



Environment and Transportation Committee  
Kumar Barve, Chair  
Dana Stein, Vice-Chair

Room 251  
House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB 656 - Safe Access for All (SAFE) Roads Act of 2022

February 17, 2022

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, my name is Peter Gray and I represent the Washington Area Bicyclist Association. I am speaking on behalf of the 2000 WABA members and several thousands of other supporters who live in Maryland.

In 2019, the General Assembly unanimously voted to commit Maryland to achieve Vision Zero – that’s zero traffic fatalities and serious injuries – by 2030. Yet, three years later, it is not clear that MDOT SHA has made any significant changes in funding, focus or policy to actually achieve it. HB 656 is a critical, concrete step towards achieving Vision Zero.

WABA supports the passage of HB 656 and its mandate that MDOT apply context-driven design elements for pedestrian and bicycle safety on the development of all construction, improvement and maintenance plans. WABA applauds the bill provision that requires MDOT SHA to conduct an analysis of all crash locations where there have been fatalities and serious injuries to people walking and biking and which will also recommend engineering and safety improvements at those locations. The bill further mandates that MDOT SHA develop a budget estimate and timeline for each safety and engineering improvement and then implement those improvements.

Crucially, HB 656 also mandates minimum spending levels in several categories of spending, with the spending levels increasing each successive fiscal year because making streets safe requires continuous funding, not just continuous promises.

As I noted in my testimony in support of the Vision Zero Implementation Act of 2022, HB 254, in my role as a WABA board member and as co-chair of the Montgomery County Families for Safe Streets, I have helped organize and attended numerous memorials for people killed while walking or biking on State Highways. From those tragic memorials it is clear to me that the conditions of most State Highways are not safe for people walking and biking.

In addition, the most recent traffic fatalities on State Highways in my County have occurred at locations where other vulnerable road users have died in the past few years. In one case, two members of the same family were killed while crossing the same street, mere blocks from one another. It is clear that MDOT SHA has not comprehensively examined the sites where crash fatalities are happening. Nor has the State agency charged with maintaining a safe environment for all road users done anything to make those roads safer, even when multiple pedestrians and bicyclists have died in the exact same spots.

Therefore it is imperative that the Committee issue a favorable report on HB 656. We desperately need thorough studies of crash sites, development of recommendations of changes to our roads which will eliminate future fatalities and serious injuries, and the mandatory minimum spending levels on such improvements to crash sites be put into law. We need the passage of HB 656 to force MDOT SHA to make the changes necessary to avoid future pedestrian and bicyclist deaths on our State Highways.

We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on HB 656.