

TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

Introduction

The movement of people and goods is an important concern in any community's growth plan. To provide a safe and efficient transportation network with minimal disruption of the area can sometimes be difficult to achieve. The Transportation Plan Element must be closely coordinated with other elements of the Plan to assure that transportation plans and policies complement and promote those of other sections.

Too often, transportation planning begins in reaction to a problem. This Comprehensive Plan suggests that a proactive approach to mobility issues is needed. Wicomico County and its municipalities need to plan in a manner that defines a coordinated, evolutionary approach toward achieving less reliance on driving alone, in order to enhance the choice, mobility, and quality of life for all citizens.

With this Comprehensive Plan there should come a new awareness of the importance of streets to the quality of life in Mardela Springs. Streets can no longer be considered a backdrop on the stage, but must be considered a central character. The form that the streets take and the newly defined functions they serve will determine how quickly the Town vision is achieved, or whether the vision can be achieved at all.

The future vision for Mardela Springs includes streets that are pleasant to walk along, safe and efficient bike routes, effective for carpools and vanpools, and a network of roads that moves people and goods efficiently throughout the Town. The goal must be to shift from moving vehicles to strategies that will result in balancing the need for cars and trucks, transit riders, bike riders, and pedestrians.

To become a less car dependent community, there must be more opportunities to live closer to work, in livable, walkable neighborhoods. In addition, streets must be well connected to make travel from one place to another as efficient as possible. The key to achieving this vision is to redefine streets as a network that will serve the pedestrian, bike riders, and vehicles that will use them. In areas where Mardela Springs wants to increase density and where the Town wants more people to live and work, existing streets need to be retrofitted with sidewalks and street trees. These improvements will help attract people back to these streets and investors to redevelop and infill in these areas.

Transportation Goal

The overall goal of the Transportation Element is to develop a coordinated transportation network that enables the safe and efficient movement of people and goods.

Highway and Street System

One State highway serves Mardela Springs - U.S. Route 50. The Town boundary abuts U.S. Route 50 and almost the entire Town is located on the south side of this major highway.

In addition to this major highway, the Town has a couple of other categories of streets and roads. These various types of roads have specific purposes depending upon the volume of traffic, typical street width, on-street parking conditions, location, and the type of development they serve.

Functional Classification

The foundation of a long-range street improvement program is a highway functional classification system. The functional classification system allows for the logical coordination of the system of State and local streets and highways in and around Mardela Springs. (See Map #7)

Functional classification categories in Mardela Springs include:

1. Arterial Highway;
2. Collectors - major and minor; and
3. Local streets.

Arterial Highway

The highest level of highway service provided to the Town is the arterial system. The primary purpose of all arterial highways is to provide continuous and efficient routes for movement of high volume traffic between towns or major traffic generators, particularly that of an intra-state or inter-state nature. Direct access to adjoining land should not be provided except at certain key points. Arterial highways are designed to maintain homogeneous neighborhoods and to serve as

boundaries between various neighborhoods. On-street parking should be prohibited.

The Federal Highway Functional Classification System has differing classification hierarchies for rural and urban areas. Under this system, Mardela Springs is considered a rural area. The rural principal arterial system is stratified into two subsystems: the interstate system and other principal arterials. U.S. Route 50 is classified by the Maryland Department of Transportation as a rural other principal arterial because it is a principal arterial highway in a rural area that is not a designated route of the interstate highway system.

Rural Major Collector

The primary purpose of the collector system is to collect traffic from local residential streets and provide for the direct movement of traffic to commercial and industrial areas and the arterial highways.

Major collectors are those roads that serve traffic within counties and between communities. They are intended for inter-neighborhood and through traffic. Sharptown Road (MD Route 313) and Athol Road (County Road #38) are classified as Rural Major Collectors and primarily function to serve through traffic. Sharptown Road is a major State route that receives traffic from Mardela Springs, U.S. Route 50, and Maryland Route 54 (Delmar Road), and travels through Sharptown and into Dorchester County, Maryland. Athol Road is a major road that collects traffic from U.S. Route 50, Bridge Street, and other various rural roads in northwestern Wicomico County. Although Athol Road is a major collector road, the posted speed limit within the Town limits is 25 miles per hour due to the number of driveways for single-family homes and the rural nature of the surrounding area. The Town elected to allow Wicomico County to receive its share of the State's Highway User Fees in exchange for County maintenance of all of its roads with the exception of U.S. Route 50, which is maintained by the State Highway Administration.

Rural Minor Collectors

Rural minor collectors are streets that, in addition to serving abutting properties, intercept minor streets, connect with community facilities, and primarily serve neighborhood traffic. Main Street from U.S. Route 50 to Bridge Street, Bridge Street from Main Street to Athol Road, Athol Road from Bridge Street to the south, and MD 54 from MD 313 to the east are all classified by the Maryland Department of

Transportation as rural minor collectors, and as previously mentioned, are maintained by Wicomico County. The posted speed limit for these two streets is 25 miles per hour due to the residential neighborhoods they serve.

Rural Local Streets

The most extensive part of the street network in Mardela Springs consists of local streets. Local streets are primarily intended to provide access for individual homes, stores, and businesses. They enable vehicles to move within the Town and to reach collector roads. All other streets not previously mentioned are classified as local streets and have a posted speed limit of 25 miles per hour. The County maintains all of the Town's local streets.

Existing Conditions

As in most small towns, the main transportation system in Mardela Springs is the road network. There are four roadways that primarily serve the Town: U.S Route 50, Athol Road, Main Street, and Bridge Street. These roads are the main routes that provide residents with easy access to other communities on the Eastern Shore and beyond. The majority of daily work and social trips generated from the Town typically traverse one or more of these four roadways.

All of the aforementioned roadways are maintained for the Town by Wicomico County, with the exception of U.S Route 50, which is maintained by the State Highway Administration. The County provides roadway maintenance in exchange for the Town's share of its State Highway User Fees.

It is important to note that the State Highway Administration (SHA) does have a conceptual access control plan for the portion of U.S Route 50 that abuts the Town's corporate boundary. This long-range plan serves as a guide to SHA when making access control decisions associated with an application for a State entrance / access permit. When development or redevelopment occurs along U.S. Route 50, SHA may issue a permit for temporary access to the site given the property owner grants the necessary right-of-way to the State for a future service road to provide centralized access to the surrounding area. Long-term, SHA envisions that there will be no individual driveways with direct access to U.S. Route 50.

Ultimately, SHA anticipates that U.S. Route 50 will be fully access controlled, thus providing for a higher degree of safety and mobility.

Not having a limited access policy can prove problematic in the future because each time a new access point is granted; the efficiency and safety of the roadways are increasingly jeopardized.

Parking is generally permitted on both sides of all minor collector and local streets with the exception of Main Street and Bridge Street, where on-street parking is prohibited in certain areas in order to provide adequate and safe access for school buses and emergency vehicles.

Overall, the existing transportation system and related amenities serve the Town of Mardela Springs very well. All of the roads in and around the Town are considered adequate for their current use according to the Wicomico County Department of Public Works, Roads Division, and the State Highway Administration.

Future Highway and Street System Needs

Most of the Town's local streets need drainage improvements and curb and gutter. The existing drainage problems range from minor, such as at the intersection of Bridge and Main Streets, to the more serious, such as at the intersection of Main Street and Spring Grove Road. There are numerous sources of these drainage problems; to include debris in the stormdrains, lack of or poor condition of curbs and gutters, and the continued paving of streets that are not milled often resulting in the height of the stormdrain above the paved surface of the roadway.

The installation or improvement of curbs and gutters is also a significant issue for the Town, not to just help address existing drainage issues, but also to help keep individual yards out of the public roadways.

Currently, either Wicomico County or the State Highway Administration maintains the Town's streets. The Town's Highway User Fees are utilized by Wicomico County for road paving and maintenance projects, as well as to provide for snow removal, street cleaning, and grass cutting at the causeway. This is a situation that is likely to continue in the future as the Town currently has no means to provide these services absent the County's assistance. Therefore, when new streets are proposed, they should be designed to standards established in the Town's subdivision regulations or to County standards if the County is to continue to maintain the streets.

Arterial, Collector, and Local streets are considered adequate to meet the needs of the community through the end of the planning period.

At this time, priority projects for the Town include the milling, proper grading, and paving of Main Street; the creation of a sidewalk along Railroad Avenue in order to provide safe pedestrian access to the Post Office; and speed controls and the possible realignment of Athol Road at Bridge Street. Another issue of concern to the Town is the amount of truck traffic on Bridge Street. This issue could be addressed through the use of weight and/or axle limitations for the bridge; however this proposal would have to be thoroughly vetted with the County, as well as with the local farming community who use this route on a regular basis for access to westward U.S Route 50.

Other Transportation Facilities

Sidewalks

Sidewalks play an important role in the Town's transportation system as they provide for pedestrian access throughout the Town. Approximately one-half of the Town has sidewalks, however most of these sidewalks are, at best, in fair condition and are not ADA compliant. The lack of a complete and safe sidewalk system works as a detriment to the Town as it does not provide an environment conducive to walking as one might naturally expect in a small town setting.

Wicomico County considers Mardela Springs' sidewalks to be the responsibility of either the Town or the individual property owner. Therefore, the County will not provide repair or maintenance services for existing Town sidewalks. Additionally, sidewalk creation, maintenance, and repair are not projects that can be accomplished with Highway User Fees; therefore the Town is going to have to explore other funding options to address this transportation need.

Parking

Off-street parking currently exists at the Post Office, Boat Ramp, Recreational Facility, Town Hall, Fire Hall, and at some of the churches.

On-street parking is generally permitted in Mardela Springs on both sides of all minor collector and local streets with the few exceptions

previously noted. Most of the on-street parking in the Town is related to residential uses, rather than commercial.

Public Transit

Shore Transit is the only regional transportation system on the lower Eastern Shore. This transit system provides service to Wicomico, Somerset, and Worcester counties.

Shore Transit is a fixed route system that also offers Demand Response Services for qualifying individuals, such as the handicapped, the elderly, and those with medical conditions. The Demand Response Service is a curb to curb service, which ranges from \$3 to \$6 each way depending upon the desired destination. Door to door service can be provided when necessary for an additional fee. There is an application process to determine eligibility for the Demand Response Service and, once qualified, reservations for this service must be made at least one day in advance.

Currently, Shore Transit only provides Demand Response Services to Mardela Springs. No fixed route service is provided, nor planned at this time.

Maryland Upper Shore Transit (MUST) is also a fixed route service, which is a collaborative effort between Delmarva Community Transit and Queen Anne's County Ride Program. There is a fixed route that departs from the Veteran's Clinic in Cambridge and travels to Salisbury with stops in Vienna and Mardela Springs. The Cambridge to Salisbury route stops in Mardela Springs five (5) times per day, as does the Salisbury to Cambridge route. The bus stop is located on Railroad Avenue in the vicinity of the post office and the recreational facility and pick-up and drop-off times run from 6:05 a.m. to 6:52 p.m. Current rates are \$2.00 each way for the general public and \$1.00 each way for handicapped persons and senior citizens 60 years of age or older.

Air Transportation

The closest airport is the Salisbury-Ocean City Wicomico Regional Airport, which is located approximately 17 miles to the east along U.S. Route 50. The Salisbury-Ocean City Wicomico Regional Airport is the only airport with scheduled airline service on the Delmarva Peninsula and therefore is the hub of air transportation for the whole region.

Rail Transportation

There is no available rail service in Mardela Springs.

Transportation Objectives

Within the context of a regional perspective, the following objectives define what the Transportation Plan Element for Mardela Springs should achieve:

- (1) To maintain and enhance the safe and efficient movement of people and goods throughout Town and surrounding area.
- (2) To coordinate the provision of new transportation facilities with the types of land uses anticipated and the level of community facilities needed.
- (3) To place an emphasis on facilitating pedestrian travel, as well as other alternatives to the automobile.
- (4) To coordinate Town, County, State, and Federal efforts in providing an efficient transportation system.
- (5) To retain an adequate transportation network and improve upon existing transportation facilities with minimal Town expense.
- (6) To maximize the desired use of transportation systems while minimizing the possible affects upon neighborhoods, the environment, and the general public.

Transportation Policies

The following policies define the Town of Mardela Springs' position on the provision of transportation facilities and services:

- (1) The Town's transportation system plan should consider all applicable modes of transportation and should consider the land use and transportation plans for adjacent areas outside Town limits.
- (2) New streets and sidewalks should be designed to fit in with existing neighborhoods and should facilitate circulation within the community.

- (3) The Town should support bicyclists and pedestrians by providing safe, convenient, and inviting routes and walkways between activity centers.
- (4) New developments should include sidewalks or trails that provide linkages to existing pedestrian paths, neighborhoods, businesses, public buildings, and open spaces.
- (5) Developers should build new neighborhood collector and local access streets according to the Town's adopted road standards.
- (6) All new roads should be deeded to the Town and the developer should bear the financial responsibility for construction. No private roads should be permitted.
- (7) Both public and private development should address accessibility and safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and the disabled, and should include, whenever possible, benches and other pedestrian oriented amenities at strategic locations.
- (8) Where possible, parking areas should be established on vacant lands to promote tourism, eliminate on-street parking, and to provide adequate parking to meet peak demand for proposed new land uses that are vehicle dependent.
- (9) Where lacking, existing streets should be improved with sidewalks to better accommodate pedestrian and bicycle movement.
- (10) All developments should have adequate access and circulation for public service and emergency vehicles, but the actual paved street sections should be as narrow as possible to maintain a human scale.
- (11) The Town should plan for adequate rights-of-way taking into account existing and future development and proposed alternative transportation support facilities and programs. The Town encourages the use of recycled materials when making right-of-way improvements.
- (12) The Town encourages the use of alternative fuels (refined oil, electricity, and compressed natural gas powered cars) to save energy resources.

- (13) Dead-end streets and cul-de-sacs should be discouraged.
- (14) Transit services should be encouraged to minimize dependency on the automobile, and to serve those who cannot drive or do not own automobiles. The Town should continue to participate in county and region-wide transit service programs.
- (15) The Town should work with the State and County to coordinate transportation and land use elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

Transportation Recommendations

The standards and recommendations for the Transportation Element are grouped according to the type of transportation, as follows:

Recommendations for New and Existing Streets

- (1) Work in cooperation with the State Highway Administration as development pressures increase regarding access controls for the portion of U.S Route 50 that abuts the corporate boundary. Such controls would help ensure the efficiency of area roads, which could become increasingly jeopardized by growing development pressures in the vicinity of the Town.
- (2) Work in cooperation with the State Highway Administration and the Wicomico County Department of Public Works to determine the best way for rural traffic to access U.S Route 50 without having to utilize the Town as a pass-through. This might involve the identification of alternative routes or the placement of an additional traffic signal along U.S Route 50 in addition to the light at Mardela Springs.
- (3) Work in cooperation with the Wicomico County Department of Public Works to address the issue of truck traffic in the Town which originates from rural northwestern Wicomico County. Some of this traffic is farming-related, so the farming community should be involved in such discussions. Suggestions may include placing a weight restriction on the bridge in order to prevent heavy trucks from traveling through Town and causing further damage to the road beds.

- (4) Work in cooperation with Wicomico County, possibly in the form of an annual meeting with the Wicomico County Department of Public Works, to discuss each fiscal year's Highway User Fees and to be informed as to how those funds are being annually expended by the County.
- (5) Work in cooperation with the Wicomico County Department of Public Works to establish better communication between the County and the Town regarding the scheduling of paving projects and other road maintenance projects within the Town.
- (6) Work in cooperation with the Wicomico County Department of Public Works to determine alternative funding sources to address the Town's deteriorating streets, curbs, and sidewalks.
- (7) Work in cooperation with the State Highway Administration on the next update of the Federal Highway Functional Classification System to ensure that all roadways are properly categorized.
- (8) Provide for the safety of vehicles and pedestrians at intersections by ensuring adequate sight distances and by using traffic control devices and geometric design features, where appropriate.
- (9) Provide multiple streets to and from residential developments for purposes of safety.
- (10) Avoid creating disconnected "pods" of residential development.
- (11) Maintain the existing grid system within the Town by requiring that streets connect with other streets whenever practical; dead-end streets and cul-de-sacs should be discouraged.
- (12) Roads should be developed to promote alternatives to reaching destinations, to ensure safety and pedestrian mobility, to promote linkages throughout the community, and to implement a street connecting policy.

- (13) Control traffic volume and speed as much as possible through neighborhoods utilizing “traffic calming” methods; such as speed humps, chokers, and bulb-outs; that encourage speeds of 25 mph or less.
- (14) When a lot has frontages on more than one street, access should be from the lesser-classified street.
- (15) Ensure that residential local access roadways are as narrow as possible, while still providing for adequate access by emergency and service vehicles.
- (16) Require residential blocks be small enough (400 to 500 feet) to create easy travel options for motorized and non-motorized travel.
- (17) Avoid difficult driveway approaches and provide vehicular access and turning movements to and from abutting lots.

Sidewalk Recommendations

- (1) Sidewalks should be provided throughout the Town to encourage pedestrian traffic between activity centers.
- (2) The Town should consider the adoption of a sidewalk ordinance that would clearly address responsible parties for sidewalk creation and repair.
- (3) The Town should require all new developments to provide sidewalks and the cost of the sidewalks should be borne by the developer.
- (4) The Town should ensure that sidewalks remain accessible to pedestrians by preventing overgrowth of vegetation or blockage by parked vehicles.
- (5) The Town should seek funding opportunities to repair deficient sidewalks, to create sidewalks where none exist, and to provide for handicapped accessibility.

Bikeways Recommendations

- (1) Bicycle travel should be encouraged, particularly by providing bikeways, where appropriate.

- (2) The Town should coordinate efforts with Wicomico County to expand upon the County's existing bikeways system to include the rural northwestern area of Wicomico County. A connection should be considered from Quantico Village to Mardela Springs via Athol Road.
- (3) A new bike route should be considered from Porter Mill Road to Riffin Road to Mill Branch Road to Athol Road. The reverse of this proposed route could include Athol Road to Rewastico Creek Road and back to Porter Mill Road.

Parking Recommendations

- (1) Off-street parking is a concern for any future development, particularly non-residential development within the Town. As such, new residential, public, and commercial uses should provide adequate parking off of public roads. New residences should have enough lot area to park a minimum of two vehicles. Public uses such as schools, parks, and churches should have enough parking area for their maximum (peak) usage. Commercial uses should provide sufficient off-street parking for their own vehicles, including employees, and an average number of customers. An exception to this commercial standard would be those businesses that have intensive usage at peak hours, such as restaurants, and those types of uses should provide parking for peak demand.
- (2) In the existing developed areas, conversion of an existing structure to a use that requires more parking should be discouraged unless it can be demonstrated that there is sufficient off-street parking in the area.

Public Transit Recommendations

- (1) The Town should work with Shore Transit to determine if a needs analysis should be initiated for the Mardela Springs / Sharptown area to determine if there is a demand for public transit in this area of the County. If sufficient need is identified, the Town should work with Shore Transit to develop a route that could play an important role in helping meet the transportation needs of the populace in and around the Town, especially elderly, handicapped, and low-income residents.

- (2) The Town should continue to work and communicate with Maryland Upper Shore Transit (MUST) to insure that the Cambridge / Salisbury fixed route continues to provide stops in Mardela Springs. The Town should periodically check with MUST to determine ridership numbers for the Mardela Springs area.
- (3) The Town should actively promote both transit systems to all residents as an alternative to driving, instead of simply utilizing these transportation systems as human service programs.

Trucking, Air, and Rail Recommendation

- (1) There are no trucking, air, or rail recommendations proposed at this time.