

Strong Towns Baltimore (STB) is supportive of Delegate Charkoudian's bill HB0070 (Safe Access for All (SAFE) Roads Act of 2023). Decisive steps need to be taken to make Maryland's state-owned roads safer for non-motorists. Consider the following numbers. In Baltimore County, 12% of the roads are state-owned. Despite this low percentage, between 2015 and 2019, 79% of pedestrian fatalities occurred on those state-owned roads. [1]

With our general support made clear, we see several ways in which the bill should be strengthened. As such, STB's stand on the bill is **favorable with amendments**.

In section 2–103.1, the bill calls for MDOT to recommend and implement context-driven design elements for pedestrian and bicycle safety consistent with the U.S. DOT FHWA proven safety countermeasures [2] and MDOT's context-driven guide [3] and associated strategies. While we recognize the usefulness of these resources, they are inadequate.

The **NACTO Global Street Design Guide** [4] is a much richer, authoritative, and impartial source of safety guidelines for non-motorists, especially in the contexts that MDOT terms "Urban Core", "Urban Center", "Traditional Town Center", and "Suburban Activity Center". In making this recommendation, we'll note that both Baltimore and Washington, D.C. are NACTO member cities.

In section 2–609.A.3, the bill calls for the SHA to create a report that includes the number of new signalized crosswalks that have been approved for construction. We would like to see this report expanded to also **include the number that were denied** and the reasons why.

In section 2–609.B.3, the bill calls for the SHA to create a report that provides a plan for establishing safe pedestrian crossings on certain state highways that are within or adjacent to census tracts with significant transit dependency and a population density along the highway that exceeds 10,000 people per mile. This seems like an unreasonably high bar to us.

Instead of requiring **both** conditions, we would prefer to see **either** condition serving as a qualifier - significant transit dependency **or** a minimum population density.

The Baltimore region's transit system is relatively under-developed and immature. As such, the only communities in the Baltimore region that would likely qualify as being significantly transit dependent are located in Baltimore City. However, MDOT SHA does not have any responsibility for maintaining any roads within the city.

We would like to see the 10,000 people per mile threshold lowered, as this high bar will prevent all but a very small area of the state from benefiting from the safety improvements offered by this bill.

While Silver Spring has a population density of 10,277 people per mile, College Park (for example) only clocks in at 6,191. In the Baltimore region, the population densities of many communities dominated by state-owned roads fall far short of the bill's current 10,000 threshold,

with Towson at 4,207, Owings Mills at 3,742, Perry Hall at 4,239, Catonsville at 3,201, Parkville at 7,424, and Timonium at 1,828. [5] Given these numbers, we believe **3,000 people per mile** is a much more appropriate threshold.

With the integration of the above-listed changes, the bill will stand to benefit a large number of pedestrians across the state in a meaningful way. We urge the committee to strongly consider integration of our suggestions and vote in support of this bill. Thank you for your time and attention.

### [Strong Towns Baltimore](#)

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[1] "Baltimore County Strategic Highway Safety Plan". October 8, 2020

<https://zerodeathsmd.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/SHSPBC.052621.pdf>

[2] U.S. DOT FHWA. "Proven Safety Countermeasures". As of January 27, 2023

<https://highways.dot.gov/safety/proven-safety-countermeasures>

[3] MDOT SHA. "Context Driven Guide". As of January 27, 2023

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/3476e680584c49e48303fe6d52ceeda9>

[4] National Association of City Transportation Officials. "Global Street Design Guide". As of January 27, 2023 <https://nacto.org/publication/global-street-design-guide/>

[5] U.S. Census Bureau. "QuickFacts". As of January 27, 2023

[https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/collegeparkcitymaryland,silverspringcdpmmaryland,perryhallcdpmmaryland,owingsmillscdpmmaryland,towsoncdpmmaryland,catonsvillecdpmmaryland/PST\\_045222](https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/collegeparkcitymaryland,silverspringcdpmmaryland,perryhallcdpmmaryland,owingsmillscdpmmaryland,towsoncdpmmaryland,catonsvillecdpmmaryland/PST_045222)