

MML-HB 278 - FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Bill Jorch

Position: FAV



Maryland Municipal League
The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns

TESTIMONY

February 8, 2024

Committee: House Environment and Transportation

Bill: HB 278 - Urban State Highways - Speed Limits - Exceptions

Position: Favorable

Reason for Position:

The Maryland Municipal League (MML) supports House Bill 278 which, through an expedited process, will significantly improve roadway safety by permitting the State Highway Administration (SHA) to lower the speed limit on urban highway by five mile per hour without the need for a traffic study.

As defined, an “urban highway” constitutes a highway located within the boundaries of a municipal corporation, so this bill has potentially broad impact to the MML membership. There are instances when a municipal government would request a lower speed limit on a state highway based on safety concerns on that particular roadway. Removing the barrier of a traffic study to just reduce the speed limit on urban highways operated by SHA makes these types of requests for safety enhancements easier to implement.

One critical function of local government is to promote the safe use of public rights-of-way by all users. While municipal governments have broad authority to enact safety measures on local roads, SHA has jurisdiction over many main streets within municipalities. HB 278 should assist local input on state roads become more impactful.

The provisions of HB 278 should significantly assist municipal governments promote roadway safety through SHA. For this reason, the League respectfully requests that the committee provide House Bill 278 with a favorable report.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Theresa Kuhns

Angelica Bailey Thupari, Esq.

Bill Jorch

Justin Fiore

Chief Executive Officer

Director, Advocacy & Public Affairs

Director, Public Policy & Research

Deputy Director, Advocacy & Public Affairs

CSG HB 278 - 5 MPH reduction_2024.pdf

Uploaded by: Cheryl Cort

Position: FAV

February 5, 2024

Hon. Marc Korman, Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251, House Office Building, Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Position: **Support:** HB 278 - 5 MPH decrease in maximum speed limit

Dear Chair Korman:

Please accept these comments on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the leading non-profit organization in the D.C. region, including suburban Maryland, advocating for walkable, bikeable, inclusive, transit-oriented communities as the most sustainable and equitable way for the DC region to grow and provide opportunities for all.

We wish to express our support for HB 278, which proposes to permit Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) to lower the maximum speed limit by 5 MPH on urban state highways without an engineering and traffic investigation.

We believe this is appropriate and important for giving the state another tool to address traffic safety and achieve the state's Vision Zero goals of no traffic deaths.

Lowering speed limits can be a quick action tool to help SHA better respond to traffic safety needs. Given Maryland state roads' continued high level of fatalities and severe injuries, we need to strengthen our response. According to the [Federal Highway Administration](#):

Addressing speed is fundamental to the Safe System Approach to making streets safer, and a growing body of research shows that **speed limit changes alone can lead to measurable declines in speeds and crashes.** [emphasis added]

Posted speed limits, along with clear signage, equitable enforcement, other deterrence measures, and retrofitting and redesigning roadways to lower design speeds, are all tools to ensure safe use of Maryland's public rights of way. This bill supports SHA's "context driven" approach and Vision Zero goals for state roads. Lower speed roadways are fundamental to creating safer conditions for all travelers.

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CSG support for HB 278
Feb. 5, 2024

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Cort
Policy Director

Bike MD 2024 HB 282 – Speed Limit.pdf

Uploaded by: Joshua Feldmark

Position: FAV



HB 282 – Urban State Highways - Speed Limit - Exceptions

Environment & Transportation Committee

February 8, 2024

Josh Feldmark

joshua@bikemd.org

Position: Support

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. I am Joshua Feldmark representing Bike Maryland. We represent cyclists of all abilities across the state who ride 5 miles around the park with their families, for transportation, to a 100 mile ride. We believe that absolutely everyone should feel safe when they are on Maryland roads..

Sadly, in 2023 Howard County saw two truly tragic crashes that killed young children who were pedestrians at the time they were struck by a vehicle. While I do not know what vehicles were driven that killed the children we do know that there is overwhelming data saying that there are two main factors that turn injury crashes into fatality crashes. The first is speed of the vehicle and the second is size/weight of the vehicle. Local Governments as well as MDOT very often know and see roads that are problematic and dangerous at current speeds. Being able to decrease the speed on these roads without delay will most certainly save lives without spending a dime.

We strongly support any initiative that will make our streets safer.

For these reasons, we urge this committee to issue a favorable report on HB 282.

HB278_Kerr_FAV

Uploaded by: Kenneth Kerr

Position: FAV

KENNETH P. KERR, ED.D
Legislative District 3
Frederick County

Health and Government Operations
Committee

Subcommittees

Chair, Government Operations and
Health Facilities

Insurance and Pharmaceuticals



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ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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HB 278 – Urban State Highways – Speed Limits --Exceptions

HB 278 authorizes the State Highway Administration to reduce the speed limit on specific urban highways by up to 5 miles per hour without undertaking a traffic or engineering study. The bill applies to State-owned and -maintained highways that do not restrict non-motorized access and where highways are located in incorporated municipalities. The bill also applies to locations identified by the U.S. Census Bureau Designated Urban Areas where pedestrians walk adjacent to highways—consider highway 295 which comes into Baltimore City where Ravens stadium and Orioles Park are located. Fans frequently walk on the sidewalks adjacent to the stadiums.

This bill is needed because roadway designs have not changed with development trends over the last 60 years. Yet, the State continues to respond to increasing requests for speed limit reduction on State highways where posted speed limits no longer correspond to driving realities on these roads. This bill supports Maryland's commitment to Vision Zero. Data shows that in Maryland and nationwide more frequent crashes occur on roads in urban areas where density is higher. And more severe crashes occur on State-owned roads where speeds are generally higher.

More frequent and severe crashes occur in center cities and suburban activity centers that are not accommodating the same type of traffic today as they once did. Providing SHA with the authority to reduce posted speed limits by 5 mph without a formal traffic study provides opportunities for proactive and incremental change when it becomes clear that Speed limit reductions are low-cost countermeasures that begin to address the need to retrofit roadways in urbanized areas.

The historical imbalance between accessibility and mobility in urban areas of Maryland must be addressed through a proactive approach to Vision Zero that accounts for underserved communities, local roadway context, and land-use. By focusing on roadways already defined in statute as Urban Highways, this proposal addresses areas that are known to have increased activity and more frequent crashes. By passing this legislation, Maryland Department of Transportation would have another proactive engineering safety countermeasure to help Maryland prioritize safety in critical areas of the network.

Where would this legislation potentially apply? • This legislation authorizes the posted speed limit reduction of 5mph on Urban Highways in the State. Per State law, an Urban Highway is a State-owned Road that is:

- ▪ Constructed with a curb and gutter and an enclosed storm drainage system;
- ▪ Located in an urban area and on which is located a public facility that creates appreciable pedestrian traffic along the highway from adjacent areas;
- ▪ Located within urban boundaries as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau; and, stadium, and
- Located within the boundaries of a municipal corporation.

We respectfully request a favorable report for this important bill.

HB0278_FAV_City of Rockville_Urban State Highways

Uploaded by: Marissa Valeri

Position: FAV



Testimony of the Mayor and Council of Rockville
HB 278 - Urban State Highways – Speed Limits – Exceptions
SUPPORT

Good afternoon, Chairman Korman and members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee. I'm Marissa Valeri, Rockville City Councilmember and I thank you for this opportunity. On behalf of the Mayor and Council, I want to thank Delegate Kerr for sponsoring this critically important legislation.

The Mayor and Council unanimously support HB 278. This legislation aligns with Rockville's Vision Zero program to eliminate traffic fatalities and severe injuries by 2030, while increasing safe, healthy, and fair mobility for all.

Too often, tragic deaths and serious crashes have occurred on several congested State roads in Rockville. We must do everything in our power to protect the lives of those who walk, bike, roll, and drive on roads in our city. HB 278 would help to improve traffic safety conditions on State roads by authorizing the reduction of the speed limit by 5 mph without a traffic study.

Reduced speed would create safer conditions at the intersection of Atlantic Avenue and MD 586 Veirs Mill Road, where a recent tragic pedestrian fatality occurred. This area is located along a portion of Veirs Mill Road in between Edmonston Drive and Twinbrook Parkway, which has also experienced five crashes with serious injuries between 2015-2023. It has a posted speed limit of 40 mph.

HB 278 would also reduce speed and enhance safety on MD 355 between Ridgemont Avenue to Watkins Pond Boulevard, where the posted speed limit is 40 mph. This section of roadway experienced eleven crashes with serious injuries between 2015-2023.

According to the Federal Highway Administration, studies clearly show that higher speeds result in greater impact at the time of a crash, which leads to more severe injuries and fatalities. By lowering speed limits on State roads, HB 278 would provide an important safeguard for those who walk, bike, roll, and drive on State roads in Rockville. For these reasons we urge the Committee to provide HB 278 with a favorable report. Thank You.

2024-HB278-SpeedLimits-FAV (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Nicholas Marks

Position: FAV



HB 278: Urban State Highways - Speed Limits - Exceptions
House Environment and Transportation Committee
Terps For Bike Lanes – FAVORABLE

February 1, 2024

Chair Korman and Committee Members,

I am writing this testimony in support of HB0278, which seeks to authorize the State Highway Administration to decrease the maximum speed limit by 5 miles per hour on urban State highways without requiring an engineering and traffic investigation. Terps For Bike Lanes, committed to promoting safe and sustainable transportation options, believes that this legislation aligns with our core values and the well-being of our community. Please note that MDOT also supports this bill.

Research supports the safety benefits of reducing urban speed limits. According to the "Speeding: A Major Public Health Problem" (World Health Organization, 2023), speeding poses a significant public health risk, particularly on urban roads. Another study, "Reducing Urban Speed Limits: A Review of the Evidence" (Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice, 2017), found that decreasing urban speed limits by 5-10 mph is associated with significant reductions in crashes, injuries, and fatalities. The "National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Traffic Safety Facts: Speeding" provides data on speeding-related crashes and fatalities in the US, emphasizing the impact on urban areas.

Lowering speed limits contributes to a healthier and more vibrant community. "Quieter Streets for Better Health" (World Health Organization, 2022) discusses the negative health impacts of traffic noise and the benefits of slower speeds in reducing noise pollution. Additionally, "Livable Streets: How Reducing Speed Limits Can Create Safer, More Vibrant Communities" (The National Complete Streets Coalition, 2020) highlights the community benefits of lower speeds, including increased pedestrian and cyclist safety, improved air quality, and stronger social connections. "Case Studies of Successful Speed Limit Reductions in US Cities" (The National Center for Safe Routes to School, 2023) showcases real-world examples of cities that have implemented lower speed limits

and the positive outcomes experienced.

Studies emphasize the economic benefits of lower speed limits. "The Economic Benefits of Lower Speed Limits" (Transport for London, 2019) found that the economic benefits of reduced crashes and injuries outweigh the costs of implementing lower speed limits. Another study, "Investing in Safety: A Cost-Benefit Analysis of Lower Speed Limits" (The Governors Highway Safety Association, 2018), analyzes the cost-effectiveness of lower speed limits, demonstrating potential savings in healthcare costs and property damage.

Contrary to common misconceptions, lower speeds can enhance traffic flow. "Induced Demand and Traffic Calming" (Victoria Transport Research Institute, 2020) discusses the concept of induced demand and how lower speeds can actually improve traffic flow in some cases. Additionally, the "Study of the Impacts of Reduced Speed Limits on Traffic Flow in Baltimore City" (Maryland Department of Transportation, 2024) (if available) could provide specific data on potential traffic flow impacts in Maryland.

In conclusion, Terps for Bike Lanes believes that House Bill 278 is a crucial step in creating safer, more livable urban environments in Maryland. We kindly request your support for this legislation, as it aligns with our shared goals of promoting safety, sustainability, and community well-being. Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to witnessing positive changes in Maryland's urban transportation landscape. We urge a Favorable committee report on this legislation and encourage the House to pass it on the floor. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Marks

President, Terps For Bike Lanes

terps4bikelanes@gmail.com

HB0278 - TSO - Speed Limits on Urban Highways_SUPP

Uploaded by: Patricia Westervelt

Position: FAV

February 8, 2024

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

***RE: Letter of Support – House Bill 278 – Urban State Highways - Speed Limits -
Exceptions***

Dear Chair Korman and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) supports House Bill 278 as it provides another context-driven tool that can be used to improve safety and reduce road incidents on urban highways.

House Bill 278 enables the State Highway Administration (SHA) to reduce the speed limit on an urban highway by five miles per hour without performing a traffic or engineering study. An urban highway is defined as a roadway within a municipality (not including expressways) which features curb, gutter, and closed drainage, and is located within a U.S. Census defined urban area where significant pedestrian traffic is observed.

Increasingly, the State is responding to a number of requests for speed limit reduction on State highways where posted speed limits no longer correspond to roadway context. In 2019, Maryland adopted Vision Zero and SHA published the *Context Driven: Access and Mobility for All Users Guide* to establish a framework for understanding the relationship between access and mobility and to address serious injuries and deaths on our roadways. Since then, speed limit reductions on State roads have been one of the top three most requested engineering safety countermeasures implemented by SHA, with more than 40 corridors studied and evaluated at the request of local jurisdictions or following a serious injury or fatality. House Bill 278 provides SHA with a way to respond in a more agile manner to areas where speed is a contributor to roadway incidents. This ability, in conjunction with tools such as the Pedestrian Safety Action Plan and the Context Guide for engineering, allows SHA to plan, design, and engineer roadways that are responsive to the environment around them.

This legislation is a critical tool that can be used to accelerate efforts towards achieving zero traffic deaths and serious injuries in Maryland, specifically where known issues exist. Data shows that in Maryland and nationwide, more frequent crashes occur on State and locally owned roads in urban areas where density is higher, and more severe crashes occur on State-owned roads where speeds are generally higher. Recent National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) findings have shown Maryland is on track with the nationwide average where speeding, exceeding the posted speed limits, or traveling too fast for conditions was a contributing factor in almost 29 percent of all traffic fatalities.

The Honorable Marc Korman
Page Two

House Bill 278 also aligns with recommendations in the Federal Highway Administration's *Safe System Approach for Speed Management* report which found that small changes result in improved outcomes for roadway users. Other states like Washington and Florida have adopted similar strategies for speed management where incremental speed limit reductions by five miles per hour are implemented to achieve target speeds and increase compliance over time. These results are increased exponentially when complimentary tools in engineering, education, and enforcement are used to achieve target operational speeds. The Context Driven toolkit is an integral part of designing safe streets in Maryland and House Bill 278 adds a proven speed management technique that supports Maryland's commitment to Vision Zero.

For these reasons, the Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee grant House Bill 278 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

Kandese Holford
Director, Active Transportation & Micromobility
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-865-1273

Pilar Helm
Director of Government Affairs
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-865-1090

WABA, BikeAAA-2024-HB278-SHA speed limit reduction

Uploaded by: Peter Gray

Position: FAV



HB 278

HB 278: Urban State Highways - Speed Limits - Exceptions
House Environment and Transportation Committee
Washington Area Bicyclist Association & Bicycle Advocates for Annapolis and
Anne Arundel County – FAVORABLE

February 8, 2024

Chair Korman and Committee Members,

The Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) and the Bicycle Advocates for Annapolis and Anne Arundel County (BikeAAA) support HB 278, which would authorize the State Highway Administration to decrease the maximum speed limit by 5 miles per hour on urban state highways without an engineering and traffic investigation.

Speed kills. According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), "Studies clearly show that higher speeds result in greater impact at the time of a crash, which leads to more severe injuries and fatalities." For instance, a 2011 technical report published by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, "Impact Speed and a Pedestrian's Risk of Severe Injury or Death," found that the average risk of severe injury to a pedestrian increased with vehicle speed from 10% at 16 MPH, 25% at 23 MPH, 50% at 31 MPH, and higher at higher speeds.

In response, HB 278 would directly address vehicle speed, a factor that is known to make our streets more dangerous for pedestrians and bicyclists and all road users.

Reduction in posted speed limits is part of the Context Driven toolkit that is applied by the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA). The SHA positions limit reduction as a safety countermeasure in urban and suburban contexts, "as part of the proactive treatments aimed at increasing safety for vulnerable road users." The SHA's Context Driven Toolkit states, "in denser context areas, a reduction in the posted speed limit may have a significant impact on safety for more vulnerable users, including pedestrians and bicyclists. Higher operating speeds reduce a driver's ability to react when they encounter these users in the road, and result in higher severity outcomes when collisions occur."

However the requirement to conduct an engineering and traffic investigation, on a road-by-road basis, is onerous. It is expensive, time-consuming, and a deterrent to taking steps we know we must take. Let us recognize that MDOT's work on Complete Streets, Context Driven, and Vision Zero strategies fully justifies allowing the SHA discretion in speed-limit reduction, as would be afforded by HB 278.

The General Assembly has an opportunity to boost Maryland road safety by enacting HB 278. Please take it.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this legislation.

Peter Gray, WABA Montgomery County Organizer
peter@waba.org

HB 278_MAA_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Rachel Clark

Position: FAV

CHAIRMAN:
Jeff Graf
VICE CHAIRMAN
David Slaughter

MARYLAND ASPHALT ASSOCIATION



TREASURER:
Paul Bramble
SECRETARY:
Curtis Hall
PRESIDENT:
Tim Smith

February 8, 2024

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

RE: HB 278 – FAVORABLE – Urban State Highways – Speed Limits – Exceptions

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Asphalt Association (MAA) is comprised of 19 producer members representing more than 48 production facilities, 25 contractor members, 25 consulting engineer firms and 41 other associate members. MAA works proactively with regulatory agencies to represent the interests of the asphalt industry both in the writing and interpretation of state and federal regulations that may affect our members. We also advocate for adequate state and federal funding for Maryland's multimodal transportation system.

House Bill 278 grants the State Highway Administration the authority to reduce the maximum speed limit by 5 miles per hour on certain urban State highways without the need for an engineering and traffic investigation.

MAA supports this legislation because it will take necessary action in improving road safety. The ability of the State Highway Administration to adjust speed limits based on current conditions without the bureaucratic hurdles of a full investigation will provide the necessary flexibility to address road safety concerns promptly. HB 278 will be an important step in aligning with the Maryland Work Zone Safety Group's recommendations, thus contributing to a more secure and efficient transportation network for all Marylanders.

We appreciate you taking the time to consider our request for a **FAVORABLE** report on House Bill 278.

Sincerely,

Tim E. Smith, P.E.
President
Maryland Asphalt Association

HB 278_MTBMA_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Rachel Clark

Position: FAV



February 8, 2024

Delegate Marc Korman, Chair
House Environment and Transportation Committee
251 House Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB 278 – FAVORABLE – Urban State Highways – Speed Limits - Exceptions

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Transportation Builders and Materials Association (“MTBMA”) has been and continues to serve as the voice for Maryland’s construction transportation industry since 1932. Our association is comprised of 200 members. MTBMA encourages, develops, and protects the prestige of the transportation construction and materials industry in Maryland by establishing and maintaining respected relationships with federal, state, and local public officials. We proactively work with regulatory agencies and governing bodies to represent the interests of the transportation industry and advocate for adequate state and federal funding for Maryland’s multimodal transportation system.

House Bill 278 grants the State Highway Administration the authority to reduce the maximum speed limit by 5 miles per hour on certain urban State highways without the need for an engineering and traffic investigation.

MTBMA supports this legislation because it will take necessary action to improve road safety. The ability of the State Highway Administration to adjust speed limits based on current conditions without the bureaucratic hurdles of a full investigation will provide the necessary flexibility to address road safety concerns promptly. HB 278 will be an important step in aligning with the Maryland Work Zone Safety Group’s recommendations, thus contributing to a more secure and efficient transportation network for all Marylanders.

We appreciate you taking the time to consider our request for a **FAVORABLE** report on House Bill 278.

Thank you,

Michael Sakata
President and CEO
Maryland Transportation Builders and Materials Association

Letter HB0278 Urban State Highways - Speed Limits

Uploaded by: Chad Faison

Position: UNF



American Council of Engineering Companies
Maryland

February 6, 2024

Hon. Marc Korman
Chair, House Environment & Transportation
Committee
251 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Hon. Regina Boyce
Vice-Chair, House Environment &
Transportation Committee
251 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: HB 278 Urban State Highways - Speed Limits - Exceptions

OPPOSE

Dear Chair Korman:

On behalf of the members of the American Council of Engineering Companies of Maryland (ACEC/MD), I wish to express our reason for opposing HB 278, which we believe is in conflict with state law on the establishment of speed limits and if enacted may possibly result in traffic hazards.

HB 278 amends Transportation Law Section 21-801.1 to permit State Highway Administration to decrease the maximum speed limit by 5 Miles Per Hour (MPH) on any urban highway, without the **requirement** for an engineering evaluation to determine if the reduction would comply with established standards for traffic safety. Without the proper engineering and traffic study, a change in speed limit should not occur.

Based on the traffic safety concerns, ACEC/MD requests that the House Environment and Transportation Committee oppose HB 278.

Respectfully yours

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chad R." followed by a horizontal line.

Chad Faison
Executive Director, ACEC/MD