



Support HB519

Bikes on Sidewalks

Bicycle Advocates for Annapolis & Anne Arundel County
P.O. Box 208, Arnold, MD 21012 www.bikeaaa.org

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

March 28, 2023

RE: SUPPORT House Bill 519

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am a resident of District 30, president of Bicycle Advocates for Annapolis and Anne Arundel County (“BikeAAA”), Chair of the Anne Arundel County Bicycle Advisory Commission, and former Member of the 2017 Maryland Bicycle Safety Task Force. On behalf of BikeAAA and its more than 1,000 members, we support HB519.

Maryland law 21-1103 prohibits people, including children, from riding bicycles (which includes similar devices like scooters) on sidewalks unless the local jurisdiction expressly permits it by ordinance. Montgomery and Howard Counties have long had such ordinances and in 2021 the City of Annapolis clarified their permitting ordinance and Anne Arundel County unanimously passed one with bipartisan sponsorship. Montgomery and Howard Counties have not experienced pedestrian complaints or issues with bicyclists on sidewalks.

Many people rely on bicycles for transportation, especially in our lower income communities and yet most places lack a connected network of paved trails and bike lanes for them to safely complete their trips to work, school, transit, shopping and other destinations. Some bus and rail transit users rely on bikes for the “last mile” at either end including carrying their bikes on bus-front racks, light rail or MARC trains. Many recreational riders prefer to bike from home to a park, trail, library or other destination rather than putting the bike on a rack on the back of the car. There are many children who bike to school. All of them ride on sidewalks where there is no safe alternative. Any police officer will tell you that no one of any age is going to be ticketed for biking safely on a sidewalk. At the same time, biking safely on a sidewalk should not be a reason for a law enforcement action. The current situation is that people ride on sidewalks for safety and yet Maryland law prohibits it. The bill includes a requirement for bike riders to yield to pedestrians, so unsafe riding would still be a violation. HB519 advances Maryland’s Vision Zero goals by aligning Maryland code with safe and equitable biking. It will align our law with the current safe public practice and law enforcement policy. It would also permit local jurisdictions to prohibit bikes on sidewalks in areas where it is deemed unsafe.

Please support HB519 to make Maryland mobility safe for all users, especially our most vulnerable.

Sincerely,

Jon Korin
President, Bicycle Advocates for Annapolis & Anne Arundel County (443-685-4103)

BikeAAA is an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) promoting safe cycling for transportation & recreation