1. **Vision**

“To ensure that Howard County is a place for individuals of all backgrounds to live and travel freely, safely, and comfortably, public and private roadways in Howard County shall be safe and convenient for residents of all ages and abilities who travel by foot, bicycle, public transportation or automobile, ensuring sustainable communities Countywide.” - Allan H. Kittleman, Howard County Executive, Council Resolution 35-2016.

2. **Scope**

Every transportation improvement and project phase is an opportunity to create safer, more accessible streets for users of all ages, abilities and modes, including people who walk, bike, take the bus, and drive cars, motorcycles, and trucks. These phases include, but are not limited to: planning, programming, design, right-of-way acquisition, subdivision and land development, new construction, construction engineering, reconstruction, operation, repair, and maintenance. This applies to both new and retrofit projects.

Other changes to transportation facilities on streets and rights-of-way, including capital improvements, lane re-configurations, and major maintenance, must also be included. Capital projects in the early stages of design will also be included if possible.

3. **Exceptions**

Complete streets improvements may not be appropriate in some cases due to the context. Exceptions to this policy, including for private projects, must be reviewed and approved unanimously by the Director of Public Works, the Director of Planning and Zoning, and the Administrator of the Office of Transportation.

Exceptions may be considered for approval when the project involves:

i. An accommodation that is not necessary on corridors where specific user groups are prohibited;

ii. A justifiable absence of current and future need exists and is not recommended in any existing planning documents;

iii. Routine, minor maintenance of the transportation network that does not change the roadway geometry or operations, such as mowing, sweeping, and spot repair;

iv. A reasonable and equivalent project exists or is already programmed to provide connectivity for all users, or

v. Cost of accommodation is excessively disproportionate to the need or probable use.

4. **Conflicting or Competing Needs**

When there are conflicting needs among users and/or modes, safety shall be the highest priority, particularly, safety for the most vulnerable street users (pedestrians, bicyclists, children, seniors and people with additional accessibility needs). Selection and weighting of performance measures will support this.

Motor vehicle speed, flow and driver convenience shall not be prioritized over safety for vulnerable street users. Reducing excessive motor vehicle speeds on streets where vulnerable users are likely will be considered a net benefit to the community.

When space is a limiting factor and where vulnerable users are likely, allocating space to a mode that is not currently accommodated will be prioritized over providing additional space to a mode that is already accommodated.
5. **Creating a Network**

To connect people to the places they want to go, the entire trip should be safe and comfortable. This requires a seamless, connected street network, regardless of mode, including safe and convenient pedestrian crossings and access to transit. Even a small interruption in the connection or one hazardous section can make a trip challenging.

Every street does not necessarily need to provide separate accommodations for every mode, but a network should be in place so that likely trips can be made by driving, walking, biking or public transit. The street network is also complemented by pathway connections in many locations.

The County shall work proactively with the State of Maryland, neighboring communities and counties, and businesses and educational institutions to develop plans, facilities and accommodations that further the County’s complete streets policy and continue such infrastructure beyond the County’s borders.

6. **Coordination and Engagement**

Many organizations, agencies and entities have a role to play in implementing complete streets. Coordination and commitment from all agencies involved are critical to success. Howard County is committed to being a leader in this effort. Some of the organizations involved include:

- Howard County Government
- Howard County Public School System
- Community Associations
- State Highway Administration
- Developers
- Property Owners
- Engineering companies
- Construction contractors
- Advocacy groups

Community engagement is also essential to the success of Complete Streets, particularly in the planning and design phases.

7. **Design Guidelines**

Howard County Complete Streets Policy shall provide the policy context, themes and tone for Howard County Design Manual Volume III, Complete Streets and Bridges. Design of Complete Streets in Howard County will also draw on established national state of the art street design guidelines including but not limited to guidance from The Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO).

8. **Context-Sensitivity**

Context sensitivity allows for flexible evaluation of the community’s needs with respect to the existing streets and planned land use. The level of improvements should take into consideration the classification of the existing roadway as defined in the Design Manual, adjacent land use, type of community, and plans and guidelines, in particular, The Howard County General Plan. Improvements should consider the scale of the community and strive for connectivity between communities based on the expected transportation needs.
9. **Performance Measures**

Performance measures shall be used to evaluate designs and as an overall tracking of Complete Streets implementation progress. Categories will be safety, mode shift and accommodation, with safety carrying the highest weight. The goals supported by the performance measures include reduction in crashes, injuries, fatalities, and excessive speed, as well as shifting mode choice towards a more balanced and accessible transportation system and safe and convenient accommodation of all modes.

10. **Implementation**

**Update of Regulations, Standards and Plans:** The County shall establish a routine process for project delivery that reflects the Complete Streets policy. The Department of Public Works, Office of Transportation, Department of Planning and Zoning, and all other relevant County departments and agencies will review and amend current design standards, including the Design Manual and the subdivision regulations that apply to roadway and bridge construction or reconstruction, to ensure that they reflect the best available standards and effectively implement this Complete Streets Policy. The County shall incorporate Complete Streets principles into all county-developed land use and transportation plans and shall review the Complete Streets Policy every five years to ensure the policy is in line with current best practices.

**Establishing Priority Projects:** The County will implement priority projects that would eliminate gaps in the pedestrian and bikeway network and that would correct intersections and street segments that present safety and access challenges for those who walk, bicycle, and drive. Priorities for improving transit operations and access will also be established. Relevant guidance for these efforts should come from the Howard County Bicycle Master Plan, Pedestrian Master Plan and Transit Development Plan.

**Education and Training:** The County will provide training to citizens serving on the county’s relevant boards and commissions on the content of the Complete Streets Policy and best practices for implementing the policy. Education for the public on Complete Street concepts, policy and implementation process will also be ongoing. Demonstration projects can be used as educational opportunities, to build familiarity with new street designs.

The County will provide training to developers and all staff in all County departments who are responsible for site plan development on the content of the Complete Streets Policy and the County’s new standards for using that policy for project development and review.

The County will also encourage staff professional development and training on non-motorized transportation issues through attending conferences, classes, seminars and workshops, as appropriate.

**Tracking and Reporting:** Tracking progress with Complete Streets project implementation will facilitate coordination and transparency. The Office of Transportation shall track and document progress made in implementing this policy in report form, including the results of performance measures. The report shall include complete streets related education or training undertaken by staff and citizen board members/commissioners. The Office of Transportation will also report on exceptions granted to incorporating Complete Streets into transportation projects, citing the documented reasons.

**Communication:** Project plans and objectives will be clearly communicated to stakeholders and the public at large.

**Maintenance:** Transportation facilities shall be maintained until they are decommissioned or replaced. All forms of transportation shall be equally maintained, including during times of repair, upkeep or construction.
“Maintenance of traffic” shall be applied to all modes and maintenance of facilities for one mode shall not disadvantage another.

**Funding sources**: Funding for construction operation and maintenance is expected to come from a variety of areas including county budgets, developer projects, state, federal, and other grants.

11. **Conclusion**

A Complete Streets approach will make the street network safer and more convenient for those who drive, bicycle, walk, or take the bus – improving quality of life and making Howard County a better place to live, work, and play.