Montgomery County FFY2024 Problem Identification

Overall

Montgomery County accounted for 17.3% of the population and 12.9% of the vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in the State of Maryland on average over the past three years (2019-2021). During that time, an annual average of 42 traffic fatalities have occurred in the County, which have trended up then down, ranging from 37 (6.9% of all fatalities in the State) to 46 (8.0%) to 43 (7.6%). The number of serious injuries (defined as KABCO=4 on the police crash report) over the past three years in Montgomery County has dipped and increased, ranging from 316 to 223 to 263, which are 10.1%, 8.2%, and 8.6% of the State total for serious injuries in 2019, 2020, and 2021 respectively.

Usually several hundred thousand citations for traffic violations are issued across the State and adjudicated in Maryland District Courts each year (435,907 in 2019 and 320,078 in 2020). However, only 308,384 citations were issued and adjudicated in the year 2021 across the State. Over the previous three years, the number of traffic citations issued in Montgomery County has steeply decreased from 59,591 (13.7% of statewide traffic citations) in 2019 to 35,303 (11.0%) in 2020 to 30,883 (10.0%) in 2021. These citations were issued anywhere within the boundaries of Montgomery County to a resident of any jurisdiction, state, or country.

Aggressive Driving

Aggressive driving fatalities in Montgomery County during the past three years have oscillated, with 1 occurring in 2019, 3 in 2020, and 0 in 2021. Serious injuries resulting from such crashes in the County have been decreasing, ranging from 14 in 2019 to 12 in 2020 and 10 in 2021. Aggressive driving crashes occurring in 2021 accounted for 0.0% of all fatalities and 5.9% of all serious injuries in the State.

Aggressive driving citations are rarely issued because a driver must be observed committing three or more specific infractions to qualify under the aggressive driving statute. In Maryland, 738 such citations were issued on average over the past three years. Of those, an average of 73 were issued in Montgomery County (86 in 2019, 71 in 2020, and 61 in 2021).

Distracted Driving

Since 2019, there have been an annual average of about 4 distracted driving fatalities occurring in Montgomery County. In 2021, distracted driving in the County added 4 deaths to the State's distracted driving fatalities, a point on a trend that has remained relatively constant over the previous three years (3 in 2019 and 5 in 2020). Serious injuries resulting from distracted driving crashes in the County have dipped and increased over the past three years, from 181 in 2019 (12.1% of all distracted driving serious injuries in the State) to 119 in 2020 (9.8% of all) to 163 in 2021 (11.7% of all). In 2021, 9.3% of all fatalities and 62.0% of all serious injuries recorded in Montgomery County resulted from distracted driving crashes.

Distracted driving citations issued in Maryland during the past three years have decreased significantly, ranging from 33,974 in 2019 to 19,432 in 2020 and 17,466 in 2021. During the same period, distracted driving citations issued in Montgomery County have steeply decreased, ranging from 4,233 in 2019 to 2,584 in 2020 and 1,960 in 2021. As a proportion of the distracted driving citations issued statewide, those handed out in the County accounted for 12.5% in 2019, 13.3% in 2020, and 11.2% in 2021.

Impaired Driving

Over the past three years, an average of 10 impaired driving fatalities occurred per year in Montgomery County. Fatalities from such crashes have stayed about the same, ranging from 10 (6.6% of all impaired driving fatalities in Maryland) in 2019 to 11 (9.1% of all) in 2020 to 10 (5.6% of all) in 2021. Serious injuries resulting from such crashes in the County over the same time period have seen an increase, ranging from 33 in 2019 (6.8% of all impaired driving serious injuries in the State) to 37 in 2020 (8.3% of all) to 41 in 2021 (9.0% of all). In 2021, 23.3% of all fatalities and 15.6% of all serious injuries in Montgomery County resulted from impaired driving crashes, compared to 31.6% of all fatalities and 14.9% of all serious injuries from impaired driving crashes occurring throughout the State.

Impaired driving relates to driving while impaired by alcohol and/or drugs or controlled dangerous substances. Several citations may be issued at the point of an encounter with an impaired driver. Therefore, all judicial figures related to impaired driving will be quantified using arrests, not individual citations. Impaired driving arrests have seesawed in Maryland over the past three years, from 19,022 in 2019 to 14,017 in 2020 to 14,855 in 2021. During the same period, impaired driving arrests have steeply decreased in Montgomery County, ranging from 3,281 in 2019 to 1,996 in 2020 to 1,982 in 2021. As a proportion of impaired driving arrests in the State, the number of impaired driving arrests in the County accounted for 17.2% in 2019, 14.2% in 2020, and 13.3% in 2021. Of the impaired arrests in the County in 2021, 1.6% were of older drivers (ages 65+) while 3.3% were of young drivers (ages 16-20).

Speeding

During the past three years, Montgomery County averaged 3 speeding related fatalities per year, which have increased over that time: 2 in 2019, 3 in 2020 and 5 in 2021. Serious injuries resulting from such crashes in the County over the past three years have decreased and leveled off, ranging from 30 in 2019 to 22 in 2020 and 22 in 2021. In 2021, 5.2% of statewide speeding related fatalities and 6.3% of statewide speeding related serious injuries resulted from crashes in Montgomery County. Over the same year, 11.6% of all fatalities and 8.4% of all serious injuries recorded in Montgomery County were the result of crashes involving driving speed.

Speeding citations are very common even though those adjudicated through the District Court do not include automated enforcement. Speeding citations issued in Montgomery County have decreased significantly over the past three years, with 19,397 (10.6% of statewide speeding citations), 13,590 (9.0% of statewide), and 11,652 (8.3% of all) issued in 2019, 2020, and 2021, respectively. Statewide speeding citations have decreased significantly over the same

three years: 182,169, 151,093, and 139,797. Speeding citations comprised 37.7% of all Montgomery County citations in 2021.

Non-motorists

Non-motorists are defined here as pedestrians (on foot) and bicyclists. Pedestrian fatalities in Montgomery County have declined over the previous three years, from 14 (2019) to 15 (2020) to 10 (2021), while serious injuries have trended down then up, ranging from 67 (2019) to 32 (2020) to 42 (2021). The occurrence of bicyclist fatalities in Montgomery County has stayed about the same, with 1 in 2019, 2 in 2020, and 0 in 2021, while serious injuries to bicyclists have fluctuated, ranging from 14 in 2019 to 10 in 2020 to 12 in 2021.

Very few non-motorist citations are issued throughout the State, to either the pedestrian or the motor vehicle driver. Typically, more violations are issued to drivers, and in Montgomery County 98 were issued to drivers against pedestrians or bicyclists in 2021, while 4 were issued to pedestrians or bicyclists that year. As a proportion of statewide totals (648 and 182), those numbers represent 15.1% and 2.2%, respectively, in 2021.

Motorcycles

Motorcycle rider fatalities have increased over the past three years in Montgomery County, ranging from 5 (2019) to 5 (2020) to 10 (2021). Serious injuries to motorcyclists have been alternating, ranging from 23 (2019) to 15 (2020) to 25 (2021). The 2021 figures account for 13.2% of motorcycle rider fatalities and 7.6% of rider serious injuries that occurred in the State.

Maryland has had a universal helmet law in place for several decades; consequently, the incidence of unhelmeted motorcyclists involved in a crash is low. The State has averaged 9 unhelmeted motorcycle rider fatalities per year over the past three years; unhelmeted motorcycle fatalities in Montgomery County have stayed the same (an average of 1 per year). However, 10 seriously injured riders in Montgomery County were unhelmeted in 2021, which is 9.6% of the State total (compared to 4 in 2019 and 3 in 2020).

Older Drivers

In Maryland, older driver safety programs focus on drivers of age 65 years or older. The data presented here on fatalities and serious injuries include any person involved in a crash with an older driver. Older drivers were involved in crashes that resulted in an average of 91 fatalities in Maryland each year (105 in 2019, 91 in 2020, and 78 in 2021). During that time, serious injuries resulting from these crashes in Maryland have oscillated, ranging from 512 in 2019 to 381 in 2020 to 429 in 2021. Fatal crashes involving older drivers in Montgomery County averaged 8 over the same period (ranging from 9 in 2019, 4 in 2020, to 10 in 2021). Further, serious injuries resulting from these crashes in the County have trended down then up, ranging from 54 in 2019, 34 in 2020 to 47 in 2021.

A total of 10,350 citations for moving violations or restraint usage were issued to drivers of age 65+ in Maryland in 2021. Over the past three years, the number of traffic citations issued to older drivers in Montgomery County has steeply decreased from 2,780 (15.7% of those issued statewide) in 2019 to 1,251 (11.5%) in 2020 to 1,057 (10.2%) in 2021.

Young Drivers

In Maryland, young driver safety programs focus on individuals between ages 16 and 20. The data presented here on fatalities and serious injuries include any person involved in a crash with a young driver. Young drivers were involved in crashes that resulted in an average of 54 fatalities in Maryland each year (46 in 2019, 56 in 2020, and 61 in 2021). During that time, serious injuries resulting from these crashes in Maryland have been alternating, ranging from 407 in 2019 to 345 in 2020 to 376 in 2021. In 2021 there were 5 fatalities involving young drivers in Montgomery County, a number that has increased and leveled off over time, with 2 in 2019 and 4 in 2020. Further, serious injuries due to crashes involving young drivers have oscillated over the same period, from 43 in 2019 to 21 in 2020 to 41 in 2021.

A total of 33,462 citations for moving violations or restraint usage were issued to drivers of age 16-20 in Maryland in 2021. Over the past three years, the number of traffic citations issued to young drivers in Montgomery County has decreased significantly: 4,326 (10.5% of those issued statewide), 3,113 (8.9%), and 2,909 (8.7%) in 2019, 2020, and 2021, respectively.

Occupant Protection

An unrestrained occupant is defined as a child under the age of eight reported to be not restrained in a child safety seat (which includes harness and booster seats) or a person over the age of eight reported as not restrained by a seat belt while riding in a passenger vehicle or light truck. Unrestrained occupant fatalities have increased over the past three years in Montgomery County, ranging from 1 (2019) to 6 (2020) to 9 (2021). Serious injuries have varied over the same period: 24 (2019) to 27 (2020) to 23 (2021). The 2021 values accounted for 6.5% of the unrestrained fatalities and 6.0% of the unrestrained serious injuries occurring in the State.

In 2021, 14,994 citations were issued statewide for safety equipment violation (including seat belt violations and child safety seat violations), which decreased significantly when compared to the numbers issued in the previous years (29,653 in 2019 and 16,833 in 2020). In Montgomery County, 926 such citations were issued in 2021, representing 6.2% of the statewide total, compared to 1,699 in 2019 and 1,269 in 2020.

The MHSO conducts an annual roadside survey of seat belt usage in Maryland. The statewide observed seat belt usage rate for Maryland in 2022 among drivers and front seat passengers of all vehicles was 92.7%, while the overall observed seat belt usage rate for Montgomery County was 96.3%.

Note: Citation frequencies and percentages reported here may be underestimates of actual issued citations due to an ongoing system conversion.