
February 16, 2022

The Honorable Delores G. Kelley
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Letter of Information – Senate Bill 874 – State Highway Administration – Pedestrian and Bicyclist Fatalities – Infrastructure Review (Vision Zero Implementation Act of 2022)

Dear Chair Kelley and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on Senate Bill 874 but offers the following information for the Committee’s consideration.

Senate Bill 874 would require the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) to perform an infrastructure review of each pedestrian or bicyclist fatality on a State highway or at an intersection where a State highway meets another highway or a municipal street; the MDOT SHA would also be required to complete the infrastructure review within six months after the fatality and publish the review on the MDOT SHA website. As explained below, the MDOT SHA already completes investigations on fatal incidents along State highways.

Maryland’s Vision Zero Program was established by the Maryland General Assembly in 2019, with the goal of reaching zero vehicle-related deaths or serious injuries by 2030. In collaboration with a vast network of partners, the MDOT has since launched a variety of strategies to decrease serious injuries and fatalities on Maryland roadways:

- Developed Maryland’s Strategic Highway Safety Plan for 2021-2025.
- Uses a data driven approach to locate and address needed infrastructure improvements at certain locations.
- Partnered with law enforcement to administer initiatives related to the existing pedestrian and bicyclist laws.
- Implemented system-wide infrastructure treatments, land-use planning, and countermeasures to address pedestrian and bicyclist safety on Maryland roadways.
- Supported legislative and policy efforts that advance pedestrian and bicyclist safety.
- Encouraged public awareness and education of pedestrian and bicyclist safety through training and media outreach.
- Identified, promoted, and implemented engineering and technological approaches that support the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Developed the “Context Driven – Access and Mobility for All Users” guide that focuses on creating a safe, accessible, and balanced multimodal transportation system.

Vision Zero is a statewide initiative that includes transportation departments at the county and municipal levels. Approximately one-third of both pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities occur on roads not owned or maintained by the MDOT SHA.

The Honorable Delores G. Kelley
Page Two

It is critical that, for the success of the Vision Zero Program, all State, county, and municipal roads are considered when a fatality occurs, to remain consistent with the Statewide Vision Zero goal.

Senate Bill 874 requires the MDOT SHA to conduct an infrastructure review of each pedestrian fatality on a State Highway. The MDOT SHA already performs these reviews for all types of crashes on our network, not just for pedestrian and bicycle fatalities. For the fatalities that occur on State roads, the MDOT SHA performs infrastructure reviews on approximately 75% of the occurrences. For the remaining occurrences that do not warrant an infrastructure review, it has been determined that external factors contributed to the incident and such a review is not necessary. The MDOT SHA's ability to review a fatality is largely dependent on being notified by law enforcement that a fatality has occurred along the network and in some cases, MDOT SHA is not notified at all, such as when a serious injury results in a fatality. It is the intent of the MDOT SHA to continue to work with law enforcement agencies to improve the process of communicating this data. Once the MDOT SHA is notified of a fatality on one of the State's roadways, the District office begins the review process. Our current infrastructure review incorporates various components that include a summary of the crash, work orders, fatal crash reviews, crash reports, and crash data. The fatal crash review provides an overview of the crash, including an evaluation of the location, a description of the crash, as well as observations and conclusions about the location's infrastructure. Infrastructure elements that are reviewed include, but are not limited to, signage, pavement marking, guardrails, speed limits, sidewalks, traffic signals, etc. As warranted, the MDOT SHA then makes a recommendation on what elements of the existing infrastructure can be upgraded based on the evaluation.

Once a recommendation has been identified and depending on the significance of the improvement, the next step is to begin the project development process which begins with planning and design. Depending on the improvement, the MDOT SHA may need to acquire right of way, move utilities, or perform additional reviews and site visits.

It is important to note that Vision Zero is comprised of six different elements, one of them being infrastructure. When addressing pedestrian and bicycle safety through the lens of Vision Zero, it is necessary to consider the other five elements: Distracted Driving, Impaired Driving, Occupant Protection, Pedestrians, and Aggressive Driving. Similarly, when applying the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Safe System Approach, the following principles are recognized: death and serious injuries are unacceptable, humans make mistakes, humans are vulnerable, responsibility is shared, safety is proactive, and redundancy is crucial.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information when deliberating Senate Bill 874.

Sincerely,

Nicole Stafford
State Legislative Manager
Maryland State Highway Administration
410-545-8713

Pilar Helm
Director of Government Affairs
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-865-1090