
February 2, 2023

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Letter of Information – House Bill 70 – Safe Access for All (SAFE) Roads Act of 2023

Dear Chair Barve and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on House Bill 70 but offers the following information and amendments for the Committee’s consideration.

House Bill 70 requires the MDOT State Highway Administration (SHA) to recommend and implement pedestrian and bicycle safety design elements in all projects, implement incremental improvements when a project is projected to take more than 12 months to complete, report human resource data related to pedestrian and bicycle improvement projects, as well as analyze, plan for, and report on pedestrian crossing projects located on certain state highways.

The MDOT would like to note for the Committee that SHA Administrator Tim Smith has engaged in conversations with the bill sponsor about areas of concern in the bill, as drafted, as well as common goals; specific amendment language has been offered to the sponsors for their consideration.

MDOT SHA’s proposed amendments would establish the continuation of an existing process that evaluates pedestrian and bicycle improvements through the context driven lens on improvements projects in our capital program. Regarding the suggested changes to both sections with reporting requirements, the proposed amendments would allow SHA the ability to quantify available information and provide the members of the General Assembly with human resource statistics that will clearly identify the resources dedicated to pedestrian and bike improvements across the state; as well as proposing an appropriate time frame to conduct analysis and develop a plan before producing a report.

The MDOT looks forward to continuing its partnership with the bill sponsor in the hope of reaching a consensus on bill language.

The MDOT SHA suggests that section (C-1) (1) be amended to:

(C-1) (1) THE DEPARTMENT, IN DEVELOPING IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS IN THE CAPITAL PROGRAM, SHALL RECOMMEND AND IMPLEMENT CONTEXT-DRIVEN

DESIGN ELEMENTS FOR PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE SAFETY CONSISTENT WITH:

The MDOT SHA suggests that the following sections under 2-609 (A) be amended to:

(1) THE NUMBER OF STAFF POSITIONS THE STATE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION HAS DEDICATED TO IMPLEMENTING PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS BY TITLE AND DEPARTMENT;

(2) INFORMATION ABOUT EMPLOYEES DEDICATED TO SUPPORTING PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE SAFETY HIGHWAY SAFETY AND IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS FOR THE STATE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION, INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:

- (I) WAGE, BENEFIT, AND COMPENSATION LEVELS;*
- (II) TITLE AND DEPARTMENT*

Finally, MDOT SHA suggests that the following sections under 2-609 (B) be amended to:

(B) ON OR BEFORE OCTOBER 1, 2024, THE STATE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION SHALL SUBMIT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 2-1257 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, A REPORT WITH A FULL ANALYSIS OF AND PLAN FOR ALL STATE HIGHWAYS LOCATED IN SUBURBAN ACTIVITY CENTERS OR TRADITIONAL TOWN CENTERS, AS DEFINED BY THE STATE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION'S CONTEXT ZONES GUIDE, THAT:

(1) INCLUDES AN INSTALLATION PLAN AND TIMELINE REQUIRED TO ESTABLISH SAFE PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS ON THESE STATE HIGHWAYS;

(2) USES ALL SIGNAL TYPES IN THE PLANNING OF ROAD CROSSINGS, INCLUDING FULL SIGNALS, PEDESTRIAN HYBRID BEACONS, AND ANY OTHER SIGNALS; AND

(3) EVALUATES THE PLACING OF PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS IN INTERVALS BEST DETERMINED BY A DATA DRIVEN APPROACH THAT CONSIDERS CONTEXT DRIVEN DESIGN CONCEPTS AND TRAFFIC CONDITIONS WITHIN OR ADJACENT TO THE CENSUS TRACTS WITH SIGNIFICANT TRANSIT DEPENDENCY AND A POPULATION DENSITY ALONG THE HIGHWAY THAT EXCEEDS 10,000 PEOPLE PER MILE.

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The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information as it deliberates on House Bill 70.

Respectfully submitted,

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