



Section A

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND



1. Introduction

With a population of over 35,000 residents and approximately 370 miles of county-maintained roads, Talbot County is experiencing a significant amount of growth. The historic and rural nature of the County, coupled with its prime location near the metropolitan areas of Annapolis, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C., and the summer tourist attractions of the Eastern Shore, have fueled residential and commercial development. Many second homes are being constructed by suburbanites looking for a weekend or summer getaway. Several large short-term residential developments near the historic towns of St. Michaels and Trappe provide proof of how fast growth is occurring within Talbot County.

Coupled with growth trends in the County, the elderly population (65 and older) of the County has also been steadily increasing from 14.7% in 1970, to 17.5% in 1980, to 20.0% in 1990, and to 20.4% in 2000, lending proof that Talbot County is becoming a retirement destination (Source: US Census Bureau and Maryland Department of Planning).

In addition to growth and changes in demographic trends, Talbot County is situated along two major "Reach the Beach" corridors: US 50 and MD 404. US 50, in particular, causes a significant transportation headache for county residents on summer weekends. Traffic volumes along US 50 cause such severe congestion that east-west movements across US 50 are nearly impossible. US 50 traffic in effect bisects Talbot County on summer weekends. The congestion along US 50 and the direct impact it has on east-west traffic is so severe that residents and County officials are expressing safety concerns. The congestion limits the ability for emergency vehicles to maneuver across the County in a timely fashion.

Roadway safety is linked to congestion; however, Talbot County also contains low volume roadways with evident safety shortcomings. A comprehensive inventory and safety review was undertaken to determine if current county roadways are constructed per current standards, and if identified safety deficiencies should be mitigated.

Realizing the growth trends and potential safety deficiencies, the Talbot County Council has recognized the need and taken the initiative to undertake a comprehensive county-wide transportation planning study to quantify existing and future operations, highlight current and short-term operational and safety deficiencies, and identify corridors of concern.

The primary purpose of the following county-wide transportation planning study is to provide the Talbot County Council the means to make informed fiscal decisions for existing, short-term, and future infrastructure improvements.

Additionally, the Talbot County Council realized that proposed mitigation alternatives may impact State-maintained roadways, and therefore the Council commissioned this study to be formatted similar to a State Highway Administration Planning Study, so that future dialogue with the SHA is founded on accurate, concise, and comprehensive planning analyses.

2. Overview of Current Talbot County Conditions

The 2000 National Census data provides a detailed "snapshot" of Talbot County. Land Use data shows that Talbot County is highly agricultural, with development occupying a small portion (12.6%) of the County land use.



Table 1 – Talbot County Land Use - 2000

Land Use	Area (Acres)	Percent Area
Low Density Residential	14,182	8.3%
Medium/ High Density Residential	2,831	1.7%
Commercial/ Industrial	2,271	1.3%
Institutional/ Open Space	2,269	1.3%
Total Development	21,553	12.6%
Agriculture	103,532	60.7%
Forest	40,633	23.8%
Extractive/ Barren	207	0.1%
Wetland	4,637	2.7%
Total Resources	149,009	87.3%
Total Land	170,562	100.0%

(Source: Maryland Department of Planning)

The Town of Easton is the largest population and employment center within Talbot County containing a total of 34.6% of the population. All other incorporated towns combine to 9.4% of the population, and the remaining 55.9% of the population reside in the unincorporated rural areas of the county.

Talbot County boasts a total of 14,307 households, with an average household size (persons per household) of 2.32. In 2000 there were 27,200 in the population over the age of 16 and 16,790 in the labor force (61.7%). There were 24,745 total jobs (full and part time) and 18,862 in the civilian workforce (1.36 ratio). The unemployment rate in 2000 was 4.2%.

Table 2 – Talbot County Population as Percent by Jurisdiction - 2000

Jurisdiction	Percent of Population
Unincorporated Area	55.9%
Town of Easton	34.6%
Town of St. Michaels	3.5%
Town of Trappe	3.4%
Town of Oxford	2.3%
Town of Queen Anne	0.2%
Total Incorporated Towns	44.1%

(Source: US Census Bureau, Maryland Department of Planning)



The 2000 census provides detailed age distribution data. Specifically, a significant number of Talbot County residents are above 45 years of age (47.6%), with this age category growing at accelerated rates.

Table 3 – Age Distribution as Percent of Total Population - 2000

Age	Percent of Population
0-4	5.2%
5-19	18.3%
20-44	29.0%
45-64	27.2%
65+	20.4%

(Source: US Census Bureau, Maryland Department of Planning)

3. Talbot County Comprehensive Plan Policies

The Talbot County Comprehensive Plan describes the “Thoroughfare Plan” in *Chapter 4 – Transportation Plan*, which refers to this planning study as a document, to be used to establish a long range vision, present more immediate policies, and implement measures for transportation planning for the County. The objectives for the Thoroughfare Plan include:

1. Establish goals and policies concerning:
 - Roadway design and construction
 - Access Management
 - Pedestrian Facilities

*Although the transportation study does not establish goals and policies related to design and access management; it does provide recommended roadway typical sections based on functional classification (See **Appendix B10-Standard Details and Recommended Typical Sections**) and a list of techniques to address access management issues (See **Table 41**). It is the County’s objective to update the roadway design standards at a later date, which should address these goals and policies.*

2. Inventory existing roadway conditions

*The transportation study completed an extensive roadway inventory of the existing County roadway conditions to identify design and safety deficiencies (See **Table 40** and **Appendix B6-County Roadway Inventory**).*

3. Provide methodology for evaluating the transportation impact of new developments.

The transportation study incorporated information of known short-term developments in the traffic forecasting process and describes site specific traffic impacts from new developments.

4. Establish acceptable standards for road classifications



The transportation study does not establish road classification standards. The roadway design standards will be updated at a later time, which should address these standards.

5. Identify mitigation measures to improve or reduce traffic impacts.

*The transportation study provides recommended intersection and corridor improvements to mitigate traffic impacts for the deficient study intersections and corridors in **Section D**.*

6. 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.

The transportation study does not establish a proposed County roadway network and connections. It does identify areas in the existing roadway network that have traffic deficiencies, which are predominately State-maintained facilities.

7. Guide future road development decisions.

One of the purposes of the transportation study is to provide the Talbot County Council the means to make informed fiscal transportation related decisions. The study identifies locations that are in need of improvements.

8. Recommend future requirements for adequate right-of-way.

The transportation study identifies locations that are in need of improvements and recommends the most beneficial type of improvements, but it does not establish the right-of-way needs.

4. Easton Comprehensive Plan Policies

The Easton Comprehensive Plan describes transportation goals and objectives that include coordination with County and State officials. These objectives include:

1. Expediting the relocation of MD 309.
2. Improve circulation along US 50 with improved measures to separate through and local traffic.
3. Reduce commercial access growth along US 50

The transportation study will serve as a document to facilitate objective discussions with SHA.



5. Planning Study Philosophy and Approach

The structure and philosophy of a comprehensive transportation planning study is quite simple. Existing/Current data is utilized to model future conditions, and analyses of the future conditions lend themselves to conclusions and recommendations. However, it is important to realize that future condition analyses in every planning study is based on implementing models, coupled with incorporating assumptions. It is the planner's responsibility to implement the model which is best suited for the objective of the study. Results of comprehensive planning studies are never intended to be exact. However, comprehensive planning studies are intended to highlight trends, and identify time periods when characteristics deteriorate to a level where mitigation should be considered.

A well organized planning endeavor realizes the above noted limitations and incorporates periodic reviews to gauge the appropriateness of the original study. Periodic verification of transportation planning studies is especially important when analysis horizons are twenty to thirty years into the future. Common practice is to verify planning studies periodically, and issue addenda and/or revisions at every verification point. It is recommended that the Transportation Planning Study/Thoroughfare Plan be updated prior to future revisions to the Comprehensive Plan.

a. Existing Conditions

Every comprehensive transportation planning study starts with existing data. A detailed traffic data collection effort will result in the acquisition of current traffic volumes, accident data, and existing roadway characteristics (lane width, shoulder width, # of approach lanes, speed limit, etc.).

Twelve-hour turning movement counts were completed at a total of 39 study intersections throughout the county (see **Table 4** for a summary of Study Intersections and **Appendix C1-Study Intersections and Corridors** for a pictorial view of the intersection locations), and key corridors were identified for detailed analysis purposes (see **Table 5** for a summary of Study Corridors and **Appendix C1-Study Intersections and Corridors** for a pictorial view of the corridor locations).

A system-wide inventory was completed of all major State and County-controlled roadways noting roadway width, lane width, shoulder width, pavement surface type, adjacent obstructions, etc.

Existing Level of Service capacity and operational analyses were completed for all study intersections and study corridors, with mitigation recommendations for locations which did not meet the minimum level of service requirements (Level of Service 'C' or better).



Table 4 – Study Intersections

<u>Site No.</u>	<u>Intersection</u>	<u>Municipality</u>
1	MD 404 (Queen Anne Hwy) @ MD 662 (Old Wye Mills Road)	Wye Mills
2	MD 329 (Royal Oak Road) @ Bellevue Road	Royal Oak
3	MD 333 (Oxford Road) @ Almshouse Road	Oxford
4	Piney Hill Road @ Koogler Road / Wrights Mill Road	Trappe
5	Koogler Road @ Barber Road	Trappe
6	MD 322 (Easton Parkway) @ MD 333 (Oxford Road)	Easton
7	MD 322 (Easton Parkway) @ Port Street	Easton
8	MD 33 (St. Michaels Road) @ MD 322 (Easton Parkway)	Easton
9	MD 322 (Easton Parkway) @ Glebe Road	Easton
10	MD 322 (Easton Parkway) @ Centreville Road	Easton
11	Centreville Road @ Airpark Drive	Easton
12	US 50 (Ocean Gateway) @ MD 322 (Easton Parkway)	Easton
13	US 50 (Ocean Gateway) @ Airport Road	Easton
14	MD 309 (Cordova Road) @ Black Dog Alley	Easton
15	Black Dog Alley @ Chapel Road	Easton
16	MD 328 (Matthewstown Road) @ Black Dog Alley	Easton
17	Black Dog Alley @ Kingston Road	Easton
18	MD 331 (Dover Road) @ Black Dog Alley	Easton
19	US 50 (Ocean Gateway) @ Dutchman's Lane	Easton
20	Dutchman's Lane @ Dover Neck Road	Easton
21	MD 333 (Oxford Road) @ Llandaff Road	Easton
22	Glebe Road @ Goldborough Neck Road	Easton
23	MD 33 (St. Michaels Road) @ MD 370 (Unionville Road)	Easton
24	MD 370 (Unionville Road) @ Glebe Road	Easton
25	US 50 (Ocean Gateway) @ Barber Road / Main Street / Howell Point Road	Trappe
26	MD 33 (St. Michaels Road) @ MD 579 (Bozman-Nevitt Road)	St. Michaels
27	US 50 (Ocean Gateway) @ MD 404 (Queen Anne Hwy)	Wye Mills
28	MD 303 (Lewistown/Starr Road) @ MD 309 (Cordova Road/Main Street)	Queen Anne
29	MD 662 (Longwoods Road) @ Sharp Road	Long Woods
30	MD 33 (St. Michaels Road) @ Cedar Grove/Station Road	Royal Oak
31	MD 329 (Royal Oak Road) @ Cedar Grove/Station Road	Royal Oak
32	US 50 (Ocean Gateway) @ Chapel Road	Easton
33	US 50 (Ocean Gateway) @ MD 328 (Matthewstown Road)	Easton
34	US 50 (Ocean Gateway) @ MD 331 (Dover Road)	Easton
35	MD 33 (St. Michaels Road) @ Railroad Avenue	St. Michaels
36	MD 33 (St. Michaels Road) @ Boundary Lane	St. Michaels
37	MD 309 (Cordova Road) @ Skipton Cordova/ Kittys Corner Road	Cordova
38	MD 328 (Matthewstown Road) @ Kittys Corner/ Matthews Road	Matthews
39	US 50 (Ocean Gateway) @ MD 565 (Old Trappe Road)/ Landing Neck Road	Easton



Table 5 – Study Corridors

<u>Designation</u>	<u>Corridor</u>	<u>Municipality</u>
A	Sharp Road	Longwoods
B	Goldsborough Neck Road	Easton
C	Glebe Road	Easton
D	MD 370 (Unionville Road)	Easton
E	MD 33 (St. Michaels Road)	Royal Oak/Easton
F	MD 329 (Royal Oak Road)	Royal Oak
G	MD 33 (Talbot Street)	St. Michaels
H	MD 333 (Oxford Road)	Easton
I	Llandaff Road	Easton
J	Barber Road	Trappe
K	Dutchmans Lane	Easton
L	MD 331 (Dover Road)	Easton
M	MD 328 (Matthewstown Road)	Easton/ Matthews
N	Black Dog Alley	Easton
O	Chapel Road	Easton
P	MD 309 (Cordova Road)	Cordova

b. Future Conditions

After analyses of existing conditions were completed, existing traffic volumes and roadway configuration data was entered into a planning model (QRS) to project future design year traffic volumes. For the purpose of this transportation planning study, two separate future design years were selected: 2015 and 2030. Comprehensive details with the various Talbot County planning organizations revealed planned short term and long term development throughout the county. An additional annual growth rate was applied to the traffic volumes to model regional growth in the area.

Level of Service analyses were computed on both design years (2015 and 2030) for all study intersections and corridors, and corresponding mitigation recommendations were developed.