

Coalition for Smarter Growth

Choices for Our Communities
Choices for Our Region

4000 Albemarle Street, NW, Suite 310
Washington, DC 20016
(202) 244-4408 www.SmarterGrowth.net

PRESS RELEASE

Coalition for Smarter Growth, Washington Area Bicyclist Association, Montgomery County Stormwater Partners, Potomac Conservancy, and Montgomery County Bicycle Advocates

For Immediate Release:
July 5, 2007

Contact:
Cheryl Cort, (202) 244-4408 x 112
or (202) 251- 7516 cell
Anne Merwin, (301) 608-1188 x 214
Diane M. Cameron, 301-655-6049

Groups Call on Leggett to Develop Strong Regulations to Meet Montgomery Council's "Complete and Green Streets" Guidelines

County the first in the country to adopt a policy designed to accommodate all users and protect water quality

Washington – The Coalition for Smarter Growth, the Washington Area Bicyclist Association, Montgomery County Bicycle Advocates, Potomac Conservancy and the Montgomery Stormwater Partners praise the Montgomery County Council's unanimous vote to adopt guidelines that ensure that streets are designed with all users in mind – pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders and drivers. The law also requires that county roads minimize polluted stormwater runoff. The groups now call on County Executive Ike Leggett to develop regulations that support this progressive law.

The county joins a growing number of communities around the country that recognize that users other than cars must be intentionally designed into the process to create "complete streets." The county steps ahead of other communities by incorporating water quality measures, requiring the greening of road construction techniques. This makes the county the first to adopt a "Complete and Green Streets" policy in the country.

"We applaud the council's vision in adopting standards that will make our roadways safer for travelers and the environment," said Cheryl Cort, policy director for the Coalition for Smarter Growth. "Now it's up to County Executive Ike Leggett to develop the regulations to ensure this happens. Leggett should provide the leadership needed to reform the 'business as usual' of street designs that regularly do not account for the safety and comfort of anyone not in a car."

For the last several months the Washington Area Bicyclist Association, Montgomery County Bicycle Advocates, the Coalition for Smarter Growth, Potomac Conservancy, and Montgomery Stormwater Partners have been working together on a unique proposal for the revisions to the Montgomery County Road Code that would couple complete streets principles with environmentally sensitive designs that would reduce impervious surfaces and help treat stormwater on site.

"The council now requires that county road builders do a better job protecting our streams and rivers," said Diane Cameron with the Montgomery County Stormwater Partners. "The Green Streets approach means that every road built or reconstructed in the future will capture and treat a minimum quantity of stormwater on-site, using more natural, vegetative techniques."

9/15/20072

“Bringing road building standards under new water quality requirements is innovative and important. By capturing and treating more of the polluted stormwater runoff before it leaves the site, we make great headway in protecting vulnerable streams and the Potomac River,” added Anne Merwin, Director of Policy, Potomac Conservancy, and member of Stormwater Partners.

The law sets out a statement of purpose championed by the Coalition for Smarter Growth, water quality and bicycle advocates that establishes the goal to design all county roadways to maximize choice, safety and convenience for all users of the transportation system, and to minimize polluted runoff.

“The Council has led the way on reforming the County’s outmoded, cars-only mentality to road design. Now we urge Mr. Leggett to ensure that truly multi-modal street design regulations are crafted. All users – pedestrians, bicyclists, wheelchair users, transit riders, and drivers have a right to use public streets. We need design standards that fully recognize that,” commented Jack Cochrane with the Montgomery County Bicycle Advocates.

“Montgomery County’s Department of Public Works and Transportation is widely known to be behind the times on new thinking about how to make the most of our street network and give people safe and attractive transportation options,” added Cort. “Unfortunately, the department has continued its resistance through the Council’s process to craft this law.”

Dorcas Adkins of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association commented that her group is eager to work with the administration to ensure conditions for cyclists improve throughout the county. “This is a big step forward for complete streets in our communities, but getting the details right by changing the regulations is critical,” Adkins said.

“The Council should be commended for making the connection between roadway design and environmental protection,” Merwin said. “If we build roads that reduce and filter stormwater and give people less polluting transportation choices like walking, bicycling and riding transit, we can ensure that our transportation decisions are moving us towards a more sustainable future.”

Along with the Complete Streets standards, the law also requires that new and reconstructed county roads are Green Streets, that is, the street design standards include stormwater pollution prevention requirements that minimize polluted runoff. With the Green Streets addition to the Road Code bill, Montgomery County is the first community in the country to incorporate design standards that accommodate multi-modal users and water quality measures, requiring the greening of road construction techniques.

According to the county, the major standards reduce the widths of newly constructed or reconstructed neighborhood and business district streets to widths that would naturally reduce the speed of traffic and shorten the distances that would be required for pedestrians to cross a street. The standards also include a provision for street trees.

These standards now go to the county’s executive branch, which has up to one year to approve of the standards or offer alternative standards. If the executive branch proposes different standards, the Council will then have three months to consider them.

Links:

Washington Area Bicyclist Association www.waba.org

Potomac Conservancy: www.potomac.org

Coalition for Smarter Growth www.smartergrowth.net

Complete Streets Campaign <http://www.completestreets.org/>

Montgomery Council press release:

http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/Apps/Council/PressRelease/PR_details.asp?PrID=3704

9/15/20073

###