

Livable Delaware Activity

Activity/Policy/Program name: Mobility Friendly Design Standards

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Purpose: Provides an alternative set of rules for designing roads that are more friendly (easier and safer) for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders to use. At the same time, these rules let cars travel safely within a community.

Enabling Laws: 17 Del C. § 508 (Subdivisions) and 17 Del. C. § 132 (General Authority)

Policies: None applicable. However, the Mobility Friendly Design Standards have been adopted into “Rules and Regulations for Subdivision Streets,” the manual which governs the design of subdivision streets.

History: Early in 1997 the Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO) began a study in partnership with the town of Middletown, New Castle County, and the Department of Transportation. The purpose of the study was to develop a set of optional land development and street design standards to encourage greater use of the transportation system by pedestrians and bicyclists, to provide better access to public transportation facilities and services, and to provide connections between existing and planned communities.

The WILMAPCO study was completed and resulted in two major products. The first, a set of proposed revisions to the Middletown zoning ordinance and site plan regulations, was adopted by the town with only a few minor modifications. The second was a set of proposed standards for the design of local subdivision streets to allow mobility friendly design. The Department reviewed the standards, made some modifications to adjust them to other Department activities and initiatives, and has since adopted them into our “Rules and Regulations for Subdivision Streets.”

Current Situation: Mobility Friendly Design Standards are roadway design standards that promote greater use of transportation facilities and service by bicyclists and pedestrians. Such design standards include but are not limited to, the addition of sidewalks and landscaped areas, narrower pavement widths, and the requirement for greater connectivity within developments.

By providing the standards as an option for the design of local subdivision streets, the Department is supporting more compact land use development patterns. However, in order to be effective, the Department has required that the standards be used as a set and within the framework of appropriate land use decision-making. The standards are currently allowed to be used by right or review according to the Transportation Investment Areas designated in the Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan. The Plan and Investment Areas Map are both to be revised according to the state strategies and are discussed as individual actions elsewhere in this document.

The addition of these standards directly supports the Livable Delaware goals and the State investment strategies by giving greater emphasis to bicycle and pedestrian access and mobility, and supporting more traditional development patterns. Since being adopted in fall of 2000, not a single developer has chosen to submit a design using these standards.

These design standards support the goals of Livable Delaware. Specifically, they provide another street design option for residential subdivisions within community and developing areas. In addition, the types of communities that provide mobility friendly street designs tend to use a variety of housing types. Typically, these types of communities will utilize less land area than traditional suburban community designs. Therefore, they will promote the preservation of open space and farmland. Finally, the street designs promote mobility by requiring a certain degree of interconnectivity.

Revisions/Actions Needed: Wording regarding the use of these standards needs to be updated to reflect the investment areas depicted in the “Strategies for State Policies and Spending.” Because the use of these standards by developers is optional, and none have chosen to use them, it would be helpful to require the use of these standards in the community and developing areas, especially in transit served areas. By doing so, it would improve the efficiency of future transit service as areas become more developed.

Resources Needed to Create/Revise: Wording changes can be completed using current resources.

Process for Creation/Revision: If the Department decides to pursue the option to require the use of the standards in certain areas, a public process will be needed.

Schedule: We will discuss this with the counties and resolve this issue over the next year.

Measures to Guide Progress: The number of communities developed utilizing mobility friendly design standards.

Interactions or Inter-relationships with Other Agencies or Units of Government: These regulations will be most effective where local land use agencies have adopted supportive land use regulations. To that end, municipal and county governments need to review and incorporate complimentary site design standards into their regulations, and zone accordingly. Along similar lines, the local governments need additional tools to direct development, at higher densities, into approved community and developing areas. Conversely, the local governments have virtually no tools to prevent development from occurring in inappropriate locations.