



Testimony of the Mayor and Council of Rockville
HB 70 – Safe Access for All (SAFE) Roads Act of 2023
SUPPORT

The Mayor and Council of Rockville thank Chair Barve, members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee, Chair Barnes, and members of the House Appropriations Committee for the opportunity to share the City's comments on HB 70. We are thankful to Delegate Charkoudian for sponsoring this important legislation.

In July 2020, the Mayor and Council approved its Vision Zero Action Plan as a comprehensive approach to achieve zero fatalities and serious injuries from traffic crashes. The Rockville Vision Zero Action Plan is consistent with the State's Vision Zero subtitle and follows the same implementation philosophy. The City supports HB 70 and its goals to assess the infrastructure and operational practices that limit our collective ability to reach Vision Zero.

The City tracks crash locations and coordinates with the State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) to identify state-maintained roadways and intersections in need of further assessment. Rockville has identified a High Injury Network of the roadways which have the most crashes resulting in fatalities or serious injuries. Five segments are located along State-maintained roadways in the City of Rockville, with 37 fatalities and serious injury crashes. Rockville wrote MDOT SHA last year to express our serious concerns and request safety improvements. Unfortunately, there is little to no progress on this request.

While regular collaboration between our transportation agencies is strong when identifying problematic safety locations, current processes and capacity at the State level often extends the timeline for implementation of safety improvements beyond acceptable levels, including a 90-day timeframe for responding to requests. Moreover, the recommended safety improvements often fall short of the needs of vulnerable people walking or bicycling in favor of maintaining the motor vehicle level of service or justification thresholds that predate the State's Vision Zero policy. The requirements for comprehensive safety evaluations, consistent with the Vision Zero Program established under Title 8, Subtitle 10 of the Transportation Article; a mandate to improve facilities for vulnerable roadway users; and staffing assessment will help expedite proactive and innovative safety improvements along state roadways that are desperately needed.

We support the provisions that require if a new construction or improvement project is projected to take more than twelve months to complete, MDOT must implement, all possible, near-term, safety improvements immediately while maintaining each project's priority ranking. Further, the requirement that SHA must submit a report to the General Assembly with a full analysis and plan for all State highways located in suburban activity centers that includes an installation plan and timeline necessary to establish safe pedestrian crossings on State highways has the potential to significantly improve pedestrian, bicycle, and traffic safety in our community.

We ask that you incorporate the following amendments into the bill:

1. Expand recommendations to include improvements to reduce unsafe and illegal driving behaviors.
2. Permit a reduction in intersection level-of-service if necessary to implement safety improvements.

In closing, HB 70 is urgently needed and will further advance the State's Vision Zero traffic safety efforts, making a safer transportation network for people walking, bicycling, driving, and using transit. We urge the Committees to provide HB 70 with a favorable report.