



Statement of

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To the

Environment and Transportation Committee
Maryland House of Delegates

– On –

House Bill 656

Safe Access for All (SAFE) Roads Act of 2022

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Annapolis, MD • February 17, 2022



An Independent Federal Agency

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) appreciates this opportunity to provide you with information regarding its special investigation reports on pedestrian and bicycle safety, and especially our call for better data and infrastructure design to ensure safer roads.

The NTSB is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the United States and significant events in other modes of transportation - railroad, highway, marine, and pipeline. The NTSB determines the probable cause of the accidents and crashes it investigates and makes safety recommendations aimed at preventing future occurrences. In addition, the NTSB carries out special studies concerning transportation safety, such as our work on pedestrian and bicycle safety. The recommendations that arise from our investigations and safety studies are the NTSB's most important tool for saving lives and preventing injury.

In 2018, the NTSB released a [Special Investigation Report: Pedestrian Safety](#). This report followed our 2016 public forum addressing pedestrian safety. At that event, experts from around the country discussed the data we need to better understand the risks, technology that could prevent vehicles from hitting people, and highway designs that offer safer roads or paths for pedestrians. Following that initial public meeting, we conducted more than a dozen investigations into pedestrian deaths in order to gain insight into how we can prevent these deaths from happening.

In 2019, the NTSB released a [Safety Research Report: Bicyclist Safety on US Roadways: Crash Risks and Countermeasures](#). This report called for a multi-faceted approach to combat the rise in bicyclist fatalities caused by motor vehicles, including improving roadway infrastructure so that vehicles are separated from bicyclists, such as with separated bike lanes, would likely reduce the number of the most serious crashes. At intersections, where more than 65 percent of collisions occur, treatments that clearly denote right-of-way using color, signage, medians, signals and pavement markings would likely reduce the number of crashes in those environments.

More recently, in 2021, the NTSB added "[Protect Vulnerable Road Users Through a Safe System Approach](#)" to its Most Wanted List of Transportation Safety Improvements. A Safe System addresses all aspects of traffic safety: road users, vehicles, speeds, roads, and postcrash care. Better safety investments - road treatments, vehicle design, collision avoidance systems, strong traffic safety laws, and robust education efforts - can mitigate injury risks for all road users. Proven, effective countermeasures are being underused to protect pedestrians, bicyclists, and other vulnerable road users.

Traditional street systems, which are designed for motor vehicle traffic, may not serve pedestrians and bicyclists well, for several highway engineering reasons:

they may lack street design elements such as sidewalks, crosswalks, curb extensions, and speed bumps; they encourage high speeds; they have complex intersections with multiple turn lanes; long waits at some crossings; arterial roads through urban environments have wide, multiple lanes that are difficult to cross; urban thoroughfares can separate neighborhoods from shopping, work, and entertainment.

Plans developed on the state and local levels to safely incorporate vulnerable road users into the transportation network can focus resources to yield the greatest possible reduction in the number of users who are severely or fatally injured by motor vehicles. However, implementation of countermeasures is often hindered by the lack of agency commitment or the lack of policies that actually designate the necessary funding for them. Addressing the safety design changes needed for will take substantially more resources.

I hope this information will be valuable to the Committee as it considers HB 656.