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Appropriations Committee

Subcommittees

Capital Budget

Chair, Transportation and the
Environment

Oversight Committee on Personnel



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Pedestrian Access Act of 2020 HB (194)

Testimony of Delegate Marc Korman--Favorable

Thank you Mr. Chair, Mr. Vice Chair, and the members of the Environment and Transportation Committee. I come before you today to discuss the Pedestrian Access Act of 2020. This legislation requires the State Highway Administration (SHA) to develop regulations regarding the maintenance of pedestrian access when access permits are issued within two miles of Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority or Maryland Transit Administration stations, including Maryland Area Regional Commuter (MARC) stations. The purpose is to ensure that in communities where we encourage Marylanders to walk or ride bikes, that access to do so be maintained, particularly around construction.

The regulations SHA should consider under the bill will ensure that temporary pedestrian structures such as sidewalk sheds are, among other things, a safe size, provide adequate lighting, are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and maintain bike lanes.

In my legislative district, as well as many others across the state, construction projects on both roads and adjacent buildings block access to sidewalks and bike lanes. According to the National Work Zone Safety Information Clearinghouse, every year on average 1,100 pedestrians are injured and 115 pedestrians are killed in work zones.¹ According to the Baltimore Sun, there were 133 pedestrian and bicycle deaths in Maryland in 2018.² The Pedestrian Access Act will greatly improve pedestrian safety and help avoid more preventable deaths. No Marylander should have to risk their life to reach public transit. We have an obligation to improve pedestrian safety.

¹ “National Estimates of Total and Injury Work Zone Crashes,” The National Work Zone Safety Information Clearinghouse, 2018, <https://www.workzonesafety.org/crash-information/work-zone-injuries-injury-property-damage-crashes/>

² Colin Campbell, “On Maryland Roads, Pedestrian Deaths Are up, but Overall Accident Fatalities Are Down,” *baltimoresun.com* (Baltimore Sun, July 8, 2019), <http://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/bs-md-traffic-fatalities-20190417-story.html>

This issue is not just about pedestrian safety, but also about congestion and the economy. When access is cut-off to mass transit, people resort to using their cars, thus putting more vehicles on the road and contributing to traffic congestion. The Pedestrian Access Act will ensure that pedestrians can reach local businesses. It will also keep pedestrians, bikers, and riders safe while guaranteeing that all Marylanders will still be able to access mass transit and local businesses regardless of physical, or economic ability.

Maintaining pedestrian and bicycle access in construction zones is critical when it comes to pedestrian safety. That said, the legislative is not prescriptive. It leaves to the expert agency to determine the precise rules governing pedestrian access while sending the important message that the Maryland General Assembly values pedestrian safety and access. For all of these very important reasons, I urge you to support the Pedestrian Access Act of 2020.