



# Odenton Town Center Plan Input

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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)) 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.

BikeAAA is encouraged to see many of the concerns and recommendations submitted in response to the Preliminary Draft Odenton Town Center Master Plan (June 2015) were incorporated into the Final Draft of the Odenton Town Center Master Plan (January 8, 2016). BikeAAA would like the Planning and Zoning Advisory Board to consider the following observations.

### **Chapter 2. Goals, Objectives, and Planning Guidance, 2.3 Transportation (Page 30)**

The Plan states: "The pedestrian and bicycle network serving the OTC includes sidewalks, trails, and shared roadways."

This statement is misleading in that it makes it appear there is a viable and safe “network” in the OTC. It is worth stating that the network is fractured and poses safety issues for people walking and riding in the OTC. This is supported by observations of residents walking, riding, and driving in the area and through discussions with residents. The shortfalls are also documented in the MD 175 (Annapolis Road) Phase II Feasibility Study (January 2010) and the Transportation Study for the Odenton Town Center Master Plan (June 2010). For example:

- The MD 175 (Annapolis Road) Phase II Feasibility Study (January 2010) found “Within the MD 175 Phase II study area, there is little or no bicyclist and pedestrian access. No sidewalks are present, except alongside the Sappington Station Road roundabout, and travel lanes are not wide enough to accommodate bicycle traffic along with vehicular traffic.”

The reality is, in the last 20 years, there has been no significant improvement in the infrastructure for people that walk or ride in the Odenton Town Center area. If anything, the situation has gotten worse as the number of cars have increased in response to the explosive growth in Odenton Town Center and the surrounding area.

**Recommendation:** *The statement should say "The planned network....."*

5.0 Transportation Facilities Requirements, 5.2 Planned Road Network, Figure 3-8. Priority Transportation Projects (Page 68/69)

BikeAAA presumes that the OTC Master Plan doesn't fully address regional interconnections due to a reliance on the 2013 Anne Arundel County Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan for inter-connections and the 2007 Odenton Trails Schematic Plan intra-connections. Both plans provide a robust planned network for people walking and biking that would make the OTC much more livable.

The plan speaks to a walking/biking network within OTC and then lists some of the priority projects (Figure 3-8. Priority Transportation Projects, Pages 68-69). Unfortunately, the priorities have no meaning without funding. Unless the State & County adequately fund the projects outlined in the plans, or leverages developers, the OTC will remain unsafe for people walking and riding. For example:

- **South Shore Trail.** The South Shore Trail is two decades in the making and only .8 miles have been completed.
- **WB&A Trail.** The WB&A Trail has been two decades in the making and has made much more progress, but remains unfinished. It appears that the last connection of the WB&A Trail may be started and finished in the next few years **IF** adequate funding is allocated.
- **Town Center Boulevard.** The community has been waiting for the completion of Town Center Boulevard for 20+ years.
- The notice to begin construction on the road was issued in late 2015. It's been reported that the developer has two years to complete the project. Town Center Boulevard may offer a safer alternative than MD175 for walkers and riders to transit within the OTC and through the OTC from surrounding areas. However, even this improvement may be short-lived due to the challenges identified in the Odenton Town Center Transportation Study and the MD175 Feasibility Studies.

**Recommendation:** *The plan should highlight the need to fund the bike and pedestrian network projects such as those above and establish the planning and zoning ordinances that will require developers to build their share.*

### Chapter 3. Development Requirements, 5.5 Pedestrian and Bicycle Network (Page 81)

The Plan states, "Ultimately, the goal is that the OTC will include a pedestrian and bicycle circulation system that connects all major activity centers, transit centers, and community facilities. This will help reduce the need for short vehicle trips, alleviate traffic congestion, and create a more urban and active atmosphere."

- This statement appears to be at odds with the intent of the changes to the Bicycle Parking ratio in Chapter 4. Design Standards, 4.5 Bicycle Parking (Page 105) which reduced the ratio from the 2009 OTC Master Plan and the 2015 preliminary draft of the OTC Master Plan.

Bicycle travel in and around the OTC can be a viable mode for work, shopping, and recreational trips. To ensure the accessibility of the local streets as well as the connections to regional trails, consider the following:

- **On-Road Facilities.** Installation of wide curb lanes with share-the-road signing and marking or exclusive signed and marked bicycle lanes should be incorporated on all urban grid and local roadways.
- **Trail Crossing & Road Crossings.** To improve safety for bicyclists as well as pedestrians and vehicles at major crossings (e.g. MD 175 at Town Center Blvd), intersection treatments such as bicycle signals should be implemented.
- **Maryland 175** remains a significant obstacle for people walking and biking. The crossing and transiting along MD 175 by pedestrians and bicycles must be provided for in a safe and convenient manner. Without such connections, the Odenton Town Center will remain fragmented and MD 175 will become a barrier to pedestrian and bicycle access.
- **Maryland 32** and the **railroad** remains a significant obstacle for people walking and biking. Maryland 32 and the railroad effectively sever the connection for people walking and biking within the OTC and through the OTC. These physical barriers effectively keep people walking and biking from transiting through OTC to other attractors in the area.

**Recommendation:** *The 2010 Transportation Study for the OTC Master Plan states "To fulfill the vision of the OTC redevelopment, there will be a need to provide high-quality non-motorized rights-of-way and safe and convenient access to high-frequency transit. This can be realized by implementing a 'pedestrian first' and pedestrian priority mentality in all roadway and land use design elements."*

### Chapter 4. Design Standards, 4.5 Bicycle Parking (Page 105)

The Bicycle parking requirement has been reduced/downgraded from the 2009 OTC Master Plan and the June 2015 preliminary draft of the OTC Master Plan.

The Final Draft Plan states: "Safe and secure bicycle racks shall be provided where practical for development in the OTC at a rate of **one space per 20,000 square feet of building**, or five spaces, whichever is greater." The previous ratio was "**one space per 4,000 square feet of building** or five spaces, whichever is greater"

- This reduction appears to eliminate the requirement for smaller (4,000 sq. ft.) buildings (businesses) to install bicycle racks. Many of the businesses a person on bicycle might frequent are those small businesses found in the OTC. It's important to note that outside of the MARC Station and County buildings (e.g., Library, public schools) in the OTC there are only nine (9) bicycle racks at commercial properties.
- **Recommend:**
- *the ratio be changed back to the previous ratio of “one space per 4,000 square feet of building or five spaces, whichever is greater”*
- **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). A robust network for pedestrians and bicycles is useless without places for riders to secure their bicycles.*
- **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.

Creating a comfortable, active, and urban pedestrian and bicycling environment requires a complete and integrated pedestrian system of sidewalks as well as appropriate intersection and bus stop treatments. Accommodations for the prioritized mode must in some cases precede consideration over improvements, operations or capacity for other modes in the corridor (e.g. bicycle lane replacing a second travel lane, signal timing for pedestrians disrupting vehicular traffic progression) [2010 Transportation Study for the OTC Master Plan].

BikeAAA is prepared to continue working with the Odenton Town Center Planning Committee, County officials and the new Anne Arundel County Bicycle Advisory Board to assure the refinement and execution of the bicycle network called for in the OTC Plan.