Park:

- Over 300 people completed the community survey.
- Respondents reported using dockless bikeshare for commuting, convenience, and shopping. 41% of those who had used dockless said they biked more often as a result.
- Most people (60%) who used both bikeshare systems said that dockless didn't change their Capital Bikeshare use.
- 84% agreed or strongly agreed that Montgomery County should continue the dockless bikeshare pilot program. The survey showed **strong support for continuing the program**, even though 1/3 of respondents said they didn't bicycle.
- Common responses for ways to improve the program were improving **proper user parking** (75%) and making **more bikes available** (38%). 21% of respondents felt that Montgomery County should **expand the service area**.

As part of the study, the project team looked at areas of existing dockless bikeshare trips outside the service area and compared these patterns with Capital Bikeshare use. Although most trips started and ended in the Capital Bikeshare service area, over 2,000 trips started or ended outside this service area. These trips were largely found between Silver Spring and Wheaton—showing bikeshare demand outside the Capital Bikeshare service area. This suggests that dockless bikeshare may be expanding the reach of bicycling in areas without Capital Bikeshare stations.

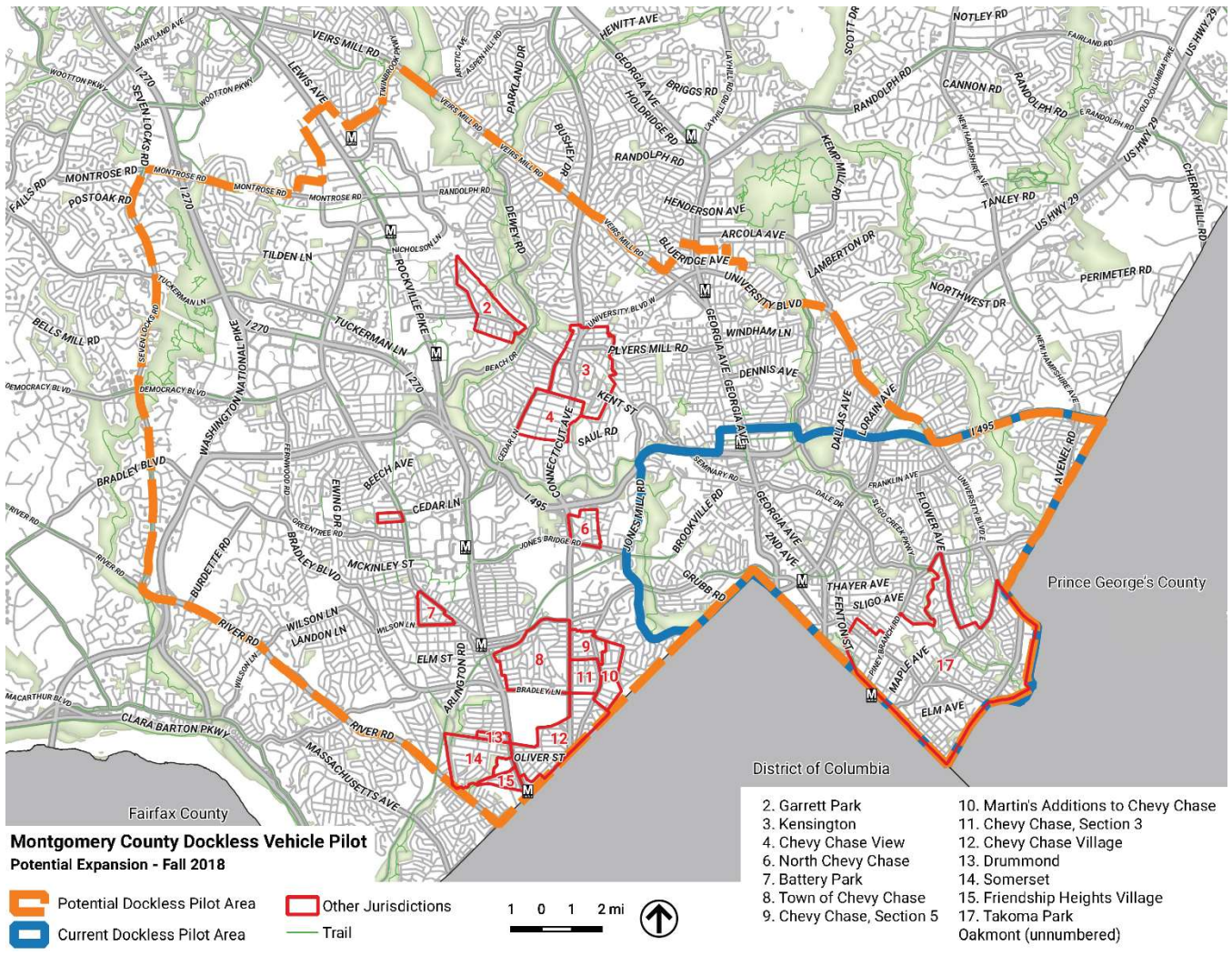


The study team also analyzed potential demand for bikeshare throughout Montgomery County. Using metrics such as population density, access to transit, destinations, and equity, this analysis highlights areas for future bikeshare expansion. For example, **Silver Spring, Bethesda, and Friendship Heights were found to have high demand for bikeshare**. There are also pockets of moderate demand throughout close-in Montgomery County, such as Wheaton and Rockville Town Center.

## DOCKLESS BIKESHARE POLICY FRAMEWORK

Key recommendations for future phases of the dockless bikeshare program are highlighted below:

- **Expand the pilot program service area to include Wheaton, Bethesda, and White Flint.** Community feedback and demand analysis suggest that an expanded service area would broaden the reach of dockless vehicles where people would use them. Future phases should transition to a permanent program with County-wide service.
- **Allow up to 4 bikeshare operators to join the expanded pilot.** It is best to remain flexible to allow multiple travel options but keep the program at a manageable size.
- **Open the dockless pilot program to scooters and e-bikes.** These vehicle types give County residents new options for short trips. Electric-assist vehicles could see wide usage in areas with longer distances between destinations or hilly topography.
- **Conduct further outreach with close-in incorporated areas to explore joining the dockless vehicle share program.** The County needs to coordinate with incorporated cities and towns to operate dockless bikeshare in those areas.
- **Increase the supply of bicycle parking racks and designate specific areas for company rebalancing in commercial districts.** Community feedback on the first phase of the pilot emphasized the need for orderly bicycle parking.
- **Refine data reporting requirements to align with regional best practices.** Accurate and consistent data are essential to evaluate the success of a bikeshare program.
- **Set minimum and maximum fleet sizes to ensure that enough vehicles are available.** The dockless program needs to balance company profitability with user and community preferences. The following requirements are recommended:
  - Minimum: 200 dockless vehicles per company.
  - Maximum: 500 dockless vehicles per company. Maximum can increase if meeting # rides per day threshold.
- **Expand outreach and education on safe and proper use of mobility devices.**



**Figure 1: Dockless Vehicle Pilot Potential Expansion Area**