



# Sabra, Wang & Associates, Inc.

ENGINEERS • PLANNERS • ANALYSTS

April 25, 2014

Mr. Richard Charnovich  
Manager, Town of Somerset  
4510 Cumberland Avenue  
Chevy Chase, MD 20815

## Re: Final Technical Memorandum

Dear Mr. Charnovich:

Sabra, Wang and Associates (SWA) has concluded its traffic review for the Town of Somerset and is pleased to produce the final observations and recommendations noted below. These recommendations have been based on field observations; prior studies; available public/private traffic data; speed data from Somerset's radar; results from an Origin-Destination Study; geolocation of all signs and traffic calming devices; an evaluation of various traffic concerns submitted by residents/Council; and resident testimony from a public meeting. Various supporting documentation has been produced for this effort and these have been appended to this memorandum.

### *Observations:*

- In general, speeding in excess of the Town-wide posted speed limit of 20 mph is minimal. While there are a few streets with a large percentage of speeders exceeding the speed limit, these roads are lightly traveled.
- Regarding stop sign compliance, field observations revealed instances of non-compliance; however, all stop signs were visible and stop bars clearly marked. Ample sight distance existed for all approaches.
- Opportunity exists for sign consolidation (i.e. combining adjacent signs onto a single pole) at approximately 15 locations within the Town.
- Dorset Road carries approximately 20% to 45% cut through traffic in the AM and PM peak hours; however, the cut-through volumes are currently insufficient, nominally and percentage-wise, to trigger County review of turn restrictions on Wisconsin Ave and Little Falls Parkway. This is true during and excluding the times that public schools are in session. Other entrances to Somerset see very little cut through traffic.
- Dorset Road has a traffic calming device approximate every 350' for its entire length; it is unlikely that additional devices will have a material impact on travel speeds or deterring cut through drivers.
- The Town of Somerset is adjacent to two high-density urban areas that are likely to see increased growth – the Bethesda CBD and the Friendship Heights area. Wisconsin Ave carries 32,000 vehicles per day; River Road carries 22,000 vehicles per day; and Little Falls Parkway carries about 20,000 vehicles per day. Despite these large volumes, and the proximity to two urban hubs, Dorset Road carries less than 3,000 vehicles per day (which *includes* traffic from Somerset residents).
- The streets of Somerset have been designed to maximize traffic calming. With narrow roadway widths, a dense and close-in tree canopy, multiple crosswalks, sidewalks, speed humps/bumps, on-street parking, and multiple all-way stop control, Somerset has created a driving environment that produces visual and tactile cues to let drivers know there are other competing travel modes and/or vulnerable road users. These cues encourage cautious driving behavior, and hence, slower speeds.

*Recommendations:*

Based on the observations above, Sabra Wang recommends the following:

- Add sidewalk wherever feasible. Somerset's public right-of-way is substantially wider than the 22' typical paved roadway width. Adding sidewalk may require removing trees or going around them (potentially onto private property).
- Add more high visibility "ladder style" crosswalks.
- Maintain the tree canopy. An expansive tree canopy produces a tunnel effect that serves to slow drivers.
- Other visual cues exist that are non-compliant with Maryland's MUTCD, but would still convey to drivers the residential quality of the Town and the need to remain vigilant. An example of such a cue would be leaving bicycles and children's play toys in front yards, or installing small signs placed roadside that indicate that children may be present (e.g. little fluorescent-green plastic figurines with flags that convey the message to "slow" are sometimes used by residents to calm traffic). The latter option may work on Uppingham, between Greystone and Trent.
- Remain active in County planning and zoning. Land near Somerset is in high demand and is in close proximity to high-quality transit; accordingly it is ripe for development and/or upzoning (increase in density over existing zoning). Watch for zoning changes nearby, because that could add traffic to Somerset's streets. New commercial or residential projects in close proximity to Somerset could have an impact on Dorset Road traffic. Somerset should be aware of the redevelopment of the Westwood shopping center and the update of the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan, as well as other nearby County planning/zoning efforts.
- If a significant amount of new construction comes online, then Somerset should consider an additional origin-destination study. If the Town wants to pursue turn restrictions on Dorset, SHA would require looking at the impact the restrictions on adjacent intersections. In addition, Somerset should evaluate how turn restrictions on Dorset would impact the traffic on other lower-volume Town streets.

If you have any comments or questions about this memorandum or any of the supporting documentation, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

**SABRA, WANG & ASSOCIATES, INC.**

Bryon White, P.E., PTOE  
Project Manager

