



Odenton Town Center

August 18, 2015

From Bicycle Advocates for Annapolis & Anne Arundel County

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Support for Odenton Town Center Master Plan

Bicycle Advocates for Annapolis & Anne Arundel County ([BikeAAA](http://bikeaaa.org)) is an all-volunteer 501c3 organization promoting safe bicycling for transportation, recreation and fitness throughout Anne Arundel County. BikeAAA originated as a project of the [Leadership Anne Arundel](#) Flagship program and now represents over 500 county cyclists. We support the commitment to *Complete Streets* by the state of Maryland and more recently by Anne Arundel County. *Complete Streets* assures that investment in new roads and maintenance/renovation of existing roads will address the needs of multiple transportation modes including cars, trucks, bicycles and pedestrians. This nationally recognized strategy provides more safe transportation options at little incremental cost. Safe bicycle and pedestrian routes to work, school, shopping and other destinations reduce traffic, protect the environment, stimulate the local economy and addresses Anne Arundel's #1 health issue – obesity. It prepares Anne Arundel County for the transportation demands of the current and next generation. Most recently we participated in the planning and launch of the new Anne Arundel County Bicycle Advisory Commission. We also stand ready to support OTC in pursuit of grants that can help fund the build-out of a safe interconnected bicycle route network.

One of our members, Glenn Gunter, lives in Odenton and sees people walking and biking daily. Residents take for granted that they should be able to get around town and do their errands without driving. However, Odenton is disconnected and leaves people with few options for walking and biking within Odenton. The projected increase in employees in the Ft. Meade area and growth of residential and retail development in Odenton and the surrounding region will only make this worse. Providing safer routes would encourage bicycling to numerous employment, education, shopping, and recreation destinations in Odenton. Local businesses could actually see a boost in business if driving was not the only way to get there. For some Anne Arundel residents, a bicycle is the only economic means of transportation and for others it is preferred for health, environmental, and enjoyment reasons. The same is true for walking. Encouraging other modes of transportation takes cars off the road and eases congestion.

While we are pleased to see the plan includes shared roadways and pedestrian sidewalks; we have several concerns about if and how this will be implemented. Specifically:

1. **COMPLETE STREETS** – Develop and adopt a Complete Streets Policy for Odenton Town Center to guide designers, developers, and government officials in the implementation of roadways which include comfortable facilities for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit vehicles
2. **INTERCONNECTED** – The vision for Odenton Town Center is to become a regional destination for the surrounding community, meeting shopping, business, service, entertainment, and transit needs. The changing demographics of Odenton and the surrounding areas mean more people are walking and

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riding. To capitalize on this Odenton Town Center must ensure it has a robust pedestrian and cycling infrastructure that allows people to travel to/from other areas (e.g., Fort Meade, Arundel Mills, BWI, Waugh Chapel). See below for specific project suggestions.

3. **INTRACONNECTED** – The Odenton Town Center must be safely intra-connected for walkers and bikers. For example, walkers and bikers that desire to travel between the north section of Odenton Town Center to the Core or Historic section have no safe routes. The completion of Town Center Boulevard has the potential to provide a safer alternative, but only if it incorporates a robust, safe biking infrastructure. See below for specific project suggestions.
4. **SEPARATED/PROTECTED** – The widening of Rt. 175, completion of Town Center Blvd, and growth in the Odenton Town Center will result in increased traffic volume and speed increases with frequent lane changes. This makes bicyclists in a striped lane adjacent to a travel lane extremely vulnerable. In fact, it makes it difficult for cars to provide the required 3 feet of space when passing. The design must provide protected or at least buffered lanes.
5. **ACCELERATED DESIGN & BUILD OF TRAILS** – We advocate early build-out of hiker/biker trails throughout the project rather than waiting for each block to mature. The trail should be less complex and far less expensive than the road widening and will provide a safe cycling and walking route sooner and while road construction is in process. See below for specific project suggestions.
6. **SIGNAGE** – The completion of the WB&A Trail and the South River Trail will bring more recreational riders and walkers into Odenton and to the edges of the Odenton Town Center. Pedestrian and Biker orientated wayfinding and safety signage will allow walkers and bikers to navigate Odenton and the OTC. Additionally, the signage can be used to draw people into the OTC and the businesses and amenities offered. See below for specific project suggestions.
7. **BICYCLE PARKING** – A key driver for people that bike is the availability of bicycle parking. They desire and need a safe and secure place to park their bicycles when they arrive at their destination. Outside of government facilities (i.e. public schools, West County Library, Odenton MARC Station) bicycling parking in the Odenton Town Center is lacking with only six locations having bicycle racks. See below for specific project suggestions.
8. **BIKE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY** – BikeAAA encourages OTC and the Greater Odenton Area to set a goal to achieve the Bike Friendly Community Bronze Status sponsored by the League of American Bicyclists (<http://bikeleague.org/community>).

The state of Maryland was recently ranked #10 in the nation for bicycle-friendliness and the commitment of MDOT to Complete Streets is an important component. We stand ready to support this and future projects that make Odenton and Anne Arundel County a more livable, healthy, and economically attractive place to live, work and play.

Proposed Priority Projects

Anne Arundel County should promote the designation of OTC as a Bicycle-Pedestrian Priority Area as described in Maryland Senate Bill 371 (<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2015RS/bills/sb/sb0371T.pdf>), introduced by Senator Rosapepe, and subsequently signed into law by Governor Hogan on 14 April 2015. The designation of Bicycle-Pedestrian Priority Areas is intended to ensure that the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians are taken into account during all phases of transportation planning, design, construction or expansion. The aim is to provide for greater safety and access through bike lanes, paths, sidewalks, crosswalks and other physical road improvements and traffic control devices.

1. PROJECTS ENHANCING INTRACONNECTIONS

- a. Town Center Blvd Project. Residents have been waiting 20+ years for completion of Town Center Blvd. The county should advance the Town Center Blvd Hiker/Biker pathway as a stand-alone project. This Hiker/Biker pathway would provide immediate relief for those residents/commuters that travel within the OTC and beyond.
- b. MD 175 Bike Lanes and Sidewalks. Walkers and Riders in the OTC must navigate extremely dangerous routes or take overly circuitous route to arrive safely. Currently 25,900 vehicles travel along MD175 in this area each day, with traffic projected to increase to 65,700 vehicles daily by 2030. Sidewalks for walkers are fragmented and bike lanes simply do not exist. The County must provide a safe alternative for walkers and riders to transit the OTC along MD175. The planned SHA widening project provides some separated bike routes but they need to extend the full length of the project, from XXXX Rd. down to YYYY Rd in Odenton Town Center.

2. PROJECTS ENHANCING INTERCONNECTIONS

- a. South Shore Trail Completion. The OTC Planning Advisory Committee should advocate the accelerated completion of the South Shore Trail and the associated connector to the Washington, Baltimore & Annapolis (WB&A) Trail. While the bulk of the South Shore Trail is outside the OTC, it will support OTC and Odenton bicycle commuters and draw day cyclists and others into the OTC similar to the BWI Loop and Baltimore & Annapolis Trail. Businesses (i.e., Rita's Ice, Baltimore Coffee & Tea, convenience stores, etc) that serve these types of visitors would see an immediate benefit.
- b. WB&A Trail Completion. The OTC Planning Advisory Committee should advocate the completion WB&A Trail, specifically the bridge crossing of the Patuxent River. Residents of the OTC and Odenton have been waiting for the completion of this trail for years. Once completed, the trail will provide an excellent, traffic free, bike commuter route between central Anne Arundel County and the New Carrollton area. The completion will also draw more day cyclists into the OTC and Odenton. The Maryland Bikeways program has already funded a design study for the Patuxent Crossing and OTC should press Anne Arundel County, PG County and MDOT to get the study launched.

3. SIGNAGE PROJECTS

- a. Signage.
 - i. Promote the use of SHARROWS, Bike Lane Markings, and “Share The Road” signage on roadways designated as Shared Roadways in the OTC Master Plan
 - ii. Promote the use of SHARROWS, Bike Lane Markings, and “Share The Road” signage on high traffic roads that see regular bike traffic (i.e., Odenton Road, MD 175, Sappington Station Traffic Circle)
 - iii. Include Bicycle Wayfinding signs that direct cyclists to key destinations like the library, schools, MARC, trails and other key destinations and routes.

4. BICYCLE PARKING PROJECTS

- a. Bicycle Parking. Promote the build-out of bicycle parking in the OTC and Odenton at large. Focus on the need for bicycle racks at ‘destinations’ (i.e., grocery stores, banks, coffee shops, transit, schools, employers, etc).
- b. Artistic Bicycle Racks. Consider implementing an ‘Artistic Bike Rack Project’ similar to the Annapolis project. These racks complement the historic nature of Annapolis and highlight specific items of note (see Figure 1 and Figure 2 below). Under the Annapolis Bike Rack project, the Annapolis DOT entered into an agreement with the Maryland DOT to design, procure and install artistic bike racks within the historic district. They were able to obtain a \$25,000 grant with a matching 10% match of \$2,500 from AACO Arts Council.



Figure 1: Annapolis Artistic Bike Rack



Figure 2: Annapolis Artistic Bike Rack (Close-up)