

Jeff Lemieux, President
Friends of the Greenbelt East Trail, Inc.
www.greenbeltnasatrail.org
Greenbelt, MD
DRAFT February 19 2024

HB 389 (A. Healey, N. Williams, A. Martinez) FAVORABLE
S. 514 (A. Washington) FAVORABLE

Dear Committee Chair and Members,

Friends of the Greenbelt East Trail is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to improving safety and accessibility for all residents and road users along Greenbelt Road (MD Route 193) in Prince George's County.



The Greenbelt East Trail is a proposed two-way, protected shared use trail between Eleanor Roosevelt High School in Greenbelt and the WB&A trailhead in Glenn Dale MD. The trail would be on the shoulder or alongside Route 193, wholly on state right of way, with a short section within the city limits of Greenbelt and a longer section through unincorporated Prince George's County. There is currently no safe bike, walk, or bus stop access on many sections of Route 193 along our proposed trail route, and there have been several recent fatalities, including a pedestrian and a four-year-old child. The picture below shows my wife on her bike next to Route 193 in Greenbelt – that's a typical streetscape: an 6-8 lane highway with overhead signs and guardrails for speeding cars, and a dilapidated sidewalk on one side of the road for everybody else. There were 129 traffic fatalities in Prince George's County in 2023 (see image below)

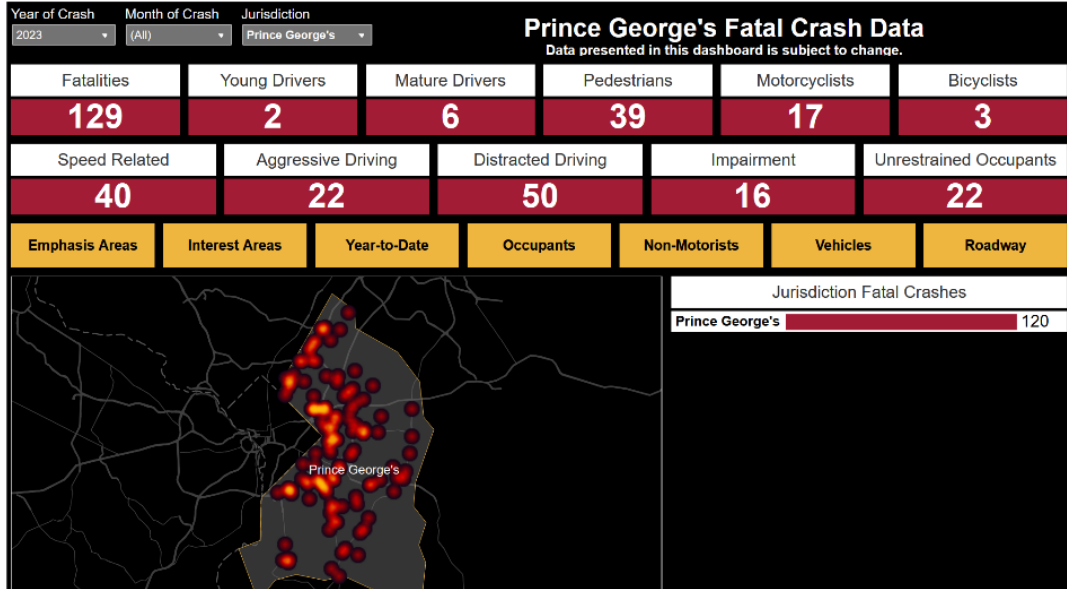
HB389 and S514 are ostensibly about maintenance of sidewalks and bike trails along state roads – removing the requirement in law that localities are required to do the maintenance. In reality, however, nobody maintains the sidewalks on state roads in the Greenbelt area, and we don't have any bike trails or side paths on state-owned roads yet. Therefore, the bill would not affect maintenance in our area at all. The real purpose of HB389 and S514 is to remove a process impediment that held up the study of our trail proposal, and which has presumably held up other worthy safety and accessibility projects as well.



HB389/S514 stemmed from our efforts to get MDOT SHA to launch a feasibility study of the Greenbelt East Trail proposal in 2023. In order to be considered, we were asked to first obtain letters from Prince George's County and the City of Greenbelt agreeing that those local jurisdictions would be responsible for maintaining any trail that was built. We eventually succeeded in getting those letters, as well as support letters from many other stakeholder groups. But obtaining maintenance letters in advance was difficult and time consuming, and, we believe, unnecessary.

HB389/S514 would simply remove the requirement in current state law that local jurisdictions must maintain any sidewalks or bike paths on state roads. It would not require the state to undertake maintenance, although that would seem like a worthy long-term goal in many areas. Instead, the bill's main purpose is to speed up much needed safety and accessibility improvements by removing a bureaucratic process hurdle for new studies. The state of Maryland and our counties and cities could continue to ignore maintenance of sidewalks and side paths along state roads or not, as they wish.

Thank you very much, Jeff Lemieux for Friends of the Greenbelt East Trail



Source: <https://zerodeathsmd.gov/>