

TRANSPORTATION

Poolesville's current street pattern is based upon the outward expansion from a rural town center located primarily between the intersection of Fisher Avenue (MD Rt. 107) and Elgin Road (MD Rt.109) and the intersection of Fisher Avenue and Cattail Road. The Town's current street system is comprised of approximately 21.5 miles of roads, the majority of which serve residential homes. Approximately 18 miles of streets are owned and maintained by the Town with the remaining roads being owned and maintained by the County and State. The State currently owns and maintains Routes 107 and 109. The County owns and maintains West Willard Road, Budd Road, Hughes Road south of Westerly Avenue, Westerly Avenue from Fisher Avenue to Hughes Road, Westerly Road, Jerusalem Road, Whites Ferry Road west of MD Route 109, and Cattail Road from the intersection of Kohlhoss Road north to MD Route 28.

The Town should consider requesting the County to transfer ownership of their part of Westerly Avenue. This would allow the integration of sidewalks, curb and gutter and provide uniformity throughout the Town.

Appendix E, Map 4 illustrates the Town's existing streets. Elgin Road and Fisher Avenue function as the Town's major highway arteries linking Poolesville with other communities. Wootton Avenue, West Willard Road, Hughes Road, Westerly Avenue, Hoskinson Road, Spates Hill Road, Cissel Manor Way, Cattail Road, Jerusalem Road and part of Tom Fox Avenue function as collector / distributor streets, with the remaining road network being local streets.

All traffic control in Poolesville is currently accomplished with signage. All of the Town's streets are paved with asphalt and are generally in good to excellent condition. Most of the Town's roads and residential areas are illuminated at night. The posted speed limit for the Town's roads is 25 mph with the exception of several segments of Fisher Avenue, which is posted as high as 40 mph.

With the exception of two streets (Beall Street, and part of Westerly Avenue), all of the Town's roads adhere to current American Association of State Highway and Transportation Official's (AASHTO) planning and design guidelines. The Town's roads consist of both open section (no curb and gutter) and closed section (curb and gutter). It is the Town's current policy to require all new roads to be closed section and have concrete curb and gutter, which comply with the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA).

Transportation Issues

Moving people and vehicles around and through the Town efficiently is important to the future of Poolesville. Three principal objectives should be addressed in coming years:

1. Pedestrian movement: Completion of the major sidewalk construction initiative with priority given to sidewalks along major arteries and high traffic areas, and continued support for the Streetscape Plans for Fisher Avenue.



2. Regional Transportation issues: Continued and determined lobbying of County and State officials to make needed improvements to the transportation infrastructure outside the Town. Also, to the extent possible, support telecommuting, public transportation (bus and train service) and car-pooling.
3. Public transportation: Seek expansion of the existing bus routes to include stops for each of the major subdivisions.
4. Local Transportation issues: Employ engineering techniques and strategic traffic law enforcement to improve the safe and efficient movement of vehicular traffic within and through Town.

Pedestrian Movement

Poolesville is committed to maintaining a “Town Center” to benefit residents and foster a greater sense of community. To achieve this goal and to enhance the safety of its residents and visitors, the Town should continue to implement a multi-year construction program so pedestrians can comfortably and safely walk to schools and parks, to visit friends, shop, and attend cultural events. A change should be made to the Streetscape Plan to include a raised crosswalk across Norris Road.

All proposed sidewalks are to be constructed of concrete and should include the installation of concrete curb and gutter where practical and road widths support their inclusion. Curb and gutter provide a safety barrier between the proposed sidewalk and roadway in accordance with the ADA. Appendix E, Map 12 also identifies streets that currently have sidewalks on at least one side of the road. Most of the sidewalk projects recommended in the Sidewalk Master Plan are identified in the Town’s long term Capital Improvements Plan.

Town Planners recommend that the pedestrian plan for sidewalks be reviewed for reprioritization to address the specific pedestrian needs of the High School attendee’s and the residents’ needs from Brightwell Crossing using Elgin Road to reach the Central Business District. CIP funding for the reconstruction of these sidewalks to bring them into conformance with ADA guidelines should be in cooperation with the State Highway Administration.

Future construction of the Sidewalk Retrofit Program should take public safety, emergency vehicular access, and drainage concerns into consideration during the design planning process.

Bicycling

Bicycling is a supported form of transportation in Poolesville, and we should strive to promote a bicycle-friendly message to our community. Our goal is to support the safe co-existence among bicycle, vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Support efforts should include:

- Courtesy/Safety reminder signage on County and State roads in the Poolesville vicinity and on the Town’s multi-purpose trail system.



- Bike racks strategically located in the commercial area.
- Safety/Courtesy messages in the Town Newsletter and through Chamber of Commerce sources.

Traffic Volume and Distribution

The most recent comprehensive traffic studies were conducted during 1995 and 1997. Forty-eight (48) hour continuous traffic counts were taken at twenty-six (26) locations within Poolesville. Automated traffic counters measured the volume of traffic in hourly intervals. In addition, four (4) intersections were identified as critical to traffic flow in Poolesville and were subsequently selected for evaluation. The intersections selected were: Elgin Road and Fisher Avenue; Wootton Avenue and Fisher Avenue; West Willard Road and Fisher Avenue; and Spates Hill Road and Fisher Avenue. Turning movement traffic count data was manually collected at each intersection. The study indicated that the majority of the Town's local streets currently experience low to moderate (under AASHTO guidelines) traffic volumes. As expected, most of the Town's collector, distributor and arterial streets experience moderate to heavy traffic volumes for a rural area. The highest traffic volumes in Poolesville occur on the eastern portion of Fisher Avenue, on Elgin Road North and MD Route 107 West (Whites Ferry Road). The existing Town Center (Fisher Avenue & Elgin Road) experiences the highest volume of traffic and it is relatively continuous throughout the daylight hours. The Wootton Avenue and Fisher Avenue intersection had traffic count rates that are only slightly less than the Town Center traffic count rate. This initial study has been added to by the Maryland State Highway Administration (MSHA) in 2005, 2006, 2008 and developer's funded studies.

Since the last master plan, discussions regarding various improvements ranging from converting the Wootton Avenue and Fisher Avenue intersection to a four-way stop or a traffic circle have been proposed. Also reviewed were acceleration-deceleration lanes, addressing pedestrian crossings on Fisher Avenue, and parking in the area of the Town Center. In February of 2008, MSHA conducted intersection studies via a visual count of the turning movements made at Wootton Avenue and Fisher Avenue. MSHA maintains that improvements are not required under the MSHA design criteria.

Existing Roadway Capacity

According to AASHTO, the theoretical capacity of a street to handle vehicles is generally considered to be between 1,200 to 2,000 vehicles per hour per lane. All of the Town's roads currently have adequate capacity. Only one road in Town (Fisher Avenue between its intersection with Elgin Road and Cattail Road) appears to be nearing full capacity as currently constructed. The multiple commercial entrance lanes and the narrow portion of road adjacent to the Old Town Hall reduce the capacity of this section of road.



Critical Intersections Capacity & Safety

The capacity of the Town's four critical intersections was analyzed by the State Highway Administration (SHA) utilizing a standardized level of service evaluation technique. Six levels of service are defined with "A" representing the best condition and "F" representing the worst condition. The results indicate that in general, all four critical intersections currently operate at level of service "A" in both AM and PM peak hours. However, certain turning movements associated with the Fisher Avenue and Elgin Road, Wootton Avenue and Fisher Avenue, and Spates Hill Road and Fisher Avenue intersections operate at level of service "B" and "C". In addition, application of standardized techniques indicates that none of the four intersections warrant the installation of a traffic signal at this time. This latter conclusion is consistent with a 1994 study conducted by the Maryland State Highway Administration.

In 2003, the Town's request to the SHA for a four-way stop at the intersection of Fisher Avenue and Wootton Avenue was rejected. This intersection represents the location of greatest contact between pedestrian and vehicular movement. Town Planners believe that an added measure of safety to enhance the pedestrian movements of our Elementary school attendee's is needed. The Town should continue its efforts to lobby the SHA to analyze and develop improvements at this intersection.

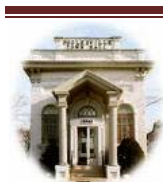
The Town also sought from Montgomery County Department of Transportation, in 2006, a four-way stop at the intersection of Tom Fox Avenue and Hughes Road. Due to a rise in Hughes Road south of the intersection, northbound cars cannot be seen by drivers on Tom Fox Avenue. As a result, several vehicular accidents have occurred at this intersection. Likewise, pedestrians using Tom Fox Avenue to cross Hughes Road are confronted with the same inability to see on-coming vehicles. Now that there is a sidewalk on Fisher Avenue connecting Hunter's Run to the Town center, there will likely be increased pedestrian traffic across Hughes Road. Accordingly, the Town should fervently continue its efforts to obtain signage for a four-way stop at both of these precarious intersections.

Future Traffic Management Recommendations

Because limited residential and commercial development could exist during the next six years, some changes in traffic conditions or patterns are expected. Although all roads within the Town have sufficient capacity for limited growth, there are some safety and congestion issues, which will need to be addressed in this Master Plan's timeframe. There is also the need for improving subdivision access and new proposed roadway extensions that are detailed in Appendix E, Map 4. It is realized that any new connections and extensions for Cattail Road, West Willard Road and Fisher Avenue may additionally warrant intersection design changes and new traffic management strategies.

Future Road Extensions and Improvements

Road extensions and major improvements could be implemented in the future to improve the Town's vehicular transportation system. Recommended road extensions are generally proposed



for areas with poor traffic circulation and / or limited access. Residential areas with only one point of access risk being cut-off from emergency vehicles should the single access point become blocked or closed. All road extensions should be design to discourage through traffic. Major road improvements are also recommended for areas with existing safety hazards and / or chronic drainage problems.

The Town has long had the goal of removing unsightly telephone and electric cables and poles from Town Center, thereby reducing the risk of accidents and injury with adjacent vehicle traffic. Although not always economically feasible, underground placement of utility lines are still recommended and included in the Streetscape Plans for Fisher Avenue.

Vehicular Speed

Excessive speed on the roads and streets in Town is a potential threat to Poolesville's citizens. In addition to Town residents leaving and entering residential areas, Fisher Avenue has an ever-increasing number of through travelers from the north and west of Town, including ferry traffic from Virginia. In working with State and County officials to establish reasonable and safe speed limits on Fisher Avenue, the perspectives of both residents and through travelers should be considered.

A variety of methods should be utilized to control vehicular speeds such as; installing additional signage, rumble strips, engineered speed humps, raised brick crosswalks, or traffic circles. In addition, new developments should avoid the use of straight roads that encourage speeding. New methods recommended by highway engineers to control speed, such as lane narrowing and trees on medians, should be studied for possible adoption in the Town.

To enhance the Town traffic flow, the Town should apply the design standards of the "Poolesville Vicinity Master Plan" recommendations for right-of-way and pavement widths within Town boundaries, to the extent that the environment and character of the Town are not negatively impacted. Streetscape plans are also to be integrated in planning.

Safe and Efficient Traffic

For safer and more efficient movement through Town:

- Recommend redesign of Tom Fox Avenue (roadway and sidewalks) from Hoskinson Road to the Middle School.
- Recommend redesign of Tom Fox Avenue and Hughes Roads at Halmos Park to improve line of sight and support the recommendation of a four-way stop sign.

For improved access to subdivisions, particularly for emergency vehicles:

- Extend Bodmer Avenue to West Willard Road when the remainder of the Westerly Subdivision is completed.
- Seek to extend Cissel Manor Way to Cattail Road.



- Where practical, future residential subdivisions shall have multiple access roads. However, this should be done in a manner that will not encourage through traffic.

To enhance public health and safety by protecting Poolesville's wellhead areas from possible chemical and fuel contamination, reducing excessive noise pollution, and safeguarding Town roads from damage:

- Encourage State transportation officials to limit overweight or hazardous chemical vehicles on Fisher Avenue and Elgin Road as through roads. Such vehicles should bypass Poolesville on Route 28.

To beautify the road systems:

- Landscape the roads, sidewalks, and bikeways with trees in conformance Streetscape/Street Tree Plans.
- Implement Streetscape recommendations and plans. Review the Streetscape Committee's recommendations and plans and develop a phased approach to implementation that will make the completion of the project more feasible and within a reasonable time frame.

Relationship to County Roads

The Town should vigorously lobby County and State authorities for improvements to the commuter roads on which the Town's residents depend. Further complications for safe vehicular travel on western county roads are the extensive use of roads in and around Poolesville by local and visiting bicyclists, those transporting horses, and travelers utilizing Whites Ferry coming from or going to Virginia. These factors, combined with the historic heavy use by agricultural equipment, also suggest that that County roads surrounding Poolesville require additional improvements to be reasonably safe. Typically, the improvements that may be required are wider lanes (including bike lanes), adequate shoulders and appropriate sight distances. In particular, the section of Whites Ferry Road between downtown Poolesville and White's Ferry, while designated as Rustic, needs milling, paving and shoulder widening (in places) in recognition of its use as a commuter route as well as a bicyclist favorite. With the pending Streetscape improvements set to take place within Town limits, all of the roadways, from White's Ferry to Route 28, should be given priority when evaluated for possible improvements such as those previously mentioned. Any decisions between rustic road standards and safety should be biased towards the consistent goal of providing reasonable safety for all users.

Safety Concerns

The Town has identified drainage concerns along Fisher Avenue between Spates Hill Road and Hersperger Lane, specifically on the south side of the roadway. This drainage problem exists when significant steady rainfall occurs.

There are two segments of MD Route 107 just east of the Town limits, which currently experience chronic accident problems. The first location is at a sharp horizontal curve located approximately ½ mile east of the Town limits. Drainage improvement to this curve, conducted



by the State in 2001, helped with wet weather safety; but, a significant number of vehicles still misjudge the severity of the curve. Poolesville thereby supports a request to the SHA to redesign this portion of MD Route 107.

Another problematic area in proximity to Poolesville is the Partnership Road and Sugarland Road intersection. This intersection has very limited sight distance for drivers in all directions and has an extreme elevation change. These problems pose a major safety hazard given the relatively high volume of traffic that utilizes Partnership Road. The Town should encourage the County to modify this intersection to improve its sight distance characteristics.

Farther east, is the intersection of MD Routes 28 and 107. Reconfiguration is needed to improve visibility and safety. The Town should jointly request that these safety enhancement projects be added to the State's Capital Improvements list of projects.

These safety improvements should continue to be emphasized and properly balanced with the constraints imposed by the County's Rural and Rustic Roads program.

The Town should continue to request the State and County to make improvements to these areas.

