



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB 135- TRANSPORTATION- MARYLAND TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY- PEDESTRIAN  
AND BICYCLE SAFETY AND ACCESSIBILITY

TESTIMONY OF DELEGATE LORIG CHARKOUDIAN

FEBRUARY 22, 2024

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and Members of the Environment and Transportation and Appropriations Committees,

Maryland's Complete Streets policy was implemented in 2012<sup>1</sup> and captures a "philosophy of developing context sensitive solutions that support pedestrian, bicycle, ADA, and transit accessibility". The Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) is responsible for our state's toll facilities including two turnpikes, two tunnels, and four bridges. Unlike all the other MDOT modal agencies including the SHA, the MDTA is currently not required to create plans that follow the state's Complete Streets legislative directive. This has led to lost opportunities to boost safety by creating multimodal options as part of key MDTA projects, notably the Harry W. Nice Memorial Bridge and the Intercounty Connector. Maryland has significant gaps in these local and national networks, sometimes due to water crossings and also due to interstate highways that lack safe, grade-separated walk/bike crossings.

Plans that incorporate Complete Streets principles are safer, better for our economy, more accessible for all Marylanders, and more environmentally sustainable than motor vehicle-focused transportation planning.

This bill closes gaps in our statewide plans for pedestrian and cyclist safety by aligning Maryland Transportation Authority safety requirements with the State Highway Administration's and other Maryland multi-modal transportation administrations. This bill implements the following changes to the Transportation Article:

- Removes the section preventing pedestrians and cyclists from using MDTA highways with the stipulation that cyclists can only use the shoulder if it is wide enough and there is not already a separated path.
- Requires MDTA to construct protected pathways on new and existing bridges if they will be doing major renovations. This has been done on recent bridges of varying length around the U.S. including the replacement Tappan Zee and Pensacola Bay bridges. Locally, the Woodrow Wilson and Frederick Douglas Bridges have such facilities which are quite popular.
- Requires MDTA, in collaboration with others, to identify locations for and plan to construct protected pathways that cross or run parallel to MDTA highways - When identifying these locations, MDTA will prioritize connecting to transit stations, critical needs locations, neighborhoods separated by MDTA highways, and traversing natural barriers.
- If MDTA believes construction to not be feasible, it may request a waiver that will go to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee and need approval from the Secretary of Transportation.

I respectfully request a favorable report on HB 135.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.roads.maryland.gov/oppen/sha\\_complete\\_street\\_policy.pdf](https://www.roads.maryland.gov/oppen/sha_complete_street_policy.pdf)