

31 January 2022

Delegate Kumar P. Barve
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Letter of Support for HB 073
Baltimore City - Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School Programs - Funding

Dear Chairman Barve and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

On behalf of AIA Maryland and the nearly 2,000 Architects we represent, we fully support sustainable strategies in the built environment as we collectively work to lessen our impact on the natural world. AIA Maryland sees HB 073 as an opportunity for improving the built environment in Baltimore City.

Streets are a vital part of livable, attractive communities. Every resident of this state deserves to have safe, comfortable, and convenient access to community destinations and public places—whether walking, driving, bicycling, or taking public transportation. In addition, streets are public spaces. They are extensions of our homes. Streets are where we meet our neighbors, go to work or shop.

Complete Streets is a transportation philosophy that calls for designing and building streets that are optimal for all road users regardless of age, ability, income, race, ethnicity, or chosen mode of travel. Similarly, the Safe Routes to School Program prioritizes improvements that will enable students to walk, bike, or roll to school on clean, safe, and well-maintained roadways and sidewalks. Many of the principles of Complete Streets are echoed in successful Safe Routes to School programs.

These policies generally support equitable urban transportation and development. A successful policy depends on the integration of Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School with other policy reforms, including improved alternative transportation offerings, urban infill development, adaptive reuse, zoning reform, smart growth/transit-oriented development, and parking and transportation demand management.

These policies can also address stormwater management and urban heat island mitigation. Applied city-wide, landscaping elements that help curb stormwater runoff – bioswales, planters, rain gardens, and street trees – are mutually beneficial for mobility and ecology. Such green elements are increasingly found to be important deterrents of crashes and injuries. Traffic-calming elements like chicanes, islands, and curb extensions – all design options in creating Complete Streets – provide site opportunities for bioswales, street trees, and rain gardens.

As architects, we know the tremendous value and benefits of an integrated design process. By employing such an approach, a design can be cost effective, provide added value and avoid expensive changes after construction has finished. The Complete Streets approach integrates people and place in the planning, design, construction, operation, and maintenance of our transportation networks. This helps to ensure streets are safe for people of all ages and abilities, balance the needs of different modes of transportation, and support local land uses, economies, cultures, and natural environments. By looking at streets holistically, with Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School policies in place, there are many opportunities for benefits with no or minimal costs.

For these reasons, AIA Maryland supports the intent of HB 073, establishing the Baltimore City Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School Program Fund to provide a non-lapsing fund to be used to advance the purpose and goals of the Complete Streets and the Safe Routes to School Programs that will improve the design, construction, and safety of our streets. We are happy to provide testimony to describe the value of the Complete Streets program and how that benefits Baltimore City.

To access more information on Complete Streets, we suggest The National Complete Streets Coalition, which is part of Smart Growth America, 1152 15th St NW Suite 450 Washington, DC 20005 (202) 207-3355. The website is <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/program/national-complete-streets-coalition/>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JF', written in a cursive style.

Joel Fidler, AIA
Past President, AIA Maryland