



MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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TO: Delegate Kumar P. Barve, Chair
Delegate Dana Stein, Vice Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee Members
FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus (MLLC)
DATE: January 17th, 2023
RE: HB0070 Safe Access for All (SAFE) Roads Act of 2023

The MLLC supports HB0070 Safe Access for All (SAFE) Roads Act of 2023

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB0070.

Regarding the Latino community, low-income neighborhoods, Communities of Color, people with physical or intellectual disabilities, older adults, and people with limited English proficiency are among those that have been traditionally underserved, mis-served, or left out of decision-making and planning processes such as the development of safe active transportation facilities.¹ Latino communities are more transit-dependent than white communities, as disparities in access and investment are both contemporary and historical. For example, many U.S. cities were intentionally divided along race and class lines— with residential and transportation development patterns rooted in segregation, discriminatory laws, and housing policies intended to disadvantage and exclude People of Color.² Infrastructure such as railroads and highways reinforced this segregation.³ As a result, neighborhoods on the “wrong side of the tracks”— mostly low-income, Black neighborhoods and other neighborhoods predominated by People of Color— experienced exclusion, disinvestment, physical barriers, and even destruction.⁴ Regarding safety, in 2021, 131 Marylanders lost their lives while attempting to cross our streets.⁵ There were an additional 3,151 pedestrian and bicyclist-involved crashes that caused injury or property damage.⁶ Regarding climate change, there is no way to move towards greater public use of alternative modes of transportation and decreasing reliance on fossil fuel-powered private vehicles without making our streets safer for pedestrians.

This bill aims to solve these issues by reducing the number of serious injuries caused by bike and pedestrian-involved crashes, advancing towards Maryland’s goal of zero vehicle-related deaths by 2030, addressing equity issues in State Highway Administration projects in some of the most diverse/underserved communities, and promoting alternative modes of transportation (primarily biking and walking). It requires the State Highway Administration to conduct an analysis on the findings of

¹ *Equitable and Inclusive Trails*. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. (n.d.). Retrieved January 17, 2023, from <http://www.railstotrails.org/build-trails/trail-building-toolbox/basics/equitable-and-inclusive-trails/>.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Maryland Department of Transportation. (2023). *Maryland Crash and Traffic Fatalities Data*. Zero Deaths Maryland & Vision Zero - Maryland Highway Safety Office. Retrieved January 17, 2023, from <https://zerodeathsmd.gov/resources/crashdata/>.

⁶ Ibid.

and implementations of context-driven design elements for pedestrian and bike safety including, but not limited to, fully signalized sidewalks, pedestrian hybrid beacons, and any other signal types. Overall, roadway fatalities are 100% preventable. No one should lose their life from choosing to walk or bike on Maryland's roadways. Moreover, if people feel safe walking, biking, and taking other modes of public transit, they will be less likely to rely on their private vehicles powered by fossil fuels.

The MLLC supports this bill and urges a favorable report on HB0070.