

INTRO

The Bicycle Master Plan sets the stage for a cultural shift, encouraging people of all ages and bicycling abilities to meet their daily needs by bicycle. Cycling to work, stores, schools and transit or going for a leisurely ride on the weekend will be so embedded in our way of life that bicycling will be considered a mainstream mode of transportation.

The Bicycle Master Plan paves the way for safe, comfortable and accessible bicycling throughout Montgomery County. Appropriate bikeways are recommended in response to the amount of stress that traffic creates on each road. On busy roads, bicyclists will have dedicated space separated from traffic. On residential streets, they will be able to comfortably share the road. Between activity centers, people will be able to travel comfortably and efficiently on a “breezeway network,” where faster moving bicyclists are able to travel with fewer delays, and where all users – including slower moving bicyclists and pedestrians – can safely and comfortably coexist.

Investing in bicycling is highly desirable for Montgomery County as it is a healthful, environmentally-friendly and cost-effective mode of transportation, an amenity for achieving a higher quality of life and a tool for economic development. With targeted investments, it is realistic to expect that much of the daily travel in Montgomery County can be made by bicycle, since half of all trips in the county are 3.5 miles or shorter, about a 20 to 25-minute bike ride for most people.

Creating this world-class bicycling community requires a commitment on many levels. Leading bicycling communities have integrated bicycle planning and implementation into their decision-making processes, established innovative bicycle facility design guidelines and made steady investments in bicycling infrastructure, block by block and curb by curb, to build their networks. In some ways, many of these communities have integrated bicycling so deeply into their transportation planning processes that a separate bicycle master plan is superfluous.

But there are significant obstacles to overcome. Foremost is a culture that has prioritized automobile travel over walking and bicycling, and mobility over safety for much of the past 70 years. Montgomery County has a road network where about 75 percent of the street mileage is comfortable for most people to bicycle on. But these streets largely represent “islands of connectivity” that are separated by arterial roads and environmental features, such that only about 17 percent of potential bicycling trips can be made on a comfortable bicycling network today.

An ideal plan vision reflects the unique priorities of its communities and sets goals that are served by clear and coherent strategies. The Bicycle Master Plan vision will be achieved through a robust network of low-stress bike-ways and bicycle parking that prioritizes bicycling as a mode of travel for people of all ages and bicycling abilities. And it establishes policies and programs that integrate bicycling into decision-making at all levels.

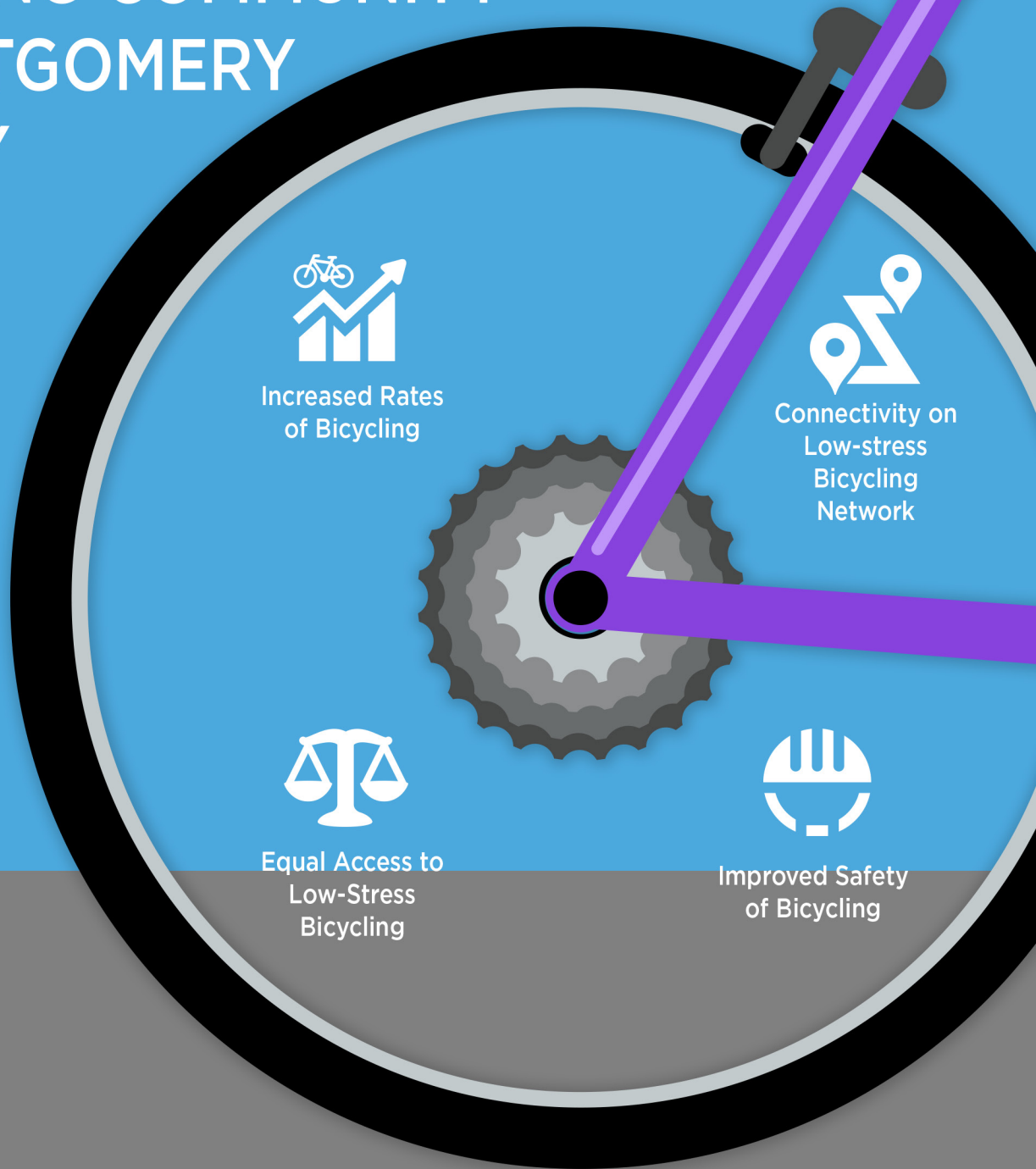
The ultimate impact of a well-made plan is dependent on the degree to which it is implemented. The Montgomery County Bicycle Master Plan is the starting point for achieving this vision. It is up to the elected officials, department heads, staff, advocacy groups and committed citizens to make this plan a reality.

It's time to connect neighborhoods, protect bike lanes and treat bicycling with the same thoughtfulness and skill applied to roads and intersections for motor vehicles. Everyone deserves the opportunity for safe, convenient and direct ways of traveling by bicycle. This master plan advances that vision by taking bicycle planning to the next level.

Not only is biking to work vastly healthier and cheaper than the alternative of cars or public transportation, but it also has far-reaching effects that extend past the individual level. People who cycle to work will relieve increasing healthcare costs. Less cars on the road means less traffic, less pollution and, most importantly, a more productive community for employers.

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HOW TO BUILD A WORLD-CLASS BICYCLING COMMUNITY IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY



Abundant and Secure Bicycle Parking



Monitoring of Implementation



Low-Stress Bicycle Network



Bicycle-Supportive Legal and Policy Framework



Cutting-Edge Bikeway Design Standards



Breezeway Network



Community residents participate in a group bike ride. Photo: Lynn Ho.



MASTER PLAN PURPOSE

The Bicycle Master Plan sets forth a vision for Montgomery County as a world-class bicycling community, where people in all areas of the county have access to a comfortable, safe and connected bicycle network, and where bicycling is a viable transportation option that improves the quality of life.

The plan focuses on increasing bicycling among what surveys consistently reveal as a majority of the public who would like to bicycle more but are concerned for their safety. These people are less tolerant of riding close to traffic and require physical separation from the road to be comfortable riding on wider and faster streets. They represent about 50 percent of the population and, therefore, present the greatest opportunity to increase bicycling in Montgomery County.

MASTER PLAN FRAMEWORK

The Bicycle Master Plan is organized into four sections. These sections are described below.

DEFINING THE VISION

Imagines a future that provides access to a comfortable, safe and connected bicycle network, and expresses that vision through the goals and objectives of the plan.

ACHIEVING THE VISION

Presents specific actions that the government, property owners, stakeholders and the public can take to fulfill the vision. These actions include establishing bicycling-supportive infrastructure, programs and policies needed to make the vision a reality.

IMPLEMENTING THE VISION

Explains how bicycling will be incorporated in all aspects of decision-making. Developing design standards to ensure high-quality bikeway design, leveraging public and private projects to incorporate the proposed bicycling network, and establishing funding mechanisms are some of the ways of implementing the recommendations in this plan.

MONITORING THE VISION

Sets up an ongoing monitoring program to track how well the vision of the plan is fulfilled by regularly assessing progress in reaching the targets for each metric in the plan. This monitoring program supports the implementation of the plan by providing an ongoing assessment of how effective Montgomery County is in creating the bicycle environment envisioned in the plan.

