

Maryland Senate
Hearing Before the Judicial Proceedings Committee
On HB 564

Testimony Delivered April 1, 2021, by:

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Chair of the Montgomery County Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee

Position: Support

2020 was a terrible year in many ways, for many people - not just because of COVID, but also because of the number of preventable traffic deaths. In 2020, we had 39 total fatal crashes in Montgomery County, including 16 pedestrian and 1 bicyclist fatalities... a 34% increase from the prior 4-year average.

A major factor contributing to many of these deaths (pedestrian and drivers alike) was speed. On November 23, 2020 the U.S. DOT issued its first ever Pedestrian Safety Action Plan. In this plan, DOT highlights the effect of speed on crash survivability. If a person is hit by a vehicle traveling 23mph, the pedestrian has a 10% risk of death. At 42 mph, a 50% risk of death. In fact, commenters from across the Country agreed that jurisdictions need to “Do a better job of setting speed limits; design roadways to encourage slower speeds; approve laws and regulations including the use of speed cameras; and conduct more education on the dangers of speeding to change the cultural mindset that does not view speeding as a serious problem.”

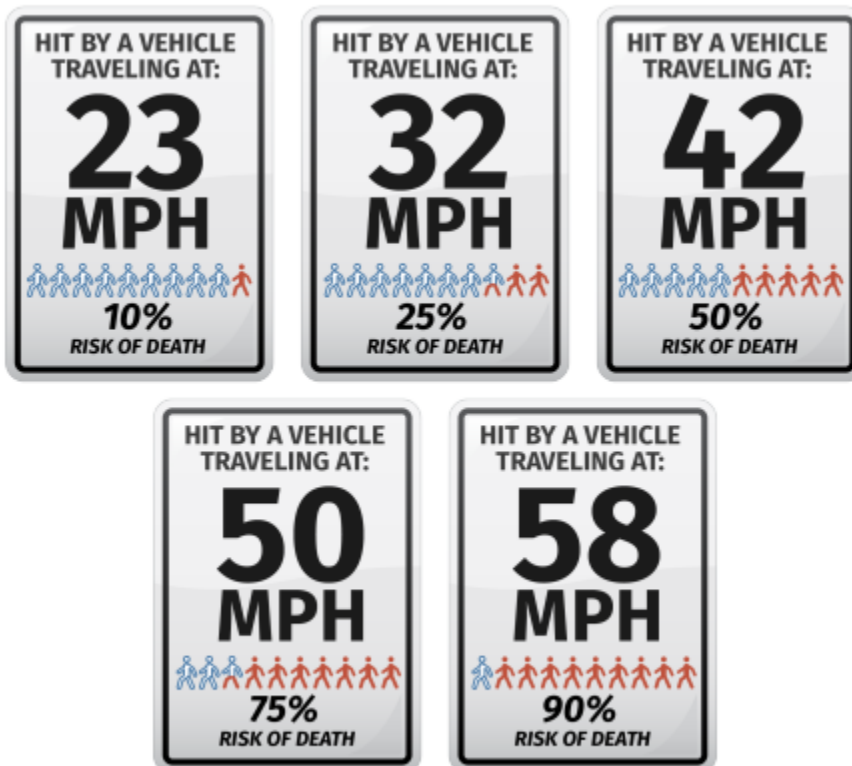
Speeding is a problem, both on State highways and on Montgomery County roadways. Montgomery County and SHA have worked together to lower speed along certain corridors, but progress on some of our roadways is currently hampered by State law. We must do what we can to reduce fatal crashes, and one potential approach is to thoroughly examine and assess our speed enforcement program.

It is true that Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) has served as a model for effective automated enforcement programs over the years. In particular, the excellent work of Assistant Chief Tom Didone and Captain David McBain cannot go unnoticed. Under the existing State law and guidance, they have developed procedures and criteria that are fair and repeatable, and it is clear that they (and the Department) take great care and pride in implementing the Montgomery County automated enforcement program. They have also used creative funding mechanisms and contracting vehicles to ensure school bus camera implementation on the fleet of Montgomery County Public School busses. Undoubtedly, the automated enforcement programs and school bus camera programs have greatly improved safety on our roadways.

However, given the rise of complete street design standards, Vision Zero assessments and implementation, and other holistic traffic safety programs underway in Montgomery County - it is time to step back and consider whether the automated safety programs should be developed and administered by the police department, or by the Montgomery County Department of Transportation.

I support HB 564 which allows the County **additional options** surrounding its automated enforcement program, and I am pleased to see that the House-passed version of the bill extends beyond speed cameras, to include red light cameras and school bus cameras. **HB 564 would simply *enable* the County to transfer the administration of its speed camera program from MCPD to MCDOT - but, does not *require* it's transfer.** This is currently an issue the Montgomery County Council is exploring, and should they determine that a transfer and/or expansion of the program is warranted, **State law should not act as a barrier to this action.** Baltimore City is currently operating its automated enforcement program out of its Transportation Department, so this action would not be unprecedented. While this approach would be different than the current approach, the MCDOT is well equipped to use data to inform placement and monitoring of automated enforcement devices, and management of the overall program - to look at the enforcement mechanism through the lens of Vision Zero, and in the broader context of our roadway network and high incidence areas.

Figure 7. Vehicle Speed and Pedestrian Fatalities



Source: AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, *Impact of Speed and a Pedestrian's Risk of Severe Injury or Death*, <https://aaafoundation.org/impact-speed-pedestrians-risk-severe-injury-death/>