



P.O. Box 278  
Riverdale, MD 20738

**Committee: Environment and Transportation**

**Testimony on: HB 813 – “Montgomery County – Speed and School Bus Monitoring Systems”**

**Position: Favorable**

**Hearing Date: March 10, 2022**

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports HB 813, which would require the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), in conjunction with the State Highway Administration (SHA), to construct a median divider at each location on a state highway where more than 1,000 citations are issued during a 12 month period for violations recorded by a school bus monitoring system. The cost of construction for each median divider would be shared equally by MCDOT and SHA, except when the total amount of fines collected for citations at a particular location is insufficient to pay for MCDOT's share of the cost.

The bill also would eliminate the prohibition on using a speed monitoring system to enforce speed limits that have been decreased and would require fines collected as a result of violations enforced by speed monitoring systems to be used to increase safety at locations where high numbers of speeding violations are recorded.

HB 813 is needed because of the enormous number of drivers who violate the law by failing to bring their vehicle to a full stop when a school bus is stopped in the opposing lane, thereby endangering students who may be getting on or off the school bus there. Having median dividers installed at the locations where school buses stop on state highways -- where the violations frequently occur -- would lessen the danger to students by allowing them to disembark from their school bus onto a median divider vs. onto the roadway where traffic may unfortunately be speeding by.

The bill is also needed to slow down drivers on our roadways and enable speed monitoring systems to play a role in making this happen. We live in a car-centric culture where transportation planning, road infrastructure, and vehicle laws are largely focused on enabling cars and trucks to get to their destinations as swiftly as possible. Unfortunately, this has resulted in some drivers feeling they have priority on the road, and there are high rates of injury and death for pedestrians and bicyclists as well as vehicle drivers and passengers. According to the MDOT Motor Vehicle Administration's Highway Safety Office, there were 542 traffic fatalities in our state last year, including 132 pedestrian and bicycle deaths.

In summary, requiring median dividers to be built where safety problems now exist on our highways, and allowing speed monitoring systems to be used where speed limits have been decreased, would increase the safety of our roads by dramatically lessening potentially serious injury to people who may be entering or disembarking from a vehicle, walking, riding a bike or scooter, or riding in a car at that location. HB 813 would help bring about positive change. We urge a favorable report on this bill.

Brian Ditzler  
Chapter Transportation Chair  
[Brian.Ditzler@MDSierra.org](mailto:Brian.Ditzler@MDSierra.org)

Josh Tulkin  
Chapter Director  
[Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org](mailto:Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org)

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.