DEPARTMENT OF
DEVELOPMENT REVIEW AND PERMITTING

Worcester County

ZONING DIVISION	GOVERNMENT CENTER	ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION
BUILDING DIVISION	ONE WEST MARKET STREET, ROOM 1201	CUSTOMER SERVICE DIVISION
DATA RESEARCH DIVISION	SNOW HILL, MARYLAND 21863	TECHNICAL SERVICES DIVISION

TEL:410.632.1200 / FAX: 410.632.3008

http://www.co.worcester.md.us/departments/drp

MEMORANDUM

TO: Weston S. Young, Chief Administrative Officer
FROM: Jennifer K. Keener, AICP, Director
DATE: September 29, 2025
RE: Comprehensive Plan Joint Work Session
****

Topic: Community Facilities Chapter, Economic Development/ Tourism Chapter and Transportation Chapter review

Background: These chapters were informed with direct input from a variety of County departments and agencies, including the Fire Marshal, Sheriff's Office, Recreation and Parks, Library, Health Department, Economic Development/ Tourism, Public Works and Environmental Programs. We appreciate the time, effort and data that staff have provided to develop these chapters.

Action requested: Feedback on the draft chapters.

Please note that any chapter language and maps are still in draft format and may be modified before the final draft plan is consolidated.

The public may view and comment upon any of the working draft chapters from our website:
https://www.co.worcester.md.us/comprehensive-plan

Citizens and Government Working Together

3. COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Community facilities and services are important elements for the County's health, safety, and welfare of its existing and future residents. This chapter helps guide facility and service establishments and programming to serve the County as efficiently as possible.

Goals and Objectives

1. Work with the State of Maryland to plan for future needs as the County grows, including emergency services, schools, and community facilities.
2. Partner with Worcester County Public Schools for essential services and schools with sufficient services demanded by the County's communities.
3. Look at opportunities to preserve and enhance the small-town character of the County through an increase in community and cultural activities.
4. Provide adequate public services, including health, safety, social, recreational, and waste disposal services to facilitate the County's desired amount and pattern of growth.

Government

The State of Maryland allows three different government structures that counties may adopt: Code Home Rule, Commissioner, and Charter. Worcester County is a Code Home Rule County. The County follows the following structure:

Structure of Government - Commissioners determine structure through local enactments.

Public Local Laws - Commissioners can enact, amend, or repeal local laws on a wide array of matters. Most powers granted Charter counties are also granted to Code counties. The General Assembly may still enact public local laws covering an entire class of Code counties, but not for one single Code county.

Bonding Authority - Commissioners authorize. No statutory maximum, but the General Assembly may establish a limit. Subject to local referendum if petitioned by 10% of voters.

Taxes (Caps, Credits) - General Assembly authorization required.

Impact Fees - Commissioners may establish.

Civil Infractions/Fines - Commissioners may enact subject to limitations.

Commissioner/Council Members - Determined through enactment of public local laws.

Police and Corrections Departments - The Corrections Department may be enacted by local Commissioners. Local Police Departments are approved by the General Assembly.

Government Structure

Worcester County is governed by a Board of County Commissioners elected from seven districts. Commissioners are elected by voters during the general election that's held every four years.

Departments

The County has the following local Government Departments:

- Administration
- Animal Control
- Board of Elections

3. COMMUNITY FACILITIES

- Boards and Committees
- Development Review & Permitting
- Economic Development
- Emergency Services
- Environmental Programs
- Fire Mashal's Office
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Jail
- Public Works
- Recreation and Parks
- Sherrif's Office
- State's Attorney
- Tourism
- Treasurer's Office

Worcester County Organization Chart
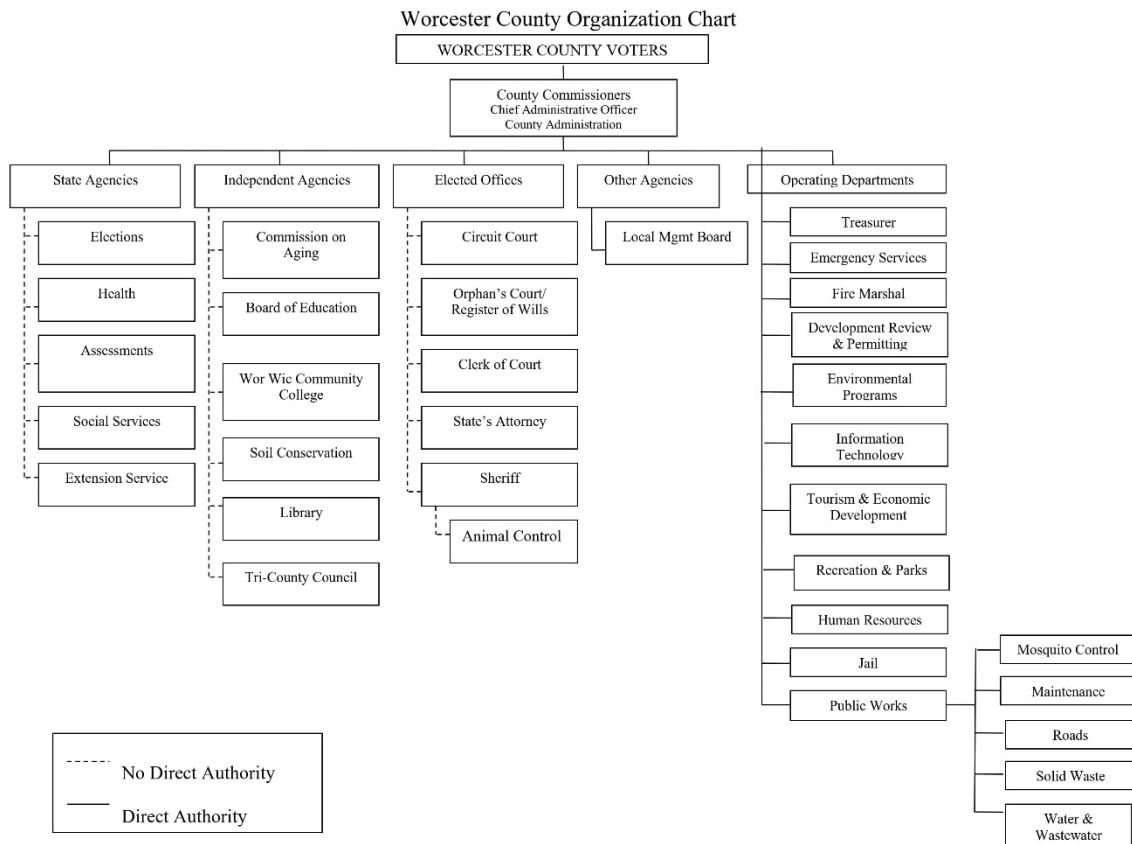
Public Safety

A variety of police protection and emergency services are provided by County, State, and municipal agencies and volunteer organizations. This section provides key information for these services.

3. COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Map 3-1, Public Safety Facilities, shows the locations of the facilities listed below.

Law Enforcement

Worcester County is committed to continuing to provide a safe environment for its residents. The Sheriff's office, located in Snow Hill, employs the Sheriff, Chief Deputy, two Captains, and five Lieutenants. In addition, the office provides judicial, field, and investigative services as well as supports the Worcester County School District with any needs through their School Resource Division.

Office of the Fire Marshal

The Worcester County Fire Marshal's Office is responsible for conducting fire investigations of all fires in the County where arson is suspected, the fire is undetermined by the fire department, and/or an injury or death has occurred. The Worcester County Fire Marshal's Office is the local enforcing agency for three municipalities and the County, including all provisions of the Maryland and Worcester County laws insofar as such powers and duties relate to fires, fire prevention, fire protection, fire inspections, fire investigations and explosive incidents.

The County Fire Marshal's Office is active in fire prevention, designing programs in fire education that are geared towards all ages of County citizens. The Worcester County Fire Marshal's Office is also responsible for the response and mitigation of all bio terrorism incidents in Worcester County.

The County Fire Marshal, Chief Deputy Fire Marshal, Deputy Fire Marshals, and Fire Investigators/Inspectors have the authority to enforce and perform the duties required under COMAR 29.06.01 (Maryland State Fire Prevention Code) and Code of Public Local Laws for Worcester County PS 1-201 & PS 1-401 (Worcester County Fire Prevention Code).

The County Fire Marshal's are deputized by the Maryland State Fire Marshal under the Annotated Code of Maryland, Public Safety Article 6, §6-304 and have the authority of Title 6, §6-305, §6-307, §6,309, §6-310, §6-312, §6-317, §6,318, §6-319 and §6-320 and the authority of a police officer when investigating fire related crimes under the Code of Public Local Laws for Worcester County PS 1-301(d), (**) the Annotated Code of Maryland, Public Safety Article, Title 3, Subtitle 1, § 3-101, & Title 3, Subtitle 2, § 3-201, Criminal Procedures Article, Title 2, Subtitle 2 § 2-208.4 and the Criminal Law Article, Title 4, Subtitle 2, § 4-201

Fire Departments located within the County include:

- Snow Hill Fire Department
- Berlin Fire Company
- Stockton Volunteer Fire Company
- Girdletree Volunteer Fire Company
- Pocomoke City Volunteer Fire Company
- Showell Volunteer Fire Department
- Newark Volunteer Fire Department
- Bishopville Volunteer Fire Department
- Ocean City Volunteer Fire Company
- Ocean Pines Fire Department

3. COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Parks and Recreation

Parks and recreation are critical to the quality of life in the County. Natural resources, open space, and recreational facilities add to the community's quality of life and make a positive contribution to the County's sustainability.

In 2023, the County approved a Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP), a five-year plan that identifies the location and recreational opportunities available across the County, how these parks and facilities are used, the proximity of these parks to the County's population, as well as the need for additional parks and facilities and where these facilities could be located to fill any gaps. The LPPRP serves as the basis for the County's participation in the State's Program Open Space (POS) program.

In addition to the Parks and Recreational facilities identified in this Plan, the LPPRP identifies other open space, parks and recreational facilities that are not owned by the County but contribute to the inventory of parks, open space and recreational facilities that County residents may use. The LPPRP is incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan by reference as a functional plan that provides more information and guidance to County officials about these facilities.

The County has numerous park and recreation facilities for the public to utilize. These facilities offer a variety of amenities and serve various areas of the County and its shore. The Couty will continue to maintain these facilities as well as identify needs and opportunities to update or expand the facilities as needed. **Map 3-2, Parks & Recreation** shows the locations of some of the main facilities listed below.

3. COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Park Name	Location	Acreage	Designation
Assateague Island National Seashore	6850 Gatehouse Rd, Berlin, MD 00152	8,476*	Nature/Beach
Bishopville Park	10602 Bishopville Rd, Bishopville, MD 21813	5.02	Neighborhood
Girdletree Park	5901 Boxiron Rd, Girdletree, MD 21829	3	Neighborhood
Greys Creek Nature Park	13240 Rollie Rd E, Bishopville, MD 21813	574	Nature
Herring Creek Nature Park	12500 Nature Park Dr, Ocean City, MD 21842	43.55	Nature
Homer Gudelsky Park	13055 Old Bridge Rd, Ocean City, MD 21842	0.97	Nature
Isle of Wight Park	13070 St Martins Neck Rd, Bishopville, MD 21813	12	Nature
John Walter Smith Park	6030 Public Landing Rd, Snow Hill, MD 21863	80	Regional
Newark Park	8332 Newark Rd, Newark, MD 21841	4.2	Neighborhood
Newtown Park	2001 Groton Rd, Pocomoke City, MD 21851	58	Regional
Northern Worcester Athletic Complex	9906 Buckingham Ln, Berlin, MD 21811	76	Regional
Public Landing	8303 Public Landing Rd, Snow Hill, MD 21863	8.7*	Beach
Showell Park	11281 Racetrack Rd, Berlin, MD 21811	21	Regional
Stockton Park	5520 Hursley Rd, Stockton, MD 21864	4	Neighborhood
Whaleyville Park	11723 Sheppards Crossing Rd, Whaleyville, MD 21872	1	Neighborhood
Worcester County Recreation Center	6030 Public Landing Rd, Snow Hill, MD 21863	1	Multipurpose Fitness Center

*Source: Worcester County Park GIS layer; * denotes that acreage values are calculated from this source using GIS analysis.*

Assateague Island National Seashore

Assateague Island National Seashore is a 37-mile-long island along the coast of Maryland and Virginia. Activities available to visitors include beaches, swimming, surfing, wildlife viewing, birding, crabbing, fishing and kayaking. Annually, the park sees over 1 million visitors.

Bishopville Park

Bishopville Park is a 5-acre neighborhood park located just outside of the community of Bishopville. Amenities include a grassy open area that can be used for both informal activities and organized recreation functions, a playground, and free Wi-Fi.

3. COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Girdletree Park

Girdletree Park is a neighborhood park in the Village of Girdletree (30 miles southwest of Ocean City). This 3-acre park includes a playground with two adjoining sections and a pavilion with grills and picnic tables.

Greys Creek Nature Park

Greys Creeks Nature Park is a 574-acre nature area located at the northeast tip of Worcester County and offers views of Assawoman Bay, Ocean City, and Fenwick Island, Delaware. The property conserves the natural habitat and contains upland coastal forest, non-tidal wetlands, and tidal saltwater wetlands. The park is currently not open to the public.

Herring Creek Nature Park

Herring Creek Nature Park is a 44-acre park located in western Ocean City. The park features a pavilion that is available for picnics and gatherings, as well as walking/jogging paths and bird watching stations.

Homer Gudelsky Park

Homer Gudelsky Park is located at the end of Route 707 in western Ocean City. This location offers access to Sinepuxent Bay and provides shore access for fishing.

Isle of Wight Park

Isle of Wight Park is a 12-acre nature park that's located south of Rt. 90 in Bishopville. Offered amenities include a canoe and kayak launch site, two piers, and picnic tables.

John Walter Smith Park

John Walter Smith Park is an 80-acre park that's located on Public Landing Road in Snow Hill. The park includes pavilions, a frisbee gold course, trails, courts, and an athletic field. This location is also where Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks programming and maintenance operations are administered.

Newark Park

Newark Neighborhood Park is a 4-acre park located in the community of Newark, between the towns of Snow Hill and Berlin. This park serves as a rural neighborhood park for the citizens of the area to enjoy. The park offers a pavilion, playground, and volleyball pit.

Newton Park

Newtown Park is a 58-acre park located in Pocomoke, serving as an athletic complex to citizens in the southern end of the County. Amenities include sport fields, a pavilion, a walking and biking trail, a fishing pond, and a playground.

Northern Worcester Athletic Complex

The Northern Worcester Athletic Complex is a 76-acre park located in Berlin. Amenities include sport fields, a pavilion, walking trails, and a playground.

Public Landing

Public Landing is located at the end of Public Landing Wharf Road in Snow Hill. The park offers a beach area, a pier to go crabbing or fishing, and 30 boat slips that are leased yearly through the Worcester County Recreation and Parks Department.

3. COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Showell Park

Showell Park is a 21-acre park located in Showell, Maryland. This park is used for county's softball leagues and as an overflow facility during large softball tournaments. Showell Park offers two playgrounds, one for 2-5 year olds and one for 5-12 year olds. Pavilions, a walking trail, and courts are also available for use.

Stockton Park

Stockton Park is a 4-acre neighborhood park that's located nine miles east of Route 113. The park offers a pavilion equipped with picnic tables and a barbeque grill. The park also has a playground unit, benches, and a baseball/softball backstop for the community to use.

Whaleyville Park

Whaleyville Park is located between the intersection of Route 610 and Shepperd's Crossing Road in Whaleyville. The park includes a playground and picnic tables under a shaded area for the community to use.

Worcester County Recreation Center

The Worcester County Recreation Center is in Snow Hill. The facility includes a climate-controlled 47,000 square-foot multi-purpose fitness arena along with the offices of the Recreation & Parks staff. The center includes a 520-seat arena, a 4-lane track, courts, meeting spaces, a childcare room, and a fitness room.

Educational Facilities

The purpose of reviewing educational facilities within the comprehensive plan is not to supersede the role of the Worcester County Public Schools (WCPS) in planning for school facilities, but rather to raise awareness of the critical nature of coordinating school facilities with community planning, open and recreation space planning, reliable access to broadband, and transportation planning. The type and quality of educational opportunities are directly linked to the economic viability of a community. Building new school facilities within a new or established community takes forethought, planning, and concern for both the student and the surrounding physical environment. Site selection requires careful consideration of the existing land uses, street capacity, location, and existing public services including water availability, wastewater treatment capacity, emergency services, and library facilities.

Worcester County Public Schools currently enroll approximately 6,800 students, between pre-k and 12th grade, through the 14 school buildings in their district. WCPS, like the other Local Education Agencies (LEAs) across Maryland, plan for capital facilities through their annual Educational Facilities Master Plans (EFMP). These annual plans are submitted to the Department of Development Review and Permitting, as well as to the Maryland Department of Planning, to review for consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.

Map 3-3, Educational Facilities, shows the locations of the schools listed below.

Elementary Schools

Buckingham Elementary School: located in Berlin; serves grades Pre-K through 4 and currently houses approximately 530 students

3. COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Ocean City Elementary School: located in West Ocean City; serves grades Pre-K through 4th grade and currently houses approximately 530 students

Showell Elementary School: located between the Towns of Showell and Ocean Pines, opened in 2020; serves grades Pre-K through 4 and houses approximately 621 students.

Berlin intermediate School: located in Berlin; serves grades 5 and 6 and currently houses approximately 625 students who come from Buckingham Elementary, Ocean City Elementary, and Showell Elementary Schools.

Pocomoke Elementary School: located in Pocomoke; serves grades Pre-K through 4, and currently houses 458 students.

Snow Hill Elementary School: located in Snow Hill; serves grades Pre-K through 3, and currently houses approximately 377 students.

Middle Schools

Pocomoke Middle School: located in Pocomoke City; serves grades 4 through 8, and currently houses approximately 456 students.

Snow Hill Middle School: located in Snow Hill; serves grades 4 through 8, and currently houses approximately 400 students.

Stephen Decatur Middle School: located in Berlin; serves grades 7 and 8 and currently houses approximately 700 students.

High Schools

Pocomoke High School: located in Pocomoke; currently houses approximately 355 students

Snow Hill High School: located in Snow Hill; serves grades 9 through 12 and currently houses approximately 358 students.

Stephen Decatur High School: located in Ocean City; serves grades 9 through 12 and is the largest of Worcester County's three high schools, housing 1400 students.

Other Locations

Cedar Chapel Special School: located in Snow Hill; Cedar Chapel Special School serves students with special needs, ages 3 through 21. Currently the school serves 50 students.

The Nest Early Learning Center: located in Newark; opened in 2023 with 5 teachers, as well as 12 high school students serving as apprentices. The building serves children ages 2 through 4.

Worcester Technical High School: located in Newark; serves grades 9 through 12

Library Facilities

Public libraries provide free access to information and resources to support literacy and learning. The Worcester County Library system includes five library branches located in Berlin, Ocean City, Ocean Pines, Pocomoke, and Snow Hill. In addition to collections of books, CDs, and DVDs, people can check out hot spots, laptops, and specialty learning kits. Each branch provides access to computers and
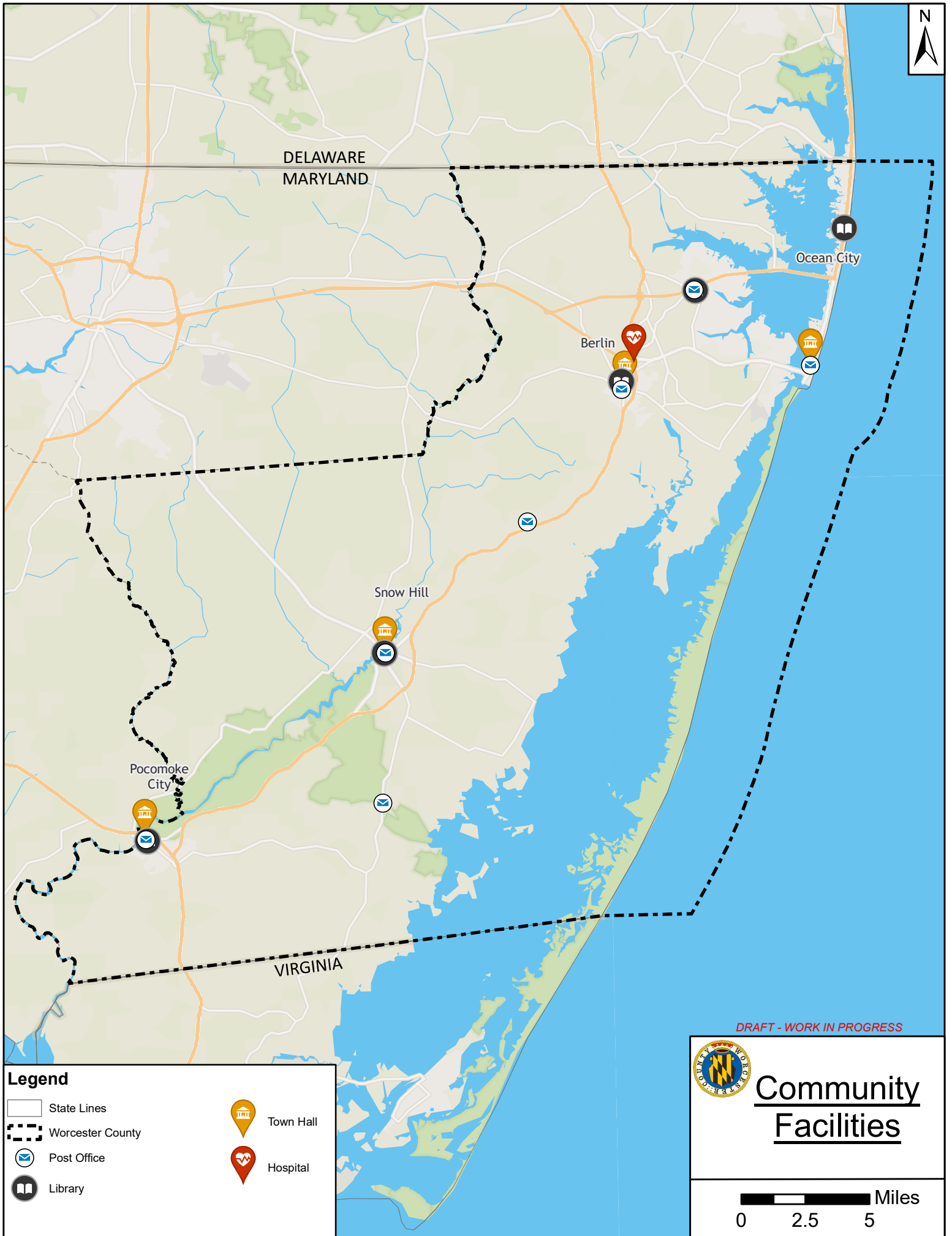
printing services. All branches have local history sections, and the Snow Hill branch houses the Worcester Room containing special collections and genealogy resources. A "Books by Mail" program helps those unable to leave their homes due to a temporary or permanent disability, and the Library operates the "Pop-Up Library," a mobile outreach vehicle.

Programs are offered for all ages and range from story times that support kindergarten readiness to personal enrichment classes. Job seekers use the library to search and apply for employment opportunities. Libraries also support digital literacy with one-on-one assistance and have taken on a greater technological role through the provision of eBooks, databases, and remote access to library materials. Libraries serve as community gathering places and provide space for studying, small group gatherings, and as a meeting place for community organizations. This is an important service, particularly in rural areas.

The Library Board of Trustees advise the Library Director, approve budgets, adopt policies, and ensure the library meets the needs of the community through its collection, services, and programs. Trustees are comprised of seven members of the public from various parts of the County. Public libraries are a resource that must be supported to encourage vibrant and sustainable communities.

Health Services

There are many dental, medical, physical therapy, and mental health practitioners within the County to serve the community. There are some medical centers and urgent care clinics within the County but the main health care facility is Atlantic General Hospital, located in Berlin. The location of this hospital can be found on **Map 3-4, Community Facilities**.
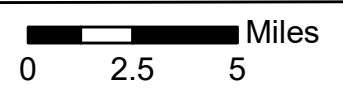
DELAWARE
MARYLAND

Ocean City

Berlin

Snow Hill

Pocomoke
City

VIRGINIA

DRAFT - WORK IN PROGRESS

Community Facilities
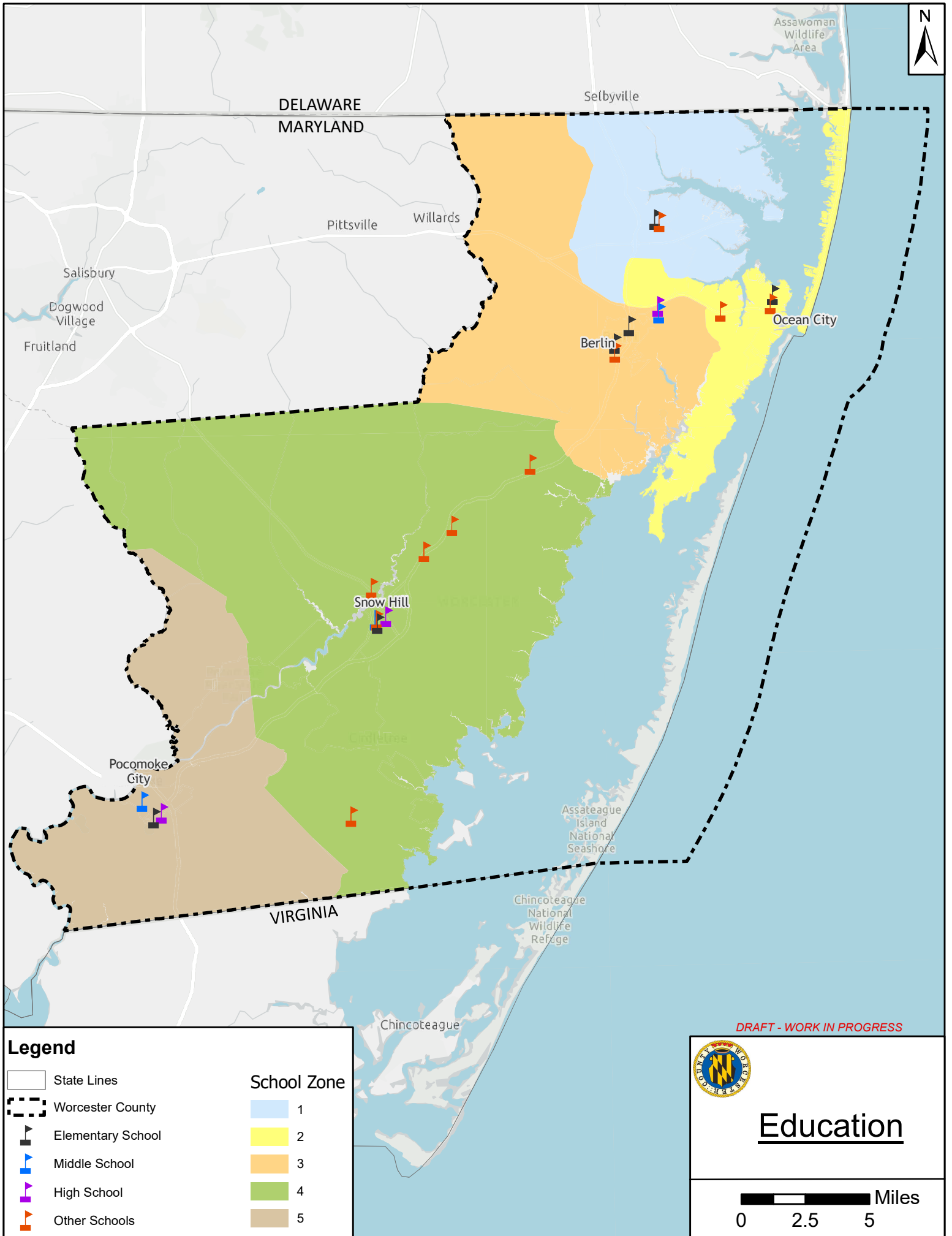
Legend

	State Lines
	Worcester County
✉	Post Office
📖	Library

🏛	Town Hall
❤	Hospital

Miles
0   2.5   5

Source: MD iMAP, Worcester County

DELAWARE
MARYLAND

Selbyville

Assawoman
Wildlife
Area

N

Salisbury

Dogwood
Village

Fruitland

Pittsville   Willards

Berlin

Ocean City

Snow Hill

WORCESTER

Girdletree

Pocomoke
City

Assateague
Island
National
Seashore

VIRGINIA

Chincoteague
National
Wildlife
Refuge

Chincoteague

DRAFT - WORK IN PROGRESS

Legend

		School Zone	
▢	State Lines		
▢	Worcester County		1
⚑	Elementary School		2
⚑	Middle School		3
⚑	High School		4
⚑	Other Schools		5

Education

Miles

0   2.5   5

DELAWARE
MARYLAND

Ocean City

Berlin

Snow Hill

Pocomoke City

VIRGINIA

N

DRAFT - WORK IN PROGRESS

Parks & Recreation
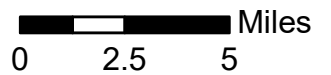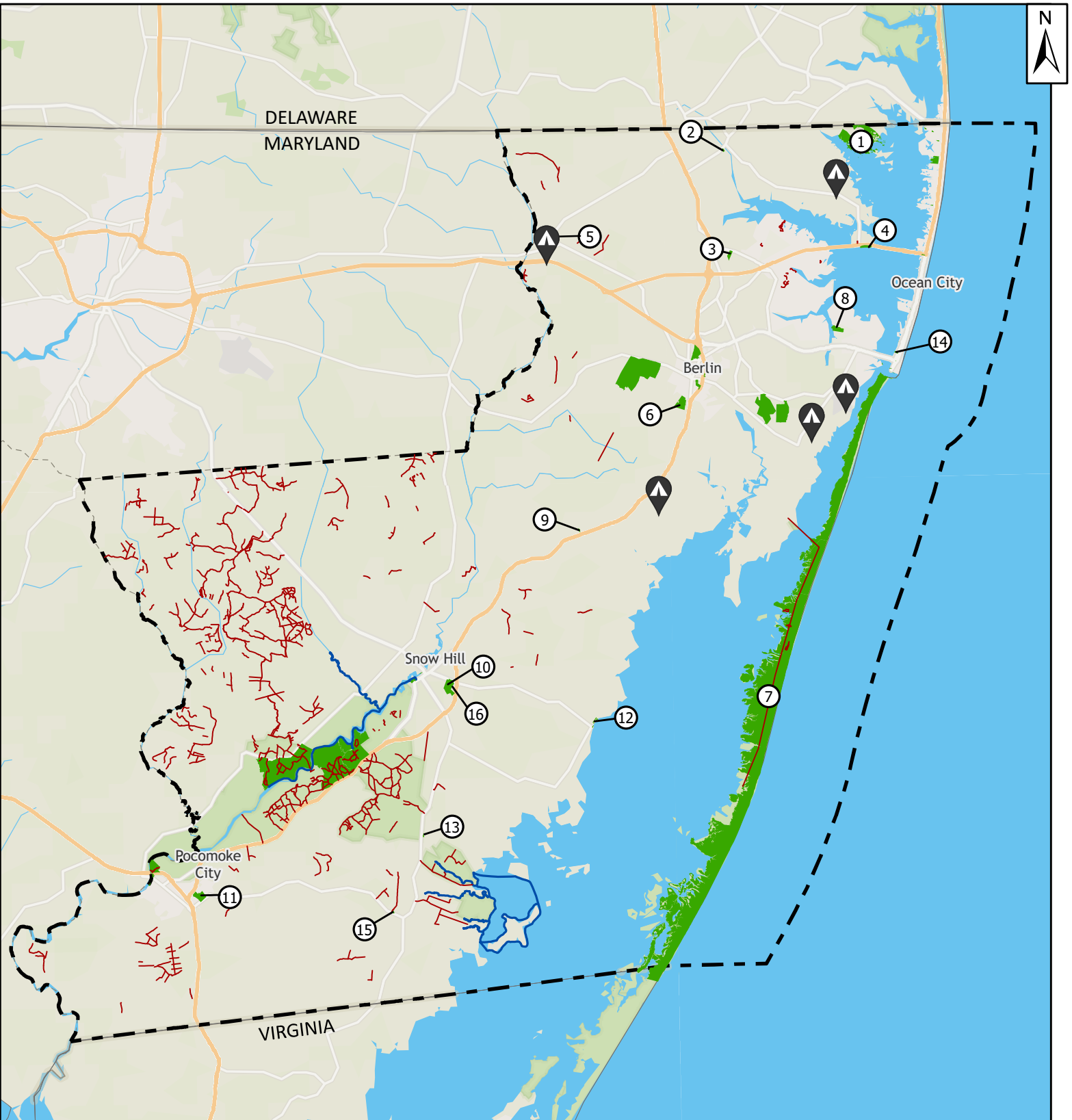
Legend

- State Lines
- Worcester County
- Land Trails
- Water Trails
- Campgrounds
- Park

1. Greys Creek Nature Park
2. Bishopville Park
3. Showell Park
4. Isle of Wight Park
5. Whaleyville Park
6. N. Worcester Athletic Complex
7. Assateague Island National Seashore
8. Herring Creek Nature Park
9. Newark Park
10. John Walter Smith Park
11. Newtown Park
12. Public Landing
13. Girdletree Park
14. Homer Gudelsky Park
15. Stockton Park
16. Worcester County Recreation Center

Miles
0   2.5   5

DELAWARE
MARYLAND

Berlin

Ocean City
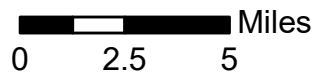
Snow Hill

Pocomoke City

VIRGINIA

Public Safety

Legend

	State Lines
	Worcester County
	Municipal Police Station
	State Police Station
	EMS
	Fire Station

Miles
0   2.5   5

N

Source: MD iMAP, Worcester County

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Introduction

Worcester County's geographic position as the easternmost county in the state of Maryland, and the only county in Maryland to border the Atlantic Ocean, presents unique economic opportunities. The county is home to the popular vacation resort area of Ocean City, founded in 1875, as well as wild habitats on the primitive wilderness areas on Assateague Island and in the Pocomoke River and Swamp. Additionally, Worcester is the only county in Maryland that borders both Delaware and Virginia. It offers ready access to major metropolitan markets, including Washington D.C., Baltimore and Philadelphia. This resulting regional connectivity is an advantage for residents and visitors alike.

Worcester County's economy is in an era of growth and diversification, with key elements like supporting small businesses and fostering tourism remaining highly relevant. Promoting a diverse economy and creating opportunities in higher-wage industries continue to be critical goals.

Since the County's last Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2006, the economic landscape has undergone dramatic shifts, particularly with the rise of remote work, the increasing importance of digital infrastructure, and the growth of agritourism. These changes should be integrated into this plan.

Currently, Worcester County faces several economic challenges, including seasonal dependence on tourism, workforce retention, the need to attract skilled talent, limited affordable housing for workers, and threats to agriculture and fisheries from environmental changes, such as the potential displacement of commercial fishing due to wind farm development.

Moving forward, strategic land use and infrastructure planning will be essential to balancing economic expansion with the preservation of the county's rural and coastal character. By focusing on higher-wage job creation, workforce development, and sustainable tourism, Worcester County can work towards long-term prosperity. Efforts to foster balanced growth, support small businesses, and create living-wage opportunities while investing in affordable housing and infrastructure will be vital to the County's continued prosperity.

Goals and Objectives

A primary goal of economic development is to foster a resilient and inclusive economy by driving sustainable growth in tourism, small business, technology, agriculture, and light industry. In Worcester County, this includes preserving and celebrating the County's unique rural and coastal heritage while creating opportunities for year-round employment, innovation, and community well-being.

The following general objectives have been specifically identified as critical to the ongoing success of Worcester County and its residents. These are grouped by category:

1. **Business Retention and Expansion (BRE)**
   - Support existing businesses with resources, guidance, and financial support.
   - Conduct regular outreach meetings to identify challenges and growth opportunities and provide connections and resources.

- Continue collaboration with local chambers of commerce, county and town communication, and legislative officials.

2. **Economic Growth and Employment**
    - Seek to raise the County's median income to meet the state average by increasing access to higher-paying, year-round employment.
    - Diversify the economic base by extending the tourist season and fostering growth in emerging industries, such as technology and health care.
    - Increase employment opportunities to retain talented young workers and attract new talent to the county.
    - Align vocational education and workforce development programs with current and anticipated employment demands, including technical and soft skills training.
    - Support the expansion of existing employers and encourage entrepreneurship to grow the local economy.
    - Reduce unemployment by targeting job creation efforts to underserved populations and regions.
    - Promote southern Worcester's potential for housing employees and allied businesses of NASA and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport at Wallops Island.

3. **Entrepreneurship and Innovation**
    - Establish small business incubators and co-working spaces to support startups and small enterprises.
    - Provide resources for grants, loans, and incentives for innovative projects and new businesses.
    - Continue to host workshops, business roundtable discussions, business groups, and networking events to foster a culture of entrepreneurship.

4. **Tourism and Hospitality**
    - Strengthen the tourism and hospitality industry by supporting towns and cities that define the County's character.
    - Promote the creation of sports, cultural, and major attractions to boost visitation and increase tax revenue.
    - Develop attractions and initiatives to encourage visitation during off-peak seasons.
    - Highlight eco-tourism through environmental, heritage, and cultural attractions in partnership with heritage areas and museums.
    - Support programming in sports tourism and arts and entertainment industries.

5. **Engagement and Collaborative Development**
    - Collaborate with towns, chambers of commerce, and local partners to advance tourism and business initiatives.
    - Partner with state-level entities to advocate for increased funding for economic development and tourism programs.

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

- Address the needs of agricultural and agri-tourism sectors to ensure their continued growth and success.
- Involve residents and stakeholders in decision-making processes.
- Strengthen partnerships with state and regional economic development organizations.
- Recognize and celebrate the achievements of local businesses and entrepreneurs.
- Collaborate with businesses in the Aerospace industry to support sustainable expansion of operations and employment opportunities.

6. **Community and Sustainability**
- Develop and support facilities catering to the county's aging population, including health care and accessible housing options.
- Ensure economic development aligns with the county's rural and coastal sustainability goals.
- Address the needs of the agricultural and agri-tourism sectors to ensure their growth and continued contribution to the local economy.

Economic Markets

Worcester County's economy is a dynamic blend of tourism, agriculture, and small business entrepreneurship. Anchored by Ocean City, a premier East Coast vacation destination, the County benefits from a robust hospitality sector that drives seasonal economic activity. Beyond tourism, the region boasts a thriving agricultural industry, including poultry farming, crop production, and agritourism ventures that connect local farms to visitors.

Small businesses and local artisans play a significant role, supported by a business-friendly environment and community-focused initiatives. Emerging sectors, including renewable energy and technology, add to the County's economic diversity. With its unique combination of natural beauty, vibrant communities, and strategic location near the Atlantic coast, Worcester County continues to grow as a hub for business and leisure.

The resort industry, construction, real estate, the public sector, agriculture, and an evolving focus on workforce development are the county's largest employers. These sectors employ a significant portion of the workforce and depend on the county's natural resources, rural charm, and coastal character for their success. For this reason, growth and economic development must be pursued in a manner that preserves these unique characteristics.

Year-round and seasonal population growth has expanded the market for the county's businesses. Service industries, including health care and technology, are expected to lead economic growth. Economic development efforts should focus on nurturing existing local industries, attracting higher-wage industries, and investing in workforce development to support a skilled and adaptable labor force.

See **Table 6-2, Employment by Industry with 10-year forecast** for the complete breakdown.

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Table 6-1. Largest Employers in Worcester County (2024)

Employer	Location	Product/Service	Employment
Harrison Group*	Ocean City	Hotels & Restaurants	975
Atlantic General Health Systems	Berlin	Medical Services	970
Blue Water Development / Blue Water Hospitality*	Ocean City, Berlin	Hospitality Management & Real Estate Development	608
Bay Shore Development*	Ocean City	Amusements & Hotels	600
Fagers Island*	Ocean City, Berlin	Hotels & Restaurants	600
O.C. Seacrets*	Ocean City	Restaurant, Distillery & Liquor Store	487
Ocean Enterprise 589 / Ocean Downs Casino*	Berlin	Casino gaming	349
Ashore Resort & Beach Club*	Ocean City	Hotel & Restaurant	300
Dough Roller*	Ocean City	Restaurants	275
91st Street Joint Venture / Princess Royale*	Ocean City	Hotels & Restaurants	250
Real Hospitality*	Ocean City	Hotel Management	215
Ocean Pines Association	Berlin	Nonprofit civic organization	190
Sunsations*	Ocean City	Beach Wear / Products & Souvenirs	180
Bel-Art Products/SP	Pocomoke City	Scientific & Lab Products	164
Carousel Resort Hotel & Condominiums*	Ocean City	Hotels & Restaurants	150
Trimper Rides*	Ocean City	Amusements	145
Berlin Nursing & Rehabilitation Center	Berlin	Nursing & Rehabilitation	127
Harrison House Senior Living[1]	Snow Hill	Nursing & Rehabilitation	85
Hardwire	Pocomoke City	Protective armour products	83
Dolle's Candyland*	Ocean City	Candy	50
Benelli	Pocomoke City	Firearms	40

*Reflects summer employment levels

Source: Maryland Department of Commerce Brief Economic Facts sheet on Worcester County

---

[1] This facility is no longer owned or operated by Harrison Senior Living and is operating under the ownership of Snow Hill Nursing and Rehabilitation.

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Table 6-2. Employment by Industry with 10-year forecast, 2024-33

Industry	Employment	Current Avg. Annual Wages	10-yr. Forecast Employment
Accommodation and Food Services	7,919	$33,275	14,474
Retail Trade	3,987	$35,934	5,150
Health Care and Social Assistance	2,412	$59,965	2,579
Public Administration	1,839	$60,449	1,682
Educational Services	1,743	$62,415	1,686
Construction	1,658	$50,044	1,475
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1,308	$36,837	1,951
Other Services (except Public Administration)	1,170	$33,506	1,381
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1,132	$61,925	992
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	956	$47,197	1,135
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	909	$53,683	875
Manufacturing	812	$54,667	821
Finance and Insurance	472	$83,076	393
Wholesale Trade	352	$50,529	348
Transportation and Warehousing	297	$47,351	321
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	280	$107,255	328
Information	190	$53,961	172
Management of Companies and Enterprises	67	$66,461	61
Unclassified	9	$56,225	11
Utilities	7	$66,288	6
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	5	$19,029	5
Total - All Industries	27,524	$45,865	30510

Source: JobsEQ 2024Q2

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Construction and Real Estate

Worcester County has had a growing construction and real estate industry, driven by both residential and commercial development. Worcester has seen significant interest from both investors and developers due to its desirable location as the only coastal county in Maryland. In recent years, residential construction has been robust, with both new homes and housing renovations in high demand.

The commercial construction in Worcester has been similarly active, with developments focused on tourism-related infrastructure, retail spaces, office buildings, and mixed-use projects. Waterfront properties and developments catering to hospitality and leisure industries are key contributors to the local economy.

The construction and real estate industry can encounter challenges such as rising material costs, labor shortages, high interest rates, and the economic cycle. Additionally, balancing development and environmental factors has proven to be difficult, especially in waterfront areas where sea level rise adds to the pressure. While some challenges may be unavoidable, careful planning can support the local construction and real estate industries. As long as demand for growth and/or redevelopment is strong in the County, these industries will continue to be viable.

Recommendations for Construction and Real Estate in Worcester County should focus on the following:

- **Stable Growth:** Leverage planned population growth to sustain the construction sector while balancing affordability and rural character.

- **Workforce Housing:** Prioritize affordable housing projects to support workforce retention and attract new residents.

Industry-specific objectives have been identified as critical to fulfilling recommendations and supporting the ongoing success of Construction and Real Estate in the County:

1. Ensure the land use plan provides adequate land for growth to meet housing, commercial, and support service demands.
2. Continue to provide workforce training programs to supply skilled labor to the construction industry.
3. Offer continuing education opportunities to keep construction and real estate professionals informed of county policies and market trends.

Tourism and Hospitality

Worcester County has longstanding ties to the tourism and hospitality industry based on its geographic location as Maryland's only point of access to the Atlantic Ocean through the town of Ocean City. Ocean City is one of the most well-known resort towns on the East Coast, making it a vital part of not just the county's tourism and hospitality industry but also the states. With 11,000 hotel rooms and more than eight million visitors each year, the economic potential Ocean City brings to the County cannot be understated.

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Tourism in Worcester County is not limited to the beach, boardwalk, and other oceanfront and resort amenities in Ocean City. Along with Ocean City's allure, Berlin, Pocomoke and Snow Hill also provide opportunities for tourism. The County and the towns should continue to expand their cooperative tourism efforts.

Berlin is a historic community known for Victorian architecture and eclectic shops and restaurants. Snow Hill offers two museums, bustling streets filled with art and antique vendors, restaurants, and small shops. Pocomoke City is home to the Delmarva Discovery Museum and the historic Mar-Va Theater. Worcester is home to the only casino on the Eastern Shore, the Casino at Ocean Downs, nine championship golf courses, several state parks and forests, and Assateague Island National Seashore. The County's commitment to the protection of public and private open space has created opportunities for a plethora of recreational activities such as hiking, biking, kayaking, bird watching, golf, marine mammal tours, and more.

Worcester County is home to a wide variety of events throughout the year, enhancing its appeal to tourists. Notable annual events include:

Ocean Pines

- Bay Day in Ocean Pines
- Arts Day in the Pines
- Classic Car & Jeep Show
- 4th of July Fireworks Celebration
- Summer Series

Berlin

- Jazz and Blues, Wine & Brews
- Bathtub Races
- Smalltown Throwdown
- Fiddler's Convention
- Oktoberfest
- Ice Ice Berlin
- New Year's Eve

Pocomoke
- 4th Friday Street Festivals
- Concerts in Cypress Park
- Great Pocomoke Fair
- Boat Docking Challenge

Snow Hill

- Annual Oyster Roast

- Blessing of the Combines
- First Fridays - Arts on the River
- Worcester County Fair
- Dicken's Holiday Weekend
- Iron Furnace Fifty
- Furnace Town Renaissance Faire

Ocean City
- Ocean City Music Festivals, Oceans Calling, Country Rock, Boardwalk Rock, Rising the Tides Festival, drawing in crowds from all across the country.
- Home of the White Marlin Open, largest billfish tournament in the world
- Summer Concert Series at Sunset Park
- Annual Springfest, Sunfest, and Winterfest
- Dreamfest
- Sundaes in the Park
- OC Film Fest
- OC Air Show

These events, along with the region's history, culture, and recreational offerings, contribute to making Worcester County a vibrant destination year-round.

Based on summer employment numbers, three of the top five employers are in the tourism and hospitality industry – Harrison Group, Bay Shore Development, and Fagers Island.

Tourism and the Hospitality industry in Worcester County should focus on the following planning considerations:

- **Tourism Diversification**: Build on the success of outdoor recreation by expanding eco-tourism, cultural tourism, and off-season events to lengthen the shoulder seasons.

- **Protecting Rural and Coastal Character**: Prioritize natural resource stewardship and sustainable growth to differentiate from competing resorts and prevent sprawl.

- **Collaborative Marketing**: Strengthen partnerships with towns to promote distinctive attractions like Ocean City, Berlin, Snow Hill, and Pocomoke as complementary destinations.

Industry-specific objectives have been identified as critical to fulfilling recommendations and supporting the ongoing success of Tourism and Hospitality in the County:

- Invest in marketing campaigns to promote Worcester County's unique attractions, including Assateague Island, Ocean City, and Pocomoke River State Park.
- Expand off-season tourism by creating and promoting events, festivals, and eco-tourism opportunities.

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

- Partner with local businesses (outfitters, retail, restaurant), attractions (museums, historical sites) and other organizations such as the Heritage Area to enhance visitor experiences, encourage guests to have multi night stays and increase repeat visits.
- Support the traditional resort industry while diversifying offerings with high-quality recreational, cultural, and heritage experiences.
- Encourage the development of large-scale attractions, including sports, cultural, and environmental venues, to enhance the County's appeal.
- Continue support for beach replenishment projects to preserve coastal attractions.
- Collaborate with towns to strengthen their tourism efforts.
- Expand eco-tourism opportunities by leveraging the county's environmental, cultural, and heritage assets.
- Facilitate year-round recreational and resort-oriented developments to mitigate seasonality.
- Address the needs of hunting, fishing, and boating sectors as part of the county's tourism strategy.

Industrial

Industrial attraction and location are a challenge. Successfully recruiting compatible industries requires a strategic approach that ensures access to the necessary utilities, transportation, and infrastructure. With limited opportunities for industry relocation and intense competition from neighboring regions, offering incentives such as tax abatements, below-market land prices, and other financial advantages is often essential. Therefore, economic development efforts should focus on supporting and expanding existing industries by providing the fundamental infrastructure they need to grow. Heavy industry and the hospitality sector can be incompatible. For this reason, both the type and location of industrial development must go through an intensive planning process. In addition to tactical site selection, adhering to architectural design standards and ensuring adequate public services, including reliable electrical, natural gas, and other utilities, is vital. Given this, industrial development should focus on light and heavier industry in the Pocomoke area and light industry in the existing industrial areas near Berlin and near the Village of Showell. Ongoing economic development efforts should continue to focus on attracting higher-wage jobs and industries that align with the county's infrastructure and regional characteristics.

Neighboring Accomack County is home to Wallops Flight Facility (WFF), located on Wallops Island, Virginia, a prominent rocket launch site operated by NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center. The anticipated growth of this facility in upcoming years presents a tremendous opportunity for southern Worcester to house Wallops employees and allied businesses. Additionally, the aerospace industry attracts a skilled workforce with higher-wage jobs and capitalizing on the expanding market would help advance the County's economic development efforts.

The recommendations for the Industrial industry in Worcester County should focus on the following:

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

- **Strategic Industry Development**: Focus on light and medium industries in Pocomoke, Berlin, Bishopville, and Showell, emphasizing industries that align with the county's rural character and existing infrastructure.

- **Incentives and Infrastructure**: Continue offering competitive incentives (tax abatements, land subsidies) alongside investments in utilities, transportation, and broadband to attract compatible industries.

- **Design Standards**: Continue to enforce architectural and site design standards to ensure industrial development aligns with the county's aesthetic and environmental values.

Industry-specific objectives have been identified as critical to fulfilling recommendations and supporting the ongoing success of industrial activity in the County:

- Identify and promote available industrial sites for immediate development.
- Maintain an inventory of suitable industrial sites and infrastructure to support business relocation and expansion.
- Focus industrial development efforts in designated industrial parks.
- Conduct a feasibility study for upgrading broadband and natural gas infrastructure in key industrial areas.
- Upgrade industrial infrastructure, including electrical supply, natural gas, and broadband connectivity.
- Develop industrial parks with state-of-the-art infrastructure to attract advanced manufacturing and technology firms.
- Offer short-term incentives, such as reduced fees or expedited permits, to attract light industries.
- Retain existing industries while attracting light industries in technology, research, health care, and advanced manufacturing.
- Identify and rehabilitate "brownfields" for potential industrial use.

Health Care

Worcester County has several major healthcare assets that serve the community and the surrounding region. Some notable ones include:

- **Atlantic General Hospital (AGH)**: Located in Berlin, Atlantic General Hospital is a major healthcare provider in Worcester County. It offers a range of services, including emergency care, surgery, diagnostics, cancer care, and outpatient services. AGH serves as the primary hospital for many residents of Worcester County and the surrounding areas.

- **TidalHealth Worcester**: Located in Berlin, MD, this facility is an important extension of the TidalHealth network, based out of Salisbury, Maryland in Wicomico County. This TidalHealth campus providing both inpatient and outpatient services to residents of Worcester County. It

offers emergency care, diagnostic services, and specialized medical care, helping to improve healthcare access in the area.

- **Chesapeake Health Care**: This organization operates multiple healthcare centers in Worcester County, offering a wide range of services including primary care, mental health, and dental services. It has a focus on underserved populations and provides services across various locations.

- **UM Shore Regional Health**: While located primarily in the neighboring counties, UM Shore Regional Health extends its healthcare services to Worcester County as part of its regional healthcare network. It provides access to specialists, emergency services, and other advanced medical care in the region.

- **Health Departments and Community Clinics**: The Worcester County Health Department operates multiple clinics and community outreach programs to support public health initiatives, preventive care, and access to healthcare for vulnerable populations.

- **Veteran's Administration Outpatient Clinic in Pocomoke:** This is the only United States Department of Veteran Affairs outpatient clinic in all of Wicomico, Somerset and Worcester Counties and Virginia Eastern's Shore, servicing veterans from 5 counties.

These assets contribute significantly to the healthcare infrastructure in Worcester County and support the local community's healthcare needs. Additionally, TidalHealth, AGH, and other medical facilities significantly contribute to the local economy through sustainable job creation and regional economic growth by contributing to an environment conducive to business expansion and development.

The recommendations for the Health Care industry in Worcester County should focus on the following:

- **Healthcare Workforce Growth**: Collaborate with Atlantic General Hospital and TidalHealth to expand services and attract skilled healthcare professionals through targeted incentives and community integration initiatives.

- **Aging Population Needs**: Enhance healthcare infrastructure and services to cater to the county's growing senior population.

Industry-specific objectives have been identified as critical to fulfilling recommendations and supporting the ongoing success of Heath Care activity in the County:

- Work with Atlantic General Hospital and TidalHealth to expand recruitment efforts for health care professionals.
- Launch a public awareness campaign showcasing Worcester County as an attractive place for health care workers to live and work.

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

- Support Atlantic General Hospital and TidalHealth in growing and expanding as they consolidate systems across the region. Provide health care employees with collateral information to assist in their decision to relocate to the county to live, work, and play.
- Anticipate growth in health care needs and work to expand the health care sector, addressing both service provisions and employment opportunities.

Agriculture

The recommendations for Agriculture in Worcester County should focus on the following:

- **Sustainable Farming:** Support local farmers through incentives for value-added products, alternative crops, and agricultural tourism.

- **Right-to-Farm Policies:** Preserve rural character by protecting farmland and encouraging innovative income streams for farmers.

- **Infrastructure Investments:** Address challenges in the grain supply chain and support local processing facilities to bolster agricultural viability.

Agricultural operations in Worcester County continue to face significant economic pressures due to fluctuating commodity prices, rising input costs, and global market competition. The past decade has also seen the effects of climate change, such as more frequent extreme weather events, including flooding and drought, impacting yields and increasing operational risks. Inflationary pressures have further compounded these challenges by raising the costs of fertilizer, fuel, and equipment.

The poultry industry remains a cornerstone of the local agricultural economy, though it has undergone notable changes. While the county continues to be a major player in poultry production, consolidation in the industry has led to fewer processing plants, further reducing competition. This dynamic continues to exert downward pressure on grain prices and limits profit margins for grain farmers. However, recent investments in renewable energy by some poultry companies have created potential opportunities for farmers to partner on sustainability initiatives.

Field crop production, primarily corn and soybeans, continues to serve as a critical input for poultry feed. While the County remains a net importer of grains for feed, some local farms are exploring diversified cropping systems, including specialty grains and organic production, to meet growing demand for high-value, sustainable products.

To bolster farm income, there has been a significant push toward value-added agriculture and agritourism. Local farmers are increasingly embracing opportunities to process and market their products directly, such as producing artisan cheeses, craft beverages, and packaged goods. Agritourism ventures, including pick-your-own farms, farm-to-table events, and educational tours, have grown in popularity, driven by consumer interest in local food and experiences.

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

According to the most recent USDA Census of Agriculture (2017), the value of agricultural products sold in Worcester County was approximately $141 million, reflecting modest growth compared to previous decades. Average sales per farm increased to $340,000. The diversification of products, alongside higher-value ventures, has played a key role in maintaining this growth despite challenges.

Industry-specific objectives have been identified as critical to fulfilling recommendations and supporting the ongoing success of Agriculture in the County:

- Preserve farming and enhance its economic viability by promoting agricultural tourism, value-added products, and alternative crops such as hemp, organic vegetables, and wine grapes.
- Support agricultural infrastructure and marketing cooperatives to improve profitability.
- Implement zoning and preservation programs to reduce farmland fragmentation.
- Enforce the "right-to-farm" policy to protect agricultural operations.
- Encourage educational and recreational agricultural initiatives to enhance public awareness.
- Preserve forestry by limiting fragmentation and supporting related industries.
- Organize workshops for farmers on value-added products and sustainable farming practices.
- Launch pilot programs for alternative crops, such as hemp or organic vegetables, with funding from state and federal grants.
- Establish partnerships with local retailers to market locally produced agricultural goods.
- Create a regional marketing cooperative to sell local products directly to consumers and retailers.

Commercial Services

Retailing is one of the largest employers in the county and is a significant contributor to the economy.

The Ocean City Boardwalk in Ocean City provides a vibrant space for businesses to cater to tourists. Shops selling souvenirs, apparel, and beach gear contribute to local sales tax revenue and support seasonal employment for residents.

The Outlets Ocean City in West Ocean City are a major shopping destination for both locals and tourists. This retail center attracts a range of retail, home accent stores, and restaurants and generates sales tax revenue, drawing in consumers year-round. These outlets not only support retail jobs but also create demand for maintenance, logistics, and service roles.

Downtown Berlin is known for its charming historic district and eclectic small shops, restaurants, and art galleries. These businesses boost sales and generate local tax revenues, while also enhancing Berlin's reputation as a popular destination for day-trippers.

Downtown Snow Hill offers a mix of locally owned boutiques, antique shops, and seasonal markets, providing a unique shopping experience in this historic town. As part of an ongoing effort to revitalize, Snow Hill is a Main Street Affiliate. That is a community that is approved by the State to work on Main

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Street Designation but has not yet achieved that status. Main Street Maryland oversees and awards grants to Main Street efforts such as Snow Hill's.

Downtown Pocomoke City is a treasure trove of independent boutiques and antique shops. Like the downtown districts in Berlin and Snow Hill, downtown Pocomoke City has the potential to attract tourists with its unique selection of local businesses and reputation as a quaint and charming.

The recommendations for Commercial Services in Worcester County should focus on the following:

- **Right-Sized Development:** Reassess commercial zoning to align with actual demand, reducing traffic congestion and underutilized spaces.

- **Mixed-Use Planning:** Encourage local commercial services in new residential developments while imposing strict design standards for large-scale commercial projects.

- **Support Small Businesses:** Provide resources and programs to nurture entrepreneurship while balancing the need for higher-wage industries.

Industry-specific objectives have been identified as critical to fulfilling recommendations and supporting the ongoing success of Commercial Service activity in the County:

- Locate commercial centers in major communities to serve as retail and service hubs.
- Encourage mixed-use developments that integrate commercial, office, and residential spaces.
- Balance commercial land supply with demand to prevent underutilization and over-congestion.
- Continue to implement design standards for commercial developments to ensure they enhance community aesthetics and functionality.
- Continue to implement siting and design standards for large-scale and commercial developments to ensure compatibility with community character.
- Continue to discourage "franchise architecture" in favor of unique, community-oriented designs.
- Host workshops for small business owners on digital marketing and e-commerce strategies.
- Offer grants to businesses that embrace mixed-use development and innovative designs.
- Collaborate with local chambers of commerce to identify underserved areas needing commercial development.

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Employment

The County's labor force stands at approximately 24,600 with an unemployment rate of 3.3 percent (2023), the lowest unemployment rate on record for Worcester County in at least 20 years (Maryland Unemployment Rates - by County). This percentage was slightly higher than the State unemployment rate of 2.1 percent but lower the national rate of 4.1 percent. See **Table 6-3, Employment Status** for the comparisons.

**Table 6-3. Employment Status (2023)**

	Worcester County		Somerset County (MD)		Sussex County (DE)		State of Maryland	
	Estimate	%	Estimate	%	Estimate	%	Estimate	%
Civilian labor force	26,736	59.1	9,787	46.8	121,901	54.7	3,326,225	66.8
Employed	25,012	55.3	9,226	44.1	116,521	52.3	3,194,028	64.1
Unemployed	1,724	3.8	561	2.7	5,380	2.4	132,197	2.7

Source: 2023 ACS 5-year estimates

Income and Poverty

As of the 2023 American Community Survey (ACS), the County had a total of 23,827 households and 15,341 families. Of those, 12.1 percent of households and 6.6 percent of families had annual incomes less than $25,000, while 40.7 percent of households and 51.7 percent of families had incomes greater than $100,000. The income range of $100,000-$149,999 accounts for the largest single income range for households (20.6%) and for families (25.9%). (**See Figure 6-1. Worcester County Income Ranges**).

Figure 6-1. Worcester County Income Ranges (2023)
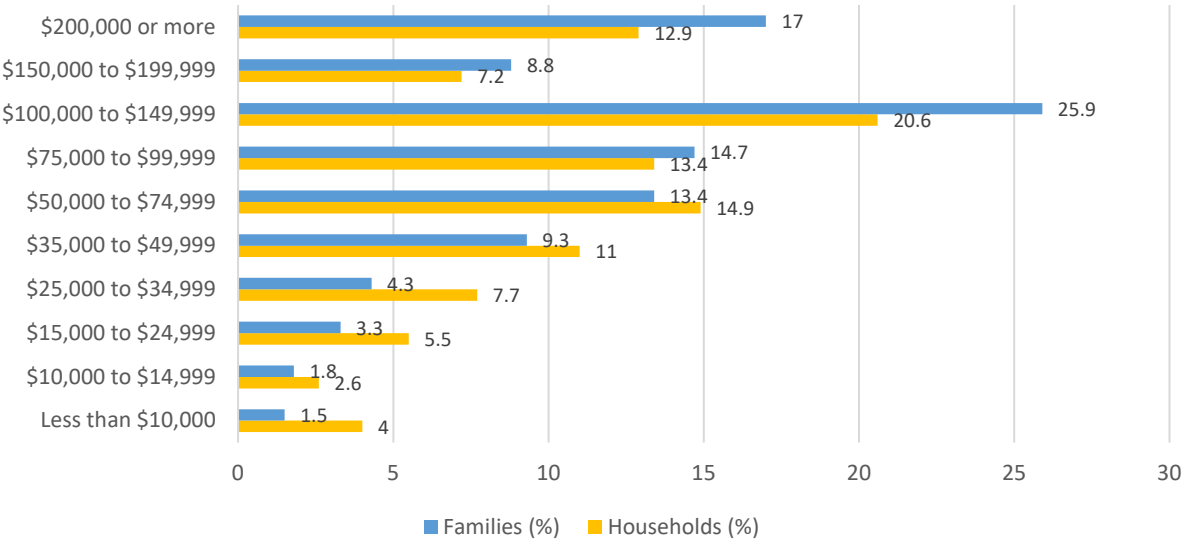
6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Source: 2023 ACS 5-year estimates

Table 6-4, Annual Income, shows the median household, family, and per capita income for the County, in comparison to neighboring counties and the State of Maryland. Worcester's median household, family, and per capita income was lower than the State but consistently higher when compared to neighboring counties, Sussex County (Delaware) and Somerset County (Maryland). Household income is typically defined as the total gross income received before taxes in a 12-month period by all members of the household above age 15, regardless of whether the individuals are related to each other. Family income measures the income of all people living in one household and that are related to each other through blood, adoption, or marriage.

Table 6-4. Annual Income (2023)

Income	Worcester County (MD)	Sussex County (DE)	Somerset County (MD)	State of Maryland
Median Household Income	$81,455	$78,162	$52,462	$101,652
Median Family Income	$102,724	$95,047	$70,366	$124,487
Per Capita Income	$51,620	$44,963	$26,031	$51,689

Source: 2023 ACS 5-year estimates

According to the 2023 ACS, 5.2% of families and 8.1% of all people in Worcester County had incomes in the past 12 months that fell below the poverty level, as depicted in **Table 6-5. Poverty in Worcester County**. More than a quarter of families with a female head of household and related children under 18 years old were considered to be living below the poverty level in the County.

Table 6-5. Poverty in Worcester County (2023)

	Total	% below poverty level
Population for whom poverty status is determined	52,574	8.1
Families	15,341	5.2
With related children of householder under 18 years	5,136	10.5
Married Couple Families	11,815	2.7
Female Householder, no spouse	2,601	16.1

Source: 2023 ACS 5-year estimates

Incentive Zones

Worcester County is committed to creating a business-friendly environment and assisting businesses in their growth and location in the County. To assist in this area, several incentive programs are available for assistance. The following are several of the programs available in support of sustaining and creating new opportunities for providing additional services to the residents of Worcester County.

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Opportunity Zones

The Opportunity Zone program is a nationwide initiative administered by the U.S. Treasury created under the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. This program provides federal tax incentives for investment in distressed communities over 10 years. Areas designated as opportunity zones will be able to reap the benefits of capital gains to help redevelop underserved communities. Snow Hill, Berlin, and Ocean City (from the inlet to approximately 33rd Street) are designated Opportunity Zones here in Worcester County (link to map in Appendix)

Enterprise Zones

Businesses locating within an enterprise zone may be eligible for real property and state income tax credits. Upon application and approval, the zone offers a ten-year credit against local real property taxes on a portion of real property improvements. Credit is 80 percent for the first five years and decreases 10 percent annually to 30 percent in the tenth and final year. The zone also offers a one-time $1,000 credit per new worker on state income taxes. In Worcester, the County has Enterprise Zones within the Berlin, Snow Hill and Pocomoke regions (see attached or see Appendix? On website: Enterprise Zones – Worcester County)

The Enterprise Zone program provides real property and state income tax credits for businesses located in a Maryland enterprise zone in return for job creation and investments. Businesses located in Focus Areas may be also qualified for personal property tax credits on new investment in personal property and enhanced income tax credit for creating new jobs.

Business and Industrial Property

Worcester County offers a diverse range of commercial and industrial spaces across its regions, spanning 2 to 80 acres. The presence of three designated Maryland Enterprise Zones (as outlined above) provides new and expanding businesses with access to crucial property and job tax credits. Additionally, the county takes pride in its two Arts and Entertainment Districts, actively fostering and supporting diverse artistic and cultural initiatives.

Pocomoke City serves as the county's central manufacturing hub, housing the expansive 175-acre Pocomoke Industrial Park, with continued growth. Also, a designated SBA HUBZone, small and medium-sized businesses gain a competitive edge in government contracting. Additionally, there are three federally designated Opportunity Zones located in Snow Hill, Berlin, and downtown Ocean City, aiming to stimulate economic growth by offering tax incentives to investors. The VLT (video lottery terminal) program utilizes slot machine proceeds from Ocean Downs Casino to assist small, minority, and women owned businesses throughout the County.[2]

Arts and Entertainment (A&E) District

An Arts and Entertainment District is a geographically designated area in which a high concentration of arts and entertainment facilities serve as an anchor attraction. The intent of the A&E District is to

---

[2] *Source: Brief Economics Facts // Worcester County, Maryland*
(https://commerce.maryland.gov/Documents/ResearchDocument/WorcesterBef.pdf)

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

stimulate neighborhood revitalization, improve the attractiveness and safety of areas, stimulate business activity (particularly in the evenings and on weekends), attract residents and visitors and build the tax base.

The tax incentives available upon the designated Arts and Entertainment District include: an income tax subtraction modification for qualifying residing artists; a property tax credit; and an exemption from the Admissions and Amusement Tax.

Worcester County is home to two A&E districts with a concentration of cultural venues and arts activities: Berlin and Snow Hill. The program stimulates revitalization and business development, attracts residents and visitors, and builds the tax base.

The designation offers incentives to artists, arts organizations and creative businesses:

- Artist Income Tax Subtraction Modification
- Property Tax Incentives
- Admissions & Amusement Tax Exemption

Strategies supported by the A&E Districts program include:

- Creating accessible and unique arts destinations
- Leveraging the state's regional identities, natural resources, and heritage
- Facilitating dynamic arts experiences that engage community and attract visitors
- Enabling artists of all disciplines to live, work, and prosper
- Investing in the power of place

Financial Resources and Incentives

Working with state, federal, and non-profit partners, business owners on Maryland's Coast have access to targeted resources to start or expand in Worcester County. From farming and fishing to technology and manufacturing, these programs incentivize job creation, innovation, and expansion.[3]

The Maryland Department of Commerce

The Maryland Department of Commerce offers programs including venture capital investments and tax credits, direct loans, grants, and loan guarantors. These programs work together to attract new companies to the state, encourage expansions and job creation and revitalize our economy.

- Enterprise Zone Property Tax Credits
- Biotech Investment Incentive Tax Credit
- Buy Maryland Tax Credit
- Job Creation Tax Credit

---

[3] *Source: Choose Maryland's Coast - Economic Development Collateral Piece (https://www.flipsnack.com/MarylandsCoast/choose-maryland-s-coast/full-view.html)*

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

- Maryland R&D Tax Credit
- One Maryland Tax Credit
- Partnership for Workforce Quality
- Video Lottery Terminal Fund (VLT)

More financial resources and incentives include:

- ***Advantage Maryland*** – Provides below-market, fixed-rate direct assistance to growth-industry-businesses.
- ***Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center*** – Loans from $10,000 to $100,000 for small business startups.
- ***ExportMD*** – Grants of up to $5,000 to help offset international marketing costs.
- ***Manufacturing Machinery Tax Exemption*** – County tax rebate on new machinery and equipment of $10,000 or more annually.
- ***Maryland Agricultural & Resource-Based Industry Development Corp*** – Assists farm, forestry, and seafood businesses.
- ***Maryland Business Works*** – Offers 50 percent reimbursement for worker training programs.
- ***Maryland Capital Enterprises*** – Funding for small and micro businesses to start or expand.
- ***Maryland Industrial Partnerships*** – Matching funding program for university-based research projects.
- ***Maryland Industrial Development Financing Authority*** – Ensures repayment on percentage of principal and interest for loans.
- ***Maryland Economic Development Corporation*** – Assists in the expansion, modernization, and retention of MD businesses.
- ***MidAtlantic Trade Adjustment Assistance Center*** – Provides technical assistance and grants to businesses impacted by foreign competition.
- ***Neighborhood BusinessWorks*** – Flexible financing loans to new or expanding small businesses and non-profit organizations.
- ***Small Business Development Center (Eastern Shore Region)*** – Located at Salisbury University, SBDC offers no-cost consulting to help startups refine business plans.
- ***TEDCO*** – Manages multiple programs designed to invest in and support entrepreneurs.
- ***USDA*** – Rural Development Business Programs provide technical and financial assistance.

Worcester County Tourism and Economic Development Office

In March 2023, the Department of Tourism and the Department of Economic Development completed a rebranding process and were combined into one office – the Worcester County Tourism and Economic Development (WCTED).

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Located in Snow Hill, WCTED serves business owners, employers and entrepreneurs throughout the county. Under the direction of the County Commissioners and Chief Administrative Officer, the office develops partnerships and programs to support businesses on Maryland's Coast. The Economic Development team has established their mission, "to improve the quality of life for county citizens by increasing employment opportunities, expanding the tax base, protecting our environmental assets, and creating full-time, family supporting jobs."[4] Services and technical assistance include:

- Manufacturing Machinery Tax Exemption
- Site Selection & Real Estate
- Small Business Development and Financing
- Start Up & Entrepreneurial Assistance
- Tax Incentive Navigation
- Workforce Development & Training

While Economic Development focuses on county residents, Tourism's objective is to increase visibility to outsiders and promote travel to the area. The Department maintains its own website, with information on lodging options, local businesses, entertainment, and an events calendar. The "Towns" tab allows users to explore what town in the County has to offer, highlighting the unique features of each community and further promoting regional connectivity.

---

[4] *Source: Maryland's Coast Worcester County (https://choosemarylandscoast.org/about-us/)*

8. TRANSPORTATION

Introduction

Transportation is an important element of County planning because it provides for connectivity, supports community sustainability, and helps to enable local economic activity. This chapter discusses the County's transportation infrastructure and examines the importance of maintaining and supporting the current and future vehicle and multimodal transportation needs of the County.

Goals and Objectives

Worcester County, in cooperation with local, state, and federal entities, will provide for safe and efficient movement of people and goods by the various transportation modes with an acceptable level of congestion.

1. **Support transportation infrastructure and future transportation needs.**
    - Improve connectivity to recreational facilities and other points of interest by adding missing sidewalk or bicycle connections.
    - Conserve and maintain scenic roadway views to maintain the rural character of the County.
    - Integrate walkability and multi-modal transportation into land use planning and development.
2. **Improve safety, mobility, accessibility, and resiliency in the transportation network.**

Policies and Guidelines

Three statewide and countywide plans provide context for the County's transportation planning.

The Playbook – 2025 Maryland Transportation Plan

The Playbook is Maryland's long-range transportation plan. It defines goals and objectives in support of the State's efforts to create safe, reliable, accessible, and sustainable transportation options across Maryland. This plan provides guidance to local officials to enhance safety for all, expand transportation infrastructure to serve local communities and support the economy, and to promote environmental stewardship.

2050 Maryland Statewide Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan

This Plan identifies statewide goals and strategies for improving active transportation access, safety, and connectivity. It establishes priorities and performance measures to guide future planning and investment based on the goals instituted in the *2023 Moore-Miller Transition Report* as well as *The Playbook*. Maryland counties and municipalities serve as partners in developing these connected and safe transportation networks.

Maryland's Coast Worcester County Greenway Trails Master Plan

This Plan provides guidance to help strengthen Worcester County's active transportation by providing healthy, equitable, and sustainable greenways. The goals identified in this Plan are to:

- Identify key origins, destinations, and trail corridor opportunities, including along existing roadways, utility corridors, parklands, or railroad rights of way.

8. TRANSPORTATION

- Identify safe, convenient, and cost-effective opportunities to make trail connections.
- Identify opportunities for additional trail amenities such as trailhead parking, wayfinding, seating areas, playgrounds, interpretive signage, landscape enhancements, or other amenities supported by community members.
- Identify engineering constraints such as needs for stormwater management, bridges, roadway crossings, or right of way acquisition.
- Inventory and assess existing environmental resources, including sensitive habitats and ecosystems, historic sites, and cultural amenities, and identify the permitting and regulatory requirements for any potential impacts.
- Build partnerships with key stakeholders for project support and participation, including potential for partnerships in trail funding and maintenance.
- Position priority trail corridors for the next steps towards implementation, including strategies to secure grant funding with the Maryland Department of Transportation Kim Lamphier Bikeways Grant program or through a multitude of Federal grant opportunities.

Functional Classification

The Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) identifies roadways by their functional classification, which is groups the highways, roads, and streets by the role each roadway plays in moving vehicles. The five classifications, as described and defined by MDOT SHA and the Federal Highway Functional Classification system are:

- Interstates - highest classification of roadway, designed and constructed with mobility and for long-distance travel.
- Principal Arterials - connectors that serve regional traffic. The primary function is to move traffic efficiently through the area with controlled access to neighboring roads or destinations.
- Minor Arterials - connect traffic from Principal Arterials to lower classified streets. They connect access to neighboring roads and local destinations. Direct access to individual properties and neighborhoods is usually discouraged.
- Collectors – provide road access to higher density residential neighborhoods and commercial areas. Traffic is usually a higher density of thru traffic from local roads and streets. They provide access to neighborhoods, commercial, and industrial areas.
- Local Roads - intended to provide access from residences to the higher roadway network. Local roads can be connected as an urban grid in smaller blocks or as a single road with direct connection to the main line.

Within the County, the existing roadway facilities are classified as Arterial Highways, Major Collector Highways, Minor Collector Highways, and Local. All roadways and their corresponding functional classifications for MDOT SHA are shown in **Map 8-1, Functional Classification**. **Table 8-1, County Classifications** lists the main roadways that connect the County to neighboring Counties and States along with their corresponding County classification.

8. TRANSPORTATION

Table 8-1: County Classifications

Roadway	Route	Functional Classification
Ocean City Expressway	MD 90	Arterial Highway
Ocean Gateway	US 50	Arterial Highway
Ocean Highway	US 13	Arterial Highway
Worcester Highway	US 113	Arterial Highway
Bay Street/Assateague Road	MD 376	Major Collector Highway
Racetrack Road	MD 589	Major Collector Highway
Snow Hill Road	MD 12	Major Collector Highway
Whaleyville Road	MD 610	Major Collector Highway
Stephen Decatur Highway	MD 611	Major Collector Highway
Old Ocean City Road	MD 346	Minor Collector Highway
Whiton Road	MD 354	Minor Collector Highway
Dividing Creek Road and Nassawango Road	MD 364	Minor Collector Highway
Public Landing Road and Bay Street	MD 365	Minor Collector Highway
Stockton Road	MD 366	Minor Collector Highway
Bishopville Road	MD 367	Minor Collector Highway
Saint Martins Neck Road	MD 368	Minor Collector Highway
Libertytown Road	-	Minor Collector Highway
Market Street	-	Minor Collector Highway
Beauchamp Road	-	Minor Collector Highway
Broad Street (Pocomoke)	-	Minor Collector Highway
Golf Course Road	-	Minor Collector Highway
Harrison Road	-	Minor Collector Highway
Keyser Point Road	-	Minor Collector Highway
Nassawango Road	-	Minor Collector Highway
Old Bridge Road	-	Minor Collector Highway
Pocomoke Baby Beltway	-	Minor Collector Highway

Source: Worcester County Zoning Code § ZS 1-326. Classification of highways.

Maintenance

The Roads Division of Worcester County Public Works is responsible for the day-to-day operation and maintenance of County-owned roads and bridges. MDOT SHA is responsible for all other state roadways and bridges. The Roads Division is responsible for maintaining approximately 571 miles of roads and 35 bridges within the County. Maintenance responsibilities include:

8. TRANSPORTATION

- Road repairs
- Paving
- Drainage
- Landscaping maintenance
- Installation of traffic signs
- Marking of County roadways
- Roadway design and construction

Traffic Volumes

MDOT SHA monitors roadway volumes by measuring traffic Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT). AADT is measured by counting the total multi-direction vehicle volume of a roadway in 24 hours and dividing it by one year (365 days). **Table 8-2, Annual Average Daily Traffic** shows the MDOT SHA AADT's for the main arterial roadways within the County. **Map 8-2, AADT**, shows all 2022 AADT values for the existing roadway system.

Table 8-2: Annual Average Daily Traffic

Roadway	Route	Functional Classification	AADT
Ocean City Expressway	MD 90	Principal Arterial – Other Freeways and Expressways	24,830
Ocean Gateway	US 50	Principal Arterial – Other Freeways and Expressways	33,522
Ocean Highway	US 13	Principal Arterial – Other Freeways and Expressways	20,686
Worcester Highway	US 113	Principal Arterial – Other Freeways and Expressways	23,360
Coastal Highway	MD 528	Principal Arterial – Other	50,242
Baltimore Avenue	MD 378	Minor Arterial	18,172
Bay Street/Assateague Road	MD 376	Minor Arterial	6,010
Broad Street	MD 374	Minor Arterial	2,315
Old Ocean City Road	MD 346	Minor Arterial	2,673
Philadelphia Avenue	MD 528	Minor Arterial	37,882
Racetrack Road	MD 589	Minor Arterial	21,141
Snow Hill Road	MD 12	Minor Arterial	5,565
Stephen Decatur Highway	MD 611	Minor Arterial	11,670
Williams Street	MD 377	Minor Arterial	2,874

Source: MDOT SHA 2020 Roadway Functional Classification & 2022 Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT)

Scenic Byway

Maryland has 19 designated scenic byways that cover approximately 2,487 miles of roadway. Scenic byways are mapped driving routes that tour of areas that are rich with nature, culture, and history. They offer a slower paced travel route that encompasses a travel theme such as, mountains, beaches, or

8. TRANSPORTATION

small-town Main Streets. There are two designated scenic byways in Worcester County, the Cape to Cape route and the Blue Crab Scenic Byway. The Cape to Cape route is a 79-mile route that promotes the East Coasts' historic beaches and islands that travel from the Delmarva Peninsula to Chincoteague, Sinepuxent, and Assawoman. This byway encourages users to stop and experience Ocean City, Berlin, Snow Hill, and Assateague Island. The Blue Crab Scenic Byway is a 210-mile route that promotes Crisfield/Smith Island, Ocean City, Assateague Island National Seashore and other public lands within the Lower Eastern Shore Heritage Area. The route combines several existing state scenic byways into one primary tour. More can be read about this route from the *Blue Crab Scenic Byway Corridor Management* Plan. The County should continue to promote, preserve, and maintain these scenic routes and their Corridor Management Plans.

Transit

Bus service in Worcester County is provided by Shore Transit and the Ocean City Beach Bus. Shore Transit is the public transit agency for the Maryland Lower Eastern Shore counties of Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester. The agency's mission is to provide safe, reliable, friendly, and effective transportation services to the community. The fleet consists of 45 vehicles that operate 361 days a year (operation is 7 days a week along six fixed routes with 70 total bus stops). Worcester County has two of these fixed routes (Route 452 and 432) with 20 associated bus stops. The County continues to monitor the growing needs for transit and the existing workforce. **Table 8-3, Shore Transit Ridership** shows the available ridership data for all the route bus stops in 2024.

Table 8-3: Shore Transit Ridership

Bus Stop ID	Bus Stop Name	2024 Ridership
S236	Atlantic General Hospital	3,567
S242	Decatur St	1,540
S247	Walmart - Berlin	6,159
S253	Hardee's - Pocomoke City	657
S255	Pocomoke Plaza	3,178
S256	Snow Hill Detention Center	1,211
S258	Ocean City Transfer Point	13,542
S259	Walmart - Pocomoke City	10,246
S261	White Marlin Mall (at KFC)	3,688
S262	West Ocean City Park and Ride	20,571
S263	Worcester Addiction Cooperative Services (WAC)	408
S264	Worcester Co. Commission on Aging Inc (MAC)	1,865
S266	Market St. & Maple St	1,372
S267	Byrd Park - South	2,074
S268	Byrd Park - North	547
S296	Franklin Ave. (across from Medical Center)	564
S301	Market St. @ Pocomoke Family Medical Ctr	5,196
S304	Ocean Pines Sports Core Pool	805

8. TRANSPORTATION

S351	12th St. & Market St. - Pocomoke	1,087
S352	Market St. & 12th St. - Pocomoke	358
	Total 2024 Ridership:	**78,635**

Source: Shore Transit 2024 Fixed Route Bus Stop Stats for Worcester County

The Ocean City Beach Bus and the Park-N-Ride Beach Bus are the public transit agencies serving Ocean City. Their mission is to provide transportation, which is safe, convenient, affordable, reliable, and friendly to the residents, visitors, and those who work or do business in Ocean City. The Park-N-Ride Beach Bus operates only during the summer season but is available 7 days a week. It provides service every 20 minutes from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. from the South Division Street Transit Station to and from the West Ocean City Park-N-Ride located off Ocean Gateway.

The Ocean City Beach Bus operates year-round and provides service from the South Division Street Transit Station to/from the 144th Street Transit Station. There are 124 bus stops along these two routes.

Map 8-3, Transit, shows the routes and bus stops for all Worcester County transit agencies. Bus stop locations for the Ocean City lines were excluded due to the quantity and scale of the map. However, all bus stop locations can be found on the oceancitymd.gov website. **Table 8-4, Ocean City Transit Ridership** shows the available monthly and yearly ridership data for the last five years (2020 to 2024).

Table 8-4: Ocean City Transit Ridership

Month	2020 Ridership	2021 Ridership	2022 Ridership	2023 Ridership	2024 Ridership
January	15,331	10,741	12,544	15,608	14,310
February	17,943	9,605	15,105	15,383	15,134
March	23,815	17,168	22,957	26,390	28,802
April	6,472	19,119	40,393	37,627	30,007
May	15,578	86,115	137,772	123,981	117,583
June	97,150	247,089	317,916	307,986	291,727
July	98,753	277,627	328,366	307,320	281,775
August	88,510	234,971	304,006	277,667	251,744
September	62,630	156,845	176,429	203,125	200,118
October	31,024	60,294	66,867	83,223	107,874
November	12,827	17,921	19,013	18,435	18,147
December	11,189	16,619	17,702	19,134	16,801
Total Ridership	**481,222**	**1,154,114**	**1,459,070**	**1,435,879**	**1,374,022**

Source: Ocean City Transit – Bus Ridership by Calander Year for Worcester County

Pedestrian Facilities

Pedestrian facilities include bicycle facilities, sidewalks, side paths, crosswalks, and trails. Accessible and connected non-motorized facilities are important to the County to encourage non-vehicle

8. TRANSPORTATION

transportation, community health, and environmentally friendly means of transportation. It is important for the County to consistent with all State bicycle and pedestrian master plans, as well as local municipal multimodal plans.

The County took an important step forward in 2024 in developing the *Worcester County Greenway Trails Master Plan*. This Plan sets goals and guidance for the County's pedestrian facilities, bicycle facilities, and greenways/trails that go hand in hand with this Comprehensive Plan. All existing and proposed facilities identified in this Greenway Plan are shown in **Figure 8-1, Greenway Facilities**.

Figure 8-1: Greenway Facilities
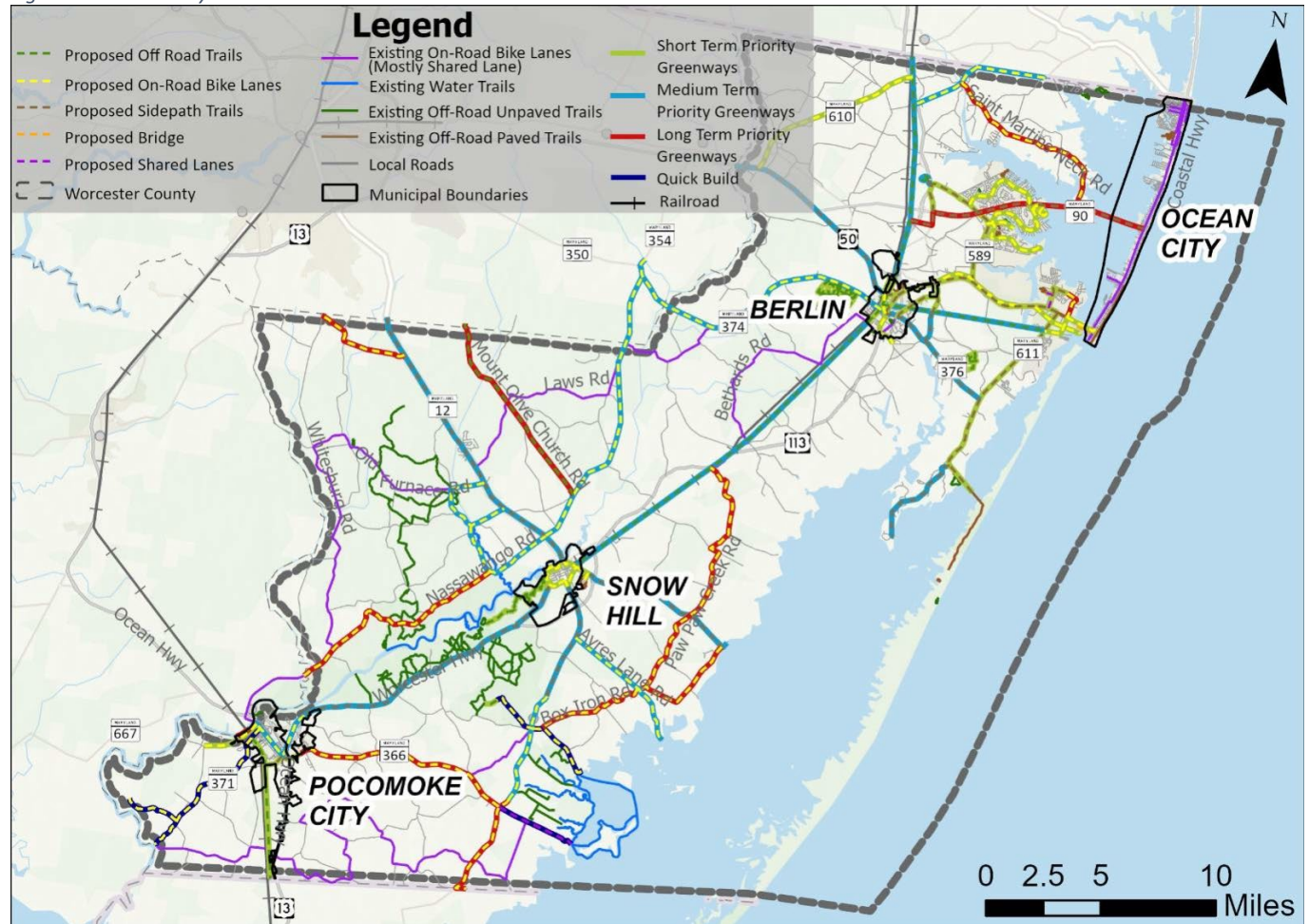
Source: Maryland's Coast Worcester County Greenways Trails Master Plan, page 28.

8. TRANSPORTATION

Bicycle Facilities

Bicycle facilities provide users with safe riding options to protect them from vehicles and traffic congestion. Bicycle facilities within the County include designated bicycle lanes, shared lanes, and off-road trails. There are many on-road bike options within the County, as depicted in **Figure 8-1**, that are identified as either a dedicated bike lane or a marked shared lane. The County should continue to work with municipalities and MDOT SHA to maintain these existing facilities and consider adding additional facilities when future roadway projects and new developments arise.

Sidewalk Facilities

Sidewalk facilities are paved concrete paths that follow roadway alignments that only pedestrians may use. Sidewalk facilities also include curb ramps, pedestrian crosswalks, and pedestrian signals. These facilities are important within the County and municipalities so that pedestrians have safe and accessible connections to schools, shopping centers, work, places of worship, and other common points of interest.

Worcester County has a large network of sidewalks within residential and commercial areas. The County should continue to maintain these existing facilities and plan for future improvements. Sidewalk improvements should be considered and incorporated in all ongoing and future roadway or development projects. The County should also continue to work closely with the State to ensure that the State sidewalk facilities are also maintained.

Trails

Trails are pedestrian facilities that are typically paved or unpaved roadway-separated paths utilized by cyclists and pedestrians. These paths follow a roadway alignment with a landscaping or concrete buffer or their own alignment. The two main coastal trails within the County are Ocean City's Boardwalk and within the Assateague Island National Seashore. There are also trails present throughout the County, most of which are located within parks. Park locations can be found in **Chapter 3 – Community Facilities**.

Water Trails

Water trails are routes on a waterway that are designated for recreational use by canoes, kayaks, and paddle boards. Since Worcester County is a coastal community, it has an extensive network of water trails and access points. This network is included in the Greenways Trail Master Plan and should continue to be maintained, protected, and expanded by the County. All existing water trails are shown in blue in **Figure 8-1**.

Water Transport

Worcester County through zoning has provided protection and encouragement for the commercial operations at the West Ocean City Harbor. The commercial component is critical to keep federal

8. TRANSPORTATION

maintenance of the inlet. The inlet is a key component for both the commercial and recreational fishing industry. Commercial marine zoning should be continued to protect the harbor's commercial status.

Marinas, docks, and shoreline stabilization have received increasing attention due to their effect on the shoreline and near-shore waters. The land and water boundary provides specialized habitat for the Coastal Bays' fish and wildlife. For this reason, a marina, dock, and shoreline stabilization policy should be developed to provide guidance to ~~the Shoreline Commission and~~ county staff when reviewing water-oriented facilities. The objective should be to provide water access, yet provide protection for these special habitats. Community docking facilities should be pursued to the maximum extent feasible to minimize shoreline construction.

A limit on the length of docks and piers is currently under study. These structures fragment wetlands, shade vegetation, and provide a predator pathway deep into the marsh. Care should be taken to limit these impacts.

The Navigation and Dredging Advisory Group of the Maryland Coastal Bays Program (MCBP) is preparing a master plan for dredging and navigation. The plan identifies issues with navigation and channel maintenance/dredging. Beneficial use of dredge material and employment of best management practices are encouraged. The draft plan notes that the Corps of Engineers maintains the bays' federal channels, and the state has limited funding for non-federal channel maintenance projects.

Maintenance of the Pocomoke River channel should continue, and it should be monitored for design changes to accommodate cargo traffic needs.

Railroads
Two rail lines serve Worcester County: the Maryland and Delaware Line and the Delmarva Central Railroad. The Maryland and Delaware Line is a 92-mile, Class III short-line rail that connects Snow Hill, Newark, and Berlin to Maryland and Delaware. The Delmarva Central Railroad is a 188-mile, Class III short-line rail that connects Delaware, Pocomoke, and Virginia. These lines mainly serve the County for bulk hauling of grain and stone. Currently in Berlin, MD, Tracks and Yaks offers a guided railbike tour that allows visitors to safely railbike along 6.5-miles of retired tracks that were established in 1877. The excursion is a shares rail history and promotes visitation of the Queponco Train Station Museum.

Airports
There are two public airports that serve Worcester County: Salisbury Regional Airport and the Ocean City Municipal Airport. The Salisbury Regional Airport supports the American Airlines, FEDEX cargo, Maryland State Police helicopter operations, and general-aviation activities. The Ocean City Municipal Airport maintains a general aviation center for local flights and plane maintenance. Both airport facilities provide car rental services.

County Priorities
Every year Worcester County updates its list of transportation priorities for the Maryland Department of Transportation's Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP). The letter is developed based on input from the public, county staff, and elected and appointed officials and sent to MDOT. MDOT evaluates the projects in the letter to assist the state in updating the CTP, which is a six-year capital budget for

8. TRANSPORTATION

State transportation projects. The CTP includes capital transportation projects that may involve planning, environmental studies, design, right-of-way acquisition, or construction. In 2024, Worcester County identified the following transportation priorities:

- Dualize MD 90 to address increased traffic demands and widen the shoulders.
- Dualize MD 589 to address increased traffic demands and increased development.
- Replace the defective drawbridge on US 50.
- Signalize the intersection of MD 611 and MD 376.
- Signalize the intersection of MD 367 and MD 368 (Bishopville).
- Signalize the intersection at US 13 and MD 366 (Pocomoke).
- Signalize the intersection at US 50 and MD 610
- Construct safety improvement on US 113 near Corners Creek to prevent crashes.
- Eliminate flooding on MD 12 north of Snow Hill.
- Construct dedicated right turn lane on southbound St. Martin's Neck Road at MD 90.
- Construct APS/CPS for pedestrians to cross the intersection of US 113 and MD 346.
- Develop an access management plan for the MD 611 to address growth and traffic.
- Construct a shared-use path on MD 611 from US 50 to Assateague State Park.
- Update the bathrooms at the MD State Line – US 13 – Pocomoke Welcome Center.

Ocean City, Snow Hill, and Berlin also submitted priority letters to be attached with Worcester County. The County should continue to monitor these projects as well as future needs, and work with the State to ensure these transportation goals are implemented.

Highway Needs Inventory

The Highway Needs Inventory (NHI) is a MDOT SHA long-term document that identifies highway improvement projects to serve the existing and projected population and economic activity in the State as well as address safety and structural problems that need to be constructed. The NHI notes that only a portion of the proposed projects may be addressed in the future due to needs and resources that are subject to change. **Table 8-5, Highway Needs Inventory** presents the lists of Worcester County projects from 2021.

Table 8-5: Highway Needs Inventory

Route	Improvement	Estimated Cost ($000)
Primary System		
MD 90 (Ocean City Expressway)	Freeway reconstruction	$655,700
US 13 (Ocean Highway)	Access control improvements	$141,200
US 50 (Ocean Gateway)	Access control improvements with interchange at MD 589	$216,700
US 50 (Ocean Gateway, Kelly Bridge)	Bridge construct/reconstruct	$376,200
US 113 (Worcester Highway)	Interchange construct	$84,700
Secondary System		

MD 376 (Bay Street)	2 lane reconstruct	$17,800
MD 589 (Racetrack Road)	Multi-lane reconstruct including interchanges	$251,500
MD 611 (Stephen Decatur Road)	Multi-lane reconstruct	$30,100
MD 756 (Old Snow Hill Road)	2 lane reconstruct	$16,300

Source: 2021 Highway Needs Inventory

Transportation Studies and Projects

There are no current or future planned County roadway projects; however, MDOT SHA has a few active projects within the County.

MD 90 (Ocean City Expressway) US 50 (Ocean Gateway) to MD 528 (Coastal Highway) Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study

The importance of addressing MD 90 needs was identified by Worcester County as their number one Consolidate Transportation Program (CTP) priority in their 2022 letter to MDOT. As a result, SHA completed a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study for the MD 90 corridor between US 50 and MD 528 in February 2023. The PEL study identified long-term transportation needs, including traffic operations, capacity, safety, pedestrian and bicyclist accessibility and emergency evacuations. Transportation goals for the MD 90 corridor were determined based on current and modeled future corridor transportation conditions, traffic analyses, and evaluation of environmental resources. The study identified the following goals for MD 90:

- Accommodate existing and future traffic needs between US 50 and MD 528 by improving capacity, traffic operations, and accommodating bicycle and pedestrian travel.
- Improve the level of safety for motorists travelling between US 50 and MD 528 by reducing stop and go movements that cause crashes and ensuring good bridge conditions.
- Provide access for evacuation during current flood events and future predicted sea level rise.

MD 528 (Coastal Highway) 15th Street to 67th Street

SHA initiated the MD 528 (Coastal Highway) project as part of the Pedestrian Safety Action Plan (PSAP). The PSAP program prioritizes safety enhancements along corridors. Implementation decisions are made using factors such as equity, destinations and connections, crash data and density. This project aims to make Context Driven improvements along 3.13 miles from 15th Street to 67th Street in Worcester County.

US 50 (Ocean Gateway) Harry Kelly Memorial Bridge Repairs

SHA initiated the repair work on US 50 (Ocean Gateway) Harry Kelley Memorial Bridge. The project will involve repairing the structural steel beams and replacing damaged connection plates. The sidewalks and hatches on the bridge will also be rehabilitated. This project is currently in the construction phase.

Transportation and Land Use

Will add this section with information from the Land Use element

DELAWARE

MARYLAND

N

113

50

50 Ocean City

Berlin

113

113

Snow Hill

113

Pocomoke City

13

VIRGINIA

Legend
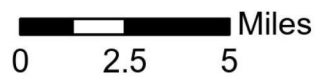
	State Lines
	Worcester County
	Water Bodies
	Railroad

Functional Classification
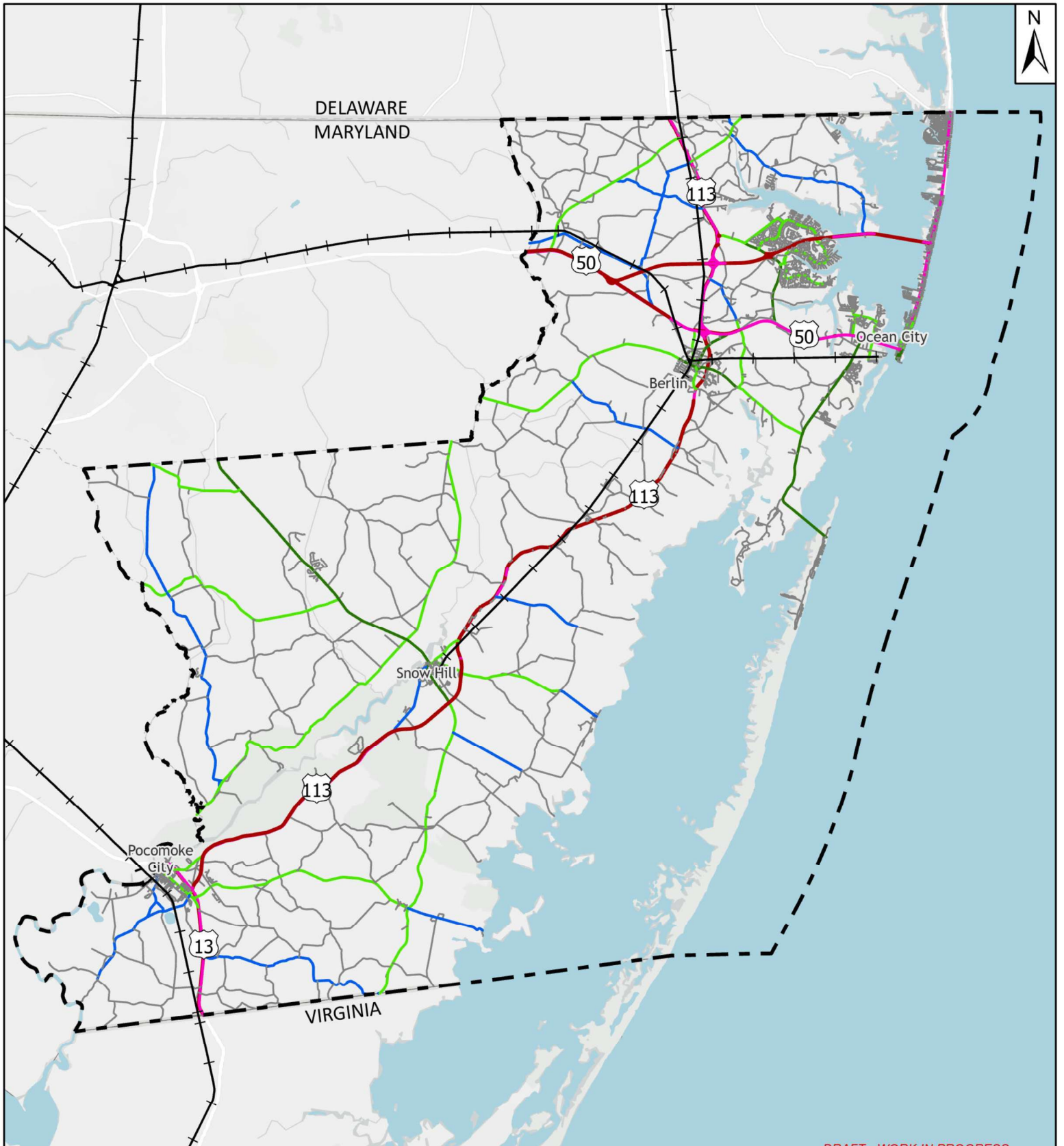
Principal Arterial – Other
Freeways And Expressways

Principal Arterial – Other

Minor Arterial

Major Collector

Minor Collector

Local

8-1
Functional
Classification

Miles

0   2.5   5

Source: MD iMAP, Worcester County
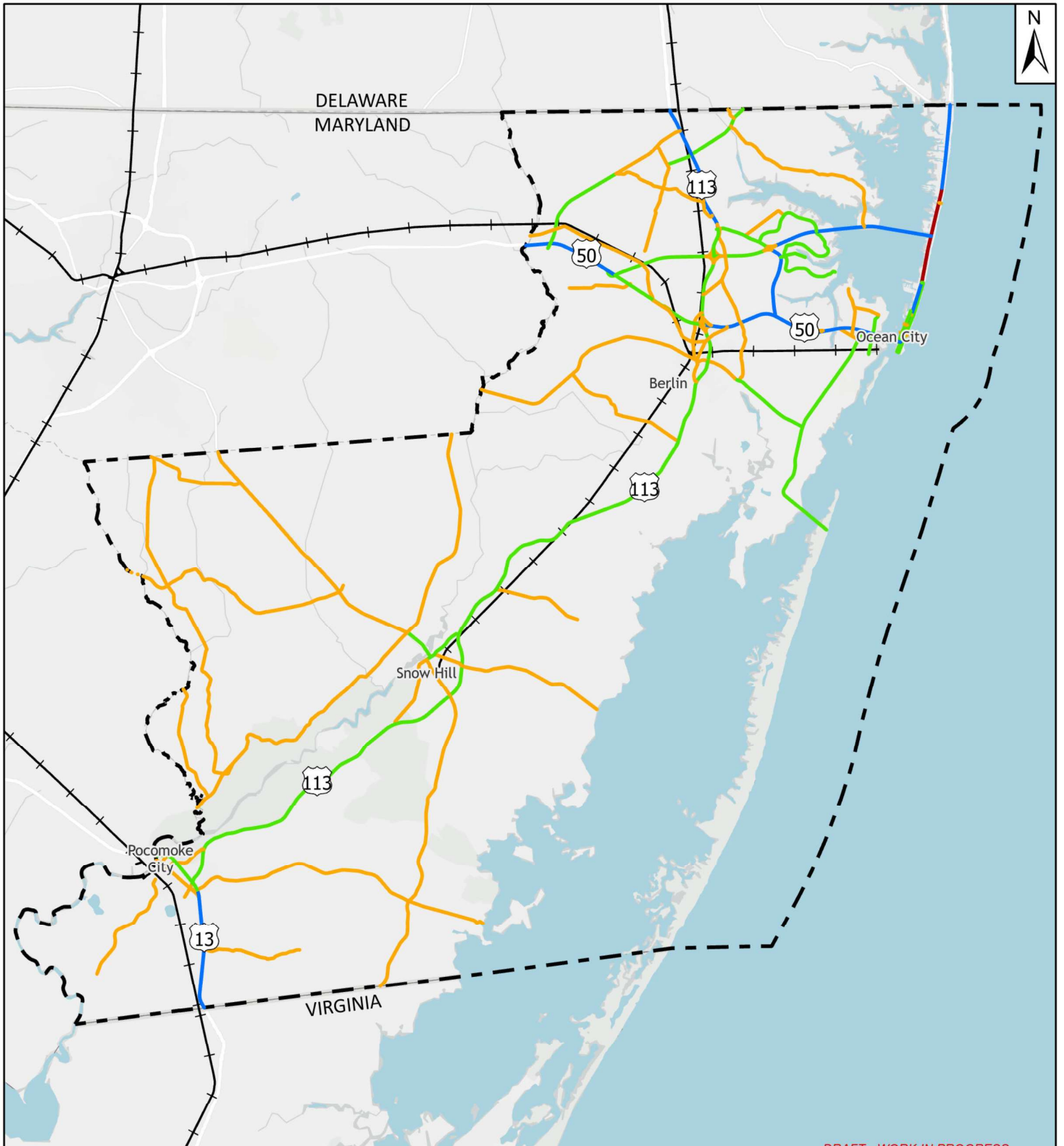
Legend
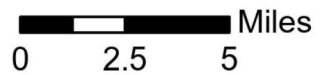
State Lines

Worcester County

Water Bodies

Railroad
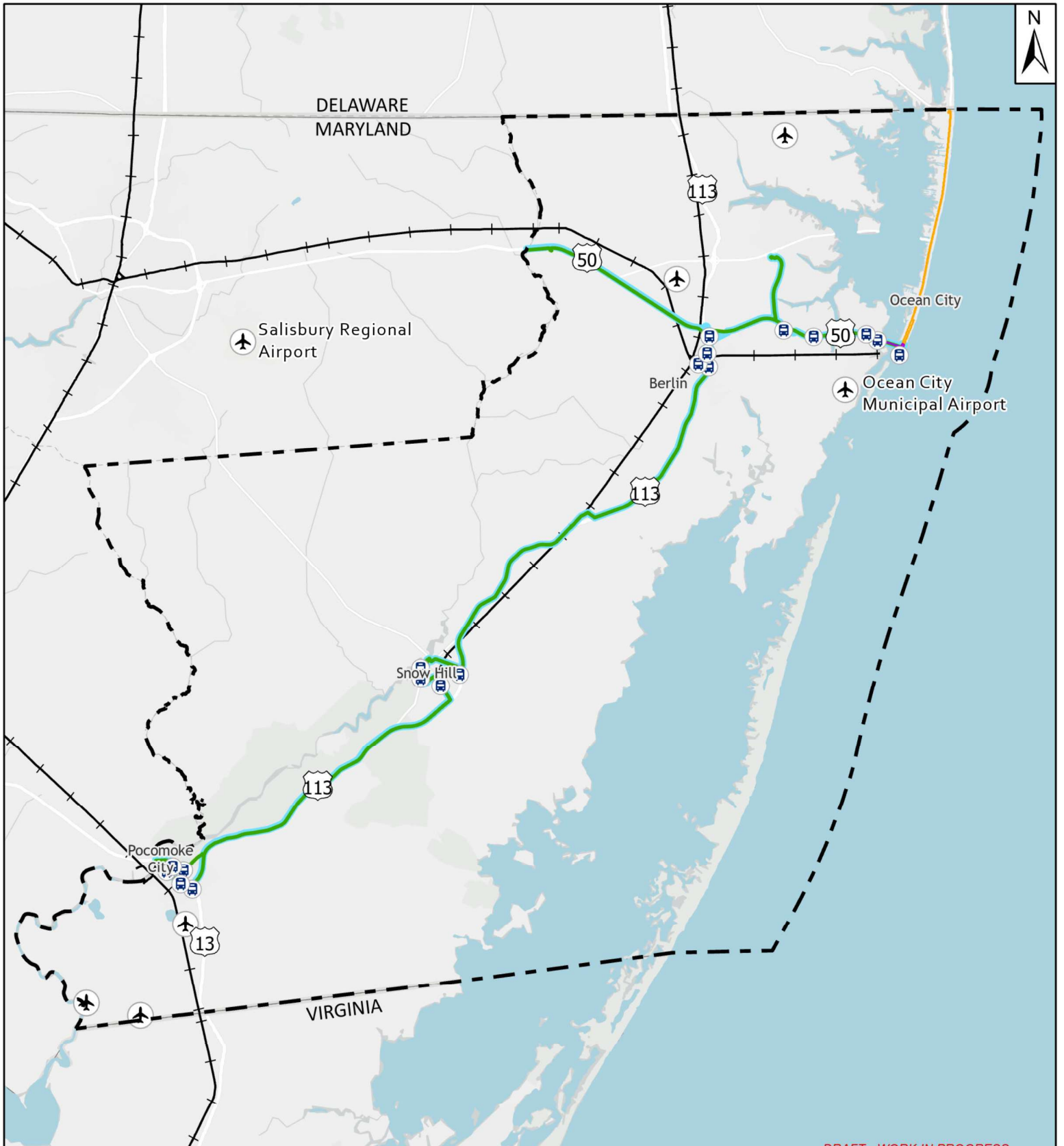
AADT (2022)

Less Than 5,000 Vehicles

5,001 to 20,000 Vehicles

20,001 to 50,000 Vehicles

Over 50,000 Vehicles

DRAFT - WORK IN PROGRESS

8-2
AADT

Miles

0   2.5   5

Source: MD iMAP, Worcester County

Legend

State Lines	
Worcester County	
Water Bodies	
Railroad	
Airports	
Shore Transit Stops	

Ocean City Transportation Routes
— 1
— 2

Shore Transit Routes
— 452
— 432

DRAFT - WORK IN PROGRESS

8-3
Transit

Miles
0   2.5   5
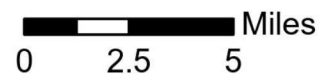
*Source: MD iMAP, Worcester County *Note: Ocean City Transportation Stops not shown due to quantity and scale of map.*