

Frequently Asked Questions

(1) Q: Why is Cecil County developing a bicycle plan?

A: In 2010, WILMAPCO prepared a bicycle plan for the Town of Elkton. Interest in bicycling generated during the development of Elkton's bicycle plan led to requests for WILMAPCO to produce a bike plan covering all of Cecil County. This planning request was from the Maryland Department of Transportation, with support from Cecil County, as part of a statewide effort to improve non-motorized transportation.

While Cecil County is rural in its composition, there are many opportunities to expand bicycling for a variety of uses. By developing an integrated transportation system that supports bicycling, Cecil County will improve access to communities and other key destinations, link to other modes of transportation, promote tourism, improve air quality, and enhance quality of life.

The Plan was funded through WILMAPCO's annual planning budget. Each year WILMAPCO offers planning assistance to local governments at no cost. Staff resources were used to work with a variety of stakeholders on the Plan. There were no consultant fees or other expenditures used for this Plan. Distribution of workshop flyers and news ads were covered under WILMAPCO's regular operating budget.

**Refer to the Cecil County Bicycle Plan, Section 1: Introduction

(2) Q: Why should Cecil County focus on bicycle improvements? What are the benefits?

A: There are a variety of benefits for promoting and improving conditions for bicycling:

- Improving bicycling conditions benefits everyone in the community as it is a practical means of achieving a variety of personal and societal goals including mobility, health, equity, and overall well-being. Investments in non-motorized modes of travel are not only cost-effective, but can reduce congestion, stimulate economic growth, and improve quality of life.
- Bicycle friendliness contributes to economic development and helps improve local economies. Nationally, the bicycling industry contributes an estimated \$133 billion a year to the U.S. economy through tax generation, jobs and tourism. In Maryland, tourism expenditures totaled \$14.3 billion in 2009.
- Areas with good bike facilities have been statistically shown to increase real estate values.
- Recent studies on obesity rates show significant increases across the entire population; however, some of these studies indicate higher rates of obesity in rural populations than urban and suburban populations. Long-term positive health benefits, such as lowered risks for chronic diseases, make bicycling much more attractive.

**Refer to the Cecil County Bicycle Plan, Section 1: Introduction

(3) Q: Why should Cecil County plan for bicycle facilities when many roads are in disrepair?

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A: Preserving existing infrastructure is a key component to meeting the County's transportation needs. The County will need to make the best use of the transportation system and look at new ways such as better facilitating bicycling to meet growing demands on the system.

Most of the installation and maintenance of bicycle infrastructure are low-cost improvements such as signage and striping. Overall, bicycle infrastructure is much cheaper than vehicle infrastructure and does not require as much maintenance because bicycles cause less wear on the pavement than motor vehicles.

Further, it is most cost-effective to include bicycle accommodations when an existing road is being repaired or a new road is constructed. For example, when roads are re-paved and striped during their regular maintenance schedule, there are no additional costs to stripe the road to include a 4 to 6 foot shoulder if adequate width exists. Most bicyclists can be accommodated by the shoulder of a roadway. Also, planning for bicycle facilities helps to save money in the long-term by avoiding costly retrofits of infrastructure.

By developing the Bicycle Plan the County and its municipalities are better positioned to integrate new bicycling facilities into the existing transportation network when opportunities arise.

(4) Q: Was this Plan developed in coordination with other agencies, such as SHA?

A: The Cecil County Bicycle Plan Advisory Committee was created to guide the development the Plan and to reach consensus on the vision and objectives. The advisory committee consisted of a variety of stakeholders including county planning staff, state and local representatives, and members of the public.

The development of this bicycle plan is a collaborative effort of the following agencies:

- 1) Cecil County Department of Parks and Recreation
- 2) Cecil County Department of Public Health
- 3) Cecil County Department of Planning and Zoning
- 4) Cecil County Municipal Governments: Cecilton, Charlestown, Chesapeake City, Elkton, North East, Perryville, Port Deposit and Rising Sun
- 5) Cecil County Department of Tourism
- 6) East Coast Greenway Alliance (ECGA)
- 7) Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway, Inc. (LSHG)
- 8) Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA)
- 9) Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- 10) Maryland Department of Planning (MDP)
- 11) Maryland Transit Administration (MTA)
- 12) Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT)
- 13) Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO)

**Refer to the Cecil County Bicycle Plan, Section 1: Introduction

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(5) Q: How will Cecil County and Towns pay for bicycle improvements?

A: This is a long-term plan so phasing over time is important. Lower cost projects such as bicycle racks can happen first, while larger projects can be phased over a period of time. Also, by having a bicycle plan in place, the County will be eligible for federal funding for bicycle improvements. Federal funding generally requires only a 20% local match of the total cost of a project. Also, there are other funding sources that can be pursued beyond traditional streams of local, state, and federal funding.

The County and Towns will prioritize bicycle facility improvements to fund in the future. Every recommendation of this Plan does not fall under the purview of Cecil County. For instance, recommendations to provide additional bicycle route signage and re-paint faded bicycle route pavement markings along a state highway would fall under the purview of the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA). SHA will prioritize these improvements internally and make improvements when feasible under their budget.

There is no budget at this time for physical improvements resulting from this Plan. As the Advisory Committee works to develop projects, the County and Towns can submit these projects for funding.

**Refer to the Cecil County Bicycle Plan, Section 9: Implementation

(6) Q: Is the County obligated to pay for bicycle improvements once the Plan is adopted?

A: The Bicycle Plan does not force the County or Towns to spend on bicycle infrastructure. The County and Towns will need to prioritize how to spend funding for future bicycle investments.

(7) Q: Is it reasonable to expect residents in Cecil County to bike to work?

A: Bicycling to work by bicycle will not be practical for everyone, therefore, the Cecil County Bicycle Plan promotes bicycling for a variety of uses, including commute, recreation, fitness, and tourism. Presently, there are a small number of residents that are bicycle commuters and have expressed the need for safer facilities. While commuter bicycling does take place on a smaller scale, biking for work trip purposes will become increasingly important, especially as mixed-use areas develop and new jobs and development arrive. Overall, improvements will help all types of bicyclists in the County feel safer and enjoy the high quality of life Cecil County has to offer.

**Refer to the Cecil County Bicycle Plan, Section 1: Introduction and Section 3: Bicycle Network

(8) Q: Motor vehicles pay to use the road, but bicyclists do not, shouldn't they pay too?

A: Under the law bicyclists have a right to use the roads. Bicycles are legal road vehicles with the same rights and responsibilities as other vehicles. Both cyclists and motorists pay taxes and contribute to the construction and upkeep of roads, regardless of usage, or how much a particular vehicle imposes in costs on the system. Motorists and cyclists are often the same people as most cyclists own cars.

Some local jurisdictions have established bicycle registration systems, which helps with bicycle identification, theft deterrence, and identification of riders. However, these programs are not widespread and are mainly in high bicycling jurisdictions with above the national average for bicycle

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commuters. Often operating costs to maintain a bicycle registration system do not keep pace with registration revenue. A bike registration program would likely be a financial hardship to Cecil County and is not recommended.

(9) Q: Would promoting and accommodating bicycling compromise our rural character?

A: Bicycle facilities in rural areas do not necessarily make those areas more urban. Many rural roads already contain sufficient shoulder space for bikeways, thus do not require major infrastructure changes. Additionally, facilitating more bicycling encourages residents to use this mode instead of driving, which could decrease traffic volumes and related congestion. Rural areas are also a great destination for bicycle tourists, who often prefer day trips in less developed areas.

The Cecil County Bicycle Plan helps the County and Towns to prepare and manage projected growth and future demand on the roadways. Bicycling improves the accessibility and efficiency of the transportation system, connects communities, supports a cleaner environment, encourages healthier lifestyles, and reduces household transportation costs. All of these can be achieved over time while maintaining the existing character of the County.