

Thaen Hardy Oral Testimony for: HB615: Education – School Construction – Pedestrian Safety Plans

House Appropriations Committee,

2/25/2020 - 1:00 p.m

My name is Thaen Hardy, and I am resident of the Wilson Park neighborhood in Baltimore City. For over five years, my neighborhood and the surrounding York Road communities have been engaged in the planning, design and reconstruction processes at Govans Elementary School and Walter P. Carter Elementary/Middle School through the 21st Century Schools Program.

A major concern students, parents and community residents consistently elevate is the need for a safe walking or biking route to school. For example, students zoned to attend Govans Elementary must cross York Road, a 5-lane major North/South thoroughfare, with inadequate pedestrian safety infrastructure (crosswalks, pedestrian signals) coupled with high-speed traffic. Students zoned to attend Walter P. Carter Elementary/School must cross E. Cold Spring Lane, with similar challenges.

Even with the immense amount of concern expressed by the community, a pedestrian safety plan was not part of either school's reconstruction plan overseen by Baltimore City Schools and the Maryland Stadium Authority. While Baltimore City's Planning Department – through the INSPIRE process – is coordinating city agency investment around the ¼ mile radius of the school to develop a SafeRoutes to School plan, and committing capital improvement dollars for plan implementation, not all municipalities have resources similar to this program, nor are they required to make any additional investment.

I am glad the school my children will be going to will have a Safe Route to school, but there must be a mandate for this type of safety planning for all school reconstruction programs.