

Senate Finance Committee

March 9, 2022

SB 880 / HB 656: [Safe Access for All \(SAFE\) Roads Act of 2022](#)

My name is David Helms, a member of [Montgomery County Families For Safe Streets](#). I urge Senate Finance Committee members to provide a ***favorable consideration*** for Senate Bill 880.

Watching the horrific scenes in Ukraine, I'm shocked but not surprised the world is traumatized by another oil funded war. I am a retired 24 year USAF veteran. I have lived through the OPEC oil embargo of 1973 and 1978, oil wars in 1991 and 2003. I have deployed to Saudi Arabia to protect oil production. Dependence on fossil fuels is killing thousands directly and indirectly through the growing climate crisis. Doubling down on oil as a primary energy source, even from domestic sources, for transportation is NOT the answer. More cars, even EVs, is NOT the answer. Safe and accessible roads for people who walk and bike *is the answer*. SB 880 does exactly what is needed.

Money isn't the problem:

* [Maryland state budget finished the fiscal year with an unprecedented \\$4.6 billion state surplus, and it expects a \\$1.9 billion surplus every year for the next five years.](#)

* [MDOT Current CTP FY22-27](#): P.18 "With the passage of the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act \(IIJA\)](#), the funding for MDOT SHA, MDOT MTA and MDOT MAA will increase about 20 percent (an additional \$3.5 billion) and may be included in a supplemental budget depending on when final amounts are known. (\$17.7B + \$3.5B = \$21.2B)."

SAFE Roads Act will require MDSHA to invest in safe and accessible transportation options by increasing funding by almost \$300 million dollars over 4 years. With state budget surpluses and billions in additional Federal transportation funding, using a small fraction of these new funds for active transportation is NOT a problem, *it is a SOLUTION* to reducing the +500 traffic deaths/year and car-dependency problems. We MUST invest in public transport and safe access to public transport by bicycle and walking NOW!

Budgets are moral documents, a statement of our values. If we can't make a down-payment for active transportation NOW, when? How many lives must be lost and how many wars must be fought before we have the political will to end car-dependency? What do we value? Please support SB 880.

Very Respectfully,

Dave Helms

Silver Spring, Maryland 20901

[Safe Access for All \(SAFE\) Roads Act of 2022 \(HB0880\)](#) will provide the State Highway Administration with the necessary resources to fix dangerous road conditions that threaten vulnerable road users. Specifically, the bill requires:

1. Increase annual spending levels in budget areas involving pedestrian and bicycle safety for identified safety and access gaps*
2. Review outstanding and upcoming preservation and maintenance projects for opportunities to implement Context Driven Design Elements and FHWA Proven Safety Countermeasures
3. When implementing new safe infrastructure and engineering improvements that will take more than 12 months to complete, implement near-term, incremental improvements which enhance safety in the interim.

* Leverage safety and access gaps identified in MDOT and SHA safety audits and plans including:

- [SHA Pedestrian Safety Action Plan \(PSAP\)](#)
- [Maryland Transit Plan](#)
- [Maryland Transportation Plan 2040](#)
- FHWA Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) Vulnerable Road Users Safety Assessment ([IIJA Sec. 11111](#))
- State law - [HB 254 Vision Zero Implementation Act of 2022](#)

Why enact SB 880? Roadway fatalities are 100% preventable. No one should lose their life from choosing to walk or bike on Maryland's roadways. However, in Maryland, the number of traffic-related pedestrian deaths is growing higher year by year. As MDOT SHA says, one traffic fatality life is too many to die on Maryland roadways. Unfortunately, about 135 pedestrians and bicyclists are killed every year.

Key Points:

A. Funding/Program Impact: SAFE Roads Act budget area increases will be funded out of a small fraction of the anticipated **increases** to the State Highway Administration capital budget, and not require redirection from current projects.

HB 656 Fiscal and Policy Note*, citing the [current Consolidated Transportation Plan \(CTP\) FY22-27](#), stated "**MDOT must redirect \$297.1 million from other projects from fiscal 2024 through 2027.**"

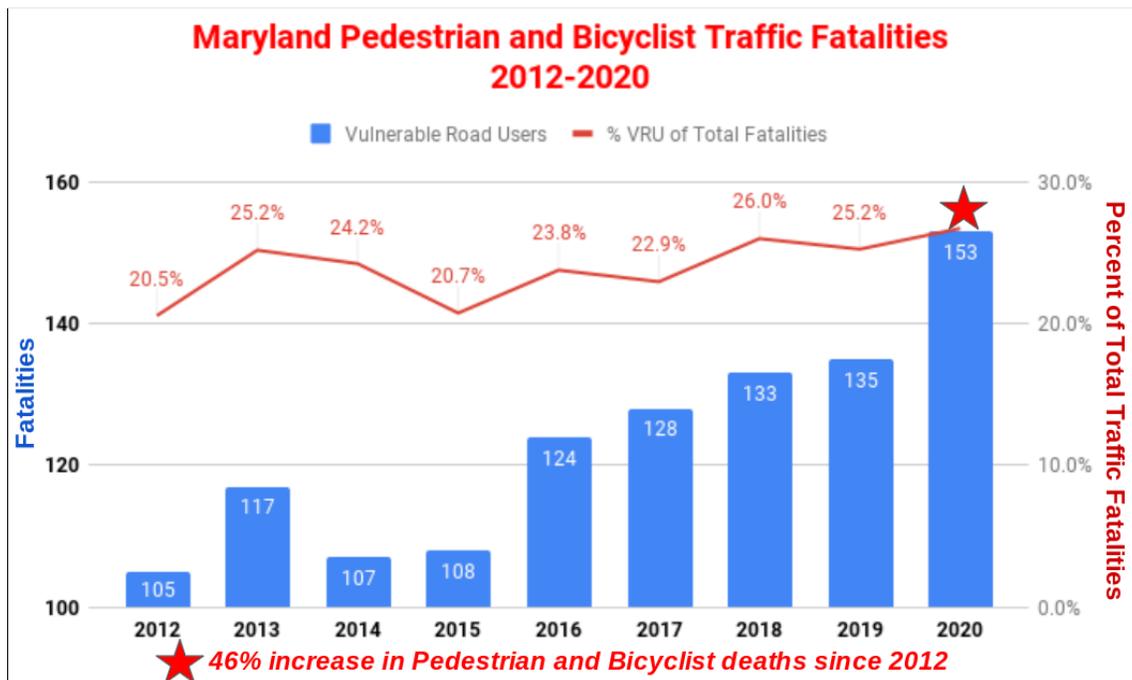
* The [Fiscal and Policy Note](#) failed to mention that the current CTP stated "For FY 2022 through FY 2027, this CTP includes only a continuation of the FFY 21 level of funding from the FAST Act as we wait for the appropriations process to conclude and additional levels of funding. With the passage of the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act \(IIJA\)](#), the funding for MDOT SHA, MDOT MTA and MDOT MAA will increase about 20 percent (an additional \$3.5 billion) and may be included in a supplemental budget depending on when final amounts are known. (\$17.7B + \$3.5B = \$21.2B)."

* Fiscal and Policy Note found the average annual increase in SAFE Roads Act program funding from FY24-27 to be \$74.3 million. As SHA capital budget is expected to conservatively increase by \$262.3 million per year as a consequence of IIJA, **the SAFE Roads Act program funding targets will not require MDOT to redirect any funding from other projects; in fact, SAFE Roads Act program funding targets represent only 28.3% of expected increased federal funding.**

B. Maryland State Budget Surpluses:

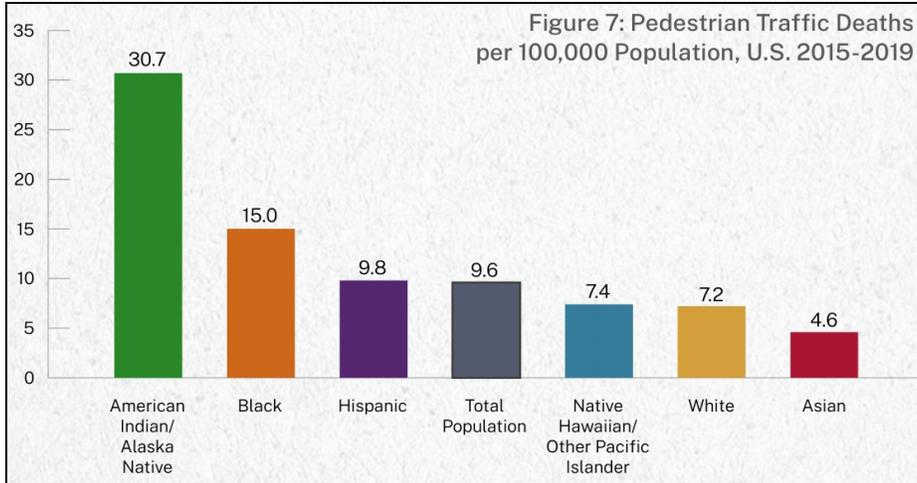
1. In addition to increasing funding from IIJA: [\\$4.1 billion for highway aid and \\$409 million for bridge replacement and repairs, \\$1.7 billion for public transit systems](#)),
2. [Maryland state budget finished the fiscal year with an unprecedented \\$4.6 billion state surplus, and it expects a \\$1.9 billion surplus every year for the next five years.](#)

C. Increasing Vulnerable Road User Deaths/Failing MDOT Policies: The status quo is not acceptable; there has been a 46% increase in pedestrian and bicyclists fatalities from 2012. MDOT, MHSO, and SHA are failing to meet NHTSA and FHWA HSIP pedestrian and bicyclist emphasis area fatality reduction targets. "System Preservation" cannot be the budget priority, this will only maintain roadway dangerous conditions that are the root cause of fatalities.



D. This is a Civil Rights issue: Disadvantaged communities and people of color who walk and ride bicycles are over twice as likely to be seriously injured and killed than other road user groups. Disadvantaged communities and people of color are more likely to be poor, very young or elderly, and in a car-free household in high density housing near public bus transit with a route along an urban arterial highway. By law, MDOT must address the needs of these communities as required by Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, sex, national origin and religion as well as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

Pedestrian Traffic Deaths per 100,000 Population, U.S. 2015-2019
[An Analysis of Traffic Fatalities by Race and Ethnicity, GHSA, June 2021](#)

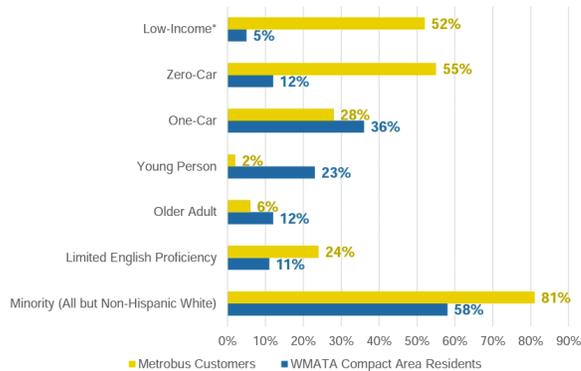


Bus Transit User Demographics - Older, Lower Income, BIPOC

WMATA Bus Transformation Project

Compared to non-riders, Metrobus customers are more transit dependent

- Metrobus riders are far more likely to come from low-income and zero-car households, which are the two strongest indicators of transit dependency
- The proportion of low-income Metrobus riders is 10x the proportion of low-income residents of the region
- The proportion of zero-car household Metrobus riders is more than 4x the proportion of zero-car households in the region
- Metrobus riders are more likely to be of a racial minority group and to have limited English proficiency



Source: WMATA 2014 Passenger Survey; WMATA 2017-2020 Public Participation Plan; US Census 2011-2016 5-Year Estimates 17
 *Low income defined as living in a household with income less than \$30,000 a year