

Environment and Transportation Committee

February 17, 2022

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

On behalf of the Montgomery County transit and safe streets advocacy group Action Committee for Transit, I ask the committee for a **FAVORABLE RECOMMENDATION** for this bill.

This bill would require the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) to make their roads less dangerous for pedestrians, bicyclists, bus riders, and other vulnerable road users, and would provide the funding for them to do so. SHA should support it.

Since 2019, I have worked with a group to review dangerous infrastructure conditions and ask SHA to make meaningful changes to prevent further injuries and deaths. Unfortunately, in most cases, SHA says no. And even when they say yes, they still don't make the changes. Why? Because

- Pedestrian/bicyclist projects have a low priority;
- Near-term improvements for pedestrians/bicyclists don't happen, pending long-term projects; and
- Projects omit needed pedestrian design elements, which must then be retrofitted.

Meanwhile, every day, people must continue using the dangerous roads that SHA is not fixing.

Here are some examples of SHA practices.

PEDESTRIAN/BICYCLIST PROJECTS HAVE A LOW PRIORITY



Where: Layhill Road (Maryland 182) at the Glenmont Metro drive/Glenmont shopping center, Glenmont

Request date: October 2019

Request: A crossing that is safe for pedestrians.

Reason for request: Pedestrian Alberto Duque struck and killed on January 26, 2019.

SHA response: A HAWK signal will be installed.

Current status: No change; "We are anticipating important update information to be forthcoming regarding our statewide signal construction program."

PEDESTRIAN/BICYCLIST PROJECTS HAVE A LOW PRIORITY



Where: Midcounty Highway (Maryland 124) at Pier Point Place, Montgomery Village

Request date: February 2020

Request: A crossing that is safe for pedestrians.

Reason for request: Pedestrian Adonias Gomez struck and killed on February 12, 2020.

SHA response: A traffic signal will be installed.

Current status: No change; “still under review by our Office of Traffic and Safety (OOTS).”

PEDESTRIAN/BICYCLIST PROJECTS HAVE A LOW PRIORITY



Where: Clopper Road (Maryland 117) at Mateny Road, Germantown

Request date: October 2019

Request: An intersection that is safe and convenient for pedestrians to cross a.t

Reason for request: Several pedestrians hit while crossing with the walk signal.

SHA response: Some marked crosswalks and pedestrian signals will be added.

Current status: No change; “still under review by our Office of Traffic and Safety (OOTS).”

NEAR-TERM IMPROVEMENTS DON'T HAPPEN, PENDING LONG-TERM PROJECTS



Where: University Boulevard East (Maryland 193) and Seek Lane, Long Branch

Request date: November 2019

Request: A crossing that is safe for pedestrians.

Reason for request: Pedestrian Julio Vargas Valerio struck and killed on October 13, 2019.

SHA response: A traffic signal will be installed, as part of Purple Line construction.

Current status: No change.

NEAR-TERM IMPROVEMENTS DON'T HAPPEN, PENDING LONG-TERM PROJECTS



Where: Frederick Ave (Maryland 355) between Montgomery Avenue and Dalamar Street, Gaithersburg

Request date: June 2021

Request: A crossing that is safe for bus riders going to and from 7-Eleven and Megamart.

Reason for request: Half a mile between crossings; longstanding issue for the City of Gaithersburg.

SHA response: When Megamart builds their new store, they will pay for a traffic signal at Dalamar Street.

Current status: No change.

NEAR-TERM IMPROVEMENTS DON'T HAPPEN, PENDING LONG-TERM PROJECTS



Where: Rockville Pike (Maryland 355) and Halpine Road, City of Rockville, near Twinbrook Metro

Request date: July 2020

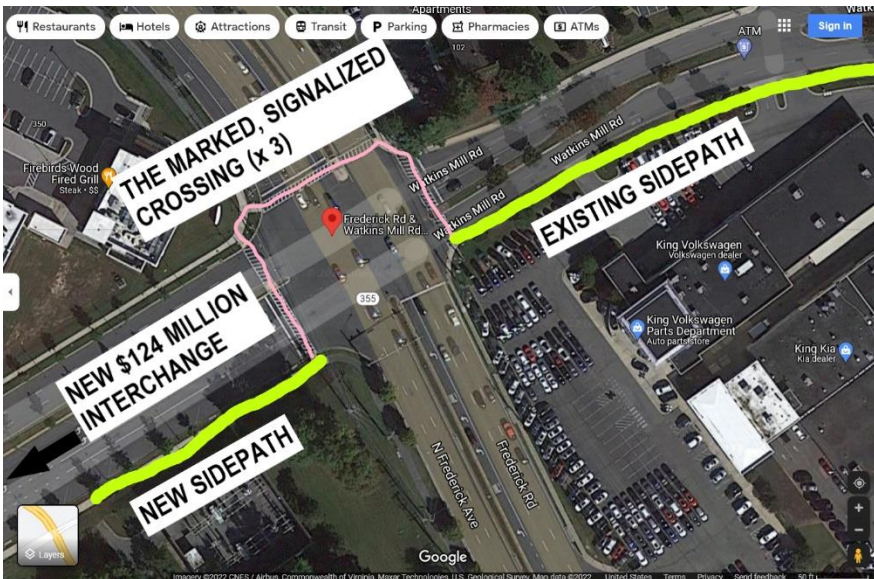
Request: Protecting pedestrians from turning drivers

Reason for request: Multiple pedestrians hit by turning drivers while crossing with the walk signal

SHA response: The Twinbrook Quarter developer will pay for a new traffic signal and other changes.

Current status: No change.

PROJECT DESIGN DOES NOT INCLUDE NEEDED PEDESTRIAN ELEMENTS



Where: Frederick Ave (Maryland 355) and Watkins Mill Road, Gaithersburg/Montgomery Village

Request date: June 2020

Request: A safe, direct crossing across 355 on the side with the sidepaths.

Reason for request: Should have been in the design of the \$124 million Watkins Mill Road interchange.

SHA response: “it was determined that pedestrians cross at the signalized crosswalks and are not crossing along the unmarked and unsignalized side.”

Current status: No change.

PROJECT DESIGN DOES NOT INCLUDE NEEDED PEDESTRIAN ELEMENTS



Where: Frederick Road (Maryland 355) and West Old Baltimore Road, Clarksburg

Request date: January 2021

Request: Pedestrian signals where the new Frederick Road sidepath crosses the newly-rebuilt intersection with West Old Baltimore Road.

Reason for request: Should have been in the designs of the sidepath and the intersection projects, especially as a school walk route.

SHA response: “Our initial findings are still undergoing review at the MDOT SHA Office of Traffic and Safety (OOTs).”

Current status: No change.