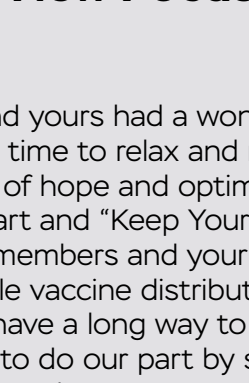


from the desk of

TIM SMITH
ADMINISTRATOR



New Year, New Day, New Focus, Same Mission

Happy New Year! I hope you and yours had a wonderful holiday and that you took some time to relax and rejuvenate. As we begin 2021 with a feeling of hope and optimism, don't forget to continue to do your part and "Keep Your Guard Up" to protect yourself, your family members and your MDOT SHA family from COVID-19. While vaccine distribution has begun, it looks like we may still have a long way to go, and it's up to each and every one of us to do our part by staying at home if we can, combining trips to the store, wearing a mask, washing our hands, staying six feet apart and avoiding crowds and large family gatherings. We can't give up now! Make good decisions.

A new year also brings new opportunities to move onward and upward as an agency – and we are continuing to do just that with our Northbound Strategic Plan. During the fall, Northbound Ten teams were formed for each of the 10 initiatives, the teams have begun meeting and each team has developed a Road Map, which outlines the team's mission, one-year and five-year goals, their progress and action steps to reach those goals, and the challenges and opportunities presented while undertaking the initiative.

The first Northbound Ten team that I'd like to highlight is the team working on "Initiate a Vision Zero Plan." Under the leadership of Navigator Kandese Holford (and Assistant Chief, Regional and Intermodal Planning Division and Bicycle & Pedestrian Coordinator), this team's mission is to develop a plan that will better equip the public to make better choices in hopes of decreasing road-related fatalities. The Plan intends to go beyond data and engineering by encouraging context driven roadway design and collaboration with our partners to promote safety education. All our safety products, tools, and initiatives will be coordinated under one umbrella to make Maryland's roadways safer and create comprehensive approaches that are responsive to the safety needs and concerns expressed by communities and customers using all modes of transportation.

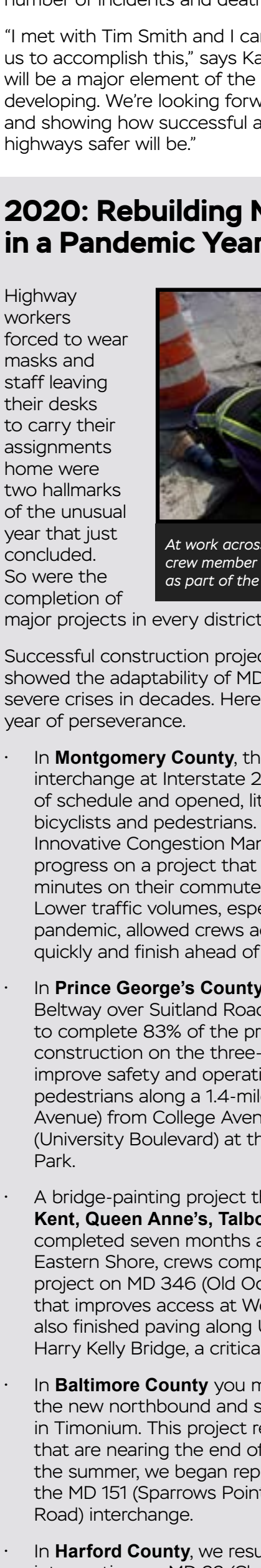
The Vision Zero team has already set its one- and five-year goals, is updating a map that shows where Context Driven treatments and initiatives are taking place, has created a Vision Zero Initiative tracking document for parallel and supporting MDOT SHA efforts, has discovered some opportunities and challenges, and has set action steps for its next check-in with the Northbound Ten Council.

I can't tell you how pleased I am already to see the progress being made on The Northbound Ten. We are focusing on progress, not perfection. We'll continue to highlight The Northbound Ten initiatives in upcoming newsletters. Thank you to those of you who are participating on a team and keep up the good work! As I've mentioned before, take the time to look for the opportunities YOU can take to help MDOT SHA move us from good to great.

Thanks for your efforts as we head northbound together!

Pedestrian Improvements Advance in New Year

The creators of Northbound, the ambitious new plan that MDOT SHA management introduced in 2020, made sure to aid a group who builders of major roads must not forget – those who set out tentatively on two feet and cross streets with traffic that can be light or threatening.



OPPE Bicycle & Pedestrian Coordinator Kandese Holford

"Everyone's a pedestrian at some point," Kandese Holford, MDOT SHA's new bicycle and pedestrian coordinator, reminds us.

In the year ahead Kandese, who serves as assistant chief of the Regional and Intermodal Planning Division (RIPD) and Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator, will work with the Office of Traffic and Safety (OOTS), partners at the Maryland Highway Safety

Office (MHSO) and others throughout the State to develop MDOT SHA's first Pedestrian Safety Action Plan (PSAP). It will protect all roadway users by applying a Context Driven approach, following the engineering primer that guides project designs in different landscapes (urban, rural, and more). It will be one of the first products under the upcoming MDOT SHA Vision Zero Plan, which places all our safety products, tools, and initiatives under one umbrella.

Sometimes danger to pedestrians leads MDOT SHA to fast track the improvement of road features. After a teenager lost his life when he fell off his bicycle into traffic on MD 187 (Old Georgetown Road), MDOT SHA used tools from the Context Driven toolkit, dedicating a bicycle lane, and painting it bright green to make cyclists more visible and reduce the chance of further accidents.

MDOT SHA staff actively plan initiatives to prevent incidents that jeopardize safety.

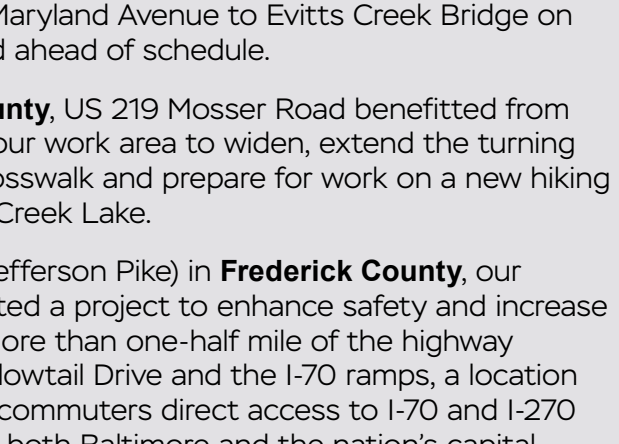
One example: Over the last year, Kandese has served as MDOT SHA's liaison to local governments for MDOT SHA District 3's design and construction of pedestrian safety improvements to enhance Wheaton Triangle. The Montgomery County neighborhood is a densely populated, mixed-use urban center where shoppers and strollers cross any of three heavily traveled State highways (MD 193, MD 586, and MD 97) during peak hours. MDOT SHA, in partnership with MCDOT, upgraded existing crosswalks and installed new ones, making them high-visibility crosswalks where pedestrians are more easily spotted by drivers. They also reduced speed limits, added leading pedestrian intervals to existing signals, and installed a pedestrian beacon. Efforts like these are part of comprehensive Statewide planning efforts like PSAP and Vision Zero Plan.

The Year 2021 will feature additional planning to drive down the number of incidents and deaths.

"I met with Tim Smith and I can tell you that he really wants us to accomplish this," says Kandese. "Perfecting that PSAP will be a major element of the larger Vision Zero plan we're developing. We're looking forward to strategizing long term and showing how successful a five-year plan to make our highways safer will be."

2020: Rebuilding Maryland's Highways in a Pandemic Year

Highway workers forced to wear masks and staff leaving their desks to carry their assignments were two hallmarks of the unusual year that just concluded. So were the completion of major projects in every district across Maryland.



At work across the State: Near North Woods Trail, a crew member installed a detectable warning surface as part of the MD 30 Business project in Hampstead.

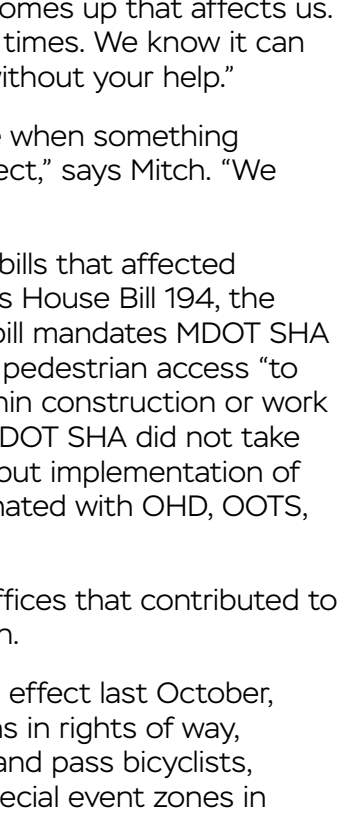
Successful construction projects during a year of COVID-19 showed the adaptability of MDOT SHA to one of the most severe crises in decades. Here are project highlights from a year of perseverance.

- In **Montgomery County**, the new \$124 million Watkins Mill interchange at Interstate 270 came in six months ahead of schedule and opened, literally, to cheers from motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians. Along I-270, crews working our Innovative Congestion Management Plan made significant progress on a project that will save motorists up to 30 minutes on their commutes between Frederick and I-495. The pandemic, allowed crews across the State to work more quickly and finish ahead of schedule.
- In **Prince George's County**, crews on the Capital Beltway over Suitland Road utilized lower traffic volumes to complete 83% of the project. MDOT SHA began construction on the three-year, \$29 million project to improve safety and operations for motorists, bicyclist and pedestrians along a 1.4-mile stretch of US 1 (Baltimore Avenue) from College Avenue/Regents Drive to MD 193 (University Boulevard) at the University of Maryland College Park.
- A bridge-painting project that included 11 bridges in **Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot and Caroline counties** was completed seven months ahead of schedule. Also on the Eastern Shore, crews completed a safety-enhancement project on MD 346 (Old Ocean City Boulevard) in Berlin that improves access at Worcester County Hospital. We also finished paving along US 50 from Herring Creek to the Harry Kelly Bridge, a critical connection for beach traffic.
- In **Baltimore County** you may have noticed our work on the new northbound and southbound I-83 dual bridges in Timonium. This project replaces the 70-year-old bridges that are nearing the end of their useful service life. During the summer, we began replacing three aged bridges within the MD 151 (Sparrows Point Boulevard) and MD 151B (Wharf Road) interchange.
- In **Harford County**, we resurfaced and widened the intersection on MD 22 (Churchville Road) between MD 136 (Calvary Road) and Prospect Mill Road around Churchville.
- In **Anne Arundel County**, we improved safety on West Street in Annapolis, activating one of the state's two specialized pedestrian beacons, located in front of the new Michael E. Busch Annapolis Library, named for the late Maryland speaker of the House of Delegates.
- In **Calvert County**, motorists no doubt noticed that the \$47 million MD 2/4 widening project is now complete. It was part of Governor Larry Hogan's \$1.97 billion investment in Maryland highways and bridges.
- In **Washington County**, crews working on Phase 1 of the bridge on I-70 over MD 65 (Sharpsburg Pike) near CSX tracks made significant progress with additional shift hours and additional lane closures. This project was identified by Governor Larry Hogan as one of 69 structurally deficient bridges needing replacement.
- In **Allegany County**, the \$5.9 million resurfacing and safety project from Maryland Avenue to Evitts Creek Bridge on I-68 advanced ahead of schedule.
- In **Garrett County**, US 219 Mosser Road benefitted from less traffic in our work area to widen, extend the turning lane, add a crosswalk and prepare for work on a new hiking trail for Deep Creek Lake.
- On MD 180 (Jefferson Pike) in **Frederick County**, our crews completed a project to enhance safety and increase capacity on more than one-half mile of the highway between Swallowtail Drive and the I-70 ramps, a location that provides commuters direct access to I-70 and I-270 and access to both Baltimore and the nation's capital. Another key route for commuters we are making progress on is the \$86 million I-270 and MD 85 (Buckeystown Pike) interchange project. This interchange reconfiguration project is replacing two poorly rated bridges, built in 1954, on I-270 over MD 85.
- In **Howard County**, significant headway was made on the second phase of our \$127 million MD 32 widening project that stretches from Linden Church Road to I-70, a span of 6.6 miles. The project will expand the highway from two lanes to four, with shoulders and a median.
- In **Carroll County** we made significant progress on the Hampstead Streetscape project. This project targets two miles of MD 30 Business (Main Street) between North Woods Trail and Farmwoods Lane.

Are You a SME? 2021 Legislative Session Beckons

If you're a subject matter expert, the Office of Policy and Research has a special request: Please pick up the phone.

The 2021 Maryland General Assembly will soon convene in an uncertain mood brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, but one thing is certain: Legislators will consider bills affecting the work that we do on the State's roads. And if we want to guide members of the House and Senate during hearings and markups, we need to provide details that make our case.



That's where you come in, say Deputy Director for Policy & Governmental Relations Sam Kahl and Legislative Affairs Manager Mitch Baldwin.

"We send hundreds of requests each year for senior management and SMEs to review things," says Sam. "It's critical for us to weigh in when a bill comes up that affects us. That might lead us to call you several times. We know it can get tiresome. But we can't weigh in without your help."

"There may be a 'fire drill,' an instance when something suddenly happens that we didn't expect," says Mitch. "We appreciate your help."

Last year's legislature passed several bills that affected the work of MDOT SHA. An example is House Bill 194, the Pedestrian Access Act of 2020. The bill mandates MDOT SHA to adopt several measures governing pedestrian access "to the maximum extent practicable" within construction or work zones on MDOT SHA rights of way. MDOT SHA did not take an official position on the legislation, but implementation of the bill is underway and being coordinated with OHM, OOTS, district access managers and OPR.

"Our team really appreciated all the offices that contributed to this, it was not an easy lift," says Mitch.

Additional legislation, which went into effect last October, covered penalties for commercial signs in rights of way, instructions to drivers who overtake and pass bicyclists, addenda to prohibitions governing special event zones in Worcester County, and regulations about collecting fines from speed monitoring systems on Indian Head Highway in Prince George's County.



PHOTO OF THE MONTH

Last year MDOT SHA triumphed in the face of a pandemic. Take a look at our 2020 Year In Review video [here](#).