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# Chapter 4      Transportation Plan

## I.            Vision

The automobile continues to be the principal mode of transportation in Talbot County. The state and county roads reflect the County's rural character, but beach traffic on US 50 continues to be a bottleneck.

Traffic lights and road improvements are in progress on roads throughout the County to alleviate the increased traffic loads created by growth. Highway beautification projects are underway along major highways, enabling the goal of maintaining the rural character of the region. The County continues to explore alternatives to the automobile as the principal means of transportation.

The airport is a regional hub for aviation and aviation related businesses.

### Goal

*Insure the safe and efficient movement of goods and people.*

## II.           Introduction

The efficient movement of people and goods is important to the quality of life and economic vitality of the community. The County recognizes the direct relationship between land use policies and transportation. Typically, land that is the most accessible is more highly valued. The historic development patterns in Talbot County traditionally follow land and water transportation corridors.

The County's transportation system includes roads, trails, public transit, port services, and air transportation services. Roads are the primary transportation facility in the County.

The County's roadway system is a combination of Federal, State, County, Town and Private roadways. Planning for State and Federal roadways in Talbot County is done by the Maryland Department of Transportation, State Highway Administration (MSHA) and is detailed in the Maryland Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP). The CTP describes ongoing and new capital programs to be implemented over a six-year period. The CTP projects are categorized by travel category such as highways, transit, aviation, rail and pedestrian projects.

The most extensive part of the roadway network consists of local roads and streets. Planning for local County roads is done by the Department of Public Works. The Transportation Engineer is actively involved in planning for improvements for local and state roads as well as coordinating facility improvements with the local jurisdictions.

The County is committed to improving transportation facilities to accommodate local development and regional travel demands. For construction of this system the County relies on funding and construction participation from both the public and private sectors. The County is exploring options for funding needed roadway improvements.

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The Comprehensive Plan's transportation goal, policies and strategies are intended to be a framework for decision making at the State and local level. The Transportation element places a strong emphasis on managing existing transportation resources, especially roads serving the villages, towns and rural areas. Measures taken to conserve the existing capacity of State and County roads should not only improve safety and traffic operations, but also should have the added benefit of enhancing the visual character of the County when viewed from its highways and roads.

The County's Thoroughfare Plan, being developed as a component of the Comprehensive Plan, will establish a long range vision to meet the needs of the County, while at the same time it lays out more immediate policies and implementation measures to achieve coordinated transportation planning and service delivery.

### **III. Regional and Local Roads**

#### **A. State Roadway System**

The State Highway Administration uses the Federal Highway Classification System for roadway classification. The classification of roadways into different functional classes is an important planning tool. It demonstrates the relative importance of any given road, and assigns an appropriate geometric design standard based on the intended function. The classification system and design standards are used to measure individual roadways against the standards and prioritize needed improvements. When new roads are built by the public or private sector, they should be constructed with an appropriate design for the road's intended function.

Using the Federal Highway Functional Classification System<sup>1</sup> the following State roadways shown on Map 4-1 are described as:

- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector
- Minor Collector
- Local Road

#### **Principal and Minor Arterials**

The County is dependent on state roadways to provide immediate regional access. In Talbot County, US Route 50, MD 322 and MD 404 are classified as principal arterials. The County does not wish MD 322 (Easton Parkway) to serve as a viable alternative to US Route 50 through Easton, and recommends that MD 322 should be reclassified as a minor arterial. Minor arterials include MD 331, MD 328, MD 333, and MD 33.

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<sup>1</sup> Definitions: Federal Highway Function Classification System

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## Major and Minor Collectors

The primary function of major and minor collector roads is to expedite movement within localized areas. They provide moderate levels of service within, rather than between, regions in the County. Major collectors connect areas of relatively dense settlement with each other and with other major traffic routes. Minor collectors are roads which, in addition to serving abutting properties, intercept minor roads, connect community facilities and are intended to serve neighborhood traffic.

The Traffic Safety Division of Maryland State Highway Administration monitors and reports on traffic volumes, accidents and highway safety. This information is used in planning for needed state funded highway improvements.

The reports on traffic counts are only one measure of traffic volume in the County. While measuring average daily traffic volumes indicate overall trends, they do not report on the significant increase in traffic volumes during the summer months. Vacationers traveling to and from the beach on US Route 50 create bottlenecks in Easton and Trappe. Traffic congestion, especially during peak commuting hours, continues to be an issue identified by residents. As indicated in Table 5-1, the number of jobs in the County has increased, while the number of County residents commuting to local workplaces has decreased. As shown in Table 5-1, an increasing percentage of the total workforce includes people commuting into the County from other jurisdictions. This trend is expected to continue and grow over the next 10 to 20 years as a greater percentage of the population will be retired. Service industries will rely more and more on attracting workers from other jurisdictions.

|             | Total Commuters   | Talbot County Residents | Upper Shore | Lower Shore | Delaware | Baltimore | Other |
|-------------|---|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|----------|-----------|-------|
| <b>2000</b> | 19655   | 12194                   | 4214        | 2280        | 507      | 304       | 156   |
| <b>1990</b> | 18600   | 12524                   | 4108        | 1404        | 269      | 170       | 295   |
|             | * Upper Shore= Caroline, Cecil, Kent, Queen Anne's Counties       |                         |             |             |          |           |       |
|             | * Lower Shore= Dorchester, Somerset, Wicomico, Worcester Counties |                         |             |             |          |           |       |
|             | * Baltimore= Includes Baltimore and surrounding region            |                         |             |             |          |           |       |

## Planned State Roadway Improvements

The Maryland Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) describes ongoing and new capital improvements programs to be implemented over a six year period. Projects are categorized by mode of travel and each project proceeds through four funding phases: planning, engineering, right-of-way acquisition and construction. Six projects in Talbot County are listed in the FY 2003 – 2008 CTP. In addition to projects that are listed in the CTP, the State Highway Administration maintains a long-range Highway Needs Inventory (HNI) for all State roadways. Map 4-2, located at the end of this Chapter, shows the location of planned improvements.

Of particular concern to the County is the indication in the long-range highway needs inventory to upgrade MD 33 and MD 322 from a two-lane to a four-lane route.

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Identifying ways to improve seasonal traffic flow in the US Route 50 corridor through the Town of Easton and the Town of Trappe is an important issue that will require the cooperation of the County, Towns and State. To facilitate traffic flow in these areas, the County encourages the continuation of the established access management program used on the segment of US 50 from the Bay Bridge to the US 50/301 split near Queenstown. Techniques such as the development of service roads for businesses and overpasses at key intersections will improve traffic flow and reduce the need to divert traffic onto other roadways.

The State should emphasize system conservation and enhancement measures designed to improve operations on MD 33 from the Easton Bypass to St. Michaels. Strict access controls should apply, with each property of record limited to one access drive, unless safety considerations dictate otherwise. Appropriate traffic controls, traffic calming measures, and access consolidation should be required in the vicinity of St. Michaels. Existing strip developments should be retrofitted with service drives and/or connected parking lots in order to limit curb cuts, minimize turning movements, increase customer convenience, improve pedestrian safety and enhance the visual character of community gateways.

## **B. Local Roads**

The most extensive part of the highway network consists of local roads. Local roads are intended to provide access to abutting residential property and to discourage through traffic.

The County has established a local road classification system (separate and distinct from the Federal Highway Functional Classification System) for the purpose of planning for County road improvements and assigning appropriate design standards. This classification system, included in the Talbot County Code, establishes the following road hierarchy:

|                        |                 |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| Major Road             | Major Collector |
| Major Village Arterial | Minor Collector |
| Minor Village Arterial | Private Road    |

The primary objective of the County's Thoroughfare Plan is to establish goals, policies and strategies to plan and manage the county's current and new road facilities. The Plan will include policies concerning roadway design and construction, access management, and pedestrian facilities. The Plan will inventory existing roadway conditions and provide a methodology for evaluating the transportation impact of new developments. The Plan should establish acceptable standards for road classifications and identify mitigation measures to improve or reduce traffic impacts.

Access management is the process of limiting and/or removing the number of points at which a vehicle may enter or leave a roadway. The County should evaluate current local access control standards to county roadways to reduce the number of conflict points and facilitate traffic flow. To further reduce congestion, the County's Thoroughfare Plan should establish a proposed network of roadway facilities and connections that reduce reliance on the State's collector road network by providing interconnections between neighborhoods and nearby neighborhood service centers.

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## **C. Transportation Facility Planning**

The County's overall transportation strategy is integrally linked to the land use strategy. The transportation policies in this Plan are intended to support the County's proposed land use to ensure adequate transportation facilities exist to serve the mobility needs of residents and industry. The County realizes that increasing road capacity alone will not fully address the transportation needs of the community. However, at this time, roads are the primary transportation facility in the County.

The County's Smart Growth strategy encourages compact, pedestrian-friendly development in the Towns and Village Centers. Outside of these growth centers, the goal of the plan is to preserve the rural character of the road system.

Existing standards for road construction and design should be scaled to the particular function of the road. Excessive standards can require roads to be over designed and costly, while inadequate standards contribute to future traffic and maintenance problems. The County should work with the State Highway Administration in the design of roadway improvements to support the rural economy, including tourism, and to ensure that rural character features such as fences, hedgerows, historic and agricultural structures are protected. Traffic calming projects should be implemented in the Designated Growth Areas to help reduce the impacts of increasing traffic.

Many County residents commute to work outside the County, and an increasing number of workers commute into the County. It is appropriate for the County to consider travel demand management alternatives to single occupancy vehicle commuting. The County should promote ridesharing and vanpool activities to reduce the number of vehicles on the roads. Park-and-ride lots need to be developed to serve commuters. The County should continue to cooperate with other jurisdictions and regional agencies in a coordinated, systematic approach to travel demand management.

### **Regional and Local Road Policies**

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#### **State Roadway System**

- C04.P. 1. The State should emphasize system conservation and enhancement measures designed to improve operations on MD 33 from the Easton Bypass to St. Michaels.
- C04.P. 2. Improvements to existing US 50 through Easton would be the most appropriate short-term means to facilitate regional traffic flow through the central portion of the County. These improvements could include the development of service roads for businesses and overpasses at key intersections. Similar improvements have recently been made to US 50 in Cambridge. It is strongly felt that improvements to existing US 50, would be in the best interest of both the County and the Town of Easton and Trappe.
- C04.P. 3. The County should address ways to evacuate people located in "one road in, one road out" areas that must be evacuated in case of emergencies, especially MD 33 and MD 333.
- C04.P. 4. The County does not desire to have MD 322 viewed as an alternative to US 50 through traffic.

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### **Road Network**

- C04.P. 5. The County Thoroughfare Plan, an element of the Comprehensive Plan, will guide future road development decisions.
- C04.P. 6. The County will encourage the continued improvement of the entire County road network and will insure that all improvements further the land use, environmental and transportation goals of the Comprehensive Plan.
- C04.P. 7. The road network will consist of a coordinated hierarchy of arterial, collector and local roads. Access to the arterial network should be primarily from collector roads. Local roads should access the collector system and not the arterial network.
- C04.P. 8. New road construction and road improvements will promote traffic safety, provide for improved vehicular capacity consistent with area land uses and regional demands and resource protection policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

### **Road Design and Construction**

- C04.P. 9. New road construction will be sensitive to the County's goal of preserving the environment and rural character. Road improvements shall be context sensitive.
- C04.P. 10. The County may require that proposed roads in new developments provide appropriate connections to adjacent properties in order to insure adequate connectivity in the overall road system.
- C04.P. 11. New roads serving residential neighborhoods should be designed to insure safety and convenience for all users including motorists, pedestrians, cyclists, and emergency vehicles.
- C04.P. 12. Setback and other development lines should recognize the ultimate traffic loads of the adjacent road and should allow for ultimate road size. A Highway Corridor Overlay or an Entrance Corridor Overlay Zone should apply where the desired setback or access restriction differs from the requirements of the conventional zoning districts.

### **Access Management**

- C04.P. 13. Roadway capacity on County and State roads should be conserved by, among other things, limiting and controlling future access points. Strip forms of development will be prohibited and existing access onto major public roads reduced where appropriate. New developments may be required to provide access or service roads where appropriate to conserve road capacity.

### **Travel Demand Management**

- C04.P. 14. The County should promote alternatives to driving alone and encourage the State to inform citizens of the monetary and environmental costs of continued dependence on autos.

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C04.P. 15. The County will work with the State and adjacent jurisdictions to coordinate the land use and transportation elements of the Comprehensive Plan in order to achieve a reduction in drive alone rates.

C04.P. 16. The County encourages the use of alternative fuels (ethanol, re-refined oil) and hybrid vehicles and compressed natural gas powered cars to save energy resources.

### **Transportation Planning for Rural and Agricultural Areas**

C04.P. 17. Agricultural transportation requirements should be recognized in the management of the County road system.

### **Transportation Planning in Designated Growth Areas**

C04.P. 18. The County and towns should coordinate planning for transportation improvements in or near a town or within the designated growth area.

## **Countywide Transportation Planning Implementation Strategies**

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Action: Establish a formal system to update the County's Thoroughfare Plan based on future residential and non-residential growth. The Thoroughfare Plan should recommend future requirements for adequate rights-of-way, taking into account existing and future development and proposed alternative transportation support facilities and programs.

Action: Impacts to State, County and Town roadways facilities will be considered during the development review process.

Action: Coordinate State and county road planning initiatives with emergency management agencies. An emergency evacuation plan, for use in the event of severe weather or a catastrophic event, should be developed and maintained by the County.

## **Design and Construction Standards Implementation Strategies**

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Ensure that roadway design and capacity standards are appropriately related to roadway function and classification.

Action: Develop design and capacity standards to ensure an appropriate relationship for function and classification and update the Roads Ordinance and Thoroughfare Plan appropriately.

Action: Design paving widths for appropriate speeds on local streets to encourage pedestrian safety and ambiance and to reduce impervious surface. All developments should have adequate access and circulation for public safety vehicles, but actual paved street sections should be as narrow as possible to maintain human scale.

Action: Reduce traffic speeds in residential areas via roadway design methods including traffic controls, roadway design and layout.

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Action: Review County's access management controls to appropriately space curb cuts based on roadway type.

Action: Ensure that road improvements in rural areas minimize disturbance and adverse impacts on rural landscape and environmentally sensitive areas. Review rural road standards for new development in rural area to see if revisions to required right-of-way are needed. Revised standard road profiles accordingly.

Action: Review design and material standards for County roadway projects. Encourage the use of nontoxic recycled materials (recycled/crushed concrete, bricks and blocks) whenever possible in making right-of-way improvements.

### **Road Funding Implementation Strategies**

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Action: New roadway construction and major improvement projects for existing County roads should be scheduled as part of the overall County Capital Improvements Program. Maintain an aggressive but financially responsible capital budget to pay for future roadway improvements.

Action: Establish a formal system to define how developers participate in financing of transportation costs. Cost should be based on traffic impact studies acceptable to the County and State Highway Administration, even if acceptable County standards are higher than State requirements. Require the quantification of impacts, based on assessment of projected traffic operations on the road network.

Action: Require traffic impact studies for all developments that will significantly increase the peak hour traffic on the adjacent roadway system and create operational conflicts. The traffic impact analysis would determine the magnitude of off-site roadway improvements required to accommodate the traffic generated by the proposed development while maintaining service standards. Develop guidelines for the impact studies including standards that establish a threshold for the size of the development that will trigger the need for a traffic impact study. The guidelines should define the requirements and procedures to be used as well as the content of the submitted report.

## **IV. Transit Service**

Transit service for the general public is not feasible at this time without substantial subsidy and would not be cost effective given the existing low density rural settlement patterns. In the immediate future, the County can be most effective by encouraging new developments in the Designated Growth Areas to provide pedestrian facilities linking residential developments to nearby neighborhood services. Larger development located near major commuter routes should be encouraged to identify locations for future ride-sharing and commuting facilities.

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Rural and town residents are able to access an on demand transportation service provided by the Upper Shore Aging, a nonprofit corporation. The Upper Shore Take-A-Ride (USTAR) program includes various trip destinations, including shopping centers, employment centers, educational facilities, medical facilities, adult day care centers and senior centers. Fares (donations) range from one to five dollars for general ridership to between fifty cents and two dollars for elderly and disabled riders. Hours of operation are from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Forty percent of the funding for the USTAR service is derived from fare box receipts and other donations and the remainder comes from a combination of local and State funding. Current annual ridership is on the order of 15,000 passengers and 68,000 trips.

## **Transit Policies**

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C04.P. 19. At the appropriate time, the County should explore the feasibility of improved transit service for County residents and encourage such services when needed and economically feasible.

## **Transit Implementation Strategies**

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In the immediate future, the County can be most effective in reducing drive alone auto trips by cooperating with the State in the planning and provision of “park and ride facilities” to encourage ride sharing and commuting,

Action: Encourage business and industry to provide reserved parking spaces for carpools and vanpools at office and industrial sites to accommodate and encourage ride sharing.

## **V. Non-motorized Transportation**

Non-motorized transportation includes sidewalks and pedestrian and bicycle trails. Although there are no County “designated” bicycle routes in Talbot County, the MD 33 to Bellevue Ferry to MD 333 route (the “loop”) is a very popular and heavily-traveled bike route. This route is along two-lane public roads including MD 33, a high traffic volume segment. In addition to the popular “loop,” other routes on the west side of the County are frequently used by bicyclists (see Map 4-3). They include the road to Bozman and Neavitt (MD 579) and the Tilghman Road (MD 33).

There are a number of potential alternative bike routes on the east side of the County. These routes traverse scenic rural areas, are long enough to appeal to bikers and form a loop with Easton as the hub. They also intersect with existing popular routes.

The County has not required new development to include sidewalks or pedestrian connections within the community. As the County’s growth strategy has shifted to encouraging a more urban development pattern in the Towns and Designated Growth Areas, several of the Towns have encouraged the County to require easements for these future pedestrian facilities to permit development of an integrated and connected pedestrian network once these areas are annexed into the town.

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## **Non-motorized Transportation Policies**

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C04.P. 20. The County should support development of safe, convenient and inviting bike routes and walkways.

## **Non-motorized Transportation Implementation Strategies**

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Action: Review the recommendations regarding sidewalks in the County's designated growth areas and establish a policy for sidewalk easements and installation.

Action: Amend the Talbot County Zoning Ordinance to require space be provided for parking of bicycles in the appropriate service retail developments.

Action: Work with the State Highway Administration to prepare a Talbot County Scenic Byway Management Plan. A Scenic Byway Management Plan will provide a blueprint for state, county, and town actions to improve vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle travel on selected State roadways in the County.

## **VI. Air Travel**

The Easton Airport is a County-owned facility located at the north end of the Town of Easton. Primary access to the airport is from US 50. The Easton Airport Manager and County Council manage and operate the airport assisted by a five-member Airport Advisory Board appointed by the County Council.

Easton Airport is a general aviation airport that services corporate jets and privately owned and military aircraft. Charter service to destinations throughout the United States and the world is provided by East Coast Flight Services, Easton Jet Services and Easton Aviation, LLC. Easton Aviation, LLC also provides flight training. The airport presently averages between 240 and 250 operations per day (takeoffs and landings), with some peak days reaching 350 operations per day. Several air service related businesses and industries are located at the airport.

According to the information contained in the Easton Airport master plan, management expects to have a total of 190 aircraft based at the facility. This number is likely to increase due to the flight restrictions around Washington, DC. Annual operations, which were estimated to be 92,000 in 2003, are expected to increase to approximately 121,000 by 2016. Total peak hour operations are expected to climb from 42 landings in 2003 to 54 in 2016.

County policies should encourage the continued vitality of the Easton Airport, by protecting the airport from encroachment from residential, retail or commercial uses. Compatible uses, such as airport related businesses and light industry should be encouraged in appropriate areas near the airport. Current zoning regulations prohibit residential uses adjacent to the airport and control the height of structures within the clear zones of the runways.

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## **Air Travel Policies**

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- C04.P. 21. The County should continue to improve air transportation services at the Easton airport.
- C04.P. 22. Private air strips and helipads are discouraged within the County as these uses often cause nuisances to the surrounding community.

## **Air Travel Implementation Strategies**

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Action: As the opportunities arise, the County should acquire avigation easements on properties surrounding the airport.

## **VII. Port Services**

Although use of the port facilities at Easton Point has been declining in recent years, some materials are still delivered by barge to terminals on the Point. The draft Easton Comprehensive Plan states, “the future role of Easton’s port facilities is clouded. A great many people have suggested that this area has tremendous redevelopment potential, although no one has come forth with a proposal to annex and redevelop it. If this ever comes to be, the future of the port is most likely more towards recreational uses such as an expanded marina, boat ramp, and associated uses with less emphasis on truly industrial uses.”

Historically the County has recommended that the northern and western edges of Easton Point should continue to be used and reserved for port-related and marine transportation activities, including regular dredging of the Tred Avon River approach channel.

## **Port Services Policies**

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- C04.P. 23. The County should continue to insure that adequate access is provided to County waters for marine transportation.

## **VIII. Rail Service**

Rail service in Talbot County has been discontinued for some years. Future service through the planning period may include the revival of limited light rail service on rail rights-of-way owned by the Mass Transit Administration. Many of the rail rights-of-ways in Talbot County have reverted to private property owners. The Town of Easton has constructed a pedestrian/bike trail along a portion of the old rail right-of-way. The Easton rail-trail runs from Idlewild Avenue to US 50. The trail connects two local parks, Idlewild Park and North Easton Park. The historic railroad station has been restored and currently is being used as private offices. The County encourages the retention of rail rights-of-way for future use. Pedestrian/ bike trails are appropriate interim uses for these corridors.

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## **Rail Service Policies**

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C04.P. 24. The County should work with the Mass Transit Administration to preserve existing rail service rights-of-way in the Talbot County and the Upper Eastern Shore for future rail service.

## **Rail Service Implementation Strategies**

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Action: Initiate a review process to evaluate surplus rail lines so that the County has a position on whether the right-of-way should remain in place for future rail use, or alternative transportation and recreation.