



Baltimore County Residential Truck Traffic Work Group

Final Report: August 31, 2021

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INTRODUCTION

The Baltimore County Residential Truck Traffic Work Group (RTTWG) presents the following final report. Initially convened in September 2020, the RTTWG has spent the last year developing comprehensive solutions to long-standing community concerns regarding large commercial vehicles traveling through residential communities in southeastern and southwestern Baltimore County. At the RTTWG's ninth and final meeting held on August 30, work group members voted to approve the recommendations outlined in this document.

BACKGROUND **SENATE BILL 41**

The RTTWG was established as a provision of [Senate Bill 41](#), passed by the Maryland General Assembly during its 2020 legislative session. This enabling legislation allows Baltimore County to implement a vehicle height monitoring system program to address the high volumes of commercial truck traffic on local roadways primarily in the southeastern and southwestern regions of the County.

Prior to the implementation of this program, Baltimore County was required to establish a work group which included commercial transportation industry representatives. Baltimore County must also approve local legislation limiting the overall number of vehicle height monitoring systems that may be placed along County roadways.

The RTTWG was given the following charges, as outlined in the enabling State legislation:

- Evaluate existing truck routes
- Develop a map of restricted roads in the County and provide the map to vehicle operators using the best available technology
- Identify areas for vehicle height monitoring enforcement
- Recommend a limit on the overall number of vehicle height monitoring systems that may be placed in the County
- Recommend certain types of vehicles which should be exempt from enforcement by a vehicle height monitoring system
- Make recommendations for the development and implementation of a process for a vehicle owner to easily contest an erroneously issued citation without the necessity of a court hearing

- Make recommendations for the development of a process for the owner of a vehicle to identify and transfer liability to the operator of a vehicle responsible for the violation
- Evaluate existing signage and identifying locations where signage can be improved

Several recommendations outlined in this report will inform the forthcoming local legislative proposal. The provisions of the enabling State legislation allow the County to enact the local legislation no sooner than October 1, 2021. Other recommendations are intended to guide future administrative policies relating to the implementation and ongoing management of a vehicle height monitoring system program in Baltimore County.

RTTWG RECOMMENDATIONS

SECTION 1: BALTIMORE COUNTY OFFICIAL TRUCK ROUTE MAP

RECOMMENDATION 1A

Adopt the route map created by the RTTWG as Baltimore County’s official truck route map, and utilize the map to promote behavioral change.

The RTTWG was given two charges related to mapping – the evaluation of existing truck routes, and the development of a map of restricted roads in the County to be provided to vehicle operators using the best available technology. This work began with a review of the County’s current “restricted routes” – roadway segments where trucks are restricted from traveling from one end to the other without making a pickup or delivery along the roadway, unless travel along the roadway is necessary to reach a pickup or delivery location.

During this review, the work group found no significant issues with the County’s existing framework. Instead of embarking on a comprehensive overhaul of the current restricted routes, the RTTWG recommends a focus on enhanced enforcement and clear communication of restrictions. The installation of vehicle height monitoring systems, detailed in later sections, is the recommended primary method of enhanced enforcement.

Although the work group’s mandate to develop a map was initially limited to the existing restricted routes, the RTTWG is recommending the County build out the provided map in a way that guides vehicle operators away from areas of concern by identifying the “preferred routes” that drivers should instead be using. While these routes will hold no binding legal designation, their inclusion alongside the existing restricted routes creates a completed map that clearly communicates where trucks should and should not be traveling.

The RTTWG recommends making this completed map of restricted routes and the work group’s suggested preferred routes the official truck route map for Baltimore County.

RECOMMENDATION 1B

Make the route map publicly available in a GIS format and ensure the map is available for real time use.

In fulfilling its charge to make the route map available using the best available technology, RTTWG support staff have created a GIS version of the recommended map. The work group recommends making this map easily locatable on the County website and encourages the County to make the data publicly available in a manner that allows the map to be utilized in a real time format by vehicle operators.

Support staff have advised that these goals can be accomplished by uploading the route map data to the Baltimore County Government Open Data Portal. This will allow the data to be shared through portals such as the Waze Connected Citizen program, ultimately allowing navigation sites like Waze and Google Maps to display the map in a real time format.

The work group also encourages the Department of Public Works and Transportation’s Bureau of Traffic Engineering and Transportation Planning to frequently consult with the Department’s GIS staff to ensure the County’s data portal is up to date and accurate.

RECOMMENDATION 1C

Work with industry representatives to build awareness of the route map among vehicle operators.

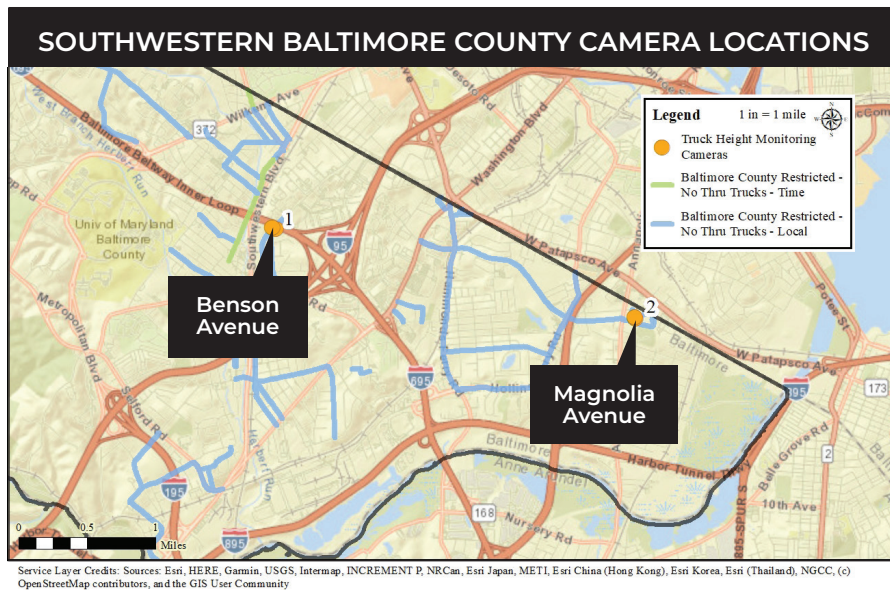
The overall goal of establishing a vehicle height monitoring program is to reduce high volumes of truck traffic in residential areas through the promotion of behavioral change among vehicle operators. In order to further encourage this behavior change, the RTTWG recommends continued collaboration between Baltimore County and trucking industry representatives to build awareness of the newly adopted route map.

SECTION 2: CAMERA LOCATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 2A

Place vehicle height monitoring systems at the RTTWG’s designated locations, utilize special circumstances at the Wise Avenue and Benson Avenue locations, and continue studying the issues at the Dundalk Avenue/Sollers Point Road traffic circle.

The RTTWG has identified **seven restricted roadways** that are ideal for enforcement through vehicle height monitoring. Cameras should be set to take a photo of the front of the vehicle to capture an image of the license plate. Unless otherwise noted, the RTTWG is recommending two camera placements per location to capture traffic coming from both directions. All cameras are recommended to be set at a height of twelve feet to capture large commercial vehicles, with the exception of the Benson Avenue location (explained below).



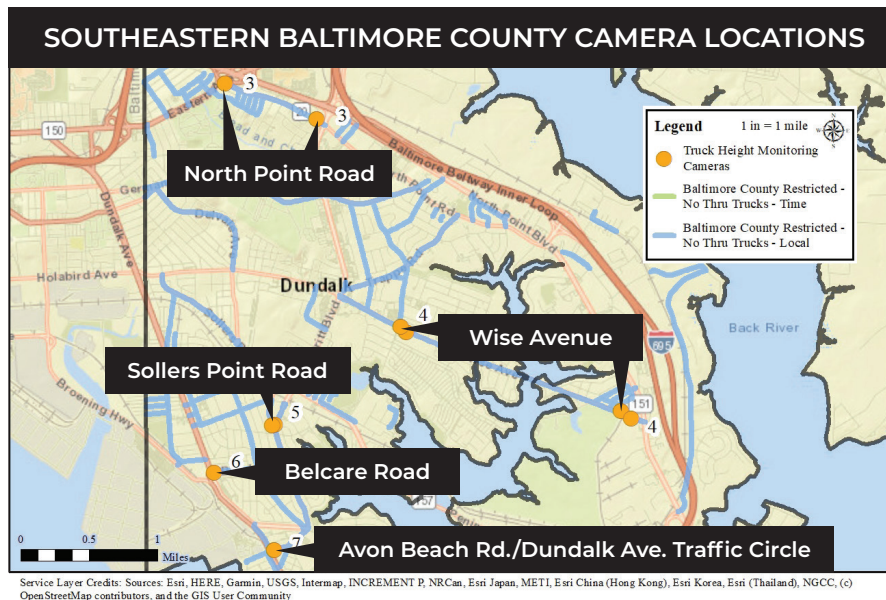
1. Benson Avenue

The RTTWG recommends that two cameras be placed on either side of the northern segment of Benson Avenue, south of the I-695 bridge over Benson Avenue and north of the intersection of Arbutus and Benson Avenue. Benson Avenue faces a unique set of challenges. While large tractor trailers create the main issues at the other identified locations, Benson Avenue regularly has a significant volume of package delivery vehicles traveling on the street without making a local delivery. The vehicle height monitoring cameras utilized by Baltimore City are set at twelve feet, which would capture a tractor trailer but is not low enough to flag a package delivery vehicle.

Therefore, the RTTWG recommends that the Benson Avenue cameras should be triggered by a vehicle of at least **ten feet**, while all other locations should be set at **twelve feet**.

2. Magnolia Avenue

The RTTWG recommends that two cameras be placed on either side of Magnolia Avenue, between the intersection of Lilac Avenue and Magnolia Avenue and the City line.



3. North Point Road

The RTTWG recommends that two cameras be placed on either end of North Point Road. One will be located on the southern side of North Point Road just after the off ramp from Eastern Avenue and will face northwest. The second camera will be placed on the north side of North Point Road just after the off ramp from Merritt Boulevard and will face southeast.

4. Wise Avenue

The RTTWG recommends that four cameras be placed on Wise Avenue. Two will be placed on either side of the road near where Wise Avenue and Gray's Road intersect. The other two will be placed on either side of the road where Lynch Road and Wise Avenue intersect.

The RTTWG found truck traffic along Wise Avenue a particularly challenging issue to address. While this roadway faces an extremely high volume of trucks illegally traveling along this street, there is also a high volume of trucks legally using portions of this roadway to make local pickups or deliveries at nearby sites. The ability of vehicle operators to prove their legal use of restricted roadways through a citation appeals process (detailed in Section 5) is a critical piece of a properly functioning vehicle height monitoring program. However, sorting through the immense volume of vehicles which travel along Wise Avenue would create a significant administrative burden for the County. The RTTWG believes that the most logical solution for this location is a double set of cameras – two in each direction for a total of four camera placements. Vehicle operators would only receive a citation if they travel directly from the intersection with Grays Road to the intersection with Lynch Road without stopping. Given the number of local deliveries made on a daily basis along Wise Avenue, this double camera set up would help filter out legitimate deliveries so that vehicles are only being cited for traveling ceaselessly through the restricted route.

5. Sollers Point Road

The RTTWG recommends that two cameras be placed on either side of Sollers Point Road south of the fork of Sollers Point Road and Merritt Boulevard.

6. Belcare Road

The RTTWG recommends one camera be placed on the south side of Belclare Road between the intersection of Belclare Road and Dundalk Avenue and the intersection of Belclare Road and Dunran Road. The camera will face west.

As traffic flow at this location is only problematic for vehicles traveling east from the intersection of Belclare Road and Dundalk Avenue, the RTTWG is only recommending one camera at this location.

7. Avon Beach Road/Dundalk Avenue Traffic Circle

The RTTWG recommends that one camera be placed on the south side of Avon Beach Road near the intersection of Avon Beach Road and Henry Street. The camera will face west.

This location presents unique problems, with multiple travel routes that lead to trucks accidentally using the residential portion of Dundalk Avenue (east of the traffic circle intersecting with Sollers Point Road) to turn around after mistakenly entering this community.

The RTTWG recommends that a single camera be placed along Avon Beach Road for traffic traveling east from the intersection with Broening Highway. This would help to address one of the routes that trucks frequently use to reach the traffic circle.

However, the vehicles that enter the traffic circle traveling east on Dundalk Avenue are more difficult to address. Neither portion of Dundalk Avenue is restricted, precluding the work group from recommending a camera location along this road. In the absence of a clear solution, the RTTWG is recommending that the County's Department of Public Works and Transportation investigate this area and gather more information on potential solutions (changes in restrictions, updated signage, etc.)

RECOMMENDATION 2B

At the identified locations, utilize best practices in signage language and placement to ensure the restricted routes with camera enforcement are clearly identified.

The RTTWG recommends clarity in signage language and placement to clearly notify vehicle operators of vehicle height camera locations. Restricted route signs at the chosen locations should have a section on the bottom of the sign that clearly reads "photo enforced." This is standard language for automatic enforcement and is the same phrase Baltimore City uses to notify drivers of upcoming vehicle height monitoring cameras.

SECTION 3: LIMIT ON THE NUMBER OF CAMERAS

RECOMMENDATION 3

Enact legislation allowing Baltimore County to operate no more than seven vehicle height monitoring cameras at a single time.

The RTTWG's seven recommended roadways for vehicle height monitoring enforcement create **fourteen total potential camera placements**:

- Four of the roadways will require two camera placements per location
- Two of the roadways only require one camera placement per location
- One location requires four total camera placements

Baltimore City's vehicle height monitoring program utilizes a two-to-one ratio for camera placements – the jurisdiction has twelve total camera placements, and is limited by local statute to six total cameras. The RTTWG recommends that the County adopts this same ratio by enacting a **limit of seven total cameras**. The cameras are mobile, which will allow them to be moved to the additional identified locations as needed.

SECTION 4: EXEMPTED VEHICLES

RECOMMENDATION 4

Exempt certain vehicles from vehicle height monitoring enforcement and implement a review process similar to current processes for speed cameras and red light cameras.

Under the enabling State legislation, the RTTWG was tasked with recommending certain types of vehicles which should be exempt from vehicle height monitoring enforcement. The RTTWG recommends the following vehicles for exemption:

- School buses
- Public transit vehicles
- Emergency vehicles
- Trash and recycling trucks
- Utility and home energy vehicles
- Household goods moving companies

These vehicle categories were chosen because these vehicles frequently have legitimate reasons to be traveling in residential communities. The County's current review processes for exempting vehicles flagged by speed cameras and red light cameras from receiving citations involve a manual review by the Police Department. The Department can reject a citation for a number of reasons, including a determination that the flagged vehicle falls into certain vehicle categories. This review prevents a citation from ever being sent to the owner of a vehicle if they fall into those specified categories. The RTTWG recommends the Police Department utilize a similar manual review process for vehicles flagged by vehicle height monitoring systems, and ensure that the above mentioned vehicle categories are built into the list of reasons a citation can be manually rejected.

SECTION 5: CITATION PROCESS

RECOMMENDATION 5A

Create a citation appeals process mimicking what is currently in place for speed camera citations and incorporate that process into the existing Speed Camera Ombudsman Program.

The enabling State legislation asks the RTTWG to make recommendations related to the development and implementation of a process for a vehicle owner to easily contest an erroneously issued citation without the necessity of a court hearing.

This is a particularly important element of the vehicle height monitoring program given the need to account for trucks legally traveling along restricted routes. It is only illegal for a truck to travel on a restricted route if the vehicle uses the roadway as a through route – traveling from one end of the route to the other without stopping. Trucks that have a local delivery or pickup along the roadway or at a nearby location are permitted to travel along the part of the restricted route necessary to reach their destination. This means that there will undoubtedly be a significant amount of commercial vehicles that receive vehicle height citations whose owners and/or operators will need an opportunity to contest those citations.

Baltimore County's existing Speed Camera Ombudsman Program provides those that receive a speed camera citation an opportunity to contest their citation. The RTTWG recommends building out this existing program to incorporate the management of vehicle height citation appeals.

RECOMMENDATION 5B

Ensure that the citation process includes procedures for citation appeals and liability transfers that are easy for vehicle operators and owners to utilize.

In building out the vehicle height monitoring program, the RTTWG recommends the County take the necessary steps to ensure that the process of appealing a citation is simple and accessible for vehicle operators. The appeals process should be made easy to find on the County's website, and the physical citation should include clear directions to that website. The website should make clear what information is required of those submitting an appeal (name, citation number, vehicle tag, etc.). Additionally, the work group recommends that the website include examples of documentation that a vehicle operator could provide to prove that they have a legitimate reason for traveling on a restricted route. The County should work with trucking industry representatives to identify the appropriate example documents.

This framework should also apply for the process of transferring liability. The enabling State legislation requires the RTTWG to make recommendations related to establishing a process for the owner of a vehicle to identify and transfer liability to the operator of a vehicle responsible for the violation. This liability process should also be detailed on the physical citation, easily locatable online and clear in the information required for transfer.

Recommendation 5C

Move the speed camera citation review request form to an online form and create similar online forms for the vehicle height monitoring citation review process and the liability transfer process.

In addition to ensuring that the citation review and liability transfer processes are user friendly, the RTTWG also recommends taking steps to streamline the management of those processes. Under the County's current Speed Camera Ombudsman Program, an individual requesting a citation review must fill out a PDF, which is then emailed to the program. At the RTTWG's seventh meeting, held on May 14, 2021, a representative of the Ombudsman program stated that moving this process to an online form would significantly streamline the processing of the citation review requests. Should the County carry out the RTTWG's recommendation to fold management of vehicle height citation appeals into the existing Ombudsman program, the work group does not want to create a further administrative burden through the continuation of outdated online practices.

Therefore, the RTTWG is recommending that the Office of Information Technology assist the Ombudsman program in the creation of an online form for the existing speed camera citation appeal process, and that similar forms be created for the vehicle height monitoring citation review process and the liability transfer process.

SECTION 6: SIGNAGE

Recommendation 6A

Update Baltimore County's signage relating to restricted truck routes to note that the routes are restricted to vehicles over five tons, replacing the current three quarters of a ton signage.

Baltimore County's current restricted routes contain signage indicating that no vehicles that weigh over three quarters of a ton may use the roadway as a through route. These signs are problematic because they do not accurately represent what Baltimore County enforces at these locations. Maryland State law defines a commercial motor vehicle as one that is over five tons. Furthermore, three quarters of a ton is lighter than the average pickup truck or SUV, making it a nonsensical threshold for restricted route traffic. Some work group members argued that the existing signage sends an unclear message to vehicle operators and presents an inconsistency in the enforcement process. As such, a majority of the RTTWG members recommend the County change the signage at restricted route locations from three quarters of a ton to five tons.

This was not a unanimous recommendation by the work group. Opposition to this recommendation came out of concern that the updated signage would create confusion among constituents. Without context, it may appear that the County is creating a much less restrictive framework. Although the majority of the work group felt that the advantages of this recommendation outweighed the potential concerns, there was general consensus that these concerns were valid.

RECOMMENDATION 6B

Create a public information campaign to convey the reason for the change from ¾ ton signage to 5 ton signage.

As referenced in Recommendation 6A, the RTTWG recognizes the concerns associated with the recommended change from three quarters of a ton signage to five ton signage. In order to ensure that constituents receive proper context on the reason for the change, the RTTWG recommends a coordinated public outreach effort on the matter. This outreach would ideally be led by the County Executive's office in coordination with the Department of Public Works and Transportation, the Police Department and members of the Baltimore County Council.

RECOMMENDATION 6C

Use the replacement of the existing signage as an opportunity for the County to assess the signage placement and needs at each restricted roadway.

The enabling State legislation asks the RTTWG to evaluate existing signage and identify locations where signage can be improved. While Recommendation 6A covers the concept of "evaluating existing signage" in a broad sense, work group members felt it was also important to examine signage locations on an individual level. Should the County move forward with the signage replacement recommendation put forth in Recommendation 6A, the RTTWG is recommending that the Department of Public Works and Transportation use each signage replacement site visit as an opportunity to assess the placement and visibility of signage at each location.

RECOMMENDATION 6D

Work to address existing signage issues identified by the work group.

While Recommendation 6C generally covers the charge of identifying locations where signage can be improved, the RTTWG has flagged two specific locations in southeast Baltimore County where local stakeholders have already cited specific signage concerns.

Constituents have flagged the need for better signage leading to the Tradepoint Atlantic site in Sparrows Point. Trucks traveling on North Point Boulevard bound for the Tradepoint Atlantic campus frequently make accidental turns onto Bethlehem Boulevard, routing them through the residential community of Edgemere. Baltimore County has been working with the State Highway Administration to enhance signage at this location, but it is unclear if the updates made to date have fully addressed the issue. Baltimore County should continue to rely on community input to assess the ongoing needs at the location.

Additionally, the work group has flagged an issue for trucks traveling east on Belclare Road through the intersection with Dundalk Avenue. The restricted portion of Belclare Road begins at this intersection, with the only signage indicating this restriction placed on the east side of the intersection. Arguably, a vehicle operator would not be able to see this sign until they are all the way through the intersection, leaving drivers no time to avoid this restricted residential roadway.

Additional west-facing signage at a more easily viewable location would create awareness for drivers of the restricted route before they are all the way through the intersection. This signage could hang alongside the traffic lights, not unlike signage dictating "no left turns" or "do not block crosswalk." Alternatively, signage could be placed on the median in the middle of the intersection or at the west side of the intersection to indicate an upcoming restricted route.

The RTTWG recommends a thorough examination of these two locations to address the signage concerns that are contributing to the issue of residential truck traffic.

SECTION 7: RESOURCES

Recommendation 7

Ensure that County agencies are provided the budgetary resources necessary to carry out the work group's recommendations.

Although the enabling state legislation did not task the RTTWG with making any specific recommendations related to funding, this topic was frequently discussed by the work group. Carrying out the above recommendations will create new costs for several County agencies, including but not limited to:

- The procurement of vehicle height monitoring systems
- The replacement of existing signage and procurement of additional signage where necessary
- Staffing needs associated with the vehicle height monitoring program within the Department of Public Works and Transportation, the Police Department and the Office of Budget and Finance (which oversees the existing Speed Camera Ombudsman Program)

The RTTWG recommends that the County Executive and County Council take these needs into consideration when composing the County's annual budget in upcoming fiscal years.

CLOSING

Having completed its work, the RTTWG now turns these recommendations over to the County Executive and the County Council to collaboratively draft, pass, and enact the required local legislation needed to establish and implement a vehicle height monitoring program.

The RTTWG's members and support staff are proud of the work done over the past year. Adoption of these recommendations will improve the quality of life for Baltimore County residents by providing the County with a framework to address residential truck traffic in a thoughtful, collaborative manner.