



*Bicycle Advocates for Annapolis & Anne Arundel County (BikeAAA)*

February 6, 2025

To: Anne Arundel County

From: Bicycle Advocates for Annapolis & Anne Arundel County (BikeAAA)

Subject: FY 2026 Capital and Operating Budgets for Safe Bicycle/Pedestrian Routes

Dear Anne Arundel County:

Thank you for your continued support for safe bicycle and pedestrian routes as called for in *Plan2040, Move Anne Arundel, Walk & Roll Anne Arundel, Safe Routes to School, Vision Zero, Land Preservation Parks & Recreation Plan* and other county policies and plans. Anne Arundel County is making progress, but it is decelerating and we still have considerable work to do – especially in building out a safe network of trails and on-road bike lanes as well as passing new legislation to strengthen our commitment to County- and developer-funded active transportation facilities. Trails are among the most popular recreational facilities. AACDRP estimates 1.8 million trail visits in FY24, a 22% increase over the prior year. Safe biking and walking are the best ways to relieve traffic congestion, protect our environment, improve health and make our communities more affordable and equitable. Transportation is typically the second largest household expense after housing, and reducing car-dependence, especially in our town centers and lower income neighborhoods, provides more affordable and attractive places to live, work, visit and play.

We estimate that we entered CY2024 with approximately 93 miles of safe bikeways (trails and bike lanes) on City, County and SHA roads and trails. 2024 is the first year since we began counting in 2016, that there were NO COMPLETED PROJECTS other than one road section where a bike lane was marked in the shoulders. Typically, there have been 2-5 miles of completed projects each year but chronic delays and postponements have thrown sand in the gears of project completion. While our pipeline of candidate projects and studies is growing, we urge acceleration of design and construction to get projects completed at lower cost and earlier public benefit. To this end, BikeAAA offers the following recommendations for the FY26 budget.

### **Capital Budget**

BikeAAA requests that the County include designated line items for safe bicycle route projects in the County FY26 Capital Budget for trails in both the Recreation and Parks (R&P) budget and the Department of Public Works (DPW) budget for on-road protected and other bike lanes, adjacent side paths and other bike safety improvements, especially at crossings and intersections. The county's commitment to Vision Zero must be reflected within a budget that improves safe road design, especially for people walking and rolling.



## *Bicycle Advocates for Annapolis & Anne Arundel County (BikeAAA)*

AACDPW has added bike lane markings and protected lanes to County roads, especially during repaving, and we would like to see this accelerate. Some of this can be done inexpensively on roads with existing shoulders, others during repaving projects and still more during construction or lane additions. We propose a budget line item for bicycle infrastructure projects on and adjacent to public roads in the DPW project class. For trails, the completion of the Anne Arundel Trail Network is critical and this includes projects in the County, City of Annapolis, State Highway Administration and developer projects. We must provide safe, connected routes to encourage more people to bike and walk and also to make it safe for those that have no choice but to bike and walk. Through our Wheels of Hope program, we have provided hundreds of bikes and helmets to people in substance recovery programs and other vulnerable situations. Many bikes went to riders in places like Brooklyn Park, Glen Burnie, Pasadena and Annapolis, places where there is insufficient bike infrastructure and riders transit high-traffic, high-bicycle-stress riding situations. The county must make it safer for all vulnerable road users. We recommend accelerated funding so key projects are started and completed sooner. Here are some key projects:

### **Trails**

- **WB&A Trail Pedestrian Bridge and Spurs.** It is disappointing to have to mention the WB&A Bridge as incomplete and years behind schedule. We must finish it this spring and study why it has been subject to repeated delays and errors so future projects meet their schedules. The WB&A spur to Waugh Chapel is a key project that will connect neighborhoods and destinations to the main WB&A Trail.
- **South Shore Trail.** Accelerate completion of the South Shore Trail. The South Shore trail, 35 years in the making, is a planned 14-mile paved trail from Odenton to Annapolis. We are pleased that South Shore Phase 2 just started construction but the remaining segments from Annapolis to Gambrills including connection to the Crownsville Hospital Memorial Park must be accelerated. Also, the county must work with SHA to improve the crossing of Rt 3 at Rt. 175 to provide safe connection between Phases 1 and 2.
- **Broadneck Trail** – This vital trail connecting the B&A Trail to Sandy Point State Park is nearing completion but also has met numerous delays. We must complete it in 2025 and better learn how to complete projects on schedule.
- **Anne Arundel Trail Network Gaps-** The Bike Commission and BikeAAA share a vision for the “Anne Arundel County Trail Network” to connect our major trails to one another and to the places people live and need or want to travel to. Critical gaps that must be completed include: Ft. Meade to Arundel Mills, Arundel Mills to BWI Trail, BWI Trail to Baltimore City Line, BWI to Howard County/Patapsco Park, B&A Trail to downtown Annapolis and Annapolis to the South Shore Trail



## *Bicycle Advocates for Annapolis & Anne Arundel County (BikeAAA)*

- **Trail Spurs and Sidepaths**– As we build out the network, we must also build more spurs and sidepaths that connect neighborhoods and key destinations like schools, parks, shopping, employment, and healthcare. Rec & Parks has a study on this but we must expand its scope to other trails and sidepaths and fund design and construction to get these connectors built. Sidepaths/shared-use paths such as on Jumpers Hole Rd (both Benfield to Kinder and Rt 2 to 177), Rt. 214, and Forest Dr. should be funded.
- **Safe Routes to School and Transit** - We have done studies to identify priorities for both schools and transit but we must increase funding to get the priority projects designed and built. AACPS should fully embrace safe walking and biking to school in order to improve student learning, promote health, reduce traffic congestion and save money on transportation. The FY26 Budget should include funding to begin design and/or construction of priority projects identified in these studies. Biking and walking safety programming is provided to every student in jurisdictions such as D.C.P.S. AACPS has had limited programming funded by grants secured by AAC Office of Transportation. AACPS should incorporate bike/walk safety into the curriculum similar to the drown-proofing program.
- **Wayfinding Signage** – We should fund a study and implementation of wayfinding signage which will encourage more people to safely bike and walk, especially in our town centers.

### **DPW and Developer Projects**

- **Town Centers, Redevelopment and Transit-oriented Development.** Improving bicycle and pedestrian access make our town centers less car-dependent and therefore less expensive and more attractive places to live. The Odenton MARC Station and Town Center remain a priority. Parole has an ambitious mobility plan but very little has been implemented. We are adding density but safe walking and biking infrastructure is lacking. We need to establish a budget that will implement the plans we have adopted. Glen Burnie is slated for redevelopment and has the benefit of the B&A Trail. However, we need safe east/west connections so people can safely reach it from their neighborhoods. We also need a safe connection to the Cromwell Light Rail Station. Brooklyn Park also had a mobility study completed and while there is some design work getting underway, we should fully fund projects through construction and assure they are completed in a timely manner.
- **Protected and other Bike Lanes** - Budget for the addition of protected, buffered or conventional bike lanes as part of regular road maintenance, resurfacing projects and on existing shoulders consistent with the County's Complete Streets policy. This is the least



## *Bicycle Advocates for Annapolis & Anne Arundel County (BikeAAA)*

expensive time to add these markings. The county now has its first 2 Protected Lanes and we need to build more of these to advance a low-stress network.

- **Signage, Maps and Bike Parking** -- Budget for design and implementation of wayfinding signage, bike maps and bike racks at key destinations.
- **Intersections and Crosswalk Safety**: Fund for additional safety features such as Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons (HAWK), Rapid Rectangular Flashing Beacons (RRFB), automated enforcement and road treatments to enhance bicyclist and pedestrian safety at uncontrolled trail crossings and other road crossings with high volume and/or limited sight-lines.

### **Grants**

These projects have the opportunity to seek funding from other sources such as the State Highway Administration, Maryland Transit Administration, Fort Meade, Federal Infrastructure and Safety Programs and other grantors. BikeAAA will support the pursuit of such grants.

### **Operating Budget**

Our review of the county plans and policies indicates that there are key initiatives that should be included in the FY26 Operating Budget. The delay of funded CIP and grant-funded projects is often delayed by staff constraints. We suggest:

- **Staffing, Training and Oversight for Trail/Bikeway Projects and Grant Management** – Our projects have been fraught with repeated delays. We urge a complete examination of staffing and processes mainly in AACDPW and AACDRP to determine the root cause of the delays and to implement the necessary remedies. Provide adequate budget in DPW and I&P for project management, design, right of way acquisition, permitting, etc. to assure projects are kept on schedule and grants are properly managed. I&P should be resourced to assure that developer-funded road projects incorporate bike facilities. This will SAVE the county millions of dollars by getting projects started and completed sooner and with more grant-funding while also realizing the public benefits earlier.
- **Vision Zero and Complete Streets Implementation** – Assure adequate staff resources and consultant funding to implement Complete Streets and Vision Zero. This may include funding for staff in OOT, OPZ, DPW, I&P for design manual, policy and other updates as well as the Office of Law to prepare and submit legislation to implement the changes to County Subdivision Code (Article 17) and Zoning Code (Article 18) to ensure bicycle and pedestrian accommodations will receive equal priority with road improvements. This should also include adequate police funding for enforcement to reduce traffic deaths,



## *Bicycle Advocates for Annapolis & Anne Arundel County (BikeAAA)*

especially among vulnerable road users, as called for in our approved Vision Zero policy. Traffic deaths rose to app. 50 in CY 2024.

- **R&P Trail Maintenance and Management** - Increase budget levels for R&P trails maintenance and rangers to allow for increasing the number of trails, and to leverage accelerated buildout of trails that can be funded through external sources, which must then be maintained by Anne Arundel County Recreation and Parks. Additional positions, equipment and materials such as signs and bike racks are required to keep up with the expansion of the trail system and replace resources lost during prior fiscal year cutbacks. Additional ranger positions will ultimately be necessary to assure a safe and user-friendly expanded trail system.
- **Office of Transportation Grant Pursuit** - Provide adequate budget in OOT to complete, maintain and enhance the Bike Map GIS, coordination of all bike/pedestrian projects and to strengthen our pursuit of grants. We continue to recommend pursuing grants from Maryland Bikeways, TAP, RAISE and other state and federal sources to supplement County funding, but County staff resources will be needed to apply for and manage these grants.

### **Developer-funded Projects and Multimodal Legislation**

The County has had some success with developer-funded trail projects including the WB&A Trail extension and the Odenton Town Center side path. Our cul-de-sac neighborhoods and hierarchical road network inhibit bike and pedestrian travel by forcing travelers onto busy arterials to get out of their neighborhoods. By requiring trail connections among neighborhoods, we can open vast networks of safe bike and pedestrian travel to schools, shopping, employment, recreation and other destinations. This improves quality of life, reduces automobile traffic, improves health/environment and reduces the cost of living. We must introduce and pass multi-modal transportation APF, Road Frontage, Scenic and Historic Roads renovation and Modern Parking Regulations legislation to get this underway.

On behalf of BikeAAA and its thousands of members and followers, we thank you for your consideration.