



## **SB645 – Great Maryland Trails Act of 2024**

### **Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

**February 15, 2024**

**Position: Favorable**

Greetings Chair and Members of the Committee:

Our mission is to promote bicycling, increase safety, improve conditions, and provide a voice for bicyclists in Maryland who use bicycles for both transportation and recreation. We partner with advocacy organizations to promote vulnerable road user safety legislation and safe infrastructure on the state, county and municipal level. We know that the safest way to get more people biking, walking and using other active transportation modes is to provide safe infrastructure that is separated from vehicular traffic. Trails, also known as “shared-use paths” are used in urban, suburban and rural environments. But in order to get more people biking and walking, especially for transportation, they must be connected in a safe network. There are a variety of local and regional trail networks in Maryland such as the Baltimore Greenway, Capital Trails Network and Anne Arundel Trail Network but there is no similar plan for the state that ties these together. This bill would:

- Advance trails statewide used for transportation, recreation and tourism
- Bring more federal grant money into Maryland for trail-building
- Strengthen local jurisdictions capacity to plan, design and construct trails
- Interconnect the existing and planned trails across Maryland
- Expand both paved and natural surface trails in urban, suburban and rural areas

As bicycling has increased in popularity across the United States and provides many environmental, economic, and health benefits, there is a need for creating a safe transportation system which makes people the priority; separated infrastructure is the best way to help achieve zero injuries and fatalities while allowing all people to get to their destinations safely on foot or wheels.

2023 saw the highest number of traffic fatalities in Maryland since 2007 with approximately 600 fatalities and increasing numbers of pedestrians and cyclists. This bill will help to advance Maryland’s Vision Zero goals by enhancing the safety and protection of people who bike, walk, use assistive and other devices and have the added benefits of positively impacting our environment and promoting multi-modal and active transportation in our state.

Amendment

We recognize that this is a challenging fiscal year and we support amending the bill so that it aligns with the resource capacity of participating agencies, especially in MDOT, DNR and MDP. We do not envision any transfer of positions but prefer collaboration among the agencies named in the bill.

Please support SB645.

**Audubon Mid-Atlantic**

**Baltimore Bicycling Club (BBC)**

**Bicycle Advocates for Annapolis & Anne Arundel County (BikeAAA)**

**Bike Maryland**

**Bikemore**

**Bike HoCo**

**East Coast Greenway Alliance**

**Frederick Bicycle Coalition**

**Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway**

**Rails to Trails Conservancy**

**Terps for Bike Lanes**

**Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA)**

**Worcester County Bike and Pedestrian Coalition**