

# Chapter Sixteen:

# Transportation

## Chapter 16: Transportation

### Goal

**Provide a safe and functional transportation system which implements the land use plan while promoting access and mobility for people and goods through a network of roads, rail, transit, and non-motorized opportunities**

### The Significance to Carroll County

The transportation network in and around Carroll County provides access for people and products to small local markets as well as large metropolitan areas. The Carroll transportation system, which contains roadways, railways, and airways, enables citizens to work at the nearby employment centers of Baltimore and Washington while they reside in an area seen as offering a high quality of life. The increasing pressures being brought to bear on Carroll's transportation network by the commuting public indicate, however, that the transportation system needs attention.

Although railroads have played a large part in the development of Carroll County's small towns, the automobile has had and will continue to have a major impact on the County transportation system. In recognition of the influence of the automobile, Carroll County developed and adopted its first Major Street Plan in 1962 -- two years prior to the first Countywide Master Plan. The Major Street Plan envisioned an interconnected network of state and local roadways that would provide access and mobility for residents throughout Carroll County and its eight municipalities.

The implementation of the Major Street Plan has been ongoing since it was first adopted in 1962. Considerable sections of the local roadway network have been constructed as part of residential, commercial and industrial development projects. The difficult roadway connections, however, those having high construction costs or posing significant environmental challenges, have been problematic in their implementation. Therefore, the County policy which placed the lion's share of the burden for road construction on the development community has resulted in an interrupted and incomplete road system.

Problems have also been encountered in efforts to implement the state roads portion of the Major Street Plan. Traditionally, it has been County policy to depend completely on the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) for their timely construction of the County's proposed bypasses and other state road improvements. Expansion of state

roadway facilities which are, in many cases, Main Streets in local municipalities, have not been forthcoming. Carroll County and its municipal governments, expecting timely state investments in its roadway network, have allowed residential, commercial, and industrial development to proceed. The lack of state road construction as envisioned on the Major Street Plan has created near-failing and failing conditions at multiple locations along several state roadway segments in Carroll County.

In addition to the roadway network, Carroll's transportation system also offers other functional and recreational opportunities, including a public transportation system which offers seven Park and Ride lots, a countywide paratransit service (Carroll Transit) and private taxi and bus companies; a network of public and private airports and airfields; and a pedestrian facilities network of proposed interconnected trails that will provide both recreation and alternative transportation uses. The map on the next page identifies existing transportation facilities in Carroll County, including State highways, rail lines, airports, park and ride lots, and the Carroll Transit headquarters.

The Westminster Regional Airport plays a key role in the economic development plan for the Air Business Center business park in Westminster. The availability and location of the airport services offers a great range of opportunities for businesses to transport goods as well as providing convenient access for business travel. The airport is an amenity for this business center that can help to make this area more attractive to prospective businesses who might locate here.

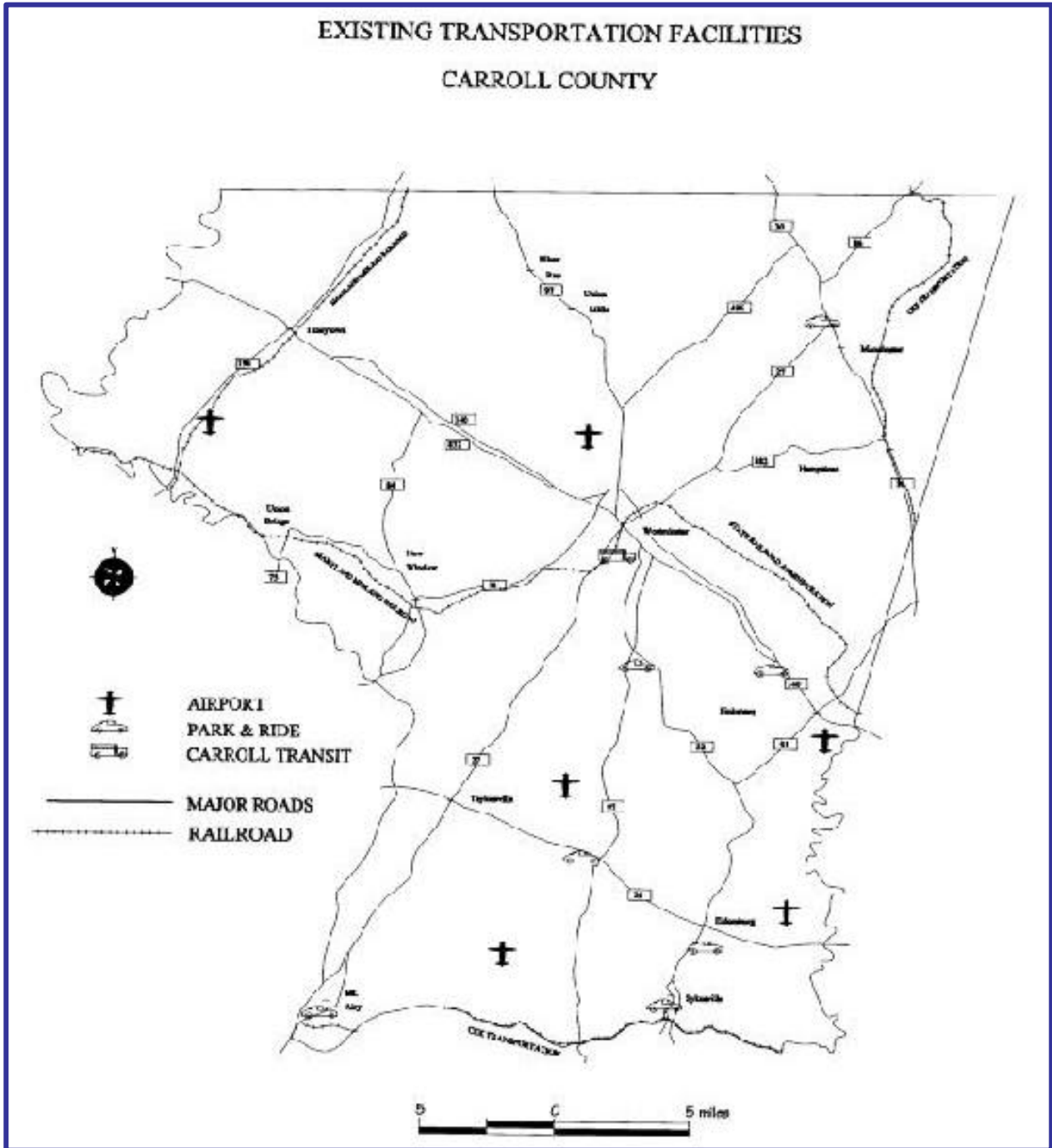
## The Challenge to Carroll County

All indications from state-wide and regional travel forecasts are that the suburb-to-suburb commute will be the fastest growing travel pattern in the future. Suburban Baltimore and Washington employment centers, such as White Marsh, Owings Mills, Columbia and Gaithersburg, will continue to grow in their regional influence. Carroll's location, relative to these destinations, presents special challenges for the local transportation network and its ability to continue to absorb the projected increase in commuters. With the two-mile segment of I-70 in the Mount Airy area making up the entire countywide interstate highway inventory, the major challenge to Carroll County will be to promote safe access and mobility on the existing and proposed roadway network. Four of the County's principal roadways, MD 140, MD 26, MD 32 and MD 30, are, at certain locations, approaching maximum carrying capacity, thereby justifying the bypasses and road widenings identified in the Major Street Plan. CPAs with a bypass on their Major Street Plan include Hampstead, Westminster, Manchester, and Taneytown. In other areas, intersection and spot improvements may be indicated for safety and increased traffic capacity.

With a population of 155,338, major commercial centers, parks, libraries, and a community college, Carroll County has achieved a major portion of the 1964 Master Plan. However, the Major Street Plan implementation has not kept pace with the needs of

the population. The County must find a way, with limited funds, to complete the local system as planned. These local connections will reduce reliance on the State highways which are already overcrowded with through-traffic. Federal and state funding for major highway realignments, as envisioned on the Major Street Plan, have been cut. Carroll County, therefore, is forced to petition the State for funds, often unsuccessfully, as State roadway needs arise.

In addition to the roadway system, there is a potential to develop trails and greenways in the County. As with most trail and greenway proposals, the property rights and liability concerns of nearby residents must be addressed. It is important to plan for and implement



an acceptable trail and greenway system to provide an opportunity for County citizens that is currently enjoyed in other jurisdictions. Providing safe and convenient pedestrian connections to schools, parks, commercial areas, etc. in the County will require a major commitment but may result in decreased reliance on the automobile for local trips.

In most cases, the scenic, rural, and small town heritage of our municipalities and communities can be maintained and enhanced by carefully considering landscaping, streetscapes, median treatments, signage, access points, and other factors along the respective historic Main Street areas. Westminster in particular has had great success enhancing historic Main Street, and this success can hopefully be carried over to other communities in Carroll County.

## The Choice: Goals, Policies, Thresholds, & Recommendations

### Goal

**Provide a safe and functional transportation system which implements the land use plan while promoting access and mobility for people and goods through a network of roads, rail, transit, and non-motorized opportunities**

### Policies

- A. Needed improvements will be a funding priority in the Carroll County CIP, especially for critical roadway segments and intersections.
- B. New subdivisions will be designed to avoid cul-de-sacs and encourage a grid road pattern.

### Recommendations

- A. Calculate the accident rate based on the most recent available “Accident Detail Highway Location Listing”, published by Maryland State Highway Administration, and review the high-accident intersections or roads to identify possible improvements needed.
- B. Consider traffic calming measures, in accord with standard Department of Public Works practice and in coordination with the State Highway Administration, where there is significant potential to slow traffic and improve safety in areas with nearby residences. On major roads, more appropriate solutions such as roundabouts, landscaping, pavement design, and geometric design may be considered.
- C. Periodically update the *Greenways, Bicycle, and Pedestrian Facilities Technical Report*, which provides for a countywide interconnected trail and pedestrian system, where feasible, to reduce pedestrian and bicycle accidents and which can integrate implementation of the *Greenways Plan* through the development process.
- D. Prepare and adopt revised “Traffic Impact Study Policy Guidelines.”

- E. Forward fund planned roads, where appropriate, to avoid fragmented infrastructure development. Develop a system whereby the County is reimbursed for road projects providing benefit to private developers.
- F. Update and adopt a countywide transportation master plan.
- G. Limit access on major and minor collector roads to encourage the development and connection of inner circulation systems and patterns.
- H. Investigate a greater role and responsibility for construction of State arterial and collector roads with the Capital Improvement Program funding in partnership with the State.
- I. Investigate a transportation improvement fund to permit needed transportation improvements on a more timely basis. This fund could be from an excise tax on new construction with proper State implementation legislation.
- J. Maintain and/or improve with corridor preservation and other measures the level of service along State arterial roads. This will ensure safety and promote the efficiency of goods movement for “on-time demand” and “just-in-time” deliveries. Studies will be conducted to review future needed rights-of-way to enhance access to interstate highways, especially I-70 and the nearby I-”95” corridor interstates.
- K. Revise the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Regulations, and the standards for highway and street design and construction to implement access control policies and a connecting system of streets.
- L. Review the road standards to identify where revisions can be made to make roads more pedestrian friendly.
- M. Emphasize the importance of the Westminster Regional Airport when developing transportation system linkages in the Transportation Master Plan.
- N. Work with the County’s delegation to the General Assembly to seek funding for State highway projects and prioritize them with the State Highway Administration.

## **Fiscal Impact to the County**

The realization of the complete transportation network in Carroll County, including the successful implementation of the Major Street Plan, an interconnected countywide trail system, and new roadway improvement needs recently identified, would be very costly. The Major Street Plan includes a combination of State and County roads which exceeds \$230 million in total construction costs. A countywide trail system, consisting of over

350 miles of trails and 2,300 acres, could cost over \$30 million to implement (based on average cost per mile figure of \$90,000 supplied by the State Greenway's Commission) if the County funded the complete proposed trail system. The cost to the residents of the County will be much less because grants and developers of major projects construct much of the needed infrastructure.

Locally, the cost for construction of all County road projects contained on the Major Street Plan would exceed \$70 million if it was completely County funded. This would equal an average cost of \$3.5M per year over the planning period 2000 through 2020. The estimated cost for local road construction is based on an estimated \$8 per square foot of roadway and was developed by the Department of Public Works. While the local road projects are located throughout Carroll County, the majority of local road construction is located within the Westminster and Freedom planning areas. In Freedom, in particular, it is important to note that the construction of several roadways involves the crossing of sensitive environmental areas and will likely have higher costs due to permitting and construction requirements.

Regarding State road projects, Carroll County has traditionally relied solely on the State of Maryland to fund its state transportation improvements contained on the Major Street Plan. It is apparent that continuing to rely on the State for \$160 million in state transportation improvements is not prudent planning. The Governor removed the Westminster bypass, at a cost of \$250 million, from the State plan. Therefore, the \$160 does not reflect the amount for that bypass. However, the County continues to keep that bypass on the County plans. Other counties in the state have begun programs, such as Howard County's transportation excise tax, that enable the jurisdictions to contribute significantly to the construction of needed state road projects. After Howard County had their enabling legislation approved, the County began charging 80 cents per square foot on residential, office, and retail development projects, as well as 40 cents per square foot on distribution and manufacturing projects. While impact fees were an option, Howard County decided to pursue the excise tax as a means of maintaining some ability to use the money in a flexible fashion. An impact fee has specific limitations which restrict flexibility and use of funds on non-related projects. Since Howard County implemented the excise tax, they have been in a position to contribute to, or totally pay for, local improvements to the state roadway network.