

# Elkton Walkable Community Workshop



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SPONSORED BY WILMAPCO,  
NATIONAL CENTER FOR BICYCLING AND WALKING,  
& THE TOWN OF ELKTON



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## Introduction

WILMAPCO was selected for the 2005 Walkable Community Workshops (WCW) program—part of the National Center for Bicycling & Walking effort to work directly with communities. WCWs are interactive events that bring together residents, elected officials, advocates, public agency staff, health practitioners, educators, planners and engineers to make our communities safer and easier to walk in.

## Who is WILMAPCO

The Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO) is the bi-state Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) serving New Castle County, DE and Cecil County, MD. Our policy-making body, the WILMAPCO Council, consists of state, county and municipal representatives. We have the important role of educating and involving the public and local agencies in the transportation decision-making and funding process. Our *Regional Transportation Plan* calls for **improving our quality of life** by protecting public health and supporting our communities, **efficiently transporting people** by providing transportation choices including facilities for bicycling and walking, and **supporting economic activity, growth and goods movement** by making our region an attractive place to live and work. Making our communities more walkable achieves all of these goals, and more.

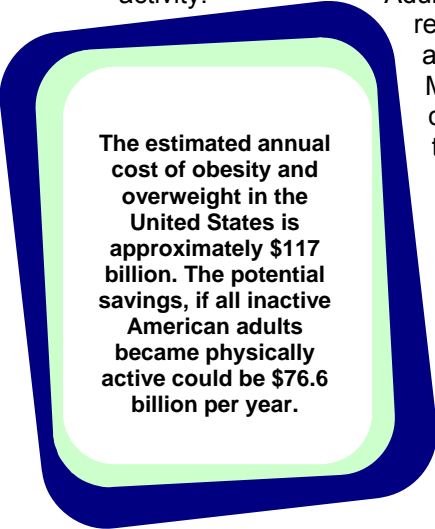
## Why are Walkable Communities Important

**We are all pedestrians.** Whether we think of ourselves as one or not, we are pedestrians. We may walk to work, walk for exercise, walk to do errands or simply walk from where we park the car to the neighborhood store; we all need safe facilities for walking.

**Walking is crucial to giving those who don't drive a travel choice.** Many in our region are too young to drive, have a permanent or temporary disability which prevents their driving, have no access to a car, or choose not to drive. In New Castle County, Delaware, 25 percent of the population is under 18, 12 percent is over 65 (and this number will grow rapidly in the years to come), 16 percent have a disability and 9 percent of households have no available vehicle<sup>1</sup>. In Cecil County, Maryland, 28 percent of the population is under 18, 11 percent are over 65, 19 percent have a disability, and 6 percent of households have no available vehicle. Many in these population groups need to walk in order to lead active and independent lives.

**Walkable communities are healthier communities.** American's waistlines keep getting bigger, along with a rise in related illnesses including heart disease and diabetes. In Maryland and Delaware respectively, 19 and 22 percent of adults are obese according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC). Only 65 percent of adolescents engage in the recommended amount of physical activity.

Adults have a worse track record, with only 26 percent getting the recommended amount of physical activity; in Delaware, 27 percent of adults engage in no leisure-time physical activity while 23 percent in Maryland report no activity. Yet, we know that pedestrian-friendly communities make it easier for people to integrate physical activity into their daily lives. Indeed, those who report having access to sidewalks are 27 percent more likely to be physically active.



**The estimated annual cost of obesity and overweight in the United States is approximately \$117 billion. The potential savings, if all inactive American adults became physically active could be \$76.6 billion per year.**

**Everyone benefits from walkable communities.** Even if you don't personally enjoy walking, you still benefit from living in a walkable community. Approximately 40 percent of all trips are less than two miles— an easy walk or a bike ride in an area with safe pedestrian and bicycling facilities. More people walking and bicycling can help reduce overall levels of congestion, benefiting drivers too. Less driving can also help reduce air pollution caused by motor vehicles. There are economic benefits as well, with higher property values and greater sales in commercial areas.

1. 2000, U.S. Census Bureau

## What is a Walkable Community Workshop

Most simply, a WCW is a four-hour session that includes an educational presentation on what makes a community walkable, a walking audit of a specific area, and a mapping session, putting pencils to paper brainstorming solutions. Focusing on a particular area, participants study it in terms of walkability: sidewalks, pathways, inviting streetscape, crosswalks, destinations, etc. The process gives everyone the tools for making a community walkable and provides realistic next steps participants can use to achieve their ideas. The first round of workshops, held in Brandywine Hundred, City of New Castle, and Edgemoor Gardens provided information on how we can turn our communities into the kind of pedestrian-friendly places we all like to experience. A second round of evening workshops was conducted during 2006 in Newark and Southbridge, Wilmington. The third round, held in the Town of Elkton, was led by Bob Chauncey of the National Center for Bicycling and Walking.

### Three parts of the workshop



*Part 1 - The presentation talks about sidewalk design, crosswalks, traffic calming, community design and other tools communities need to create walkable communities.*

*Part 2 – The walking audit gives participants a chance to walk through the area, identifying issues and thinking about how to apply what they have learned from the presentation. Getting out and walking is key to illustrating the challenges that people face when pedestrian facilities are not available.*



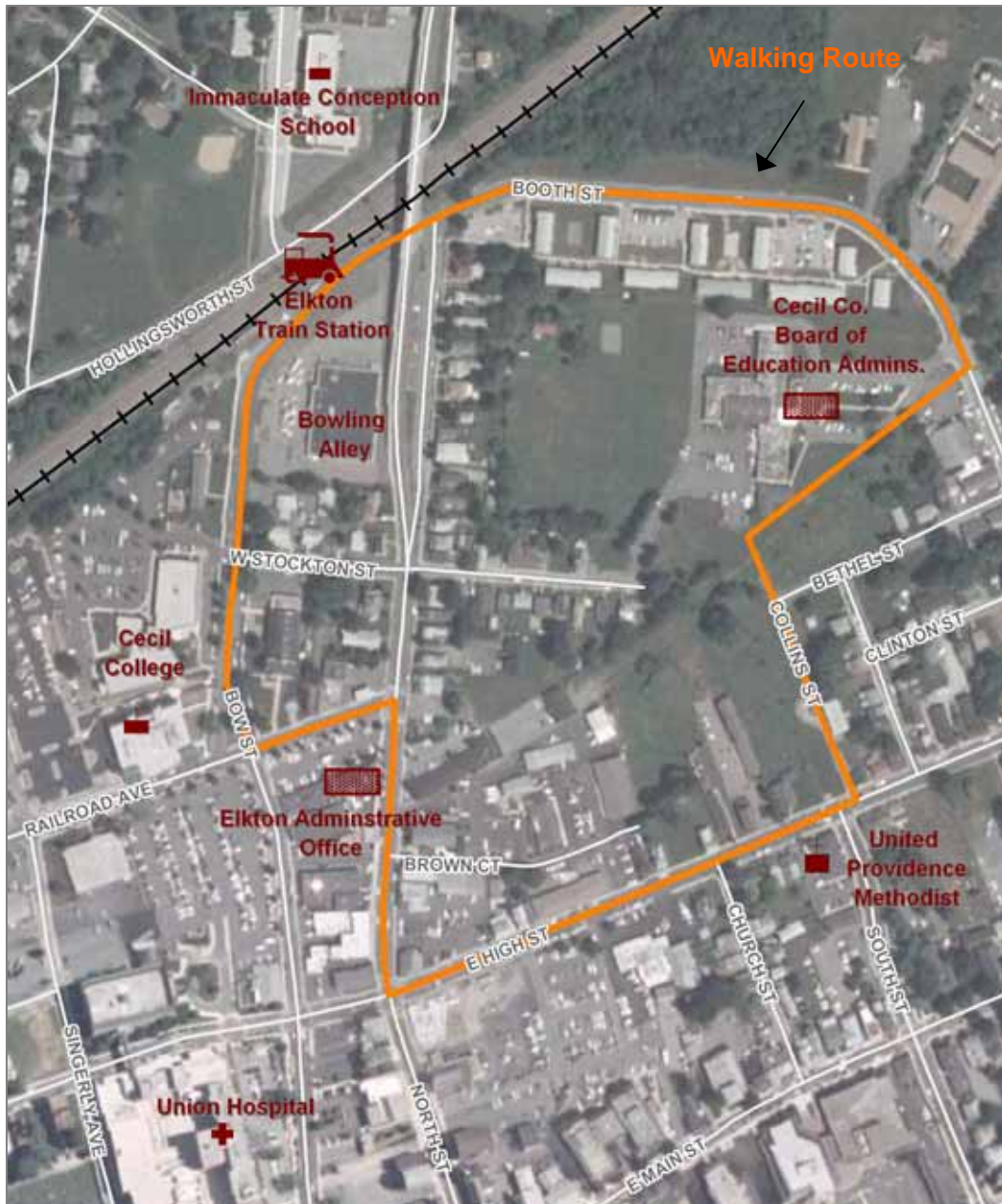
*Part 3 – During the mapping exercise people put down on paper their vision and realistic actions for improving the study area. Participants ended the session by committing to specific next steps to continue the process started at the workshop.*

# The Town of Elkton

## Area Background

Elkton is the most populated town in Cecil County, with a mix of close-knit residents, historic structures, government buildings, a hospital, retail, parks and businesses. The workshop was held in the center of the town, just north of Main Street. Elkton is working to restore, redevelop and sustain its historic Main Street community and economic corridor. Main Street is very attractive yet residents desire a safe and convenient non-motorized way of getting there. The community expressed the need for better connections to public parks and recreation opportunities, more well-defined pathways, enhanced pedestrian facilities on bridges, and safe connections to transit services. Also, Elkton Middle School students need better pedestrian and bicycle facilities to travel safely.

## Study Area for the Walking Audit



## Issues and Potential Solutions Identified

### Issue:

- **Sidewalk Condition.** Sidewalks should be level, continuous, have a proper width, and most important, lead to somewhere. Lack of sidewalks discourages residents from walking, even to destinations that are in close proximity. In Town, some sidewalks do not direct pedestrians to a particular place, nor connect to other sidewalks or pathways. For instance, there is no sidewalk from the Elkton Middle School to Route 279.

### Solutions:

- ❑ Pursue funding through Maryland's Sidewalk Retrofit Program. Financial resources are made available through the six-year Consolidated Transportation Plan (CTP) which may be allocated to local jurisdictions to construct sidewalks along state highways. Depending on the location, the cost for retrofit sidewalks is either covered 100% by the state, or shared equally between the local government and the state. The local jurisdiction is required to maintain the sidewalks.
- ❑ Utilize the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program, which uses a community approach to encourage and enable more students to walk and bicycle to school safely. SRTS works with schools to identify the safest routes from children's homes to their schools and identifies ways to improve school area safety. The program involves two steps: (1) plan development and (2) project implementation. Funding and assistance is available to establish a program and implement its recommendations. Contact Maryland's Safe Routes to School Program Coordinator, Joseph Pelaia, at (410) 787-7620, or by email at [jpelaia@sha.state.md.us](mailto:jpelaia@sha.state.md.us). More information on the National SRTS Program can be found at [www.saferoutesinfo.org](http://www.saferoutesinfo.org).
- ❑ The Department of Public Works and Transportation is responsible for maintaining most of the sidewalks in the State and County maintained public right-of-ways. Submit an application to the Department of Public Works for a project to have included in Elkton's Capital Improvement Program.



*Sidewalks are needed on Bow Street approaching the Train Station.*



*In Elkton, lack of sidewalks puts the elderly at risk when walking.*



*Good sidewalks are wide, even, and buffered from vehicular traffic.*

**Issue:**

- **Safe Pedestrian Crosswalks.** Pedestrians are most vulnerable at intersections, mid-block crossing, and driveway entrances. Striped crosswalks show pedestrians the shortest route across an intersection, with the least conflict with vehicular traffic. For example, the intersection of Bow Street lacks striped crosswalks—which should be in place to increase safety and pedestrian visibility.

**Solutions:**

- ❑ In conjunction with marked crosswalks, fluorescent pedestrian crossing signs can be used, especially near schools and other areas where children cross to increase safety.



*Signage directs people to the designated location to cross and alerts drivers that pedestrians are crossing traffic.*



*Marked crosswalk are needed at Bow St. & Railroad Ave.*



*Combined with a raised crosswalk (above), incorporate a curb extension which slows traffic and reduces the amount of time pedestrians are exposed to traffic.*



*A textured and/or colored crosswalk is an aesthetic treatment used to make a crosswalk surface more visually attractive.*

**Issue:**

- **Curb & Driveway Ramps.** Several driveway ramps throughout the study area do not comply with standards for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Inadequate ramps and driveways without level crossings pose a tripping hazard to all pedestrians, and create instability for people who use wheelchairs or walkers.



*On Booth Street curb cuts are too steep to accommodate the disabled.*

**Solutions:**

- ❑ Install or upgrade ADA accessible curb ramps at intersections and sidewalks that intersect driveways according to the Cecil County Department of Public Works Road Code and Standard Specifications.
- ❑ Contact the Cecil County Department of Public Works Roads Division, who is responsible for maintenance of county streets. For more information call Dan Webber, the Roads Division Chief, at (410) 996-6270.
- ❑ Curb ramps are often incorporated into paving and rehabilitation projects—therefore contact MDOT. For separate curb ramp projects, Transportation Enhancement or Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funding may be used. For general information James Dooley, the Regional Planner for Cecil County, should be contacted at (410) 545-0300, or [JDooley@mdot.state.md.us](mailto:JDooley@mdot.state.md.us). The Enhancement Program Liaison, Mary Keller, and can be reached at (410)545-5675.

**Issue:**

- **Improve Pedestrian and Bicycle Linkages.** A walkable community should also be a bikeable community. Creating solid links between all forms of non-motorized transportation provide better mobility for residents and enhances travel options and connections to greenways.

**Solutions:**

- ❑ Transportation Enhancement Funds (TE), are administered through Maryland's State Highway Administration. TE funds can be used for pedestrian projects including new or reconstructed sidewalks, walkways, curb ramps; bike lane striping, bike parking, and off-road shared use, non-motorized trails. Funds can also be used for landscaping along transportation facilities. The TE Program manager is Dennis Yoder and can be contacted at (410) 545-5674 or [dyoder@sha.state.md.us](mailto:dyoder@sha.state.md.us).
- ❑ Contact Maryland's State Highway Administration (SHA) Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator at (410) 545-5656 or [bikes@sha.state.md.us](mailto:bikes@sha.state.md.us), who is the public's contact person for bicycle information, performs bicycle related research and systems



*Facilities that accommodate both pedestrians and bicyclists are ideal community assets.*



planning, reviews design plans, develops policy and procedural guidelines, and monitors SHA's major capital projects for bicycle compatibility. The Coordinator also manages safety, enforcement, and educational activities.

- ❑ Pursue funding through Maryland's Bicycle Retrofit Program. Financial resources are offered for on-road spot improvements along state highways to increase mobility and accessibility of cyclists. Specific recommendations for improvements can be presented by the bicycling community or the local jurisdiction.

**Issue:**

- **Aesthetics.** Streetscaping such as trees, flowers, and attractive pedestrian-scale lighting help create a pleasant walking environment. Residents acknowledged that roads on the periphery of Main Street need aesthetic improvements.



*There is potential for pedestrian lighting, flowerbeds and a mural at the curve connecting Bow & Booth Streets.*

**Solutions:**

- ❑ Work with the Elkton Alliance who encourages businesses to improve their physical appearance through programs like the Facade Improvement Grants and other state funded projects, and to gain financial assistance through the State of Maryland.
- ❑ Incorporate aesthetic enhancements into transportation improvements and/or with renewal and revitalization projects. Include street furniture (benches, tables, and chairs), bike racks, banners, decorative tree grates, planters and pavers, and pedestrian lighting.
- ❑ Consider creative uses of limited spaces and promote public art in points beyond the Main Street area.
- ❑ Work with the Cecil County Arts Council, Inc., a non-profit-organization, who works to promote and support the arts in Cecil County.



*Street furniture helps create a sense of place which contributes to a walkable community.*



*Decorative pedestrian scale lighting can add street character, but also serves as a safety measure.*

**Issue:**

- **Transit.** Transit trips are walking trips; therefore transit use should be directly linked to sidewalks. Elkton is served by DART's Route 65, and The Bus administered by Cecil County Community Transit and Maryland Transit Administration (MTA). More amenities are needed to make using transit pleasant and convenient for riders. In the future, residents want bus service to connect with rail service at the train station.



**Solutions:**

- ❑ Work with the Delaware Transit Corporation to pursue additional bus shelters and bus pads for the Route 65 in Elkton. Contact DART at (302) 577-DART.
- ❑ Support and work with the State and local government to resume rail service at the Elkton Train Station. Consider assessing the feasibility of transit-oriented development (TOD) at this site. TOD is characterized by dense mixed land uses surrounding public transit, usually rail stations, and is designed with features that encourage transit ridership.

*To compliment transit services, amenities are needed for riders who are also pedestrians.*

## Highlights from Our Walk



*Pedestrian on Bow Street*

Although missing sidewalk exists, there are some good stretches of sidewalk in town.



*Striped crosswalk at Railroad Avenue*

There are several good striped crosswalks in town that make pedestrians more visible to vehicular traffic. But there are other intersections that lack safe pedestrian crosswalks. Improvements for these crosswalks could include better lighting and benches for pedestrians. Also street buffers and bike lanes could be incorporated along Railroad Avenue.



*Elkton Train Station built in 1837*

Currently commuter trains do not provide service to the town, but there are many possibilities for the future of Elkton's Train Station. Residents would like to see parking at the Station, bus connections, and good pedestrian access to and from Main Street.



At the parking lot entrance of residential units, the sidewalk ends abruptly, forcing pedestrians into the street with motor vehicles. A section of the grass can be paved to accommodate walking.

*Lack of sidewalk on Booth Street*



Adversely, speed bumps can create noise pollution and air quality concerns for nearby residents. Other traffic calming solutions should be considered such as lane narrowing from 14ft to 10ft lanes or constructing a traffic island. A welcome sign to the neighborhood can be incorporated as well.

*Speed bump adjacent to residential units*



The travel lanes on Booth Street are wide enough to accommodate bicycle facilities. Bike lanes on Booth Street would provide a non-motorized mode of transportation to the nearby Elkton Train Station, when it re-opens, and to other destinations.

*Elkton's Route 65 bus travels down Booth Street*



Located behind the Cecil County Board of Education Administration Building is an informal path which indicates there is a need for a defined pathway. A formal path at this location would provide a pedestrian connection to Collins Street.

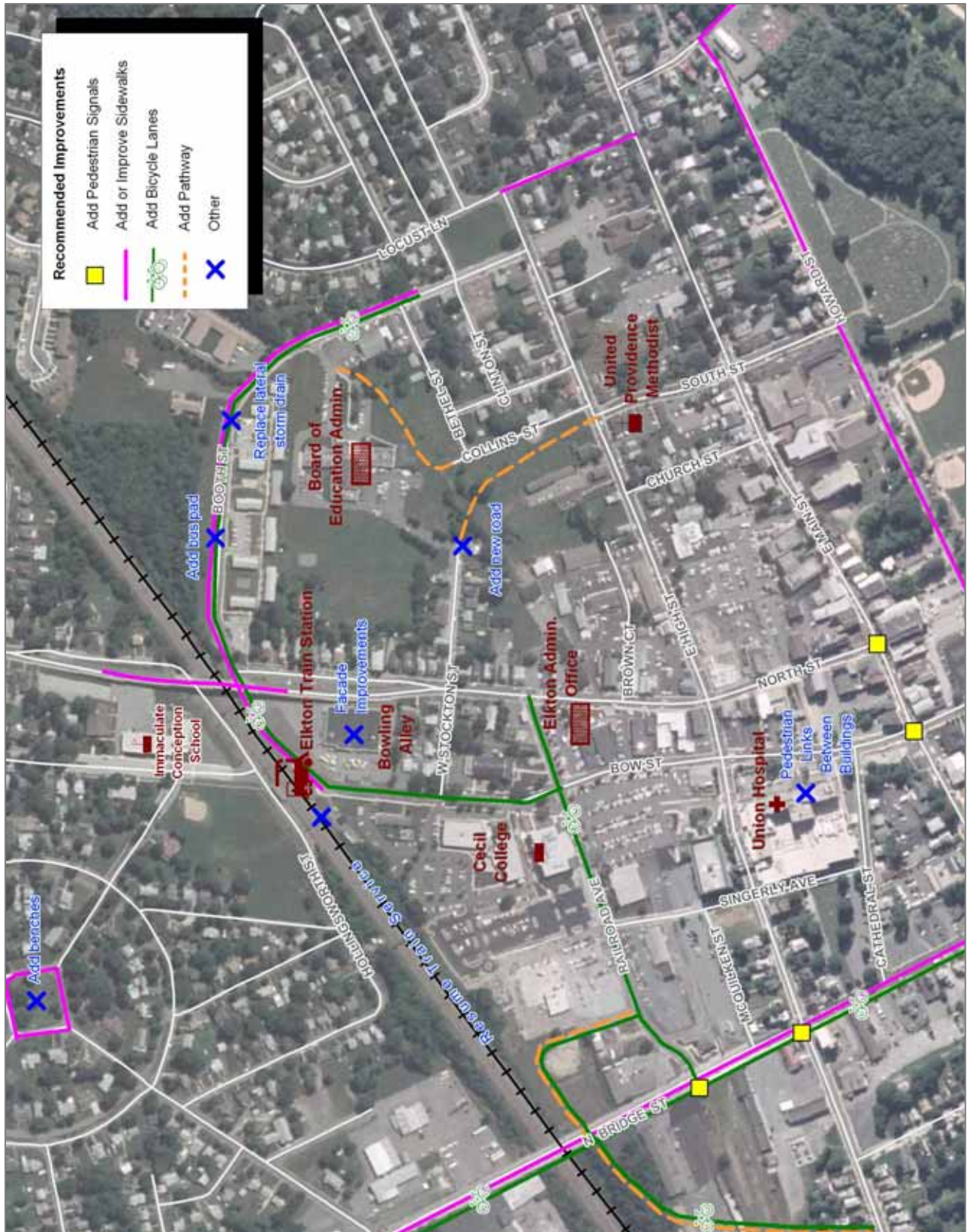
*Workshop participants walk informal path*



Collins Street, which is currently underutilized, has the potential to be linked to Booth Street.

*Workshop participants gather near Collins St.*

# Community Recommendations



## **Community Recommendations (Con't)**

### **Pedestrian Improvements:**

- Improve connections to open space and parks.
- Improve pedestrian access to library from schools
- Provide safe pedestrian facilities along bridges in Town.
- Add multi-use trails connecting residences and the Main Street area.
- Add pedestrian scale lighting along Bow Street near Cecil College.
- Sidewalks are needed along MD 279 from North Street to I-95 commuter parking.
- Install ADA curb ramps:
  - Along N. Bridge Street from Elkton Boulevard extending north to Maryland Avenue.
  - N. Bridge Street at the intersections of Railroad Avenue, E. High Street, and E. Main Street.
  - At the intersection of South Street and E. High Street.

### **Related Improvements:**

- Create a new road with sidewalks from North Street that links directly to the Train Station on Bow Street.
- Consider two-way traffic along E. Main Street.
- Extend South Street to the north to connect with W. Stockton Street—include sidewalks.
- Improve traffic flow surrounding Main Street to make walking conditions safer.
- On Booth Street, pursue traffic calming solutions and add street trees.
- To encourage more pedestrian activity, create mixed-use development along E. High Street between South and North Streets.
- Build a transit hub to include a parking garage and retail at the Elkton Train Station, once service is resumed.

## **New Steps**

A number of next steps were identified during the Elkton workshop. These include:

- Follow up with Maryland's State Highway Administration
- Prioritize short-term and long-term ideas
- Conduct funding research for project implementation
- Brief the Town Council about the workshop and recommendations
- Meet with the Elkton Alliance Design Committee
- Update the Town's Comprehensive Plan