



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB 656 –SAFE ACCESS FOR ALL (SAFE) ROADS ACT OF 2022
TESTIMONY OF DELEGATE LORIG CHARKOUDIAN

FEBRUARY 17, 2022

Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

In 2020, although there were fewer cars on the road due to Covid-19 restrictions, pedestrian and cyclist deaths were at an all-time high. Last year alone, 130 Marylanders lost their lives while attempting to cross our streets. There were an additional 3,022 pedestrian-involved crashes which caused bodily injury or property damage.¹

Roadway fatalities are 100% preventable. No one should lose their life from choosing to walk or bike on Maryland's roadways. Furthermore, the safety of our streets is a paramount issue in addressing climate change. There is no way to move towards greater public use of alternative modes of transportation and decrease reliance on fossil fuel powered private vehicles without using policy measures to make our streets safer for pedestrians and cyclists.

Maryland's numbered highways are maintained by the State Highway Administration (SHA). Almost every incorporated city, town, and village, and most unincorporated places in the state are served by these state highways. This legislation would require the SHA:

- to conduct an analysis of high pedestrian and bike injury corridors and intersections on this broad network of roadways – focusing on potential engineering improvements- and publish the results by July 2023
- to increase annual spending levels in budget areas involving pedestrian and bicycle safety
- to review outstanding projects for opportunities to implement Context Driven Design Elements and FHA Proven Safety Countermeasures
- to implement near-term, incremental safety improvements when engineering projects will take more than 12 months to complete

SHA expects that the IIJA will increase the capital budget by over 20%². This will provide more than enough funds to ensure that the funds required in the bill can be dedicated for pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements.

During the 2019 Session, the General Assembly committed to a Vision Zero Goal of zero vehicle-related deaths by 2030. We are not on track. The measures in this legislation will allow us to make progress toward that goal.

This bill is a priority for the Transit Caucus, please see the attached priorities letter.

I respectfully request a favorable report on HB 656.

¹ <https://zerodeathsmd.gov/road-safety/pedestrian-bicyclist-safety/>

² https://mdot.maryland.gov/OPCP/CTP_2022/CTP_FY2022_2027_Web.pdf (pg, 18- Federal Aid Assumptions section)



MARYLAND TRANSIT CAUCUS

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2022 Legislative Session

The Transit Caucus is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that supports a robust, equitable, modern, and effective transit network that serves all Marylanders. To that end, the Caucus has several areas of focus for this legislative Session. We are dedicated to increasing equity in the transit system by encouraging a focus on equity throughout all transit planning. Every Marylander should have fair access to the benefits of transit regardless of race, income, disability, or zip code. We also believe that 2022 is a critical year to pass transit legislation to put Maryland in the strongest position possible to maximize federal infrastructure funds. These themes play a role in the legislation we have decided to prioritize.

Priority Bills

This Session we are prioritizing the following bills, with a focus on improving the rail system and ensuring pedestrian and bicyclist safety in our state.

Equitable and Inclusive Transit-Oriented Development Enhancement Act (SB516/HB710)

Incentivizes transit oriented development through the expansion of the More Jobs for Marylanders program and dedicates significant funds to the development of transit in the annual budget.

Maryland Regional Rail Transformation Act (SB514/HB778)

Requires the Maryland Transit Administration to make short-term investments in rail infrastructure throughout the state and establish longer-term goals to enhance rail lines and service.

Safe Access for All (SAFE) Roads Act of 2022 (HB656/SB880)

Requires the State Highway Administration to review high pedestrian and bike injury corridors/intersections and implement timely engineering improvements with increased spending and to design future projects for even greater safety.

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Vision Zero Implementation Act of 2022 (HB254/SB874)

Requires the State Highway Administration to conduct an infrastructure review of each pedestrian or bicyclist fatality that occurs on State roads and to publish said review.

Endorsements

The following bills have received an endorsement from the Transit Caucus.

Zero-Emission Bus Transition Act Revisions (HB10/SB61)

Vehicle Laws - Dedicated Bus Lanes - Prohibition and Monitoring Systems (HB53)

State Highways – Designated Shoulder Areas – Establishment and Use by Transit Buses (HB64)

Baltimore City – Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School Programs – Funding (HB73)

Railroad Companies - Condemnation Authority - Application (HB120)

Vehicle Laws – Intersections – Prohibited Acts (HB137/SB87)

Equity in Transportation Sector - Guidelines and Analyses (HB141/SB23)

Vehicle Laws - Plug-In Electric Drive Vehicles - Reserved Parking Spaces (HB157/SB146)

Criminal Law - Assault of a Public Transportation Service Provider - Penalties (SB 208)

Vehicle Laws - School Bus Safety - Occupant Capacity (HB283)

Transportation of Persons with Disabilities - Transportation Network Companies – Employee Requirements (SB625)

Transportation of Disabled Persons - Transportation Network Companies - Employee Requirements (HB726)

Primary and Secondary Schools – Bus Driver Wages – Study (HB753/SB421)

Transportation - Elderly and Handicapped Transportation Service - County Funding (HB1019/SB838)

Vehicle Laws - Bicycles, Play Vehicles, and Unicycles - Riding on Sidewalks (HB1153)

Maryland Rail Investment Act (HB1324)