

**Environment and Transportation Committee**  
**SB 880/HB 656: Safe Access for All (SAFE) Roads Act of 2022**

On behalf of the Montgomery County transit and safe streets advocacy group Action Committee for Transit, I ask the committee for a **FAVORABLE RECOMMENDATION** for this bill.

This bill would require the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) to make their roads less dangerous for pedestrians, bicyclists, bus riders, and other vulnerable road users, and would provide the funding for them to do so. SHA should support it, and so should the General Assembly, because

- People are killed in the same places, over and over again for years.
- Even when SHA agrees to make a road less dangerous, they still don't do it.
- SHA always has reasons why they can't, won't, or shouldn't make a road less dangerous.

**PEOPLE ARE KILLED IN THE SAME PLACES, OVER AND OVER AGAIN FOR YEARS**

SHA's roads have been dangerous for decades, and SHA has done nothing to lessen the danger. Here are some examples:

- CONNECTICUT AVENUE/MD185 AND SAUL ROAD, KENSINGTON
  - On December 13, 1978, pedestrian Geneve Anderson (age 68), a domestic worker, was on the sidewalk when a two-car left-turn/head-on crash killed her; the crash also critically injured pedestrians Tiffany Scott (age 13) and Jennifer Fielding (age 14), Holy Redeemer Catholic School students who were also on the sidewalk.
  - On October 23, 2019, bicyclist Dr. Grant Bonavia, a radiologist at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, was on the sidewalk when a three-car left-turn/head-on crash critically injured him.
- GEORGIA AVENUE/MD97 AND REGINA DRIVE, ASPEN HILL
  - On September 20, 2009, pedestrian Victor Ramos (age 50) was killed crossing Georgia Avenue at the bus stop at Regina Drive.
  - On June 3, 2011, pedestrian Etsegenet Hurissa (age 24) was killed crossing Georgia Avenue on her way home from the bus stop at Regina Drive, returning from her nursing class at Montgomery College.
  - On October 24, 2016, pedestrian Robert Grossman (age 60) was killed crossing Georgia Avenue on his way to the bus stop at Regina Drive to go to his synagogue.
  - On May 5, 2017, driver Stavroula Doulaveris (age 81) was killed in a crash involving 2 cars and a school bus, while turning left onto southbound Georgia Avenue from Regina Drive.
  - On April 28, 2021 – after SHA finally installed a new traffic signal at the adjacent intersection at Rippling Brook Drive in January 2020 – pedestrian Claire Grossmann (age 63) was killed crossing Georgia Avenue at the new traffic signal, on her way home from the bus stop, returning from her job at CVS; she was the widow of Robert Grossmann.

- NEW HAMPSHIRE AVENUE/MD650 AND ELTON ROAD, HILLANDALE
  - On March 14, 2006, pedestrian Jesus Perez (age 62) was killed crossing New Hampshire Avenue at Elton Road, going from the bus stop to the shopping center.
  - On May 24, 2010, pedestrian Jenet Costa (age 43) was killed crossing New Hampshire Avenue at Elton Road, going to the bus stop to go home after her work shift at the shopping center.
  - On January 15, 2021, pedestrian Mark Henderson (age 66), a former Army sergeant, was killed crossing New Hampshire Avenue, going from the shopping center to the bus stop, two days before his birthday.
  - On January 17, 2022, pedestrian Moges Alemnew Webete (age 70) was killed crossing New Hampshire Avenue, going from the shopping center to the bus stop.

### **EVEN WHEN SHA AGREES TO MAKE A PLACE LESS DANGEROUS, THEY DON'T DO IT**

Since 2019, I have worked with a group to review dangerous infrastructure conditions and ask SHA to make meaningful changes to prevent further injuries and deaths. Unfortunately, in most cases, SHA says no. And even when they say yes, they still don't make the changes. Why? Because

1. Pedestrian/bicyclist projects have a low priority;
2. Near-term improvements for pedestrians/bicyclists don't happen, pending long-term projects; and
3. Projects omit needed pedestrian design elements, which must then be retrofitted.

Meanwhile, every day, people must continue using the dangerous roads that SHA is not fixing.

Here are some examples of SHA practices.

PEDESTRIAN/BICYCLIST PROJECTS HAVE A LOW PRIORITY



Where: Layhill Road (Maryland 182) at the Glenmont Metro drive/Glenmont shopping center, Glenmont

Request date: October 2019

Request: A crossing that is safe for pedestrians.

Reason for request: Pedestrian Alberto Duque struck and killed on January 26, 2019.

SHA response: A HAWK signal will be installed.

Current status: No change; “We are anticipating important update information to be forthcoming regarding our statewide signal construction program.”

PEDESTRIAN/BICYCLIST PROJECTS HAVE A LOW PRIORITY



Where: Midcounty Highway (Maryland 124) at Pier Point Place, Montgomery Village

Request date: February 2020

Request: A crossing that is safe for pedestrians.

Reason for request: Pedestrian Adonias Gomez struck and killed on February 12, 2020.

SHA response: A traffic signal will be installed.

Current status: No change; “still under review by our Office of Traffic and Safety (OOTs).”

## PEDESTRIAN/BICYCLIST PROJECTS HAVE A LOW PRIORITY



Where: Clopper Road (Maryland 117) at Mateny Road, Germantown

Request date: October 2019

Request: An intersection that is safe and convenient for pedestrians to cross a.t

Reason for request: Several pedestrians hit while crossing with the walk signal.

SHA response: Some marked crosswalks and pedestrian signals will be added.

Current status: No change; “still under review by our Office of Traffic and Safety (OOTs).”

## NEAR-TERM IMPROVEMENTS DON'T HAPPEN, PENDING LONG-TERM PROJECTS



Where: University Boulevard East (Maryland 193) and Seek Lane, Long Branch

Request date: November 2019

Request: A crossing that is safe for pedestrians.

Reason for request: Pedestrian Julio Vargas Valerio struck and killed on October 13, 2019.

SHA response: A traffic signal will be installed, as part of Purple Line construction.

Current status: No change.

**NEAR-TERM IMPROVEMENTS DON'T HAPPEN, PENDING LONG-TERM PROJECTS**



Where: Frederick Ave (Maryland 355) between Montgomery Avenue and Dalamar Street, Gaithersburg

Request date: June 2021

Request: A crossing that is safe for bus riders going to and from 7-Eleven and Megamart.

Reason for request: Half a mile between crossings; longstanding issue for the City of Gaithersburg.

SHA response: When Megamart builds their new store, they will pay for a traffic signal at Dalamar Street.

Current status: No change.

**NEAR-TERM IMPROVEMENTS DON'T HAPPEN, PENDING LONG-TERM PROJECTS**



Where: Rockville Pike (Maryland 355) and Halpine Road, City of Rockville, near Twinbrook Metro

Request date: July 2020

Request: Protecting pedestrians from turning drivers

Reason for request: Multiple pedestrians hit by turning drivers while crossing with the walk signal

SHA response: The Twinbrook Quarter developer will pay for a new traffic signal and other changes.

Current status: No change.

## PROJECT DESIGN DOES NOT INCLUDE NEEDED PEDESTRIAN ELEMENTS



Where: Frederick Ave (Maryland 355) and Watkins Mill Road, Gaithersburg/Montgomery Village

Request date: June 2020

Request: A safe, direct crossing across 355 on the side with the sidepaths.

Reason for request: Should have been in the design of the \$124 million Watkins Mill Road interchange.

SHA response: “it was determined that pedestrians cross at the signalized crosswalks and are not crossing along the unmarked and unsignalized side.”

Current status: No change.

## PROJECT DESIGN DOES NOT INCLUDE NEEDED PEDESTRIAN ELEMENTS



Where: Frederick Road (Maryland 355) and West Old Baltimore Road, Clarksburg

Request date: January 2021

Request: Pedestrian signals where the new 355 sidepath crosses the newly-rebuilt intersection.

Reason for request: Should have been included in the designs, especially as a school walk route.

SHA response: “Our initial findings are still undergoing review at the MDOT SHA Office of Traffic and Safety (OOTS).”

Current status: No change.

## **SHA ALWAYS HAS REASONS WHY THEY CAN'T MAKE THE ROAD LESS DANGEROUS**

Here are some actual reasons SHA has provided for why they won't, can't, or shouldn't make a road crossing safe for pedestrians.

- Because it's dangerous to cross there.
- Because not enough people cross there.
- Because then more people would cross there.
- Because then people would think it's safe to cross there.
- Because people can cross somewhere else.
- Because nobody has been hit there yet.
- Because nobody has been killed there yet.
- Because typically drivers don't hit people there.
- Because it already is safe, if drivers are law-abiding.
- Because it's too complicated.
- Because drivers would have to wait too long.
- Because the speed limit is too high.
- Because engineering standards don't allow them to.
- Because they have to do another study.
- Because they're waiting for a different plan.

It's SHA's job to make roads safe for everyone. And SB 880 will help them do their job.