

Bike Safe Play Court in Washington County, Maryland

Traffic gardens are gaining popularity throughout the United States because of the ability for kids to learn about roadways and safety away from traffic. Traffic gardens are designs that mimic small streetscape. For more information about traffic gardens, visit trafficgardens.com. In 2016, Seattle launched its first traffic garden eight miles south of downtown, complete with crosswalks, multilane roads, a roundabout and more street features. Washington County, Maryland has made great strides in planning for the first Bike Safe Play Court in Maryland. (Refer to Image 1). Safety City in Baltimore City is an example of a Traffic and Safety lay Court in Druid Hill Park that provides outreach and education to elementary-school-age children (Refer to Image 2). Hannah Person, program coordinator with the Washington County Health Department, shared the following information with us regarding this exciting new project.



Image 1: Aerial view of traffic garden in Seattle

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/www.nytimes.com/2020/05/05/business/pandemic-work-from-home-coronavirus.amp.html>

1) What is the background regarding the Bike Safe Play Court in Washington County?

In 2018, the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) encouraged local health departments to implement walking and biking initiatives in their counties, and provided training workshops. As part of that initiative, Mary McPherson, program manager at the Washington County Health Department, participated in the Walking College curriculum hosted by America Walks. The Walking College culminated with sending participants to the Walk Bike Places Conference in September 2018. At the conference, McPherson viewed a presentation about traffic gardens. She loved the idea and mentioned it to MDH, which offered Safe Routes to School funding to create a traffic garden in Washington County.



Image 2: Safety City Baltimore City

Source: <https://twitter.com/TrafficGarden/status/1084483136707313665/photo/1>

2) What partnerships made this project possible?

Initially, we partnered with the city of Hagerstown, since they owned the space we were originally looking at. The city's engineering department created all the designs, including the current design we plan

on implementing. The Hagerstown YMCA is allowing a section of their parking lot to be re-painted to create the Bike Safe Play Court. We also partnered with Girls Inc. to have them implement bicycle safety education in their summer camps last year and with Bester Community of Hope to host a bike rodeo. We hope to continue partnering with the YMCA, Girls Inc., and Bester Community of Hope to provide bicycle safety education and bike rodeos, as well as make use of the Bike Safe Play Court, once it's completed.

3) Who can use the Bike Safe Play Court?

The Bike Safe Play Court is intended to function like a public park that anyone can use. The YMCA will allow members and non-members to use the Bike Safe Play Court. The only times it will not be available will be dusk to dawn and during large soccer matches where the YMCA will need to use the space for overflow parking. We plan to create a web page with instructional videos that show people how to safely bicycle through the different traffic features on the traffic garden and have the link or a QR code on a sign at the Bike Safe Play Court. Ideally, parents would bring their children to the Bike Safe Play Court and teach them bicycle safety and the rules of the road. Additionally, we want to encourage afterschool programs, day care facilities and schools to make use of it.

4) When do you anticipate this project to be completed?

Our current funding ends June 30, 2020, so we hope to have it completed by then. However, MDH has indicated there will be additional funding in the next fiscal year. Therefore, the county hopes to use additional funding to improve the Bike Safe Play Court or implement bicycle safety education programs using the facility.

For more information regarding the Bike Safe Play Court:

Visit washcohealth.org or contact Hannah Person with the Washington County Health Department at 240-313-3357 or Hannah.Person@Maryland.gov.

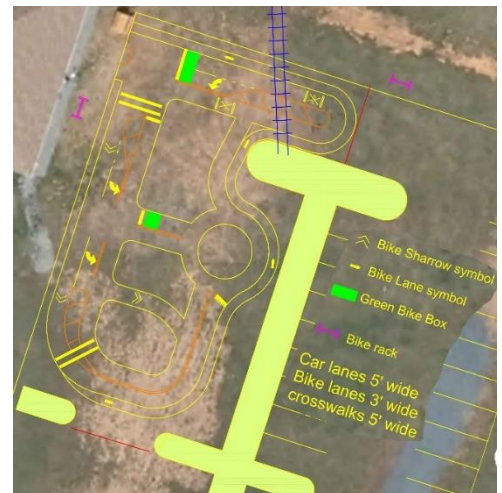


Image 3: Washington County Bike Safety Play Court

Source: Washington County Health Department