

Maryland Senate
Judicial Proceedings Committee
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 21, 2024

Re: **SB 514 – Support**

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members,

I am a resident of District 22 in Prince George’s County. I volunteer with several organizations working to make Maryland streets safer, including Bike Maryland and Friends of the Greenbelt East Trail. I strongly support **SB 514**. I urge the committee to report **favorable** on the bill.

SB 514 removes an impediment to designing and building safer streets. While the change does not require MDOT SHA to assume maintenance, it removes an administrative obstacle to getting needed sidewalks and bike paths designed and built along MDOT SHA-owned and -maintained roads.

Designing and building sidewalks and bike paths along state roads is consistent with MDOT’s mission and commitment to promote a safe transportation system that supports all types of users, including people walking, biking, and rolling. In recent strategic plans, MDOT has noted the need to update its policies related to bike lanes and sidewalks.

[Maryland’s Climate Pollution Reduction Plan](#) stated that, “MDOT will ramp up investments and policies to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians routinely and safely on our extensive road network by retrofitting streets with bike lanes, sidewalks, and traffic calming measures.”ⁱ

Similarly, [MDOT’s The Playbook \(i.e., the 2050 Maryland Transportation Plan\)](#) sets goals to enhance safety, serve communities, and support the economy, by increasing active transportation (*i.e.*, walking and biking), including filling gaps in active transportation networks (*i.e.*, sidewalks and bike paths).ⁱⁱ

Finally, MDOT’s [2050 Maryland Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan](#) notes that “Complicating the maintenance issue, state law and policies restrict the State of Maryland from providing maintenance assistance Revisiting and updating the Maryland code to remove the maintenance responsibility from local jurisdictions was encouraged [during stakeholder engagement] to provide a more equitable responsibility of asset management.”ⁱⁱⁱ The master plan also noted the need to update another outdated MDOT SHA policy, which SHA has managed to implement without a comparable statutory provision to rely upon – that local jurisdictions must cover the costs for design, construction, and maintenance of green pavement treatments for bicycle facilities on state roads.

Again, SB 514 does not require that MDOT SHA assume maintenance of sidewalks it builds along state-maintained roads. However, it removes an administrative impediment that has resulted in needed safety improvements in our communities experiencing long delays or going unbuilt. Removing the prohibition gives MDOT greater flexibility when updating policies, as recommended in its recent strategic plans, including the option to move forward with the design and/or construction of sidewalks and bike paths needed to fill gaps in the state’s active transportation networks, which can occur concurrent with MDOT’s coordination with local jurisdictions over maintenance.

I strongly **support SB 514** and urge the committee to report **favorable** on the bill.

Thank you,

Dan Behrend
Riverdale Park, MD
Prince George’s County

ⁱ See page 14. Available at: <https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/air/ClimateChange/Pages/Maryland's-Climate-Pollution-Reduction-Plan.aspx>

ⁱⁱ See e.g., pages 35 & 38. Available at: <https://www.mdot.maryland.gov/tso/pages/Index.aspx?PageId=22>

ⁱⁱⁱ See page 47. Available at:

https://www.mdot.maryland.gov/OPCP/MDOT_State_Bike_Ped_Master_Plan_FULL_FINAL_VERSION.pdf