
February 29, 2024

The Honorable Marc Korman
Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee
251 House Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

RE: Letter of Information – House Bill 530 – Maryland Trails Advisory Committee and the Maryland Office of Trails – Establishment (Gret Maryland Trails Act)

Dear Chair Korman and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) offers the following information on House Bill 530 for the Committee’s Consideration.

House Bill 530 seeks to establish a Maryland Trails Advisory Committee and the Maryland Office of Trails within MDOT to improve access to trails across Maryland. The bill further requires certain staffing to the Maryland Office of Trails and assigns specific tasks to the Office and Committee.

The MDOT currently supports the goals of House Bill 530 by providing resources for the development of trails across the State. MDOT has already completed some of the bill’s provisions, while outstanding requirements are recommended in the recently completed 2050 Maryland Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan (BPMP). House Bill 530 and the BPMP both support updating the statewide trail plan of regionally significant trails and creating a “Trails Team” of multi-agency staff who currently address trail issues. MDOT is drafting a scope of work for the state trails plan and beginning to organize staff from several state agencies to convene the ‘trails team.’

The MDOT Office of Active Transportation and Micromobility (OATM) maintains a database of trails open to two-way bicycle traffic, which is both a key provision in the bill and the foundation for trails planning across the state. The OATM staff coordinate regularly with colleagues at the State Highway Administration (SHA) and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to advance trail and shared-use paths development. Other MDOT staff are also assigned to manage grant opportunities for all manner of transportation projects, including trail projects. MDOT supports trail development by local jurisdictions and metropolitan planning organizations which are eligible for federal programs such as the Transportation Alternatives Program (TA), Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program (ATTIIP), the Emissions Reductions Program and the Reconnecting Communities Program.

The MDOT is the agency assigned to staff the MBPAC, a legislatively mandated committee to address bicycle, pedestrian and micromobility safety and access across the state. The Director of the Office of Active Transportation and Micromobility holds a seat on the MBPAC representing the Maryland Department of Transportation along with 21 other interagency and citizen members to advise the State in bicycle, pedestrian, and micromobility program areas.

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The MBPAC includes most of the members recommended in House Bill 530 and meets quarterly to discuss trail and shared-use path access and issues. Subcommittees, or working groups, are permitted to help advance work of the full MBPAC but are subject to full Open Meetings Act requirements if given official standing. The formation of ad-hoc committees on a volunteer basis is another opportunity to advance the Committee's needs and interests. These ad-hoc committees may include stakeholders outside of the formal MBPAC membership. MBPAC has considered voting to form a Trails Subcommittee which would support requirements of House Bill 530.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information when deliberating House Bill 530.

Respectfully submitted,

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