

TRANSPORTATION

Introduction

Transportation infrastructure provides efficient movement of people and goods and improves the quality of life and economic vitality of the community. The County's transportation infrastructure includes roads, bridges, trails, public transit and facilities, air transport, and port services.

The County recognizes the importance of this system as well as the direct relationship between land use policies and the availability of these services. The infrastructure policies outlined in this Plan were developed to help support local land use plans while ensuring adequate transportation facilities to serve the needs of the County as well as regional travel and utilities. Transportation priorities include a strong emphasis on managing existing resources and efficiently planning future infrastructure for the community.

Goals and Objectives

Maintaining, improving, and expanding needed transportation facilities is a priority of Talbot County. To fulfill this, the following goals and objectives have been identified:

1. Ensure the safe and efficient provision of transportation and utility services to the greatest degree possible.
 - *Action Item 6.1.1:* Provide a resilient system of public multimodal facilities and services to encourage safe and connected alternatives to vehicular travel.
 - *Action Item 6.1.2:* Provide a resilient roadway system.

Policies and Guidelines

The County continues to coordinate with the State of Maryland on policies and guidelines, particularly the long-range transportation plan, *The Playbook*. This document defines statewide goals and objectives to help support safe, reliable, accessible, and sustainable transportation options. The other policy guidebook the County helps to implement is the *Maryland Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan*. This plan defines multi-modal goals and objectives to improve pedestrian transportation accessibility, safety, and connectivity.

Table 6-1 regional and Local Policies from 2016 Plan outlines all of the policies identified from the 2016 Comprehensive Plan. Talbot County still recognizes these policies and continues to work towards them.

Table 6-1: Regional and Local Roads Policies from 2016 Plan

6.1 – The County will work to coordinate land use and transportation goals of the Comprehensive Plan to promote transportation alternatives, with State and other partners.

6.2 – The County will encourage continuous improvements to the entire road network and will ensure that all improvements further the land use, environmental, transportation and utility goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

6.3 – Road construction and improvements will promote traffic safety, improve vehicular capacity (consistent with area land uses and regional demand) and conform to resource protection policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

6.4 – Road construction and improvements shall be context sensitive and consistent with the County's goals of preserving the environment and rural character.

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6.5 – A County thoroughfare plan will guide future road development decisions through periodic intersection analysis including traffic counts and functionality.

6.6 – The County and towns should coordinate planning for transportation improvements within designated growth areas or at jurisdictional lines.

6.7 – The State should emphasize system conservation and enhancement measures designed to improve operations on MD 33 from the intersection of MD 322 through St. Michaels.

6.8 – Improvements to US 50 should facilitate traffic flow through the area and would be in the best interest of the County and its towns. Improvements could include service roads and overpasses at key intersections. Similar improvements have been made to US 50 in the City of Cambridge.

6.9 – Access to the arterial road network should be from collector roads. Local roads should access the collector system rather than the arterial network.

6.10 – State and County roadway capacity should be conserved by limiting and controlling future access points. Strip forms of development will be prohibited, and the number of existing access driveways onto major public roads shall be reduced where appropriate.

6.11 – New roads in proposed developments may be required to provide appropriate connections to adjacent properties, in order to ensure adequate connectivity through the overall road system.

6.12 – Agricultural equipment clearances and requirements should be recognized in the design and management of the County roadway system.

6.13 – The County should address ways to expedite emergency traffic and manage critical lane volume in areas of limited egress, such as MD 33 and MD 333.

6.14 – New roads serving residential developments should be designed to ensure safety and convenience for all users including motorists, cyclists, pedestrians and emergency vehicles.

6.15 – Setbacks and other development lines should anticipate future traffic loads on adjacent roadways and provide for road expansion. A highway corridor or entrance corridor overlay should apply where such provisions differ from the setbacks prescribed by zoning.

6.16 – The County should maintain and strengthen, where applicable, its system to define how developers participate in financing road infrastructure improvements. Plans should be based on traffic impact studies, including assessments of projected traffic operations on the road network. Impact studies shall comply with County roadway standards in instances where they exceed State standards.

6.17 – The County should endorse State efforts to inform citizens of the costs of dependence on automobiles and promotion of transportation alternatives.

6.18 – The County encourages the use of alternative fuel vehicles to save energy resources and improve air quality.

6.19 – The County will continue to discuss existing conditions and opportunities to improve automobile, pedestrian and bicycle safety with SHA and other relevant agencies.

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6.20 – The County should support the development of safe, convenient and inviting bike routes and walkways and expansion of rails to trails.

6.21 – The County should continue to improve air transportation services at the Easton airport.

6.22 – The County should review the Airport Overlay Zone in the county Zoning Ordinance for consistency with the most current recommendations and best practices.

6.23 – The County should partner with the Town of Easton to ensure that adequate access to County waters continues to be provided for commercial marine transportation, materials transfer and associated activities.

6.24 – The County should work with the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) to preserve existing rail rights-of-way in the region for future rail service or other compatible use.

Existing Roadway System

Functional Classification

The Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) uses the Federal Highway Functional Classification for roadways to indicate the relative importance of any given road and assigns each road into a category by the role it plays in moving vehicles. The five classifications are identified as:

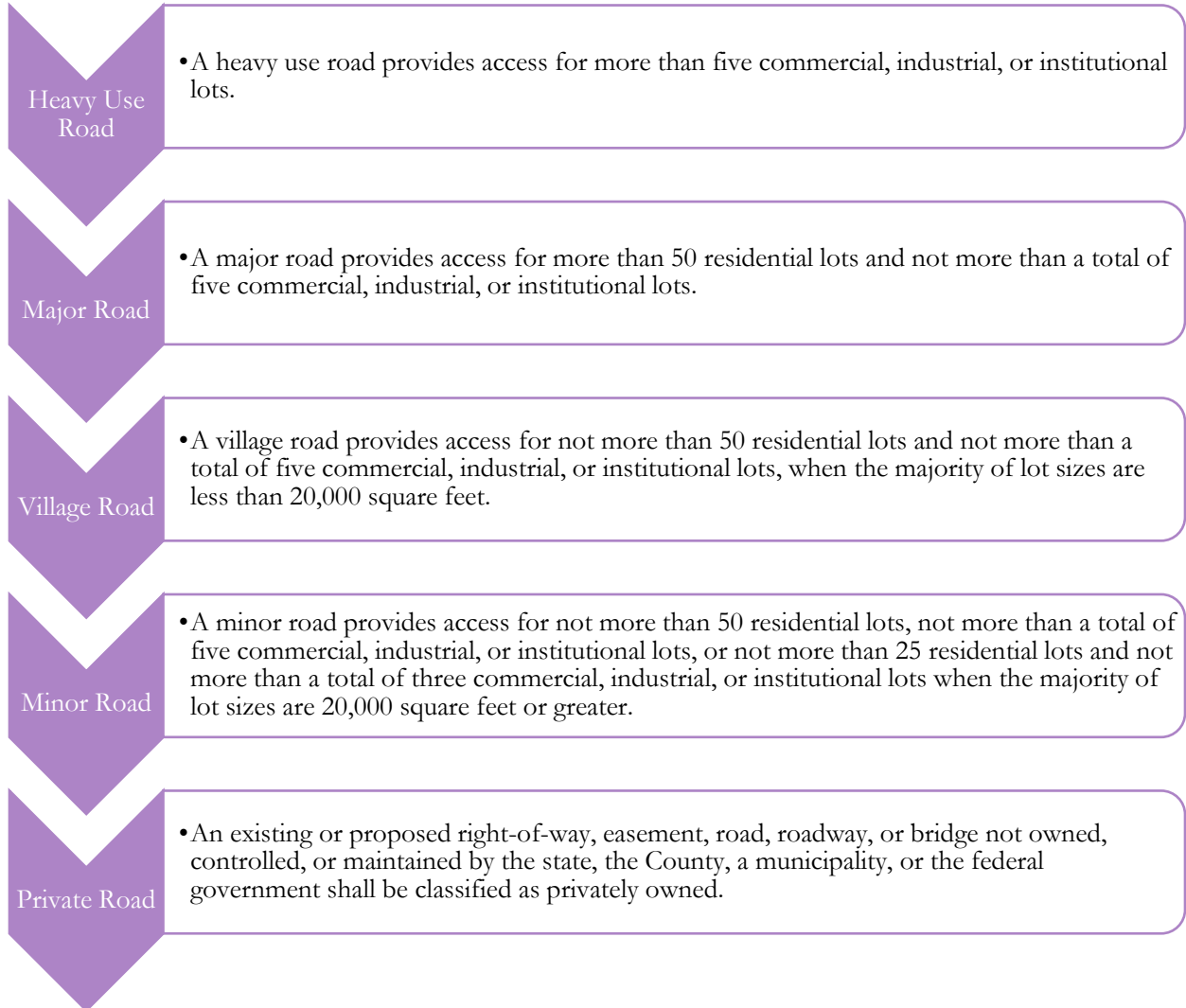
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All MDOT SHA functional classifications within Talbot County can be found on **Map 6-1 Functional Classification** and roadways that aren't identified as local are listed in **Table 6-2 Main Roadway Annual Average Daily Traffic**.

The County established its own local roadway classification system that is separate from MDOT SHA's Functional Classifications. The purpose of this was for future planning of improvements and easily assigning appropriate design standards to County roads. All design criteria for each classification can be found in the Talbot County Code or design manual. The County classification system uses the following hierarchy for roadways:

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Traffic Volumes

MDOT SHA also monitors roadway volumes by measuring Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT). AADT data is collected by obtaining multi-directional traffic counts of a roadway within 24 hours and dividing that number by 365 days. This data is used to help with planning and roadway design standards. **Table 6-2 Main Roadway Annual Average Daily Traffic** shows the 2024 AADT values for the main roadways within the County. **Map 6-2 AADT** gives a visual representation of all the values.

Table 6-2: Main Roadway Annual Average Daily Traffic

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<i>Roadway</i>	<i>Route</i>	MDOT SHA Functional Classification	AADT
<i>Ocean Gateway</i>	US 50	Principal Arterial Other	38,362
<i>Eastern Parkway</i>	MD 322	Principal Arterial Other	17,801
<i>St. Michaels Road/Bay Street/Talbot Street</i>	MD 33	Minor Arterial	14,852
<i>Mattenstown Road</i>	MD 328	Minor Arterial	10,241
<i>Dover Road/Dover Bridge Road</i>	MD 331	Minor Arterial	12,331
<i>Peach Blossom Road/Oxford Road</i>	MD 333	Minor Arterial	8,680
<i>Washington Street</i>	MU 1090/1091	Minor Arterial	5,271
<i>Tilghman Island Road/St Micheals Road</i>	MD 33	Major Collector	5,942
<i>Aurora Street</i>	MU 80	Major Collector	4,200
<i>Brookletts Avenue</i>	MU 160	Major Collector	3,030
<i>Airport Road/Dover Road</i>	MU/CO 277	Major Collector	11,041
<i>Dover Street</i>	MU 280	Major Collector	9,950
<i>Almsbouse Road</i>	CO 282	Major Collector	912
<i>Dutchmans Lane</i>	MU 293	Major Collector	6,352
<i>Cordova Road</i>	MD 309	Major Collector	5,965
<i>Port Street</i>	MD 334	Major Collector	3,174
<i>Unionville Road</i>	MD 370	Major Collector	2,801
<i>Hillsboro Road/Old Queen Anne Road</i>	MD 404	Major Collector	1,435
<i>Glebe Road</i>	MU 410	Major Collector	5,082
<i>Goldsborough Street</i>	MU 430	Major Collector	8,960
<i>High Street</i>	MU 500	Major Collector	1,622
<i>Bozman Neavitt Road</i>	MD 579	Major Collector	1,991
<i>Wrightson Ave</i>	MU 1140	Major Collector	2,962
<i>Skipton Cordova Road</i>	CO 3	Minor Collector	645
<i>Rabbit Hill Road</i>	CO 26	Minor Collector	845
<i>Black Dog Alley</i>	CO 28	Minor Collector	3,482
<i>Bellevue Road</i>	CO 59	Minor Collector	2,075
<i>Landing Neck Road</i>	CO 101	Minor Collector	1,135
<i>Island Creek Road</i>	CO 111/429	Minor Collector	655
<i>Kittys Corner Road</i>	CO 271	Minor Collector	365
<i>Main Street</i>	MD 303	Minor Collector	1,031
<i>Royal Oak Road</i>	MD 329	Minor Collector	1,493
<i>Claiborne Road</i>	CO 440	Minor Collector	614
<i>Harrison Street</i>	MU 470	Minor Collector	4,590
<i>Idlenwild Avenue</i>	MU 540	Minor Collector	7,881
<i>Wye Mills Road</i>	MD 662	Minor Collector	872
<i>South Street</i>	MU 922	Minor Collector	2,162

Source: MDOT SHA 2024 Roadway Functional Classification and 2024 Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT)

Maintenance

The Road Department of Talbot County is responsible for the maintenance and operations of county-owned roadways and bridges. This includes 374 miles of County roadway. MDOT SHA maintains all other state-owned roadways and bridges. General roadway maintenance responsibilities of the County include surface repairs, drainage clearing and maintenance, shoulder maintenance, roadside mowing and landscaping, weather maintenance, and road sign installations and repairs.

Multimodal Facilities

Transit

County residents are served by the Delmarva Community Transit (DCT) bus service. This service offers fixed shuttle routes, flexible routes in and between counties, and specialized services for seniors and persons with disabilities (DCT One Stop Service). The DCT coordinates with Queen Anne's County Ride services to connect Talbot to the surrounding counties. Routes operate regularly Monday through Friday with limited service on Saturdays and certain holidays. There are 13 route options, both fixed and on demand, and are coordinated by Maryland Upper Shore Transit (MUST). All routes and available bus stops can be found on **Map 6-3 Transit Facilities**.

Bicycle Facilities and Trails

Bicycle facilities and trails provide pedestrians with safe riding options separate from vehicles and traffic congestion. Typical facilities include designated bicycle lanes, shared lanes, and off-road trails. The scenic views and rural roads of the County attract many recreational cyclists. Many trail routes travel through these scenic areas or parks and offer either paved or unpaved roadway separated paths. Routes have been compiled and mapped by the Department of Parks and recreation and promoted by the Office of Tourism. Popular trails within the County include the School Days, Joust Maryland, Talbot Farmland, Chesapeake Views, Oxford/St Michaels, and Cemetery Quest trail. More trail information can be found at TourTalbot.org. The County should continue to work with incorporated towns to ensure safe cycling options and plan for efficient growth of bicycle traffic.

Sidewalk Facilities

Sidewalk facilities offer walking connectivity for residents and usually include a 5-foot minimum paved walking path, curb ramps, pedestrian signals, and/or crosswalks. Talbot County provides sidewalk within residential communities and large commercial areas. Because of the limited scale of rural development and the County's strategy directing development to towns and Designated Growth Areas, there has been no requirement for rural subdivisions to include "complete streets" (sidewalks, bike trails or pedestrian connections) within a community. Easements for future pedestrian facilities to support integrated pedestrian pathways are stipulated in the development standards for the County's Gateway Overlay Zone in the current zoning ordinance. The County should continue to work with its Towns and the State to maintain existing facilities and plan for future roadway improvements.

Air Transportation

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The Easton Airport is a County-owned public facility overseen by the Easton Airport Manager and County Council, assisted by a five-member Airport Advisory Board. Easton Airport is 654 acres and is designated as a National Airport. The designation recognizes the provision of international and national flights over 500 miles, as well as the airport's role in public service and the number of jet aircraft based there. Easton Airport is the home base for Maryland State Police helicopter Trooper 6, providing emergency medical evacuation and law enforcement services in the region. The US Coast Guard uses the airport as an auxiliary operations site when responding to Chesapeake Bay or mid-Atlantic area missions. Talbot County EMS also has an ambulance and crew stationed here for deployment around the County. The airport is a secondary site in County Emergency Management plans due to its emergency power generation, covered area, and high elevation. All other airports or helipads within the County are privately owned. All facilities can be located on **Map 6-3 Transit Facilities**.



SOURCE: WWW.EASTONAIRPORT.COM, *ECONOMIC IMPACT 2024*

Rail Services

There is no active rail service within Talbot County. New service is not anticipated; however, future uses could include the revival of limited light rail service on rights-of-way owned by the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA). The County encourages the retention of rail rights-of-way for future use. Pedestrian and bike trails are appropriate interim uses for these corridors. The State of Maryland promotes the Rails-to-Trails movement that converts inactive railway to paved paths for hikers, bikers, and horseback riders.

Ferry Services

The County has one privately owned ferry service available to the public. The Oxford Bellevue Ferry is in Oxford, MD and provides transit to/from Bellevue Landing in Royal Oak, MD. The Ferry offers seasonal transit to pedestrians, bikers, and vehicles. The facility operates from April through October, open seven days a week from May to September. The ferry only provides weekend transit during the colder months of April and October.



Port Services

Easton Point is a small area of land at the Tred Avon riverside, under County jurisdiction but surrounded by the Town of Easton. It is the County's only industrial port, where bulk materials are delivered by barge in quantities equivalent to many truckloads each. It is also the site of a County-owned public landing, a private marina with boatyards, and related facilities.

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Historically, the County has recommended that the northern and western edges of Easton Point should continue to be planned for port-related and marine transportation activities, including regular dredging of the Tred Avon River approach channel. It would be an error to lose the critical industrial resource of a regional bulk materials landing site in Talbot County. Dredging for recreational use is only possible because of ongoing industrial activity at the port. If that activity were discontinued, maintaining a navigable channel may, if achieved, become a public expense. However, this area has obvious redevelopment potential and is identified as a future growth area in the 2010 Easton Comprehensive Plan.

The Plan states:

“(T)he future of the port is most likely a mixed-use project with a strong recreational component to include uses such as an expanded marina, boat ramp, and a waterfront park or open space with less emphasis on truly industrial uses. Higher density (i.e. townhouse or apartment) residential and commercial uses would also seem to be an appropriate part of the mix in any redevelopment plan.”

The Town of Easton considers the impacts of future land use changes on existing land uses. Negative impacts and possible loss of channel dredging activities by the Army Corps of Engineers should be avoided. Easton’s Redevelopment land use designation for the port area under the County’s jurisdiction is inconsistent with the land use designations in this Comprehensive Plan. Addressing consistency with existing land use is a requirement for annexation.

The County will support the efforts of the Town of Easton and the Easton Economic Development Corporation to pursue funding opportunities for the purpose of developing studies to include traffic, economic development and environmental impacts for the Easton Point and Port Street Corridor. The traffic study shall account for vehicular, non-motorized and pedestrian modes of transportation.

Utilities

Apart from wastewater treatment facilities, Talbot County operates no public utilities. Nevertheless, the County has zoning and regulatory responsibility for several modern utility services. Cellular phone service emerged as an issue in the 1990s and has become one of the most contentious areas of public debate. In recent years broadband services, wind turbines and solar panels have come under some level of County oversight.

Wireless Communications Towers

The Talbot County Council in 2008 commissioned a study to create an orderly process for the placement and use of communications towers. At issue was the prospect of competing utilities erecting stand-alone towers in proximity to one another and being incompatible with the character of rural communities.

Following a study of the existing network and gaps in coverage, the Cellular Tower Requirements Study for Talbot County and the resulting Priority Placement Areas map for future towers (see Map 3-D at the end of this chapter) were adopted as zoning ordinance amendments. Now, co-location is required when possible, to expand coverage to underserved areas and to increase coverage in areas of existing service.

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Since the zoning ordinance was amended in 2010, there have been several applications to fill gaps in the cellular network. Upgrades or additional antennas on existing towers have been installed. Because finding suitable sites for new towers in some areas has remained difficult, the Council passed a Concealed Towers amendment in 2012. These actions have encouraged expansion of cellular service but coverage away from US 50 remains inadequate.

Full County coverage for 911 emergency calls is not yet built out. An increasing dependence on mobile devices for both voice and data communication has been accompanied by decreasing carrier support for land lines. Despite this trend the market alone has provided an insufficient incentive for extending either cell or broadband coverage to rural homes and businesses, or 911 coverage to all of Talbot County.

Wind

Interest in alternative energy generation has grown in recent years as technology has advanced and equipment has been marketed to homeowners. Talbot County has chosen to apply the existing zoning code to some aspects of wind generation systems. Presently, small wind turbine systems are considered accessory uses and limited to single-site energy consumption. County zoning regulations include production, height and density limits and a maximum number of units per property.

Other conditions are applied to small wind turbine production facilities, including an assessment of visual impact and design specifications. Turbines can be up to 160 feet tall and developed at a greater density than the single-site turbines.

Solar

Solar energy systems for residential use are regulated through the Building Code and are subject to lot coverage and setback requirements as well as structural standards. Larger solar installations generating power for off-premise uses are classified as utility structures and are permitted by special exception.

County Priorities

Every year the County has to update a list of transportation priorities for the Maryland Department of Transportation's Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP). The letter is developed based on input from the public, county staff, and elected and appointed officials and sent to MDOT. MDOT evaluates the projects in the letter to assist the state in updating the CTP, which is a six-year capital budget for State transportation projects. The CTP includes capital transportation projects that may involve planning, environmental studies, design, right-of-way acquisition, or construction. Talbot County identified the following transportation priorities for 2025:

- MD 322/US 50 Intersection – Evaluation and Improvements
- MD 33 Capacity, Safety, and Evacuation Improvements
- MD 329 (Royal Oak Road) Safety Improvements
- MD 33, Oxford Causeway – Roadway Flooding and Improvements
- Address Safety Issues for Cross Street Traffic on US 50 – Intersection Improvements for Goldsborough Street, Dover Street, Chapel Road, MD 309/MD 662, Airport Road, Idlewild Avenue, and Cordova Road

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- Eastern Airport - Airfield Modernization Program

The Town of Easton, Oxford, Queen Anne, Trappe, and St. Michaels also coordinated with the County to include their own lists of transportation priorities within the letter.

Transportation Studies and Projects

MD 328 (Matthomstown Rd) between US 50 (Ocean Gateway) and Black Dog Alley Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study

MDOT SHA is completing the MD 328 Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study. The study limits are between US 50 and Black Dog Alley in Talbot County. The purpose of the study is to assess the transportation needs along MD 328, including traffic operations, safety and pedestrian and bicyclist accommodations.

US 50 (Ocean Gateway) from the Bay Bridge to Ocean City - Design-Build

MDOT SHA has obtained a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) grant through FHWA's Advanced Transportation Technology and Innovation (ATTAIN) program to develop a project on US 50 from the Bay Bridge to Ocean City. The program will help fund advanced transportation technologies to improve safety, mobility, efficiency, system performance, intermodal connectivity, and infrastructure return on investment.

Frederick Douglass Rail Trail

MDOT SHA is completing the Frederick Douglass Rail Trail project from Tuckahoe State Park in Queen Anne to Black Dog Alley in Easton. The purpose of the project is to repurpose the railroad right of way to provide bicycle and pedestrian connectivity, accessibility, and safety throughout the corridor.