Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on: HB 135, Transportation – Maryland Transportation Authority – Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety and Accessibility

Position: Support

Hearing Date: February 22, 2024

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports this bill that will make it both possible and much safer to walk or bicycle along highways by constructing protected bikeways and walkways along highways. The Transportation Authority may apply for waivers through the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee to the Secretary of Transportation.

Now the default law prevents pedestrians and bicyclists from using most highways and bridges; it provides no safe or direct way for those travelers.

The illogic and unfairness of the current law was demonstrated when the Transportation Authority replaced the route 301 bridge to Virginia over the Potomac River now called the Nice-Middleton Bridge. In 2019, the Maryland Transportation Authority chose a cheap alternative that prohibits pedestrians, makes bicycling dangerous, and limits bicycling to daylight hours and only on weekends and holidays. The agency could have chosen the option with a protected walkway and bicycle path. This decision keeps bicycle tourists and other users away from this area. It will force commuters to drive thereby increasing both climate and health-harming pollution.

This bill will require the Transportation Authority to avoid blocking bicyclists and pedestrians. The bill would encourage safe bicycling and walking, providing enjoyable healthful exercise and reducing air pollution that harms our health and our climate.

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Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental
organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the
Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.